

2022 Discrimination Survey Results

The Salem Human Rights Commission recently partnered with graduate students from Western Oregon University to conduct a survey regarding discrimination in Salem. The purpose of the survey is to gain insight into community members' experiences with discrimination. The commission uses the survey results to inform its work advising the City Council on human rights and relations issues, hearing and resolving complaints of discrimination, and promoting harmony in the community. This is the fourth survey since 2017.

The commission recognizes the limitations of the survey data. The demographics of those who responded to the survey do not mirror the demographics of the community at large. Many people who have no experience with discrimination opted not to complete the survey. For those who have experienced discrimination, we do not know specifics or outcomes. What the survey does do is provide insight into the experiences of those who have experienced discrimination and allows them to tell their story.

The survey was conducted in May. There were 824 surveys completed by people who live or work in the Salem area. Of those 824 surveys, 208 were completed by individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness.

Of respondents who are not homeless, 60% have experienced discrimination in Salem. Highest types of discrimination were due to gender (22%), race/color (21%), age (7%), weight or body type (7%), and sexual orientation (7%). Of respondents who are currently homeless, 94% experience discrimination in Salem on a regular basis, primarily due to housing status.

Specific to disabilities, 66% of respondents who are currently homeless live with a disability, while 27% of respondents who are not homeless live with a disability.

The 2022 survey asked about respondents' comfort level in reporting a bias crime to the Salem Police Department. Responses to this question varied widely. Of respondents who are not homeless, 26% are very comfortable reporting a bias crime to the SPD, while 23.5% are very uncomfortable. Of respondents who are currently homeless, 75% were either very uncomfortable or somewhat uncomfortable reporting a bias crime to the SPD.

The survey allowed respondents to write in comments. Comments ranged from those who experience and witness discrimination daily; to those who are aware of discrimination but don't personally experience it; to those who believe discrimination does not exist.

The Salem Human Rights Commission appreciates all responses to the survey.

The WOU students made several recommendations to the Human Rights Commission, which the commission will consider over the coming months.

The Survey Research Report and Presentation, and more information about the Salem Human Rights Commission, can be found at <https://www.cityofsalem.net/government/boards-commissions/commissions/salem-human-rights-commission>.

Anyone who has experienced discrimination in Salem can contact the Human Rights Commission at 503-540-2371, 503-588-6439 (TTY/TDD), or humanrights@cityofsalem.net.