


FALL 2020

**ATHLETICS  
RACIAL  
CLIMATE  
SURVEY  
REPORT**



## INTRODUCTION

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In September 2020, the LSU Athletics Administration distributed a racial climate survey to its employees. A collaborative research team designed the survey to evaluate LSU Athletics' collective commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to assist the department in planning for related future initiatives aimed at creating lasting change.

### METHODS AND SAMPLE

Questions on the LSU Athletics Racial Climate Survey assessed respondent perspectives relevant to general workplace environment, racial/ethnic discrimination in the workplace, current and future efforts related to diversity and inclusion, and the broader social environment related to activism and police brutality. The survey was voluntary and confidential. Respondents could choose to participate, not participate, and/or to stop participating at any time without penalty. Results are shared in aggregate form. Written comments have been stripped of potentially identifying information. **A total of 312 full-time employees received the survey invitation and 232 took the survey, for a response rate of 74 percent.** This rate is significantly higher than the response rate for LSU's recent campus climate surveys (Becker et al., 2019; Becker et al., 2017). Survey responses also came in from 63 respondents who were part-time employees, student employees, or volunteers, and five individuals who did not report their employment status, for a total sample of 300. Not all respondents answered each question, but data from each respondent is included in overall tallies. This report focuses primarily on answers from full-time employees, due to their permanence in the department and ability to impact its future. Among full-time employees, White respondents had a slightly higher response rate and are therefore slightly overrepresented in sample data. Final sample racial and ethnic demographics for full-time employees are displayed in the Appendix, with comparisons to the overall sample population and to LSU student-athlete, city, state, and national data for context. Quantitative data from the survey was exported from Qualtrics for analysis from all respondents and from full-time employees and was then broken down by broad demographic groups. Participant comment data were coded in two stages: applying a line-by-line open coding strategy, which generated a set of emergent themes (Emerson et al., 2011) and then refining the most common codes and using them to categorize the data. Results of the combined analysis are presented in this report.

### ORGANIZATION

This report is a broad summary of the survey's findings. It is broken into four parts:

**Part 1: Workplace Environment** covers respondents' perspectives on workplace experiences and sense of belonging, both generally and with regard to diversity, inclusion, and racial/ethnic equality.

**Part 2: Workplace Practices and Responsibilities** covers respondents' opinions on LSU Athletics' commitment to diversity, inclusion, and racial/ethnic equality and perspectives about their personal responsibilities relevant to racial/ethnic equality in the workplace.

**Part 3: Police Brutality and Activism** covers respondents' experiences witnessing or encountering police violence and perspectives on voting initiatives and forms of protest against police brutality in the broader world of athletics.

**Part 4: Workplace DEI Efforts** covers respondents' perspectives on current and future diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives in LSU Athletics. The conclusion section summarizes patterns in the data and relays data-driven recommendations for future areas of improvement.

**PART 1**

# WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

## OVERALL ASSESSMENTS

Six survey items assessed how respondents felt about their overall work experiences in LSU Athletics. A large majority of respondents reported feeling satisfied with their job, feeling like “part of the family” in LSU Athletics, rarely feeling like an outsider, and that the work they do is meaningful. Most also reported feeling comfortable sharing specific types of insight at work. However, the data indicate these experiences vary by race/ethnicity.

A majority of all respondents (86%) agreed<sup>1</sup> with the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with my job.” A slightly higher proportion of White full-time employees (87%) agreed with the statement, compared to Black<sup>2</sup> full-time employees (81%) and underrepresented minority (URM)<sup>3</sup> full-time employees (77%).

**A large majority of respondents reported feeling satisfied with their job, feeling like “part of the family” in LSU Athletics, rarely feeling like an outsider, and like the work they do is meaningful. However, the data indicate these experiences vary by race/ethnicity.**

A majority of all respondents (72%) agreed with the statement “I feel like ‘part of the family’ in the LSU Athletic Department.” Over three-quarters (76%) of White full-time employees agreed with this statement, compared to 56% of Black employees and 54% of URM full-time employees. Only a small proportion of respondents (11%) reported having often or very often “Felt like an outsider among colleagues or coworkers” in LSU Athletics. However, nearly one-third (30%) of Black and a quarter (26%) or URM full-time employees reported often/very often feeling this way, compared to only 9% of White full-time employees.

An overwhelming majority of respondents (93%) agreed with the statement “The work I do is meaningful to me.” A somewhat higher proportion of Black (97%) and URM full-time employees (96%) agreed with the statement, compared to White employees (91%).

Finally, most respondents reported rarely<sup>4</sup> feeling afraid to share suggestions with their supervisor (76%) or to voice their negative experiences around campus (78%). A larger proportion of White full-time employees reported rarely experiencing fear of sharing suggestions with a supervisor (77%), compared to 60% of Black full-time employees and 63% of URM full-time employees. Additionally, higher percentages of Black (17%) and URM (15%) reported often/very often feeling afraid to share their negative experiences around campus, compared to 7% of White full-time employees.

## RACE AND ETHNICITY IN THE WORKPLACE

Nine survey items assessed aspects of how race/ethnicity impact the LSU Athletics work environment. These items examined respondent opinions about respect in the workplace, employee sensitivity to cultural differences, tolerance (or lack thereof) for racist jokes or comments in the workplace, and frequency of experiences with discomfort associated with coworkers’ or students’ comments based on an employee’s race or ethnicity.

**90%**

**Over 90% of respondents indicated “Employees are treated with respect within my work environment, regardless of their racial or ethnic identities.”**

Many respondents reported feeling people are equally respected and that racist jokes and comments are not tolerated in LSU Athletics. Over 90% of respondents agreed with the statement “Employees are treated with respect within my work environment regardless of their racial or ethnic identities.” A slightly higher proportion of White full-time employees (93%) agreed with this statement, compared to Black (84%) and URM (83%) full-time employees.

<sup>1</sup> We collapsed agree/strongly agree and disagree/strongly disagree into two categories (agree, disagree).

<sup>2</sup> Individuals who identified as Black or African American.

<sup>3</sup> The URM category includes Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino/a/x, Asian, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and bi- or multi-racial respondents because numbers of non-Black URM respondents are too small to report alone without jeopardizing respondent confidentiality.

<sup>4</sup> In this report, “rarely” refers to respondents who answered “Never” or “once in a while.”

## PART 1

## WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

Nearly 90 percent (89%) of respondents agreed with the statement “Racist comments or jokes are not tolerated in my work environment.” Proportions of respondents agreeing with this statement were similar among White (90%), Black (88%), and URM (85%) full-time employees. A majority of respondents (79%) also agreed with the statement “Employees within my work environment are sensitive to cultural differences.” A higher proportion of full-time White employees (85%) agreed with this statement, compared to Black (68%) and URM (68%) full-time employees.

**While 94% of White full-time employees reported rarely experiencing discomfort associated with colleague or coworker comments based on their race/ethnicity, only 63% of Black full-time employees and 70% of URM full-time employees reported the same.**

An overwhelming majority of respondents reported rarely being made uncomfortable by student comments based on their race or ethnicity (95%), with similar proportions across White (95%), Black (93%), and URM (91%) respondents. This was less the case for respondents’ experiences with colleagues’ or coworkers’ comments. While 94% of White full-time employees reported rarely experiencing discomfort associated with colleague or coworker comments based on their race/ethnicity, only 63% of Black full-time employees and 70% of URM full-time employees reported the same.

Respondents left a total of 40 comments relevant to general satisfaction and how race and ethnicity impact the workplace overall. Comments disproportionately came from Black respondents, who account for 14% of the overall sample, but 32% of comments on this topic. The most common type of response, across race, involved documenting how racial tension or inequality manifest in the workplace. For example, one Black respondent wrote:

*From listening to others speak about racial issues, it seems difficult for them to admit something is wrong, or even just to stop to think about the individuals involved, because if they admit something is wrong, then they go against other*

*coworkers and abandon their political beliefs. I believe caring for the individuals involved who we are responsible for should be a number one priority.*

As a White respondent wrote, “We are an all white staff with the tendency to hire former students or promote current students, usually male, when they graduate. Working towards building a more racial[ly] diverse student staff to build the pipeline.” A Black respondent similarly remarked, “Hiring practices are not intentional on creating diversity and inclusion.”

The second most common theme in Black and White respondents’ comments was optimism about the department’s current DEI efforts. One White respondent wrote: “I don’t think it has always been this way, but I’m encouraged by a new-found awareness within the department.” One Black respondent left a similar comment: “My new supervisor has definitely brought a constant tone of equality and fairness. I am inspired by this new diverse unapologetic approach... I am encouraged and hopeful for the change this new supervisor appears committed to.”

*“True empathy requires compassion as well as action, and so long [as] the athletic department continues this response, I think that we will all contribute to the conversation and overall change of the country.”*

Other people wrote similar remarks but added thoughts about ensuring current efforts are bolstered by further action. For example, a White respondent wrote: “Although nationwide there is a lot of work that must be done to create equal opportunity for people of all races, I think the LSU response thus far has been commendable. True empathy requires compassion as well as action, and so long [as] the athletic department continues this response, I think that we will all contribute to the conversation and overall change of the country.”

## PART 1

## WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT

Finally, while the comments were in the minority overall, only White respondents left remarks relevant to racial equality existing in the workplace. As one wrote, "I think as a whole the athletics department is committed to diversity and inclusion and I have not experienced any wrong doing to minorities." Another remarked, "I have never noticed anything wrong within my workplace, with my bosses or coworkers, in regards to racial issues, or treating anyone unfairly."

### CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

Four items assessed respondent perspectives on their opportunities for advancement and experiences with racial/ethnic discrimination in the workplace. Most respondents reported believing their supervisor offers equal opportunities regardless of race and rarely feeling unable to advance in LSU Athletics because of their race or ethnicity. However, important differences emerged among full-time employees by race.

For example, 96% of White full-time employees reported "never" or "once in a while" feeling "unable to advance in career development at LSU/Sports Properties because of [their] race or ethnicity," compared to smaller proportions of Black (67%) and URM (72%) of full-time employees.

Most respondents (87%) reported agreeing their supervisor "offers equal opportunities to myself and colleagues regardless of race." Similar proportions of White (89%) and Black (84%) full-time employees indicated agreement with this statement, compared to 77% of URM full-time employees.

When asked if they had "personally experienced racial or ethnic discrimination within [their] work environment," only 7% of all respondents said "yes." However, a larger proportion of Black full-time employees reported personally experiencing and/or witnessing racial or ethnic discrimination. Over one quarter (27%) of Black full-time employees reported personally experiencing racial or ethnic discrimination in their work environment, compared to 4% of White full-time employees and 22% of all URM full-time employees. Over half (53%) of Black full-time employees reported witnessing racial or ethnic discrimination within their work environment, compared to 12% of White and 43% of all URM full-time employees.

**Over half of Black full-time employees (53%) reported witnessing racial or ethnic discrimination in their workplace and 27% reported experiencing it, compared to only 12% and 4% of White full-time employees.**

Respondents left 23 comments relevant to witnessing or experiencing racial/ethnic discrimination. Black respondents, who account for 14% of the overall sample, left 39% of comments on this topic. Most comments from White respondents and 100% of those from Black respondents articulated awareness of racial inequality or discrimination and/or how it manifests in the workplace. Some spoke of student experiences. For example, one person wrote, "I have witnessed discrimination with the faculty and our students. Faculty making assumptions based on race and gender. I have had interactions with faculty and non-student-athletes questioning academic ability and making the assumption that our student-athletes are here for the sole purpose of sport." Another person wrote about experiencing or witnessing microaggressions<sup>5</sup> and still another wrote of noticing it in "hiring practices," where they heard people make "Comments such as 'a little too aggressive or etc...'" when describing a Black woman candidate." Another person wrote, "Hard to witness discrimination when the diversity doesn't exist. Which is ultimately discrimination."

A minor theme in these data was the introduction of gender into the conversation. Put together with comments in other sections of the survey, a total of five respondents mentioned gender discrimination being another issue in the workplace and suggested future surveys examine that issue. For example, one White respondent wrote, "Need to include gender bias and misogyny or harassment in our efforts."

<sup>5</sup> "Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue et al., 2007: 271).

**PART 2**

# WORKPLACE PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

## ATHLETICS' COMMITMENT TO DEI

Seven survey items assessed respondent perspectives on LSU Athletics' commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. A large majority of respondents reported believing their supervisor "understands the importance of diversity and inclusion." Smaller proportions of respondents agreed the "LSU Athletics administration is committed to diversity and inclusion within the athletic department." Differences in opinion emerged across race/ethnicity.

**A majority (68%) of White full-time employees agreed the athletics administration is committed to diversity and inclusion in the department, compared to only 35% of Black full-time employees and 40% of URM full-time employees.**

Most respondents (87%) agreed their supervisor understands diversity and inclusion are important. Among full-time employees, this opinion was true for 90% of White respondents, 75% of Black respondents, and 72% of URM respondents. When looking at the administration, however, only 65% of all respondents expressed belief in their commitment to diversity and inclusion. A majority (68%) of White full-time employees agreed the athletics administration is committed to diversity and inclusion in the department, compared to only 35% of Black full-time employees and 40% of URM full-time employees.

As Table 1 shows, when asked to assess how satisfied employees were with the LSU Athletics Department in specific areas related to DEI, answers were less uniformly positive. For example, only 50% of respondents said they were satisfied<sup>6</sup> with the racial and ethnic diversity of the athletics staff. Less than half (46%) of White full-time employees indicated they were satisfied, compared to just 16% of Black full-time employees and 27% of URM full-time employees. Similar patterns appeared for satisfaction with the diversity of coaches and administration.

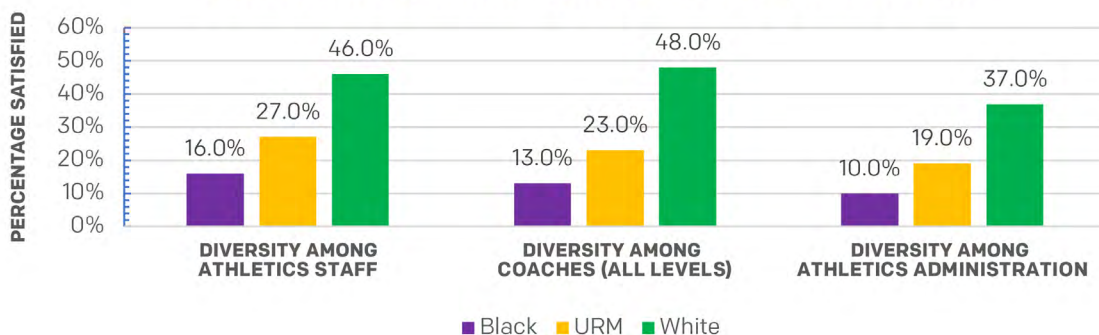
Parallel patterns also emerged in opinions about LSU Athletics' commitment to hiring racial or ethnic minorities and supporting them once hired. Less than half (39%) of full-time employees reported satisfaction with LSU Athletics' commitment to hiring racial/ethnic minorities, but a larger proportion of full-time White employees (42%) were satisfied, compared to full-time Black (16%) and URM (26%) employees.

Over half of respondents (52%) expressed satisfaction with Athletics' commitment to supporting racial or ethnic minorities once hired, but 54% of full-time White employees expressed satisfaction, while only 23% of Black and 28% of URM full-time employees did.

A large majority (74%) of Black full-time employees reported dissatisfaction with LSU Athletics' commitment to hiring racial or ethnic minorities, and 68% reported dissatisfaction with the department's commitment to supporting them once hired. The same was true for just 20% / 11% of full-time White employees. Small proportions of White full-time employees reported dissatisfaction with levels of racial or ethnic diversity among

**TABLE 1**

**Percentage of Full-Time Employees Reporting Satisfaction With Racial and Ethnic Diversity of Athletics Staff, Coaches, and Athletic Administration**



<sup>6</sup> Includes "satisfied" or "extremely satisfied."



**PART 2**

# WORKPLACE PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**A large majority (74%) of Black full-time employees reported being dissatisfied with LSU Athletics' commitment to hiring racial or ethnic minorities and 68% reported dissatisfaction with the department's commitment to supporting them once hired. The same was true for just 20% and 11% of White full-time employees.**

LSU staff (16%), coaches (15%), and administration (26%). On the other hand, a large majority of Black full-time respondents expressed dissatisfaction with racial/ethnic diversity among staff (75%), coaches (68%), and administration (84%).

*“I think the Athletic Department lacks diversity in several areas, but specifically administration. I believe it’s so important for the makeup of an athletic department to look similar to its athletes. Representation matters.”*

Respondents left 34 comments about LSU Athletics’ commitment to hiring with diversity and inclusion in mind. The most common type of comment was supportive of working to improve the department’s diversity and inclusion (79%). Some comments expressed general support, others were specific. For example, one White respondent wrote, “I feel like there is a definite lack of diversity with the administration of athletics.” Similarly, a Black respondent commented, “I think the Athletic Department lacks diversity in several areas, but specifically administration. I believe it’s so important for the makeup of an athletic department to look similar to its athletes. Representation matters.”

**RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEI**

Respondents were asked whether or not they agreed with five specific diversity and inclusion practices being a part of

their workplace roles. Higher levels of agreement emerged for practices not specifically labeled as diversity- or inclusion-related. For example, 80% of respondents agreed it is their role to “encourage [their] colleagues to share their ideas openly and have a voice, and 88% agreed it is their role to “become educated about individuals who are different from me.” There were lower levels of agreement for other measures, especially among White respondents.

When asked if it is their role to “regularly discuss the value of diversity and inclusion,” 57% of White full-time employees agreed, compared to 77% of Black and 65% of URM full-time employees. Closer levels of agreement were reported for whether or not it is an employee’s role to “challenge others on issues regarding discrimination.” Here, 74% of White, 70% of Black, and 65% of URM full-time employees agreed. Finally, 74% of White, 87% of Black, and 76% of URM full-time employees agreed it is their role to participate in programs for diversity and inclusion.

*“These are NOT part of my job; however, it is my responsibility because of who I am, the person I want to be, and the way I was raised.”*

Respondents left 15 comments about job roles and responsibilities. Ten of the 11 comments left by White respondents expressed support for race/ethnicity-related diversity and inclusion work (n=8) or for another form of inclusion work, such as that related to gender (n=1) or disability (n=1). As one White respondent wrote, “These are NOT part of my job; however, it is my responsibility because of who I am, the person I want to be, and the way I was raised.”

All comments from Black respondents spoke about the importance of diversity and inclusion-related efforts (n=4). Two of those four additionally mentioned the need for support from White colleagues. For example, one person remarked, “As a Black person, I do feel that it is my responsibility to encourage people to speak openly about racism, diversity, equity and inclusion, but it is not my sole responsibility to educate White colleagues about these topics. They must be intentional in their efforts to educate themselves.”

**PART 3**

# POLICE BRUTALITY AND ACTIVISM

## BACKGROUND

In summer 2020, the world witnessed increased attention to police, state, and White violence disproportionately directed at Black people in the United States after the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and others. Since the early years of BlackLivesMatter (#BLM), professional and collegiate athletes and teams have been part of the conversation around racial justice in the United States. As such, the survey design team collected data to develop an understanding of LSU Athletics' employees' perspectives on police violence, #BLM, voting, and activism.

## EXPERIENCES WITH POLICE BRUTALITY

Four survey items assessed experiences with police brutality. Five percent of respondents indicated they have been a victim of police brutality, including 4% of White full-time employees, 10% of Black full-time employees, and 11% of URM full-time employees. Almost a quarter (24%) reported knowing someone who has been a victim of police brutality. About one-fifth (19%) of White full-time employees answered yes to this question. Over half (52%) of Black full-time employees reported knowing someone who has been a victim of police brutality, compared to 45% of URM full-time employees.

**52%**

**Over half of Black full-time employees reported knowing someone who has been a victim of police brutality.**

Eleven percent of White full-time employees reported people intervening in the incidents of police brutality they had experienced or knew about, compared with zero Black full-time employees and 7% of URM full-time employees.

Respondents left 19 comments about police brutality on the survey. Three-quarters of those comments came from White respondents, three from Black respondents, and two from Hispanic respondents.

Among Black and Hispanic respondents, all comments had to do with either providing an example of police brutality or expressing concern for the problem. For example, one Hispanic respondent called for "More training for law enforcement and the use of deadly force!" and one Black respondent wrote, "It is different for Black people."

*"[We need] More training for law enforcement and the use of deadly force!"*

Among White respondents who left comments, most (57%) also reported concern for the problem or shared an example. As one wrote, "It is inhumane and unacceptable." Another shared, "as a White [person] working with Black young men and women over the past [number of] years, I have become more aware of the microaggressions that could have escalated and gone very differently."

A large minority of White respondents also left comments that expressed empathy for police or emphasized compliance as a means of protection. One, for example, wrote "I respect the police as brave men and women who choose their career to protect their communities." Another person commented, "I've been roughed up by the police and I've seen family members roughed up, but we ALWAYS complied with the demands of the officers and escaped unharmed."

## BLACK LIVES MATTER

Two survey items assessed respondent views of dialogue and/or stances about Black Lives Matter in the workplace. First, respondents were asked how often they "Felt wary or cautious of expressing my personal views about the Black Lives Matter movement." Nearly a quarter said they often or very often felt this way (23%). Higher proportions of URM (39%) and Black (37%) full-time employees reported feeling this way compared to their White (19%) peers.

Respondents left a total of four comments relevant to discomfort associated with speaking their opinions on #BLM. Three came from White respondents expressing fear of voicing their opinions, as well as one from a Black respondent noting colleagues had shared "a few harmful conspiracy theories" about #BLM in the workplace.



## PART 3

## POLICE BRUTALITY AND ACTIVISM

A second item asked respondents “Would you support student-athletes and coaches wearing a Black Lives Matter patch/logo?” A large majority (81%) answered yes, including 77% of full-time White employees, 97% of full-time Black employees and 95% of URM full-time employees.

People left 80 comments relevant to this measure. Comments disproportionately came from White respondents, who are 78% of the sample, but left 85% of comments on this topic. Among Black and Hispanic respondents’ comments (n=12), 100% expressed some level of support for a #BLM patch, writing things like “Students should have full range of ability to wear what they want to support and recognize the injustices that face their community.”

Among White respondents, just 48% of comments expressed some level of support for the patch. As one person wrote, “I love and want to support anyone who takes a stance against racism.” A majority of comments were opposed to the patch. The most common reason cited was opposition to Black Lives Matter as an organization. As one White respondent wrote, “The BLM organization at its heart is not a good organization to be associated with.” Other White respondents expressed support for the principle behind the statement, but opposition to the organization. As one wrote, “I think it’s important to differentiate between the ‘Black Lives Matter’ organization, which has values that many people, across various races, disagree with, and ‘Black Lives Matter,’ the statement which calls attention to the importance of Black lives.”

**VOTING**

Two survey items assessed whether or not people felt LSU Athletics should “proactively encourage voter turnout” in the department and/or in Baton Rouge for the November election. A large majority said yes relevant to departmental encouragement (89%) and to similar efforts in Baton Rouge (87%). White and URM full-time employees supported the ideas at similar levels (around 90%), compared to 97% of Black full-time employees.

Respondents left eight comments relevant to encouraging voter turnout, a majority of which were supportive. For example, one White respondent wrote, “LSU Athletics shouldn’t just put out a message of ‘GO VOTE,’ but continuously push out information on how people can vote, where they can do their research, info on how to find your polling place. We live in

the capitol of Louisiana. The Governor’s office is just down the street from us. We should be able to team up and do our part.” One Black respondent commented, “I think it is so, so, so, SO important to get athletes out voting this November. Please, let them use their likeness, image, voice to encourage more people [their] age to vote.”

*“We live in the capitol of Louisiana. The Governor’s office is just down the street from us. We should be able to team up and do our part.”*

**ACTIVISM IN SPORTS**

Three survey items assessed respondent opinions of two forms of protest that have been part of public conversation about activism and sports in the United States since the advent of #BLM in 2013: kneeling during the national anthem and/or the #TakeAKnee movement (generally) and “a colleague’s, student-athlete’s, or coach’s decision to kneel to protest racial inequalities in America during the national anthem.” Respondents were additionally asked to explain (in their own words) the form of protest they think “would be effective to demonstrate against racial injustices in the United States.”

A majority (62%) of respondents said “yes” when asked if they “support kneeling and/or the #TakeAKnee movement as a form of protest for racial inequalities in America during the national anthem.” This was true for 59% of White full-time employees, compared to 93% of Black and 80% of URM full-time employees. When asking if they would support an LSU colleague, student-athlete, or coach’s decision to kneel during the anthem, support was more widespread. Here, 86% of all respondents—including 87% of White, 100% of Black, and 96% of URM full-time employees—said yes.

Many respondents (n=126) answered the open-ended question about forms of protest against racial inequality they think are effective. All the comments were supportive of protesting racial injustice, but differences in types of support people believe are effective emerged across race.

## PART 3

## POLICE BRUTALITY AND ACTIVISM

Among White respondents, the most common response was to express support for people who choose to kneel during the anthem (n=34), with some people adding they supported any form of protest a person affected by racial injustice thinks is appropriate (n=15). For example, one person wrote:

*I support any action that an oppressed group takes to fight for justice because it is not my place to tell someone experiencing generational trauma how to act. The point of a protest is to bring attention to an issue and call for action—it is not to make people comfortable.*

The second most common theme among White survey respondents was to emphasize peaceful protest (n=28). As one person remarked, “Anything that isn’t violent and doesn’t risk the safety of other people is cool with me. I personally think peaceful protest is the best way of going about things, but I realize that some people are frustrated and feel like they haven’t been listened to.”

*“The point of a protest is to bring attention to an issue and call for action—it is not to make people comfortable.”*

Three final answer types were most common among White respondents: opposition to kneeling during the anthem (n=14), calling for institutional responses (n=12); and emphasizing acts demonstrating unity (n=14). As one White respondent wrote, “I support Black Lives Matter. Just have [a] hard time with kneeling for National Anthem.” White women disproportionately left comments focusing on institutional change (67%), compared to White men (33%). They suggested a range of actions the Athletics Department could take, such as creating apparel, doing more walks like they did in summer, and/or making social media or pre-game statements opposing racism. Comments looking for expressions of unity disproportionately came from White men (71%). For example, one person wrote, “I like the Tigers United. I like the locking arms with the opposing team.”

Comments left by Hispanic and Asian respondents were few in number, but paralleled those from White respondents. They were largely supportive of kneeling and/or protest and some mentioned unity and/or peacefulness.

Among Black respondents, a different pattern emerged. None expressed direct opposition to kneeling. The most common theme(s) in responses were support for kneeling (specifically) or protest against racial injustice (generally) or calling for institutional change. For example, one Black respondent wrote:

*I think people have to protest in the manner that feels most effective for them. I understand the various forms of protest and believe people are fed up with the lack of change in this country and the difficulty some people have with understanding why the protests, in various forms, are occurring and are needed.*

*“I think people have to protest in the manner that is most effective for them. I understand the various forms of protest and believe people are fed up with the lack of change in this country and the difficulty some people have with understanding why the protests, in various forms, are occurring and needed.”*

Another, focusing on institutional change, remarked “public speeches, declarations by the institution, communications to larger audiences via social media, billboards, jumbotrons, public announcements to be played throughout all sporting events. Posters and banners, displayed communications” were all effective forms of protest.

**PART 4**

# WORKPLACE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION EFFORTS

## OPINIONS ABOUT CURRENT DEI EFFORTS

An open-ended question assessed beliefs about the department’s current DEI efforts: “What are your thoughts on the diversity and inclusion efforts already released by the athletic department? (the ‘Heard’ series for student-athletes, various diversity and inclusion councils, communication from administration, social media content, educational opportunities, resource documents, etc.)”

An overwhelming majority (89%) of comments were supportive of the athletic department’s recent DEI efforts. Compared to other groups, White men’s supportive comments more often expressed positive reviews without mentioning future work that needs to be done. For example: “I think the efforts and outreach have been appropriate and a clear signal from the administration that the support is serious and substantial.” A comparatively larger proportion of White women and Black/URM respondents expressed support while emphasizing the work that remains to be done. For example, one wrote: “I think the athletic department is off to a good start but has a long way to go.”

## PARTICIPATION IN DEI EFFORTS

One survey question assessed which programs employees would voluntarily participate in. The top three choices respondents made about the programs they’d voluntarily participate in were: speaker series, diversity training, and small group discussion. The order of those preferences varied by race/ethnicity.

Respondents were also asked to rank their comfort “discussing issues or topics concerning race/ethnicity at work,” with 1 being “extremely uncomfortable” and 10 being “extremely comfortable.” The average rating was 6.65. Ratings were similar across race/ethnicity, but slightly lower for URM (6.29) and Black (6.45) compared to White (6.72) full-time employees. Black full-time employees’ slightly lower level of comfort, paired with small group discussions being ranked highest in that group, suggests full-time Black employees exhibit willingness to confront discomfort discussing race/ethnicity in the workplace to move DEI efforts forward.

## RANKED ANSWERS, BY RACE/ETHNICITY

### White Full-Time Employees

1. Speaker series
2. Diversity training
3. Small group discussion

### URM Full-Time Employees

1. Diversity training
2. Small group discussion
3. Speaker series

### Black Full-Time Employees

1. Small group discussion
2. Speaker series
3. Diversity training

Respondents were also directly asked “what hesitations, if any” they have when discussing race/ethnicity. Among Black and URM respondents, a majority of answers (71%) had to do with concerns about the conversation going poorly and/or fear of negative consequences associated with being a Black person in a mostly White workplace. For example, one Black respondent reported their hesitation was: “Retaliation against me.” Another shared, “My hesitations are being viewed as making excuses and not taking personal initiative. Being misunderstood because my plight is different, being Black. Finally, feeling that it is not important enough for them (White co-workers) to care about my plight.”

A majority of comments from White respondents included themes not found in answers left by Black or URM respondents. The most common theme among White respondents was concern about offending someone or being misinterpreted (41%). As one person wrote “I never want to offend anyone.” Another shared, “I hesitate on speaking up because I feel as if anything I say will be taken as an offense, so I just chose not to speak.” The second most common theme among White respondents was having no hesitations (27%). The third most common theme was related to the first: hesitation to speak due to feeling one lacks education on the topic (15%). These patterns could explain why White respondents ranked speaker series and diversity training highest.

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It is important to add that while rare (n=4), open opposition to discussing race/ethnicity at work emerged only among White men. For example: “When it comes to work, I prefer to remain apolitical. I’ve found that discussing politics/race/ethnicity has more cons than pros. At work, I prefer to focus on work rather than talk about potentially polarizing subjects.” Another respondent simply remarked, “Not the time or place to discuss.”

**While rare, open opposition to discussing issues and topics related to race/ethnicity at work emerged only among White men.**

## DIVERSE SUPPLIER EFFORTS

Five survey questions assessed respondent opinions about diversifying LSU Athletics’ supplier sources. When asked what percentage of goods or services purchased by the athletic department they think is provided by Black-owned businesses, the mean answer was 20%. When asked if they would support efforts in their work environment “to diversify the vendors or suppliers” currently used, overwhelming support emerged. Nearly all (94%) of respondents, including 95% of White and URM full-time employees and 100% of Black full-time employees said “yes.”

When asked if they would “support requirements to utilize minority-owned businesses as vendors” in their unit, support levels were lower. A majority (71%) of all respondents said yes, including 68% of White, 84% of URM, and 97% of Black full-time employees. Support for respondent departments “intentionally recruit[ing] Black-owned businesses to provide goods and services” existed among 59% of all respondents, including 57% of White, 75% of URM, and 90% of Black full-time employees.

Respondent comments about diversifying suppliers varied by race and (sometimes) gender. Black respondents all expressed support for diversifying suppliers. For example, one wrote, “We must be intentional about diversifying suppliers.” In contrast, non-Black respondents most commonly emphasized quality/price. Two of six comments from Hispanic, Asian, or mixed-race respondents and a portion of comments from White women (56%) and White men (44%) mentioned the need to improve efforts to diversify. For example, one White

respondent wrote, “This is going to be hard and take a full commitment. Campus needs to help us be better.” However, quality/price was also mentioned in a majority of comments from these groups—sometimes in conjunction with support for diversification. As one person wrote, “I support diversifying our suppliers and vendors, HOWEVER I think we also owe ourselves the responsibility of doing what’s best for us and keeping costs low where we can.”

Comments solely emphasizing quality and/or price accounted for 28% of remarks from White women, 51% of those from White men and four of six comments from Asian, Hispanic, or mixed-race respondents. No Black respondents answered this way. Many of the comments in this category highlighted keeping race/ethnicity out of the choice. For example, one White respondent wrote: “I believe if a product or business is good it should not matter the race/demographics of the owners and workers.”

## POSSIBLE DEI EFFORTS

Respondents were asked a set of questions relevant to future DEI efforts in the department. Two questions pertained to voting. A large majority (89%) of respondents supported the LSU Athletic Department proactively encouraging voter turnout for the November election within the department, including 90% of White, 91% of URM, and 97% of Black full-time employees. The same was true for 87% of respondents when asked about LSU Athletics encouraging voter turnout in the broader Baton Rouge community, including 89% of White, 91% of URM, and 97% of Black full-time employees.

When asked if they would like the department to “host an event in support of racial equity,” 91% of all respondents—including 94% of White, 86% of URM, and 97% of Black full-time employees—answered “yes.” Looking at specific event recommendations, the following were popular in comments people left: speakers and educational events (especially related to history), small-group discussion or building connection to one another, food-centered events, and community outreach.

The most popular type of suggestion from Black women, White women, and respondents from other minority racial/ethnic backgrounds was focused on speakers or education. For example, one person suggested “Black history presentations (not the stuff we learned in elementary school but true Black history.” Others suggested specific speakers and/or book clubs for people to come together for.

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The most popular type of suggestion from Black and White men was creating more opportunities for small-group discussion and/or building connection with one another. As one person put it, “interactive programming that will continue to drive meaningful conversation about race and diversity.” Another wrote, “Any kind of event that will bring people together to create dialogue always works.”

*“Food truck block party!!! This can consist of Black-owned restaurants and in Baton Rouge as well as local Black-owned businesses.”*

A small number of respondents (n=8) brought up food-centered events such as a “Taste of BR” event that would “bring in Black-owned restaurants and set them up around the PMAC and let people try out the food and mingle in hopes of using them as vendors and developing relationships,” as a White respondent suggested. Another White respondent suggested a “Food truck block party!!! This can consist of Black-owned restaurants in Baton Rouge as well as local Black-owned businesses.”

Another portion of respondents (n=9) suggested engaging in more community outreach. For example, one Black respondent suggested, “promote events at the elementary, middle, and high schools in Black communities, especially the one right near campus.” In another example, a White respondent remarked, “I think the LSU community should require service hours to help the surrounding community, especially during these times. I believe in service before self.”

*“[Athletics should] promote events at the elementary, middle, and high schools in Black communities, especially the one right near campus.”*

### TRAINING / PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Four questions addressed workplace training and professional development. A large majority (94%) of respondents—including 95% of White, 98% of URM, and 100% of Black full-time employees—indicated supporting “initiatives designed to provide professional development opportunities for minorities in the LSU Athletic Department.”

A similar pattern emerged when respondents were asked if “diversity training and education [should] be required for all LSU Athletics and Sports Properties employees.” A majority (86%) of respondents said yes, including 86% of White, 93% of URM, and 100% of Black full-time employees. A majority (80%) of respondents also supported a new employee orientation program. Finally, 81% supported requiring “Hiring Manager Training for anyone hiring for a position” that “would be designed to uncover unconscious bias and challenge recruitment efforts to ensure diverse hiring pools.” Most White (79%), URM (95%), and all Black (100%) full-time employees said yes to supporting that requirement.

In an open-ended question where people could leave comments for the DEI councils, some respondents left remarks relevant to training and professional development. The most common type of comment left by White respondents involved approval for professional development opportunities, but only if they were for everyone. For example, one person wrote, “I think initiatives designed to provide professional development opportunities need to be available for everyone – not only singling out minorities. Yes, encourage their participation, but these incredible resources shouldn’t be limited to only minorities.” Black and URM respondents who left comments all expressed some level of support for more training, orientation programs, and professional development. For example, one wrote, “All of the above are so incredibly important.” Overall, comments from all respondents were supportive of training and professional development initiatives (93%), but where opposition was voiced (n=2), it was only from White respondents.

### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Respondents were asked an open-ended question about what changes (if any) they would “like to see within the LSU Athletic Department regarding diversity and inclusion.” The most common response had to do with hiring. Across racial/ethnic and gender categories, respondents most frequently emphasized greater fairness in hiring practices and/or ways LSU Athletics can or should engage in DEI efforts around



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hiring. For example, one White respondent wrote, “The biggest area of concern that I have is the hiring of minorities. In my opinion, this needs to be the next major priority.” Quite a few respondents emphasized diversifying positions in the administrative ranks, saying things like “Hire more people of color, particularly women, in athletic admin.”

**Among Black respondents, additional emphasis was often placed on retaining employees once hired.**

Black respondents, who were just 13% of the sample, left 30% of comments in this section. Among Black respondents, additional emphasis was often placed on retaining employees once hired. As one person put it, they’d like to see “Programs and attention for the retention of minority employees.” Some people recommended the creation of new positions aimed at DEI enhancement. For example, a Black respondent suggested “having a director in D&I and have at least 2 people working under that person.” A White respondent suggested creating scholarships for minority students that work in Athletics, which would, when paired with “support in the classroom and on the job training,” help “plant a seed for [the] future workforce in Athletics.”

At the end of the survey, respondents could leave additional comments to the DEI councils or generally. Comparatively fewer people left remarks in these sections. Among those who did, the most common remark (42%) involved expressing some type of gratitude or praise for the department’s ongoing efforts. For example, one Black respondent wrote “This is a totally new approach and I am pleasantly impressed with this start.” One White respondent wrote, “Over the past several months, I have learned that we don’t live in a ‘colorblind’ society, and I greatly appreciate the efforts of LSU Athletics in moving our department toward the goal of attaining racial equity.” Many other respondents wrote simple thank you messages, such as “Thank you for this” or “Thank you for allowing us to give some input.”

*“Over the last several months, I have learned that we don’t live in a ‘colorblind’ society, and I greatly appreciate the efforts of LSU Athletics in moving our department toward the goal of attaining racial equity.”*

Remarks varied by race and gender. Among White women and Black men, gratitude for ongoing efforts and the survey was the most common theme. Among Black women, suggesting specific new ideas or expressing hope the efforts are sincere were most common. For example, one respondent from this group wrote, “Just hope that we are considering real change and just not for show.” Among White men, the most common type of response had to do with emphasizing unity (e.g., “I believe in the TEAM! I believe in HUMANITY!”) or calling for an overall more caring ethic in the athletics department. As one wrote, “We need to care more about lives and overall health of the human that is employed by LSU.”



## CONCLUSION

In summer and fall of 2020, LSU Athletics put intensive effort into diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. For a comprehensive review of those efforts, see [LSUsports.net/diversity](https://LSUsports.net/diversity). This racial climate survey is a part of that work.

### SURVEY FINDINGS INDICATE THREE MAJOR AREAS IN NEED OF ATTENTION IN LSU ATHLETICS:

#### HIRING AND PROMOTION

Less than half of respondents across racial/ethnic categories reported satisfaction with current levels of diversity among LSU Athletics' staff, coaches, and administration. A large majority of Black full-time employees (74%) reported dissatisfaction with the department's commitment to hiring racial/ethnic minorities and dissatisfaction with racial/ethnic diversity among LSU Athletics staff (75%), coaches (68%), and administration (84%). Compared to 96% of White full-time employees, only 67% of Black full-time employees reported "never" or "once in a while" feeling "unable to advance in career development at LSU/Sports Properties because of [their] race or ethnicity." In addition, most comments respondents left were supportive of increasing racial/ethnic diversity in the department, especially at the administrative level.

#### INCLUSION AND RETENTION

Black (and, to a lesser degree, all URM) full-time employees reported different workplace experiences than White full-time employees. Over one quarter (27%) of Black full-time employees had personally experienced racial or ethnic discrimination in their work environment, compared to just 4% of White and 22% of all URM full-time employees. Lower proportions of Black full-time employees reported feeling like part of the family in LSU Athletics. Compared to White full-time employees, a higher proportion of Black full-time employees reported feeling like an outsider or experiencing discomfort due to coworker comments based on their race/ethnicity. In addition to thoughts on inclusion, opinions about employee retention also stood out in the data. Smaller proportions of Black (23%) and all URM (28%) full-time employees reported satisfaction with Athletics' commitment to supporting racial/ethnic minorities once hired, compared to 54% of White full-time employees. Study data also indicate support for efforts to diversify LSU's vendors and supply sources.

#### EDUCATION AND DEI INITIATIVES

Survey findings indicate racial/ethnic differences in respondents' experiences with and perspectives on police brutality, #BlackLivesMatter (#BLM), and activism in the world of sports. Over half (52%) of Black full-time employees reported knowing someone who has been a victim of police brutality, compared to 45% of all URM and 19% of White full-time employees. Noticeably higher proportions of Black full-time employees reported feeling "wary or cautious" of expressing their views of #BLM at work. Respondents showed broad support for LSU Athletics' recent DEI initiatives and willingness to participate in future work. Comments from many White respondents, in particular, emphasized their own need and/or desire for more education on race, ethnicity, and racism.

Overall, survey findings highlight differences across race/ethnicity in workplace experiences and perspectives on DEI. However, it is important to note that a majority of employees of all racial/ethnic backgrounds reported positive views of their workplace, a desire for more racial/ethnic equity, and willingness to engage in ongoing and future DEI efforts. These patterns suggest there is a lot of momentum to capture and strong possibilities for cross-racial/ethnic coalitions and collaboration in making LSU Athletics a more diverse, thriving, and fully inclusive workplace. LSU Athletics is well-positioned to stand out among programs across the nation by putting effort into improving quality-of-life for its employees, student-athletes, and community collaborators.

APPENDIX

# 2019-2020 RACE/ETHNICITY STATISTICS

	FULL-TIME ATHLETICS STAFF		STUDENT-ATHLETES	BATON ROUGE	LOUISIANA	UNITED STATES
	SURVEY RESPONDENTS	ACTUAL				
White	77.6% 180	74.0% 231	50.5%	39%	58.4%	60.1%
Black or African American	13.8% 32	21.2% 66	29.1%	51.7%	32.3%	12.5%
Hispanic/Latino/a/x	5.6% 13	2.9% 9	4.8%	3.9%	5.3%	18.5%
Asian	0% 0	0.3% 1	0.2%	3.9%	1.8%	5.8%
Two or More	1.3% <sup>7</sup> 3	0% 0	0.8%	1.1%	1.5%	2.2%
Other/Unknown	1.7% 4	1.6% 5	6.3%	0.3%	0%	0%
Non-Resident			8.2%			
American Indian or Alaska Native				0.2%	0.7%	0.7%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander					0.04%	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>312</b>				

<sup>7</sup> The Two or More category includes 1 participant who identified as Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White, and 2 participants who identified as American Indian or Alaska Native and White.  
 Note: Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and United States data are from the 2019 U.S. Census population estimate as of July 1, 2019.

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LSU Office of Diversity - [LSU.edu/diversity](https://lsu.edu/diversity)

LSU Athletics Diversity and Inclusion - [LSUsports.net/diversity](https://lsusports.net/diversity)