



## WEST AFRICAN PARENTS' EXPERIENCES OF RACISM

This series has been updated to include findings from a 2022 community café with West African families. In the series, Best Starts for Kids (BSK) shares survey results about seven questions related to racism from the 2021 BSK Health Survey, along with reactions and insights from families who reviewed these survey results for their community. Across the now, 11 BIPOC communities included, families faced racism to varying degrees in every facet of life, and families said that racism is under-reported in the BSK Health Survey. Families were commonly subjected to racism in public and professional settings. Families from most communities agreed that acts of racism were common at their child's school, and most communities described racist occurrences in the healthcare system. For more information about the café findings for the initial 10 communities who participated in 2021, please see the full Community Café Collaborative report at: <https://bit.ly/3pMbzqf>

### Major Takeaways, Insights, and Themes from Café Discussion:

Participants from the West African café reacted to these data points by asking why the numbers were so low. They agreed that the numbers did not reflect the frequency at which racism is experienced, although they appreciated the wide range of West African countries represented in the BSK health survey data. Experiences of racism were universal among café participants. The stories shared described racism at interpersonal levels, in childcare settings, and especially in interactions with management at work. Several times, stories were shared where the racism was brought to the attention of someone in a leadership role, and it was denied. Participants shared how, often, “people act like it’s perfectly acceptable to make stereotypes about African immigrants” or act surprised to “find an African person in a position to help them with their life”. They recommended providing examples of experiences in the survey questions or collecting these data through discussion, because survey respondents may not be connecting their personal experiences to the questions as they were written. Finally, participants reflected on how powerful it would be to hear about experiences of racism directly from children and youth, who may be hiding these experiences from adults in their lives.



*“No matter where we are, we have no right to abandon where we come from all our traditions, and we have the duty to teach our children about our culture.”*

– West African Café participant

*“The image out there about Africa in the Western world is negative. People believe we are not up to standard based on the color of our skin.”*

– West African Café participant

*“For us in this meeting today, we need to know our values and what will be taught to our children. As parents, it must be us who teach our children.”*

– West African Café participant



**29%**

of West African parents said they experienced racism.

**Among West African parents who experienced racism:**

**56%** in a public setting

**50%** in the workplace

**33%** in a business/retail setting

Other common settings included while **receiving medical care**, when **looking for housing**, and in obtaining **financial services**.

**33**

West African parents took the survey in 2021.



**Notes:**

The West African café discussion was facilitated in English. West African parents are defined as parents who wrote in any of the following countries: Ascension, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Saint Helena, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, or Tristan da Cunha on the survey. Multiracial people are reflected in each category that they selected (e.g., a parent who selected Vietnamese and wrote in a West African country on the survey would have their responses counted in both Vietnamese and West African results). Photos generously provided by members of the West African community.