

From: Charlie Blaich and Kathy Wise

To: HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey Liaisons

Re: Were data from the 2020-2021 HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey different from previous years?

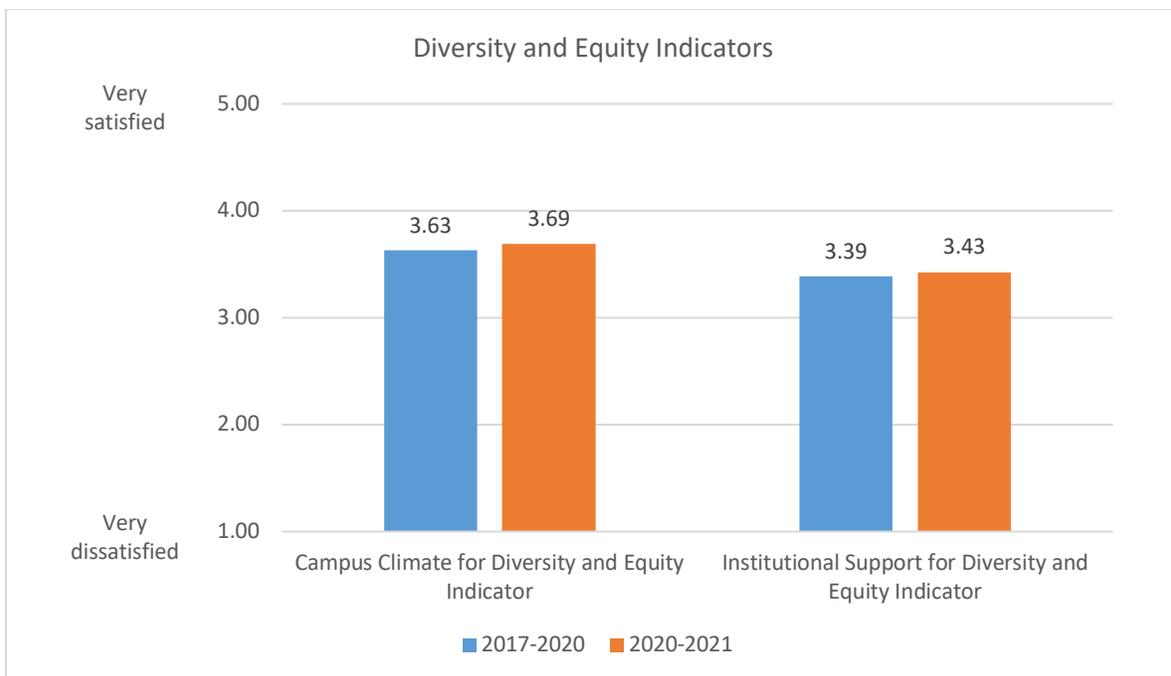
Date: 8/27/21

We don't have to tell you that it's been a challenging year. COVID, the murder of George Floyd, the important protests across the country against racism, and ongoing attempts to undermine the presidential election have had a powerful impact on us, our colleagues, and our students. For these reasons, a number of people have asked us whether this year's HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey (HEDS D&E) data are different, and specifically more negative, than HEDS D&E data from prior years.

Below we compare this year's HEDS D&E Survey data to data from three prior years. As you'll discover, we conclude that we do not see substantial differences in how people responded to the HEDS D&E Survey this year. The differences we see in this year's data are small and, surprisingly, more positive than data from previous years.

Campus Climate Indicators

We use four key indicators in the HEDS D&E Survey. Three of these are scales. We create scales by combining responses to a small number of questions into an overall measure.¹ The following graph compares average scores on the *Campus Climate for Diversity and Equity* indicator and the *Institutional Support for Diversity and Equity* indicator for people who took the survey in 2017-2020 and people who took the survey this last year.

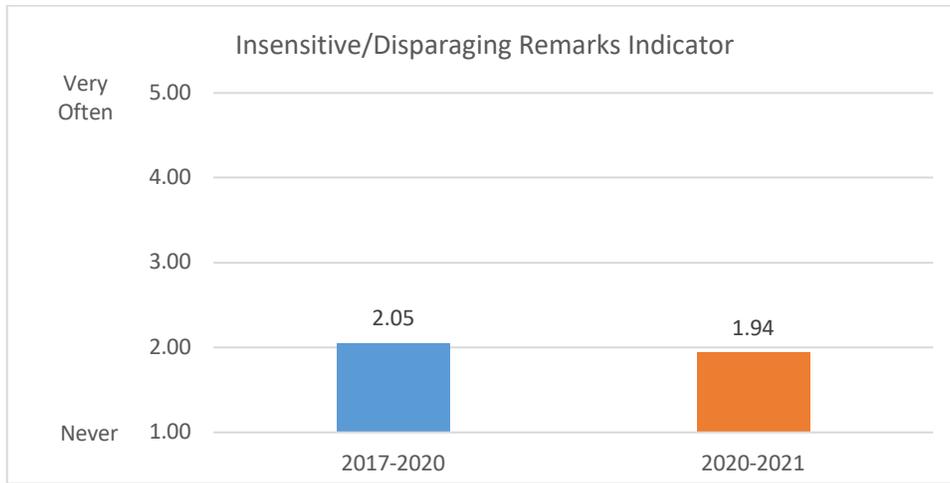


The differences between the means of these indicators for this year and prior years of the survey are tiny, and both are slightly greater this year than in previous years.²

¹ For more information about these four indicators, including the questions that we've incorporated into the three scales, please see the Appendix.

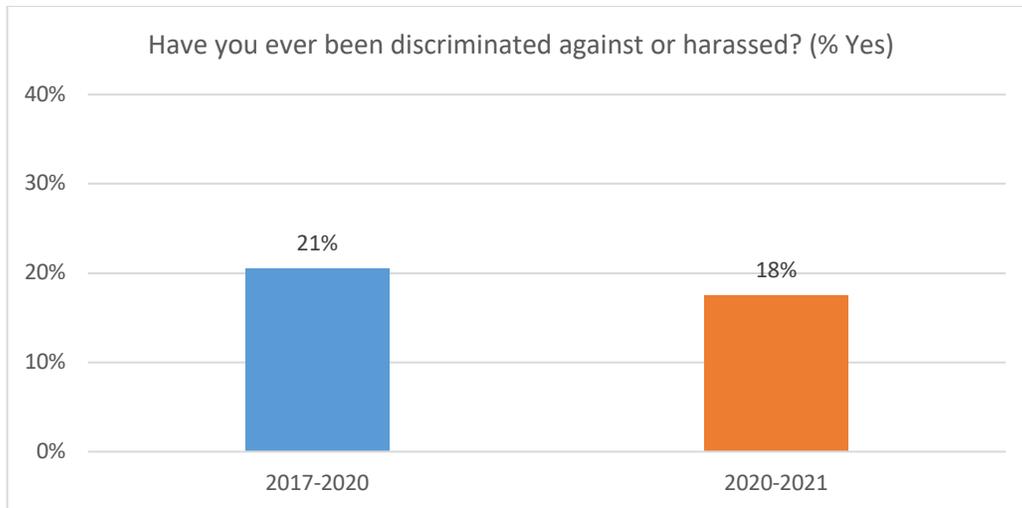
² $d = 0.06$ and 0.04 respectively. Note, we use measures of effect size here rather than statistical significance because our samples are so large that negligible differences would be statistically significant.

Our third indicator measures how often people hear insensitive or disparaging remarks about race/ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or other aspects of people’s identity (see figure below).



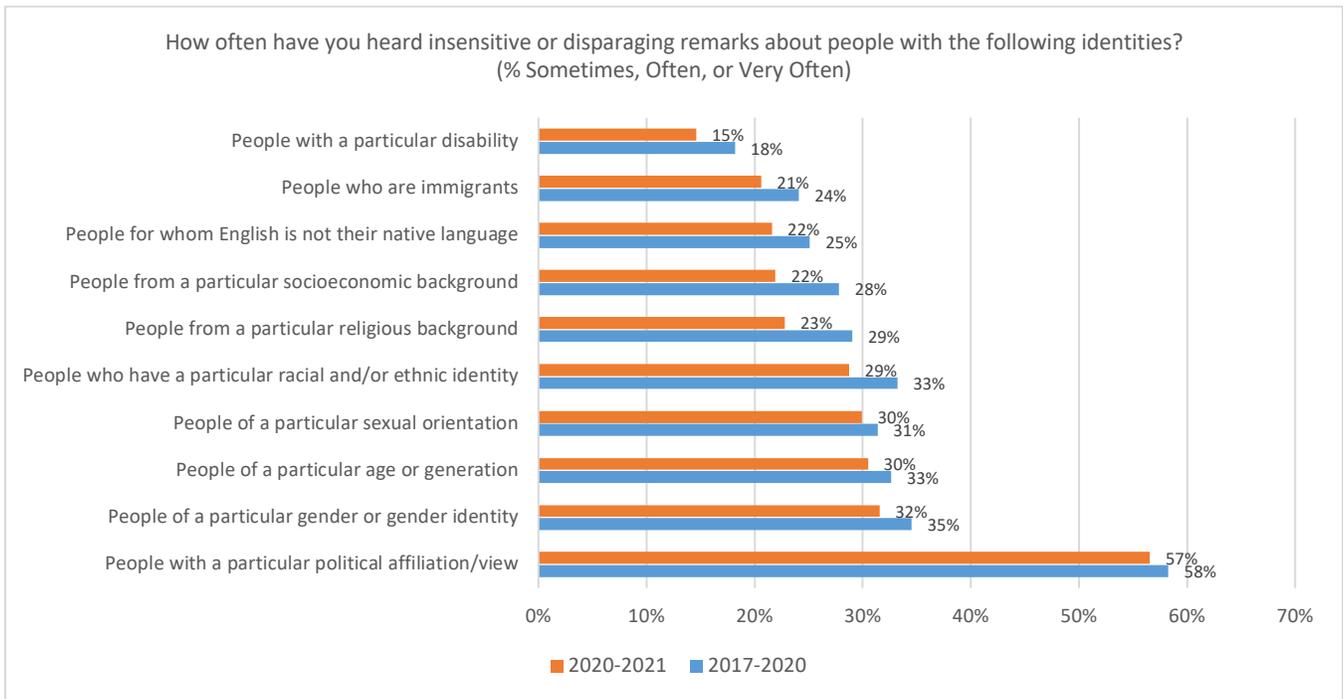
The data for 2020-2021 are better, with people reporting they heard insensitive and/or disparaging remarks slightly less often in 2020-2021 than in prior years.³

Our final indicator is the percentage of people who report experiencing discrimination or harassment. Like our other indicators, the data are a little better this year with a lower percentage of people reporting that they experienced discrimination or harassment than in prior years.



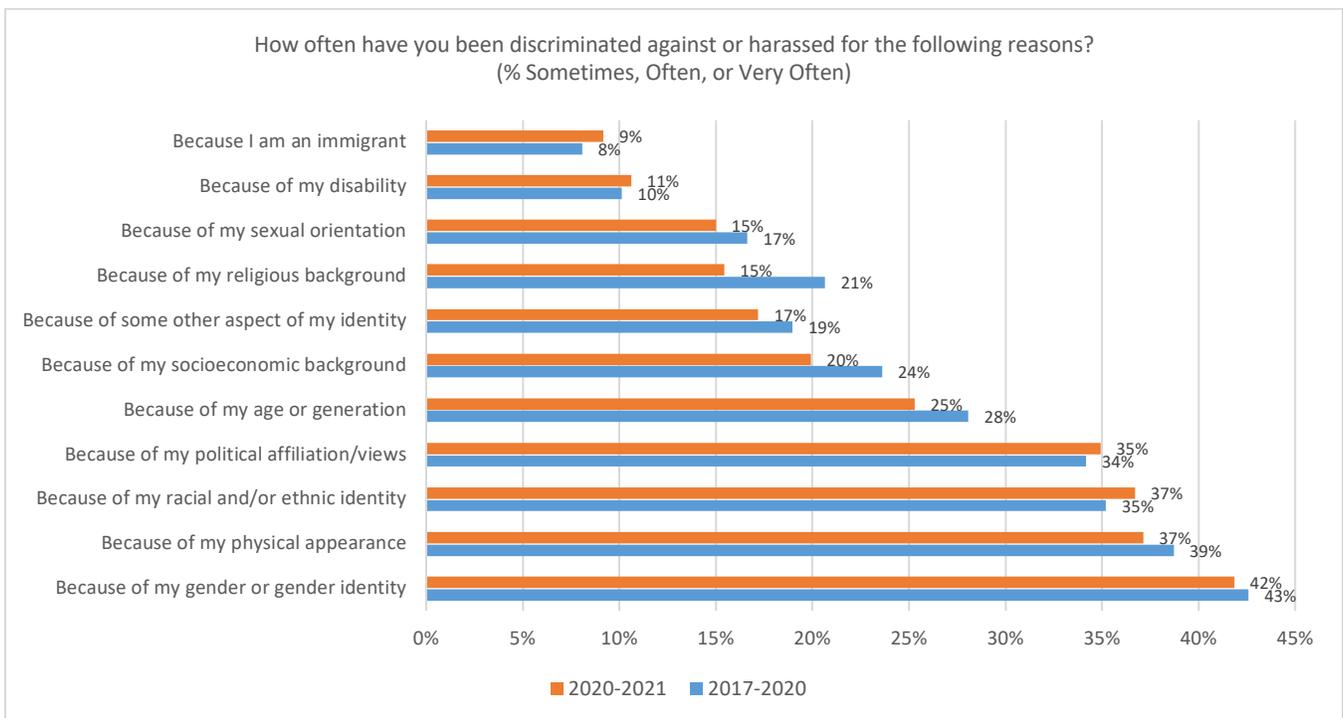
To look in more detail at what people heard and experienced this last year compared to prior years, we dug into who insensitive or disparaging remarks and acts of discrimination were directed against. The following graph shows the different groups against whom insensitive or disparaging remarks were directed last year compared to prior years.

³ $d = 0.13$



On average, the percentage of people who reported hearing insensitive or disparaging remarks directed at people with specific identities was about 4% lower in 2020-2021 compared to previous years.

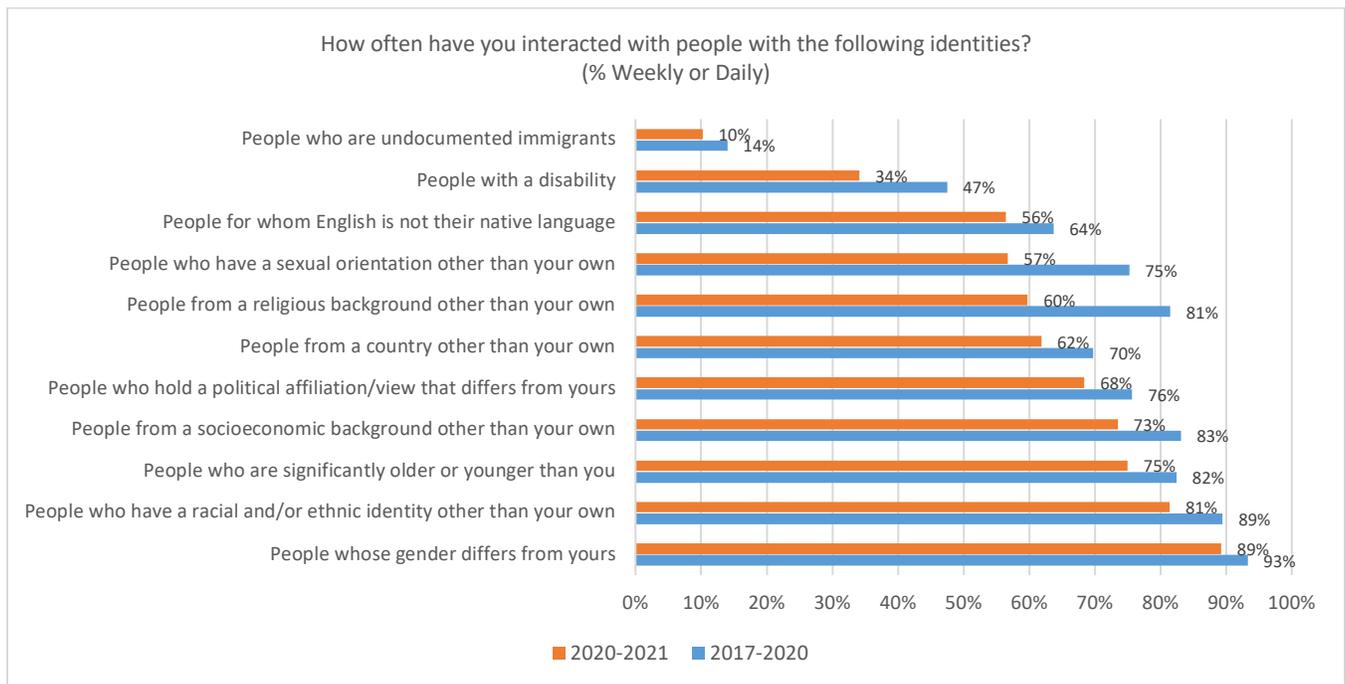
Unlike our previous measures, differences in how often people reported experiencing discrimination or harassment based on different aspects of their identity were a mixed bag, with some increasing and others decreasing by a small amount (see following figure).



Given the events of the last year, we’re surprised that responses to the HEDS D&E Survey looked a little more positive this year. What might explain this? As we’ve noted in our earlier research, increasing the diversity on campus increases both positive *and* negative interactions.⁴ The small positive differences we see in this year’s HEDS D&E Survey data might stem from changes related to COVID-19, specifically:

1. Campus living, dining, classroom, and other restrictions related to COVID-19 made it less likely for people from different backgrounds and with different identities to interact with one another; and
2. Fewer interactions among diverse people meant fewer opportunities for people to experience, or engage in, negative interactions.

In this year’s survey, there was a roughly 10% reduction in the percentage of people who reported interacting frequently with people from different backgrounds and identities compared to prior years (see figure below).



As we’ve found in prior studies, in the HEDS D&E Survey, the less often people interact with other people who are different from them, the less likely they are to hear insensitive or disparaging remarks.⁵ It’s a small effect, but it is an effect, nonetheless. Finally, in the HEDS D&E Survey, the less often people experience insensitive or disparaging remarks, the more positive they are about their campus climate for diversity and equity and their institution’s support for diversity and equity.⁶ So, the small positive differences we noted in our indicators in this year’s survey *could* have been the result of fewer interactions among people with different backgrounds and identities that were brought on by changes that institutions made in their environments in response to COVID-19.

⁴ See <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/02/06/study-finds-negative-diversity-experiences-affect-student-learning> and Roksa, J, Kilgo, C.A, Trolan, T. L., Pascarella, E.T., Blaich, C., & Wise, K. S. (2017). Engaging with Diversity: How Positive and Negative Diversity Interactions Influence Students’ Cognitive Outcomes. *Journal of Higher Education*, 88, 297-322.

⁵ For every one standard deviation increase in how often people interact with individuals with other identities, there is a 0.15 standard deviation increase in how often they hear insensitive or disparaging remarks about identity. See the Appendix for more information.

⁶ For every one standard deviation decrease in how often people hear insensitive or disparaging remarks about identity, there is a 0.47 standard deviation increase in their view of campus climate for diversity and equity and a 0.49 standard deviation increase in their view on their institution’s support for diversity and equity. See the Appendix for more information.

Takeaways

We ran these analyses to address the question of whether the events of the last year had an impact on how people responded to the HEDS D&E Survey. The reasonable concern that we wanted to address was whether the events of 2020-2021 had a negative impact on people's experiences with diversity or how they evaluated their institution's climate for and commitment to diversity and equity.

People's responses to the HEDS D&E Survey were a little different this year compared to previous years. Their views about campus climate and their institution's commitment to diversity and equity were a little more positive this year. People also heard insensitive or disparaging remarks about people's identity less often this year. One possible explanation for this is that COVID-related campus restrictions led people to interact less often with people who were different from them. And because they were interacting less often, people were less likely to hear, or make, insensitive or disparaging remarks about people who were different from them.

To be clear, even if our hypothesis about why diversity and equity data were slightly more positive this year is correct and fewer interactions with diversity resulted in fewer painful experiences, the downside to a reduction in such interactions is far worse: a diminution in the educational benefits of engaging with diversity and a slowing of our efforts to create more inclusive and equitable institutions.

Appendix

Campus Climate for Diversity and Equity Indicator

- *Question 1 on the survey:* Please indicate your level of satisfaction with the following at [Institution Name].
 - Overall campus climate
 - The campus experience/environment regarding diversity at [Institution Name]
 - The extent to which you experience a sense of belonging or community at [Institution Name]
 - The extent to which you feel all community members experience a sense of belonging or community at [Institution Name]
- *Response options:* 1=Very dissatisfied; 2=Generally dissatisfied; 3=Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 4=Generally satisfied; 5=Very satisfied
- Cronbach's alpha = 0.88

Institutional Support for Diversity and Equity Indicator

- *Question 2 on the survey:* Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about [Institution Name].
 - The campus environment is free from tensions related to individual or group differences.
 - Recruitment of historically marginalized students, faculty, and staff is an institutional priority.
 - Retention of historically marginalized students, faculty, and staff is an institutional priority.
 - Senior leadership demonstrates a commitment to diversity and equity on this campus.
- *Response options:* 1=Strongly disagree; 2=Disagree; 3=Neither agree nor disagree; 4=Agree; 5=Strongly agree
- Cronbach's alpha = 0.84

Insensitive or Disparaging Remarks Indicator

- *Question 10 on the survey:* During your time at [Institution Name], about how often have you heard someone make an insensitive or disparaging remark about:
 - People who have a particular racial and/or ethnic identity
 - People with a particular disability
 - People of a particular sexual orientation
 - People who are immigrants
 - People of a particular gender or gender identity
 - People with a particular political affiliation/view
 - People from a particular socioeconomic background
 - People of a particular age or generation
 - People from a particular religious background
 - People for whom English is not their native language
- *Response options:* 1=Never; 2=Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=Very often
- Cronbach's alpha = 0.93

Discrimination or Harassment Indicator

- *Question 13 on the survey:* Have you ever been discriminated against or harassed on the [Institution Name] campus, at an off-campus residence, or at an off-campus program/event affiliated with [Institution Name]?
- *Response options:* Yes; No; Unsure

To analyze the relationship between hearing insensitive or disparaging remarks and the frequency of interactions with diverse people, we created the following scale to measure how often people interacted with individuals who had different identities and backgrounds.

Frequency of Interactions Scale

- *Question 3 on the survey:* In the last year, about how often have you interacted with the following people while at [Institution Name]?
 - People who have a racial and/or ethnic identity other than your own
 - People from a socioeconomic background other than your own
 - People who have a sexual orientation other than your own
 - People whose gender differs from yours
 - People for whom English is not their native language
 - People from a religious background other than your own
 - People with a disability
 - People who are undocumented immigrants
 - People from a country other than your own
 - People who hold a political affiliation, philosophy, or view that differs from yours
 - People who are significantly older or younger than you
- *Response Options:* 1=Not at all/not that I'm aware of; 2=A few times; 3=Monthly; 4=Weekly; 5=Daily
- Cronbach's alpha = 0.85

We used simple regression to look at the relationship between the Frequency of Interactions scale (the independent variable) and the Insensitive or Disparaging Remarks indicator (the dependent measure). We've inserted the output from our statistical program below.

▼ **Linear Fit**

Insensitive/Disparaging Remarks Indicator Mean = 1.4494948
+ 0.1492202*Frequency of interaction scale

▶ **Summary of Fit**

▶ **Lack Of Fit**

▼ **Analysis of Variance**

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio
Model	1	2017.533	2017.53	2879.072
Error	133487	93542.129	0.70	Prob > F
C. Total	133488	95559.662		<.0001*

▼ **Parameter Estimates**

Term	Estimate	Std Error	t Ratio	Prob> t	Std Beta
Intercept	1.4494948	0.010372	139.76	<.0001*	0
Frequency of interaction scale	0.1492202	0.002781	53.66	<.0001*	0.145302

Similarly, we used simple regression to look at the relationship between the Insensitive or Disparaging Remarks indicator (the independent variable) and a) the Campus Climate for Diversity and Equity indicator (the dependent variable) and b) the Institutional Support for Diversity and Equity indicator (the dependent variable). We've inserted the output for each of these analyses on the next page.

Linear Fit

Campus Climate for Diversity and Equity Indicator Mean =
 $4.6727392 - 0.5081962 \cdot \text{Insensitive/Disparaging remark scale}$

▸ **Summary of Fit**

▸ **Lack Of Fit**

▾ **Analysis of Variance**

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio
Model	1	24740.79	24740.8	38487.17
Error	134107	86208.29	0.642832	Prob > F
C. Total	134108	110949.09		<.0001*

▾ **Parameter Estimates**

Term	Estimate	Std Error	t Ratio	Prob> t	Std Beta
Intercept	4.6727392	0.005596	834.97	<.0001*	0
Insensitive/Disparaging remark scale	-0.508196	0.00259	-196.2	<.0001*	-0.47222

Linear Fit

Institutional Support for Diversity and Equity Indicator Mean =
 $4.4742487 - 0.5362519 \cdot \text{Insensitive/Disparaging remark scale}$

▸ **Summary of Fit**

▸ **Lack Of Fit**

▾ **Analysis of Variance**

Source	DF	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F Ratio
Model	1	27929.93	27929.9	42687.48
Error	135944	88946.59	0.654288	Prob > F
C. Total	135945	116876.51		<.0001*

▾ **Parameter Estimates**

Term	Estimate	Std Error	t Ratio	Prob> t	Std Beta
Intercept	4.4742487	0.005611	797.34	<.0001*	0
Insensitive/Disparaging remark scale	-0.536252	0.002595	-206.6	<.0001*	-0.48885