

They Sigh or Give You the Look

Discrimination and Status Card Usage

2022



Prepared for
Union of BC Indian Chiefs

Trigger Warning

This report seeks to prevent harms and support positive change by illuminating discrimination experienced by First Nations people in the use of status cards, and making recommendations to address these harms.

In doing so, this report discusses topics that may trigger uncomfortable feelings and/or memories. First Nations peoples who require emotional support may contact the First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line and On-line Counselling Service toll-free at 1-855-242-3310 or through hopeforwellness.ca. Additionally, the KUU-US Crisis line is available 24/7 at 1-800-588-8717. For more information, visit: kuu-uscrisisline.ca.

Terminology

The terminology related to Indigeneity is evolving, complex, and can be intertwined with colonialism, particularly as related to the subject matter of this study.

For the purposes of this report, “Indian” is used in reference to the legal status conferred to some First Nations individuals as per the conditions established in the federal *Indian Act*.

“First Nation” is used in reference to status Indian persons who participated in this study through the online survey and as Assessors. It is recognized that not all First Nations persons hold status under the *Indian Act*.

“Indigenous” is used as an overall descriptor of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit populations, and their collective interests and organizations.

Acknowledgements

This study has taken place on the territories of First Nations from across what has been recently referred to as British Columbia.

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Assessors carried out front-line interactions that made the fieldwork aspect of this study possible. The National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health at the University of Northern British Columbia and R.A. Malatest & Associates provided critical research to assist in the preparation of the report.

This study has come about as a result of those, like Maxwell Johnson, who have publicly stepped forward to share their discriminatory experiences of status card use. Many others took the time and energy to share their experiences through participation in the online survey conducted as part of this project.

Project Team

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Photos: Melody Charlie, Nuu-chah-nulth, @firstnationphotographer

Illustrations: Bailey Macabre, nêhiyaw ayâhkwêw + michif/Ukrainian, @cedarsageskoden

***“They sigh or give
you the look.”***

Sandi Baker, Leqá:mel First Nation Facebook comment
on Status Card Survey Promotion Ad, June 24, 2022



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Key Context & Understanding



First introduced in 1876, the *Indian Act* describes how the federal government defines and administers Indian (status First Nations) persons, governments, and lands in Canada. Section 6 of the *Indian Act* describes the criteria for entitlement to be registered as a status Indian. Registered or status Indians who meet the criteria within the Act are entitled to apply for and receive status cards which reflect their registered status under the Act.¹

A comprehensive overview of the history of legislative efforts to define what constitutes an “Indian” is beyond the scope and purpose of this study (see Box 1 for a brief description of the *Indian Act*). Other literature is available which describes this history, its key themes of assimilation, disenfranchisement, and misogyny, and the legal and political counter-strategies championed by Indigenous people and organizations.

Status cards are valid, legal identification in Canada, issued by the Government of Canada under Canadian law, similar to a passport. As such, government offices, stores, and other places of business must accept status cards as valid proof of identification when needed.

Additionally, people with registered Indian status may, in some specific circumstances, be exempt from paying certain taxes. Section 87 of the *Indian Act* says that the “personal property of an Indian or a band situated on a reserve” is tax exempt. In other words, status Indians living on reserve are exempt from both provincial and federal sales tax for purchases which

Box 1

Through time, the *Indian Act* has:

- Forbade First Nations from speaking their language
- Denied women status
- Made Indian residential schools compulsory
- Created Indian reserves
- Enabled the renaming of First Nations persons with European names
- Restricted First Nations from leaving reserves without permission from an Indian Agent
- Enforced enfranchisement of any First Nation person admitted to university
- Forbade First Nations from practicing their religion
- Outlawed core practices of First Nations economic and social systems (e.g., potlatch)
- Denied First Nations the right to vote

Source: Joseph R. P. C. (2018). *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation With Indigenous Peoples a Reality*. Indigenous Relations Press.

are made in a First Nations community (“on reserve”) in British Columbia. Their purchases are also exempt from tax if a business located off reserve delivers purchased goods to an on-reserve address. To have this tax exemption applied to their eligible transaction, the card holder must present their status card proving their registration status to the individual conducting the transaction.

¹ Status cards were first introduced in 1956. Expiry dates were introduced to status cards in 1997. In 2009, a secure version of the status card was introduced as an alternative to the laminated version. As such, there are two types of status cards in circulation and being issued today. The Certificate of Indian Status is issued by Indian Registration Administrators employed by some First Nations governments using a national standardized application process and card template. The Secure Certificate of Indian Status is issued by the Government of Canada directly, akin to a passport application process. This study’s methodology made no distinction between the two types of status cards.

As reported in the 2016 Census, there were 270,580 persons in British Columbia who identified as Aboriginal (Indigenous). Of these, 172,520 were First Nations. First Nations with status under the *Indian Act* numbered 125,635, with 51,705 living on reserve and 73,930 living off reserve. Almost all First Nations who lived in one of the 203 First Nations communities in BC had status (50,410).²

It is critical to emphasize that status cards and identity are not the same. Indigeneity is not defined by a status card, and being registered under the *Indian Act* is not the same as being accepted as a member or citizen of a First Nation. First Nations people have mixed and varied feelings, understandings, and experiences related to both Indian status and their Indigenous identity, and carry diverse views about what status cards mean, or don't mean, to them. This study in no way intends to suggest that status cards convey or confirm matters of identity.

What this study does seek to do is better understand the implications of status card use in associating someone as Indigenous, and specifically whether this leads to experiences of racism and discrimination.

There is significant literature about racism and discrimination experienced by Indigenous persons in Canada, and how this oppression contributes to disparities and inequities in areas like justice, health, education, and many more.³ Racism is the belief that a group of people are inferior based on the colour of their skin or due to the perceived inferiority of their culture or spirituality (see Box 2 for a list of key terms). It leads to discriminatory behaviours and policies that oppress, ignore, or treat racialized groups as “less than” non-racialized groups.⁴ For example, some common beliefs about Indigenous people is that they are unfairly advantaged and get “stuff for free”, including post-secondary education, housing, and health benefits, and that they do not pay taxes.⁵ These beliefs, and other anti-Indigenous stereotypes, shape discriminatory comments and treatment against Indigenous peoples and violate Indigenous human rights as described in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. Therefore, the use of status cards identifying a person explicitly as First Nations may make them more vulnerable to being treated in a discriminatory way by staff and/or other patrons. This vulnerability to discrimination on the basis of status card use is the issue that this study sought to examine.

² Statistics Canada. 2018. *British Columbia [Province] (table). Aboriginal Population Profile. 2016 Census*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-510-X2016001. Ottawa. Released July 18, 2018.

³ See for example: Greenwood, M., de Leeuw, S., & Lindsay, N.M. (eds.). (2018). *Determinants of Indigenous Peoples' health in Canada: Beyond the social*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Scholar's Press. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). *Canada's Residential Schools: Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*. Turpel-Lafond, Mary Ellen. (2020). *In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care*. Allan, B. & Smylie, J. (2015). *First Peoples, second class treatment: The role of racism in the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada*. Toronto, ON: the Wellesley Institute. Leyland, A et al (2016). *The Health and Health Care Implications of Systemic Racism on Indigenous People in Canada*. Ottawa, ON: The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

⁴ Turpel-Lafond, Mary Ellen. (2020). *In Plain Sight: Addressing Indigenous-specific Racism and Discrimination in B.C. Health Care*.

⁵ Ibid.

Key Terms

Race refers to a group of people who share the same physical characteristics such as skin tone, hair texture, and facial features. Race is a socially constructed way to categorize people and is used as the basis for discrimination by situating human beings within a hierarchy of social value.

Racism is the belief that a group of people are inferior based on the colour of their skin or due to the perceived inferiority of their culture or spirituality. It leads to discriminatory behaviours and policies that oppress, ignore, or treat racialized groups as “less than” non-racialized groups.

Indigenous-specific racism refers to the unique nature of stereotyping, bias, and prejudice about Indigenous peoples in Canada that is rooted in the history of settler colonialism. It is the ongoing race-based discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by Indigenous peoples that perpetuates power imbalances, systemic discrimination, and inequitable outcomes stemming from the colonial policies and practices.

Prejudice refers to a negative way of thinking and attitude toward a socially defined group and toward any person perceived to be a member of the group.

Discrimination is the unearned negative treatment of a person or group of people, typically on the basis of social categories such as race, gender, and sexual orientation.

Profiling is creating or promoting a preset idea of the values, beliefs, and actions of a group in society and treating individuals who are members of that cohort in a discriminatory manner.

Stereotyping is a simplistic, frequently negative, and socially widespread image, impression, or belief about a particular type of person, for example, a person associated with a particular racial category.

Microaggressions are common (intentional or not), day-to-day insults or slights that communicate subtle hostility, aggression, underestimation, negative attitude, and/or dismissiveness towards racialized and/or stigmatized people or groups of people.

Systemic racism is the perpetuation and maintenance of avoidable and unfair inequalities across racial groups through societal systems, structures, and institutions such as requirements, policies, legislation, and practices.

Anti-racism is the practice of actively identifying, challenging, preventing, eliminating, and changing the values, structures, policies, programs, practices, and behaviours that perpetuate racism. It is more than just being “not racist” but involves taking action to create conditions of greater inclusion, equality, and justice.



Introduction

On December 20, 2019, Maxwell Johnson and his 12-year old granddaughter, members of the Heiltsuk Nation, attended a Bank of Montreal (BMO) branch in downtown Vancouver in order to open a bank account. Mr. Johnson presented status cards as the requisite identification for this transaction. Mr. Johnson and his granddaughter were subsequently detained and handcuffed by two police officers outside of the bank after a staff member called Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) on suspicion that the status cards were “fake ID”, and was advised by ISC to call 911. Mr. Johnson and his granddaughter were released after officers contacted the Heiltsuk Nation and confirmed the pair’s membership with the Nation.

Mr. Johnson launched legal action against BMO, filed a complaint against the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) with the BC Human Rights Tribunal, and filed a complaint against the VPD with the Office of the Police Complaint Commissioner.

Mr. Johnson and his legal team sought support from the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC). The UBCIC Chiefs in Assembly passed a resolution in June 2021 fully supporting Maxwell Johnson in his and his granddaughter’s complaint against the VPD with the BC Human Rights Tribunal and approving UBCIC’s application for Intervenor Status in this complaint (Annex 1). Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, legal counsel for UBCIC, led subsequent efforts to identify existing research related to the experience of racism and discrimination related to status card use in order to support UBCIC’s intervention. Given the limited results of the search, this small, arms-length study was commissioned to pull together available information and gather new data.

This project took place over an approximately five-month period, commencing in mid-April 2022 and concluding in late September 2022. The study used mixed methods to better understand how discrimination may be experienced when using status cards for retail (sales tax exemption) or identification purposes, what form this discrimination may take, the impact of any discrimination experienced, and how First Nations individuals respond to

this experience. The methods undertaken in this study were as follows. See Annex 2: Methodology for a detailed overview.

- **A literature review:** A rapid review was conducted by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health to identify exposures to racism and discrimination with the use of status cards. The search strategy identified 43 non-duplicate sources which met the inclusion criteria, and which were examined to generate key themes in the literature, as well as observations about the quality of the literature.
- **A media scan:** A content analysis was conducted of mainstream media coverage about status cards between January 1, 1980 and September 1, 2022. The search strategy yielded a total of 51 non-duplicate stories which met the inclusion criteria and were analyzed to generate factual analysis about sites and forms of discrimination documented in these stories, and thematic analysis about how status cards are described and framed in the media.
- **An online survey:** Informed by the themes drawn from the media scan and literature review, the survey solicited information about where status cards are used, experiences of discrimination (frequency and type), and behaviours associated with status card use. The survey was limited to

eight closed-ended questions, one open-ended question, and three demographics questions. The survey was available via an open online platform, and was completed by 1,026 respondents. See Annex 3 for a copy of the survey instrument.

- **Fieldwork:** A behavioural study involving “secret shopper”-like fieldwork was conducted in towns and cities across multiple regions of BC. Assessors were trained and hired to complete and record assessments of their interactions with staff at store and service locations after presenting their status cards as identification or for the purposes of tax exemption. See Annex 4 for a copy of the reporting instrument used by Assessors. Seven Assessors recorded observations of over 103 interactions through June and July 2022.

As this study was underway, Mr. Johnson’s legal action against the BMO and the Human Rights Tribunal matter against the Vancouver Police Board were both settled amongst the parties, with acknowledgement of harms and associated commitments for change and transformation.

Also during the timeframe in which this study was being conducted, at least two additional media reports of discrimination and status card use in BC were widely publicized. Heiltsuk Nation member, Sharif Bhamji, presented his status card as identification at a TD Bank branch and was told by an employee that this identification was fake. This led to an exchange between the bank teller and Mr. Bhamji which resulted in police involvement but no criminal charges. Mr. Bhamji has since filed a discrimination complaint with the Canadian

Human Rights Commission.⁶ In another incident, the status cards of three First Nations children were not accepted for coverage for required dental care, and the family was told that they needed to pay for these services in cash. They had no issue receiving services at another dental clinic using their status cards.⁷

This report begins with a description of the study’s Key Findings, which are the common themes arising from the four methods of inquiry undertaken in this study. The Detailed Findings of each of these four methods of inquiry are then described. Finally, this report concludes with Future Directions, summarizing opportunities to take proactive steps to address the findings of this study. Annexes provide detailed supporting information, including methodological processes and limitations of the study’s four lines of inquiry, the survey and reporting instruments used in the two primary data collection methods (online survey and fieldwork), and the entirety of the literature review.



⁶ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/sharif-bhamji-human-rights-complaint-1.6369366>

⁷ <https://thetyee.ca/News/2022/08/30/Indigenous-Kids-Dental-Work-Turned-Away/>



STAFF,
FULL SERVICE WILL RESUME PROVIDING WE
HAVE 3 EMPLOYEES ON AT A TIME 9AM TO
6PM
OBSOULETLY IF ONLY TWO AND ITS NOT BUSY
WITH FREIGHT WE WILL DO IT AS WELL
THANKS EVERYONE ☺

After shift
Please make sure to have
your phone number written on
your ID's
Some ID's cards need
processing through the
system so if reading phone
to contact us

What Co. of -ETS
New Member #

STAFF
WHEN DOING REFUNDS PLEASE ATTACH ALL RECEIPTS WITH
AN EXPLANATION FOR ACCOUNTANTS & PUT IN FLEET/PAY/IN
ENVELOPE
THANK YOU ☺

20170704
CHRIS ZWISP
CERTIFICATE OF WORK STATUS - CONTRACT OR SEASON EMPLOYEE

STAFF,
PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT A GROUP OF PEOPLE ARE
DISTRIBUTING COUNTERFEIT MONEY.
DO NOT ACCEPT ANY OLD CURRENCY AFTER OUR CLOSURE
OR IN DOUBT CALL AP MKE 250-534-9127
ALSO DO NOT ACCEPT 100 DOLLAR - E.L. 9214718
THANK YOU

Emergency Phone Numbers
2878 Peninsula Rd
Emergency Services - 911
New Hampshire - 603-271-2200
Maine - 603-271-2200
Michigan - 248-348-2148 Alaska - 248-348-2148
New Mexico - 505-252-2444
Missouri - 314-252-2444
Illinois - 312-750-2422
Ohio - 614-252-2444
Texas - 281-252-2444
You can get the national number
1-800-368-5848

Key Findings

This project was designed to incorporate four lines of inquiry – literature review, media analysis, online survey, and behavioural fieldwork – which together provide historical and current insight into the experience of discrimination by status First Nations individuals who seek to use their status cards for a tax exemption or identification. This section considers and highlights the primary conclusions of this study, drawing from all four lines of inquiry, as well as a fifth source of evidence that emerged as a result of this work – the comment sections on social media and media articles about the online survey.

Encountering racism when using status cards is a near-universal experience

“Oftentimes when I present my status card at businesses for tax exempt purposes, the cashiers at the checkout become rude with their body language (i.e., don’t look at me, not seeming friendly, rolls eyes, acts like it’s a hassle to process the tax exemption).”

(online survey respondent)

Among the 1,026 respondents to the online survey, discrimination related to the use of status cards was an ubiquitous experience. All except four individuals reported that they had experienced discrimination along the spectrum of “rarely” to “always” at one or more of five different types of service and retail businesses, with retail establishments resulting in the highest rates. The online survey respondents could review their life history of discrimination with respect to status card use when answering questions, whereas the Assessors were reporting on real-life examples of discrimination in a five-and-a-half week period. In this short time window, discrimination was reported by Assessors in 17% of the 103 transactions undertaken in the fieldwork, and possible discrimination in a further 21%. Thirty-eight percent of Assessors reporting potentially discriminatory experiences in such a short time frame corroborates the 99%+ of online survey respondents reporting experiences of discrimination using status cards during their lifetimes.

Both the online survey and fieldwork confirm diverse ways that discrimination is displayed

during a transaction. In the online survey, from half to three-quarters of respondents reported that clerks were “sometimes”, “often”, or “always” rude, acted as though status cards were not acceptable, or acted as if processing this information was a hassle. Along that spectrum lay a host of microaggressive behaviours – sighing, being brusque, lacking in civility, and overt rudeness – displayed by clerks as well as other customers.

One of the themes from the online survey written responses was that First Nations who were “white passing” reported sometimes experiencing better treatment. This suggests that those who did not physically resemble the clerk’s preconceived notion of what a First Nations person should look like, at times had more friendly experiences. It is additional evidence that some of the discriminatory experiences documented in this project are bona fide racism, and not attributable to actual ignorance of status cards and their use, or to unwelcome disruptions to a business’s typical process when serving customers without status cards.

Racism appears most acutely in the use of status cards for tax exemption purposes. The mention of status cards can trigger racist comments rooted in stereotypes that First Nations people get “handouts” or “stuff for free”. This was evident from the news and social media posts about this status card study, which elicited open and undisguised hostility from commenters about First Nations people receiving “special treatment” and the like. This common social belief is presumably held by many clerks and other patrons of businesses and services frequented by status First Nations, including the Assessors. This helps explain why: essential retail had the highest rate (76%) of survey respondents reporting that they either “rarely”, “sometimes”, “often”, or “all the time” experienced discrimination; the feeling of unease noted by Assessors who were conscious of holding up the line and incurring the displeasure of other customers; and the choices that Assessors made to minimize the possibility of discrimination by using the status

card more frequently for identification rather than for tax exemption purposes.

The survey and fieldwork also highlight systemic deterrents that impede use of a status card for tax exemption purposes. In the fieldwork, this included being told the return and exchange policy was reduced for status card users (e.g., from 30 days to 10 days), being unable to collect points on the store points card when a status card is used, being told to go to a separate customer service line, and being refused because the card was laminated. The online survey written comments spoke about many differing processes, forms, and expectations among businesses. Even when a status card-using customer escalates concerns to a supervisor, there is little recourse; in only three of 13 supervisor-involved cases reported in the fieldwork was there a positive outcome (meaning that the status card was accepted from a supervisor who showed no racist or discriminatory behaviour in the interaction).

The experience of racism has long-lasting emotional and behavioural impacts

“I have to regulate and prepare myself every time. I try to be calm but it left me with anxiety.”

(Assessor)

Anticipatory behaviour is generally behaviour that is dependent on predictions, expectations, or beliefs about future states and is typically informed by past experiences, whether specific or generalized. It takes only one experience to create lifelong memories that colour future interactions and reverberate harm into the future and within families, communities, friends, and colleagues as those experiences are discussed and shared.

Media analysis results were validated by the primary data collection involved in this study. All evidence emphasized the emotional

consequences of discrimination experienced when using a status card. Online survey respondents wrote extensively in the comment field about negative emotional or mental health impacts, being uncomfortable with conflict or confrontation, and not wanting to do the emotional labour of explaining status cards to clerks. In the 39 cases of confirmed or suspected discrimination experienced in the fieldwork, Assessors came out of the transactions feeling uncomfortable (59%), stressed (44%), and angry (38%), among other emotions.

These experiences led to a broad range of anticipatory strategies and protective behaviours described in all lines of evidence gathered in this study, some of which are akin to strategies used when one is on the receiving end of a bully or oppressor. For example:

- Engaging in emotional and mental preparation, including deep breathing and smudging;
- Being courteous at all times;
- Changing one's way of speaking;
- Hiding one's identity; and,
- Bringing someone along for support.

Although the Assessors in the fieldwork were trained to be courteous and neutral in clothing and demeanor, these strategies are not preventative in that a discriminatory interaction might have and/or did occur in up to 38% of cases. Rather, the techniques could be thought of as a way of reducing the possibility and degree of discriminatory behaviour.

Ultimately, a common theme was that many status First Nations often choose not to use their status cards in order to avoid potentially negative treatment and the associated emotional consequences.

Discrimination associated with status card use is felt most acutely amongst LGBTQ2+ persons and youth

"I've had to navigate racist experiences so often with my status card when I shop on reserve that I've made decisions to pay more off reserve to avoid the hassle."

(LGBTQ2S+ online survey respondent)

The vulnerabilities associated with the use of a status card are particularly acute for a person already experiencing social stigma on the basis of identifying as LGBTQ2S+. These persons are experiencing the compounding oppressions of racism, gender, and/or sexual identity. As one online LGBTQ2S+ survey respondent remarked about using status cards, "[I] don't use it. Just need to get through each day without more burdens."

For example, 41% of LGBTQ2S+ respondents said that they experienced discrimination "all the time" when purchasing tobacco or alcohol products and using a status card, a rate that was five times higher than reported by women and men respondents. This gender-related

difference, albeit lower at a two to three times disparity, was also seen with other service type interactions (fuel and large retail).

LGBTQ2S+ respondents had higher rates than other respondents when reporting the frequency of six different types of discriminatory clerical behaviours, and lower rates when reporting the frequency of neutral or positive clerical behaviours. They were also more likely than women or men to use strategies to reduce the chances of a negative interaction, such as being courteous even in the face of clerk rudeness, dressing nicely, explaining status cards, moderating tone, and/or shopping when the business was not busy.

LGBTQ2S+ respondents reported that they were less likely to make a complaint when compared to women and men in three areas: expectation of poor treatment during the complaint process; expectation of poor service in the future; and fear of police intervention. The largest difference was with respect to concern that the business will involve the police; on this point, the rate amongst LGBTQ2S+ respondents was seven times higher than the women’s rate and four times higher than the men’s rate.

Discrimination is also experienced more frequently and acutely amongst younger persons; amongst survey respondents, the

frequency of discriminatory experiences declined with age. This trend was also seen when looking at the six types of discriminatory experiences which were offered in the online survey, with the 39 years and younger age group having 1.3 to 1.9 times higher rates of “sometimes”, “often”, or “always” experiencing discrimination when compared to one or both of the two older age groups (40-59 and 60+ years). However, the possibility of making a complaint increased with age. Only 26% of those aged 39 and younger said they were “very likely” to complain if the situation warranted, compared to 36% of those aged 40 to 59, and 48% of those aged 60 and over.



Government is seen as abdicating responsibility

“If an Indigenous person has to have a federal card to ‘prove’ their indigeneity then they should be up to federal standards and recognized federally.”

(online survey respondent)

The Government of Canada is responsible for the creation of the concept of Indian status, for the legislation defining Indian status, and for issuing associated status cards. A theme arising from online survey respondents and Assessors conducting fieldwork was the abdication by the federal government of their responsibility to create a safe, knowledgeable, and informed environment for status First Nations persons to use their status cards. It was emphasized by the respondents and Assessors that businesses have limited understanding of status cards and that their staff are not effectively educated or trained about the card’s purpose and use, and therefore the burden falls on the individual with the status card to educate others on these matters. This observation was further confirmed by comments posted on news and social media posts concerning the study, the vast majority of which illustrated a lack of understanding by the public about the origin of status cards and associated tax exemption under section 87 of the *Indian Act*.

Another related issue arising in responses to the online survey – and confirmed by Assessors and First Nations commenters on social and news media postings – is the difficulty in obtaining a status card from the federal government, and the inconvenience of having cards expire and needing a new one. The Government of Canada indicates that a person should expect to wait 8-12 weeks to process an application for a status card; however, in reality

the wait can be nine months or more as noted in the personal experience of one Assessor. Multiple survey respondents also commented on the difficulty of accessing a new card after theirs expired, as did First Nations commenters on social media posts about the online survey. Despite an individual’s best efforts, a new card may not be received in a timely manner. Obviously, this delay can be a hardship to status First Nations persons who need a valid government-issued ID in order to access other pieces of identification, or who simply must deal with the multitude of processes requiring ID in our society. As reported in both the online survey and fieldwork, there is a real possibility that businesses may reject an expired status card at the point of sale, resulting in negative emotional and other impacts on the status card holder. This problem worsened during the early stages of the pandemic, as offices for processing status card applications were closed and processing times were delayed.

Another relevant implication of the COVID-19 pandemic was raised by a number of survey respondents. Due to the institution of curbside pickup by many businesses, shopping largely moved online. However, most businesses will not allow status card use during the online purchase, necessitating the individual (who might be immunocompromised) to have to go into the store, stand in line, explain the issue, and go through the procedure of reversing a sale, so that it can be rung up correctly.

Status cards are a catalyst for open anti-Indigenous racism on media platforms

“If you are going to use your status card to not pay taxes and contribute to Canadian society, expect a little blowback.”

(online comment to media article about this study)

The role of the media industry and media platforms in encouraging and enabling anti-Indigenous sentiment and stereotyping was a key theme arising from the analysis of historic print media and present-day online platforms.

The media industry plays a critical role in framing and shaping public perception, particularly on issues outside of people’s direct experience. The media coverage examined in this study reveal ways in which this industry perpetuates harmful stereotypes, in particular those associated with status card fraud and abuse, and “stuff for free”. A sampling of headlines is as follows:

- “Phoney Status Cards promise tax breaks,” Edmonton Journal, 1992
- “Bogus Indian Status Cards sold to quebecers,” Times Colonist, 1992
- “New card system proposed to thwart imposters,” Ottawa Citizen, 1994
- “Ottawa Probes Indian status cards,” Vancouver Sun, 1994
- “Indian Status cards abused,” Montreal Gazette, 2000
- “Native status card fraud cost \$62M a year: records,” Ottawa Citizen, 2001
- “Indian status cards open to abuse: audit,” Montreal Gazette, 2004
- “Crackdown planned on identity cards,” Edmonton Journal, 2007
- “Native status cards easily forged,” Vancouver Sun, 2007

This coverage normalizes anti-Indigenous views amongst society at large, creating broad public perceptions that contribute to racism and discrimination when using a status card and helps maintain anti-Indigenous bias in policies, systems, and institutions.

Media complicity in perpetuating and normalizing anti-Indigenous racism is also visible in a lack of comment moderation on stories about status cards. Media coverage of this study, and promotion of the online survey on social media platforms, elicited significant racist responses from the public.

The persons posting did not attempt to anonymize their comments, which were unfiltered and unrepressed, unlike a store or business where a clerk might feel the need to temper a personal opinion due to representing their employer and/or being in an in-person context. These comments reveal themes of common public sentiment that status cards shouldn’t exist, that they confer undeserved benefits and “handouts”, that benefits conferred by status cards actually hurt Indigenous people, and that racism experienced by Indigenous people when using a status card is somehow deserved as a result of the “special treatment” that the cards confer.

Everyone knows about this problem, but it is not the subject of dedicated study

“There is VERY often body language without any verbal comments that make very clear their thoughts of status.....All Canadians need education on Canada’s ongoing treatment of Indigenous peoples.”

(online survey respondent)

As noted above, racism related to the use of status cards is a near-universal experience amongst status First Nations. The project team and other First Nations people were immediately exposed to hostile and blatant racism through the online and unmoderated comments left on news and social media articles about this study. The three themes distilled from the literature review – negative experiences with the use of status cards, lack of public knowledge on status cards resulting in racism and discrimination, and status cards used as a tool to assert racist behaviours and remarks – were fully validated in the project’s other lines of inquiry. The literature review identified forms of racist and discriminatory actions, behaviours, and attitudes that are presented when status individuals use status cards, including stereotyping (Waite, 2010), harassment (Treaty 8 Environmental Assessment Team, 2012), disrespect (Pedri-Spade, 2016), mockery (FitzMaurice et al., 2013), and overt harm (Davis-Delano et al., 2021).

Very little of this literature, however, specifically and deeply examined status card use, but rather utilized it as an example within broader studies of anti-Indigenous racism. The literature review identified only one study that concentrates solely on experiences with the use of status cards from an individual First Nations perspective (Pedri-Spade, 2016), and one additional study that focuses on status

cards’ use and origins from the perspective of colonial settlers, although as part of a larger study (Mamers, 2017). Because very little of this literature examines status card use specifically, it does little to precisely describe experiences in status card use from both individual and community levels, nor to examine the structural and institutional enablers and barriers that are deterring use of status cards in a retail context and perpetuating harmful experiences. This lack of specific examination impedes the design and implementation of specific improvement interventions and ongoing monitoring of specific progress measures.





██████████ yes was jst at Coop one for status that guy seen me standn ther would'nt call serve rite away standn in line like dam then thy put discount down wen put \$10 in other day got \$12.67. this time today down \$11.20 🙄🙄🙄🙄 happned befor like dam thy ar so rasist ..

16w



██████████ Walmart in chilliwack they sigh or give you the look...

16w



██████████ right?!?

16w



██████████ i don't get it why work there if u hate your job

16w



██████████ Campbell River restaurant and store refused our status card

16w



██████████ I've been waiting over a year for my new status card
It's in the mail,they said but still no show do I do another one idk

16w



██████████ I used to work at McDonald's in the Walmart in Duncan. I never had any issues with taking status cards as long as they were presented up front. You cannot assume any one has a status card. Present it up front and it helps the person taking the payment .

16w



██████████ My son ██████████ had a funny experience at Park Royal when he was shopping. He presented his status card and the cashier said to him "Sorry Sir. Looks like this is expired." He paused for just a few seconds and responded "Looks like we're going to have to revisit your lease." Serious and stoic as he can be he watched for her reaction. Her jaw dropped slightly not knowing how to respond to that.

16w



██████████ Never had a problem ever. If you are getting harassed, it's because of ignorance and poorly educated on their part. Or maybe they shouldn't be working there.

16w

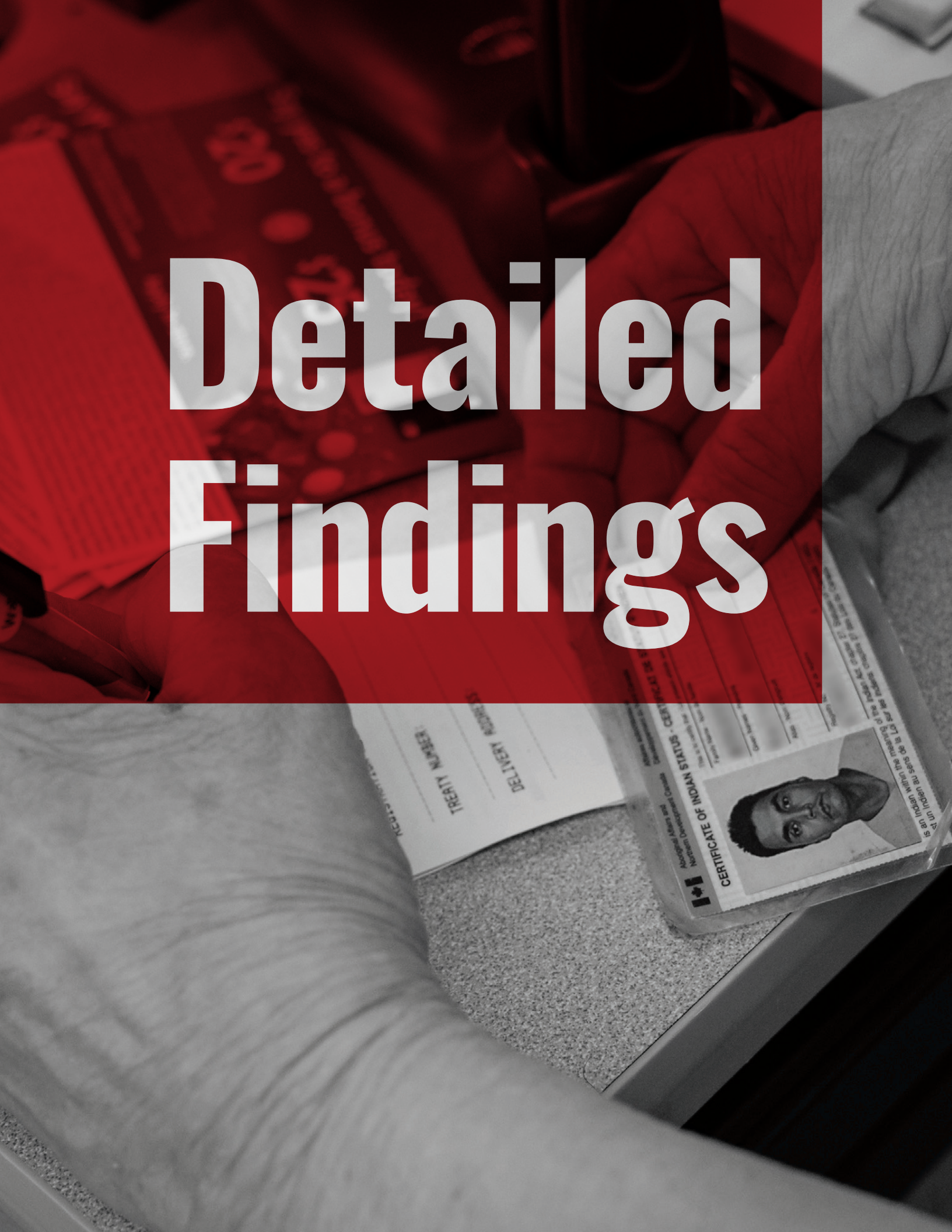


██████████ Some stores won't use mine cause it's expired, but others do let me use it , it's along wait to get a new one . I wanna apply for the 10 year card

16w

The names of commenters have been redacted from this publication despite these comments being posted on public platforms. This is to protect participants from hostility and potential retaliation.

Detailed Findings



This section describes in detail the findings and supporting data within each of the four main methods of inquiry employed in this study. The findings of primary data collection methods employed through this study – the online survey and fieldwork – are presented first, followed by the literature review and media analysis which relied on secondary sources. An unexpected additional source of evidence were the comments posted by some persons to the social media promotion of the survey and to the news articles covering this study, and this is elaborated upon in the media analysis section.

The project’s four lines of inquiry had distinct, but mutually reinforcing and informing, methodologies which are described in Annex 2.

SURVEY

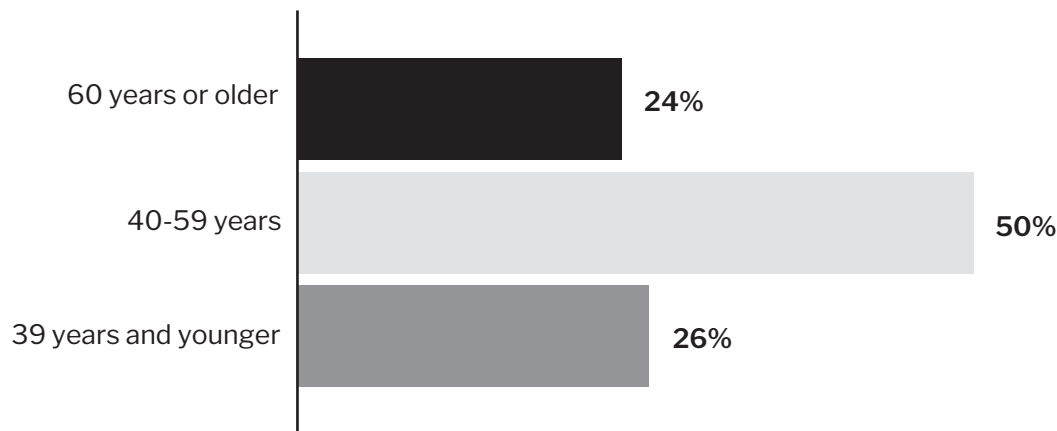
In the five-and-a-half weeks of the survey duration, 1,026 respondents who reported having status cards completed the status card online survey. As possession of a status card was a requirement for participation in the survey, the initial question asked if the respondent had a status card. Those that indicated they did not were thanked for their time, and directed away from the remainder of the survey.

Profile of Respondents

The majority of survey respondents reported living in an urban area (59%), followed by rural (33%) and remote residence (8%).

One half of the respondents were 40-59 years of age, with the remainder fairly evenly split between those who were younger, and those older.

Figure 1.1: Age Breakdown of Respondents to Online Survey



Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

18 years or younger category collapsed with the 19-39 years category, due to the small number in the under-18 category.

The vast majority of respondents were women (75%), followed by men (20%). Two-spirit individuals made up 3% of the respondents,

and the remaining gender identities were collectively 2%.

Use of Status Cards

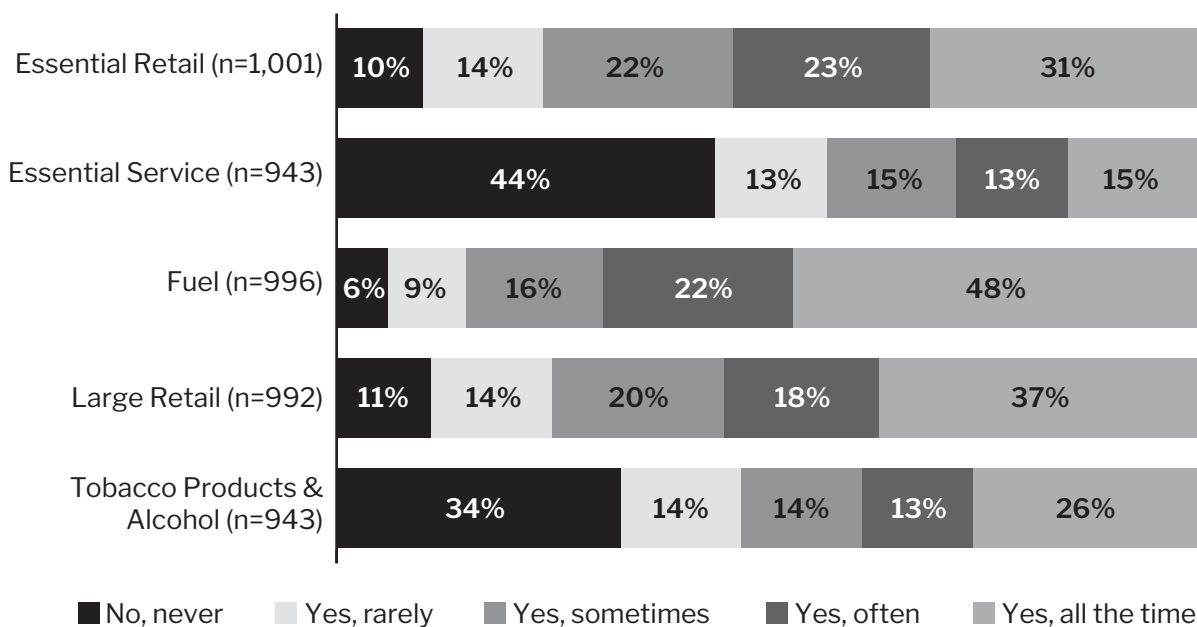
Respondents were asked about where they use their status cards, with the options being essential retail (e.g., clothing), essential service (e.g., insurance, telecommunications), fuel, large retail (e.g., car, electronics), and tobacco products and alcohol. They were also provided an option of “not applicable”; as for example, the purchase of tobacco products and alcohol might not be applicable for all respondents.

Interestingly, there were two service categories where a significant number of individuals indicated that they did not use their cards compared to other categories: essential service (44% indicated they “never” used their status card) and tobacco products and alcohol (34%). When “never” is combined with “rarely”, approximately half of the respondents were represented in the rates for these two service categories.

The data, overall, shows a polarization, as respondents were more likely to choose one of the extremes in a service type: “never” versus “all the time”. Approximately 50% of respondents used their card “all the time” to purchase fuel, and 30% or more used it “all the time” for essential retail and for large retail purchases. On the other extreme, 44% of respondents “never” use status cards for essential services.

When considering response options indicating degree of usage, status card use was most frequent among purchases for fuel (70% of respondents saying they use their status cards “all the time” or “often”) and essential retail (54% of respondents saying they use their status cards “all the time” or “often”). Use of status cards was lowest for essential services (e.g., cell phone bills, utilities such as gas and electric), with less than one-third of respondents (28%) saying they use their status cards “all the time” or “often” (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Frequency of Use of Status Card in Transactions



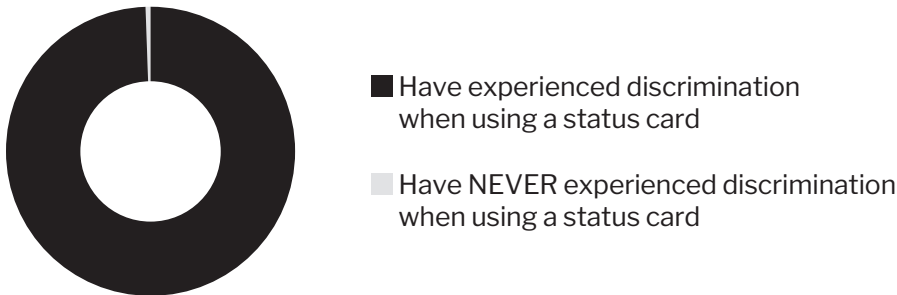
Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

Experiences of Discrimination

Discrimination in the use of status cards was almost a universal experience (>99%) amongst the survey respondents, with only four of 1,026 respondents indicating that they had

never experienced discrimination while using their status cards across any transaction type (Figure 1.3).

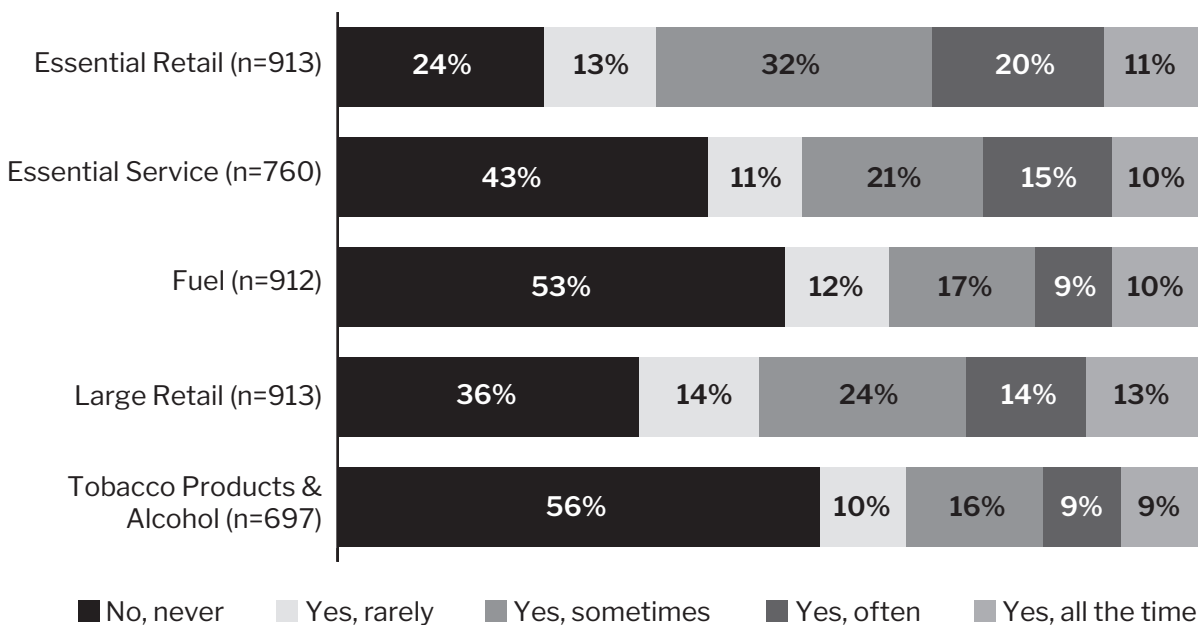
Figure 1.3: Experience of Discrimination in Survey Respondents



Respondents were provided with five options to describe the frequency of their discriminatory experiences (“never”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, “often”, and “all the time”). If the service type data is analyzed by any experience of discrimination, essential retail had the highest rate at 76% of respondents reporting that they

experienced discrimination either “rarely”, “sometimes”, “often”, or “all the time”. On the other end of the spectrum, some level of discrimination was experienced by less than half of respondents: fuel (47%), and tobacco products and alcohol (44%) (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: Frequency of Discrimination During Transactions by Service Type



Have you ever experienced discrimination or racism when presenting your status card?

Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

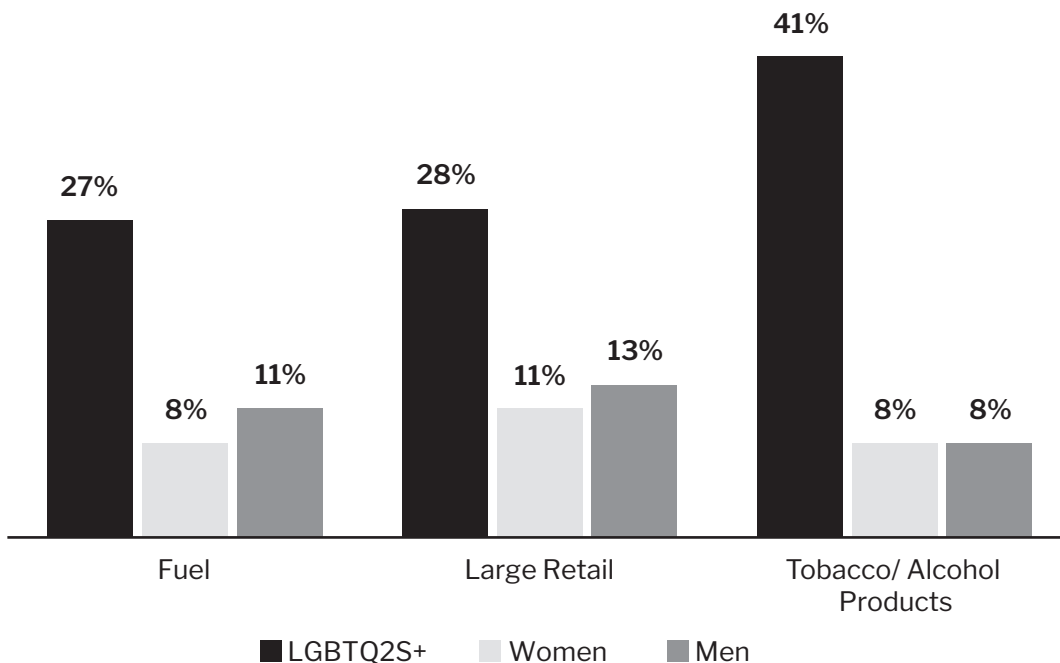
Gender Differences

When analyzed by gender identity, this experiential data reveals differences between LGBTQ2S+ respondents and other gender identities. In fuel, large retail, and tobacco products/alcohol, LGBTQ2S+ persons were more likely than women and men to answer “yes, all the time” to discrimination during transactions (see Figure 1.5). The largest variation was with tobacco products and alcohol, where the LGBTQ2S+ rate (41%) was 5.1 times higher than either the women’s or

men’s rate. The other differences in Figure 1.5 – for fuel and large retail – range from 2.2 to 3.4 times higher for LGBTQ2S+ rates compared to the women’s or men’s rates.

In addition, LGBTQ2S+ respondents had a 2.3 times higher rate of answering “often” to experiences of discrimination than men when frequenting essential retail (34.8% versus 15.4% respectively) and a 2.8 times higher rate for essential service (29.7% versus 10.8%) businesses.

Figure 1.5: Experiences of Discrimination – “All the Time” – by Service Type

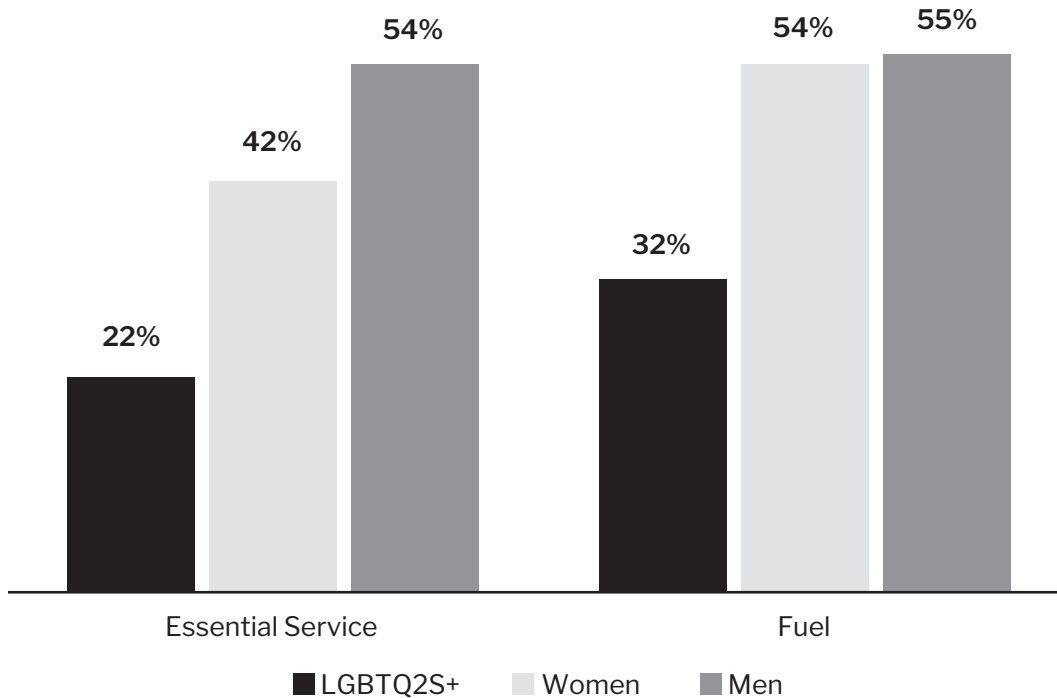


Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

In essential services and fuel, LGBTQ2S+ respondents had lower response rates than women and men to “never” experiencing discrimination, with the disparity reaching

2.5 times higher for men respondents’ essential service rate compared to the LGBTQ2S+ respondents’ rate (Figure 1.6).

Figure 1.6: Experiences of Discrimination – “Never” – by Service Type



Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

Age Differences

Younger respondents were significantly more likely to report higher rates of discrimination during some service types. Those aged 39 years and younger were significantly more likely to report “often” or “all the time” to experiences of discrimination during essential retail (40% of young people, compared to 30% of those aged 40 to 59, and 23% of those aged 60 and older), essential service (32% of young people, compared to 17% of those aged 65 and older), and large retail (32% of young people, compared to 22% of those aged 65 and older). There were no other significant differences by age.

Types of Discrimination

Respondents were presented with potential scenarios where discrimination could be experienced, and asked to choose from five frequency options: “never”, “rarely”, “sometimes”, “often”, and “always”. “Always” having a particular experience, whether it be

good or bad, was reported in a minority of respondents, for example, 19% reported that in their experience, clerks “always” act as if processing their status card information was a hassle, and 11% reported that they are “always” treated with the same courtesy and respect as other patrons.

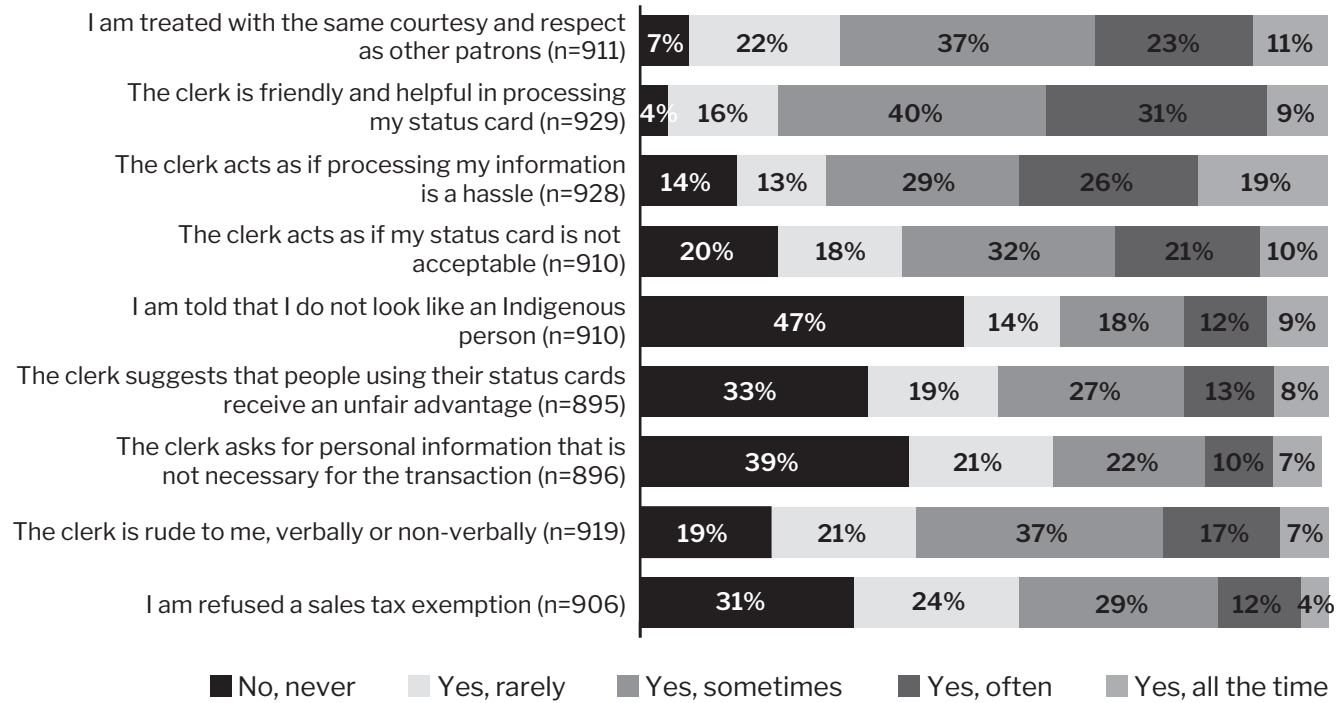
When “sometimes”, “often”, and “always” responses are combined, the data illustrate the broad-reaching and variable ways that discrimination may be experienced. Subtle forms of discriminatory experiences were more prevalent than overt discrimination in the results received. The subtle style of discrimination rates, were, for example: clerks act as though processing cards is a hassle (74% responding “sometimes”, “often”, and “always”), clerks acting as though status cards are not acceptable at the place of business (63%), and general rudeness (61%). More overt types of discrimination, when analyzed for similar responses, had lower rates: clerk suggesting that people using their status cards had an

unfair advantage (48%), or are refused a tax exemption (45%).

These results are counterbalanced with positive reports from respondents, as 71% said they “sometimes”, “often”, or “always” have been

treated with the same courtesy and respect as other patrons, and 80% reported that clerks were “sometimes”, “often”, or “always” friendly and helpful in processing their status cards (Figure 1.7).

Figure 1.7: Expressions of Discrimination During Transactions with Status Cards



When you use your status card, how often do any of the following things happen to you?

Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

Gender Differences

In eight of the nine scenarios presented, LGBTQ2S+ respondents had significantly different responses than men and/or women. They were significantly more likely to report poor experiences, and significantly less likely to report positive interactions with store staff. Figure 1.8 demonstrates these findings, showing the reported rates for “sometimes”, “often”, and “always” for LGBTQ2S+, women, and men respondents. Ninety-one percent of LGBTQ2S+ respondents reported that they “sometimes”, “often”, and “always” experienced a clerk acting as if processing the information was a hassle, and 83% reported that the clerk

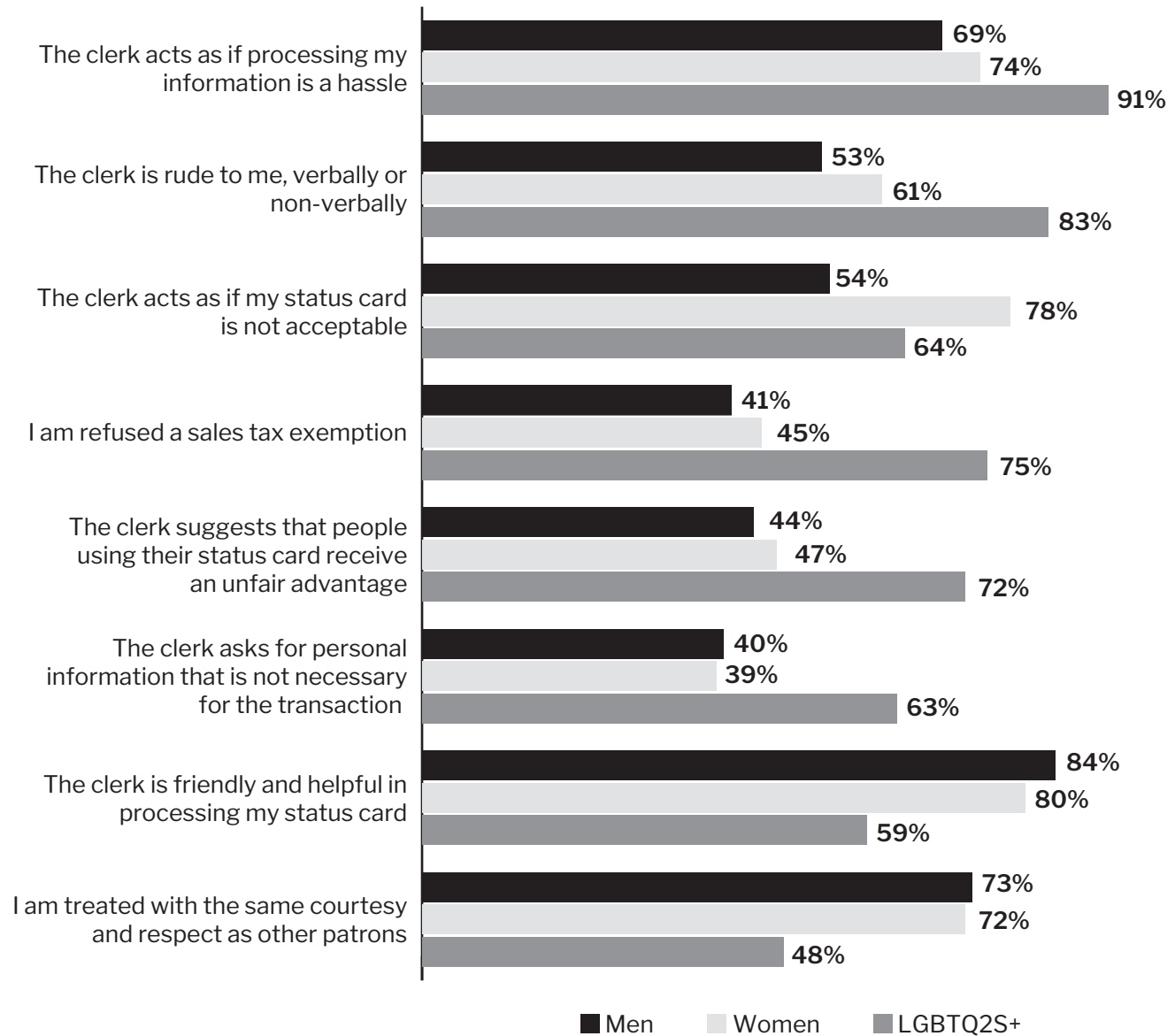
was rude, verbally or nonverbally “sometimes”, “often”, and “always”, with rates ranging from 63% to 75% for all other negative interactions.

The largest gender-related difference was in being refused a tax exemption, with a LGBTQ2S+ respondent rate for “sometimes”, “often”, and “always” which was 1.8 times higher than the men’s rate and 1.7 times higher than the women’s rate, followed by the clerk asking for personal information not necessary for the transaction (1.6 times higher than both women’s and men’s rates), and the clerk suggesting that people using their status card receive an unfair advantage (1.6 times higher than the men’s rate and 1.5 times higher than the women’s rate).

For positive interactions, LGBTQ2S+ respondents were less likely than women and men respondents to answer “sometimes”, “often”, and “always”. Both men and women’s

rates were 1.5 times higher than the LGBTQ2S+ rate for being treated with the same courtesy and respect as other patrons, and 1.4 times higher for having a friendly and helpful clerk.

Figure 1.8: Discrimination During Transactions with Status Cards - “Sometimes,” “Often,” or “Always” – by Gender



When you use your status card, how often do any of the following things happen to you?

Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

All LGBTQ2S+ rates were significantly different from both men and women. In addition, for “the clerk is friendly and helpful in processing my status card,” the women’s rate was higher than the men’s rate.

Age Differences

Experiencing discrimination also appears to be age-related. The youngest age group (<40 years of age) was significantly more likely to experience a variety of, but not all, types of discrimination when compared to the older age cohorts (40-59 and/or 60+ years of age). Table 1 summarizes the age-related differences for six of the options presented to respondents, when rates were analyzed for the “sometimes”, “often”, and “always” responses. Persons aged 39 years or younger had rates of discriminatory experiences for these responses which included:

- 81% – The clerk acts as if processing my information is a hassle.
- 71% – The clerk acts as if my status card is not acceptable.
- 67% – The clerk is rude to me, either verbally or nonverbally.
- 57% – The clerk suggests that people using their status card receive an unfair advantage.

- 51% – I am told I do not look like an Indigenous person.
- 48% – The clerk asks for personal information that is not necessary for the transaction.

Table 1 quantifies the age-related differences. In the Table, the rates of those 39 years and younger were compared to the 60+ rate (column 2), and also to the 40-59 rate (column 3). In addition, the 40-59 rate was compared to the 60+ rate (column 4). For example, in the first row, the 39 years and younger age group’s rate for the observation that “the clerk acts as if my status card is not acceptable” was 1.3 times higher than the 60+ age group’s rate.

In most instances, the youngest age group had higher rates related to experiential discrimination than the oldest group, with the largest difference related to not being seen as Indigenous (1.9 times greater). Differences were also seen between the youngest age group and the middle age group (40-59 years), and in two instances, between the middle and older age groups. In general, these differences rated from 1.2 to 1.4 times.

Table 1: Magnitude of Difference for “Sometimes”, “Often”, and “Always” Responses by Age Group

	“39 years and younger rate” > “60+ rate”	“39 years and younger rate” > “40-59 rate”	“40-59 rate” > “60+ rate”
The clerk acts as if my status card is not acceptable	1.3 times		
I am told I do not look like an Indigenous person	1.9 times	1.3 times	1.4 times
The clerk acts as if processing my information is a hassle	1.3 times		1.2 times
The clerk is rude to me, either verbally or non-verbally	1.3 times		
The clerk suggests that people using their status card receive an unfair advantage	1.4 times	1.2 times	
The clerk asks for personal information that is not necessary for the transaction.		1.3 times	

Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

Not surprisingly based on the above results, the youngest age group had a lower combined “sometimes”, “often”, and “always” rate for positive experiences, with significant differences compared to the middle age group. The middle age group’s rate related to receiving

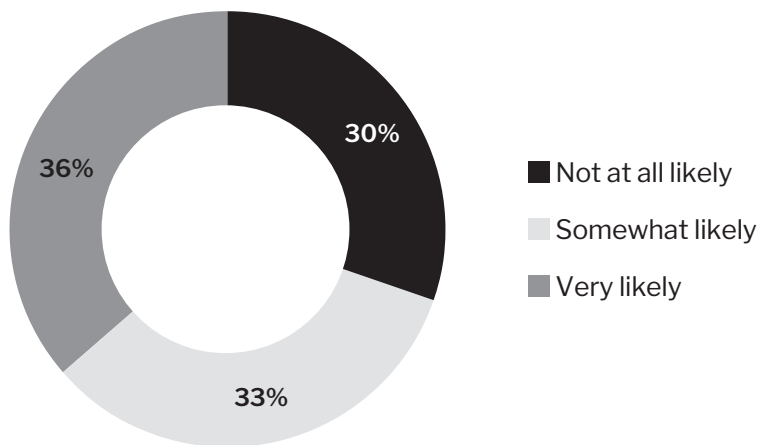
courtesy and respect was 74%, which was 1.2 times higher than the youngest age group’s rate. The middle age group’s rate for friendly and helpful service was 82%, which was 1.1 times higher than the youngest age group’s rate.

Responding to Discrimination During Transactions

Survey respondents were asked how likely they would be to make a complaint about discriminatory treatment if they had a reason to do so. Responses were relatively evenly split, with slightly less than one-third of respondents (30%) saying they “likely” would *not* make a

complaint, and slightly more than one-third of respondents (36%) said they “very likely” would make a complaint (see Figure 1.9). The remainder (33%) said they would be “somewhat likely” to make a complaint.⁸

Figure 1.9: Likelihood to Complain if Treated Poorly During Transaction Using a Status Card



Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

There were no significant differences in likelihood to make a complaint by gender or by region. However, the possibility of making a complaint increased with age. Only 26% of those aged 39 and younger said they were “very likely” to complain if the situation warranted, compared to 36% of those aged 40 to 59, and 48% of those aged 60 and over. Conversely, younger age groups were significantly more likely to report being “not at all likely” to make a complaint if the situation warranted.

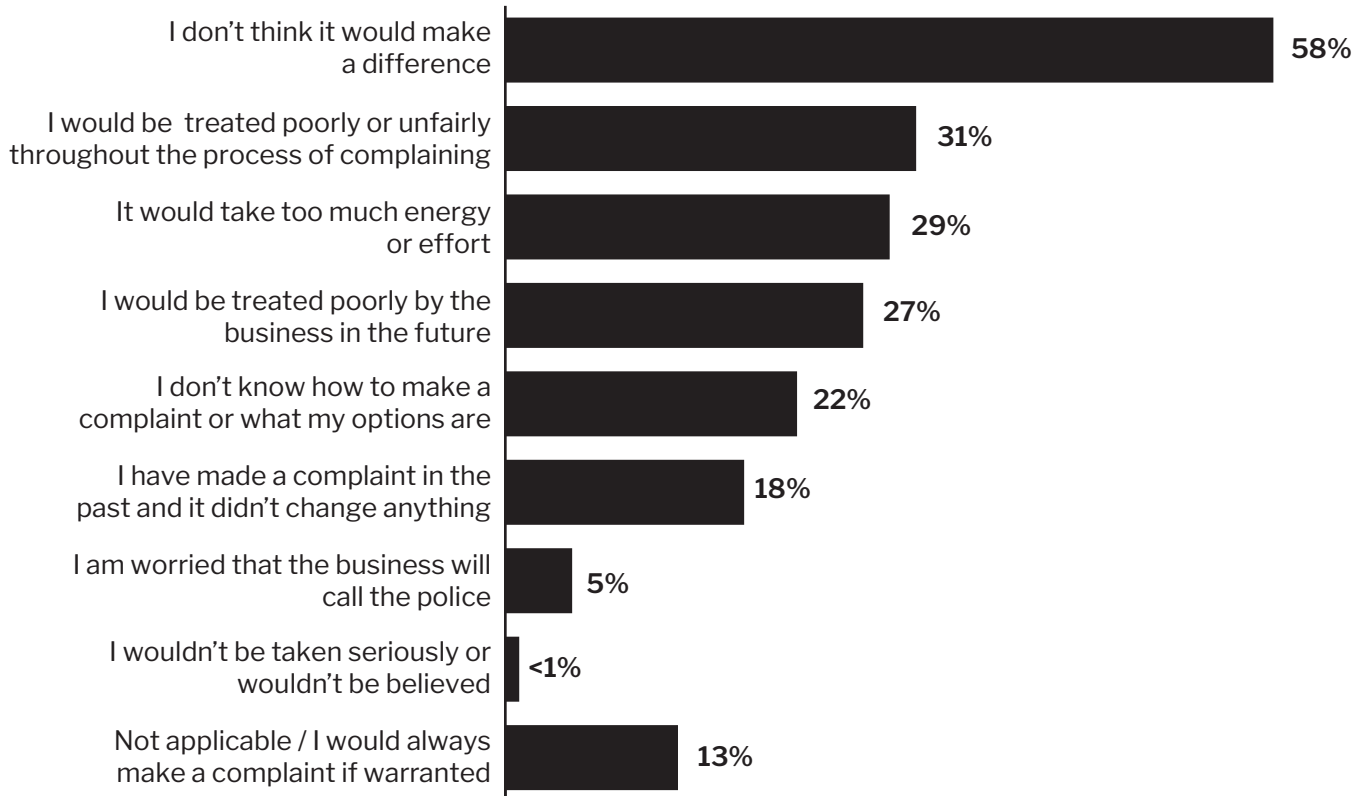
A follow-up question asked what reasons, if any, respondents would have for not making a complaint when one was warranted, and a respondent could choose up to four reasons. The most common reason provided by 58% of respondents was pessimism about the usefulness of complaining – not believing that it would make a difference (see Figure 1.10). Other reasons endorsed by more than one-quarter of respondents included believing one would be treated unfairly when complaining

⁸ Rates do not equal 100% due to rounding.

(31%), that complaining would take too much energy or effort (29%), and expectations that they would be treated poorly by the business

in the future (27%). Slightly more than one in ten respondents (13%) said they would *always* make a complaint if warranted.

Figure 1.10: Reasons for Not Making a Complaint if Warranted



Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

Please note that respondents could select up to four applicable reasons, therefore percentages may add to more than 100%.

Respondents also had the option of providing additional information, in their own words, regarding why they might not make a complaint when they were experiencing discrimination due to status card use. Most responses to this question were similar to existing response options and were integrated into the results (i.e., those listed in Figure 1.10 above). Other themes that were identified within these responses included:

- Preferring to simply take one's business elsewhere rather than complain or try to change the business's behaviour;
- Complaining will result in negative emotional or mental health impacts;
- Being uncomfortable with conflict or confrontation;
- Being pressed for time or facing other logistical challenges;
- Not wanting to do the emotional labour of explaining status and status cards to clerks;
- Being concerned about the impact on other patrons; and,
- Finding the value of the tax exemption too small to be worth complaining about.⁹

⁹ Frequency of each theme ranged from two to six respondents.

Gender Differences

For the response option “I don’t think it will make a difference,” women were more likely than men to be pessimistic (50% versus 60% respectively). Of the eight options provided for reasons why persons might not make a complaint, three showed gender-specific differences. One half of LGBTQ2S+ respondents reported not complaining because they would be treated more poorly by the business in the future, and one half also indicated that they would not complain because they would be treated poorly or unfairly through the complaint process. These rates were 1.7 to 2.0 times higher than either the women’s (25% and 31% respectively) or men’s (28% and 27%) rates.

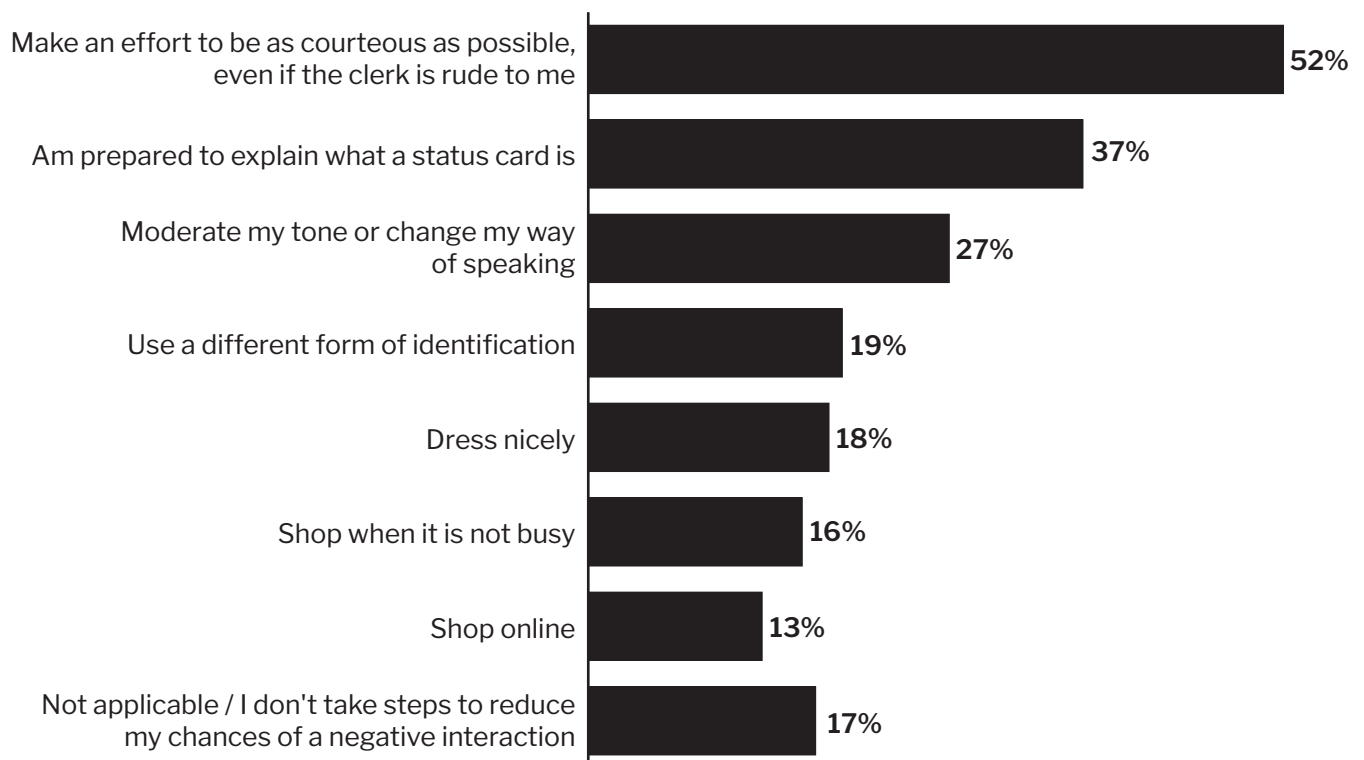
The largest difference for not complaining, however, was with respect to concern that the business would call the police. Twenty-seven

percent of LGBTQ2S+ respondents felt this way; a rate which was 7.0 times the women’s rate (4%), and 4.1 times the men’s rate (7%).

Avoiding Discrimination

Finally, survey respondents were asked what steps, if any, they take to minimize their chances of having a negative interaction when using a status card in a retail context. They were given seven potential actions, and could choose four. The most common approach, reported by approximately one-half of respondents (52%), was making an effort to be courteous and polite, even if the staff they were dealing with were rude to them, followed by being prepared to explain what a status card is (37%), and moderating one’s tone or way of speaking (27%) (Figure 1.11).

Figure 1.11: Approaches to Reducing Chances of a Negative Interaction



Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

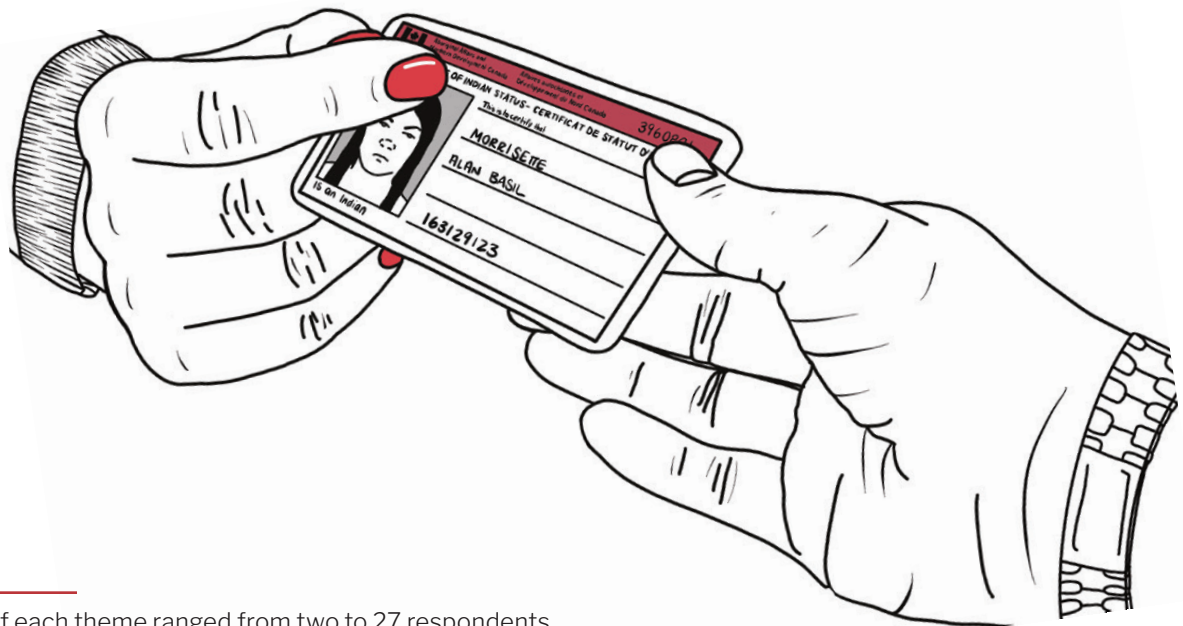
Please note that respondents could select up to four applicable reasons, therefore percentages may add to more than 100%.

Respondents were also able to provide more information, in their own words, about the ways in which they reduce their chances of experiencing discrimination. The wide variety of responses illustrate the thought and effort put into avoiding these situations. Themes identified in these responses included:¹⁰

- Not using their status card at all in a situation where they think discrimination is likely;
- Shopping in stores they know to be safe for First Nations people and/or avoiding stores they know to be unsafe;
- Checking that their status card will be accepted before they shop;
- Asserting their legal right to use their card during the transaction;
- Attempting to make contact only with staff they know or suspect will be kind and/or knowledgeable about status cards;
- Trying to minimize perceptions of “taking advantage” or saving an “unfair” amount of money; and
- Bringing along a non-Indigenous person for support (e.g., shopping with a spouse or friend).

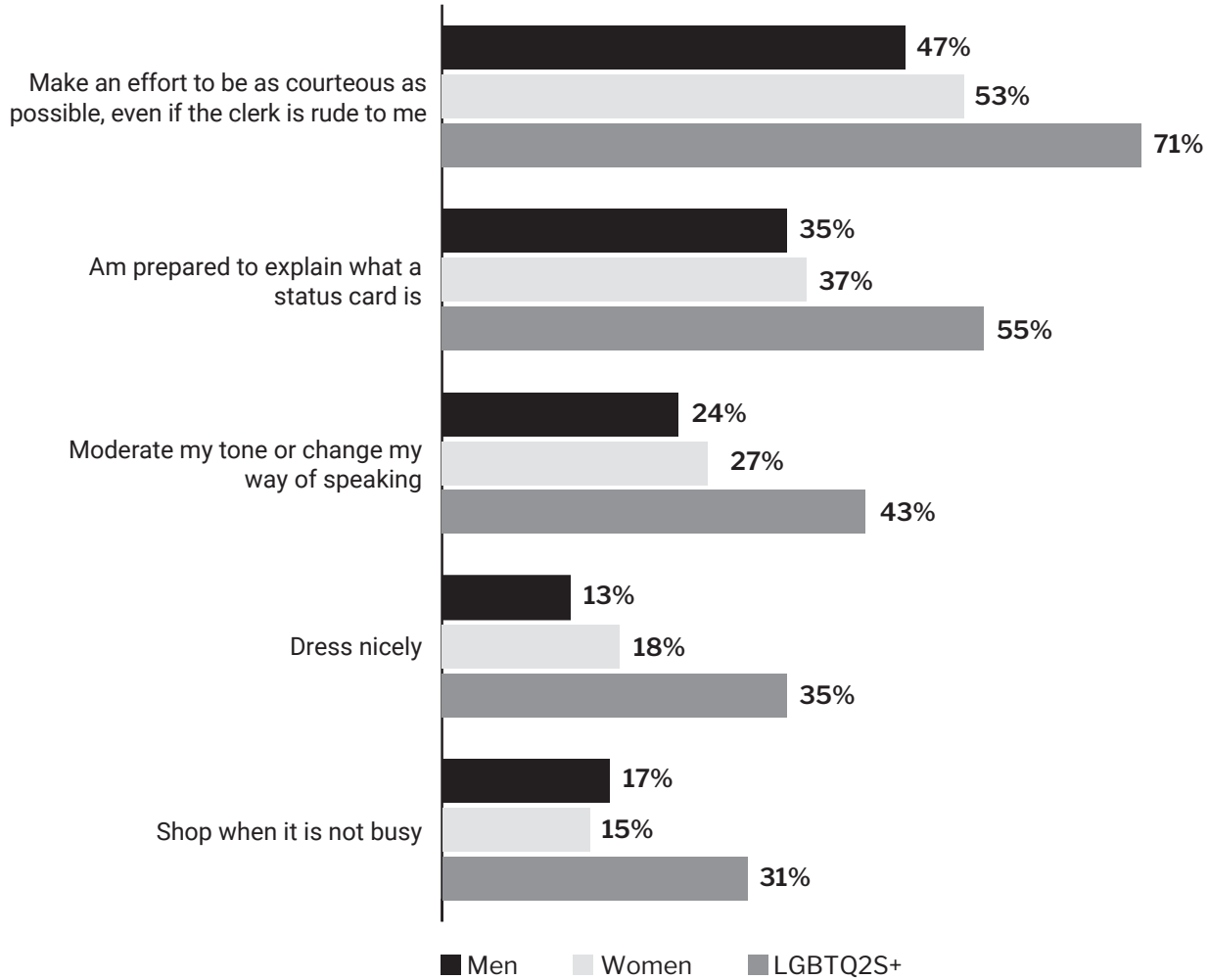
Gender Differences

In terms of efforts made to reduce chances of a negative experience, men and women had no significant differences from each other in their survey options. There were gender-related differences when women and men respondents were compared to LGBTQ2S+ respondents. Figure 1.12 illustrates the five strategies where LGBTQ2S+ respondents had significantly higher rates. Over 70% of LGBTQ2S+ respondents make an effort to be as courteous as possible during a transaction, even in the face of clerk rudeness, a rate which was 1.5 times higher than the men’s rate. LGBTQ2S+ respondents were 2.7 times more likely than men and 1.9 times more likely than women to endeavor to dress nicely as a preventative strategy. In the other three strategies in the figure below (explaining status cards, moderating tone, and shopping when not busy), LGBTQ2S+ rates were from 1.5 to 2.1 times higher than women’s and men’s rates.



¹⁰ Frequency of each theme ranged from two to 27 respondents.

Figure 1.12: Strategies to Reducing Chances of a Negative Interaction, by Gender



Source: UBCIC Online Status Card Survey

All LGBTQ2S+ rates are statistically higher than the women’s and men’s rates, except for the first approach (making an effort to be courteous...) where the LGBTQ2S+ rate differed statistically only from the men’s rate.

Additional Comments

A final open-ended field at the end of the survey asked respondents to provide any additional comments they had about using status cards in BC. Of the 1,026 respondents, 604 (59%) provided a response.

A wide variety of themes were captured in responses to this question that fell into three

broad categories: discussions of racism; discussions of institutional issues related to status cards and their use; and discussion of specific places where challenging interactions occur. It should be noted that each response was coded with up to three themes, therefore the total percentage of responses listed below may add to more than 100%.

Racism Themes


Six distinct themes within the category of “racism” were identified in comments. These were:



- Discussions of racism, rudeness, and/or pressure from staff during transactions (28% of all comments);
- Discussions of racism, rudeness, and/or pressure from other patrons during transactions (7%);
- Discussions of racist myths about status and/or status card use (7%);
- General comments about anti-Indigenous racism in BC and/or Canada (5%);
- Comments that the respondent sometimes experiences poor treatment for “not looking Indigenous” (3%); and
- Comments that the respondent sometimes experiences better treatment due to being white-passing (1%).


“[I’ve experienced the] racism and stigma of being treated like I already get everything free...[Most non-Indigenous Canadians have] no knowledge of the history of Indigenous issues.”



“The experiences of racism and microaggressions aren’t limited to staff at establishments. More frequently than not, I’m not only being talked down to by the staff person but also have other shoppers behind me huffing and puffing while the paperwork is being filled out.”



“I am relatively white-passing for a First Nations member, but often when walking into businesses and using my status card I get treated like what I presented to them was fake, or that they don’t accept the status card, despite it being a government ID.”



 [Redacted] They gasp and rush it through idk why
16w



 [Redacted] If you send tax exempt letter from band with gst # to telus and hydro they can't charge you gst tax 😊👍
16w  5


 [Redacted] but only if you live on reserve...
16w


 [Redacted] yes forgot to add that part thx
16w  1


 [Redacted] Its a card for white ppl and every other race to talk down about us , with out known facts about been first nations
16w  2


 [Redacted] I don't know about the talking down thing because I'm white. I think a clear understanding of what a status card is, what it's purpose was and is, is important knowledge for everyone - tell me what you feel it's purpose is please.
16w  2

 [Redacted] I feel the same as you and think it is unfair to be lumped into something. I was appalled when I saw a status card and what it said on it, I have several good friends who have them and seriously they still pay tax on most things.
16w  2

 [Redacted] your 100% true 👍
16w

 [Redacted] The best way to deal with that, [Redacted], is to use your rights to the fullest extent - and smile. 😊
16w

 [Redacted] Status Cards good for smokes and Gas that's pretty much all I don't smoke and I don't have a car even having a Status Card people still look at it and say I can't accept this fake ID
16w

 [Redacted] buying a new car on the reserve.
16w

The names of commenters have been redacted from this publication despite these comments being posted on public platforms. This is to protect participants from hostility and potential retaliation.

Structural Racism

Themes related to structural and institutional issues around status card use were those that identified ways in which status, and status card use, continues to stigmatize and is made more challenging than necessary through formal and informal ways of organizing and doing business in BC. Themes captured within this category included:

- Complaints about government rules and/or processes around status cards (e.g., expiry dates, poor quality of cards) (23%);
- Complaints about poor or inefficient processes at many businesses for handling tax exemptions (22%);
- Discussion of how most non-Indigenous people do not have a good understanding of what status is and what status cards are (18%); and
- Tax exemptions being difficult or impossible to get when online shopping (2%).

“Many of the challenges that I face are that small businesses are not knowledgeable about the rules of tax exemption, and enforce the rules incorrectly, which creates another miscommunication and conflict because they think you’re trying to take advantage of the system.”

“Status cards should be enabled with a barcode to ease the gridlock that happens at cash registers. This would make the tax exemption process painless for both the consumer and retailer and potentially ease the burden and hate by those not eligible for tax exemptions.”

“Many employees of businesses I’ve frequented over the years are not even aware of the option and have to call their manager in to process.”



Locations Where Racism Occurs

Finally, within responses to the final open-ended question, two themes related to specific places where discrimination occurs. While it was not the goal of this study to identify or single out specific settings where discrimination related to status card use occurs, these themes came up spontaneously in the comments at a high enough occurrence to report. The two settings or situations where some respondents noted they frequently encountered racism and discrimination related status card use were:

- In government or public offices or services (e.g., border crossings, police stations, other services) (8%); and
- In medical and healthcare settings (e.g., dentists' offices, pharmacies) (4%).

“Not just retailers have a problem with our official government status cards. I have had police station staff refuse to accept my ID as proper identification. I have had storekeepers take away my ID and I had to call the police to get it back, they thought I stole it or had fake ID made. Hospital staff have also had an issue with me using my status card as ID.”

“Many big box chain stores require personal information such as your telephone number in order to get [the] tax exemption; also from store to store the information needed is different, there is no consistency on what info is needed. In the hospitality industry, mainly hotels, I notice a stark difference in how I am treated if I use my status card versus other forms of identification.”

“When using the status card at the border which we are entitled to do so. The border agent has asked us what our blood quantum is because our skin is light. He then proceeded to say us Natives should have our blood quantum be on our birth certificates.”



[REDACTED]
I remember traveling to the US for a concert. I used my status card as secondary ID. One question caught me off guard was if I had any marijuana for ceremonial purposes. I was like uh what? No. I mean I'm not stupid enough to attempt importation but what struck me was the exact phrase for ceremonial purposes. Would that have been an issue if I didn't present my status as ID. I wonder to this day. Also on subsequent visits I've decided to use other documents for ID.



FIELDWORK

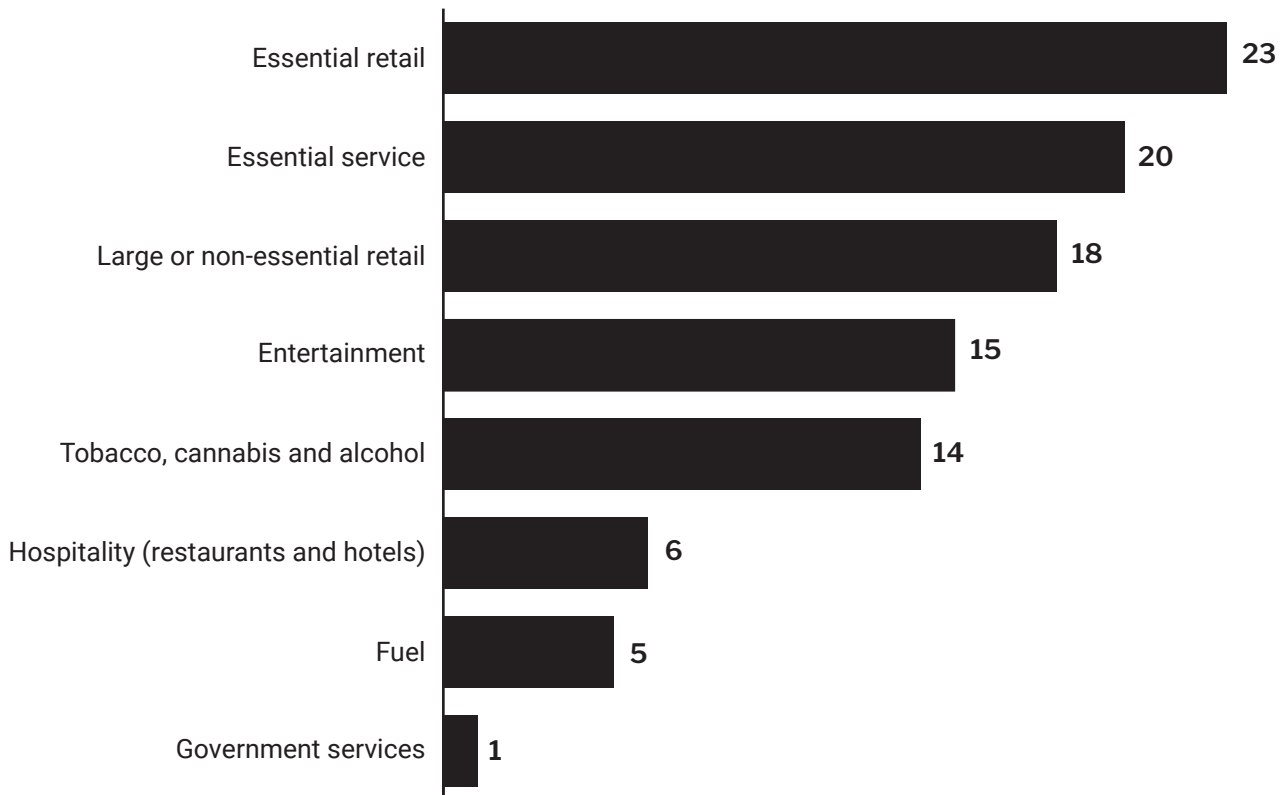
The Assessors conducted their research over a similar time period as the online survey. In total, 103 assessments were completed by seven Assessors. The number of assessments by individuals ranged from 4 to 43, with 74% of the total number of assessments being completed by three Assessors.

The majority of assessments occurred in the Lower Mainland (47%) and the Northeast region (30%). Other regions were represented in lesser frequency: Interior (9%); Vancouver Island and Coast (6%); and the Nechako region (5%). In four cases, the region could not be identified

due to the Assessor indicating the business name but not the city or region.

A variety of business types were assessed during the study period, although representation of fuel purchases, hospitality establishments, and government services was lower than other types of interactions. Most assessments were completed in essential retail, essential services, and large or non-essential retail businesses (59%), followed by entertainment and tobacco, cannabis, and alcohol products (28%) (Figure 1.13).

Figure 1.13: Types of Establishments Assessed During Fieldwork



Source: UBCIC Status Card Study Fieldwork

There was also good coverage of Assessors across business types. Most Assessors conducted at least one transaction in large retail businesses (five of seven Assessors), entertainment (five of seven Assessors), and tobacco products and alcohol (six of seven Assessors). Essential retail, essential service, and hospitality each had four Assessors conducting transactions in these business categories, while entertainment, hospitality, and government services each had three or fewer Assessors conducting transactions in these businesses.

Preparing to use a status card

Status cards were used for identification more frequently than for a tax exemption; of 103 assessments, in 67 (65%) interactions, status cards were used only as ID, while they were used solely for a tax exemption in 33 (32%) assessments. In three cases (3%), status cards were used for both ID and a tax exemption.

The majority of Assessors reported feelings of anxiety in anticipation of using their status cards, and how this was informed by past experiences (whether their own, or that of other status First Nations they know or have seen reported in the media).

“I felt a bit anxious approaching the interactions, I knew the slightest thing could go wrong and the cops could be called on me like that poor grandfather at the bank.”

“Every time I did an assessment, I always had the people on my mind that I heard about on the news. I was avoidant of going into banks with my status cards because of those stories, I would feel sad.”

“Some of the places I went to were places I had issues in the past...so approaching those ones I felt stressed before I entered the store.”

All Assessors interviewed noted that they engage in some emotional and mental preparation for interactions such as:

“Deep breathing before I entered the interaction to relax myself.”

“I would psych myself up... try to distract myself, stay calm and distract myself.”

“I smudged in the mornings to cleanse myself of negative energy and to rid myself of any anger or hurt, then at the end of the day as well I smudged for the same reason.”

“Being mindful of community members who might only have status card for ID and the challenges they may face in accessing basic services. I kept them in mind and it was humbling in that way.”

Experience using a status card

Positive or neutral experiences

In a majority of cases (62%), Assessors felt confident that they did not experience any direct discrimination or racism during the interaction. Thirty one percent felt affirmed, and 27% felt supported after their transactions. In over one half (57%) of the transactions, Assessors documented in the open text field of their report that their experiences were uneventful – clerks were professional and handled their status cards without issue, and displayed no discriminatory or hurtful behaviour towards them. Relief was commonly expressed following positive or neutral experiences:

“I was nervous at first to see what would happen but was relieved when I [was] treated equally.”

“[I] felt relief afterwards that it did go well.”

Lack of awareness about status cards

In many interactions, clerks did not know how to accept status cards and displayed a lack of awareness of status cards. This theme came up in 16% of the written notes:

“The most common thing that I didn’t expect was that people had no clue what a status card was, where I used it for tax exemption on reserve. I thought that would be part of their training being on reserve. No one knew what it was or what to do and when I escalated to a manager they didn’t know either.”

“..so many times the clerk didn’t know what status cards mean...I waited 45 minutes once for a clerk to get a supervisor that could explain it to the staff.”

“In most of my experiences, the staff didn’t know what a status card was or how to use it and I would have to wait while they asked.”

A lack of standardization regarding the acceptance and processing of status cards was noted:

“Processes for using your status cards are not the same everywhere, it can look different in different stores and that is stressful.”

“Some places I had to fill out a paper form and that makes me less likely to use [my status card].”

One hundred percent of Assessors reported that they wished people knew more about status cards and the colonial context, for example:

“I wish people knew that status cards are this colonial construct that we have to live with before we are even born. We are the only race based, legislated population in this country. We come into the world

and have this number to identify who we are but it needs to be revalidated every 5 years. Our status cards expire but our identity doesn’t expire.”

“This is a human rights element of my identity but it was really awkward and like I was an inconvenience, as if I’m coming in with my barely acceptable identification.”

“This confirmed my beliefs that there are still a lot of barriers and a lack of cultural sensitivity and safety by the clerks. Even though they are on reserve, it is clear they don’t know anything about First Nations or Indigenous history.”

“It was mentally and emotionally draining. It is hard not to take it personally. It feels like all the pressure is on me to inform people and share the information they should have to do their job, you have to be ready to talk to anyone about it.”

“I wish more people knew the history of colonialism and racism in this country and that the process of getting and renewing our status cards can be a real barrier to accessing the things we need.”

Despite the reported emotional labour involved, a sense of responsibility to educate staff about status cards was common amongst the Assessors:

“I’m using [the status card] more as a statement that it is valid ID, to make it more common for other people that need to use it, to help the staff learn.”

“I have been using [the status card] more just to make people more aware of it and educate them when I have the capacity to do so.”

“[I] use it as a teaching moment for the broader community to make them more aware of the colonial history of this country,

but not everyone has that capacity and we shouldn't expect Indigenous people to carry this labour or burden, all Canadians should learn about it."

"I will keep using my status card everywhere to get people working in stores more familiar with it."

Experiences of racism and discrimination

Discriminatory or negative experiences in using status cards occurred in slightly less than 40% of all fieldwork transactions. In 17 cases (17%), Assessors felt confident that they were discriminated against, while in 22 cases (21%) they felt unsure of whether they had been treated poorly due to discrimination. Some Assessors described these interactions in detail, for example:

"She [the clerk] glanced at my status card a few times and then picked it up and turned it over, sat it down and handed me the cash. This was all done in silence... The customers in front of me engaged in small conversation [with her] and she was laughing... She was warm and friendly to the two customers in front of me. I feel like she felt uncomfortable when I was there, even though I was polite and smiled to greet her and said thank you as well, there was no response other than when I said thank you, have a good day, she nodded and said 'bye.'"

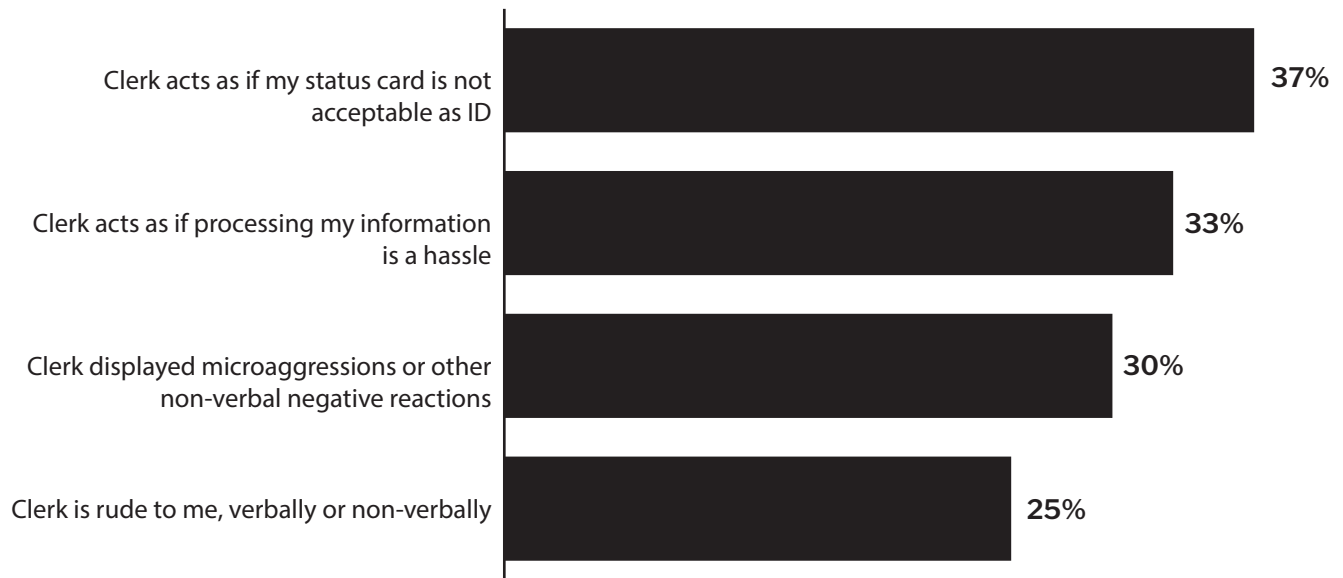
"She [the clerk] then pointed at the debit machine and I paid. I wasn't told a total for the purchase or any pleasantries such as 'have a nice day' or 'bye'. I left and felt embarrassed and uncomfortable."



Among the 39 cases where Assessors believed, or weren't sure, they had been treated prejudicially due to their status cards, 37% of clerks acted as if the status cards were not acceptable. Over 30% of clerks acted as if the status card was not acceptable, processing

their information was a hassle, or displayed microaggressions (Figure 1.14). In these 39 cases, the clerk's behaviour was often subtle, such as not making small talk, or being brusque during the transaction.

Figure 1.14: Types of Negative or Discriminatory Transactions in Fieldwork



Source: UBCIC Status Card Study Fieldwork
Based on 39 Interactions

The most common subtle behaviour was communicating that the status card was not acceptable in some way (e.g., not valid ID, or not sufficient for a tax exemption due to being expired). Multiple Assessors said they “are sometimes treated like this [identification] the government gave us isn't real or we are doing something wrong by using it.” One Assessor confessed that they “didn't expect people to not believe the status card was really valid ID, as if it was a fake ID” to the extent that they did. Some reported situations where a clerk acted as though they were working outside of their instructions or doing the Assessor a favour by accepting the card, “they said this time they will accept [the status card] but not in the future.”

Another common behaviour was acting as if processing the tax exemption was a hassle. Assessors reported situations in which staff rushed them, rolled their eyes, or ignored them. Assessors reported often feeling as though they were putting undue burden on the clerk processing their status cards. For example:

“[Staff often] became silent during the transaction. I felt very uncomfortable and this shut me down.”

“At some places I feel uncomfortable showing my status card for tax exemption because it takes so long to wait for it to be processed, or a manager is needed and people in the line behind me get angry or impatient.”

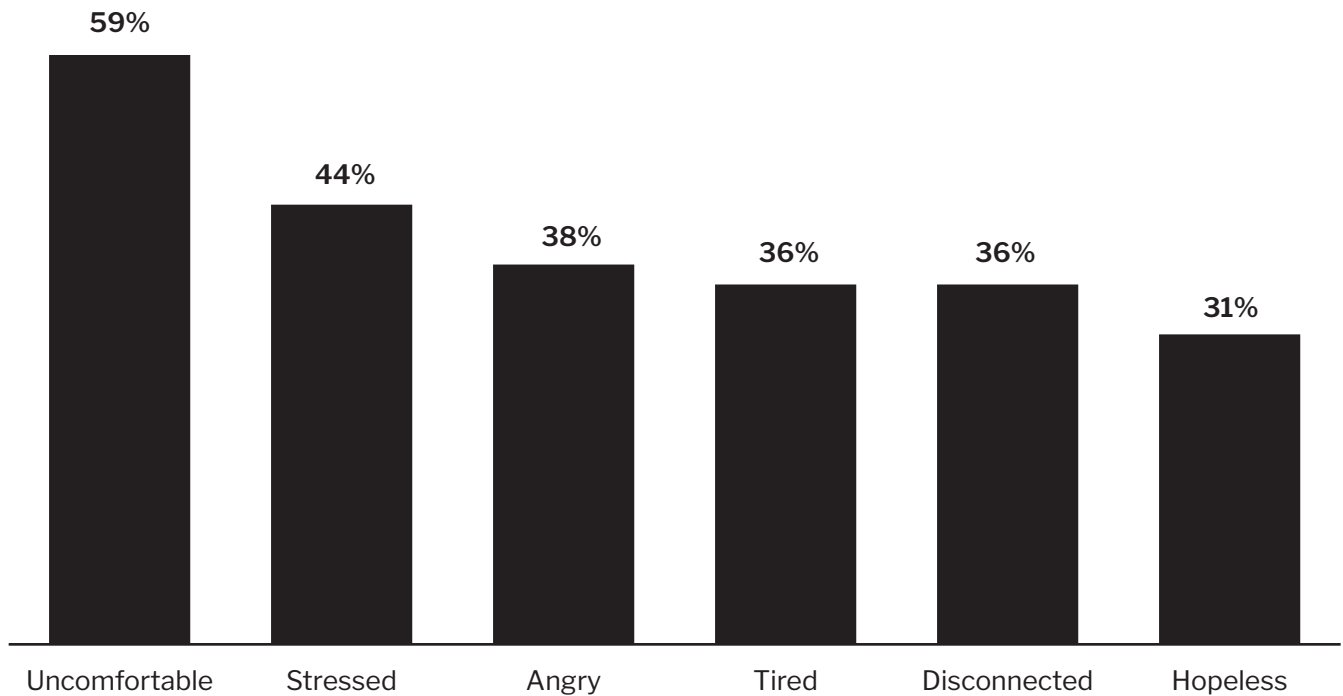
“They didn’t know how to process the tax exemption, they had to page the floor manager. People in the line were very mad at me for holding up the line.”

In some instances, staff were completely unable to help the Assessor, who then had to follow separate channels such as a separate customer service line. In others, implications for store policy were described to the Assessor, “I was told that if I’m using my status card then the return and exchange policy is different, that I only have 10 days. But on the store door it states 30 days.” At another location an Assessor reported “...the manager said I had to choose between getting tax [exemption] or points on my [store points] card.” And at another

location a status card was not accepted: “they told me it wasn’t valid ID because it was laminated.”

In these 39 transactions, the most common emotion recorded by the Assessors after the interaction was being “very” or “somewhat” uncomfortable (59%). Other emotions experienced by a third or more of Assessors ranged from being tired and hopeless, to angry and stressed (Figure 1.15). A fewer number of these Assessors (10% or less of the transactions) noted that they felt embarrassed, oppressed, and confused or flustered. As one Assessor reported, “the first interaction I had was at a bank and I cried when I came back to my vehicle.”

Figure 1.15: Emotions Experienced during Negative or Discriminatory Transactions (very or somewhat responses)



Source: UBCIC Status Card Study Fieldwork
Based on 39 Interactions



██████████ SUPERSTORE is the WORST when u pull out a STATUS CARD 🙄



16w



██████████ I think ██████ should write a letter to Loblaw corporate reminding them just whose land their store is located in and that the Duncan management team should undergo a Cowichan Tribes racial sensitivity course.

16w



██████████ And JYSK IN DUNCAN



16w



██████████ I think it depends where you live and whether ur band has given up there rights 🙄

16w



██████████ For the annoyed employee I just remind them that their place of work is ON a reserve. If they don't like it, go find somewhere else to work. As for the disgruntled customer behind me I ask why did they come to the reserve to do their shopping? If they don't like it, shop somewhere else. Simple. 🙄



16w



██████████ Rude as ever at superstore as to they sigh or a customer will complain

16w



██████████ Everyone with stories needs to do the Survey 😊



16w



██████████ I have no story. Have NOT ever been questioned or asked. The ONLY time I was questioned was from a FN lady behind me in line at the liquor store and she very questionly stated "you're First Nations???" And pointedly looked at me! I looked back at her with a big smile and said "of course I am! Why would you question me?" Lol

16w



██████████ many don't seem to think First Nations can have lighter skin eyes and hair. I'm part

16w



██████████ well that is so much the truth from way way back.

16w



██████████ have a few trying to pass off the ' Métis cards as status cards in cowichan ,which are not legal ,Cowichan tribes is the largest single tribe in British Columbia ,with over 5000 members ! Yet we have always faced racism and bigotry on our own territory which covers most of south eastern Vancouver island all the way to the lower Fraser river ,super store receives the most complaints in cowichan



16w

The names of commenters have been redacted from this publication despite these comments being posted on public platforms. This is to protect participants from hostility and potential retaliation.

Supervisor intervention

In 13 cases, Assessors escalated their interaction to a supervisor. In three of these cases, the issue was resolved positively by the supervisor with no other issues noted by the Assessor (the supervisor was friendly, helpful, and/or polite). In two cases, Assessors were still refused a sales tax exemption once the issue was escalated to a supervisor. In some cases, Assessors could not bring themselves to ask for the intervention of a supervisor, “I did not expect that I would not be able to request a manager or supervisor during any of these transactions because I was truly worried that I would be embarrassed or treated poorly.”

Rudeness and discrimination occurred in almost 50% of the interactions with supervisors, expressed through verbal or non-verbal rudeness (15%), acting as though processing the information was a hassle (23%), and microaggressions (15%). Finally, some discriminatory behaviour was noted. In one case, the supervisor told the Assessor they did not look Indigenous, and in another, the supervisor asked for information that was not needed for the transaction.

MEDIA ANALYSIS

News media sets up public agenda and frames the confines of debate, specifically supporting the public to define issues and actors, and to suggest solutions.¹¹ News frames are “central organizing idea(s) for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue,”¹² and move the reader/viewer through complex content by suggesting how to think and feel about the issue, often through the use of subtle signals like metaphors, catchphrases, and visuals.¹³ News frames are derived from society/culture, and help the consumer to define problems, diagnose causes, prescribe moral judgements, and suggest remedies.¹⁴ Media coverage of poor people, for example, generally positions the poor as belonging to one or the other categories of “deserving” or “undeserving” poor. Cues are provided through phrasing such as “down on their luck” and “can’t catch a break” to describe the deserving poor. This helps to orient the reader to adopt a sympathetic stance toward the subject. The selection of facts and proof points by journalists is another mechanism through which frames are constructed; the elements chosen and presented all influence readers’ perspectives and opinions.¹⁵ Essentially, a key function of media is creating the “pictures in our heads” or virtual shortcuts for understanding issues outside of our direct experiences.¹⁶

¹¹ McCombs, M. (2004). *Setting the Agenda*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press. Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58.

¹² Gamson, W. A., & Modigliani, A. (1989). Media discourse and public opinion on nuclear power: A constructionist approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 1–37. Hallahan, K. (1999). Seven models of framing: Implications for public relations. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 11(3), 205–242. p. 57.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Entman, 1993.

¹⁵ McCombs, 2004.

¹⁶ Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public Opinion*. p. 29

Status cards are outside the realm of direct experience for most people; as such, the public relies on the media to help them to make sense of the issues. The project team therefore believed that a media analysis was a critical line of inquiry for this study, given the role of media in shaping public opinion and public policy.

The media analysis examined how the purposes of status cards were described in the 51 articles examined, as well as the key themes or topics associated with status cards presented in these articles.

Media representation of status card purposes

Fifty-one media samples were analyzed to determine if each story, column, or letter described what a status card is, and if so, what purpose was mentioned. The results are presented in Table 2 (as a number of the media samples examined listed more than one purpose of a status card, the total count of 69 in Table 2 exceeds that of the 51 media samples examined). Eleven of 51 stories included no context or description about the genesis or purpose of status cards despite status cards being central to the story, column, or letter. These include two stories about this study which did not explain what a status card is, or its purpose. Tax exemption was the most common purpose attributed to a status card, followed by use of status cards for proof of Indigenous identity or for health/dental coverage. Only four stories described status cards as being connected to treaty or constitutional relationship between Canada and First Nations.

Table 2: Media description of status card purpose

Rank	Purpose of Card
1	tax exemption (22)
2	no description of purpose (11)
3	proof of identification, primary identification (8)
4	health coverage (6)
5	prescriptions or drugs (6)
6	dental (6)
7	border crossing (5)
8	treaty rights (5)
9	eye exams or glasses (2)
10	housing (2)
11	jobs in US (1)

Status card fraud

Status card fraud was the dominant theme of the earlier period of articles examined in this study (1980-2010). Between 1980-2010, 68% of stories in the sample were about status card fraud.

Federal officials are the most commonly cited spokespeople in these stories, often delegitimizing status cards as a valid form of identification.

“Illegal immigrants, especially Asians and Mexicans, have used fake status cards to enter Canada from the US.” Andre Labelle, immigration official in *New Indian Status Cards aimed at halting fraud*, Edmonton Journal, February 28, 1994

“The funding that’s available for Indians is not a bottomless pit.” Terri Harrison, spokesperson for Indian Affairs in *Ottawa Probes Indian status cards*, Janice Tibbetts, January 11, 1999

“...the federal government warned banks that they should not be accepting status cards as primary identification.” *Ottawa Probes Indian status cards*, Janice Tibbetts, January 11, 1999

While much of the focus on fraudulent cards ceased in 2010 (presumably because new status cards were in circulation by this time), present-day stories of discrimination related to status card use in the media illustrate that the fraud association with status cards persists in public opinion. The source of conflict in several stories arises with cashiers and workers assuming a status card is fake or that the cardholder is trying to deceive them:

“According to the transcript, the bank manager initially thought the pair were South Asian, and didn’t appear to understand what an Indian Status card was.” *Watchdog says arrest, treatment of Indigenous girl ‘inexcusable’*, Mike Hagar, *Globe and Mail*, April 7, 2022

“[Bhamji] is both South Asian and Indigenous, as well as Muslim. The bank branch in Clayton Heights told him his federal status card must be a fake.” *Indigenous Muslim man refused service; Single father accuses TD Bank in Surrey*

of discrimination after status card called fake, Gordon McIntyre, *Vancouver Province*, March 2, 2022

“Sometimes they look at the picture on the card, they look at me and they say, ‘Are you native? Are you full (blooded)?’ Or ‘You’re not 100 per cent (aboriginal), right?’” *Brittany LeBorgne in Retailers often ill-informed about Indian Status Card*, Christopher Curtis, *Montreal Gazette*, September 10, 2015

“[Ramona Stonefish] Jacobs said she became upset when the customs official looked at her son and asked, “is he 50 per cent Indian...he looks more like a n*** to me.”** *Confrontation could bring about changes in policies*, *Canadian Press*, *Regina Leader Post*, February 13, 1982

Experiences of discrimination when using a status card

Experiences of discrimination when using a status card were mentioned in 26 stories (51%) in the media analysis sample. Sites where status cards were not honoured, or were accepted only after some resistance or a complaint, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Sites where status cards were refused

As identification	Tax exemption	Access goods or services
Applying for a passport	Home Hardware	Dental clinic
To vote in a federal election	Holt Renfrew	Ice hut rental
Applying for a learner’s permit (auto)	Consignment store	
Opening a bank account	Other retail	
Conducting routine banking		
To cross the US border		

In first-hand accounts of experiences using their status cards, First Nations people describe the reactions from storekeepers or business that include: commentary on appearance (e.g., “you don’t look Native”); treated with suspicion and subjected to extra security measures; treated as an inconvenience, burden, hassle, or annoyance; treated with curiosity and genuine interest; eye-rolling, sighing, shrugging, snickering, whispering, huffing and puffing; and given dirty looks or a “long look”.

“I don’t know a Native person who has a status card who hasn’t experienced discrimination in using that status card in a wide variety of scenarios.” Pam Palmater in *Indigenous people often denied access to Canadian institutions because of status card misinformation*, Bridgette Watson, January 25, 2020

“The minute Duane Gastant’ Aucoin takes out his Indian status card in Pembroke, the ‘dirty looks’ start. ‘Nobody says anything to me, but they don’t have to. [It’s] their body language, their eyes, [It’s] the feeling that you don’t belong.” Gastant’ Aucoin in *The Ottawa Valley has a racism problem. These people have been living it*, Priscilla Ki Sun Hwang, CBC News, December 7, 2020

“...the way they demeaned you, and the way we were treated very rudely and put down and kind of snickered at. One guy was snickering the whole time. One guy said ‘Is he still standing there? Just ignore them.” Brandon Nolan in *Younger Nolan wants apology from border staff; Denied entry to Canada*, Jeremy Sandler, National Post, August 7, 2007

“Millie Falconer and her sister visiting from British Columbia, went to a store in the Stanley Park Mall and she presented her status card to pay for the items. The clerk became annoyed and called her ‘a stupid

Indian,’ Falconer said. Falconer and her sister left the store and the clerk, who was non-white, followed them, calling them names. ‘We sat in the car for half an hour. We didn’t know what had just happened,’ she told the group. ‘Indigenous people are still putting up with this.’” *Local minorities applaud minister’s call for data to help fight systemic racism*, Liz Monterio, Waterloo Regional Record, October 26, 2016

In these articles, First Nations cardholders describe a range of emotions and anticipatory and responsive behaviours, including: not presenting the status card, even where eligible; anxiety in presenting the card; “steeling” oneself; numbness; “shrugging it off”; and exhibiting patience and respect.

“For me, just the action of pulling out the card and handing it over, it gives me anxiety. Because you know that as soon as you do that, something is going to change, just their attitude or the way they see you, it changes. I don’t want to feel anxious but I do. Because I’ve gotten bad reactions.” Brittany LeBorgne in *Retailers often ill-informed about Indian Status Card*, Christopher Curtis, Montreal Gazette, September 10, 2015

“When I was pregnant with my first son, my mother, a residential-school survivor, told me under no circumstances to let a health care worker other than my midwife check on my newborn in my home. I would be “flagged” in the system simply because I’m Indigenous. My status card alone would raise the risk of my infant son being taken from me, based solely on a social worker’s judgment.” Laura Vukson, *Reflections of Rural Racism First Person*, Globe and Mail, December 2, 2020

Another key theme within articles involving first-hand accounts and/or comments from status First Nations people relates to the need for public education about racism, stereotyping, Crown-First Nations relationships, the *Indian Act*, and status cards.

“Canadians are undereducated about Indigenous peoples, treaty relationships, and the Indian Act, we need more education and public awareness if we want to promote a greater understanding and dispel myths.” Hadley Freidland in *Indigenous McGill lecturer Orenda Boucher’s status card rejected while shopping*, Miceala Wiseman, March 8, 2017

“The government should use the controversy as an opportunity to improve public education on why Indigenous people hold status cards in the first place. ‘A lot of Ontarians and Canadians across the country still to this day, 2017, don’t fully understand the reasoning behind it and how this country was founded. Until we get better understanding, the movement towards reconciliation is never really going to be achieved. It has to come through education.” Nipissing First Nation Chief Scott McLeod in *Ontario Human Rights commission asked to deal with controversial ice hut ad*, CBC News, January 5, 2017

“What ends up happening is you have to constantly explain yourself, which is fine but it can be exhausting. It’s like, the moment you leave the reserve you’re an ambassador and every interaction,

on some level, is political. Even if you’re not a political person, as an indigenous person, you’re born into a political situation.” Brittany LeBorgne in *Retailers often ill-informed about Indian Status Card*, Christopher Curtis, *Montreal Gazette*, September 10, 2015

“Stuff for free” associated with status cards

Within the sample, “benefits” (8), “free” (3), “special” (3), and “entitled” (3) were words that figured prominently in describing status cards.

“The card determines who receives special federal services and tax exemptions totalling as much as \$8,000 per card holder per year in such areas as sales taxes, drugs, prescriptions and eye exams.” Rick Mofina, *Native status card fraud cost \$62M a year: records*, *Ottawa Citizen*, January 4, 2001

“...a paper status card which can be used to obtain free housing, and services on their home reserve as well as free prescription drugs.” Bill Curry, *Indian status cards open to abuse: audit*, *Montreal Gazette*, January 7, 2004

“Fraud and misuse of Indian status cards – which entitle natives to everything from free drug care, to tax-free purchases, to jobs in the United States – have been costing taxpayers an estimated \$33 million a year.” *Native Status cards are easily forged*, *Vancouver Sun*, May 05, 2007



[REDACTED]
I feel all Canadians should pay the same, to be given special treatment has been their biggest fight.



This theme additionally dominated an unanticipated additional set of data collected through this study – that of comments on social media and media posts about this status card study. Letters to the editor, comments on web stories included in the sample, and social media comments received while promoting the study, reflect that common public sentiment is that status cards shouldn't exist, that they confer undeserved benefits, that benefits conferred by status cards actually hurt Indigenous people, and that racism experienced by Indigenous people when using a status card is somehow deserved as a result of this “special” treatment:

“Although I am from the British Isles you don't see me with my hand out. I am a self-made person and I work hard for everything I have. I don't have my hand out and bellyache about something that happened to my ancestors from generations past...”

Letter to the editor, *They want cake and to eat it too*, The Brantford Expositor, January 13, 2007

“Here is an easy solution... just pay tax like everyone else. I'm tired of paying for your 'right' to be 'special'.” Comment on theglobeandmail.com, *Indigenous leaders to study racism linked to status card use at banks, retailers*, Globe and Mail, Canadian Press, June 10, 2022

“Fear or Embarrassment? Have some pride for christ sake! stop blaming whites for all your problems, my guilt tank is empty.”

Comment on vancouver.sun.com, *Survey launched to gauge racism Indigenous people experience with status cards*, Tiffany Crawford, Vancouver Sun, June 10, 2022

“If you enjoy special rights and privileges and tax exemptions that other people do not get, then expect people to be angry.”

Comment on vancouver.sun.com, *Survey launched to gauge racism Indigenous people experience with status cards*, Tiffany Crawford, Vancouver Sun, June 10, 2022

“If you shop pay taxes, the rest is BS.”

Comment on dailyhive.com, *Holt Renfrew denies tax exemption to Indigenous customer*, Ty Jadah, Daily Hive, March 29, 2022

“Honestly I think if you can afford to buy anything at Holt Renfrew, I think you can pay the tax.” Comment on dailyhive.com, *Holt Renfrew denies tax exemption to Indigenous customer*, Ty Jadah, Daily Hive, March 29, 2022

“How can Indians be so arrogant to think they have special powers at birth. Both the American aboriginal and the Maori were both beaten in their territory. Nothing special about either of them.” Comment on Status Card Survey Facebook Post, UBCIC, June 24, 2022

“I feel all Canadians should pay the same, to be given special treatment has been their biggest fight.” Comment on Status Card Survey Facebook Post, UBCIC, June 24, 2022

“If you are going to use your status card not to pay taxes and contribute to Canadian society, expect a little blow back.” Comment on theglobeandmail.com, *Indigenous leaders to study racism linked to status card use at banks, retailers*, Globe and Mail, Canadian Press, June 10, 2022



[REDACTED] · 1 DAY AGO

Vancouver Sun continues to put out these lefty victim articles. This “news” outlet isn’t reporting the news anymore. There are just another SJW activist opinion website.

REPLY 1 REPLY 9 1



[REDACTED] · 1 DAY AGO

[REDACTED] - [view message](#)

people need to be smart enough to realize opinions aren't news. and news outlets need to just tell the news and forget about the opinions.

REPLY 3 1

SHARE FLAG



[REDACTED] · 1 DAY AGO

[REDACTED]

You should be angry at the government then, not the people. Figures your kind would say something like that

REPLY 1 REPLY 0 2



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I feel the same as you and think it is unfair to be lumped into something. I was appalled when I saw a status card and what it said on it, I have several good friends who have them and seriously they still pay tax on most things.



[REDACTED]

We should eliminate taxes for everyone and no more discrimination . And no social programs, no welfare, no medical care. Works for me let’s go

Hide 12w



[REDACTED]

I experienced idiocy and weirdest looks like I'm trying to rip them off! 🤔😬

Like Reply Hide 15w



[REDACTED]

Comments I receive . Is why don"t You pay like WE all do . comments from store clerks out of town like Prince George , Vancouver . Racist .

Like Reply Hide 12w



The names of commenters have been redacted from this publication despite these comments being posted on public platforms. This is to protect participants from hostility and potential retaliation.

Depictions of First Nations status card holders as violent and aggressive

In two highly publicized stories where conflict arose with Indigenous people about status cards not being honoured (*Vancouver police officers suspended for handcuffing Indigenous man, granddaughter at BMO* and *Indigenous Muslim man refused service; Single father accuses TD Bank in Surrey of discrimination after status card called fake*) institutional officials were quick to involve law enforcement. At the Bank of Montreal it was on the advice of the federal government and at Toronto Dominion it was to investigate allegations of assault, for allegedly throwing a crumpled paper in the direction of the teller.

In a number of less publicized stories (*Confrontation could bring about changes in policies, Morris Home Hardware facing human rights complaint, London woman alleges discrimination after status card refused, and Holt Renfrew issues apology after Ojibway man's status card rejected in Montreal store*), First Nations people denied status card use were charged for assault, called abusive and told to leave the store, labelled rude and accused of throwing items, and/or escorted out of the store.

In contrast, a number of stories involving non-Indigenous people breaking the law and purchasing fake status cards are positioned as innocents who were “duped” (for example, “The RCMP is investigating complaints that thousands of Quebecers were duped into buying bogus status cards so they could receive tax exemptions.” *Phoney status cards promise tax breaks*, Edmonton Journal, March 25, 1992).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The entirety of the literature review is available as Annex 5. This review illuminated three interrelated themes.

Negative experiences with the use of status cards

The grey and academic literature includes some examination of the negative experiences of First Nations persons when using status cards. This is often within the context of broader studies on anti-Indigenous discrimination, or within reports on social, economic, and health conditions of Indigenous populations. The review of this literature has identified:

- Cases of overt racism tied to the use of status cards in the early 2000s (Browne et al., 2001).
- Experiences of racism or discrimination with the use of status cards that were not the primary focus of articles, rather they were interspersed into other social or health topics that affect Indigenous populations (Desmoulins, 2009; Goldstein et al., 2022; Miller, 2010; Waite, 2010). For example, Browne et al. (2001).
- Discriminatory treatment to those who present status cards upon seeking financial support at a Canadian university (Bombay et al., 2015).
- Negative body language and “signs of exasperation” when using status cards at retail locations in Ontario (McCaskill et al., 2007).

- Long-lasting effects of racism with the use of status cards, describing how repeated racist and discriminatory actions lead to a reluctance of First Nations peoples to use their cards. This includes hiding their status card in efforts to “white wash” themselves and avoid harm and discrimination when interacting with law enforcement (Davis-Delano et al., 2021); avoiding using their cards in urban centres and larger cities, citing concerns that the process to do so is a hassle and often leads to hostile situations (Senese et al., 2013); and being reluctant to hunt and practice treaty rights due to a reliance on status cards for identification for this purpose (Treaty 8 Environmental Assessment Team, 2012).
- Personal experiences of dehumanizing and differential treatment from non-Indigenous customers based on the use of a status card; overt racism, disrespect, and discrimination from retailers; and hostile environments sparking feelings of embarrassment, disappointment, and anger (Pedri-Spade, 2016).

Lack of public knowledge on status cards resulting in racism and discrimination

The literature describes the impact of the lack of public knowledge about status cards and their uses, and resulting experiences of racism, discrimination, stereotyping, or harassment, amongst other discriminatory behaviours and attitudes (Desmoulins, 2009; Senese et al., 2013; Pedri-Spade, 2016; Curtis, 2020; Lamberink, 2020; and Watson, 2020). As one example, a status card was rendered “inadequate” at international borders due to a lack of available information about, and

understanding of, the card’s use and purpose – a situation largely inconsistent with cross-border treaty rights (e.g., Jay Treaty) (Mailhot, 2019).

A hostile environment may be created due to this lack of knowledge amongst retailers, staff, and other non-Indigenous consumers. The end result is First Nations peoples being faced with ridicule, judgement, and piercing hostility for the use of their card and assertion of rights to do so (Pedri-Spade, 2016; Senese et al., 2013).

Status cards used as a tool to assert racist behaviours and remarks

Negative experiences can be a byproduct not just of ignorance, but rather a targeted action by non-Indigenous people to perpetuate racism. The literature includes reports of mockery and bullying targeting First Nations based on their use of a status card (FitzMaurice et al., 2013), and in one case, references to status cards were used to send racist messaging in protests against First Nations treaty rights (Tattie, 2020).

One publication offers insights into the worldview which may be underlying these occurrences. This researcher asserts that status cards were designed to produce “documentary evidence” to monitor and keep track of First Nations and to authenticate access to services. Within this legislated structure is a power imbalance in which colonial governments and its settler constituents adopt a worldview distorted by power and supremacy, where both elements are blinded by deception and rooted in racism. Therefore, the impacts of and meanings behind the manipulation of status cards by settlers to assert racist actions and behaviours are much more than the effects observed or captured on the surface (Mamers, 2017).



Future Directions

This study has found that discrimination is a near-universal experience amongst status First Nations individuals that have used a status card. This experience is profoundly negative, particularly for those experiencing other compounding and overlapping forms of oppression, and shapes people’s behaviour for a lifetime. This experience is further reinforced by media coverage and social media spaces about status card usage that platform anti-Indigenous racism.

Allegations and incidents of racism and discrimination, particularly those experienced in the form of microaggressions, often allow for plausible deniability. In this project, this plausible deniability is disputed by the specific, clear, and consistent evidence gathered through multiple methods.

Despite the fact that status cards are a catalyst that unleashes multiple forms of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping – an issue well-known amongst status First Nations – few, if any, proactive strategies appear to be in place to mitigate this harm. This study has attempted to consolidate evidence on this well-recognized issue, and its findings point to the following future directions. As racism and discrimination are issues indivisible from Canadian society’s widespread and typically subconscious belief systems about Indigenous inferiority, these future directions should be advanced as part of, and within, broader efforts of anti-colonialism and anti-racism.

Basic standards from the federal government

The concept of Indian status and the associated administration of status cards is entirely a construct of the federal government and federal legislation. These cards are issued by the Government of Canada under Canadian law, and confer some form of obligation on the part of the federal government to ensure a user can safely carry and use these cards. This includes an obligation to ensure that those operating businesses and services in Canada understand what a status card is. The reality is, however, that the experience of accessing, carrying, and utilizing the status card – and the associated racism and burden of education of service providers and retailers – is currently entirely borne by status First Nations individuals.

The federal government can demonstrate leadership and implement significant improvements to better serve those to whom it issues these cards. This includes improvements to both the process for obtaining a status card, and how information is organized and disseminated to the public, retailers, and service providers about this form of identification and associated uses. Recent material issued by Indigenous Services Canada states that “service providers are aware and recognize the Secure Certificate of Indian Status” and that it “may be used as an identity document” (with qualifications with respect to crossing the Canada/United States border).¹⁷ However, this study has demonstrated that these are overstatements. Specifically, the federal government should:

- Clearly renounce the racism that status First Nations experience when using this form of identification.

¹⁷ Indigenous Services Canada. (n.d.). *Important Information about the Secure Certificate of Indian Status*.

- Clearly articulate the rights of First Nations governments as self-determining, including with respect to what tax regimes are applicable to their own peoples.
- Significantly improve its adherence to its own service standard for processing applications for status cards, and publicly publish its performance data relative to meeting this standard.
- Develop plain-language, standardized public information about status cards for retailers and other front-line staff, in particular a clear online toolbox addressing the question “I am serving someone who is using their status card, what do I need to know?” This should include a clear statement that an expired status card is not invalid.
- Radically improve its distribution network to service providers and retailers about status cards and the fact that they remain valid after expiry.
- Work with First Nations to establish a complaints protocol(s) or process(s) to support continued learning amongst retailers and service providers, and a safe experience for status card users.
- Develop options for, and engage with First Nations on, a consistent and streamlined systems solution for use of status cards to reduce time spent at the till in a way that benefits status card holders, and makes the process less variable and paper-heavy for retailers.
- Add a provision to the status cards to state that an expired card is not invalid.

Enhance training for retailers and service providers

Status cards are basic legal identification similar to a passport or driver’s licence. Additionally, use of a status card for the purposes of a tax exemption in the majority of cases takes place on-reserve, presumably where retailers would have enhanced knowledge of and familiarity with status cards and how to process them efficiently. Yet, a key finding of this study is that status cards are seemingly unknown as legal identification to many service providers and retailers, and that processing them is inconvenient. This is harmful to status First Nations people. Supported by efforts by groups like the BC Business Council, retailers and service providers should:

- Build basic information about status cards as legal identification into the training and onboarding for all staff.
- In retail contexts in particular:
 - Establish clear and efficient workflows for status card use, to make this common experience more seamless for all involved.
 - Ensure training about the tax exemption, and how to appropriately process the tax exemption.
 - Ensure orientation to expected behaviours of staff when processing a status card – including definitions, examples, and negative consequences for displaying racism, discrimination, stereotyping, and microaggressions.

Improve media stewardship

This study has demonstrated how common and harmful anti-Indigenous stereotypes are frequently reinforced by media coverage of status cards, including comments sections of news articles on this subject. Social media spaces about status card usage are platforms for anti-Indigenous vitriol. These industries hold responsibility to increase safety and disrupt racism, and should:

- Cease reiterating misinformation about status cards and instead utilize and publish links to reputable sources of information about status cards as explainers or background.
 - First Nations political organizations should consider creating materials suitable for newsroom staff about the genesis and purpose of status cards.
- Take seriously their responsibility for comment moderation, both on news sites and when shared to official social media channels.
- Employ credible editorial tools (e.g., *Reporting in Indigenous Communities* riic.ca) to reduce the continued feeding of anti-Indigenous stereotyping in news headlines and articles.

Continue to study and monitor change

Although the experience of racism in the use of status cards is near-universal amongst status First Nations, and the mention of status cards elicits overt and numerous racist responses in online forums, there is very little data collected, studies published, or indicators monitored about this experience. Increasingly, there is broad policy support for the collection and monitoring of race-based data to support equity and dignity for all persons. Future work pursuant to this study should continue, and specifically:

- Be a matter of focus of human rights offices and associated studies.
- Indicators and data collection about experience in the use of status cards, and outcomes data related to the experience of racism, should be embedded in surveying and performance monitoring at local, regional, provincial, and national levels, including by First Nations governments in their primary data collection and research projects.
 - These should consider the unique experiences of LGBTQ2S+ persons as well as other groups that are experiencing intersecting and compounding forms of oppression and discrimination.
- Be tied to clear action plans and accountability for change.
- Be rooted in Indigenous data sovereignty.



Go check out ANY indigenous news story on #GlobalBc Facebook. The comments are always turned off. Why? Racism is at an all time high.



This study concludes with a sampling of the calls to action provided by survey respondents and Assessors:

Status Card Administration

“Make the cards themselves more accessible, it is so hard to get now. I had to wait six months for my children’s status cards and I had to send away their ID.”

“[Status] Cards should never expire but the photos should be renewed.”

“I do not believe there should be expiry dates on our cards. Our rights and identity never expires. Even if there is an expiry date, stores and industry should accept this.”

“It would be nice if there was consistency in how status cards are accepted for tax exemption, in some places it was a big form, some places it was my telephone number, sometimes they wanted my email. There is no consistency on what information they collect. Even in stores side by side, they have two different processes.”

“I wish there was a universal system that worked like when they scan your Care card at the hospital, you scan or swipe and it is all there. For status cards it would be nice to have one universal system that will say you are status and NEVER renewing them.”

Public Education

“A good start would be talking about it more, general education in schools and post-secondary schools, this means learning about the history of Indigenous people. People aren’t taught about status cards. Education needs to change.”

“Publish a simple language pamphlet outlining the status card holders rights, and the Settler responsibilities, and remind THEM of their legal obligations in honouring Status Cards. Distribute the pamphlet to EVERYONE so everyone knows.”

Training

“Anyone working in any retail front line work needs a lot more mandatory training regarding the Canadian genocide and the after effects of the abuse n trauma we walk in daily.”

“Companies need to take responsibility in the education of their employees. I’ve worked retail for many years and the racism within these stores is rampant toward First Nations.”

“There needs to be a consistent training on the use of Status Cards across the province and country for service providers – that it IS a valid form of identification, that it is not a “discount”, and that it is discrimination to deny point of service tax.”

Recourse

“There should be an online complaint process for when issues occur while using status cards.”

“Part of lease agreements should be that store staff should have cultural safety and competency training. This would help to create understanding; hopefully!”

ANNEX 1: UBCIC RESOLUTION

OUR LAND IS OUR FUTURE

UNION OF BRITISH COLUMBIA INDIAN CHIEFS

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UNION OF B.C. INDIAN CHIEFS
CHIEFS COUNCIL
JUNE 30TH, 2021
VIRTUAL MEETING

Resolution no. 2021-33

RE: Support for UBCIC Intervention in Maxwell Johnson's Human Rights Complaint

WHEREAS Indigenous peoples in Canada continue to confront discriminatory, negligent, and oppressive policing – including surveillance, racial profiling, and excessive force – that is tied to the destructive colonial legacy of institutionalized racism and violence against Indigenous peoples;

WHEREAS Maxwell Johnson and his twelve-year-old granddaughter ██████████, who are members of the Heiltsuk Nation, were subjected to an appalling and traumatizing display of racism when they were racially profiled, wrongly accused of fraud, and handcuffed while trying to open a bank account at a Bank of Montreal (BMO) branch in Vancouver on December 20, 2019;

WHEREAS the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, which the government of Canada has adopted without qualification, and has, alongside the government of BC, committed to implement, affirms:

Article 2: Indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity.

Article 7(1): Indigenous individuals have the rights to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.

Article 18: Indigenous peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures, as well as to maintain and develop their own indigenous decision-making institutions;

WHEREAS in an open letter sent on January 23, 2020 to the Vancouver Police Board (VPB), UBCIC condemned BMO's attempts to minimize and frame the incident as "unfortunate" and a "learning opportunity," and called on the VPB to conduct an impartial, independent review of VPD and BMO member and staff conduct that would thoroughly examine the racial profiling and racist dynamics at play;

2021-33

Page 1 of 2

WHEREAS the BMO bank incident highlighted the critical need for corporations and law enforcement agencies to be held accountable for any racist misconduct and violations of Indigenous Title and Rights, and for them to actively acknowledge and understand the lived experiences of Indigenous people – to understand that handcuffing an Indigenous child and forcing her to witness her grandfather’s arrest replicates and perpetuates the horrific violence that defined the Indian Residential School System and the intergenerational trauma that stemmed from it;

WHEREAS Maxwell Johnson and his granddaughter ██████ have filed human rights complaints against the VPD with the BC Human Rights Tribunal (BHCRT) with the intention of holding institutions accountable for systemic racism and procuring justice for their family, their community, and First Nations so that other visible minorities can feel safe;

WHEREAS by Resolution 2018-17, 2019-25, and 2020-02, UBCIC has a strong mandate to address racism and the lack of protection afforded to Indigenous Title and Rights that is reflected across all aspects of society, including in the overrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in the child welfare and criminal justice systems, the racial profiling and service denial seen in the BMO bank situation, and the excessive force and pervasive bias shown in the Crown and law enforcement response to Indigenous land defenders stewarding their territories and lands;

WHEREAS UBCIC has precedent to intervene in Tribunal complaints to provide a better understanding of the fraught relationship between the BC police and Indigenous peoples, successfully intervening in the *Campbell v. Vancouver Police Board, 2019 BCHRT 12* case which led to the BCHRT ruling that VPD officers discriminated against an Indigenous mother, Deborah Campbell, in 2016 when they physically and forcefully blocked her from the arrest of her son; and

WHEREAS Maxwell Johnson and his legal team have sought UBCIC’s support and UBCIC has the opportunity to apply for Intervenor Status in his and ██████’s human rights complaint with the BCHRT.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council fully supports Maxwell Johnson and ██████ in their complaint filed against the Vancouver Police Department with the BC Human Rights Tribunal;

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council recognizes the critical importance of this complaint setting a precedent for redressing anti-Indigenous racism and holding institutions and those in positions of power accountable for their racist misconduct and violations of Indigenous Title and Rights; and

THEREFORE BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the UBCIC Chiefs Council supports and approves UBCIC’s application for Intervenor Status in Maxwell Johnson and ██████’s Tribunal complaint, contingent upon funding and resources.

Moved: Louisa Housty-Jones, Heiltsuk Nation (Proxy)
Seconded: Kukpi Lee Spahan, Coldwater Indian Band
Disposition: Carried
Date: June 30, 2021

ANNEX 2: METHODOLOGY

This project’s four lines of inquiry had distinct, but mutually reinforcing, methodologies. The literature review and media analysis, by definition, looked at existing information on this topic, and provided a rationale to go forward with this project. The key themes identified in the literature review and media analysis informed the design of questions used in both the survey and fieldwork. The survey and the fieldwork created new data and have contributed to the evolving knowledge base on discrimination associated with use of status cards in BC. An unexpected additional source of evidence were the comments posted by some persons to the social media promotion of the survey and to the news articles covering this study.

Literature Review Methodology

The literature review component of this project was undertaken by the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health (NCCIH) as a rapid review. A rapid review was requested, in part due to the compressed time frame of this project, and secondly in anticipation that there would be limited sources available which directly addressed discrimination in status card use.

The methodology focused on a search of Google and Google Scholar databases to identify common and unique exposures to racism and discrimination with the use of First Nation status cards as recognized and regulated under the *Indian Act*. The following search terms were used: (“First Nation*” OR Indian) AND (“status card*”) AND (racism OR discrimination OR stereotype OR profiling). Results were restricted to literature written in English and focused on sources published from 1980 onwards to capture experiences from the initial expansion of Indian status associated with Bill C-31 passed in 1985, to the present day. Sources were included based on any mentioning of racist and/or discriminatory experiences related to the use of status cards,

whereas sources that focused on other forms of identification beyond First Nations status (e.g., Métis citizenship identification, recognition by an Inuit Land Claim Organization), as well as racism and discrimination not tied to the use of status cards, were excluded. With the search strategy employed, 82 sources were identified and 66 met the inclusion criteria, 43 of which describe unique cases of racist and/or discriminatory experiences with the use of status cards (the remaining 23 describe duplicate cases).

Limitations

As the review encompassed English news media as well as published literature in English, there is a possibility that some French or Indigenous language media reports may have been excluded. Another limitation concerns the lack of depth in the reviewed literature; there was little academic literature with specific attention to the use of status cards, with only one study that centred solely of experiences of the use of status cards from the perspectives of First Nations individuals, and one additional study that focused on status card use and origins from the perspective of settlers.

Media Analysis Methodology

The project team conducted a content analysis of mainstream media coverage about status cards, how they are described in Canadian media and stories of discrimination between January 1, 1980 and September 1, 2022. A Lexis Nexis search using terms “status card”, “Indian Status Card”, and “discrimination” or “retail” or “identification”, supplemented by Melwater Media Monitoring clippings, Google news search, and newspapers.com clipping from the same time period yielded a total of 647 stories.

After classified ads, job postings, duplicate articles, and stories that only peripherally mentioned Indian status cards were eliminated from the sample, 51 units including stories, columns, and letters (stories) remained which met the following criteria:

- The article’s primary topic is discrimination when using a status card; or
- The article includes a first-hand account of discrimination while using a status card as identification or for tax exemption purposes when purchasing goods and services; or
- The article’s primary topic is Indian status cards.

The project team analyzed the 51 units along the following paths of inquiry:

- 1) Did each unit include a description of what status cards are?
 - a) If a description of Indian status cards was included, what did it say about the purpose of the cards?

- 2) A thematic analysis of the first-hand accounts of status card use and discrimination to ascertain:
 - a) The sites where this discrimination occurred (e.g., retail, essential services);
 - b) The types of discrimination experienced when presenting a status card; and
 - c) Reaction by institutions or retailers to claims of discrimination.

Survey Methodology

The online survey (Annex 3) was designed to understand the past experiences of status First Nations when they use their status card for purchases or as a form of identification. In order to minimize survey fatigue as a driver for non-response and to optimize a response rate, the inquiry was limited to eight closed-ended questions, and a final open-ended question which asked for anything else that the respondent felt was helpful in understanding First Nations’ experiences when using their status card.

The survey content was informed by (1) the literature review, (2) a scan of recent news media reports particularly those articles reporting persons’ experiences, and (3) the Indigenous Peoples Survey used in the *In Plain Sight* review examining Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination in the BC health system.¹⁸ The draft online survey was reviewed by the project team, staff at the UBCIC, and the company which hosted and analyzed the survey responses. The project team and the company which hosted the survey both had experience in designing and administering the two surveys used in the *In Plain Sight* review.

¹⁸ Turpel-Lafond, 2020.

The survey was structured to solicit information about:

- Where the status card is used;
- Experience of discrimination when using the card, by frequency;
- Types of discrimination experienced, by frequency;
- Any reasons for avoidance of the use of status cards;
- Making complaints about negative experiences or barriers when using a status card; and
- Actions to minimize the potential for discrimination when using a status card.

The frequency assessment of experiences used a variation of a Likert scale: all the time, often, sometimes, rarely, never/no, and not applicable (or no opinion).

The demographic questions were narrowed to data points seen to be pertinent to understanding the survey results and which could support cross tabulation analysis.

Therefore, three supplemental questions asked: the age group of the respondents; whether they lived in an urban, remote, or rural area; and their gender identity.

Survey Platform and Promotion

The survey was uploaded to an electronic platform that supported all devices, including cell phones, tablets, and laptop/desktop computers. A survey microsite was published on the UBCIC website with a survey invitation and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

The website and survey were promoted on social media with links providing immediate access to the survey. The survey was fully anonymous, with no ability to backtrack to even the geographic region of the respondent.

Promotional business cards with survey QR code were produced and made available at political forums for the UBCIC, First Nations Summit, and BC Assembly of First Nations.

The initial time period that the survey was open was June 2, 2022 to June 31, 2022. It was extended once, with a final closing of the survey at 9 am on July 11, 2022. The project team could monitor the number of completed responses in real time, and make decisions on optimal marketing to improve the response rate.

Earned Media

The survey was announced by press release on June 10 resulting in 16 unique stories syndicated over 133 publications and 48 broadcast stories including all major BC networks.

Social Media Promotion

A mix of organic and paid social media promotion was used to attract respondents. Organic survey promotion occurred through the UBCIC Facebook (15,106 followers) and Twitter (31,000) accounts.

Paid promotions were boosted in geographic locations across British Columbia that have significant First Nations populations *and* on-reserve retail shopping including Park Royal Mall in Squamish Territory, Westbank in Sylix territory, Campbell River shopping centre in Wei Wai Kum territory, and Tsawwassen Mills in Tsawwassen territory.

Additionally, short-run paid regional social media ads were geotargeted in Nisga'a, Haida, Tsimshian, Dane-Zaa, Sauteau, Cree, Dakleh, Secwepemc, Sylix, Ktunaxa, Heiltsuk, Nuu Chah Nulth, Nlaka'pamux, Stó:lo, Coast Salish, and Kwagiulth territories, to ensure a broad representation of BC First Nations voices in the survey.

Campaign Reach

In total, social media ads resulted in 180,259 impressions reaching 68,339 unique individuals and resulting in 1,939 link clicks. Additionally, there were 2,873 page engagements, 299 post reactions, 172 comments, 45 post saves, and 417 shares. 71% of those who clicked through the ads to the survey identified as women, 3% identified as “other gender”, and 26% identified as male (see Table 4). Elders and junior Elders were most likely to click through to the survey and 58% of the total clicks originated from those over the age of 55 (see Table 5).

Table 4: Response to Facebook Ads by Gender

Gender	Clicks	% of total clicks
Women	1371	71%
Men	515	26%
All other genders	53	3%
Total	1939	100%

Table 5: Response to Facebook Ads by Age

Age	Clicks	% of total clicks
18-24	38	2%
25-34	177	9%
35-44	250	13%
45-54	351	18%
55-64	520	27%
65+	603	31%
Total	1939	100%

Analytical Techniques

Quantitative Data

Closed-ended survey items are summarized in this report using appropriate statistical methods (e.g., frequency analysis and other methods appropriate to the data’s measurement level). Where appropriate to the project’s purpose and identified by pre-determined considerations, cross-tabulations or other comparative analyses have been conducted. Demographic comparisons were conducted only within the open online data set, and compared groups based on gender identity, age group, and region type.

Statistically significant differences in the online survey results were based on z-tests of proportion at the $p < .05$ level of significance, with Bonferroni corrections made for multiple corrections.

Qualitative Data

Text comments provided in open-ended comment fields were reviewed and thematically coded with up to three themes per comment, based on pre-developed coding frameworks. These coding frameworks were developed using an inductive approach in which comments were read and codes identified as themes emerged from the data. This approach was used until saturation was reached, defined as reading through 50 comments without identifying any new themes (or when all comments were read, whichever came first).

Limitations

A primary concern of surveys, including this one, is the degree of representativeness of the sample. The sample was not randomly selected but instead the 1,026 completions were achieved through public awareness-building campaigns led by the UBCIC and the project team, and which were largely through social

media. As a result, it is likely that not everyone who would have been eligible to complete the survey were aware of it, or had the opportunity to do so if they were unable to access electronic devices. A second limitation stems from the self-selecting nature of the sampling method. It is possible that people who had strong opinions on this issue were more likely to complete the survey, creating a possible skewing of the responses. For these two primary reasons, the data collected through this online survey, and the resulting analysis, cannot, on their own, be assumed to be representative of the experiences of all or most status First Nations people in BC.

The survey heavily relies on perceptions of events in the past. However, a mitigating factor is that as this survey wished to understand the impact of this form of discrimination, the emotions experienced in real-time stemming from historical events are a valid and desired contribution to this project.

Other limitations, which are common to surveys in general, include the reliability of responses to Likert style options, as there is no common standard as to how people interpret “often”, “sometimes”, and “rarely.” The representativeness of the survey is also relying on the respondents answering without a personal agenda to boost either negative or positive responses.

The sample size, even though it reached 1,000, did restrict some analyses. It is likely that statistical confidence in differences among sub-groups in the respondent population could not be achieved in some cases. The question on gender identity had the following options: female, male, non-binary, transfeminine, transmasculine, two-spirit, different identity. There were sufficient reportable responses in three categories: female, male, and two-spirit; and in the combined category of transfeminine, transmasculine, and different identity. In order

to boost the analytical power of the data and extend the understandings available for the non-women and non-men respondents, the categories of two-spirit, non-binary, transfeminine, transmasculine, and different identity were analyzed as a single group (LGBTQ2S+).

Fieldwork Methodology

Throughout May 2022, eight Assessors were trained and hired to complete and record assessments of their interactions with staff at store and service locations after presenting their status cards as identification or for the purposes of tax exemption. One Assessor did not complete any assessments and therefore seven Assessors completed over 100 interactions and assessments in BC through June and July 2022. Assessors were instructed to act similar to a secret shopper, observing the behaviours of staff and other customers or clients during their interactions.

Each Assessor was over the age of 19 and was status First Nations. Assessors completed their fieldwork across BC, including in both the north and south of the province, as well as in the Interior and on Vancouver Island. Individuals asked to participate as Assessors also had to meet the minimum requirements of having access to the internet and a device on which to complete post-assessment reports (Annex 4), and the ability to travel to service and retail locations. The project team determined to not expose any potentially vulnerable people to the uncontrolled interactions that would take place in this study and therefore did not include individuals who were elderly or who had diverse needs.

Behavioural Study Assessor Training

Assessors completed an online training with members of the project team. Training included the history of status cards, how to legally and appropriately use a status card as identification and for tax exemption, and recent issues reported in the media with respect to status card use. To prepare Assessors for behavioural interactions, and attempt a measure of reliability and comparability between interactions by reducing variables, training was also provided in the following areas:

- *Comportment*: Assessors were asked to not display any markers of First Nations cultural identity, such as beaded earrings, medallions, or clothing with their First Nations community name or logos. Assessors were asked to wear generally neutral, neat, and modest clothing so as not to have this factor impact the behaviours of others in the assessment interaction. Additionally, Assessors were asked to maintain a polite and calm demeanor and complete all of their interactions alone so that any potential behaviour or appearance of someone accompanying them did not impact their interactions.
- *Interaction Locations*: Assessors were instructed to present their status cards at service or retail locations where they were not known and did not typically frequent, in order to avoid existing relationships or prior exchanges impacting their experiences and reports. They were asked to attempt interactions in locations where staff were unlikely to also be Indigenous and therefore more representative of interactions taking place in the general population.
- *Observation*: Assessors were briefed in covert naturalistic and participant observational techniques, including how to limit their impact on the interactions and how to make mental notes for reporting immediately after the interactions. Descriptions of covert and overt racism and microaggressions were included in the training to enable Assessors to identify staff and service person behaviours that may produce barriers or negative responses when a status card is used.
- *Conflict Management and De-escalation*: Due to the recent and historical reports of issues when presenting status cards, it was necessary to prepare Assessors for circumstances in which behaviour may escalate. Assessors were instructed to maintain a calm and even tone, a pleasant facial expression, and to avoid any language that could be interpreted as adversarial or disrespectful. If Assessors encountered any issues in the use of their status card, they were instructed to ask for a manager or similar person of decision making authority to assist in using or processing their status card. If the Assessor felt at all unsafe or that the interaction was escalating in a way that might risk their well-being, they were asked to immediately leave the interaction.

- *Reporting:* Following the service or retail interactions, Assessors completed a standardized eight-question and open field report using an online data platform, that when completed was immediately sent to the project team (Annex 4). This asked Assessors to report: the location and type of service interaction; if they felt they experienced racism or discrimination; what happened during their interaction; if they had to escalate their request to use their status card to a manager or similar person; and how they felt as a result of the interaction. At the end of the fieldwork period, the seven Assessors were interviewed by the project team to gather more detailed information about their experiences in the study. Quotes displayed in this report have been extracted from the written reports and from the Assessor debriefing.
- *Remuneration:* Each Assessor was compensated for their time attending training sessions. A flat rate was paid to Assessors for each interaction and associated report completed. Additionally, Assessors were reimbursed for expenses incurred during their interactions and were provided a transportation flat rate to support travel to interaction locations. Finally, Assessors were asked to attend a project closing and debriefing meeting in which they contributed general observations, learnings, and feelings arising from their fieldwork and were compensated for their time in doing so.

Limitations

The fieldwork conducted in this study, as with all observational studies, involves limitations regarding observer bias and objectivity. Reports were based on the Assessors' interpretation of events and behaviours. While the project team attempted to moderate this limitation in the Assessor training, subjectivity will always colour observational reports in observational studies.

While the sample size of this study was large enough to discuss common findings among the Assessor interactions, it is not large enough to state that the results are a statistically accurate reflection of how status cards are used or accepted more generally. Rather, this fieldwork was conducted to provide insight related to fairly neutral and similar instances. In these instances, staff and service people were not interacting with individuals who were very young, gender diverse, elderly, had diverse needs, whose first language was not English, or who insisted that their right to legally use their status cards be acknowledged and accepted. The unhurried and explicitly neutral presentation and polite demeanor of the Assessors, along with their lone presentation, does not mirror every day, practical circumstances.

The sampling of interactions and their locations was not random, as Assessors were selected based on their ability to safely and reliably perform their duties and they conducted assessments in locations of convenience to them.

Other limitations, which are common to feedback style reports in general, include the reliability of responses to Likert style options, as there is no common standard as to how people interpret "often", "sometimes", and "rarely". The representativeness of the reports also rely on Assessors answering without a personal agenda to boost either negative or positive responses.

ANNEX 3: ONLINE SURVEY

Experiences of Discrimination and Racism When Using Status Cards Survey

We are requesting your voluntary participation in this survey to understand the presence and extent of First Nations-specific discrimination when using a status card at businesses and services in British Columbia.

The data and information collected by this survey will be held securely by the project team and will be stored at UBCIC. All responses are confidential, and privacy will be protected by presenting all survey findings anonymously (no individuals will be identified) in the project reporting and through using best practices to safely store and secure data. Data analysis will occur by project team members only, and individual survey responses will not be shared with any non-project personnel.

This survey should take 8-10 minutes to complete.

Mental Wellness, Health Supports

Should you require cultural or mental supports following the completion of this survey, please feel free to contact:

KUU-US Crisis Services

The KUU-US Crisis line is available 24/7 to provide support to Indigenous people in B.C. For more information visit: kuu-uscrisisline.ca

Toll Free: 1-800-KUU-US17 (1-800-588-8717)

Adult/Elder: 1-250-723-4050

Child/Youth: 1-250-723-2040

For Further Information

If you have any questions on this survey, please contact statuscardsurvey@ubcic.bc.ca

1. Do you have a status card?

___ yes

___ no

(only those answering Yes continue on.)

2. Do you use your status card for identification or at the point of sale for a sales tax exemption?

	Yes, all the time	Yes, sometimes	Yes, rarely	No	Not applicable
Essential retail (e.g., clothes)					
Essential service (e.g., insurance, telecommunications)					
Fuel					
Large retail (e.g., electronics, car)					
Tobacco products and alcohol					

3. If YES from Question #2:

Have you ever experienced discrimination or racism when presenting your status card?

	Yes, all the time	Yes, often	Yes, sometimes	Yes, rarely	No	Not applicable
Essential retail (e.g., clothes)						
Essential service (e.g., insurance, telecommunications)						
Fuel						
Large retail (e.g., electronics, car)						
Tobacco products and alcohol						

4. If YES (from Question 2):

When you use your status card, how often do any of the following things happen to you:

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	No opinion
I am treated with the same courtesy and respect as other people						
The clerk acts as if my status card is not acceptable						
I am refused a sales tax exemption						
I am told that I did not look like an Indigenous person						
The clerk acts as if processing my information is a hassle						
The clerk is rude to me, verbally or non-verbally						
The clerk is friendly and helpful in processing my status card						
The clerk suggests that people using their status card receive an unfair advantage						
The clerk asks for personal information that was not necessary for the transaction						

5. If any response except “yes always” (from Question 2):

The reason that I do not use, or only occasionally use, my status card for identification or sales tax exemption is because:

(Please select at most four answers)

- I never think of it
- I have heard of negative experiences of others when they have used their status card
- I stopped using my status card after a negative experience of my own
- I am not comfortable when I present my card
- I don't need the tax exemption
- It takes too much time and energy
- I feel singled out – other customers stare at me and are impatient
- I am worried that I will draw the attention of the authorities, such as child welfare services, which could affect me or my family.*

* Due to a coding error in the transition of this question to the online format, most individuals were not given the opportunity to answer Question 5. As a result, the number of respondents was too low to reliably report, and has caused these responses to be excluded from the Detailed Findings section.

6. How likely would you be to express your concerns or make a complaint if you thought you were treated poorly or unfairly when using your status card?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not at all likely
- Prefer not to answer

7. If you had a reason to make a complaint about the use of your status card, but you did not, what was the reason that you would not make a complaint?

- I don't think it would make a difference
- I would be treated poorly by the business in the future
- I am worried that the business will call the police
- I would be treated poorly or unfairly through the process of complaining
- I don't know how to make a complaint or what the options are
- It would take too much energy or effort
- I wouldn't be taken seriously/no one would believe me
- I submitted a complaint before, and it did not make a difference
- Other (please describe)

8. In order to minimize the possibility of a negative experience when using my status card,

(please select at most four answers)

- I shop online
- I shop when it is not busy
- I use a different form of identification
- I dress nicely
- I make an effort to be as courteous as possible, even if the clerk is rude or unfriendly
- I am prepared to explain what the status card is, in case the clerk is not knowledgeable
- I moderate my tone of voice or way of talking
- Other (please describe)

9. Please tell us anything else that you might think be helpful in understanding First Nations' experiences when using their status card.

(Please don't include any personally identifiable information about yourself or others in your response.)

Your age is:

18 years or younger

19-39 years

40-59 years

60 years or older

Prefer not to answer

What best describes where you live?

urban area

rural area

remote area

Which best describes your current gender identity?

female

male

non-binary

transfeminine

transmasculine

two-spirit

different identity

self describe _____

prefer not to answer

Thank you very much for your participation in this survey

ANNEX 4: ASSESSOR REPORT

Status Card Assessor Report

The data and information collected by this report will be held securely by the project team and will be stored at UBCIC. All responses are confidential, and privacy will be protected by presenting all study findings anonymously (no individuals will be identified) in the project reporting and through using best practices to safely store and secure data. Data analysis will occur by project team members only, and individual survey responses will not be shared with any non-project personnel.

Assessor #:

Location (city/town):

Store type: (Select one)

- Essential retail (e.g., clothes)
- Essential service (e.g., insurance, telecommunications)
- Fuel
- Large retail (e.g., electronics, vehicles)
- Tobacco products and alcohol
- Other:

Use of status card: (select one)

- Tax exemption
- Identification
- Both tax exemption and identification

Do you feel you experienced discrimination or racism when presenting your status card?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If YES or UNSURE: Did any of the following things happen to you:

- I was treated with the same courtesy and respect as other people
- The clerk acted as if my status card was not acceptable
- I was told that I did not look like an Indigenous person
- The clerk acted as if processing my information is a hassle
- The clerk was rude to me, verbally or non-verbally
- The clerk was friendly and helpful in processing my status card

- The clerk suggested that people using their status card receive an unfair advantage
- The clerk asked for personal information that was not necessary for the transaction
- The clerk displayed micro aggressions or showed other non verbal, negative reactions (e.g., rolled their eyes, look impatient)
- Other:

Did you have to escalate your request to use your status card to a Supervisor:

- Yes
- No

If YES: Did any of the following things happen once a supervisor was involved

- I was treated with the same courtesy and respect as other people
- The supervisor acted as if my status card was not acceptable
- I was refused a sales tax exemption
- I was told that I did not look like an Indigenous person
- The supervisor acted as if processing my information is a hassle
- The supervisor was rude to me, verbally or non-verbally
- The supervisor was friendly and helpful in processing my status card
- The supervisor suggested that people using their status card receive an unfair advantage
- The supervisor asked for personal information that was not necessary for the transaction
- The supervisor displayed micro aggressions or showed other non verbal, negative reactions (e.g., rolled their eyes, look impatient)
- Other:

As a result of this interaction I felt: (Scale for each one (very, somewhat, a little, not at all, unsure))

- Stressed
- Hopeless
- Disconnected
- Supported
- Affirmed
- Hopeful
- Other:

Please describe any of your negative or positive thoughts or feelings about this experience that may not have been listed here:

ANNEX 5: LITERATURE REVIEW

National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health Rapid Review: Racism and Discrimination and Use of Status Cards

In a rapid review of grey and academic sources, we searched Google and Google Scholar databases to identify common and unique exposures to racism and discrimination with the use of First Nation status cards as recognized and regulated under the *Indian Act* (1876) of the Government of Canada. We used the following search terms: (“First Nation*” OR Indian) AND (“status card*”) AND (racism OR discrimination OR stereotype OR profiling). Results were restricted to literature written in English and focused on sources published from 1980 onwards to capture experiences from the initial expansion of Indian status associated with Bill C-31, passed in 1985, to those of present day. Sources were included based on any mentioning of racist and/or discriminatory experiences related to the use of status cards, whereas sources that focused on other forms of identification beyond First Nations status (e.g., Métis citizenship identification, recognition by an Inuit Land Claim Organization), as well as racism and discrimination not tied to the use of status cards were excluded. With the search strategy employed, 82 sources were identified and 66 met the inclusion criteria, 43 of which describe unique cases of racist and/or discriminatory experiences with the use of status cards (the remaining 23 describe duplicate cases).

In studying the results, three themes emerged that grasp the common experiences of, factors contributing to, and mechanisms to exhibit racist and discriminatory encounters with the use of First Nation status cards. Each theme is presented below (*Negative experiences with the use of status cards; Lack of public knowledge on status cards resulting in racism and discrimination; and Status cards used as a tool*

to assert racist behaviours and remarks), using a narrative approach to explore the findings. We then conclude with a discussion on the breadth, sufficiency, and notable gaps in the literature to inform further research and learning.

Theme 1. Negative experiences with the use of status cards

The literature documents several experiences of discrimination, harassment, stereotyping, as well as many other forms of racist activities targeting First Nation peoples and the use of status cards. In the last decade, media coverage has drawn public attention to incidents that overtly demonstrate non-Indigenous peoples’ racist and discriminatory behaviours in public settings, such as stereotyping when a status card is shown in an attempt to open up a bank account (Bhamji, 2022; Cecco, 2020), when claiming tax exemptions at a retail store (King, 2016; Nakonechny, 2017), or to prove identity at international borders (Allaire, 2018; Caron, 2017; Warmington, 2007). In each event, accounts of *not looking Indigenous enough* or fitting into colonial-derived perceptions of what constitutes an Indigenous identity grounds and provides ill-justification to discriminatory actions and behaviours (First Nations Health Authority et al., 2021). Media also captures undue denial of tax exemptions (Fisher et al., 2009; Jadah, 2022; Lamberink, 2020) and access to community services (Hamilton-McCharles, 2017; Watson, 2020) as further outcomes resultant of racist attitudes towards First Nations use of status cards.

Recent media coverage of such events sparks public awareness and outrage; however, with this review we found grey and academic

literature to have long been documenting similar issues, citing cases of overt racism tied to the use of status cards in the early 2000s (Browne et al., 2001). Much of the literature briefly denotes or mentions experiences of racism or discrimination with the use of status cards while addressing other social or health topics that affect Indigenous populations (Desmoulins, 2009; Goldstein et al., 2022; Miller, 2010; Waite, 2010). For example, Browne et al. (2001) discuss First Nations women's experiences in the health care system and describe "expressions of discrimination" that are encountered when status cards are shown at dentists' offices or pharmacies (p. 135). Moreover, the Native Women's Association of Canada (2014) denotes similar experiences at pharmacies while discussing the *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Finally, a report on academic access and support for Indigenous students at a Nova Scotia University highlights discriminatory treatment to those who present status cards upon seeking financial support (Bombay et al., 2015).

In reports on social, economic, and health conditions of Indigenous populations, some studies allude to experiences with the use of status cards to elaborate on anti-Indigenous racism witnessed within their study's environment or location (FitzMaurice et al., 2016; McCaskill et al. 2007; Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2017). For instance, McCaskill's et al. (2007) report investigates the everyday realities of urban Indigenous life in Ontario, finding participants often witness negative body language and "signs of exasperation" when using status cards at retail locations (p. 107).

Academic literature reveals three qualitative studies that shed light on the long-lasting effects of racism with the use of status cards, describing how repeated racist and discriminatory actions fabricate a reluctance

of First Nations peoples to exercise their rights associated with the cards (Davis-Delano et al., 2021; Senese et al., 2013; Treaty 8 Environmental Assessment Team, 2012). Davis-Delano et al. (2021) found Indigenous Peoples living in the United States to hide their First Nation status card and any cultural artifacts in efforts to "white wash" themselves and avoid harm and discrimination when interacting with law enforcement (p. 230). Moreover, First Nations participants in Senese's et al. (2013) qualitative study describe their reluctance to use their cards in urban centres and larger cities, citing concerns that the process to do so is a hassle and often leads to hostile situations. Lastly, in a community assessment, the Treaty 8 Environmental Assessment Team (2012) found all Treaty 8 First Nations to feel harassed when on the land and exercising inherent treaty rights tied to status cards. One participant spoke to their experiences while hunting, explaining that poor and hostile treatment by law enforcement is a regular occurrence when dealing with status cards and other documents (Treaty 8 Environmental Assessment Team, 2012). So much so, participants are reluctant to hunt and practice treaty rights (Treaty 8 Environmental Assessment Team, 2012).

Only one study was found to focus solely on status cards and varying approaches and experiences with its use for sales tax exemptions. Pedri-Spade (2016) shares four unique stories and offers personal reflections on their experiences. The stories contain insights into the realities of and misconceptions over the use of status cards, with many opportunities for readers to critically reflect and engage in further listening and learning beyond what is shared in the article. With this, Pedri-Spade (2016) shares personal experiences of dehumanizing and differential treatment separate from non-Indigenous customers based on the use of a status card; overt racism, disrespect, and discrimination from retailers;

hostile environments sparking feelings of embarrassment, disappointment, and anger – all the while attempting to exercise treaty rights as per the status card (Pedri-Spade, 2016).

Theme 2. Lack of public knowledge on status cards resulting in racism and discrimination

The literature points to an overarching and impactful lack of public knowledge on status cards and their origins and use that unequivocally results in experiences of racism, discrimination, stereotyping, or harassment, amongst other discriminatory behaviours and attitudes towards Indigenous Peoples. Mailhot (2019) describes the challenge of attempting to assert First Nations rights tied to status cards when met with uninformed personnel who are designated to approve their attempt and enable such assertion of rights. In this example, a status card was rendered “inadequate” at international borders due to a lack of public information and understanding on the card’s use and purpose – a situation largely inconsistent with cross-border treaty rights (e.g., Jay Treaty) (Mailhot, 2019, p.1).

In retail and other consumer settings, the misinformation or lack of knowledge surrounding status cards often scales into larger harmful consequences disproportionately affecting First Nations peoples. Many media sources point to the undue denial of tax exemptions and overall use of status cards due the lack of public or retailer knowledge (Curtis, 2020; Lamberink, 2020; Watson, 2020), however; what is often missed in the media is the hostile environment this lack of knowledge creates amongst the retailer, staff personnel, and other non-Indigenous consumers (Desmoulins, 2009; Senese et al., 2013; Pedri-Spade, 2016). As retail and staff personnel grapple with assorted procedures to process a status card, the lack of information,

training, or awareness creates an environment where First Nations peoples are faced with ridicule, judgement, and piercing hostility for the use of their card and assertion of rights (Pedri-Spade, 2016; Senese et al., 2013). FitzMaurice’s et al. (2016) research on Indigenous economic success in the city of Sudbury, Ontario suggests an increase in retailer training and knowledge on status cards, as well as acceptance of the card at stores, compared to previous years. Yet, the authors also note hostile experiences born out of misinformation as a reoccurring event (FitzMaurice et al., 2016). Further education, training, and awareness on the origins and use of status cards is thus needed at national, regional, and local levels (Iqbal, 2018).

Theme 3. Status cards used as a tool to assert racist behaviours and remarks

Further commonalities within the literature show how status cards are used by non-Indigenous peoples (i.e., settlers) to perpetuate racist behaviours and remarks against First Nations peoples. In encounters with law enforcement and the judicial system, there are reports of mockery and bullying targeting First Nations based on their use of a status card (FitzMaurice et al. 2013). Tattie (2020) also recounts incidences when references to status cards were used to send racist messaging in protests against First Nations treaty rights in Nova Scotia, characterizing these acts as “white settlers policing the identities of Indigenous Peoples”, and making note that these actions are nothing new (p. 1).

When looking to the history and origins of status cards, Mamers (2017) offers insights and conclusions which may be applied to understanding the harmful use of status cards by settlers and the colonial worldview which may be underlining these occurrences. Mamers (2017) argues that status cards were designed to produce “documentary evidence” tasked

to monitor and keep track of First Nations and to authenticate access to services as per First Nations treaty rights and Crown obligations (p. 111). In other words, status cards were introduced as a colonial instrument to govern First Nations identity through bureaucratic processes entrenched in legislation. Within this structure is a power imbalance in which colonial governments and their settler constituents adopt a worldview distorted by power and supremacy, where both elements are blinded by deception and rooted in racism. Therefore, the impacts of and meanings behind the manipulation of status cards by settlers to assert racist actions and behaviours are much more than the effects observed or captured on the surface. As this review identifies, since very few studies explore these issues (Mamers, 2017), further research in this area is highly warranted.

Breadth, Sufficiency, and Gaps in the literature

This review identifies a wide breadth of literature and research on the use of status cards and experiences of racism and discrimination. Although much of the literature focuses on media coverage of particular events occurring across Canada, we also identify literary works on the origins and purpose of status cards (Mamers, 2017), qualitative research that denotes experiences (Senese et al., 2013), as well as select cases of international experiences (Caron, 2017; Robinson, 2019). Moreover, some of the literature intricately speaks to and recounts experiences of racism and discrimination from a level of detail that enables us to build a comprehensive understanding of these experiences according to the many types of racist and discriminatory actions, behaviours, and attitudes that exist when using status cards. These include, although are not limited

to, stereotyping (Waite, 2010), harassment (Treaty 8 Environmental Assessment Team, 2012), disrespect (Pedri-Spade, 2016), mockery (FitzMaurice et al., 2013), and overt harm (Davis-Delano et al., 2021); each warranting further research and investigation to understand and eliminate.

Despite a wide array of topics, there is little academic literature with specific attention to the use of status cards. This review identifies only one study that focuses solely on experiences with the use of status cards from an individual First Nations perspective (Pedri-Spade, 2016), and one additional study that zones in on status cards' use and origins from the perspective of colonial settlers, although as part of a larger study (Mamers, 2017). This gap in the literature requires research attention and analysis to fully grasp experiences from both individual and community levels, as well as to understand the structural and institutional enablers and barriers that are fueling experiences of racism and sustaining harm.

In building off this work and filling research gaps, further analysis may help to inform policy and legislative strategies that are needed to combat and tear down racism embedded in systems and ideologies surrounding the use of status cards as observed in this review. Education and training on the use of status cards is said to be increasing (FitzMaurice et al., 2016), and media-driven awareness of racist and discriminatory incidences in Canada continues to gain traction and garner public attention (Bhamji, 2022; Cecco, 2020). Yet, structural and institutional racism continues to be felt by First Nations peoples across Canada when simply exercising inherent and treaty rights, thereby signaling that much more needs to be done.

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