



A membership mosaic

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Recognition of diversity is now essential to the health of our society and the strength of organizations.

Today, leading institutions seek to understand the unique experience of their members in order to better represent and serve them.

HSA has long sought to understand and respect the diversity of our members, and in March, almost 800 HSA members voluntarily took part in the first-ever diversity survey. The results provide a fascinating snapshot of the HSA membership, and will be used to ensure HSA is inclusive and welcoming to all its members.

"HSA understands that our members are more than the work they do," said President Val Avery. "We all come from different backgrounds, see the world in different ways, and have different dreams. By asking questions about this, we can be more inclusive, build stronger bonds, and ultimately be a stronger, more united union."

Results show a few things that are to be expected – that our members come from a wide range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds – and a few things that would have been harder to guess – that age and body image discrimination is almost as common as discrimination based on gender, or that members feel that being Canadian is more important to their sense of identity than the country they came from or the language they speak.

Members who responded also say they like to spend time with family, engage in outdoor activities, professional development, travel and hobbies.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

GENDER: 83 per cent of respondents identify as a woman, and 16 per cent as a man – very close to the actual membership composition, and suggesting the survey results are reasonably accurate. About 1 per cent of the respondents identify themselves as transgender or gender fluid.

AGE: The largest group of members (43 per cent) is aged 50-59. 26 per cent are aged 40-49, 20 per cent are aged 30-29 and 12 per cent are older than 60. 8 per cent are under the age of 30.

CHILDREN: 66 per cent of respondents have no kids living at home, and of the 34 per cent who do, most have just one or two children.

LANGUAGE: HSA members speak over 40 different languages. In addition to English, members speak to friends and relatives in ASL, Afrikaans, Amharic, Arabic, Cantonese, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Farsi, Finnish, French, Gaelic, German, Gujarati, Greek, Hebrew, Hindi, Hokkien, Ibo, Italian, Japanese, Javanese, Katchi, Korean, Kutchi, Llocano, Malay, Mandarin, Norwegian, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Shona, Slovenian, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Toisan, Turkish, Ukrainian, Visayan, Welsh, and Yoruba. Cantonese and French are essentially tied as second most common language used by members.

SEXUALITY: 84 per cent of respondents identify themselves as heterosexual and 6 per cent identify as lesbian, gay or queer. 3 per cent identify as bisexual, 1 per cent as asexual, 5 per cent preferred not to answer.

DISABILITY: 14 per cent of respondents indicated they have a disability condition. Of those, 39 per cent suffer from a chronic medical condition, 30 per cent from a physical condition, 29 per cent from a mental health condition and 10 per cent from hearing impairment.

RELIGION: 50 per cent of member respondents identify with Christianity, and 37 per cent with no religion. The remaining 13 per cent of respondents identify with religions including Baha'i, Buddhism, First Nations Spirituality, Hindu, Islam, Judaism, Paganism, Sikhism, and Taoism.

IDENTITY: When asked what is important to their own sense of identity, respondents were most likely to name their country of residence - being Canadian - as central to their sense of self. Second most important was their community of interest (see below), followed by their country of origin, gender, language, cultural background, sexual orientation, religion and disability.

DISCRIMINATION: Asked if they had ever experienced discrimination, 41 per cent of member respondents said they had been subject to gender discrimination. 31 per cent had experienced age discrimination, 27 per cent discrimination based on body image, and 26 per cent based on race or skin colour. Another 26 per cent said they had not experienced discrimination.

COMMUNITY OF INTEREST: When asked about their most important shared group activities, respondents were most likely to select activities with family and kids or outdoor/active lifestyle activities. This was followed by continuing education/professional development, travel, hobbies, public issues and neighbourhoods.

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