

An In-Depth Look at the Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants and Racialized Individuals in the Sarnia-Lambton Region, and Strategies for Combatting this Discrimination

**Prepared for the Sarnia-Lambton
Local Immigration Partnership**

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Overview and Goals

This qualitative study, involving in-depth interviews of 19 immigrants and racialized individuals in the Sarnia-Lambton region, was conducted as a follow-up to a [survey](#) conducted in March 2021 examining experiences of discrimination in the region. The Sarnia-Lambton survey was one of nine conducted in Southwestern Ontario at that time. Results of these surveys revealed that immigrants and racialized people often experience discrimination in workplace settings (i.e., when applying for a job or promotion and at their job) and in public settings (e.g., while using public transit, in parks, stores, restaurants), and that discrimination levels seem to be higher in these small and mid-sized communities than in large urban settings.

This study was then conducted to gain a more detailed understanding of the lived experiences of immigrants and racialized individuals in terms of the discrimination they are experiencing in these settings, the consequences, and possible strategies that would be effective for counteracting this discrimination. It is one of five qualitative studies being conducted to examine these issues in Southwestern Ontario. More specifically, the interviews explored discrimination that immigrants and racialized people have faced in workplace settings and public places in the past three years, including what happened and where, the perceived reason(s) for the discrimination, observers' reactions to the discrimination, and respondents' reactions to the discrimination. The interviews also explored individuals' sense of belonging to the region and desire to stay here, knowledge of strategies to respond to discrimination and knowledge of supports available, views on a possible tool for reporting experiences of discrimination in the region, and other suggested supports that could be put into place for people who experience discrimination. The findings provide a detailed portrait of the discrimination occurring in the region and its consequences. They also include practical information that will allow the Sarnia-Lambton Local Immigration Partnership and its partners to take concrete steps in combatting discrimination so that immigrants and racialized individuals thrive and choose to live and work in the region.

Method

Procedure

Between November 2022 and September 2023, a total of 19 online interviews were conducted with immigrants and racialized individuals in the Sarnia-Lambton region. To qualify for the study, respondents had to be at least 18 years old and report in a pre-screening survey that they had experienced discrimination in the Sarnia-Lambton region in the last three years in a workplace setting or public place. Respondents were recruited by the Sarnia-Lambton Local Immigration Partnership through email listservs, social media, newsletters, and word of mouth.

The online interviews were conducted via Zoom and all interviews were also recorded (with respondents' permission) so that central details and quotes could be confirmed after the interviews. Quotes have been used in this report to demonstrate the main points conveyed by respondents, and have been edited slightly for clarity. All interviews were conducted in English.

The interviews were semi-structured. The research team developed an interview guide consisting of central questions and follow-up probes in partnership with the five participating Local Immigration Partnerships. The questions focused on:

- Description of an incident of discrimination that the respondent had experienced, including the assumed reason for the discrimination, observers' reactions, and respondents' reactions
- Sense of belonging to the region and whether the respondent planned to stay
- Knowledge of strategies to respond to discrimination and supports available
- Characteristics of a reporting tool that would be most likely to be used by the respondent
- Useful supports that could be put into place for people who experience discrimination

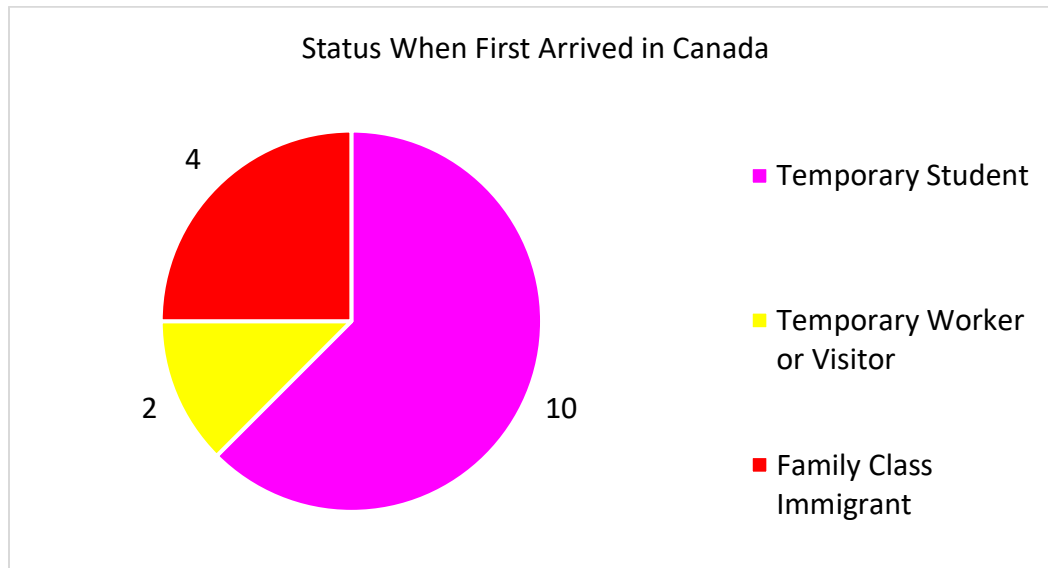
At the end of the interviews, respondents were also asked a set of background questions. The interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours, and all respondents were compensated with a \$30 Tim Hortons or Walmart e-gift card for their time.

Description of Interviewees

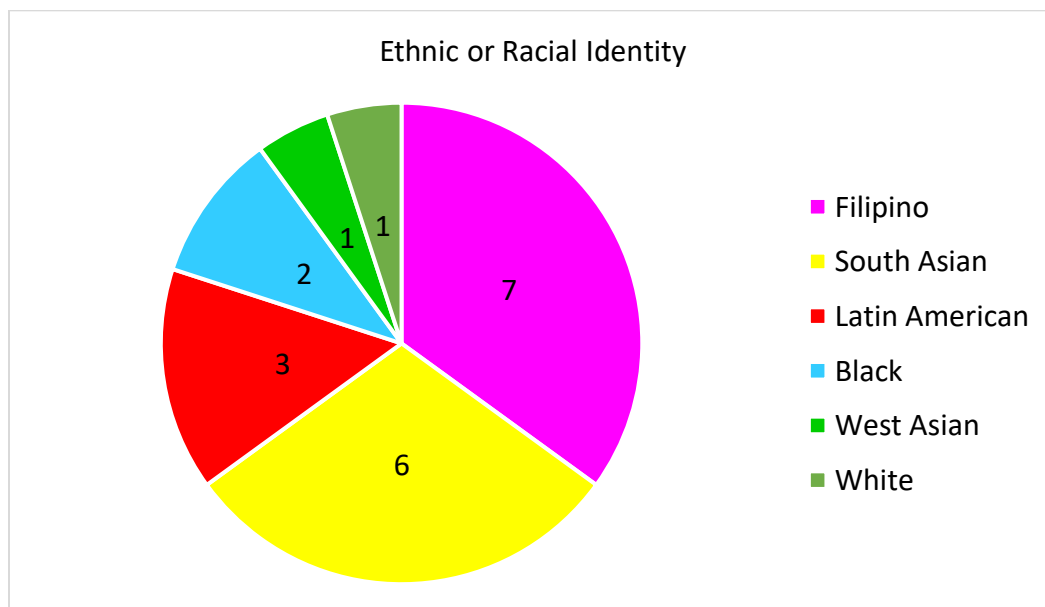
Respondents ranged in age from 23 to 62 years old, with the average being 35 years old. Over half of respondents identified as women (12 women, 7 men).

All but 3 respondents were born outside of Canada. Those born outside of Canada had lived here between a few months and 46 years, with the average length of time residing in Canada being

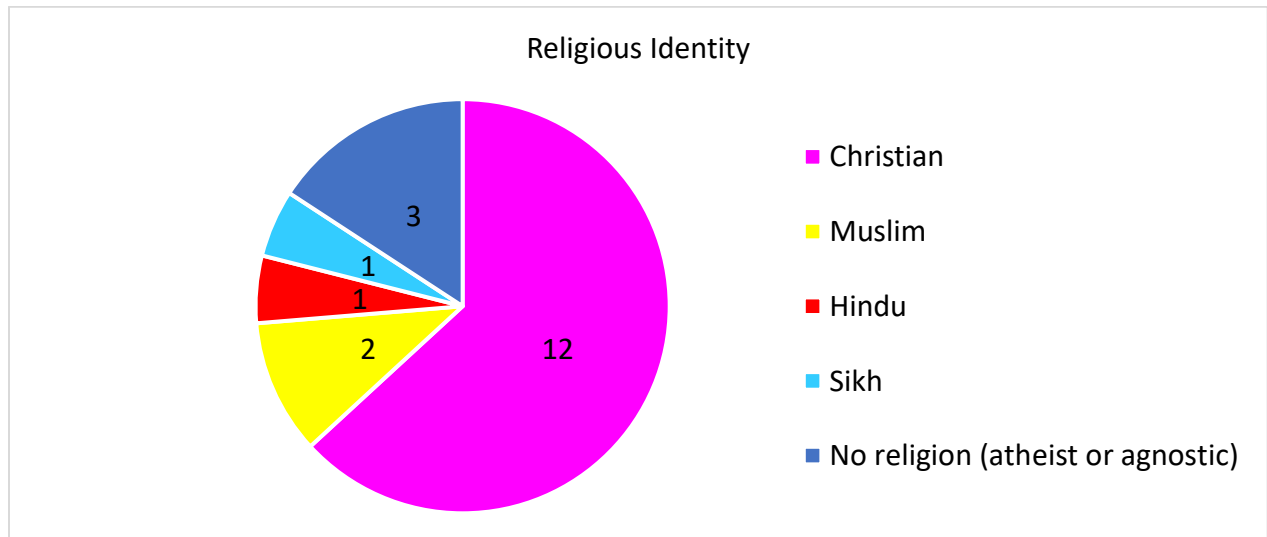
approximately 8 years. The majority had arrived in Canada on temporary visas, but several have since become permanent residents or citizens.



Respondents identified as Filipino, South Asian, Latin American, Black, West Asian, and White. (Note that one participant identified as both Black and White).



Respondents identified their religious identity as Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, or indicated that they had no religion.



Most respondents were well-educated, with 11 having obtained university undergraduate degrees and 4 having obtained university graduate degrees. The remaining 4 respondents either had college/vocational training (3) or had completed secondary school education (1). Respondents were mainly employed or students, with 4 working full-time, 5 working part-time, 6 being students and working part-time, and 1 respondent was an unemployed student who was looking for work. The remaining 3 participants were self-employed.

Most respondents reported their annual household income as being less than \$45,000 (7) or more than \$130,000 (5), while some reported an annual household income between \$45,001 to \$80,000 (2) or \$80,000 to \$130,000 (2). Three respondents preferred not to provide any information about their annual household income.

Specific Experiences of Discrimination in Sarnia-Lambton

Many respondents indicated experiencing discrimination in more than one context in Sarnia-Lambton in the past three years. However, respondents were asked to describe one experience of discrimination – 10 described an experience in a workplace setting (i.e., when applying for a job or at their job), and 9 described an experience in a public place (e.g., retail stores, restaurants, and educational institutions).

Incidents of Discrimination

The most common forms of discrimination experienced by respondents both in the workplace and in public places were having derogatory language directed at them and being treated differently compared to others. Within the workplace, this included having their abilities questioned by customers of their workplaces and customers not wanting to be helped by them.

“In the workplace (discrimination) is actually very subtle. I work at Coffee Culture and then, of course, it’s not as diverse as Toronto here. It’s really subtle; like whenever I ask (the customers) if I can serve them, they just give me a side-eye. There was this one time the lady was literally grossed out when I told her that I can serve her.”

“From May to August, I was looking to apply to work. As an international student, I can only work 20 hours per week in different positions or in the same company. My husband and I applied to different restaurants, housekeeping, and different positions in kitchens. I applied to Walmart but never heard anything back, so I applied to a local restaurant. I gave the lady at the front desk my resume and cover letter, and she seemed really excited to have me come work. I told them I can help them cook Latin American dishes as well, and the lady seemed excited. She told me to come back the following week if she didn’t call me. I went back two times before she said that they are not looking to hire yet. I understand there are differences in hiring practices in other countries, but she should have told me no right away instead of telling me to come back. Also, I noticed after I came back to the restaurant with my family that they only hired Indian or Canadian workers. I felt this was disrespectful to my time. After this, I continued and applied to other jobs. I talked to a friend in my class about this restaurant and she mentioned that they only hire Canadians, specifically Canadian women. Apparently, the son of the owner said we need people to reflect the food/tradition of the restaurant.”

In public places, discrimination was experienced at retail stores, restaurants, and educational institutions.

“There's a restaurant out of town a little bit and my husband and I had gone in together for breakfast. He is White, and I am biracial and we walked in. I was wearing my natural hair so my curls were out. And the stares that happened when we walked in, I very much felt like I was on display. People were curious but not in a friendly way. And that was from servers and from patrons. That's one of the experiences for sure. And then the more direct experience that recently happened was my mom is White. She was here visiting for Mother's Day and we went to a local restaurant. I walked in to get us a table. That day I was wearing a scarf on my head. So, like a silk scarf that was kind of wrapped up, cause I didn't want to do my hair that day. And, I walked in first and got the table. And nobody came over to say anything to me. No servers, no nothing. And then my mom walked in and then to the server my mom said, “Oh, I'm looking for my daughter. She came in here to grab a table,” and the server was like, “Oh, does she have some weird thing on her head?” And then proceeded to not talk to me at all when she came over to our table. They would only interact with my husband and my mom and not interact with me at all. So that was definitely one of the more recent experiences.”

“So things like this happen, but this was super awkward and very notable. That's why I shared it when that link came across. I'm walking into the mall and I've been here since I was 7. . . It's like I'm as Canadian as you get at this point other than the colour of my skin. I'm walking into the mall. And this guy, he sees me and he just goes on a tirade of why he can't find housing and no one can find housing because all these people are here taking up all our housing and people like this ruin the country. . . I didn't engage because they were very aggressive. I just kept going. Everything in me wanted to engage, but I mean, it's a no-win situation if somebody already feels so hard and fast about something like this. But he carried on until I went in and luckily, I came out another door, so I didn't have to run into them, but that was the most recent one.”

These experiences were often described as occurring repeatedly rather than as isolated events. Respondents described the perpetrators of discrimination as mainly White, middle-aged, males and females.

Perceived Reasons for the Discrimination

Of the 19 respondents, 14 respondents stated that they believed that ethnicity and race were the basis of the discrimination incidents. The reasoning for this was based on the comments they heard and how the only thing different about the respondent in the specific context was their ethnicity or race. Being an immigrant was also another perceived reason for discrimination.

"I am sure she was just racist. She was just simply racist. She has complained a few times about me to the transit company . . . She was telling me I have to go back to my own home, that this isn't your place and you should not be here and we don't want you here."

"Because I think it's a territorial thing. Like I said, they think that they own the place and that they originated from here. But if you really go back from the beginnings, it's like the first people here were the Indigenous people . . . We are all migrants, and if you go back to your origins or your ancestors, they are all migrants. So it's a territorial thing, thinking that they own the place."

Observers' Reactions to the Discrimination

Of the ten individuals who experienced discrimination in the workplace, two of them stated that no one was there when the discrimination was occurring. Three of them reported that their co-workers observed the discrimination and intervened. Five of them stated that people witnessed the incident but did not intervene when the discrimination was occurring.

"There was also a White female that interrupted and stopped our argument. So she comforted me, and then she said, 'Just let it pass. She's always been like that, like she has her problems.' . . . She managed the situation, and I think she encouraged the aggressive lady to say sorry to me. And I realized what she did. So yeah, it's a big help."

"No. (My co-worker who observed the discrimination) doesn't like me. She doesn't like me at all. I don't know why she has a problem with me. I don't know why. She is okay with other Indian girls but she has a problem with me."

"I can surely say that nobody took a stand, and I think everybody was just okay with that. I don't know whether they were seeing that or not, but yeah at that time, nobody showed up or took a stand for us."

For those who experienced discrimination in public spaces, four of them stated that no one was there, three of them stated that people were there but did not intervene, while for two of the respondents, observers did help.

"I don't know specifically (why they didn't intervene). I personally would intervene if I saw something. I don't know. Maybe they feel the same way (as the perpetrator). Who knows."

"There's like one person who helped me when I reported this issue, my college student advisor, I think she's the Dean of Students, so she did report this to people and we had to take some measures. And that's something that we did."

Respondents' Reactions to the Discrimination

Most respondents did nothing at the time in response to the discrimination they experienced as they did not know how to respond. Further, several respondents stated that they could not react or respond as they were at work.

"I think at that time, I just approached my other Filipino friend to find comfort because I saw her experience, and she was also frustrated with it. So, it's really more of finding people who feel the same way or support you. And then I also told my Canadian work friends about it, and said, like, 'this is what happens. I don't know what to do.' It's really more of just finding comfort in other people's words. But in general, it's something that I have to brush off, because again, you are on a shift, and you must work so yeah, it's really more of just talking about it and finding comfort in that."

"I ignore the feeling of feeling discriminated. Because I need to obey the supervisor's orders and it does not happen every day, so I kind of ignore it and let the day go."

"The transit (company) was tying my hands. I couldn't defend myself. I couldn't swear back. I couldn't kick her out. She was just standing beside me yelling and swearing."

"Honestly, I didn't (respond to the discrimination). The very first event that happened in the parade, I just wanted to protect myself there that day as there were a lot of white supremacists there. Unfortunately, I just had to move away."

"I ignored it, I just kept walking (in the mall). It was like a few of them, and it felt like an attack, and it was just me walking."

Respondents indicated feeling sad, angry, and like an outsider after the incidents of discrimination occurred.

"We are not in our home. It is difficult because when you are a newcomer under a work permit, and you are not really a citizen or permanent resident, so you can't really do much. I feel like we don't have a voice."

"I just go to the washroom and just sometimes just release my anger . . . I also don't want to cry in front of them because I think I'm giving them like the pleasure of winning, cause I got affected by that. I make sure that I don't get affected by how they treat me. After I serve them, I go back. I go to the washroom, and just release my frustration, my anger, and then serve them again. So that's how I think I'm also winning cause I show that I really don't care, but at the same time I really care about how you treat me."

"Before I decided to really quit, I was talking to my friend, and I was like, 'I really can't do this job, but I need this for now, because I don't have like an option to go for other jobs' . . . I got burnt out and I broke down to my friend and I was crying. And that's the week I went to my manager and told them I really can't do this anymore."

"Very angry. Specifically because my mom is not the type of person to understand these pieces because she's White too, so she doesn't really get it, so you know having to like constantly speak up for myself like, 'Oh, it's not a weird thing that I have on my head; it's a scarf, it's a culturally significant thing.' Very angry, very isolated. Irritated."

Respondents' Reporting of the Discrimination

An overwhelming number of respondents (13) did not report the discrimination. They provided several reasons for not doing so, including not knowing who to report to, the fear of losing employment, and not seeing the benefits of reporting.

"I just didn't know how to and I don't know who to report it to. I don't know even if, for example, I complained to their office, I don't know if it will be addressed in any way. I don't know who to report it to, how to report it, and if it will be addressed, so I just don't know what the process is like."

"I was about to report but I didn't because I was kind of scared because what if she gets it back to me and she finds out that I reported her to the manager? She has a group of friends there at the Tim Hortons Branch, and they're really close and have been there together for quite some years. I'm kind of scared that if I report it to the manager, they will just micromanage me and just always pick on me. I was scared, so I didn't report it."

"It would fall on deaf ears like the police department here tells themselves that there are not a lot of racist incidents and not a lot happens. They do, but they say it to make the community feel safe."

Six individuals reported the discrimination, and of those, three of them stated that they had no response or follow-up, while another's investigation is still pending. Another individual reported the incident through an exit interview; hence the individual is not aware of any follow-up. Only one individual's report was taken seriously by the educational institution.

"I tried to send an email, but I got nothing. I got no response."

"I did mention it to corporate HR, but nothing came out of it."

Sense of Belonging and Retention in Region

Sense of Belonging to Sarnia-Lambton

Respondents from this study varied in their sense of belonging to the Sarnia-Lambton region. Those who felt like they belonged in the region identified some factors that made them feel welcome in Sarnia-Lambton and like they belong, including their work and friends.

"We live here now. I would say, for one, having employment within the Sarnia community, which is here at Lambton college, helped me a lot in a way where it expanded my idea and my knowledge of the community."

"I know that the friendships that I made here are definitely a big piece of what makes me feel like I belong."

Several respondents stated that the friendliness and helpfulness of strangers and those whom they interact with made them feel like they belong in the region.

"In my neighbourhood, my neighbours are really friendly and I am really lucky about that."

"It's really welcoming when people that I encounter everywhere just asking 'How are you? How are you doing today?' stuff like that. In that way, I feel really welcome here and that I somehow belong in the city. By being valued as just asking, 'How are you? How are you doing today?' And it's like a Canadian thing. So with that, I kind of feel welcome to be here."

Respondents noted that volunteering in the community and attending community events had a positive impact on their sense of belonging.

"I think just my tenure, like how long I've been here. I've established roots, you know. My husband's worked here his entire career. People know we participated in the community. He's coached basketball. I've volunteered for the Y(MCA). We got out there and did things so people know us like that, right? But we created our own sense of belonging when we got here."

The respondents talked about the comfort of seeing other immigrants, racialized people, and other people from marginalized communities in the region.

“When I arrived here, I was able to find people from the same country as mine and they gathered this welcoming of international students. So they did a get-together near the lake. A family hosted it and everyone was there. And you know that there will be a support community for you. If you need help, they will be there for you.”

In contrast, some respondents did not feel like they belonged in the Sarnia-Lambton region due to people's values and unwelcoming behaviours.

“People's behaviour can make you feel like you are not welcome. Not make you feel part of it. I even remember when my kids were in elementary school, I tried to be part of and help with school activities and all that stuff. I decided I would try to help and talked to the principal and there were too many procedures to try to get into there and be able to help with the fundraiser. There were too many things, and it was just for a fundraiser. It looks like it is red tape. My kids have been here for so many years and I tried to be part of it and I wanted to help with the fundraiser but it was too much work.”

“Probably it's just the old school values and it's just too old school for me. It is just not what I thought it would be. It's too traditional and old school. I just feel like, as an international student who has a lot of expectations coming to Canada, I feel like the expectations didn't meet me and what I had in mind. I feel like those are the things that make me feel like I don't belong and are not welcome. I come from a metropolitan city that's very active; coming here was more slow and it's just not how I felt like it would be and that makes me feel like I don't belong here.”

“(I feel like I don't belong) if you go to certain events, if I feel like I stick out. If you're going to these community-led- and I don't even know what to call them- like something in the park. If they have barbecues or this or that, you just stick out because not very many minorities go. So I want to go because I think it's a neat and interesting thing, whatever it might be like say it was art in the park or whatever, but you stand out. And that always makes me feel like I don't know.”

Impact of Discrimination on Sense of Belonging to Sarnia-Lambton

Of the 19 respondents, 11 indicated that the discrimination they experienced made them feel less welcome and less like they belong in the Sarnia-Lambton region.

“It's just more of an expectation, and I didn't meet that. Eventually, it didn't work out for me, and it makes me feel like, ‘okay, I am still an outsider.’”

"I am just always vigilant of who I am around, how they are perceiving me. How my voice is going to land in a space where I have people that can support me versus feeling a little more alone in a space that'll impact how I might speak up on something or show up in the space."

Respondents shared specific instances when they felt like they did not belong and were not welcome in the region, noting the lack of cultural spaces in the area and people being unfriendly to them.

"This region is quite conservative in their mindset, which I don't see that as a problem for people at all. Everyone's entitled to their own beliefs and opinions, but I feel like it paints a picture and my interactions that I've had aligns with that of like "this is Sarnia, this is blue collar. This is our home," but it's not my home, right? Where I can't go to a hair salon here. I can't go and get the products that I need for my skin and my body here. I can't go and get ingredients for cultural meals that I wanna cook here. I can't go to restaurants that have cultural meals that I want to have. There's just different pieces of that, where I can get a burger at any restaurant here but I can't get curry here."

Impact of Discrimination on Desire to Stay in Sarnia-Lambton

Ten of the 19 respondents indicated that the discrimination that they experienced in the region, whether from non-immigrants or other immigrants, affected whether they were likely to stay in Sarnia-Lambton long-term or move away.

"Definitely (want to move to) a different city. There is no question about it. Some people from my country choose to stay here because they are old school. As Indians, you know, family values are different. Those people really like being here because it is more aligned with how they see society but a younger generation who are trying to be more progressive and are trying to be in a more progressive environment, like me and a few of my friends that I know, really want to get out of this place. We don't feel like we belong here not because of people from Sarnia but also people from our own country who discriminate against us because we have different values from them."

"I hate it here. I hate this place. This place is terrible... I always thought it was a great place to come and retire here, and that was the idea. When I came here and saw these things, I realized I hate this place. I would move."

Some respondents described wanting to move to other cities that are more diverse, such as Toronto.

"I would most probably move to a more diverse place. Like Sarnia is not really diverse compared to other cities. So I will probably move to a more diverse place, cause then I don't really feel that I am the only Asian guy in the community. It's much easier when you move to a new city that's more diverse, so then you don't really feel that you are unwelcome."

"My first choice is Toronto, if not, I had London or Montreal or Vancouver. Ultimately, I want to be in Toronto at some point to at least work. But if I wanted to settle down, I would probably choose London, which is more like a commercial city as well, which is not as expensive as Toronto is. But yeah, I could probably manage there. Montreal, because it's a very beautiful place and it's also progressive like Toronto. Vancouver I had as a choice as well because it's a really beautiful city."

A few respondents even considered leaving Canada and returning to their home country or moving closer to their family and friends within Canada.

"I would just like to go back to my home country."

"If I could move tomorrow, I would move tomorrow. My husband's job is the only reason we are here . . . If I could pick, I would be back in Ottawa, where most of our family is, and we have made some special and really amazing friends here, but we grew up there, and we went to university there so we have a really good group. So it would be Ottawa."

In contrast, respondents who were more likely to stay in the Sarnia-Lambton region long-term identified their experience of discrimination as singular and not reflective of everyone in the region.

"In general, I don't see Sarnia, in itself, as discriminatory. Again, there are a few bad apples, right? But not the entire orchard is bad."

Similarly, a few participants noted that discrimination can occur anywhere.

"I do think about moving, but not because of discrimination because I know that everywhere I go, the same thing is going to happen."

Several participants also noted that compared to bigger cities, the Sarnia-Lambton region was safer.

"I would like to stay in Sarnia, because from what I see from the news, from the social media, other cities like Toronto and other big cities, have high rates of discrimination. So I feel like Sarnia is already like a safe space for us Asian and people of colour to stay here because people are not that really aggressive in terms of treating other people of colour."

"I feel like Sarnia in general is a very nice and quiet place. People are very kind and when I move to a bigger city, I will face more instances of racism and whatnot."

Knowledge of Strategies to Respond to Discrimination and Knowledge of Supports Available

Knowledge of Strategies for Directly Responding to Discrimination When It Occurs

More than half of the respondents knew of several strategies that they can use to respond to discrimination when it occurs, whereas six respondents did not know of any strategies at all to respond to discrimination.

"I don't know (any strategies) because I don't want to be rude to them, especially this is still their land so I don't wanna be rude to them. I just want to be a friendly and welcoming (person)."

The strategy most often cited by respondents is to ignore the perpetrator or walk away from the situation if possible.

"I think growing up I was just taught to suck it up."

"I just let them be. So what do you do? You just keep to yourself. That's what you do . . . It is what it is."

Similarly, four participants referred to staying calm and regulating their own emotions and reactions as a strategy to respond to discrimination.

"For my personal strategy, I just don't let them see that it gets to me because when I give it to them, I think that they won or they really did their job of being racist so I just don't let them get to me, let them know that they got to me."

"I'm just handling my own emotions so that I don't really feel bad from the discrimination . . . I've just prepared myself to face those kinds of situations."

A couple of respondents preferred to reach out to their community and lean on their family and friends for support.

"if I am like really upset or angry, I'll lean on my social supports, especially like other racialized people in the community that I know. I try to connect with them. That's pretty much it."

One respondent had different strategies depending on the place of the discrimination incident.

"Calling it out is very important and letting them know about that it's a discriminative thing . . . try to explain it to people, as much as possible because some people definitely don't really know a lot about this . . . (But if it's in public), I would suggest to protect yourself first because end of the day you would never know what's gonna happen to you. And especially we as people of colour are more vulnerable section on the society. So I feel like in public places try to protect yourself first but if it's people from your work, who can be held accountable for all this action probably you should call them out."

A few respondents had used these strategies previously and found them effective, and would likely use them again.

"I started educating her about where I come from and what I do, and she was very accepting. She was like, 'oh! That's new information.' That's how she responded to that. So when I try to respond and match their energy and give them an idea as to why this is the reason, they understand why."

"I know that for myself, it works. I'm not sure for others but for myself, it works. Mentally, after that, I am okay."

On the other hand, a few respondents who had opted to ignore or avoid the situation had found that strategy not effective.

"It doesn't feel good. I know that getting older, it doesn't feel right. I think as I get older and have children and move through life, I realize that I do get more angered about it, more aggravated about it, more frustrated about these situations, and I'm just more attuned to it. And I'm learning more about it and even more about how to understand it better."

Knowledge of Policies and Procedures for Reporting Discrimination in Sarnia-Lambton

Several respondents (7) noted that they did not know how to report the discrimination they experienced and were not aware of any policies or procedures for reporting discrimination that occurred in public places and workplaces in the Sarnia-Lambton region.

"No (to policies and procedures). I didn't get any training like officially . . . Also, (my workplace) has inspections everyday about the food quality but they never think about what the employees are feeling there; How they are feeling there? Is it working good? Is there any discrimination or something? . . . They just want money, money, money and

nothing else. They don't care about people."

"No, (I don't know) because actually I don't have a contract to that. They didn't give me a contract. I was waiting for a contract and I just kept telling the manager."

A couple of respondents were aware that certain policies and procedures or resources existed but did not know details, and questioned their legitimacy and effectiveness.

"I do know there is a Human Rights Commission, but I also know that Sarnia is very . . . White, and I don't know a good place to go tell someone or I feel like it would be heard. Someone writes it down on a paper and files it under 'G' for garbage is what I feel like happens here."

"They said they did. Like all places, they have it written on the wall . . . You can read it but you don't have to live by it, and I feel like nobody ever held (the perpetrator's) feet to the fire."

"I know I could have gone to HR but the other problem is . . . there is a total lack of diversity at all levels. Let's say I take these concerns to someone . . . how do you know HR isn't just going to dismiss it . . . I feel like nothing would have even happened."

Of those who experienced discrimination in the workplace, most had some knowledge had some knowledge of the policies and procedures for reporting discrimination at the workplace, often citing speaking to their direct managers or supervisors.

"Currently at the hospital, there is (formal ways) I can report it. There's several ways. There is like a form online for harassment, with either patients or staff. There is a patient . . . feedback center that you can go and report instances there too. So there's a form on our intranet and there's an office you can go and visit too at my current employment. At my old employment, it was just a small clinic so it was just my manager that I could report to."

"We do (have policies against discrimination) but I am not really sure what they are. But upon entering the workplace, when we signed the contract, we had that policy that we had to sign. So, I think it basically says that any form of discrimination isn't allowed either it be with your co-worker or customers . . . I think generally in the workplace it is (effective)."

"During the orientation, it was being discussed. 'If you're being like harassed in any way report it to your immediate supervisor. Your immediate supervisor is your friend.' . . . That's

what the company told me . . . and well, they have this diversity and inclusion value, like corporate value . . . yeah, they have (anti-discrimination) policies.”

Knowledge of Supportive Organizations in Sarnia-Lambton

Of the 19 respondents, 13 did not know of any groups or organizations in Sania-Lambton that can provide support for those who have experienced discrimination.

“Not exactly. It’s been pretty hard especially when you are a new student, it’s just very hard for us still to get used to the place. So in that way, I don’t think there are any places to help us.”

“Honestly, I never really bothered to look for any of those (organizations) . . . maybe I should. I don’t know. I don’t even know where they are.”

“I don’t have any idea if they do have that here.”

The other six respondents had some knowledge of groups or organizations in the region. They named the Sarnia-Lambton Alliance Against Hate and Lambton College as relevant organizations.

“My Filipino community here and my churchmates . . . also in our school, there’s this group called ‘Let’s face it.’ So, there they help students who encounter depression, anxiety, bullying, discrimination.”

“It’s the Sarnia Lambton Alliance Against Hate. They are a branch of the John Howard Society and I know that they do offer supports for anybody who’s faced discrimination or a hate-motivated act.”

“I’m not sure but I think the college counselling centre they provide this if you felt discriminated, biased or sexually assaulted or harassed. You can go to them, book an appointment and talk about what happened to you.”

A few respondents knew of the organizations because they were involved with them but did not use their services themselves.

“I started volunteering with them, I just haven’t used them actually for myself.”

Reporting Tool that Would be Most Likely to be Used

Respondents were told that the Sarnia-Lambton region was thinking of setting up an electronic reporting tool (such as a website or app) where people can report on discrimination that they experience. They were asked if they would use such a tool, and a majority (12 out of 19) of the respondents indicated that they were likely to use such a tool.

“Yes, for sure, because again, I am not aware of any resources or tools that I can report these experiences to. So as soon I learned that there is a like a tool, then definitely. Yes, for sure. I will help promote it to my other friends, especially the new Filipinos. I feel like this is extremely helpful, especially for newcomers. Because as newcomers, you are just trying to follow the rule every time and you don’t want, at least for me, I don’t want to create friction with anyone or disagreement with anyone. So that’s why when these things happen, I keep my mouth shut. But if there is a tool, it will help me, it will help the community.”

However, six respondents stated that it would depend on the situation, if it was anonymous and if action is taken against their preparators. One individual would not use the tool due to their fear of reporting incidents.

“I would like to do something like that (report the incident) if there was some result to it. . . But the point is I want this to get somewhere where we have some consequences for abusers. If I report something to you guys and it doesn’t do anything and it just sits on the shelf somewhere, I rather not do it. But if it gets somewhere and there are some policies, then absolutely it’s worth it.”

“I think I would (report the incident) if there is action taken after. If that program would just let me report something and nothing happens after, I wouldn’t be reporting all the time. So, I guess it is a step but again if there is no action taken to it or no advocacy built then there is no purpose doing it (reporting the incident) every time we experience racism.”

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Respondents highlighted the importance of confidentiality and anonymity in their likelihood of using the reporting tool. Eleven respondents stated they would prefer anonymous reporting, often for safety reasons.

“You can’t put your name in there because once you put your name in there, Sarnia is such

a small town; once you say 'ahh,' everyone already knows you said 'ahh.' It spreads so fast. It is hard to keep privacy here. It spreads so fast. That if you put your name in there, you might not even get hired. Do you get what I mean? You can't really speak out because if you speak out and they know it's you, you won't get hired. I would participate if it's anonymous."

"Probably anonymous. Because I work with a lot of community members, and I try to be as involved as I can in the community... There's just such a stigma with like crying wolf for being too sensitive and these pieces that I would just wanna like kind of distance myself from, you know."

Seven respondents stated they would like it if there were an option to include their name and contact information.

"I think I will have to remain anonymous, but if it is given an option to give my contact information but not my name, I think I will be okay with that. Some people might get scared if their name pops up, even though there's a confidentiality consent about it. Cause I don't know, there might be hackers and stuff like that that might link the things that you said or link the reports that you did so, I think, anonymous option is good, but the contact information, I think it can be an option for you to give it or not. Because just in case someone have the same incident as you, so they can just compile everything and make a summary about it and then maybe they can approach what happened and take action."

Three respondents preferred providing their name and contact information in the report as it demonstrates a person's willingness to discuss their experiences, and it is important to provide contact information in case people would like to follow up on the claim.

Reporting Tool Host

For the majority of respondents, it was important who hosted the tool. Individuals wanted a group of diverse individuals to create and host the tool.

"It would matter where it is coming from. Whoever is creating or developing the tool or the app needs to come from a place where people understand why they are creating the tool. You wouldn't want a bunch of people that are like the preparators making a tool like this. It needs to come from someone who has empathy and someone who has experience with some of this stuff to create this tool in the first place. That would be valuable."

Respondents had varied opinions on who exactly should be hosting this type of tool. Seven individuals stated that they would prefer the government (municipal, provincial, or federal) to host the tool as they are considered trustworthy.

"I don't think it matters that much but I think it should be promoted by the Government of Canada or the provincial government... That's the safest thing to do. I cannot disclose my info to a private organization, which I haven't heard of before. I would be okay with sharing my info with the government and not a private organization."

Six respondents indicated they would prefer such a tool to be hosted by a local community organization, as they are not as biased as the government or police and they are trusted.

"It might be the immigrant organizations or some other similar organizations, so they can take action."

A few respondents stated that the police were also a good host for the reporting tool. However, several other respondents stated that they would not want the police to host the tool as there is a lack of trust in the police and that they would require proof of the incident.

"I would probably be resistant if it was a correctional service. So if it was like the police services here versus a local agency or non-profit, I would probably be resistant with the police services. In my past, I have tried reporting to the police, I have tried calling, and I have been faced with, 'Well, don't go to those spaces,' 'You shouldn't be there,' and 'You probably caused it.' So, I just have a sour taste."

Several respondents stated they did not care who hosted the tool as long as their complaints are being taken into consideration.

"Not really. As long as it's addressed, and they are going to do improvements."

Finally, one individual stated they would like to see partnerships with reliable academic institutions such as Western University or Lambton College.

Reporting Tool Type

The respondents indicated varied preferences for the type of reporting tool, such as a website, a smartphone app or a non-digital option. Eight respondents reported that they would prefer using an app, as it is more accessible.

“Definitely mobile app. It’s more accessible, so I don’t usually have my laptop with me unless I am at school. So, it’s so much easier to access everything on my phone.”

Several respondents said they did not have a preference between a website or an app, whereas non-digital options were also suggested by respondents.

“I can use both (an app or a website). Either works for me. Because I mean, I am with my phone all the time, so if this is a website, I can navigate it anytime. And if it is an app, it’s the same thing. I can just install it, and then when I have an issue or case to report, I can just easily use my phone and put it into writing.”

“I’d write a letter if I knew someone was going to read it, you know what I mean, just to have that avenue would be great.”

Three respondents indicated that they would not feel comfortable downloading an app to their device as it is a constant reminder of negative experiences, and an app takes up space on their phone.

“I would say a website. It’s just more convenient because with an app, I still have to download it, and it will take space on my phone. As opposed to a website, I can just look it up online and then click on the website and then report it. As much as possible, I try to get rid of apps on my phone, so I would prefer a website.”

Finally, one individual also highlighted the need for there to be an offline option when completing the form in case of lack of internet access.

Reporting Tool Features

The majority of the respondents indicated that they would like the reporting tool to be user-friendly, easily accessible, and easy to navigate. Further, respondents also wanted the form to be simple and quick to fill out, with a few respondents stating they would like a space in the form for them to explain the incident in their own words. Having educational resources on the form and the ability to upload pictures/videos of the incident were also highlighted.

“Probably, user-friendly of course. And super quick. I am not the type of person who wants to answer long surveys, so if it’s quick and it’s fast and efficient and, of course, it shows results.”

“Just basic and straightforward, you know. Not have something that you have to jump through hoops. Someplace I can just go in and type in what I need, what is happening and explain.”

“There should be a form which you can fill with your details and a little bit of a description of what happened . . . For additional features, I would say, for sure educational things should be there, there should be some sort of course sort of thing. Not even a course, but educational videos that promote diversity and inclusion.”

“I don’t want to get into answering a bunch of questions that might be like retriggering or retraumatizing. For myself, I would be able to do that, but for other people, it might be a little more difficult. So brief, to the point and easily accessible.”

Four respondents indicated the importance of having someone follow up with them after completing the form and for their reports to be taken seriously. For example, when asked if there was anything that would prevent respondents from using the tool, one individual stated:

“If I submit it one time, my concerns about prejudice, and I got back the automatic generated ‘thank you for your whatever’ and then I never heard back from anybody again, I would never use it again, because what’s the point?”

Useful Supports that Could be Put into Place for People who Experience Discrimination

The majority of the respondents (11 of 19) indicated that the Sarnia-Lambton region is not doing enough to make everyone feel like they belong and are welcome in the region.

“Absolutely not . . . This city’s incredibly old. The mentality of the members, the mentality of the mayor, the mentality of everybody in an authority figure, it’s unbelievable how old-minded they are. They don’t wanna change at all. I heard racist comments and jokes, anti-women, anti-this, anti-that, everywhere. It is just old-fashioned.”

“I think the government should do their part of the bargain. They invite us (immigrants) to come here, to work, to move the economy. They should make sure - I don’t know if you know that, but every 400,000 immigrants that come to Canada, 300,000 leave (back to their home countries) . . . You put an effort to bring people in and then you just let them go? It doesn’t seem smart enough. Why are people leaving? Maybe not everybody gonna have the stomach to be fighting against the system, right? And I think that’s big big thing.”

“I’m sure that those immigrants that are being brought by the college, they already come with sources of support and all that stuff. I can’t speak about that because . . . when I came here. I came on my own. So I didn’t have any of that. I wasn’t given any of that by anybody.”

However, some respondents did acknowledge that the region is making efforts towards being more welcoming of newcomers.

“It’s getting there. I mean I can’t really feel it, to be honest, but it was just recently that I learned that they are being active about it.”

“Nobody is perfect. I think there are still places you can experience discrimination or even racial comments or anything like that but apart from that, I would say 80% of the time, I would say that Sarnia-Lambton is pretty welcoming and I would actually recommend to my peers to come to Sarnia.”

“Has it gotten better? Yes, because there are people making an effort. I will say that. There are genuine people who are making a genuine effort.”

Respondents discussed the supports that might be useful for immigrants and racialized people who experience discrimination in the region, and who should be providing these supports and implementing changes.

Some respondents placed the responsibility on local organizations whereas the majority cited local, municipal, and federal levels of government.

"I think government is not going to do this because they are busy with another stuff, politics or something. Local organizations can do these things. They know this area better than others."

"I would say that again, it's up to like the leadership of the county. I think that they are elected into those positions to be able to influence the community and change what the community looks like, support the community that is here. And so when our leaders don't wanna do it, why would other people wanna do it?"

Education and Training

Close to half of the respondents (9 of 19) spoke about educating and raising the awareness of the broader community that discrimination is occurring in the community, what constitutes discrimination and why it is harmful.

"Sarnia needs to be aware first that there is racism happening, because if they are not aware that there is racism or discrimination happening, then you can't really fix the issue . . . They should be aware that there is racism happening first before they can solve the problem."

"It's about people being conscious . . . It's self-conscious(ness), having compassion and being in someone else's shoes."

This includes people of all ages.

"Some of the discrimination by the elderly is an issue . . . I think the education needs to go to the people 25, 30 and older, right? Because I think young people are getting it."

"Education. This is such a small community. I have friends who I've met here who are like the first black person that they ever saw was when they were 16 years old and it's like the diversity is growing and it's increasing and that's great, but it's also like let's educate the people who never got that diversity. Let's make sure everyone is understanding the fact that human beings are human beings and should be treated as such."

"They should have more in the school systems, from public school right through to high

school . . . There's prejudice even in public school here. That's disheartening. This is 2023 people! This ain't the 60s when I was growing up and there is no need of it. And to hear the N-word this day and age is beyond unacceptable."

Some participants recommended providing education to the perpetrators themselves after the discrimination incident.

"A lot of times it's . . . fear. It's not because they don't like you, because they don't know you, but they're afraid . . . It's not because they wanna be prejudiced, it's just how they were raised . . . I think opening that line of communication would just make it easier for both parties."

"It's our job to either educate them or change their perspectives . . . I don't think that the people who are discriminating should be punished, but I would say that instead of being punished, they should be educated. So that they do not do it and they can pass their education to their future generations as well."

This education should also extend to workplaces in the forms of equity, diversity and inclusion training.

"For example, in the workplace, they need to include it during training and highlighting that it's important to value people with colour and to not discriminate ever. That's one way to mitigate discrimination for me, to include it within the training."

"I would say that the first thing is that all the staff members, and especially I would say the managers and people above managers, should be educated enough. They should know about cultural diversity and inclusion and all of that. All of them needs to be trained well enough that this is something which is unacceptable and you shouldn't do it."

Increased Awareness of Available Supports

Seven respondents spoke about the importance of increasing awareness of available policies, resources, and organizations that support immigrants and racialized people in the region. This information could be spread through word-of-mouth as well as through other avenues.

"It should be out there. Everybody should know it, and the marketing should be good as well, right? I mean there's no point in having a program which is not well marketed and nobody knows about it, so it's just like a failed project."

"I think there is an opportunity to any city here in Ontario, or in Canada, I would say, to show and make it easier to find information. Even if you try to go to Sarnia City Hall's website, you're gonna see it's a very poor layout, it's difficult to find anything there. Even if you were to look for something specific wordings, they don't show up. So I think you need to be where people are . . . Most of the people here have Facebook so you must be on Facebook in a way that your community knows what's happening. Then, you pay for Facebook advertising and say, 'Look, I want to (advertise) to this area here.' That's pretty simple. That's the basics of marketing. 'I want this to reach these people here, to this demographic, with this age' and you make them aware every day . . . Especially if they are thinking about creating a tool, it makes no sense to spend money, the public's money, on something that will not be used because no one knows about it."

"It would be nice if Sarnia can really promote it and cascade information across the public that there are resources available, that they can report, that they are being supported, again especially to newcomers like me, because we don't know where to go, how to start, and what the process looks like. So having that information promoted is essential."

A couple of respondents also noted that information about workplace policies and procedures should be explicit and available to all employees and new hires and even to prospective employees.

"There should be clear protocols in place and whenever a newcomer or any new employee joins the organisation, he or she should be educated about those protocols so that if he or she feels discriminated, (they) might use those resources."

Community Spaces and Events

Some respondents suggested that would be helpful to create diverse spaces and events for immigrants, non-immigrants, racialized people, and non-racialized people to come together. These can be virtual, such as Facebook community groups, as well as in-person.

"Make it a safe space. Try to change the laws, probably set up a community, a place where these international students or the people of colour could approach or seek help . . . We should have some kind of institution, association . . . where I could seek help. It should not just be college, because college is not somewhere I live, college is somewhere I go to. So if I want a place where I wanna feel belong(ing), I wanna have that place where I can talk to (someone) to feel belong(ing)."

"I think honestly like having spaces where people can connect and listen and support each other (can support people who experienced discrimination)."

"I feel like people should be invited to things, included in things, specifically included in things - Once a year, at Canada day, in the park, they have this multicultural food thing where people will go. And, I mean, they love their food. Like they love our food. They love all that stuff. I think that those things should occur more than once a year at different venues so people can share their culture and maybe talk about it a little more and it's not like an isolated, 'oh, we're in the car and we're just getting food.' . . . I think the city should do things like that to engage people."

A few participants also highlighted the need for resources and spaces for racialized and immigrant youth.

"I want kids in the future and I want my kids to have better resources. So I actually work for a not-for-profit as well where I'm running a racial diversity drop-in program where youth who are racialized or allies can come and talk about different experiences, learn about how race and society and power all kind of are intertwined and really try to build a community. And so that's something that I'm trying to build for somebody else, for other kids."

"Start in the schools. Start giving these kids a place to tell people how they're feeling and what's happening before they start throwing hands, because then they look like they're the bully when they put their hands up to punch you when you just called them bad names and they've had enough."

"There should be somewhere that people can go to discuss this kind of thing especially if they're having issues with their kids in school, or themselves. I remember when I was younger, the YMCA used to do something, but I don't know if that exists still. It was like an immigration settlement thing but I don't know if that still exists, but that would be something people could use and it needs to be out there so everyone knows they can use it. There needs to be some kind of package that people get."

The Importance of Being Heard and Taken Seriously

The respondents emphasized the importance of being heard, as racialized people and immigrants in the community, and the importance of being taken seriously when they do speak up about their experiences.

"The most important thing is that they need to understand (each) case because as a newcomer you have to deal with a lot of things at the same time. The authorities should take it seriously and strict action should be taken against it. As I quit my job because of the discrimination, I wish that they could offer me employment or they could even ask the manager not to do it ever again or probably compensate me for the time that I was unemployed."

"Whatever you have asked me, it is something nobody asked me before, and I am really glad I am sharing this experience with you."

"People should have an advocate that they can report this to and somebody will, at the very least, try to have a meeting with you and that person . . . sit at a table and talk about it and explain 'I feel this way' and you explain why you feel that way . . . I went to our HR and I thought 'Well, that was kinda stupid' because . . . (the perpetrator) is her direct boss so she's not gonna do anything."

A few respondents further highlighted the importance of reporting tools and research studies, such as the current one, to hear from community members who experience discrimination.

"I am really glad you are focusing on the workplace because I think it is very minimised."

"That app or website (would help), so they could feel like somebody wants to hear their experience."

"If we have a (reporting) portal of Sarnia, where everyone can raise their voices, it's a very good thing . . . something to interact with the public. Our motive is to make them aware and so (if) many people are sharing their story, people who are doing the discrimination thing, they are more aware, 'No, no, we should not do that.'"

Recommendations

Recommendations for Employers and Businesses

To prevent discrimination toward immigrants and racialized individuals at work in the Sarnia-Lambton region, businesses and other employers should:

- Have a clear, widely disseminated policy on employee non-discriminatory behaviour, with specific consequences laid out for those who violate the policy
- Display clearly visible notices informing patrons of their zero-tolerance of discrimination policy
- Provide employee training at all levels of the organization focused on countering stereotypes, encouraging perspective taking and the valuing of diversity, and education about what constitutes discrimination, including microaggressions
- Develop a system for supporting the promotion of immigrants and racialized employees to managerial and top positions, wherein they are provided opportunities for additional training and obtaining skills that will lead to management and top positions in organizations

To support immigrants and racialized individuals who may be facing discrimination at work in the Sarnia-Lambton region, businesses and other employers should:

- Implement a straightforward and confidential procedure for reporting experiences of discrimination that formally documents the investigation and the outcomes
- Disseminate clear information to employees on their policies surrounding non-discrimination, and provide clear instructions on steps to take if one does experience discrimination
- Provide bystander intervention training for all employees, including how to respond to incidents of discrimination and how to support targets of discrimination
- Disseminate information to existing employees and new hires about the resources and supports available if they were to experience discrimination in the workplace

- Hire an external mediator to deal with reports of discrimination, who can decide the appropriate action to be taken and appropriate outcomes
- Hire an external evaluator to assess and make recommendations about their policies surrounding non-discrimination and the system in place for reporting discrimination (if any)

Recommendations for the Region

To prevent discrimination toward immigrants and racialized individuals in public places in the Sarnia-Lambton region, the region should:

- Develop a zero tolerance of discrimination community protocol for the region – e.g., [RichmondCommunityProtocol_v4.pdf \(iamrichmond.ca\)](#)
- Display clearly visible notices of the zero tolerance of discrimination community protocol in public places
- Provide educational workshops and events for members of the public focused on countering stereotypes, encouraging perspective taking, and education about what constitutes discrimination, including microaggressions and one's right to be treated in a non-discriminatory manner
- Provide training for staff of public facilities focused on countering stereotypes, encouraging perspective taking, and education about what constitutes discrimination, including microaggressions, as well as bystander intervention training
- Provide education to the broader community to raise awareness about the benefits of immigration to the community, the discrimination that is being experienced in the community, and the damage caused by this discrimination – starting with children and youth at schools

To support immigrants and racialized individuals who may be facing discrimination in the Sarnia-Lambton region, the region should:

- Provide bystander intervention training sessions for members of the public, including how to respond to incidents of discrimination and how to support targets of discrimination

- Disseminate information widely (and in multiple languages) on how to most effectively respond to discrimination when it occurs and the specific steps to take if one experiences discrimination in the region
- Disseminate information widely using various marketing strategies about local groups and organizations that can provide support to those who have experienced discrimination for both adults and youth
- Develop a straightforward, easy-to-use discrimination reporting tool that is widely advertised and provides information on supports available for targets of discrimination and what types of behaviours should be reported. The tool should have an option to be anonymous or for one to provide contact information.
- Once a discrimination reporting site is set up in the region, disseminate information widely (and in multiple languages) about the site, including what types of behaviours should be reported
- Ensure effective supports and initiatives are available to those who experience discrimination by consulting with immigrants and racialized individuals in the region as to whether supports currently available, and new supports being considered, are useful to them
- Provide information to immigrants and racialized individuals about what constitutes discrimination (including microaggressions) and one's right to be treated in a non-discriminatory manner
- Ensure that reports of discrimination are taken seriously and acted upon
- Conduct further research on the experiences of discrimination in the region to collect data from immigrants and racialized individuals and hear about their experiences
- Provide opportunities for immigrants and racialized individuals to get together to talk about their experiences and share information

To support a sense of belonging and retention to the Sarnia-Lambton region among immigrants and racialized individuals, the region should:

- Publicly celebrate the diversity in the region, including through community events and spaces that bring all members of the community together
- Provide spaces for immigrants and racialized adults and for youth to come together to share information, create social ties, and for social support

Recommendations for a Reporting Tool

In order for a reporting tool to be used and to be effective:

- Information about the reporting tool must be widely disseminated (in multiple languages) in the Sarnia-Lambton region, and describe the different types of discrimination that could be reported using the tool
- The reporting tool should be easy to access as a website and as an app that can be downloaded to a mobile device, with clear instructions and a few short straight-forward questions to answer
- The reporting tool should be confidential and anonymous, with an option to provide personal information if one desires to be contacted for follow-up
- The reporting tool should include the ability to upload pictures and videos
- The reporting tool host should have diversity within its staff and ensure that its staff is culturally competent
- The reporting tool must clearly state who has access to the information being provided and what they will do with the information, including what concrete outcomes will result from the reporting
- The reporting tool should be linked with information about supports available for those who experience discrimination, including groups that would allow them to discuss their experiences and mental health supports
- Consideration should be given to providing alternative methods of reporting discrimination, including through a hotline and in-person reporting