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# Understanding & Addressing Library Employees' Workplace Perceptions

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**MLA Annual 2024**

# Partnership



COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

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The  
Library  
Network

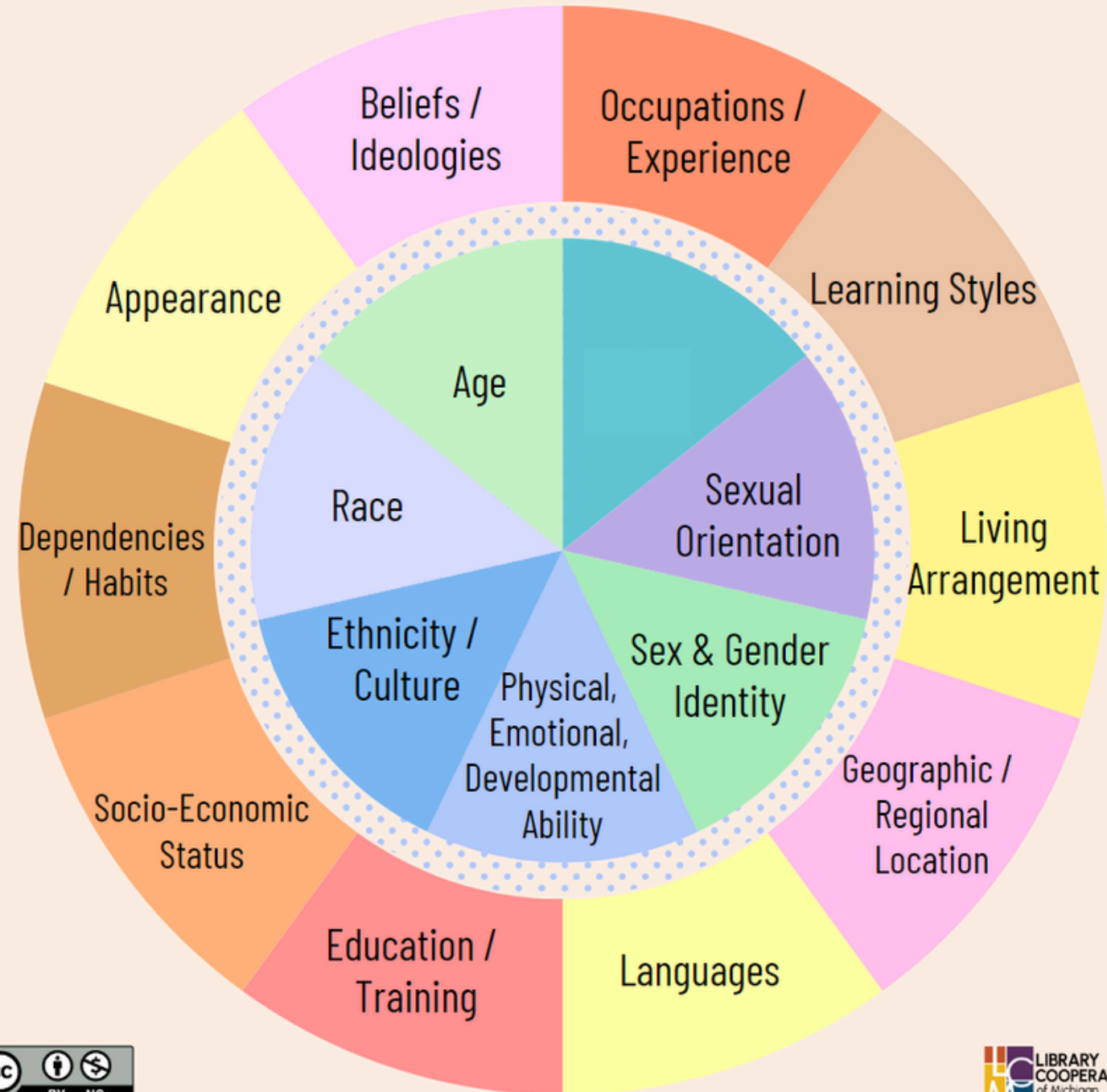
Libraries working together.



# Including Identities



IDENTITY WHEEL - SEE YOURSELF - SEE OTHERS



Each individual's identity is different and made up of several parts.

Identity Wheel Resource:  
<https://micoops.info/publications/resources/>



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# Applicability

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This presentation covers a specific survey of The Library Network and its member libraries, as designed and implemented by iLabs at University of Michigan Dearborn.

While the information in this study is specific to a defined group the issues and concepts studied may be applicable to you and your library as you work to create a positive work environment.

# Workplace Perceptions

**Culture:** "the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization"

**Climate:** "the prevailing influence or environmental conditions characterizing a group"

Culture is ingrained and takes great effort and time to change as a group. Workplace climate is measured by how people *perceive* the culture and work conditions at an institution.





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# Relevancy

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In today's post-pandemic work environment there are still continuing stressors that were not present in the past. Understanding workplace perceptions and developing a supportive workplace climate and culture can have a positive impact on employees, their work, and the institution.



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# Measuring the Climate

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"A climate survey is a valuable tool used to assess and measure the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of individuals within an organization or institution. It covers topics such as workplace culture, diversity and inclusion, safety, and overall satisfaction. The purpose of a climate survey is to take the temperature of an organization and assess areas for improvement."

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# Setting Direction

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It is important for those in power to purposely make space for underrepresented identities.

Working towards belonging for everyone in The Library Network , The TLN Board sets direction –inviting everyone else to help– creating policies, setting priorities, and defining our shared values.





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# Focus on Engagement

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TLN as a whole is empowered by our Board to work on moving towards equitable services and to foster inclusive and connective communications.

Committees / Interest Groups / Communities



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# Community

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As TLN moved forward on restructuring our member groups, a process we are still undertaking, one of the first changes we realized was the formation of new TLN Communities. TLN Communities are meant to be a place for underrepresented groups of connected identities to find a way to support each other, somewhat like a work "Affinity Group."

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# Voices at the Table

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The TLN *Vibrant Voices* and *Rainbow Connections* Communities brought forth the idea of doing a **Climate Survey** to measure ***workplace perceptions*** and identify areas of concern so that those in power can work on inclusive change.



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# Workplace Perceptions Survey

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“The purpose of this project is to measure the health and impact of the workplace setting, identifying areas of concern such as the prevalence of microaggressions, passive and active discrimination, passive and active harassment, and other personnel/people-to-people measures that affect the work environment.”

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# About the Project

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## Methodology

- Online survey sent to 1,760 employees at 74 member libraries and TLN
  - April-June 2024
  - Final sample: 868 responses (49%) response rate
- Additional data collection:
  - Michigan Public Library Statistics - Library class size
  - U.S. Census Bureau
    - % of community reported as BIPOC (average = 25%)
    - % of community 25+ with a bachelor's degree or higher (average = 46%)
    - Median age
    - Median household income

## Demographics

- English as primary language - 90%
- Female - 77%
- 35-64 years old - 60%
- Work 31+ hours/week - 54%
- Master's degree 51% - (MLIS 88%)
- 15+ years in library services - 36%
- 2-5 years at library/TLN - 31%
- Christian - 38%
- Management/supervisory role - 29%
- Identify as LGBTQIA+ - 19%
- Identify as person living with a disability - 14%
- Identify as BIPOC - 5%



# Views of Workplace Climate/Culture



## Positive

- Welcome, inclusive, collaborative, team-oriented
- Empathetic towards patrons

## Areas for Improvement

- Management
  - Favoritism and bias
  - Poor communication
- Lack of work-life balance
  - Understaffing
  - No flexible scheduling (e.g., ability to work from home)
- Dissatisfied with compensation and benefits
- Some resistance to DEI

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# Attitudes and Perceptions - Stakeholders

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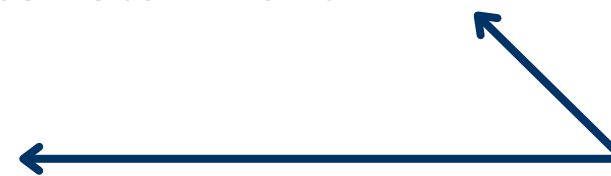


- Generally high levels of agreement about management, colleagues, TLN, and library employees' respect towards different groups of people

## Patrons respect individuals . . .

- Of different educational levels - 70%
- Of different ages - 70%
- With disabilities - 65%
- Of different socioeconomic levels - 59%
- Of different races/ethnicities - 57%
- Of different religious affiliations - 56%
- Of different gender identities - 47%
- Of different sexual identities - 47%

**Lower agreement among employees working in communities with a median household income of \$30,624-\$58,741**



# Experiences - Harassment

- **26% (221 respondents) have personally experienced harassment in the workplace in the past 12 months**
  - 77% have reported the incident(s) to someone in management
  - 53% feel the issue was resolved appropriately

## Employee Demographics

- % of job that is public-facing - 58%
- Management/supervisory position - 35%
- 2-5 years at library/TLN - 34%
- Union member - 29%
- 45-54 years old - 27%
- Living with a disability - 21%
- Identify as BIPOC - 7%

## Community Demographics

- Class 6 library - 47%
- Median age 35-44 - 68%
- Below average diversity (1-24%) - 60%
- Below average educational attainment (1-45%) - 54%
- Median household income \$58,742-\$93,431 - 37%



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# Harassment and Patrons

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**Lack of patron respect is the strongest factor related to employee harassment**

**Patrons respect individuals of . . .**

- Different ages - 55%
- Different educational levels - 54%
- Persons with disabilities - 48%
- Different races/ethnicities - 43%
- Different socioeconomic levels - 42%
- Different religious affiliations - 41%
- Different gender identities - 30%
- Different sexual identities - 29%

# Reporting Harassment

- Managers/supervisors and those that work in more diverse communities are more likely to report
- Employees living with a disability and those that work in less diverse communities are less likely to report
- **Reasons for not reporting include:**
  - Lack of trust
  - Fear of retaliation
  - Difficulty describing the incident(s)
- **47% do not feel the issue was resolved appropriately after reporting**
  - Lack of support from management and HR
  - Action is only taken if immediate legal threat against library is evident
  - Reporting leads to hostile work environment, particularly for LGBTQIA+ employees and those with a disability
  - Lack of accountability and formal reporting processes





# Experiences - Discrimination

- **9% (80 respondents) have personally experienced discrimination in the workplace in the past 12 months**
  - 67% have reported the incident(s) to someone in management
  - 46% feel the issue was resolved appropriately

## Employee Demographics

- 25-44 years old - 47%
- 2-5 years at library/TLN - 35%
- Union member - 31%
- Identify as LGBTQIA+ - 25%
- Living with a disability - 25%
- Male - 17%
- Work at more than one library - 16%
- Identify as BIPOC - 14%
- Jewish - 7%

## Community Demographics

- Median age 35-44 - 68%
- Below average diversity (1-24%) - 65%
- Above average educational attainment (47%+) - 53%
- Median household income \$58,742-\$93,431 - 43%
- Class 6 library - 40%
- Class 5 library - 32%



# Discrimination and Management



## Management Respects ...

- Persons with disabilities - 68%
  - Individuals of different religious affiliations - 68%
  - Individuals of different ages - 65%
  - Individuals of different educational levels - 63%
- 55% of employees that have experienced discrimination at work feel valued as an individual by management
  - 51% of employees that have experienced discrimination at work agree their voice is heard by management

# Reporting Discrimination

- **Respondents that are less likely to report the incident(s) of discrimination:**
  - Employees that have worked at library/TLN for 2-5 years
  - Union members
  - Employees with a 4-year college degree
  - Employees that work in less diverse communities
  - Employees that work in communities with a median household income of \$58,742-\$93,431
- **Reasons for not reporting include:**
  - Management was source of discrimination
  - Management witnessed the incident but did not react
  - Close-knit nature of management team
- **54% do not feel the issue was resolved after reporting**
  - Lack of corrective action following report of discrimination based on gender identity and mental health
  - Condescending behavior from leadership
  - Preferential treatment of external groups over staff





# Experiences - Physical Safety

- **11% (92 respondents) have been concerned about their physical safety at work in the past 12 months**

## Employee Demographics

- 45-54 years old - 32%
- Male - 23%
- Identify as LGBTQIA+ - 22%
- Living with a disability - 22%
- Identify as BIPOC - 10%

## Community Demographics

- Median age 35-44 years old - 64%
- Below average diversity (1-24%) - 58%
- Below average educational attainment - 58%
- Class 6 library - 48%
- Median household income \$58,742-\$93,431 - 47%

- **71% described concerns related to instability of patrons**
  - Verbal altercations becoming physical
- **Lack of emergency preparedness**
- **Building accessibility and environmental concerns**

# Desired Programs/Resources

- **Training and professional development opportunities**
  - Dealing with challenging patrons, implicit bias training
  - 3D printer and library graphic design training
- **Mental health resources**
  - Work from home flexibility
  - Paid mental health days
- **Engagement and team-building**
  - Interlibrary networking events, monthly recreational activities
- **Health benefits for part-time employees**
- **User-friendly reporting system**
- **Better communication protocol**
  - Monthly staff meetings and employee feedback opportunities





# Overall Satisfaction



- **Compensation is important, but not main driver of satisfaction with workplace**
  - **Feeling valued, belonging, career development opportunities, and work-life balance are more impactful**
- I feel a sense of belonging at my workplace - 79%
- My workplace encourages employee work/life balance - 78%
- My workplace values my unique skills and talents - 77%
- My workplace provides employees with opportunities to advance their careers - 51%

# Workplace Dissatisfaction

- **Management**
  - Lack of appreciation and respect
  - Communication issues
- **Burnout leading to toxic work environment**
- **Dissatisfied with pay and benefits**
  - Employees have not received promised raises
  - Unable to advance careers due to lack of funding to attend professional development opportunities





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# Recommendations

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- **Leadership**

- Take immediate action when harassment/discrimination are reported or witnessed
- Review workload and staffing needs to address work-life balance concerns
- Prioritize staff career growth by providing access to professional development opportunities

- **Culture**

- Establish and foster a culture of trust, support, and open communication
- Celebrate employee contributions to promote sense of value and belonging among staff

- **Policy**

- Implement user-friendly reporting/feedback system
- Establish and enforce strict conduct policies for all stakeholders
- Established policies should be regularly reviewed/modified

- **Resources**

- Tailor based on employee and community demographics
- Regular training (e.g., gender sensitivity, anti-racism, anti-discrimination, emergency preparedness, etc.)
- Dedicated security personnel, more security cameras, alarms, and panic buttons

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# Future Work

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- Reporting out on survey results, findings, data
- Follow up with specific groups
- Forming new Continuing Education Committee
- Addressing communication: training, modeling, correcting
- Long-term services planning at TLN
- Policy modeling and templates for library use
- Continued engagement and other activities to foster belonging

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# Fostering Positive Experience

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How an employee feels about the workplace culture actually shapes the reality of the climate at the institution.

**Perceptions are reality.** Clear communication and an inclusive culture can change perceptions for a positive impact at the workplace.







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# Get Involved with iLabs

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- **iLabs offers a wide variety of services to support businesses and the community**
  - Market research/consulting studies completed by students as an independent study for degree credit
  - Connect businesses with COB faculty for project work as part of a class
  - Sponsored research projects completed by iLabs leadership, UM-Dearborn faculty, and student interns
  - Short-term student internships



**Scan the QR code  
to visit the iLabs website!**

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