



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

# IRCC Anti-Racism Employee Focus Groups

## Final report

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For more information on this report, please contact IRCC at:  
[IRCC.COMMPOR-ROPCOMM.IRCC@cic.gc.ca](mailto:IRCC.COMMPOR-ROPCOMM.IRCC@cic.gc.ca)

**Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français.**

Canada 

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## Copyright

This public opinion research presents the results of a series of qualitative focus group discussions conducted by Pollara Strategic Insights on behalf of the Department of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. This study consisted of 10 online focus group discussions with a total of 54 employees from across IRCC. The purpose of the study was to understand current experiences of racism within the department as well as perceptions of management's handling of racism within the workplace, and gather suggestions for changes in policies and practices moving forward.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre : **Groupes de discussion des employés d'IRCC sur antiracisme**

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Communications Branch  
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada  
Jean Edmonds Tower South  
365 Laurier Ave W  
Ottawa ON K1A 1L1

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## Political neutrality certification

I hereby certify as Senior Officer of Pollara Strategic Insights that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Policy on Communication and Federal Identity and the Directive on the Management of Communications.

Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings within the electorate, or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.

Signed:



Craig Worden  
President  
Pollara Strategic Insights

## Executive Summary

### Background and objectives

Following the reverberations of the George Floyd murder in the United States, like many other public and private organizations in Canada, IRCC began taking a deeper look at the department's internal environment from an anti-racism lens. An employee survey conducted in 2020 revealed that perceptions of the existence and nature of racism in the department varied significantly based on respondent racial and ethnic background, and that significant proportions of racialized employees consider racism to be a problem within the department.

As a result, it was determined that focus groups should be held to gain greater insight into the realities underlying the survey results.

The primary objectives of this focus group study are to:

- Gain insight into the impacts and nature of racism witnessed or experienced within the department;
- Identify strengths and failings of the mechanisms currently in place to address and prevent racism; and
- Gather input into the creation of programs and policies that will be effective at dealing with racism at IRCC and its impacts.

### Method

10 two-hour online focus groups were conducted among a cross-section of IRCC employees from various levels of the organization. A total of 54 employees participated in the groups. The focus groups were held from March 18<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

Participants were chosen from among those who, when completing the anti-racism survey, had indicated they would be willing to participate in a follow-up study if required, as well as those who expressed interest in participating in response to an internal callout within the department for volunteers. Those who expressed an interest in participating in the focus groups were sent a questionnaire to complete which, among other things, allowed us to separate participants, based on self-identification, into the groups described below. Participants included both racialized and non-racialized employees and employees from various sectors of the department, including people working in operational roles, client service, and policy and program development as well as internal services such as HR and Finance.

The group composition and schedule was as follows:

GROUP NUMBER	DATE	TIME	GROUP COMPOSITION
1	18-Mar	10 am to noon	Black
2	18-Mar	2 to 4 pm	South Asian
3	22-Mar	10 am to noon	East Asian
4	23-Mar	2 to 4 pm	Black
5	24-Mar	10 am to noon	People of Mixed Origin
6	24-Mar	2 to 4 pm	Non-racialized
7	25-Mar	10 am to noon	BIPOC (mix)
8	25-Mar	2 to 4 pm	Black
9	26-Mar	10 am to noon	South Asian / BIPOC (mix)
10	26-Mar	2 to 4 pm	Black (Group Conducted in French)

Each group discussion was attended by between 5 and 8 participants, and the focus groups were held online. This report also incorporates observations gathered in a follow-up in-depth telephone interview with one respondent who was not able to attend the focus group at which their presence was initially planned. Given the confidential nature of the discussion, as is often the case in employee focus groups, these sessions were not recorded. What is reported here is the product of detailed notes taken by the Pollara team. Note also that, in keeping with research conventions, certain details provided to us may need to be withheld or dissimulated in order to protect respondent confidentiality and anonymity.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, results cannot be extrapolated to a broader audience and should be considered indicative, rather than definitive. Further, while participants were randomly selected from a list of potential participants, that list was generated through an opt-in process rather than random selection. Consequently, the sample of employees who participated cannot be said to be representative of all IRCC employees.

Contract Value for this research: \$59,207.50.

## Summary of findings

### ***Experiences of racism at IRCC include microaggressions, biases in hiring and promotion as well as biases in the delivery of IRCCs programs, policies and client service***

Participants shared a large number of specific examples of racism witnessed within IRCC, as well as their causes. These include but are not limited to:

- Microaggressions ranging from well-intentioned comments with hurtful impacts to blatantly racist tropes
- Sources of discrimination in hiring ranging from screening requirements that are biased against racialized candidates and selection criteria that do not sufficiently guard against implicit bias, to the location of management positions in places where the pool of qualified racialized candidates is likely to be low (without compensation for relocation or efforts to recruit from more diverse metropolises)

- Experiences of discrimination in access to professional growth, with suspected causes that range from work conditions that disincentivize the extension of training and development opportunities where the prevalence of racialized employees is high, to what are perceived to be blatant examples of subverting selection criteria to disadvantage racialized employees
- Racial biases in the application of IRCC's programs, policies and client service that are believed to result from implicit biases among decision makers, as well as administrative practices that introduce biases or the potential for bias over time.

***In addition, employees paint a picture of an organization fraught with challenges at the level of workplace culture.***

- little in the way of clear guidelines or training for management on how to handle reports of racism
- a history of racism going unchecked, resulting in low willingness to speak out or seek retribution by witnesses and victims alike
- a deep imbalance in racial representation in management that inherently militates against progress on dealing with racism in the department.

Under these circumstances, IRCCs anti-racism initiatives are initially met with skepticism. **It will take bold, decisive actions to convince employees there is a real management commitment to change.**

## Results in detail

### Commitment to and Expectations of the Department

Struck by participants' apparent attachment to and longevity with the Department despite the numerous and intensely felt negative experiences related to racism expressed in the first group, we asked participants in our subsequent conversations what they felt were **the positives about working at IRCC**. The following themes emerged.

- Participants believe IRCC has significant **strengths compared to some other federal government organizations**. Namely:
  - **Being visibly more diverse** than many other departments, **particularly at lower levels** of the organization and in the National Capitol Region (NCR) - Those who work in these environments feel at home and encouraged by this, while also raising significant concerns about the lack of upward mobility from these entry level positions.
  - **Being perceived as relatively “open-minded”**, exhibited in diversity in the entry level workforce as well as by what is seen as a greater focus on human wellbeing than in some other federal departments. (Participants mention not only the anti-racism initiatives underway but also significant attention being paid to employee wellbeing overall and to employee mental health initiatives carried out in the recent past.) Part of this is also an expectation that, given its mandate of working with people from other countries, IRCC would be a more open-minded environment.
  - Offering **more varied roles** and therefore more *possibility* for lateral or vertical movement within the department. (As we will see later, however, there are significant concerns about racialized employees not having equitable access these opportunities.)
- Some also simply mentioned having experienced working within **specific teams where there is a strong sense of collegiality, and mutual respect and ability to contribute** and be heard.
- Most strikingly, the **employees we met with are strongly devoted to IRCC's mandate**. This is as true of the racialized employees we spoke to as it is of the non-racialized participants who volunteered as participants and tend to identify themselves as allies. For the racialized employees, many of whom are in Canada by virtue of immigration, and being able to work in an environment where they get to contribute to and affect the policies and processes that got them or their families to Canada is significant. Many say they approach their work at IRCC with both gratitude and empathy and would like to feel they can contribute to improving the experiences of others like them, or the policies and processes in place.
  - Note that, as we hear later in the discussion, **this belief in and attachment to the importance of the IRCCs mission makes the disappointment and concern**



**about racism witnessed from within all the more emotionally acute.** For participants, it raises concern about the values and decisions of some of those with the power to affect the lives of people like them.

## Experiences of Racism at IRCC

Participants shared a large number of experiences of racism that they witnessed or experienced in the department. Note also that most qualify the problem of racism at IRCC as systemic, supporting their position by pointing to:

- the dramatic drop in racial diversity as one looks upwards through the organizational hierarchy
- the gap in racial representation outside the operations and client services areas of the department, especially as considered against the prevalence of post-secondary educational qualifications among racialized Canadians.

While it is impossible to share all the examples we gathered here, in what follows we attempt to provide a sampling of the types of experiences that were shared with us including details where possible because we know these real-life examples help to:

- promote awareness of the nature and extent of the problem within the department
- generate understanding of the impact of these experiences not only on racialized employees but also on the work environment as a whole
- point to places to start in creating an anti-racism strategy that tackles not only policies and regulations, but also organizational culture.

## Examples of Microaggressions

A microaggression is defined by Webster's dictionary as:

*"a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority)".*

Though they are often unintentional, it's important to pay attention to the occurrence of microaggressions in a workplace because they can reveal the potential for implicit biases (the attitudes, assumptions, and stereotypes that unconsciously affect our actions). Furthermore, because they are often subtle and not intended to be malicious, they are difficult to identify, leaving recipients of and witnesses to the comment with disempowering experiences (such as wondering whether or not they are being too sensitive, doubting their feelings and right to speak up) that can undermine employee wellness and the sense of safety and sense of belonging required for a productive work environment.

Employees shared examples of many types of microaggressions experienced at IRCC. Note that several of the examples shared were attributed not only to peers but also to people in a supervisory or management capacity, underscoring a belief held by most

participants that these unconscious biases can and most likely do make their way into hiring, promotion and business delivery practices at IRCC. Note: Several of the examples below could be placed in more than one category of microaggression.

- **Microinsults:** unintentional and often unconscious discriminatory behaviour or comments.
  - Asking to touch someone's hair, or making fun of or passing judgements on someone's hair (e.g., a person in a supervisory capacity telling a black employee that their afro looks unprofessional, or joking about an employee's hairdo in a team meeting)
  - Greeting a black colleague with "Salut, ma noire"
  - A manager regularly greeting a South Asian employee with a "namaste" sign or a headnod, or a Latin American employee with an "Andale", gestures that remind the employee that they are an "other."
- **Microassaults:** overt and conscious discriminatory behaviour without the intent to be offensive, such as racist or sexist jokes.
  - Hearing non-racialized employees and supervisors refer to sectors of the department where representation of racialized employees is high referred to by as "the ghetto"
  - A person in power making derogatory and lewd comments about physical characteristics of "black girls" while speaking to a black female employee
  - A manager saying Indigenous people are lazy
  - A manager who, when explaining why they wanted to understand disciplinary actions against one of their employees, referred to the employees racial background and said that behaviour in question was typical of their race.
- **Microinvalidations:** verbal statements that deny, minimize, or undermine the experiences of members of a marginalized group.
  - Racialized employees being asked not only the much-lamented separateness-inducing question "where are you from?" but also what some consider to be an IRCC specific variant: "how did you get here?"
  - A manager who systematically greets all the employees in the unit by name except the black ones as they walk through the unit
  - A team leader having a conversation on the floor, loudly enough for the racialized employees to hear, saying colonialism was good and if "the natives" wanted the land they should have just stood up.

Given the particular nature of IRCC's work, participants also mentioned numerous examples of microaggressions heard internally in reference to client groups, that not only suggest to them the possibility of implicit biases affecting client treatment and processing

but also impact employees themselves as they breed distrust of their colleagues and supervisors. Examples of these include:

- Widespread internal references to certain African nations as “the dirty 30”
- Stereotyping Nigerians as particularly corrupt or untrustworthy. (Such negative stereotypes were mentioned about certain other immigrant groups as well, but Nigerians were cited as an example particularly often in our conversations.)
- A manager referring to Latin American applicants as people who just come here to collect social insurance

### Examples specific to international assignments

Employees who have held foreign postings shared a number of specificities in the nature and impacts of racism experiences in international assignments. According to them, there are particular dynamics at play that can amplify racism in international assignments. The cohort of those who access these positions is small, and in the eyes of these participants, with a tendency for those who go on assignment to do so repeatedly, certain behaviours seem to become tolerated and ingrained. Furthermore, employees on international assignments feel they have limited access to the chain of command to whom to make a complaint if issues occur. As a result, racist behaviours are more likely to go unchecked in those settings. These employees share situations that include:

- Racist comments of a degree that would be unlikely to be tolerated within Canadian social norms but that continue uninterrupted overseas in part because there is no oversight but also because there is an ‘us-versus-them’ culture that affects relationships with local staff and local clients as well.
- Racialized overseas staff being socially and professionally excluded and marginalized by non-racialized Canadians
- Racialized overseas staff being passed up for professional development opportunities and promotions

#### *Examples:*

*One participant reported hearing racial slurs when on international assignments that they had never heard before.*

*One participant reported having decided not to accept any postings to countries in the region their ancestors came from, as the emotional toll of being exposed repeatedly to racist comments against people of their background had become too heavy.*

*One participant reported being excluded from meetings and social events on an international posting where local staff were often not included.*

*One participant reported making an effort to “Uber-Canadianise” themselves so as not to be treated like the local staff.*

*One participant reported having arrived on assignment at the same time as a non-racialized colleague who was warmly welcomed and shown around by the other staff members, while this (racialized) participant was left to their own devices.*

## **Biases in the hiring process**

Participants highlight a number of biases in hiring and selection:

- Several racialized participants recount incidents of having passed quantitative evaluations for selection and then having threshold scores raised after the fact (or being told that that was the reason they never made it to the interview stage)
- One manager reports having their evaluation of a racialized employee overridden by someone above them to promote a non-racialized employee instead
- One mentions that a disproportionate number of indigenous applicants seem to drop off the hiring process at the interview stage
- Many agree screening tests are culturally biased and almost require insider training to know how to produce the types of answers required to score

## **Biases in the identification of individuals for development opportunities and advancement**

Participants share a large number of specific situations they consider to be clear indicators of bias in access to personal development and promotional opportunities. Some of these have to do with work conditions and the socio-demographic make-up of client service and operations staff and hence are an example of policies having a disproportionate impact on racialized employees. They include:

- Racialized employees not being informed about opportunities for training, development and upward mobility on the same basis as non-racialized peers
- Discriminatory access to language training (which tends to impact employees who are immigrants more as English/French is often already their second language)
- Managers in regional processing offices being less willing to free employee time (and their own budgets) for professional development or language training since evaluations are based on high productivity output goals
- Fewer acting opportunities being given to racialized employees
- Racialized employees being kept in acting positions for a long time without ever moving into the position
- Racialized employees being kept in precarious temporary contract positions disproportionately and for a long time which keeps them from advocating for their own rights to professional progression or even for speaking up against incidences of racism they contend with for fear of reprisal or being labelled as difficult or a troublemaker
- Restrictions to allowing unionized employees to attend certain management meetings which prevents them from learning the work needed to progress

A couple of racialized participants share that their supervisors attempted to co-opt them into reporting on their racialized peers, despite their having no supervisory authority over these peers, simply to help create a case for disciplinary action that would then appear to not have been motivated by racism.

*“It’s funny, it’s very emotional to bring back all these memories. I feel sometimes it’s so subtle and so systemic you’ll never know if its racism at a systemic level or not, so you are always wondering” [referring to a situation where an employee felt they were discriminated against in accessing a promotional opportunity]*

Participants also share that employees often talk about cronyism and a powerful “old-boys network” as being very much an entrenched part of the culture at IRCC. Though, if true, such a phenomenon would not necessarily affect only racialized employees, this perception does serve to support the beliefs that it is possible for those who are well connected within the organization to bend rules or escape consequences for unacceptable behaviour.

Finally, some who have had the opportunity to be present for management meetings share that there is “an obvious” internal cultural code in operation, which can act against racialized employees being seen to “fit in” at higher levels of the organization.

### **Biases in IRCC’s programs, policy and client service**

Participants expressed concern that some of the overt and subtle racism they have witnessed by both employees and decision makers can and probably must impact case processing. Some point to differences in refusal rates by country as an indicator that some form of bias must be at play.

They also point to a few ways in which established practices meant to reflect policies can have taken on discriminatory undertones for the sake of expediency or performance. These include:

- Discriminatory rules for processing immigration applications from some countries or regions that are different than for others (e.g., additional financial document requirements for applications from Nigeria)
- Concern that increased automation of processing will embed racially discriminatory practices in a way that will be harder to see over time

## **Impacts of Racism at IRCC**

When talking about micro-aggressions, we occasionally asked participants to articulate the immediate emotional and accumulated impact of these incidents as they can sometimes be dismissed as trivial among other organizational priorities, although left unmanaged, they can contribute to a climate of tolerance and silence.

*“When you are addressed like this, it is so overwhelmingly shocking, you retire to your corner to figure out what to do” [One participant referring to a personally targeted derogatory comment from a supervisor, after we asked what they did about the situation and what prevented them from responding immediately]*

One of the impacts of the existence of a culture where racism is tolerated and not dealt with consequentially is that it becomes self-perpetuating. Perpetrators of racism feel emboldened to continue and those who would speak up remain silent because they feel the benefits are outweighed by the potential costs, which can be not only emotional but also professional and social (e.g., being made to feel separate, excluded from the group or from professional growth opportunities).

*“Because I’m white passing, people are more permissive about making comments around me. And you bring it home. You are thinking about these comments later. It’s heaviness I take home with me everyday”*

*“It [the comment] was completely inappropriate and then they [the person making the comment] looked at me and saw the stunned reaction on my face and said ‘is that okay?’ as if to challenge me like, do you have a problem with that? I felt pushed up against a wall. It felt gross” [Non-racialized employee referring to a situation where another non-racialized employee was making racist comments among a closed group of other non-racialized employees]*

*“In the office, when some of these conversations are happening, you can just walk away. Online it’s hard. You’re just stuck there” [Non-racialized employee describing the experience of witnessing racist comments by peers in the confinement context of Zoom meetings]*

*“You just feel like, now that I’m speaking out, am I also going to be looked like as one of those angry black women for speaking up?” [Racialized employee describing their concerns after reporting an incidence of racism]*

In a similar vein, racialized employees who have progressed into higher levels of the organization and find themselves alone as the only non-racialized person among their peers say they are “careful not to make waves”.

Mixed race or lighter skinned/less visibly “different” employees sometimes find themselves in the position of being witness to racism or included in an “inner circle” by non-racialized employees, and experience the inner conflict of having to decide whether or not to speak up and, hence, feel excluded and different again.

*“[As someone who is mixed race] I have my own form of privilege. I have a dark-skinned co-worker, and I have seen myself promoted while they are as competent as me but got left behind and not offered training opportunities, not included on those emails. I don’t know how to process that. And we are close, and yet I feel like I am part of the system that is perpetrating it, and I take that home with me every day because it’s so obvious that its racism, but if I say anything will they pay the price...”*

## Management’s Performance on Anti-Racism

Two participants mentioned positive examples of how their immediate team managers have helped create a climate of anti-racism within the team. They point to:

- Managers who set an example by being willing to admit their own mistakes and being willing to apologize for microaggressions or other forms of discrimination, hence promoting an environment where individuals are free to become more aware of and confront their own inherent biases and conversations addressing racism are easier to have without fear of judgement or loss of affinity

- Managers who celebrate diversity (by, for example, encouraging employees to display flags of their country of origin or notices with their languages spoken on their desks)

What we heard more commonly though was:

- Participants do not believe there are currently any consequences for racism or racist behaviour at IRCC (or if there are consequences that go beyond a slap on the wrist, they do not believe they are applied in their sectors)
- There seems to be no lasting accountability for those accused of racism, many of whom go on to be promoted or sent to another secure position
- Complainants are not given any feedback on what if anything was done
- A few mention that there does not appear to exist a specific process or guidelines for management on how to deal with incidents or complaints of racism when brought to their attention
- One mentions that the Office of Conflict Resolution (the recourse that a few participants had previously turned to) is there to provide information for how to make a complaint but has no power to act

The lack of universally disseminated education and training on all the subtle forms racism can take and the importance of collective responsibility for anti-racism, means that employees who do bring up issues when they arise find themselves also having to carry the burden of managing the emotions of those receiving the complaint.

*“I’m shaking [to bring it up] and then **they** start [reacting emotionally] and so now you have to manage and console **them**” [employee referring to a conversation with a manager for having made a racist comment]*

One participant mentions that their experience of mild consequences for management involved in other forms of discrimination contributes to their belief that the same would be true in the case of race-based discrimination as well, reminding us experiences in one area of human resources policy affect perceptions of experiences in other areas as well.

Participants, including those in executive roles, also underscore that there is a general belief that IRCC is an organization with a powerful “old-boys network” ripe with cases of seemingly “protected” people never suffer the consequences of their improper behaviour and are often rewarded for it as well. This type of culture dissuades employees from reporting issues and supports the belief that Caucasian employees are more likely to be given more opportunities and chances to be forgiven for mistakes.

They also state that there is a strong hierarchical structure, with people being discouraged from even emailing higher ups, which creates a sense that there is no one to turn to if the problem is with management.

Finally, several participants agree they do not feel they are in a safe environment to speak out against racism. Fear of reprisal or of being labelled as a troublemaker or difficult is widespread and there is a belief that complaints are not met with strong enough

consequences when made. The result leaves the complainant feeling more uncomfortable and vulnerable, and dissuades others from being part of the solution.

One participant shared how over the course of several years, they personally progressed up several levels from an entry level position only to be subsequently demoted back to entry level after having raised concerns about racial discrimination in their sector.

## Evaluating the Department's Performance on Anti-Racism

A few participants say they do believe there is a real commitment to anti-racism at the DM level (with a few participants mentioning the DMA by name as someone who is more likely to be serious in her commitment to resolving the problem). Several also say they are somewhat heartened at the creation of the Anti-Racism Task Force and a few of the initiatives and communications on the topic they have seen so far. Some also mention the holding of these focus groups as an indicator that IRCC is taking anti-racism seriously.

However, the majority remain skeptical, because they believe:

- the problem is so deeply rooted in the organizational culture and in the values of people in power who have held it for a long time and are not likely to change
- the resources deployed towards anti-racism so far this year are temporary and insufficient and initiatives are poorly funded
- there is a natural tendency for managers to favour employing people they are comfortable with and that resemble them. Therefore, the lack of racial diversity in management creates an upper limit on the success of any anti-racism initiatives that would require a countervailing incentive system to overturn it.
- there are systemic barriers to promoting racial diversity into management, including lack of access to acting opportunities and training as well as evaluation practices that are not sufficiently impervious to bias
- there is no known safe mechanism for reporting racism and an organizational reputation for lack of action (and a perceived risk of reprisals) when it is reported, all of which preclude progress

## Perceptions of the Circle for Visible Minorities

Most participants had not heard of the Circle for Visible Minorities and therefore had little to share. Furthermore, those who had had only had limited interactions with the CVM and admitted that their feedback must be taken in that context.

That said, what we did hear on the topic of the CVM is that:

- it is perceived by some to be an example of what does not work or what is not wanted in an anti-racism or racism mitigation initiative: namely because it is seen as being:



- just another place for racialized employees to talk among themselves (when what is needed is an organization with a voice and the freedom to advocate for change among non-racialized decision tables)
- underfunded and under resourced (assumed partly based on their being slow to respond to requests for information)
- not very influential / not present (assumed partly based on their not being visible in the anti-racism initiatives underway in the past year)
- lacking in power to make decisions
- perceived as being too embedded with management to militate for change

## Potential Solutions: IRCC Proposals

We probed for reactions to a few specific possible initiatives proposed by IRCC:

- **IRCC permanently establishing an Anti-Racism Secretariat**

This idea is not very strongly endorsed as a key solution. To the extent that this involves permanent funding, that would be considered a good thing. However:

- Some participants seem unclear as to what exactly being a Secretariat would represent in terms of mandate and power.
- Some also mention that it depends on who is running it and making decisions
- Some are concerned that this is the type of gesture that could easily sound significant and noteworthy but ultimately have little concrete impact

- **Rate my manager approach or 360-degree feedback**

It was difficult for most participants to comment credibly on this idea as they feel it can either affect racism very positively or very negatively depending on how the program is structured.

It does appear that there is some initial skepticism, although probably couched in the existing distrust of management and climate of falling in and out of favour.

- **New qualification requirements to become an Executive (i.e. intercultural competency) or different ways to assess leaders within a hiring process**

Participants' comments suggest a general belief that management lacks training, lacks processes and resources to recognize and counter the impact of their own unconscious biases, and that cronyism does result in issues at the level of management competencies. Therefore, this should, in their eyes, be a requirement for promotion.

- **Mandatory review of policies, practices and procedures for systematic biases and racism, similar to gender analysis**

This idea was well received and supported by the vast majority of participants. In some groups, it was even brought forward proactively by them.

## Potential Solutions: Focus Group Participant Proposals

Participants did also make some suggestions of their own which we have grouped into broad categories below:

- **In Hiring and Promotion**
  - Eliminate the notion of best fit as a justification for hiring and promotional decisions or, at least, introduce guidelines or structures for use that minimise the impacts of implicit bias.
  - Provide training or guidelines (or some even mention mentorship or coaching) to help racialized candidates to prepare for hiring tests and interviews and reduce the impacts of cultural norms.
  - Extend candidate searches for management positions to cities with more diverse populations to compensate for the more limited diversity pool in the NCR (with possible support for relocation)
  - Creating a mentorship system to help racialized employees navigate the path to promotion
  - Create clear objectives for promoting racialized employees throughout the organisation and incentivise management for achieving these objectives
- **In rooting out systemic racism**
  - Analyse internal data for racial representation in a number of areas to identify where to target bias mitigating strategies:
    - hiring interview participation and success rate
    - contract type (casual, indeterminate, temporary, etc.) by race and level
    - contract duration by race
    - referrals for professional development and language training by race
    - racial representation by level
- **In ensuring accountability**
  - create a system for reporting incidents and providing feedback anonymously
  - creating a permanent anti-racism ombudsman
  - train managers on how to handle complaints

- encourage (and create a culture that encourages) each employee to be responsible for speaking up when they witness racism (perhaps even incentivise it) so people feel they are protected by this agreement to speak out
- provide training and education on implicit bias and its universality, so people feel safe to notice and counter their own natural racist tendencies
- One participant suggests having all employees at all levels sign onto an anti-racism in the workplace commitment that mandates that racist incidents including micro-aggressions are brought up immediately and directly with the perpetrator in a spirit of recognising bias as a society wide problem and open dialog as a way to break the cycle. That way you are speaking up not against the person but “in honor of a commitment you made to the organisation”.

## Conclusions

Employees recognize that anti-racism is an ongoing process and will take time. What they expect of IRCC, however, is a commitment backed by the resources necessary to see the process of change through the long term. This requires concrete actions to advance the following priorities:

- Educate employees and managers alike on the nature and impacts of micro-aggressions and create compassion through understanding of their impacts.
- Enroll all employees and managers in contributing to create a climate in which people feel safe to call out the micro-aggressions that have helped set the tone for racism to be perpetuated unchecked, and for those called out to hear and understand the impacts of their words and actions
- Communicate specifically the types of racist language and behaviours that will not be tolerated and their consequences
- Create a safe process for reporting experiences of racism
- Implement measures to counter the effect of the current racial imbalance in the ranks of management on access to opportunities for professional development and promotion

## Appendix A: Qualitative instruments

English and French qualitative instruments are provided under separate cover.