



# Results Summary: Island County Employee Survey on Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

## Survey objectives

A non-scientific survey, the DEI Staff Survey was conducted between Dec. 9, 2022, and Jan. 24, 2023, to help gain a better understanding of employees' perspectives and experiences related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The data collected will be used to understand employee experiences at the time of the survey and inform current and future decisions supporting a diverse and inclusive workplace for all.

## Method

This anonymous survey was delivered to full-time and part-time Island County employees using Survey Monkey for electronic responses and paper copies with Spanish versions available. For the paper copies, drop-off boxes were in the Annex and administration buildings on Whidbey and Camano islands.

## Participation and Response Rate

A total of 174 responses to the survey were received. With approximately 440 full-time Island County employees at the time of the survey, that is a response rate of 39.5 percent. Of those 174 respondents, 101 self-identified as women, 25 self-identified as being Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC), 31 self-identified as being LGBTQ+, and 34 self-identified as being disabled. Many individuals identified as being a member of one or more of these groups.

This survey was not intended to be scientific, but the response rate is considered adequate to provide useful information regarding employee perspectives on the Island County workplace.

## The Results

To present the results of this survey clearly and effectively, we are presenting them in groups of related topics, or themes. Those themes are:

- Discrimination (DEI\* and HR\*\*)
- Isolating Behaviors & Bullying (DEI and HR)
- Employee Accommodation/Disability (HR)
- Employee Engagement (HR)
- Employee Recognition/Management (HR)
- Compensation (HR)
- Openness to DEI Work/ Work Needed (DEI)

*\*Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*

*\*\*Human Resources*

## Conclusions

Throughout this summary perceived implications from the data and potential factors that caused the responses provided are presented. These are not intended to be definitive nor conclusive, but rather are presented for consideration. As such these sections are included under the heading “Implications” rather than “Conclusions.”

## Employee Accommodation/Disability (HR)

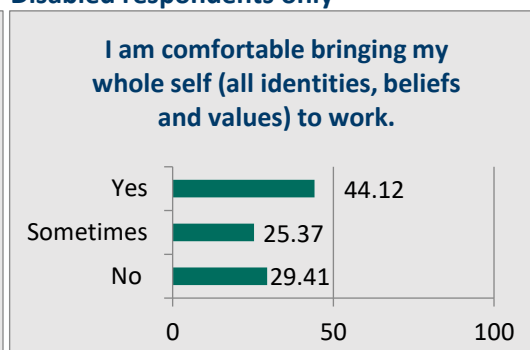
Survey Questions 3, 8 and 9.

**Q3** In response to, “I am comfortable bringing my whole self – all identities, beliefs, values – to work,” a little over 80% replied “yes,” but 18.39% said they did not. Among those who identify as disabled, the highest number, 29.41% said they do not feel like they can be themselves at work. 28% of those who are LGBTQ+ said they don’t feel they can be themselves at work.

**Includes all survey respondents**



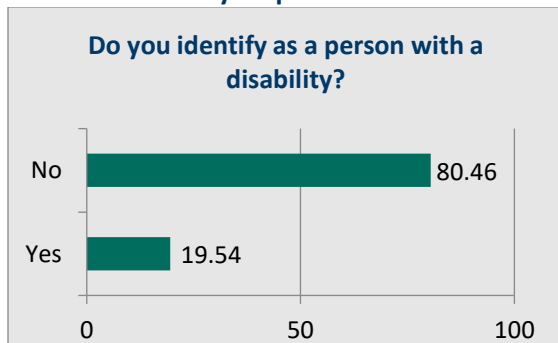
**Disabled respondents only**



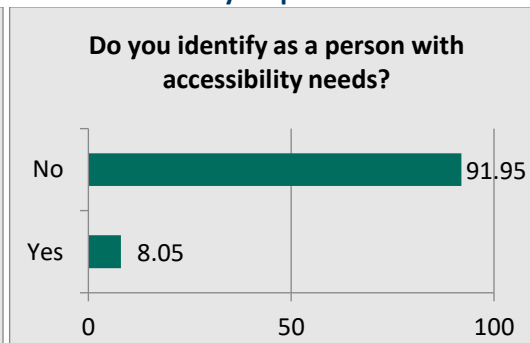
**Q8** Of the respondents, 19.54% identified as being a person with a disability. Among LGBTQ+, 44% identified as disabled. Among people who identify as gender diverse, 33.3% identified as disabled.

**Q9** In response to, “Do you identify as a person with accessibility needs,” 8.05% identified as having accessibility needs, and 23.53% of disabled said that they had accessibility needs.

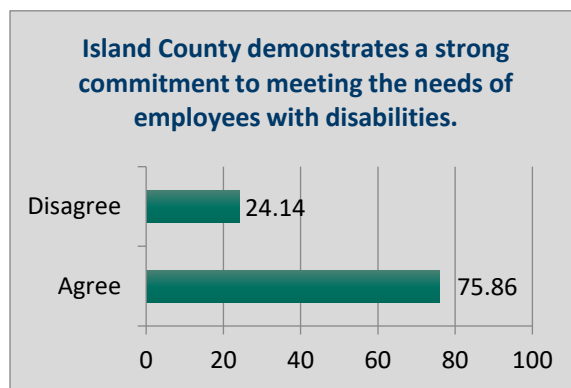
**Includes all survey respondents**



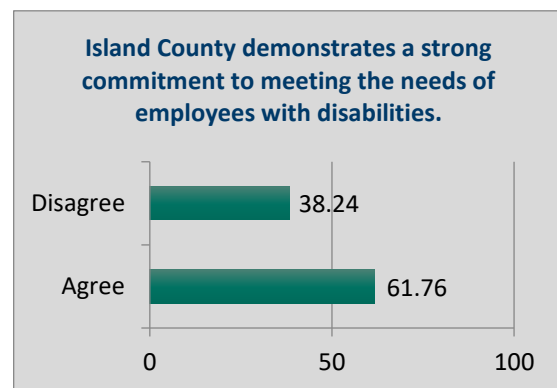
**Includes all survey respondents**



**All survey respondents**



**Those who identify as disabled**



## Implications

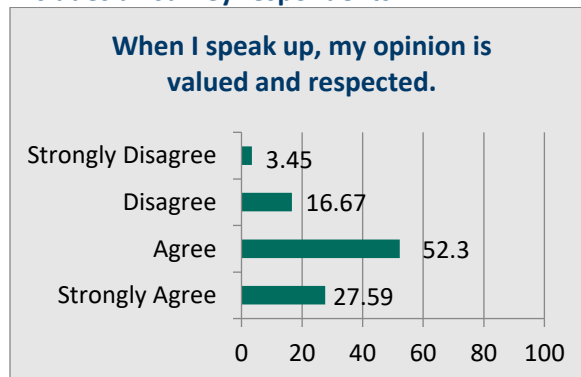
There is a notable difference in the responses between “all” respondents and respondents identifying as having a disability in the perception of accommodation. “All” respondents see the County’s commitment to meeting the needs of employees with disabilities as stronger than those with disabilities. It is possible that employees who need (or may need) an accommodation are not having that need met effectively. The responses indicate a need for expanded outreach to employees to ensure that the County is providing reasonable accommodation where there is demonstrated need. This data may also be impacted by perceived unmet needs even though the employee has not requested an accommodation or has not communicated a need.

## Discrimination

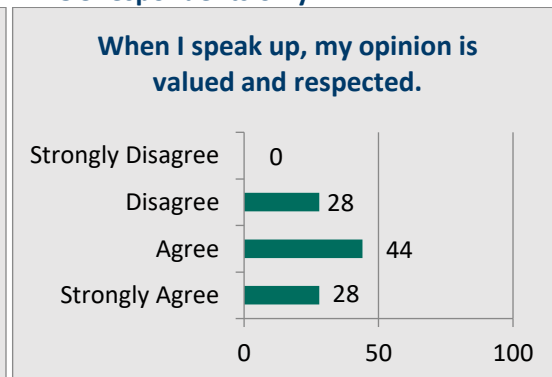
Survey Questions 5, 14, 20, 21 and 29.

**Q5:** While 79.89 % of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “When I speak up, my opinion is valued and respected,” 20.12% disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement. Of the BIPOC respondents, 28% disagreed with that statement. Of women, 22% disagreed that their opinions were valued and respected. Of LGBTQ+, 20 percent disagreed that their opinions were valued and respected. Of those who identify as gender diverse, 16.67% disagreed with the statement. However, at 28.47 percent, the group with the highest number of respondents disagreeing with this statement were those who identified as disabled.

**Includes all survey respondents**



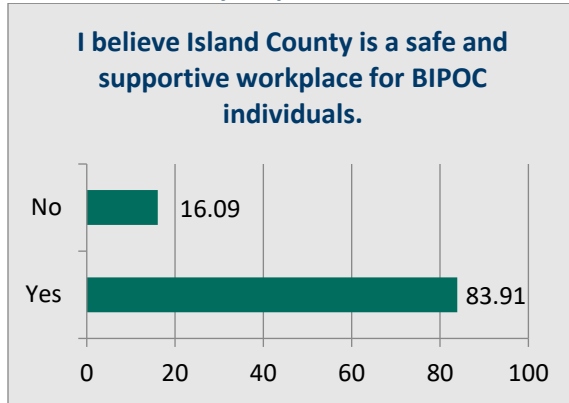
**BIPOC respondents only**



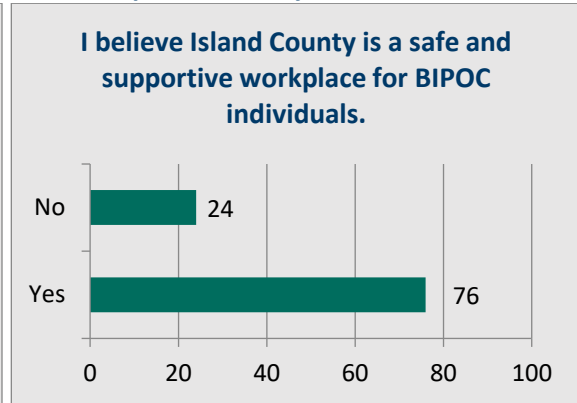
**Q14:** To the question “I believe Island County is a safe and supportive workplace for BIPOC individuals,” 83.91 of BIPOC respondents responded “yes,” and 16.09 percent of BIPOC

respondents answered they do not feel Island County is a safe and supportive workplace. Women, disabled and LGBTQ+ respondents answered similarly, though at slightly lower numbers.

**Includes all survey respondents**

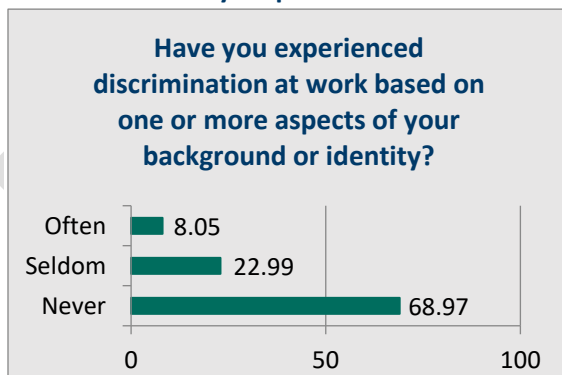


**BIPOC respondents only**

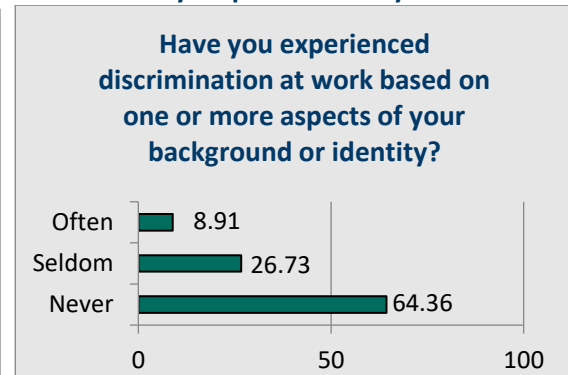


**Q20:** In response to the question, “Have you experienced discrimination at work on one or more aspects of your background or identity,” (question did not specify whether respondents limit their experience to their jobs with Island County) 68.97% of the 174 respondents said they have never experienced discrimination at work, 22.9% said they seldom experience discrimination and 8.5% said they often experience discrimination at work. This means that more than 30% percent of the respondents have experienced discrimination in a work environment, though it’s not clear how many experienced discriminations specifically in the Island County workplace.

**Includes all survey respondents**

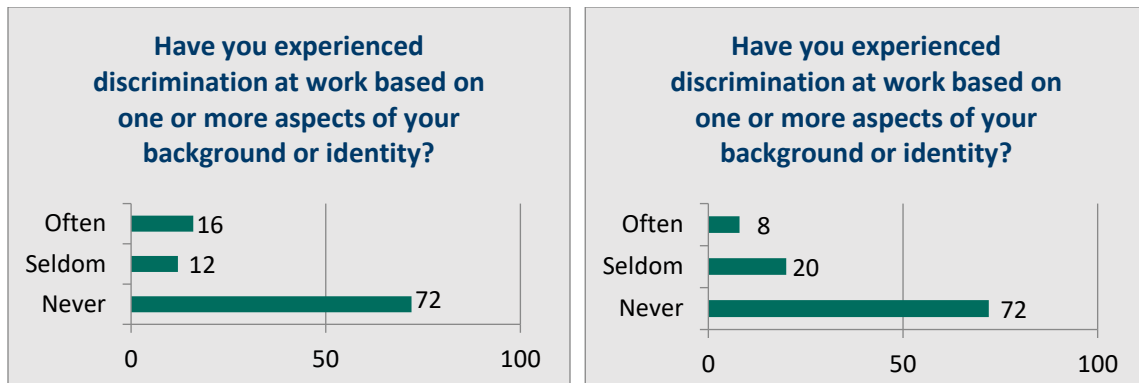


**Female survey respondents only**



**BIPOC survey respondents only**

**LGBTQ+ survey respondents only**



**Q21:** The question “If I raised a concern about discrimination, I am confident my employer would take action” had five potential responses: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. Of the 174 survey respondents, 5.75% reported never, 9.77% rarely, 26.44% sometimes, 22.41% often, and 35.63% always. Among women who responded to the survey, the response always dropped to 31.68%, 24% for BIPOC, 16.67% for people who identify as gender diverse, and 28 percent for LGBTQ+ respondents. Among those who identify as disabled, only 38.24% responded always with 2.94% saying often. This data does not distinguish between the organization and a department or office where the employee works. Some employees may view their direct supervisor, manager, department head or elected official as the employer instead of the larger organization.

**Q29:** Responses to the question “Does race play a role in your life” indicate that most Island County employees do not believe race plays a role in their lives. This is reflective of many Americans belief that race, class, gender, sexuality, and other differences do not play a role in their lives. Only 27.59% of respondents to the Island County DEI survey said that yes, race does play a role in their lives. Women answered similarly to the overall respondents. However, 40% of BIPOC individuals, 33.33% of those who identify as gender diverse, 44% of LGBTQ+ individuals answered that race does play a role in their lives. Of those who identify as disabled, 32.35 said that race does play a role in their lives.

## Implications

The number of people who do not believe their opinions are valued and respected suggests managers and elected officials should examine and improve their means of communication with their employees, open channels for more employee feedback and effective ways of acknowledging and responding to that feedback in a respectful and transparent manner.

Although some instances of discrimination may have occurred outside the Island County workplace, addressing and eliminating all forms of discrimination should be a top objective, one that is addressed immediately, transparently, and head-on at all levels of the Island County organization.<sup>1</sup>

There is a need for transparent processes that show employees that concerns about discrimination are being acknowledged and addressed. Feedback is an essential component of effective communication, but it is also extremely difficult due to the need for confidentiality in issues dealing with individuals. Work needs to be done regarding this feedback. Better education for employees would benefit these efforts so employees understand that the organization addresses issues of discrimination even though

<sup>1</sup> Question 20 did not limit respondents to only considering Island County employment when answering about experiencing discrimination in the workplace.

the employee experiencing the discrimination only receives confirmation that the matter was addressed.

More than a third of BIPOC respondents report that race plays a role in their lives. Since the average full-time worker spends about 30-percent of their waking hours at work, it is reasonable to conclude that the workplace plays a factor in the responses. Given the difference between white and BIPOC respondents answers, white respondents likely undervalue the significance of race in the workplace. Question 29 identifies another opportunity for further analysis because the question does not explore if the "role" is positive or negative and how that is affected by the workplace.

By adopting a strong policy expressing a commitment to addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusion, Island County will examine and implement more effective means of responding to DEI concerns raised by any employee. This can include improved training of appointed and elected officials and staff, direct and transparent responses to all DEI concerns shared (where appropriate), and improved communication at all levels of the organization. Future surveys will help to document and evaluate the effectiveness of Island County's efforts to improve diversity, equity and inclusion and likely result in adaptations to improve the processes.

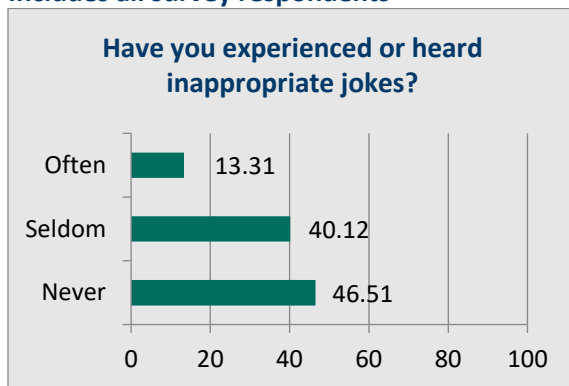
## Isolating Behaviors & Bullying

Survey Questions 4, 18A, 18B, 18C, 18D, 18E, and 31 .

**Q4:** In response to the question, "I feel supported in my position/role," 35.06% of the respondents answered that they strongly agreed that they felt supported and 47.13% said they simply agreed. 15.5% disagreed with the statement and 2.3% strongly disagreed. Of BIPOC staff, 36% said they felt supported. Overall, only 2.3 percent strongly disagreed that they felt supported in their position/role.

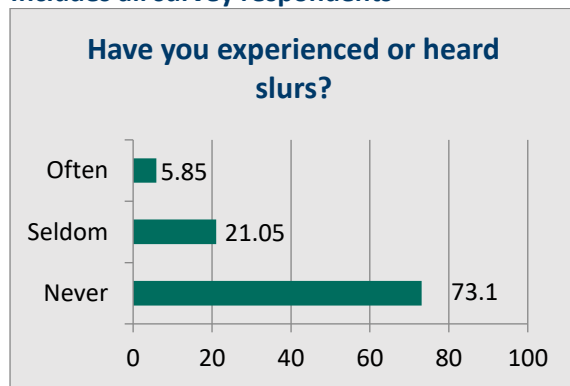
**Q18A, B, C, D and E** addressed isolating behavior and bullying. The way the questions are phrased, it's not clear if the respondents' answers were specifically addressing events that occurred while employed by Island County, or if some responses address experiences in previous workplaces or in general. The results by subgroup were generally similar.

Includes all survey respondents

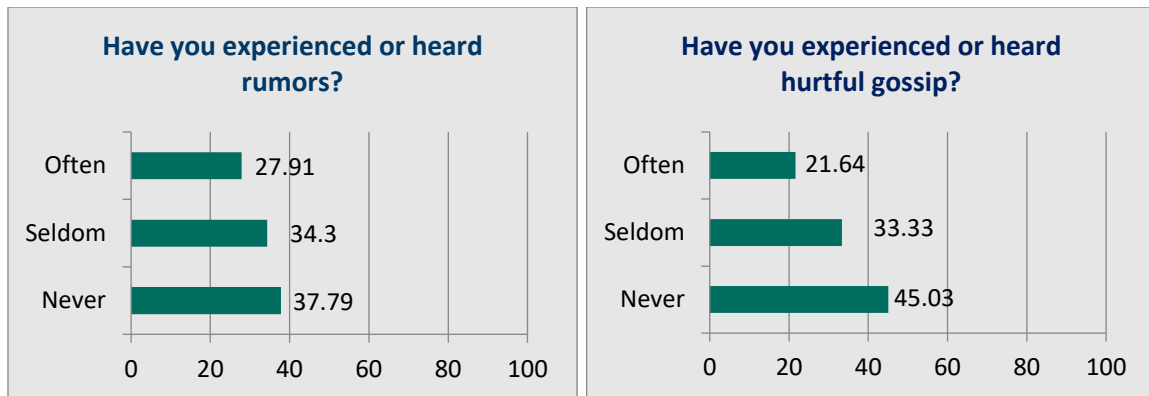


Includes all survey respondents

Includes all survey respondents



Includes all survey respondents



Responses to questions 18A (inappropriate jokes), 18B (slurs), 18C (rumors), 18D (hurtful gossip) and 18E (isolating behaviors) reveal that, of the 174 employees who responded to the survey, 53.43% had at some point heard inappropriate jokes. While the response rate was similar for women or those who are BIPOC, among those who identify as gender diverse, about 67% have heard an inappropriate joke at least once.

**Q31** Employees were asked, “What is the biggest challenge you feel this organization should work on addressing?” The top three responses, omitting “No Comment,” were: “Pay,” with 42 responses, “Professionalism,” with 12 responses, and “Fairness,” with 18 responses. The issue of pay indicates there is a perception that Island County pay is lower than in surrounding counties and cities in Washington state. Some survey respondents specifically cited concerns about inflation and the high cost of housing in Island County. In the responses citing “professionalism” as a work challenge, both training and behavior at work were cited. And while seven responses were directed specifically toward DEI work, all other responders were in favor of increased fairness, increased diversity, and increased inclusion for all Island County staff.

## Implications

Overall, employee responses to questions 18A, 18B, 18C, 18D and 18E show that elected and appointed officials and all supervisors must take steps to eliminate isolating behaviors as they are identified. To foster an inclusive and diverse working environment, there can be no tolerance for inappropriate jokes, slurs, rumors, hurtful gossip, and isolating behaviors.

## Openness to DEI Work/Equity, Work Needed

Survey Questions 1 (last 3 statements), 3 and 31.

**Q1** is a set of 10 statements with “yes” or “no” answers. These statements range from Human Resources questions about opportunity, support, and encouragement to questions about feeling included and/or respected by supervisors and coworkers.

At least 80% of all employees who completed the survey said “yes” to the following statements: “My immediate supervisor encourages people with different ideas to speak up,” “I feel comfortable speaking up about issues in the workplace with my immediate supervisor,” and, “People of all cultures and backgrounds are valued and respected in this organization.”

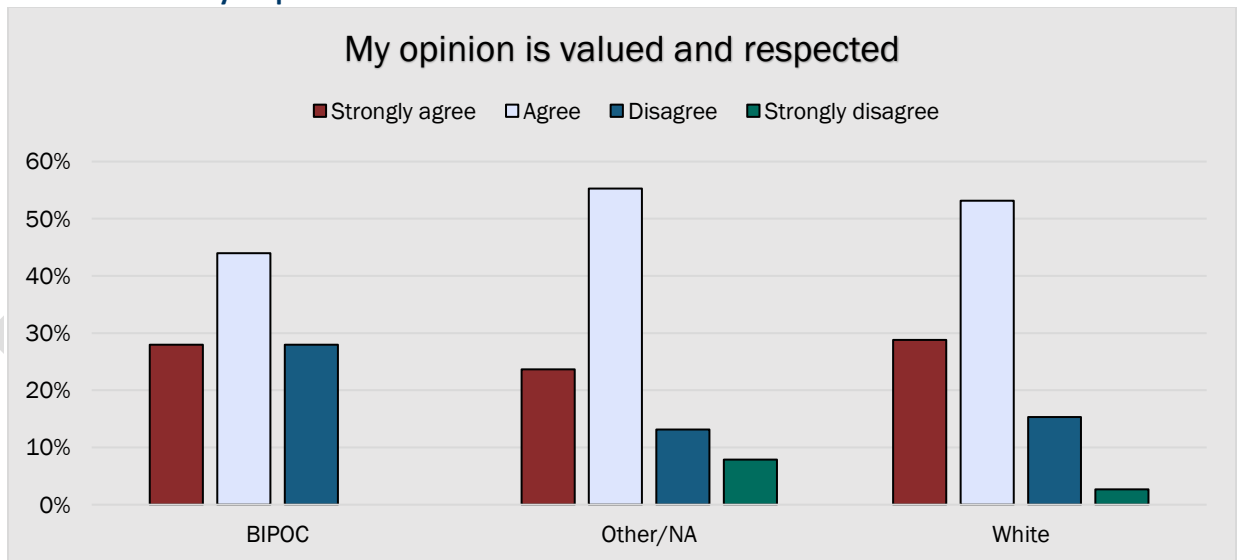
Of the 174 who answered the survey, 54 percent said they believe employees are treated equitably. But Only 46.53% of women, 48% of BIPOC and LGBTQ+ and 47% of survey respondents who identify as disabled responded that they believe employees are treated equitably.

Only 16.67% of respondents who identify as gender diverse and 28% of LGBTQ+ and 16.67% of respondents said they feel they can achieve success as their true selves. 60% of BIPOC respondents said they feel comfortable bringing their whole selves to work. Of women who responded, 52.48 said they are comfortable bringing their whole selves to work. Of those who are disabled, 44.12 said they are comfortable bringing their whole self to work.

Answering “yes” to the statement, “Island County values and respects diverse opinions,” 67.24% of all survey respondents answered “yes.” However, 64% of women, 56% of LGBTQ+, 52% of BIPOC, 52% of disabled and 50% of gender diverse responded “yes.”

“Do you think this organization offers equitable opportunities for career growth,” (59.2% all respondents) and “I trust this organization treats all employees equitably,” (54.6% all respondents).

Includes all survey respondents



**Q3** See summary above under “Employee Accommodation/Disability.”

**Q31** See summary above under “Isolating Behaviors and Bullying.”

## Implications

Responses indicate that employees who are members of diverse classes do not feel valued at the same level that white, straight, and cis-gender employees do.

## Employee Engagement (HR)

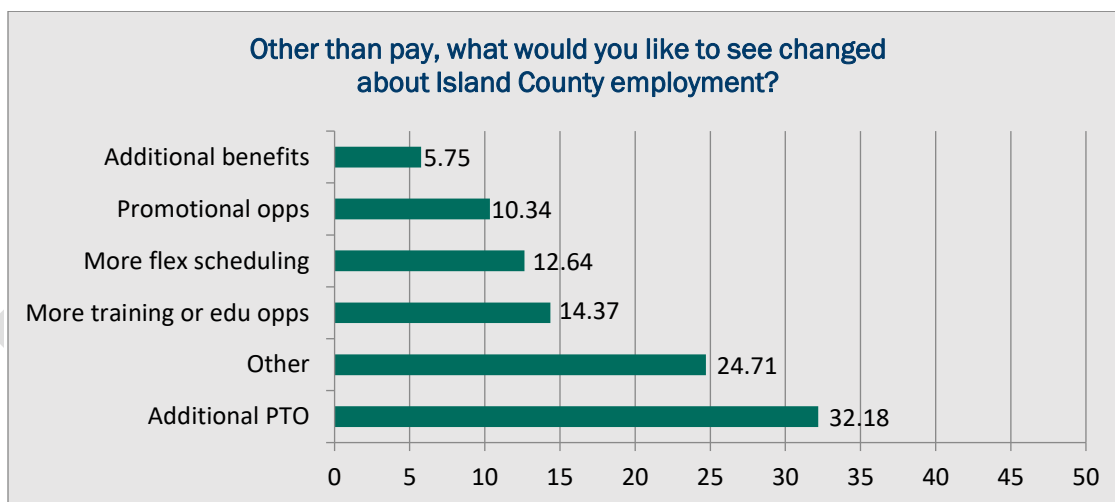
Survey Questions 4, 7, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26 and 31.



**Q4** See summary above under “Isolating Behaviors and Bullying.”

**Q7** In response to the question, “Other than pay, what would you like to see changed about Island County employment,” 32.1% of all respondents said “PTO”, 24.71% said “other,” 14.37% said “more training and education opportunities,” 12.64% said “more flexible spending,” 10.34% said “more promotion opportunities,” and 5.75% said additional benefits. Most “Other” responses were related to pay increases, citing the cost of living in Island County. Several respondents said they would like to have a four-day/32-hour work week, more flexible scheduling, work-from-home opportunities, childcare, and lessening of individual workloads.

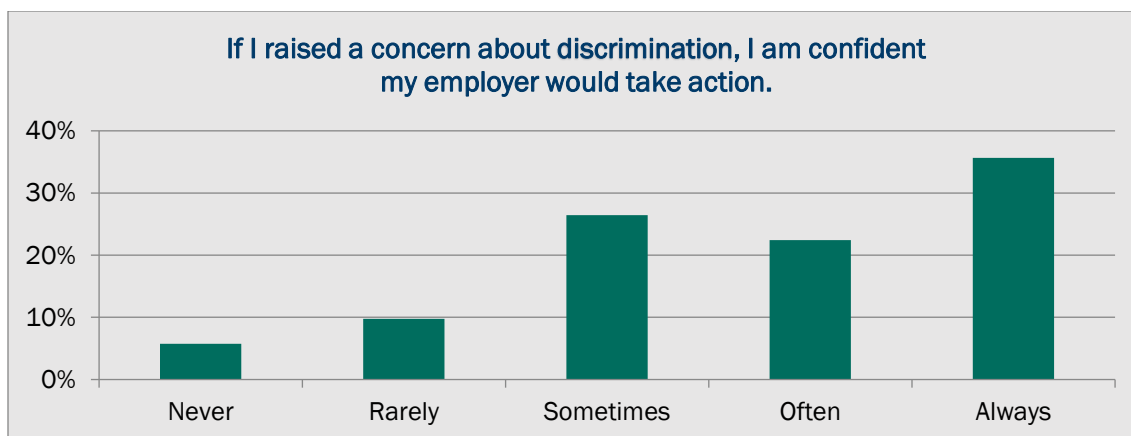
**Includes all survey respondents**



**Q21** See summary above under “Discrimination.”

**Q22** The question, “If I raised a concern about discrimination , I am confident my employer would take action,” had five potential responses: “Never,” “Rarely,” “Sometimes,” “Often,” and “Always.” Out of the 174 responses, 39.08% said that were always comfortable reporting something wrong at work, 29.89% said often, 19.54% said sometimes and 6.9% said rarely. Only 4.6% of respondents said they were never comfortable reporting discriminatory action. The fact that 15% of employees think their employer would rarely or never act is troubling. “Action” includes investigation, and in almost all instances investigation should be the minimum response by a supervisor.

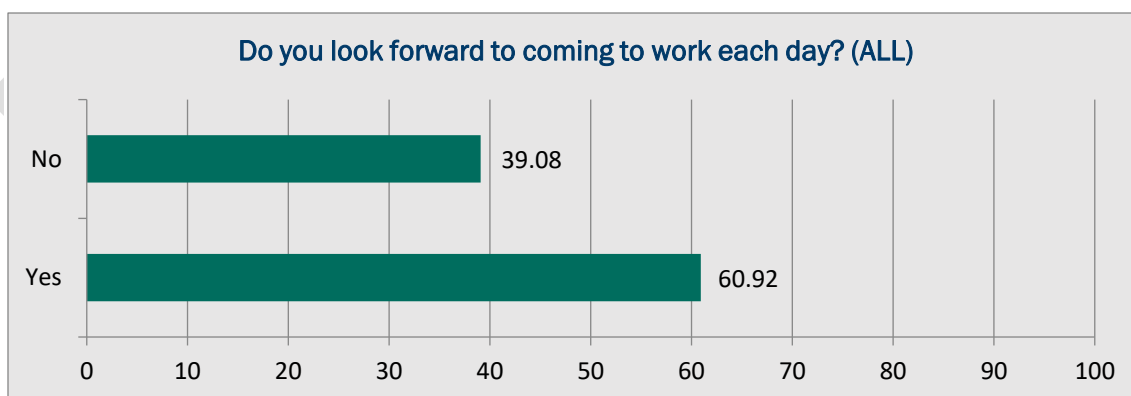
**Includes all survey respondents**



**Q23** The question, “Do you feel your concerns/complaints are held confidentially?” had five potential responses: “Never,” “Rarely,” “Sometimes,” “Often,” and “Always.” Of the 174 respondents, 30.06% said they always felt their concerns were held confidentially, 26.01% said often, 24.28% said sometimes. Only 9.83% said concerns/complaints are rarely or never held confidentially. However, 20% of BIPOC employees responded with rarely and 8% said never. LGBTQ+ employees responded similarly. And 38.24% of disabled respondents said they always felt their complaints were held confidentially with 23% responding rarely or never.

**Q25** The question, “Do you look forward to coming to work each day?” allowed only “yes” and “no” responses. 60.2% said they do look forward to coming to work each day, 39.08% said they did not. Broken down into subgroups, BIPOC individuals and those who identify as gender diverse were more positive with 66.7-68% saying they look forward to coming to work. Of those who are LGBTQ+, 56% said they look forward to coming to work, and of those who are disabled, 52.94% said they look forward to coming to work.

**Includes all survey respondents**



**Q26** As a follow-up to Question 25, the survey asked, “If you answered “no,” you do not look forward to going to work, why?” Overall, 56.7% reported “other” as their reason for not looking forward to going to work each day. 14.81% reported there was no room for advancement, 6.17% reported they were bored, and 22.22% reported it was because they had a difficult coworker or boss. Several respondents wrote that they did not feel valued or respected, some citing examples of favoritism and cliques within certain departments, and others wrote that it

was because of supervisors not acting on racist or ageist comments. Others cited burnout and too high of a workload.

**Q31** See summary above under “Isolating Behaviors and Bullying.”

## Compensation (HR)

Survey Questions 6 and 7

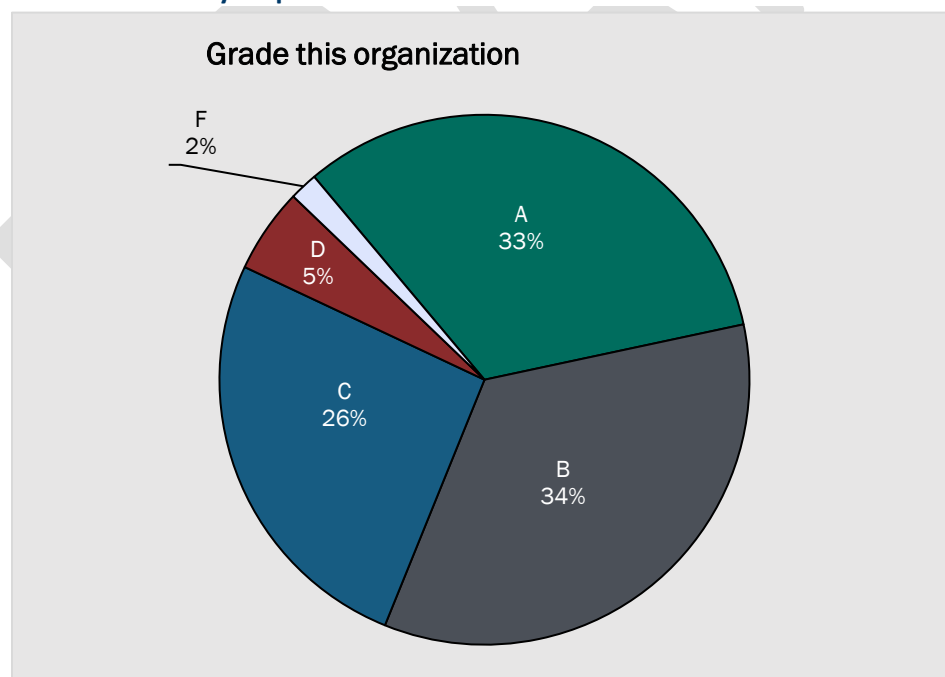
**Q6** Asked “What improvements to benefits could the county make?” there were several potential answers allowed: “No additional benefits” (15.57%); “Lower employee premiums” (7.19%); “Lower deductibles and co-pays” (25.15%); “Additional Coverage” (19.16%); “Pets” (15.57%, though it is not clear what is specifically desired regarding pets)<sup>2</sup>; and “Higher HRA contributions” (16.67%). One noted that the County should have medivac benefits.

**Q7** See summary above under “Employee Engagement.”

## Overall Grade

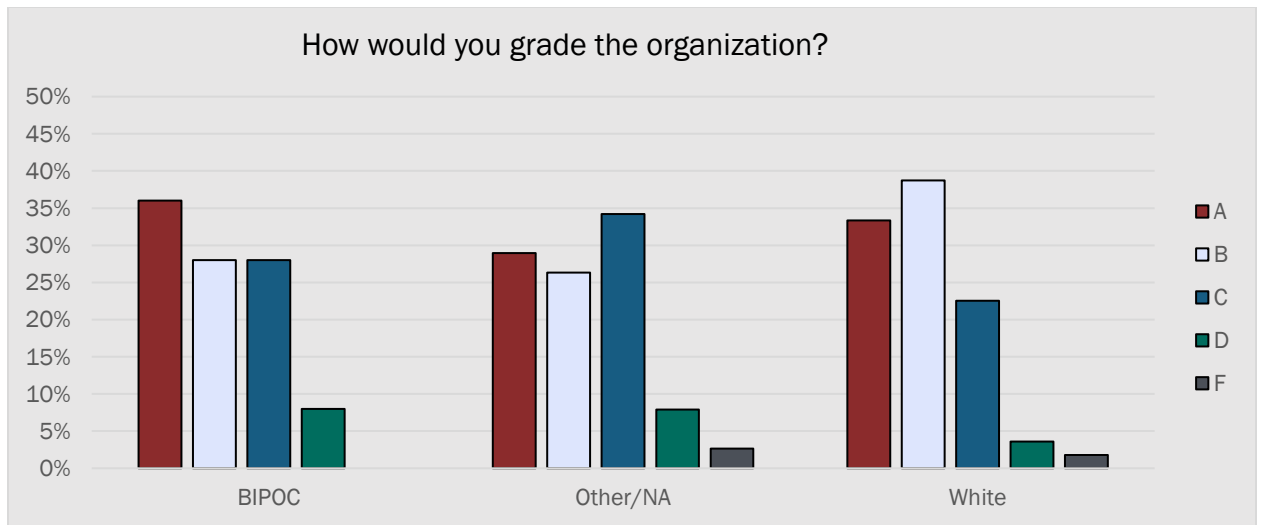
**Q32** Using a grading scale of A, B, C, D, and F, respondents were asked, “How does the organization treat you as a person? The average grade awarded was a B+, calculated by assigning a value of 1 through 5 to each letter and then taking the average, which was 2.08.

Includes all survey respondents



Breaks down all survey responses to Questions 32A, B, C, D and F.

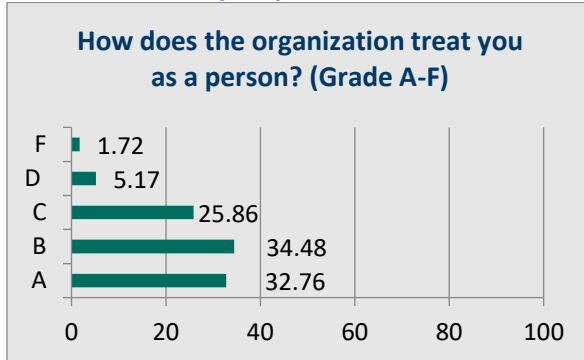
<sup>2</sup> The analyst was unaware that the response related to pet insurance.



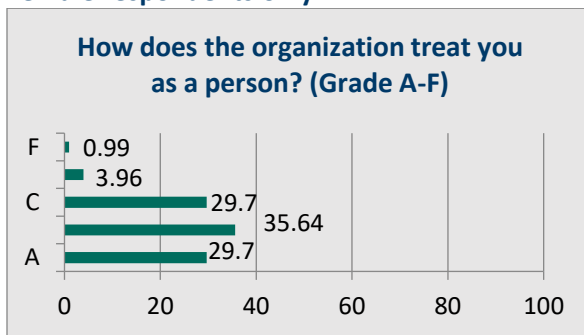
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The following four graphs break down by category how survey respondents grade Island County based on how they feel treated as a person.

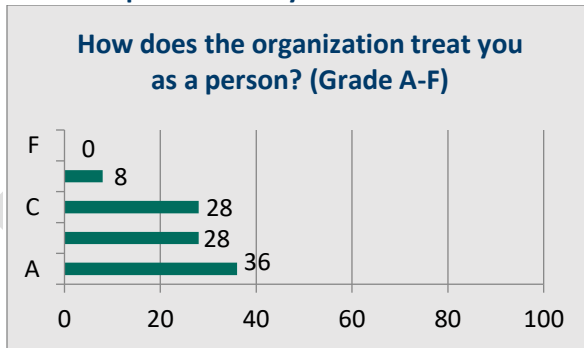
Includes all survey respondents



Female respondents only



BIPOC respondents only



Disabled respondents only

