

# **Iowa DOT DEI Survey**

## ***Summary of Responses***

prepared for

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion  
Task Force**

July 2021

## **BACKGROUND**

At the recommendation of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force, the Iowa Department of Transportation conducted a survey of employees in July of 2021. The focus of the survey was to gather information from the workforce related to diversity, equity, and Inclusion (DEI). This report presents an initial summary of the results. Information is generally presented in the order in which it occurred in the survey.

This report provides the results of the survey to the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force. Intended as an initial summary report, it is assumed additional summaries may be created for the Iowa DOT's Executive Leadership Team (ELT), in support of discussion/focus groups, or other DEI efforts.

## **SURVEY**

The survey was conducted internally, using an "open sample" or "fixed link" methodology. A link was distributed via email. The survey had several sections, which included: demographics and work location; policy awareness; individual work unit perspectives and experiences; and organizational culture and behaviors. Questions in these sections were primarily close-ended questions on a 5-point scale.

There were two questions which asked about being the target of offensive comments and hearing inappropriate jokes. Both asked for additional information on the focus of the behavior(s).

The survey closed with an opportunity for respondents to share any additional thoughts or comments. Themes identified by reviewers are shared in this report.

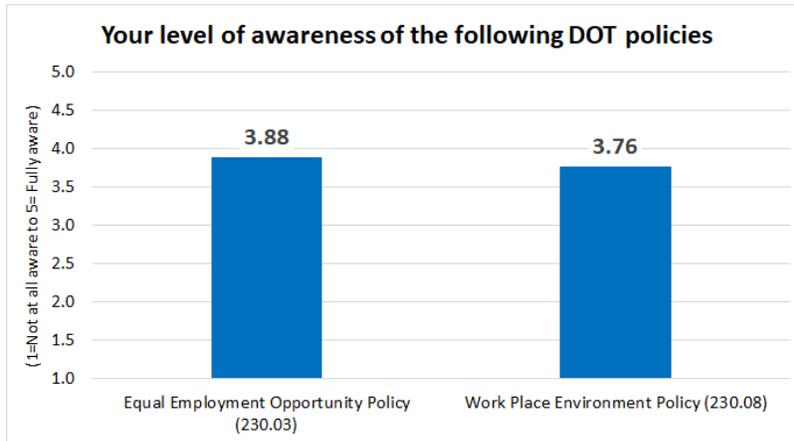
As an "open sample" survey, employees were not directly identified. Respondents were given the opportunity to share demographic information (sex, generation, race/ethnicity, tenure, and work location (at the division level). Analysis will focus on overall results, with breakdowns by demographics. Prior to sharing any version of comments offered by respondents, comments were reviewed to minimize identifying information.

## **RESPONDENTS**

A total of 1,249 individuals started the survey. Department-wide, this represents a little over half (51.8 percent) of positions that existed in October 2020. Taking vacancies into account, the rough estimate for response rate is likely closer to 54 percent for current employees who shared responses.

## **DOT POLICIES - AWARENESS**

Respondents were asked to rate their level of awareness of two policies on a 5-point scale (1=Not at all aware to 5=Fully aware).



Overall, respondents shared they had a fair level of awareness of both policy 230.03 related to Equal Employment Opportunity and policy 230.08 related to Work Place Environment with overall ratings of 3.9 and 3.8 respectively.

As awareness is a necessary condition to allow for following policies, it may be desirable to identify means by which awareness can be increased.

### **Highlights**

- Ratings of awareness for both policies falls below 4.0 on the 5-point scale.
- There were no significant gender differences.
- Older generations tended to have higher awareness.
- Minority level of awareness of the Work Place Environment policy appeared lower.
- There were differences of awareness based on work location (division).
- Awareness appears to dip as employees enter their 5- to 10-year timeframe.

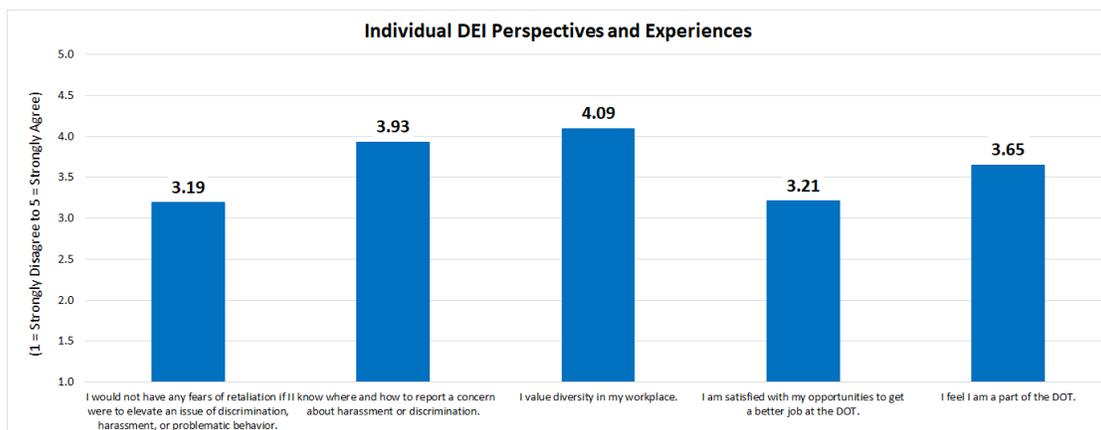
## INDIVIDUAL PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

This section of the survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement to seven statements regarding their individual perspectives and experiences. It also asked them to reflect on the past five years and indicate if they felt they had been the target of offensive comments.

The seven rated statements consisted of five positively worded and two negatively worded statements. As an indicator that survey respondents read and understood the nature of the statements, ratings for the negatively worded statements were significantly lower than those of the positively worded statements. Positively and negatively worded results will be present separately.

### **Positively Worded**

Of the five items, *I value diversity in my workplace* received the highest rating (4.1 on the 5-point scale). This was followed by; *I know where and how to report a concern about harassment or discrimination* (3.9) and *I feel I am a part of the DOT* (3.7)



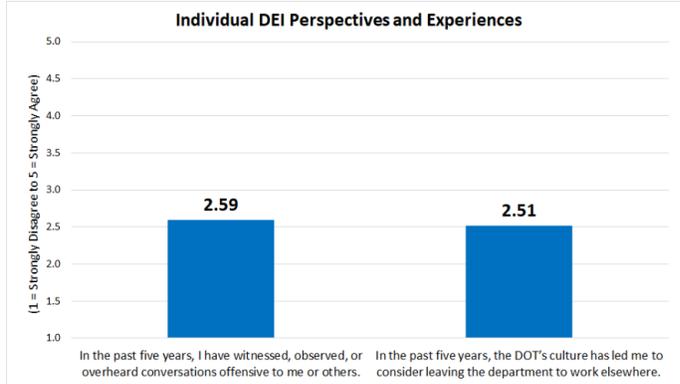
Lowest rated statements were, *I am satisfied with my opportunities to get a better job at the DOT* and the statement about fearing retaliation for elevating an issue – both receiving a rating of 3.2. Ratings for these statements were significantly lower than the ratings given to the other items in the section.

### Highlights

- Ratings of satisfaction with opportunities and fear of retaliation are concerning. These elements could be subject matter for future discussion/focus groups.
- Female and minority respondents' ratings were lower on these items.
- Ratings tended to increase as generations got younger.
- There were differences in ratings based on work location (division).
- Ratings started high with new hires, dropped, then leveled off or increased as tenure increased.

## Negatively Worded

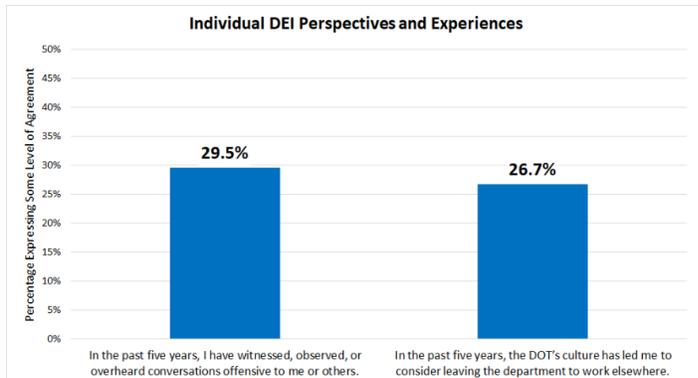
In this section of the survey, respondents were twice asked to think back over the past five years as they considered rating a statement. Both items were rated significantly lower than the lowest positively worded items, falling well below the mid-point (3) on the 5-point scale.



The statement about witnessing, observing or overhearing conversation that were offensive to the respondent or others received a rating of 2.6.

The statement about considering leaving the department due to the DOT's culture received a rating of 2.5.

While the lower ratings are a good sign, a look at the percent of respondents responding either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" was looked at to better understand the ratings.



Three in ten respondents (30 percent) reported some level of agreement (Strongly Agree or Agree) with having overheard offensive conversations.

More than one in four respondents (27 percent) reported some level of agreement with considering leaving the DOT due to its culture.

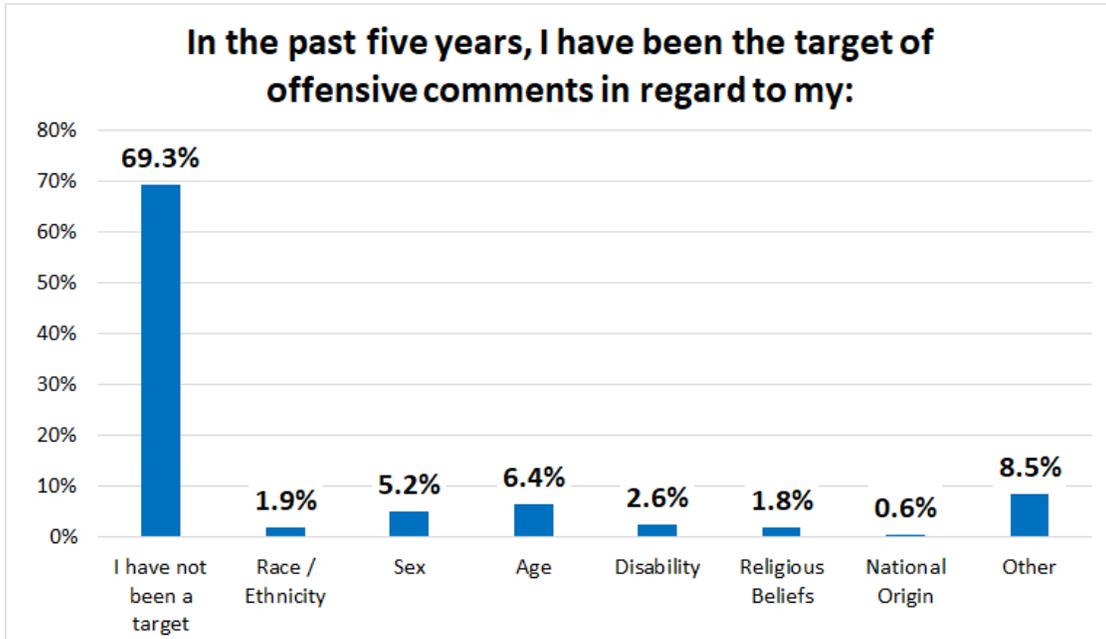
## Highlights

- Though rated "lower" than the positively worded statements in the section, more than one in four respondents indicated some level of agreement with both statements. This could be subject matter for future discussion/focus groups.
- Female and minority experiences (higher ratings) were less favorable.
- Experiences became less favorable for older generations.
- There were differences in ratings based on work location (division).
- Negative experiences were report less by newer employees.

## Targeted Comments

When asked if they had been the target of offensive comments in the past five years, nearly seven in ten (69 percent) indicated they had not been a target. Age and sex were the most frequently identified topic of the comments.

For those sharing the basis for the “other” offensive comments, the topics of political affiliation and being put down were indicated most often.



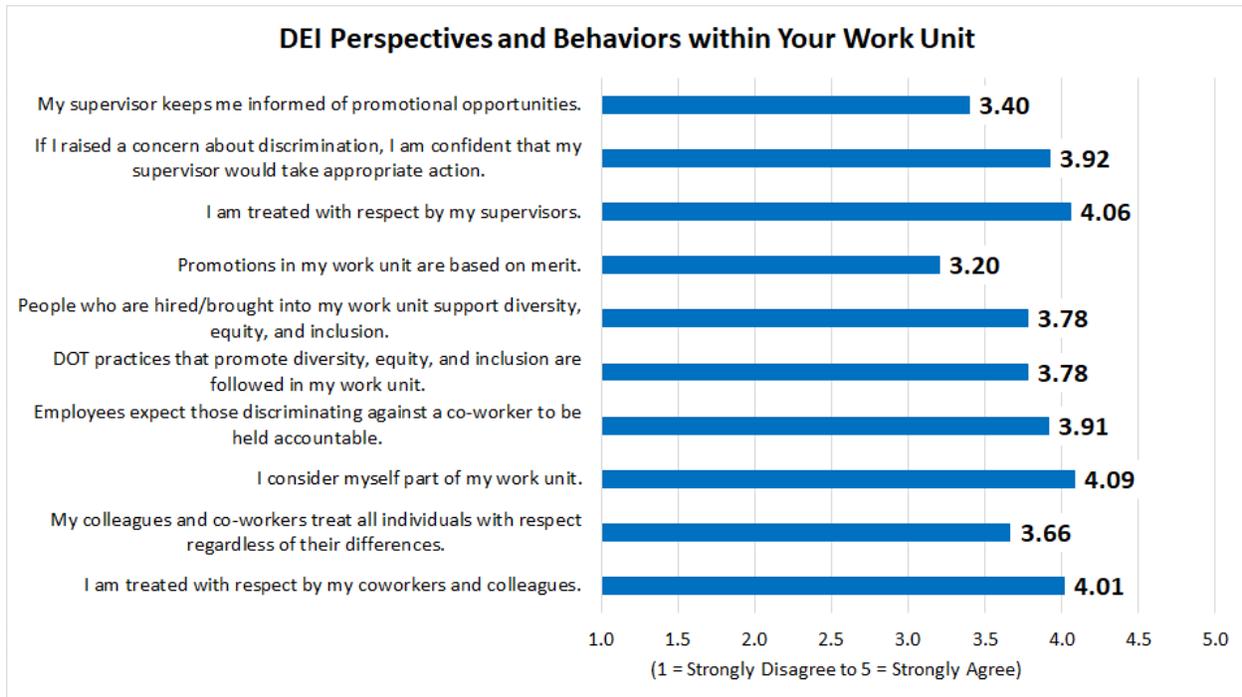
### Highlights

- Given seven in ten reported not being a target, that leaves three in ten who have.
- Women and minorities reported higher rates of being a target. This could be subject matter for future discussion/focus groups.
- Generational and tenure groups were fairly stable.
- There were differences in ratings based on work location (division).

## WORK UNIT PERSPECTIVES AND EXPERIENCES

This section of the survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement to ten statements regarding their work unit perspectives and experiences using a five-point (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) scale.

The statements receiving the highest ratings were: *I consider myself part of my work unit* (4.1), *I am treated with respect by my supervisor* (4.1), and *I am treated with respect by my coworkers and colleagues* (4.0).



### Highlights

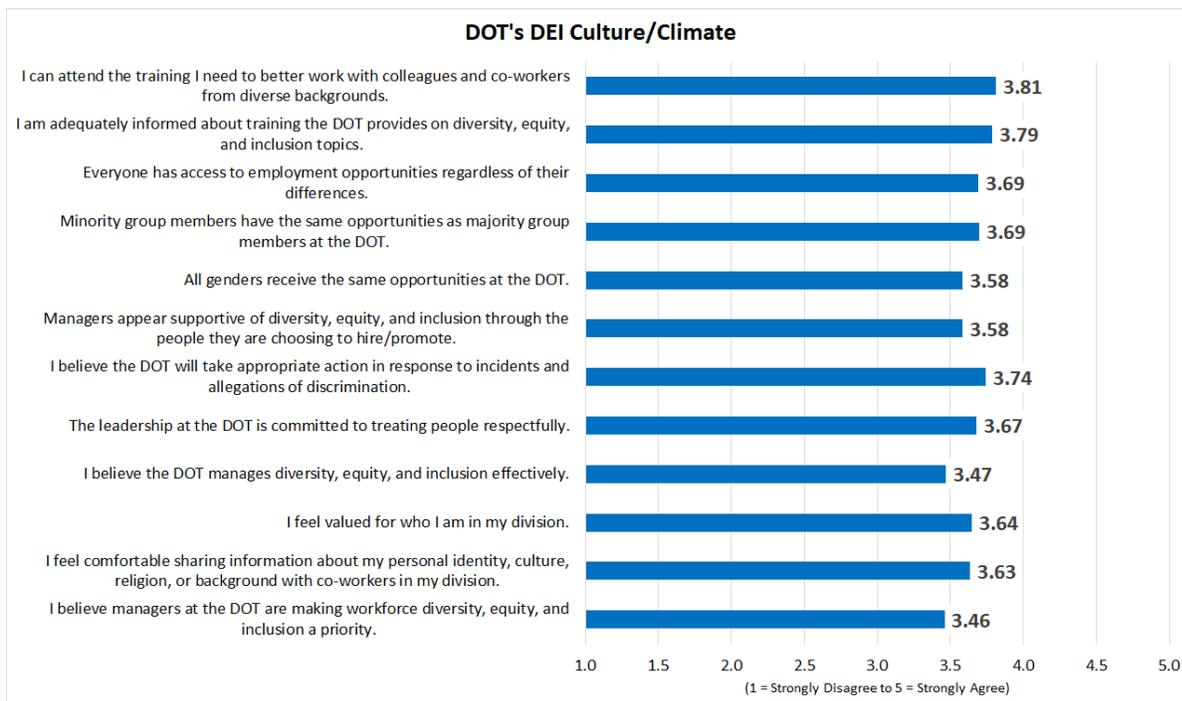
- Connection to work unit, respect by supervisors and coworkers (all rated at 4 on the five-point scale) are promising results.
- Ratings related to promotion are concerning. This could be subject matter for future discussion/focus groups.
- Female and minority ratings were consistently lower.
- Gen Z ratings were significantly higher than the other generational groups.
- There were differences in ratings based on work location (division).
- Ratings were highest among short-tenure employees.

## ORGANIZATION – CULTURE AND BEHAVIORS

This section of the survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement to twelve statements regarding organizational culture and behaviors. It also asked them to reflect on the past five years and indicate if they had heard inappropriate jokes at the Iowa DOT.

### Rated Items

The range of ratings across the statements is smaller (less than 0.4 on the 5-point scale) than the range of ratings in the other sections (Individual – 0.9 for positively worded statements, Work Unit – 0.9). The two statements touching on training (*I can attend the training I need to better work with colleagues and co-workers from diverse backgrounds* and *I am adequately informed about training the DOT provides on diversity, equity, and inclusion topics*) were given the highest ratings (3.8).

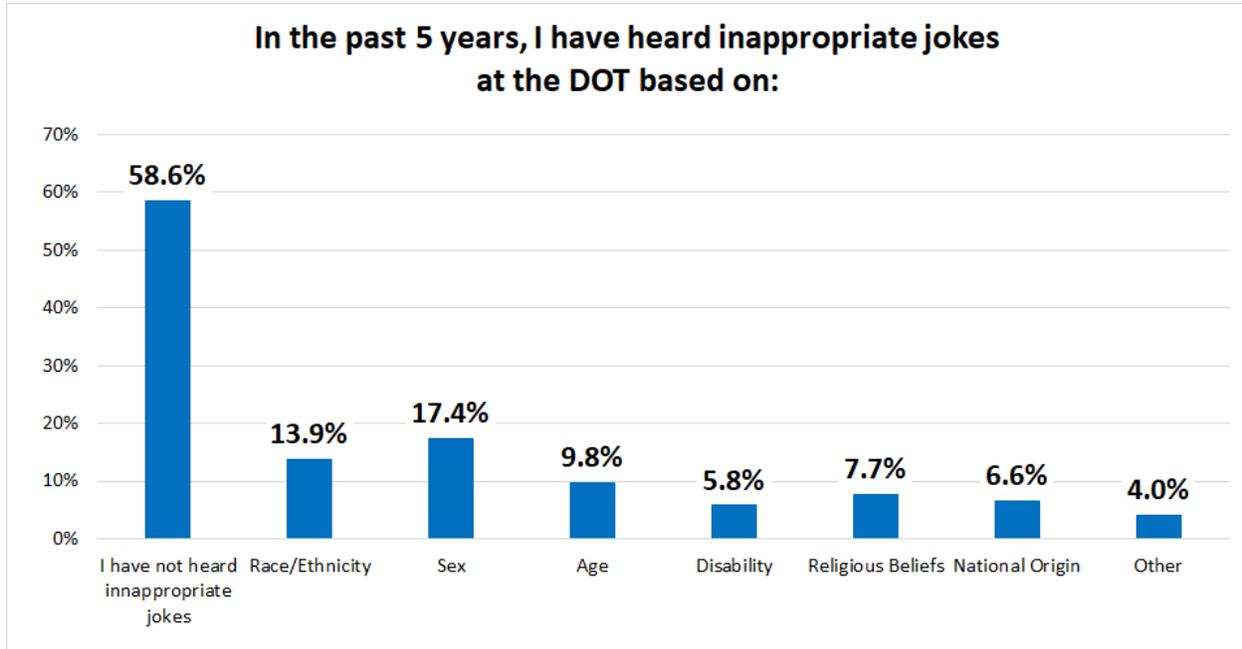


### Highlights

- Ratings for items were not a variable as other sections, no rating above 3.9.
- Ratings tied to managers and the management of DEI were the lowest. This could be subject matter for future discussion/focus groups.
- Female and minority ratings were consistently lower.
- Gen Z employees and those with under one year with DOT had highest ratings.
- There were differences in ratings based on work location (division).

## Inappropriate Jokes

When asked if they had heard inappropriate jokes at the DOT in the past five year, fewer than three in five (59 percent) indicated they had **not** heard an inappropriate joke. For those sharing the basis for the jokes, the topics of sex, race/ethnicity, and age were indicated most often.



## Highlights

- Given three in five reported not heard an inappropriate joke, that leaves two in five who have. This could be subject matter for future discussion/focus groups.
- Women and minorities (more so) reported higher rates of hearing an inappropriate joke.
- Millennials reported the highest rate of hearing an inappropriate joke.
- There were minor differences in ratings based on work location (division).
- Those employees who have been with the department five to ten years reported the highest rate of hearing an inappropriate joke.

## COMMENTS

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to share any additional thoughts or comments they might have regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Iowa DOT. Approximately 200 entries were made in this section.

As work is still being done on individual comments, the table below shares themes found by three independent reviewers. These are initial themes and may well be adjusted as future reviews are performed.

	<b>Reviewer #1</b>	<b>Reviewer #2</b>	<b>Reviewer #3</b>
<b>Theme</b>	Promotion, hiring, interviews	Hiring/Promotion	
<b>Theme</b>	General workforce comments/concerns		
<b>Theme</b>	DEI Training (need for)	(mis) Perceptions about DEI	
<b>Theme</b>	Harassment and workplace experiences	Attitudes / Actions	
<b>Theme</b>		Accountability	
<b>Theme</b>		Culture	