



# The Belonging Project 2024-2025



Queen's  
UNIVERSITY

HEALTH SCIENCES

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Indigeneity,  
and Accessibility Initiatives

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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



Queen's University is situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory. To acknowledge this traditional territory is to recognize its longer history, one predating the establishment of the earliest European colonies. It is also to acknowledge this territory's significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived, and continue to live, upon it – people whose practices and spiritualities were tied to the land and continue to develop in relationship to the territory and its other inhabitants today.

The Kingston Indigenous community continues to reflect the area's Anishnaabek and Haudenosaunee roots. There is also a significant Métis community and there are First Peoples from other Nations across Turtle Island present here today.

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## ABOUT THE PROJECT



The Belonging Project is an ongoing system of monitoring that explores how students, faculty, staff, and community members experience belonging within Queen’s Health Sciences (QHS) and Kingston healthcare settings. It focuses on capturing real voices and lived experiences through a mixed-methods survey that includes both narrative and structured responses.

Launched in 2023, the project invites participants to share personal stories about when they felt they belonged or did not belong in educational and healthcare environments. These reflections highlight the role that people, programs, and places play in shaping how we connect with our surroundings and with each other.

The project is ongoing and continues to collect stories as part of a long-term commitment to understanding the culture of belonging across QHS and the wider Kingston community.

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## ABOUT THE PROJECT

### WHY Belonging Matters

Belonging is a fundamental psychological need and is associated with better mental and physical health (Allen et al., 2021; Queen's Health Sciences, 2024). A weak sense of belonging correlates with negative health outcomes and lower satisfaction with life and work (Allen et al., 2021). In education, it enhances motivation and performance (Allen et al., 2021); in healthcare, it improves employee retention and patient care (Queen's Health Sciences, 2024). In healthcare, it improves employee retention and patient care. Belonging is shaped by social identity, institutional culture, and interpersonal interactions, and is particularly important for marginalized groups who often face additional barriers to inclusion (Allen et al. 2021) (Chau, E. 2025).

### Objectives

Collect stories/testimonies to provide qualitative and quantitative insights on belonging within Queen's Health Sciences and Kingston healthcare spaces to translate into case studies.

Continually track experiences of belonging for QHS students, staff, and faculty and Kingston community members for social accountability and to inform program development.

### Participant Demographics 2024-2025 (n= 51)

- 85% identified as women
- 43% identified as racialized
- 23% identified as having a disability
- Majority were aged 18-29
- Most identified as heterosexual

### Participant Demographics Overall (n= 137)

- 75% identified as women
- 41% identified as racialized
- 17.5% identified as having a disability
- 58.7% were aged 18-29
- 76.4% were learners

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## METHODS

### Recruitment

Participants were recruited through a convenience sample via QHS emails, newsletters, EDIIA events, and posters in clinics and common areas.

### WHO can participate?

- 18+ years old
- QHS student, staff, or faculty member
- Kingston community member who accessed a health service in Kingston

[Click here](#)  
or Scan the QR code to access  
the survey



### HOW were data collected

Participants were invited to share a story of belonging or not belonging, and to reflect on what influenced that experience. A 27-question Qualtrics survey was used to collect stories, demographic details, and Likert scale responses about influences on belonging. The survey included a mix of short-answer and multiple-choice questions.

### Survey Question Highlights:

*Participants were asked to indicate the relative influence of these three areas on their story of belonging by selecting a place on a triangle.*

Programs or Services

People

Physical Places

*Please tell us a story about a time then you felt like you belonged or did not belong in one of the following spaces:*

- Queen's University Faculty of Health Sciences as a student, staff, or faculty member
- Accessing health care services in Kingston, Ontario as a community member

Data collection for the most recent cycle took place between July 2024 and March 2025, using posters, social media, emails, and in-person outreach to promote participation.

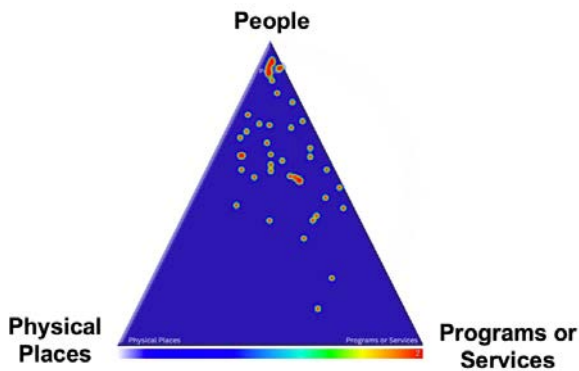
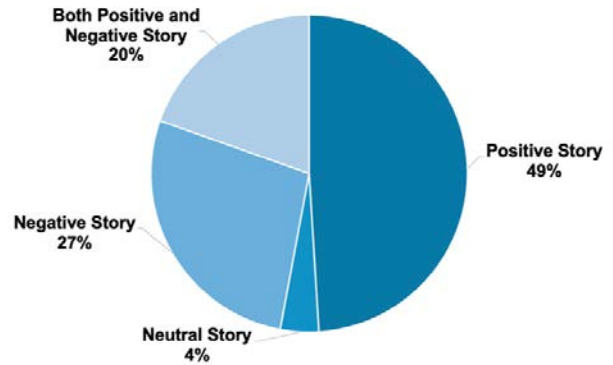
# 2024 - 2025 RESULTS

July 2024 – March 2025

Participant Story of Belonging or Not Belonging (n = 51):

- 49% of stories were positive
- 4% were neutral
- 27% were negative
- 20% were both positive and negative.

There were diverse stories captured about participant’s stories of belonging. Many shared positive, negative, neutral, or both positive and negative stories.

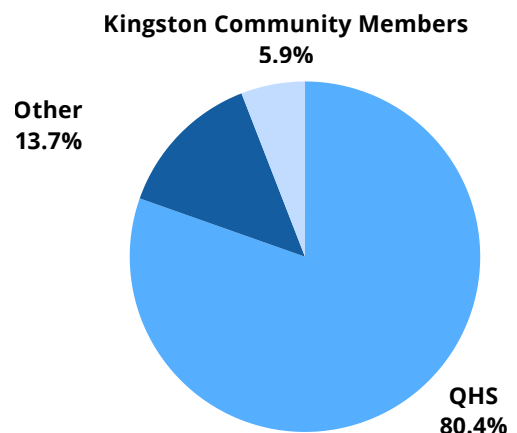


A blank triad of people, physical places, and programs or services was presented to participants, where they were asked to click a space within the triangle that best represented the relative influence of each of the three factors on their story of belonging. The triangle is shown as a “heat map” which shows more red where there are higher number of responses.

“People” were identified as factor with most relative influence. Most responses clustered around the “people” corner of the triangle. Programs and physical spaces played a role for some, but were less commonly emphasized.

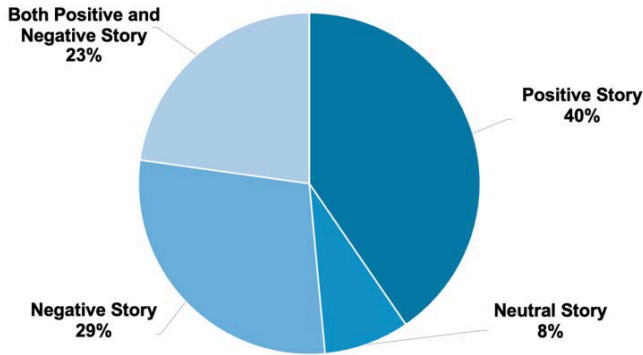
Space in which Participant Story of Belonging or not Belonging Took Place (n = 51):

- 80.4% took place at Queen’s University Faculty of Health Sciences as a learner, staff, or faculty.
- 5.9% took place accessing healthcare services in Kingston, Ontario as a community member
- 13.7% took place at another place “other”



# OVERALL RESULTS

December 2023 – March 2025



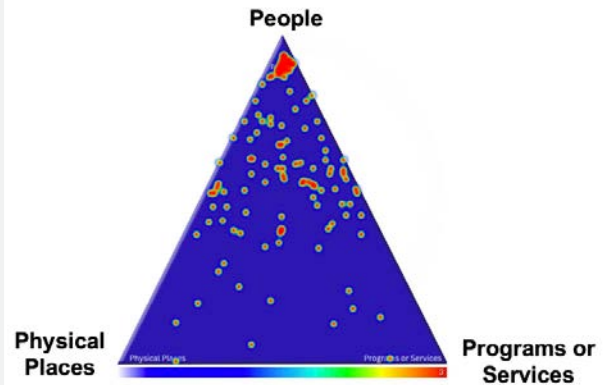
Participant Story of Belonging or Not Belonging (n = 137):

- 40% of stories were positive
- 4% were neutral
- 29% were negative
- 23% were both positive and negative.

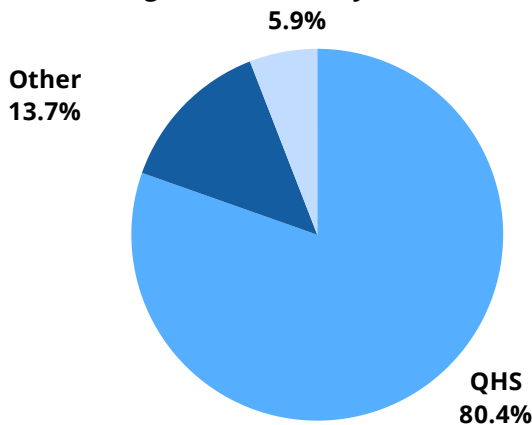
There were diverse stories captured about participant’s stories of belonging. Many shared positive, negative, neutral, or both positive and negative stories.

A blank triad of people, physical places, and programs or services was presented to participants, where they were asked to click a space within the triangle that best represented the relative influence of each of the three factors on their story of belonging. The triangle is shown as a “heat map” which shows more red where there are higher number of responses.

“People” remained the strongest relative influence across all responses to date. Many individuals mentioned that physical places and programs still impacted their experience, just to a lesser extent than people.



## Kingston Community Members



Space in which Participant Story of Belonging or not Belonging Took Place (n = 137):

- 83.2% took place at Queen’s University Faculty of Health Sciences as a learner, staff, or faculty.
- 8% took place accessing healthcare services in Kingston, Ontario as a community member
- 8.8% took place at another place “other”

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# FINDINGS

## Thematic Findings

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### Ability for Self-Expression

Participants emphasized the importance of being able to express their thoughts, identity, and culture.  
*"I feel free to be me without any sense of judgment or discomfort."*

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### Feeling Supported and Welcomed

Support from faculty, staff, and peers, as well as availability of program resources, played a crucial role.  
*"While waiting to be seen [at the ED], I was in distress... nearly every community member in the waiting room came to check in on me."*

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### Social Relationships and Community

Opportunities to connect through orientation, cultural groups, and shared experiences fostered belonging.  
*"Four Directions became a bridge... a way to connect not only with others but with my culture."*

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### Respect for EDI and People Living with Disabilities

Participants reported both positive and negative experiences related to living with disabilities and belonging at QHS or health care settings.  
*"When I reached out for support, I felt heard. My instructor worked with me to make sure I had what I needed to succeed."*

*"As long as the people you are with are supportive, you feel a sense of belonging, no matter where you are, no matter the programs/services."*

## Overall Findings

- Themes of belonging remained consistent with previous years
- Positive stories slightly increased from previous results
- New stories emphasized respect for people living with disabilities as a key theme
- The role of people e.g., peers, instructors, healthcare staff was consistently emphasized as central to belonging

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## IMPLICATIONS

- This study helped to fulfill the education, curriculum, and professional development goals of the QHS EDIIA Action Plan
- Results can influence the development of interventions and programs to improve belonging and inclusion.
- A select number of stories will also be made into case studies for curriculum within QHS

## NEXT STEPS

### Subgroup Analysis

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Completing a sub-group analysis could offer further insight. Specifically, stratifying responses to the triangle figure—people, programs or services, and physical places—by factors such as story type, gender, or education level may help reveal how different groups experience and interpret belonging.

### Further recruitment efforts

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Further recruitment efforts focus on obtaining a greater number of stories from the Kingston community and gender-diverse individuals.

### Develop case studies

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A select number of stories from the project will be adapted into case studies for use within QHS curriculum.

### Address gaps in support

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Although some positive gains were noted in stories related to people living with disabilities, findings also suggest that gaps in support remain, especially for online students, mature learners, and racialized individuals (Chau, 2025; Queen’s Health Sciences, 2024).

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## WORKS CITED

Queen's Health Sciences. (2024). The Belonging Project: 2023–2024 Results. Faculty of Health Sciences, Queen's University.

Chau, E. (2025). Belonging in healthcare and educational settings: A mixed-methods exploration. HSCI 593 Written Thesis, Queen's University.

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