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## Quality of Employment in Canada

# Discrimination at work, 2016

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# Discrimination at work, 2016

## Overview

Nearly 10% of workers in Canada reported experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment at work in 2016, and some groups were more at risk than others. This was particularly the case for persons with a disability, Indigenous people (living off reserve) and population groups designated as visible minorities.

The experience of discrimination at work may expose individuals to unfavourable working conditions, lower pay, and block access to supervisory and managerial roles. Individuals who face discrimination at work may also experience lower psychological well-being. This indicator is measured by calculating the proportion of workers who reported experiencing discrimination or unfavourable treatment at work over the previous 12 months. Additional information is provided on the types of discrimination experienced, as well as the grounds for discrimination.

## Historical trends

Statistics Canada data from the General Social Survey (GSS) on the experience of discrimination at work are currently available for one year

## A recent snapshot

In 2016, 9.3% of workers in Canada who worked at some point in the previous 12 months reported experiencing unfair treatment or discrimination at work.

Some workers may be more at risk of experiencing discrimination at work due to their demographic characteristics or personal circumstances. This was particularly the case for workers with a disability, as 16.1% had faced discrimination or unfair treatment at work in the previous 12 months in 2016, compared with 6.9% of workers without a disability.

**Table 1**

**Percentage of persons employed during the previous 12 months (15 years and over) who experienced discrimination at work, by selected demographic characteristics, Canada, 2016**

Characteristics	Percentage of employed persons
Has a disability	16.1
Does not have a disability	6.9
Indigenous	15.2
Non-Indigenous	9.1
Visible minority	13.2
Not a visible minority	8.2
Women	11.3
Men	7.5

**Note:** Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, custom tabulation.

Some workers experience discrimination daily or almost daily, while it is an isolated event for others. In 2016, among persons with a disability who faced discrimination, 35.4% reported that it had happened often, daily or almost daily, compared with 21.9% for those who experienced discrimination but did not have a disability.

The *Canadian Human Rights Act* prohibits discrimination on several grounds, including religion, sexual orientation, and disability. About one-quarter of those who had experienced discrimination at work in 2016 indicated that it was based on age (25.6%) or sex (24.0%), while 17.6% reported that it was based on race.

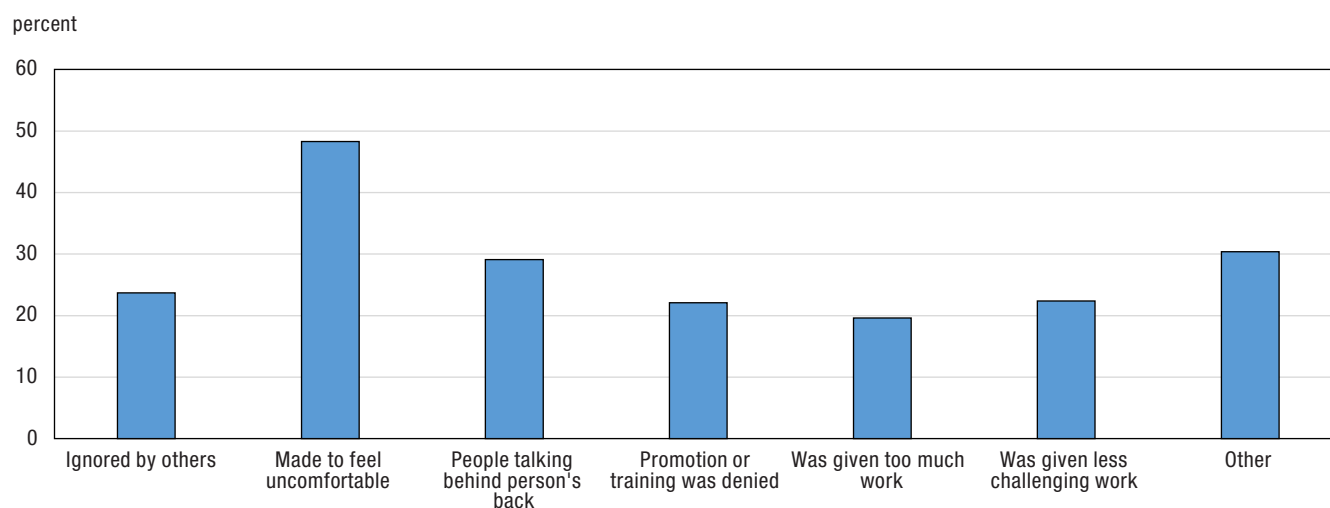
## Discrimination at work, 2016

There are different ways in which workers can experience discrimination as a result of the actions of their colleagues or supervisors. In 2016, the most common type of discrimination was “being made uncomfortable,” reported by 48.3% of those who had experienced discrimination, followed by “people talking behind one’s back” (29.1%). About one-third (30.4%) reported experiencing a type of discrimination not listed in the questionnaire.

Nearly half of those who had faced discrimination at work experienced more than one type of discrimination in 2016. One quarter (25.0%) had experienced three or more types of discrimination, 21.8% had experienced two types, and 52.7% had experienced only one type.

### Chart 1

#### Types of discrimination experienced at work, persons employed in the previous 12 months who were victims of discrimination (15 years and over), Canada, 2016



**Note:** Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.  
**Source:** Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, custom tabulation.

Nearly half of those who had faced discrimination at work experienced more than one type of discrimination in 2016. Approximately 25.0% had experienced 3 or more types of discrimination, 21.8% had experienced 2 types, and 52.7% had experienced only 1 type.

### Information on the indicator

#### Description or definition

The **discrimination at work** indicator is the number of persons who worked at any time in the previous 12 months and who report experiencing discrimination or unfavourable treatment while at work over this period. The estimate is expressed as the proportion of all persons who worked at some point during the previous 12 months.

Additional information is also provided on the number of times discrimination or unfair treatment was experienced, the type of discrimination experienced, as well as the grounds for discrimination.

#### Source

General Social Survey: Canadians at Work and Home, 2016 (Cycle 30).

#### Information for interpretation

The mandate of the General Social Survey (GSS) Canadians at Work and Home is to explore peoples' views about work, home, leisure and well-being, and the relationships between these life domains. For more information on the methodology and collection, please consult [General Social Survey: Canadians at Work and Home \(GSS\)](#).

Disability status is established on the basis of the [Disability Screening Questionnaire \(DSQ\)](#).

As the GSS is based on a sample, all estimates are subject to sampling variability. The analysis focuses on differences between estimates that are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Due to rounding, estimates and percentages may differ slightly between different Statistics Canada products, such as analytical documents and data tables.

The estimate of unfair treatment or discrimination at work is based on self-reports and therefore represents a subjective measure of discrimination.

In the GSS, the concept of Indigenous people includes persons who reported being an Indigenous person, that is, First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit), or those who reported more than one identity. Excluded from the survey's coverage are persons living on reserves and other Indigenous settlements in the provinces as well as those living in the territories.

The concept is distinct from others used in the Census of Population and the Aboriginal Peoples Survey because it does not depend on Registered or Treaty Indian status, membership in a First Nation or Indian band, or ancestry. As such, self-identification as belonging to an Indigenous group for the purposes of the GSS is entirely subjective. It is similar to the concept of "Indigenous identity" used in the Census.

#### Other related information

Additional Statistics Canada data are available on the following subject:

[Discrimination at work](#)