

Summary of the “Where Are You Sitting?” Survey

Department of Biostatistics at the University of Washington, Seattle

In January 2024, the *Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion* (EDI) Committee within UW’s Biostatistics department sent a survey to current students to investigate workplace selection on the department floor. Interest in seating followed a comment from the 2023 Climate Survey describing an observed racial divide on the floor within the Hans Rosling Center (HRC). Domestic, white students were described as the main occupants of the north end, with open-space seating and desks; and international, students of color as more prevalent in the south end, designated for quiet, independent work.

Executive Summary

The survey was open for two days and gathered 17 anonymous responses (12 domestic students, 5 international students). It asked respondents to self-identify domestic status and select their preferred workspace area on the department floor (north, center, south) with optional space for detailed responses.

- Domestic students (70% of respondents) most-prefer the northern workstations; international students (30% of respondents) most-prefer the southern workstations. Zero students selected the center tables around the kitchen, which were described as best for eating.
- South-sitting students appreciate **quiet for focus and productivity**; north-sitting students appreciate **speaking for collaboration and productivity**.
 - Northern group-seating creates an environment suitable for assignment discussion and friendly, spontaneous socializing. Multiple students select north workstations for their computer monitors, which are not present in the south end.
 - Southern seats are inviting to introverts and those who desire to work in a focused, independent manner within a quiet space.
- Both sides enjoy sunlight and views from nearby windows. Both sides agree that the noise on the north end (reported as from undergraduates) may be disruptive at times.

	North	South	
Domestic	9 (53%)	3 (18%)	12 (70%)
International	1 (6%)	4 (23%)	5 (30%)
	10 (59%)	7 (41%)	

Table 1. Group counts and (approximate) proportions of preferred workspaces

Grander Implications

Committee interest in department workstations arose after the 2023 Climate Survey, in which students reported a divide between international and domestic students across multiple areas of department life. A respondent from this survey indicated exclusive behaviors by domestic students engender this dynamic.

Regardless of your position in this department, consider your attitudes toward this suggestion. Do you see this divide reflected in classrooms and social events? What role does similar identity, culture, or language play? Are you competent regarding the cultures present in our community? To what extent is your behavior toward department members characterized by inclusion? These are considerations the EDI Committee want to encourage faculty, staff, and students to engage in with one another.

Contact Us

If you have further questions or would like to request additional information, such as a copy of the survey, response data, or spreadsheets, please message the Biostatistics Associate Director of Student Services, Minh Vo, at minhtvo@uw.edu or the Biostatistics EDI TA, Alejandro Hernandez, at alej@uw.edu.