

**An In-Depth Look at the Discrimination
Experienced by Immigrants and Racialized
Individuals in the Oxford and St. Thomas-Elgin
Regions, and Strategies for Combatting this
Discrimination**

**Prepared for the Oxford Local Immigration Partnership and
St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership**

Rama Eloulabi, Zsofia Agoston Villalba, Satveer Dhillon, Haniya Waseem, Elmond
Bandauko, Jalen Jackson, Mamta Vaswani, and Victoria M. Esses

Network for Economic and Social Trends (NEST), Western University

February, 2024



LIP | Oxford Local
Immigration Partnership



ST. THOMAS • ELGIN
Local Immigration Partnership
Building Welcoming, Caring, and Inclusive Communities



Western
SocialScience

Network for Economic
and Social Trends (NEST)

Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation to the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership, Oxford Local Immigration Partnership, Sarnia-Lambton Local Immigration Partnership, London & Middlesex Local Immigration Partnership, and Niagara Local Immigration Partnership for their collaboration on this project, including development of the interview guide.

Table of Contents

Overview and Goals	1
Method	2
Procedure.....	2
Description of Interviewees.....	3
Specific Experiences of Discrimination in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin	6
Workplace Settings	6
Incidents of Discrimination	6
Perceived Reasons for the Discrimination	7
Observers’ Reactions to the Discrimination	7
Respondents’ Reactions to the Discrimination.....	8
Respondents’ Reporting of the Discrimination	9
Public Places.....	9
Incidents of Discrimination	9
Perceived Reasons for the Discrimination	10
Observers’ Reactions to the Discrimination	11
Respondents’ Reactions to the Discrimination.....	11
Respondents’ Reporting of the Discrimination	12
Police.....	12
Incidents of Discrimination	12
Perceived Reasons for the Discrimination	13
Observers’ Reactions to the Discrimination	13
Respondents’ Reactions to the Discrimination.....	13
Respondents’ Reporting of the Discrimination	14
Sense of Belonging and Retention in the Regions	15
Sense of Belonging to Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin.....	15
Impact of Discrimination on Sense of Belonging to Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin.....	16
Impact of Discrimination on Desire to Stay in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin.....	16

Knowledge of Strategies to Respond to Discrimination and Knowledge of Supports Available	17
Knowledge of Strategies for Directly Responding to Discrimination When It Occurs.....	17
Knowledge of Policies and Procedures for Reporting Discrimination in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin	18
Knowledge of Supportive Organizations in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin	19
Reporting Tool that Would be Most Likely to be Used	20
Anonymity and Safety Measures	21
Reporting Tool Host	22
Importance of How the Tool Data Would Be Used	23
Reporting Tool Type	24
Reporting Tool Accessibility and Ease of Use	25
Useful Supports that Could be Put into Place for People who Experience Discrimination	27
Education and Increased Awareness	27
Accountability, Action, and Being Heard	28
Community Spaces and Support Groups	29
Recommendations.....	30
Recommendations for Employers and Businesses	30
Recommendations for the Regions	31
Recommendations for the Police	32
Recommendations for a Reporting Tool.....	33

Overview and Goals

This qualitative study, involving in-depth interviews of 15 immigrants and racialized individuals in Oxford County and St. Thomas & Elgin County, was conducted as a follow-up to a survey conducted in March 2021 examining experiences of discrimination in the regions. The [Oxford survey](#) and the [St. Thomas-Elgin survey](#) were two of nine conducted in Southwestern Ontario at that time. Results of these surveys revealed that immigrants and racialized people often experience discrimination in workplace settings (i.e., when applying for a job or promotion and at their job) and in public settings (e.g., while using public transit, in parks, stores, restaurants), and that discrimination levels seem to be higher in these small and mid-sized communities than in large urban settings.

This study was then conducted to gain a more detailed understanding of the lived experiences of immigrants and racialized individuals in terms of the discrimination they are experiencing in these settings and, as suggested by the Local Immigration Partnerships, discrimination by the police, as well as the consequences of this discrimination and possible strategies that would be effective for counteracting discrimination. This report covers two of five qualitative studies being conducted to examine these issues in Southwestern Ontario. More specifically, the interviews explored discrimination that immigrants and racialized people have faced in workplace settings, public places, and by the police in the past three years, including what happened and where, the perceived reason(s) for the discrimination, observers' reactions to the discrimination, and respondents' reactions to the discrimination. The interviews also explored individuals' sense of belonging to the regions and desire to stay, knowledge of strategies to respond to discrimination and knowledge of supports available, views on a possible tool for reporting experiences of discrimination in the regions, and other suggested supports that could be put into place for people who experience discrimination. The findings provide a detailed portrait of the discrimination occurring in the regions and its consequences. They also include practical information that will allow the Oxford and St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnerships and their partners to take concrete steps in combatting discrimination so that immigrants and racialized individuals thrive and choose to live and work in the regions.

Method

Procedure

Between November 2022 and September 2023, a total of 15 online interviews were conducted with immigrants and racialized individuals in the Oxford and St. Thomas-Elgin regions. Of the 15 interviews, 8 interviews were from the Oxford community and 7 interviews were from the St. Thomas-Elgin community. To qualify for the study, respondents had to be at least 18 years old and report in a pre-screening survey that they had experienced discrimination in either the Oxford region or the St. Thomas-Elgin region in the last three years in a workplace setting, public place or by the police. Respondents were recruited by the Local Immigration Partnerships through email listservs, social media, newsletters, and word of mouth.

The online interviews were conducted via Zoom and all interviews were also recorded (with respondents' permission) so that central details and quotes could be confirmed after the interviews. Quotes have been used in this report to demonstrate the main points conveyed by respondents, and have been edited slightly for clarity. Almost all of the interviews were conducted in English, with two interviews conducted in Spanish.

The interviews were semi-structured. The research team developed an interview guide consisting of central questions and follow-up probes in partnership with the five participating Local Immigration Partnerships. The questions focused on:

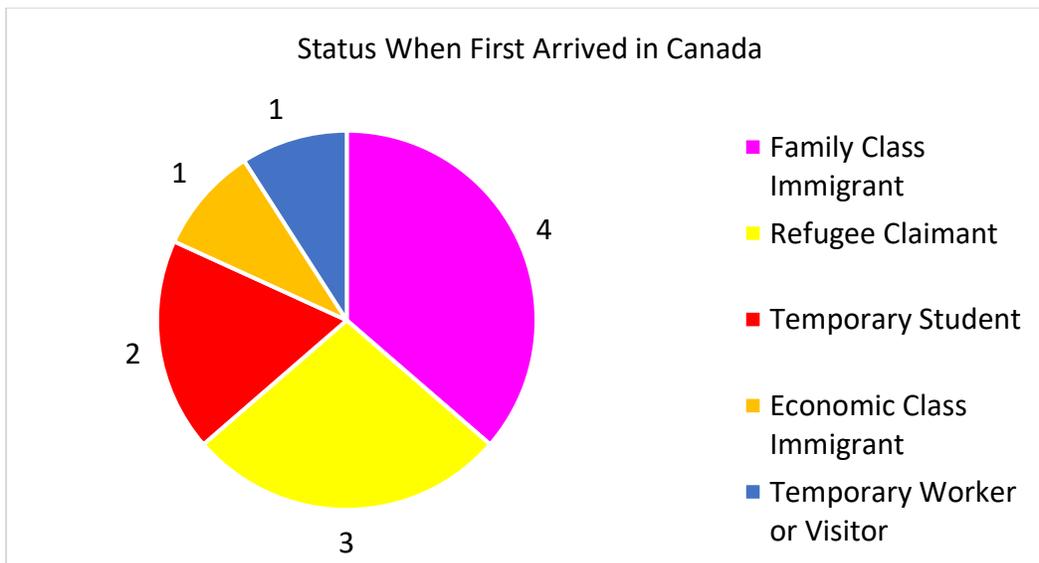
- Description of an incident of discrimination that the respondent had experienced, including the assumed reason for the discrimination, observers' reactions, and respondent's reactions
- Sense of belonging to the region and whether the respondent planned to stay
- Knowledge of strategies to respond to discrimination and supports available
- Characteristics of a reporting tool that would be most likely to be used by the respondent
- Useful supports that could be put into place for people who experience discrimination

At the end of the interviews, respondents were also asked a set of background questions. The interviews lasted approximately 1.5 hours, and all respondents were compensated with a \$30 Tim Hortons or Walmart e-gift card for their time.

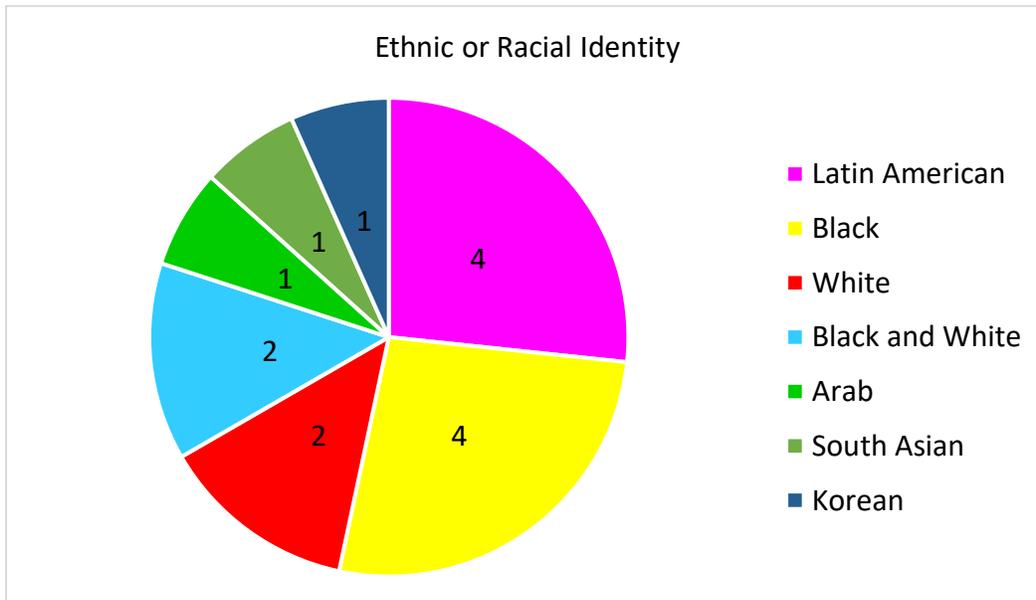
Description of Interviewees

Respondents ranged in age from 19 to 55 years old, with the average being 33 years old. Most respondents identified as women (11 women, 4 men).

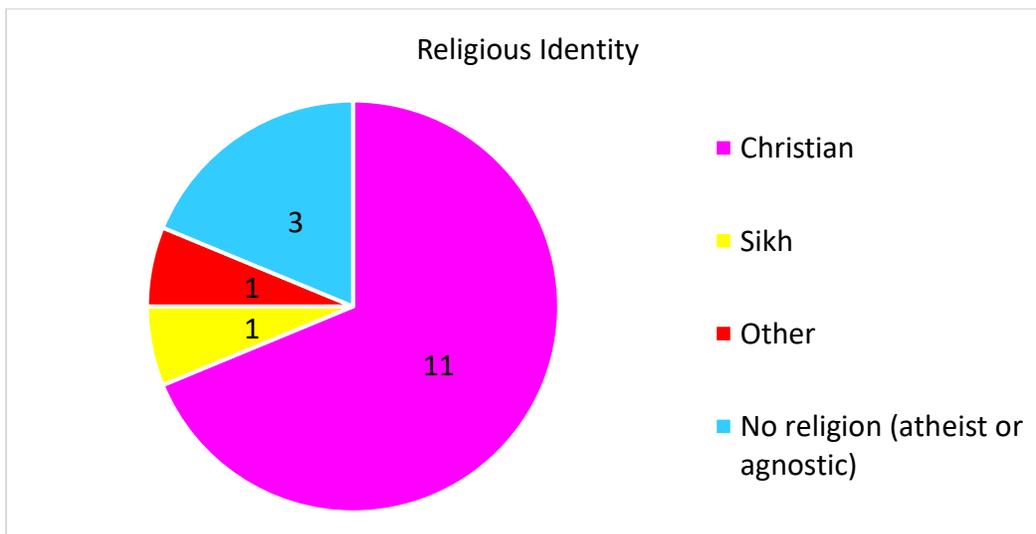
All but 4 respondents were born outside of Canada. Those born outside of Canada had lived here between a few months and 20 years, with the average length of time residing in Canada being approximately 6 years. The majority of respondents reported their current immigration status as Canadian citizen (8) or Permanent Resident (3). Most respondents who were not born in Canada first arrived to Canada as family class immigrants, refugee claimants, or on temporary visas.



Respondents identified as Latin American, Black, White, Arab, South Asian and Korean. Two respondents identified as both Black and White.



Respondents identified their religious identity as Christian, Sikh, Other (Neo-Paganism and Wiccan), or indicated that they had no religion. Note that the total in the chart below is greater than 15 as one participant identified as both Sikh and with no religion.



Many respondents were well-educated, with 5 having obtained university undergraduate degrees, 4 having obtained university graduate degrees and 1 respondent having obtained a professional degree. The remaining 5 respondents either had college/vocational training (2) or

had completed secondary school (3). Respondents were mainly employed or students, with 4 working full-time, 3 working part-time, 4 being students and working (either part-time, full-time, or self-employed), and 2 being students and not working. The other respondents were either self-employed (1) or unemployed and looking for work (1).

Most respondents reported their annual household income as being less than \$45,000 (6) while some reported an annual household income between \$45,001 to \$80,000 (2), \$80,000 to \$130,000 (2), or more than \$130,000 (1). Of note, 4 respondents preferred not to provide any information about their annual household income.

Specific Experiences of Discrimination in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin

Many respondents indicated experiencing discrimination in more than one context in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin in the past three years. However, respondents were asked to describe one experience of discrimination – 5 described an experience in a workplace setting (when applying for a job or at their job), 7 described an experience in a public place (e.g., retail stores, hospitals, schools), and 3 described an experience of discrimination by the police.

“It's been more than just my workplace as well that I've experienced it, too, outside. I wear head wraps sometimes, and when I do, I find that when I go into public, I just get stared out way more . . . For me, (discrimination) it's everywhere.”

Workplace Settings

Incidents of Discrimination

In the workplace, respondents commonly faced discrimination characterized by derogatory language, racial stereotyping, and instances of having their authority undermined.

*“This couple came in that day . . . the lady asked me for information, so I was trying to print it out from the computer so they can have a hard copy. As I was doing that the husband just came at me and he called the woman's name and said, ‘leave this n*****, leave this n*****, I don't know what he's doing in this country, he should go back’ . . . he was screaming . . . then he pulled his wife to not collect the paper from my hand.”*

“She was telling the chef some nasty words and nasty things about me.”

“[At my workplace], they were asking for volunteers for the Christmas parade. It was supposed to be a Caribbean beach party Christmas, but are Caribbean people hosting this? Christmas in Barbados looks very different than in Jamaica. What do they mean by Caribbean? . . . I sent an email to my boss asking who is hosting the event; the best-case scenario this will come across insensitive and worst-case scenario it will be blatantly racist. . . I later saw the link and it was literally a White Santa on a hammock with palm trees.”

These experiences were often described as being repeatedly perpetrated by the same person. Perpetrators of discrimination were described mainly as White, males and females, who ranged in age from younger to older adults.

Perceived Reasons for the Discrimination

Many respondents reported that ethnicity and race were the bases for the discrimination incidents in workplace settings. The salience of ethnicity and race was clear to respondents based on the derogatory remarks they heard. It was also clear to them because the only thing different about them in the specific context was their ethnicity or race.

“I feel it’s my colour . . . there was a statement that was made that people of my colour are kind of dumb.”

“It would be ongoing . . . whenever we talked about race, which was frequently, it would be me convincing her that life is a lot different for you than it is for me. You don’t get stared at wherever you go.”

A respondent noted that immigrants experience discrimination more frequently than their non-immigrant colleagues in the workplace.

“More than discrimination, it’s a company where 400 people work per shift and they have all immigrants in just one department and it’s the hardest department. It’s just Black people, Hispanic people, and Filipino people. In the other departments, it’s all the Canadian people.”

Observers’ Reactions to the Discrimination

Several respondents reported that their colleagues observed the incidents of discrimination but did not intervene when the incidents occurred. Respondents noted that the timing of observers' responses significantly affected their experience of the incident. Often, observers chose to step in after the incident occurred, leaving some respondents feeling isolated by the event.

“Some of my colleagues heard and they came to me later . . . They could have interjected, they could say stop, but none of them said anything. Once the man left, then they came to me . . . It’s not supposed to be like this. You let him know in the moment that it was out of line . . . This really offends me.”

“They would come talk to me, but I felt they were pitying me.”

One participant noted that the support she received from her colleagues was limited because they were temporary workers. Factors such as fear influenced the way her colleagues were able to support her.

"[My coworkers] were temporary workers so they might have been scared of losing their jobs."

Respondents' Reactions to the Discrimination

The majority of respondents did nothing at the time in response to the discrimination incidents for fear of making the situation worse.

"I prefer to quit before that situation became worse. . . sometimes you feel that you have no voice as an immigrant in a company full of Canadian people."

"I was feeling bad. . . I was in my work mainly. . . it's not my place to tell the higher authority to do that."

"At first, I didn't do much, I'm not used to having to do anything about it. . . I was trying to slowly approach the situation and slowly teach her."

Respondents expressed feelings of discomfort, insecurity, fear, resentment, and anger stemming from their experiences of discrimination.

"For me, it was uncomfortable."

"It made me feel like the workplace is not safe for people of my color and for someone like me."

"Uncomfortable. At first, I was like maybe I should just ignore it. . . but then I thought I should say something."

Another respondent expressed concerns about the possibility of their children experiencing discrimination in the future, similar to the discrimination incident they themselves experienced.

"[The discrimination incident] doesn't make me feel anything, really. But I don't want it to go down to my kids."

One respondent reported how incidents of discrimination often took on subtle forms, resulting in feelings of workplace exclusion.

“Racism in Canada is so subtle that sometimes you're thinking to yourself, are they being racist or is it just ignorance? . . . or maybe it's just me being sensitive?”

Respondents' Reporting of the Discrimination

After the incidents, the majority of the respondents (4 of the 5) did not report their experiences of discrimination in an official way in the workplace setting.

“I didn't report it because I've heard other people complain about the same thing, so I feel what is the report going to change anything. They were making me feel like it's a norm so I should cope with it.”

“No, there is no point . . . the man who discriminated me was trying to degrade me and make me feel belittled . . . so there is no point in dealing with this.”

One respondent officially reported the discrimination that included discussing their experience with management, which yielded little to no assistance.

“No, I received an email to discuss with St. Thomas-Elgin immigration services to talk about my culture, but it ended right there.”

One respondent enrolled in an advocacy course focusing on the impact of racism to better support herself.

“I took an advocacy class from my university . . . now I'm trying to put those tools to use, it's time for advocating for myself and others and be more vocal about subtle racism.”

Public Places

Incidents of Discrimination

Seven respondents reported encountering discrimination in various public settings, including retail stores, hospitals, neighborhoods, and within school environments. The most common forms of discrimination experienced by respondents in these settings were being treated differently than others and having derogatory language directed at them.

"I placed the items to pay, and he looked at my cart with a judgmental face . . . he said, 'this Latina wants to take everything.'"

*"My neighbor started making vulgar comments in the group chat 'who is the a***** making this noise,' then I explained that it was Diwali celebration . . . Then he said, 'just because other people have these bylaws doesn't make it the law in this area, if people want to celebrate their holidays while they live in this city, then they should respect the by-laws of the area, or go back to where they are celebrated.'"*

"She said 'you can't go in there; you have a child with you.' And I said, 'yes, I know, I called previously to confirm that I had my child with me, and they said it's okay to bring him.' Then she looks at me dead in the eyes and says, 'but that's not your child.' Because I'm a black woman with a white-looking child, right?"

"They let six people in front to me go and then stopped me . . . They said 'no, you need to be escorted to customer service area to pay for your stuff, you can't just pay here like everyone else' and they checked through all my items I was buying and searched through my bags."

The majority of respondents described the experiences of discrimination as isolated incidents perpetuated by one person. Perpetrators of discrimination were described mainly as White, males and females, who ranged in age from younger to older adults.

Perceived Reasons for the Discrimination

Respondents were most likely to report that racial and cultural backgrounds were the bases for the discrimination incidents. They also specifically mentioned instances where discrimination occurred due to their lack of proficiency in English or status as newcomers.

"You're not the culture that's accepted here."

"I think it was mainly because she thought I was going to steal something . . . I know it was definitely because of my skin colour."

"She realized my accent or maybe my not so perfect English. She looked at me and stopped talking to me. . . maybe if I had a better level of English, she would treat me another way. . . maybe she realized I was new here."

Observers' Reactions to the Discrimination

Several respondents (5 of the 7) reported that the discrimination incidents were observed by others. In some instances, the observers intervened in these public settings.

"I really appreciated the cashier supporting me. If it wasn't for him, I'll be honest, I would never go back. The cashier was very professional, so I continue going to this supermarket without any issue."

"It was helpful for the other person to chime in. Like someone else gets it here, I'm not crazy, I'm not the only one who felt this way . . . It felt validating in that way."

However, in other instances, none of the observers intervened.

"There were many observers in the chat who were not saying anything . . . they don't care enough about that. No one felt that there was an impact for them."

"There were six other women that were in the store in line in front of me and then there were a couple other people wandering around as well . . . they all watched, and no one intervened."

Respondents' Reactions to the Discrimination

Several respondents altered their behavior in response to the discrimination incidents they experienced.

"I lifted up my already pregnant gut and I said to her 'I have the C-section scar to prove it, this is my child . . .' I felt I had to justify my family situation . . . my word wasn't good enough."

"I mainly tried to cooperate with them, try to be polite and say I'm obviously not going to steal from you . . . I tried to just basically overexaggerate how nice I was in comparison to what they thought I was."

"I wanted to provide some education about Diwali and what it means."

Respondents expressed feelings of discomfort, anger, distress, sadness, vulnerability, and a sense of being disregarded after experiencing discrimination in these public places.

“Angry . . . it’s anger. It fuels my emotions, I feel angry.”

“Horrible . . . people should realize that no matter where you are, or your situation, you could communicate in a good way.”

Respondents’ Reporting of the Discrimination

Following the incidents, none of the respondents reported their experiences of discrimination in an official way. Several cited reasons for not reporting these incidents, including fear of potential repercussions and the perception that the incidents were too subtle to warrant reporting.

“I was just so worried about getting to the ultrasound . . . I was dreading the fear of being turned away.”

“It’s relationship preservation . . . I rely on my neighbours the most . . . I might need them in the future.”

“I can never really tell if I’m just being dramatic or if it’s something that actually is discrimination until after I talk to somebody.”

Police

Incidents of Discrimination

Three respondents recounted experiences of discrimination by the police, characterized by racial stereotyping and being treated in a harsh manner.

“My husband has poor health. He has diabetes and heart issues that cause him to tremble when he is nervous or in general pain. His legs were shaking when the police asked him to walk the line, so he failed the test. They pulled him in front of the vehicle and since he failed, they handcuffed him. My husband is not an aggressive person, but he had a pain in his right arm, so he tried to move it because it hurt, and they held him in that position the whole car ride to the station.”

"I was walking at night, normal walking, and I was questioned why I was walking . . . I wasn't drunk or acting weird and the police officers were very inquisitive and angry with me. I don't know why, but they asked if I was a prostitute, I was scared."

Perceived Reasons for the Discrimination

Respondents were most likely to report that race, immigrant status, and gender influenced the treatment they received from the police.

"We came here as immigrants, but we are now Canadian citizens, but sometimes we don't feel like it."

"First of all, I'm a woman . . . very easy target. I'm short, and I'm not White."

Observers' Reactions to the Discrimination

One respondent reported that people were present during the incident but did not intervene.

"I was passing a store and there was a man having a cigarette, but no one said anything . . . if it's the police, people tend to watch."

Respondents' Reactions to the Discrimination

In response to the incident of discrimination, one respondent chose not to react, perceiving it as too subtle at the time.

"I didn't know it was discrimination in the moment, so I remember I had my hands out and I was walking home. Then he asked, 'what are you doing?' and he said, 'just answer my questions, everything will be fine'."

Another respondent indicated that she reacted by confronting the police at the moment of the discrimination incident.

"I pleaded with the police to let my husband go but they ignored me."

A third respondent underscored the emotional turmoil experienced by their family member who witnessed the discrimination incident.

“My whole family has suffered significant emotional, mental, and physical pain from this experience. My daughter is emotionally scarred, she sometimes blames herself for the incident with the police.”

Respondents reported feeling scared, fearful, upset, and uncomfortable as a result of their experiences of discrimination by the police. These incidents also led to deteriorating physical health, feelings of insecurity, and concerns about potential repercussions.

“I don’t feel safe around police officers . . . I don’t think I behaved in any way that should make me feel that way.”

“I tried to talk to the police, but they didn’t listen . . . I felt afraid.”

Respondents’ Reporting of the Discrimination

One respondent officially reported their experiences of discrimination by writing a letter to the police department.

“I wrote a letter, and I went into the police office to hand it in. They handed the letter to the chief, and he came out to talk to me.”

The subtlety of the discrimination led another respondent to refrain from reporting the incident, causing them to feel isolated.

“I wouldn’t even know what I would report. If I called them, they would say there’s another Brown person here claiming the racism card, and I would isolate myself even further.”

Sense of Belonging and Retention in the Regions

Sense of Belonging to Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin

The respondents in this study had varying senses of belonging to the Oxford and St. Thomas-Elgin regions. Among those who did feel a sense of belonging, they identified several contributing factors.

Respondents discussed the significance of their established family and friend networks as integral connections that fostered a sense of community, belonging, and security within the regions. Respondents also expressed that adapting to the community over time strengthened their connection to the broader community.

"It's close to my family . . . I've spent a lot of time here, so it has a lot of childhood memories for me."

"It's more secure for me and for my family, they have a good place here."

"I have some friends who live here . . . some are Canadians and others are from different countries. We support each other, so that makes me feel belonging."

Respondents highlighted the small size of the community, and a sense of community kindness and friendliness that contribute to a sense of belonging.

"It's a warm and welcoming community, I love how tight knit everything is . . . it reminds me of small-town vibes."

"There are friendly people here. People that are really concerned about your well-being."

"My florist, I enjoy going to the same shops, and my church."

"I like my neighbours, I enjoy the parks, the fresh air, and it's less noisy."

However, some respondents did not feel like they belong in the Oxford and St. Thomas-Elgin regions.

"People giving me dirty looks . . . I don't like walking outside a whole lot anymore because I always need to have three people with me to feel safe enough to do it."

"I go to church, I looked around and thought, 'why am I the only Black person here?'"

Impact of Discrimination on Sense of Belonging to Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin

The respondents indicated that the discrimination they experienced made them feel less welcome and less like they belong in the Oxford and St. Thomas-Elgin regions.

"I always feel different, no matter what, I feel different than these people."

"There's a lot of people who are low-key about it around here . . . The discrimination has had a bigger effect on me."

"Discrimination drains people mentally and emotionally. Most people have regrets, maybe why did they come to this place?"

Impact of Discrimination on Desire to Stay in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin

The majority of the respondents indicated that the discrimination they experienced affected whether they were likely to stay in the Oxford and St. Thomas-Elgin regions long-term or move away. Some respondents described wanting to move to other cities and provinces in Canada (including London, Toronto, Calgary, and British Columbia).

"Moving away to British Columbia. I visited it, it's really beautiful . . . there is still some discrimination but it's more cohesive."

"I'm moving later this year to London because I would like to go somewhere a little bit bigger with more people too. I don't plan to come back to Woodstock to live either."

While the incidents of discrimination shaped many respondents' experiences in the region, most respondents are planning to stay long-term, primarily due to family ties.

"It's too much to try to generalize all the people . . . I'd like to be here for a long time."

"I'm thinking of staying long term. My husband and I are hoping to raise a family here. It's just kind of getting him used to the idea of what it's going to be like for a person of color but he's also from a minority group as well . . . We're both pretty happy here."

Knowledge of Strategies to Respond to Discrimination and Knowledge of Supports Available

Knowledge of Strategies for Directly Responding to Discrimination When It Occurs

Almost two-thirds of the respondents knew of some strategies that they can use to respond to discrimination when it occurs, whereas the other third reported not knowing of any strategies at all to respond to discrimination. Of those who had some knowledge of strategies to respond to discrimination, few had used them previously and even fewer had found them effective.

"I don't really know how to handle them half the time. I normally just freeze up."

"Nothing is as effective as just being White."

The strategy most often referred to by the respondents was to stay calm and ignore the perpetrator or walk away from the situation if possible.

"I only ignore, but sometimes it's tiring . . . How long am I going to ignore and quit? So I don't want it that way. I need the right measures to be taken. So, before, usually, I would just ignore, and if I'm being pushed too much, I just quit."

"Silence is the best answer for a fool."

*"I just shut up. One lady said to me, 'Thank God your kid doesn't have the nappy s*** hair,' and I just pretend to laugh and said nothing . . . That's what I do, I just push things out until I forget. That's probably why I've been so forgetful, because a lot of things I block because that's how I kinda live with it."*

A couple of respondents preferred to reach out to their community. Respondents also mentioned confronting the perpetrators, speaking up for themselves, and using the incident as a teaching moment to educate the perpetrator.

"Calling it out when you see it. Being able to address it in a way that is not accusational. Kind of just like trying to teach like, 'hey, what you said was not okay,' and identifying it at the source, wondering of where it's coming from, maybe it's coming from a place of like not understanding and not knowing. So being like, 'hey this is what it means to me when you do that kind of stuff, this is how it may come off to the other person.'"

*"I just walk away when I can, if it doesn't matter. But when it does matter, I pull up my rights and then I become that s***** angry non-White person. I just go, 'Is this necessary? Why am I being asked to provide this information?' Usually it's like just surrender your information . . . I'm not taking that, you know. So it depends how it is. If it's just like random, whatever. But the moment that person has any power over my life, I know my rights and I pull that out immediately. I know now if an officer stops me to just ask 'am I under arrest?' No, I'm leaving. That's it."*

One respondent suggested sticking with her White family members as that seemed to lessen the discrimination she experiences.

Knowledge of Policies and Procedures for Reporting Discrimination in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin

Some respondents noted that they did not know how to report the discrimination they experienced and were not aware of policies or procedures for reporting discrimination that occurred in public places, workplaces, and by the police.

"I read some little advice in the washrooms, in the women's washrooms. Yeah, just that was my first job here so I really don't understand if I can call that line so what's gonna happen. But yes I read something about I think sex assault or something like that in the washrooms (at work)."

"No, it sounds really vague and like nothing's gonna happen, expect for trouble. I don't feel informed about how (reporting to the police) could go well for me."

Others had some knowledge of the policies and procedures for reporting discrimination at the workplace, often citing speaking to their direct managers or supervisors. Some respondents did not find the reporting effective.

"If I think of something that might be discriminatory or anything, I just kind of let my director know . . . My boss at the time, I forget what she said but she said 'she doesn't really understand it,' and that's when we had that long 1 hour meeting about race and discrimination . . . We even had a 4 hour meeting I think last month about discrimination, race and ethnicity and ways to be an ally and stuff. And it was really good actually."

Knowledge of Supportive Organizations in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin

A large majority of the respondents did not know of any groups or organizations in the region that can provide support for those who have experienced discrimination.

“I don't know actually, no. Aside from like if I were actually hate crimed or something, I would go to the police obviously, but aside from that, I don't really think I know of any (groups or organizations).”

A few others did indicate having some knowledge of such supports and listed organizations such as their church, the employment centre, a centre for domestic abuse and other local organizations that provide services to immigrants. Of those respondents, half had gone to the organization(s) for support when they experienced discrimination.

“I only know of social services and employment services in the Woodstock community in my area. It's been very helpful in finding different jobs in the local area and understanding the experiences with discrimination.”

“Honestly, I know I could talk to the people at the Y, but I don't think there really is anything. I really don't think there is anything. Even though when I was going through my CAS (Children's Aid Society) stuff and they were acting a certain way, (the people at the Y) all said it was unfair but there was really nothing they could do about it. It's really nothing they could do about it.”

Reporting Tool that Would be Most Likely to be Used

Respondents were told that the Oxford or St. Thomas-Elgin region were considering setting up an electronic reporting tool (e.g., website, mobile application) where people can report on discrimination that they experience. They were specifically asked if they would utilize such a tool, and more than half of respondents (8 out of 15) expressed a strong likelihood of using this reporting mechanism.

“Yes . . . I like how it’s already there and it would be available online. It’s good for data sake if nothing else, and maybe it could stop people looking at you like you’re the worst thing.”

“Yes . . . I feel the higher authority would help.”

“Yes, I probably would . . . mainly because if it’s online I would be more comfortable.”

“Yeah, I probably would . . . if it was made available and publicized, I would use it.”

However, some respondents expressed reservations about using the reporting tool. They voiced concerns about who would be reviewing the reports and about the outcomes of the reporting process, particularly concerning their immigration status. Respondents also expressed fears regarding how the reporting tool might handle issues related to racism, racial bias, and discriminatory stereotypes.

“For me, no, but my family, yes. My son, my daughter, my friends, and my colleagues would use it . . . sometimes I feel because I’m Black, it’s more difficult.”

“If I could do it anonymously, for sure. But that’s the thing; racism here is so subtle so it’s tough to decide.”

“Yes, I would use it as long as it doesn’t come back to me. I have kids and I’m not trying to get in trouble with anyone or rock the boat. Even when I stand up for myself, I’m labelled as the angry Black woman.”

Some respondents highlighted that their usage of such a reporting tool would be conditional, depending on factors like anonymity, safety measures, the host of the tool, accessibility, and the potential risks or consequences associated with its use.

Respondents further discussed characteristics and features of the electronic reporting tool that would encourage and/or prevent them from using it:

Anonymity and Safety Measures

Respondents emphasized the importance of anonymity and safety in their likelihood of using the reporting tool. For some, the requirement to disclose personal information, such as their name and contact details, would deter them from utilizing the tool entirely. Many participants highlighted the preference for anonymous reporting, citing concerns about personal safety, potential repercussions in their workplace, and apprehensions about encountering discrimination within the reporting tool itself.

“An anonymous feature . . . and a text box where you can explain what happened.”

“I prefer it to be anonymous . . . I always have this mindset if I report a case and my name is mentioned, I will be in danger.”

“Anonymous because I wouldn't want there to be any negative repercussions for me, or if I were to talk about discrimination in my workplace, it'd be kind of obvious it would be me.”

“I have a little bit of a fear that if I were to report the wrong person that it could come back to bite me later. I prefer to keep my name out of things. If I have any complaints about anybody around me, I prefer to do it anonymously rather than putting my name out there.”

“I prefer anonymous if people want to share their experience. When it comes to discrimination, people prefer to talk in a low voice because we're not in our country. We're not as safe to have a voice here.”

Some respondents preferred providing their name and contact information (for example, a pseudonym) to report their experiences with discrimination.

“It's safer to be anonymous but it is important to provide some name and contact information . . . There must be a form of identification, like a pseudonym.”

A few respondents suggested having both options available, wherein respondents can report anonymously but have the choice of including their name and contact information if desired.

“The option to remain anonymous but also be able to follow up if you want to be able to share more information. Be able to get a call back asking more questions rather than expecting the person to type in all the information initially.”

“I think it depends on the level of discrimination. If it’s like what I experienced, it could be enough as anonymous. But if the experience is of a higher level, I think that could be useful to provide names to help and support the person.”

Reporting Tool Host

In reference to who would host such a reporting tool and handle the data from the discrimination reports, respondents (8 of the 15) emphasized the importance of who hosts or leads the reporting tool. Respondents had varied opinions on who exactly should be hosting this type of tool. Some of the respondents indicated that they would prefer the reporting tool to be hosted by a local community organization, as they confided in them more and trusted that they would be fair and take people’s reports seriously.

“Probably trust more of a local organization because I don't think I'd want the government really doing that. I'd rather a place where I feel safe like the Y, a place that actually cares about people and their interests.”

“I prefer a local organization I trust . . . I feel the local organization will have much more concern and they will be able to connect with people or people are going to be very comfortable and be able to connect with them . . . I feel more comfortable with the local organization.”

“A local organization would be the best really, because they would have a better idea of how to help their community. Like the St. Thomas and Elgin immigration place would be the best because they'd probably be more sensitive to other people's cultures and be more understanding.”

“More likely to use it if led by a local organization . . . I’m not a fan of the current government or the police in my area so I prefer something else.”

Alternatively, some respondents expressed a preference for the city, municipality, or the police to host the reporting tool. Others favoured a collaborative approach involving all three kinds of institutions—government, police, and local organizations—to collectively oversee the tool's operations.

“The city or the municipality that is providing the result, like a more neutral party, where people feel like there isn’t an agenda either way.”

“I think of the police as an institution to lead it . . . I feel I can trust in police here, and they have the power to do something if they see that the situation is dangerous or wrong.”

“I think all together because you have to research step by step. You might look into the government for help or the police to investigate.”

However, one respondent indicated that they would not use the reporting tool if it was hosted by the police.

“Honestly just from my experience, if it’s police that’s doing it, I would probably not use it, you never know.”

Other respondents did not have a preference for the type of organization leading or hosting the reporting tool.

“No, it doesn’t matter – the police, the government. Whatever organization is trying to make the positive change is what matters.”

Importance of How the Tool Data Would Be Used

Around half of the respondents (7 out of the 15) were concerned about what the outcomes of using the reporting tool would be. Respondents’ concerns revolved around the security measures of the tool, apprehensions about a possible breach of trust, and uncertainties regarding which third parties might access the reported data.

“If there was a breach of trust, I wouldn’t use it . . . also if there were sharing the data with other parties with no consent.”

One respondent said they might not use the reporting tool if would lead to mandatory legal follow-up action.

“If it was mandatory that something had to be done about it, if there wasn’t an option . . . it will scare me if it leads into mandatory legal action.”

Another respondent expressed feeling insecure and vulnerable as a newcomer in reporting their experiences with discrimination. They were worried about how their information might be used and whether it could impact their immigration status.

“For the newcomers, assurance that it can remain 100% confidential without names. If something is to be done about the incident that is reported, it would stay in the persons hand on how to proceed. Immigrant families feel a lot of shame. They want their kids to be in harmony with society . . . It's usually the older generation that resists because they're working so hard that they don't know that we have rights to.”

Reporting Tool Type

Many respondents (9 of the 15) preferred a website for the type of reporting tool. Many indicated that they would prefer using a website to report on discrimination as it is more accessible to a broad number of people.

“Website because I'd be scared of people seeing the app on my phone and saying ‘you love snitching on White people’ you know? I think a website is more discrete.”

“I would prefer a website so I wouldn't have to download an app and I can use it on all platforms.”

“I would use a website that is completely anonymized, and the data collected is secure.”

Some respondents indicated that they did not have a preference between a website or an app and preferred to have both options. Some others expressed a preference for a phone line to make their reports.

“The website would be good and the ease of downloading an app on the phone. I see benefits in both. It would help to report and be able to put that information somewhere.”

“I think an app and a phone call is okay too. I think these are good ways more than a website.”

“It doesn't really matter to me, a technology that is accessible and reliable is the best option.”

A few participants mentioned they might not use a mobile app because they already have a lot of apps on their phones, making it less likely for them to add another one.

“Internet use and patterns of using the internet are very different now than they were ten years ago. . . also, the last thing people want to do is download another app on their phone.”

“I wouldn’t want to download another app on my phone. I already have so many apps.”

“If it was requiring a lot of space on my phone like an app then I wouldn’t use it.”

Reporting Tool Accessibility and Ease of Use

Respondents emphasized the importance of the tool’s accessibility and expressed the necessity and desire for direct interaction or discussion with a real person regarding their discrimination incidents. They suggested features such as a live chat option and a text box to write in a description of their experiences of discrimination.

“A bunch of Yes or No questions, and talk about it and type about it, and then they would ask if you would like it change or would you like someone to contact you.”

“It’s important to include a text box but if it’s more than five boxes, it’s more erroneous . . . It would have to be mobile friendly and no glitches in terms of how it’s viewed on a mobile device.”

“Live-chat option . . . If you want to type in your concerns, the live chat would allow you to chat with an agent about your concerns.”

Several respondents emphasized the importance of clear definitions of discrimination on the tool, and explicit and accessible instructions guiding how to report their experiences of discrimination.

“It would be good if the website was easy to use and with clear instructions on where I have to go to report any situation. Also, a place where it explains what discrimination is because for me, I wasn’t sure. We are new here and we have never lived in another country, so it would be useful if they offered some examples or concepts about what discrimination is and where I can report it. And maybe some results, for example if it

states that last year there were three cases of discrimination compared to cases this year.”

“It would be helpful to understand the various kinds of discrimination one can experience. I’ve noticed that here there is emphasis on emotional and mental well-being. Understanding the laws of a place is very important so the site should define the various laws about community responsibility and well-being. I know the basics laws in Canada. I know that if someone touches me physically without consent, I can go to the police. But words and glances can also affect one’s well-being so a site guiding people about this would be helpful.”

Useful Supports that Could be Put into Place for People who Experience Discrimination

Many respondents (7 Of 15) indicated that the regions are not doing enough to make everyone feel like they belong and are welcome in the Oxford and St. Thomas-Elgin regions.

Other than a reporting system, respondents discussed the supports that might be useful for immigrants and racialized people who experience discrimination in Oxford and St. Thomas Elgin:

Education and Increased Awareness

Many respondents spoke about educating the broader community, including those who are discriminating and those in the public sector, and providing training, such as bystander training.

“If the employees working in public-facing places, which does reflect quite a bit of people in this community, if they took anti-oppression training, if they had the opportunity to attend something like that, if training was put on that was funded that was able to help open up people's mindset beyond just their own circles, their own pictures, to be like ‘this is the experience of an oppressed person, and this is the different ways that it can be experienced, and this is what you can do to help change that narrative, or to change that incident, or to help that’s oppressed feel supported,’ I think providing that kind of training more generally to like the public sector would be a good step in the right direction.”

“Education for people. People think discrimination and racism looks like burning crosses in people's yards but it's just like no, it's making people miserable on a daily basis; giving benefit of the doubt to one and being highly suspicious of another. Especially educators in schools, I would really appreciate when they see a child is falling into their archetype because everyone else is pushing them, like the Black is the gangster or the female is super spicy. And they see that child literally falling into a racial archetype that's usually been pushed by the culture around them, for educators to actually notice it and maybe challenge that on a personal level with them.”

“There should be education for people who discriminate, not only to people who have (experienced) discrimination.”

Respondents also discussed the importance of educating immigrants and racialized people about their rights and increasing their awareness of available resources.

“Probably to find a way for more people to know about the St. Thomas-Elgin immigration place. I feel like that would be a great start. It's kind of like if you had to find out about it through like other people.”

Accountability, Action, and Being Heard

Respondents wanted to see follow-up and action taken after the discrimination incidents occur. They discussed wanting to see perpetrators held accountable for their actions and suffer consequences, ranging from education to punishment.

“I think you have to set rules. There should be rules and penalties for discrimination. They should be very straightforward towards discrimination. I think they have to start from there. So I think when they do, when they send something like that off, it's actually give people who have faced the discrimination confidence to make them kind of comfortable, because you know that there's a rules . . . It makes them feel included. It makes them feel like they belong in society as well.”

“You need someone to get punished. To know that someone who did you harm now understands what they did. Nobody that I mentioned today, I think, knows what they did or how their actions made other people feel.”

One respondent suggested that body cams should be turned on at all times when police officers are interacting with community members.

“Especially the audio visual because the questions I was asked were so inappropriate and jarring that I literally just don't feel safe around police officers. I don't think I behaved in any way that should make me feel that way.”

The respondents emphasized the importance of being heard and the importance of listening to racialized people and immigrants in the community.

“You talked about an app just now. I think something like that would help a lot. Yes, it's like a voice . . . It is heard. You see I am talking now. I don't know where this is gonna get to, but I am venting what I felt that I stored in there for some time now, for years now. Maybe it will help somebody else one day.”

“Be more receptive when people do report it. I know at school there's been a huge protest going on basically at my school because of a lot of issues with teachers themselves and a lot of stuff is being ignored. They have that happen quite a bit here, so I think that kind of is a big part of it.”

Community Spaces and Support Groups

Some respondents suggested that it is helpful to create diverse spaces and events for people to come together in the region. They also indicated the importance of support groups for people who have experienced discrimination to find community and mentorship.

“If certain things could change to reflect that we are inclusive, that we are celebrating cultures . . . Maybe hosting events. I don't know, or helping to normalize events. Like 'yeah, this is normal. This is okay. We accept this here.'”

“They can organize meetings and open places to talk about the experiences that people go through. It doesn't just happen at work, but everywhere. We can learn from so many people who go through similar things.”

One respondent focused on the importance of funding such events and groups and funding initiatives that focus on education and inclusivity.

“For high schools to have an incentive to have a multicultural club, for money funding to be poured into that. And for these things to be discussed and for it to be open to everyone, including obviously White folks. So yeah, I think this kind of stuff can be stopped in like a generation if we focus on more educating the coming people and then having resources and support and acknowledging and reporting tools for people right now . . . Having funding for groups where everyone can show up and talk about it . . . Honestly, I think the funding from the police should be going to these groups because . . . (there's) this ugly narrative that we are seeing all over the world with refugees . . . I think that whatever's funding the police should be funding small groups that are about peacekeeping and informing civilians of how to be peacekeeping.”

Recommendations

Recommendations for Employers and Businesses

To prevent discrimination toward immigrants and racialized individuals at work in the St. Thomas-Elgin and Oxford regions, businesses and other employers should:

- Display clearly visible notices informing patrons of their zero-tolerance of employee harassment policy
- Have a clear, explicit policy on employee non-discriminatory behaviour, with specific consequences laid out for those who violate the policy
- Provide employee training focused on countering stereotypes, encouraging perspective taking, and education about what constitutes discrimination, including microaggressions
- Regularly evaluate and update non-discrimination policies to adapt to evolving workplace dynamics. Seek input from employees to ensure policies reflect the diverse perspectives within the workplace.

To support immigrants and racialized individuals who may be facing discrimination at work in the St. Thomas-Elgin and Oxford regions, businesses and other employers should:

- Implement a straightforward and confidential procedure for reporting experiences of discrimination that formally documents the investigation and the outcomes
- Disseminate clear information to employees on their policies surrounding non-discrimination, and provide clear instructions on steps to take if one does experience discrimination
- Provide bystander intervention training for all employees, including how to respond to incidents of discrimination and how to support targets of discrimination
- Encourage open dialogue between employees and management regarding concerns about diversity and inclusion. Establish accessible spaces for sharing experiences and insights, fostering a culture of understanding and collaboration.

Recommendations for the Regions

To prevent discrimination toward immigrants and racialized individuals in public places in the St. Thomas-Elgin and Oxford regions, the regions should:

- Develop a zero tolerance of discrimination community protocol for the region – e.g., [RichmondCommunityProtocol_v4.pdf \(iamrichmond.ca\)](#)
- Display clearly visible notices of the zero tolerance of discrimination community protocol in public places
- Provide educational workshops and events for members of the public focused on countering stereotypes, encouraging perspective taking, education about what constitutes discrimination (including microaggressions), and one's right to be treated in a non-discriminatory manner
- Provide training for staff of public facilities focused on countering stereotypes, encouraging perspective taking, and education about what constitutes discrimination, including microaggressions, as well as bystander intervention training
- Provide education to the broader community about the benefits of immigration to the community, the discrimination that is being experienced in the community, and the damage caused by this discrimination
- Increase funding for support groups and spaces for racialized and immigrant youth and other community members to get together

To support immigrants and racialized individuals who may be facing discrimination in the St. Thomas-Elgin and Oxford regions, the regions should:

- Provide bystander intervention training sessions for members of the public, including how to respond to incidents of discrimination and how to support targets of discrimination
- Disseminate information widely (and in multiple languages) on what constitutes discrimination, including microaggressions, and how to respond to discrimination most effectively when it occurs

- Provide specific steps to take if one experiences discrimination in the region and outline one's rights in this regard, along with the local groups and organizations that can provide support to those who have experienced discrimination
- Develop a discrimination reporting tool that is widely advertised and provides information on supports available for targets of discrimination
- Provide funding for community initiatives to help support immigrants and racialized individuals who have experienced discrimination
- Ensure effective supports and initiatives are available to those who experience discrimination by consulting with immigrants and racialized individuals in the region as to whether supports currently available, and new supports being considered, are useful to them
- Once a discrimination reporting site is set up in the region, disseminate information widely (and in multiple languages) about the site, including what types of behaviours should be reported
- Ensure that reports of discrimination are taken seriously and acted upon
- Conduct further research on the experiences of discrimination in the region, including the experiences of interracial couples and mixed-race children

To support a sense of belonging and retention to St. Thomas-Elgin and Oxford regions among immigrants and racialized individuals, the regions should:

- Publicly celebrate the diversity in the region, including through community events and spaces that bring all members of the community together

Recommendations for the Police

To support immigrants and racialized individuals who may be facing discrimination in the St. Thomas-Elgin and Oxford regions, the police should:

- Provide education and training to all police personnel focused on countering stereotypes, encouraging perspective taking, countering biases, and education about how newcomers and racialized individuals may view interactions with the police and

what constitutes discrimination, including microaggressions

- Provide clear information to those who would like to report discrimination by the police as to the procedure for doing so
- Ensure that body cams are activated at all times during interactions with the public to provide transparency and accountability in policing practices

Recommendations for a Reporting Tool

In order for a reporting tool to be used and to be effective:

- Information about the reporting tool must be widely disseminated (in multiple languages) in the St. Thomas-Elgin and Oxford regions
- The reporting tool should clearly outline terms and definitions related to different types of discrimination that could be reported using the tool to enhance the reporting process
- The reporting tool should be easy to access as a website and as an app that can be downloaded to a mobile device, with clear instructions and a few short straight-forward questions to answer
- The reporting tool should be confidential and anonymous, with an option to provide personal information if one desires to be contacted for follow-up
- The reporting tool must clearly state who has access to the information being provided and what they will do with the information, including what concrete outcomes will result from the reporting
- Consideration should be given to providing alternative methods of reporting discrimination, including live chat and a hotline