



# Latino Leadership Network Professional Development

# & Inclusion Survey 2020 Report

By LLN  
Best Practices  
Subcommittee

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## Credits

The Latino Leadership Network's (LLN) Professional Development and Inclusion Survey Report would not have been possible without the hard work and contributions of both LLN members and allies.

Contributors helped with survey development, data analysis, report writing, peer review, feedback, and accessibility. Gracias.

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## Una Nota de Gracias (a note of thanks)

The Latino Leadership Network's Best Practices subcommittee would like to express gratitude to the Rainbow Alliance Inclusion Network (RAIN). RAIN's "I feel" survey provided the inspiration for our Professional Development and Inclusion survey. RAIN not only shared their survey, but also gave guidance and advice from their experience running the survey. Muchas gracias, our RAIN friends and allies!

The Latino Leadership Network, a Washington State Employee Business Resource Group (BRG), is an organization of Latinos and allies with a bold vision to build, connect, and inspire our state's Latino workforce. We are driven by a vision to prepare outstanding Latino leaders and a qualified workforce to serve our state today and tomorrow.

LLN reflects the rich Latino diversity, culture, and history seen across the state of Washington, and an empowered business resource group contributes to a state workforce that understands the communities it serves and improves the delivery of public services.

## Purpose

The Latino Leadership Network's Best Practices subcommittee created the Professional Development and Inclusion survey to better understand the work experiences of Latino state employees. This was our first statewide survey of Latino state employees. It establishes a data set that creates a baseline for future research.

The data and key findings from the survey will:

- Help influence training
- Identify potential barriers
- Support the state as an employer of choice

Latinos are underrepresented in the state employee workforce. We represent 13.7 percent of Washington State's population (Washington State Office of Financial Management, Forecasting and Research Division, 2018) but only 5.7 percent of the state employee workforce (Washington State Office of Financial Management, State HR Planning, 2020). This representation gap impacts both Latino state employees and Washington residents. Closing these representation gaps is important to the efficacy of state services. As Governor Inslee's [Executive Order 21-01 Affirming Washington State Business Resource Groups](#) states, "...the diversity of people and cultures is a critical component of who we are as a state. State employees deserve respectful, supportive, and inclusive workplaces. Our diverse perspectives stimulate innovation and help us address complex issues."

## Goals and Objectives

The goal of the survey was to explore the Latino experience in the state workplace.

## Professional Development

The survey sought to answer the following about development among Latinos:

- What are Latino perceptions regarding opportunities to develop or advance their careers?
- Is your authentic self an asset or a liability as a leader??

- What is the awareness level of the state’s Business Resource Groups?

## Inclusion

The survey sought to answer the following about inclusive workplaces and cultures:

- Do Latinos feel their agency treats customers and employees with respect or value?
- What types or levels of discrimination are Latinos facing in the current work environment?

## Methodology

The LLN Best Practices subcommittee created the survey in 2020. The survey was open to all state employees to participate in December 2020. The survey did not ask respondents to identify their agency of employment, so results do not represent a specific agency. An online survey platform was used and participation was promoted in LLN’s newsletter and with state human resources managers.

The survey used the term Latino for anyone who identifies as Hispanic, Latino, Latina, Latinx, Latin@, Chicano, or other similar identifiers.

The Professional Development and Inclusion survey centered on and sought the voices and perspectives of Latino employees. Question wording was direct to Latino experiences. While questions captured the Latino voice successfully, question response options created barriers for non-Latino respondents. Respondents were only offered the choice of Latino or non-Latino. The survey did not offer further ethnic or racial identity options. This affected survey data from non-Latinos. The survey limited use of non-Latino responses to questions about agency treatment of Latinos and awareness of the state business resource groups. All survey response data is available in the attached appendix. The Best Practices subcommittee will adjust future surveys to offer clearer and more inclusive identity and response options for non-Latinos.

## Key Findings

The Professional Development and Inclusion survey received 459 responses. Latinos represented 56 percent of responses (257 responses). Almost all questions received a majority of positive responses from Latino respondents. However, every question had room for either slight or significant improvement. Addressing these margins can create a more inclusive and equitable workplace for Latinos.

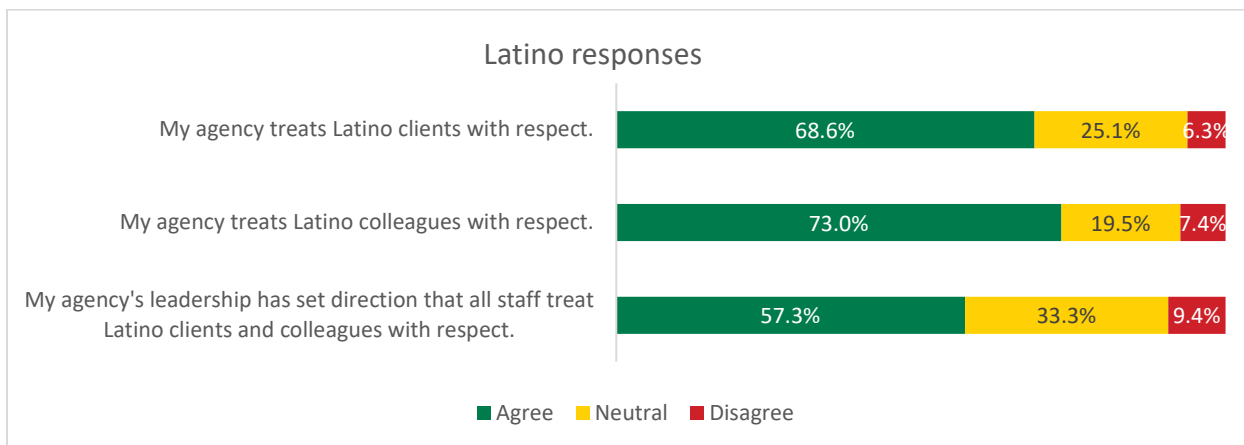
## Agency Culture

Overall, agencies are creating a workplace that treats Latino clients and colleagues with respect. The majority of Latinos and Non-Latinos responded positively to questions about treatment of Latino clients and colleagues (Figures 1 and 2). However, there appears to be a gap in messaging or sponsorship from agency leadership, Latinos were less likely to agree that leadership set direction on respecting Latino clients and employees. This gap is most apparent between Latino responses (57.3 percent positive) and non-Latinos (77 percent positive). This suggests a perception difference in terms of how leadership creates an inclusive culture for Latino employees.

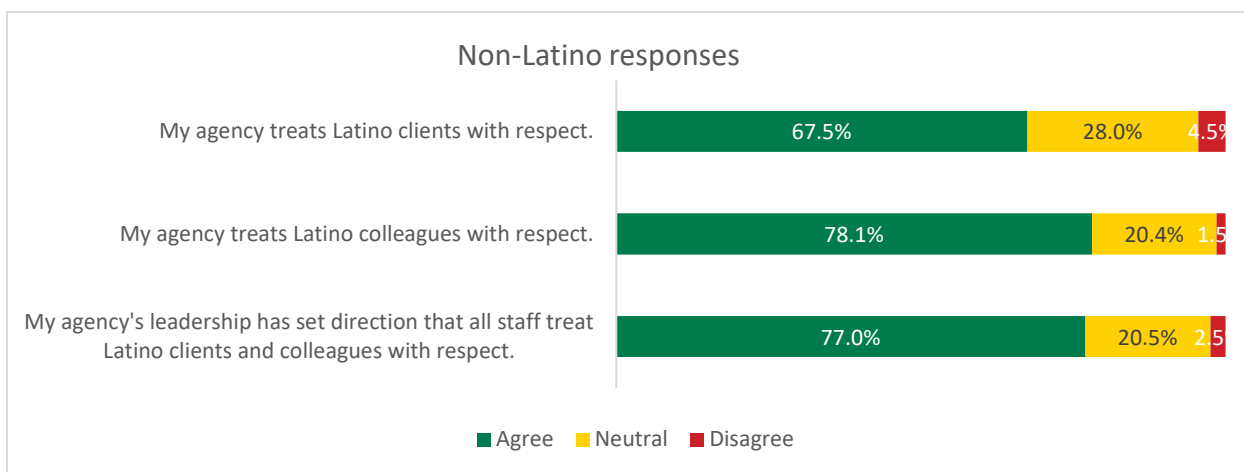
Leadership is a key ingredient when building organizational culture. Improving messaging and sponsorship by leadership could improve workplace experience for Latinos. Leadership messages could cover a range of topics from treating Latino clients with respect to bringing your “authentic self” to the

workplace. Respondents might define “agency leadership” differently. However, all leaders, from a line supervisor to an agency director, set an agency's culture.

**Figure 1:** Latino responses to questions about treating Latinos with respect



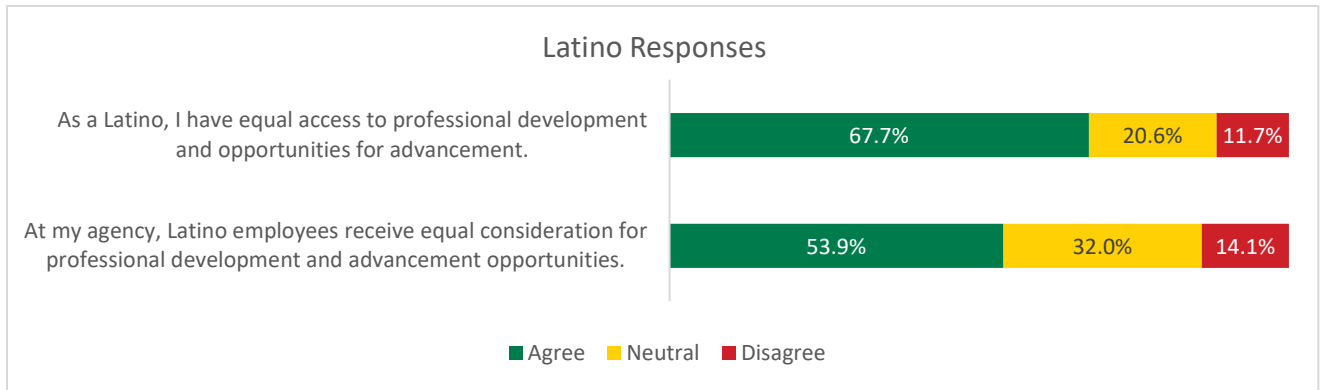
**Figure 2:** Non-Latino responses to questions about treating Latinos with respect



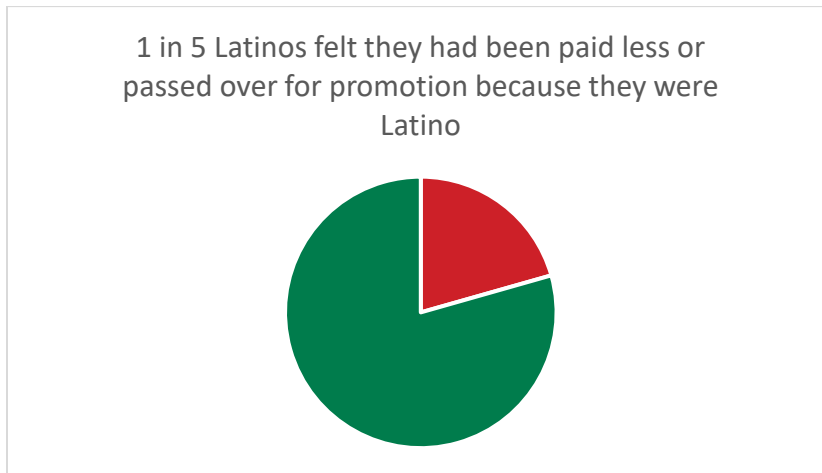
### Opportunities for Development

Latinos felt they have access to professional development. But fewer agreed that they receive equal consideration for opportunities (Figure 3). Moreover, one in five Latinos felt they had been paid less or passed over for promotion because they were Latino (Figure 4). This appears to be in line with similar national surveys on Latino experiences. A 2017 National Public Radio poll found that one in three Latinos felt they had experienced discrimination when it came to being paid equally or considered for promotion (NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2017). This deserves further exploration to identify advancement barriers and equity gaps.

**Figure 3: Latino responses to access and consideration for advancement**

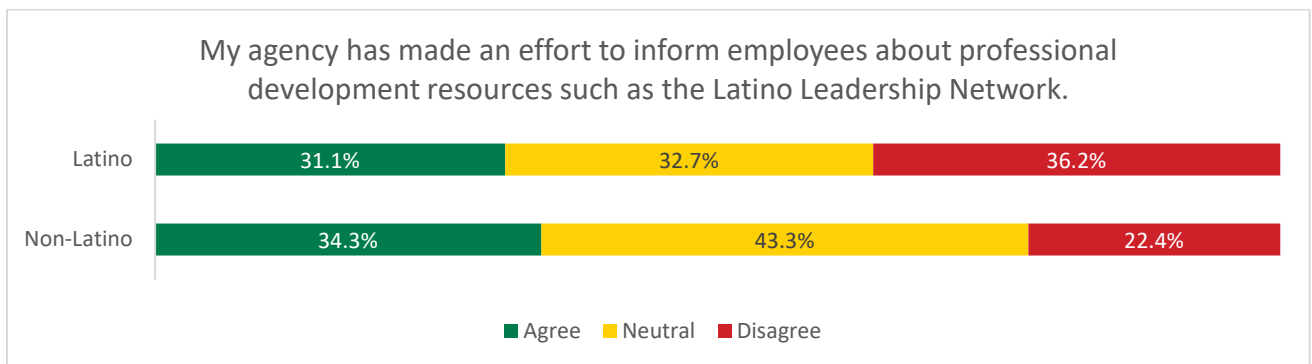


**Figure 4: Latino responses to feelings about pay or promotion**



There is an awareness gap about state business resource groups as opportunities for professional development. Both Latinos and non-Latinos did not agree that their agency had informed them of these resources (36 percent for Latinos and 22 percent for non-Latinos) (Figure 5). Increasing employee awareness of and participation in BRGs could provide new development opportunities for Latino employees. This improvement opportunity is not limited to Latino employees, as all employees are eligible to participate in BRGs.

**Figure 5: Awareness of Business Resource Groups**

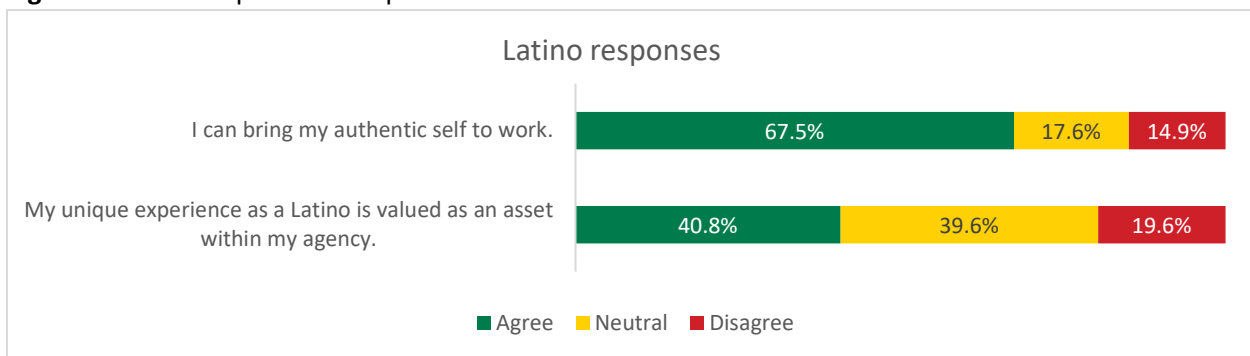


## Leadership as a Latino

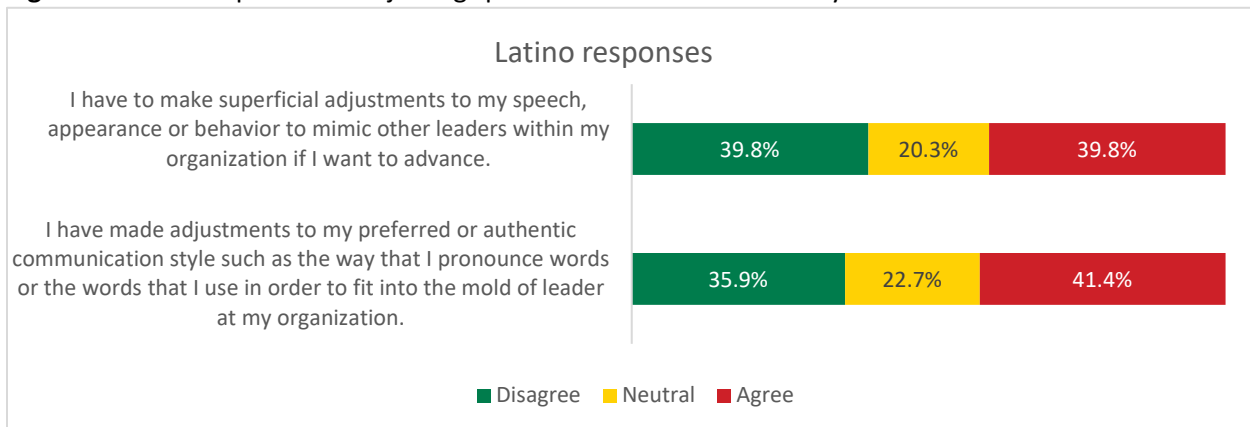
For Latinos, there appears to be a disconnect between the ability to be one's authentic self and advancing in leadership. Only 40.8 percent of Latinos felt their agency values their experience as a Latino (Figure 6). Two out of five Latinos felt that to advance in leadership requires adjusting their speech, appearance, or behavior. A majority of Latino respondents changed their preferred or authentic communication style to fit the mold of a leader (Figure 7). This appears to contradict survey results on bringing your authentic self to work.

This discrepancy might be in part due to the diversity of experiences and backgrounds among Latino employees. Latino employees may or may not speak Spanish, and English might not be their first language. The survey did not ask questions regarding languages spoken or proficiency. However, one in five Latino respondents did not feel comfortable speaking languages other than English in the workplace (Figure 8). A similar percentage felt their coworkers might not be comfortable when languages besides English were spoken in the workplace. As an ethnic group, the Spanish language is central to the Latino identity. Additional exploration of language and identity could prove valuable for creating a more inclusive leadership culture.

**Figure 6:** Latino responses to experience and value as a Latino

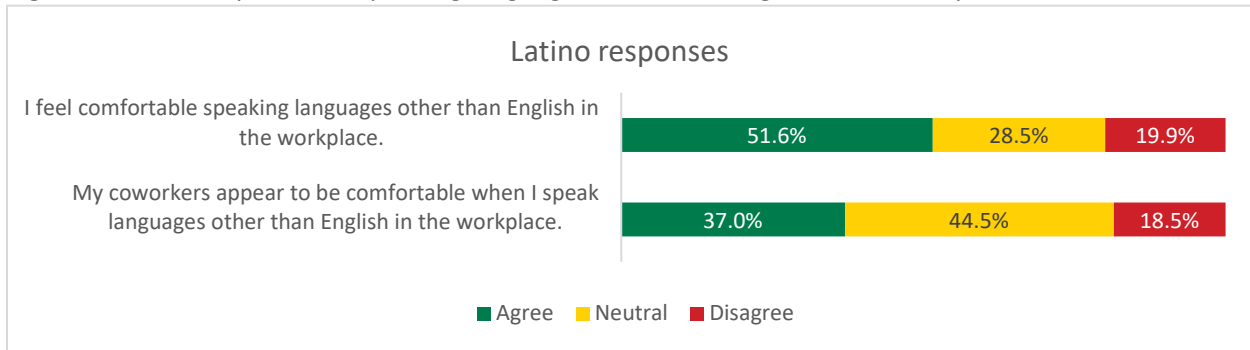


**Figure 7:** Latino responses to adjusting speech and communication style





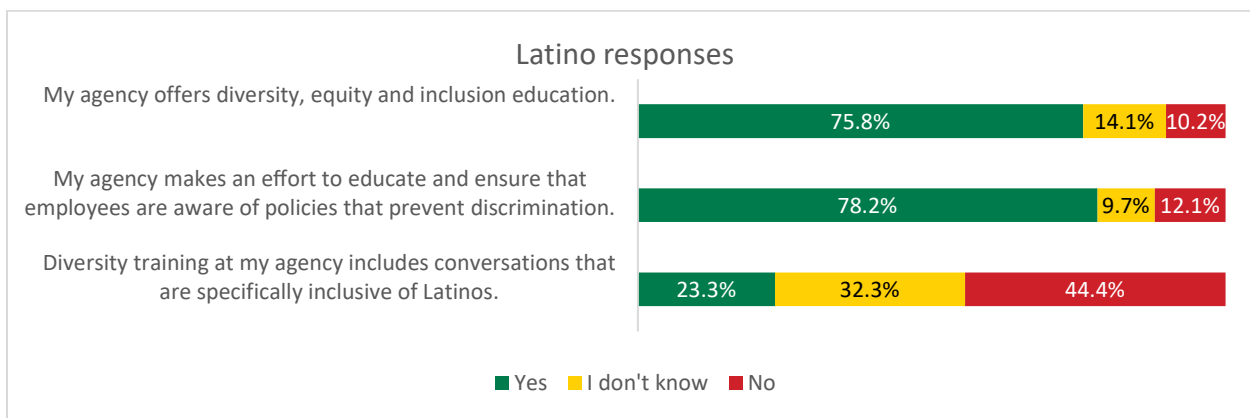
**Figure 8: Latino responses to speaking languages other than English in the workplace**



### Awareness of Business Resource Groups

There is an awareness gap regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) education efforts. Twenty-four percent of Latinos either disagreed or did not know if their agency offered DEI education (Figure 9). A third of Latinos did not feel that DEI training or education were specifically inclusive of Latinos.

**Figure 9: Latino responses to DEI training and education**



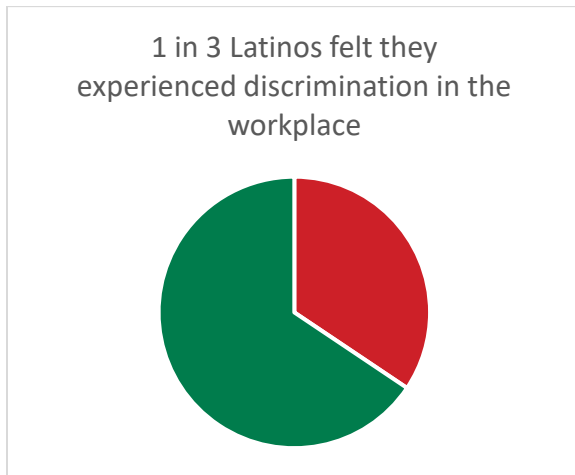
### Latino Experiences with Discrimination

Latinos agree that their agencies are making efforts to address discrimination. The majority felt agencies treat Latino clients and colleagues with respect. But these efforts are not complete. One in three Latinos felt they experienced discrimination because they are Latino (Figure 10). Over 70 percent had experienced insensitive or offensive comments during their time in public service (Figure 11). Future surveys will seek to clarify or identify if these comments were from fellow state employees or customers. Clarifying the source of insensitive comments will help create mitigation strategies.

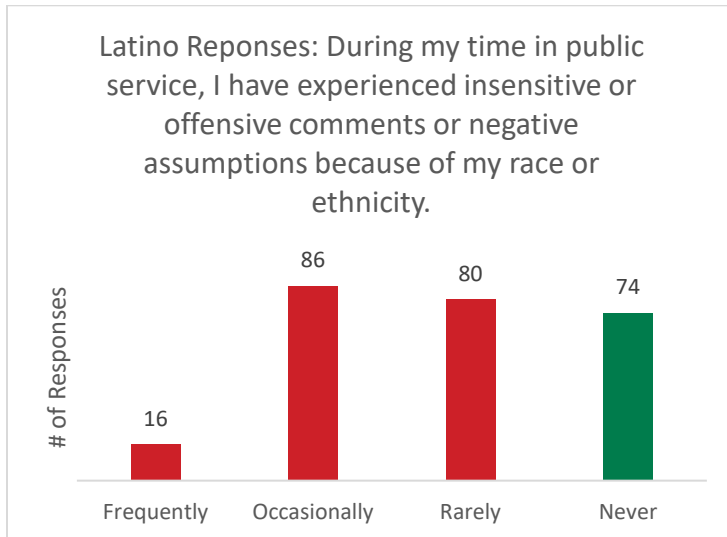
These findings appear in line with national trends for discrimination of Latinos. A 2017 poll by National Public Radio found that one in three Latinos experienced discrimination in their daily lives (NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, 2017). In 2018, a Pew Research Center survey found 37 percent of Latinos experienced discrimination or unfair treatment because of their ethnicity (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Krogstad, 2018). Most recently, the Gallup Center on Black Voices reported that 24 percent of Latinos had experienced discrimination in the workplace (Gallup, 2021).

The survey did not ask questions about the type of discrimination encountered. As shown by other survey questions, discrimination could range from pay disparities to comments on accents or language. This deserves further careful exploration to identify the severity and types of potential discrimination. Anonymity and privacy should be a top priority in these investigations. Regardless, agencies can improve Latino experiences by addressing gaps identified in workplace culture, consideration for professional development, and consistency with DEI education.

**Figure 10:** Latino experiences with discrimination



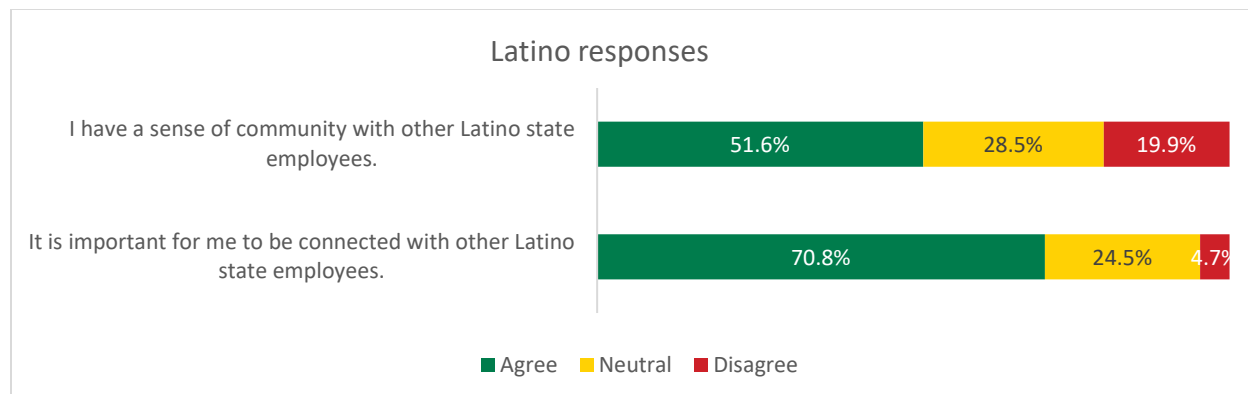
**Figure 11:** Latino experiences with offensive comments



### Connection with Latino State Employees

Currently, there is a gap in connection and community for Latino state employees. Only half of Latino respondents agree they have a sense of community with other Latino state employees (Figure 12). The majority of respondents felt connection with other Latino employees is important. Factors affecting this question could include location of the respondent (for example: Olympia location versus Eastern Washington) and number of Latinos employed at an agency.

**Figure 12:** Latino responses to questions about community



## Recommendations

The LLN Best Practices Subcommittee recommends acting on this survey data. The five following recommendations are in line with statewide DEI efforts. These recommendations are a starting point for state agencies. They not only benefit Latinos, but also all state employees and communities.

### Recommendation 1: Create space for diverse authentic leaders

The freedom to present your authentic self in the workplace shouldn't just be for a select few. Many individuals experience negative impacts when sharing their authentic voice. Although 67.5 percent of Latinos felt they could bring their authentic self to work (Figure 6), other survey results show that may not be the case. A significant number of respondents felt they needed to change or assimilate to advance in leadership (Figure 7). This demonstrates a need for agency leadership to take action to create safety and trust. While leaders may make efforts to communicate safety, words are not always enough. The pressures to assimilate are grounded in both hundreds of years of history and in the personal experiences of individuals. Counteracting that history takes great effort. Especially when employees are still experiencing discrimination or offensive comments in the workplace. Improving in this area means more than increasing the number of Latinos in leadership positions. It means creating a work environment that values Latinos (and other marginalized groups) for the people and leaders they are. Advancement should not come at the cost of assimilation.

Examples of actions to create a more inclusive leadership environment include:

- **Setting the expectation** - Sponsorship and messaging on bringing your authentic self to work are important, but they're not quite enough. Leadership should expect that this messaging will encourage employees to speak up. Expect to hear about problems in the work environment. Be prepared to listen and not to deny an individual's experience.
- **Celebrating inclusive acts** - Provide affirmation for when an employee speaks up about their experiences. Public affirmation demonstrates recognition and value of diverse backgrounds. It encourages more engagement and helps identify areas of growth for an organization. Affirmation and active support create a space for authenticity.
- **Holding boundaries for bad behavior** - All too often an offensive comment or remark goes uncommented on. Silence is complicity. If no one says anything it affirms the bad behavior is

acceptable. True leadership sometimes requires difficult conversations and holding people accountable for their actions.

### Recommendation 2: Offer consistent and universal participation in DEI training and education

A significant number of respondents were unaware of their agency DEI education efforts. This held true for both Latino (24.2 percent) and non-Latino respondents (16.9 percent). While agencies may offer training and education opportunities, this identifies a gap. Education is critical for empowering employees and building a more inclusive workforce. This could be addressed by increasing awareness of and participation in DEI education opportunities. Many agencies require training on non-discrimination in service. Creating requirements for training may also help agencies complete their civil rights obligations.

### Recommendation 3: Provide training and education more inclusive of Latinos

Less than one in four Latinos felt diversity training was inclusive to their experience. Creating greater inclusion to the Latino experience could be accomplished through a variety of methods. This includes not only greater Latino representation in existing trainings, but also providing topics relevant to Latino experiences.

Training or education topic recommendations include:

- Identifying and understanding microaggressions
- Bystander interruption training to disrupt bias or harassment
- Working with multilingual employees

DEI education need not be the only area to increase Latino representation. Leadership and professional development training in fields like information technology or human resources could also provide opportunities for inclusion. Increasing representation across all training sends a message that Latinos and other marginalized groups can be successful in those fields of work. It creates a more inclusive workplace and helps avoid the tokenism of only including Latinos in diversity training.

### Recommendation 4: Promote and partner with Business Resource Groups

Both Latino and non-Latino survey respondents indicated a low awareness level of BRGs. Only one in three respondents gave affirmative answers regarding agency efforts to promote the Latino Leadership Network or others. This may reflect a lack of name recognition for the LLN, but it is also an indicator that awareness of BRGs is either low or inconsistent between groups.

A lack of employee awareness limits the effectiveness of BRGs. Agencies can grow awareness by promoting BRG events through agency communications or newsletters. Supervisors play a crucial role in BRG awareness. Supervisors can support reasonable requests for employee participation as identified in [EO 21-01](#). Outreach to supervisors could improve awareness and create a safe space for employee participation.

BRGs are a valuable resource for informing agency policies and recruiting for open positions. They can provide a source of feedback on accessibility or language access for agencies. Executive Order 21-01 states BRGS, “provide business advice, outreach, professional development, policy guidance and expert insight into the communities they represent.” Growing awareness and partnership means that agencies

could better leverage BRGs in achieving agency missions. BRGs represent a resource to agencies for improving equity.

### Recommendation 5: Recognize the value of multilingual employees

Multilingual employees are an untapped resource for the state to provide better service. Roughly seven percent of Washington residents speak English less than “very well” (US Census Bureau, 2017). These residents are considered to have limited English proficiency. The COVID-19 pandemic made a clear case for the need to communicate quickly and consistently across languages. Multilingual employees can ensure that messaging is both linguistically and culturally appropriate.

Survey results show a gap in recognizing the value of multilingual employees. Agencies should consider how to create a workplace safe to speak languages other than English. Latino respondents did not feel comfortable speaking languages besides English. Outside of the survey, some LLN members shared personal experiences on language. Their coworkers worried they were being talked about by multilingual coworkers. Experiences outside of the workplace may also contribute to these concerns. In a 2018 Pew Research Poll, 22 percent of respondents had been criticized for speaking Spanish in public (Lopez, Gonzalez-Barrera, & Krogstad, 2018). Closing this gap and creating a more inclusive work environment will help to better recruit and retain multilingual employees.

Messaging and education are two tools for creating a safe multilingual workplace. This can counteract misperceptions and build understanding between teams. Messaging and sponsorship from leadership is vital for this cultural shift. This shift will not only benefit Spanish speaking Latinos, but all multilingual state employees. All state employees deserve a workplace that creates a space to be their authentic selves.

Clear roles and responsibilities can also benefit multilingual employees and state agencies. Role clarity can help leverage these language skills in serving customers. Clear interpretation and translation standards ensure quality customer service. Agencies can do this with an up-to-date language access plan. An agency should base its language access plan on customer needs and agency resource. Each language access plan should include guidance and role clarity for employees providing language services. This helps prevent employees from working out of class and ensures employee compensation is adequate. Role clarity can provide a path to realize and recognize the value of multilingual employees.

## Conclusion

Agencies can improve the Latino state employee work experience. The recommendations provide modest efforts to improve representation and appreciation of Latino employees. Latinos, and all state employees, deserve a workplace free from discrimination. More inclusive education and workplaces will help recruit and retain Latino employees. This data represents a starting point. Future survey work should watch data for trends over time and compare against state human resources data. With a bit of work, state agencies can improve the Latino state employee work experience.

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## Appendix A: Latino Responses

Question Text	Yes	No	I don't know	Answered	Skipped
My agency offers diversity, equity and inclusion education.	194	26	36	256	1
Diversity training at my agency includes conversations that are specifically inclusive of Latinos.	60	114	83	257	0
My agency makes an effort to educate and ensure that employees are aware of policies that prevent discrimination.	201	31	25	257	0

Question Text	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Answered	Skipped
My agency treats Latino clients with respect.	76	99	64	11	5	255	2
My agency treats Latino colleagues with respect.	85	102	50	16	3	256	1
My agency's leadership has set direction that all staff treat Latino clients and colleagues with respect.	67	79	85	18	6	255	2
I have a sense of community with Latino state employees.	29	62	80	63	23	257	0
It is important for me to be connected with other Latino state employees.	84	98	63	9	3	257	0
I can bring my authentic self to work.	69	103	45	30	8	255	2
I feel comfortable speaking languages other than English in the workplace.	52	80	73	41	10	256	1
My coworkers appear to be comfortable when I speak languages other than English in the workplace.	40	54	113	37	10	254	3
My unique experience as a Latino is valued as an asset within my agency.	33	71	101	45	5	255	2
As a Latino, I have equal access to professional development and opportunities for advancement.	59	115	53	19	11	257	0
At my agency, Latino employees receive equal consideration for professional development and advancement opportunities.	47	91	82	29	7	256	1
During my time in public service, I believe that I have been paid less or been passed over for a promotion because I am Latino.	17	36	71	78	55	257	0
I have made adjustments to my preferred or authentic communication style such as the way that I pronounce words or the words that I use in order to fit into the mold of leader at my organization.	29	77	58	52	40	256	1
I have to make superficial adjustments to my speech, appearance or behavior to mimic other leaders within my organization if I want to advance.	30	72	52	60	42	256	1
My agency has made an effort to inform employees about professional development resources such as the Latino Leadership Network.	21	59	84	67	26	257	0
During my time in public service, I have experienced discrimination in the workplace because I am Latino.	24	64	57	60	51	256	1

Question Text	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Answered	Skipped
During my time in public service, I have experienced insensitive or offensive comments or negative assumptions because of my race or ethnicity.	16	86	80	74	256	1

## Appendix B: Non-Latino Responses

Question Text	Yes	No	I don't know	Answered	Skipped
My agency offers diversity, equity and inclusion education.	167	13	21	201	0
Diversity training at my agency includes conversations that are specifically inclusive of Latinos.	59	49	93	201	0
My agency makes an effort to educate and ensure that employees are aware of policies that prevent discrimination.	163	17	20	200	1

Question Text	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Answered	Skipped
My agency treats Latino clients with respect.	76	78	41	2	3	200	1
My agency treats Latino colleagues with respect.	85	72	41	2	1	201	0
My agency's leadership has set direction that all staff treat Latino clients and colleagues with respect.	76	59	56	8	1	200	1
I have a sense of community with Latino state employees.	27	41	94	9	4	175	26
It is important for me to be connected with other Latino state employees.	23	31	107	7	2	170	31
I can bring my authentic self to work.	63	77	34	16	10	200	1
I feel comfortable speaking languages other than English in the workplace.	18	32	117	9	5	181	20
My coworkers appear to be comfortable when I speak languages other than English in the workplace.	13	20	128	10	4	175	26
My unique experience as a Latino is valued as an asset within my agency.	3	7	149	0	3	162	39
As a Latino, I have equal access to professional development and opportunities for advancement.	9	6	142	0	2	159	42
At my agency, Latino employees receive equal consideration for professional development and advancement opportunities.	50	61	70	5	1	187	14
During my time in public service, I believe that I have been paid less or been passed over for a promotion because I am Latino.	2	1	114	16	36	169	32
I have made adjustments to my preferred or authentic communication style such as the way that I pronounce words or the words that I use in order to fit into the mold of leader at my organization.	7	38	81	34	22	182	19
I have to make superficial adjustments to my speech, appearance or behavior to mimic other leaders within my organization if I want to advance.	14	25	95	22	27	183	18
My agency has made an effort to inform employees about professional development resources such as the Latino Leadership Network.	26	43	87	38	7	201	0
During my time in public service, I have experienced discrimination in the workplace because I am Latino.	0	42	122	15	33	172	29

Question Text	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Answered	Skipped
During my time in public service, I have experienced insensitive or offensive comments or negative assumptions because of my race or ethnicity.	2	32	45	102	181	20