Barriers at Work:

Experiences of Racism and Discrimination Faced by Racialized Newcomer Women in Employment

Despite years of policies and strategies designed to help, many newcomers still face persistent disadvantages in the workforce. Racialized newcomer women, with their rich and diverse cultural and social identities, are especially impacted, contorting a range of challenges that hinder their ability to break through and succeed in the Canadian labour market

SURVEYS

FOCUS GROUPS

Drawing on data from surveys and focus groups with racialized newcomer women participating in the **Career Pathways for Racialized Newcomer Women Pilot Project**, this infographic highlights the key findings of 2,287 program participants with racism and discrimination during their job search and in the workplace.

Quantitative survey questions were related to the barriers to their skills assessment and career experiences, their perceptions of racism and discrimination in the workplace, and their experiences with employment supports, as well as their socio-demographic characteristics.

Qualitative focus group discussions were conducted with 27 participants to explore their experiences with racism and discrimination in the workplace, and their views on how to improve employment supports.

The CPRNW program participants are relatively new arrivals to Canada who are highly educated and bring substantial work experience from outside of Canada. There is great diversity in ethnicity, race, and culture among participants

RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION DURING JOB SEARCH

Participants reported several challenges they encountered in their job search in Canada. These factors often contribute to discrimination in the job market [1]

- lack of professional networks
- non-recognition of foreign credentials and experience
- limited job search skills
- lack of affordable childcare
- systemic obstacles
- language barriers

[1] Hyungsoo, D., Jung, J., Kwon, H. and Shungin, B. (2020) Employment Barriers for Racialized Immigrants: A Review of Research and Policy Initiatives in Canada. Research and Data in Ontario (RADAR) Working Paper #1. Retrieved from https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/diversity/research/Employment_Barriers_for_Racialized_Immigrants_Review_of_Research_and_Policy_Initiatives_in_Canada_RADAR_Working_Paper_1.pdf; Hudon, T. (2020). Racialized Immigrant Women in Canada: Barriers to Employment. Canadian Women's Foundation. Retrieved from https://canadianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Racialized-Immigrant-Women-in-Canada-Barriers-to-Employment-Feb2020.pdf; Mahboubi, N. (2019).

Among those reporting difficulties during their job search, **14 percent** identified racial discrimination as a barrier to securing employment

23 percent indicated that their work experience outside of Canada was not recognized or valued. Beyond that, participants felt other systemic barriers make it harder for them to succeed

BARRIERS TO EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS

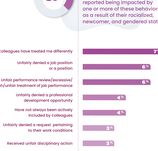
- Racial discrimination 14%
- English skills 60%
- Foreign educational credentials 18%
- Appearance 4%
- Work experience gained outside of Canada 23%
- Speaking with an accent 2%

And she started talking about the refugees, that they are not educated and so on. [...] I did not feel good about the way she was talking and maybe because I'm coming from the Middle East, she thought I was not going to be educated. So that sometimes comes especially like when you wear [a] hijab.

CPRNW program participant who had both Master and PhD degrees spoke about a scenario in which a manager assumed she was a refugee

WHAT RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION CAN LOOK LIKE AT WORK ?

While overt discrimination is unacceptable in the workplace, racialized individuals often encounter covert or disguised forms of discrimination



PARTICIPANTS SHARED WORKPLACE EXPERIENCES TIED TO THEIR IDENTITIES AS RACIALIZED NEWCOMER WOMEN

37% reported being impacted by one or more of these behaviours as a result of their racialized, newcomer, and gendered status

- Colleagues have treated me differently 21%
- Unfairly denied a job position or a position 15%
- Unfair performance review/excessive/ harsh/unfair treatment of job performance 15%
- Unfairly denied a professional development opportunity 11%
- Have not always been actively included by colleagues 11%
- Unfairly denied a request pertaining to their work conditions 10%
- Received unfair disciplinary action 10%
- Verbally or physically abused by colleagues 10%
- Falsely accused or criticized by colleagues 10%
- Intentionally excluded from work or social events 10%
- Other 7%

When you want to somehow climb that ladder, that may cause some problem when you are not the same as others or your language or your accent or your background or your time of living in Canada is the same as others. And I think that maybe I will face that problem

Despite being happy with her workplace and not perceiving racism or discrimination, one CPRNW program participant notices barriers when she wanted to advance her career.

IMPACT OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION ON HEALTH AND CONFIDENCE

Participants who report experiencing one or more of these unfair treatments in the workplace reported the impact these experiences had on their physical health, mental well-being, and confidence



- **69%** REPORTED NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON MENTAL WELL-BEING
- **82%** EXPERIENCED A DROP IN CONFIDENCE
- **31%** FACED PHYSICAL HEALTH IMPACTS

PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS AND DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

For participants who were working at the time of the survey, a considerable proportion indicated they **did not** agree or strongly agree with that:

18% Workforce diversity is valued at their organization

20% Everyone is treated fairly regardless of race, gender, age, ethnic background, sexual orientation or other differences at their organization

20% Confident the employer would take appropriate action if someone raises a concern about discrimination in the workplace

The findings from the CPRNW surveys reveal the unsettling reality that racialized newcomer women face racism and discrimination in the workforce, which deeply affect their self-efficacy and erode their confidence in their ability to succeed in the Canadian labour market



The evidence is clear: systemic barriers persist, blocking their paths and creating major obstacles in their journey toward settlement and success. Immediate action is needed to break down these barriers and create real and equitable opportunities.

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