

COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA

DENVER HEALTH WORKER UNITED ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Anti-Racism and Trust In Healthcare

February 2024

Trust and Healthcare in the United States

Trust is key to everything that we do in healthcare.

Patients need to trust their providers. Employees need to be able to trust their institutions. And institutions need to trust the society they operate in.

Unfortunately, the healthcare industry has a history showing that some of that distrust has been earned.

A loss of trust is not irreversible or inevitable. We have the ability, and opportunity, to look at both our past and present to build a future that benefits Denver Health, the employees that make everything possible, and the patients that we serve.

A Brief History For Transparency: Patients

1798

The use of the bodies of enslaved people for medical experimentation.



Enslaved by Dr. Preserved Power, a bone surgeon, Fortune's body was kept without his or his family's consent. His corpse was dissected, his bones boiled, so that Dr. Porter and his descendants could use Fortune's skeleton to study anatomy, train doctors and teach other students.

1933: The bones were donated to a museum.

1970s: The bones were removed from display.

2013: Fortune's bones were buried to a church in the parish where he was baptized in 1797.

A Brief History For Transparency: Patients

1845-1849

Medical progress at the expense of vulnerable populations.



Dr. J Marion Sims, the father of gynecological surgery, practiced his new surgery to correct vesicovaginal fistulas, on enslaved women without any anesthesia.

This involved up to 30 surgeries on each women to complete the procedure.

Once the procedure was determined successful, the surgery was performed on white women with anesthesia.

A Brief History For Transparency: Patients

1900

Chinese immigrants treated as scapegoats for plague.



An autopsy of Chick Gin, a Chinese-American man, revealed the first known case of bubonic plague as a cause of death in the United States.

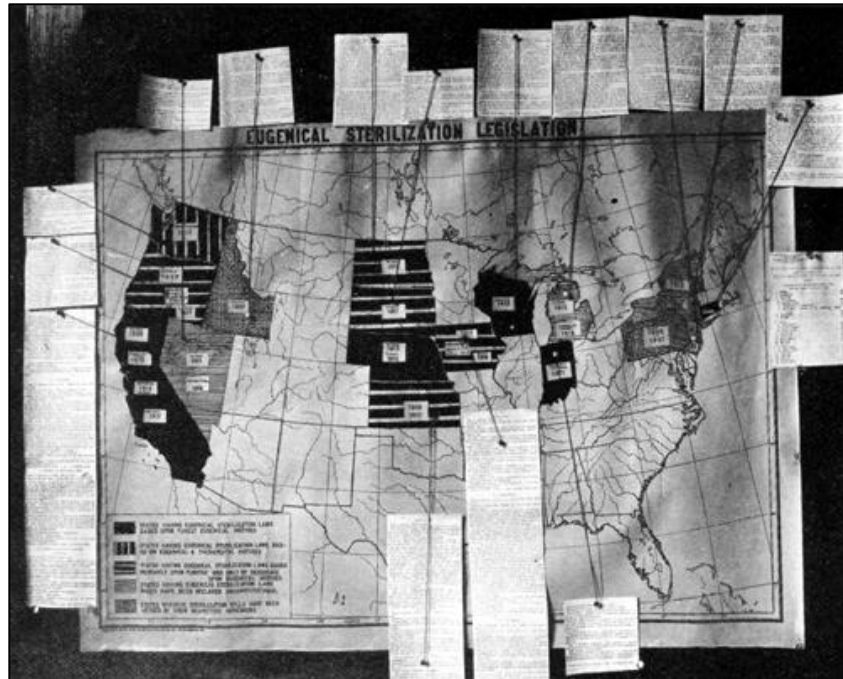
The news of plague was initially suppressed by California officials to protect businesses. After pressure, quarantine was reimposed on Chinatown and armed patrols were used to halt the movement of Chinese people in and out of the city.

The case *Jew Ho v. Williamson* determined the quarantine was racially motivated and did not do anything to stop the outbreak of plague.

A Brief History For Transparency: Patients

1909-1979

Sterilization of Latina women.



The California Sterilization Act of 1909 authorized doctors and medical superintendents to perform sterilization procedures on men and women deemed undesirable to pass down “defects”. Male Latinos were 23% more likely to be sterilized. Female Latinas were 59% more likely. 88% of sterilized individuals had Spanish surnames. Approximately 20,000 women were sterilized.

Law 116, passed in 1936, made sterilization legal and free in Puerto Rico while offering no other methods of birth control. This was strongly pushed by the US government and health officials. Per the US Department of Health, Education and Welfare by 1976 over 37% of women between 20-49 years of age were sterilized.

<https://stanford.edu/group/womenscourage/cgi-bin/blogs/familyplanning/2008/10/23/forced-sterilization-in-puerto-rico/>

<https://www.cwluherstory.org/health/35-of-puerto-rican-women-sterilized>

A Brief History For Transparency: Staff

1847

Access denied for Black doctors and other health care professionals.



Established in 1847 The American Medical Association (AMA), started its existence explicitly representing white physicians only.

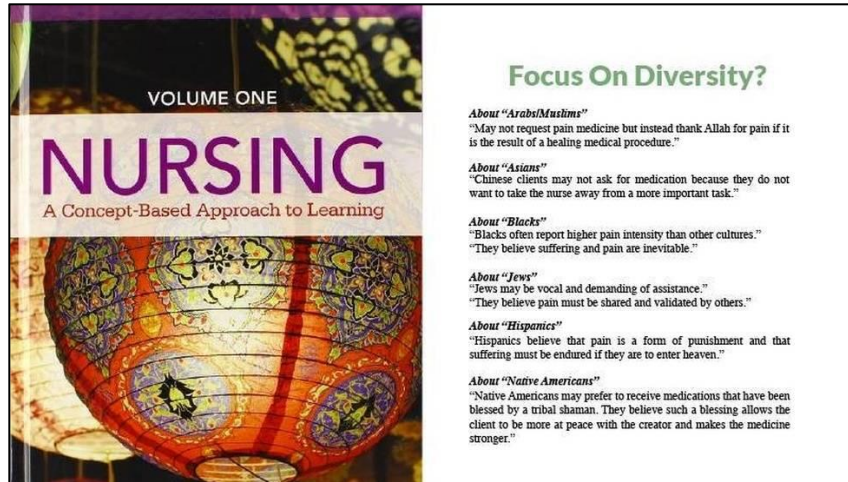
The national organization allowed discrimination of admittance based on sex and race at the local level until the civil rights legislation of the 1960s outlawed the practice.

An apology for the discrimination was made in 2008.

A Brief History For Transparency: Staff

2014 present

Nurses setup to fail to build trust



Published in 2014, a nursing textbook discusses “cultural differences” in response to pain, and medical professionals are still taught to teach and practice medicine around these racial stereotypes.

Some examples include:

- Jews may be vocal and demand assistance.
- Blacks often report higher pain intensity than other cultures.
- Arabs may not request pain medicine but instead thank Allah for pain if it is the result of the healing medical process.
- Hispanics may believe that pain is a form of punishment, and that suffering must be endured if they are to enter heaven.

A Brief History For Transparency: Here and Now

2016

Dr. Michelle Herren to resign from Denver Health after calling Michelle Obama an “ebonic” speaker and a “monkey face”

“As of December 2, Michelle Herren, MD, and Denver Health have mutually agreed that Dr. Herren will voluntarily resign her employment.”

 Andrew Kenney

Dec. 02, 2016, 3:55 p.m.

<https://denverite.com/2016/12/02/dr-michelle-herren-resign-denver-health-calling-michelle-obama-ebonics-speaker-monkey-face/>



The screenshot shows the Westword website interface. At the top, there are social media icons for Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, and Facebook. The Westword logo is prominently displayed in red. A yellow 'SUPPORT US' button is located in the top right corner. Below the logo, a navigation bar lists various categories: News, Food & Drink, Arts & Culture, Music, Cannabis, Things To Do, Best of Denver, Newsletters, and More. The main content area features a 'NEWS' section with the headline 'Denver Health: State's Anti-Discrimination Law Doesn't Entirely Apply to Us'. A sub-headline reads: 'Since an openly-gay employee was fired from Denver Health in September of 2016, the hospital has been embroiled in litigation. Now, the hospital is taking its case to the Colorado Court of Appeals.' The article is attributed to 'By Nora Olabi | March 30, 2018'.

<https://www.westword.com/news/denver-health-argues-immunity-to-anti-discrimination-in-lawsuit-with-gay-former-employee-10129329>

A Brief History For Transparency: Here and

2020

Complaint alleges Denver Health prevented employees from speaking out against racism, COVID-19

A complaint filed on behalf of the union that represents Denver Health workers claims the hospital suppressed whistleblowers.

<https://www.9news.com/article/news/health/coronavirus/denver-health-systemic-racism-covid-19-whistleblower-complaint/73-057d1e8a-df65-420d-a04d-096c7b41f0ff>

The allegations listed in the complaint include:

- An incident where multiple Denver Health employees signed and emailed the organization an open letter regarding COVID-19 and systemic racism. According to Towards Justice, Denver Health responded by “admonishing the signatories of the letter and wrongly accusing them of improperly obtaining email addresses.”
- An emergency room physician involved in anti-racism issues said funding to her At Risk Intervention and Mentoring (AIM) program was cut after she attended a White Coats for Black Lives event. In response, supporters of the program sent letters to the hospital’s management, but the complaint alleges the doctor was disciplined for “not getting along with leadership.”
- In October 2020, a Denver Health emergency medical services professional granted an interview with Colorado Public Radio to discuss the burnout experienced by health-care workers. The complaint alleges that the worker was reprimanded for violating Denver Health’s press policy and passed over for special assignment opportunities as a result.

2022

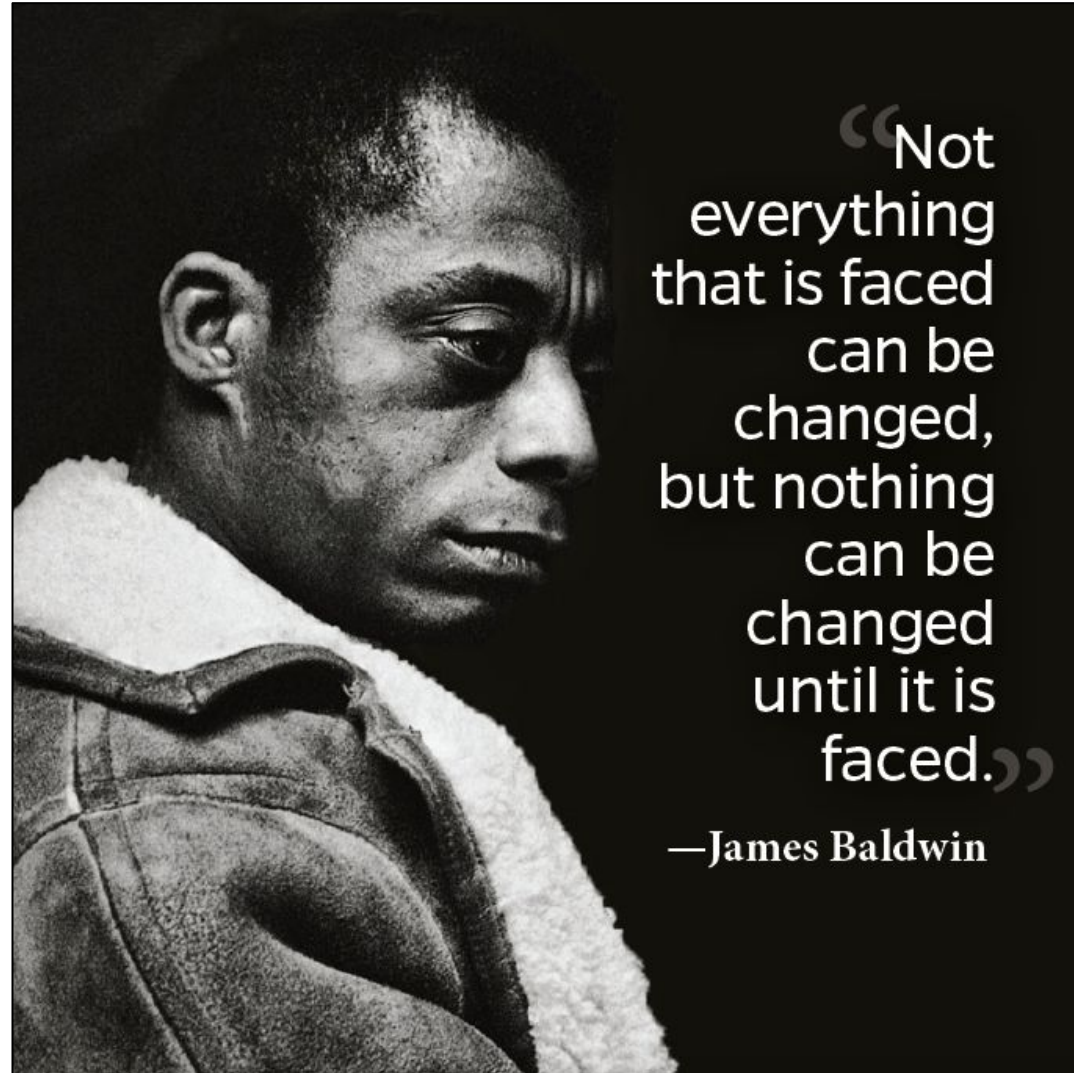
NEWS > LOCAL NEWS



Paramedic files lawsuit against Denver Health alleging harassment, discrimination due to sexual orientation

<https://www.denver7.com/news/local-news/paramedic-files-lawsuit-against-denver-health-alleging-harassment-discrimination-due-to-sexual-orientation/>

Breather



“Not
everything
that is faced
can be
changed,
but nothing
can be
changed
until it is
faced.”

—James Baldwin

Trust and Denver Health Workers

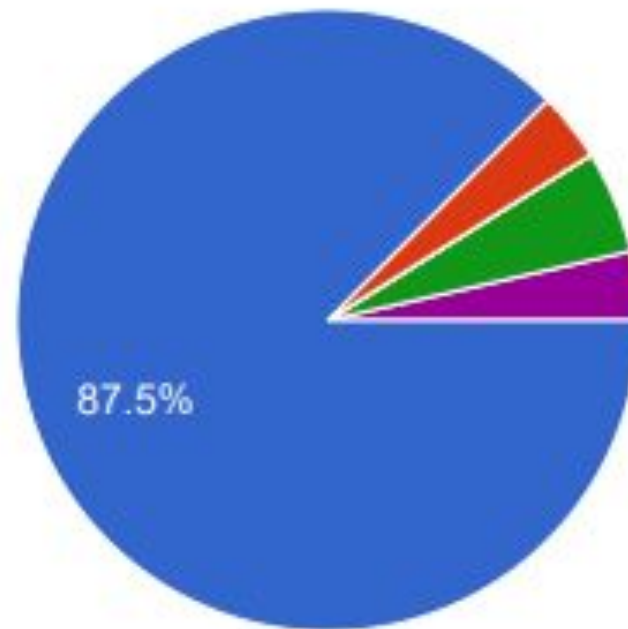
In the Summer of 2020, Denver Health Workers United (DHWU) conducted a survey of Denver Health Employee, not all of whom were union members.

Some things that we found...

Trust and Denver Health Workers

I think it is valuable to examine and discuss the impacts of race and racism in a healthcare workplace.

56 responses

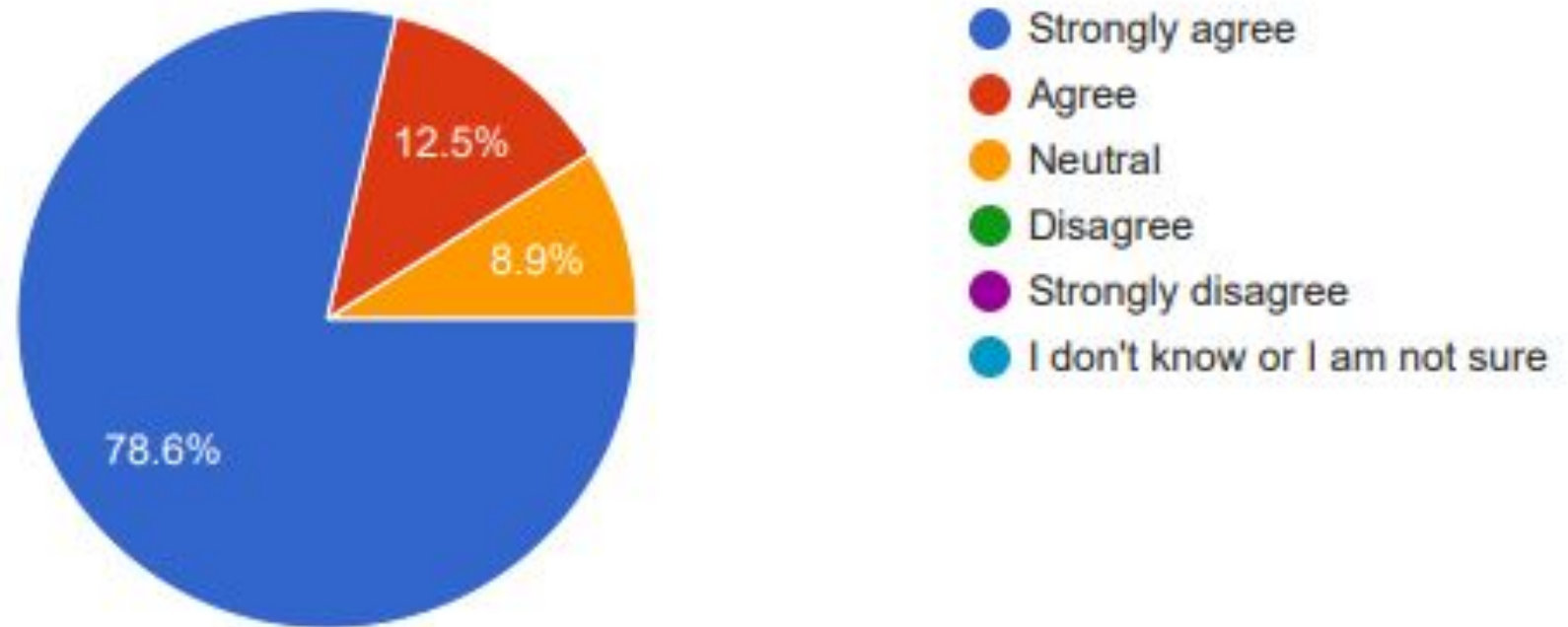


- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neutral
- Strongly disagree
- I don't know or I am not sure.

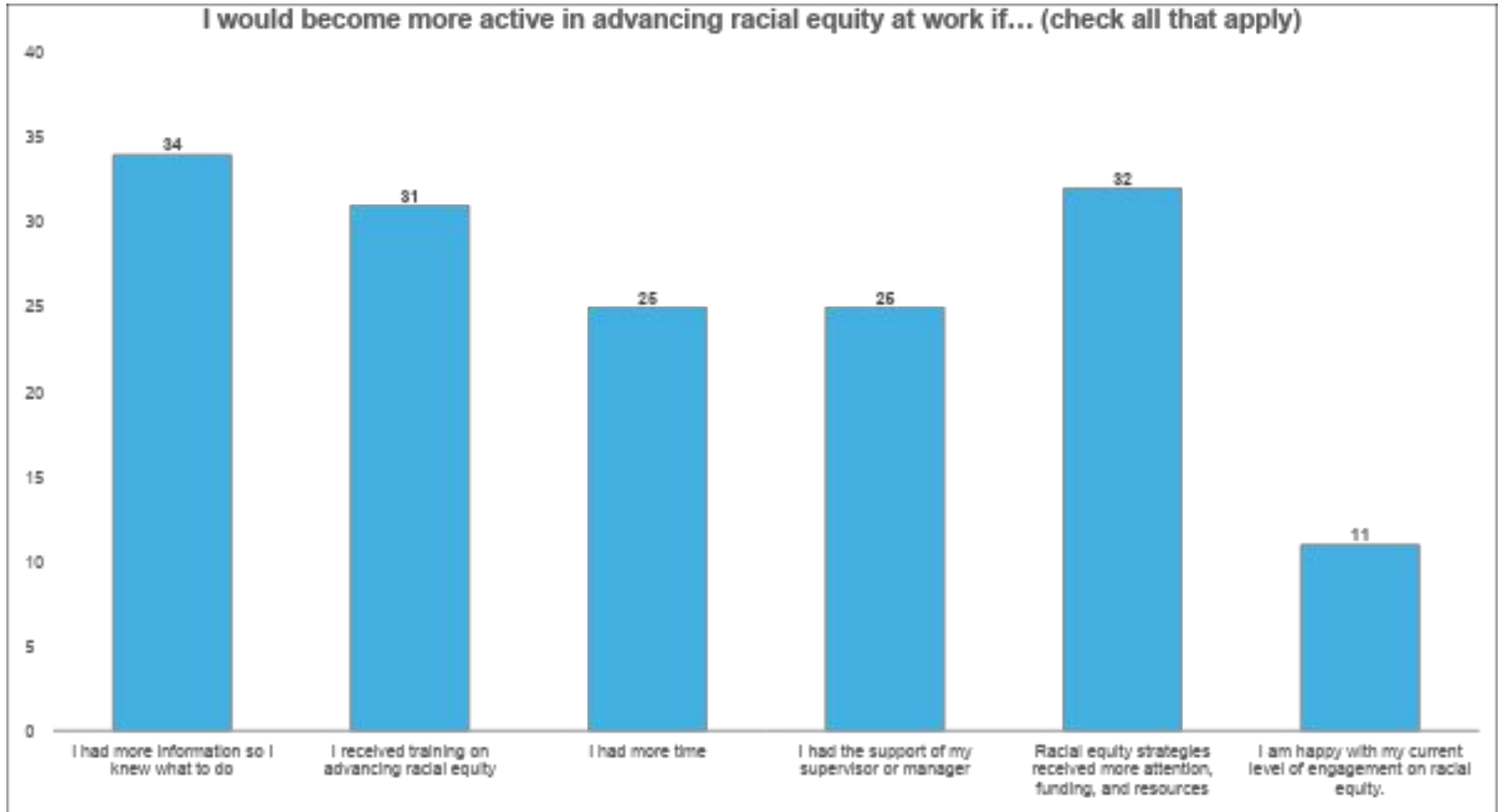
Trust and Denver Health Workers

I think there is a need for more diverse representation in our top leadership and among our providers.

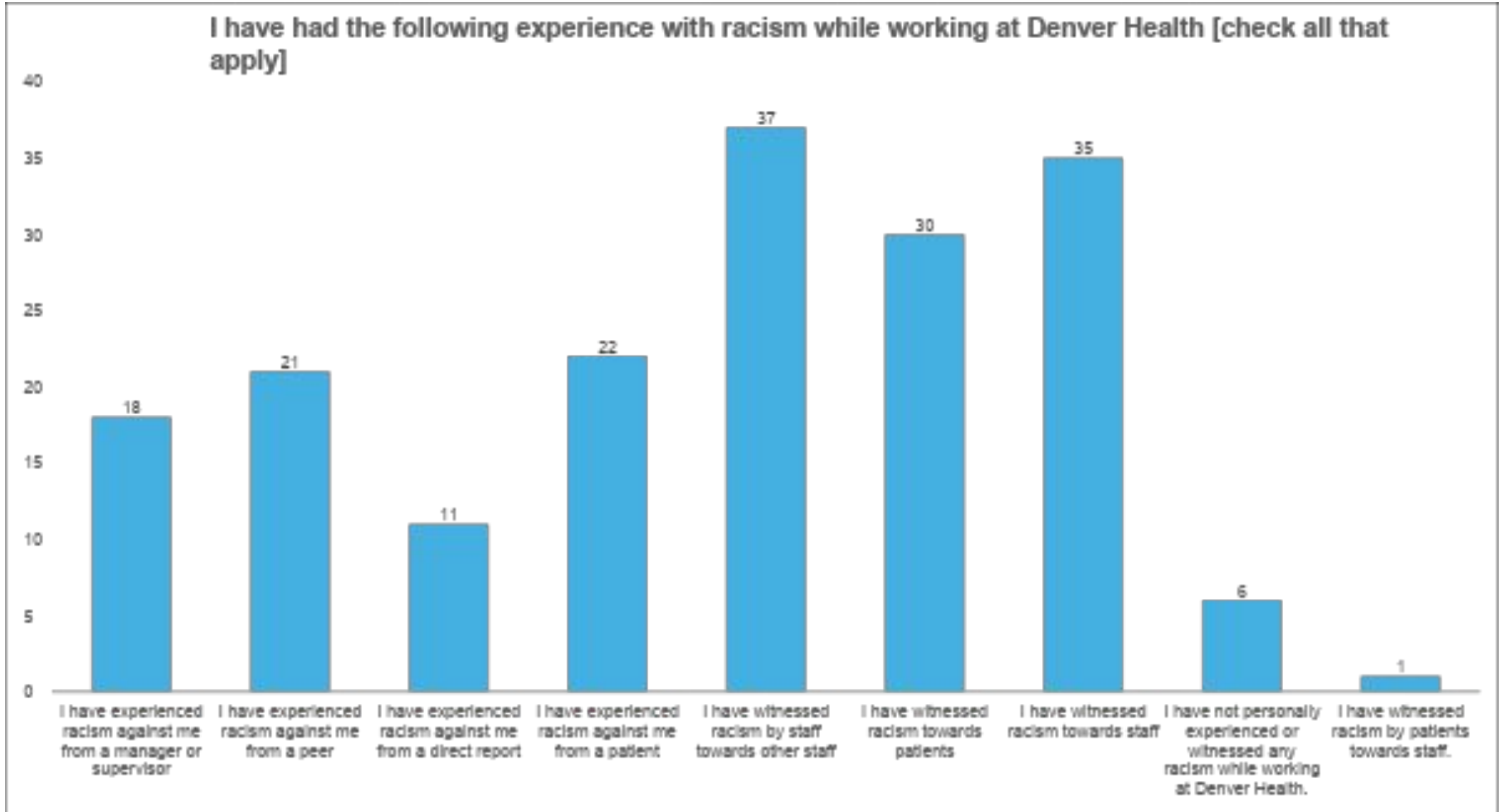
56 responses



Trust and Denver Health Workers



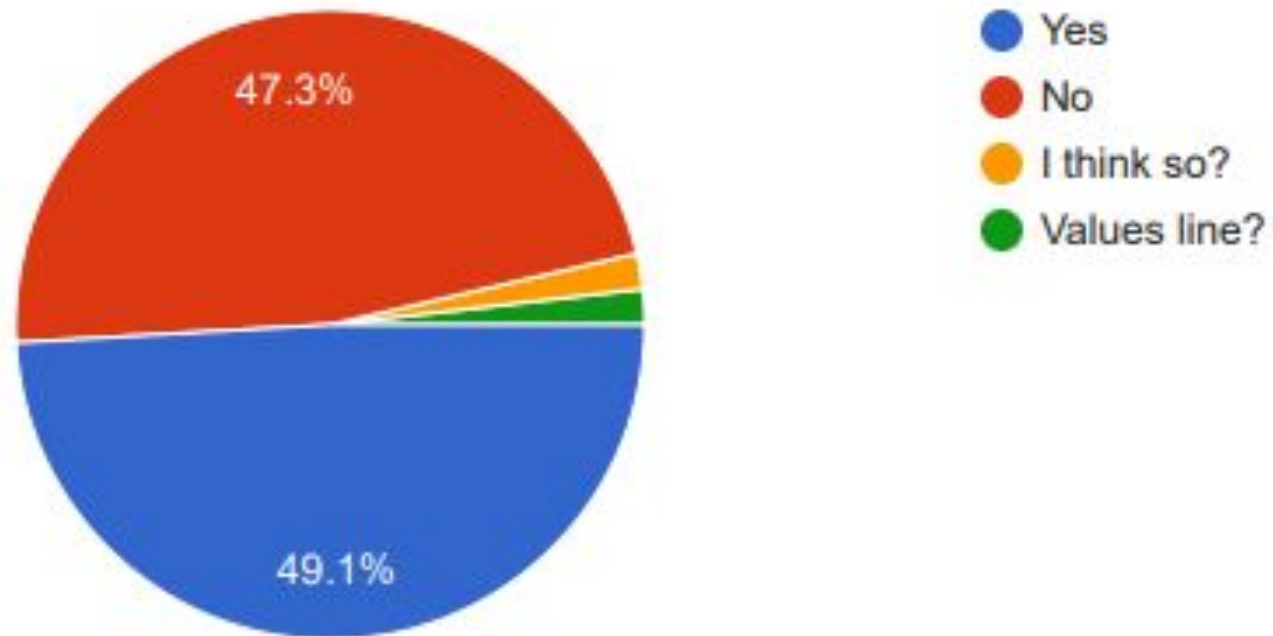
Trust and Denver Health Workers



Trust and Denver Health Workers

Do you know how to report racial discrimination at Denver Health as an employee?

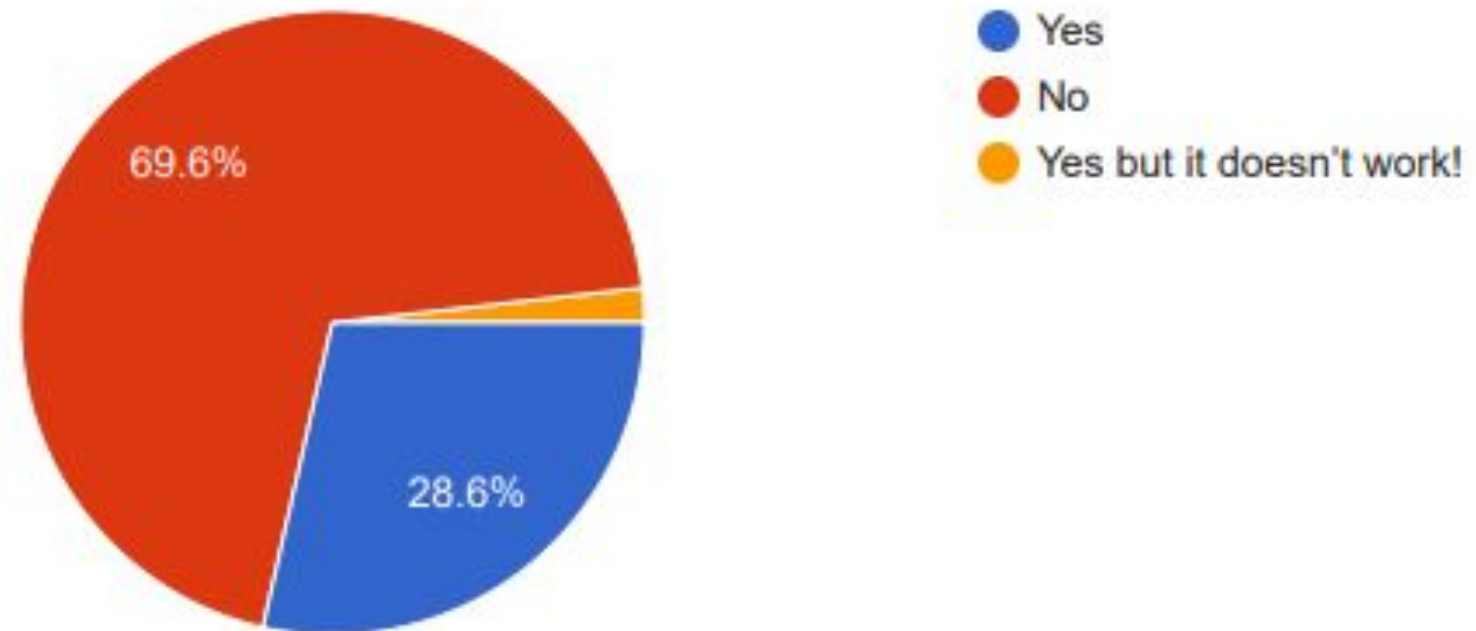
55 responses



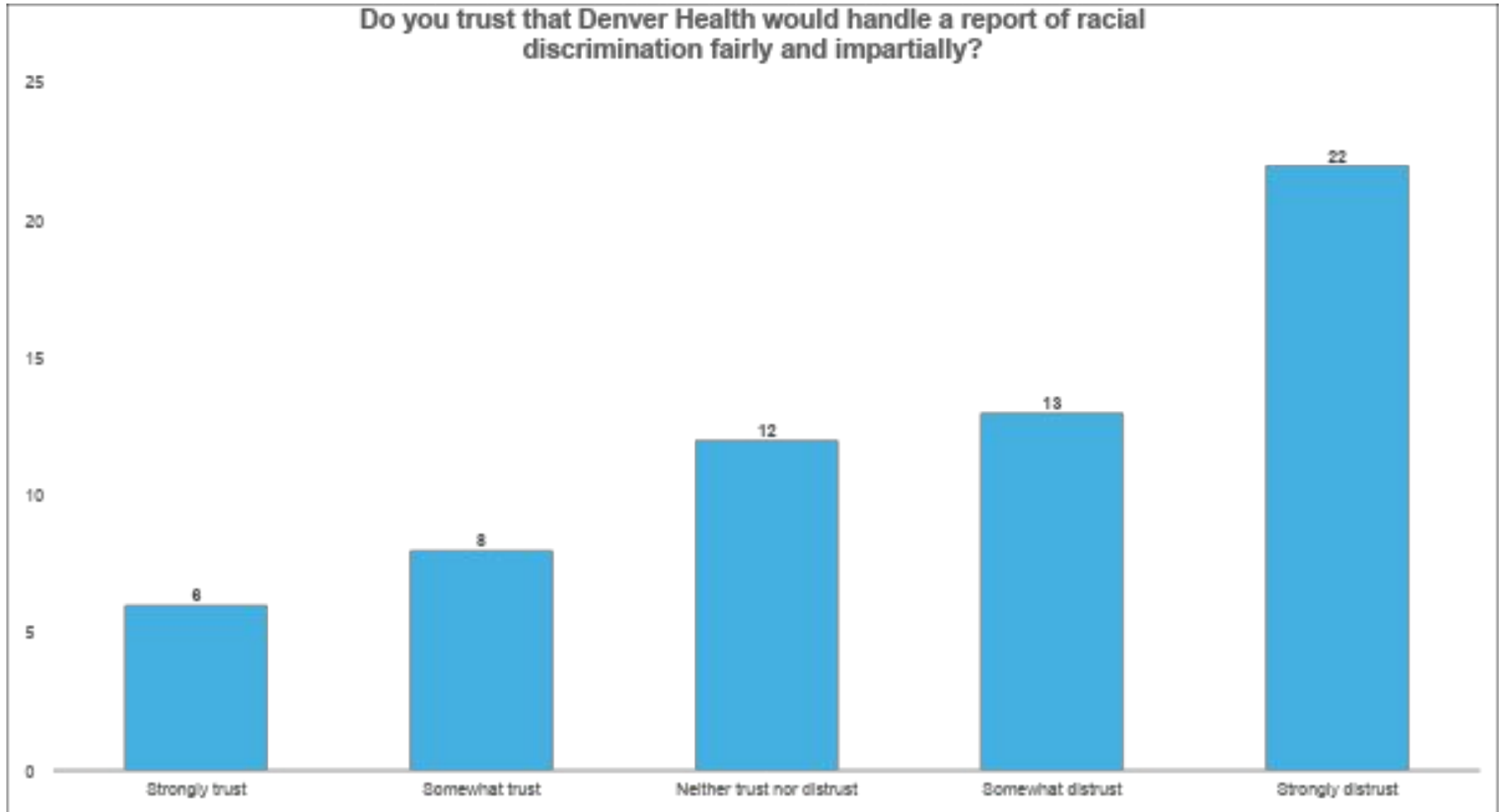
Trust and Denver Health Workers

Are you familiar with the process Denver Health uses to handle reports of racial discrimination?

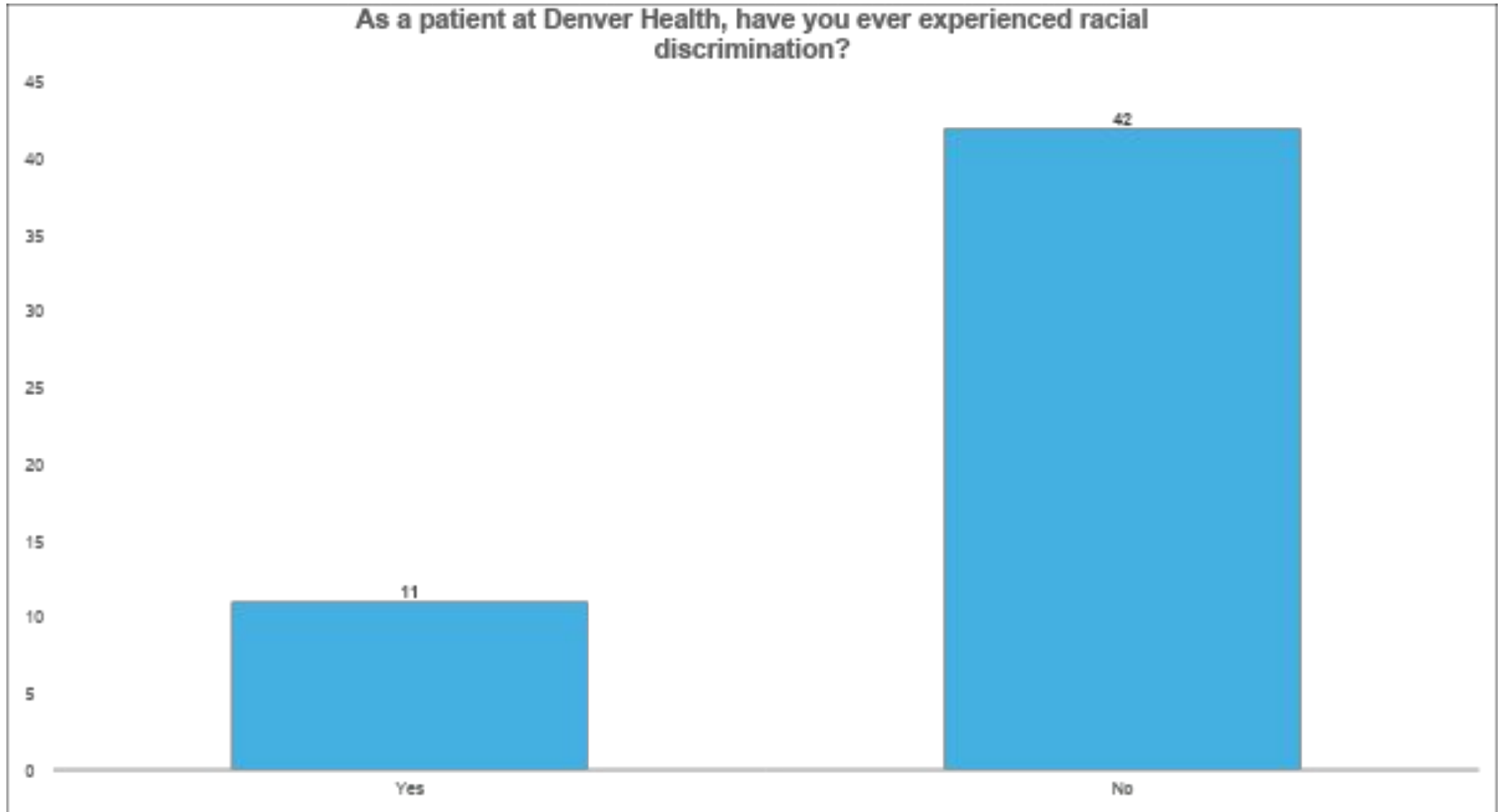
56 responses



Trust and Denver Health Workers



Trust and Denver Health Workers



Trust and Denver Health Workers

Denver Health employees need to be able to trust Denver Health the institution.

This allows us to:

- Be comfortable bringing issues to the attention of leadership.
- Believe leadership will support us.
- Advocate for the best treatment for our patients.

Right now, Denver Health employees want to do better in terms of equity of all kinds.

However, trust in Denver Health's willingness and ability to address these issues is lacking.

Trust and Denver Health Workers

This isn't just an issue with Denver Health:

- More than 30 percent of Coloradans are people of color.
- With the exception of certified nurse aides, in Colorado minorities are underrepresented across all health professions.
- 98% or top executives in local health departments and senior managers in health care organizations are white.

Trust and Denver Health Patients

A health care workforce that reflects the composition of the population is needed to build rapport and trust with communities of color. This ensures effective communication and improves patient centered care.

- People of color are more likely to practice in locations with populations that are underserved.
- Providers who share the culture and language of underserved communities, can help others receive quality care.
- Patients seeing diversity in provider staff working together can feel safe, respected and appreciated.

Dismantling Systemic Racism

- Partnership between Denver Health and Denver Health Workers United.
- Acknowledge the reality of racism and make real change.
- Community Involvement.
- Workers at the forefront.
- Community health and safety.
- Commitment and accountability.

We want Denver Health to be the best place to Give and receive care.
Let's rise together!