NEOGOV



2023 REPORT

DIVERSITY

IN PUBLIC SECTOR RECRUITING

From Data to Strategy

DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE IS MORE THAN AN IDEAL — **IT'S A PROVEN ADVANTAGE.**

A diverse workforce attracts top talent, serves communities more effectively, and encourages innovation and better decision-making. But, without insight into recruitment drop-offs, charting a path to equal representation can be challenging.

NEOGOV's 2023 Diversity Report offers a **comprehensive view of public sector recruitment related to race, ethnicity, and gender.** More than data, it's a toolkit designed to drive equitable hiring practices.



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OVERVIEW

Every year, Insight – our applicant tracking system – manages millions of recruitments for local and state positions within government and education. **Our 2023 report dives deep into the data from 2020 to 2022, analyzing over 16.8 million applicants by race, ethnicity, and gender and 16.4 million by salary bracket.**

This report traces the journey of public sector candidates from applicant to hire. **We've segmented the recruitment process into three critical phases:**

1. **Applications**
2. **Screening and Eligibility**
3. **Referred to Hired**

In each section, uncover powerful insights and actionable strategies to enhance diverse recruitment outcomes for your agency

KEY **DATA DISCOVERIES**

- Practices that support diverse hiring help you fill roles. Tools like PII blinding can help eliminate biases and lead to increased interviews and hires.
- Black candidates over-index in public sector applications, while White candidates under-index.
- Qualified White candidates are more likely to be hired than qualified Black candidates across all analyzed salary brackets.
- The referred-to-hired rate of qualified Black candidates jumps significantly when blinding PII.

PHASE 1:
APPLICANT REPRESENTATION

Inclusive recruitment strategies benefit your organization in many ways. You reach a broader talent pool of unique skills, perspectives, and experiences. You also build a stronger employer brand that helps you stand out to top talent.

Let's discover how racial and ethnic diversity in the public sector measures up.

APPLICANTS BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

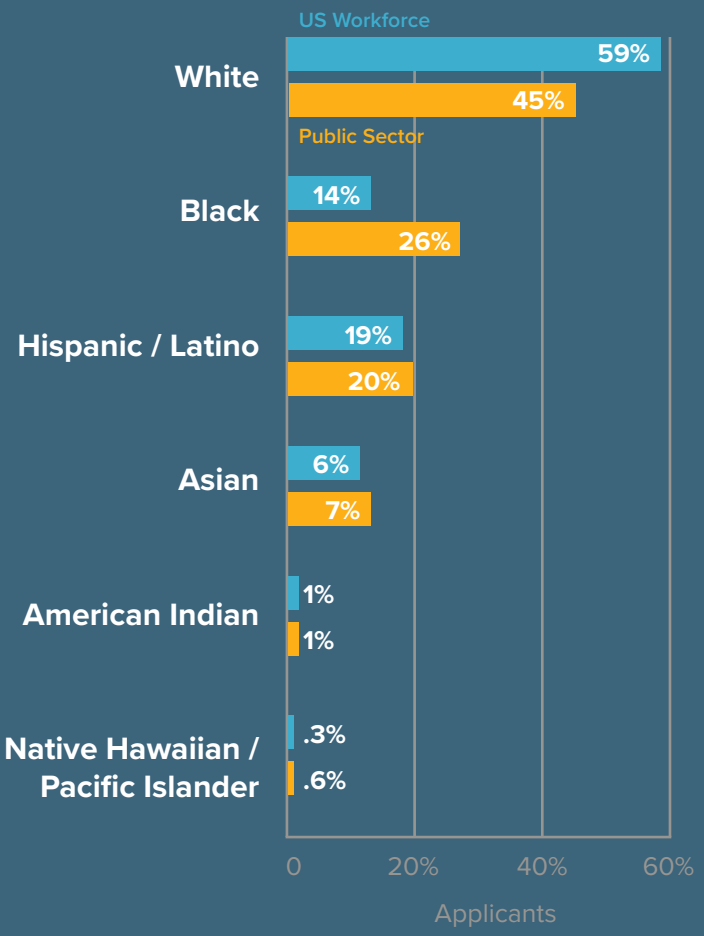
To get a clear picture of racial and ethnic representation, we compared public sector applicants with U.S. workforce census data. Most groups were represented equally, with two notable exceptions.

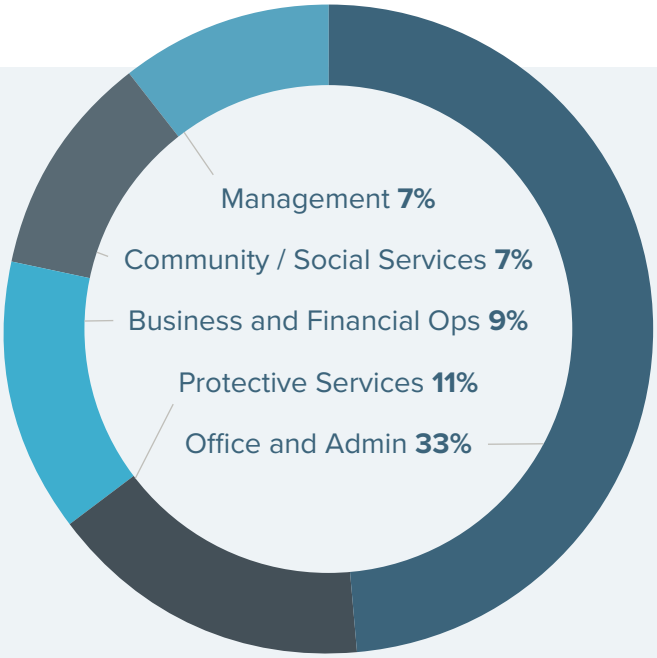
Black candidates account for 26% of public sector applications, nearly twice their census representation of 14%. White candidates account for 45% of public sector applications, significantly lower than their census representation of 59%.

Figure 1

Applicant Representation: US Workforce vs Public Sector, 2020 - 2022

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight





What are the most popular public sector jobs?

The following five job categories collectively represent almost 67% of all job applications, highlighting key areas of interest and demand in the public sector.

APPLICANTS BY **JOB CATEGORIES**

Black job seekers apply to public sector jobs proportionately higher than White job seekers. But how are applicants represented across job categories? The differences may surprise you. But more importantly, they show you where to target your recruitment efforts.

Each group has job categories they're naturally interested in and most likely to apply for. But large differences can also signify areas where minority candidates aren't being reached.

Black applicants represent 35% of Community and Social Service applications, but only 17% of Life, Physical, and Social Science applications. Hispanic or Latino applicants represent 27% of Installation, Maintenance, and Repair applications, but only 15% of Management applications.

Figure 2

Heat Map: Public Sector Applicant Representation Across Job Categories

By U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Standard Classification

Job Type	White	Black	Hispanic/ Latino	Asian	American Indian	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
Building & Grounds Cleaning	46%	26%	21%	3%	1.5%	1.5%
Business & Financial Operations	45%	27%	17%	9%	1%	.5%
Community & Social Service	38%	35%	20%	5%	1.1%	.4%
Computer & Mathematics	44%	22%	16%	15%	.9%	.4%
Construction & Extraction	48%	22%	23%	3%	1.3%	.8%
Educational Instruction	52%	22%	15%	7%	1%	.4%
Healthcare Practitioners	41%	18%	18%	20%	.8%	.8%
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	44%	21%	27%	4%	1.3%	.6%
Legal	53%	19%	19%	5%	1.2%	.4%
Life, Physical, & Social Science	57%	17%	16%	8%	1%	.5%
Management	48%	27%	15%	7%	1%	.4%
Office & Administrative Support	42%	29%	21%	6%	1.1%	.5%
Personal Care & Service	44%	30%	17%	4%	1.1%	.5%
Protective Service	45%	23%	25%	4%	1.1%	1%
Transportation & Material Moving	38%	32%	23%	4%	1.4%	1%

Highest for Group

Lowest for Group



KEY **TAKEAWAYS**

Diversity is well-represented when looking at public sector applicants as a whole. But when you narrow the focus, large gaps exist in many job categories. The following strategies can improve applicant outreach and contribute to more equal representation.

Target Your Outreach

You might already be casting a wide applicant net, but this strategy narrows the focus. Getting specific about your sourcing strategy helps you reach underrepresented groups.

Let's use the example of wanting more Black applicants for Life, Physical, and Social Science jobs. Organizations like Black Women in Science and Engineering, the NOBCChE (National Organization for the Professional Advancement of Black Chemists and Chemical Engineers), or NABGG (National Association of Black Geoscientists) could all serve as resources for potential applicants. You might also consider recruitment trips to traditionally Black Colleges and Universities, or reaching out to social media groups.

Comparable organizations and networks exist for other diverse groups, which you can use to broaden your recruitment outreach. Knowing who to target is the first step, and then you can determine the best ways to reach them.

Analyze Job Descriptions

If you're having trouble reaching applicants for specific jobs, it can be helpful to revisit your job descriptions. Each one is an opportunity to showcase an evolved workplace.

To craft effective job descriptions, get input and feedback from diverse voices. This helps avoid any exclusionary language. And if your company champions diversity, convey those values. By being inclusive from the start, you show that everyone's voice matters in your workplace.



PHASE 2:
SCREENING & ELIGIBILITY

Government hiring managers grapple with a dilemma: upholding standards without sidelining capable candidates. Equality in screening can break that cycle and allow all talented individuals to shine. Let's investigate the representation of qualified applicants.

"Qualified" is defined in our analysis as applicants who meet the minimum job qualifications.

QUALIFIED BY **RACE AND ETHNICITY**

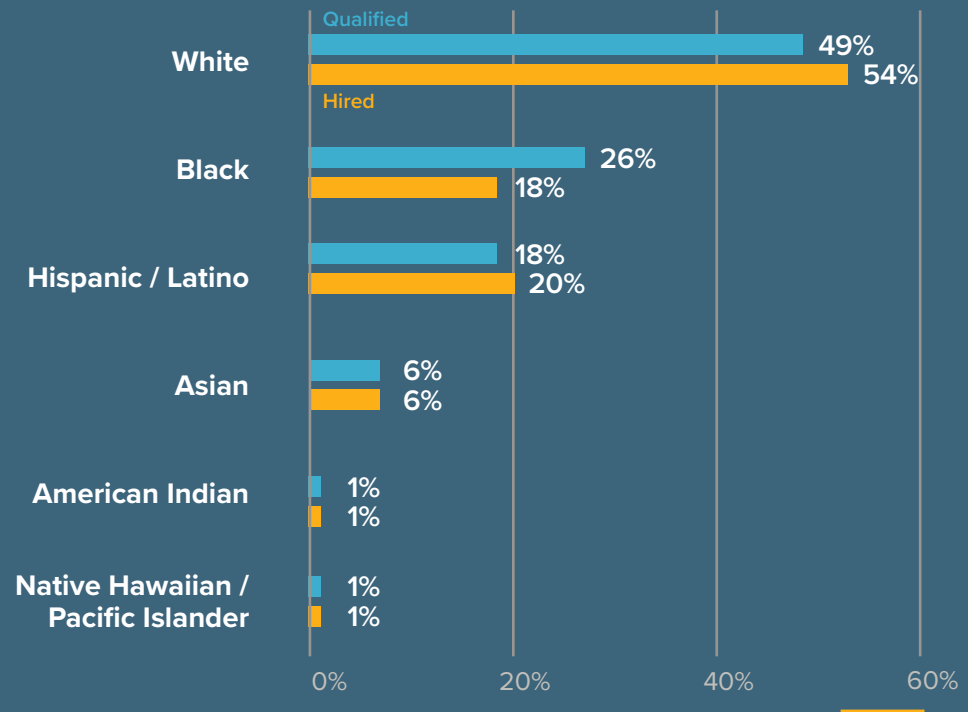
Black candidates are the only racial and ethnic group to over-index in qualified applicants but under-index in hires.

- **Black candidates represent 26% of all qualified applicants, but only 18% of hires.**
- **White candidates represent 49% of all qualified applicants, but 54% of hires.**

Figure 3

Public Sector Workforce Broken Down by Qualified Applicants

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight, 2020 - 2022



QUALIFIED BY **JOB CATEGORIES**

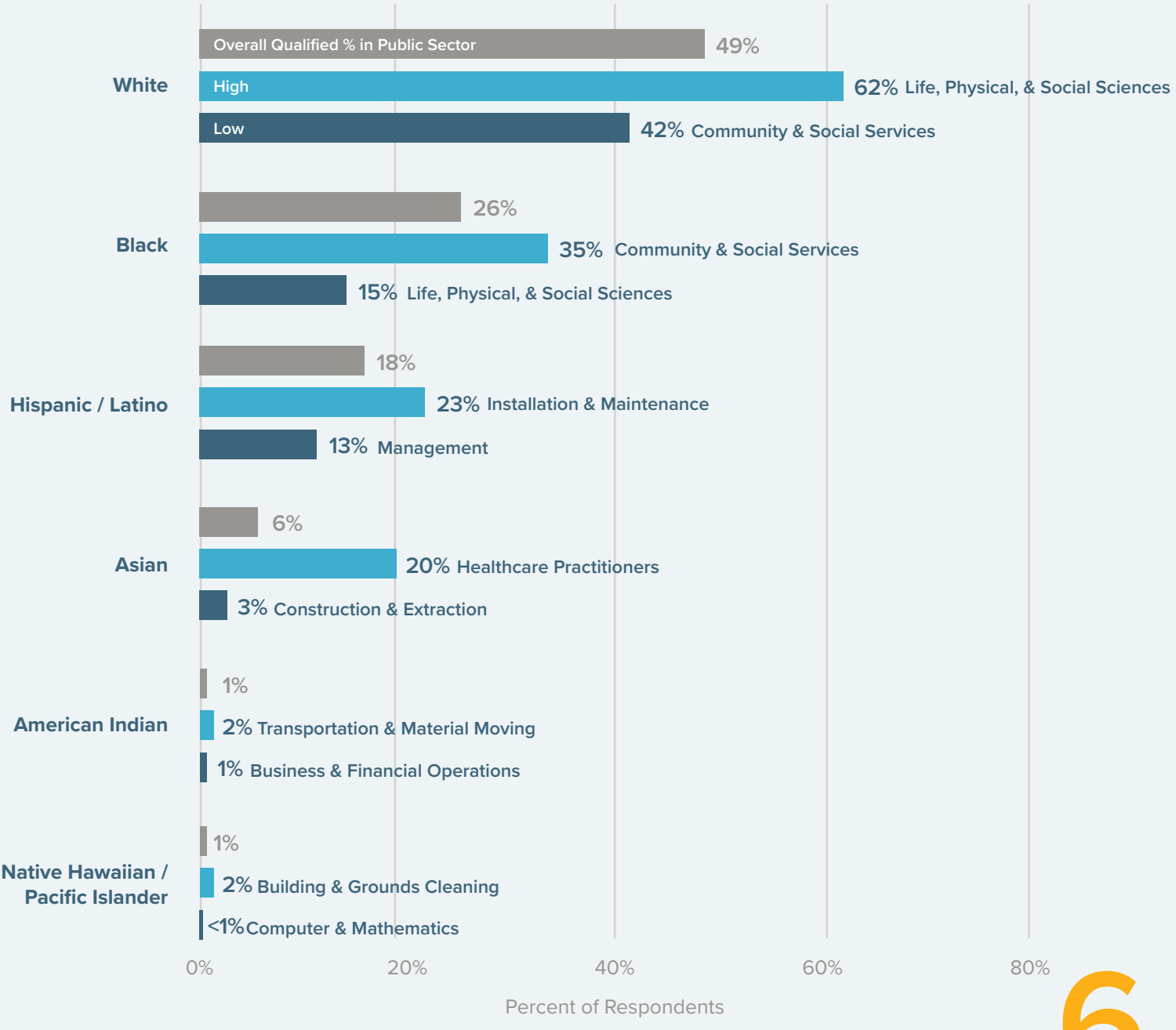
Looking at qualified candidates in job categories tells us two things: what jobs applicants are interested in and where some groups might face barriers due to minimum qualifications.

The following public sector job categories highlight where specific groups have notably high or low numbers of qualified applicants. **By revisiting minimum qualifications, for example, you may be able to make Management occupations more equitable for Hispanic or Latino candidates.**

Figure 4

Job Categories by Qualified Representation, with Higher and Lower Job Categories by Race

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight, 2020 - 2022



QUALIFIED BY **SALARY RANGES**

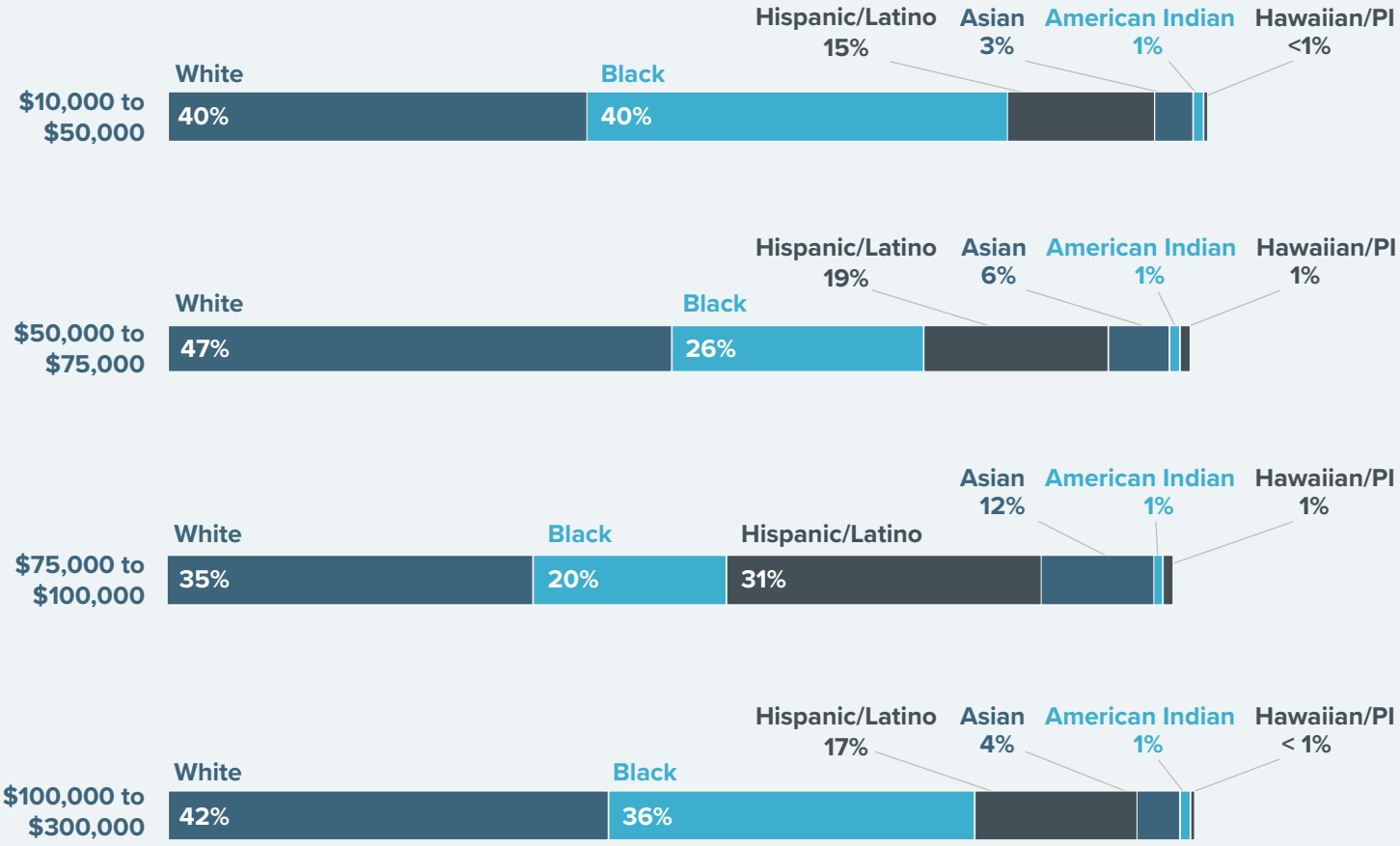
How are qualified candidates represented across salary ranges? To get a clearer picture, we examined Community and Social Services jobs and Office and Admin jobs.

- **Qualified Black candidates are represented most in the highest and lowest salary ranges for Community and Social Service jobs.**
- **Hispanic or Latino and Asian candidates are represented most in the $75,000 to $100,000 range for Community and Social Service jobs.**

Figure 5

% Qualified Candidates Represented by Salary Bracket: Community & Social Services Occupations

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight, 2020 - 2022



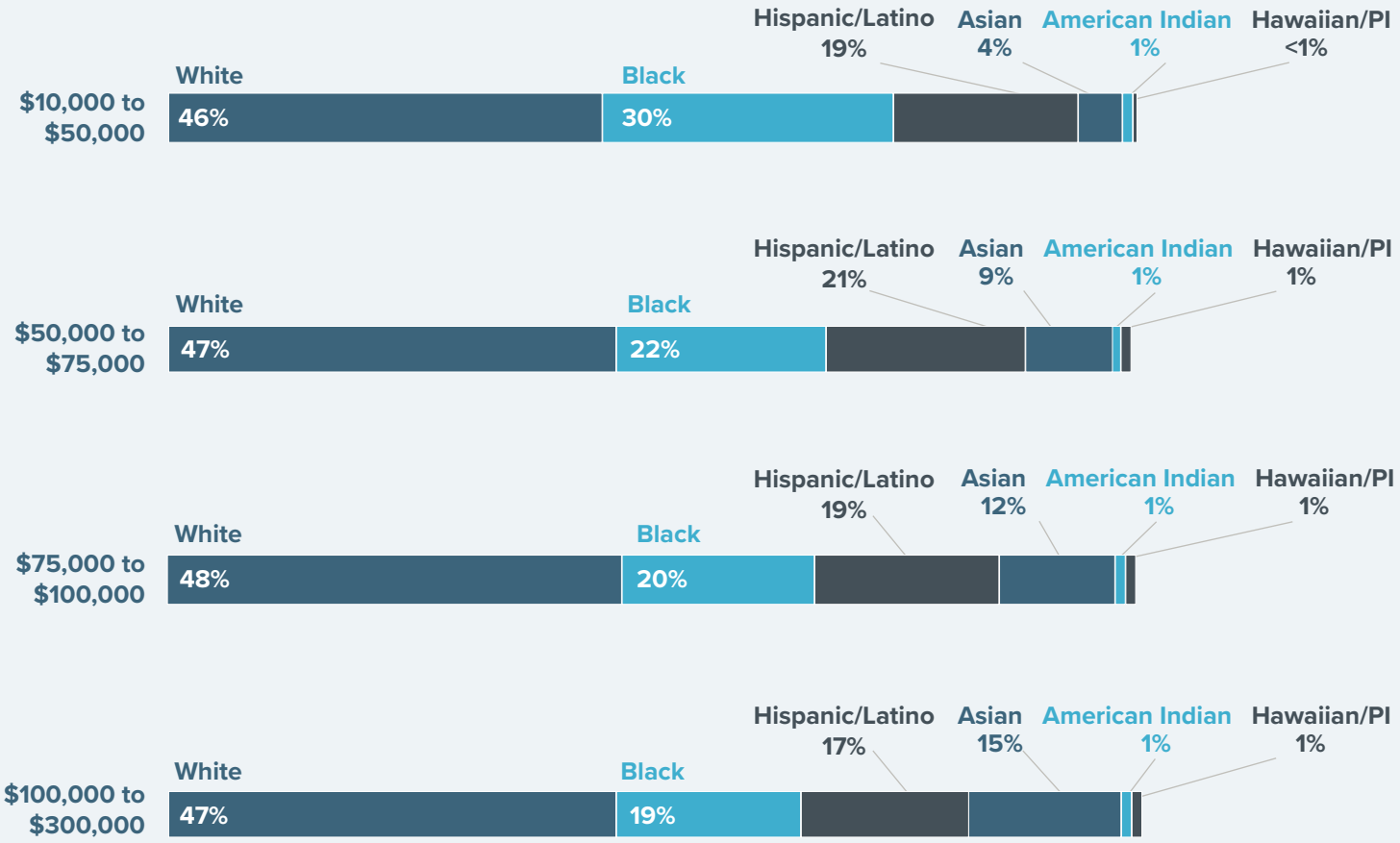


- **As salaries increase, the representation of qualified Asian candidates dramatically increases in Office and Admin jobs.**
- **As salaries increase, the representation of qualified Black candidates steadily decreases in Office and Admin jobs.**

Figure 6

% Qualified Candidates Represented by Salary Bracket: Office & Admin Occupations

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight, 2020 - 2022





KEY **TAKEAWAYS**

Gaps in the proportion of qualified candidates across job categories and salary ranges can signify both varied career interests but also potential barriers linked to minimum qualifications. **A group well-represented in one category may have capable candidates sidelined in another due to outdated minimum qualifications.**

A skills-first hiring approach can bring a wider array of talented candidates into consideration and help even the playing field for groups who have faced systemic barriers to education, work experience, or professional and social networks.



Reevaluating Minimum Qualifications

Revisiting qualification standards is not about lowering the bar; it's about making sure the bar accurately measures what's needed for the job. It values what someone can do over the degrees or credentials they hold. By matching job needs with real-world skills and experiences, we can reduce unintentional biases against certain groups.

Minimum Qualification Equivalencies

Focusing on skills provides a more inclusive way to assess potential. This approach can help even the playing field, especially in higher-paying roles where higher education is often mandatory. **A combination of skills, knowledge, and experience might be suitable equivalencies to a specific degree and help lessen the gap between groups who haven't traditionally had the same access to education.**

PHASE 3:
REFERRED TO HIRED

As we reach the hiring phase, it's befitting to reflect on just how important diversity is to organizational success. Agencies lacking diversity are less equipped to meet and address needs, enhance public trust, and foster innovation and creative thinking. Additionally, they are less appealing to the newest members of the workforce, Gen Z, who believe strongly in diversity.

Equitable hiring is the culmination of fairness throughout the recruitment process. Let's explore how the final phase contributes to hiring outcomes.

HIRING BY **RACE AND ETHNICITY**

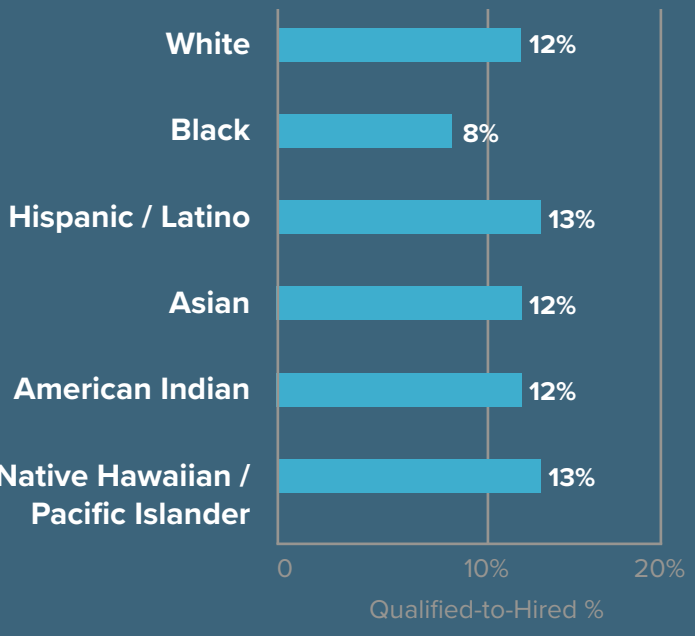
All groups have a similar qualified-to-hire rate except for **Black candidates, who are at least 33% less likely to be hired than every other group.**

With Black candidates facing a significant drop-off from qualified to hire, we set out to find answers. Using a subset of customers who had activated the PII blinding feature, we analyzed 900,000+ applications to see if PII blinding affected hiring. The results were eye-opening.

Figure 7

Qualified-to-Hire Rate

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight





REFERRED TO HIRED

"Referred" indicates candidates who met minimum qualifications and were passed from HR to hiring managers.

Blinding PII (Personal Identifiable Information) refers to concealing elements like candidate names, races, genders, home addresses, email addresses, and educational institutions after a candidate has been referred.

We analyzed 901,596 applications from 64 local and state governing bodies that turned on PII blinding between 3/19/20 - 12/31/22. This is what we found.

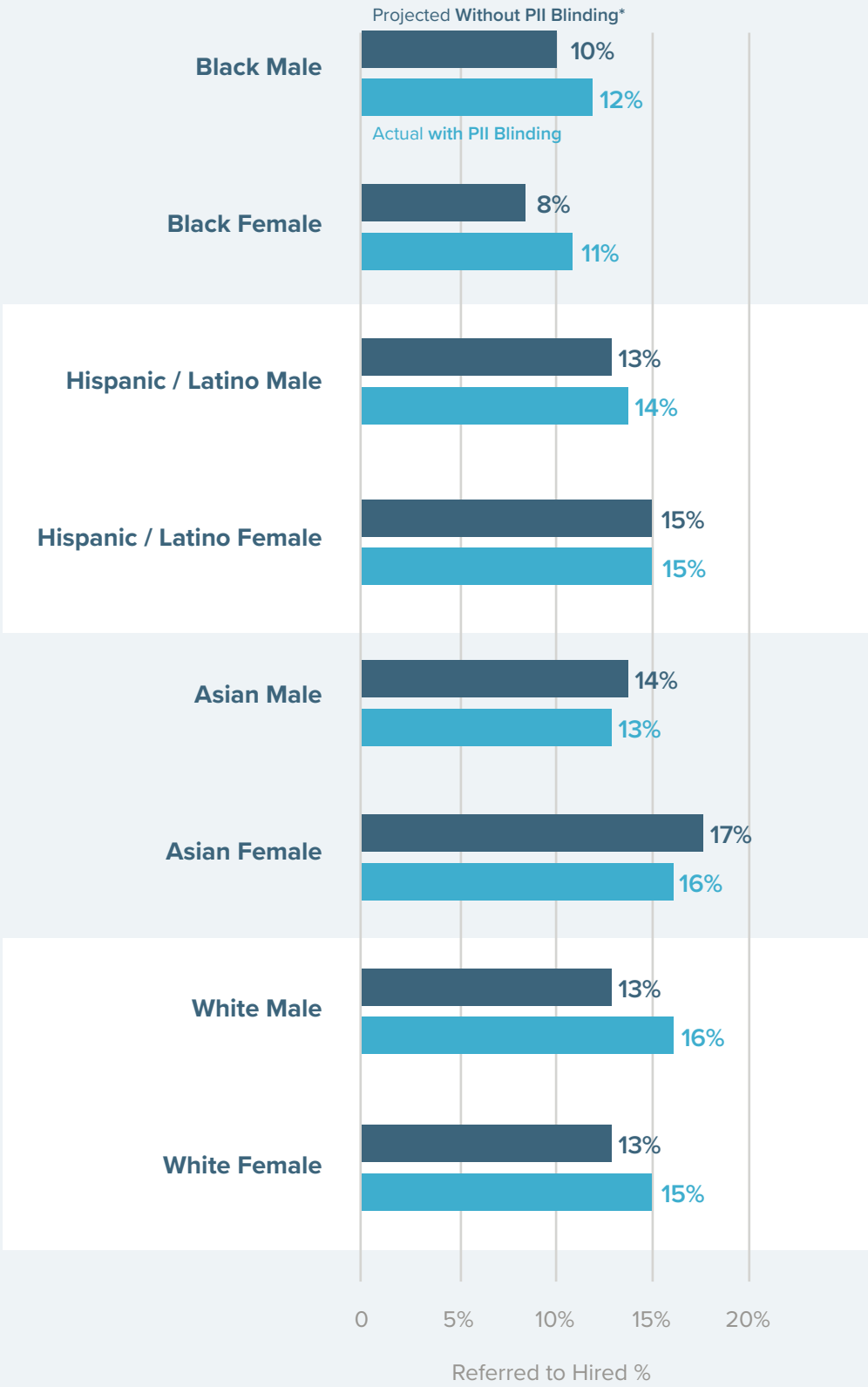
- **PII blinding improved the hiring rate for every group except Asian candidates.**
- **Black females benefited the most, experiencing a relative increase of 40% in hiring after PII blinding.**
- **Black males experienced a relative increase of 22% in hiring after PII blinding.**

*Projection based on referred to hire rate for agencies that implemented PII blinding before turning on the feature and applying trend for agencies that did not turn on blinding. 2020 - 2022.

Figure 8

PII Blinding Impact: Referred to Hired

Source: 901,596 applications from 64 governing bodies who turned on PII Masking/Blinding in Insight 3/19/20 - 12/31/22.





PII BLINDING KEY **TAKEAWAYS**

PII blinding can help eliminate potential biases based on identifiable information rather than qualifications. If a disproportionate number of qualified candidates from a certain group aren't being hired, it can be a red flag. Here are some further steps to help minimize bias during the referred-to-hired phase.

Representation in Hiring Managers

Diverse hiring managers can help promote equity in your interview process and prevent the unconscious bias of one group having unfair influence.

Studies have shown how effective this is during the application phase. **A recent study in The Journal of Applied Psychology discovered when a woman leads a search committee, 23% more women apply. And when minorities lead a search committee, 100% more minorities apply.** Ensuring representation with your hiring managers can help you spot biases you might not otherwise see.

Structured Interviews

Structured interviews can help minimize subjectivity. A study at The University of Texas Medical School revealed unstructured interviews were unreliable predictors of job performance, and the perceptions of interviewers were instead responsible for the initial rejection of qualified candidates.

Structured interviews offer a consistent framework and can reduce the influence of subjective feelings and biases. Asking every candidate the same qualification-focused questions and assessing responses based on predefined criteria can be a useful way to even the playing field. After the interview, it's beneficial to collaborate with colleagues on the decision, bringing multiple perspectives into the evaluation process.

SALARY BY **RACE & ETHNICITY**

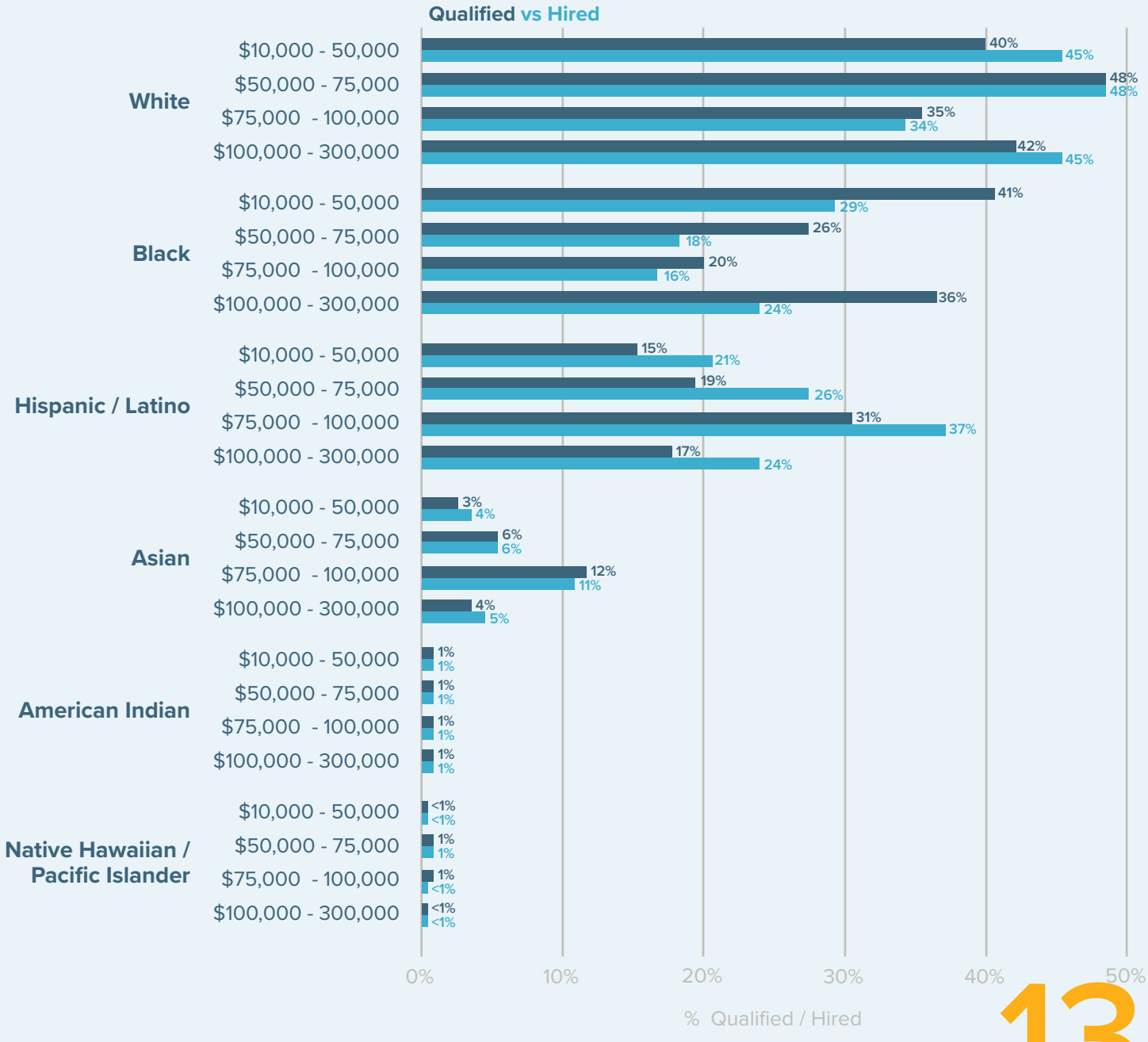
To complete our earlier analysis of salary representation in Community and Social Service jobs and Office and Admin jobs, we compared qualified candidates to hires for each racial and ethnic group.

- **Hispanic or Latino candidates are hired significantly above their qualified candidate rate in every salary range for Community and Social Services jobs.**
- **Black Candidates make up 36% of qualified applicants but only 24% of hires in the highest-paying Community and Social Service jobs.**

Figure 9

Salary of **Community and Social Service Occupations**: % Qualified vs Hired

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight, 2020 - 2022

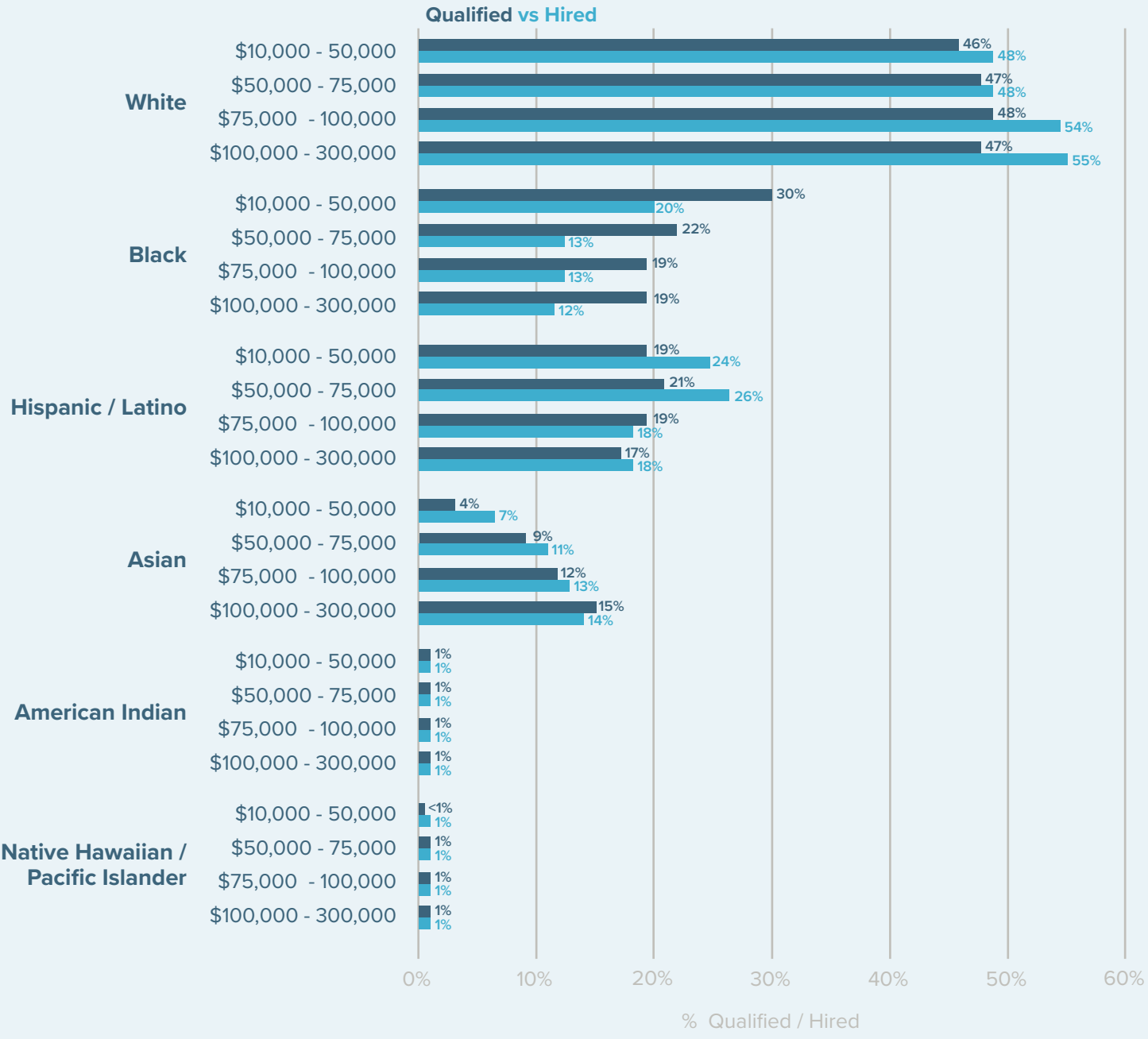


- **As salaries increase, the representation of qualified White and Asian candidates increases in Office and Admin jobs.**
- **As salaries increase, the hiring rate of qualified Black candidates steadily decreases in Office and Admin jobs.**

Figure 10

Salary of **Office and Admin Occupations**: % Qualified vs Hired

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight, 2020 - 2022



GENDER-SPECIFIC SALARY DISPARITIES

In the highest-paid **Community and Social Services roles**, qualified Asian females see an increase in representation. In contrast, qualified Black females experience a decline.

- **Asian females represent 6% of qualified applicants in the $100,000 to $300,000 range but 9% of hires.**
- **Black females represent 13% of qualified applicants in the $100,000 to $300,000 range but only 8% of hires.**

In the highest-paid **Office and Admin roles**, qualified Asian females see a decrease in representation. In contrast, qualified White females see a notable increase.

- **Asian females represent 8% of qualified applicants in the $100,000 to $300,000 range but 6% of hires.**
- **White females represent 24% of qualified applicants in the $100,000 to $300,000 range but 31% of hires.**

Figure 11

Community and Social Services Hires: $100,000 - $300,000 Salary Range

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight

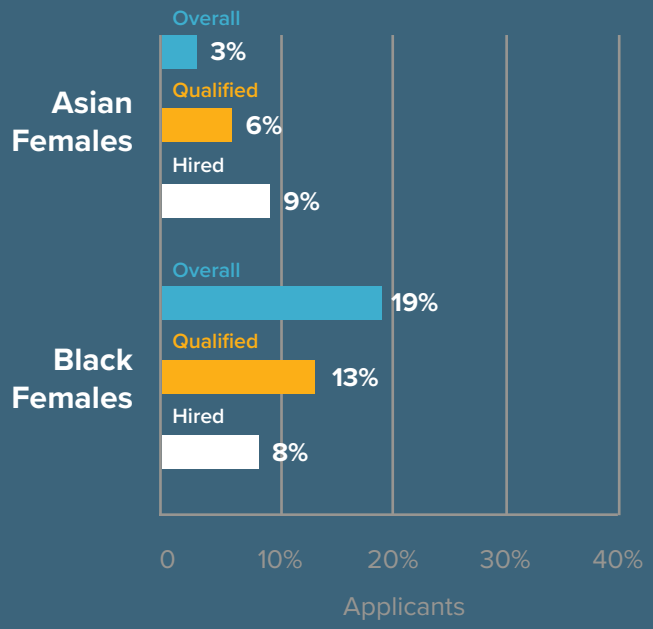
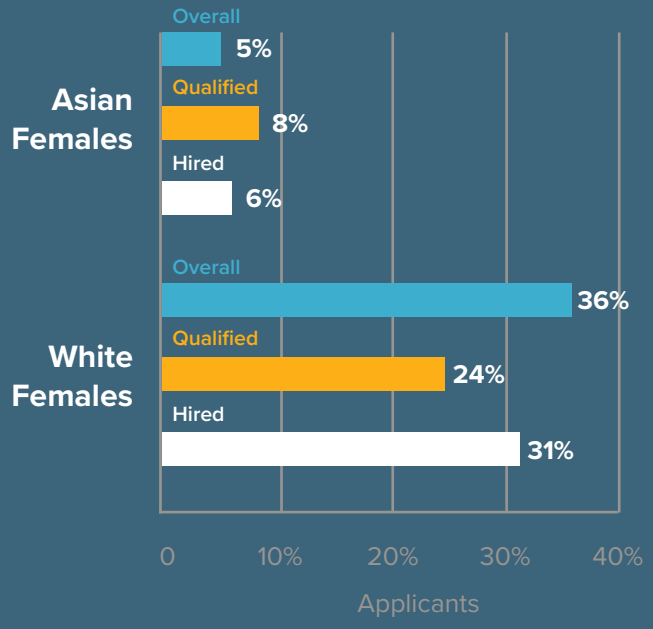


Figure 12

Office and Admin Hires: $100,000 - $300,000 Salary Range

Source: Applicant data from 16.8M+ applications in Insight



KEY **TAKEAWAYS**

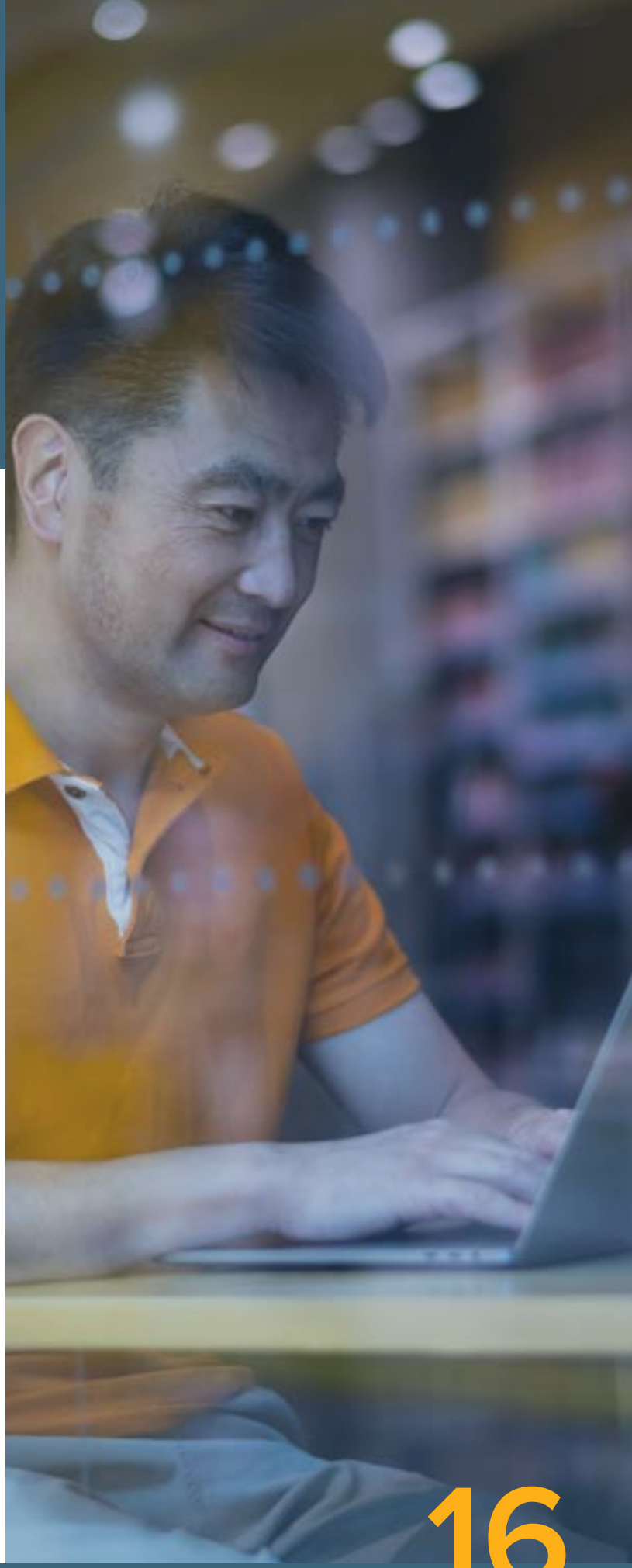
Disparities in the recruitment process are more than numbers and statistics. They reflect lived experiences, unrealized potential, and the state of diversity in the public sector. The data underscores steps to take to eliminate biases and build a workforce that genuinely represents the diverse populace it serves.

Recognizing these patterns is the first step; the next is taking proactive measures to rectify them.

Audit Your Recruitment Process

Here is a helpful checklist of questions to use when evaluating the stages of your agency's recruitment process.

- ☐ **Applied:** Are you getting enough diverse applicants? Are you posting job openings in the right places so they're seen by a diverse pool of candidates?
- ☐ **Qualified:** Are you using objective criteria to evaluate candidates, or are you relying on gut feelings and hunches? Is there an opportunity to reach more capable candidates by revisiting minimum qualifications and exploring skills-based hiring?
- ☐ **Referred:** What criteria do you use to decide whether qualified candidates make it to the referred stage? How do you determine which candidates are sent to the hiring manager?
- ☐ **Interviewed:** Do you interview all referred candidates? Are there unconscious biases in the hiring manager?
- ☐ **Offered:** Are diverse candidates getting job offers? Does the number of diverse candidate offers equal the ratio of diverse candidates that are referred?
- ☐ **Hired:** Have you created goals for each stage of the hiring process? Are you working to meet them with each new job opening?

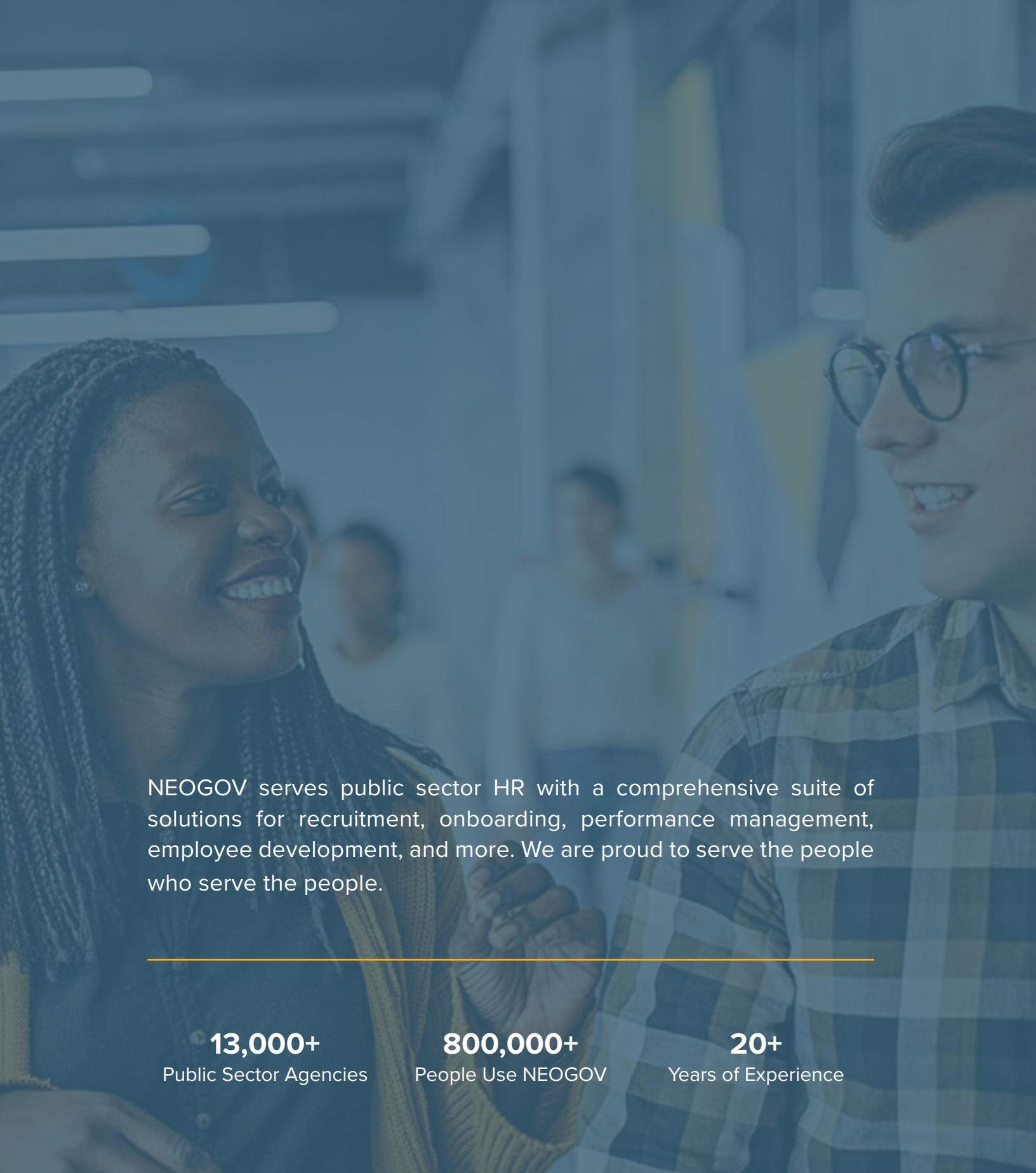


NEXT STEPS

Thank you for reading *Diversity in Public Sector Recruitment: From Data to Strategy*. We hope the data, insights, and strategies included here have been helpful. Addressing diversity in your organization directly contributes to a more equitable future in public sector recruitment.

NEOGOV's Insight (applicant tracking system) and Attract (candidate relationship manager) can help you source, attract, and hire diverse, qualified candidates more effectively. **Designed for public sector HR, these tools save time and resources, helping you accomplish more with less. To learn how NEOGOV's HR software can help your agency, sign up for a no-obligation consultation today.**





NEOGOV serves public sector HR with a comprehensive suite of solutions for recruitment, onboarding, performance management, employee development, and more. We are proud to serve the people who serve the people.

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