

IDEA.NB

Project Report



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Meet the Team



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Project Overview

The goal of our project was to identify areas of concern expressed by DEI employees in Part 1 of GNB using comments from the 2022 Employee Experience survey. The survey in conjunction with external research on DEI best practices for survey-based data collection, informed our recommendations and conclusion of this project.

What is IDEA and DEI?

The acronym IDEA stands for “Inclusivity, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility.” The concept aims to promote the equal treatment of traditionally discriminated or marginalized groups based on identity. The acronym DEI stands for “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion” and was a primary theme of our research. Its goal is to foster both a welcoming and inclusive environment for all, regardless of one’s identity. Understanding these themes was key to our research deliverables and was considered throughout our process.

Who are the Groups?

This project analyzed all comments in the EX survey, categorizing them into three main groups: DEI, Prefer Not to Answer, and Majority. The Prefer Not to Answer group are those who selected the “prefer not to answer” option when answering the demographic questions. The Majority group consist of respondents who selected the following demographic identifiers:

- White or Caucasian
- Heterosexual
- Cisgender
- Able-bodied/neurotypical

Members of our DEI groups were those who fell into the following identities:

- Gender Diverse (Non-binary and Two Spirit)
- Persons With a Disability

- Sexual/Romantic Minorities
- Transgender
- Visible Minorities
- Indigenous

The Process

Initially, our project was created to review the Employee Experience (EX) survey and provide possible improvements to the Equal Employment Opportunity program. However, this task was decided to be out of our scope and area of expertise, so we changed direction. We broadened our project scope to analyze the comments on the EX survey with a DEI lens, helping to give these individuals a voice in an environment where their concerns are often devalued.

With our new approach we began to look at comments from a different angle. Since the survey questions were not tailored to this research, they provoked generalized responses from workers. Therefore, it was difficult to recognize flaws in DEI practices within GNB and find DEI-specific problems. We instead looked at general issues that surrounded the workplace but from a DEI lens.

Comment Filtering

Qualtrics

To analyze our data we used the survey platform Qualtrics and its existing demographic filters to identify our DEI groups. The filters went as follows:

Sexual Identity		Ethnicity		Identify as Transgender		Disability	
✓	Asexual	✓	Arab		No	✓	No
✓	Bisexual	✓	Black		Prefer Not to Answer	✓	Prefer Not to Answer
✓	Gay	✓	Chinese	✓	Questioning	✓	Uncertain
	Heterosexual	✓	Filipino	✓	Yes	✓	Yes
✓	Lesbian	✓	Indigenous	Gender Identity			
	Not Mentioned	✓	Korean		Man		
✓	Pansexual	✓	Latinx	✓	Non-Binary		
	Prefer Not to Answer	✓	Not Mentioned		Not Mentioned		
✓	Queer		Prefer Not to Answer		Prefer Not to Answer		
✓	Questioning	✓	South Asian	✓	Two-Spirited		
✓	Two Spirit	✓	Southeast Asian		Woman		
		✓	Two or more races				
		✓	West Asian				
			White or Caucasian				

Not Mentioned and Prefer Not to Answer options

The “not mentioned” option in the demographic questions provides a space where individuals can insert their own identifiers if it is not on the existing list of options. When it came to reviewing the custom “not mentioned” options, we noticed that there were issues of homophobia, transphobia, racism, and general prejudice seen in the Sexual/Romantic and Visible Minorities sections that were not seen in the Persons with a Disability section. The Disability “not mentioned” was used respectfully and therefore included in our filter choices.

Due to ambiguity in the ethnicity filter, and for the sake of capturing the most minorities as possible, we chose to include “not mentioned” for Visible Minorities as there were identities indicated that did not previously exist within the options. There were also many uses of “Canadian” or nationalities that could still indicate a visible minority. However, due to the overwhelming negativity found in the Sexual Identity “not mentioned” filter we chose to exclude it from our research. When analyzing what individuals wrote for “not mentioned” under Sexual Identity, we saw comments such as “I’m a normal person,” “Super Straight,” or “WHAT... Jedi!” When counting the number of “not mentioned” comments and reviewing how many were from 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, we realized that only 4 out of 94 respondents were giving legitimate answers to the question. Many of the 90 others were homophobic and expressed their anger about being asked this question. Another large portion were individuals indicating “straight,” which is a clear sign of lack of education and communication errors.

We had a meeting with Amond McKenna of Finance and Treasury Board to ask for some advice on how to carry this issue out, where we ultimately decided that it was most ethical to exclude “not mentioned” from the filters, as we believe that the risk of including multiple comments from homophobic individuals caused greater harm than the possibility of leaving out 1-2 comments from 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

Notably, we did not see the same attitude in the Disability section. When reviewing the “not mentioned” demographics under this category we only saw comments from people declaring their disability and disability class. There was no hint of anger or hostility in this section, which was drastically different from what we saw under Sexual Identity. This showed

us that there is a clear issue of homophobia within GNB and that 2SLGBTQIA+ employees are at risk of mistreatment in the workplace at government.

This was also a concern when it came to the Prefer Not to Answer portion. The number of Prefer Not to Answer respondents was highest for the Sexual Identity section at 1,686. There was a high likelihood that respondents were selecting this option for all demographic questions, rather than DEI individuals not wishing to disclose their identity. Alternatively, it was also likely that respondents were selecting this option for only certain demographic questions but not others. Therefore, we decided to do a separate analysis of these comments which will be discussed in a later section of this report. The number of Prefer Not to Answer respondents for each demographic group are as follows:

- Gender Identity: 766
- Sexual Identity: 1,686
- Ethnicity: 961
- Disability: 698
- Transgender: 921

DEI Comments

Leadership Key Themes



Communication

Respondents expressed frustration about a lack of communication and transparency from senior leadership regarding top-down decisions effecting the organization and/or department. Many shared their desire for senior leaders to become involved with the day-to-day work of their employees to better understand their work and provide more effective guidance.

“Talk to workers, visit offices, walk around corridors and ask how the workers are doing...”

(GNB Employee, 2022)

Staffing and Resources

Respondents felt overwhelmed due to the increase in workload and short staffing. This has led to poor morale and workplace burnout for employees. Furthermore, staff cannot meet deadlines in a timely manner, and some feel it has prevented them from maintaining high-quality work while also providing adequate support and services for clients.

“The workload is unreasonable. We need more staff - competent staff which has to come with

additional funding.” (GNB Employee, 2022)

Opportunities and Morale

Respondents are seeking more appreciation, acknowledgment, and fair treatment from senior management. They would like more opportunities for career advancement and to be recognized for their output and tenure. They emphasize the importance of trust, empowerment, and a positive work culture for overall morale and motivation.

“It’s always good to go around offices to meet and let your employees know that you have their back just like they have yours. Visibility promotes a sense of belonging, trust, and commitment.”

(GNB Employee, 2022)

Health and Safety Key Themes



Communication

Many respondents asked for improved communication in the workplace regarding health and safety measures. Many respondents expressed being unfamiliar with the rules and regulations currently in place and request frequent monthly meetings around the health and safety measures in their workplace.

“Management needs to communicate regularly with the employees and be proactive. Perhaps have a group regularly go and conduct a safety check/assessment.”

(GNB Employee, 2022)

Training Sessions

DEI comments suggested that GNB host regular or monthly health and safety training to refresh general workplace knowledge. Insufficient training for both management and their direct reports has left staff unprepared. This places them at risk for encountering potentially dangerous or uncomfortable situations.

“Regular awareness sessions including refreshers. Health and safety as a standard agenda point for all teams (at least once a month).”

(GNB Employee, 2022)

Work Environment

Respondents expressed concern for their building safety and the ergonomics of their workspaces. Some suggested that ergonomic assessments should be made for more comfortable workstations (i.e., standing desks, better chairs, etc.) Other respondents spoke about needing better building ventilation and easier access to safety equipment on each floor (i.e., defibrillators and first aid kits.) Many others requested for additional work from home/hybrid models to be available.

“Communicate often and assertively with the owners of the building we work in for issues related to heating, ventilation, lighting, etc.”

(GNB Employee, 2022)

Majority and Prefer Not to Answer Comments

Leadership Key Themes

Communication

Respondents asked for leaders to include employees when making important decisions and for relevant information to be shared efficiently with frontline staff. Employees asked for greater transparency between senior management and their staff, with more meetings being held prior to significant changes made within the department. Additionally, they suggested leaders having more personal check-ins and in person visits with their direct reports.

“Having clear policies communicated directly to front line staff in a timely manner is appreciated. Having information travel from RD, to PDM, to supervisors to front line workers causes great delays and lots of information gets lost or not communicated to front line staff. “

(GNB Employee, 2022)

Staffing and Workload

Respondents commented on poor morale and burnout due to the large and constantly changing workload. Some suggestions to mitigate these problems are replacing casual/contract work with permanent full-time positions, more efficient hiring practices to ensure vacancies are filled quickly, creating new positions, and prioritizing retention. A common theme across both groups was increasing compensation to improve retention and justify the increasing workload.

“Caseloads are too high to properly serve clients and meet their needs. High caseloads are leading to high levels of stress and burnout among staff, and there is not enough support for staff. It is the expectation from supervisors that caseloads are managed well, despite the extremely high volume. There needs to be a greater focus on the stress levels of staff and more support from management.”

(GNB Employee, 2022)

Health and Safety Key Themes

Communication

Respondents asked for more frequent communication between leadership and staff regarding health and safety standards and procedures. Suggestions to enhance health and safety communication and awareness in a formal setting included having a Health and Safety Committee, monthly meetings/check-ins, and standardized safety practices. Informally, health and safety communication could be via peer conversations or email newsletters.

“Speak with officers one on one when applicable. Some officers find it hard to share an opinion on certain safety aspects of the job when in front of a crowd of people - Maybe smaller meetings by district rather than the entire group of officers?”

(GNB Employee, 2022)

Work Environment

Respondents expressed concern for the workplace environment especially in the case of ergonomics, ventilation/air quality, and cleanliness. Many requested receiving ergonomic

assessments and better office equipment such as chairs and standing desks. Additionally, many comments spoke to a hybrid or fully remote work model.

“Provide the proper equipment for the employees; many have had evaluations for better chairs, sit/stand desks, etc. why not just provide everyone with the best equipment out there so that everyone is working to their potential... Show your employees some "love" and take care of their bodies regarding strain and stress put on them by the wrong equipment. This would make them need physical therapy/massages/chiropractors much less.”

(GNB Employee, 2022)

Resources and Support

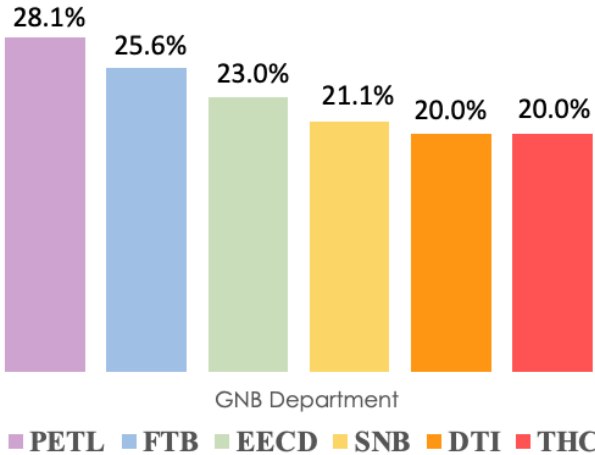
Suggestions for improvements included creating health and safety committees to promote the awareness and implementation of H&S protocols. Comments around mental health resources and work-life balance also emerged in this theme. Additionally, comments mentioned H&S training around both physical and mental health.

“My choices represent office work with less physical safety issues, however mental health, fatigue and the ability for myself and others to maintain a healthy balance is not a priority AND management verbally recognizes this is unsustainable but it not taking any visible action to address workload, fatigue or burn out issues.”

(GNB Employee, 2022)

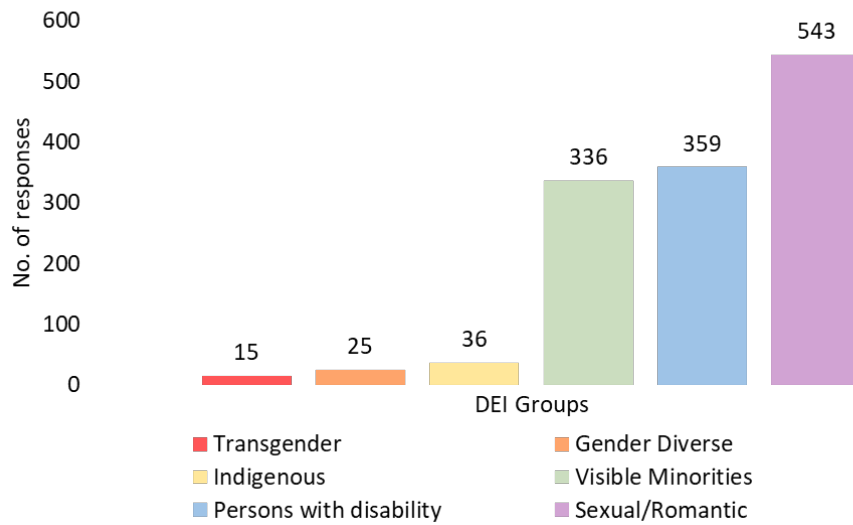
DEI By the Numbers

How Diverse is GNB?



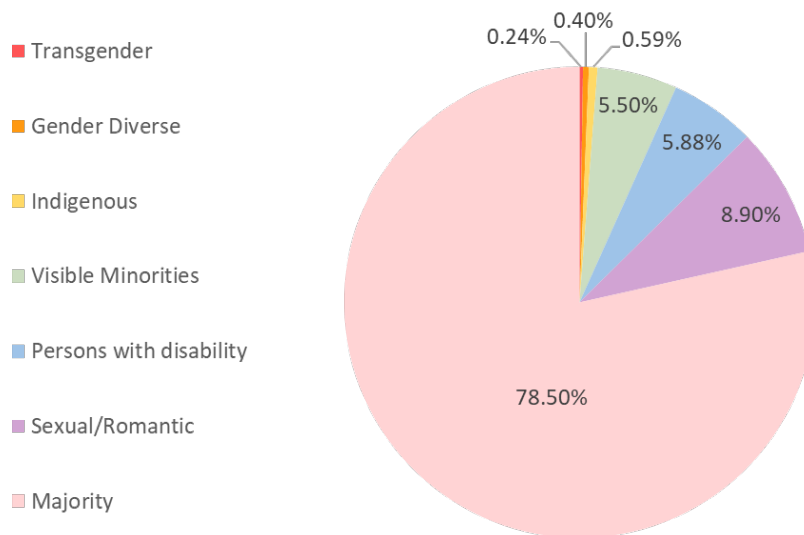
The above graph represents the top 6 departments with the highest diversity ratio amongst their employees. This ratio was determined by finding the departments with the highest number of self-identified DEI survey respondents and compared that number against the total number of respondents for that department. Because these numbers are based on survey responses this diversity ratio may vary, and it is likely that the number of DEI individuals in these departments is still quite low.

DEI Responses



The response rate for this survey was 54% with 6,099 responses out of a total 11,333 survey recipients. The above chart indicates the number of respondents who self-identified as a DEI group member.

Proportion of DEI Employees at GNB



This chart represents the population percentage of each DEI group in relation to the total number of survey respondents. The data shows that members of a DEI group made up 21.5% of the total population, with the three lowest groups being Transgender, Gender Diverse, and Indigenous. This demonstrates the lack of diversity within survey respondents, and within GNB overall.

Equity Group	NB DEI Population	Year
Persons with Disability	109,280	2017
Indigenous	15,450	2021
Visible Minority	33,250	2021
Transgender and Non-Binary	2,185	2021
Sexual/Romantic Minority	1,000,000 (Whole Canada)	2018

The above chart indicates the number of DEI individuals in the province to contextualize the number of self-identified DEI individuals in GNB. The organization should represent the diversity of the province to better serve those who live in it.

Qualtrics Key Drivers

After we identified the key themes within the comments, we then cross examined these findings with the key drivers determined by Qualtrics. The software determined key drivers for each DEI group, which we then compared in the graph below.

Key Drivers 2022	Persons with Disability	Visible Minority	Sexual Identity	Indigenous	Transgender	Gender Diverse (NB/2S)
Trust in senior leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Open and honest communication	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Leadership communicated vision for the future	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Values my contribution	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Supports my mental health	✓	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Leadership support for diversity and inclusion	✗	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
Manageable stress	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗	✗
Comfortable expressing my identity at work	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Leader effectively manages work	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Leader conducts monthly safety talks	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
My workload is reasonable.	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Outstanding leadership	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✗
Flexibility in work arrangements	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Regular performance feedback	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓

As indicated above, key drivers such as “Trust in senior leadership” and “Leadership communicated a vision for the future” were among the most important for most groups. We found that the comment themes did not align with many of the key drivers indicated by Qualtrics. This meant the respondents were not speaking to what Qualtrics produced as their “areas of concern.”

Recommendations

Considering that the questions used in this survey were not sufficient in gathering DEI-specific information, we have a list of recommendations for GNB to implement for future Employee Experience surveys.

1. Clarity for Demographic Data Collection

When reviewing the “not mentioned” section of the demographics we noticed that there was a misunderstanding when it came to both visible minority status and sexuality. It was

clear that many respondents did not understand the difference between ethnicity, race, and nationality with many writing “Canadian”, “Acadian”, and “French speaking Canadian” as answers. There were also respondents who included an ethnicity that would have been captured by the existing list, but it seemed that they did not understand the terminology. For example, a few respondents wrote “Indian” which would be considered Southeast Asian. Another respondent indicated “South American” which would be considered Latinx on the survey. Terminology pertaining to ethnicity and/or race might be relative to a part of the globe, therefore it is important to explain where and who these labels capture to ensure accurate demographic data. Additionally, the inconsistency between ethnicity, race, and nationality in this question can be seen in the breakdown of different East Asian nationalities such as Chinese, Korean, or Filipino. These should be combined into the “East Asian” ethnicity as to not alienate various nationalities and to remain consistent to the question. There was also mislabeling with “two or more races” which could have caused greater confusion to survey respondents.

As for the sexuality demographic label, many respondents used the “not mentioned” as an opportunity to express their concern and disdain for said question by indicating “why is this necessary?” and “none of your business” among other comments. Several seemed unaware of the difference between biological sex, gender, and sexual orientation by writing “male/female,” “man/woman” and “normal person.” Again, there were some knowledge gaps with the terminology used in the survey, as many wrote “straight” which would be considered Heterosexual in the existing list.

Due to the lack of knowledge and overall frustration with these questions, we recommend that definitions be available for all labelling used in the survey, and potentially an explanation as

to why this data is important while clarifying that this information is not used for employment-related decision making but rather demographic capturing. We deem it necessary to explain the difference between ethnicity, race, and nationality to avoid further confusion and to capture the cleanest data possible.

2. Add DEI-Specific Survey Questions

Throughout our research, we realized that the questions on the survey were not adequate to identify DEI-specific concerns. Therefore, we created a list of possible questions that are both open-ended and multiple-choice (yes/no). Many of these use the term “DEI” which is not a familiar term for everyone. We recommend that this definition be included at the beginning of the survey along with the demographic-related definitions to prevent misunderstanding and gather the most accurate data possible.

Below are two lists of questions that could be used in future Employee Experience surveys. One focuses on open-ended DEI questions, where respondents can elaborate on their DEI related concerns. The second list asks Yes/No DEI questions. For the second list, it is advised that if a respondent selects “yes” to any of the questions, an opportunity to elaborate be made available to capture specific, actionable concerns.

DEI Open Ended Questions:

1. What can leadership do to improve DEI in your department?
2. What is your experience with DEI in your work environment?

DEI Yes/No Questions:

1. Do you feel ethnic, racial, and gender-based jokes are tolerated in your workplace?

2. Do Human Resources at your organization work to ensure diversity?
3. Are you comfortable voicing your opinion?
4. Are there strict consequences against discrimination in your workplace?
5. Does your manager demonstrate commitment to diversity?

3. Continue Project Research Through Different Lenses

For a future iteration of this project, we recommend combining both IDEA.NB and Action.NB into one DEI-focused project. The scope of IDEA.NB was limited, making it difficult for the team to go in-depth with the information gathered without impeding on the work of Action.NB. A second term of IDEA.NB could consist of once again analyzing the EX survey data with a DEI lens to see if the findings and recommendations from this year have shown an improvement in DEI specific data collection. If the survey improvements are successful, the new team should be able to identify DEI specific concerns that this team could not do. If IDEA.NB is combined with Action.NB, it could use this information to examine the Qualtrics heat map and compare which departments have improved regarding DEI and those that need further improvement.

Conclusion

Our initial project goal of identifying employee DEI-related concerns was unsuccessful due to the nature of the EX survey that did not ask DEI relevant questions. That is, the comments revealed no relevant information towards improving Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at GNB. In lieu of this goal, we reviewed the survey comments that addressed themes

pertaining to Leadership and Health and Safety concerns. This comment analysis revealed employee concerns such as insufficient communication from leaders, requests for health and safety training and displeasure with the physical work environment. While these concerns should be addressed to enhance the employee satisfaction, they are indicative of organizational issues not directly related to government DEI practices. Moving forward with DEI data collection, surveys should ask DEI specific questions as outlined by our recommendations. The answers to these DEI questions can then be applied to create more equitable and inclusive workspaces that support individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Acknowledgements

Our sincerest thanks to everyone who has supported IDEA.NB's mission from start to finish. Special thanks to FutureGNB, Rochelle Fletcher, and various HR teams for providing us the opportunity to contribute towards enhancing DEI initiatives. The work accomplished by IDEA.NB will serve as a significant step towards making meaningful change and improving the workplace experience of minority employees.

Sincerely,

Rikkie, Jessica, Kiruthika, & Ruthie

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