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# **MONMOUTH UNIVERSITY 2008 CAMPUS CLIMATE ASSESSMENT**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*Conducted by:*

Survey: Monmouth University Polling Institute  
Focus Groups: Human Relations Advisory Council

*Data Collection:*

Survey: October-November 2008  
Focus Groups: April-June 2008

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## SURVEY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2008 Monmouth University Campus Climate Survey was developed by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in consultation with the Human Relations Advisory Council. The survey was conducted during the Fall 2008 semester using an online questionnaire. All community members were sent an email link inviting them to participate in the survey.

A total of 746 undergraduates, 194 graduate students, and 527 employees completed the survey. The margin of error for results associated with the undergraduate and employee samples is  $\pm 3.3\%$ . The margin of error for the graduate student sample is  $\pm 6.6\%$ . However, readers should note that the margins of error associated with some of the group differences found in the survey results are significantly higher for smaller under-represented groups (e.g. by race or sexual orientation).

Most of the questions posed in this survey included 5-point response scales that ranged from strong agreement/satisfaction to strong disagreement/dissatisfaction. Research indicates that it is important to focus on strongly held opinions as indicators of deeply held beliefs, particularly when overall agreement or satisfaction is widespread. As such, this report looks at group differences in terms of strong opinions as well as overall opinion on diversity issues at Monmouth.

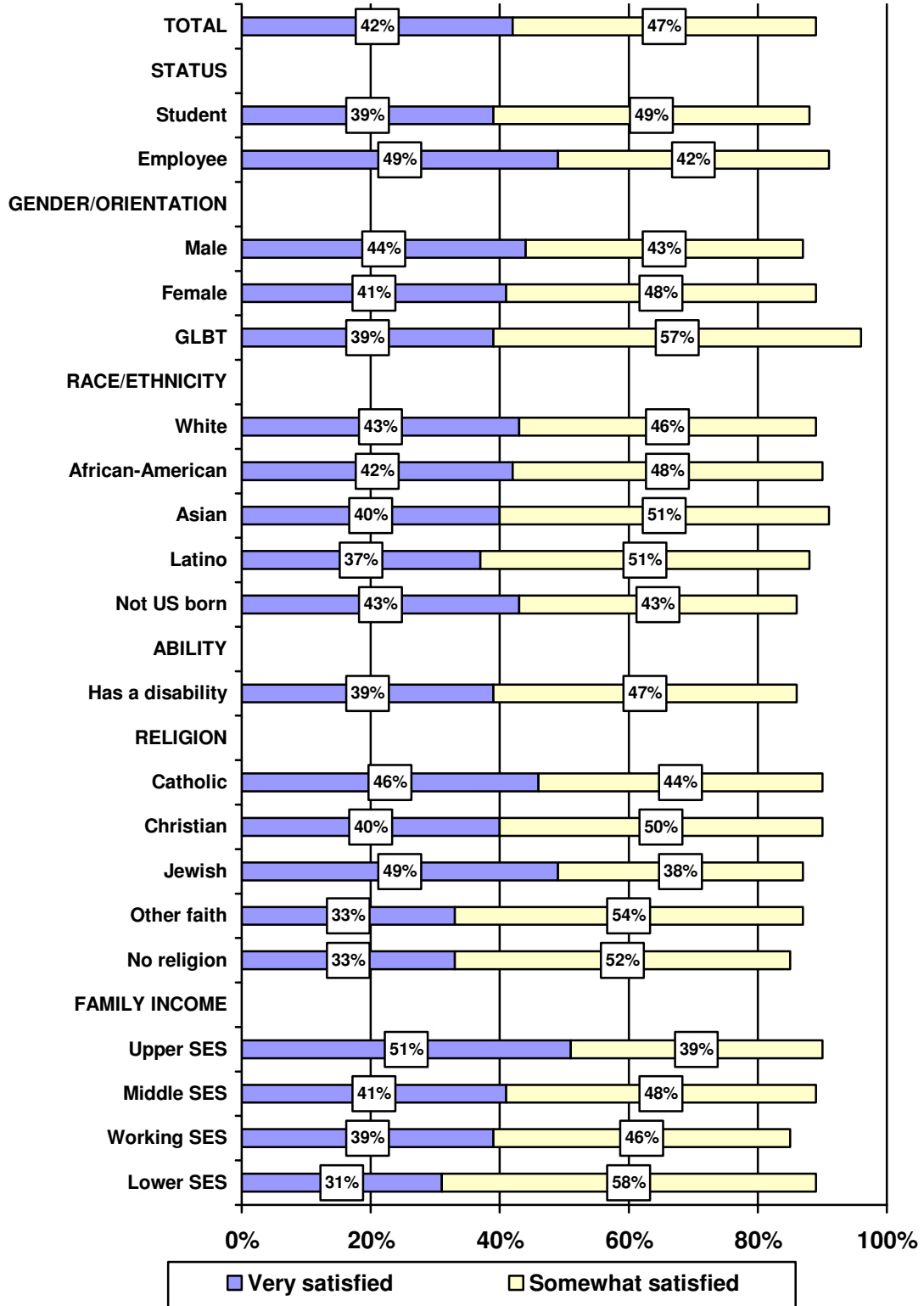
### Satisfaction with Monmouth University

In order to establish a benchmark for diversity-related views, the survey first asked respondents to rate their overall level of satisfaction as a student or employee at Monmouth University. About 9-in-10 community members report that they are at least somewhat satisfied. Half (50%) of all employees surveyed give the top rating of *very* satisfied. Just under 4-in-10 undergraduates (38%) and graduate students (37%) feel the same level of satisfaction. Only 5% to 7% of respondents report being dissatisfied with Monmouth.

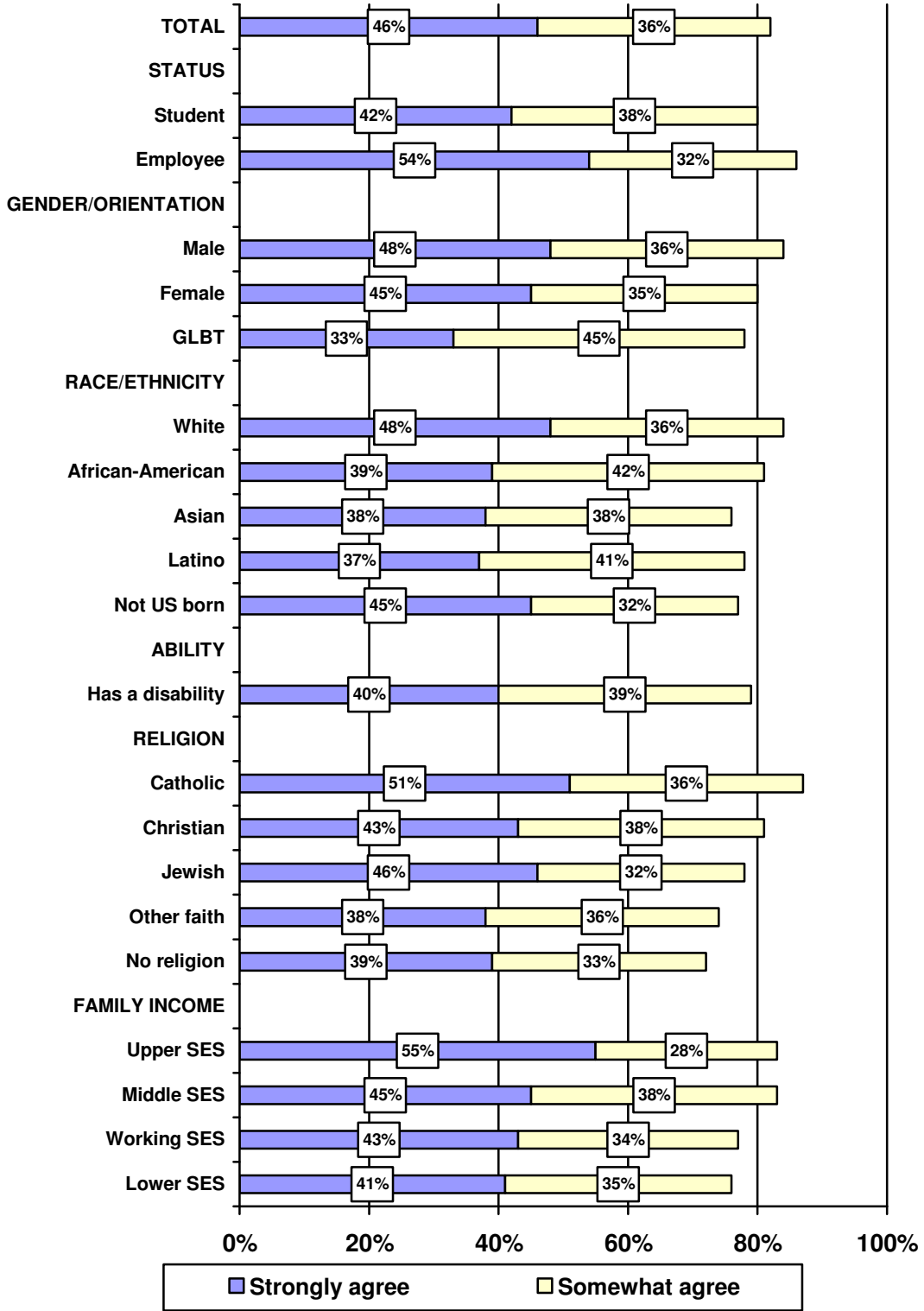
About 9-in-10 members of all under-represented groups say they are satisfied with Monmouth, and about 4-in-10 in most groups say they are *very* satisfied, including whites (43%), African-Americans (42%), Asians (40%), Latinos (37%), immigrants and international students (43%), people with disabilities (39%), members of the GLBT community (39%), Catholics (46%), other Christians (40%), and those of the Jewish faith (49%).

Adherents to non-Judeo/Christian faiths (33%) – such as Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists – as well as those with no religious affiliation (33%) are slightly less likely to say they are *very* satisfied, but just as likely as other groups to be at least somewhat satisfied with Monmouth. Those who say they are from lower income or poor backgrounds are slightly less likely to be *very* satisfied (31%) than are those from working class (39%), middle income (41%) or upper income (51%) backgrounds. However, socioeconomic differences in satisfaction are less stark among the student body than they are among employees.

## General Satisfaction with Monmouth



### Feel Like I Belong at Monmouth



About 8-in-10 students and employees say they feel as though they belong at Monmouth. Employees (54%) are somewhat more likely than students (43% undergraduates and 39% graduates) to *strongly* agree with this statement.

Members of racial or ethnic minority groups on campus, the GLBT community, and non-Judeo/Christian religions are about 10 to 15 points less likely to *strongly* agree with this statement, but they are just as likely as other respondents to agree overall. Among undergraduates, wealthy or upper class students are about 10 to 15 points more likely than either middle class or working class/lower SES students to *strongly* agree that they feel as though they belong at Monmouth.

Just over half of Monmouth students (54% undergraduates and 50% graduates) and employees (59%) agree that it is easy to get to know people of other backgrounds at the university. Between 1-in-5 and 1-in-4 respondents disagree with this statement and a similar number register no opinion.

## **Satisfaction with Diversity**

Only about half of survey respondents say they are satisfied with the amount of diversity at the university. Between 1-in-5 and 1-in-4 are *very* satisfied. About 1-in-5 are dissatisfied with diversity levels at Monmouth and another 3-in-10 have no opinion.

Among all respondents, whites (54% satisfied to 16% dissatisfied) and Asians (50% satisfied to 29% dissatisfied) are relatively more satisfied than other groups with the amount of diversity at Monmouth. More African-Americans (39% satisfied to 50% dissatisfied) and Latinos (30% satisfied to 47% dissatisfied) are dissatisfied rather than satisfied.

Other groups that differ from the average assessment of diversity include adherents to non-Judeo/Christian faiths (36% satisfied to 40% dissatisfied).

Respondents who identify themselves as GLBT are also divided on their satisfaction with diversity at Monmouth (42% satisfied to 39% dissatisfied), although undergraduates are somewhat less likely than employees to say they are dissatisfied.

There are no significant differences in satisfaction with diversity among groups with different abilities and disabilities or whether they were born in the United State or not.

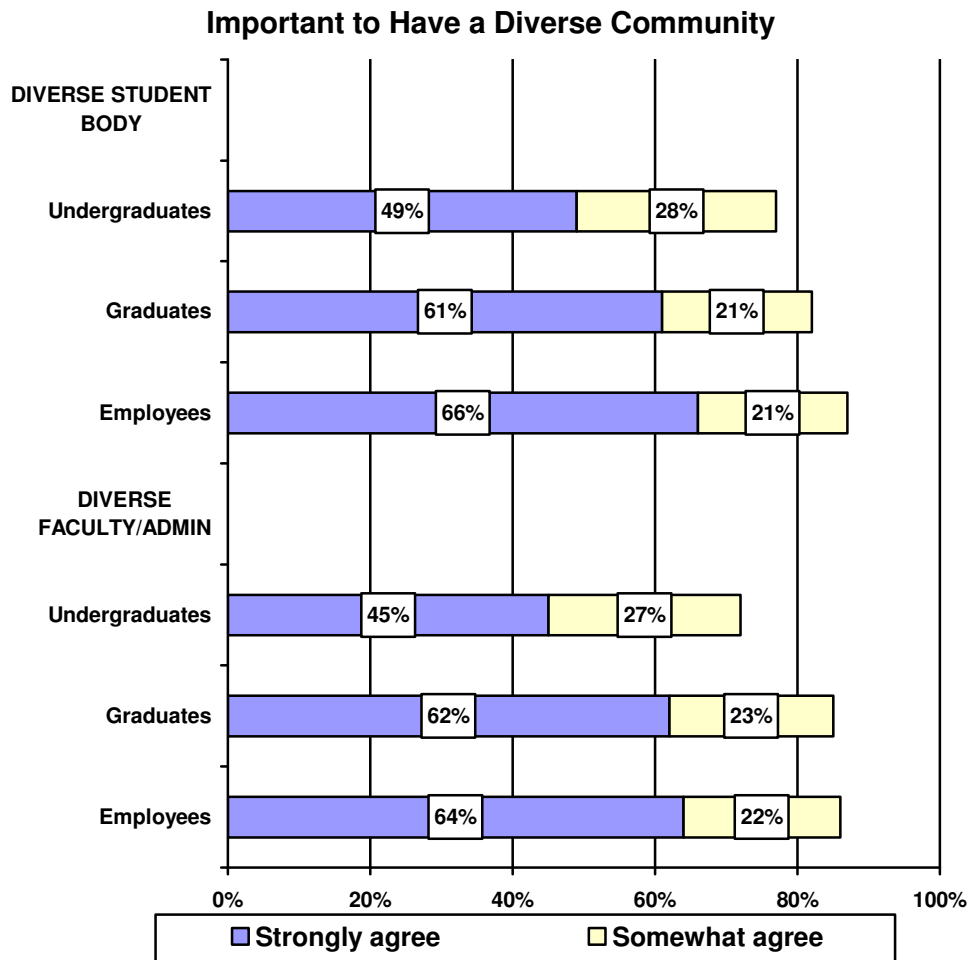
There is no prevailing opinion about Monmouth's efforts to promote diversity. A plurality of respondents say Monmouth does the right amount to promote diversity on campus, while about 1-in-5 say it does too little. Among the remainder, about 1-in-20 feel Monmouth does too much and 3-in-10 are not sure.

For many undergraduate students, the amount of diversity they encounter at Monmouth is different from what they experienced in their home town or high school. Only 36% say the amount of diversity at Monmouth is the same as their prior school or living situation. Among the remainder, 37% say Monmouth has less diversity than they are accustomed to while 27% say Monmouth has more diversity.

About half of all respondents feel that Monmouth’s diversity climate is about as accepting as other colleges and universities with which they are familiar. The remainder are split almost evenly between saying Monmouth is more accepting, Monmouth is less accepting, or they don’t know how to compare Monmouth to other institutions. About 1-in-5 respondents give each of these three answers.

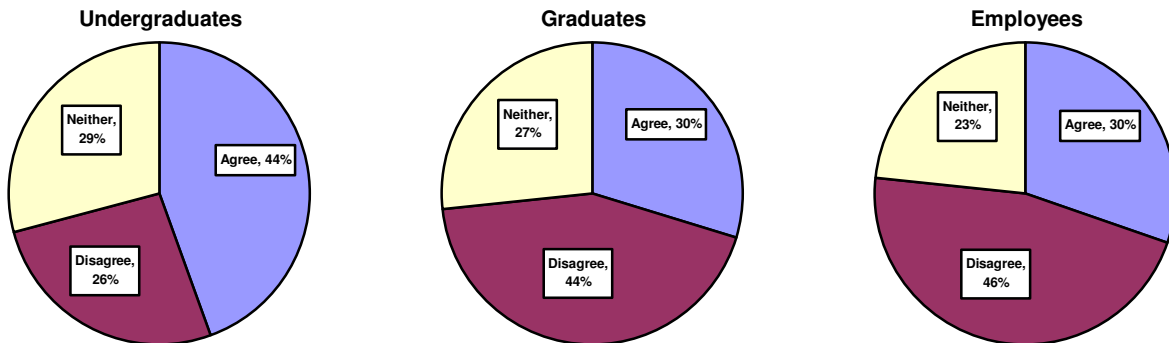
About 2-in-3 respondents agree that Monmouth students respect people who are different from them, while about 1-in-7 disagree with this. By comparison, about 3-in-4 respondents say that faculty and other employees respect people who are different from them, while fewer than 1-in-10 disagree with this.

About 8-in-10 respondents agree that it is important for Monmouth University to have both a diverse student body and faculty/administration. About two-thirds of employees and graduate students *strongly* feel this way, compared to just under half of undergraduate students who *strongly* feel that having a diverse campus community is important.



Just under half (44%) of undergraduate students say they are tired of hearing and learning about diversity, compared to 26% who disagree and 29% who have no opinion. The sentiment is reversed for graduate students and employees, where nearly half disagree with this statement. There is a racial divide on this question among undergraduates. White students are more likely to agree (46%) than disagree (23%) that they are tired of hearing about diversity, while students of other racial and ethnic backgrounds are more likely to disagree (49%) than agree (27%) with this statement.

### Tired of Hearing and Learning about Diversity



### Diversity Comfort Level

About 9-in-10 students say they are comfortable going to see a faculty member of a different race or ethnicity, including about 3-in-4 who are *very* comfortable doing this.

Over 9-in-10 respondents say they are comfortable being around people at Monmouth of a different race or ethnicity. There are no significant racial group differences on this question.

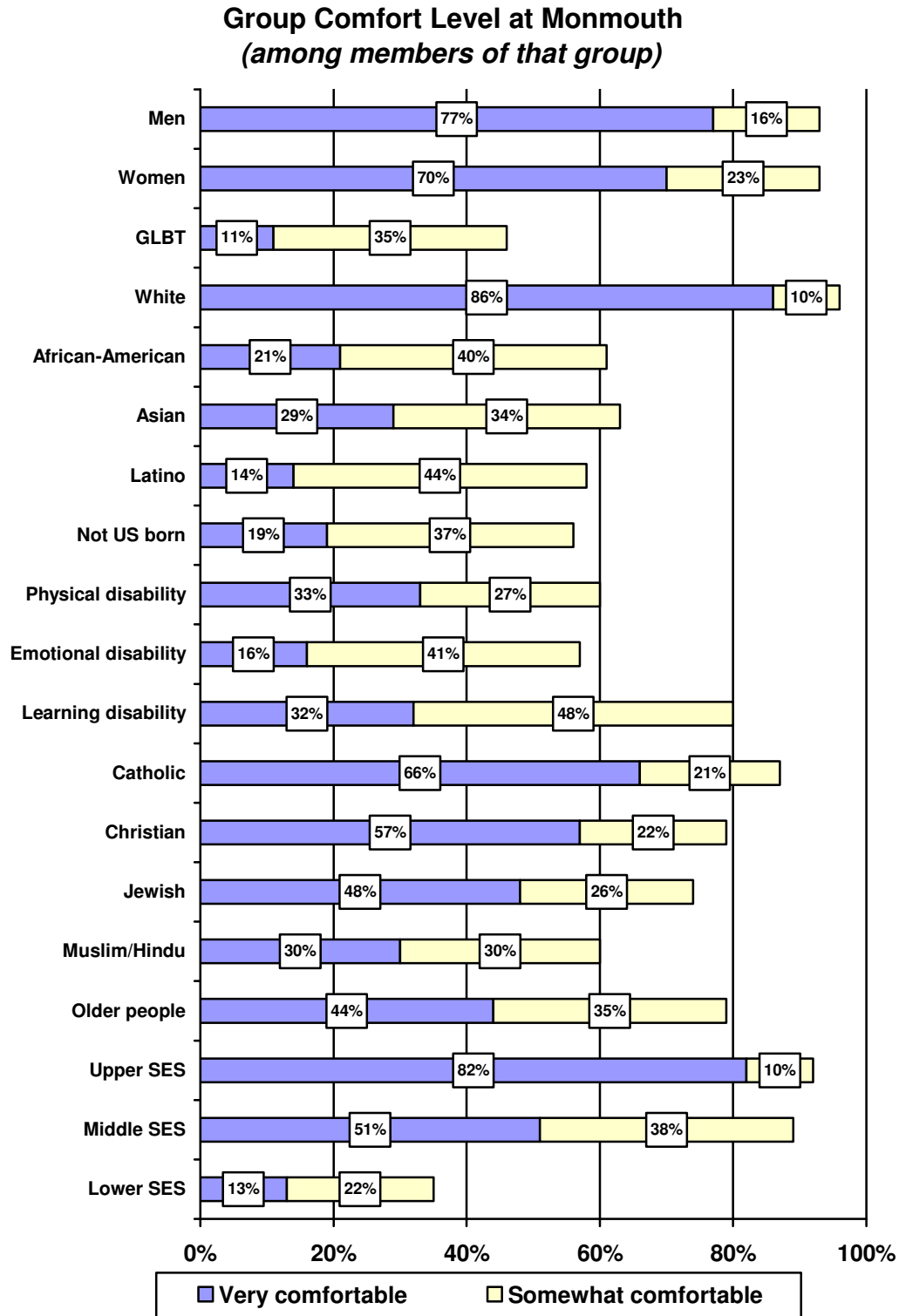
About 9-in-10 employees and graduate students and 8-in-10 undergraduates are comfortable being around people at Monmouth with a different sexual orientation.

About 8-in-10 employees and graduate students and 7-in-10 undergraduates are comfortable being in a situation at Monmouth where they are the only person of their race, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexual orientation or abilities. There are no significant group differences on this question.

About 8-in-10 respondents say they are comfortable speaking about their background or lifestyle with others and about half say they are *very* comfortable. There are few group differences for this question except for GLBT individuals who are less likely to feel *very* comfortable doing this.

About 3-in-4 undergraduate students and employees and 8-in-10 graduate students feel comfortable saying what they think about diversity at Monmouth. White respondents (42%) are less likely than respondents of other racial or ethnic backgrounds (58%) to feel *very* comfortable speaking about diversity.

The survey also asked respondents to estimate the comfort level of members of different groups on campus. The survey responses are very similar for both students and employees. The following chart presents these questions with the results for group members.



The groups that consider themselves to be most comfortable on campus are whites and those from upper income backgrounds. Both men and women in general also consider themselves to be comfortable on campus when thinking about gender only. Catholics and other Christians also describe their groups as fairly comfortable on campus.

Respondents who describe their groups as being of average comfort levels include Jewish individuals, older people, people from middle class backgrounds, and those with learning disabilities.

Groups who feel the least comfortable on campus are Latinos, GLBT individuals, immigrants and international students, individuals with mental or emotional disabilities, and those from lower income backgrounds. Also, African-Americans, Asians, those from non-Judeo/Christian faiths, and those with physical disabilities are also somewhat less likely to describe their groups as comfortable on campus.

There are some discrepancies regarding how group members see their own group fitting in on campus and how others perceive them. This is especially true for African-Americans, Asians, Latinos, and people from lower income backgrounds. For these groups, outsiders are somewhat more likely than the group members themselves to perceive these groups as comfortable on campus. The reverse is true for older people and those with learning disabilities – these group members see themselves as more comfortable on campus than others see them.

It's also important to note that, in many instances, respondents rate their group's comfort level on campus lower than their own individual comfort level. For example, nearly 4-in-10 African-American, Asian, and Latino respondents strongly agree that they "feel like I belong" at Monmouth, fewer (21% African-Americans, 29% Asians, 14% Latinos) say that members of their group probably feel very comfortable here. On the other hand, upper income and white respondents are more likely to say their group is very comfortable on campus than strongly feel that they as individuals "fit in."

The factors that drive these individual versus aggregate group variations in opinion are not entirely clear. Some may suggest that individuals from diverse backgrounds use different contextual yardsticks to measure their sense of community. In any event, there is a perception that some groups feel more welcome on campus than others. This could be related to actual observed behaviors and personal interactions or it could be based simply on a general impression of the university's diversity as represented by the community's demographic makeup.

## **Personal Experience with Discrimination**

The survey found about 1-in-10 respondents who say they have experienced discrimination or harassment at Monmouth University because of their race, ethnicity, religion, culture, sexual orientation or abilities. This includes 8% of undergraduates, 9% of graduate students, and 12% of employees.

Overall, about 1-in-5 African-Americans (21%), Latinos (19%), Asians (17%), and immigrants or international students (21%) report experiencing discrimination or harassment. This compares to 8% of white community members.

There are no statistically significant religious differences in reported discrimination or harassment among employees. However, among undergraduates, 19% of those from the Jewish faith and 21% from non-Judeo/Christian religions report these experiences. There are no significant differences in the prevalence of these experiences by student living situation. Students who live in campus housing, off-campus, or in their family homes are equally as likely – just under 1-in-10 on average – to report experiencing discrimination or harassment at Monmouth.

According to information provided by those who experienced discrimination or harassment, there is no prevailing type of discrimination among these incidents. About 11% report racially based incidents, 8% report ethnicity/semitic based incidents, 10% report religion as the issue, 12% report some form of gender bias, 6% sexual orientation, 6% disability, 14% socioeconomic status or education, 2% age, 2% political views, and 5% some form of reverse discrimination.

Overall, most of these incidents went unreported to Monmouth officials. Just 1-in-5 undergraduate survey respondents who experienced discrimination or harassment say they reported the incident to someone at Monmouth. This compares to 3-in-10 graduate student and employee survey respondents who reported these incidents to Monmouth. Those who experienced race-based discrimination or harassment are the most likely to have reported it (nearly half reported these incidents). Anti-semitism, religious bias, and gender or sexual orientation related incidents were much less likely to be reported.

Those who did not report such incidents were asked why. Among students, the overwhelming response (57%) was a sense that reporting the incident would not result in any changes or improvements. Among employees who did not report their experience, a plurality (41%) said they feared repercussions and 34% felt that reporting the incident would not result in any changes or improvements.

The survey also asked all respondents whether they have personally experienced different situations related to diversity:

- 45% of undergraduates and 47% of graduate students report they have felt that others on campus have certain expectations of them based on their background or lifestyle.
- 26% of undergraduates and 30% of graduate students report that they have been called on in class to speak as a representative of their background.
- 35% of undergraduates and 31% of graduate students say they have not been taken seriously by some professors when they make a comment in class.
- 20% of employees report being called upon to speak as a representative of their background in work situations.
- 29% of employees report that a supervisor has encouraged them to become involved in diversity initiatives at Monmouth and just 2% have been actively discouraged from doing so.

## Monmouth Response to Diversity

Most members of the Monmouth community agree that the administration appropriately deals with issues of diversity. Few tend to disagree, but a sizable number say they do not know enough to answer questions about the administration's efforts.

More than half of employees (60%) and undergraduates (56%) and just under half of graduate students (44%) say that the university administration takes appropriate action when incidents occur. Only about 5% of respondents say it does not take appropriate action and the remainder have no opinion. These findings also hold for community members who have experienced discrimination or harassment at Monmouth, but did not report it. However, among the small group who experienced discrimination on campus and did report their personal experience to someone at Monmouth, about half feel that the administration takes appropriate action in these incidents while 4-in-10 say it does not.

Small, but notable, numbers of employees (27%), graduate students (26%) and especially undergraduates (37%) agree with the statement that the administration tries to keep discrimination incidents quiet. By comparison, 27% of employees and 12% of students say the administration does not do this. There are no significant differences in these views by race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion or ability. However, among the small group that did in fact report a personal experience with discrimination to someone at Monmouth, about 2-in-3 feel that the administration wants to keep these incidents quiet.

Undergraduate students are divided on whether placing more emphasis on diversity awareness would make the campus climate better (47%) or have no effect on it (43%). By comparison, about 2-in-3 graduate students (66%) and employees (64%) say such efforts will improve the campus, while about 1-in-4 grad students (27%) and employees (28%) say it will have no effect. Only 1-in-10 students and employees believe such efforts would actually have a negative impact on the campus climate.

Fewer than 1-in-5 undergraduates (19%) and graduate (16%) students, along with 1-in-3 employees (36%) feel they are very aware of the diversity events happening on campus. There are no significant differences in awareness of campus diversity programs by race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or ability.

## Conclusions

Overall, nearly all community members say they are satisfied with their general experience at Monmouth, including about 4-in-10 who are *very* satisfied. When the focus shifts to diversity, though, satisfaction levels shift – only about half are satisfied, including 2-in-10 who are *very* satisfied, with the amount of diversity at Monmouth.

While there are few demographic differences in overall satisfaction at Monmouth, there are some variations regarding satisfaction with diversity on campus. Whites and Asians are relatively more satisfied than African-Americans and Latinos with the amount of diversity at Monmouth. Community members from non-Judeo/Christian faiths and GLBT individuals are also somewhat less likely to be satisfied with the amount of diversity at Monmouth.

Most members of the Monmouth community feel that the university administration appropriately handles issues of diversity. However, the small number of survey respondents who reported an incident of discrimination to the university are likely to disagree with this assessment. Moreover, the vast majority of individuals who say they experience discrimination on campus simply choose not to report it.

It is impossible to compare these levels of satisfaction to other similar institutions since there are few existing standardized efforts to measure diversity. Some of the disparities noted in this survey may not be much different – or indeed may be less stark – than those found in society at large. An internal benchmark from this survey indicates that about half of the Monmouth community perceives the diversity climate here to be about the same as elsewhere. Among the remainder, about 1-in-5 say Monmouth is more accepting and a similar 1-in-5 say Monmouth is less accepting of diversity.

One potential reason for this “perception divide” is that most undergraduate students come from communities where the diversity profile differs from Monmouth’s – about one-third report that Monmouth is more diverse than their home town or high school and one-third say it is less diverse. In other words, two-thirds of Monmouth students are coming into a diversity environment that is new to them, but in widely dissimilar ways.

There are also some indications in the survey that respect for diversity on campus is not as strong as it could be. For example, while 2-in-3 respondents generally feel that students are respectful of people who are different from them, only 1-in-4 *strongly* feel this way. This number is higher for employees.

Undergraduates also seem to place less value on diversity than graduate students and employees. They are less likely to feel that efforts to increase diversity are important and more likely to say that they are “tired of hearing and learning about diversity.”

It is also important to remember that some of the demographic issues in the survey results are more pronounced in one particular segment of the community. Specifically, African-American students tend to be more positive about diversity at Monmouth than are African-American employees. The reverse is true for Asian and international community members – more Asian and international students report issues with “fitting in” at Monmouth than do employees from Asian and immigrant backgrounds. Also, GLBT employees express more concerns about diversity at Monmouth than GLBT students do.

Overall, the key areas where diversity issues seem to be more pressing are related to race/ethnicity and sexual orientation. There are also some differences by immigrant status and non-Judeo-Christian religious beliefs, but these appear to be intertwined with ethnicity and culture (e.g. Muslim, Hindu, etc.). The survey also found some concerns among individuals in the least affluent socio-economic group. Each of these groups comprises a very small percentage of the overall Monmouth community, which poses a unique challenge both in surveying their diversity experience and addressing the resultant issues.