



Insights Into Nurses' Experiences and Perceptions of Discrimination

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

MAY 2023





About the survey

Diversity and equity became major focal points for many organizations in the aftermath of the racial justice protests of 2020, but there has been little research into how racism and discriminatory practices—whether intentional or unintentional—have impacted nurses.

On behalf of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, McCabe Message Partners engaged and collaborated with National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago to survey nurses nationwide. The aim was to better understand nurses' perceptions of and experiences with discrimination and racism within their workplaces and nursing schools. Consultant Andrew Benedict-Nelson and Revive also provided input on the project, including development of the survey questionnaire.

Sample Demographics

The nursing survey was fielded using NORC’s survey partner to a non-probability sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Included oversamples by race and ethnicity to ensure representation and allow for greater between-group comparisons across racial and ethnic groups

Demographic		%	#
Race / Ethnicity	Asian	24%	231
	Black / African American	24%	232
	Latino/ Hispanic	23%	225
	Other	11%	108
	White / Caucasian	32%	317
Sex	Male	16%	151
	Female	82%	808
	Nonbinary / Prefer Not to Say	2%	21

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC’s survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Key Findings

- **Nurses say there is a high prevalence of racism and discrimination in the workplace—from patients and colleagues.**

Seeing or experiencing racism or discrimination from patients occurred more frequently (79%) than seeing or experiencing racism or discrimination from colleagues (59%).

- **Asian, Black/African American, and Latino/Hispanic nurses are significantly more likely than White/Caucasian nurses to have seen or experienced microaggressions.**

2 in 3 nurses have seen or experienced microaggressions due to race/ethnicity from patients, and nearly half (47%) of nurses said the same about microaggressions from colleagues.

- **Fewer than 1 in 4 nurses formally reported racism or discrimination they saw or experienced to workplace management.**

Although 40% of nurses discuss observing or experiencing discrimination because of race/ethnicity with their supervisors, only 23% formally report or document incidents.

- **Nurses say their organizations are prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, but more education and training is necessary.**

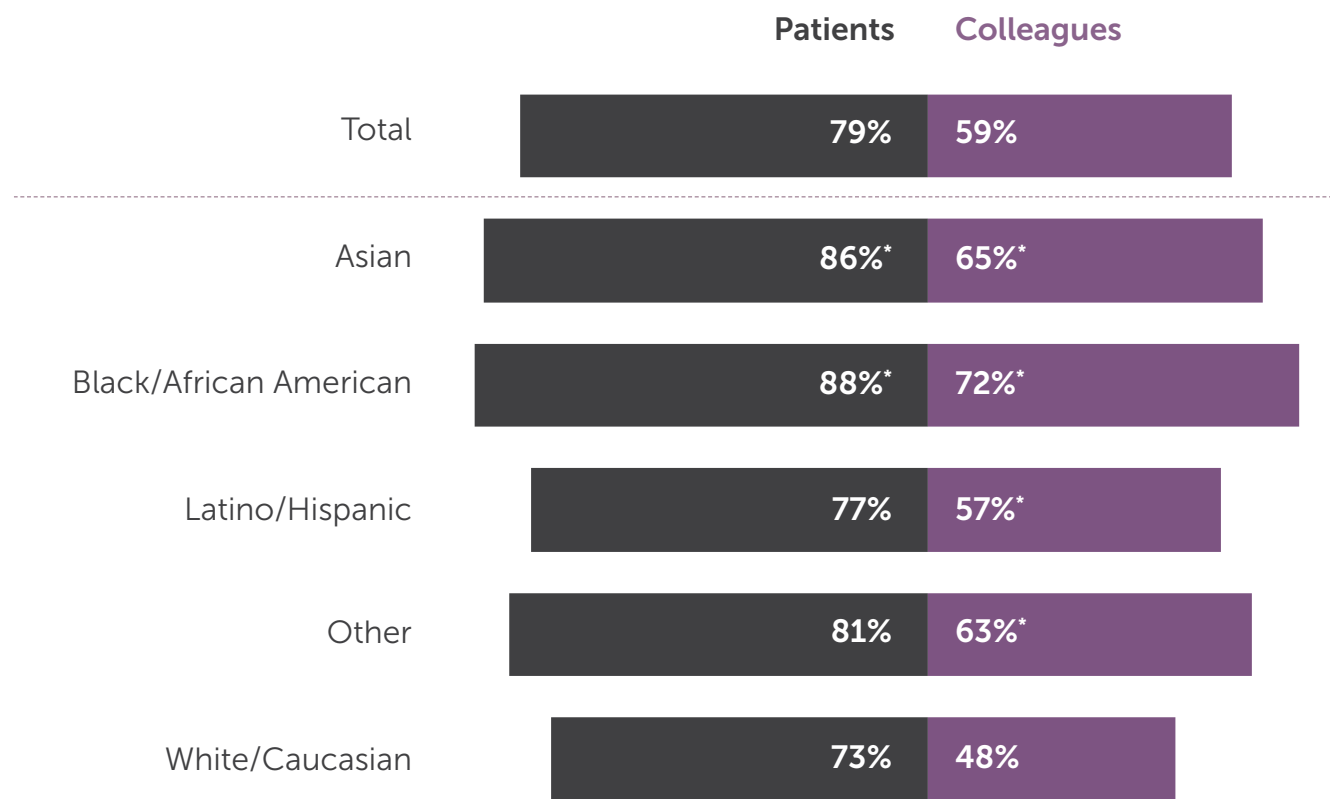
9 in 10 nurses say equitable patient outcomes are a stated organizational priority at their current workplace.

- **Nurses say there was a culture of racism/discrimination in their nursing school and that more training/education is needed.**

More than half of nurses say that their nursing school taught about racially/ethnically sensitive bedside manner; less than one-third said they were taught about racial bias/stereotypes or systemic racism in healthcare.

Nurses say there is a high prevalence of racism/discrimination in the workplace

Almost 8 out of 10 nurses have seen or experienced racism/discrimination from patients, and almost 6 out of 10 nurses said the same about racism/discrimination from colleagues



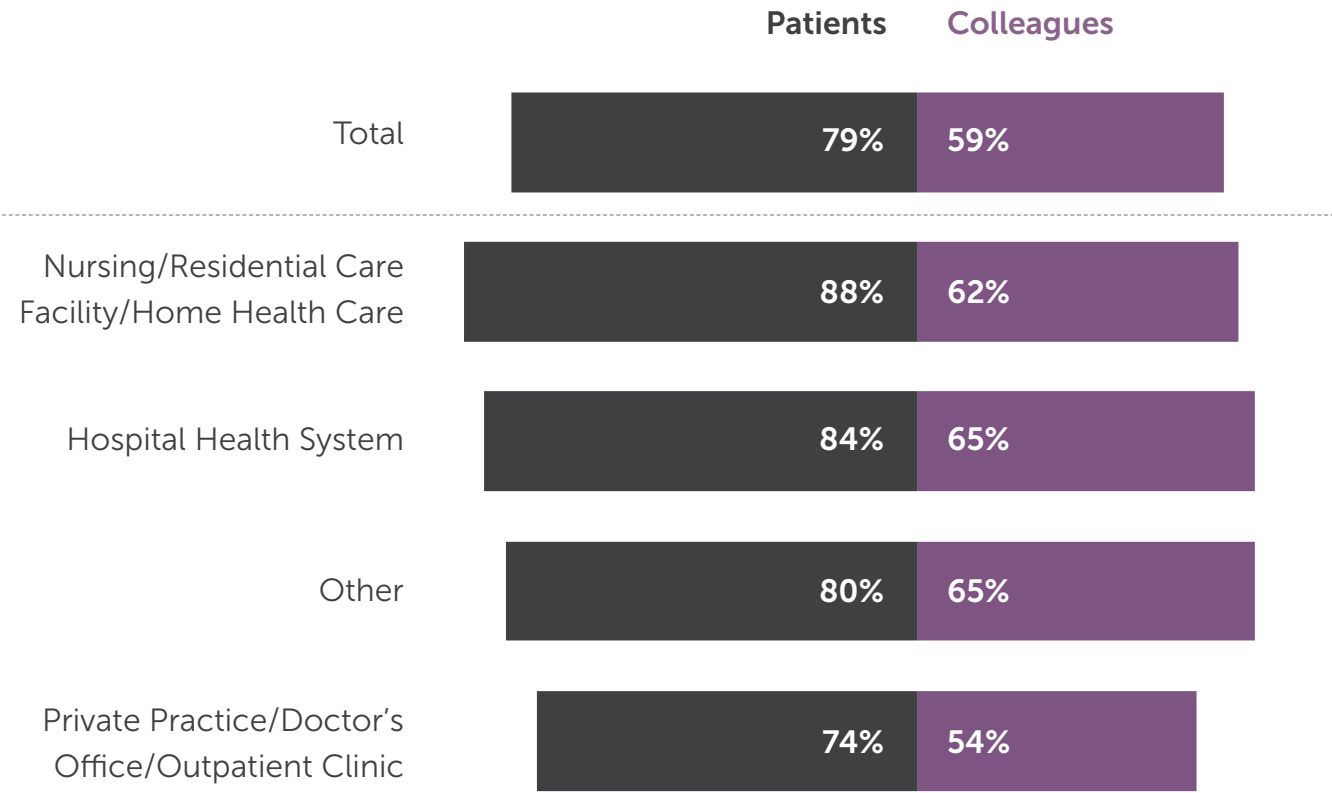
Black/African American and Asian nurses are most likely to have seen or experienced racism/discrimination from both patients and colleagues

Question: Q1 and Q2. Have you seen or experienced racism or discrimination based on a nurse's race or ethnicity from.

* Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ to White/Caucasian.

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Workplace setting is associated with prevalence of racism or discrimination

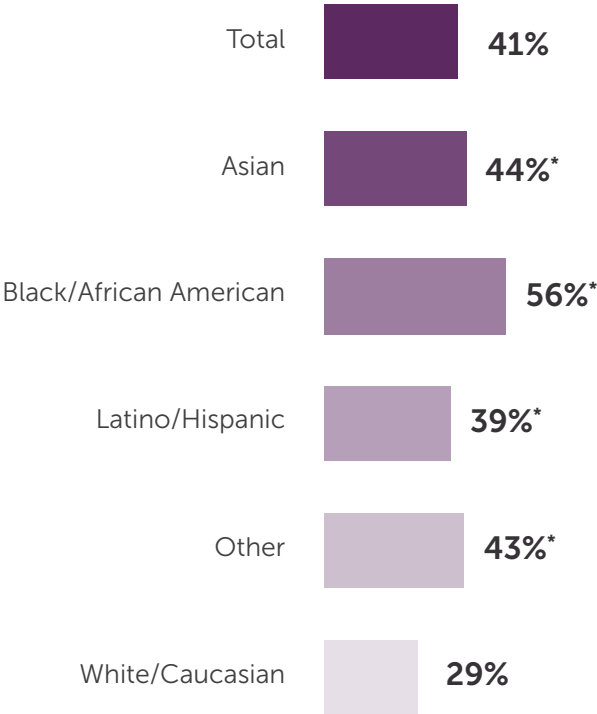


Nurses working in a doctor's office/clinic are less likely to have seen or experienced racism/discrimination than nurses working in nursing homes, hospitals, or other settings.

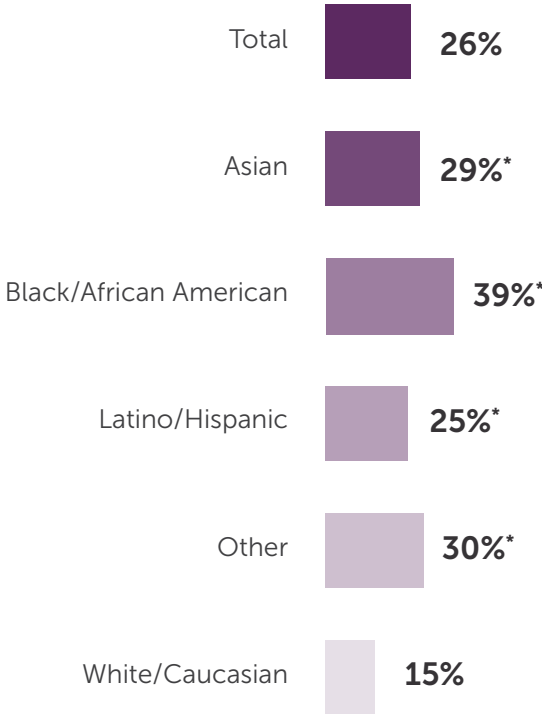
Question: Q1 and Q2. Have you seen or experienced racism or discrimination based on a nurse's race or ethnicity from.
 Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Black/African American nurses are consistently more likely to have seen or experienced racism/discrimination from workplace management

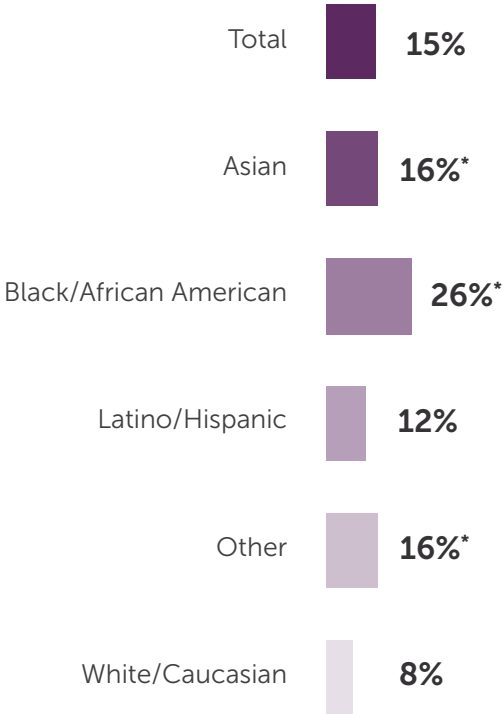
Nursing Directors/Supervisors



Senior Leaders/Executives



Human Resources Staff



* Statistically significant at p<0.05 to White/Caucasian.

Question: Q6. Have you seen or experienced any of the following individuals treat a nurse unfairly due to their racial or ethnic background?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Asian and Black/African American nurses are more likely to have seen or been threatened or harassed based on a nurse's race/ethnicity

	Asian	Black/ African American	Latino/ Hispanic	Other	White/ Caucasian
Insults					
A nurse was called slurs or insulted by a <u>supervisor or boss</u> because of the nurse's race/ethnicity	12%	15%	8%	12%	7%
A nurse was called slurs or insulted by a <u>coworker</u> because of the nurse's race/ethnicity	23%	27%	19%	30%	15%
Threats					
A nurse was unfairly humiliated in front of others at work because of the nurse's race/ethnicity	25%	35%	16%	26%	14%
A nurse was threatened or harassed because of the nurse's race/ethnicity	35%	34%	28%	32%	25%

Question: Q5. In the past 12 months, in your work as a nurse, have you seen or experienced the following behaviors?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

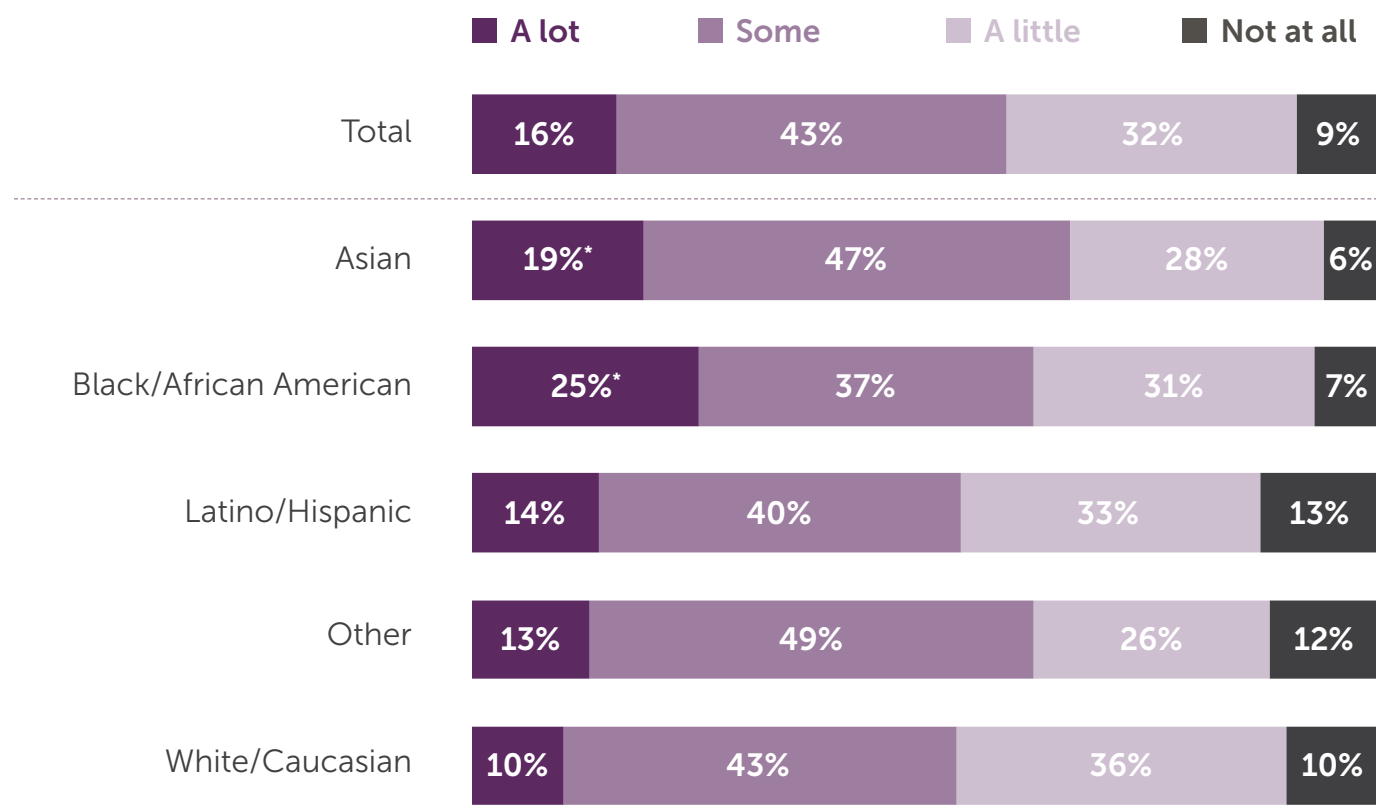
Asian and Black/African American nurses are more likely to have seen or experienced nurses being treated with less courtesy/respect and being less trusted based on a nurse's race/ethnicity

	Asian	Black/ African American	Latino/ Hispanic	Other	White/ Caucasian
Respect					
A nurse was treated with less courtesy/respect than other people because of the nurse's race/ethnicity	74%	77%	67%	68%	62%
People acted as if a nurse was less qualified because of the nurse's race/ethnicity	73%	78%	65%	59%	56%
Trust					
People acted as if they were nervous to approach a nurse because of the nurse's race/ethnicity	43%	53%	38%	43%	38%
People acted as if they did not trust a nurse because of the nurse's race/ethnicity	66%	73%	59%	59%	53%

Question: Q5. In the past 12 months, in your work as a nurse, have you seen or experienced the following behaviors?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Of nurses who've seen or experienced racism or discrimination in the workplace, 9 in 10 nurses say it has affected their mental health/well-being



94% of Asian nurses and 93% of Black/African American nurses who've seen or experienced racism/discrimination say it has affected their mental health/well-being

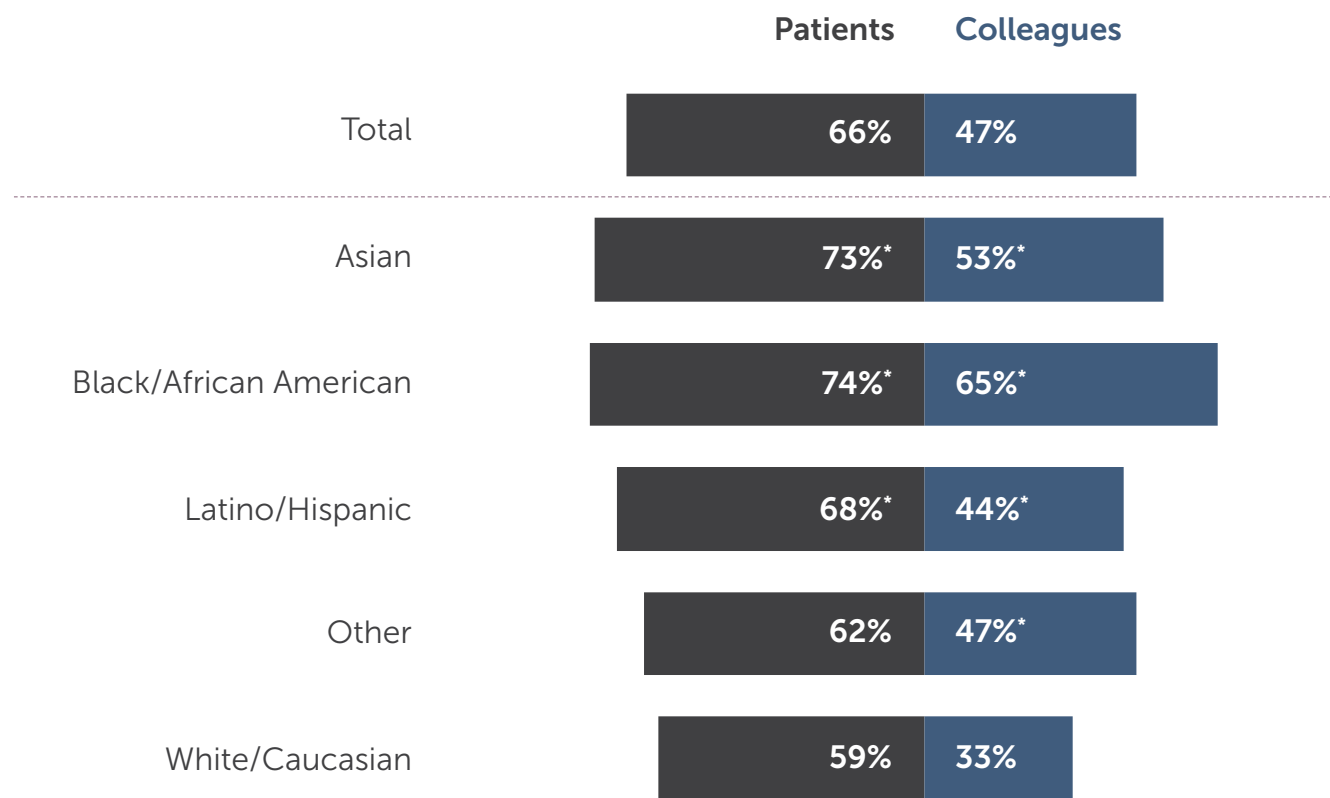
* Statistically significant at p<0.05 to White/Caucasian. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Question: Q3. How much has this experience affected your mental health and well-being?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 813 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Asian, Black/African American,
and Latino/Hispanic nurses are
significantly more likely to have seen
or experienced microaggressions

2 in 3 nurses have seen or experienced microaggressions from patients due to race/ethnicity, and nearly half (47%) of nurses said the same about microaggressions from colleagues



Black/African American and Asian nurses are most likely to have seen or experienced microaggressions from both patients and colleagues

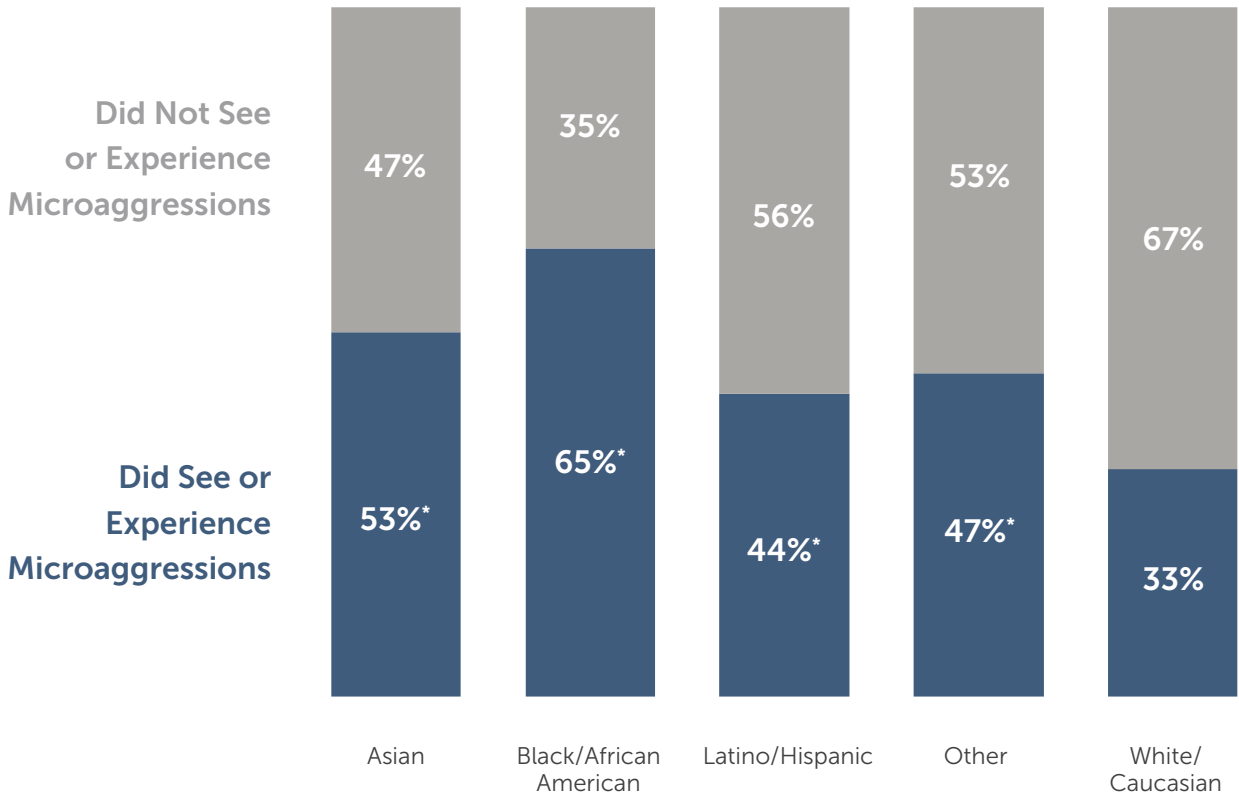
Question: Q5H. A nurse experienced microaggressions from other coworkers or supervisors because of the nurse's race/ethnicity

Question: Q5I. A nurse experienced microaggressions from patients because of the nurse's race/ethnicity

* Statistically significant at p<0.05 to White/Caucasian.

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Nurses of color are significantly more likely than White/Caucasian nurses to have seen or experienced microaggressions from co-workers

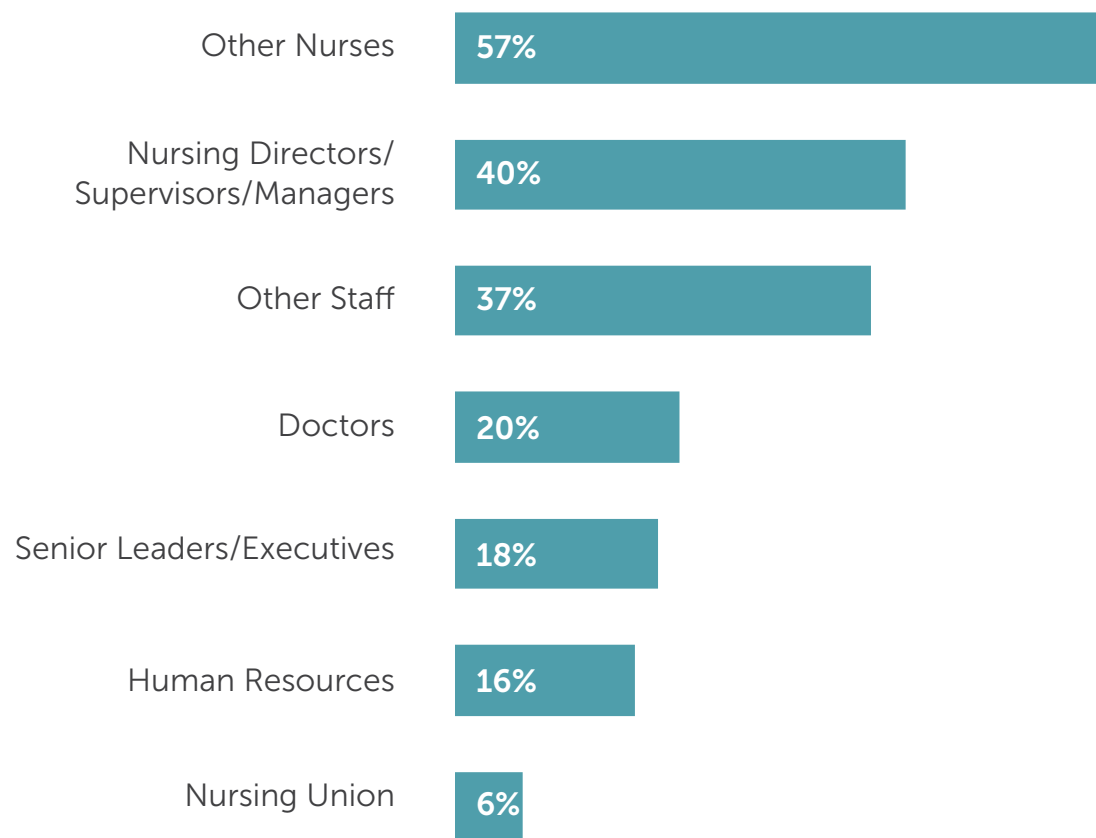


Black/African American nurses have seen/experienced microaggressions from coworkers at almost twice the rate of White/Caucasian nurses

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
 Question: Q5. In the past 12 months in your work as a nurse, have you seen or experienced the following behaviors?
 Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC’s survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Fewer than **1 in 4** nurses formally reported racism/discrimination they saw or experienced to workplace management

16% of nurses have discussed discrimination/racism they've observed or experienced with Human Resources...instead most nurses (57%) speak with their fellow nurses

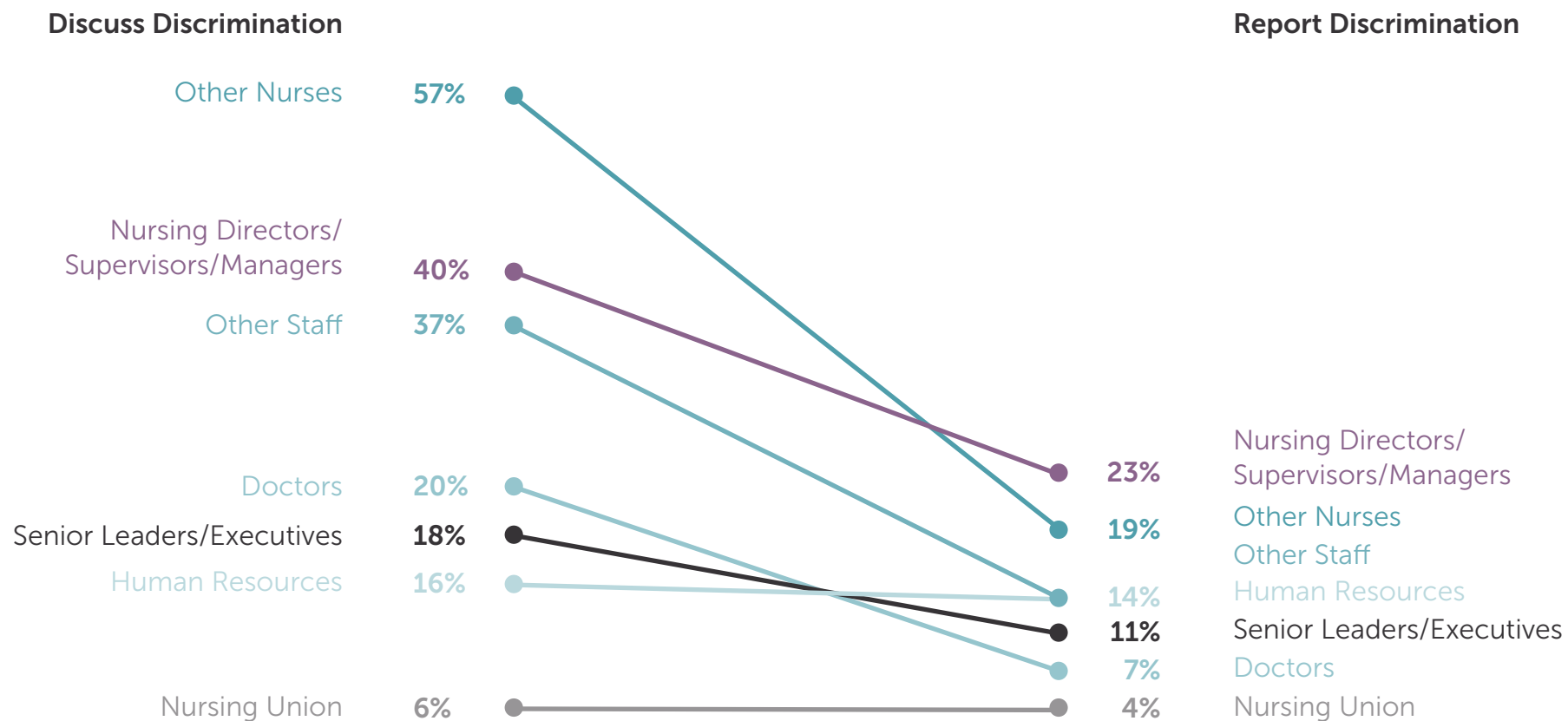


Black/African American nurses are most likely (64%) to have discussed discrimination/racism they've observed or experienced with other nurses

Question: Q7. Have you ever discussed that you observed or experienced discrimination because of race/ethnicity with any of the following?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 813 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Although 40% of nurses discussed observing or experiencing discrimination because of race/ethnicity with their supervisors, only 23% formally report or document incidents with managers/supervisors

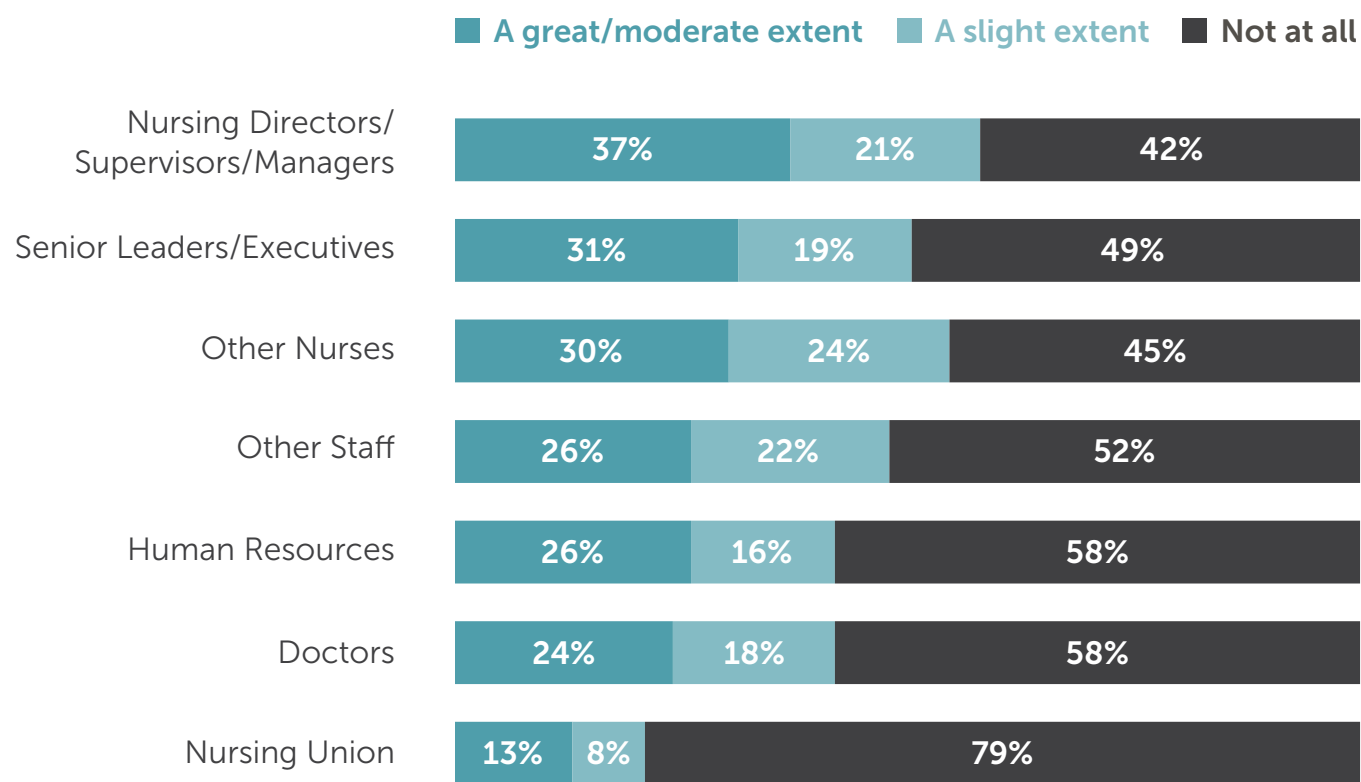


Question: Q7. Have you ever discussed that you observed or experienced discrimination because of race/ethnicity with any of the following?

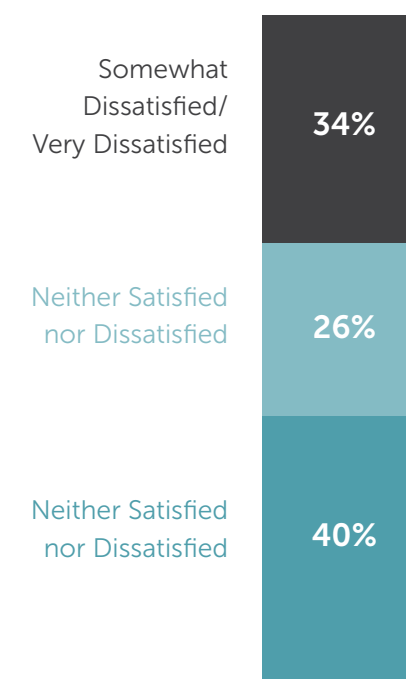
Question: Q8. Have you ever formally reported or documented that you saw or experienced discrimination because of race/ethnicity to any of the following?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 813 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Among nurses who reported such observances or experiences, more than 50% say their relationship with supervisors, senior leaders, and fellow nurses was negatively impacted



4 in 10 nurses are satisfied with their reporting response



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

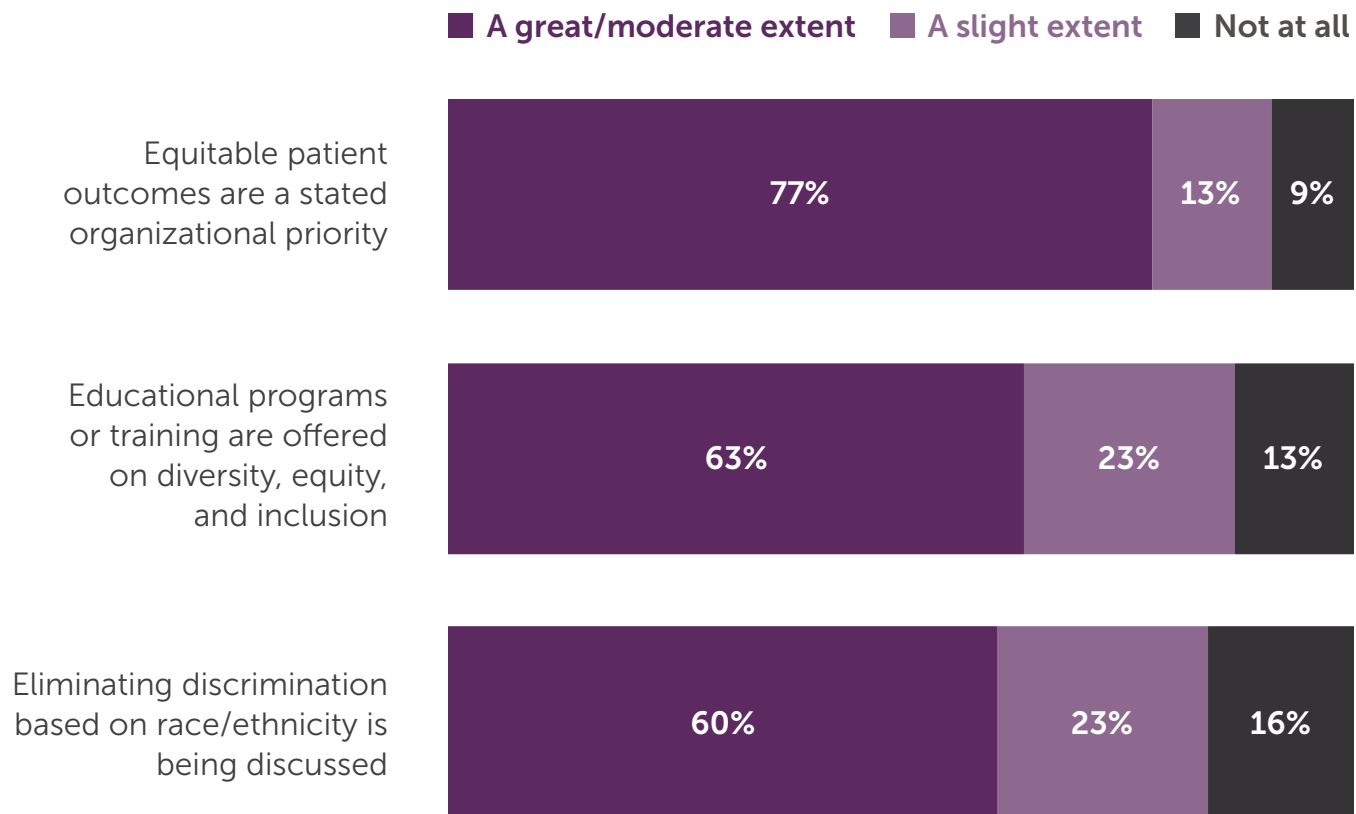
Question. Q9: Were you satisfied with the response?

Q10: To what extent did reporting the discrimination experience negatively impact your relationship with any of the following?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 414 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Nurses say their organizations are prioritizing DEI initiatives, but more education and training is necessary

9 in 10 nurses say equitable patient outcomes are a stated organizational priority at their current workplace



Most nurses (86%) say educational programs and training on DEI are offered...

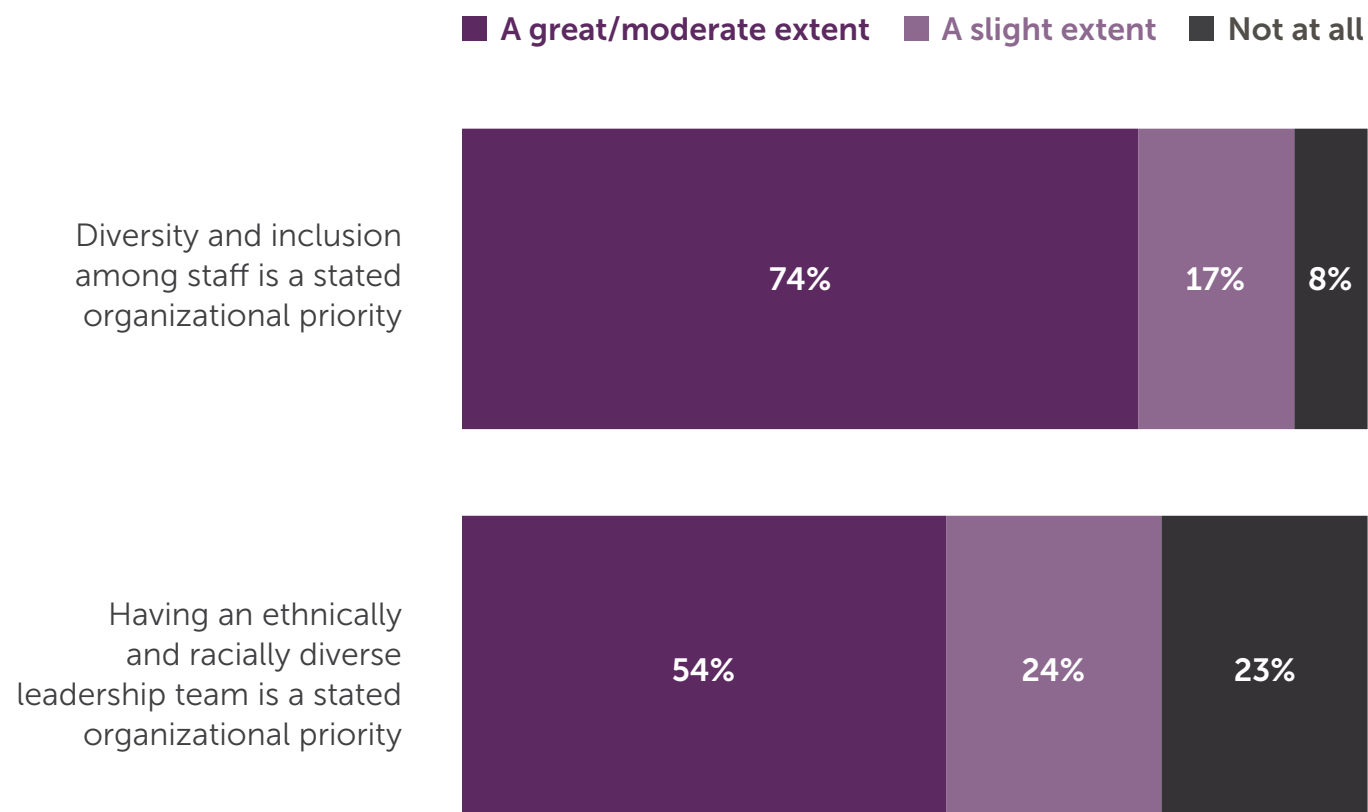
...however, Black/African American nurses are twice as likely to say "not at all" when asked

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Question: Q11. To what extent do you believe the following statements are true at your current workplace?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

9 in 10 also say diversity and inclusion among staff is an organizational priority, less stated is having ethnically and racially diverse leadership



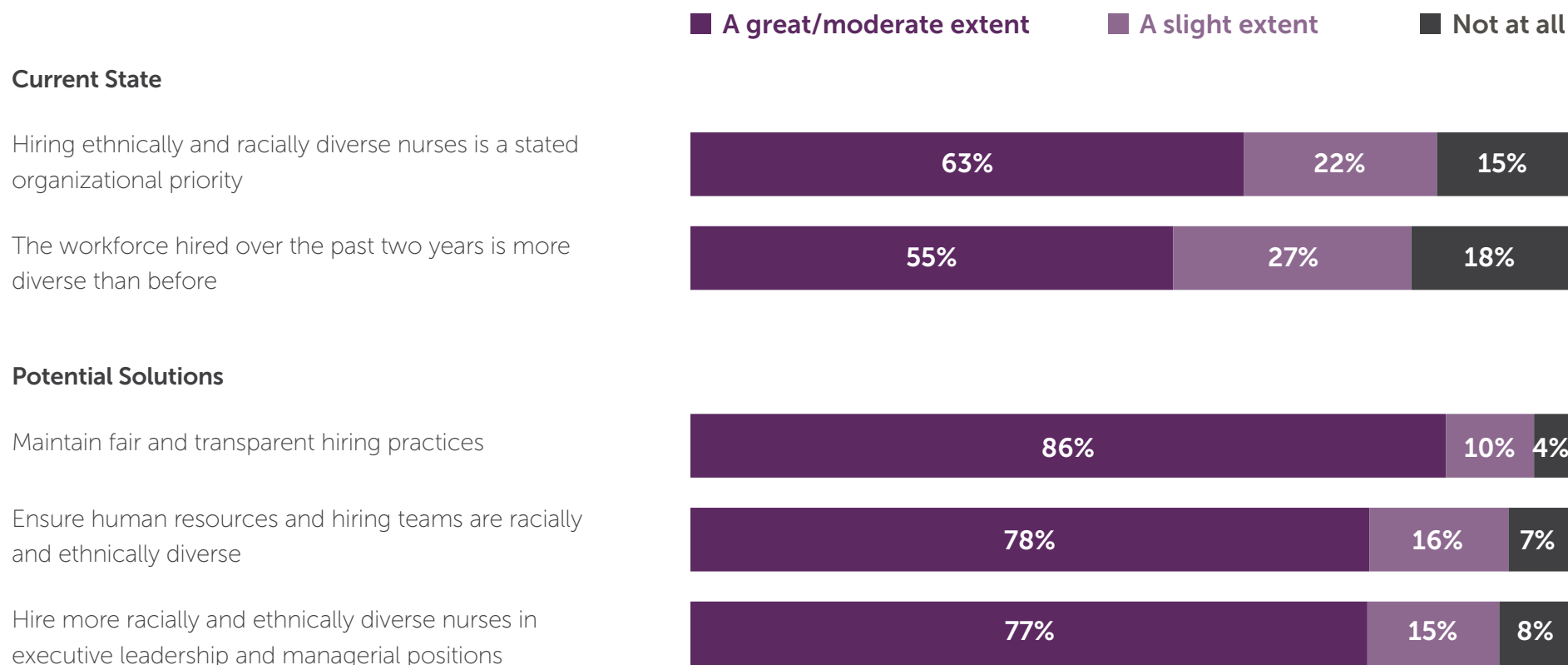
91% say diversity and inclusion at the staff level is an organizational priority; 78% say that about having an ethnically and racially diverse leadership team

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Question: Q11. To what extent do you believe the following statements are true at your current workplace?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Majority of nurses (85%) say hiring ethnically and racially diverse nurses is an organizational priority, and most agree hiring practices would improve the ability to recruit and retain racially and ethnically diverse nurses



Question: Q11. To what extent do you believe the following statements are true at your current workplace?

Question: Q14. To what extent do you believe the following hiring practices would improve your workplace's ability to recruit and retain racially and ethnically diverse nurses?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

8 in 10 nurses say zero-tolerance workplace discrimination policies, clear consequences, and reporting anonymity would improve nurses' workplaces' ability to retain racially and ethnically diverse nurses

83%	Establish zero-tolerance policies for racism or discrimination
81%	Establish and implement clear consequences for reported and confirmed incidents of racism, discrimination, or harassment
80%	Encourage staff to report all incidents of racism, discrimination, or harassment, with guaranteed anonymity if desired
79%	Establish clear and accessible ways to report workplace discrimination or harassment
79%	Include racial and ethnically diverse nurses in workplace decisionmaking
75%	Establish leadership development workshops or pathways
74%	Create and sustain mentorship initiatives for career development among racially and ethnically diverse nurses
74%	Implement on-the-job diversity, equity, and inclusion classes/seminars/training for managers/management
72%	Implement on-the-job diversity, equity, and inclusion classes/seminars/training for nursing staff
68%	Showcase racially and ethnically diverse nurses' contributions within the workplace

Question: Q13. To what extent do you believe the following workplace policies would improve your workplace's ability to retain racially and ethnically diverse nurses?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

More than 9 in 10 nurses say they believe that each of the following hiring practices will facilitate hiring more racially and ethnically diverse nurses in executive positions in their workplace

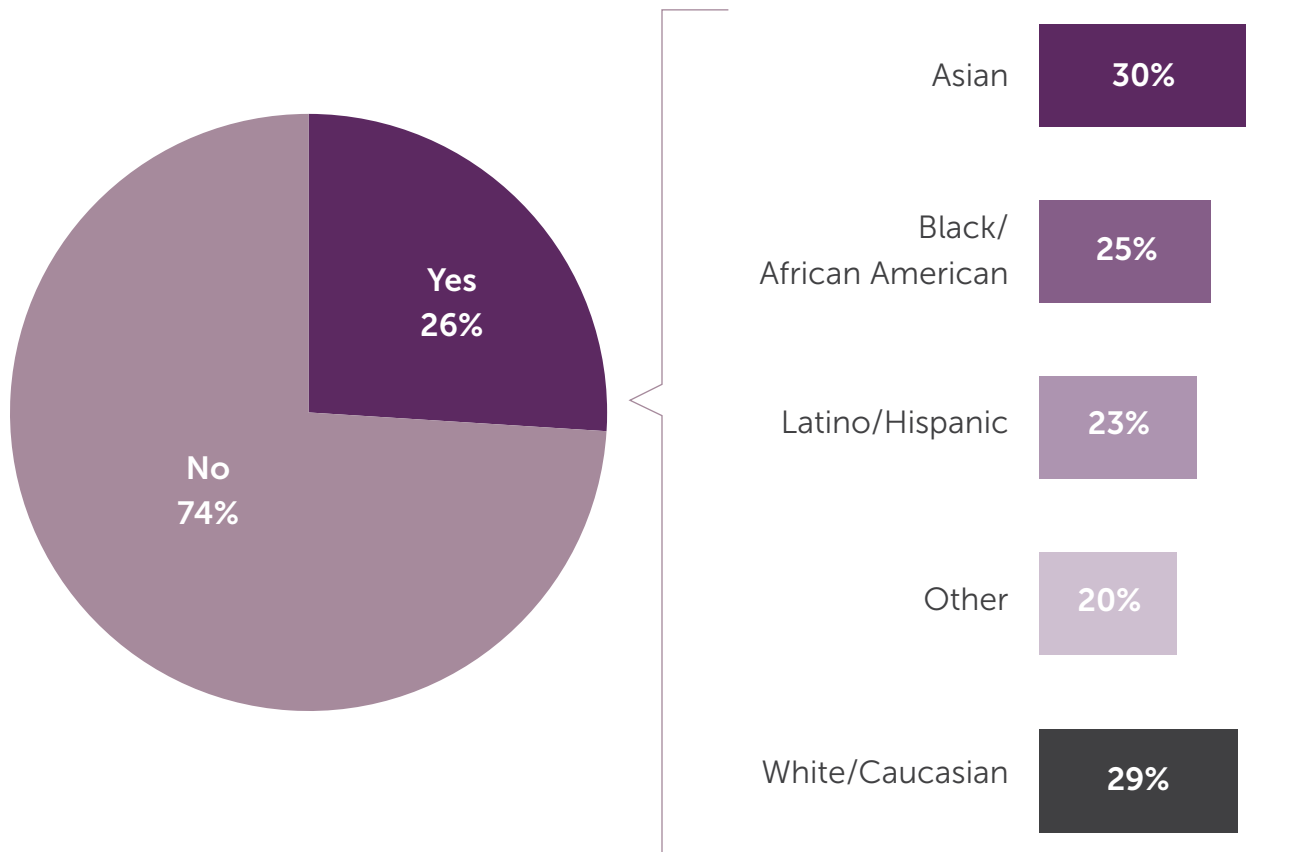
	To a great extent/ to a moderate extent	Slight extent	Not at all
Embed diversity, equity, and inclusivity practices in the hiring process	79%	14%	6%
Ensure career development opportunities for racially and ethnically diverse nurses	78%	15%	7%
Establish mentoring programs	75%	16%	9%
Host leadership development workshops	73%	20%	7%

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Question: Q15. To what extent do you believe any of the following will facilitate hiring more racially and ethnically diverse nurses into executive positions across your workplace?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC’s survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

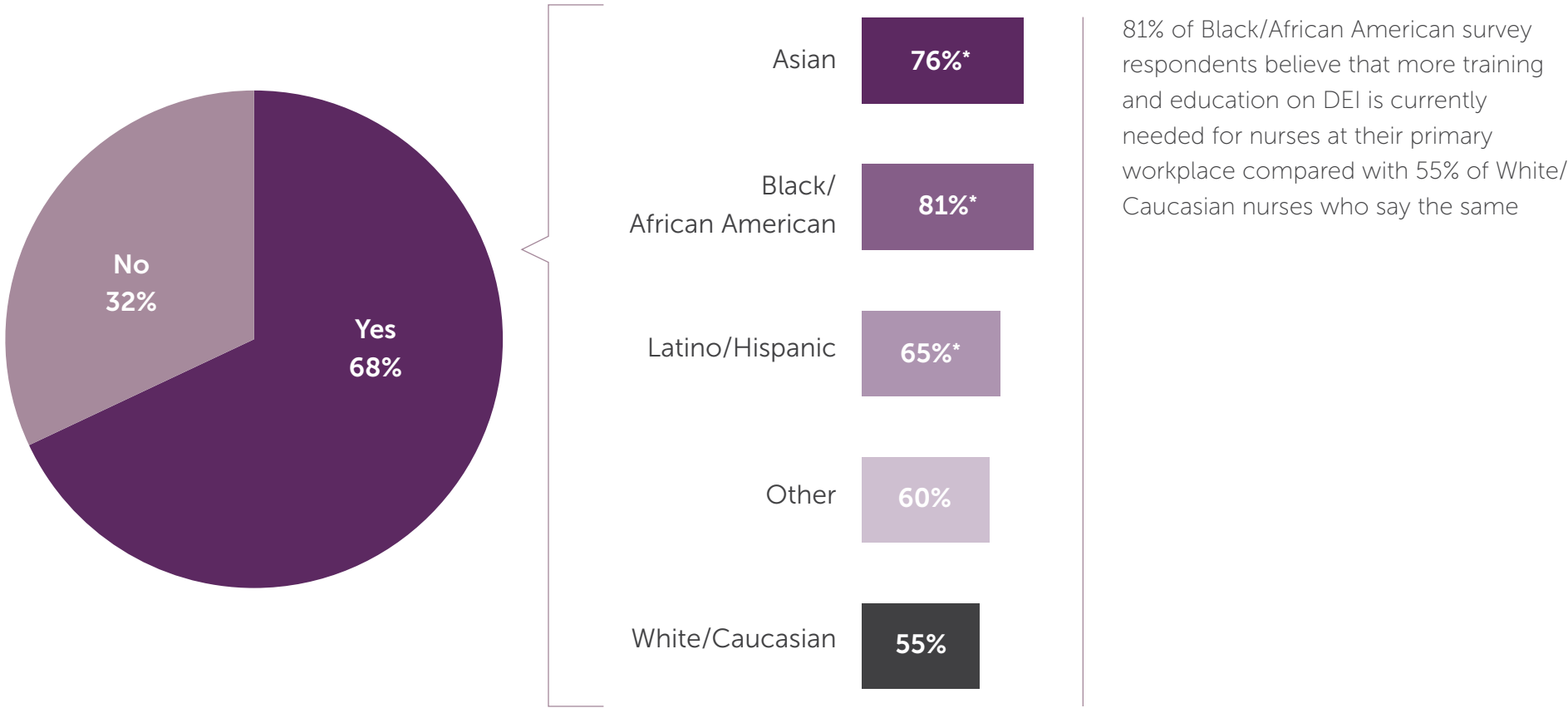
1 in 4 nurses have been asked or encouraged to take on additional responsibilities to promote DEI



- Asian nurses (30%) were most likely, followed by White/Caucasian nurses (29%), to have been asked/encouraged to take on additional responsibilities to promote DEI
- Latino/Hispanic nurses (23%) and Black/African American nurses (25%) were less likely to have been asked/encouraged

Question: Q12. Have you been asked or encouraged to take on additional responsibilities to promote diversity, racial equity, or inclusion?
Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

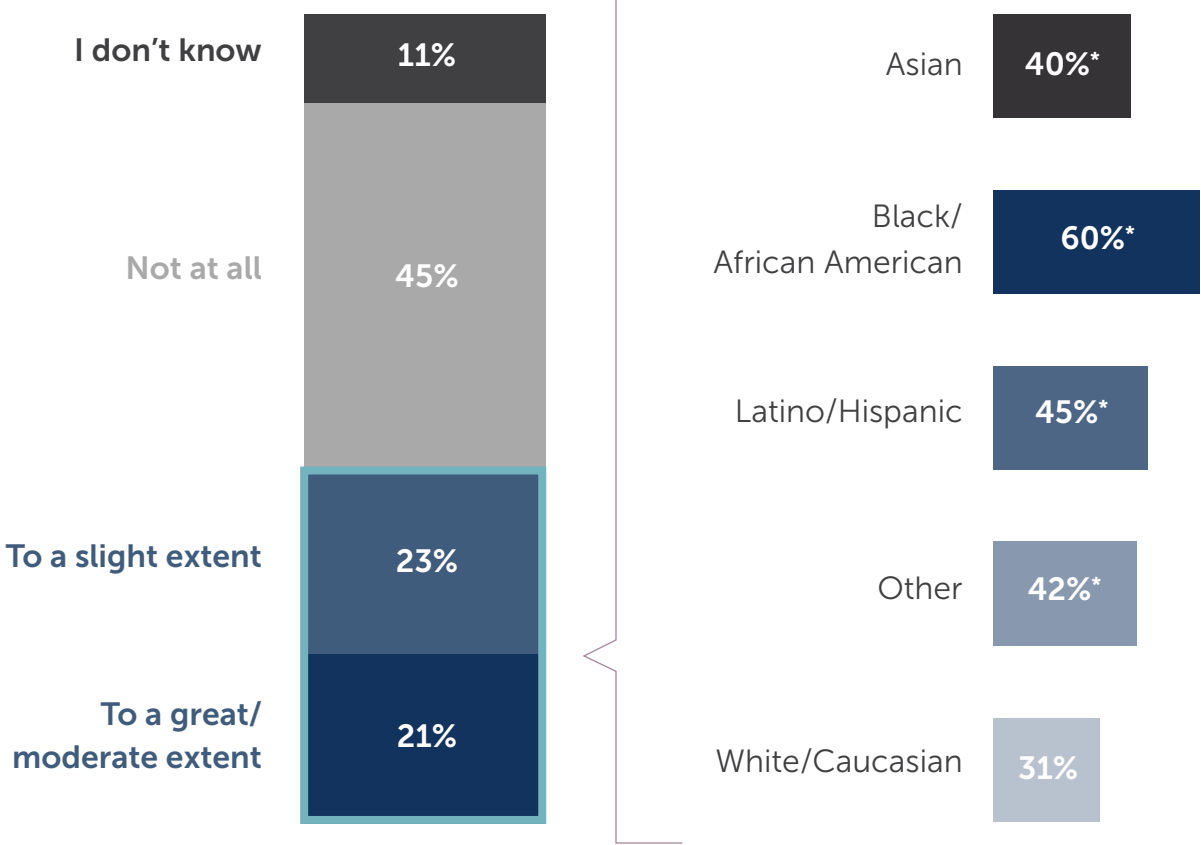
68% of nurses believe that there is a need for more training or education on diversity, equity, and inclusion in their workplace



* Statistically significant at p<0.05 to White/Caucasian.
Question: Q16. Regardless of any of your previous answers, do you feel more training/education on diversity, equity, and inclusion is currently needed for nurses at your primary workplace?
Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Nurses say there was a culture of racism/discrimination in their nursing school and that more training/education is needed

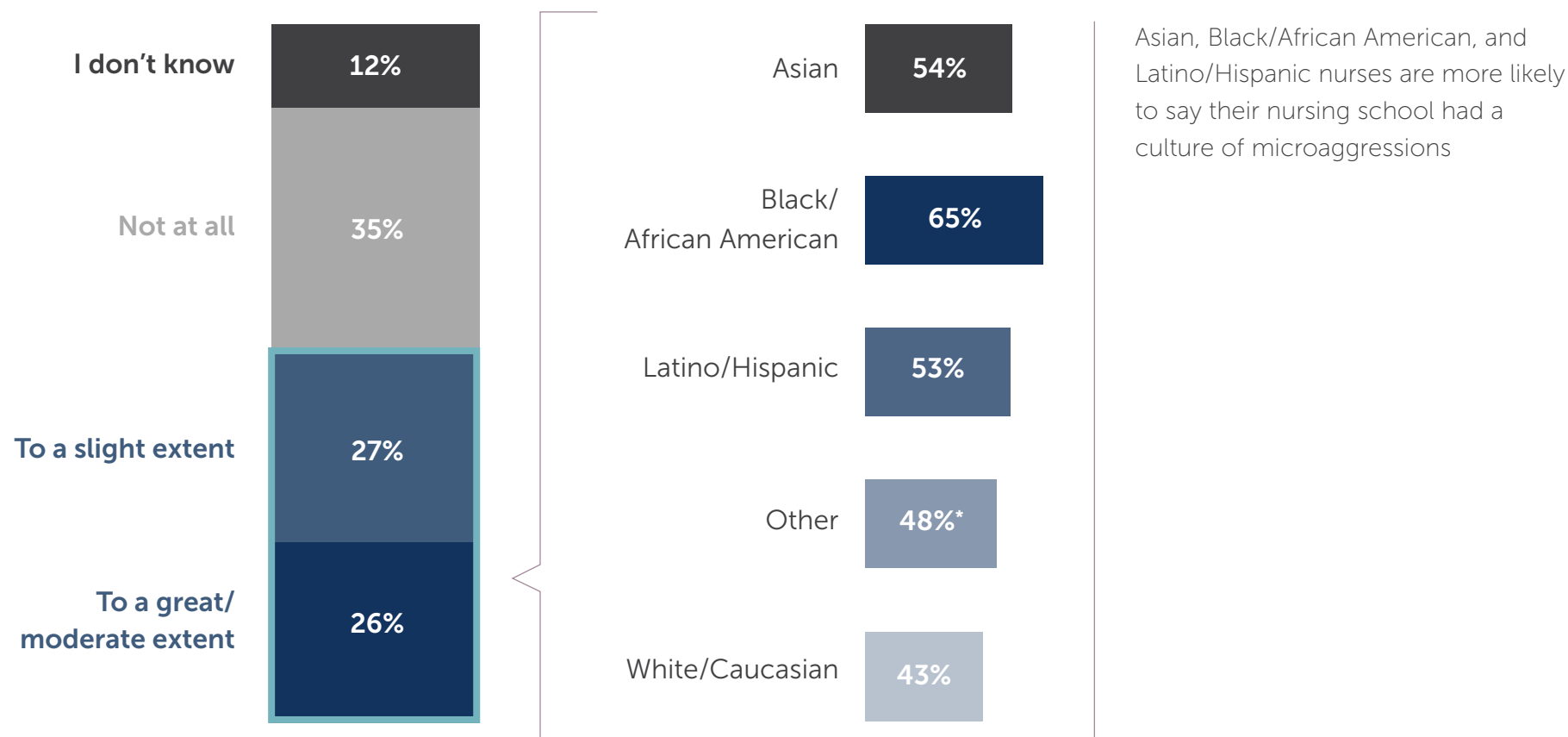
More than 4 in 10 nurses say they believe racism and/or discrimination was part of their nursing school's culture



Black/African American nurses are almost twice as likely as White/Caucasian nurses to say their nursing school had a culture of racism/discrimination

* Statistically significant at p<0.05 to White/Caucasian.
 Question: Q18. To what extent do you believe the following statements. [Racism and/or discrimination were part of the culture at my nursing school]
 Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

More than half of nurses (53%) say microaggressions were part of their nursing school's culture



Asian, Black/African American, and Latino/Hispanic nurses are more likely to say their nursing school had a culture of microaggressions

* Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ to White/Caucasian.

Question: Q18. To what extent do you believe the following statements. [Microaggressions were part of the culture at my school]

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Asian and Black/African American nurses were most likely to say they were discriminated against based on their race or ethnicity during nursing school

	Asian	Black/ African American	Latino/ Hispanic	Other	White/ Caucasian
Being held to a higher standard of performance based on race/ethnicity	71%	78%	66%	71%	59%
Subject to racially/ethnically offensive remarks or name calling	70%	68%	64%	66%	63%
Received lower evaluations or grades solely because of race/ethnicity rather than performance	67%	75%	64%	69%	62%
Denied opportunities for training based on race/ethnicity	67%	79%	64%	68%	60%

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Question: Q17. During nursing school, how frequently were nurses of color...

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

More than half of nurses say that their nursing school taught racially/ethnically sensitive bedside manner; less than one-third said they were taught about racial bias/stereotypes or systemic racism in healthcare

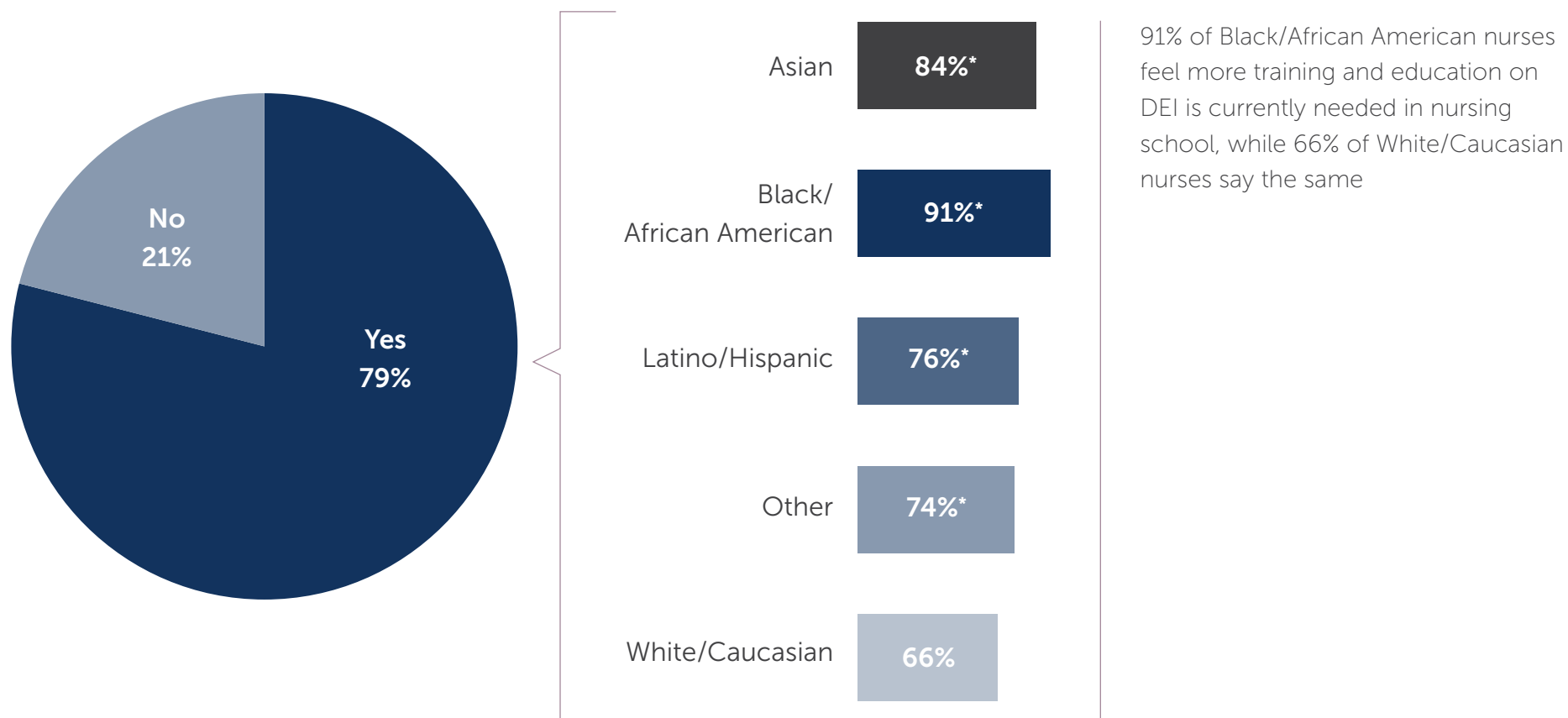
	To a great extent/ To a moderate extent	Slight extent/ Not at all	I don't know
Bedside Manner			
My nursing school taught me how to understand and incorporate people's cultures into their care	58%	36%	6%
My instructors demonstrated sensitivity in caring for racially/ethnically diverse patients	58%	39%	3%
Racial and Unconscious Bias/Racism			
My nursing school had adequate lessons on unconscious bias or stereotypes	32%	68%	6%
My nursing school had adequate lessons to help me identify racial bias	32%	63%	5%
My nursing school taught me about systemic racism in the healthcare system	27%	69%	4%

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Question: Q17. During nursing school, how frequently were nurses of color...

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Nearly 8 in 10 nurses feel there is a need for more training/ education on diversity, equity, and inclusion in nursing school



* Statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ to White/Caucasian.

Question: Q21. Regardless of any of your previous answers, do you feel more training/education on diversity, equity, and inclusion is currently needed in nursing school?

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Nurses say they are confident in their own ability to treat and communicate with people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds and social health needs; however, knowledge gaps arise in working with external community resources to treat racially and ethnically diverse patients

92%	Are confident about their ability to work effectively with patients from different ethnic/racial backgrounds
91%	Understand the social, economic, historic, political, and cultural factors that influence the health of patients
90%	Feel confident in their abilities to communicate with and assist people with different needs
89%	Understand the role of cross-cultural communication and language skills for community health, education, and patient care
87%	Feel comfortable negotiating a plan of care for patients from different socioeconomic backgrounds, considering their financial constraints and expectations
74%	Know how to engage effectively with community and public health teams to reduce health disparities and promote health
71%	Are familiar with the community resources available to assist members of healthcare teams that treat patients of different ethnic/racial backgrounds

Question: Q20. To what extent do you agree with the following statements...

Source: The nursing survey was fielded using NORC's survey partners to a sample of 980 nurses from March 23, 2022, to April 7, 2022.

Racism in Nursing: Key Takeaways From Qualitative Interviews

The McCabe Message Partners team, alongside consultant Andrew Benedict-Nelson, conducted a series of 30-minute one-on-one qualitative phone interviews November–December 2021 with a diverse group of frontline nurses working in different care settings. Below is a summary of key themes arising from the interviews, which informed the quantitative survey conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago.

1. NURSES INTERVIEWED THINK STRUCTURAL RACISM EXISTS, BUT EACH DEFINES IT DIFFERENTLY.

Interviewees generally believe that structural racism exists within healthcare, but each defines it differently and thus points to very different examples. Some describe issues with access to the healthcare system, including language barriers. Others note differences between the racial makeup of nurses and other providers compared to the population they serve. Some refer to generational and/or racial assumptions made by healthcare providers. One interviewee said it was about vaccine uptake or distrust.

2. INTERVIEWEES SAY DISCRIMINATION “PROBABLY” HAPPENS.

Most nurses interviewed believe that racism exists in healthcare, but most can't share an example that they've witnessed. This is particularly true of White interviewees. A few nurses say discrimination is based on sexual orientation, age, or gender. All interviewees say that bullying occurs in the profession.

3. NURSES TALK TO EACH OTHER RATHER THAN REPORT DISCRIMINATION.

When discrimination occurs in the workplace, interviewees say they don't have many avenues to handle it or don't trust the formal channels. Many say that human resources and administration—and sometimes their unions—are of little help. Instead, they avoid traditional channels and turn to trusted colleagues or nurse managers to share frustrations, or they say nothing to others at work.

4. INTERVIEWEES SAY EDUCATION ON DISCRIMINATION IS LIMITED OR NONEXISTENT.

More than half of interviewees say their workplace has not discussed the impact of systemic racism on health, and many say they had minimal discussion of racism/discrimination/disparities when in nursing school. Younger nurses are more likely to say equity issues are discussed in school, though some say this training reinforced stereotypes. About 2 in 3 interviewees say education on inequities would be helpful.

5. PATIENTS (RATHER THAN CLINICIANS OR THE SYSTEM) ACTING IN RACIST WAYS ARE TOP OF MIND.

Many nurses interviewed say they did not go to school with and/or do not work with many nurses of color. Some relay discriminatory experiences of their Black or Brown clinician colleagues. More top of mind for most interviewees are examples of discrimination—sometimes racial, but also based on age or gender—from patients. Nurse interviewees share experiences where patients use racial slurs or question their credentials. Some interviewees have concerns about systemic issues like language barriers impeding patient care or lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity affecting patient health. Some say they witness fellow nurses laugh at the names of diverse patients, or reveal biases based on patients' race or economic vulnerability.



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