

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Survey – 2020

Submitted by J. Mark Baumhardt

The survey launched on November 5th, 2020. The link was emailed to approximately 1,300* members who are on the EMACT mailing list and a copy of the link was posted on the EMACT website and EMACT Facebook page. Four reminders were sent out along with four Facebook page posts. The survey was closed on November 30th, 2020.

72 people completed every question. 98 people completed at least the first two grids and are included in this report. All percentages are based on Total Answered.

Organizational Needs

The survey asked respondents to rate their agreement with a comprehensive battery of statements as it pertains to their theater/themselves. Respondents were asked to rate each statement on a 5-point scale (Strongly Agree ←-→ Strongly Disagree, with an option to answer “Don’t Know”). For reporting purposes, answers will be split into the following three buckets:

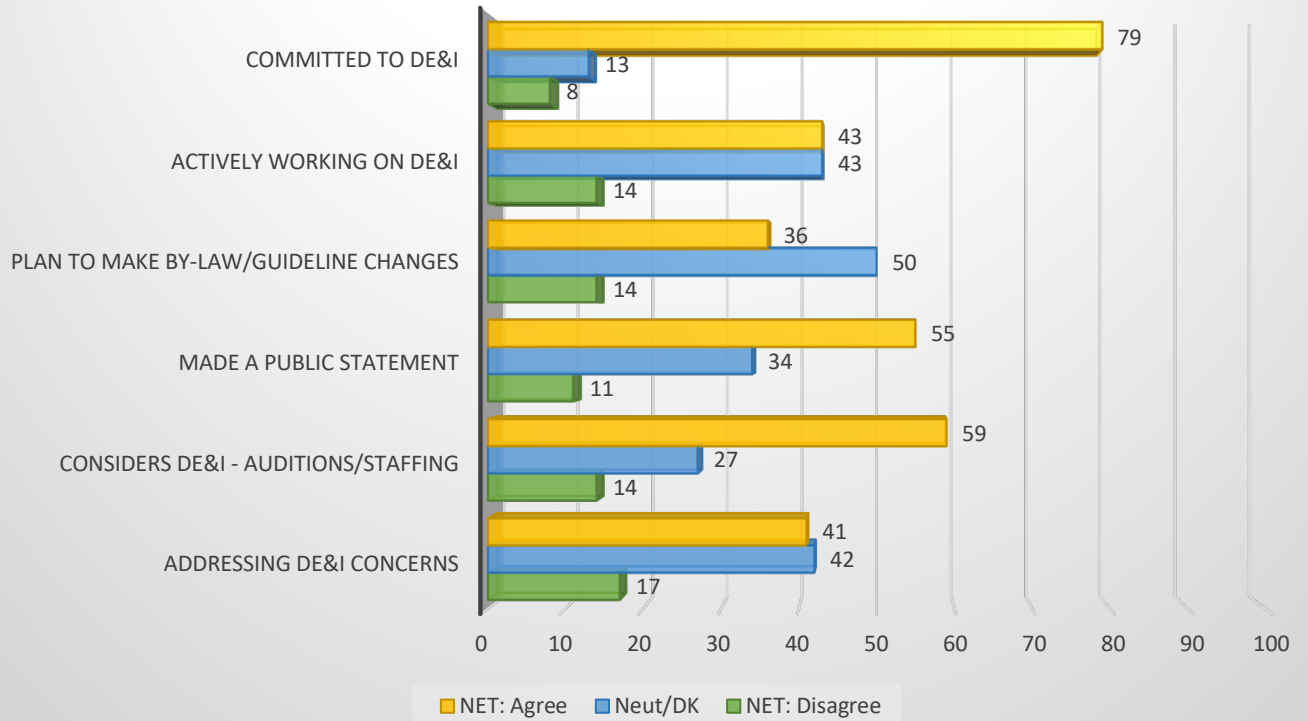
Net: Agree (Top 2 Box)

Neutral/Don’t Know

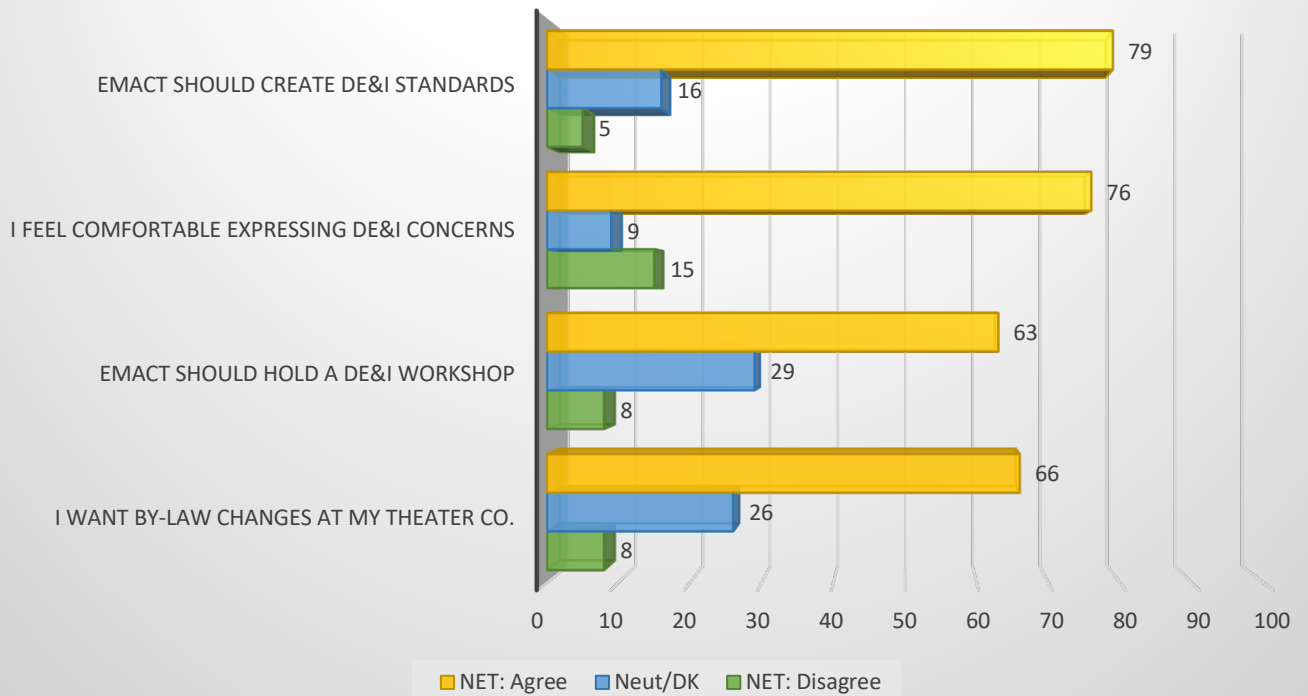
Net: Disagree (Bottom 2 Box)

- 99% of respondents want their theater company committed to DE&I
- 79% feel that their theater company *is* committed to DE&I
- 43% of respondent’s theater company are working on a DE&I plan
 - 25% don’t know if their theater company is actively working on a DE&I plan
 - 33% are not working on a plan
- 66% wish their theater would make changes to bylaws/guidelines on DE&I
- 59% consider DE&I when staffing
- 41% are addressing concerns over DE&I with their membership now
- 79% believe EMACT should create compliance standards
- 76% feel comfortable expressing DE&I concerns
- 63% are interested in attending a DE&I workshop

My Theater



My Wishes



How is your Theater Company addressing DE&I with its membership?

All of the information found here. A former committee for this is turning into a full-time board position to address this regularly. Our auditions beyond asking for DE&I includes a panel of two members to make sure that all auditions have been inclusive for the past 5+ years if not longer.

Being conscious about the season selected and ensuring it reflects more diverse stories; ensuring that casting notices are written with an equity lens and are inclusive; just starting to think more about community engagement and diversifying our subscriber/audience base.

Considering how to reach out to more marginalized communities, considering changing membership pricing structure so that it is not prohibitive.

Formed a committee dedicated to forming policies around DE&I. Independent learning is underway. Looking into workshop for organization.

My theater company has created an Equity and Inclusion Committee that is addressing the company's current by-laws and policies that have subliminally and/or overtly resulted in the exclusion of a more diverse population in its productions and membership. One of the things being proposed is creating an Equity and Inclusion Board position to ensure that the organization is providing equitable access to the theater's offerings.

We have established a subcommittee to address all DE&I issues. We currently partner with an agency in nearby communities and are looking to partner with others. We are also examining how we choose our productions and are adding DE&I metrics into the decision- making process.

We held a fund raiser to provide access to the stage for people with disabilities. We have also upgraded all rest rooms and water fountains to comply with MADA. This year we have rebuilt physical access to provide easier access for the elderly and people with disabilities.

We hold open auditions and have tried to produce plays that have diversity in the cast. Theatre One's problem is that actors of color do not audition, which is disappointing and limits our choices of plays.

We are changing our policies and by-laws to reflect the need to be more inclusive by doing more works by and about people of color and finding more participants of color among the community.

Do not agree to put in By-laws. I do it through advertising and casting.

Why do you feel that EMACT should or should not create standards of compliance as it relates to DE&I?

"Standards of Compliance" sounds like it has disciplinary impacts. If an EMACT theater does not meet all standards of compliance. All businesses are embarking on DEI efforts and trying to figure it out as they go. The EMACT member theaters are small community theaters--I believe most without paid staff--and don't have money to pay experts to help them implement formal DEI standards. It would be helpful for EMACT to suggest some best practices and guidelines to improve DEI in member organizations, however, it could be harmful for EMACT to become the judge of how much effort is enough and the enforcer of compliance with EMACT-defined rules for many small theaters hanging on by a thread financially right now. I work for a large hospital system that has been quickly building out DEI over the last year with many expensive experts in this field. There were large-scale listening sessions, and the hospital system has built training programs for all staff. I mention this effort because I see how hard it's been for a giant hospital paying teams of VPs and outside experts to accelerate this work. So many tiny theaters are trying to take this on and figure it out. Any "standards of compliance" would have to be flexible enough to allow boards of community theaters to approach DEI efforts that meet the needs of their home communities.

Because each group is trying to do its own thing and most are reinventing the wheel and lacking a unified set of resources and messaging.

By helping member companies, EMACT can make it possible for even small, under-resourced groups to address DE&I effectively.

Check the reviews by your reviewers in the past and see how many have made negative comments about "inappropriate" casting as it relates to race, age, body type. That in itself says everything.

EMACT as an organization should do what they feel is best for their members keeping in line with their philosophy. It is a volunteer membership organization and those with different beliefs do not have to participate. I believe it is time to better address these issues and the moral and political climate has pushed it to the forefront.

Goals yes, not rules. Because creating Art is messy and highly subjective, that should inspire conversation and debate, and controversy. I also believe meeting externally imposed guidelines/rules often impede creativity, and also can give an artificial imprimatur of progress.

I think a lot of theaters know that they need to be doing this work, but just don't know where or how to start, or need the motivation of a little pressure. If EMACT were to create a standard to hold its members to (and provide support and tools to implement), I think even non-member theaters would eventually feel the pressure to step up.

I'm not sure that is the purview of the organization. I think it's nice to have information available. But a standard of compliance seems out-of-line.

Is an important aspect to accomplish - in general. EMACT can help each member group with their implementation. I would view the EMACT "standard of compliance" more as guidelines and suggestions than as formal standards - something that MUST be followed.

Realizing this is a very complicated problem on many fronts, I think it would be helpful for EMACT to make a DE&I requirement for DASH qualifications. It's hard - the amount of diverse talent that comes out for auditions is not high, and many EMACT theatres are in highly affluent, predominantly white areas. However, requiring a DE&I statement for show selection, actionable elements for increasing outreach, and making these steps as qualifications for DASH participation would be a motivating step. Having each theatre explain how they will approach increases in accessibility would be a positive first step. Additionally, I have thought for years and years that MOST EMACT theatres would do well to add a youth theatre element to their programming, and THAT is where we could start to see evolutionary change.

The creation of such standards encourages individual organizations to take on the work of breaking down the barriers that have hampered our growth toward anti-racist theatre that engages and reflects the communities in which we operate, and could provide support for those who have already taken steps in this direction. It aligns EMACT with the anti-racist change that is growing within the New England theatre sector and identifies the group as part of solutions, rather than another barrier to be broken down and overcome. This work is not a matter of good PR, it is a matter of survival for all of us.

Theatre groups need guidelines. Need a diverse set of organization leaders that are open to change.

Too many companies get away with not addressing DE&I at the expense of BIPOC community members - often directly harming them in the process. These companies won't do anything unless held accountable.

It depends on the suggested standards. I believe each theater company should seek to expand their group with DE&I principles, but I worry that broad guidelines could ultimately hinder theaters with season expectations that may not align with their audience or resources (talent pool, etc.). EMACT should seek to train and reach out to ALL member theaters with best practices and guides on how to incorporate more diversity and equity into casts and seasons. EMACT should also adopt a more public face and help educate and guide audiences from a leadership position. EMACT is too focused on the minute compliances of its members, when it has a bigger opportunity to become a regionally recognized leader of local theater initiatives, advocacy, and outreach.

If you do NOT feel comfortable expressing concerns you may have around DE&I, what could EMACT do to help you feel more comfortable?

As a whole, Theatre, especially in this area, is ageist and sizeist. And if I come out and say anything about that, then word could get around and I could be dismissed from anything castable. But just because someone isn't 22 and a size 00 doesn't mean they still aren't capable of playing a romantic lead!

I support DE&I initiatives and guidelines within the organization. I worry about imposing those guidelines on member theaters, and the hardships that may come from them.

I think where some of us struggle is around attracting and retaining a more diverse membership and audience. I've been on casting committees where you WANT diversity, we try to make that known and try to reach out, yet we're still calling the same X number of BIPOC folks begging them to help us out. How do we get beyond that?

If you do NOT feel comfortable expressing concerns you may have around DE&I, what could EMACT do to help you feel more comfortable?

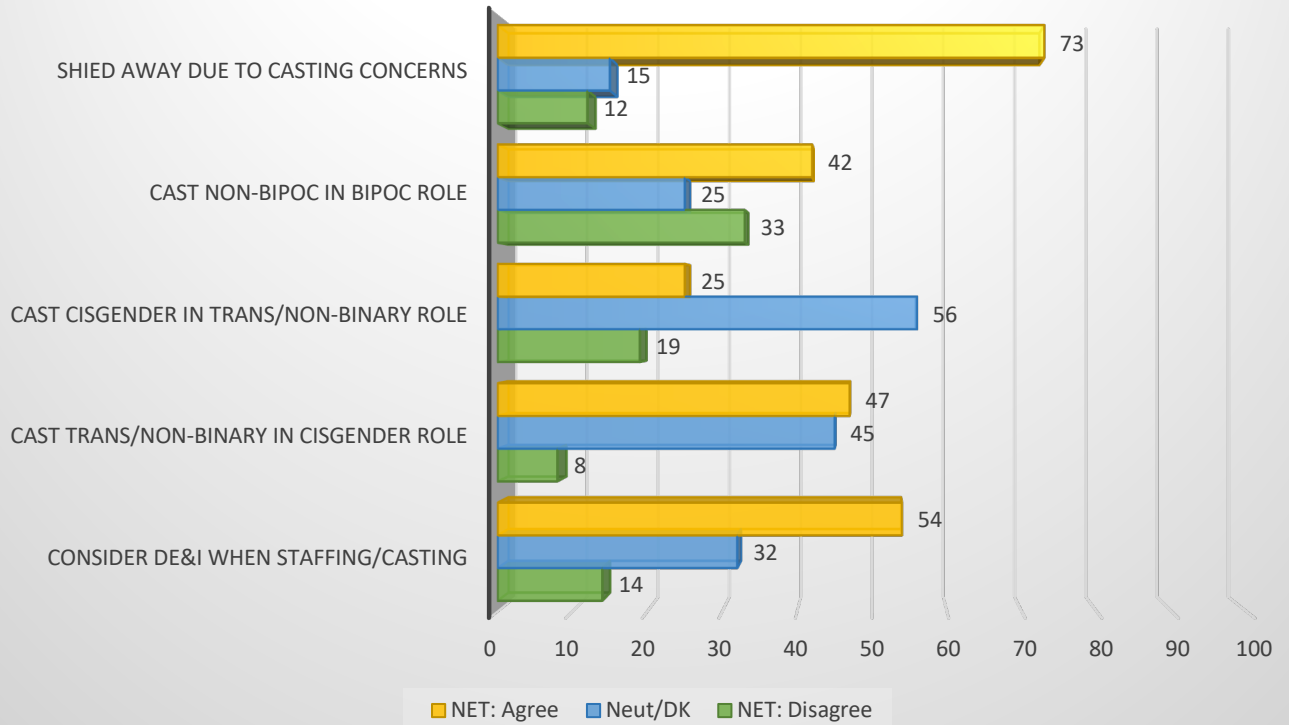
Refresh the board. You need young people who can champion for change.

We need tools around how to be able to talk about these issues and possible ways to address them in a way where people can listen to other people's ideas without being judgmental or dismissive. People are understandably very passionate, but we need to be able to collaborate on solutions that will work for our organizations.

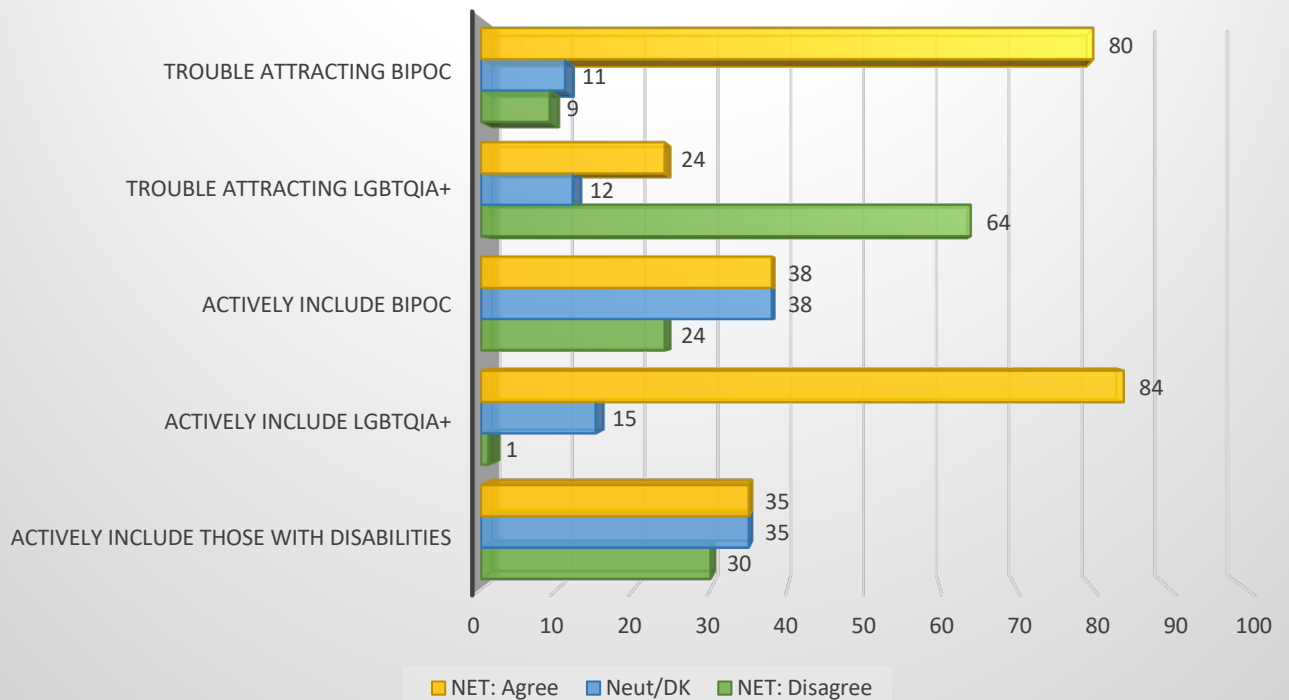
Current State of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

- 73% of theaters have shied away from a show for fear of casting
- 42% of theaters have cast non-BIPOC in a BIPOC role
- 25% have cast cisgender actor in a transgender/non-binary role
- 47% have cast a transgender/non-binary actor in a cisgender role
- 54% consider DE&I when advertising auditions
- 80% *do* have trouble attracting BIPOC
- 24% *do* have trouble attracting LGBTQIA+
- 38% actively include BIPOC
- 84% actively includes LGBTQIA+
- 35% actively include the physically disabled

Current State of DE&I



Current State of DE&I



Current State of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

Regarding what they want their theater to do and what they wish for in the future:

- 92% wants their theater to do more to attract BIPOC
- 92% wishes their theater included more BIPOC
- 79% wants their theater to do more to attract LGBTQIA+
- 74% wishes their theater included more LGBTQIA+
- 86% wants their theater to do more to attract those with physical disabilities
- 80% wishes their theater included those with physical disabilities

Regarding where they are now:

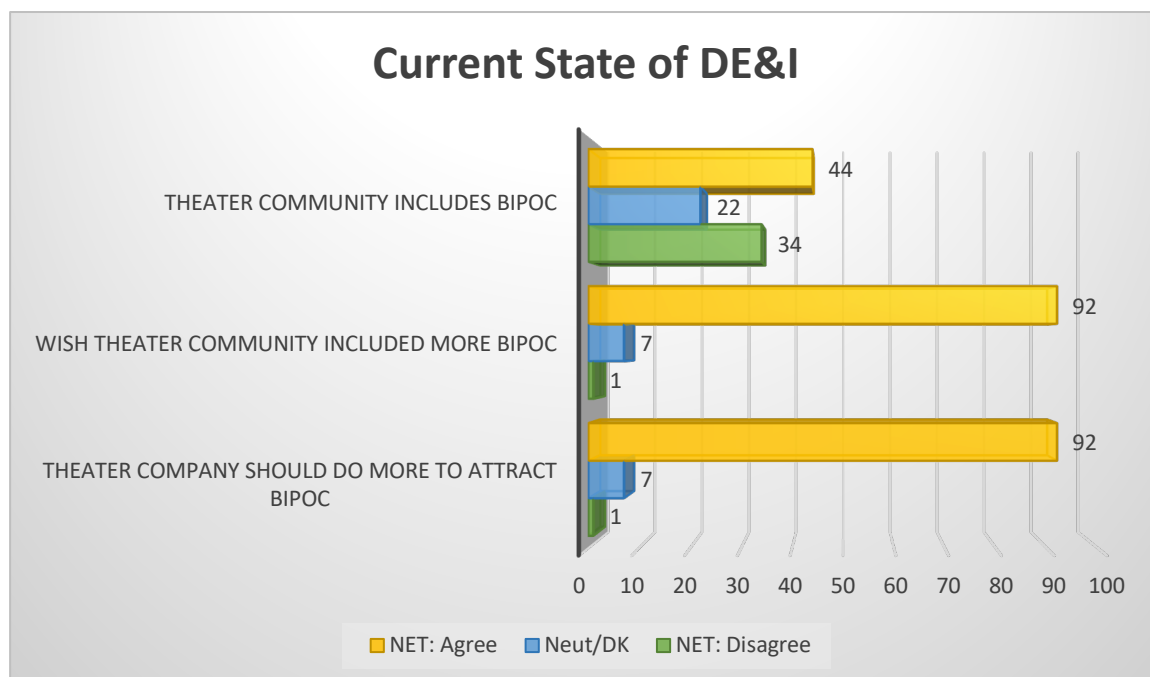
- 44% Agree that their membership/audience includes BIPOC
- 84% Agree that their membership/audience includes LGBTQIA+
- 62% Agree that their membership/audience includes those with physical disabilities

Of the 26 respondents who Disagree that their audience includes BIPOC:

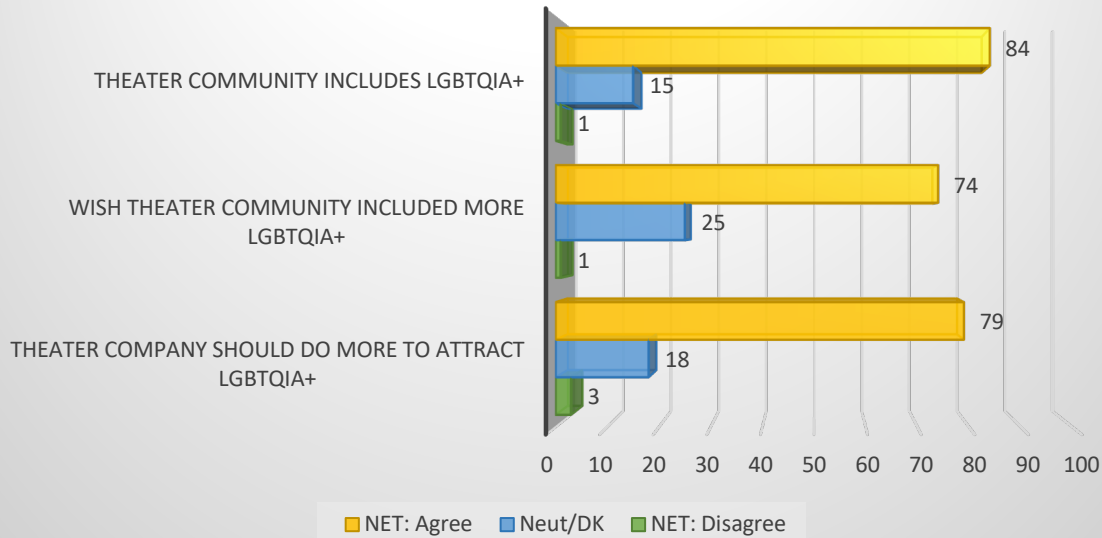
- 96% want their theater to do more to attract BIPOC
- 96% wishes their theater attracted more BIPOC

Of the 34 respondents who Agree that their audience includes BIPOC:

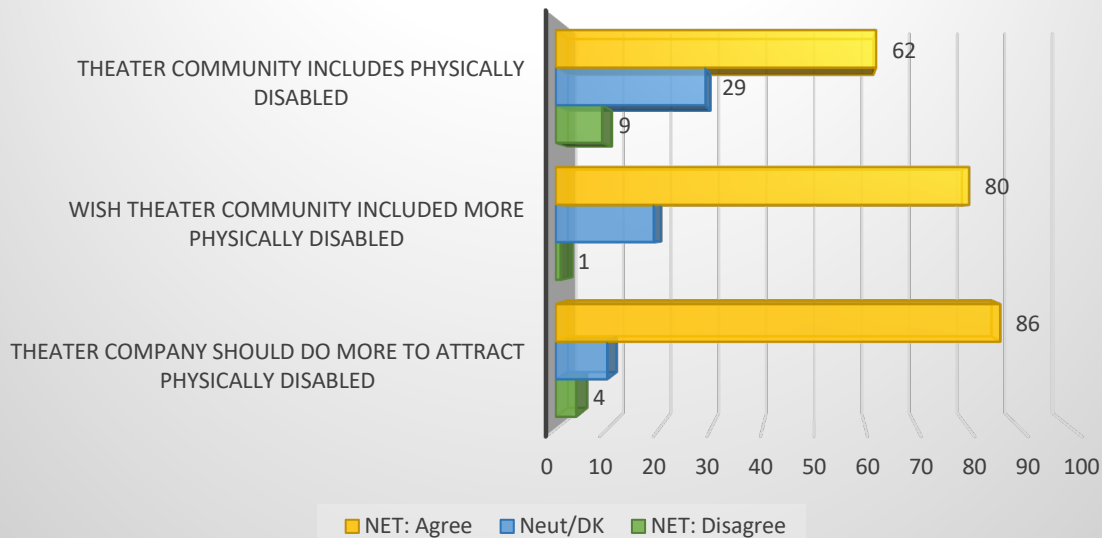
- 88% want their theater to do more to attract BIPOC
- 88% wishes their theater attracted more BIPOC



Current State of DE&I



Current State of DE&I



Around 88% of respondents are looking for assistance with marketing outreach, auditions, resource tools, etc. with regards to attracting BIPOC.

Around 60% of respondents are seeking assistance with the same for LGBTQAI+

Around 80% of respondents are seeking assistance with the same for those with physical disabilities and neurodivergent individuals

What ideas do you have for increasing DE&I at your theater company?

A member of the aforementioned Equity and Inclusion Committee will sit in on auditions/casting, play selection, bylaws committee, and anything else that comes up. We are also looking to do some inclusion training as a Board so that we have the language we need to proceed. We also need to figure out how to effectively market to BIPOC folks.

Advertising in more BIPOC areas. Reaching out to the BIPOC individuals who have been associated with the company to reach out to other BIPOC individuals.

Change the criteria for those who can direct, choreograph or be a music director and include the option of mentoring and offer these opportunities to those who are new or haven't been able to get any opportunities due to not having done it before but would like to.

I don't know. We need to branch out to try shows that will bring these folks...

In order to increase DE&I at my theater company, we would need to conduct outreach beyond our community (which is largely affluent and white). And in order to attract more diverse company members, we would need to increase benefits for them. The unfortunate thing is, most community theaters do not pay enough to attract actors or crew from beyond their community lines. Additionally, productions are often chosen based on who from within the community we can cast. Well, if the community is white... we're only going to get white actors, and then we will only put up shows with white casts. So the basic and most necessary requirements would be to 1. Choose a more diverse production, 2. hire a more diverse director/technical crew, and 3. normalize paying people -- too many community theaters pay people in exposure and the promise of a good time. As a stage manager who rarely gets paid, it's a lot to ask of our entertainers to put themselves up for free.

Let actors or production personal know by putting into info for our call for actors and our production crews and our choices of shows. However, as I stated hard here in Middleboro. I guess we will have to try harder.

Seminars, guest speakers, panel discussions.

We are reaching out to recruit BIPOC into leadership roles from our board to our crew, focusing on directors. We are involving BIPOC in all our efforts toward anti-racist change. We are participating much more strongly in building community across the sector to facilitate outreach and engagement. We are sending a strong message throughout our organization and our community that we are making this work a priority.

We need to reach communities outside our core area; our audiences tend to come from surrounding towns, and those towns do not have a terribly diverse population.

We have a DEAnd I Committee & are considering creating a new board position for DE&I.

What aspects of improving DE&I would you like EMACT to help your theater company with?

Audition and staffing announcements and how best to host an open-house to welcome volunteers and members.

Community outreach, audience broadening, admin and artist outreach.

EMACT needs to change first before it can reach out to any groups.

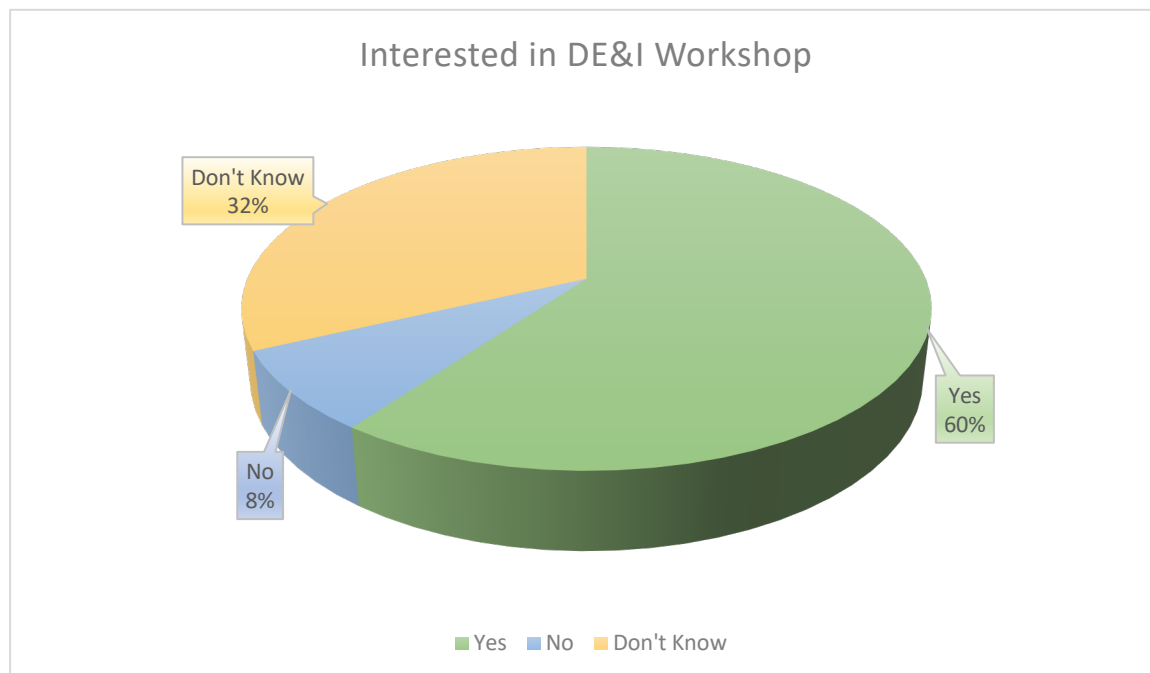
Funding and training for community outreach. Also, guidance on choosing productions, definitely more modern ones, that explore diverse groups.

I'm not sure what EMACT could do to help.

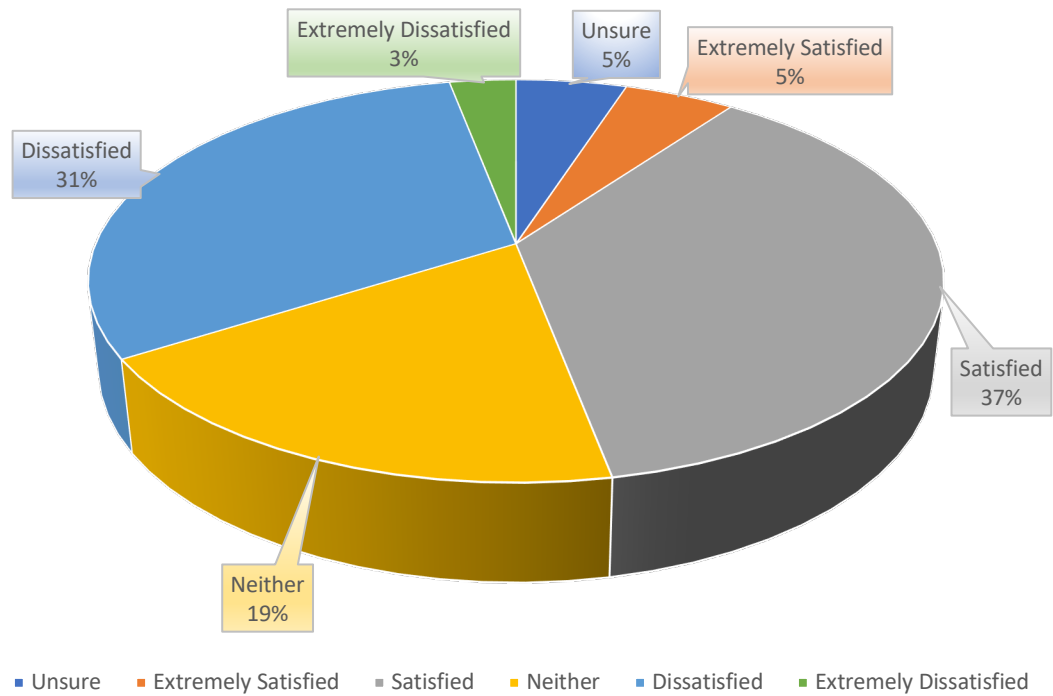
Providing a framework for enacting change would be helpful, with concrete steps and resources theaters can take to assess their DEI efforts ("Standards of compliance" in another form?)--including proactively countering excuses!

Pulling together ideas on how to improve diversity and some best practices for improving the experience at our theaters for all people.

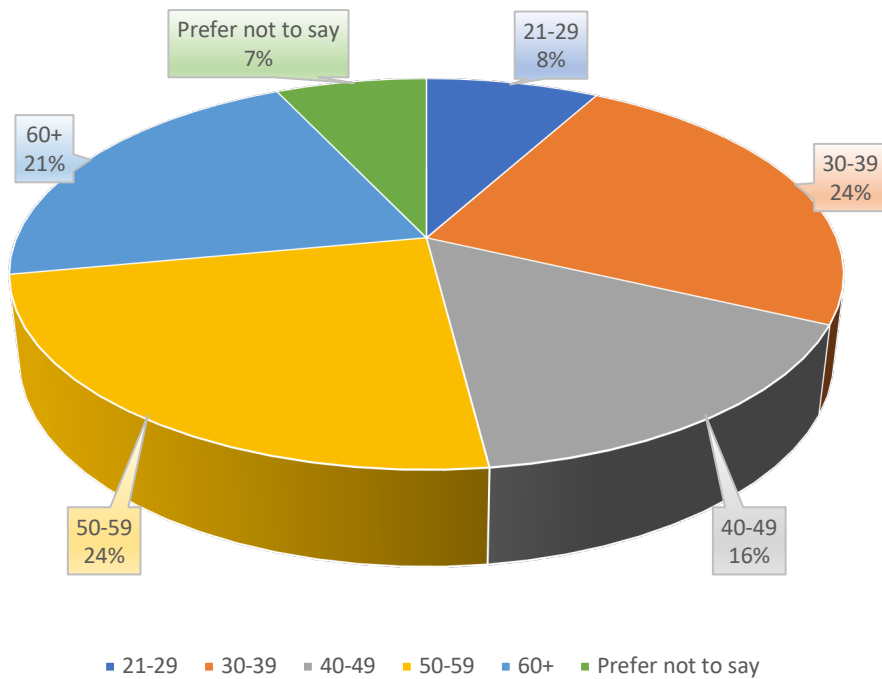
What we really need is a shared training regimen in anti-harassment, anti-racism, DE&I. We would like to require all board members, directors, producers, and stage managers to meet continuing education and training standards, but lack the resources to provide those on an ongoing basis.



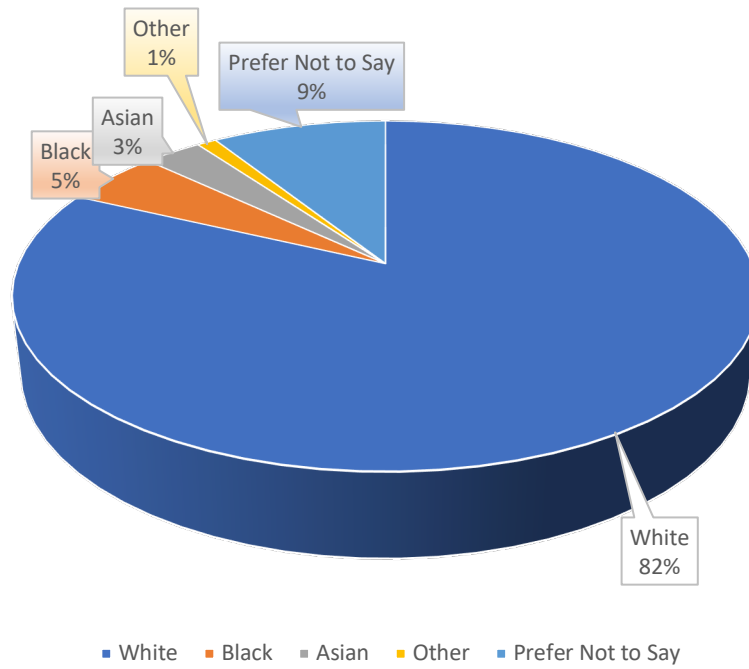
Rate the level of satisfaction that the work of your theater reflects the demographics of your community



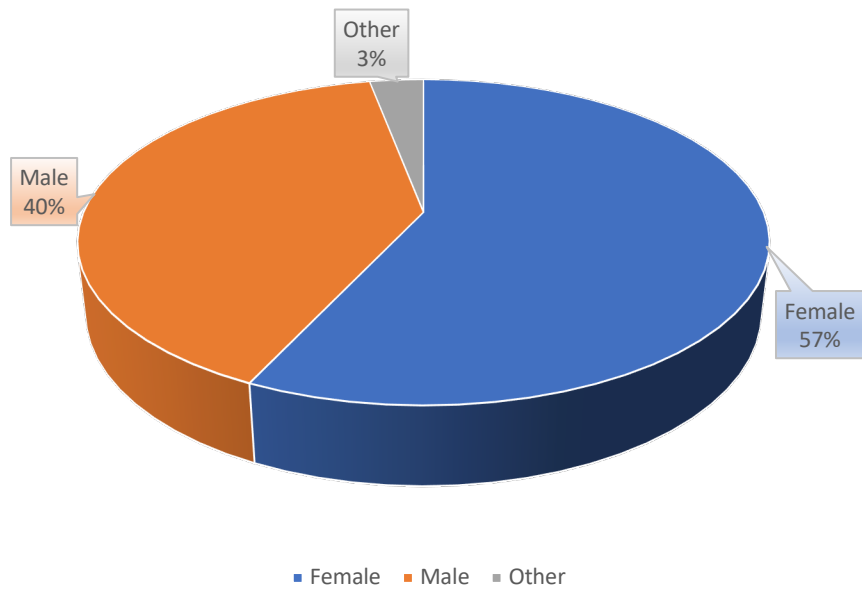
Age



Ethnicity



Gender



General Comments:

Community theaters need all the help we can get! Our resources are extremely limited, especially during this pandemic.

I am SO glad you are doing this, thank you.

I'm glad this conversation is starting. But more needs to be done and that starts with EMACT. I've read many reviews of shows I've been in where the reviewer made inappropriate remarks about the actors, including their body type, race, and age. Your reviewers need to be better trained in providing constructive criticism vs. biting remarks about someone being cast ethnically inappropriate in their eyes. It's hard to trust the system to change when these are the memories we have. It's not just EMACT -- it's all of the theater community in Boston, including the Equity houses. But EMACT has a reputation of exclusion and that needs to be overcome before trust and vulnerability can be shared.

Thank you embarking on this effort to help EMACT theaters.

Thank you for doing this. Surveys are a good first step, and I appreciate the effort. I also think this work taps into the long tradition of theater as a contributor to and even catalyst for social justice. My theater company is in an area that is decidedly not diverse. If our goal was to simply reflect our community in our shows, we'd be fine! But there is a moral imperative to fighting for equity and (to be cliched) holding a mirror up to our society. Lack of DEI causes real suffering (this is reflected in incontrovertible data); we can help ease that suffering in our own small (and perhaps not-so-small) ways in the theater community. And we should.

Thank you for reaching out to the community on this important topic!

Thanks for putting together a committee to look at these important issues.

This is ridiculous.

We have hesitated to join EMACT, because our organization is not interested in awards or competitions. EMACT leadership in DE&I would be a compelling reason for us to sign up.