Employment Equity Survey FAQs

We welcome your inquiries so do not hesitate to contact the Equity and Human Rights Office at 250-721-8488 or email eqhr@uvic.ca. You may also want to review UVic's Employment Equity Policy.

Part 1: About the Employment Equity Survey

Who is responsible for the Employment Equity Survey?
The survey is managed by the Equity and Human Rights Office at UVic.

Why are survey data collected at UVic?
Confidential equity data are collected and analyzed by UVic to monitor our progress towards an equitable workforce and to advance employment equity. Additionally, UVic has a yearly reporting requirement to the BC Human Rights Tribunal to document our progress towards equitable employee representation as outlined in our Employment Equity Plan. Finally, maintaining the survey allows UVic to be ready should we fall within the Federal Contractors Program in the future.

How are survey data used?
UVic uses the survey data to identify and dismantle barriers to employment equity and implement the principle that employment equity means more than treating people in the same way: it also requires special measures and accommodation of differences. Data are used to
• implement and monitor the university's employment equity program
• suggest activities to promote fairness and equity at the University of Victoria (such as training programs and addressing turnover and retention)
• fulfill our employment equity reporting requirements to the BC Human Rights Tribunal
• assist with internal planning and reporting
• be ready to comply with the Federal Contractors Program monitored by Employment and Social Development Canada

What is asked in the survey?
The survey provides definitions for three designated groups - Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities and persons with a disability - and asks if you self-identify as a member of these groups. You may self-identify as being a member of one, more than one, or none of these groups. For example, you might be an Aboriginal person with a disability, a woman of African descent, or a non-racialized person with no disabilities.

The survey does not ask about gender, which is drawn from UVic's human resources database containing employee identification at the start of employment. Because we need to align our human resources data with federal programs (e.g., Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan), the system only offers the options of male and female. We will be exploring options for addressing other aspects of diversity in the future as our work on the Employment Equity Plan expands.
How has Employment Equity at UVic changed over time?
Until 2013, UVic fell within the scope of the Federal Contractors Program, which included organizations with over 200 employees who either had specific types of federal contracts of over $200,000 or wished to bid on such contracts. As a recipient of federal funding, UVic was required to comply with Canada’s Employment Equity Act; the employment equity survey is a component of the statutory requirements of the Act. Changes to the Federal Contractors Program in 2013, which raised the threshold for funding to $1 million, mean that the University of Victoria no longer falls within its scope.

While participating in the Federal Contractor's Program, UVic maintained an Employment Equity Plan with the BC Human Rights Tribunal. Our current plan carries this work forward to 2020. Approval of the plan allows UVic to engage in preferential and limited hiring.

Part 2: Definitions for the Groups

Where do you get the definitions for the different groups?
In order to determine if UVic’s employee population reflects the available workforce in the wider community, we need to compare our designated group statistics with labour market information, ensuring that our definitions match those of the comparison groups. As a result, the UVic survey draws its definitions from Statistics Canada, the major source of workforce data in Canada, and the Employment Equity Act and related documents, which clarify some definitions.

What is the definition for Visible Minority?
" … persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour …" (Employment Equity Act).
Definition: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/concepts/definitions/minority01a

What is the definition for Indigenous Person?
" … persons who are Indians, Inuit or Métis ..." (Employment Equity Act).
Definition: http://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/concepts/definitions/aboriginal2

Why do you use the term "Indigenous" instead of "Aboriginal"?
At UVic we have consulted members of Indigenous communities to find language that is acceptable to most and now use the term Indigenous to describe peoples who may also be described as Aboriginal.

What is the definition for Person with a disability?
" … persons who have a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric or learning impairment and who

- (a) consider themselves to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment, or
- (b) believe that a employer or potential employer is likely to consider them to be disadvantaged in employment by reason of that impairment,

and includes persons whose functional limitations owing to their impairment have been accommodated in their current job or workplace." (http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-5.401/FullText.html)
Why don't you ask a question about gender?
The numbers we use for gender are drawn from UVic's Banner HR, a secure, access-controlled database. This data is provided by employees at the start of their employment at UVic and, owing to requirements in a number of federal programs (e.g., Service Canada reporting), the two options provided for gender are male and female. We recognize that this is limiting and hope to revise the survey in the future to more accurately represent the range of genders at our institution.

Part 3: About Employment Equity

What is Employment Equity?
The following links provide more information about employment equity:
- Canadian Human Rights Commission – on Employment Equity
- The Employment Equity Act
- Timeline: History of Employment Equity in Canada by the Public Service Alliance of Canada

Is employment equity a form of reverse discrimination?
No. Employment equity seeks to remove barriers faced by all employees. It provides opportunity to equally qualified candidates who have been denied opportunities in the past for reasons other than their skills, knowledge and experience. The goal of the university’s employment equity program is a discrimination-free workplace where all employees and job applicants receive equitable hiring, training and promotion opportunities. We believe that all employees will be able to work and grow best in a welcoming, inclusive workplace.

Does employment equity mean hiring unqualified people?
No. UVic’s commitment to employment equity does not mean the university will hire or promote unqualified people. The goal of selection is always to find the candidate who best meets the criteria specific to that position.

Part 4: Survey Procedure and Privacy

What about privacy laws?
The University of Victoria collects, uses, discloses and retains personal information only in compliance with the BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The University of Victoria collects the personal information on this form pursuant to section 26 (c) and (e) of FIPPA. For further privacy information you may review the Collection and Privacy Notice.

How do you keep my information private?
The information collected in this survey is strictly confidential. It is held in a secure database that is separate from employee records and is used only by select employees to analyze UVic's employee characteristics. It is analyzed and reported in summary form with no individuals identified.
Why is the survey confidential, but my employee number is connected to my responses?
The survey responses are confidential but not anonymous. This allows employees to update their survey information at any time. As well, UVic can monitor representation in each job category over time by adding new employees, removing employees when they leave the university, and changing their status when promoted or transferred.

Who can see my responses?
The survey data can only be accessed by select continuing employees in or designated agents of the Equity and Human Rights Office and select systems employees for maintenance and troubleshooting purposes.

Could this information be used in a way that will affect pay, opportunities for promotion or other employment decisions?
No. The information is completely confidential. It does not form part of Human Resources records and is not accessible by Human Resources staff, supervisors or managers.

What will be done with the individual employment equity information?
The information will only be used to maintain an employment equity database showing designated group representation in UVic's workforce, and to produce statistics to assist in developing and reporting on UVic's employment equity program. When creating reports, all data is automatically aggregated and stripped of identifying information. Reports on UVic's 5,000+ employees show summaries based on fourteen Employment Equity Occupational Groups and other broad categories which make it very nearly impossible to identify individuals. When reporting, statistics for groups with small numbers of respondents are suppressed. These reports are published annually and relevant aspects of the data are included in reports to the BC Human Rights Tribunal.

Should I submit my survey response if I'm not a member of a designated group?
Yes. It is important for all employees to submit a survey response. UVic needs an accurate picture of its workforce. Plus, Employment Equity involves all employees: policies and programs that support members of designated groups like best practices for hiring, flexible work hours, family-friendly measures and accommodation of persons with disabilities, support and benefit all employees.

Do I have to complete the survey?
Participation in the survey is voluntary. If you choose, it is very helpful for us if you to login to or return the survey even if you don't answer the questions. There is an option on both the electronic and paper versions of the survey to indicate your choice not to answer the questions.

Can I change my answers to the survey?
Yes. If your circumstances change, you are encouraged to update your survey responses. Please contact the Equity and Human Rights Office to arrange access to your survey.

How can I get more information?
We welcome your inquiries so do not hesitate to contact the Equity and Human Rights Office at 250-721-8488 or email eqhr@uvic.ca. You may also want to review UVic's Employment Equity Policy.