

# Better Data Spring Report (2024)

Please note the information in the spring report was produced on April 30, 2024. Please visit the [Better Data webpage](#) for some more current insight into our community.

## Context

After extensive community consultation, feedback, and engagement, the Better Data Questionnaire launched in November 2023. The questionnaire asks identity-related questions across six broad identity categories. It is continuously open to all University of Victoria employees and students to complete or change their responses, recognizing identities can shift. As of April 30, 2024, approximately 6000 community members have completed their questionnaire, including 18% of active students and 27% of active employees. The report that follows offers early insights into data collected so far and highlights the communication strategies that will be used within phase 2 of the communication plan.

## Understanding the data to date

Having received approximately 6000 responses as of April 30, there are several noteworthy initial datapoints in both student and employee responses to date. While detailed reports are not yet available, high-level reports (i.e., summed responses across all questions and options) among both students and employees already provide important insight for equity work across campus. For instance, 32% of student responses and 26% of employee responses indicate that they identify as a person with a disability, a disabled person, or a person with a chronic health condition (Table 1). For context, only about 6% of employees surveyed with the old Employment Equity Survey identified as a person with a disability. When paired with disaggregated data regarding manner of disability or health condition (Table 2), this represents a marked improvement in our ability to understand the diverse support needs of the community.

*Table 1: Disability/chronic health condition among students and employees*

<b>Do you identify as a person with a disability, a disabled person, or a person with a chronic health condition?</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Employees</b>
<b>Yes</b>	32.5%	27%
<b>No</b>	63%	65.5%
<b>Prefer not to answer</b>	4.5%	7.5%

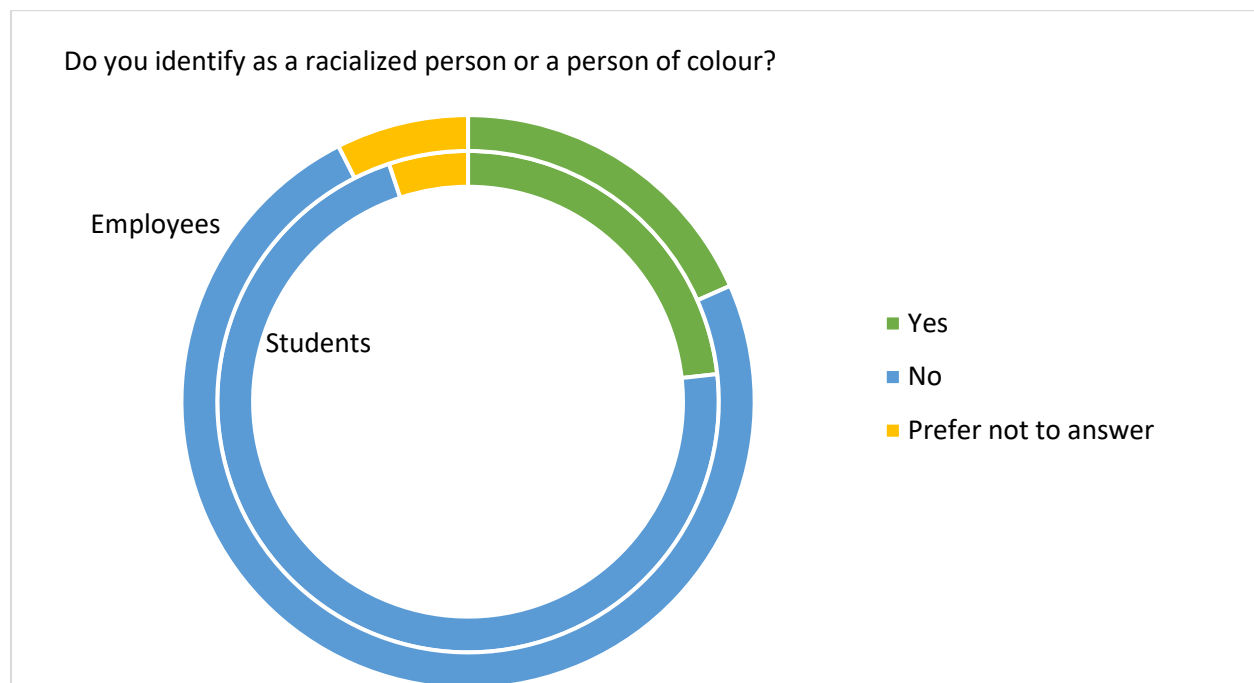
*Table 2: Disaggregated disability/chronic health condition among students and employee*

<b>If yes, please confirm the nature of your disability/disabilities or chronic health condition.</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Employees</b>
Physical and/or mobility (e.g., loss of a limb, chronic pain, or cerebral palsy)	25.0%	38.6%
Visual (e.g., visual impairment or light sensitivity)	7.8%	11.0%
Hearing (e.g., deafness or auditory processing disorder)	9.5%	9.5%
Related to mental health (e.g., depression or schizophrenia)	56.7%	43.4%
Related to reading and writing (e.g., dyslexia, dysgraphia, or dyscalculia)	13.7%	9.5%

<b>If yes, please confirm the nature of your disability/disabilities or chronic health condition.</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Employees</b>
Related to attention and/or ability to focus (e.g., ADHD or auditory processing disorder)	58.0%	39.0%
Related to neurodevelopment (e.g., autism spectrum disorder)	25.7%	16.3%
Related to social environments and/or behaviours (e.g., social anxiety)	37.4%	24.0%
Prefer not to answer	2.6%	8.6%
A nature of disability not listed (please specify)	7.0%	12.5%

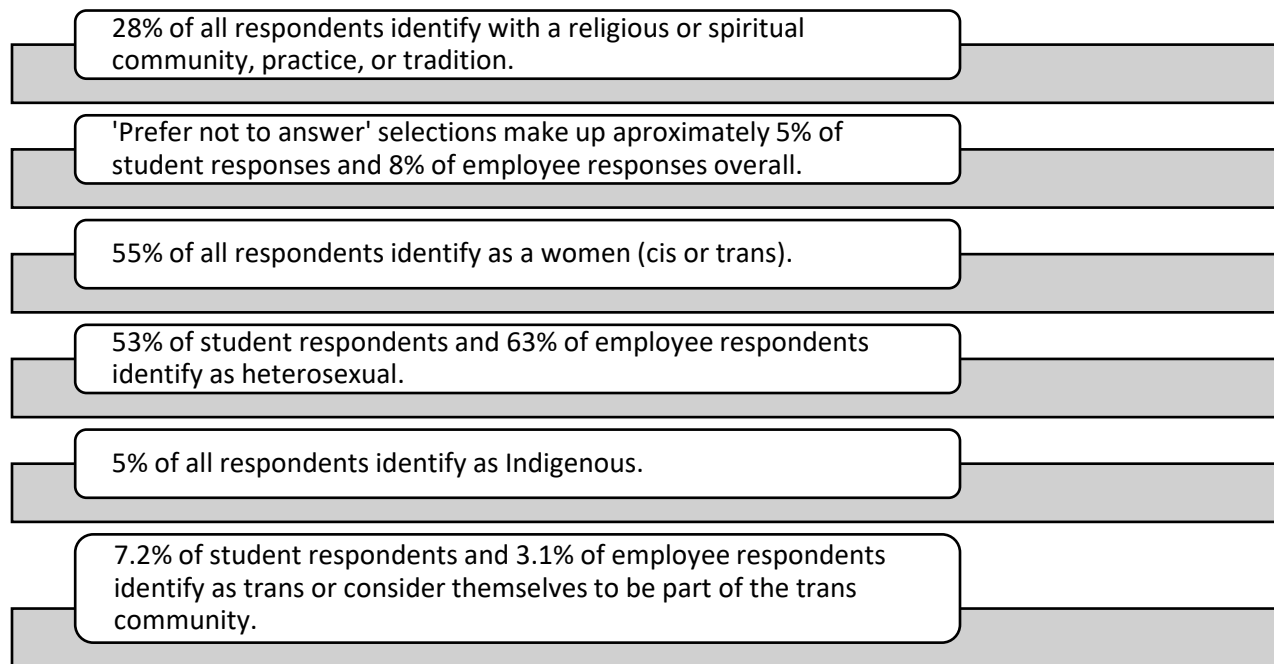
The data also provides us with substantial opportunity to compare the diversity of the student population to that of the employment population. Such comparisons may provide important insight into gaps in representation in specific areas of the university, contextualized through the need to support the diverse needs of the student population with a representative employee cohort. Concerning ethnocultural identity, for instance, a higher proportion of students identify as a racialized person or person of colour when compared to employee responses (Figure 1). When further contextualized by position/unit/faculty, this data can provide important internal context when engaging in ambitious goal setting surrounding hiring, recruitment, retention, and advancement processes.

*Figure 1: Ethnocultural identity among students and employees*



Importantly, despite limited reporting abilities and limitations related to response rate, the initial data is already providing meaningful insight into who is actually a part of the UVic community. As response rates increase and our detailed reporting system becomes available, opportunities for necessary intersectional analysis and faculty and/or unit-specific data will only increase.

Figure 2: Other data points



## Communications

### Phase 1 (September 2023 – April 2024):

Phase 1 of the communication plan utilized institutional strategies (e.g., broadcast emails, developing a central web presence, login reminder system, etc.) in combination with various tabling opportunities and poster distribution to reach as many UVic community members as possible. As these strategies were rolled out, the project team also engaged specific areas of the institution to build partnership and encourage multiple layers of project advocacy. This included meeting with union executives for both employees and students, delivering various presentations across portfolios, and providing communication materials to all executive leaders. These strategies were used with a recognition that more targeted, population-specific messaging would be needed in subsequent communication phases to maximize participation.

### Phase 2 (May 2024 – January 2025):

The login reminder system, which prompts community members who have not completed the questionnaire to do so once every two weeks, will continue as a method of response rate maintenance over the next several months. Beyond the login reminder system, phase 2 will seek to leverage the data we have collected so far to help inform the ways in which we reach areas and/or populations who have not yet engaged with the questionnaire. Notably, having an in-person presence when discussing the project and its impacts has been a welcomed approach by units across campus; with detailed reports becoming available in the near future, we will be able to be more targeted in our door-to-door communication and engagement approach, specifically addressing units and/or populations that have not engaged with the questionnaire via the institutionalized strategies used in phase 1.

The following additional communication strategies will be used in phase 2.

## Engaging faculty and staff

- **New employee communication system** – new employees will be prompted to complete the questionnaire as soon as they've started in their position. The automated email system – which sends up to three reminder emails – will be an effective tool for managing employee responses over time.
- **Door-to-door communication and engagement** – using context from data collected so far, we will engage in a door-to-door communication and engagement approach for employment units over the next several months. Having an in-person presence has been noted as an important aspect of trust-building and myth-busting concerning the project's objectives.

## Engaging students

The student-specific context differs considerably from the approach concerning employment populations. Because of the continuous turn-over with graduating students and new students each year, it is imperative that the questionnaire become integrated within the student account set-up process to ensure that a high percentage of new students are completing the questionnaire each September. If we are successful at reaching new students, the overall student response rate should continue to climb on an annual basis. Given this reality, the following student-specific strategies will include:

- **Build the questionnaire into the account setup process** – We are working to have the questionnaire added to the account setup checklist to reach a large portion of new students each year.
- **Maintaining a physical presence on campus** – We will continue to maintain an outreach table at significant student events on campus (e.g., orientation). Past tabling efforts have been very well received by students, offering a unique venue for talking about the project and its impact.
- **Student testimonials project** – Students learning about the project from students represents another important facet of student-specific communication. As such, we will gather student testimonials about the importance of the data and its future impact for students specifically. This will be used in various student-centred communications (e.g., socials) moving forward.

## Moving forward:

Each of the communication strategies described above represent on-going efforts to engage the UVic community in a multi-faceted, audience-centred manner. Communication will continue to prioritize socializing the project and working towards building a collective understanding that data is the backbone of substantive equity work. Moving forward, we must balance these foundational efforts with other strategies and/or tools at our disposal to ensure campus-wide engagement in the process. As such, each phase of communication and engagement will work on scaffolding towards making the questionnaire 'required'<sup>1</sup> for all community members—a step that has been very successful for other Canadian institutions and their self-identification collection tools (e.g., Toronto Metropolitan University,

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<sup>1</sup> While the tool may eventually become 'required', it's important to note that because of the way it is built, community members will always maintain the right to not provide their personal information (i.e., 'select all prefer not to answer').

University of Toronto, etc.). Recently, a federal task force which reviewed the Employment Equity Act reaffirmed this approach, suggesting that data collection tools should be mandatory while self-identification within the tool should remain optional (i.e., including 'prefer not to answer' options).

## Better Data Steering Committee

In fall 2024, we plan to form the Better Data Steering Committee to oversee decision-making processes for both internal and external reporting and for data use beyond the original project scope. The committee will be made up of knowledge experts in both employment and student-specific contexts. Its specific purpose will be to:

- Define regular data use and associated reporting (e.g., deciding on filters, internal versus external dashboards, etc.).
- Assess data use beyond original project scope (i.e., uses defined within the approved Privacy Impact Assessment) on a per-application-basis.
- Ensure clarity and compliance with the data governance and ethical principles framework on an on-going basis.

## Feedback so far

Given that over 6000 people have accessed the questionnaire, we are delighted to share that the feedback we have received via our project email address and the anonymous feedback form has been overwhelmingly positive. Community members have expressed an appreciation for the flexible nature of the questions and highlighted the diverse range of options as inclusive and welcoming. Several individuals also expressed that they are looking forward to being able to explore the data themselves once dashboards have been produced.

Feedback on individual questions, wording, and/or language has been catalogued for continuous quality assessment. In addition to the feedback forms, the 'Please specify' submissions will also be reviewed and catalogued to inform any adjustments to the questionnaire moving forward. Having now engaged almost 25% of our campus community, we are confident in the quality of the questionnaire and its ability to capture the true breadth of diversity across campus.