



# Interns and Inequality

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# Who works on Capitol Hill?

A tale of dueling selfies





# Who works on Capitol Hill

- **Problem:** Congress is a non-transparent work organization which makes it difficult to analyze racial representation among congressional staff and interns.
- **Research Question:** What is the racial makeup of congressional interns?
- How does racial diversity among interns compare to lawmakers and undergraduates nationally?
- **Method:** We analyzed congressional payroll records



The Color of Congress:  
**Racial Representation Among  
Interns in the U.S. House of  
Representatives**

By  
**Dr. James R. Jones**

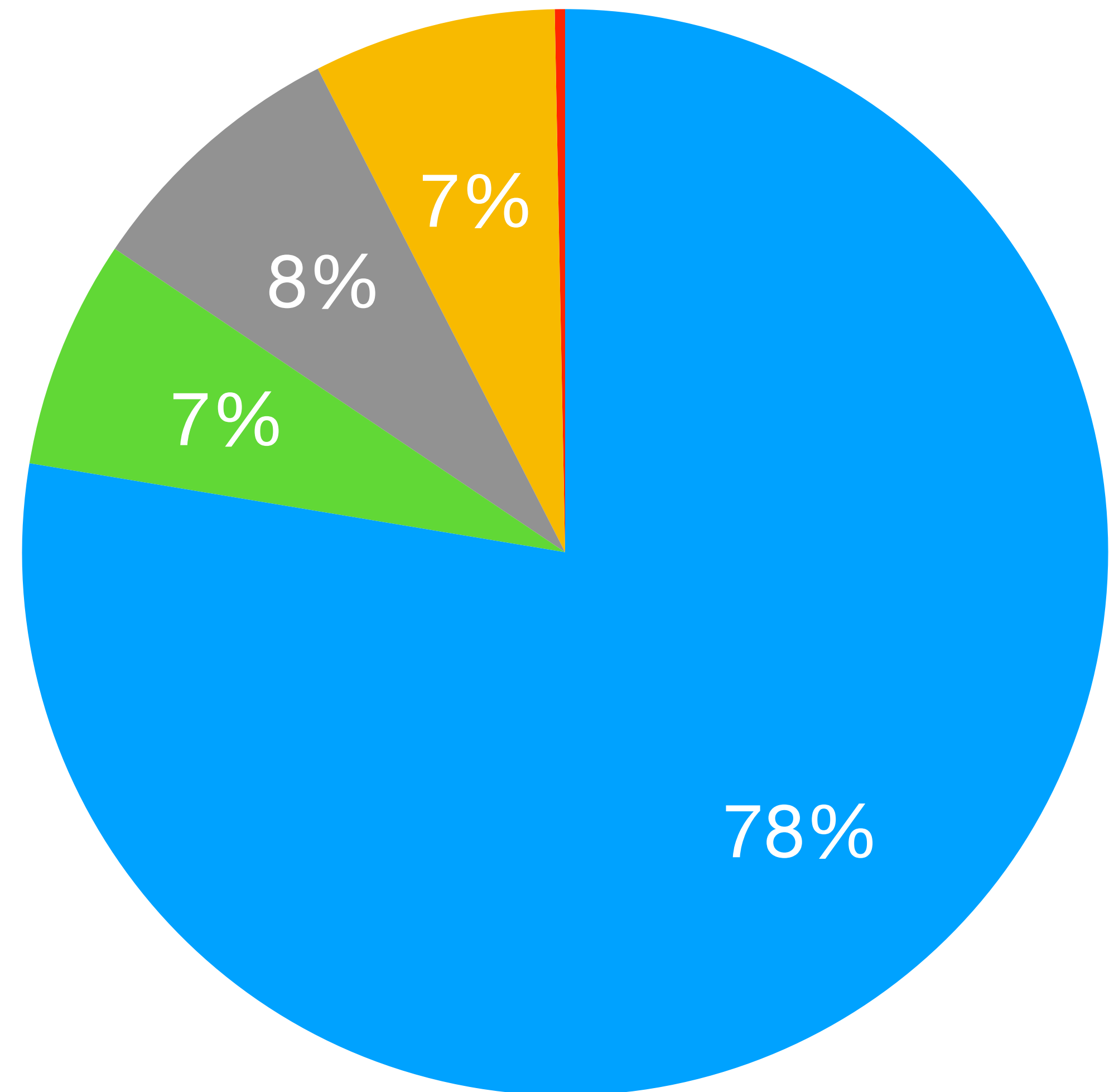


Who Congress Pays:  
**Analysis of Lawmakers'  
Use of Intern Allowances  
in the 116th Congress**

By  
**Dr. James R. Jones  
Tiffany Win  
Carlos Mark Vera**

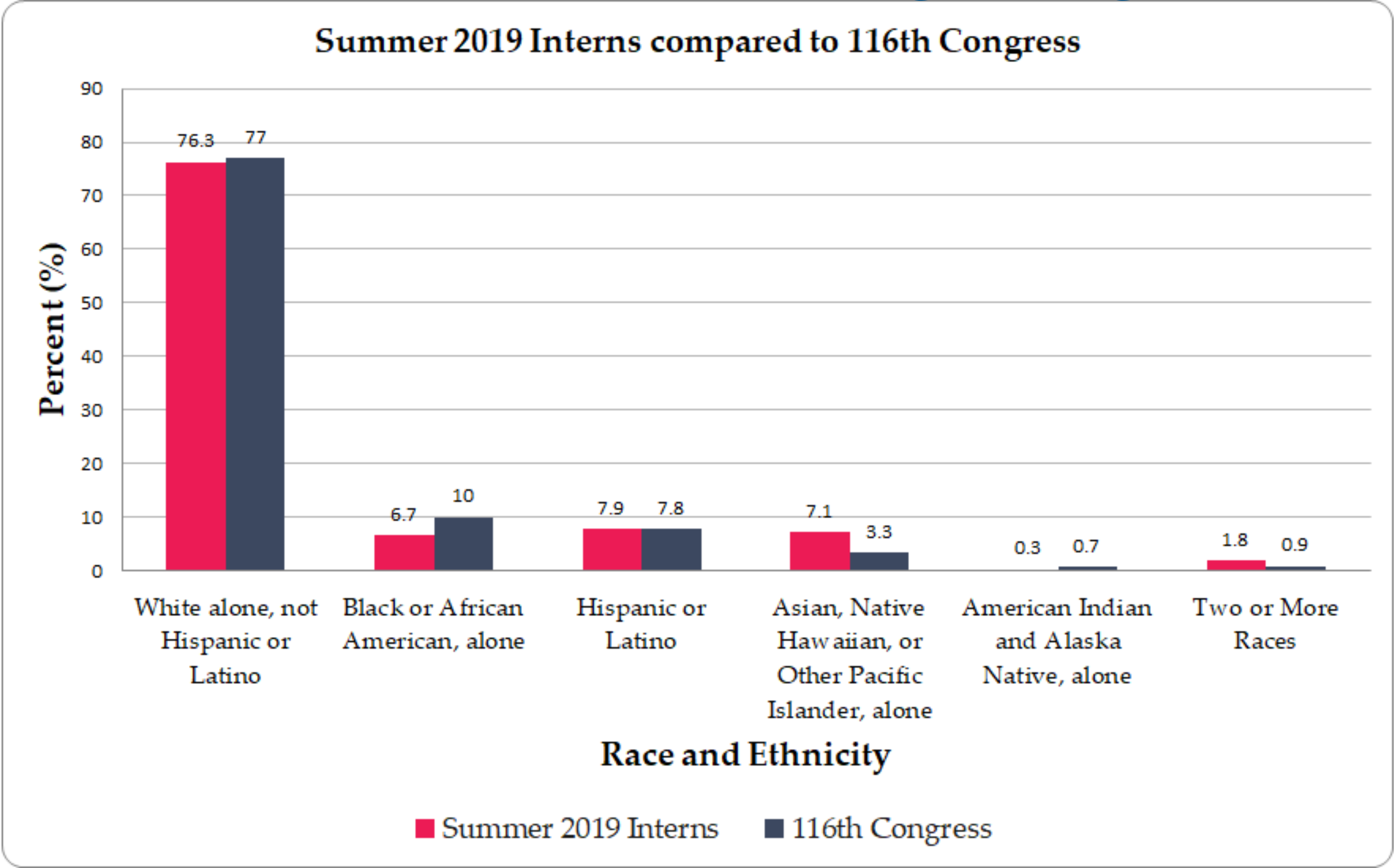
## Racial Representation Among Paid Congressional Interns

- Analysis from 8.5k personnel records
- 3,841 paid interns in the House and Senate
- Employed between April to September 2019

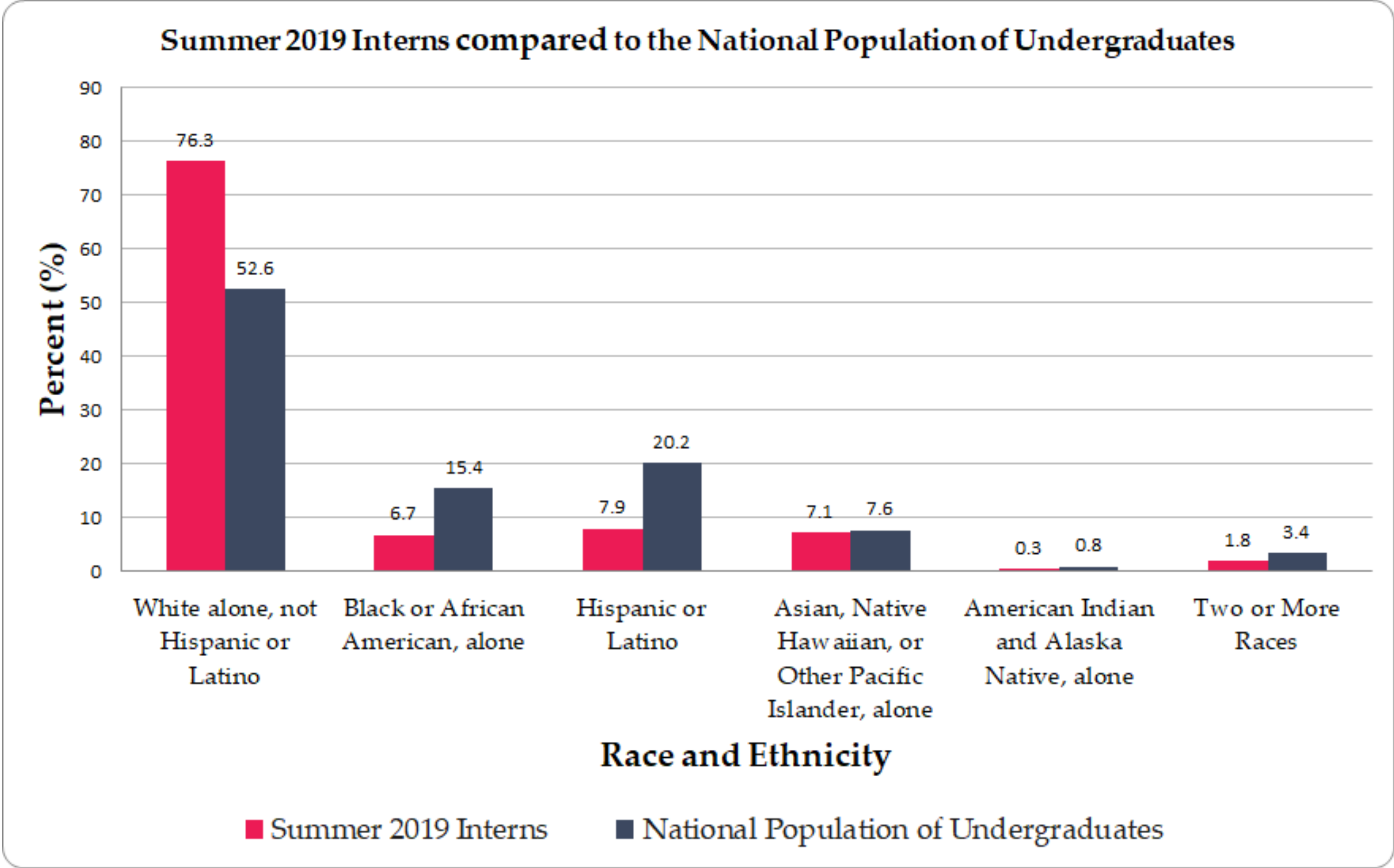


From “Who Congress Pays: Analysis of Lawmakers’ Use of Intern Allowances in the 116th Congress” by James R. Jones, Tiffany Win, and Carlos Mark Vera (2021).

# Racial Representation Among Congressional Interns



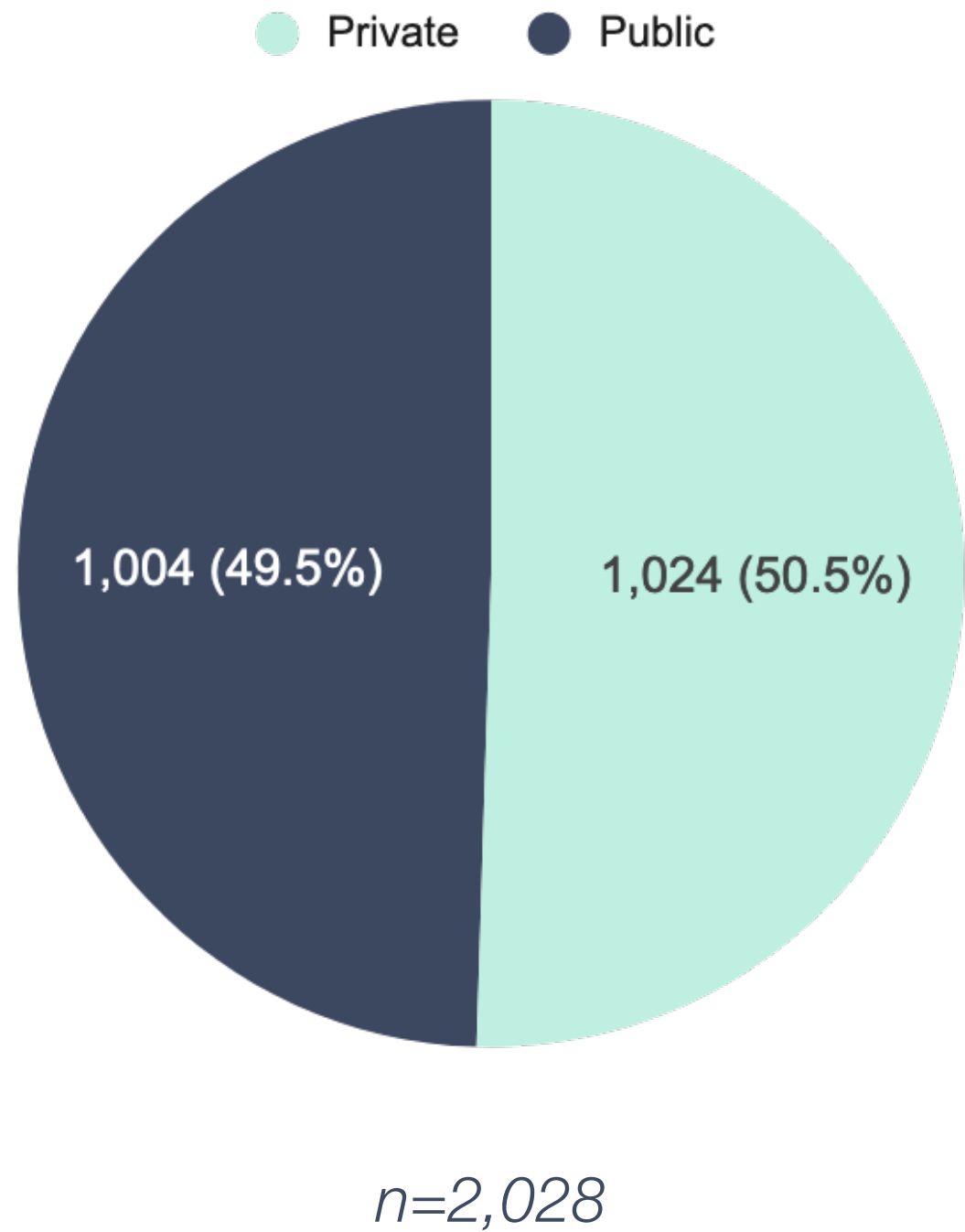
# Racial Representation Among Congressional Interns



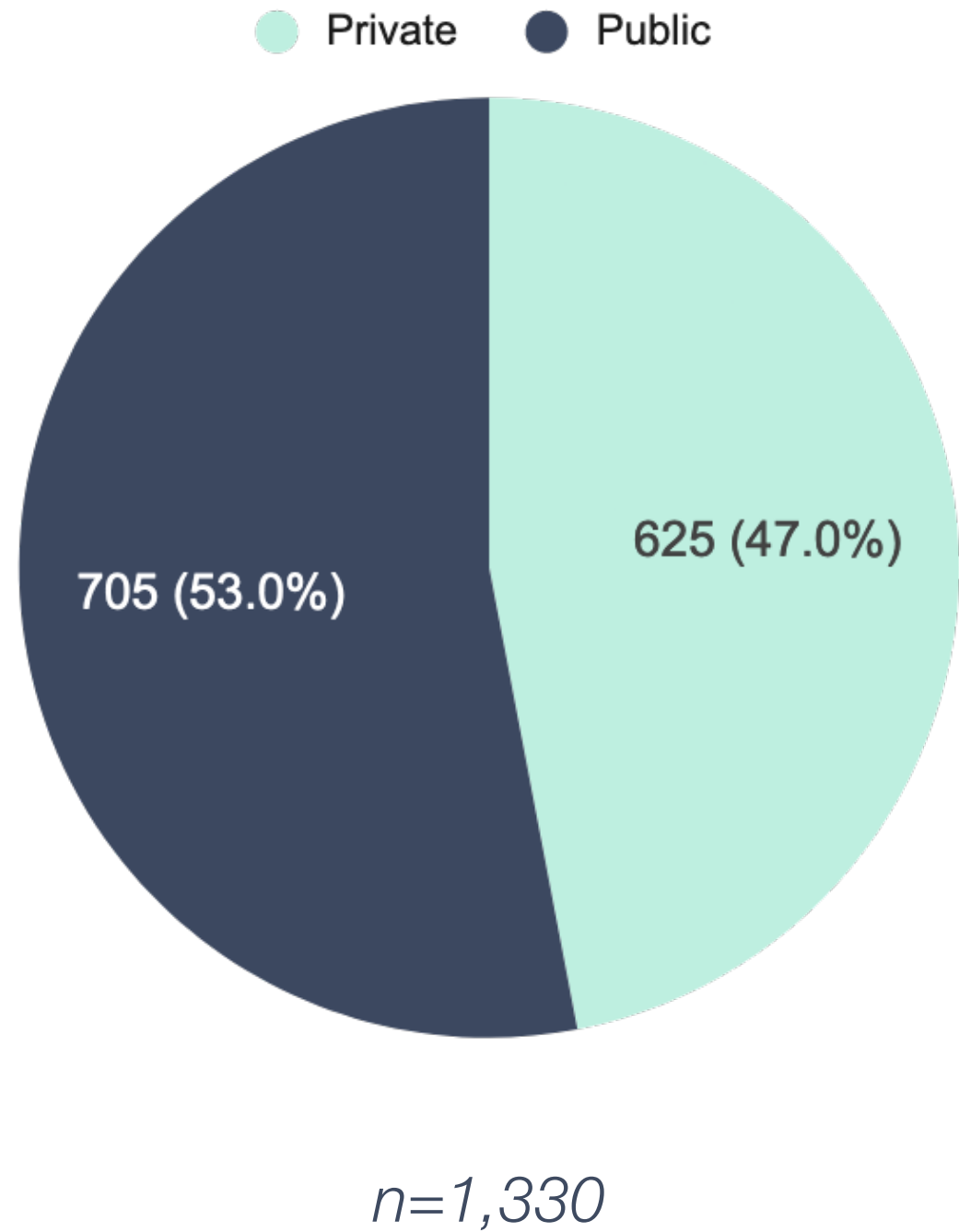
Who Congress Pays



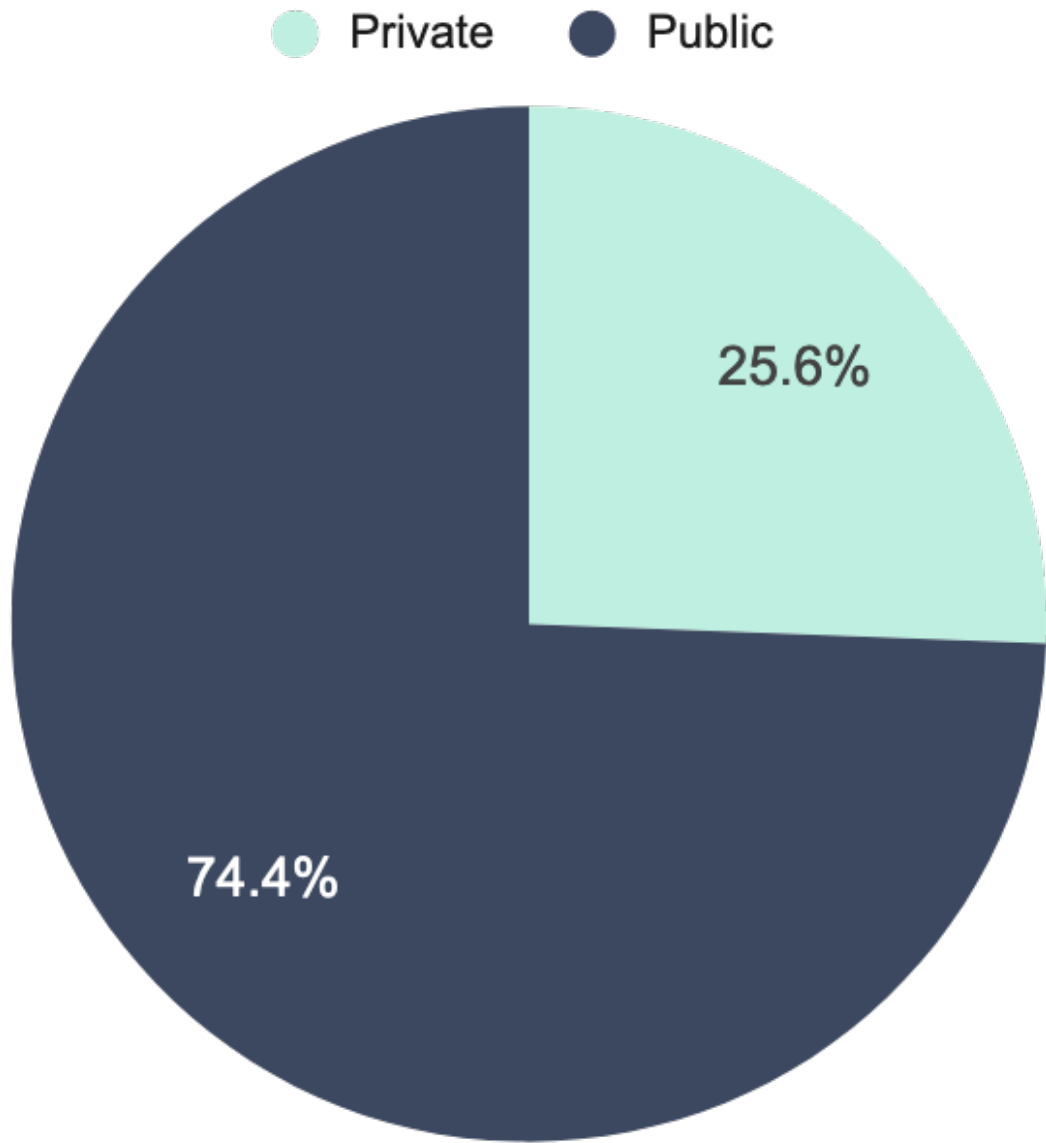
**Paid House Interns Summer 2019 have attended Universities that are...**



**Paid Senate Interns Summer 2019 have attended Universities that are...**



**National Population of Undergraduate Students have attended Universities that are...**





# The importance of Congressional Internships

- Congressional internships matter. These work opportunities are an expression of democratic citizenship that support the day-to-day operations of the federal legislature, train and socialize political novices to lawmaking, and provide a pipeline to paid employment and elective office.
- In a recent survey of Congress staff over 50 percent indicated that they got their start on Capitol Hill by interning (Furnas, LaPira 2020)
- 18.5 percent of lawmakers in the 116th Congress worked as previous interns or staffers



# The Racial Composition of Congress

## Interns



Percent White: **77%**

## Staff



**86% House**  
**89% Senate**

## Lawmakers



**77 %**



# The importance of Congressional Internships

- Congressional internships matter. These work opportunities are an expression of democratic citizenship that support the day-to-day operations of the federal legislature, train and socialize political novices to lawmaking, and provide a pipeline to paid employment and elective office.
- Racial diversity can help strengthen the legitimacy of democratic institutions and build political efficacy.



# Increasing Access to Capitol Hill

- Congress must adopt transparent hiring practices
- Internship stipends should be based upon a living wage
- Increased engagement with and recruitment from communities of color