A horizontal bar composed of three segments: blue, red, and purple.

# Baseline on Belonging: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Architecture Licensing

## *Firm Culture & Career Development Report: Executive Summary*

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National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA)

# Baseline on Belonging: Firm Culture & Career Development Report

## Report Structure

NCARB and NOMA have released the full *Baseline on Belonging* report in phases. This phase features data related to firm culture and career development. A full, compiled report will be released later this year.



# Baseline on Belonging: Firm Culture & Career Development Report

## In This Summary

This summary report features an overview of the key findings and next steps from the *Baseline on Belonging: Firm Culture & Career Development Report*. To explore in-depth survey findings related to experiences working within a firm—including charts showing filtered responses to each related survey question—please visit [ncarb.org/belong](https://ncarb.org/belong).

For more information about the study, read other reports from NOMA and NCARB:

- [Baseline on Belonging: Experience Report](#)—Explores support, impediments, and barriers candidates encounter while completing the Architectural Experience Program® (AXP®).
- [Baseline on Belonging: Examination Report](#)—Highlights various areas and degrees of disparity related to completing the Architect Registration Examination® (ARE®).
- [Baseline on Belonging: Education Report](#)—Highlights impediments related to earning a degree in architecture.

## Engage

Sign up for email updates at [ncarb.org/subscribe](https://ncarb.org/subscribe) to be the first to hear about future *Baseline on Belonging* findings and participate in follow-up studies.

# Baseline on Belonging: Firm Culture & Career Development Report

## Executive Summary

Architecture firm culture impacts most phases of the path to licensure, from providing the access and resources necessary for completing the experience program to supporting the time and cost investment needed to pass the examination. Beyond that, firm culture can shape many other aspects of an early career in architecture—including motivation to achieve career growth, a sense of belonging in the field, and the post-licensure return on investment.

The *Baseline on Belonging* study focused on candidates completing the path to licensure. As a result, most survey respondents (77%) were actively working through the process at the time of the survey. NCARB's supplemental data shows that roughly 2 out of every 5 candidates who begin the licensure process eventually fall off the path, most doing so while completing the Architectural Experience Program® (AXP®). The focus on active candidates in this study allows NCARB and NOMA to highlight and understand impediments that are impacting current candidates on the path to licensure.

This report provides an in-depth look at aspects of the *Baseline on Belonging* study related to experiences working within a firm—including firm culture, compensation, growth opportunities, exposure to discrimination, compensation for licensure, and reasons for leaving the profession. As with previous *Baseline on Belonging* reports, survey findings were filtered primarily by race, ethnicity, and gender, with additional factors such as firm size, age, and career position taken into consideration when possible. Where appropriate, NCARB provided supplemental data to offer additional insight and background information.

Many key findings from the report highlight the disparities faced by people of color—especially Black or African American respondents—related to firm culture, including discrimination and belonging in the workplace.

First, Black or African American candidates were more likely to face a variety of barriers related to their firm's culture. Compared to white candidates, they were less likely to feel like they belonged in their firm, less likely to say their firm values diversity and inclusion, and less likely to say they felt valued by their firm. Additionally, they were more likely to report they considered leaving the field due to their experience working in a firm.

African American women were more likely to face disparities that limited their career growth. For example, they were less likely than their white male peers to report that employees of different backgrounds are encouraged to apply for higher level positions and less likely to report that they can find individuals who are similar to themselves in their firm's leadership. They were also more likely to indicate that diversity is a barrier to progression at their firm.

When it comes to post-licensure advancement—including raises, promotions, and new work opportunities—African American women were less likely than their white male peers to receive these material benefits. However, they are more likely to receive a team celebration for their effort.

# Baseline on Belonging: Firm Culture & Career Development Report

Additionally, women and people of color—especially African Americans—are much more likely to report facing or witnessing discrimination in the workplace compared to their peers, including racial, gender, and age discrimination. Nearly half of all African American women indicated that they had faced or witnessed discrimination, compared to 18% of white men.

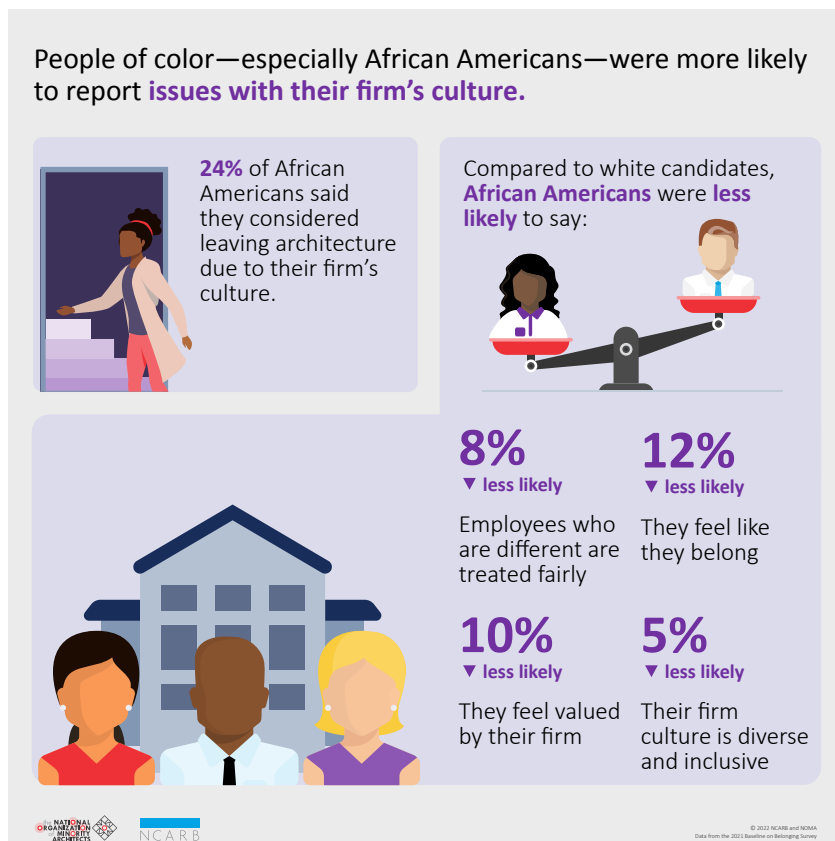
Finally, survey results indicated that firm size can widen the disparities experienced by people of color, with Black or African American employees of large firms facing larger disparities than Black or African American employees of medium-sized firms.

As with key findings related to the path to licensure, additional study is needed to better understand how to address disparities related to firm culture and career development. For more information about NCARB and NOMA's planned follow-up surveys, research, and next steps, see page 135.

# Baseline on Belonging: Firm Culture & Career Development Report

## Firm Culture: Key Findings

### People of Color More Likely to Face Firm Culture Disparities

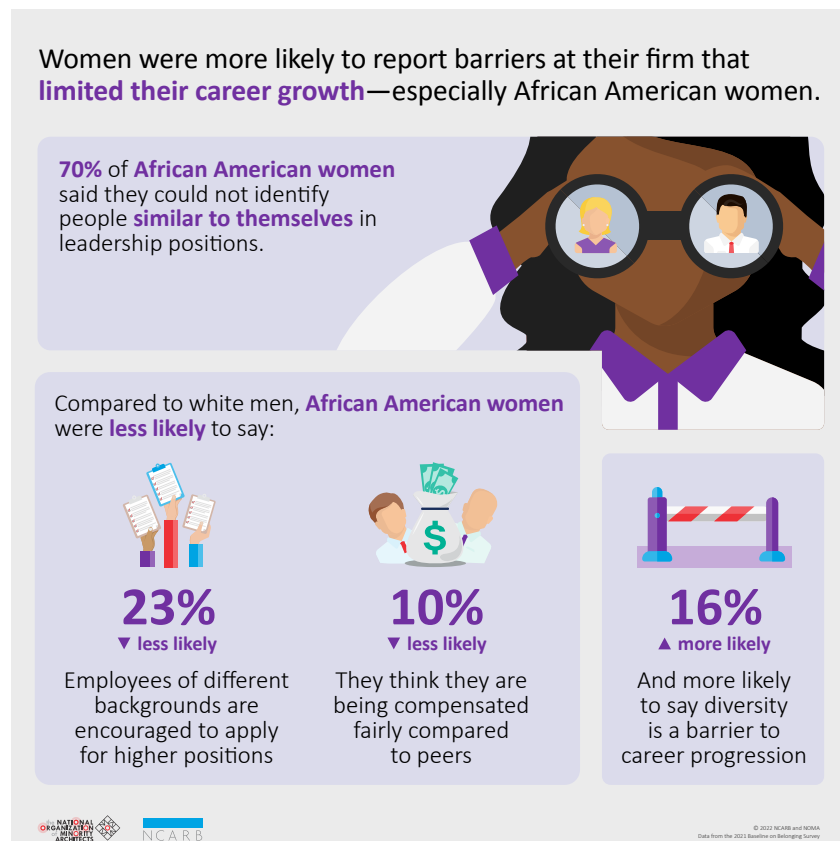


- Compared to white candidates, African Americans were less likely to:
  - Say they feel like they belong (12%)
  - Say that employees who are different are treated fairly (8%)
  - Say that their firm culture is diverse and inclusive (5%)
  - Report feeling valued by their firm (10%)
- African American candidates were more likely to consider leaving architecture due to firm culture (14%)

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## Key Findings

### Disparities Limit Career Growth for Women of Color



- Compared to white men, African American women were:
  - Less likely to say that employees of different backgrounds were encouraged to apply for higher positions (23%)
  - Less likely to indicate they could identify people similar to themselves in leadership positions (48%)
  - More likely to agree diversity is a barrier to career progression (16%)
  - Less likely to believe they were being compensated fairly compared to peers (10%)

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## Key Findings

### Firm Size Highlights Racial Disparities:



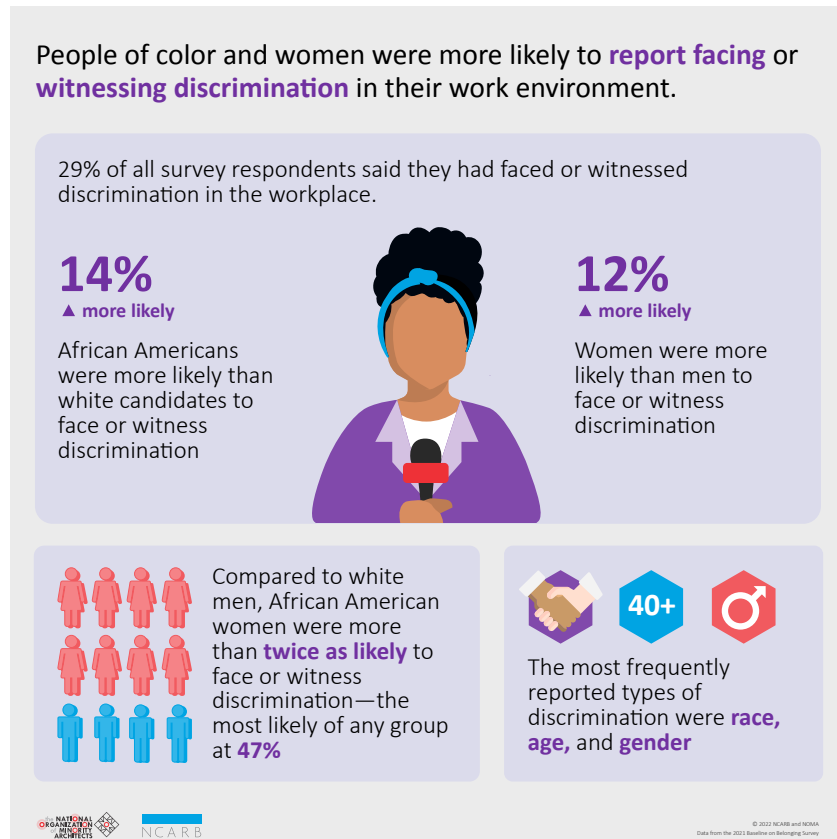
- Compared to white employees of large firms, African American employees of large firms were:
  - 12% more likely to agree diversity is a barrier to career progression at their firm
  - 13% more likely to say their firm values diversity and inclusion
  - 16% more likely to report facing or witnessing discrimination
  - 15% less likely to report that their firm treats individuals who are different from most others fairly



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## Key Findings

### People of Color and Women Report Discrimination at Higher Rates:



- 29% of all survey respondents indicated they had faced or witnessed discrimination in the workplace.
  - This includes 40% of African Americans, compared to 26% of white candidates
  - This gap grows when factoring in gender—with African American women 28 percentage points more likely than white men to indicate facing or witnessing discrimination
- Race, age, and gender discrimination were the most frequently reported types of discrimination.
  - African American women were 11 percentage points more likely to report facing or witnessing racial discrimination and age discrimination compared to white men
  - White, Asian, and African American women were 10 percentage points more likely to report facing or witnessing gender discrimination compared to white men

# Baseline on Belonging: Firm Culture & Career Development Report

## Key Findings

### White Men Receive More Benefits After Licensure:



- Compared to white men, African American women were:
  - 12% less likely to indicate they were given access to new opportunities at work
  - 16% less likely to indicate they received a promotion
  - 8% less likely to indicate they received a raise
- African American women are also 7% more likely than white men to indicate they received a team celebration after becoming licensed
- Latinas were the least likely to receive a raise after becoming licensed—16% less than white men

# Baseline on Belonging: Firm Culture & Career Development Report

## Next Steps

Findings from the *Baseline on Belonging* survey highlight the impact that firm culture can have on the career development of individuals working in architecture—especially for Black or African American respondents. Areas for ongoing research, discussion, and action within the broader architecture community include:

- How can firms better support diversity at all of levels of the company?
  - What resources or training would enable firms to create a culture that is more diverse, equitable, and inclusive?
  - How can firms better ensure that individuals of all backgrounds feel welcome?
- What aspects of firm culture are most likely to drive individuals to stop pursuing licensure and/or leave the profession?
- How can the architecture community better incentivize licensure?
  - Do firms consistently provide the same opportunities for raises, promotions, and new work opportunities for all employees?
  - How can firms support licensure when it is not necessary or beneficial to the firm’s work?
- For respondents who faced or witnessed discrimination in the workplace, what was the ultimate impact of that discrimination?
  - Does the impact of discrimination affect respondents of different demographic groups to different degrees?
- Why do large firms see larger racial disparities regarding culture and career development compared to medium-sized firms?
  - How do economic resources available at small vs. medium-sized vs. large firms impact compensation for licensure?



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