

Springfield (MO) Inclusion Survey 2020

**Survey designed and distributed by City Council of Springfield and the
Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and Community Relations**

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Springfield Inclusiveness Survey

Introduction

From January 21 through March 2020, the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights and the City of Springfield made a survey available to local residents that asked how they view inclusiveness in the Springfield area. This survey was distributed to various groups through several methods. It was sent electronically to the mailing lists of numerous service clubs and nonprofit organizations, the NAACP, Springfield City Council and other city channels. Individuals receiving the survey were encouraged to distribute it to others they thought would be interested. A postcard describing the survey, with information about how to access and complete it, was distributed to attendees at the Springfield Multicultural Festival. The survey was distributed via several social media platforms (Facebook, Reddit) and press releases were sent to the media. The electronic version of the survey used Qualtrics software; this enabled Spanish-speakers to hit a button that translated the survey into Spanish. In addition, physical copies of the survey were distributed at local library branches.

While it is impossible to determine exactly how many individuals received or were made aware of the survey, 2276 individuals returned it. These individuals constituted a convenience and snowball sample, which turned out to be reasonably representative of the city. Regarding location, respondents came from Zone 1 (Northwest), 279 (12.26%); Zone 2 (Northeast), 367 (16.12%); Zone 3 (Southwest), 432 (18.98%); Zone 4 (Southeast), 517 (22.72%); Outside city limits, 640 (28.12%); and there were 41 (1.8%) who were not sure.

Demographically, regarding race/ethnicity, respondents were Asian, 42 (1.76%); Black/African American, 96 (4.02%); White, 1977 (88.72%); Hispanic/Latino, 76 (3.18%); Native American, 73 (3.05%); Pacific Islander, 5 (.21%), and other, 44 (1.84%), with 77 (3.22) preferring not to answer. In terms of sex, 1359 (59.84%) were female; 811 (35.71%) were male; 48 (2.11%) preferred not to answer; and 53 (2.3%) answered "other" (primarily non-binary, gender non-confirming, trans, and questioning). Regarding age, 138 (6.08%) were 18-24; 809 (35.65%) were 25-39; 780 (34.38%) were 40-59; 495 (21.82%) were 60+; and 47 (2.07%) preferred not to answer.

The survey included several closed-ended questions and eight open-ended ones. In general, the survey sought to assess how inclusive Springfield and area residents perceive the area to be. Respondents said Springfield is very inclusive, 249 (12.22%); somewhat inclusive, 812 (39.86%); not very inclusive, 646 (31.73%); not inclusive, 267 (13.11%); or had no opinion/not applicable, 63 (3.09%).

The eight open-ended questions analyzed in this report are:

- *What do you think would make Springfield a stronger, more inclusive community?*
- *If you have experienced barriers to fully participating in the Springfield community, please share the top three barriers you have faced.*
- *Have you personally felt, at any time, that you were not valued based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age (40+)? Please share. Where did the incidents take place?*
- *Have you or someone you know experienced an incident of unlawful hostility or discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or*

age (40+)? Please share.

- *Have you personally witnessed an incident of hostility or discrimination directed at somebody else based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age (40+)? Please share.*
- *Please use the following space for anything else you'd like to share about your experiences.*
- *What activities could the Springfield community offer to encourage a more welcoming environment for all cultures?*
- *Do you have any additional comments or suggestions to share?*

Responses exposed a variety of attitudes related to Springfield's inclusiveness. It is hoped that the attitudes and stories revealed by the survey will be used to help Springfield plan its next steps toward creating a stronger, more inclusive community.

Many people provided one-word or one-phrase answers. Responses selected for inclusion here were representative of responses in general, provided helpful details, or were particularly insightful. The responses are preserved in the original language, except where an obvious misspelling has occurred or added punctuation would clarify the comment.

Because the comments provided in this report represent only a small percentage of the total number of responses, it is strongly recommended that readers at least browse through the entire set of original comments (although it is lengthy). While the sample included here is representative, it does not do full justice to the entire range and breadth of thought provided by the respondents.

Question 1: What do you think would make Springfield a stronger, more inclusive community?

Most respondents supported making Springfield more inclusive and noted that the city's homogeneity can make inclusiveness difficult. Comments suggested a number of things to increase inclusiveness.

More diverse community and greater visibility of diversity in community leadership

This category was one of the most frequently represented among the comments. One important way to strengthen the city and increase inclusiveness is simply by having a more diverse population, with increased minority visibility at all levels—leadership with the schools, city government, nonprofit organizations and boards, and so forth. Respondents called for more diversity of all kinds (racial, ethnic, age-related, class, sex, gender, sexual orientation, and disability). Several suggested that inclusiveness would be improved with fewer racist individuals, while some suggested that the only thing that would help inclusiveness is for the older population (i.e., baby boomers) to die off. Along with providing more diversity at all levels, respondents said that the city needs to solicit the opinions of diverse members and actually listen to those opinions.

The following are example comments calling for increasing the city's diversity:

Lack of diversity is fostering an environment where people are subconsciously discriminating in addition to purposefully [discriminating].

Part of the reason so many around here fear others is because they are exposed to limited diversity.

Minority population is small. We need to develop methods to make this area inviting to minorities, and all peoples. As our population increases in diversity, hopefully inclusivity will improve.

And I see a few ethnicities in restaurant kitchens and on college campuses. But overall we are incredibly homogeneous and boring.

Exposure to the rest of the USA, getting out of the Springfield bubble.

More diversity in population. More diversity in our work force and employers. A Chief Diversity Officer for the City. More inclusion for Queer and Trans people.

Much more diversity. This community is predominately White and made up of people from this area. We need influences from other parts of the US/World. People here need to see that others are just human beings as well.

More diverse leadership throughout the city. More Latino leaders.

More people of color, plain and simple. More ethnic diversity. We need to attract more minority citizens to our area.

More professional educated minorities.

It would have to be a generational thing. Too many "good ole boys" in this area and until there [sic] not here it will never change.

Less bigoted rednecks.

Less racist old white guys, to be honest.

Many respondents called for more diverse leadership in all segments of Springfield's society: government, education, health care, the nonprofit world, business, and organizations of all kinds. Of the many comments provided in this category, the following are representative and often insightful:

More women and diverse people in leadership roles (Chamber President, Mayor, City Manager, Higher Ed leaders, Healthcare leaders, County Leaders . . . they are all currently older white males). I believe we can become more intentional with recruiting people of all ages, races and backgrounds in leadership roles.

Also, we need to be more intentional about diversifying leadership roles. It is fine to diversify at the bottom, but diversification also needs to happen in the middle and at the top as it pertains to our organizations and local leadership and decision makers.

Seeing more women of color and other forms of diversity in leadership positions. Pick someone else besides Francine and Wes Pratt, Cheryl Clay and Daniel Ogunyemi to speak, serve on boards, chair committees, etc. There are many professional people of color between ages 25-45 that have lived in Springfield and Greene County for decades that deserve to have a voice and a platform. End the popularity and privilege contests and intentionally seek out input,

contributions, and perspectives.

City and business leaders need to do the work to see that not everyone starts from the same spot, that the playing field is not level . . . It means seeking people to fill jobs and board positions that are out of your circle if your circle is white, male, straight and cisgender. It means looking around your office and asking yourself why there are no people of color [who] work here. Leaders are going to have to do the personal work as well as professional work.

More African American teachers at SPS & higher ed institutions – starting with OTC a& MSU (strategic recruitment of candidates from job pool systems with diverse candidates). Create job opportunities for Springfield populations experiencing highest rates of disparity: African American LatinX, Asian, and other LMI [Labor Market Information] populations . . .

More representation on City Council, the Springfield School Board. Business need to practice more diversity when hiring people. Less discrimination from the Springfield Police Dept., Springfield Fire Dept., City Utilities, Municipal Courthouse. The Springfield Public Library system needs an extreme renovation on their hiring practices.

Intentionally invite and reach out to those stakeholders not usually at “the table.” Most of the leaders and community board are made up of the “usual suspects.” We need to make it more encouraging and accessible for all citizens to participate and have a voice.

Opening the civic groups and clubs up by recruiting more members from minority groups and making them really feel like they are a genuine part of the community.

More high profile outreach between civic and community leaders and religious minority groups, particularly the Muslim community . . .

Diverse leaders in government, schools, companies, organizations, churches.

More women, minorities in leadership positions. For instance, all three county commissioners are white males.

Stop making entire boards and committees nothing but Baby Boomers.

Promoting political involvement from more ethnic and racial groups.

Springfield will not grow inclusive until it “hires” more diverse individuals and is open to other cultures.

Allow minority groups to have more voice to educate the community on what it can do better or what still needs improvement.

Civic leadership opportunities for underrepresented populations.

Finally, in addition to inviting diverse citizens to participate in the business and social life of the city, the majority community needs to listen to the voices of diverse citizens:

Ask questions, make no assumptions and LISTEN.

All people feeling not only invited to the table but having a voice and not left out due to differences.

Need to hear from minority people about what makes them feel included or not.

Springfield has the Network for Young Professionals, however it feels as if the Commerce does not really care to listen to them.

We need to make it more encouraging and accessible for all citizens to participate and have a voice.

Actual citizens voices need to be heard by the powers that be.

City leaders actually listening and taking complaints seriously.

We need to make it more encouraging and accessible for all citizens to participate and have a voice.

. . . but more focused attention to give place and voice to underrepresented groups.

Opportunities for diverse citizens to interact: Providing education, hosting more community events, providing opportunities for personal interaction

Responses in this category were frequent. Education and training were seen as essential to overcoming the prejudice and ignorance about diversity that many respondents perceive. There was support for designing opportunities that allow diverse citizens to get to know and appreciate one another. Such opportunities could include events and festivals as well as programs designed to increase sensitivity to others. Education about other cultures/ways of living, developing and showing appreciation for diverse cultures, and getting to know one another's personal stories all serve to strengthen the community and support inclusion. And as can be seen from the comments, these ideas overlapped considerably.

Providing educational opportunities, particularly in the schools, was suggested by many respondents. Representative comments:

Having an educational team to train teachers and businesses on inclusion. To educate the population over the importance of having diverse teams.

Providing educational conversations over diversity in schools. There are huge community deserts in Springfield that have no one or groups of people to bridge the gap between diverse communities.

Schools are a great resource for families and work environments that would benefit from inclusive training. Ramapo for Children has a great model that has been successful in NY to build inclusive schools and communities.

Make a strong effort to expose children in schools to different cultures and beliefs, emphasizing that people with different beliefs are still people just like them and are entitled to their opinions and have a right to live their lives how they wish, just like they do, while not tolerating

intolerance that children may have picked up at home.

Education on the topics of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Most of the hate crimes comes from a place of pure ignorance.

Educate the community and businesses on the importance of having inclusive and diversity initiatives.

Educational events. I've lived in a city that conducted educational events about inclusiveness and welcomed the public to these events. They seemed to work in educating the public about inclusion.

We must offer consistent training on diversity and inclusion to adults as well as children in our schools.

More opportunities for diversity/inclusion training. Employers making it a regular, mandatory part of training would help. We need a shift in attitudes and understanding, which is not an easy goal.

Government should hold more leadership and conferences around fostering diversity in the workplace (ethnic, age and gender diversity).

Diversity competence training for all who work for the city of Springfield (ex: respecting people's perceived or known gender identity and/or sexual orientation).

Learn about and eliminate the use of microaggressions.

First of all, we need more education on what inclusion means: educate the community on what it means to be inclusive; provide resources on power, privilege, systems of oppression, and how those systems interact; help organize trainings and readings for community members that is offered to all.

Festivals and celebratory events are fun ways through which Springfield's diversity might be showcased, communicated to others, and appreciated. Representative comments, including several that are quite specific:

That we foster understanding among ethnicities through more activities that will bring people of all ethnicities together, like street fairs in neighborhoods, using Jordan Valley for more than just a place for kids to play in the water – have ethnic food fests there, concerts and plays and performances by different groups of people. Hold programs where people can sit alongside those of groups different than who/what they are.

Emphasis on all these [diverse groups] for community festivals and/or volunteer opportunities. Cross-culture meetings to learn about diverse cultures free to the public, maybe at the Library Center.

Development of arts and cultural resources/events to attract a more diverse population. Programs to encourage inclusiveness.

Events that may focus on a specific art but include how each culture uses and interprets the art form.

We need more art in the community. More community events with art as the center point so that the community can discuss what they are seeing and feeling.

.. . finding ways to weave diversity and inclusion into existing community events/elements – things like incorporating a diverse group of people in the planning or adding a new twist to an long-standing festival, essentially leveraging where community engagement already exists and is successful to include D & D instead of making it a separate initiative.

Celebrations of prominent holidays from other cultures is a good starting point, especially if the core of it is educational in nature. To foster inclusivity, you must start with bridging gaps in knowledge. If people understood each other a bit better, maybe they'd be more inclusive.

Community events that foster community discussion and involvement and show off other backgrounds than the white hetero norm.

More recognition and celebration events of holidays and events from other countries and parts of the world (i.e., Chinese New Year, Mexican 16 de Septiembre, World Cup, etc.).

More free community and social events, especially circulating around community cohesiveness and unity.

More festivals and special events to bring people together.

I support multicultural events. IT allows people to see other cultures as having the same needs and wants but different ways of expressing them.

Hacer mas eventos culturales.

Mas eventos culturales.

Neighborhood parties and activities.

More community events for ALL people. Everyone, white , black, brown, need to feel welcome at each other's events.

More public events, of all kinds, that encourage social interaction of the different types of communities within the Springfield area . . . you/old/all those in between; affluent/working class/lower incomes; all races; all genders; all sexual orientations'; educated/non-educated; residents/non-residents, etc.

More cultural themes festival. Maybe the type we see in San Diego Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, or New York. They all have cultural festivals that adhere to more diversity.

Not sure, maybe having more events for everyone, not just for a specific group so people have a chance to get to know people that may be different than themselves. Food or music type things that most people can relate to.

Perhaps having cultural events monthly from May through September to celebrate the diversity that Springfield has come to represent.

More events such as the Culturefest and the Multi-cultural Opportunity Faire.

We should see diversity in event advertising, news, and actively practice inclusiveness. Build multiple activities based around all cultures and attend these activities. Encourage people to meet their neighbors.

Several respondents suggested that when people get to know others as individuals, many of the prejudices disappear or are reduced. Springfield is perceived as being divided, with few opportunities for persons of different cultures to interact in a meaningful way. But when people do get to know one another beyond a surface level, inclusiveness increases. Examples:

Opportunities to interact with people who are different than me.

I think opportunities to celebrate, interact. We are pretty siloed.

To be intentional about getting diverse communities involved with dialogue about Springfield. This could involve setting up meeting in the diverse communities and campaigning for their input (churches, restaurants. . .).

Opportunities to tell stories of people of all walks of life so there is an opportunity for people to meet others they assume are very different from them . . . and maybe even make a connection to see that they aren't so different after all.

We have a transgender at our church and she gave a question and answer testimony of her life. Afterwards, I felt more understanding of her situation. I believe education is key to becoming a stronger, more inclusive community.

People that teach things have often tried to use pervasive training such as Facing Racism to solve these [diversity] issues. At the end of the day, the only way to get past this is for people to build relationships and work hand in hand.

More face-to-face dialogue? I feel people are threatened by the "unknown". Maybe opportunities to know people as "individuals" versus stereotypes.

I think continuing to have open and honest discussion about issues of race or "otherness" and how we might modify our community systems or personal conversations would be good.

To be able to combine different cultures in the same spaces and have an open dialogue.

We have festivals, which are good, but honoring difference in everyday life is just not prevalent.

More involvement with sister cities in Japan and Mexico. Possibly get the public schools involved in learning about the sister cities.

Continued dialogue and events where groups mingle in events. The challenge is all groups feel more comfortable with folks like themselves, both minorities and majorities.

Opportunities for interactive dialog between different people [and] group to give people a better understanding of differences as well as similarities.

Having more meetups where close-minded individuals had the opportunity to meet people different from themselves. Now, to get people to show up . . .

Some experience that would bring different areas of the city together. A volunteer day where 2 disparate groups work together.

More programs that appeal across demographic groups and give folks from different backgrounds the opportunity and incentive to interact with one another in a safe environment.

The role of the faith community

According to a number of respondents, the faith community holds great potential for bringing people together, increasing awareness and appreciation of individuals from different cultures and traditions, and teaching respect and kindness. However, many respondents believe the churches are not living up to this potential.

Several comments referenced what is perceived as a surface-level friendliness, extended only to those who are similar. Representative comments:

I've listened for decades to our community and church leaders touting how "friendly" Springfieldians are. (And people ARE initially friendly to those who are white and Protestant like me.) People who don't fit the preferred demographic aren't invited to join in – even by the churches – and don't feel they are welcome.

It is mainly the Christian churches that exclude people. Whether you are black, Hispanic, gay, trans, homeless these are the ones that the churches do not extend openness or love to . . . This is not what Jesus taught. There are a few churches that do this, but most don't, including the megachurches.

The things that make Springfield so divided are the things that most folks "celebrate" in this city – namely their political affiliation and their religion; both of which are pretty divisive by nature. Your 2-3 most prominent megachurches in this area are preaching a divisive form of politics from the pulpit, it makes it difficult for those folks to then go out into the community and embrace people who aren't straight, white, Republicans. The same goes for religion in and around this area – anti-Democrat, anti-gay, anti-anything that their preacher didn't spoon feed them on Sunday morning.

One problem is the discomfort people who are seen as 'others' here (non-white, non-Christian, non-conservative, LBGT, etc.) experience on a daily basis.

Many respondents decried what they saw as a disproportionate influence in the social and political sphere of Christian churches, particularly evangelical and megachurches. In response to what would make Springfield more inclusive, the following comments were typical:

. . . reduction in the outsized influence wielded by conservative religious institutions.

Fewer churches.

Less mega churches. And I'm a seminary student

Less religion. For people to be real and not phony. We are a family of faith and have had a hard time fitting in here.

Less judgmental religious groups. Not using Jesus as a reason to discriminate.

Not letting the Christians and rednecks run people and businesses they don't agree with out of town (The Alchemist's Attic, for example).

Less influence and hate speak from evangelical Christians.

Fewer racists, bigots, and toxic Christians.

Less exclusion of non-Christians in public places, including holidays, decorations, school, etc.

Stop trying to bend to James River Assembly's idea of how the city should be run.

Stop letting churches lead the cultural direction of our city and tax any religious organization that gets involved in any politics.

Limiting the churches power in elections. Congregations are told how they must vote and churches are constantly running interference to make others feel excluded.

More education and less influence of fundamentalist religious dogma.

Several respondents called specifically for separation of church and state, and the removal of religious influences in public decision making and religious symbols on public items:

Also separation of church and state.

Also take religion out of decisions and talk. Separation of church and state.

I would prefer that religion not be on our police vehicles.

Freedom of religion and freedom FROM religion. Pandering to one group of people (white Christians) alienates all other people who don't look the same or believe the same. Religious inscriptions/statements should be eliminated from all government property to truly have an inclusive city for ALL people.

Although most who commented about the faith community believed that religion served to divide citizens, others believed that the churches have potential to help Springfield become more inclusive:

That our churches were more welcoming and worked together better (especially with churches that are primarily a different race, ethnicity, or low-income).

Free education offered through church partnerships to deconstruct the anemic understandings of their own religion (and its implications for sexuality, politics, race, and economics) among white, conservative, evangelical/fundamentalist Christians.

I would also like to see the churches working together and put denominations behind them. There are so many non-profits in the area and places that want to help, but very little overlap in how they work together. I think all churches should be part of the Council of Churches . . .

Finally, one individual provided a warning that there should be limits to inclusiveness:

Be careful about applying the concept [inclusiveness] to socially embrace sexual sin. (Gen.19; Lev. 18:22; Matt. 11:23; Rom. 1:24-31; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Jude 7.)

Adding legal protections for LGBTQ and other underrepresented groups individuals

Respondents asked for stronger laws to protect minorities, especially the LGBTQ+ community. About one in 15 mentioned the LGBTQ community as one that particularly needs support and protection. Comments ranged from those generally supportive of inclusion for LGBTQ individuals to those asking specifically that Springfield's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) ordinance be reinstated. This ordinance was passed by Springfield City Council in 2014 and narrowly repealed (51% to 49%) by voters in 2015.

General comments of support included the following:

Building a more LGBTQ friendly community would be a start.

Better acceptance of LGBTQ community.

To have equality in our rights for everyone, including the LGBTQ+ individuals.

Creating an environment where our LGBTQ+ friends, loved ones, and neighbors feel safe, welcome, and free from discrimination.

Greater protections for LGBTQ employees.

Improve legal rights, safety, visibility of LGBTQ community.

More support and safe places for non-white heteronormative persons.

Specific calls to reintroduce and pass something like the SOGI ordinance included the following:

Pass SOGI ordinance.

City-wide protections for LGBTQ people in employment, rental, and public access laws . . .

Add protections for LGBTQ people against housing & employment discrimination in Springfield's local ordinances.

To have it in our city charter that we welcome all races, religions, sexual orientations, etc. The repeal of SOGI really made us appear non-inclusive and obviously we are since it was repealed.

Passing a city ordinance that prohibits discrimination based on orientation and gender identity.

Adding sexual orientation to non-discrimination policies.

Prioritize LGBTQ+ anti-discrimination ordinance. The lack of this protection makes me want to relocate.

Adopt some form of the bias crimes/SOGI ordinance, indicating to the public that the officials elected to represent the community do in fact support safety for all.

A stronger non-discrimination ordinance that protects the LGBTQ+ community. Perhaps a way to hear the stories of discrimination that happen to people from a variety of minority groups? So many people think it doesn't happen because they don't see it. . . But I do wish there were a good way for potential allies to be better aware.

Economic disparities and the north/south divide

There was a perception among some respondents that the divide between north and south Springfield contributes to a lack of inclusion many experience. Although this was not one of the largest categories (mentioned perhaps one in 50 comments), it came up often enough to be noted. Representative comments:

I feel like there is a huge divide between our south Springfield vs all other parts of Spfld. I think we need to put more focus on bringing communities together and including the central/ north areas in this. A lot of retail and shops are all located on the southside. It feels like the majority of SBJ stories I read about growth are all focused on south side businesses.

Bring all of Springfield together, stop the division of Northside versa the Southside. Springfield should be a whole. All of Springfield created equally. What the city does for the south they do and treat the north the same way.

Less division between north and south – especially regarding improvements to roads. Sidewalks, parks, and other city tax funded initiatives.

The first would be to bridge the gap between North and South Springfield. There are many people on the Southside of Springfield and surrounding towns, i.e. Nixa, Ozark, Republic, that do not want anything to do with those on the Northside of Springfield. This is primarily b/c they perceive it as a high crime area. It is not only where we have pockets of poverty but where much of our diversity exists. In order to be more inclusive, I think the number one goal would be to break down this barrier that currently exists.

There is road called Division Street (based on the 2 cities past), it divided the older north side of town from the newer south. The north side has been called the ghetto side of town by a lot of residents. Rename it United Street and fix all the pot holes. More parks, trees, trails and a community focus on well being could help boost morale, increase a healthier population, and lower drug addiction.

We absolutely must start making certain the North half of the city school system is equally on par with those districts in other parts of the city. They [are] critically important to the future of their communities, the city, the region, and beyond in the years to come. Failure to support these practices is the same as saying we are inclusive as long as those that want to be included are in the right financial demographic/situation to be accepted.

We have a dire need for more empathy, and acceptance [of] people from those who live on the South side of town. Especially those who have greater economic resources. I am extremely tired of the snarky, hateful attitudes coming from the people who live south [of] Sunset Street. . . .

More respect for city center schools like Parkview and the elementary schools in the center and north.

Making the North part of the city attractive to new businesses and making it more attractive in general. This area would benefit from a more diverse group of businesses since it is the most diverse area of Springfield.

People who post on NextDoor website, regularly refer to "people on the north side", "juveniles" and "undesirables" when they describe burglaries and theft.

Things have gotten better over the years, but it still seems like there is a racial divide between north and south in the city. Many of our multicultural populations are "hidden," so to speak

Improve conditions on the north side; enforce nuisance property regulations. Make the whole city desirable living.

Invest in the Northside.

I think we need to work harder at uniting the north and south!

These comments reflect the south side's lack of respect for the north side and were seen by those who responded as detrimental to making Springfield a strong and inclusive community.

Addressing societal issues such as income inequality, poverty, crime, drugs and homelessness

Many respondents believe that societal issues cause most of Springfield's problems, including the lack of inclusiveness. Issues of crime, poverty and income inequality, lack of jobs paying a living wage, derelict properties, affordable housing, homelessness and drug use all negatively affect the city. Comments:

The socioeconomic gaps in Springfield is what causes the lack of inclusion, but I don't know how to help fix it.

Ensuring access to citizens' most basic needs such as: housing, transportation, uninterrupted power, clean water and affordable financial services is critical so that more people can participate in inclusive growth and that small businesses can flourish. Inclusion is making sure everyone is included in the conversation and to do this we must also address privilege and opportunity. Antoinette Samuel said: "income inequality and poverty are important issues we need to work on. Inclusiveness means affordability and non-discrimination in housing so that neighborhoods are diverse and representative of a city's population. . ."

Higher wages to increase the median household income in the city. This action would enable people to participate in all facets of community activities.

Raising the minimum wage for adults so that there is more equity in living accommodations and resolve hunger issues that perhaps lead to the crime issues.

Better employment opportunities, specifically for lower income residents.

More meaningful full time employment opportunities for people age 60 and over that pays a living wage.

Care needs to be taken to integrate women, new immigrants, felons and communities of color into the labor force. . . .

Better police department and a city jail. Safety first.

Get real criminals and beggars off the streets, get our name out of the national ratings for undesirable places to live, crime ridden statistical views and drug capital for meth/cocaine/heroin [sic] and legalizing the gateway drug. Create some kind of respect for this city and people within it will respect each other.

. . . now you need to focus on crime. Number 61 on the top 100 murder cities.

Less crime, abandoned houses, people not caring about their stuff or properties, homeless people.

Public schools need resources for poorer neighborhoods so all children have similar opportunities to succeed.

Affordable housing in all areas. . .

Revitalization of inner city neighborhoods with a more diverse population, as well as a revitalization of properties. Having nice things often makes people take better care of them, especially if they are the owner of the property.

There are many dilapidated homes in my neighborhood. The city does not regulate this very well, and therefore, my community seems more vulnerable to unsafe situations—drugs, loiterers, crime—because there are so many empty and neglected homes where people can do such things.

Renters rarely feel vested in their communities and rightly so. They are not financially invested in their neighborhoods and they are treated as such. They recognize that their community complaints and concerns from public safety, nuisance properties, and requested police actions are taken less seriously and acted on less often than those of neighborhoods with larger percentages of homeowners or higher property tax revenues causing a demographically generated systemic issue in our city; and while Springfield is certainly not alone in this, we have a tremendous opportunity to start setting an example of doing right by everyone equally regardless of their financial circumstances.

Hold slumlords accountable for the negative effects their behavior has on our community. Create land/housing trusts and/or housing co-operatives to increase availability of safe, affordable housing for low-income residents, especially single mothers and their families.

Working to get the homelessness and addicts off the street and somewhere safe. Try to reduce crime in all neighborhoods and being more understanding of single parent households and needs that they might need.

Having a safe place for the homeless to stay, a bus system that can get them around and give them some dignity. Mental illness among the homeless needs to be addressed so they don't fall between the cracks. (I've always thought the empty Central Bible College could house all sorts of opportunities and safe, clean spaces for the homeless.)

We need housing and resources for the homeless and impoverished. . .

Lessen the drug use, homeless population, and work on the community as a whole.

More support and opportunities for people with disabilities, specifically developmental disabilities.

More services for the disabled, mentally and physically. Better services for elderly and lower income.

Accessibility and transportation issues, particularly for the disabled

The community would be strengthened and more people would be able to participate in the civic and social life of the city if accessibility and transportation were improved, particularly for the disabled.

Comments:

More accessibility and transportation for the disabled.

Springfield lacks some accommodation for people with various disabilities, and the cities [sic] “walkability is lacking, which is a problem for people who cannot utilize the bus system due to their mobility devices. . . . Springfield also lacks family bathrooms and disabled bathrooms . . . many public locations also lack changing tables for younger children.

Better/more sidewalks (easier “walkability”); encouraging people to get to know their neighbors.

More accessibility features in the community. As the parent of a special needs child, we struggle getting out. Where am I going to change him? Is the place accessible? Are those features going to be blocked somehow? More accessible parking places in busy places. Downtown is completely out of the question for us because of the amount of walking.

I think accessibility and universal design for all people including those with disabilities. . . 1 in 4 people has a disability so I believe it should become a number one priority. I think better public transit so those who don’t have the luxury of having cars or choose other modes of transportation have good safe options and easy efficient choices so they aren’t forced to have a car.

Leaders need to not only read into the community as a whole . . . but reach into the disabled community as well. . . Curbside shopping needs to be more accessible to people on food stamps. . . . Clothing stores are impossible to enter aisles with a wheelchair due to owners wanting to fill every bit of available space with product. I’m not sure what the answer is here. Maybe shopping assistance upon request? . . . I never realized how small my world would become when my disabilities progressed to being in a wheelchair.

. . . better infrastructure and methods of transportation (for example, I typically won’t attend my club meetings because of rush hour and the inconvenience, which is a shame because I really love that feeling on inclusion with those with the same interests as me). . .

Make the bus stops accessible so that people using wheelchairs are not dropped in a ditch or

traffic.

Better accommodations for those who are differently-abled. . . as part of boards, chairs, and other city planning committees to ensure their perspective is being considered when planning is taking place . . .

More accessibility, better acceptance of those with different abilities. We have affordable housing crisis, transportation is not Very accessible nor easy, business building not ADA compliant. Many restaurants I can't go with a friend who utilized a wheelchair due to the lack of space. . . . we need more accepting and open business for those with disabilities.

Significant investment in multi-modal transportation including: expanded public transit, integration of bike lanes/infrastructure, more walkable communities (including improved ADA accessibility in public spaces and sidewalks).

Sidewalks on every street in town with easy to reach poles for hitting the traffic crossing buttons. Bus shelters at every bus stop in town. Yearly by wheelchair, foot, bike and bus tours by the bosses making decisions about Spgld before they make decisions.

Increase in diversity not necessary/desirable

Interestingly, there were a number of responses to suggest that Springfield doesn't need to do anything to increase diversity—either things are fine as they are, just talking about diversity fosters division, or increasing diversity would make things worse for citizens. While these do not represent a majority of comments—perhaps one comment in 50 or so—they are worth noting because they represent either attitudes that must be acknowledged or potentially teachable attitudes. Comments ranged from the belief that Springfield is already inclusive to active hostility to inclusion. The following are representative of the many comments suggesting Springfield is already inclusive:

TOO "INCLUSIVE" NOW . . . NEED LESS INCLUSIVE!

I hardly believe "inclusion" is an issue in Springfield. I don't believe that there are any policies/ordinances/laws that stifle inclusion. I think it's pretty fair across the board. Respect isn't something that can necessarily be fostered. It's something that is earned, and Springfield is already a place that can provide that opportunity to properly earn respect.

I think it's quite inclusive. I've seen nothing to suggest otherwise.

As a business owner with many employees in Springfield, I do not see or hear of other businesses turning away potential employees because they are gay. . . The problem I see is someone is trying to make up a problem. I understand we need to take action if someone is mistreating a person because of their sexuality but most of us don't see that happening. . . The gay community in Springfield is small and I think they are being treated just fine.

We are one of the few cities in Missouri that has diversity and compassion and inclusion without a lot of enforced, restrictive and resented laws.

Our community is very inclusive, period. . .

A couple of respondents genuinely wondered who does not see Springfield as being inclusive:

Where/Who did this question originate with and why do they feel left out??

Nothing else needed. What makes you think something is needed or missing?

The following comments are not necessarily hostile to diversity but suggest that calling attention to diversity, particularly if the government is involved, presents a danger or overreach. The following are representative:

Quit dwelling on diversity. It promotes division and adversity

Stop making it a big deal

It's already too inclusive

Get out of the diversity business!

Not dwelling so much on not being inclusive or non-inclusive. A positive mindset goes a long way.

I feel like this isn't something the city needs to worry about. It's 2020 and we aren't some small podunk town. The inclusivity in this town is fine and up to par and standard.

Several participants believe that focusing on inclusion promotes identity politics and is counterproductive:

It's fine the way it is. Government should not force inclusive measures on the people.

Nothing. Stop trying to force the issue. It needs to happen naturally or it's just more government overreach, wasted tax dollars, and the end result will be worse. . . "

Stop forcing crap inclusive initiatives. With the social justice bullies these days, it's not a fight for equality but a fight for inequality with persons who are not a person of color, BIPOC, black, African American, or whatever politically correct jargon they choose wanting to blame white people for all their problems . . . but liberals keep pushing their agenda to get those of another race to adopt a victim mentality.

Don't force it. Let the community grow naturally diverse. If you ever attach a label to anyone that divides through class warfare, you will cause resentment and derail what you hope to accomplish.

Do not encourage identity politics. Sending out public questionnaires like this one and forming Race and Gender Relations Counsels [sic] within our city government encourages and fosters problems and complaining between citizens who are otherwise completely alike except for their skin color and/or sex or sexual orientation. Why beg for trouble?

Quit doing horrible race bate surveys such as this!

Stop focusing on race and focus on people.

Less emphasis. Pushing inclusion alienates people.

By trying to be inclusive you are, but its very nature, not being inclusive. If you are a citizen of the United States living in Springfield, ALL rights are guaranteed you under our constitution. Get rid of inclusiveness language and just BE Americans.

Among the most hostile comments were the following:

Lesser push for inclusion, Not sure we need to be more inclusive,

Black people quit playing the race card and actually hold themselves accountable for their own actions and place in society.

If ethnic people chose to act decent individuals and not gang bangers. There wouldn't be any issues.

Quit doing special crap for certain aspects of our population.

Kick the homeless out . . .

Get rid of all the non-whites

Kick out all the minorities . . . there [sic] not wanted.

Stop with all the faggot and negro parades.

Too many minorities, there are areas that are unsafe in a once wonderful, wholesome city due to blacks. The mentality is so far off anymore the future looks bleak for whites.

Springfield used to be a charming, safe community that provided quaint shop's [sic] and dining. It has devolved over the years to making national news as being a top most dangerous city to live in and number 1 in Missouri for crime. Stop trying to be inclusive and worry about quality of life for your current citizens.

While it is disheartening to see these comments, all of us must recognize that these represent a segment of our population that fears diversity and sees nothing positive as coming from increasing diversity and encouraging inclusiveness.

Miscellaneous comments

The following comments were not widely represented in the survey but reflect perceptions deemed worth including. Some were general comments suggesting, essentially, that we all need to be nicer to one another:

Generally speaking, people could be nicer.

We can just start by being nicer. Say hello to people you come in contact with. Ask someone you work with to have dinner with you. People of different races mostly eat the same foods, have the same interests, and have the same problems. If we were all blind we wouldn't know the difference.

Kindness and patience

More acceptance of people with differences and stopping the ignorance.

More respect and dignity shown to others, including those of religious backgrounds, sexual orientation, and opposing viewpoints.

More tolerant of other cultures.

Raising a more compassionate responsible generation.

The population could learn to be less homophobic and more welcoming of foreigners from all over the world.

Businesses, individuals and churches being more accepting of different cultures and lifestyles.

You'd have to overhaul the entire culture.

Some hoped that we would take some action in calling out racism and discrimination when we observed it:

I feel Springfield would be more inclusive if we took more serious measures to reprimand people who are exclusionary/intolerant of those who are different from them, such as loss of job and expulsion from schools. . .

Maybe have schools have harsher punishments for bullying.

. . . accountability for hate related actions . . .

To have a complete overhaul in politics, and leaders! To hold all leadership accountable!

Quit tolerating hate. Those opposed to change hate political correctness, but there is no excuse for not making our language and actions be inclusive.

One respondent suggested that the survey itself was not practicing inclusivity, and four responses were offered in Spanish:

First, make this survey available in other languages. Second, this survey assumes access to the digital world. [Note: the survey available through Qualtrics had a button that translated it to Spanish]

Promover que personas de otras culturas tengan trabajos en entidades gubernamentales. Promover respeto a las diferentes culturas. Hacer más eventos culturales que la comunidad se incluya en todos los ámbitos. Y que en las escuelas incluyan más propuestas para la comunidad minoritaria. que los americanos tengan conocimiento y aceptación a otras culturas [Encourage people from other cultures to have jobs in government entities; Encourage respect for different cultures. Hold more cultural events so that the entire community is included. And that schools include more proposals for minority community. And that Americans have knowledge of and acceptance of other culture.]

mas eventos culturales, mas diversidad en las empresas [more cultural events, more diversity in the companies]

Some comments criticized what respondents saw as hypocrisy from the left:

If those demanding “equality” and “inclusivity” weren’t so hateful to anyone who disagrees with them. Being accepting to those who agree with you is the same thing you accuse of those who disagree with you.

Less hypocrisy from liberal and left leaning factions.

Minorities need to welcome in their groups the majorities instead of choosing to stay to themselves and talk bad about the majorities.

A less liberal city government.

More respect for the conservative Christians.

Some respondents decried government involvement in the issue of inclusiveness:

Less government intrusion – questions about race divide us rather than looking for common ground.

The government should not be involved.

Stop trying to force the issue. It needs to happen naturally or it’s just more government overreach, wasted tax dollars and the end result will be worse.

Show us how selective forced govt. inclusion benefits the entire area.

Questions like this are slanted to encourage one group of people to use the law to force their views on another group. This is not the role of government – stop it.

Finally, some respondents noted that progress to increase inclusiveness has been made, and time will take care of the rest:

Time. I’ve lived here my whole life, and we are far more diverse than we were in the 60’s and 70’s, but we still have a way to go. Only as folks who are NOT white learn that Springfield is accepting of diversity will they come here to live.

Education and time. Springfield is much more inclusive than it was 30 years ago, but one simply needs to read the comments from any post on Facebook from the News Leader or KY3 to see there is work to do.

Some of it is just time...but also more people moving in who either represent a bigger variety of ethnicities and other differences, or who come from places where inclusiveness just goes without saying.

Integration grows naturally over time, it can’t be forced.

Continuing to be more welcoming. Change in this area takes time.

Keep doing what you’re doing, it is working, just give it more time.

Question 2: If you have experienced barriers to fully participating in the Springfield community, please share the top three barriers you have faced.

Respondents were first asked, in a closed question, whether they had experienced barriers to participating fully in the Springfield community. Nearly one-third, or 30.52%, said that they had. Respondents then were asked to share the top three barriers they had faced. These related to discrimination due to age, sex, gender/sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability status, religion, and fear related to crime and various types of harassment in Springfield.

Many of the responses were one-word or one-phrase answers without elaboration regarding the nature of the barrier: *sex, LGBTQ, disability, religion, age*, and so forth. The responses selected here attempt to show the nature of the barrier, why it is perceived to be a barrier, or how it has manifested in the life of the respondent.

Barriers relating to disability accommodations and transportation

Barriers relating to lack of disability accommodations were often intertwined with issues of transportation. With respect to disability, representative comments included:

Sidewalk absence or disrepair, lack of repair or obstacle removal when reporting sidewalks blocked, sidewalks too steep in slope for navigating in manual wheelchair, whether it is forward-backward or side-to-side slopes

Accessibility (wheelchair); no ramps or there are stairs.

The city is not walkable. There are no sidewalks or bike lanes on the west side of town. After spending some time in Europe and Asia this past year and we are sorely lacking in walkability, which adds significantly to quality of life.

My husband and I are both disabled. He walks with a cane and I have a condition that makes sitting and standing very difficult from spinal cord injuries. There should be fewer barriers and more handrails at events and meeting sites. Chairs need arms and backs. Fewer big curbs and more handicapped access.

I have mobility issues. While the laws are followed, some venues are insensitive to issues like heart problems or painful mobility not requiring wheelchairs.

Curbs: Curb cuts at numerous businesses are not at the door, but way down at the corner of the building.

Doorways: Doorways are too narrow to get a chair through without scraping up my hands or jacking up my shoulder because of having to hold open weighted doors and going over high thresholds.

I'm in a power wheelchair; can't drive and Access express is great but need the taxis in the city need to have wheelchair ramps.

Ability to easily enter facilities/buildings: stairs, no elevator, too much info/display items on counters.

I have friends and loved ones that are disabled, and seeing my friend going across a large parking lot to get to a ramp is gut wrenching. Cars driving through with no regard to a person in a power chair. Just to get to that ramp.

I also see this with restaurants. My friends who use walkers or wheelchairs can't go everywhere and have the same choices or eat and go out with me. They either can't get in to the place or they can't use the restroom while there. This seems so "not" inclusive to the point that it is discrimination.

Answering for a family member with a developmental disability. She is completely able and willing to work, but employers are struggling with how to work with her. Voc rehab and other employment services for those with disabilities only have so many jobs (cleaning, sorting, etc.) and many people with disabilities can do more creative work if they have the right supports.

I am hearing disabled. Many times I cannot hear at certain public meetings or events.

Related are transportation issues, which cause problems especially for those with mobility issues:

The public bus system is not user friendly. . . There is so much more Springfield could be doing even with limited resources. Oh, the transportation system for seniors and people with disabilities is so fragmented and lacks coordination and cooperation with each other. Training for cab drivers. The cost for Uber, Lift is so much more expensive here than any place I have lived!

I do not have a car and so it is difficult to get around the city via public transportation to attend events without using Uber, which is not sustainable.

Difficulty of traveling around town with [out] a car; government services not centrally located (SSA on E. Battlefield—can you quickly tell me which busses to take to get there from downtown and how long that journey will take?)

Lack of ability to get around easily (public transport) due to a disability and too widely spaced bus stops and busses not running many places.

I run a day program for individuals with disabilities in Springfield. We have run into a few there. Transportation is a huge one. . . . the city bus routes take so long and aren't always the safest. Access isn't easy on our individuals because of the timeframe they could come. . . . I did have one client lose her job over the access bus.

The bus stops are on the side of the road in which there is no shoulder and the grassy area is about 1.5 before the ditch.

Everything to do with non-vehicular travel in Springfield. Sidewalks are not a guarantee. Bus system doesn't have very extensive hours and could potentially benefit from inter-area transit that includes Springfield's outlying areas. The lack of safe and accessible bus stops is a huge frustration. So many of them are put in a place that does not have sufficient sidewalks access, alongside roadside ditches, or are not near crosswalks with is huge frustration during evening/weekend routes when the place you need to go requires a long walk down a road to

find safe pedestrian crossing or otherwise illegally crossing heavy traffic. . . . Not having safe, useful transportation available at all times is limiting because Springfield is designed to be very car-centric and many useful resources in the city (be they the Library, schools, grocery stores, movie theatres, museums, social services, etc.) are not located near to each other. Therefore, trying to go to any number of these eats up a lot of personal time outside of work.

Public transportation. While one street (like Fort) has three very close together [bus stops] (literally two right across from each other) other areas have no bus stop and the closest one is a 20+ minute walk. Commute times are also difficult. I need to get to work and have to get up and ready extremely early due to a two-hour+ bus ride to get to work.

A number of respondents shared difficulties with access, services for children with special needs, or issues related to autism:

I love our parks but I know that when talking with family and friends, if children or parents have disabilities, many of our parks are not set up to enjoy together. There might be one or two accessible playground equipment parks but they are segregated and people who want to spend time together have a barrier and can't.

Bathrooms where I can take my toddler and disabled preteen and change her are virtually nonexistent, bathrooms where my husband can change our daughter ARE nonexistent, parking in many parks is too close to the playground (Dan Kinney) making parenting a flight risk nightmare. . . .

Access to daycare programs for school aged children. Examples include being told my child could not attend after school programs facilitated by the YMCA because they are not "staffed" to support children with needs. Access to summer daycare programs, same as above. Access to extracurricular activities, examples would be parks that include accessible playground equipment.

I have an autistic child and there are not always a lot of sensory-friendly options.

Kids events not being sensory friendly. No interpretation services for hard of hearing kiddos. Having to travel to LC or St. Louise for basic services related to my multiple children with different abilities.

1) Lack of competence for in-class assistance for my child with sensory processing disorder. 2) lack of training for teachers to accommodate/handle/challenge gifted children or children with a disability that hinders learning opportunities . . .

I'm autistic and extreme noise in this city has is big problem. Fireworks, very loud cars/motorcycles treating the streets like playgrounds, volume at events on the square too loud, art openings too loud, stores too loud. And I mean too loud for my earplugs, loud enough to cause hearing-damage volume. . . . It's not just autistics with sensory issues. Traumatic brain injury (lots of vets with that and just mundane things like falling off a ladder) causes similar issues. It can make a simple trip out to get groceries a real challenge.

Discrimination based on LGBTQ+ status

Numerous comments described the legal discrimination that LGBTQ+ individuals can and have experienced. Just as heartbreaking is the fear that many LGBTQ+ individuals live with daily in our community. Representative comments:

I can still get fired or evicted or denied service for being queer. That lack of security has been a major source of fear for me and has limited my potential.

I'm a gay male and have lived in Springfield for more than 20 years. I can currently be fired by an employer for my sexual orientation without question. I can also be denied housing for the same reason. So #1 [barrier] is laws that don't support diversity.

I'm gay and can be fired in my state . . . KC and St. Louis gave put protections in place, why hasn't Springfield ????? I have friends who have been fired because of who they love . . . come on!!!!

Worried about losing housing due to sexuality—Harassed in the community for my sexuality. Not promoted due to my sexuality and gender.

Being Gay, I have been denied acceptance into Graduate programs. . .

LGBTQ+ people are undervalued in areas of employment. Further, there are many verbal attacks when visible. Most of all, LGBTQ+ are discriminated against in housing. Specifically, when searching for rental accommodations.

- 1) I got kicked out of housing for being gay and didn't have the financial or legal resources to fight it. 2) I'm regularly confronted in public restrooms because I "don't look like I belong."
- 3) . . . I've had people yelling slurs out of windows at me, confronting me for no apparent reason, blatant staring, etc.

Gender—when my child has tried to advocate as an ally for LGBTQ+ friends at school she has faced resistance from teachers.

I was unable to put my children's other parent on school paperwork because the school secretary refused to put a same sex couple down as parents. I watched my community overturn discrimination protections after only a short time of them being in place. I had a police officer refuse to take a report on a hate crime occurring because we are a same sex couple.

Because I'm gay I can't share my private life with my partner of 34 years in a business setting without fear of repercussions. Because I have not been able to share my private life without fear of judgement or worse, effectively I'm barred from being part of the community, even though I'm considered a community leader.

Holding hands with my girlfriend out in public and being called a "dirty gay who is going to hell" on the downtown square.

As an LGBTQ member, I have sometimes felt that I cannot express myself (say I have a girlfriend) in the workplace for fear that my job is not safe. I have left my girlfriend off the lease for fear of losing housing if I were to get an unaccepting property manager.

- 1) I can be discriminated against due to being gay by any business that does not want to serve me – this is legal. 2) Not accepted at churches I have attended by their extreme anti-gay

beliefs. 3) Feeling like my sexuality is an issue at my job.

Being treated differently than others in the workforce, because I was gay. I was not allowed to take funeral leave when my partner of 7 years died because we were not married.

If I hold my wife's hand anywhere besides at a LGBTQ event, we get looks from people. Being LGBTQ, I could lose my job or my housing for saying so. I've also been told by multiple churches, mainly AoG, that I could not be a member b/c I'm LGBTQ.

My kid is made fun of at school for having a black father and gay parents; my kid is teased that he is "gay" because he is different, making gay something negative and shameful.

Feeling unwelcome in my university (hateful speech allowed by anti-gay protestors on MSU campus).

Well, one of my kids is gay, so I feel less than welcome at all but about 2 churches in this city. That isn't the city's fault, I guess. But church is such a big part of social life here.

As a trans woman living in the heart of the Midwest, I'm keenly aware day in and day out that being queer -- and more specifically being recognized as queer -- in this part of the country can be dangerous. There are certain places and events in Springfield that I just know I should not attend due to the kind of crowds they attract. There's only one or two music venues in town I feel safe in. Public transit is downright terrifying (for so many more reasons).

Gender identity—Being a transwoman, I have been refused service and care because of who I am. I have friends refused access to restroom. Access to medical care—Physicians will refuse patients due to LGBTQ status. How is that OK for people to not get health care?

Mercy not accepting trans patient. Academy Bank not accepting trans customer that have legally changed names. Area churches stating in their online about them. Non accepting of trans people.

I have faced a ton of street harassment for exercising outside while being lesbian, including trash and two liter soda bottles being thrown at e out of car windows as they drive past me. I also have never felt comfortable asking to be called anything other than my given name or assigned sex at birth in a professional setting, as I have seen many of my trans peers be belittled and disrespected when they do make this request.

It's incredibly difficult to find trans-specific medical care in Springfield, and it often feels like doctors and hospitals don't know what to do with us. For services such as endocrinology, we have to look as far as Columbia or Kansas City. Finding work as a trans person is difficult anywhere and Springfield is no exception. I'm lucky enough to work from home, but my partner has faced discrimination in the hiring process.

Healthcare: Continued lack of competent care for LGBTQ+ people here at home. Undue burden caused by requiring travel to other cities who are ensuring competent healthcare for all.

Barriers of race and ethnicity

Another prominent category involved barriers due to race and ethnicity. Many responses simply

indicated “race” or “racial discrimination” without specifying how these manifest. Responses provided below are those that provide some idea of how race and ethnicity are perceived as barriers to inclusion:

Discrimination due to my accent. Lack of education from non-travelers. Made fun due to English being my second language and having grammatical errors.

Being judged poorly by coworkers, supervisors and community members due to my race. Being retaliated against by supervisors and coworkers for calling attention to overt racism and microaggressions in the workplace. . .

My husband and I like to walk. In most of the streets I felt welcomed, but in some places, when people listen that my husband and I communicate in Spanish, they act as if we are a threat. In two occasions a buy with a white pick-up truck, drove on the sidewalk to force us to walk on the street.

Some Springfieldians treat other cultures with a sense of fear, disdain, coldness and non-inclusiveness. Some cultures have to “work” to make the Caucasian population feel comfortable in the most common places, restaurants, grocery stores, gas stations, churches, etc. Law enforcement assumption of my household’s character, despite being a model citizen with no arrests, good credit, and longstanding job.

No community gatherings for Native American interest.

Police “suspicion” profiling

Prejudice for being in an interracial marriage. My husband feeling out of place & judged for being the only black person in the place.

Passive-aggressive racism on a daily basis. Aggressive racism on a weekly/monthly basis.

Refused or delayed service on many, many occasions based on racial appearance.

Being made to feel unwelcome at certain public venues. Being called names by strangers in public. Threatening displays from drivers (My experiences have been quite mild as an Asian-American.

Lack of community activities/events planned to allow individuals from other cultures/ethnic groups the opportunity to share their special holidays, how/when they observe them, and the historical importance/value the holidays hold for these individuals.

Often being the token black person. Gaslighting during conversations about diversity.

My family is bi-racial and we have faced actively racist language and actions.

. . . Immigrant from Mexico has caused racial profiling. . .

Feeling uncomfortable in some places because I am Latino.

Racial slurs.

Repeated racist incidents in various churches, racist incidents at sporting events, racist incidents at university.

Implicit bias regarding my eligibility for promotion to leadership roles. I am not perfect, but neither are the white coworkers that were promoted. There are those that re in power that are quick to point out the errors and failures of those o color and the diverse community, while ignoring the same errors and failures of those of the white community.

When I experienced having my child, I often attended my dr. appointments alone as my husband is very busy with our small business. The Dr. asked me several times if ‘the father’ was white or black . . . and after I said, “My husband is Caucasian” she proceeded to say, “Well, I can feel all kinds of nappy hair in there.” . . . I was so mortified and embarrassed and it was way too late to search for another Dr. . . . the Dr. brought up my child’s hair two more times and she expressed her confusion as to why his hair was straight and blonde. This was at the Women’s Center at Cox.

Most recently, at Michael’s, I was shopping for an art supply and had a question. I waited in line twice. First, being passed over by a busy cashier but then I was next and two other women, both white and not formally in line, had their needs taken care of with no problem.

While I am white, older and male (all positions of privilege in our society), I have witnessed the racism some of my friends have experienced.

I’m from the east side of St. Louis originally, even though I’m white and Appalachian by birth, so when I worked for SPS I constantly felt that I had to help Springfieldians rethink their bad attitudes toward African-American kids. Oh, yes, I heard the “n” word used. That made me feel a distance from my co-workers.

Lack of accountability and consequence for a manager at a local business who threatened to call the police on me oblivious to the fact that calling the police can have a deadly consequences for Black people for reasons that should not have to be defended nor explained. And secondly, because threatening to deploying law enforcement for no reason, except for a person conferring their dignity, is not neighborly.

Denied job due to race, hidden but was very clear.

As my beliefs do not align with the evangelical conservative community, and I am married to a minority, we are not embraced in any attempt to participate but rather have to elbow in.

No invitations to bond families and make friends among the native Caucasian community here. Culture of being seen as “different” than them. Possibly out of not knowing each other well. Perhaps the local community may not feel the need to include the minority population in the mainstream.

Yeah, not being a minority or women has been a barrier with all the leftist bullshit that’s going on.

Barriers due to social and economic factors

Many respondents noted that full participation in the Springfield community was curtailed by various social and economic barriers. For example, participation in many clubs and organizations requires schedule flexibility during the day, which many citizens do not have. Finances are a barrier to

participation. Many respondents felt that there is a social and cultural elite in Springfield that does not welcome participation from those who are less well connected socially and financially. Many perceive that Springfieldians are biased in favor of those who grew up here or are from old, established families. A number of people simply feel excluded. Here are representative comments:

Being too poor to participate in the community. Participation in public forums, elections, city council meetings, etc., means taking time away from work or caring for family. When you're too busy to participate, that is a barrier. When you are poor, it means that you can't afford the cost of admission to get into the rooms and get to the tables where real decisions are made.

A lot of community meetings are during hours that make it difficult to attend if you are single parent or have small children. For example, with school-aged and smaller children, 7:30 am meetings are hard to attend.

Events being held on a single weekday, during regular working hours; therefore, not allowing me, or the general working public, the opportunity to attend and/or participate.

Some established systems are hard to break into. When I was new in town, there were barriers to becoming active in my children's school due to rigid systems and leadership. There was no change and no invitation to be involved.

My socioeconomic status—e.g., Facing Racism Institute and Leadership Springfield are amazing opportunities I've been invited to, but due to my economic status these opportunities are out of the question due to the lack of affordability.

I think it is impossible to be in city council unless you are independently wealthy or a business owner. This excludes so many gifted and concerned citizens.

I want to engage directly in transformational community work. It seems all those opportunities are volunteer only . . . I need paid work

I would like to serve in a leadership capacity within Springfield on City Council or A City Board etc., but as the primary breadwinner in my family it is difficult to participate in those capacities and maintain a full time employed status as a senior manager at my company where I work. I have to work during the day and cannot afford to take a lesser position or start my own company so I can have a freer schedule with fewer responsibilities or fewer benefits. I see that as a barrier for 'normal people' to participate in local government.

Age discrimination perpetrated through a wealth gap and classism. Leaders do not listen to the voices, figuratively and literally, of anyone poor and under the age of 30. I am under 30. I am poor. . . . The negative effects of 417 Magazine on our community. They show luxe and rich lives being the literal only citizens living in Springfield. We are not all doctors, lawyers, business owners. One out of every 4 residents in Springfield live in POVERTY. 417 Magazine is the definition of exclusivity and classism in Springfield.

You shouldn't have to buy a ticket to attend the City State of the Union. Citizens should be allowed to hear what is going on in their community without paying for it.

I am from a humble class of agrarian lineage in the area. As a child growing up in the city I was

excluded from upper class people by my family rearing.

Difficult to find ways to connect with various people in the community if you are not from here.

If you aren't already connected, it can be difficult to get a seat at the table.

I have lived much of my life in northwest Springfield . . . Feeling isolated from more affluent communities.

The tight relationships in Springfield seem to be valued over equity.

. . . closed Chamber Mafia good old boys club that excludes those who aren't in the inner circle.

I'm not one of the corporate elites who control the city. We aren't made aware or asked to vote about major changes. The city council overrides the communities (sic) wishes, no one wants to participate in a rigged system.

Community groups/charity groups who only want members/volunteers of a certain income level. Seeing residents who have made mistakes in the past not being given a second chance or acceptance to live a productive and happy life. It has always been difficult to be involved when you work an 8-5 job.

It seems one must be wealthy to be sought or considered to serve on boards. I am not.

There are lots of great opportunities but there are not many things to do that are free of charge. The most everything is going to cost some money and as a family with five children that does not give us any options besides parks.

Organizations that exist are not welcoming if you didn't grow up here or go to school here. There is no way to break into the community. People here are very fake.

Inclusion in big-picture development of community, the feeling that certain "families" or "good old boys" control the flow of public dollars, underinvestment in quality of life north of Chestnut Expressway.

Good old boys club mentality: If you are not in the clique, the city nor its businesses will do anything for you. Example: seats on ANY board or commission as part of the city Volunteer Boards and Commissions. City ONLY chooses "yes" men.

Springfield offers a lot of affordable and free programs and services, but sometimes cost can still be an issue.

One of the admiring traits of Springfield is that access to many influential decision-makers in business institutions and organizations is fairly straightforward. However, many people from specific segments of the community do not have the same access.

Barriers for non-Christians

The Springfield area is overwhelmingly Christian in its religious tradition. Many respondents perceived barriers to those citizens who are not Christian. These ranged from neglected and exclusion to outright hostility:

Religious intolerance. Religious intolerance. Religious intolerance.

Lack of halal or kosher options

Lack of Buddhist acceptance.

I am Jewish and have been told by too many members of the community that I am going to hell. This is not a welcoming community for my friends who are Muslim. They are harassed almost daily.

I experience religious “suspicion” from Christians, as I am Jewish.

1) As an eminently qualified candidate, I was denied a volunteer opportunity, based solely upon the fact that I am atheist. 2) My wife and I were “encouraged” not to continue to pursue foster adoption, based solely upon the fact that we are atheist.

I have had hateful and untrue statements made to me and around me about my religion and about people who practice it. I am Roman Catholic.

Not being an active member of a Church. (This is always one of the first things I am asked upon a MO native meeting me. When they find out I do not attend Church, they quit talking.)

Employers don’t trust you if you don’t have positive things to say about Christianity or church. Being non-religious can lead people to think you’re a bad person before even knowing you.

Not being willing to discuss my religious beliefs with many an inquiring stranger. Having government and community activities presume a certain religious or political affiliation.

I have found the need to hide my Humanist values from all but my closest friends. The overt “Christian” culture makes it difficult.

Church influence and the hatred it inspires.

Christians who can’t accept that other ways of life are just as valid as their own.

Discriminated against because not a white, ultra conservative Christian.

Specifically regarding politics and religion, I feel a part of a population that isn’t represented by our local representatives. . . . I feel because I do not belong to an Assemblies of God church I am not welcomed into the local community.

I believe there is a lot of discrimination against non-Christians. It is generally assumed that everyone believes the same way as everyone else, even in the workplace.

And, the hurt seems to go both ways, although the following comment was in a distinct minority:

. . . and because I’m a conservative Christian woman I’m often excluded from events because of my beliefs . . . (upset because I’m black but don’t support liberal causes). . .

Barriers due to age and sex/gender

Many comments related to perceived age and sex or gender discrimination, but often these did not say why age or sex/gender was a barrier. Comments that provided some detail about sex/gender as being a

barrier are the following:

Sexism, Sexism, Sexism.

Fear for safety—female, do not want to walk alone in certain areas.

As a sexual assault victim, I certainly do not feel that city leadership has my best interests in mind due to their poor response to the rape kit scandal. When something so important (i.e., prosecuting sex crimes) and foundational (i.e., how could any police officer feel that destroying evidence is anything other than unethical and helpful to criminals) is swept under the rug, it causes people to doubt that their municipal government is responsive, competent, or caring.

Safety issues due to gender, mostly.

Subtle, but real, sexism and ageism in my time as a clergy member. I am no longer clergy as a result.

Total disregard that I'm a female seeking a job I'm qualified for but I'm not male.

Gender discrimination . . . "good ole boy" network has prevented me from promotional opportunities. Stereotyped as "flight" and "too talkative: . . . classic discriminatory language used against females.

1. Being told I can't do a job because I'm a woman and wouldn't be able to handle it.
2. Being paid less than my male peers when I've been at my job longer and have far more experience.
3. Being told I know nothing because I haven't seen the Red Skelton show.

More experience but not selected for a leadership position . . . Not being addressed when in a leadership role because of gender [female].

I am female and have been excluded from men's leadership groups. I have seen HR policies be used to deter progress toward inclusion.

As a female, I have noticed that I was not getting promotions, jobs, etc., due to the fact that I am a woman.

. . . The CEO has actively tried to have our top females on boards that would fit their leadership and be great for the community. However, multiple times boards have said "no, thank you", but those same boards have taken males for their spots in the community.

No communities for *female* executive level business leaders.

Marginalized as a woman.

Gender – My opinion and rights being cast aside because I'm a woman. FMLA rights – being forced to fight for things that are awarded by law. Being fired from a major "reputable" employer for sexist disregard for law. Lack of voice and no advocates for me when power is blatantly abused.

. . . being a woman and not being respected or being harassed . . .

Not being taken seriously. Not being given an equal voice. Having to fight for equal attention.

This is particularly worse if you are a woman AND a minority AND short stature.

I've lived in Fort Worth, TX and St. Louis, MO as well in Springfield, and there's a pronounced tendency for men to bully women here. That makes even driving here more risky.

Retaliation from white men against women as a result of the Me Too movement.

Many years ago, women were considered a second class citizen, especially in the business world. That has changed a lot, but there is still a gender gap in top management and civic organizations.

The city does not do enough to protect women in the workplace. Complaints of sexual harassment are not taken seriously enough.

The following comments, which provided some detail, relate to age as a barrier. Age was perceived to cut against both older and younger respondents:

The main barrier are infrequent gatherings for senior population, and/or they are at night when we do not want to be out driving. More opportunities would be welcomed during daytime hours.

My age was a barrier when looking for part-time work.

Lack of full time job opportunities for those over 60—Age discrimination.

Age discrimination by younger citizens.

Hostilities for the elderly.

Trivialized as an older person and a lesbian.

More options for the older population Everything seems geared for the younger.

Distrust of younger people.

2) OLD PEOPLE; you want more turn out to events? Stop gearing it toward old people and do stuff 18-30 year olds may enjoy, we make a lot of your community. 3) Children; c'mon, do they really need whole days dedicated to kid stuff? Make that happen at the YMCA like it should. You see the giant lack of anything to do for people that are 18-30? Exactly why you have no turn out in that age.

Barriers related to generalized fear of crime, drugs, potential harassment

Several respondents noted that not all areas of Springfield are safe, and that fact represents a barrier to participation. Representative comments:

Safety is the number one barrier. Not feeling safe at community events or in public in general due to an increase in mental health issues and addiction issues. It is not uncommon to be approached by someone in an aggressive manner.

Druggies attacking people or property. Begging for money for drugs or liquor., unable to go to stores comfortably! Family member attacked in own home!!

General harassment in public spaces.

This city is unsafe. . . you cannot walk the streets to be able to enjoy city events.

I've been worried about my safety.

Being harassed in public places, at the Mall, the Ozark Empire Fair, the Libraries, the baseball stadium, the Christmas and St. Patrick's Day parades, and at city several parks. Witnessed discrimination and harassment of other people. Especially in retail locations, public parks, the libraries, and in the Downtown area.

Criminal activity: There is absolutely no incentive to open up a brick and mortar when inventory is under constant threat of theft and property damage. Again, there is additional officers our city has, we have more officers here than KC, and the crime here continues to rise, again, with NO accountability from Leaders of our city!

Unsafe due to gangs, rundown bad business areas, parks that we used to enjoy not safe and rundown.

I do not feel safe in some neighborhoods, even in the neighborhood where I work.

Afraid to leave my home alone. Having to deal with rude, intoxicated people all over the city.

Getting my property broken into makes me not want to go into town.

1. Verbal/physical altercations in the street.
2. Street harassment (catcalling, being followed home, etc.).
3. Crime (people stealing my mail, kicking my door, etc.)

As a cyclist and a family of runners, it's surprising how often people throw bottles, cans or trash at you; or they may yell obscene words at you or even try to run over you with their car – you become very cautious of where you go and safety of your ride.

Crime is out of control throughout. Panhandling deters me from going across town.

1. Scary people bothering me when I pump gas.
2. Scary people bothering me when I stop for a red light.
3. Scary people acting crazy at Walmart.

I couldn't take my family downtown without facing a "free the nipple" rally.

Miscellaneous barriers reported occasionally

The following barriers were mentioned only a few times, but often enough that they seemed worthy of note. They related to communication (finding out about events in time enough to plan), timing of community meetings and events, and political intolerance experienced by some members of the community. Comments:

Communication about opportunities.

Lack of information to get in touch with city officials.

Lack of timely and relevant access to information & resources.

Not hearing about events.

Lack of information for planning for the event.

Lack of awareness of programs due to limited marketing, timing of events. . .

Not enough advertising of things to do in Springfield . . .

Not enough information offered. Very short time lines.

I am a transfer student and while I would love to get involved with the Springfield community, I have found it difficult to do so outside of the university walls. It would be helpful to hear about and see billboards about different community groups that offer a welcoming invitation for newcomers.

Times of community/citizen meeting events. . . . Simple awareness – not being aware of when meetings or events are taking place.

Time/day of activity challenges.

Lack of respect for differing political views.

Politically motivated intolerance.

A lot of times being a political liberal can also lead to harassment in the workplace, or anywhere, people vandalize your car or yard and can be distrustful of you for merely believing what you believe.

The political interests of my community are not adequately represented on the city council, school board, the state legislature, or the U.S. Congress—this is a huge barrier as a 7-year Springfield resident.

I am an atheist, feminist, and liberal. The bias in this town against all three is pervasive.

Question 3: If you have personally felt, at any time, that you were not valued based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, or age (40+), please share your experience.

Respondents were asked whether they had personally felt undervalued based on any of the categories listed above. There were 781 (41.12%) respondents who said yes and 950 (54.88%) who said no. The examples mirror the comments shared earlier and represent each of the categories listed, but many of them provided no detail: “All of the above,” “I experience it daily. There are too many experiences to share here,” and “Age discrimination.” While many of the comments may not describe legally sanctioned instances of discrimination, they do reflect a high level of insensitivity, and in many cases outright cruelty, that people experience in everyday life. The comments selected below are ones that provide additional context or detail.

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or national origin

One of the categories most heavily represented was that of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, or national origin, with a few individuals feeling discriminated against because they are white.

Representative comments:

Employers' ignorance to bilingual candidates due to their lack of understanding or tolerance of grammatical, cultural and personal discrimination.

I was called a "damn Mexican."

Racist comments regarding Hispanic people aren't rare.

Was told to go back to my country.

Walking down the C-Street, a couple talking about my sister and mine green card status. We are indigenous to North America and 3 generations of born in US.

I have been asked at a supermarket to show my Visa. The employee said she needed to make sure I was not illegally in the country.

There are a lot of anti-immigrant/anti-Latino sentiments that get shared amongst citizens here. I think the city could potentially be more progressive and welcoming to refugees and immigrants and lead by example.

Hearing people around me talking about how they feel the need for a wall to stop immigration. There was one moment someone mentioned everyone who comes to America must speak English fluently because they can't stand talking on the phone with someone who can't speak English. Another time was when a woman mentioned she thought she was going to die when she was sitting next to a man of color on the plane while returning to SGF airport.

As a Community Health Care worker and employee of a not-for-profit in Springfield I have definitely seen members of a minority be treated differently, especially in a health care environment. Black mothers face a much higher rate of maternal and postnatal death rates. Yet I still see black mothers be quickly dismissed when complaining of any symptoms. My African American patients may be encouraged to continue working or told their symptoms are likely normal and they just need to wait to see improvements.

As a customer in many stores in town (I've been followed and asked to leave my bag at the checkout counter). I've been asked what "certain populations" think about a certain idea or situation only for that opinion or view to be dismissed. I have been told to my face that my hiring met a quota.

Shopping for a house with a realtor. We talked over the phone to coordinate our first meeting. My whole family came. . . Once myself and my family got out of the car and met her she obviously (by the look on her face) could see we are a biracial family. Told us she had made a mistake and asked us to meet her at a different house. We followed her to another part of town that she considered "acceptable for your type." Bars on windows, run down boarded up homes. The realtor was white. She said we would be more comfortable in this part of the city. We fired her.

I stopped by a garage sale with my Mom. I saw that there were beautiful dolls on a table for sale. . . When I would ask for the price of each doll, the lady kept saying in a non-friendly way that each doll I pointed at wasn't for sale, while also following me rather closely. . . . Finally

after about the third negative answer my Mom spoke up and said we were leaving. . . Mom then told me knew why the dolls weren't for sale . . . [white/Native American respondent]

Every year when its Native American month there is barely a mention of it When it's black month its everywhere.

As a Native American who can blend, I am able to see racist remarks toward minorities by white people who think that since I look like them my experiences are the same as theirs. I hear racially carted comments often.

I am a federally recognized member of the Muscogee Creek Nation. In various positions working with the public here, I've been asked if I speak English, if I go to college for free (which is inaccurate), if I live in a tipi (not even my tribe), etc. There is a lot of ignorance regarding indigenous peoples and could be corrected.

. . . as a child, I was made fun of for my round face and my braids. As an adult, it isn't really an issue, however with raising my son there just isn't very much available for Native Americans in Springfield. Everyone seems to focus only on African American minorities.

People in this community have no understanding of diversity. They think it's OK to make comments to Asian women, "Are you Connie Chung?" in the grocery store. My black friends experience people walking up to them and just reading out and touching their hair. This city ATTRACTS poor, uneducated people to do the majority of meaningless jobs.

I'm Asian. Went to MSU. I experienced 3-4 times where white American males would drive by and make racial related comments about me.

I've had interviews where I'm the nicest dressed person in the room. And the person interviewing me will call out my name and look at all of the white applicants. No surprise that I wasn't hired.

Confederate flags make me uneasy; have heard people say white power.

Being called a nigger when doing a school clinician session.

. . . have witnessed racial slurs toward my biracial daughter on more than one occasion.

I have been called racial slurs and/or assaulted due to my race.

I have been called the "n" word. I have been told in the workplace by a Director level supervisor that I should be more willing to have a sense of humor about race issues. I was called aggressive, abrasive, tense, etc., just for being direct and confident in my communication. I have been told by a white coworker in front of the whole team that they should be able to say the "n" word if they want to because it is in a song they like . . . and then I was chastised for having an opinion about it.

I have watched people of color be afraid to walk the streets of downtown Springfield.

I've seen shop owners follow people of color through their stores. I've had people make insensitive and insulting comments about. . . persons of color as if it were a joke and assuming that as a white person, I would see humor in it.

I have been called a “nigger lover” and accused of harboring “illegal wetbacks” simply because I was with people of color in the community.

Another situation: I work with a lot of people within the community on a daily basis. People will hand [hang] signs on their property “no blacks allowed,” “better run nigger” or worse.

As a teenager I was followed in stores when my white peers were not. I’ve been told I spoke good English (assuming that Spanish should be my first language even though I don’t speak it). I’ve been asked how long I’ve been in the country (Born here, thank you).

Because my husband is black and loud, every interaction with the police department is a horrible experience. They assume the worst and treat us that way.

I was in a mixed marriage and my late husband and I at times were stared at and there were whispers. We would smile and say hello and start a conversation, sometimes they walked away in disgust and others we seemed to show we were just like them, my husband just had a better tan.

I had a boss that felt that I had an attitude and was disrespectful any time I had questions for her. She couldn’t see past the color of my skin when we had any type of conversation. She had already made up her mind that I was a “black woman with an attitude” from the first time she met me.

The fact that 90% of the images Springfield promotes are of the white race is what sometimes has me feeling discouraged, invisible, and alone. The fact that I’ve attended two city-wide SGF visioning meetings where attendance was no less than 150 community members and I was the only black in the room to contribute in the decision-making process concerns me. . . . The fact that another friend had to call me three weeks ago to ask me what to do concerning an SPS bus driver who told her 5-year-old daughter that “we” all look alike is more than upsetting. . . .

People eyeballing me when I walk into a store. Like I’m going to steal just because I’m black.

Told to stay out of certain towns because you may not be welcome there.

I’ll just say housing denied and racial profiling by police. Let me add that I am not a felon or a problem to police, but in Springfield that means nothing.

I’ve experienced being called an “N-word” while walking downtown. I have had unmarked police cars/possibly sheriffs treat me terribly and disconcertingly on a back road on the west side of town with no reason. I have experienced cops treat me differently than my white friend that was with me at the time of being pulled over. The list goes on. . . .

My children are regularly called the n-word at school by other students and given harsher consequences (including 52 suspensions in one school year for “defiance”) that I feel were racially charged. In public, my family is followed often at stores to ensure my children, black, are not stealing.

And here are some of the few examples shared of perceived discrimination against straight, white people:

It is official city policy to make Springfield less white. Of COURSE I have felt that I was not valued.

This was a case of reverse discrimination. I tried to help out an aspiring athlete and the parent perceived me to be a white man and did not want any help with his son.

There is a black entertainment channel, BET. That is great! But if there was a TV channel focused on being white, people would lose their minds. There is a gay news network, no way in the world you would ever see a straight news network. It would be considered a hate issue. I don't celebrate my white, straight, Catholic heritage because of the repercussions that would come with it.

I have felt due to being white and middle aged I have been looked over for many opportunities whether it was at events or in the job market. In our attempt to be inclusive we are exclusive at the same time.

I get bothered by bums wanting money because I'm a middle aged white guy who bathes.

I'm a white, middle aged male who likes guns. I need not say any more.

I'm an older white male. . . the worst think you can be in today's America. . . just look at the TV ads, white male is always the one who is made fun of and made to look silly or stupid. . .

African Americans calling me Honky, Cracker.

Being the wrong race and not one of the protected races is a hindrance. We get no special programs or treatment.

White males are under attack. Stop letting the media guide your decisions about the best person for the job.

Early 90's at Central High, group of black girls tried to jump me. 2 weeks ago, an "Asian refugee" man kept trying to talk my daughter (13 yrs) into going over to his house.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

As with the previous question, there were many responses dealing with discrimination based on LGBTQ+ status. The repeal of the SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity) ordinance was perceived as a slap in the face to the LGBTQ+ community, and Springfield is seen as unfriendly to that community:

This is not a welcoming community for LGBT People.

I am a member of the LGBTQ+ community and the fact that the nondiscrimination law was overturned in 2015 proves that people have the capability of using their religion as a way to discriminate against people they consider to be different.

I'm bisexual. When the SOGI ordinance was repealed, I felt that City officials and fellow residents didn't have my back.

Being harassed going into LGBT clubs, being harassed by street preachers.

Any questionnaire that forces me to choose either male or female. Quite often, there is no need

for the data.

I was denied promotion for being transgender.

I'm transgender . . . and am very publicly transitioning in Missouri. There is not a day that has gone by since I began transitioning which I have not felt that my gender identity marks me as lesser in the eyes of most people I interact with who know I'm transgender.

I have been called multiple slurs just walking downtown. It comes from the protesters bastardizing who I am without any understanding of me as a person. I have felt that due to my "life choices" I am damned by my community. When Prop 2 [the repeal of the SOGI ordinance?] was happening in 2015, I felt that because I was gay I was causing a stink in the town that I know and love, by my own coworkers.

I will not come out due to the danger of being queer in this community. I am polyamorous, and I have had that used as a weapon to push me out of spaces in the community through rumor and innuendo.

I worked for Pet Warehouse on Kearney and they asked me to make a poster for the Cat aisle. I drew a cat playing with rainbow mice (We sell this item) and was told by the manager they would not accept gay pride in the store. . . . I think had I not been gay this would not have been an issue. . . .

In the first years of my employment with the city, special permission had to be obtained for me to be able to use funeral leave when my wife's father passed away. With any heterosexual couple, this was not even questioned.

Sexual orientation—when churches and voters repealed city equal protections and also various other times when hearing LGBT slurs by community, friends, and coworkers.

Well, when you are walking down the street holding hands with your same-sex husband and people drive by and yell homophobic slurs at you repeatedly. It makes it difficult to feel valued.

Multiple wedding venues refused to host our marriage service because we're gay.

Again, moving Pride month from June to October felt like a slight, and it sends the message that queer people aren't as important. The strange looks and treatment we receive from people in general contribute to a feeling of isolation (although it's something we're used to).

The news stories about businesses' rights to deny service based on sexual orientation and identity made me feel like me and my friends weren't valuable as humans.

Employment: asked to leave after my sexual orientation was known. Not to mention the fear of being outed for many years prior to this experience, in a city so [where] I have no clear assurance would protect me and my family.

My previous employer supposedly fired someone before me for being gay—this made me apprehensive to be myself and allow my sexual orientation to be known for fear of losing my job. This was only one year ago in 2018.

. . . the fact that I could get fired or lose my housing or be denied service because I am in a same

sex relationship makes me feel unwelcome and not valued in my community.

I am often given the cold shoulder when I'm out with my same gender spouse and a server realizes that we're a couple.

Being called names simply for going out with my girlfriend. Knowing that any time I could be fired from my job if I was out at work.

I had an icee thrown out of a truck window at me while walking downtown because I was holding hands with another guy.

Yes, when dealing with SPD, I know for a fact I was discriminated against as a single gay man that was trying to make my neighborhood a better place to live and protect my property value. I called police multiple times for thefts in the neighborhood, drug crimes, and neighbor disputes. I ended up being harassed by police and discriminated against.

I'm gay. Several years ago we were at a restaurant with friends. One of our couple friends had a small child they were fostering, and the wait staff and other customers were giving us dirty looks. And my spouse and I were walking down the sidewalk together and a car drove by and the passengers yelled "fags" out the window.

My husband is transgender, and we constantly worry about the threat of violence, or bullying of our children because of it, and because we know that in Springfield there would be no repercussions for the perpetrators.

I've had an employer that purposely pulled me from a "public face" position to work in a back office position, simply because I had cut my hair, and they didn't want people to know they had hired a lesbian (even though I had worked for them for 2-3 years at the time).

Sexism and gender discrimination

Another frequently mentioned category was discrimination based on sex or gender. A few respondents noted that this was more of a problem in years past, but also indicated that problems still exist, particularly with women being taken as seriously as men. Springfield is perceived to be run by white, middle-aged men—good ole boys—and that hasn't changed much. Representative comments:

Through my work I watched the good ole boy system where those in a similar age and gender [older white males] were given opportunities not provided to everyone. I'm no longer there, I gave up and found a job within 30 days that was a promotion and doubled my pay. P.S., that was at the local school district, so it doesn't give me much faith in anyone else if our government agencies set the standards.

Leadership does not value identities that are not male.

As a woman, I have had many experiences where I was not taken seriously or was ignored in a public shopping place, work, or just in a general public place.

It is fairly common to feel belittled or completely ignored as a female & when I have my kids with me in corporation, health care, & legal settings (such as when needing to obtain official records or anything at all to do with financial situations). In all of these settings, if I am

addressed at all, it is only to imply that I need my husband there to receive service.

I can give a suggestion at a meeting full [of] white men and have it ignored until a white man says the same thing. I was paid several thousand dollars a year less as branch manager than a man who came into the same role with no experience. Have seen it happen in council meetings.

Often as a professional female we are looked on as not equal, this shows in the opportunities we are given and in our compensation.

I was fired for being pregnant.

Yes, I have in several jobs in Springfield, been treated poorly as a female. I have lost a job because I did not accept advances. My voice not heard at other jobs because I am female or treated like a child. Treated differently than men.

I'm a 40 something white careerwoman who often has to interact with 60+ year old white men who have outdated ideas about my strengths or life experience and those men determine my career direction/company future.

Hired into a position and was not paid based on experience. When I left the position, everyone hired after me had less experience, put in less hours, and received more pay.

I have had several doctors question me for being late 20s and not pregnant. I have also had many doctors tell me I should become pregnant, etc. They would never say this to a man.

I worked at a firearms store, and had an elderly man walk in and ask if there were any men around to talk to. I told him there were not, but I was fully capable of helping him. He scoffed at me and walked out in a huff, saying he would come back when there was a man to talk to.

Sexism – I was not allowed to speak in a particular setting because I'm a woman.

I am constantly catcalled and harassed when I run in the park.

"Well no, little lady, let's just leave that for the men to decide." I've actually been told this in this century! And there are too many similar examples to type in this box.

I worked for a large corporation here in town that is largely male-oriented. I was frequently prevented from providing input and purposely left out of my job-related discussions and decision making. I was at one point told to "let the men figure it out." This was just one experience, but there have been many, especially in the workforce.

Working with males in facility maintenance, treated like I don't know what I'm talking about when explaining work which needs to be conducted.

I had a restraining order against my ex-husband. I was offered by the judge to go back to my home, escorted by a Greene County Sheriff, and that sheriff had his hand on his gun the entire time, staring at me and telling me to hurry up and finish packing because he had better things to do than stand there and deal with a marital spat. It was not a spat. He made me feel unsafe, unrelieved, and unheard.

I have had employers pay me different wages than male co-workers or male predecessors with

the exact same job descriptions, even though I have had better performance reviews. I have been directly told that I stood to go far because I was not married and did not have children and that if I wanted to keep my job that I had better keep it that way. I had another employer tell me that his father would be rolling over in his grave if he knew that his son hired a female attorney to work with the office, but that he hired me anyway because he knew that he could ask more of me than a man. Many other similar examples.

I work in a male dominate industry. I have been told that I could never be a manager because I'm a woman.

Any time I go to the mechanic I am treated like an incompetent. A stranger slapped my bottom from their car while I was riding my bicycle through campus. I have received less pay per hour than male coworkers for the same work.

And of course, as a woman, there's been a number of workplaces where I've asked male managers to stop being handsy with me, making sexual jokes at me, etc., and suddenly I'd go from having earned a place as one of the best employees in the workplace to the bottom rung.

I experienced sexual harassment during my career in health care by professional males in positions of authority.

My former employer's COO was very chauvinistic, believing women should remain in lower level company roles. Also, he also believes a woman's salary should be based on his assumption of her husband's wage (i.e., the more the husband makes, the less she should be paid). A single woman's wage was based on the lower end of the scale of wants for the position.

I will never forget working with a local technology company regarding converting some data in CSV. I carefully explained what I did and why. A man 10 years my junior responded with a condescending email that stated I should do X, Y, Z. My communication explicitly spelled out that I WAS doing X, Y, Z, and yes, I feel that because I was a woman and he was a "tech guy" he did not read a single word I sent nor review the data I sent (which was correct). He dismissed me as a woman who didn't know anything.

In a college class at MSU, a male student made disparaging remarks about a woman's ability to excel in Computer Science. I have also felt objectified by many men, where it seems my only value (or my main value) to them is my appearance.

I bought a hybrid Toyota instead [of another car where she was ignored at the dealership]. The car had issues with sensor alignment that caused unexpected braking. When I reported this, I had at least 3 guys offer to give me driving lessons. I finally called Toyota corporate. They took the problem very seriously . . .

I worked for an organization that had only white males in leadership and they wrote job descriptions to explicitly keep younger women with children out of leadership positions (60 hours/week, travel, no support staff, etc.)

As a woman in ministry I have experienced exclusion and bias based on gender.

It's taken a long time for women to catch up to men at many civic tables in Springfield. There are

still way too many situations where women are in a distinct minority.

As a female in business, I have been treated as if I don't fully understand the "way business is done here with handshakes" between white males when I try to document everything and have proper contracts in place.

As a woman, I have felt inferior when involved with city leaders who are all men.

I have been slighted/dismissed by MSU President & Chamber CEO when engaging in issue discussions. I feel there's a general dismissal of women by the male-dominated leadership all over this city.

Old, white men deferring to husband when I'm the one shopping for (insert large purchase.)

Did not acknowledge me in car buying experience when I was with my husband.

And this example of reverse discrimination:

I reported sexual harassment in an interview and was told that men cannot be sexually harassed even if they were told that the only way to get the job was to sleep with the interviewer.

Religious discrimination

Perceived religious discrimination, primarily against non-Christians, was also well represented, although several Christians felt they were being discriminated against as well. Here are comments with enough context to help understand the respondent's point of view:

Public meetings should be respectful and inclusive of all religions, or a person's choice to not be religious. Christian prayer at almost every public event without regard for other religions makes non-Christians feel like outsiders. I have seen some leaders hold a moment of silence and acknowledge all religions rather than recite a Christian prayer.

I am not religious and am uncomfortable about saying I do not attend church since so many just presume we are Christians. This, of course, is a minor example compared to what others experience.

My child's school distributed Christian propaganda and when I asked that they remain secular I was treated as an outcast.

Religion, specifically, because I do not relate to Christianity. I have been told I would burn in hell and categorized as Atheist even though this is far from the truth of my beliefs.

[Dismissed from a job by a woman] The only conflict I ever had with this person was I did not pray with her in the parking lot of a school while others in the organization joined in.

I'm afraid of coworkers finding out I am non-Christian. I consider myself a good person, but have definitely been treated differently whenever someone finds out I don't attend church.

When the entire city is bathed in Christian messaging and you're not a Christian, it's easy to feel excluded.

Attending events where the audience is expected to join in a prayer.

As a non-Christian . . . I am bombarded with billboards trying to force me to convert, I am denied everything from jobs to social opportunities, to charitable help on the basis that I am not a Christian. . . . I . . . often hide my religion for fear of retaliation or loss of opportunities.

I absolutely feel shunned because of being Catholic. I have brought food to work events that people would not eat because they thought of me as a heathen.

I've had people literally turn their backs on me and walk away after they ask, "What church do you go to?" and responding that I don't attend a local church. . .

I'm Jewish and female. I feel like many times we feel discouraged by being told we're awful people or that we killed Jesus. Just general hostility from the community.

I try to hide the fact that I'm not religious, but at times when individuals or groups have found out, it's dramatically changed their treatment of me for the worse.

You do not attend a "good, Bible-believing church."

People often ask where you go to church in this community within seconds of meeting me. If I tell the truth and say nowhere, I am placed into an undesirable social category.

This is a daily struggle and why I'm leaving this area. The reproductive rights rally downtown last summer proved Christians can get away with anything, including repeated and deliberate physical violence.

Anyone who is not Christian is met with condemnation and criticism in the Springfield area. It is assumed that all people are Christian, and other faiths are basically ignored or disrespected.

I can't tell you how many times people have made rude or hateful comments when they learn I'm Catholic. I've never experience that until I moved to Springfield.

I have been told that Catholics are all cheaters, liars, and drunks at various times since I moved to here.

At a job interview I was asked what church I attended and was told they only hire Christians so they said I didn't fit the company's needs. I did get hired by another company which required prayer at the start of meetings.

You really cannot say out loud in this town that you are an atheist. The pro-religious bias is so strong that you risk having your tires slashed, not getting hired for a job (such as at Mercy, which requires you to agree to prayers at staff meetings), or worse.

As a single woman willing to volunteer at a community event. Discovered they were grouping volunteers by church. Had no group for "you other people."

Reed Middle School holds a Holocaust exhibit in their boiler room with a fake concentration camp complete with fake incinerator.

I'm an atheist, and suddenly my more openly religious coworkers have stopped being friendly with me or bosses started not scheduling me for prime shifts, etc.

Christianity is very prominent within the area and does not allow different views [about] equal opportunity in the community. I do not bring up my religious views in public or at work, not only because it's courteous, but I also don't want to have to go on the defense when expressing my views.

A few people mentioned being discriminated against because they are Christian, although these were in a minority:

I have sometimes experienced mild hostility based on my Christian beliefs when operating outside the trappings of the Christian community here. I don't see this as surprising or troubling. It is very mild compared to the hostility of much of my Christian community toward those of other beliefs and traditions. Christian bigotry and closed mindedness is a bigger problem and often earns much of the reciprocal hostility I have witnessed.

I worked at a job where raises and promotions only went to members of the owner's religion. A Catholic coworker was fired for mentioning Lent.

Conservative Christians are many times treated as fanatics or haters. This is not true, and we don't deserve that kinds of treatment. Just because we don't agree with certain lifestyles does not make us haters. In fact, it seems that hating Christians is OK, but disagreeing with sinful lifestyles is not OK.

I'm routinely told to keep my Christian beliefs to myself when I get involved with social issues.

I see an incredible bias, disrespect, and sometimes even hate against Christian believers.

I have been looked down on and treated rudely for my Christian faith. But I'm not upset about it.

Yes --- every time I am ashamed to say I believe in God for fear of harassment.

The focus has become so pro-lgbt and Muslim that Christianity seems to be frowned upon in city events.

As a white, conservative Christian woman, the city is attempting to move to a more liberal, progressive political structure and seeking to silence people like me.

I am a white, conservative Christian male. The only demographic without some sort of federal protection.

People have been hostile/rude towards me because of my faith in Jesus Christ on more than one occasion. It seems that people are less and less civil.

Ageism

Respondents experienced ageism, in both directions. Some mentioned that they were taken less seriously because they were younger, but more noted that they experience a pervasive ageism against older people. Those who experienced discrimination because they were older said such things as:

There are venues where being older causes you to be invisible.

As an older white woman, I can get in the door just about anywhere. But I feel pretty much invisible to young professionals in networking settings.

Over 40 appears to be a weeding-out factor no matter the expertise and experience of the applicant.

A college student said they felt uncomfortable being around a bunch of old people. It was a group of middle-aged women leaving work.

I find there's not a lot of respect for older people, more like we are a hindrance.

Age at times. Sort of a patronizing attitude toward me by some younger adults.

At age 63, I found myself out of a job for the very first time. As an estimator/project manager in the construction industry for nearly 40 years, I was qualified for a number of positions, yet I never was given an interview. Even from the city.

Working at a school as an older teacher and the principal was much younger. My ideas and contributions to the school were not valued.

Employer was biased toward younger, "savvier" [people] who lacked experience, but were treated preferentially.

Too old to matter when requesting help.

I feel there is limited help for elderly and the city will pressure the elderly after storm cleanup to clean up more quickly than the younger and insured citizens.

Not being able to find a full time job that pays a living wage at my age . . . 60 . . . with a Masters Degree . . . Even when I applied for a part time position at Cox Hospital, I was turned down. Their reason: they were looking for someone who was looking for a career working for them. What exactly does that mean?

I have felt at times because of my age the city/community is not interested in my opinion or thoughts on how to make the city better. Everyone views us as a place people come to retire/or go to college but for people who have lived their whole lives here it is more than that and I would like to raise my son in a more rounded city.

My husband hasn't been able to find full-time employment in the 3 years we've been here because he's over 55 years of age. And he has a bachelor's, master & JD degrees.

. . . age (I'm 60) has made it hard to get a good paying job since I moved here 4 years ago! Too many businesses want young people.

Downtown events aren't always for the 60+.

I feel that I have faced age discrimination. I was passed up for a promotion. I had 17 years of experience and the promotion was given to a 23-year-old with 10 months experience.

The local history Museum, while being run on mostly volunteers, I was told I was too old for paid positions and too young for volunteer positions.

Others thinking because of my age that I would [not] be open minded.

In my experience, once a person reaches 50+ years of age, younger, less experienced people are being “bounced” over the corporate ladder instead of having to “climb” the corporate ladder.

It’s always hard to be a senior citizen . . . Most people assume you are inferior in some way.

As a former employee of the City, my technical knowledge, education and experience was used but not compensated for to me. Young, inexperienced and lazy employees with college degrees were upgraded and compensated over me. I was told my age affected desire for City to retain me.

Some individuals from the younger generation do not seem to like baby boomers and believe we have nothing to offer.

“OK BOOMER” disrespect.

Those who experienced discrimination because they were younger said such things as:

Older community members have made comments on my age when patronizing several local stores.

People over the age of 40 think I am clueless, lazy, uneducated, not worth listening to.

I’m not 40, but I have felt not valued due to my age because I am young, especially in the workplace.

Disability status

Discrimination due to disability status, although not mentioned as frequently as most of the previous categories, came up often enough to be noteworthy. Even when the discrimination did not rise to the level of legal challenge, the pain of exclusion or embarrassment came through clearly:

Being disabled but not looking disabled is very hard.

When you’re a disabled vet, no one will give you a job.

I think some think disabled are the same as homeless.

Those with disabilities are often viewed as victims rather than supported as individuals who have something valuable to add to community organizations. There needs to be a better public understanding of all differences and their value to a community as a whole.

Denied job cause of disability right to live [in] place with a certified service animal.

I have PTSD. Can’t tell you the number of times I’ve been talking with a person, and mention I am disabled, and suddenly the person is not so interested in talking as much. Things were “fine” before disclosing my disability, but not so much immediately afterward.

Any time I cannot participate because it’s just unbearably loud. Oh, and that OTC required me to get a new evaluation for autism because I was diagnosed more than 10 years ago.

Many people take advantage of parking in handicapped parking, some buildings don’t have

handicapped accessible ramps.

I walk slowly from being shot in the war. You assholes in the retail business can f yourselves for me holding up the flow of people because they get behind me. Especially you Battlefield mall.

Springfield isn't as handicapped accessible as it could or should be.

Access to public buildings, including city and county,. No accommodations to programs and events, hearing, vision, etc.

Things not being accessible to me—made to feel inferior.

Every time I have to climb up the stairs because there's no elevator at all.

I was disabled and there were a lot of times where people put us barriers so I could not achieve my potential. One example is while trying to get my college degree. One Disabilities Services Director said she could not build me my "own special room to study and take tests" (sarcasm but inappropriate when trying to find accommodation services for someone with learning disabilities).

I have been treated like I'm from outer space when I ask for accommodations.

It feels like I don't have the same opportunities as others when it comes to job possibilities because of a lack of built in accessibility like accessible computers.

My friend who is in a wheelchair – we angrily asked to move at a restaurant because the limited space between tables for her chair blocked the aisle where we were seated by a hostess. The manager moved us but was rude and it still was an issue so we just had to leave as it was so embarrassing and we could [not] enjoy a simple lunch.

Can't enter a business, restaurant not having accessible bathrooms—having a larger toilet area does not make it accessible if you have to have someone open the doors because they open the wrong way and block a wheelchair. Ask to move repeatedly at a restaurant because wheelchair block aisle, but there is no room between tables out of the aisle for a wheelchair and the table is too short for a typical wheelchair to fit under.

Feeling invisible in crowds. Navigating in a wheelchair takes room. People don't want to let me pass and act put out by having to move a couple of feet to let me through.

I was in a very large and expensive stand alone retail store (PFI). I was in an electric chair. [Glass doors were too heavy to open, had no electric opener . . . another customer opened the door for me]. . . I looked for a salesperson to help but none would make eye contact with me as I impatiently waited. They were sharing stories with others, not selling a product. I finally asked if someone could help me. A customer finally did. . . . The whole incident upset me.

My previous employee did not understand my disability and therefore disregarded my input on many decisions ,even though I was in upper management.

Many of us have hidden disabilities and are judged by how we look, etc.

Mental health issues can be hard for some people to understand because they can't see it. Some

people/supervisors think you're making it up.

My disability doesn't get received in our community. I have severe issues with fibromyalgia, asthma, & allergies.

We are constantly harassed by standers-by for my child's invisible disability, and no one does anything to stop them.

I have a lazy eye. .. I 've had various job interviews where I knew from the interviewer gawking at my eye to know I wouldn't get the job.

Miscellaneous instances of being undervalued

Finally, a few respondents mentioned that they felt undervalued due to political beliefs or because they lived on the north side. Examples:

North-South bias in cutting our town in half.

I've been judged for being a north-sider. When I go to the South side of town where there are more opportunities, I'm stereotyped and treated differently.

We have had multiple instances of property damage on the lit that we own, but because it is north side the cops seem to not want to be bothered.

More so, being someone who lives on the north side., I've been stereotyped as less valued because of perceived socio-economic differences.

I am obese, I am stared at on a regular basis.

I would never dare to put a bumper sticker for a Democratic candidate on my car for the same reason [risk of having tires slashed]. An acquaintance of mine was threatened with a gun simply for driving in a car with such bumper stickers on it.

Minority in political views.

Political viewpoints.

I am not a Republican conservative.

A couple of people noted that discrimination and feeling undervalued is part of the human condition:

Everyone has [experienced being undervalued] at some point. The world isn't perfect. . .

LOL love the "FEELING NOT VALUED." Everyone is excluded from something, has a bad day, takes offense at something . . . mature and empathize.

Everyone experiences some form of this [being undervalued] in their lifetimes. People of different races, socioeconomic backgrounds, different values and beliefs will always look at others differently. That doesn't mean they don't value that individual. The culture at large needs to stop being so hypersensitive to these issues and individuals need to learn to appreciate these differences without feeling the need to be PC constantly for fear of offending someone. It's gotten way out of hand. Freedom of speech only seems to apply if you agree with liberals and

the left wing.

Discrimination is everywhere in this area. It's not just these categories, it's Everything. Someone can be too young, too old, not enough money, too much money, it doesn't matter anymore. You need to quit focusing on "certain groups" and look at the entire way the public is treated by Leadership. Until there is a complete overhaul on leadership in this town, there will be discrimination in all areas. . .

Yeah [I have had experiences of being undervalued] but what the hell does it matter. Don't need government to be a nanny.

Question 4: If you or someone you know has experienced an incident of unlawful hostility or discrimination, based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age (40+), please share that experience.

This question is similar to the previous one but asks specifically for examples of unlawful hostility or discrimination. Respondents were first asked whether they or someone they knew had experienced an incident of unlawful hostility or discrimination based on the categories listed. There were 709 (41.46%) respondents who said yes and 1001 (58.54%) who said no. In some cases, the examples provided were the same as had been shared for the previous question and, as before, many examples provided no detail: "Age related," "Sexism," and "Homophobia." Comments selected below provide context for understanding the nature of the discrimination and are different from the ones selected for the previous question. The two categories with the most responses, by far, were discrimination based on race/ethnicity/national origin and sexual orientation/gender identity.

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and national origin

Many respondents reported experiencing or witnessing racial and ethnic slurs being shouted at them, people throwing trash or drinks at them, and related acts of hostility. They reported examples of minorities, particularly African Americans, being denied jobs, opportunities, and promotions because of their race, and being bullied or harassed at school. According to these respondents, racial profiling by police and in retail establishments is common, as is poor service in restaurants and shops. Many of the comments repeated examples from the previous question; different examples and comments are provided here:

When working at a Spanish bank branch, a customer said he did not want any foreign/Hispanic to help him.

My wife is Hispanic and had to leave her church, because the sermons turned into rants about closing the southern border of this country.

An acquaintance of mine and her husband were speaking Spanish at Walmart (of course). She is Anglo and he's Hispanic, but speaks English fluently. A stranger stopped them in the store and told they then needed to speak English because they were in America.

One time at Price Cutter, a gentleman in his late twenties . . . told me "fuck your kids" then commented on the destruction of the white race. My wife is half Filipina, so he obviously had

strong feelings about me sullyng the bloodlines.

Having a teammate that is foreign. I have witnessed this first-hand from customers. Usually someone else will have to step in to get the offender to stop their words or actions.

Expedia uses quotas for hiring and retention.

My son was called a Chink by a supervisor in training inside the cooler at Sam's years ago. My son walked away and went to his locker rather than talk. He did not report the incident but was fired the next day for insubordination. He said it wasn't worth reporting, because they wouldn't believe him . . .

My sister who's Asian has been told in [pubic that she shouldn't be in this country at community events before.

My Asian friend said they were treated unfairly at workplace because their colleagues (mostly white) were afraid my Asian friends were taking their jobs away—because my Asian friends worked harder than them.

My significant other is Hawaiian and has been asked what his nationality is, which I don't find to be an offensive question. But it has been followed up with the comment, "Oh . . . you are one of the good ones," which is offensive.

I've seen vehicles with Confederate flags and my non-white friends are called awful names and harassed.

[I have been discriminated against] As a customer in many stores in town (I've been followed and asked to leave my bag at the checkout counter).

A friend of mine was stopped as she entered a retail store and subjected to being searched based on race.

At the store where I worked, it was unofficial policy to follow and stare at any non-white customers until you mad them leave.

I've had relatives that are pulled over far too often for often unimportant things, but seems to be largely based on race.

My daughter's boyfriend (Black) was pulled over a police officer. No ticket was issued and nothing was noted as a problem. The officer was just checking. My daughter was horrified.

Also a white nurse accused a friend who is black of physically abusing her child because she observed marks on the child's skin. They were actually just angle kisses/stork bites (i.e., birth marks the nurse was not familiar with in black skin).

The owner of the company I work for is a black woman and the landlord for our office space has been actively racist and misogynist toward her. . . This landlord has refused basic services . . . that are clearly lined out in our lease—such as basic maintenance . . .

I don't know one behavior, but the term "coloreds" and "faggots" are used here more than any place I have lived.

My bi-racial sons are stopped by SPD far more freq. I have similar vehicle but am a middle age white female and never get detained.

My parents were selling their house. My family and I were helping them. A family came to a house showing. They saw my husband (who is black) and me (who is white) and they grabbed their gun. They left the house immediately saying all kinds of racial slurs. . . .

Patients at our office keep asking to not see “the black doctor.” This makes for a very awkward and uncomfortable setting. . . .

I have also seen multiple patients from the community [not] accept care in the hospital due to race of a doctor or nurse. This speaks to the general mindset of the area.

I had a black employee who was a convicted felon. He worked very hard and was working very hard to put his past behind him. Rode his bike across town to get to work in any weather. Cops constantly harassed him. Pulling him over on his bike every other week only to find nothing.

Yes, I have a friend who was unlawfully detained by the SPD as he was walking by a nightclub where a brawl had broken out between some college student who happened to be black. SPD assumes that he was involved as he is black and happened to be passing by the club.

I know 2 different black men who do not have criminal records, who are regularly stopped by the police in our city. Usually they are told that they violated a minor traffic law, like crossing a line or failing to use a turn signal to change lanes. . . . They are usually just given a warning, but sometimes ticketed for the minor offense. The stops are often done by the same couple of officers.

Not receiving proper medical care where the practitioner stated they could not help me because they never had a patient of color with the issue I shared.

An African American friend was told he was “liable to get shot” because he was wearing an Obama tee shirt. The incident occurred in a local supermarket.

My father is a black man and has been discriminated against his entire life. He has been profiled by police, denied jobs based on color and has dealt with hostility in more circumstances than there is space to articulate in this text box. Because my skin is much lighter, I look white. Due to that we have faced discrimination as though I do not belong to him.

My neighbor, who is African American, has had to wait in restaurants to be served while everyone white gets served first. This information is not coming from him it’s something I’ve observed. . . . An older African American gentleman, an acquaintance of mine, reported that he gets called “boy” all the time—and he was in his 70s when he told me that.

A good friend is currently struggling to find housing because her boyfriend is a person of color, but when she applies alone as a white woman, gets approved.

My niece, who is a mixed nationality, was denied a place she wanted to rent in Springfield.

A friend’s daughter was not able to work as a greeter at a local restaurant because a customer did not want to be greeted by someone of the daughter’s race.

A candidate for a position was not hired because she was African American and would not be well received by the rural southern Missouri community she would work in.

A coworker . . . shared that she hired a repair man, once he came to her home and saw her (she is not white) and her children, he refused to do the job, stating it couldn't be done. She hired another contractor . . .

I just hosted an international student for MSU, and it was horrible what those students experienced.

Having worked with students with disabilities, and international students for 30 years in Springfield, I have heard, and observed, individuals saying/doing rude/inappropriate things to , or about those who in one way or another were different from themselves.

Several issues with school system not addressing bullying against a friend's child that is gay and mixed race.

Unequal administration of consequences for children of color in the SPS system. More severe for students of color.

I had a group of students observing an elementary classroom years ago. And 8-year-old African American kid was constantly being sent out into the hallway to sit, as punishment, for infractions that the white boys got away with all the time. I did not point this out to my students, although I had observed it and filed it away for later discussion. My students pointed it out to me, it was so obvious.

I have watched several African American and mixed -race kids go through discrimination at school. They have been branded as troublemakers, when they're not, just based on the color of their skin!

I also heard a preacher one time spend his sermon time on an Easter morning tearing down MLK, Jr.

My brother and sister-in-law are a biracial couple who moved away due to repeated threats and assaults.

Nazi symbols left in the pew. We have a black pastor.

I have family members who are Native American. They have dealt with discrimination and hostility their entire lives, including racial profiling by law enforcement and unequal treatment in school.

At least one acquaintance was assaulted in a supermarket after being accused of being Middle Eastern and told to "go back home." (He is a Native American man).

Native American friend told to "go back where you came from " in local grocery store. Oh, the irony . . .

A friend of Indian ethnicity, who was a hostess at a popular, high-end restaurant, was let go because the "high-paying customers didn't want to be served by 'someone like her.'"

I also have an Indian friend who was pregnant and was told “Your kind of people just squat by the side of the road and pop out kids!”

A family we rented to experienced discrimination when trying to secure an event space. The price quoted on the phone doubled when they went in person to rent it. The gentleman was Muslim.

Being an old white guy, many locals mistakenly think I am of a like mind and will spew racist comments. Yet will mask this ugliness when confronted.

Being shown a comedic video that contained racial slurs by a person not of color.

As before, a number of white respondents felt that they were the ones discriminated against:

My husband has been a plumber for over 25 years. He has been turned down for jobs because a company chose a minority just to make a demographics goal. I feel that the most discriminated against group is the straight, white male. People talk about white privilege, but we have not seen any privilege.

To gain funding for a position, a previous supervisor went through human resources to obtain money for a diversity position where ONLY people who were not white men could apply. Two people more qualified than myself were intentionally excluded from the hiring process because they were white men. [white woman, 25-40 years old]

Yeah [I was discriminated against] because I’m white.

Group of blacks, very nasty, cutting line and being disruptive at fair. We won’t go back. Too unsafe for children.

I have access to certain programs because I’m part black that my white friends aren’t. It’s racist to have programs available to people based on their skin, like affirmative action and the 4A program in school. These social programs need to end, they only taught us the color of our skin is the most important.

I have seen people who were more qualified for jobs get passed over for a lesser qualified applicant because that person was a member of a minority class. We’ve gone too far in the opposite direction. Enough is enough.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Many respondents reported experiencing or witnessing discrimination in housing and employment against members of the LGBTQ+ community, especially trans men and women. They observed acts of physical and verbal assault, being refused service, profiling by police, and bullying at school and work. Examples provided here are different ones from those reported in the earlier question:

An acquaintance who grew up here but currently lives in Texas came back to Springfield to visit his parents, and brought his [same sex] partner with him. They stayed at a local hotel . . . the hotel called the police. It’s shameful a business felt they had the right to call the police because two quite respectable men who just might be gay had booked a room and were staying in their facilities. . .

A trans woman I know was assaulted by a law enforcement officer. Two gay men I know were attacked by random groups of men who beat them so severely that hospitalization was required.

I've had several friends who've been verbally threatened, one who was beaten, and those who are transgender face threats and violence in much higher proportion. Do we report these? No. Why? It only opens you to further threats and intimidation. So you hide it, let it go, hope it simply goes away.

Some transgender friends and I went to eat at Mexican Villa East. We got the standard chips and salsa then placed our orders. People all around us, even some that came in after us, had gotten their orders, ate, and left. After an hour and a half, multiple inquiries to where our orders were we finally realized what was happening and got up and left.

I asked a male customer to stop calling me honey in a lascivious way and I was reprimanded. A friend's same sex partner was not allowed to see him in the hospital because he wasn't recognized as family.

Several churches do not accept gay and transgender people, most notably Assemblies of God.

Myself and others that I personally know have been denied employment, lost employment, lost housing, been harassed verbally and physically by members of the community, and been removed from businesses for our gender identities and sexual orientation. Police have told a woman I know who was being verbally and physically abused by her same sex spouse to stop calling them after they repeatedly did nothing to help her in her abusive situation.

Following a Pride event on the square, I walked the block over to the bus stop . . . I was verbally assaulted sitting waiting for the bus, and physically assaulted as I tried to get on the bus. Yes, this was a number of years ago, but it still sticks with me and I'm afraid to be "out" on a bus to this day.

A friend was denied fertility treatment by a doctor in Springfield because she is married to a woman. A local business refused to give a friend a men's style hair cut because she is a woman.

No businesses would hire a transgender, except Target. They applied 30-40 different times before Target hired.

I'm unsure if it's illegal or not, but I was turned away from donating plasma due to an "ID mismatch" after explaining my point in transition in full detail and that I had no problems being registered as female in the system (which is what my ID said).

A neighbor (a trans woman of color) was stabbed several times and I was with her when the police came. They accused her of prostitution, stating that trans people usually are, even though that was not true. They mocked her, using the wrong pronouns and calling her "it" a couple of times. They told her they could report the assault but they would have to charge her with prostitution. Which what that has to do with a break-in and assault at 4 am I am not sure.

My husband has been demoted from volunteering positions when it was discovered he was transgender. There is like a 2-year wait for Big Brothers in Springfield, he signed up, and there

was not one family OK with him being transgender.

I have a transgender friend who cannot be treated for any type of health concern at Mercy Hospital. I know of another person who was not allowed into a women's shelter because she looked too male. The Democratic and Republican Parties state committee members must consist of one man and one woman to represent a ward. I have [non] binary friends who do not fall into either of those categories.

Actually, it is lawful to fire someone because they're gay in the state of MO. We need to pass an ordinance that outlaws this practice.

While we have experienced discrimination, it appears not to have been unlawful according to the legal definition you provided. This, in itself, is discriminatory because there is not protection for same sex couples seeking the same rights as heterosexual couples.

A friend was asked in a job interview at what age she realized she was a lesbian. She did not get the job and was afraid to file an anti-discrimination claim.

One of my friends was eating at a restaurant and had on a t-shirt with a rainbow flag and the word "gay" on it. A customer came up to him and asked him if he was gay. My friend said yes. The other person then said he didn't like that and shoved my friend's plate off the table.

Family Video refused to hire someone because they were gay.

Having drinks with my same sex partner at Jimm's Steakhouse where the staff became hostile because we were too affectionate. In addition to my experience, a peer shared that they were released from a job based on how students felt about their sexual orientation/gender identity. This person did not fight it because of the energy it would've taken to prove the experience.

Academy Bank told a trans male after legally changing his name they would not change his account to his new legal name because "we don't serve your kind."

Someone I spoke with locally on a dating app sent offensive photos and messages to my family members on Facebook, calling me words like "faggot" and "disgusting," citing my orientation as a reason why I should kill myself. I then found out that things like this have been happening to my gay friends and acquaintances for a long time in Springfield.

The number of times I have seen someone hurl a slur at one of my LGBT friends or feel the need to "witness" to them that they are going to hell is too innumerable to count.

I have a nonbinary teenager. I've witnessed bullying that was teacher supported. It was not until they were able to attend a school outside their district that they felt accepted and is recovering socially.

In college, a young man walked into one of Springfield's gay bars, not realizing it was a gay bar. When someone approached him, his homophobic reaction was to spit on the person. It went to court, and the spitter was fined. He was later heard to remark, "So, it costs \$50 to spit on a fag in Springfield."

Another group of my [college] students was observing a classroom group of college students,

one of whom was gay. The gay student was bullied and her ideas were met with eye rolls, even though my student reported that her ideas were the best in the group.

I have had many friends leave Evangel because of being forced to attend counseling due to their sexual orientation.

It's also hard to have a kid who's gay and hear a minister at my mom's church saying he's less than a person.

And there was one comment from someone who believed she had been discriminated against because she was not gay:

On Park Central Square during some gay pride crap, I went to support a family member. A man dressed as a drag queen called me names and told me to leave because I was an older female and not gay.

Discrimination based on religious beliefs

Churches in the area attempting to use public funds (taxpayer monies) to further push a "Christian only" agenda. Religion does not belong in public schools, nor does it belong in government and governing settings.

A Jewish couple from the east coast chose to live and work in Springfield, had degrees from excellent universities, were amazing contributors to the community, but their kids were harassed at school, and they spent weekends cleaning up the Jewish cemetery, and finally gave up and moved back to the east coast where they felt like they fit in.

Your City government assumes all persons are of a "praying nature" plus breaking the law discussing their religious opportunities on news programs. . . . Also need to remove the "god" stickers off Greene Co police vehicles. Another offense.

I volunteered to become an election judge in my precinct. The training was preceded by not only the pledge of allegiance (with the 1950s addition of "under God") but with a prayer led by a city employee.

Intolerance by coworkers surrounding a difference of religious beliefs. Was docked at 10% late penalty off an assignment at OTC because I had missed class due to religious observance; had a letter from clergy and notified the professor prior but was still deducted points for turn it in "late." Have had coworkers decorate for holidays but only the main Christian holidays, completely ignoring mine and others' holidays. Being forced to use leave time for holidays instead of being able to trade it for another day, even though all the Christian holidays are off and paid.

The religious discrimination my family faced at an SPS school was – I believe – illegal but I have been too afraid of backlash (which my child might face) to pursue legal options. School hires only if degree is from conservative Christian university, principles of religion are thematic priorities (obedience, shaming, learned helplessness, gender complementarianism). Another kid threatened to bring a gun to school to kill my kid (to prove hell IS REAL!). School admin refused to address beyond the use of the word "gun." They clearly agreed with the conservative

Christian student. We moved and left the school for safety.

. . . fired because they didn't have Christian values. . .

Mercy Hospitals did not call my husband back for a janitorial position when he admitted that he would remain quiet, but not participate in prayer.

I have been in a hostile workplace where I was forced to leave because I am not Christian.

My wife was let go from an employer due to her unwillingness to participate in prayer in the work environment.

I've had businesses refuse to provide services because they have "issues of faith" that prevent them from doing so.

I've heard friends describe being threatened with violence just because of . . . their religion (Islam).

A friend of mine was fired from Expedia by Christian staff for being LGBTQ+.

I have been denied birth control by Mercy when I wasn't married. Because I was single! My married friends were told by Mercy they needed their spouses' permission.

Sex and age discrimination

There were fewer examples in these two categories. Most of the examples involved workplace discrimination, such as the failure to be hired or promoted due to one's sex or age. Several examples involved serious sexual harassment. Here are representative comments:

I happen to work for an organization that designates certain men to lead, but treat their direct female employees with lack of respect—who are underpaid and overworked. . . I think there's a lot of sexism in several workplaces among Springfield.

. . . When I was younger and unmarried, I had an employer who told me that he owned my personal life and his goal was to keep me busy every night of the week. He would set me up on dates and tell me that they were required for work networking. He made me perform free legal and volunteer services for his friends and for his wife's company, even though I worked on a commission basis.

I have a friend who I believe was passed over on a promotion after studying for months to pass the test required, based on being a female. She was the second highest score and they skipped over her and promoted 2 other males.

My mother and I have both made less money than our male peers. . . I also don't know of a woman who hasn't been groped or dry humped or similar at a work function, seminar, event, our shopping, etc. The preceding is all current. The next even was '96ish. On a million dollar business loan, I was approved on the merits ,but the main guy wanted to meet with me to demand a blowjob from me before he'd sign off on it. I told him no thanks. Since it was he (powerful man) said, she (youngish woman) said, I had no recourse. And that's just the most egregious example.

. . . Many women who are telling me they just left a job because of inappropriate attention. That's a national problem . . .

I was passed over for a management position because I refused to provide sexual favors to the boss.

Rape kits being destroyed instead of processed. Rape cases being dropped without prosecution.

I live in fear in Springfield as a woman, our chief of police should be fired for his mishandling of rape kits.

I have a friend who was raped in Greene County. And she was accused of lying and it was never investigated.

. . . a few of my friends were sexually harassed or assaulted on campus and the case was brushed under the rug. Their abuser was not charged or dismissed from campus and he was allowed to walk free, only having to move dorms for a semester.

When questioned by police, target harassment and taunting of a young woman friend of mine who was clearly having a panic attack. She was taunted for her emotionality by at least three cops while her friends knew she was having a panic attack and were trying to calm her down.

Another example is my doctor. My husband has no health problems and is instructed to return to the dr in 6 months. I have serious health issues and chronic conditions. He tells me to come back in a year.

[In Spanish]: At work, for being a woman and for being Latina.

I was treated poorly for being older.

The Thriller performance on C-Street at Halloween. Not enough seating for the elderly. Couldn't see a thing.

Successful spouse attempting to return to the workforce after age 50. Had earned awards and done well financially. No offers after applying to several places advertising a need.

My friend who is over 50 applied for a supervisor position that she was clearly qualified for because she was already doing the job. In her interview she was asked, if you don't get the position, how would you feel about training your new supervisor? It was later learned that they already had a younger, less experience male from another area in mind.

I had been working at a local grocery store for quite some time when an opening came up that I was qualified for. The person that got the job was hired out of store and was very young, cute, and knew nothing about the position. This store is known for hiring young pretty people.

I believe I was unlawfully terminated because of my age and I believe I was discriminate against because of my age, while seeking employment.

I was encouraged to retire by being moved to a job I didn't like, even though my job evaluations were excellent.

Police seem to profile the younger crowd.

The college community is all that seems to matter here.

And there was one reverse discrimination comment related to sex:

My supervisor told to me he only interviews and hires women.

Discrimination due to disability status

The final major category was discrimination due to disability status. Often, this entailed the lack of appropriate accommodation or curtailed job opportunities due to the disability. Many comments provided no details. Representative comments with context include:

[lack of] ADA access

MSU/JQH and other facilities not disability friendly.

. . . cause of disability, fired from work.

People with disabilities need more activities where people don't care if someone is loud or moves around a lot.

Discrimination due to my disability by not accommodating.

I also am concerned about the lack of inclusive access for people with disabilities. One of my friends has to use an electric scooter and there are places he cannot go.

Have been denied housing based on disability.

My individual [from a social service worker] wasn't allowed to volunteer at a restaurant due to him looking "too retarded."

I was talking to a local business in town and was told people with disabilities could not do the work. It was cashier and stocking, she was extremely rude. When I wrote a complaint to the business about the employee, they never responded.

Landlords being unwilling to rent to people who have emotional support animals, despite them having proper paperwork from medical professionals, landlords wanting proof of mental health diagnoses to "verify" their disability since it was not of a physical nature. I've also known people who have been told by doctors that they cannot help them or refuse to treat them due to them having HIV. I've also had clients whose employers have disclosed their private health information illegally to other coworkers.

OTC refused to recognize my disability and chose to tell me they would not accommodate me, but they did several others.

I once was asked an unlawful question about a disability by a job interviewer and then denied the job—based on my truthful answer. All totally illegal. It was at a major medical facility in Springfield.

When in the community with individuals on the autism spectrum, I have witnessed certain

people treating them in ways as if they do not exist.

My mom was almost fired at her job for being very sick. The BIA helped her retain her job.

I am younger and use a disabled license plate, no placard, when people see me parking in the appropriate parking space they have already made rude comments, shouting at times before they realize I am really a person with a mobility issue.

Having to ask for accommodations everywhere we go for room for our son's chair. Sometimes it's easy, other times people act like we should just stay home, so most of the time we do. The people who decided what was acceptable for ADA clearly in most cases never had to do it themselves. SPS is terrible for special needs kids and families, they try to force my son into programs they already have instead of doing what he actually needs.

My parents are raising my sister who has a severe disability. They often receive poor service in public places like restaurants. Because of her disability, they do not attend church services, movies, or loud and crowded social events because the noise that my sister makes is distracting to others.

A friend was barred from a church because they felt her chair would tear up the building.

I work with deaf people, and I have OFTEN viewed discrimination of this community. I

Miscellaneous

Several comments were made regarding discrimination due to socioeconomic status or due to living on the north side of Springfield. Although there were few of these, the comments are worth noting:

My fiancé only lives in Springfield because we are too poor to live [elsewhere]. . . . Lately, our lives have felt more and more in danger. Half the time we go out to enjoy "nightlife" we are verbally harassed.

I have witnessed other shoppers shun and leave the shop when encountering . . . street people, whether homeless or indigent.

I know someone very mistreated last year based on perceived socio-economic class.

Other adults have made negative comments about my living and working in north Springfield.

City Utilities forces customers with financial hardship to reach out to churches for assistance instead of having a proper citywide fund.

Question 5: If you have personally witnessed an incident of hostility or discrimination directed at somebody else based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or age (40+), please share that experience.

In response to this question about having witnessed acts of hostility or discrimination against others, there were 821 (48.35%) individuals who answered yes and 877 (51.65%) who answered no.

Respondents were also asked where these incidents occurred. In order of frequency, they occurred in employment, 344 (22.72%); public accommodation, 238 (15.72%); by goods and service providers, 213 (14.07%); educational institutions, 178 (11.76%); houses of worship, 142 (9.38%); local government, 131 (8.65%); and by healthcare providers, 130 (8.59%). Respondents were permitted to check more than one category, which explains why the total exceeds 821. The “other” category was selected by 138 (9.11%) of respondents, who observed such instances in all sorts of public settings, gatherings, in neighborhoods, on public streets, in bars, financial institutions, by the police, and in homeless shelters. There seems to be no setting in which such incidents do not occur:

It is such a common thing in Springfield that I’ve witnessed it many times. Derogatory and demeaning language is prevalent. Anyone that is not white, straight, Christian, or that in any way looks different from the stereotypical Springfieldian is a target.

Springfield is one big KKK rally.

The responses to this question echoed responses to the previous two questions and numerous respondents referred to their previous answers in response to this question. As before, many respondents provided one-word or short phrase answers: “Sexism,” “ADA access,” or “Too many to begin.” While most of these acts of discrimination do not necessarily represent unlawful acts, they do demonstrate the indignity and cruelty many in our area experience. Reading about some of the nastiness our fellow citizens experience daily is heartbreaking. Representative examples that do not duplicate previous responses are shared as follows.

Race, ethnicity, or national origin

This, by far, was the category with the most comments. Well over half the comments involved the respondent witnessing discrimination due to race, ethnicity, or national origin. The discrimination ranged from name calling and racial/ethnic slurs to discrimination in seeking or retaining employment to physically assault and abuse. While some of the comments had been shared in response to previous questions, many new ones were mentioned. Representative new comments include the following:

Hostility comes in side comments, looks, suggestions, and other big and small gestures that are baked into an overall undercurrent of the community. I’ve witnessed this based on race, color, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Today’s climate has created an environment where people casually call other racially derogatory phrases towards African Americans, Latinx community, and other minority groups.

Neighborhood children, middle schoolers, calling a black child a racial slur – on purpose – until the child cried and went home. These were awful children living in a neglectful home with drug addicted parents.

There is a bank in town who sponsored a 5K called Run from the Police. When I complained, they could not understand how this was offensive. When black men are shot with alarming regularity by police, sometimes while running away, why would any think this is OK?

Check the records in Springfield to see how many more traffic tickets and stops are given to our friends of color. It happens all the time. . . A close African American friend of mine told me she cannot count the number of times she has been stopped just to check her license and proof of ownership. She is a college graduate, mother of three girls, and a responsibly employed citizen of Springfield married to her one and only husband.

A white woman in a position of authority touched a woman of color’s hair without her consent. The white woman genuinely didn’t understand why her actions were problematic. Community

education is needed.

“I have to hire some niggers, and women.”

I have seen black people called nigger. For example, a female Sonic employee was working in the parking lot when a car drove by and a passenger yelled, “Yeah, take out the trash, nigger!” I have three children in SPS. They tell me terrible stories of racism, starting in elementary. One day during summer school, my daughter witnessed three white boys link arms in the hallway and block a black or brown boy from passing, all while chanting, “Build the wall!” It’s incredibly depressing.

I went to an event and someone said towel head as they were doing a sales presentation.

A landlord told a couple his property was already rented, when in fact it was not. I was present and questioned him about it after. He told me that he had the right to rent to who he wanted and he didn’t want to rent to black people.

A former landlord admitted to “raising” rents to discourage “blacks and other undesirables” from renting his properties.

While looking at a potential apartment for rent for my brother-in-law, my mother-in-law made a very loud pronouncement of “it’s not safe here, too many blacks,” while we were about 10 feet away from two children playing. They were black. I was and am still disgusted with her.

I have many, many students who see that the “others” they have gone to school with should just have to “deal with” curriculum, resources, and traditions that don’t include those [other] perspectives. They see nothing wrong with exclusive practices because exclusive practices is our norm here.

My children were regularly discriminated against by teachers at Pershing Middle School. I sat on the Superintendent’s council and felt that he was more focused on hot button topics, like external gun threats, than he was on the safety of our kids of color on a daily basis.

Schools routinely discipline children of color harsher.

A black man with several years’ experience, who was the best candidate for a job where I work, was not hired because of his skin color. 200 employees, not one black person.

The Nest, or something like that, behind old MO Career Center on Cinderella. Free Ornament day. A black staff from center came over (after dozens of white staff) and was told this was for customers only. Little if any staff were customers. She was denied an ornament by bitchy old white biddies.

My sister’s boyfriend . . . was working for a local hotel as a maintenance man. . . he always got the crappiest jobs because he is black. His supervisor . . . made it obvious that . . . he did not like African Americans. He would be given the crappiest jobs, always outside jobs in bad weather, be told to do one thing that he would work on for a couple of days and then be told to undo it all for a couple of days and then have to REDO it all over again the following week in the exact same way. Meanwhile, newer employees were promoted to better duties as soon as they were hired, even though they had no experience, just because they were white – and the manager was not subtle or secretive about it!

Social situation where I included an African American friend. The usual white friends just didn’t come around.

An older gentleman at a grocery store yelled at a black man who was with his son because he

felt the man and his family should not live in his part of town.

My son had kids ask if he was going to be put in a cage due to Donald Trump's law on immigration. I have heard students at SPS directing comments to other students (who are mixed-race) about the size of their lips, their skin color, and worse ("You could be my slave").

There were flyers left on all the driveways in my neighborhood that promoted white nationalist websites and organizations. I took this flyer to the police.

Police treatment of the black community. I have witnessed the police harassing black people and my son was followed by a police cruiser while he was just walking on the street.

. . . my neighbor, who immigrated from Kenya, is now a new citizen, and he teaches at two colleges here in town (I am as white as he is black). We stopped at the northwest Walmart and upon entering, a police officer standing at the door glared at my neighbor as he walked past. When I came in, the officer smiled quite friendly until he realized I was with the 6 foot black man. Instead of looking at my neighbor with a better look on his face, the officer looked at me like I was trash.

Traffic stop of a black male by Springfield police for "crossing the center line" in mid-evening on a virtually empty street. Although he was totally cooperative (his mother taught him to keep his hands in sight!), had not been drinking and was in no way impaired, he was given a field sobriety test. I think of this every day as I witness white people of all ages committing dangerous traffic infractions without being stopped—speeding, running red lights, and yes, crossing into the next lane as they text and jabber on their cell phones.

I witnessed a young, black man, with no criminal history, be sentenced to prison, by a now retired judge. The charge was for selling a small amount of marijuana to another college student. The young man was married, worked full time, and was going to college full time. The other people in the courtroom were openly shocked, including the young man's attorney. On the same day, the same retired judge gave probation to a young white male, who had pled guilty to a very serious assault.

I was sitting in traffic and noticed a person in a car next to me wave at a white person who crossed in front of their car. Then a black person walked in front of their car and they mimicked shooting the person. They then revved the engine and pulled forward toward the black person.

One night on Commercial Street, I observed three young white men harassing and then assaulting two older black men. I called the police for help, and when police arrived, they let the white men (who were the aggressors) go and arrested the two black men.

I work in health care. A patient and their family (all white) were very hateful and racist toward a black coworker to the point my coworker had to be removed from her work station for her safety until this patient and family were discharged. This was several days. This is only 1 incident. These things happen DAILY at the hospitals!

I shadowed a doctor from Sri Lanka, and listened to patients make demeaning comments about her ethnicity throughout the day. . .

I worked at the hospital a few years ago, at Cox South. I overheard several white people talking about how they didn't trust the doctor (who I assumed was seeing someone they knew) because he was a "n****r doctor."

Just the sight of someone of color walking out of a blood bank caused a woman to begin using

derogatory language about this person shed' never met. The person was not approaching her, speaking to her, looking at her. Just walking to their care. The woman was speaking to her husband and I was nearby. All three of us were white.

When I worked at a Chinese restaurant here I was told to "go back to (my) Vietnamese hell."

Had an argument with a 50+ customer who insisted "all black men need a good ass-kicking" within earshot of a polite young black man.

The only people I have ever witnessed being pulled aside, to have their receipts checked, as they leave Walmart at Glenstone and Kearney, are people of color. Happens every time I visit. My white self has never been asked to show my receipt.

I have seen people at the Price Cutter down the street be stopped, ask to have their bag searched because they are people of color. One time someone literally yelled "filthy n*****s" at a family of black people there.

My husband and I are white, and we are good friends with four black teens. They come from an impoverished home, and sometimes their clothes are not clean or may have holes. When we take them to restaurants, movies, stores, etc., people often stare. When in stores, I think [it] is obvious that they are watched closely, as if it is expected that they will shoplift.

Managers making unkind comments about my coworkers/customers who wore hijab or pagan-symbol jewelry. . .

I watched a hired security guard at Walmart target a Latino family by aggressively driving his large truck very close to them as they walked to the store. I reported the incident to the store manager.

I worked with a group of people who were from another country and spoke with a very heavy accent and many people could not understand them when they talked. I heard a person tell them to either learn to speak English or go back to where they came from. I told that person they were speaking English, but you have to take the time to try and understand them, which is something most do not want to try to do.

One of my [fellow employees] was talking about a class he participated in. He said there were a group of Pakistanis in the class and they were standing around taking pictures of the Manufacturing Facility where the class was being held. Another employee said, "You know what they were doing don't you? They were mapping out a plan to bomb the place." I found this offensive because I know a family from Pakistan and they are very friendly and a loving family. That comment to me was a stupid thing to say.

A shop clerk choosing to help a white lady over Hispanic when Hispanic arrived first and waited until she was free. I said she was here before me. You could tell she [clerk] didn't want to help her.

I am a friend of the Latin American community. I see many dark skinned or Spanish speakers treated as illegals when they are either citizens or legal residents. This is not right!

I have an employee whose second language is English. Some clients of ours refuse to work with her as a "foreigner."

Northside Lowe's has(d) bilingual signs (English/Spanish). A customer very loudly stated that he would no longer do business in that store if they were going to be unAmerican.

Also, I have witnessed prejudice against international students (primarily Missouri State

students since I work nearby) based on religion and national origin.

Unfortunately, my Native American friends and I have had our belief systems questioned because we are perceived to be white. White people who plead for black equality have called us “racist” and said we have “white privilege.”

A few respondents perceived hostility and discrimination to be directed toward white people:

I’ve actually seen some people of color assume offense where none was intended. We all need to take a step back and forget the labels.

Surprisingly I most often see minorities being hostile to people because they sometimes want special privileges or assume that since they’re a minority they will be discriminated against even when they haven’t. I’ve seen this with at least one of all the minority groups listed except for age.

The principal of Weller Elementary openly stated in a news interview that it’s a “good thing” that Springfield is becoming less white.

I’ve seen black youths taunt a white guy about being a “honky.”

Saw a fight at Trops once, an African American girl kept calling a white girl a “white bitch” and went at her with a bat.

A white male walked out of a Kum N Go and was greeted by a large African American man who punched him so hard that I could hear his body hit the ground from inside my car. The victim was just trying to leave the store.

I witnessed a black man use his color to be aggressively outspoken in order to receive free tires for his car. Unfortunately, the business caved in order to get rid of him.

Whites are looked down on from non-whites.

My friend painted his face black for Halloween and boy howdy he got in a lot of trouble for that one – How else could I describe other than discrimination based on color?

Disability

In previous comments, many respondents noted the difficulty people with mobility disabilities have in navigating the streets and stores of Springfield. Similar examples were shared here, as well as others that highlight the cruelty directed to those with special needs, mental or cognitive disabilities:

Trump publicly made fun of a disabled journalist on national television, giving others a feeling of freedom to express their same feelings.

And the day I was in school with the assignment to be in a wheelchair all day I experienced how people with disabilities are discriminated against every day in consideration of building and city planning, not being provided the same opportunities for mobility as everyone else.

I watched a man in a wheelchair repeatedly ignored in a restaurant for a good 20 minutes. He had to block the walkway to get service.

I have witnessed landlords on more than one occasion discriminate against clients for their disability by refusing them apartments or accommodations based on their disabilities, even after both myself and client showed them the law and that they could not do that.

I have picked up two disabled people who did not have sidewalks to their houses. One was in an electronic wheel chair who had come to the end of the sidewalk on Lone Pine, 2 miles from

home. The other was walking home from getting necessary prescriptions at Price Cutter on Division (since closed) and their house was southeast of Cherry street. It was dark and there is no sidewalk south of Cherry on East Gat for quite a ways. These were very difficult situations for these men.

A close friend with a physical disability (Muscular Dystrophy) is often treated as lower class by those that do not know him.

Individual with cast not able to join a party because restaurant didn't have access to upstairs banquet room.

Many businesses in Springfield cannot be accessed by people in wheelchairs. Speaking to owners and being told they aren't going to change things falls into this [discrimination].

Many of my special needs parent friends, we all have stories.

I have witnessed discrimination of a deaf person in both employment setting and in healthcare.

A lady that I work with is in her 60s, she has hearing issues. The millennials in my department talk horribly about her, make rude comments, make fun of her and are downright cruel. When I have said something and stood up for her, then I begin to be treated the same way. This is the behavior of straight, white women who are from this area, the Ozarks. Shameful.

I frequently see people who clearly have mental health issues being publicly scorned when they are out in public. The most recent incident I saw was a man, who was very friendly but somewhat unaware of social norms, who did not have the money to purchase a very inexpensive lunch, The people behind him in line were being hateful and rude to him. I ended up buying his lunch and then the same people who were behind him in line were upset with me. For making sure a man had a meal that day.

Patients with chronic pain and/or psychiatric type medical problems are not uncommonly treated badly by local medical personnel. They are frequently treated with a demeaning and hostile attitude. It is common that medical symptoms are ignored because "it must be all in their heads" while undiagnosed and untreated medical problems pile up as a result. No wonder they're in pain.

I work with people in the poverty level that have a lot of barriers in their life . . . Often time people judge the people I work with based on their perception of "skills." They do not consider giving them accommodations to help them overcome barriers.

I was visiting a patient in the hospital and was told I needed to "suit up." When asked why I was told because the client was HIV positive.

I see this regularly toward my disabled daughter, mostly by other kids, but have had a lot of eye rolls from waitresses and clerks at businesses.

I've seen athletes yell "retard" at those that are not as physically mobile.

Employee made a Worker's compensation claim and was called a liar and forced to go reenact how they got hurt by doing by doing the same they were doing when they got hurt, after being told by the doctor not to be lifting anything over 5 lbs. The sweet little old man was about to drop an engine block on himself while trying to show the management team how he hurt himself . . . Myself and several other people ran over to help and I told management they are all liable if he should see legal help . . . I was injured 3 weeks prior to incident and fired a few days later.

A disabled individual using food stamps was shamed by a customer and cashier at a grocery store. The cashier wasn't trained in how to ring up an EVT purchase and made a big deal of the line being held up. The customer next inline jumped on the bandwagon. Telling her [the disabled woman] she needed to get her fat ass off the electric cart and lose some weight, get a job, and quit taking everyone else's hard earned money.

Religious discrimination

While this was not the largest category, it was well represented. Several comments referenced the harangue by the street preachers in downtown Springfield, while others believe that hatred and division is being sown by ministers from the pulpit:

There are houses of "worship" where hate, bigotry and homophobia are actively "preached" from the pulpit. I feel this is one of the leading causes of discrimination in our community.

I was shut out of a local church because of life experiences myself. Officially I was told I was simply too old, but unofficially I was informed it was because of my current life circumstances [not shared in the example].

Many people make remarks to those around them in public with the thinking that we are all conservative Christians, but these public comments about race or sexual reference are so unacceptable and make people feel like Springfield is off limits to those that are not conservative white Christians.

This area hides behind religion based dogma and stereotypes to perpetrate others' differences. Finding a diverse and inclusive church is very rare in the SGF community. All the good religion can do is stopped by the discrimination and inappropriate conduct that is allowed in employment, etc.

Asked if we were Christians; said no and was told "have fun in hell."

Cannot believe the incidence of Jewish hostility. Still hear insults at public gatherings of public officials.

Public schools scheduling major events on Jewish holidays and coaches leading prayers.

There are public school teachers, and other professionals, in the area who are being encouraged by their churches, Christian leaders and peers to push an unlawful religious agenda upon children in public schools. Some of these teachers willingly participate, while others resist the pressure.

Witnessed anti-Semitic comments from a tech at Mercy hospital.

I had the worst sidewalk conversation with a neighbor displaying her most anti-Semitic rant I have ever heard. There are some extremely conservative, obnoxious "ministers" spouting hate in the square way too often.

There is a rise of Islamic phobia that is increasing in our community.

A Muslim friend of mine was cussed out during a Trump rally.

Every June, churches come out on the street and abuse our LGBTQ+ citizens.

Neighbors said their pastor told them about dangers of transgender people using the restroom of their choosing.

I've seen churches preaching hatred toward LGBTQ.

An entire denomination excludes LGBT people from membership.

Rev. Phil Snider trying to shame the community because the community's religious beliefs are not the same as his.

Reading the pastor of James River Assembly hate speak in the local paper towards the lgbtq community.

The Christian group that yells at individuals downtown.

And there were a few examples of discrimination against Christians:

I saw someone spit on those Christian folks who do their megaphone thing on the square downtown.

People of conservative views being verbally assaulted for sharing their opinions.

Sexual orientation and gender identity

There were many comments to the effect that "The gays don't get treated well" and "Street preachers, catcalling of LGBT person." Many comments stated that "I have witnessed people of the LGBTQ+ community be verbally and even physically assaulted." The repeal of the SOGI ordinance was again mentioned often. While most of the responses had been given in earlier questions, some additional examples that contained more detail or context were shared:

It's very hostile every Friday night down at the square. We stopped going there because of the constant yelling from the sidewalk preachers, no one wants to be told they are going to hell while they are trying to eat dinner.

I have seen members of the LGBT community being discriminated against in the workplace, being fired for things that straight people had done and not been fired for and being coached more often.

Individuals I work directly with for the nature of my job stating they are not comfortable in working with people who are not heterosexual.

I bring trans-gendered individuals into my class for my students—who are future educators—to see and listen to. I will have some who refuse to even come to that class day out of feeling "offended" at having a trans individual in the classroom.

I have seen election judges give a hard time to other queer people for not matching the picture on their license. I have seen verbal and physical harassment of queer people.

Had co-workers who played "guess what gender" people were if it wasn't obvious. It would make everyone uncomfortable and sometimes may have been loud enough for the other person to hear. It was fun for them but cruel for everyone else.

Customers leaving "gays go to hell" comics instead of monetary tips for openly gay waiters.

The Speaker of the Missouri House of Representatives announcing to the press that "the timing is not ripe for lgbtq rights in Missouri."

I've seen people who do not react kindly to a person in our neighborhood who is clearly transgender. They make rude faces and talk about her. I saw one person who wouldn't stand in line behind her at the school.

I have witnessed two individuals being harassed by other customers due to gender identity—employees and management were standing by and watching---did nothing. My friends and I had

to step in to stop it.

Workplaces calling trans people “it,” . . .

Judge kept calling trans woman Sir.

A very lovely young man was minding his own business when a group of “friends” gathered around him and told him that he was going to hell because he was gay. These “friends” were told to do such things by their pastor. Absolutely heartbreaking.

When I was in high school I witnessed a gay student being isolated, threatened and harassed.

Our community needs to reinstate SOGI and promote diversity in leadership.

Sexism

While this was not the largest category, several comments showed the gender bias many women experience in Springfield:

An older lady was allowed to be harassed till she moved so they could rent her apartment for a higher rate.

At a march for women, I saw a couple of guys driving a pickup around the square honking and yelling while a speaker was talking to the crowd.

OTC allowed a co-worker to scream, call me names, tell me how stupid I was. I am an educated woman. When I reported it to my supervisor who witnessed this exchange, he laughed at me and told me I was stupid. When I reported it to Human Resources, I was told OTC allowed their employees to bully others. [white woman, 40-59]

While on the Greene County Sheriff’s ride, I had a man try to run me off the road because he wanted to see if I could keep my bike upright. HE told me before we started that women should be on the back of a bike, not riding her own.

A local trainer didn’t “like” any of the new members as they were all young and/or female and/or a minority race. They [the trainer] actually resigned from the organization and refused to schedule orientation sessions with these new members.

In the health care setting. I have witnessed young single moms and women of color be treated differently than middle-class white women.

Miscellaneous

This category included comments related to ageism and treatment of the homeless population. There were not many examples in either category—ageism, in particular, had been described in response to previous questions—but several examples of mistreatment of the homeless and indigent were particularly distressing. Examples in both categories are included here:

My mother also was searching for employment several years back and was flat told she was too old to be hired.

I was discriminated against as an older State employee after 20 plus years of service. I chose early retirement rather than file a grievance against the individual, while other younger employees didn’t follow any office rules.

Job opportunities were less than forthcoming due to my age.

My husband, a 50-year-old white man, was let go from his position at a Springfield Co. and

replaced by a younger Romanian man. So I saw that as age discrimination.

I've seen people yell slurs from their car windows at the homeless . . . I've seen a few police officers (not many, but a few) who are quite disrespectful and tend to bait people. In one circumstance an officer called a homeless individual "one tooth" as in "Shut up, One Tooth."

Homeless person was ignored based on his homelessness by the Springfield police. They thought he was drunk (he was not . . . was suffering a stroke). The police left him with me to deal with it. I was walking my dogs at the time so I called 911. The ambulance came and assessed the situation and dealt with a very sick man.

And this example of hostility by an indigent person against someone else:

A nice old lady had fallen on the sidewalk. I went to help her but she was too frail to get up and too frail for me to assist with getting up. A bum came and asked her for money while she was lying helpless on the ground.

Concerns about raising the issue of inclusion

There were several comments, with examples represented below, of individuals who are concerned about the community focusing so much on inclusion. Some individuals perceive this focus as contributing to the "Balkanization" of America; they would prefer for everyone to consider themselves Americans, without hyphens. Some see the inclusion focus as causing more harm than good:

This "inclusion" focus just highlights race and causes more separation.

There is bigotry everyone on every side of the coin.

This is part of life. Grow up. Just do what is right for everyone. Not chose who you want to champion because it makes you feel good and special.

The point is, there are, there has been, and there will always be situations where some group thinks they are morally superior or physically or mentally superior to someone else. It is human nature. Constantly trying to change this just makes it worse. It allows people to identify with one group vs. everyone just being an American without a hyphen in front. Stop Balkanizing this country.

Question 6: Please use the following space for anything else you'd like to share about your experiences.

Respondents were invited to share anything else they wanted to add about their experiences. Many repeated comments and stories they had shared in response to previous questions or added additional examples of perceived hostility and discrimination. In addition, many shared opinions about Springfield in general, Springfield's progress (or lack of it) toward inclusiveness, the survey itself and about inclusiveness in general. It was clear that some of those individuals who had not experienced or witnessed hostility or discrimination chose to share their perceptions here. Several individuals thanked the Human Rights Commission and the City for distributing the survey and trying to make the community more inclusive; some thought actions taken to make the community more inclusive will be futile, while others thought that there had been enough talk and it was more than past time for action. A number of respondents thought that surveys like this create more problems than they solved.

Because many examples of lack of inclusion, hostility and discrimination have been provided in detail

earlier in this report, the comments shared here contain mostly general impressions of Springfield and opinions about what is needed. Representative opinions are shared here. In general, individuals agreed with the following respondents said:

Inclusivity needs to be on both sides of ideas and decisions. One party, race, age, religion, income status, home location or employment type, supporter, or protester group cannot be allowed to bully and persecute another, and it should not be allowed in this city or anywhere else.

I think it's hard to quantify what it feels like to be other. It's hard to explain what it feels like when the assumed norm is not you.

A challenge – how do you change hearts?

Springfield in general: perceptions of the city

Many respondents shared their general impressions of the city in response to this question. Most perceive Springfield to be a friendly city, but with qualifications: friendly to those who are white, native-born, cisgender, and Christian. Examples:

One-on-one I think our area is very polite. However, on the whole there is a feeling that anybody who doesn't look white, American, and Christian is not welcome here.

When I first came to work in Springfield, I was putting together a pie chart that broke down the population by race for the diversity officer at the public entity I worked for. . . . I said, "Give me a second to check the colors again" . . . to be sure I hadn't accidentally used any colors that might be offensive – e.g., red for Native American, yellow for Asian, etc. She came back with an answer I have always thought represents Springfield as well as cashew chicken, "Oh, I would never have thought of that."

I feel that people in Springfield are kind, if they think you are like them. . . . Many people think they are good Christians but are bigots and racists. They're afraid of others and feel superior.

Springfield likes to think it is diverse and accepting as it often appears on the surface, but the undercurrent of racism and bigotry seems to be growing.

I want to leave Springfield because of how bad it is for anyone who isn't straight, cisgender, able bodied, and white.

Springfield needs to get schooled. Literally. It's a town of no tolerance, no culture, no room for differences (i.e., non-Christian, nonwhite, not straight).

I used to think Springfield was a good place, with people I maybe disagreed with but that were generally good. Now I believe that they are not generally good, they live for the opportunity to beat down a minority when they see one . . .

I know there are some amazing people in this community, but they are often overshadowed by the large number of people who are undereducated about minority groups. There seems to be a movement to educate others on the many issues these groups face and Springfield needs to catch up.

What we have in Springfield is a general ignorance problem. Poorly educated (because our schools are terrible), uncultured, drug & alcohol addicted people with no sense of common decency.

There are many in this city who work for diversity in education, the arts, population – but they are outnumbered by the voices who are threatened by, or who have personal/religious bias against many forms of diversity. . . .

I love Springfield, but it is awful for minority communities.

Springfield has become one of the places where outward expressions of hate and racism are becoming normalized, to the extent that marginalized people feel afraid.

Moving here was like going back in time to the 50's. I've been here 9 years. The city is backwards.

Springfield is known for its small mind mentality. . . . Springfield doesn't embrace diversity nor cultivate it . . .

Citizens should not have to worry about discrimination at any point in their lives. I never thought I would until I came to Springfield. [white woman, 40-59]

If Springfield has the desire to change its stagnated lack of diversity, . . . they will have to . . . acknowledge the racist problems whether they be of people of color or trans, LGBT, etc. I believe basically all people are good, but people isolated from differences in the global world become fearfully irrationally, and need to learn about other cultures, races, religions. . . .

There are people that work for the City Administration that have prejudiced/racist views of people of color. For instance, I have personally heard the grants administrator refer to minorities as "coloreds" and homeless people as "street people." Also, he does not feel the Violence Against Women Act is something that the City needs to take seriously.

The incidents at Kickapoo HS last school year should radiate loudly in this community's ear. SPS tried to respond—poorly and far too late—but that's a cancer on the community, not just the school system. Call out racism when it's projected, when it's shared on social media, and when it's honored by the president. If SPFG city leaders don't feel comfortable doing that loudly, boldly and abundantly clearly, then they shouldn't be city leaders.

Our community is divided. To be frank, people are self-centered and many are in survival mode. . . . Morals are things few people have, and even fewer follow. The culture of this city is far from ideal.

Most of the hostility I have seen over the years was more in the form of "microaggressions." It's gotten better over the years since I've moved here in 2002. It was a much different town then.

I work in the educational area and the arts and find the lack of education and barriers put up by our area suffocating. It has pockets of the city and surrounding area that allow freedom but in this area the conservatives of sports and religion as the main thrust for everyone instead of diversity. Lack of acceptance of other religions, sexual orientation and financial levels. This area is so opinionated and the restrictions only perpetuate this lack of education and exception in

our children for the future.

Just look back at recent, local history . . .1. SOGI; 2. Nipple Gate; 3. Yoga as a gateway to the devil . . .; 4. The book, *The Hate U Give*, being removed from certain school libraries in our county; 5. Lack of female leadership in Greene County Commission and Planning & Zoning.

A number of respondents spoke again about the perceived north-south divide in Springfield and expressed the believe that economic inequality and treatment of poorer or indigent citizens is a major problem in the city. Several believed that Springfield has bigger problems than inclusiveness, including homelessness, drugs and crime:

I think that there is a divide between the north and South side (I've resided in both). I feel that the South side in general feel superior to the north side.

Pay attention to the Northside! We need to start a better conversation about being better neighbors to each other.

Discrimination of social status should be added to your list as I have heard a lot of South side people say they don't want to travel past Sunshine.

. . . I worked for a non-profit and many of our clients lived on the Northside of Springfield. Through this, I became acutely aware of the way people on the Northside were viewed by those on the Southside. It is like two different cities. In my experience much of this discrimination focused on those in poverty and the perception that nothing good happened on the Northside of Springfield, everyone was involved in crime.

As an older Caucasian person, the most bias I have witnessed or experienced in Springfield is based on perceived economic status. . . . The attitude that if you want a better quality of life in Springfield, you should move as far south as you are able is only helping to perpetuate the attitude and bias of the North Side. It is harder to live in Zone 1 and care about a city that doesn't seem to care about me and my neighbors' quality of life.

When you live on the northside, the community is not maintained as it is on the south side. We have a street on the corner of Vernon and Snider that is breaking off into the ditch. Every time it rains, we have to pick up chunks out of our yard from where it runs down our ditches. We have called, no response. . .

I think this community needs to put a greater focus on fighting the underlying causes of problems like crime and work on truly creating economic development and opportunities that will help our huge population of impoverished citizens improve their situations. There is far too great of a focus on the south side and developing new strip malls when the people who really need help and attention and opportunities are suffering.

I left Springfield and moved to Arkansas in NW area, a very progressive area, in 1983 and moved back here to retire in 2014 and was in shock to see how the town looked so run down and trampy people walking the streets and intersections with backpacks asking for money when we filled up with gas. No impressive Springfield.

There is a distinct division between those with accepting minds and those with closed ones, also

a large divide between the haves and have nots. Springfield has much more poverty than anywhere else I have ever lived.

This is a rough city I'd like to get out of ASAP. Crime is on the rise, roads are bad, drugs are everywhere, and the SPFD police department is out in full force for speeding tickets and busting teenagers with weed.

Springfield used to be very nice. Now it's not. There's more homeless and crimes. I've been a nurse forever at Mercy. Why is this too many people moving here from everywhere not a racial thing?

I would love to see Springfield look into and help everyone but also look at the top issues we have in our city (homelessness, addicts and crime) and help the people become better. I also feel as though our system (state & local) is broken when it comes to helping single parent households.

This is a courteous town for the most part, but one that is turning a blind eye toward its homeless citizens and keeping its disadvantaged and chronically ill citizens in poverty.

The city needs to pull its head out of its ass and address poverty and neighborhood decline now.

I notice that there is a high rate of homelessness and drug use in Springfield. My question for Springfield is how can we make this a city that is more inclusive for those individuals who go overlooked every single day in the heat, the cold—many of them may not have been called by their first name in a long time.

I feel our community could use more interest in the poor, disabled, & and those fighting battles of anything else going on in their lives.

The under privileged definitely suffer in silence.

Inclusivity is a problem everywhere. I don't think we do too bad in Springfield considering we're such a large town. But there's certainly a huge homeless situation that needs some solutions.

No matter what policies or laws you try to put into place, you can't fix ignorance. This city is worried so much about including everyone in everything. Why don't we worry about the homeless population rising? Or the crime rates steady incline year to year? Or the school lunch debt that shouldn't exist because kids need to eat and school might be the only place to do it?

Consistent with responses to earlier questions, many respondents believed Springfield is more highly influenced by a conservative Christian perspective, and they see this influence as detrimental to supporting increased diversity and inclusion in Springfield, particularly for non-Christians and the LGBTQ+ community. Examples:

I love Springfield and have lived here all my life. I do feel that the conservative and religious nature of the population creates cultural barriers for progressive ideas. We need leaders, especially faith leaders, who help educate the population and provide better guidance towards progressive ideas.

Having lived here 40 years I can tell you that Springfield used to be a more inclusive place, but

the growing influence of the radical religious right has dramatically changed the culture of our community to be much more homogeneous, and much less accepting of anything outside the narrow norms of the religious Right.

I find the most judgmental, small minded people are those church service weekly attendees who call themselves Christian but act as though they are above most others. Perfect example is the churches like James River Assembly who want to keep themselves secluded and isolated from the lesser people by building their own communities within themselves.

One of the most shocking [instances of discrimination] has been at churches. I no longer wish to be a part of any of them.

Too many Evangelicals and Trump supporting Republicans in this area. They do not look beyond their own pitiful lies and never broaden their horizons.

The community is full of Christian bigotry.

I believe that the overwhelming number of evangelical (meaning politically conservative) churches have too much influence in the community.

One time my daughter was asked to sit in separate areas in the church because of being LGBT.

Leaders have to recognize that the whole population does not agree with their right wing bias in terms of religion or reproduction or anything else.

I have found that the most blatant racial discrimination comes from, predictably, white, heavily religious men aged 40+, and other forms of discrimination from the same of any age.

I have attended local Catholic churches where you hold hands during prayer and have had people refuse to hold mine. [Asian female, 40-59]

I was a member at Crossway Baptist church for 10 years. Active member. I was told if I openly came out as Trans I would be dropped as a member, I quit going. Now I attend Brentwood Christian church.

Heterosexism and cissexism are rampant in the town, as are racism and xenophobia. . . It's represented as, "Christian" or "just my opinion."

I believe a portion of our faith community could benefit from some sort of focused education on diversity and inclusion.

Consistent with responses to previous questions, the problems of racism, sexism, ageism, disability and homophobia were again raised in response to this question. Because most of these had been shared earlier, the examples provided here are new ones or are ones that speak about Springfield in general.

I made a job offer once to a woman of color from St Louis. She excitedly accepted . . . The next week, she called me in absolute tears asking me if she could still take the job but work remote. She had googled Springfield . . ., found some very unfortunate history and some other studies retarding perceived/real discrimination against people of color . . . That incident I experienced as a young professional in the area opened my eyes tremendously as to how we're perceived, how we behave, and the lack of self-awareness for so many.

I was completely embarrassed to say I was from Springfield. . . . an older gentleman and a [black] woman [who didn't know each other] were talking. . . . The woman said she was from Chicago and was so excited to move back. . . . The gentleman asked why she would want to go back to Chicago. She said, Look at me. No one else here looks like me She went on to tell stories of people in Target touching her hair without asking because they had never seen anything like it. . .

It's not only a local issue, but it is a national issue. Everything is based on the white race. . . . When the system is working against you it is harder to get anywhere.

Dear White People, Diversity is more than a skin tone. Build your committees with representation from abledness, socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures, and race.

Our Police force is atrocious about discrimination.

We are doing better at recognizing /acknowledging the city's troubled history of racismI would only suggest that community leaders take every pertinent opportunity to affirm their/our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. We can't say it often enough, and those goals are never achieved without action and intentionality.

I am very happy that Springfield is more open and diverse than ever beforeHowever, in terms of misogyny, sexism, objectification of woman and discounting of women's intelligence, abilities and leadership, we have a long way to go.

Springfield is mostly a really nice place, but there is chronic underlying sexism that is obvious to those paying attention. There is also ageism, especially towards women. Plus anyone "different" gets treated the same or worse than women do.

The city sets a bad example for its citizens in not prioritizing these protections for the LGBT+ community.

I don't feel that it is safe to call the police in the case of harassment toward minorities like POC and LGBT people. My experiences with the police show that they will do nothing to help and may ask to not be called on again OR they will escalate the situation with the victim.

I am very happy that Springfield is more open and diverse than ever beforeHowever, in terms of misogyny , sexism, objectification of women and discounting of women's intelligence, abilities and leadership, we have a long way to go.

. . . I was surprised to see the difference in how people will treat myself or my husband. I was treated more fairly when I was with my husband, sadly.

. . . There's nothing that interests the younger crowd. It seems like Springfield was created for a massive nursing home for the retired.

In addition, some respondents felt discriminated against because they hold traditional values, and they see those values being eroded:

I feel as the values I have are not respected. Me being a white heterosexual Christian, I get ostracized, called out for not being tolerant, or I am a bigot, just because I do not share someone's views about letting a man who identifies as a woman go into the same restroom as

my wife and child, for example.

. . . Born and raised in a Communist regime really gave me a perspective on real discrimination based on many aspects. . . Then the real question is: what more is needed? No one is going to [prison because of their lifestyle. No one is losing business because of their lifestyle. No one is losing freedom of speech, in fact they say insulting things about traditional families . . . I came to the States to have freedom of speech and freedom to worship whom I want. . . . What is Springfield community doing to ensure the safety of those like me? I hope my rights are not forgotten or overlooked.

Black folks seem self-segregated. Can't blame them. But I think hillbillies are naturally self-segregated too. Keeping SGF Ozark is important.

I resent being called xenophobic if my opinion is different than someone else's opinion. . . Every person deserves to be valued. . . However, if I want our immigration laws enforced, that does not make me xenophobic. Having our tax dollars pay to educate persons not here legally puts a huge strain on our educational system.

Support for inclusiveness and initiatives to support it

A number of respondents support the Mayor's Commission's efforts to understand the issue of inclusiveness, and the Commission's and City's initiatives to increase inclusiveness. Many respondents noted that Springfield has made progress in this regard, although it has a way to go. Several supported the idea that Springfieldians talk about difficult issues and have public conversations about them, and some questioned whether any tangible outcome would come from this survey.

Support for the fact that the Mayor's Commission and the city conducted the survey was expressed by many respondents. This contrasts with the responses of some people, later in this section, who questioned the need for the survey and the expense in conducting it. Comments:

Keep up the good work!

Do the right thing. . .

Thank you, I hope that this will help our community to be better.

I appreciate the fact that you are seeking out this information. I do hope that it leads to a more inclusive Springfield.

The city pays a steep price due to its cultural homogeneous and xenophobic image. I am encouraged that a survey like this will help shape public policy and make Springfield more vibrant.

Thank you! I love our community and am heavily involved with those who have disabilities, so that is where I see the most need for improvement.

I, however, am very happy that you are asking for responses regarding this extremely important subject and I applaud you!

Thank you so much for reaching out to the community for input. That's a perfect first step to faster progress.

Thank you for doing this.

This is a noble cause.

Thank you for these efforts. Assessment is essential. I hope you are spending an equal amount of time collecting quantitative data.

I think it is great that the conversation on inclusion and equality has gotten to the point where the City has generated this survey. However, I do not think that having a list of personal experiences is a path to a solution. Being able to quantify how many survey takers think we have a problem is a pretty good thing to know.

There were many expressions of support for increasing inclusiveness, with some respondents noting that Springfield's inclusiveness has increased in the past few decades. A number of people said they would do what they could to help, and several noted that the time for action was long past:

Change something. Do something. And let young people be involved, and sometimes LEAD conversations on what this city needs.

I would like to see Springfield actually take action on diversity inclusion. Stop just talking about it and start doing something about it.

Springfield looks good on the surface, but it didn't run deep.

The more our city can do to officially welcome and protect every citizen overtly, the better.

Springfield has come a long way and has a way to go. I believe the City is generally leading in the right direction with programs like Forward SGF.

I think the City leadership taking a bold stance on acceptance . . . is the first step to showing what we are about! It will most definitely rub some people the wrong way, but that is an important first step to being a truly inclusive community. Thank you so much for asking about this and I really hope Springfield chooses to take some action.

Our city needs to embrace change in terms to diversity, equity and inclusion. We are losing out on great young diverse young professionals and losing out on potential employers who can enhance our city.

It's not ALL bad. As swmo goes, Springfield is making progress. I see work going into this, but I still see so much room for improvement.

I love Springfield. I have lived here for 19 years. There are a handful of people trying to make things better, but it is not enough, not widespread enough, and not happening fast enough. More time, effort and funding need to be put toward diversity and inclusion initiatives.

I haven't seen many instances personally, but I absolutely believe that they're happening. I would love a way to become more aware of such incidents and how I might advocate for better treatment.

What I've learned is that we need to get our priorities right We must come together against White Supremacy and Corporate Greed.

I've been a bit negative in this survey, but I'd like to say that I'm from a smaller town in Phelps County, so like, compared to that, Springfield . . . is a very open place. . . So there's still room to improve, but I think there's a chance that with work that Springfield could become a vibrant & welcoming community.

Experiences seem to be getting better due to outreach and education. There is still work to be done.

I think that the area has come a long way from the 125 years that I've lived and worked here. But I believe that it has much room for improvement.

The town is doing better, but we've got a long way to go.

Springfield is overall pretty great, but we need to continually strive to do better.

There are some wonderful people in the Springfield community and Springfield is a beautiful place to live . . . However, the City should continue to further diversity, inclusiveness and a sense of community.

The more we encourage cultural and ethnic diversity and take to heart the experiences and knowledge of others from other places, the more we can grow as a community. It does seem to be increasing noticeably in these recent few years and while it can't be expected to change everything overnight, we can do far more to support this kind of progress.

We have to be proactive in our inclusion.

I find Springfield to be a place where any good intentioned person who wants to make the community a better place has abundant opportunities to do so.

Those of us who are more liberal and accommodating must be willing to stand up for equality and not just let others who are racist in any way to get away from harming others. We have to SAY that we will not stand for mistreatment of other human beings.

I am a middle aged white woman of privilege and I still think our community could do much better and inclusion! If we include (and protect), we will have diversity!

Despite my experiences, I'm hopeful. I view our current state as an opportunity for internal as well as external change. . . . I see Springfield talking openly about and taking active steps to break down all structures that promote systemic racism making it increasingly difficult for minorities to feel included and valued.

Springfield has improved greatly since my childhood regarding inclusivity & welcoming diversity, but if city leaders are sincere in increasing more inclusive participation, it needs to take a more directed, well-conceived, a thoughtful & *active* role.

I think Springfield has made great progress over the decades that I have lived here. Sadly, I believe the last three years has set us back.

While Springfield has come a long way since I moved here 10 years ago, I still feel tokenized in many professional settings and profiled in public.

I've witnessed a lot of leaders in our business community really pushing the issue of inclusion the last couple of years. That needs to transcend throughout the community in civic leadership, nonprofit roles, educational institutions, and other prominent places that the general public forms their perceptions of Springfield. . .

While some respondents (described later) thought that bringing up issues of inclusiveness created divisions and problems, others thought it necessary that such issues be raised and discussed openly:

I think there is a huge opportunity to teach Cultural Conscienseness [Consciousness]. Some of the people have no intention to discriminate but they do it unknowingly.

I feel inclusion needs to be part of the public school program beginning in kindergarten, most children hold their ideals based on what they see and hear at home. They never have the opportunity to visit with, play with, or interact with individuals different from themselves . . .

I think that each of us have biases that we may not necessarily recognize. We might cause harm without knowing it as well. Continued community conversations about this will be very helpful over the long haul.

Having had to work through my own prejudices and having faced prejudice myself, I have come to realize that I am in no place to judge or condemn. Springfield has a long way to go and we will get there by loving each other, being patient with one another, forgiving one another, and engaging each other in open and honest conversation about these things.

. . . but probably a bigger problem faced in communities like SPFD is a refusal among whites to talk about race. White people are scared to use the word, "race." . . . Any community that can't talk about race can't even begin the path toward becoming inclusive, let alone finish that task.

A number of respondents, while supportive of the survey and initiatives to increase inclusiveness, believed that this effort, like others before, would come to nothing:

Springfield, in my experience, would rather brush aside, sweep under and/or just drag it out until you stop, than to deal with the issues.

The Human Rights Commission of Springfield really has no "teeth" to be able to either evaluate discrimination of the LGBTQ community or to enforce anti-discrimination. They can't even gather evidence or stories from this community. I do not understand why the HRC cannot even document discrimination of this community.

We have taken these surveys before. We have talked to council members, served on committees, written letters, gone to council meetings and more. It is time for the council to take action. Development more committees is not taking action. Creating, supporting and putting real strength behind ordinances is taking action at the community level.

You can't just talk about it; you have to take decisive action to expose prejudice and communicate that it is not acceptable in any form.

I appreciate that our Mayor has a Commission on Human Rights. However, my expectations from the Commission are low. Not because they don't try. But because the cards are stacked against them. But thank you for asking. I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to provide honest

input.

The Mayor's Commission has no teeth and is not equipped by skills or with sufficient resources to investigate or pursue claims of discrimination. Its best use would be in educational efforts for small employers.

I always hold ferociously to a hope that things will get better. Case in point, a survey like this that highlights the real need for inclusion in our city. At the same time, I am tempted to give in to cynicism because part of me doesn't believe that anything meaningful will come of this.

Turning a blind eye to incidents or only partially fixing it is a huge problem and seems to be a standard in Springfield.

I appreciate the effort, and I hope this will lead to something actually happening. But because I know Springfield, I'm not going to hold my breath.

I am pleased that Springfield is asking about these issues. But they are so embedded in the culture here that I am afraid nothing will change.

Other perspectives regarding inclusiveness

Judging from the tenor of the remarks to this question, it is likely that many of the respondents were individuals who had not experienced or witnessed incidents of hostility or discrimination. Some believe that Springfield is already inclusive and welcoming; others think that if people perceive discrimination it is somehow their fault: "Get over yourselves." Several think raising the issues, via the survey or in general, creates more problems than it solves; several simply expressed hostility to the idea of inclusion. These perspectives are shared below.

Quite a few individuals find Springfield already to be welcoming and inclusive. These included some families of color. Several believe nothing needs to be done to make the community more inclusive, and that the issue of inclusiveness is a manufactured one:

Springfield is perfect.

Springfield is the most friendly and accepting place I have ever seen.

Really kind people!! I love this town!

Springfield is a great community.

Springfield is a very caring community.

People in Springfield are nice. Meth is our problem, not a lack of inclusivity.

In my opinion, Springfield does not have a race problem, it has a drug problem.

Springfield is a nice place to live. You ask about the negative stuff and I'll tell you. I've lived other cities and towns, and other than opportunities, it's better here.

I moved to Springfield for the exact reasons you are wanting to find out about. This place is accepting, caring and free thinking. . . we are so accepting and loving here in Springfield.

People are already friendly in Springfield. Don't try to change it by forcing artificial inclusion down people's throats. . . . If they don't like one place they could move.

I feel Springfield is a very welcoming and inclusive community. I also feel that claims of discrimination and "hostility" are overblown and hyped up.

This isn't an issue. It's a manufactured crisis you're being guilted into asking about as to appear "woke." It's a waste of time.

I think we all can get along and be respectful but the most important part of this is that it goes both ways.

I have found residents treat all with respect IF respect is shown by each party upon first contact.

I've lived here four years and have found it to be non-discriminatory. I work with people of all races, ages, and faiths, and witness all being treated equally.

I have an ethnically and politically diverse family and NO ONE has ever been treated unfairly or rudely. I have friends and family of other races come visit and they feel welcome in our community.

Several individuals objected either to the survey itself or to raising issues of discrimination and inclusiveness; they suggest that things will take care of themselves and talking about them or asking people to think about them makes things worse:

I am a person of "color" as YOU would say, but I don't want to be classified like this and the more you do and make this a big deal, the more you divide.

Sometimes people who feel marginalized do this to themselves because they want to play the victim card. Programs, surveys and other initiative only allow this to continue. I'm against all of this. It doesn't advance us.

These types of surveys are just race baiting to try to lame race and inclusion for the lack of leadership this city has shown!

This is a waste of money.

Keep asking these kinds of questions and you open all kinds of possibilities for people to start thinking about every situation they've ever had to get their feelings all torn up. . . Government and the media are creating problems that didn't exist until you created them. Just Stop.

I am 45 years old and never met a true racist. The fact that this survey is being done shows that our city leaders are trying to join the liberals in starting a race war.

People need to stop talking about things like "racism.: It only stirs up the pot. I have lived here since 1994 mostly in Springfield and have NEVER seen racism. But the liberals sure like to talk about it. Springfield needs to do better!

If YOU stop making everything about race, creed, gender, etc. then the issue will be a non-issue, like it should be, but YOU have to keep it going for whatever reason.

There will ALWAYS be racist people and you can't legislate that fact away. But you can try, and that will inspire resentment.

When I was a kid there was a definite discrimination. I think today we try to make out to be that way. Support family values and the law of the land and God and things better take care of themselves.

In Springfield, I have not been rejected due to my accent nor did I hear anyone discriminate against other people. . . . Honestly, by this survey, it seems that the organizers are trying to promote a special protection for specific category of people. . . . Your survey seems to be based on feelings (question 8). Please be aware we should not do things based on someone's feelings.

Springfield and the surrounding area is fine regarding so called diversity and inclusion. I supposed this tax payer funded commission/committee will not be content until this area is like Kansas City and St. Louis. What is your purpose and who said you are needed?

We have more pressing issues facing our community than inclusion. Also, the group of residents put together to study our community moving forward is a crock. Every single person on that committee has an agenda.

Some respondents suggest that issues of perceived discrimination are overblown by those who perceive themselves to be victims—that the situation isn't as bad as media and others would lead us to believe:

I am not denying the existence of racism or bias, I am denying that these exist at a systematic level. I have personally never experienced these, but if anyone ever has, it can likely be traced to the God given free will of an individual . . . Imposing any kind of mandate for inclusion tuns the risk of infringing on personal liberties

If you want to help what is essentially issues of insecurity, then teach them to see that true empowerment is when the individual understands that they alone determine their life's path.

A victim mentality is not the way to define whether a community is inclusive or not. Those that define themselves as victims of some injustice should first look at their own conduct and how they are manifesting themselves in the community. . . .

If you continue to ask for victims, you create victims. Life isn't always fair. Suck it up and make the best you can of what is given you!

I had witnessed a Springfield officer comment about someone with a disability and PTSD from childhood sexual abuse. "Not the brightest bulb . . . she brings issues on herself."

If you obey the law you won't have any problems. If you do break the law and you do what the cop says and follow directions you will be fine.

Incidents increase when people are bombarded with kooky ideas that are contrary to the norm. They begin to believe that they are different and then perception is altered. People need to be themselves, respect others and treat others with the example provide by Christ.

People are trying too hard to be diverse, just need to take every person on an individual basis regardless of race, gender, etc.

All groups have good and bad, no matter what, we need to stop being so offended by everything and take care of the problems within those groups.

Finally, there were a few expressions of outright hostility, toward those of other groups and toward the idea of inclusiveness as a positive value:

Springfield is first and foremost for Christians, and others will be marginalized if they deviate from Christian dogma in any way. The 25% of the population that lives in poverty is an abomination to the preaching of Jesus, but is allowed to continue unabated.

We are all Springfieldians – sometimes things happen that I don't like, but I do not expect the government to try [to] pick winners and losers – the market place will do that just fine.

Springfield seems to cater to fad groups and leaves out the heterosexual community. I can't recall an event put on to parade heterosexuals through town.

Many immigrants, refugees, and others who take refuge here are taken care of better than those who were born and raised here. Tax free jobs, free or reduced education, free health care, etc. It does not make sense. That causes a divide and hostility that isn't necessary.

The faggots need to [go] back into the closet. The negros need to shut the fuck up. The gender confused assholes need mental help.

Stop catering to all these "fad" organizations and get back to the old time Springfield! The last thing I ever wanted to see on the square was uninformed women activists wearing vagina hats. Not classy at all!

If you continue to push this liberal agenda the city we used to love will not be visited any longer.

Please don't turn this survey into another Christian-bashing, white-bashing, "redneck"-bashing document. . .

Rainbows and feeling gay (i.e., happy) was once great. Certain groups ruined these words.

Typically, when the word "inclusive" is used it is to promote the LGBTQ crowd. No thanks.

Jesus is coming soon! Repent people!!!

. . . I am Caucasian. I resent being told or witnessing others being told that it's "White Privilege" that has gotten me or them where we are today. I feel that this is a false narrative that all white people have it better than those of other skin tones. . .

Miscellaneous comments about what Springfield should do

The following comments also fit within the categories described earlier but contain suggestions of what the respondent would like to see happen in Springfield, with the suggestions underlined:

. . . complete revamp of public transportation. It's totally stupid to have to take 2 or 3 busses to get to one location, and better transportation hours so people can actually get to work, day or night, without a two or three hour wait. Totally ridiculous.

I've lived in Springfield all my life. I'm a North Sider and we embrace diversity and uniqueness.

But the city has ordinances that take away my liberties as a law abiding citizen. I am not allowed to warm my car up in the morning or I'll get a ticket. . . So BACK OFF AND LET ME MAKE MY OWN DECISIONS REGARDING MY LIFE.

The best way we can be more inclusive is to create more opportunities of experiences for everyone and no one in particular. When we specify for certain demographics it alienates someone else. . . Try to implement things that have substantial benefits rather than something that is used for photo and media purposes but no lasting results for those receiving services. . .

. . . I don't think it would be harmful for the community on hot days to intentionally reach out and offer some water [to the homeless], offer some snacks. In the winter it would be a kind gesture to offer a blanket . . or offer that individual a hot drink.

I think more needs to be done for the elderly population in Springfield.

Would love to see more educational/human interest type offerings where you can learn things & meet more people. Loneliness is common among the aged.

I'd like to see offered more services for those within our community who truly experience major health disabilities.

. . . MSU is really good [about setting up accommodations] . . . but in school or workplaces we don't have 6 weeks to wait for materials or resources we need. We need it [accommodations] available at the same time as our peers . . [but we are] an afterthought . . .

I think it would be great to get some playground equipment for disabled children put into the parks.

I wish more companies would see the value of these individuals [with physical disabilities] and let them contribute to our community.

I would like to see more Springfield businesses being open to hire individuals with barriers to employment.

I wish there was an accessibility challenge that stores could enter. Something that they could earn an accessibility friendly medallion window cling or other recognition . . .

I would like to see citizens be able to report violators of disabled parking spaces or ADA violations. WE do not have a good system for this . . .

Sidewalks! Sidewalks! Sidewalks!

Have more events welcoming people of different cultures. Food events promoting diversity are always fun.

I would love to see more ethnic type of events.

For people who are minorities to feel welcomed and included, they need to see themselves. We need to do a better job of putting their faces on billboards, on business signs, in stores and on products. For instance, go to Cox South on the second floor, mom and baby unit. There are beautiful pictures of babies lining the halls, all of them white.

I have friends who are transgender or visibly queer and they are not able to exist in this city without being openly and frequently persecuted by citizens of Springfield. This is unacceptable. There should be consequences any time a person is harmed.

As an employee [transgender] of the city, I would personally like to see more inclusive insurance policies.

. . . LGBT protections in Springfield, MO public spheres and private spheres.

I really think the fact that sexual orientation isn't protected by the city of Springfield shows that there is a long journey ahead to get anywhere close [to inclusive]. [i.e., pass SOGI]

Actual LGBT people need to be included in these talks [about diversity].

The public schools could do more about the issue of bullying.

Springfield public schools can and must do better. The community must demand so.

Every child in school needs to be held accountable. This in turn will drive parent accountability.

We need more help for students who are trying to better their lives. Base it on their school attendance, give a bonus of some kind for academic excellence.

Wide media coverage to highlight different cultures would make inclusion normal and appeal to the psychological bias of humans.

Question 7: What activities could the Springfield community offer to encourage a more welcoming environment for all cultures?

There were more than 2000 suggestions and other responses given to this question; the sheer number of responses made this a difficult question to assess, in part because suggestions often touched on more than one area. Many of the responses repeated those made to earlier questions. The most often-mentioned categories were community events and festivals and educational activities, particularly those that connect individuals of different cultures and promote honest discussion. Also suggested were faith-based activities and initiatives; legal initiatives, particularly reinstating the SOGI ordinance; media initiatives; integration activities that welcome newcomers and work intentionally to integrate them into the community; addressing poverty, fixing run-down areas of the city, and combatting crime and drugs; and ensuring that the leadership of Springfield include members of minority and marginalized groups.

Festivals, celebrations, public events

The largest category, by far, was this category, which encompassed approximately 25% of the suggestions. Many people suggested "multicultural celebrations" as a good idea to encourage appreciation for various cultures. Several mentioned, also, the cost, timing, and promotion of such events—they preferred free events that exclude no one due to income, weekend events that include most workers, events for children, and more widespread promotion of such events. Food was mentioned often! Some called for more downtown events while others suggested spreading events around the city. A few representative comments are enough to provide a sense of the scope of this

category:

Have an inclusion day that would allow Springfieldians to co-mingle with each other, taste different foods from different cultures, drinks goods, etc.

Activities that are welcoming to everyone with broad appeal that are in areas that are more diverse. Example: community activities at Silver Springs Park, Nichols Park, Doling Park, etc. such as community concert, art shows, or cultural events that engage all segments of our community population.

Cultural showcases that are free and on the weekends. The international festival is great . . . if you have MLK Jr. day off, but many don't.

It would be interesting to have a festival or fair where people can learn about disabilities without feeling stupid for asking questions.

Offering "get togethers" at neutral locations like the square. Food and style from different cultures.

I'd like to see less stuff on the square and more stuff all around Springfield (not just fairgrounds either). Springfield is a pretty place with trails and parks where smaller events could be made for diversity, too. Those small events could turn into something big one day, too.

More activities outside of the downtown area.

Bring back block parties.

Promoting gatherings like potlucks to meet the neighbors . . .

Host community events where there is entertainment, food, etc. for people to gather from different cultures.

A World Culture Day, where people could show off the traditions and foods of their home countries.

Hosting a multicultural city-wide festival with food, music, and dance showcasing all ethnic groups interested.

Celebrate Cultures separately—not in one big CULTURE SEMINAR at a local hotel sound stage.

Cultural appreciation weeks. Focus on one culture at a time and tell what restaurants to check out to try their food, stores to shop at, music to listen to, etc.

Anything that builds culture and understanding. More activities like Chinese New Year and the Japanese Festival.

Festivals celebrating other cultures like Diwali, Chinese Spring Festival or New Year Festival, Eid al Mawlid celebration, African music festivals.

I love all culture fairs—I would love to see more . . . with an emphasis on how people from that culture experience life here in Springfield.

Cultural recognition days organized and hosted by members of those communities.

Festivals/gatherings centered around celebrating the wonderful culinary diversity here, which we have a lot of.

Think about how to incorporate different cultures in events that aren't designated as "multicultural." For example, Route 66 Festival, Ozark Empire Fair, Goldwing Wing Ding, Bass Pro fitness festival.

Create a new event/festival celebrating diversity in Springfield and emphasizing that diversity is a strength for our city.

An international food day. There are lots of good local international restaurants in Springfield.

Ethnic Food Cook-off (similar to Sertoma Chili Cook-off but for local ethnic restaurants).

Springfield offers a number of cultural festivals. Perhaps these need to be more widely promoted so people know about them.

Put more effort/funding into organizations that already celebrate other cultures, like the Springfield Multicultural Festival or last year's Culture Fest. . .

Move multi-cultural festival for more of a downtown/parade activity. This may have happened on Commercial Street last year. Not very well publicized.

Social media concerts and activities for kids to interact live.

Have more inclusive children's festivals.

Have a writing competition for fiction, horror, hauntings, supernatural, mysteries, romance, teen fiction, fantasy, etc. The catch is the stories ALL have to be based in Greene County, Incorporate streets, business, schools, landmarks, parks, local history, historical buildings, local events, and city culture.

Multicultural film festivals. Many large cities have African American films, indigenous films, etc. showcased.

Minority focused film festival.

City events to highlight minority historical persons. Example—More promotion of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parade.

More entertainment options such as music, sports, comedians, guest speakers.

Big multi-venue music festival (follow Sioux Falls SD example).

Art exhibits from diverse cultures that include all age groups.

There were several alternative comments expressed from those who don't particularly believe more festivals, etc., will improve inclusiveness:

Activities???? You need to clean up the town 1st before anything welcoming in the environment can happen!!

I honestly think it isn't about activities, it's about having diverse leadership on boards, and not just as tokens, but as respected equals.

The problem cannot be cured with activities. The problem is a mindset of I'm better than you.

Not sure that additional activities are needed. Just need to focus on making current activities more accessible, especially to those with physical disabilities.

It's not a matter of activities, which are usually just feel-good exercises for white people.

Missouri is not for all cultures. Have them move to California. Stop having events.

Education and training, conversation, creating opportunities for connection

Another highly represented category was that of education; respondents called for more education at all levels about diversity and the importance of diversity, but particularly focusing on the public schools. Education around diversity and inclusion should also include the business, government, civic leadership and faith communities. Respondents called for facilitated community conversations about diversity and for creating opportunities for people to get to know one another as individuals. Representative comments:

Starting with education and creating a training community-based program that goes into schools and trains teachers on how to build community in the classroom and provides guidance on how to educate students on inclusion. This will help with students' exposure and provide confidence within teachers on how to facilitate these conversations.

Start teaching kids in school that they CAN discuss religion, politics and general philosophical disagreements with people and STILL be their friend!

It starts with education. Parents and teachers as well as public figures must model a sense of openness, fairness, and kindness to all people.

Springfield should invest in the local school district (R-12) to improve education. Pay teachers more. Encourage a diverse curriculum. Bring in speakers who educate about equity and diversity.

. . . Education in school would probably be a good place to start, with children who haven't learned prejudice yet.

Build a buddy program in the elementary schools of Springfield that would pair up a Southeast school with a Northwest school, for example, where the kids could each have a buddy at the other school. Have activities that would encourage the children to learn about each other, their likes, dislikes, favorite subjects in school, least favorite subjects. . . Host eh buddies, perhaps monthly, alternating which school hosts.

On teaching children about different cultures within their community, either invite a member of that culture, or at least have the teacher consult with a member, to explain who their traditions are practiced here in Springfield & what challenges they deal with & how they modify what they traditionally do to be compatible with living in Springfield.

Cultural competence and diversity training were mentioned frequently, for all levels of the community:

Better diversity teaching in our schools and public offices.

Cultural competence training for those who work in government, public sector as well [as] those who work in positions that area customer facing.

Diversity development for government officials, community leaders, and decision makers on a continuous basis.

Educating city employees about discrimination should be mandatory.

More police training for de-escalation and diversity.

All city employees, Peace Officers, and Springfield Public school employees be required to attend a daylong implicit bias workshop.

Require the police officers to attend more diversity training. Keep statistics as to which officers tend to stop a larger number of minorities and determine whether those officers need more diversity training.

Diversity and Inclusion Community Training.

Training on why diversity and inclusion is important.

Assist nonprofits in educating their volunteers and staff about different cultural expectations and norms that they may encounter when working in the community.

Business requires cultural competency training and community connects/conversations with minority populations and input about their business from these connections.

Make upper management of all organizations attend classes about people from different backgrounds.

More training for upper level management and leaders of organizations.

Educate employers and the community. Start a campaign. The anti "PC" culture here is terrible. They don't have access to diversity education.

Education for business to be more inclusive of those with disabilities. See Ozarks Inclusion Partnership . . .

Trainings for business owners and nonprofit organizations on how to be more inclusive and raise awareness on the disparities.

. . . Train Realtors to understand how important diversity and inclusion are to every single one of us.

Better training for medical staff.

Facilitated conversations and dialogues, where people could get to know one another, were suggested:

We don't need "activities." We NEED EDUCATION. We NEED Communication.

This isn't fixed by events that are attended by those who already "get it." This is fixed by a

systemic decision to bring it into the light, focus on it, and amplify it.

Diversity Dialogues.

Facilitated conversations about different cultures and lifestyles.

We need venues where we can come together and get to know one another. . . I have known several individuals who were adamantly anti-LGBT who actually changed their minds when they got to know and like someone on a personal level who was gay, for instance.

More events like The Network small group diversity class where we discussed scenarios in groups of 7-10 people.

Take a year, have a series of “get to know you” events at the public library! There’s a wonderful Bengali community in town, for instance, with a LOT to offer all of us. And they’re curious about Appalachian culture and foodways, too.

Community conversations/lectures around diversity and inclusion.

Sponsor community events in which “decision makers” are available and willing to discuss the “hard questions” within our community.

Social interactions – find ways to encourage people of different backgrounds to not only come together for events, but to also encourage them to actively get to know other groups within the city overshared interests.

Community listening sessions across town where people from diverse backgrounds have an opportunity to discuss community issues in a small but safe group.

Have open round table dialogue for the public to attend so they can witness the intentional efforts to become more Diverse and Inclusive.

Develop participatory platforms, workshops, round-table events so voices can be heard.

Listening sessions for our almost all-white city council where members listen to the stories and experiences of those who are not like them and take seriously the needs that are expressed by those communities.

Listen to folks that have experienced not being included and discrimination. Really listen, with nothing in your head but what they’re telling you

Open dialogue with different groups.

Maybe a monthly/recurring gathering to support our community as a whole where anyone can come and meet others in their community who are understanding and willing to make Springfield a better place.

Community forums.

Consciously arrange opportunities for people with different beliefs, race, sexual orientation, abilities, and cultures to come together and have a planned activity. Start with just sharing a common experience—painting, making a ceramic piece, playing bingo, it doesn’t matter. The

idea is just to start with exposure and just being together sharing an activity.

Something that involves all races, genders, ages, and LGBTQ where they can socialize and get to know others that are different from themselves.

Educating people on what actions they can take to be more inclusive.

More inclusive simulations for the general public. For example, there is a program now that allows those on the autism spectrum to experience a mock flight. It is a great learning and teaching tool for the individuals, the aircraft employees, and the general public.

Programs at Drury, OTC and MSU and Evangel where people can get together and have open discussion with people from other cultures. Wes Pratt and Lyle Foster are great at opening up discussions and bringing ordinary people together to learn from each other.

And there were a few alternative perspectives that did not support diversity initiatives:

Diversity is not a strength. If it was . . . it would have shown somewhere by now. All I see is stabbing, drug wars, rape and gang violence from diversity. I moved here to get away from it.

We don't have to be a welcoming community for all cultures.

Faith-based activities and initiatives

Quite a few respondents noted that the churches have potential to bring the community together, although many perceived that the more conservative Christian denominations were creating divisions. Many respondents called for support for the separation of church and state, including not using churches as polling places. Representative comments about interfaith discussions and events:

We live in a community with supposed Christian values. Somehow they forgot what that means.

Call upon religious organizations to be more tolerant and educated.

Work with faith based organizations to either be polite and accept those that are different, even if they are outside of their faith.

Host inter-faith conversations with local leaders of different religions.

I would like to see Pastors of different churches attend, preach at a church that they normally wouldn't attend.

Religion; too many people do not understand religions other than their own and it does affect children's viewpoint.

Possibly more churches and neighborhoods could sponsor activities to bring people together.

Have local Christian churches host Muslims and other religion get togethers. (They have to put the pause on evangelism during the get together.)

More days of caring, Christian-based. Church members to provide the labor . . . donations to provide the supplies.

Interfaith community events on the topic [of inclusion].

Encourage multi-denominational events. Maybe Christians won't have to fear or hate people who worship differently, if they can see that other religions are populated with decent people.

Gatherings involving the local Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, etc. communities. National Avenue Church (I think) has Buddhist meditation, which I think is extremely progressive for a Christian church to host. I'd love to see more of that.

Many local churches reach out to various cultures with English lessons, gardens, encouragement, community, etc. Perhaps gathering church participants and leaders for a forum could give good suggestions to city leaders.

Celebrate holidays and hold events that represent the minorities as well. Christian and US holidays are the only ones that are even mentioned.

The airport. When one flies in during December, have a Christmas tree. Have a menorah. Have an educational display on Kwanza.

Allowing more religions inclusion in schools or public spaces (i.e., around the holidays), or eliminating religion from them altogether.

City leaders taking part in celebrations of faith from other cultures. i.e., the Mayor or Council members/City leaders attending a service at the Springfield Islamic Center. As a heavy Christian area, it would be great to show that other religions are valuable.

Churches walking the true Christian walk and being like Jesus.

ESL [English as a Second Language] @ church

Creating interfaith partnerships to do community volunteering, sponsor events, etc.

Host an inter-faith panel or coalition that that can find ways for diverse religions to interact or help serve a community need.

There were many suggestions regarding the separation of church and state, and the concern many people have about the power of some Christian churches to set the political and social agenda:

Take separation of state and religion seriously.

Separation of church and state is extremely important. Every few years there seems to be a new nonsense proposal to include religious symbols or "laws" in government spaces. . . .They [churches] should be taxed. . . There should be zero entanglement between religious organizations and local government.

Make all efforts to separate church and state—no sweetheart real estate deals for churches, no tax exemption for politically active churches, raise expectation of churches to open their doors (remove regulations that keep churches from feeding and housing), no voting in churches!!!. . .

Less promotion of religion or so called appropriate religious participation. Non church-based activities.

Get rid of "In God We Trust" and prayer from city buildings.

Not be so “Christian” about everything . Having AG headquarters here is already bad enough that some businesses aren’t interested in our area.

Christians have so much power here. They need to be involved in helping their members cross outside their comfort zones.

Less preference for the Christian perspective.

Quit allowing the Evangelical church community to heavy-hand what goes on in this area.

Do not let churches dictate policy.

Not let churches influence our local government.

Remove the references to God from all over the city.

. . . banning churches that are polling places from playing religious music tin their parking lots during elections would be fantastic.

Tax religions organizations that continually cross the line of separation of church and state.

Good old fashioned Bible revivals.

Develop or encourage a NON-faith based community.

A few alternative perspectives:

Put God back where he belongs. Christians are a target and discriminated [against] all the time and no one cares.

More of God in school and less of government intrusion including forced affirmative action and faux multicultural promotion.

Legal actions

One legal action was mentioned over and over, and that was for Springfield again to pass the SOGI (Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity protection) ordinance, which was approved by City Council in 2014 and repealed in a narrow vote, 51% to 49%, in 2015. Most respondents who mentioned this simply asked for the ordinance to be reinstated. Sample comments:

Pass SOGI ordinance.

LGBT protections.

LGBTQ+ workplace protections.

Legislation should be passed regarding discrimination against the LGBTQ population.

How about protections for LGBTQ? What did the repeal say to the rest of the country?

Re-enact ordinance where people can’t lose housing or job based on identity.

City leadership should show support for anti-discrimination bill.

Maybe public policies delineating a commitment to being inclusive, and anti-discrimination

based on sexual orientation and gender.

Show your support for all persons by making Springfield safer: Enact a SOGI/bias crimes ordinance.

Put in and enforce language barring discrimination, including sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Laws that protect the rights of citizens if folks aren't inclined to honor the Constitution . Housing and employment protections specifically.

Make laws to protect against discrimination and have the police and government do something when someone discriminates.

Must first protect people before developing activities to bring people together who are not protected, at risk, etc.

And alternative perspectives:

Stop promoting deviant lifestyles.

Less government intrusion in the form of ordinances in our daily lives.

The media and increasing visibility of minority communities

Increasing the visibility of minority communities and increasing public awareness of such communities, via the media and other methods, were mentioned frequently. Making minority group members a visible and essential part of our community is important, and the media can help in this regard. The media also can be used to promote the value of diversity and diversity initiatives. Respondents recognized the important role media play in our perceptions as well as how important it is for all of us to see minority group members throughout our community. Comments:

Visibility. All are welcome.

Many thanks to the City and County leaders for announcing Springfield will be a refugee-friendly community! Make that a front-page issue, have it as a banner on all media, promote that mission, make it a part of "who we are."

Make others with differences visible in public office.

More diversity among highly visible persons, i.e., police officers.

Media is one of the most powerful tools we have in our society. Release short stories, articles on life in the day of a person of color, different ethnic backgrounds. A person with a disability, a transgender youth, a gay/binary person. . . When they see how . . . they are made to feel less than, I believe they will have more empathy.

I think more exposure about culture in newspaper, media. It seems like that is what guides opinion in many cases in our community. I think the access piece is easy and when enforced will just naturally make us inclusive and no one would be limited . . .

Highlight the cultures we can celebrate that we have in Springfield with newspaper articles,

displays in public libraries, community events that others are encouraged to attend.

How about getting folks out from in front of their TVs where they are constantly told the Boogie Man is lying in wait to accost them if they leave their house . . .

Challenge negative stereotypes with positive stories that show the humanity of the person in varied avenues.

News stations carry more positive human interest stories from our community (positive publicity from a variety of cultures within our city).

Local press could do better on their coverage of stories involving people groups on the fringe. Help educate the general public.

Change media culture and more accurate reporting; less opinion, more fact based reporting.

Local commercials to promote D & I.

More news articles and posts on diverse events.

Include more offerings for marginalized groups in media.

Anti-bigotry campaigning.

Public educational campaign on inclusiveness.

A campaign aimed at businesses to promote inclusion:

<https://www.facebook.com/HuntingtonOpenToAll/> [a campaign to promote inclusiveness in Huntington, WV]

Have a campaign to recognize that not all disabilities are visible.

PSA on things that are illegal, like NBC used to do on how not to be a dick.

Promote tolerance. "We all have something to offer" or a similar slogan on billboards, websites, community events. Some employers might even advertise their participation in the concept.

Work with the Springfield Cardinals on a campaign to promote diversity in our community and at the games.

Billboards at the entrances to town indicating Springfield is trying to be inclusive and welcoming "the other."

Provide POSITIVE stories and reports on minorities instead of just the bad things they are associated with.

Positive media stories about people from different backgrounds.

Positive stories regarding LGBT people . . . including families.

Positive information shared about groups experiencing non-inclusion.

More articles in local media about the Jewish community, and various Christian communities often overlooked (example: Orthodox Christians, Seventh Day Adventists, etc.)

Make short “commercials” of real people from around the city telling what they love/like about their neighborhoods. Aire these during the news on local TV stations, radio stations, Facebook and other social media sites.

Billboards and the use of advertising.

Perhaps some advertising on local media for inclusion and anti-bullying campaigns.

Create an ad campaign that supports inclusion and offers suggestions on how to be a more inclusive individual.

Keep a sustained social media presence on the topic.

Social Media is the biggest platform available, but don't force things.

Using social media to highlight Springfieldians that are diverse and doing great things in the area. Spotlighting one a month.

Have the mayor's office promote inclusivity on social media.

Recognize diversity on a website about our citizens.

Create a website and ad campaign that consistently uses positive messaging to develop an inclusive narrative for the city which informs and drives practice.

On Facebook, do a series like “People of New York” where you interview someone and talk a little bit about their life, their country of origin, their religion and give them a place to introduce themselves. This would involve even the “majority” too and not just a spotlight on foreign cultures, so it's a get to know your neighborhood type post.

Maybe an option for people to experience someone else's perspective . . . like a YouTube channel that has videos of all different types of people that make up our community and their stories of getting to Springfield. . . .

Alternative perceptions:

Stop forcing “diversity” in advertisements. If you have someone from a diverse background, great. If not, don't force it. It's obvious when it's fake.

Recruiting, welcoming, supporting, encouraging and promoting members of minority communities

There were many suggestions regarding the recruitment and support of minority group members to become involved in all aspects of city life. Some respondents noted that just simply making an open call for minority group members to apply for leadership positions and become members of boards, and so forth, will not work; people, especially those new to our community, need to be invited personally. It is important to note that “minority group members” does not refer only to racial/ethnic minorities or immigrants, but includes members of the LGBTQ+ community, the disabled, the poor, and women in some instances.

Comments regarding recruiting and inviting minority group members:

Encourage more diverse population to come and create an environment where they feel this

could be their home too.

Encourage more people from diverse backgrounds to become involved in city government – boards, elected officials, paid positions within the city. Make it clear Springfield isn't an "old-boys club" anymore, that people of all genders and ethnicities have a say in our future.

Intentional outreach, recruitment & retention of diverse employees and administrators.

Actively recruit diverse leaders.

Encourage more minority participation in local government.

Actively recruit people of color to serve in city management and on city staff.

Outreach to minorities to ask them to be involved.

Invite others from diverse cultural backgrounds to join our organizations.

More earnest outreach to one another through the neighborhood associations.

We have to be more proactive and intentional with our efforts to include people in underrepresented groups. We can't just be welcoming when people come through the door, we actually need to invite them to participate. Proactive vs. reactive.

Active recruitment of LGBTQ+ and people of color (especially Asian and Hispanic) for public office and influential community boards.

ASK and INVITE active participation and don't give up if it doesn't happen overnight. Trust is going to take a long time to grow.

Personal invitations to events where decisions are being made. Specifically to groups that represent other cultures.

Politics and city government departments could do more outreach in minority communities.

Create opportunities for minorities, women, and younger generations that put them in the public eye.

Involving minority community members in existing activities with broad popular appeal & making some room to incorporate aspects of their culture so that it is presented as just another aspect of Springfield, not a separate entity.

Encourage people at the local level to get involved. And not the same folks the community always taps. Ask principals and religious leaders who are involved and reach out to those people.

Promote immigrant settlement.

Host more immigrant families.

Help community members identify, groom, mentor folks with alternative perspectives and race.

Accept refugees and offer institutional support for this goal.

Support is needed to ensure that minority group members can become fully integrated into city life:

Create a welcoming committee that is a first point of contact for individuals moving into the community, to connect them to local resources and help them find their place. Form specific welcoming committees in each district, provide some basics that should be included in a welcome packet.

Several welcoming committees/welcome wagons to welcome people and connect people to diverse communities.

An event geared toward people who are new to the area to let them know what is available in Springfield and ways to meet people. This can be especially beneficial for people who do not have children, since that is a way that new people to town meet and connect with others.

A newcomers "class" to acquaint people with the opportunities the community offers.

Highlight ways that people of marginalized communities can participate in a way that is meaningful and does not tokenize them.

Free public programs to welcome different cultures more than once a year.

Classes on how to assimilate into our culture.

English reading, writing and speaking classes.

English classes.

We need to promote more language learning in our schools to keep up with the rest of the.

Grants to pay for language learning classes/free or subsidized language learning courses for citizens who work in a social or government services or who otherwise have direct contact with the public to help the subset of the public who do not speak /English well.

Insist that SPS create a better plan to address the needs of language learners and multicultural students.

More trained ESL [English as a Second Language] professionals in SPS/Greene County schools.

Increase the number of free or low cost ESL classes.

Better funded library and library spaces to host events. I often see new immigrants and international students use the library as a place for language learning resources and to acclimate to the community.

Programs dedicated to helping those of another culture become an American.

More involvement and inclusion among community families where we are trying to raise our kids. We want to assimilate and be considered locals and feel like we belong here.

Better collaborate and advertise assistance for integrating new immigrants into our community.

More transparency in the process for getting people on city boards and commissions.

Civic leaders provide orientation program on civic engagement opportunities.

Events for disabled individuals, such as how the BearPower program exists at MSU.

Programs to help develop leadership would help ensure full participation of minority group members:

Politics in the Park: A series of fun, free events throughout the year, focused on helping *everyone* become involved in local politics.

Have small business mentorships to POC [people of color].

Business/career training/workshops for minorities.

Integrate more qualified ethnic/minority leaders into city and community leadership positions.

Host educational access to capital meeting in neighborhoods with high minority concentration.

Reach out more often to underrepresented groups about opportunities they may not be aware of. Or explain to them how to get in touch with these opportunities.

I want to see leadership programs that teach minorities how to be active leaders in their communities at no cost.

Encourage everyone, but especially organizations that represent minority cultures, to offer training and education on how to become engaged in the community. From the smallest nonprofits to areas of government, all of us can benefit from a more diverse perspective.

Be more inclusive and nurture development of leaders.

Leadership training for individuals from diverse backgrounds.

A leadership program (similar to the Chamber of Commerce Leadership SGF program) specifically for people of color. The Chamber program serves people whose jobs/personal circumstances allow them to take a lot of time away from work to participate. By design (?), this makes it hard for people of color to participate b/c very few people of color are employed in positions that allow that flexibility.

A pro-bono class of Leadership Springfield SPECIFICALLY for people in poverty and those from under represented populations and sections of town. We only need so many bankers to understand how collaborative we can be and how our city works.

Addressing issues of poverty, economic inequality, resource inequality

Many respondents believed that inclusion would be supported if poverty and income inequality were reduced. A number of respondents mentioned that areas of Springfield—particularly on the north side—look shabby and do not seem to command the resources available to areas on the south side. Many people expressed the idea that one of the best things Springfield could do to increase inclusiveness was to bring better paying jobs, help those less fortunate, particularly the homeless, and address issues of crime and drugs. Representative comments along this vein are noted below:

Areas of Springfield do not present a good “face” and need to be cleaned up:

Beautification of Kansas Exp. Utilizing Jordan Creek itself could add a natural bonus for all.

Improving the welcome corridors of the city. Show our visitors that they are welcome.

When we have guests visit SGF, we stay away from the I-44 corridor and navigate them down 65 to the south side, or James River Freeway from the airport. It would take a long lead zoning initiative to address that one, I know, and \$\$\$\$.

Support quality of life initiatives that give a sense of pride in our community (trails, public art, Springfield flag).

Focus on our crumbling infrastructure. Anything contributing to that.

Clean-up events in EVERY neighborhood.

We need to improve the overall attractiveness of community to create an environment people can be drawn to,. It seems incredibly simplistic, but curb appeal of a community makes a huge difference in attracting people.

Clean up all of Springfield, make it more appealing in all areas of town, especially the older part of town that has been neglected for decades because it is the older part of town.

Better housing in the run down neighborhoods. There are plenty of nice houses on the North and west sides. But the rental properties are in shambles while people. . . are not held responsible for their failing properties.

Poorer parts of town are replete with vacant homes, junked out lots, and overfilling dumpsters. Perhaps a vacant building tax to property owners would create a condition where vacant buildings are properly maintained and inhabited or torn down.

Stronger city support for activities in lower SES neighborhoods & parks.

Continue to support cultural improvements and connections in center city.

Help areas with low income to clean up their streets.

Focus more community outreach in lower income communities. There are tons of things available to the rich. But no one actively pursues the poor.

Northside Reconstruction/Revitalization.

More entertainment venues on Northside, movies, bowling , roller rinks,. We are the negative of Springfield, simply cause of the way all areas look. New sidewalks and lights everywhere, and yes on all side streets also!!

Make all streets have curbs, sidewalks, and water run off drainage like underground sewers lines. I see even new subdivisions built with no sidewalks or sewers.

Invest equal amounts of money throughout the city. The south portion gets a great deal of attention in comparison to the north west portion. It's rumored to be race related.

Put in sidewalks on North side instead of South side, as more people on North side have to walk

to and from places. The muddy paths look very bad.

Fix up the north side of the city. Give us a chance.

Monitor the slum lords. . .

Use the Library Station more. Many more choices available at Library Center on the south side than on the north.

Lack of access to jobs that pay a living wage and hiring discrimination keeps many citizens from full civic participation:

Living wages for all.

Empower and support the Chamber of Commerce to encourage diverse business to come to Springfield (financial, in-kinds, and other support).

Increase affordable housing and bringing employment that pays a living wage. Work to address poverty and the whole community will be elevated.

Focus on bringing more jobs in service and manufacturing to this area.

Try to bring good paying jobs to Springfield – people will feel welcome if they can get a job.

Offer incentives to bring good factories that would force other businesses to pay better wages.

More workforce outreach for anyone that is long-term unemployed for more than a year.

Health Clinics for the poor.

Small business loans directed at minorities.

Make buildings accessible for people with disabilities.

Increase accessible transportation and parking.

Find a way to fix the transportation system in Springfield. There are cities much bigger than Springfield that have a functioning transportation system.

Free and widespread public transportation.

Offering transportation for those who have a difficult time getting out.

An employment initiative for hiring people with disabilities. Our state ranking is dismal, Springfield could help lead the state to better inclusion.

Employers being more open to hiring and operating in an inclusive way.

Look for ways to provide resources to the homeless and mentally ill.

Programs for the homeless, and for those looking to help with homelessness.

Offer living facility for homeless and street people.

More tiny houses.

More resources for the working poor.

Help the homeless get jobs.

Pay homeless to clean up trash/landscape in our community.

Because they are part of our neighborhood, have acceptable (to them) places for homeless so they don't camp out in yards, etc.

Donation boxes to help the homeless and get the homeless off the street corners asking for money. It is a matter of time before someone gets run over . . .

The problems of crime and drugs are more serious than problems of inclusion:

Let's worry about making the town safe again. Get rid of the panhandlers, meth heads, and prostitutes that accost everyone on the Northside of town.

Protect property from the rampant crime in this city, especially in the downtown area around the Veterans Coming Home Center.

Crack down on crime; remove criminals from our neighborhoods – lock 'em up!

Keep begging bums out of intersections. Don't arrest for panhandling, just make sure that if there's a begging bum he's so busy talking to copes for wellness checks he can't make any money.

Help for recovering addicts.

Police protection and enforcement.

Naming and eliminating the reasons people resort to drugs, thereby leading to crime and home violence.

Zonal Blitz on Crime (multiple offenders are caught and released how often).

And, as before, there were a few alternative perspectives:

I've never lived in a town with more opportunities available.

Keep bums out of gas station parking lots.

Less immigration of homeless to Springfield.

How about you spend our taxes helping our countrymen that are out on the streets [as] opposed to dumping more cultures on us.

Making the leadership of Springfield more diverse

One of the recurring themes throughout this survey was the idea that Springfield's leadership—at the city, in business, in the nonprofit world, on boards, and so forth is almost uniformly older, white, and male. Many respondents said that one of the best things we could do to promote inclusivity is to ensure that our leadership be, itself, more inclusive and furthermore that our leadership actually support and speak in favor of inclusiveness. Here are representative comments:

. . . I think seeing city leaders and officials addressing inclusivity is a good start. Lead by example, people will follow.

City officials modeling inclusion.

I'd like to see our mayor say more about acceptance in communities.

Have the city council promote inclusivity on social media.

More city officials taking leadership roles in diverse community events.

Call city council members need to be required to volunteer in our community within a marginalized group. Homeless, LBGTQ advocacy, etc.

Formal action by City and Chamber on diversity and inclusion issues.

Activities will cure nothing. The leadership needs to take a more active position of inclusion. Take a look at the lack of diversity in leadership in all areas of boards, employers, and city council.

Have Springfield City Government leaders be more involved in existing community events like PrideFest and the walk on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

City leadership on all levels must engage with and participate in various cultural events and observances. If the leadership doesn't represent the City's interest in its cultural diversity, the culture has no reason to feel welcomed.

Leadership needs to set the example of encouraging boards and employers to promote other ethnicities to apply for open positions. Perhaps if they had friendships with others it might help.

Deal with the failures of leadership. For example, any police chief who oversaw a department that routinely destroyed evidence is either incompetent or an accessory. [to discrimination against women]

Proactively infuse inclusion and diversity as core professional competencies. Hire recruitment firms with proven track records of successfully placing professionals of color with diverse management styles.

Don't focus on "ACTIVITIES," focus on populating the work force and hiring into positions of influence and power with persons of color, persons with disabilities, women and those from SGM populations. Also in places like City Council (9 folks,-- 90% white, 80% male), Chamber of Commerce (Board of Directors-Executive Committee is 90% white, Board of Directors is 85% white), SPS (I know there are efforts being done there).

Incentives for city, businesses, schools, community organizations to choose culturally diverse, minority leaders.

Hire diverse people in positions of influence so a broader perspective is considered.

Seek a public-private partnership that certain private companies would agree to actively increase their diversity within a 10-year period. Also, provide public acknowledgement and

awards for private companies in Springfield that have increased the diversity of their company.

The faces of Springfield should not be all white.

Our leaders need to stop being “old white guys.”

Stop promoting white males to the majority of the leadership positions.

I want to see not just white people on list of business leaders.

Encouraging greater diversity among executive and leadership – selections for boards and committees, high profile leadership employees. (More than just the token person.)

Work at getting buy in from leaders in the community to actively work at non-discrimination.

More diversity in city leadership.

A diverse police and fire force.

Diversity in leadership and influential positions.

More minority or female leaders.

More people of color, women, and LGBTQ+ representation.

Recruit more diverse workforce in county/city jobs.

There has to be more opportunity for all cultures. You have the same people running our community that will only select people like them.

Find servant leadership representing people of different color, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, abilities, and Pass SOGI.

Bold leadership. Our emphasis on collaboration has resulted in no one being willing to pursue progress, make tough decisions, or take a stand for things that matter.

Create a task force to research and understand Springfield’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in regard to inclusivity. Then have them create an Inclusive Plan for Springfield.

Miscellaneous suggestions

The following suggestions did not fall neatly into the categories described earlier, but seemed worthy of mention. For example, many comments throughout the survey chastised the police for racial profiling and discriminatory treatment, but some suggested that the police could be used as ambassadors to promote inclusiveness. Here are sample comments regarding the police:

Use the Springfield Police Department as ambassadors. This group is the most publicly visible representation of the city. Involve them in events like Pridefest, Silver Springs, MLK Day, etc.

Foster a good relationship between law enforcement and the community, especially by taking action against cops who are bad actors.

Police and other community outreach to traditionally victimized communities including local

beat police for affected neighborhoods and groups.

Have law enforcement engage in inner city areas on a social level, like gun buy-backs, etc.

Community Policing.

Make police presence back in the neighborhoods patrolling, not just driving the same streets glancing up and down the streets they pass by . . . With police presences in the neighborhoods it would cut down on possible domestic violence, drug houses, and other mischief in the neighborhoods.

There needs to be accountability for violators of the law and members of the majority community, in particular, need to speak up when observing abuses:

Inclusive language about the city.

Have a clear community statement about inclusion and post it on documents.

. . . But those that are making Springfield LESS inclusive will continue to do what they do until their (white) peers call them out and tell them to stop. Minorities cannot make this change.

I think we need bystander training—to know what to do as a bystander when you see instances of discrimination, bullying, etc. I do generally speak up, but by that time I'm so angry I don't think I'm very effective.

Others of the majority-- "white people" "straight people"-- need to SPEAK UP ! when they see wrongdoing happen.

Call out racist, bigoted people and let them know that will no longer be tolerated in this community. There is absolutely no blow back on these bullies and there should be.

When you see an elected official attempt to demonize, or marginalize, those who are different from their voter base and radicalize that base, raise your voice to that official.

Not be silent when President Trump or other people discriminate against classes of people in our community.

Work to make stigmatization of others (racist remarks in public, for example) behavior that's considered unacceptable. Speaking as a psychologist, while it's not easy to change the minds of bigots, it's simpler to eliminate the behavior when people like them express disapproval.

Have major employers and nonprofits take a stand for what is right publicly.

More enforcement of violations conduct involving discrimination and harassment.

Harsh laws for those withholding goods and services based on discrimination.

Real punishment for discrimination.

Stiff punishments for individuals who break these laws.

Expand the Human Rights Committee's mandate

Cultural centers and similar places could be established to help citizens learn about other cultures:

A welcome center that provides information about activities available in Springfield for all cultures. Not just the cultural fair that takes place once/twice a year but is available at all times.

Have a multicultural welcome center.

Bring a community center where everyone can learn. A free center for everyone (or at least \$10 classes). Make it so everyone can learn.

Cultural centers, like St. Louis has many places. There is an Asian center where one can get publications, newspapers, magazines, borrow videos, meet up with people from the same area of origin.

A safe culture community center that shares all cultures and teaches about each.

Places where they can learn about other cultures.

A convention center to bring many different people to the city.

Big investments in free and save community spaces.

Maximizing common areas in Springfield with pop-up vendors, artists—something like a market/fairs/outdoor small concerts featuring a variety of cultural performances.

Increased support for the arts could help bring the community together:

More emphasis on the arts in the community.

Expand art installations and art events beyond downtown.

More investments in the arts for the public.

Activities of the arts in school for elementary age that have the money that the sports teams receive.

More diverse/alt options in arts and theater.

Increase funding for the arts.

Springfield can learn about successful initiatives by consulting with other communities:

Look at other communities and see what they are doing well.

Consult with more diverse cities about inclusion efforts.

Borrow best practices from other cities. For example, Santa Ana has had a bilingual recruitment policy for all front-line positions at all levels. Over time, increasingly diverse front-line staff have been promoted to management and supervisorial positions.

And again, alternative perspectives:

Stop hiring diversity officers or similar.

Quit wasting tax payer monies on studies, commissions.

Do away with the Springfield Human Rights Commission. It is a waste of tax dollars and seeks to divide the community.

Discontinue the Sister City Program. It just benefits the City Council in the form of free trips at taxpayer's expense.

Stop coddling cultural groups. We used to be a melting pot where everyone strove to be good Americans, not hyphenated Americans, just plain Americans.

Question 8: Any additional comments or suggestions you have to share?

The final questions provided respondents one last chance to share any additional comments or suggestions they may have had. Many respondents thanked the Human Rights Commission and the City for providing the survey while others emphasized suggestions or comments they had made earlier. Some provided additional suggestions or simply expressed thoughts they had about diversity in Springfield in general. Examples:

Thank you for doing the survey

Many respondents expressed appreciation for having been given the chance to provide opinions and expressed the hope that the city would share the results and act on them. They supported the city's raising the issue of inclusion and seeking suggestions for improvement:

It's nice to see people at least asking, and looking for potential answers.

Please be sure to share the results and do something with them . . .

Thanks for inquiring. I hope that you will quickly collate your results and inform the community of the findings and the intentions of what will be done with them.

Please use this survey for genuine change. Springfield gets a bad rap already – let's change that.

Thank you for doing this! I hope the results prove helpful in making this a safer, more welcoming and inclusive community.

I truly hope this is the first step to Springfield becoming more inclusive. We have a terrific diverse population here and each of us deserves the same respect, protection, and freedoms as the next.

I appreciate these surveys. The Forward SGF program was excellent and surveys like this are a fantastic way to gain input but are not greatly advertised.

I appreciate the city making this effort. I know there's a lot of pushback on "cramming PC culture down people's throats," but fostering a community where people aren't afraid they'll be targeted for their race or religion should be a fundamental part of a civil society.

. . .I do appreciate the attempt and outreach the City is trying. Hopefully you all receive a multitude of valuable feedback from minorities and disenfranchised folks.

Thank you for working on inclusion. Diversity does not mean division.

Thank you for doing this survey. I hope more people answer questions truthfully. I think this is a great start. God bless!

I'm proud to have been born and raised in SW Missouri. WE have come a long way, and I look forward to being involved in our continued questions for city to be the best.

Springfield is on its way to being a great city full of wonderful opportunity, culture, arts, music, etc. I'm happy that inclusion is part of that conversation.

Thank you for providing this survey and hope it is marketed for historically underrepresented groups to take the survey.

Such a relevant topic, thank you for making this a priority for our community.

Thanks for conducting this survey. I will be watching to see what comes next.

Make this an annual survey.

Others, far fewer, thought the survey was a waste of time and money or didn't perceive a reason to be asking about inclusiveness:

This survey is a joke.

I hope this didn't cost the taxpayers any money.

How many resources did the city waste here?

This survey, but its very questions, is slanted and biased.

This is bullshit, unneeded, unwanted and shit they pull in democrat strongholds.

I do not believe the old fashioned white Springfieldians will have a fair voice in your survey. It will be slanted by the weirdos, queers stuffing the survey box.

It won't do any good to suggest anything else since my comments wouldn't fit the narrative you are seeking. This is just an exercise to fool people into thinking they have a say in what goes on. I'm more irritated the more I think about the way Springfield has degenerated over the last few decades.

Hire someone who knows survey methodology and best practices to help you with instruments like this. There's no point in gathering data if you don't ask the right questions the right way.

I'm not sure why you're taking this survey. Seems like we all get along even if we may not totally agree. Kindness covers everyone.

Respondents stated their support for diversity throughout the survey and re-emphasized it here:

Racism and discrimination are REAL and happen every single day in Springfield in so many places. Black people and trans people face it the worst, in my opinion.

I think this needs to be a priority in our city. We have a long history of institutional racism here. Our community was built on white supremacy and it still exists. . .

We are 20 years behind everyone else in respecting others. . .

I applaud city government for trying to take steps to make our home a safer and more inclusive place for all walks of life, and I hope that good things come from this.

Until Springfield becomes truly diverse, we will never be able to attract good paying jobs and top notch companies to locate here. Smart persons who have diverse experience DO NOT want to live in an area that is backwards and narrow minded!

I would discourage anyone who is considering a move to Springfield. The natives here are close-minded. Opportunities for nonwhites to thrive are LIMITING. . .

What Springfield should do to increase diversity and inclusion

Respondents took this opportunity to reaffirm what they had said before, and to emphasize what they thought was most important. Several noted that if Springfield wants to increase diversity and inclusion, it must make these a priority; city leaders in all contexts—government, schools, churches, businesses—have to walk the talk:

I think this is getting the cart before the horse. We need to communicate to Spfd community WHY we need to be inclusive before we figure out HOW to be inclusive. I'm not convinced most Springfieldians believe we need to be inclusive in the first place . . .

Support from institutions like local governments, schools, community networks, faith groups, and the media will be very important to building an inclusive community here in Springfield. The city should prioritize getting these institutions on board for this initiative. Identify and engage leaders in this effort and find ways to show how this will benefit them, as well.

If Springfield community leaders are serious about increasing inclusivity, they will need to make a commitment to keeping that goal at the forefront of community planning. They need to incentivize inclusivity for civic organizations as there is no reason for them to do it otherwise.

There are many things we can do and it starts with real substantial conversations. It is a bit discouraging that the same conversations are being had for decades and nothing substantial appears to be coming from these conversations . . .Focus on people's strengths and what they can do rather than what they lack and let's get away from narrowly talking about race.

The kind of transformation that is necessary to ensure our city's prosperity is one that needs to happen from the inside out. If it happens any other way . . .[it] won't be sustainable . . .

City leaders must continue to emphasize – and embody – concern for all citizens, with extra attention to those who are the targets of bigotry. All citizens have to call out and denounce in appropriate behavior when we see it.

. . .All city workers and official employees of any kind need to know what is and is not acceptable behavior, and to be trained in how to deal with all types of people and how best to intervene when they see something wrong.

Fight for everyone's equal rights in Springfield, MO so everyone can thrive, grow, and contribute to our economy.

Please help. Please believe the marginalized. Please make a forum [for] people to anonymously share discrimination complaints. Springfield is a place where people really want to be good, please give them more options than just ignoring and silencing.

Start by getting along with the county. We need to work together for the people . . .

We need to create a better dialogue about race and equality but not one person has all the answers.

Churches have such an important responsibility to create such an atmosphere and teach these goals [equality, acceptance and inclusiveness], but in this area I see a narrowness of thinking that is disturbing.

Invest in Springfield Manufacturing department. Invest in correct Education system. Invest in helping Springfield Citizens by creating a safer community for children. . . Do some real help for the community based on facts not feelings.

Needs some new industries for better jobs for workers.

Invite a variety of folks from a variety of backgrounds to come to Springfield to present and lead a variety of fun events that are geared to appeal to a wide audience. Spend the money – make it happen. . .

Make the Golden Rule the city motto and replace In God We Trust on police cars.

One obvious way to increase diversity is by increasing it in governance and leadership:

Invite new voices to the table. You have the same privileged people on boards, councils, committees, task forces all the time.

GET NEW LEADERHIP and problems will start to improve. There has been many solutions that has been submitted that I know of personally that has been ignored. . .

Don't make assumptions. . . you can please a lot more people if you asked them personally what they want.

Include more diversity in planning. Groups with disabilities, etc.

. . . Please keep in mind . . . chest beating volunteers (of any race) aren't always the best to hear from, place on boards, etc. Cultivate the quiet observers in the background . . .

Adding a little ethnicity to every group assembled. That should be the goal. When diversity is seen, diversity becomes normal.

There are gems in Springfield that contribute to the quality of life (such as the parks and public art) and these areas can be highlighted. At the same time, areas of the city need to be improved and resources need to be distributed equitably, particularly with respect to repair of sidewalks and roads, whose lack of repair hits the disabled community particularly hard:

The Springfield-Greene County Parks is a wonderful and seemingly inclusive part of our local community. I love spending time outdoors in our local parks. . . .It's a great atmosphere that I

wish were reflected in our community overall. Thank you to our parks.

I wish the city were more decorated with “cultural art” and not just in the city center. . . like West Bypass and Sunshine. The airport is on that side of town, and that is where a lot of our travelers come in through. It is so boring and doesn’t really show our culture here. We should have art up in the medians or on the light poles. Even if we just painted the brick decoratively . .

Distribute the city funds across the entire city equally and quit putting most of it into the square and Commercial St. . . . Start burying those [power and telephone lines]. Few people of any quality want to live in an ugly city . . .

Continue focusing on improving the north side.

. . . do more to tie north and south together. I think the 4 council zones should be redrawn to include a piece of north and south, like opposite pieces of a cut pie, forcing more even representation where financial decisions are made.

I feel like the city owes it to citizens here to help foster a more inclusive community, and to treat each area equally. Fix the terrible road on Division. . .that have 8,000 potholes. Fix the streetlights. Have PD drive other areas besides Commercial and Division.

It’s hard to be of the baby-boomer generation on the north side, with a fixed income, especially in wintertime . . & afraid to drive on slick streets. One day, you too will be elderly.

Fix Division Street between Glenstone and National. I have been traveled over county roads that are dirt that [are] smoother.

Let’s make better storm water rules and actually follow them throughout development. We need people in the City to stand up to developers to protect our waterways.

We need to fix the junkie and homeless problem.

Walkability. . . . I personally know a lot of people . . . that are seriously considering a move to Arkansas . . . Bentonville is a great model to what we should strive for . . I think we need to prioritize making this city easier to navigate by foot . . .It does no good to have a public transportation system if you can’t access the stops or locations before or after the ride.

Walkability, public transportation, green spaces, and safe public places are vital to interaction among diverse groups. These items should be priorities to foster inclusion.

Assistance for specific populations is needed:

Springfield does not have a very inclusive disability environment. People always assume the worst when they see someone who is disabled. The disability . . . should not be used as a tool to humiliate a family that may already be stressed financially, physically and emotionally.

I have a neighbor whose daughter has Down’s Syndrome. She volunteered at a local hospital for many, many years, when the family discovered she was cleaning bathrooms like paid employees but was not being paid. . . The family was outraged, but never followed through with bringing it to the attention of the administrators because they believed nothing could be done. . . .It goes back to “see something, say something” . . . and I think this should be pounded into the

communities for people to take action against instances like this.

PASS NON DISCRIMINATION ORDINANCES!!!!

More Eden Villages to help those that really do not want to be homeless. We could be an example of how to curb homelessness for other cities.

Offer free HIV services for infected people of Springfield. Get people off streets and in shelters.

As a minority, I don't believe Springfield has my back. . .

As was mentioned extensively in response to previous questions, several respondents wanted better training for and more sensitive responses from the police and asked for the power of conservative Christian churches to be restrained regarding public decision making:

Have more education and training for law enforcement around not discriminating and racial profiling.

Auditing SPD to make sure they're doing their jobs and not destroying rape kits. Holding judges accountable for lenient sentences.

Less emphasis on the wishes of the religious right, more emphasis on what would attract cool young people. . .

Springfield has a lot going for it but it appears to coast on some things. . . sexism is allowed because of the prevalence of small businesses and the underlying "Christianity" that oppresses women. . ."Christianity" is a shadow over all.

As before, some respondents believe that Springfield has more pressing issues than diversity:

I think Springfield would benefit more people by focusing on the drug problem and decline of neighborhoods.

Continue to crack down on crime – don't go easy on violators. Thanks!

It would also be nice if our police force would do something about all the meth that the city is full of.

We don't need more walking trails or theaters, we need to get this city safe and cleaned up.

SGF is already a great place and very open and inviting to those that wish to enjoy and contribute to what has been built already. . .

PLEASE, PLEASE DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE HOLES, PANHANDLERS AND TRASH ON OUR STREETS. . .make trash service mandatory so people won't dump illegally . . .

Several respondents suggested looking at other cities to see what has worked there:

The city moves too slow. What are we waiting for? . . . there are plenty of templates from other similar sized communities that could be followed. Somehow all we do is talk, talk, talk.

Take some lessons from Fayetteville. They celebrate their rich live entertainment scene, they attract customers that want to go to cool local restaurants and shops instead of pabulum chains,

and they have a vibrant diverse population that does not focus on religious dogma. Instead it focuses on inclusion and opportunity.

Embrace things that are special and unique about Springfield. We don't have to copy other benchmark cities.

Let's become the most inviting, interesting, and vibrant city in the Midwest! A great way to encourage our educated youth and graduates of our wonderful universities to stick around. Here are my ideas to make Springfield more inclusive and inviting for all:

- Create community murals. . . [Burlington, VT]
- Turn everyday urban hardware . . into colorful creations: www.muralarts.org/
- Create a community sign initiative like the CoSign project in Cincinnati . . .
- More public benches
- Local car-free day with busses running for free on day a year . . .
[multiple details and suggestions from this individual]

Finally, several respondents thought the problem of inclusion would be resolved if we were just nicer to and more tolerant of one another:

Less singling out people by which group they fit into. It tends to be divisive for everyone. More "were all in this together" regardless of groups type things.

I just wish we could live and let live a bit more and not have to deal with folks telling us we area sinners and going to hell because we don't share the same faith or views as them.

Please, please, please . . just treat everyone equally . . . even the so-called "majorities" around here . . .All of us are equally deserving of love and respect, even if we're in a "majority" group . .

The atmosphere around diversity has become more tense over the last few years and I sincerely hope we can find a way to diffuse that tension.

Everyone should be more open to the diversity [in] the Grant Beach area. Be kind.

We have good people in the area and I for one have faith the people will grow and learn to be accepting of others who may be different.

We need to overcome the stigma of "different" people and stop showing indifference toward them. . . Care.

Perceived negative aspects of diversity

The designers of the survey believe that diversity is healthy for a city and that inclusion is necessary for the city to utilize fully all the talent within the city. As one respondent said, in a quote attributed to Lyle Foster, "Diversity is a statistic. Inclusion is a feeling." Not every respondent supports increasing Springfield's diversity or inclusion. Some think too much is being made of the issue and that increasing diversity and inclusion is a solution to an artificial problem:

Just grow up and stop being offended by what others thing. Keep government out of our daily lives.

The more you try and push lifestyles and ideas on the people, those who have convictions will feel discriminated about. Let everyone live and stay out of people's personal lives. This is getting to be too much.

Personally, I think too many people are overly sensitive calling racism, and prejudice on personal life style over incidents that are not. It is more their own antisocial behavior that is not friendly, considerate or inclusive. I appreciate this survey and hope its results are not manipulated or selectively ignored based on bureaucratic dysfunction at the expense of the public.

Springfield is a great place to live. Don't make this some BS dialogue about how we're so hateful, racist, sexist, . .etc. We're SICK of that dialogue already . . .

Others are actively hostile to the idea of increasing Springfield's diversity:

Stupid survey. Diversity is another name for equal opportunity and so far every diversity position I've heard of has been filled by a BLACK.

Springfield is diverse enough.

This "diversity and inclusion" projects are a waste of time and money. I'm half black, they don't work and are not sincere. It's teaching children that race is important and it's not . . .It's culture and values which you guys don't seem to care about.

I am not responsible for what other people did more than a hundred years ago. I have worked for every dollar I have. No one gave it to me. I do not have privilege just because I am white. I have nothing to apologize for to people I have never even met.

You want diversity, when the going gets rough you take away our freedom of choice You want us all to ac the same. Fall in line and goose step to your will. You don't even know what diversity is. Diversity is about letting people be who they want to be. If I want to put a couch on my porch then so be it. If I want to park my car in the yard in front of my house then so be it. If I want to go to a restaurant, movie theatre, or church during a pandemic, then sob be it. Live and let live.

I understand the premise behind wanting everyone to feel loved & included. However, our society has turned the whole diversity/inclusion/equity thing into its own form of discrimination. . .Look at job posting nowadays; many of them will say . . . that they give preference to women . . etc. If you're old, white and male. . . don't bother to apply.

If you try to make Springfield more like Chicago, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco or New York, you are going to end up with the problems that they have there. High crime, racial tension, filthy streets, corruption in business and government, and the exact opposite of the inclusion that you so earnestly seek. Be careful what you wish for in Springfield.

Don't let Springfield deteriorate like St. Louis. It's not safe there and we have stopped going to Six Flags because of it.

Make the city more diverse and watch it turn into the black plagued hell holes such as LA and SF. Watch the murder skyrocket . . .I did not bust my ass to get citizenship just to have my new home turn into the hell hole I fled.

KICK THE HOMELESS OUT. They are running everything that was decent about Springfield.

Despite the hostility to the concept of inclusion contained in several of those last comments, this section closes with the following comment from one participant, which should give us all hope:

Thank you for addressing these issues! Having grown up in a very biased family, I was extremely closed minded, and unaccepting of those who were different from me. . . After moving away from this area at the age of twenty-one, I found myself interacting with individuals different from myself, and with opened eyes and an opened mind, seeing them for who they were—not what they were. This is why I feel these issues need to be addressed in public schools, beginning at an early age. . .

Conclusion

Recap of major findings

The Springfield Inclusiveness Survey sought to determine how local residents view the area's inclusiveness and what suggestions they might offer to improve diversity and inclusiveness. Respondents to the survey did not represent a random sampling of the community, but the 2276 individuals who completed the survey were reasonably representative of the Springfield area. Respondents came from all areas of the city (Northwest, 12.26%; Northeast, 16.12%; Southwest, 18.98%; Southeast, 22.72%; outside city limits, 28.12%) and were demographically consistent with the make-up of the city (Asian, 1.76%; Black/African American, 4.02%; White, 88.72%; Native American, 3.05%; Pacific Islander, .21%; and other, 1.84%, with 2.11% preferring not to answer). There were more women (59.84%) than men (35.71%), and most respondents were aged 25-39 (35.65%) or 40-59 (34.38%), with fewer being 18-24 (6.08%) or over 60+ (21.82%). Thus, survey respondents represented a workable cross section of the community.

While many respondents believe that Springfield is perfectly fine now, it is compelling that nearly half the respondents had either experienced or witnessed instances of discrimination. Nearly 45% deemed Springfield not inclusive or not very inclusive. 31% said they had experienced barriers to participating fully in the Springfield community; 41% said they had felt undervalued based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, or age. 41% had encountered or knew someone who had experienced unlawful hostility or discrimination based on those categories, and 48% had witnessed such acts against others. Clearly, Springfield has some work to do.

Responses were consistent across questions. The two biggest groups on the receiving end of hostility and discrimination were based on race/ethnicity/national origin and sexual orientation/gender identity. Some of the milder indignities against these groups involved name-calling, failure to be served in restaurants and similar places, and strangers insisting that people speak English instead of whatever language they were using. More serious forms included discrimination in housing, employment discrimination regarding hiring and advancement opportunities, bullying, and failure to be selected for volunteer boards. More hostile forms included people throwing things at such individuals and other physical and verbal assaults. The repeal of the SOGI ordinance was seen as a slap in the face to the LGBTQ+ community. Hostility was particularly vicious against transgender individuals; some of the examples of hostility directed toward these groups were truly heartbreaking.

Discrimination also occurs based on religion, disability, sex and age. A consistent theme throughout the responses involved the perception that certain conservative Christian denominations were able to establish the legal, political, and social agenda in Springfield in a way that is hostile to non-Christians or progressive Christians. Often, respondents noted that Springfield is not a disability-friendly city. Not all areas of the city have sidewalks and the bus system is not as functional as it could be. Some roads and storm water drains are in disrepair, many buildings and stores are not accessible, and many stores and restaurants simply do not know how to deal with disabled individuals. Many respondents perceived the area to be sexist and ageist; most of those examples involved employment issues.

Although economic/class discrimination is not a protected category in discrimination statutes, quite a few individuals perceived that this was the biggest barrier to full participation in Springfield and believed they had been discriminated against because they are poor or they live on the north side. They perceive that the homeless are not treated respectfully. There is a widespread perception that Springfield resources are not equitably distributed, with the south side receiving more than its fair share.

Next steps

Based on the themes described in this report and the many suggestions provided, the following are logical next steps for the City of Springfield to consider. Because this report summarizes more than 300 pages of comments, readers are advised to take the time to review the actual comments so they can see how prevalent the incidents were and how intense respondents' feelings were.

Some people will never be convinced that increasing diversity is a good idea. The sponsors of the survey clearly support diversity and inclusion efforts and are eager to see Springfield be a welcoming city for all groups. However, not everyone welcomes diversity and inclusion initiatives. This fact is important to consider when the City and the Human Rights Commission undertake initiatives to improve diversity and inclusiveness. Those individuals who are hostile to diversity efforts, thankfully relatively few, will likely remain unconvinced that such efforts will improve Springfield.

Describing why diversity and inclusion are important is a key first step. Although some people are hostile to diversity, there is also a large group of people who have not themselves witnessed or experienced discrimination; many of these do not believe it exists in Springfield. Some believe the issue of inclusion is a manufactured one, not a real one. These people will need to be convinced that there is a problem. But it seems clear from the responses that this group can be convinced that discrimination is a problem here and that increasing diversity and inclusion are worthwhile goals. As one respondent wrote, "I think this is getting the cart before the horse. We need to communicate to Spfd community WHY we need to be inclusive before we figure out HOW to be inclusive. I'm not convinced most Springfieldians believe we need to be inclusive in the first place . . ."

There will need to be a multi-pronged approach to improve the situation in Springfield. If Springfield is serious about addressing the issues of diversity and inclusion, it will have to address those issues on multiple fronts, including working on making leadership more diverse, involving the media, engaging in training, and so forth. There isn't one magic bullet that will solve the problem of lack of diversity and inclusion.

All the key players in the city and area must be on board. These include city and county government officials; leaders of major institutions, including the school system, the universities/colleges, the health

systems; the Chamber of Commerce and local business organizations; the faith community; and the boards and committees in the nonprofit sector. All the major players in Springfield must be on the same page regarding diversity and inclusion, so that citizens are hearing a consistent message from all quarters. That message should include:

- Strong statements of support from all major organizations
- Inclusive language
- Diversification of leadership and staff, so that Springfieldians are actually seeing diversity
- Ensuring that governmental and civic leaders are visible at diversity events—walking the talk
- Accountability and transparency, so that discriminatory actions are called out and punished

SOGI must be reinstated. The repeal of the SOGI ordinance was both an insult and a genuine injury to the LGBTQ+ community, who can be discriminated against, legally, in housing and employment. Members of this community have lost housing and employment because of their LGBTQ+ status and they currently have no recourse. This population feels particularly vulnerable and unprotected in the current environment.

Members of the faith community must come together to address issues of discrimination. Quite a few respondents blamed the conservative Christian churches for promoting discrimination, particularly against the LGBTQ+ community but also against others, including other Christians, as well. Some hold the conservative Christian community responsible for what they perceive to be a rampant sexism in the area—that only men should be in leadership positions. However, many respondents also saw the potential for good that can come from interfaith dialogues and actions to support diversity and inclusion. The faith community, including all traditions and denominations working together, has the capacity—as yet untapped—to move hearts and minds so that diversity and inclusion is not just tolerated, but embraced.

Springfield should hold facilitated dialogues where people can discuss issues of diversity, particularly race and LGBTQ+ status, and get to know one another as individuals rather than representatives of a category. Although some respondents felt strongly that discussing issues openly was dangerous and made the inclusion situation worse (some respondents felt this was “race baiting”), many more people felt that open discussion in safe spaces was necessary for members of the community to get to know and understand one another’s perspectives. Missouri State’s “Tough Talks” could serve as a model for such facilitated dialogue, but there are other models that are likewise effective. What is important, however, is for citizens to hear one another’s stories so that movement toward inclusion can happen with empathy and understanding.

Education and training must be provided for citizens throughout the community. Some of the discriminatory actions described by respondents were likely due to ignorance as much as hostility. However, some populations—the Springfield Police Department, public school teachers, city workers, government representatives, city leaders—should be cognizant of how to deal with diverse populations so as to treat all people with sensitivity and de-escalate potential conflicts. It appears that many segments of the population would benefit from such training. The Facing Racism Institute was mentioned as a potential model.

Springfield should look for ways—festivals, events, celebrations of all kinds—to celebrate its diversity. Festivals and events are fun, non-threatening ways that members of diverse groups can get to know one

another and begin to appreciate one another's culture, particularly if there is food involved. Such festivals and events need to be free or low cost, offered at times convenient for families, well publicized, and accessible to the disabled. Some respondents recommended establishing a physical space—a cultural center, for example—where people could learn about other cultures than their own. A caution is in order here, however. One respondent noted that “This [increasing diversity and inclusion] is not about cultural festivals. There needs to be real action.”

Springfield should make intentional efforts to welcome newcomers and diverse members of the community to integrate them fully into the civic life of Springfield. Respondents recommended something like a Welcome Wagon for newcomers. They also noted that people need to be personally invited to attend professional, civic and social gatherings. Recommendations were made to host leadership development programs as a way to help integrate diverse members of the community fully into Springfield's civic life.

Springfield must attend to economic issues that affect acceptance for diversity. Many respondents observed that Springfield has bigger problems than diversity, and that attention to some of these economic and infrastructure issues would improve the city's inclusiveness. Respondents perceived a significant north-south divide and believe that the south side consumes more than its fair share of resources. Many others called for Springfield to secure more jobs that pay a living wage. Respondents mentioned crumbling infrastructure on the north side—lack of sidewalks, storm drainage issues—that make northsiders feel like second class and unwanted citizens. Economic inequality and inequity were mentioned as barriers to full participation in the city.

Springfield should consult with other cities to learn what has worked there. Several respondents provided website addresses for other cities' initiatives related to diversity and inclusion. Other cities have faced many of the same issues as Springfield and have developed programs we might be able to utilize (such as Grand Rapid, MI's Facing Racism Institute). If we adopt a program or initiative from another city, it is important that we modify it to suit Springfield's specific situation.

There must be accountability for those who violate the law or who exhibit insensitivity or hostility to diverse populations. Violators of the law must be held accountable and there must be an easy and safe way for people to report violators. Quite a few respondents noted that they did not report violations because they feared reprisals or did not believe reporting would do any good. Many people believed that people committing insensitive or hostile actions must be called out; perhaps bystander training, to know how best to intervene, would be useful. One respondent noted that “those that are making Springfield LESS inclusive will continue to do what they do until their (white) peers call them out and tell them to stop. Minorities cannot make this change.” This is accurate; we all are responsible for ensuring that Springfield is a welcoming and inclusive community.