

# A Discussion on the Diversity [& Inclusion] Problem in the AEC Industry

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# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify ways to become an advocate for yourself and others.
2. Utilize strategies to become more inclusive in our hiring and collaboration practices.
3. Recognize unconscious bias and learn strategies to begin to overcome it.
4. Identify and utilize strategies to help the next generation be more inclusive.

# WHY THIS TOPIC?

- **Diversity and Inclusion have always been issues**
- **There's no better time than now**
- **This needs to be more than a conversation and hopefully this roundtable will come out with actionable strategies**
- **We can't do this alone**
  - We all need to support each other and having this conversation is the first step
  - I want to learn from you and your experiences

# SURVEY OVERVIEW

To understand the breadth of issues out there, I created a survey that was shared via social media in October of 2020.

I will give a brief overview of the results. A more detailed analysis can be found in the handout and also on an accompanying website that I created to continue this movement and provide more analysis of the data that I have collected.

Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/aecdiversityproblem>

Survey link: <https://forms.gle/3GT87PsmUfRFQbbn7>

(The survey is still open and accepting responses)

# SURVEY OVERVIEW

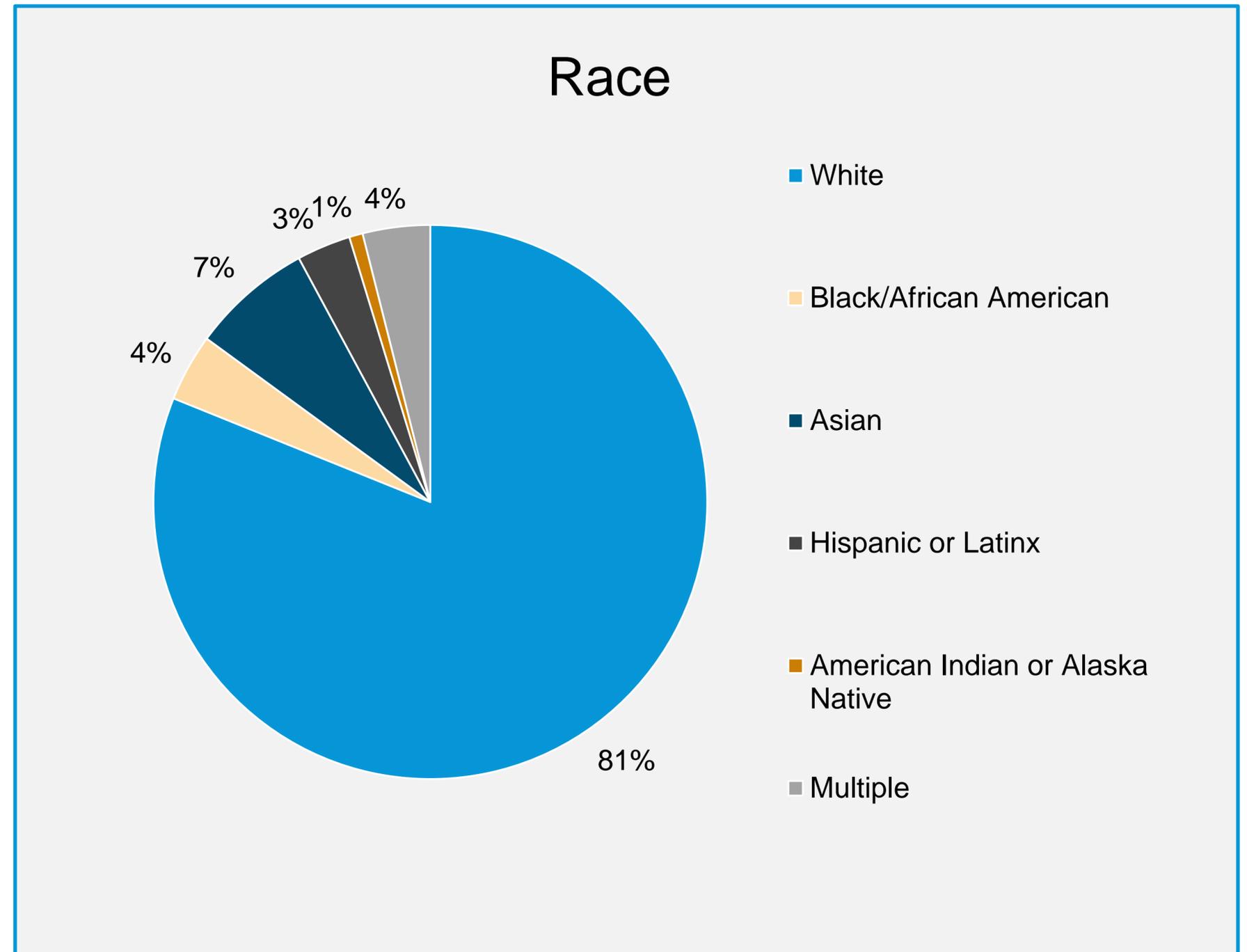
## 128 Unique Respondents

### Gender Identity:

- Male: 57% (73 respondents)
- Female: 43% (54 respondents)
- Non-Binary: 0%

### Sexual Orientation:

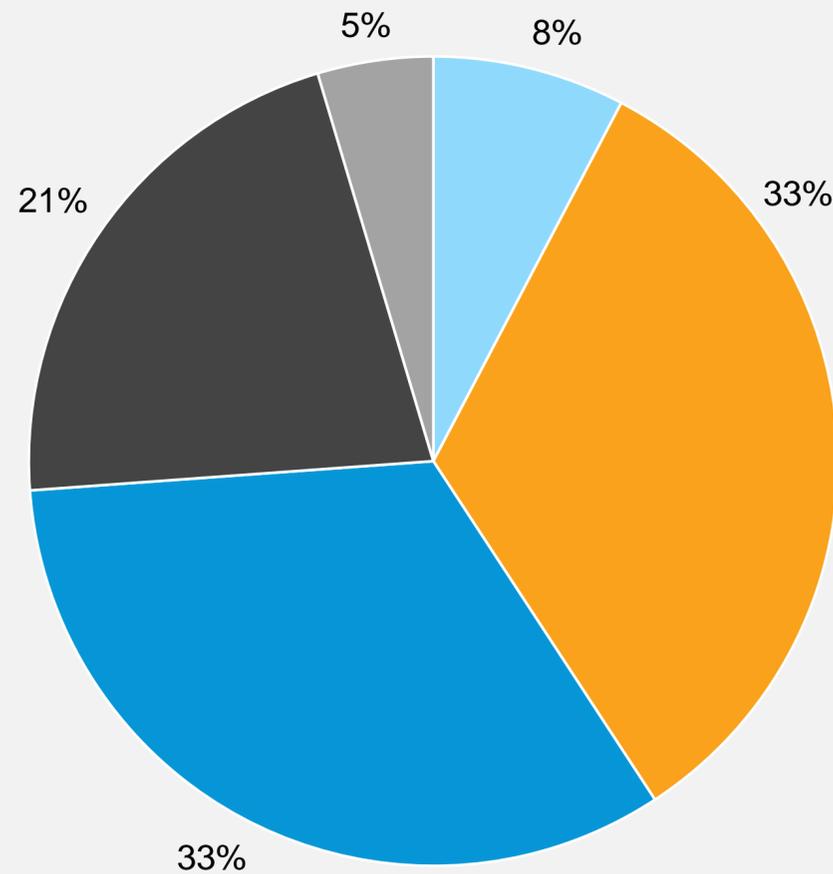
- Heterosexual: 90%
- Homosexual: 5%
- Bisexual: 3%
- Pansexual: 2%





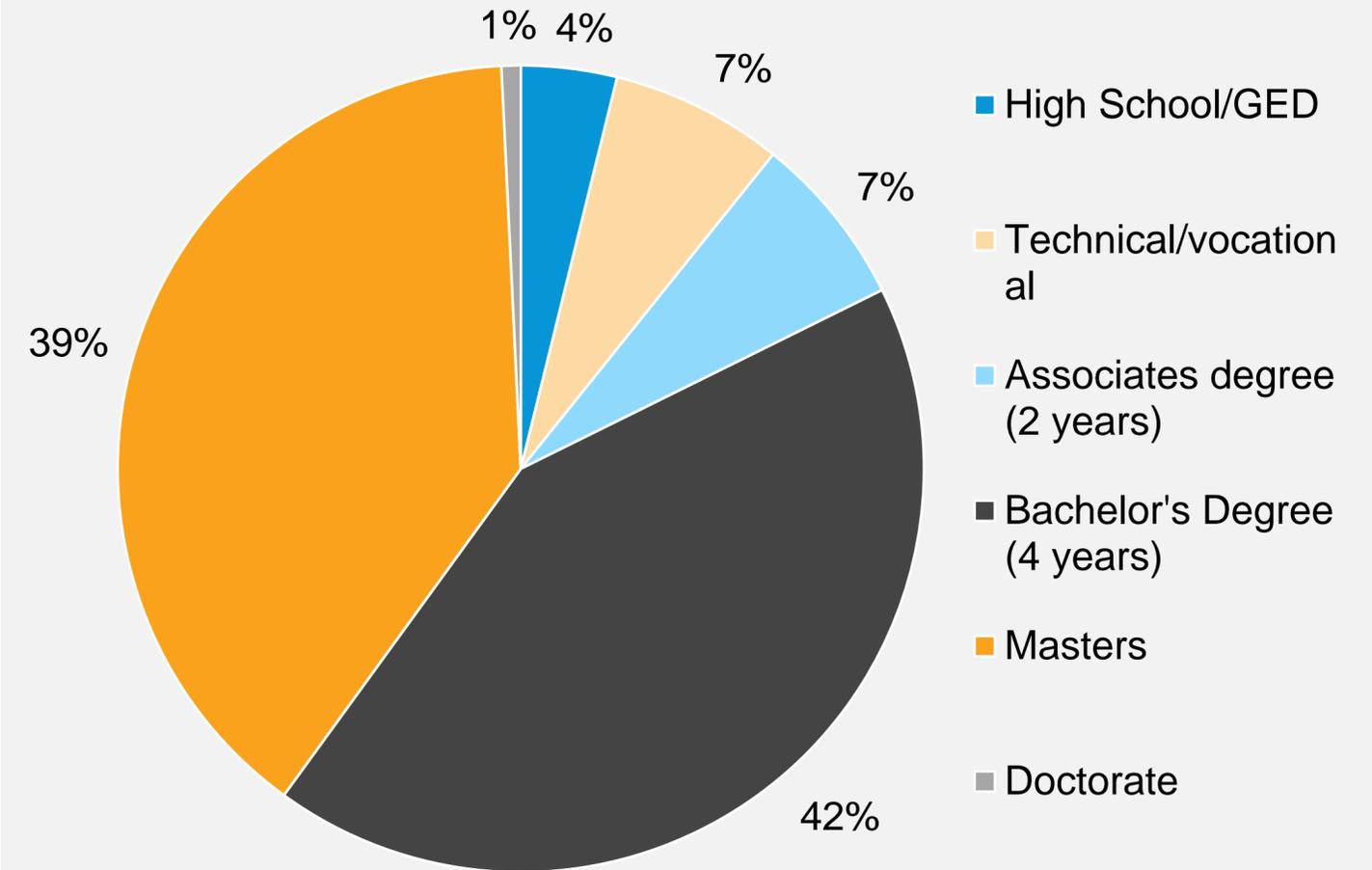
# SURVEY OVERVIEW

## Income Growing Up



- Lower Class (below or at the poverty level, free and reduced price lunch, on gov't or private assistance, typically household income below \$20,000 per year)
- Working class (generally able to make ends meet, paycheck to paycheck, typically household income of \$20,000-\$50,000 although varies based on location)
- Middle Class (able to live comfortably with some savings and investments, typically household income of \$50,000-80,000)
- Upper Middle Class (own a house, have investments, no financial insecurity, typically household income between \$80,000-\$120,000)
- Upper Class (lots of personal wealth and property, typically household income above \$120,000 per year)

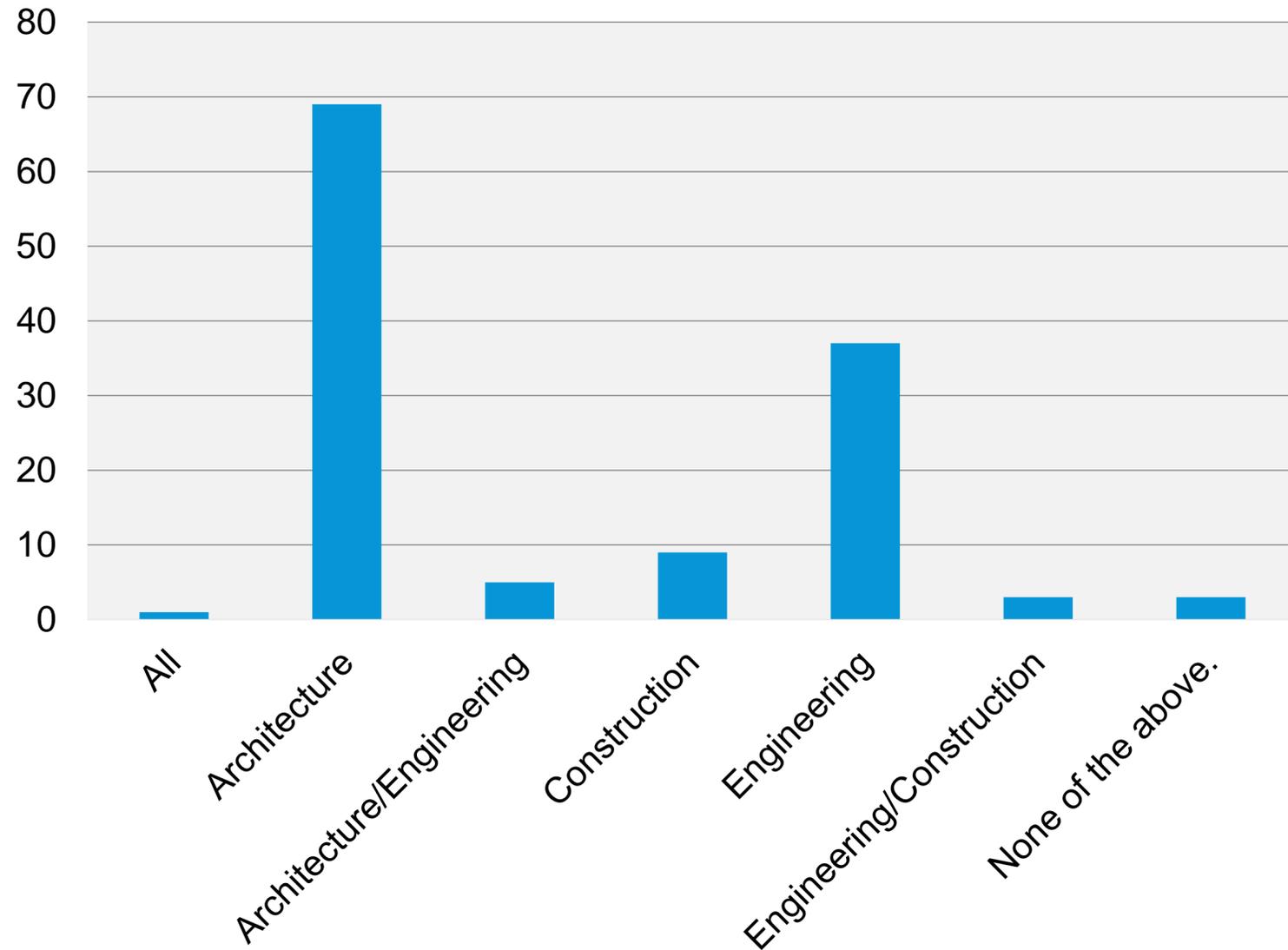
## Highest Level of Formal Education Completed



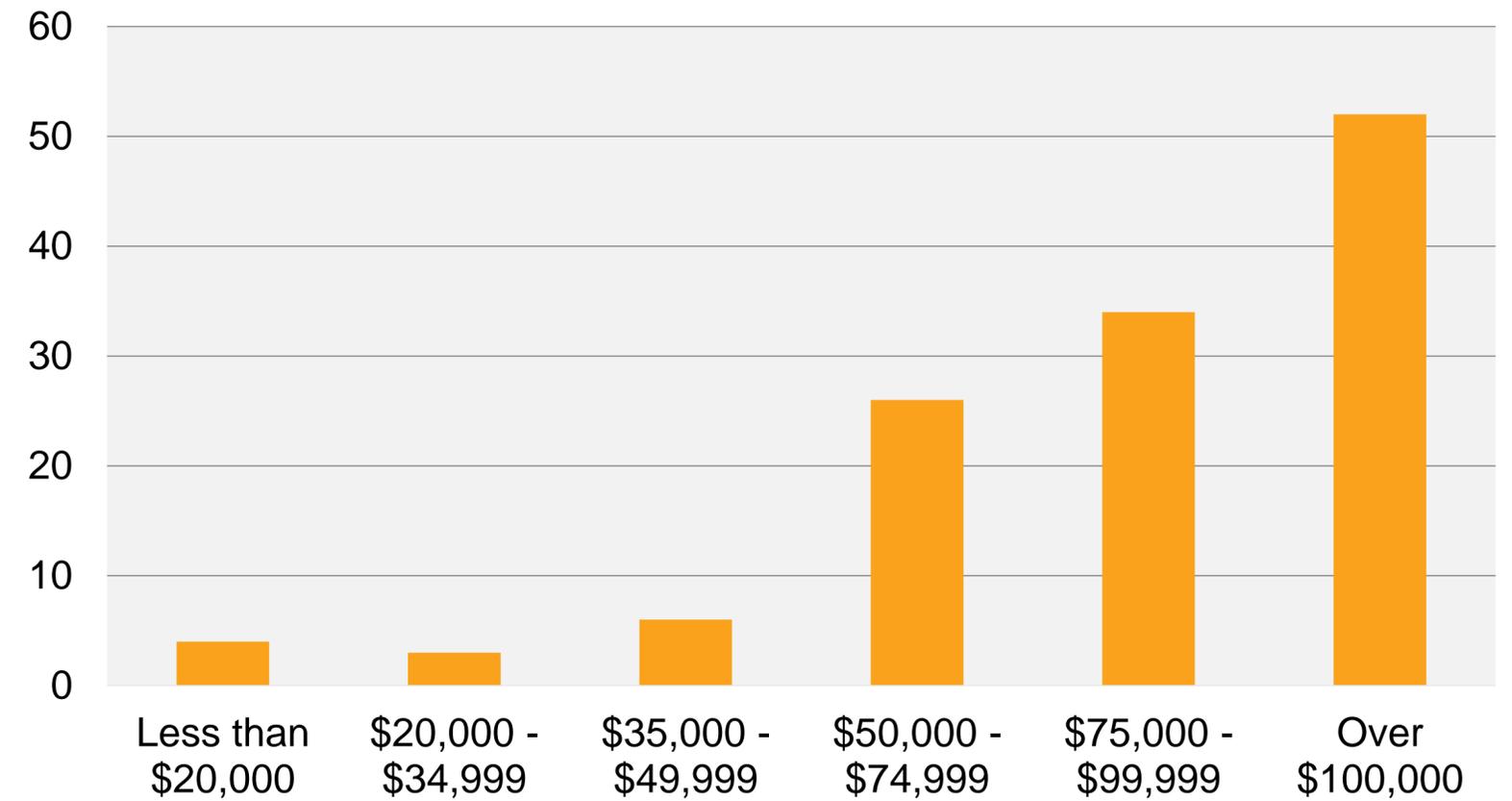
- High School/GED
- Technical/vocational
- Associates degree (2 years)
- Bachelor's Degree (4 years)
- Masters
- Doctorate

# SURVEY OVERVIEW

## Discipline of Respondents

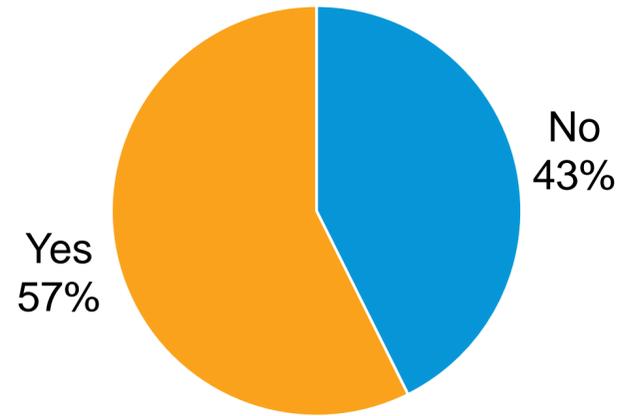


## Annual Salary

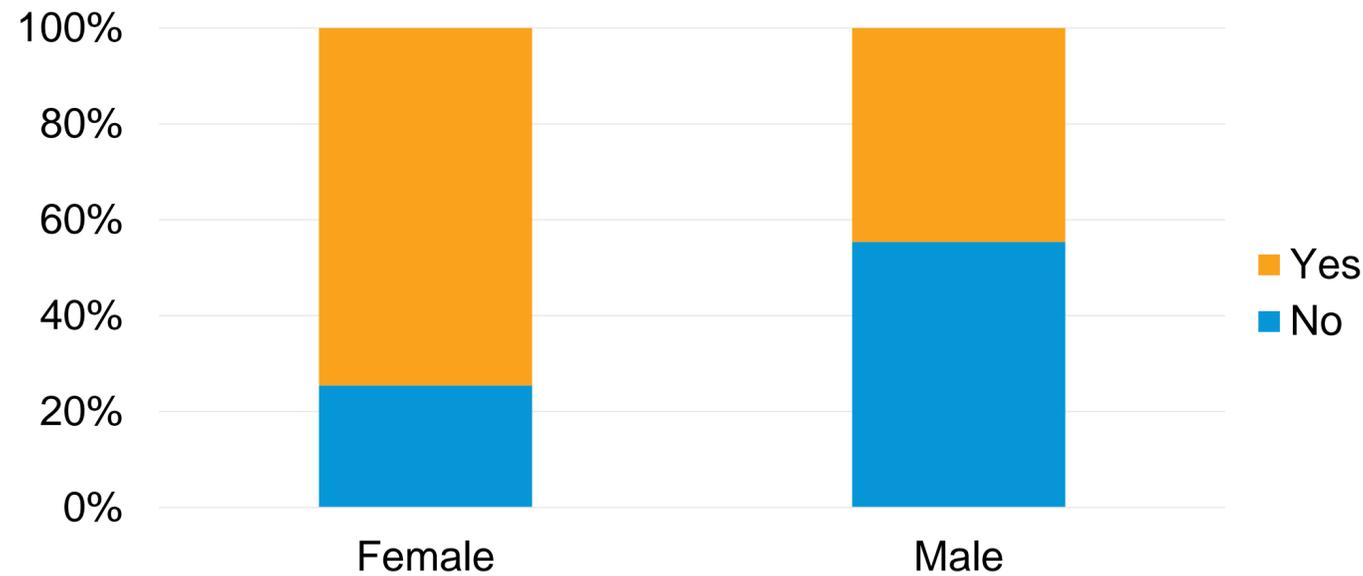


# SURVEY OVERVIEW

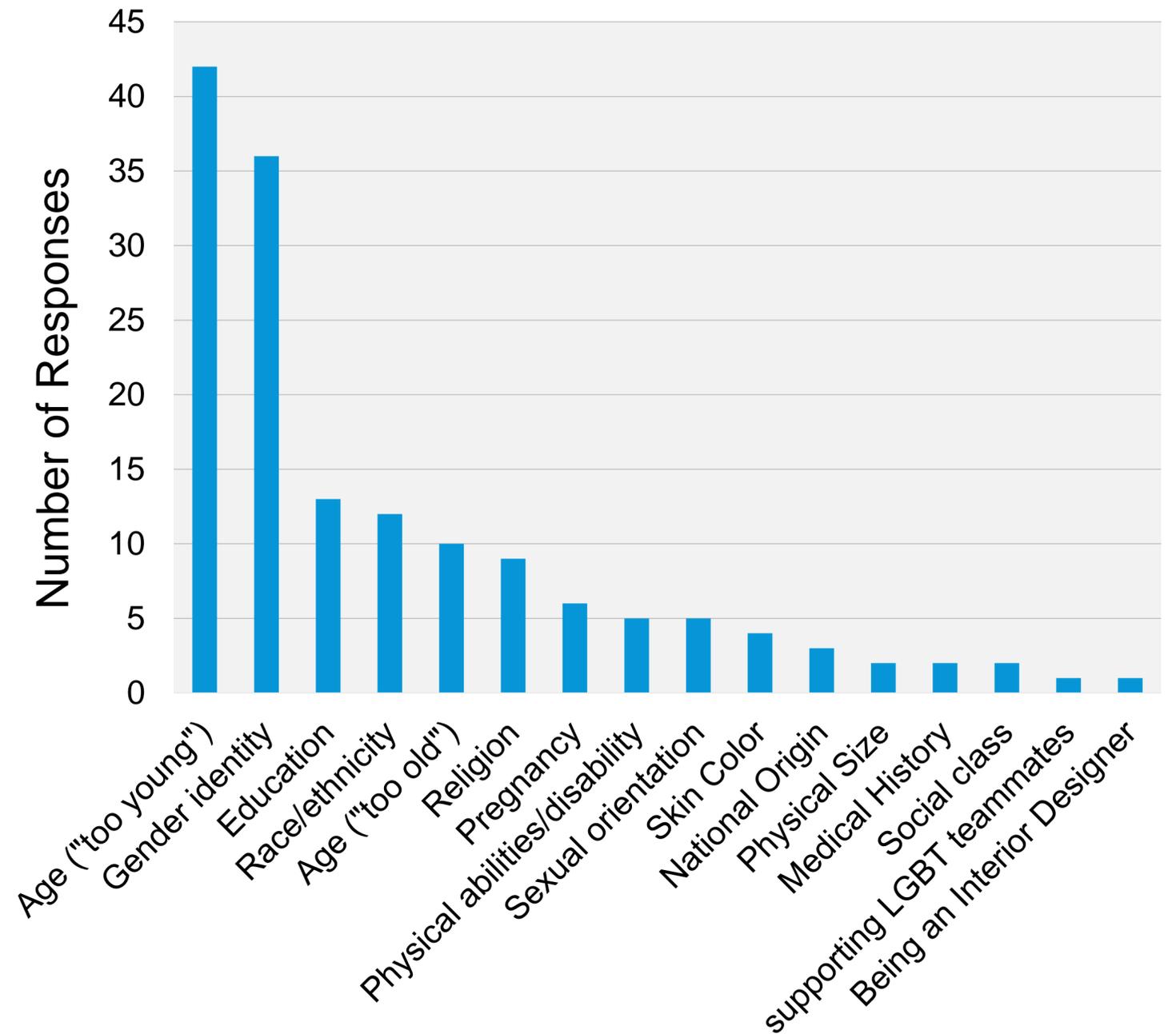
## Discriminated Against at Work



## Discriminated Against at Work



## Discrimination Categories



# SURVEY OVERVIEW – CURRENT LOCATION

12 COUNTRIES



22 STATES + DC



# DISCUSSION RULES

## BE RESPECTFUL

Disrespectful language will not be tolerated. This is a very important subject where emotions will come into play. We will do our best to moderate the discussion, but you will be muted if you are rude. Do not talk over others or interrupt.

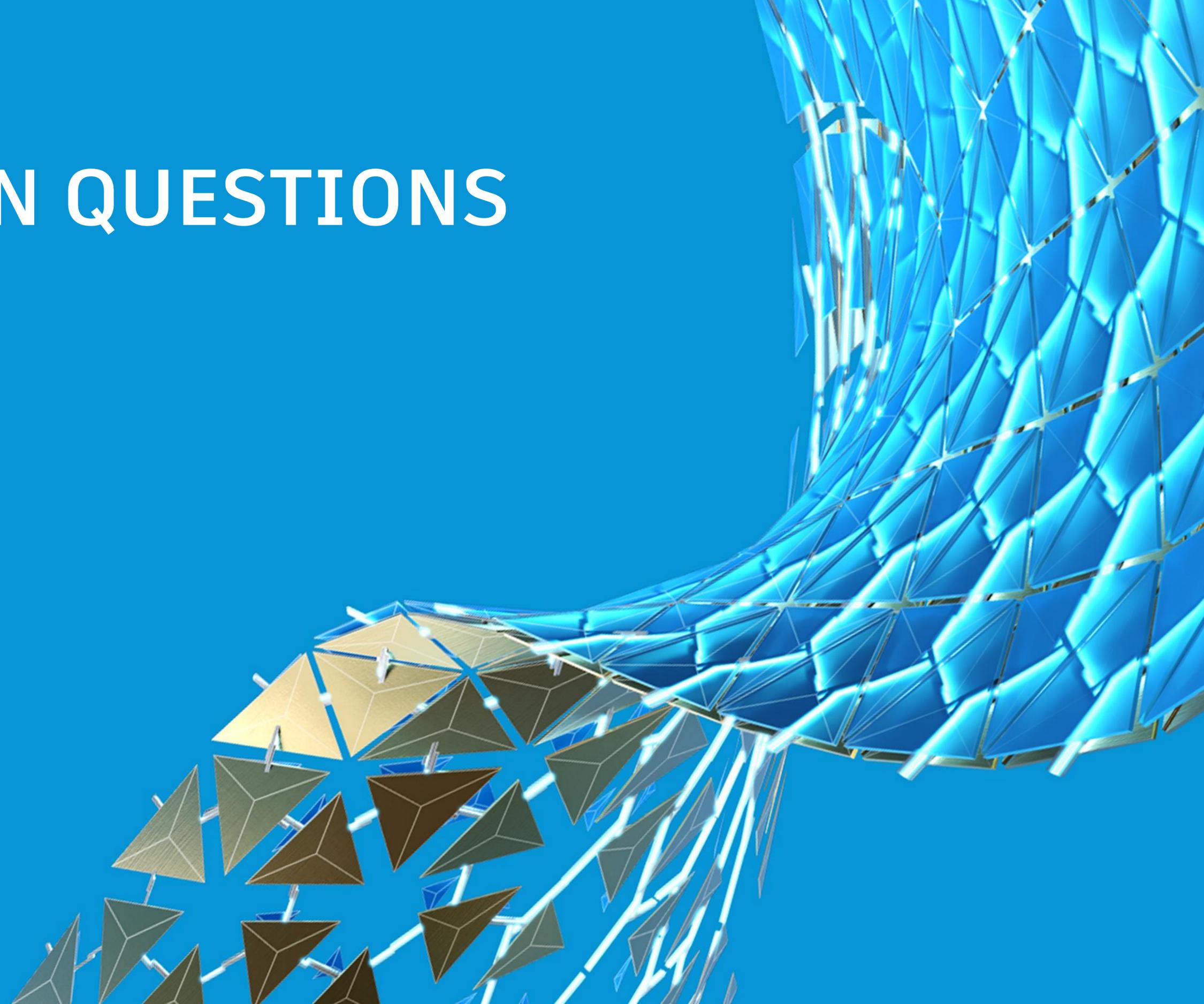
## THERE ARE NO DUMB QUESTIONS

A huge part of diversity and inclusion is working to understand others who inherently have different experiences and beliefs than you do. If you don't understand something, please ask, but see the first point above.

## PLEASE PARTICIPATE

Roundtables are the most productive when ever person participates. You are here because you care about this topic. We hope that we can make you comfortable enough to share your thoughts and opinions.

# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



# DEFINING THE PROBLEM

## QUESTION 1

From the survey, official labor and statics information and from our own experiences, we have a pretty good sense of the major groups that are typically underrepresented in the AEC Industry – women, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ folks, and those who are differently abled. Are there other groups that we need to specifically target for better inclusion in the industry?

Each person has their own challenges and by identifying groups and their general characteristics, we can begin to then create a more individualized approach to including these groups.

## QUESTION 2

**What are some of the root causes of the lack of diversity and inclusion in the AEC Industry?**

The survey provided a great variety of examples of root causes, many of them centered on implicit bias, racism, and opposition to change.

## QUESTION 3

**Have you faced discrimination in the workplace? If so, is there anything that you would like to share with the group? What strategies did you use to cope with these experiences and what impact did they have on you?**

We want everyone to feel comfortable so no one is required to share any information unless they choose to do so.

# DEFINING THE PROBLEM

## QUESTION 4

**There is a lot of ego in the AEC industry, which many have commented might be one of the main factors contributing to the lack of diversity – that people don't like to be called out for being wrong or discriminatory because it tarnishes their reputation. Why do you think that egotism is so rife in the AEC industry?**

Disciplines like architecture are surrounded in ego in part because you have to have a certain amount of self confidence to put your work out there and prove that what you've created has value in the world. How can this confidence not be turned into ego run rampant?

## QUESTION 5

**Continuing the discussion on ego, have you seen places where change has been able to occur? What are strategies to break through this ego layer?**

We definitely don't want to be sycophantic and sugar coat what we tell others but at the same time we want to be respectful as a general rule of thumb. Are there times when the only way to break through is to really be blunt and, to an extent, offend to get through?

# WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS, SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

## QUESTION 6

**How do we convince those at the top that D&I (Diversity and Inclusion) is important and can make a huge difference in their business, not just economically but socially and culturally?**

Think about what would incentivize a business owner/leader to open their mind and be open to change.

## QUESTION 7

**What solutions have you seen that have made a difference in D&I and why do you think these initiatives work? Alternatively what have seen that doesn't work and why?**

A lot of companies have D&I committees that have had varying levels of success. The hope here is to start creating a list of strategies that can be implemented NOW and that can lead to a robust program that eventually becomes obsolete as culture shifts.

# WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS, SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

## QUESTION 8

**What are ways that we can support the diversity that is already in the industry? How do we support groups in different ways to continue their valuable contributions?**

Often women leave the industry because it's not compatible with pregnancy and having a family. Others might leave because they don't feel like they are valued because they are, too young, too different, too old, too [fill in the blank].

## QUESTION 9

**What are ways that we can support each other without putting an undue burden on already over-burdened groups? To be blunt, how can cis, white males support colleagues that don't have the same opportunities and privilege as them?**

This question is in direct response to an issue raised by Danielle in her presentation. She states that all POC who worked at a company with a D&I program and who answered her survey were all part of that committee. While it's great that they are involved, we have seen that this can put a great burden on people who already have a great burden on them because of societal bias.

# WORKPLACE SOLUTIONS, SUPPORT & ADVOCACY

## QUESTION 10

**What are some ways that we can be more aware of bias around us and counteract it when we see it? How can we be advocates for others in a way that is respectful and cognizant of their backgrounds and personal experiences?**

Please share examples of how you have been helped by those around you, or you have helped others.

# ECONOMICS & EDUCATION

## QUESTION 11

**What are some economic and educational barriers that hinder a diverse applicant pool? What are some suggestions for ways that this can be changed? What have you seen that has made an impact?**

Survey respondents indicated the price of education and relatively poor pay as two main barriers.

## QUESTION 12

**What are ways that kids can get exposed early to all the fields that are encompassed in the AEC industry? How can we support those who want to pursue these fields but don't know where to begin or don't have the means to do so? Should we begin this early or later?**

Programs exist to expose K-12 students to AEC fields but often they are limited in scope and reach. Describe programs that you have seen/experienced and how they might be expanded to further their reach.

# FINAL THOUGHTS

## QUESTION 13

**I want to use the end of this session to come up with examples of ways that diversity is beneficial to everyone – social, economic, cultural, maybe even spiritual?**

The hope is to create a list of benefits that we can use to influence others and help to change their minds about being more open to all kinds of people.

## QUESTION 14

**Are there any additional topics that you would to discuss or any last thoughts that you would like to share?**

Thank you for being part of this discussion! If you would like to continue to be involved, please go to the website in the next section.

# Continue the conversation

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Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/aecdiversityproblem>

Diversity Survey: <https://forms.gle/3GT87PsmUfRFQbbn7>