

CSU Channel Islands: Employee Campus Climate Spring 2023

Office of Institutional Research

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Background

CSU Channel Islands (CSUCI) conducts periodic surveys of its employees asking them to report on their work experiences. Employee's responses are reviewed by senior leadership and Critical Learning Collective (CLC) teams¹ with the aim of amplifying employee voices, identifying areas for celebration and improvement, and using this feedback to inform strategic decisions and plans. The Campus Climate Survey (CCS) being reported on here was conducted in Spring 2023 and asked employees to reflect on their sense of achievement, opportunities for advancement, and attitudes towards their salary and benefits.

Survey Design, Administration, and Analysis

The Spring 2023 Campus Climate survey (CCS) was the second in-house climate survey administered based on work conducted in 2022². The Spring CCS contained 14 demographics questions, 31 climate questions for staff and administrators, and 33 climate questions for faculty and chairs. The climate questions were all on a five-point Likert scale which ranged from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Level of agreement with each question was ranked by the comparing average response scores (which ranged from 1 to 5). For the purposes of this discussion, question agreement will be presented as the percentage of respondents who selected either Disagree/Strongly Disagree or Agree/Strongly Agree, depending on the topic under discussion. Both groups of respondents were also asked one open-ended question, "Pick a question where you felt strongly about your answer, either positively or negatively. Please tell us why you felt that way as you were answering the question." The Spring 2023 CCS was administered anonymously to all employees in April-May of 2023.

While the exact number of university employees changes daily, CSUCI had just over 400 faculty and just over 710 administrators and staff in Spring of 2023. The CCS received 84 faculty responses for a response rate of 21% for faculty and 221 staff and administrators responded for a 31% response rate. The survey also received 11 responses from student employees. The median response time was 10 minutes.

¹ See the CLCs section of the [President's Communication](#) page for example CLC work.

² See the [Fall 2022 Campus Climate Survey report](#) to learn more about the survey development process and methods.

Climate Questions

Staff and Administration

For staff and administration, the highest scoring questions were “I am proud of what I have achieved through my work” with 89% responding Agree or Strongly Agree, “CSUCI’s benefits package meets my needs” with 82% responding Agree or Strongly Agree, and “The benefits package is a significant factor in my decision to stay at CSUCI” with 75% responding Agree or Strongly Agree (see Figure 1: Highest scoring staff and administration responses³).

Generally, staff and administrators felt that they had job security (66% Agree or Strongly Agree), although there is a substantial disparity between the two groups on this question: while 74% of staff Agreed or Strongly Agreed only 48% of administrators Agreed or Strongly Agreed.

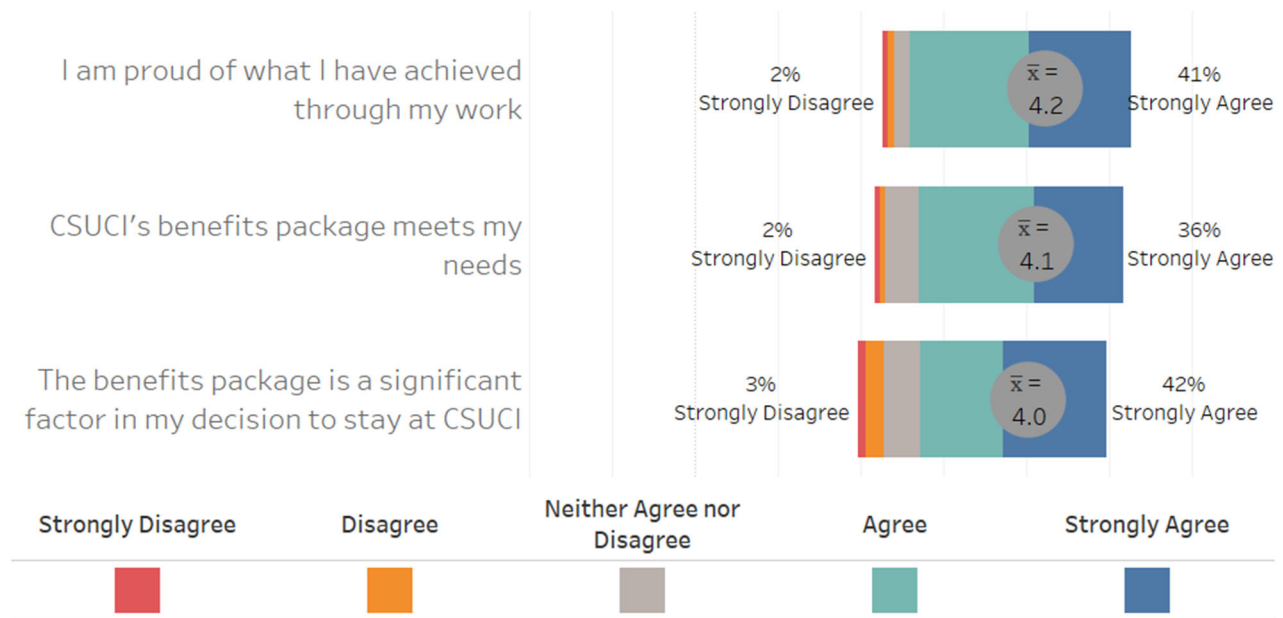


Figure 1: Highest scoring staff and administration responses

Looking at the lowest scoring questions for staff and administration, salary and salary increases were a top concern for respondents, with 63% either responding Disagree or Strongly Disagree that the process for a salary increase is applied fairly and equitably, and 69% either responding Disagree or Strongly Disagree that salary increases are satisfactory. Please note, this survey was conducted before 2023 contract negotiations and future climate surveys that ask these questions will capture whether these negotiations positively impacted employee’s feelings about their salaries. Respondents were also concerned about understanding the process for advancement, with 56% responding Disagree or Strongly Disagree that “CSUCI provides me with the clear information that I can advance at my institution” (see Figure 2: Lowest scoring staff and administration responses

³ CSUCI employees can view the [Campus Climate Survey dashboard](#) to explore these results in greater detail

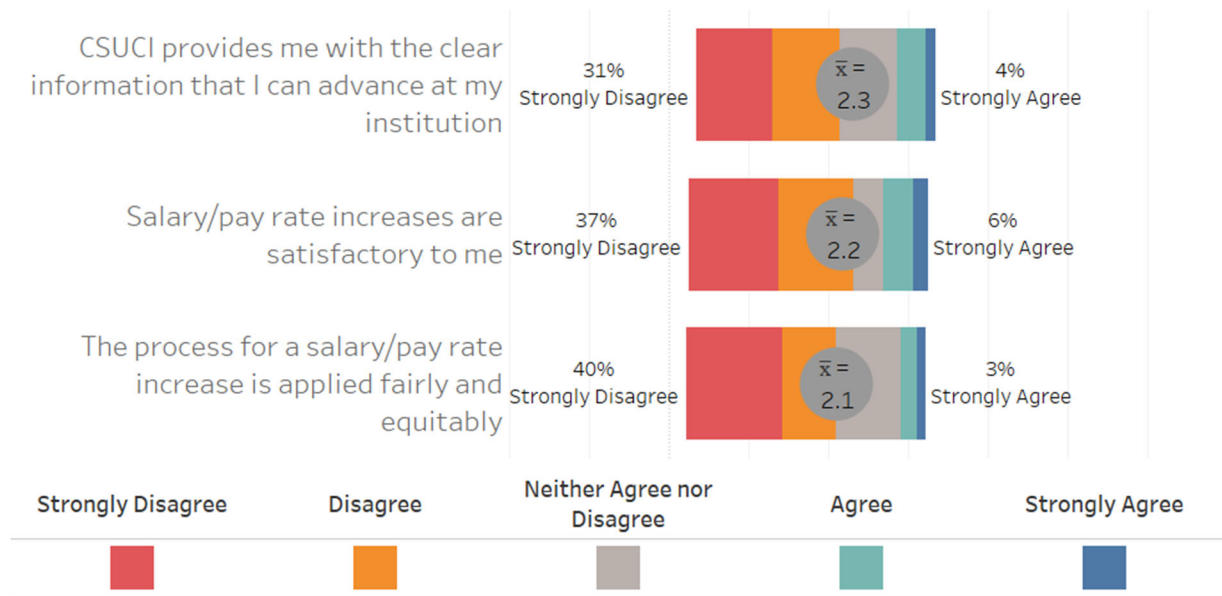


Figure 2: Lowest scoring staff and administration responses

Also noteworthy was that 62% of staff and administrators Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they “have considered leaving CSUCI in the past 12 months.” Those respondents who agreed with this question were asked a follow-up asking them to select up to three reasons why they considered leaving. The top three responses selected were salary (62% of respondents), lack of opportunities for advancement (48% of respondents), and workload (42% of respondents). There were, however, substantial differences in how staff and administrators answered this question. For staff, salary was the biggest concern (selected by 67% of those staff who have considered leaving compared with only 51% of administrators), while for administrators workload was the biggest concern (selected by 63% of those administrators who have considered leaving compared with only 33% of staff).

Faculty

For faculty, the highest scoring questions were “I am proud of what I have achieved through my work” with 78% either responding Agree or Strongly Agree, “My Program Personnel Standards (PPS) are clear and transparent” with 71% either responding Agree or Strongly Agree, and “I have a feeling of achievement through my teaching” with 72% responding Agree or Strongly Agree (see Figure 3).

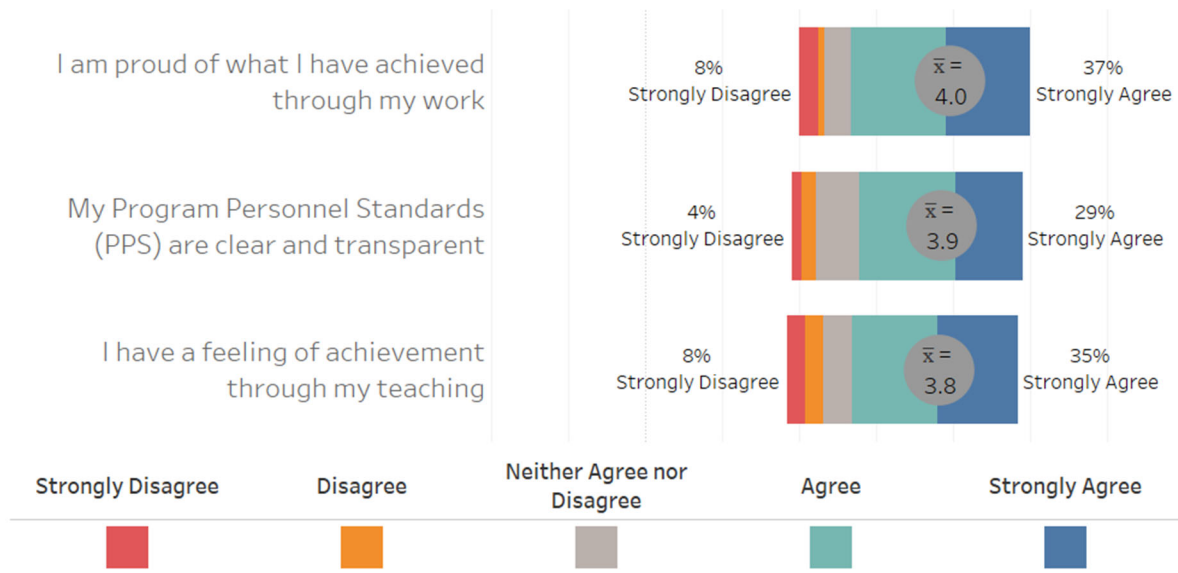


Figure 3: Highest scoring faculty responses

While 71% of faculty responded Agree or Strongly agree that their “Program Personnel Standards are clear and transparent”, indicating that most faculty know the requirements for retention, tenure and promotion (RTP), only 57% of faculty responded Agree or Strongly Agree that “CI provided support and mentorship for [RTP]” and only 40% of faculty responded Agree or Strongly agree that “[RTP] procedures are fairly and consistently applied.” This indicates that while policies and procedures surrounding RTP may be well established, there may be inconsistencies in implementing these policies and some faculty feel under-supported in navigating this critical process.

Looking at the lowest scoring questions for faculty, 61% of responded Disagree or Strongly Disagree that “CSUCI provides reasonable resources for work-life balance,” 56% responded Disagree or Strongly Disagree that “Salary/pay rate increases are satisfactory to me,” and 56% responded Disagree or Strongly Disagree that “Information about job opportunities within CSUCI is shared well.” Notably, no faculty responded Strongly Agree to CSUCI’s providing resources for work-life balance or the satisfactory nature of salary increases(see Figure 4). When comparing responses by tenure/tenure-track (T/TT) status, lecturers (N=33) had the most positive views of CSUCI’s work-life balance but they had the most negative views of salary increase satisfaction.

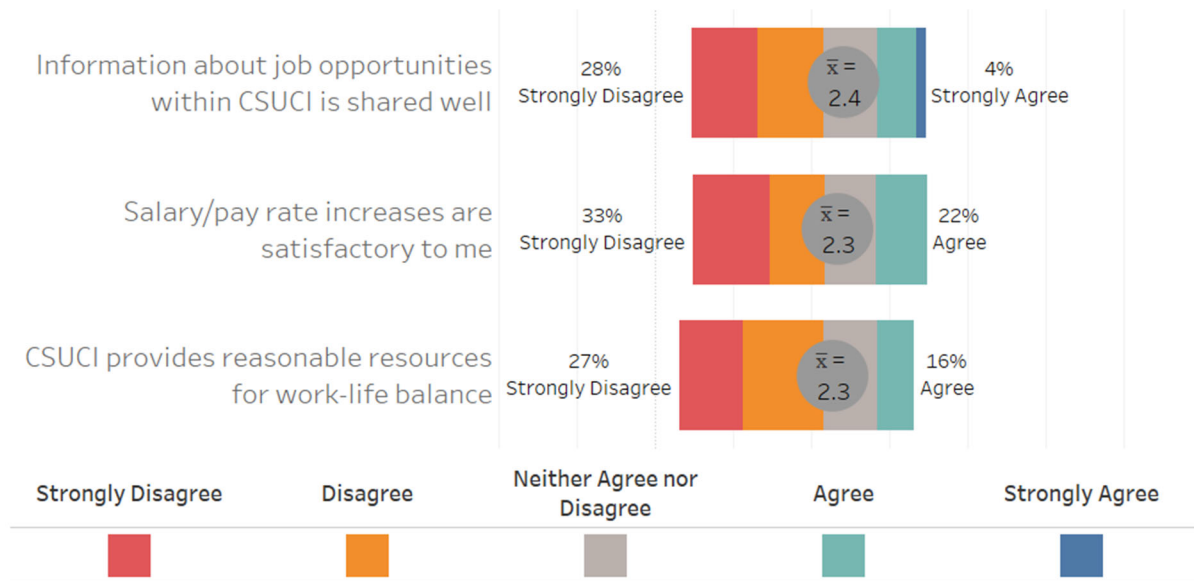


Figure 4: Lowest scoring faculty responses

When asked whether they considered leaving CI in the past 12 months, 53% of faculty responded Agree or Strongly Agree. When asked a follow-up question to indicate three reasons that they have considered leaving, the most commonly cited reasons were workload (43%), lack of opportunities for advancement/promotion (38%), incongruence with the university’s mission and actions (33%), and lack of support for professional development (30%). Comparing lecturers to T/TT faculty, lack of opportunities for advancement were a much larger concern for lecturers (86% vs. 12%). On the other hand, incongruence with the university’s mission and actions was a much larger concern for T/TT faculty than lecturers (46% vs. 7%).

In addition to differences between T/TT faculty and lecturers, there were also substantial differences between faculty who have worked at CSUCI for 11+ years (N = 38) compared with faculty who have worked at CSUCI for 10 years or less (N=46). Faculty with longer periods of employment with CSUCI were less likely to feel that they had sufficient resources for their work; 33% of faculty with 11+ years at CSUCI Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they “have what I need to do my teaching (e.g., resources, tools, equipment, space)” compared to 61% of faculty working 10 years or less. Similarly, 29% of faculty with 11+ years at CSUCI Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they “have what I need to conduct my scholarly/creative activities (e.g., resources, tools, equipment, space)” compared to 52% of faculty working 10 years or less.

Open-Ended Responses

Staff and Administration

One hundred thirty-one staff and administrators provided responses to the open-ended question to, “pick a question where you felt strongly about your answer, either positively or negatively. Please tell us why you felt that way as you were answering the question.”. When coded and categorized, their comments were in close alignment to the quantitative responses although in general people expanded on the topics that they felt most negatively about rather than those they felt positively about. The top themes to emerge were insufficiency of salary (N=41), lack of opportunities for advancement (N=34),

and feelings of being overworked (N=24). Twenty-one respondents took the opportunity to express happiness with their colleagues and the opportunity their job provides them to support our students and serve our community.

Addressing salary concerns, a staff member wrote:

I'm very bothered by the emphasis on benefits, upward mobility, and professional development opportunities...Salary increases and in-range progression are much more vital to staff morale and success, but we continue to talk around the issue without implementing any significant changes on our campus. Even if I had zero ambition to leave my current role, I will inevitably be forced to in order to seek a salary increase just to keep up with rising inflation. Cost-of-living adjustments only come when negotiated CSU-wide, with no thought given to whether we are experiencing higher or faster inflation rises than campuses in more rural areas of the state, and in-range progression requests are a nightmare to undertake."

Another staff member summed it up by writing, "PAY STAFF A LIVING WAGE." Finally, some respondents reflected both on monetary and non-monetary rewards, such as a staff member who wrote:

I believe that the salary range for my position should be higher because, for my position in other governmental entities, they pay 20k+ annually above my pay in the County of Ventura. It is a topic that seems to take place everywhere and although inflation is high, I am truly blessed and humbled to be a part of CSUCI. I know that I can find a job that pays more but I also know that I may not find a work community that is supportive as CSUCI.

In sum, many respondents who wrote about salary highlighted the cost of living in the Ventura region, salaries not keeping up with inflation, and the difficulty of getting an in-range progression that would reward increased skill and expanded scope of work.

Addressing the role that a manager can play to in encouraging or stifling professional growth, a staff member wrote, "I'm getting to a point where I am thinking about career growth and advancement opportunities. I want to stay with the university but I don't know where I can go from here except to another university. I've never had this conversation with my supervisor. It's almost like my supervisor expects that I will stay in this same position forever." Speaking to how slowdowns in hiring can impact career growth and inspire employees to look for opportunities elsewhere, one staff member wrote:

I do not currently have any upward mobility in my department. My supervisor resigned...and that position was "absorbed" and likely won't be reopened in the future. This was a position that I could have qualified for and have the experience and expertise to serve in, however, that opportunity is now inaccessible. I am now unable to move upwards unless I switch to a different department or different campus, which could require an entire career change...Because of my supervisor leaving, I have been given increased responsibility from this role but have not received additional compensation for this increased responsibility. These concerns have me strongly considering leaving CSUCI for better professional opportunities.

This concern was also noted by administrators, such as one who wrote

I find the process for merit increases to be problematic. Not so much the process but the perception of use and trust in that process for employees. In starting my position I found many

individuals who have never received a merit increase in all the time they have been here and did not feel empowered to pursue since the responsibility seems to be on the employee to ask for that opportunity and not the supervisor. I do not know how this is approached across divisions but I feel the low morale and trust in the process due to this situation.

Writing in response to questions about work-life balance when offices are stretched thin, one administrator wrote:

With essentially every area being understaffed and individual employees being responsible for so many different functions, it is impossible to take time off without negatively impacting the entire area. It is such a hassle to work out coverage and delegation of responsibilities which prevents me from trying to use vacation time. Although my supervisor encourages taking time off when needed, there never seems to be a "good time of year" to do so.

Similarly, a staff member wrote:

The unfair workload that I have been saddled with since the pandemic began has been unrelenting. High turnover and lack of training for our newly hired staff is the main cause of the unequal distribution. Now we are facing an "enrollment crisis" and I am expected to work even harder and faster to "fix" the problem. I am doing my best to avoid total burnout, but everyday I question whether or not I can make it through the day.

Finally, while not emerging as a clear theme, a few staff lamented a loss of work they can take pride in and a lessening of the feeling that their efforts, wherever they occurred in the university, contributed to the student experience. Reflecting this, one staff member wrote,

I have worked in Facilities Services here at CI for [many] years. In those [many] years I have gone from being told I would be part of this great new university, told that I would make a difference and have the opportunity to make a positive impact on future generations of students to come to being told we are merely maintenance staff and that we should not get involved with the future of the university. Under previous management I was told, in public forum, in front of my peers, that the jobs I used to do are not the type of jobs I should feel proud of doing. (*here the writer describes building a display to multiculturalism on campus*), but that honor was taken away from us for the sake of saving a few bucks). That we should start contracting out the 'little' jobs that mean nothing...I feel strongly that no job is too small or too mundane to take pride in, especially if we are to be part of this awesome community that is CSUCI. But, managers come and go with no changes being made to improve the lives of the ones doing the work.

Faculty

Fifty-four faculty provided responses to the open-ended question. The top themes to emerge were a lack of support for scholarship (N=13), feeling overworked in a COVID era (N=10) and an insufficiency of salary (N=10). While the feelings of being overworked and underpaid were in close alignment with the quantitative responses, ratings for support for scholarly/creative activities were not especially low, rated in between support for tenure and promotion evaluation and support for career advancement based on service. When asked about various areas where CSUCI provides support for faculty, 57% replied Agree or Strongly Agree to "tenure and promotion evaluation," 42% replied Agree or Strongly

Agree to “maintaining productive scholarly/creative activities,” and 24% replied Agree or Strongly Agree to “advancing my career based on my service.”

Writing about support for scholarship, one assistant professor wrote:

the expectations for scholarly activities are incommensurate with the support faculty receive. Between the 4/4 teaching load and the lack of monetary support for research, it is difficult to maintain a robust research agenda. The recent changes to RSCA funding especially impact scholars whose research requires international travel. Faculty should not have to take on personal debt to conduct research required for tenure/promotion.

Another associate professor observed differences in how different disciplines are supported, writing:

It has been my experience that there is more institutional support for STEM faculty which includes funding for research and support for teaching. Humanities feel secondary in many cases even though most faculty and students in these areas are continually asked to provide services that the University will use for marketing purposes, such as exhibitions, performances, speaker series, etc. These provide a ton of value to the university but are often seen as novelties and not serious work and research that students and faculty are doing.

Not every comment about support was negative, however. One associate professor wrote:

I feel very supported and valued by the university for my scholarly work, service and teaching. The university has supported me with funds to advance in my research and dissemination locally, nationally and internationally. I am grateful for AA, RSCA, IRA and sabbatical funds that has helped strengthen my professional development, research, and overall growth, as a faculty member at CI.

Writing about feelings of being overworked, one associate professor wrote, “in our effort to best serve students by ‘meeting them where they are’ and providing multiple high-impact learning opportunities, the amount of extra work and effort demanded of faculty to meet these goals is not sustainable.”

Another associate professor spoke to the tension between largely unseen student-facing work and a call to service in ways that are visible to senior leadership, writing:

Faculty already have full-time jobs for which we're already not paid for the research work and most service we do. And yet, we have a Provost who is supposed to be our 'leader' who claims faculty refuse to participate. I don't refuse to participate, I refuse to add yet more unpaid labor to weeks I'm already working 65-80 hours when my contract very specifically says 40 hours per week on average. I refuse to take on yet more administrative staff tasks because the provost would rather hire AVPs than the staff we so desperately need. That faculty are both dismissed by the provost and president when we'd like to have input on decisions determining the future of this institution that WE have to live with, but are loudly shamed when we won't participate in additional service to make *them* look well-supported (see: WASC accreditation) gives me zero faith that this institution has any interest in living up to the values CI was founded on.

Conclusions

In conclusion, when surveyed about their salary, benefits, work-life balance, and opportunities for advancement, CSUCI employees feel very positively about their benefits but largely struggle with the

other three dimensions. On one hand, employees across the institutional feel pride in their work accomplishments. On the other hand, faculty and staff report that salaries are insufficient to live in the Ventura region⁴ while administrators report that an overwhelming workload is inspiring them to consider other employment. Additionally, in an era of hiring chills, respondents highlighted the stress of taking on responsibilities inherited from positions that have not been filled when they are not compensated for that additional workload, at times combined with distress at the lack of advancement opportunities that would normally come with an open position. Furthermore, as some of the above qualitative responses indicate, employees report feeling removed from the decision-making process and that their efforts to help make CSUCI live up to its values and support the students of the region have not been fully appreciated. This feeling of not being heard may be reflected in the decreased response rate to this survey relative to the Fall 2022 administration (-17p.p for faculty and -19 p.p. for staff and administration). Hopefully efforts such as the CLCs to provide context, make meaning and advocate for change from the lens of our previous climate surveys will address these concerns and lead both to increased feelings of capacity to effect change and an improved workplace climate.

⁴ https://www.nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/California_2023_OOR.pdf