



OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL

**WORKPLACE INCLUSION INITIATIVE
CONSULTATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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SUBMITTED BY:

**COMMON
GOOD
SOLUTIONS¹**

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Executive Summary

Canada has seen a huge demographic shift in its workplaces, but inequity continues to stifle goals of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Communities are wrestling with histories, biases, cultural differences, and acceptance. Empowering citizens and supporting employers are key steps in creating the transformational change required to build inclusive communities. Employers now are prioritizing EDI policies as a demonstration of their commitment to social justice. For the creation of a diverse and inclusive workplace, there needs to be an interplay of macro factors like systemic inequity and bias and micro implementation through consultation and design implementation.

Canada has an increasingly aging population, especially in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region where over 46% of working individuals are over the age of 55. This changing demographic along with the emigration of young people in the region in search of better jobs has increased the need for newcomers in the region and for employers, municipalities, and governments to take a more proactive role in creating more inclusive communities and workplaces. In creating an inclusive workplace, people need to have a seat at the table regardless of their culture, race, accessibility, gender, or sexual orientation. Looking at people's lived experiences from an intersectional lens can help create better, more inclusive policies that encourage inclusive growth. Municipalities can play a vital role by economically empowering people, advocating for truth and awareness, and promoting cultures and safe spaces. While policy implementation is essential, one of the biggest hurdles small organizations face is the lack of Human Resources (HR) management support to effectively implement workplace inclusion measures.

This study presents the findings of a primary research study conducted in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region about workplace inclusion. The team applied a multimodal approach to interviewing people at different levels including employers, service providers, and members of the workforce across Cape Breton-Unama'ki's most prominent service industries - healthcare, wholesale and retail, education, and construction. The workforce research was conducted anonymously through survey methods where 256 individuals participated. Additionally, the team consulted with 23 employers and service providers through in-person consultations in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality (CBRM), the Town of Port Hawkesbury, Baddeck, and Inverness, as well as through virtual interviews and surveys.

Through primary data collection, we found that employers are prioritizing EDI in the workplace, in particular through staff training, with 61% of agencies surveyed currently offering this form of support. Beyond training, additional support is required for employers and service providers. Currently, only 29% of those agencies surveyed are collecting staff demographics. This is a critical first step in filling in workforce gaps. If employers and service

providers aren't aware of their current staff profile, it is challenging to take an active approach to recruiting diverse populations. Additionally, only 50% of employers and service providers have a dedicated way to collect staff feedback and suggestions pertaining to EDI. Generally, while there's a commitment to EDI, sometimes the actions fall short of the intention. This is aligned with what we heard from members of the workforce. 70% of workforce survey participants responded "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement, "my workplace demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion". However, of those survey respondents who experienced workplace discrimination, only 49% felt that the act of discrimination was handled appropriately.

Overall, agencies need to invest in fostering a culture where EDI is valued and integrated at every level of the organization and business. This needs to start with internal auditing, and then systematically working to ensure that EDI is embedded at all stages; from recruitment to the exit interview; from program delivery to strategy development.

Introduction

In Canada, workforce demographic diversity has changed dramatically over the past three decades, shifting to a stronger and more diverse workforce. However, our workplaces, policies, and legislation haven't evolved at the same pace, creating the context for inequitable conditions to persist. There is an urgency to address this infrastructure in organizations because there are ethical, moral, and legal responsibilities required to ensure that inclusive work environments are created and maintained.

Across Canada, communities are wrestling with complex colonial histories, unlearning falsehoods and bias, and building collective cultural competence, while thinking about the future of social and economic well-being for all. In Cape Breton-Unama'ki, we have seen strong progress in immigration, population growth, retention, and strategic commitments to support social and economic well-being.

As our communities evolve, it is important to invest in entrepreneurs, businesses, impact and human service organizations with the support, capacity, and tools to build strong and diverse workplaces with welcoming cultures and strong policies and practices. Moreover, communities require social infrastructure, both visible and invisible, to truly create inclusive communities.

Call for Transformation

Over the past three years, our communities have faced a global pandemic, witnessed the murder of George Floyd which spurred the Black Lives Matter movement, and were confronted with the cruel history of residential schools and the truth of colonization across Canada. Globally, we are experiencing the migrant crisis affecting people across the world, the war in Ukraine, as well as wars and injustices across many countries. With this social context, marginalized communities have emerged at the forefront of our collective social consciousness.

As these movements gained traction, organizations attempted to demonstrate a greater awareness and respond to increasing societal commentary of negative biases toward marginalized groups. This has called on organizations to reflect on their social justice viewpoints. Many organizations are looking to modernize their approach to EDI across their operations and workplaces. This has led many to prioritize the creation of EDI policies or employee/stakeholder teams as a demonstration of their societal commitment to social justice. This is more than corporate social responsibility - this is a tectonic shift in how social and economic development demonstrates greater symbiosis.

These movements have identified major inequities and how bias is ingrained across society - from the justice system, health care, and social services, to workplaces and, in many instances, the policies and laws that govern our society. This means the work required to

address EDI from an employment perspective must be looked at from a macro perspective, including a fulsome analysis of the systems that perpetuate inequality and reinforce bias, while building an understanding of the micro-environment and how important it is to get this work right - from consultation and design to implementation.

Nova Scotia - Need for change

The diversity of Nova Scotians comprises factors including, but not limited to: age, sex, income, race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, spirituality, geography, literacy, and education. Like most provinces across the country, Nova Scotia has a complicated history of how it supports those who are marginalized.

Many current inequities are sustained by historical legacies and structures and systems that repeat exclusion. Institutions and structures have continued to create and perpetuate inequities, sometimes despite the current lack of explicit intention. The following groups of people have been historically marginalized in Nova Scotia:

- African Nova Scotians/Black Canadians
- Indigenous peoples (Mi'kmaq/L'nu)
- Immigrants, refugees, and newcomers to Canada
- 2SLGBTQIA+ (two-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and others)
- People with disabilities
- People with mental illness
- Women

A Changing Workforce

In Nova Scotia, there has been a workforce dilemma simmering over the last decade. The 2016 Census reported that, of those employed in Cape Breton-Unama'ki, 27% were over the age of 55. 40% of those working in the transportation and warehousing sector were over 55, as were more than 30% of workers in wholesale trade, education, professional services, construction, and manufacturing. As we analyze future labor market needs, coupled with current demographics, we know there are not enough young people coming through the education system to meet current and future labor market demands.

Cape Breton-Unama'ki's aging entrepreneurs

The community's entrepreneurs and small business owners are also getting closer to retirement, which is an additional challenge for the local economy. More than 46% of all self-employed people in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki urban region are over the age of 55. This changing demographic will impact not only the workforce but critical social infrastructure

and amenities that could impact the development of communities across Cape Breton-Unama'ki.

This context further validates that Cape Breton-Unama'ki must adapt to maintain its economic position. There are also clear opportunities - diversifying workforces and ownership of companies, encouraging new entrants, and building its social infrastructure to support current and future generations.

1.0. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

The three components of EDI are often used interchangeably, and in some instances referred to as DEI. As a critical starting point, reflecting on the interplay between these three terms, “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion” will ground our conversations throughout the report.

The term “diversity” may be viewed as a workplace policy recognizing, understanding, and accepting personality differences of employees based on their race, gender, age, class, ethnicity, physical ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, and other social and psychological orientations (Bika, 2022). Leveraging the explanation of the Harvard Business Review (2017), “diversity is being invited to the party, while inclusion is being asked to dance.”

It is critical to note that diversity does not manifest inclusion, moreover, without inclusionary practices, diversity interventions can be more harmful than supportive. Without inclusion, the efforts are often viewed as shallow and tokenistic, and in some instances, set up for failure. This is why equity is such a critical component of the diversity and inclusion equation. To extend that logic, diversity without inclusion perpetuates a lack of equity in the workplace and is simply performative in nature. Consequently, workplaces without equity can create serious problems for all stakeholders. Without equity, bias, stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination all pose risks to all engaged in the workplace. EDI is more than legal compliance.

In the literature, many organizations use their legal compliance as the baseline for EDI management (Garg & Sangwan, 2020). Diversity management initiatives can focus on what it means in the legal context of discrimination, especially in the context of recruitment and selection as well as performance management. By moving from a reactive approach to EDI work and instead creating alignment with values, culture, and strategy, we can convert minimal efforts into meaningful contributions to change how EDI is embedded into the fabric of the organization.

Legal compliance offers a framework that creates a sense of stability and is the main influencing factor when making decisions regarding HR in a workplace. The historical colonial influence on these legal frameworks has helped to shape modern laws and policies.

The combination of addressing legal requirements and the competing desire to tackle diversity leaves the organization with a limited ability to be effective in responding to the evolving state of diversity and self-identification.

1.1. Attracting and Retaining Diverse Employees

Newcomers are critical to a thriving workforce, contributing different perspectives and worldviews to the workplace. According to Statistics Canada, due to our aging population, the natural population will start to decline by 2050 as seniors will make up nearly 25% of the population with the country having to rely heavily on newcomers to manage the economy (CIRRO, 2011). According to the CIRRO toolkit, small communities across Canada require more newcomers in their communities due to more emigration of youth to big cities, low replacement levels, and aging. This has heavy implications including a reduced labor pool, less sale of goods and services, and a lowered tax base, creating a downward spiral and making the community's activities obsolete (CIRRO, 2011).

Attracting newcomers to small communities is not only important for the skill sets and values they bring in but also because they bring investment capital to start enterprises in the community. The invested money creates demand and gets the wheel running for the economic prosperity of the region. Their business connections in the local market can also help establish a well-connected ecosystem (CIRRO, 2011).

Additionally, reflecting EDI in the workforce has been shown to be better for business. Specifically, companies with a diverse workforce are 35% more likely to experience greater financial returns than their respective non-diverse counterparts (McKinsey, 2015). Additionally, companies with greater diversity are 70% more likely to capture more markets than those with a lower level of diversity within their staff (Hewlett et al, 2013). By prioritizing diversity in the workforce, businesses are capturing various worldviews which fosters innovation and forward-thinking that isn't possible in the absence of diverse teams.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that diverse teams are better at making decisions than non-diverse teams. Specifically, a study that analyzed 600 business decisions made by 200 teams found that the decision-making of diverse teams outperforms non-diverse teams 87% of the time (Washington State, 2021). In environments where diversity is reflected at every level of an agency, staff feels more included and valued in the agency, which could lead to enhanced performance and retention.

Diversity and inclusion play an important role in the integration of newcomers in the workplace as it is a way to respect the autonomy and unique needs of all employees, fully immersing them into the workforce. When creating an inclusive workplace, organizations

need to put effort into hiring people across the spectrum keeping accessibility, culture, race, diverse ability, gender, and sexual orientation at the center.

Immigrants can also be integrated by putting a focus on celebrating diverse holidays, honoring Indigenous heritage, and being more inclusive of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. For this, organizations can follow a 6-step plan of identifying the inclusion level of the business, committing to making it an inclusive workplace, developing a guiding document (or Inclusion Charter) to communicate the organization's EDI values and associated commitments, and subsequently updating policies to match the commitments and values stipulated in the charter, communicating transparently to the team about the inclusion values, and finally deploying it and keeping it as an evolving process (Red Deer Local Immigration Partnership, n.d.).

An immigrant retention primer by the University of Guelph emphasized the importance of a "no-door policy" which essentially means that regardless of the service provider that the immigrants go to, their problems need to be heard and help to be provided. The no-door policy encourages institutions and municipalities to be more action-oriented rather than merely tokenistic (University of Guelph, 2017).

1.2. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Workplaces in Rural Communities

Immigrants play an important role in the Canadian economy and an interplay between multiple stakeholders including community organizations, governmental bodies, and private enterprises is required to create a better environment and experience for newcomers.

In many rural communities across Canada, more immigrant services need to be organized and made accessible for advice and support. A study by Carleton University also suggested that policymakers need to be more involved with providing funding to immigrant organizations, writing better policies for credential verification across all levels, and also providing incentives to employers hiring newcomers (Carleton University, 2019).

The involvement of immigrants is even more important in smaller communities. These individuals bring in a plethora of experiences and skilled talent to the economy. Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) require more diverse talents as competition becomes increasingly more globally competitive and labor shortages are crippling communities. Many SMEs do not have the HR capacity to support strong policies and practices designed to create equitable, diverse, and inclusive workplaces.

A study analyzing the state of SMEs in Ontario found that over 90% of SMEs do not have HR support and they lack the knowledge of equating experience level, skills, etc. (Welsh, 2012).

This holds them back from giving immigrants a chance, creating barriers to greater opportunities in the labor market.

For smaller organizations to incorporate EDI in their workplaces, it is also important to incorporate EDI in the values of an organization. In order to truly embed the principles of EDI, SMEs need to craft a vision statement that can help internal and external stakeholders better understand the organization's values, connect with its strategic priorities, and implement a change management process to properly roll out the new policies and practices. Tools need to be deployed to track the progress and make iterations if necessary.

As an example of an initiative supporting EDI practices in Atlantic Canada, PEI released an HR toolkit that outlines the necessary steps to integrate people into the workforce. In terms of immigrants, the toolkit spoke about peer mentorship and the cultural competency training of employees. The toolkit also highlighted steps for supporting Indigenous people in the workplace, including cultural sensitivity and a better understanding of the cultural obligations of the community. In support of women, the workplaces were encouraged to consider flexible work hours and ensure unbiased pay. The workplaces were also encouraged to be allies to the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (PEI HR Toolkit, n.d.).

1.3. Best Practices in Rural Environments

Fostering community connections and welcoming newcomers is essential to building the region's social capital. The Rural Ontario Institute identified vital best practices observed by stakeholders (Rural Ontario Institute, 2017). Some of the key practices were:

- Creating a database of online resources with tools to access support services. Tools to enhance accessibility within the community were given primacy.
- Providing support to refugee groups within the community.
- Establishing fund settlement services to support transitions and setting up a referral framework.
- Supporting newcomers with language barriers with language classes, English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, online courses, and employment counseling. Translation support services can also be provided for people who want to access important services like health care or emergency services.

King's County in Nova Scotia has similar demographics to Cape Breton-Unama'ki. The municipality of King's County came up with a diversity and inclusion plan after surveying the community and understanding their concerns. Community feedback was foundational in the research for the county's EDI plan and the largest concerns they heard were that the municipality needed to make decisions based on input from the community and that the project must recognize the communities who historically inhabited their region of Nova Scotia like the Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotia communities.

The feedback also revealed the desire to have a decentralized action plan throughout the municipality. An essential part of developing an implementation plan is to draw out the organization's vision statement which can be the guiding light for all the actions. The vision statement captured the municipality on three levels: 1) as an organization, upholding the values of diversity, authenticity, and community; 2) as a partner, upholding rights, providing a voice, and taking action against injustice; and 3) as a place, creating a safe space where everyone feels like they belong.

The municipality highlighted six pillars that guided their action plan:

- Demonstrating Leadership & Enhancing Representation
- Economic Empowerment
- Truth, Awareness, and Advocacy
- Cultural Celebration & Reflection of Diversity
- Creating Safe Spaces, Land, & Built Environment
- Access to Equitable Service Delivery

The municipality strived to implement these within a timeline of 3-5 years with the entire municipality taking ownership of the tasks rather than just one unit assigned to the task. Additionally, both qualitative and quantitative feedback needs to be accounted for in impact evaluation including an annual workshop and an open survey, with stakeholders, and shareholders to discuss the actions in the plan, add actions, or adjust the course (Municipality of the County of Kings, 2021).

The Town of Stratford also has a diversity and inclusion plan for the integration of newcomers into the community. They aimed to make the residents more sensitive towards and aware of the newcomers and to become more conscious of discrimination and racism. One example of this is through the development of a "just say hello" campaign to break the ice and build a culture of comfort in the community (Town of Stratford, 2018). The town also provided a space to the residents on the town committee. Furthermore, they created a directory of resources in cases of racism and discrimination. In terms of communication, a need was identified to make the content simplified, and accessibility-friendly, accounting for language barriers. They also ensured that the town's achievements were communicated well through timely town publications.

Some changes the town strived to make in terms of its accessibility infrastructure were:

- Accounting for accessibility needs in town events including care for people with children, time of the day, and language of communication.
- Promoting the use of barrier-free universal design.

- Maintaining a housing policy accounting for people's social, economic, and physical needs.
- Conducting training in schools, offices, etc. to build sensitivity toward people of different cultures.

1.4. Municipal and Industry Roles in EDI

There is a wealth of information about EDI when it comes to immigration and the retention of talent, however, it is more limited when it comes to rural areas and smaller communities — where it is probably needed the most. For small employers across Canada, especially in rural areas, the lack of HR management practices continues to be the biggest hurdle.

While the conversation around EDI in rural areas has only recently gained traction, there is a strong need for partnership and communication between municipal, provincial, and federal programs and initiatives for the success of EDI action plans and commitments.

Canada has more than 200 different ethnic identities and therefore it is important for municipalities to bring in a nuanced intersectional lens while evaluating human experiences and building policies around it (guide for municipalities).

The “City for all Women Initiative”, Ottawa (CAWI) prepared a guide for municipalities on adopting diversity and inclusion in their regions. The guide is created for elected officials within municipalities and their staff, but also for local organizations and community organizers about advancing EDI in small towns. It uses small, medium, and large towns as case studies and discusses community engagement, strategies for change, and building a welcoming workplace.

The guide encourages municipalities to not just ask the larger question of how to make their municipalities more inclusive, but also to ask more specific questions addressing the intersectionality of human experiences. Questions such as:

How might this person view and experience the municipality? What insights can their experience bring to the municipality? What barriers could they be experiencing (e.g. social services, jobs)? (CAWI, 2015)

Breaking the questions into actionable measures can help municipalities move beyond ideas to action. Looking from this lens can help look at the nuances of human experiences rather than looking at them in silos.

The guide also had a perspective shift towards the cost associated with these programs to instead focus on the missed opportunity and losses incurred by not doing such programs.

A coalition of inclusive municipalities toolkits captures best practices and experiences from across Canada and puts together several strategies on how municipalities can retain newcomers. Some suggestions for municipalities were: (CCUNESCO, 2019)

- Centralize services and ease access to them
- Partner with public libraries and open institutions to provide open access to information and services
- Use international dates to run campaigns and celebrate events and festivals to involve newcomers
- Forge local partnerships and strengthen existing connections

The toolkit also features promising practices from across Canada in fields ranging from education and employment to health and security. It promoted access to business incubation, networking and mentorship programs, etc.

UNESCO's International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR) also highlights suggestions for the municipalities and reiterates the importance of accounting for intersectional experiences (ICCAR, 2016). Some key suggestions include:

- Giving a space for diverse voices to express their needs. This can be done through regular engagement and consultations with the population.
- Including youth in the change-making process by offering them a seat at the table, including them in the policy process, and directly involving them in the municipality's work.
- Becoming more stringent towards racism and discrimination and developing policies to take action. Additionally, finding champions in the local community who can put forward the message of the municipal government.
- Becoming more data-driven by evaluating qualitative and quantitative data points including but not limited to (1) community demographics, (2) program evaluation, and (3) municipal workforce composition (ICCAR, 2016).

UNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities is a network of municipalities under the direction of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to connect municipalities that want to improve their policies on EDI. Currently, there are 96 cities across the country as part of the coalition, including small rural towns in Atlantic Canada such as Stratford, Prince Edward Island; Grand Bank, Newfoundland and Labrador; New Glasgow, Nova Scotia; and Chester Municipality, Nova Scotia. The coalition highlights the role of rural municipalities in EDI (Rathwell, 2017).

The Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities: Small and Rural Municipalities highlights some key actions municipalities can engage in:

- Improve on existing programs by the municipality and make iterations to those plans before introducing new ones.
- Rather than keeping the horizon wide, taking it slow with specific problem areas can be the way to go. It encouraged municipalities to highlight one or two key areas and build up from there.
- Establish partnerships with organizations doing similar work as well as primary stakeholders to take the work forward.
- Focus attention on low to no cost projects first before taking up bigger projects.
- Apply for federal and provincial grants to run projects that meet the coalition commitments (Rathwell, 2017).

1.5. How Unions can contribute to EDI practices

Larger unions across Canada such as the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) and the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) are making headway when it comes to EDI policies and raising awareness amongst union members and local leaders. Best practices from larger unions can help organizations chart out their path when it comes to EDI policies and to raise awareness amongst union members and local leaders.

The UFCW's Member Activist toolkit provides information for engaging UFCW members in their workplace, community, and within the union itself and discusses EDI practices and conversations about newcomers, youth, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. The toolkit encourages unions to provide two-way language translation for people to participate in conversations (UFCW, 2022).

The toolkit also talks about stringent anti-harassment actions at the union level by facilitating regular conversations about the subject and becoming a safe space where people can come to voice their concerns. Additionally, it speaks to the opportunity for unions to proactively make an effort in providing access to women, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals to feel more included (UFCW, 2022).

The National Union of Public and General Employees' *Diversity and Inclusion in Our Unions: An Introduction* highlights the role of unions in becoming more inclusive. Some of their steps were:

- Work with proponents to gather the necessary demographic data on membership to increase representation and make sure all union members are included as active, motivated activists.
- Collaborate with the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) Collective Bargaining Advisory Committee to produce a list of the strongest clauses

from their members' contracts that address equality, diversity, and inclusiveness-related concerns (NUPGE, 2020).

- Maintain their support for employment fairness laws and initiatives.
- Support the labor movement's efforts to safeguard migrant workers' rights to transition from temporary immigration status to permanent immigration status.

The Professional Institute of Public Services Canada's *Pocket Guide to Employment Equity* states that employee representatives from unions should proactively take part in consultations to prepare and implement the employment equity plan (The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, 2022).

Internationally, there are also several initiatives by CCUNESCO Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities and the UNESCO International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities. Many businesses and organizations across Canada have diversity and inclusion policies.

2.0 Community-Based Research and Consultations

2.1 Demographic Profile

The Cape Breton-Unama'ki region includes the entire island of Cape Breton-Unama'ki. The region includes CBRM, the Town of Port Hawkesbury, Inverness, Richmond, and Victoria counties, and First Nation communities of Eskasoni, Membertou, We'koqma'q, Wagmatcook, and Potlotek. There are 4 municipalities, several towns and villages, and many other communities throughout the region (Nova Scotia Works, 2021).

- Population: 132,235
- Size of Workforce: 55,900
- % of Full-time workers: 82%
- % of Part-time workers: 18%

2.2 Economic Profile

According to statistics by Nova Scotia Works (2021), sectors in Nova Scotia have the following demographics.

Healthcare

Healthcare and social services is the largest employment industry in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region.

Potential workplaces include:

- Healthcare centers
- Hospitals
- Nursing or residential care homes
- Organizations that provide counseling, welfare, child protection, community housing, and food services to those in need.

Worker profile:

- 66% of workers have a trades or college certificate or diploma.
- 19% of workers have a university degree at a bachelor's level or above.
- 55% of workers work full-time.
- 35% of workers work part of the year, either full or part-time (Nova Scotia Works, 2021.)

Wholesale and Retail

Wholesale and retail trade is the second largest employment industry in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region. The industry is made up of both businesses that sell goods to other businesses, and businesses that sell goods directly to the public (Nova Scotia Works, 2021).

Potential workplaces include:

- Wholesale warehouses and offices.

- Stores that offer various products.
- Businesses that provide after-sales services (like repair and installations).
- Gas stations.
- Mobile home dealers, or in-home demonstration sales.
- Businesses that deliver goods to homes, like home heating oil dealers.

Worker profile:

- 39% of workers have a high school diploma or less.
- 31% of workers have a trades certificate or diploma.
- 49% of workers work year-round at full-time hours.
- 36% did not work the full year at either full or part-time hours (Nova Scotia Works, n.d.).

Educational Services

Educational services are the third largest employment industry in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region. The industry is made up of both for-profit and not-for-profit institutions that provide instruction and training in a wide variety of subjects.

Potential workplaces include:

- Schools
- Colleges
- Universities
- Training centers

Worker profile:

- 64% of workers have a university degree.
- 15% of workers have a college certificate or diploma.
- 49% work full-time year-round.
- 47% work for part of the year (Nova Scotia Works, n.d.).

Construction

Construction is the fourth largest employment industry in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region. The industry is made up of companies that build, repair, and renovate buildings and those that subdivide and develop the land.

Potential workplaces include:

- Design-build firms
- General contractors
- Construction management firms
- Land developers
- Specialty trade contractors

Worker profile:

- 28% of workers have an apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma.
- 24% of workers have high school or equivalent.
- 44% work full-time year-round.
- 53% work for part of the year (Nova Scotia Works, n.d.).

Other industries

There are many other industries in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region. The following industries employ thousands of Cape Breton-Unama'ki workers:

- Accommodation and food services
- Public administration
- Professional services (legal services, accounting, bookkeeping, and payroll services management, scientific and technical consulting services, advertising, public relations, and related services)
- Scientific services (scientific research and development services)
- Technical services (architectural, engineering, and related services)
- Forestry, fishing, mining, and quarrying (Nova Scotia Works, n.d.)

2.3 Methodology

With the goal of understanding EDI in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region from as many perspectives as possible, the Cape Breton Partnership and Common Good Solutions teams engaged in a multimodal approach to data collection. This included engaging with three core audiences:

- **Employers** - this included a combination of small, medium, and large businesses across Cape Breton-Unama'ki.
- **Service Providers** - this captured those providing employment and other related services and support to various groups in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region.
- **Members of the Workforce (past and present)** - this group included those who are employed or were previously employed in a business or organization in Cape-Breton-Unama'ki and currently reside on the Island.

With the goal of collecting surveys from as many folks as possible in these three groups, we collected data in the following four ways:

- **Online surveys (workforce)** - We collected data from 256 members of the workforce through a survey that was administered online. We promoted this survey through Facebook ads (administered through both, Cape Breton Partnership and Common Good Solutions), and by further promoting the online survey link via employers and service providers in the region.
- **Paper surveys (workforce)** - We aimed to be as inclusive as possible in our data collection practices by offering a paper survey option. In particular, we provided the

employers and service providers who we consulted with paper surveys to bring back to their staff members to complete. We took several steps to maintain anonymity throughout this process.

- **Consultations (Employers and Service Providers)** - We hosted four in-person consultations in a) CBRM, b) Town of Port Hawkesbury, c) Baddeck, and d) Inverness where we consulted with 19 folks representing various organizations/businesses.
- **Virtual Consultations** - We hosted four one-on-one consultations with employers and service providers who were interested in sharing their feedback verbally but couldn't attend the in-person consultations.

We aimed to incentivize participation of members of the workforce by offering those who participated the chance to win a \$50.00 gift card if they completed the survey and opted in to being entered for a draw. Additionally, we took measures with all four of these options to maintain anonymity by ensuring that any personal information collected was done separately from the person's survey results. This meant not collecting any identifying information through the online survey (instead, participants were invited to email the consultant to be entered into the draw for a gift card), and separating the personal information collected from the survey results for those who chose to complete the paper survey. In this case, members of the workforce would complete two separate forms and would be invited to submit them in separate sealed envelopes.

3.0 Employers and Service Provider Surveys

The following is a summary of what we heard from four one-on-one interviews, and four completed consultation sessions with 19 stakeholders. It should be noted that surveys were completed through a combination of Cape Breton Partnership-run workshops, and paper surveys which were distributed for completion during the Cape Breton Partnership and Common Good Solutions-led Workplace Inclusion sessions. We collected a total of 28 surveys.

Who We Heard From - Service Providers and Employers Analysis and Limitations

We received the highest response rate from hosting in-person sessions in-community. Our highest response rate was in the CBRM, with 79% of respondents having one or more locations in the CBRM. Additionally, 42% of survey respondents were located in the Town of Port Hawkesbury, 39% were located in Inverness County, 32% located in Richmond County, 25% in Victoria County, 17% in Membertou First Nation, 14% in Eskasoni First Nation, 14% in We'koqma'q First Nation, 10% in Wagmatcook First Nation, and 7% in Potlotek First Nation. One of the limitations of the data collection is that there was a heavy concentration of participation in CBRM, and we weren't able to have in-depth conversations (or receive completed surveys) for as many employers and service providers in other regions as we would have liked.

One of the most significant barriers to participation that we heard about was time - while consultations can provide a depth of information that surveys can't, we also recognize that, especially for service providers, it's a challenge to make the time to attend an in-person session. In the future, it would be best to look at leaning more heavily into the survey option for Employers and Service Providers with optional 20-minute phone calls. We were able to offer a one-on-one interview option for Employers and Service Providers, but for the most part we used this as a secondary option for those who couldn't make it to the in-person sessions. Furthermore, given the consultation timeline, we had a limited amount of time to complete the consultations, and weren't able to give as much notice as we would have liked for folks attending the consultations in-person.

Despite the constraints, we largely had the right people in the room for our consultations and/or completing the survey, with 76% of respondents holding either a position of Operational or Strategic decision-making. We were also happy to hear from folks representing a broad range of organizational sizes. 43% of respondents represented an organization/business of 100+ employees; 39% represented an agency of 20-99 employees; 25% represented an agency of 5-19 employees and 4% represented an agency of 1-5 employees.

What We Heard from Service Providers and Employers - Analysis and Limitations

In analyzing what we heard from Service Providers and Employers, it is important to keep in mind that 76% of respondents are in decision-making roles, either guiding or influencing EDI work within their agencies, therefore their perspective on how effective their EDI work is may be biased based on their position of power.

Those who responded feel that their agency is strongly committed to EDI, and is taking critical actions to integrate EDI policies and procedures into their work. Of those who responded to the survey, 82% replied “strongly agree” to the statement “EDI is something we value within our organization/business”.

Additionally, those who we heard from spoke to the many ways that they are currently, actively, working toward EDI within their agency. 79% of respondents replied “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statement “EDI is something we are actively working towards within our organization/business”, with 75% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement “my workplace is supportive of diverse staff”.

One of the main ways that agencies are ensuring that staff are well-versed in EDI is by supporting them with training. 61% of respondents stated that they currently have plans in place to offer EDI training to staff, and 54% of respondents stated that they currently have plans in place to offer EDI training for management (with 29% of participants responding “unsure”). Additionally, agencies are interested in creating cultures that support diversity and inclusion by actively supporting diverse staff, prioritizing hiring diverse populations, investing in the development of EDI policies and procedures, and for service providers advocating on behalf of clients who require community support and employment.

While service providers and employers are making strides in implementing EDI practices, there are still major gaps. For example, only 50% of agencies surveyed currently have a process in place to collect staff suggestions and feedback pertaining to EDI, and only 29% of agencies are currently collecting staff demographics. Generally, agencies shared that they need more time and capacity to really explore the EDI gaps within their agency, and to implement meaningful solutions to shift the culture and to attract more diversity within the workforce.

The following are the key responses from the open-ended survey, interview, and consultation questions. Responses to the close-ended questions are available in Figures 1 - 16.

Question - When it comes to EDI, what are 2-3 CURRENT areas of focus for your organization/business?

- Increasing knowledge & awareness of EDI in the workforce.
- Promoting more inclusive language in the workforce.
- Fostering safe spaces within the workforce for diverse workers.
- Investing in EDI training for staff.
- Supporting diverse hires from the application process to onboarding, and through their term of employment.
- Actively recruit to reflect EDI practices.
- Advocate for staff and members of the community who require employment support from an EDI lens.
- Develop a better understanding of workplace challenges of marginalized staff members.
- Invest in the development of EDI policies and procedures.

Question - When it comes to EDI, what are 2-3 FUTURE areas of focus for your organization/business?

- Increasing staff training opportunities and reaching more staff through training. Invest in training for board board and staff members.
- Developing an internal EDI committee.
- Provide mentorship opportunities for marginalized staff.
- Be an advocate for underrepresented groups in the community. In particular, advocate for the benefits of hiring diverse populations.
- Investing in capability building (internal) to meet EDI commitments.
- Developing trust with employees so that employers and service providers can best meet their needs.

Question - What barriers do you face in implementing EDI goals within your organization/business?

- Lack of representation in leadership positions.
- Organizational culture.
- Local cultural norms.
- Level of openness to new ideas.
- Funding shortage (lack of funds to support clients who require EDI supports AND lack of funds to invest in internal EDI initiatives).
- Lack of time to invest in EDI.
- Finding diverse candidates to hire.

- Turnover (difficult to keep up with training; difficult to maintain EDI initiatives).
- Aging workforce coming up to retirement.
- Heavily unionized environment makes it hard to prioritize diversity in hiring practices.

Question - What EDI Work Have You Done So Far? (Service Providers Only)

- Advocate to employers to see the value of hiring diverse folks. Supporting people in seeing the value of hiring diverse populations.
- Investing in EDI training (e.g. through onboarding).
- Prioritizing basic needs for diverse populations first (e.g. housing, transportation).
- Providing a welcome guide and welcome network for newcomers.
- Discussing/sharing experiences on the value of hiring diverse folks.
- Through engaging in self-reflection (e.g. what are we doing? Where can we improve?).

Question - What are your EDI Goals? (Service Providers Only)

- Support employers in seeing the value of hiring diverse people. Support folks in seeing this as an opportunity to address the labour market shortage/ "silver tsunami."
- Have honest conversations. Move beyond the fear of saying the wrong thing.
- Pull back and do an EDI audit (ask - where are we? Where do we need to go?).
- Understand who our staff are (e.g. key demographics), and work to strengthen diversity in the workforce.

Who We Heard From (key data)

Figure 1

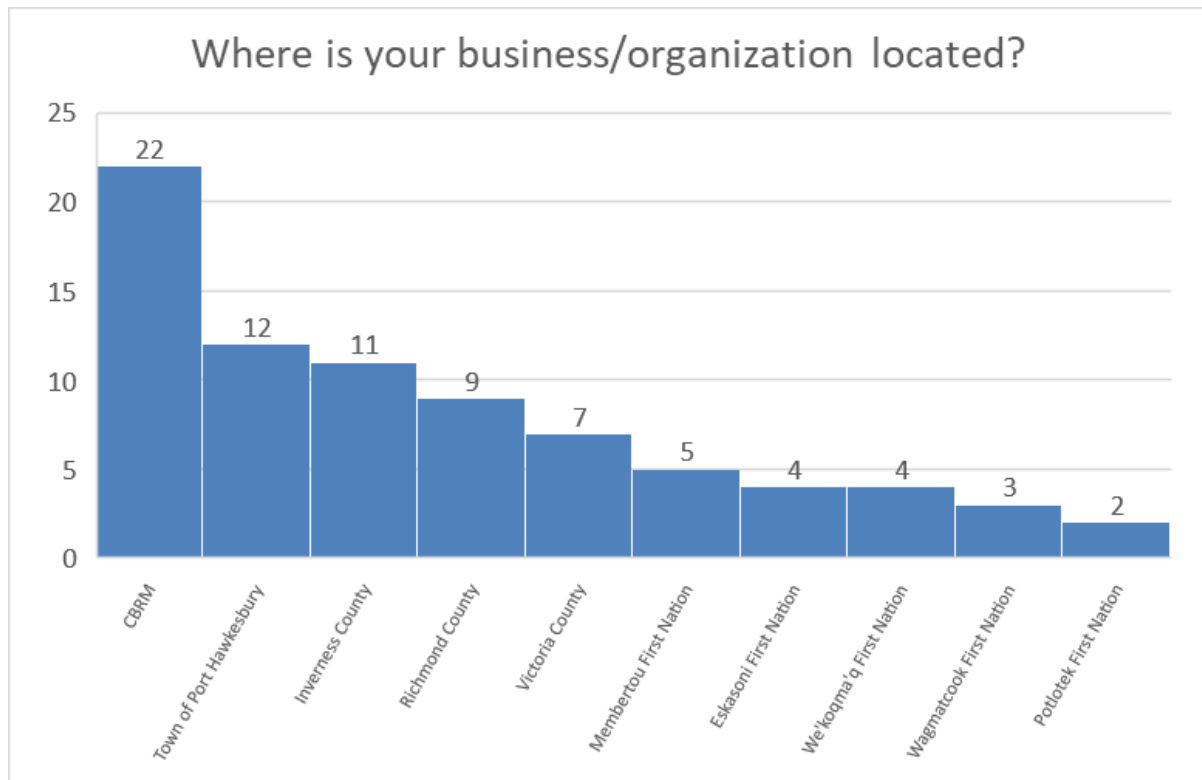


Figure 2

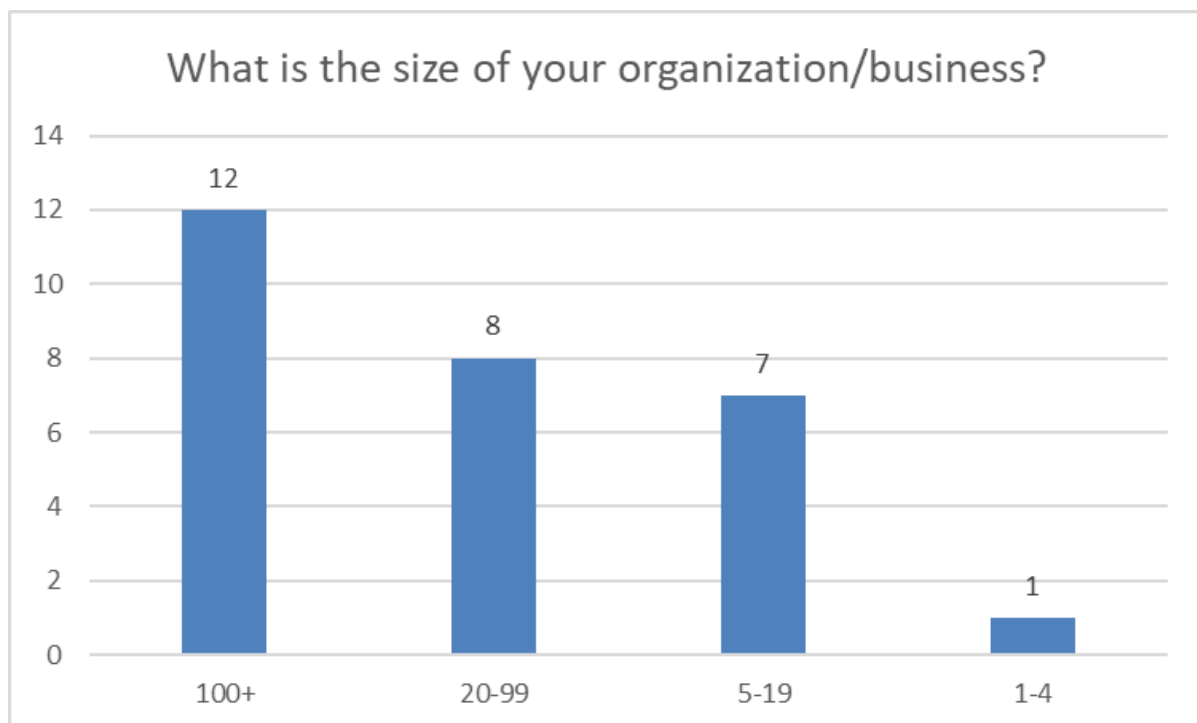


Figure 3

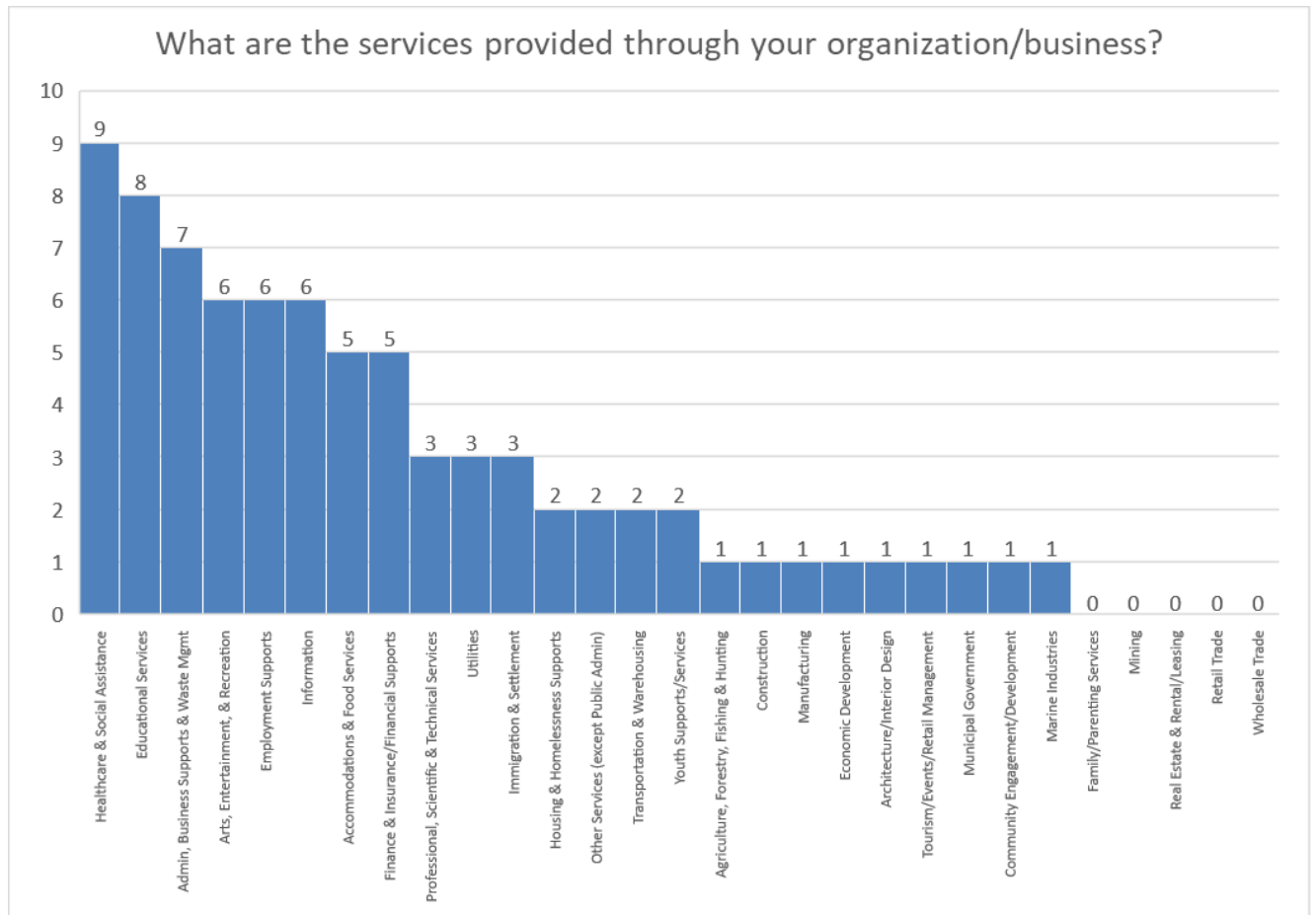


Figure 4

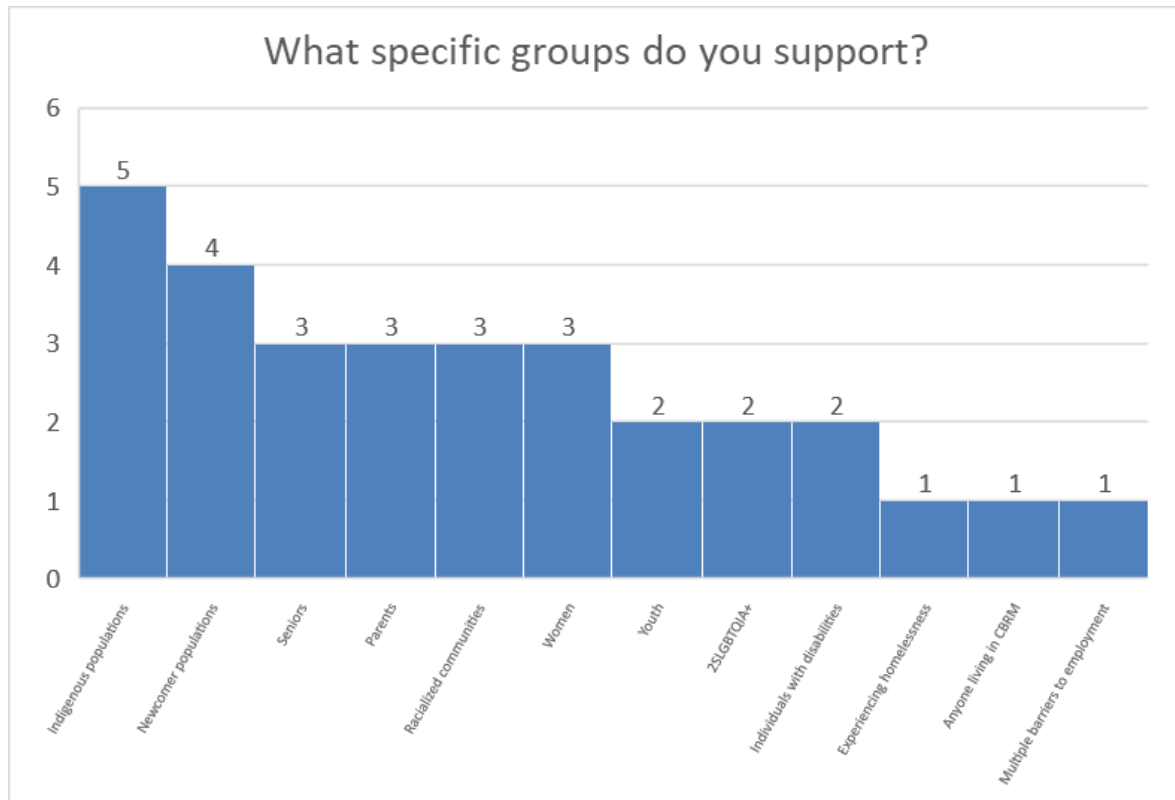


Figure 5

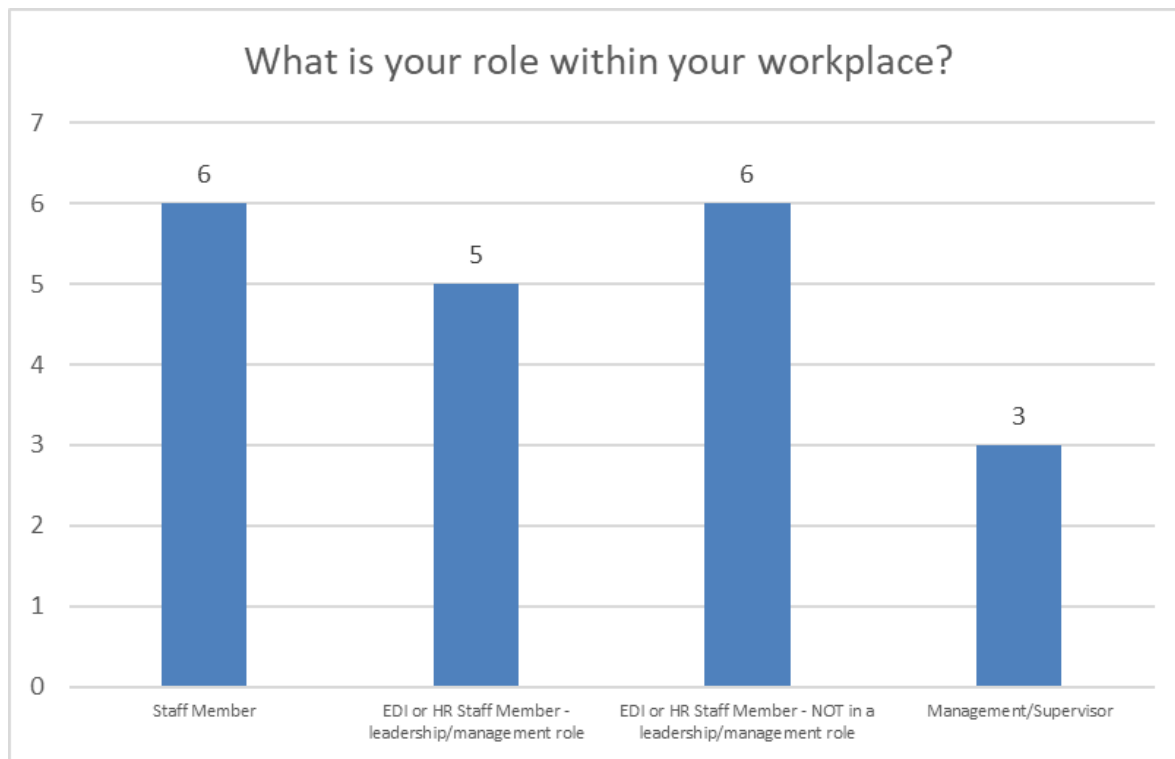


Figure 6



What We Heard (key data)

Figure 7

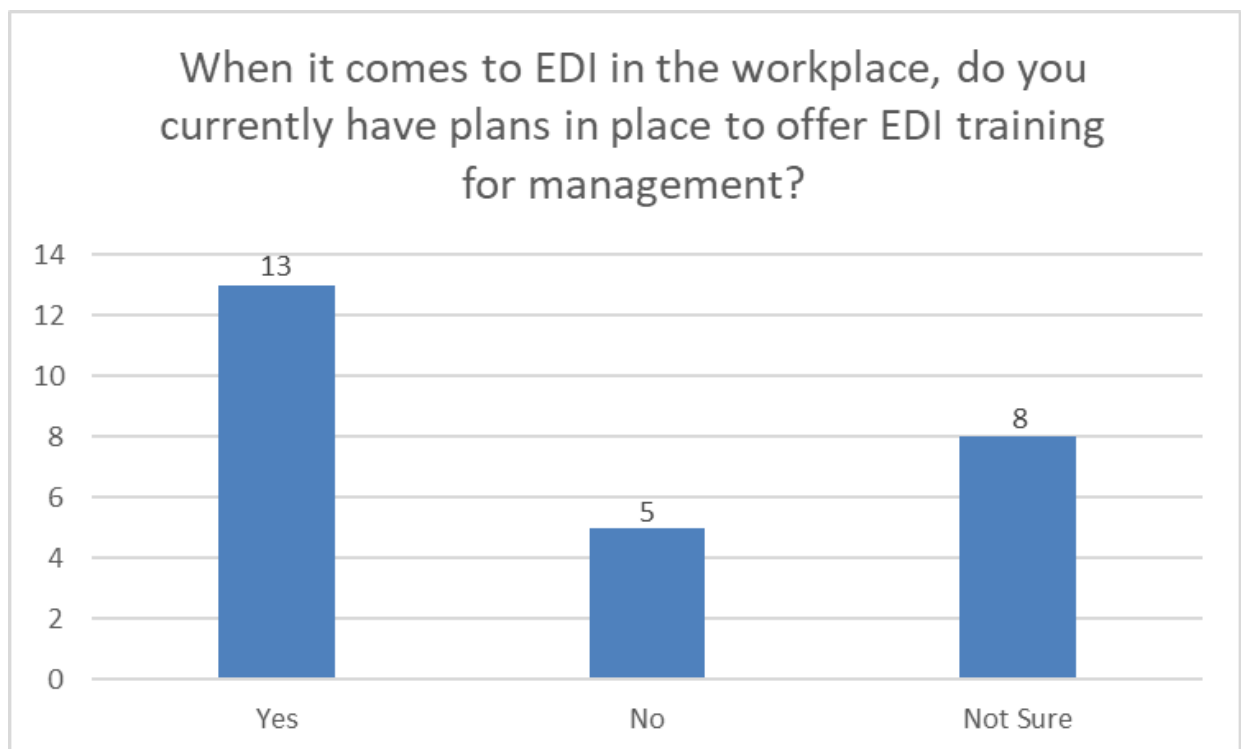


Figure 8

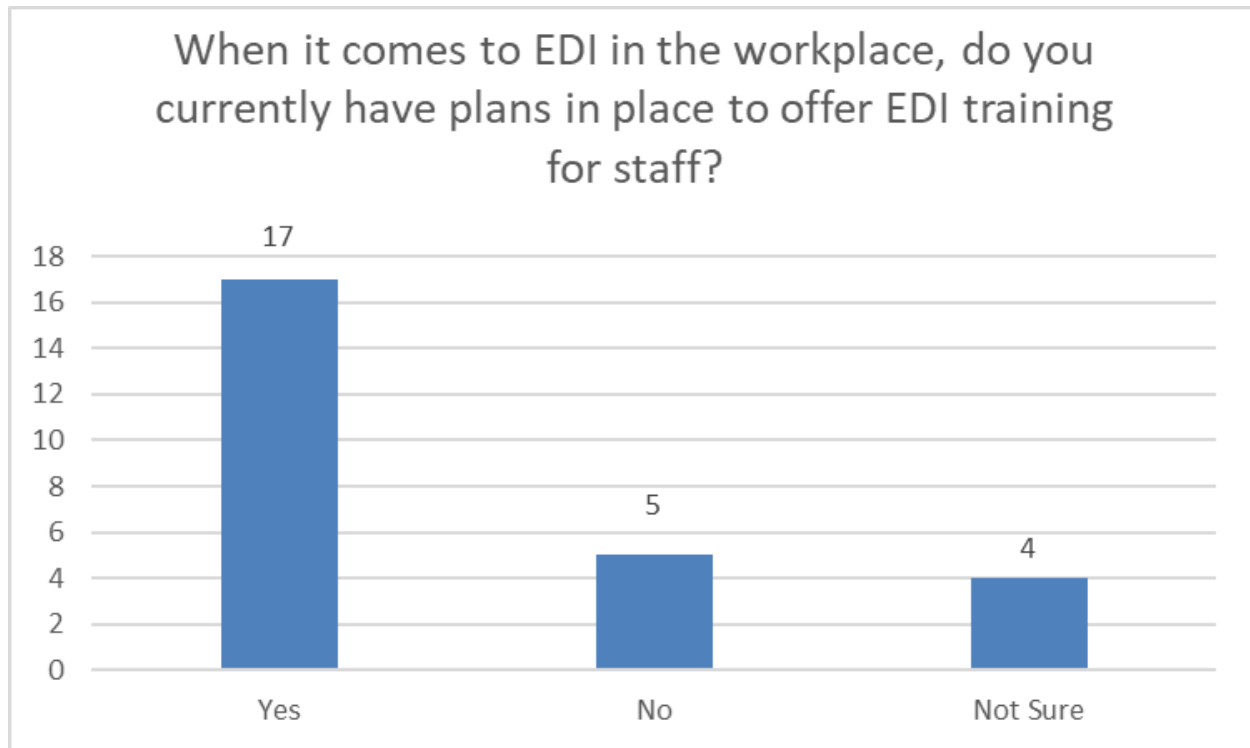


Figure 9

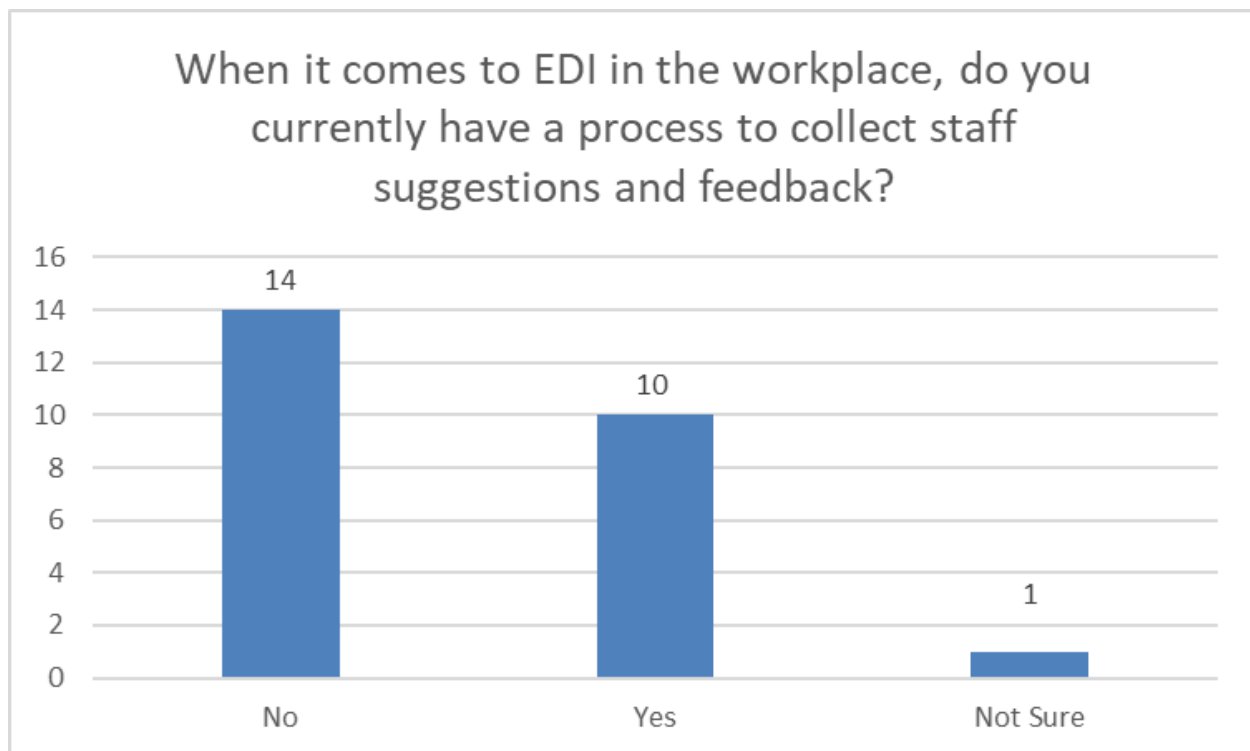


Figure 10

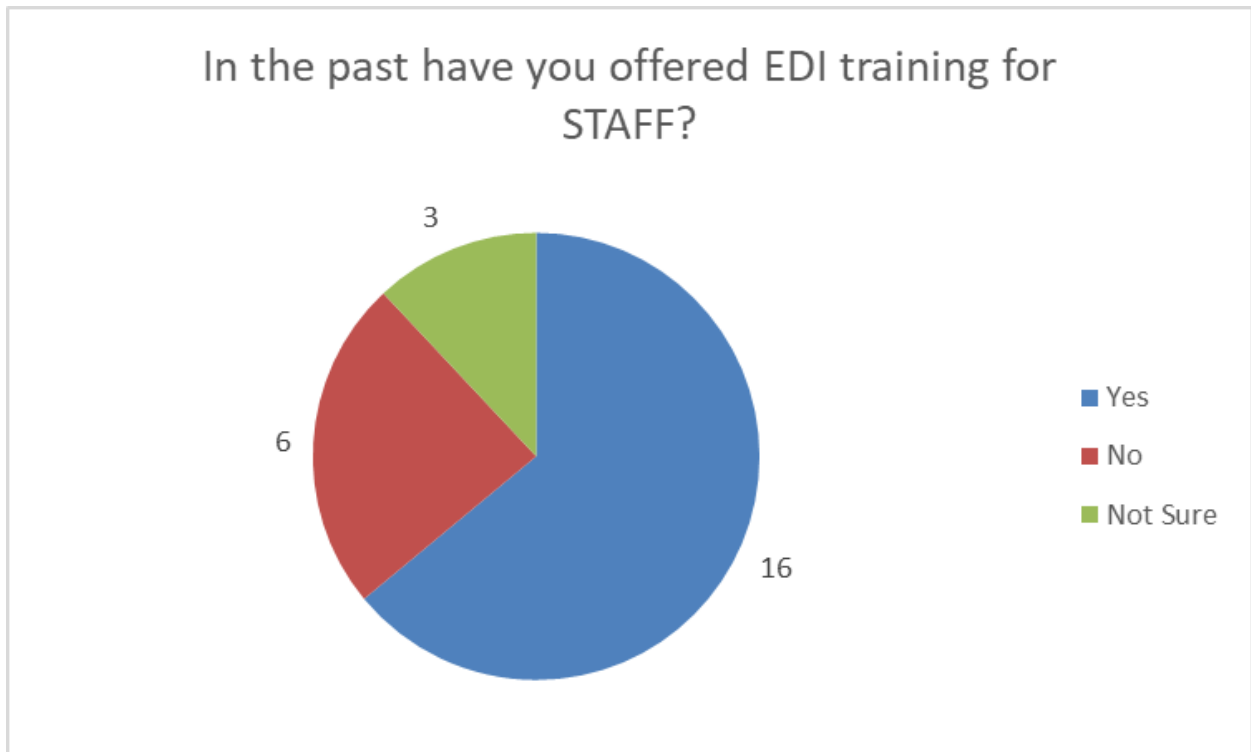


Figure 11

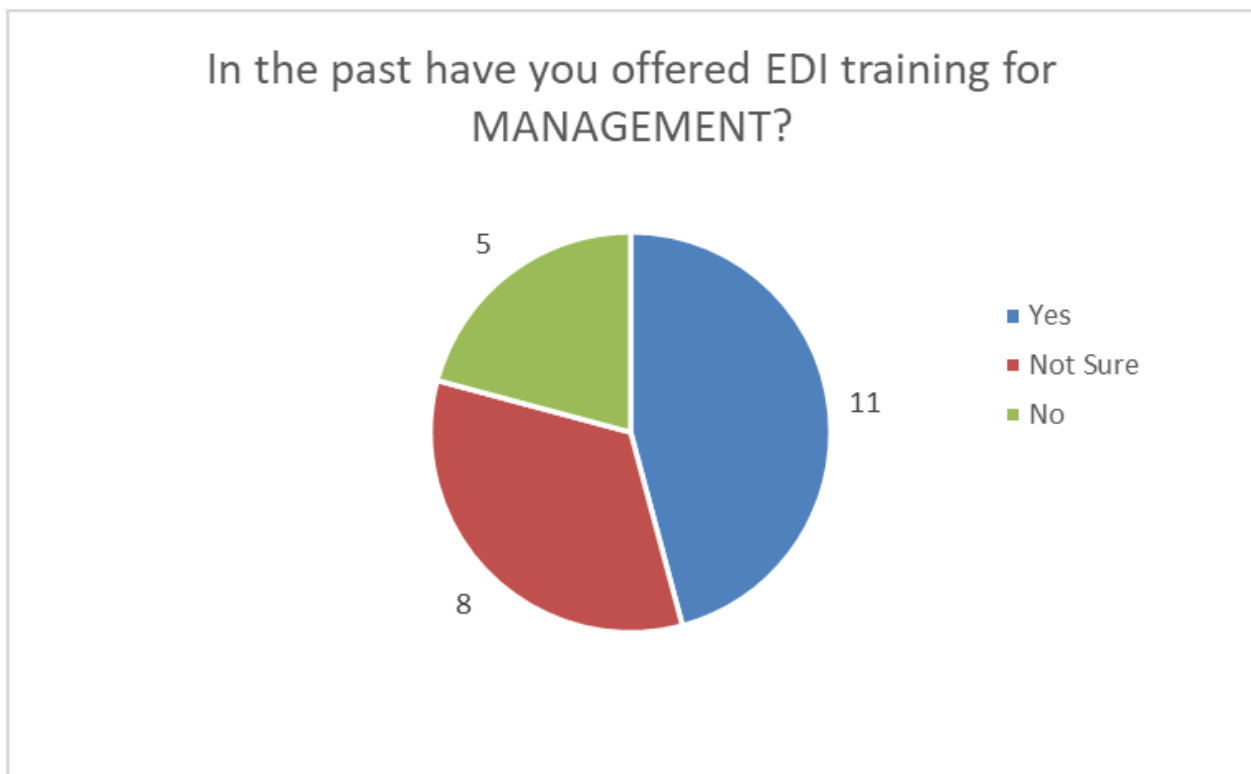


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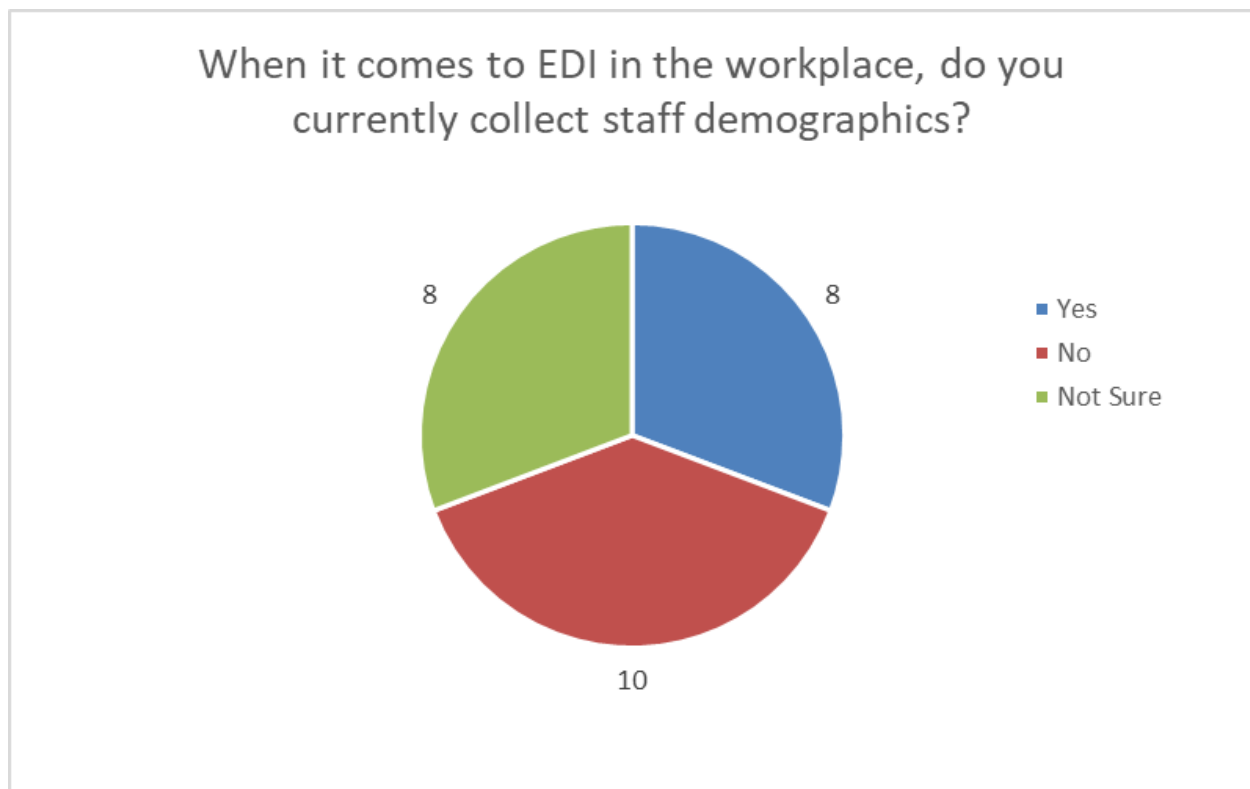


Figure 13

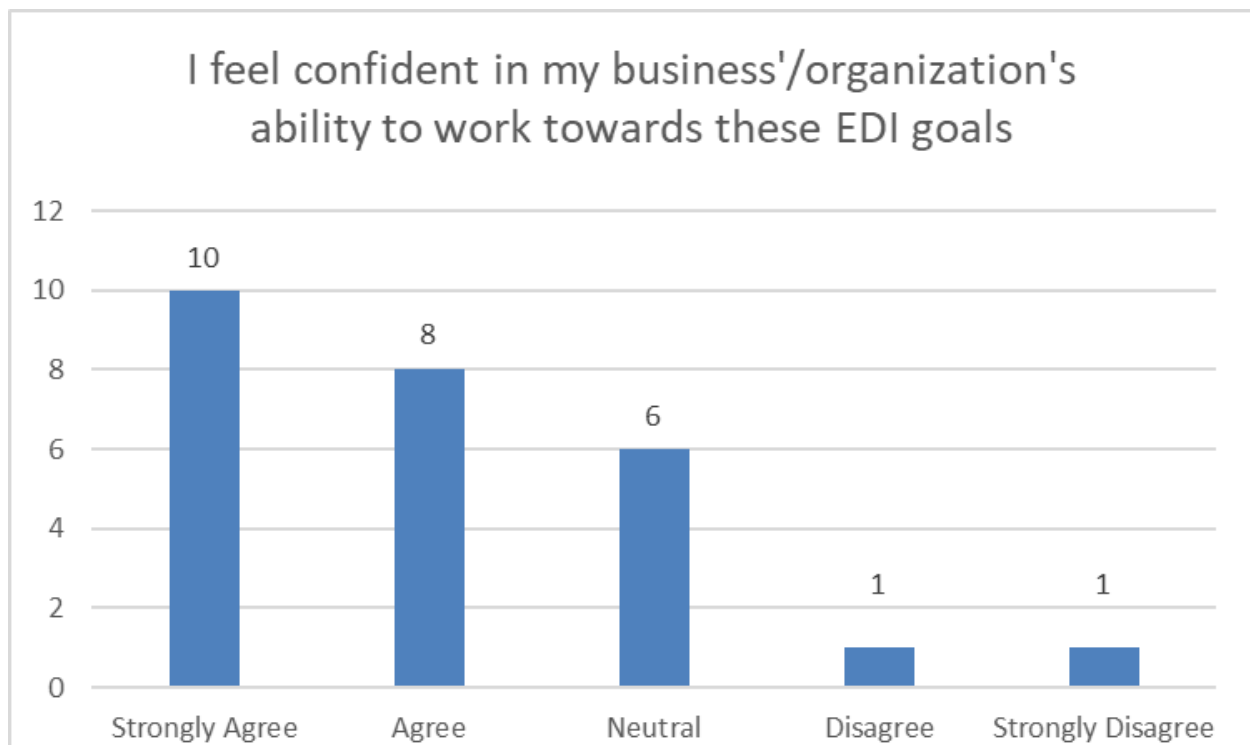


Figure 14

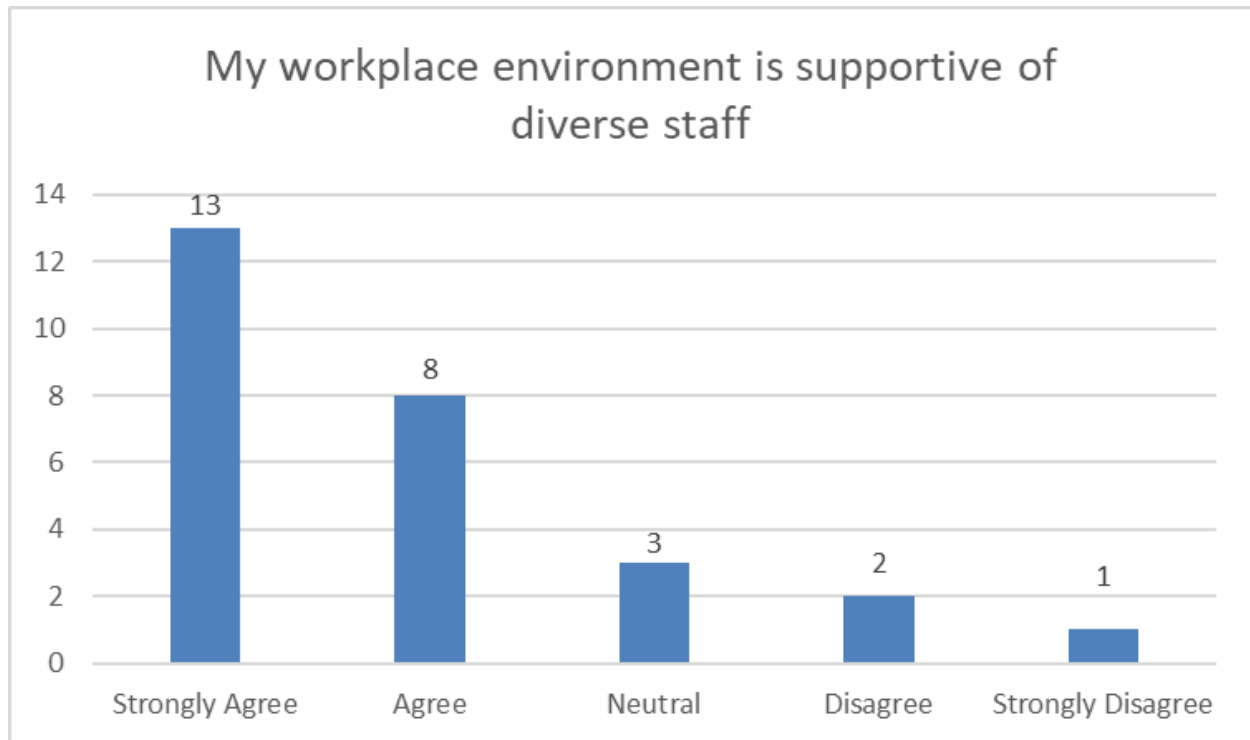
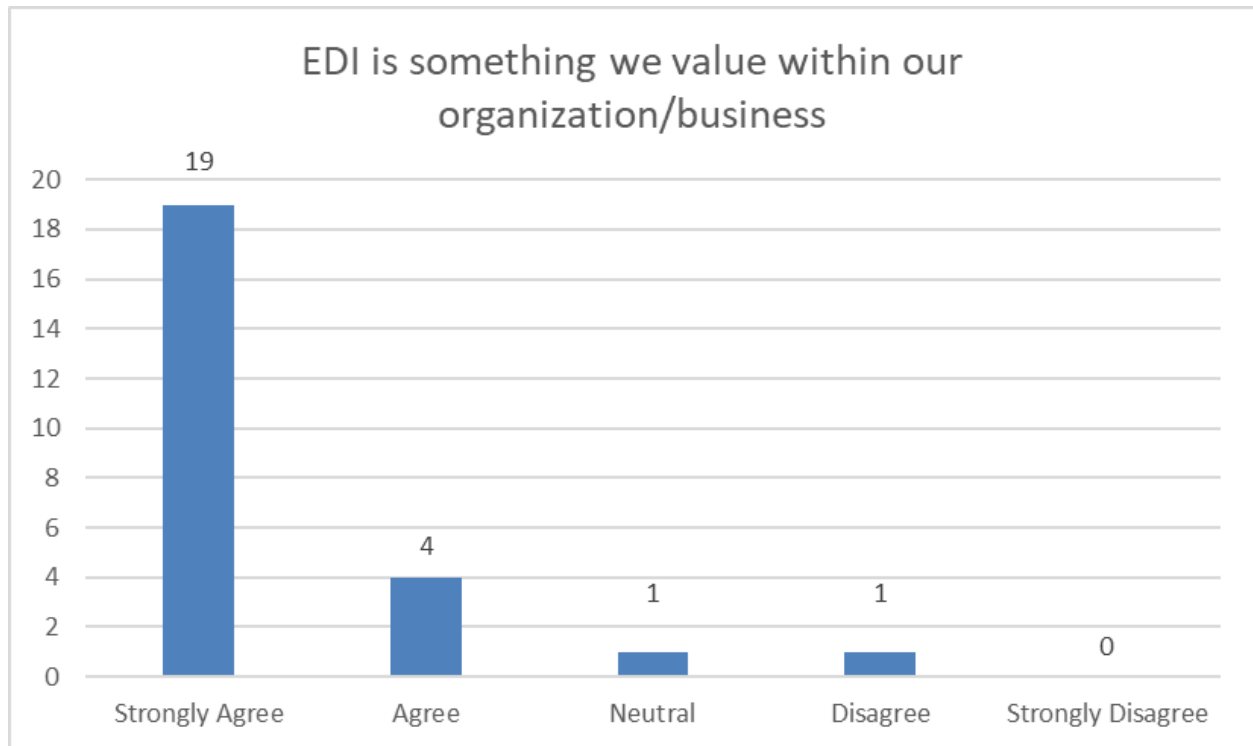


Figure 15



Figure 16



4.0 Workforce Surveys

We heard from a total of 256 folks who completed paper/online surveys. This included folks who are currently or were formerly engaged in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki workforce, and who are currently living in Cape Breton-Unama'ki. Please see below for several graphs detailing the findings of these surveys.

Who We Heard From - Workforce Analysis and Limitations

Through the initial survey release, we collected 186 survey responses. We then re-launched the survey which brought the number up to 256 completed surveys. Through the survey collection process, we received several hundred spam responses. We were able to filter out spam responses by postal code (we asked folks to submit the first three digits of their postal code as part of the survey, and only accepted responses from Cape Breton-Unama'ki postal codes). We also removed survey responses that were suspected to be spam (e.g. a single respondent responding with the same open-ended responses through multiple successive surveys). One of the biggest challenges of the survey process was that we didn't reach as many marginalized populations as we would have liked through the online survey approach. We were able to capture more diverse audiences by providing paper surveys for client and staff completion, but we would have liked to see a stronger uptake from those who are ethnically diverse (18% of survey respondents), those who identified as 2SLGBTQIA+ (10% of survey respondents), and those who identified as gender diverse (2% of survey respondents).

While 76% of the survey respondents were Canadian Citizens, we did hear from 15% of respondents who identified as a Permanent Resident. Despite the growing number of International Students in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region, only 2% of survey respondents were International Students. In the future, administering surveys directly through agencies who are supporting diverse populations may be the most impactful avenue for reaching these groups (e.g. primary source of data collection), while leveraging online surveys as a secondary source of data collection. This could include those working in the areas of immigration and settlements services, agencies supporting 2SLGBTQIA+ folks, and post-secondary establishments who are working directly with international students.

While we didn't attract as many diverse survey respondents as we had hoped for, we did attract a disproportionately large number of women (66% of the total survey respondents). This may speak to the fact that women are more heavily impacted by workplace discrimination than men, and therefore a survey like this may attract those who have lived experience and feedback to offer.

What We Heard from the Workforce - Analysis and Limitations

In terms of what we heard, most of the folks who responded felt that their workplace was committed to diversity and inclusion (70% of participants responded “agree” or “strongly agree”), and this was further enforced by 71% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, “I am comfortable sharing information about my ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability, religion, etc. at my place of work”. Furthermore, 67% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that employees at their place of work demonstrate a commitment to EDI.

While respondents generally felt that EDI was a priority within their organization and that they could share information about their identity at work, the results were much less positive for those who experienced discrimination at their place of work. 27% of respondents reported that they experienced discrimination at their place of work. Of those who experienced discrimination, 49% felt that this act of discrimination was not handled appropriately, whereas 29% responded “neutral” to the handling of the act of discrimination. This speaks to the notion that while agencies and employees alike feel that EDI is a priority within their respective workplaces, it is not translating into the way that discrimination is being handled in the workplace. This could mean that there’s a need for more education and training for managers and HR professionals within the workplace, a better understanding of the needs of diverse populations, and/or the investment in a culture that has zero tolerance for discrimination (e.g. through policies and procedures).

When we asked members of the workforce what employers could do to ensure a sense of inclusion and belonging in the workplace, the response was overwhelmingly to educate themselves and others about the needs and experiences of diverse populations, and to not give into the bystander effect of letting acts of discrimination and microaggressions slide. Members of the workforce called for investment in education for all staff, and to ensure that diversity is reflected at every level of an organization. To ensure that agencies foster a culture where diverse workers can thrive, folks point to the need to have clear policies, procedures and frameworks that put EDI policies into practice, and outline zero tolerance for discrimination. Furthermore, fostering a safe space for folks to come forward with their experiences is key for survey respondents in fostering that sense of trust (e.g. “open door policy”). Finally, respondents point to the fact that diversity must be respected through fair salaries and promotion opportunities, as well as fair treatment of staff. EDI practices can improve when diversity is reflected in leadership positions and valued in promotion opportunities.

Who We Heard From (key data)

Figure 17

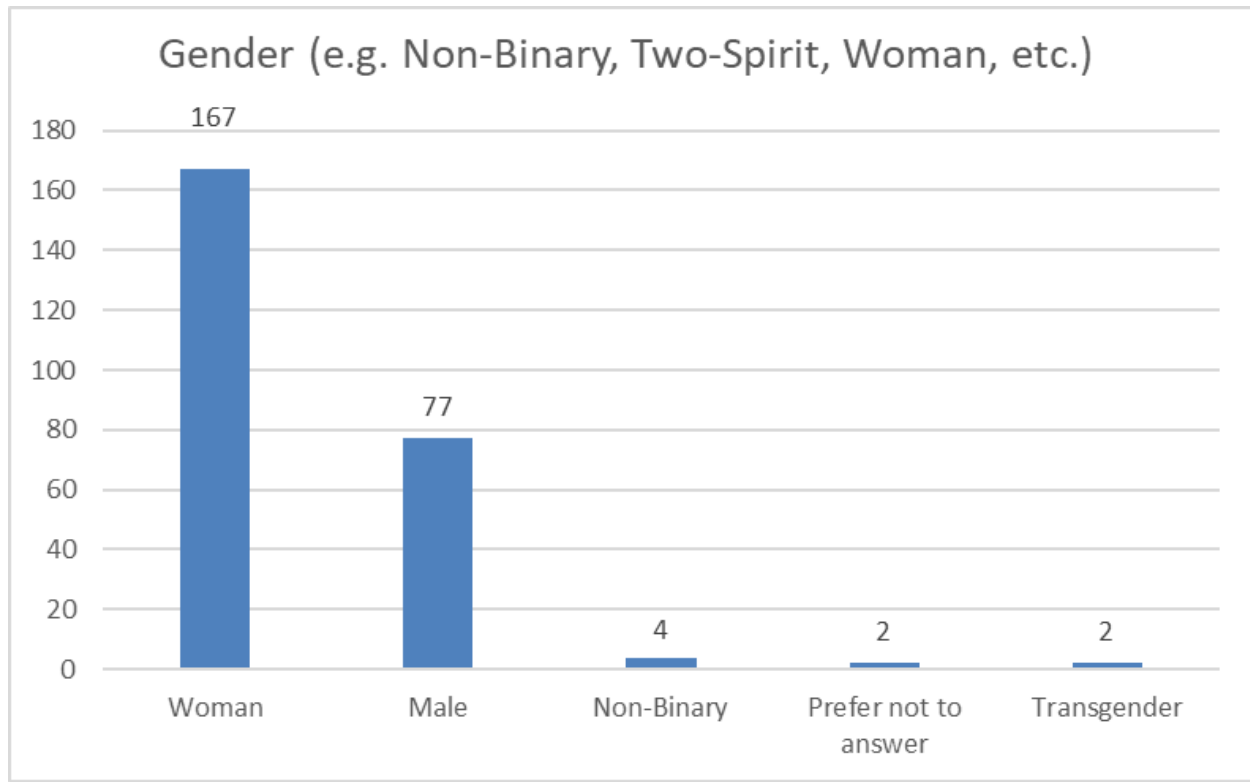


Figure 18

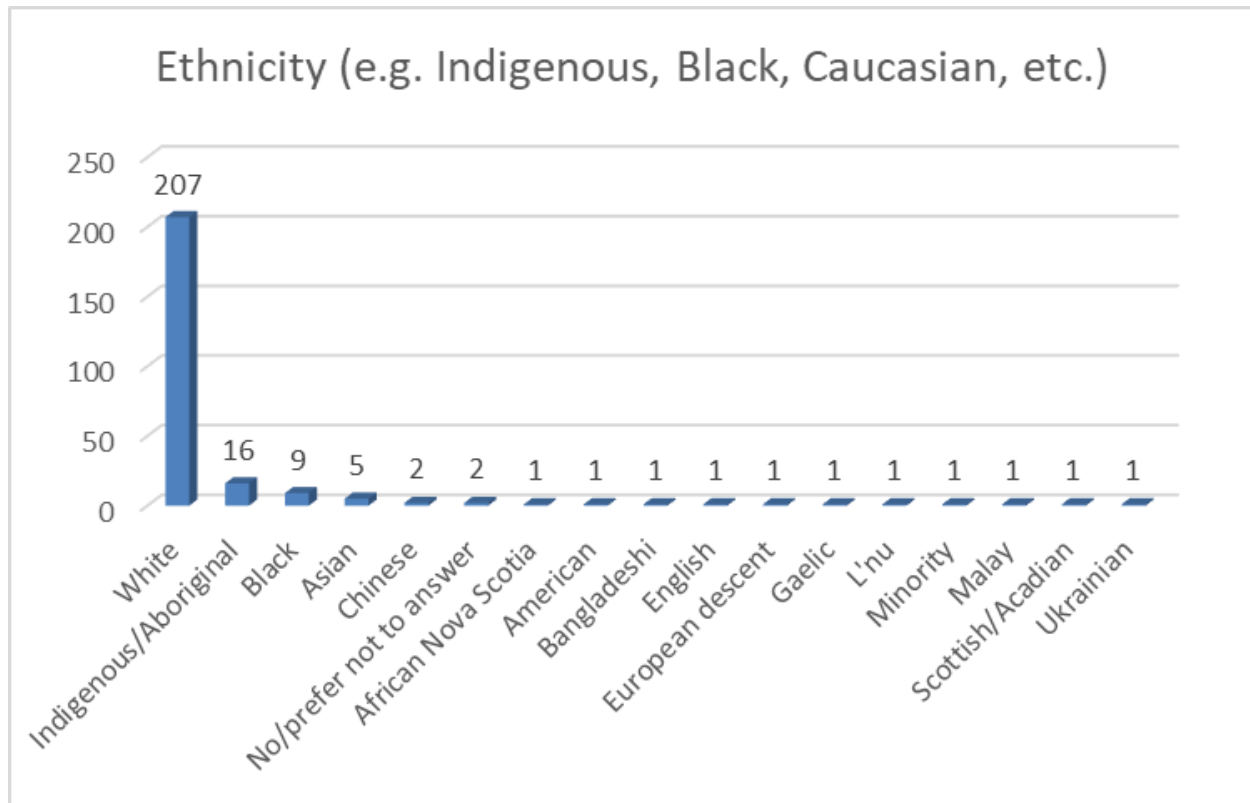


Figure 19

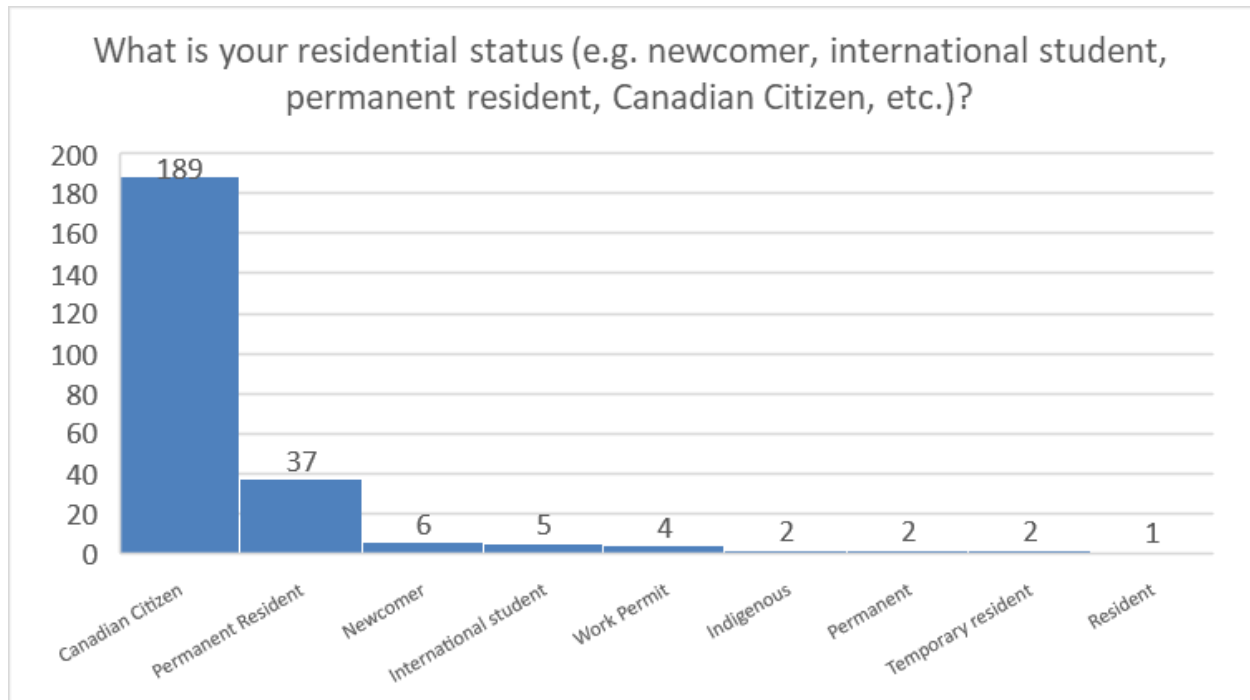


Figure 20

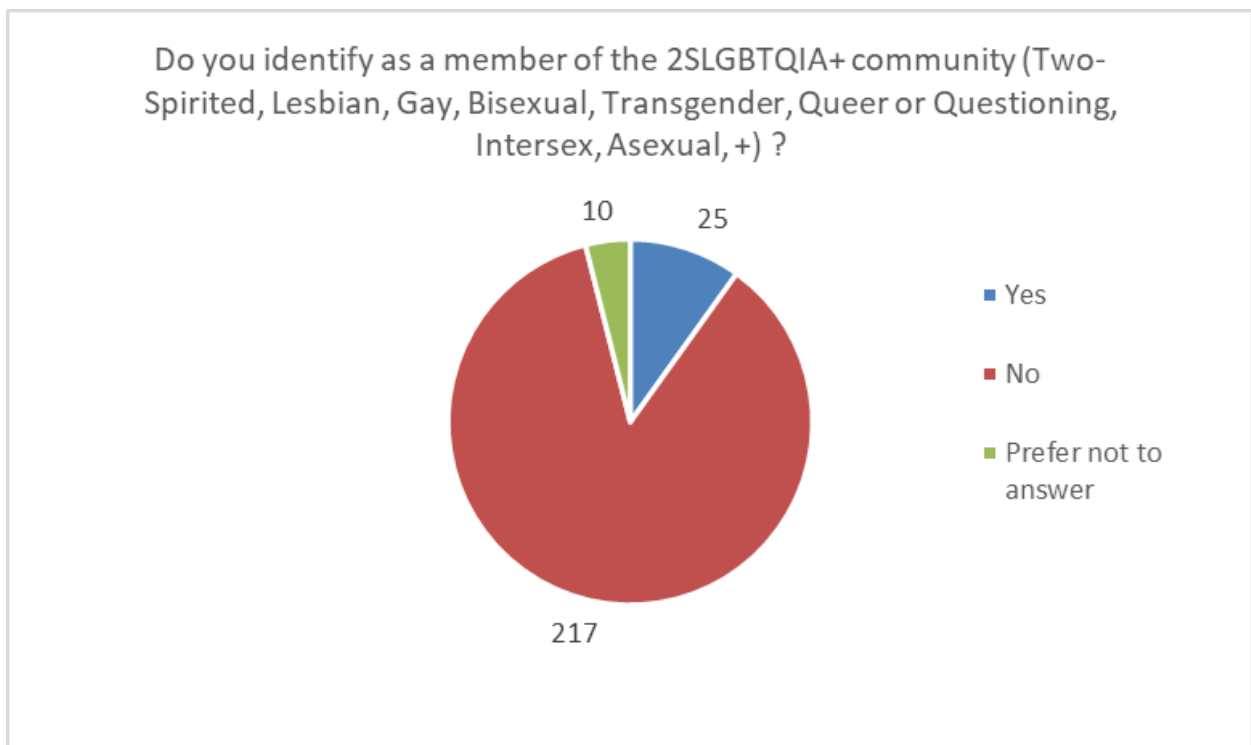


Figure 21

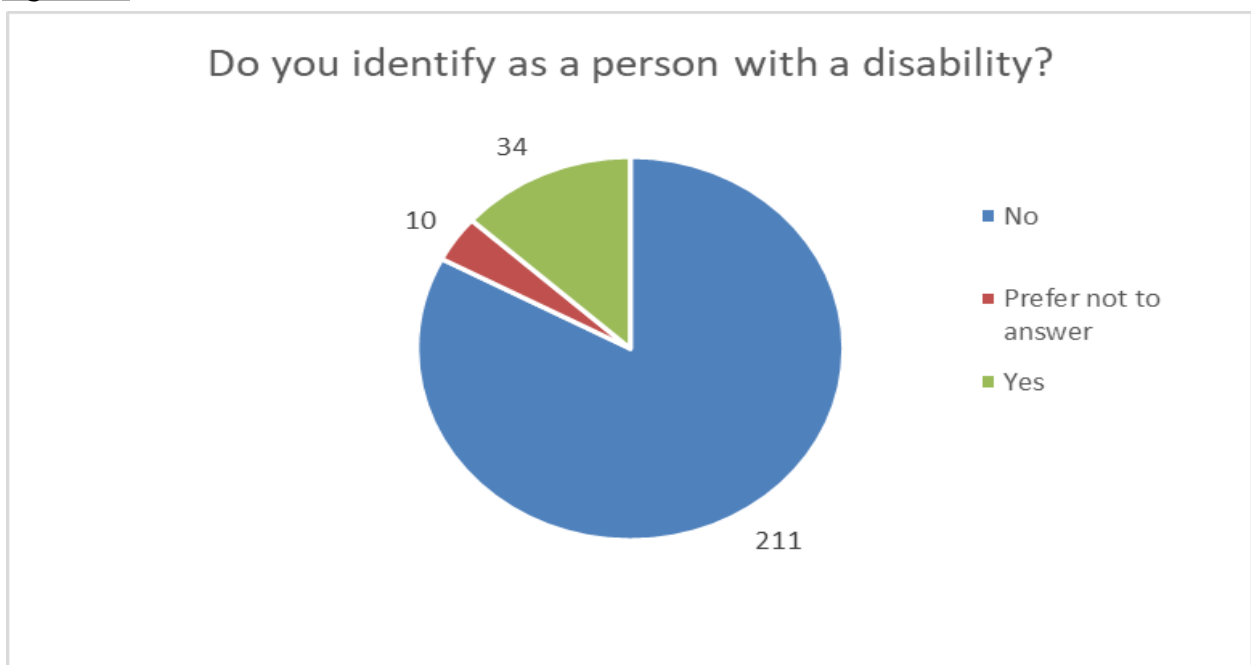


Figure 22

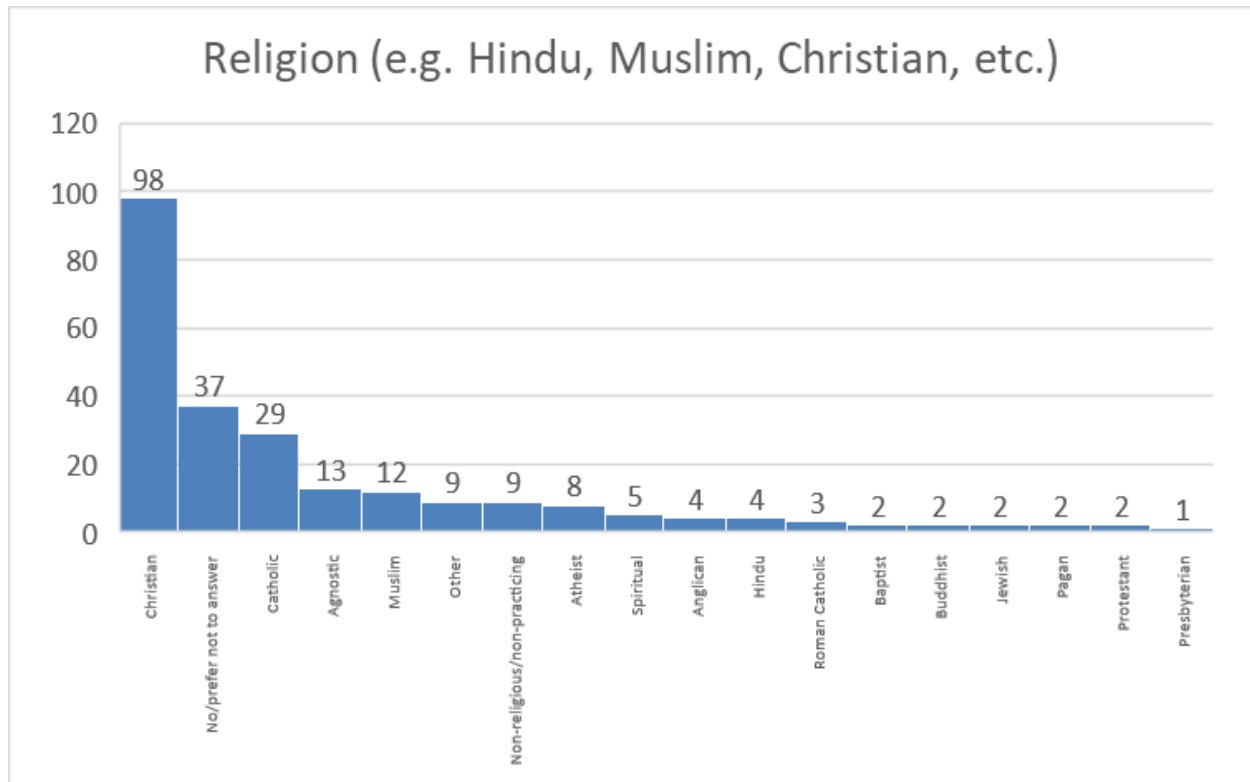
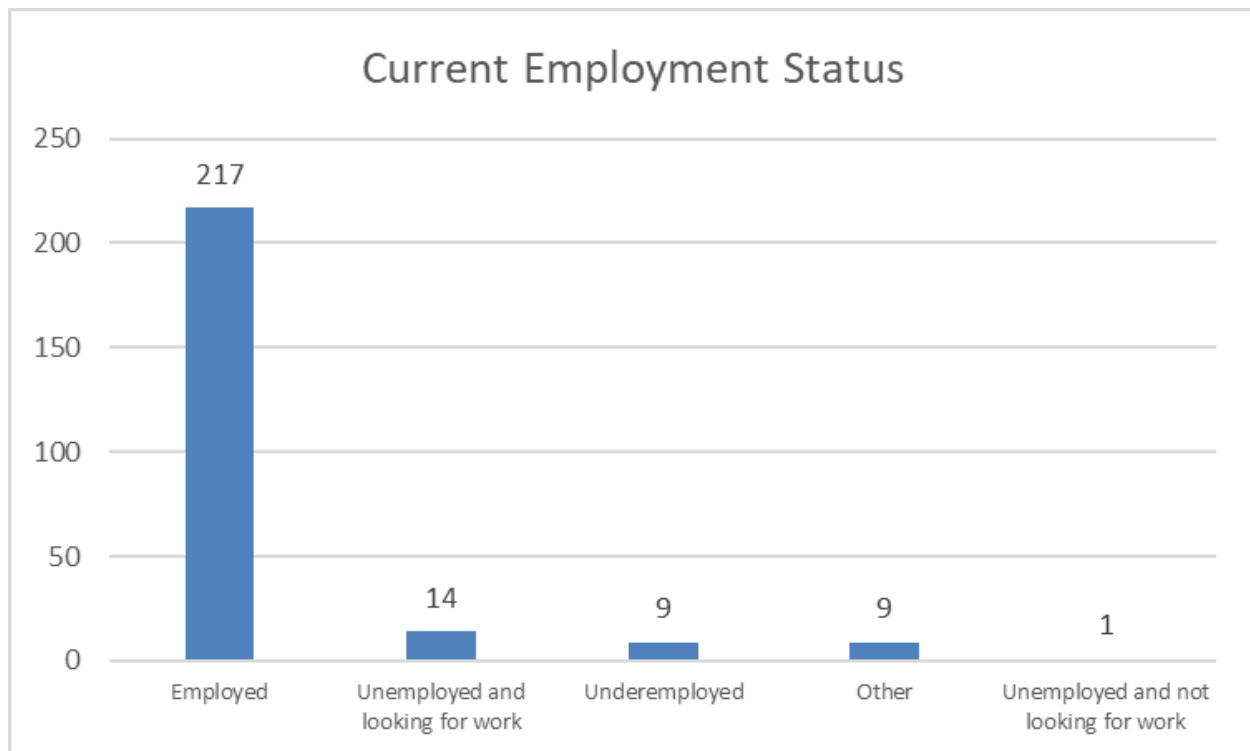


Figure 23



Note - "Underemployed" typically refers to an individual not being able to attain sufficient employment to meet their needs and/or experience.

What we Heard (key data)

Figure 24

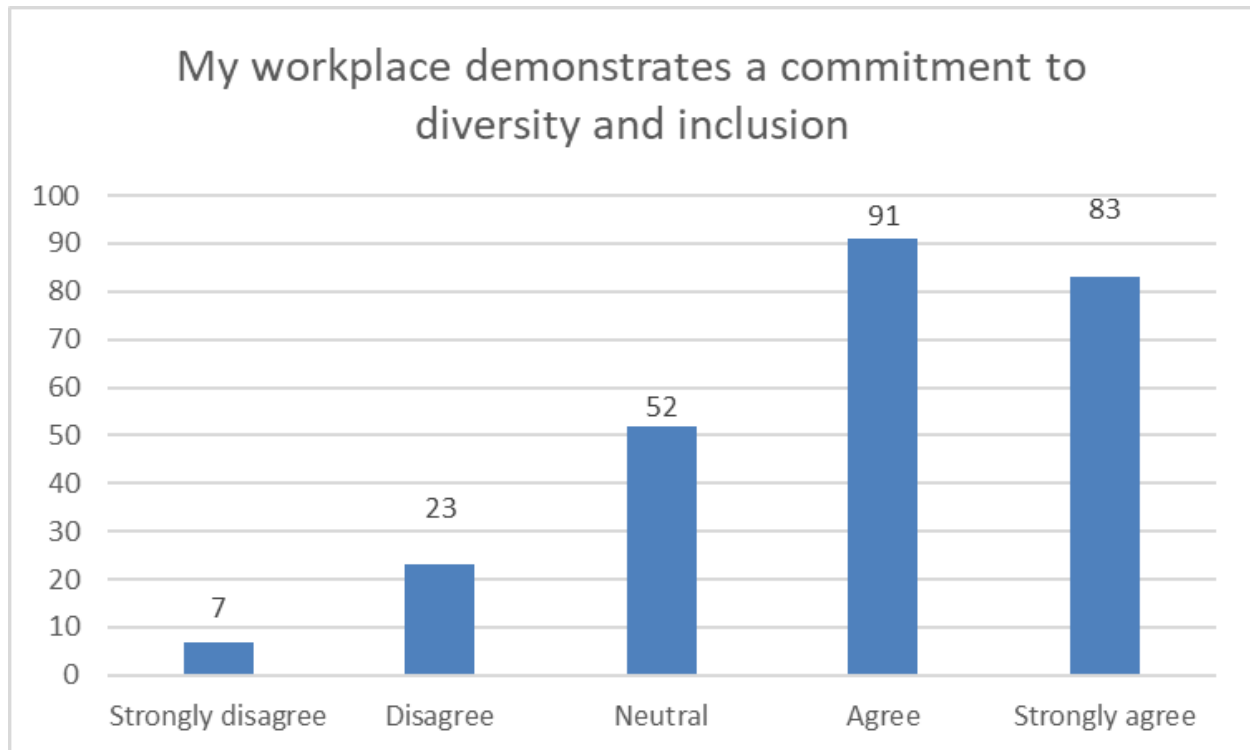


Figure 25

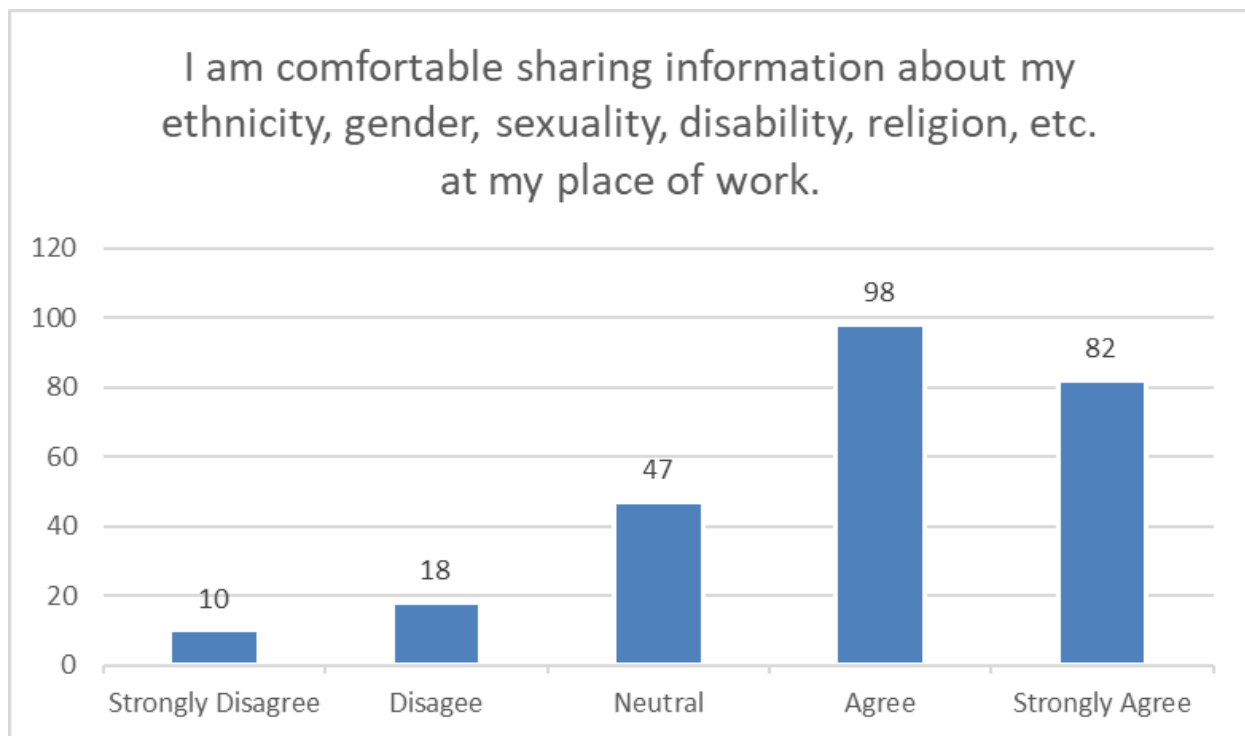


Figure 26

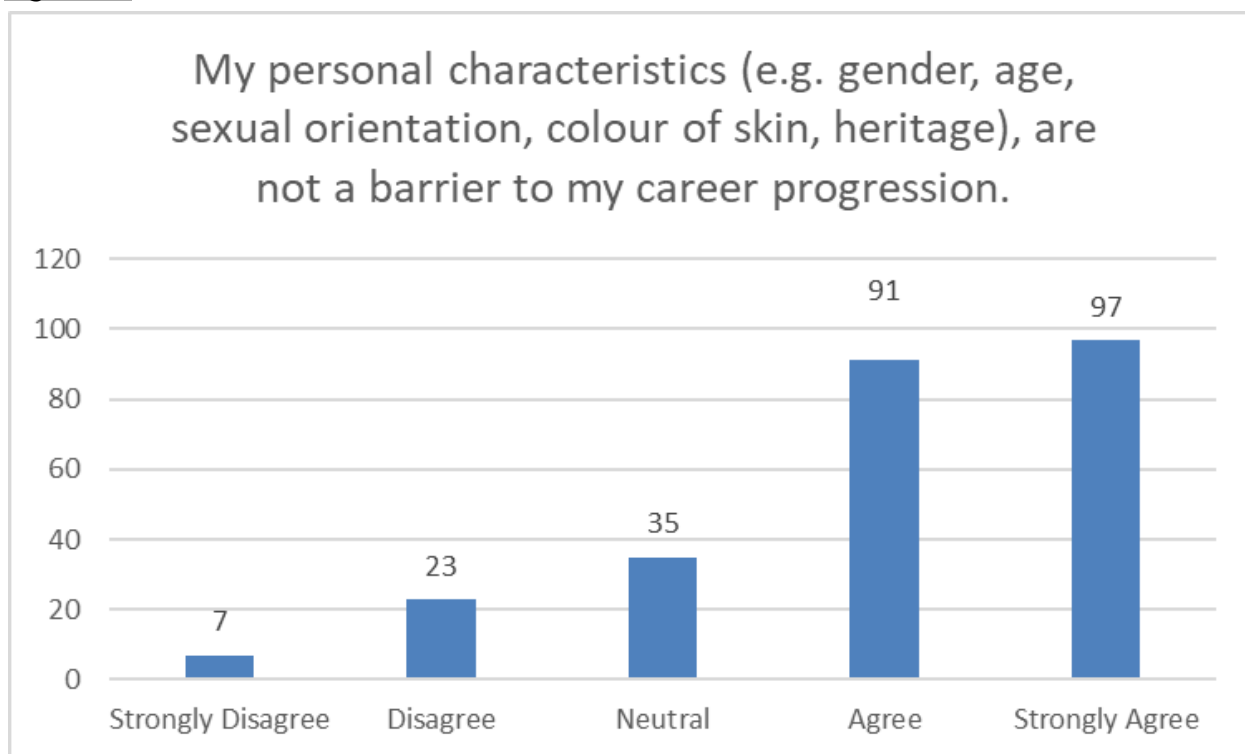


Figure 27

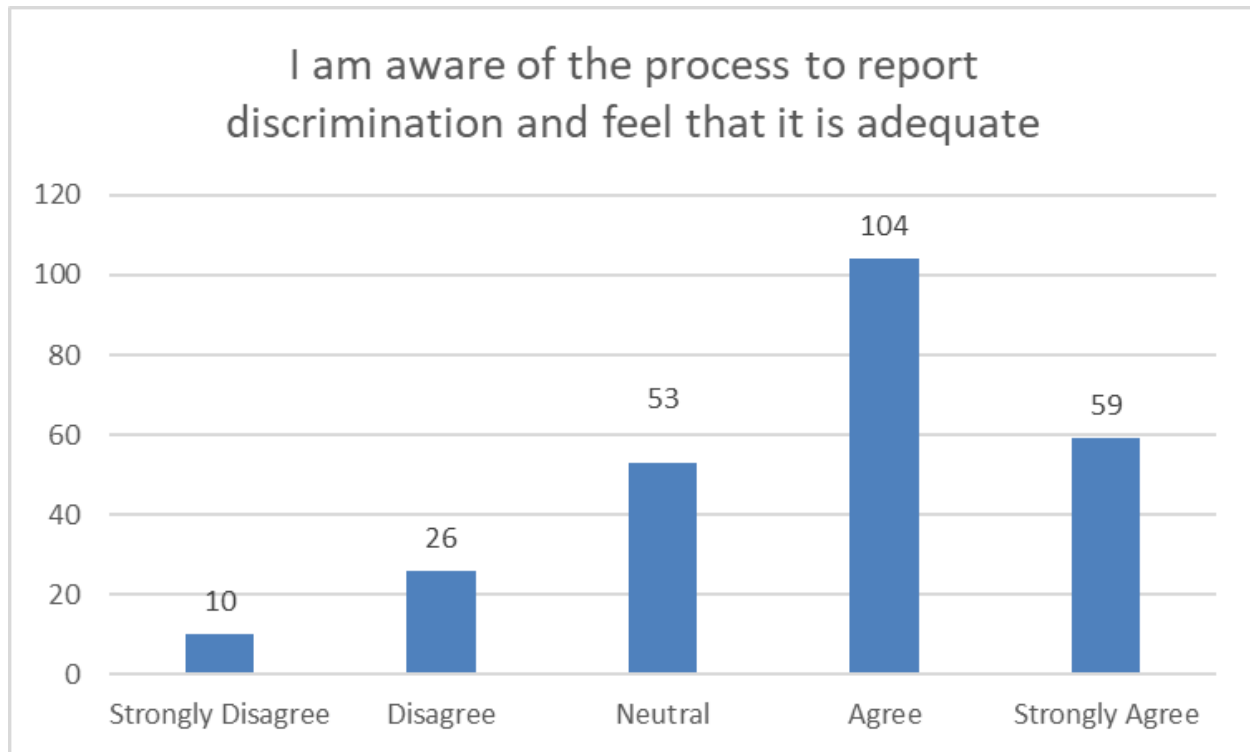


Figure 28

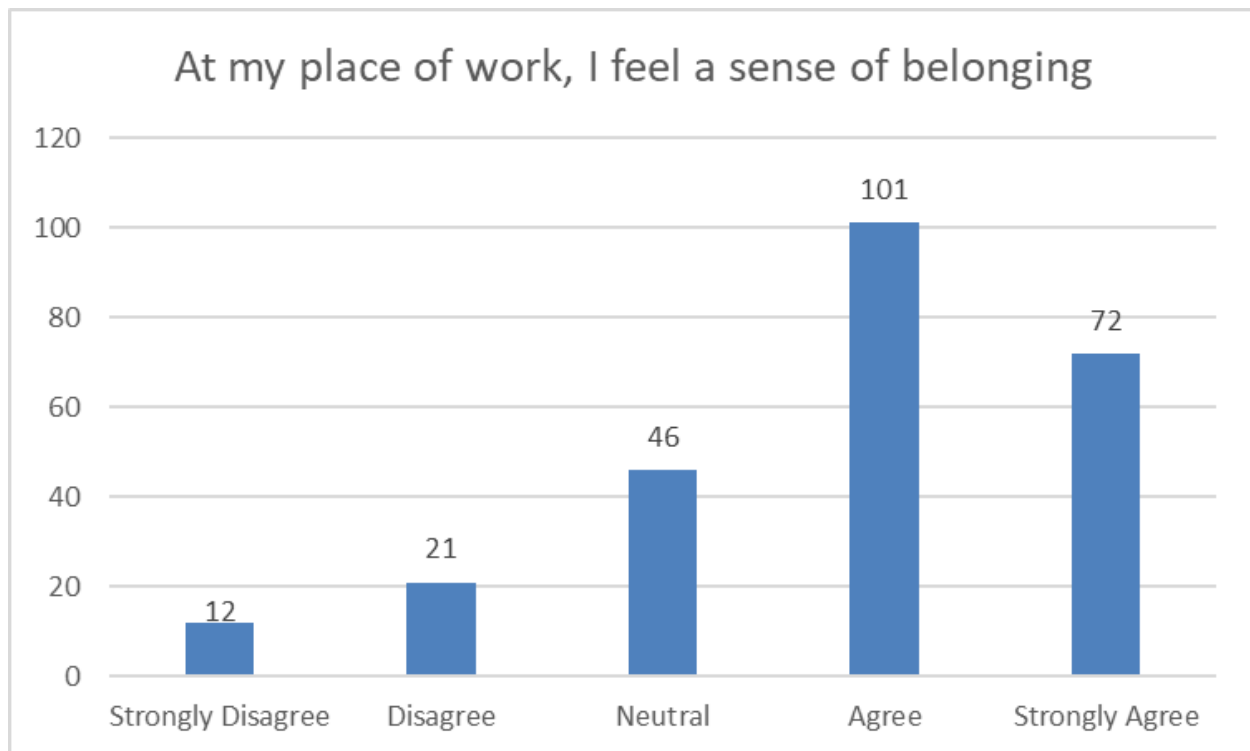


Figure 29

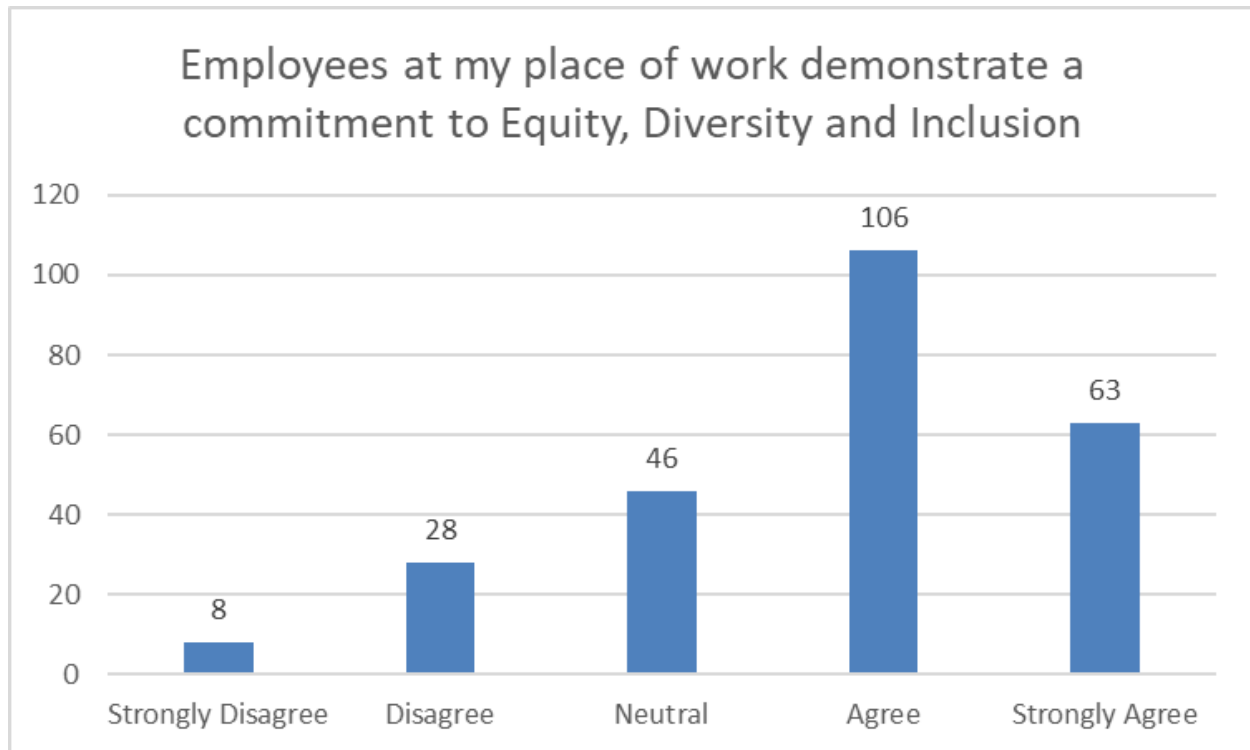


Figure 30

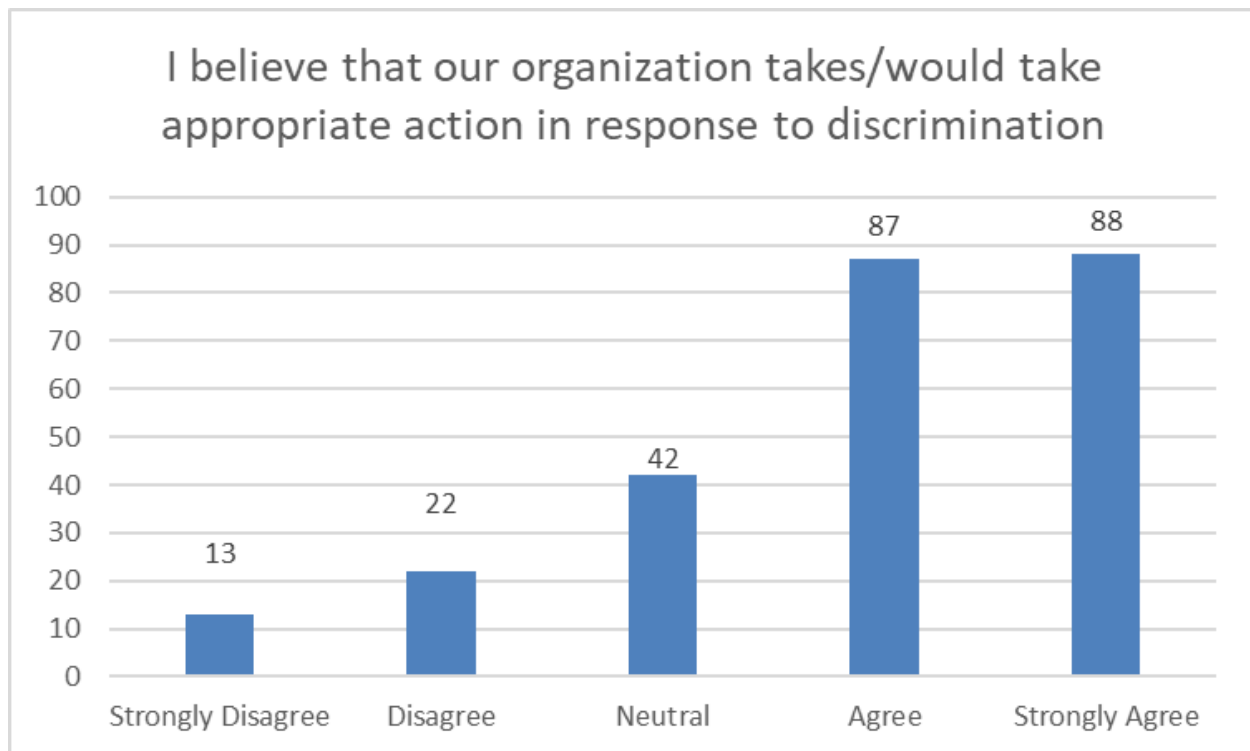


Figure 31

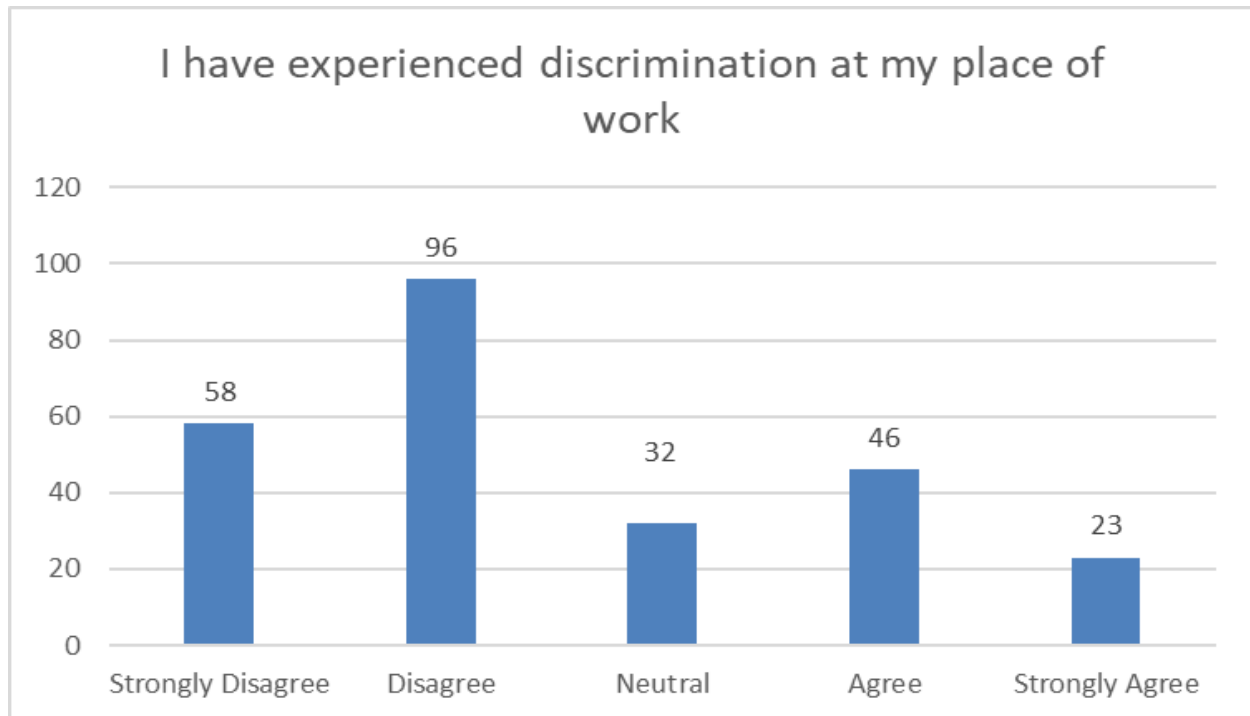


Figure 32

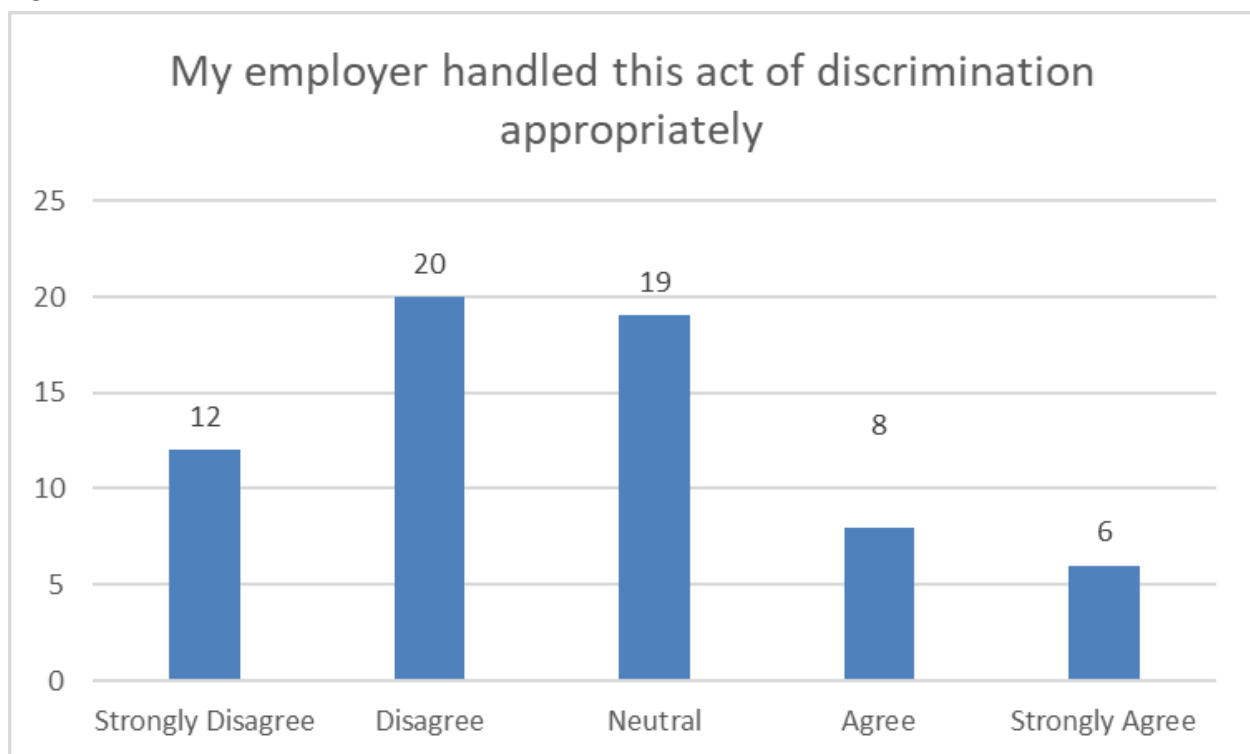
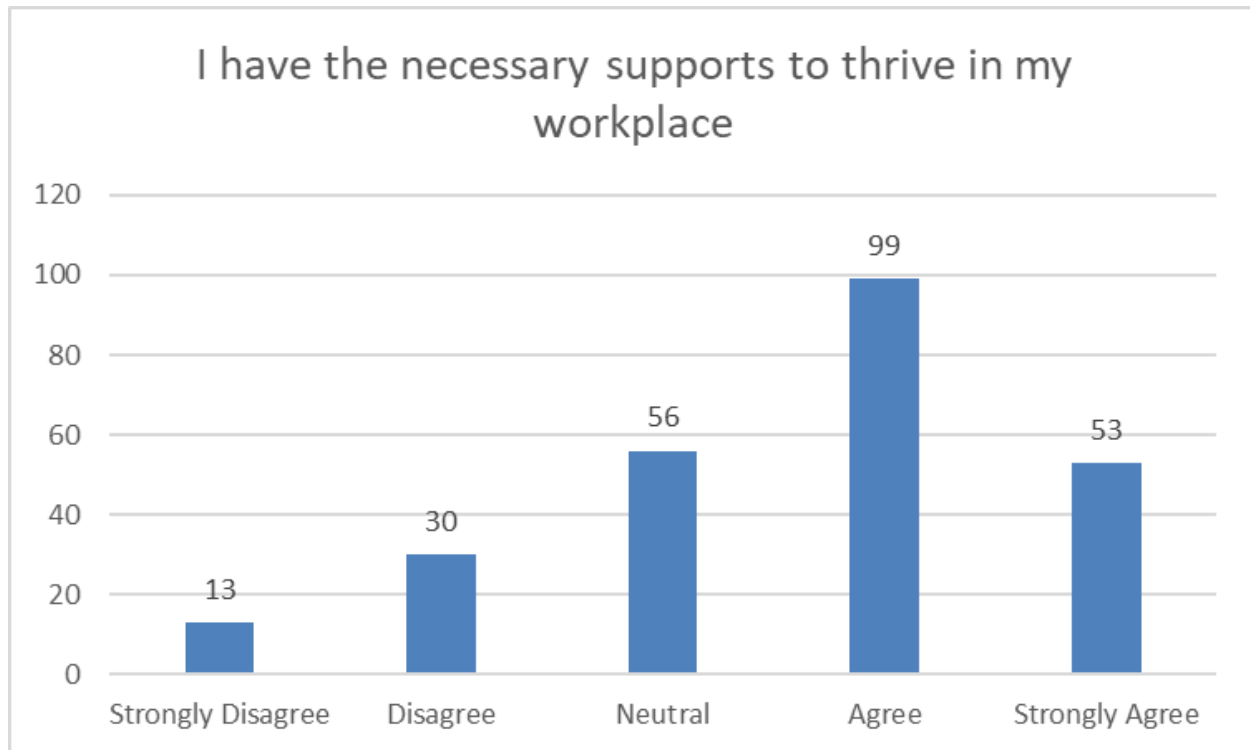


Figure 33



5.0 Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

Invest in free or subsidized baseline EDI training, available for all employers across Cape Breton-Unama'ki

Effective workforce EDI efforts have to start with educated HR professionals, management, and staff. Baseline EDI training (e.g. “Workforce EDI 101”) needs to be accessible to all employers across the region. This could be an opportunity for the Cape Breton Partnership to partner with Federal or Provincial levels of government to offer training to all employers, with set targets for how many training sessions are provided in a given year, and with pre and post surveys to monitor how understandings of EDI change as a consequence of these training sessions.

Training sessions should be available through either online or in-person delivery modes, and it should be encouraged that workplaces engage in this training at least once a year to ensure that new staff are adequately trained.

Additionally, we would recommend developing tips for employers on inclusive hiring practices, how to effectively support diverse members of the workforce, etc., to ensure that employers are empowered with the resources that they need to support diverse staff.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Support the Application of EDI principles through the Employee Life Cycle (from Recruitment to Development)

Promoting and delivering EDI in the workplace is an essential aspect of good people management. To reap the benefits of EDI, it's about creating working environments and cultures where every individual can feel safe, a sense of belonging and is empowered to achieve their full potential.

Recruitment and Selection

According to Nova Scotia Works, 42% of Cape Breton-Unama'ki residents found their current job through personal contacts, referrals, or informal networks as opposed to 30% of whom applied to postings on company websites or job boards.

To truly be inclusive in your recruitment and selection strategies, it starts with where you distribute the job posting, the language you use, the font you use, etc. The Cape Breton Partnership could invest in a job seeker platform and have criteria that must be met regarding inclusivity. Hosting a platform like this meets many objectives - valuable services

for members/investors, supporting and transforming HR practices, and offering capacity for small business owners and candidates alike.

Onboarding and Enablement

Supporting organizations and businesses to build out onboarding materials and enabling their capacity to create and deliver good employee engagement. With additional capacity provided by the Cape Breton Partnership, supporting the development of onboarding tools with businesses and the implementation of onboarding and enablement strategies, businesses can have real tools to support the cultural and policy changes at the micro level.

This support could build on the Consultant Advisory Services offered by Community Business Development Corporations (CBDC) and could be specifically tailored for supporting EDI practices in coordination with Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. This would demonstrate alignment with the federal government's priority to recruit and retain immigrants and service their ambitious retention targets. This would require advocacy on the behalf of Cape Breton Partnership. A project such as this has clear metrics to demonstrate impact - employee retention, diverse composition of workplaces, population demographics, etc.

The onboarding process should also seek to integrate employees with the broader community, support needs that will help employees be their best at work, as well as provide barrier reduction services. This can be done in tandem with community-based organizations. The Cape Breton Partnership can support a table of service providers, employers, and partners that support EDI work across the community. This table to build partnerships, streamline access points to services, as well as support dissemination of accessible information for employees on community services to support settlement and access to necessary services that reduce barriers to employment.

Development

This is an opportunity to support employers as they build strong cultures, invest in their staff, and support their professional development. To do this, the Cape Breton Partnership can support this by offering professional development opportunities by creating training and professional development programming for employees with a mixed method approach - this could be in person in the form of training sessions and online in a shared virtual, self-directed platform that is designed with appropriate EDI principles. This could be purchased from a provider or custom designed for Cape Breton Partnership and supported as a resource available to members of the Cape Breton Partnership.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Social Determinants of Health Matter. Educate employers and advocate for strong social services.

Further Investments in Transportation

Transportation is a critical piece of community infrastructure that is required to align with employment and economic development initiatives. We heard loud and clear from employers and service providers that more investment is needed in transportation to support the growth of the labour market.

Invest in Affordable Housing

Across the Island, we heard about housing challenges. Affordability, gentrification, volatile housing market, lack of rentals, etc. are all realities in rural Nova Scotia, particularly in places with a tourism economy. It becomes increasingly difficult to live in communities where the cost of housing has increased without wage increases. The advent of AirBnB has had a negative impact on housing affordability and taken supply in the rental housing market. To combat this, communities must invest in the housing supply, ensure the regulatory framework incentivizes maintaining affordable housing in the area, and businesses can support housing through their own strategic investments.

Access to Affordable Childcare

This is a critical part of EDI practice. Many employees have to make the challenging decision to work or not based on the availability and accessibility of childcare. Without childcare, many potential employees become marginalized, and their talents are not utilized.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Create a strategic plan that articulates the vision of the Cape Breton Partnership as it relates to EDI, supported by third party impact evaluation and a communications strategy.

It is important that the Cape Breton Partnership sets targets through a strategic planning process, tailored to specifically enhance EDI outcomes across the Island by investing in employers' capacity to support, while convening and aligning the community services, and advocating for social infrastructure through its government relations strategy. As progress is made, the Cape Breton Partnership can report on the development of EDI impact by using an evaluation framework that is reflective of the plan. This should be managed and reported on by a third party, specializing in impact evaluation.

This recommendation is to build on the good work being done by the Cape Breton Partnership and to support investing in the marketing and communications efforts to

continue telling stories of impact. The communications should profile EDI successes and share resources.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Invest in an EDI capacity-building program for employers and service providers with the goal of auditing EDI practices & developing a roadmap for implementing EDI best practices.

The success of the Atlantic Immigration Pilot Program, now simply the Atlantic Immigration Program (AIP), is demonstrated by the fact that the retention rate in Nova Scotia has risen dramatically, from 21.5% in 2011 to 67.6% in 2016. In this context however, most of these retained immigrants live in the Halifax metro area. The official report on AIP states that there is a need for more awareness of settlement services, something the Cape Breton Partnership can enhance and provide additional services to enhance the experiences of newcomers to encourage retention.

There is a need and a demand for EDI policies for both small businesses, not-for-profits and government organizations in rural areas that lack resources for HR services. The Cape Breton Partnership could invest in initiatives that aim to improve the culture of existing organizations and businesses throughout the region whether through EDI training, improving hiring strategies or creating targets to increase diversity.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Go to people; show don't tell (rethink where services are offered; bring possible recruits to office to show culture).

A critical component of fostering workplaces that are inclusive and supportive of diverse populations is developing trust with diverse members of the workforce. This process of trust-building can start early on. Building on some of the successful actions that are already being taken across the region, there's an opportunity to support businesses by articulating and showing their workplace culture to potential employees. This could include open houses, supporting the articulation of value statements on their websites, and/or creating a list of workplaces in the Cape Breton-Unama'ki region that have EDI policies and procedures in place and/or have made other concrete commitments towards fostering EDI in the workplace.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Develop shareable workplace policies/procedures with optional disclosure of key demographic info (consider timing, trust and communication of "why").

A noted gap among service providers and employers is in the collection of staff demographic information. Collection of staff demographic information can paint an important picture of diversity in the workforce and can support agencies in understanding where they need to focus their recruitment. For staff, it is critical for them to understand why they are being asked to disclose this information, and for what purposes this information will be used. We recommend the Cape Breton Partnership support in developing a policy and procedure to help guide agencies in the collection of staff demographic information to support them on their journey of fostering EDI in their workplace.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Focus on retaining diverse talent through the existing educational pipeline.

Cape Breton-Unama'ki has fewer young people in school compared to most other urban centers in Canada. In 2016, there were 61 young people aged 15 to 24 in school for every 100 people in the workforce over the age of 55, compared to 81 per 100 in Halifax and 87 per 100 in St. John's.

Cape Breton University (CBU) has put a significant push on attracting international students. If CBU and the Nova Scotia Community College can continue to attract more students (Canadian and international) in the coming years, it will help to build a larger local talent pipeline to address workforce needs. To do this, prioritizing EDI in our workplaces by supporting the capacity for workplaces to evolve with an EDI lens could directly support these retention efforts while creating safe and inclusive workplaces with global talent and expertise across the region.

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