



# Kansas City Area Board Diversity Research



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# Executive Summary

The 2021 BoardSource report *Leading with Intent: Reviewing the Current State of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion on Nonprofit Boards* includes findings at the national level. However, to date, there has been limited empirical data regarding the current state of diversity among nonprofit boards in the Greater Kansas City region.

Using a mixed methods survey design, this study assessed the level of diversity among nonprofit boards in the Greater Kansas City region to create a shared understanding of how the Greater Kansas City metro is aligned with the national research available, as well as to establish a baseline understanding of board diversity in the Kansas City region that can be referenced in the future.



# Methodology

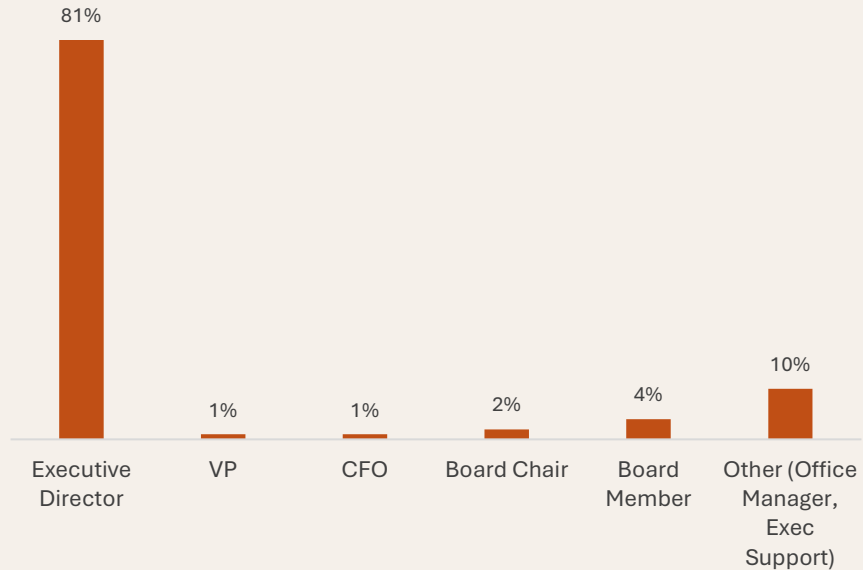
The study was a mixed methods design with a survey distributed to a sample of Kansas City area board members and executive leadership, and a series of in-depth interviews with individuals from the same sample.

The survey collected insights regarding organizations' focus on diversification of their boards, representation of a variety of community voices and of those the organizations serve, levels of commitment the organization has regarding diversity and representation, and the impact boards' current level of diversity has on strategic organizational work.

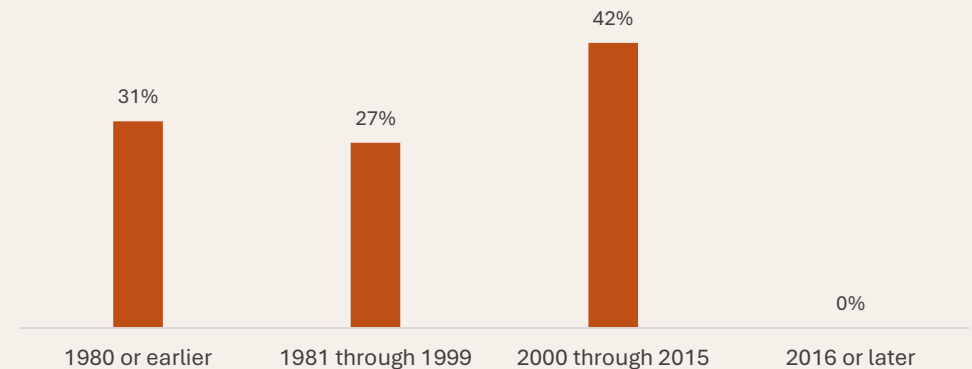
Respondents were asked to take part in one-on-one interviews with a researcher to explore the experiences of these topical areas. Deeper explanation was possible in an interview format on the meaning of "diversity" for a board, the challenges organizations face in attracting diverse voices to their boards, and the impact it may or may not have as experienced by organizational leadership.

# Study Overview

Role of Respondent

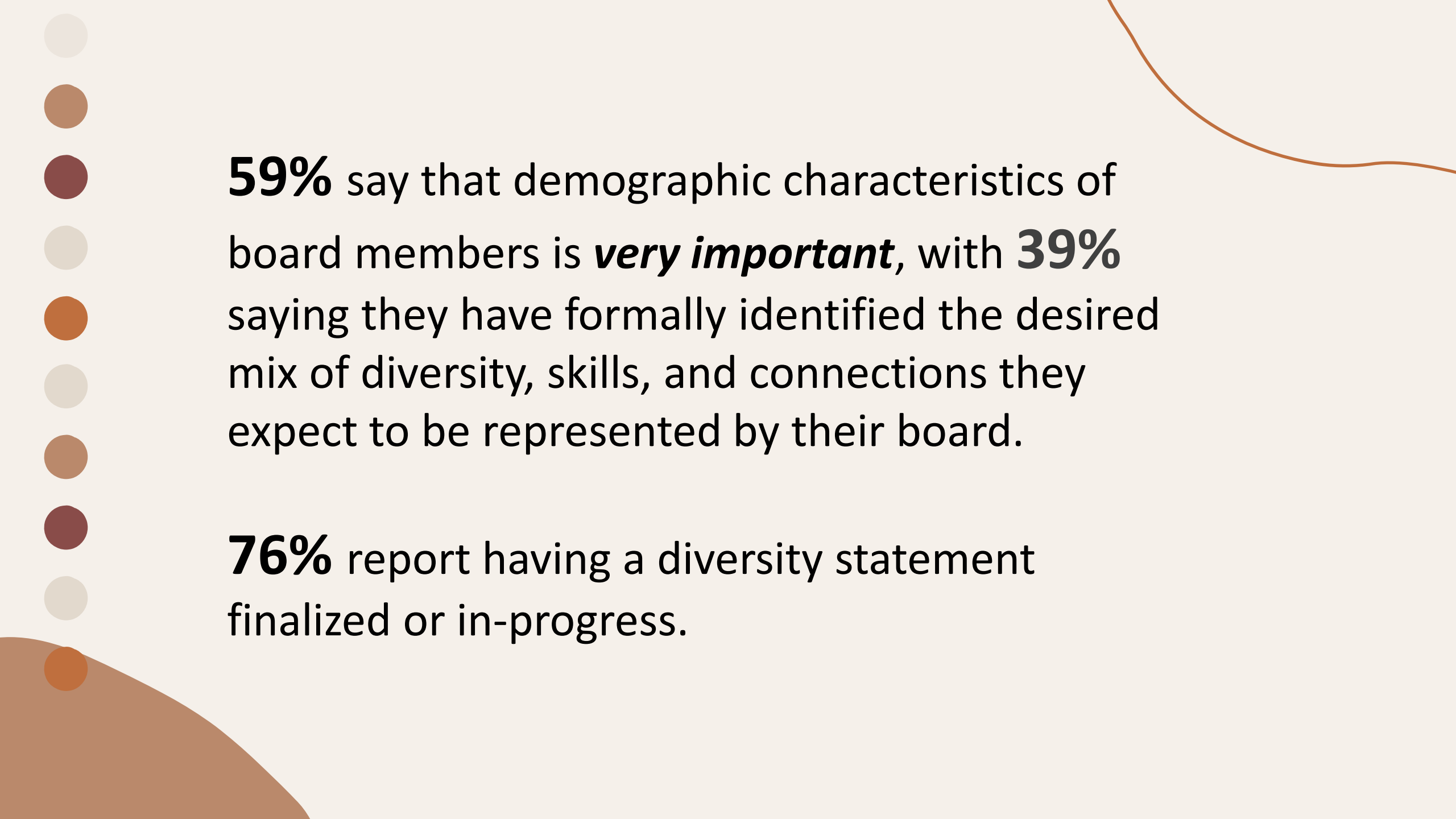


Year Organization Formed



- Participating organizations were all at least nine years old.
- Majority of participants providing organizational and board information were Executive Directors or administrative staff.
- Half of respondents have been in their roles 5 years or less.

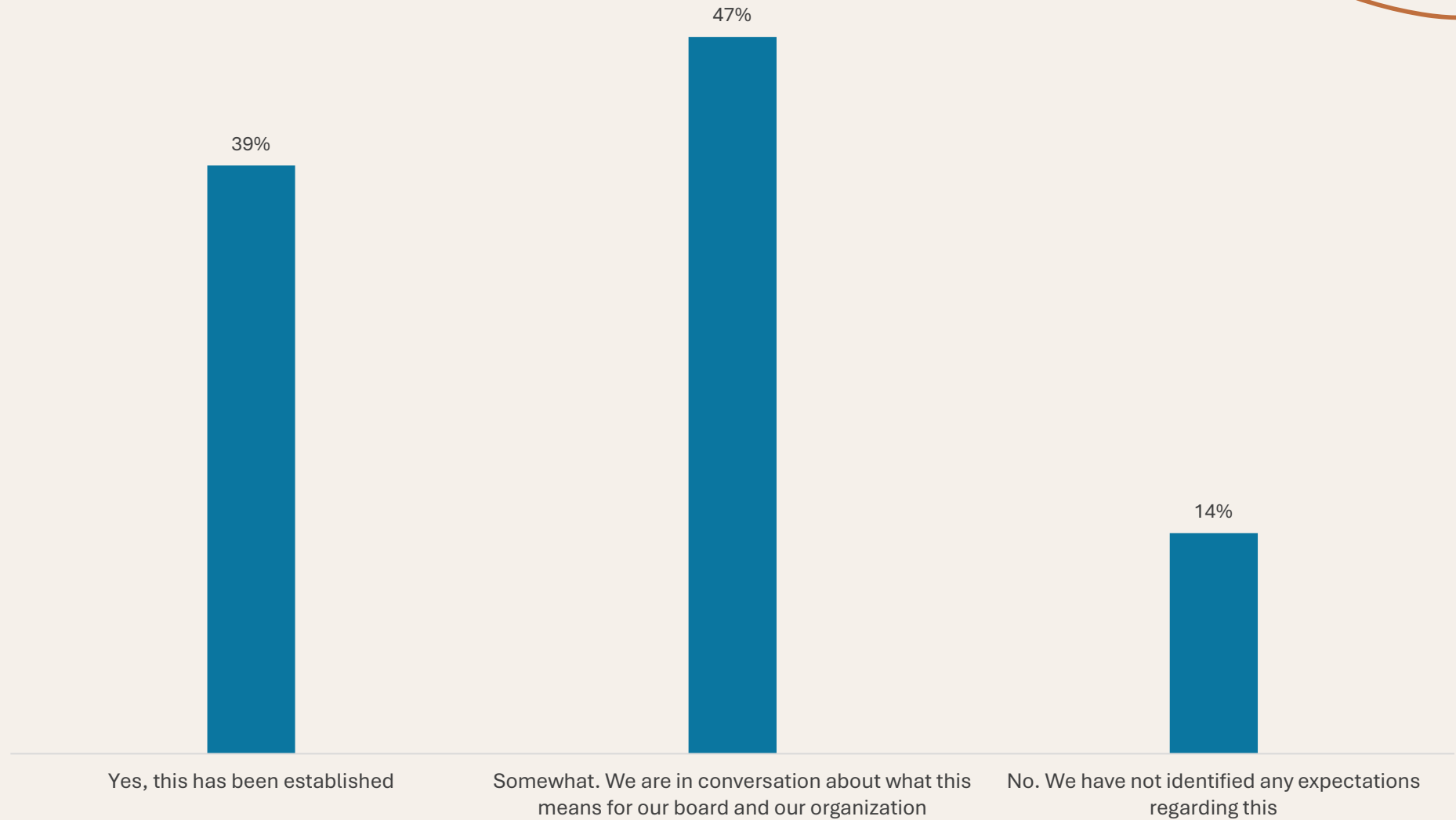
- On average, boards are approximately 72% White and 28% Persons of Color
- 47% of board members are within the ages of 45-64
- Nearly 95% of organizations have only Cisgender male and/or Cisgender female board members.
- 45% of responding organizations have board members who identify as LGBTQIA+.



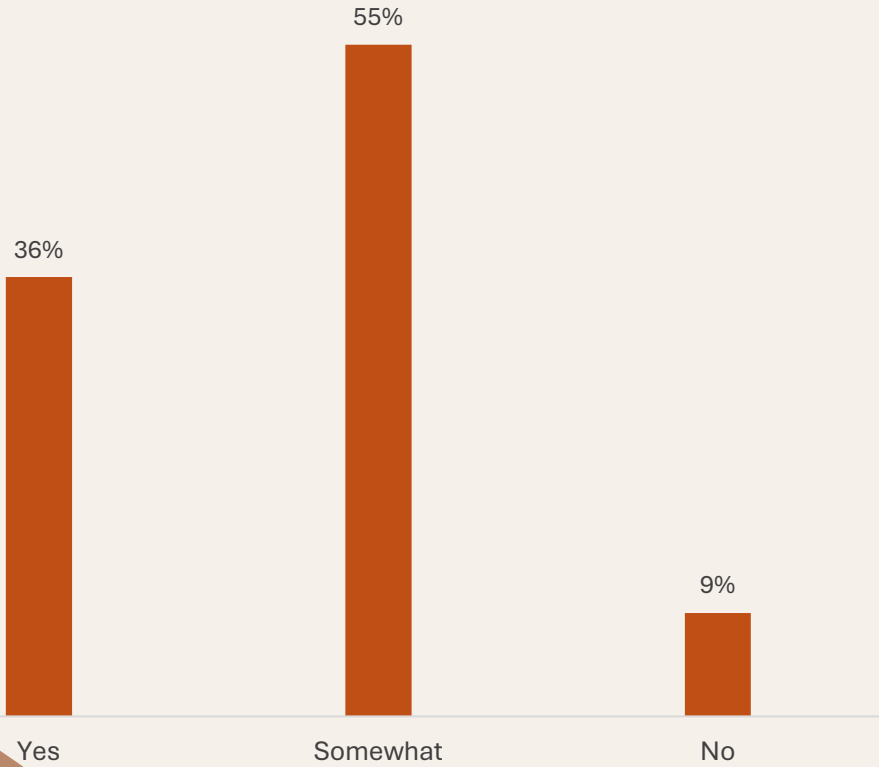
**59%** say that demographic characteristics of board members is *very important*, with **39%** saying they have formally identified the desired mix of diversity, skills, and connections they expect to be represented by their board.

**76%** report having a diversity statement finalized or in-progress.

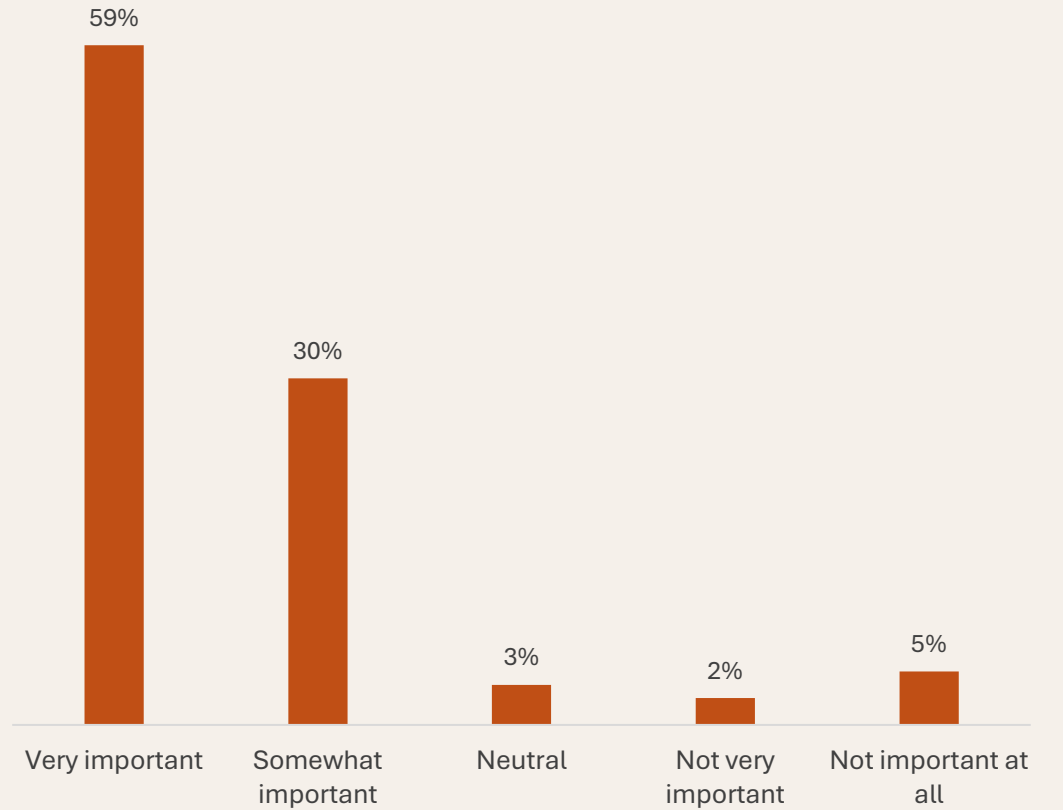
**Has your organization formally identified the desired mix of diversity, skills, and connections you expect to be represented on your board?**



**Do the members of your board generally represent the demographics of the population served by your organization?**

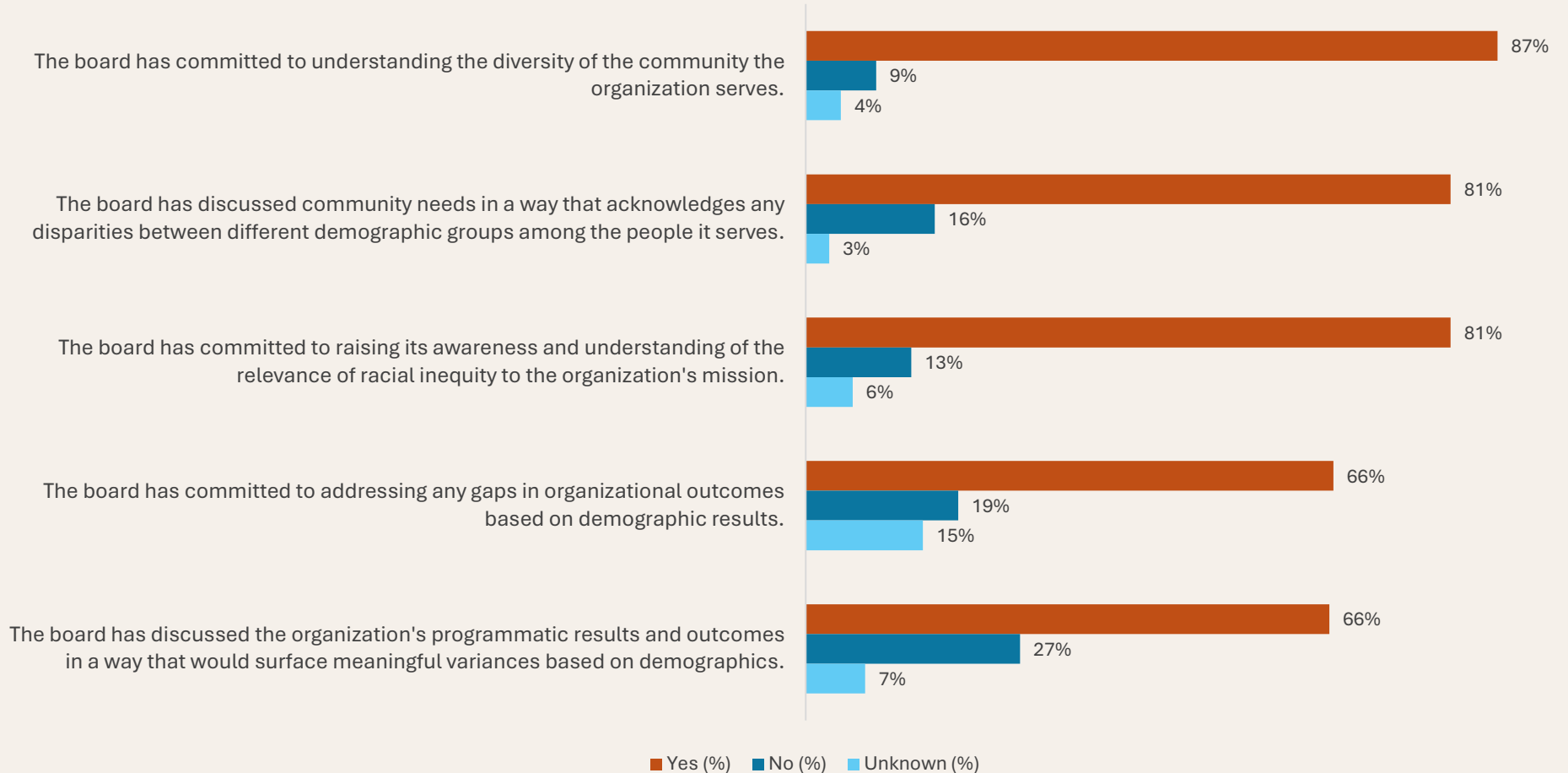


**How would you rate the importance the board applies to demographic characteristics when recruiting board members?**



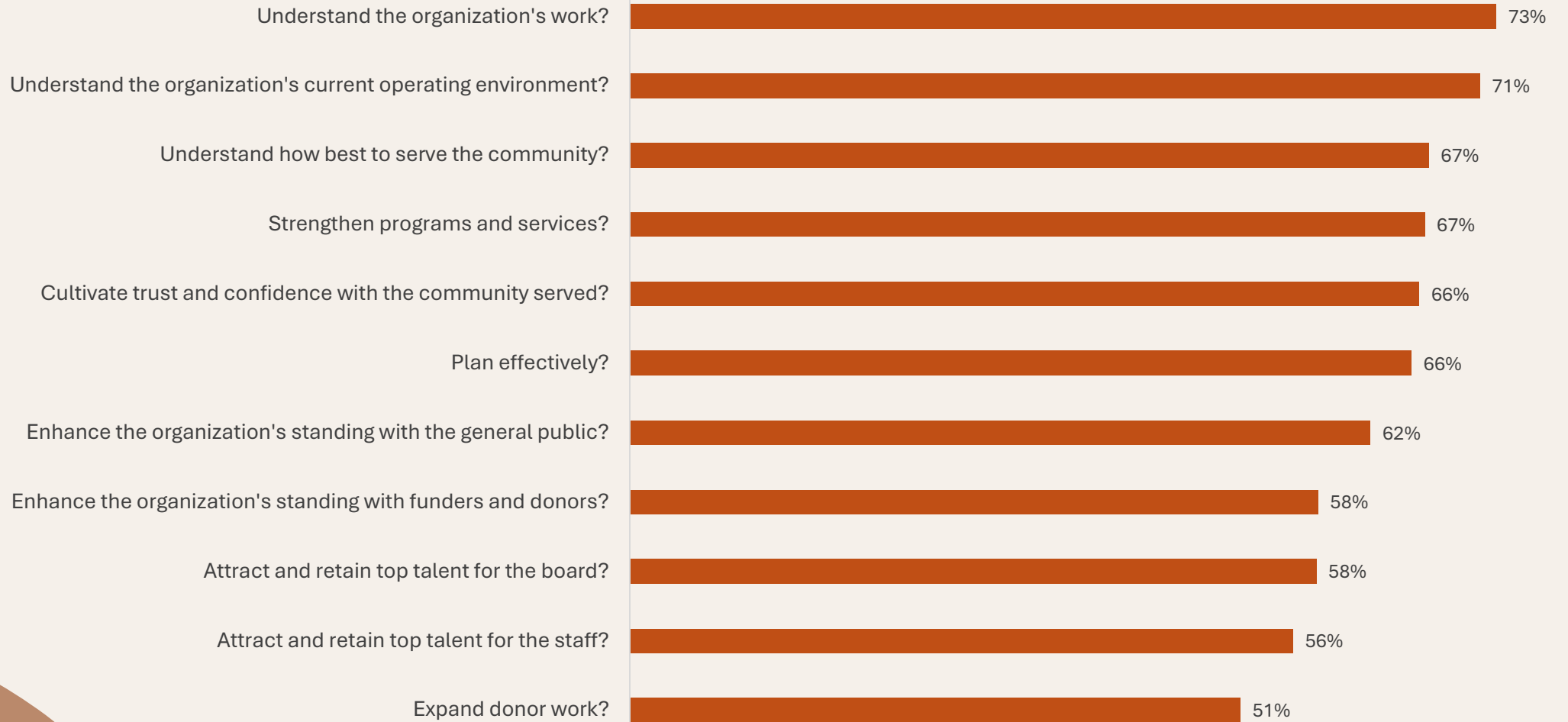
# Research Insights

Participating organizations indicate they are committed to and actively engaging in conversations about board diversity and representation.





## How does the board's current level of diversity impact the organization's ability to...



# Current State & Opportunities

“Encourage people to consider functional diversity. You want a diverse board not because you want a diverse board but because the guidance it brings actually helps move the organization forward.”

-Current Executive Director

## Leaderships' Views on Current State of Board Diversity

Established leadership indicate relative ease in finding and recruiting a variety of perspectives and backgrounds to their boards, while admitting this would be *very* challenging for newer, less professionally established leadership and boards.

Organizations that have prioritized board diversity and a range of experiences indicate positive growth in the organization's direction.

Executive Directors express a board's need to consider diversity, experiences, skill sets, and representation by various definitions depending on the organization's needs, and still trying to recruit members that are committed to the work of the organization.

Some Executive Directors indicate a challenge in diversity requirements for certain funding opportunities.

## Advice from Leadership Regarding Diverse Boards

Seek out board members who want to represent and serve, not come from a perspective of saving.

Focus on board members who can functionally help the board and the organization. Think about 'how can this individual help our organization'.

Know your personal mission, the organization's mission, and what drives a connection to that mission and then listen for that when meeting potential board members.

Think about what it means to reflect the community the organization serves and also how best to help the work of the organization.

Incorporate a variety of voices and perspectives to collaborate with the board: partnering groups to the board, advisory boards, volunteers, etc.



# Limitations and Future Research

Participation in this study was notably low. The survey totaled 104 responses yielding non-significant findings. Interview participation was also low with 5 interviewees, however across the interviews several thematic findings reached saturation across participants' experiences. There were areas of difference though that would require further interviews to achieve saturation and reliability in the findings. It is hypothesized that this could be due to several factors including the bias to participating in an interview on this topic, the demographics of the sample being similar due to the skewed demographics of leadership in Kansas City area boards and leadership, and the timeframe in which the study was conducted. All these factors could be explored in further research to continue to effort of growing knowledge about Kansas City's nonprofit boards.

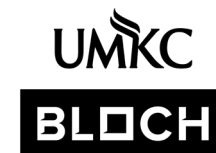


# About the Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership

The Midwest Center for Nonprofit Leadership (MCNL) catalyzes nonprofit and community organizations' success through education, engagement, research, and service.

As a nonprofit academic center of the Henry W. Bloch School of Management at the University of Missouri – Kansas City (UMKC), the Center works in partnership with community and nonprofit leaders to strengthen Kansas City and other communities throughout Missouri, Kansas, and the Midwest.

The team combines academic rigor with practical application to propel community leaders and organizations of all sizes and missions forward.



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