



Seattle Office for Civil Rights

Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor
Mariko Lockhart, Interim Director

Date: June 22, 2018

To: Anti-Harassment Interdepartmental Team

From: Mariko Lockhart

Authors: Yunuen Castorena Romero, Race and Social Justice Initiative, SOCR
Marcel Baugh, Race and Social Justice Initiative, SOCR

RE: Analysis of the 2018 Employee Survey, Harassment-Specific Responses

This memorandum provides the analysis of the survey results from a set of eight questions related to harassment that SOCR added to the RSJI Employee Survey conducted in April of 2018. The purpose of these questions was to gather additional insight into employee concerns related to harassment in the City of Seattle. The questions were developed in partnership with the Seattle Human Resources Department and in consultation with the Mayor's Office, Councilmember Mosqueda and the City Attorney. We hope that this supplementary information will help inform the recommendations of the Anti-Harassment Interdepartmental Team.

Summary

To address the impacts of racial and sexual harassment in City government, the analysis of the citywide 2018 RSJI Employee Survey data related to harassment looks at the intersections of race and gender. We highlight the marginalized voices of women of color because this intersection of identities underscores the depth and reality of the overall experiences of women in the City of Seattle. The Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) team found that of respondents who identified as women of color, Asian and Black/African American women provided the highest number of qualitative responses. It should be noted that by underscoring this trend, we do not intend to minimize the voices of other vulnerable communities whose sample size may be considered statistically insignificant (e.g., gender non-conforming respondents).

The quantitative data revealed several patterns associated with workforce equity, disparate treatment, and underreporting. Additionally, the qualitative data illuminated deep and pervasive patterns of perceived lack of safety and a lack of knowledge about complaint processes. The top themes related to harassment and reporting/underreporting were as follows:

- *Mistrust of HR process*
- *Mistrust of Management*
- *Fear of Retaliation*
- *Lack of Transparency*

- Lack of awareness of Reportable Offenses*
- Racial and Gender Bias in Hiring and Promotion*
- Ageism*

These were recurring sentiments expressed throughout all City departments. These responses come from both managers and frontline staff. While women had the highest response rate, issues of workforce equity were predominantly noted by Black and Asian respondents regardless of gender or job classification. Although, ageism was not included as a survey topic, it was mentioned in several of the narrative responses submitted across City departments.

Background

In 2016, the national election emboldened City employees to openly display their racial bias which resulted in heightened tensions for employees of color. This discernable change in attitudes and behavior led a small group of organized employees of color to submit a letter to the Murray administration requesting the administration direct departments to take complaints of racial harassment seriously and mete out consequences. The letter detailed the persistence of racial harassment in many departments and was submitted along with employee testimonies of racial and sexual harassment. Employees continued to organize and raise the issue through efforts led by RSJ Affiliates, Silence Breakers, Change Team Leads, and others.

The Anti-Harassment Interdepartmental Team has rooted its work in employee efforts seeking for City leadership to acknowledge racial harassment and take steps to address institutional barriers to racial justice.

Moreover, in Executive Order 2017-13, Mayor Durkan reaffirmed the City's and her administration's commitment to the Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI). The City leads with a racial justice lens because race is a leading predictor of life outcomes which have catastrophic impacts on People of Color. To address sexual harassment in City government, we must center the voices, experiences, and leadership of those most impacted by historical structural racism—People of Color, particularly Black and Native employees. By centering those most impacted, we can effectively address and change the policies, practices and institutional culture that perpetuate harassment for all employees.

RSJI Analysis & Implications

Methodology:

The 2018 Employee Survey asked 57 questions that were divided into ten sections: Demographics, Employee Thoughts and Understanding About the Race and Social Justice Initiative, Departmental Efforts Toward RSJI, Departmental efforts Toward RSJI and Gender Equity (Workforce Equity and Workplace Culture), Workplace Bullying, Contracting Equity, Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement, Immigrant and Refugee Access to Services, Racial Equity Toolkit, and Citywide RSJI questions. This memo presents the quantitative and qualitative information gathered from the Demographics sections and new sections of Workforce Equity and Workplace Culture, and Workplace Bullying.

Whenever possible, the percentages used refer to the percentage of respondents within their own racial category, allowing us to understand how different racial identities experience racial and gender harassment, are treated by City coworkers and leadership, and experience City culture, policies, and practices.

It is important to note the data gathered from the Employee Survey cannot be analyzed objectively. Respondents, analysts, and policy-makers all are impacted by conscious and/or unconscious biases across social identities and individual lived experiences, and by a history of structural racism. Racial equity requires that we all acknowledge our biases as we approach this body of work.

Overview of Demographics:

The total number of survey respondents was higher for the 2018 survey (4,231) than the 2016 survey (3,940). The response rate is difficult to ascertain as several factors impacted the calculation including: 1) a shortened length of time to respond (three weeks versus six weeks in previous surveys); 2) an increase in the overall number of City employees; and 3) the lack of consistent methodology to quantify City employees across departments (e.g., inclusion/exclusion of seasonal employees and who is included in each department's employee count). Using a total number of City employees of 14,053 we approximate a response rate of 30 percent in this year's survey.

Of all respondents, women were the largest gender demographic at 49 percent; men were 46 percent. Transgender, Genderqueer and Gender Non-conforming respondents were a very small percentage and would be considered statistically insignificant. However, the City does not collect demographic information on these gender identities and we have no way of knowing what percentage of City employees who identify as such filled out the survey. Leading with a racial equity lens requires that we highlight the experiences of Transgender, Genderqueer and Gender Non-conforming respondents of color as they are some of the most impacted by structural violence in our communities and live on the margins of many social identities. Respondents were also overwhelmingly older: 79 percent identified as 36 years of age or older. Whites comprised 57 percent of respondents; people of color comprised 43 percent. Lastly, Asian employees made up 33 percent of all respondents of color followed by Black/African American employees who represented 24 percent of all respondents of color.

Quantitative and Qualitative Results:

The voices of respondents of color were amplified in our analysis, in consideration of a history of relentless marginalization and decades of internal organizing to uncover and mitigate sexual and racial harassment within City departments. This year's survey had one of the highest proportions of Asian female respondents. We also had several gender non-conforming respondents share their experiences. Many Asian, Black/African American and Latinx women who provided narrative responses reported experiences of harassment and differential treatment due to race, as opposed to many other groups who mostly reported "observing" harassment or unfairly harsh criticism of their work due to race or gender.

The narratives also captured the essence of working and surviving within an institution that has caused harm to respondents directly or indirectly. One female respondent of multiple racial backgrounds stated, "Generally, my supervisor is just unfairly critical of my work, will not listen or acknowledge my perspective, dismissive of what I say. He is a "mansplainer", asks your opinion or feedback then proceeds to tell you all the ways you're wrong, but says he is very approachable and open-door policy, so the communication issues are my fault". This highlights the ways in which gender dynamics can result in female employees feeling belittled or shut down by male supervisors. It also demonstrates how policies that are designed to be inviting (open-door policy) can be intimidating when a manager treats their employees with undue scrutiny, disrespect or neglect due to their gender.

Reporting: Across race, respondents overwhelmingly do not report incidents of gender-based or racial harassment. When asked specifically about the reasons for not reporting incidents of gender-based harassment, responses differed across race. This indicates that people of different races experience racial and gender harassment differently. Black/African American respondents and American Indian/Alaska Native respondents had the highest response among their racial group for selecting “Did not think there would be a satisfactory response” to gender-based harassment complaints, at 27 percent and 25 percent respectively.

With respect to reasons for not reporting incidents of racial harassment, response rates increase to 33 percent of Black/African American respondents and 30 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native respondents reporting they did not believe there would be a satisfactory response. Qualitative narratives indicate that experiences with inaction and fear of retaliation influences employees’ likelihood of reporting ongoing harassment. An African American female shared, “the culture of my environment has been harassment on multiple levels and occasions. I’ve sought assistance through mediation, through my union stewards and rep and have spoken with my management on multiple occasions. It appears that nothing has ever happened as the behavior continues and happens primarily to people of color, primarily women of color”. This statement is reflective of several accounts shared by Black/African American women. This also provides insight into how management, HR and civil rights agencies have dealt with incidents of gender and racial harassment in the past.

Many employees reported fear of retaliation and specific incidents of retaliation. Among them, several African-American respondents stated after filing a complaint, they were singled-out, removed from a project, and left without the prospect of advancement. A multi-racial gender non-conforming respondent stated they were, “told by others [a complaint] would go nowhere and only hurt my future, so I chose carefully”.

Experiences of Harassment by Race and Gender: When comparing responses between racial and gender harassment, racial harassment is more salient than gender-based harassment for respondents of color. When asked if they had experienced different treatment because of their race/ethnicity, 32 percent of Black/African American respondents indicated they had experienced it and 30 percent had observed the behavior. In contrast, 18 percent of Black/African American respondents indicated experiencing gender-based harassment and 24 percent observed the behavior.

Notably, just seven percent of all White people reported that they experienced different treatment because of their race/ethnicity and only 10 percent observed the behavior. This highlights the additional burden that racism adds to the lives of People of Color, specifically Black and Native peoples across gender, sexuality, ability, and other social identities.

Some managers admitted that City departments may be better at dealing with gender-based harassment than they are with harassment based on race. In fact, one Asian female department manager noted that, “our office is significantly better at ensuring equity along lines of gender than along lines of race”.

Intersectionality of Age, Race, and Gender: Many narrative responses related to workforce equity, perceived prospects of upward social mobility, and ageism. One Asian female respondent stated, “[I] found out most of the temp workers are Asian females (some males) and the permanent positions are mostly white people”. In another, one African American female respondent stated that, “Someone needs to look into my department and hold management accountable for the harassment that’s going on from them. 80% of the people that have worked for over 12 years are being pushed out”. While the

percentages stated may represent the employee's perception, this quote demonstrated a recurring pattern in which people of color witness similarly situated individuals get marginalized and strategically removed due to their age, race, and gender.

A Racial Justice Approach to Harassment:

Employee survey respondents clearly identified that the structural conditions and workplace culture of the institution have repeatedly failed to address race- and gender-based harassment. We advocate a racial justice approach to addressing the issues indicated in the survey results. Such an approach requires that the City:

- acknowledge its role in the history of structural racism, design policies, and support practices that are accountable to those who have been most impacted. In this way policies and practices will drive toward institutional change.
- challenge workplace cultures that allow racial and sexual harassment to thrive. This includes: 1) addressing the role of white dominant culture in maintaining inequities within City government; 2) honoring the stories and experiences of workers most impacted by structural racism; 3) acknowledging the urgency felt by the people who have experienced and challenged racial and sexual harassment across mayoral administrations; and 4) investing the time and resources to effectively address and change institutional policies, practices and culture.