

# Discrimination Barriers Survey Report & Recommendations

October 26, 2020

Produced by:



**MULTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION**  
OF WOOD BUFFALO

In collaboration with

the Wood Buffalo Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and the Immigrant Advisory Table

Funded by

the Alberta Human Rights Commission's Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund



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## Executive Summary

In 2020 the Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo (MCA) conducted an online survey titled Discriminatory Barriers Survey (the Survey) in collaboration with the Wood Buffalo Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) and the Immigrant Advisory Table. The survey was made possible with a grant from the Alberta Human Rights Commission's Human Rights Education and Multiculturalism Fund.

The goal of the Survey was to understand discriminatory barriers in the Wood Buffalo region and to help inform the establishment of tools that could fight discrimination and make the community a more welcoming place. It was noted that only people who have lived in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) should participate. The RMWB consists of Anzac, Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan, Fort Fitzgerald, Fort McKay, Fort McMurray, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier and Saprae Creek Estates.<sup>1</sup> Discrimination is happening against people in the Wood Buffalo region as the results of this survey confirm and will help inform how to create greater awareness about it and how we can collectively take action to prevent it.

### **Highlights from the Survey are as follows:**

- Completed by 440 people, of whom 95 per cent noted they currently lived in Fort McMurray.
- Respondents noted originating from at 58 countries other than Canada; 37 per cent indicated that they were white or Caucasian with the second highest number noting they were Black or African (65 people representing 16 per cent of the total respondents).

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<sup>1</sup> Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo: <https://www.rmwb.ca/living/Communities.htm>

- 60 per cent indicated that did not feel they have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in the last 12 months. While this is encouraging it still means nearly 40 per cent, or 160 people have felt discriminated against or treated unfairly in the last year.
- Of note is that 45 per cent of the respondents indicated that they witnessed discrimination at the workplace and over 30 per cent at shops or restaurants. Of these, over 80 per cent of respondents noted either feeling angry or sad about it. This high percentage suggests real or perceived acts of discrimination have a negative impact not only on the people who experience it, but also those who witness it.

Based on the Survey outcomes and in context of the current social and political landscape on racial justice, the following recommendations are offered for consideration as next steps:

1. Establish *Diverse Voices* as an annual event in conjunction with the MCA's Human Rights Day and expand on activities that bring local Indigenous and Newcomer communities together to discuss common issues regarding diverse representation and preserving traditional knowledge.
2. Explore ways for MCA to develop and deliver accessible training programs on discrimination. For example, create custom courses committed to providing support for transformative education and training initiatives in the pursuit of eradicating all forms of racial discrimination in the Wood Buffalo region.
3. Seek and develop opportunities to weave education on human rights, discrimination, and cultural awareness into multi-generational and diverse events throughout the RMWB. For example, by MCA collaborating with educational institutions, the health

care sector, tourism and the oil and gas industry on existing opportunities. This could be achieved through a combination of committee and program development by the MCA.

4. Broaden the scope of this research to get a stronger baseline on perceptions about racial injustice<sup>2</sup> and discrimination. For example, by designing and circulating another survey that focuses on obtaining a higher rate response from RMWB communities that are not Fort McMurray. Lessons learned from the first survey could help inform a design and delivery method that increases the number of responses from these communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Racial justice is the term commonly used to describe the “systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone.” For more information on this term and others see: <https://www.aecf.org/blog/racial-justice-definitions/>.

## Background

The Discriminatory Barriers Survey (the Survey) created by the Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo (MCA) was delivered in early 2020. The goal of the Survey was to understand discriminatory barriers in the Wood Buffalo region and to help inform the establishment of tools that could fight discrimination and make the community a more welcoming place. It was noted that only people who have lived in the Region of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) should participate. The RMWB consists of Anzac, Conklin, Draper, Fort Chipewyan, Fort Fitzgerald, Fort McKay, Fort McMurray, Gregoire Lake Estates, Janvier and Saprae Creek Estates.<sup>3</sup>

Of the people who opened the survey, the completed response rate was 73 per cent. There were 440 people who completed the survey and, of these, over 95 per cent of the respondents noted they were currently from Fort McMurray. Given this high rate, exploring opportunities to increase the response rate from the additional nine communities would be a worthwhile exercise.

The Survey outcomes will inform next steps that could strengthen the RMWB's priorities as noted in the 2020 Strategic Plan. Specifically:

- 1F - To foster equality, diversity, and inclusion in the region by raising awareness of diversity and inclusion initiatives.
- 4A – Truth and Reconciliation commission calls to action specifically Action #93 to inform Newcomers to Canada about the Treaties and the history of residential schools<sup>4</sup>.
- Culture Plan Priority 5 – improve awareness of the value of culture.

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<sup>3</sup> Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo: <https://www.rmwb.ca/living/Communities.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2012.

- Social Sustainability Program Priority 5 – support diversity in the region.
- Implement the calls to action that the Municipality has the jurisdiction to influence related to growing the understanding of discrimination and human rights and fostering Newcomer’s understanding of Indigenous Peoples history.
- Foster a healthy environment for culture arts and heritage by developing events that celebrate and education people on multiculturalism and diversity.

## **Method**

Community members were invited to participate in what was framed as a research project to understand discriminatory barriers in the Wood Buffalo region. They were told that the research results would help establish tools to fight discrimination and make the community a more welcoming place. It was noted that only people who have lived in the Wood Buffalo region could participate in this survey. All survey participants had the option of being entered into a draw for a chance to win one of three (3) \$50 gift cards. The Survey consisted of 14 questions over 11 pages with an estimated seven-minute completion time.

The Survey was disseminated in the following ways:

- Social media platform, Facebook on multiple pages including the MCA’s Welcome Centre page and the pages of about 20+ cultural, ethnic and interest groups.
- Made it available in-person by the Immigrant Advisory Table at events including MCA’s Expo and the Black History Month Cultural Extravaganza.
- By email through the distribution lists of LIP's Newcomers Interagency Network - a network of about 35 service providers that work with newcomers; Sandy

Grandison email loop for Community distribution; Fort McMurray Public School Division; and Fort McMurray Catholic School Division.

- An in-person session at the YMCA Support for Wellness for Seniors.

## **Terminology**

The Canadian Human Rights Commission defines discrimination as: “an action or a decision that treats a person or a group badly for reasons such as their race, age or disability.”<sup>5</sup>

All of these are protected under the Alberta Human Rights Act as well, specifically, discrimination against the following:

- race
- national or ethnic origin
- colour
- religion
- age
- sex
- sexual orientation
- gender identity or expression
- marital status
- family status
- disability
- genetic characteristics
- a conviction for which a pardon has been granted or a record suspended

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<sup>5</sup> Canadian Human Rights Commission: <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/what-discrimination>



Amnesty International further defines different forms of discrimination:<sup>6</sup>

- **Direct discrimination** is when an explicit distinction is made between groups of people that results in individuals from some groups being less able than others to exercise their rights. For example, a law that requires women, and not men, to provide proof of a certain level of education as a prerequisite for voting would constitute direct discrimination on the grounds of sex.
- **Indirect discrimination** is when a law, policy, or practice is presented in neutral terms (that is, no explicit distinctions are made) but it disproportionately disadvantages a specific group or groups. For example, a law that requires everyone to provide proof of a certain level of education as a prerequisite for voting has an indirectly discriminatory effect on any group that is less likely to have achieved that level of education (such as disadvantaged ethnic groups or women).
- **Intersectional discrimination** is when several forms of discrimination combine to leave a particular group or groups at an even greater disadvantage. For example, discrimination against women frequently means that they are paid less than men for the same work. Discrimination against an ethnic minority often results in members of that group being paid less than others for the same work. Where women from a minority group are paid less than other women and less than men from the same minority group, they are suffering from intersectional discrimination on the grounds of their sex, gender and ethnicity.

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<sup>6</sup> Amnesty International: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/discrimination/>

## Local Context

This survey was a collaborative effort by the Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo (MCA) with the Wood Buffalo LIP and the Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT). MCA fosters an inclusive community and understanding amongst diverse cultures through a number of programs and events as well as offers much-needed resources to Newcomers in collaboration with partners across the region. For more information see their website: <https://www.mcawb.org/>.

NIN and its IAT represent a diversity of voices in the RMWB as a committee of community members who were born outside who come together to provide guidance and strategic direction in areas such as: providing insight on local immigration, liaison between community groups including advising on the needs, gaps and barriers of newcomers, and to champion inclusive communities. For more information see their website: NIN <https://www.newcomers-ymm.ca/>.

The RMWB is one of Canada's largest regional municipalities, and the number of different ethnic groups also makes it one of Canada's most diverse populations. Therefore, understanding the current perceptions of discrimination and how to increase racial justice is critical to the community's future. It is vital to consider the results of this Survey in the current global context justice movement. The recent increase in Black Lives Matter protests worldwide has highlighted injustices that non-white people experience and have increased awareness of discrimination globally, including in our community. Awareness about inequalities has been brought to the forefront recently on a global level by the Black Lives Matter movement and many communities and organizations, profit and non-profit, have initiated programs that address racial injustice by building workplace, "identifying and dismantling White-dominant values, and amplifying the voices of Black people and people of color." <sup>7</sup> In Canada, this momentum is also

in the context of recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which include ensuring Newcomers are educated on First Peoples' history.

Developing greater understanding of discrimination, human rights and of how racial justice can be achieved in a regional context and building partnership to develop programming that increases awareness about discrimination and living and working together in respectful ways appears to be a good next step for the Municipality to take.

<sup>7</sup> Donor Perfect. Eight ways to make Racial Justice part of your Nonprofit Culture. 2020. <https://www.donorperfect.com/nonprofit-technology-blog/social-fundraising/ways-your-organization-can-address-the-call-for-racial-justice/>

### Survey Highlights

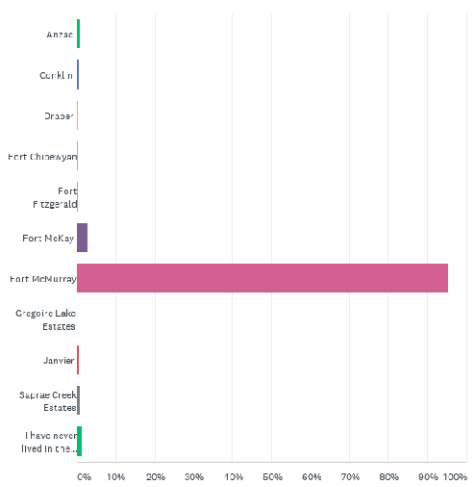
The Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo (MCA) conducted an on-line survey in early 2020 titled Discriminatory Barriers Survey (the Survey). The goal of the Survey was to understand discriminatory barriers in the Wood Buffalo region and to help inform the establishment of tools that could fight discrimination and make the community a more welcoming place. It was noted that only people who have lived in the Region of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) should participate.

The majority of responses occurred in January and February 2020 with a few trickling in the following months. Over 50 per cent of the respondents were between the ages of 25-44 and less than 5 per cent noted being 65 or older.

Of the people who opened the survey, the completed response rate was 73 per cent. Of the 440 people who completed the survey, more than 95 per cent of the respondents noted they were currently from Fort McMurray. Given this high rate, exploring opportunities to increase the response rate from the additional nine communities might be a worthwhile exercise.

#### Q1: Which area(s) of the Wood Buffalo region have you lived in?

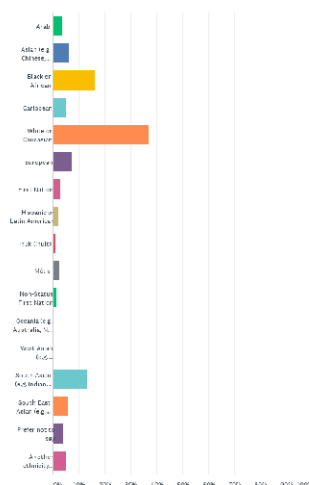
Answered: 427 Skipped: 13



Respondents noted originating from at least 58 countries other than Canada. 150 of the respondents (37 per cent) indicated that they were white or Caucasian with the second highest number noting they were Black or African (65 people representing 16 per cent of the total respondents).

### Q3: Ethnicity (Select all that apply)

Answered: 405 Skipped: 35



The majority of respondents (174) identified as originating from Canada followed by were seven per cent each from India and the Philippines and nearly five per cent from Nigeria.

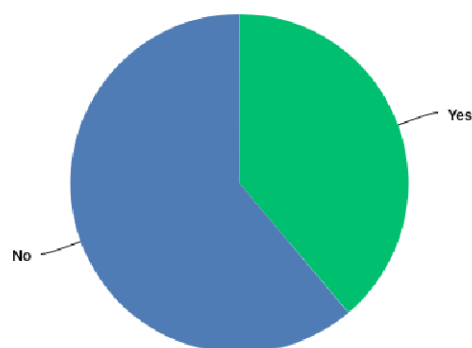
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Canada	46.65% 174
India	6.97% 26
Philippines	6.97% 26
Nigeria	4.56% 17
Prefer not to say	2.95% 11
Pakistan	2.14% 8
Jamaica	1.88% 7
Bangladesh	1.34% 5
Kenya	1.34% 5
Ukraine	1.34% 5
Ghana	1.07% 4
Somalia	1.07% 4
Sri Lanka	1.07% 4
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1.07% 4
Yemen	1.07% 4
China	0.80% 3
Ethiopia	0.80% 3
Republic of Moldova	0.80% 3
Romania	0.80% 3
United States of America	0.80% 3
Zimbabwe	0.80% 3
Other (please specify)	0.80% 3
Afghanistan	0.54% 2
Algeria	0.54% 2
Colombia	0.54% 2
Egypt	0.54% 2
Guinea	0.54% 2
Guyana	0.54% 2
Indonesia	0.54% 2
Senegal	0.54% 2

Senegal	0.54%	2
South Africa	0.54%	2
Uganda	0.54%	2
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	0.54%	2
Botswana	0.27%	1
Brazil	0.27%	1
Cameroon	0.27%	1
Chad	0.27%	1
Côte D'Ivoire	0.27%	1
Croatia	0.27%	1
Dominican Republic	0.27%	1
Ecuador	0.27%	1
Entrea	0.27%	1
Georgia	0.27%	1
Germany	0.27%	1
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	0.27%	1
Iraq	0.27%	1
Ireland	0.27%	1
Jordan	0.27%	1
Lebanon	0.27%	1
Malaysia	0.27%	1
Mauritius	0.27%	1
Mexico	0.27%	1
Nepal	0.27%	1
Netherlands	0.27%	1
Peru	0.27%	1
Slovakia	0.27%	1
Syrian Arab Republic	0.27%	1
Trinidad and Tobago	0.27%	1
Uzbekistan	0.27%	1

A little more than 60 per cent of people noted that they did not feel they've experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in the last 12 months. While this is encouraging that it is the majority of respondents, nearly 40 per cent, or 160 people have felt discriminated against or treated unfairly.

### Q6: In the last 12 months, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in Wood Buffalo?

Answered: 412 Skipped: 28



### Q7: Please read the statements below and select the response that most applies.

Answered: 394 Skipped: 46

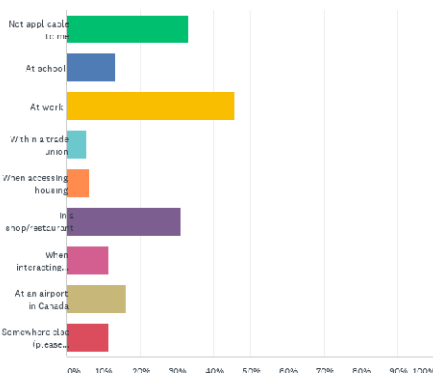
	ALMOST EVERY DAY	A FEW TIMES A MONTH	A FEW TIMES A YEAR	NEVER	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
I am treated with less respect than others	8.67% 34	15.05% 59	37.24% 146	39.03% 153	392	1.93
I receive poorer service than others at restaurants or stores	2.07% 8	9.50% 37	26.61% 103	61.70% 239	387	1.52
People act as if they think I am not smart	10.03% 39	13.02% 50	32.50% 128	43.44% 169	309	1.90
People act as if they are afraid of me	4.33% 17	7.55% 29	10.21% 39	69.49% 271	300	1.47
People act as if they think I am dishonest	3.64% 14	9.61% 37	21.50% 82	65.45% 252	385	1.51
I am called names or insulted	2.57% 10	8.23% 32	22.62% 88	66.58% 259	389	1.47
I am threatened or harassed	2.81% 11	5.04% 19	18.66% 73	72.35% 280	387	1.39

12-18 per cent feel they are treated poorly, including with less respect because of their skin colour. 45 per cent of the respondents noted witnessing discrimination at the workplace and over 30 per cent at shops or restaurants. Interestingly, of the people who witnessed

discrimination, over 80 per cent of respondents noted either feeling angry or sad about it. This high percentage suggests real or perceived acts of discrimination have a negative impact not only on the people who experience it, but also those who witness it.

### Q9: Have you experienced or witnessed discrimination in Wood Buffalo in any of the following areas?

Answered: 349 Skipped: 91



### Q12: How were you impacted by your experience of discrimination (Check all that apply)

Answered: 339 Skipped: 101

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
I was not impacted	8.85% 30
It made me feel angry	47.49% 161
It made me feel sad	46.31% 157
It made me fear for my safety	12.39% 42
It impacted me physically	5.01% 17
It impacted me mentally	29.20% 99
Not applicable to me	19.76% 67
It impacted me in other ways (Please specify)	6.78% 23
Total Respondents: 339	

There seems to be dialogue occurring about instances of discrimination, but it is varied, and a small number of people made formal complaints.

**Q11: The last time you WITNESSED discrimination, how did you respond? (Check all that apply)**

Answered: 338 Skipped: 102

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I made a complaint	12.13%	41
I had a discussion with the person who did it	28.11%	95
I talked about it with family/friends	31.07%	105
I filed a complaint (called an application) with the Human Rights	1.48%	5
I kept it to myself and did not respond	16.86%	57
Not applicable to me	28.40%	96
I responded in different ways (please specify)	5.33%	18
Total Respondents: 338		

Please contact MCA for full survey outcomes which can be provided in Excel format.