

# *THE FACES OF PLANNING*

**Crafting a BIPOC Mentorship Experience through  
Empirical Research with Planners**

December 2019



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Toronto is the traditional territory of many First Nations, including the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Huron-Wyandot, and most recently the Mississauga of the Credit river First Nations. Toronto is in the 'Dish with One Spoon Territory'. The Dish with One Spoon is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississauga and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations and peoples, Europeans and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect. As settlers on this land, brought to the city currently known as Toronto through a variety of trajectories, the authors of this report acknowledge our treaty responsibilities and aspire to work on behalf of Indigenous relations.

We would like to acknowledge the foundational work of the MIIPOC group in this space upon which this project builds, especially Abigail Moriah, and thank them for their guidance and input through the phases of this project. We would also like to thank our project advisor, Dominique Dennery and Hamdi Mohamed, as well as our course directors, Professor Katherine Rankin and Michelle Berquist, for their wisdom and ongoing support. We would also like to thank others who contributed invaluable insights on diversity in Planning, and mentorship initiatives for students and early professionals in other professional feeds, including Professor Ted Rutland, Ike Okafor, Tara Erb, and Dr. Mikhail Burke. Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the enthusiasm, support and engagement of our Planning colleagues who were willing to share their personal experiences through the surveys and interviews, and for the continued work that they do to contribute to planning activities for the betterment of all.

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## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under the guidance of MIIPOC, this study was commissioned to examine the experiences of Planners who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) through their academic Planning education, into transition and advancement in the profession. The goal of this research is to provide recommendations to inform a mentorship initiative by and for BIPOC Planners. By mentoring BIPOC Planners, MIIPOC aspires to shape a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive field.

There is a lack of empirical research with human subjects on the issue of racial diversity in Planning, especially in the Canadian context. This study advances Planning research that examines its own ranks through the lived experiences of its own practitioners. The subject matter of the study sparked a great deal of interest from BIPOC Planners — with 57 responses to the survey in 3 weeks and over 30 interview requests — indicating the strong interest to address racial disparities in Planning. The survey and interviews provided a depth of qualitative and quantitative data on the complex experiences BIPOC have in Planning. Paired with a review of pertinent literature, and information gathered about diversity mentorship initiatives in other professional fields, the research findings contribute to insights for justice-seeking Planners.

The research team identified four key themes through thematic analysis of empirical data: *Career, Retention, Network and Supports*. These four themes emerged naturally out of survey responses and interview conversations. While each theme speaks to a different challenge and need for BIPOC Planners, significant overlap between themes during the analysis phase of the study highlights the need for an integrative action-plan for addressing BIPOC Planners' challenges and needs. Each of the themes developed through thematic analysis map onto recommendations for MIIPOC located at the end

of the report. These recommendations, while not exhaustive, mobilize the study's findings into actionable goals and directions for MIIPOC organizers to adopt as the project takes off.

Limitations of this research fall on the limited demographic composition of the sample, which notably fell short on including Queer and Trans BIPOC and Indigenous individuals. The report concludes with ideas on further exploration and action for BIPOC Planners and argues the importance of empirical research with human subjects for addressing systemic barriers in professional and academic Planning. Further empirical studies in this area would do well to examine the experiences of Indigenous planners, as well as Queer and Trans BIPOC, as these perspectives were not adequately captured in the study here.

## 2.0 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BIPOC: Black, Indigenous, People of Colour

Code-switching: "Code-switching, process of shifting from one linguistic code (a language or dialect) to another, depending on the social context or conversational setting"<sup>1</sup>. Even cultural subgroups within the same linguistic community use different linguistic codes to communicate, meaning that code-switching regularly occurs between English language speakers.

GTA: Greater Toronto Area

MIIPOC: Mentorship Initiative for Indigenous and Planners of Colour

PRT: Planning Research Team

QTBIPOC: Queer and Trans People of Colour

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<sup>1</sup> "Code-switching," Britannica, accessed December 8, 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/code-switching>.

## 3.0 WHAT IN THE WORLD

### 3.1 Framing the Issue

Diversity — a reverence for difference — is what makes our lives meaningful. Living among people of different cultures allows us to celebrate and support each other in ways that build better places to live. The degree of diversity one experiences daily in a world city like Toronto is often packaged into more one-dimensional ideas of “multiculturalism” or “corporate diversity checkboxes.” In this way, the lived experience of race and ethnicity is erased in favour of entities that do not directly benefit marginalized communities. Myriad injustices and inequalities are produced for BIPOC when diversity is diluted, simplified, or sanitized. Diversity, as we understand it, is alive, multi-dimensional, and a force for positive transformational change.

While the practice of Planning grapples with issues of inequity and injustice by working with diverse communities, the Planning profession does not fully address how these dynamics impact its own community of practitioners. Specifically, anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, and anti-immigrant racism still operate within our profession. Racism in Planning is a detriment to field overall. Specifically, racism hurts BIPOC students and professionals, and disenfranchises the diverse communities which the profession of Planning serves.

It is with optimism for a diverse Planning profession that the Mentoring Initiative for Indigenous and Planners of Colour (MIPOC) has charged the Mentoring Initiative in Planning Research Team (PRT) to better understand the barriers Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) Planners encounter during in Planning education and the profession. The goal of the PRT is to provide evidence-based insights and recommendations that enable MIPOC’s success. MIPOC aspires to intervene where Planning-as-usual has failed, to support new generations of BIPOC Planners, and foster deeply inclusive and diverse Planning communities. This section highlights the need for a field that better represents and understands the diverse ethnic and racial communities that make up the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).

Among the three post-secondary institutions in the Greater Toronto Area with undergraduate or graduate Planning programs, none currently collect statistics on the backgrounds or self-reported identities of incoming or graduating students. However, Ryerson University indicated that it is looking into ways to collect this information to track future student cohorts.

Toronto is the most ethnically diverse city in Canada, and one of the most diverse urban regions in the world. According to the 2016 Canadian Census, visible minorities comprise both 51.5% of overall populations in the City of Toronto and the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), representing the GTA<sup>2</sup>. Apart from visible minorities, the 2016 census reported approximately 23,000 Indigenous people in the City of Toronto (0.09% of the City)<sup>3</sup>, and approximately 46,000 Indigenous people in the Toronto CMA. However, the City of Toronto’s web page “Indigenous people of Toronto” identifies that “Agencies serving the Indigenous community in Toronto estimated that there are 70,000 residents who belong to this community,” as “research has shown that Indigenous people are undercounted by the national census”<sup>4</sup>. On both quantitative and qualitative levels, the GTA boasts an impressive population of Indigenous and People of Colour in sheer numbers and degree of diversity within its BIPOC populations.

Despite the diversity of our city and urban region, Planning in the GTA is a majority white, Anglo-Canadian profession with historical and current antagonisms with BIPOC. The history of Planning in Toronto starts with the Huron-Wyandot, Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee First Nations, who — like other Indigenous civilizations across Turtle Island — planned their environments to best support their complex ways of life<sup>5</sup>. Since Canadian settlement, Planning has been used as a tool to dispossess Indigenous First

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<sup>2</sup>“2016 CENSUS HIGHLIGHTS: Factsheet 9”, Ontario Ministry of Finance, accessed November 19, 2019, <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/census/cenhi16-9.html>

<sup>3</sup>“Census Profile, 2016 Census, Toronto, City”, Statistics Canada, accessed November 19, 2019, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3520005&Geo2=PR&Data=Count&B1=All>

<sup>4</sup>“Indigenous People of Toronto,” City of Toronto, accessed November 19, 2019, <https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/accessibility-human-rights/indigenous-affairs-office/torontos-indigenous-peoples/>

<sup>5</sup> Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York: Knopf, 2005).

Nations and assert the unilateral right to land claims on behalf of Canada and its settler populations<sup>6</sup>.

The relations between BIPOC populations in Toronto, more broadly, and Planning has a complicated history. Land use Planning has a long record of turning recent immigrant and racialized communities into ‘vulnerable populations’ by neglecting their services and infrastructures and disenfranchising them in Planning processes. Neighbourhoods such as The Ward, Regent Park, Thorncliffe Park, and Jane and Finch — where large concentrations of BIPOC reside(d) and where living conditions are/were considered to be inadequate — testify to Planning’s role in segregation and poverty in Toronto. Planning scholars recognize that the pattern of racial oppression via Planning is not unique to Toronto, but emblematic of modern Planning practiced in Canada. Dr. Ted Rutland, Professor at Concordia University, notes that Nova Scotia’s notable Black population “has experienced modern Planning as an unyielding source of imperilment and plunder”<sup>7</sup>. Rutland acknowledges Planning’s “commitment to the improvement of human life,” while arguing that Planning routinely classes Black Canadians outside of what is defined as *human*<sup>8</sup>. This is how Planning’s consequences often directly undermine its intended outcomes when it comes to BIPOC communities — perpetuating displacement, poverty, and precariousness.

On the other hand, Planning can advance quality of life and social protections for BIPOC in Toronto. Social Planning and Community Development in Toronto are robust fields of professional Planners, activists, and residents who, by working with and empowering BIPOC, embrace ethnic and racial diversity. However, equity and justice-informed

Among 4 major Toronto Planning firms identified at the time of this report’s preparation, only 1 has publicly available statements on corporate diversity and inclusion. One additional firm indicated its commitment to a diversity mission statement, and an active diversity and inclusion committee, upon inquiry.

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<sup>6</sup> Heather Jeanne Dorries, “Rejecting the “False Choice”: Foregrounding Indigenous Sovereignty in Planning Theory and Practice,” (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Ted Rutland, *Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth Century Halifax* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ted Rutland, *Displacing Blackness: Planning, Power, and Race in Twentieth Century Halifax*, 293.

approaches to Planning are not the norm and remain marginalized by Canadian Planning law and status quo private Planning imperatives<sup>9</sup>. Despite an often-marginal status in the profession, Social Planners and Community Developers claim a distinct roster of victories for Toronto's diverse BIPOC communities in recent years:

- Parkdale and Jane and Finch's robust internal neighbourhood solidarity networks fostered by grassroots and non-profit organizing.
- Community Benefits Agreement programs for the Eglinton Crosstown Light Rail Transit (LRT), Finch West LRT, and Rexdale Casino Woodbine.
- Networks of support fostered by Social Planning Toronto, by way of grants, community engagement, and coalition-building.
- East Scarborough Storefront, through a community asset-based approach, fosters the social capacity of residents.
- Centre for Connected Communities focuses on empowering city builders and supporting cross-sector collaboration.

In all of the above cases, it is important to note that Planning victories for BIPOC in Toronto contribute to the bettering of built environments for all residents.

Additionally, there are many instances of the Planning profession in Toronto dealing with inequity. Important initiatives include the Alternative Planning Group, Planners Network, Black Urbanists Toronto, Parkdale People's Economy, Parkdale Community Land Trust, Toronto Community Benefits Network, Social Planning Toronto, Women Plan Toronto, and many more. The majority of these emerge out of grassroots initiatives, often in conjunction with academic environments that encourage critical Planning perspectives.

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<sup>9</sup> Leela Viswanathan, "Postcolonial Planning' and Ethno-Racial Diversity in Toronto: Locating Equity in a Contemporary Planning Context," *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 18, no. 1 (2009): 165.

However, the many challenges Planning poses for BIPOC results in a profession that greatly lacks BIPOC practitioners and struggles to align Planning practice, as a whole, with anti-racist principles of equity, justice, and solidarity. Planning’s complicated, and often harmful, history with BIPOC in Toronto and Canada certainly plays a role in this dilemma. BIPOC Planners are still excluded from Planning through a range of systemic and cultural barriers, and as a result a significant portion of public and private sector Planning is practiced by — and ultimately for — white Torontonians. This is a significant problem that must be addressed in many spheres, including current practitioners, academic institutions, private firms, public procurement, and professional bodies. MIIPOC seeks to contribute to the shift towards a more diverse and equitable profession by developing mentorship and networking infrastructure by and for BIPOC Planners.

A 2017 survey of Geography & Planning students and faculty focusing on eliciting concerns around equity and diversity, identified several common themes, including: “lack of outreach and engagement with First Nations;” lack of accountability and transparency regarding equity measures and mechanisms to address equity concerns; inadequate urgency in developing more diverse hiring practices; and ensuring environments to support and retain faculty from a variety of backgrounds. Further, it was noted (with some variations) that there was often a lack of diversity in classrooms and among faculty, and persistent themes of nationalism and colonialism in both research and teaching approaches.

While the appeal for a Planning profession that more closely reflects the people and communities that it serves should be adequate justification in itself for broader BIPOC representation in the field, there is also strong and consistent evidence from business literature that this is also a sound business strategy for private firms. Several studies have confirmed that firms noted to be “ethnically-diverse” as well as “gender-diverse” benefit from a “diversity dividend,” and are more likely to outperform less diverse firms in the same sector (Hunt et al, 2015). Further, other studies have concluded that higher levels of team diversity (based on diversity of national origins and genders) are associated with measurable increases in innovation, shown by increased company revenues from new product streams (Lorenzo and Reeves, 2018).

### *3.2 MIIPOC*

The Mentorship Initiative for Indigenous and Planners of Colour was founded in Toronto in February 2019. Spearheaded by Abigail Moriah (an experienced Planning professional

in the non-profit housing development sector) and a group of BIPOC Planners, the mentoring initiative identifies that BIPOC face significant barriers to equitable participation in the field of Planning, and “often lack networks, access, or are systematically excluded from opportunities to influence change”<sup>10</sup>. In order to lessen these systemic barriers, MIIPOC seeks to provide a networking structure that enables Planners who are Black, Indigenous, or People of Colour to find both professional and social support, including opportunities for skills development and mentorship.

Since its inception in February 2019, MIIPOC has held several events on University campuses focused on highlighting experiences of BIPOC Planners in the GTA, leading conversations around race and diversity in the Planning field and creating an informal space for building networks among BIPOC.

Currently - in its formative stages of development - MIIPOC is also working to frame its organizational structure and strategic plan and creating a mentorship framework for BIPOC Planning students and professional Planners.

The full MIIPOC team is made up of nine core members:

- Abigail Moriah - Lead Collaborator & Research Reference Group
- Gervais Nash - Mentorship Program Development and Overview & Research Reference Group
- Kenny Lamizana - Mentorship Program Development and Overview
- Nathan Sugunalan - Mentorship Program Development and Overview

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<sup>10</sup> Mentorship Initiative for Indigenous & Planners of Colour. Facebook Page. <https://www.facebook.com/MIPOC/>

- Ben Bongolan - Project Coordinator & Recruitment Lead
- Aisha Jallow - Recruitment Lead
- Vivian Nguyen - Recruitment Lead, Graphic Design Lead & Research Reference Group
- Saqib Ahsan - Social Media Lead & Research Reference Group
- Jc Elijah Madayag Bawuah - Social Media Lead

### *3.3 The Planning Research Team*

The Mentorship Initiative in Planning Research Team (PRT) is made up of five Masters of Science Planning students in the Department of Geography and Planning at the University of Toronto:

- **Ruth Belay** is the child of Ethiopian refugees who migrated to Canada. Her lived experiences have shaped her interest in working with BIPOC communities and using radical Planning approaches to support meaningful liberation efforts.
- **Da Chen** is a First-generation Chinese-Canadian who grew up in Toronto. His passion lies in Indigenous justice, environmental conservation and bringing youth voices to the forefront of any conversations.
- **Steve Pomedli** is from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and of European descent. He is a family physician engaged in the geographies of health and healthcare and in addressing inequitable distributions of the social influencers of health.
- **Darian Razdar** is a queer iranian-canadian-american whose passions live at the intersection of queer and trans liberation, media cultures, spatial justice, and experimental research methods.

- **Melinda Yogendran** is a Tamil-Canadian who is interested in her community's relationship with food and agriculture, as well as how the stories we tell can shape policy that incorporates empathy and prioritizes its end-users.

## 4.0 RESEARCH INTENT

### 4.1 Finding Our Objectives

This driving question that has shaped this research project is as follows: How can MIIPOC provide effective mentorship for Planners who self-identify as Black, Indigenous or a Person of Colour? Central to the process is defining the challenges, obstacles and experiences of current students and recent graduates of accredited Planning programs in the Greater Toronto Area who identify as BIPOC. Through exploring academic, professional, and personal experiences in the field, along with previous mentorship experiences of BIPOC individuals, the research team set out to identify opportunities and gaps for MIIPOC to address. This project aims to offer initial insights into how a strong mentorship program can provide support to these individuals as part of the broader objectives of MIIPOC.

### 4.2 Design Process - Diverse Sources of Data

#### *Literature Review and Landscape Scan - What is Already Out There*

As part of the preliminary research process, the research team conducted a literature review and landscape scan pertaining to:

- Current statistics regarding BIPOC individuals in the Planning professional and in accredited Planning programs in the GTA
- Policies or materials from Planning firms in the GTA regarding BIPOC employees or hiring practices
- Reports, policies and narratives related to BIPOC in Planning

- Academic articles and grey literature pertaining to mentorship and other efforts to recruit and retain students and professionals who identify as BIPOC (in Planning, and other professional disciplines, such as medicine, law, etc)
- Current initiatives and organizations in the Planning profession related to BIPOC Planners
- Advice from other initiatives related to mentorship for BIPOC students in other professions
- Survey designs and specific questions used to elicit experiences of BIPOC in academic and professional settings

### *Survey*

Drawing upon previous studies that examined experiences with diversity among students in academic Planning programs,<sup>1112</sup> and shaped by our readings and personal experience, the research team developed a cross-sectional survey intended to be completed by undergraduate and graduate Planning students as well as Planning professionals active in the GTA who self-identify as BIPOC. The survey was structured to understand the prior or current experiences and needs of respondents in four main domains: 1) academic environment; 2) the work environment; 3) professional networks and development, and; 4) transition into the profession. The survey employed a mixture of questions soliciting the degree of agreement/disagreement with statements on a five-point scale, as well as questions asking for short free-form responses. An additional section focused on “Planning in context,” which asked about individuals’ experiences with Planning in relation to their racial-ethnic communities, and included an option to add further open

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<sup>11</sup> April Jackson, Ivis Garcia-Zambrana, Andrew J. Greenlee, C. Aujean Lee, and Benjamin Chrisinger, “All Talk No Walk: Student Perceptions on Integration of Diversity and Practice in Planning Programs.” *Planning Practice and Research* 33 (5), (2018): 574–95.

<sup>12</sup> Andrew J. Greenlee, April Jackson, Ivis Garcia-Zambrana, C. Aujean Lee, and Benjamin Chrisinger, “Where Are We Going? Where Have We Been? The Climate for Diversity within Urban Planning Educational Programs,” *Journal of Planning Education and Research* (2018): 1-19.

comments on any other related topic. The final format and content of the survey was finalized in collaboration with advisors and research supervisors, who contributed their specific expertise. The survey questionnaire was distributed via email to academic networks in three GTA universities with Planning programs, as well as to personal contacts, and to professionals in the Planning profession.

### *Interviews*

The survey also enquired as to whether individuals would be willing to participate in more in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. The interviews were not intended to provide a representative sample but rather to offer insight through a purposive sampling. The research team received 34 responses from individuals willing to participate in an interview. However, due to capacity and time constraints, a total of 10 individuals - both students and professionals - were invited for a 45-minute in-person interview.

Semi-structured interviews were framed as a set of open-ended questions based around understanding individuals' experiences in the academic and workplace environment, as well as their experience during their transition into the professional field post-graduation (see Appendix A for the Interview Guide). Interviewees were chosen specifically so as to include a range of academic and professional backgrounds and career stages, though the research team specifically chose to interview more individuals who were professionals, rather than students, in order to better understand the challenges in transitioning into the workplace and where the opportunities lie for MIIPOC to be effective during this time period.

### *4.3 Consideration of Constraints*

This project focused solely on the experiences of BIPOC Planners from professional Planning programs located in the Greater Toronto Area. Though we are cognizant of the critical and often unrecognized role of city builders, community organizers, and others

involved in Planning processes and practices in a multitude of ways, this project was charged with specifically looking at the experiences of BIPOC who have engaged with formal post-secondary academic Planning programs. As a result, additional research would be required to acknowledge and capture the narratives and experiences of the wide diversity of individuals, roles and professions involved in collaborative and supportive city building networks.

We received 34 requests for interviews, but ultimately, the research team prioritized interviews with working professionals: three students, three recent graduates, one mid-career professionals and three managers/associate professors in the Planning field.

## 5.0 LITERATURE REVIEW: WHAT'S BEEN SAID

A preliminary scan indicated that there was limited research regarding the diversity of the Planning profession and barriers to entry. Further, it seemed that this dearth of research mirrored the underrepresentation of racialized Planners in academic discourse. Nonetheless, the scant available research in this field was helpful to understanding the gaps within popular and academic discourse. A number of scholars have highlighted the limited research conducted on the experiences of racialized Planners and Planning education<sup>13 14 15 16</sup>. Most of the existing research focuses on the American context with the exception of one article that highlighted diversity in Canadian Planning education and

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<sup>13</sup> Catherine L. Ross, "Increasing Minority and Female Representation in the Profession: A Call for Diversity," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 9, no. 2 (2009): 135–38.

<sup>14</sup> Leonardo Vazquez, and Juan Miguel Kanai, "Lagging Behind: Ethnic Diversity in the Planning Profession in the APA New York Metro Chapter Area Findings and Recommendations Prepared by New York Metro Chapter American Planning Association Ethnic diversity in the Planning profession," (2001).

<sup>15</sup> Giovania G Tiarachristie. "Elephant in the Planning room: overcoming barriers to recruitment and retention of Planners of color," (New York City: Pratt Institute School of Architecture, 2016).

<sup>16</sup> Jackson et al, "All Talk No Walk," 574–95.

racialized Planners/communities<sup>17</sup> As many American cities have similar demographics as Toronto, the American literature was able to provide important background information regarding the experiences of racialized Planning students and professionals. This literature review draws on a mixture of grey and academic literature to understand diversity in the Planning profession and barriers to entry.

Three key areas of research were identified within the literature review: 1) Research Focused on Access & Retention of Racialized Planners to the Planning Profession; 2) Research Focused on Diversity and Representation in Urban Planning Educational Programs, and; 3) Experiences of Racialized Planning Professionals. Lastly, we reviewed academic descriptions of approaches to mentorship for BIPOC and connected with other mentorship initiatives for BIPOC in other disciplines to learn about their perspectives on best practices for mentorship.

### *5.1 Research Focused on Access & Retention of Racialized Planners to the Planning Profession*

The discussion surrounding access and retention of racialized Planners to the Planning profession continues to be an underwhelming discussion in the body of Planning scholarship. Ross' seminal paper exemplifies the need for diverse representation and lived experiences of urban Planners<sup>18</sup>. Nearly thirty years later, the recommendations and observations provided to the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) continue to be relevant to the retention and recruitment of Planners of colour. Understanding that challenges of access are in part rooted in Planning programs, Ross' call for diversity challenged institutional response from accrediting associations for Planning programs<sup>19</sup>. Through creating a "Framework of Action", Ross recommends

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<sup>17</sup> Kanishka Goonewardena, Katharine N. Rankin, and Sarah Weinstock, "Diversity and Planning Education: A Canadian Perspective." *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 13 (1 SUPPL.) (2004): 1–26.

<sup>18</sup> Catherine L. Ross, "Increasing Minority and Female Representation in the Profession: A Call for Diversity." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 9, no. 2 (1990): 135–138.

<sup>19</sup> Ross, "Increasing Minority and Female Representation in the Profession: A Call for Diversity," (1990).

adopting diversity policy as part of an institution accreditation process, which includes targeted recruitment practices and a financial commitment to recruitment of racialized Planners<sup>20</sup>.

Additionally, Tiarachristie's Masters thesis is a critical reflection and analysis of the experiences of racialized Planners. Tiarachristie provides a comprehensive examination of barriers to retaining Planners of colour in the metropolitan area of New York City. Her paper emphasizes institutional racism as a primary barrier to access to the Planning profession. Although the research speaks to the American context, particularly New York City, many of the barriers identified are applicable to the Canadian context due to the similar demographics and issues faced by BIPOC Planners in both cities. Tiarachristie also emphasizes the lack of research regarding job retention, the lack of diversity in the private sector, the glass ceiling for Planners of colour, barriers to accessing urban Planning programs, and limited participation in Planning networks. These gaps identified by Tiarachristie provide a comprehensive foundation for conducting research focused on the experiences of racialized Planners in the Canadian context.

### *5.2 Research Focused on Diversity and Representation in Urban Planning Educational Programs*

The discussion on diversity and representation in urban Planning programs is also quite limited. In a few of the studies that touched upon the issues, the authors provide important context. Various American scholars have raised the need for Planning programs to incorporate more diverse perspectives in the classrooms and provide appropriate spaces to discuss issues of race and diversity<sup>21</sup>. As Planners work alongside communities to facilitate the development of plans, it's crucial that the Planning education can foster a greater sense of listening and understanding to adequately

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<sup>20</sup> Ross, "Increasing Minority and Female Representation in the Profession."

<sup>21</sup> Courtney E. Knapp, "Integrating Critical Autobiography to Foster Anti-Racism Learning in the Urban Studies Classroom: Interpreting the 'Race and Place' Stories of Undergraduate Students." *Journal of Planning Education and Research* (2018), 1-12.

address and support the needs of communities.<sup>22</sup> While there is research that focuses on Indigenous Planning/Settler-Indigenous Relationships in Planning education<sup>23</sup>, there is little research that looks at the experiences of Indigenous Planning student or professionals. .

Studies such as the one by Jackson *et al.* (2018) provide important context to the experiences of Planning students. Through a nationwide survey of degree-seeking urban Planning students in the United States, Jackson *et al.* found that many students reported a positive climate for diversity<sup>24</sup>. The researchers also found continued reports of bias and discrimination, which is reflected in the continued lack of diversity in faculty, as well as the Planning profession more generally. The Jackson *et al.* (2018) study is unique in that it's the first national study in the USA regarding diversity in Planning education, faculty and profession. The research found that it's important to prioritize the practice of diversity within the Planning programs and Planning curriculum needs to be reformed to better address the issues of diversity and social equity<sup>25</sup>. This study can support the methodological design of a project interested in understanding the presence of diversity in the Canadian context.

In one of the few academic papers on the Canadian experience, Goonewardena *et al.* demonstrate the importance of diversity of communities be reflected in the training and lived experiences of Planning students. In this piece, the authors provide a critical lens to understanding Planning education, institutional reform and the dominance of multiculturalism rhetoric. The authors' contextualization of Canadian experience, focusing on Toronto, provide important insight into the experiences of racialized Planners, multicultural cities and Planning education received by students. The authors

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<sup>22</sup> Andrew J. Greenlee, April Jackson, Ivis Garcia-Zambrana, C. Aujean Lee, and Benjamin Chrisinger. 2018. "Where Are We Going? Where Have We Been?: The Climate for Diversity within Urban Planning Educational Programs." *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 2.

<sup>23</sup> Libby Porter, Hirini Matunga, Leela Viswanathan, Lyana Patrick, Ryan Walker, Leonie Sandercock, Dana Moraes, et al, "Indigenous Planning: From Principles to Practice." *Planning Theory and Practice* 18, no.4 (2017): 639–66.

<sup>24</sup> Jackson, "All Talk No Walk," 575.

<sup>25</sup> Jackson, "All Talk No Walk," 591.

note the limitations of the existing Planning framework, and indicate the lack of emphasis on cultural differences in the context of inclusive politics and that Planning programs has an obligation to address diversity issues.<sup>26</sup> The authors suggest two main areas of reforms, in the demographic and curricular of the Planning education. They argue that Planning programs need to be better involved in the recruitment and retaining students and faculty from the racialized communities and that it's also important to incorporate elements of social-economic and cultural dimension of injustice and equity-based approach to Planning.<sup>27</sup>

Lastly, Greenlee et al (2018) highlighted the importance of creating an inclusive campus climate, arguing that inclusivity goes beyond representation in numbers and should also address and account for the effects of discrimination and historical impact of exclusion. This means that institutions need to acknowledge and address racial conflicts and the historical legacies of exclusions experienced by BIPOC students. The authors highlight that while racialized students tend to bear most of the burden of feelings of isolation and alienation within Planning programs, the overall impacts affect all students.<sup>28</sup>

### *5.3 Experiences of BIPOC Planning Professionals*

There is limited academic literature on the experiences of racialized Planning professionals, and most of the existing work exists as grey literature or non-academic papers.

Marlon Williams, an urban planner with roots in South Africa, discusses the challenges racialized Planners face conducting work that does not always reflect their identities or communities, "I am aware that Planning wasn't the plan for people who looked like me or came from where I have been. Planning was not a thing I knew about, but rather a

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<sup>26</sup> Goonewardena, "Diversity and Planning Education: A Canadian Perspective," 2.

<sup>27</sup> Goonewardena, "Diversity and Planning Education: A Canadian Perspective," 13.

<sup>28</sup> Greenlee, "Where Are We Going? Where Have We Been?," 11.

thing I stumbled upon”.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Maya Lewis is an urban planner advocating for the integration of environmental justice in climate adaptation and mitigation Planning. According to Lewis, building resilience requires an active rejection of whites supremacy in urban Planning, recognition that the impacts of climate change reflect social inequality, and climate justice requires transformative praxis.<sup>30</sup> This is due to urban Planning and community-making being started by white men who didn't have everyone's best interest and used historically used to segregate people and being started by white men who didn't have everyone's best interest.

Cassie Owen's opinion pieces cites prominent racialized urban Planners such as Leonardo Vazquez, the executive director of the National Consortium for Creative Placemaking and co-founder of the American Planning Association's Latinos and Planning Division, and Lamont Cobb, a transportation planner for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, who are concerned both with American Planning Accreditation Boards (APCB) decision to “tone down” diversity requirements.<sup>31</sup> Lamont Cobb highlights key barriers preventing minority groups from accessing the professional field of Planning such as lack of awareness and stringent requirements for master's degrees from prestigious schools and experiences in often unpaid internships.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Jamaal Green, a Ph.D. candidate at Portland State University, emphasizes “seemingly benign institutional rules that helped to lock out students of color”<sup>33</sup>.

In a report by the APA New York Metro Chapter Area in 2001, Kanai and Vasquez's analysis demonstrates that despite the growing number of racialized Planners, Planners

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<sup>29</sup> Marlon Williams, “As Urban Planners, We Must Ask: Who Are We?”, *Next City*, June 28, 2017, <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/urban-Planners-diversity-profession-community>.

<sup>30</sup> Maya Lewis, “We Need to Re-Think Urban Planning in The Face of Climate Change. These Urban Planners of Color Tell Us How, *Everyday Feminism*, 2017. <https://everydayfeminism.com/2017/12/urban-Planners-climate-change/>.

<sup>31</sup> Cassie Owens, “Urban Planning Faces Possible Diversity Setback.” *Next City*, November 12, 2015, <https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/Planning-accreditation-board-diversity-urban-Planning>.

<sup>32</sup> Owens, “Urban Planning Faces Possible Diversity Setback.”

<sup>33</sup> Owens, “Urban Planning Faces Possible Diversity Setback.”

of colour continue to be underrepresented in comparison to White counterparts<sup>34</sup>. Through professional associations and networks, the researchers advocate for the inclusion of racialized peoples by creating mentorship programs, increasing research on the experiences of racialized Planners and increasing visibility of the profession. Kanai and Vasquez report provides a pathway for building stronger community of racialized Planners that will be helpful for understanding the Toronto case study.

In conclusion, the scan of academic and grey literature and media outlets confirmed the limited theoretical and empirical research conducted on the experiences of racialized Planners and Planning education.<sup>35 36 37 38</sup> Most of the research found focused on the American context with the exception of one article that highlighted diversity in Canadian Planning education and racialized Planners/communities.<sup>39</sup> After reviewing the existing literature, it can be said with confidence that this report will be a unique contribution to the field. Many of the existing literature tend to focus on either the Planning curriculum or policies rather than the human experiences of BIPOC Planning students and professionals. This research will be unique in being the first study of its kind in Canada to explore the experiences of BIPOC Planning students and professionals. Ultimately through this report, we will be able to contribute meaningfully research to contextualizing the Canadian perspective of racialized Planners and Planning education and using the experiences of students and professionals to inform future initiatives to bolster BIPOC involvement in the profession.

#### *5.4 Approaches to Mentorship for BIPOC*

Mentorship is increasingly understood as an important factor for students (at the high school level to undergraduate and graduate level) and early professionals to meet their

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<sup>34</sup> Vazquez, "Lagging Behind: Ethnic Diversity in the Planning Profession."

<sup>35</sup> Ross, "Increasing Minority and Female Representation in the Profession," 135–138.

<sup>36</sup> Vazquez, "Lagging Behind: Ethnic Diversity in the Planning Profession."

<sup>37</sup> Tiarachristie, "Elephant in the Planning Room."

<sup>38</sup> Jackson, "All Talk No Walk," 574–595.

<sup>39</sup> Goonewardena, "Diversity and Planning Education: A Canadian Perspective," 1–26.

goals and succeed in their chosen area<sup>40</sup>. Further, mentorship initiatives are considered particularly important for students from underrepresented and marginalized backgrounds<sup>41</sup>. In reviewing the experiences of minority graduate students, Thomas et al (2007) note that "minority graduate students' historical exclusion from institutions of higher education, the persistent group stereotypes that relate to their academic abilities and competencies, as well their unique cultural perspectives demand that more attention needs to be paid to the qualities needed to effectively mentor this group," all of which are relevant in this context, and can be extended to include the challenges faced by early career professionals in the workplace and the job market. Further, other authors have noted that because mentorship relationships and mentee selection often evolve on the basis of attraction due to perceived similarity<sup>42</sup>, this inherently disadvantages BIPOC from accessing mentorship due to the dearth of mentors who have similar racial or cultural backgrounds.

While broader opportunities for generalized mentorship relationships (i.e. mentorship without taking into account the BIPOC background of the mentor or mentee) are likely to be beneficial for both mentors and mentees -- and indeed some authors suggest that "cross-race" mentoring may provide certain specific benefits, though more for the mentor than the mentee (Newby and Heide, 1992)<sup>43</sup> -- the unique backgrounds, experiences and challenges faced by BIPOC students and early professionals likely warrants more specific forms of mentorship which understand, recognize, empathize

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<sup>40</sup> K.M. Thomas, L.A. Willis, J. Davis, "Mentoring minority graduate students: issues and strategies for institutions, faculty, and students," *Equal Opportunities International* 26, np.3 (2007): 178-192.

<sup>41</sup> J.E. Girves, Y Zepeda, and J.K. Gwathmey, "Mentoring in a post-affirmative action world," *Journal of Social Issues* 61, no.3 (2005): 449-80.

<sup>42</sup> K.M.Thomas, C.Y Hu., A.G. Gewin, K.L. Bingham, N. Yanchus, "The roles of protege race, gender, and proactive socialization attempts on peer mentoring," *Advances in Human Resource Development* 7, no.1 (2005): 540-55.

<sup>43</sup> T.J. Newby, and A. Heide, "The value of mentoring," *Performance Improvement Quarterly* 5 (1992): 2-15.

with and confront these issues. <sup>44</sup> Acknowledging these issues brings into focus challenges that may be especially relevant to certain types of “cross-race” mentee relationships. These include issues pertaining to faculty or mentor anxiety around “intergroup” relationships<sup>45</sup>; limited mentor “proficiency in diagnosing diversity issues and resolving diversity-related conflicts and organizational problems” (i.e. “multicultural competence”, as defined by Chrobot-Mason and Ruderman, 2004, and cited in Thomas et al 2007); self-selection and avoiding mentorship that may be seen as promoting assimilation (Girves et al 2005); lower level of mentor identity development <sup>46</sup>, intersectional challenges that also include gender or sexuality dynamics; and implicit or explicit racism.

However, given the significant underrepresentation of BIPOC in academic and professional streams, some scholars assert that “it should be unacceptable for White faculty to relegate the mentoring of students of color solely to faculty of color,” nor should it be presumed that BIPOC mentors “automatically engage in functional mentoring” based on shared backgrounds or other similarities to their mentees (Thomas et al, 2007). Recognizing and acknowledging these complexities can be helpful in structuring mentorship initiatives for BIPOC, as well as considering approaches to developing mentorship capacity that is sensitive to the needs of BIPOC students and early professionals.

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<sup>44</sup> D.L. Chrobot-Mason, K.M. Thomas, “Minority employees in majority organizations: the intersection of individual and organizational racial identity in the workplace,” *Human Resource Development Review* 1, (2002):323-44.

<sup>45</sup> C.W. Stephan, and W.G. Stephan. “Reducing intercultural anxiety through intercultural contact.” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 16 (1992), 89-106.

<sup>46</sup> J.E. Helms (Ed.), *Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice*. (Portsmouth, NH: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc, 1990).

### 5.5 BIPOC Mentorship Initiatives in Parallel Disciplines

Many academic and professional disciplines have recognized similar challenges regarding representation of BIPOC in student cohorts, challenges in transitioning to the workforce, and presence in the profession and in leadership roles. While each profession and sector has its own unique challenges, there are inevitable parallels given the ubiquity of these observations across disciplines, including perennial concerns in academia<sup>47</sup>, law<sup>48</sup>, engineering<sup>49</sup>, medicine<sup>50</sup>, and other health professions. Recognizing this challenge, several programs have adopted various initiatives, including mentorship programs, that have been tailored to address these challenges at various stages of academic, career, and professional development.

We connected with four different initiatives in Canada that focus on mentoring for post-secondary students from Black or Indigenous backgrounds (specifically, in engineering, medicine, and research/academia) to learn about their experiences with and recommendations for nascent mentoring programs. While each initiative is situated within its unique milieu and thereby somewhat distinct, several key themes emerged:

- **Create a strong foundation for mentorship.** Learn from target constituencies and involve them in the initial design as well as implementation from the onset: What does

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<sup>47</sup> Fisher, A.J., Mendoza-Denton, R., Patt, C., Young, I., Eppig, A., Garrell, R.L., Rees, D.C., Nelson, T.W., Richards, M.A. 2019. "Structure and belonging: Pathways to success for underrepresented minority and women PhD students in STEM fields." *PLoS ONE* 14(1): e0209279.

<sup>48</sup> Leadership Council on Legal Diversity. Website. [<https://www.lclldnet.org/programs/law-school-mentoring/contact/>]

<sup>49</sup> Irving, T. 2018. "Meet Mikhail Burke, Dean's Advisor on Black Inclusivity Initiatives and Student Inclusion & Transition Mentor." *University of Toronto Engineering News*. Website.

<https://news.engineering.utoronto.ca/meet-mikhail-burke-deans-advisor-on-black-inclusivity-initiatives-and-student-inclusion-transition-mentor/>

<sup>50</sup> Okafor, I. Philips, L. 2018. "Shifting the paradigm in outreach to under-represented groups." *MedEd Publish* 7: 65.

mentorship mean to them? What are their expectations around mentorship? What unmet needs do they have?

- **Forge relationships and spaces for connections and community.** Common sentiments of isolation and not belonging among BIPOC students and professionals require multi-faceted approaches to find and engage individuals who might want to be involved with mentorship initiatives and creating these relationships and spaces to foster a sense of community can build towards more formal mentorship relationships.

- **Find places where similar discussions are taking place.** Build alliances and be present in places where discussions around representation, race/ethnicity, and inclusivity in the profession may already be taking place (e.g. conferences, existing networks, associations, academic administration, etc).

- **Focus on transitions.** Times of transition--into a new program, or into the workplace--were consistently seen as a critical period in which mentorship relationships are most valued, and times where mentorship is most likely to have an impact.

- **Explore non-hierarchical mentorship structures.** Encourage and facilitate other types of mentorship activities, such as mentorship between peers, or “cascading mentorship” models, where individuals act as both mentors and mentees to different individuals.

The literature review and landscape scan as described here informed our approach to the survey and interviews and highlighted key areas to explore.

## 6.0 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS & ANALYSIS: EXPERIENCES OF BIPOC PLANNERS IN THE GTA

Designed by the PRT, the survey was distributed online and shared through the following channels:

- Listservs reaching current Planning students at Ryerson University, the University of Toronto and York University

- MIIPOC Networks
- Planning program alumnus and Planning alumni groups
- Various private and public sector organizations

Once released, the survey was championed by a number of individuals who supported the research by further distributing the survey through their networks. The enthusiasm surrounding the survey release is important to highlight in itself. Individuals expressed a clear sense of excitement and gratitude that the experiences of BIPOC Planners were being finally discussed -- an initiative that has felt necessary and overdue for many.

The survey was available online from October 21st to November 12th, 2019, during which 57 responses were received. Participants of the survey ranged from students currently enrolled in an undergraduate Planning program to individuals who have completed a PhD in Planning across a range of racial-ethnic identities, as highlighted in Chart 1 and Chart 2. The majority of respondents were either currently enrolled in, or a graduate of a Master's in Planning program.

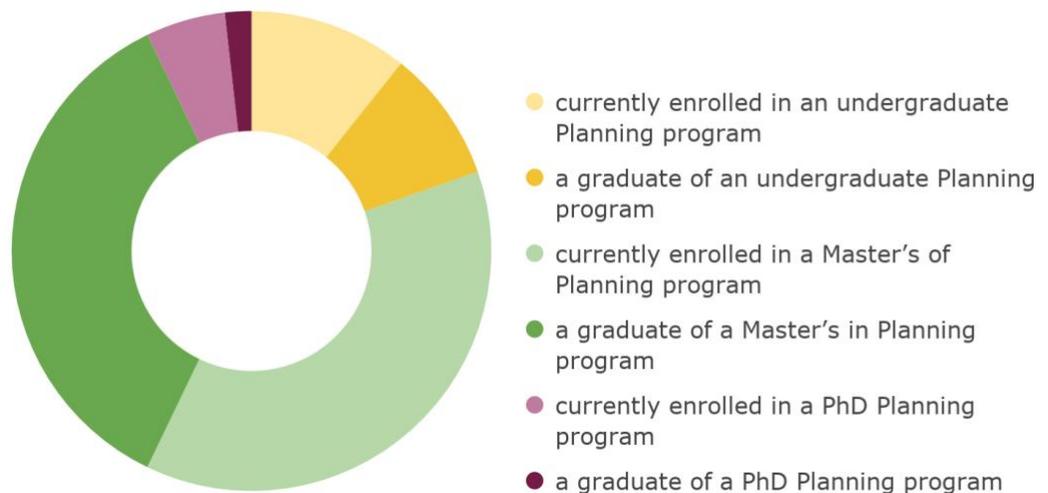


Chart 1. Level of Planning education of the 57 survey respondents.

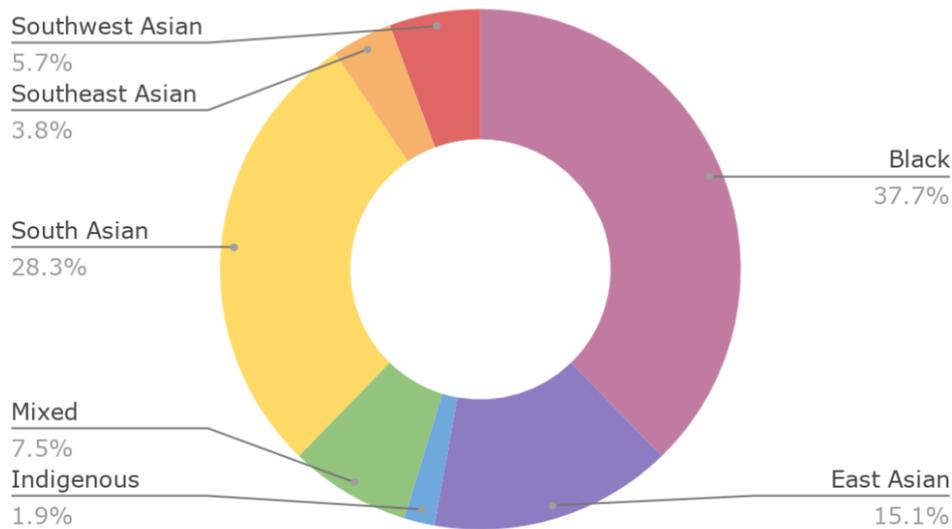


Chart 2. Racial-ethnic identities of the 57 survey respondents.

In general, respondents were satisfied with their Planning education and the majority of participants found that their racial-ethnic identities and perspectives were respected and accepted by their peers. However, responses showed that fewer individuals felt that racial justice, equity, and Planning perspectives originating from diverse communities and worldviews were featured in the core curriculum of their educational programs. Additionally, the most polarized response in the survey highlighted that the majority of the survey participants (84.2%) strongly disagreed or disagreed that there was a strong representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour among the instructors in their academic program (Chart 3).

*Strong representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour among instructors*

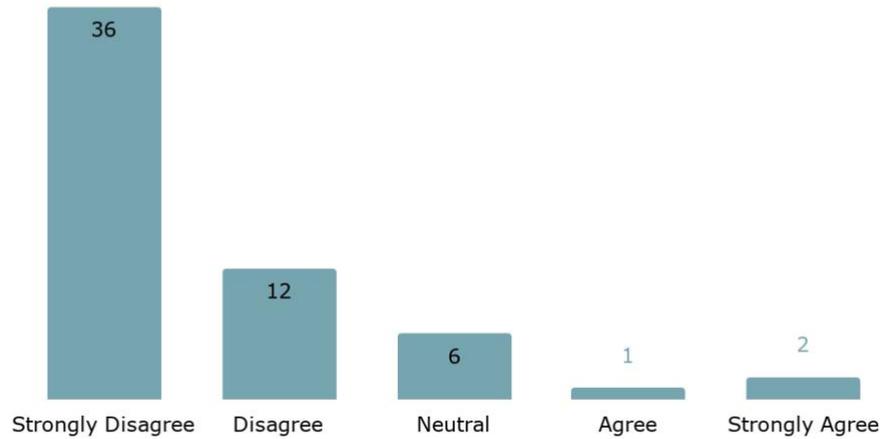


Chart 3. Responses to the statement “There is a strong representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour among the instructors” in the Academic Experience section of the survey.

When asked about experiences in the workplace, similar sentiments were seen regarding a lack of representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour among participants’ employees, although responses to this question were much more evenly distributed relative to the responses regarding representation among instructors. In regard to workplace efforts, the majority of participants expressed neutrality towards the statement “my workplace makes a strong effort to address racial-ethnic diversity and intersecting issues that exist in the communities where our projects are based”. However, responses to this statement skewed heavier towards disagreement (Chart 4).

*Strong effort in the workplace to address racial-ethnic diversity and intersecting issues in communities where projects are based*

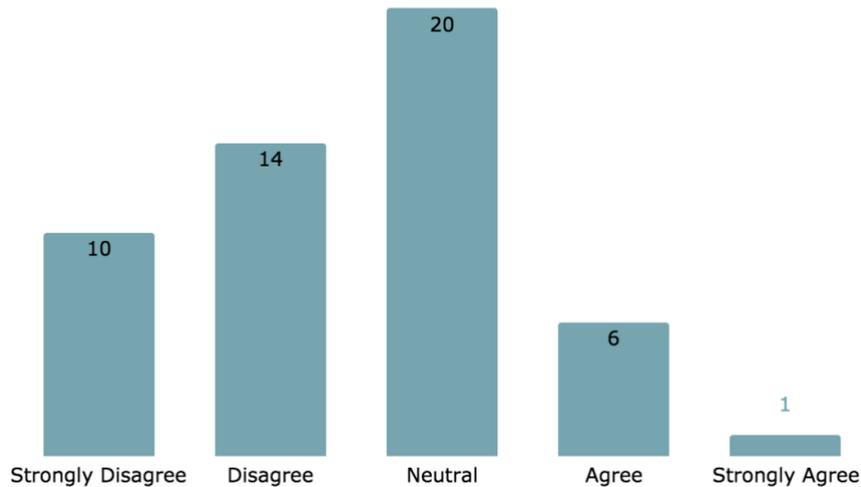


Chart 4. Responses to the statement “My workplace makes a strong effort to address racial-ethnic diversity and intersecting issues that exist in the communities where our projects are based” in the Work Experience section of the survey.

While the interview insights were wide ranging and highlighted the heterogeneity of backgrounds, life experiences, and academic and professional environments of the participants, the primary goal of the interviews was to understand how a mentorship program could be of most benefit. Upon reviewing the qualitative responses from the survey as well as the core responses to the interview questions, four main themes consistently emerged pertaining to what Planning students and early professionals would seek in a mentoring initiative: **Career**, **Network**, **Support**, and **Retention**. After the PRT identified themes, we coded transcripts of the interviews and the survey results with the relevant themes. In the end, we found distinct trends within each theme, as developed below, as well as considerable overlap. Such parallels indicate a strong need for an integrative approach by any initiative, including and beyond MIIPOC, that seeks to improve the conditions of BIPOC Planners. In the following subsections, we elaborate on findings and provide analysis based on each theme.

- 1) **Career:** This theme centers around interest in mentorship as a way to develop and advance careers, meet specific career-related goals, and progress in desired directions professionally, and find new opportunities or jobs, or otherwise develop one’s career. Given the context of the survey and the interview, the desire for career development is often set within the context of recognizing systemic barriers to career development. Such an analysis of racial disparities by our respondents underscores the marginalization often faced by BIPOC students and professionals in Planning. There is, thus, a pressing need for a higher amount and a higher quality of career development opportunities for BIPOC. Specifically, the career goals of BIPOC Planners should be understood in the context of Planning’s history with racialized communities. Justice, then, looks like redistributing career skills and opportunities to BIPOC, with the goal of making good jobs in healthy work environments accessible to these Planners. Mentorship is one key avenue for addressing this need.

“Practicing ways to value yourself and take care of yourself so that you don’t obsess over that (i.e. systemic racism) and harm yourself over that (i.e. systemic racism).”

A key, career-related finding from our survey is that students and professionals feel they must work harder than non-BIPOC colleagues in order to prove their value. As one respondent explains: “I feel like I have the added responsibility of proving my capacities above my white colleagues with more societal privilege, and I know that I have to work harder than my white colleagues to even get to the place to be ready to apply for jobs and be ready for successful interviews.” Another respondent stated: “There’s a systemic problem of emerging BIPOC Planners being excluded from job opportunities and then not being accepted when in the professional firms.” The workplace dynamics of many Planning firms creates unsupportive environments that reproduce racial inequities that exist in society at large. Even when BIPOC Planners get their foot in the door, it is still difficult to find champions, allies, mentors, and opportunities for career development. As a result, the previous respondent indicated that BIPOC Planners often leave jobs, or even the profession, to seek opportunities that will be more fruitful and allow for career advancement.

Barriers to career advancement take a toll on BIPOC Planners. One respondent notes that, “I know it's going to be hard to find allies - people with access to power — and allies who are your friends. I think also that in terms of mental health — to do your best — to not value yourself based on the ability of people who have power to value you.” Barriers to career development have deeper impacts than career advancement. The mental and emotional toll can harmfully impact BIPOC Planners.

- 2) **Network:** This theme centers around the need for BIPOC individuals to create and access networks of relationships and assets. Networks allow professionals to establish contacts entities and venues, form groups for emerging projects, and fulfill other career or personal development needs. One interviewee expressed an interest in these networks being opportunities to “share our experiences as racialized Planners,” and others described networking as crucial a sense of belonging to the Planning profession and access to good jobs.

Of note, several survey participants note a lack of access to professional networks and the opportunities that could arise from those networks. For example, one respondent shared: “I think it’s difficult to enter the profession when there are so few people of colour or Indigenous people in positions of power. It’s harder to develop networks and make connections.” Similarly, there was a sense among several interviewees that, on account of their race, they do not have access to professional networks to the same their white colleagues had. Interviewees understood the issue of network disenfranchisement as a disadvantage to their success as professionals. This was particularly true for students and recent graduates. However, one interviewee did note that after graduation, her and a group of fellow graduates provided an important early network of support while entering the profession.

“BIPOC Planning students, especially those without class privilege, are way less connected to professional networks and access to jobs. White peers were easily able to find work quickly because of family, supportive mentors (usually white people who had similar interests).”

Furthermore, many survey respondents wrote about what deters them to attend existing networking events. Their responses included the predominantly white and male presence and the lack of non-traditional Planners at these events.

Additionally, constraints of time and location were common barriers to being part of networking events. Several individuals noted that most, if not all, networking events are held in downtown Toronto, which poses a problem for those who must find time to commute between work and family responsibilities. [sidebar quote: “Practicalities like time, but it can also be difficult to break into the white “boys club” at networking events, so they are often uncomfortable.”] Lastly, it is important to note that the structure of networking events themselves can create exclusive environments. In reference to this, several respondents noted concerns with networking events being centered around alcohol consumption, with one participant noting that events are “usually always held in bars/pubs, formulated as events where drinking occurs, and I don’t feel comfortable being in those settings. I feel excluded because of my faith, since I cannot and choose not to drink.” However, in contrast to accessing networks through formal events, one interviewee noted that even having access to informal networks, through email chains or listservs of BIPOC Planners could serve her needs well and could offer opportunities through which mentorship relationships could develop.

BIPOC Planners need accessible networks that are supportive, sensitive, accommodating, and understanding of the unique barriers and needs of BIPOC. Endeavours to build these networks ought to include both professional Planners and city-builders from outside the Planning realm.

3) **Support:** This theme centered around a need for individuals to receive guidance, assistance and coaching through personal, academic, and career challenge. Support within a professional community is crucial for addressing the racialized barriers such by BIPOC in Planning. Based on survey and interview responses, BIPOC in Planning are often deprived of the focused support that their white colleagues may already be afforded. For example, many respondents expressed a sense of discomfort and intimidation when attending networking events mostly because of the lack of diversity in these environments and the perceived lack of support for different kinds of Planners.

Many respondents expressed doubts about their ability and worth as Planners. Such remarks make visible the ways that systemic barriers manifest as individualized challenges. Support systems are crucial to fostering an understanding of systemic issues among Planners, as well as building a robust community of practice by and for BIPOC Planners. Mentorship is one piece to this puzzle, as it aims to generate mutually beneficial relationships to redistribute skills and opportunities among BIPOC.

Specific to the academic environment, many respondents mentioned the important influence that their BIPOC peers, instructors, and mentors have had on their academic success. While BIPOC faculty representation falls short across the board, respondents already rely on other BIPOC peers and others outside Planning school to succeed. Therefore, support work should be aimed at amplifying the kinds of peer support that is already working while bolstering the BIPOC representation in Planning programs.

“It is important if there are people to turn to when I am faced with issues such as blatant discrimination or racism — it’s really helpful to have the support during these times.”

“... I've observed that my racialized coworkers also share my personal doubts that we are not capable, that we know little relative to other Planners, or that we are anxious about whether we can prove our value so that our work contracts are renewed.”

“While the faculty at that time was inconsistent in addressing diversity issues, my fellow classmates in the program provided opportunities to learn about topics such as migration, religion and their impact on Planning.”

“I had to make a lot of decisions by myself at work, but sometimes you need perspective. Being able to have people to ask questions such as “What parts of the project am I missing? Where can I grow?” is so important.”

Challenges also arise in navigating the workplace. From “unlearning behaviours that relate to hesitancy around sharing perspectives,” to code-switching<sup>51</sup>, to the personal burden that is felt when one is expected to represent all racialized perspectives — there is a distinct desire for personal guidance through similar situations faced by BIPOC Planners.

Respondents repeatedly mentioned the need for support when dealing with difficult issues in both the academic and work environment. They stated that racism and discrimination does happen and its especially helpful to have someone who understand such lived experience to turn to during challenging times. Support among peers, between generations, and within networks were a few ways respondents and interviewees saw this working.

“I want to be able to serve as a role model. . . Regardless of specific background, [race] is something that is othered in our society, and it’s nice to look up to a familiar face who can understand at least some of your experience — in a real, experiential, rather than academic, way. It’s recognizing that we’re underrepresented. Encouraging a student or recent grad to be like ‘oh yeah, there is a place for me.’”

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<sup>51</sup>“Code-switching, process of shifting from one linguistic code (a language or dialect) to another, depending on the social context or conversational setting”. Even cultural subgroups within the same linguistic community use different linguistic codes to communicate, meaning that code-switching regularly occurs between English language speakers.

- 4) **Retention:** One of the most common themes throughout the survey responses and interviews was the desire to feel a sense of acceptance and belonging in educational settings, during transitions to work, and in professional workplaces. The issue of retention was echoed in interview participants' repeated desire to belong to a community of practice with other students and professionals of colour in and outside Planning. BIPOC Planners want to be in a profession that values their whole selves, variety of interests, and which fosters their excellence.

Retention is a matter of fostering supportive and generative environments. Responses show that the degree that these environments exist vary between academic and workspaces, but all related responses speak to factors that hinder retention of BIPOC Planners to the field.

In the academic environment, a large number of survey respondents addressed a disconnect between what they need and what the academic environment and faculty are able to provide. For example, respondents spoke to the lack of racialized faculty in their programs and the impact that underrepresentation has on their ability to build relationships with faculty members, as well as the impact that this has on academic curriculum and class discussions. Specifically, the lack of representation among faculty has led to feelings of frustration in class discussions that involved issues pertaining to racialized communities. One respondent explained that it's "difficult in an academic setting when you realize that the academic content you are taught often overlooks the nuances of minority BIPOC communities." Additionally, frustration was expressed about the lack of opportunities to discuss racial discrimination and injustice in Planning practice, as well as a lack of attention to the way that Planning practices continue to marginalize BIPOC. As members of this system, several individuals pointed to the personal conflict with which they must contend.

"There is very little acknowledgment or questioning of systemic racism in Planning. We aim to engage with different communities, but the goal is speaking to people or collecting information, it is not about having non-white communities be a part of the process or take over the process. The mentality is still that Planners, who are predominantly white, are the experts."

“Even though racialized Planners are valuable in that they bring different perspectives, they shouldn’t have to perpetually be the mouthpiece for that group that they represent. There’s an interesting balance that should be addressed and discussed.”

In regard to work environments, there was a general sentiment that the field of Planning is diversifying. Still, respondents noted that the immense lack of racialized Planners results in the need for them to act as a representative for marginalized communities. It’s important to note that this was brought up by several people, both in survey responses and during interviews. However, this topic exhibited mixed feelings — with some feeling it necessary to act as an advocate, and others feeling burdened by the expectation. Lastly, students and emerging professionals identified that not seeing themselves represented in the field of Planning as a challenge, specifically in regard to understanding whether their voices will be valued and respected in professional Planning spaces.

The first three themes echo previously observed “functions” or purposes of mentorship initiatives in other studies as well as in the stated objectives of many mentorship initiatives. However, within the broader racial dynamics around Planning, these themes have added significance given that issues of support, career, networks and retention are more acute for BIPOC Planners. Thus, a BIPOC-centred initiative based on the above evidence holds the potential to address these challenges and barriers in ways that more general mentorship initiatives could not.

The final theme of retention speaks to the widespread and multifaceted challenge faced by BIPOC students and early professionals regarding comfort and belonging within multiple Planning settings and relationships. Due to the enormity of the problems here and the multifaceted solutions required, these issues will not easily or quickly be overcome. However, this is nonetheless a critical aspect for MIPOC to be acutely aware of, take on, and continue to directly address through its mentorship initiatives. Beyond the targeted work of mentorship, MIPOC participants would likely benefit from broader transformation strategies, which MIPOC may take on through advocacy efforts. Transformative advocacy may look like building momentum to facilitate cultural shifts in Planning firms and programs. Such shifts are necessary for BIPOC Planners to feel fully accepted, part of, and valued in the profession.

## 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS: BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT THROUGH MENTORSHIP

By fostering a community of support, MIIPOC will strengthen its commitment to supporting BIPOC Planners through mentorship. A community of support for BIPOC Planners has the potential to not only diversify the profession, but to promote social justice and equity in Planning practice more broadly.

The analysis process produced four key themes: *Career, Supports, Networks, and Retention*. The identified themes are what we, the PRT, call the “4 Pillar of Mentorship.” These evidence-based thematic categories map naturally on to actionable recommendations for a BIPOC-centred initiative such as MIIPOC. The following recommendations act as guiding principles that emerge out of the PRT’s empirical analysis. By adopting these recommendations, we believe that MIIPOC can generate the most befitting mentorship program for BIPOC in Toronto today.

## → *Career*

- Fostering and creating tangible opportunities for employment, career development, and competitively paid internships.
- Facilitating the transition from Planning school to profession by connecting students and recent grads with employment opportunities in public, private, and non-profit entities that would allow for their growth.
- Supporting the desires of many professionals for career advancement through peer-to-peer professional relationship building and forums for questioning and conversation.
- Identify and record professional workplaces where BIPOC already exist and thrive, in order to help the job search process and reward exemplary workplaces.
- Partner with potential Planning employers to connect mentees with career development opportunities and key contacts inside these entities.

## → *Network*

- Build partnerships with existing, non-traditional networks of Planning professionals and scholars — such as Planners Network. Collaboration with these networks will provide BIPOC with alternatives to traditional professional Planning networking bodies.
- Host networking events in sober spaces, or in venues the consumption of alcohol is not compulsory.
- Organize networking events in varying locations across the GTA, to allow for accessibility for BIPOC who are concentrated throughout the region.
- Create an online inventory of MIIPOC members, in order to foster a community of support.
- Invite non-Planning professionals to MIIPOC networking events and other initiatives to allow for a diversity of perspectives in city-building work.

## →Support

- Allow for flexibility in mentoring arrangements as to best meet the needs of BIPOC Planners, understanding that every one of us needs and offers support.

Mentoring relationships may look like:

- mentor-mentee dyads,
  - multiple-member mentorship groups,
  - student-to-student peer mentors,
  - professional-to-professional peer mentors,
  - student-to-prospective student mentors.
- Organize online and in person forums where MIIPOC members can share stories of challenges and successes regarding how to navigate Planning. Record and disseminate skills and strategies shared in these forums for those who are unable to attend.
  - Match individuals based on interest and complementary needs/skills, rather than on ethnic identity.

## → *Retention*

- Advocate on behalf of BIPOC in Planning training programs by calling on administration to set priorities for more critical, anti-racist, and community-driven perspectives — specifically in regard to curriculum, student admission, and faculty representation.
- Generate discussion around the challenges experienced by BIPOC in Planning, as well as the assets we bring to the Planning realm.
- Prioritize the long-term goal of redistributing resources and opportunities in Planning, especially in Planning education, from privileged individuals to marginalized individuals.
- Regularly convene BIPOC-centred spaces open to many kinds of city-builders — not exclusively professional Planners — in order to foster belonging, hold space for honest conversations, and foster interdisciplinary synergy.
- Continually celebrate the contributions of BIPOC Planners and Planning students to the field and to their communities.
- Compensate BIPOC Planners and Planning students for the labour they provide to improve the profession, and for engaging in career development opportunities (e.g. workshops, internships, masterclasses, retreats, etc.)

## 8.0 LIMITATIONS (AS OPPORTUNITIES)

### *Queer and Indigenous Experiences*

- Out of 57 survey responses, there were only three respondents who self-identified as non-heterosexual and one as non-cisgender POC, and only two that self-identified as Indigenous. The lack of data on Queer and Trans BIPOC (QTBIPOC) and Indigenous Planning students and professionals limits the findings of this study to heterosexual and settler BIPOC identities.
- There is an important need for future research to look at the representation of both QTBIPOC and Indigenous Planning students and professionals.

## 9.0 FURTHERING THE WORK

We all have a role to play in carrying this work forward. The following items will focus on immediate or short-term goals for this project:

- Targeted engagement with Indigenous Planning students, Indigenous Planners and Queer-POC Planners in order to address the underrepresentation in current survey/interviews.
- Exploring opportunities to expand the project
  - Interviews with Planning firms with diversity programs
  - Potential academic publication for the contents of the project
- Presentation at MIIPOC Conference
- Sharing of the contact list for individuals interested in further participating in MIIPOC

## 10.0 CONCLUSION: NOT YOUR DIVERSITY CHECKBOX

Our study demonstrates that there are several significant barriers to success and support for BIPOC in the Planning profession. These barriers limit the ability BIPOC have to reach their potential or make it harder for us to reach the same milestones as our white colleagues. The lack of diversity also holds back the field of Planning as a whole — rendering the profession unsuited to grapple with the complexities that arise with racial-ethnic diversity among metropolitan urban populations.

Through survey and interview analysis, our team concludes that it is crucial for Planners to address racial equity, diversity, and inclusion in our field. In both professional and academic realms, there is ample room to ameliorate how Planning supports BIPOC in the field. Our findings, explored in the above sections, elucidate 4 main ways racism manifests in the experiences of BIPOC Planners in the GTA, and 4 realms for action by anti-racist initiatives in the field: career development, personal support, professional networking, and long-term retention.

Diversity has been absorbed into popular discourse as a symbolic commitment, but it is a mandate that needs to resonate and manifest in all sectors. We cannot forget the role that Planning plays in perpetuating white supremacy, colonialism, displacement, inequity, and injustice. MIPOC exists to address systemic issues of inequity, exclusion and marginalization through representation of BIPOC Planners in a profession that needs diverse lived experiences to inspire transformative and radical change. Our empirical findings indicate that MIPOC has the potential to create a community of support for BIPOC Planners to thrive. By developing mentorship initiatives and network development, the Planning field can start to address the systemic, racialized barriers to access and success. MIPOC alone cannot address systemic racism and barriers, but mentorship initiatives may well repair the rift made between BIPOC Planners and the profession. Moving beyond the symbolic gestures of diversity statements, partners in institutions, private and public sector also need to commit to address systemic racism and barriers.

Educational institutions play a crucial role in fostering forthcoming generations of Planning professionals. With this responsibility, university Planning programs need to not only admit more BIPOC students, but also uphold intersectional diversities and critical perspectives among students and instructors. Relatedly, the private sector must address the lack of diversity among its workforce and counter the four key challenges facing BIPOC Planners. Government social procurement policy can play a positive role in advocating for diversity, but it is not enough in transforming Planning culture into one that nurtures those who experience systemic and interpersonal discrimination and disenfranchisement. In addition, the public sector must ensure that “diverse constituencies” are represented in their organizations, approaches, mandate, and policies. For the profession to live up to its mandate to equitably shape built environments for diverse, 21st century communities, all Planners must deconstruct the “status quo Planning paradigm”<sup>52</sup>. Planning has the potential to transform itself into a field where BIPOC belong, and where all practitioners work on behalf of the radical diversity of our world city.

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas, 2005.

## 11.0 APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: Interview Protocol

#### Background Information

1. Can you please discuss your positionality?
  - Race/Ethnicity/Other relevant identities
2. Please does Planning mean to you? What makes you passionate about your work/studies?

#### Academic Experience

3. Tell me about your experience as a student of colour in your Planning education.
  - What was most surprising about being a person of colour in a Planning program?
  - The majority of respondents noted a very weak representation of POC among their instructors. How did this impact your Planning education?

#### Mentorship & Networking

4. What would you need from a mentorship and networking initiative for BIPOC Planners?
  - What are other ways you feel that mentorship initiatives can support the career trajectories of Planners from BIPOC backgrounds?
5. Where did you feel you could have used more support in terms of mentorship? What are the opportunities that you would identify for support?
6. As a practicing planner, what sorts of structures would help you support emerging Planning professionals?

#### Professional Experience

7. Tell me about your experiences of being a person of colour in the field of Planning?
8. What was your transition from Planning school to the Planning profession?

9. In what ways, and to what extent, do you think the increased representation of BIPOC Planners can address institutional barriers for racialized and Indigenous communities?

**Professional Development**

10. How do you see yourself being an important contributor to the field of Planning?  
11. Where have you found impactful networks, mentorship, or support?

**Community**

12. In what ways is your community involved in formal and/or informal Planning processes or Planning practices?  
13. To what degree does your community's involvement in Planning processes influence your experience in the Planning field?

**Other**

14. Is there anything else you would like to add or share that has not been discussed?

**APPENDIX B: Additional Survey Results**

*I face unique barriers in career advancement because of my background*

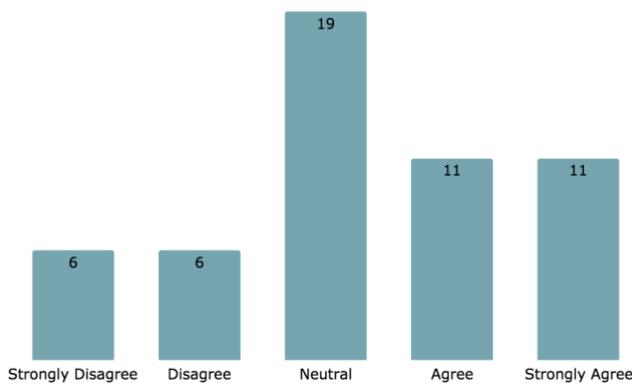


Chart 5: Responses to the statement “I face unique barriers in career advancement because of my background” in the Professional Networks and Development section of the survey

*There is a strong representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour among the instructors in my program*

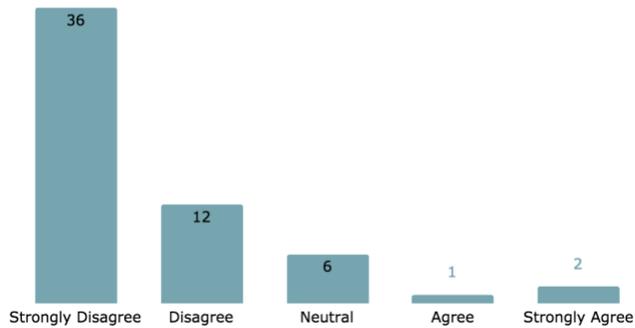


Chart 6: Responses to the statement “There is a strong representation of Black, Indigenous and People of Colour among the employees at my workplace” in the Work Experience section of the survey

*Racial justice and equity factors strongly in my work environment*

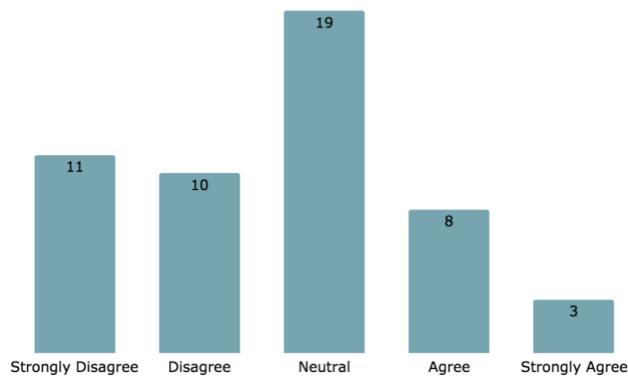


Chart 7: Responses to the statement “Racial justice and equity factors strongly in my work environment” in the Work Experience section of the survey

*Strong effort in the workplace to address racial-ethnic diversity and intersecting issues in communities where projects are based*

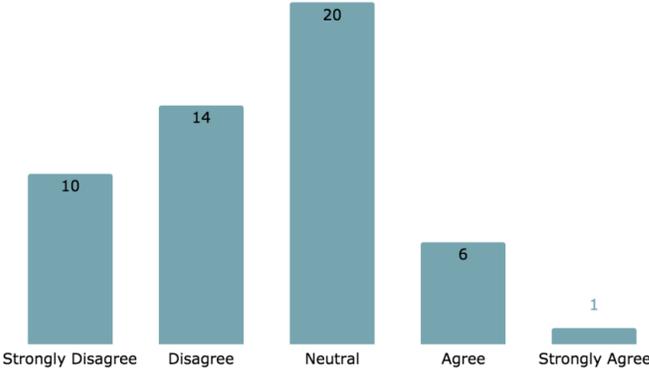


Chart 8: Responses to the statement “There is a strong effort in my workplace to address racial-ethnic diversity and the intersecting issues in communities where our projects are based” in the Work Experience section of the survey

*People who look, feel, and think differently have equal opportunities to thrive in my workplace*

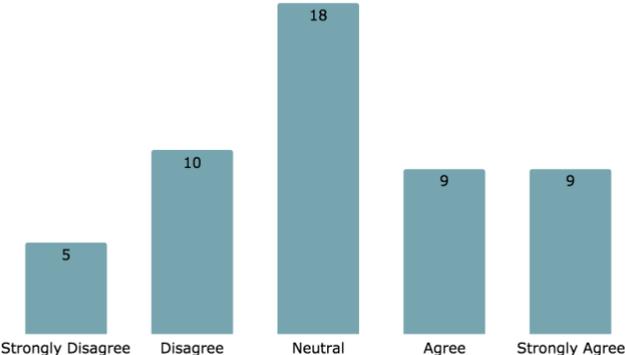


Chart 9: Responses to the statement “People who look, feel and think differently have equal opportunities to thrive in my workplace” in the Work Experience section of the survey

*I became aware of the planning profession during:*

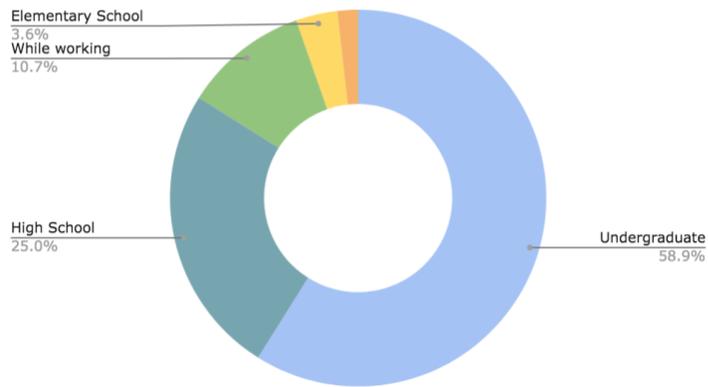


Chart 10: Response to the question “I became aware of the Planning profession during” in the Background section of the survey

*Age of respondents:*

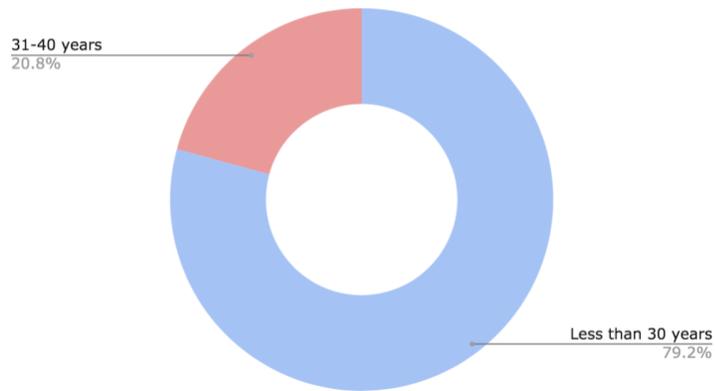


Chart 11: Age distribution of the survey participants

## APPENDIX C: Detailed Racial-Ethnic Identities

Survey respondents identified their racial-ethnic identities in various ways using various levels of distinction, through which the research team categorized respondents' racial-ethnic identities into 7 broad categories. Below are the identifiers used by respondents in each category.

### Black

- Black, African Canadian, African American, Black African, Black/Caribbean, Afro Caribbean, Black/Somali, Black and Somali-Kenyan, Black/West Indian

### East Asian

- East Asian, Hong Kong Chinese Canadian, East Asian/Hong Konger, East Asian - Taiwanese, Chinese

### Indigenous

- Indigenous, Cree/Indigenous

### Mixed

- Mixed, Biracial, Mixed-Race, Black (Mixed African American/Jewish Canadian)

### South Asian

- South Asian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Indian, Tamil

### Southeast Asian

→ Filipino

Southwest Asian

→ Southwest Asian, Persian, Middle Eastern

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