

# PledgeLA Venture Capital Portfolio Diversity Report Executive Summary

2025

JASMINE D. HILL, PHD  
CHINYERE J. NWONYE, MPP

DASHBOARD DEVELOPED BY  
IDRIS AKILAPA

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## PROGRESS AND TRENDS

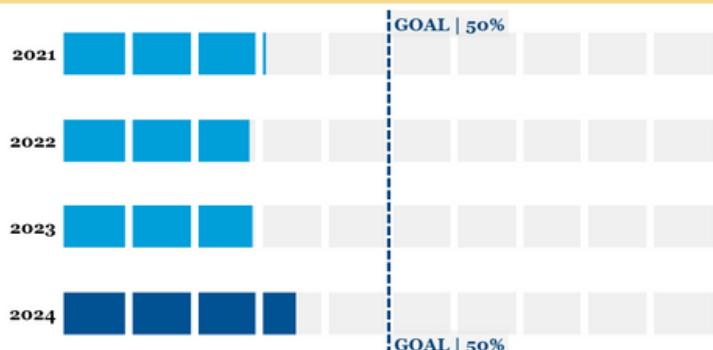
This year, we reviewed **the investments made in 557 companies by 55 venture capital firms** that signed a commitment to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion (see Investor Profiles). In our review of all 2024 investments, we find:

### OVERALL MILESTONE

- **As of 2024, 35.5% of PledgeLA members' investments** went to companies led by women, Black, or Latinx founders.
- Notably, over time, PledgeLA has continued to make progress towards its goal.

#### How close are we to our 2028 goal?

PledgeLA set the bold goal to drive **50%** of all member venture investments to companies led by women, Black or Latinx/e founders **by 2028**.



### RACIAL AND ETHNIC INCLUSION

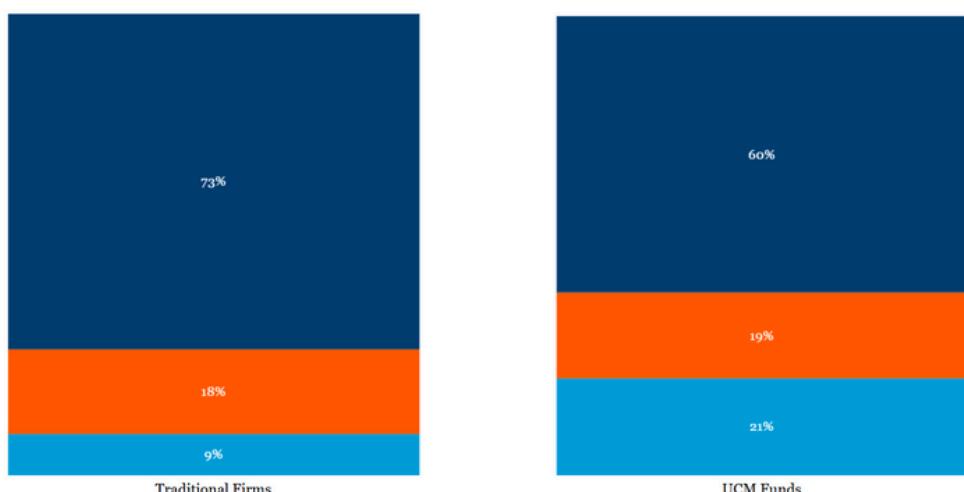
- The **majority of founders receiving investment from PledgeLA member firms continue to be White (58.4%)**; however, there has been some gradual increase in the representation of people of color.
- The **share of Asian founders increased**, especially among **South and East Asians**, while the share of **Southeast Asian representation declined**.
- There was an **18% increase** in funding raised by White-only founding teams from 2023 to 2024, compared to a 83.9% decrease in dollars raised by Black/Latinx founding teams.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## GENDER EQUITY

- The number of female-led companies in PledgeLA VC portfolios slightly increased between 2023 and 2024 from 8.1% to 12%.
- Men-only founding teams continue to raise more overall from PledgeLA VCs, with the typical checks to men-led companies being close to \$5 million, compared to \$2.2 million for women-only teams.
- Mixed gender teams made some gains in fundraising at particular deal stages, raising more than men-only and women-only teams during Series B. This shift may suggest that more mixed gender firms are gaining more investment to scale.
- Under-Capitalized Minority-led VC firms (UCM funds) remain an important source for investments in racial diversity and gender inclusion. 37% of the founders in UCM funds' portfolios are Black or Latinx founders (double the share of URM founders backed by Traditional VCs); 40% of UCM-backed companies are women-only and mixed gender teams (compared to 27% for Traditional VCs).

### *Investments in Gender Inclusion*



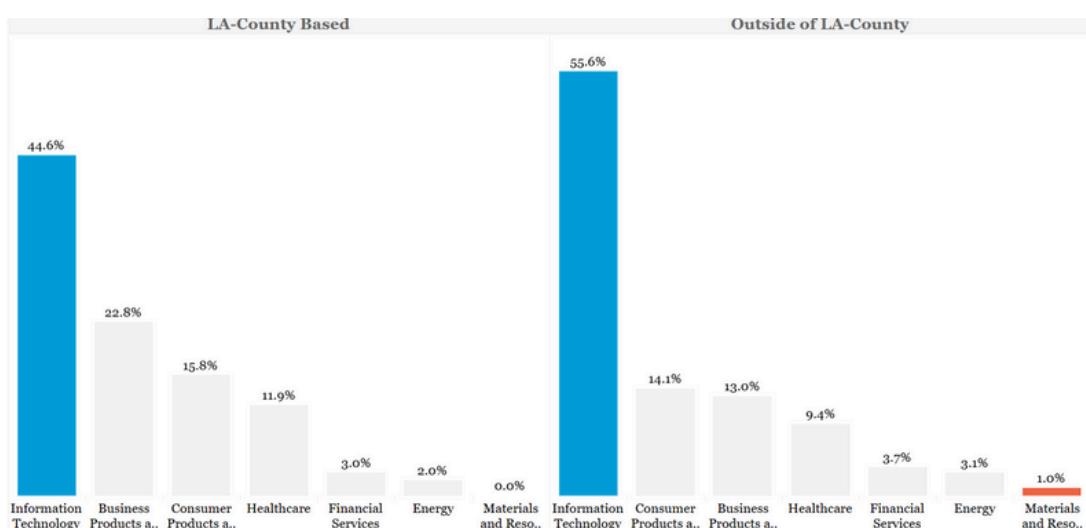
#### Key

Dark Blue = Men-only Teams  
Orange = Mixed Gender Teams  
Light Blue = Women-only Teams

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## LOCATION AND DEAL STAGE INSIGHTS

- Only 15% of PledgeLA-backed companies were based in LA County.
- Both **Traditional VC firms** and **UCM funds** were most likely to invest in **Seed & Early Stage** (43% of all Traditional VC deals; 57% of UCM-led VC deals). Compared to UCM-led VC firms, **traditional VC firms were also more likely to invest at Series B** (32% for Traditional VC vs 21% for UCM-led VC), reflecting ongoing disparities in institutional capacity.
- When investing in LA-based companies, PledgeLA VCs are slightly more open to different kinds of companies.** 44% of LA-based companies operated in Information Technology, compared to 56% of companies outside of LA.



## ONGOING COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

- The **steady progress towards PledgeLA's 2028 goal is encouraging but fragile** – Traditional VC firms still held the largest assets under management (AUM), and URM founders remain underrepresented.
- Despite **broader national backlash against DEI**, including the Fearless Fund lawsuit, the **consistency of this year's findings** relative to previous years suggests **PledgeLA firms remained committed to racial and gender equity despite a increasingly challenging climate.**

# METHODOLOGY

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As part of efforts to take tangible action to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion, [\*\*PledgeLA\*\*](#) commissioned a team of researchers from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs to code and analyze demographic data on more than **1,314 company founders** in 2024, representing **557 companies** and **75 venture capital firms**. PledgeLA is the first effort of its kind to monitor the advancement of regional tech equity annually. This work allows LA to hold an industry vital to all Angelenos' future accountable.

Our data collection uses proprietary industry data from Pitchbook to learn more about VC portfolios. This cross-section of data allows us to examine the Los Angeles tech industry, including institutional funders' investments in inclusion, the foundations of company culture, and the demographic makeup of start-up founders.

[\*\*Pitchbook\*\*](#) is an online platform that provides information on private and public companies, including investments, funding information, founding members, and industry news. Using proprietary API data, we analyzed the investments of all 80+ PledgeLA VC members to establish a complete list of companies they had invested in from January 1, 2016, to December 31, 2024. Some firms had no investments during this period and were

excluded from the annual analysis, leading to a [\*\*final data set of 55 firms\*\*](#) that made investments in 2024. We then retrieved information on each portfolio company, including their headquarters location and the names of their founding team.

We used two sources to assess the diversity of each portfolio company's founding team (founders and co-founders). First, Pitchbook offers demographic data (gender and university) on many founders in a growing effort to assess representation in tech. Because Pitchbook does not have demographic data on every founder and lacks information about the founder's race, we used a second technique to assess diversity: algorithmic imputation.

We used the [\*\*NAMSOR API\*\*](#), which is a peer-reviewed instrument that compares first and last names to decades of sociolinguistic data to recognize the likely cultural origin of first and last names. Finally, a trained Luskin researcher combed through the data to reconcile discrepancies between Pitchbook and NAMSOR and correct any other irregularities in the data. While not as perfect as self-reporting, as a methodology vetted and commonly used by top academics to impute demographics, we are confident in the reliability of our estimates.

# GLOSSARY & KEY TERMS

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Throughout the report, we use the following terms:

- **POC:** People of Color; a founder or team of founders identifying as: 1) Asian/Pacific Islander, 2) Black/African American, 3) Latinx/Latine, and/or 4) Native American/Indigenous.
- **URM:** Under-represented Minority; a founder or team of founders identifying as: 1) Black/African American, 2) Latinx/Latine, or 3) Native American/Indigenous.
- **Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of identities, including race, class, and gender, as they apply to a given individual or group creates overlapping systems of discrimination or disadvantage.
- **VC with a Diversity Thesis:** A venture capital firm publicly committed to investing most of its capital in women, people of color, LGBTQ+ founders, or other historically underrepresented groups. The firm may or may not be led by URM or POC investors.
- **URM-led VC:** A venture capital firm with a founder or managing general partner identifying as: 1) Black/African American, 2) Latinx/Latine, or 3) Native American/Indigenous. The firm may or may not have a diversity thesis.
- **Women-led VC:** A venture capital firm with a founder or managing general partner who identifies as a woman. This may include firms who also have men founders or managing general partners.
- **Traditional VC:** A venture capital firm without a diversity thesis and not led by a woman or URM.
- **UCM Firms:** Under-Capitalized Minority Firms; A collapsed category to reflect all VC firms with a Diversity Thesis, URM-led VCs, or Women-led VCs, as these categories often overlap.
- **Mixed Gender Team:** A company whose founding team comprises more than one gender and has at least one woman founder.

**NOTE:** Our current reporting and methodology is limited to tracking binary, cisgender (cis-male and cis-female) categories. PledgeLA is committed to expanding our methodological approach to be inclusive of all gender categories in future reporting as data becomes available.

# THE RESEARCH TEAM



## JASMINE D. HILL, PhD

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF  
PUBLIC POLICY, SOCIOLOGY

Dr. Jasmine Hill is an Assistant Professor of Public Policy and Sociology at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research explores racial inequality in the labor market and the material, cultural, and spatial underpinnings of modern stratification. She received her Ph.D in Sociology from Stanford University, where she was trained in qualitative, quantitative, and experimental methodology.

In 2018, she led the founding of PledgeLA with the Annenberg Foundation and the Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti. Her scholarship on racial justice, public policy, and the workplace has appeared in top-ranked academic journals like *Social Problems*, *The DuBois Review*, *Teaching Sociology*, and in 2017 she co-edited ***Inequality in the 21st Century*** with David Grusky.

Her research lab (pictured to the right) engages UCLA graduate and undergraduate students in the study of the changing face of the tech industry and policy levers to abolish the low-wage labor market.



## **CHINYERE J. NWONYE, MPP**

RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Chinyere Nwonye is a researcher with a background in mixed methodology, policy analysis, and community engagement. She earned a master's in public policy from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, where she specialized in global public affairs, economic development, and environmental sustainability.



## IDRIS AKILAPA

DASHBOARD DEVELOPER

Idris Akilapa is a results-driven Data Analyst and 3X Tableau Ambassador with 5+ years' experience in analytics, visualization, and consultancy. Skilled in Tableau, Power BI, SQL, Python, and Alteryx, he has trained 5,000+ enthusiasts and delivers tailored, impactful solutions that drive data-driven decision-making across industries.