

EQUITY SURVEY REPORT

2021

JOINTLY ADMINISTERED BY
THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON AND UAW 4121

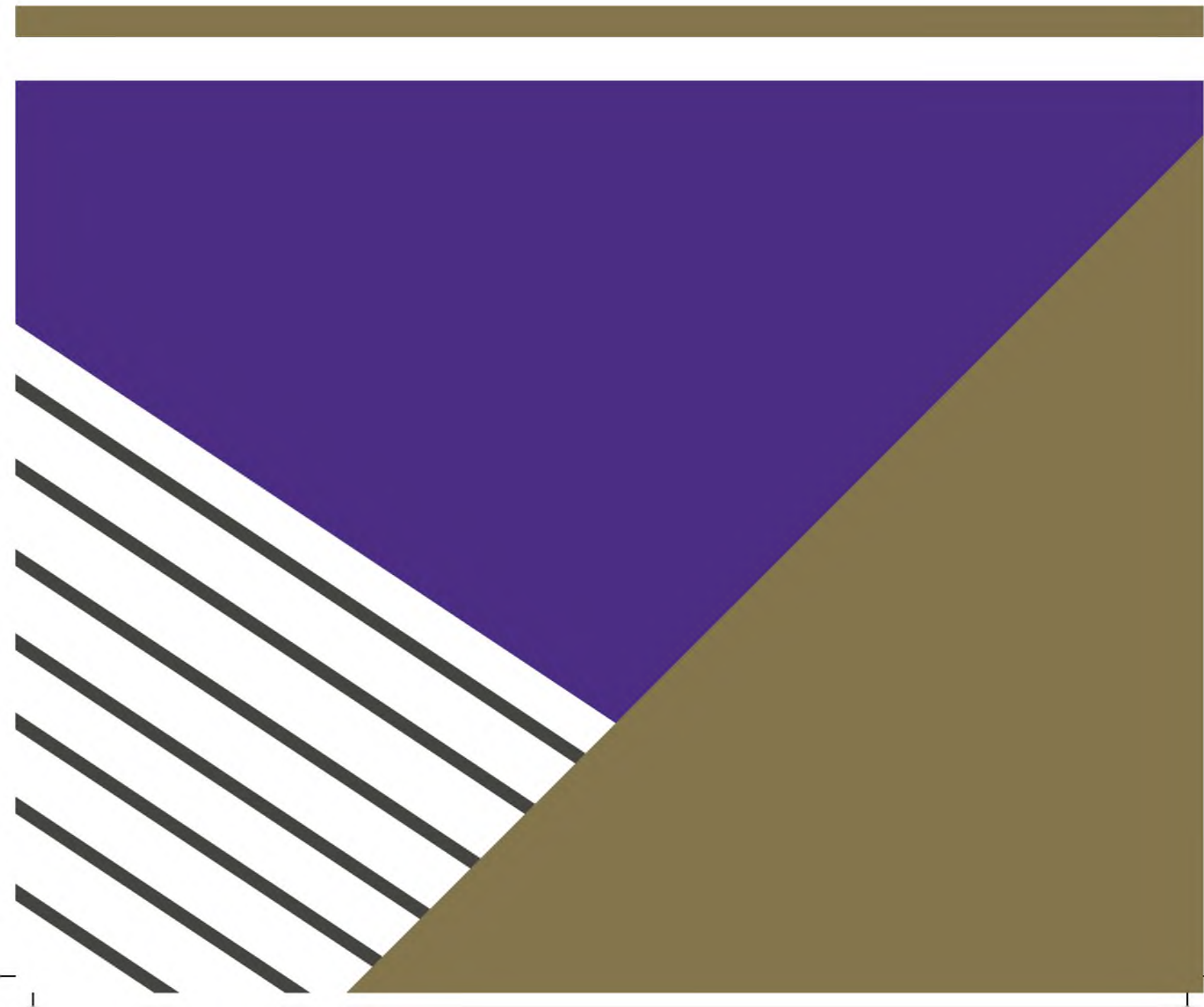


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OVERVIEW

ABOUT THE EQUITY SURVEY

The UW-UAW Equity Survey is enshrined in the collective bargaining agreement between the University of Washington and UAW 4121, the union that represents academic student employees (ASEs) and postdocs at the UW. The contract stipulates that the survey be conducted annually and be jointly administered. The survey asks ASEs and postdocs to provide an account of how they have experienced and witnessed harassment, how well they are able to access various institutions and resources, as well as their experience of campus climate.

The survey was distributed to ASEs and postdocs early in spring quarter, and officially closed on April 9, 2021, giving us an understanding of how COVID-19 dramatically affects the conditions under which ASEs and postdocs do their work. These data provide a fascinating snapshot into the sources of hierarchy and inequity that existed within this population during the pandemic and has introduced new challenges. It is incumbent upon all who are interested in pursuing equity and reducing harassment to remember that the pandemic will only exacerbate the isolation, vulnerability, and differential access to resources that create inequity at the University of Washington.

In this report, we analyze the survey results along several lines: (1) equity, inclusion, and experiences with harassment, (2) experiences with and perceptions of reporting, and (3) equity, inclusion, and career development. The final section provides recommendations for future programming based on this analysis.

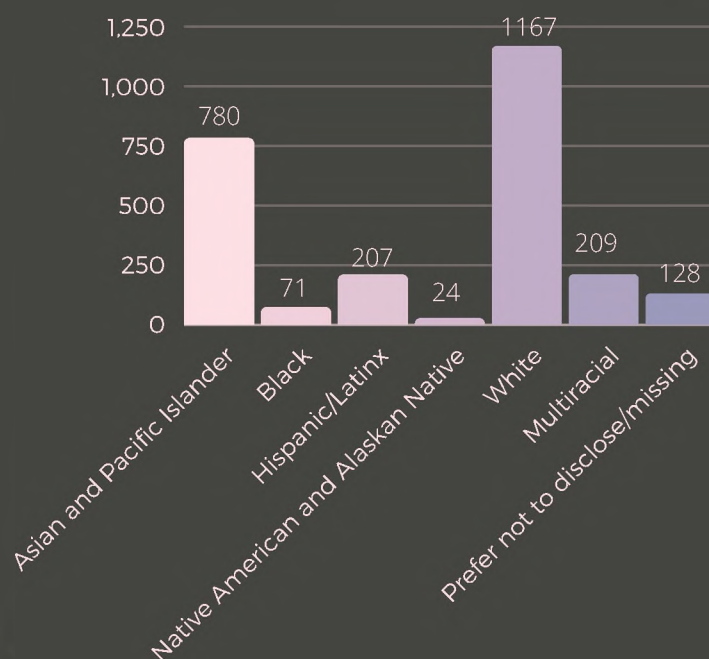


METHODOLOGY & REPRESENTATION

In the first year of the Equity Survey's administration, the survey questions were developed by ASEs and postdocs and then vetted by several key stakeholders: Labor Relations, Office of Learning Assessment, the Graduate School, SafeCampus, College of Engineering, College of Arts and Sciences, School of Medicine, and UAW 4121. Because one of the objectives of the annual Equity Survey is to engage in cross-temporal comparisons, the 2020-2021 iteration of the Equity Survey asked very similar questions to those developed during the previous year. The survey was administered to ASEs via multiple communication channels.

In total, **2,335 people participated** in the survey, or **about 43% of the ASE and Postdoc units** at the time the survey was administered. This represents a 15% increase relative to last year, in which 2,021 people participated, representing 38% of the ASE and Postdoc units at the time. This year, the College of Arts & Sciences was the most highly represented at 80%, with most other UW colleges falling between roughly 25% and 50% participation.

RACIAL DEMOGRAPHICS



GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS

	Raw Count	% of Sample
Men (Cis & Trans)	1037	44.4%
Women (Cis & Trans)	1071	46%
Nonbinary/Agender (including Trans nonbinary)	115	4.9%
Prefer not to disclose	50	2%

SEXUAL ORIENTATION DEMOGRAPHICS

	Raw Count	% of Sample
Asexual	39	1.6%
Bisexual	187	8%
Gay/lesbian	118	5%
Pansexual	46	2%
Straight or heterosexual	1584	68%
Queer	162	7%

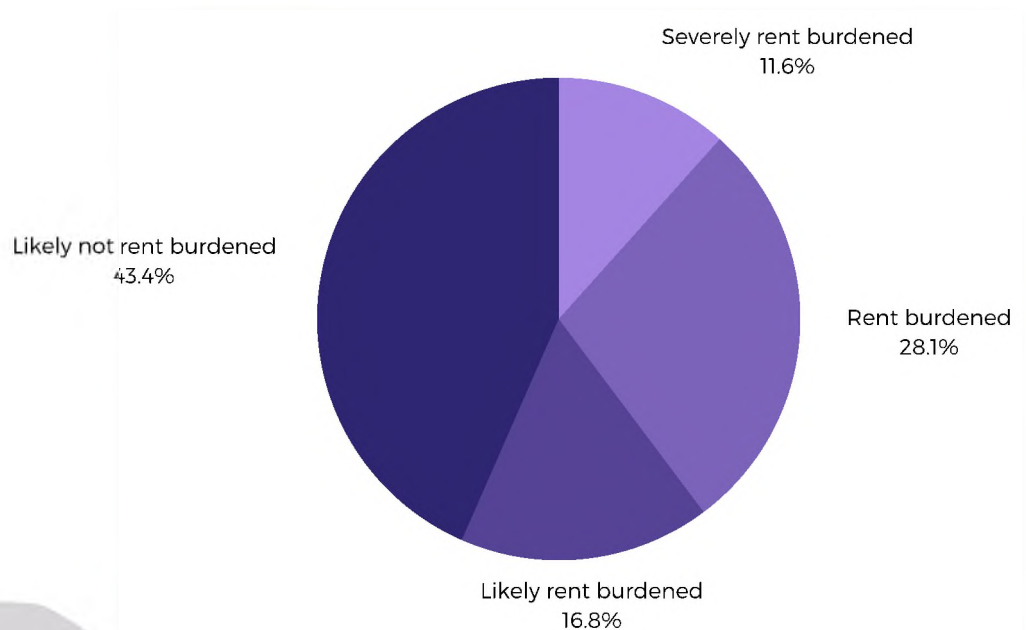
ADDITIONAL KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

1% Veterans
 7% Parents
 14% First in their family to pursue an undergraduate degree
 24% International scholars

CONTEXTUALIZING HARASSMENT

56.5% of respondents are likely rent burdened or definitively rent burdened. Due to the binned income and rent ranges in survey design, there is some ambiguity in the data. In future years, the monthly net income and personal responsibility for rent or mortgages should be self-reported to allow for more accurate calculations. The number of rent burdened respondents may be lower than usual due to atypical housing circumstances due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

RENT BURDENED RESPONDENTS



One thing the university could do to elevate the accessibility of higher education (specifically graduate studies) is pay grad students more! It is really difficult to live in Seattle off of <\$2000/mo. Rent is really high here [...] and I find myself worrying about money often.

Remote school is by definition not equitable for those living in small or shared spaces (which is a result of not having enough income).

University of Washington doesn't seem to care about the well being of their student employees in terms of financially surviving in Seattle. Coming from a poor family and being the first to attend graduate school I do not think that the university does enough to ensure I have stability and security in life, so I don't think they would do this for others from my background or similar.

Moved home to save money, hence the low rent price.

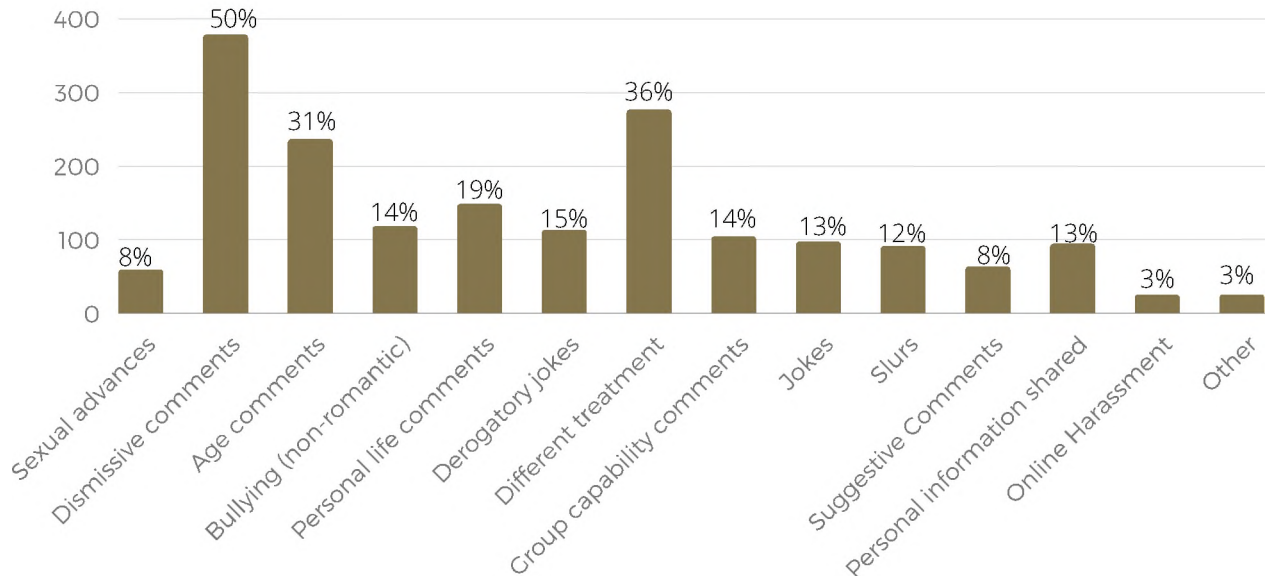
EXPERIENCES WITH HARASSMENT

The survey asked whether individuals had experienced particular behaviors that fell in a range of types of harassment, including interpersonal harassment as well as differential treatment or access based on identity. The percentage of people who reported witnessing harassment increased from 7% last year to 35% this year. We have also seen a rise in dismissive comments but a drop in dismissive treatment. Because of the COVID-19 context, we asked folks if their personal information was shared without their knowledge or consent.

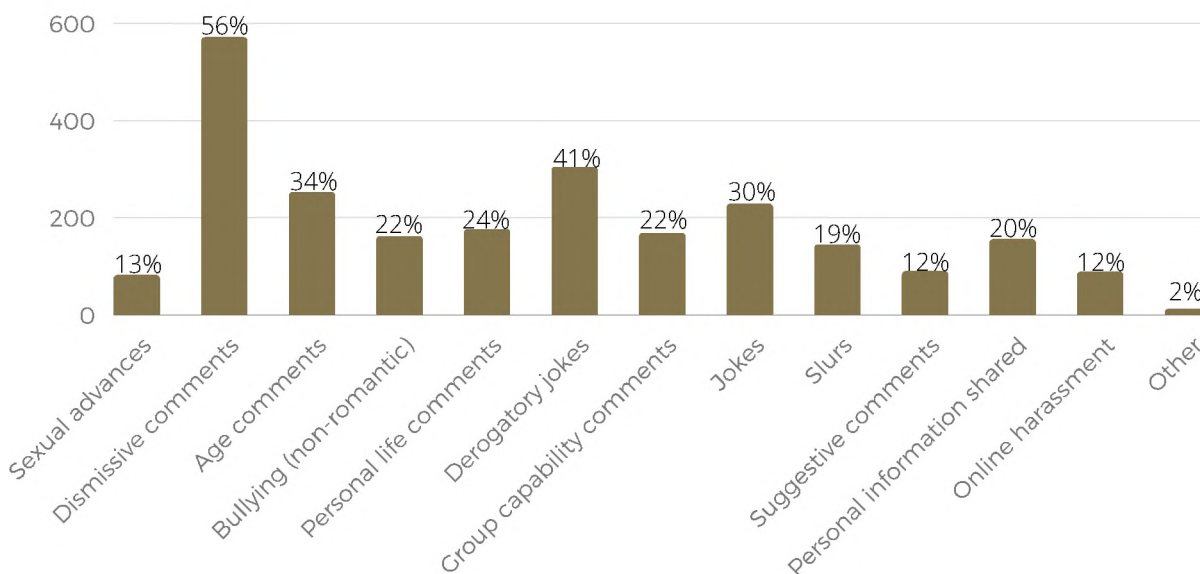


EXPERIENCED AT
LEAST ONE FORM
OF HARASSMENT
IN THE PAST
YEAR

EXPERIENCED HARASSMENT BY TYPE



WITNESSED HARASSMENT BY TYPE



REPORTED
WITNESSING
HARASSMENT

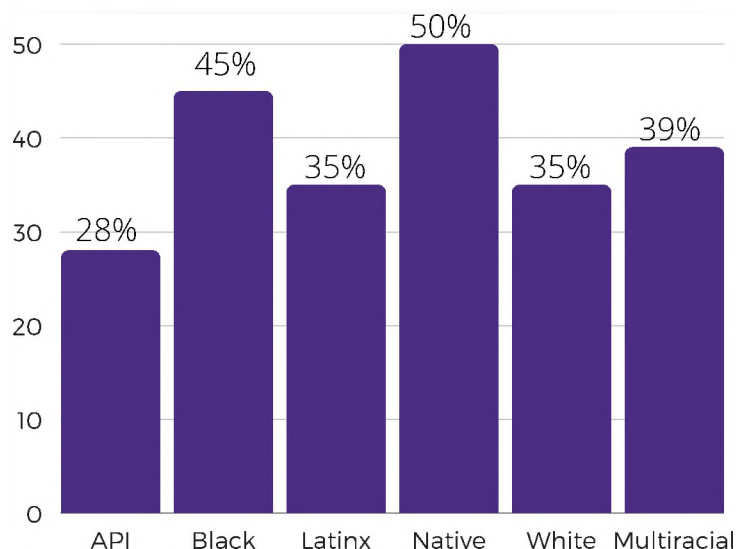
EXPERIENCES OF HARASSMENT

EXPERIENCES OF HARASSMENT BY RACE

In last year's survey, Black and Indigenous AEs and Postdocs experienced harassment at higher rates, which was a trend observed in this year's survey as well.

In light of the police killing of George Floyd and others, the Black Lives Matter movement inspired many departments to have conversations around race and to expand their DEI efforts.

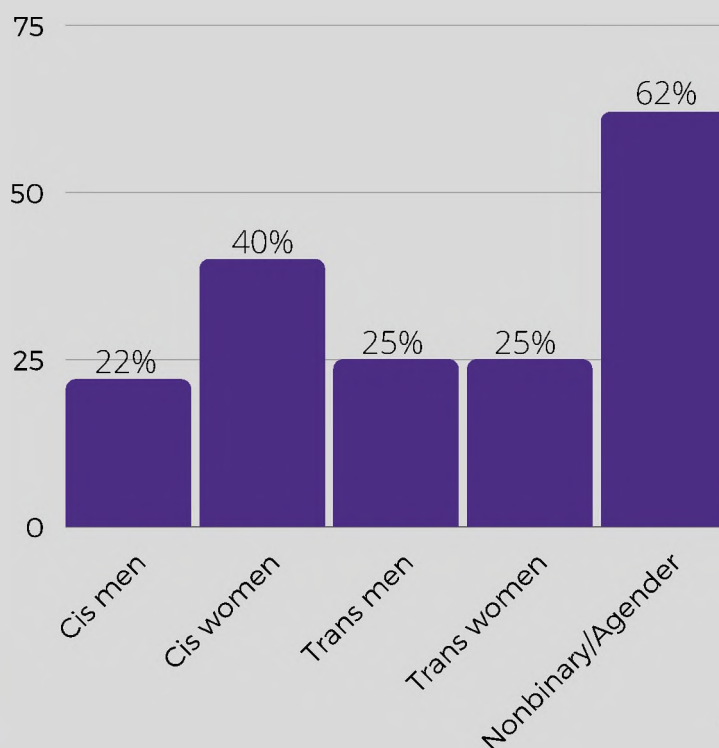
“ I really want to see a major overhaul of the organization of DEI committees at the entirety of UW. It is so unfair that we ask minoritized and underrepresented individuals to take on additional work on top of their course work. They should not be doing this work. They should be consultants who are respected and paid for their time. ”



EXPERIENCES OF HARASSMENT BY GENDER

AEs and Postdoc who identify as nonbinary, agender, and women reported experiencing harassment more than cis men. Nonbinary and agender folks reported being frequently misgendered, despite online learning where pronouns are visible. While experiences of harassment decreased for both trans men and women, these are both very small sample sizes. While viewing these data through categories may be helpful, in some ways, this method of presentation obscures the extent to which people's experiences of harassment always happens through the lens of the multiple positionalities they occupy.

“ I have experienced comments being made about my background as a first-generation student and woman of color in STEM. I've been told that these labels are why I have been accepted into grad programs and it's given me an advantage for opportunities. ”

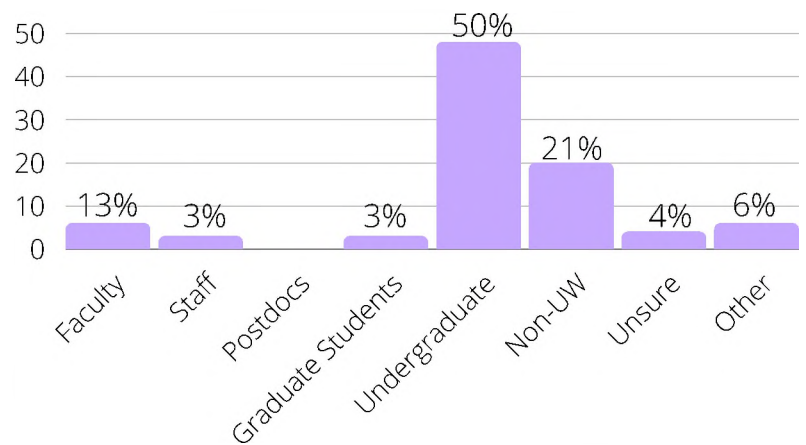


EXPERIENCES WITH HARASSMENT

EXPERIENCES WITH HARASSMENT BY ROLE

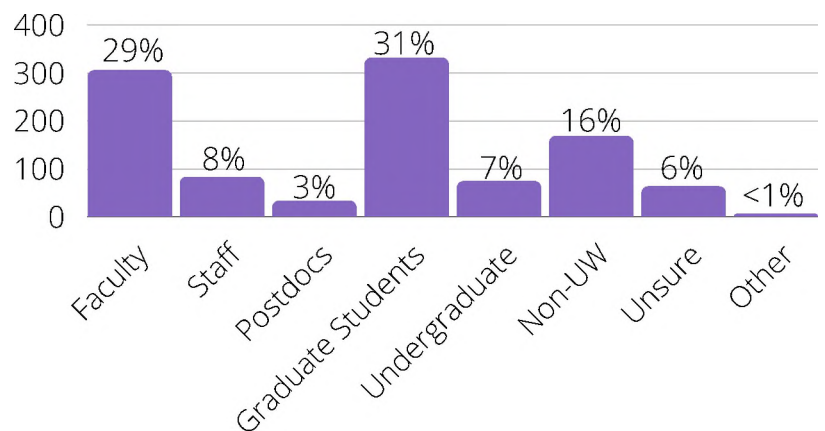
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

experience harassment primarily from their undergraduate peers. Harassment often occurs within the spheres we occupy, suggesting the importance of peer-to-peer training. Undergraduate programs are often evaluated through more structured processes, which may result in fewer experiences of harassment by those higher in the academic hierarchy.



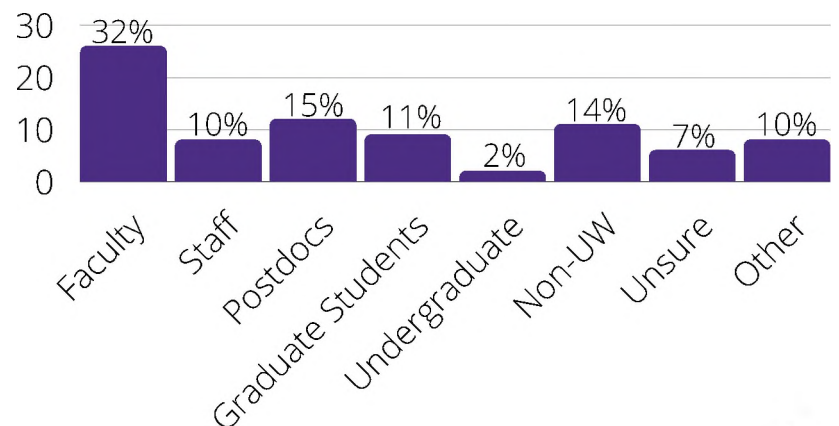
GRADUATE STUDENTS

experienced similar rates of harassment from faculty and from their graduate student peers. Graduate students rely on faculty for mentorship, professional references, and advancement within their graduate programs, which are often less structured than undergraduate programs, furthering opportunity for bias. Such power dynamics create the condition of possibility for harassment to occur.



POSTDOCTORAL SCHOLARS

experience harassment primarily from faculty. This points to the increasing degree of power dynamics between mentees and their mentors as folks move through the academic hierarchy, along with the isolating nature of postdoc positions and the lack of community that they often experience.

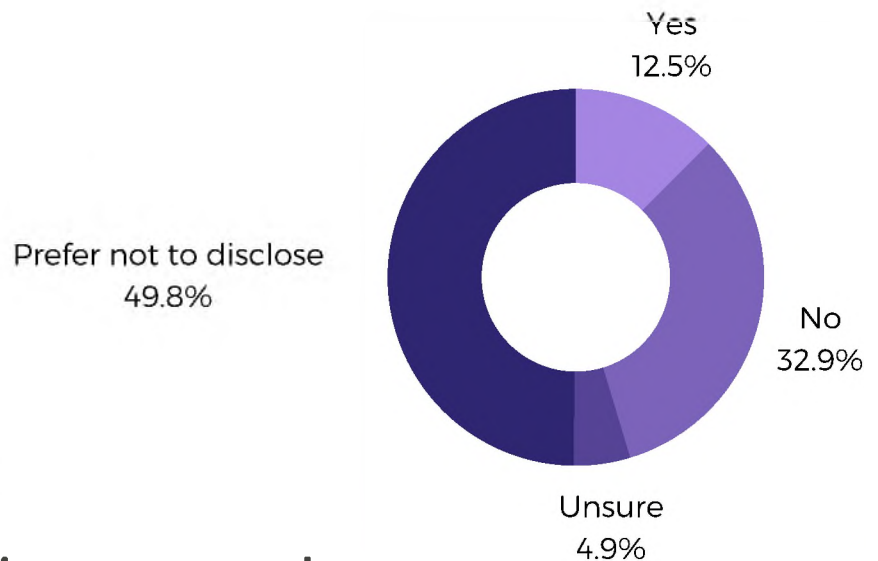


ACCESS: DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

520 respondents reported having a disability, **approximately 22% of all respondents**. Within that population, when asked whether they had ever had difficulty accessing accommodations, 12.5% reported yes while almost 50% preferred not to disclose. Only a third of students can confidently say that they did not struggle to receive the accommodations they need to be successful at UW, leaving a majority of disabled students at a disadvantage relative to their non-disabled peers.

42% of respondents have a mental health disability often in conjunction with other physical, cognitive, and developmental disabilities. This is important to note because 32% of respondents also responded yes to having difficulties accessing mental health care highlighting a major need in this community for more readily available support.

DIFFICULTY ACCESSING ACCOMMODATIONS

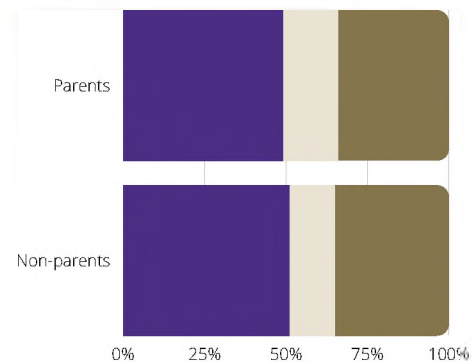


In their own words

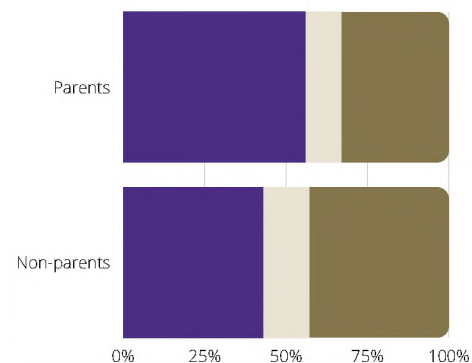
- I have chronic health conditions that are managed well working from home, now that we are transitioning to the office in the coming months, I am not sure how that will work. I have had poor experiences trying to get information from my supervisors, HR to understand my leave benefits for health or family leave.
- I have not been able to discover any kind of community resources, whether within my department specifically or in the graduate school at large, that offer support or community-building around for/by neurodiverse graduate students/graduate students with psychological and/or learning disabilities. Psychological disabilities are often isolating in and of themselves; the lack of a means to process, connect, and develop mutual support around the experience of being a graduate student with psychological disabilities/mental health issues serves to exacerbate a sense of not belonging.

ACCESS: PARENTING IN GRAD SCHOOL

The university's adaptations to COVID-19 had a mixed effect on learning and wellbeing in the Equity Survey, which is especially evident in the case of parents. Many parents noted that being online greatly increased their access but the decline in childcare made this benefit complicated. Childcare had decreased from already limited levels at UW and in the broader Seattle area suggests that childcare access for AEs at UW needs to be better supported and access widened.



COVID Increased
Learning
Accessibility



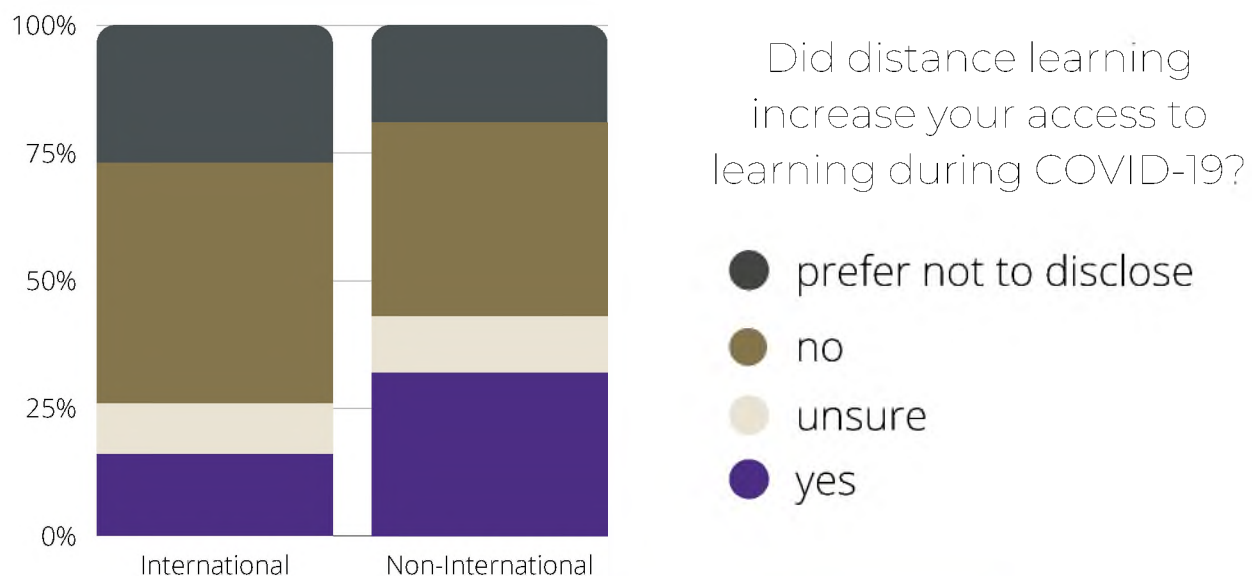
COVID Decreased
Learning
Accessibility

no unsure yes

“In response to a question about the presence of children in the background on Zoom, I was told that **academic culture is not tolerant of people with children**, and the person telling me this said that he never mentions his children in some academic spaces....As a low-income single parent, I **don't have the luxury/privilege of pretending my kid doesn't exist** when I'm in academic spaces.”

INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS AND COVID-19

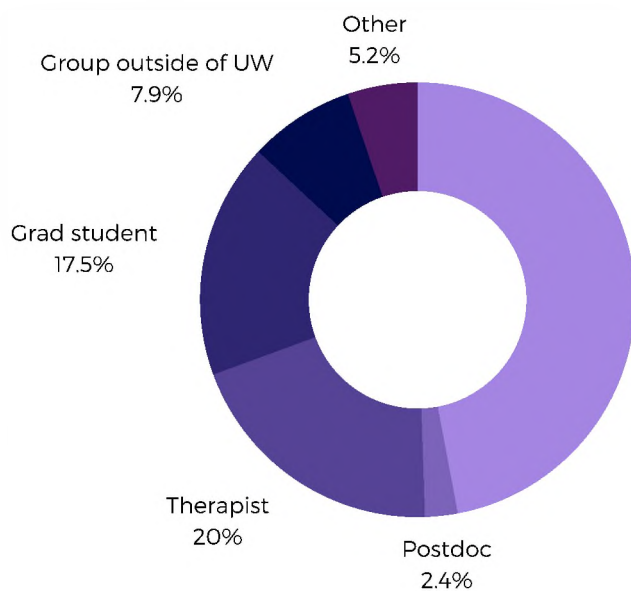
Almost 25% of the respondents to the Equity Survey were International Scholars. **International scholars were the least likely to answer that during COVID-19 their access to learning increased relative to all other categories.** Themes that emerge in respondents' answers include: persistent uncertainty because of the Trump administration, the university's lack of care in allaying concerns, and its unwillingness to engage with international scholar concerns. A significant number of respondents preferred not to disclose on this question.



This year, as an international student, I felt like going through hell during Trump's executive orders, the closing of borders due to the pandemic, etc. I really appreciated UAW's support and all the outreach they did. I do think that my department was very supportive too. I do think tho the University Administration could have done more to reassure us.

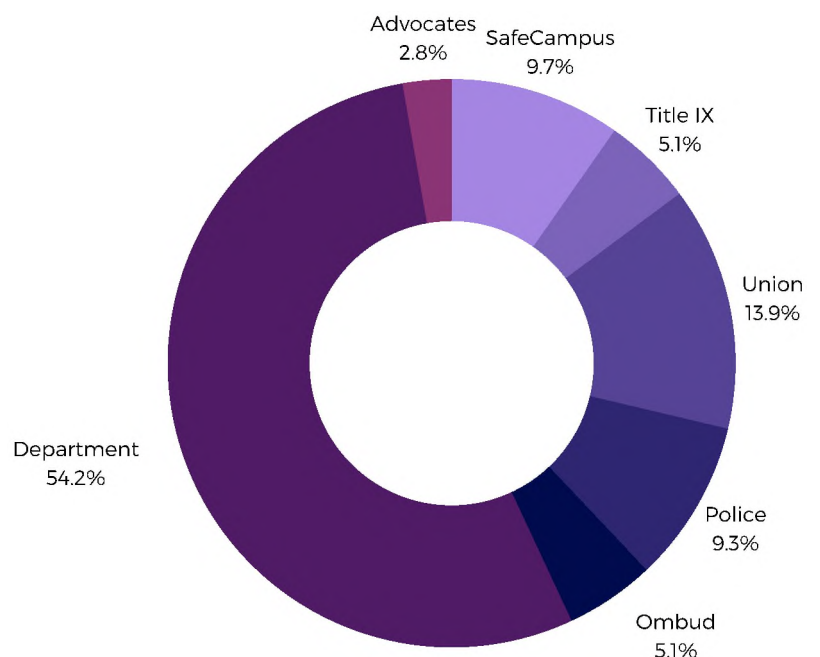
REPORTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

39% of people who experienced harassment indicated that they did not go to anyone for support or to make a report [n = 299]. Of the people that reported or sought support, **most respondents pursued informal channels** (like friends & family, students), over university-provided formal channels (like SafeCampus, Title IX Investigators, etc.)



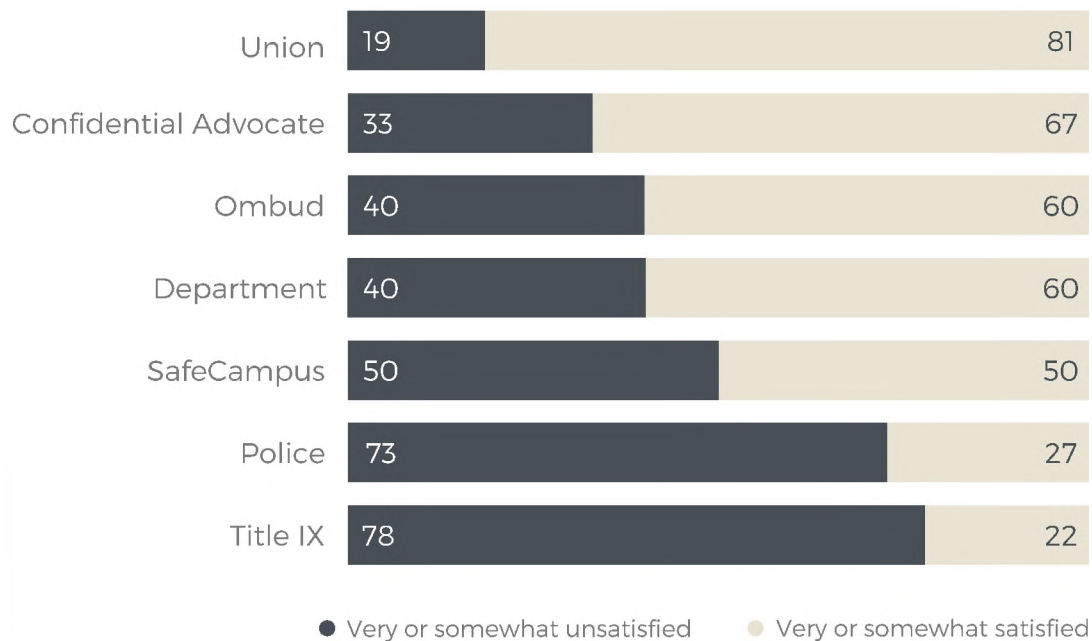
“Speaking honestly about experiences with fellow female engineers and friends does help in knowing I am not alone...”

Respondents indicated that they were **more likely to report harassment and seek support through their department** than any other university-related resources.



REPORTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT (SATISFACTION)

For respondents that reported cases of harassment, when asked **how satisfied they were with the resources they accessed**, we noticed an **increase in dissatisfaction of engaging with university-related resources compared to last year**. Some of this could be attributed to the virtual nature of the past year affecting the quality of services being provided. Respondents also indicated that their levels of satisfaction were impacted by "word-of-mouth" stories from others engaging with these resources.



Intentionally did not go through any of the official channels because I'm worried about how hard the system would have come down on that person. Just have tried to deal with it personally as best as I could."

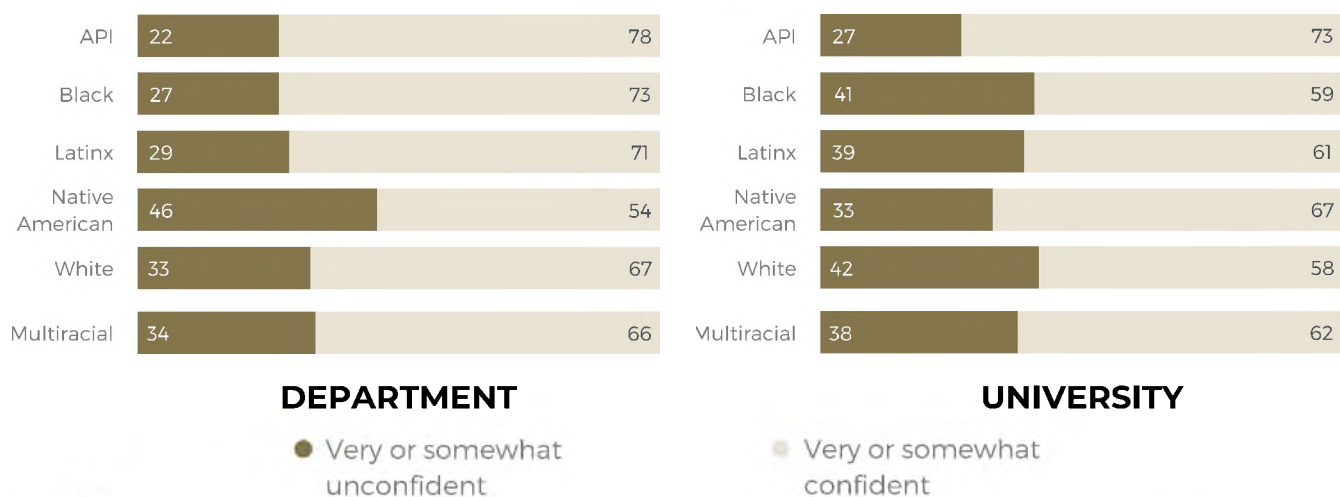
"...the title 9 process felt bureaucratic and that nothing would actually result from it"

... Unfortunately, I was advised that it is usually more work to make a report.

INSTITUTIONAL CONFIDENCE: RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY

Respondents were more confident in their department's ability to respond effectively to issues of sexual harassment than they were in the university's ability.

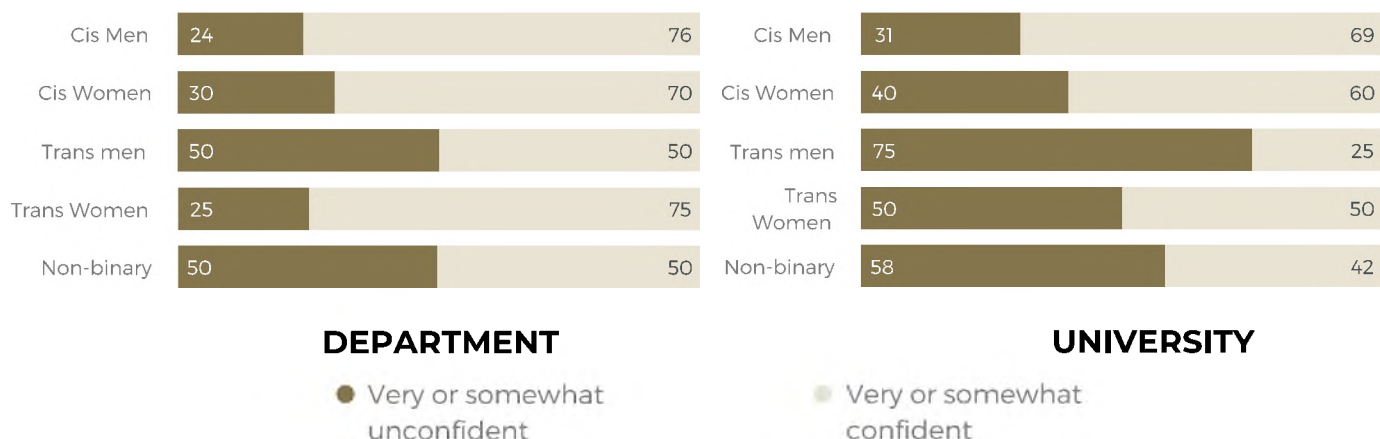
BY RACE



“When I reported racism to my department, no one did anything. I was instead blamed for experiencing racism.”

Trans (n = 12) and non-binary/agender (n = 115) respondents indicated significantly less confidence in their departments and the university being able to respond effectively.

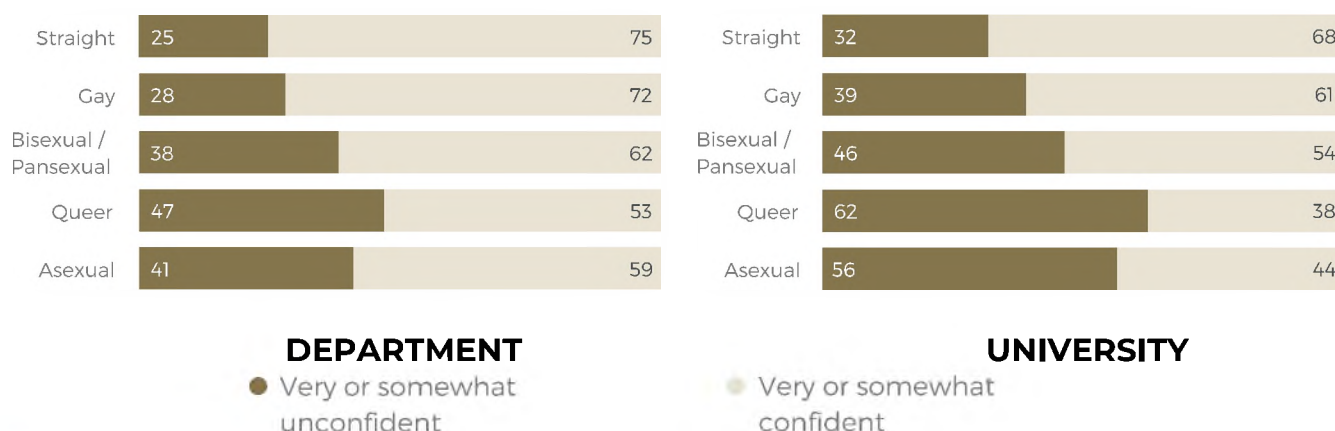
BY GENDER



INSTITUTIONAL CONFIDENCE: RESPONDING EFFECTIVELY

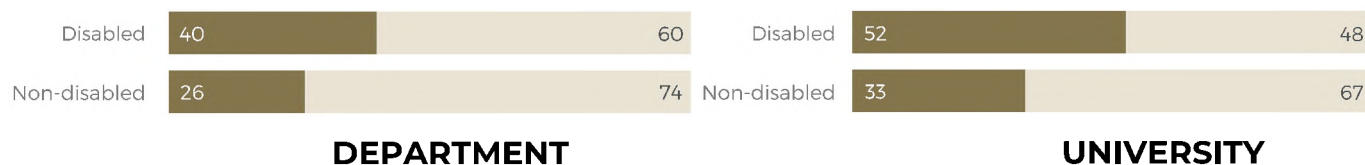
Participants who identified as **gay** (n = 118) , **bisexual/pansexual** (n = 233), **queer** (n = 162), or **asexual** (n = 39) indicated **significantly less confidence** in both their department's and the university's ability to respond effectively to issues of harassment.

BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION

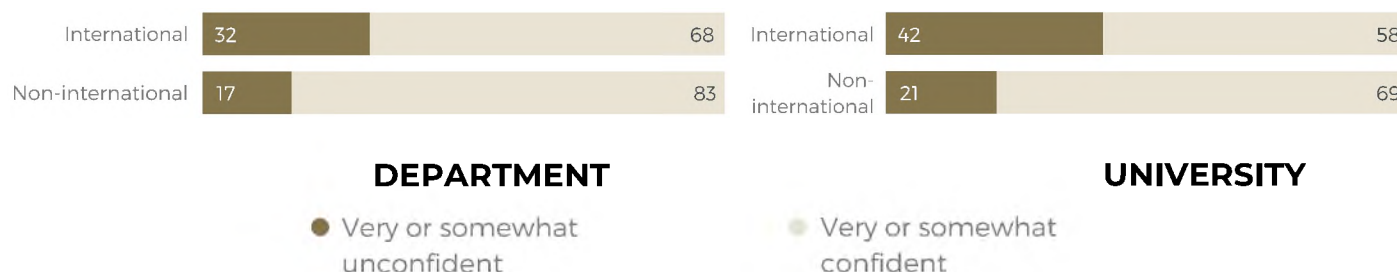


“Most departments and the university made a lot of DEI commitments this year, but I haven't seen much of a change in the culture. This concerns me that there is more of a concern about appearance than effectively responding.”

BY DISABILITY



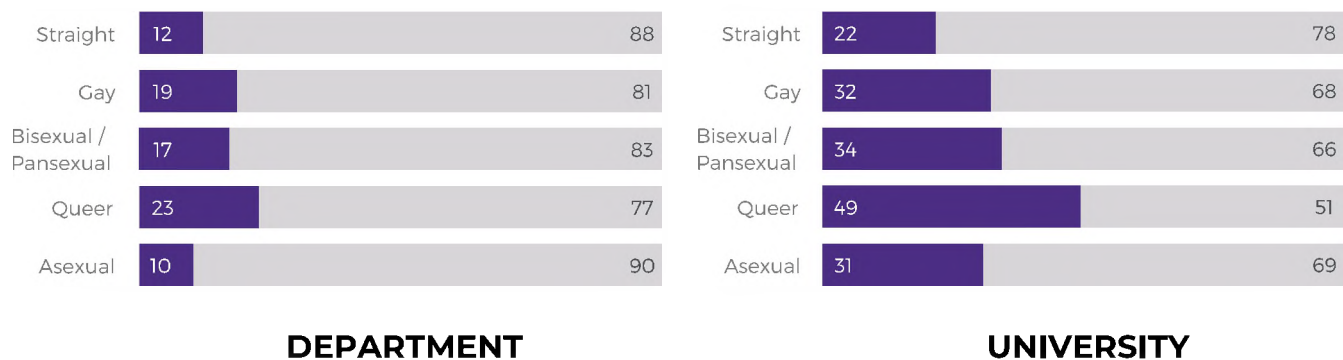
BY INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR



INSTITUTIONAL CONFIDENCE: TAKING HARASSMENT, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION SERIOUSLY

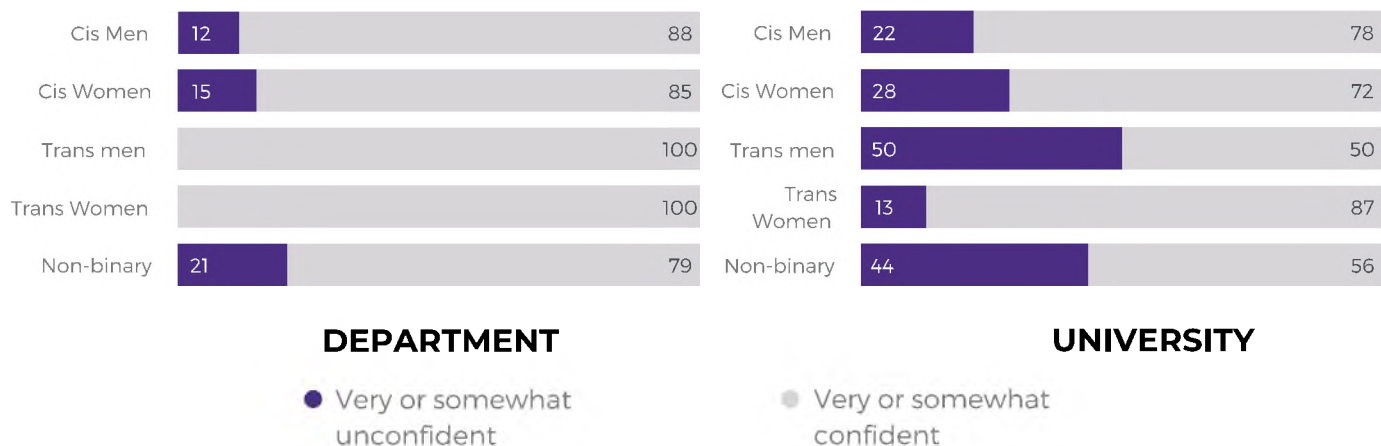
In the matter of taking harassment, equity, and inclusion seriously, respondents indicated higher confidence in both departments and the university compared to **last year**. However, when analyzed particularly by gender and sexual orientation, there was notably lesser confidence in the university. **49% of respondents who identified as queer (n = 162) were unconfident in the university's ability to take these matters seriously.**

BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION



100% of respondents who identified as trans (n = 12) said that they were confident in their departments when it came to taking harassment, equity, and inclusion seriously. This was not the case when asked about the university's ability.

BY GENDER

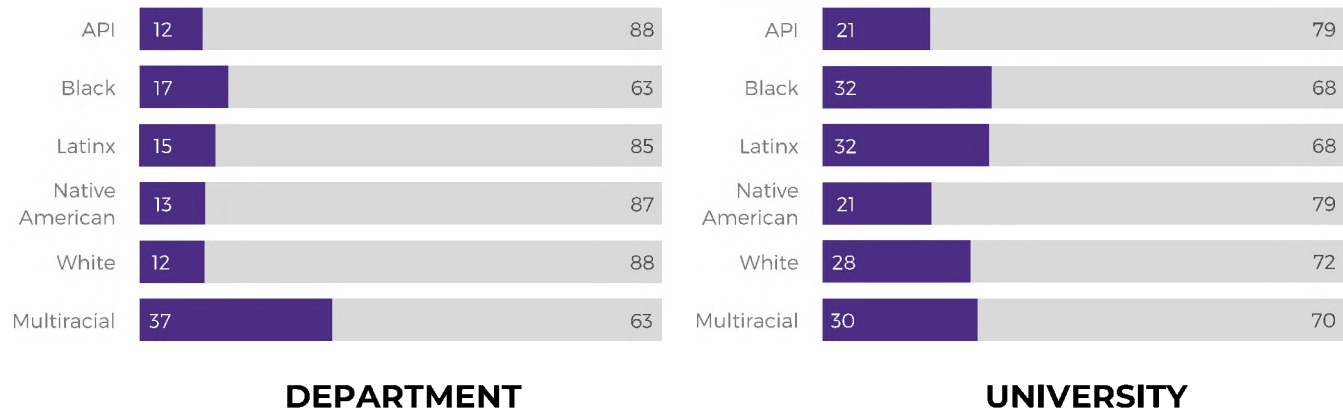


INSTITUTIONAL CONFIDENCE: TAKING HARASSMENT, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION SERIOUSLY

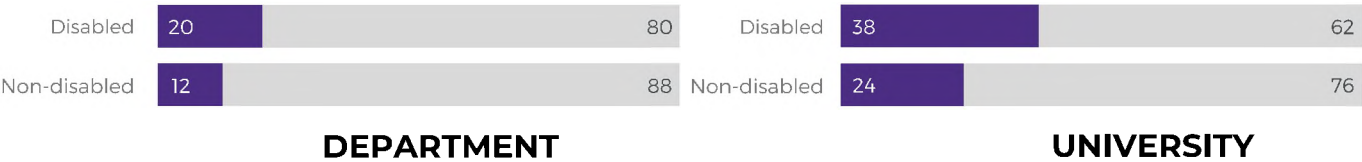
The pattern of higher confidence in departments as compared to the university continues across the different lenses of analysis. Respondents shared the notion that the **lack of confidence in the university stemmed from the gap between its commitments to matters of equity and inclusion, and the follow-through on them.**

“ I've seen performative action in the face of racial injustice, discrimination, harassment, etc... rather than efforts to make serious changes. ”

BY RACE



BY DISABILITY



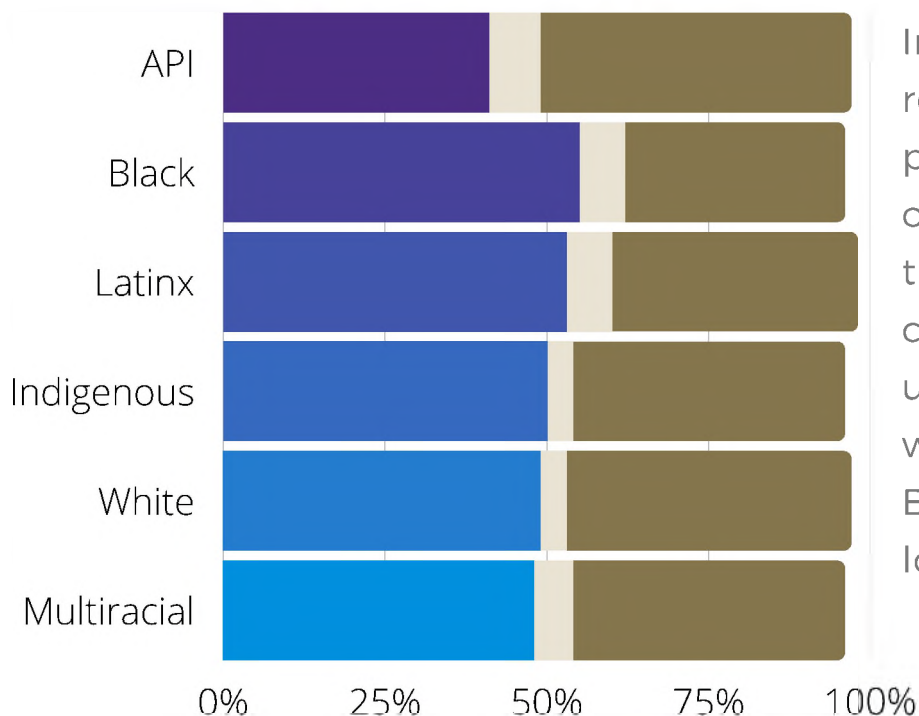
BY INTERNATIONAL SCHOLAR



SUPPORT, COMMUNITY AND BELONGING: UNCERTAINTY IN CAREER

Persistent uncertainty in career path?

yes unsure no



In the overall Equity Survey, 1,290 respondents reported feeling persistent uncertainty in their sense of career trajectory. Compared to that, we can see that there is a consistent near 50% affirmation of uncertainty across racial categories, with uncertainty being highest for Black and Latinx respondents and lowest for API and white students.

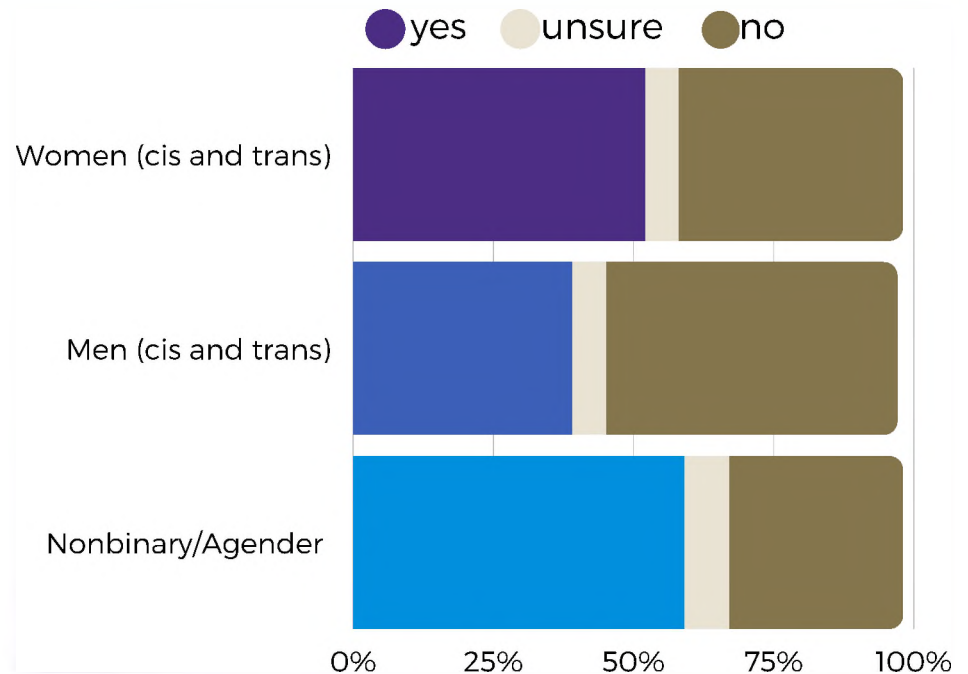
I have passed my qualifying exam and I am working on dissertation related work. However, I don't feel confident in my PhD studies and I feel trapped to some extent if I were to pursue an academic career. My advisor does the best he can, but he doesn't have the time to really mentor me appropriately. I constantly think about leaving my PhD studies and trying to get an industry job

There are not enough resources for humanities graduate students about pursuing alt-ac careers. Even extremely supportive professors are usually unable to provide enough support in this area because they themselves have academic jobs.

SUPPORT, COMMUNITY AND BELONGING: UNCERTAINTY IN CAREER

Persistent uncertainty is highest for nonbinary/agender folks. For women, cis and trans, the persistence holds steady at about 50% but is still higher than men's (cis and trans). Uncertainty is lowest for cis men, at 39% as opposed to 50% for trans men.

Persistent uncertainty in career path?



I have experienced comments being made about my background as a first-generation student and woman of color in STEM. I've been told that **these labels are why I have been accepted into grad programs** and it's given me an advantage for opportunities.

I've had people refer to me, a woman, as a member of my advisor's, a man, **harem**.

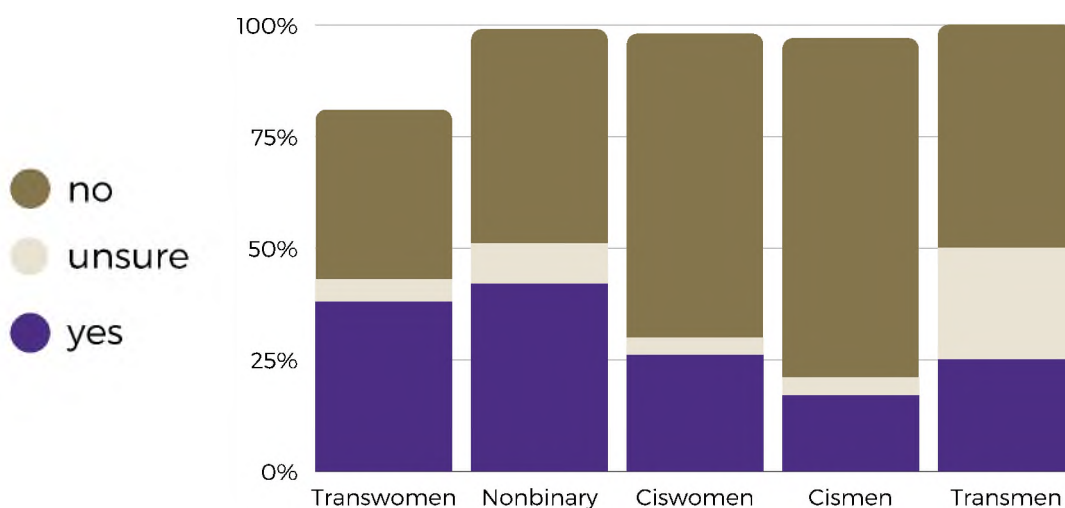
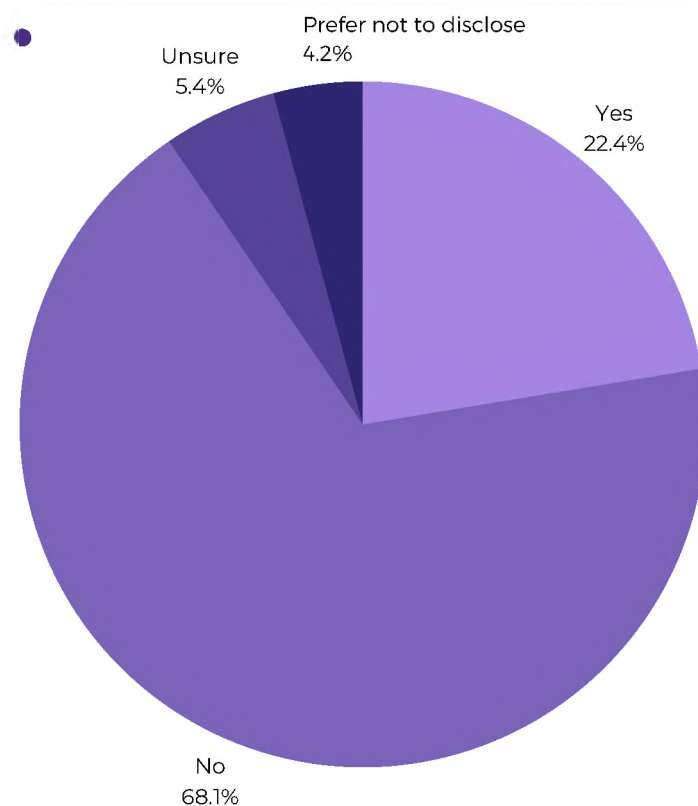
I have heard one person say "**diversity is somebody else's job**" -- this was in the context of job applications. As a white male, he didn't understand why he should need to demonstrate to his future employer that he'd played some role in DEI. He's making plans to apply to faculty roles.

comments like these erode confidence and certainty in career path and in departments

SUPPORT, COMMUNITY AND BELONGING: FINDING GOOD MENTORSHIP

Finding affirming and effective mentorship is a key factor in determining ASE and postdoctoral scholars' feelings of belonging, career path certainty, and ability to find community. Roughly 22% of participants had difficulty with this. When we look at the experiences of trans women and nonbinary folks compared to cismen and ciswomen (as well as the general population in the top right chart) we can see significant differences. .

Did you have difficulty finding good, affirmative mentorship (overall)?



Did you have difficulty finding good, affirmative mentorship (by gender)?

SUPPORT, COMMUNITY AND BELONGING: FINDING GOOD MENTORSHIP

On lack of
faculty
training

I've often felt that those in supervisory/**advisory positions are all talk and no follow-through**. If you don't fit into the cookie cutter molds they have on hand (i.e. what they're familiar with), then you become the problem, not their ignorance or lack of humility or ability to grow. It's made me think that **there's no point in attempting to better such a fraught system** that doesn't have any real interest in offering support.

I wish I had a more responsive advisor. I wish I knew how to request a new advisor. **I wish I knew what grad students were supposed to expect/what guidance and support to receive from an advisor.** I think that my career choices are limited, among other factors, by the fact that I did not know what questions I should be asking. I'm a first gen higher ed student, a person of color and an immigrant so I had no first-hand student experience of the educational system.

On lack of
clarity

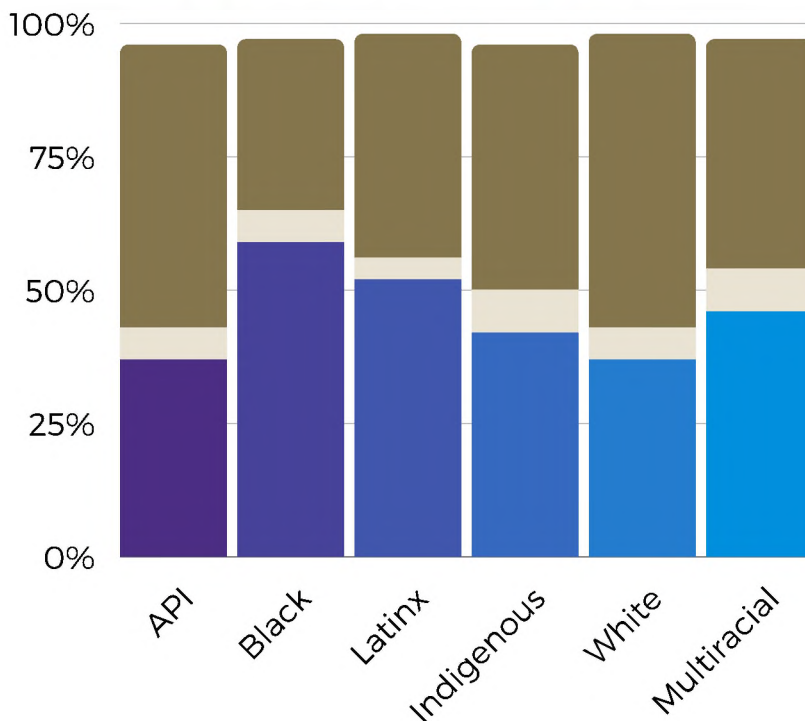
On unhealthy
work cultures

Lack of mentorship has been a major issue. I've been in a lab that is become purely results focused and is not working to mentor or necessarily teach their graduate and undergraduate researchers. **As a result I will most likely leave the program at the end of the quarter to go work elsewhere.**

SUPPORT, COMMUNITY AND BELONGING: DIFFICULTY FINDING COMMUNITY

Difficulty finding community?

yes unsure no

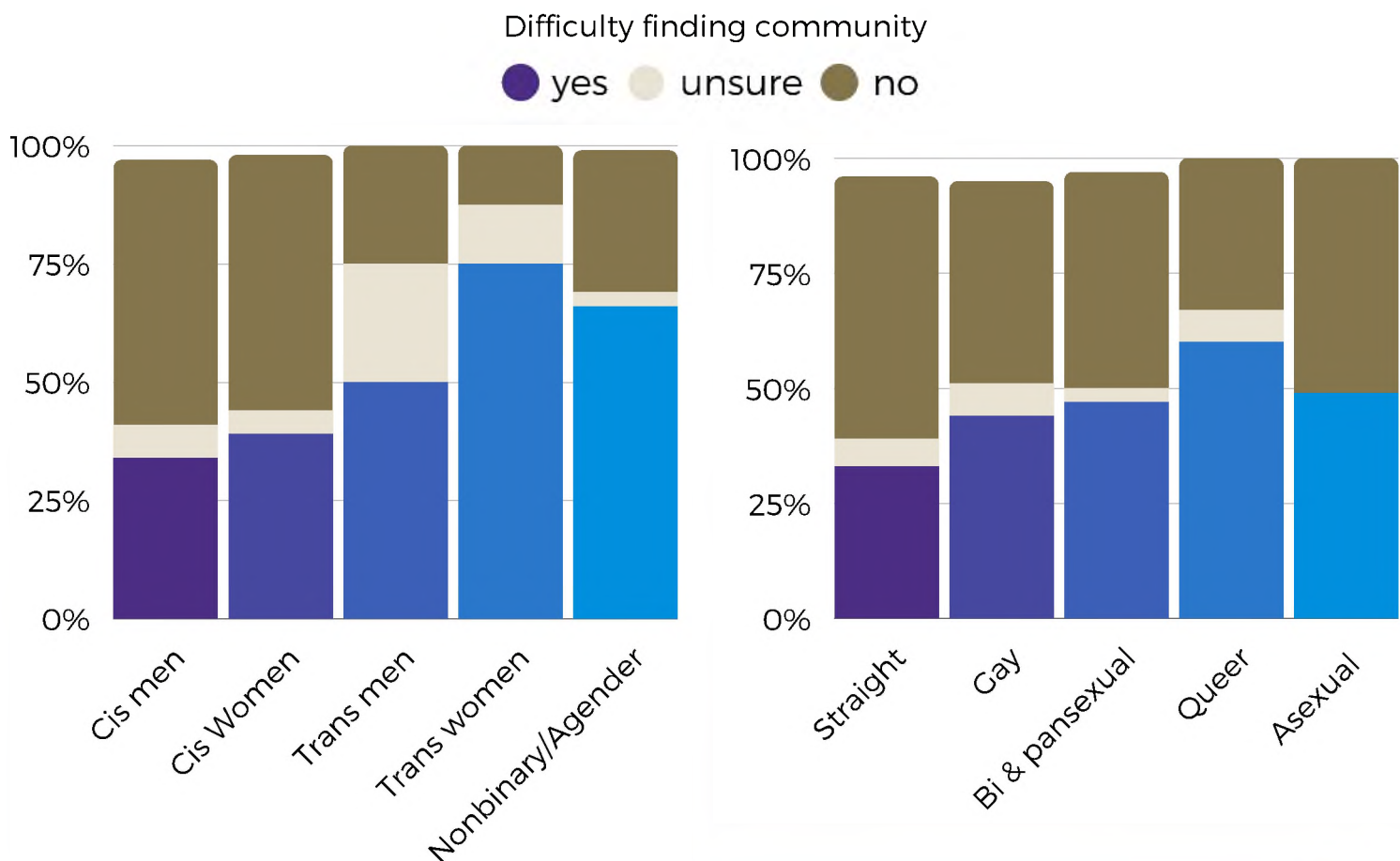


In the overall Equity Survey, 1053 respondents reported finding it difficult to establish a community for themselves. The individual percentages are consistent with the previous's year's report, with over half of Black (59%) and Latinx (52%) students indicating they struggle to find community while white and API students show the lowest (37%).

I really think that more spaces are needed. My previous school had a MESA club with its own space that was awesome for making me feel included and supported. Here I think we have GO-MAP but I find it harder to navigate and don't know if it's just for undergraduates or if it applies to graduates and postdocs. Additionally, I just don't feel like I have a space in my department if I want to connect with other LGBTQIA*+ people or people of color -- I have NO clue where to go.

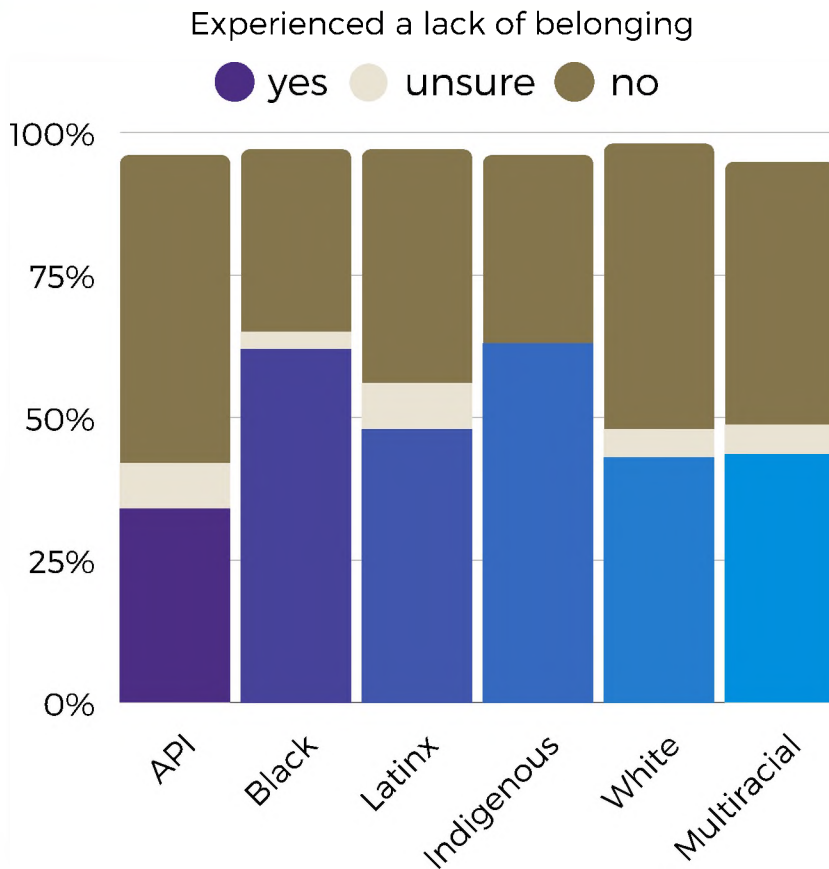
SUPPORT, COMMUNITY AND BELONGING: DIFFICULTY FINDING COMMUNITY

Difficulty finding community is highest for nonbinary and agender folks, showing a significant increase from the previous year, even accounting for an increased N (40 to 66%). Transphobia has a significant impact on who can pursue opportunities in academia in the first place and what their quality of training and education will be once they get here. Cis respondents, both men and women, report much lower numbers than trans respondents, 34% compared to 50% for men and 39% versus 75% for women. Those in the LGBTQIA+ community reported consistently around 50% or higher, showing significantly more trouble finding community than those identifying as straight (33%).



"Finding community with other people like me" outside of UW has not been difficult, but it's discouraging to be directed out of the College to find community with other queer and non-binary students and it sends the message that there are not any other queer and non-binary students in the entire College.

SUPPORT, COMMUNITY AND BELONGING: EXPERIENCED LACK OF BELONGING



In the overall Equity Survey, 1,092 respondents reported a feeling of difficulty in finding community. There is consistent 50% or above affirmation of this feeling for Black, Latinx, and Indigenous respondents compared to 43% for white respondents and 34% for API.

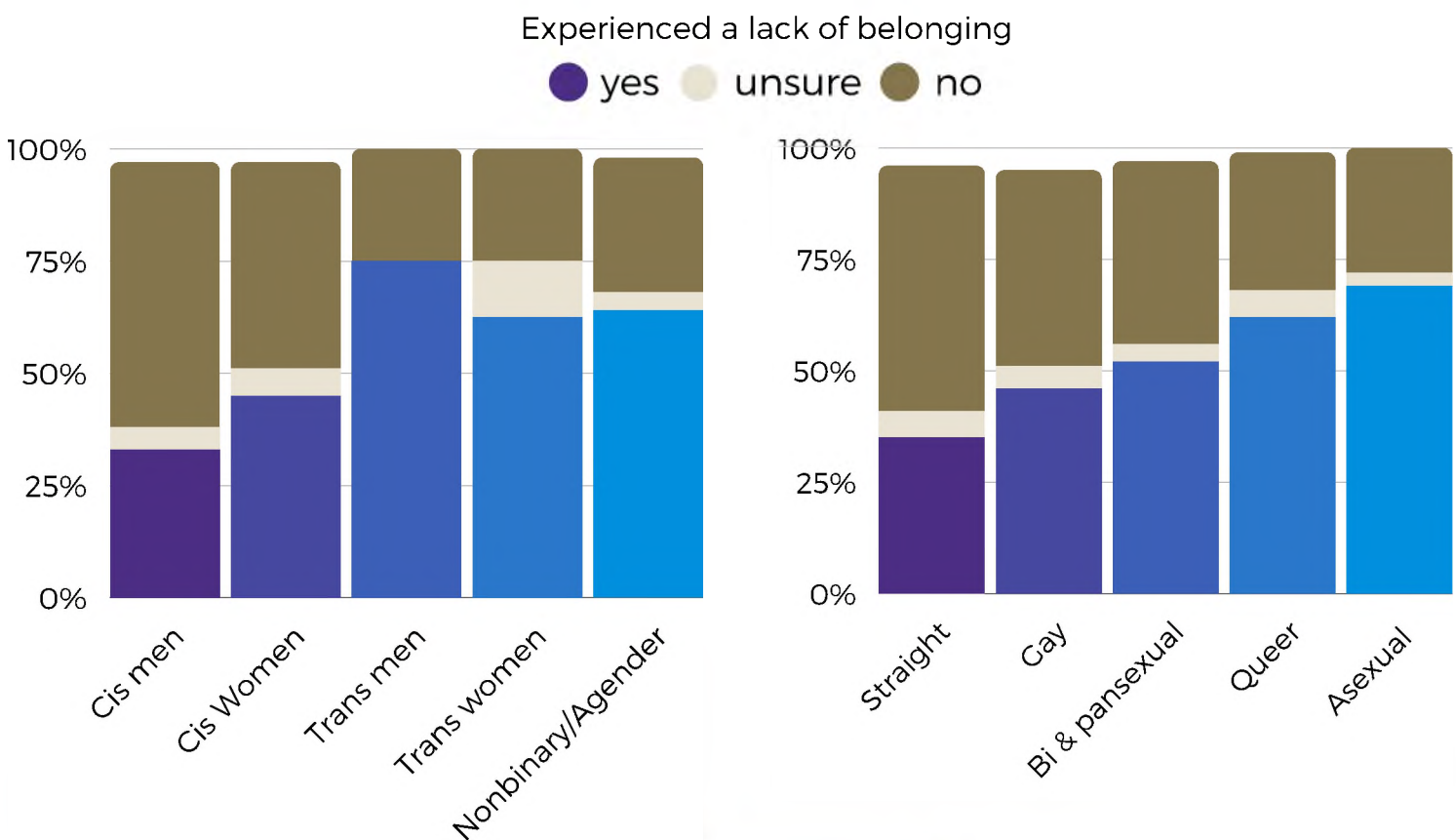
I definitely felt isolated because everything is remote, but I also was surprised to find very little POC in my department, which has made it difficult to relate and share fully my experiences as a graduate student.

There are very few black women or people in the UW grad school and at my workplace. Sometimes it's hard to look around and envision what I want to be because I have to fight to relate to people in the first place. Without the same interests and backgrounds I really have to be creative about finding safe spaces to express my dreams, goals, and intents, and actions. I have thankfully found mentors but it was extremely difficult and they are few and far between.

I appreciate all of the DEI efforts as a whole but as a biracial individual I feel that many of these efforts still silence this group

SUPPORT, COMMUNITY AND BELONGING: EXPERIENCED LACK OF BELONGING

Nonbinary and agender folks had the highest rate of experiencing a lack of belonging consistent with the previous year's report. Cis respondents, both men and women, report much lower numbers than trans respondents, 33% compared to 75% for men and 45% versus 63% for women. Those in the LGBTQIA+ community reported consistently higher numbers in feeling a lack of belonging relative to those that identify as straight with asexual students experiencing this the most at 69%.



It's not specific to UW, but academia as whole. As a queer, first generation college student there are not very many people like me in the academy.

Many introductions don't include pronouns, I've had mixed results with pronoun usage. Several grad students have profusely apologized for making mistakes and even corrected others on my behalf, but many others don't pay attention to them at all and several postdocs and faculty persistently misgender me even after being corrected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the report analysis and fruitful discussions held during the stakeholder meetings, EPIC makes several broad recommendations for future initiatives focused around equity, inclusion, and experiences with harassment.

- **Reevaluate the reporting processes for those venues with the lowest rates of satisfaction.** By centering the experiences of those who have reported, these processes could be modified to better support victims and increase institutional confidence.
- **Provide regular, mandatory leadership and mentor training for faculty.** This would address the disparities ASEs and postdocs feel between finding effective mentorship and identifying career paths, particularly for those in marginalized communities.
- **Build and strengthen connections between organizations undertaking equity and inclusion work.** Increasing communication and access between groups would create networks of support for individuals, broader buy-in for initiatives, and expand overall capacity for addressing issues.
- **Expand funding for resources that support disabled, international, trans/nonbinary, and BIPOC ASEs and postdocs.**