



## Report of the International Veterinary Students' Association's (IVSA) Taskforce on Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity (DEI) - Discrimination In The Veterinary Community

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### ABSTRACT

Discrimination within the veterinary community has been a longstanding issue across the world. Continuous attempt to understand the roots of this matter is therefore a necessity. This survey complements the ongoing efforts aiming to overcome this problem by focusing on how veterinary students from different countries encounter discrimination on many levels: within the universities and within the International Veterinary Students' Association (IVSA) locally and globally.

**Method:** 134 IVSA members completed an online anonymous survey shared on IVSA platforms during 2.5 months. The survey was analysed using Google Forms and SPSS Statistics Data Editor.

**Results and conclusion:** Verbal discrimination tends to be more prevalent than any other type of discrimination shared by IVSA members in this survey. Most of the experiences were based on ethnicity or sexuality, but the survey also found other types of minorities such as body weight and tribal ethnicity. The International Veterinary Students' Association (IVSA) plays an important role in the diversity, equity and inclusivity (DEI) education of members around the world, however, most members feel that IVSA should focus more on inclusivity and promoting anti-discrimination.



## INTRODUCTION

In the past, veterinary medicine was thought to be a diverse profession in terms of the geographical distribution of the community, variety of species we treat, zoonotic relationships and the many fields of specialization. While this may be true, it is long overdue that we expand our horizons and embrace ethnic, gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, physical and mental ability, and other human differences.

Institutional discrimination is when policies and practices are more favourable to a specific group of people, that have been systemitically embedded in the structure and governance of an institution [1]. Such an occurrence could be due to explicit (intentional) acts or indirect (unintentional) acts and is possibly a result of historical norms [2]. Another type of discrimination that is unfortunately common is verbal discrimination. This is when the verbal treatment of a person who is a member of a minority group violates their rights or dignity.

Nowadays, the words "acceptance" and "tolerance" are being used interchangeably. However, there is a discrepancy in the way the terminology is used. According to the Oxford Dictionary:

*"Tolerance is the ability or willingness to tolerate the existence of opinions or behaviors that one dislikes or disagrees with."*

*"Acceptance is the agreement with or belief in an idea or explanation."*

Acceptance goes beyond tolerance as it indicates a greater sense of reception and freedom for others to be themselves [3]; tolerance can occur without acceptance, but acceptance cannot occur without tolerance. Tolerance does not imply understanding since it is a state of putting up with something or someone [4]. It is coexisting without having to accept the different behaviors or opinions incorporated into society. While tolerating, dealing with minorities is mostly viewed as a tedious chore rather than a learning experience [5]. In tolerance, there is no starting point to discover differences, commonalities and experiencing the full spectrum of human contact.

Diversity, equity and inclusivity is relevant to the International Veterinary Students' Association simply because we are an international community made up of members from over seventy countries. That is almost forty thousand unique individuals that should be celebrated and valued for what makes them who they are.

**The aim of this survey is to address the different ways in which our members encounter discrimination, gain more of an understanding about the challenges they face and to see how we can better address such issues in order for IVSA to develop more holistically and become an even more inclusive association.**



Through this, IVSA hopes to gain further insight on the discrimination some IVSA members face. By learning these outcomes, IVSA can move towards becoming a more diverse and inclusive global community on both an international and regional level.

## METHODS

To get an impression of the discriminatory experiences IVSA members face within the veterinary community around the world, a survey was sent out through the network of IVSA. The survey was sent out by means of a digital newsletter and various social media platforms. The duration of the survey period was 2.5 months. Halfway through, the results were checked for regional representations. Regions that were underrepresented at this point received additional promotion of the survey to promote equal representation in the results.

The survey was created in Google Forms under the IVSA GDPR. Respondents to the survey were given various statements to respond to on a 5 point Likert scale of frequency and opinion. The respondents were subdivided into two groups: minority and non-minority, and the statements in three levels: within their university, within their local IVSA and within IVSA global. Non-minority students were asked how often they witnessed discrimination on all three levels on a 5 point Likert scale (never- almost never - at least once a month - at least once a week - every day). Minority students were asked how they experienced discrimination on all three levels on a 5 point Likert scale (strongly disagree- disagree - not sure - agree - strongly agree). Additional analyses have been made with the same data but sorted per IVSA region to get a more region-specific image.<sup>1</sup>

Statistics were processed through SPSS Statistics Data Editor and figures generated automatically through Google Forms. Statistical methods used were Crosstabs and Chi Square tests to compare between groups. For significance,  $p < 0.05$  was chosen.

## RESULTS

### About the respondents

From the total 137 responses to the survey from IVSA members around the world, 134 were fit for analysis. Exclusion criteria being incorrect or incomplete data from the respondents or repetitive sending of the same entry. In the tables below, you can find their responses in percentages of the global total and where significant, regionally. From the analysed sample, the IVSA regions represented by the respondents can be seen in figure 1.

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<sup>1</sup> *The exact data on each IVSA region is available upon request*



Which region is your IVSA MO in?

134 answers

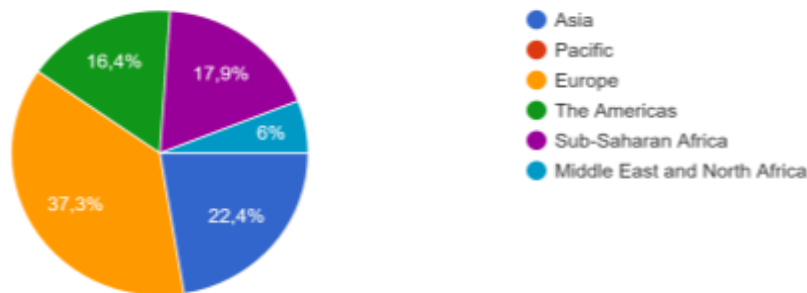


Figure 1 - IVSA Regions represented by respondents,  $n=134$ .

The majority of respondents represented the Europe region, least represented was the Pacific region with no respondents at all. Looking at the percentages of fig.1, this seems to be an adequate reflection of the current amount of active MOs within IVSA.

From the total respondents ( $n=134$ ), 26,9% ( $n=36$ ) were part of a minority and 73,1% ( $n=98$ ) were not.

Minorities were represented within the survey based on the grounds on which the respondents within a minority group experienced discrimination. The percentages of these grounds within the minority group can be seen in Figure 2.



The grounds on which I am discriminated against are...  
IVSA Survey on Discrimination in the Veterinary Community 2020-2021

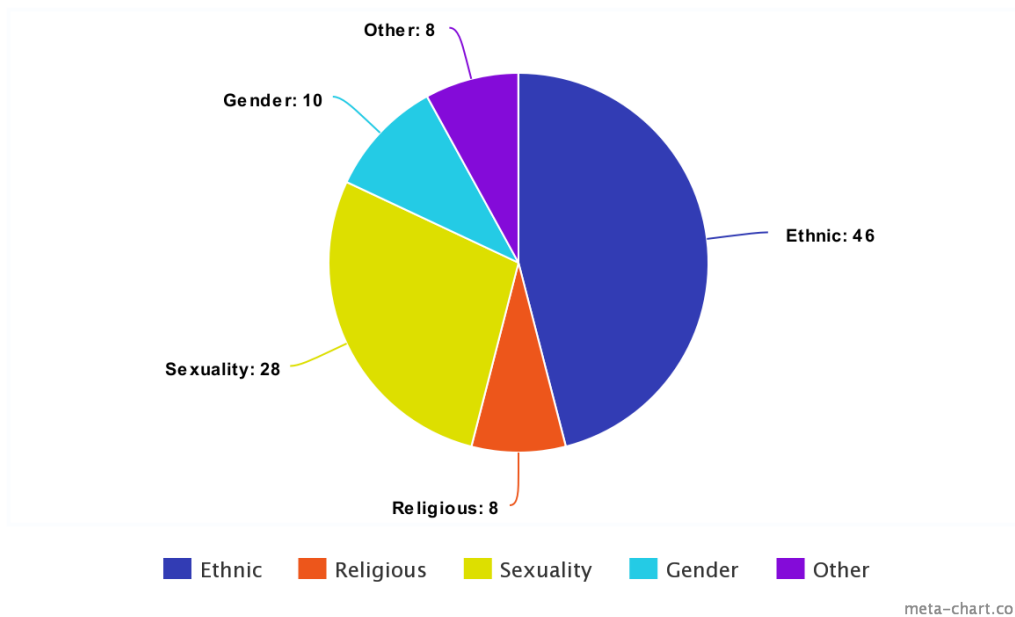


Figure 2 - The grounds on which respondents in a minority were discriminated against in % of total responses ( $n=50$ ).

This varied from ethnic (46%) or religious (8%) grounds to the respondents gender (10%) or sexuality (28%). Some respondents experienced being discriminated against on several grounds, this raised the total to  $n=50$ . Four respondents mentioned disability, diet, height or being overweight as grounds of discrimination. As these were only present once in the sample, these are included in category 'Other' (8%).

Below, in figure 3, the pie charts are split out per region of which there were minority respondents.

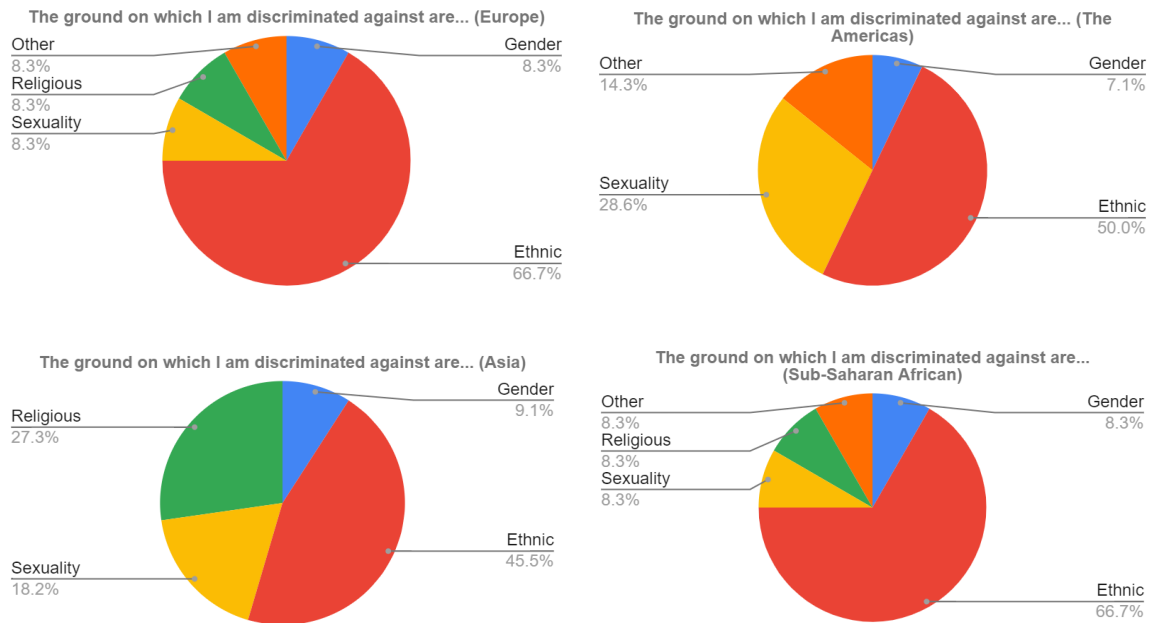


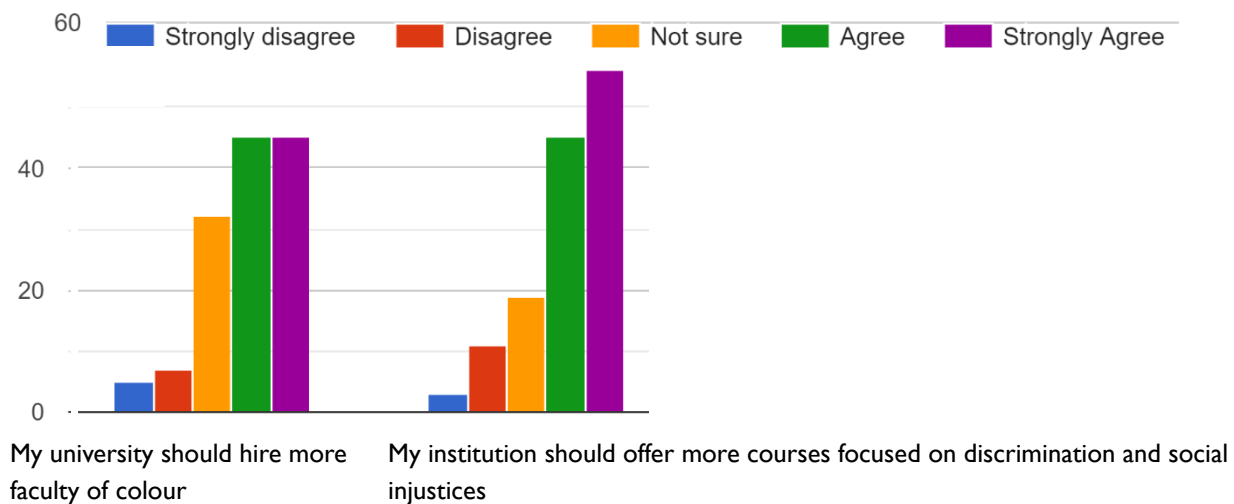
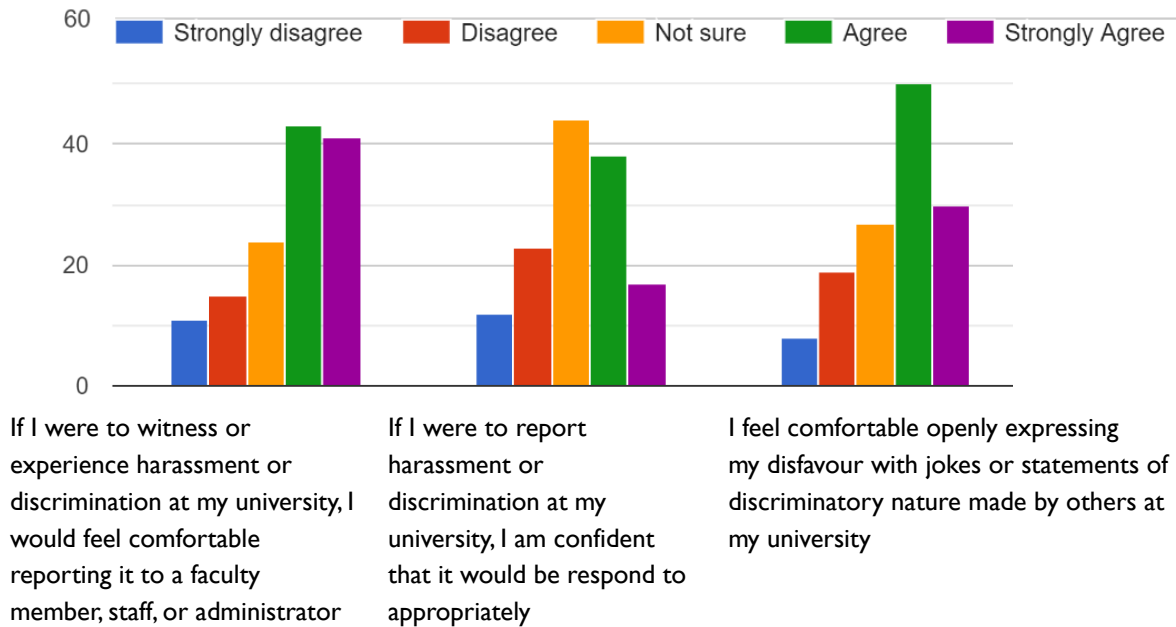
Figure 3 - The grounds on which respondents in a minority were discriminated against in % of total responses per region.

### Reporting on discrimination and education in DEI

To follow up on how both minority and non-minority students deal with discrimination at their institution, three more statements were provided in regards to how they would react. Two additional statements were provided to assess whether students felt their institutions could do more to address DEI within their organisation (See table I)



**Table I – Reporting on discrimination and education in DEI within universities - Globally**



The majority of students felt confident to report harassment taking place, no matter whether they were witnessing it or experiencing it, to the authorities within their university. There were no significant differences in regions for this.



On the other hand, most also felt that if they did report discrimination, they were either unsure or positive that it would be responded to appropriately. Only a few confirmed that this was either completely not the case (strongly disagree) or absolutely the case (strongly agree). Only in the Asia region, students were positive their report would be handled appropriately. In Europe and the MENA region, most students were unsure to somewhat positive. In The Americas and Sub-Saharan Africa, the majority were unsure and tended more to (strongly) disagree rather than agree.

The greater part of students also said they feel confident to openly express their disfavour with jokes or statements of discriminatory nature made by others at their university. Students from Sub-Saharan Africa were more confident in this than the global average, students from regions Europe and MENA were closer to the global average. Students in Asia and The Americas regions were a lot more unsure of this. This may suggest a significant cultural difference.

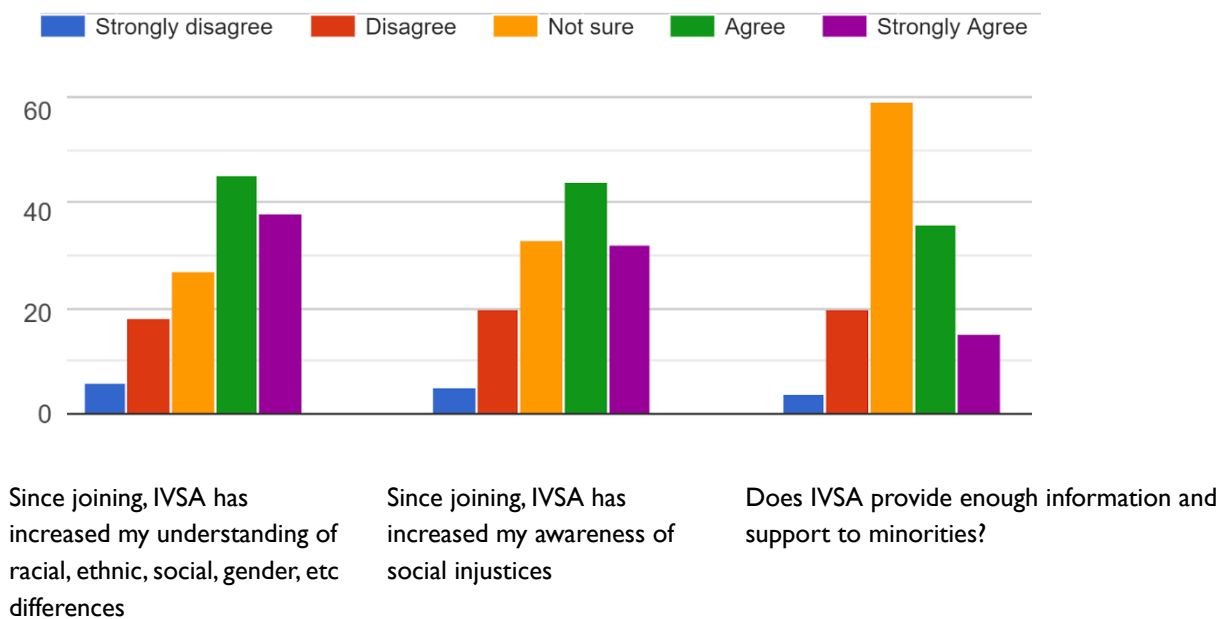
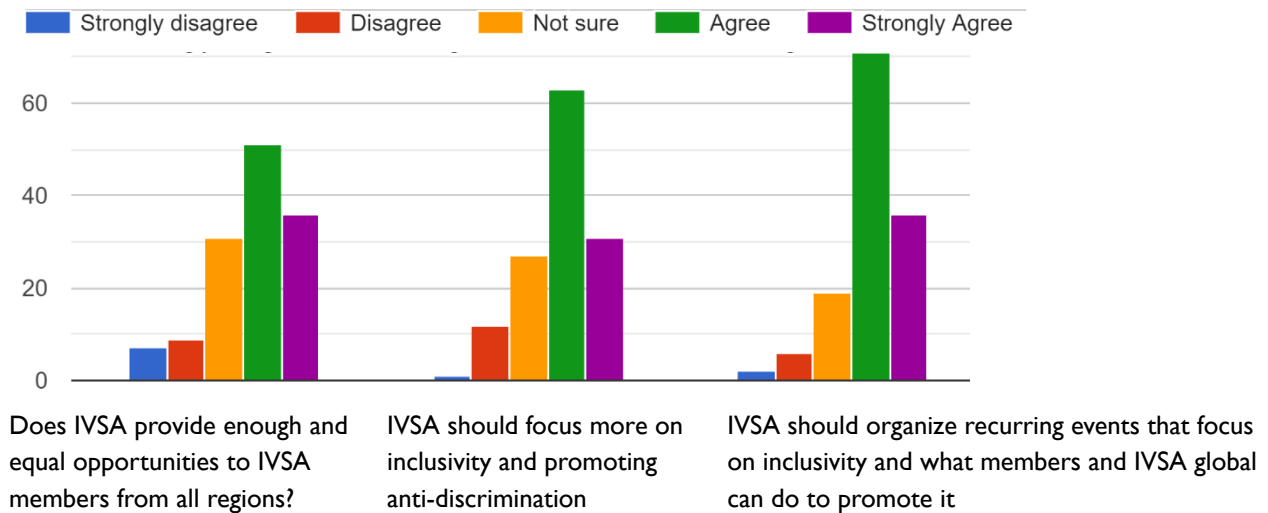
When asked if their university should do more to address DEI within their organisation, an overwhelming majority agreed to 'My university should hire more faculty of colour' and 'My institution should offer more courses focused on discrimination and social injustices'. This was the same across all regions. This suggests that this is a topic where veterinary institutions have yet to improve.

Finally, six statements were aimed at how IVSA as an organisation addresses DEI in their work. Three of these were aimed at how IVSA members experience the current situation, and another three to how this could be improved in the future (See table 2).





**Table 2 –Education in DEI within IVSA - Globally**



When asked if IVSA provides enough and equal opportunities to IVSA members from all regions, the majority of respondents agreed to strongly agreed, though close to a third were unsure. This is coherent with the results of the statements ‘Since joining, IVSA has increased my understanding of racial, ethnic, social, gender, etc differences’ and ‘Since joining, IVSA has increased my awareness of social injustices’ which gained similar

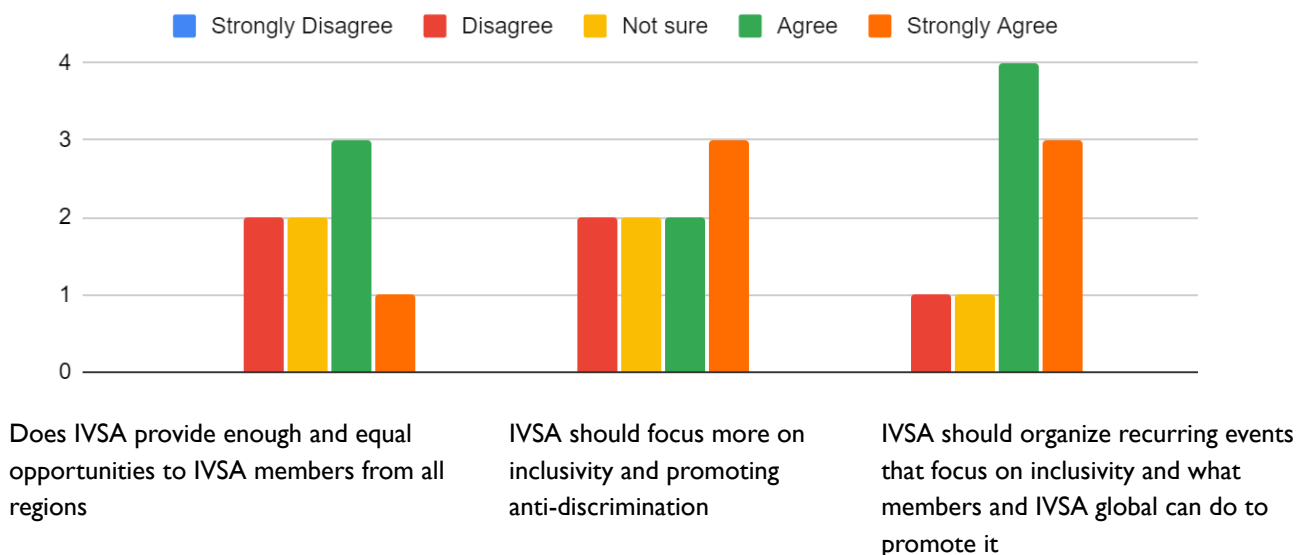


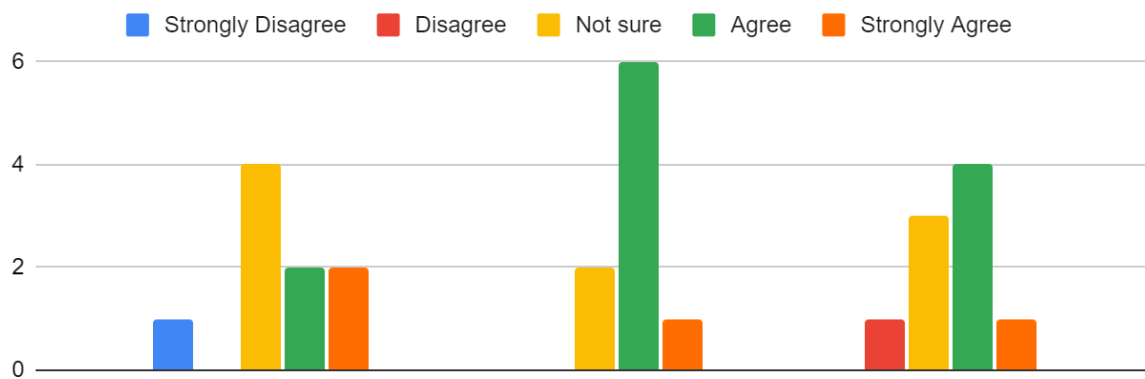
results. This might indicate that IVSA has an important role to play in DEI education of members around the world.

When asked if IVSA provides enough information and support to minorities, however, the majority was unsure and about a third agreed. Regarding how this should change in the future, a grand majority agreed to strongly agreed with the statements 'IVSA should focus more on inclusivity and promoting anti-discrimination' and 'IVSA should organize recurring events that focus on inclusivity and what members and IVSA global can do to promote it'. Based on these results, it is clear enough that IVSA needs to work towards actively raising awareness, sharing resources and offering support to those subjected to discrimination.

In the Asia region, respondents agreed more strongly with these statements than the global average. Only for the final statement 'Does IVSA provide enough information and support to minorities?' they scored exactly on the global average. In the Europe region, most statements scored similarly to the global average. When asked if IVSA had increased their awareness of social injustices and if IVSA provides enough information and support to minorities, more respondents were unsure compared to the global average. Unlike other regions, the MENA region had significantly more respondents that disagreed with the statements 'Does IVSA provide enough and equal opportunities to IVSA members from all regions?' and 'IVSA should focus more on inclusivity and promoting anti-discrimination' though the majority still agreed (See table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 –Education in DEI within IVSA - MENA**





Since joining, IVSA has increased my understanding of racial, ethnic, social, gender, etc differences

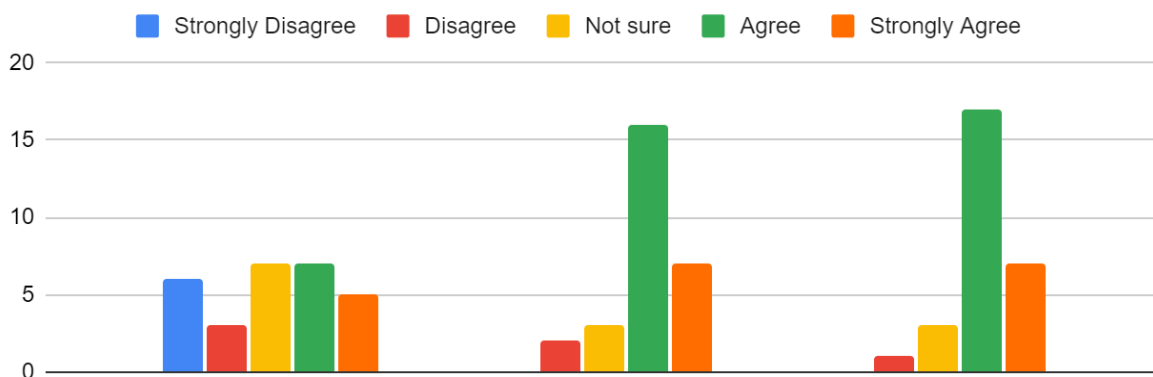
Since joining, IVSA has increased my awareness of social injustices

Does IVSA provide enough information and support to minorities?

The majority of this region was also unsure whether IVSA had increased their understanding of racial, ethnic, social, gender, et. differences, which forms a stark contrast with the global average.

In the Sub - Saharan Africa region, most statements scored similar to the global average, though two were significantly different (See table 2.2).

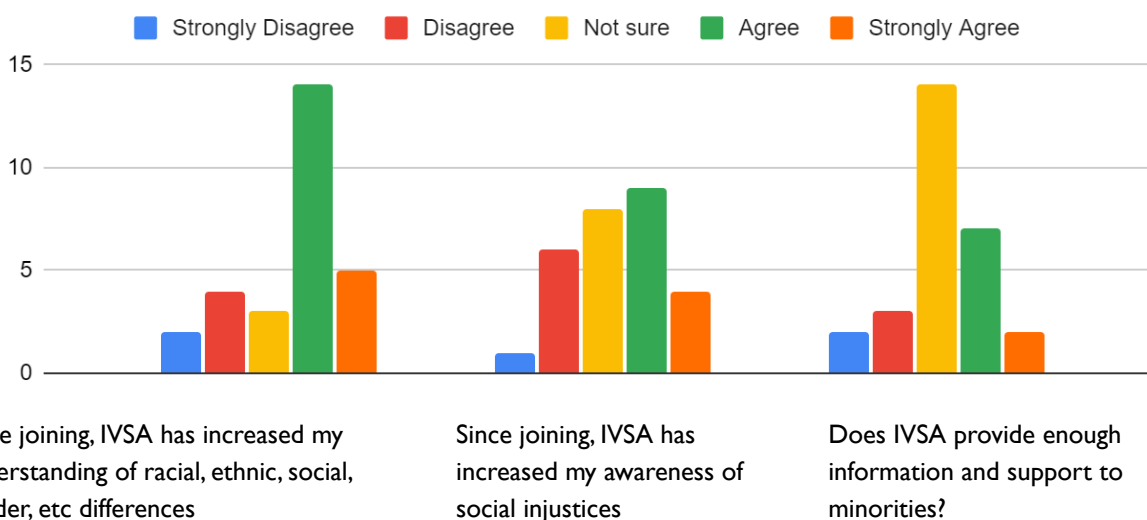
Table 2.2 –Education in DEI within IVSA - Sub-Saharan Africa



Does IVSA provide enough and equal opportunities to IVSA members from all regions

IVSA should focus more on inclusivity and promoting anti-discrimination

IVSA should organize recurring events that focus on inclusivity and what members and IVSA global can do to promote it



To the statement ‘Does IVSA provide enough and equal opportunities to IVSA members from all regions’ the opinions were very divided and more than the global average strongly disagreed. In addition to that, to the statement ‘Since joining, IVSA has increased my awareness of social injustices’ more than the global average either disagreed or were unsure.

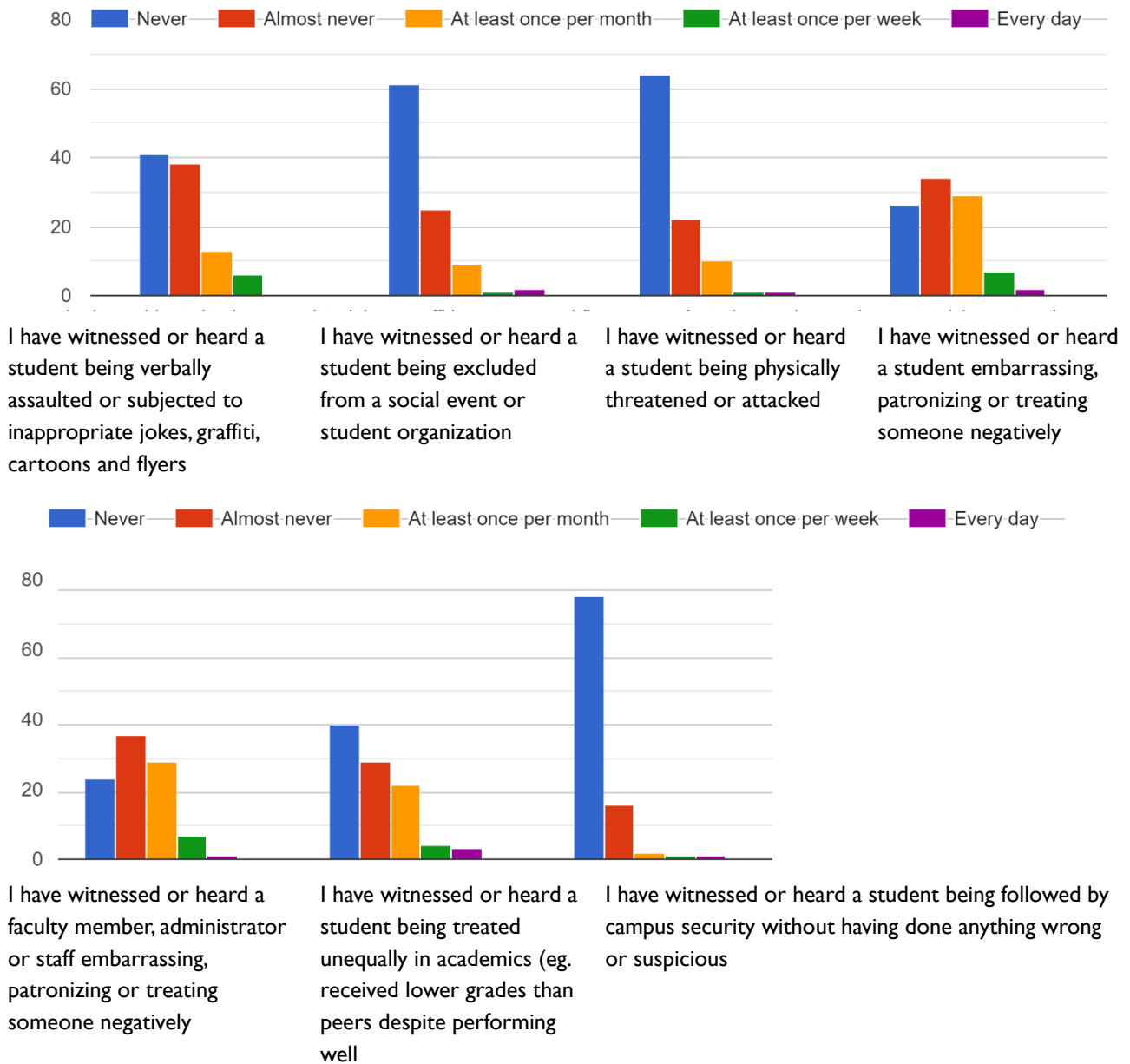
In the Americas region, most scores were close to the global average. For the statements ‘Does IVSA provide enough and equal opportunities to IVSA members from all regions’, ‘Since joining, IVSA has increased my awareness of social injustices’ and ‘Does IVSA provide enough information and support to minorities?’ the majority of respondents was unsure, making it higher than the global average.

**The experiences of non-minorities within their universities**

The majority of non-minority students responded never or almost never to being a witness to discriminatory acts within their vet schools (See table 3). Student to student discrimination seemed to be less prevalent than faculty staff to student discrimination. When asked ‘I have witnessed or heard a student embarrassing, patronizing or treating someone negatively’ or ‘I have witnessed or heard a faculty member, administrator or staff embarrassing, patronizing or treating someone negatively’, fewer respondents could confirm never having witnessed this type of discrimination.



**Table 3 - The experiences of non-minorities within their universities - Globally**



Between regions, the amount of witnessed student on student discrimination was similar in all regions (never to almost never), although it was reported slightly more in the MENA region. As for faculty staff to student discrimination, compared to the global average, this seemed to be more prevalent in the The Americas, MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa but there was no significant difference between regions.



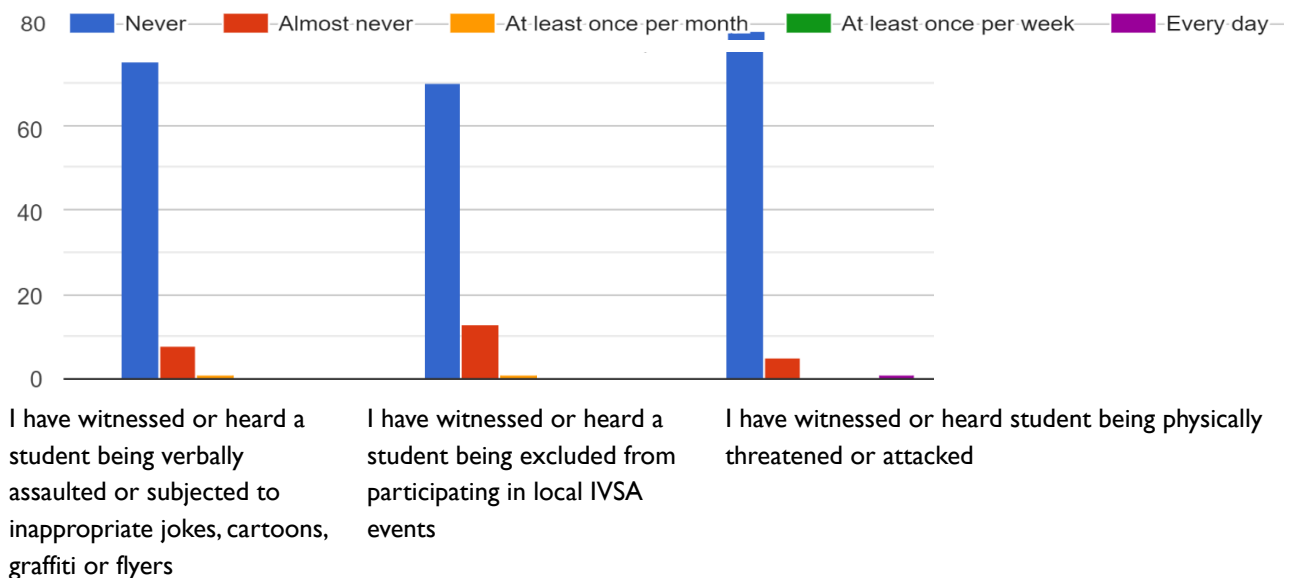
Most did not witness the following types of discrimination:

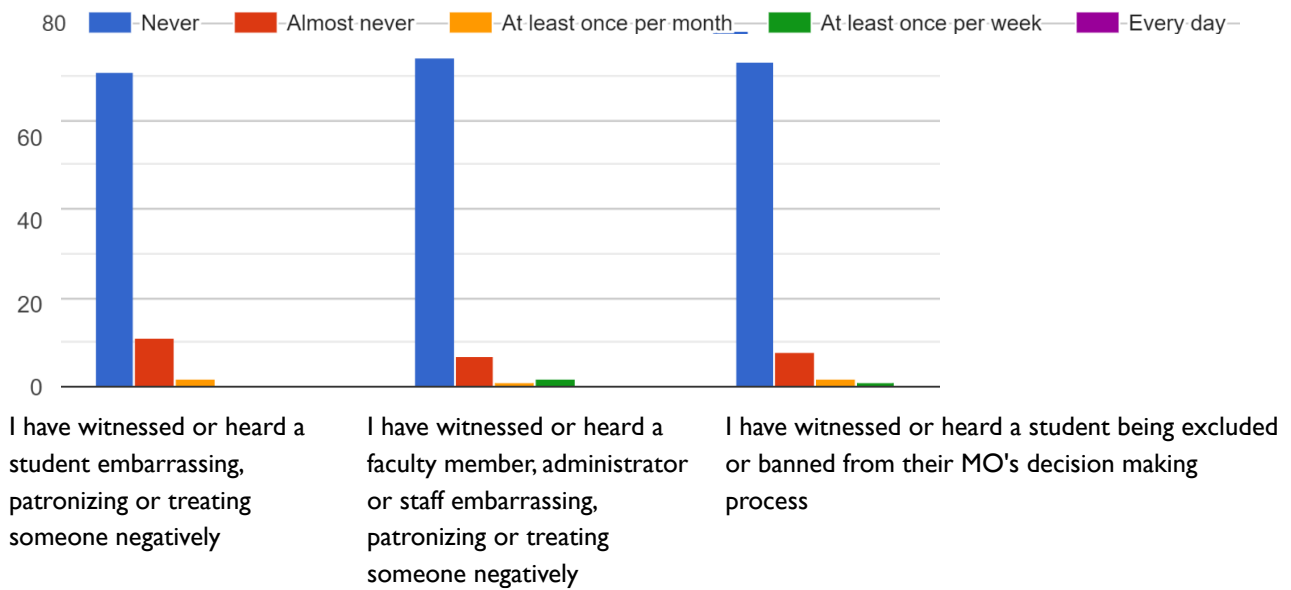
- being verbally assaulted or subjected to inappropriate jokes, graffiti, cartoons and flyers (no significant difference between regions)
- being excluded from a social event or student organization (no significant difference between regions)
- being physically threatened or attacked (slightly higher incidence for Sub-Saharan Africa and MENA but not significant - could be a coincidence)
- embarrassing, patronizing or treating someone negatively (no significant difference between regions)
- I have witnessed or heard a faculty member, administrator or staff embarrassing, patronizing or treating someone negatively (no significant difference between regions)
- being treated unequally in academics (eg. received lower grades than peers despite performing well (no significant difference between regions)
- being followed by campus security without having done anything wrong or suspicious (happening significantly more in regions Asia and Sub Saharan Africa)

**The experiences of non-minorities within their local IVSA chapters**

Within local IVSA events, the non-minority respondents almost unanimously reported never to have witnessed any type of discrimination (see table 4).

**Table 4 - The experiences of non-minorities within IVSA local events - Globally**





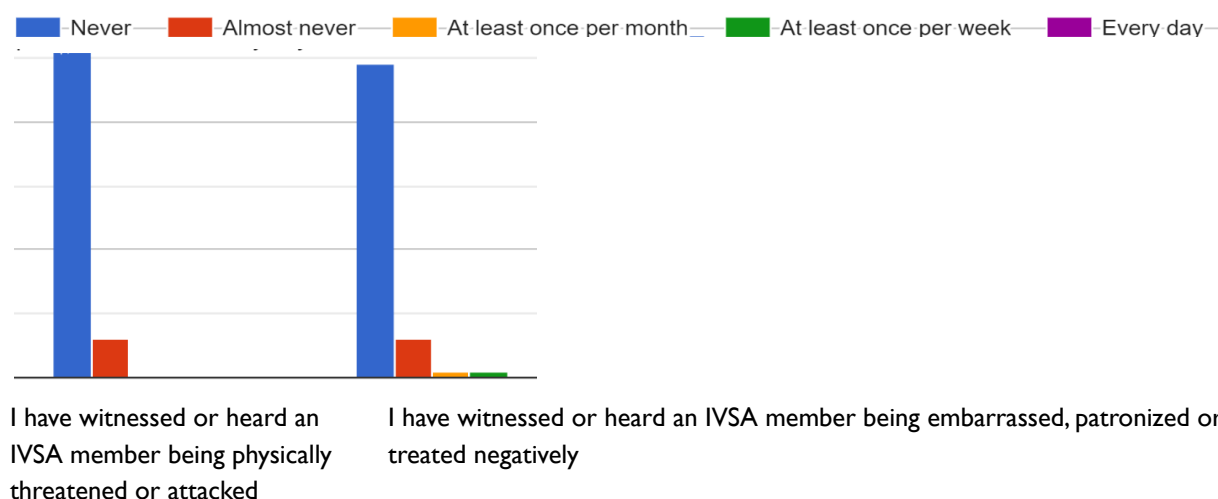
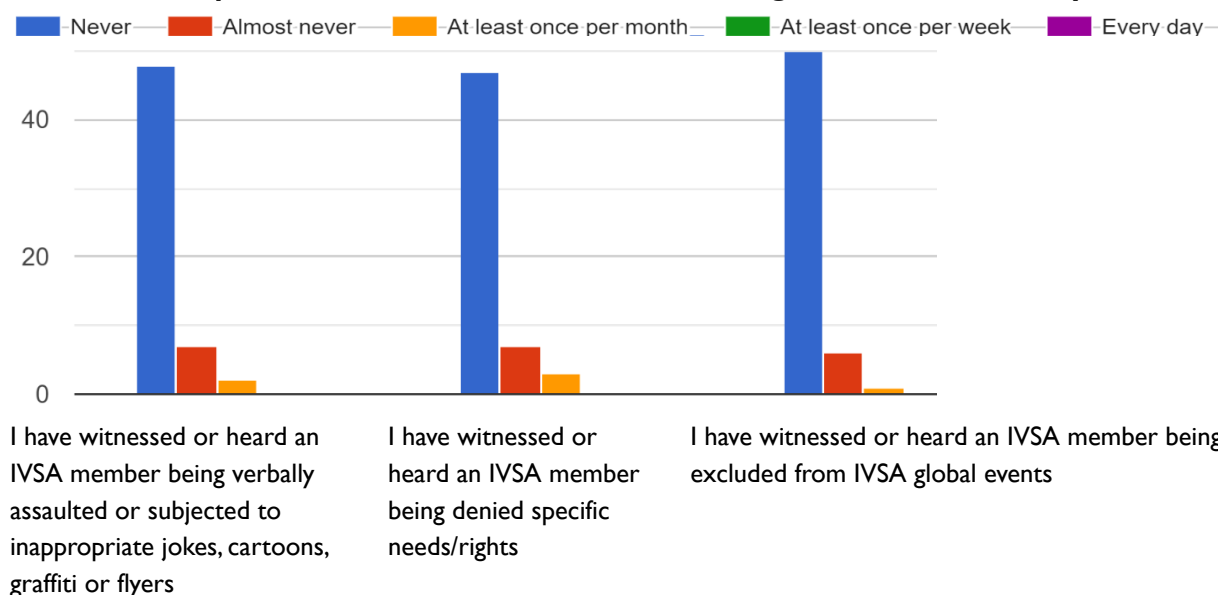
This was the same across all regions, though the MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa reported a few incidences.

**The experiences of non-minorities within IVSA global**

For IVSA global events, the non-minority respondents witnessed slightly more discrimination than at a local level, but the grand majority still reported never to have witnessed any type of discrimination (See table 5). There were a few respondents reporting discrimination at IVSA global events , but there was no significant difference between regions.



**Table 5 - The experiences of non-minorities within IVSA global events - Globally**



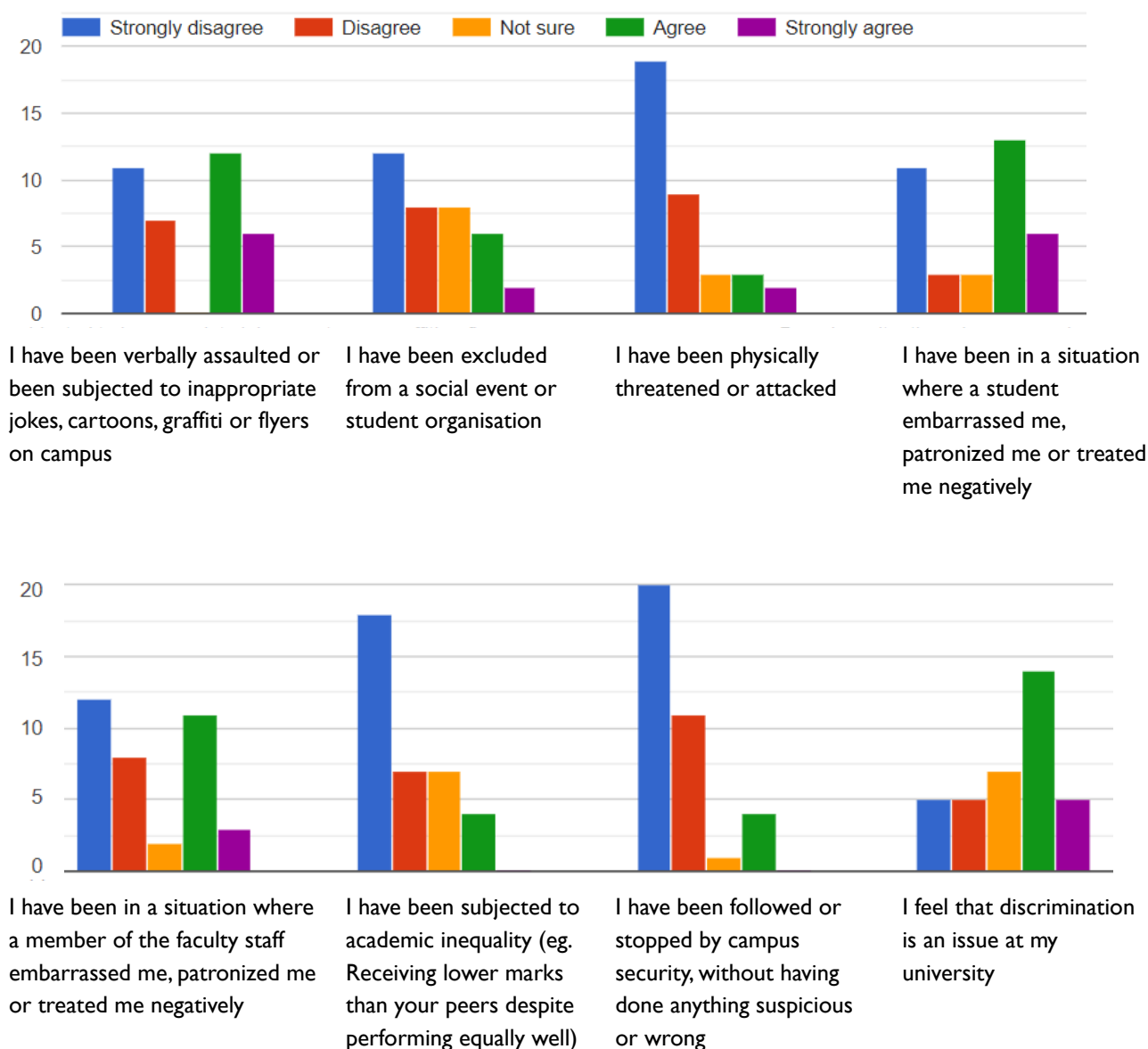
**The experiences of minorities within their universities**

When asking the minority students how they experienced discrimination within their veterinary institutions, there was a lot more variety between respondents (See table 6). For each statement, the type of minority (as described in figure 2) subjected to that type of discrimination is given if there was a significant difference compared to other minority groups.





**Table 6 - The experiences of minorities within their universities - Globally**



Most did not experience the following types of discrimination:

- being excluded from a social event or student organisation (for those who did experience this, it was significantly linked to being an ethnic minority (30% of ethnic minority represented in the survey either agreed or strongly agreed)
- being physically threatened or attacked (no significant difference between minority groups)
- being subjected to academic inequality (eg. Receiving lower marks than your peers despite performing equally well) (respondents from all minorities significantly disagreed to strongly disagreed with this statement)



- being followed or stopped by campus security, without having done anything suspicious or wrong (no significant difference between minority groups)

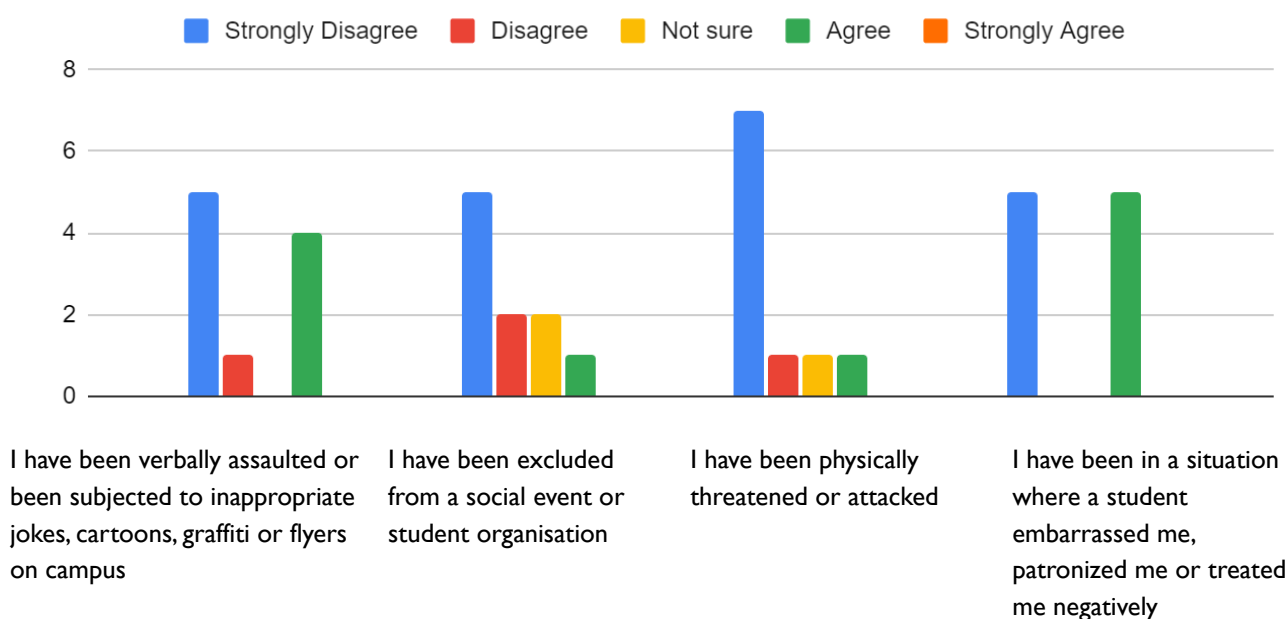
This seems coherent with the amounts of non-minority IVSA members witnessing discrimination (compared to table 1). Then again, non-minority IVSA members reported slightly more incidences, whereas more than half of the minority IVSA members reported to experience the following types of discrimination:

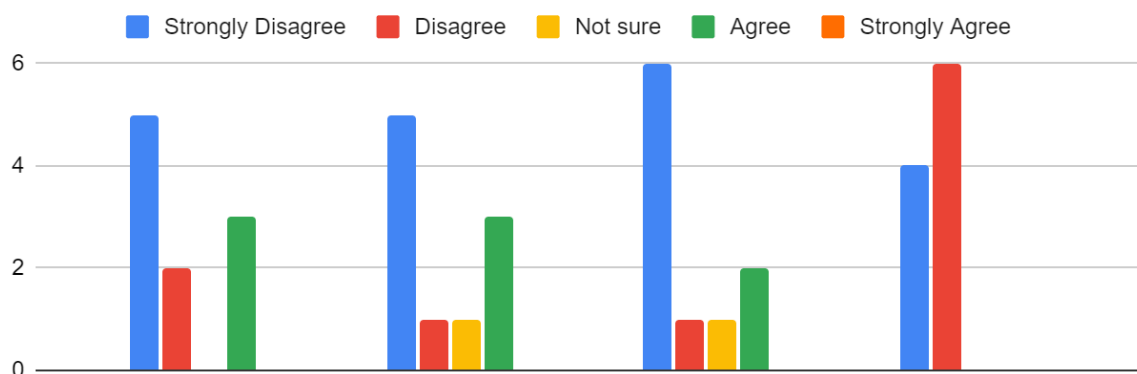
- being verbally assaulted or been subjected to inappropriate jokes, cartoons, graffiti or flyers on campus (no significant difference between minority groups)
- been in a situation where an IVSA member embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (no significant difference between minority groups)
- been in a situation where a member of the faculty staff embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (no significant difference between minority groups)

As a consequence, the majority of minority IVSA members feel that discrimination is an issue at their university (no significant difference between minority groups).

The differences between regions and compared to the global average also provided interesting insights. In the Asia region (see table 6.1), most minority IVSA members have not been physically threatened or attacked, nor have been followed or stopped by campus security, without having done anything suspicious or wrong.

**Table 6.1 - The experiences of minorities within their universities - Asia**





I have been in a situation where a member of the faculty staff embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively

I have been subjected to academic inequality (eg. Receiving lower marks than your peers despite performing equally well)

I have been followed or stopped by campus security, without having done anything suspicious or wrong

I feel that discrimination is an issue at my university

Half of the minority students reported never having been subjected to these types of discrimination, although the other half did report the following events happening:

- I have been verbally assaulted or been subjected to inappropriate jokes, cartoons, graffiti or flyers on campus (no significant difference between minority groups)
- I have been in a situation where a student embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (no significant difference between minority groups)
- I have been in a situation where a member of the faculty staff embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (no significant difference between minority groups)
- I have been subjected to academic inequality (eg. Receiving lower marks than your peers despite performing equally well) (no significant difference between minority groups)

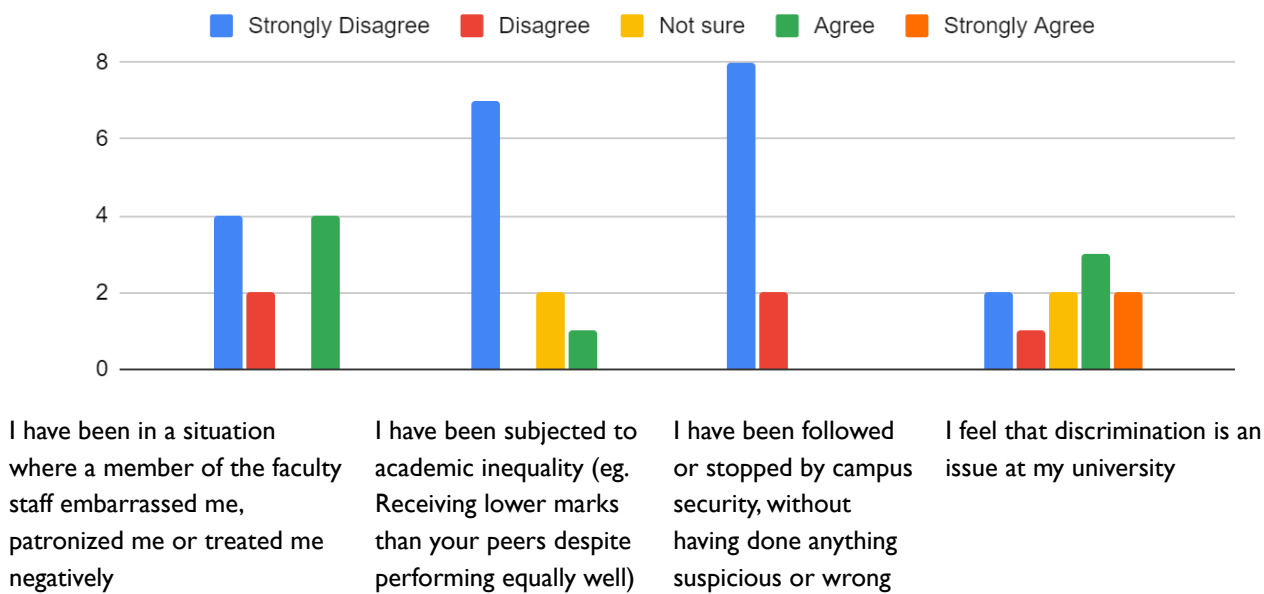
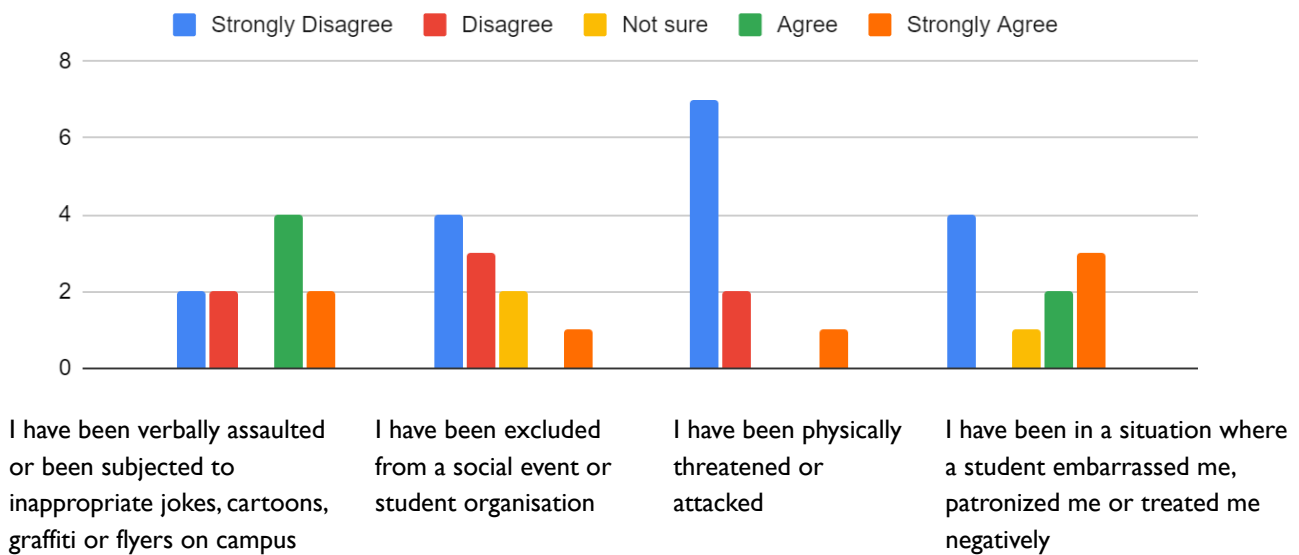
To keep in mind for this region is that most of these region's respondents originated from India, which might have skewed this regions' results. Of the Asian minority students, however, most either strongly disagreed or disagreed with discrimination being an issue at their university; this is completely opposite of the global average.

In the Europe region (see table 6.2), minority students have not experienced the following types of discrimination:

- been physically threatened or attacked (no significant difference between minority groups)
- been subjected to academic inequality (eg. Receiving lower marks than your peers despite performing equally well) (no significant difference between minority groups)
- having been followed or stopped by campus security, without having done anything suspicious or wrong. (no significant difference between minority groups)



**Table 6.2 - The experiences of minorities within their universities - Europe**



The minorities from Europe have experienced the following types of discrimination more than the global average:

- been verbally assaulted or been subjected to inappropriate jokes, cartoons, graffiti or flyers on campus (no significant difference between minority groups)
-



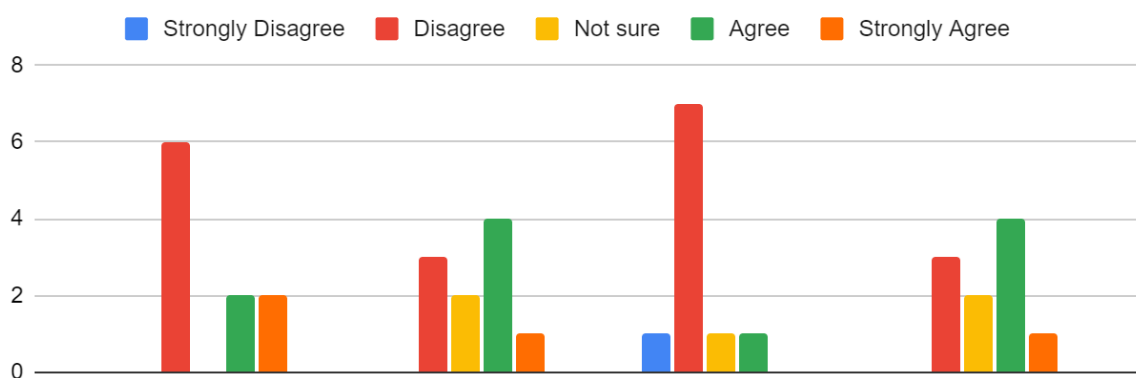
- been excluded from a social event or student organisation (no significant difference between minority groups)
- been in a situation where a student embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (ethnic minority group significantly more than other minority groups; 100% of ethnic minority respondents in Europe agreed to strongly agreed)
- been in a situation where a member of the faculty staff embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (no significant difference between minority groups)

As a result, the European minority students agreed more strongly with discrimination being an issue at their university.

In Sub-Sahara Africa region (table 6.3), most minority students have not experienced the following types of discrimination:

- been verbally assaulted or been subjected to inappropriate jokes, cartoons, graffiti or flyers on campus (though for those who did experience this, it was significantly linked to their sexuality)
- been physically threatened or attacked (no significant difference between minority groups)
- been subjected to academic inequality (eg. Receiving lower marks than your peers despite performing equally well) (no significant difference between minority groups)
- been in a situation where a member of the faculty staff embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (no significant difference between minority groups)
- having been followed or stopped by campus security, without having done anything suspicious or wrong. (no significant difference between minority groups)

**Table 6.3 - The experiences of minorities within their universities - Sub-Saharan Africa**

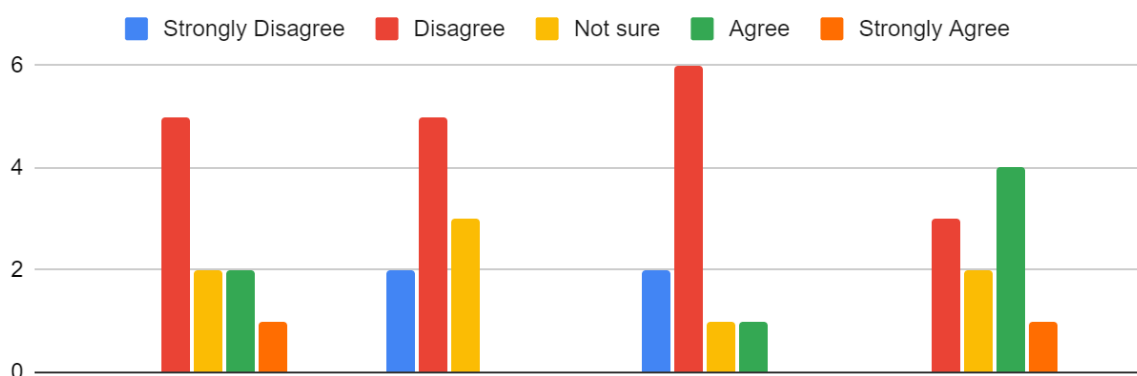


I have been verbally assaulted or been subjected to inappropriate jokes, cartoons, graffiti or flyers on campus

I have been excluded from a social event or student organisation

I have been physically threatened or attacked

I have been in a situation where a student embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively



I have been in a situation where a member of the faculty staff embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively

I have been subjected to academic inequality (eg. Receiving lower marks than your peers despite performing equally well)

I have been followed or stopped by campus security, without having done anything suspicious or wrong

I feel that discrimination is an issue at my university

The majority did experience:

- being excluded from a social event or student organisation (no significant difference between minority groups)
- being in a situation where a student embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (no significant difference between minority groups)

This suggest discrimination primarily taking place between students, rather than on a institutional level. Looking at the comments received from students of minority, an issue of tribal discrimination was brought up twice, along with slurs being used when referring to the LGBTQ+ community, and sexism. The sub-sahara african minority students generally agreed with discrimination being an issue at their university (no significant difference between minority groups).

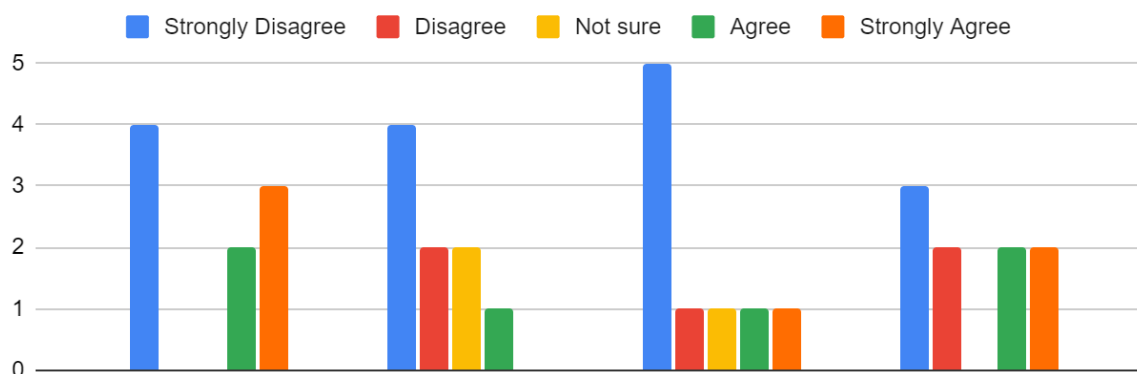
For the MENA region, there were no responses from minority students. Because of this, there is no data available to measure the experienced discrimination within the region.

For The Americas region (table 6.4), most minority students have not experienced the following types of discrimination:

- been physically threatened or attacked (no significant difference between minority groups)
- been subjected to academic inequality (eg. Receiving lower marks than your peers despite performing equally well) (no significant difference between minority groups)
- having been followed or stopped by campus security, without having done anything suspicious or wrong. (no significant difference between minority groups)



**Table 6.4 - The experiences of minorities within their universities - The Americas**

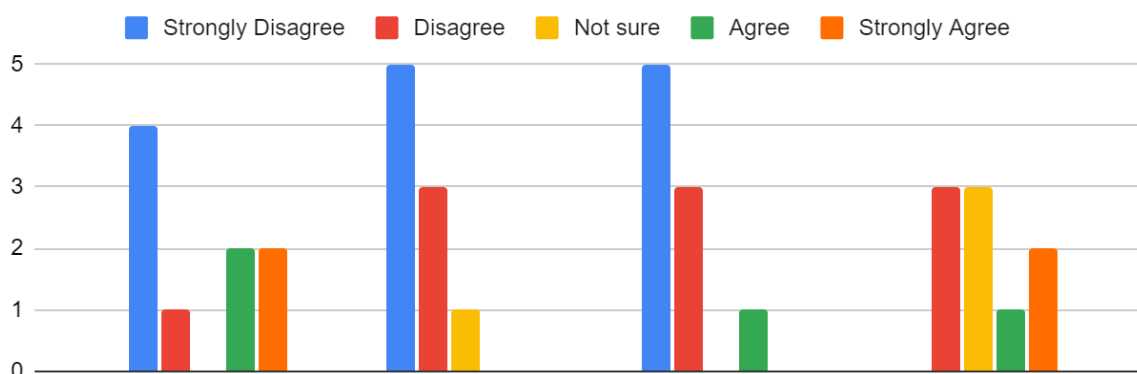


I have been verbally assaulted or been subjected to inappropriate jokes, cartoons, graffiti or flyers on campus

I have been excluded from a social event or student organisation

I have been physically threatened or attacked

I have been in a situation where a student embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively



I have been in a situation where a member of the faculty staff embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively

I have been subjected to academic inequality (eg. Receiving lower marks than your peers despite performing equally well)

I have been followed or stopped by campus security, without having done anything suspicious or wrong

I feel that discrimination is an issue at my university

Like in the Asia region, there is a division between minority students that either do not experience these types of discrimination at all and those who do so more frequently than average:

- been verbally assaulted or been subjected to inappropriate jokes, cartoons, graffiti or flyers on campus (no significant difference between minority groups)
- been excluded from a social event or student organisation (no significant difference between minority groups)
- been in a situation where a student embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (no significant difference between minority groups)



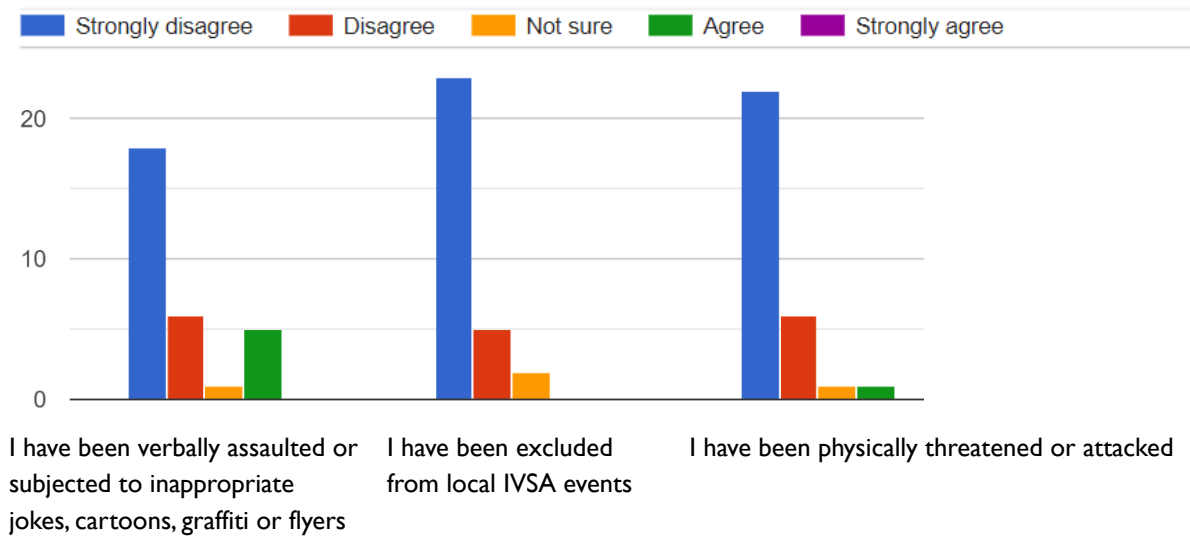
- been in a situation where a member of the faculty staff embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively (no significant difference between minority groups)

In conclusion, the minority respondents from this region either disagree, doubt or agree with feeling that discrimination is an issue at their university.

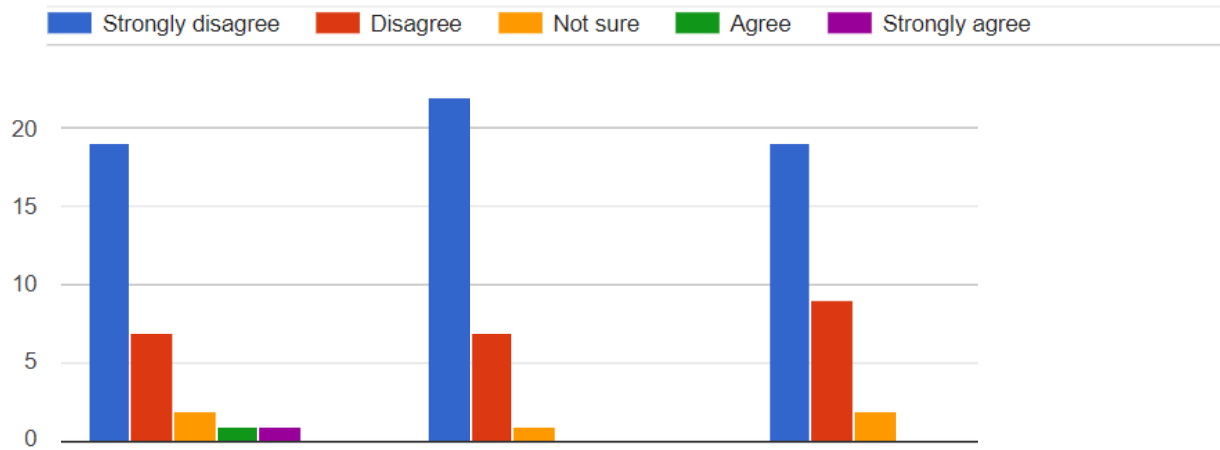
**The experiences of minorities within their local IVSA chapters.**

The experiences of minorities within their local IVSA tended to be far more positive than at their university. Globally, most minority respondents either never or almost never experienced any discrimination (See table 7). This is slightly more than the non-minority respondents reported to have witnessed according to table 4.

**Table 7 - The experiences of minorities within their local MOs - Globally**







I have been in a situation where an IVSA member embarrassed, patronized or treated me negatively

I have been excluded or barred from decision making within the MO

I feel that discrimination is an issue at my MO

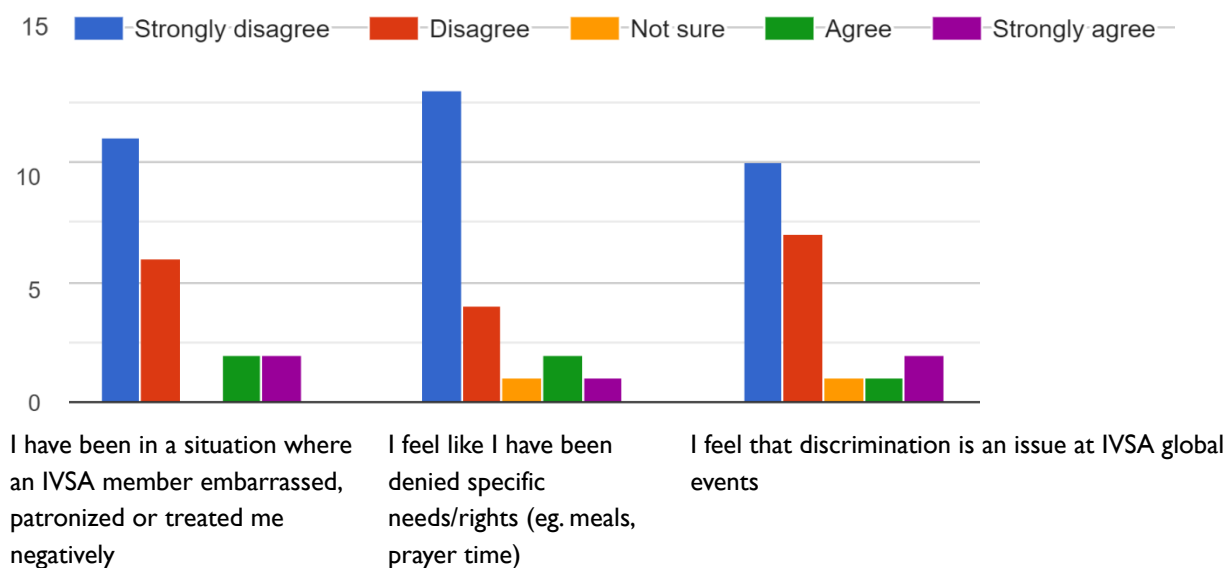
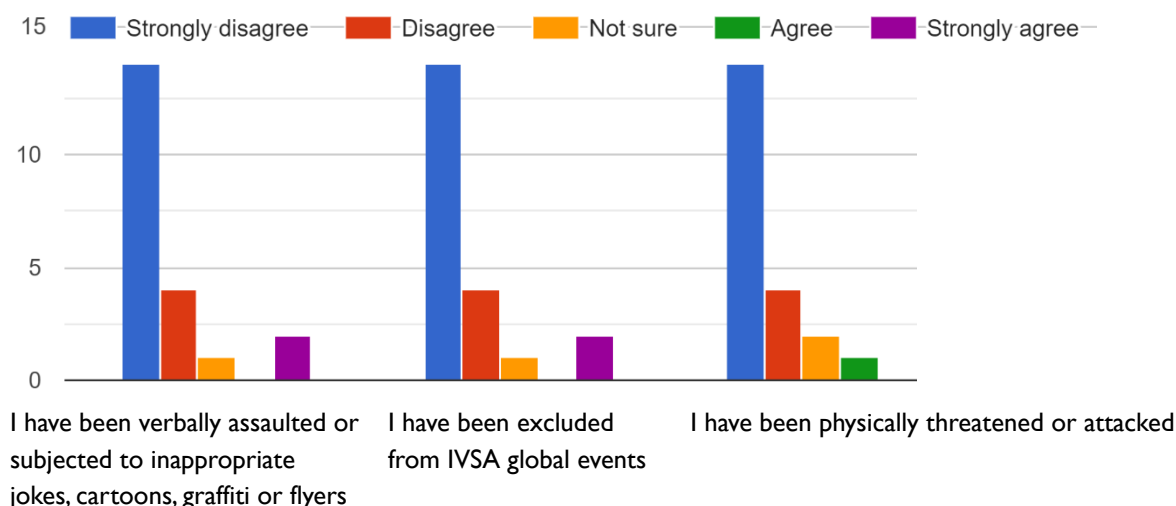
In Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and Asia regions, there were incidents of ‘I have been verbally assaulted or subjected to inappropriate jokes, cartoons, graffiti or flyers’ and/or ‘I have been in a situation where an IVSA member embarrassed, patronized or treated me negatively’. This again suggests that the discrimination that does take place, is verbal.

**The experiences of minorities within IVSA global**

The discrimination that minorities experienced during global IVSA events seems to be more prevalent than at a local level (See table 8). Though the grand majority still never experienced any type of discrimination, some minority students still reported to have have been subjected to exclusion, verbal abuse and in one case even physical abuse.



**Table 8 - The experiences of minorities within IVSA Global - Globally**



As a result, most minority members of IVSA global events do not feel discrimination to be an issue, but there are two that do however strongly feel that this is the case. Of those two, one of the comments received was regarding the MO's inability to meet financial obligations.

When comparing the regions, Europe and The Americas minority students did never or almost never experience discrimination at global events. In Asia, this was very similar though one student mentioned 'being in a situation where an IVSA member embarrassed, patronized or treated me negatively' and 'feeling like I have been denied specific needs/rights (eg. meals, prayer time)'. In Sub-Saharan Africa, most minority students disagreed with experiencing any type of discrimination at



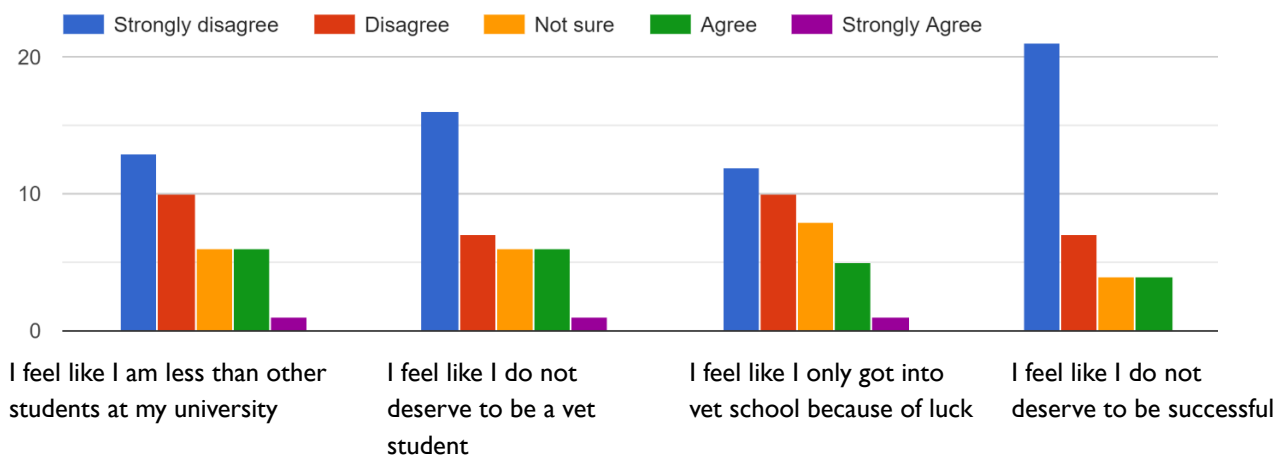
IVSA Global events. There was one exception that did experience all types of discrimination except for 'being physically threatened or attacked'.

**The overall wellness of minority students**

To

measure the overall wellness of the minority students in this survey, five more statements regarding their position in veterinary education were given (see table 9).

**Table 9 - The experienced wellness of minorities - Globally**

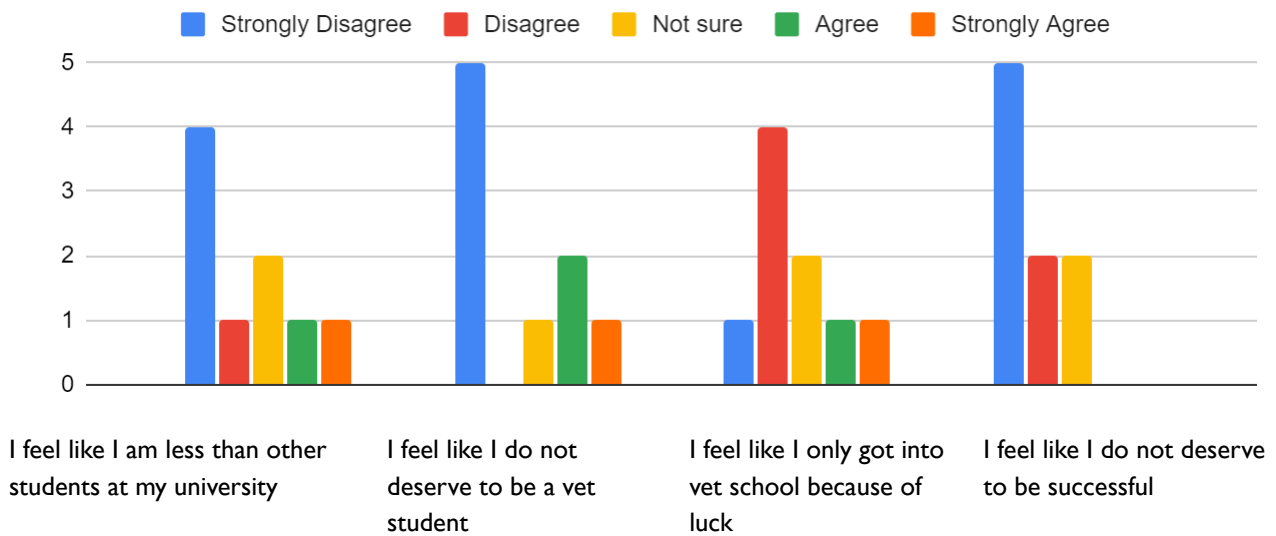


Overall, these results indicate that the veterinary students in minority groups feel a sense of belonging at their university and feel that their success is earned. These are reassuring results because discrimination is known to have a significant impact on an individual's mental health, in both minor and major incidences. The students that selected either agree or strongly agree in this wellness section did not report having experienced discrimination at IVSA Global events but did report incidences at a university level.

This is especially the case for the minority students in the region of Asia, who scored significantly better than the global average. This can also be said for The Americas' region, though there are a few that did agree or strongly agree with the statements there (see table 9.1).



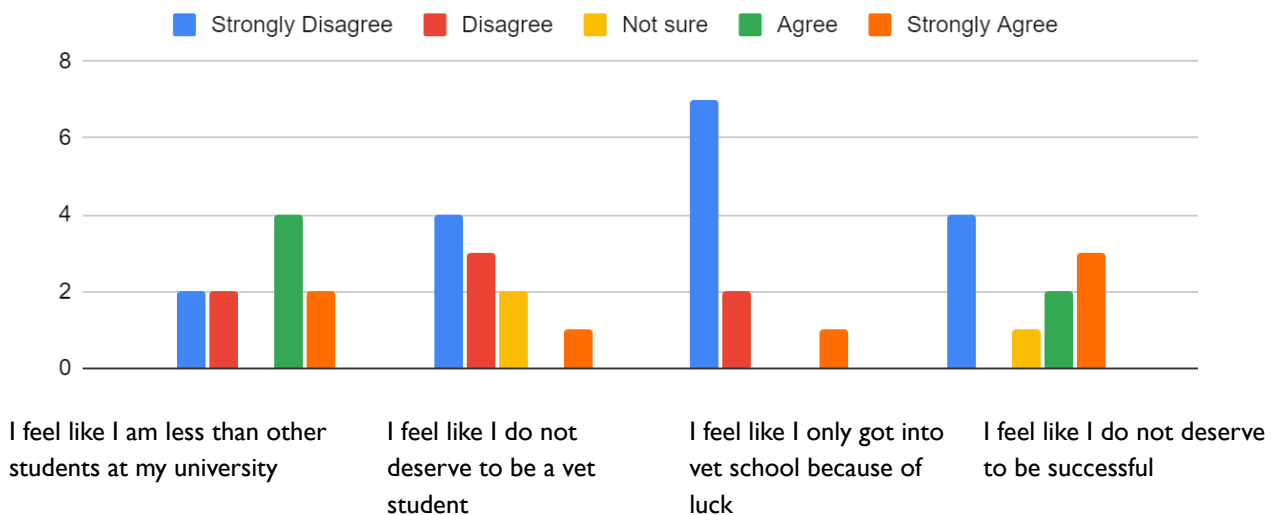
**Table 9.1 - The experienced wellness of minorities - The Americas**



The results for Sub-Saharan Africa were similar, though minority students there disagreed with the statements rather than strongly disagreed.

In the region of Europe, minority students scored worse than the global average and with much greater differences between individuals (see table 9.2).

**Table 9.2 - The experienced wellness of minorities - Europe**





## DISCUSSION

Of the total sample (n=134), the majority of respondents represented the Europe region and the least represented region was the Pacific region with no respondents at all. The percentages of the different regions reflect the current amount of active MOs within IVSA. However, the MENA and the Americas regions seem to have less responses in comparison with other regions. This caused smaller sample sizes (n<10) once groups were compared, making the overall results less significant, but good enough to gain a general impression. The lack of responses in certain regions may be explained by a language barrier as students from these regions might not feel comfortable enough to share their experience in a language they do not speak fluently.

From the total respondents 26,9% were part of a minority and 73,1% were not. On a regional level, the proportions varied but the biggest disparity is the fact that there were no responses from minority students in the MENA region. Because of this, there is no data available to measure the experienced discrimination within the region on. However, the absence of responses may suggest that minorities are less involved in IVSA compared to non minority students in this region. The minorities in the MENA region might have language barriers as well. The survey being in English, many students were probably not comfortable with expressing their feelings.

In general, the responses of minority students indicate discrimination as a real issue while the responses of non minority students tend to show the opposite, which could be explained by a lack of awareness.

### University level:

The results indicate that verbal discrimination exceeds by far institutionalized discrimination which reflects the idea that discrimination is technically not acceptable within the universities, however, the verbal treatment of others could be neglected and considered less violating of other persons' rights or dignity.

The experienced level of discrimination exceeds the witnessed amount of discrimination. Non-minority students reported slightly more incidences of verbal discrimination compared to forms of institutionalized discrimination, whereas more than half of the minority students reported to experience the following types of discrimination:

- being verbally assaulted or been subjected to inappropriate jokes, cartoons, graffiti or flyers on campus.
- been in a situation where a student embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively.
- been in a situation where a member of the faculty staff embarrassed me, patronized me or treated me negatively.

The results might suggest that there is a lack of awareness among non-minority students.



In the Asia region, the minority experiences are split out which could be the consequence of different groups of minorities experiencing different types of discrimination. However, most either strongly disagreed or disagreed with discrimination being an issue at their university which is the complete opposite of the global average. This disparity provides a clearer understanding of the existence of a plausible cultural link since all the other regions agreed with discrimination being an issue. In Europe, minorities have experienced verbal discrimination and exclusion more than the global average. This could be explained by the fact that the countries of the Europe region hold more diverse students compared to countries in other regions.

Discrimination is primarily taking place between students, rather than on an institutional level in Sub-Saharan Africa. Again, this mainly consisted out of verbal discrimination in the form of slurs against different types of minorities.

In The Americas region, like the Asia region, the minority experiences are split out (figure 3) which could be the consequence of different groups of minorities experiencing different types of discrimination. Contrary to the Asia group, the Americas region was more divided on whether discrimination was an issue at their institution.

To sum up, in response to the question “is discrimination an issue at veterinary institutions?”: The Asia region disagreed, the responses from the Americas were divided, and the other regions (Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa) agreed.

#### **Addressing discrimination at the institution:**

In general, students felt comfortable reporting discrimination they would witness or experience. However, students from The Americas and MENA were significantly more unsure. This might suggest that people from these regions are pressured into thinking that raising their voice wouldn't make a change. The cultural differences may explain the results as well ; some kinds of minorities may not be accepted within certain societies. The results showed alongside that, that most students were unsure or agreed that once they did report something, the response would be appropriate. A reason behind students' doubts could be the fact that they feel their claims are not being taken seriously by the faculty staff which could be the result of previous rejected complaints. This was especially the case of students from the Americas and Subsaharan Africa regions. This would suggest a serious problem within institutions in dealing with reports of discrimination.

#### **IVSA local level:**

The results of the survey indicate that similarly to the university level, the experienced level of discrimination exceeds the witnessed amount of discrimination. Which might highlight a possible lack of awareness regarding discrimination occurring ; non-minorities are probably not paying enough attention to what minorities could go through.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe and Asia, there were incidences of verbal discrimination. However, in comparison with the university level, the prevalence of witnessed and experienced discrimination is far less than at the university level. The available data indicates that within IVSA, discrimination is more unlikely to happen than on the university level. This could be explained by the importance



IVSA members give to building an accepting atmosphere and the safe space IVSA provides to its members.

### **IVSA Global level:**

Though the grand majority have never experienced any type of discrimination, some minority students still reported having been subjected to exclusion, verbal abuse and in one case even physical abuse. The discrimination witnessed and experienced is far less than at the university level and most minority members of IVSA global events do not feel discrimination to be an issue, but there are a few that do however strongly feel that this is the case.

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusivity in IVSA:**

The results in table 2 suggests that IVSA plays an important role in the DEI education of members around the world. This was especially the case for members from the Asia region, possibly because for most Asian students, IVSA is the way to get in touch with students with different backgrounds than their own.

The results in MENA for this section might suggest that respondents in this region experience less equality and education on DEI topics through IVSA than other regions. Nonetheless, when asked if IVSA had increased their awareness of social injustices and if IVSA provided enough information and support to minorities, more respondents agreed than the global average, which seems contradictory with results in earlier statements, especially when considering that the region's scores for 'IVSA should organize recurring events that focus on inclusivity and what members and IVSA global can do to promote it' is completely similar to the global average. This might mean that the respondents from this region on one hand feel that IVSA is doing enough to promote DEI, whereas the other half is in favour of more promotion of inclusivity within the organisation. A plausible explanation to the results could be the language barrier experienced by members ; opportunities made available by IVSA require a decent level of English which could make some members feel excluded.

At the same time, in Sub-Saharan Africa, members were more negative about DEI in IVSA than the global average. This might suggest that the members there feel less included in what IVSA currently provides and that IVSA does not raise awareness for social injustices.

In The Americas, the majority of respondents were unsure if IVSA provided enough information and support to minorities, making it higher than the global average. Part of this may be explained through the fact that in this region, there are a lot of relatively new IVSA members but it might also indicate that DEI education through IVSA in this region has yet to improve.

Generally speaking, members agree with the suggestions to focus more on inclusivity and promoting anti-discrimination as well as organizing recurring events that focus on inclusivity and what members and IVSA global can do to promote it. On top of that, most respondents were unsure of what IVSA currently does to include and support minorities. This goes to show that, as expected at the start of this survey, IVSA has yet more to gain in visibility and representation of minorities within the organisation according to its members.



### **Wellness of minorities:**

From the global scores, the wellness of minorities in veterinary institutions seems to be good. For those that do experience lesser welfare, it seems to be linked to discrimination within their institution rather than IVSA. The Asia region scored best, whereas the Europe region scored worst. The survey data does not offer any direct explanations for this. Possible theories however, could be that there is relatively more diversity in European veterinary schools, due to which discrimination against different types of minorities may take place more frequently. Another explanation can be found in either cultural differences or the pressure experienced by the minority student to get into veterinary school and perform well.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through this survey among IVSA members, some insight in discrimination within the veterinary community was gained. First of all, the respondents themselves were not equally distributed over the different regions. The Pacific and MENA regions were underrepresented. A plausible explanation for this could be the language barrier experienced by members; IVSA's opportunities generally require a good understanding of English which could make some members feel excluded.

Most discrimination experienced by veterinary students in the survey is based on ethnicity or sexuality, but the survey also found other types of minorities such as body weight and tribal ethnicity. The discrimination itself tends to be more verbal rather than through specific acts. This suggests tolerance of certain minorities is present, but acceptance is not. When comparing results from non-minorities with those from minorities, it was confirmed that the experienced level of discrimination by minorities mostly exceeded the witnessed amount of discrimination by non-minorities. This can be explained through a lack of awareness of what types of discrimination minorities face among non-minority students. With awareness and visibility campaigns on the rise, this disparity should decrease in the future.

At the university level all types of minorities seem to experience discrimination to a greater or lesser extent. On top of that, many students feel that even if they were to report discrimination, their report would not be handled appropriately. Through this, the majority of students feel that discrimination is an issue at their university. Alongside that, both minority and non-minority students around the world strongly feel that their institutions do not hire enough faculty of colour and should be offering more education on discrimination and social injustices. On the bright side, the wellness results indicate that veterinary students in minority groups feel a sense of belonging at their university and feel that their success is earned. This may be indicative of a resilient group of students that can push positive change forward.

When comparing this to discrimination within IVSA, discrimination is far less likely to happen. For the local IVSA events, the non-minority respondents almost unanimously reported never to have witnessed any type of discrimination. Globally, they witnessed slightly more discrimination than at a local level. This is similar to the experienced discrimination of minorities within IVSA. This could be





explained by the importance IVSA members give to building an accepting atmosphere and the safe space IVSA provides to its members. Perhaps this positive influence of IVSA can help improve situations at institutions as well through new projects and collaborations. Right now, most respondents were unsure of what IVSA currently does to include and support minorities. This goes to show that, as expected at the start of this survey, IVSA has yet more to gain in visibility and representation of minorities within the organisation according to its members.

To continue to maintain an accepting atmosphere in IVSA, most members feel that IVSA should focus more on inclusivity and promoting anti-discrimination. We can do so, according to the respondents, by having recurring events that focus on inclusivity and what members and IVSA global can do to promote it. When creating such projects, a regional approach should be implemented to adequately promote diversity, equity and inclusivity and recognize cultural differences underlying the discrimination taking place.

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