The Equity Project 2022 Survey "Snapshot" Report

Understanding Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Belonging

Data compiled by
KAMacLean Consulting LLC
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Of Note:

- *This summary is only a "snapshot in time."* More detail on themes and data reporting, and clear next steps have been provided to National Leadership in a 67-page document.

- Next steps include specific areas of priority and suggested measures for success, triaged by SinC leadership from a robust list.

- General questions/comments about this report, The Equity Project, or the survey can be directed to:
  - Sandra Wong, DEIJB Committee Chair via DEIJB@sistersincrime.org;
  - Julie Hennrikus, SinC Executive Director via ED@sistersincrime.org;
  - or
  - Kimberly A. MacLean via k.maclean@sistersincrime.org.

- SinC DEIJB Resources are available at https://www.sistersincrime.org/page/SinCDEIResources. Additional resources are added and/or updated on an ad hoc basis by the DEIJB Committee.

- SinC Executive Director Julie Hennrikus and Culture & Belonging Consultant Kimberly A. MacLean will be hosting a live online Q&A Town Hall about these survey results on Thursday, September 22 at 5pm PDT / 8pm EDT. Register via https://www.sistersincrime.org/event/surveydiscussion.
Goals and Rationale for this Survey

- Establish areas of success & growth opportunities for Sisters in Crime as thought leaders and to continue healthy, sustainable growth.

- Determine opportunities for growth into the next phases of Sisters in Crime’s original mission “to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition and professional development of women crime writers” by aligning with the core values of advocacy, equity, inclusion, and community.

- Take the temperature and gauge community sentiment in regards to The Equity Project and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice and Belonging (DEIJB). I.e., where is the community at large aligned; where do we need to build bridges.

- Offer a platform to report discriminatory behavior in a confidential and protected format.

- Collect more robust demographic information to help SinC understand the membership make-up, potential needs, and imbalances.

- Qualify & quantify anecdotal information, feelings, and experiences in one place to be shared transparently.

- Establish a baseline for future assessment and checks/measures of success.
Where are we in this process?

**Step 1:** Results reviewed, aggregated into 67-page report, and redacted for confidentiality by Kimberly MacLean + 1 of her team

**Step 2:** Broad list of *Recommendations & Next Steps* formulated based on findings

**Step 3:** Some narrative responses and summaries reviewed by members of the DEIJB Advisory Committee and Equity Project leads for clarity/confidentiality

**Step 4:** Consultation with DEIJB Committee and Equity Project leads on prioritizing *Recommendations & Next Steps*, for the next 6 months, 1 year, 3 years, etc.

**Step 5:** Redacted Summary Report shared with SinC Board for input & understanding

**Step 6:** Share widely with SinC community

**Step 7:** DEIJB Advisory Committee leads transparently with community & coordinates with SinC Board for budgeting and task timelines

**Step 8:** Continued & ongoing checks for progress and to measure success / failure
About the Respondents

The survey was sent by email to ~4000 SinC members, and posted in the newsletter and on Tradewing, resulting in 775 responses received. This equals an approximate 20% response rate, considered very good by industry standards.

- Date Opened: April 25, 2022 / Date Closed: May 9, 2022
- Survey was sent to members only

Of the 775 total respondents, not all provided complete demographic data. Nearly 400 did offer robust demographic responses that indicated at least two trends noted below. *This data does not alone indicate challenges or success and is intended as part of a larger picture and for informational purposes.*

- Of the several hundred respondents who self-identified across multiple categories, there is an indication of a "majority group" that shares all 4 intersecting identities of white + cisgender female + straight + able-bodied
  - 35% of this group are also aged 61-70
  - 44% of this group have a Master’s Degree
  - Respondents who used terms like "core group" and expressed concerns of being marginalized themselves were almost exclusively from this "majority group"

- Of the several hundred who self-identified across multiple categories and do not fall into that "majority group," a significant number have 2 or more identities from historically marginalized groups (intersectionality of gender, race/ethnicity, living with a disability, LGBTQIA+, low income)
  - These intersections are highly varied throughout the responses
  - Respondents who reported discriminatory behaviors, when demographics were shared, were almost exclusively of 2 or more historically marginalized groups

- 79% of respondents completed the entire survey
- The average time spent on the survey was 12 minutes
- The response rate points to an active engaged community and how much individuals care about Sisters in Crime

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Sisters in Crime 2022 Survey Summary Report

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Analysis of Findings

SWOT Analysis Snapshot

**Strengths**
- Dedicated, loyal, and connected members
- Vast majority support The Equity Project & JEDIB
- Recognize the necessity of advocacy for historically marginalized writers
- Abundance of opportunities for members to connect, learn, and network
- A large & active group
- Diversity of lived experience to learn from

**Weaknesses**
- The organization does not yet reflect the pluralistic reality of our changing world
- Misunderstanding & misrepresentation of Equity Project goals
- The responses to incidents of discrimination have been inconsistent
- A belief that there are more important “core members”
- Seeing DEJIB as distinctly separate from other SinC goals

**Opportunities**
- Expand the beneficiaries of the core values of advocacy, equity, inclusion, and community.
- Training opportunities and resources for leaders
- Create clear-pathways for support, learning, and reporting discrimination
- Cultural humility that will entice & retain important identities that are minorities or missing

**Threats**
- Homogeneousness of the dominant cultures are a threat to the future & sustainability
- Current burden carried by those impacted by inequities
- Us/Them mentality
- Small but vocal dissenters pulling focus
- Defensive, retaliatory, harmful behaviors when light is shined on discrimination or inequities
- Inconsistent/unclear expectations of volunteer leadership
Some details from the SWOT Analysis:

**Strengths**

- There is overwhelming appreciation for what SinC offers to its membership, from learning to connecting & networking, to being with others who love mystery/crime literature.
- SinC has a dedicated, well-informed, and passionate team of leaders that has already laid some foundation for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Belonging work: the DEIJB Advisory Committee, resource pages, equity supports, and grants/awards.
- Based on the survey responses, there is a vast majority of support within the SinC community for The Equity Project & DEIJB work in general.
- The meaning & mission of SinC is powerful to its members, especially to those who feel deeply connected to a space that centers women, and to those who recognize the necessity of a group like SinC to advocate for the historically marginalized.
- The percentage of self-identified LGBTQIA+ members exceeds the reported national average.

**Opportunities**

- Expand who SinC considers to be the beneficiaries of the core values of advocacy, equity, inclusion, and community. The current scope can be easily expanded to recognize and include the additional barriers faced by women of color, LGBTQIA+, and other intersectional and/or historically excluded groups.
- Continue inviting folks into the DEIJB and Equity Project conversations, learnings, and sharing in order to grow the buy-in and practice within the community; to deflate the fears & rumors circulating; and to demonstrate that more balanced opportunities, power, and representation for more, doesn’t equal fewer opportunities for some.
- Continue DEIJB training to create more cultural humility that will entice, retain, and consistently create safe psychological spaces for younger members, members of color, and other important identities who are currently extreme minorities or missing altogether—without tokenizing those same people or aiming only for numbers rather than true belonging.
- Create clear pathways for getting support, for learning, and for reporting discrimination throughout the member community, as well as training opportunities for leaders to more effectively and consistently manage potential discriminatory behavior when it arises.
- Encourage programs that promote lived experience, empathy, growth-mindset and how that connects to better writing, readership, and opportunities for everyone.
Some details from the SWOT Analysis:

Current Challenges

- The organization does not yet reflect the pluralistic reality of our changing world. The self-reported demographics indicate substantial homogeneous majorities that do not align with national/international averages.

- There is a small but vocal group that is intolerant of conflicting views, ideologies, or perceived differences/change. This group believes that by seeking balance for historically marginalized groups, they themselves will become as disenfranchised as those groups
  - I.e., Scarcity mindset/Replacement theory.

- There is a lack of understanding of what DEIJB or The Equity Project are in practice or execution, along with an apparent reliance on word-of-mouth from like-minded friends, instead of doing their own research, exploration, or experiencing it first-hand. An example of this is the "knee-jerk" reactions to the survey question about the organization name, and the related, incorrect, assumptions about that question.

- Inclusion and DEIJB work in general seem to be viewed as an addition or afterthought rather than central to humanity, empathy, creativity, growth, learning, and increased opportunities for everyone. It is also seen as only relating to race/ethnicity & sometimes gender.

- Though with good intent to protect the most vulnerable, the responses to incidents of discrimination have been inconsistent and often opaque, leaving room for conjecture, misinterpretations, and division among SinC membership, and feeding unhealthy behaviors like victim blaming, gaslighting, and diminishing. Further, how things are handled at National level differs from that at chapter level, adding to a sense of inconsistency.

- Due to the reliance on volunteers, a great deal is asked and expected of SinC siblings who have different levels of availability, leadership abilities, and understanding of expectations of DEIJB specifically.
  - Volunteer burn-out was reported.
Some details from the SWOT Analysis:

Potential Threats

- The homogeneousness of the dominant cultures create a threat to the future and sustainability of SinC. Efforts must be made to create more inclusive spaces that attract and retain greater ranges of members. First priority for membership growth are folks under 50 and a better balance of racialized folks.

- People in many of the current SinC minorities feel frustrated, carrying the burden of teaching others about discrimination while expending a lot of energy to survive in the midst of discrimination at SinC, in the world at large, and in the world of writing/publishing. This threatens to further move SinC away from a community more representative of a pluralistic society and to lose current members while discouraging potential new members.

- There is a group that refers to themselves throughout the survey as “the core” membership of SinC, who believe they are under threat. By far the majority in SinC, these folks self-identified as white, straight, cisgender, highly educated, & over 50. The fear expressed is that they will become as disenfranchised as some of the other historically marginalized groups. The defense of those fears can be a threat to SinC’s growth, expansion, & sustainability.
  - While taking these fears seriously, focusing too much energy or attention on the negative/dissenting voices can threaten the health of others in the community who support DEIJB and The Equity Project (or may be on the cusp) and those impacted by discrimination/marginalization.

- There seems to be a cognitive dissonance for many who believe in the need for a group like SinC, to advocate for women in the genre, who simultaneously do not acknowledge the correlation of that same or intensified experience for folks from other or intersecting marginalized groups. If these folks continue to operate with an ‘us vs them’ mentality, it can breed dissent and misinformation that ultimately threatens the growth & reputation of SinC.

- The small but vocal group of dissenters can be a threat if they are allowed to dominate the conversation or undermine the goals of DEIJB and The Equity Project. Finding a balance between sharing differing or dissenting beliefs without attacking or retaliating against people will be a challenge, but one worth undertaking for this organization.

- When individuals in the SinC community have spoken up or reported discriminatory behavior formally or informally, it has been, overall, an incredibly negative and demoralizing experience. This threatens to breed mistrust, misinformation, and division, and perpetuates harm, while also serving to damage SinC’s reputation for prospective future members, impacting the ability to grow, sustain, and expand.
  - There was extensive evidence of gaslighting, victim blaming, retaliation, bullying, and threats to careers.
  - The most common outcome of reporting harm to leadership was “nothing was done.”
Recommendations

1. Fund & center DEIJ work as a continuation of current core values.
3. Review/reform recruitment and retention practices across the organization to support a more diverse SinC membership.
4. Review roles, structure, and support of leadership roles at all levels.
5. Implement steps to address previous harm.

Next Steps for The Equity Project pilot (Sept. 2022-March 2023)

Map out ongoing 1, 3, 5, and 10 year plans, milestones, guideposts, and measures for success. Share progress periodically and transparently with the internal & external community.

- Earmark appropriate budget for ongoing funding & centering DEIJ work as a continuation of current core values.
- Focus on scaffolding plans in order to give space for growth and allow for pivoting as needed.

Create “curriculum map” within the next 3 months to prioritize basic DEIJ education and clarity for SinC leaders and the general community.

- Define words, meanings, and expectations before larger initiatives and change can happen.

Create and implement a community call-in or “crisis response” plan to address (and redress) incidents which cause harm to individuals and groups within our community.

- Protect vulnerable people & populations from additional harm.
- Include resources for Restorative Justice practice, including outside mediation and experts as needed.

Beyond March 2023, in addition to further broadening SinC’s original mission of advocacy, DEIJ work will continue on sustaining leadership supports and training, and building tools and accessibility for all, with a continued commitment to community input and transparency.
Community & Project Leaders / How to get Involved

SinC Board

2021-2022

President
Stephanie Gayle

Vice President
Jennifer Chow

Secretary
Faye Snowden

Treasurer
Jacki York

Chapter Liaison
Kim Garnick Giarratano

Grants/Awards Liaison
Valerie Burns

Education Liaison
Edwin Hill

Library and Bookstore Liaison
Susan Hammerman

Monitoring Project Liaison
Cynthia Kuhn

Membership Development Liaison
Tracee de Hahn

Publicity Liaison
Vanessa Lillie

Member-at-Large
Barbara Ross

Member-at-Large
Kellye Garrett

Immediate Past President
Sandra Wong

DEIJB Committee

José Bográn  Bess Carnan
Stephanie Gayle  Alexia Gordon
Julie Hennrikus  Caitlin Highland
Charlotte Hunter  Delia Pitts
Patricia Sargeant  Alex Segura
Faye Snowden  Sandra Wong (Chair)

DEIJB@sistersincrime.org

How to Get Involved

1. Learn. Take the asynchronous online courses. Do the work.
2. Engage. Join or start the conversations in your chapter(s) and in the Tradewing Equity Project group.
3. Connect. Reach out to the DEIJB Committee, national or chapter leaders, other SinC siblings. Ask questions. Share ideas.
5. Participate. Attend Town Halls, take surveys, join events.

Scan QR code to share your feedback