

# Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Report



2021

## The 2021 Year in Review

2021 was a challenging year in many ways.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has had lasting health, social and economic impacts. The pandemic has also been a reminder of a larger, persistent pandemic – one of systemic racism, including anti-Asian, anti-Black, anti-Brown and anti-Indigenous systemic racism that has been evident in disproportionate COVID-19 health outcomes for Indigenous, Black and racialized communities.

This year has also seen increased awareness of systemic racism as a result of a global movement to combat anti-Black racism and through the discoveries of unmarked graves of Indigenous children in multiple former residential school sites across Canada. Increasing anti-Asian racist incidents have also resulted in a growing movement against anti-Asian racism here in Canada and around the world.

As a result of these issues and others related to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), organizations across Canada have begun the necessary work to better support their clients and teams in safe, culturally appropriate ways. VHA has historically engaged in DEI efforts and is now concentrating on advancing this work and focusing on systemic interventions.

In the summer of 2020, VHA launched an Anti-Black Racism Action Group tasked with developing a clear action plan to bring about meaningful change. The group was co-chaired by then CEO Carol Annett, succeeded by new CEO Kathryn Nichol in March 2021, and Christian Owusu-Mensah, Care Team Supervisor. Adam Benn, Manager of DEI, assumed a co-chair role in September 2021 after joining the organization in this new role.

VHA's Anti-Black Racism Action Group is focused on four key areas: data, to gather a better understanding of the diversity at VHA; education and training, to enhance our anti-racism and allyship offerings and to create opportunities for open discussion; policy and communication, to critically examine our language and develop guidelines to promote and ensure inclusion; and advocacy, to identify areas where VHA can influence systemic racism in our community.

Subgroups were formed to address issues of anti-Black racism in each of these areas. The **Advocacy** subgroup looked at issues of racism during client visits and drafted a new "VHA Position Statement on Racism and Discrimination." The **Data Collection and Reporting** subgroup conducted VHA's DEI Workplace Survey, which was a key driver in developing VHA's 2022 DEI Action Plan. The **Education and Training** subgroup coordinated a series of anti-Black racism training opportunities for managers and supervisors at VHA; and the **Policy and Communication** subgroup completed a DEI review of VHA's policies.

We are pleased to share this DEI Report with you. It showcases the fantastic work of the committee and previews some of the exciting work to come with our 2022 Action Plan. VHA and the Anti-Black Racism Action Group remain committed to doing the important work of addressing issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, racism and anti-Black racism.



**Adam Benn**

Manager of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion,  
Co-Chair of VHA Anti-Black Racism  
Action Group



**Kathryn Nichol**

President & CEO,  
Executive Sponsor of VHA Anti-Black  
Racism Action Group



**Christian Owusu-Mensah**

Care Team Supervisor,  
Co-Chair of VHA Anti-Black Racism  
Action Group

# What did we do?

## Methodology



### Advocacy

#### VHA “Call it Out” Statement

The Anti-Black Racism Action Group has been actively working to create a more inclusive environment for both staff and service providers and clients and families. The Advocacy subgroup has drafted a “Call it Out” statement, which reflects VHA’s commitment to addressing issues of racism and harassment.

VHA is proud to have a zero tolerance for any discriminatory practices. VHA values the wealth of diversity and inclusion across all areas of our organization as well as within the diverse communities where we provide care.

As an organization we “Call It Out” to ensure that active steps are being taken to champion anti-discriminatory practices within home care and the health care sector. As such, we invest in education, align practices, advocate for changes and challenge situations to support our clients and caregivers, volunteers, staff and service providers all with the humility that there is always more for us to learn.



### Data Collection and Reporting

#### VHA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey

VHA’s Anti-Black Racism Action Group launched its first **VHA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey** in summer 2021. Results of the survey informed the development of VHA’s 2022 DEI Action Plan. Staff and service providers as well as volunteers and Board members provided feedback on a number of quantitative metrics. Participants were

asked to respond to statements in a number of key areas, including:

- Culture of Inclusion
- Hiring and Career Development
- Policies and Procedures

Response options included: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, do not know or neutral towards the statement. Respondents had the opportunity to provide written responses expanding on some of the areas in the survey. A significant amount of qualitative data was shared reflecting areas where VHA has performed well in addition to recommendations for future focus.



### Education and Training

#### Anti-Black Racism Training for VHA Leaders

In October and November, the Anti-Black Racism Action Group launched anti-racism and equity training for leaders. The sessions were led by renowned speaker and educator [Camille Dundas](#). The training consisted of two sessions which were attended by over 80 VHA leaders including executives, managers, supervisors and clinical leads. This training reflects VHA’s commitment to continuous learning and development. Feedback from the session was positive and participants agreed that it should be part of future learning offerings.



### Policy and Communications

#### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy Review

In 2021, members of the Anti-Black Racism Action Group reviewed VHA policies in a number of areas, including recruitment, service delivery and employee experience. The subgroup identified a number of opportunities in VHA’s policies to reinforce the organization’s commitment to anti-racism and anti-Black racism. These included: clarifying key definitions such as racism, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism and anti-discrimination; developing specific procedures for dealing with issues of racism; and explicitly including diversity, equity and inclusion in the hiring process.

# What Did We Learn?

## KEY FINDINGS

**1** VHA is home to a diverse workforce. This diversity includes women and Black and racialized people including individuals born outside of Canada.

### Celebrating VHA's Diverse Workforce

Through the DEI Survey, VHA learned how diverse its workforce truly is. The survey was administered to the entire workforce with a 59% response rate (1542/2613).

Select key survey results:

<b>100</b>	There are more than 100 languages other than English spoken by VHA staff, service providers, volunteers and Board members. Top languages include Tagalog, Hindi and French.
<b>82%</b>	of survey respondents identified as a woman.
<b>78%</b>	of survey respondents were born outside of Canada.
<b>73%</b>	of staff and service providers identified as racialized.
<b>8%</b>	of survey respondents identified as 2SLGBTQ+.
<b>4%</b>	of VHA staff and service providers self-identified as a person with a disability.
<b>3%</b>	identified as being trans, gender variant or intersex.

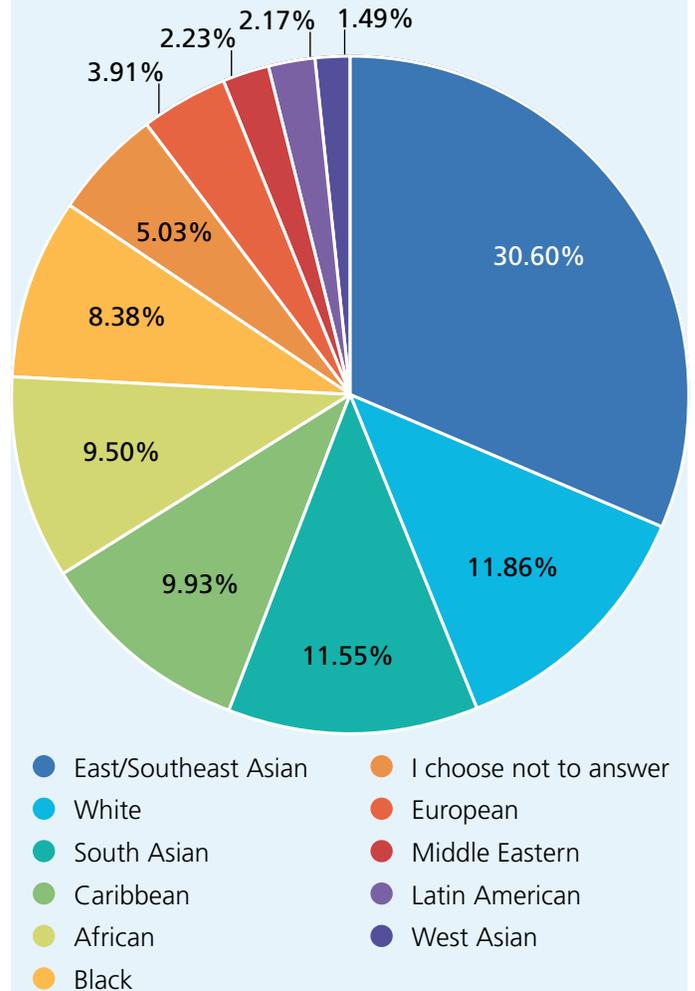
Ontario is home to the largest contingent of immigrants and racialized communities in Canada with almost 30% of Ontario's population identifying as a member of a visible minority group<sup>1</sup>. Toronto is Canada's most multicultural city, with 51.5% of the residents belonging to a racialized group<sup>1</sup>. DEI Survey results revealed that VHA's workforce is representative of this diverse community and well positioned to provide culturally appropriate care for Ontario's multilingual and racialized communities.

Despite this, there are areas where VHA is not as diverse as it might be. For instance:

**1%** Less than 1% of VHA's workforce identified as Indigenous

### Ethnic/Cultural Identity

Staff N = 1,385



<sup>1</sup> "Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census: Toronto, City (CSD) - Ontario: Immigration and Ethnocultural diversity". Statistics Canada. Accessed at <<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-CSD-eng.cfm?TOPIC=7&LANG=eng&GK=CSD&GC=3520005>>

# KEY FINDINGS

2

Diversity and inclusion are fundamental to a healthy workplace for staff and service providers at VHA.

## Lessons from the Qualitative Data

Qualitative responses demonstrated the importance of DEI. Staff and service providers indicated that VHA demonstrates its commitment to DEI through:

- COMMITMENT**
- **Fair** and **respectful** treatment of employees
  - **Sharing** of DEI resources and communication
  - **“Seeing diversity at work”** and hiring practices
  - Training and education **opportunities**

Respondents expressed support of VHA’s recent responses to global and national incidents and events that impacted DEI and team members and clients. The most common responses encouraged VHA to:

- RESPONSES**
- **Acknowledge** with an appropriate statement through communication channels
  - **Create** space for discussion and support
  - **Provide** staff with supportive resources

When asked “What can be done to improve DEI efforts at VHA?”, the top themes identified by respondents were:

- TOP THEMES**
- **More** training, educational opportunities and discussions (n=177)
  - **Efforts** that promote safety and inclusion of staff and providers (n=130)
  - **Better** communication of VHA’s DEI efforts (n=80)
  - **Work** towards more diversity within the leadership team (n=70)



# KEY FINDINGS

**3** There are areas in diversity, equity and inclusion that VHA is excelling in, while there are other areas that need more work.

## Measuring DEI at VHA with the Quantitative Data

Quantitative responses from all three stakeholder groups indicated that while VHA is effectively creating a culture of inclusion and developing processes that support a more equitable workplace, staff and service providers, Board members and volunteers may not be aware of these initiatives. In some of the responses, a proportion of respondents were either neutral towards the statement or indicated that they did not know.

This demonstrates the work needed to build awareness of VHA's DEI strategies, efforts and policies.

### Board Members

- 100%** agreed that **"The leadership at VHA is committed to treating people respectfully."**
- 78%** agreed that **"Inclusion is very much a part of VHA's culture"** however 21% of Board respondents indicated that they did not know.



## Staff and Service Providers

- 83%** agreed that **"The leadership at VHA is committed to creating a culture where everyone can bring their authentic selves (inclusion)."**
- 81%** agreed that **"VHA will take appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination and bias."**
- 75%** felt **"the different opinions, ideas and perspectives brought by employees/service providers are valued by other workers."**
- 70%** believed staff could **"voice a different opinion without fear of negative consequences."**
- 65%** felt that **"Employees/service providers of diverse backgrounds are treated fairly in the internal promotion process."**

## Volunteers

- 93%** agreed **"At VHA, the different opinions, ideas and perspectives brought by employees/service providers are valued by other workers."**
- 93%** believed **"The leadership at VHA is committed to treating people respectfully."**
- 12%** expressed that they did not know if **"VHA will take appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination and bias."**

## Sharing the Data

VHA has actively shared this data with team members through newsletters, presentations and most recently at VHA's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Town Hall. This report is being made available to clients and families and external partners, funders and contacts. This reflects the important practice of relaying what we have learned to the community.

# VHA's 2022 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan

VHA's 2022 DEI Action Plan was designed with the current environment in mind, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the changes that are underway in Ontario's health care system.

The Action Plan is based on the 3 Key Findings:

- 1** VHA is home to a diverse workforce.
- 2** Diversity and inclusion are fundamental to a healthy workplace for VHA's staff and service providers.
- 3** There are areas in diversity, equity and inclusion that VHA is excelling in, and there are other areas that need more work.

Key elements of VHA's DEI Action Plan:

- **VHA's plan is focused on addressing diversity, equity, inclusion and anti-racism at a system level:** For this to happen, DEI principles need to be embedded within policies, operational frameworks and workplace culture in order to be successful.
- **VHA's plan targets processes and structures:** In order to improve the work experience for VHA's team members, examination of how we do things, including both processes and structures, is needed.
- **The goal of VHA's DEI plan is long term, sustainable change:** We recognize that change is a process. Sustainable change requires taking the necessary time to ensure that the changes are meaningful and that they become part of our day-to-day functions.

## 10 Goals of VHA's 2022 DEI Action Plan:



### Advocacy

- We will pilot strategies to address under-reporting of racism
- We will broadly promote our "Call it Out" strategy



### Data Collection and Reporting

- We will collect and analyze data related to incidents of discrimination, harassment and anti-Black racism
- We will complete a DEI Survey and Report in 2022, sharing insights and actions



### Education and Training

- We will deliver comprehensive DEI training for our workforce
- We will deliver ongoing inclusion training for VHA's leaders, with an emphasis on inclusive recruitment and promotion practices



### Policy and Communication

- We will deepen our policies and communication material to address systemic racism
- We will continue to recognize and celebrate meaningful events and dates of recognition for our diverse workforce



### Organizational Culture

- We will amplify our communications, highlighting policies and practices that support an inclusive work environment
- We will build competence and knowledge in the area of Indigenous cultural safety

# VHA Home HealthCare Diversity Statement

VHA is committed to ensuring that:

- We foster a culture where diversity is respected and valued while maintaining confidentiality and privacy
- Staff/service providers, volunteers and Board members reflect the diverse communities we serve
- Our services are accessible and sensitive to the needs of diverse groups
- VHA is an equal opportunity employer
- VHA is an LGBTQ2S (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer & questioning, two spirit) inclusive environment
- Individuals at all levels of the organization are trained in managing and understanding diversity through orientation and continuing education opportunities
- There is zero tolerance for racism and discriminatory behaviour at all levels of the organization
- All VHA communications present a positive and balanced portrayal of diverse groups



2021



Creating More Independence

[www.vha.ca](http://www.vha.ca)

