

Racial Diversity Among Top Staff in Senate Personal Offices



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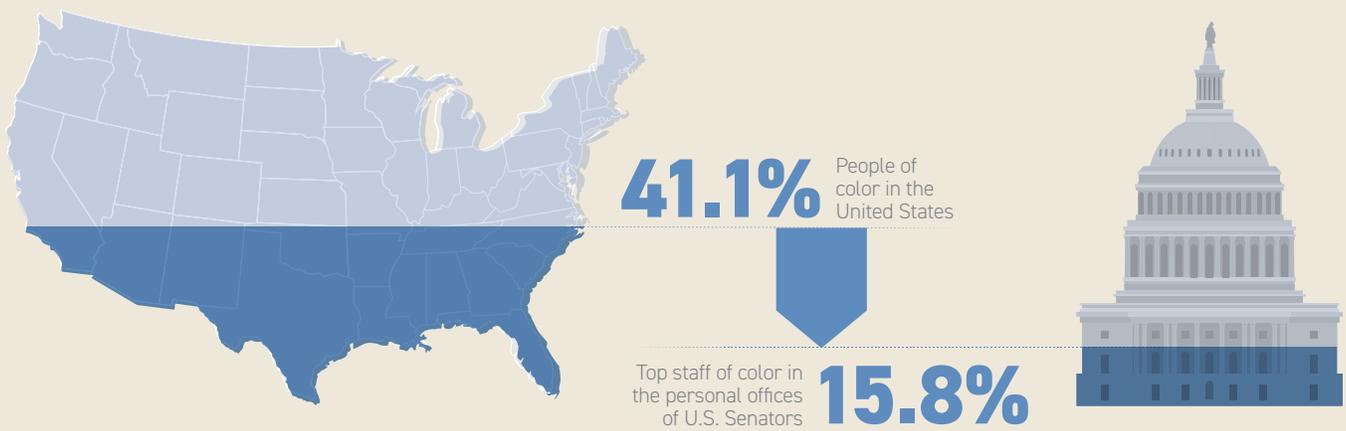
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides evidence regarding the need for more racial diversity among U.S. Senate personal office top staff. In this report, top staff include all chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors in the Washington, DC personal offices of U.S. senators. The data reflects Senate employment as of June 30, 2023. Key findings show:

- **People of color make up 41.1 percent of the U.S. population, but only 15.8 percent of all Senate personal office top staff.** African Americans account for 13.6 percent of the U.S. population, but only 2.1 percent of Senate personal office top staffers. Latina/os make up 19.1 percent of the U.S. population, but only 5.8 percent of Senate personal office top staffers. Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders are 6.6 percent of the U.S. population, but only 4.5 percent of Senate personal office top staffers.
- **Between 2020 and 2023, the overall percentage of personal office top staff of color increased from 11.0 percent to 15.8 percent, but the percentage of African American top staff decreased.** The percentage of African American top staff decreased (from 3.1 percent to 2.1 percent) but increased among Senate personal office top staff who are Latina/o (from 3.8 percent to 5.8 percent), Native American (from 0 percent to 0.3 percent), and Asian American/Pacific Islander (from 2.7 percent to 4.5 percent).
- **Senate personal offices representing states with large shares of Black or Latina/o residents hire relatively few Black or Latina/o top staffers.** African Americans account for an average of 27.2 percent of the population in ten states (AL, DE, GA, LA, MD, MS, NC, NY, SC, and VA), yet hold only 5.2 percent of the total top staff positions in these states' U.S. Senate personal offices. Latina/os account for an average of 30.3 percent of the population in ten states (AZ, CA, CO, FL, IL, NJ, NM, NV, NY, and TX), yet hold 20.7 percent of the top staff positions in these states' Senate personal offices.
- **Democrats employ more personal office top staff of color than Republicans.** People of color make up 14.0 percent of Republican voters and 7.1 percent of Republican Senate personal office top staff. People of color account for 36.0 percent of Democratic voters, but only 24.0 percent of Democratic Senate personal office top staff. African Americans are 17.0 percent of Democratic registered voters, but only 4.0 percent of Democratic Senate personal office top staff.
- **None of the Black top staff hired as of January 2020 were retained as of June 2023.** In examining top staff recruitment and retention, we observed that Black top staffers' retention and hiring patterns are unique. All six current Black top staffers previously worked for other Senate offices, whereas a portion of the staffers from other racial/ethnic backgrounds in this report obtained these positions through internal promotions within the same office.



INTRODUCTION

This report examines racial diversity among top staff in the Washington, DC personal offices of U.S. senators — i.e., chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors — as of June 30, 2023. While the percentage of top staff of color increased by almost five percentage points since our last Senate report in [August 2020](#), the proportion of diverse top staff remains well below the percentage of people of color in the U.S. population. We find that while people of color account for 41.1 percent of the U.S. population,^[1] they account for only 12 percent of U.S. senators^[2] and 15.8 percent of top staff in the personal offices of U.S. senators.^[3]

In the U.S. Senate, top staff in Washington, DC personal offices play an essential role. These staffers often provide policy expertise, draft legislation, meet with constituents, and manage Senate offices, including hiring, supervising, and terminating employees. Personal office top staffers also assist senators in carrying out several special powers, including confirming federal judges, cabinet secretaries, and many other executive branch and federal agency officials. While senators make final decisions, top personal office staff wield significant influence and sometimes act as surrogates for their bosses.

The lack of racial diversity among top staff is not a partisan issue but a challenge that the Senate, as an institution, must address. Congressional decisions affect all Americans and the lack of racial diversity among personal office top staff impairs senators' understanding of their constituencies' diverse perspectives. This report does not claim that white staff cannot represent diverse communities, nor that proportional representation is a panacea. We do argue that the considerable influence of top staff in shaping the U.S. Senate, combined with the lack of racial diversity among top staff, stifles adequate representation of all U.S. citizens. Increasing diversity among key staffers would enhance deliberation, innovation, legitimacy, and legislative outcomes, allowing the Senate to function more effectively and in a way that more accurately reflects America's diversity.

Currently, the U.S. Senate does not systematically collect data on the race and ethnicity of its members top staff.^[4] While federal law requires that employers with more than 100 employees collect and disclose employees' race, gender, and other demographic information to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission,^[5] this law does not apply to the U.S. Senate. For the past seven years, however, Senate Democrats have disclosed data from a voluntary survey on the aggregate racial and ethnic diversity of each Democratic U.S. Senator's personal and committee offices. These data are presented in an aggregate fashion, so we cannot ascertain whether staff of color are over-represented in lower-level positions or positions in state offices more visible to their constituents of color. Senate Republicans have not publicly released any data on staff diversity.

METHODOLOGY

We completed a census of employment in top positions in each U.S. Senator’s Washington, DC personal office as of June 30, 2023. In the initial data collection stage, the authors performed an online search for Senate staff photographs with links to current and past employment. The authors obtained data from various sources, including LegiStorm, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Wikipedia, Roll Call, The Hill, National Journal, constituent photographs, wedding announcements, and press interviews. During this initial stage, the authors conditionally identified the race or ethnicity of approximately 96.9 percent of top staff.

The authors then reviewed all the collected information identifying people of color with leadership from diverse staff associations (e.g., Congressional Asian Pacific American Staff Association, Congressional Native Staff Association, and the Black Women’s Congressional Alliance) to confirm these data and to identify the remaining 3.1 percent of staffers whose race could not be determined during the initial stage of data collection.

Further, the authors emailed the chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors in each Senate personal office, provided each person with the data collected about their race/ethnicity and position, and asked the staffers to correct any errors. Those staffers who did not respond were contacted via email a second time with another opportunity to correct our data.

Twenty-three percent of the offices responded, and a few submitted corrections to the data (for example, “this person identifies as biracial”). A few offices that responded expressed an unwillingness to participate in the study and did not confirm our data. For these offices, we coded the staffers as white.

In addition, we also analyzed the retention of top staff in each senator’s office from January 2020. We used the staff data from our 2020 Senate report for the top staff makeup of each office, including staff demographic information.

The authors then performed an online search for the 2020 staffers to locate their current employment. If they were still on Capitol Hill as of June 30, 2023, we compared their current office and position to our data from 2020. If they were no longer working on Capitol Hill as of June 2023, we searched for their current employment as of that date. We reviewed multiple sources, including LegiStorm, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Senator press releases, and our current staff data. We were able to identify the current employment of 97.6 percent of top staffers from 2020.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines race as a person’s self-identification with one or more social groups. This report contains seven racial categories: white, African American^[6], Latina/o, Asian American/Pacific Islander (AAPI), biracial or multiracial, Middle Eastern/North African (MENA), and Native American.^[7]

To maintain consistency, we limited our definition of “top” staff to three positions: chief of staff, legislative director, and communications director. The chief of staff is the highest-ranking staff position in each senator’s personal office. Usually, a chief of staff is responsible for hiring and firing employees and making other management decisions in a member’s personal office. Chiefs of staff are endowed with tremendous decision-making power and their perspectives shape legislative action. Legislative directors often manage an office’s legislative activities and supervise the senator’s legislative staff. Communications directors play a vital role in planning and executing senators’ communications strategies, including managing relationships with media outlets and journalists, arranging

press interviews, preparing senators for interviews, and drafting news releases, statements, and opinion pieces.

This report focuses on the Washington, DC personal office top staff positions deemed so essential that almost every Senate office includes one or more positions. Other staff may have significant roles such as senior advisor in the personal offices of some senators, but those positions are not included in this report because they are not consistent across offices. Some congressional staff have multiple titles and roles in Senate personal offices. For our analysis, we counted only the most senior roles to identify top staffers as unique individuals.

Deputy chiefs of staff, for example, are not hired by all U.S. Senate personal offices, and their responsibilities vary significantly across the offices that do hire them. As of June 30, 2023, 61.0 percent of personal offices had a deputy chief of staff position. Of the offices with a deputy chief of staff position, 18 percent had more than one deputy chief of staff.^[8]

This report focuses on top staff positions in Senate personal offices in Washington, DC, rather than state offices. Some Senate offices, especially those close to Washington, DC, may consider their state director as part of their senior leadership team, but this is not consistent across offices. Most state directors are in state offices and often more visible to constituents than staff in Washington, DC. An April 2022 Joint Center study on state directors found that people of color make up 40 percent of the U.S. population, but only 24.2 percent of Senate state directors.^[9]

Further, many staffers of color in personal offices work as press secretaries, legislative assistants, policy advisors, and other mid- and junior-level positions in Senate personal offices. These staff add significantly to legislative deliberations and communication strategies and enrich the congressional workplace with diverse perspectives and experiences. Future Joint Center research will study the state of diversity among staff in these roles and determine which of these positions serve as “feeder” positions for top staff roles.

Some personal offices had vacancies in the positions we identify as top staff, so this report analyzes 100 chiefs of staff, 96 legislative directors, and 95 communications directors. Ordinarily the number of available top staff positions would add up to 300, but we excluded vacancies from our analysis. As of June 30, 2023, there were no vacancies in the chief of staff role. Senators Maggie Hassan (D-NH), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Lindsey Graham (R-SC), and Tim Scott (R-SC) did not have a legislative director; and Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Mike Lee (R-UT), Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Marco Rubio (R-FL), and Dan Sullivan (R-AK) did not have a communications director.

We contend that this analysis provides the most consistent snapshot of diversity across top staff in U.S. senators’ personal offices in Washington, DC. Isolated instances of significantly influential staff of color in positions may not be reflected in this report, but their presence does not explain why the U.S. Senate has few people of color in the chief of staff, legislative director, and communications director positions.



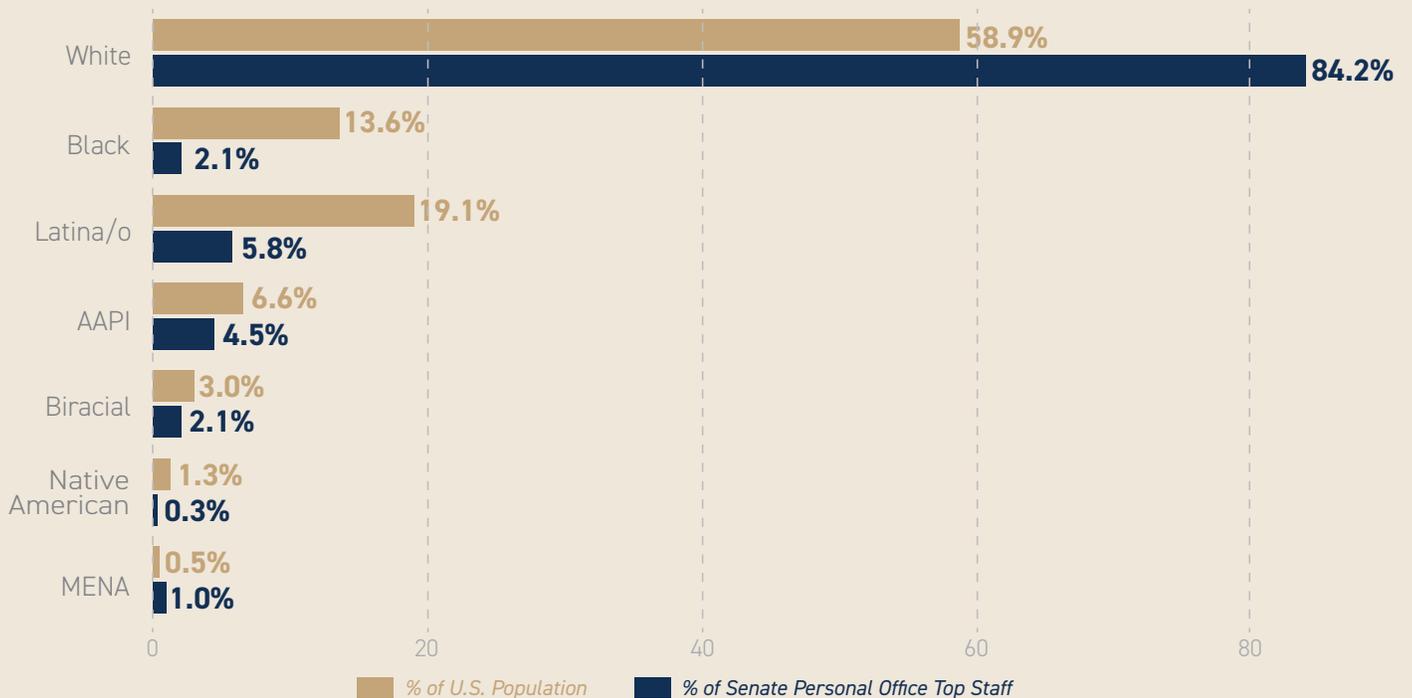
PERSONAL OFFICE DIVERSITY

People of color are underrepresented among the 291 personal office top staff in the U.S. Senate. People of color account for 41.1 percent of the U.S. population, but only 15.8 percent of Senate personal office top staff. White Americans account for 58.9 percent of the U.S. population, but 84.2 percent of personal office top staff.

This report finds that almost all groups of color are underrepresented among Senate personal office top staff:

- African Americans are 13.6 percent of the U.S. population, but only 2.1 percent of Senate personal office top staff;
- Latina/os are 19.1 percent of the U.S. population, but only 5.8 percent of Senate personal office top staff;
- AAPIs are 6.6 percent of the U.S. population, but only 4.5 percent of Senate personal office top staff;
- Biracial Americans are 3.0 percent of the U.S. population, but 2.1 percent of Senate personal office top staff;
- Native Americans are 1.3 percent of the U.S. population, but 0.3 percent of Senate personal office top staff; and
- MENAs are 0.5 percent of the U.S. population, and 1.0 percent of Senate personal office top staff.

Racial Demographics of Senate Personal Office Top Staff vs. U.S. Population^[10]



Of the 100 Senate chiefs of staff in Washington, DC personal offices, only 16 (or 16.0 percent) are people of color. They include eight Latina/o staffers, three AAPI staffers, two biracial staffers, one MENA staffer, one African American staffer, and one Native American staffer.

Of the 96 legislative directors, 16 (or 16.7 percent) are people of color. They include six AAPI staffers, four African American staffers, four Latina/o staffers, one MENA staffer, and one biracial staffer.

Of the 95 Senate communications directors, 14 (or 14.7 percent) are people of color. They include four AAPI staffers, five Latina/o staffers, three biracial staffers, one MENA staffer, and one African American staffer.

Racial Demographics Among Senate Personal Office Top Staff

	Chief of Staff	Percentage	Legislative Director	Percentage	Communications Director	Percentage
White	84	84.0%	80	83.3%	81	85.3%
Black	1	1.0%	4	4.2%	1	1.1%
Latina/o	8	8.0%	4	4.2%	5	5.3%
AAPI	3	3.0%	6	6.3%	4	4.2%
Native American	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
MENA	1	1.0%	1	1.0%	1	1.1%
Biracial	2	2.0%	1	1.0%	3	3.2%
Total	100	100.0%	96	100.0%	95	100.0%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. The number of chiefs of staff, legislative directors, and communications directors does not add up to 100 due to vacancies at the time of data collection. See the methodology section for more details.

STAFF DIVERSITY BY POLITICAL PARTY

Voters of color are underrepresented among top staff across political parties. A 2023 Pew Research Center survey showed that 36 percent of 2022 voters who self-identified as Democrats were people of color.^[11] Yet only 24.0 percent of Democratic Senate personal office top staff are people of color. In comparison, people of color made up 14.0 percent of 2022 voters who identified as Republicans and 7.1 percent of Republican Senate personal office top staff.

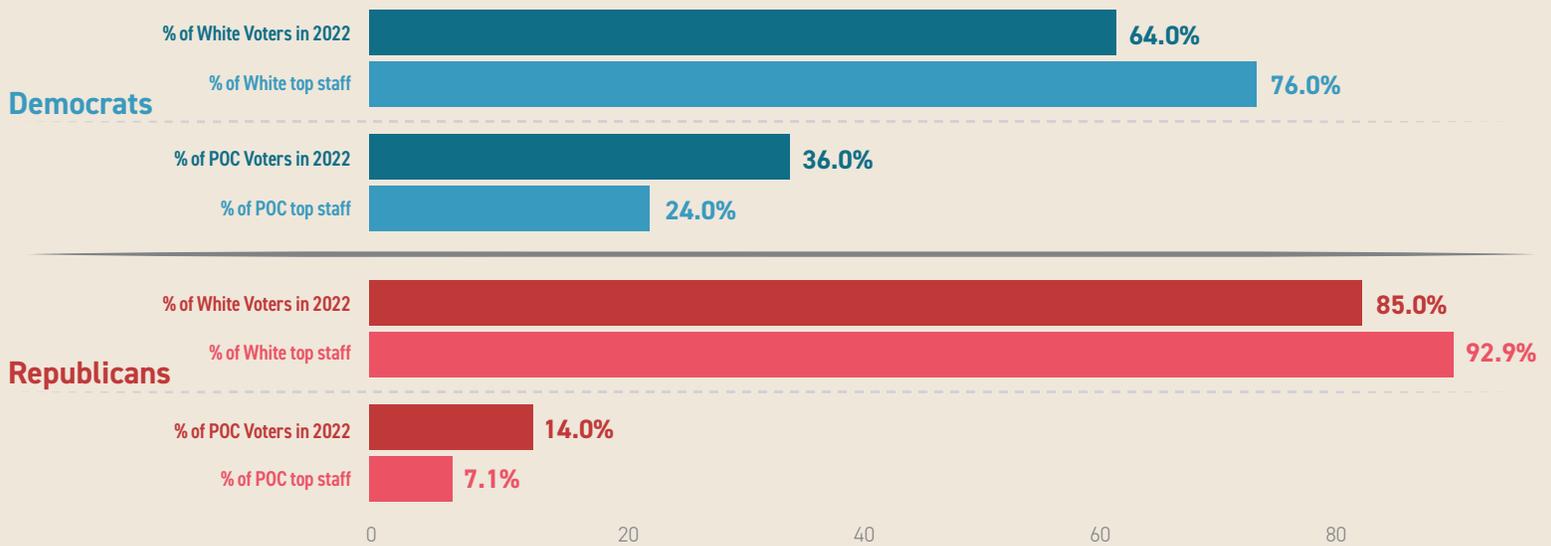
Top Staff of Color in Senate Personal Offices by Political Party (by raw number)

	Democrats	Republicans	Total
Black	6	0	6
Latina/o	14	3	17
AAPI	11	2	13
Native American	0	1	1
MENA	3	0	3
Biracial	2	4	6
Total	36	10	46

African American voters were significantly underrepresented among top staff across political parties. African Americans accounted for 17.0 percent of Democratic voters in 2022,^[12] but only 4.0 percent of Democratic Senate personal office top staff. African Americans accounted for 1.0 percent of Republican voters, and currently, no African Americans are among Republican Senate personal office top staff.

While Democratic senators have only slightly more staff in available top positions than Republican senators, Senate Democrats employ over three times as many staff of color in top positions than their Republican colleagues.

Racial Representation by Party Base Voters

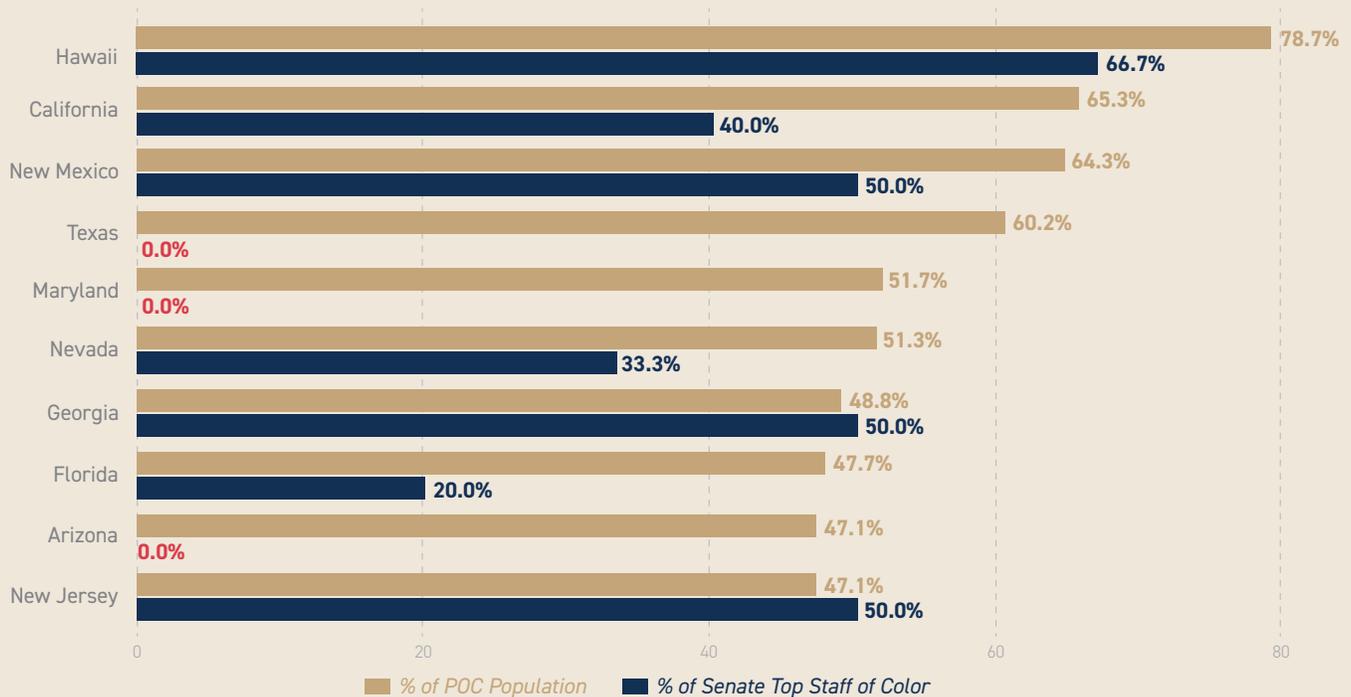


*Due to rounding, some percentages may add up to less than 100 percent.

STATES WITH LARGE POPULATIONS OF COLOR

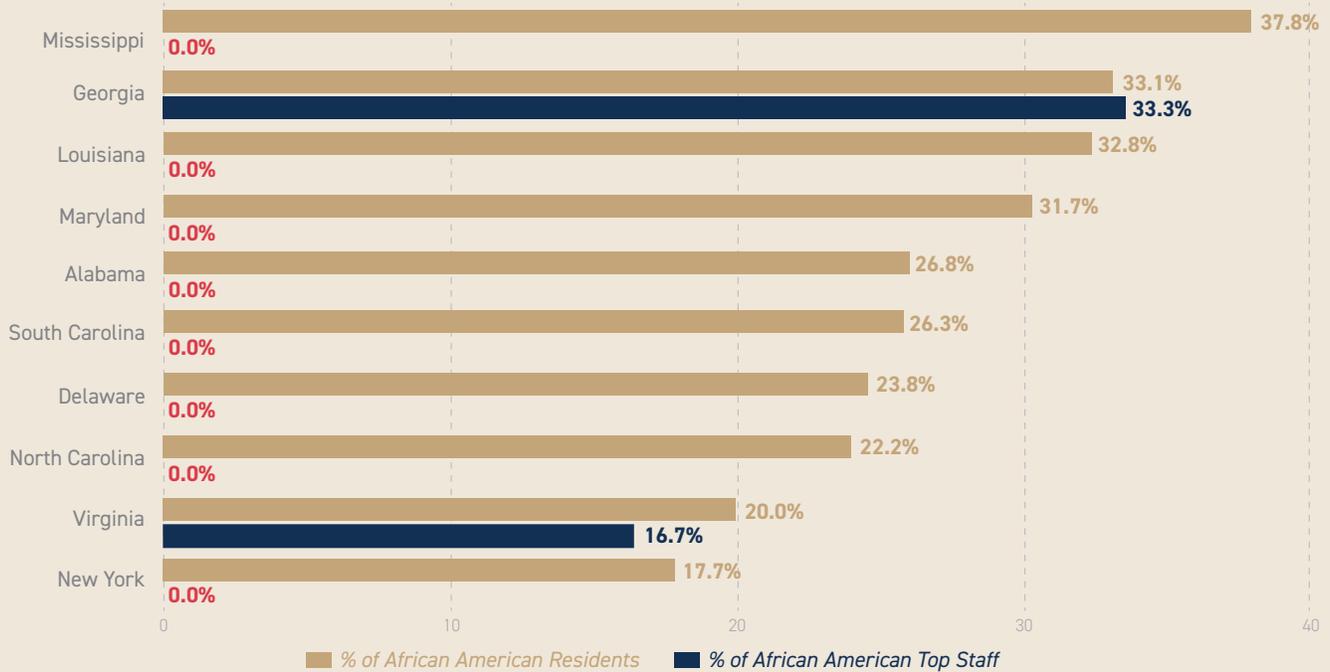
Top staff of color remain underrepresented in Senate personal offices representing the 10 states with the largest proportions of people of color. On average, people of color (POC) in 10 states (Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Texas) make up 56.2 percent of the population, yet comprise only 31.0 percent of the states' total Senate personal office top staff positions.^[13] Three of these 10 states (Arizona, Maryland, and Texas) have no staff of color in personal office top positions. Half of these states (California, Florida, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Nevada) have a population of people of color that is higher than the state's percentage of Senate personal office top staff of color. In Georgia and New Jersey, the percentage of top staff of color is slightly higher than the state's population of people of color.

Senate Personal Office Top Staff of Color in States with Highest Percentage of Residents Who Are People of Color



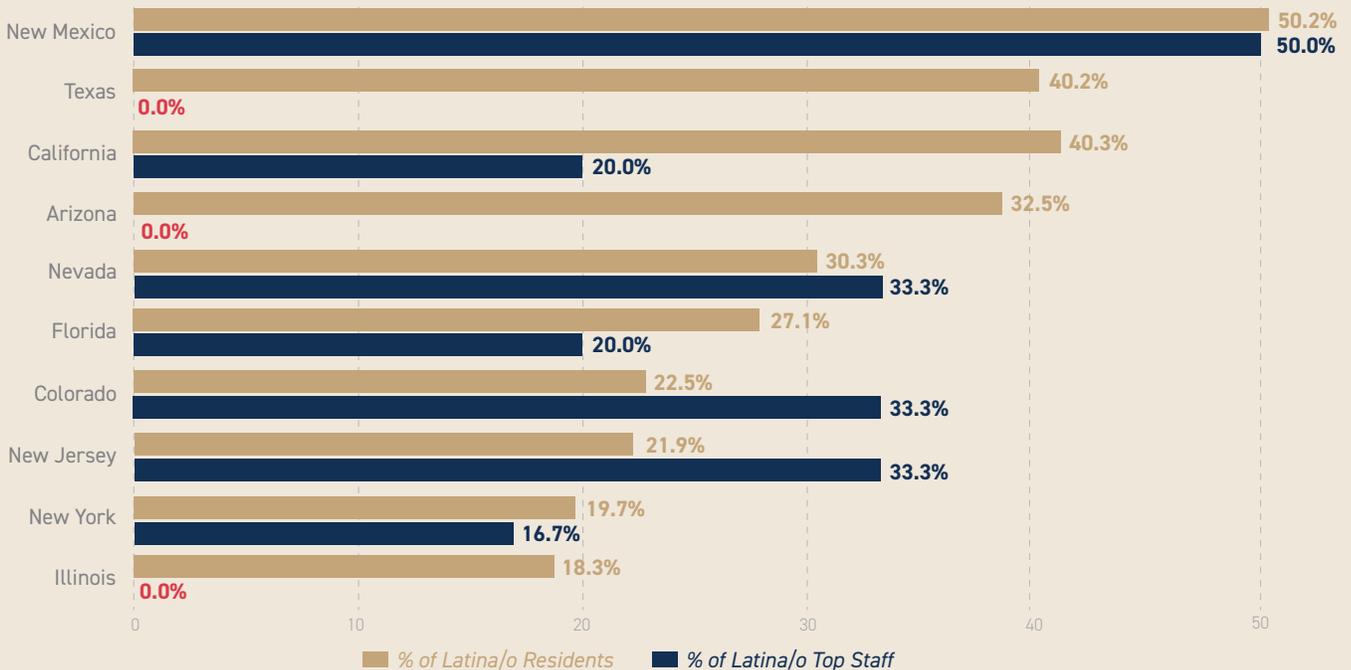
African American top staff are significantly underrepresented in states with the highest percentages of African Americans. On average, African Americans account for 27.2 percent of the population in the 10 states with the largest African American populations relative to the entire state population (Alabama, Delaware, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia). By comparison, African Americans account for only 5.2 percent (three of 58) of the top staff positions in Senate personal offices representing these states.^[14] In eight states (Alabama, Delaware, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, and South Carolina), no African Americans are top staff in personal offices. Only Georgia senators employ a percentage of African American top staff that is slightly higher than the state's African American population.

Black Senate Personal Office Top Staffers in States with Highest Percentage of Black Residents



Latina/os are also underrepresented among top staff in the personal offices of senators representing the 10 states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, New Mexico, Nevada, and Texas) with the largest percentage of residents who are Latina/o. On average, Latina/os account for 30.3 percent of the population of these states, but only 20.7 percent (12 of 58) of the top staff positions^[15] in the Senate personal offices representing these states. There are no Latina/o top staff in Senate personal offices in three states (Arizona, Illinois, and Texas).

Latina/o Senate Personal Office Top Staffers in States with Highest Percentage of Residents Who Are Latina/o



DIVERSE TOP STAFF BY SENATE OFFICE

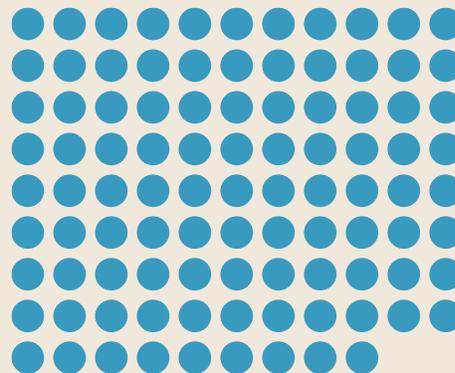
Senators of color tend to hire a disproportionate number of top staffers of color. People of color account for 41.1 percent of the U.S. population, but only 12.0 percent of U.S. senators.^[16] While diverse senators comprise a low percentage of all U.S. senators, they employ 26.1 percent of the top staff of color in personal offices in the Senate.

While Black senators only account for three percent of the U.S. Senate,^[17] they employ 50 percent of the Black top staff in the U.S. Senate. One of the six currently employed Black top staffers was hired by Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ), and two Black top staffers are employed by Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA). The other three Black top staffers are employed by Senators John Fetterman (D-PA), Mark Warner (D-VA), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI).

While Latina/o senators only account for six percent of the U.S. Senate,^[18] they are responsible for hiring 23.5 percent of the Latina/o top staff in the U.S. Senate. Among the 17 Latina/o top staff employed as of June 30, 2023, four were hired by Senators Ben Ray Luján (D-NM), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Alex Padilla (D-CA), and Marco Rubio (R-FL). Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM) and Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV) each employ two Latina/o top staffers. The remaining nine Latina/o top staffers were employed by Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO), Cory Booker (D-NJ), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), John Hickenlooper (D-CO), Joe Manchin (D-WV), Jon Ossoff (D-GA), Pete Ricketts (R-NE), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), and Tim Scott (R-SC).

While AAPI senators only account for two percent of the U.S. Senate,^[19] they are responsible for hiring 15.4 percent of the AAPI top staff in the U.S. Senate. Of the AAPI top staff hired as of June 30, 2023, one AAPI top staffer was employed by Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) and another was employed by Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI). Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI) each employed two AAPI top staffers. The remaining seven AAPI top staffers were hired by Senators Tom Carper (D-DE), John Hickenlooper (D-CO), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Thom Tillis (D-NC), and Ron Wyden (D-OR).

THREE BLACK
SENATORS HIRED
HALF OF ALL BLACK
SENIOR STAFF



Black Senators: 3



The rest of the Senate: 97

Black top staff working
for Black Senators: 3

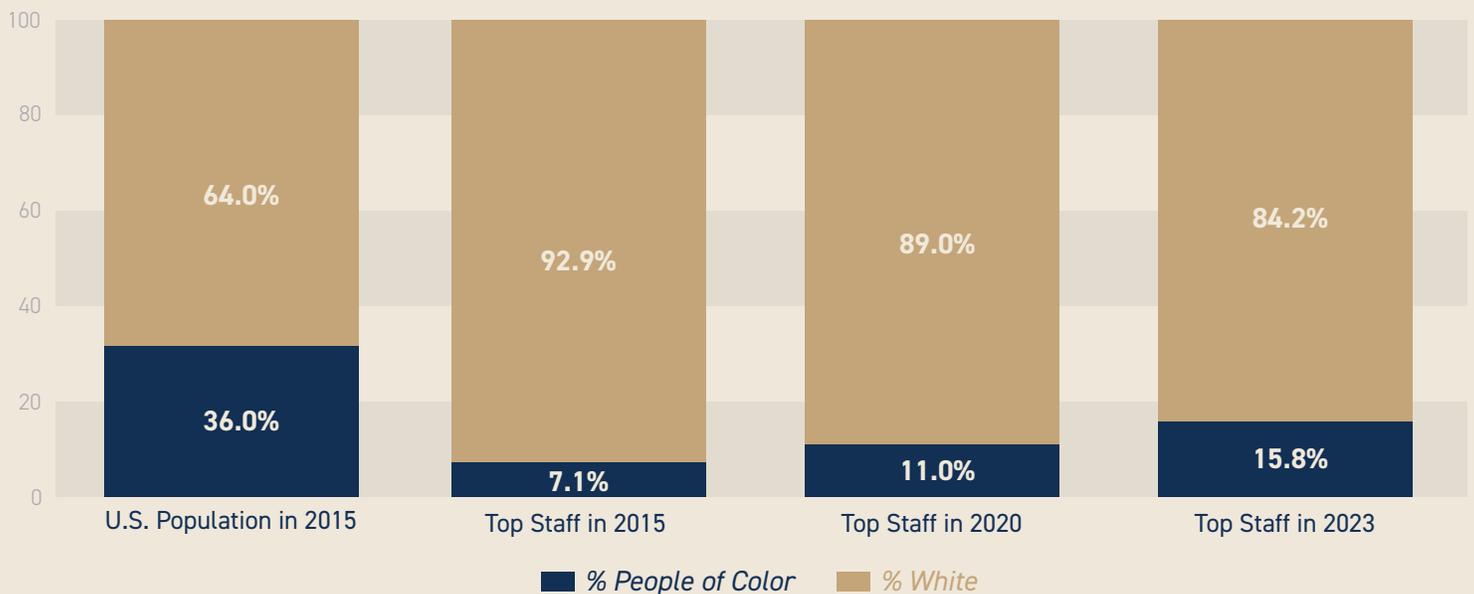
Black top staff working for
the rest of the Senate: 3



CHANGES IN TOP STAFF DIVERSITY OVER TIME

From 2015 to 2023, the percentage of people of color in Senate personal office top staff positions increased from 7.1 percent (21 positions) to 15.8 percent (46 positions).

Racial Diversity Among Top Staff, 2015–2023

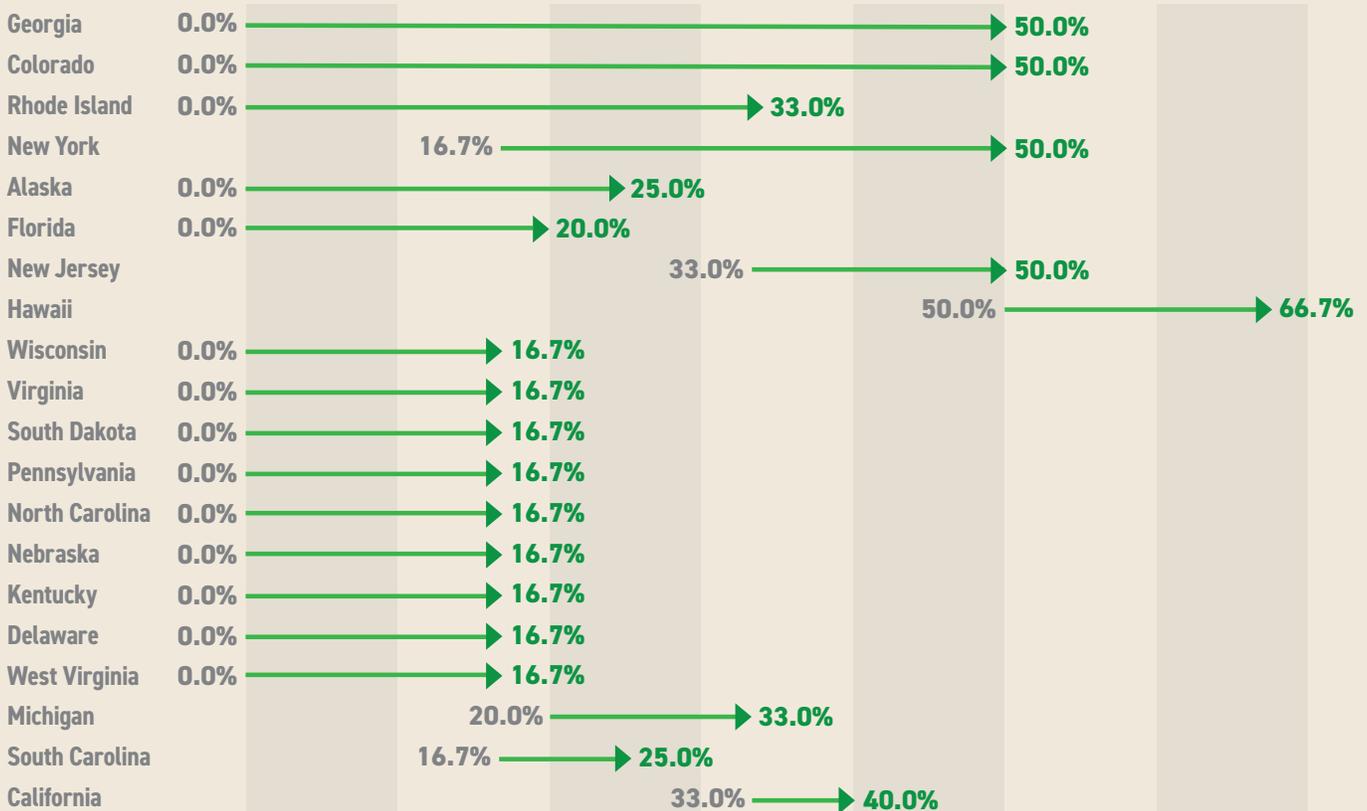


Note: Between 2015 and 2023, the U.S. population increased from 36.0 percent to 41.1 percent people of color. Because of vacancies, the analysis includes 297 positions in 2015, 292 positions in 2020, and 291 positions in 2023.

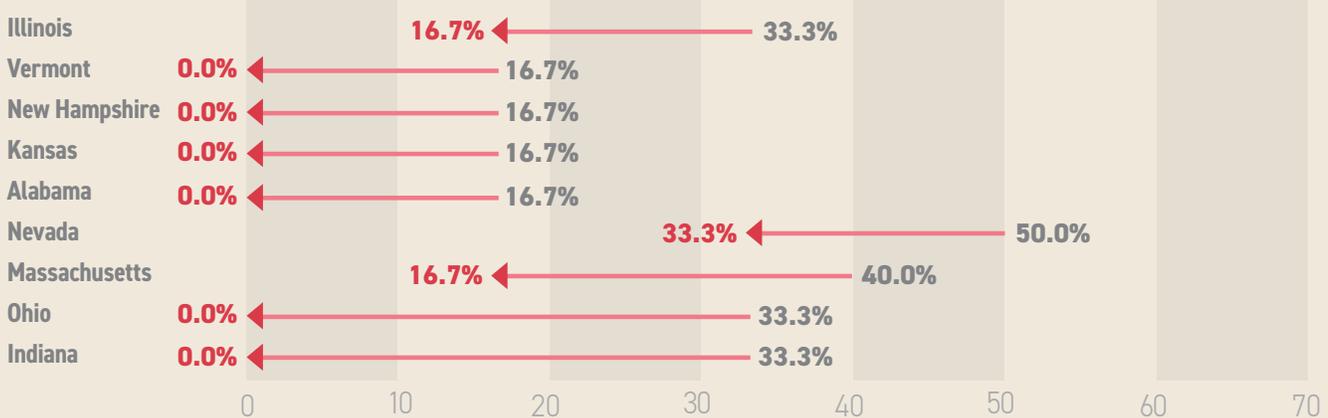
Of the 35 states with at least one Senate personal office top staffer of color in either 2020 or 2023, 57.1 percent experienced an increase in the number of top staff of color from January 2020 to June 2023, 25.7 percent experienced a decrease, and 17.1 percent remained the same. The numbers changed for several reasons — some states had newly elected senators who hired new staff, some top staff of color left their positions and were replaced by white top staff, and some white top staff left their positions and were replaced by top staff of color.

Change in Senate Personal Office Top Staff of Color, 2020–2023 (by state)

INCREASED: GRAY NUMBERS REPRESENT 2020, GREEN NUMBERS REPRESENT 2023



DECREASED: GRAY NUMBERS REPRESENT 2020, RED NUMBERS REPRESENT 2023



Note: The following states with at least one Senate personal office top staffer of color in either 2020 or 2023 with no change were Minnesota (16.7 percent), Mississippi (16.7 percent), New Mexico (50.0 percent), North Dakota (16.7 percent), Oregon (16.7 percent), and Washington (16.7 percent).



EXAMINING RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF TOP STAFF

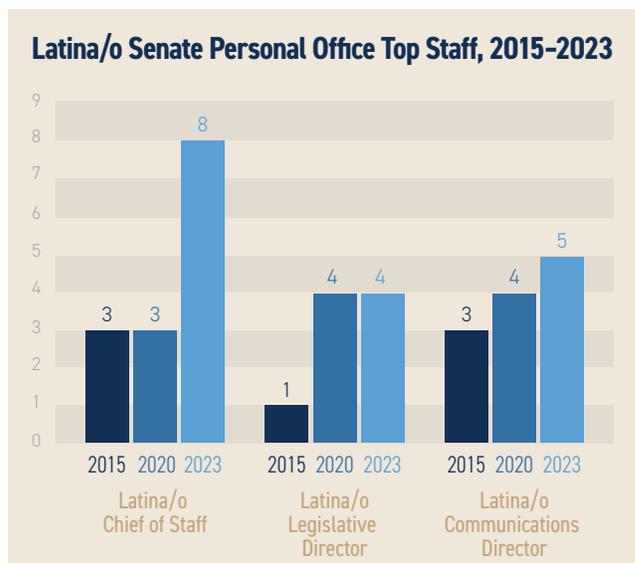
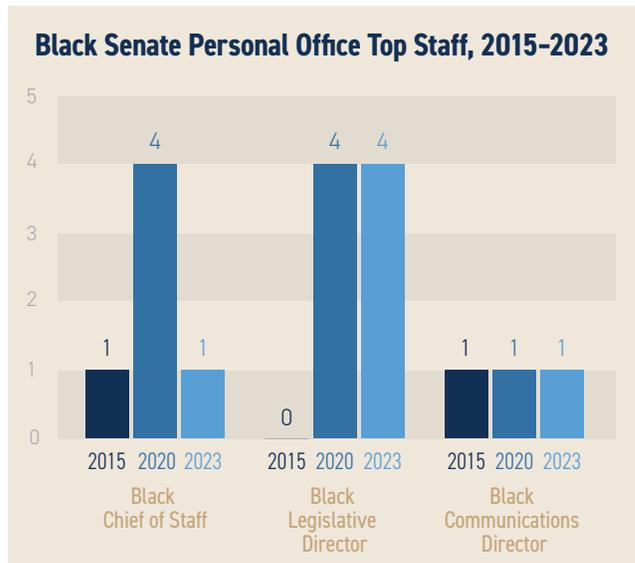
In examining the recruitment and retention of top staff, we observed that African American top staff’s retention and hiring patterns are unique. None of the African American top staff hired as of January 2020 were re-tained as of June 2023. In addition, all six current African American top staffers previously worked for other Senate offices, rather than obtaining these positions through internal promotion within the same office, as all other top staffers included in this report. White, Asian, and Latina/o top staff, in comparison, have at least a portion of their staffers from internal promotion.

Black Top Staff Recruitment and Retention

Overall, from 2015 to 2023, the number of Black Senate personal office top staff increased from two to six. From 2020 to 2023, however, the number of Black Senate personal office top staff decreased from nine to six. All nine Black top staff employed on Capitol Hill in January 2020 left by June 2023.^[20]

Latina/o Top Staff Recruitment and Retention

From 2020 to 2023, Latina/o Senate personal office top staff increased from 3.8 to 5.8 percent (11 to 17). While the number of Latina/o chiefs of staff more than doubled from 2020 to 2023 (from three to eight), the number of Latina/o legislative directors remained the same (four), and the number of Latina/o communications directors increased (four to five). In examining the retention of Latina/o top staff since January 2020, we found that seven Latina/o top staff (63.6 percent) left Capitol Hill, and

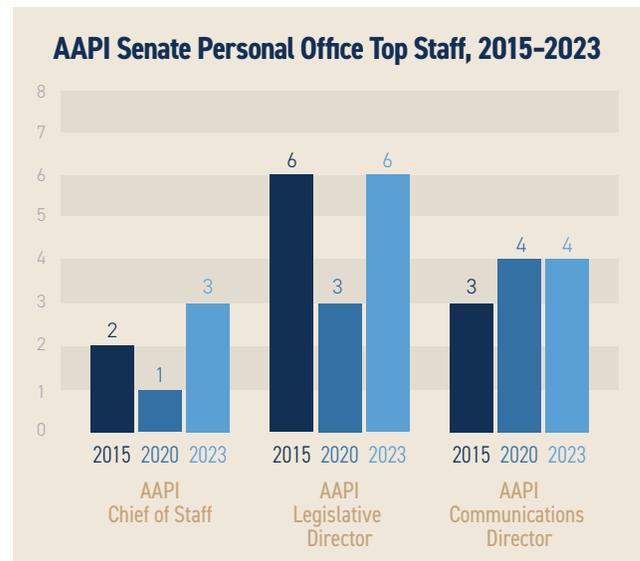


four (36.4 percent) still work for the Senate. Three of the four staffers that remained in the Senate were retained by the same Senate office.

AAPI Top Staff Recruitment and Retention

From 2015 to 2023, the number of AAPI Senate personal office top staffers increased from 11 to 13 positions (or 3.7 percent to 4.5 percent). The number of AAPI chiefs of staff more than doubled from 2020 to 2023 (from one to three), the number of AAPI legislative directors doubled (from three to six), and AAPI communications directors remained the same (four).

Since January 2020, we found that three AAPI top staff left the Senate (37.5 percent) and five (62.5 percent) are still employed as top staff in the same Senate offices.



Native American Top Staff Recruitment and Retention

Senators employed one Native American top staff who accounted for 0.3 percent of Senate personal office top staff in 2015. The number and percentage of Native American top staff remained the same in 2023.^[21]

Biracial Top Staff Recruitment and Retention

From 2020 to 2023, the number of biracial personal office top staffers in the Senate increased from four to six.^[22] In examining the retention and recruitment of biracial top staff since our last report, we found that only one has left Capitol Hill since January 2020. Two biracial top staffers remained employed as top staff by the same Senate office. The other staffer is now employed by a different senator, but in the same top staff role.

MENA Top Staff Recruitment and Retention

Senators employed one MENA top staff who accounted for 0.5 percent of Senate personal office top staff in January 2020. The number of MENA top staff increased to three (or 1.0 percent) in 2023.

White Top Staff Recruitment and Retention

In examining the retention of the 259 white top staff since January 2020, we found that 123 white top staff (47.5 percent) are still working on Capitol Hill,^[23] while 136 white top staff (52.5 percent) left Capitol Hill since January 2020.

In studying the 246 white top staffers hired as of June 2023, 179 (72.8 percent) were retained for at least two years in the offices that they currently work in, 20 (8.1 percent) came from different Senate offices, and 45 (18.3 percent) were hired from outside the Senate. Of the white top staffers who were retained, 88 (49.2 percent) were in the same office and position as of January 2020, and 91 (50.8 percent) were internally promoted. Of the white staffers who came from outside the Senate, 35 had prior Capitol Hill experience (77.8 percent), and 10 were new to the Hill (22.2 percent).

NEXT STEPS

Since the Joint Center's 2015 report, *Racial Diversity Among Top Senate Staff*, Congress has taken essential steps to improve transparency and staff diversity. For the past several years, for example, Senate Democrats led both chambers by releasing racial/ethnic data about the staff in Democratic senators' personal and committee offices. In future reports, Senate Democrats should disclose data on diversity by position, as this would reveal which senators' staffs are diverse in critical mid-level positions that may serve as pipelines to top positions.

Unfortunately, Senate Republicans have yet to publicly release any data on the diversity of their staffs, despite representing states with large populations of color, such as Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Texas. Senate Republicans should immediately disclose this data and annually report it.

Both Senate Republicans and Democrats should work together and follow the lead of the U.S. House of Representatives by establishing an Office of Diversity and Inclusion that develops a diversity plan that helps Senate offices in recruiting, hiring, training, promoting, and retaining a diverse Senate staff. In developing this plan and bipartisan office, senators should do so with the recent Supreme Court decision that rejected race-conscious admissions at Harvard and University of North Carolina in mind,^[24] as this decision could also complicate diversity efforts elsewhere like in the hiring process.^[25]

RECOGNITION OF PERSONAL OFFICES WITH DIVERSE TOP STAFF

We applaud the Washington, DC personal offices of the following U.S. senators who had at least one person of color in a top staff position as of June 30, 2023.

Personal Offices with at Least One Staffer of Color

Senator Michael Bennet (D-CO)
Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ)*
Senator Thomas Carper (D-DE)
Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL)
Senator John Fetterman (D-PA)
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)
Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM)*
Senator John Hickenlooper (D-CO)*
Senator Mazie Hirono (D-HI)
Senator John Hoeven (R-ND)
Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS)
Senator Ron Johnson (R-WI)
Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN)
Senator Ben Ray Luján (D-NM)
Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV)
Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY)
Senator Bob Menendez (D-NJ)
Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

Senator Patty Murray (D-WA)
Senator Jon Ossoff (D-GA)
Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA)*
Senator Pete Ricketts (R-NE)
Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV)*
Senator Mike Rounds (R-SD)
Senator Mark Rubio (R-FL)
Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI)*
Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY)*
Senator Tim Scott (R-SC)
Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)*
Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC)
Senator Mark Warner (D-VA)
Senator Raphael Warnock (D-GA)*
Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)*
Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR)

*Senate personal offices with more than one top staff of color.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Dr. LaShonda Brenson is the senior researcher at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. Prior to her current role, she led the Joint Center’s Hill Diversity research as the senior fellow of diversity and inclusion at the Joint Center. Dr. Brenson earned her Bachelor’s Degree in Mathematics and Political Science from the University of Rochester, and her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Michigan–Ann Arbor. Using qualitative interviews with congressional staffers and quantitative methods, her dissertation research provides evidence that the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Hispanic Caucus, as institutions, matter. One way she demonstrates the added value of the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressional Hispanic Caucus is by illustrating that when caucus members serve as caucus leaders, they introduce more bills because of their additional staff capacity.



Kimberly Victor is the research associate for the Hill Diversity Program at the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. She previously served as the Joint Center’s research analyst. She earned a Bachelor’s degree in Human Development with minors in Inequality Studies and Crime, Prisons, Education, and Justice from Cornell University. At Cornell, she successfully defended her senior honors thesis on the intersection between race and purpose, arguing that the connection between one’s sense of purpose and racial identity has important implications on one’s well-being, particularly for communities of color. During her tenure at Cornell, she worked as the Poetry Program Coordinator for Prisoner Express, helping the organization provide opportunities for creative self-expression through art and poetry to hundreds of incarcerated individuals across the U.S.

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- [1] [United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts.”](#)
- [2] Katherine Schaeffer, [“U.S. Congress continues to grow in racial, ethnic diversity.”](#) Pew Research Center, January 9, 2023.
- [3] U.S. senators of color include Cory Booker (D-NJ), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Ted Cruz (R-TX), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Markwayne Mullin (R-OK), Alex Padilla (D-CA), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Tim Scott (R-SC), and Raphael Warnock (D-GA). See U.S. Senate, [“Ethnic Diversity in the Senate.”](#) Please note that this does not include the recent appointment of Senator Laphonza Butler (D-CA), as she was appointed as senator after June 23, 2023.
- [4] One notable exception is the [Senate Democratic Diversity Initiative](#), which has published an annual staff diversity survey among U.S. Senate Democratic offices since 2017. To date, Senate Republicans office have not released demographic data on their staffs.
- [5] U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, [“EEO Data Collection.”](#)
- [6] The terms African American and Black are used interchangeably throughout the report. Both terms are used to define the same group and are not meant to make any cultural differentiation.
- [7] Our previous Senate report published in 2015 did not include Middle Eastern/North African and biracial/multiracial racial and ethnic categories.
- [8] Thirteen of the 73 deputy chiefs of staff are already included in our top staff calculations because the relevant staffers also serve as the legislative director or communications director in their respective offices.
- [9] LaShonda Brenson, “Racial Diversity Among U.S. Senate State Directors,” Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, April 2, 2022.
- [10] The authors calculate this figure using U.S. Census data and original data collection. See [United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts”](#) and Maryam Asi and Daniel Beaulieu, [“Arab Households in the United States: 2006-2010.”](#) United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey Briefs, May 2013.
- [11] [“Demographic profiles of Republican and Democratic voters.”](#) Pew Research Center, July 12, 2023. Due to rounding, some percentages may add up to less than 100 percent.
- [12] [“Demographic Profiles of Republican and Democratic Voters.”](#)
- [13] There were only five senior staff positions in California and Florida because of position vacancies.
- [14] There were only four senior staff positions in South Carolina because of position vacancies.
- [15] There were only five senior staff positions in California and Florida because of position vacancies.
- [16] Katherine Schaeffer, [“U.S. Congress Continues to Grow in Racial, Ethnic Diversity.”](#) Pew Research Center, January 9, 2023.
- [17] [“African American Senators.”](#) U.S. Senate.
- [18] [“Hispanic American Senators.”](#) U.S. Senate.
- [19] [“Asian American Senators.”](#) U.S. Senate.
- [20] Three of nine Black staffers (33.3 percent) now work other government jobs, two (or 22.2 percent) of these staffers were employed by senators that lost an election, or ran for another office, three Black staffers left for private sector jobs, and one Black staffer retired after over several decades of service.
- [21] Since our previous report did not include information on Biracial or Middle Eastern/North African staffers, we cannot draw any definitive conclusions about how the number of these staffers has changed since 2015.
- [22] The authors learned that one staffer in 2023 who has been in the same Senate office since January identifies as biracial, but they were previously labeled as white. We have updated our 2020 biracial top staffers accordingly.
- [23] Many of these staffers still work on the Senate side of the chamber and a handful of staffers moved to the U.S. House of Representatives.
- [24] Adam Liptak, [“Supreme Court Rejects Affirmative Action Program at Harvard and U.N.C.”](#) The New York Times, June 29, 2023.
- [25] Liptak, [“Supreme Court Rejects Affirmative Action Program at Harvard and U.N.C.”](#)



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