



First-ever DEI Census reveals major challenges around family status, age, gender, ethnicity and disability

Most common forms of discrimination globally were reported on the basis of age and family status

Women and ethnic minorities in the marketing industry report poorer lived experiences than men and ethnic majorities

But marketing still outperforms many other industries globally on DEI

18th October 2021: Initial results from the first-ever Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Census of the global marketing industry have identified key challenges around family status, age and gender as well as ethnicity and disability.

It found clear gaps in lived experience when these groups were compared to the industry average, both in individual markets and globally. For example, on Kantar's Inclusion Index, which is generated by asking questions about people's sense of belonging, the absence of discrimination and presence of negative behaviour, men scored at 69% compared to women at 61%.

Despite these serious concerns, the marketing sector still outperformed every other category that has been analysed by research partner Kantar, scoring an overall 64% on the Inclusion Index, ahead of the next highest sector, Health and Pharmaceuticals on 60%.

The results are based on more than 10,000 responses from 27 markets around the world conducted in June to July 2021 with the online survey identifying not just the demographics of participants but also their sense of belonging, experience of discrimination and demeaning behaviour.

The research effort was led by the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) in close collaboration with agencies associations, EACA and VoxComm, Cannes Lions, Advertising Week, Effies, GWI, Campaign, IAA and research firm, Kantar.

The most common forms of discrimination identified by the survey globally were family status and age, with 27% agreeing that their company does not treat all employees fairly regardless of family status and 27% agreeing that their company does not treat all employees equally regardless of age. Thirty-six per cent of respondents agreed that age can hinder one's career while 40% of women agreed that family status can hinder one's career.

This final statistic reflects a key finding from the Census – that women's experiences are notably poorer than men's. There is also strong evidence of a gender pay gap in

some markets. In the US and Canada, for example, the gap is worst among industry starters with a 13% gap in the US and a 20% gap in Canada.

There were similar findings for ethnic minorities, who score lower on key questions such as “feel like I belong at my company” than ethnic majority groups in nearly all markets. In the US, 17% say they have faced discrimination based on their racial background. In a number of markets this is also reflected by a pay gap. However, in many markets surveyed, ethnic minorities or foreign nationals reported being paid more than the ethnic majority.

In an industry struggling to find the right talent, the lack of diversity and inclusion is a serious concern with 17% saying they were likely to leave their current company of as a result of the lack of inclusion and/or discrimination they had experienced. Fifteen per cent said they would leave the industry. The Netherlands was the best performing country on this issue, with 9% saying they would find new employment within the industry.

“There is only one limitation to sustainable growth: Talent. If we want to be an attractive industry to thrive in, we must listen, acknowledge, and act upon the problems of those who are at the heart of the advertising & comms world. With this first-ever industry ambition in the shape of the Global DEI Census, we now know exactly where the issues lie and, at the same time, we are presented with an opportunity to overcome the biggest challenges. It was wonderful to see the industry so united around such an important topic! A very special thank you to the ones who participated & spread the word - and to the ones who are now listening,” said **Tamara Daltroff, President of VoxComm, the global association representing agencies.**

“This has been a Herculean but long overdue effort. For the very first time we hear and see the marketing industry in all its different facets and nuance. There is a confidence and strong sense of belonging that rings true of the marketing industry. But there are significant minorities in all countries saying they witness negative behaviours and discrimination on account of their age, family status, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, mental health, sexuality... such that one in seven considers leaving the industry. No company or industry can ignore this; a line has been drawn in the sand and we now know where progress must be made. The onus on us all now is to work together to make our industry fairer, more diverse and more inclusive – and to measure our common progress in a second wave in the Spring of 2023,” said **Stephan Loerke, CEO of the WFA.**

Other key findings include:

- The lived experiences of people with disabilities are poorer in some but not all markets. Globally, 8% of disabled respondents say they have faced discrimination based on disability and they also tend to score lower against “feel like I belong at my company” than non-disabled respondents.

No disabled respondents reported experiencing discrimination on the grounds of disability in the GCC countries, Malaysia, Pakistan, Portugal, Spain and Turkey.

- Mental health issues are still taboo for many. Around 7% of respondents globally reported a long-term health condition and of these 71% said they related to mental health. However just 44% of them had made their employers aware of the issue. The good news is that among those who did, 59% agreed their employer was “generally supportive”. The best performing country on this metric was Ireland, where 76% agreed.
- Sense of belonging varies widely. The global average for “company sense of belonging” is 68% but this hides a wide range of performance, with Sweden top scoring on 76% and the bottom market achieving just 53%. Again, there is variation between different groups. In the US, the score averages 66%, peaking at 71% among white respondents and compared to 59% among ethnic minorities.
- Most reported that their organisations are taking active steps to address diversity and inclusion but this sentiment varies greatly from country to country. The majority of respondents feel their company is working hard to become more diverse and inclusive, with 60% of global respondents agreeing. The US topped the chart at 83%, although again there was a 14-percentage point difference between white respondents and those from ethnic minorities. However, in some countries this figure is significantly lower. In one market, only 26% of respondents believed their organisation was taking active steps to address diversity and inclusion.
- There are huge variations generally between markets. When looking across all scores, Belgium scored highest of the 27 markets surveyed in Kantar’s Inclusion Index at 74%. But one of the starkest learnings from the survey is the extent to which some countries reported figures *significantly* below the global averages when it comes to the absence of discrimination and presence of negative behaviours. This is particularly noticeable when it comes to reviewing the responses from women in these same markets. These differences also corroborate systemic issues in some countries where there have been longstanding societal problems around gender, race and/or ethnicity.

The Census was designed on the basis of the UK *All In Census* conducted by the UK Advertising Association, ISBA and IPA in March 2021 (whose results are not yet part of the global survey) and was actively supported by companies, including Beiersdorf, BP, Diageo, GSK, Heineken, Havas, Just Eat, m/Six, Omnicom Group, Reckitt and WPP.

Details of the findings covering the US and Canada will be announced at Advertising Week New York on Monday October 18. The session can be viewed by registering for

a free digital pass on [this link](#). The full findings will be shared with each participating market later this month with the full global overview with detailed analysis published later this year. The results will also feed into the work of the [WFA Diversity and Inclusion Task Force](#) as well as national action plans led by WFA [national associations](#) around the world.

Those national advertiser associations and their agency association counterparts were the key drivers of the market research in the following markets: Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Greece, the Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE), Hong Kong SAR, China, India, Ireland, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Portugal, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the USA.

*"This research represents a critical first step in holding the industry accountable to something many claim are important for their companies and brands: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. For decades we have watched as companies and industries pledge to do better, and for many this pledge has not had a meaningful impact on their lived experiences including their safety and ability to earn a living in an environment free of discrimination. I am thrilled to see this first start and benchmark data. Our message to the industry for wave 2 is clear, 'Put your measurement where your pledge is,'" said **Belinda Smith, CEO Americas m/Six and Global WFA Diversity Ambassador.***

*"Whilst there are some positive takeaways the research does highlight that for many individuals the marketing industry is not as inclusive nor as welcoming a place as we know it needs to be. Through some of our wider work with the WFA we've been exploring the power of representative creative output and we know that that starts by listening to representative voices and having diverse opinions from our teams. This first in-depth survey to look at both the diversity of our global industry and also how included people feel within it is a critical step towards moving us forwards – of course what we now need is continued & greater action to ensure the results are stronger when we next see them," said **Jerry Daykin, Senior Media Director, EMEA at GSK Consumer Healthcare Marketing and WFA Global Diversity Ambassador***

*"The marketing industry shows itself to be relatively progressive at first glance. But scratch beneath the surface and there is a myriad of stories of suffering. Common themes arise again and again; discrimination against care givers and the old and the young, women and minorities living poorer work experiences and stark inequalities between cohorts and countries. This survey shines a light on those stories so that action can be taken to address them. There is a business and moral imperative to do so," said **Gareth Rees, Head of CX Partnership Services, Insight Division, Kantar.***

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Notes for editors

About VoxComm

Established in 2020, VoxComm is the new global voice for agencies, championing the value that agencies bring to their clients as turbo boosters for growth. With 36 national trade associations from around the globe, VoxComm stand for the power of commercial creativity in all its forms – across strategy, ideas, content and media – as a proven lever for growth that businesses neglect at their peril. For more information, visit www.voxcomm.org.

About EACA

Established in 1959, the Brussels-based European Association of Communications Agencies (EACA) unites more than 2500 communications agencies and agency associations from nearly 30 European countries. EACA's purpose is to engage with EU policymakers, the industry and stakeholders in order to provide its members in with the most favourable business and legal framework they need to thrive. Through initiatives like INSPIRE, edcom, and the IMC & Effie Awards Europe, EACA is continuously working on the educational, qualitative and sustainable aspects of advertising in Europe. For more information, visit www.eaca.eu.

About WFA

The World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) makes marketing better by championing more effective and sustainable marketing communications. It is the voice of marketers worldwide, representing 90% of global marketing communications spend – roughly US\$900 billion per annum.

WFA connects the [world's biggest brand owners](#) and [national advertiser associations](#) in more than 60 markets, bringing together tens of thousands of brands at local level. Together, they create a global network which offers a unique source of leadership, expertise and inspiration. More information at www.wfanet.org

More about the WFA census at www.wfanet.org/census