



# ***2023 NFL DIVERSITY & INCLUSION REPORT***

***VOLUME XII | MARCH 2023***

# ***OCCUPATIONAL MOBILITY PATTERNS***

## ***IN THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE***



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**A REPORT PRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE**

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*This report is available at [operations.nfl.com](https://operations.nfl.com)*



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## NFL MOBILITY REPORT - KEY DATA AND INSIGHTS SPOTLIGHT

- A central goal of this data-driven mobility report is to provide real-time insights combined with strategic recommendations to help produce measurable goals and improved results in future hiring cycles, especially concerning the persistence of disparate outcomes for leaders of color with respect to NFL general manager, head coach, and offensive coordinator roles
- This Volume XII research report is a direct call to action to strengthen leaguewide processes, expand inclusive programming, shift the mindset of hiring managers, and increase accountability
- Data-driven policies, programs, and incentives can certainly create incremental progress and momentum and result in a meaningful paradigm and culture shift by facilitating heightened awareness and increased stakeholder engagement—however, a genuine commitment by all hiring managers to hire, develop, and promote leaders of color is absolutely critical to produce compelling, sustainable outcomes
- Recent annual hiring cycles all seem to reinforce the reality that no matter how many innovative and practical data-driven policies and initiatives are created, sustainable change will not occur until the hearts and minds/perspectives of those making the hiring decisions shift and the resultant selection process for head coaches, coordinators and general managers truly becomes more merit-based and as close to bias-free as possible
- The hiring process for team leaders still needs to evolve, as does the thought process and evaluative criteria of many hiring managers—improved results need to flow from improved processes
- A primary challenge for candidates of color is breaking into the head coach pipeline, as many head coaches, coordinators and key position coaches continue to get “reshuffled,” thereby preventing new talent from entering the candidate pipeline—this “reshuffling effect” reduces the number of opportunities for new talent/candidates to break into the head coach pipeline
- In addition to increasing the number of qualified candidates of color who interview for each open coordinator, head coach and general manager position, it is imperative to ensure that qualified candidates are perceived as being “qualified” by the individuals who make the hiring decisions
- The evaluative criteria utilized by hiring decision-makers seems to consistently shift each hiring cycle with respect to what prior coaching experience, leadership attributes and other non-cognitive variables are deemed essential for new head coach and other team leadership hires—some teams have recently placed too much emphasis on “interview performance” as compared with actual coaching performance
- Coaching qualities such as compassion, relatability, and mutual respect are essential to establishing and maintaining an inclusive and empowering team culture; currently, a candidate’s job prospects are sometimes impacted by intangible factors such as trust and perceived competence in addition to tangible factors such as actual performance in past head coach or coordinator position(s)
- The aspirational goal is for all NFL teams to transition from a rules compliance and compensatory draft pick incentivization perspective to a hiring and talent development mindset that truly values equity, fairness, inclusivity, culture, trust, and merit
- A permanent change in hiring cultures is critical in addition to the fluctuating gradual incremental improvements concerning the percentage of coaches and other team leaders of color hired each season
- Simply put, it is imperative to educate, enlighten, encourage, and empower team owners and other key decision makers to shift personal perspectives, perceptions, preferences, priorities, and processes



## NFL MOBILITY REPORT - KEY DATA AND INSIGHTS SPOTLIGHT

- From 1963-2023, 125 White individuals such as Frank Reich, Sean Payton, Nathaniel Hackett, Bill O'Brien, Matt Nagy, and Vic Fangio have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator, or defensive coordinator after a first NFL head coach opportunity, whereas only 23 men of color such as Todd Bowles and Brian Flores have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator, or defensive coordinator after a first head coach opportunity
- Since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season, 40 of the 77 head coaches hired were previously an offensive coordinator in the NFL for at least one full NFL season before earning a head coach opportunity, and 24 of the 77 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously a defensive coordinator in the NFL for at least one full NFL season before earning a head coach opportunity—64 of the 77 (equal to 83%) head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL season were previously an NFL level offensive or defensive coordinator
- During the most recent annual hiring cycle between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII), NFL teams hired a total of 41 head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers for open positions
  - White individuals were hired for 26 of these 41 available positions and 15 men of color were hired for these 41 recently filled positions
  - Men of color were hired for approximately 37% of the 41 recently filled head coach, offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator, special teams coordinators, and general manager openings—somewhat comparable to both the 2021-2022 hiring cycle during which men of color were hired for 32% of the openings (15 out of 47 positions) and the 2020-2021 hiring cycle during which men of color were hired for 37% of the openings (19 out of 52 positions) as well as a significant improvement from the 2019-2020 hiring cycle during which men of color were only hired for 19% of the openings (6 out of 32 positions)
- During the most recent annual hiring cycle between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII), 12 of the 39 head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers who were fired, resigned, promoted, retired, accepted the same coaching position with another team (“lateral career transition”), or otherwise “mutually parted ways” with an NFL team were men of color—from February 2022 to February 2023, the total number of men of color serving as head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers merely increased by three within the NFL, which closely mirrors the 2021-2022 hiring cycle during which the total number of men of color serving in these primary team leadership roles only increased by two men of color
- From 1993-2023, NFL teams have hired/employed 402 individuals as general managers and head coaches—only 16% (63/402) of these general managers and head coaches have been men of color
- High position turnover rates have been prevalent at the NFL coordinator level in recent years as NFL teams have made 106 total changes at the offensive coordinator position during the previous eight NFL seasons and NFL teams have made 85 total changes at the defensive coordinator position during the previous eight NFL seasons—this extremely high turnover rate in key team leadership roles is not ideal from a player development or career trajectory and sustainability perspective
- From 2002-2023, NFL teams hired a total of 222 head coaches—59 of the head coach hires served as NFL defensive coordinators in the immediately prior season (including 13 coaches of color such as Todd Bowles and DeMeco Ryans), 58 of the head coach hires served as NFL offensive coordinators in the immediately prior season (including 4 coaches of color), and 34 of the head coach hires served as NFL head coaches in the immediately prior season (including 6 coaches of color)
- The 21-season summary data (2002-2023) on common pathways to becoming an NFL offensive coordinator illustrates the troubling reshuffling effect for a central primary head coach pipeline position as 101 of the 389 offensive coordinators hired by NFL teams from the start of the 2002 NFL season through February 2023 (approximately 26% of total offensive coordinator hires) previously worked as either an NFL head coach or an NFL offensive coordinator of another team immediately before earning a subsequent NFL offensive coordinator opportunity—only nine of these 101 former NFL offensive coordinators and head coaches have been men of color, which indicates that White individuals represent 91% of the former NFL head coaches and/or former NFL offensive coordinators who have been reshuffled into a subsequent offensive coordinator opportunity
- While it is somewhat encouraging that 43% of the defensive coordinators hired (53 out of 124) since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season are coordinators of color, only 12% (18 out of 149) of the offensive coordinators hired during this same time period have been coordinators of color

# STATEMENT FROM DR. G. KEITH HARRISON

*"It was all a dream."* ~ Notorious B.I.G.

I want to walk you through my dream prior to "Black Monday" in the NFL (day after the regular season ends) and all the vacancies being filled by February in most instances. I dreamed that offensive coordinator Eric Bieniemy would be hired as a head coach, as well as defensive coordinator Leslie Frazier and other African American males that have earned such an opportunity in addition to dreaming that someone like DeMeco Ryans would earn a head coach opportunity with a franchise in good standing (an organization other than the Houston Texans, although one understands that such an opportunity does not come around often). None of my dreams happened, which leaves me with a pertinent question: Do White coaches' leadership livelihoods matter more when it comes to hiring and firing trends, patterns, and best practices of decision makers in the NFL? As of 2023, my answer remains "yes." The goalposts continue to move with the attributes and dues paid by African American male coaches and other coaches of color more broadly speaking.

One of the more interesting case studies when looking at head coaching prospects who have not received an opportunity (to either succeed or fail like White coaches) is Eric Bieniemy. From 2019-2023, Bieniemy has interviewed for 17 head coaching positions with 16 different teams (Jets interviewed Bieniemy in 2019 and 2021). During this time span, the Kansas City Chiefs, who Bieniemy worked for as offensive coordinator, have finished with a top 6 offense all four seasons in points and yards. The Chiefs have seen success winning games as they have made the Super Bowl three of the four seasons, winning two of them. Of the 16 coaches who have coached at least one season since they were hired, only five of them have made the playoffs since being hired (Brandon Staley, Nick Sirianni, Kevin Stefanski, Zac Taylor, and Bruce Arians). Conversely, seven of the 16 hired coaches have been fired. More coaches have been fired than made the playoffs since being hired over Bieniemy. Of the 17 open positions that Eric Bieniemy interviewed for, 14 of them were filled with White coaches, 12 of which were offensive-minded coaches. When looking at experience, 11 of the 17 open head coach positions were filled by someone with less years of NFL coordinator experience than Bieniemy at the time of the interview. Nine of those 11 coaches with less years of NFL coordinator experience were White coaches. Facts only.

In a forthcoming research article for the American Journal of Sociology, scholars Christopher Rider, James Wade, Anand Swaminathan and Andreas Schwab (2023) examined how racial disparity results from the organizational matching of individuals to positions with different advancement prospects ("allocative bias") and by the provision of differential rewards within those positions ("valuative bias"). These scholars proposed that "racial disparity in organizational leadership representation will persist until valuative bias favoring White men ceases to influence advancement from the lower-level positions where most careers begin." Results from this recent research study suggest "that people of color will gain more if organizations address valuative bias in promotions from lower-level positions and into positions below the leadership ranks, where the qualifications considered pre-requisite for leadership are acquired."

Another empirical article by Professor Melissa Williams (Emory University's Goizueta Business School) and colleagues objectively and scientifically captures the inequitable trend that informs the reality that White male coaches enjoy the hiring biases in an article titled "Looking the Part: Stereotypicality in Appearance Among White Professionals Predicts Leadership Attainment and Perceived Leadership Suitability" (2022): "Building on research showing that people hold an image of the ideal leader as a White person, we propose that looking more typically White may facilitate leadership attainment. Furthermore, within race, stereotypicality positively predicted occupying a leadership head-coach role among White professionals (and negatively predicted occupying a head-coach role among Black professionals). These findings advance theorizing on the White leader link and have implications for the ability of people of color to achieve lucrative professional roles."

Even though the overall hiring process seemed to improve in some facets and aspects this annual hiring cycle in terms of numerous extended, more deliberate team hiring processes and positive impacts of the NFL's inclusive hiring training initiative and other programming, the cumulative hiring results nonetheless mirror previous hiring cycles—from February 2022 to February 2023, the total number of men of color serving as head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers merely increased by three within the NFL, almost precisely aligning with the 2021-2022 hiring cycle during which the total number of men of color serving in these primary team leadership roles only increased by two individuals.

In the final analysis, the NFL has real life resumes with real life people that get overlooked for real time head coaching jobs, and this impacts real human beings' feelings, attitudes, and mental health. There is only one primary recommendation this year—change the hearts and mindsets of the decision makers who are still not choosing experience, quality achievements, and innovation. Choosing nepotism and cronyism continues to be a major hurdle and problem. Too many teams lean on the excuse of overly relying on interviews instead of a coach's body of work and skill sets as a leader. Choosing what is comfortable is choosing the status quo.

# STATEMENT FROM TROY VINCENT

Every year, we strive to normalize the hiring of Black coaches in supervisory roles in the NFL. Each year, we find there is more work to be done. While we inch closer to fairness in hiring practices through efforts aimed at creating trust, spotlighting skill, and developing talent, the results are slow and tenuous.

We learned a lot from the 2023 hiring cycle. Efforts to emphasize development and highlighting the offensive side of the ball may have paid off in Black hires for Quarterback Coaches, representing the highest percentage (36%) of Black coaches hired in a cycle since 2017. The Black Defensive Coordinator has come much closer to normalization. Black Defensive Coordinator hires were at 50% for the hiring cycle, second highest since 2017, about even with the seven-year average. In key coaching roles, one Black coach was gained over the previous year—zero Head Coaches, but a gain of four in Quarterback Coaches. There was one Black GM gain over 2022.

In addition, history was made. There was a gain of one Black General Manager, which brings us to an all-time high of nine Black General Managers. Two Black Club Presidents were added, bringing the total to five--the most in league history. These are indicators that some initiatives are paying off. Process and guidelines are instilling accountability toward clean, fair and equitable interview and hiring processes.

The processes include a committee of representatives from the Black College Hall of Fame, the Fritz Pollard Alliance, and former GMs that evaluates all possible candidates and identifies top candidates that NFL Football Operations shares with clubs, hiring consultants and agents. Accountability is introduced into the process, as data is collected and tracked on the number of interviews and job offers, ensuring that minority candidates are seen and are seriously considered.

The NFL Quarterback Summit, in partnership with the Black College Football Hall of Fame, and the Ozzie Newsome General Managers Forum are yielding results. Position coach development through the Bill Walsh Minority Coaching fellowship and the Nunn-Wooten Scouting Fellowship continue to strengthen and expose talent.

It is time, however, to think outside the box with first defining success so the goalposts are not always moving. Existing barriers such as the agent effect, nepotism and cronyism must be eliminated. Alternative paths to success ought to be considered. Expanding the college coach inventory, ongoing development, and strengthening policies that directly impact accountability are necessary steps. We must continually ask ourselves: "If normalization is the goal, how do we effectively get there?" The answer likely is found in "both/and" rather than "either/or" scenarios.

## REPORT BACKGROUND & RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This empirical research report series began analyzing data on occupational mobility patterns of key NFL team leaders commencing with the start of the 2012 NFL regular season to develop actionable data-driven policies along with corresponding best practices recommendations at both the league and team levels. The current Volume XII report, released in March 2023, supplements and complements the comprehensive annual internal league-developed “NFL Coaching Demographics” report.

A primary goal of this multifaceted data-driven initiative is to provide real-time data combined with strategic recommendations to help produce improved results in future hiring cycles, especially concerning the persistence of disparate outcomes for leaders of color with respect to NFL general manager, head coach, and offensive coordinator roles. This independent report also aims to function as a core resource that supports an overall strategic, thoughtful, ambitious, and program-based blueprint for scalable improvements relating to career opportunities for coaches and other team leaders of color. Simply put, this Volume XII research report is another direct call to action to strengthen leaguewide processes, expand inclusive programming, shift the mindset of hiring managers, and increase accountability.

The findings within this report highlight the need to transition traction into action by inviting all league and team stakeholders to renew a commitment to more equitable hiring processes and resultant more diverse and inclusive coach and front office staffs. Data-driven policies, programs, and incentives can certainly create incremental progress/momentum and result in a meaningful paradigm and culture shift by facilitating heightened awareness and increased stakeholder engagement. Previous reports and policy reforms have produced gradual changes and noteworthy improvements. Nonetheless, deeper systemic overhauls and culture/mindset shifts continue to be vital to yield prolonged meaningful change in the hiring cycle results. A genuine commitment by all hiring managers to hire, develop, and promote leaders of color is essential to produce compelling, sustainable outcomes.

This independent research study analyzes data and attempts to decode media narratives regarding NFL head coach demographics, tenure, and occupational mobility patterns from the start of the 1963 NFL season to February 2023. This specific range of NFL seasons is utilized because 1963 serves as the first season during which the NFL began to track relevant data on head coach mobility patterns. This research study also contains detailed data regarding NFL offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator, special teams coordinator, and general manager demographics as well as overall tenure and mobility trends from the start of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) to kickoff at Super Bowl LVII (February 12, 2023). The present research study also highlights mobility patterns of head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers during the approximate one-year period from the day following Super Bowl LVI (February 14, 2022) to kickoff at Super Bowl LVII (February 12, 2023) in order to provide a timely, precise snapshot of key recent mobility trends and themes. A comprehensive database of descriptive data was developed to evaluate the career paths, organizational tenure, and occupational mobility patterns of current NFL position coaches in conjunction with examining opportunities for these position coaches to earn promotions to coordinator or head coach positions. In addition, this research study integrates descriptive data from recent interconnected research conducted by the NFL related to occupational mobility and job success determinants of NFL head coaches and other primary football operations team leaders.

***“In the previous editions of this annual occupational mobility report, more than 35 policy and programmatic proposals have been developed and proposed—numerous of which have been embraced, implemented, and/or adapted by the NFL league office. Nonetheless, each hiring cycle seems to reinforce the reality that no matter how many innovative and practical data-driven policies and initiatives are created, truly meaningful and sustainable change will not occur until the hearts and minds/perspectives of those making the hiring decisions shift and the resultant selection process for head coaches, coordinators, and general managers truly becomes more merit-based, empathy-driven, skill set influenced, and as close to bias-free as possible. The aspirational goal is for all NFL teams to transition from a rule compliance and compensatory draft pick incentivization perspective to a hiring and talent development mindset that genuinely values equity, fairness, inclusivity, culture, trust, and merit.”***

***Dr. C. Keith Harrison***

# OVERVIEW OF RECENT MOBILITY PATTERNS & KEY MOBILITY TRENDS SINCE 2012

The NFL league office internal team database contains demographic data on current and former NFL head coaches starting with the 1963 regular season. From the start of the 1963 NFL season through kickoff at Super Bowl LVII (February 12, 2023), only 20 different African American coaches, three Latino American coaches, one Lebanese American coach, and two multiracial coaches have served as head coaches in the NFL. As of February 2023, six head coaches of color led NFL teams as compared with 26 White NFL head coaches. For comparison purposes, five head coaches of color led NFL teams as of both February 2021 and February 2022.

The findings of the current study indicate that, historically, NFL teams have been reluctant to hire a person of color for a head coach, offensive coordinator, or defensive coordinator position after a person of color has previously served as a head coach in the NFL. Since the start of the 1963 NFL season, 125 White individuals such as Frank Reich, Sean Payton, Nathaniel Hackett, Bill O'Brien, Matt Nagy, and Vic Fangio have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator, or defensive coordinator after a first NFL head coach opportunity, whereas only 23 men of color such as Todd Bowles and Brian Flores have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator, or defensive coordinator after a first head coach opportunity. In addition, since the start of the 1963 NFL season, 27 White individuals have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator, or defensive coordinator after a second NFL head coach opportunity, whereas only four men of color have been hired as an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator, or defensive coordinator after a second head coach opportunity.

Within this report, a specific emphasis is placed on the occupational mobility patterns of offensive coordinators and defensive coordinators because these two team coaching positions have historically functioned as the primary career pipelines for NFL head coach hires. For instance, findings in the current research study indicate that 40 of the 77 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously an offensive coordinator in the NFL for at least one full NFL season before earning a head coach opportunity. Twenty-four of the 77 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously a defensive coordinator in the NFL for at least one full NFL season before earning a head coach opportunity. It is important to note that this Volume XII report also includes foundational mobility trend data on special teams coordinators—a team leadership role that continues to emerge as a viable springboard pathway for aspiring NFL head coaches.

Between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII), NFL teams hired a total of 41 head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers for open positions. White individuals were hired for 26 of these 41 available positions. Fifteen men of color were hired for these 41 recently filled positions (see Figure A1). In other words, men of color were hired for approximately 37% of the recently filled head coach, offensive coordinator, defensive coordinator, special teams coordinators, and general manager openings—somewhat comparable to both the 2021-2022 hiring cycle during which men of color were hired for 32% of the openings (15 out of 47 positions) and the 2020-2021 hiring cycle during which men of color were similarly hired for 37% of the openings (19 out of 52 positions) as well as a significant improvement from the 2019-2020 hiring cycle during which men of color were only hired for 19% of the openings (6 out of 32 positions). Figure A2 provides a snapshot of the four most recent annual hiring cycle results from February 2019 to February 2023 for head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers.

Between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII), 12 of the 39 head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers who were fired, resigned, promoted, retired, accepted the same coaching position with another team (“lateral career transition”), or otherwise “mutually parted ways” with an NFL team were men of color. Stated differently, from February 2022 to February 2023, the total number of men of color serving as head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers merely increased by three within the NFL—closely mirroring the 2021-2022 hiring cycle during which the total number of men of color serving in these primary team leadership roles only increased by two individuals.

**FIGURE A1**

**OVERVIEW OF RECENT GENERAL MANAGER, HEAD COACH AND COORDINATOR HIRES**



**FIGURE A2**

**FOUR-YEAR HIRING CYCLE SUMMARY SPOTLIGHT (2019-2023)**

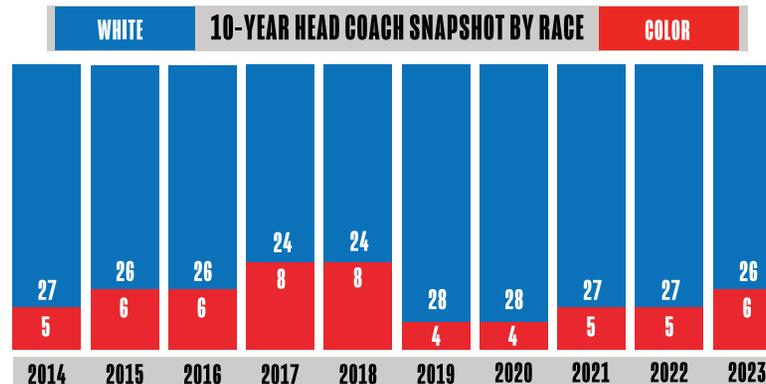
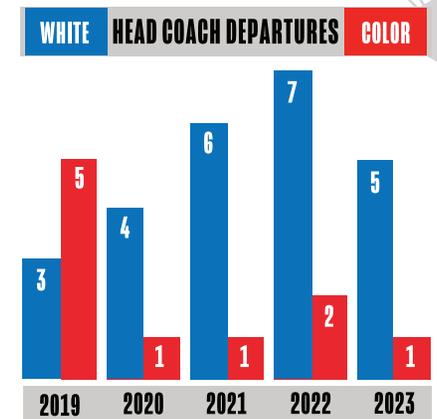
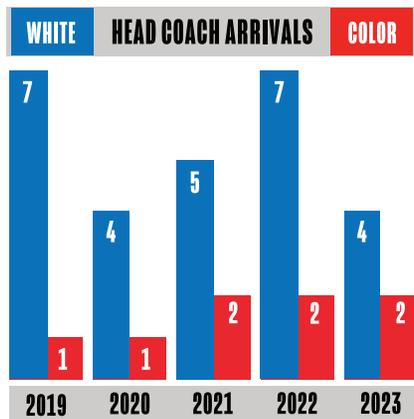
YEAR	OPENINGS FILLED BY CANDIDATES OF COLOR	POSITIONS
2019-2020	19%	6 OF 32
2020-2021	37%	19 OF 52
2021-2022	32%	15 OF 47
2022-2023	37%	15 OF 41



**TABLE 1**

**HEAD COACH MOBILITY PATTERNS (2022-2023)**

Team	Name of Former Head Coach	Race of former Head Coach	Next Opportunity for Former Coach	Name of New Head Coach	Race of New Head Coach	Previous Position of New Head Coach
Arizona Cardinals	Kliff Kingsbury	White		Jonathan Gannon	White	Defensive Coordinator, Philadelphia Eagles
Carolina Panthers	Matt Rhule	White	Head Coach, University of Nebraska (NCAA)	Frank Reich	White	Head Coach, Indianapolis Colts
Denver Broncos	Nathaniel Hackett	White	Offensive Coordinator, New York Jets	Sean Payton	White	Head Coach, New Orleans Saints (2021)
Houston Texans	Lovie Smith	African American		DeMeco Ryans	African American	Defensive Coordinator, San Francisco 49ers
Indianapolis Colts	Frank Reich	White	Head Coach, Carolina Panthers	Shane Steichen	White	Offensive Coordinator, Philadelphia Eagles
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	Bruce Arians	White	Consultant, Tampa Bay Buccaneers	Todd Bowles	African American	Defensive Coordinator, Tampa Bay Buccaneers



As illustrated in Table 1, between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII), NFL teams hired four White head coaches (Jonathan Gannon, Sean Payton, Frank Reich, and Shane Steichen). During that same time period, NFL teams hired two head coaches of color (Todd Bowles and DeMeco Ryans). In addition, between the start of the 2012 NFL season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LVII (February 12, 2023), NFL teams hired 62 White head coaches—81% of total head coach hires. During that same time period, NFL teams hired only 15 head coaches of color—19% of total head coach hires (see Figure A3).

**FIGURE A3**

**HEAD COACHES HIRED BETWEEN 2012-2023**



**81%** total head coach hires  
**WHITE**

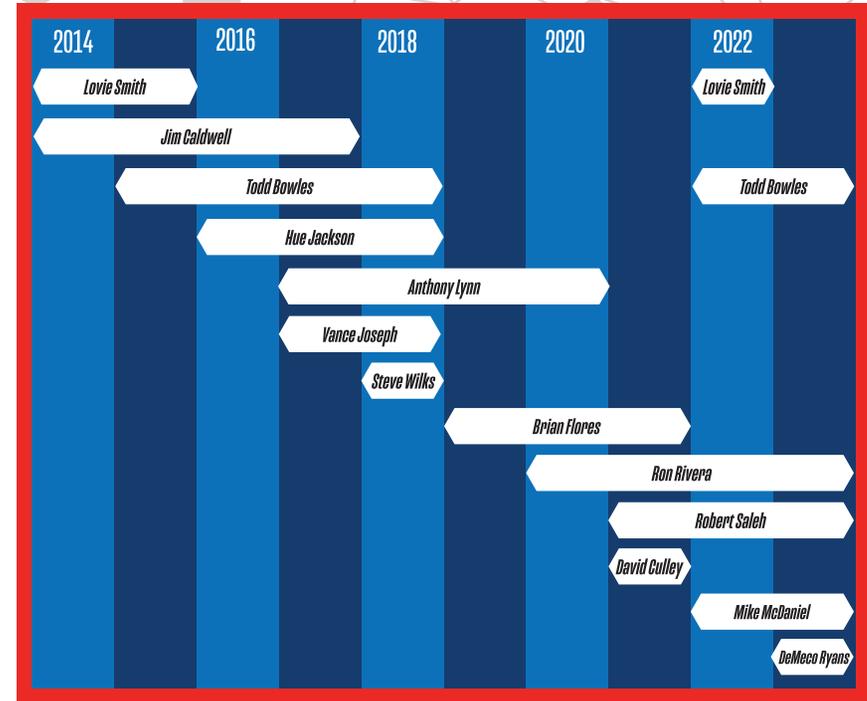
2012 - 2023

total head coach hires  
**COACHES OF COLOR**

**19%**

**FIGURE A4**

**HEAD COACHES OF COLOR HIRED SINCE 2012**



Notably, only five of the head coaches of color hired since the start of the 2012 NFL season remain current NFL head coaches as of March 2023 (Todd Bowles, Mike McDaniel, Ron Rivera, DeMeco Ryans, and Robert Saleh). Mike Tomlin has served as head coach of the Pittsburgh Steelers since 2007. Lovie Smith served as head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers from 2014-2015 and the Houston Texans during the 2022 NFL season. Jim Caldwell served as head coach of the Detroit Lions from 2014-2017. Todd Bowles served as head coach of the New York Jets from 2015-2018. Hue Jackson served as head coach of the Cleveland Browns from 2016-2018. Anthony Lynn served as head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers from 2017-2020. Vance Joseph served as head coach of the Denver Broncos from 2017-2018. Steve Wilks served as head coach of the Arizona Cardinals during the 2018 NFL season. Brian Flores served as head coach of the Miami Dolphins from 2019-2021. David Culley served as head coach of the Houston Texans during the 2021 NFL season (see Figure A4).

**TABLE 2**
**OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS (2022-2023)**

<i>Team</i>	<i>Name of Former Offensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Race of Former Offensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Next Opportunity for Former Offensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Name of New Offensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Race of New Offensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Previous Position of New Offensive Coordinator</i>
Arizona Cardinals				Drew Petzing	White	Quarterbacks Coach, Cleveland Browns
Baltimore Ravens	Greg Roman	White		Todd Monken	White	Offensive Coordinator & Quarterbacks Coach, University of Georgia (NCAA)
Carolina Panthers	Ben McAdoo	White		Thomas Brown	African American	Assistant Head Coach & Tight Ends Coach, Los Angeles Rams
Dallas Cowboys	Kellen Moore	White	Offensive Coordinator, Los Angeles Chargers	Brian Schottenheimer	White	Coaching Analyst, Dallas Cowboys
Denver Broncos	Justin Outten	White	Running Backs Coach & Run Game Coordinator, Tennessee Titans	Joe Lombardi	White	Offensive Coordinator, Los Angeles Chargers
Houston Texans	Pep Hamilton	African American		Bobby Slowik	White	Offensive Passing Game Coordinator, San Francisco 49ers
Indianapolis Colts	Marcus Brady	African American	Senior Offensive Assistant, Philadelphia Eagles	Jim Bob Cooter	White	Passing Game Coordinator, Jacksonville Jaguars
Kansas City Chiefs	Eric Bieniemy	African American	Assistant Head Coach & Offensive Coordinator, Washington Commanders	Matt Nagy	White	Senior Assistant & Quarterbacks Coach, Kansas City Chiefs
Los Angeles Chargers	Joe Lombardi	White	Offensive Coordinator, Denver Broncos	Kellen Moore	White	Offensive Coordinator, Dallas Cowboys
Los Angeles Rams	Liam Coen	White	Offensive Coordinator & QB Coach, University of Kentucky (NCAA)	Mike LaFleur	White	Offensive Coordinator, New York Jets
New England Patriots				Bill O'Brien	White	Offensive Coordinator, University of Alabama (NCAA)
New York Jets	Mike LaFleur	White	Offensive Coordinator, Los Angeles Rams	Nathaniel Hackett	White	Head Coach, Denver Broncos
Philadelphia Eagles	Shane Steichen	White	Head Coach, Indianapolis Colts	Brian Johnson	African American	Quarterbacks Coach, Philadelphia Eagles
Tampa Bay Buccaneers	Byron Leftwich	African American		Dave Canales	Latino American	Quarterbacks Coach, Seattle Seahawks
Tennessee Titans	Todd Downing	White	Passing Game Coordinator, New York Jets	Tim Kelly	White	Passing Game Coordinator, Tennessee Titans
Washington Commanders	Scott Turner	White	Passing Game Coordinator, Las Vegas Raiders	Eric Bieniemy	African American	Offensive Coordinator, Kansas City Chiefs

**TABLE 3**
**DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS (2022-2023)**

<i>Team</i>	<i>Name of former Defensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Race of Former Defensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Next Opportunity for Former Defensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Name of New Defensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Race of New Defensive Coordinator</i>	<i>Previous Position of New Defensive Coordinator</i>
Arizona Cardinals	Vance Joseph	African American	Defensive Coordinator, Denver Broncos	Nick Rallis	White	Linebackers Coach, Philadelphia Eagles
Atlanta Falcons	Dean Pees	White	Retired	Ryan Nielsen	White	Co-Defensive Coordinator & Defensive Line Coach, New Orleans Saints
Carolina Panthers	Phil Snow	White		Ejiro Evero	African American	Defensive Coordinator, Denver Broncos
Cleveland Browns	Joe Woods	African American	Defensive Coordinator, New Orleans Saints	Jim Schwartz	White	Senior Defensive Assistant, Tennessee Titans
Denver Broncos	Ejiro Evero	African American	Defensive Coordinator, Carolina Panthers	Vance Joseph	African American	Defensive Coordinator, Arizona Cardinals
Houston Texans				Matt Burke	White	Defensive Line Coach, Arizona Cardinals
Los Angeles Chargers	Rinaldo Hill	African American	Defensive Pass Game Coordinator, Miami Dolphins	Derrick Ansley	African American	Secondary Coach, Los Angeles Chargers
Miami Dolphins	Josh Boyer	White		Vic Fangio	White	Defensive Consultant, Philadelphia Eagles
Minnesota Vikings	Ed Donatell	White		Brian Flores	Multiracial	Senior Defensive Assistant & Linebackers Coach, Pittsburgh Steelers
New Orleans Saints	Kris Richard Ryan Nielsen	African American White	Defensive Coordinator, Atlanta Falcons	Joe Woods	African American	Defensive Coordinator, Cleveland Browns
Philadelphia Eagles	Jonathan Gannon	White	Head Coach, Arizona Cardinals	Sean Desai	Indian American	Associate Head Coach & Defensive Assistant, Seattle Seahawks
San Francisco 49ers	DeMeco Ryans	African American	Head Coach, Houston Texans	Steve Wilks	African American	Defensive Passing Game Coordinator & Secondary Coach, Carolina Panthers

DEPARTED HEAD COACHES HAD AN  
AVERAGE TENURE OF

SEASONS

4.6

TENURE TREND

4.7

WHITE

AVERAGE TENURE OF  
DEPARTED HEAD COACHES  
(2019-2023)

4.4

COLOR

CURRENT NFL COACHES HAVE AN  
AVERAGE TENURE OF

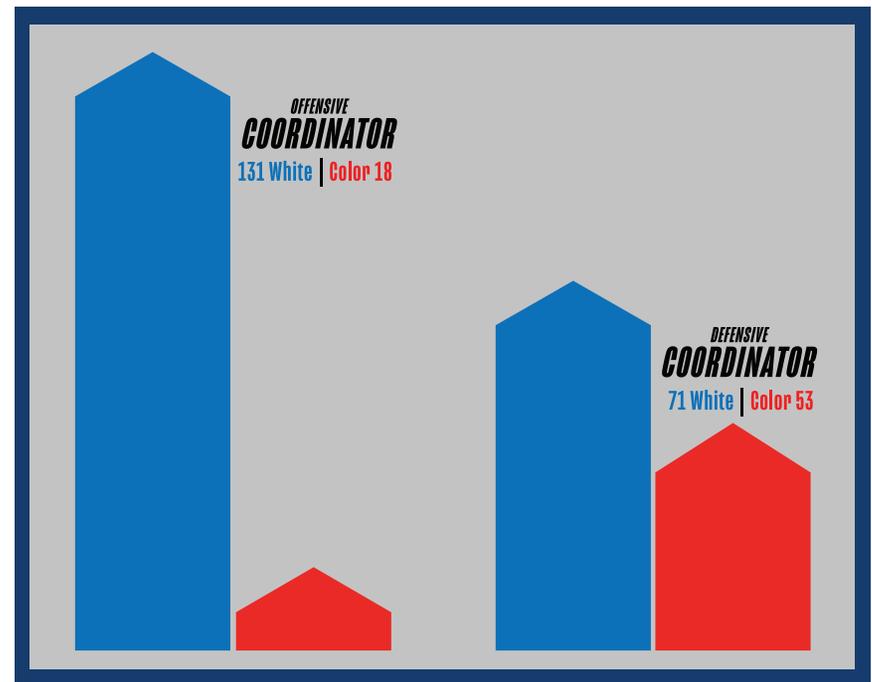
SEASONS

4.2

As Table 2 and Table 3 illustrate, between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII), NFL teams hired 12 White offensive coordinators and only four offensive coordinators of color. During the same approximate one-year time period, NFL teams hired five White defensive coordinators and seven defensive coordinators of color—this data precisely mirrors the defensive coordinator hiring results for the previous annual hiring cycle (2021-2022) during which five White defensive coordinators and seven defensive coordinators of color were hired. It is important to note that, in February 2023, Leslie Frazier decided to take a year off from coaching and temporarily step down as defensive coordinator of the Buffalo Bills—the team did not intend to temporarily fill the defensive coordinator position on an interim basis during Frazier’s one-season leave of absence. Between the start of the 2012 NFL season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LVII (February 12, 2023), NFL teams hired 131 White offensive coordinators and 18 offensive coordinators of color. During this same time period (from September 2012 to February 2023), NFL teams hired 71 White defensive coordinators and 53 defensive coordinators of color (see Figure A5).

FIGURE A5

OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS HIRED BETWEEN 2012-2023



**TABLE 4**

**SPECIAL TEAMS COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS (2022-2023)**

Team	Name of Former Special Teams Coordinator	Race of Former Special Teams Coordinator	Next Opportunity for Former Special Teams Coordinator	Name of New Special Teams Coordinator	Race of New Special Teams Coordinator	Previous Position of New Special Teams Coordinator
Cleveland Browns	Mike Priefer	White		Raymond Ventrone	White	Special Teams Coordinator, Indianapolis Colts
Denver Broncos	Dwayne Stukes	African American		Ben Kotwica	White	Assistant Special Teams Coach, Minnesota Vikings
Indianapolis Colts	Raymond Ventrone	White	Assistant Head Coach & Special Teams Coordinator, Cleveland Browns	Brian Mason	White	Special Teams Coordinator, University of Notre Dame (NCAA)
Los Angeles Rams	Joe DeCamillis	White		Chase Blackburn	White	Assistant Special Teams Coach, Tennessee Titans

As Table 4 illustrates, between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII), NFL teams replaced three White special teams coordinators and one African American special teams coordinator. During this same approximate one-year time period, four White special teams coordinators were hired and zero special teams coordinators of color were hired. Each of the seven current NFL special teams coordinators of color has been in such position for five or fewer prior seasons. Twenty current NFL special teams coordinators (including recently hired Chase Blackburn, Ben Kotwica and Raymond Ventrone) are serving in this core coaching leadership position for the second or greater time—this “reshuffling effect” limits opportunities for new talent to enter the broader head coach pipeline from within this emerging key team leadership pathway position. In addition to these lateral transitions (reshuffling) of special teams coordinators, the assistant special teams coordinator position has functioned as the core requisite primary mobility pipeline for all current special teams coordinators of color as 31 current NFL special teams coordinators served as either a special teams coordinator of another team or an assistant special teams coordinator for their current team or a different team immediately prior to earning their current special teams coordinator position—recently hired Brian Mason most recently served as special teams coordinator at the University of Notre Dame.

*“We should be creating a workplace culture that doesn’t require mandates to interview people of color and minorities ... [Teams] should be doing the right thing for the right reasons, not because there is a policy ... It’s not about percentages. It’s about intentionally normalizing fairness, inclusivity and opportunity as an extension of football for all.”*

*Troy Vincent, NFL Executive Vice President of Football Operations*

*“Until we see organizations doing the right thing for the right reasons in hiring individuals, the Rooney Rule and other policy adjustments are necessary. It is disappointing because we are going into 2023 and we are still in a place where we still have to have these requirements and mandates just to interview women and people of color. You would think that as an institution at this juncture based off of the evolution of the sport and those who play it—almost 80% of our workforce are people of color at the collegiate level and [the NFL] level—that we would be the last institution that would be faced with this challenge.”*

*Troy Vincent, NFL Executive Vice President of Football Operations*



**TABLE 5**

**GENERAL MANAGER MOBILITY PATTERNS (2022-2023)**

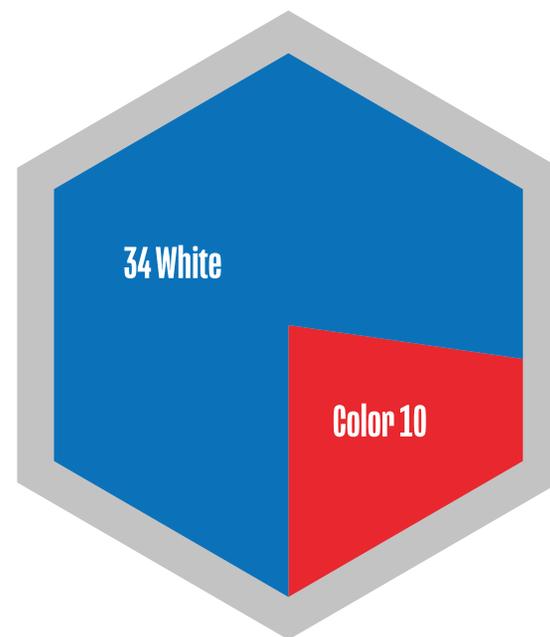
Team	Name of Former General Manager	Race of Former General Manager	Name of New General Manager	Race of New General Manager	Previous Position of New General Manager
Arizona Cardinals	Steve Keim	White	Monti Ossenfort	White	Director of Player Personnel, Tennessee Titans
Pittsburgh Steelers	Kevin Colbert	White	Omar Khan	Multiracial	Vice President of Football & Business Administration, Pittsburgh Steelers
Tennessee Titans	Jon Robinson	White	Ran Carthon	African American	Director of Player Personnel, San Francisco 49ers

As Table 5 illustrates, between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII), NFL teams replaced three White general managers and zero general managers of color. During this same approximate one-year time period, one White general manager was hired and two general managers of color were hired. It is important to note that Omar Khan was promoted by the Pittsburgh Steelers in May 2022 to replace the retiring Kevin Colbert. Monti Ossenfort and Ran Carthon were hired as first-time general managers in January 2023.

Between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and kickoff at Super Bowl LVII (February 12, 2023), NFL teams have hired 44 general managers—34 of the 44 general managers hired during this time frame have been White football operations team leaders—less than 23% of NFL general managers hired since the start of the 2012 NFL season have been men of color. However, since February 2019, eight of the 15 NFL general manager hires have been men of color, which demonstrates progress from an equitable and inclusive hiring perspective (see Figure A6).

**FIGURE A6**

**RACE OF NFL GENERAL MANAGERS HIRED SINCE 2012**

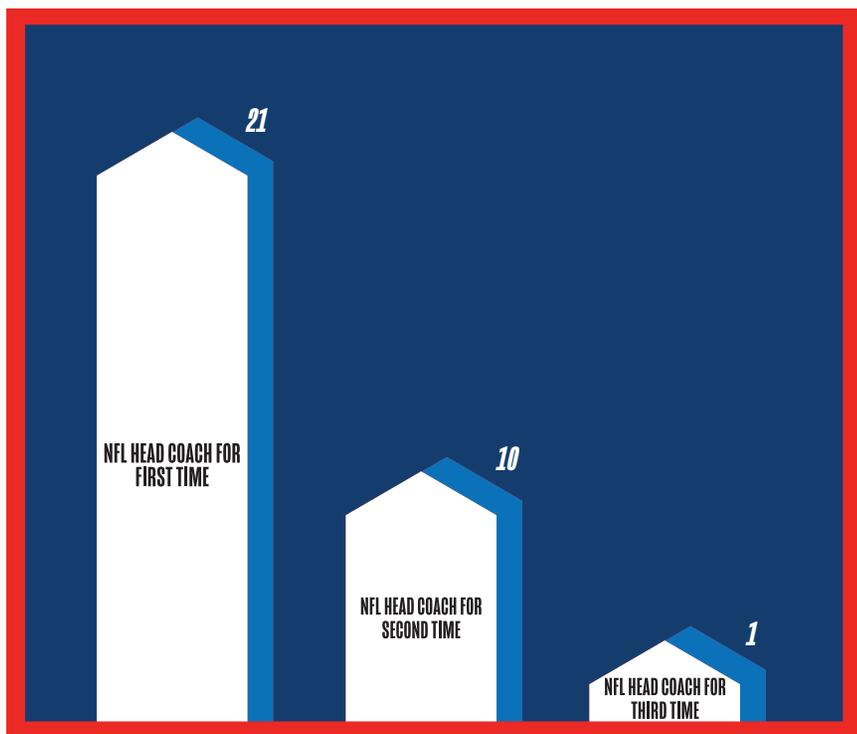


# TENURE/STINT & OPPORTUNITIES FOLLOWING NFL HEAD COACH ROLE(S)

Six current NFL head coaches have been hired since the day following Super Bowl LVI (February 14, 2022). Jonathan Gannon, DeMeco Ryans, and Shane Steichen are first-time NFL head coaches. Todd Bowles, Frank Reich, and Sean Payton are second-time NFL head coaches. Twenty-one of the 32 current head coaches are serving as first-time NFL head coaches, ten coaches are serving as second-time NFL head coaches, and one coach (Pete Carroll) is working as an NFL head coach for the third time in his coaching career (see Figure B1). All six recently hired head coaches have prior NFL experience as either an offensive coordinator (three recently hired coaches) or defensive coordinator (three recently hired coaches). None of the six recently hired head coaches has any prior NFL level experience as a special teams coordinator.

**FIGURE B1**

**CURRENT HEAD COACH TENURE/STINTS (2023)**



**FIGURE B2**

**NFL OPPORTUNITY AFTER FIRST HEAD COACH POSITION (1963-2023)**



As illustrated in Figure B2, after separating from a first head coach position, 12 different coaches of color have earned a second head coach opportunity in the NFL since the start of the 1963 season. For example, in March 2022, Todd Bowles was named head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers after previously serving as head coach of the New York Jets from 2015-2018. After separating from a first head coach position, 62 White individuals have received a second NFL head coach opportunity since the start of the 1963 season. For example, recently hired Carolina Panthers head coach Frank Reich served as head coach of the Indianapolis Colts from 2018 to midway through the 2022 NFL regular season—Reich was fired after the Colts started the 2022 season with a 3-5-1 record. Similarly, recently hired Denver Broncos head coach Sean Payton served as head coach of the New Orleans Saints from 2006-2011 and 2013-2021—Payton was suspended by the NFL during the 2012 season and took a year off from coaching in the NFL after parting ways with the New Orleans Saints following the 2021 NFL season.



As also illustrated in Figure B2, since the start of the 1963 NFL season, after separating from a first head coach position, 34 different White individuals have held NFL offensive coordinator positions, and 30 different White individuals have held NFL defensive coordinator positions. For instance, Nathaniel Hackett was recently named offensive coordinator of the New York Jets after previously serving as head coach of the Denver Broncos for most of the 2022 NFL season—Hackett was fired after the Broncos went 4-11 with two regular season games remaining to be coached by an interim head coach (Jerry Rosburg). Similarly, Matt Nagy recently earned an opportunity to serve as an NFL offensive coordinator (hired by the Kansas City Chiefs) after previously working as head coach of the Chicago Bears from 2018-2021. Likewise, Bill O'Brien was recently named offensive coordinator of the New England Patriots after previously serving as head coach of the Houston Texans from 2014-2020. And Vic Fangio was recently named defensive coordinator of the Miami Dolphins after previously serving as head coach of the Denver Broncos from 2019-2021. It is important to note that Jim Schwartz (recently named new Cleveland Browns defensive coordinator) is currently serving as an NFL defensive coordinator for the third time since being the head coach of the Detroit Lions from 2009-2013.

Since the start of the 1963 NFL season, after separating from a first head coach position, four former NFL head coaches of color (Tom Fears, Jim Caldwell, Hue Jackson and Anthony Lynn) have subsequently held an NFL offensive coordinator position, and seven former NFL head coaches of color (Brian Flores, Raheem Morris, Romeo Crennel, Leslie Frazier, Todd Bowles, Vance Joseph and Steve Wilks) have been subsequently hired as NFL defensive coordinators. During the most recent 2023 hiring cycle, Brian Flores earned the defensive coordinator position with the Minnesota Vikings after previously serving as head coach of the Miami Dolphins from 2019-2021. It is important to note that Vance Joseph (recently named new Denver Broncos defensive coordinator) is currently serving as an NFL defensive coordinator for the second time since being the head coach of the Denver Broncos from 2017-2018. Similarly, Steve Wilks (recently named new San Francisco 49ers defensive coordinator) is currently serving as an NFL defensive coordinator for the second time since being the head coach of the Arizona Cardinals during the 2018 season.

*"Even though the overall hiring process seemed to improve in some facets and aspects this annual hiring cycle in terms of numerous extended, more deliberate team hiring processes and positive impacts of the NFL's inclusive hiring training initiative and other programming, the cumulative hiring results nonetheless mirror previous hiring cycles—from February 2022 to February 2023, the total number of men of color serving as head coaches, offensive coordinators, defensive coordinators, special teams coordinators, and general managers merely increased by three within the NFL, almost precisely aligning with the 2021-2022 hiring cycle during which the total number of men of color serving in these primary team leadership roles only increased by two individuals."*

*Dr. C. Keith Harrison*

**FIGURE B3**

**NFL OPPORTUNITY AFTER SECOND HEAD COACH POSITION (1963-2023)**

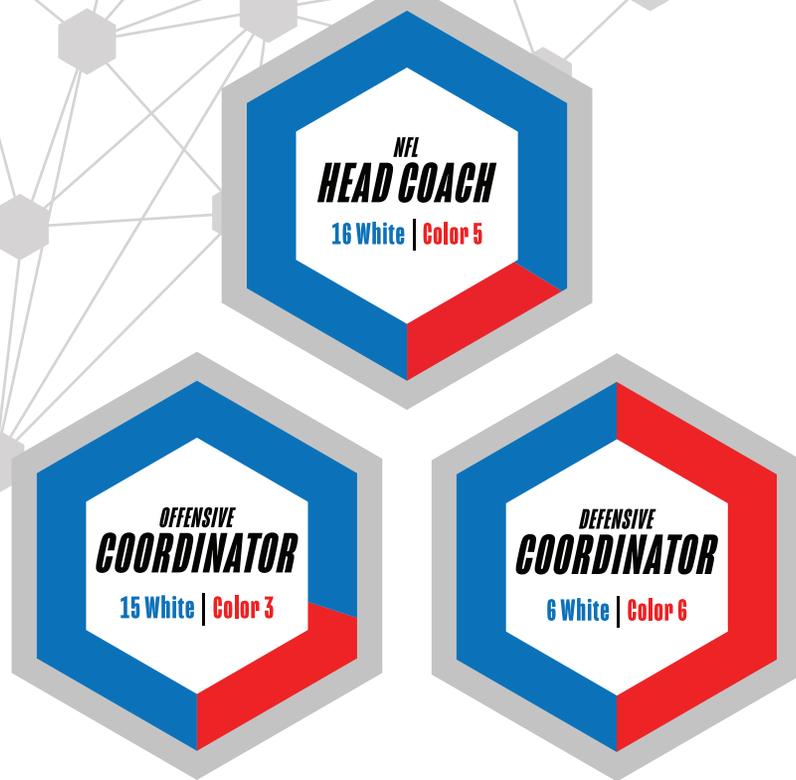


As illustrated in Figure B3, after separating from a second NFL head coach position, only one coach of color, Lovie Smith, has earned a third opportunity to serve as the head coach of an NFL team. Fifteen White coaches have received a third opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team. In addition, two White coaches (Bill Parcells and Marty Schottenheimer) earned a fourth opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team. Conversely, not a single person of color has earned a fourth opportunity to be the head coach of an NFL team.

As also depicted in Figure B3, after separating from a second head coach position, seven White individuals have received the opportunity to serve as an NFL offensive coordinator (as compared with zero men of color). Figure B3 also illustrates that, after separating from a second head coach position, five White individuals have received the opportunity to serve as an NFL defensive coordinator (as compared with three men of color). During the most recent 2023 hiring cycle, zero coaches of color earned an NFL head coach, offensive coordinator, or defensive coordinator opportunity following two prior stints as an NFL head coach.

**FIGURE B4**

**NFL OPPORTUNITY AFTER FIRST HEAD COACH POSITION (2012-2023)**



As illustrated in Figure B4, between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LVIII (February 12, 2023), 16 White individuals including Frank Reich and Sean Payton along with five men of color including Todd Bowles earned a second head coach opportunity after transitioning from a first head coach position during this time period. Lovie Smith, John Fox, Mike Mularkey and Jon Gruden are the only four coaches who received a third NFL head coach opportunity during this same time frame. During this same time period between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LVIII (February 12, 2023), 15 different White individuals and three different African American individuals earned an opportunity to be an NFL offensive coordinator after transitioning from a first head coach position. Also, during this same time period (from September 2012 to February 2023), six different White individuals and six different African American individuals earned an opportunity to be an NFL defensive coordinator after transitioning from a first NFL head coach position.

Only ten NFL teams have hired two or more African American, Latino American, Lebanese American and/or multiracial head coaches from 1963-2023 (excluding interim head coaches from the analysis). For example, DeMeco Ryans recently became the third non-interim head coach of color hired by the Houston Texans (after the team parted ways with two other head coaches of color, Lovie Smith and David Culley, in successive seasons following one-year head coach stints). Similarly, in March 2022, Todd Bowles became the fourth non-interim head coach of color hired by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Based in part on NFL internal research data, since the start of the 2008 NFL season, 33 different individuals have served as interim head coaches (that is, these individuals were head coaches for part of an NFL season including Steve Wilks, Jeff Saturday, and Jerry Rosburg during the 2022 NFL season). Eleven of the 33 interim head coaches have been men of color (with Romeo Crennel and Perry Fewell twice serving as interim NFL head coaches since 2008). Five of the eleven interim NFL head coaches of color since 2008 eventually earned a head coach opportunity with either the same or a different NFL team. Mike Singletary, Leslie Frazier and Romeo Crennel represent the only three men of color who earned the head coach position with their same team after serving as interim head coach for part of the immediately prior season. Likewise, since the start of the 2008 NFL season, Anthony Lynn is the only coach of color to earn a head coach position with a different NFL team after serving as an interim head coach for part of the immediately prior season. Relatedly, in January 2015, Todd Bowles became the sole African American leader named to a head coach position since the start of the 2008 NFL season after previously serving as an interim head coach with a different NFL team earlier in his career as he served as interim head coach for three games with the Miami Dolphins during the 2011 NFL season. Todd Bowles recently also became the first former interim head coach of color to earn two subsequent NFL head coach opportunities when named head coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in March 2022. Relatedly, Steve Wilks recently earned the defensive coordinator position with the San Francisco 49ers after serving as interim head coach of the Carolina Panthers for 12 games during the 2022 regular season.

In December 2022, Nathaniel Hackett was fired by the Denver Broncos during his first season as head coach—the Broncos went 4-11 in the 15 games Nathaniel Hackett coached. In January 2023, Lovie Smith was fired following one season coaching the Houston Texans. Similarly, in December 2021 Urban Meyer was fired during his first season as head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars and in January 2022 David Culley was fired following one season coaching the Houston Texans. Hiring managers (head coach talent evaluators) are encouraged to be patient during the first few seasons with a new head coach so long as the head coach has established a culture in which players feel respected and empowered and feel that the coaching staff is helping all players develop and compete with consistent compelling effort each game. Conversely, in situations like that in Jacksonville where a head coach has not created a culture of professionalism and inclusive excellence, hiring managers should not be reluctant to make swift changes—that said, proper due diligence on the front end of the hiring process for head coaches could reduce the number of future avoidable situations akin to the one that unfolded during the 2021 NFL season with Urban Meyer and the Jaguars.

**NFL General Managers and Head Coaches of Color from 1993 – 2023**

During the 30-season period from 1993–2023, NFL teams have hired/employed 402 individuals as general managers and head coaches. Only 16% (63/402) of these general managers and head coaches were men of color. Similarly, although the tenures/stints of White and racially diverse general managers and head coaches are somewhat comparable and encouraging, a clear ongoing occupational mobility barrier exists with respect to leaders of color earning the actual initial opportunity to serve as an NFL head coach or general manager. The Cleveland Browns have hired/employed five combined head coaches and general managers of color since the 1993 NFL season. The Minnesota Vikings, Houston Texans, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and Detroit Lions have each hired/employed four combined head coaches and general managers of color since 1993. Conversely, the Dallas Cowboys, Los Angeles Rams and New Orleans Saints have not hired/employed a single general manager or head coach of color since 1993. In January 2023, the Tennessee Titans hired a general manager of color (Ran Carthon) for the first time in team history. The Cleveland Browns are also the only NFL team that have hired/employed three different general managers of color since 1993—during this same time period, 13 NFL teams have not hired/employed a single general manager of color. The New York Jets, Houston Texans, and Tampa Bay Buccaneers are the only three NFL teams that have hired/employed three or more different head coaches of color since 1993 with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers being the only NFL team to have hired four head coaches of color—during this same time period, 10 NFL teams have not hired/employed a single head coach of color. Since 1993, only three NFL teams (Miami Dolphins, Houston Texans, and Indianapolis Colts) have hired a head coach of color directly after parting ways with a head coach of color. Only six NFL teams have employed a general manager and head coach of color at the same time since 1993 (Arizona Cardinals, Cleveland Browns, Detroit Lions, Miami Dolphins, Pittsburgh Steelers, and Washington Commanders). Finally, the Houston Texans are the only NFL team to consecutively hire three head coaches of color in January 2021, February 2022, and January 2023 (David Culley, Lovie Smith, and DeMeco Ryans)—Culley and Smith were both let go following one season as head coach and did not receive a true opportunity to prove themselves.

**51**

**former first-time NFL head coaches earned subsequent head coach opportunity or coordinator opportunity**

**37**  
**WHITE**

*2012 - 2023*

**14**  
**COLOR**

**Total Team Hires and Average Tenure (1993-2023)**

	<i>Total Hires</i>	<i>Average Tenure</i>
General Manager of Color	26	5.8 seasons
White General Manager	142	6.6 seasons
Head Coach of Color	37	5.0 seasons
White Head Coach	197	5.2 seasons

**General Managers of Color Hired Per Team (1993-2023)**

<i>Number of General Managers of Color</i>	<i>Number of NFL Teams</i>
0	13
1	13
2	5
3	1

**Coaches of Color Hired Per Team (1993-2023)**

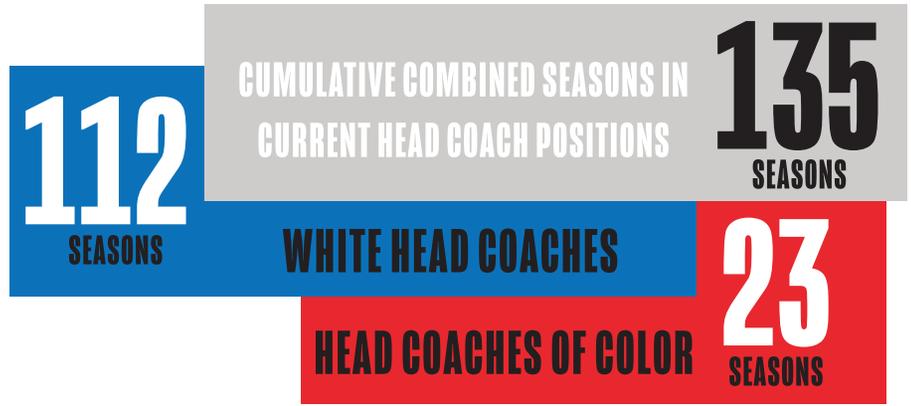
<i>Number of Head Coaches of Color</i>	<i>Number of NFL Teams</i>
0	10
1	11
2	8
3	2
4	1

**Coordinator Tenure—Constant Turnover Negatively Impacts Opportunity for Coordinators of Color to Prove Themselves**

This research study also analyzed the tenure/stint (that is, length of time in current positions) of all current offensive coordinators and defensive coordinators. High position turnover rates have been prevalent at the NFL coordinator level in recent years. For instance, NFL teams have made 106 total changes at the offensive coordinator position during the previous eight NFL seasons. Similarly, NFL teams have made 85 total changes at the defensive coordinator position during the previous eight NFL seasons. This extremely high turnover rate in key team leadership roles is not ideal from a player development or career trajectory and sustainability perspective. Additional patience and more realistic expectations by those who hire and fire offensive and defensive coordinators remains critical to both creating and sustaining eventual head coaching opportunities for men of color. It is essential to develop programming and strategies to expand the length of tenure (“opportunity to prove themselves”) for offensive and defensive coordinators of color. Leadership stability and continuity are essential for creating true culture pivots and sustainable success.

For current NFL offensive coordinators, the average length of time is only 1.2 seasons in the current position. Twenty-eight current NFL offensive coordinators have been in their current position for two NFL seasons or fewer. More specifically, 16 offensive coordinators will be entering their first season in such position during the upcoming 2023 NFL season, nine offensive coordinators will be starting their second NFL season in their current offensive coordinator position, and three offensive coordinators will be starting their third NFL season in their current offensive coordinator position. Only three NFL offensive coordinators have been in their current position for three or more prior NFL seasons (Pete Carmichael, Brian Callahan and Alex Van Pelt) (see Figure B5). The San Francisco 49ers do not have an officially designated offensive coordinator—head coach Kyle Shanahan is responsible for offensive play calling duties.

**FIGURE B5** NFL OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR TENURE IN CURRENT POSITION (AT START OF 2023 NFL SEASON)



The data is quite comparable for the stint/tenure of current NFL defensive coordinators—the average length of time is approximately 1.1 seasons in the current position. Twenty-six current NFL defensive coordinators have been in their current position for two or fewer NFL seasons. More specifically, 12 defensive coordinators will be entering their first season in such position during the upcoming 2023 NFL season, eight defensive coordinators will be starting their second NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position, and six defensive coordinators will be starting their third NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position. Only three NFL defensive coordinators have been in their current position for three or more prior NFL seasons (Lou Anarumo, Steve Spagnuolo and Jack Del Rio). The New England Patriots and Tampa Bay Buccaneers do not have separately designated defensive coordinators. Also, Leslie Frazier decided to take a break from serving as the defensive coordinator of the Buffalo Bills during the 2023 NFL season (see Figure B6). Six NFL teams (Arizona Cardinals, Carolina Panthers, Denver Broncos, Houston Texans, Los Angeles Chargers and Philadelphia Eagles) made changes at both the offensive coordinator and defensive coordinator positions during the most recent hiring cycle (2022-2023), as compared with six NFL teams making changes at both the offensive coordinator and defensive coordinator positions during the preceding hiring cycle (2021-2022) and seven NFL teams making changes at both the offensive coordinator and defensive coordinator positions during the 2020-2021 hiring cycle.

**FIGURE B6** **NFL DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR TENURE IN CURRENT POSITION**  
(AT START OF 2023 NFL SEASON)



**FIGURE B7** **NFL TENURE FOR OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS OF COLOR IN CURRENT POSITION**  
(AT START OF 2023 NFL SEASON)



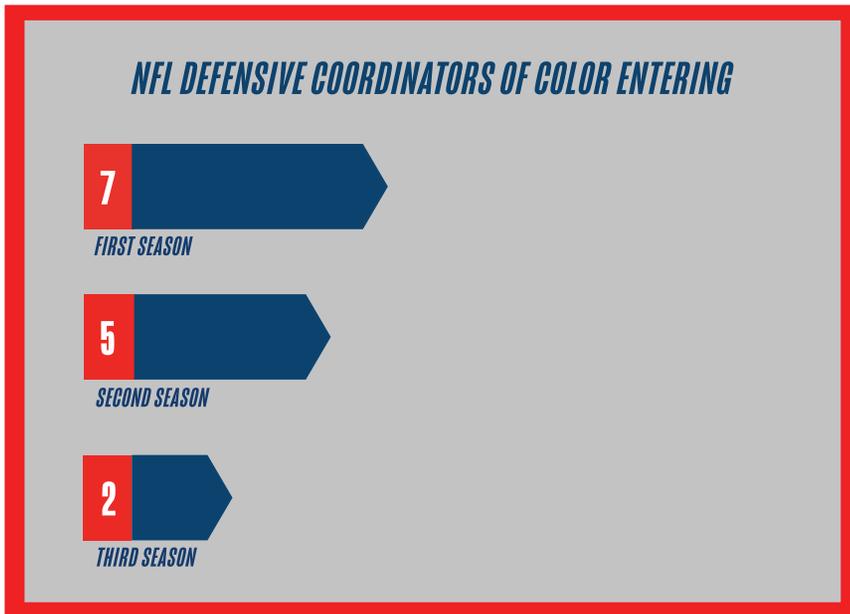
All four men of color serving as NFL offensive coordinators are entering their first season in this position with their current team. Eric Bieniemy previously served as offensive coordinator of the Kansas City Chiefs from 2018-2022. Thomas Brown, Dave Canales, and Brian Johnson are first-time NFL offensive coordinators. Only one African American offensive coordinator (Brian Johnson) was recently promoted internally, as compared with one offensive coordinator of color promoted internally during the preceding annual hiring cycle (2021-2022) and three offensive coordinators of color promoted internally during the 2020-2021 hiring cycle (see Figure B7).



The average tenure/stint in the current position for the 14 current men of color in defensive coordinator positions is .64 seasons—no current defensive coordinator of color has served in their current defensive coordinator position for more than two prior NFL seasons. Seven defensive coordinators of color will be starting their first NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position, five defensive coordinators of color (Teryl Austin, Mike Caldwell, Patrick Graham, Clint Hurtt and Alan Williams) will be entering a second NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position, and two defensive coordinators of color (Aaron Glenn and Raheem Morris) will be entering a third NFL season in their current defensive coordinator position (see Figure B8).

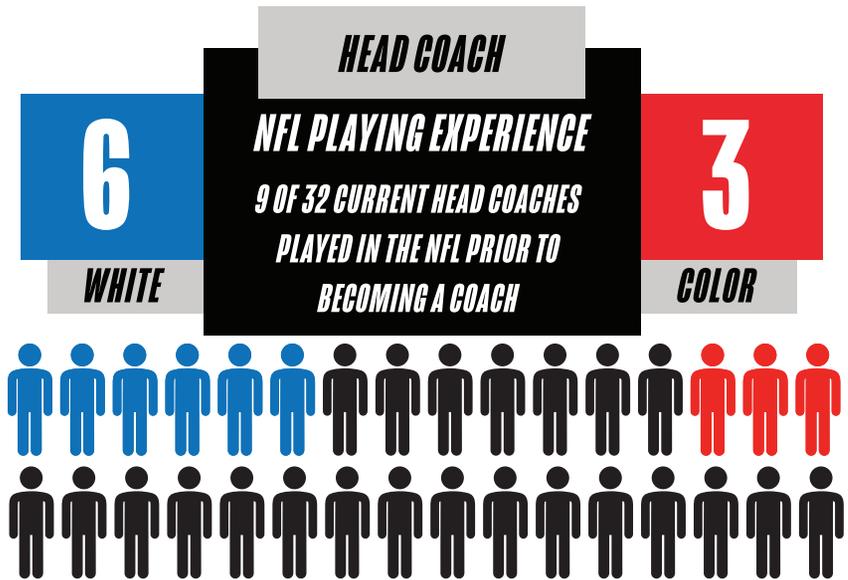
**FIGURE B8**

**NFL TENURE FOR DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS OF COLOR IN CURRENT POSITION (AT START OF 2023 NFL SEASON)**



*"We know that in life relationships matter. The business of football is no different. Taking the time to know someone and being intentional about creating lasting relationships begins with networking... What we aim to eliminate [is] bias. Promote trust. Develop skills. Provide opportunities. That's the hope. That we get to a day where you're being measured off of team success, individual position-group success. How you manage players. How you communicate with people. What your strategic plan is. You hope those are the things that are present on the table when a team is looking for somebody in that coach/CEO role. But in many cases, those factors don't seem to come into the equation."*

*Troy Vincent, NFL Executive Vice President of Football Operations*



**Interview Summary - 2022-2023 Hiring Cycle**

Position	White Candidates Interviewed	Candidates of Color Interviewed
General Manager	7	10
Head Coach	31	23
Offensive Coordinator	60	55
Defensive Coordinator	20	38
Special Teams Coordinator	6	5
Quarterbacks Coach	13	22

# MOBILITY PATHWAYS & TALENT PIPELINES

Five of the 16 offensive coordinators hired between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII) are currently holding an NFL offensive coordinator position for the first time, seven of the 16 offensive coordinators hired during this time period are serving as an NFL offensive coordinator for the second time, two of the recently hired offensive coordinators are now serving as third-time NFL offensive coordinators, and two of the recently hired offensive coordinators are serving as NFL offensive coordinators for the fourth time. Stated differently, 11 of the 16 recently hired offensive coordinators have prior career experience as an NFL offensive coordinator (see Figure C1).

**FIGURE C1** EXPERIENCE OF RECENTLY HIRED OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS

White		Color
2	First-Time Offensive Coordinator	3
6	Second-Time Offensive Coordinator	1
2	Third-Time Offensive Coordinator	0
2	Fourth-Time or Greater Offensive Coordinator	0

One of the offensive coordinators hired between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII) served as the head coach of a different NFL team immediately before being named offensive coordinator of their current NFL team (Nathaniel Hackett). Four of the offensive coordinators hired during this same time period held the offensive coordinator position with a different NFL team immediately before being named offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Four of the recently hired offensive coordinators held the quarterbacks coach position with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) offensive coordinator of their current NFL team—one of the recently promoted former quarterbacks coaches (Matt Nagy) also held the title of “senior assistant.”

Three of the recently hired offensive coordinators served as passing game coordinators with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Two of the recently hired offensive coordinators served as college-level offensive coordinators before being hired as offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. One of the recently hired offensive coordinators served as a tight ends coach / assistant head coach of another NFL team immediately before being hired as an offensive coordinator. And one of the recently hired offensive coordinators served as a coaching analyst immediately before being promoted to the offensive coordinator position.

Three of the twelve defensive coordinators hired between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII) are currently holding an NFL defensive coordinator position for the first time. Four of the twelve defensive coordinators hired during this time period are serving as an NFL defensive coordinator for the second time. Three of the twelve recently hired defensive coordinators are serving as NFL defensive coordinators for the third time. And two of the twelve recently hired defensive coordinators are working as an NFL defensive coordinator for the fourth or greater time in their coaching career—for example, Jim Schwartz is now serving in his fourth stint as an NFL defensive coordinator and Vic Fangio is now serving in his sixth stint as an NFL defensive coordinator. Stated differently, 9 of the 12 recently hired defensive coordinators have prior career experience as an NFL defensive coordinator (see Figure C2).

**FIGURE C2** EXPERIENCE OF RECENTLY HIRED DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS

White		Color
1	First-Time Defensive Coordinator	2
2	Second-Time Defensive Coordinator	2
0	Third-Time Defensive Coordinator	3
2	Fourth-Time or Greater Defensive Coordinator	0

Divergent from the typical mobility trend observed in recent previous annual hiring cycles, none of the twelve defensive coordinators hired between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII) served as the head coach of a different NFL team immediately before being named defensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Four of the twelve defensive coordinators hired during this same time period held the defensive coordinator position with a different NFL team immediately before being named defensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Again, this reshuffling of defensive coordinators limits opportunities for new talent to enter this key head coach pipeline position. Four of the twelve recently hired defensive coordinators held titles such as “associate head coach and defensive assistant,” “senior defensive assistant and linebackers coach,” “senior defensive assistant,” and “defensive consultant” with a different NFL team immediately before being hired as defensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Two of the twelve recently hired defensive coordinators served as a defensive pass game coordinator and/or secondary coach with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) defensive coordinator of their current NFL team. One recently hired defensive coordinator held the linebackers coach position with another NFL team immediately before earning their current defensive coordinator position. And one recently hired defensive coordinator held the defensive line coach position with another NFL team immediately before earning their current defensive coordinator position.

As illustrated in Figure C3 and Figure C4, between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LVII (February 12, 2023), 53 White individuals have received a second opportunity to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team. During this same time period, only 19 men of color received a similar “second-chance” opportunity to be an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator. In addition, during this same time period (September 2012 to February 2023), 69 White individuals received a “third or greater chance” to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team, whereas only 16 men of color received a similar “third or greater chance” to be an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator (for example, Vance Joseph, Joe Woods and Steve Wilks are recently hired third-time NFL defensive coordinators of color).

**FIGURE C4**

**DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS (2012-2023)**



**FIGURE C3**

**OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR MOBILITY PATTERNS (2012-2023)**



4%

ONLY 2 OF 32 CURRENT HEAD COACHES WERE PROMOTED INTERNALLY

2 of 32

1 OF 26 WHITE COACHES PROMOTED INTERNALLY

17%

1 OF 6 COACHES OF COLOR PROMOTED INTERNALLY



**The “Reshuffling Effect”—Limiting the Leadership Talent Pipeline and Restricting Occupational Mobility Pathways for Prospective First-Time NFL Head Coaches**

Equitable access to career opportunities is crucial. A primary challenge for candidates of color is breaking into the head coach pipeline, as many head coaches and key position coaches continue to get “reshuffled,” thereby preventing new talent from entering the candidate pipeline. This “reshuffling effect” reduces the number of opportunities for new candidates to break into the head coach pipeline. The reshuffling effect disappointingly continues to be a major trend/theme within recent annual occupational mobility report research studies.

Three of the six recently hired head coaches in the previous year have prior NFL head coaching experience. Likewise, 11 of the 16 recently hired offensive coordinators previously served at least one prior stint as an NFL offensive coordinator for one or more full NFL seasons. In addition, nine of the 12 recently hired defensive coordinators have previously served as an NFL defensive coordinator. Relatedly, three of the four recently hired special teams coordinators have previously served as an NFL special teams coordinator. Less reshuffling is evident at the general manager position, as only three current general managers are second-time NFL general managers—all other current NFL general managers are in their first general manager stint including all three general managers hired during the 2022-2023 cycle (see Figure C5).

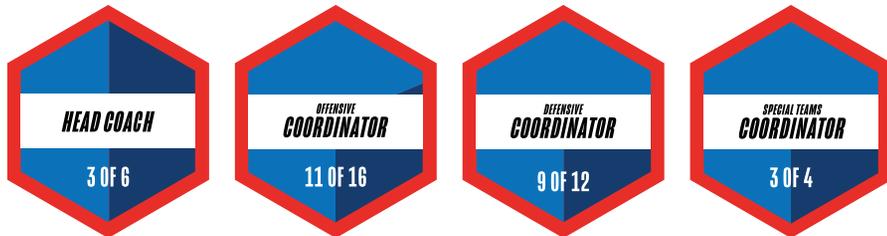
**FIGURE C6**

**PREVIOUS NFL OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR EXPERIENCE BEFORE BECOMING NFL HEAD COACH (2012-2023)**



**FIGURE C5**

**RECENTLY HIRED HEAD COACHES AND COORDINATORS IN SECOND OR GREATER STINT AT SAME POSITION**



Findings in the current research study also indicate 40 out of the 77 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously an offensive coordinator in the NFL for one or more full NFL seasons before earning a head coach opportunity. Twenty-four of the 77 head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season were previously a defensive coordinator in the NFL before earning a head coach opportunity. As a result, 64 of the 77 (equal to 83%) head coaches hired since the start of the 2012 NFL season were previously an NFL level offensive or defensive coordinator (see Figure C6).

**CURRENT HEAD COACH STINTS**



Since the start of the 2012 NFL season, the offensive coordinator position has functioned as the central primary pipeline for aspiring first-time NFL head coaches, whereas defensive coordinator can be viewed as the second core primary pipeline for prospective first-time NFL head coaches. From the start of the 2002 NFL season through February 2023, NFL teams hired a total of 222 head coaches—59 of the head coach hires served as NFL defensive coordinators in the immediately prior season (including 13 coaches of color such as Todd Bowles and DeMeco Ryans), 58 of the head coach hires served as NFL offensive coordinators in the immediately prior season (including 4 coaches of color), and 34 of the head coach hires served as NFL head coaches in the immediately prior season (including 6 coaches of color). This combined mobility data regarding common coaching mobility pathways underscores the importance of men of color earning an opportunity to serve as an NFL offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator, as these two leadership positions function as viable springboards to NFL head coach opportunities in addition to previously serving as an NFL head coach. NFL coordinator experience is often viewed as essential with respect to NFL head coach prospects—especially for candidates of color. However, a primary occupational mobility access barrier for coaches of color exists mainly at the offensive coordinator position (see Figure C7). It is also important to note that nine current NFL head coaches are former NFL players—prior NFL playing experience represents another valued experience-based variable for aspiring head coaches of color.

Seven of the 31 current offensive coordinators of NFL teams held the quarterbacks coach position with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Five of the 31 current offensive coordinators of NFL teams served as passing game coordinators with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Four of the 31 current offensive coordinators of NFL teams held the combined role of quarterbacks coach and passing game coordinator with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) offensive coordinator of their current NFL team. Four of the 31 current offensive coordinators of NFL teams served as offensive coordinators of another NFL team immediately prior to being named offensive coordinator of their current team. For comparison purposes, a year ago (in February 2022), two of the 29 then-current offensive coordinators worked as offensive coordinators of a different NFL team immediately prior to earning a subsequent NFL offensive coordinator opportunity. And two years ago (in February 2021), seven of the 32 then-current offensive coordinators worked as offensive coordinators of a different NFL team immediately prior to earning a subsequent NFL offensive coordinator opportunity. The remaining current NFL offensive coordinators served in the following positions immediately before being named to their current offensive coordinator position: run game coordinator and offensive line coach (prior position of two current offensive coordinators), college-level offensive coordinator (prior position of two current offensive coordinators), head coach (prior position of one current offensive coordinator), assistant head coach and tight ends coach (prior position of one current offensive coordinator), passing game coordinator and tight ends coach (prior position of one offensive coordinator), tight ends coach (prior position of one offensive coordinator), senior offensive assistant (prior position of one offensive coordinator), wide receivers coach (prior position of one offensive coordinator), and coaching analyst (prior position of one offensive coordinator). Only one of the 31 current offensive coordinators of NFL teams (Nathaniel Hackett) served as a head coach of another NFL team immediately prior to being named offensive coordinator of their current team. As of March 2023, the San Francisco 49ers did not have a separately designated offensive coordinator (see Figure C8).

**FIGURE C7** PRIMARY HEAD COACH PATHWAYS (2002-2023)

White		Color
28	Head Coach in Immediately Prior Season	6
54	Offensive Coordinator in Immediately Prior Season	4
46	Defensive Coordinator in Immediately Prior Season	13

**222** Total Head Coaches Hired from 2002-2023

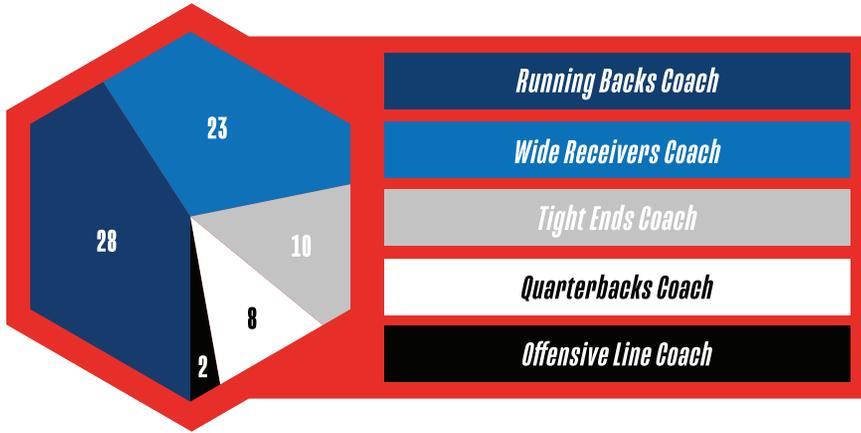
Nine of the 31 current NFL offensive coordinators earned internal promotions with their current team from coaching positions such as quarterbacks coach, passing game coordinator, tight ends coach, run game coordinator and offensive line coach. It is also important to note that several current NFL offensive coordinators previously held dual position coach roles such as passing game coordinator and quarterbacks coach, assistant head coach and tight ends coach, or run game coordinator and offensive line coach. In recent hiring cycles, a general trend has emerged with position coaches serving in combined roles with increased responsibility—future diversity and inclusion reports will examine mobility trends concerning position coaches with multiple titles/responsibilities.

**FIGURE C8** MOBILITY PATHWAYS FOR CURRENT NFL OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS



**FIGURE C9**

**MEN OF COLOR IN NFL OFFENSIVE POSITION COACH ROLES**

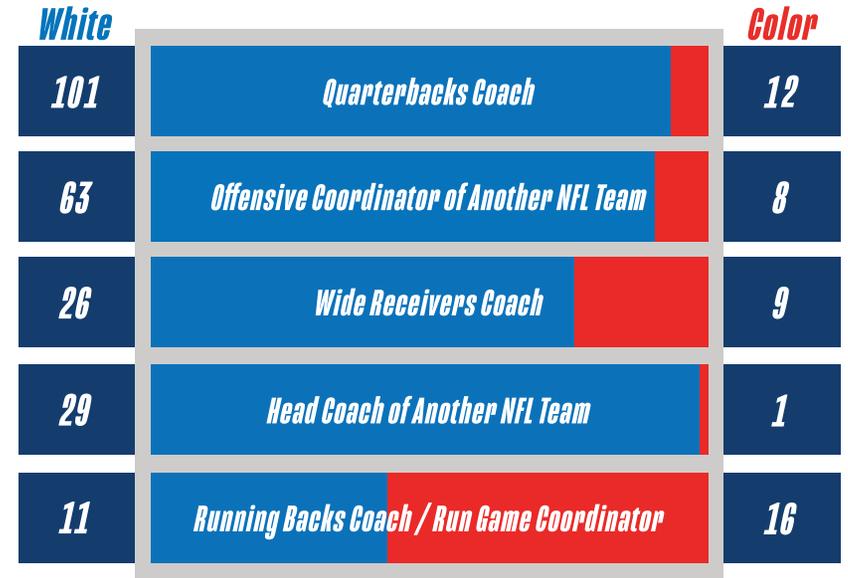


As of March 2023, most men of color serving as offensive position coaches oversee running backs (28 coaches of color), wide receivers (23 coaches of color), tight ends (10 coaches of color), quarterbacks (8 coaches of color), or the offensive line (2 coaches of color). Only eight coaches of color (Israel Woolfork, Tee Martin, Jerrod Johnson, Ronald Curry, Mike Sullivan, Thad Lewis, Charles London, and Tavita Pritchard) currently hold the quarterbacks coach position, which functions as a primary pipeline to become an offensive coordinator—it is important to note that Brian Johnson (one of the five quarterbacks coaches of color during the 2022 NFL season) was internally promoted to offensive coordinator of the Philadelphia Eagles in February 2023 (see Figure C9). Additional roles that serve as potential pipeline opportunities for men of color include pass game coordinator and run game coordinator as well as senior offensive assistant. The pass game coordinator and run game coordinator roles are commonly found as a dual title alongside a position coach role, whereas the senior offensive assistant is commonly a reshuffling opportunity for experienced coaches. Currently four coaches of color serve as pass game coordinator and three coaches of color currently serve as run game coordinator in a dual-title capacity, while zero coaches of color serve solely as pass game coordinators and one coach of color serves solely as run game coordinator. Conversely, only one coach of color holds a senior offensive assistant role.

From the start of the 2002 NFL season through February 2023, NFL teams hired a total of 389 offensive coordinators—113 of the hired offensive coordinators served as NFL quarterbacks coaches in the prior season (including 12 coaches of color such as Brian Johnson and Dave Canales), 71 of the hired offensive coordinators worked as an NFL offensive coordinator of a different team in the prior season (including 8 coaches of color such as Eric Bieniemy), 35 of the hired offensive coordinators served as NFL wide receivers coaches in the prior season (including 9 coaches of color), 30 of the hired offensive coordinators served as an NFL head coach in the prior season (including one former head coach of color—Anthony Lynn), and 27 of the hired offensive coordinators served as an NFL running backs coach or run game coordinator in the prior season (including 16 coaches of color) (see Figure C10). The 21-season summary data on common pathways to becoming an NFL offensive coordinator once again illustrates the troubling reshuffling effect for a central primary head coach pipeline position. For example, 101 of the 389 offensive coordinators hired by NFL teams from the start of the 2002 NFL season through February 2023 (approximately 26% of total offensive coordinator hires) previously worked as either an NFL head coach or an NFL offensive coordinator of another team immediately before earning a subsequent NFL offensive coordinator opportunity—only nine of these 101 former NFL offensive coordinators and head coaches have been men of color, which indicates that White individuals represent 91% of the former NFL head coaches and/or former NFL offensive coordinators who have been reshuffled into a subsequent offensive coordinator opportunity.

**FIGURE C10**

**NFL OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR PATHWAYS 2002-2023 (21-YEAR SUMMARY DATA)**

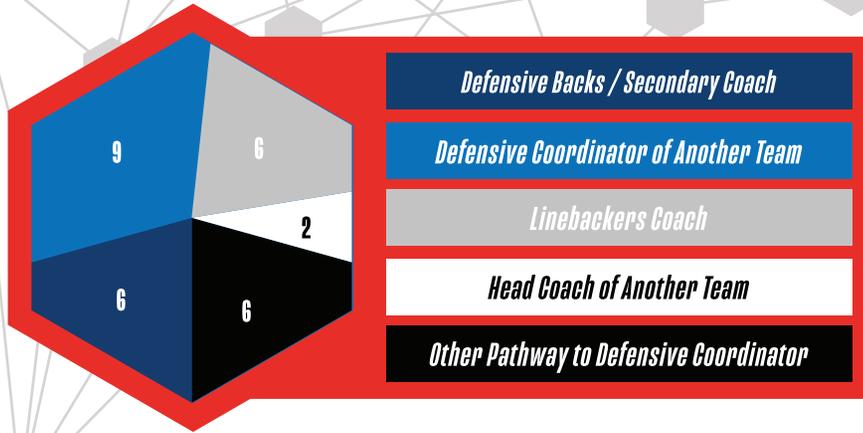


**389 Total Offensive Coordinators Hired from 2002-2023**

Overall, recent occupational mobility patterns for NFL defensive coordinators show more potential and promise for men of color to break into this key head coach pipeline position. Nine of the 29 current defensive coordinators served as defensive coordinators of another NFL team immediately prior to being named defensive coordinator of their current team—one such current defensive coordinator most recently worked in the combined role as co-defensive coordinator and defensive line coach of a different NFL team and another current defensive coordinator most recently served as assistant head coach and defensive coordinator of a different NFL team. Six of the 29 current NFL defensive coordinators held the defensive backs (secondary) coach position with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) defensive coordinator of their current NFL team—several of these former defensive backs (secondary) coaches held combined roles such as senior defensive assistant and secondary coach or defensive pass game coordinator and secondary coach. Six of the 29 current NFL defensive coordinators held the linebackers coach position with either a different NFL team or their current NFL team immediately before being hired as (or promoted to) defensive coordinator of their current NFL team—several of these former linebackers coaches held combined roles such as senior defensive assistant and linebackers coach or assistant head coach and linebackers coach. Two of the 29 current defensive coordinators of NFL teams served as head coaches of another NFL team as their most recent full-time position in the NFL prior to being named defensive coordinator of their current team. The remaining six current NFL defensive coordinators served in the following positions immediately before being named to their current defensive coordinator position: assistant head coach and defensive line coach, defensive line coach, senior defensive assistant, associate head coach and defensive assistant, defensive consultant, and college-level defensive coordinator (see Figure C11).

**FIGURE C11**

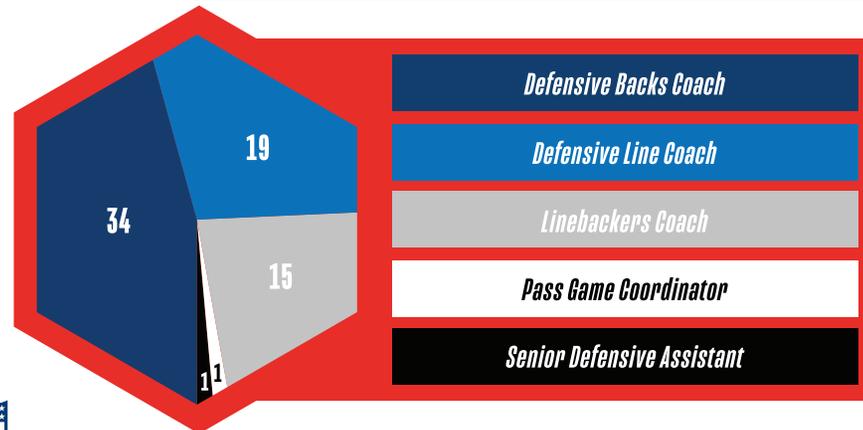
**MOBILITY PATHWAYS FOR CURRENT NFL DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS**



The defensive backs (secondary), defensive line, and linebackers coach positions presently function as three of the more viable occupational mobility pathways for coaches of color in the NFL who aspire to earn defensive coordinator and/or head coach opportunities. As of March 2023, most men of color serving as defensive position coaches oversee defensive backs (34 coaches of color), the defensive line (19 coaches of color), and linebackers (15 coaches of color). Ten defense-focused coaches of color serve as pass game coordinator and three coaches of color serve as run game coordinator in a dual-title capacity, while only one coach of color serves solely as pass game coordinator and zero coaches of color serve solely as run game coordinator. Also, one coach of color works exclusively as a senior defensive assistant and three other coaches of color serve as a senior defensive assistant in a dual-title capacity (see Figure C12).

**FIGURE C12**

**MEN OF COLOR IN CURRENT NFL DEFENSIVE POSITION COACH ROLES**



From the start of the 2002 NFL season through February 2023, NFL teams hired a total of 347 defensive coordinators—86 of the hired defensive coordinators served as NFL linebackers coaches in the prior season (including 15 coaches of color such as Brian Flores), 86 of the hired defensive coordinators worked as an NFL defensive coordinator of a different team in the prior season (including 26 coaches of color such as Ejiro Evero, Vance Joseph and Joe Woods), 70 of the hired defensive coordinators served as NFL defensive backs (secondary) coaches in the prior season (including 37 coaches of color such as Derrick Ansley and Steve Wilks), and 30 of the hired defensive coordinators served as an NFL head coach in the prior season (including 7 coaches of color). This 21-season snapshot data on common pathways to becoming an NFL defensive coordinator indicates that former NFL head coaches and defensive coordinators of color have earned greater subsequent opportunities to serve as NFL defensive coordinators (as compared with the more limited mobility pathways of coaches of color far less frequently earning an NFL offensive coordinator position after serving as an NFL head coach or offensive coordinator). This data also spotlights some of the key viable mobility pathways for men of color with respect to earning a defensive coordinator position within the NFL. In addition to developing talent (that is, creating a talent pipeline for hiring decision-makers to consider), it is essential to identify and monitor the main occupational mobility pathways with respect to men of color eventually earning a head coach opportunity (see Figure C13). It is important to note that seven current NFL defensive coordinators held the dual role/title of associate head coach, assistant head coach, or senior defensive assistant in their immediately prior positions before earning their current NFL defensive coordinator opportunity. Also, only four of the 29 current NFL defensive coordinators earned internal promotions with their current team from coaching positions such as defensive line coach and linebackers coach. As of March 2023, the Buffalo Bills, New England Patriots and Tampa Bay Buccaneers did not have a separately designated defensive coordinator on the team football operations staff.

**FIGURE C13**

**MOBILITY PATHWAYS FOR CURRENT NFL DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS**



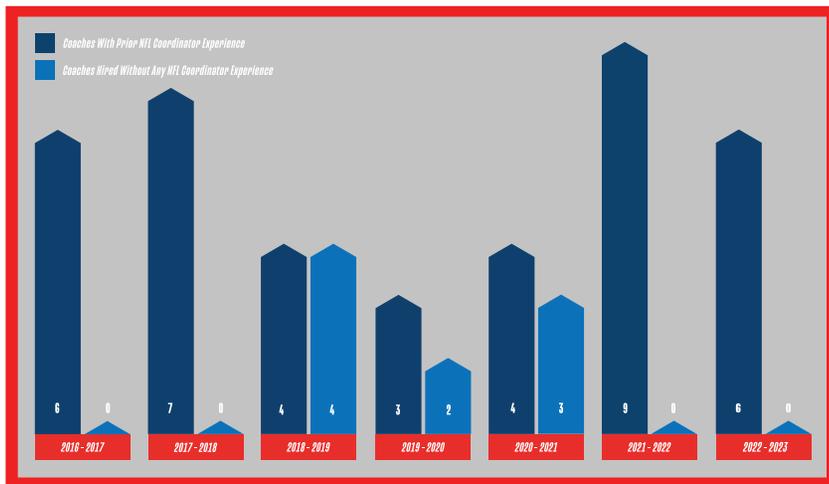
**347** Total Defensive Coordinators Hired from 2002-2023



The reshuffling effect—and, as a result, restricting the pipeline and pathway for prospective first-time NFL head coaches—remains evident for defensive coordinator hires. For example, 116 of the 347 defensive coordinators hired by NFL teams from the start of the 2002 NFL season through February 2023 (33% of total defensive coordinator hires) previously worked as either an NFL head coach or an NFL defensive coordinator of another team immediately before earning a subsequent NFL defensive coordinator opportunity—only 33 of these 116 former NFL defensive coordinators and head coaches have been men of color, which indicates that White coaches represent almost 72% of the former NFL head coaches and defensive coordinators who have been reshuffled into a subsequent NFL defensive coordinator opportunity.

Three of the six head coaches hired between February 14, 2022 (day following Super Bowl LVI) and February 12, 2023 (day of Super Bowl LVII) have extensive offensive coaching backgrounds including at least three seasons of prior NFL offensive coordinator experience (Sean Payton, Frank Reich and Shane Steichen). Similarly, three of the six recently hired head coaches have extensive defensive coaching backgrounds including at least two seasons of prior NFL defensive coordinator experience (Todd Bowles, Jonathan Gannon and DeMeco Ryans). For comparison purposes, six of the nine head coaches hired during the 2021-2022 hiring cycle had extensive offensive coaching backgrounds including at least one season of NFL offensive coordinator experience (Brian Daboll, Nathaniel Hackett, Mike McDaniels, Josh McDaniels, Doug Pederson and Kevin O’Connell). And three of the nine head coaches hired during the 2021-2022 hiring cycle had extensive defensive coaching backgrounds including multiple seasons of NFL defensive coordinator experience (Dennis Allen, Matt Eberflus and Lovie Smith). This recent mobility data for the most recent two annual hiring cycles indicates that all 15 head coaches had at least one season of prior NFL coordinator experience before earning the head coach opportunity—during the three prior annual hiring cycles from 2018-2021, nine of the 20 head coaches hired did not have any prior NFL coordinator experience (see Figure C14).

**FIGURE C14** NFL HEAD COACH MOBILITY PATTERNS (2016-2023)



**FIGURE C15** RACE OF "SECOND OR GREATER OPPORTUNITY" NFL HEAD COACHES HIRED BETWEEN 2006-2023



Recent combined research by the authors of this report and the NFL league office reveals that 36 of the 115 NFL head coaches hired from the start of the 2006 NFL season to February 2023 were former NFL head coaches. Seven of these 36 "second or greater opportunity" head coaches hired during this same time period were men of color such as Todd Bowles (see Figure C15). Similarly, since the start of the 1963 NFL season, 12 men of color (46% of the 26 different head coaches of color from 1963-2023) have received a second head coach opportunity in the NFL—with Lovie Smith becoming the first coach of color to earn a third NFL head coaching opportunity with the Houston Texans during the 2022 NFL season. These findings demonstrate that to be hired as a head coach in the NFL, sometimes the perceived most valuable career background is previous experience as an NFL head coach. Overall findings in this research study once again reveal a troubling "reshuffling effect" in which recently "separated" (that is, promoted, fired, resigned, retired or otherwise parted ways) head coaches, offensive coordinators and defensive coordinators immediately received a new coaching opportunity in a key "head coach pipeline position" such as quarterbacks coach and defensive line coach, thereby limiting the overall number of opportunities for prospective first-time NFL head coaches.

**FIGURE C16**

**RACE OF "SECOND OR GREATER OPPORTUNITY" NFL OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS HIRED BETWEEN 2012-2023**



Findings in this research report also indicate a prevalence of the reshuffling effect with respect to the same individuals repeatedly hired for NFL team coordinator positions, which prevents new talent from entering key head coach pipelines. For example, between the beginning of the 2012 NFL regular season (September 5, 2012) and Super Bowl LVII (February 12, 2023), 122 White individuals have received at least a second opportunity to work as an offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator of an NFL team. Only 35 men of color have received a similar “second or greater” opportunity during the same time period. Notably, 29 of these 35 “second or greater chances” have been for men of color hired as defensive coordinators with only six men of color (such as Eric Bieniemy) receiving a “second or greater chance” to serve as an NFL offensive coordinator (see Figure C16).

While it is somewhat encouraging that 43% of the defensive coordinators hired (53 out of 124) since the start of the 2012 NFL regular season are coordinators of color, only 12% (18 out of 149) of the offensive coordinators hired during this same time period have been coordinators of color. In addition, although it is likewise encouraging that Eric Bieniemy, Sean Desai, Ejiro Evero, Vance Joseph, Joe Woods and Steve Wilks each recently earned another opportunity to serve as an NFL offensive coordinator or defensive coordinator in the most recent hiring cycle, the hiring of these “second chance or greater” coordinators nonetheless prevents new prospects of color from entering the head coach talent pipeline and overall core upward football coaching career mobility pathways.

**131**

**TOTAL OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS HIRED SINCE 2012**

**149**

**WHITE OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS**

**18**

**OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS OF COLOR**

**71**

**TOTAL DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS HIRED SINCE 2012**

**124**

**WHITE DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS**

**53**

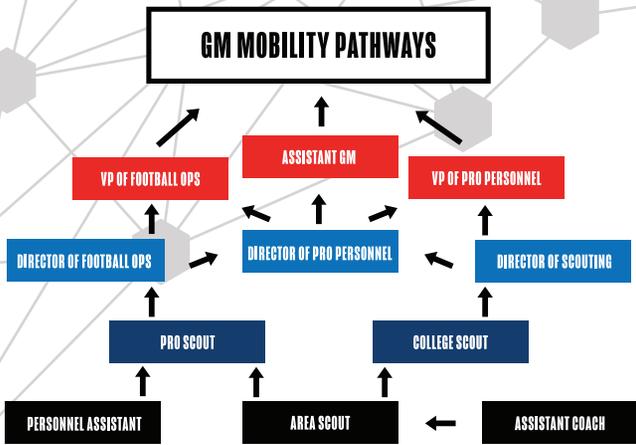
**DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS OF COLOR**

Overall, findings within the current research study support the need for a continued emphasis by both NFL league and team personnel on further developing programming for position coaches of color in order to create a more robust pathway to offensive and defensive coordinator opportunities. The data in this report also indicates that inherent contradictions exist within the common pipelines to becoming an NFL coordinator or head coach. Stated differently, some of the coordinators and head coaches hired during the most recent three annual hiring cycles (2020-2023) “skipped a step” in terms of earning a coordinator or head coach opportunity without the typical prerequisite NFL level experience—this underscores the importance of social capital, personal branding, attribution bias, perceived competence and other variables not based on actual career experience during the team leader selection process.

*“Networking, along with strong relationship management, is currency for professional mobility. It is a key component of the NFL’s Football Inclusion Plan that integrates networking with pipeline development, individual professional development, education, club and league diversity, equity and inclusion plans, and data collection and reporting to measure progress. These components combine to form the NFL’s long-term efforts to promote fair and inclusive hiring practices.”*

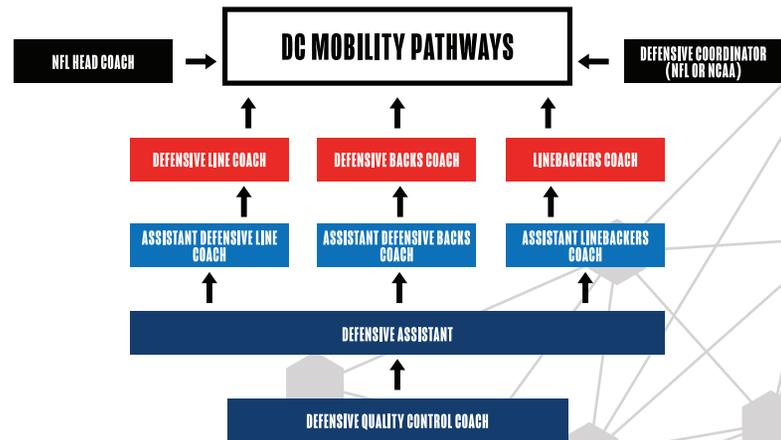
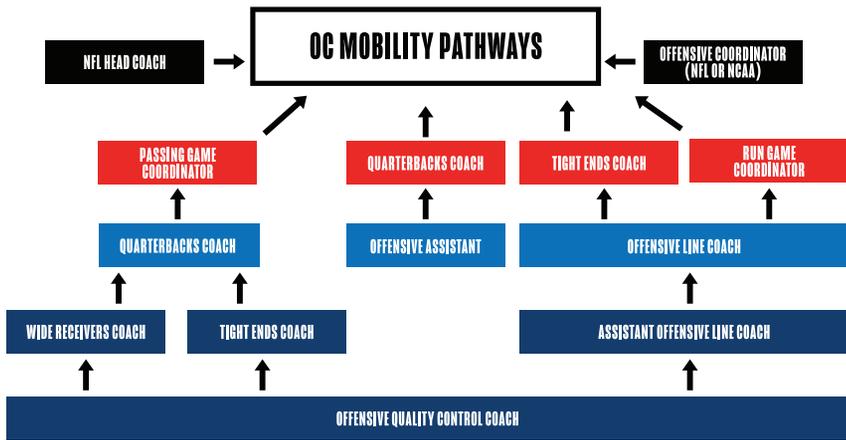
*Troy Vincent, NFL Executive Vice President of Football Operations*





**BIASED TEAM EXCUSES FOR NOT HIRING HEAD COACHES OF COLOR**

- "NEVER CALLED PLAYS"*
- "TOO MANY FRIENDS LISTED ON POTENTIAL COACHING STAFF"*
- "NO PREVIOUS GAME-CLOCK MANAGEMENT"*
- "UNSURE OF THEIR ABILITY TO MOTIVATE VETERAN PLAYERS"*
- "DIDN'T INTERVIEW WELL"*
- "LACKED THE NECESSARY EXPERIENCE TO LEAD"*
- "DIDN'T LOOK THE PART"*
- "SEEMED NERVOUS THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW PROCESS"*
- "JOB IS DIFFERENT THAN WHAT IT WAS PREVIOUSLY"*



# Analysis of Valued Leadership Attributes

Articles published by web-based media outlets (for example, ESPN.com and NFL.com) as well as team press releases and introductory press conferences were analyzed and compared to collect an extensive sample of descriptive terms and phrases utilized to depict the most recent annual hiring cycle. This content analysis underscores how online print and video media may influence public perception of NFL coaches and might also impact future hiring cycles for head coach, coordinator, and general manager positions. In addition, this content analysis provides insight into the perceived leadership traits, technical skill sets, and other non-cognitive intangible variables that are noticed and valued when team football operations leaders are analyzed and sometimes scrutinized within media stories. Public discourse about NFL team leaders can create perceptions and perspectives that directly and sometimes adversely impact the evaluation of coaches and administrators along with the resultant experiences and opportunities of these coaches and administrators.

## WHITE

## COLOR

### GENERAL MANAGERS

BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE LEADERSHIP  
 WORK ETHIC PLAYED KEY ROLES WITH OTHER NFL TEAMS  
 EVOLVING ROLES BEST FIT FOR TEAM  
 POSSESSES EVERY ATTRIBUTE OF A SUCCESSFUL GENERAL MANAGER  
 WELL-DEFINED VISION EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE  
 INTELLIGENCE PASSION CHARACTER

EVALUATING TALENT ABILITY TO CONNECT WITH PEOPLE  
 SUCCESSFUL PERSONNEL EXECUTIVE COLLABORATOR  
 TALENT EVALUATOR INTEGRAL PART OF FOOTBALL OPERATIONS IN-HOUSE FAVORITE  
 GROWTH MINDSET SMOOTH TRANSITION PICKED A GUY WE KNOW VERY WELL  
 EXCEPTIONAL FORMER PLAYER ROSTER BUILDING  
 VARIETY OF VALUABLE EXPERIENCES STRONG RECORD OF SUCCESS NATURAL LEADERSHIP QUALITIES  
 GREW UP AROUND THE GAME CLEAR VISION  
 TASKED WITH TURNING THINGS AROUND

### HEAD COACHES

GENUINE LOVE OF THE GAME MAD SCIENTIST OFFENSIVE EXPERTISE  
 BRILLIANT OFFENSIVE MIND PROVEN WINNER CHARISMA HIGH CHARACTER  
 INCREDIBLE INTEGRITY PART OF FRANCHISE ORIGIN STORY SECOND-LEVEL THINKING  
 NATURAL LEADER A LOT OF ENERGY COMMITMENT TO WINNING CHAMPIONSHIPS  
 LEADERSHIP GREAT MOTIVATOR SO IMPRESSIVE CREATIVITY  
 CHECKS ALL THE BOXES ATTENTION TO DETAIL OUTSTANDING LEADER BRILLIANT FOOTBALL MIND  
 VERY FAST MIND STRONG LEADER TREMENDOUS IN THE INTERVIEW DIALED IN  
 INCREDIBLE FAMILY MAN PRESENCE STUD PREPARATION HIGH INTEGRITY TREMENDOUSLY ORGANIZED  
 MAINTAINING HIGH STANDARDS IMMEDIATELY MADE AN IMPACT ADAPTED TO CIRCUMSTANCES  
 PASSION REALLY GOOD FOOTBALL COACH NATURAL FIT  
 CREDENTIALS GREAT WAY OF DOING THINGS GREAT PERSON BUILDS CHAMPIONSHIP CULTURE  
 GREAT FOOTBALL MIND INTENSITY TOUGHNESS HIGH EXPECTATIONS SAVANT-LIKE  
 BACKGROUND AS PLAYER AND COACH

LEADERSHIP TOUGHNESS  
 VALUES COLLABORATION PROGRESSIVE IN HIS VISION  
 PROVEN TRACK RECORD OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT  
 BEST FIT GREAT COMMUNICATOR FOOTBALL KNOWLEDGE  
 TEAM-FIRST MINDSET CONNECTOR CONSTANTLY INNOVATED DEFENSIVE SCHEME SELFLESSNESS  
 PROVEN COACH INNATE ABILITY TO LEAD PEOPLE  
 CHARISMA VISION FOR OUR FOOTBALL TEAM

### COORDINATORS

BELIEVES IN TEACHING FUNDAMENTALS  
 ASSET TO OUR STAFF BROAD KNOWLEDGE  
 EXPERIENCE WITH INNOVATIVE OFFENSES PERFECT FIT  
 KNOWS HOW TO GET THE BEST OUT OF HIS PLAYERS  
 BRIGHT MIND EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE RIGHT FIT HIGH CAPACITY, HIGH CHARACTER  
 QUARTERBACK-WHISPERING WAYS  
 OUTSTANDING COACH ADAPTABLE PROVIDES SOME FAMILIARITY  
 VAST EXPERIENCE WILL MATCH SCHEME TO SUIT STRENGTHS  
 VERSATILE WITH X'S AND O'S AND SCHEME PREMIER DEFENSIVE MIND PASSIONATE LEADER  
 HAS A GREAT GRASP OF WHERE WE ARE AND WHERE WE WANT TO GO

HOLD EVERYONE ACCOUNTABLE SEASONED COORDINATOR  
 COACHING VETERAN TREMENDOUS FOR US, TREMENDOUS FOR THE NFL  
 LEADER CHALLENGE SEEKER VETERAN COACH  
 CONTINUED SUCCESS DOES EVERYTHING THE RIGHT WAY  
 FOOTBALL KNOWLEDGE AND VISION LEGIT HEAD COACHING CANDIDATE  
 HIGHLY SOUGHT-AFTER CREATIVE IN MAKING UP PLAYS FOR US  
 WISDOM, CONVICTION AND STRENGTH



In May 2022, the NFL launched the Coach & Front Office Accelerator initiative to immerse women and other emerging leaders of color in leadership development sessions with football operations experts as well as to provide networking opportunities with team owners in order to facilitate candid discussions on how to take the next step in becoming a coach or front office executive. The NFL strategically designed the Coach & Front Office Accelerator program to continue building a diverse hiring pipeline for future head coach and general manager positions.

During the May 2022 NFL Spring League Meeting, 30 rising front office leaders representing all teams except the Baltimore Ravens and Pittsburgh Steelers participated in the inaugural accelerator program. The NFL hosted its second accelerator program in December 2022, which included 31 aspiring general managers from 28 teams—no front office prospect represented the Baltimore Ravens, Dallas Cowboys, Jacksonville Jaguars, or Seattle Seahawks. Twenty-six of the emerging front office prospects who participated in the May 2022 accelerator returned to continue networking and professional development during the December 2022 accelerator program. The December 2022 accelerator also included five new participants who did not participate in the May 2022 accelerator.

The Pittsburgh Steelers internally promoted Omar Khan to the general manager position in May 2022. More recently, in January 2023, the Arizona Cardinals and Tennessee Titans each conducted an extensive search for a new general manager. Six of the 35 total Front Office Accelerator participants interviewed for one or both of these two recently filled general manager positions. More specifically, the Arizona Cardinals interviewed seven general manager prospects—three of the seven interviewees participated in the accelerator program and two of these three accelerator participants were existing members of the Cardinals football operations front office team. Similarly, the Tennessee Titans interviewed seven general manager prospects—five of the seven interviewees participated in the accelerator program with the remaining two candidates already members of the Titans football operations front office team. Ran Carthon, the Titans recently hired general manager, participated in both the May 2022 and December 2022 Front Office Accelerator programs. Ian Cunningham and Quentin Harris represent the two leaders of color who participated in the Front Office Accelerator program and also interviewed for both the Cardinals and Titans open general manager positions.

## FRONT OFFICE ACCELERATOR / INTERVIEWS

■ INTERNAL CANDIDATE   
 ■ EXTERNAL CANDIDATE   
  ACCELERATOR PARTICIPANT   
 ■ HIRED

ARIZONA CARDINALS	TENNESSEE TITANS
<b>Adrian Wilson</b>	<b>Ran Carthon</b>
<b>Quentin Harris</b>	<b>Malik Boyd</b>
<b>Ian Cunningham</b>	<b>Glenn Cook</b>
<b>Monti Ossenfort</b>	<b>Ian Cunningham</b>
<b>Matt Harriss</b>	<b>Quentin Harris</b>
<b>Jerry Reese</b>	<b>Monti Ossenfort</b>
<b>Joe Hortiz</b>	<b>Ryan Cowden</b>

*"The NFL is committed to diversity and inclusion, and this program is the latest in a series of steps designed to improve our hiring practices and create opportunities for advancement. The program helps ensure that clubs receive exposure to high-performing, up-and-coming NFL talent and candidates get a chance to learn the business on a working level from team owners and executives."*

*Roger Goodell, NFL Commissioner*

*"Obviously, we need more minority candidates interviewing and getting jobs, but it's not happening. So, this is why the accelerator program has been created, to accelerate the process . . . The situation is what it is and the league is trying to get better at it and we're trying to as minority coaches become more prepared by coming to situations like this."*

*Thomas McGaughey, Special Teams Coordinator with New York Giants*

*"It's been great. You know just to be here with a lot of my colleagues in the league and for us to have an opportunity to be in front of some decision-makers. I think it's a really good program and hopefully a kickstart for things to come."*

*Chad Alexander, Director of Player Personnel with New York Jets*

*"I think all of our goals is to have the opportunity to ascend in this profession that we're in. This is a relationship business and so the opportunity to meet my peers and the ownership, it gives us the ability to ascend and that is what we are looking for."*

*Joe Whitt Jr., Defensive Passing Game Coordinator / Secondary Coach with Dallas Cowboys*



# REVIEW OF SCHOLARLY LITERATURE ON MOBILITY PATTERNS IN SPORTS BUSINESS

## Performance-Reward Bias

"Performance-reward bias" occurs when equivalent performances in the same position yield differential returns (Rider et al., 2016). Rider and colleagues (2016) studied NFL leadership positions and established performance-reward bias contributed to a racial disparity in leadership by suppressing the rate at which minoritized groups, relative to equally performing whites, were promoted to positions considered prerequisite for organizational leadership. Coaches of color were initially hired into positions with inferior promotion prospects and then subsequently "stacked" into positions with similarly inferior promotion probabilities. This extended to minoritized groups who had initially been in promotion-promising positions as their similarly performing white counterparts; performance-reward bias contributed to lower likelihood that minoritized employees would continue ascending the organizational ladder relative to equally performing white employees in the same position (Rider et al., 2016). Braddock and colleagues (2012) also uncovered differential labor market returns in their study of position coaches and movement to central coaching positions. The findings highlighted that more "central" positions translate into better promotion and mobility prospects but that there was a lower likelihood for black coaches to attain central positions and coordinator roles. Recent work by Foreman and Turick (2021) also found that black position coaches were less likely than white position coaches to move to central coaching positions. Earlier work by Foreman et al. (2018) examined coach promotions in the NFL between 1984-2016 and found that black position coaches were less likely to be promoted to coordinator positions.

Other research illustrative of the performance-reward bias includes the recent Pitts and colleagues (2022) analysis of NFL coordinator data since the introduction of the Rooney Rule within the context of examining the probability of individuals becoming a head coach. These scholars found the premium for NFL playing experience had declined since the introduction of the Rooney Rule. Stated another way, the performance-reward bias is likely at play as the relationship between having NFL playing experience and a pathway to a head coach position has become even smaller for black coordinators than non-black coordinators (that is, non-equivalent outcomes for the equivalent performance). Pitts and colleagues (2022) also tested the notion that underrepresentation of black coaches is because these coaches tend to be underrepresented in offensive coordinator positions—a trend in the experience of NFL head coach promotions but evidence that "all else being equal, the negative effect of being black during the 2018-2020 seasons were independent of black coaches' underrepresentation as offensive coordinators" (pg. 17). Further, white coaches are hired to coach central positions such as quarterbacks coach, even without ever having played the position in college or the NFL, therefore, claiming a dry pipeline as a reason for underrepresentation of black coaches does not adequately explain the lack of black coaches and corresponding lack of upward mobility (Gomer & Ossei-Owusu, 2022). The available empirical research suggests attempts to adopt pipeline programs to expand leadership diversity may be undermined by performance-reward bias. For example, performance-reward bias in key lower-level positions such as quarterbacks coach, linebackers coach, and defensive backs (secondary) coach results in access barriers for men of color with respect to the inability of attaining key leadership positions such as offensive coordinator and defensive coordinator and this bias extends to years of NFL playing experience by race and opportunities to move into head coaching positions.

Existing scholarship provides evidence of racial disparity in promotion prospects for NFL coaches regardless of position. Gomer and Ossei-Owusu (2022) in their analysis of NFL head coaches hired between 2013-2021 conclude "there are black offensive candidates who are more qualified, more experienced, and have had more success than many of the white coaches hired since 2013" (p. 14).

## Particularistic Mobility Thesis, Stereotypicality, and Leadership Potential Mis(Perceptions)

Applying the particularistic mobility thesis, which has previously been used to examine high status professions and promotion practices in the labor market, Day (2015) investigated the effects of job-level, task-based segregation on racial differences in college football coaching promotions. According to the particularistic mobility thesis, performance metrics which are inherently vague or not easily measured or quantified such as loyalty, leadership potential, or work ethic are applied when making employment/position promotion decisions. This then leads to decisions that are subjective and laden with mis(perceptions), stereotypes, or bias. If one is a member of a group where the perceptions ascribed are positive, more promising promotion opportunities ensue. If one is a member of a group with negatively ascribed characteristics as in the case of black coaches as less capable leaders and thinkers, this could result in being passed over for managerial positions (Day, 2015; Olushola-Ogunrinde & Carter-Francique, 2022). Stated differently, this reality introduces "particularistic manipulation" or subjective criteria into promotion decisions of upper-level managers (Day, 2015). Day (2015) established that white workers enjoyed access to formal pathways to mobility but also benefited from "the subjective and sometimes biased assessments of their skills and abilities" (pp. 3-4) and that hiring into executive positions based on these intangible traits reduces black coaches' opportunities of upward mobility. More recent empirical work applying the particularistic mobility thesis to investigate racial differences in occupational mobility patterns of college football coaches concluded consistent with this thesis, black coaches were less likely than their white peers to successfully navigate mobile career patterns (Day, 2018). This thesis has been extended to hiring practices that are rushed and informal, which often favor white candidates over black candidates and lead to decisions based on supervisory authority (Day, 2018; Wilson et al., 2018).

Studying coach promotions necessarily involves studying leadership and perceptions of who is deemed suitable for leadership. Williams and colleagues (2022) in their review of the literature on leadership established that leaders are stereotyped as those with agency, competence, intelligence, charisma, and dominance (Williams et al., 2022). Successful leaders are also often stereotyped as white men (Rosette et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2022). This leads to the perception that white people are more suitable for leadership positions versus people of color. Therefore, a preference bias for white candidates over non-white candidates for leadership positions emerges. Since white people are seen as more effective leaders and possess more leadership potential, being white is understood to be a characteristic of a business leader prototype (Foreman & Turick, 2021). Scholars studying the NFL assert this leadership preference occurs in the mobility prospects of coaches (Brooks et al., 1998) and persists because black coaches continue to be stereotypically portrayed as less intelligent than their white counterparts.

Black coaches then may be viewed as lacking the intelligence necessary to coach quarterbacks and lead football teams (Conklin et al., 2022; Harrison et al., 2022). Olushola-Ogunrinde and Carter-Francique (2021) reviewed empirical work in critical sport scholarship and argue for the disruption of the “normalization” of whiteness and who is identified as leaders capable of leading a team. Gomer and Ossei-Owusu (2022) also advance labeling theory and demonstrate the pernicious effects of black people labeled as deviant. Olushola-Ogunrinde and Carter-Francique (2021) illustrate that unquestioned norms and taken for granted assumptions of who can lead and who has the intellectual acumen to be a head coach become “the structural habitus of sport organizations, normalizing these social beliefs through hiring and promotion criteria, behavior policies, and differential, often discriminatory treatment” (p. 49). Further, emerging scholarship illustrates the degree to which a person’s racial phenotypic stereotypicality is connected to leadership attainment and perceived leadership suitability. Williams and colleagues (2022) studied peoples’ perceptions of college coaches to understand if there was a relationship between who was perceived to be suitable for leadership and who was ascribed more leadership potential would predict who holds leadership roles—this scholarly work showed that not only are white people perceived to be more suitable for leadership, but also that this stereotypicality preference is greater the “more” white a person is perceived to be (Williams et al., 2022). Empirical evidence points to the persistent racial disparities in occupational mobility and movement into leadership positions that are “raced” and “gendered.”

### ***Unconscious Bias, Meritocracy Myths, and Limits to Social Capital Activation***

Scholars have previously examined the negative effects of unconscious bias, aversive racism, and/or racial discrimination on occupational mobility (see Bridgeman, 2008; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998; Greenwald & Krieger, 2006; and Pager & Shepherd, 2008). Company decision-makers (e.g., general managers of NFL teams) are prone to categorize and stereotype with respect to a candidate’s qualifications for a specific opportunity without any intent or conscious awareness. Bridgeman (2008) explains that most people do not identify themselves as racist and may well desire diverse workplaces yet still select prospective hires in ways that are discriminatory and biased. These unconscious practices extend to our social networks. Collins (2007) examined the impact of the Rooney Rule in relation to “social capital,” which is defined as social relations that are activated to facilitate action (Adler & Kwon, 2002)—these researchers found that unconscious bias reinforces traditional power structures when transactions including hiring are extended to others within our networks. Collins further asserts that unconscious bias operates during head coach selections “through the internalization of stereotypes regarding African Americans’ intellectual inferiority and the establishment and maintenance of ‘old boy’ networks” (p. 875, 876). However, these biases can be mitigated with self-awareness and intentionality in working to address unconscious bias as is evidenced in the Pope, Price and Wolfers (2018) analysis of the behavior of National Basketball Association (NBA) referees who had examined the potential impact of racial bias with respect to the number of fouls called on players by referees. Publicity and awareness illustrating evidence of racial bias resulted in changes in practices. The authors concluded, “making individuals more aware of their own bias leads them to have decreased prejudice . . . incentives, pressure, and transparency can change racial biases” (p. 4991-4992). Still an area that has not been remedied is how to mitigate against racial stereotypes that underlie in-group favoritism. Day and McDonald (2010) found that same race contacts and strong ties are positively associated with the number of promotions received by white coaches; however, those same race ties were found to be the least effective for black coaches. For black coaches, it was access to higher status contacts that predicted mobility. Sagas and Cunningham (2005) analyzed social capital of college football coaches with respect to network size, strength of ties/relationships, racial similarity within network, contacts within higher levels of organization, and inter-organizational ties and highlighted that white coaches have more opportunities to gain occupational experience because of matching race networking, while candidates of color typically have a “much smaller set of ‘similar others’ from whom to develop professional relationships” (p. 791).

This reality is significant as limited exposure to social capital activation due to the lack of same-race ties among black coaches can impede the professional development and subsequent success of black coaches (Sagas & Cunningham, 2005). In a similar empirical research study, Cunningham and Sagas (2005) analyzed the notion of access discrimination with respect to coaching positions in college athletics and found that based on the predominance of same race hiring practices, personnel decisions in college athletics are often influenced by “who you know who is racially similar” (p. 157). However, the racially similarity phenomenon identified in the literature does not appear to result in the same occupational mobility returns for black coaches. Seebruck and Savage (2013) examined how an assistant coach’s race and the race of his supervisor (the head coach) interact to affect occupational mobility. Seebruck and Savage (2013) found that African American collegiate basketball assistant coaches working under black head coaches (“black homophily”) were significantly disadvantaged with respect to the probability of earning a head coaching position; results indicated that while homophily (same race connection) is neither advantageous nor disadvantageous for white job candidates, it is disadvantageous for black job candidates. Rosette et al. (2008) developed a theory-based argument that “institutional inequality” (Davis & Moore, 1945, p. 243; see also Acker, 2006) and “membership in powerful coaching families” (Greene, 2012, p. 131) have more of an impact in the hiring and evaluation processes than do the substantive skill sets of individuals.

Kilduff et al. (2016) recently extended the social network research literature with an empirical investigation related to the career mobility impact of aspiring NFL head coach candidates (for example, “acolytes” who have experience working on the same management team as one or more high-reputation leaders) developing “advantageous connections” with high-reputation industry leaders (e.g., NFL head coaches such as Bill Belichick and Mike Tomlin). These scholars investigated the occupational mobility patterns of NFL head coaches and position coaches from 1980-2010 to determine the long-term significance of initially beneficial workplace ties between acolytes and high-reputation leaders. Kilduff et al. (2016) concluded that “affiliation with a successful leader can facilitate or damage career progress, even in an industry in which quantitative indicators of performance are routinely used to assess outcomes” (p. 371). Kilduff et al. (2016) observed that “high-reputation social connections can be considered not just as signals of underlying quality” but also as “lenses that potentially distort individuals’ qualities both beneficially (in terms of enhancing the value of prior performance) and detrimentally (in terms of ex post settling up)” (pp. 369-70). A primary practical implication of this research study directly related to occupational mobility patterns within the NFL is that not only do social connections enable movement into head coach positions, but also the race of who one is socially connected to matters for occupational mobility.

*“One of the primary objectives of this diversity and inclusion focused research report is to apply existing empirical research to the findings of the current study in order to create awareness and accelerate transparency with the ultimate aspiration of reducing the degree of racial bias and other biases embedded within the hiring process. This abridged review of relevant empirical research aims to identify mobility trends for White coaches and coaches of color via an analysis of the root causes for the difficulties that candidates of color experience when seeking higher-level positions within NFL organizations. Results and findings from previous scholarly research studies illuminate a variety of institutional issues that exist within the NFL and allow for the development of recommendations that are useful for scholars and practitioners alike.”*

***Dr. C. Keith Harrison***