

REPORT | MAY 2025

REI Workers Speak Out:

*Racial Discrimination, Inequity,
and the Fight for a Fair Workplace*

By Amy Traub and Hannah Chimowitz



Contents

About NELP	2
Acknowledgements.....	2
Executive Summary	3
Introduction	5
Black and Latinx Workers Are Underrepresented in REI's Workforce.....	7
REI Workers Report Widespread Racial Discrimination.....	8
Racial Discrimination in Discipline at REI	10
Racial Discrimination in Layoffs and Discharges at REI.....	11
Racial Discrimination in Promotion Practices at REI	12
Racial Discrimination in Hiring at REI	12
REI Workers Experience Unstable and Inequitable Scheduling Practices	13
Workers of Color Are Assigned to Work Fewer Hours Than Their White Coworkers, Despite Wanting to Work More Hours.....	14
REI Workers of Color Report Limits on Opportunity and Mobility	16
Workers Decry REI's Response to Discrimination Concerns	17
Retaliation Against Workers at REI	19
Workers Say REI's Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Strategy Fails to Promote an Equitable Workplace.....	21
Workers Say REI is Headed Off Course.....	22
Conclusion	23
Endnotes.....	24

About NELP

Founded in 1969, the National Employment Law Project (NELP) is a nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to building a just and inclusive economy where all workers have expansive rights and thrive in good jobs. Together with local, state, and national partners, NELP advances its mission through transformative legal and policy solutions, research, capacity-building, and communications. NELP is the leading national nonprofit working at the federal, state, and local levels to create a good-jobs economy. Learn more at www.nelp.org.

Acknowledgements

This report was conducted in cooperation with the REI Union. The findings and conclusions represent NELP's independent analysis.



REI Workers Speak Out: *Racial Discrimination, Inequity, and the Fight for a Fair Workplace*

By Amy Traub and Hannah Chimowitz

Executive Summary

Recreational Equipment Inc., known as REI, is an outdoor apparel and equipment retailer that promotes itself as “values-led” and committed to “becoming a fully inclusive, anti-racist, and multicultural organization.”¹ Yet workers at REI have publicly criticized the company for failing to uphold these values and perpetuating a discriminatory workplace.² To understand workers’ experiences at REI, the National Employment Law Project (NELP) surveyed 219 workers at 10 REI stores across the country and conducted interviews with current and former employees.³ Workers’ responses suggest that REI was once a more progressive employer that worked to nurture the expertise and enthusiasm of its employees. However, the company has now shifted to operate like most big box retailers where workers of color are particularly subject to inequality in scheduling, workplace discrimination, and management failure to prevent or address harassment and microaggressions.

Key Findings

- **Black and Latinx workers are severely underrepresented at REI:** Based on the company’s own data,⁴ REI’s workforce is less racially diverse than the overall national retail workforce, with an underrepresentation of Black and Latinx workers and overrepresentation of white workers.
- **REI workers report widespread discrimination:** Nearly half (47%) of REI workers in our survey report witnessing or experiencing some type of racial discrimination at work. They suggest that one reason for the company’s lack of diversity is that workers of color are disproportionately disciplined and dismissed or are pushed out by the company’s discriminatory practices.
- **REI workers say they experience inequitable scheduling:** A significantly larger percentage of workers of color (64%) report working 20 hours or less in a typical week compared to white workers (38%). Overall, REI workers of color in our survey report being scheduled to work fewer hours than their white counterparts, even though they wanted to work more hours.
- **Workers of color at REI report constraints on opportunity and mobility:** More than half of surveyed workers of color (52%)—a significantly larger proportion than surveyed white workers (31%)—would prefer to work in a different department at REI. Most of these workers would need to the Co-op to provide additional training for them to do so.

- **Even as REI publicly affirms its dedication to diversity,⁵ workers report that discrimination persists and REI's internal Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) strategy has been dramatically scaled back.** Workers explain that the Co-op has failed to make meaningful progress in changing the conditions that drive serious inequities REI has long acknowledged within its workforce.⁶
- **REI workers raise multiple concerns:** In addition to racial inequity, REI workers also report age and gender bias, discrimination against transgender workers, a lack of consistent accommodation for workers with disabilities, lagging pay, and serious health and safety concerns.
- **Workers say REI is headed off course:** Most of the REI workers surveyed see the company going in the wrong direction, with 64 percent saying it is becoming a worse place to work, and less than 4 percent reporting that it is becoming a better place to work.

Key Solutions

REI can only fully live up to its promise of “becoming a fully inclusive, anti-racist, multicultural organization”⁷ by listening to workers and taking their concerns and aspirations seriously. By forming a union, workers have already provided the company's management with an ideal forum to negotiate the future of employment at REI and ensure its co-operative values and commitment to equal opportunity are reflected in everyday workplace practices.

Why This Matters

Customers, Co-op members, and prospective employees alike are attracted to REI's avowed inclusive and anti-racist values.⁸ However, REI workers report that the company fails to live up to its commitments and has adopted business practices that prioritize cost-cutting over worker well-being and have created inequitable, unstable working conditions.

"I genuinely used to believe in REI's message and was proud to work here. Their claims of advocating for those previously cut off from the outdoors and pushing for environmental protections sound beautiful."

-A worker at REI's SoHo, NY flagship store

Introduction

REI (Recreational Equipment Inc.) is a retail company specializing in outdoor apparel and equipment. The company is organized as a consumer co-operative (co-op), meaning that customers who become co-op members get store discounts and special offers and can vote on candidates for the board of directors.⁹ REI promotes itself as an environmentally and values-led enterprise committed to anti-racism.¹⁰ Yet REI workers have publicly criticized the company for failing to uphold these values. In the early 2020's, workers began organizing unions at stores across the country, demanding that REI listen to their voices.¹¹

To better understand workers' experiences at REI, the National Employment Law Project conducted an online survey of REI workers at 10 unionized stores across the country in November and December 2024. The REI Union assisted in worker outreach in select stores. Our final survey sample includes 219 workers who had been working at 1 of the 10 REI stores for at least three months at the time of the survey.¹² Additional details about the survey sample, as well as our methods and findings, can be found in our [methodology and data supplement](#).

The survey asked about workers' experiences at REI and workplace concerns including discrimination, scheduling practices, and health and safety issues. We also conducted hour-long interviews with current and former REI workers. Quotes from interviewed workers, as well as workers' anonymous responses to open-ended questions in the survey, are included throughout this report.

Source: REI Union



“What first attracted me to work at REI was actually the expertise that the green vests offered before I went on my first backpacking trip,” says Tini Alexander, a worker at REI’s store in Bellingham, WA. **“The wealth of knowledge that was given to me really made me have a soft spot for REI because, being someone from my background—half Filipino and also half black, with a very short and a petite build—you don’t see a lot of people who look like me or move like me outdoors. I valued it a lot. I worked as a corporate accountant and then realized that I wanted to spend more time outdoors. So when I was looking for a new career, REI came first to my mind.”**¹³

Many workers were attracted to employment at REI because of its image as a values-led employer that cultivates expertise and enthusiasm about outdoor adventure and exploration. Long-time REI workers describe extensive training about outdoor equipment and morning huddles that served as opportunities to share knowledge and outdoor tips and learn about new gear. “The reason I worked there was to connect with like minds,” says Shannon Higgins, a former employee of REI’s Durham, NC store. “When it came to my peers in the workplace, that was actually extremely positive. The expectation was met overwhelmingly.”

Workers report that the workplace began to change dramatically in 2023 as REI undertook a corporate reorganization that limited the number of full-time positions and shifted toward a “lean staffing” model common among big box retailers.¹⁴ Workers explain that chronic understaffing at their stores provided much less time for discussion and learning about new products, as many workers scrambled for enough work hours. Workers describe less thorough training for more recently hired employees.

“It makes me sad that the job I was hired to do: ‘help people get outside’ doesn’t seem like my job anymore,” says a worker at REI’s store in Bellingham, WA. “I have also seen a huge drop off in employee knowledge and trainings. Newer employees are not given the same training that I was given, and current employees are given zero time to learn about new or improved products.”

Additionally, workers report that REI’s Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) strategy was dramatically scaled back at the store level.

Taken together, our findings suggest that a renewed focus on short-term profitability over investments in employee stability, training, and expertise¹⁵ not only undermines REI workers’ job quality, but disproportionately harms the workers of color REI claims it is committed to attracting and retaining.¹⁶ Far from promoting diversity and inclusion, REI exposes workers of color to the same type of scheduling, discipline, and other employment practices that perpetuate racial inequality across the retail industry.¹⁷



Black and Latinx Workers Are Underrepresented in REI's Workforce

To its credit, REI's 2023 impact report publicly recognized that "the co-op is not as racially diverse as the communities we serve."¹⁸ Yet in the years since REI announced a commitment to increasing representation from Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities in its workforce,¹⁹ the company's own data show that REI is still substantially less diverse than the national retail workforce.

Comparing REI's employee demographics to the national retail workforce reveals that white workers are overrepresented at REI, while Black and Latinx/Hispanic workers are severely underrepresented. For example, while Black workers made up 10.4 percent of the retail workforce nationally in 2023, they comprised just 3.3 percent of REI's employees. Similarly, while 20.1 percent of retail workers nationally identified as Hispanic, only 9.6 percent of REI retail workers were Hispanic. Meanwhile, REI's retail workforce was 74.5 percent white, although white workers made up just 59.5 percent of retail workers nationally.

Table 1. REI Versus National Retail Workforce by Race/Ethnicity²⁰

Race/Ethnicity	REI Retail Workforce*	U.S. Retail Trade Workforce**
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.6	0.5
Asian	5.5	4.7
Black	3.3	10.4
Hispanic	9.6	20.1
Multiracial	6.0	4.2
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.5	0.2
White	74.5	59.5

* Source: [REI 2023 Impact Report](#).
** Source: NELP analysis of IPUMS American Community Survey data, 2023.

The lack of racial and ethnic diversity is evident to REI workers: "I have noticed how the store employees, including management, are not demographically representative of the community we are in. There are very few employees who are people of color," observed an REI worker in Durham, NC.

More importantly, REI workers have crucial insights into possible reasons why the company falls so short of its diversity goals: Our survey found that many workers have witnessed or experienced racial discrimination at REI, including discriminatory disciplinary actions and dismissals, while workers of color are significantly less likely to have the opportunity to work in their preferred department or to have received the training they would need to do so.²¹

At some stores, workers point to patterns of occupational segregation that relegate workers of color to stocking and warehouse positions while white workers primarily work on the sales floor. And even as the majority of surveyed workers of all backgrounds contend with inconsistent work schedules and other

scheduling challenges, surveyed workers of color are less likely than their white counterparts to be assigned the hours they want to work by their managers.

As an REI worker from the Lincoln Park store in Illinois notes, “Even if they hire diversely, it remains a majority white workplace with significant problems retaining employees of color.”

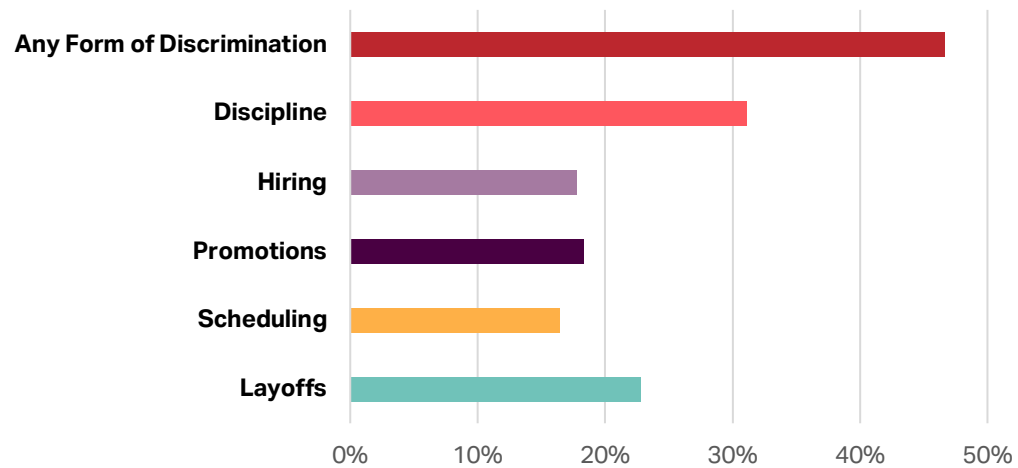
REI Workers Report Widespread Racial Discrimination

Nearly half (47%) of REI workers in our survey report that they had witnessed or experienced some type of racial discrimination at work, and 1 in 5 workers of color (20%) report personally experiencing it. The true prevalence could be even higher, as workplace discrimination can be subtle and may not always be recognized, even by the workers who are harmed.²²

Among all respondents, the most frequently reported types of racial discrimination that REI workers report include discrimination in discipline (experienced or witnessed by 31% of workers surveyed), layoffs and discharges (23%), and promotions (18%). Workers of color at REI are disproportionately affected. As shown in Figure 2, a higher percentage of workers of color report witnessing or experiencing nearly every type of discrimination at work compared to white workers.²³ For example, 42 percent of workers of color report they had experienced or witnessed racial discrimination in discipline versus 26 percent of white workers. These disparities align with broader research demonstrating that workers of color are consistently more likely to experience and identify racial discrimination on the job, including more subtle forms of discrimination.²⁴

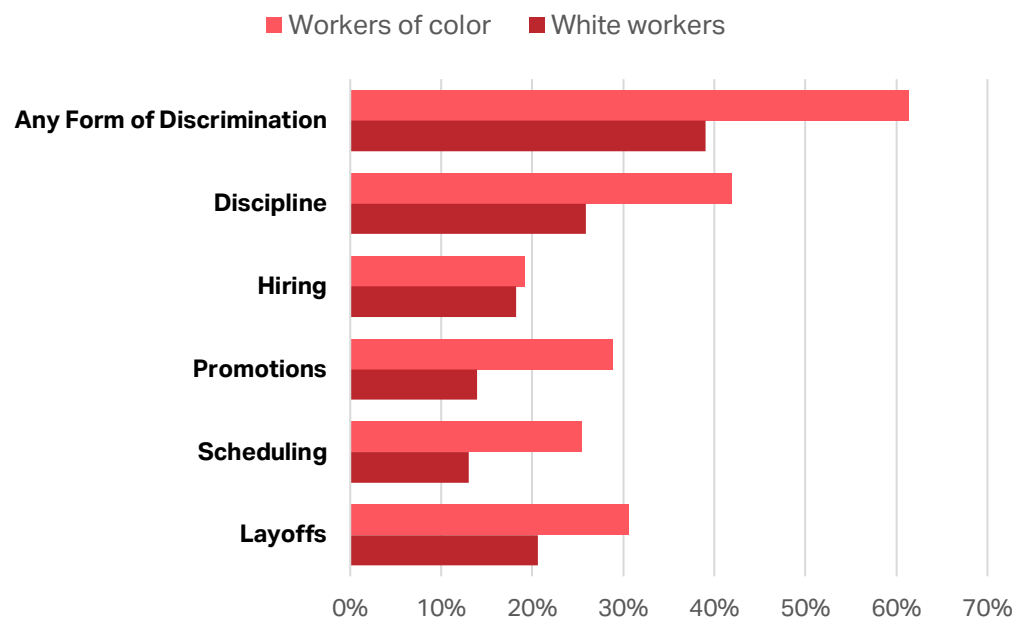


Figure 1. Percent of REI Workers Who Have Witnessed or Experienced Racial Discrimination at Work, by Type



Source: NELP survey of REI workers.

Figure 2. Percent of REI Workers of Color and White Workers Who Have Witnessed or Experienced Racial Discrimination at Work, by Type



Source: NELP survey of REI workers.



“REI may hire employees who are diverse but the way that they are treated once they are hired tells a different story. In particular, our store has hired few Black employees, and often they were relegated to stocking and warehouse work even when their white coworkers in the same cohort were trained to work into customer-facing departments on the sales floor...Our management tends to treat employees of color worse, in a way that eventually drives these employees to leave by cutting hours, not accommodating medical or religious needs, and disciplining unfairly and harshly.”

-Megan Shan, a worker at REI's Durham, NC store

Racial Discrimination in Discipline at REI

Nearly a third (31%) of all REI workers surveyed and 42 percent of workers of color report witnessing or experiencing racial discrimination in discipline on the job. Workers explain that rules are often enforced selectively and that store managers appear to use their discretion to penalize workers of color for actions that white workers are not disciplined for. Discriminatory discipline is not necessarily intentional—it may be a result of unconscious or implicit bias on the part of REI management—but the results are very real.²⁵ As one white REI worker at the SoHo, NY flagship store observes, “My coworkers of color are regularly scolded and questioned about their job performance, and incredibly micro-managed, while I do not get this treatment at all.”

Workers describe widespread disciplinary double standards and selective enforcement of rules, including rules for dress codes, clocking in on time, and tone of voice when speaking on the store radio. An REI worker in Durham, NC reports, “One coworker of color was disciplined for holding a coffee cup while talking to a customer while other white coworkers do this often without any repercussions.”

Another worker at REI's Lincoln Park, IL store connects discrimination in discipline to workers of color being fired: “I have seen BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and people of color] employees be surveilled for cell phone usage on the floor in a way that is not enforced for their white counterparts. This resulted in write-ups and performance improvement plans, and to my knowledge eventual termination.”

Racial Discrimination in Layoffs and Discharges at REI

Nearly a quarter (23%) of all REI workers surveyed and over 30 percent of workers of color report witnessing or experiencing racial discrimination in discharges or layoffs on the job. “REI hires people of color all the time and fires them at a noticeably high rate,” says an REI worker in Lincoln Park, IL. “I have seen the most employee turnover with POC [people of color] coworkers, who were all the first of my hiring cohort to be fired or let go.”

REI’s own data reinforces these concerns. The company most recently reported termination rates by employee race in 2022,²⁶ when it shared data showing that employees of color—and Black employees in particular—experienced higher moving average termination rates than white workers. Although REI did not specify whether these terminations were involuntary or voluntary, many surveyed workers noted a pattern of workers of color being disproportionately affected by layoffs and discharges, particularly amid rounds of job cuts in recent years tied to financial struggles and operational restructuring.²⁷ In addition, researchers find that unstable schedules are associated with increased worker turnover.²⁸ As the section on scheduling describes further, workers of color at REI disproportionately report experiencing this type of scheduling instability, suggesting that precarious schedules directly undermine REI’s stated goal of retaining workers of color.

Because our survey included only current REI workers, no one in our survey sample had personal experience of being discharged in a discriminatory way. However, we interviewed former REI workers, including Victor Delgado—a Latinx man and union supporter who worked at REI’s Berkeley, CA store for three years before being fired for breaking a rule that had typically gone unenforced. Victor’s experience illustrates what workers describe as the selective enforcement of rules in a way that targets workers of color and union supporters.



“It’s pretty common for people to leave the store without clocking out if they’re going to go grab a bite really quick that’s around the corner and then come back in. It’s pretty common practice. It’s unspoken, it’s unwritten. People do it. But it’s never really been enforced. So what happened to me came as a surprise. And I remember it was explained to me that they happened to stumble upon footage of me doing that. Which I know is a lie. They were obviously looking for something...They’ll pick and choose when to apply these policies and take them seriously. Depending on who it is.”

-Victor Delgado, former worker at REI’s Berkeley, CA store

Disparities in terminations reflect broader retention challenges at REI. In 2022, the company recognized that “Retaining BIPOC and Black talent remains an area for improvement,”²⁹ and our survey data suggests this remains the case. Among surveyed workers, a greater proportion of workers of color have worked at REI for less than a year compared to white workers (25% versus 18%), while a considerably smaller proportion (9% versus 26%) have worked there for more than five years. Whether driven by disproportionate layoffs, discharges, or other inequitable workplace conditions, our survey data, worker accounts, and REI’s own data point to a pattern in which workers of color experience greater instability and shorter tenure at REI.

Racial Discrimination in Promotion Practices at REI

Nearly 1 in 5 workers (18%) and over 1 in 4 workers of color (29%) in our survey report they experienced or witnessed racial discrimination in promotion practices at REI. An REI worker at the SoHo, NY flagship store observes, “I know of several coworkers [of color] who were denied promotions and were told it wasn’t the right fit right now...While on the other hand, I [have] yet to see the same issue with coworkers who are promoted who are white. It seems that issues with career advancement is regularly more difficult for people of color at REI.” Another worker at the Durham, NC store notes, “All of our managers have been white or white-passing for at least the 3.5 years I have worked at this REI (and likely longer). In the time that I have worked at REI, our management has hired or promoted dozens of “Senior Sales Specialists” and only one was a person of color.” These worker testimonies highlight concerns about racial inequity in REI’s promotion practices, suggesting that workers of color have fewer opportunities for advancement.

Racial Discrimination in Hiring at REI

Approximately 18 percent of REI workers report that they witnessed or experienced discrimination in hiring at REI. While discriminatory hiring can be difficult to detect,³⁰ some workers observe underrepresentation of employees of color and disparate patterns in hiring. One REI worker in Durham, NC notes, “Often I see people of color come into the store for job interviews, so I know that people of color are applying for the job, but they never come back with the new hire group. I know several people of color who have applied for a job at our store and not received an interview or job offer.” Others describe that while REI may hire people of color as temporary “seasonal” employees, they seem less likely than their white counterparts to be offered permanent positions with the company.

At the same time, workers in some stores describe a pattern of occupational segregation in which white workers and workers of color are funneled into different types of jobs at the company. As a SoHo, NY worker describes at their store, “The majority of REI’s non-white sales staff work in stock, a non-customer facing department, that works most in the basement and off the shopping floor. These working conditions are worse [because] there is little light, and it’s isolated from other workers.”

Another worker at REI’s Durham, NC store notices a similar dynamic: “There have been instances where my non-white coworkers were only trained in stocking while their white counterparts were cross trained in another department.” Taken together, these workers’ experiences point to troubling patterns in REI’s hiring practices, where workers of color are not only underrepresented in the company’s workforce, but may also be disproportionately placed in lower-visibility roles with limited opportunities for advancement.

REI Workers Experience Unstable and Inequitable Scheduling Practices

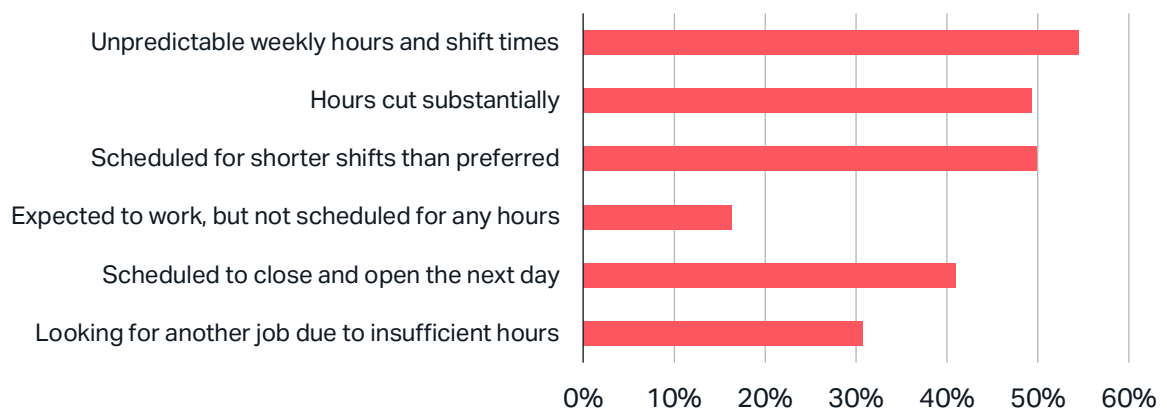
Retail workers at REI are hourly employees whose earnings depend on the number of hours they are scheduled to work. REI's recent corporate restructuring, which limited full-time positions and shifted to a leaner staffing model, left many workers scrambling for stability, predictability, and enough hours.³¹ One REI worker at the Lincoln Park, IL store describes how their schedule was changed "from 30 hours to 8 hours per week, split into two 4 hours shifts through the week."

Researchers have documented how companies' practice of inconsistent scheduling puts workers in a difficult position to plan their budget, arrange childcare, coordinate transportation, make medical appointments, attend school, or pursue additional part-time work opportunities.³² Scheduling instability also increases stress and takes a significant toll on workers' health and wellbeing.³³

"Everyone's being spread thin," explains Tini Alexander at REI's Bellingham, WA store. "People not having consistent hours or regular schedules that they can depend on...really disrupts people's lives...whether they're part-time or they're full-time."

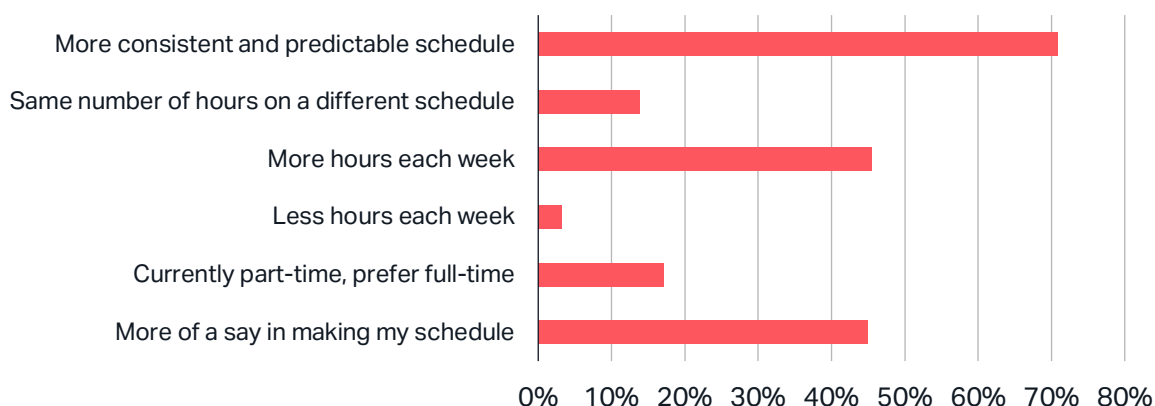
Among REI workers in our sample, more than half (54%) say their work hours and shift times changed a lot from week to week and 71 percent say they would choose a more consistent and predictable schedule if they could. In addition, 45 percent of REI workers report they want to be scheduled for additional hours. About 30 percent of workers report that the hours they were scheduled to work at REI were so inadequate that they were currently looking for another job.

Figure 3. REI Workers' Scheduling Problems



Source: NELP survey of REI workers.

Figure 4. REI Workers' Scheduling Preferences



Source: NELP survey of REI workers.

Workers also report that understaffing made it harder to do their jobs effectively. “With hours being cut [there are fewer] employees on the floor so everyone is stretched and stressed,” says an REI worker in Santa Cruz, CA. “We are asked to do more with less staff,” notes another worker in Bellingham, WA. At the same time, workers describe lagging pay rates. “I haven’t received a raise in over two years,” reports a worker at REI’s SoHo, NY flagship store. Another REI worker in Bellingham observes, “We’re getting paid the same wages as years before...it doesn’t really feel like we’re being valued.”

Lagging pay is particularly notable given the substantial skills and years of experience many REI workers bring to their jobs, as well as the reality that REI workers in our survey are employed in some of the nation’s most expensive metropolitan areas,³⁴ including New York City, Boston, MA, and Chicago, IL. One worker in Durham, NC shares, “I’m having a hard time. I am living paycheck to paycheck.”

Workers of Color Are Assigned to Work Fewer Hours Than Their White Coworkers, Despite Wanting to Work More Hours

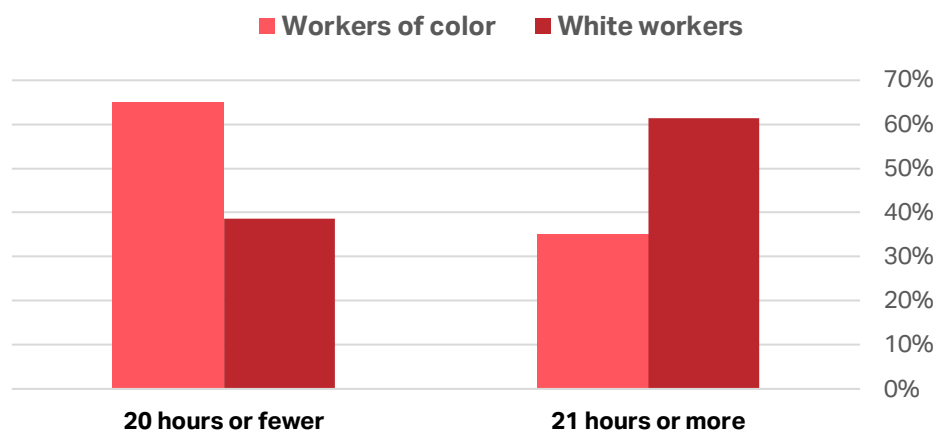
While REI workers of all backgrounds express frustration with their schedules, our survey suggests that workers of color experience the worst consequences of REI’s shift to lean staffing, including being assigned fewer work hours and experiencing more scheduling problems. Since individual managers have considerable discretion in scheduling, inequitable scheduling is a key way that implicit or explicit bias and racism play out in the workplace, with direct impacts on workers’ economic security.³⁵ Indeed, studies show that workers of color nationwide are disproportionately exposed to unstable and unpredictable work scheduling practices, exacerbating systemic racial inequities in economic security and contributing to material hardships including food insecurity, a lack of housing stability, and delays in accessing needed medical care.³⁶ By subjecting workers of color to the same type of precarious scheduling practices that perpetuate racial inequality across the retail industry, the co-op is directly undercutting its efforts to “advance racial equity at REI and beyond.”³⁷

By subjecting workers of color to the same type of precarious scheduling practices that perpetuate racial inequality across the retail industry, the co-op is directly undercutting its efforts to “advance racial equity at REI and beyond.”

Several REI workers in our survey observe clear racial disparities in scheduling at their stores. “I have noticed that I seem to get scheduled more consistently than my coworkers of color,” says a white worker at the Lincoln Park, IL store. A worker in REI’s Cleveland, OH store notices the same dynamic: “I have a coworker who is a Black man and is scheduled so infrequently despite working in a busy department...I see his white counterparts get far more shifts.”

When asked how many hours they were scheduled to work in a typical week, a significantly larger percentage of workers of color at REI (64%) report working 20 hours or less compared to white workers (38%).³⁸ Meanwhile, a larger proportion of white respondents (36%) report working 31–40 hours per week compared to workers of color (17%). A larger percentage of white respondents also report working 21–30 hours a week compared to workers of color.

Figure 5. Percent of REI Workers of Color and White Workers by Usual Hours Worked per Week



Source: NELP survey of REI workers.

Working fewer hours might not be a problem for workers who prefer a scaled-back schedule. However, surveyed REI workers of color are also more likely to want additional hours: Over half (53%) of workers of color surveyed say they want to work more hours, compared to 41 percent of white workers.

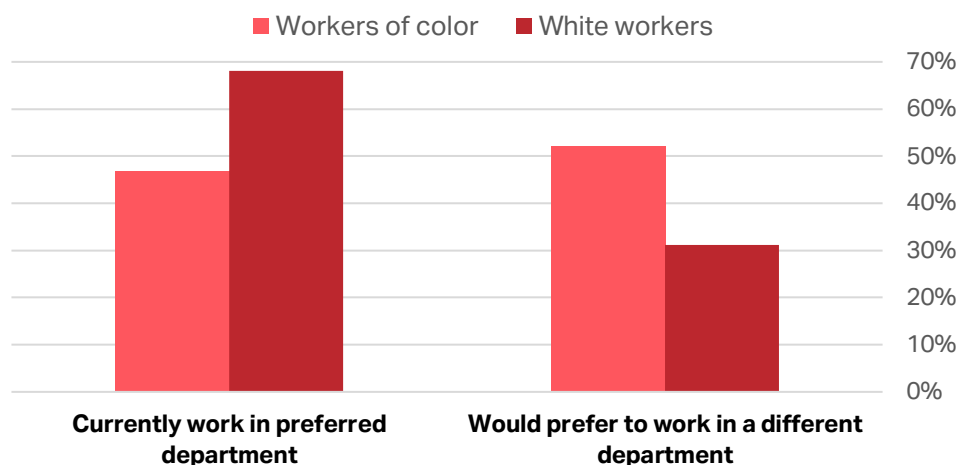
In addition to being scheduled to work fewer hours overall, a greater percentage of workers of color report scheduling problems, such as having their hours cut (55% of workers color compared to 47% of white workers), being scheduled for short shifts (53% of workers color compared to 48% of white workers), and receiving a weekly schedule with no hours assigned at all (21% of workers color compared to 14% of white workers).

“I don’t want to assume that it’s because of my ethnicity but my hours have been cut drastically,” says one Latinx REI worker, “I have gone from 30 hours to 6 hours weekly!” Taken together, our findings suggest that workers of color are likely to bring home much smaller paychecks than their white counterparts. Despite REI’s prior promise to consistently review and report on their “equitable pay practices,”³⁹ scheduling practices that leave workers of color with fewer hours contribute to the same racial inequities in take home pay that REI claims to be working to dismantle.

REI Workers of Color Report Limits on Opportunity and Mobility

Different departments within REI’s stores provide varying limitations and opportunities. Workers who are winter sports enthusiasts and experts may prefer the ski shop, while others appreciate the opportunity to focus on camping gear or to work in shipping and receiving. Certain departments may also provide more opportunities to be scheduled for additional work hours and bring in more income. Whatever their preference may be, most white REI workers in our survey (68%) report that they currently work in their preferred department. In contrast, over half of the workers of color surveyed (52%) report that they would prefer to work in a different department. In other words, workers of color are significantly less likely than white workers to do the type of work they want to be doing at REI⁴⁰—a constraint on their mobility at the company.

Figure 6. Percent of REI Workers of Color and White Workers in Preferred Department



Source: NELP survey of REI workers.

One obstacle that may block workers of color from being assigned to their preferred department is the need for additional training. The large majority (82%) of workers of color who would prefer to work in a different department say they need additional training to do so. Indeed, workers report that training overall has become less prevalent at REI following recent rounds of corporate reorganization. These findings suggest workers experience inequitable opportunities for mobility and advancement at REI, undermining the co-op’s goals to “hire, engage, advance, and retain BIPOC employees at all levels.”⁴¹

Shannon Higgins, a Black man who worked at REI's Durham, NC store, detailed REI's failure to support opportunities for training and career advancement, which ultimately pushed him to leave the company. While working for REI in Durham, Shannon applied for a position at an REI store in Oregon as he contemplated a move to that state:



"I definitely had enough experience and background in the company that it was logical for me to apply for that job. Yet I was offered [a different position] instead at less hours...What threw me off about the interaction was that before the folks in the Oregon store reached out to me, I was pulled aside by our manager [in Durham] and asked, why was I applying for a different job? Which should be somewhat obvious. And it felt predatory. What would have been nice is maybe a more structured conversation of, 'How can we train you to advance in the company?' or 'How can we make you happy within this space to retain you?' But that conversation felt more of like a hand slap...I didn't feel that support from my local store to either receive more training or more time on the job to receive relevant experience to advance. So leaving felt like the better option."

Workers Decry REI's Response to Discrimination Concerns

Amid widespread reports of discrimination in hiring, discipline, scheduling, and other aspects of work at REI, workers report that REI's response was inadequate. Fewer than 1 in 10 workers in our survey state that REI took appropriate action in response to racial and other forms of discrimination. Instead, as one worker reports, "it just wasn't something that they considered really urgent."

Frustrated by the response of direct managers, more than 1 in 10 REI workers in our survey (11%) say they reported or filed a complaint about discrimination on the job at REI. Yet escalating issues to human resources was no guarantee of a satisfactory process. Whether the concern was racial discrimination, sexual harassment, or another type of inappropriate and harmful conduct, workers report that REI's response was seldom constructive. "My report was related to sexual harassment," says an REI worker in Santa Cruz, CA. "The perpetrator received a slap on the wrist and stayed in their position of power. I was moved departments in the store."

Meanwhile, another worker reports: “My own complaint was about discrimination and harassment directed towards transgender employees. My complaint was directed at two members of [the] store management, one of whom has since left the company. The other has not been disciplined in any way and has continued to threaten and harass me.”

“[Americans with Disabilities Act] compliance has long been an issue in our store,” reports an REI worker at the SoHo, NY flagship store. “They also discriminate against employees who have disabilities. I have seen a manager telling an employee who has a visible disability (with accommodations) to stop sitting on their stool because it promotes a culture of sitting in the store.”

While our survey focused on racial inequity, workers’ concerns about discrimination—and their disappointment with REI’s handling of the serious allegations they raised—also encompass issues of sexual harassment, gender identity, and disability.

Microaggressions Are Tolerated by Management at REI

In addition to deep concerns about discrimination on the job, REI workers also report contending with microaggressions and inappropriate jokes that undermine their spirit and make them feel less valued. Yet workers report that management’s response is frequently lacking.

“Managers can still be heard telling borderline racist stories. Coworkers say racist things at work,” shares an REI worker in Cleveland, OH. At the Lincoln Park store in Illinois, a worker was told she “must continue working with a customer who addressed her as ‘little Black girl’ despite being deeply uncomfortable.” At the SoHo, NY flagship, a worker says, “I’ve experienced management calling me and a coworker by each other’s names. We’re both Latino but look nothing alike.” A Latinx worker in Berkeley, CA had the same experience and notes, “they would constantly mix up our names, call us one person and the other, and perhaps sometimes we’d even be standing right next to each other, and they’d still mix our names up. And it was an issue that lasted for a while. It was pretty persistent. And this is despite us constantly having to talk to managers to correct people.”

An REI worker in Durham, NC shares, “I gave a witness statement to Human Resources after a coworker filed a complaint about another coworker who...repeatedly made racist and sexist comments and jokes over several months. He even admitted that he was surprised he was hired at all because he had been fired from his previous employment for making racist and sexist comments! Other coworkers also complained about him to management, yet it seemed that they never disciplined him. In fact, they promoted him shortly after.”

“Managers can still be heard telling borderline racist stories. Coworkers say racist things at work.”

-A worker at REI’s Cleveland, OH store



Retaliation Against Workers at REI

In addition to seeing their concerns ignored and formal complaints unheeded, REI workers describe experiencing retaliation from REI management for speaking out about workplace conditions. A worker in REI's SoHo, NY flagship store explains: "I consistently have been intimidated and threatened by managers for speaking up about harassment, safety concerns, and prejudice in the workplace. I have had managers disproportionately surveil me while working... This surveillance constantly ramps up after I speak up in public. I have also had my hours cut without any reason given."

According to workers, much of the retaliation at REI was connected to exercising their right to form a union or take other federally protected actions such as walking out or going on strike.⁴² This type of retaliation based on exercise of workplace rights is against the law.⁴³ Acting through their union, REI workers have filed dozens of complaints of unfair labor practices against the company, detailing allegations of illegal intimidation, surveillance, and other forms of retaliation against REI workers who visibly supported their union or took other actions protected by law.⁴⁴

Workers describe the emotional toll of this retaliation in visceral terms. A worker at REI's store in Cleveland, OH says: "I am tone policed, told I'm not doing my job adequately, I'm scrutinized at a higher level than my peers who also make mistakes. I'm watched on camera and generally feel like I have eyes on me waiting for me to slip up because of my involvement in the union." A worker in Bellingham, WA describes that the retaliation they experienced included "being treated with disrespect, intimidation, and hostility [and] feeling threatened."

"REI does not want people who are pro-union at any of its stores..." explains Elio Alexander in REI's SoHo, NY flagship store. "You may be fired at any moment, you may be demoted, your hours may be cut, which is almost more demeaning than being fired... The scheduling policies are really the top thing that is weaponized."



Workers Report Serious Health and Safety Concerns

Retail work is not always considered among the most hazardous occupations, but REI workers describe numerous risks on the job. Workers regularly go up and down ladders carrying boxes, lift 60-pound e-bikes off a rack, and stand for hours. Like other retail jobs, dealing face-to-face with customers can expose workers to contagious diseases (a particular concern as stores re-opened after the COVID-19 shutdown)⁴⁵ and to workplace violence.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, workers assigned to shipping and receiving report navigating cluttered warehouse spaces (“a dangerous obstacle course” according to one worker) and breathing in dust. Ski shop workers, who are required to melt plastic and wax to repair or tune skis, are particularly concerned about the risks of inhaling chemical fumes in a poorly ventilated space.

Overall, more than half (53%) of workers surveyed are concerned about the health and safety risks of working at REI and 43 percent report experiencing an injury as a result of their work at REI. One worker describes suffering a fractured elbow, while another mentions a back injury. “They never acknowledge just how much we put our bodies on the line,” says a worker at the SoHo, NY flagship store. As a previous survey found,⁴⁷ understaffing only intensifies safety concerns and risks for retail workers.

Figure 7.

Over 1 in 2 workers are concerned about health and safety risks on the job.



Over 2 in 5 workers report they had been injured as a result of their job at REI.



Fears about health hazards increased in fall 2024, when REI abruptly took away the protective masks it had provided to ski and bicycle shop workers exposed to potential toxins from melting plastic and other chemicals used on the job. “REI has provided that PPE [personal protective equipment] at my store’s location for over 4 years,” says a worker in Maple Grove, MN. “REI is refusing to provide PPE in the form of n95 and respirators for shop mechanics. [REI management is] stating that OSHA says the work we do doesn’t require them. But at the same time both OSHA and REI recommend them.” Outraged by the removal of important protective equipment, ski shop workers at REI’s SoHo, NY flagship store walked out on strike on December 4, 2024, demanding a safer work environment. Specifically, workers called for access to evidence supporting REI’s claim that existing ventilation is sufficient, reinstatement of respirators, an independent safety assessment, proper PPE management, and a new health and safety policy based on objective data.⁴⁸ After 54 days on strike, REI agreed to meet some—but not all—of ski shop workers’ demands.⁴⁹

Workers Say REI's Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Strategy Fails to Promote an Equitable Workplace

In 2021, after the murder of George Floyd sparked a racial reckoning across the country, REI announced its commitment to “becoming a fully inclusive, anti-racist, multicultural organization.”⁵⁰ Among other actions,⁵¹ REI outlined a plan to improve its own workforce practices. According to REI's 2021 press release, the co-op's internal Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) strategy centered on more diverse hiring, publishing workforce demographic data, employee education to promote inclusion and racial equity, and recognizing “holidays, events, memorials and celebrations that represent the diversity of racial and religious heritages of our employees.”⁵² REI continues to state that it is committed to these values.

Most workers in our survey (74%) report being familiar with REDI and many express support for its goals, which are all the more urgent in a workplace where many workers report experiencing or witnessing racial discrimination. Yet just 14 percent of workers who are familiar with REDI say it has been implemented in a way that effectively promotes racial equity, diversity, and inclusion. Instead, most workers either report that REDI has not been implemented effectively (40%) or were not sure about REDI's effectiveness (44%).

Workers also explain how REI's commitment to REDI shifted over time. REDI launched with racial equity trainings and frequent employee “huddles” to discuss issues of race and inclusion, but these activities seemed to taper off after some months. Several workers express appreciation for early REDI efforts. A worker at REI's Maple Grove store reports that “I attended REDI huddles where we had in depth conversations about how safe people felt working in our store, what we could do in the store to be better, and what we should do on a product/company level to be more inclusive to customers.” At the Lincoln Park store, a worker notes, “Our store used to put on amazing REDI meetings around topics our store was interested in.”

Despite the fact that REI publicly reasserted its commitment to diversity in February 2025,⁵³ workers observe that REI's commitment to REDI as a program and its values and practices has declined. In September 2021, the Co-op appointed general counsel Wilma Wallace to be the company's first ever chief diversity and social impact officer. When Wallace left REI in November 2023, her position was eliminated. At the same time, workers assert that REI's shift to lean scheduling left little time for thoughtful meetings or discussions in stores.

REI's dwindling support for REDI was noted across the board. As a worker in REI's Castleton, IN store shares, “I continue to do this [REDI] work because I am personally passionate about it and want to educate others about these topics, but it feels like it is not very well supported in any meaningful way...I've described this effort as ‘screaming into the void’ as our staff does not have much time during their shifts to review this material or engage with it in any capacity.” Another REI worker in Cleveland describes, “it feels like they have abandoned it.”

At REI's Bellingham store, Tini Alexander expresses disappointment and concern about the decline of REI's racial equity efforts: “To see how that first started and then the follow through, it kind of feels a little gimmicky and kind of hurts part of me, because I was just thinking, ‘wow, I felt like that's kind of like a play on my background for profits,’ not necessarily [REI] trying to really connect people to that greater group and bring them outdoors.”

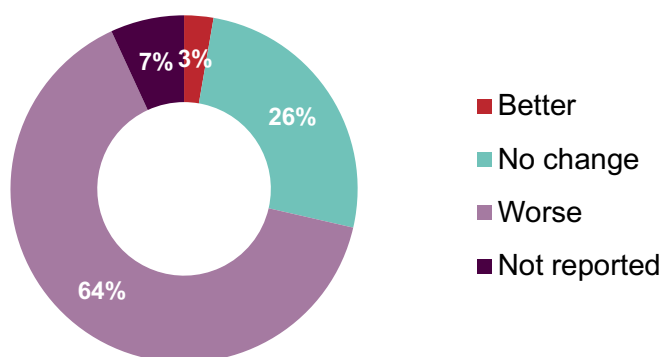
In 2022, when REI committed to a range of additional internal education and learning efforts under the umbrella of REDI, the co-op stated that the goal was “ensuring our workplace ecosystem understands individual and systemic bias toward people who identify as part of the BIPOC community and intentionally works to address it.”⁵⁴ If these efforts had been sustained and fully resourced, REI workers might not report experiencing such a discriminatory workplace today.

Workers Say REI is Headed Off Course

“REI seems to have lost its way and their moral compass,” reflects a worker in Cleveland, OH. “I was excited to work for a company I loved. Now I don’t love it. Their operation feels incredibly hypocritical,” says a worker in Maple Grove, MN. “The company feels more and more corporate every day,” laments a worker in Santa Cruz, CA.

Like the workers quoted above, most of the REI workers surveyed sense the company is going in the wrong direction as an employer: 64 percent report it is becoming a worse place to work. Less than 4 percent of workers surveyed report that REI is becoming a better place to work.

Figure 8. REI Workers’ Perceptions of Whether REI is Becoming a Better or Worse Place to Work



Source: NELP survey of REI workers.

In addition to concerns about discrimination, workers point to REI’s shift toward lean staffing and reduced work hours as a major reason they believe the co-op is becoming a worse place to work. As noted above, 54 percent of REI workers report that their hours and shift times change substantially from week to week, and more than 70 percent want a more consistent and predictable schedule. More than half of workers of color surveyed report that their work hours have been cut substantially and express a desire for more hours.

REI’s turn toward less staffing and minimal worker training not only harms REI workers but, as survey respondents report, also downgrades the experience of customers and co-op members. Workers like [Elio Alexander](#) describe REI’s recent pattern of hiring less experienced staff and providing minimal training, even for positions where experience and know-how are important to ensure customer safety. Workers also describe a lack of guidance about new products for employees.

Customers who seek out REI specifically for the expertise of the “green vests,” as REI workers are known, may be disappointed—unless workers take it upon themselves to build and maintain their knowledge without being compensated for it. As an REI worker in Bellingham, WA wonders, “If we are supposed to be product experts why do we have to spend hours of our own time educating ourselves?” Survey respondents raised concerns that customers seeking advice about outdoor gear from workers who don’t have the training to provide it could even be at risk.

Elio Alexander, who has been working in REI’s SoHo, NY flagship store for more than two years, describes how REI hired them and provided minimal training, even as the Co-op put them in a position that required knowledge and expertise to keep customers safe:

“What I have experienced is expertise being valued way less as a factor in hiring. I work in the bike and ski sales floor department. I’ve downhill skied twice in my life, and I was 13...I am not a downhill skier. I got less than one day of training...I’ve seen people get hurt on skis. And so, I didn’t feel comfortable outfitting people for a whole year. And still, when people start asking specific questions I’m like: ‘I don’t ski, so I will find you a coworker who does if there’s one on the floor.’ And often that’s not the case. I am...being placed in this situation and there are hundreds of things REI could do to mitigate that. REI could have given me training; I could have shadowed [a more experienced worker] for longer. But they don’t care about that. What they want is just people—they’re like pumping anybody into the store that is applying. And it feels like from my case that they don’t even care if there’s [expertise].”

Conclusion

Our findings highlight a stark disconnect between REI’s stated commitment to advancing racial equity and the lived experiences of workers. Surveyed REI workers describe widespread racial discrimination at the co-op alongside a shift to a corporate model that prioritizes cost-cutting over worker well-being. This shift—marked by sharp cuts to hours, reduced training, and a disregard for worker expertise—undermines the



co-operative principles REI was built on and contributes to an environment where workers of color disproportionately report experiencing instability, precarity, and discriminatory treatment.

Despite REI's pledge to become "a fully inclusive, anti-racist, and multicultural organization,"⁵⁵ workers describe a range of racially discriminatory practices, including selective discipline and inequitable scheduling, as well as a retreat from REI's Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) initiatives that aimed to improve internal workforce practices. Our findings suggest that REI is failing to foster the kind of supportive, equitable workplace it claims to prioritize, undermining its ability to build an outdoor culture and industry that are welcoming to and representative of all people.

The gap between REI's public commitments and the conditions described by workers raises urgent questions about the company's current direction. The workers we surveyed say REI must return to its principles as a co-operative, valuing and trusting the knowledge and know-how of its expert staff and investing in them to maintain it. To build a truly inclusive outdoor culture, the co-op must build a truly equitable workplace—one that "actively works to eliminate policies and beliefs that lead to racial inequities in the co-op, the outdoor industry and society."⁵⁶

Workers have fought for and won a union at 11 REI stores to hold REI accountable to its values, providing the co-op with a powerful opportunity to correct its course. Unions can play a critical role in promoting workplaces free of discrimination based on race.⁵⁷ Union contracts can establish clear, enforceable protections against the kinds of practices REI workers report, ensuring fair, equitable procedures for hiring, training, scheduling, discipline, and dismissal.⁵⁸ A union contract can also provide procedures for addressing grievances,⁵⁹ clear and fair processes for requesting and receiving the training needed to change departments,⁶⁰ systems for more diverse hiring,⁶¹ and provisions that address health and safety risks.⁶²

By negotiating fairly with workers, REI could take a critical step toward building a workplace that reflects the Co-op's values and fulfilling its promise of becoming an inclusive, anti-racist organization. To truly uphold its stated values, REI must listen to workers, honor its co-operative roots, and invest in creating a workplace that reflects the inclusive outdoor culture it aims to champion.

Endnotes

¹ "REI Co-op Impact Report 2023," REI Co-op, accessed January 17, 2025, <https://www.rei.com/impact>.

² "REI Union's 10 Essentials for a Better Co-op," REI Union, accessed March 3, 2025, <https://www.ourrei.com/our-10-essentials>.

³ See our [Methodology and Data supplement](#) for more details.

⁴ REI Co-op, "REI Co-op Impact Report 2023."

⁵ Eric Artz and Mary Beth Laughton, "Reaffirming Co-op Values," REI Co-op, February 12, 2025, <https://www.rei.com/newsroom/article/reaffirming-co-op-values>.

⁶ "2022 Impact Report," REI Co-op, accessed March 3, 2025, https://www.rei.com/dam/18553157_impact-report-2022.pdf.

⁷ "Careers," REI Co-op, accessed March 3, 2025, <https://www.rei.jobs/careers-home>.

⁸ REI Co-op, "REI Co-op Impact Report 2023."

⁹ "REI Co-op Membership," REI Co-op, accessed January 17, 2025, <https://www.rei.com/membership>.

¹⁰ REI Co-op, "REI Co-op Impact Report 2023."

¹¹ "We Are the REI Union," REI Union, accessed January 17, 2025, <https://www.ourrei.com/>.

- ¹² Although turnover rates in the retail industry are high, resulting in ongoing fluctuations in the total number of workers across stores, we estimate that 45 percent of workers at the 10 surveyed stores responded to our survey. Regarding high retail turnover rates, see David Fuller et al., “How retailers can attract and retain frontline talent amid the Great Attrition,” McKinsey & Company, August 17, 2022, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/how-retailers-can-attract-and-retain-frontline-talent-amid-the-great-attrition>, and Bureau of Labor Statistics, Job Openings and Labor Turnover – January 2025, available at: <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/jolts.pdf>.
- ¹³ Worker quotes have been edited for readability.
- ¹⁴ Marshall Fisher, “Retail Rage,” Harvard Business Review, January 6, 2012, <https://hbr.org/2012/01/retail-rage>; Joan C. Williams et al., *Stable Scheduling Increases Productivity and Sales: The Stable Scheduling Study* (San Francisco: Center for WorkLife Law, 2018), <https://worklifelaw.org/publications/Stable-Scheduling-Study-Report.pdf>.
- ¹⁵ For media coverage of REI’s corporate restructuring see: Victor Whitman, “REI reports another year of losses, pledges efficiency and new stores,” *Seattle Times*, April 30, 2024; “REI eliminating about 275 jobs while restructuring store roles,” *Bicycle Retailer*, October 13, 2023, <https://www.bicycleretailer.com/industry-news/2023/10/13/rei-eliminating-about-275-jobs-while-restructuring-store-roles>; Renata Gerlado, “REI cuts 275 retail jobs in bid to restructure brick-and-mortar stores,” *Seattle Times*, October 30, 2023, <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/rei-cut-275-retail-jobs-in-bid-to-restructure-brick-and-mortar-stores/>.
- ¹⁶ “REI Co-op Commitments in the Fight for Racial Equity,” REI Co-op, July 15, 2020, <https://www.rei.com/newsroom/article/rei-co-op-commitments-in-the-fight-for-racial-equity>.
- ¹⁷ Catherine Ruetschlin and Dedrick Asante-Muhammad, *The Retail Race Divide: How the Retail Industry Is Perpetuating Racial Inequality in the 21st Century* (NAACP and Demos, 2015), <https://www.demos.org/sites/default/files/publications/The%20Retail%20Race%20Divide%20Report.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ REI Co-op, “2022 Impact Report.”
- ¹⁹ REI Co-op, “REI Co-op Commitments in the Fight for Racial Equity.”
- ²⁰ We used IPUMS American Community Survey (ACS) data for 2023, restricting our sample to employed individuals who were classified as W2 employees working in the Retail Trade major industry. Following the approach used in REI’s impact report, we treated Hispanic workers as a separate racial category. ACS estimates for other racial groups represent the percentage of the 2023 retail workforce identifying as non-Hispanic within each respective category. In addition to the categories included in Table 1, which were limited to those that corresponded with categories that REI reported on in their 2023 Impact Report, 0.4% of the national retail workforce are estimated to identify as another race based on ACS data.
- ²¹ We ran a logistic regression to analyze the relationship between worker race (as a binary variable) and working in one’s preferred department. We found that workers of color were over two times more likely than white workers to report that they would prefer to work in a different department (OR = 2.43, 95% CI [1.37, 4.36], $p = .003$).
- ²² Kristen P. Jones et al., “Subtle Discrimination in the Workplace: A Vicious Cycle,” *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 10, no. 1 (2017): 51–76. <https://doi.org/10.1017/iop.2016.91>.
- ²³ In our analyses of survey responses by race, we report results for REI workers of color ($n = 75$) and white workers ($n = 141$) who responded to our survey. We recognize aggregating diverse racial groups can mask important differences; however, small sample sizes limit our ability to conduct rigorous analyses of each racial and ethnic group separately. This approach, while a limitation, ensures more statistically meaningful findings with the available data.
- ²⁴ Elizabeth Hirsch and Christopher J. Lyons, “Perceiving Discrimination on the Job: Legal Consciousness, Workplace Context, and the Construction of Race Discrimination,” *Law & Society Review* 44, no. 2 (2010): 269–298. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5893.2010.00403.x>; Mallory A. McCord, “A Meta-Analysis of Sex and Race Differences in Perceived Workplace Mistreatment,” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 103, no. 2 (2018): 137–163.
- ²⁵ Michael Blanding, “Women Receive Harsher Punishment at Work Than Men,” *Working Knowledge*, December 17, 2018, <https://www.library.hbs.edu/working-knowledge/women-receive-harsher-punishment-at-work-than-men>; Sheryl L. Walter et al., “The Race Discipline Gap: A Cautionary Note on Archival Measures of Behavioral Misconduct,” *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 166 (2021): 166–178, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2020.03.010>; Costas Cavounidis, Kevin Lang, and Russell Weinstein, “The Boss is Watching: How Monitoring Decisions Hurt Black Workers,” *The Economic Journal* 134, no. 658 (2024): 485–514, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ej/uead079>.
- ²⁶ REI Co-op, “2022 Impact Report.”

- ²⁷ Victor Whitman, "Seattle-founded REI struggles to adapt to changing retail. What's next?" *Seattle Times*, May 3, 2024, <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/seattle-founded-rei-struggles-to-adapt-to-changing-retail-whats-next/>; Victor Whitman, "REI reports another year of losses, pledges efficiency and new stores"; Renata Gerlado, "REI cuts 275 retail jobs in bid to restructure brick-and-mortar stores"; Care Salpini, "REI shuts experiences business, eliminating hundreds of jobs," *Retail Dive*, January 9, 2025, <https://www.retaildive.com/news/rei-shutters-experiences-business-cuts-hundreds-jobs-layoffs/736901/>.
- ²⁸ Choper, Joshua, Daniel Schneider, and Kristen Harknett, "Uncertain Time: Precarious Schedules and Job Turnover in the US Service Sector," *ILR Review* 75, no. 5 (2022): 1099–1132, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00197939211048484>.
- ²⁹ REI Co-op, "2022 Impact Report."
- ³⁰ Devah Pager and Bruce Western, "Identifying Discrimination at Work: The Use of Field Experiments," *Journal of Social Issues* 68, no. 2 (2012): 221–237.
- ³¹ Matt Dougherty, "REI Union Demands Company Settle Contract with Every Unionized Location by End of Year," *Ithaca*, June 30, 2024, https://www.ithaca.com/news/ithaca/rei-union-demands-company-settle-contract-with-every-unionized-location-by-end-of-year/article_94ea6796-3737-11ef-ba0d-4fb30d7c80d8.html; Melissa Daniels, "'Living paycheck to paycheck': Confessions of an REI associate considering unionization," *ModernRetail*, March 5, 2024, <https://www.modernretail.co/operations/living-paycheck-to-paycheck-confessions-of-an-rei-associate-considering-unionization/>; REI Union (@reiunion), "IMPORTANT REI CO-OP UPDATE," Instagram, August 9, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/reiunion/p/C-dHIEju5TB/?img_index=3.
- ³² *Collateral Damage: Scheduling Challenges for Workers in Low-Paid Jobs and Their Consequences* (Washington, D.C.: National Women's Law Center, 2023), <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Collateral-Damage-9.14.23v1.pdf>.
- ³³ Daniel Schneider, Kristen Harknett, and Megan Collins, "Consequences of Routine Work Schedule Instability for Worker Health and Wellbeing," *Shift*, February 1, 2019, <https://shift.hks.harvard.edu/consequences-of-routine-work-schedule-instability-for-worker-health-and-wellbeing/>.
- ³⁴ "Most Expensive Places to Live in the U.S. in 2024-2025," *U.S. News*, <https://realestate.usnews.com/places/rankings/most-expensive-places-to-live>.
- ³⁵ Cesar Perez and Alix Gould-Werth, "How U.S. workers' just-in-time schedules perpetuate racial and ethnic inequality," *Washington Center for Equitable Growth*, October 16, 2019, <https://equitablegrowth.org/how-u-s-workers-just-in-time-schedules-perpetuate-racial-and-ethnic-inequality/>.
- ³⁶ Cesar Perez and Alix Gould-Werth, "How U.S. workers' just-in-time schedules perpetuate racial and ethnic inequality"; Daniel Schneider and Kristen Harknett, "It's About Time: How Work Schedule Instability Matters for Workers, Families, and Racial Inequality," *Shift*, October 16, 2019, <https://shift.hks.harvard.edu/its-about-time-how-work-schedule-instability-matters-for-workers-families-and-racial-inequality/>.
- ³⁷ "REI Co-op update on our racial equity commitments," REI Co-op, April 14, 2021, <https://www.rei.com/newsroom/article/update-on-rei-racial-equity-commitments>.
- ³⁸ We ran a logistic regression to analyze the relationship between worker race (as a binary variable) and working 20 hours or less per week. We found workers of color were nearly three times more likely to work 20 or fewer hours per week than were white workers (OR = 2.94, 95% CI [1.65, 5.34], $p < .001$).
- ³⁹ Cesar Perez and Alix Gould-Werth, "How U.S. workers' just-in-time schedules perpetuate racial and ethnic inequality"; Daniel Schneider and Kristen Harknett, "It's About Time."
- ⁴⁰ We ran a logistic regression to analyze the relationship between worker race (as a binary variable) and working in one's preferred department (OR = 2.43, 95% CI [1.37, 4.36], $p = .003$).
- ⁴¹ "REI Co-op Update On Our Racial Equity Commitments," REI Co-op, December 9, 2020, <https://www.rei.com/newsroom/article/rei-racial-equity-commitments-update>.
- ⁴² "Employee Rights," National Labor Relations Board, accessed January 17, 2025, <https://www.nlr.gov/about-nlr/rights-we-protect/your-rights/employee-rights>.
- ⁴³ "Retaliation Rights," U.S. Department of Labor, accessed January 8, 2025, <https://www.worker.gov/retaliation-rights/>.
- ⁴⁴ For details on the REI Union's unfair labor practice charges against REI, search Recreational Equipment, Inc. in the [National Labor Relations Board database](#).
- ⁴⁵ Sapna Maheshwari, "REI Faces Staff Backlash Over Response to Covid-19 Cases," *New York Times*, July 19, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/19/business/coronavirus-rei-staff.html>.

- ⁴⁶ Suzanne Blake, “Store Employees Are Facing an Increase in Violence,” *Newsweek*, October 10, 2023, <https://www.newsweek.com/retailer-crime-theft-rising-violence-1833557>.
- ⁴⁷ *The State of U.S. Retail Worker Safety* (Chicago: Motorola Solutions, 2024), <https://www.motorolasolutions.com/content/dam/msi/docs/about-us/2024-us-retail-worker-safety-report.pdf>.
- ⁴⁸ “Send An Email: REI, Protect SoHo Ski Shop Workers!” REI Union, 2025, https://actionnetwork.org/letters/rei-soho-ski-shop-letter?link_id=10&can_id=1b7947c6f82701013810b3be4fbc082b&source=email-union-matters-january-10-2025&email_referrer=email_2584568&email_subject=union-matters-january-17-2025.
- ⁴⁹ Kiera Feldman, “REI Sells the Great Outdoors While Workers Breathe Chemicals in a Windowless Basement,” *The Nation*, January 28, 2025, <https://www.thenation.com/article/economy/rei-SoHo-strike/>.
- ⁵⁰ “REI Co-op announces commitment to becoming a fully inclusive, anti-racist, multicultural organization,” REI Co-op, October 7, 2021, <https://www.rei.com/newsroom/article/rei-antiracist-multicultural-fully-inclusive-commitment>.
- ⁵¹ “REI Co-op: Update on racial equity commitments,” REI Co-op, October 7, 2021, <https://www.rei.com/newsroom/article/rei-october-2021-racial-equity-commitments-update>.
- ⁵² REI Co-op, “REI Co-op: Update on racial equity commitments.”
- ⁵³ Eric Artz and Mary Beth Laughton, “Reaffirming Co-op Values.”
- ⁵⁴ REI Co-op, “2022 Impact Report.”
- ⁵⁵ REI Co-op, “Careers”.
- ⁵⁶ REI Co-op, “REI Co-op announces commitment to becoming a fully inclusive, anti-racist, multicultural organization.”
- ⁵⁷ Josh Bivens et al., *Unions Promote Racial Equity*, Fact Sheet (Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, 2023), <https://www.epi.org/publication/unions-promote-racial-equity/>.
- ⁵⁸ Josh Bivens et al., *Unions Promote Racial Equity; Unions Help Reduce Disparities and Strengthen Our Democracy*, Fact Sheet (Washington, D.C.: Economic Policy Institute, 2021), <https://files.epi.org/uploads/226030.pdf>.
- ⁵⁹ “Practical Guidance: Labor Relations, Clause Description - Grievance Procedures,” Bloomberg Law, accessed January 17, 2025, <https://www.bloomberglaw.com/external/document/X6SFRKGG000000/labor-relations-clause-description-grievance-procedures>.
- ⁶⁰ Ken Green, “Unions Fight for That: Career Training Opportunities for Workers,” *UnionTrack Blog*, January 21, 2022, <https://uniontrack.com/blog/career-training-opportunities>.
- ⁶¹ Ken Green, “How Collective Bargaining Agreements Can Encourage Workplace Diversity,” *UnionTrack Blog*, March 9, 2020, <https://uniontrack.com/blog/workplace-diversity>.
- ⁶² Adam Dean, Jamie McMallum, and Atheendar Venkataramani, *Unions in the United States Improve Worker Safety and Lower Health Inequality* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Center for Equitable Growth, 2022), <https://equitablegrowth.org/research-paper/unions-in-the-united-states-improve-worker-safety-and-lower-health-inequality/>.

© 2025 National Employment Law Project. This report is covered by the Creative Commons “Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs” license fee (see <http://creativecommons.org/licenses>). For further inquiries, please contact NELP (nelp@nelp.org).