

Mistreatment and Discrimination in Macomb, IL

Julia Albarracin
Department of Political Science
j-albarracin@wiu.edu
309-836-5202
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An electronic survey was conducted with 424 students at WIU between August and October 2020. The questions were directed to assess experiences of mistreatment and discrimination in Macomb and Western Illinois University based on several factors including race, gender, sexual orientation, accent, physical appearance, as well as other factors. The results for the city of Macomb are reported here.

Demographic and Other Characteristics

Students across campus were represented. The gender of participants were 90% female, 40% male, and 1% other. The race of participants was 78% White, 16% African or Black, Asian 5%, and 1% American Indian or Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Table 1. Race

Answer	%	Count
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.43%	2
Asian	4.70%	22
Black or African American	16.24%	76
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.43%	2
White	78.21%	366
Total	100%	468

About 12% of respondents identified as Latino/a.

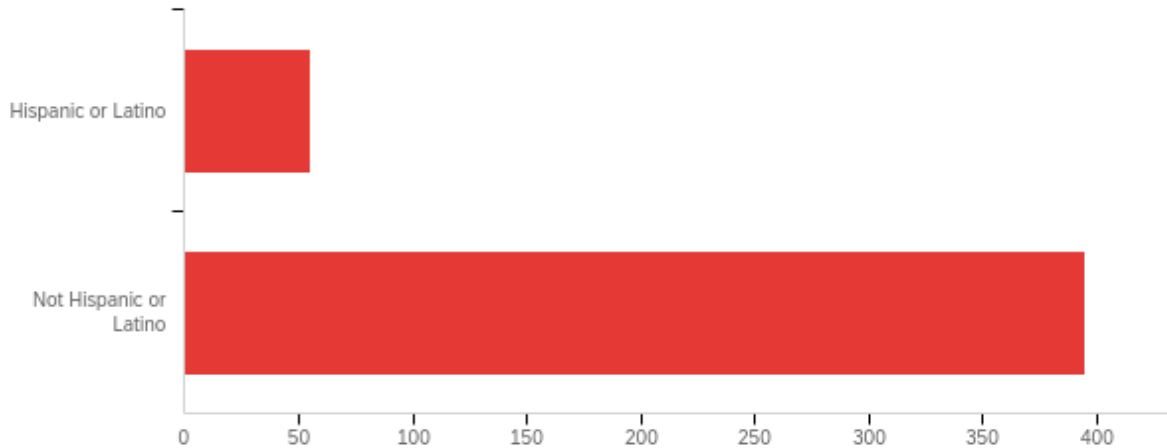


Figure 1. Latinos/s versus non-Latinas

Less than one fourth (94) of the participants were international students from Asia, Africa, Europe, Middle East, Latin America, or North America.

Question: How often do you feel...?

The first question aimed at capturing the frequency of experiences of mistreatment and discrimination. The results are in Table 1.

Table 2. Frequency of Experiences of Mistreatment and Discrimination

	N =424 (%)		
	Everyday/A Few Times a Month	A Few Times a year/Less than Once a Year	Never
You are treated with less courtesy than other people are.	25	41	43
You are treated with less respect than other people are.	26	35	43
You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores.	15	33	40
People act as if they think you are not smart.	28	34	38
People act as if they are afraid of you.	16	24	60
People act as if they think you are dishonest.	15	31	54
People act as if they're better than you are.	38	31	31
You are called names or insulted.	18	29	60

You are threatened or harassed	9	27	63
You are followed around in stores.	10	22	67

Question: What do you think is the main reason for this experience?

Another question was intended to reflect the perceived reason for discrimination. The answers to this question can be found in Figure 1.

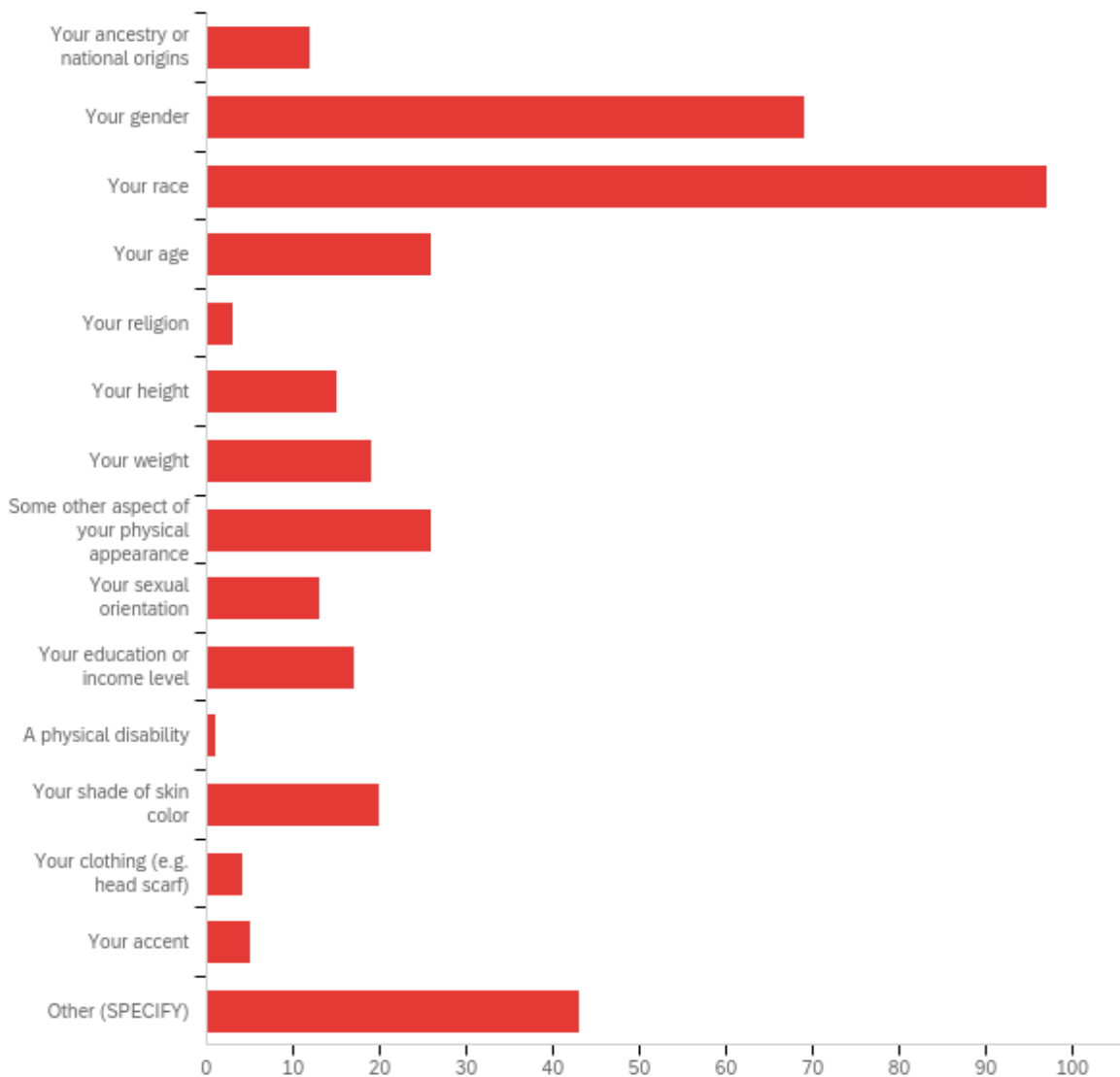


Figure 2-Perceived Reason for Mistreatment or Discrimination

Question: Place where the mistreatment happened

Another question asked participants the place where the discrimination took place. The answers to this question can be found below.

Table 3-Place Where the Mistreatment of Discrimination Took Place

Answer	%	Count
Business	38.52%	151
City Office	4.59%	18
City Police	8.16%	32
Other government	4.85%	19
On the streets	43.88%	172
Total	100%	392

Question: Please, describe your experience if you are comfortable.

In order to assess the gravity of the experience described as mistreatment or discrimination, another question asked participants to describe this experience. A summary of the responses can be found below.

Examples of Mistreatment or Discrimination (unedited):

Walmart

When at Walmart once, I had purchased some medication and took it there. This woman stopped and yelled at us asking if we paid for it. I did and she seemed eager to not believe me that I had to show her the receipt. Following that, my friends and I went to continue shopping for house supplies and she followed us from a distant as if she expected us to steal.

Buying goods at Walmart Macomb.

There have been multiple times where I have been in stores, mainly Walmart, where I had good reason to believe that a man/multiple men were following me around the store

At Walmart in Macomb while WIU's on break, people are typically pretty rude. To be fair, I'm not sure if it's just to me or just in general, but they're things like purposely continuing to stand in my way when I just want to get around them, giving me dirty looks for existing (and I smile at everyone, so I don't think I'm asking for it), and the like.

During the beginning of Winter Break, I took a late-night trip to Wal-Mart, to buy some groceries and a new jacket. I ended up purchasing the jacket and was unsatisfied with the

material and the fit (the fitting rooms were closed that evening). Consequently, I returned the jacket the following evening after I got off of work. As I waited in line to be helped, a customer service representative comes up and asks if I am in the correct line as well as what do I need help with (despite there being three other people in line behind me). I nervously answer, "I want to return this jacket". The representative proceeds to say "Oh yes, this is the return line."

Usually at Walmart or another type of store. I usually notice that I'm being followed by 1 particular person. As well as when I'm leaving Walmart, they'll always ask to see my receipt even though they didn't ask multiple people before me to or even if I have only 4 or 5 items in my cart.

Other Businesses

Just getting followed around the stores and not buying things so I get kicked out because they are afraid I'm shop lifting.

Many workers in businesses do not trust students. They follow us around and

Apartments/other

I am an off-campus student and was looking for apartments. I was conversing with the leasing office over the phone the whole summer. When I came into the office, I was told that I am very "well spoken." I was not sure how to handle that situation. I have also been followed around in a certain business.

RENTAL COMPANIES don't care about service just a quick buck. Response times are weeks, security deposits take months and lawyers to receive back.

Additionally, off campus landlords take advantage of college students just because they are college students.

Restaurants

Waiters/waitresses not wanting to serve us because we are college students or wearing Greek letters.

Chicks

I was at chicks and I was sitting next to a table where they were all white and my table we're all black and Mexican. We were rushed, our orders were wrong, and the waitress had a attitude the whole time but when she went to the other table she was nicer friendlier and took her time. She also checked on them More often.

Another instance was in 2017-My girlfriend was visiting during fall break and we had decided to go out to eat. So we decided to go to Chicks because of the good food and reviews. Upon entering there was an intoxicated customer sitting at the bar looking at us and shaking his head (my then girlfriend now fiance is bi-racial with a lighter skin complexion than me), we ignore him and proceed to place our orders. Everything tasted great and the customer service was good.

My girlfriend paid with her credit card and we left. Later, after receiving her statement, she saw excess charges made by Chicks that we did not authorize.

Taco Bell

Was called a "faggot" while ordering food at Taco Bell.

Dollar Tree

I was out shopping at Dollar Tree and I decided to ask the cashier about if there were any positions available. She believed there were, but she wanted to make sure, so she called one of her managers over. She asked, " Hey, aren't we hiring?" "He's wondering if there are any positions available". She (the manager) responds "We aren't hiring at this time". The cashier responded, "Really?, I thought you said we were?" The manager tells her "No, we don't need any positions filled." I returned 2-3 weeks later only to see new employees. On the other hand, I get the same response every time I ask about job openings at that Dollar Tree

Banks

Tellers at the bank pretty rude and fed up with simple questions about personal banking.

Police

Profiled by Police Officer and accused of gang affiliation

There have been times where I have been watched/followed in stores or the police have driven behind my car

I was setting up for an event outside and a cop came up to me and said that I had better not be doing anything harmful. After that several cops were wandering around for some time during the rest of the set up.

I have been followed around town in my car by police on numerous occasions for seemingly no reason. I am paranoid that I might be given another ticket, so I always use cruise control in town so that I cannot be caught speeding.

Police generalizing and stereotyping college students.

I was coming back from crystal lake around the time it was 4:20 and back me and my friends we're black cause we wasn't speeding and didn't get any tickets this day the police pulled us over cause he thought we would have weed and when they didn't find anything he started to harass me so that he could find a reason to give me a ticket.

Cops in this town have a real ego issue

I got pulled over ONE time on campus, a few laws were broken and I understand that but after the first stop it happened constantly. I changed my license plates and the situation was solved.

Against Women

Some guys are creepy and weird. It doesn't happen very often, but just enough to notice. There are people who think they have a right to touch you or to they think you're dumb because you're "just a girl" and it's pathetic.

I've been told to smile more at various businesses around town. Me and a friend have also been followed around at a business while they said catcalls.

Walking past the old Marietta Phelps building I was followed by a man that had watched me walk my boyfriend to work. He followed me around the square and eventually back to my apartment, all the while talking about my "ass" and how do I "know I love my boyfriend if I haven't tried being with him," asking for my number, etc. It was dark and late; I was alone.

Police here both on and off campus

Weight/Size

When reaching on the top shelf for a box of cookies and old man said "are you sure you need to be reaching for that" and scanned my body. I immediately felt judged for my weight and didn't buy any cookies that day.

I have a very petite build and I look much younger than my actual age. I find people react most inappropriately to this aspect of me. People may comment that I need to be eating more or buying more groceries and I have been followed around the grocery store multiple times, all of which I was alone for.

Ethnicity

Incidents of discrimination are related to my gender and sometimes to my ethnicity. I am a white Latina and discrimination surrounding my ethnicity typically occurs when cultural factors are exposed. For example, when others hear my accents when I speak or learn my name.

Being looked at differently because I have an afro/braids

People around bars saying go back to where you came from / servers giving white individuals better service

Sexual Orientation

Many people on and off campus are homophobic. I have experienced more on campus. I have been called gay slurs, and have friends who have been attacked verbally and harassed physically for being openly gay.

Local People/Other

The city of Macomb has several groups of people who appear to feel that they are better than others due to their wealth, education level or career. They point, stare, laugh and talk down to those not in these groups and unfortunately there is no restaurant and few small businesses in town you can go to that this does not happen. There are many businesses that I will no longer

have anything to do with and I often travel outside of the city for business and leisure purposes because of this.

Many citizens in Macomb hate the university and try to look down on students

Disabilities

I'm usually treated with "kid gloves" due to my physical disability. People go out of their way to be nice and helpful, but some people are frightened, unsure how to treat me or irritated at the inconvenience caused by my needs. Some people assume I am mentally disabled in addition to physically and treat me as a child.

Prejudice against white people

Assumption that I have all these resources and easy way outs because I'm white or that I wouldn't get it cause of my race. Mostly cause of all the assumptions society makes about not just my but of all races.

Businesses Specifically Mentioned

Another question asked participants to identify the businesses where the experience took place Walmart was the business with the most reported cases of discrimination, followed by Chicks, Hyvee, and Wendy's. Other places mentioned also appear in the table below.

Table 4. Place Where Discrimination Took Place

Business	Mentions
Walmart	16
Chicks	3
Hyvee	2
Wendy's	2
STC Investments	1
Town Cafe	1
Sally's	1
Dollar Tree	1
Rocky's	1
Great Clips	1
Vitale's	1
Ritz	1
Forum	1

Ways for Improving Race and Other Relationships

Finally, participants were asked to propose ways for improving race and relationships in Macomb. Most of the students proposed more education (10), having combined town and WIU events 4), giving students a voice and including them in event planning (3), and diversifying city workers and police (2).