Rising to the Challenge

Optical Companies Address Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

MARGE AXELRAD / SENIOR VP, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

NEW YORK—In a year of upheaval, which in the year 2020 escalated on every front, from health care, business, family, politics and culture, due to many things including a global pandemic, it became clear to many that a new awareness of inequities, access and a demand for change would bring about a new and more widespread dialogue within the optical industry and profession toward diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

DEI has become, for a growing number of companies, individuals, groups and organizations across the optical industry and vision care profession, more than a buzzword. It is a widening commitment.

Executives and employees, doctors and associates, patients and patient advocates are starting to more openly address the issues of racism and institutional prejudice and to support diversity as part of their stated mission. In the mid point of 2020, sustained civil protests became very visible and vocal across major cities, suburbs and local towns throughout the U.S.

Communications and steps forward are complex but are on a crescendo. They have taken different forms, from internal statements to employees and associates to formally posted letters of support and principle.

VMAIL has been consistently reporting on these as they are issued. *Vision Monday* has housed these and more in our Diversity & Inclusion category on *VisionMonday.com* and will continue to do so.

Efforts this year have spanned a long list of optical companies including

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Optical Companies Address Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

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statements of support for diversity including initiatives, plans to address and take action, support new businesses and form action plans. Among these are VSP Global, MyEyeDr., Warby Parker, IDOC, EssilorLuxottica, Safilo, Marcolin, Zyloware, Kering, WestGroupe, ClearVision, CooperVision, Johnson & Johnson and many, many more independent ECPs, eyewear suppliers and other service companies.

Recognition of the challenges span issues among Black, Asian, Pacific Islander, and others of color as well as LGBTQ and women, and those with economic access to care and services.

The Vision Council's expansive DEI Survey is one example (See Page 38).

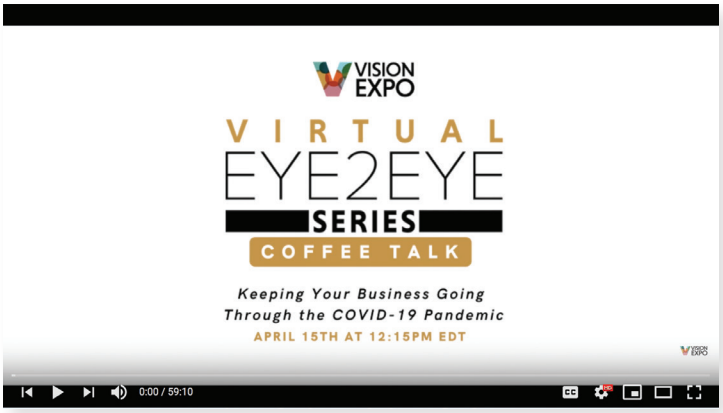
The full report is available on The Vision Council's website here. https://memberportal.thevisioncouncil.org/MemberPortal2020/TVC_Research_Store/MemberPortal2020/Store/Research-Store.aspx

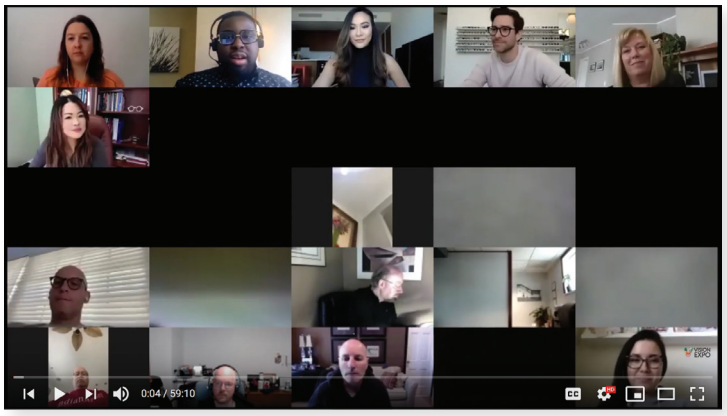
The Vision Council, like many companies, alliances and suppliers around the vision care industry, has established its own Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Task Force.

Vision Council DEI task force members include:

- Dr. Derrick Artis – Management consultant at Artis Consulting
- Lanard Atkins – Opticianry Program director at Georgia Piedmont Technical College
- Dr. Diana Canto-Sims – Co-Founder at Buena Vista Optical and Designer at La Vida Eyewear
- Gai Gherardi – Co-Founder at l.a.Eyeworks
- Rebecca Giefer – CEO, Americas at MODO Eyewear
- Dr. Millicent Knight – SVP, Customer Development Group at Essilor
- Blake Kuwahara – President/CEO, Focus Group West and creative director, Blake Kuwahara Eyewear
- Dr. Howard Purcell – President and CEO at New England College of Optometry
- Dr. Danielle Richardson – Independent optometrist at Optometrix
- Tiffany Smith – Regional director of Doctor Recruitment at National Vision
- Phernell Walker – Director of Optometric Relations at VSP Ventures
- Kyly Zak Rabin – Co-Founder at Zak.
- Christine Yeh – Executive editor at *20/20 Magazine*

Representatives of the Task Force were among those who discussed some of the findings from the Vision Council DEI survey in a recent EYE2EYE session. Links to their thought provoking comments and discussion were recently posted here. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL95Z2flK4LpWbs406B5UdXi59Kefy2xqD. ■





National Optometric Association Expands Its Voice on Behalf of Minority Optometrists

CHARLOTTE, N.C.—From its origins in 1969, the National Optometric Association (NAO) has been working to provide a voice to Black optometrists, and it wasn't always an easy road. More than 50 years later, the NAO is still the largest optometric association representing minority providers. Its charitable work, education and outreach efforts have only increased.

"Today, 50 years after the founding of the NOA, our mission and mandate remain as relevant as ever. We owe it to ourselves and to the next generation to continue the fight for representation and inclusion in our profession," said Sherrol A. Reynolds, OD, FAOO, NOA president.

Dr. Reynolds and other NOA members have been very visible this year as discussions about diversity and equity in culture, in health care and in the vision care field have been amplified. In addition to sessions with today's optometry students at various schools and colleges of optometry, the NAO has taken part in many dialogues, including the collaboration with The Vision Council's EYE2EYE virtual panel session: Black-Owned Eyewear Vendors: How to Find and Partner with Them—featured five Black eyewear entrepreneurs.

In conjunction with the National Optometric Student Association, NAO's Town Halls this year discussed diversity, equity and inclusion problems that NOSA students have experienced in their training and clinical practice as well as a session seeking solutions to these.

The NAO's 2021 Convention, July 9-11, will be virtual this year. The group will also take part with a regional meeting at the upcoming Vision Expo East in Orlando next month, offering a series of courses. ■

Open Your Eyes Scholarships Support Students' Path to Opticianry Schools

ALEXANDRIA, Va.—In January of this year, The Vision Council launched the Open Your Eyes Scholarship Program, through the Better Vision Institute, a 501(c)(3) charity designed to support high school students in marginalized communities throughout the U.S. who have an interest in pursuing a career in the optical industry. The program will support selected students through monetary scholarships to opticianry school, paid internships and mentorships. Tarrence Lackran, director of programs and partnerships at The Vision Council, said, "Some of the communities we will be working with have a mean household income that is less than the average licensed dispensing optician's salary. Therefore, the tools and skills this scholarship will provide have the potential to truly change some of these students' lives. In addition, being able to bring professionals to our industry from diverse racial backgrounds will elevate our industry and fill the need for a more inclusive community."

OPEN YOUR EYES
SCHOLARSHIP AUCTION
THE VISION COUNCIL

At the kickoff for the program in January this year, many Vision Council member companies donated auction items and experiences. Among those were the **eyewear designers** of the **Council of Fashion Designers (edCFDA), including Selima Salaun, creator of Selima Optique, Christian Roth, Gai Gherardi of l.a.Eyeworks, Blake Kuwahara, Ahlem and Patti Perreira of Barton Perreira. Other gifts and special items were donated by CEV Eyewear, Marchon and Dragon Eyewear, Thelios, Safilo, Dr. Danielle Richardson of Optometrix in L.A., Anna-Karin Karlsson, Cazal, Jacques Marie Mage, Zyloware Eyewear, Prive Revaux, The Vision Council and Reed Exhibitions.**

Sales of a limited edition **Maxwell x STATE frame**, called Reunion, would donate a percentage of proceeds from the frame to the scholarship program, with a minimum of $5,000 being donated. And a special collab between @theopticalpoet (Lackran) and British firm **Frame Chain** donated proceeds to the cause. Another Virtual Happy Hour in June raised funds for the Equal Justice Initia-

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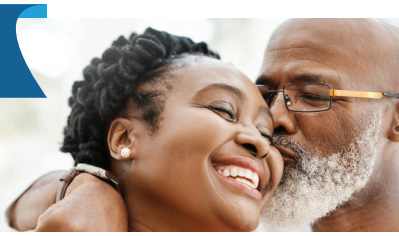
NVA
Vision Benefits. Smarter.®

National Vision Administrators (NVA) is pleased to announce that it is accepting applications for participation in our Provider Network for the following programs:

Medicare Advantage



Commercial

Medicaid

Please contact Laura McKay at (917) 574-2328
or lmckay@e-nva.com to learn more!

Rising to the Challenge

Black EyeCare Perspective Expands Its Connections and Development on Many Fronts

PALM BEACH GARDENS, Fla. and RALEIGH, N.C—2020 and 2021 have been busy years for the members and supporters of Black EyeCare Perspective (BEP), which has raised its profile among Black eyecare professionals, prospective optometrists (students) and supporters from across the industry. Its engaged members have shared their personal professional journeys with others, and developed two signature events including: IMPACT HBCU (the first Tuesday of October) and Black EyeCare Perspective Pre-Optometry Club's (BEPPOC) Signing Day (the last Tuesday in April). The group also has posted an Annual Report to provide transparency to the dollars and support raised and to recap its goals.

Notably in August of 2020, the groups established Diversity Perspective, Inc., a 501(c)(3) organization designed and created to improve equity in health care through awareness, action and accountability. "We're redefining the color of the health care industry 1 percent at a time by creating a pipeline for students and professionals," stated the organization which was founded by optometrists, Drs. Adam Ramsey and Darryl Glover and and created to cultivate and foster lifelong relationships between African Americans and the eyecare industry.

IMPACT HBCU is a recruitment and awareness event to introduce more students to the eyecare industry and support future Black optometrists on their journey. HBCU stands for Historically Black College and University. Black and African American optometrists represent less than 2 percent of practicing optometrists and approximately 40 percent of optometrists that received their undergraduate degree from an HBCU.

Several leading eyecare and optical retail companies stepped up to be the initial three supporters of the program: America's Best, MyEyeDr. and Warby Parker. The Association of Schools & Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) has become a bronze sponsor of the program.

Essence Johnson, OD, FAAO, and chief visionary officer of Black EyeCare Perspective, said, "Our IMPACT HBCU initiative is a targeted recruitment event to increase the visibility of optometry within the black community and increase the volume of Black and African American applicants into optometry school."

The first IMPACT HBCU event had to be held virtually in October of last year, but it might be possible for another approach in October 2021, Dr. Johnson noted, as plans are underway.

On the path to building the story of optometry to prospective students who might not have considered an optometric career path, BEP launched its Pre-Optometry Club (BEPPOC). The first and only virtual pre-optometry club, Black EyeCare Perspective Pre-Optometry Club is nationally recognized by the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO). It was established in August 2020 to ensure not a single, potential Black or African American student or optometrist is ignored, discouraged or disadvantaged.

A new Annual Report sheds light on Black EyeCare Perspective's work, including its Pre-Optometry Club and its IMPACT HBCU outreach.

Noted Johnson, "The reality is in order to have more Black doctors we have to actively recruit them as well as create more opportunities to not only help them survive, but thrive in their pursuit. The Signing Day, with the support of Johnson & Johnson Vision, celebrated the achievements of BEPPOC members who have been accepted into optometry school or college of optometry and also awarded its Matriculation Grant Recipients and Video Contest Winner(s)." Since August 2020, BEPPOC has grown to over 60 members, with about 34 percent of the membership applying to optometry school this cycle and with an acceptance rate of over 80 percent.

Black EyeCare Perspectives' goals remain focused as the group raises its profile and connects with supporters across the industry. The organization has raised over $80,000 in the form of direct sponsorships from the eyecare industry to increase the representation of Black and African American students being accepted into optometry school (1 percent increase per year until the overall 13 percent goal is achieved and sustained) through targeted recruitment and intentional retention.■

Rising to the Challenge

CEO Action Pledge for Diversity and Inclusion Signed by National Vision's CEO

DULUTH, Ga.—Several companies across the optical industry have expressed their support to embrace, learn and develop diversity and inclusion initiatives at their companies. National Vision Holdings, Inc. (NVI) (NASDAQ: EYE), one of the nation's largest optical retailers, is one of these, augmenting its existing support of the goals by naming several new corporate board members this year.

Reade Fahs

Earlier this month, NVI also announced that its CEO, Reade Fahs, has become a signatory to the CEO Action for Diversity and Inclusion (CEO Action) pledge. National Vision is the first optical retailer represented in the growing coalition of nearly 2,000 business leaders across 85 industries committed to advancing diversity and inclusion goals in the workplace, the company's announcement said.

"I am proud that over 50 percent of National Vision's total associates and 45 percent of optometrists in our network identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC). We feel it is important for patients and customers to feel represented and included when they come to our stores and entrust us with their vision, so we want to continue to attract diverse perspectives and talents and be a great place to work for everyone who comes to the optical industry," said Fahs.

"Signing the CEO Action pledge is a public acknowledgement of how serious these efforts are to our mission and values, and our intention to continue taking meaningful action on these commitments going forward."

In the pledge, National Vision committed to a series of actions related to diversity, equity and inclusion across its company, industry and communities, on many of which National Vision has already made progress.

The DEI efforts include:

- Created a new department, including dedicated staff and leadership, tasked with leading company-wide DEI efforts.
- Formed the National Vision DEI Council, which strategically guides DEI efforts in four focus areas: Employment Branding/Recruitment, Training & Education, Mentoring & Career Development, and Community Services.
- Implemented a company-wide Diversity Calendar to create a hub for intentional conversation opportunities, training and resources around highlighted observations throughout the year.
- Reviewed recruitment and hiring practices to increase opportunities to attract, support, and retain a diverse pipeline of talent.
- Committed more than $425,000 in scholarships, grants, and philanthropic donations focused on supporting BIPOC students and students from communities with historical underrepresentation in the optical industry.
- Increased minority representation and achieved a gender balance among the independent directors on the board of directors.
- Built DEI efforts into the core framework of National Vision's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) strategy, which is designed to extend and formalize the company's commitments to DEI initiatives.

Jacqueline Grove, National Vision's senior vice president of talent development, culture, DEI, and philanthropy, has led the development of these ongoing initiatives. "It's important that we are intentionally striving to create an inclusive environment that respects and celebrates differences, and engages the full value these many perspectives bring to the table. We have work ahead of us, and I'm proud that our CEO Action pledge publicizes our commitment to staying on this journey." ■

Optometric Colleges Deepen their Diversity Commitments

NEW YORK—The Association of Schools & Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) has taken on a visible role in supporting DEI goals, pledging to do even more going forward. On its main website, ASCO and its member institutions state that they have embraced the concepts of diversity and multiculturalism in optometric education and in the profession. "Goals include developing an applicant pool, student community, faculty and profession that reflects the diversity of the U.S. population, while preparing future optometric clinicians for practicing in a multicultural and global society."

SUNY Optometry is one of the optometry colleges which has hosted panels exploring issues to advance diversity and inclusion this year.

Dr. Angela Abraham is New England College of Optometry's new Diversity and Inclusion Liaison. NECO has also signed on to support the Black EyeCare Perspective's 13% Pledge.

ASCO is also offering a growing range of resources, including an Anti-Racism Reading and Resource List along with a host of Multicultural Resources.

With financial support from Walmart, ASCO has been implementing a multi-year project focusing on cultural competence. The goal is to assist the schools and colleges of optometry in the prepara-

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Education and Dialogue Continues, Online and at Vision Expo East Orlando

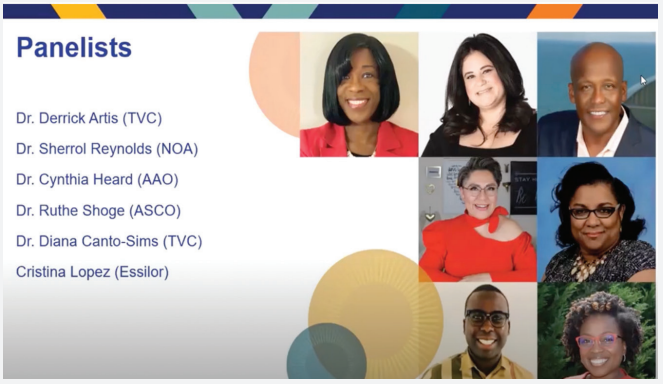
With new ones announced just this month, the education and teaching continue in the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion realm, both online and at the upcoming Vision Expo East scheduled for June 2-5.

Opening Your Eyes! The First Look at the Industry's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey

The now on-demand session was presented in collaboration with the **American Academy of Optometry, The Association of Schools** and **Colleges of Optometry**, and the National Optometric Association, taking a close look at The Vision Council's 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Report.

An engaging and insightful discussion session was moderated by **Dr. Derrick Artis, management consultant at Artis Consulting. Panelists include: Dr. Sherrol Reynolds, president of the NOA; Dr. Ruth Shoge, chair of the Diversity and Cultural Competency Committee at ASCO; Dr. Cynthia Heard, chair of the AAO DEI committee; and Dr. Diana Canto-Sims, co-founder at Buena Vista Optical and designer at La Vida Eyewear.**

Dr. Ruth Shoge, chair of the Diversity and Cultural Competency Committee at ASCO, said, "The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) and its member institutions embrace diversity and the continued cultural competence of our students and in our profession. More importantly, we look forward to continuing to work with other organizations in creating an equitable and inclusive profession in an intentional and purposeful way."



Dr. Sherrol Reynolds, president of the National Optometric Association, said, "The National Optometric Association (NOA), an organization dedicated to advancing the visual health of minority populations, is thrilled to partner with The Vision Council, the American Academy of Optometry (AAO), and the American Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) in presenting this informative panel discussion addressing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in our industry."

Dr. Cynthia Heard, chair of the AAO DEI committee, said, "Diversity, equity and inclusion is finally coming to the forefront for difficult and transparent conversations. Examining one's own identities replaces the silence and fear with tools that allow courageous conversations to occur.

This session can be viewed on the Eye2Eye page here: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL95Z2flK4LpWbs406B5UdXi59Kefy2xqD. ■

Range of DEI Courses and Discussions Are Slated for Vision Expo Orlando in June

Thursday, June 3

Cultural Competence: The Opportunities of Serving the Needs of Hispanic Patients

Thursday, June 3 from 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Location: Education Room #TBD

Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing minority group in the United States and present an opportunity for growth of our optometric practices. Led by Hector Santiago, OD, PhD, FAAO, this course presents the demographics, cultural traits, values, the prevalent systemic and ocular diseases and provides recommendations on how to improve the access of eyecare services to Hispanics.

VIRTUAL EYE2EYE SERIES

National Optometric Association

EYE2EYE Series: Removing Barriers Between You and Your Multi-Cultural Patients

Thursday, June 3 from 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

The Seen

Cultural competence in eyecare is a foundational element of providing high-quality care and a bedrock for meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse population of patients. Join us for an in-depth discussion with eyecare providers and industry representatives as they explore the need for eyecare providers and all members of their staff to systematically consider how to integrate cultural competencies into their approach in patient interactions in order to deliver the best quality of care.

Moderated by: *Dr. Diana Canto-Sims, Co-Founder at Buena Vista Optical and Designer at La Vida Eyewear*

Panelists: *Dr. Lina Arango, Co-Founder of Clear Eyes Clear Mind; and Arlene Segovia, Marketing Manager, Trade Communications for Transitions Optical*

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Rising to the Challenge

Open Your Eyes Scholarships Support Students' Path to Opticianry Schools

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tive and My Brother's Keeper Alliance The week-long virtual auction featured donated gifts from companies **AHLEM, Anna-Karin Karlsson, Barton Perreira, Blake Kuwahara, Cazal, Christian Roth, Jacques Marie Mage, l.a.Eyeworks, Morgenthal Frederics & Robert Marc NYC, Nico Roseillier, Rigards, Selima Optique, and Thierry Lasry**. More industry players stepped up with program donations, among them **MyEyeDr., National Vision, DeRigo REM, Luxury Optical Holdings, Salle Opticians and more**.

As of this month, online applications for scholarships are now being accepted, with a deadline of July 1. Applicants will be notified by July 15. For the first round of scholarships for the 2021–2022 school year, eligible students must be interested in pursuing an Associates Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing from either **Georgia Piedmont Technical College or New York City Technical College**. Scholarships will cover tuition and fees, and a $250 allowance per semester for books and supplies. Scholarships are renewable each semester upon successful completion of all course work and internship/mentorship requirements.

Additional questions can be sent to Lackran at tlackran@thevisioncouncil.org. ■

Optometric Colleges Deepen their Diversity Commitments

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tion of a diverse pool of optometric clinicians who will be clinically ready to address the vision and eyecare needs of a multicultural and global community.

ASCO has also committed to the development of a diverse applicant pool. In partnership with the American Academy of Optometry (AAO) and the National Optometric Association, ASCO organized an attendance-breaking workshop on diversity in optometric education in concert with the 2020 AAO At Home Conference. And ASCO's public education campaign, *Optometry Gives Me Life*, showcases diverse, exceptional professionals as exemplars to prospective students about how a life in optometry can be fulfilling for everyone.

At individual member colleges, the causes and issues behind the need for more DEI has grown as well. Several colleges, among them The State University of New York's College of Optometry, New England College of Optometry, Salus University/Pennsylvania College of Optometry, Illinois College of Optometry and Southern College of Optometry reconfirmed their commitments to supporting DEI through their own programs, panels, appointments and task forces. ■

Range of DEI Courses and Discussions Are Slated for Vision Expo Orlando in June

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Friday, June 4

EYE2EYE Series: Building a More Inclusive Work Environment

Friday, June 4 from 12 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.

The Seen

This panel of leading diversity and inclusion executives will discuss how you can engage members of your team from different backgrounds to build a more equitable agenda in your place of business. They will discuss diversity, equity and inclusion principles that you can utilize with your team—no matter how big or small your organization is.

Moderated by: *Dr. Danielle Richardson, West Coast Director of Clinical Care for Zak*

Panelists: *Marvin Davenport, Vice President, Chief Diversity Officer at VSP Global; Cristina Lopez, Head of Talent, Inclusion & Diversity at Essilor Group; and Jacqueline Grove, Senior Vice President, Training, Culture, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and Philanthropy at National Vision Inc.*

Opening Your Eyes to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: A Review of The Vision Council's DE&I Initiatives and 2020 Survey Results

Friday, June 4 from 2:30-4:30 p.m.

Location: Education Room #TBD

Attend this engaging panel discussion to learn more about The Vision Council's **2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report**, which provides an in-depth analysis of the custom survey The Vision Council fielded to the vision care community in November 2020. **Derrick Artis, OD, who also serves on The Vision Council's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force, will moderate the panel.**

Panelists: Dr. Howard Purcell, President and CEO at New England College of Optometry; Dr. Millicent Knight, Senior Vice President, Customer Development Group at Essilor; Phernell Walker, Director of Optometric Relations at VSP Ventures; and Dr. Diana Canto-Sims, Co-Founder at Buena Vista Optical and Designer at La Vida Eyewear

National Optometric Association Regional Meeting

- The National Optometric Association (NOA), an organization with a 52-year history dedicated to "advancing the visual health of minority populations" through the delivery of effective and efficient eye and vision care services to the minority community, will host a **Regional Meeting on Friday, June 4 and Saturday, June 5 at Vision Expo East**.
- This in-person regional meeting will serve as an opportunity for **NOA doctors** and **National Optometric Student Association (NOSA)** students to connect and learn together safely. As part of the regional meeting, **NOA will offer six hours of education exclusive to their members on Friday, June 4 and Saturday, June 5**.
- Additionally, on **Saturday, June 5**, the NOA will host a **panel discussion** at The Seen, a dynamic new main stage destination offering collaborative learning. The panel is titled **"Excellence: Overcoming Obstacles to Optometric Success."** ■

Rising to the Challenge

The Vision Council's Report Starts the Diversity and Inclusion Conversation

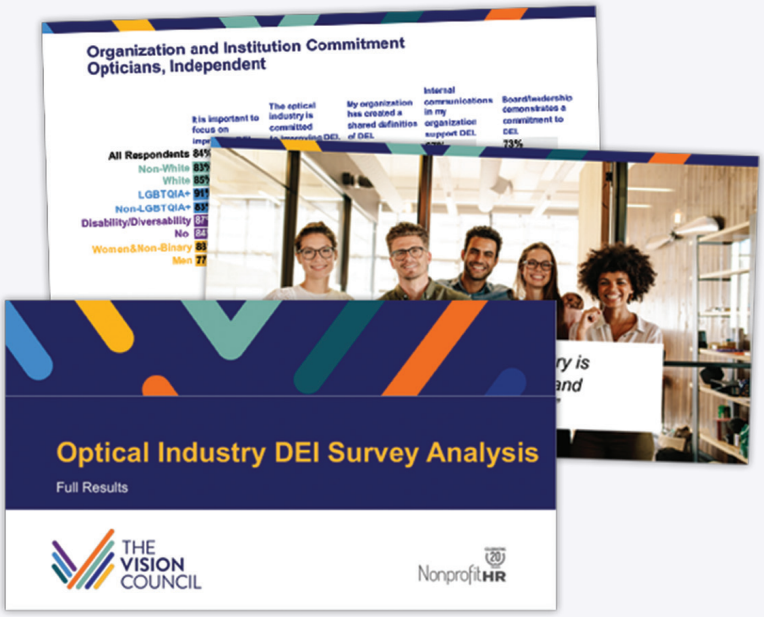
The Vision Council's 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report provides an in-depth analysis of the custom survey fielded to the vision care community in November 2020. The confidential survey, developed in partnership with Nonprofit HR, one of the leading full-service human resources firms focused exclusively on the nonprofit sector with expertise in DEI consulting, was designed to benchmark the vision care leadership landscape in order to help organizations within the industry identify opportunities they have to promote diversity, cultivate talent and improve their performance, the Council said.

The Vision Council's main goals in commissioning the survey included: to assess diversity, inclusion, and career perceptions within the optical industry; to understand if certain populations were experiencing the industry differently; and to obtain feedback on how The Vision Council and other network organizations can provide support in this area.

The report provides an analysis and overview of the survey results in five key topic areas: DEI Commitment, Belonging, Inclusive Culture, Equity & Systems, and Rewards, Recognition and Advancement.

The survey was open to all members of the vision care products and services industry and was fielded from November 9-24, 2020. The survey received 1,527 usable responses, all U.S.-based. The industry segment breakdown of the 1,527 respondents includes:

- **Independent Eyecare and Retail: 37 percent**
- **Academia: 20 percent**
- **Supplier and Manufacturer: 19 percent**
- **Corporate Eyecare and Retail: 16 percent**
- **Industry group or other (includes buying groups, trade media, nonprofit organizations): 8 percent**



Additionally, of the 1,527 respondents, 61 percent identify as female, 38 percent as male and less than one percent as gender non-binary or non-conforming.

The Vision Council noted, that when reviewing the report, the percentage scores indicate strengths or areas of opportunity. The scale below is provided to offer additional context and consideration for the results of the survey:

- **Items above 85 percent are typically viewed as strengths.**
- **Items between 84 percent and 70 percent are a mix of emerging strengths or areas to be aware of.**
- **Items below 75 percent indicate areas of opportunity.** ■

More →

DEI Commitment

From a numbers standpoint, most respondents, 86 percent, indicated that they personally believe it is important to focus on DEI in the optical industry. However, when responding to whether they believe the industry is committed to this work, agreement fell to only 52 percent. This disparity in scores, suggests that while people might be open to, or even committed to advancing DEI in the industry, they perceived barriers, larger than themselves.

Qualitative commentary and considerations also shed more light on potential gaps and opportunities in relation to bringing the scores closer together. The open ended questions provided the space for respondents to share their personal perspective and assessment of how well they and their organization's view and approach, supporting DEI in the workplace. When reviewing the comments, language, and terms used by respondents, it is evident that individuals have different definitions of what it means to operate a diverse, equitable and inclusive organization in the industry. ■

"As eyecare professionals, we understand the importance of diversity and inclusion. Let's take a close look at our practice and the patients we serve. Are we meeting the eyecare needs of our Latino and other minorities in our practice? If not, it is okay to ask how we can improve. We're all in this together."

-Dr. Diana Canto-Sims, Co-Founder at Buena Vista Optical and Designer at La Vida Eyewear

Does the organization or institution demonstrate a commitment to advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in concrete ways, through behaviors and communications?

Organization and Institution Commitment, All Respondents (N = 1527)

- **86% of individuals responding** indicated they believe it is important to focus on improving DEI.
- **52% of individuals responding** agree that the optical industry is committed to improving diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace.
- **62% of respondents** reported that their organization/institution has created a shared definition of a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture.
- **68% of respondents** agreed with the notion that internal communications in their organization/institution support DEI.
- **75% of respondents** believe that their Board, management team or senior leadership demonstrates a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Source: The Vision Council's 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report

Organization and Institution Commitment Optometrists/Doctors, Corporate

	It is important to focus on improving DEI.	The optical industry is committed to improving DEI.	My organization has created a shared definition of DEI.	Internal communications in my organization support DEI.	Board/leadership demonstrates a commitment to DEI.
All Respondents	79%	41%	50%	55%	61%
Non-White	89%	32%	50%	58%	53%
White	64%	54%	50%	50%	71%
LGBTQIA+	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d
Non-LGBTQIA+	77%	40%	52%	55%	60%
Disability/Diversability	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d	n/d
No	80%	41%	50%	55%	59%
Women&Non-Binary	90%	40%	45%	50%	52%
Men	58%	42%	58%	63%	75%

**Showing percentage Agree/Strongly Agree*
**n/d indicates sample size was less than 10 so data is omitted*

Source: The Vision Council's 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report

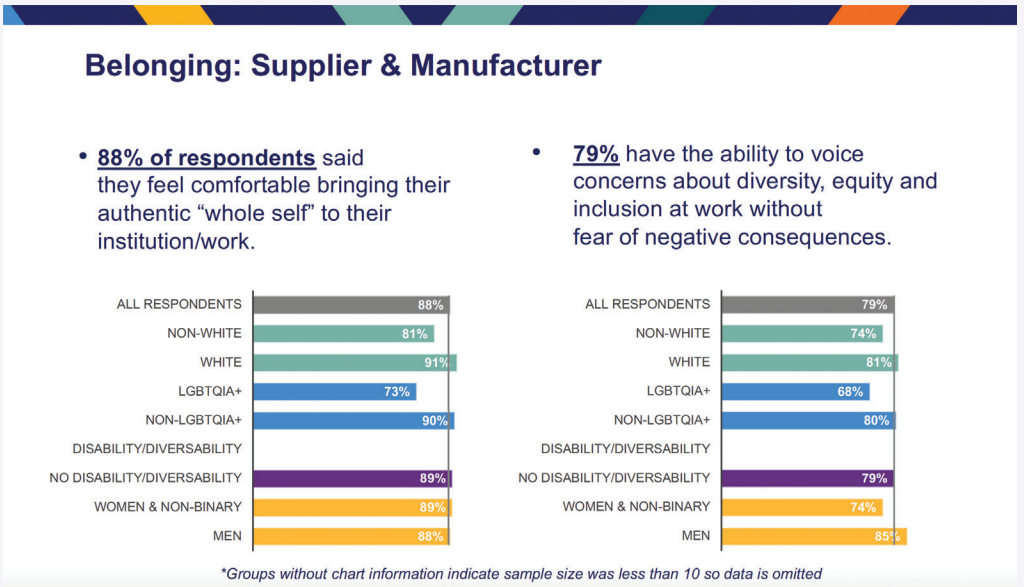
Belonging

Belonging is described as the feelings of affinity for a place or situation. High levels of belonging in the work context are correlated with staff being comfortable sharing views on diversity, equity and inclusion at work, bringing their full authentic selves to work, and feeling as though they belong at the organization.

Belonging is an important metric to measure as it correlates strongly with employee engagement, which in turn is known to have positive impact on organizational outcomes, such as productivity, revenue, and even turnover. Belonging is described as the feelings of affinity for a place or situation.

High levels of belonging in the work context are correlated with staff being comfortable sharing views on diversity, equity, and inclusion at work, bringing their full authentic selves to work, and feeling as though they belong in an organization. Most respondents, 81 percent, indicated that they feel comfortable bringing their "authentic self" to work, or the institution they've connected to, such as the University.

When asked whether they had the ability to voice DEI related concerns without fear of negative consequences, 72 percent of respondents agreed. These scores could be considered emerging strengths with room to grow. ■

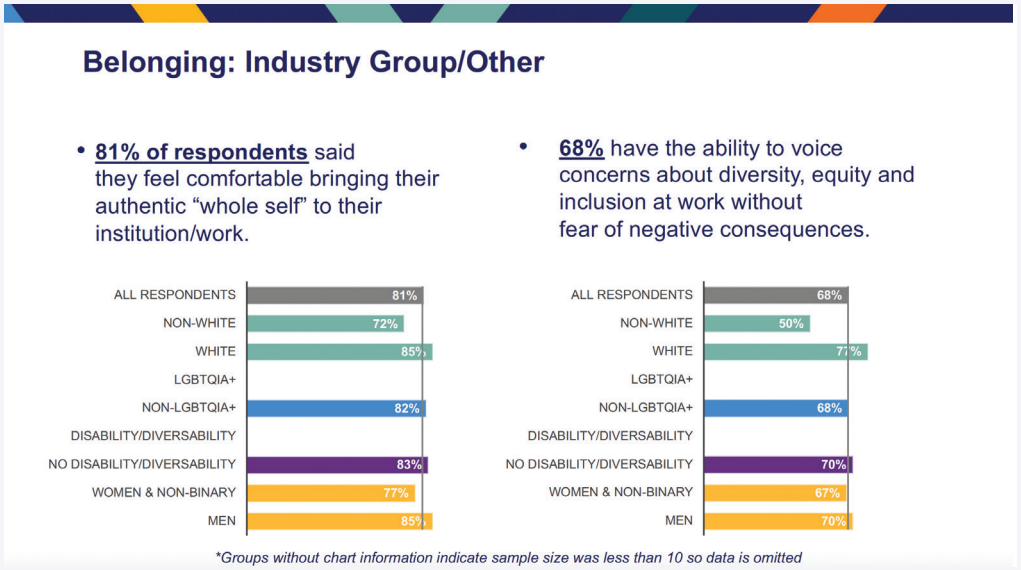


*Groups without chart information indicate sample size was less than 10 so data is omitted

Source: The Vision Council's 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report

"I think there's an opportunity for us as an industry to better ourselves. Not only is it the right thing to do, it also drives business success."

-Dr. Derrick Artis, Management Consultant at Artis Consulting



*Groups without chart information indicate sample size was less than 10 so data is omitted

Source: The Vision Council's 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report

Inclusive Culture

An inclusive culture is one that accepts values and views as strength, the differences we all bring to the table. An industry that has an inclusive culture will be perceived in tangible ways, such as seeing people of different dimensions of diversity within the industry and the behaviors that are experienced by the workforce.

When asked about the perceived diversity of people who attend industry conferences, only 63 percent of respondents indicated that they felt a diverse population attended those events. When asked about marketing within the industry, only 60 percent felt that they were represented in the marketing, typically seen within the industry.

In terms of behaviors and environment, the survey also explored experiences of micro-aggressions and racism in the industry. Micro-aggressions are defined as indirect subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group. A notable 24 percent of report respondents indicated they had experienced micro-aggressions within their workplace, or institution within the past 12 months. ■

“We have to seek clarity—diversity and inclusion is more than race. It’s about diversity of thoughts, opinions, and religion. The survey responses suggest the need for more exploration in these areas, and accountability starts at the top. We need to look at our own company’s cultures and we must make meaningful, measureable shifts.”

-Dr. Millicent Knight, SVP, Customer Development Group at Essilor

An inclusive culture is one that accepts values and views as strength, the differences we all bring to the table.

Inclusive Culture – All Respondents

Collectively, respondents indicated that their organization/institution may have issues of inclusion related to these populations:

- Persons who are Transgender
- Persons with less economic mobility
- Persons with disabilities, (both visible and invisible)

Key Data Points

63% Believe that optical industry conferences and events are attended by people of diverse backgrounds.

Feel represented in the marketing used across the optical industry. 60%

24% Respondents indicated they have experienced microaggressions in their organization/institution

Categories of microaggressions noted included: gender, race/ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital and family status

Source: The Vision Council’s 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report

Inclusive Culture – Students

Collectively, respondents indicated that their organization/institution may have issues of inclusion related to these populations:

- People who speak English as a second language
- People who are Transgender
- Persons with disabilities, (both visible and invisible)
- Persons who identify as Black/A.A., Native/Indigenous or Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

Key Data Points

47% Believe that optical industry conferences and events are attended by people of diverse backgrounds.

Feel represented in the marketing used across the optical industry. 58%

22% Respondents indicated they have experienced microaggressions in their organization/institution

Source: The Vision Council’s 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report

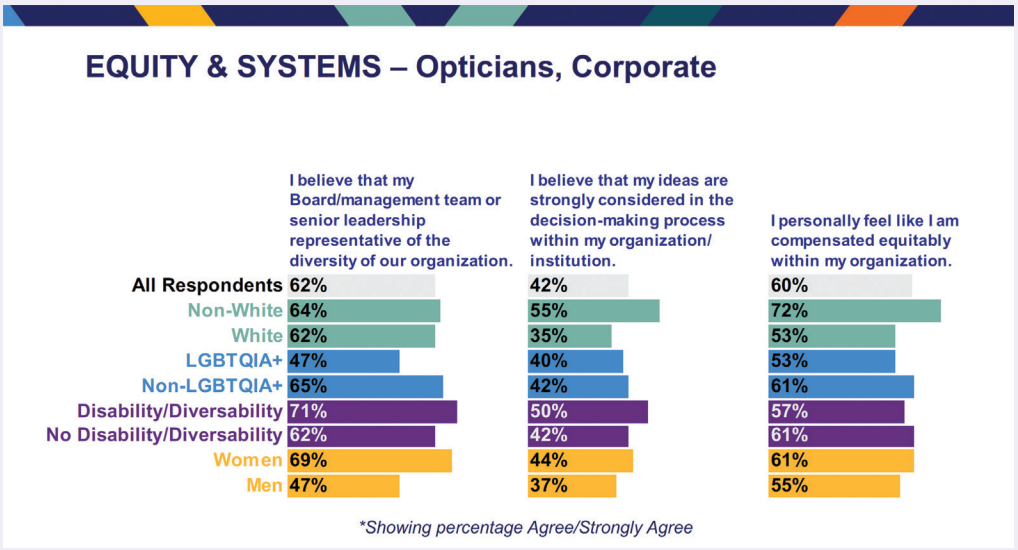
Equity & Systems

In this section, an assessment of whether equity is present within organizational systems is investigated. To determine this, it is important to consider how power is distributed, who contributes to decision making, the distribution of workload and representation of diversity across the organization, or industry.

One of the methods used to measure equity in representation is to determine if people perceive the most senior decision makers in an organization, such as senior leadership, or the board/management team, are as diverse as the overall organization. Respondents indicated only 56 percent agreement that their senior management team, or board were representative of the diversity of their organization.

When asked about equity in compensation, 62 percent of all report respondents indicated that they felt they were equitably compensated in their organization. Additionally, 64 percent of respondents indicated that their ideas are strongly considered in decision making within their organization or institution. ■

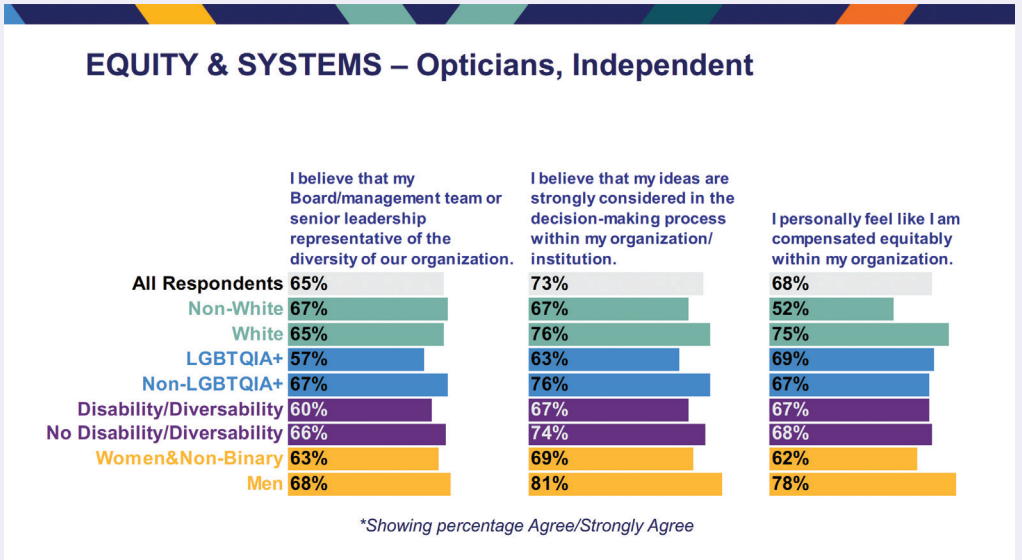
Is Equity present within organizational systems? To determine this, it is important to consider how power is distributed, who contributes to decision making, the distribution of workload and representation of diversity across the organization or industry.



Source: The Vision Council's 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report

"The burden to change is on the schools and colleges of optometry. If we don't have a more diverse student body coming through we will not solve the problems downstream. We know that and we take that very seriously. We appreciate the support the industry has shown us. We need that help and with that help we will make a difference."

-Dr. Howard Purcell, President and CEO at New England College of Optometry



Source: The Vision Council's 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report

Rewards, Recognition and Advancement

The last areas explored by the survey were to understand if rewards, recognition, and advancement opportunities are equally distributed across the industry or respondents' organization. When asked if recognition for performance is fairly/equitably distributed amongst their colleagues, 62 percent of respondents agreed.

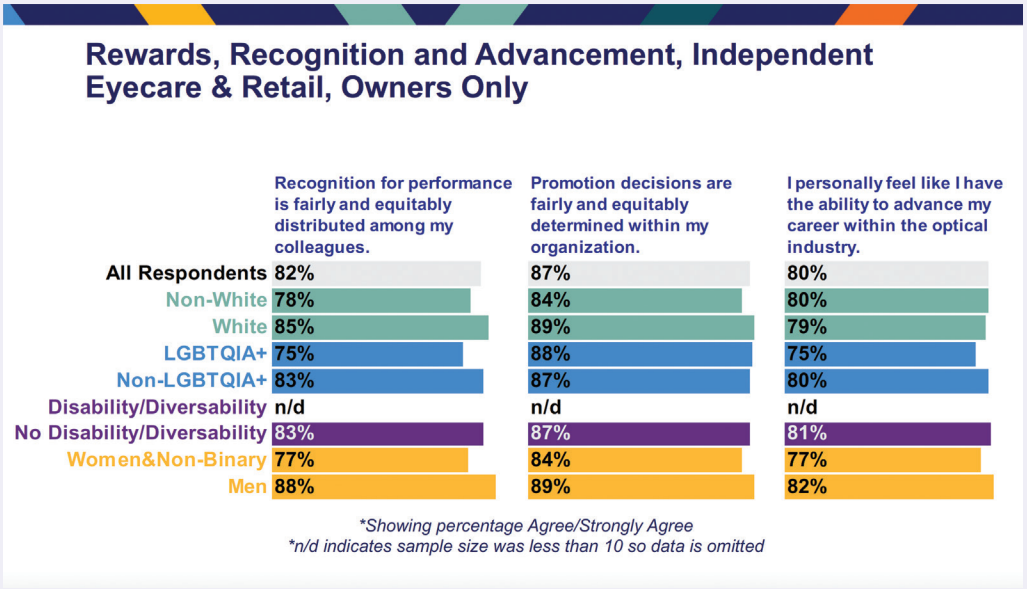
When asked a similar question about promotions being equitably determined within their organization, only 56 percent of respondents agreed. When asked about perceptions of ability to grow professionally in the industry, 69 percent reported that they personally felt they could advance their career in the optical industry.

For the three areas of rewards, recognition, and advancement opportunities, it was observed that men have more positive feelings about these topics than other responding groups. Persons that are identified as having a disability indicated the lowest level of agreement with these areas. ■

"We know we have a long way to go if we can't have a shared definition of what diversity, equity and inclusive culture even looks like. If we don't know what the goal is or have a shared definition, how can we achieve those results, which directly impact gross revenues and the bottom line when it comes to profitability. Having diversity allows us to approach problems differently and have greater results. Furthermore, if we know that diversity allows us to reach our full potential, why would we not embrace that?"

-Phernell Walker MBA, ABOM, Director of Optometric Relations at VSP Ventures

Are Rewards, Recognition, and Advancement opportunities, equitably distributed across the organization or institution?



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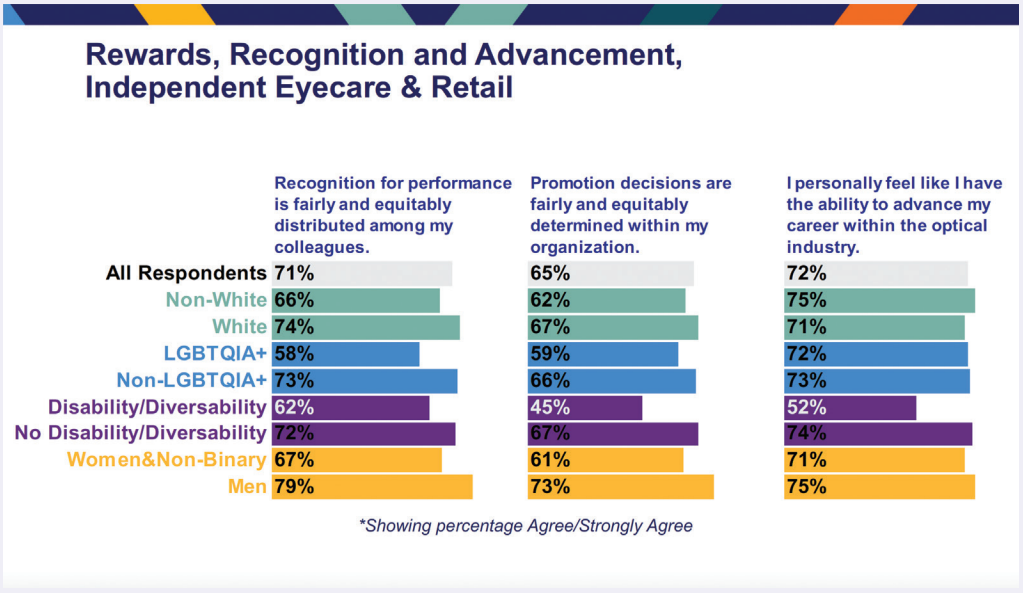

Source: The Vision Council's 2020 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report