

Garrett County Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee

Diversity & Inclusion Community Impact Report

February 2024

GarrettCountyMD.gov/inclusion



This report has been compiled by the Garrett County Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee at the request of the Garrett County Board of Commissioners.

The Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee would like to thank the Garrett County Commissioners, The Honorable Mr. Paul Edwards, The Honorable Mr. Larry Tichnell, and The Honorable Mr. Ryan Savage, and also recognize Garrett County Administrator, Mr. Kevin Null, for creating the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee and requesting this report. The Committee appreciates the commitment to diversity and inclusion evident in the decision to appoint this study.

The Committee would also like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals/groups/organizations for their assistance in this important endeavor:

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- Garrett College
- Garrett County Chamber of Commerce
- Garrett County Community Action
- Garrett County Courthouse
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- John Corbin - Garrett County Health Department
- Listening Sessions Participants (198)
- Local Radio Station WKHJ - 104.5 FM
- Maria Jacoby Bravo
- Paddy Morton, Esq. – Maryland Nonprofits
- Survey Respondents (875)
- Thomas Vose – Ruth Enlow Libraries (five locations)
- United States Post Office in McHenry, Maryland

The Ad Hoc Committee Members:

- Sarah Myers – Garrett County Government
- Siera Wigfield – Garrett County Government
- Samantha Hodge-Williams – Garrett County NAACP Branch #7139
- Tiffany Rains – The Alley, Oakland
- Will Wrobleski – Garrett County Chamber of Commerce

If you are interested in more information about this report, please visit www.garrettcounty.md.gov/inclusion.

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Transmittal Letter

The Honorable Paul Edwards, The Honorable Mr. Larry Tichnell, The Honorable Mr. Ryan Savage,
Commissioners of Garrett County, Maryland
203 South Fourth Street
Oakland, Maryland 21550

Dear Commissioners,

In accord with County resolution 2021-7, the Garrett County Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (the Committee) submits the Garrett County Diversity and Inclusion Community Impact Report.

The report addresses the Committee's findings and recommendations based on an 18-month process of collecting information and experiences from targeted groups and the general public, a widely distributed and responded to survey, and bi-weekly Committee meetings with public participation. Responses were organized around experiences of those living in and visiting Garrett County, working in Garrett County and raising a family in Garrett County.

The 2023 – 2027 Garrett County Strategic Economic Development Plan notes “barriers to entry into the economic sectors are limiting growth” To “ensure the county’s economy is balanced and resilient” a measure to “identify and implement strategies to reduce barriers to entry” is needed. The Committee’s findings and recommendations speak directly to these barriers and ways to overcome them.

Key Overall Findings:

- ***Different Lived Experiences:*** There were noteworthy disparities in positive perceptions of Garrett County between different demographic groups, with **marginalized groups¹ often reporting feeling less positive.**
- ***Inclusion and Acceptance: Marginalized groups reported feeling less accepted, unwelcome, and excluded*** from the full experience of Garrett County. Some individuals are leaving the County and others are deciding not to locate here.
- ***Discrimination:*** Discrimination and racism are **very real and nearly daily experiences** for people from marginalized groups. These individuals report that this feels like an accepted practice in the County at large. They describe hateful words and exclusion from all the community has to offer. Further, **over 40% of all respondents, regardless of demographic, indicated that they have observed discrimination** in the community.
- ***Safety:*** Many people from marginalized groups **reported real fear for their safety** in various situations and locations. This feeling has discouraged some from visiting or moving to the County and in some cases leaving the County.

¹ For the purposes of this report, the marginalized groups the Committee focused on were People of Color (POC), LGBTQIA+, and persons with disabilities.





- **Mental Health Impacts:** The **lack of mental health resources** was raised by all groups, but particularly marginalized groups. Bullying in schools was a critical concern.
- **Qualitative Insights:** The **personal stories related** in this report bring to light very **real and emotional lived experiences**. (Please refer to Appendix C – Listening Session Report and Appendix F – Survey Comments from Respondents)
- **Need for Further Insight:** The Committee expended great effort to reach all people of Garrett County but recognizes that important constituents were reluctant to fully disclose their experiences. It will be important to **build trust in these communities to truly understand their experiences** so meaningful actions can be taken.

Recommendations:

- Adopt a “Welcoming Resolution/ Statement” to Foster an Inclusive Environment
- Establish a County-level Position Responsible to Lead Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives
- Maintain the Diversity & Inclusion Committee in an Advisory Role
- Encourage and Support Training Events to Educate Various Entities on the Importance of Diversity and Inclusion to the County
- Encourage the Public School System to Support Students Who are Marginalized
- Encourage Support for Festivals and other Activities/Events that Promote Inclusion of Marginalized Groups by Various Government, Business, Nonprofit Entities and Others
- Support a Network of Communication Dissemination for the County

The report, as noted in the Introduction section, recognizes the cost of doing nothing and encourages the Commissioners to consider and implement the recommendations included. Without a welcoming environment, Garrett County may not prosper. There is economic power in diversity and inclusion. We need to develop an atmosphere where people want to live, visit, work, and raise a family in Garrett County. As stated in Forbes’ article on August 16, 2023, *The Power of Diversity and Inclusion: Driving Innovation and Success*: “The financial performance of companies prioritizing diversity and inclusion consistently outperforms their peers.”² Advancing diversity & inclusion through policy and programs will be critical to the long-term sustainability of Garrett County’s economic health. Garrett County can stand out as a leader in the efforts to develop effective strategies and methods that will drive economic growth and create a welcoming community for all.

Respectfully Submitted,

Members of the Committee

² Miller, J. (2023) Council post: The Power of Diversity and Inclusion: Driving Innovation and Success, Forbes. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/08/16/the-power-of-diversity-and-inclusion-driving-innovation-and-success/?sh=96c7e8f2505d>(Accessed: 17 January 2024).

Introduction



INTRODUCTION

On July 20, 2021, the Garrett County Board of Commissioners adopted Resolution 2021-7, a statement of principles on Diversity and Inclusion for Garrett County Government. The statement recognizes that Garrett County is a diverse community in many respects and all members of the community *“have the right to be treated fairly and to live their lives with dignity, free from discrimination or disparate treatment.”* The Commissioners have stated that *“a healthy community is one in which all members of the community have an equity-based opportunity to access county services, participate in the public process and feel safe and welcome in their community.”*

In order to assess the current situation in Garrett County and to identify the challenges in attaining the aspirational goals in their statement on diversity and inclusion, the Commissioners established a Diversity & Inclusion Committee as an advisory body of the Board of County Commissioners for Garrett County. The Committee is to advise the Board of County Commissioners of Garrett County, Maryland (Commissioners) on information about the diverse population in the County, the challenges they face, and potential policy initiatives to achieve their vision of a *“welcoming and inclusive community that recognizes and honors diversity and is free from prejudice, harassment, bigotry and hate.”*

The Committee, comprised of members appointed by the Commissioners³, began meeting in July of 2022 and continued to meet on a bi-weekly basis. These community advocates regularly attended meetings and participated in activities designed to reach out to the community regarding diversity and inclusion issues in the County.

When approaching the concept of diversity, the Committee’s primary focus was on race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and physical and mental disabilities. However, other issues in the County may impact individual decisions about where to live and work. For example, while it may not be commonly recognized that affordable housing, accessible transportation, and mental health support compound aspects of discrimination and inclusion, they have an impact on and implication for creating a welcoming and inclusive community.

Garrett County is a beautiful rural community. This report is not about changing what makes it special. It is about ensuring that **everyone** feels safe, secure, and welcome here. However, the County does have its challenges. For example, the 2023-2027 Garrett County Economic Development Strategic Plan, identifies *“imbalanced community dynamics whereby long-term residents and new residents feel a divide regarding lifestyles and amenities access and*

³ See Appendix A – Members of the Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee



INTRODUCTION

whereby demographics present low and project even lower numbers of young residents and workers.” The Strategic Plan highlights equity and inclusion concerns as a barrier to creating the workforce needed in the county for future economic growth.

These challenges can lead to a detrimental view of Garrett County from both locals and visitors. The Committee believes that economic sustainability and economic growth for the County are inextricably linked with embracing a diverse community and taking concrete steps to be inclusive in welcoming all into the County.

According to the National Association of Counties, “As every county is unique, there is no common solution to achieving a more inclusive society; but by valuing diversity of thought and taking practical steps toward systematic inclusion, county leaders are building solutions to improve outcomes and strengthen America’s counties.”⁴

With these efforts in mind, the information in this report provides insight and guidance in how to meet the various goals in Garrett County Government Resolution 2021-7.

⁴ <https://www.naco.org/program/county-resources-diversity-equity-inclusion>

Key Overall Findings^{5 6}

198 individuals participated across multiple listening sessions.

875 individuals responded to the survey.

The Committee's analysis of the responses focused on race/ethnicity, LGBTQIA+ identity, and disability identifiers.

Different Lived Experiences: There were noteworthy disparities in positive perceptions of Garrett County between different demographic groups, with **marginalized groups often reporting feeling less positive.**

Inclusion and Acceptance: Marginalized groups reported feeling less accepted, unwelcome, and excluded from the full experience of Garrett County. Some individuals are leaving the County and others are deciding not to locate here.

Discrimination: Discrimination and racism are **very real and nearly daily experiences** for people from marginalized groups. These individuals report that this feels like an accepted practice in the County at large. They describe hateful words and exclusion from all the community has to offer. Further, **over 40% of all respondents, regardless of demographic, indicated that they have observed discrimination** in the community.

Safety: Many people from marginalized groups **reported real fear for their safety** in various situations and locations. This feeling has discouraged some from visiting or moving to the County and in some cases leaving the County.

Mental Health Impacts: The **lack of mental health resources** was raised by all groups, but particularly marginalized groups. Bullying in schools was a critical concern.

Qualitative Insights: The **personal stories related in this report bring to light very real and emotional lived experiences.** (Please refer to Appendix C – Listening Session Report and)

Need for Further Insight: The Committee expended great effort to reach all people of Garrett County but recognizes that important constituents were reluctant to fully disclose their experiences. It will be important to **build trust in these communities to truly understand their experiences** so meaningful actions can be taken.

See the Committee's **Recommendations on page 26** on addressing these findings.

⁵ The methodology used to gather information for this report can be found in Appendix B – Methodology.

⁶ One important point to keep in mind when reviewing these results is that small numbers in groups of interest may obscure important findings. Some groups have very small populations, but their perceptions remain of interest. The numerical results from the survey do not always clearly highlight the concerns and issues of these groups due to their small numbers. Thus, it is critical to consider the qualitative responses in both the survey and the listening sessions as these comments provide the richness to understanding the lived experiences of these marginalized groups within Garrett County and their impact on welcoming all to the County. For the purposes of this report, the marginalized groups the Committee focused on were People of Color (POC), LGBTQIA+, and persons with disabilities. While this report focuses primarily on race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and persons with disabilities there are many other areas of interest that can be further explored as shown in the overall survey results in Appendix E – Survey Data Results.



Key Listening Session Findings

The Committee was very successful in reaching citizens across the County. The citizens were very open and interested in sharing their lived experiences. These sessions were powerful, emotional reminders of the trauma faced by some of these marginalized groups.

Across sessions, common themes related to diversity and inclusion emerged. There was a consensus from the participants in the listening sessions that Garrett County is not welcoming to people of historically marginalized groups and that bias and discrimination are tolerated.

There was also a consensus by people in these sessions that they want to be part of the solution and participate in building a community that is stronger, more vibrant, and more open to all.

The listening sessions were structured as outlined below, although they often expanded organically as the conversation continued.

What follows is a summary of the sessions related to Living/Visiting, Working and Raising a Family. In each section there are also examples of thoughts and feelings of the participants that help the reader “hear” their voices.

Guiding Questions:

- **What have your experiences been living in Garrett County?**
 - **Where do you feel safe and welcome?**
- **Are there places or events you avoid?**
 - **Why?**
- **Have you experienced or observed bias and/or discrimination?**
- **Is there anything else that we should be asking?**
- **What suggestions would you offer to make Garrett County a more welcoming community?**
- **What can Garrett County do to improve your experiences?**



A. Living in/Visiting Garrett County

Key Findings: People from traditionally marginalized groups experience routine (or frequent) discrimination and racism in Garrett County and some on a daily basis. Visitors reported that they had been warned to stay away from Garrett County by others and, at a minimum, to avoid staying out after dark. Marginalized citizens expressed their desire to be able to live and participate fully in the County but have fears for their safety.

Examples of comments from the listening sessions

Regarding safety, when there is intersectionality (such as- an individual who is LGBTQIA+ and disabled, and/or- a person of color, and/or- from somewhere other than Garrett County), the situation becomes “extremely scary”.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

One Adult in the LGBTQIA+ community said, “I have had letters sent to me to ‘change my ways’, ‘avoid burning in hell’.”

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

One individual wanted to sponsor a refugee to bring to Garrett County. But decided against it because they felt the person would not be welcome here.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

Participants with family members who have disabilities talked about how there are many different microaggressions toward them, such as not being spoken to, being talked over, being ignored and avoided, and not being accepted for talking and communicating in ways that are different.

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022

There were comments provided on lack of acceptance of Black students or visitors going into local businesses and restaurants, where they were made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable based on non-verbal cues and marginalized references (i.e., “them”). For example, a tour group of Black students went to a local restaurant and the tour guide said it was very tense and there were numerous glares/stares at the group.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

It was reported that visiting performers were subjected to incidents of racism and aggression. A troupe of performers, all people of color, were accosted in a local restaurant. They were told, “Looks like you are the three blind mice,” meaning, as explained to the Committee, can’t you see you aren’t welcome here. This was communicated by a woman of color. She said she would never come to Garrett County alone and never at night because of the reputation of racism.

Meeting Minutes 1-11-2023



B. Working in Garrett County

Key Findings: Examples were provided of bias and discrimination in hiring and promotion, as well as examples of name-calling and microaggressions at local establishments. It was reported that in many situations there was no apparent concern by the store or property owner/manager regarding this treatment.

Examples of comments from the listening sessions

Participants expressed concerns about the environment in their workplace including discrimination, racial bias, and targeting. This is done mostly by employers and fellow employees.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

One person with a disability shared that their job was working for a local business and unloading trucks weekly. He feels constantly pushed to work faster. He is a steady and reliable employee who needs to work at a regular pace in a regular pattern. The confusion and yelling are hard for him. Others echoed this with examples that their speech pattern takes them a little longer to get words out, but that is not accepted. There was a general feeling of a lack of accommodation for their disability in the workplace. They may need a little more time and more organization but feel like they are very good employees. They feel the business community doesn't want to accept them.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023

An immigrant and US citizen, who was the top sales performer at a local business, was targeted by another employee for his ethnicity. The fellow employee made untrue accusations about his citizenship status to the employer and the INS, whilst also sending management negative information about gay employees. When this harassment was brought to the attention of management, there was no response or support. At another time, the employee was told, "don't invite your people" to a company event and was called derogatory ethnic names. In addition, he was instructed to follow a Black man in the store because of the supervisor's assumption, "he is going to steal".

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

One individual reported that there were repeated incidents of racial profiling (cautioning employees to "watch" individuals of Hispanic origin as they shopped.)

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

It was related that there is regular racial bias against customers of color, such as restricting them from parking near the storefront, thus requiring them to cart large quantities of products a further distance to their vehicles.

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023



C. Raising a Family in Garrett County

Key Findings: Students in marginalized groups reported that they experience regular and frequent bullying. It was felt that the school administration did not support the students. A lack of mental health resources was also noted.

(Note, the listening session with school administrators revealed a commitment to methods to support inclusion and identified many programs and efforts to combat bullying and discrimination.)

Examples of comments from the listening sessions

Most all the LGBTQIA+ young people felt that the public schools were not safe places for them. They believed they were shunned, bullied, and hated by other students as well as by a lot of their teachers. They felt nothing was done to help them. This lack of attention created a situation where one participant felt so unsafe that they brought a knife to school for protection.
LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

Parents of individuals with a disability all noted during the listening sessions that their children suffered more bullying and negative interaction at school-age.
Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022.

One parent with a bi-racial daughter in second grade related that her daughter has been called the “N” word by other students. When brought to the attention of school administrators and teachers, the response was callous and unconcerned (i.e., just young kids that don’t know better). They felt that racism is “taught” at home and crosses generations.
Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023.

Students are being called inappropriate names based on their race or sexual identity and some feel like the staff and administrators do not take enough of a stance to prevent it or even address it to make it stop.
Middle and High School Students Listening Session Spring 2023

One group of participants believe that in our schools, individuals who “seem different” are treated badly. Students of color can be targets. LGBTQIA+ students have been traumatized, which has caused extreme stress, mental illness, and self-harm. Poor mental health, fostered by school culture and lack of understanding or action taken by school administrators and teachers, was discussed.
General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

One transgender individual said that starting in 2nd grade, there was physical abuse and bullying on a routine basis from students. There was no help from the adults who knew. Instead, the individual was punished for being bullied. Conversion Therapy was encouraged by one administrator. There was no trust with teachers, or anyone else, thus the student went into a



KEY LISTENING SESSION FINDINGS

psychological shell to protect themself.
2023

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-

Key Survey Findings^{7 8}



In this section, we delve into a selection of telling questions from the survey. These questions, gauged on a Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree," have been instrumental in providing the Committee with critical insights.⁹ It's important to note that this is a curated subset, chosen for their relevance and insight into the key issues at hand. For a thorough understanding of the survey's scope and the complete list of questions, please refer to Appendix D – Paper Survey and Appendix E – Survey Data Results.

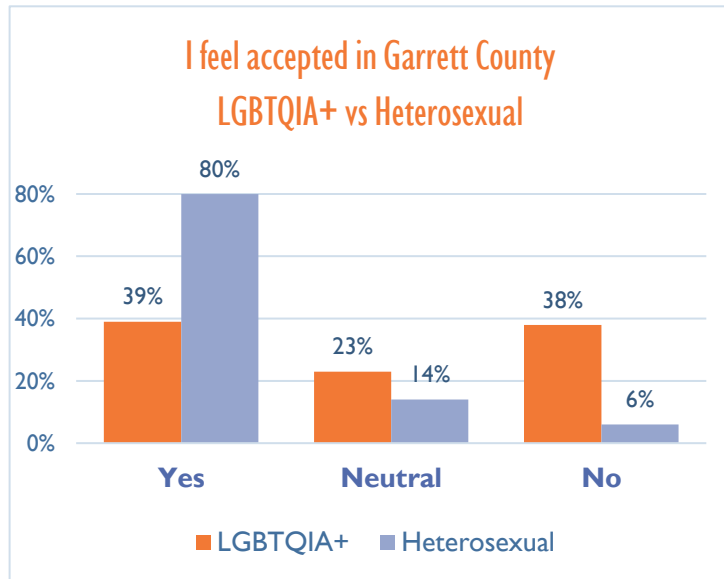
A. Living in/Visiting Garrett County

Survey Statement:

“I feel accepted/included in Garrett County.”

Key Findings: Most marginalized groups feel less accepted/included in Garrett County than others.

There was a marked difference between heterosexual respondents as compared to LGBTQIA+ respondents. Only 39% LGBTQIA+ respondents said they felt accepted/included in Garrett County and 38% indicated that they did not feel accepted/included. This result is in contrast to heterosexual respondents – 80% say they felt accepted/included and only 6% said they did not. This result is reinforced through the listening sessions, as previously described.



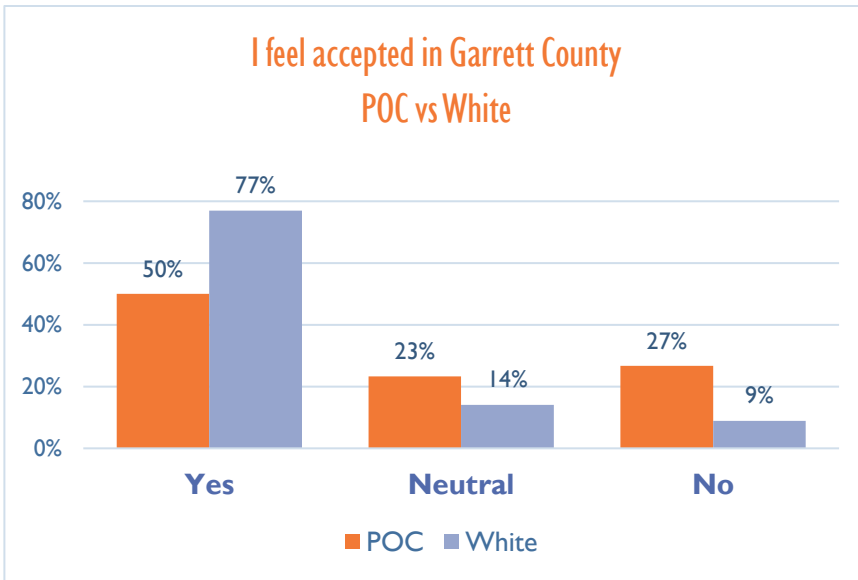
⁷ For the purposes of these analyses, the following survey key findings focus on three main groupings – race/ethnicity, LGBTQIA+ identity, and persons with disabilities. The survey findings of particular note are presented in the same order as the questions were shown in the survey. Questions not presented in the body of this report are provided in Appendix D – Paper Survey.

⁸ The groupings are described as 1. White respondents (716) and People of Color (POC) including Native American/Indigenous, Asian/Asian American, Black/African American, Afro-Latina Middle Eastern/North African, Hispanic/Latina/o/x/e, Mixed Racial Identity(60); 2. Heterosexual (706) and LGBTQIA+ including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer (64); 3. Persons with Disabilities (84), and Persons without Disabilities (760). Please note that the numbers will not always equal the total respondents due to individuals selecting Does not Apply, Prefer not to answer, or Prefer to self-identify.

⁹ Survey responses were simplified from five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) to three categories: Yes (Strongly Agree/Agree), Neutral, and No (Disagree/Strongly Disagree), to facilitate easier analysis and understanding.

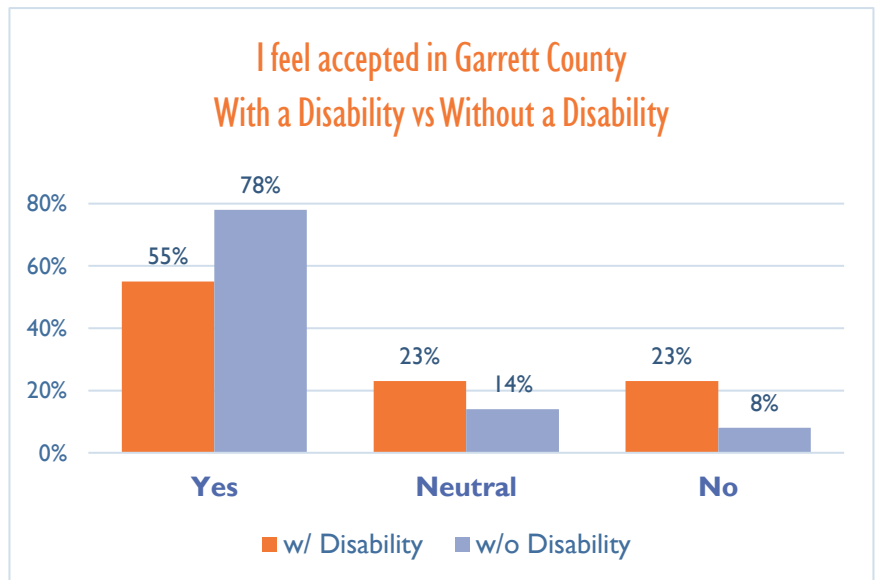


KEY SURVEY FINDINGS



When looking at People of Color (POC) as compared to White respondents, only 50% of POC indicated they feel accepted and included compared to 77% of White respondents. The size of the negative response of POC (27%) compared to White respondents (9%) is of particular concern.

When examining the responses from people with disabilities, one can see that their responses align with that of other marginalized groups. Only 55% of those with disabilities indicated that they feel accepted and included in Garrett County with a large number indicating that they do not (23%). This contrasts with those without disabilities, where 78% say they feel accepted or included and only 8% say they do not.





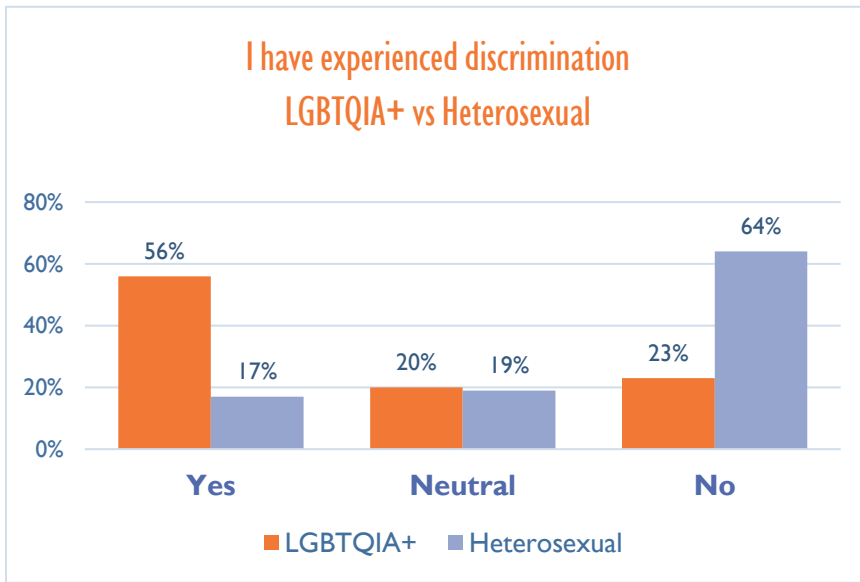
KEY

KEY FINDINGS

Survey Statement:

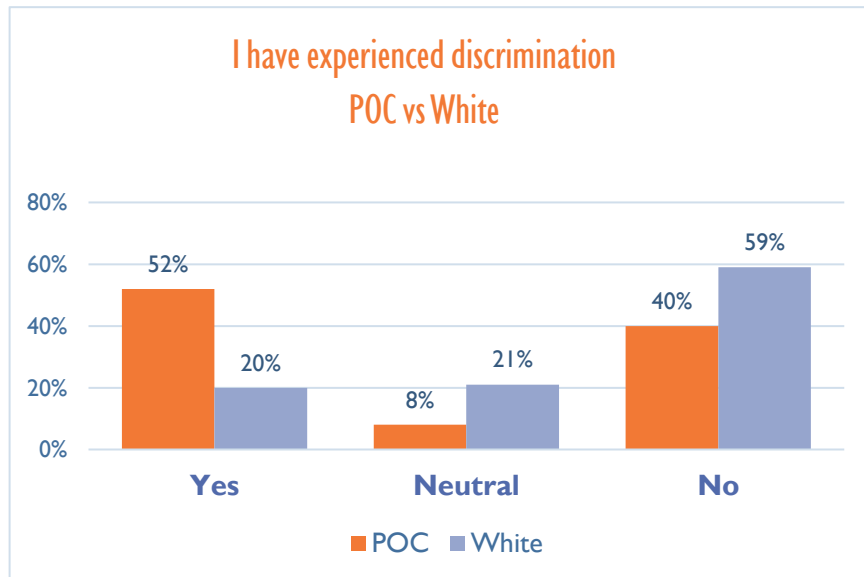
“I have experienced discrimination when in Garrett County.”

Key Findings: All marginalized groups indicated more experience with discrimination than the relevant group of comparison.



Of particular note is the LGBTQIA+ respondents, where almost 60% (56%) indicated that they had experienced discrimination compared to only 17% of those identifying as heterosexual.¹⁰

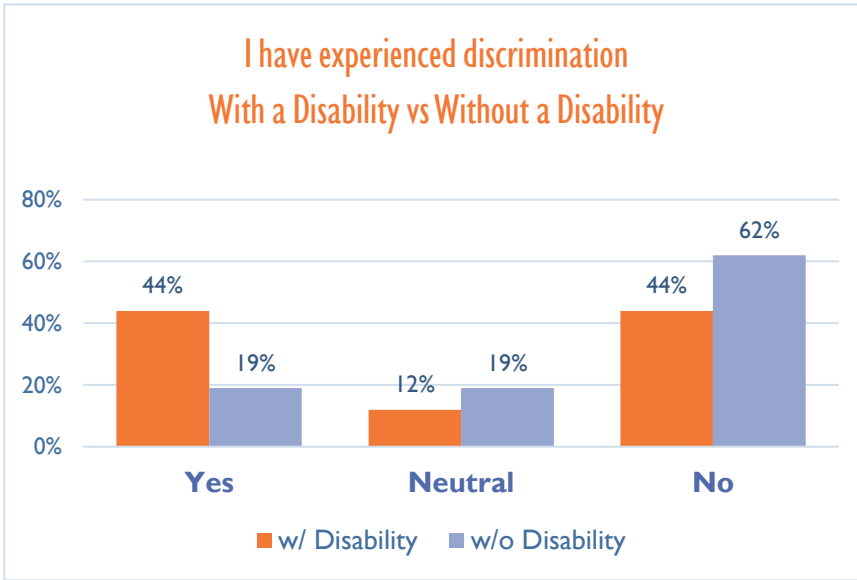
Fifty-two percent (52%) of People of Color (POC) indicated experience with discrimination, while only 20% of White respondents indicated such an experience. While this is not as large a difference as indicated for the LGBTQIA+ respondents, it is still a large enough difference (32%) to warrant further investigation.



¹⁰ It should be noted that the type of discrimination is not indicated and could cover a range of unwanted behaviors.



KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

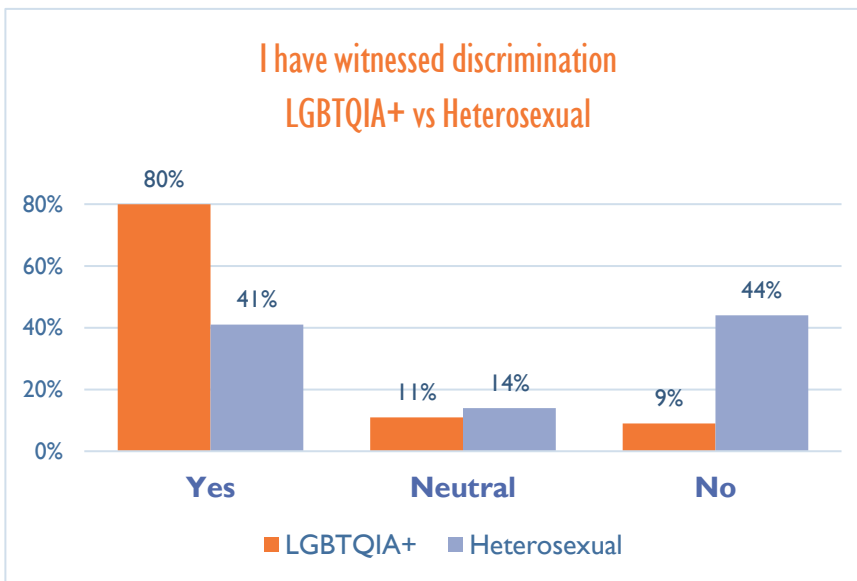


Forty-four (44%) percent of those in the disability community indicated that they have experienced discrimination compared to 19% of those without disabilities - a difference of 25%.

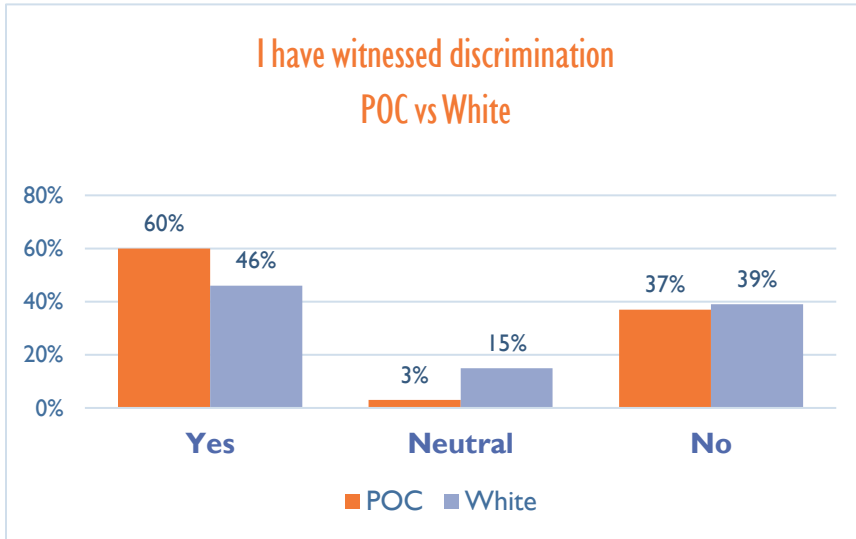
Survey Statement:

“I have witnessed discrimination in Garrett County.”

Key Findings: A larger percentage of all groups indicated that they have witnessed discrimination as compared to personally experiencing discrimination.



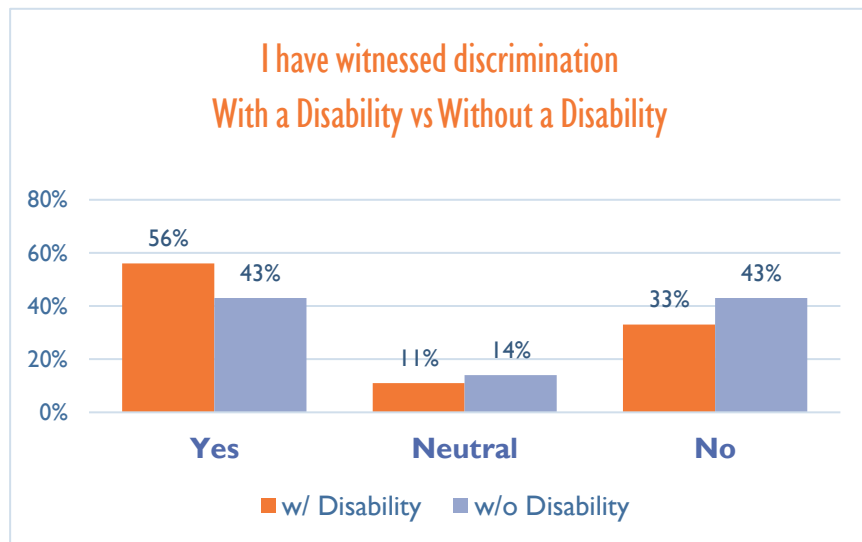
The most troubling finding in this set of data is with the LGBTQIA+ respondents, where 80% indicated that they have witnessed discrimination in Garrett County compared to only 41% of those identifying as heterosexual.



The same pattern can be seen in the comparison of White respondents to People of Color (POC) witnessing discrimination versus personally experiencing it. As illustrated in graph to the left, nearly 50% of White respondents indicated that they have witnessed discrimination in Garrett County with 60% of POC

indicating so. The large percentage of White respondents indicating that they have seen such behavior suggests that the occurrence of such unwanted /undesirable behaviors is greater than many may think.

There was not as large a contrast between people with disabilities and people without disabilities, with 56% of persons with disabilities and 43% of those without disabilities saying they have witnessed discrimination.





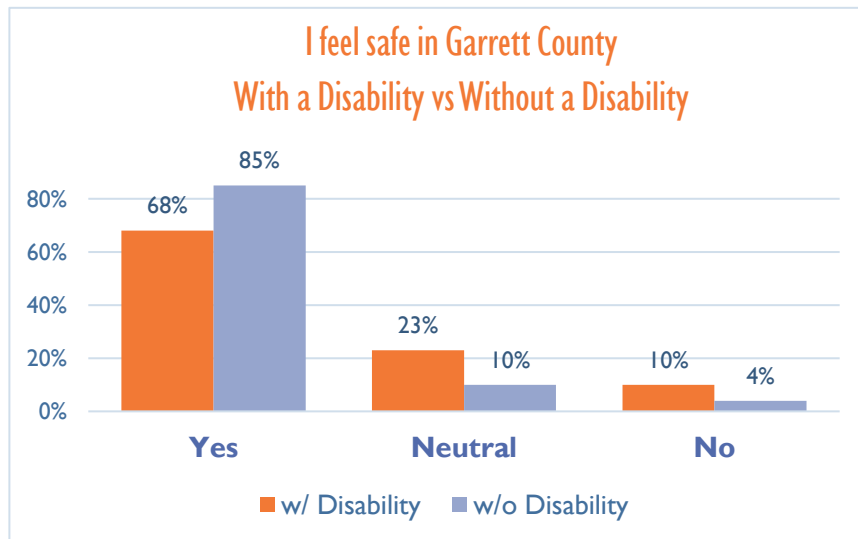
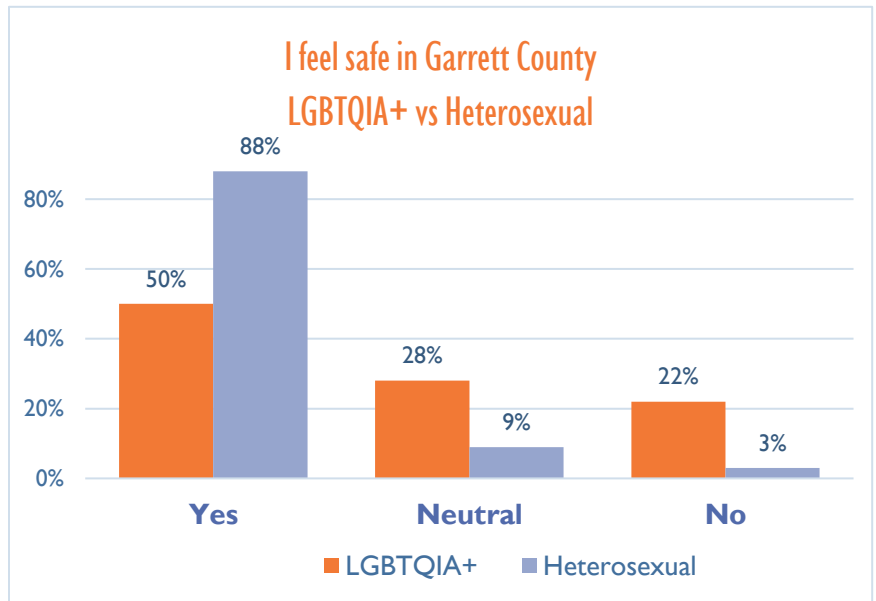
KEY FINDINGS

Survey Statement:

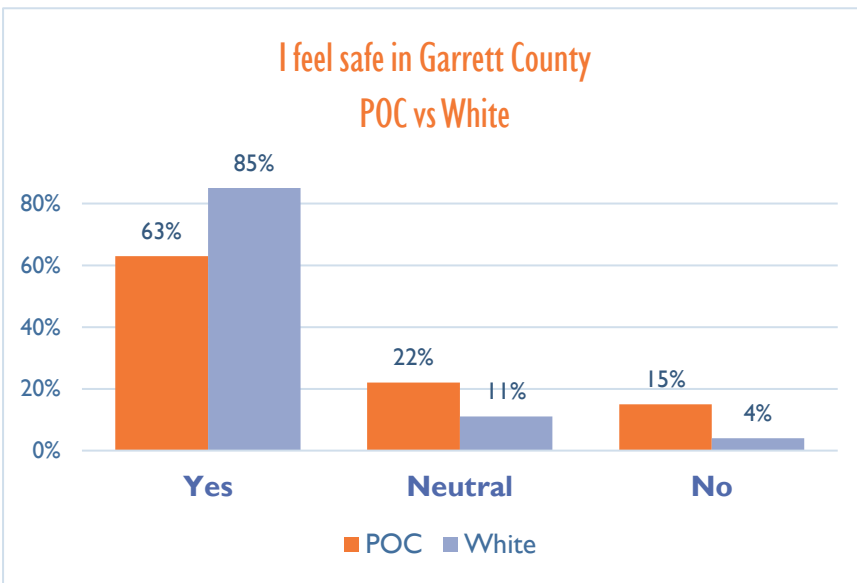
“I feel safe in Garrett County.”

Key Findings: All marginalized groups felt less safe than others in Garrett County, with the LGBTQIA+ respondents feeling the least safe.

The stark difference between LGBTQIA+ and heterosexual respondents is dramatic, with only 50% of LGBTQIA+ respondents indicating they feel safe, whereas 88% of heterosexual respondents indicating so. This is an area of great concern and was reinforced by participants in the listening sessions.



Sixty-eight percent (68%) of persons with disabilities and 85% of persons without disabilities indicated that they felt safe.



White respondents had an 85% rating and People of Color (POC) respondents had a 63% rating indicating that they felt safe. It should be noted however, that 15% of POC, compared to only 4% of White respondents, indicated that they did not feel safe.

Examples of comments from the Survey

“As a minority in Garrett County, I have experienced many microaggressions and racist incidents that have made me feel unsafe in the community. I feel that has increased in severity recently making me feel unsafe in my community and therefore not a great place to visit as a minority.”

“I don't feel safe or accepted here. I am excited to move away. I feel as though there is already a target on my back being visibly very queer and going through transition- I'm terrified to be living here with the anti trans legislation being passed everywhere else because I feel like this place is next. I was told that gay people should be shunned and are sick, by members of the church I only attended for a few weeks.”

“Family members who are in the LGBTQ+ community don't feel safe in most places in the area, as well as black and brown skinned friends who have visited us.”

“As a local, who grew up here and identify as LGBT, I was tortured in school; physically and mentally. I dropped out of school, went to live at Brooklane for some time, and eventually became a successful adult — elsewhere.”

“I have been personally discriminated against because of my religious and political beliefs. My family has experienced racism - both of my brothers-in-law and nephews are of Mexican ancestry. The office I work in has shown prejudice to Hispanics, Blacks, gays, and non-evangelical Christians.”

“I have seen slurs towards blacks and gays. Have been told by a realtor that certain neighborhoods don't want Asians Blacks or gays moving into their neighborhoods.”



KEY SURVEY

55

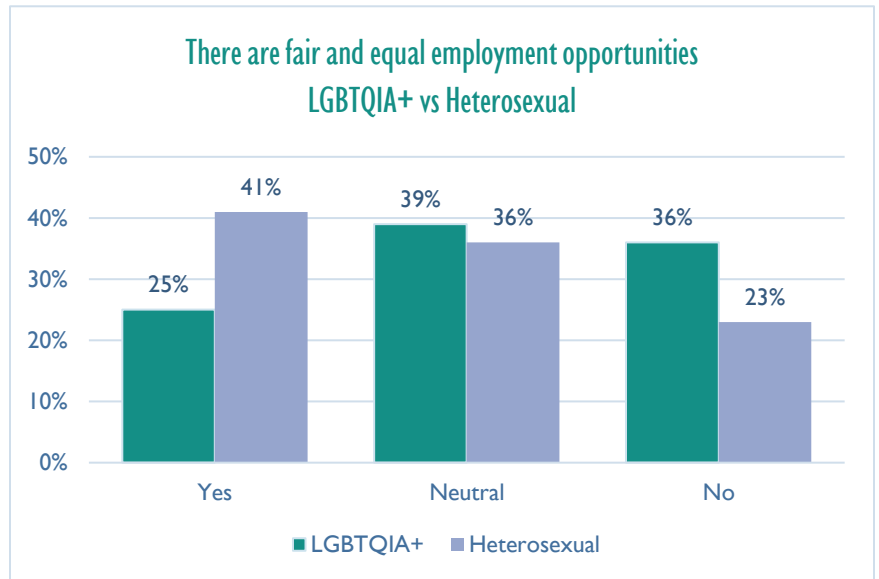
B. Working in Garrett County

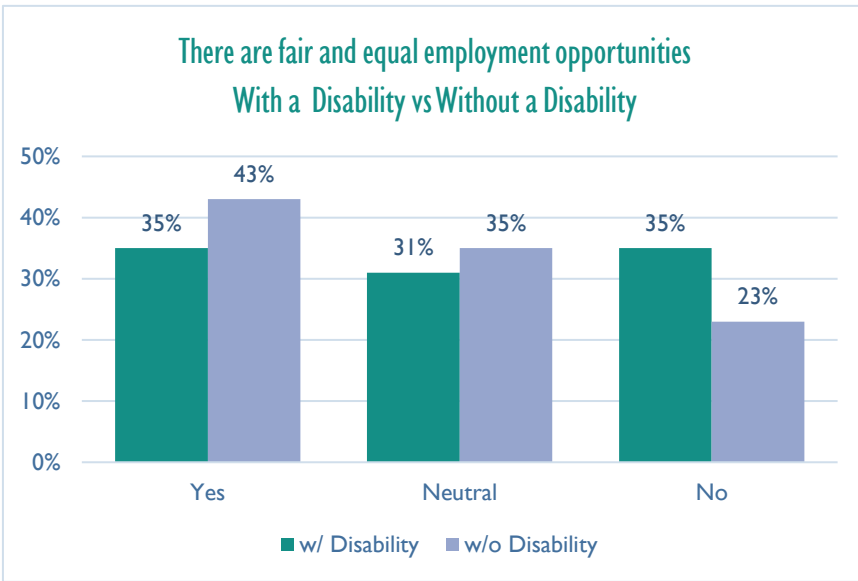
Survey Statement:

“There are fair and equal employment opportunities in Garrett County.”

Key Findings: Across all respondents, there is little belief in the availability of fair and equal employment opportunities. No group reached 50% agreement with this statement. These results could indicate broader concerns around employment in the County.

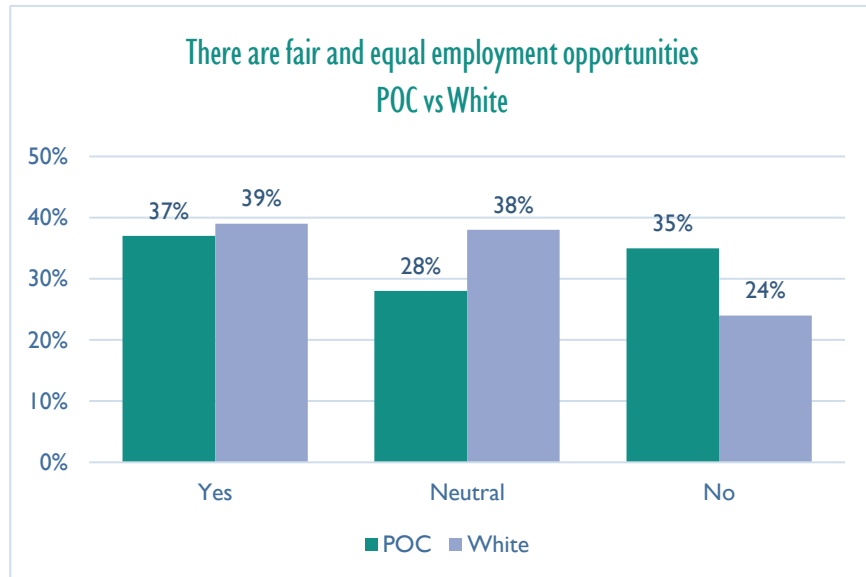
As can be seen in the graph to the right, there appears to be an ongoing pattern in the results for those identifying as heterosexual compared to LGBTQIA+, with a greater difference in those believing in fair and equal employment opportunities (41% for heterosexual and only 25% LGBTQIA+).





People with disabilities were similarly reflective of the concern over fair and equal employment opportunities with only 35% thinking that there are such opportunities in the County.

Less than 40% of White and People of Color (POC) respondents believe there are fair and equal employment opportunities in Garrett County.





KEY FINDINGS

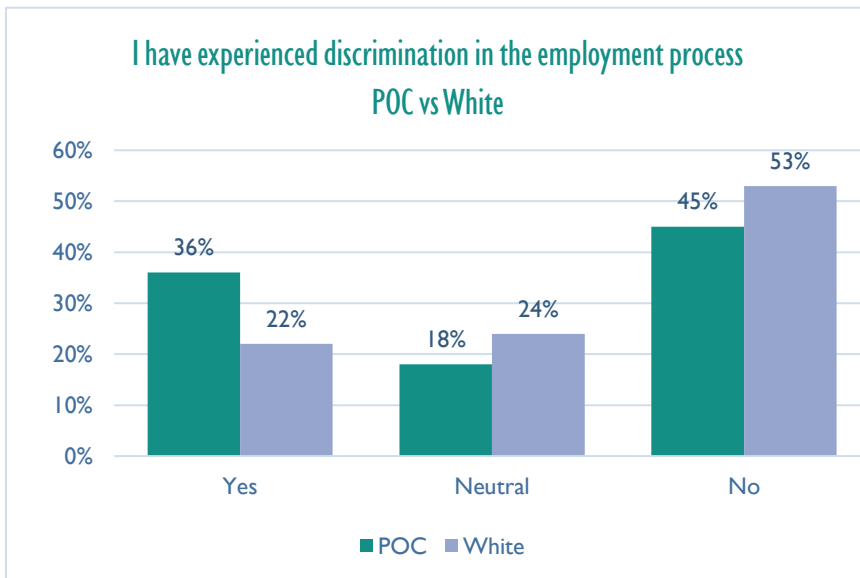
Survey Statement:

“I have personally experienced discrimination in the employment process.”

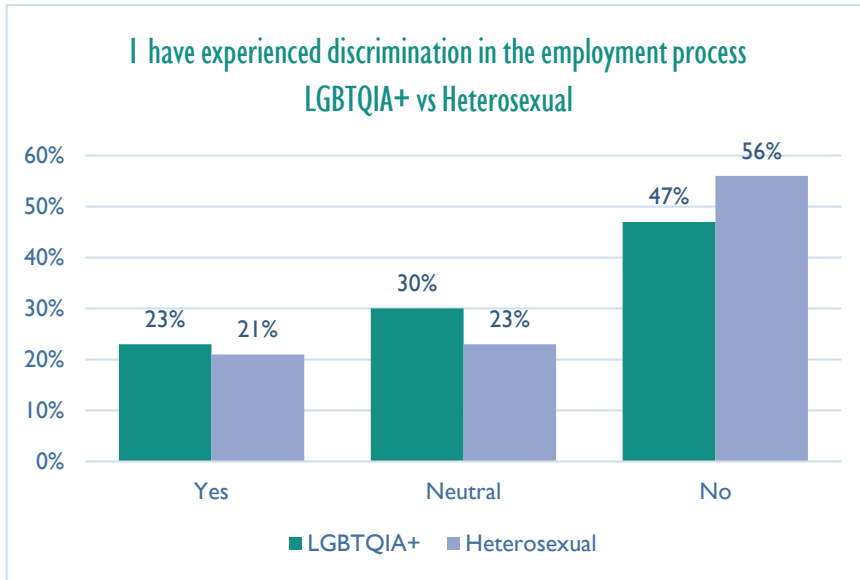
Key Findings: Out of all marginalized groups, people with disabilities reported more experience with employment discrimination (46%) than any other group. This finding is particularly troubling considering Federal and State Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) laws that are in place to protect the rights of these individuals.

GS

People with disabilities reported more experience with personal discrimination (46%) than those without disabilities (19%).



While 36% of People of Color (POC) reported experiencing discrimination in the employment arena, only 22% of White respondents reported such behaviors. It should be noted however, that around 50% of White and POC respondents did not report experiencing such actions.



In the LGBTQIA+ respondent group, only about a fifth (23%) reported experiencing discrimination in the employment process, while almost 50% said they had not.

Examples of comments from the survey

“Low wages, lack of employment above minimum wages, transportation challenges.”

“Due to me being a trans woman, and wearing feminine and fashionable clothing as well as wearing makeup, I have been discriminated due to these reasons.”

“It’s all about who you are and who you know.”

“I have hard evidence of employment discrimination against people with disabilities in Garrett county.”

“Told because I was a female I couldn’t be promoted.”



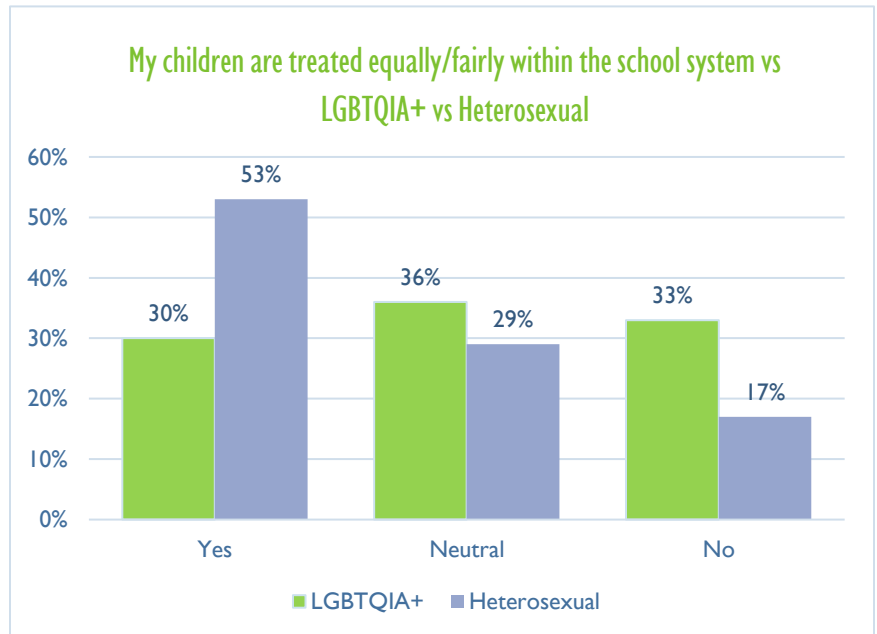
C. Raising a Family in Garrett County

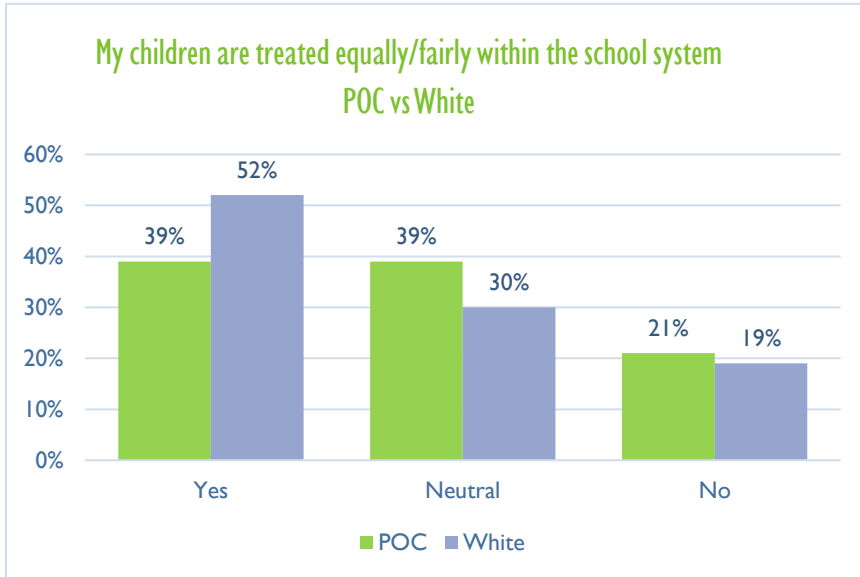
Survey Statement:

“My children are treated equally/fairly within the school system.”

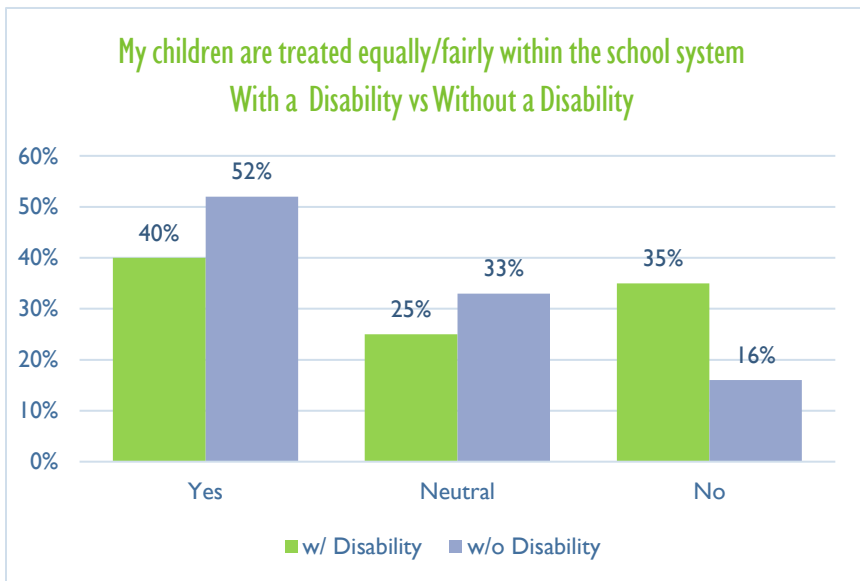
Key Findings: No marginalized group reached more than 40% agreeing that their children are treated equally and/or fairly within the school system.

Of note is that more of the LGBTQIA+ respondents feel their children are not treated equally (33%) than feel they are treated equally (30%) – unlike any of the other groups.





Only 39% of People of Color (POC) respondents felt their children were treated equally/fairly, while 52% of White respondents felt this way.



The results for people with disabilities were similar to the POC respondents, with only 40% feeling their children are treated equally/fairly. Of note is the large percentage (35%) feeling their children are not treated equally/fairly.



KEY SU

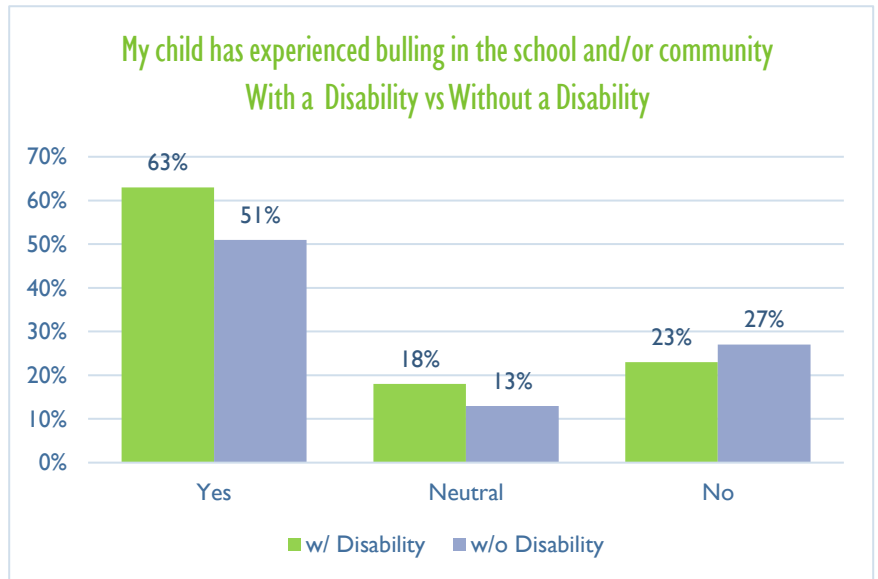
FINDINGS

Survey Statement:

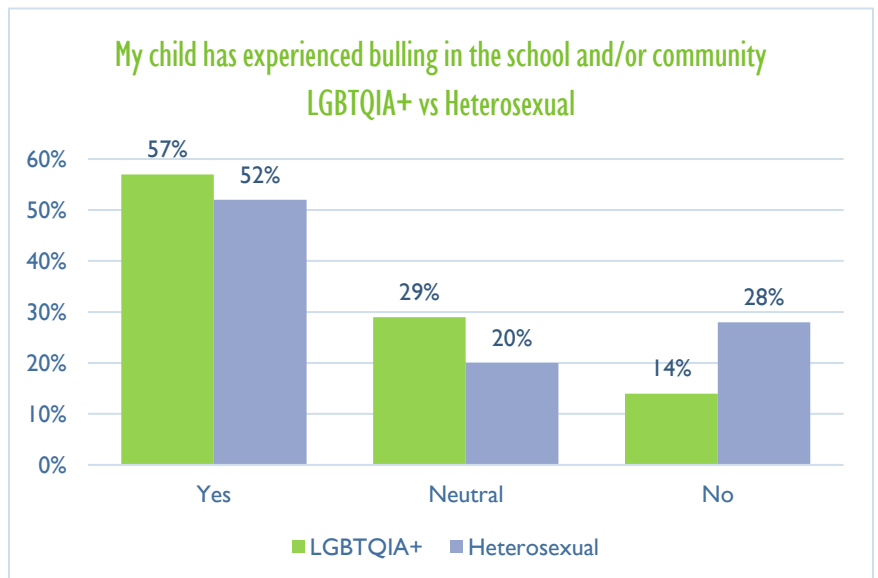
“My child/ren has/have experienced bullying at school and/or in the community.”

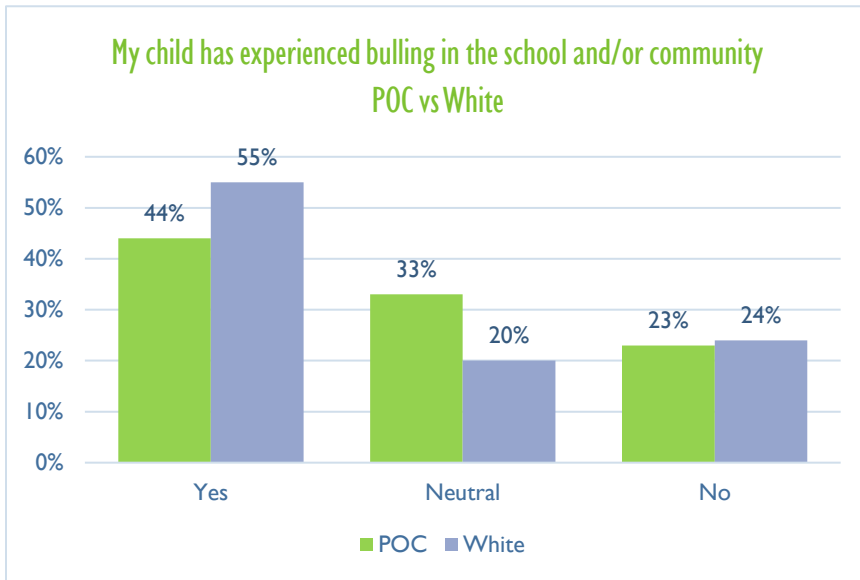
Key Findings: At least 50% of all groups felt their children had experienced bullying at school and/or in the community.

People with disabilities had the largest percentage feeling this way with 63% saying that their children had been bullied. This large percentage is troubling and needs further exploration.



The responses for the heterosexual and LGBTQIA+ respondents are more similar than other groups with both above 50%.





Of interest in this comparison is that White respondents indicated a higher percentage than POC respondents. This finding should be explored further, especially considering the large raw numbers of White respondents (218) to the survey.

Examples of comments from the survey

“We are a white, heterosexual family so we fit in here. My family, who are People of Color, have had negative experiences. My children, who were raised here, have moved away to be nearer to more progressive communities with more diversity and opportunity.”

“I have a biracial child. This is not the best place to raise them.”

“It's simply not safe here. Especially for black/poc families, trans and queer families- not traditional families are shunned/discriminated against.”

“Low income families and families with certain names are discriminated against in schools and employment.”

“I have heard from several families that they feel uncomfortable after they moved here because of the lack of diversity. Being mainly Caucasian, this county can unknowingly be somewhat cruel and ignorant to those coming from a different culture and or race. Kids are especially cruel to those who are different then themselves.”

*“When my son was in kindergarten, 5th grade boys told him his skin wouldn't be so dark if he would shower more, this past year a teammate called him a N***er multiple times at practice. The school system did very little in the first incident, parents of the children were not even contacted. ***My son is not African American*** but students do not even know there are races aside from Black and White.”*



Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings from the listening sessions and survey results.

A. Adopt a “Welcoming Resolution/Statement” to Foster an Inclusive Environment.

A critical first step is to be clear that all people are welcome to live and visit, work, and raise a family in Garrett County. This message needs to represent the County and stand as a model for town governments, business, places of worship, community groups and events. The Commissioners have a unique opportunity to provide a leadership role in this effort.

This welcoming message needs to be promoted and amplified across the County and the region and supported by local/regional and state government, organizations, business, faith groups, Garrett County NAACP, and all other groups. Successful messaging and positive change should be recognized and celebrated.

Garrett County cannot afford to miss the enrichment that is created when individuals of diverse backgrounds and experiences are welcomed and integrated into the community. Without increased diversification, population decline may continue, both from younger generations, who seek the growth that comes from experiencing diverse communities, and potential new residents to Garrett County who can offer their own unique contributions.

To this point, in the past three years, out of 13 college-educated Black professionals who had lived and worked in Garrett County and were willing to discuss their lived experiences with the Garrett County NAACP, nine (9) moved away because of racial discrimination. They described hostility at the workplace, in Oakland stores, when finding housing, and generally feeling unsafe.

A clear Welcoming Resolution/Statement with the associated leadership and celebrations sets the stage for the success of the following recommendations.

B. Establish a County-level Position Responsible to Lead Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives.

Our findings support the critical need for a commitment toward diversity and inclusion in Garrett County. A full-time, county level position to drive opportunities and initiatives is necessary to lead change. This position could assist the Commissioners by serving as the point person for addressing citizen concerns regarding inclusivity and complaints of discrimination.



This position would develop an overarching strategic plan and a complementary implementation plan to address the needs and concerns around these issues. In addition, methods of measurement and goal accomplishment should be put in place.

This position could work with government and non-government entities as well as individuals, including the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, to identify and support actions and develop policies to promote diversity and inclusion. This position could collaborate with organizations, such as the Garrett County NAACP and the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights, that specialize in diversity, equity, inclusion, and civil rights.

Advancing diversity and inclusion through policy and programs will be critical to the long-term sustainability of Garrett County. Evidence within the business sector, where these types of policies and programs have been incorporated into company strategic and tactical plans, has created competitive advantages and sustainable cultures.

The Committee believes this recommendation is the most important for advancing the goals of diversity and inclusion. Without this new staff position, change is unlikely at best and at worst the concerns are exacerbated.

There are hard consequences if solutions are not found. That is the financial impact of negative population growth and outcomes (increase in suicide, crime, homelessness). In addition, without growth there will be cultural isolation and division.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

C. Maintain the Diversity & Inclusion Committee in an Advisory Role.

While there were no specific questions around maintaining a diversity and inclusion committee in the County, there were many comments that spoke to the need for an outlet for sharing feelings and opinions and to reinforce the effort to listen to the community. In addition, this Committee has gained a wealth of knowledge around these issues and could provide support and guidance to a County-level employee attempting to navigate this area.

Regarding the makeup of the Committee, while we know there were efforts to recruit individuals from marginalized groups, we believe it is essential to have greater diverse representation on the Committee going forward.

The role of the Committee needs to be clearly defined in order to ensure proper boundaries are maintained and the purpose and goal of the Committee moving forward is in line with the goals of the County.

People are making conversations possible. There is a need to continue the listening sessions. It shows a level of caring.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023



D. Encourage and Support Training Events to Educate Various Entities on the Importance of Diversity and Inclusion to the County.

A trained workforce is fundamental to growth. It is difficult for many businesses and community organizations to access this training and a cooperative effort is needed.

To facilitate this change, it will be important to establish a diversity education resource for local businesses utilizing the Garrett Chamber of Commerce, in conjunction with Garrett College. We also understand that the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights is in the process of developing training resources that could be leveraged in this effort.

It is critical that community members, employers and employees understand the importance of inclusivity and a welcoming nature of all to the community. Likewise, it is important to recognize the potential legal pitfalls of discrimination in the workplace.

Training of this type should not be viewed as a one-time event but should be incorporated into the ongoing efforts of the County to ensure that the concepts and facts are continually being shared with the community.

Those businesses and organizations that demonstrate commitment to diversity strategies, training, and programs need to be recognized and promoted for the purposes of attracting new businesses to Garrett County and recruiting talent to the local workforce.

Increase community education and training to reduce discrimination and implicit biases towards marginalized adults.

*Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023;
Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023*

E. Encourage the Public School System to Support Students Who are Marginalized.

The Committee recommends continued support for the public school initiative of a universal behavioral health screener to help early identification of students who may be struggling in different areas. This would give immediate feedback about where individual students are struggling and aspects of the school climate like student-student relationships, bullying, emotional safety, physical safety, and substance abuse.

Support the creation of schools as a safe space for ALL students. This would need to include education and training of staff and students specific to cultural and diversity awareness, anti-bullying and harassment and increasing the mental health support for ALL students in the school. The lack of adequate mental health care can be seen through the rise in school bullying, suicides, school shootings, and other negative and harmful behaviors.

The schools have many proactive strategies for taking action on the above recommendations, some of which they already do. However, based on the information gathered for this report, there is room for improvement. The County-level position could act as a resource for the public school system to help support students who feel marginalized.

Participants felt that the public schools are contributing to the problems facing marginalized students. They expressed that too often the school administration and teachers do not protect students adequately. Too often there is simply no response, issues are just ignored.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

F. Encourage Support for Festivals and other Activities/Events that Promote Inclusion of Marginalized Groups by Various Government, Business, Nonprofit Entities and Others.

Our findings support the idea of educating and celebrating diversity and inclusion through methods of entertainment, recreation, and participation. This could include encouraging/sponsoring town business associations and local municipalities to coordinate such events and activities, e.g., Black History Month, Pride Festivals, Kwanzaa, Hispanic Heritage Month, etc. Such activities could encourage visitors to the County and demonstrate that the County welcomes diversity and inclusion. Appreciation of different cultures and experiences builds the capacity in people to see their shared values.

In addition, there were many comments in the survey as well as the listening sessions where respondents felt that the County was focused solely on the lake, and its residents were not provided the same resources and opportunities as the lake area or visitors. When considering support for festivals and other activities/events the Committee believes attention should be paid to this segment of the population.

G. Support a Network of Communication Dissemination for the County.

Our Committee heard from many respondents about the difficulty in accessing information, community resources and staying informed about events, opportunities, services, and general information occurring in the County.

The Committee acknowledges that multiple networks and methods currently exist across both governmental and non-governmental entities to disseminate information but the reality, gleaned from the survey responses and the listening session, is that this is inadequate.

The Committee suggests that this issue be addressed taking into account the barriers imposed by factors such as economic challenges, cultural, language, rural, internet connectivity, education, and develop a coordinated communication plan to incorporate additional methods of dissemination of information.





Conclusion

Garrett County is a wonderful place to live and work. There are many benefits of a beautiful rural community. The Commissioners were concerned that this was not the universal experience of all residents and visitors.

Through extensive outreach, listening sessions and a broadly distributed survey, the Committee found that not all citizens or visitors fully enjoy the benefits of our community. The Committee found that there are serious issues of safety, discrimination, and unequal treatment for people from traditionally marginalized groups. The young people of the LGBTQIA+ community are especially traumatized by discrimination described in this report and the need for mental health support is acute. People of Color are regularly subjected to racial slurs and mistreatment. Citizens with physical and mental disabilities are too often passed over, ignored, or alienated.

The Committee found that this situation not only affects the people and their families subjected to the discrimination who want to move away but has become an unwelcoming characteristic that inhibits people from moving into the County or visiting in the County. This environment will impact the economy and limit future growth. In fact, the County's recent Economic Development Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 warned:

“Equity & Inclusion is needed to shore up the workforce. There exists a “tale of two cities” in Garrett County, a divide in the “come here's” and “from here's.” The County is at risk of losing more youth in the long-term because of this.”

The health and well-being of all citizens in Garrett County is dependent on addressing the issues highlighted in this Committee's findings. The recommendations in this report are a necessary step to move forward to achieve the Commissioners' aspirational goal in Resolution 21-7:

“We commit to building a welcoming environment throughout the County that is free from harassment, discrimination, and disparities.”

Addressing issues of diversity and inclusion in the County is an investment in our future that benefits all citizens in the County.



Appendices

Garrett County Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee

Appendix A – Members of the Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Committee

List of Appointed Members of the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee

- Duane Yoder – Chair - Garrett County Community Action Representative
- Vianne Bell – Vice Chair – Member At Large
- Scott Hollingsworth – Secretary - Appalachian Crossroads Representative
- Kevin Null – (ex officio) – Garrett County Government Administrator
- Daphne Gooding, Ph.D. – Garrett County NAACP Representative
- John Hummel – Garrett County Public Schools Representative
- Shelley Menear – Garrett College Representative
- Chuck Olsson – Member At Large
- Shane Pittman, Ph.D. – Member At Large
- Gloria Salazar, MSW – Member At Large
- Ryan Savage – Member At Large (resigned after being elected commissioner)



Appendix B – Methodology

To gather information and insights from the community, the Committee utilized two primary methods for the report: targeted and public listening sessions and a broadly distributed community survey. In addition, the Committee held bi-weekly meetings, open to the public, for 18 months. These methods were chosen to ensure that the voices, perspectives, and experiences of community members were heard and reflected in the Committee’s recommendations.



Listening Sessions

In addition to the targeted listening sessions for marginalized groups, public listening sessions were held to provide an opportunity for all community members to share their thoughts and experiences related to diversity and inclusion in a safe and open forum.

There were efforts to engage the wider Hispanic community, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, law enforcement, veterans, churches, the Jewish community, seniors, Garrettland tenants, mental health providers, and the homeless community. Unfortunately, these targeted sessions did not happen. In some cases, as anecdotally relayed to Committee members, members of these groups indicated a lack of trust in confidentiality and a fear of reprisal in participating. Future efforts should focus on creating safe environments for these groups to share their lived experiences.

Listening Sessions

General Public Listening Sessions

- Accident Public Library
- Friendsville Public Library
- Grantsville Public Library
- Kitzmiller Public Library
- Oakland Public Library (3 sessions)



198
participants

Targeted Listening Sessions

- Individuals in Addiction Recovery
- Hispanic Individual
- Individuals with disabilities
- Parents and or family members of individuals with disabilities
- Youth in the LGBTQIA+ Community
- Adults LGBTQIA+ Community
- Garrett College Students of Color
- Middle and High School Students
- Garrett County Public School Administrators



Participation in the listening sessions was lively and individuals appreciated the opportunity to share their views and experiences. The sessions were conducted in a standard format for consistency with broad leeway to allow the conversations to expand. The discussions were generally facilitated by two members of the Advisory Committee. Participants were assured of confidentiality.

See Appendix C – Listening Session Report for the full report on the listening sessions.

Community Survey

The community survey, developed by the Committee, asked a range of questions on lived experiences in Garrett County around three main areas of interest with ample opportunity for responders to provide comments and thoughts throughout the survey.

The survey was widely distributed through numerous sources:

- Garrett County Courthouse
- Garrett County Government Website
- Garrett County Government Facebook Page
- Garrett County Government Health Department Website
- Garrett County Post Office Locations
- Garrett College
- Mass email distributions to various employers,
- Garrett County Public Libraries
- Various Local Advertising Venues
- Digital Billboard Advertising
- Garrett County Chamber of Commerce Members
- Local Radio Station WKHJ - 104.5 FM
- Individual Distribution
- Local Community Groups
- Flyers/Posters at Local Retail Stores
- Restaurants
- Laundromats

Surveys were collected using multiple methods – electronic, paper, and Spanish language versions. The survey was launched on March 7, 2023, and closed on August 23, 2023. The survey contains a wealth of quantitative data, while the comments and responses to the questions reveal incredible details of the situations facing our marginalized populations.

Together, these methods generated a diverse range of perspectives and insights that informed recommendations of the Committee and ensured that the report was grounded in the lived experiences and needs of the community.

See Appendix D – Paper Survey, Appendix E – Survey Data Results, and Diversity and Inclusion Survey Raw Data File (312.65 KB) .xlsx



Appendix F – Survey Comments from Respondents for more details about the survey.

Appendix C – Listening Session Report

Overview

The Committee scheduled 16 listening sessions over a seven-month period. There were 198 individuals that attended and participated in the sessions.

- 9 were targeted to specific historically marginalized groups
- 7 were open to the public scheduled at locations throughout the county
- Additional efforts were conducted to schedule other sessions, but were not successful

The sessions were conducted in a standard format for consistency with broad leeway to allow the **conversations to expand. Participants were assured of confidentiality.**

The opening questions were:

- What have your experiences been living in Garrett County?
 - Where do you feel safe and welcome?
- Are there places or events you avoid?
 - Why?
- Have you experienced or observed bias and/or discrimination?
- Is there anything else that we should be asking?
- What suggestions would you offer to make Garrett County a more welcoming community?
- What can Garrett County do to improve your experiences?

The synopsis below highlights common themes from the Sessions. This report also includes recommendations from the citizen participants in the Sessions.

Synopsis and Key Take-Aways

There were several repeated themes across the listening sessions. This provided a good picture of the reality of living in Garrett County as a person in a marginalized group. It became clear, through the totality of responses, that these are not isolated individual experiences. They were reported county wide by numerous citizens.

1. Safety and prejudice

Many people reported multiple threats, hateful comments, bullying, aggressive stares, and clear prejudice. For many people this is a regular, if not daily, experience. There were multiple examples of microaggressions that felt threatening to the individuals. These examples occurred across the community in schools, local stores, restaurants, churches etc. Some people said that they would not return to, or recommend, Garret County to marginalized groups. One professional stated that they would not travel into the county after dark.

2. Lack of community support

There was a general sense that the community at large and people in authority do not support equal participation by our marginalized citizens. It was said that there is a systemic underlying acceptance of discrimination. This included:

- **Students who identify as LGTBQ+** reported that they experience regular and frequent bullying and verbal attacks both in the community and in school and yet reported that school officials too often looked the other way and seemed to tacitly agree with the bullies. Many examples were provided. *Note, the listening session with school administrators revealed a commitment to methods to support inclusion.*
- **Local Merchants** – Examples were provided of bias and discrimination in hiring and promotion as well as examples of name calling and microaggression at local establishments. It was reported that in many situations there was no apparent concern by store or property owners/managers regarding this treatment. At one restaurant several people of color were taunted, and the restaurant personnel ignored the situation.
- **Law Enforcement** - There were no specific examples of a lack of fair treatment by law enforcement but there was a generalized concern, as noted by students of color, at Garrett College, that there was no institutional support in Garrett County for equal treatment.
- **Code Enforcement** – Persons in the Disability Groups expressed grave concern on the lack of accessibility and no apparent enforcement of basic tenets of the ADA.

3. Mental Health Services

Many people expressed grave concerns about the lack of adequate mental health services. Many of the youth reported suicidal thoughts and ideations, and when they reached out for help found no support and/or long wait lists. Individuals were seeking help for coping skills and wanted to learn and practice these skills. They expressed a need for group support and safe spaces where they would find others going through similar situations.

4. Housing

The lack of affordable housing was regularly noted. There was an assumption that this contributed to a barrier for people wanting to move into the county. Several examples were provided of people with a past background of drug use, and other barriers to access housing that is subsidized.

Citizen Recommendations

As part of the Listening Sessions process, recommendations for actions were solicited. The citizens participating had many specific and global suggestions. It was clear that they are invested in contributing to improvement in the diversity and inclusivity of Garrett County.

The general recommendations include:

1. Continue this process of open communication. Citizens want to be heard. It was suggested that the Garrett County Board of Commissioners participate in open forums on the topic of Diversity and Inclusion and should be clear in their support. The County, as a whole, should promote inclusion and tolerance.
2. Use the human resources that we have in the County and use energy and ideas generated by this open process. Many people have personal experiences and deep understanding of these issues and can help guide solutions.
3. Emphasize education and training to help everyone better understand the issues. This should be provided, in part, by people from diverse backgrounds. This training is needed in schools, businesses, churches, and community organizations. There is a disparity of “haves and have nots” and “lake vs general community” that could be minimized.
4. Public transportation is inadequate and contributes to the exclusion of marginalized people. Expand transportation services and, at the same time, adjust fees for local events so that local citizens can afford these events.

5. Expand affordable housing and consider creating competition in entities that manage and control the subsidized housing options.

There was a general consensus that the social environment in Garrett County is not welcoming to people of historically marginalized groups and that bias and discrimination is both tolerated and encouraged. There was also a general consensus by people in these groups that they want to be part of the solution. They are willing to be active participants in building a community that is stronger, more vibrant, and more open to all people.

What follows are the insights gained from the questions.

What have your experiences been living in Garrett County?

Where do you feel safe and welcome?

Many young people (18-23 years of age) that are of the LGBTQIA+ community expressed that they did not feel safe in Garrett County particularly because of their sexuality. They were accustomed to comments like “Don’t infect me with it”.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

Regarding safety, when there is intersectionality as with gender preference plus disabilities, or plus being a person of color, or plus being from somewhere other than Garrett County, the situation becomes “extremely scary”. It was stated that there is homophobic and transphobic thought here.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

Most all the LGBTQIA+ young people felt that the public schools were not safe places for them. They believed they were shunned, bullied, and hated by other students as well as by a lot of their teachers. Nothing was done to help them. This lack of attention created a situation where one participant felt so unsafe that a knife was brought to school for protection.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

In one public school there is a gender-neutral bathroom. It became a dirty scary place. It was not cleaned regularly. There was graffiti on the walls, including a swastika. Being off a common area, where individuals can see who goes in and comes out, jokes were made to students that used this bathroom. Nothing was done to correct this situation.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

It was reported that there are churches in Garrett County that conduct conversion therapy on LGBTQIA+ individuals. It was felt that only a couple of churches welcomed the LGBTQIA+ community.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

There are just a few “safe places” in Garrett County for the LGBTQIA+ youth to frequent. This was related by the group gathered.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

Over half of the young LGBTQIA+ individuals in the listening session plan to leave Garrett County. Some remarked that it is too bad because they love the beauty of the area. They wish people’s attitudes toward them could be better.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

One Adult in the LGBTQIA+ community said, “I have had letters sent to me to “change my ways”, “avoid burning in hell”.”

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

Some places where an Adult LGBTQIA+ individual goes in Garrett County, there is hesitation in how to act. “Do I shake hands; do I cross my legs? It brings back the trauma of my younger self.”

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

One Adult LGBTQIA+ person was told to be careful when moving here.

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

It was reported that visiting performers were subjected to incidents of racism and aggression. A troupe of performers, all people of color, were accosted in a local restaurant. They were told, “Looks like you are the three blind mice,” meaning, as explained to the Committee, can’t you see you aren’t welcome here. This was communicated by a woman of color. She said she would never come to Garrett County alone and never at night because of the reputation of racism.

Meeting Minutes 1-11-2023 Attachment

It was expressed that Garrett County does not welcome those in need. There is no drop in shelter for the homeless.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

One individual wanted to sponsor a refugee to bring to Garrett County. But decided against it because they felt the person would not be welcome here.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

Too often, Garrett County does not have cultural appreciation of others.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

There is a general feeling that Garrett County is an unwelcoming place for many people.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

It was stated that there is religious proselytizing in a local medical facility. A young woman shared that she has chosen to travel to Morgantown for medical care. She also said that should any child of hers be of the LGBTQIA+ community, she and her husband would move to a more open community.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library, 5-10-2023

In church, the parents and family of an LGBTQIA+ individual were subjected to a negative sermon about homosexuality. They walked out.

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

“I avoid church because I feel stigmatized there.”

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

One church was negative and did not make my son feel welcome, but we switched churches, and the new church is wonderful. There may be a need for more education in the religious community.

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022

Generally, the families reported overall feelings of acceptance by the community with some notable exceptions. Each family has experienced some negative attitudes from the occasional community interaction but generally attributed that to ignorance.

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022

There are many different micro aggressions toward people with disabilities from not talking to the person, talking over them, ignoring the person, avoiding people with disabilities, and not accepting people who talk and communicate in ways that are different.

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022

It is difficult to have to constantly advocate for oneself.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023

Limited safe places for Gay/Lesbian population to gather and socialize without incrimination; forcing decisions to move out of the county.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

Are there places or events you avoid?

Why?

A local retail store was commonly named due to discrimination and intimidation by employees and customers. “Get stared at, followed...”

Garrett College Students of Color, Listening session 4-27-2023.

There were comments provided on lack of acceptance of black students or visitors going into local businesses and restaurants, where they were made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable based on non-verbal cues and marginalize references (i.e., them). For example, a tour group of Black students went to a local restaurant and the tour guide said it was very tense and there were numerous glares/stares at the group.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

There was a feeling that there is Implicit and blatant bias/discrimination from local business towards LGBTQIA+ community.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library, 5-10-2023

Unsafe places for members of the young LGBTQIA+ community, in the county, are due to attitudes by customers and some employees. Named as unsafe were a local retail store, public schools, bars, most churches, and various community events.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

Accessibility for people who use wheelchairs or other ambulatory supports is very poor. Oakland brick sidewalks are impossible, the aisles at a local retail store are congested, many lake businesses are not accessible, parking spots are often used by people without disabilities and the curb cuts in Oakland need repair.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023

There is no apparent code enforcement of the ADA requirements.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023

Have you experienced or observed bias and/or discrimination?

School Environment—

Parents in the listening session for a family member with a disability, all noted that their family member suffered more bullying and negative interaction as school children.

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022.

Parent with a bi-racial daughter in second grade related that her daughter has been called the “N” word by other students. The response when addressed to school administrators/teacher was callous and unconcerned (i.e., just young kids that don’t know better). Racism is based on generational acceptance.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023.

Students are being called inappropriate names based on their race or sexual identity and some feel like the staff and administrators do not take enough of a stance to prevent it or even address it to make it stop.

Middle and High School Students Listening Session Spring 2023

One of the participants had been a teacher in Garrett County public schools. She was called ethnically referenced names and identified with racial figures in satirical ways by students.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

Most of the young LGBTQIA+ participants have observed bias and discrimination. One spoke about witnessing a disabled person not being given an alternative opportunity for extra credit in a school class. The extra credit was for participating in a hike though terrain that was not suitable for a mobility aid. “There is bullying of disabled students as though they are less than human.”

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

It was said that last names of students were mispronounced continuously. They believed there was no effort to say it correctly. A student was asked, “Did your parents marry for love or for a green card?”

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

One participant said that children with ethnic last names are having them mispronounced continuously. The teachers do not care enough to learn how to pronounce a student’s name. This is interpreted as racial bias.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

Concern was expressed about the lack of support for students who are members of a minority by administrative personnel and teachers.

Individual Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

Participants felt that the public schools are contributing to the problems facing marginalized students. They expressed that too often the school administration and teachers do not protect students adequately. Too often there is simply no response, issues are just ignored.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

One group of participants believe that in our schools, individuals that “seem different” are treated badly. Students of color can be targets. LGBTQIA+ students have been traumatized, which has caused extreme stress, mental illness, and self-harm. Poor mental health, fostered by school culture and lack of understanding or action taken by school administrators and teachers, was discussed. There was agreement that this is a key area to work on to improve lives in Garrett County.

Appendix C

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

A male student was incorrectly labeled as gay, due to his slight build and personal interests, by other students. He was told by administrators to “act differently”.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

It was noted that students of color have experienced racial slurs (such as monkey noises when they walk by others). This was related by the mother. When the mother was asked, by a member of the listening session, if education on diversity and inclusion would be a solution, she responded that “only if there was a motivation to change”. She does not believe that this would be the case.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

A conversation was reported to us about a student making a comment concerning Hitler. The comment was discriminatory about Jewish people.

Meeting Minutes 2-22-2023

One person described an incident in public school. An innocent comment was made about a published picture by a transgender person, and this ended in a sentence of detention for two weeks. Another student had gone to the administration and misrepresented the comment. After the punishment was determined, other students came forth to say that this was an untruth. It did not matter, the punishment remained.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

A transgender individual told the people at the listening session that physical abuse and bullying were done to this person on a routine basis by male students. There was no help from the adults that knew. This individual was punished for being bullied. Conversion Therapy was encouraged by one administrator. There was no trust in teachers, or anyone else, thus the student went into a psychological shell to protect themselves. This began when the child was in 2nd grade.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

As college was being considered after graduation, the transgender individuals at the session declined free-tuition opportunity for fear of continued harassment and are considering moving from the area.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

A parent was made to feel that bi-racial/LGBTQIA+ children need to be directed to home schooling to address other students marginalizing them. This was done by a prior principal. They were also advised to have the child attend conversion programs offered through local churches.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

It was noted that history has erased the contributions made by the LGBTQIA community.

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

When in public school, in Garrett County, an LGBTQIA+ adult said, “I was funny and made people feel good so they would not hurt me.”

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

My children are bashed at school because of my choices.

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

Social media makes things worse. Things happen outside of school so the schools cannot do anything unless it comes into the building.

Middle and High School Students Listening Session Spring 2023

There are numerous external pressures that make efforts more difficult – such as social media and its impact on students and their families.

GC Public School Administrators Listening Session 6-27-2023

We must deal with family issues as well as issues that arise during the school day.

GC Public School Administrators Listening Session 6-27-2023

“There’s a Klan here. Heard that someone showed up to a Halloween party in full Klan gear.”

There was an incident in a student club regarding antisemitism.

A Garrett College Student of color was asked to leave establishments.

A Garrett College Student of color asked employees a question only to have the employees respond to the white friends that were with him.

Garrett College Students of Color, Listening session 4-27-2023. 2023

“I’ve been whitewashed as a survival tactic”.

“I’ve had to assimilate”.

“Last 3 months have been worse”.

“The racism I’ve experience here isn’t worth it. I wouldn’t recommend it to others.”

Garrett College Students of Color, Listening session 4-27-2023.

There were several general themes from the Garrett College Students of Color Listening Session.

- Lack of diverse activities and education
- Discrimination- framed as curiosity; microaggressions, inequitable treatment
- Lack of representation- specifically among faculty/staff, but also within community
- Lack of allyship

Garrett College Students of Color, Listening session 4-27-2023.

Community Environment–

Culture in Garrett County too dominated by established white-male perspectives; women’s place is to not have a voice/be involved in promoting change, use of racial slurs is too common in conversations.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-20232023

It was said that there is difficulty in finding physician(s) willing to work with LGBTQIA+ individuals.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library, 5-10-2023

Various individuals reported being offended by a racist culture at community events.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library, 5-10-20232023

The participants thought that there was a stigma for individuals in drug recovery. Garrett County is doing more for females, but there are 9 males for every 1 female that become addicted.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

Appendix C

There were several specific themes from Adults in Recovery Listening Session.

- Housing discrimination and exclusionary practices
- Limited resources for continued recovery
- Exclusionary and discrimination practices in workplace
- Lack of education and awareness in community
- Lack of communication of available resources
- Little to no inter-agency sharing of programs and resources
- Bias towards non-custodial parents (most typically father)

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

“My past is hard to shake when trying to find housing or a job.”

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

“How do I even find resources?” Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

We have the working poor. They need transportation to and from jobs and the current system is not helpful during hours of need.

Individual Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

The existing food pantries are not always helping the homeless. There is discrimination against this group. There is food insecurity.

Individual Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

One participant said that her friends would not come here due to perceptions of bias and discrimination – certain political signs, use of the N-word, etc.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023.

A Black woman who was a vendor at a community event was confronted in a hostile/negative manner.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023.

Attempts to provide public service (promoting election political agendas) has been met with hostility and threats of violence when attempting to discuss in person/going door-to-door. Heard comments like, “Blacks and women should not be president.” One participant shared that when they were promoting environmental/green-energy agendas they were chased on the porch and chased in their car.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023.

An individual shared her insight on the impact of hate attitudes in the partisanship in the county. She noted that the Garrett County Health assessment asks about a feeling of belonging. Her observations and experiences of the divide between political parties in the county have been very ugly. She provided examples of how law enforcement in the county does not seem to respond to reports of criminal activity if it is related to political activity. She believes this is an example of the diversity and inclusion issue.

Meeting Minutes 12-14-2022

State financial resources are too focused on the lake industry.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library 5-10-2023

How money is allocated towards starting a new business venture varies greatly between the town of Oakland and the lake district.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library 5-10-2023

The individuals at the listening session believed that discrimination exists in Garrett County, especially toward those moving to the area, regardless of race or ethnicity.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

Discrimination exists in Garrett County towards those moving to the area. “You must be born here. It is them versus us attitude.” It is a cultural issue.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

There is a big disparity in how Federal and State monies are awarded.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library 5-10-2023

Work Environment-

Participants expressed concerns about the environment in their workplace which too often has discrimination, racial bias, and targeting. This is done mostly by employers and fellow employees.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

A US citizen, that immigrated to the US, worked in a local business. He was the top sales performer but was targeted by another employee. This employee made untrue accusations about his citizenship status to the employer, and reported this untruth to the INS. The same person would document gay employees and send information to management. When these issues were raised to management there was no response or support. In addition, he was told, “don’t invite your people” to a company event. He has been called names. He was instructed to follow a black man in the store as “he is going to steal”.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

One person shared that their job was working for a local business and unloading trucks weekly. He feels constantly pushed to work faster. He is a steady and reliable employee who needs to work at a regular pace in a regular pattern. The confusion and yelling are hard for him. Others echoed this with examples that their speech pattern takes them a little longer to get words out, but that is not accepted. There was a general feeling of a lack of accommodation for their disability in the workplace. They may need a little more time and more organization, but they are very good employees. The business community doesn’t want to accept them.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023

One male of color told us he has developed skills to address direct and indirect racial bias and discrimination in a proactive way. He provided an example about working for a local employer, where racial comments made to him were addressed to the manager, in front of the customer, in a reasonable respectful manner to get resolution and move forward. This participant told the group that adapting to cultures different than your own is the starting point for understanding, where acceptance will eventually take place. Again, he provided an example where a person who had racial bias toward his wife and him when they moved to Garrett County, is now an ally for them when they see discriminatory behavior against the couple.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

There is poor communication and lack of transparency in worksites.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023

There is disrespect towards volunteers in some nonprofit work sites.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023

An individual reported that there were repeated incidents of racial profiling (cautioning employees to “watch” individuals of Hispanic origin as they shopped.)

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

There were accusations of theft against customers of Hispanic origin, “check their receipts”.

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

It was related that there is racial bias towards individuals of color, (forcing customers to cart large quantities of products to their vehicles rather than allowing them to park closer to the exits)

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

It was reported that there is preferential treatment of white employees and customers.

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

It was felt that there are bias and exclusionary practices towards employees and customers of color.

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

There was an incident of sexual harassment (staff revealed himself to a female employee).

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

It was said that there have been verbal attacks towards staff of Hispanic origin and customers.

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

There were reports to immigration resulting in outside investigation, (results indicated individual/customer was here on a Work Visa)

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

It was reported that a Hispanic custodial worker endured multiple threats and racial slurs resulting in his leaving the County.

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

In the workplace there is nepotism and staff preferences.

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

An Individual made numerous written reports on the discrimination of Hispanic and Black employees and customers to section managers and the general store manager, resulting in no action. “They sweep it under the table and ignore me.”

Hispanic Individual Listening Session, 3-8-2023

There is racism in the workplace. General Public Listening Session at Accident Library 5-10-2023

One individual believed that their age has prevented them from getting a job in Garrett County.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

Is there anything else that we should be asking?

Yes - Mental Health:

The lack of mental health for young LGBTQIA+ students is a serious problem. Most all the individuals in the listening session had suicidal thoughts. Several had been hospitalized in mental institutions. “Here, there is nowhere to go for help.” These young people expressed their being “tired of justifying their lives.”

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

There are 14 tent communities in Garrett County for the homeless. Both men and women are living in these tents. Men have a harder time with housing than women. Some of the individuals living in the tent communities are recovering from addiction or are in addiction. There is a need for mental health.

Individual Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

“I wish there were more “sober living” opportunities/rehab.”

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

Many participants felt there is a lack of adequate mental health awareness and treatment options in the county.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

A retired physician came to the meeting to provide information on mental health resources in the county. There are not enough therapists that specialize in LGBTQIA+ concerns. All the current therapists are trained to provide support for that community and are involved in providing that support. He noted the chronic shortage of trained therapists in Garrett County and the nation at large, but that all the major providers in the county work together to maximize the resources that are available and work together to recruit additional therapists. Garrett County Public Schools are also an active partner and the Maryland Blueprint for Education lists child mental health as a priority.

Meeting Minutes 2-22-2023

Mental health concerns of school age children and young adults where influence of social media, video games and lack of role models has promoted support of Nazism and anti-semitic views as being acceptable. One comment by an 8th grader was that “Hitler was great – he got a lot of Jews.” This was feedback from a participant’s efforts in supporting a teen mental health program.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

Yes - Affordable Housing:

There was a consensus that affordable housing was a major problem. This is one of the reasons why people do not move here or stay here. The population is in decline. Older people stay, but the young leave. Schools are closing. Economic development is stagnant due to the lack of housing for workers.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

A young person of color, who grew up in Garrett County, would love to move back here. But there is no affordable housing with the level of pay in employment. This was related to us by her mother.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

There are basic needs for an individual – food, housing, clothing. Some of our residents are in a situation where this is all they can think about. This is a very vulnerable community. Economic circumstances are a factor that drives people to extremes in thinking. They do not understand the concept of “white privilege”. They see others receiving benefits they do not get and are angry.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

What suggestions would you offer to make Garrett County a more welcoming community?

Sensitivity Education and Listening to Others:

There is a lot of ignorance. There should be diversity, equity, and inclusion education. Sensitivity training for administrators, teachers, police, students, the community, etc. The trainers should be of diverse backgrounds. There is not enough diversity in the programs currently in place. The diversity curriculum should be formed by people who are diverse.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

There is a need for diversity training for school administrators and teachers and employers.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

Garrett County Public Schools should teach tolerance.

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

Increase community education and training to reduce discrimination and implicit biases towards marginalized adults.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023
Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

Consider marginalized communities who were in the County historically and how to highlight and communicate their contributions. Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

Create opportunities to “see” individuals in the LGBTQIA+ community. Use theater to educate on diversity. Examples of plays are friends with different backgrounds and obstacles they overcome, or historical figures such as Alan Turing and Oscar Wilde. The more you can make it personal the less likely they will be treated poorly. Make the abstraction more personal, everyone knows someone who is in the LGBTQIA+ community.

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

Consider a performance by a professional touring group of people with disabilities as part of GLAF, Our Town Theater, or a similar organization.

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022

Provide ongoing opportunities for sessions like this where the community can discuss issues and solutions.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

The listening sessions are very helpful. There should be more places where individuals can talk and share their experiences.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

People are making conversations possible. There is a need to continue the listening sessions. It shows a level of caring.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

The greater community needs to be more aware of what is happening in the county. Awareness and education are needed for the population.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

There is a need to continue to hold open discussion forums like this, invite County Commissioners to participate.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

Commissioners should stand up and speak to inclusion and the benefits of it for the community.

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

Explain that there are hard consequences if solutions are not found. That is the financial impact of negative population growth and outcomes (increase in suicide, crime, homelessness). In addition, without growth there will be cultural isolation and division.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

Commissioners are part of the culture. They need to be able to understand that they don't know what they don't know. There is an unconscious and conscious bias in Garrett County.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

People of both sides of the issues must understand and adapt to other's differences and beliefs for understanding to be achieved. Solutions will come from better understanding each other's concerns and fears.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

There is a need to listen to the people that are prejudiced to see how they may be able to be changed.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

There needs to be a focus on listening to the people that are prejudiced. It is extremely important to have a good mediator conducting this listening session. Asking questions such as, "When we talk about inclusivity, do we want that? What is the worst thing that could happen? You need to get people to come and be uncomfortable. You need to take a bit of a risk. Tough conversations are needed."

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

The Garrett College Students of Color, that participated in the listening session, want to discuss ways that they can address the issue of feeling safe and being welcome moving forward.

Garrett College Students of Color, Listening session 4-27-2023.

Everyone needs to understand that there is a level of adapting to change. You give up something in exchange for something else. Improve diversity, embrace, and adapt to the consequences. There needs to be a discussion around this concept.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

The discussion at the meeting (12-14-2022) led to additional conversation. The Committee members thought that a platform for civil discourse might be helpful. It was mentioned that the college may be able to facilitate.

Meeting Minutes 12-28-2022

This problem is said to be unsolvable. It is only so until it is solved. Thinking outside the box is important. Solutions do not have to follow a specific course. There were major advances in Finland when they changed their thinking in methods of helping the homeless. They went to the end result (a home) and then worked backwards (providing education and jobs).

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

What can Garrett County do to improve your experiences?

Mental Health:

A therapist knowledgeable in the LGBTQIA+ community needs to be hired for Garrett County. Someone with knowledge in “queer dynamics” and “body dysphoria”.

LGBTQIA+ Youth Community Listening Session, 2-06-2023

There needs to be access to more mental health resources such as hotlines and counselors.

Adult LGBTQIA+ Community Listening Session, 4-25-2023

There should be parental involvement or county resources to control social media and support better mental health.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

Cultural Awareness:

It might be useful to create and provide more culturally based resources that would support marginalized groups. Provide a voice and better connection to local government and schools on the issue of discrimination in Garrett County.

General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 5-24-2023

There should be an effort to attract interested diverse restaurants/cooks through monetary/tax incentives to bring them to GC to broaden cultural awareness.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library, 5-10-2023

Garrett County is “Culturally locked” and in order to thrive and grow this needs to change.

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022

Improving the reputation of Garrett’s acceptance of diverse populations will attract people to move here and take advantage of all the positive attributes that our community can provide.

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

Make other towns "Destinations" rather than just focus on the lake district.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library 5-10-2023

Make recreational activities more affordable for residents (i.e., lake related activities are unaffordable creating segregation)

Friendsville Library Listening Session, 05-22-2023

More social events and opportunities for people with disabilities would be helpful.

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022.

Redirect Federal and State funds towards other parts of the County.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library 5-10-2023

Activities and education; Advocacy; Heritage Month; “Teach history and culture”; Have representation in the activities and education.

Garrett College Students of Color, Listening session 4-27-2023.

Transportation:

Transportation to evening and weekend events is nonexistent in Garrett County

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022

Arrange for some after-hours transportation.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023

There should be buses for transportation. The county could use the school buses after school use.

Individual Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

Affordable Housing:

There should be more affordable/available housing.

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

Homeless Population:

There needs to be a drop-in shelter for the homeless. It could be open for individuals to come in from 5 – 7 PM. There should be a meal. Then they should be out by 7 AM after a cup of coffee and a food item.

Individual Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

There needs to be more food pantries willing to help the homeless.

Individual Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

Accountability:

There were several specific recommendations from persons with disabilities.

- Consult with a person who uses a wheelchair when designing a space. Let that person go in first and evaluate first-hand to provide real life experience and educate and raise awareness of the needs.
- Enforce Codes for accessibility.
- Establish an Advocacy Group so people can work on these issues together and share ideas.

Persons with Disabilities Listening Session, 3-27-2023

There needs to be a level of accountability for things that are done that are against rules, regulations, and laws.

Follow up General Public Listening Session at Oakland Library, 6-7-2023

Commissioners should adopt all County anti-hate resolutions.

General Public Listening Session at Accident Library, 5-10-2023

The County should knock down existing barriers for marginalized individuals.

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

The building of a strong service delivery for people with disabilities of all ages will bring professionals and others to this county to live and work.

Parent Group- Disabilities Listening Session, 12-13-2022.

There should be creation of support systems such as life skills training, adventure sport programs, financial management skills, and childcare for single parents.

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

There needs to be more awareness in the schools regarding the impact on the child/children of parents in recovery (bullying at school, lack of activities, etc.)

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

There should be after school support programs for children of parents in recovery.

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

Communication:

Communicate available resources better through online avenues, radio, community events, flyers, etc. There needs to be greater inter-agency communication.

Adults in Recovery Listening Session, 3-29-2023

There should be communication/education of school efforts to parents and students –

- Many actions, policies and procedures are in place to handle negative behaviors/bullying, etc.
- There are students who do not know there were procedures for reporting incidences of bullying.
- There are classes for every 6th grader facilitated by counselors regarding civil behavior and other topics of appropriate behavior.
- There are efforts to make school sports and other activities accessible to all (e.g., unified sports program – one of the first counties in the State).
- There are efforts to resolve problems/conflicts among students – called Restorative Practice.
- The increase in non-English speaking students is a challenge and one that is likely to grow - how to integrate them into the system effectively.

GC Public School Administrators Listening Session 6-27-2023

Appendix D – Paper Survey

1

Welcome to the 2023 Garrett County Community Experience Survey!

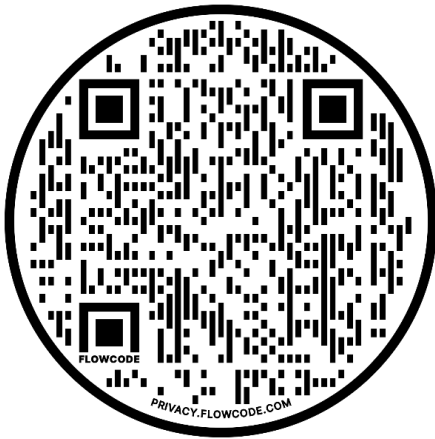
The purpose of this survey is to explore ways to enhance and/or improve the experiences of those living, visiting, working and/or raising a family in Garrett County. Your input is greatly appreciated as we strive to make Garrett County the best it can be.

This survey should take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. There are 38 main questions and several open-ended questions.

Your responses are ANONYMOUS and will be averaged and/or grouped with all other responses in a summary report to the Commissioners.

If you have any questions or comments or want to share your experiences directly with someone: call (301)334-8970 or email inclusion@garrettcountry.org.

If you want to take the survey on line:
<https://tripetto.app/run/F02RWK5O9Z>



Living in/Visiting Garrett County

Garrett County is a great place to live/visit: check the one that applies

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2

Disclaimer: The links and email address in this survey were relevant at the time of the survey's original circulation and are not active.

Garrett County is a great place to live/visit because of pick as many as you want

- Cultural events that are available
- Education that is high quality
- Health care that is available
- Housing that is affordable and available
- Internet/wifi that is available
- Mental Health resources available
- Recreational opportunities
- Transportation opportunities

Garrett County would be a better place to live/visit if it had: pick as many as you want

- Cultural events that are available
- Education that is high quality
- Health care that is available
- Housing that is affordable and available
- Internet/wifi that is available
- Mental Health resources available
- Recreational opportunities
- Transportation opportunities

In the past few years, I have experienced: check all that apply

- Domestic violence
- Food insecurity
- Lack of access to affordable housing
- Lack of access to mental health resources
- Lack of available transportation
- Substance abuse
- Other

3

Disclaimer: The links and email address in this survey were relevant at the time of the survey's original circulation and are not active.

I feel comfortable in Garrett County when I am engaging in various activities such as shopping, visiting parks, eating out, and/or participating in outdoor activities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I feel accepted/included in Garrett County when I am engaging in various activities such as shopping, visiting parks, eating out, and/or participating in outdoor activities.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I have experienced discrimination when I have been in Garrett County.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I have witnessed discrimination against others when I have been in Garrett County.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I am comfortable contacting law enforcement when I have a problem or issue.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I feel safe in Garrett County.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I am familiar with wellness programs and support services available in Garrett County.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I have health insurance.

- Yes
- No

Please provide any additional comments related to living in/visiting Garrett County.

Disclaimer: The links and email address in this survey were relevant at the time of the survey's original circulation and are not active.

Garrett County is a great place to work.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

There are fair and equal employment opportunities in Garrett County.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

I have as equal a chance as others for obtaining a job in Garrett County.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

I am treated fairly when applying for a job in Garrett County.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

6

I am treated equally/fairly in my workplace.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

I have personally experienced discrimination in the employment process.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

I have observed discrimination in the employment process.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

Please provide any additional comments related to working in Garrett County.

7

Raising a family in Garrett County

Disclaimer: The links and email address in this survey were relevant at the time of the survey's original circulation and are not active.

I am currently raising a family in Garrett County.

- Yes
- No

Garrett County is a great place to raise a family.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Garrett County has a strong school system.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

My children are treated equally/fairly within the school system.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

I have adequate access to childcare.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

8

Garrett County community embraces me and my family.

- Strongly Agree

Appendix E

- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

I have experienced discrimination with my family in the community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

I have witnessed discrimination against other families in the community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

My child(ren) has (have) experienced bullying at school and/or in the community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Does not apply

Please provide any additional comments related to raising a family in Garrett County.

9

We would like to know a bit more about your background.

Disclaimer: The links and email address in this survey were relevant at the time of the survey's original circulation and are not active.

I identify as the following: select all that apply

- Native American or Indigenous
- Asian or Asian American
- Black or African American
- Afro-Latina Middle Eastern or North African
- Hispanic or Latina/o/x/e
- White (not Hispanic)
- Mixed Racial Identity
- I prefer not to answer
- I prefer to self identify

Which of the following best describes you?

- Resident of Garrett County
- Second home owner
- Visitor to Garrett County
- Work in Garrett County but don't live in the County
- Student
- Other
- I prefer not to answer

Which of the following best describes your total annual household income?

- Less than \$30,000 a year
- At least \$30,000 but less than \$60,000 a year
- At least \$60,000 but less than \$90,000 a year
- \$90,000 or more a year
- I prefer not to answer

I have reached the educational level:

- Some high school
- High school graduate or GED
- Some college or college graduate
- Some post graduate or graduate degree

- Technical/Trade School
- Other

- I prefer not to answer

My age falls within the following range:

- 29 and under
- 30 to 39
- 40 to 59
- 60+
- I prefer not to answer

Which of the following best describes you?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- I prefer to self identify
- Other
- I prefer not to answer

I identify as:

- Heterosexual/straight
- Lesbian or Gay
- Bisexual
- Queer
- I prefer to self identify
- I prefer not to answer

I identify as a person with a disability:

- Yes
- No
- I am the guardian of a person with a disability.

Is there anything else you want to share with us about living in, visiting, working, and/or raising a family in Garrett County?

Disclaimer: The links and email address in this survey were relevant at the time of the survey's original circulation and are not active.

**wish to speak to someone directly
about your experiences, please
contact us at:
301-334-8970 or
inclusion@garrettcounty.org**

This survey was compiled by the Garrett County Advisory Committee on Diversity and Inclusion at the request of the Garrett County Board of Commissioners.

**If you have any questions or
comments regarding this survey or**

Appendix E

Appendix E – Survey Data Results

Please check out the results at this website link:

www.garrettcounty.md.gov/inclusion

[Diversity and Inclusion Survey Raw Data File \(312.65 KB\) .xlsx](#)

Appendix F – Survey Comments from Respondents

Please check out the comments from survey respondents at this website:

www.garrettcounty.md.gov/inclusion

[Diversity and Inclusion Survey Comments Spreadsheet \(238.64 KB\) .xlsx](#)

These comments were heavily redacted (using XXXX) only to ensure privacy concerns. No other edits were made to these comments.