



INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2020, the Colorado Nonprofit Association team recognized the weight from the past year - not just the weight on nonprofits, but the weight on the people behind them. Countless surveys and information were being shared about nonprofit organizations, but there was limited information about what the nonprofit workforce was feeling and experiencing. Conversations were centered around support for organizations but not support for the workforce.

In witnessing this, our team recognizes that a thriving nonprofit sector relies heavily on a thriving workforce, in which the personal and professional are intertwined. Therefore, we created this report to better understand COVID-19 impacts on the people working for nonprofits that will help guide gatherings and trainings, resources, public policy issues, conversations and challenges to nonprofit leaders, and other efforts that support and center the nonprofit workforce as a vital means to achieving missions.

Unlike past reports, these findings were deeply personal for our team as individuals, who are also a part of this workforce. Throughout this report, you'll hear from different Association team members as we reflect on the findings and experiences from the past year, and years prior, that were exacerbated by COVID-19 and racial reckoning.

We ask that you do the same - read, reflect, and start conversations with colleagues.

THE EXPERIENCES OF A FEW THAT RESONATE WITH MANY

The reflections you'll read are based on survey findings from 108 respondents, therefore only provide a snapshot of the nonprofit workforce. Findings by race provide insights for those responding, and may not reflect the whole population within the nonprofit workforce. Although we were unable to sample enough people from diverse populations, we felt it was important to include this data to share the stories of those who responded.

Our team hopes this report will launch further studies and data collection that recognizes the human experiences of the people working within the nonprofit sector.



Lydia McCoy

Vice President &
Chief Operating
Officer

A CALL TO ACTION TO RETHINK OUR APPROACH TO OUR WORK

The past year and a half has presented new challenges, perspectives, and solutions to the missions the nonprofit sector works to achieve. And yet I am struck by how familiar the findings of this survey are; they are the same struggles and feedback our workforce has been providing for decades, only now super-charged. Doing more with less, feeling undervalued, and chronic burnout are not pandemic-specific dynamics in the nonprofit sector.

As you peruse the findings in this report, consider the assumptions we make when thinking about a career in the nonprofit sector. I have often heard or thought to myself that choosing this path means less than adequate pay, a bloated job description, and a well-honed sense of martyrdom. If these characteristics exist within our workforce, are they supporting us to be our best, to achieve bigger goals, and to envision a world where the issues we are tackling are solved? Are we sufficiently investing in our greatest asset: our people? If we allow these results to continue to be a theme in the nonprofit sector, what are we sacrificing as a consequence?

One of the opportunities presented by the turmoil of the last year is the freedom and imperative to rethink our approach to our work. My hope is that as we rebuild communities and as a sector, we do so in a way that lifts up the people who commit their lives to this work.

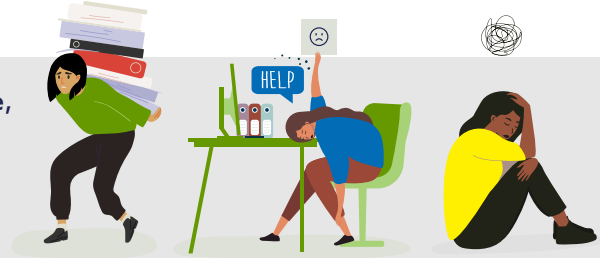


Rachel Childs
 Manager of
 Communications
 and Digital
 Accessibility

A WORKFORCE THAT IS A COLLECTION OF PEOPLE WITH PERSONAL LIVES

There were several pieces that were very illustrative from the survey data. One was that 32 percent of respondents indicated being burned out, and that it affects all demographics, but it was indicated more among those identifying as not white.

Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color were more likely to experience increased workloads, feel burned out, and feel anxious compared to those identifying as white.



| | Increase in Workload | Burned Out | Anxious |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|------------|---------|
| Native American, American Indian | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Hispanic, Latino, LatinX | 82% | 82% | 82% |
| Asian, Asian American | 75% | 100% | 100% |
| Multi-racial | 71% | 100% | 100% |
| African American, Black | 67% | 100% | 100% |
| White, Caucasian | 64% | 74% | 67% |
| Prefer not to answer | 80% | 60% | 60% |

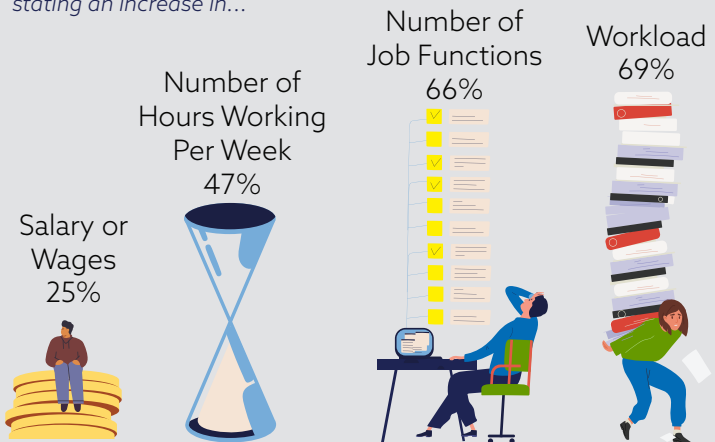
My initial reaction to the results was disappointment, because I saw that most emotions from respondents were that of anxiousness, burnout, disconnection, discouragement and lack of motivation. There were many positive emotions such as feeling hopeful and motivated, but they were less distressing than the other end of the spectrum.

I was unsurprised by the increase in workload and work hours due to the circumstances of the pandemic, but the lack of support that marginalized groups felt from the community was the most disappointing piece, especially with the increase in issues that nonprofit workers indicated happening in their personal lives.

Personally, I have felt many of the negative emotions as the respondents over the past year, and have seen an increase in responsibility.

The majority of the workforce experienced an increase in workload and number of job functions due to COVID-19.

% of respondents stating an increase in...



Fortunately, I did not have many extenuating circumstances, but I felt supported by other staff members and leadership. I also experienced an increase in job roles and hours, as well as adding on responsibilities and training needs. This has left me feeling anxious, but also motivated to make changes.

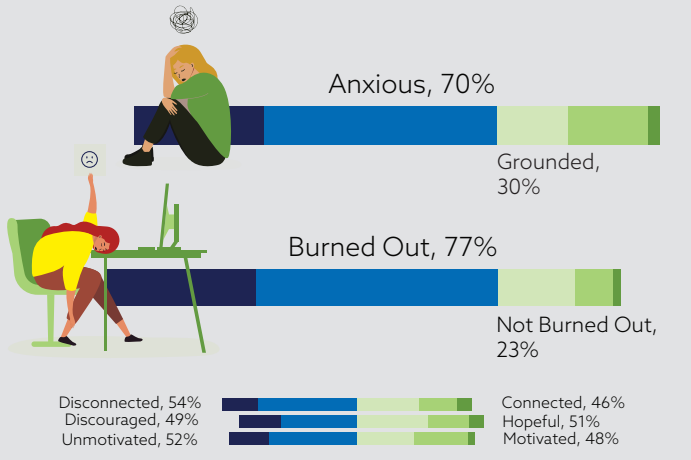
This report says many things about the state of nonprofit work and ways to improve people’s emotional health. It shows that a workforce is not just work. A workforce is a collection of people with personal lives that are stressful, and the addition of larger work loads, more hours, and a lack of support brings a collective negativity.

Burnout is real, and adding more work or roles will not make up for the eventual mental health effects that can deter people from returning to this sector. Investing in people is essential, and can fortify workplaces so that negative feelings are not secret to others in the organization.

The fact that the demographic of race and gender showed a disproportionate level of burnout among marginalized groups showed the need for the sector to be well versed in justice, diversity, equity and inclusion to work toward

liberation. This survey data shows that the level of burnout affects a large part of the nonprofit population, and that population is often oppressed further by workplace conditions and lack of resources.

The majority of the workforce felt anxious and burned out at the beginning of 2021.





Maureen Maycheco
Communications
Director

AT WHAT COSTS?

My dad died on October 11, 2020, of pancreatic cancer. He is represented in this survey data. The lead-up to his death and his transition from his physical body we're devastating. My nuclear family lives in California, and because of COVID-19, I could not make the trip home to honor the loss of my dad in person. Following his death, I took a Prozac, drank coffee, and spent a sleep-fueled week away from work to recover in my home and then logged back in to work the following Monday. My team was supportive and encouraged me to take care of myself, yet honestly, I wasn't able to name what I needed or what caring for myself meant. Especially as a Mixed person grieving death from afar, surrounded by the scariness of a global pandemic, and feeling the need to be present and active in the racial reckoning. I felt (and still feel) the aloneness and isolation in my bones.

I reflect on that time of early grief with empathy for myself. I facilitated sessions for our conference, dreamed up a community-powered response, and gathered my energy to show up to Zoom meeting after Zoom meeting. Pandemic response became an effective coping strategy for the pain I was suffering. I sacrificed a piece of myself over the past year to continue to achieve Association results and success. I lost myself to impact. This survey data and report feel like the first step towards exploring "at what cost?" and to shift the nonprofit sector to acknowledge its powerful workforce as human beings.

As a survey respondent, reflecting on the findings provides me a deep sense of belonging and also overwhelming heartbreak. I acknowledge my fellow nonprofit workforcers who bravely shared about their losses and the emotions tied to those personal impacts. Thank you for showing up so vulnerably and authentically. This report is a call-in and call to action for our Colorado nonprofit community to thoughtfully address individual isolation, stress, loss, and fatigue before it overwhelms. I cannot always name what I need to feel emotionally and mentally supported by my work family. However, I know when I need to leave a meeting without warning, nap during the afternoon, walk outside with my doggos, or plan an untouchable day. My sincere hope is that grind culture is replaced with grace culture, lifting up the necessity of rest/recovery, honoring collective healing, and celebrating the humanness of our Colorado nonprofit family.



Lindsay Newman
Manager of Strategic Partnerships

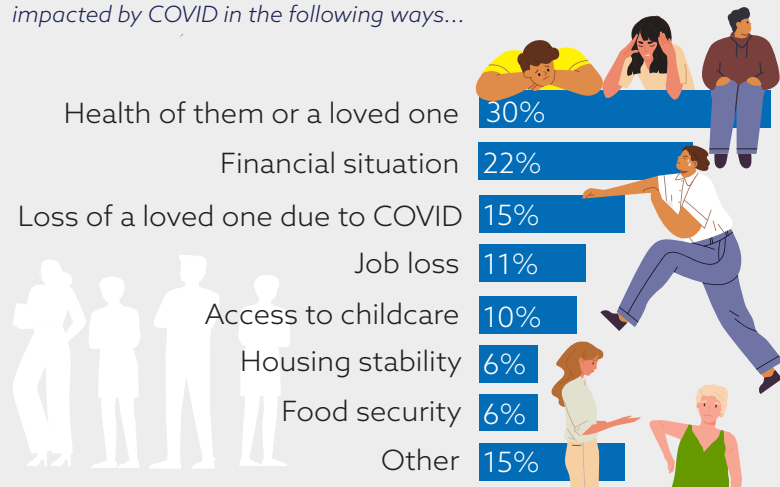
YOU CAN'T POUR FROM AN EMPTY CUP

In the nonprofit sector, I often hear “you can’t pour from an empty cup”. The metaphor speaks to the energy and effort employees put forth to assist, enhance, and create community. Along with the reality that impact can only be made when employees have the means to do mission work without burning out. Reviewing the data collected around nonprofit workforce experiencing loss, instability and personal or relational health decline made me hyper-aware of the humans behind the work being done. Imagine, you work for an affordable housing organization who has tools, networks, and knowledge to assist people in need of housing and you lose your job and financial stability in the resulting waves of COVID-19. Not only are the people who turned to you for expertise and assistance in increased peril, you yourself could end up in need of the same services you were providing. The data also demonstrates the contrast in gendered roles and the self-reported increase in responsibility for childcare by female-identifying respondents. With access to childcare minimized, the balancing act of work and children becomes more burdensome and creates additional stress on caregivers. The sector is specifically strained when so often, women are primary caregivers in a home and close to 75 percent of the nonprofit workforce is made up of female-identifying employees.

Having tragic disruptions to our daily lives has been immensely disruptive of energy, workflow, progress and the ability to create, inspire or hold space for others. Taking the time to be vulnerable and express perspective takes incredible energy. This survey captured the data in a way that drilled down to the essentials of strains on feelings and needs. I was grateful to read through and find unexpected companionship in the results.

6 out of 10 nonprofit households have been personally impacted by COVID-19.

% of respondents who have, or their households, been personally impacted by COVID in the following ways...





Melanie Tsuchida
Manager of Strategic Learning

SUPPORT THE WORKFORCE IN WAYS THEY WANT AND NEED TO BE SUPPORTED

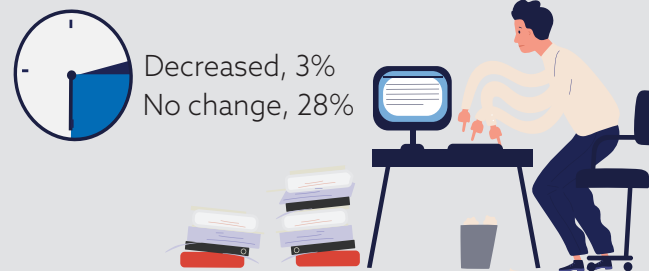
I resonated with the survey findings at a personal level. Conversations with nonprofit colleagues and friends about toxic workplace cultures, burnout, and salary and wage challenges resurfaced.

The strong sense of community and passion within the workforce was evident when 69 percent experienced increased workloads, yet only 25 percent saw an increase in salaries. However, this notion of passion within the workforce is often used as an excuse to ignore high turnover rates, the (too) many hats a person starts wearing, and burnout.

When thinking of turnover rates and the hats we wear, reading how BIPOC staff have higher rates of feeling burned out, anxious, and having increased workloads doesn't feel like "new" news to me. Systems, cultures, and interactions prevalent within the sector impact BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities in more harmful ways - both psychologically and physiologically - than it does others. And reviewing that the job changes, personal impacts, and emotional sentiments are negatively affecting the majority (68%) of people's ability to be effective in their roles was no surprise to me. It is, however, a call to action for Colorado Nonprofit Association, nonprofit leaders, decision makers, board members, and funders - those who are in positions that influence systems and cultures - to listen to those in the sector when they ask the community to recognize people as humans and continue providing grace, understand the impacts of access to childcare for working parents and caretakers within the sector, continue focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion at all levels, and look at ways to address burnout.

More than a quarter of those with increased workloads and job functions were having to do more with the same amount or less time.

Changes to working hours per week due to COVID-19.



The majority saw no change in salaries or wages.

Changes to salaries or wages due to COVID-19.

No change, 68%

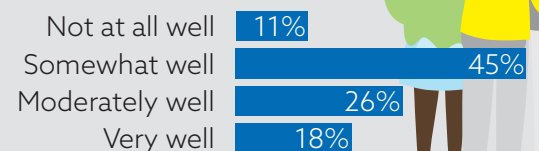
Increased, 25%

Decreased, 7%

When 45 percent of the workforce states the nonprofit community has supported them somewhat well, and 11 percent state they've been supported not at all well. The questions to ask are, "Is 'somewhat well' good enough for the people vital to our missions and community impact? Are we going to ignore the 11 percent of people that aren't being supported well at all?"

The nonprofit community has supported 45% of the workforce somewhat well, and 11% not at all well.

% of respondents stating the nonprofit community has supported them...



FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS: HOW THE COMMUNITY AND NONPROFIT CAPACITY BUILDERS CAN SUPPORT THE WORKFORCE.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR PERSONAL NEEDS

When asked how their community can support their personal needs, a common theme was to recognize personal impacts and the whole person.

Respondents mentioned the need for their community to continue to provide grace and to understand the different personal impacts they may be experiencing. In extending grace, communities can provide access to collective healing opportunities, flexibility in work schedules and deadlines, self-care options and activities, and support for mental health. However, a couple respondents stated that the increased attention from supervisors or colleagues to talk about personal impacts and mental health has created more burnout for them.

Respondents also mentioned that peer groups and their community coming together to support one another has been helpful knowing that they can reach out if in need.

Leaders and the sector need to recognize the whole person. How an individual wants to address these impacts varies by each person and must be respected.

Additional support for personal needs were:

- Continue to focus on solidarity, racial equity, and anti-racism in personal lives and for communities.
- Continue to follow COVID-19 protocols and regulations around safety measures.
- Access to childcare that meets the various needs of the nonprofit workforce, including affordable childcare, length of childcare per day, and flexibility for working parents.

SUPPORT FROM COLORADO NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION AND OTHERS FOR WORK-RELATED NEEDS

The nonprofit workforce asked for organizations to address burnout in the sector and encourage changes in HR practices and culture that support staff needs.

Respondents stated the harmful culture within the sector that celebrates and feeds a “go-go-go mentality.” Employers who are celebrating those who have been working hard need to understand the culture that they are creating when doing so. Respondents stated employers need to also support staff in preventing and addressing burnout by providing and recognizing self-care needs, sabbaticals or breaks, support for mental health, flexibility on work hours, and flexibility and policies that encourage use of paid time off.

Additional support from supporting organizations on work-related needs:

- Provide opportunities for connection, especially as COVID-19 impacted the opportunities to network and connect with others.
- Continue to provide education opportunities for the sector on various topics.

YOUR OWN REFLECTIONS

As you read the Colorado Nonprofit Association team's reflections, what are your own reflections? What conversations can you have and actions can you take that help build a stronger workforce?

Knowing burnout is real for many, who should be responsible for taking action? What does that action look like? How can you advocate for yourself and your colleagues - no matter your title or position? What and who needs to be challenged (e.g. systems, structures, institutions, boards)?

Share your reflections with your colleagues and the sector on the Association's [Workforce Reflections Wall](#).

A CALL TO ACTION FOR THE ASSOCIATION AND NONPROFIT LEADERS

As our team continues to reflect on these findings, we are dedicated to providing support that centers the nonprofit workforce and the humans behind the missions.

Informed by this survey and the experiences shared by the workforce, our team will continue to:

- offer trainings and opportunities that also address the human side of working in the nonprofit sector (like our Mourning Vigils);
- send communications that reflect personal and professional experiences;
- advocate on issues that impact the nonprofit sector and workforce;
- cultivate partnerships where we can both challenge and be challenged to think differently about how to support people; and
- provide membership services that recognize the workforce as the heart of thriving nonprofits.

For the executive leaders, managers, staff, funders, and board members who are reading this publication, reflect on your own experience, start conversations in your workplace, challenge toxic burnout culture, champion self-care, address equity issues head on, and question what it would take to support a workforce like we strive to support our constituents.

ADDITIONAL DATA TABLES

| How have the following related to your role changed due to COVID-19? | | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | <i>n</i> = | Increased | No change | Decreased |
| Number of hours working per week | 107 | 47% | 49% | 5% |
| Number of job functions | 107 | 66% | 34% | 0% |
| Salary or wages | 97 | 25% | 68% | 7% |
| Workload | 107 | 69% | 27% | 4% |

| Change in workload by race | | | | |
|---|----|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | n= | Increased | No change | Decreased |
| African American, Black | 3 | 67% | 33% | 0% |
| Asian, Asian American | 4 | 75% | 25% | 0% |
| Hispanic, Latino, Latina, LatinX | 11 | 82% | 18% | 0% |
| Multi-racial | 7 | 71% | 29% | 0% |
| Native American, American Indian, Alaska Native | 3 | 100% | | 0% |
| Prefer not the answer | 5 | 80% | 20% | 0% |
| White, caucasian | 86 | 64% | 31% | 5% |

| Change in number of job functions by organizational budget | | | | |
|--|-----|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | n= | Increased | No Change | Decreased |
| Overall | 107 | 66% | 34% | 0% |
| Less than \$1M | 38 | 71% | 29% | 0% |
| \$1M-4.9M | 37 | 65% | 35% | 0% |
| \$5M or more | 20 | 55% | 45% | 0% |

| Change in hours working per week - filtered | |
|--|-----|
| Filtered: Increased workload & increased number of job functions | |
| n=61 | |
| Increased | 69% |
| No change | 28% |
| Decreased | 3% |

| For each of the rows below, use the scale to indicate which feeling you have felt the most frequently within the past three months. | | | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|----------------|
| n=106 | | | | | | |
| | -2 | -1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | |
| Anxious | 26% | 44% | 12% | 16% | 2% | Grounded |
| Burned out | 32% | 45% | 15% | 7% | 1% | Not burned out |
| Disconnected | 14% | 40% | 25% | 16% | 6% | Connected |
| Discouraged | 18% | 31% | 27% | 18% | 6% | Hopeful |
| Unmotivated | 16% | 36% | 23% | 22% | 4% | Motivated |

| Emotional sentiments by general role | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|--|
| Filtered: -2 & -1 score | | |
| | ED or CEO | Paid staff or Employee (other than ED) |
| | <i>n</i> =28 | <i>n</i> =68 |
| Anxious | 68% | 70% |
| Burned out | 70% | 80% |
| Disconnected | 39% | 59% |
| Discouraged | 35% | 52% |
| Unmotivated | 32% | 57% |

| In what ways have you or your household been personally impacted by COVID-19? | | |
|---|---------------|-----|
| | <i>n</i> =105 | % |
| Loss or death of a loved one due to COVID-19 | 16 | 15% |
| Job loss | 12 | 11% |
| Access to childcare | 11 | 11% |
| Housing stability | 6 | 6% |
| Health of you or a loved one | 32 | 31% |
| Financial Situation | 23 | 22% |
| Food security | 6 | 6% |
| Other | 16 | 15% |
| None of the above | 39 | 37% |

| How have the above impacts affected your ability to be effective in your role? | |
|--|-----|
| <i>n</i> =103 | |
| | % |
| Negative effect | 9% |
| Somewhat negative effect | 59% |
| No effect at all | 21% |
| Somewhat positive effect | 11% |
| Positive effect | 0% |

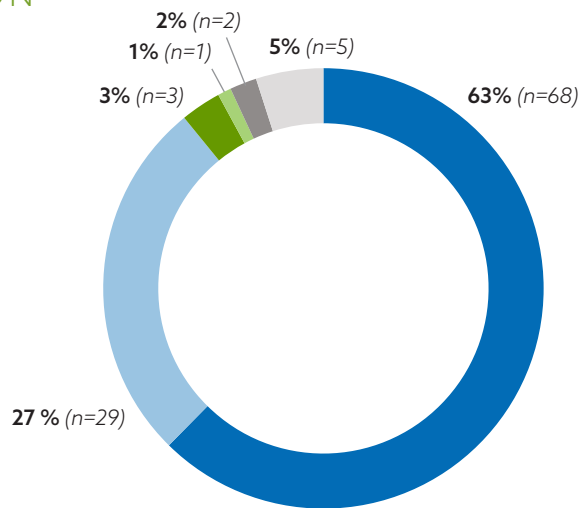
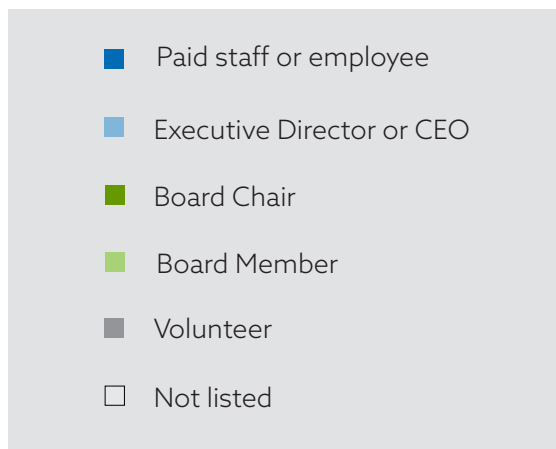
| In the past 12 months, how well have you been supported by the nonprofit community as a whole? | |
|--|-----|
| <i>n</i> =105 | |
| | % |
| Not at all well | 11% |
| Somewhat well | 45% |
| Moderately well | 26% |
| Very well | 18% |

PARTICIPANTS & METHODOLOGY

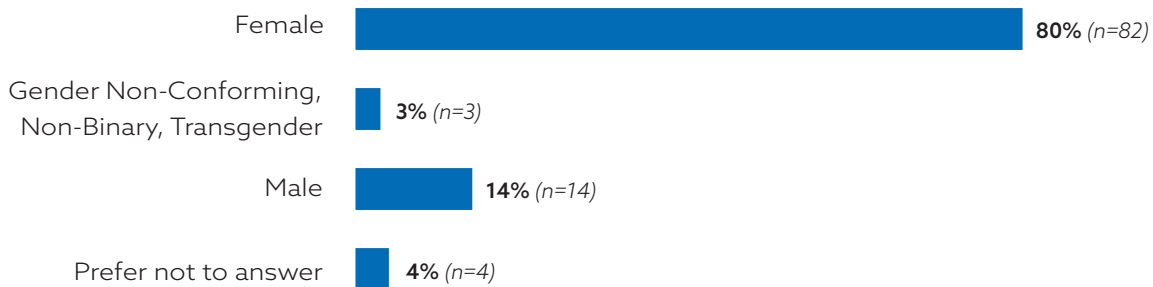
The survey was conducted by Colorado Nonprofit Association via an online survey tool. Responses were collected from March 23, 2021 through April 30, 2021. All questions were optional. Respondents were entered into a drawing where 50 participants received \$10. The survey was sent to Colorado Nonprofit Association's members and network.

The survey findings are based on 108 responses from those in working in the nonprofit sector, whether as a paid staff member or volunteer. Majority of respondents are paid staff or employees.

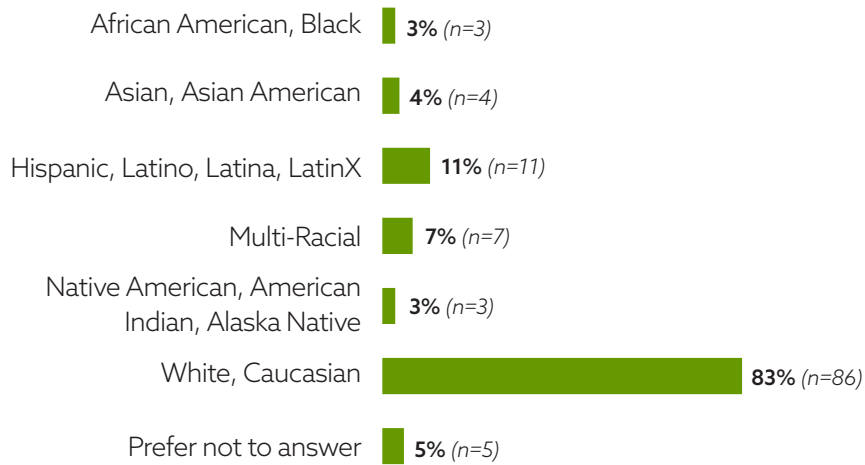
GENERAL ROLE WITH ORGANIZATION



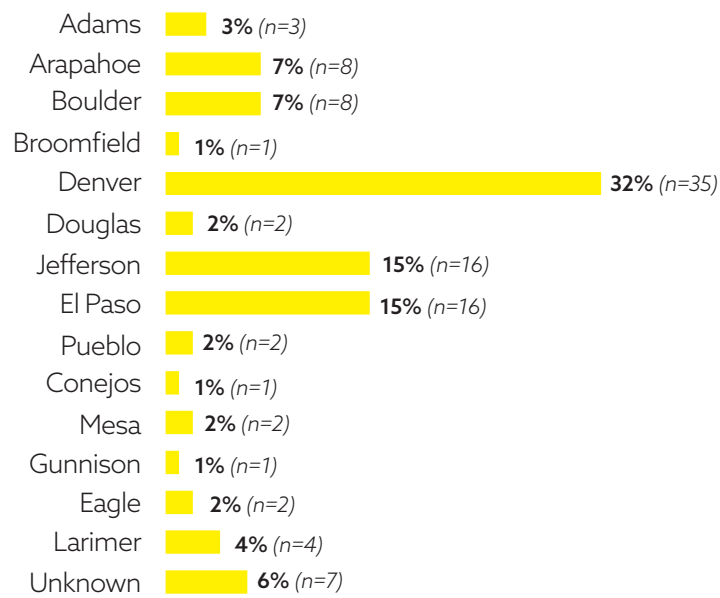
GENDER IDENTITY



RACIAL IDENTITY



COUNTIES REPRESENTED



ORGANIZATION BUDGETS REPRESENTED

