December 2023

EXPERIENCES OF RACISM ON PEI

REPORT

Prepared by:

Mutinda Consulting

Acknowledging Our Positionality

We recognize and acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional and unceded territory of the Abegweit Mi’kmaq First Nation. We are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the “Treaties of Peace and Friendship” which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) people first signed with the British Crown in 1725.

We recognize that settler colonialism has caused deep harm to Indigenous Peoples through the erasure of their worldviews from our modern understanding. The colonial project, which is predicated on historical and current barriers to access, participation, representation, and self determination within and throughout social, financial, economic, environmental and political systems, has enacted violence and discrimination, and entrenched the plunder and destruction of Indigenous Peoples and people from the majority world. We have a collective and individual responsibility to co-write a different history.

As part of our commitment to reframing our responsibilities to land and community we use the following questions as a guide: *what relationship with land should we as non-colonizing settlers of Indigenous lands choose to foster? For settlers like us, brought to or born in lands we settle upon, what relationship do we and should we have with land, removed from our roots?*

PROJECT CONTEXT

Prince Edward Island has no current provincial data on racism of any kind. And yet, BIPOC USHR (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour United for Strength, Hope and Relationships) receives firsthand reports about many instances of racism from their clients and community members.

As no provincial data on racism on PEI exists it is difficult to work toward substantial policy change. Therefore, the *Exploring the Prevalence, Nature, and Psychosocial Impacts of Racism in Healthcare, Education, Employment and Housing on Prince Edward Island* project seeks to fill a very large knowledge gap and enable us to advocate for policy changes, based on evidence that could reduce systemic barriers faced by racialized peoples on PEI across multiple sectors.

The project also seeks to address Systemic Racial Barriers. Having empirical evidence on the frequency, nature, and impact of racism on PEI will help inform policies in healthcare, education, housing and employment on PEI.

The collation of this empirical evidence can better equip BIPOC USHR to advocate for the removal of systemic barriers through policy and procedural changes in the above sectors on PEI, and beyond. This data focuses on healthcare, education, employment and housing, and can be used to advocate for the removal of systemic barriers in the justice system, public life, and other public services.

The project also addresses Public Awareness. Results of this study can highlight the various ways in which racism manifests itself on PEI. Having empirical evidence with regard to the frequency, nature, and impact of racism on PEI can help inform policies in healthcare, education, employment and housing on PEI, as well as beyond these sectors.

PREFACE

Exploring the Prevalence, Nature, and Psychosocial Impacts of Racism in Healthcare, Education, Employment and Housing on Prince Edward Island project sought to increase awareness of factors such as race, culture, ethnicity, and religion that may be hindering full participation of the entire PEI population in Island society and the Island economy. Increasing awareness of how racism, in general, functions but also how the various types of discrimination that fall under the umbrella of racism such as xenophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, Islamophobia, and anti-Asian racism all manifest in their own unique ways, is central to designing policies and practices whose interventions are informed by those who are excluded by the society in which they live..

The report findings highlight how race, ethnicity, culture, immigration status, and religion can all be a basis for discrimination and how this discrimination may impact people's ability, as well as their willingness to participate in Island society (including the *nature* of that engagement). Understanding the extent of discrimination - distilled from both the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in this work - will help to identify the gaps and therefore opportunities for communities to address racism and discrimination.

We know that a problem cannot be addressed until it is first identified and understood. By understanding the prevalence of racism - where it occurs, how it manifests itself, and how serious an impact it has - we can co-design and jointly implement contextualized and dignifying initiatives toward addressing racism and discrimination on PEI.

Emerging insights, findings and recommendations of this project will fill a large knowledge gap, and enable BIPOC USHR, and other organizations such as the Black Cultural Society of PEI and The Cooper Institute, to advocate for policy changes, based on evidence, that could reduce systemic barriers faced by racialized peoples on PEI in healthcare, education, employment and housing. These results can also inform the work of PEI's Anti-Racism Policy Advisor and the provincial Anti-Racism Table. As both bodies seek to provide advice on anti-racism work, they have no data or empirical evidence to support their proposals.

Discrimination in Canada

According to the 2019 General Social Survey (GSS) on Canadians' Safety, nearly half (46%) of Black people aged 15 years and older reported experiencing at least one form of discrimination in the past 5 years, compared to 16% of the non-Indigenous, non-visible minority population. Of all Black people, four in ten (41%) experienced discrimination based on their race or skin colour, about 15 times higher than the proportion among the non-Indigenous, non-visible minority population (3%).

https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2022001/article/00002-eng.htm

- Experiences of discrimination were much more common among Canadian-born Black people (65%) than among Black immigrants (36%).
- Data from the GSS show that a considerably higher proportion of Black people experienced discrimination in 2019 than in 2014 (46% versus 28% respectively).
- Discrimination was more common among the Indigenous population than among populations who are both non-Indigenous and non-visible minority (33% versus 16%). More specifically, 44% of First Nations people had experienced discrimination in the 5 years preceding the survey, as had 24% of Métis and 29% of Inuit.
- Among those who were discriminated against, 21% of Indigenous people and 16% of Black people said it was when dealing with police, compared with 4% of non-Indigenous, non-visible minority people who experienced discrimination.
- Experiences of discrimination were more common among Indigenous people in 2019 (33%) than they were in 2014 (23%).

As we dive into the results of this work it is important to note that conversations and details about experiences and impact of racism are not happening, and do not happen, in a vacuum.

When it comes to lived experiences of racism, this study seeks to demonstrate what is experientially and anecdotally known by Black, Indigenous and People of Color, in real time. While what is happening is not often tangible, BIPOC folks feel it, and it is happening now.

The opportunity offered through this work is ways to measure the impact and implications on BIPOC folks when these harms are allowed to continue because they are entrenched within all sectors. For BIPOC folks, the findings and learnings here are not new, or surprising. For some readers, there is content that may be found surprising, to which the following questions can be explored - *why does this surprise me? What is my understanding of systemically-sanctioned racism and discrimination relative to service delivery? What assumptions and blind spots do I have about different experiences of folks beyond my immediate network of family and friends?*

PEI Human Rights Act

The PEI Human Rights Act states that every person is free and equal in dignity and rights.
In order to promote this principle, the Act prohibits discrimination on PEI in certain areas, such as employment, public services and accommodations, on the basis of certain characteristics or grounds, such as age, race, sex and disability.
The Act became law on September 11, 1976.

http://www.gov.pe.ca/photos/original/YRTK_eng.pdf

"The system meant to help us is dismantling us - because of racism, lack of cultural understanding, assumption that BIPOC people's cultural practices are wrong or barbaric."

"If Canada cannot make tangible efforts toward truth and reconciliation, how do we expect Canada to address systemic racism toward other communities?"

Research Response Rate:

- 137 Respondents
- 17 were white respondents
- 120 TOTAL respondents from **June to September 2023**

The target of the study had been to reach 300-400 BIPOC with the online survey tool (questionnaire).The intent was to reach BIPOC WITH EXPERIENCE - past and/or current - with living on or visiting PEI. The capture of 17 white people who did not fit the qualifications was omitted to reduce skewing of results.

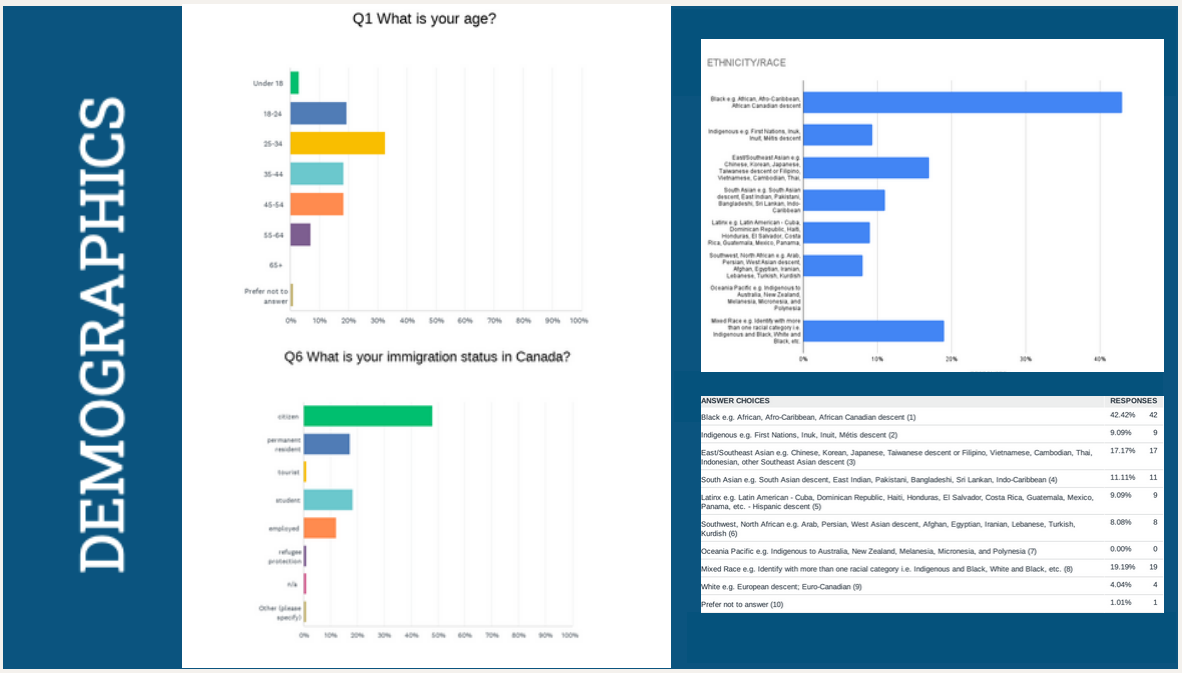
What we heard

Respondents expressed feelings of vulnerability, humiliation, anger, frustration and sadness related to their experiences of racism on PEI; by and large, respondents were not surprised that they continue to encounter various forms of racism.

The emotional toll on participants demonstrated in the survey's findings reveals high levels of stress (40% of respondents find experiences *very stressful*; *somewhat stressful* 29.11% and *quite stressful* 25.32%).

The burden rests on respondents who are navigating highly charged and stress-inducing situations in every aspect of life, creating experiences which reinforce and perpetuate trauma.

Integrating into Canadian life, and specifically Island life - where the reminder at every turn is that one does not belong - is not only depleting, exhausting and deeply, psychologically harmful, it is in contradiction to shared human rights, and shared values.



By and large, nearly 50% of respondents are Black, African Afro-Caribbean, African Canadian descent and are predominantly Canadian citizens between the ages of 25-34.

The psychosocial impact of the experience of racism is deeply scarring when we expose how that experience is internalized. Most often it is a source of frustration, anger and sadness, and in fact, 50% of respondents indicated that they are not surprised by this. They feel vulnerable, and humiliated and powerless. Those reporting 'other' feelings shared that they also feel ashamed, disgusted and exasperated. These situations are scored as *very stressful* by nearly 40% of respondents. Nearly 30% found these experiences *somewhat stressful.*

VOICES

"I was trying to be something different because I didn't know who I was."

"Your culture is like a little atom going up against everything, everywhere all at once."

"My kids want to connect with their culture — they face resistance and ignorance from other people in rural areas — it's worse for my kids than me — I have that sense of self because I got to live in my own culture. They didn't — it's harder for the next generation."

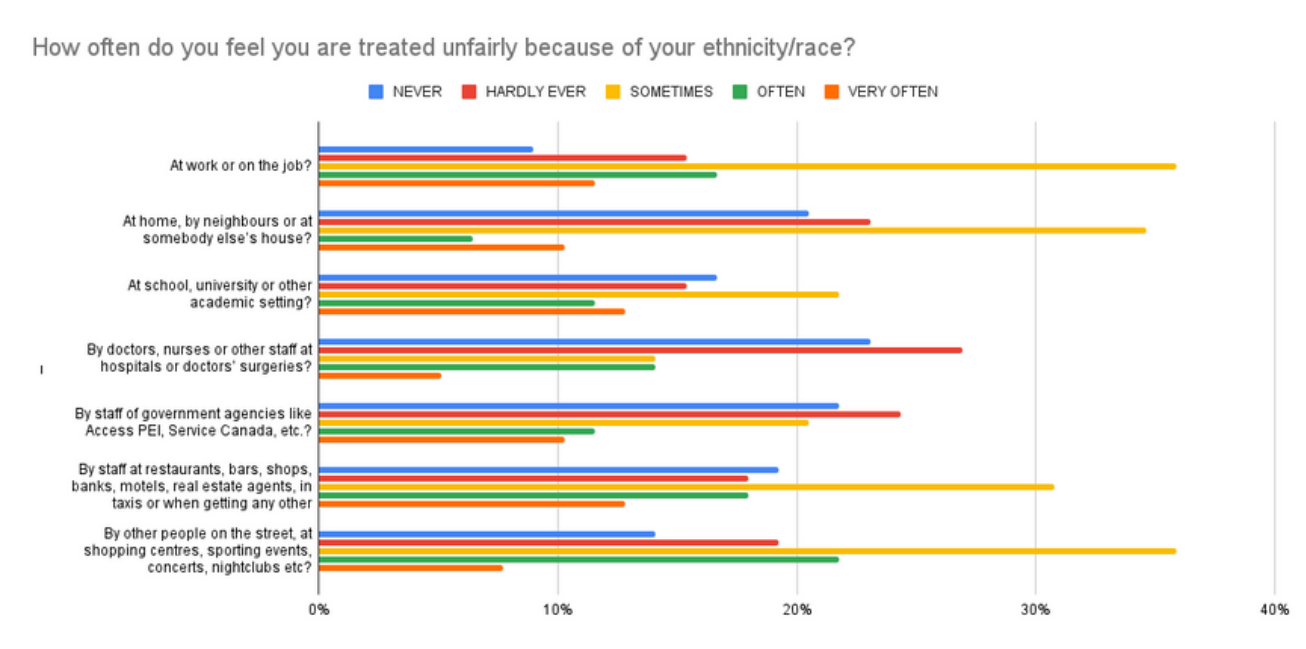
"When we hold diversity events most of the time we're not talking about white people, it tells us that we are the diversity — they're the normal, and we're the diversity"

"People will support you Monday–Friday, 8–4, and then after that they go their way"

Folks feel invisibilized, lost to themselves, and to the white world that they inhabit and have to try and navigate. Is it wrong to have culture? Is it wrong for one to be proud of where they come from, and the richness of their ancestry and cultural background? In the context of Charlottetown, when it comes to experiences of racism across education, health, housing and employment, many Black, Indigenous and People of Color are made to doubt who they are and where they come from, even when for instance, 30% of Black (African, Afro-Caribbean, African Canadian Descent) respondents indicated they are Canadian citizens. Their multiple intersecting identities are somehow in question in this context across these sectors.

For Black, Indigenous and People of Color who come from cultures and heritages where community defines the individual, their PEI experience paints a situation of lostness, and attempts to navigate unknown/foreign, judgemental and exclusionary waters.

Respondents were asked how often they feel they are treated unfairly due to their ethnicity/race, to which 36% responded they sometimes do at work or on the job, and by other people on the street, at shopping centers, sporting events, concerts, night clubs, etc. (respectively). Slightly less (35%) indicated they feel they are treated unfairly due to their race/ethnicity at home, by neighbours, or at somebody else' house. A further disaggregation of the data reveals that 40% of folks who identify as Black (African, Afro-Caribbean and African Canadian Descent) sometimes feel treated unfairly at work or on the job, and by other people on the streets, simply existing. From this same group, 35% sometimes have this similar experience from staff in restaurants, bars, and other service sectors.



Notice that 25% of respondents indicated that they hardly ever feel treated unfairly by doctors, nurses or other staff at hospitals or doctors surgeries, which is interesting and raises questions for deeper research, greater sample size, and mindfulness around drawing generalizations about individual, and societal levels based on this data. This may not be the collective experience of all those who responded, or chose not to.

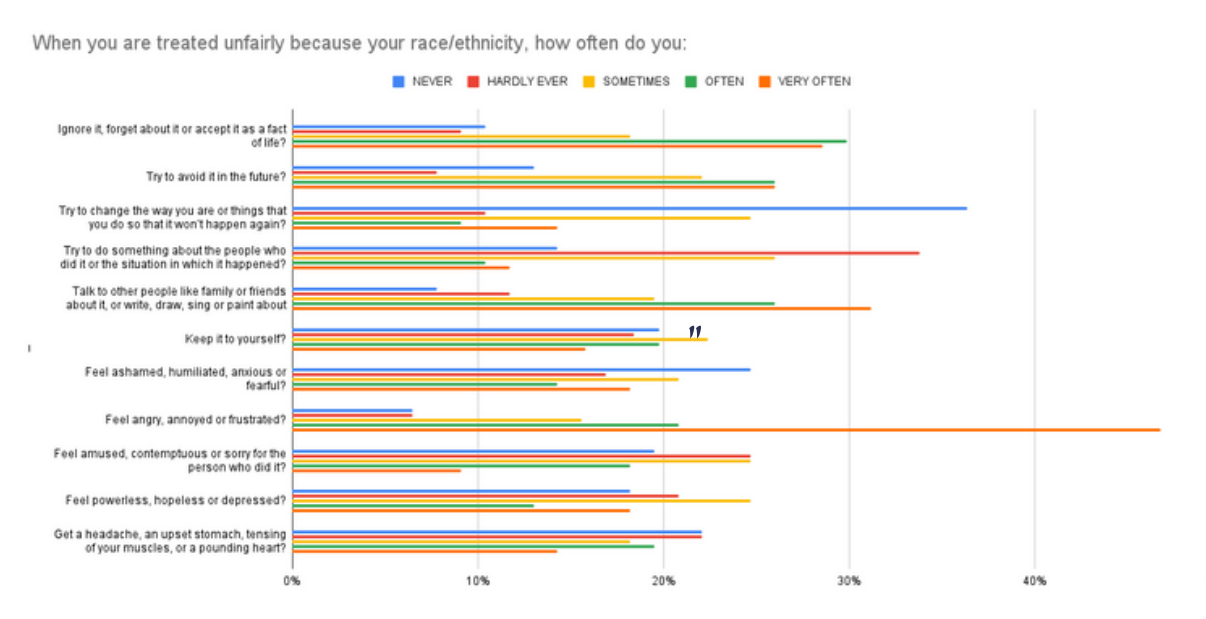
"Systemic issues means that I don't get the services I need"

Forty-seven percent of folks indicated that very often, when treated unfairly due to their ethnicity/race, they feel angry, annoyed or frustrated.

Significantly, though they experience these emotions, 35% of folks hardly ever do anything about the people who did it or the situation in which it happened. Further questions to probe further may include:

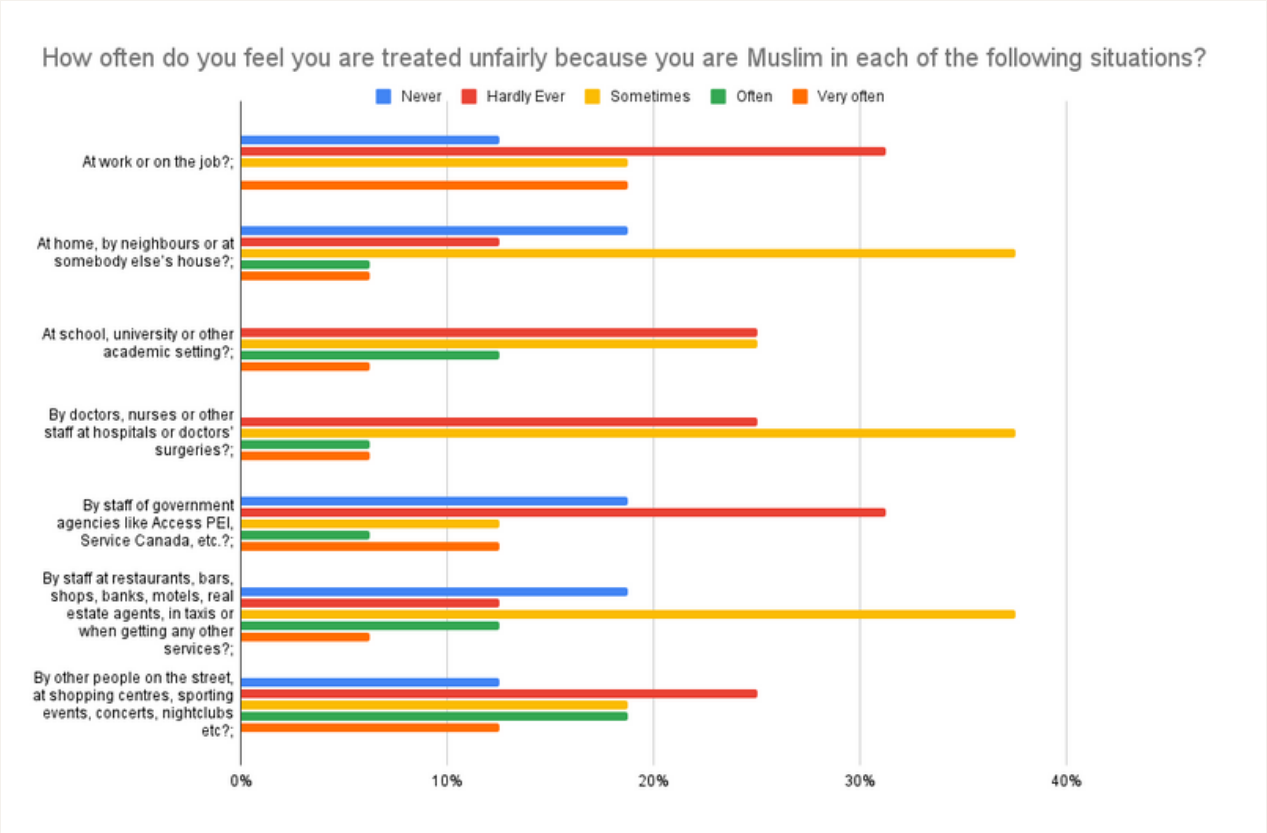
When BIPOC folks are treated unfairly, what actionable options do they have at their disposal? What stands in the way of them reporting it or escalating the incident? What could we learn and address about negative impacts of unfair treatment due to race/ethnicity?

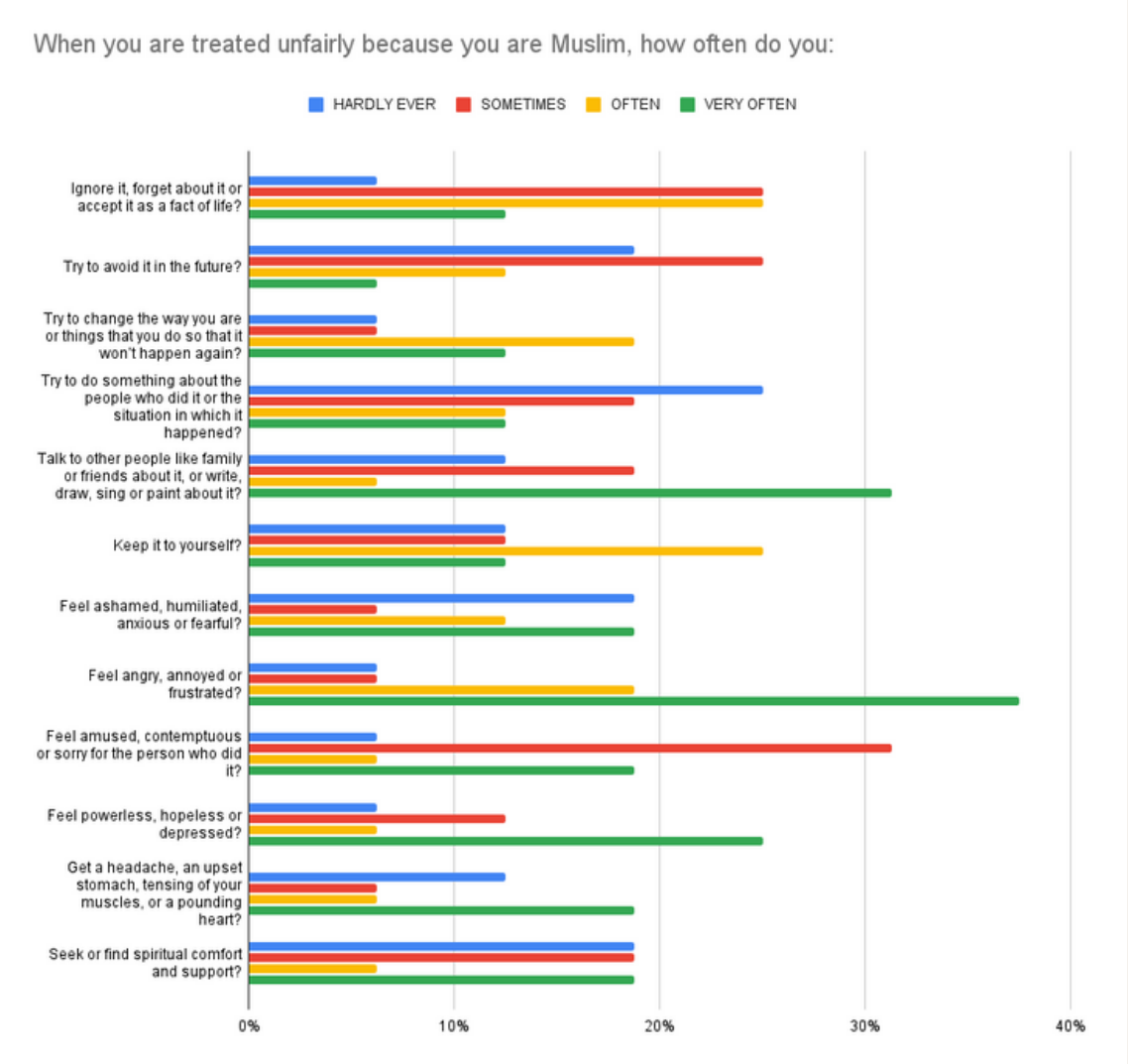
The data is clear that for Black (African, Afro-Caribbean and African Canadian Descent) respondents, when treated unfairly, often ignore it, talk to other people, and of course try to avoid such incidences in the future. They also very often feel angry, annoyed and frustrated. These findings are worth a deeper dive to further identify and document nuances around trust-based data collection practices and managing tensions between transparency and fear of recourse where participant data is concerned.



In general, the data revealed that respondents *sometimes* and *hardly ever* feel they are treated unfairly/discriminated against because they are Muslim.

When discrimination happens, it is often at work or on the job, by other people on the street, at shopping centers, sporting events, concerts, night clubs, etc. (19% said this).

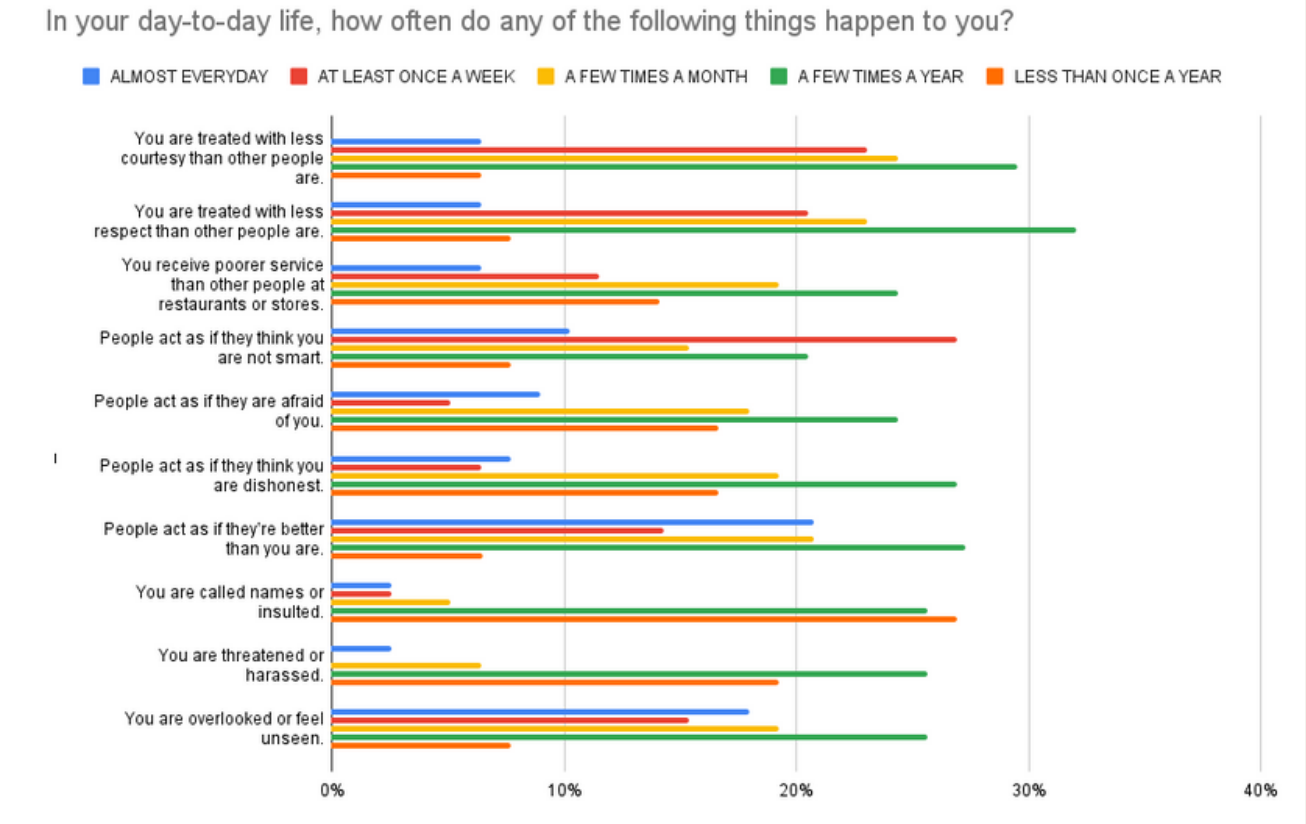




The responses many people took when they perceived they were being treated unfairly because they are Muslim was to *very often* feel angry, annoyed or frustrated (37%). Another 32% of people responded by very often talking to other people like family or friends about it, writing, drawing, singing or painting about it. Sometimes people felt amused, contemptuous or sorry for the person who treated them unfairly (32%).

"How much do you have to be palatable to maintain your job?"

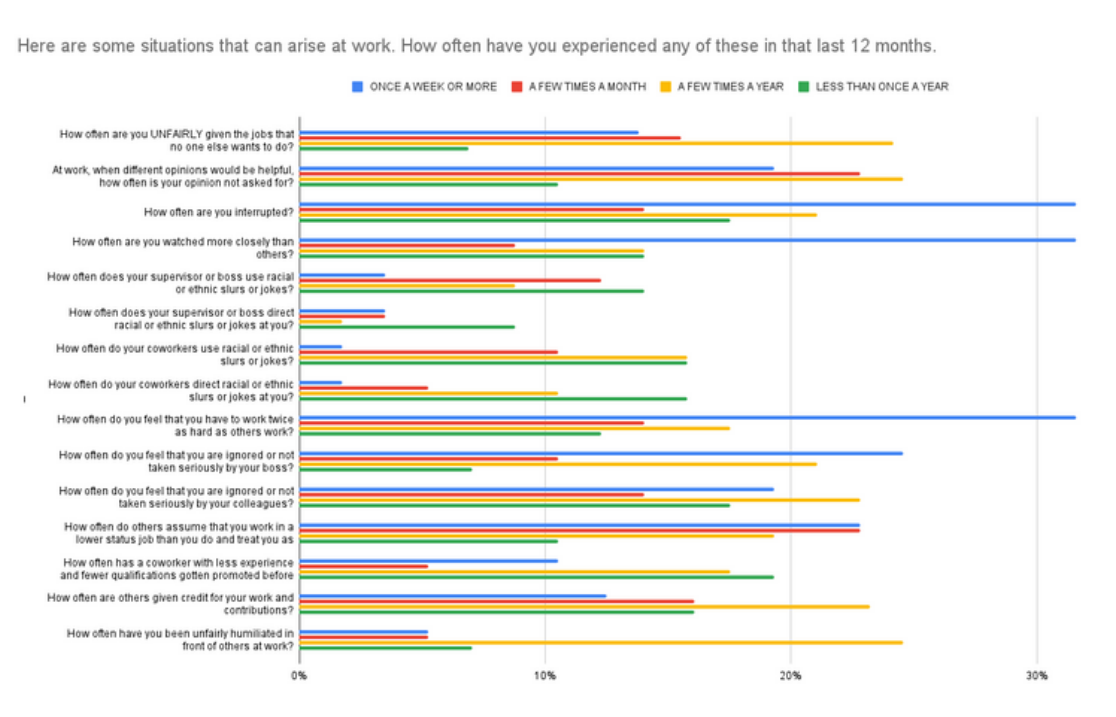
In day-to-day life, 32% of respondents said they experienced being treated with less respect than other people (at least a few times a year), and 28% said over the course of a year, they experienced being treated with less courtesy than other people. 25% of respondents said that they were treated as if they are not smart at least once a week. The data is more telling for Black (African, Afro-Caribbean and African Canadian Descent) respondents for whom 30% said they experienced being treated with less courtesy than other people are, and indicated being overlooked or unseen a few times a year, respectively. Another 33% expressed being treated with less respect than other people.



"Am I here because of my qualifications or is there another agenda?"

"If you're in a role, do you feel valued? Is your expertise used? Do you feel called upon?"

"Do you feel supported and represented in your workspace?"

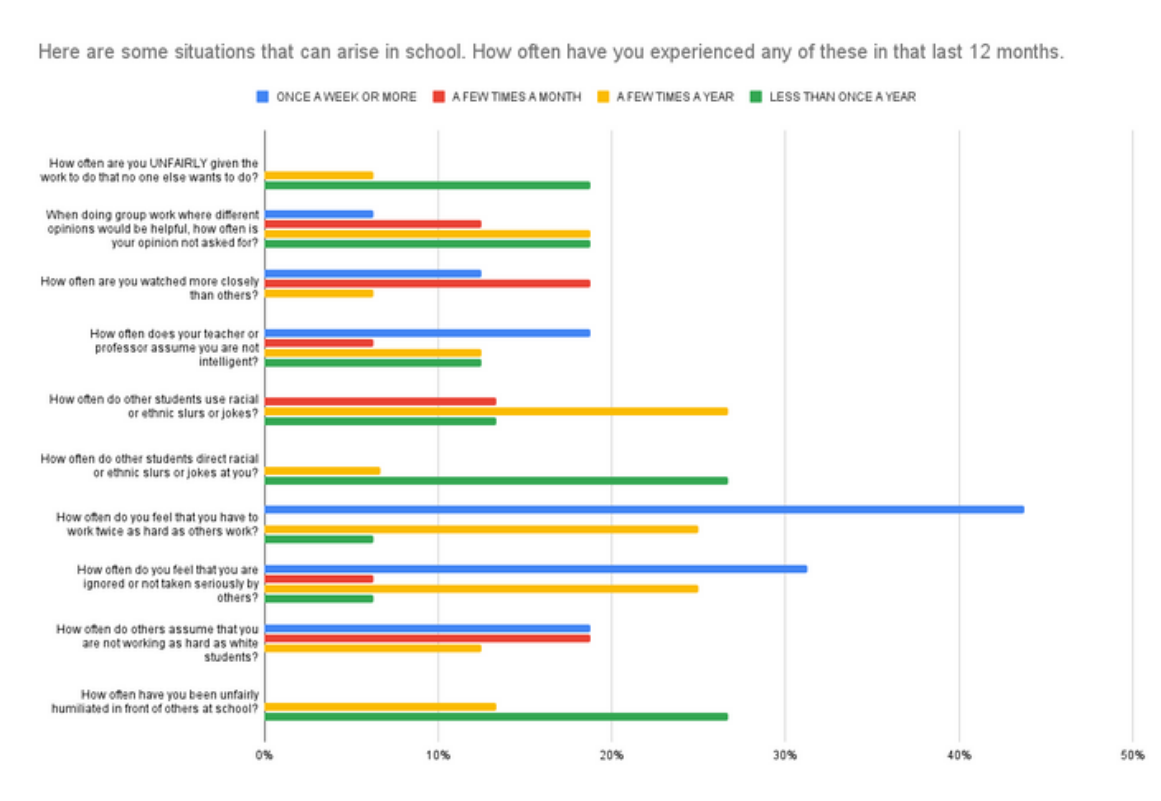


Within the work context, 32% of respondents said that once a week or more they experienced being interrupted, being watched more closely than others, and feeling they have to work twice as hard as others at work, respectively.

A few times a year between 21% and 25% of respondents indicated that they have been unfairly humiliated in front of others at work (25%), that they are unfairly given the jobs that no one else wants to do (23%), that their opinions are not asked for at work, that they feel they have to work twice as hard, and that they face assumptions that they work in a lower status job as colleagues and are therefore treated as thus. They indicated that others get credit for work that is not theirs, a few times a year.

Respondents indicated that in the academic setting, once a week or more, 43% felt they have to work twice as hard as others work (just to be seen as equal), and 31% indicated that once a week or more, over the course of the past 12 months, they feel ignored or not taken seriously by others.

Twenty-seven percent of respondents said that a few times a year other students use racial or ethnic slurs or jokes, and slightly less than that number indicated they feel ignored or not taken seriously by others a few times a year. And this is also the case when they discussed their feelings about working twice as hard as others work.



The last question of the survey invited participants to offer their recommendations and ideas about how to address racism on PEI.

Notable responses are as follows:

Psychosocial supports for BIPOC: supports and opportunities to connect and network with other BIPOC communities, locally and internationally (learning from others); community organizing around everyday issues that involve instances of racism;

Public Education & Supports for International and Immigrant Students

Judicial/Legal Supports: Address the backlog of the Human Rights Commission; publish information for individuals experiencing discrimination; offer pro bono and free basic legal advice

Representation/Employment: increase representation of racialized minorities in PEI key institutions, including education, health, social services, etc.; enforce mandatory Diversity Training for all types of workplaces, especially at HR and Executive levels.

EXPERIENCE	ANALYSIS
• Unfair treatment based on my ethnicity and religious identity across all aspects of my life (work, socially, etc.). • Perceptions and treatment of me as less than; I am not afforded the same level of respect, no recognition that I have expertise. • Experience of being watched closely, being interrupted, and having to work twice as hard; suffering humiliation at being singled out for less desirable jobs, my opinions are not sought after, I face negative assumptions of my worth due to the low-level jobs I am given; others are credited with work that is not theirs. • Being ignored and not being taken seriously within academia. • Racial/ethnic slurs and jokes at my expense.	Power dynamics must be part of conversations on systemic racism, which includes individual and collective behaviours, thoughts and attitudes, and approaches around creating welcoming and judgement-free environments for clients – laying out history of where that comes from in Canada, and why, and how to deal with situations where folks are being othered, undermined and not seen. Analysis of power relations and perceptions of power structures and their nuanced nature is needed to unpack truths around attitudes and behaviours (entrenched within systems such employment, healthcare, housing, etc.) of doubling down and doing 'the work'/ignoring incidents Building support networks through intentional community-building to support folks to navigate life in Canada.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above participant responses offer concrete first steps toward addressing identified barriers to equitable access to services, platforms, policies and voices for those who experience racism on PEI . Further steps will emerge in coordination and collaboration with Black, Indigenous and People of Color to flesh out collective, community-building strategies that can restore relationships, partnerships, and mutual and collective wellbeing. All Black, Indigenous and People of Color on PEI have within them the agency, expertise, skills and worldviews that will be central to formulating co-created solutions that address systemic racism.

The prevalence, nature and psychosocial impacts of racism are personal, interpersonal and collective. They are layered experiences, emotions, hurt, confusion and anger that folks must hold and carry while simultaneously navigating a new country, customs, and culture. New Canadians, visitors, temporary permit-holders, and others, in addition to navigating a “new world” not designed to see and support the so-called “other”, are almost always working through trauma wrought throughout the immigration system, colonial trauma, and/or vicarious trauma. Understanding Canada’s colonial history, and the interconnectedness of our world, all peoples, all life forms, and all systems is a necessary first step in personal and collective learning and unlearning, and in taking responsibility for what we must do now to shift narratives through intentional community-building.

To be done well and with care for those living through the experiences further exposed within this research and report, the next iteration of this work will emerge from meaningful partnerships that meet priority communities where they are. They can and must lead in the design and inform plans, processes and procedures that ultimately affect their wellbeing.

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Canadian Race Relations Foundation | Fondation canadienne des relations raciales

This research was conducted by Mutinda Consulting for BIPOC USHR.

2023