

Niagara Region // January 2022

NIAGARA REGION STAFF DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION EXPERIENCES

Authors:

Jayzer Flores, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Intern, Niagara Region
Cassandra Ogunniyi, Diversity Equity and Inclusion Program Manager, Niagara Region
Shilini Hemalal, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Student, Niagara Region

Reviewed by:

Harroop Ahuja, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Intern, Niagara Region
Natalie Early, Director, Corporate Strategy and Innovation, Niagara Region
Kate Harold, Strategic Initiatives Coordinator, Public Health, Niagara Region
Jodie Middleton, Manager of Organizational Development and Talent Acquisition, Niagara Region

Special thanks to:

Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group

©Niagara Region Corporate Strategy and Innovation 2022

For more information, please contact:

Corporate Strategy and Innovation Division, Corporate Administration
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way
P.O. Box 1052
Thorold ON L2V 0A2
905-980-6000, 1-800-263-7215

Citation: Niagara Region Corporate Strategy and Innovation (2022). Niagara Region Staff Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Experiences. January 2022. Thorold, Ontario.



Table of Contents

NIAGARA REGION STAFF DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION EXPERIENCES	1
Executive Summary	1
Barriers.....	1
Discrimination.....	1
Reporting Incidents of Discrimination at the Region.....	1
DEI Training	1
Current Areas of Success	2
Conclusion	2
1.0 Introduction.....	3
2.0 Methodology.....	3
2.1 Sample.....	3
2.1.1 Focus Group Participant Selection.....	3
2.1.1 Focus Group Participants.....	4
2.1.3 Staff Survey Participants	5
2.2 Data Collection	5
2.2.1 Focus Group Data Collection Methods.....	5
2.2.2 Staff Survey Data Collection Methods.....	6
2.2.3 Data Confidentiality	6
2.3 Analysis	7
2.3.1 Focus Group Data Analysis.....	7
2.3.2 Staff Survey Data Analysis.....	7
3.0 Demographic Profile of Staff Respondents.....	8
3.1 Race or Ethnicity.....	8
3.2 Length of Time in Canada.....	10
3.3 Physical or Mental Health Challenges	10
3.4 Religion.....	14
3.5 Sexuality	15
3.6 Gender.....	16
4.0 Barriers related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	17
4.1 Discrimination	18
4.1.1 Race.....	18
4.1.2 Gender	20
4.1.3 Religion	21



4.1.4 Sexuality.....	23
4.1.5 Immigrant Status/Language Barriers.....	24
4.1.6 Age.....	25
4.1.7 Physical and Mental Health Challenges	26
4.1.8 Micro-aggressions and Lack of Diversity or Acceptance of Differences	26
4.2 Reporting	28
4.2.1 Fear.....	28
4.2.2 Lack of Allies or Representation.....	31
4.2.3 Not Taken Seriously or Unsatisfied with Outcome	32
4.3 DEI Training.....	34
5.0 Current Areas of Success.....	35
5.1 DEI Training Successes.....	36
5.2 Community Partners	37
5.3 Recent Initiatives	38
6.0 Conclusion.....	39
Appendix A: Focus Group Script and Questions – Staff.....	40
Appendix B: Focus Group Information and Consent Form	42
Appendix C: Staff Survey Introduction and Questions.....	43
Appendix D: Niagara Region Staff Survey DEI Scores	48

Tables

Table 1: Regional Staff Focus Group Participants	4
Table 2: Staff Survey Response Rates by Department.....	5
Table 3: Race or Ethnicity of staff survey respondents compared to Niagara and Ontario ..	8
Table 4: Physical and mental health challenges	10
Table 5: Staff religious or spiritual affiliation compared to Niagara	14
Table 6: Staff responses for sexuality	15
Table 7: Gender identity of staff respondents	16
Table 8: Staff Survey Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Scores.....	48

Figures

Figure 1: Race/Ethnicity by Management Level *categories are not mutually exclusive.....	9
Figure 2: Physical or mental health challenges * categories are not mutually exclusive....	12
Figure 3: Physical or mental health challenge by Department	13
Figure 4: Physical or mental health challenge for people leader or non-people leaders....	13
Figure 5: Gender Identity by Department.....	17



Executive Summary

The Niagara Region¹ and the 12 Local Area Municipalities joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities in 2020 and are currently working towards developing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan. To inform the Action Plan, Niagara Region staff conducted 17 focus groups with 110 staff members across 6 diversity categories, and received 1670 completed surveys out of 3884 Niagara Region staff, a response rate of 43%. This report provides a summary of the challenges and barriers faced by staff in relation to DEI, as well as some current areas of success.

Barriers

This report describes five types of barriers that staff described, experiences of discrimination, challenges with reporting incidents of discrimination at the Region, barriers relating to training, communication challenges, and systemic barriers.

Discrimination

Various types of bias and discrimination were discussed by staff, including discrimination based on age, gender, immigrant status, language, disability, race, religion, and sexuality. These examples included micro-aggressions, racially charged or biased language, comments, refusal of service, and staff accommodations that are perceived to support discrimination.

Reporting Incidents of Discrimination at the Region

There were three main reasons participants provided for not reporting incidents of discrimination or bias at the Region.

- Fear of reporting which included the concern of repercussions, such as job loss, severed relationships with coworkers, or loss of access to services
- Lack of allies or representation
- Lack of satisfaction with past outcomes which led to disappointment and distrust in the process

DEI Training

Participants expressed that there was lack of time to complete training, particularly for staff who work in front line positions. Within the region, there was also a lack of knowledge about available DEI related trainings, limited space in available trainings, and the need for training to go beyond online or one time modules. Participants outlined that in some

¹ Note: Niagara Region with a capital R refers to the Regional Municipality of Niagara as an organization, while Niagara region without a capital R refers to the geographical area of Niagara.



instances, there was a lack of support from managers. Largely, people who were already interested in participating in DEI related training were the ones that attended current training opportunities.

Current Areas of Success

Many focus group participants had joined diversity related trainings at the Region or elsewhere. For the most part, staff were satisfied with the trainings received and welcomed the opportunity to open the trainings to more people. A number of community partners were listed as working with Niagara Region to implement successful DEI related programs or supporting diverse populations. These partners are included in a compiled list of over 200 diversity related organizations in Niagara. Focus group participants mentioned recent initiatives associated with Niagara Region that were successful. Supporting community partners that are advancing DEI efforts in the region identifies priorities of the organization and helps set the tone for a positive work culture.

Conclusion

Despite the numerous barriers and types of discrimination faced by staff, there is an optimism that current successes such as training opportunities, and community based programs are the start of a positive culture shift towards increasing DEI within Niagara.

The information found in the staff reported will be combined with the Environmental Scan, the Community DEI Experiences Report, and the Opportunities for Change Report to inform the creation of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan. The Action Plan will be created with input from internal staff, the Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee, as well as other community members.



1.0 Introduction

On September 18, 2020, Niagara Region and the 12 Local Area Municipalities joined the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. In response to joining the Coalition, the Region agreed to develop a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Action Plan. One of the steps to create the plan is to gather data from Niagara Region staff in order to get a diverse range of perspectives regarding the current barriers, successes, and recommended opportunities moving forward. Staff feedback on experiences of discrimination, incident reporting, training relevant to DEI, and current successes was collected through focus groups and a staff survey.

2.0 Methodology

DEI staff worked with a group of employee representatives that make up the DEI Working Group to develop the focus group questions and consent form. The DEI staff Working Group as well as staff from TalentMap, the company hired to conduct the survey, worked together to develop the survey questions. The methodology describes the samples for the focus group and survey, data collection methods, confidentiality, and data analysis.

2.1 Sample

2.1.1 Focus Group Participant Selection

Selection for staff focus groups were based on the six demographic categories asked on an employee engagement survey conducted in November to December 2020 with the addition of a group focused on Francophone employees, in the following categories.

- Race/Ethnicity
- Born Outside of Canada
- Gender
- 2SLGBTQQA+
- Disabilities
- Religious/Spiritual Affiliation
- Francophone

Communications went out to all staff inviting individuals to participate. Interested staff completed a form indicating which diversity categories of focus groups they wanted to join as well as providing demographic information, and their department affiliation. DEI staff used the completed forms to schedule focus groups, with the aim to have broad representation from across the organization in each group.



In addition to specific focus groups pertaining to particular demographics, several focus groups were conducted with particular departments/divisions within the Region. One was with the Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Interest Group, staff representatives from across the Region that are champions for DEI. The second was from staff who volunteered from across the organization, but were not available to attend the time designated for the group related to their specific demographics.

DEI staff worked with the Corporate Leadership Team to identify some divisions that needed a different approach to gather their input. Seniors Services and Children’s Services were identified as requiring in-person focus groups as many staff in these areas are front-line workers with limited time and access to technology during their shift to attend a virtual focus group session. Through working with leadership in Senior Services, two Long Term Care Sites were identified and three focus groups were conducted with each site, one with management, and two with frontline staff. Through working with Children’s Services, two focus groups were identified, one with Child Care supervisors and one with Early Childhood Educators, both with representation from across all Regionally-operated Child Care centres.

2.1.1 Focus Group Participants

A total of 17 focus groups were conducted with 110 Niagara Region staff members. The following table demonstrates the diversity category and total participants per category. Participants were chosen due to identifying as part of the category, each focus group was centered around a specific diversity category, however individuals participating in one focus group may also identify as members of other diversity categories (see table 1).

Table 1: Regional Staff Focus Group Participants

Diversity category	Number of focus groups	Number of participants
Race/Ethnicity	1	7
Born Outside of Canada	1	5
Gender	1	6
2SLGBTQQA+	1	5
Disabilities	1	3
Religious/Spiritual Affiliation	1	5
Francophone	1	4
Department/Division Based	10	75
TOTAL	17	110



2.1.3 Staff Survey Participants

The Niagara Region staff survey was called the Welcoming and Inclusive Workplace Survey, and was launched on September 20, 2021 to a total of 3884 active employees. The survey closed on October 8, 2021. The survey was voluntary and confidential, a total of 1670 surveys were completed, a 43% overall response rate. When front line and operations based staff are excluded from the response rate, it increases to 67%, as front line and operations based staff often lack the opportunity and access to technology required to complete online surveys. See table two for the breakdown of responses by department.

Table 2: Staff Survey Response Rates by Department

Departments	Surveys Sent	Surveys completed	Response Rate (RR)	RR w/o operations
Community Services	1806	757	42%	64%
Corporate Administration	101	80	79%	79%
Corporate Services	257	182	71%	71%
Governance	3	2	67%	67%
Planning and Development Services	46	38	83%	83%
Public Health & Emergency Services	1175	424	36%	66%
Public Works	496	187	38%	62%
Total	3884	1670	43%	67%

2.2 Data Collection

2.2.1 Focus Group Data Collection Methods

Focus groups were conducted with 110 participants, either through Zoom or in-person. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all efforts were made to conduct the focus groups online in order to ensure that relevant public health and safety measures were followed. Accommodations were made to ensure that individuals that required a laptop to participate were able to access one. Due to time and technology challenges, focus groups with Long-Term Care and Regional Child Care staff were conducted in-person with physical distancing and masking in order to effectively reach and gather input from front-line staff or community members. The remaining focus groups took place virtually using Zoom.

Focus groups lasted between 30-90 minutes in length, with a designated facilitator and administrative support. The role of the facilitator was to ask questions, listen, and ensure all were comfortable and had a chance to share. The role of administrative support was to take notes and provide logistical support to the facilitator. Participants were asked a series of prepared questions in each of the focus groups. Facilitators also developed prompts in



cases where conversation was not generated from the initial question. Facilitators asked follow-up questions when necessary to probe on a topic that would benefit from more detail. See Appendix A for a copy of the focus group script and questions. The questions were modified slightly to be relevant to each type of group.

Because the focus groups were conducted primarily online, DEI staff used additional software to help facilitate the conversation. Specifically, DEI staff integrated the use of the software, Mentimeter. Mentimeter is an interactive presentation software that allows presenters to effectively engage with the audience, using real-time voting and feedback, while remaining anonymous. This allowed DEI staff to gauge the feelings of Regional staff with regards to DEI in a way that made them safe and comfortable, to encourage participation and generate further discussion. Ideas written down in Mentimeter allowed DEI staff to develop themes in real-time which were then explored in greater depth through conversation. DEI staff used the transcription feature on Zoom to transcribe the interviews and reviewed the transcripts after each focus group session to ensure the transcription accurately captured the conversation.

2.2.2 Staff Survey Data Collection Methods

The survey was promoted by email and through internal staff newsletters to encourage participation. The survey was expected to take approximately ten minutes to complete. All staff were sent a personal link to take the survey. This allowed the company hired to administer the survey, TalentMap, to determine what responses came from specific departments and divisions. See Appendix C for the full list of survey questions and information provided with the questions. All collected data was provided to the DEI staff in aggregated form, which could be filtered and sorted through multiple variables of interest to view trends. Data was not revealed in samples of less than five people to protect anonymity and remove the potential for identification of individuals.

2.2.3 Data Confidentiality

DEI staff and Niagara Region are committed to maintaining confidentiality at each stage of the data collection process. Focus group participants were asked to sign a consent form which outlined important information surrounding the focus group including the purpose of the research, how confidentiality would be maintained before, during, and after the focus groups, how the information would be used to inform future direction, and other privacy considerations. Consent was also explicitly asked for prior to staff survey participation. All survey responses were confidential. See Appendix B for a copy of the focus group consent form. Only DEI staff have access to focus group and survey data in a restricted access, secure, shared folder. DEI staff are committed to ensuring that no names, or any other self-identifying information from the focus groups will be used in any reports, references, presentations or material shared with anyone outside of the DEI staff.



2.3 Analysis

2.3.1 Focus Group Data Analysis

Transcripts from the focus groups and Mentimeter data were downloaded and saved in a secure location on the Niagara Region server. Transcripts were cleaned by DEI staff and any additional information from Mentimeter was added to the transcript. DEI staff analyzed the data using the qualitative analysis software NVivo, version 12. Analysis of interview data was primarily inductive, and transcripts were reviewed with material pulled out for further analysis, beginning with open coding, which became more focused and resulted in categorical coding.

A coding framework was developed by DEI staff. Data was coded with further categories created when necessary. There was a total of 81 different codes. Throughout the presentation of qualitative material, names were removed, and potentially identifying details about individuals' identities were omitted to ensure confidentiality. The rest of the document uses selected interview quotes, with context added where necessary.

2.3.2 Staff Survey Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis on demographic data was conducted to determine the number and percentage of people that identified in each answer category. For some questions, participants were able to select multiple responses. This may lead to an overestimation of the proportion of people who answered a certain way, as single respondents may be counted separately for each response they gave.

Answers to demographic questions were analyzed through disaggregated proportions based on several variables. Answers were disaggregated by seven variable categories for comparison. These variable categories included: department; length of service; union or non-union employee; part-time or full-time; regular or temporary staff or student; being a people leader or non-people leader; and by management level. In the staff demographic profile section the notable variables are described.

Similarly, data on incident reporting, and potential reasons for not reporting, were analyzed through descriptive statistics that presented the proportion of people who selected each possible response, using the organizational total of responses as the denominator.

Another way in which staff survey data was analyzed was through heat maps. The survey presented seven DEI related statements which participants were asked to state their level of agreement with on a five-point Likert scale, disagree and somewhat disagree were grouped into unfavourable responses, whereas agree and somewhat agree were grouped into favorable responses. Neutral was left as answered. Answers were presented as a



percentage with an overall average, and answers to each question separately. The answers of various demographic groups were compared to the average responses, to reveal patterns and areas of strength or gaps.

3.0 Demographic Profile of Staff Respondents

The DEI staff survey asked six demographic related questions. The data summary for each question is provided in this section with numbers and percentages. The data was also analyzed by seven variable categories, with key findings of patterns or contrast described.

3.1 Race or Ethnicity

In response to the question, “which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic identity?”, 1283 of staff identified as White (77%). While 269 (16%) identified as Racial Minorities, 46 (3%) as Indigenous, and 147 (9%) preferred not to answer (see table 3). Staff could select more than one answer. Compared to the 2016 Census, 9% of people in Niagara identified as a racial minority and 2.8% identified as Indigenous. In Ontario, 21% of the population identify as a racial minority, and 2.8% identify as Indigenous.²

Table 3: Race or Ethnicity of staff survey respondents compared to Niagara and Ontario

Race or Ethnicity	Staff Survey #	Staff Survey %	Niagara Region #	Niagara Region %	Ontario #	Ontario %
White	1,283	76.8%	399,345	91.1%	9,356,575	70.7%
Racial Minority	269	16.1%	38,810	8.9%	2,735,170	20.7%
Prefer not to answer	147	8.8%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Prefer to self-describe	84	5.0%	2,455	0.6%	226,555	1.7%
Black	49	2.9%	7,870	1.8%	627,715	4.7%
South Asian	47	2.8%	6,170	1.4%	1,150,415	8.7%
Indigenous	46	2.8%	12,250	2.8%	374,395	2.8%
South-East Asian	28	1.7%	2,050	0.5%	133,855	1.0%
Metis	24	1.4%	4,340	1.0%	120,585	0.9%
East Asian	24	1.4%	12,130	2.8%	1,185,990	9.0%
First Nations	21	1.3%	7,200	1.6%	236,680	1.8%
Latin American	21	1.3%	4,620	1.1%	195,950	1.5%

² Indigenous peoples are underrepresented in the Census due to lack of trust of Canadian government, migration between geographical locations and unclear definitions of different Aboriginal Identity Groups within the Census. Statistics Canada, Census Profiles (2016)



Race or Ethnicity	Staff Survey #	Staff Survey %	Niagara Region #	Niagara Region %	Ontario #	Ontario %
Arab	11	0.7%	2,570	0.6%	210,435	1.6%
Pacific Islander	4	0.2%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Inuk (Inuit)	1	0.1%	105	0.0%	3,830	0.0%
West Asian	1	0.1%	860	0.2%	154,670	1.2%
Total	1,670		438,160		13,242,160	

When looking at trends in relation to race or ethnicity, the percentage of racial minorities decreases as length of service increases (26% for employees under 1 year, 19% for 1-4 years, 11% for 5-9 years, 13% for 10-14 years and 7% for 15 or more years). There were more racial minorities in part time positions (24%) compared to full time employees (15%). Similarly, temporary staff included a higher percentage of racial minorities (23%) than regular staff (15%).

There are more White or Caucasian people within the people leaders (82%) compared to non-people leaders (76%). People leaders are all staff at the Region that have other staff report to them, including Managers, Directors, Commissioners, this group can also be referred to as leadership or management. Fewer people leaders identified as racial minorities (14%) or Indigenous (2%), compared to non-people leaders, where 16% identified as racial minorities and 3% as Indigenous (see figure 1).

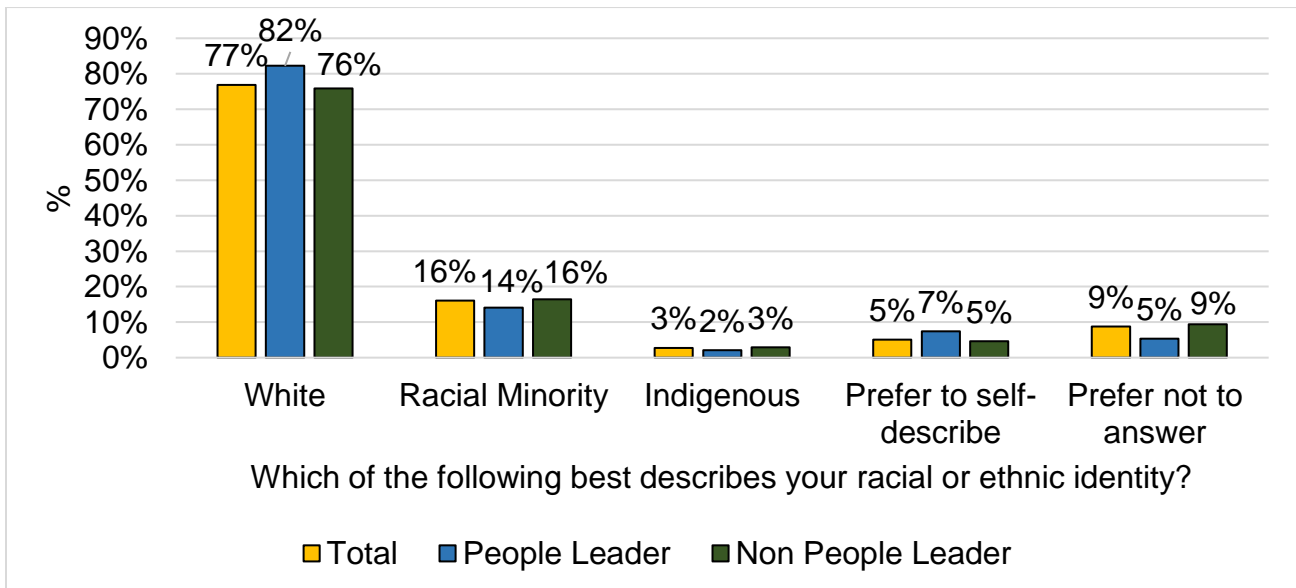


Figure 1: Race/Ethnicity by Management Level *categories are not mutually exclusive



3.2 Length of Time in Canada

When measuring length of time lived in Canada, 81% of staff (1356) have lived in Canada 26 or more years, while 14% (227) have lived in Canada 25 years or less, 4% (63) preferred not to answer. Although not exactly the same, according to the 2016 Census, 82% of people in Niagara were born in Canada.

When looking at cross analysis, 27% of part time employees had lived in Canada for 25 years or less, compared to 11% of full time employees. Similarly, temporary staff had a higher number of people living in Canada for 25 years or less (28%) compared with regular staff (11%). Regarding leadership positions, 5% of people leaders have lived in Canada for 25 or less year, compared to 90% who have lived in Canada 26 years or more.

3.3 Physical or Mental Health Challenges

The staff survey ask if employees had lived with any of the following, which was a list of physical and mental health challenges. They were asked to self-identify and not necessarily if they had received a diagnosis based on that challenge. Throughout this report, these challenges will be referred to as disabilities, even if they are undiagnosed. Of the 654 staff (39%) that identified that they live with one or more physical or mental health challenge, the most common was mental health challenges (64%, 25% of all participants). Other prevalent areas were chronic conditions (33%, 13% of all participants), and learning challenges (15%, 6% of all participants) (see table 4 and figure 2). Staff could select more than one option. Mental health challenges have been exacerbated due to COVID-19, especially as the pandemic continues to have a toll on front line workers. In the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disabilities 29% of people in the St. Catharines-Niagara Census Metropolitan Area had a disability.³ The top disabilities within that survey were pain, flexibility, mobility, mental health, and seeing.

Table 4: Physical and mental health challenges

Do you live with any of the following	Number	Percentage of all employees	Percentage of people with a disability
Mental health challenge (anxiety, depression, schizophrenia)	420	25%	64%
Chronic condition (pain, epilepsy, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, multiple sclerosis)	215	13%	33%

³ The St. Catharines-Niagara Census Metropolitan Area excludes Grimsby and parts of West Lincoln. Statistics Canada, Canadian Survey on Disability, Table: 13-10-0750-01 & 13-10-0374-01 (2017)



Do you live with any of the following	Number	Percentage of all employees	Percentage of people with a disability
Learning challenges (dyslexia, attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder)	96	6%	15%
Hearing loss	60	4%	9%
Vision loss	43	3%	7%
Addiction (alcohol, drugs, gambling)	41	2%	6%
Physical condition (cerebral palsy, spinal cord, injury, amputation)	30	2%	5%
Other	32	2%	5%
Developmental (autism, down syndrome)	18	1%	3%
Total staff living with a physical or mental health challenge	654	39%	100%
Prefer not to answer	196	12%	N/A
None of the above	820	49%	N/A
Total	1670		654



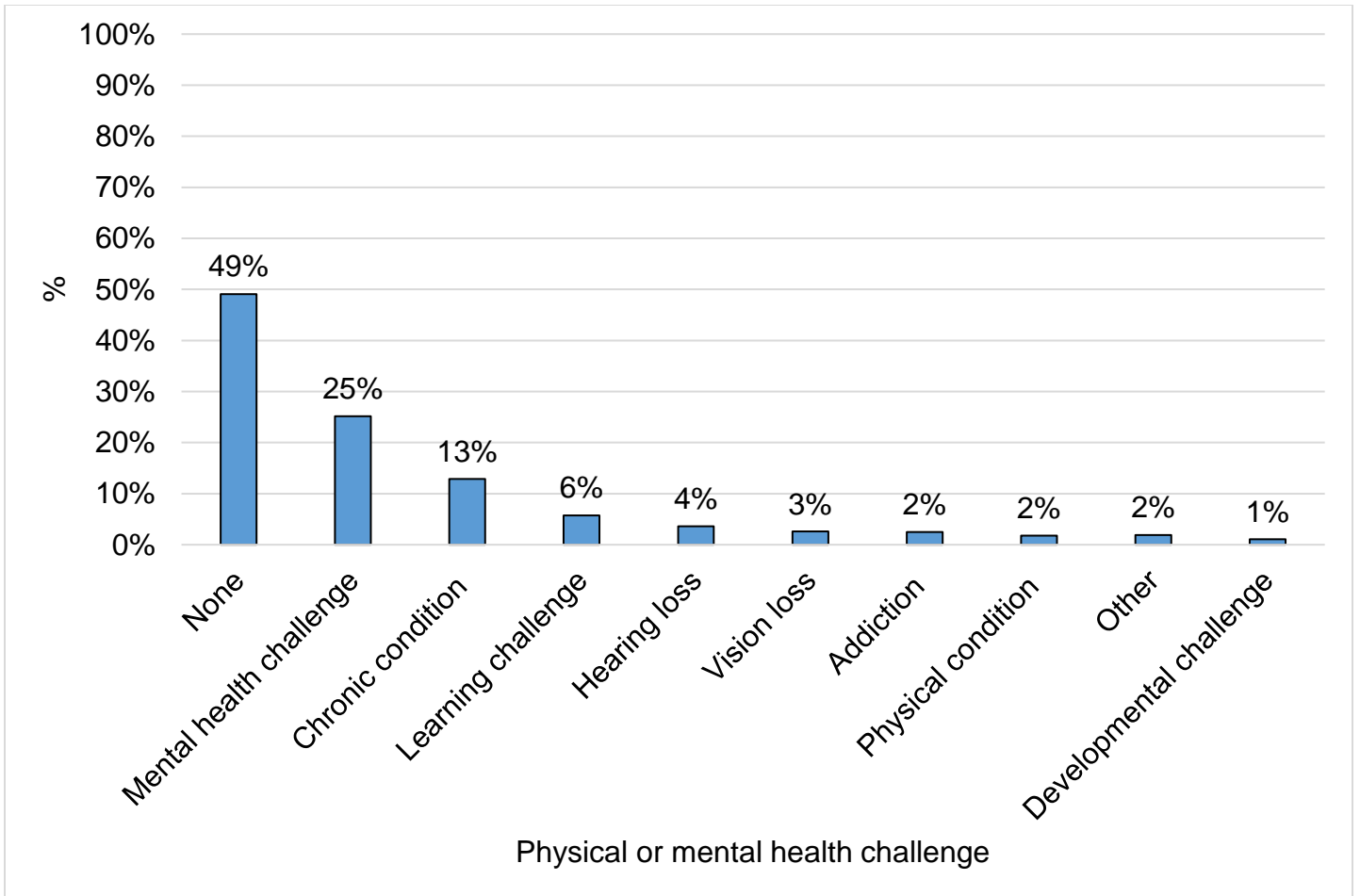


Figure 2: Physical or mental health challenges * categories are not mutually exclusive

When looking at disabilities comparing departments, Corporate Administration has the lowest percentage of people living with a physical or mental health challenge (29%), compared to Public Works, which has the highest percentage of people living with a physical or mental health challenge (43%), followed by Community Services (41%) (see figure 3).



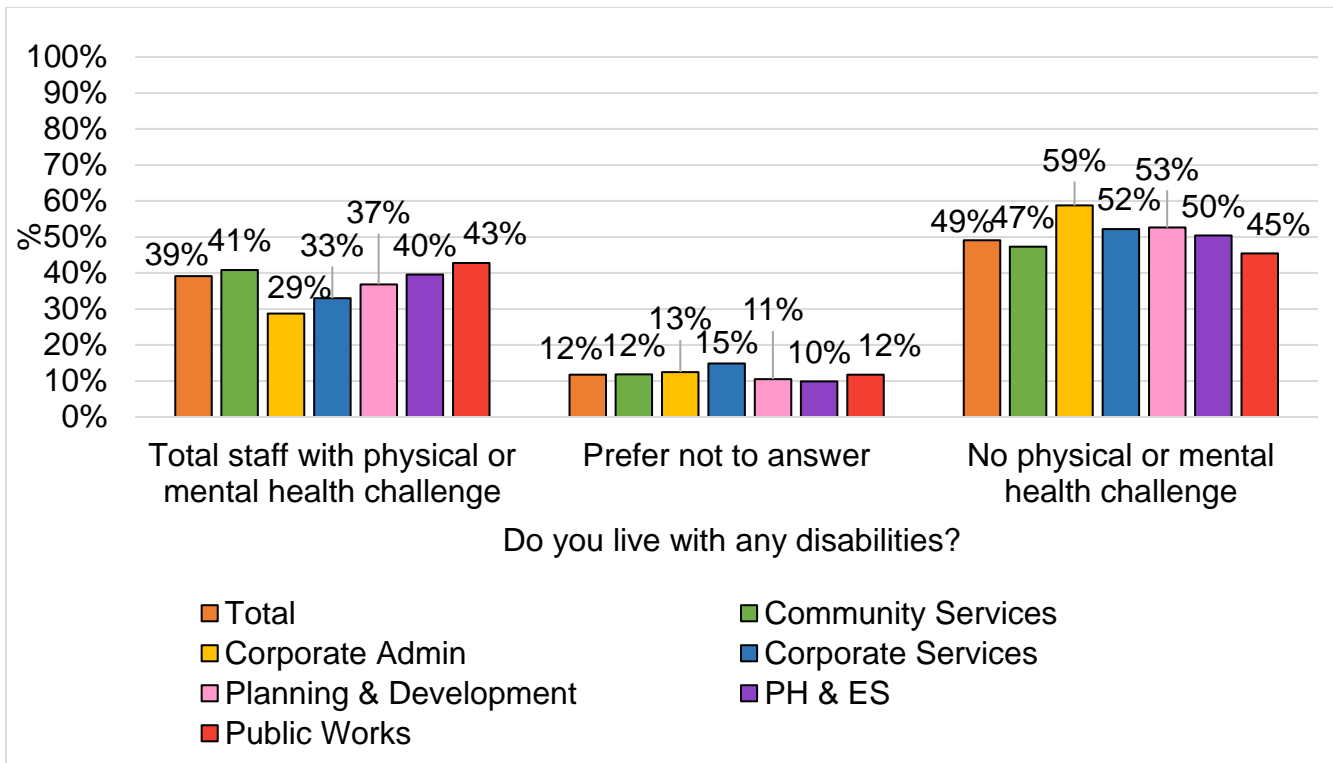


Figure 3: Physical or mental health challenge by Department

More non-people leaders (41%) experience a physical or mental health challenge compared to people leaders (31%) (see figure 4).

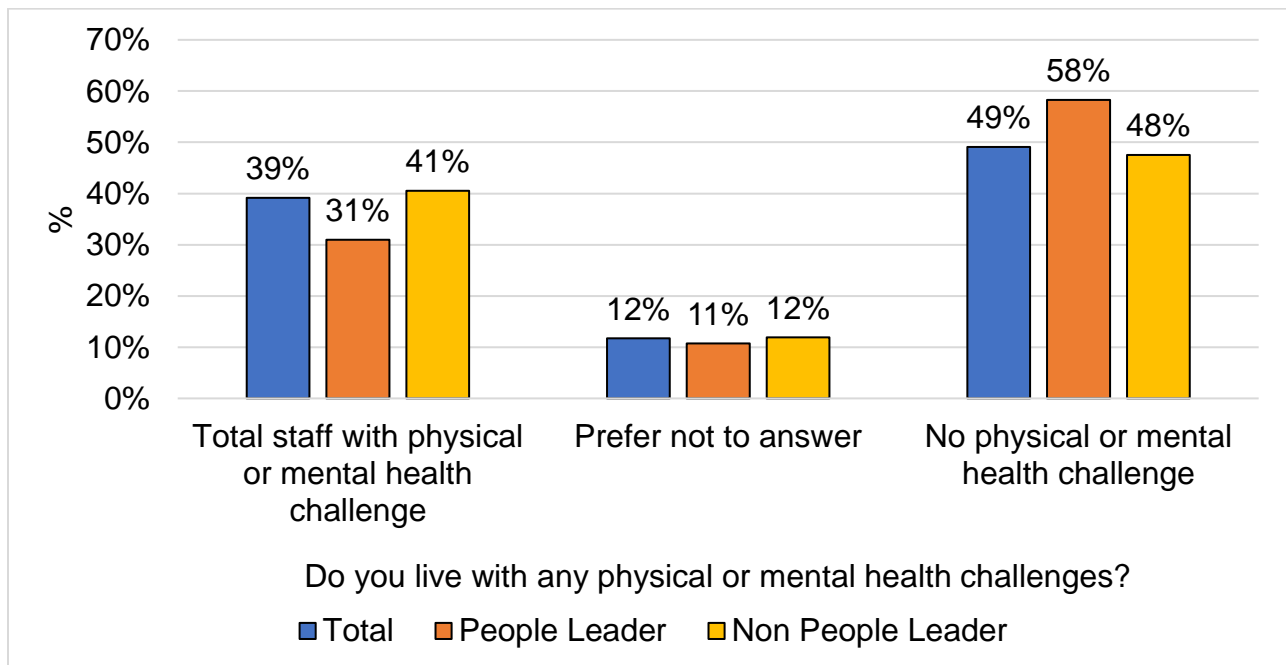


Figure 4: Physical or mental health challenge for people leader or non-people leaders



3.4 Religion

In response to the question, “Please indicate your religious or spiritual affiliation”, the highest percentage of staff identified as Christian (697, 42%) (see table 5), 28% had no religious affiliation, 15% preferred not to answer, 5% identified as Atheist, and 92 (6%) were a Religious Minority, which included Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism, Wiccans, and those of Indigenous spirituality. The responses to ‘other’ included Pagan, Agnostic, Taoist, Orthodox, Jehovah’s Witness, and/or a mix of beliefs. Participants could select more than one answer. The 2011 Household survey is the most recent Niagara wide data source for religion. It reports 75% of Niagara residents as Christian, 23% with no religion, and 2% with religious minority affiliations, including Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, and Aboriginal Traditional Religion (see table 5 for the full list).

Table 5: Staff religious or spiritual affiliation compared to Niagara

Religious or Spiritual Affiliation	Staff Survey Number	Staff Survey Percentage	Niagara Region Number	Niagara Region Percentage
Christian	697	41.7%	286,090	74.5%
Atheist	90	5.4%	310	0.1%
Buddhist	20	1.2%	1,565	0.4%
Muslim	17	1.0%	4,275	1.1%
Hindu	15	0.9%	885	0.2%
Indigenous Spirituality	14	0.8%	185	0.0%
Wiccan	12	0.7%	215	0.1%
Sikh	8	0.5%	205	0.1%
Jewish	6	0.4%	1,025	0.3%
Religious Minority	92	5.5%	8,355	2.2%
No religious affiliation	466	27.9%	88,355	23.0%
Prefer not to answer	254	15.2%	N/A	N/A
Other	106	6.3%	860	0.2%
Total	1670		383,965	

The percentage of Atheists, religious minorities, or those with no religious affiliation decrease as length of service increases, 17% of people employed at the Region for under a year are religious minorities, compared to 6% of those at the Region for 20 or more years. The opposite trend is seen for those with a Christian affiliation. A lower percentage of religious minorities were identified as people leaders (3%) compared to non-people leaders (6%).



In terms of departments, Community Services and Corporate Services had the highest percentage of religious minorities (7% each), while Public Health and Emergency Services has the highest percentage of Christians (44%), and Corporate Administration has the highest percentage of people with no religious affiliation (35%). Planning and Development and Public Works have the lowest percentage of Christians (37%), while neither Corporate Administration nor Planning & Development have any staff that completed the survey that identify as a religious minority.

3.5 Sexuality

When asked “How do you identify in terms of your sexuality?”, 118 employees (7%) identified as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, including Aromantic, Asexual, Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Pansexual, Queer, Questioning, and Two-Spirit (see table 6). The majority of staff identified as heterosexual (n=1227, 73%), while 255 (15%) preferred not to answer. There is no provincial or regional data on sexual orientation.

Table 6: Staff responses for sexuality

Sexuality	Staff Survey Number	Staff Survey Percentage
Heterosexual	1227	73.5%
Bisexual	43	2.6%
Asexual	24	1.4%
Pansexual	15	0.9%
Gay	10	0.6%
Queer	9	0.5%
Aromantic	8	0.5%
Questioning	6	0.4%
Lesbian	3	0.2%
Two-Spirit	0	0.0%
Prefer to self-describe	31	1.9%
Prefer not to disclose	255	15.3%
LGBTQ2S+	118	7.1%
Total	1670	

Similarly to results seen across other diversity categories, there were less members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community in full time positions (6%) compared to part time (10%) or as people leaders (4%) compared with non-people leaders (8%). Community Services (4%, n=65), Public Health and Emergency Services (1%, n=25), and Corporate Services (1%,



n=11) have the highest percentage of 2SLGBTQ+ employees, while the other departments have less than 1% of employees identifying as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

3.6 Gender

In response to the question “How do you identify in terms of your gender?”, 1153 (69%) were female, 351 (21%) were male, 85 (5%) were cisgender,⁴ 108 (6%) preferred not to answer, and 11 (1%) were gender diverse, including people who identified as non-binary, questioning, transgender, transmasculine, transfeminine, and two-spirit (see table 7). Respondents could select more than one answer. In comparison, based on the Region’s HR records, 69% of staff identify as female, 31% identify as male and 1 person identified in another way. Therefore there was a lower percentage of males that completed the survey compared to the overall work force.

Table 7: Gender identity of staff respondents

Gender	Staff Survey Number	Staff Survey Percentage
Female	1153	69.0%
Male	351	21.0%
Prefer not to disclose	108	6.5%
Cisgender	85	5.1%
Gender diverse	11	0.7%
Non-binary	7	0.4%
Prefer to self-describe	7	0.4%
Questioning	1	0.1%
Transgender	1	0.1%
Transmasculine	1	0.1%
Two-Spirit	1	0.1%
Transfeminine	0	0.0%
Total	1670	

Community Services has the highest percentage of females (82%), while Public Works has the highest percentage of males (53%) (see figure 5). Gender diverse peoples were not widely represented across the organization. Public Health and Emergency Services had the highest percentage of gender diverse individuals (2%).

⁴ Cisgender means not transgender, cisgender people have a current gender that matches the sex they were identified with at birth.



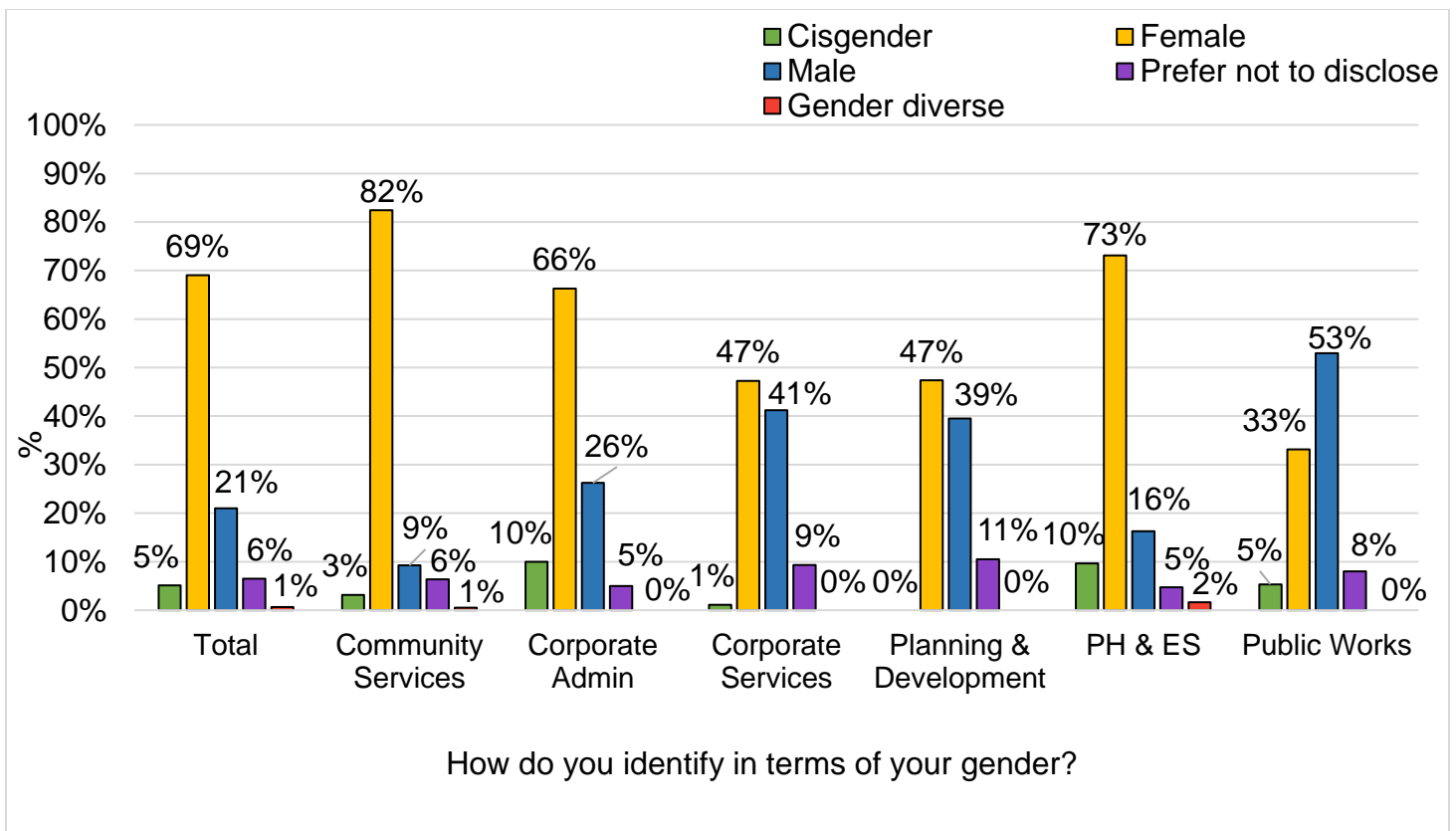


Figure 5: Gender Identity by Department

Though the proportion of females working at the Region was the highest across all job types (including people leaders and non-people leaders), a higher proportion of people leaders are men (32%) compared to the proportion of non-people leaders that are men (19%). The 2016 Census only had two categories for sex, in Niagara 51.6% of the population was female and 48.4% was male.

4.0 Barriers related to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Understanding the current barriers related to DEI in Niagara was one of the main goals of the focus groups and survey. In order to develop effective solutions and a plan for implementation, it is important to develop a better understanding of the current barriers. The main barriers that will be discussed are in relation to discrimination, reporting, lack of training, communication challenges, and systemic barriers. The discussion focuses on staff experiences, which includes experiences within the organization, with colleagues, as well as with clients, community partners, or residents. The experiences can be those personally experienced, or witnessed, and include considerations relating to service delivery. However, more details regarding barriers to service delivery and access to services are found in the complimentary report, “Community DEI Experiences Report”.



4.1 Discrimination

“Have you witnessed or experienced anything that you would label as exclusion, discrimination, or another barrier?” was asked by the focus group facilitators to better understand experiences of discrimination and exclusion. Participants were provided with a glossary of terms prior to the focus groups, which included the definition of discrimination as “The treatment or consideration of people based on class or category rather than individual merit, which can be used to privilege or to disadvantage particular groups or individuals.”

Discrimination within the organization manifested in many different forms, including.

- Age
- Gender
- Immigrant Status
- Income
- Language
- Disability
- Race
- Religion
- Sexuality

The most referenced among these were discrimination based on race, immigrant status/language, gender, religion, and sexuality. This section touches upon all of the types of discrimination mentioned except income. Analysis of the seven DEI related statement on the staff survey compared to the demographic variables revealed areas of higher and lower levels of agreement to the statements between demographic groups, which can be considered for future investigation and potential improvement.

4.1.1 Race

Discrimination based on race was the most referenced type of discrimination in the staff focus groups. This includes racially charged language, comments, residents refusing to be served by certain groups of staff, and responses by managers that were perceived to be supporting discrimination.

Regional employees sometimes face racism which can impede their ability to perform their job effectively. The staff survey and focus groups shared that clients sometimes refuse to see or be served by certain service providers because they are perceived to be of a specific racial background. Responding to various incidents or ongoing racism is difficult for management, who make different accommodations. Some staff commented that the accommodations themselves could be considered or perceived to be supporting the



racism of the clients or community members, by not standing against the specific incidents.

For instance, some staff indicated that there were specific residents that refused to be cared for by people of colour, in order to accommodate this staff would be moved to another area to work for that shift, or longer term. On one specific occasion an employee described a conversation with their people leader when they were being requested to serve a specific resident, due to “being tanned just enough” since they knew the resident would not complain. The employee stated that they refused to serve the resident because they believed the rationale behind why they were chosen was discriminatory.

Multiple visible minority participants who work for the Region expressed several instances of racism, including problematic, racially-charged language and comments by co-workers and community members.

“Someone made a comment about affirmative action, kind of mocking affirmative action. I just think that’s really inappropriate because someone may not understand the lived experiences of people of colour and why those policies are in place.”

“I think other comments with regards to race, like using certain language, certain words. Like you can’t use the N word in a meeting but they will maybe quote a client who’s used that...again, it’s very emotionally charged and it doesn’t create a safe space.”

One participant highlighted that racial minorities may not fully understand the severity of the issue because racism might be happening behind closed doors, when employees believe visible minorities are not present.

“As a racially ambiguous person I can be white passing. Sometimes people feel more comfortable saying things in front of me than they would have if someone had more melanin in their skin for example.”

In the staff survey, people who identified as Arab, Black, East Asian, and First Nations had lower levels of agreement to the statements surrounding DEI at the Region. The statement these groups had the lowest level of agreement with was “People in my team work effectively with each other regardless of our differences”, with Black (64%) and First Nations (55%) people having the lowest levels of agreement, compared to the organizational average of 84% agreement. See Appendix D for the description of the Niagara Region DEI Survey scores for the organization.



East Asians had the lowest level of agreement to the statements, “My immediate manager works effectively with people in my team, regardless of individual differences” (65%, organizational average 85%), and “My immediate manager creates an inclusive work environment where I feel heard, respected and valued” (65%, organizational average 79%).

Black employees had the lowest levels of agreement to the statements, “Diverse identities, ideas, and ways of thinking and working are valued at my organization” (54%, organizational average 69%), and “Senior leaders in our organization lead by example to promote a respectful and inclusive workplace” (53%, organizational average 70%). On the other hand, some minority groups, such as Latin American and South Asian had higher rates of agreement than the organizational average to the DEI statements.

4.1.2 Gender

Gender was among the most prevalent issues discussed and brought forward. Issues related to gender were varied. Participants in focus groups touched on important issues related to pay equity, sexism, and community reception.

Related to pay equity, participants expressed a gap at the Region as an organization, and society more generally, between traditionally male positions and traditionally female positions. This largely alluded to gaps in prestige and salary ranges for positions. As a note, the Region monitors pay equity and examines differences between roles. However, larger structural differences remain in society and impact gender differences in pay.

Beliefs and assumptions about norms of masculinity and femininity are more pervasive in some divisions typically dominated by one gender. This can often lead to feelings of exclusion and impacting employees’ abilities to provide services. For instance in some female dominated areas, male employees were told, “*You’re a man, you shouldn’t do that*” by community members. Family members can be reluctant to allow their loved ones to be cared for by male staff in Long Term Care and Child Care Centres.

“I think we’ve got some old school pockets maybe in the organization where there are still assumptions about what real men do and what real women do or are. I think it’s still a thing that needs to be dismantled.”

Staff participants in other parts of the Region highlighted that some departments can be described as a bit of a “*boys club*” not only being characterized as being heavily male-dominated but also through experiences of misogyny, exclusion of different genders in social interactions, and the devaluing of ideas generated by gender minorities. Women in heavily male-dominated pockets of the organization expressed concern over problematic



comments and actions targeted towards them based on their gender. These participants expressed feeling left out daily by not being invited to certain discussions or excluded from discussing certain subjects (e.g. sports). Gender barriers were apparent in some team meetings as well. Participants expressed that ideas generated by women were more likely to be devalued and often shut down, yet accepted when men presented those same ideas.

Exclusion based on gender not only targets women, in some female dominated work spaces, male staff felt uncomfortable, particularly when there was “shop talk”, crude remarks, and jokes that targeted men.

Transgender or non-binary staff also expressed experiencing barriers. Some staff participants highlighted being misgendered frequently while working with community members or colleagues. While many Regional buildings have gender-neutral bathroom options, some buildings do not, or the ones that exist are located far from some staff work stations.

There is belief that gender barriers and sentiments persist even if there is an outward appearance of progression, such as when women enter into leadership positions. Participants expressed that women in leadership positions and Regional Council are more likely to face scrutiny, be targeted, and insulted in-person and online.

In the staff survey, people who selected multiple gender identifiers, those that indicated they were cisgender (the same gender as the sex they were identified with at birth), and those that preferred not to disclose had lower levels of agreement to the DEI related questions. For instance, 43% of people who preferred not to disclose their gender identifiers agree that “diverse identities, ideas, and ways of thinking and working are valued at my organization”, compared to 50% of cisgender, and 57% of people with multiple selections, 71% of females, and 72% of males. People who made multiple selections as their gender identifiers had the lowest level of agreement that “Senior leaders in our organization lead by example to promote a respectful and inclusive workplace”, with 29% agreeing, 52% of cisgender people agreed, 54% of people who preferred not to disclose, 71% of females, and 75% of males.

4.1.3 Religion

Religion was identified as another prevalent issue in the focus groups discussions. Many participants highlighted the importance of religious accommodations in ensuring inclusion. Although the Region has an Anti-harassment policy that includes discrimination based on religious, there is no explicit policy on religious accommodation. This leads some staff to believe that the Region as whole is not effectively responding to religious accommodation requests since discretion is left to distinct work areas, and ultimately managers.



“Management allows us to recognize our cultural, religious background, as long as it doesn’t interfere with our work.”

Partly, issues arising from religious accommodations are due to a general assumption that everybody is Christian, according to participants.

“There is a general assumption that everybody’s a Christian. Sometimes we assume that that’s the way it is. And we proceed to do all the things that we do; the way we process information, the way we interact with fellow staff, it is with that lens.”

Some staff discussed how even when they asked for time off for religious holidays such as Eid al-Adha, they were told that there are not enough supply staff and they would not be able to get it off. After being denied an initial request, they have not asked for other holidays off.

“I don’t even ask for it [time off for Muslim holidays] because I know the answer. [No.]”

Assumptions of Christianity can translate to the ways in which Niagara Region provides services and the ways in which colleagues interact with one another. One of the participants describes a situation in which they felt inclusion was missed by the Region. Their team planned to sing Christmas Carols to seniors during the Holiday season. They noted that doing this carried the assumption that all of the seniors celebrated Christmas.

“But my point to my supervisor at the time was that we didn’t ask seniors, if they were even celebrating Christmas. The point was very missed. It wasn’t about my personal beliefs. It was about us not being inclusive of what we were offering as a Region.”

One participant highlighted that these assumptions can manifest in jokes targeted towards religious minority colleagues.

“So what I witnessed is people making some jokes about religion. And because there is not diversity in religion, these kinds of jokes are welcomed. I looked around and I was the only one feeling uncomfortable. Everyone was having fun but there’s nothing I could do because it’s just me against everyone.”

There was a perception that some managers viewed religious diversity as a setback to work, carrying an assumption that individuals will need more time off and



accommodations. One staff participant recalls problematic comments made by another manager when they were collaborating to hire a new employee.

“You get a file full of names of people and the comment that was made to me by another manager was ‘uh, I can’t pronounce their name, how much time are they going to take off for other holidays?’”

In the staff survey, a few religious groups had lower levels of agreement for the DEI related questions, those included Wiccans, people with Indigenous Spirituality, and Buddhists, while people with multiple selections, those that preferred not to answer and those that specified another religion also had lower than average levels of agreement. Only 40% of Wiccans agreed that “Senior leaders in our organization lead by example to promote a respectful and inclusive workplace”, while 46% of Buddhists, 56% of people with Indigenous Spirituality, compared to 73% of Christians, and 82% of both Hindus and Muslims. People with Indigenous Spirituality also had the lowest levels of agreement to “People in my team work effectively with each other regardless of our differences (in age, gender, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, values, etc.)” (55%), and “My immediate manager creates an inclusive work environment where I feel heard, respected and valued” (56%).

4.1.4 Sexuality

Discrimination based on sexuality was identified by multiple focus group participants. Similar to issues of race, individuals were exposed to homophobic comments in contexts where sexual minorities were believed to be absent. These interactions and comments ranged from speculation about an individual’s partners to overtly derogatory comments about sexual minorities.

“So I’ve found myself in conversations with other colleagues who say blatantly homophobic things. They might not say that to me if I had outed myself but I don’t for those reasons.”

As the example above shows, these comments create a culture of exclusion and make individuals feel as if they cannot fully be themselves at work. Partly, this feeling of othering can be attributed to wider, structural issues of heteronormativity which can pervade daily interactions and conversations.

“The assumption is always like heterosexuality so if I’m asked about my partner it’s assumed that it would be a man... Or we just assume that everyone has a nuclear family. There isn’t a lot of space for queerness.”



Despite these negative interactions, participants raised some areas for optimism both within the organization and in the community. Participants provided examples of when staff took a stand against sexual discrimination, and other organizations that provided support for sexual diverse individuals or groups.

In the staff survey, people who are questioning had the lowest levels of agreement to the DEI questions. People who identify as pansexual, queer, prefer to self-describe, and prefer not to disclose also had lower levels of agreement. People who are questioning had the lowest levels of agreement that “Senior leaders in our organization lead by example to promote a respectful and inclusive workplace” (20%), compared to 38% of people who are queer, 39% of people who are pansexual, and 73% of heterosexual people.

Only 20% of people who are questioning agreed to the statement “Diverse identities, ideas, and ways of thinking and working are valued at my organization”, compared to 43% of pansexual people, and 71% of heterosexual people. People who are questioning had the lowest levels of agreement that “My immediate manager creates an inclusive work environment where I feel heard, respected, and valued” (20%), compared to 60% of people who are pansexual, and 82% of people who are heterosexual. The highest rates of agreement to these statements were from people who are aromantic.

4.1.5 Immigrant Status/Language Barriers

Discrimination based on immigrant status and language barriers was a commonly referenced type of discrimination. Newcomers (or at least those perceived to be) that are service providers can experience barriers in providing services either because those accessing services will believe that there is a language barrier that cannot be overcome or those accessing services will refuse care from an immigrant/newcomer altogether. These concerns were especially prevalent in public-facing roles.

“I think, clients will say certain things. They don't want to see certain service providers, because they're of a certain race. I have like a very ethnic name – that's not Canadian, so people will often ask me where I'm from, and then they'll fixate on that.”

Language barriers were identified as a major problem for the new immigrant participants but were also a major barrier identified by the Francophone focus group participants. The Francophone participants highlighted that there is a lack of recruitment for bilingual individuals for certain roles which creates barriers to services for the Francophone population in Niagara. Francophone staff participants spoke of the importance of having dedicated Francophone service providers. They noted that in the past, Francophones might be expected to take on extra work outside of their role to translate materials,



increasing their workload without getting appropriate compensation. Francophone participants lamented the lack of resources in French, particularly in reference to the Regional website and COVID-19 education materials available for Francophone schools.

There was limited differences between how long people had lived in Canada and their responses to the DEI statements. The only group that had lower levels of agreement consistently was those that preferred not to answer.

4.1.6 Age

Some participants mentioned discrimination based on age. Discrimination based on age was largely rooted in stereotypes and assumptions that older adults were a monolith including beliefs that all older adults had trouble understanding, were more easily forgetful, and had mobility issues.

Staff participants noted that older adults are often talked to like little children by Regional staff, are belittled in their tone of voice and vocabulary, such as using “Okay dear”, or talking very slowly and loud.

“And when we first started volunteering at the vaccine clinic, and we were doing our over 80 plus population, it really was painful because people were being insulted. Staff were running out with wheelchairs because they saw someone with white hair. They were like, ‘Aren't you cute?’ and talking to people as though they were children.”

Participants noted a current gap related to data collection and that collecting more data on older adult experiences in Niagara, particularly as it relates to issues of isolation would be beneficial. Participants stressed the importance of avoiding detrimental stereotypes that contribute to exclusion and ensuring that access to services for older populations addresses barriers related to technology.

Ageism was present in some work situations where there was a clash between new employees who recently graduated from their studies, and long serving staff, particularly around best practices that evolve over time. Some older employees are considered to be set in their ways, while the newer employees are considered to keep to themselves, with the assumption being that they “*don't really want to hear guidance*”.

There was limited differences between the age of staff and their responses to the DEI statements, with no groups having lower than 60% of staff agreeing to each statement. The age groups 35 to 39 and 55 to 59 had the highest levels of agreement.



4.1.7 Physical and Mental Health Challenges

Participants described discrimination based on health issues, including physical and mental health challenges. Discrimination based on health issues manifested in variety of ways including co-workers doubting the severity of health issues of staff members. Staff with physical disabilities voiced concerns about being doubted about the severity of their disability, this was particularly the case when considering invisible disabilities.

“I’ve definitely run into people who just don’t understand that [particular participant’s disability] is in fact a disability. They seem to equate a disability to something that they can physically see or [that] some permanent physical hardship for your abilities are constant. One day I might be perfectly fine and able to take on the world. The next day, I might not.”

Another participant described that coworkers and managers didn’t respect the severity of their invisible disability. They had a severe scent allergy that resulted in migraines from perfumes, colognes, or synthetic sprays. They found that even though their work area had signs up that it was a scent-free zone, many people still came in the area wearing perfumes and strongly scented lotions. They even had things sprayed in their cubicle before work. When they approached co-workers about it, the co-workers requested that the participant go through their supervisor to talk to them and in turn accused the participant of harassment for talking with the co-workers.

In the staff survey, people with multiple selections relating to experiences with disabilities had the lowest levels of agreement to the DEI questions. People with mental health challenges, learning challenges, hearing loss, and those that preferred not to answer also had lower levels of agreement. People with hearing loss had the lowest levels of agreement that “Senior leaders in our organization lead by example to promote a respectful and inclusive workplace” (53%), compared to 56% of people with learning challenges, 59% of people with multiple selections, and 62% of people with mental health challenges, and 77% of people with no disabilities.

Only 50% of people with hearing loss, 58% of people who prefer not to answer, and 60% of people who made multiple selections agreed to the statement “Diverse identities, ideas, and ways of thinking and working are valued at my organization”, compared to 75% of people with no disabilities. The highest rates of agreement to these statements were from people who with vision loss, who had 100% agreement with four of the five statements.

4.1.8 Micro-aggressions and Lack of Diversity or Acceptance of Differences

In addition to the previous types of discrimination and exclusion, participants experienced other acts that were less blatant, including what DEI staff categorized as micro-



aggressions and exclusion rooted in a lack of diversity or acceptance of differences. These acts of exclusion were more subtle yet more prevalent and widespread. Although subtle, they can nevertheless be detrimental and have lasting impacts on those who are at the receiving end of these exclusionary comments or acts.

Micro-aggressions are defined as actions, words or other factors in the environment that communicate derogatory or negative slights or insults to a person or group.⁵ Regional staff from across the organization expressed experiencing micro-aggressions. Participants expressed dwelling on these negative experiences. One participant highlighted the power of language and comments in making them feel excluded. They admit, although comments and actions might be unintentional, it does not make it any less hurtful, especially when it happens regularly.

“One of the questions that I’ve gotten frequently is, ‘What are you?’, because I’m very ambiguous looking. I’ve gotten a lot of different guesses. When people ask ‘What are you?’, it’s not intended to be rude but it is quite hurtful because it implies that you’re less human.”

While on the surface, micro-aggressions appear to be less severe or distressing than overt forms of discrimination, participants highlighted the issues that arise when experiencing and processing micro-aggressions. Participants highlight that because micro-aggressions are often subtle, it can make it difficult to talk about it and explain the experience to others, which can make those experiencing them almost needing to justify the severity of what they have experienced to themselves and others. This can lead to internal self-doubt about the magnitude of these experiences and make it difficult to report. These nuances likely contribute to the pervasiveness of the issue and allow micro-aggressions to persist over time.

“Perpetrators become smart and use micro and subtle racism and aggression so it is difficult to report.”

“Because I find a lot of times, you might perceive something as a micro aggression but then we’re quick internally to be like, ‘Oh, well maybe I’m blowing this out of proportion or maybe I’m just reading into this too much’...That’s the lens that I always have so maybe I’m misinterpreting this.”

While participants highlighted the equally detrimental effects of micro-aggressions compared to blatant discrimination, they were more optimistic that comments and actions that fell under micro-aggressions and/or a lack of diversity or acceptance of differences

⁵ Washington, E., Birch A., Roberts, L. (2020). When and How to Respond to Microaggressions. <https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions>



were more likely to be unintentional. They were more likely to give the benefit of the doubt to individuals that committed these offences, attributing any shortcoming to ignorance and a lack of education rather than bigotry. Participants were more optimistic that these issues could be reduced with more training and education.

4.2 Reporting

Following the question regarding discrimination and exclusion, focus group facilitators asked about reporting experiences, “Did you tell anyone about the experience or formally report it?” Participants shared whether or not they had reported experiences of discrimination and exclusion as well as the reasons for their decision. If a participant mentioned that they did report an experience, they were encouraged to share whether or not they were satisfied with the outcome of the reporting process. If a participant mentioned that they did not report the experience, facilitators encouraged them to share the factor(s) that motivated them not to report.

The discussion highlighted the processes of reporting including the barriers that participants experienced in Niagara Region related to reporting. Participants expressed a general feeling of dissatisfaction with the current reporting process. While several themes related to reporting dissatisfaction emerged, three themes stood out as most prevalent, fear of repercussions, lack of allies, and not being taken seriously when submitting reports.

In the staff survey, 64% of participants agreed and 23% disagreed that they knew how to report an incident of discrimination or harassment that they might experience at Niagara Region. A further 69% said that they would feel comfortable reporting an incident of bias, discrimination or harassment that they experienced or witnessed, while 17% stated that they would not feeling comfortable reporting it.

According to demographic groups, staff with the lowest levels of agreement that they know how to report an incident of discrimination or harassment at the Region were people who identify as: queer (11%), questioning (20%), Arab (33%), having learning challenges (44%), cisgender (46%), South Asian (55%), Pansexual (57%), Atheist (57%); and having mental health challenges (58%).

4.2.1 Fear

In the staff survey, of the staff that did not feel comfortable reporting an incident, fear of problems for themselves (72%), and fear of being identified (59%) were the two most cited reasons why they would not feel comfortable reporting an incident. Fear was the most cited reason for choosing not to report in the focus groups as well. Fear is complex and can include the concern of repercussions, including beliefs that individuals could lose their



livelihoods by reporting. This can be compounded when individuals were new or found themselves in a precarious work situation.

“I just really think that there's always that undertow and the what-ifs, and job security, you know, being impacted that way [by reporting].”

Multiple participants highlighted that they carefully considered the decision to report or not, reflecting on what choosing to engage in the reporting process would entail.

“I have to think a long, long time and I have to weigh. Like will reporting benefit me more than just staying silent... now I'm finally kind of getting my voice and it's not even really there. I have a family to feed so I think about that before I choose to report.”

Participants expressed that weighing the costs and benefits, as in the quote above, often led them not to report. Many expressed experiencing multiple forms of discrimination in a variety of ways and at various points throughout their career, including at Niagara Region as well as with other employers. Often, participants only chose to report when the act(s) of discrimination reached a certain subjective threshold but otherwise chose to stay silent.

“None of them [acts of discrimination] have reached the level of where I would want to report them. I think that would create a social dynamic that I'm not particularly interested in.”

One participant highlighted that the threshold to speak out was when the consequences of exclusion impacted their work and daily ability to perform their role.

“And then on another example I had to report it [the act of discrimination] where it was just too much of a negative influence on my ability to perform my tasks at hand.”

This concern of repercussions for reporting, according to participants, largely stems from beliefs that reporting will make them look problematic or as if they are complaining about something that is non-existent. In their view, the blame and stigma can quickly shift from the individual that committed the act of discrimination, to them.

“How safe of a space is it for me openly discuss an issue on race or diversity, without it coming back to bite me, and the victim becoming the aggressor just by virtue of discussing, by saying anything about it at all.”

“Because sometimes in the past, when you bring up issues. It might be your head on the chopping block, you know? Like ‘I'd rather not deal with this at all so I'll just get rid of you’, rather than get rid of another employee that they might determine that's more valuable.”



Staff participants expressed concerns that even filing one formal complaint would create a dynamic which would be detrimental to them and ruin previously good relationships with their managers and team, potentially leading to them being bullied or impacting their own career progression. Others feared that filing a report against a colleague could potentially ruin their colleague's career by having a complaint filed against them.

New employees can feel threatened by filing a formal complaint against someone who has been at the Region for a long time. Employees that have worked together for a long time will feel like family. People will naturally take sides and be pitted against each other.

“So, if I complain with them about one person for doing something, it almost feels like I'm fighting a whole group of individuals. And I don't want to be working in a place where staff members treat me differently because I spoke about their fellow coworker and [they] didn't approve of that. So that's definitely a concern, to me at least, where I'm hesitant because I don't want to get in trouble because they have a whole family behind them. Would you like me the next day?”

Dynamics such as being part of a small team, or belonging to a minority group in a team that lacked diversity were additional reasons that could compound fearfulness to report.

“A lot of the groups are pretty small. So even if you say something anonymously... it will come back to you. There's no way to do it anonymously.”

“Everybody was having fun [when a joke was being made about religious minorities], so I will be the party pooper to bring it up. And then the people taking part in the jokes, some of them are senior colleagues, some of them are at same level as me, so it was like everyone was having fun. So, it looks like I was the only one not enjoying it. There was nothing I could do, that was it.”

Some participants provided justification for their fear, as the power of negative labels were difficult to be separated from, and even after moving departments.

“I issued a formal complaint in the past and I ended up being the bad guy to the point of having to relocate to a new home and being told by coworkers that I came with a reputation.”

Even when participants ultimately choose to report, they found the process discouraging and time consuming for all parties. Multiple participants described the reporting process as a hassle for everyone and many employees do not believe that inconveniencing everyone is worthwhile. Participants expressed that this fear of being singled out was exacerbated



because of a perceived lack of anonymity or confidentiality in the reporting process. One participant expressed not being comfortable reporting having witnessed too many examples of whistleblower protection not occurring within their specific work environment.

4.2.2 Lack of Allies or Representation

The focus group discussions revealed that a large component of this fear can be attributed to a lack of allies or representation in the workplace as well as in the larger community. Multiple participants highlighted the lack of allies or representation as a major reason that they either a) chose not to report and/or b) believe that they had an unsatisfactory outcome in cases when they did report.

Participants highlighted that the reporting process could benefit from greater representation or allies in their immediate teams, managerial teams, and/or the Human Resources (HR) team. Currently, there is a sentiment that a homogenous management team is partly to blame for past reports and concerns not being taken seriously or dismissed. However, focus group participants highlighted that more important than visual diversity and representation was allyship. An ally is any person that actively promotes and aspires to advance the culture of inclusion through intentional, positive and conscious efforts that benefit people as a whole.⁶ One staff participant helped illustrate this nuance and the importance of allies:

“You know, your boss or your manager doesn’t have to be queer, but I think they have to support queer issues.”

More allies and representation in these different areas are thought to make people more comfortable coming forward, help them feel supported and understood in the process, and would manifest in reports being taken more seriously.

“So there’s got to be, perhaps more people that are diverse, who look after the complaint. Somebody who can actually put themselves in this person’s shoes.”

The effects of allyship are powerful, influencing both whether instances of discrimination are reported in addition to whether or not individuals feel supported at work generally.

“But it was the first issue that I brought to somebody who I can consider an ally that felt empowered enough to bring it forward.”

“I want to point out to the person I’m speaking of is not a racialized worker...I think if not for her and her broad mindedness, and willingness to actually be eager to learn

⁶ Atcheson, S. 2018. Allyship – the Key to Unlocking The Power of Diversity
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/shereeatcheson/2018/11/30/allyship-the-key-to-unlocking-the-power-of-diversity/?sh=6a2349eb49c6>



about you know, “What is life like as a racialized person?”, I don’t know that I would still be here in Niagara Region.”

Allies can often be the ones empowered to report on behalf of the individual experiencing discrimination, with their consent. One participant explained that they are more likely to report experiences of discrimination that they witness happen to others rather than acts of discrimination against themselves.

“When it comes to me personally, I tend to not tell anyone or formally report it because that’s part of my own dealing with things. But when I see something from a coworker or between my clients, then I’m definitely going to say something and report it and/or deal with it.”

When there is a lack of allies, participants expressed being less likely to be believed and more likely to feel that there was not a supportive and safe environment to report.

“And when I brought it [an experience of discrimination] to [my manager] and explained the situation and who may have been involved, and [the manager’s] immediate response was, ‘oh no that couldn’t have happened’. I kind of took that as like a litmus test of the culture of the Region. And so from then, that’s when I decided, okay, this might not be a safe space.”

One participant noted that it would be prudent for the Region to have a designated ambassador, with lived experience, to properly address incidents surrounding reporting of bias, discrimination and harassment in order to ensure that there is a dependable and consistent individual that staff can lean on and trust. The current lack of allies and representation has in part, contributed to complaints not being taken seriously, in participants’ views.

4.2.3 Not Taken Seriously or Unsatisfied with Outcome

In the staff survey, of the staff that did not feel comfortable reporting an incident, just over half of the question respondents (51%) did not think they would get a good outcome, while 39% did not think their complaint would be taken seriously by their manager, and 31% did not think their complaint would be taken seriously by Human Resources.

Multiple focus group participants highlighted reports of exclusion and discrimination not being taken seriously by those handling the formal reporting process.

“I spoke to a colleague about it, and [they] asked if it would be okay for [them] to bring it to Human Resources and so I said yes. And so [they] spoke with a member of the team and then got back to me with what was said. And I believe [they] was told that it would be addressed in a training of some form with the particular team in



question. And from my presence I could say that the training never did happen and there was no follow up from that.”

“So how important are we really to my employer then if you know I have just been put on the back burner. And these are the messages... that [are] what's being sent out by the employer.”

Participants expressed problematic comments and behaviours on the part of managers and leaders by excusing the behavior or pawning it off to other managers. Some participants believe that management might say that they will treat complaints seriously but that is mostly just “*lip service*”. Staff in these instances expressed that follow-up actions of managers gave them the impression that managers had no real desire to fix anything and that there was often a gap between words and actions.

“I actually had an incident recently [within the] last couple of months and actually reported to three managers, and the response was not what I expected though. You know the response was like ‘Oh this is Niagara, it happens’. And that's not acceptable.”

“This happened a couple years back. The follow up was ‘Well can you come and speak to other managers about this?’ And I felt like a road show and I felt that... that was not an appropriate response.”

Staff perceive that many perpetrators were never reprimanded for their actions as they did not see any behavior changes. However reprimands are a private affair and staff may not be aware of the situation was discussed among other staff. Because of this, staff felt that the perceived lack of consequences for the perpetrator created an environment where individuals felt comfortable continuing to treat colleagues in a discriminatory manner.

One staff participant highlighted an instance in which, a colleague that engaged in discriminatory behaviour continued to have career success and has fears that this can send the wrong message. This general feeling of the reporting process not being taken seriously has led to feelings of disappointment and distrust in its overall effectiveness. This has led some individuals to stay silent in subsequent instances of discrimination.

“Unfortunately that experience, it almost validated what my thoughts were about if I were to bring an issue forward. Because it wasn't the first issue I had come across, but it was the first issue that I brought [to report].”



Overall, information gathered highlighted the need to dedicate resources to further explore and address barriers related to reporting. Focus group insights revealed that the reporting process is currently a major area of consideration.

4.3 DEI Training

Participants mentioned various barriers and challenges relating to training at Niagara Region, there were multiple reasons that led to what staff considered to be a lack of DEI training at the region. DEI training was discussed in almost all of the focus groups. A few staff have participated in training, or were aware of training opportunities, however, the majority of staff were unaware of trainings available relating to DEI. Staff raised a few challenges relating to training, including:

- Lack of time to complete training
- Lack of knowledge about available trainings
- Limited space in available trainings
- The need for training to go beyond online or one time modules or sessions
- Lack of support for managers
- When training is optional, the people who may need the training don't choose to participate

For lack of time to complete training, this is more of a challenge for some roles than others. Staff who do not have a desk or an office find it more challenging to have time to participate in training.

"I work in Public Health and sometimes [it is] just so busy, and there's not a designated time to do these trainings."

"It's in mylearning [Regional software to access training opportunities] but there isn't time to do it; [we] don't have enough time on the lunch break."

Staff were interested in learning more, but other than the limited options included in the Corporate Learning Calendar, they were not aware of training options available at the Region. When they were aware of the trainings, the trainings had limited space and if they forgot to sign up right away, they missed the opportunity.

Staff who have attended trainings on diversity-related topics are appreciative of the training they have received, however they are looking for more discussions within their team and opportunities to implement the information.



“And I can also say that outside of an Indigenous training that we had in-person, which I think was really well done, we haven't had very many discussions within our department specifically where we talk about anti-racism, and we talk about [the] LGBTQ + community, where we talk about, health equity and justice. I don't think that we've had those in-person interactions.”

It is clear that the training needs to go beyond a one-time occurrence, as staff want the learning and practice to be embedded within the culture of their team. In order to facilitate the team discussions and support their staff, managers should receive additional training and resources. They are responsible for guiding their teams and therefore require additional support and guidance themselves. It is important for managers to have training in order to become more non-judgmental, better listeners, and treat everyone with respect. This is important so that employees feel comfortable coming to their managers.

Finally, staff lamented that when training is optional, it tends to be the same people who are already interested or invested in the topic that participate. This can feel like “*preaching to the choir*” and not getting to address some of the challenges staff face.

“I think because when we make it optional, the people who are choosing to do it are often the people that have any interest in having diverse experiences with people. The people who are less likely to be signing up for these things are likely [those] people that [others] want to have more training or more openness to that training. So whatever type of training it is, I would say it's important that it's happening with everybody that possibly can be trained.”

5.0 Current Areas of Success

Even though there are many barriers that were discussed in the focus groups, participants also highlighted areas of current success and potential opportunities for change. The question in most of the focus groups that had the lowest amount of responses was around what is currently going well regarding DEI, both at a Regional government level and within the Niagara community as a whole. Most Regional staff struggled to answer the question, while community members were able to provide many more examples of programs that were positively impacting them. The section below highlights the current areas of success related to programs that support diverse populations in partnership with the Region, as well as recent initiatives from the Region, that prioritize DEI. Supporting community partners that are advancing DEI efforts in the region helps to create a positive work culture and sets a tone for staff as to what the culture is and what the organization prioritizes.



5.1 DEI Training Successes

Staff also described positive experiences with current trainings and what types of trainings they had participated in. Participants were asked, “What are current initiatives or trainings that the Region is doing well in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion?” and, “What other initiatives or training should the Region implement to foster values of diversity, equity and inclusion?” Some staff found it difficult to answer the first question, as many were unaware of current trainings. Consistent across focus groups, training was the most referenced way to address DEI related issues.

Many focus group participants had joined diversity related trainings at the Region or elsewhere. Here is a list of some of the trainings that participants received.

- Public Health, Health Equity Learning blocks (Trauma informed care, 2SLGBTQIA+)
- Indigenous Cultural Safety (San'yas Cultural Safety Training)
- Indigenous Speaker Series
- Mental Health First Aid
- ASIST/Safe Talk
- Senior's Pride Network provided training for Senior Services
- Diversity Training (Samah Merei)
- Addressing Bias and Discrimination, Leader's Edge (Cassie Ogunniyi)
- Unconscious Bias (through Niagara Local Immigration Partnership)
- Health Equity
- Gender Diversity Training (Celeste Turner, Niagara Falls Community Health Centre)
- Domestic Violence
- Respectful Workplace (Play Nice in the Sandbox)
- Crucial Conversations

For the most part, staff were satisfied with the trainings received and welcomed the opportunity to open the trainings to more people.

“Those [Public Health] training modules are really great... they brought in different speakers from around the region, who can speak to being part of different communities and what that meant to them and almost like [presented] tangible things that employers or employees or just people in the world can utilize ... They're at your own pace. They have , YouTube videos, and then we also have speakers who come in live but they record them. And you can listen to them after the fact and they're absolutely amazing so that's been really nice.”



“Took the diversity course with Cassie [Addressing Bias and Discrimination, Leader’s Edge course], it was really good. I think all staff would benefit from that training.”

“Niagara LIP [Local Immigration Partnership] had a gender and sexual diversity training. And it was very eye opening because there’s a lot of, even the definitions, that we didn’t even know. ... Even with pronouns and it gets really deep, but I think there’s, a great opportunity there for us to leverage and be more knowledgeable in that area.”

The Niagara LIP training the staff member is referring to was conducted by Celeste Turner, who also did a similar training as part of the Public Health, Health Equity training modules. These training modules were highly praised by staff that participated in them.

As of December 30, 2021, the Region has offered nine DEI related training courses, with a total of 1272 participants. The same participant could have taken all nine courses and counted nine times. Additionally there were eight Indigenous related training opportunities, including a mandatory three part docuseries by Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre. The mandatory session has been completed by 2290 staff, and 978 staff have participated in the other Indigenous focused sessions.

5.2 Community Partners

A number of community partners were listed as implementing successful programs or supporting diverse populations. This is not an exhaustive list, nor does it represent all the great community organizations in the region. The DEI team has collated a list of over 200 community organizations that conduct DEI related work in Niagara, of which these organizations are included.

- Public Libraries
- JobGym
- YMCA Employment Centre
- OUTniagara
- Niagara Region Police Service
- Niagara Trans Action Coalition
- Community Care
- Niagara Health Centre
- Niagara Falls Community Health Centre
- Age Friendly Niagara Network
- Renewed Computer Technology St. Catharines



- Start Me Up Niagara
- Quest Community Health Centre
- Westview Centre for Women
- Brock University
- Niagara College
- Niagara Folk Arts Festival
- Welland Canal Centre
- Streetworks
- REACH Niagara (Dr. Stobbe)
- Contact North

5.3 Recent Initiatives

Here are some of the recent initiatives associated with Niagara Region that focus group participants mentioned were successful and not included in other sections of this report. This list is not exhaustive of all the DEI related work currently happening at the Region.

- Flag raising to support Indigenous communities, 2SLGBTQQIA+ communities, and Older Adults
- Mental Health team continued to provide in-person and direct access to psychiatry services for clients throughout COVID-19
- Public Health, Health Equity Strategy and Health Promotion Project
- Long Term Care world maps indicating where staff and residents were born
- Supporting children with special needs
- Inclusive programming at Child Care centres
- Street Outreach Team
- Community Paramedics
- Housing First program
- Rent supplement program
- Niagara Regional Police Diversity and Inclusion initiative, including Liaison Officers
- Public campaigns to raise awareness of homelessness
- Niagara Region Public Health COVID-19 Vaccination Days
- St. Catharines Senior's Centre goodie bag give away
- Public Health Lived Experience Advisory Network (LEAN)
- Multiple Advisory Committees for Councils
- Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) Team (community-based psychiatric treatment, rehabilitation, and support to persons with serious and persistent mental illness such as schizophrenia)
- Mental Health Workers



6.0 Conclusion

This summary of the focus group sessions has provided information about the barriers, current successes and recommended solutions for addressing discrimination and improving inclusion and equity for Niagara Region as an employer and service provider. Despite the numerous barriers and types of discrimination faced by staff, there is an optimism that current successes such as training opportunities, and community based programs are the start of a positive culture shift towards increasing DEI within Niagara.

The information found in the staff report will be combined with the Environmental Scan, the Community DEI Experiences Report and the Opportunities for Change Report to provide a rich understanding of the current context. Information gathered will inform the creation of the DEI Action Plan in response to the Region and 12 Local Area Municipalities joining the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities. The Action Plan will be created with input from internal staff, the Niagara Region Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee, as well as other community members.



Appendix A: Focus Group Script and Questions – Staff

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you for taking the time to participate in our discussion on diversity, equity and inclusion in Niagara Region. I am _____. (moderator(s) introduce themselves and their roles). The focus group meetings will help the Region develop a comprehensive five-year Action plan that clearly conveys the Region's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. The plan will articulate goals, objectives, and a plan for implementation. During the focus group today, we want to hear about your experiences, perspectives and insights on diversity, equity and inclusion particularly as it relates to _____ (fill in with appropriate category) as a Regional employee.

There are some ground rules for the discussion today that we wanted to share before we begin. First, there are no right or wrong answers, we expect that you will have different points of view and experiences. This is a safe space so we ask that everyone engage in respectful discussion and respect each other's experiences, opinions and time. Second, we sent out a consent form already but we wanted to remind you that we will be taking notes and if everyone agrees voice recording the session because we don't want to miss any of your comments. No names or self-identifying information will be included in any reports or references to our focus group. Your comments are confidential. Please do not share any participant's names or self-identifying information of this focus group with others. We also ask that when sharing about your experiences that you do not disclose any specific details about other people, please refrain from using names or other identifying information. The success of these focus groups depends on shared trust that we can engage in meaningful, productive and honest conversation. However, if something is shared that puts you or someone else at risk, we may be required by law to disclose that information. Third, my role will be to ask questions, listen and make sure everyone has a chance to share. We're interested in hearing from every one of you, but you don't have to answer a question if you do not want to. I will be making use of the software Mentimeter to help facilitate the discussion today. This will help us better to capture your ideas given the constraints.

Finally, while the topic of this focus group is _____ (fill in with appropriate category), we recognize that individuals are complex and have multiple aspects of identity that can interact simultaneously. If you feel another aspect of your identity has been significant in a particular experience(s), you are encouraged to share that as well. We recognize that the discussion today could bring up a lot of emotions. Please let me know me know if you need some time to gather yourself, or if you need any additional support to help with the emotions.

Does anyone have any questions before we begin?



Engagement Questions

Let's begin by finding out a little more about your colleagues by going around the room one at a time. Please tell us your name, your position, and a little bit about what motivated you to participate in this discussion today. We are going to start with a couple of questions using Mentimeter, please go to menti.com and enter the code _____, then answer the first two questions.

Niagara Region hires people from diverse backgrounds. (strongly agree to strongly disagree)

I feel like my colleagues understand, accept and value who I really am. (strongly agree to strongly disagree)

Exploration Questions (the main part of the discussion)

1. As a Regional employee, have you witnessed or experienced anything that you would label as exclusion, discrimination or another barrier? (answer with Mentimeter, open for sharing)
2. If you witnessed or experienced anything that you would label as exclusion, discrimination or another barrier, did you tell anyone at work about the experience or formally report it? (answer with Mentimeter, open for sharing) **Prompt/follow up:** *If you reported your experience, how was the process? If you didn't report it, why not?*
3. What barriers or gaps have you seen at the Region in terms of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion? (answer with Mentimeter, then ask for comments) (**prompt:** *think about the Region as an employer and as a service provider*)
4. What current initiatives or training that the Region is doing well in terms of diversity, equity and inclusion? (answer with Mentimeter, then ask for comments) (**prompt:** *think about the Region as an employer and as a service provider*)
5. What other initiatives or training that the Region should implement to foster values of diversity, equity and inclusion for staff? (answer with Mentimeter, then ask for comments)
6. What culturally or religiously important dates that you think we should be aware of and acknowledge at the Region? (answer with Mentimeter)
7. Of the diversity, equity and inclusion issues that we discussed today, which is the most important to you? (Use Mentimeter to get the response, then ask if anyone would like to comment) **Prompt:** *What stood out from our discussion today?*
8. Thinking of DEI, write down a word or phrase of what you want the Region to look like in five years. (use Mentimeter)
9. Is there anything regarding diversity, equity and inclusion that we did not get the chance to touch on today that you would want to highlight before we close?



Appendix B: Focus Group Information and Consent Form

You have volunteered to participate in a focus group conducted by staff at the Niagara Region. The purpose of the focus groups is to hear more about your experiences, perspectives and insights on diversity, equity and inclusion as an employee of Niagara Region. The information gathered in the focus groups will help the Region develop a comprehensive Action Plan that demonstrates the Region's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. The plan will articulate goals, objectives and plans for implementation.

You can choose whether or not to participate in the focus group and stop at any time. If everyone in the group agrees, we will be voice recording the session. Although the conversation from the focus group will be voice recorded, your responses will remain anonymous and no names or self-identifying information will be mentioned in the report or other communications. The focus groups will be expected to last between 60-90 minutes.

There are no right or wrong answers to the focus group questions. We want to hear many different viewpoints and would like to hear from everyone. However, you can choose to not answer a question. We hope that you can be honest even when your responses may not be in agreement with the rest of the group. In respect for each other, we ask that only one individual speak at a time in the group and that responses made by all participants be kept confidential. The success of these focus groups depends on shared trust that we can engage in meaningful, productive, and honest conversation.

I understand this information and agree to participate fully under the conditions above:

Please check:

I consent to have the focus groups session voice recorded and transcribed.

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

(You can insert a signature or just type your name)

Any personal information will be collected, used and disclosed by Niagara Regional staff in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). This information will be used for the purpose of developing a comprehensive action plan that conveys Niagara Region's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Any information you share will be used only for the intended purpose for which it was provided. If you have any questions, email our [Access and Privacy Office](#) or call 905-980-6000 ext. 3779.



Appendix C: Staff Survey Introduction and Questions

Welcome to Niagara Region's Welcoming and Inclusive Workplace Survey

Instructions

This survey should take no more than **10 minutes to complete**. Although encouraged, you are not required to complete the survey in one sitting. Each time you click "Next", the survey will be saved. If during the course of completing your survey you decide to close it, please click "Next" and close your browser. Return to the link provided and click on it to continue the survey. After you complete and submit your survey, you will not be able to re-use this link. If an item in the questionnaire is not applicable to you, please select NA/ No Opinion.

Privacy

To ensure confidentiality, **TalentMap WILL NOT divulge individual survey responses** to anyone at your organization; only aggregate reports with groups of 5 or more employees will be provided. For more information please contact us at privacy@talentmap.com or view our [privacy statement](#).

TalentMap is a member of the Insights Association and subscribes to [INSIGHT's Code of Standards](#). You can be assured that your responses will be treated with the strictest confidence.

* 5 point Likert Scale

1. Diverse identities, ideas and ways of thinking and working are valued at my organization.*
2. People in my team work effectively with each other regardless of our differences (in age, gender, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, values, etc.)*
3. My immediate manager works effectively with people in my team, regardless of their individual differences (in age, gender, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, values, etc.)*
4. My immediate manager creates an inclusive work environment where I feel heard, respected and valued.*
5. Senior leaders in our organization lead by example to promote a respectful and inclusive workplace.*
6. I know how to report an incident of discrimination or harassment that I may experience or witness at Niagara Region.*
7. In the future, if you were to experience or witness an incident of bias, discrimination or harassment within Niagara Region, would you feel comfortable to report it?
 - a. No, I would not feel comfortable reporting it [go to Q8]



- b. Yes, I would feel comfortable reporting it [go to Q9]
 - c. Prefer not to answer [go to Q9]
8. Please select which of the following reasons why you would not be comfortable reporting an incident of bias, discrimination or harassment at Niagara Region. Select all that apply.
- a. Fear of being identified
 - b. Fear of problems for myself
 - c. Fear of problems for the perpetrator
 - d. I do not think I would get a good outcome
 - e. I do not think my complaint would be taken seriously by my manager
 - f. I do not think my complaint would be taken seriously by Human Resources
 - g. I had a bad experience when reporting an official complaint at the Region
 - h. I had a bad experience when reporting an official complaint elsewhere
 - i. I would prefer to settle the matter informally (e.g. educating the colleague that made an insensitive remark)
 - j. I would prefer to ignore or distance myself from the perpetrator
 - k. The process seems time-consuming
 - l. Other, please specify: _____
 - m. Prefer not to answer
9. What would make you feel more comfortable to report an incident of bias, discrimination or harassment in the future?
- a. Open ended response
10. What topics regarding Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training do you think would be beneficial for your team? (Select as many as you want)
- a. 2SLGBTQQA+ Inclusion
 - b. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
 - c. Anti-Oppression Training
 - d. Community and Industry Engagement
 - e. Customer Service Training
 - f. Gender Based Analysis Plus
 - g. Human Rights and Anti-Harassment
 - h. Inclusive Management
 - i. Indigenous Cultural Safety
 - j. Intercultural Communication
 - k. Introduction to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
 - l. Leading Diverse Teams
 - m. Micro-aggressions and belonging
 - n. Unconscious/Implicit Bias
 - o. Other, please specify: _____



11. Is there a training or a speaker relating to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion that you would recommend for the Region?

a. Open ended response

12. What actions or initiatives should the Region implement to make the Region more welcoming to everyone?

a. Open ended response

Demographic Questions

The following questions are optional. However, your responses will help us better understand the demographics of the Niagara Region work force and how the views of various groups of employees may differ.

1. Which of the following best describes your racial or ethnic identity? Please select all that apply.

- a. First Nations
- b. Inuk (Inuit)
- c. Métis
- d. Arab
- e. Black
- f. Latin American
- g. East Asian
- h. South Asian
- i. South-East Asian
- j. West Asian
- k. Pacific Islander
- l. White
- m. Prefer to self-describe: _____
- n. Prefer not to answer

2. How long have you lived in Canada?

- a. Less than 1 year
- b. 1 to 5 years
- c. 6 to 15 years
- d. 16 to 25 years
- e. 26 or more years
- f. I do not currently live in Canada
- g. Prefer not to answer



3. Do you live with any of the following? Please select all that apply

- a. Addiction (alcohol, drugs, gambling or other)
- b. Chronic condition (pain, epilepsy, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, multiple sclerosis or other.)
- c. Developmental condition (autism, down syndrome or other)
- d. Hearing loss
- e. Learning challenge (dyslexia, attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder or other)
- f. Mental Health challenge (PTSD, anxiety, depression, schizophrenia or other)
- g. Physical condition (cerebral palsy, spinal cord, injury, amputation or other)
- h. Vision loss
- i. Other, please specify: _____
- j. None of the above
- k. Prefer not to answer

4. Please indicate your religious or spiritual affiliation. Please select all that apply.

- a. Atheist
- b. Buddhist
- c. Christian
- d. Hindu
- e. Indigenous Spirituality
- f. Jewish
- g. Muslim
- h. Sikh
- i. Wiccan
- j. No religious affiliation
- k. Prefer not to answer
- l. Other, please specify: _____

5. How do you identify in terms of your sexuality?

- a. Aromantic
- b. Asexual
- c. Bisexual
- d. Gay
- e. Heterosexual
- f. Lesbian
- g. Pansexual
- h. Queer
- i. Questioning
- j. Two-Spirit
- k. Prefer to self-describe: _____
- l. Prefer not to disclose



6. How do you identify in terms of your gender? Please select all that apply.

- a. Cisgender
- b. Female
- c. Male
- d. Non-binary
- e. Questioning
- f. Transfeminine
- g. Transgender
- h. Transmasculine
- i. Two-Spirit
- j. Prefer to self-describe: _____
- k. Prefer not to disclose



Appendix D: Niagara Region Staff Survey DEI Scores

The Niagara Region Staff Survey administered by TalentMap included six diversity, equity, and inclusion related questions. Participants were asked to provide their agreement on a 5 point Likert Scale. Disagree and Somewhat Disagree were grouped into Unfavourable responses, whereas Agree and Somewhat Agree were grouped into Favourable responses. Neutral was left as answered. Answers are presented as a percentage with an overall average, and answers to each question separately. These are the average scores for the organization overall. The first question, “Diverse identities, ideas and ways of thinking and working are valued at my organization”, is comparable to a benchmark from TalentMap. The Niagara Region average is 2% higher than the TalentMap benchmark.

Table 8: Staff Survey Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Scores

Question	Favourable	Neutral	Unfavourable
DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION – OVERALL	75%	11%	13%
Diverse identities, ideas and ways of thinking and working are valued at my organization.	69%	16%	15%
People in my team work effectively with each other regardless of our differences (in age, gender, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, values, etc.).	84%	7%	8%
My immediate manager works effectively with people in my team, regardless of their individual differences (in age, gender, race, ethnic origin, nationality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, values, etc.).	85%	8%	7%
My immediate manager creates an inclusive work environment where I feel heard, respected and valued.	79%	10%	11%
Senior leaders in our organization lead by example to promote a respectful and inclusive workplace.	70%	16%	15%
I know how to report an incident of discrimination or harassment that I may experience or witness at Niagara Region.	64%	13%	23%

