

Advancing Board Diversity

INSIGHTS FROM THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF
DIRECTOR INSTITUTES (GNDI)

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01 | OPENING REMARKS

Opening Remarks from the Global Network of Director Institutes (GNDI)

The Global Network of Director Institutes (GNDI) acknowledges that conversations about diversity have evolved significantly over recent years, with shifts in sentiment across different parts of world. This is likely to continue in the near and mid-terms, yet the long term approach across our member institutes is clear: continued support for diverse, representative, and forward looking boards.

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GNDI MEMBER INSTITUTES

The GNDI and participating member institutes reaffirm our commitment to the long-term value that diverse boards create for organizations, economies, and societies. Through sharing the different approaches to supporting board diversity, this report highlights the need to consider thoughtful and context-specific approaches rather than recommending a ‘one-size-fits all’.

As you review this report, we encourage you to reflect on the nuances in your own context, and consider the diversity approaches that will best support your board’s and organization’s effectiveness.

Executive Summary

Board diversity is widely recognized as a cornerstone of effective governance and organizational performance. This report brings together insights from 15 Institutes of Directors (IoDs) across the Global Network of Director Institutes (GNDI), highlighting how different jurisdictions are advancing diversity through research, advocacy, and targeted initiatives.

KEY INSIGHTS

- Gender diversity remains the primary focus across most institutes, sometimes supported by regulatory or voluntary targets.
- Mentorship, scholarships, and director pipeline programs are the most common and impactful interventions.
- Data, benchmarking, and public reporting are key drivers of accountability and progress.
- Some institutes also focus on ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+ representation, and diversity of thought.



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DIRECTORS

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DIVERSITY
DIMENSIONS



“Boards that reflect the markets they serve benefit from better decision-making, innovation, and reduced groupthink.”

GNDI BOARD DIVERSITY REPORT

03 | INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The GNDI defines board diversity as the inclusion of board members with a broad range of complementary attributes including perspectives, demographics, attributes, skills and experiences whose diversity of thought contributes to board effectiveness through strong decision-making on issues affecting the organization.

Board diversity is a critical component of board composition and board effectiveness. Boards that reflect the markets they serve, across demographics, experience, and perspectives, benefit from better decision-making and problem solving, innovation, and reduced groupthink¹, thereby enhancing board effectiveness and organizational performance. Diverse boards and organizations are also viewed more positively by stakeholders and communities. By working towards board diversity, the talent pool available to boards expands.

The Global Network of Director Institutes (GNDI) and its members recognize both the business case and social case for board diversity. This report explores how institutes worldwide are supporting board diversity in their respective contexts. It aims to serve as a practical resource for director institutes, boards and organizations to consider how best to support diversity in their unique markets.

¹Australian Institute of Company Directors: Why is Board Diversity Crucial to an Organisation's Success?

04 | PARTICIPATION

Participating Director Institutes

Fifteen institutes of directors (IoDs)² around the world shared their approaches to board diversity for this report.



AUSTRALIAN
INSTITUTE OF
COMPANY DIRECTORS



BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE
OF CORPORATE
GOVERNANCE



INSTITUTE OF
CORPORATE
DIRECTORS CANADA



GCC BOARD
DIRECTORS INSTITUTE



THE HONG KONG
INSTITUTE OF
DIRECTORS



INSTITUTE OF
DIRECTORS IRELAND



MAURITIUS INSTITUTE
OF DIRECTORS



INSTITUTE OF
DIRECTORS NEW
ZEALAND



PAKISTAN INSTITUTE
OF CORPORATE
GOVERNANCE



SINGAPORE INSTITUTE
OF DIRECTORS



INSTITUTE OF
DIRECTORS SOUTH
AFRICA



SWISS INSTITUTE OF
DIRECTORS



ASSOCIATION OF
BOARD MEMBERS
TÜRKİYE (YÜD)



UK INSTITUTE OF
DIRECTORS



VIETNAM INSTITUTE
OF DIRECTORS

The participating institutes indicated their strong support for board diversity as a cornerstone of good governance, board effectiveness and corporate growth, viewing diversity from both the social, i.e. the right thing to do, and business, i.e. good for business, perspectives.

Some institutes engage in activities and initiatives that support demographic diversity generally, while others focus on specific areas of underrepresentation in their markets. While the institutes support board diversity generally, the most common initiatives were focused on gender, racial/ethnic diversity, and age, depending on the focus of underrepresentation in their market.

²See 'Additional Resources' at the end of this report for board diversity thought leadership and research publications by participating director institutes.

General Board Diversity Supports

Several institutes indicated the importance of supporting a broad range of diversity demographics, including age, gender, ability, race/ethnicity/culture, tenure, independence, industry expertise and domain knowledge, international experience, LGBTQ+, skills and First Nations representation.

Some institutes publish surveys and indexes on board diversity in their context. For example, the Singapore IoD partners with corporates to publish a Board Diversity Index which reports on age, gender, tenure, independence, industry expertise, domain knowledge, ethnic background and international experience. The Pakistan Institute conducts surveys to assess board diversity in terms of gender and age to help benchmark progress and inform policy recommendations. The Mauritius IoD runs a survey on directors' fees and board composition, which measures and reports on age, gender and expatriate status.

In terms of diversity programs with a broad approach, the Brazilian Institute organizes Board Diversity Forums through its regional chapters in various regions across Brazil, including readings, lectures, practical activities, case presentations/discussions, and networking opportunities. The New Zealand Institute offers a 'Mentoring for Diversity Programme' which connects aspiring directors from diverse backgrounds with senior directors. The Australian Institute of Company Directors offers support to accelerate board diversity for women (including culturally diverse and from rural backgrounds), directors with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, and culturally diverse people. They also report on diversity across ASX 300 boards tracking gender, cultural background, First Nations Representation, disability, LGBTQ+, skills, tenure, independence and age. The Pakistan Institute has integrated diversity, equity and inclusion into their flagship directors program, board performance evaluation parameters, as well as governance frameworks, practices and culture.



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To support underrepresented groups with access to director certification, the Institute of Corporate Directors Canada offers 15 diversity scholarships annually, and runs diversity webinars and chapter events. They have also developed board diversity publications, tools and guides to support stakeholders to take action on board diversity. The Australian Institute offers targeted initiatives and scholarships for directors with disabilities and women from rural backgrounds, and culturally diverse women. IoD Ireland's Gary Kennedys Bursary aims to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in the leadership and governance landscape by recognising individuals whose unique perspectives and lived experiences can enrich boardrooms and executive decision-making. The Bursary includes the opportunity to receive a fully-funded place on the IoD Chartered Director Programme and a year's complimentary membership.

Most institutes such as those in Australia, Brazil, Canada, the GCC, Ireland, Mauritius, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, Türkiye, United Kingdom, and Vietnam publish board diversity tools, research, surveys, and thought leadership to support boards with knowledge and tools for action on board diversity. These range from research related to specific demographics, tools to support boards with diverse recruitment practices, board diversity indexes, toolkits, handbooks, and a board skills matrix, and can be accessed via the Additional Resources section at the end of this report.

Some institutes issue awards or special recognitions to showcase genuine efforts to promote diversity. The Vietnam IoD holds bi-annual 'Board of the Year' awards to recognize the most diverse boards of Vietnam listed companies, in addition to quarterly bulletins with DE&I themes and a board diversity report published annually. The Hong Kong IoD runs an annual 'Award for Director Excellence' which gives winning boards further special recognition if their board composition is truly diverse in terms of experience, skills, education, gender, age, ethnicity and more factors relevant to their business, in ways that perpetuates a sound diversity policy into practice.



INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS IRELAND

Provides full funding for one participant in the Chartered Director Programme each year.



VIETNAM INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

Hosts bi-annual 'Board of the Year' awards recognizing the most diverse boards.



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GNDI BOARD DIVERSITY REPORT

Gender Diversity

Gender diversity is the most common form of diversity addressed by the institutes. Women face barriers to accessing board positions such as gender bias and discrimination, the gender segregation of jobs and roles, an underrepresentation in leadership roles that lead to board positions, a preference for men in leadership, and limited time due to carrying the load of unpaid domestic work and childcare. In order to support women's access, institutes around the world offer initiatives meant to support women's access to director education and to board positions outlined below.

The Pakistani and Canadian institutes mandate diversity for their own boards, as a way to lead by example. The Canadian Institute has a mandate of at least 30% women on their board. Similarly, the Pakistani Institute mandates that at least one-third of its own board is women, and also recommended the inclusion of at least one female director on every listed company board, which was adopted by the regulator. The UK Institute's policy aspiration is that no gender should have more than 60% representation at the board and council level. When recruiting at the board and council level, recruiters are required to provide a list of diverse candidates, and the selection panel must also have diverse representation. The Türkiye IOD has proposed national targets of women on boards as 25% for 2026, 30% for 2028 and 33% for 2030.



Some institutes offer limited full fee scholarships, or discounts ranging from 5-30%, for women wishing to pursue director education through the institute, such as in Australia, Brazil, Canada, the GCC, Pakistan and Vietnam.

Across several institutes there are initiatives designed specifically to support women's director education or directorship, such as director education programs, mentoring programs, networking events, conferences, podcasts and developing a database of qualified women directors. For example, and known as the Board Diversity Program – Women's Track, the Brazilian Institute offers a board development program for women to combining board readiness training, mentoring with experienced board members, and networking events. The Singapore Institute offers a similar program for women which includes development programs, mentorship and targeted networking. Since 2010, the Australian Institute has been running their flagship Chair's Mentoring Program to increase gender diversity on boards. The Mauritius Institute runs the Women Directors Forum which is focused on advocacy, leadership development and stakeholder engagement, including the UNMUTE conversation series, and an engagement platform called WE-CONNECT. The UK Institute is actively seeking to increase women membership, with a scorecard goal of 35%. They also run annual women's conferences both regionally and nationally, including a Women's Business Forum. In early 2026, the UK IoD has announced the launch of its inaugural women-only cohort of the Accelerated Certificate in Company Direction. They also organize annual conferences dedicated to women's directors, both at national and regional levels including the Women in Business Forum.

Some institutes also offer support to women with board access. Through the Path to the Boardroom initiative, the Mauritius Institute offers a board recruitment service which recommends women directors to listed companies to help them meet the women on boards target. The Pakistan Institute maintains a databank of independent directors with a feature of almost 1000 qualified women with detailed profiles on experience, education and board roles. The GCC Board Directors Institute has begun an initiative to promote on their website the profiles of women who have earned their directors' certification. The Swiss Institute offers the Female Board Pool initiative which is aimed at promoting gender diversity and increasing the representation of women directors on corporate boards.

Some institutes work with governments or other not for profit organizations to support women on boards initiatives, while others focus on the reporting of women on boards, by working with regulators or corporates to measure and report on women's board representation in the country. For example, the Singapore institute works with partners to measure board diversity including women on boards in their market. The Australian Institute provides support through secretariat and administrative assistance to the 30% club. IoD Ireland partners with Balance for Better Business, an independent business-led Review Group established by the Irish Government to improve gender balance in senior leadership in Ireland. This partnership includes being a member of the advisory committee, as well as cross share of research, insight content, and event promotion and collaboration. IoD Ireland also partners with the Irish chapter of the 30% club. This has included co-hosting an event highlighting the importance of diversity.

In all instances, the institutes recognize the value that gender diversity on boards can add, and support the initiatives from this lens.



GCC BOARD DIRECTORS INSTITUTE

Lowers financial barriers by offering a discount to women who self-fund their director education.



MAURITIUS INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

Operates the Women Directors Forum focused on advocacy, leadership development, and stakeholder engagement.

Ethnic and Racial Diversity

Some institutes also prioritize supporting ethnic and racial diversity through initiatives that are targeted to the populations in their context.



BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Brazilian Institute, for example, partners with local organizations and corporates to run a ‘Racial Track’ of their board-readiness program including a board training course, access to a tailored ‘lifelong learner study track’, collective mentoring sessions with experienced professionals, and hybrid events to support the representation of Black and Indigenous people on boards and board related bodies. They also offer up to five scholarships to their board readiness program.



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF COMPANY DIRECTORS

The Australian Institute has expanded their mentoring program to culturally diverse women as a pilot offering in 2026, in response to the 2025 Board Diversity Index which found that culturally diverse women are significantly underrepresented on boards in Australia.



INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS NEW ZEALAND

The IoD New Zealand collaborates with advisory groups, partners, and networks, to ensure cultural perspectives are integrated into governance. The UK IoD is actively seeking members from diverse ethnic backgrounds, with a scorecard goal of 25%.



UK INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

For their own governance, the UK IoD’s diversity policy requires that at least 2 of their board and council members come from diverse ethnic backgrounds. They achieve this by requiring recruiters to provide a list of diverse candidates, and also ensuring that the selection panel includes diverse members.



SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

Runs the Female Board Pool, promoting women’s representation on corporate boards.

Age diversity

While several institutes recognize and name age diversity as a critical component of board diversity, some are measuring age diversity on boards in their contexts, and four institutes offer specific initiatives to increase age diversity.



INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS NEW ZEALAND

The New Zealand IoD offers targeted events, learning opportunities and peer connections for younger directors, considered to be members under the age of 40. They also offer a 'Future Directors Programme' which is meant to develop younger and more diverse candidates.



SWISS INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

The Swiss IoD offers the 'NextGen Board Leaders' which is an initiative designed to bridge the generational gap by fostering collaboration between seasoned executives and emerging young leaders, including through mentorship, leadership development programs, and networking.



THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

The Hong Kong Institute in conjunction with its 25th Anniversary milestone began a 'Young Directors Group', to develop 18-45 year olds directors and aspiring directors as the next generation candidates with requisite skills and capabilities to perform in the boardroom.



UK INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

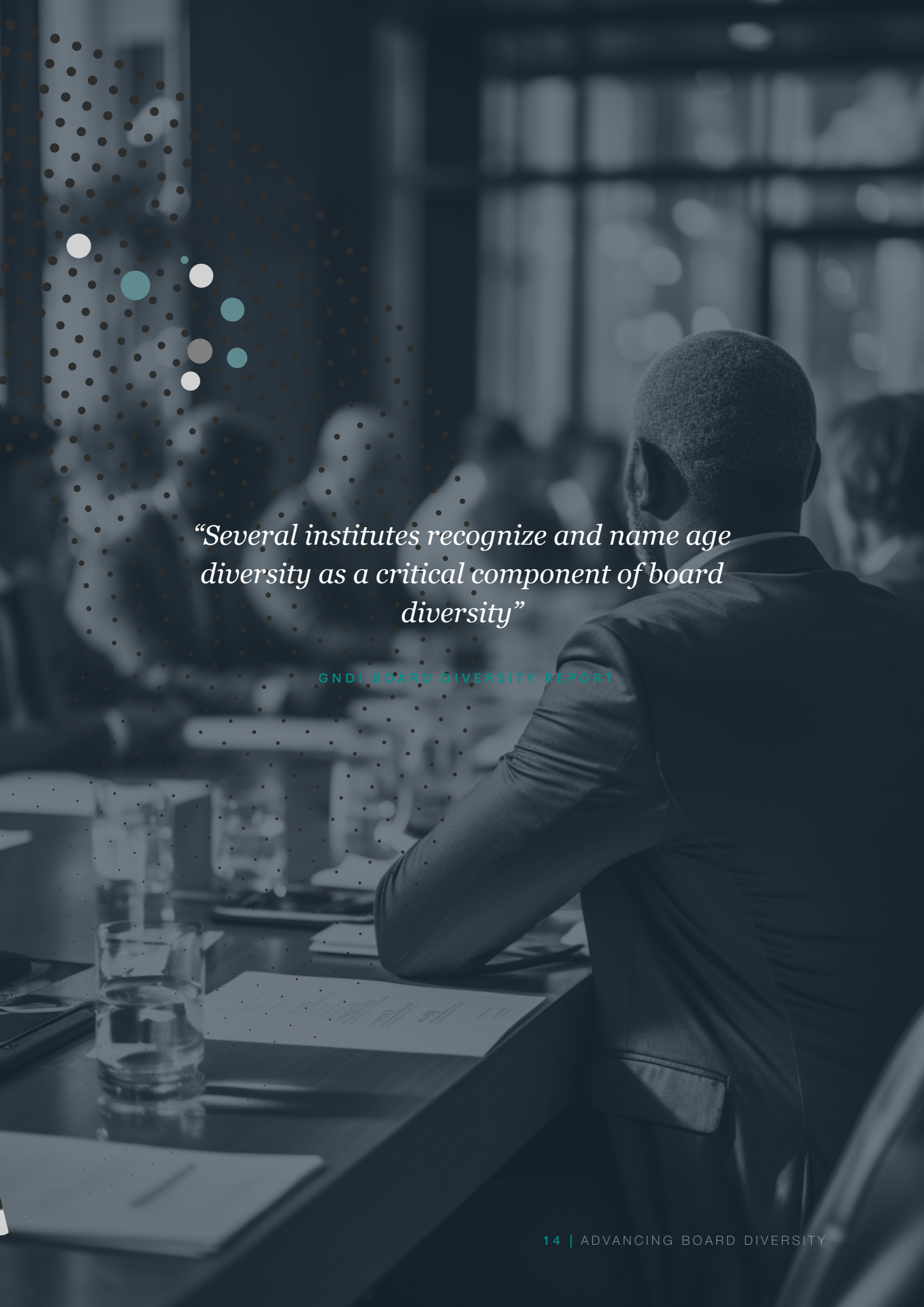
From a membership perspective, the UK IoD is actively seeking younger members, with networking events and aspiring directors initiatives.



INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS SOUTH AFRICA

Publishes leadership and gender diversity reports to track representation on JSE-listed boards.

In addition to this, some institutes, such as Singapore and Australia, report on age diversity through general board diversity reporting.



“Several institutes recognize and name age diversity as a critical component of board diversity”

GNDI BOARD DIVERSITY REPORT

LGBTQ+ diversity

LGBTQ+ diversity was highlighted by two institutes, Australia and New Zealand. The Australian Institute includes LGBTQ+ diversity in their measures of board diversity reporting. In terms of specific programming or events, the New Zealand Institute developed a Rainbow Directors Network, which provides a platform for LGBTQIA+ directors and allies to connect, share insights and advocate for inclusive governance.

07 | CONCLUSION

Conclusion

The institutes that participated in this research expressed their support for both the business case and the social case for board diversity. While their contexts and their diversity targets may differ, they have all indicated a commitment to diversity through research, advocacy, targeted programming, events or forums, recruitment services and more.

The Global Network of Director Institutes and its member institutes support board diversity and encourage the ongoing exchange of approaches across contexts and jurisdictions. We invite you to connect with us if your board would like to explore how it can reflect the diversity of the organization and the market it serves, thereby increasing board and organization effectiveness.

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Additional Resources

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF COMPANY DIRECTORS

- Board Diversity Index (2025) - in partnership with Watermark: <https://www.aicd.com.au/about-aicd/governance-and-policy-leadership/board-diversity/2025-board-diversity-index.html>
 - Gender Diversity Snapshot -Quarterly (2025): <https://www.aicd.com.au/board-of-directors/diversity/women/top-asx-companies-inching-closer-to-40-percent.html>
 - Gender Diversity Progress Report – Quarterly (2016-2023): <https://www.aicd.com.au/news-media/research-and-reports/gender-diversity-report.html>
 - Beyond the Pale: Cultural Diversity on ASX100 (2018): <https://www.aicd.com.au/content/dam/aicd/pdf/about/board-diversity/research/2018/beyond-the-pale-full-report-web.pdf>
 - Beyond 200: A study of Gender Diversity in ASX 201-500 companies (2018): <https://www.aicd.com.au/board-of-directors/diversity/gender/beyond-200-gender-diversity-asx-201-500-companies.html>
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BRAZILIAN INSTITUTE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- Gender and racial diversity of board members and employees of publicly traded companies (2nd edition – 2025 – Portuguese only): <https://conhecimento.ibgc.org.br/Paginas/Publicacao.aspx?PubId=24735>
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INSTITUTE OF CORPORATE DIRECTORS CANADA

- Taking Action on Board Diversity: five questions to get you started: <https://boardsource.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/5-Questions-for-board-diversity.pdf>
 - 2024 Diversity Disclosure Practices (Oslers): <https://edge.sitecorecloud.io/institutecof37f-icdwebsite-icdprod-f918/media/project/icd/www/documents/pdfs/icd-policy-and-charters/osler-diversity-disclosure-report-2024.pdf>
 - Sponsored Content: Women in the Boardroom; eighth edition (Deloitte): <https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/topics/leadership/women-in-the-boardroom.html>
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THE GCC BOARD DIRECTORS INSTITUTE

- Women on Boards in the GCC: Experiences, insights, and the path to progress: https://gccbdi.org/sites/default/files/2026-01/BDI_GCC_Women_on_board_2026_ENG_FINAL.pdf
 - Certified Women Board Directors: <https://gccbdi.org/gcc-bdi-women-certified-board-directors>
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INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS IRELAND

- Mid-Year Survey 2025, New IoD Ireland Research on Confidence and Competitiveness: <https://www.ioDireland.ie/resources-media/media-hub/news/candc-survey-press-release>
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MAURITIUS INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

- Directors' Fees and Board Composition 2024 (in French): <https://mIoD.mu/latest-updates/remuneration-des-directeurs-et-de-composition-des-conseils-a-maurice/>
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INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS NEW ZEALAND

- Board Diversity Guide: A comprehensive guide to help boards improve diversity of thought and capability: <https://www.ioD.org.nz/resources-and-insights/guides-and-resources/board-diversity>
 - Could New Zealand move faster on board diversity?: <https://www.ioD.org.nz/news/articles/why-new-zealand-could-move-faster-on-board-diversity>
 - Why Diversity of Thought Should Be Your Board's Superpower: <https://www.ioD.org.nz/news/articles/why-diversity-of-thought-should-be-your-boards-superpower>
 - Why Inclusion Belongs in the Boardroom: <https://www.ioD.org.nz/news/articles/why-inclusion-belongs-in-the-boardroom>
 - Stepping Up on Diversity, Culture and Inclusion: <https://www.ioD.org.nz/news/articles/stepping-up-on-diversity-culture-and-inclusion>
 - Realising Your Board's Diversity of Thought: <https://IoD-production.catch.build/news/articles/realising-your-boards-diversity-of-thought-independence>
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PAKISTAN INSTITUTE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

- PICG Survey: https://picg.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/CG-Trends-Survey-Report-2025_F.pdf
 - ESG Corporate Survey 2023: <https://picg.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/ESG-Report-2023.pdf>
 - Survey Report on Board Composition, Practices and Remuneration, 2019: <https://picg.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Survey-on-Corporate-Governance-Practices-in-Pakistan-2019.pdf>
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SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

- 2025 Singapore Board Diversity Index: <https://sid.org.sg/common/Uploaded%20files/Resources/2025BoardDiversityIndex.pdf>
 - Singapore Board Diversity Review: <https://sid.org.sg/common/Uploaded%20files/Resources/CBDSINGAPOREBOARD DIVERSITY REVIEW 2025.pdf>
 - The good, the bad and the ugly of DEI: https://sid.org.sg/Web/About/News-and-Press/News_2025/2025-06-06_BT_The_good_the_bad_and_the_ugly_of_DEI.asp
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INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS SOUTH AFRICA

- SA Leadership Diversity Report: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.loDsa.co.za/resource/collection/42E1B136-71E6-4B1A-8726-6F5B08E44682/SA_Leadership_Diversity_Report_September_2022.pdf
 - Status of Gender on JSE Listed Boards Report 2021: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.loDsa.co.za/resource/collection/42E1B136-71E6-4B1A-8726-6F5B08E44682/Status_Of_Gender_on_JSE_Listed_Boards_Report_2021_5th_Edition_.pdf
 - Status of Gender on JSE Listed Boards Report 2020: https://www.businessengage.africa/wp-content/uploads/Annual_Report_2020_BusinessEngage.pdf
 - Board Composition – Guidance Paper: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.loDsa.co.za/resource/collection/05E93ACB-10BE-4507-9601-307A66F34BD8/Corporate_Governance_Network_Governing_Body_Composition.pdf
 - Board Composition – General Guidance Note: https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.loDsa.co.za/resource/collection/49D62EF3-F749-403C-BE47-73C50F27F30F/General_Guidance_Note_on_Board_Composition.pdf
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SWISS INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

- Female Board Pool: <https://boardfoundation.org/en/initiative/female-board-pool/>
 - NextGen Board Leaders: <https://boardfoundation.org/en/initiative/nextgen-board-leaders/>
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ASSOCIATION OF BOARD MEMBERS TÜRKİYE (YÜD)

- YUD Board Diversity Manifesto: https://yud.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/turkey_board_diversity_corporate_report-eng-sd.pdf
 - Turkey Board Diversity Corporate Report: https://yud.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/turkey_board_diversity_corporate_report-eng-sd.pdf
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UK INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

- Inclusion and Diversity Business Resources: <https://www.loD.com/resources/inclusion-and-diversity/>
 - Women in leadership: Taking stock of recent developments 2024: <https://www.loD.com/resources/inclusion-and-diversity/women-in-leadership-taking-stock-of-recent-developments/>
 - Building Collective Board Effectiveness: Handbook Consultation 2025: <https://www.loD.com/resources/governance/building-collective-board-effectiveness-handbook-consultation/>
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VIETNAM INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

- Board Diversity in Vietnam 2025: <https://vloD.vn/en/board-diversity-report-2025/>
- Bulletin No. 09 - 03/2025: Board Diversity and Inclusion: A Key Factor For Sustainability: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1e7HnEGP6ppexcm0wKr92_aJKPSMGJpEj
- Bulletin No. 03 – 11/2023: Board Diversity and Inclusion: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1e7HnEGP6ppexcm0wKr92_aJKPSMGJpEj