

# Building Solidarity in Diversity

A Report on  
Unifor's  
Equity Audit



# Table of Contents

Letter from Unifor’s National President	2
Introduction	5
A Changing Workforce	6
Intentional or Unconscious?	6
Why Conduct an Equity Audit?	7
A Note on Methodology	8
Equity Audit Results: Strengths and Challenges	8
Equity Audit Results: By the Numbers	13
Coverage Rate	13
Diversity of Unifor Membership: Estimates and Identified Members	14
Diversity and Representation: Local Union Representatives	15
Diversity and Representation: A Regional Breakdown	18
The British Columbia Region	18
The Prairies Region	20
The Ontario Region	22
The Quebec Region	24
The Atlantic Region	26
Diversity and Representation: National Leadership and National Staff	28
Local Union Standing Committees	30
What We Heard: Action Items for Consideration	33
National Union Efforts	34
Local Union Efforts	35
The Role of Collective Bargaining	35
Celebrating Our Members’ Diversity	36
Union Structure	36
Government Regulation and Legislation	37
Building on the Local Union Task Force	37
Appendix A: Methodology	39
Limitations of the Research	40
Sample Equity Survey Sheet	41
Appendix B: Equity Audit Survey	42

# Letter from the Unifor National President

Unifor was established with the expressed commitment to becoming a union for everyone. Representing the diversity of our union and today's workplace is an essential component to building the vibrant, dynamic, progressive and inclusive union we envision for the future.

Right from the outset, we set up Unifor structures to be more inclusive and to promote diversity within the union. Our regional equity standing committees and caucuses are included in our constitution as an effort to increase opportunity and diverse representation of the membership within our organization. Human rights trainings, equity related conferences and the promotion of diverse groups at councils and convention are all important pieces in our effort to be more inclusive. These initiatives have been an important start to promoting diversity within our union.

Unifor and our predecessor unions have worked hard to end many forms of discrimination within our organization, in our workplaces, communities and in society. However, reports from activists and members across our structures indicate that Unifor has much work to do in accomplishing our goal.

As a first step towards assessing our progress in representing diversity, Unifor made the bold decision to conduct an internal equity audit. The equity audit committed the union to measuring the diversity of Canada's labour force and comparing that to what we know about the diversity of our members and of our members' representatives including local and national union leadership and staff. We wanted to compare the results to discover if and where representation gaps exist - and to develop strategies and approaches to reduce the gaps.

Thank you to Local Unions for making the best effort to participate in this audit. Overall, the participation rate was relatively high. At the same time, we recognize that there were a number of locals that

were unable to participate because of tight timelines and previous commitments. Our union is in a constant state of change: new members are organized, the faces of local leadership change and staff members are retiring. When one adds this to the high level of activism maintained throughout the year, it is understandable that some locals had a difficult time participating in the timeframe allotted. In the future, we will take this into account and ensure the necessary steps are taken to generate as much participation and inclusion as possible.

As you'll read in the pages of this report, the equity audit did confirm that we have significant representation gaps within our union. The gaps exist at the national level and at the local union level. Gaps exist in every region and for each of the six designated Unifor equity-seeking groups.

These gaps are unacceptable.

At a time when right wing populism and hateful, discriminatory messages are dominating the political discourse, actions to promote inclusion and equity are more important than ever to the success of our organization and the continued success of our society. Unifor can and will lead on this front.

Feminism, anti-racism, reconciliation, accommodation, inclusion and access to human rights are all central to our struggle as a labour movement. Our union's equity program to increase diversity and representation across our entire organization is essential to our movement. This equity audit was a major investment by Unifor in measuring ourselves against our own goals. The results are now a reference point to highlight our challenges and strengths, and are a tool to help us continuously do better.

We started a difficult conversation with the equity audit and the National Executive Board intends to see it through. As a union we each have a role to play. We need to be introspective; to challenge ourselves to assess how our own attitudes and practices might be

contributing to discrimination and to representation gaps. We need to be bold; to develop new approaches and processes that acknowledge the fact that discrimination and inequities exist and we must work to develop systems, processes and attitudes to treat people fairly. We need to build a more equitable organization for the future.

This project is not the end of this conversation, it is the beginning. It is the beginning of a deeper dialogue to develop a path forward. Certainly, progress has been made in our first four years as Unifor. The commitment to and participation in this first phase of an equity audit is evidence of that. But the progress we've made is not enough.

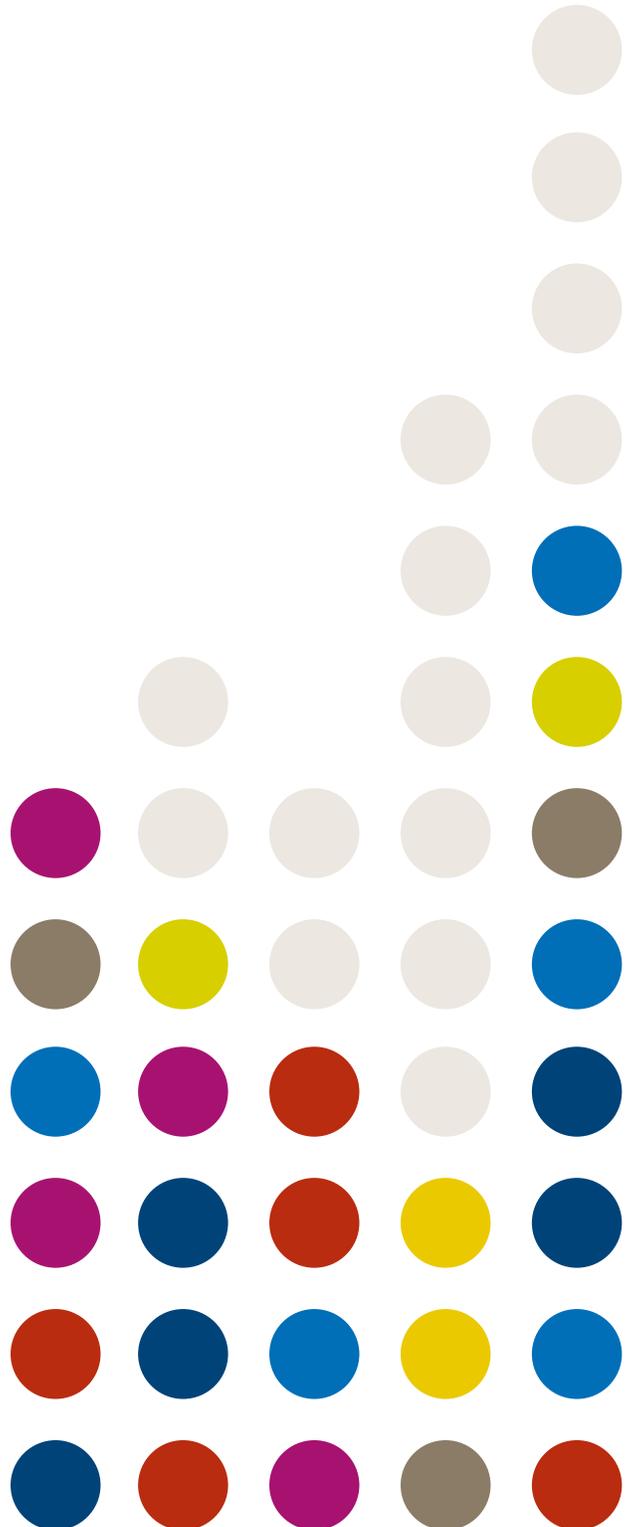
We need to become a union that will not wait for our members to come to us, but a union that will go to the places where our members celebrate diversity in all its forms.

A commitment to equity, inclusion and diversity starts with each one of us. Diversity must be reflected in the faces of Unifor's leadership, in our committees and in our organizational structures. It is our shared responsibility to establish the kind of sustained change in attitudes and practices that will move our Union forward so that we truly are a union for everyone.

In solidarity,



Jerry Dias  
National President





# Introduction

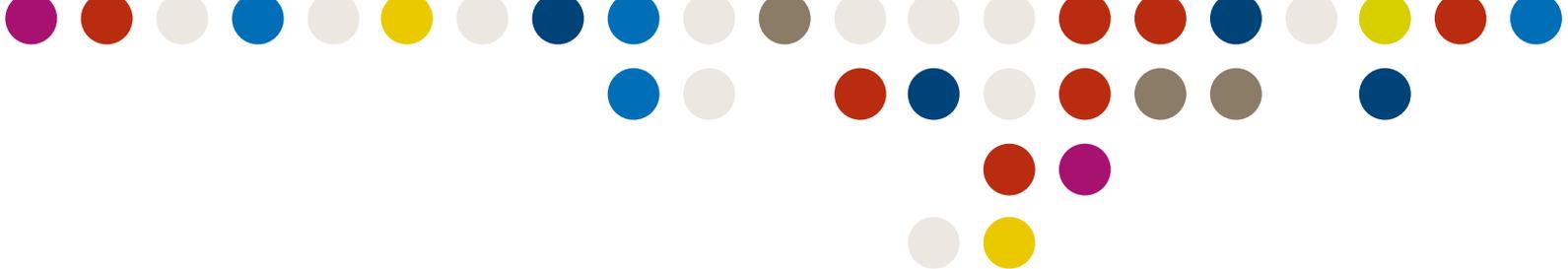
# Introduction

Unifor has a long history of fighting for social justice in society and within our union. Over the years, our union and predecessor unions (all 87 of them) have been on the forefront in the fight for equity and inclusion, not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is essential to the basic struggle for human dignity that we work towards every day.

Our commitment to equity and inclusion has been the key to our success in the past. In fact, the results of our on-going struggle for women's equality and for equal pay for equal work have become our core strengths. Half of our elected leadership are women and many women sit in top leadership positions within Unifor's structures. While there is still much work to be done, we must remember that we have been on the leading edge of that fight.

Unifor members must continue to extend these same efforts for workers of colour, for Aboriginal workers, for workers with disabilities, for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) workers and for young workers.

Our commitment to ensuring an equitable and inclusive environment in which all members are welcome to participate and all workers are treated with dignity and respect is another core strength of Unifor. As the diversity of Canada and our union grows, we must double down on our commitment to equity and inclusion to ensure our viability and success in the future.



## A Changing Workforce

From coast to coast to coast, the population is growing increasingly diverse.

The share of persons belonging to a racialized group increased four-fold between 1981 and 2011, from nearly 5% to 19%. According to the most recent projections, this proportion could reach 30% by 2031.

The Aboriginal population in Canada is the fastest growing group in the country. Relatively speaking, the Aboriginal population is young, and will continue to make up a larger portion of the adult population in Canada as time moves on.

Approximately 14% of Canadians identify as having a disability – either one they were born with or one that developed during the course of life.

Additionally, it is estimated that at least 4% of the population identifies as part of the growing LGBTQ community.

As these changes occur, our union membership will grow increasingly diverse as well.

Unifor has worked hard to end discriminatory attitudes in our workplaces and society; however, first-hand accounts from members and activists across the organization indicate that these attitudes and beliefs also exist within our union. Our members continue to face racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, ageism and Islamophobia every day.

Unifor's regional equity standing committees, human rights trainings, equity related conferences and caucuses, and the option for an additional equity delegate seat at councils and conventions as covered by the Unifor constitution are all responses to existing inequities. These systems have been designed to reduce the barriers many of our members face in achieving equity and inclusion throughout the union.

## Intentional or Unconscious?

Sometimes discrimination is unintentional or unconscious. Sometimes it is purposeful and overt. In all cases, discrimination is unacceptable.

The unequal treatment of groups of people who have been marginalized - including Aboriginal workers, workers of colour, workers with a disability, workers who identify as LGBTQ, women workers and young workers - has led to unequal outcomes and unequal representation both in society and in our union.

Discrimination is a reason why the burden of precarious work falls disproportionately on Aboriginal workers, workers of colour, women, and young workers. It is a reason LGBTQ workers may not identify as being a member of the LGBTQ communities in the workplace or in a union setting.

Discrimination is a reason why the employment rate of people with a disability is just two-thirds of the population as a whole. It is a reason why good jobs and leadership positions across the labour market are disproportionately filled by people who don't openly identify with an equity-seeking or marginalized group.

# Why Conduct an Equity Audit?

Reports of discrimination – systemic and overt – are the reason Unifor made the bold decision to conduct this equity audit. Despite the best attempts to create space for members from equity-seeking groups within our union and to open pathways for people from equity-seeking groups to become more involved, in some areas of our union, our members continue to experience unequal treatment and discrimination at every level of Unifor.

This equity audit was a first attempt to find out more about Unifor's success in representing diversity in all aspects of our union: from our members, to bargaining representatives to Local Union leaders and even at the national level among the staff and national leaders.

The equity audit committed the organization to comparing the demographics of the country's workforce to what is known about the demographics of our membership and our members' representatives; and to taking action if representation gaps were found.

What is a representation gap? A representation gap means that there is a significant difference between the share of the workforce, the share of the membership and the share of Unifor's representatives that identify or are identifiable as belonging to one or more equity-seeking group.

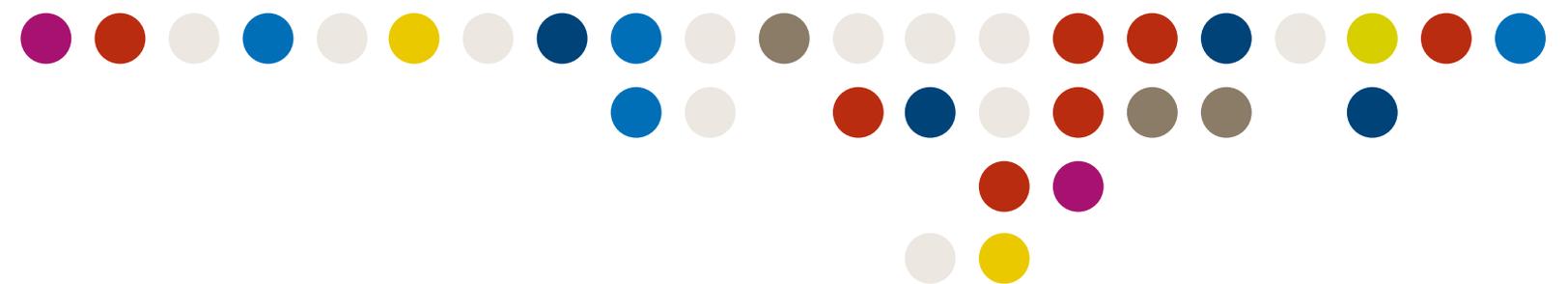
Historically, the actions of the labour movement have sometimes led to the exclusion and marginalization of equity-seeking groups in the workforce and in the union. Consciously or not, unions have played a role in the systemic and sometimes deliberate exclusion of people from equity-seeking groups in leadership positions and, in extreme cases, from the labour force. Unions have often been slow to reach out to workers who identify as members of an equity-seeking group.

While this exclusion may or may not be deliberate, it continues to exist within Unifor. Our aim is to make discriminatory behaviour, actions and inactions, systems and processes unacceptable in order to ensure each individual is treated equitably and fairly and can see themselves included in the structure and activism of our organization.

Many local unions, leaders, activists and our regional councils have been formally and informally doing the work of building equity for decades. The collective action thus far is the reason we are now at a place where our organization is ready for this honest and difficult conversation.

This equity audit has provided our union with the opportunity to gain a better understanding of our strengths and weaknesses. Further, the results allow the union to develop an action plan to build on those strengths and address the weaknesses.

This report provides a detailed outline of the equity audit results.



## A Note on Methodology

The equity audit took place over nine months. The national union hired two members as equity coordinators who conducted semi-structured interviews with nearly 470 local unions. The interviews provided an opportunity to gather information on Unifor's membership, including who identified as being a member of one or more equity-seeking groups. Discussions during the interviews allowed the equity coordinators an opportunity to educate and to expand the definition and understanding of the concept and importance of equity within Unifor. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in person or over the phone and sometimes took place over multiple meetings, particularly when the demographics data was not immediately available or even known.

The interviews were also an opportunity to dig deeper into the best practices and challenges evident at the local union level. When knowledge gaps were obvious, the equity coordinators took the opportunity to probe further; to find out why local union leaders are sometimes unaware of the demographics of their membership and what sort of practices led to more equitable representation.

The results of the survey should not be interpreted as a census but rather as a starting point to understand how members have overtly and openly identified or have been identified in the workplace and in our union.

A detailed explanation of the methodology can be found in the appendix.

## Equity Audit Results: Strengths and Challenges

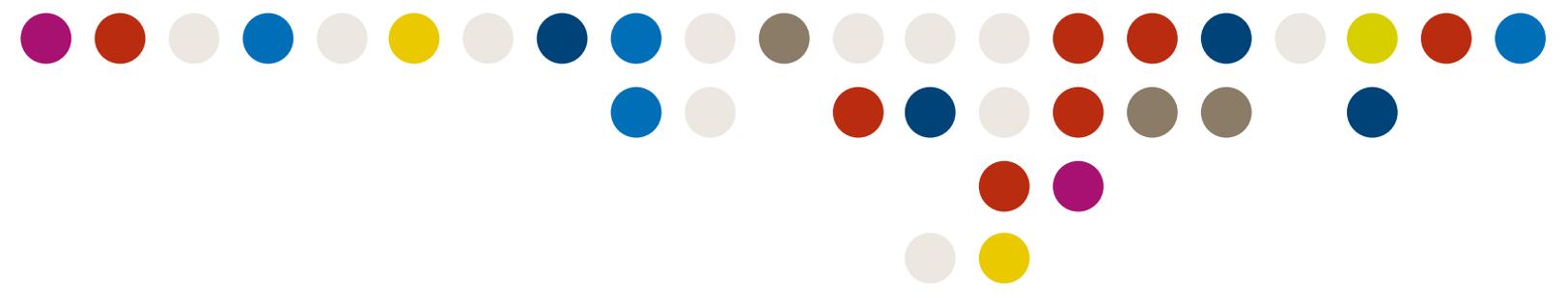
The equity audit gave Unifor's equity coordinators the opportunity to sit down and discuss the importance of representation with local union leaders across the country. Through these interviews, Unifor was able to gather information on the best practices and challenges in building equity and inclusion into every level of our organization.

A significant challenge for the coordinators was discovering how many local unions were unaware of the demographics of their membership. Local union leaders often had to take extra time to fill in the gaps in knowledge in order to complete the survey. Even now, the numbers we have are based on how people have identified or are identifiable in the workplace, not necessarily how they would identify on a confidential survey.

Another major challenge in completing the audit was the complexities around the concepts of equity, inclusion and representation within Unifor. Some local unions were immediately defensive when contacted to participate in the equity audit. Local union leaders felt this process could be an exercise in shame and/or discipline if their local union didn't measure up. Given the nature of the interview process, Unifor's equity coordinators were able to turn these conversations into opportunities to discuss, not what had gone wrong in the past, but how we all could do much better starting today.

Importantly, the equity audit revealed that, when it comes to diversity, every local union is different. This creates challenges when talking about representing diversity across our structures. Some local unions are doing incredibly well while others face significant challenges.

These conversations were very difficult. Equity coordinators reported they were often ignored, told



there was no time to or no point in conducting an equity audit or, to the shame of our union, were sworn at and verbally abused. This behaviour shows that some local unions have incredible amounts of work to do in eliminating discriminatory behaviour and to understand that equity and representation are integral to our present and our future.

On the other end of the spectrum, many local unions embraced the equity audit as an opportunity to live out the values of the labour movement. One local union, which did not have a particularly good grasp on the diversity of its membership or its leadership, sent out a survey to get a better idea and gained important knowledge. Instead of turning their backs on a challenging conversation, the Local embraced the opportunity and found new ways of exploring diversity. As a next step, the Local developed new benchmarks and goals to assist in measuring success in the future.

The equity audit uncovered many positive and compelling initiatives and stories that are helping to move our union towards being a more equitable organization.

Another local union that was, at first, resistant to the initiative decided to gather the entirety of its equity standing committees one Saturday afternoon and have an open and honest conversation about the diversity of the membership and the representation imbalances that became obvious during the audit process. This gathering provided an opportunity for local union members and leaders to have an honest and productive dialogue about the barriers to equity that exist and the actions that are necessary to remove those barriers.

Recognizing the isolation that many members who identify with an equity-seeking group face, one local union in an isolated resort town took this matter to heart and hired a bus to take their Filipino members to a cultural festival taking place a few hours away. This activity demonstrated to these members that their local union recognized the unique challenges they face and showcased the local unions' ability to act as a strong ally in diversity.

In one northern community, a number of women from separate local unions across the jurisdiction have banded together to form one area women's committee. The committee and its activities have expanded over time. Members of that committee report that there are now more people to carry the load of organizing events and a larger pool of participants that get involved. This change has increased the participation of women in the area.

Each of these stories represents the creativity that our local unions are using to actively engage members who might otherwise be marginalized.

Unifor's national and regional structures have recognized the discrimination inherent in our society and our union, and made leaps forward in addressing those inequities. Our organization has made many efforts to create pathways for people from diverse groups to access leadership opportunities and opportunities to provide input into our union's operations. These efforts have included the creation of equity standing committees at the local and regional level, the development of the women's advocate program, hosting equity conferences and caucuses, requiring human rights training of all local and national union leaders and staff, providing training for workers from equity-seeking groups and adding equity seats to council and convention delegate numbers.

Building equity is both a formal and informal process. Across our organization people are building equity every day. By establishing informal norms and practices and engaging in formal and informal conversations we are creating the pathways and networks that lead to equity and diverse representation. Regional Directors do this with councils, councils do this with locals and locals are doing this with each other.

Unfortunately, this equity audit has shown that our efforts, while an important step forward, have moved us only part of the way towards the goal post.

During the audit process, many members reported being approved to attend equity related activities, and then passed over for attendance in the general activities. The reasons given to them by their local leadership were that they had already participated in an event. The additional spaces and opportunities provided through equity conferences and delegate spots are meant to increase the profile of members from equity-seeking groups to participate and to act as a pathway to equitable opportunities for representation in the broader union. However, it appears that that pathway is not always open. Again, the structures Unifor has put in place are only getting the organization part of the way there.

Many members identify or are identifiable as being a member of more than one equity-seeking group. The intersectional nature of diversity causes conflicts when equity committees meet at the same time. For example, a worker of colour who is also a woman will sometimes have limited access or the local union suggests they should choose between attending the local union women's committee meeting or the Aboriginal and worker of colour committee meeting. Similarly, an LGBTQ worker who also identifies as having a disability will have to choose between the two identity groups if the committee meetings occur

simultaneously. While efforts have been made at the national, regional and local levels to prevent this from occurring, it still happens across the union.

Conversations with the equity coordinators also revealed that local union leadership may put up barriers to the participation of members from equity-seeking groups. Often these barriers are unintentional and sometimes they are purposeful. Local union leaders receive immense amounts of information that is meant to be shared with members. But the amount of information local union leaders receive is sometimes overwhelming and leaders are forced to decide what information is high priority and what is not. In addition, some local union leaders reported that local union budgets are insufficient to allow for participation in all of the opportunities provided via the national union. This causes the need to prioritize one type of activity over another which may lead to the exclusion of some opportunities, including those related to building equity and diversity in the local union. This is a serious challenge across the union structure.

At the local union level, language barriers can result in a member being unable to read their own collective agreement. Some local unions have tackled this by hiring translators and even hiring their own members to provide translation services and information sessions or answer questions. One local identified that their demographics included a high number of members where English was a second language. The local offered a member lost time and had the member translate for the meeting. Over time, this tripled the number of members at the membership meetings.

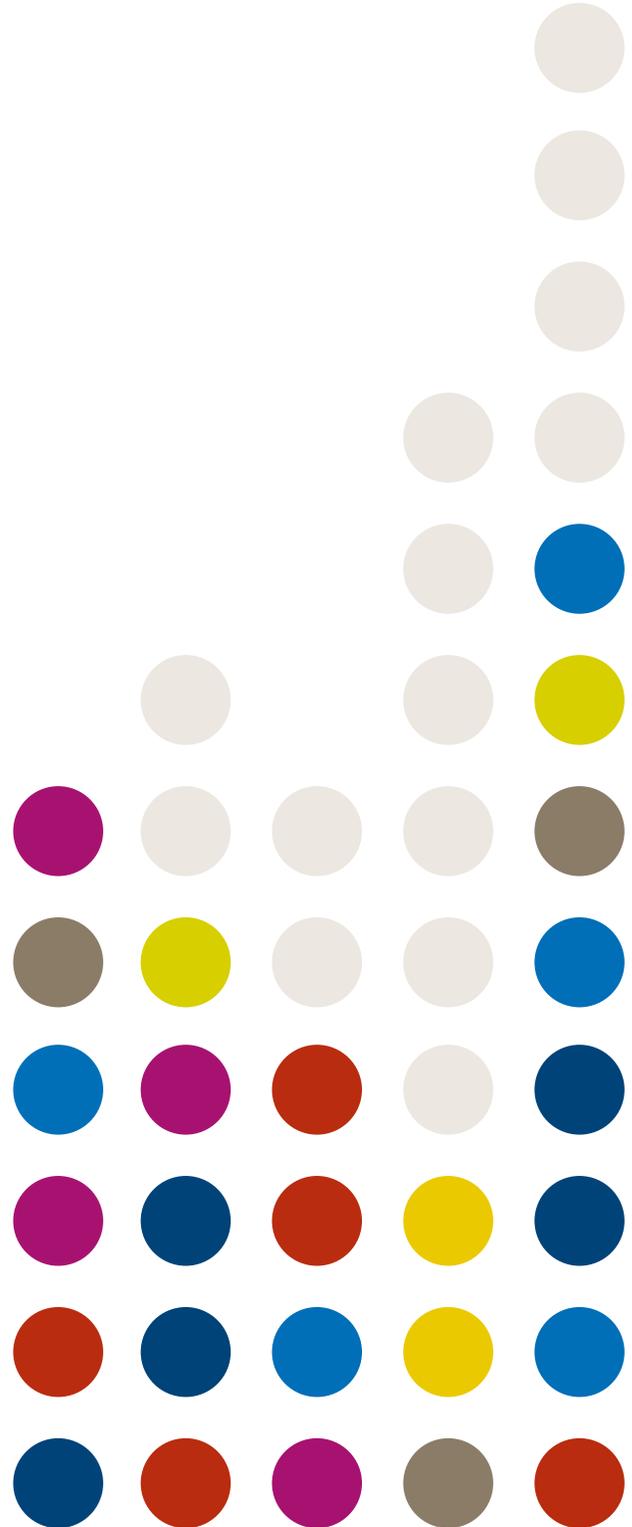
Barriers are also put up by employers. Without effective leave provisions in a collective agreement, employers have the ability to block a member's request for time off to participate in a union event. Discriminatory attitudes can lead to discriminatory

approval processes for time off. However, employer power is not absolute in this regard. Local unions can bargain leave provisions that reduce or eliminate that power.

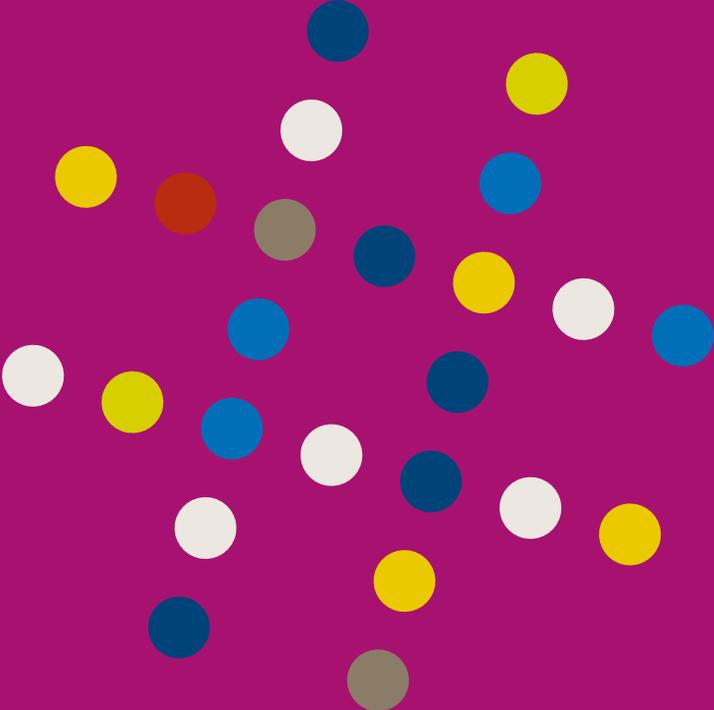
Employers may also participate in discriminatory hiring practices which lead to inequitable employment opportunities at the community level.

The equity audit also found that despite its systems set up to reduce barriers, the national union has a tendency to put up barriers as well. Many of the national union's information pamphlets are translated in only English and French, leaving a large minority of our membership unable to read materials related to anti-racism, homophobia, Islamophobia and more. Furthermore, if the pathway to becoming a staff member is often through the path to local union leadership, barriers at the local level lead to a less diverse pool of people from which to hire for staff positions.

Many members reported they feel the national union does not look beyond the obvious when making hiring decisions which leads to inequitable representation across the union. It is perceived there is somewhat of a glass ceiling on how far up the ladder people from diverse groups are able to climb. While there has been progress in this in this area, there is still much work to do.



# Equity Audit Results: By the Numbers



# Equity Audit Results: By the Numbers

Representing diversity means ensuring that each equity-seeking group is represented in the structures of our union at every level: from local union stewards to discussion leaders; from bargaining committee representatives to national union leadership; and everywhere in between. The equity audit set out to measure the diversity of our membership and diversity of people in leadership positions at every level. It also means ensuring Unifor members feel welcome and safe to openly and explicitly identify with an equity-seeking group if they so choose. The following sections outline the findings of the audit and our progress in representing diversity.

## Coverage Rate

Over the course of nine months, Unifor's equity coordinators conducted semi-structured interviews with almost 470 local unions. More than two-thirds of Unifor's local unions are included in the analysis.

The locals that did participate in the equity audit represent a total of 80% of Unifor's 315,000 members. This is a much higher participation rate than was expected given the tight timelines built in to this project.

## Summary of Total Response to and Coverage of the Equity Audit

Local unions participating in the equity audit



66%

Total share of membership covered by the survey responses



80%



## Diversity of Unifor Membership: Estimates and Identified Members

Results of the equity audit show that Unifor’s membership is quite diverse; approximately 52% of members have identified or are identifiable in the workplace as belonging to at least one equity-seeking group. Overall, survey participants reported that 15% of our members are workers of colour, 1% identified as Aboriginal workers, 1% openly identified as LGBTQ and 2% identified as a worker with a disability. 28% of our members are women and 12% are identified as young workers.

The results for workers of colour and women are approximately what we would expect given the industrial and geographic breakdown of our union.

The results are much lower than expected for Aboriginal workers, LGBTQ workers, workers with a disability and young workers. Previous work estimating Unifor’s demographic profile found that workers with disability are likely to make up approximately 8% of Unifor’s membership and young workers are likely to make up 35% of our membership. This same work estimated that Aboriginal workers

and LGBTQ workers are each likely to make up approximately 4% of Unifor’s membership.

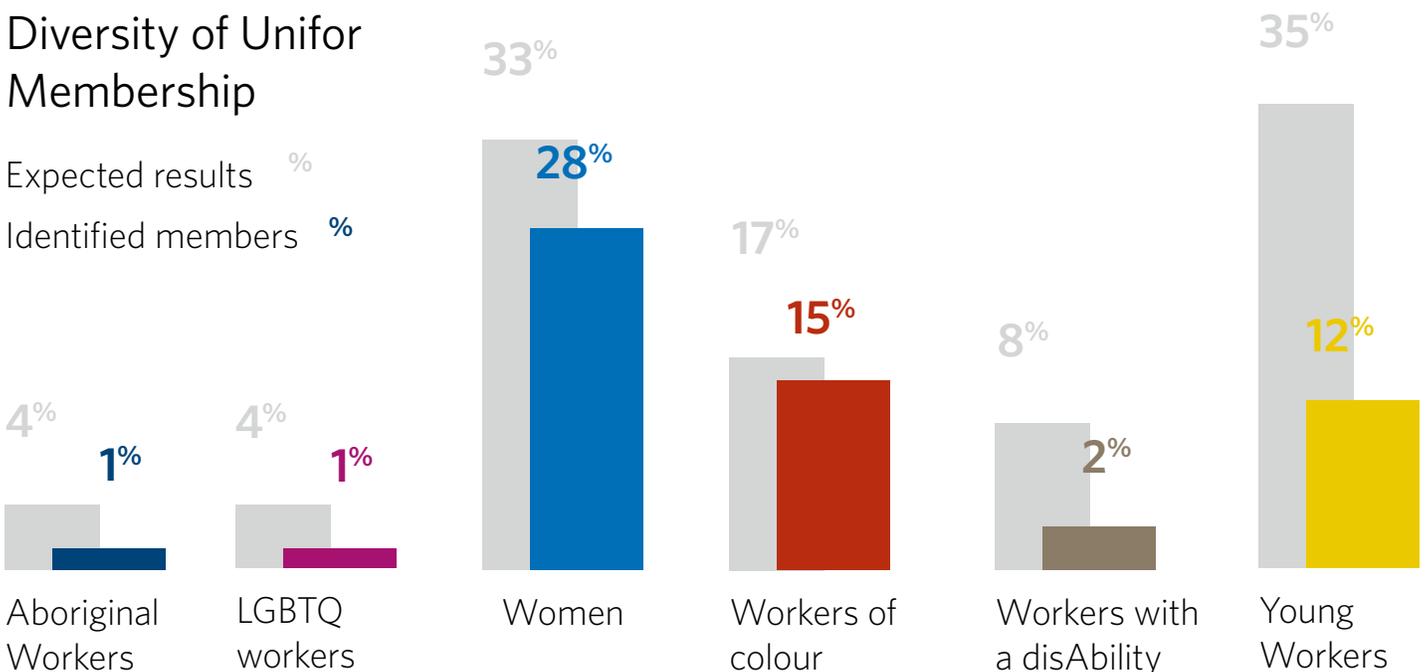
The relatively low numbers uncovered through the equity audit could be the result of three main issues:

- 1) Workers are not identifying as a member of the equity-seeking group(s) in the workplace;
- 2) Workers from these equity-seeking groups are not being hired into Unifor represented workplaces at a rate that would indicate equity in the hiring process; and
- 3) Some local union leaders do not know their membership well enough to identify the diversity of the workers they represent.

*Note: Numbers may not add due to intersectionality (i.e. many people identify as being a member of more than one group. For example a member who is a worker of colour and a woman is counted in both categories but is counted only once in the total). The equity audit took intersectionality into account by asking questions about members identifying as being a member of two or more equity-seeking groups.*

## Diversity of Unifor Membership

Expected results %  
Identified members %





## Diversity and Representation: Local Union Representatives

These results lead us to ask some important questions: why might workers who belong to an equity-seeking group feel unsafe identifying in the workplace and in our union? And: what can we do to become a more welcoming organization for a diverse array of workers in Canada?

As you will see in the following pages, the level of diversity in the labour force and in Unifor's membership varies from region to region. For example, the Atlantic Region reports the highest share of membership who are women and young workers (44% and 20% respectively) and a relatively low share of members who are workers of colour (5%). At the same time, British Columbia reports the highest share of membership who are workers of colour (34%) and a lower share of members who identify as living with a disability (1%). The Prairie Region reports the highest share of members who are Aboriginal workers (3%). This region also reports a relatively high share of workers of colour (23%).

Quebec reports the lowest share of members who are identifiable as being from an equity-seeking group (38%), far behind the Prairies at 52%. The Atlantic Region reports the highest share of members who have identified or are identifiable as being a part of an equity-seeking group at 62%, followed by Ontario at 55%. Table 2 provides the breakdown of the diversity of Unifor's membership.

Overall these numbers show that Unifor's membership is diverse, though not as diverse as would be expected given the demographics of Canada's labour force.

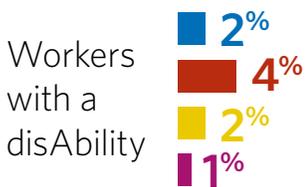
In addition to questions about the diversity of local union membership, the equity coordinators gathered information on the diversity of local union representatives including: elected leaders, union stewards and bargaining committee members.

Overall, the survey found that local union representatives are not as diverse as the membership they represent. The table on the next page provides a breakdown of the data.

While approximately 52% of Unifor members identified as belonging to an equity-seeking group, only 42% of local union executive and 40% of union stewards identify in the same way. Furthermore, people from equity-seeking groups make up less than one third (31%) of the bargaining committee positions surveyed across the country.

For some these numbers may be higher than expected; for others these numbers are lower than expected. No matter your expectation, what these numbers make clear is that Unifor has work to do to ensure that the diversity of the membership is represented at every level of our organization.

## Diversity of Local Union Representatives Separated by Equity-Seeking Group



By disaggregating the data to look at the results for specific equity-seeking groups the data shows that when it comes to representation, Unifor is doing well in some areas and has a long way to go in others. For example, the audit found significant representation gaps for workers of colour, young workers and women across the board, though the gap is wider for workers of colour and young workers than it is for women. Workers of colour are identified as making up 15% of Unifor membership but hold only 8% of executive positions, bargaining committee positions and union steward positions across the country. Closing this gap will require Unifor to almost double the number of workers of colour in each of these positions – increasing the number of workers of colour who are elected to executive committees by 88%, who are union stewards by 88% and who are elected to bargaining committees by 88%

28% of Unifor’s membership is women. While the representation gap is significantly smaller than for workers of colour, a gap continues to exist. Closing the representation gap for women will mean increasing the number of women who are elected to executive boards by 17%, who are union stewards by 12% and who are elected to bargaining committees by 40%.

Young workers make up approximately 12% of Unifor’s membership. The representation gap that exists for young workers is large as well. Young workers make up 7% of members sitting on executive committees, 8% of union stewards and only 4% of bargaining committee representatives.

At the same time workers with a disability, workers identifying as LGBTQ and Aboriginal workers show that the representation gaps exist between Unifor’s membership and the general population as opposed to between Unifor’s membership and members’ representatives. As stated above, given the geographic and industrial make-up of Unifor it was expected that the share of workers identifying as Aboriginal, LGBTQ or having a disability would be much higher than it is. This means that either local union leaders do not know their membership or there is discrimination in the hiring processes implemented by employers. In all likelihood, there is a combination of both.



## Diversity and Representation: A Regional Breakdown

The equity audit also revealed that representation gaps vary from province to province and group to group. Particularly, the representation gaps are larger in provinces where an equity-seeking group forms a larger share of the membership. For example, 44% of Unifor members in Atlantic Canada are women, but only 25% of the seats on local union executive boards are filled by women. On the other side of the country, 34% of our members in British Columbia are workers of colour, but only 9% of seats on local union executive boards are filled by workers of colour.

### **The British Columbia Region**

British Columbia has the highest share of members who are workers of colour of any region across the country. In BC, workers of colour also face a particularly large representation gap. Workers of colour make up 34% of the total membership but fill only nine per cent of seats on executive boards, only 13% of union steward positions and fill only 15% of seats on bargaining committees.

Workers who identify as LGBTQ make up only one per cent of the membership in BC but fill four per cent of executive board seats and less than one per cent of seats on bargaining committees.

Women make up 23% of Unifor's membership in BC. When it comes to executive board positions the representation gap is relatively small – women fill 19% of the executive board seats – however the representation gap grows significantly for union steward positions and seats on bargaining committees.

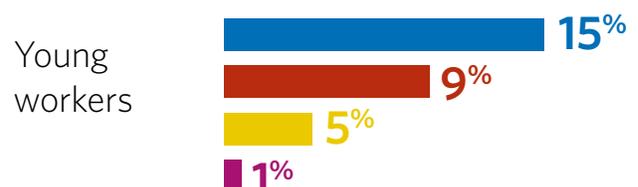
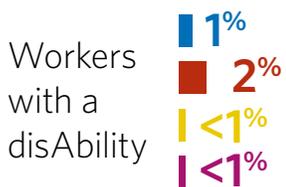
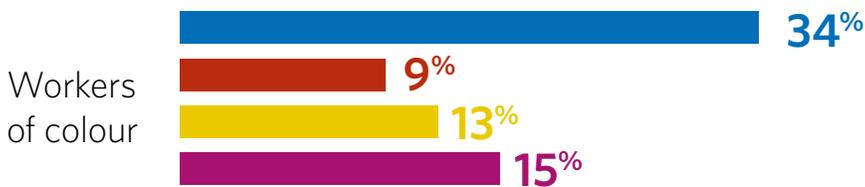
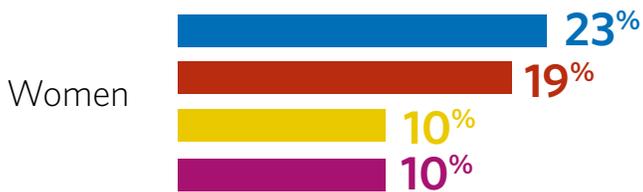
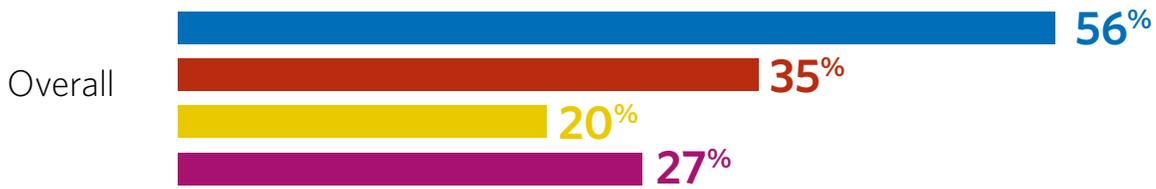
Young workers face an astounding representation gap at the bargaining table. While the gap shrinks with union steward and executive positions, there remains a meaningful gap for young workers in BC.

Workers with a disability and Aboriginal workers each make up one per cent of the total membership in British Columbia. Both face representation gaps on bargaining committees with less than one per cent of seats filled by an Aboriginal worker or worker with a disability. Workers with a disability also face a representation gap in the position of union steward; however have a higher representation on executive committees than the share of BC members who have identified as a worker with a disability. Aboriginal workers do not face a representation gap at the executive committee level or as union stewards as compared to the membership. However, Aboriginal workers, workers who identify as LGBTQ and workers with a disability are all under-represented in Unifor's membership compared to the general population.



# Diversity and Representation in British Columbia, Survey Results

*\*Note: Numbers may not add up due to intersectionality*



## The Prairies Region

Just over 50% of Unifor's membership in the Prairies is identifiable as being a member of an equity-seeking group. Workers of colour face a large representation gap in the region. 23% of the total membership is identified as workers of colour, but workers of colour fill only eight per cent of seats on executive boards, 12% of union steward positions and only 10% of bargaining committee positions. Essentially, membership in the Prairies needs to double representation of workers of colour at every level in order to close the gap.

The equity audit also revealed two areas where the representation in the Prairies appears to be doing quite well: Aboriginal workers and women. Aboriginal workers are identified as making up about three per cent of Unifor's total membership (the highest of any region) and fill seven per cent of seats on executive boards, four per cent of union steward position and hold six per cent of seats on bargaining committees.

These three measures are also the highest of Aboriginal workers of each region across the country.

Similarly, women show a representation gap of 0% on executive boards and a higher representation level among union stewards (25% of membership compared to 29% of union stewards). Women fill 20% of seats on bargaining committees.

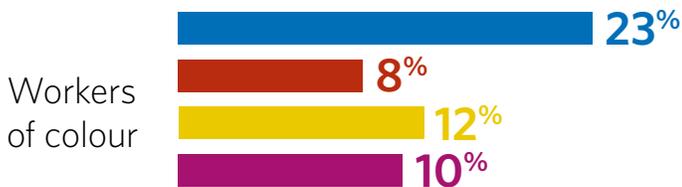
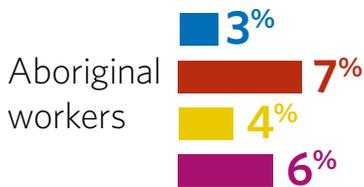
Workers who identify as LGBTQ and workers identifying as having a disability make up 1% and 2% of the membership respectively. A representation gap for workers with a disability is present at every level in the Prairies with less than one per cent of union steward positions filled by this group. The data shows there is no existing representation identified for workers identifying as LGBTQ. Workers with a disability and workers identifying as LGBTQ are under-identified in Unifor's Prairie membership indicating that the representation gaps exist at a much deeper level for these groups

In this region young workers make up the largest share of representatives on bargaining committees compared to all other regions across the country. The largest gap for young workers in the Prairies is at the executive committee level.



# Diversity and Representation in the Prairies, Survey Results

*\*Note: Numbers may not add up due to intersectionality*



## The Ontario Region

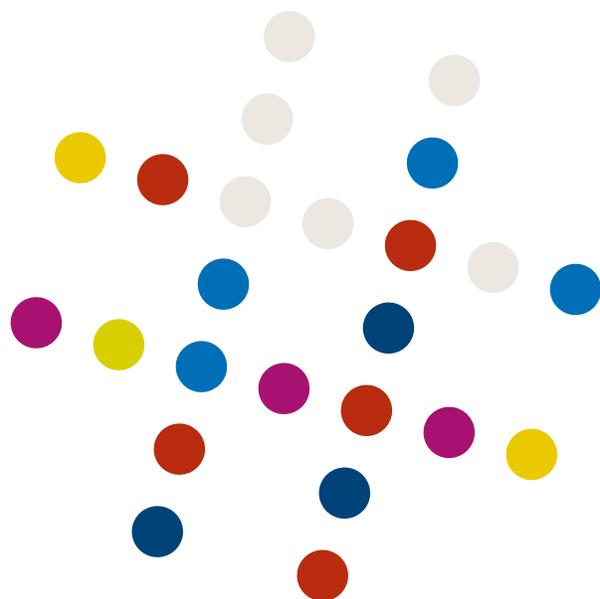
In Ontario, 55% of members are identified as being a member of at least one equity-seeking group. In the Region, workers of colour face a representation gap at every level measured. Workers of colour make up 17% of the Ontario membership but fill only 11% of seats on executive boards, nine per cent of union steward positions and 12% of positions on bargaining committees.

Though a representation gap for women continues to exist in Ontario, it is relatively small compared to other provinces. Women make up 32% of union stewards in Ontario, however, removing women's advocates from the data does show a significant representation gap which indicates women are not being elected for other steward positions at an equitable rate.

Young workers in Ontario also face a significant representation gap. Ontario needs to increase the share of executive positions, union steward positions and bargaining committee positions filled by young workers by approximately one and a half times in order to make up the gap.

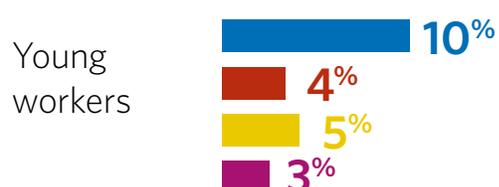
Aboriginal workers are identified as making up only one per cent of Unifor's Ontario membership. Workers identifying as LGBTQ make up less than one per cent of the membership and workers with a disability make up two per cent. Members from each of these three groups hold a higher share of positions on executive boards than is identified in Ontario's membership and have similar levels of representation as union stewards and on bargaining committees.

At the same time, each of these groups is under-identified in Unifor's membership as compared to the diversity of the workforce.



# Diversity and Representation in Ontario, Survey Results

\*Note: Numbers may not add up due to intersectionality



## The Quebec Region

At just 38%, the Quebec locals report the lowest share of membership that identified as part of an equity-seeking group. Women and young workers make up almost equal shares of the Quebec membership at 17% and 16% respectively. Workers of colour make up only four per cent of the membership and identified Aboriginal workers make up less than one per cent. Workers who identify as LGBTQ make up just one per cent of the membership and workers with a disability make up two per cent of the Quebec membership.

Again, the equity audit found that workers of colour and women face significant representation gaps. Workers of colour make up four per cent but fill only two per cent of the seats on the executive committee and one per cent of the seats on bargaining committees in Quebec. Workers of colour fill three per cent of union steward positions facing a greater representation gap in this area.

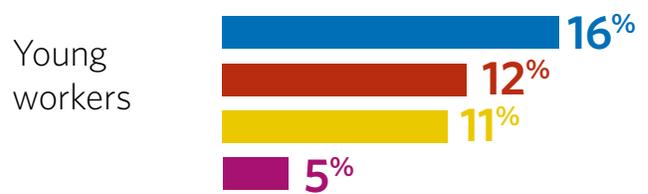
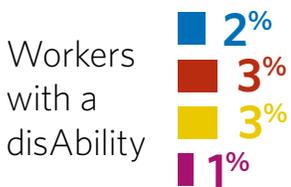
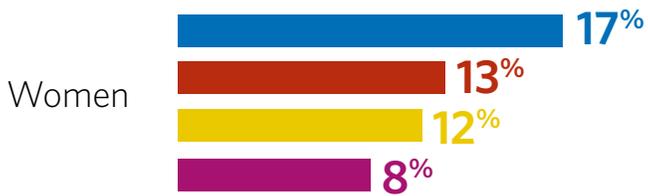
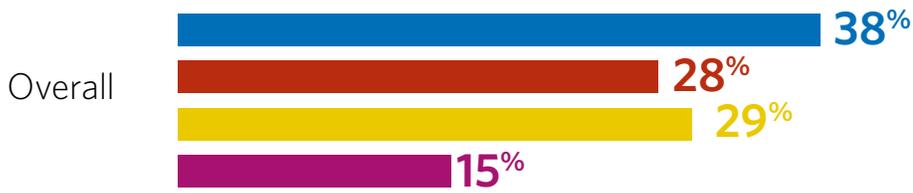
Aboriginal workers, workers who identify as LGBTQ and workers with a disability face smaller representation gaps in the Quebec Region as well. In fact, workers with a disability make up two per cent of the total membership in Quebec but fill three per cent of executive leadership positions and three per cent of union steward positions. Each of these three groups - Aboriginal workers, workers identifying as LGBTQ and workers with a disability - are under-identified in Unifor's membership compared to the diversity of the workforce.

Young workers in Quebec face the smallest representation gap of any region across the country. Young workers make up 16% of the membership, 12% of the executive seats and 11% of the union steward positions. The largest gap for this group is the share of bargaining committee seats are filled by young workers.



# Diversity and Representation in Quebec, Survey Results

\*Note: Numbers may not add up due to intersectionality



## The Atlantic Region

Overall, the Atlantic region reports the highest share of total membership who belongs to an equity-seeking group. Unifor's Atlantic region has the highest share of membership who are women - 44% in total. The representation gap for women is also the largest in Atlantic Canada of any region across the country. While women make up over 40% of Unifor's membership in Atlantic Canada only 25% of executive board positions are filled by women, only 28% of union steward positions are held by women and only 22% of women have a spot on the bargaining committee.

The gap for workers of colour is also significantly high. Workers of colour make up a total of five per cent of Unifor's membership in Atlantic Canada but fill one per cent of executive board positions, two per cent of union steward positions and only one per cent of bargaining committee positions.

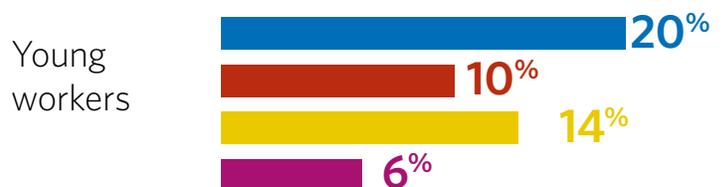
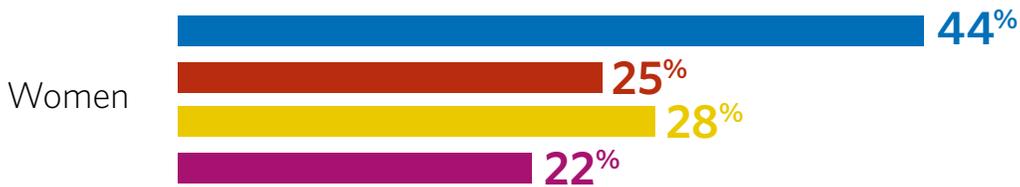
Young workers face a representation gap as well. The data shows young workers are identified as making up 20% of Unifor's Atlantic region membership but fill only 10% of executive positions, 14% of union steward positions and six percent of bargaining committee positions.

The data on the following page does not show that representation gaps exist for Aboriginal worker, LGBTQ workers or workers with a disability, however, that is compared to how our members have openly identified in the workplace. Each of these three groups appears to be under represented in comparison to the diversity of Canada's labour force. This indicates that the representation gaps exist between the labour force and Unifor membership. Closing the gap means organizing workers and hiring workers from equity-seeking groups.



# Diversity and Representation in Atlantic Canada, Survey Results

*\*Note: Numbers may not add up due to intersectionality*



## Diversity and Representation: National Leadership and National Staff

Just as local unions must be held accountable for diversity in representation so, too, must the national office. In addition to the equity audit of local unions, the national office has conducted a survey of national staff and leadership in order to gain a better understanding of our success in representing our members across the country.

Table 9 outlines the diversity of Unifor's national leadership team and national staff. A column reiterating the identified diversity of Unifor's membership allows for ease of comparison between groups.

At the leadership level, Unifor does very well in terms of representation of Aboriginal workers, workers of colour, women and workers with disability. Unifor's representation of diversity falls short when it comes to workers who identify as LGBTQ, and young workers. Overall, 50% of the national leadership belong to an equity-seeking group. This is almost exactly comparable to the total membership

At the national staff level, Unifor's representation of diversity is mixed. Women and workers with a disability have significant levels of representation within the national staff group of Unifor. Representation of women is essentially equal to the expected share of membership made up by women. Representation of workers with a disability is higher than what is perceived given the results of the survey and on par with the share expected given Unifor's industrial and geographic make up.

Staff identifying as LGBTQ is also fairly close to the expected share given the diversity of the labour force in Canada.

At the national staff level, young workers face the largest gap. On the one hand, this is expected as young workers generally need to develop skills and expertise in their particular area before becoming local leaders and bargaining committee members or national staff. On the other hand, the gap is the largest gap of any comparator groups across the entire audit.

**Again, these results lead us to ask some important questions: Why and where do these representation gaps exist and what can Unifor do to reduce barriers to representation and close the gaps?**

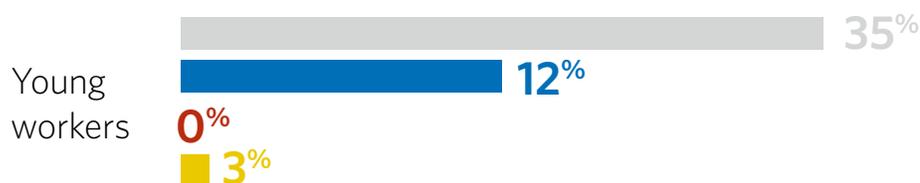
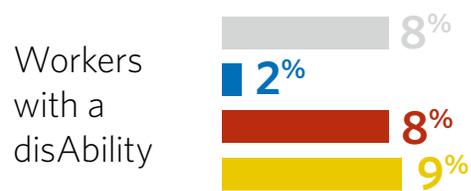
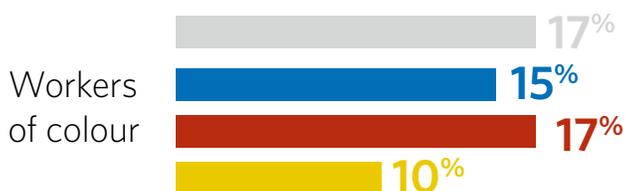
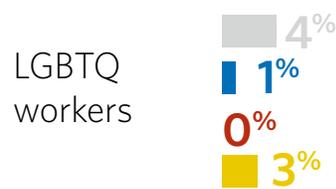
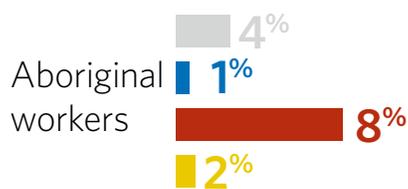
*\*Note: For the purposes of this section, national leadership refers to elected leaders (including National President, National Secretary-Treasurer and Quebec Director and three Regional Directors) and Assistants to the President. The staff survey numbers are reported based on a survey response rate of less than 50%.*



# Diversity of National Leadership and Staff

\*Note: Numbers may not add up due to intersectionality

Expectation Based on Canadian Labour Force    Membership Based on Local Union Survey    National Leadership    National Staff



## Local Union Standing Committees

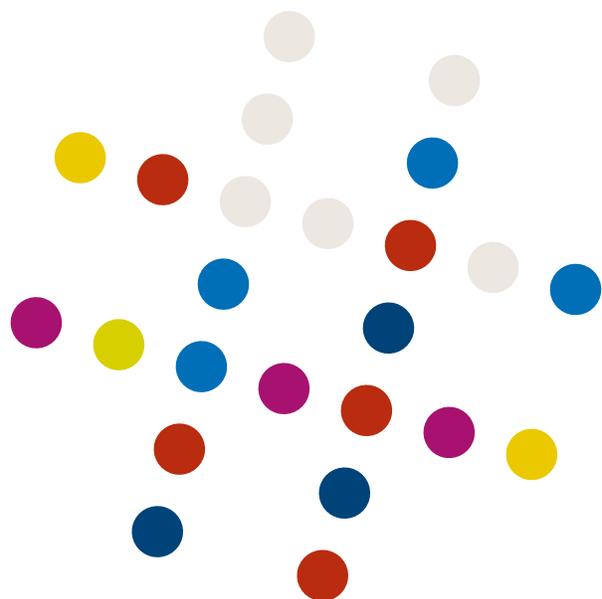
Unifor's constitution provides that each local union should establish a number of standing committees, including standing committees set up to represent and advocate for the interests of people from equity-seeking groups. The relevant standing committees as listed in the constitution include: human rights committee, LGBTQ (Pride) committee, Aboriginal and Workers of Colour committee, Workers with a DisAbility committee, Women's committee and the Young Workers committee.

During the equity audit, the equity coordinators asked questions about whether or not local unions had established these committees and whether the committees were active. The equity audit found that standing committees relating to equity are not being utilized to the extent called for in the constitution. For instance, only 10% of locals that responded to the question regarding standing committees reported having an active Aboriginal and Workers of Colour committee and only nine per cent reported having an active Pride committee.

Overall, the equity audit found that only about 10% of Unifor locals have active standing committees relating to equity. The reasons given for not having these standing committees included: no interest from membership; membership does not have enough time; membership is spread over a large geographical area; and the local is too small to support all of the standing committees required.

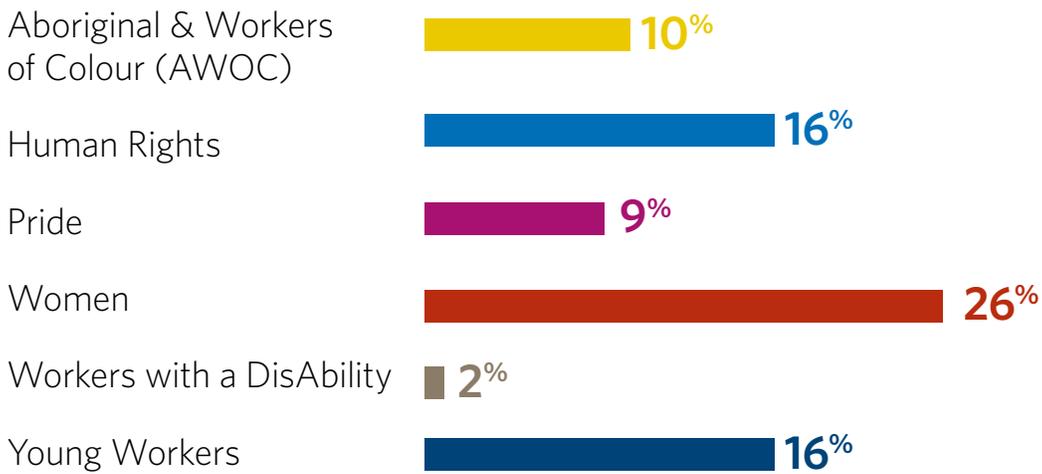
The constitution also requires all local union executive board officers and all workplace representatives to take a week long, 40-hour human rights course. During the equity audit interviews, Unifor's equity coordinators asked questions about human rights training attendance. Overwhelmingly, it was found that local union board officers and workplace representatives have not been attending this training. Only 32% of locals reported having sent at least one executive board representative to the human rights training. That number decreases dramatically if each board officer or workplace representative is counted instead of the local union as a whole. Reasons for not taking the training ranged from being unaware that the human rights training was a constitutional requirement to the training being an overburden on resources including time and the local union budget.

These findings clearly show that the systems set up in Unifor's constitution and day to day practices to encourage equity, representation and training have encouraged progress, but also show there is much work to be done to ensure the systems are working as intended.



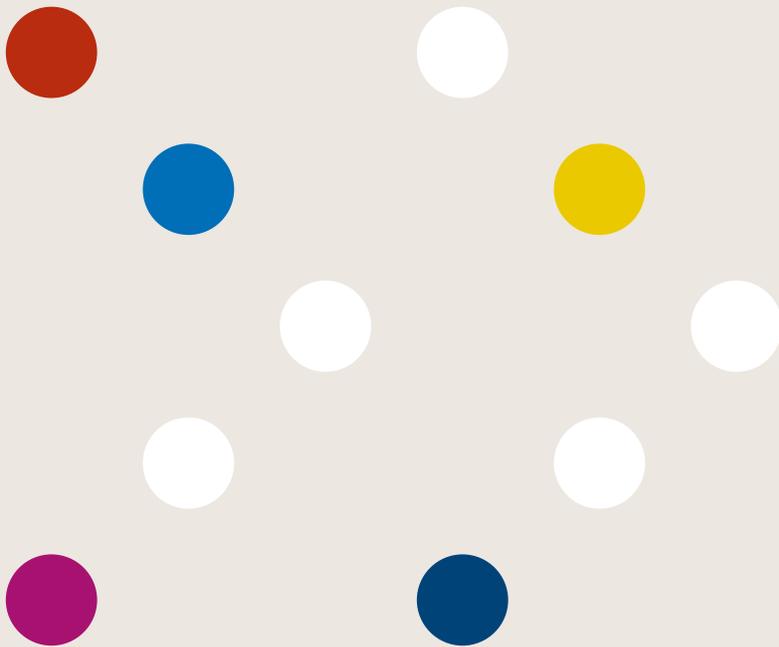
## Local Union Standing Committees, Select Information

Share of Locals That Have Committees\*



*\*Refers only to locals responding to survey questions regarding standing committees.*

# What We Heard: Action Items for Consideration

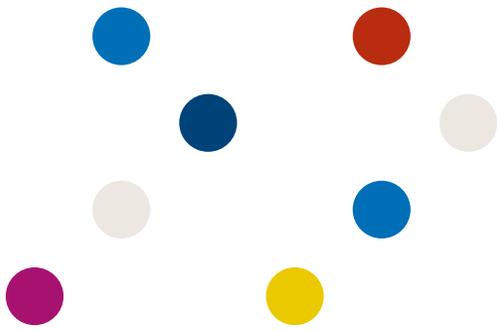


# What We Heard: Action Items for Consideration

During the interview process, equity coordinators asked each local union the following question: what ideas do you have to help create a more inclusive union?

The ideas were creative, wide ranging, and included everything from collective bargaining efforts to effective strategies for celebrating the diversity of the membership. These ideas have been organized into seven categories and are included below. These action items should be considered by every level of our union as small and large actions that could contribute to the development of a more inclusive and diverse Unifor.

The categories for action include: national union efforts; local union efforts; collective bargaining; celebrating our members' diversity; union structure; government regulation and legislation; and building on the Local Union Task Force.



## National Union Efforts

First and foremost, the national union must lead by example and continuously model inclusivity and diversity in everything it does – from conferences and educational opportunities to staffing decisions and conventions. The national union must provide opportunities for all Unifor members to discuss equity and representation and offer opportunities to learn more about how to promote diversity throughout the organization.

Action items for consideration include:

- » Develop an employment equity framework requiring Unifor National office to engage in proactive practices to increase representation of six specific groups: Aboriginal workers, workers of colour, workers with a disability, LGBTQ workers, young workers and women workers.
- » Continue to encourage diverse representation at conventions, councils, meetings and in educational opportunities at the national and regional levels. In support of this the Human Rights department should develop an equity statement.
- » Organize a president’s summit to discuss the importance of equity and diversity in our union and the methods for proactively becoming a more representative local union.
- » Develop a mechanism to assist local unions in collecting and recording membership demographics.
- » The mandatory human rights training for local union leaders and workplace representatives should be made more easily accessible and less time

and resource intensive to enable more local union leaders and workplace representatives to access the training. Consider an accountability mechanism to monitor local union participation in human rights training.

- » Translate select national union materials into additional languages spoken by a significant number of Unifor members. Materials for additional translation could include materials marking national days and weeks highlighting specific equity groups, and materials outlining the importance of equity and inclusion at Unifor as a start.
- » Continue to provide national union resources to human rights related departments to ensure the work of the equity audit is continued into the next phase.
- » The national union should source best practices related to building equity and diversity from jurisdictions around the world.
- » Develop a training module for national staff with a focus on raising awareness of equity related matters and solutions.
- » Appoint an accessibility coordinator for councils and conventions.
- » Apply inclusive practices toolkit to all union events including: meetings, marches, conferences, and conventions.

## Local Union Efforts

Local unions have a primary responsibility in promoting diversity and inclusion in Unifor structures and activities.

Action items for consideration include:

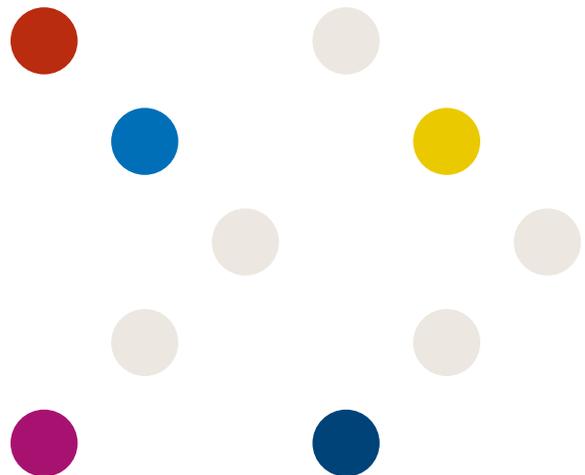
- » Employ bargaining surveys prior to opening collective bargaining that include questions on demographics and bargaining priorities (as recommended above, the national union will facilitate the development of this tool).
- » Facilitate understanding of local union and bargaining unit materials for our members who do not speak English or French fluently. Clarify guidelines around translation services and responsibilities.
- » Make local union materials and equipment available to Unifor members to support participation in local community events and celebrations.

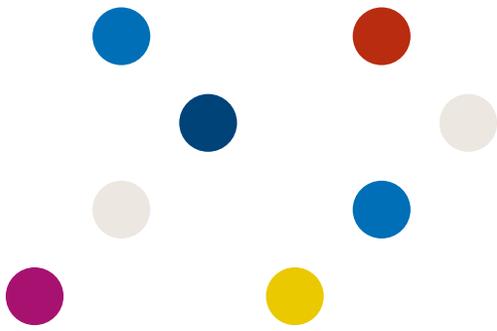
## The Role of Collective Bargaining

The collective bargaining process can play a critical, though often invisible role in promoting equity in the workplace and the union. Who is on the bargaining committee is often just as important as what is bargained. In this way, staff reps and bargaining committees play an important role in building equity.

Action items for consideration include:

- » Continue to encourage local unions to negotiate time to meet with, welcome and inform new Unifor members as they are hired into the workplace.
- » Bargain effective union leave language that removes employer power to deny leave based on being identified as belonging to an equity-seeking group.
- » Bargain employment equity language in order to enable local unions to discuss employment equity with employers and be proactive in assisting in the design of the recruitment and hiring process to increase diversity in employee population and thus Unifor's membership.





## Celebrating Our Members' Diversity

Actively celebrating and highlighting the diversity of our membership is a necessary and important part of becoming a more welcoming and equitable organization.

Action items for consideration include:

- » Continue to highlight equity pages on national and local union websites and ensuring the pages are kept up to date.
- » Organize diverse cultural music and artistic representation at events.
- » Conduct an internal awareness campaign to highlight and profile workers and activists who represent diverse contingencies within the organization.
- » Assign an equity coordinator to connect with locals, national staff and regional councils, gather data and provide tools to increase diversity in representation at the local level. Re-evaluate the equity coordinator position after one year to improve upon structure and ensure continuous advancement towards Unifor's equity related goals.

## Union Structure

The equity audit has shown that some of the structures related to building and promoting equity and diversity are not working as intended by Unifor's constitution. These structures are an important avenue for ensuring a diversity of concerns and potential solutions are discussed at local, regional and national levels. To build on the structures currently in place action items for consideration include:

- » Adjust and strengthen local equity standing committee structures by expanding committees to the area level when there is not enough interest or membership at a specific local union.
- » Clarify the role of equity standing committees at the local, area, Regional/Quebec council levels to ensure standing committee representatives are more engaged in the activities in their region and work closely with the regional and Quebec leadership to provide input into decision making.
- » Local unions, Quebec and regional councils and the national union should develop a plan to ensure the participation of regional standing committee members at regional council meetings, Canadian Council and conventions.
- » Provide space for all five equity caucuses to meet together and discuss the intersectional nature of the issues that are advocated for by each group and to build solidarity in advocating for issues and policy change affecting specific groups.

## Government Regulation and Legislation

At the federal level, employers are legislated to engage in proactive practices to increase the representation of six specific groups within their employee population including: Aboriginal workers, workers of colour, women, LGBTQ workers, young workers and workers with a disability.

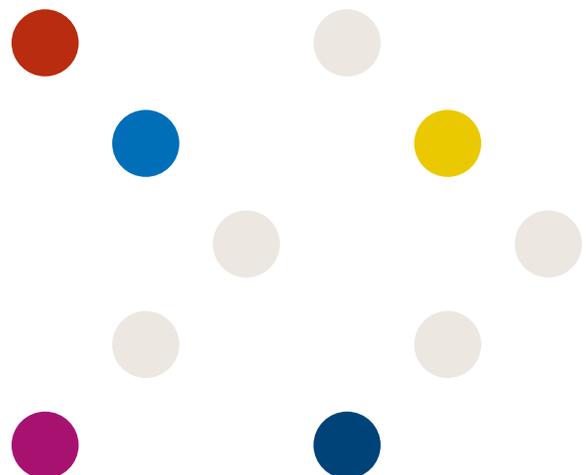
Action items for consideration include:

- » Advocate that provincial and territorial governments institute employment equity legislation similar to the federal legislation. Ensure that all six equity-seeking groups indicated above are included and that the legislation is enforceable.
- » National staff and local unions representing members in federally regulated sectors should work with employers to collect and analyse employment equity data. Unifor staff, locals and workplace representatives will be active in engaging in all steps of the employment equity process, including enforcement of employer obligations.
- » Regional council equity standing committees and equity caucuses should bring an equity lenses to review all equity related workplace legislations that impacts representation and inclusivity.
- » Continue to be a politically active union and maintain a strong record of allyship with our members and their communities.

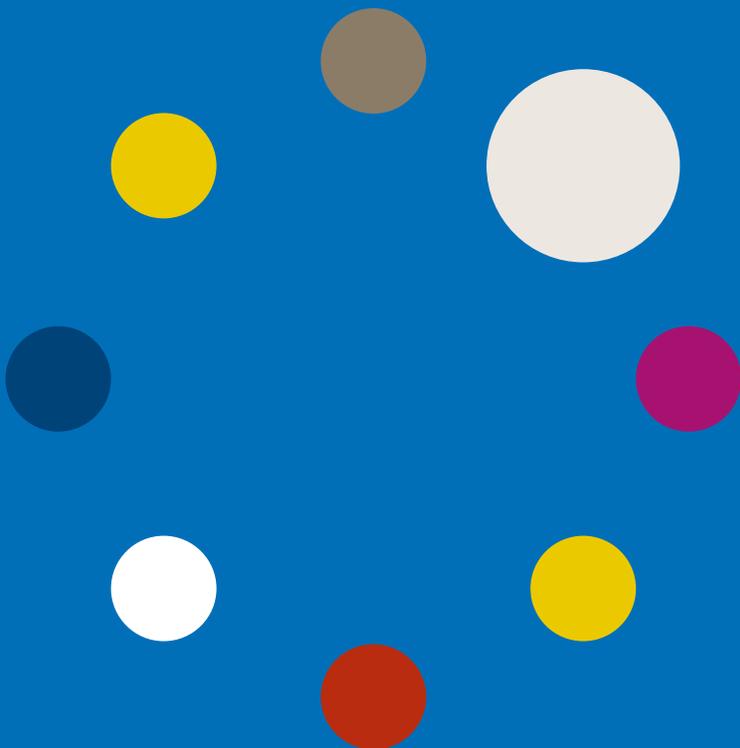
## Building on the Local Union Task Force

A number of suggestions coming out of the equity audit can build on and compliment the activities underway as part of the Local Union Task Force recommendations.

- » Mentorship Program: reinforce efforts to build a focus on diversity of participants (mentors and mentees) into the mentorship program.
- » New member orientation kit: Build on current efforts to include diversity and inclusion related materials in the new member orientation kit with an additional focus on Unifor's approach to equity and inclusion and highlighting the importance of diversity to our union.



# Appendix A: Methodology



# Appendix A: Methodology

Unifor's equity audit was conducted over a nine month period. During that time, Unifor hired two equity coordinators who engaged with local union leaders in person and over the phone to gather quantitative and qualitative information and provide a deeper explanation of what equity means, and why it is important to Unifor.

Each local union, where up to date contact information was available, received an introductory letter on the equity audit from Unifor National President Jerry Dias. This letter introduced Unifor's equity coordinators, outlined the equity audit process and rationale, and included guidance to cooperate and support the equity coordinators through the equity audit process.

Next, the equity coordinators contacted each local union to set up a time to complete a semi-structured interview. Some local unions responded right away, most, however, took two or three additional reminders in order to get the ball rolling.

Once an interview time was set-up, equity coordinators conducted interviews over the phone or in person to gather data on a number of metrics including:

- The number of members of each local union and/or unit (where applicable);
- The number of members of each local union and/or unit who are or have openly identified as belonging to an equity-seeking group including: workers of colour, Aboriginal workers, workers with a disability, LGBTQ workers, young workers and women workers;
- The number of seats on the executive board and the number of seats on the executive

board filled by a person belonging to an equity-seeking group;

- The number of union stewards (including women's advocates) in total and the number who identify as representing an equity-seeking group;
- The number of seats on the bargaining committee and the number of seats on the bargaining committee filled by a person who identifies as belonging to an equity-seeking group.
- Do you have any recommendations to help create a more inclusive union?

Additional topics discussed included whether or not the local union or unit has active standing committees, health and safety, Aboriginal and workers of colour, young workers, women, human rights and even education.

The semi-structured nature of the interview process made it possible to collect information on best practices in building equity and inclusion from across the country. It also made it possible to note the areas where building equity and inclusion will be the most challenging.

In some cases, information was readily available and immediately collected and entered into the database. In other cases, the equity coordinators supported local union leadership in gathering the data requested before completing the data entry process. Depending on the local union and availability, the necessary work was completed in one visit by the equity coordinator. In other cases, the local union

required additional support in gathering the data and in understanding why the equity audit process is such a vital task for the future of Unifor. For many local union leaders, this was the first time they had seen their own local union's equity numbers side by side. Equity audit meetings and conversations were an important opportunity to discuss equity, inclusion and representation across the union.

The results from each semi-structured interview were recorded on an interview form. The equity coordinators kept detailed notes from each interview including both qualitative and quantitative information. Where appropriate, that information was transferred to a database that was then used to provide the overall quantitative analysis. The best practices as well as challenges were gathered from the interview forms as recorded by equity coordinators. In addition, local union leadership were given the opportunity to follow-up with equity coordinators to provide any data that was missing or incomplete at the time of the official interview.

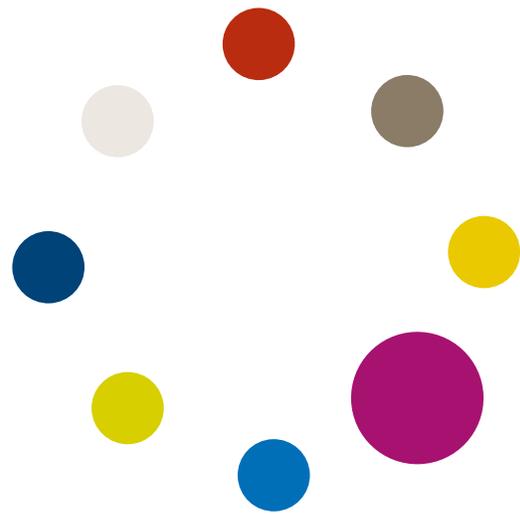
Overall, this approach to Unifor's equity audit has provided a fulsome picture of Unifor's strengths and weaknesses in the area of equity and inclusion.

## Limitations of the Research

As with all research, there are a number of limitations to the data that must be pointed out and discussed. First, the tight timeline for gathering the data meant that local unions faced a hard deadline to ensure equity coordinators had all the information requested. In most cases, local union leadership made every effort to get their information in on time however some local unions did not meet the deadline. Due to the time constraint in analysing the data and writing the report, late data was not included in the analysis.

Second, some local unions did not respond to the multiple requests to participate in the equity audit. While every effort was made by the equity coordinators to ensure all local unions had an opportunity to participate, not every local union was able to make the equity audit a priority and not every local union participated. This means the data is not based on a random sample of local unions but on the local unions that made the decision to participate. However, because more than two-thirds of local unions participated, it is felt the data is sufficiently representative as to adequately represent the union as a whole.

Finally, each local union collected equity data in their own way. Approaches to data reporting ranged from relying on individual knowledge of current membership to conducting an equity survey on each worker in their unit in order to get better acquainted with the membership. The numbers presented in this report should be understood as a measure of the members who have identified or are identifiable in the workplace as belonging to an equity-seeking group.



## Sample Equity Survey Sheet

	TOTAL #	FT	PT	ABORIGINAL INDIGENOUS	WORKERS OF COLOUR	WORKERS WITH A DISABILITY	WOMEN	LGBTQ IDENTIFIED	YOUNG WORKERS UNDER 35
MEMBERSHIP									
STEWARDS									
BARGAINING									
SKILLED TRADES									
WOMENS ADVOCATE									
HEALTH & SAFETY									
ANY OTHER UNION REPS									
LOCAL EXECUTIVE BOARD									
COMMITTEES									

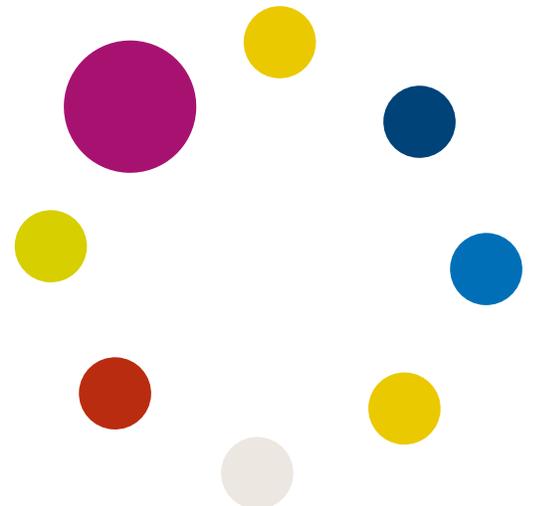
# Appendix B: Equity Audit Survey

## Executive Board Questions via Phone/In Person

1. How many Executive Board members do you have at your local?
2. How many identify as Aboriginal, LGBTQ, as a woman, a worker of colour, a worker with a disability (visible/nonvisible), or young worker? Do any identify with more than one equity-seeking group?
3. How many executive positions are full-time? Which positions?
4. How many full-time positions are filled by a member of an equity-seeking group? Which positions? Any identify with more than one equity group?
5. Are there any vacant spots on the Local Executive Board?
6. Is there any equity spot designated on the Executive Board?
7. Has the Local used equity funding to send members to conferences, councils etc.?
8. What is the selection process for who attends a conference?
9. How many of executive members have taken the 40 hour mandatory human rights training cited in the Constitution?
10. Is there a reason why they have not taken the 40 hour human rights training?
11. Is the Local accessible for meetings?
12. Do you have any recommendations to help create a more inclusive union?

## Questions Asked Regarding All Union Reps in Workplace

1. How many union stewards do you have in the workplace?
2. How many identify as Aboriginal, LGBTQ, as a woman, a worker of colour, a worker with a disability (visible/nonvisible), or as a young worker?
3. How many identify with more than one equity-seeking group?
4. Does the Local Unit chairperson/ chief steward identify as a member of an equity-seeking group?
5. Is there a Women's Advocate? Does she identify with any other equity-seeking groups?
6. Is the Women's Advocate a paid position?
7. Is there a social delegate/ or an employee family assistance program rep?  
Does that person identify as a member of any equity-seeking groups or more than one?
8. Is the social delegate/ or the employee family assistance program rep a paid position?
9. How many health and safety reps are there? Do any identify as a member of an equity-seeking group?
10. Is the health and safety rep a paid position?



## Questions About Bargaining Members per Unit

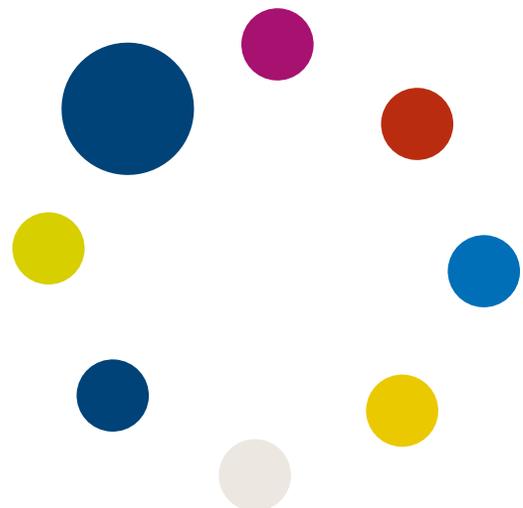
1. How many people total on bargaining team?
2. How many members identify as Aboriginal, LGBTQ, as a Woman, a worker of colour, a worker with a disability (visible/nonvisible), or as a young worker?
3. Any members identify with more than one equity group?
4. Does a member from an equity group hold a leadership position on bargaining team?  
Which position?
5. Do you have anti-harassment language in your collective agreement?

## Questions About Standing Committees

1. Do you have any standing committees (Aboriginal & Workers of Colour, Human Rights, Pride/LGBTQ, Women, Workers with a DisAbility, Education, and Health & Safety)?
2. How many members total are there?
3. Do any of the members identify with and equity group?
4. Do any of the members identify with more than one equity group?
5. Reason for not having committee(s)?
6. Are committees appointed or elected?

## Questions About Membership

1. How many members are in the workplace? (broken down by units in amalgamated locals)
2. How many are workers full-time, part-time, and other?
3. How many members identify as Aboriginal, LGBTQ, women, a worker of colour, a worker with a disability (visible/nonvisible), or as a young worker?
4. What is your highest paid unit? Is that unit membership dominated by an equity-seeking group?
5. What is your lowest paid unit? Is that unit membership dominated by an equity-seeking group?
6. What is the sector?



Designed by:



**unifor**

theUnion | lesyndicat

[unifor.org](http://unifor.org)

# Unifor

## A union for everyone.



**UNIFOR**  
theUnion | lesyndicat