

British Columbia's
Office of the Human Rights
Commissioner

Introduction to systemic discrimination

Module 2:

What is systemic
discrimination?

Learning goals

- identify the key elements of systemic discrimination
- explain the differences and relationship between systemic and interpersonal discrimination

Reflect and record

- What does systemic discrimination mean to you?
- Can you think of an example?
- What does a supportive, inclusive community look like to you?

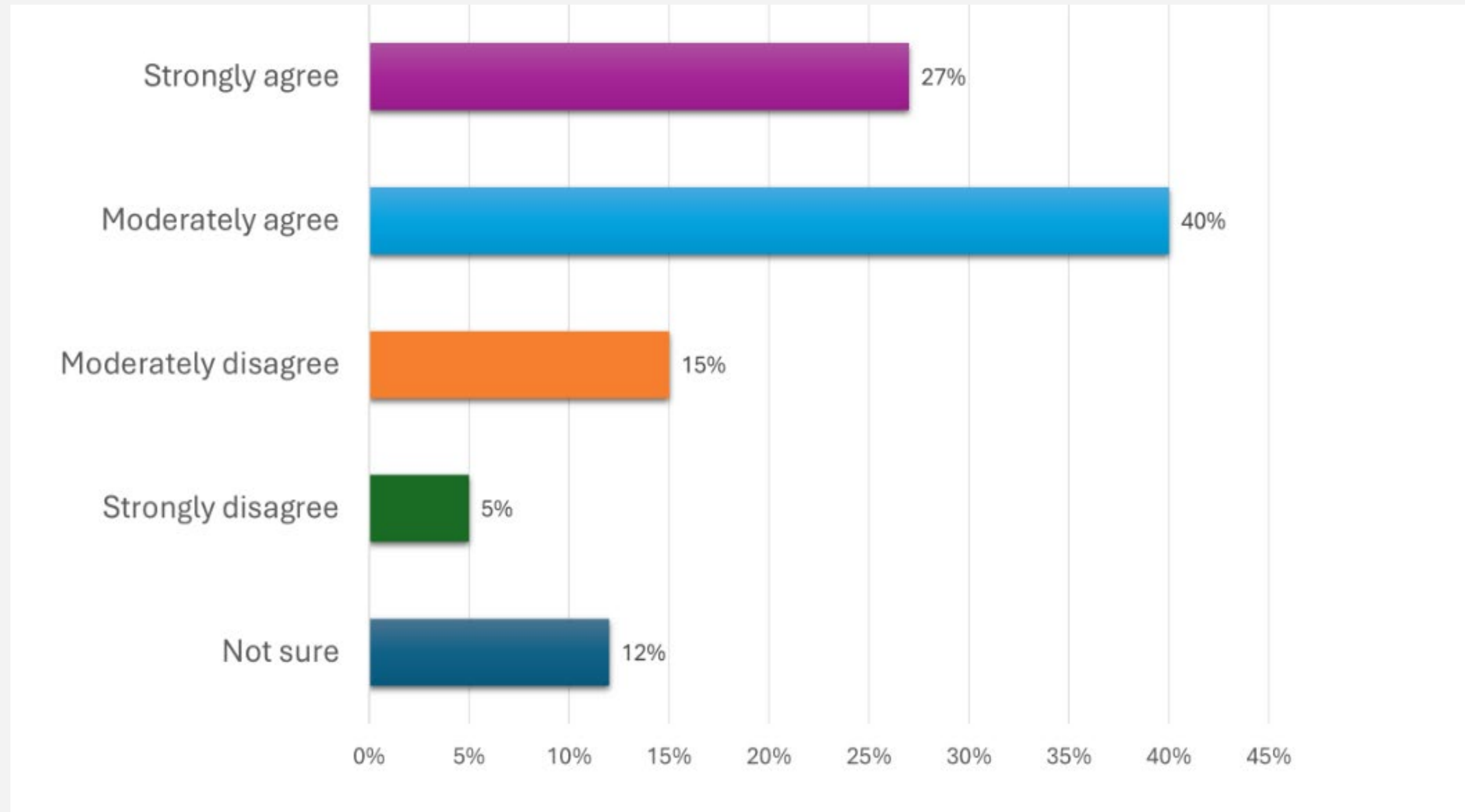


Reflection question

Is systemic discrimination a problem in
British Columbia?



Systemic discrimination is a problem in B.C.



Examples of systemic discrimination

- Compared with men, women earn 68 cents for every dollar and are more likely to work part time.
- People with disabilities are twice as likely to live in poverty as those without disabilities.
- 63% of jobseekers aged 45 and older are unemployed for more than a year, compared to 36% of people aged 18 to 24.

More examples

- 62% of 2SLGBTQIA+ students across Canada feel unsafe at school.
- 68% of children and youth in care in B.C. are Indigenous.
- At 17% and 21%, Arab and Black Muslims face the highest levels of unemployment in Canada, compared to 7% for white Christians.
- Indigenous and Black people are overrepresented in police-involved deaths in B.C., which has the highest rate of such deaths in Canada.

Mall ejection policy

- Gladys is a visibly Indigenous woman.
- She lives in one of the lowest income neighbourhoods in the city.
- She likes to go for coffee at the mall across the street from where she lives.
- Community members have reported that the mall security staff has told them they can't enter the mall, followed them or kicked them out.
- The mall has an "Ejections Policy" with a "Zero tolerance" procedure to keep suspicious people and vagrants off the site
- The ejections policy tells staff that suspicious people and vagrants must not be allowed to enter, to approach and remove vagrant or suspicious people right away if they see them and to follow "borderline" suspicious people from a close distance.
- One day, Gladys saw a security guard she recognized at the entrance to the mall.

Mall ejection policy (continued)

- The security guard demanded to know where Gladys was going
- She had been confrontational with Gladys before.
- When Gladys ignored her and kept walking, the security guard followed her.
- Feeling like a criminal, Gladys turned around and asked angrily, “What’s your problem? Why are you harassing me?”
- The security guard told Gladys she had to leave the mall.
- Gladys asked to talk to a supervisor, who came and told her that the mall’s policy required that she leave.
- Gladys was upset and said they were being racist and kicking her out because of how she looked.
- When another manager came and told Gladys she was causing a disturbance and had to leave, Gladys left the mall.

Further reflection

Think about the scenario and the other examples of systemic discrimination we have discussed.

What do they have in common?



Key indicators

- impacts certain groups more than others
- appears in patterns
- based on *attributed* rather than *actual* characteristics
- shows up in laws, policies, practices, behaviours and attitudes
- impacts include creating barriers, harms or increased disadvantages
- attributes power to one group over another
- based on historical patterns of inequality
- often appears neutral
- may be unintentional

Reflection

Using a racial slur is an example of:

- interpersonal discrimination
- systemic discrimination
- neither interpersonal nor systemic discrimination
- it depends



Systemic or interpersonal?

Are there barriers or harm based on a personal characteristic such as race, gender or ability?

Yes ↓

Did this occur in a single or a few isolated incidents?

AND

Are only one or a few members of a group impacted?

No ↓

Is there a pattern of discrimination? Has it occurred repeatedly over time?

AND

Does it show up in policies, practices or widely accepted behaviours?

Are all or most members of a group impacted?

AND

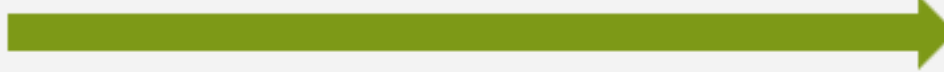
Are these groups historically in positions of lesser power?

No



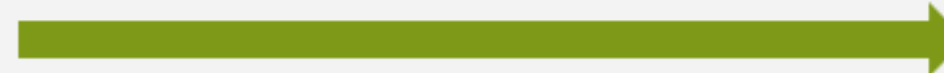
Not discrimination

Yes

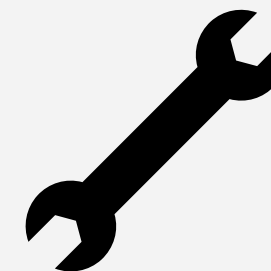


Interpersonal discrimination

Yes



Systemic discrimination





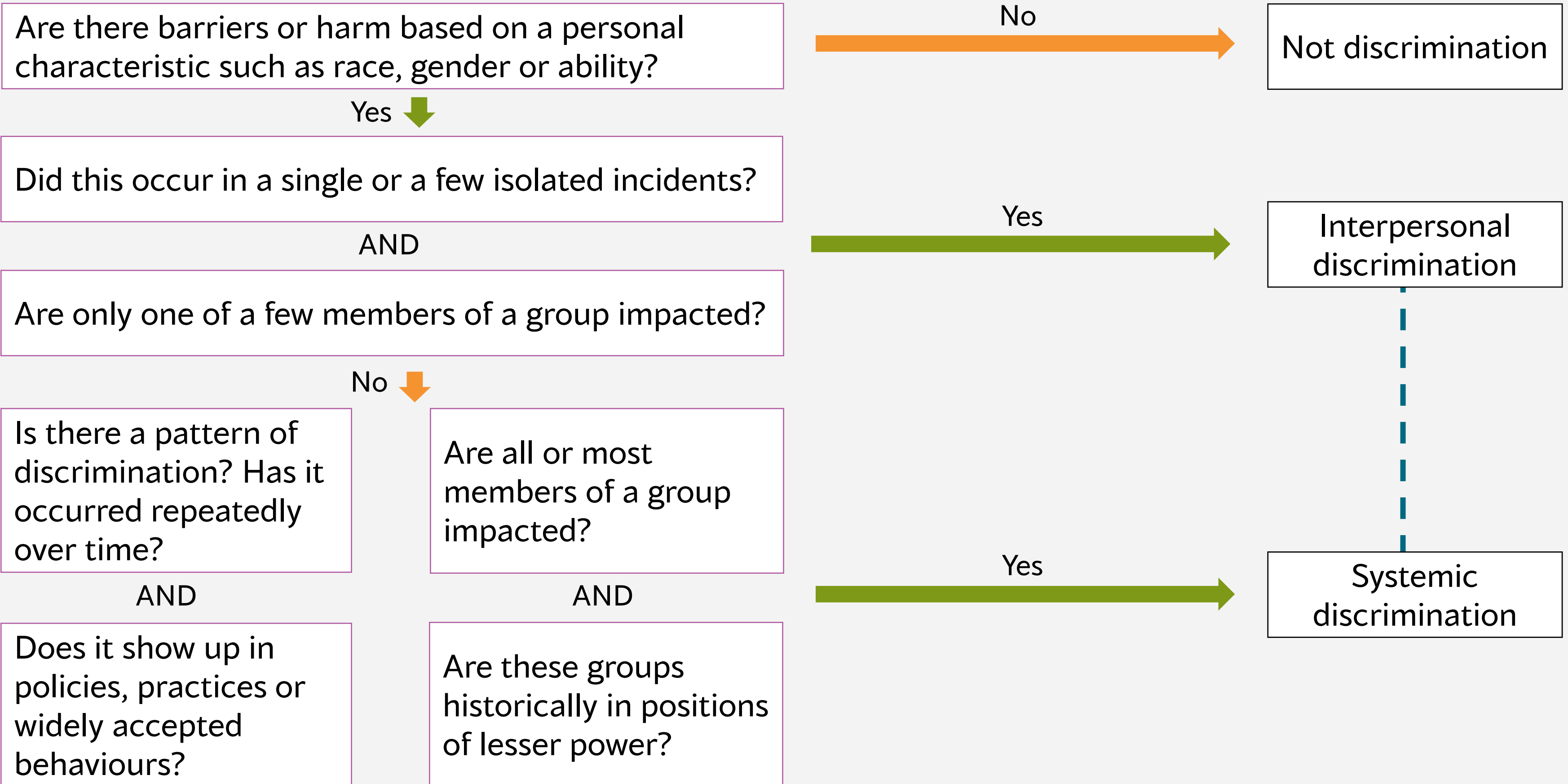
In East Vancouver,
and then my father ended up getting a job

Reflect on Lauren, Anthony and Brandon's stories.

Did they experience interpersonal
discrimination, systemic discrimination or
both?



Systemic or interpersonal?



Consider...

everything we have discussed today.

How would you explain systemic discrimination to a colleague, friend or family member?



“Systemic discrimination can be defined as patterns of behaviour, policies or practices that create and maintain the power of certain groups over others or reinforce the disadvantage of certain groups.”

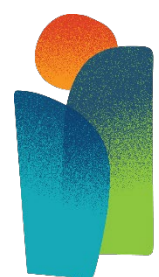
—BC’s Office of the Human Rights Commissioner



Next module

Impacts of systemic discrimination





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Thank you

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