

HIGHER ACCESSIBILITY VERSION

Hiring Bias and Wage Gap Report

2022 - 2023



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Introduction

From the Director of Diversity and Inclusion

In our industry, we face so much uncertainty. When will the next audition be? Will I have the time to go? When will I get my next contract? How long until I need to search again? When will my big break be...or even a medium break so I can pay my bills?

Amidst the November 2024 election results, several global crises, and still within the grasp of COVID-19, we face uncertainty on a national and global level as well. While the two years presented in this report were still directly within the four-year height of the COVID pandemic (with a collective 321,000 COVID-related deaths between 2022 and 2023), we are still experiencing the ramifications of the pandemic now. This is also a potentially tenuous time for unions as we see a shift in the political landscape over the next four years, including the direct attacks on diversity, equity and inclusion at the federal level. I know that statement will be met with sentiments of, “Why do we need to make this political?” and I get it; there is an oversaturation in media already. However, “the personal is political.”¹ Personal issues, like whether someone receives a job or is discriminated against because of certain identities or characteristics, even how discrimination leads to pay gaps, demand political and social intervention. Reading a report like this *should* make you feel like something needs to be done so that you and your fellow members, folks who have worked hard in our industry, are able to not only receive work, but make a living, support their families and thrive when the world around us makes it hard to even survive sometimes.

This might feel like heavy stuff, because it is. You can and should remain hopeful

¹ Heberle, Renee, “The Personal Is Political,” in Lisa Disch and Mary Hawkesworth (eds), [*The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*](#), 2016

for change – you’ll see it in the report below – but you also need to become activated and maintain that activation in your workplaces, so everyone can thrive. I remain optimistic because I see the incremental change taking place from year to year, especially as we are regaining the contract numbers we saw pre-COVID. At the same time, I am acutely and intimately aware of the very real issues our members face on a daily basis. My team, staff, council and members will continue to fight for fair, equitable and inclusive workplaces. This is a call to action as much as it is a report examining hiring biases wage gaps.

During a tumultuous and confusing time in which the future of unions is precarious (in addition to the inherently precarious nature of our industry), this report brings us a look at what our union (*your* union) has achieved and spaces where we need to pay closer attention and do more work.

The 2022 season saw an increase in new contracts by 198%, increasing from 5,818 in 2021 to 17,352 in 2022. We saw yet another increase in 2023 with 18,085 new contracts. While this is still below the total new contracts in 2019 (24,156), which was an all-time peak year for new contracts at Equity, we are moving closer to pre-pandemic numbers. We also see several identity statistics from the 2016–2019 report that point towards a more equitable industry; with 30.26% of all new contracts going to BIPOC members (an increase of 8.96% from the 2016–2019 collective seasons) and an increase of 1.18% for folks above the age of 45 from 2016–2019 to 2023 and folks with disabilities (an increase of 1.11% from 2016–2019 to 2023). There have been more equitable (though statistically questionable due to lack of member self-reporting) trends for transgender and veteran members as well. Unfortunately, we also saw some trends that lend themselves towards less inclusivity and equity. Women and non-binary members saw fewer contracts on average in 2022 and 2023 than in 2016–2019.

Our industry is one of storytelling, mystique and possibility – we help people fly, transform and grow to unimaginable heights. That same possibility exists in our hiring practices, too, in our pay structures and in our approaches to the stories themselves.

The union legally cannot tell producers what to produce or what stories to tell, but we can urge employers to think deeply about casting practices and whose stories are being told and who gets to tell them. And we can do so through presenting these

figures and showing where there is still room to grow even in the face of uncertainty.

A reminder: Each and every one of these figures has real people behind them. A contract isn't just a way to fulfill one's dream of being on stage or in a call booth – it is a way to pay rent, feed our children, have access to healthcare.

I love metaphors. Last report, we talked about flowers. This time, it's pie. Now stick with me. Sometimes it seems like DEI means some folks get smaller pieces of the pie; that adding more people to the union or focusing our efforts on ensuring certain populations feel like they belong in the union means that others are forgotten, or resources are now limited. See? Smaller piece of the pie. But DEI does the opposite. It means more pie. More spaces for employment, more bargaining power, more political power and more resources for everyone. DEI can be a scary term because sometimes it's assumed that it means fewer resources for some to give more to others. Sometimes we need to focus on the needs of one population for a bit to be sure they even have pie to begin with, a privilege that so many others have. Our union and our industry deserves more pie – more concentrated energy put into developing spaces where ALL of our members feel like they can belong, can work, and can thrive. It's not less pie but finally equal pieces of pie for everyone.

With thoughts of pie in your heads, let's dive into the hiring bias and wage gap report for 2022 and 2023.

DANEE CONLEY

Director of Diversity and Inclusion

Introduction

From the President

Equity's Hiring Bias and Wage Gap reports have become an important tool in our industry for measuring certain kinds of progress we're making towards an American theatre that actually looks like America. These reports have shown how biases that are ingrained in our culture can affect work and earning opportunities for so many different kinds of actors and stage managers.

The good news is that these reports have shown steady, if incremental change. At times the pace of change reported in each iteration has been frustrating. Change is hard, and big changes take time. With this year's report – the first to look at a typical season since the COVID shutdown – we now have enough data over a significant span of time to see that we've made steady progress. For example, we've seen an increase of more than 10% in the number of new contracts offered to BIPOC actors and stage managers between 2019 and 2023.

This change doesn't happen organically. The whole reason Equity began sharing this data was to bring awareness of existing disparities to the people who make decisions about what shows to stage, who to hire for them and how much to pay those workers. We can point out the numbers and the trends they represent, but it's up to those producers and employers to take action to move the industry toward a more equitable model.

That doesn't mean that our own union has sat back and waited for change to come. In this year's report, you'll find a new feature, highlighting some of the work Equity has done internally with our members, leaders and staff to help us all overcome unconscious biases and become co-creators of a theatre that promotes justice and belonging. I'm also happy that this year's report takes a special look at the situation for stage managers and performers who work on chorus contracts, since each of those job categories faces distinct situations that may not be visible when only looking at

the union as a whole.

I'm extremely proud of the work our union does to help make our industry better. And I know there's plenty more work ahead for all of us. As you read the information in this report, I invite you to consider what your role may be in advancing this work in the season to come.

In solidarity,

BROOKE SHIELDS

President

Introduction

From the Executive Director

This report is the fifth in a series Equity has been publishing since 2017. Although this project has examined both hiring bias and wage gaps from its inception, hiring bias has always had top billing. (The first report was titled *Looking at Hiring Bias by the Numbers*.) Hiring bias can be easier to talk about – for one, it’s more visible, and the wage gap doesn’t really matter if you aren’t getting jobs to begin with. Couple those factors with Americans’ typical discomfort with discussing finances, and it’s not hard to see why the wage gap data may get overlooked.

But understanding and improving both factors are critical to the work of creating a more equitable industry. An industry that hires all kinds of people but only financially rewards some is fundamentally unfair. Similarly, an industry that refuses entry-level opportunities to some, only hiring them once they’ve somehow managed to ascend to the top of their field, creates near impossible stakes for newcomers.

This year’s report offers some notable data related to wage gaps that we haven’t seen in previous reports – namely, in several categories, BIPOC actors and stage managers appear to be out-earning their white counterparts. What this report cannot tell us is what employment situations created this gap – are smaller, lower-budget theatres more highly segregated than Broadway and national tours? Are stars of color negotiating for themselves such great pay packages that they tip the scales? Are there more nuanced situations on the ground at play?

This report cannot answer those questions, but it can encourage those in the field making decisions around hiring, budgeting and season-planning to think critically about the repercussions of their choices, unintentional or otherwise.

In this moment when the president of the United States and his supporters are weaponizing the very idea of DEI to resegregate the federal workforce, it’s more important than ever that we take care to ensure our own workplaces can live up to

the actual ideals of diversity, equity and inclusion. I hope this report can support all of us in the theater industry in doing just that.

In solidarity,

AL VINCENT, JR.

Executive Director

How to Use This Report

This report is meant to be a comparison of theatrical work in 2022 and 2023, from January 1 to December 31 each year. We have moved to producing a report every other year so that we can look more closely at change over longer stretches rather than one year at a time. One of Equity's commitments as a part of the larger labor movement is to address systemic injustices, both within our own institutions and within our industries. Our report is also part of a larger social commitment to foster live performance across the country – we cannot grow until we look at our foundations like hiring and pay practices. Hiring decides who survives in this industry and pay decides who thrives; that is systemic power and a big responsibility on the part of all decision-makers. Equity works toward advancing the careers of its members by negotiating wages and improving working conditions. One way we do this is through reports like this, which not only provide ample data for negotiations (on pay structures, for example), but also through really looking at practices our employers engage in that impact on the working conditions of their workplaces. Biases in hiring and pay inevitably affect those spaces.

Our members deserve access to work and equitable pay; that is the bottom line of this report. That said, the data in this report analyzes the allocation of new contracts in 2022 and 2023 as well as the average weekly salaries across various identity and job categories. Like the last hiring bias and wage gap report, this report looks at federally protected identities such as race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability and veteran status. It also, once again, looks at the intersectional work built upon the last report regarding the intersections of race/age, age/gender and gender/race. New to this report is the addition of looking at typically under-discussed job categories in union literature: chorus and stage managers. This report looks specifically at the

statistics involved; for more qualitative information on DEI practices at the union, see the Looking Ahead section of this report and other reports that can be found on the [Diversity and Inclusion page of Equity's public website](#).

Methodology

Employment data in this report is pulled from January 1 to December 31, 2022, and the same date range for 2023. These two years were more typical for Equity new contracts than the previous post-shutdown years, with numbers getting closer to those of the pre-pandemic years, so this report will feature comparison between these two years and the data from the 2016–2019 Hiring Bias and Wage Gap Report. There are also reports for 2013–2015, 2020 and 2021 that share our other older data, but those are not used for comparison in the current report.

The six demographic identity points (race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability and veteran status), the intersectional data (race/age, age/gender, gender/race) and the demographic information provided for the chorus and stage manager sections were gathered from Equity members' self-identification to the union. This information is both voluntary and confidential. We do note that there are identities presented in this report that are severely underreported to the union and that can be due to many reasons, which are explored later on in this report.

The earnings information comes from contracts filed with Equity; the average weekly salary for contracts is considered the average of all contracts as of their opening week. This data is based on a show's opening night company and does not include replacements, salary increases or changes in roles. If someone was hired for a job in a previous year and continued into 2022 or 2023, it is not included in this report. Only shows that opened in the 2022 and 2023 calendar years were considered for the new data in this report, focusing on potential hiring and salary biases in initial

casting and hiring decisions.

In this report, a contract refers to an individual job rather than an individual person. Using this definition, there were 17,352 new contracts issued in 2022. Of those contracts, 5,187 new contracts went to BIPOC members. This could mean that all those new contracts went to the same person, that 5,187 individual BIPOC members each received a new contract, that all of those contracts went to the same 15 people, etc. We look at individual jobs rather than individual people; by comparing employment opportunities rather than individual hireability, the aggregation of the data maintains confidentiality of our members.

Five job categories are explored in this report: principal actor in a play, principal actor in a musical, chorus actor, stage manager and assistant stage manager (with special attention later in the report to the latter three categories). Stage management contracts are not delineated by whether the production was a play or musical because members have expressed that stage managers and assistant stage managers move more fluidly between the genres.

There are two categories that represent a lack of information: “Prefer Not to Say” and “Not Provided.” “Prefer Not to Say” represents that a member actively chose not to share their identity for a given demographic marker. As we intimated above, that can be for a number of reasons, and while we encourage members to self-identify with the union and ensure that the information is only used in the aggregate and an individual’s identifiable information is never shared with anyone, we do respect members’ choices. “Not Provided” implies that a member did not answer that question at all.

Unlike previous years, there will be no comparative data with the U.S. Census or any other external demographic censuses. The U.S. Census is inherently flawed; not only is the population count for critical demographic populations underreported or missing completely, but the population count that is reported out is often inaccurate and inappropriate for comparative purposes. For example, “the bureau estimates that in 2010 it overcounted whites and undercounted Black and Latinx people and Native Americans who live on reservations.”² While this has devastating impacts

² Rojas, Nikki, “[Harvard Sociology Professor Weighs in on Census Flaws](#),” *Harvard Gazette*, 11 Jan. 2024

in the legal landscape (to determine how many seats each state receives in the U.S. House of Representatives and federal funding for schools, hospitals, etc.), it also has ramifications on any comparisons we may make here. An underrepresentation of socially marginalized groups skews perceptions on what is and isn't progress. Additionally, there are several categories of demographic identities that the U.S. Census does not consider, such as gender beyond the binary of "male" and "female" or MENA (Middle Eastern and North African) ethnicities. This is not to say that the census or census taking isn't important; it just won't be used comparatively in this report.

Averages are calculated as arithmetic means, rounded to the nearest tenth. When an increase in percentages is reported out as a percentage again, we are referring to the total of the two percentages. For example, a 10% population demographic that increases by 5%, is meant to be read to mean a 15% population demographic in the second data point referenced.

No demographic information for a specific person is ever shared outside of Equity unless given express permission from the member in question, and no individual's information is divulged in any part of this report.

For detailed graphs of each demographic section, please see the Appendix, which is a separate document that can be found [here](#). Throughout this report, unlike past years, we have used overall BIPOC data rather than individual races/ethnicities – this more detailed information can be found in the Appendix.

If you have any questions about methodology or need help reading/understanding any part of this report, please contact us at diversity@actorsequity.org and we will be more than happy to help.

A Look at the Numbers

Race/ Ethnicity

In June 2021, Equity renewed our commitment to change the stage – to re-examine its own systems and work towards a more equitable industry, including addressing the needs of our BIPOC members and potential members. There are two stipulations of that commitment that we'd like to highlight here:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we will commit to negotiating provisions into our agreements with employers that ensure the safety and well-being of our BIPOC members, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we will engage with our employers beyond negotiations to address systemic racism in our workplaces, using all of the tools at our disposal to implement anti-racist policy across our industry.

These commitments haven't been forgotten and have been at the forefront of conversations in and around the union. This report is one of those tools, part of a larger toolkit meant to change the way we not only see the stage and its possibilities for diverse and equitable representation, but also how we show up behind the scenes to fight for more inclusive contract language, develop programming for members and have meaningful conversations with employers. It's important to note that Equity doesn't ask for demographic information just for reports; we utilize that information to discuss bargaining priorities for members in each new or renegotiated contract.

With a response rate of 83.5% on self-identification from members, 2023 saw an increase in the number of new contracts for both BIPOC and White/European

American members. There was a 0.4% increase in new contracts for BIPOC members between 2022 and 2023; similarly, there was a 0.1% increase in new contracts for White/European American members. It's important to recognize that substantial change takes time. Looking between the two years may provoke a "change is too slow" response – and we completely get that. But comparing employment in 2023 with that in 2016–2019, we can see a substantial shift in the data.

We see a similar trend in pay – a substantial increase in pay across the board for all racial and ethnic demographics in all job categories between 2016–2019 and 2023. We see less of an increase between 2022 and 2023, but this is affected by a few things: (1) contractually bargained of wage increases, (2) one's ability to negotiate a higher salary on top of base pay and (3) the increase between two years within a longer period of sustained or overall increase will be less than the overall increase between 3 and 5 years. That said, 2022 and 2023 saw average salaries that are relatively similar across racial and ethnic groups, though leaning slightly higher towards BIPOC members on new contracts.

We also want to reiterate something we included in the last report: The salaries shared here are across a wide range of contract types, which affects the averages reported here. The types of contracts made available, particularly entry-level jobs like SPT (Small Professional Theatre) and lower-tiered LORT (League of Resident Theatres) contracts, veer towards fewer contracts for BIPOC members in addition to BIPOC members receiving fewer new contracts overall compared to their White/European American colleagues. So even though the average is higher for BIPOC members, that does not paint the entire picture of either representation or diversity because the report does not specify contract types or tiers.

A keen example of other ways we are working to dismantle racism in the industry is as signatory to Black Theatre United's (BTU) New Deal.³ The intro to the New Deal reads:

For far too long, Black artists, theatre makers and technicians in all areas of our industry have been subjected to systemic

³ ["A New Deal For Broadway," Black Theatre United](#)

and interpersonal racism that has harmed their lives and careers and diminished us all. From March 2021 through August 2021, we, leaders in the Broadway theatre industry, participated in a summit organized by Black Theatre United. In five working groups consisting of theatre owners, producers, unions, and two groups of creatives (one with directors, choreographers, music directors, and designers; and another with casting directors, composers, and playwrights), we discussed how to reform our industry across issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging (EDIAB) with a focus on Black professionals.

The BTU Summit (in conjunction with various stakeholders including unions) and subsequent New Deal document act as testaments and intentions of various groups/positions to address both issues faced by Black artists in our industry and EDIAB efforts. Equity, as signatory, both agrees to the terms set forth in the document and actively works with BTU to update the language to best represent and fight for its members of color on one of the largest contracts in our bargaining portfolio. Our diversity and inclusion department has been working closely with BTU to find ways that the union can show up for and commit to ongoing advocacy for Black artists via our Retrofit, the union's ambitious plan, launched in 2020, to reinvent itself as an anti-racist organization from the ground up. One key commitment for unions outlined in the document is that "We will adopt an EDIAB policy, including a process for members to express complaints or concerns (including anonymously) relating to EDIAB issues, and will ensure that all members are made aware of it." Not only has a business representative for discrimination and harassment been appointed to the union (a role that was newly formed in 2022), but Equity is contracted with Lighthouse, a secure, confidential online tool used to report issues of bullying, discrimination, harassment, hostile work environment, sexual harassment, willful misconduct or retaliation that have occurred within the workplace. Anonymous reports can be filed through Lighthouse, and there are three ways to make a report: the Lighthouse Website, the Lighthouse mobile app or the Lighthouse hotline. This information is shared in various spaces made available and reiterated to members

(the member portal, first rehearsals, etc.) and also to the public via a series of informational tutorials.⁴ The ultimate goal of the partnership with BTU and these updates to Equity work is to be both proactive and responsive when issues arise in the workplace. It is all part of an ongoing effort to change the stage, at the Equity level and beyond.

	BIPOC	White or European American	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2016 - 2019	21.3%	64.0%	5.2%	9.5%
2022	29.9%	49.5%	3.8%	16.8%
2023	30.3%	50.0%	3.9%	15.9%

Table 1: Percent of contracts that went to BIPOC workers, White/European American workers, those who preferred not to provide their race or ethnicity and the folks who chose not to answer

2016-2019	Overall average weekly salary	BIPOC	White or European American
Principal (play)	\$682.79	\$664.82	\$665.81
Principal (musical)	\$884.62	\$1,002.55	\$865.20
Chorus	\$1112.00	\$1,073.34	\$1,074.99
Stage Managers	\$862.65	\$882.97	\$882.04
Assistant Stage Managers	\$954.04	\$968.38	\$989.70

Table 2: Average weekly salaries for BIPOC and White/European American workers compared to the total average for the 2016–2019 seasons across job categories

⁴ Crowley, Abbey, "Reporting Harassment and Discrimination Series," YouTube

2022	Overall average weekly salary	BIPOC	White or European American
Principal (play)	\$912.40	\$970.09	\$836.75
Principal (musical)	\$1,159.44	\$1,204.98	\$1,158.81
Chorus	\$1,283.32	\$1,344.76	\$1,364.31
Stage Manager	\$1,022.62	\$1,065.20	\$1,055.45
Assistant Stage Manager	\$1,149.07	\$1,350.26	\$1,178.67

Table 3: Average weekly salaries for BIPOC and White/European American workers compared to the total average for the 2022 season across job categories

2023	Overall average weekly salary	BIPOC	White or European American
Principal (play)	\$864.66	\$870.44	\$857.93
Principal (musical)	\$1,278.67	\$1,291.69	\$1,337.94
Chorus	\$1,392.33	\$1,468.93	\$1,360.78
Stage Managers	\$1,051.58	\$1,103.68	\$1,088.99
Assistant Stage Managers	\$1,176.32	\$1,390.48	\$1,178.67

Table 4: Average weekly salaries for BIPOC and White/European American workers compared to the total average for the 2023 season across job categories

Gender

Something our diversity and inclusion department shares frequently is that Equity was formed in 1913, when half of the population didn't have the right to vote. Equity is committed to addressing its foundational issues regarding gender disparities and encourages the rest of the industry to do the same – this report is a call to action as much as it is a reporting of key data impacting our members and their experiences in the workplace. Like sexual orientation (discussed later in this report), gender is a spectrum. Due to many of the anti-trans bills either passed, downvoted or still in process, we wanted to start this section with a few key definitions as we continue the discussion (all taken from the GLAAD Media Reference Guide). While other sections rely more heavily on outside data, we wanted to be cognizant that, where gender studies are concerned, education is essential, so we do not put folks into dangerous or hostile situations.

Gender Identity – “A person’s internal, deeply held knowledge of their own gender. Everyone has a gender identity. For most people their gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth (cisgender). For transgender people, their gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth...Gender identity is not visible to others. You cannot look at someone and ‘see’ their gender identity.”

Gender Expression – “External manifestations of gender, expressed through a person’s name, pronouns, clothing, haircut, voice and/or behavior. Societies classify these external cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. Most transgender people seek to align their gender expression with their gender identity to resolve the incongruence between their knowledge of their own gender and how the world ‘sees’ them.”

Non-Binary – “An adjective used by people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the binary gender categories of ‘man’ and ‘woman.’ Many nonbinary people also call themselves transgender and consider

themselves part of the transgender community. Others do not.”⁵

Third gender, as used by Equity, represents the folks that are neither man nor woman but are a third gender (though not necessarily defining themselves as non-binary). It’s essential to recognize that it is everyone’s right to identify as whatever they see fit, and it is not our right as a union or otherwise to dictate how a person identifies or expresses their gender.

Now, take a look at the numbers and how we can contribute to safe, inclusive work environments both as a union and as an industry. We are moving closer to parity amongst both men and women regarding percentage of new contracts (44.4% and 43.2% in 2023 respectively), but there is still an underrepresentation of non-binary and third gender members contracted in 2022 and 2023, even seeing a decrease in 0.4% from 2016–2019 (2.0%) to 2023 (1.6%). Similarly, we see the pay disparity gap closing across the binary of men and women, though women consistently make less than men, no matter the year being looked at. What is starkly apparent is the pay disparity for folks who are non-binary or third gender. Non-binary and third gender members made \$98.68–\$295.54 (depending on job category) less weekly on average than the aggregate average contracts in 2023. For transgender members, of the population of folks on new contracts who identified that they were transgender, while the absolute number of self-identified transgender members increased, the number of new contracts offered to transgender workers stayed the same from 2022 to 2023 (0.8%). That is up from the 0.1% of new contracts reported in the 2016–2019 report. As a reminder, transgender identity is one of our most underreported demographics, which may impact this data.

A key element of developing both inclusive and diverse spaces is showing up for our members when they need us most. Spearheaded by Assistant Executive Director for the Central Region and General Counsel Andrea Hoeschen, Equity filed several amicus briefs in Montana (in the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals), Tennessee (in the district court level and the 6th Circuit), Texas (in the 5th Circuit) and Florida (in the 11th Circuit) to push back against the anti-trans bills put forward in those states. While the decision was that the law stands in Tennessee at both levels, we are still awaiting a decision in Montana, Texas and Florida (though the latter case may be

⁵ [Glossary of Terms: Transgender, GLAAD](#)

dismissed because the plaintiff handling the issue went out of business). Our briefs focused on First Amendment freedoms and overbreadth (when a law is too broad), with specific attention on how they could affect theatrical productions. As we await these decisions, Equity continues to work hard to address members' needs at the personal level in addition to the federal legal level.

Last year, Equity released a video message of solidarity and call for support from members to take a stand against the wave of anti-trans legislation sweeping the country. In it stands the resounding statement: "We're not going anywhere." At Equity, we represent members – all members, of every identity, including every gender identity. The video is accompanied by a resource toolkit helping members and other theater practitioners learn more about what's going on at the legal level, become more socially engaged and access further resources for getting the help they need when they need it. Equity stands in solidarity with trans, non-binary and gender non-conforming members (and people), which we wanted to especially highlight in this report.

“Not Transgender”: A Side Note

We did not include the numbers of those who responded “Not Transgender” because asking that question does not imply that the person responding is cisgender, just that they do not identify as transgender. This could include folks who are non-binary, a third gender, cisgender men and women or even folks who identify differently than their sex determined at birth but do not identify as trans. Trans men are men. Trans women are women. We include the information for folks who are transgender in this section rather than in the section on “Sexual Orientation” because the T in LGBTQ+ has no correlation to sexual orientation and we wanted to be sure we discussed the hiring biases that exist in conjunction with larger conversations about gender, especially as the legal landscape attempts to debate the rights of trans folks as though they are separate from or unequal to other gender identities in our society.

	Women	Men	Non-binary and third gender	Prefer not to say	Prefer to self-describe	Not provided
2016 - 2019	45.0%	51.4%	2.0%	0.1%	0.1%	1.4%
2022	43.3%	45.0%	1.5%	0.3%	0.2%	9.7%
2023	43.2%	44.4%	1.6%	0.5%	0.3%	10.0%

Table 5: Percent of contracts that went to women, men, non-binary and third gender, those who preferred not to provide their gender, those who preferred to self-describe and the percentage of folks who chose not to answer

2016-2019	Overall average weekly salary	Women	Men	Non-binary and third gender	Prefer to self-describe
Principal (play)	\$682.79	\$671.45	\$691.39	\$598.75	\$516.19
Principal (musical)	\$884.62	\$892.37	\$885.19	\$703.54	\$762.27
Chorus	\$1,112.00	\$1,141.84	\$1,103.24	\$1,009.21	\$767.27
Stage Manager	\$862.65	\$840.24	\$952.53	\$700.31	\$716.33
Assistant SM	\$954.04	\$963.89	\$1,002.82	\$961.59	\$1,916.85

Table 6: Average weekly salaries for women, men, non-binary or third gender workers and those who prefer to self-describe compared to the total average for the 2016–2019 seasons across job categories

2022	Overall average weekly salary	Women	Men	Non-binary and third gender	Prefer to self-describe
Principal (play)	\$912.40	\$869.80	\$939.07	\$816.30	\$857.46
Principal (musical)	\$1,159.44	\$1,209.15	\$1,168.10	\$995.14	\$1,240.33
Chorus	\$1,283.32	\$1,327.01	\$1,282.85	\$1,117.40	\$0.00
Stage Manager	\$1,022.62	\$1,043.66	\$1,108.76	\$847.40	\$929.88
Assistant SM	\$1,149.07	\$1,218.13	\$1,241.61	\$968.83	\$1,505.00

Table 7: Average weekly salaries for women, men, non-binary or third gender workers and those who prefer to self-describe compared to the total average for the 2022 seasons across job categories

2023	Overall average weekly salary	Women	Men	Non-binary and third gender	Prefer to self-describe
Principal (play)	\$864.66	\$844.59	\$877.63	\$765.98	\$723.91
Principal (musical)	\$1,278.67	\$1,262.85	\$1,350.92	\$983.13	\$1,453.23
Chorus	\$1,426.36	\$1,426.36	\$1,408.05	\$1,272.93	\$910.69
Stage Manager	\$1,051.58	\$1,050.35	\$1,180.71	\$963.52	\$1,156.80
Assistant SM	\$1,176.32	\$1,255.53	\$1,297.66	\$973.76	\$0.00

Table 8: Average weekly salaries for women, men, non-binary or third gender workers and those who prefer to self-describe compared to the total average for the 2023 seasons across job categories

	Transgender	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2016-2019	0.1%	0.2%	78.5%
2022	0.8%	0.5%	67.9%
2023	0.8%	0.9%	62.3%

Table 9: Percentage of contracts that went to transgender workers, workers who preferred not to say and workers who did not provide this demographic information

Age

Ageism is “the stereotypes (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) towards others or ourselves based on age.”⁶ Ageism is pervasive in our industry, which is built on the ability for employers to make artistic choices that prohibit people who don’t “look” a certain way, including looking a certain age, from receiving certain roles. In this section, we find it particularly important to share what rights exist under the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and how we as an industry can go beyond that to recognize age discrimination across the board.

Under the U.S. EEOC, age discrimination in the workplace against employees only protects workers over the age of 40 and only if an employer has 20 or more employees. The law “prohibits discrimination in any aspect of employment, including hiring, firing, pay, job assignments, promotions, layoffs, training, benefits, and any other term or condition of employment.”⁷ This is important context because the protections of folks under the age of 40 and across all ages in spaces where an employer has fewer than 20 employees are non-existent at the federal level even though ageism can happen across age groups and in small companies. (By companies we mean both organizations and the companies of shows when the total number of employees under a given employer is fewer than 20 people.) This does limit the capability of employees (read here: members) to seek legal action when there are concerns of ageism in the workplace. Because of these limitations, it’s important that we, as a collective industry, learn to not only spot ageism in our workplaces but seek

⁶ [“Ageism.” World Health Organization, World Health Organization](#)

⁷ [“Age Discrimination.” US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

to dismantle it no matter the circumstances. For employers, engage in anti-ageism trainings, conversations and practices – seek the employment of folks of all ages and be cognizant of implicit biases and pay discrepancies when decision-making. For employees, know your rights not only under the federal government, but at the state and local levels as well. ⁸ Age discrimination is one of the hardest forms of discrimination to prove, so it is essential for us to combat it at the foundational level, even when that work feels hard to do. ⁹

Equity is committed to fighting ageism in the industry and encourages members experiencing ageism to contact the diversity and inclusion department for further resources and information (diversity@actorsequity.org).

The percentage of new contracts that are offered to each age range (defined by the U.S. government for census purposes, the faults within which we have previously discussed) follow neither the bell curve of overall U.S. population nor even the curve of our own membership's age. Job opportunities are disproportionate across age categories and underscore the ageism which our members face across the board. We continue to see disproportionately fewer jobs offered to our 45 and older age ranges.

While the pay between age groups in 2023 is relatively similar when looking at each job category, it does tend to decrease as members get older. Focusing solely on the “Across All Job Categories” data in 2023, the total weekly average salary increases until the gap between 25–44 and 45–64 in which it drops by \$35.73 and then drops again for the 65+ age group by \$94.30. Looking comparatively with the 2022 data (most age groups increased in pay between the two years except for those 65+), the pay gaps there paint a similar picture. A drop of \$35.74 between the 25–44 and 45–64 age groups and then another drop of only \$10.31 between 45–64 and 65+ age groups. We cannot conjecture why the gap is so much larger between 45–64 and 65+ between the two years, but it is a statistic that we will need to keep an eye on as time moves on.

⁸ [“Age Discrimination Laws by States.” Workplace Fairness, 9 Dec. 2024](#)

⁹ Span, Paula. [“Discrimination Is Hard to Prove, Even Harder to Fix.” New York Times, 22 July 2019](#)

	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Not provided
2016-2019	0.8%	13.6%	51.2%	27.9%	3.5%	3.0%
2022	0.2%	5.2%	54.5%	26.2%	6.1%	7.8%
2023	0.2%	5.1%	54.2%	26.6%	5.9%	8.0%

Table 10: Percent of contracts that went to each age group and those who did not provide their age

2016-2019	Overall average weekly salary	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Not provided
Principal (play)	\$682.79	\$935.76	\$713.82	\$678.47	\$678.17	\$700.65	\$663.38
Principal (musical)	\$884.62	\$1,244.70	\$862.63	\$890.00	\$862.71	\$1,037.92	\$766.31
Chorus	\$1,112.00	\$1,254.08	\$1,137.18	\$1,132.29	\$971.81	\$902.32	\$886.15
Stage Manager	\$862.65	\$567.15	\$702.28	\$871.25	\$965.32	\$825.32	\$570.82
Assistant SM	\$954.04	\$710.31	\$863.27	\$1,042.00	\$989.75	\$727.11	\$691.31
Across job categories	\$899.22	\$942.40	\$855.84	\$922.80	\$893.55	\$838.66	\$715.60

Table 11: Average weekly salaries for each age group and those who did not provide their age compared to the total average for the 2016–2019 seasons across job categories

2022	Overall average weekly salary	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Not provided
Principal (play)	\$912.40	\$2,227.77	\$782.18	\$900.47	\$928.44	\$897.01	\$948.40
Principal (musical)	\$1,159.44	\$1,079.87	\$1,263.05	\$1,137.87	\$1,138.70	\$1,752.45	\$912.40
Chorus	\$1,283.32	\$1,602.70	\$1,270.48	\$1,320.09	\$1,161.96	\$1,001.04	\$1,185.87
Stage Manager	\$1,022.62	\$0.00	\$662.92	\$1,051.12	\$1,169.73	\$895.70	\$668.63
Assistant SM	\$668.63	\$0.00	\$962.10	\$1,275.66	\$1,107.67	\$908.74	\$837.87
Across job categories	\$1009.28	\$982.07	\$988.15	\$1137.04	\$1101.30	\$1090.99	\$910.63

Table 12: Average weekly salaries for each age group and those who did not provide their age compared to the total average for the 2022 season across job categories

2023	Overall average weekly salary	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Not provided
Principal (play)	\$864.66	\$1,756.04	\$857.01	\$858.00	\$850.05	\$891.84	\$919.71
Principal (musical)	\$1,278.67	\$1,560.10	\$1,333.94	\$1,310.41	\$1,253.07	\$1,299.54	\$990.69
Chorus	\$1,392.33	\$1,797.53	\$1,415.47	\$1,412.97	\$1,356.24	\$1,230.57	\$1,224.28
Stage Manager	\$1,051.58	\$0.00	\$827.05	\$1,074.93	\$1,143.91	\$1,089.49	\$735.13
Assistant SM	\$1,176.32	\$0.00	\$1,004.00	\$1,305.04	\$1,179.42	\$799.75	\$880.55
Across job categories	\$1152.71	\$1022.73	\$1087.49	\$1192.27	\$1156.54	\$1062.24	\$950.07

Table 13: Average weekly salaries for each age group and those who did not provide their age compared to the total average for the 2023 season across job categories

Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation is a spectrum, so it's important to mention at the top of this section that reports like this will never be able to capture the full picture of the impact that hiring bias and wage gaps have on specific sexual orientation demographics. This is why the "Prefer to Self-Describe" option is essential – we want to be sure that even when we can't fully represent folks in these reports, we can do so internally. Another thing to note is that we say LGBTQ+ intentionally; not to erase transgender experiences, but because we include that information in our section on gender to reflect the nuance of the "T" in LGBTQ+. According to the Williams Institute at UCLA, in a 2021 study entitled "LGBT People's Experiences of Workplace Discrimination and Harassment," about 45.5% of LGBT workers experience unfair work treatment, "including being fired, not hired, or harassed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity at some point in their lives," with 31.1% claiming to have experienced discrimination or harassment in the last five years.¹⁰ This is not only unacceptable but paints a picture of labor in the United States that exacerbates the negative experiences of an already vulnerable population. The ACLU has been tracking anti-LGBTQ+ legislation through an interactive map.¹¹ Laws like Louisiana's HB466 which would impose a "Don't Say LGBTQ+" curriculum in schools and Florida's SB170, which would "discourages cities from

¹⁰ [Sears, Brad, et al. "LGBT People's Experiences of Workplace Discrimination and Harassment," UCLA School of Law Williams Institute, Sept. 2021](#)

¹¹ ["Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures in 2024," American Civil Liberties Union, 17 Mar. 2025](#)

passing non-discrimination ordinances,”¹² have the potential to develop serious ramifications for our LGBTQ+ members (an even more staggering impact on trans folks, as discussed earlier in this report) both in their everyday lives and workplaces. Even if someone isn’t experiencing issues in their workplace, very real barriers to work and workplace inclusion exist and are pervasive to our industry, along with many others.

It’s essential to recognize this even though we have low reporting rates for members self-identifying their sexual orientation to the union. That said, roughly 14.4% of new contracts went to members who self-identified as LGBTQ+ (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, etc. – again not an exhaustive list and one that is being updated as needed) in 2023 compared to the 12.6% in 2022. There was an increase in new contracts for LGBTQ+ members by 8.5% between our 2016–2019 report and that of 2023. Truly a win is the decrease in the “Not Provided” category from 2016–2019 to 2022 and then subsequently to 2023. There was a decrease in the lack of reporting by 18.7% between 2016–2019 and 2023, resulting in a clearer (though obfuscated until we receive more information) picture of the delegation of new contracts for LGBTQ+ members in comparison to their colleagues who identify as straight. A similar win is the increase in our “Prefer to Self-Describe” number – by members providing further information to the union, we can better represent them in our data metrics.

	LGBTQ+	Straight	Prefer to self-describe	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2016-2019	5.9%	13.6%	0.8%	1.2%	78.5%
2022	12.6%	18.4%	1.4%	4.2%	63.4%
2023	14.4%	19.0%	1.6%	5.2%	59.8%

Table 14: Percent of contracts that went to LGBTQ+ workers, straight workers, workers who prefer to self-describe, workers who preferred not to say and workers who did not provide this demographic information

¹² Peele, Cullen, [“Roundup of Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation Advancing in States Across the Country.”](#) Human Rights Campaign, 23 May 2023

Disability

It is telling that we have significant underreporting for folks with disabilities in the union for so many reasons, the least of which is the fear that an individual's information would be shared with an employer. While the union will share information in the aggregate through reports like this, an individual's disability or disability status is never shared with an employer by Equity (as is true of all member demographic information); this does not preclude a member from sharing their demographic information voluntarily themselves. There remains, however, a fear that disclosure of one's disability status – even confidentially to the union – may have an impact on the ability to be hired, and that is something we, as an industry, truly need to recognize. There are folks pushing themselves past their limits for fear of discrimination, or they don't know their rights as an employee because the ADA can be confusing (and sometimes just not enough). While we are seeing an upwards trend in the percentage of people sharing whether they have a disability (which will always have both federal and personal definitions), there is still more work to do in this regard. There was an increase in the number of members who self-identify from 2016–2019 to 2022 (by 0.8 %). Due to the higher reporting rate, the numbers could have been impacted. There was a 0.3% increase in the number of new contracts that went to members with disabilities between the years 2022 and 2023.

This past year, to address some of the concerns brought to the union by membership, the diversity and inclusion department hosted a series of events under our Embracing Equity series around the topic of disability and the very real barriers that members are facing in the industry. These events were closed and only available to members, but we want to share some information with you here because we do think it is programming that other organizations could institute to better help their employees know not only their rights, but also that their employer cares about their wellbeing – their full wellbeing.

The first event was “[Know Your ADA Rights](#),” which covered the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) laws regarding employees, labor unions and the entertainment industry. Labor attorney Melissa Woods and her team walked members through how to better interpret the language of the ADA, what is covered under the existing laws and the union’s role in negotiating, advocating for and educating members on ADA compliance. The group also discussed the shortcomings of the current legal structure and explored hypothetical situations that might arise on the job and how to handle them.

The second workshop, “[All Things Accommodations](#),” further broke down the language of the ADA that covers “reasonable” accommodations and walked members through the process of making a request. The diversity and inclusion department shared some examples of reasonable and unreasonable accommodations to illustrate concepts that may come up, including the concept of an “undue burden” that may mean hitting the limits of what an employer will do, and how to reach a potential compromise. The event also included time to draft a sample letter requesting ADA accommodations and the opportunity to workshop them.

The third and final event in the first quarter was “[Accessibility in Performance Spaces](#).” Held in partnership with ConsultAbility, a member-led consulting group, the webinar delved into the important work being done to create accessible performance spaces. ConsultAbility leaders Jenna Bainbridge and Paul Behrhorst led a conversation about how all of these issues manifest the theatre, as well as ways to create safe and inclusive environments for disabled theatre artists. Topics considered included supporting neurodiversity, different kinds of disabilities and how physical spaces can be altered to be more accessible for all.

Webinars: A Side Note for Members

The webinar recordings can all be found on the member portal in the Member Ed section. Alongside the webinar recordings, you can access all accompanying documents, including video transcripts, full Q&As and additional resources and links.

members.actorsequity.org/member-ed/webinars

	Disability	No disability	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2016 - 2019	1%	19.6%	0.6%	78.8%
2022	1.8%	33.0%	0.9%	64.3%
2023	2.1%	38.7%	1.3%	57.9%

Table 15: Percent of contracts that went to disabled workers, workers who identified as not having a disability, workers who preferred not to say and workers who did not provide this demographic information

Veteran Status

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, “In December 2024, the veteran unemployment rate was 2.8% [...] down from 3.0% the prior year.”¹³ Additionally, the VA reports that the percentage of veterans experiencing homelessness increased by 7.4%¹⁴ between January 2022 and the same month in 2023. For some veterans in the United States, the ability to obtain a job is not just being able to be on stage, it could be the difference between have housing, buying groceries and establishing a living or not. A veteran, according to Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations, is “defined as anyone who served in the active military, naval, or air service and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.”¹⁵ For the purposes of Equity’s data collection, whether someone was dishonorably discharged or not would not prohibit them from identifying as a veteran in their self-identification form; we honor and respect everyone’s journey and leave it up to members to share how they identify. It’s important to know this distinction between the legal definition of a veteran and how folks self-identify because it impacts what legal protections they have at the federal level. Folks who have served in the military and were not dishonorably discharged are protected under several laws that fall beneath the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. A key statute protecting veterans in places of employment is the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Right Acts (USERRA), which “prohibits civilian employers from discriminating against

¹³ [“Veteran Unemployment Rates,” U.S. Department of Labor](#)

¹⁴ Diaz, Monica, [“Veteran Homelessness Increased by 7.4% in 2023,” VA News](#), 15 Dec. 2023

¹⁵ [“What Is a Veteran? The Legal Definition,” Veterans Alliance](#)

you based on your present, past, and future military service [and]...entitles service members...who leave their civilian employment to perform covered military service to prompt reemployment with their pre-service employer following the completion of their duty.”¹⁶ Knowing your rights as a veteran is essential to navigating both the employment and legal landscapes.

While we do have a large percentage of folks who have not reported to the union if they are a veteran or not, 0.5% of the 18,085 new contracts in 2023 went to members who identified as veterans. This is up 0.1% from 2022 and the same percentage of change as 2016–2019. The reporting has improved as well by 20.8% between our 2016–2019 report and the numbers from 2023. What this tells us is that members are potentially feeling more comfortable, or more forthcoming, about their veteran status with the union. However, there has been an increase in the number of members who “Prefer Not to Say,” which can be the result of several reasons, including the growing stigma against veterans (especially those with mental health related disabilities like PTSD and depression), fear of discrimination in the workplace and even not meeting the legal criteria for veteran status despite having served. While we can’t definitively say what folks’ reasonings are, we can work together as a union to remove stigma in our own spaces and create environments where veterans feel they can share their identities and not fear discrimination, harassment or retaliation.

	Veteran	Not a veteran	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2016 - 2019	0.3%	20.5%	0.1%	79.2%
2022	0.4%	34.6%	0.3%	64.7%
2023	0.5%	40.8%	0.4%	58.4%

Table 16: Percent of contracts that went to veteran workers, workers who identified as not a veteran, workers who preferred not to say and workers who did not provide this demographic information

¹⁶ [“Protections Against Employment Discrimination for Service Members and Veterans,” U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

Intersectional Representation

Coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, “intersectionality” is an understanding that social configurations and identities are often interconnected and work with or against one another to form varying levels of privilege and/or marginalization. For example, someone who is both BIPOC and a woman will have very different experiences of oppression than someone who is a BIPOC man or a White/European American woman. This follows the notion that “major systems of oppression are interlocking.”¹⁷ Due to this, we at Equity began examining the intersectional impact of identities on hiring bias and wage gaps in our last report and continue that work here.

¹⁷ BlackPast, “blackpast.org, 16 Nov. 2012

Age and Gender

The first matrix we will be looking at is age and gender – i.e. how members are differently impacted based on the intersection of their age with their gender. In 2023, men over the age of 45 were offered 40.7% of all new contracts that were offered to men. In contrast, women over the age of 45 were offered only 32.7% of new contracts offered to women. The ageism that women face is pervasive. The opportunities offered to women are already fewer than the opportunities offered to men, and women face fewer opportunities after the age of 45 than men do. These persistent trends continue from previous seasons. Perhaps the most substantial hiring gap was for folks who are non-binary or third gender. In 2022, there was a 78.8% drop in new contracts between the age groups of 25–44 and 45–64, then decreased in 2023 to 86.3%. While that is an increase between the two years, there is still a significantly higher rate of decrease for non-binary and third-gender workers between age groups than any other reported gender demographic. This is primarily a function of the higher proportion of members in the 25–44 cohort that identify as non-binary and third gender, a demographic which is practically non-existent in our membership over 45 (as reported to the union), thus resulting in a higher decrease in representation within the newly issued contracts.

We do recognize that the self-identification of our non-binary and third-gender membership over the age of 45 does not reflect their percentage of the population and can be a result of several things: a change of language over time, the change in gender “options” offered to them when they filled out their demographic information compared to now and the continued stigma that pervades our society around gender identity politics. Between age cohorts, men make more money than both women and non-binary or third gender workers, with non-binary and third-gender workers making less than any other gender demographic, decreasing at a larger rate than any other gender as ages increase.

As a union, Equity has conducted internal training and programming to help Equity staff learn more about gendered ageism and its impact on both their own experiences at Equity and our members’ experiences in the workplace. The session was preceded by two external resources that staff were encouraged to watch/read ahead of time.¹⁸ The diversity and inclusion and human resources teams led a discussion on the topic including where ageism and gender overlap (the intersectionality of the two), cues to identify how it’s being weaponized (microaggressions, hiring practices) and how to speak out when you notice or are made aware of gendered ageism in the workplace (scripts). This moved into an open discussion with the following guiding questions: (1) How can we educate ourselves on issues of gendered ageism? (2) How do we hold others and ourselves accountable? and (3) How can we use intersectionality to think through the issue of gendered ageism? Through these discussions, staff engaged in a dialogue that spanned the topics of Equity as a workplace and the practices of employers along with their decision-making impact on members, particularly older women.

	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64
Women	0.3%	5.8%	61.6%	26.2%
Men	0.1%	3.6%	55.5%	32.7%
Non-binary/third gender	0.0%	17.1%	80.3%	1.5%
Prefer to self-describe	0.0%	5.1%	84.6%	10.3%
Prefer not to say	0.0%	16.0%	68.0%	16.0%

Table 17: Percent of contracts in 2022 for women, men, non-binary or third gender workers and those who preferred to self-describe or not to say across age groups

¹⁸ [“Gendered Ageism - Women in the Workforce at All Ages.”](#) YouTube, Empowered_Aging, 8 Jan. 2023
 Grose, Jessica, [“The Hour Between Babe and Hag.”](#) *New York Times*, 4 Jan. 2023

	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64
Women	0.2%	5.8%	61.2%	26.9%
Men	0.2%	3.4%	55.6%	33.1%
Non-binary/third gender	0.7%	23.1%	71.9%	3.6%
Prefer to self-describe	0.0%	10.7%	69.6%	19.6%
Prefer not to say	0.0%	14.0%	71.0%	15.1%

Table 18: Percent of contracts in 2023 for women, men, non-binary or third gender workers and those who preferred to self-describe or not to say across age groups

	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64
Women	\$1,336.75	\$1,128.03	\$1,079.10	\$1,015.01
Men	\$1,334.79	\$1,059.39	\$1,072.91	\$1,037.48
Non-binary/third gender	n/a	\$967.70	\$890.48	\$691.79
Prefer to self-describe	n/a	\$619.50	\$1,042.38	\$942.42
Prefer not to say	n/a	\$877.18	\$1,098.27	\$753.92

Table 19: Average weekly salary in 2022 for women, men, non-binary or third gender workers and those who preferred to self-describe or not to say across age groups

	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64
Women	\$1,690.09	\$1,147.31	\$1,097.75	\$994.32
Men	\$1,911.79	\$1,307.17	\$1,156.02	\$1,033.79
Non-binary/third gender	\$1,121.07	\$989.57	\$938.62	\$697.98
Prefer to self-describe	n/a	\$1,135.59	\$1,016.33	\$1,088.37
Prefer not to say	n/a	\$892.87	\$941.50	\$803.50

Table 20: Average weekly salary in 2023 for women, men, non-binary or third gender workers and those who preferred to self-describe or not to say across age groups

Gender and Race

Activist Frances M. Beal, in her 1969 article “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” coined the term “double jeopardy” to describe “the simultaneous forms of sexism and racism experienced by Black women, and women of color more broadly.”¹⁹ Systems of oppression disproportionately impact BIPOC women and BIPOC non-binary and third gender folks more than men, which can be seen in the data below. White/European American men received more contracts in 2022 than any other gender or race intersection, with 24.8% of new contracts. Comparatively, White/European American women received the second highest percentage of new contracts at 23.8%, followed by BIPOC men at 14.6% (10.2% less than White/European American men) and then BIPOC women at 14.4% (9.4% less than White/European American women). Non-binary and third gender folks received the fewest contracts at 0.7% across both racial demographic groups. This trend continues in 2023 with White/European American men receiving 10.9% more contracts than BIPOC men and White/European American women receiving 9% more new contracts than BIPOC women. We do see some improved equitability for BIPOC non-binary and third gender workers in 2023, with a 0.1% increase from 2022. While BIPOC workers seemingly make more than their White/European American colleagues, we do need to consider that these contracts are not broken down by tier or type and can be skewed by a few higher paying contracts when BIPOC members have historically been marginalized in lower-tier, entry level positions in the industry.

What becomes clear when looking at the numbers, is that BIPOC men and women experience a hiring gap in comparison to White/European American workers and

¹⁹ Khosroshahi, Hanieh, “[The Concrete Ceiling](#),” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 10 May 2021

BIPOC women experience an even wider hiring gap compared to BIPOC men, across both years in this study. While we work towards building an anti-racist industry, we must pay close attention to the intersectionality of race and gender to bridge these gaps.

	BIPOC percent of contracts	BIPOC average salary	White/European American percent of contracts	White/European American average salary
Women	14.4%	\$1,126.58	23.8%	\$1,024.02
Men	14.6%	\$1,096.03	24.8%	\$1,027.67
Non-binary/third gender	0.7%	\$915.97	0.7%	\$887.21
Prefer to self-describe	0.1%	\$1,237.65	0.1%	\$771.27
Prefer not to say	0.1%	\$925.13	0.1%	\$915.43

Table 21: Percent of contracts and average weekly salaries in 2022 for BIPOC and White/European American workers across gender demographics

	BIPOC percent of contracts	BIPOC average salary	White/European American percent of contracts	White/European American average salary
Women	14.9%	\$1,099.10	23.9%	\$1,056.26
Men	14.3%	\$1,109.59	25.2%	\$1,123.24
Non-binary/third gender	0.8%	\$968.41	0.7%	\$916.51
Prefer to self-describe	0.2%	\$1,151.22	0.1%	\$909.07
Prefer not to say	0.1%	\$1,105.72	0.2%	\$886.32

Table 22: Percent of contracts and average weekly salaries in 2023 for BIPOC and White/European American workers across gender demographics

Race and Age

In 2018, Victoria Lipnic (the then acting chair of the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission), released a report claiming that “African Americans/Blacks report much higher rates of having experienced age discrimination or knowing someone who had, at 77 percent, compared to 61 percent for Hispanics/Latinos and 59 percent for Whites.”²⁰ The intersectionality of race and age disproportionately impacts those who are both older and BIPOC.

For example, in 2022, for the age range of 25–44, BIPOC members received 1,186 fewer contracts than that of their White/European American colleagues; in 2023, that number increased to 1,226 fewer contracts for BIPOC members than White/European American members. These numbers jump even higher as members age, with BIPOC members in 2022 receiving 1,707 fewer new contracts than White/European American members in the age range of 45–64 and 552 less contracts for those 65+. In 2023, BIPOC members aged 45–64 received 1,813 fewer contracts than White/European American members and 617 fewer contracts once reaching the 65+ age group. Rather than seeing an increase between years, we are actually seeing a decline in equitability – older BIPOC employees are consistently hired less frequently than White/European American employees and these numbers worsen as members age. While we advocate for the hiring of all members no matter their demographics and will continue to fight for workers’ rights across the board, we as an industry need to be cognizant of hiring and pay practices to ensure that all workers are treated fairly.

²⁰ Lipnic, Victoria A., [“The State of Age Discrimination and Older Workers in the U.S. 50 Years After the Age Discrimination in Employment Act \(ADEA\),”](#) U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, June 2018

Age	BIPOC number of contracts	BIPOC average salary	White/European American number of contracts	White/European American average salary
0-17	0.2%	\$1,641.39	0.1%	\$1,046.84
18-24	6.9%	\$1,148.27	3.6%	\$946.85
25-44	68.4%	\$1,112.19	55.2%	\$1,039.02
45-64	21.2%	\$1,039.11	32.7%	\$1,024.25
65+	3.2%	\$1,293.04	8.4%	\$945.92

Table 23: Percentage of contracts and average weekly salaries in 2022 for BIPOC and White/European American workers across age groups

Age	BIPOC number of contracts	BIPOC average salary	White/European American number of contracts	White/European American average salary
0-17	0.2%	\$1,462.11	0.2%	\$1,727.75
18-24	7.8%	\$1,180.35	3.7%	\$934.99
25-44	67.8%	\$1,114.93	54.5%	\$894.92
45-64	21.7%	\$1,040.41	33.1%	\$800.97
65+	2.6%	\$958.42	8.4%	\$744.73

Table 24: Percentage of contracts and average weekly salaries in 2023 for BIPOC and White/European American workers across age groups

Who is Missing

There has been a consistent call for more attention to be paid both to members whose primary job category is the chorus and those who work primarily as stage managers and assistant stage managers. This isn't uncommon – we are in an industry that focuses mostly on principal roles, from media to awards; there is a more overt representation of those in leading roles than in the chorus or behind the scenes as stage managers and assistant stage managers. To that end, we wanted to set aside space (and make space) for those who identify within those roles, to look closer at the hiring bias and salary discrepancies across identity markers that may be impacting those folks.

This section does not delve past three categories (race, gender and age) because the amount of information provided to the union was so low that any comparative data (for disability, sexual orientation and veteran status) would be statistically lacking and could reduce the anonymity of the data.

Chorus Actors

In the world of Equity, 2025 is “A Chorus Year,” and we wanted to take some time to address the hiring and pay practices for members on chorus contracts, pointing to the absolute essential nature and value of the chorus to our industry. The following was shared in a recent Equity press release:

“A Chorus Year marks three historic milestones for the chorus: First is the 10th annual Swing Day on January 15, which recognizes the contributions and highlights the challenges of the performers who fill in when their colleagues in the chorus are absent – sometimes taking on multiple roles in the same performance. Then, August 12 marks the 70th anniversary of the merger of Chorus Equity into Actors’ Equity Association. Finally, November marks the 75th anniversary of the Legacy Robe, Broadway’s most treasured ritual that celebrates an accomplished member of the chorus on new productions’ opening night on Broadway.”

We commemorate and celebrate the chorus not only because of their fortitude and perseverance in the industry, but because they lay the foundation of our stories, build up our scenes and take audiences on journeys that they have yet to imagine. These three milestones are a catalyst for engagement in a year dedicated to the work of these members and it’s important to recognize that potential hiring biases and wage gaps are a part of that larger picture.

Of those who reported their race or ethnicity to the union, the percentage of BIPOC chorus members increased from 37% in 2022 to 40.1% in 2023. The percentage of chorus contracts that went to BIPOC members in 2023 (40.1%) was within 1% to that of White/European American members (41.1%). We have not seen that close a percentage since the development of this report. Comparatively, the overall new contracts that went to BIPOC members was 30.3% while those that went to White/European American members was 50%. We want to celebrate advancement towards equity and inclusion where we can while also remain realistic

about what this means on a statistical level.

Let's bring back the pie metaphor. Because the number of contracts increased from 2022 to 2023, even though the percentage of contracts that went to White/European American members decreased, that doesn't mean that the number of contracts that went to that population decreased. Because of the change in overall contracts, the number of contracts given to any one group could increase between years even though the overall percentage decreased. Even if the piece of the pie seems smaller, there are more pies overall. In terms of wages, BIPOC chorus members made \$87.20 more on average in 2022. In 2023, White/European American members made \$76.68 more on average than their BIPOC colleagues. This is across all contract tiers, and it should be noted that the difference in tiers is not reported here, which may alter these pay differences by racial and ethnic group.

Like the statistics seen earlier in the report on the dissemination of new contracts across job categories when looking at it broken down by age group, the bulk of chorus jobs went to folks in the 25–44 age group in both 2022 and 2023 (68.9% and 67.9% respectively). Those numbers drop significantly in both years once members reach the 45–64 age group and then again for 65+. The same trend can be seen in wage discrepancies as well, with members making less money the older they get after the 25–44 age group.

In 2023, fewer chorus members who identify as women received new contracts (40.1%) than men (47.1%) and even fewer so who identify as non-binary and third gender (1.7%) or who prefer to self-describe their gender identity (0.2%). Women did make slightly more than men (by \$18.31), but folks who were non-binary or third gender made significantly less weekly than men (by \$135.12) and women (by \$153.43), dropping yet again for folks who prefer to self-describe.

What these three data sets tell us (race, age and gender), is that chorus members, though striving towards hiring equity, do experience discrepancies in tandem with histories of marginalization. BIPOC folks, older members, women and non-binary or third gender members are on the receiving end of hiring biases in ways that their historically privileged colleagues are not. While we cannot speculate why these trends take place, we can use this information to recognize that changes need to be made for the most societally vulnerable chorus performers in our industry.

RACE

	BIPOC	White or European American	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2022	36.9%	43.6%	2.0%	17.5%
2023	40.1%	41.1%	2.4%	16.4%

Table 25: Percent of chorus contracts comparing BIPOC, White/European American, prefer not to say and not provided

	BIPOC	White or European American	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2022	\$1,344.76	\$1,257.56	\$1,364.31	\$1,208.69
2023	\$1,468.93	\$1,360.78	\$1,437.46	\$1,276.95

Table 26: Chorus average weekly salary comparing BIPOC, White/European American, prefer not to say and not provided

AGE

	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Not provided
2022	0.2%	11.8%	68.9%	10.8%	1.7%	6.7%
2023	0.4%	12.0%	67.9%	11.0%	1.1%	7.7%

Table 27: Chorus percent of contracts by age cohort

	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Not provided
2022	\$1,602.70	\$1,270.48	\$1,320.09	\$1,161.96	\$1,001.04	\$1,185.87
2023	\$1,797.53	\$1,415.47	\$1,412.97	\$1,356.24	\$1,230.57	\$1,224.28

Table 28: Chorus average weekly salaries

GENDER

	Women	Men	Non-binary and third gender	Prefer to self-describe	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2022	40.5%	48.5%	1.0%	0.0%	0.5%	9.9%
2023	40.1%	47.1%	1.7%	0.2%	0.5%	10.4%

Table 29: Chorus percent of contracts by gender

	Women	Men	Non-binary and third gender	Prefer to self-describe	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2022	\$1,327.01	\$1,282.85	\$1,117.40	\$0.00	\$1,132.12	\$1,126.09
2023	\$1,426.36	\$1,408.05	\$1,272.93	\$910.69	\$1,258.64	\$1,224.17

Table 30: Chorus average weekly salaries by year

Stage Managers

This report will be released after Stage Manager Day at Equity (February 16th each year), a day each year dedicated to the accomplishments and needs of our members working as stage managers and assistant stage managers. 2025 is the 105th anniversary of Equity first recognizing stage managers as a distinct category within the union and in 2023 (the year analyzed in this report), Equity's Executive Director Al Vincent, Jr. had this to say:

Stage managers are used to working behind the scenes to ensure productions run smoothly, without receiving the recognition their actor colleagues do. We are excited to shine a spotlight on all the hard work stage managers do. The union, like every production that employs Equity stage managers, is stronger because of the work of these dedicated and talented individuals. I celebrate them today and every day.

Vincent's words ring true today. We want to do the same here – celebrate, commend and find yet another avenue to fight for the work that stage managers and assistant stage managers do.

As seen in the trends earlier in the report, while it looks like BIPOC stage managers and assistant stage managers make more money than their White/European American colleagues, they are being hired at a lower rate than White/European American workers. In 2022, BIPOC workers received 56.7% fewer new contracts and 53.8% fewer new contracts in 2023 than their White/European American counterparts. There are two aspects we want to point out where this data is concerned. (1) That percentage is dropping, a 2.9% difference between the two years, and we hope to see that trend continue, and (2) the percentage of new

contracts provided to those who didn't provide their racial or ethnic demographics to the union is improving, which will make our data more accurate moving forward. That said, the disparities between BIPOC and White/European American stage managers and assistant stage managers is stark.

Another contrast is the decrease in new work opportunities for stage managers and assistant stage managers as they age. The main bulk of new contracts went to folks aged 25–44 in 2022 and 2023 (54.0% and 53.6% respectively) and dropped by 27.1 % in 2022 and 26.2% in 2023 for the 45–64 age group. This is a trend towards addressing ageism in the workplace – there are more contracts going to stage managers and assistant stage managers aged 45–64 in 2023 than 2022 – but an over 25% drop in new contracts between 25–44 and 45–64 each year is still a large difference. Just as there is ageism in the industry for actors and performers, stage managers and assistant stage managers experience ageism as well; there are preconceived notions of what older workers are able to do and the skills they can learn, which results in a stigma around aging in this country and on the job. The difference increases when stage managers and assistant stage managers reach the 65+ age group. In 2022, the drop between 45–64 and 65+ is 21.3% and in 2023 it's 22.3%. This is not a trend that exhibits movement towards equitability or even equality. Stage managers and assistant stage managers are consistently receiving fewer new contracts as the years progress. While the data shows members aged 45–64 making more money than their 25–44 counterparts, there are fewer opportunities. Even though we see that trend, folks aged 65+ continue to make less than younger stage managers and assistant stage managers. In 2022, stage managers and assistant stage managers aged 65+ made \$274.03 less than their 45–64-year-old colleagues and in 2023, they made \$54.42 less. This difference is lessened between the two years, but we should still strive towards equal pay no matter one's age.

Women are consistently offered more stage management contracts than men. In 2022, women were offered 58.7% of all new stage management contracts compared to men who were offered 28.8%. In 2023, women were offered 59.4% of all new stage management contracts compared to men who were offered 26.7% of all new stage management contracts. However, as you can see by the average weekly salaries, men had a higher average weekly salary, which is a function of the percentage of higher paying contracts going to men (i.e. Production, LORT A and B) as compared to

those going to women. On contracts with higher minimum salaries, the preference seen in hiring statistics flips, with a preference towards men.

Non-binary and third gender workers consistently receive fewer contracts than both men and women and are paid far lower average weekly salaries. While there were fewer non-binary and third gender members to receive new contracts, when they did get work in 2023, they were paid \$86.83 less than women and \$217.19 less than men. This information shows us a few things. Where stage managers and assistant stage managers are concerned, women are hired at a higher rate than any other gender demographic, but make less than men, men were hired less than women but make more, and non-binary and third gender folks were hired both at a lower rate and paid less than both men and women. As always, we can't conjecture why these numbers exist (we can look at patterns of oppression, marginalization and underrepresentation in the industry but cannot say definitively why these trends exist), but we can make sure to pay attention to and push for more equitable hiring and pay practices through our contract negotiations.

In the charts below, we are only presenting specific stage manager contracts (sometimes also called a PSM – production stage manager), not both stage manager and assistant stage managers as an aggregate. We do this to maintain consistent minimum salaries because the statistics for assistant positions (which are both fewer and consistently on agreements with a higher minimum salary) influenced both the data and opportunities presented to members.

RACE

	BIPOC	White or European American	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2022	13.4%	70.1%	2.8%	13.7%
2023	15.0%	68.8%	3.6%	12.6%

Table 31: Stage manager percent of contracts comparing BIPOC, White/European American, prefer not to say and not provided

	BIPOC	White or European American	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2022	\$1,065.20	\$1,055.45	\$1,095.45	\$798.08
2023	\$1,103.68	\$1,088.99	\$1,070.28	\$780.38

Table 32: Stage manager average weekly salary comparing BIPOC, White/European American, prefer not to say and not provided

AGE

	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Not provided
2022	n/a	5.1%	54.0%	26.9%	5.6%	8.4%
2023	n/a	5.0%	53.6%	27.4%	5.1%	9.0%

Table 33: Stage manager percent of contracts by age

	0-17	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	Not provided
2022	n/a	\$662.92	\$1,051.12	\$1,169.73	\$895.70	\$668.63
2023	n/a	\$827.05	\$1,074.93	\$1,143.91	\$1,089.49	\$735.13

Table 34: Stage manager average weekly salaries by age

GENDER

	Women	Men	Non-binary and third gender	Prefer to self-describe	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2022	58.7%	28.8%	2.5%	0.5%	0.2%	9.3%
2023	59.4%	26.7%	2.5%	0.7%	0.8%	9.9%

Table 35: Stage manager percent of contracts by gender

	Women	Men	Non-binary and third gender	Prefer to self-describe	Prefer not to say	Not provided
2022	\$1,043.66	\$1,108.76	\$847.40	\$929.88	\$835.52	\$678.37
2023	\$1,050.35	\$1,180.71	\$963.52	\$1,156.80	\$904.90	\$738.35

Table 36: Stage manager average weekly salaries by gender

Looking Ahead

As we have shown throughout, incremental change is resulting in a more diverse workforce. That change is not as readily apparent for many of our members to fully participate in our industry, but we are making headway. Our workforce is more diverse than it was pre-pandemic, as is our membership, which is why we need to continue pushing for change in our industry. With our shared commitment to diversity and your continued support of your union's efforts to hold a mirror of accountability up to our employers, we will continue to make the change you deserve. Our efforts, as a union and a membership, are showing movement – this will continue to drive us forwards even amongst a changing legal landscape.

This year, we want to address more questions to accompany some of the “answers” shared above. And because after reports like these, we are often left with more questions than answers.

Key Questions

There is a section that says people from my demographic background are getting more contracts, but I'm not. Why don't these numbers represent me?

While the numbers shared in this report are an aggregate, they won't always reflect the experiences of the individual. Like we stated at the beginning of this report – a contract means access to so much security (food, healthcare, etc.), and this industry is built so heavily on uncertainty. Your experience is valid and seen, and we are here to help through talking with employers about developing safe working environments, internal member programming and reports like this one. With that in mind, it's important to recognize that there are systems at work in the United States that disproportionately impact already marginalized groups of people, and we see that underrepresentation in the industry as well. Additionally, Equity is unable to help folks book work or tell employers how to hire, though we can encourage them to think about their hiring and pay practices. While we will always fight for all workers' rights and access to jobs, there are times when we will need to pay a little closer attention to how we are impacting our most vulnerable populations.

Additionally, if you are experiencing discrimination (see the Discrimination and Harassment page on the member portal for more info on what this means) regarding your hiring or pay, please reach out to us as soon as possible at diversity@actorsequity.org or file a report through Lighthouse.

Why are the numbers for "Prefer not to say" and "Not Provided" so high?

Reporting one's demographics can be hard to do, especially when there is any sort

of mystery around how that data is being used. The union recognizes that self-identification is a personal choice influenced by societal beliefs, potential fears, identities in flux or a myriad of other reasons. Some members may opt out of providing information because they disagree with any kind of analysis that relies on quantifying these kinds of characteristics. Others are deeply familiar with histories of violence against certain populations, particularly around census-taking and “counting.” The consequences of these histories have run the gamut from folks not being considered full people and not being able to vote, to physical harm like genocide and war, and ongoing modern-day losses of civil and human rights. Equity will never force a member to share their demographics because we know there can be trauma around sharing those intimate parts of oneself. We will, though, continue to encourage members to have trust in their union and continue to strive towards building that trust. We only ask for demographic information to better negotiate contract provisions (as we learn more about our members, we know better how to protect them), develop programming so we can work towards inclusion and belonging and utilize aggregate information to make a call to action in the industry, like we do here.

We do encourage members who are unsure about sharing their demographic information to reach out to the diversity and inclusion team, who would love to talk further (diversity@actorsequity.org).

DEI isn't for me, so why should I personally be invested?

DEI is for and about everyone. It is a common misconception that DEI is only for or only focused on racially marginalized populations and, in certain cases, that is true; DEI is about addressing imbalances for folks who have historically been left out or mistreated in our industry based on race and racial bias. But sometimes underrepresented means that there aren't enough disabled folks, older folks or veterans being represented and heard in our workplaces. Or they feel so ostracized because of the environment that they don't feel like they belong or don't feel comfortable sharing that part of themselves. For example, everyone has an age and may experience bias based on that age, especially in entertainment industries – our older members saw fewer contracts between 2022 and 2023, on average. With those numbers, we can

negotiate fairer contracts that address age biases, we can develop DEI programming that helps address the needs of our older members, and we can provide education on what their protections are both legally at the federal level and within their union. DEI is for and should be for everyone, even you.

(One of the biggest critiques we receive after each of these reports is published,) “Why aren’t we seeing more significant change?”

We continuously see either slow progress or no progress and ask ourselves each year why that might be. While we are seeing growth in the way theater is being approached across the country, there is still mystery around what DEI is and how it’s done. That, coupled with the mentality of “this is how we have always done it,” leads to an industry of slow change – if any. It’s important to know that cultural shifts like what we are asking for here, can take 2–5 years to show any progress, which is a grueling timeframe, but one we are seeing play out in real time. Year to year we see a small percentage difference and that can be disheartening, but when looking at a 2–5–year comparison, we see real change. For example, in 2016–2019, 21.3% of new contracts were offered to BIPOC members. In 2022, that was 29.9% and in 2023, it was 30.3%. Change towards a more inclusive, more equitable industry is happening!

In our department, we always say, “Know better, do better, but it’s when you know better and choose not to do better that we have a bigger problem.” The industry is learning to do better, and that education can take time, but we are seeing change. And in spaces where we don’t, we can address them at the contract level, so that our members are protected no matter their demographics.

What’s next?

We look forward to continued programming under the Embracing Equity series, a forthcoming report entitled “Going Beyond Unconscious Bias,” and further engagement from the union around DEI issues. Our next hiring bias and wage gap report will look at the 2024 and 2025 seasons. We are here to make the lives of our members better, and we intend to do so on multiple fronts. Also, keep a diligent focus

on Equity's organizing efforts – a union is only as strong as its workers, and we all must stand together and fight for one another to maintain and build that strength. We look forward to what is to come and can't wait to build up our foundations as an industry to better represent, include and treat all workers.

For further information, questions, or comments,
please reach out to diversity@actorsequity.org.