
Diversity, equity and inclusion in the field of economics in Atlantic Canada

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Abstract—During the fall of 2022, we conducted an online survey of economists in Atlantic Canada to: (1) examine their distribution by dimension of diversity; and (2) characterize climate in the economics profession, both overall and by dimension of diversity. Our results indicate that the proportion of economists who identify as female is smaller compared to the population in Atlantic Canada. The opposite is true for the proportion of economists who are foreign born, those who identify as a visible and/or ethnic minority, and economists who speak a different language at home and work. In terms of climate, approximately 40 percent of economists in Atlantic Canada are not satisfied with their work-life balance, almost a quarter do not feel intellectually included in the field, a third do not feel socially included, and more than 40 percent do not feel respected. Likewise, almost 30 percent of survey respondents have personally experienced discrimination in the field and/or their workplace, compared to about 13 percent in the economics profession at the national level. Economists in Atlantic Canada also report personal experiences of harassment in the field and their workplace. Considering differences by dimension of diversity, we find that female economists, those who have a disability, those who are foreign born, economists who identify as a visible and/or ethnic minority, and those who speak a different language at home and work are more likely to face challenges related to general climate, discrimination and harassment in the field and/or their workplace. On balance, this study elucidates the need for policy and practice aimed at improving diversity, equity and inclusion in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada, as well as the characteristics of economists who stand to benefit from such efforts.

Keywords— Economists, Demographics, Discrimination, Harassment, Atlantic Canada

1 Introduction

Diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) are distinct but related concepts. As defined by Lunsford (2022) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (2023), diversity refers to the presence of differences, including those related to age, disability, ethnicity, family and marital status, gender identity, language, place of origin, political perspective, race, religion, sexual orientation and socio-economic status. Equity refers to the removal of systemic barriers and biases, thus enabling fairness and impartiality in procedures and the distribution of resources. Inclusion refers to a situation in which all individuals are welcomed, respected for their contributions and supported in a culturally safe environment, thus allowing full participation in decision-making processes and development opportunities.

DEI in the economics profession is necessary to ‘disrupt

conformity’ in terms of the questions we ask and the methods we use to answer them, thus enabling a more vibrant discipline. Further, to the extent that economists are representative of the population at large, our contributions to science and policy will be better aligned with society’s priorities (Bayer et al., 2021; Yellen, 2019). Efforts to diversify the economics profession have focused on supply-side factors affecting an individual’s decision to pursue economics as a field of study or career, as well as demand-side factors. The latter include attitudes and behaviours of economists throughout the pipeline – from recruiting, admitting and teaching/mentoring students to hiring, promoting and engaging with colleagues Bayer and Rouse (2016). To better understand DEI in the field of economics, and to guide demand-side initiatives, professional associations in Canada and the United States have conducted climate surveys in recent years (Allgood et al., 2019; Dhuey, 2021); climate refers to “behaviors and attitudes within a workplace or learning environment, ranging from subtle to cumulative to dramatic, that can influence whether an individual feels personally safe, listened to, valued, and treated fairly and with respect” (All-

good et al., 2019).¹

While nationally relevant, these surveys cannot necessarily be generalized to the current state of the economics profession in Atlantic Canada because they were conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.² Further, Atlantic Canada differs from the rest of the country in ways that may impact DEI in the economics profession. For example, according to Statistics Canada (2023a), the population is older, more rural and less racially diverse; the share of the population that identifies as a visible minority ranges from 3.4 percent in Newfoundland and Labrador to 9.8 percent in Nova Scotia, compared to a national average of 26.5 percent. There is also a comparatively small immigrant population in Atlantic Canada, ranging from 2.8 percent in Newfoundland and Labrador to 7.8 percent in Prince Edward Island, compared to a national average of 23.0 percent. Likewise, New Brunswick is the only province/territory in Canada that is officially bilingual (i.e., English and French). Approximately 30 percent of the population reports French as their first language, which is considerably higher than the national average (21.4 percent) and second only to Quebec (82.2 percent). In addition to the socio-demographic characteristics of the population, Atlantic Canada differs from the rest of the country in terms of the concentration, size and type of academic departments/programs and employers in the region. For example, only 13 of 83 Canadian economics departments are located in the region (Canadian Economics Association, nd), most of which are relatively small undergraduate institutions.

Thus, to complement the national surveys, the objectives of this paper are to: (1) examine the distribution of economists in Atlantic Canada by dimension of diversity; and (2) characterize climate in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada, both overall and by dimension of diversity.³ In terms of the latter objective, we consider measures of work-life balance, general climate, discrimination and harassment, and we differentiate between the field of economics and the workplace.

2 Methods

We conducted an online survey of economists in Atlantic Canada during the fall of 2022, including those who work in academic and non-academic settings. Academic economists are primarily employed in colleges and universities, whereas

non-academic economists are primarily employed in government, private firms and organizations, as well as those who are self-employed.

2.1 Data Collection

The survey instrument is available in Appendix A. It was developed based on the national climate surveys (Allgood et al., 2019; Dhuey, 2021), as well as questions and terminology used by Statistics Canada (2023b). We also received input from executive members of the ACEA and Atlantic Association of Applied Economists (AAAE), which are the professional associations of academic and non-academic economists in the region, respectively. It should be noted that survey was not offered in French, despite the linguistic profile of the population in Atlantic Canada. We recommend that future iterations of the survey be offered in both English and French.

The survey was administered using Qualtrics XM. It was anonymous; we did not collect names, Internet Protocol addresses or other identifiers. Participants were provided a written consent form when they first clicked the survey link. All questions were optional; participants could skip any questions they did not wish to answer. Participants could exit the survey at any time and optionally return to it later. Responses were only recorded if participants clicked 'submit survey'. There were no incentives offered for participation.

The survey opened on October 4, 2022 and closed on November 15, 2022. We emailed potential participants when the survey opened and we sent a reminder one week before it closed, inviting them to take the survey and to share it with colleagues in Atlantic Canada. We also emailed leaders in the economics profession (e.g., executive members of the ACEA and AAAE, department chairs, directors, managers) when the survey opened and we sent a reminder one week before it closed, asking them to share an advertisement for the survey with their professional networks and publicly on bulletin boards, websites and social media. The lists of potential participants and leaders were created from internet directories of the ACEA, AAAE and employers (e.g., relevant academic departments/programs and research centres, all levels of government, private firms and organizations). In addition to email, the survey was advertised on the Twitter/X account of the ACEA DEI Committee (@aceadei). The survey was also advertised during ACEA and AAAE events that occurred while it was open (e.g., an advertisement was included in the registration package of the 2022 ACEA conference).

We received 80 responses (the sample size has been rounded to protect privacy and confidentiality), which is approximately 34 percent of potential participants.⁴ This is similar to the national survey, which had a response rate of 33 percent (Dhuey 2021). Approximately 60 percent of respondents work in academic settings, about 63 percent of whom have a rank lower than full professor (i.e., associate

¹Likewise, the Canadian Association for Business Economics Canadian Association for Business Economics (2022) recently conducted a salary survey, which included questions about work-life balance and career trajectory by gender and visible minority status, as well as experiences of discrimination and harassment.

²Canadian Women Economists Committee (2021) conducted a survey during the COVID-19 pandemic to assess concerns related to family health, children's education, household income, tenure and promotion, and research and teaching productivity. It largely focused on differences between men and women.

³This paper is derived from a report released by the DEI Committee of the Atlantic Canada Economics Association (ACEA) in December 2023 (Daley et al., 2023) To complement the analysis featured in this paper, we refer readers to the report, which contains suggestions from survey respondents about what could be done to improve DEI in the field of economics in Atlantic Canada, including those related to: recruiting and teaching/mentoring future economists; mentoring and supporting current economists; hiring and promotion practices; DEI education; other policies and practices; and future research.

⁴Our response rate may be understated because the number of potential participants (i.e., the denominator) is likely larger than the list created from internet directories. As previously noted, we asked potential participants and leaders in the economics profession to share the survey with their networks and publicly. The survey was also advertised on the Twitter/X account of the ACEA DEI Committee, and during ACEA and AAAE events that occurred while it was open.

professors, assistant professors and contract faculty, such as instructors, researchers and post-doctoral fellows). Likewise, approximately 40 percent of respondents work in non-academic settings, almost two thirds of whom are in entry- or mid-level positions (versus senior-level positions).

2.2 Dimensions of Diversity

In what follows, we describe the dimensions of diversity considered in our analysis, as well as the respective comparison groups.

- **Female** – This refers to current gender identity. We compare respondents who identify as female with those who identify as male. To protect privacy and confidentiality, we cannot separately consider respondents who identify as transgender male, transgender female or non-binary (e.g., agender, pangender, genderqueer, genderfluid, gender-nonconforming, Two-Spirit). Likewise, we cannot separately consider respondents who stated that their gender identity was not listed or those who preferred to self-identify.
- **Single** – This refers to current marital status. We compare respondents who are single (i.e., separated, divorced, widowed, never married) to those who are married or living common law.
- **Major Caregiving** – This denotes respondents who have major caregiving responsibilities (e.g., children, spouse/partner, other family members).
- **Disability** – This denotes respondents who have a disability that affects their work.
- **Foreign Born** – We compare respondents who are foreign born with those who are Canadian citizens by birth. The former includes respondents who became Canadian citizens through naturalization (i.e., the process by which immigrants are granted citizenship), as well as non-citizens (i.e., landed immigrants, permanent residents, temporary residents).
- **Visible Minority** – This denotes respondents who identify as a visible minority. The following definition was provided in the survey (Appendix A): According to the Employment Equity Act, visible minorities are "persons, other than Aboriginal [Indigenous] peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".
- **Ethnic Minority** – This denotes respondents who describe their ethnic or cultural origins as Latin, Central or South American, Caribbean, African, Asian and/or those who preferred to self-identify. The comparison group includes those who identify as North American and/or European. Respondents could select more than one category, and those who identify with both minority and majority groups are included in the latter.
- **Different Language** – We compare respondents who speak a different language at home and work (such as French at home and English at work) with those who typically speak the same language across settings.

- **Religious** – This denotes respondents who identify as Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh or other. The comparison group includes respondents who stated that they do not have religious or secular perspectives.

2.3 Measures of Climate in the Economics Profession

To characterize climate in the economics profession, we consider measures of work-life balance, general climate, discrimination and harassment, and we differentiate between the field of economics and the workplace. As listed below, statements related to work-life balance and general climate were reported on a five-point scale (i.e., 'strongly disagree', 'somewhat disagree', 'neither disagree nor agree', 'somewhat agree', 'strongly agree'). In our analysis, we dichotomize responses, such that we compare respondents who 'somewhat agree' or 'strongly agree' to the other categories. Statements related to discrimination and harassment were reported as 'yes' or 'no'. Relevant definitions were provided to respondents during the survey (e.g., climate, discrimination, harassment).

Work-Life Balance

- I am satisfied with my work-life balance.

General Climate – Field of Economics

- I feel intellectually included in the field of economics.
- I feel socially included in the field of economics.
- I feel respected in the field of economics.
- People from diverse backgrounds are respected in the field of economics.
- I am satisfied with the overall climate in the field of economics.

General Climate – Workplace

- I feel intellectually included in my workplace
- I feel socially included in my workplace.
- I feel respected in my workplace.
- People from diverse backgrounds are respected in my workplace.
- I am satisfied with the overall climate in my workplace.

Discrimination and Harassment – Field of Economics

- I have personally experienced discrimination in the field of economics.
- I have personally experienced harassment in the field of economics.
- I have witnessed discrimination in the field of economics.
- I have witnessed harassment in the field of economics.

TABLE 1: DISTRIBUTION OF ECONOMISTS IN ATLANTIC CANADA BY DIMENSION OF DIVERSITY (% RESPONDENTS)

	Economists in Atlantic Canada (<i>n</i> = 80)	National Estimates from Dhuey (2021) (<i>n</i> = 1,652)	Estimates from the US Allgood et al. (2019) (<i>n</i> ≈ 10,000)	Population in Atlantic Canada (<i>N</i> = 2,409,874)
Female	30.1%	31.7%	30.0%	51.1%
Single	16.0%	30.6%	20.0%	36.2%
Major Caregiving	48.2%	41.4%	–	–
Disability	15.9%	12.7%	10.0%	–
Foreign Born	43.9%	–	36.0%	5.9%
Visible Minority	28.0%	–	21.0%	7.0%
Ethnic Minority	31.6%	43.5%	–	9.2%
Different Language	14.6%	–	–	1.2%
Religious	49.4%	51.2%	49.0%	70.6%

The sample size has been rounded to protect privacy and confidentiality. As available, national estimates from Dhuey (2021) are provided for comparison, in addition to estimates from the U.S. (Allgood et al., 2019) and the 2021 Census of Population in Atlantic Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023a) The sample size in Allgood et al. (2019) varies across dimensions of diversity, but it is approximately 10,000 observations in all cases.

Discrimination and Harassment – Workplace

- I have personally experienced discrimination in my workplace.
- I have personally experienced harassment in my workplace.
- I have witnessed discrimination in my workplace.
- I have witnessed harassment in my workplace.

2.4 Analysis

First, we examine the distribution of economists in Atlantic Canada by dimension of diversity (i.e., the percentage of respondents in each group described in Section 2.2). As available, we make comparisons to the national survey (Dhuey, 2021), estimates from the United States (Allgood et al., 2019) and the 2021 Census of Population in Atlantic Canada (Statistics Canada, 2023a).

Next, we characterize climate in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada by estimating the percentage of respondents who agree with each statement in Section 2.3. Again, estimates from Canada (Dhuey, 2021) and the United States (Allgood et al., 2019) are provided as available, but differences between survey periods and methods may affect the comparison. For example, our survey contained statements about feeling respected in the field of economics and workplace, respectively, whereas Dhuey (2021) and Allgood et al. (2019) asked about feeling valued. Regardless, comparisons to national estimates from Canada and the United States may shed light on aspects of the economics profession in Atlantic Canada that are uniquely beneficial or harmful to DEI, thus providing a starting point for future research regarding specific regional and/or institutional characteristics that may be contributing to the observed differences.

Finally, we characterize climate by dimension of diversity. For each statement in Section 2.3, we estimate the difference in the proportion of respondents who agree in the group of interest versus the comparison group, expressed as a percentage relative to the comparison group. For example, when considering differences by gender identity, we take the

proportion of female respondents who agree with a particular statement minus the proportion of male respondents who agree, divided by the latter and multiplied by 100. We assess differences using two-tailed t-tests such that statistical significance is denoted by * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$ and *** $p < 0.01$.

Preliminary results were presented to the executive members of the AAAE in September 2023, and at the ACEA conference in October 2023. We are grateful for the feedback received. As possible, it has been incorporated into the analysis.

This project was approved by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of Maine.

3 Results

In Table 1, we examine the distribution of economists in Atlantic Canada by dimension of diversity. The proportions of female respondents (30.1 percent) and those who are religious (49.4 percent) are similar to Allgood et al. (2019) and Dhuey (2021), but they are much lower compared to the population in Atlantic Canada. On the other hand, the proportions of economists in Atlantic Canada who identify as foreign born (43.9 percent), a visible minority (28.0 percent) and/or ethnic minority (31.6 percent) are higher compared to the region's population, as is the share of respondents who speak a different language at home and work (14.6 percent). We also find notable differences in marital status; only 16 percent of economists in Atlantic Canada are single compared to 20 percent in the United States, and more than 30 percent at the national level and in the region's population as a whole. Finally, relative to the national estimates from Dhuey (2021), a larger share of economists in Atlantic Canada have major caregiving responsibilities (48.2 percent) and/or a disability that affects their work (15.9 percent).⁵

In Table 2, we characterize climate in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada with comparisons to the national

⁵Differences in marital status and caregiving responsibilities may be associated with the age distribution of economists in Atlantic Canada. Although not shown, the average age in our sample is 48 years, compared to 43 years in Dhuey (2021), 47 years in Allgood et al. (2019) and 44 years in the 2021 Census of Population in Atlantic Canada Statistics Canada (2023a)

Table 2. Climate in the Economics Profession in Atlantic Canada (% Respondents Who Agree with Each Statement)

	Economists in Atlantic Canada (n = 80)	National Estimates from Dhuey (2021) (n = 1,652)	Estimates from the United States Allgood et al. (2019) (n ≈ 10,000)
Work-Life Balance			
I am satisfied with my work-life balance.	61.4	—	—
General Climate – Field of Economics			
I feel intellectually included in the field of economics.	75.9	50.4	42.0
I feel socially included in the field of economics.	66.3	47.2	37.0
I feel respected in the field of economics.	59.0	48.3	40.0
People from diverse backgrounds are respected in the field of economics.	56.6	—	—
I am satisfied with the overall climate in the field of economics.	45.1	56.2	34.0
General Climate – Workplace			
I feel intellectually included in my workplace.	84.1	61.2	64.0
I feel socially included in my workplace.	74.4	61.8	63.0
I feel respected in my workplace.	84.0	60.2	63.0
People from diverse backgrounds are respected in my workplace.	69.1	—	—
I am satisfied with the overall climate in my workplace.	67.1	61.1	56.0
Discrimination and Harassment – Field of Economics			
I have personally experienced discrimination in the field of economics.	28.9	13.9	18.0
I have personally experienced harassment in the field of economics.	10.8	—	—
I have witnessed discrimination in the field of economics.	43.4	—	—
I have witnessed harassment in the field of economics.	20.7	—	—
Discrimination and Harassment – Workplace			
I have personally experienced discrimination in my workplace.	29.3	12.8	12.0
I have personally experienced harassment in my workplace.	17.1	—	—
I have witnessed discrimination in my workplace.	41.5	—	—
I have witnessed harassment in my workplace.	31.7	—	—

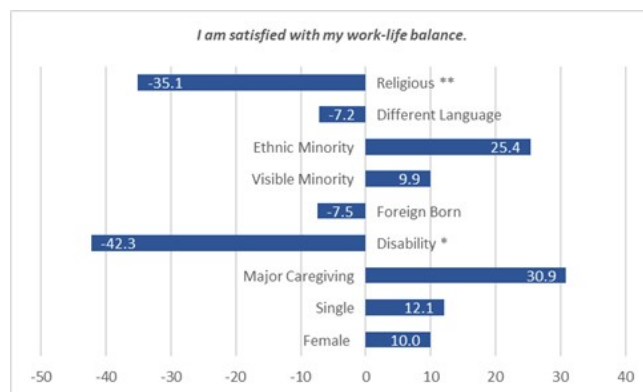
Notes: The sample size has been rounded to protect privacy and confidentiality. As available, national estimates from Dhuey (2021) are provided for comparison, in addition to estimates from the United States (Allgood et al. 2019). The sample size in Allgood et al. (2019) is approximately 10,000 observations.

estimates from Canada and the United States where possible.⁶ We find that approximately 61 percent of respondents are satisfied with their work-life balance. Further, compared to estimates from Canada and the United States, they are more likely to report favourably about general climate, in both the field of economics and their workplace. In the field, for example, a relatively large share of economists in Atlantic Canada feel intellectually included (75.9 percent versus 50.4 percent at the national level and 42.0 percent in the United States), socially included (66.3 percent versus 47.2 percent at the national level and 37.0 percent in the United States) and respected (59.0 percent versus 48.3 percent at the national level and 40.0 percent in the United States). However, there is room for improvement. For example, while 75.9 percent of economists in Atlantic Canada feel intellectually included in the field, this implies that 24.1 percent do not. Likewise, a third of respondents do not feel socially included in the field, and more than 40 percent do not feel respected in the field. We also note that a smaller share of economists in Atlantic Canada are satisfied with the overall climate in the field (45.1 percent versus 56.2 percent at the national level). This is seemingly at odds with the larger share of economists in Atlantic Canada who feel intellectually included, socially included and respected in the field. While outside the scope of this project, future work should examine possible reasons for the concurrent dissatisfaction with the overall climate. We hypothesize that it may be related to discrimination and harassment. Approximately 29 percent of economists in Atlantic Canada report personal experiences of discrimination in the field of economics and/or their workplace, compared to about 13 percent at the national level.⁷ This is also much higher than personal experiences of discrimination in the United States (18.0 percent in the field and 12.0 percent in the workplace). Moreover, while national estimates are not available, economists in Atlantic Canada report personal experiences of harassment in both the field (10.8 percent) and their workplace (17.1 percent).

In what follows, we characterize climate in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada by dimension of diversity, focusing on statistically significant differences between the groups of interest and the respective comparison groups. The results are presented in five sets of figures: (1) work-life balance; (2) general climate in the field of economics; (3) general climate in the workplace; (4) discrimination and harassment in the field of economics; and (5) discrimination and

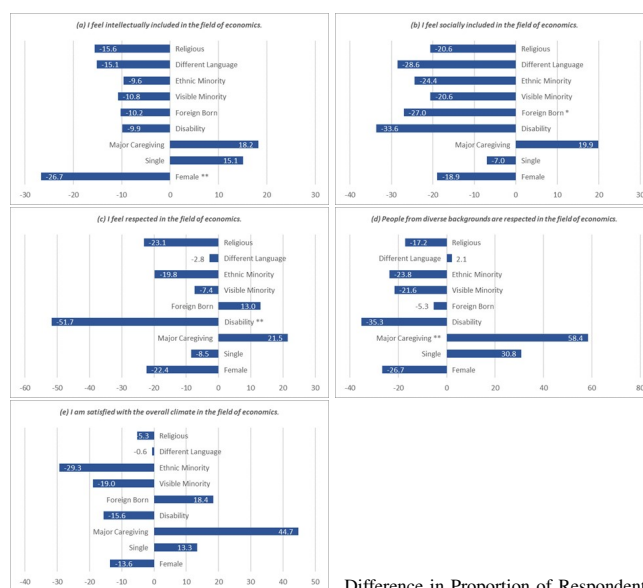
⁶We also consider differences by employer type and rank in Appendix Table B1. We find that work-life balance, general climate in the workplace, and personal experiences of discrimination and harassment are worse in academic settings, especially among those with a rank lower than full professor. We find the opposite in non-academic settings, where a larger proportion of economists in entry- or mid-level positions are satisfied with their work-life balance, and a smaller proportion have personally experienced or witnessed discrimination and harassment (compared to those in senior-level positions). When making comparisons by rank, we acknowledge that full professors and non-academic economists in senior-level positions likely had more time to experience and witness discrimination and harassment. They may also have different socio-demographic characteristics; for example, a considerably small share of full professors are women (Lundberg, 2018). Moreover, there may be differences by rank in how respondents define discrimination and harassment (although definitions were provided in the survey) and/or in the propensity to report such incidents.

⁷Measures of general climate, discrimination and harassment are correlated when comparing the field of economics versus the workplace, especially personal experiences of discrimination (Appendix Table B2).



Difference in Proportion of Respondents Who Agree with Statement Group of Interest versus Comparison Group (% Relative to Comparison Group) Notes: The sample size (n = 80) has been rounded to protect privacy and confidentiality. Statistical significance is denoted by *p<0.10, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

Fig. 1: Work-Life Balance by Dimension of Diversity



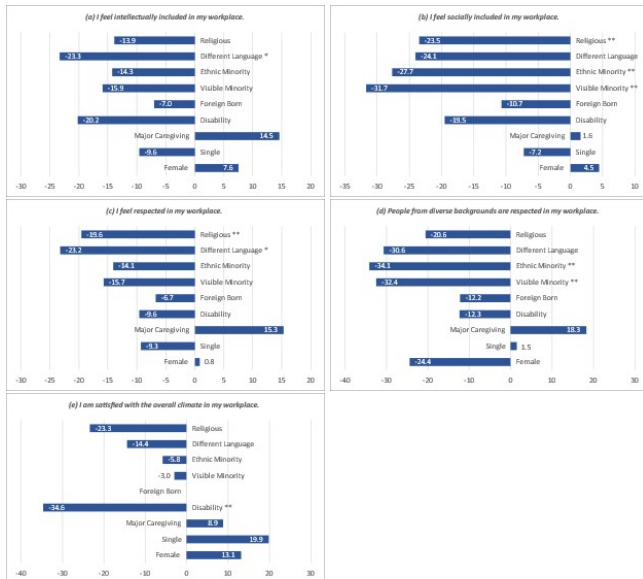
Who Agree with Statement Group of Interest versus Comparison Group (% Relative to Comparison Group) Notes: The sample size (n = 80) has been rounded to protect privacy and confidentiality. Statistical significance is denoted by *p<0.10, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

Fig. 2: General Climate in the Field of Economics by Dimension of Diversity

harassment in the workplace.

First, Figure 1 indicates that a relatively small share of respondents who have a disability are satisfied with their work-life balance; the proportion is 42.3 percent smaller compared to those who do not have a disability, and the difference is statistically significant at the 10 percent level. The result is similar when comparing respondents who are religious versus those who do not have religious or secular perspectives.

In Figure 2, we find that a smaller share of female (versus male) respondents feel intellectually included in the field of economics. This is statistically significant at the five percent level. Likewise, a relatively small proportion of foreign-born economists feel socially included in the field (compared to those who are Canadian citizens by birth) and a smaller share of respondents with a disability feel respected in the field (versus those who do not have a disability). On the other hand, a relatively large proportion of respondents with major caregiving responsibilities feel that people from diverse backgrounds are respected in the field of economics; the pro-



Difference in Proportion of Respondents Who Agree with Statement Group of Interest versus Comparison Group (% Relative to Comparison Group)
Notes: The sample size (n = 80) has been rounded to protect privacy and confidentiality. Statistical significance is denoted by *p<0.10, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

Fig. 3: General Climate in the Workplace by Dimension of Diversity

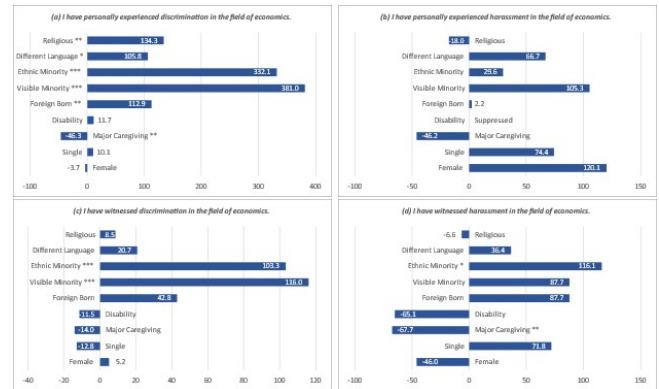
portion is almost 60 percent larger compared to those who do not have major caregiving responsibilities.

Figure 3 indicates that a relatively small proportion of respondents who speak a different language at home and work feel intellectually included or respected in the workplace (versus those who speak the same language across settings). This is statistically significant at the 10 percent level. Likewise, among those who identify as a visible and/or ethnic minority, the proportion of respondents who feel socially included in the workplace is approximately 30 percent smaller compared to the respective comparison groups.⁸ We also find that a relatively small share of religious respondents feel socially included or respected in the workplace (versus those who do not have religious or secular perspectives). And, the proportion of respondents who are satisfied with the overall climate in the workplace is almost 35 percent smaller among economists who have a disability (versus those who do not).

As shown in Figure 4, personal experiences of discrimination in the field of economics are more common among foreign-born respondents, those who identify as a visible and/or ethnic minority, respondents who speak a different language at home and work, and those who are religious (versus the respective comparison groups).⁹ For example, the proportion of respondents who have experienced discrimination in the field is 381 percent higher among those who identify as a visible minority (versus those who do not). And, while not statistically significant, a larger proportion of respondents who identify as a visible minority have reported

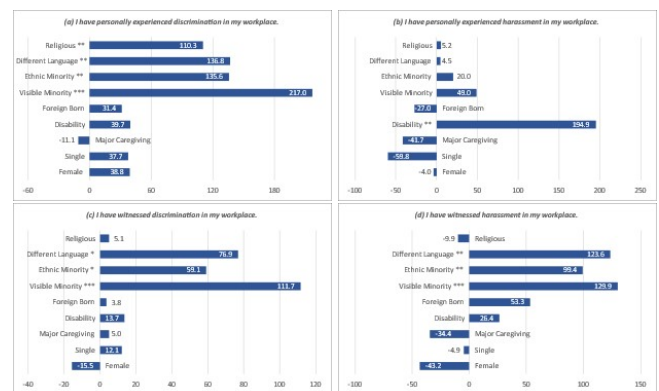
⁸ Although not shown, some dimensions of diversity are strongly correlated with each other. For example, the correlation coefficient between visible and ethnic minority status is 0.88, and both are associated with speaking a different language at home and work (i.e., the correlation coefficient is 0.45 for visible minority status and language, and 0.37 for ethnic minority status and language).

⁹ As noted above, some dimensions of diversity are strongly correlated with each other, including visible and ethnic minority status, and speaking a different language at home and work.



Difference in Proportion of Respondents Who Agree with Statement Group of Interest versus Comparison Group (% Relative to Comparison Group)
Notes: The sample size (n = 80) has been rounded to protect privacy and confidentiality. Statistical significance is denoted by *p<0.10, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

Fig. 4: Discrimination and Harassment in the Field of Economics by Dimension of Diversity



Difference in Proportion of Respondents Who Agree with Statement Group of Interest versus Comparison Group (% Relative to Comparison Group)
Notes: The sample size (n = 80) has been rounded to protect privacy and confidentiality. Statistical significance is denoted by *p<0.10, **p<0.05 and ***p<0.01.

Fig. 5: Discrimination and Harassment in the Workplace by Dimension of Diversity

personal experiences of harassment in the field. The result is similar when comparing female (versus male) respondents. Conversely, the proportion of respondents who report personal experiences of discrimination or witnessing harassment in the field of economics is smaller among those with major caregiving responsibilities (versus those who do not have major caregiving responsibilities).

Similar to the field of economics, Figure 5 indicates that personal experiences of discrimination in the workplace are more common among respondents who identify as a visible and/or ethnic minority, those who speak a different language at home and work, and religious respondents (versus the respective comparison groups).¹⁰ For example, the proportion of respondents who have experienced discrimination in the workplace is more than 200 percent larger among those who identify as a visible minority (versus those who do not). These respondents (i.e., those who identify as a visible and/or ethnic minority, and those who speak a different language at home and work) are also more likely to have witnessed dis-

¹⁰ As noted above, measures of general climate, discrimination and harassment are correlated when comparing the field of economics versus the workplace, especially personal experiences of discrimination (Appendix Table B2). Likewise, some dimensions of diversity are strongly correlated with each other, including visible and ethnic minority status, and speaking a different language at home and work.

crimination and harassment in the workplace. Finally, the proportion of respondents who report personal experiences of harassment in the workplace is almost 200 percent greater among respondents who have a disability (versus those who do not). This is statistically significant at the five percent level.

4 Discussion

During the fall of 2022, we conducted an online survey of economists in Atlantic Canada, including those who work in academic and non-academic settings. Building on past research at the national level, our objectives are to: (1) examine the distribution of economists in Atlantic Canada by dimension of diversity; and (2) characterize climate in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada – both overall and by dimension of diversity – including measures of work-life balance, general climate, discrimination and harassment.

First, examining the distribution of economists, the share of female respondents is similar to the national estimates but much lower compared to the population in Atlantic Canada. On the other hand, the proportion of respondents who identify as foreign born, a visible minority and/or ethnic minority is higher compared to the region's population, as is the share of respondents who speak a different language at home and work. Finally, relative to the national survey, a larger share of economists in Atlantic Canada are married or living common law, and they are more likely to have major caregiving responsibilities.

In terms of climate, approximately 60 percent of economists in Atlantic Canada are satisfied with their work-life balance, which implies that 40 percent are not. And, while respondents report more favourably about general climate compared to national estimates from Canada and the United States, there is room for improvement. For example, almost a quarter of economists in Atlantic Canada do not feel intellectually included in the field, a third do not feel socially included, and more than 40 percent do not feel respected. Consistent with these estimates, economists in Atlantic Canada have experienced harassment in the field (10.8 percent) and their workplace (17.1 percent). Moreover, almost 30 percent of respondents have experienced discrimination in the field and/or their workplace, compared to about 13 percent at the national level. As previously noted, measures of general climate, discrimination and harassment are correlated when comparing the field of economics versus the workplace, especially personal experiences of discrimination. It is unclear whether respondents have experienced discrimination in both settings, or whether such experiences are limited to one setting but spill over in reporting. This should be considered in future iterations of the survey.

Throughout the paper, we have described climate in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada relative to national surveys in Canada (Dhuey, 2021) and the United States (Allgood et al., 2019). These comparisons are useful for identifying factors that are particularly important to DEI in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada, thus providing a starting point for future research regarding specific regional and/or institutional characteristics that may be contributing to the observed differences. Based on our survey, discrimi-

nation and harassment appear to be particularly problematic in Atlantic Canada and should be further examined in future work. It should also be noted that, while the national estimates are natural comparisons, they are not necessarily the best that can be achieved. Meaningful and feasible benchmarks should be considered in future research (e.g., by looking at the economics profession in other jurisdictions and/or other disciplines). In the meantime, our results can be further contextualized based on Allgood et al. (2019), who compare climate in the economics profession to other disciplines in the United States. First, economists in Atlantic Canada have a lower rate of social inclusion in the field compared to political scientists and historians in the United States. They are also less likely to feel respected in the field relative to professional engineers in the United States, but the latter are less likely to feel respected in the workplace. Likewise, personal experiences of discrimination in the workplace are less common among economists in Atlantic Canada compared to professional engineers. Personal experiences of harassment are similar between economists in Atlantic Canada and those who work in astronomy in the United States, and they occur more frequently compared to linguistics and anthropology.

In addition to characterizing climate in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada overall, we differentiate by dimension of diversity. We find that a smaller share of female (versus male) respondents feel intellectually included in the field of economics, and a larger share have experienced harassment. Likewise, a relatively small proportion of economists who have a disability are satisfied with their work-life balance, feel respected in the field, or feel satisfied with the overall climate in their workplace. Notably, the proportion of respondents who have experienced harassment in the workplace is almost 200 percent larger among economists who have a disability (versus those who do not). We also find that respondents who are foreign born, those who identify as a visible and/or ethnic minority, and respondents who speak a different language at home and work are more likely to face challenges related to general climate, discrimination and harassment in the field of economics and/or workplace. This is consistent with Daley, Behzadan, and Gambin (2023), who summarize open-ended survey responses in which respondents describe discrimination and harassment in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada, including discrimination on the basis of colour, language and other dimensions of diversity. They conclude that discrimination and harassment are occurring both overtly (e.g., disparaging comments, verbal harassment) and more discreetly (e.g., microaggressions). And, while respondents have reported improvements over time, especially in terms of sexual harassment, they emphasize that there is still room for progress.

Finally, in contrast to other dimensions of diversity, we find that a relatively large proportion of respondents with major caregiving responsibilities feel that people from diverse backgrounds are respected in the field of economics. Likewise, a small proportion of such respondents report personal experiences of discrimination or witnessing harassment in the field (versus those who do not have major caregiving responsibilities). We hypothesize that these results are associated with flexible work arrangements during the COVID-19 pandemic, many of which were still in place during our

survey period. While we cannot formally test this hypothesis, we note that respondents with major caregiving responsibilities tend to be younger, female, and married or living common law. They are also less likely to be foreign born. These characteristics may confound the estimates, and this should be considered in future work.

4.1 Limitations

A number of limitations should be noted. First, our sample size is very small, which hinders statistical inference. It also restricts our ability to stratify results by other dimensions of diversity (e.g., gender identity other than female and male, sexual orientation, Indigenous identity). Second, while likely understated, our survey response rate was 34 percent, and we recognize that our estimates are subject to self-selection bias. Likewise, our sample consists of economists who are currently working in the field, and it is likely skewed toward those who are affiliated with the ACEA or AAEE. We postulate that economists who are not working in the field may have different socio-demographic characteristics and/or they may have different experiences related to general climate, discrimination and harassment (e.g., negative experiences may have prompted economists from equity-deserving groups to leave the profession). In terms of the survey instrument, there were no questions about political perspective or (parental) socio-economic status, both of which should be considered in future iterations. Similarly, the religious variable was derived from the question 'Which best describes your religion?'. In the future, it may be more informative to ask whether respondents currently observe and practice a particular religion. This would allow us to differentiate between such respondents and those who identify with a religion but for whom it is not an integral part of everyday life. Finally, as noted earlier, the survey was not offered in French, despite the linguistic profile of the population in Atlantic Canada. This should be remedied in future iterations of the survey.

5 Conclusion

To our knowledge, this is the first study to provide an in-depth examination of DEI in the economics profession in Atlantic Canada, spanning academic and non-academic settings. In doing so, we elucidate the need for relevant policies and practices – including those related to work-life balance, general climate, discrimination and harassment, in both the field of economics and the workplace. We also identify the characteristics of economists who stand to benefit from such efforts – including female economists, those who have a disability, those who are foreign born, economists who identify as a visible and/or ethnic minority, and those who speak a different language at home and work. To guide the development of policies and practices, we again refer readers to the report by Daley, Behzadan, and Gambin (2023), who summarize suggestions from survey respondents about what could be done to improve DEI in the field of economics in Atlantic Canada.

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A Appendices

Available on ACER website.

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