

Discrimination in the Workplace

Findings from HSA's Survey
on Inclusion and Belonging



Acknowledgement



HSA respectfully recognizes the stolen and occupied lands of the over 200 diverse Indigenous nations in the territories colonially referred to as British Columbia. We recognize we have a responsibility to actively participate in decolonizing our union through building more inclusive relationships. We are grateful to the stewards of the lands and waters from which we all benefit.

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Address failure of Respect in the Workplace policy and complaint processes	37
Create targeted campaigns and bargaining proposals to address workplace discrimination that is part of systemic oppression	37
Commit to acts of solidarity: be an active bystander and address microaggressions	38
Yes, more equity, decolonization and inclusion education... AND	38
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Introduction

In 2020, HSA released the report [Confronting Racism with Solidarity](#), which examined how racism affects health care and social services professionals. This survey builds on recommendations from that report as well as recommendations from the 2022 HSA Convention, where members asked for a clearer understanding of the demographic makeup of their union's membership. In Spring of 2022, HSA's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) team administered a demographic survey which yielded 1,299 responses. Unfortunately, this response rate was too low to be considered representative and consequently we were unable to report the findings. However, lessons were learned, and this current report is generated from 2,141 responses, which is a representative sample (approximately 10%) for the current size of our membership (21,754 members).

The context of our findings includes understanding that HSA members continue to face ongoing shortages, untenable workloads, the ongoing opioid epidemic, and high rates of burnout. These conditions do not make it favourable to develop good and trusting relationships, and only serve to exacerbate tensions between people. We also consider that HSA members are going through a long overdue classification review on the heels of bargaining for increased wages and benefits, as well as provisions that address Indigenous specific racism, gender-affirming care, and for Health Sciences Professionals Bargaining Association (HSPBA) members specifically, a pilot on cultural days of significance.

Meanwhile, simultaneously, all citizens in British Columbia are facing climate change crises with wildfires and floods. Increased cost of living and affordability issues are also impacting well-being, as well as the ongoing housing crises across the province. These pressures are coupled with increased polarization, a sense of "us versus them" in the world, rollback of women's rights for our neighbours to the south, increased hatred towards 2SLGBTQIA+ communities and anti-trans legislation, as well as ongoing racism in a country grappling with colonial roots and calls to Truth and Reconciliation.

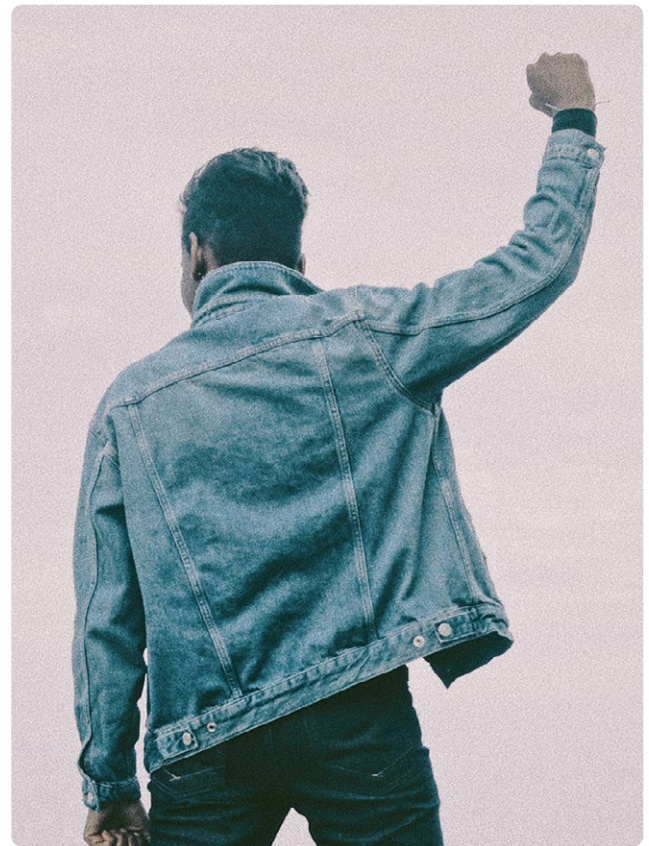
This report problematizes many issues, and readers may wonder about solutions. The issues caused by inequities are complex, and as such require sitting in, and with, the problems – even with the recognition that addressing these issues is critical and urgent. Systemic oppression and related discrimination can be described as "wicked" problems – highly complex problems, sustained by multiple and interconnected systems – and as such they are resistant to single or simple solutions.¹ This interconnectedness is no accident. As a response to living in systems of supremacy, the report comes with recommendations, but one of them is to consider action bias and the urge to rush to solutions before fully coming to know the problems. We look forward to collaborating with our members on ways we might imagine otherwise and finding paths that are more inclusive.

Solidarity

We ask readers to consider the idea of solidarity as you review the report. As a trade union HSA values solidarity. Solidarity means that members of HSA act together to promote their common interests in their workplace. It also means that members commit to respectfully working through differences.

We ask readers to consider: what are the issues that bring us together, even as society divides us apart?

When we stand together to ensure all people's rights are respected and protected, we strengthen the core value of solidarity. As you read, you are invited to reflect on the issues that matter most to you and the ones that you do not view as a priority and to contemplate why it is you might fight for some but not others.



Purpose of the Survey

The 2023 Member Survey on Inclusion and Belonging in the Workplace was conducted in response to Resolution 19 at HSA's 2022 convention:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: we/HSA start by undertaking a survey to encourage members to self-identify various aspects of their identities, so that we understand the true demographics of HSA membership, in order to know where to begin working towards inclusion with an evidence-based approach to addressing systemic inequities.

Additionally, the purpose is to improve HSA's capacity to support inclusion and belonging at the workplace. We seek to use this data to inform our practices and policies to better serve our members at their worksite.

Methodology

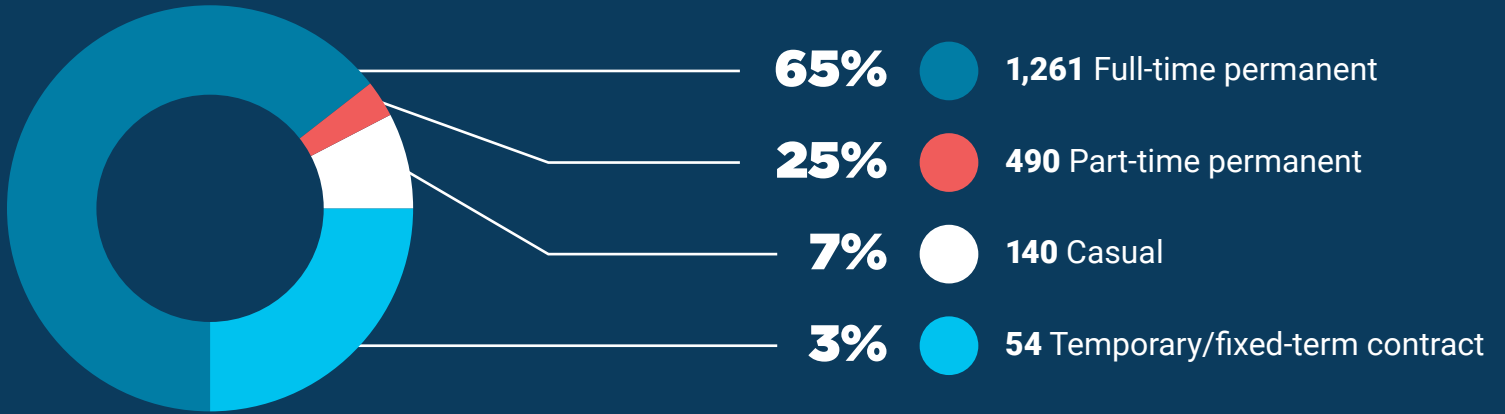
- ▶ The survey was modelled after the 2020 *Confronting Racism with Solidarity* survey, but also broadened to include other marginalized groups.
- ▶ The survey was open to members from April 17 to June 5, 2023.
- ▶ 2,141 members accessed and completed the online survey through SurveyMonkey.
- ▶ Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Members could skip any question they did not want to answer.
- ▶ Overall findings were cross-checked and collaborated on by two of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion staff members, who are both in PhD programs, to enhance reliability.

Demographics

2,141 members accessed and completed the online survey through SurveyMonkey. The information in the following pages gives us a sense of the demographics of our membership.

07 Employment Status	07 Geographical Region	07 Collective Agreement
08 Age	08 Gender Identity	08 Sexual Orientation
08 Disability	09 Race	09 Residency Status in Canada
09 Faith	09 Primary Language	10 Educational Attainment
10 Socioeconomic Status	10 Caregiving Responsibility	

Employment Status



Geographical Region

45%

Vancouver, Burnaby, Tri-Cities, New Westminister, North Shore, or Sunshine Coast (**869**)

21%

Vancouver Island (**405**)

16%

Fraser Valley or Surrey (**306**)

13%

Kootenays and the Interior (**258**)

6%

Prince Rupert, Prince George, or Northern BC (**106**)

Collective Agreement

87%

1,695

Health Science Professionals (HSPBA)

4%

76

Community Social Services (CSSBA)

4%

69

Nursing (NBA)

2%

47

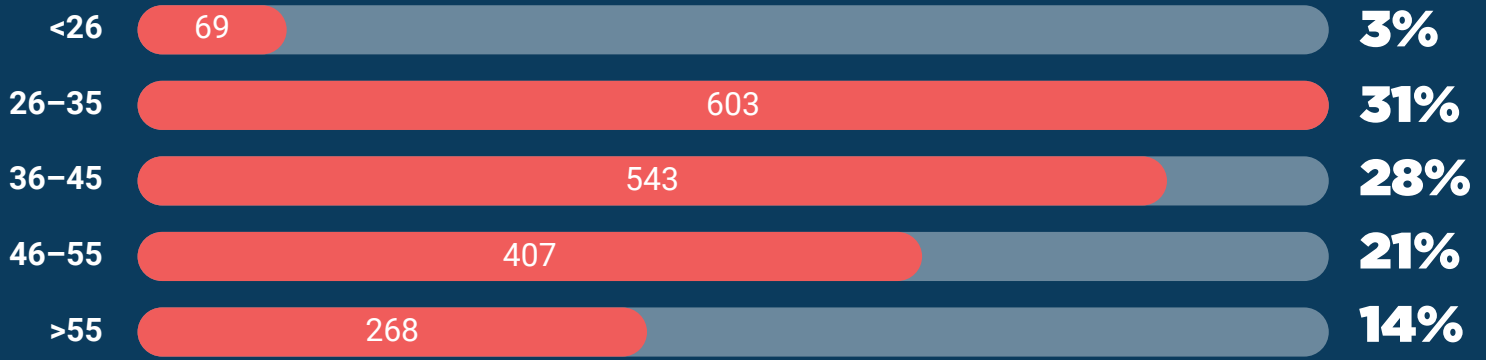
Community Health Services and Support (CBA)

1%

11

West Coast Medical Imaging

Age



2SLGBTQIA+

11%

205 identify as a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community



DISABILITY

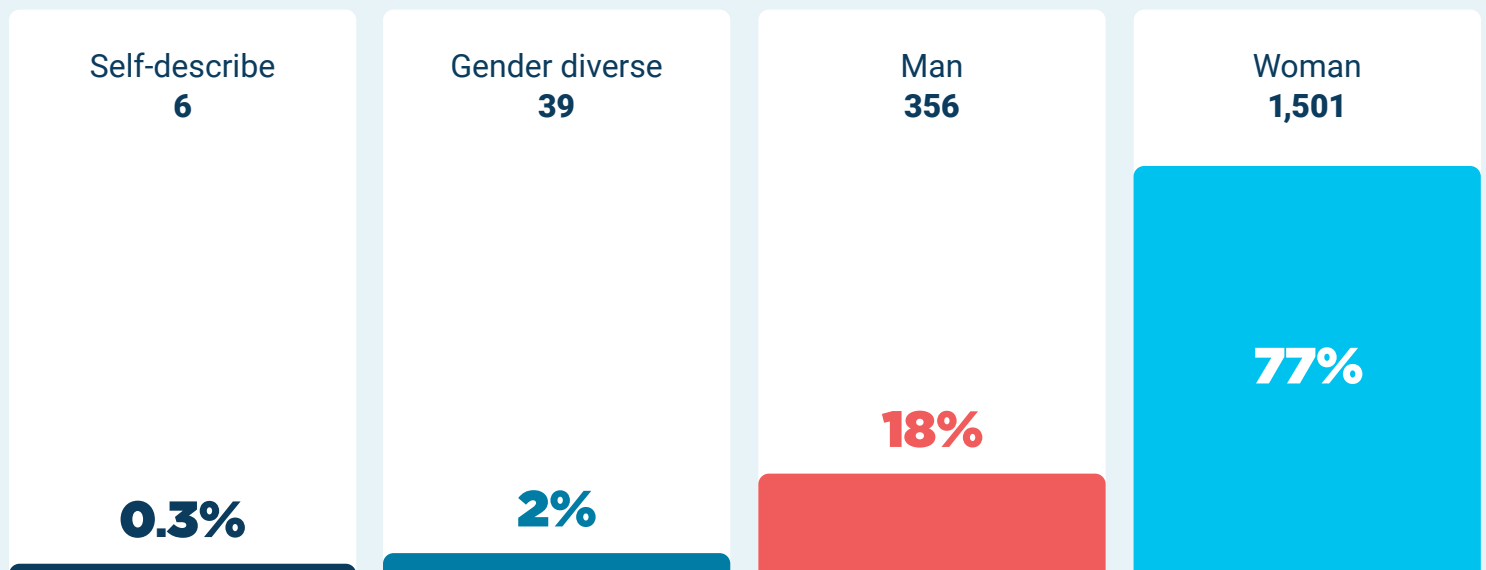
9%

173 identify as a person with a disability

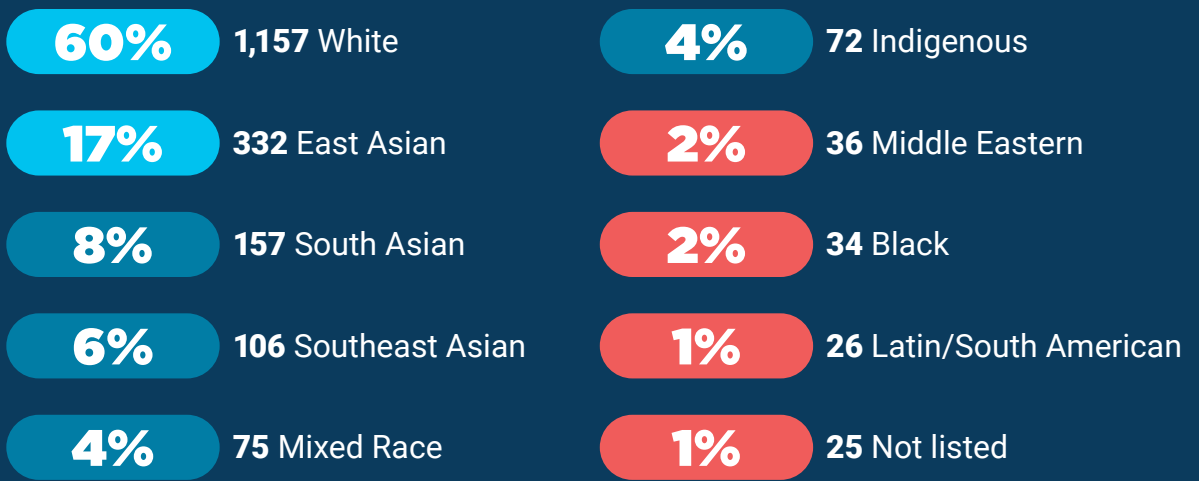


Gender Identity

*Self-describe responses included genderqueer, genderfluid, nonconforming, brother/sibling, female



Race



RESIDENCY STATUS IN CANADA

3%

60 are working in Canada with a permit or visa



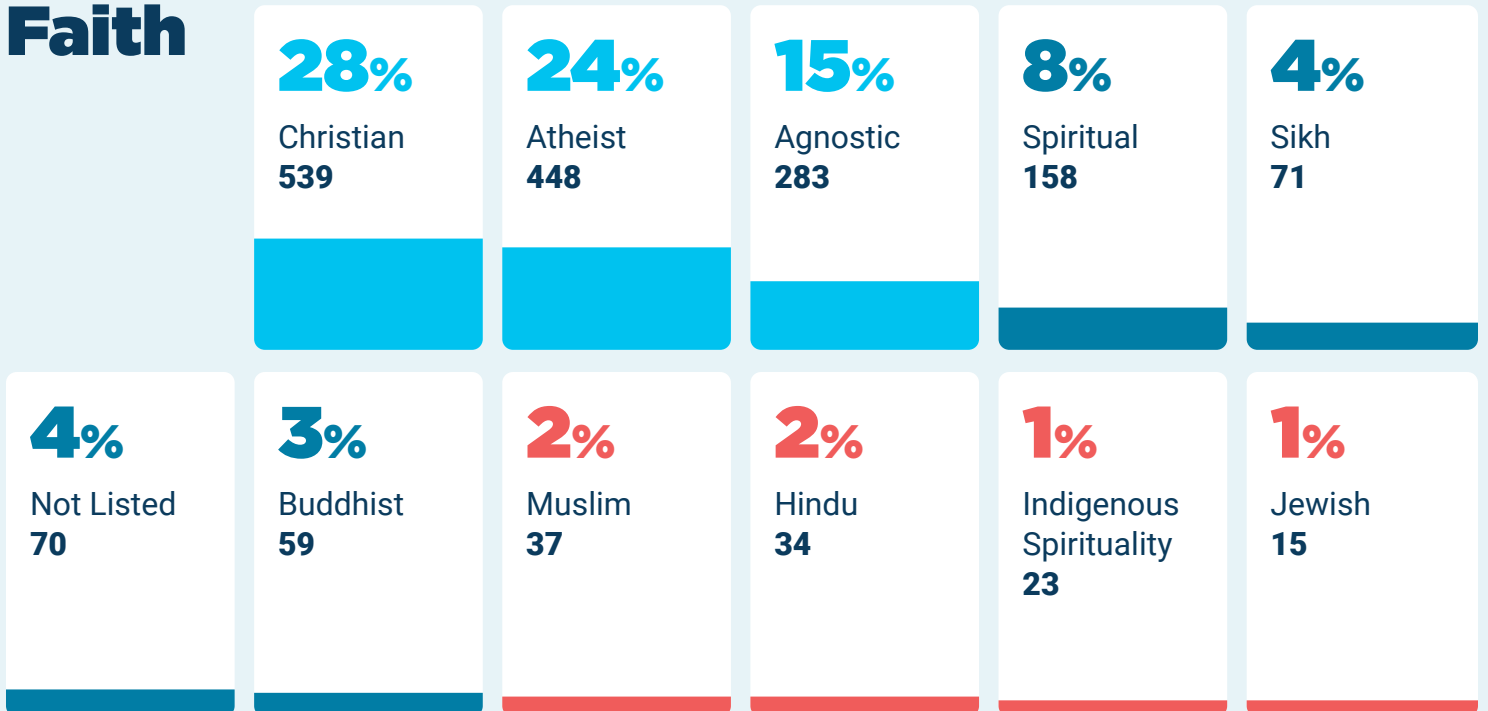
PRIMARY LANGUAGE

8%

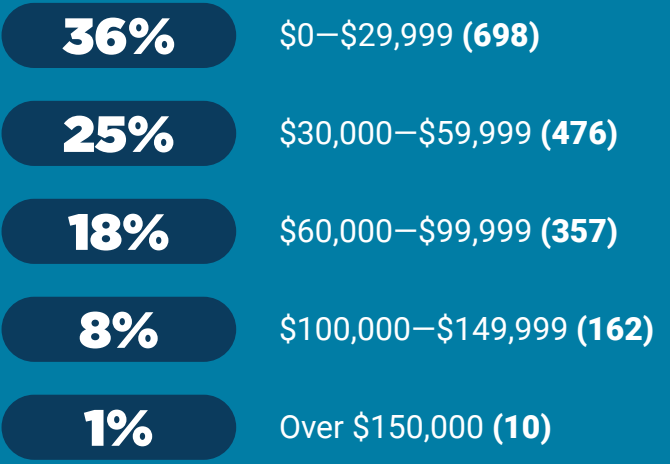
156 do not speak English as their primary language



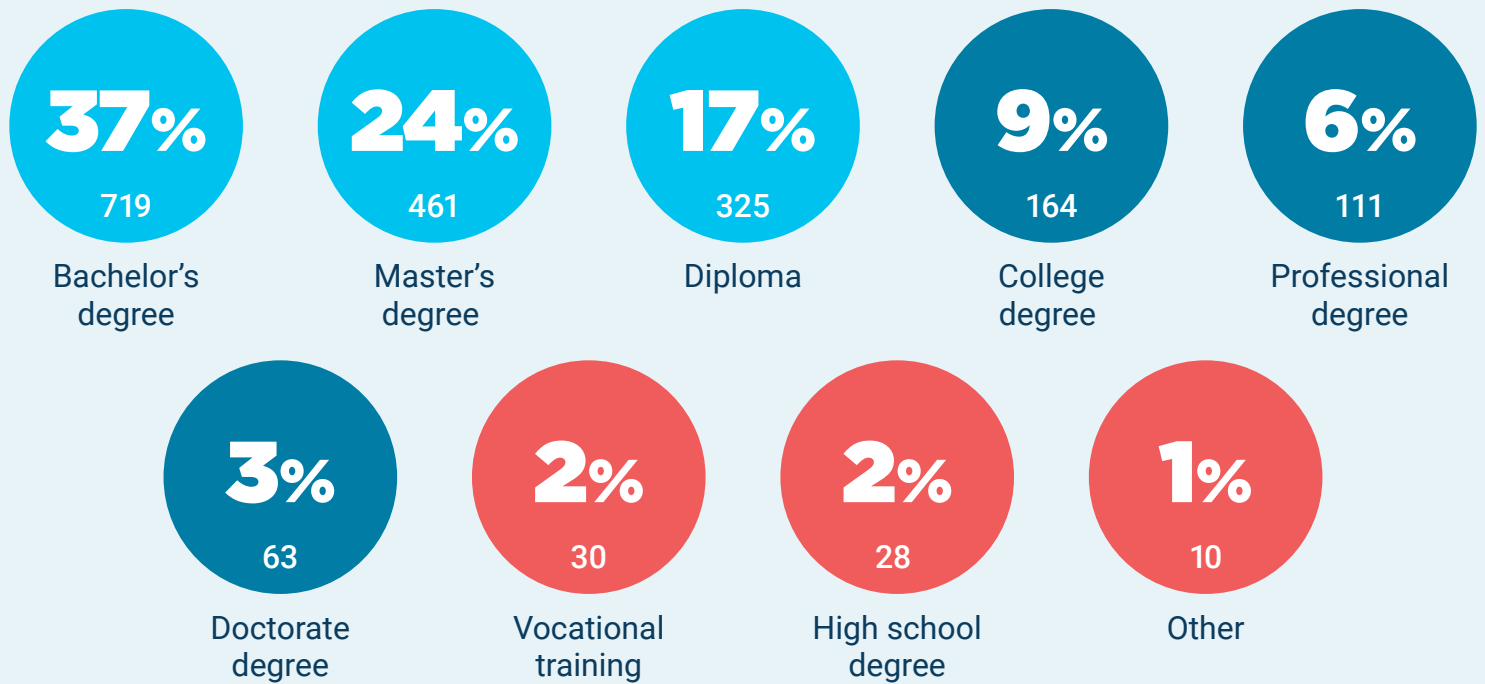
Faith



Socioeconomic Status



Educational Attainment

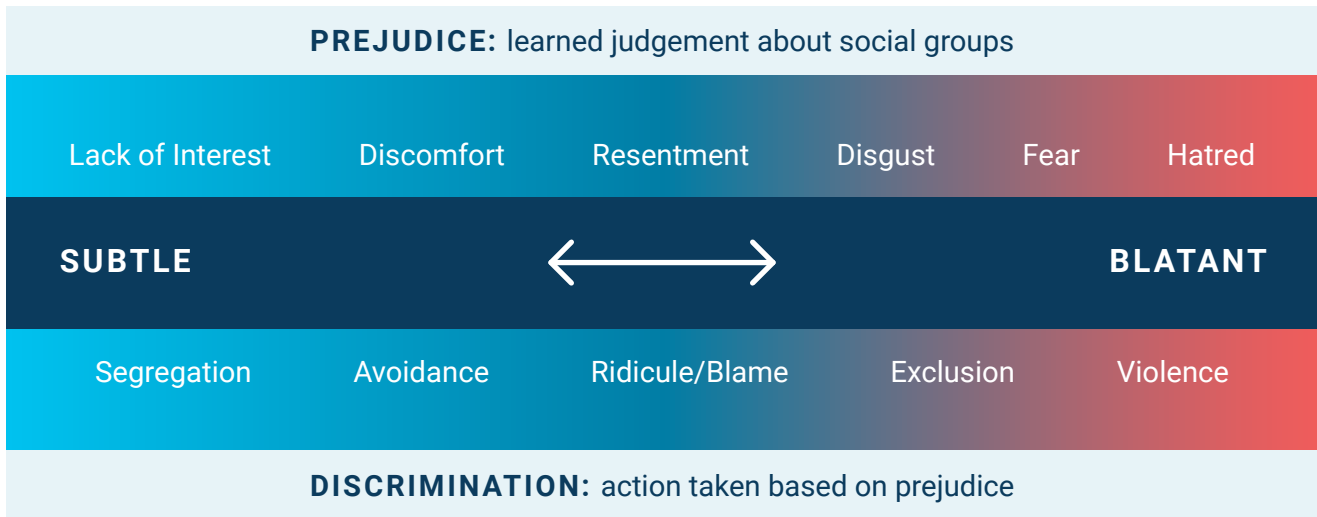


CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITY

42%

803 identify as a caregiver to a partner, child, parent, sibling, or other dependents

Oppression, Discrimination and Harassment



Source: DiAngelo, R (2012). What Does it Mean to be White? p.54

What is the difference between discrimination and harassment?

Discrimination is an action that is taken based on prejudice. Prejudices are beliefs about a social group that are often founded on stereotypes and bias, most often at the unconscious level. We all inherit prejudice through the social/cultural conditioning in which we live. Anyone can experience discrimination as it often happens at the level of the individual or through interpersonal interactions.

OPPRESSION

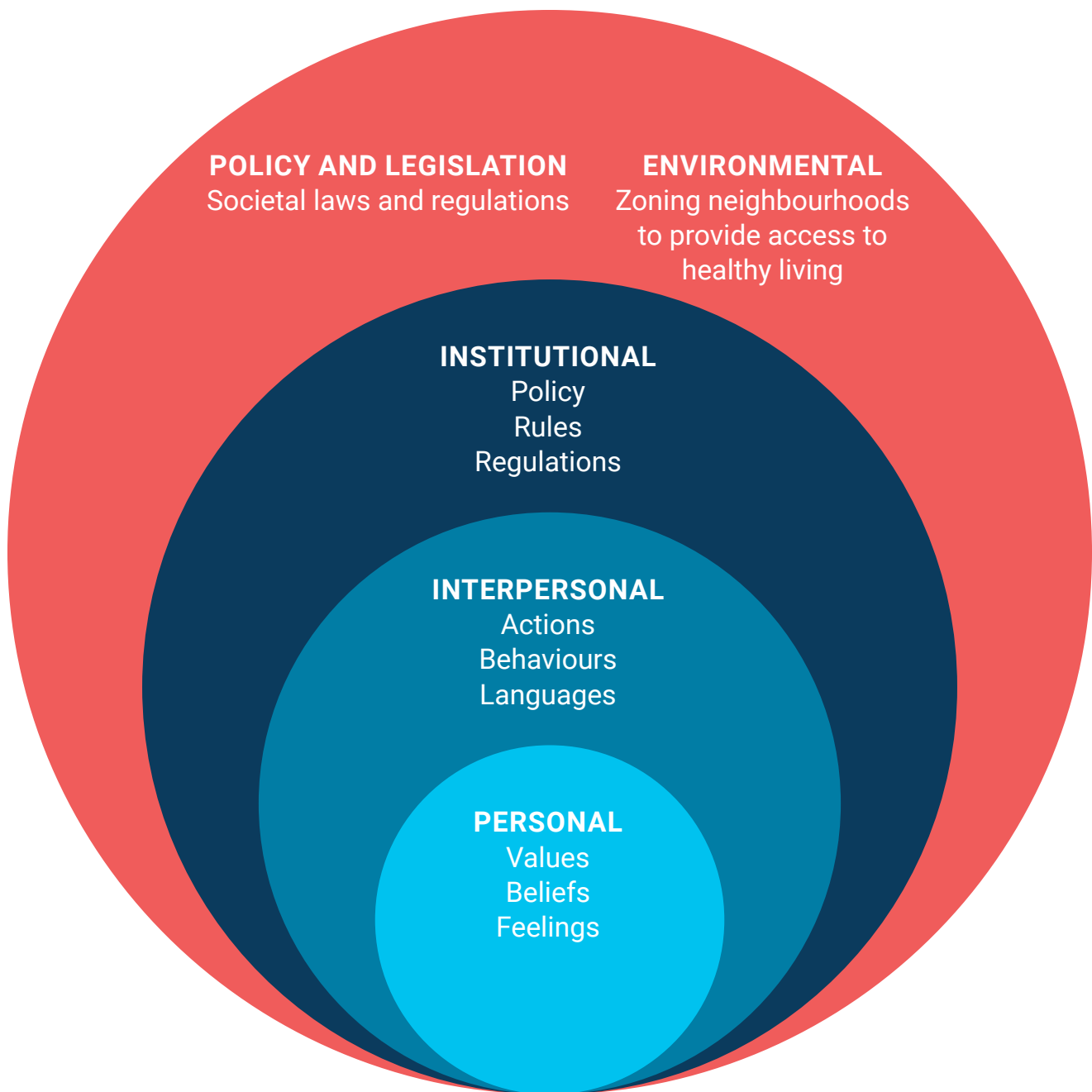
The term *oppression* indicates that one group is in the position to enforce their prejudice and discrimination against another group throughout the society; the prejudice and discrimination have moved from the individual to the societal level and have long-term and far-reaching impacts.

OPPRESSION INCLUDES THE DYNAMICS OF SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL POWER, WHILE PREJUDICE DOES NOT²

Power refers to having the ability to exercise one's will and/or desire over others. Those in a position of power generally control access to resources and often decide what is best for others within their power. The layers of oppression, as shown in the visual, include personal values or feelings, interpersonal actions and behaviors – which overlap with discrimination, but also include – historical and ongoing institutional policies and procedures, and environmental, policy, and legislative contexts that serve to press down upon marginalized peoples. These layers interact and reinforce one another.

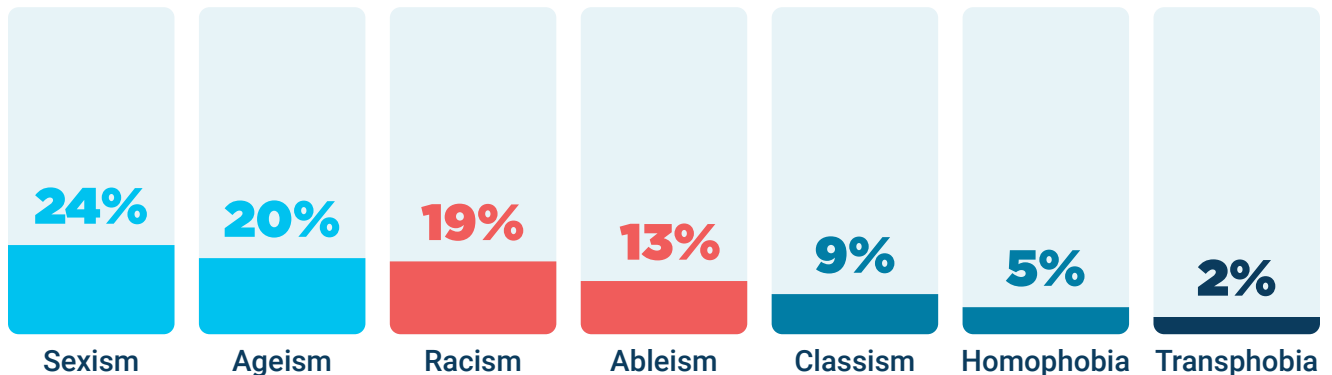
Forms of oppression include racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia and other such experiences of marginalization, where aspects of identity dictate who is likely to experience ongoing exclusion or marginalization. When the 'isms' are referenced, it is important to understand that the 'ism' is a reference to oppression and is distinct from discrimination.

For example, while men can experience discrimination, they cannot experience sexism, as their gender has not been both historically, and in ongoing ways, pressed down, limited, harmed, and intentionally excluded by and from societal and institutional policy and procedures in a way that limits/diminishes/extinguishes their ways of being at the benefit of women and/or gender-diverse folks.



Experiences of Oppression

Overall, members responded that in the last three years they have experienced:



The disaggregated data and qualitative analysis of the responses emphasized findings related to racism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia, and sexism.

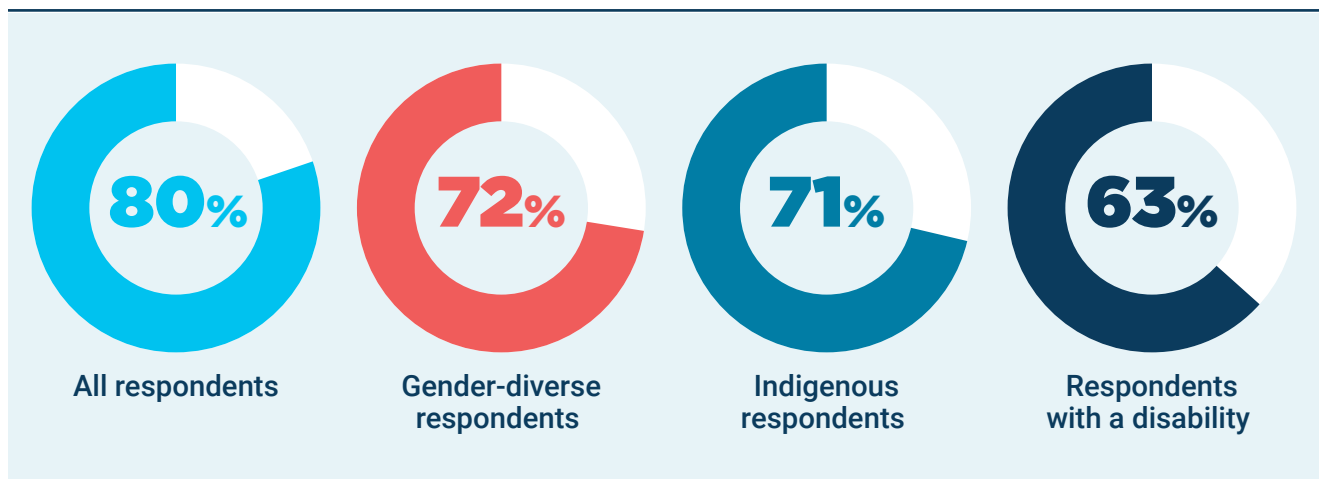
DISAGGREGATED DATA

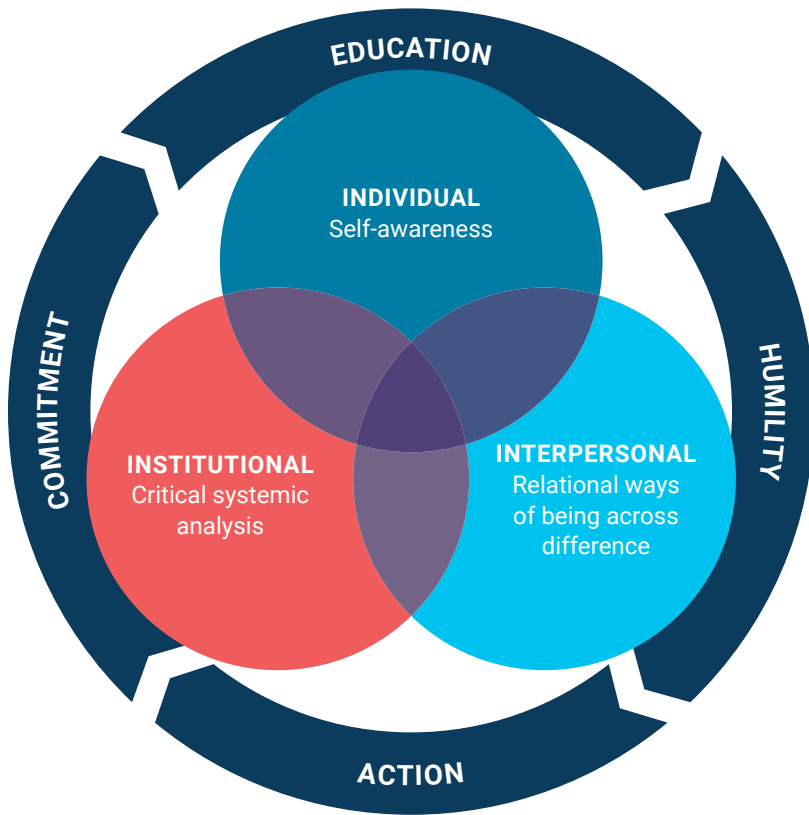
The analysis made use of disaggregated data to ensure there was an equity lens applied to understanding diverse members' experiences. Disaggregated data is data that has been broken down by detailed sub-categories – for example by race, gender, ability, and sexual orientation – and demonstrate the gaps that exist along social group lines.

In the pages ahead, **mind the gap**, between the experiences of the majority, and those who experience marginalization. Consider:

- ▶ Why is there such a gap?
- ▶ Who benefits from the gap?
- ▶ At whose expense?

For example, percent that agree with the statement: *I feel a sense of inclusion in my workplace.*





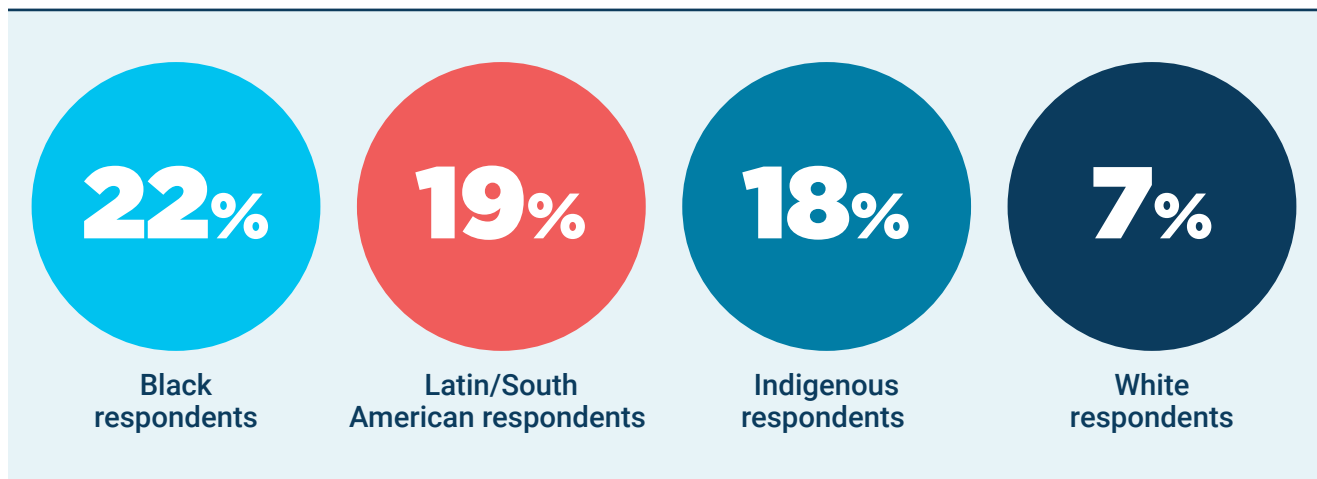
If analysis was left at ‘all respondents’ we would not understand the ways that people who experience marginalization are not feeling a sense of inclusion and belonging in the workplace. It is in the gap that we need to focus on making changes in the three I’s model: at the level of the individual (be aware and manage your bias), interpersonal (build strong and respectful relationships), and institutional (changes to policy, processes and procedures that create and maintain inequities).

Racism

The survey defined racism as prejudice, discrimination, harassment or violence based on belonging to a race that is historically and currently marginalized.

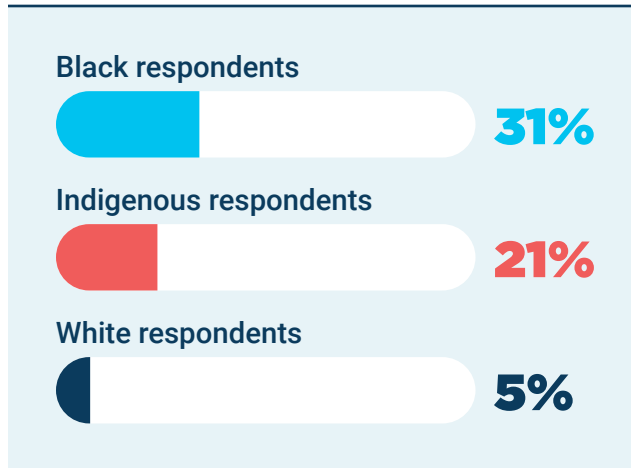
Respondents who identified as Black, Indigenous and/or racialized reported significantly higher rates of identity-based discrimination in some areas as compared to White respondents. *Note, White people can experience discrimination, but do not experience racism.*

Percent that report: ***Unfair performance review, or excessive, harsh, or unfair scrutiny or surveillance of their work or job performance***

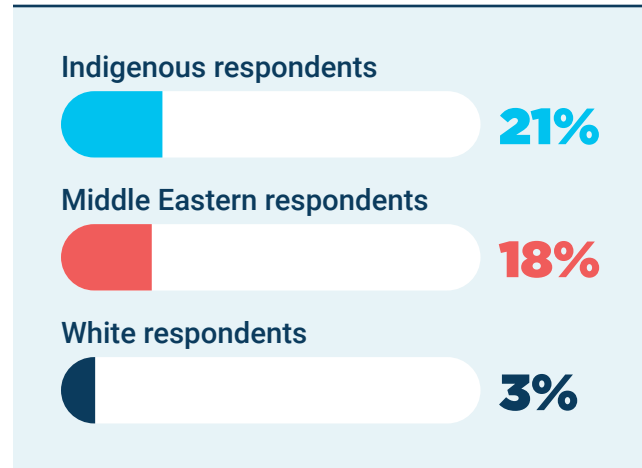


Additionally, there are clearly gaps in experiences of belonging and inclusion. In particular, the term BIPOC or IBPOC, is highlighted. Black and Indigenous Peoples are often the folks who experience racism at higher rates.

Percent that report: **A hostile, derogatory or negative racial slight, whether intentional or unintentional**



Percent that report: **Bullying at work as a result of identity**



Several respondents identified witnessing **Indigenous specific racism** in the open-ended comments.



Sometimes this happens against Indigenous patients where the team is not very understanding of the situation. For some reason, there is a belief that Indigenous patients are eligible for certain resources...



I've seen staff treat rich patients with a higher degree of care and poor, Indigenous patients with disdain and little to no collaborative care.



I have witnessed significant anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism from racialized professionals and clients. When this comes from professionals I advocate for the person's right to care, but I have not named racism in situations where the person is a doctor or has significant power. In one extreme case of anti-Indigenous racism I tried to call the college of doctors, but the response was very defensive and there was no interest in documenting or addressing this type of event.

LINGUISTIC RACISM

Respondents who reported not speaking English as their primary language reported significantly higher rates of experiencing racism at work in the last three years. To illustrate, 11.5% of those who said English was not their primary language reported experiencing racism at work compared to 3.5% who reported speaking English as their primary language.



Comments about patients who speak English as second language and transgender people, sexism from patients about roles, racism from patients (“Where am I really from”, asides about my name, asking about my “background”)



Colleagues making racially insensitive remarks, “jokes”, inappropriate accents. Colleague making fun of another colleague’s accent. Colleague making fun of another worker’s mannerisms and voice inflection

Ableism

Ableism was defined as prejudice, discrimination, harassment or violence based on disability status.

Respondents who identified as persons with a disability reported significantly lower rates of inclusion and belonging in some areas as compared to those who identified as able-bodied.

I am respected and valued in my workplace



I feel a sense of inclusion in my workplace



I feel a sense of belonging in my workplace



The leadership at my workplace treats all employees fairly



Respondents with a disability report higher instances of workplace discrimination, which compounds a lack of inclusion in the workplace:



57% of respondents with a disability report **a lack of recognition of their accomplishments, contributions, skills, and/or successes**, compared to 36% of able-bodied respondents.



24% of respondents with a disability report experiencing **unfair performance review, or excessive, harsh, or unfair scrutiny or surveillance of their work or job performance**, compared to 6% of able-bodied respondents.



20% of respondents with a disability report **being denied a request pertaining to their work conditions (e.g., vacation request, special leave request, shift relief, overtime request, accommodation request, etc.)**, compared to 8% of able-bodied respondents.



Manager from previous job did not demonstrate empathy or compassion towards my disability and ongoing health issues. She demonstrated ableism by giving me a poor review as a result of my absences (due to invisible disability) which appeared to overshadow the meaningful work that I was doing on site. Manager's poor recommendation colored by these biases prevented me from being accepted for a job that I was applying for.



The accommodation was brutal, targeted and punitive with no transparency. I had to challenge and justify everything.



All my requests were denied and I was offered a not workable plan which I had to strongly challenge/justify every step of the way. I don't believe they understood my needs or that I really needed accommodation. This only increased my stress level and to function at my best. I had medical documentation to back up my needs, unfortunately my health issues are invisible and often not believed/accepted.

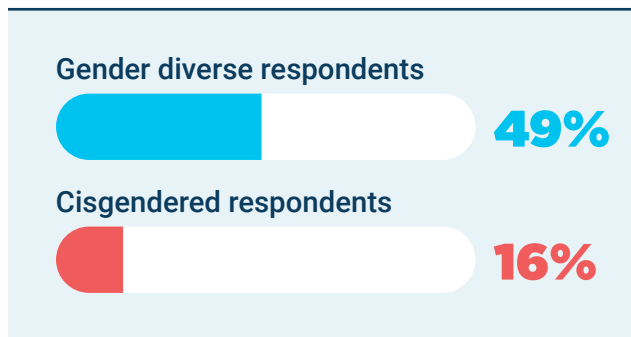
Transphobia

Transphobia was defined as prejudice, discrimination, harassment or violence towards people who do not conform to social norms of the gendered binary of male and/or female.

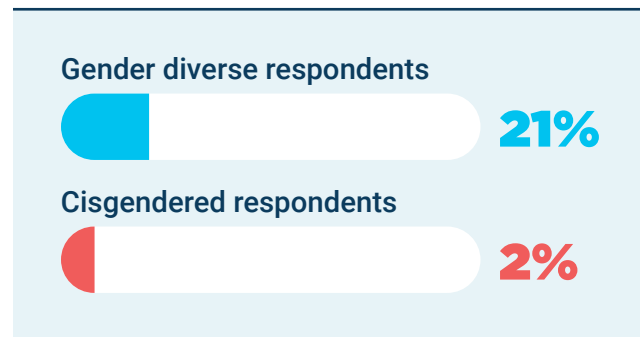
Respondents who identified as gender-diverse reported significantly lower rates of inclusion and belonging in some areas as compared to their cisgender counterparts.

46% of those who identified as gender diverse reported experiencing misgendering or deadnaming, whether intentional or unintentional. **That is roughly equivalent to every second gender diverse member who took this survey.**

Gender-diverse respondents experience **ignorant, insensitive or arduous comments about their appearance, culture, religion, name, gender, language, accent, and other identity aspects** three times as much as cis-gender people.



Gender-diverse respondents report **experiencing the sharing of discriminatory literature, music, video, or multimedia in the workplace, including through social media** ten times as much as cis-gender people.



Colleagues not using my preferred name and or pronouns and saying "I just can't keep up with all that" or "I just don't understand it"



A colleague showing a video of a trans woman topless in the lunch room and laughing at it.

Trans members report (54%) feeling less of a sense of belonging in the workplace than cis-gender members (77%).

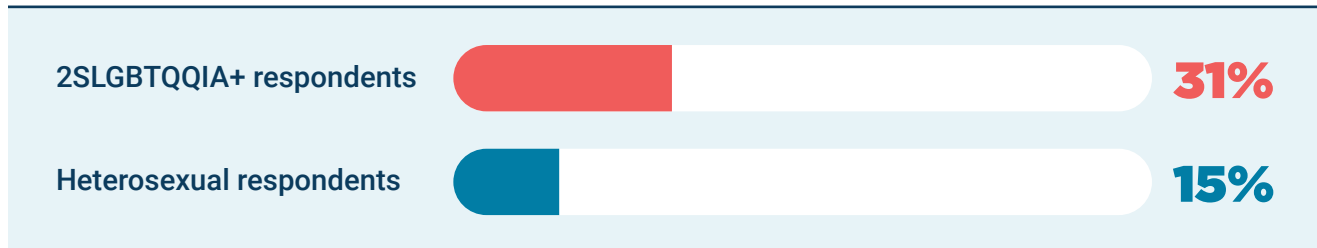
Additionally, transgender members (51%) report significantly lower rates of agreeing with the statement 'At my workplace employees appreciate other backgrounds who are different from their own, compared to cis-gender members (76%).

Homophobia

The survey defined homophobia prejudice, discrimination, harassment or violence based on sexual orientation outside the dominant norm of heterosexuality.

Respondents who identified as members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community reported significantly lower rates of inclusion and belonging in some areas as compared to those who identified as heterosexual. To illustrate:

Percent that report: **ignorant, insensitive or arduous comments about their appearance, culture, religion, name, gender, language, accent, and other identity aspects**



Sexism

Sexism was defined as prejudice, discrimination, harassment or violence based on being a woman. The quantitative/disaggregated data did not show much, but the qualitative comments spoke about experiences of sexism.



A female colleague couldn't convince a doctor that something was unsafe, but as soon as our male colleague said the same thing, the doctor immediately changed his tone and pretended he had always wanted the safe recommendation.



Two male, one female coworkers were idle, but the male manager only calls out the female coworker to do a task that could be done by any of the three employees. The language that should have been used is "can one of you do this task?" not "can [female coworker] do this task?" Male coworkers given preferential treatment in shift exchanges. Male coworkers given priority to decide which shifts they like to do, meanwhile female coworkers have to do all variety of shifts regardless of their preference. Example: male coworkers can choose not to scan breast exams, but female coworkers cannot decline testicular exams.



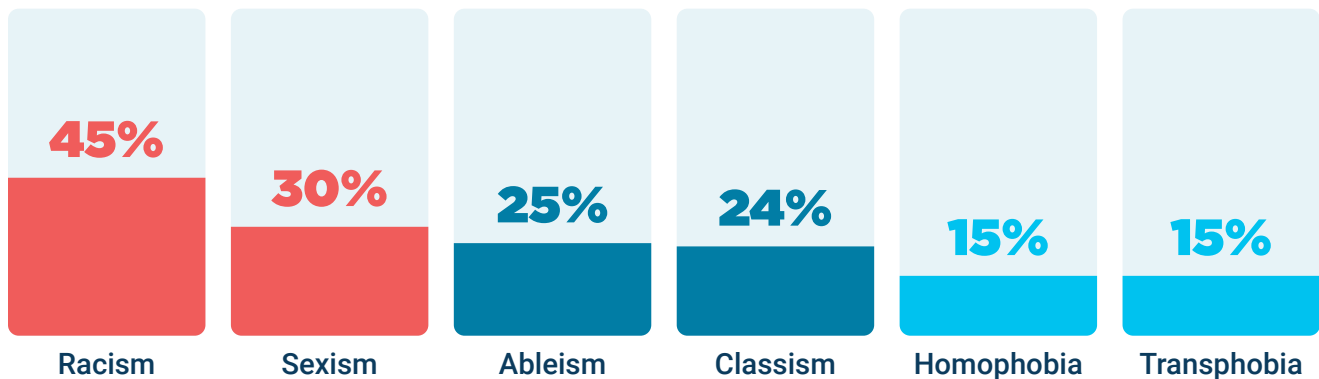
An older male colleague made a joke about "women should be at home mending socks" when it was myself (a woman) and three other older men.



I have been oppressed being a woman get told that my “emotions” are out of control when I ask bold questions. I’ve been shamed about being poor as I am a single mother on a single income for my house so we just manage to get by with my income. I am also Métis and very White passing, hearing discriminatory comments about Indigenous people really offends me as I was raised in that culture and see it as beautiful.

Witnessing Oppression

There was a notable difference in the percentages of those who reported experiencing discrimination and those who reported witnessing discrimination. It appears that identifying discrimination and harassment is not an issue, but later, it will be shown that addressing it is an issue for many members.



When acts of discrimination are reported as being witnessed, many of the acts were based on comments, jokes, or remarks about marginalized social groups.

Many report that they were witness to such remarks or ‘jokes’ as their identity of belonging to a marginalized group was not visible:



Racial slurs (witnessed not directed at me) inappropriate comments regarding religion and “blonde” jokes



My coworkers engage in inappropriate conversation. i.e. ranking females based on attractiveness, making racial jokes etc. it’s a boys club and speaking out has resulted in shunning and exclusion.



Offensive things being said but followed with “but it’s just a joke”.

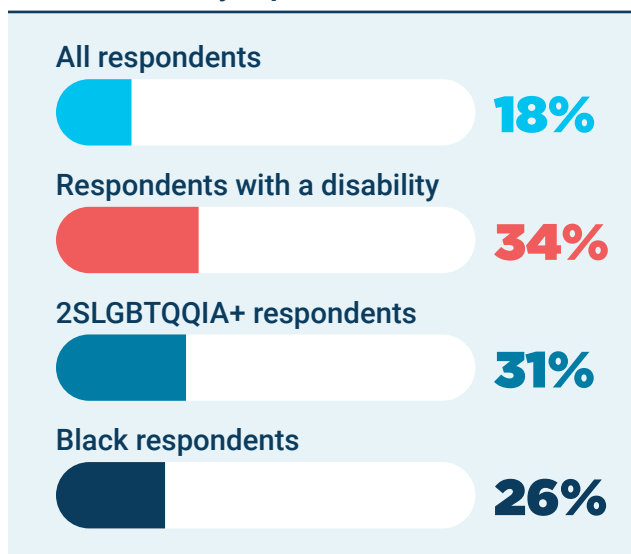


I have witnessed people who are entitled and who feel they can say anything they want and it is ok because they are just joking! It isn’t ok! I have colleagues who feel they can talk about their colleagues behind their backs because they do not like something about them, whether be their looks, size, gender, or how they work.

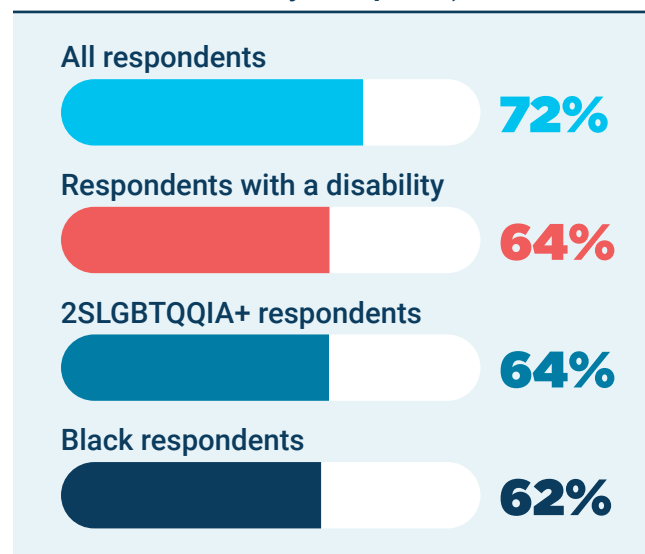
Microaggressions and Microassaults

Language matters, words have power. Whereas overt forms of discrimination may be more easily identified, subtle discrimination has received increased attention focused on studying how it may affect individuals in society, especially those from groups that have been historically marginalized. Microaggressions can be related to race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, or other features that reflect some aspect of personal identity. And while microaggressions most often present as verbal slights in spoken language, they may also take on nonverbal or environmental forms.³ Derald Wing Sue describes microassaults as “conscious, deliberate and either subtle or explicit ... biased attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors that are communicated to marginalized groups through environmental cues, verbalizations, or behaviors.”⁴ The cumulative effects of microaggressions and microassaults contribute to the damaging effects of oppression.

Percent that report: **ignorant, insensitive, or arduous comments based on their appearance, culture, religion, name, gender, language, accent, and other identity aspects.**



Percent that agree with the statement: **inappropriate comments (for example, jokes, slurs, mockery) related to race, culture, ethnicity, sex, gender are not tolerated at my workplace.)**





A staff member sharing a “funny” story in the hallway that contained a lot of racial stereotypes and slurs. The person’s voice was very loud and everyone, staff and patients could hear her.



Inappropriate comments that were meant as a joke / teasing. Supervisor and manager thought it was a joke/sided with the harasser.



Name calling or inappropriate dissing among coworkers of other colleagues, overly sexual jokes exchanged between colleagues.



I have had discriminatory comments from physicians both towards me and patients which they find funny and the rest of the team are left in a state of discomfort. With the perceived hierarchy and history of inaction against individuals, why would anyone say anything?

Key Themes

There are three main themes that emerged from the survey data: relationships, respectful workplace policies, and EDI education.

24

THEME ONE

Relationships



30

THEME TWO

**Respectful
Workplace Policies**



35

THEME THREE

EDI Education



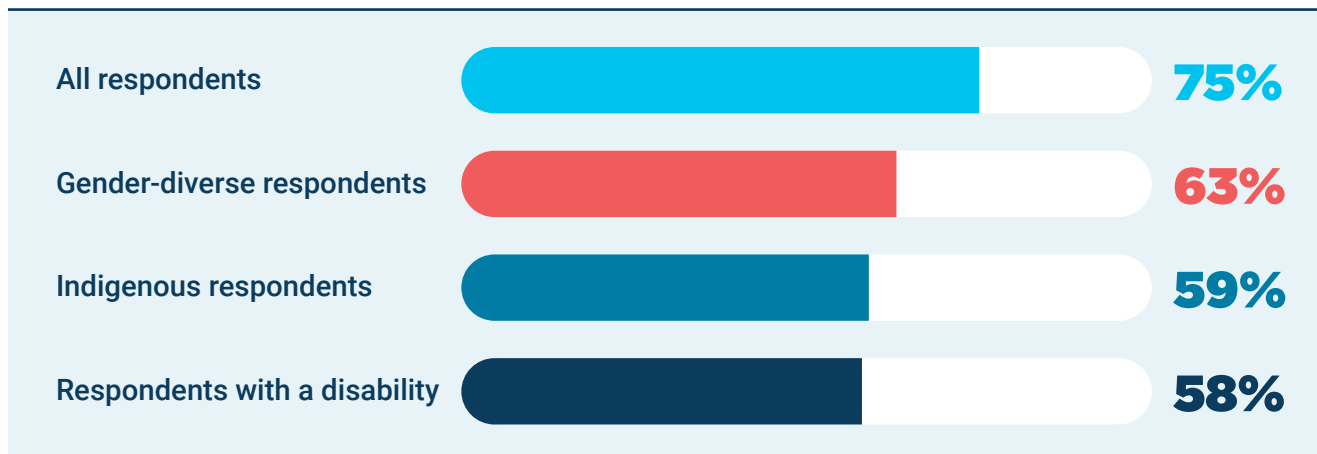
THEME ONE

Relationships

Relationships are critical to creating a sense of inclusion. The following section has implications for all kinds of relationships in the workplace: relationships with leaders, relationships with colleagues, and relationships with clients and their families. Under the pressures of professionalism⁵ people who experience marginalization are still experiencing the effects of assimilation, or ‘go along to get along’, which makes belonging more difficult when you are different from the ‘norm’ or the majority.

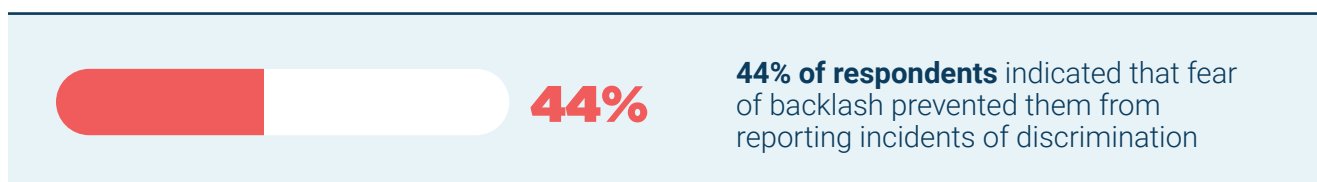
Belonging was defined as a sense of being able to be who you are without fear of prejudice or discrimination. The following breakdown shows that there is a lack of good relationships that enable people who experience marginalization to feel a sense of belonging in the workplace.

Percent that agree with the statement: *I feel a sense of belonging in my workplace*



As emphasized in the 2020 Report on *Confronting Racism with Solidarity*, fear of negative backlash or retaliation persists as the reason why members do not report instances of discrimination, harassment, and/or bullying.

The top reason that members identified that may hinder members’ seeking assistance from reporting discrimination:



Fear of backlash included fear from leadership/retaliation, fear of job loss, fear of upsetting the team/ judgement from colleagues. Overall, there is a need to focus on creating stronger relationships within the workplace to help mitigate such fears.

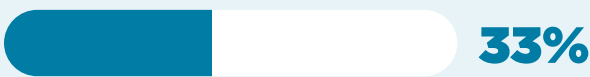


Relationships with Colleagues: Solidarity

As a trade union, HSA values solidarity. Solidarity means that members of HSA act together to promote their common interests in their workplace. It also means that members commit to respectfully working through differences. Solidarity is sometimes difficult in Western cultures as there is an overemphasis and value on individualism. Individualism is an ideology that places value on being independent, separate, special, self-reliant, and assertive over more collectivist tendencies of being collaborative, consultative, and putting the wellness of a group above one's own desires. Individualism has been closely tied to systems of oppression like white supremacy and goes against the unionist principle of solidarity.

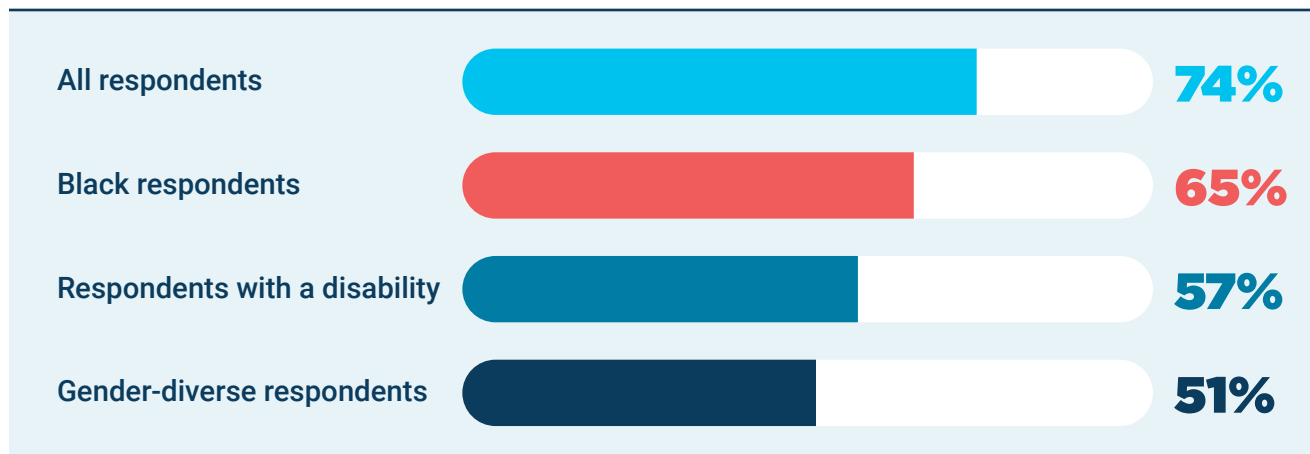
Reminder: Solidarity is defined as fellowship arising from common responsibilities and interests, as between members of a group or a community of responsibilities and interests. This includes a willingness to promote others' interests, or the interests of the group, even at personal cost.⁶ At HSA common

interests include fair wages and benefits, respectful workplaces, as well as advancing anti-oppressive efforts to decolonize health care and workplaces. Often the labour movement speaks in terms of equality, but we recognize the need to address issues from an equity standpoint. Equality assumes that everyone is born into equal access to supports and services, and denies that there are intersecting social factors that produce unequal access to these things. Therefore, when we look at common interests and responsibilities, we need to account for the ways certain barriers may prevent some people from accessing promotions, educational opportunities, and/or collegial relationships in the workplace.



33% of respondents reported that a colleague was/were the main perpetrator of discrimination, harassment or bullying.

Per cent that agree with the statement: **At my workplace, employees appreciate others whose backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences are different from their own**



We all have work to do to become better relatives to each other. For there to be systemic changes, each one of us has to take responsibility for the environment we create in our workplaces. A sense of humility and openness to learn from each other is paramount. It also means that when we learn that we have hurt someone (regardless of our intentions) – an authentic apology can go a long way.

An effect of individualism is the tendency to feel personally attacked when equity issues are raised within workplace settings. For example, White people often equate conversations or dialogues about whiteness as a personal attack on them as individuals.⁷ In studies using discourse and narrative analysis, there are several examples of expressions of feeling attacked.⁸ At the level of the individual, we need to notice when we feel defensive and take time to get clear in our response, rather than react.

One additional important effect of individualism is the **bystander effect**. The bystander effect is when individuals choose not to intervene when witnessing acts of discrimination, harassment, and/or bullying, because they assume that others will report it or manage it. When asked why there was no report to witnessing discrimination or harassment, respondents cited that they thought someone else would report it, other colleagues reported it, the issue didn't seem big enough, that they were only a witness, and/or it was none of my business.



An assumption (I'm embarrassed to admit this!) that someone else would report.



Co workers reported it. I just try to let it go and just do my best.



For the major incidents I have witnessed, the victim was reporting the incident. For the more minor ones, the aggressions seemed too small/difficult to prove and I am also worried about consequences/retaliation.

How might we find solidarity, a sense of collective responsibility to each other's right to respect and dignity in the workplace, around issues that are divisive in our societies?

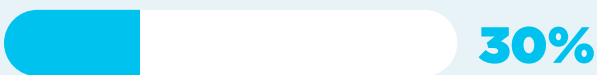


If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.

LILLA WATSON

Relationship with Leadership

The qualitative data clearly spoke to a lack of trust in the relationship with leadership. Fear of retaliation is a signal that the power structures are toxic. Fear based work environments are part of the systems of patriarchal colonialism, where rules that benefit current power structures are enforced through fear-based tactics like retaliation.



30% of respondents indicated that a relationship of trust has not been established with workplace leadership

In creating equity and inclusion, trusting relationships are critical. This can be difficult in many workplaces due to the hierarchical structures of reporting, professional hierarches, and a lack of critical analysis and approaches to power, privilege and positionality. The colonial nature of transaction-based relationships does not help workplaces in efforts towards decolonization.

Transactional relationships function like business deals where the work is centred, and the humans do not necessarily get to know one another. Often these interactions have a sense of something being extracted, where the focus is getting what you need out of other people. It follows, then, that the second reason identified by respondents as to why they do not report discrimination is because:



I did intervene, the manager said, maybe you're the problem.



I have been advocating on behalf of our Indigenous clients and have suffered because of it. Management doesn't accept it and gaslighted me when I bring it up.



History of negative experiences when bringing forward issues or standing up to others. Not supported when done so. Better to change roles than stay and work in that environment.

The power dynamics between leadership and workers does not lend itself well to people reporting on instances of discrimination either.

30% reported that a manager or supervisor was/were the main perpetrator of discrimination/harassment/microaggressions.



It is challenging to cope when a manager is the person bullying or harassing an employee. Although there are policies and procedures in place that state there will be no retaliation, I personally feel unsafe making a complaint against a manager for my safety and that of my colleagues who might be witnesses.

Speaking to the lack of accountability and interventions from leadership, a member said:



Jokes directed at me seem to be brushed off by management as not important.

Another member said



Even when derogatory comments are made in front of leadership, no action is taken because comments are presented as jokes.

Relationships with Clients/Patients

Moreover, the hierarchical and transactional ways relationships are conducted in many workplaces are also coupled with health care as being seen as a service, where some patients/clients feel entitled to treat health care professionals as instruments, not as people. Respondents in the survey shared how putting up with certain kinds of psychological abuse like racism and sexism from patients/clients is an unspoken expectation to be put up with in their workplace.



When I had inappropriate comments said to me by a patient, I felt that I could not do anything. In a work setting, I could bring it to my supervisor's attention if desired.



Patients often disrespect staff members. I often experience racism and microaggressions from patients. Racism towards staff is not addressed in the workplace.



I was the one experiencing this. This happened in a public workplace setting where addressing it would not have been conducive to patient care.

Power dynamics in all relationships in the workplace need to be addressed. Discrimination and harassment occur at the level of the interpersonal, but as will be shown in the next theme, needs addressing at the level of the institutional, or policy.

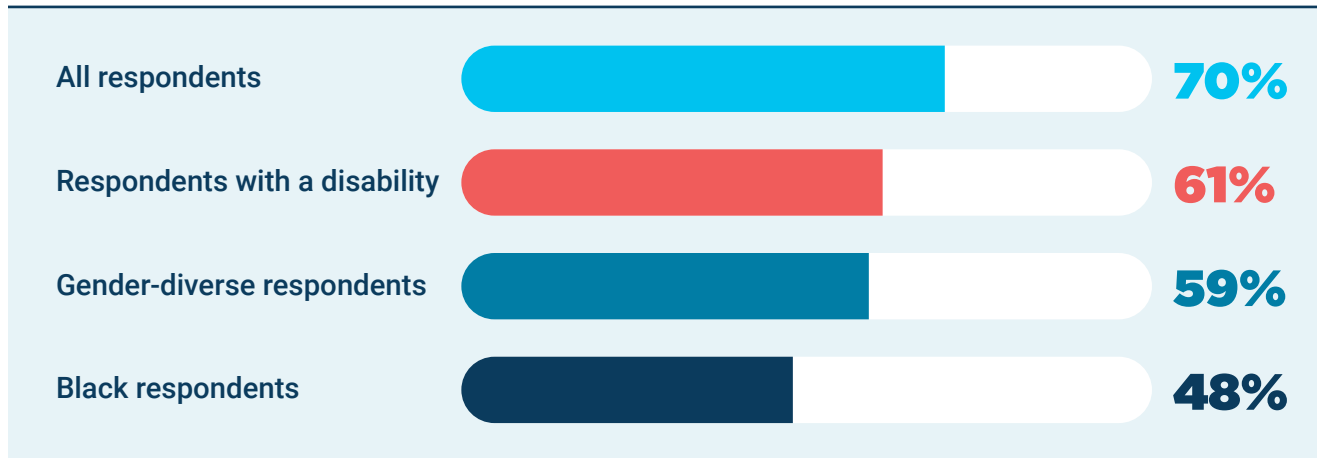
THEME TWO

Respectful Workplace Policies

Recommendation 7 from *Confronting Racism* speaks to the need for improved policies that centre racial justice. However, this survey, alongside a brief literature review, questions how effective such policies can be. Combined with a lack of trust in leadership, and fear of retaliation for submitting a complaint, respectful workplace complaint processes are not user friendly, often isolate the parties, lack opportunity for healing, and often, this leads to further stress.

Policies that are designed to address equity and inclusion are not creating inclusion for the marginalized communities they are supposed to serve.

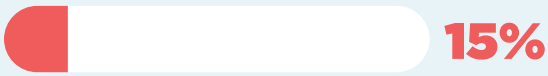
Percent that agree with the statement: ***My workplace policies or procedures encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion***



Sarah Ahmed, who works at the intersection of queer, feminist and race studies, conducted an in-depth research study on institutional diversity and complaint systems. Ahmed names this phenomenon ‘non-performativity’... which “refer(s) to institutional speech acts that do not bring into effect what they name.”⁹ Workplaces create diversity, equity and inclusion policies, however, often these policies become checkboxes to make it appear as though the work of building inclusion is happening. Respect in the workplace policy does not create respect in the workplace. Employers can point to a policy and say, ‘See, we are inclusive’, but as we see without meaningful workplace cultural shift many people who experience marginalization will continue to experience workplaces as assimilative. The workplace is, in turn, the place where you need to ‘go along, to get along’, and where diversity is only about appearances, not meaningful cultural shifts towards being respectful of diverse ways of being, diverse knowledges and/or diverse approaches.

Problems with Complaint Processes

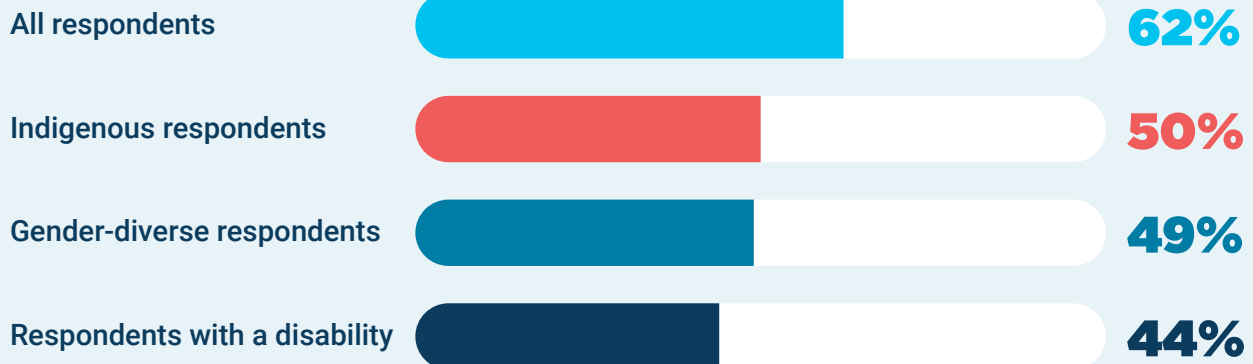
Members were asked if they have ever reported an incident of identity-based harassment, bullying, violence, intimidation, or discrimination to their employer. 1,982 members answered this question.



Only 15% have reported an incident of identity-based harassment, bullying, violence, intimidation, or discrimination to their employer.

Additionally, the labour involved in complaint processes needs to be considered. "In addition to writing and documenting materials to support your case, which may include policies, you have to speak to many people from various departments, or divisions, to unions... To make a complaint you have to keep making that complaint – complaint as a requirement to become expressive. To express something is to push something out. The harder an experience, the harder it is to express a complaint. If complaints are a mess of documents that mess is hard." (Ahmed, p. 34)

Percent that agree with the statement: ***I believe my employer will take appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination and/or bias through respectful workplace procedure***



If members answered yes to reporting an incident of identity-based harassment, bullying, violence, intimidation, or discrimination to their employer, they were asked what the response was based on a list of options. 657 members answered this question. The responses they received have been categorized into 3 areas:

RESPONSE TO COMPLAINT

18%

reported that the **complaint was ignored.**

12%

reported that the **complaint was investigated, but no action was taken.**

10%

reported that the **complaint was taken seriously and dealt with properly.**

9%

reported that the **complaint was filed under the employer's respectful workplace policy with no grievance.**

5%

reported that the **complaint was filed under the employer's respectful workplace policy with a grievance.**

RESPONSE TO GRIEVANCE

2%

reported that the **grievance was investigated, but no action was taken.**

2%

reported that the **grievance was ignored.**

2%

reported that the **grievance was taken seriously and dealt with properly.**

OTHER RESPONSES

8%

reported that they were **identified as a troublemaker.**

6%

reported that they were **subjected to a counter complaint.**

3%

reported that they were **disciplined in response.**

3%

reported that they were **forced out of their job.**

2%

reported that they were **transferred to another department or workplace at their request.**

1%

reported that they were **transferred to another department or workplace, not at their request.**

“

Was told that my complaint wouldn't result in anything but ruining my career opportunities.

“

For the major incidents I have witnessed, the victim was reporting the incident. For the more minor ones, the aggressions seemed too small/difficult to prove and I am also worried about consequences/retaliation.

Qualitative studies¹⁰ of experiences reveal that workers feel highly compromised regarding confronting bullying behaviour in the workplace, believe they will not be listened to, that the organization will not reprimand or punish bullies and that their only option is to “shut up and put up”.

Members reported on the burden of proof and difficulty of providing evidence when it comes to workplace complaints of discrimination.

“

At the end of the day, this is hard to prove.

“

This is an interesting question. Many times discrimination cannot be pinpointed to identity based discrimination, yet there is a felt sense of the discrimination being tied to one's identity.

“Where do complaints end up?... the same file, in filing cabinets, filing as in filing away.”¹¹ Many respondents reported the sense that filing complaints related to discrimination was not worth it as experience has shown that nothing is done/changed.



Not reported because the employer will do nothing about it.



Not an official complaint, but described the experience to my manager who empathized but did not take any action.

There is strong evidence to suggest that employees often perceive complaint/grievance processes to be adversarial and hostile, lacking confidentiality, risky in terms of isolation or reprisal from the workgroup, and likely to not be taken seriously.¹²

THEME THREE

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Education

In the qualitative responses members ask for more education on equity, inclusion, and decolonization topics. They ask that this not only come from HSA, but also from employers.

As reported on through *Confronting Racism with Solidarity*, this survey also demonstrates that members continue having trouble accessing leaves to further their education.

7% reported being denied a professional development opportunity (e.g., participation in a project, training, conference, or event)



I have received no support from manager when discussing doing further education projects or anything of the sort. I've actually been discouraged.

Additionally, members ask that HSA stewards receive specific EDI/trauma-informed training and education so that they are better equipped to help members who are experiencing discrimination. 31% of respondents do not believe their HSA steward is equipped to provide adequate assistance.



Regular training, steward talks about how the HSA is working on creating safer workplaces.



More training for stewards, staff, and board on EDI work and trauma informed communication and relationship building.



Need more education and training on the matter starting with the top executives/board members all the way to the stewards and HSA members.

Recommendations

There needs to be more emphasis on prevention, less on policy. Change happens at the speed of trust. Employers need to invest resources (time, money and people) in building trusting relationships. This means that workload and working short issues absolutely need to be addressed.

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RECOMMENDATION ONE

Address failure of Respect in the Workplace policy and complaint processes.



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RECOMMENDATION TWO

Create targeted campaigns and bargaining proposals to address workplace discrimination that is part of systemic oppression.



38

RECOMMENDATION THREE

Commit to acts of solidarity: be an active bystander and address microaggressions.



38

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

Yes, more equity, decolonization and inclusion education... AND



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RECOMMENDATION FIVE

Review steward processes and access to JEDI expertise.



RECOMMENDATION ONE

Address failure of Respect in the Workplace policy and complaint processes

Members need to advocate for changes to respect in the workplace policies and governance in bargaining proposals. The union needs to work alongside members/groups who experience marginalization, push for more accountability in respectful workplace in bargaining.

Policies are not working, it is time try something different, alongside the current system. HSA would like to pilot restorative justice programs in some of the complaint processes. However, this requires a big culture shift, where individuals on both sides of a complaint are prepared to be humble, admit when they make mistakes, make apologies, be prepared to hear about negative impact, and to take responsibility to do better in pathways forward. This means letting go of defensiveness and any sense of entitlement to comfort. It is a long term aim to relate to each other in these ways.

RECOMMENDATION TWO

Create targeted campaigns and bargaining proposals to address workplace discrimination that is part of systemic oppression

HSA will work alongside the Indigenous Circle, Racial Justice Committee and diversity caucuses to brainstorm ways of addressing systemic harms from racism, ableism and transphobia in the workplace. These interconnected systems of oppression continue to cause harm, and as such need an intersectional approach. Questions these groups might consider include:

- ▶ How can the union advocate for more inclusion so that people who experience marginalization are hired and retained in workplaces?
- ▶ What changes are needed for the workplace to operate in ways that accept and value differences in ability and cultural/ethnic backgrounds, while also address the very real impacts of racism, transphobia and ableism?
- ▶ What are examples of equity seats in hiring and promoting that need to be piloted so that marginalized people have a chance at leadership?
- ▶ In which ways do staff shortages cause further inequities and discrimination in the workplace?
- ▶ How can the union advocate for these changes with government and in committees with the employer?

Wicked problems need multi-pronged, long-term approaches. One such example is pushing for recognition that experiences of oppression, such as racism, are occupational health and safety issues.

RECOMMENDATION THREE

Commit to acts of solidarity: be an active bystander and address microaggressions

We encourage all members practice being an active bystander. Being an active bystander includes some of the following actions:

- ▶ When safe to do so, could I **Distract** by starting a conversation with the person targeted, and create a safe barrier between them and the harasser?
- ▶ Could I **Delegate** by seeking assistance from someone else with more authority in the given setting?
- ▶ Could I **Document** by taking a video to give to the person targeted so they can decide how to use it on their journey to closure and healing?
- ▶ What about providing support after a **Delay**, asking the person targeted how they are doing after the incident has passed?
- ▶ Is it safe enough to be **Direct**, addressing the harasser and harassment directly and asserting that the person targeted deserves to be treated with respect?¹³

Different scenarios call for different approaches. Let's all take an active role in creating communities of care. It is essential that care is centred in the approaches we take to addressing microaggressions and discrimination in the workplace. Public takedowns, calling out, sometimes are necessary especially when up against institutional instances of oppression. However, when it is safe, calling each other in, taking the time to have conversations with people who have made comments or 'jokes' that are harmful is a powerful tool to creating transformative justice.¹⁴

RECOMMENDATION FOUR

Yes, more equity, decolonization and inclusion education... AND

Education is only one way forward towards creating equity and inclusion in the workplace. Inequities are caused by wicked problems. Wicked problems resist simple solutions, such as an educational workshop, as they are complex and interconnected to other systemic and nuanced issues. There are several reasons¹⁵ for this:

- ▶ Most EDI education is offered as stand-alone, one-off workshops that range from one hour to one day. Complex and wicked problems are not (un)learned well enough in this way of learning about inequities. The focus on awareness in anti-bias and such education does not translate into behavioural changes, and if not done well, can lead to further balkanization, or hostile fragmentation across social groups.
- ▶ Often billed as the panacea for inequitable workplaces and societies, it is clear that the rise of diversity training has not put an end to the systemic inequities that keep historically excluded groups from being hired, promoted, accepted and valued in their places of employment.

- ▶ The majority of EDI education is at the foundational or 101 level for those in the privileged categories. While foundations are critical, this level needs to be moved and advanced, and tailored to folks who experience marginalization.

Education should continue, but also different models, where there are expert facilitators and mentors who help shepherd the building of new skills. EDI should not remain at level 101 if we are to advance towards justice and as such more advanced training with prerequisites needs to be built.

Education needs to focus on disrupting privilege in a compassionate way that invites people to see themselves as part of a powerful collective, instead of individuals, and invites people to genuinely liberate themselves from the comforts of privilege for the collective well-being.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE

Review steward processes and access to JEDI expertise

The responses in the survey spoke about how there are inequities created when stewards are also supervisors. There is a conflict of interest in reporting workplace discrimination and harassment when the union representative is also the person who is contributing to the harms. Respondents also spoke about not having confidence in speaking with their stewards about discrimination for fear of lack of confidentiality, retaliation, trying to keep harmony in a team, and a request that stewards have education on how to manage instances of discrimination from the union.

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