



What We Heard Report

Community Engagement Findings for the
Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan
March - April 2026



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Acknowledgments

We respectfully acknowledge that this work took place on the traditional territories of First Nations across British Columbia. We recognize and respect the rights, cultures, histories, laws and systems of governance of Indigenous Peoples, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples.

We thank the community organizations that led engagement activities and everyone who shared their experiences and ideas. Many people shared personal experiences of racism, discrimination and exclusion. We recognize the trust and care it took to share these experiences.

Executive Summary

B.C. released its first Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan on June 1, 2026. The plan guides government work from 2026 to 2028 to address systemic racism in provincial programs, policies and services. It is required by the Anti-Racism Act and builds on work under the Anti-Racism Data Act.

In March and April 2026, the Ministry of Attorney General worked with community partners to gather feedback on selected proposed actions in the plan. More than 1,200 people participated across B.C. Participants were asked about actions related to education, health care, jobs and the economy, the environment, government representation and accountability for local leaders.

Overall, participants said the proposed actions responded to real community needs. They also said the actions must lead to visible change. Many participants were concerned that engagement, data collection and public commitments can weaken trust when communities do not see results. Participants called for clear timelines, public reporting, plain language information, translated resources and accessible formats. Many said that communities most affected by racism should help shape how actions are carried out and how progress is measured.

This report summarizes what was heard through the engagement process. The feedback will help inform implementation of the Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan and future reporting on progress.

Introduction

The Anti-Racism Act was passed in 2024. It requires the Province to develop an Anti-Racism Action Plan in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples, and through engagement with racialized communities and other partners.

B.C.'s first Anti-Racism Action Plan guides government work from 2026 to 2028. The plan includes actions from across government to address systemic racism and improve racial equity in provincial programs, policies and services.

Community engagement took place in early 2026 to help inform how the plan will be carried out. Participants were asked whether the proposed actions respond to community needs, what barriers could affect implementation, and what government should consider during implementation.

Engagement with racialized communities was led by community organizations. Participants included racialized people from different backgrounds and communities, including people from faith and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities.

A separate process of consultation and cooperation with Indigenous partners also informed the broader plan. That work focused on Indigenous priorities, perspectives and experiences of Indigenous-specific racism.

This report summarizes feedback from the community engagement sessions. It does not summarize the full consultation and cooperation process with Indigenous partners.

Engagement Approach

The Ministry of Attorney General used a community-led approach to gather feedback on proposed actions in B.C.'s Anti-Racism Action Plan.

Twenty-three community organizations led engagement with the communities they serve. These organizations were selected because of their relationships, local knowledge and ability to support culturally responsive conversations.

Each organization held at least two engagement activities. These included in-person and online sessions, roundtables, focus groups and town halls. Some organizations also used surveys or one-on-one interviews to give people different ways to participate.

Engagement took place from early March to mid-April 2026.

The Ministry's Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism Branch provided session materials and a reporting template to support a consistent process.

Organizations were asked to choose at least two proposed actions that were most relevant to their communities. Participants were asked:

- How familiar they were with B.C.'s Anti-Racism Act.
- Whether the action addressed community needs.
- What would help government carry out the action.
- What risks or barriers could affect implementation.

Organizations could adapt their sessions to meet community needs, including language, accessibility, cultural safety and local context.

The feedback in this report is qualitative. It reflects the views and experiences shared by participants. It should not be read as a statistical survey or as representative of all people in British Columbia.

Who participated

The engagement reached more than 1,200 people across British Columbia.

A total of 53 engagement activities were held. Activities included online and in-person sessions, surveys and interviews (Appendix A: Engagement Participation).

Participants came from a range of communities, backgrounds and experiences. This included racialized people, newcomers and immigrants, people from faith communities, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, people with disabilities and people from different age groups.

Engagement also included community members, staff from community organizations, policy professionals and researchers. This helped gather both lived experience and organizational perspectives.

Some participants identified with more than one community or identity group. These categories should not be read as separate or mutually exclusive.

What We Heard

Awareness of the Anti-Racism Act

Participants were asked how familiar they were with B.C.'s Anti-Racism Act.

Many participants had limited awareness of the Act. Some had not heard of it before the engagement sessions. Others knew about government's anti-racism work but were not clear about how the Act was different from other policies, programs or public commitments.

Participants wanted clearer information about what the Act changes in practice. They asked what public bodies are required to do, how progress will be measured, and how communities will know if the Act is making a difference.

Participants said awareness would improve if information were easier to find, understand and share. They called for plain language materials, translated resources and accessible formats. They also said trusted community organizations should help share information.

Communication should not only explain the Act. It should also show what government is doing, what progress is being made, and how communities can see results over time.

Feedback on Proposed Actions

The next sections summarize feedback on the proposed actions discussed during the engagement sessions. Feedback is organized by action.

Education

Proposed action: Collect identity-based data to better understand the experiences of racialized students in K-12 education.

Participants generally supported this action. They said identity-based data can help show where racialized students experience racism, discrimination or unequal outcomes. Better data can help government and schools make stronger decisions about programs, policies and support.

Support for this action depended on how the data would be collected and used. Participants wanted a clear link between data collection and real change. Some were concerned that broad identity categories may not reflect the full experiences of students and families.

Participants emphasized the importance of naming specific forms of racism and hate, including antisemitism, anti-Black racism, Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian hate. They said these experiences should not be grouped too broadly, because doing so can hide distinct harms and make it harder to design effective responses.

Participants also said identity can be complex, especially for children and youth. Some students may feel pressure to hide parts of their culture, religion or identity to fit in or feel safe.

What participants said would help

Participants said data collection should be voluntary, safe and clearly explained. Students and families should know why the information is being collected, how it will be used, who will see it and how it will be protected.

They also called for plain language information, translated materials and strong privacy protections, especially in small, rural or close-knit communities where people may be easier to identify.

Participants said communities should help shape the process. They wanted government and schools to work with trusted community organizations, families, students and staff. They also wanted clear reporting back to communities so people can see what was learned and what actions followed.

Risks and barriers

Participants raised concerns about mistrust, privacy, data misuse and fear of retaliation. Data collection will only build trust if it is safe, voluntary, accountable and connected to visible action.

“Our kids’ experiences are layered. It’s not just about numbers or categories - it’s about how they’re treated in classrooms, how safe they feel, and whether there’s anyone they can turn to when something happens.”



Credential Recognition

Proposed action: Review how well regulatory authorities are complying with the *International Credentials Recognition Act* so that internationally trained professionals can gain access to job opportunities in the fields they studied for.

Participants strongly supported this action. Many said better oversight of international credential recognition is needed and overdue.

Participants said internationally trained professionals often face long delays, high costs and inconsistent assessment processes. These barriers can prevent newcomers and skilled professionals from working in the fields they trained for, even when they have strong education, skills and experience.

Participants described the personal and economic impacts of this issue, including underemployment, loss of income and loss of professional identity. Some described this as “brain waste” and a form of systemic discrimination.

Participants also said credential recognition is only one part of the problem. Even when credentials are recognized, internationally trained professionals may still face hiring bias, devaluation of international experience, limited access to Canadian work experience and professional gatekeeping.

What participants said would help

Participants said oversight should be clear and enforceable. They called for clear rules for regulatory bodies, standard timelines, independent monitoring and consequences when requirements are not followed.

They also recommended public reporting on compliance, processing times, decisions and outcomes.

Cost was identified as a major barrier. Participants said fees, exams, document requirements, bridging programs and supervised practice can be hard to afford and navigate. They recommended more affordable pathways, including equivalency testing, bridging programs and supervised practice opportunities.

Participants also called for one clear source of plain language and multilingual information about requirements, appeal options and available support.

Risks and barriers

Participants said process improvements alone will not be enough. Without action on hiring bias, high costs, professional gatekeeping and discrimination in the labour market, internationally trained professionals may continue to face barriers even if credential recognition systems improve.

Environment

Proposed action: Collect and make better use of environmental data from public bodies to understand how environmental risks affect communities differently. This includes looking at race, income, housing and climate vulnerability.

“Climate impacts don’t hit everyone the same.

Where you live, how much

you earn, your housing,

and your racial

background all shape how

exposed you are to heat,

flooding, and pollution.”

Participants supported this action. They said better data can help show where environmental harm and climate risks are most concentrated, especially for Black and other racialized communities, low-income households and geographically isolated communities.

Participants said climate change is already affecting their daily lives. They raised concerns about housing, extreme heat, flooding, poor air quality and access to support during emergencies.

Participants said data alone will not meet community needs. Many were frustrated by past efforts where information was collected but did not lead to visible change. They said the work must lead to practical action, such as safer

housing, stronger infrastructure, climate adaptation supports and targeted investments.

What participants said would help

Participants said communities should be involved early. They wanted government to work with grassroots organizations, local leaders and trusted community partners to decide what data is collected, how it is understood and how it is used.

They also said environmental data should be connected to housing, health, income and census data, so government can better understand how risks overlap. Participants emphasized that data should be grounded in lived experience, not only numbers.

To support participation, both online and in-person options were recommended, as well as interpretation, childcare, honoraria and safe community spaces.

Risks and barriers

Participants said low trust, consultation fatigue, short timelines, limited funding and slow responses could limit participation. They also warned that the work could lose impact if it tries to address too many issues at once.

Health Care

Proposed action: Adapt chronic disease programs and supports to better address the needs and experiences of racialized populations.

Participants supported this action and said improvements are needed urgently. They said patient experiences and race-based data can help show gaps in chronic disease care and improve health outcomes for racialized communities.

Participants raised concerns about access to care, including difficulty finding family doctors, long wait times, limited in person appointments and too few health care providers who speak languages other than English. These barriers were described as especially difficult for newcomers, migrant communities and racialized seniors.

Some senior participants shared experiences of delayed diagnosis, misdiagnosis, unclear test results and care that did not meet their needs. Participants said these experiences can make people feel dismissed or unsafe.

Participants said health care services do not always reflect the needs of diverse communities. They called for care that is more culturally responsive and available in different languages. Mental health was also raised as a concern, especially for newcomers dealing with stress, uncertainty, conflict or displacement.

Participants said data collection alone will not address discrimination in health care. Some people may not feel safe sharing personal health or identity information. Trust is lower

when people do not understand why information is being collected, how it will be protected or how it will lead to change.

What participants said would help

Participants said this work should be shaped with communities and trusted organizations. They wanted communities to help guide data collection, outreach, interpretation and follow-up.

They also called for better language access, including interpretation in spoken and signed languages. They said information should be available in plain language and in formats such as videos, visuals and audio.

Participants said people need clear information about why data is being collected, how it will be used, who can access it and how it will be protected. They also called for stronger training in cultural safety, anti-racism and trauma-informed care, as well as more diversity among health care providers and decision makers.

Risks and barriers

Participants raised concerns about mistrust, data misuse, monitoring and profiling. They said these concerns are stronger in communities that have experienced discrimination or harm.

They also warned that asking people to share difficult experiences without showing change could reduce trust. Other risks include approaches that are too broad, staffing pressures and limited community involvement in decisions.



Small Business Supports

Proposed action: Develop plain language and multilingual resources to strengthen connections with racialized service delivery organizations and support entrepreneurs.

Participants strongly supported this action. Many said immigrants and newcomers start small or family-run businesses because they face language barriers, hiring barriers or limited job options.

Participants said small business owners need clearer information about government programs, workplace rules, business requirements and legal responsibilities. This can help people grow their businesses, understand their rights and protect themselves from exploitation.

Participants also said translation alone is not enough. Government information can still be hard to understand, even when translated. It needs plain language, clear examples and wording that reflects different communities.

Newcomers and immigrant families often need this information soon after arriving in Canada. Older adults, spouses and family members who help with small businesses may face greater barriers if they have limited English, limited digital access or little experience with government systems

What participants said would help

Participants said communities should help design and share the materials. They said trusted community organizations understand local needs, cultural context and the best ways to reach people.

Information should be available in different formats. This includes printed materials, videos, audio, visuals, sign language and in-person support. Some participants warned that websites and apps alone may leave people out.

Recommendations included pairing translated resources with practical supports. This could include multilingual advisors, peer learning, language learning supports and in-person navigation through trusted community organizations, cultural spaces, faith spaces and community media.

Risks and barriers

Participants said translated materials will not be enough if broader barriers remain. These include systemic racism, lack of funding, limited community capacity and difficulty keeping information current.

Resources in many languages are important, but success will depend on trusted community delivery, practical human support and sustained funding.



“To truly address community needs, the government must pivot from a ‘resource-first’ model to a ‘people-first’ model.”

Employment Standards

Proposed action: Review the Employment Standards Branch complaint process through an anti-racism lens and engage racialized worker advocacy groups as part of the review.

Participants strongly supported this action. They said racialized workers face significant barriers when reporting workplace discrimination, exploitation or other workplace concerns.

Participants said many workers do not know their rights or where to get help. Some are also unsure what counts as discrimination, racism, bullying or harassment at work.

Participants said trusted advocates can help workers understand their options, assess risks and decide whether to file a complaint. This support is especially important for migrant, temporary, workers without immigration status and precarious workers, who may face serious risks if they speak up.

Fear of retaliation is one of the biggest barriers. Workers may worry about losing their job, being blacklisted, losing housing tied to work or facing immigration consequences. Many said complaint systems can place too much risk on workers and too little accountability on employers.

What participants said would help

Participants said workers need a safe way to speak with a trusted advocate before deciding whether to file a formal complaint.

They also called for plain language information, interpretation, sign language and different ways to access support, including in-person, phone, video and community-based options.

Support should be delivered through trusted organizations, such as worker centres, settlement agencies, unions, legal clinics and disability-led organizations. Participants also said these supports need stable funding, not short-term pilots.

Clearer guidance is needed on how to document discrimination, bullying or harassment. Participants said workers need clear timelines, follow-up and visible outcomes when complaints are made.

Risks and barriers

Participants said the main risks are retaliation, weak enforcement, limited language access, lack of disability inclusion and low trust in government systems.

They also said complaint processes alone will not fix workplace racism. Change will require stronger worker protections, clearer employer accountability and community-led support to address systemic issues, not only individual complaints.

Public Service Representation

Proposed action: Expand career development for racialized employees by delivering direct supports and incorporating anti-racism content into leadership training.

Participants supported this action. They said representation in the public service matters, especially in leadership and decision-making roles. Government policies and programs are stronger when racialized employees are part of the work and have real influence.

Participants said barriers do not end after someone is hired. They pointed to workplace culture, limited advancement opportunities, lack of mentorship and experiences of being overlooked despite strong qualifications.

“Increasing representation in the public service helps ensure decisions reflect diverse community experiences.”

Participants also said training alone will not be enough. They were concerned that commitments may fall short if they are not tied to changes in hiring, promotion, performance management and workplace accountability.

They also raised concerns about intersectional barriers. Racialized employees with other lived experiences, including disability, may be missed when equity efforts are too broad.

What participants said would help

Participants said government should address bias in hiring, promotion and performance assessments. They also called for clearer advancement pathways, stronger

mentorship and better support for racialized employees once they are hired.

Participants supported leadership training but said it must be linked to clear expectations and accountability. They wanted leaders to be responsible for creating safer and more inclusive workplaces, not just attending training.

Racialized public servants should help design and assess the work, so actions reflect real workplace experiences.

Risks and barriers

Participants identified tokenism, weak accountability, resistance to change and one-size-fits all approaches as key risks. They said the action will only lead to meaningful change if it includes measurable goals, long-term commitment and clear follow-through.

***“Good policy
without
enforcement
does not
create
change.”***



Agencies, Boards and Commissions

Proposed action: Engage in strategic outreach to underrepresented communities to increase awareness of opportunities to serve on B.C.'s agencies, boards and commissions.

Participants supported this action. They said many racialized people do not know these opportunities exist and may not see themselves as possible applicants.

Participants said awareness is only a first step. Many people believe these roles are not meant for them, or that appointments depend on personal connections or insider knowledge. Unclear application processes, unpaid roles, racism, discrimination and limited influence can also prevent people from applying or staying involved.

Tokenism was a key concern. Some participants said they had been invited to bring a “diverse perspective,” but their views were not valued or taken seriously. These experiences left some people feeling unsafe, exposed or used.

What participants said would help

Participants said outreach should happen through trusted community organizations, cultural spaces, community leaders and in-person channels. Government websites and formal language are not enough to reach people who have not been connected to these opportunities before.

Participants called for plain language information about what boards do, how appointments work and who can apply. Participants said people may need information sessions, mentorship and help with applications.

Awareness should lead to real opportunities, including fair recruitment, meaningful roles, appropriate compensation and support for people with work, caregiving or community responsibilities.

Risks and barriers

Participants said the main risks are tokenism, low trust, unclear processes, unpaid roles, accessibility barriers and reliance on informal networks.

This is not only an awareness issue. People also need to see that these roles are open, safe, meaningful and worth their time.

Accountability for Local Leaders

Proposed action: Include discriminatory conduct in a proposed standardized B.C. code of conduct for local elected officials and provide guidance and training resources on discrimination and racism to support orientation to the code. Explore opportunities for further education and training on anti-racism and Indigenous-specific racism with local governments and Indigenous partners.

Participants supported this action. They said local elected officials should have clear expectations for respectful and non-discriminatory conduct.

Many participants said this action is needed because harmful or discriminatory behaviour is not always addressed. Some, including people from faith communities, shared experiences where they reported discrimination or hate but did not see a clear response. Others said their concerns were minimized or treated as misunderstandings.

Participants said this action will only build trust if it leads to real accountability. They were concerned that a code of conduct could become symbolic if there are no clear consequences when standards are not followed.

Discrimination is not always obvious. It can be subtle, repeated or shaped by local context. Definitions, training and reporting processes need to reflect this.

What participants said would help

Participants said the code should include clear rules, reporting steps and consequences. They also wanted people to know what happens after a concern is raised and how they will be protected from retaliation.

Complaints should be reviewed in a fair and transparent way. Some participants called for independent review, so community concerns are taken seriously.

Participants also called for practical training based on real situations. They said one-time or generic training may not help leaders recognize harm, especially when discrimination is subtle or normalized.

Risks and barriers

Participants said the main risks are weak enforcement, fear of retaliation, resistance from some elected officials and limited capacity in smaller or rural communities. A code of conduct will only help rebuild trust if it is enforced, understood by communities and linked to real changes in behaviour.

Common Themes

Across the engagement sessions, participants raised common themes about how the action plan should be carried out.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Participants said information and services need to be easier to access. They described barriers such as heavy reliance on English, formal government language, limited interpretation, digital access gaps and lack of disability supports.

Participants called for plain language information, translated materials, interpretation, sign language, in-person options and culturally responsive approaches. These supports were seen as especially important for people in rural communities, people with disabilities, seniors, newcomers and people with limited digital access.



Accountability

Participants said government commitments must lead to visible change. Many said past engagement or public commitments did not always result in clear action.

Participants called for clear timelines, public reporting and regular updates. They also said education and awareness must be paired with enforcement where discrimination occurs. Without follow-through, engagement can feel performative and may weaken trust.

Community Partnerships

Participants said government should work with communities throughout implementation, not only during consultation. They wanted ongoing relationships with trusted community organizations, local leaders and people with lived experience.

Community expertise should be valued and compensated. Actions are more likely to succeed when communities help design, deliver and evaluate them.

Data, Transparency and Trust

Participants supported the use of race-based data to better understand inequities. They also raised concerns about privacy, consent and how data may be used.

Participants said data collection must be clear, safe and transparent. People need to know why information is being collected, how it will be protected and how it will lead to action.

Safety and Protection

Participants described fear of retaliation as a major barrier to reporting racism or sharing personal experiences. This concern came up in discussions about schools, workplaces, health care, public services and local leadership.

Participants said people need safe and confidential ways to raise concerns. They also said stronger protection is needed so people can report harm without fear of losing work, services, status, safety or community standing.

Overall, participants want the action plan to be practical, transparent and accountable. They also want communities most affected by racism to help shape how actions are carried out and how progress is measured.

Next Steps

This report summarizes what we heard through community engagement on selected actions of the Provincial Anti-Racism Action Plan.

The feedback will be shared with ministries responsible for each action. Ministries will use it to support implementation, track progress and identify where changes may be needed.

The Province will continue to report on progress now that the action plan has been released. The first annual progress report will be published in fall 2027 and describe progress made in the first year.

Appendix

Appendix A: Engagement Participation





Communities Engaged



Immigration & Legal Status



Newcomers; immigrants; permanent residents; temporary residents; international students

Age / Life Stage



Youth; working age adults; seniors; families

Equity Dimension



Gender & Sexual Orientation

Women; men; non binary participants; other 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals

Racialized Communities



Asian, Arab, Black, Filipino, Latin American, South Asian

Faith Identity



Muslim; Sikh, Jewish; other faith affiliated Punjabi-speaking communities

Employment



Migrant workers; temporary foreign workers; small business owners; frontline workers; professionals, caregivers; agricultural and construction workers

Disability & Accessibility



Deaf Community

