

# FIELD-WIDE OPERA DEMOGRAPHIC REPORT 2021

BASED ON A SURVEY OF  
ADMINISTRATORS AND  
BOARD MEMBERS

OPERA  
AMERICA

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# Introduction

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**T**he North American opera field is far from reflective of our nation's racial and ethnic diversity. The murder of George Floyd and others in spring 2020 accelerated opera's long overdue racial reckoning, and opera companies are committing themselves to change.

But how do we begin to measure that change? In spring 2021, OPERA America administered its first-ever field-wide demographic survey of Professional Company Members to establish initial benchmarks. The survey was conducted anonymously among administrative staff and board members with first-person reporting about race/ethnicity, gender, and age. Responses were compiled by OPERA America and analyzed from various perspectives. Salient analyses are shared in this report, with comparisons to U.S. Census data.

The data represent 2,700 individuals — 1,200 administrative staff and 1,500 trustees — from 97 U.S. and Canadian opera companies, slightly more than half of the 184 companies invited to participate. These companies were distributed across all five of OPERA America's membership budget groups in numbers consistent with the composition of the field. The sample size has been deemed suitable for reporting trends on the entire field.

What did we find in this initial study?

- Women hold a majority of administrative positions throughout the industry, although the margin decreases in leadership positions (defined as senior staff).
- One-fifth of opera administrators identify as BIPOC, as compared to two-fifths of the U.S. population.
- Nearly three-fifths of administrative staff are under the age of 45, although the percentage decreases to just two-fifths when looking at company leadership.
- Opera company boards are relatively even in gender but skew older and are less diverse than company administrators, with just 15% of trustees identifying as BIPOC

This research is just the beginning. It provides benchmarks for understanding if and how the efforts taken across the industry are working to achieve diversity that is reflective of the communities served by opera companies and of the nation. Participating companies received a customized company "snapshot report" to compare their company demographics to those of their local communities and to establish internal goals for accountability.

OPERA America plans to conduct national demographic surveys and issue reports on an annual basis. Future surveys will build on this one to investigate additional defining characteristics of the opera field that can be useful in setting goals for and measuring progress. Notably, these surveys will expand in reach to include artists as a third essential group alongside administrators and trustees.

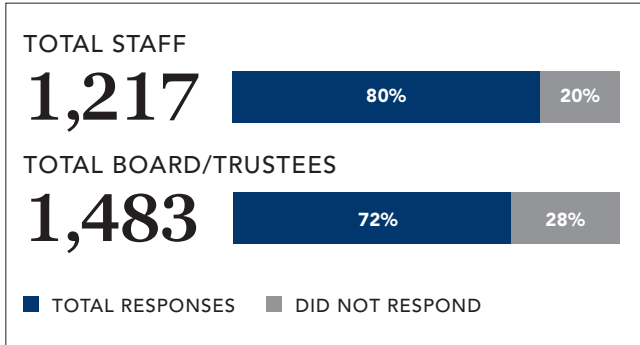
Overall, there is hope: The data in this report show that the younger generations of administrators and trustees are more diverse than their older colleagues. With the commitment to becoming a more inclusive and welcoming industry, there is an opportunity for opera to be an art form and industry of, by, and for all people.

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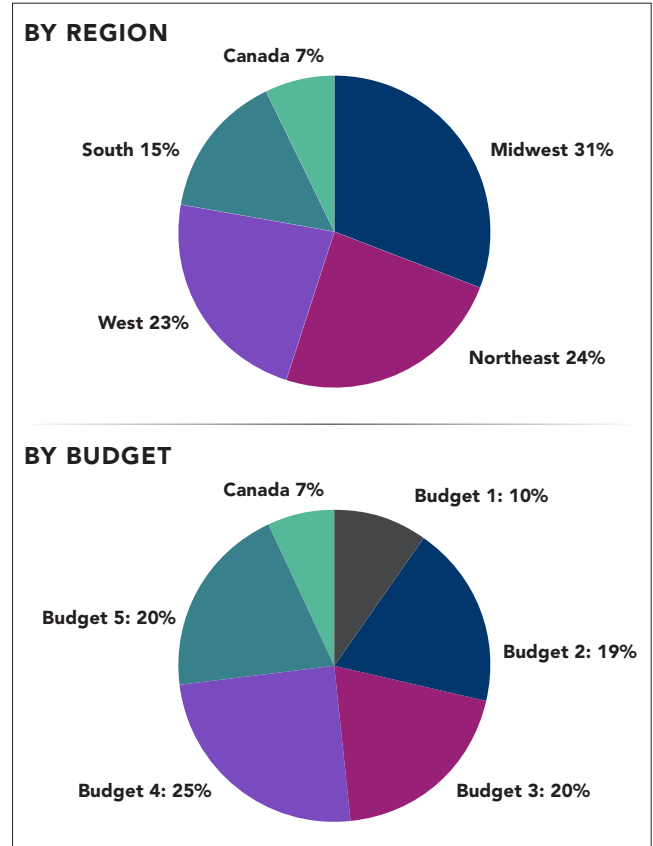
*Readers are invited to contact OPERA America at [Info@operaamerica.org](mailto:Info@operaamerica.org) with questions about the report or suggestions about future research.*

# Participation Overview

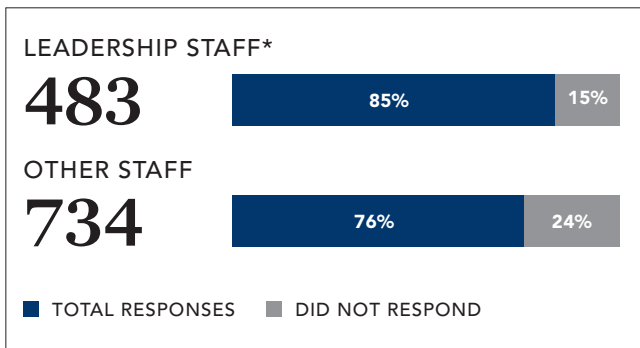
## Total Responses



## Participating Companies



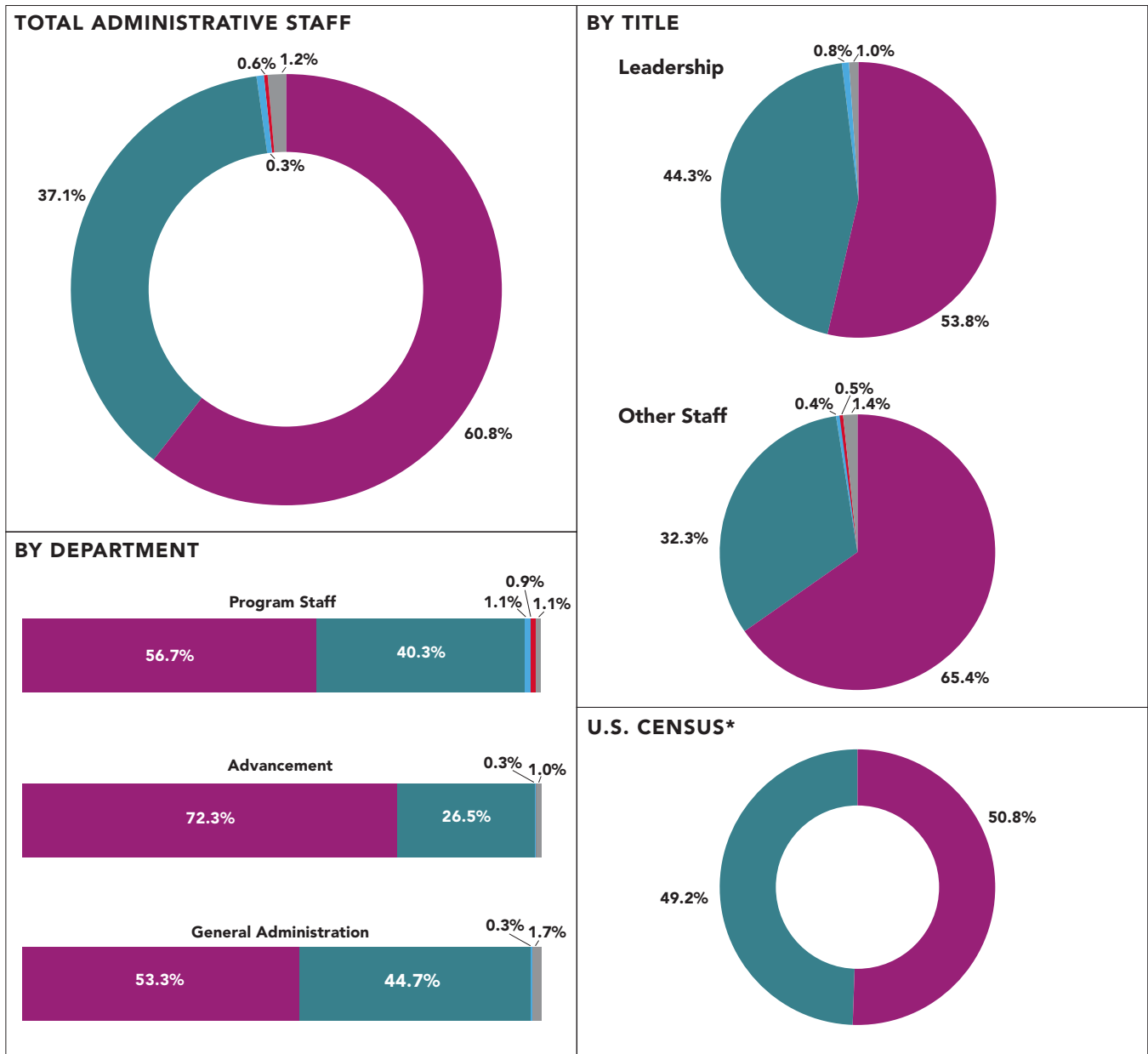
## Administrators by Job Level



\*Leadership staff is defined as those in working in senior positions at the department director level or above.

# Field-Wide Snapshot

**Staff by Gender** Among the administrative staff, 60.8 percent were women. The study separated leadership staff from other staff for deeper analysis. Among leadership staff, 53.8 percent were women, whereas among other staff, 65.4 percent were women. Among all staff, just under 1 percent identified as non-binary. Advancement departments (development and marketing) had the highest proportion of women staff.

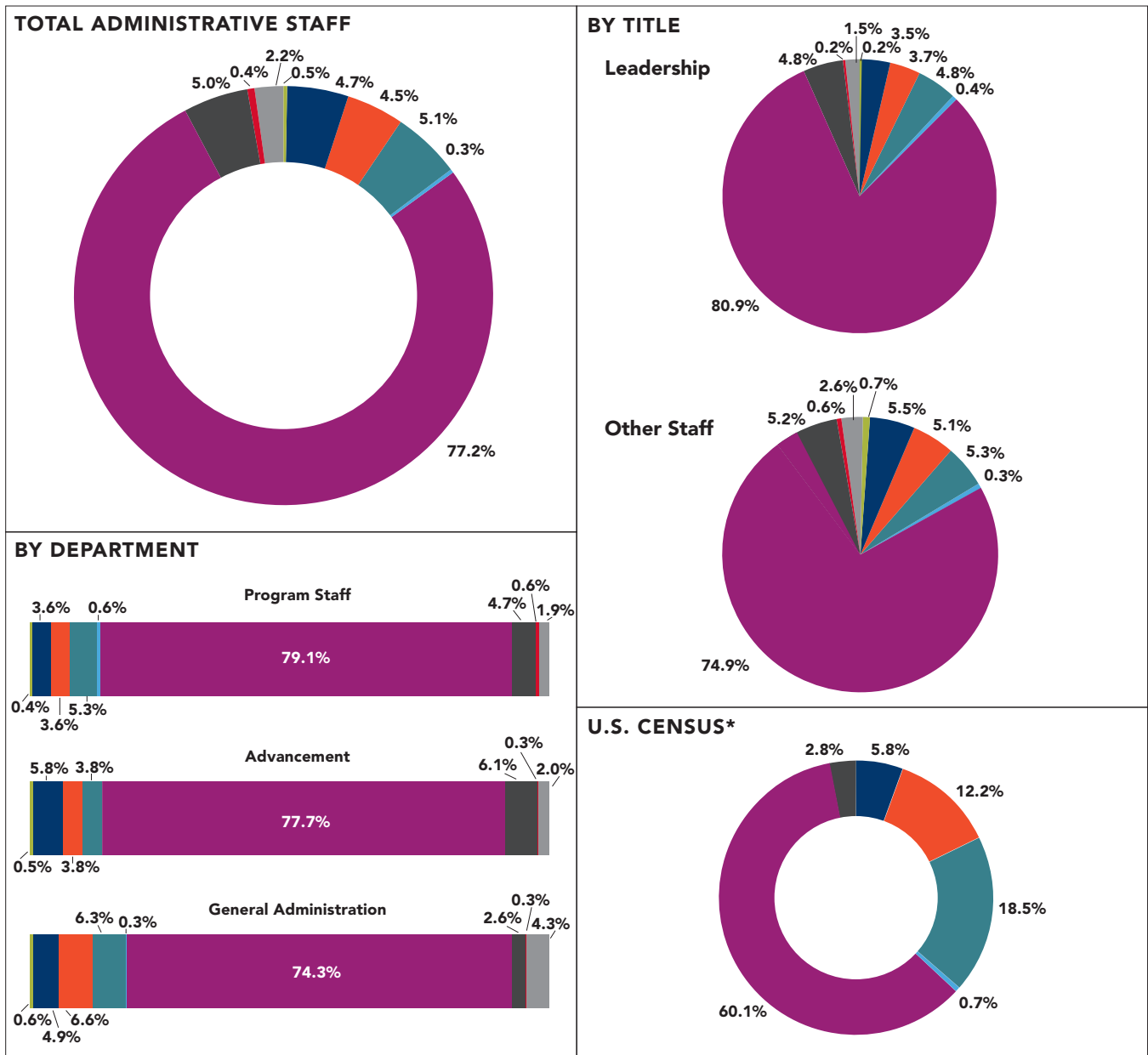


■ FEMALE 
 ■ MALE 
 ■ NON-BINARY/THIRD GENDER 
 ■ PREFER TO SELF-DESCRIBE 
 ■ PREFER NOT TO SAY

\*Census data is from 2019. Note that the U.S. census only allowed respondents to select "male" or "female."

# Field-Wide Snapshot

**Staff by Race/Ethnicity** Across the entire field, 20.6 percent of opera administrators identify as BIPOC, with a nearly even distribution among staff who describe themselves as Black, Hispanic/Latinx, and Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian. This is significantly lower than the national BIPOC population of 39.3 percent. At the leadership level, BIPOC administrators represent an even smaller proportion of staff: only 18 percent compared to 80.5% of senior staff who identify as White. This held true across all functional areas.



\*Census data is from 2019. Note that the U.S. census includes fewer categories of race/ethnicity than OPERA America's demographic survey.

# Field-Wide Snapshot

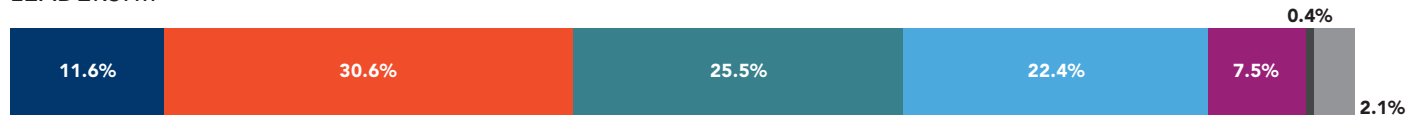
**Staff by Age** The distribution of administrative staff by age was fairly evenly spread, with the largest segment being staff between the ages of 25 and 34 (29.2 percent), followed by those between the ages of 35 and 44 (25.3 percent) and 45 to 54 (19.0 percent). Administrators over the age of 55 totaled 22.3 percent of respondents. Leadership staff were slightly older; those in the age range between 35 and 44 were the largest segment at 30.6 percent. By contrast, the largest segment of other staff, those between 25 and 34 years of age, comprised 40.7 percent of respondents. The largest cohort of young staff was found in the advancement/development/marketing area.

## TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF



## BY TITLE

### LEADERSHIP



### OTHER STAFF

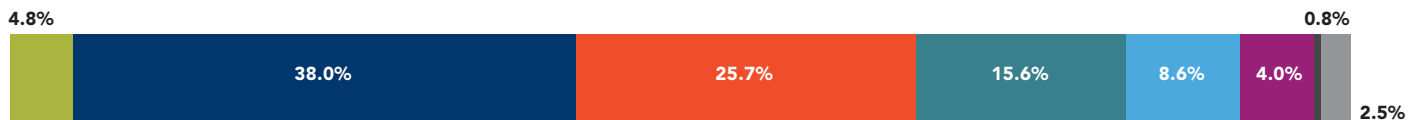


## BY DEPARTMENT

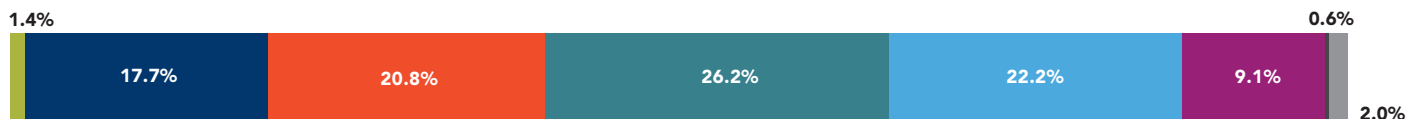
### PROGRAM STAFF



### ADVANCEMENT STAFF



### GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

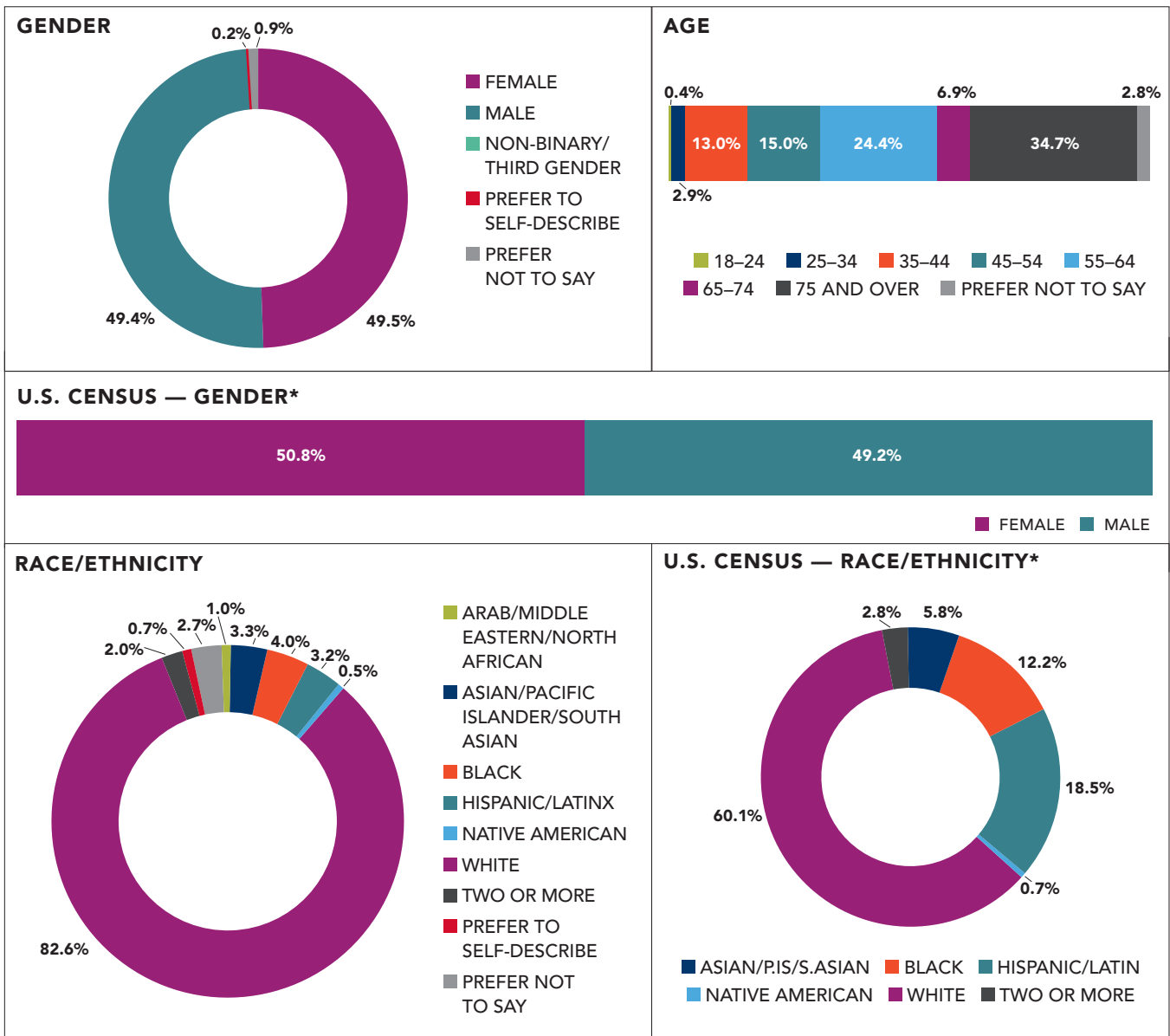


18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75 AND OVER PREFER NOT TO SAY

# Field-Wide Snapshot

**Board/Trustees** Among opera company trustees, representation by gender was virtually identical to the general population: women were 49.5 percent of the population of trustees, and men were 49.4 percent. These respondents were much older than the administrative staff: 41.6 percent were over the age of 65; 34.7 percent were over the age of 75. Just under 30 percent of responding trustees were between the ages of 35 and 54.

The percentage of opera company board members who identify as BIPOC is 14.7 percent of this population – slightly more than one-third of the national BIPOC population as a whole (39.9 percent). As with the administrative staff, BIPOC trustees identified relatively equally among Black, Hispanic/LatinX, and Asian/Pacific Islander/South Asian. Native American board members comprised 0.5 percent of the trustee population.



\*Census data is from 2019. Note that the U.S. census includes fewer categories of race/ethnicity than OPERA America's demographic survey and only allows respondents to select "male" or "female."



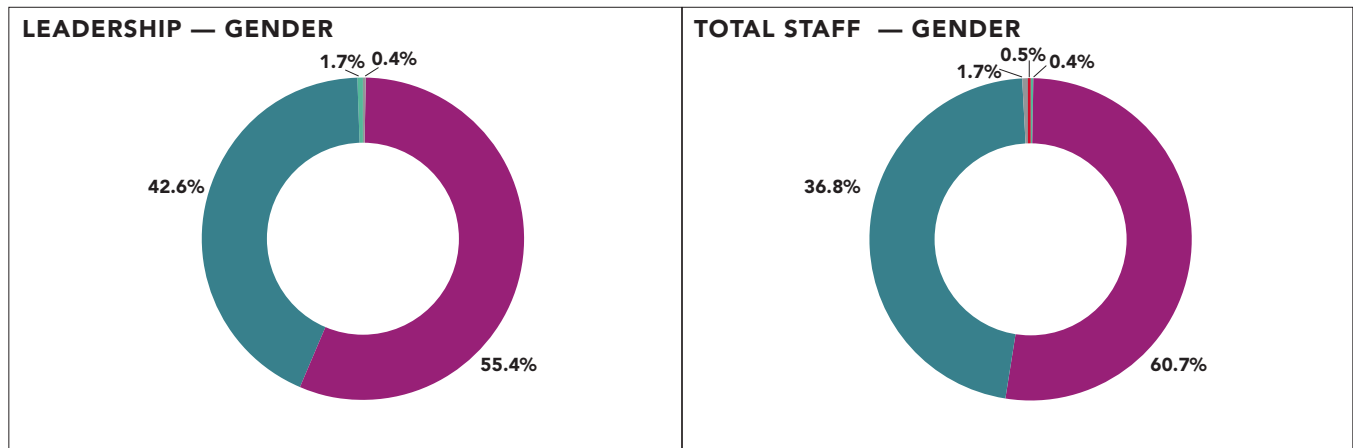
# Results by Budget

**Budget 1 & 2 (\$3M+)** Having examined the field as a whole, analysis of Professional Company Members by budget group and region showed only modest variations.

For Budget 1 and 2 companies, the overall proportion of women administrators was virtually identical to the field as a whole (60.7 percent versus 60.8 percent fieldwide). There was a very slight increase, however, in the proportion of women in leadership positions at the larger companies (55.4 percent versus 53.8 percent field-wide). The distribution of administrators among age clusters also was virtually identical to the national averages, with occasional variations of only 1 percent across the groupings.

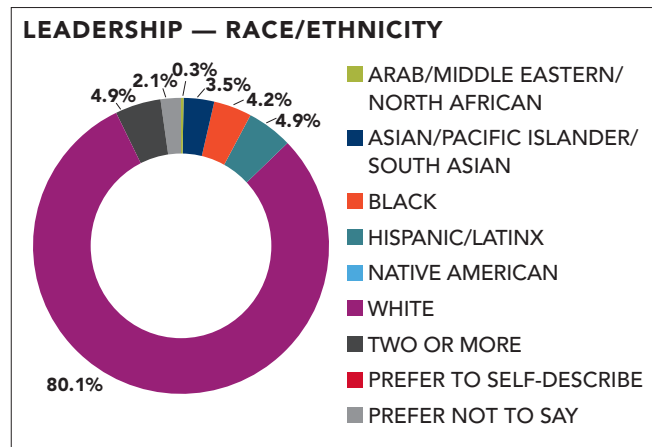
Larger variations were found among the trustees of Budget 1 and 2 companies. Compared to the field as a whole, board members of the largest companies were more likely to be men (52.3 percent versus 49.4 percent field-wide) and considerably more likely to be older. Trustees 75 years of age and older represented 43.1 percent of board members for Budget 1 and 2 companies, but only 34.7 percent of board members across the entire field. In terms of race/ethnicity, trustees of Budget 1 and 2 companies were virtually the same as trustees from all companies; only about 14.5 percent of these board members identified as BIPOC compared to 82.7 percent (Budget 1) and 82.6 percent (Budget 2) who identified as White.

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

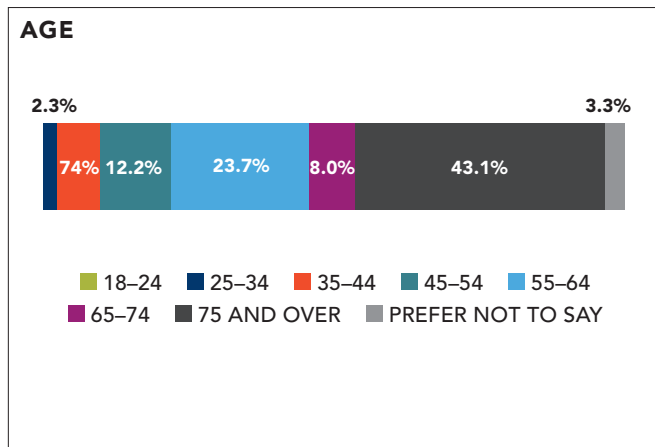


■ FEMALE 
 ■ MALE 
 ■ NON-BINARY/THIRD GENDER 
 ■ PREFER TO SELF-DESCRIBE 
 ■ PREFER NOT TO SAY

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF



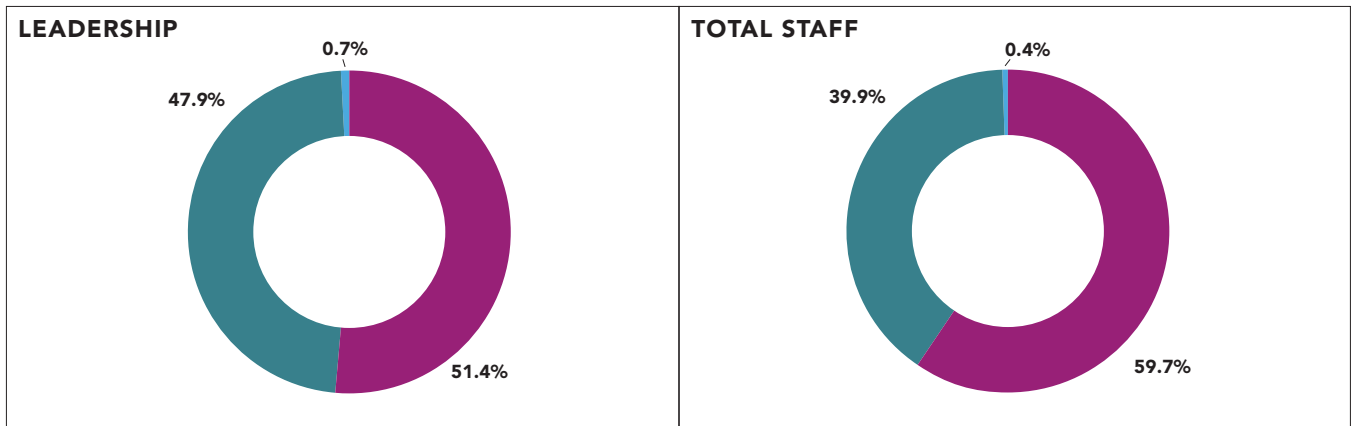
## BOARD/TRUSTEES



# Results by Budget

**Budget 3, 4 & 5 (Under \$3M)** Budget 3, 4, and 5 companies showed similar modest variations. The overall proportion of women administrators in smaller companies was only slightly lower than for the entire field (59.7 percent compared to 60.8 percent fieldwide). There is a slightly greater variation among women in leadership positions at these companies; women in Budget 3, 4, and 5 positions filled 51.4 percent of the positions compared to 53.8 percent for the field as a whole.

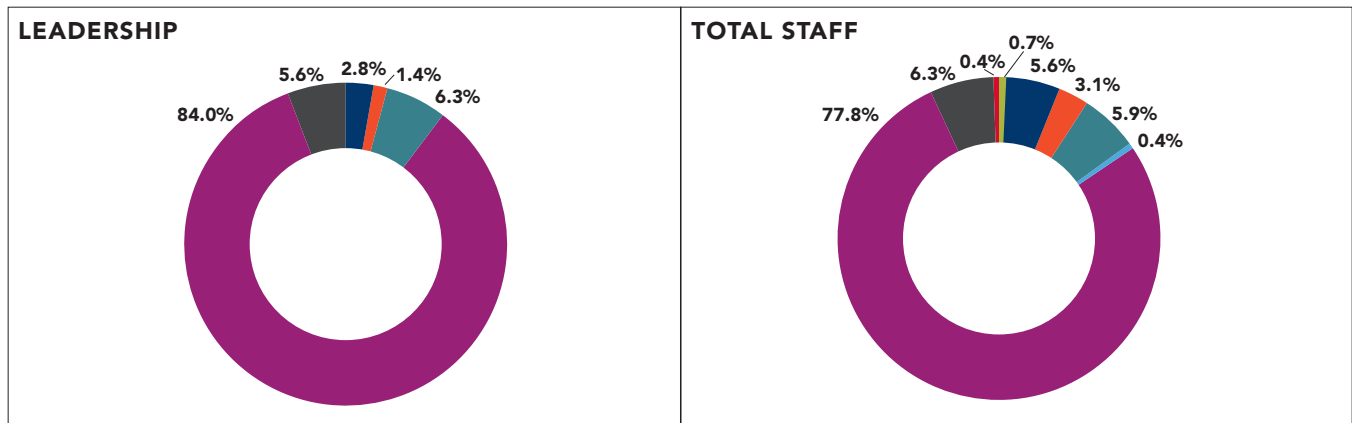
## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF — GENDER



■ FEMALE ■ MALE ■ NON-BINARY/THIRD GENDER ■ PREFER TO SELF-DESCRIBE ■ PREFER NOT TO SAY

While the racial/ethnic diversity of the entire staff among these companies was almost identical to the field as a whole, smaller companies report an even smaller number of BIPOC colleagues in leadership positions (16 percent as compared to almost 20 percent fieldwide).

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF — RACE ETHNICITY



■ ARAB/MIDDLE EASTERN/NORTH AFRICAN ■ ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER/SOUTH ASIAN ■ BLACK ■ HISPANIC/LATINX  
 ■ NATIVE AMERICAN ■ WHITE ■ TWO OR MORE ■ PREFER TO SELF-DESCRIBE ■ PREFER NOT TO SAY

# Results by Budget

**Budget 3, 4 & 5** The leadership staff of Budget 3, 4, and 5 companies skews slightly younger than the field as a whole. 22.4 percent of leadership administrators across the field were between 55 and 64 years of age, while only 16.7 percent of the leaders of smaller companies fall into this range.

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF — AGE

### LEADERSHIP



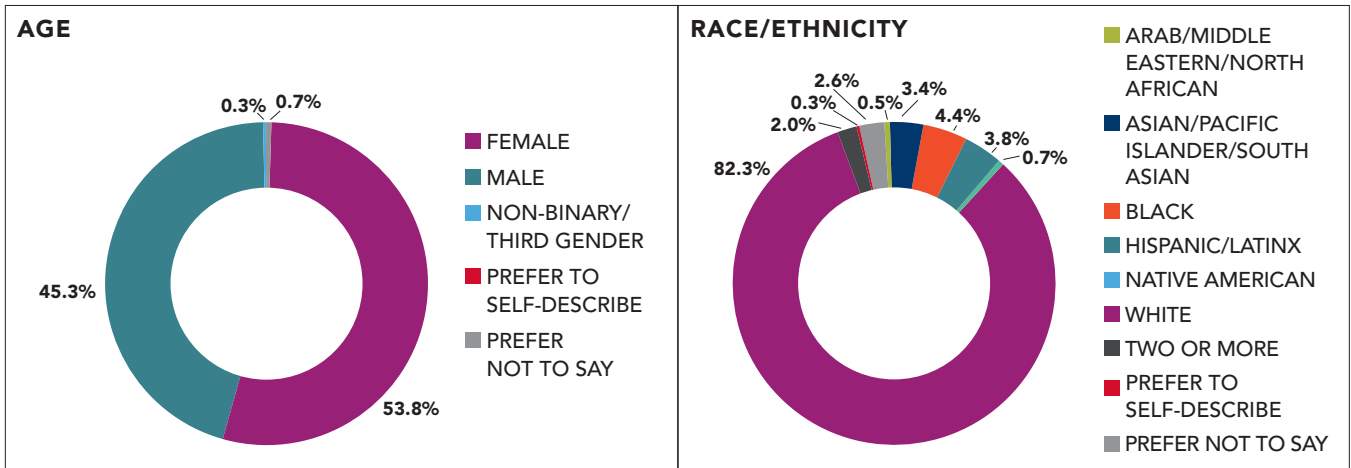
### TOTAL STAFF



18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75 AND OVER PREFER NOT TO SAY

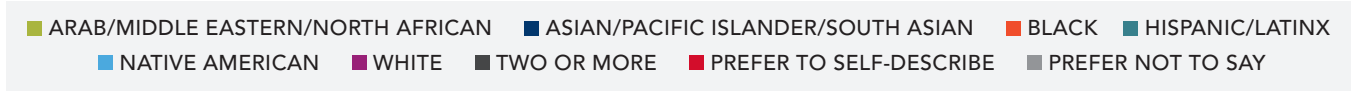
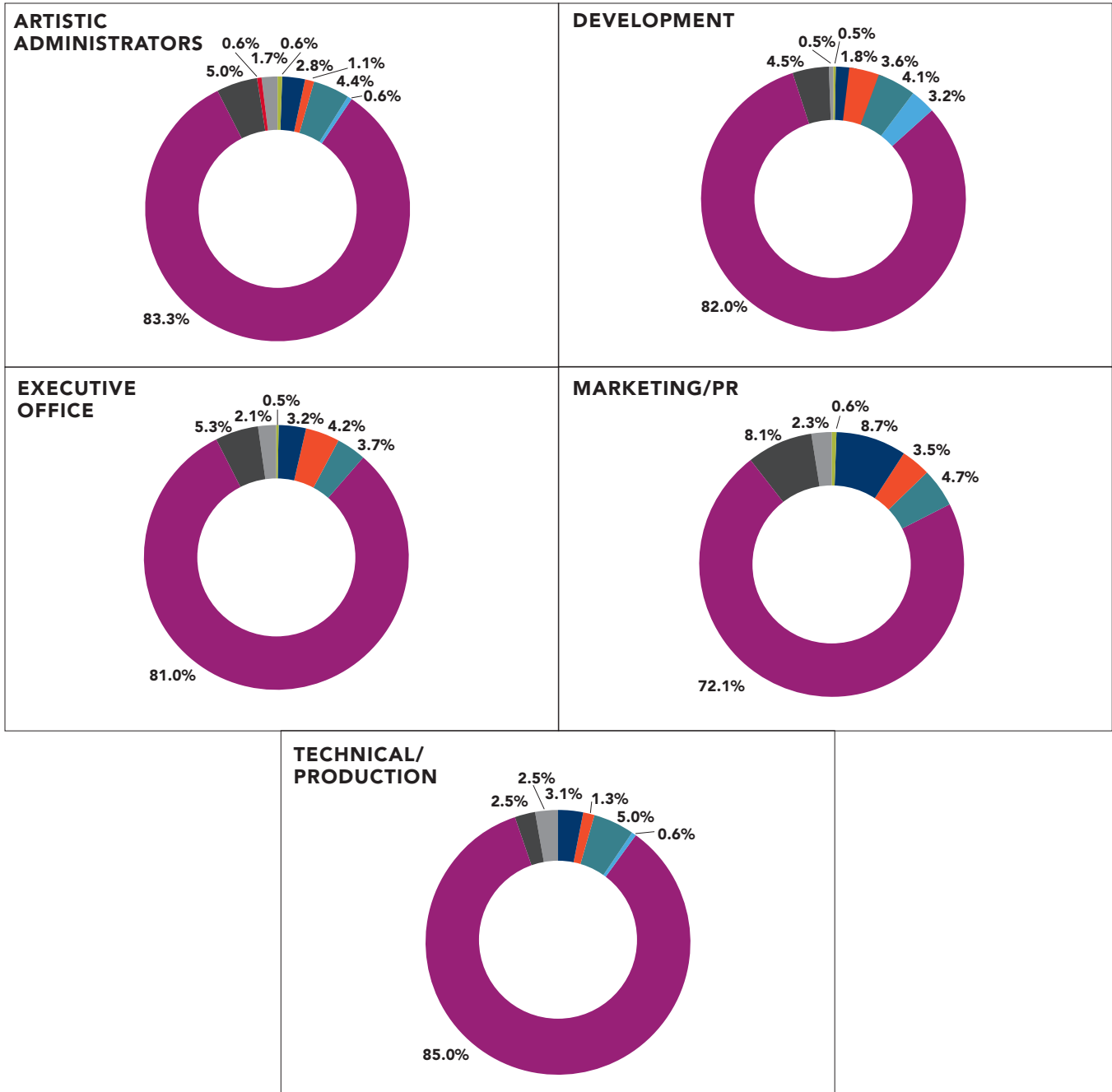
Among trustees, more board members were women in Budget 3, 4, and 5 companies (53.8 percent versus 49.5 percent nationally). Board members who identified as non-binary represented 0.6 percent of this cohort. The distribution of trustees by race/ethnicity was virtually identical to the field as a whole (about 17.5 percent of board members identified as BIPOC.)

## BOARD/TRUSTEES



# Results by Department: Race/Ethnicity

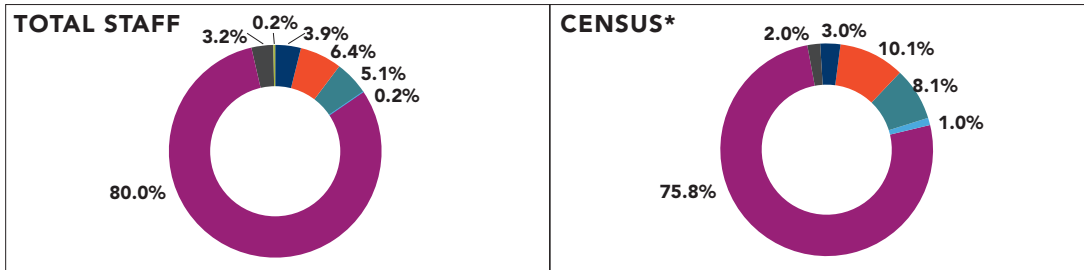
The analysis of racial representation by department reveals some variation while underscoring underrepresentation of BIPOC administrators in the opera field. Race/ethnicity for departments that met a minimum threshold of participation are shared below:



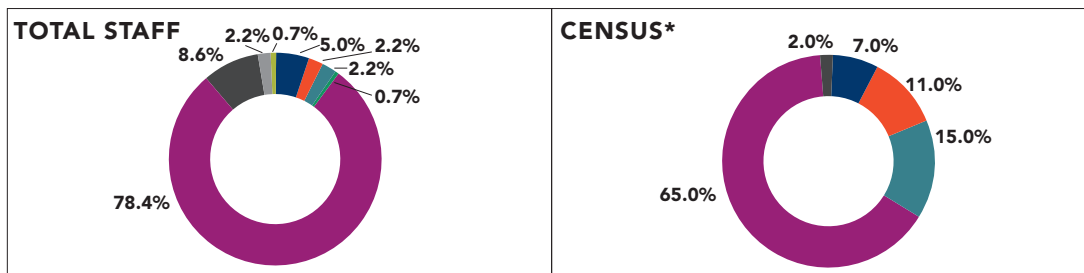
# Results by Region: Race/Ethnicity

Despite demographic differences in the general population by geographic region, when analyzing the race and ethnicity of the opera field on a regional basis, the results were very consistent with the national averages. This highlights a demographic uniformity across the opera field in a country that is otherwise racially and ethnically more varied by region.

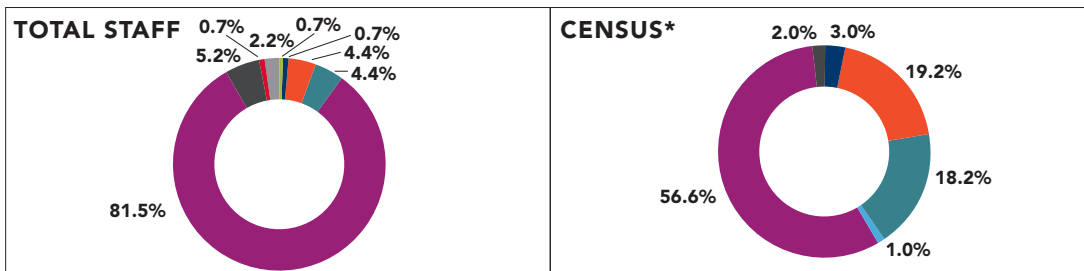
## MIDWESTERN



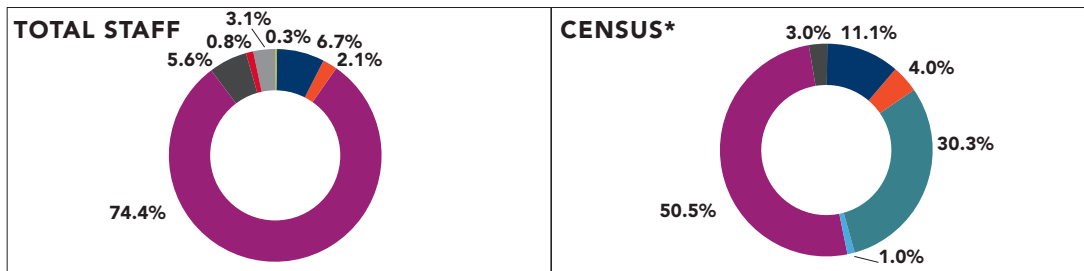
## NORTHEASTERN



## SOUTHERN



## WESTERN

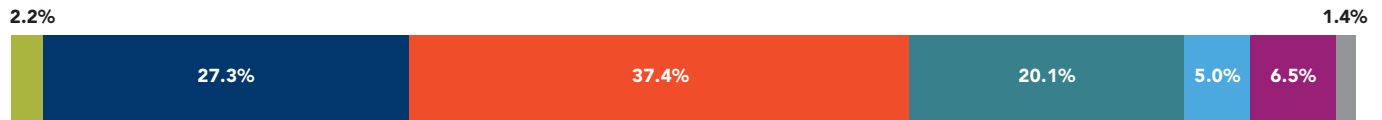


\*Census data is from 2019. Note that the U.S. census includes fewer categories of race/ethnicity than OPERA America's demographic survey.

# Results by Region: Age/Gender

**Age** When analyzing the age of opera administrators by region, one variant stood out. In the Northeast, staff members between the ages of 25 and 44 were 64.8 percent of the administrative population, compared to 54.5 percent across the country.

## NORTHEASTERN ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

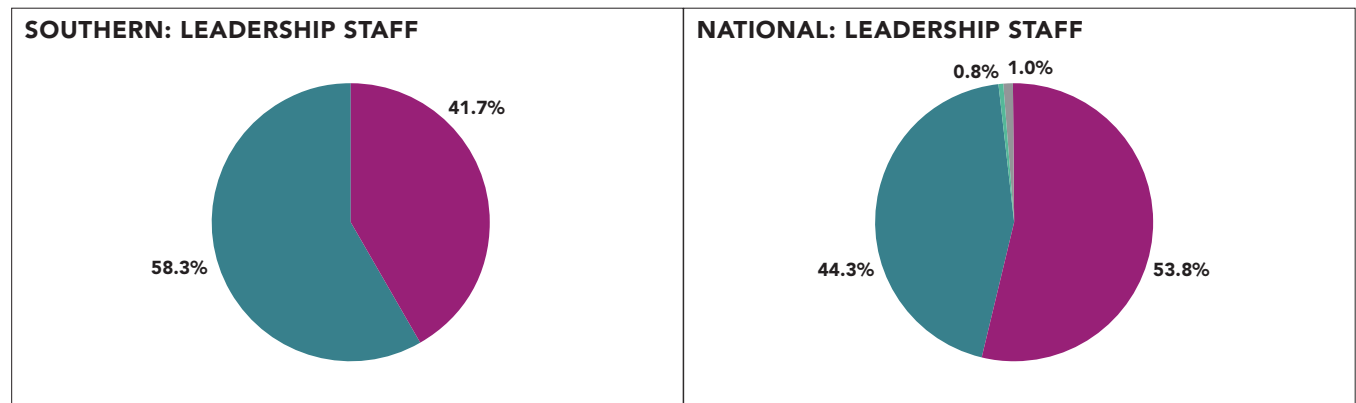


## NATIONAL TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF



18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75 AND OVER PREFER NOT TO SAY

**Gender** When analyzing gender on a regional basis, the data reveals that in the South, women occupied only 41.7 percent of the leadership positions compared to 53.8 percent nationally. This was the only regional variation of note based on gender.



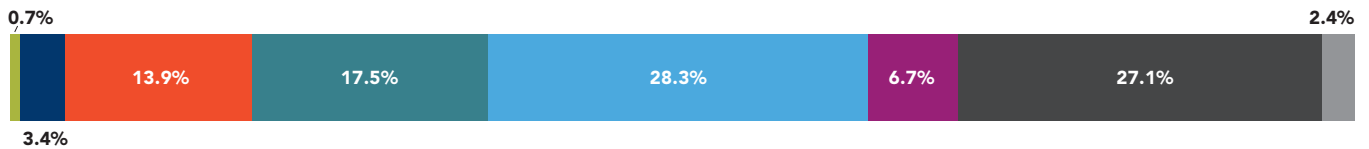
FEMALE MALE NON-BINARY/THIRD GENDER PREFER TO SELF-DESCRIBE PREFER NOT TO SAY

# Results by Region: Board/Trustees

Similar to staff, Northeastern boards appeared to be younger when compared to the national average. In the Northeast, board members between the ages of 25 and 54 comprised 42.0 percent of trustees in this region compared to only 30.9 percent in this age group nationally. Additionally, board members over the age of 75 in the Northeast were only 22.5 percent of the total population compared to the national average of 34.7 percent.

In the West, 47.9 percent of responding trustees were 75 years of age or older, while across the country trustees in this age range were only 34.7 percent of the population of board members. Similarly in the South, 40.9 percent of responding trustees were over 75 years of age – above the national average.

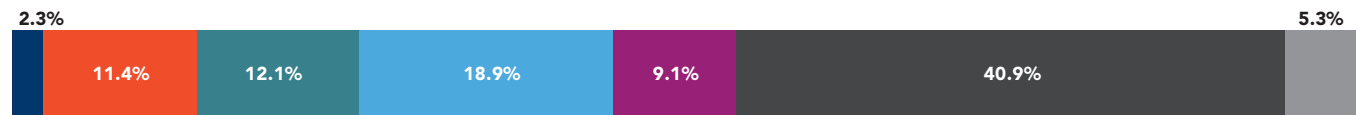
## MIDWESTERN BOARD/TRUSTEES:



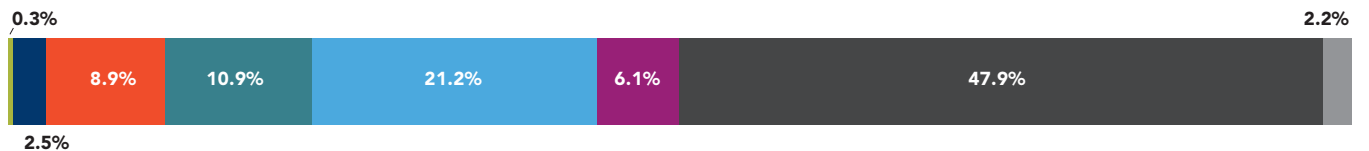
## NORTHEASTERN BOARD/TRUSTEES



## SOUTHERN BOARD/TRUSTEES



## WESTERN BOARD/TRUSTEES:

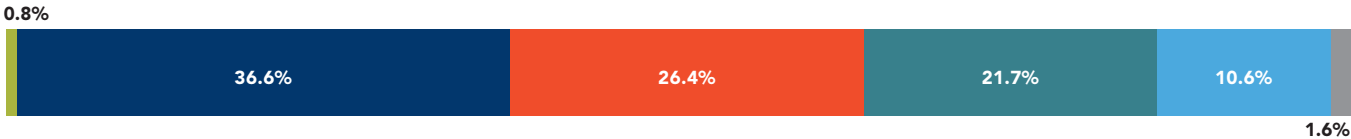


18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75 AND OVER PREFER NOT TO SAY

# Cross-Referenced Results by Age

A separate cross-referencing of race/ethnicity with gender and age yielded interesting results. BIPOC administrators were slightly younger than their White counterparts, while women administrators were significantly younger than men working in opera (62.4 percent of women were 44 or younger, while only 48.4 percent of men were 44 or younger). Men between the ages of 55 and 64 were double the percentage of women in that same age group; 22 percent versus 11 percent respectively.

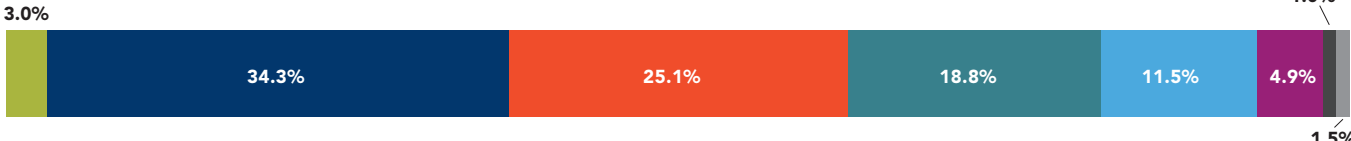
## BIPOC ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:



## WHITE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:



## FEMALE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:



## MALE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF:



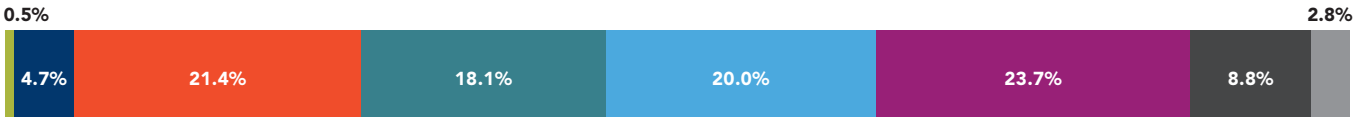
18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65-74 75 AND OVER PREFER NOT TO SAY



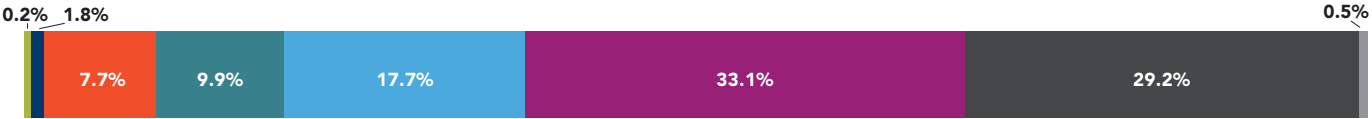
# Cross-Referenced Results by Age

BIPOC trustees were significantly younger than their White counterparts. 62.2 percent of White board members were 65 years of age or older, while only 32.6 percent of BIPOC board members fall into that age group. 9.4 percent of White board members were between the ages of 25 and 44 compared to 26.1 percent of the BIPOC trustees.

## BIPOC BOARD/TRUSTEES:



## WHITE BOARD/TRUSTEES:



## FEMALE BOARD/TRUSTEES:



## MALE BOARD/TRUSTEES:



■ 18-24  
 ■ 25-34  
 ■ 35-44  
 ■ 45-54  
 ■ 55-64  
 ■ 65-74  
 ■ 75 AND OVER  
 ■ PREFER NOT TO SAY

# List of Participating Companies

## BUDGET 1 (OVER \$15M) 91% OF BUDGET 1 MEMBERSHIP

The Dallas Opera	Lyric Opera of Chicago	San Francisco Opera	Seattle Opera
Houston Grand Opera	Michigan Opera Theatre	The Santa Fe Opera	Washington National Opera
Los Angeles Opera	Opera Philadelphia		

## BUDGET 2 (\$3M – \$15M) 75% OF BUDGET 2 MEMBERSHIP

Arizona Opera	Florida Grand Opera	Opera Carolina	Palm Beach Opera
The Atlanta Opera	Glimmerglass Festival	Opera Colorado	Pittsburgh Opera
Austin Opera	Hawai'i Opera Theatre	Opera Omaha	Sarasota Opera
Central City Opera	Minnesota Opera	Opera San José	Utah Symphony   Utah Opera
Florentine Opera	OPERA America	Opera Theatre of St. Louis	

## BUDGET 3 (\$1M – \$3M) 59% OF BUDGET 3 MEMBERSHIP

Beth Morrison Projects	Madison Opera	Opera Idaho	Opera Delaware
Fort Worth Opera	Nashville Opera	Opera Lafayette	Toledo Opera
Kentucky Opera	New Orleans Opera	Opera Memphis	
Knoxville Opera	North Carolina Opera	Opera Parallèle	
Long Beach Opera	Opera Columbus	OPERA San Antonio	

## BUDGET 4 (\$250K – \$1M) 51% OF BUDGET 4 MEMBERSHIP

Anchorage Opera	Haymarket Opera	Opéra Louisiane	Pittsburgh Festival Opera
Ardea Arts	HERE Arts Center	Opera Maine	Pocket Opera
Cedar Rapids Opera	Intermountain Opera	Opera North	Tri-Cities Opera
Charlottesville Opera	Bozeman	Opera Orlando	UrbanArias
El Paso Opera	On Site Opera	Opera Roanoke	Washington Concert Opera
Eugene Opera	Opera Birmingham	Pacific Opera Project	
Fargo-Moorhead Opera	Opera in the Heights		

## BUDGET 5 (UNDER \$250K) 43% OF BUDGET 5 MEMBERSHIP

Amarillo Opera	Heartbeat Opera	MassOpera	Opera Las Vegas
Baltimore Concert Opera	Lighthouse Opera Company	New Camerata Opera	Opera Modesto
Experiments in Opera	the little OPERA	Nickel City Opera	Orchestra of New Spain
Finger Lakes Opera	theatre of ny	Opera Cultura	Queen City Opera
Guerilla Opera	Lyric Opera of the North	Opera Ithaca	Resonance Works Pittsburgh

## CANADA 44% OF CANADIAN MEMBERSHIP

Against the Grain Theatre	Manitoba Opera	Tapestry Opera	Vancouver Opera
Edmonton Opera	Opera on the Avalon		

**OPERA  
AMERICA**

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