Discrimination in the Workplace in Canada: An Intersectional Approach

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Abstract: This study examines discrimination in the workplace in Canada and explores the intersection of marginalized groups. It uses data from the General Social Survey 2016, which collected information from 19,609 non-institutionalized individuals. Results show that 17 percent of the job applicants and 9 percent of the workers felt discriminated against in the workplace during the 12 months before the survey. Data analysis indicates that a person's identification with two marginalized groups increases the chances of discrimination and augments further with three marginalized identities. However, the incremental effect of four or more marginalized groups is difficult to examine with this dataset due to the depleting sample size with the inclusion of every new group. Results from the logistic regression illustrate that the intersection of two, three, or four selected disadvantaged groups increases workplace discrimination significantly, thus supporting the theory of intersectionality. However, this perspective does not work for some combinations of marginalized groups.

Keywords: discrimination, intersectional discrimination, designated groups, marginalized groups, workplace, job application

Résumé: Cette étude examine l'intersection des groupes marginalisés et la discrimination en milieu de travail au Canada. Elle utilise les données de l'Enquête sociale générale de 2016 recueillies auprès de 19 609 personnes non institutionnalisées. Les résultats montrent qu'au cours des 12 mois précédant l'enquête, 17 % des demandeurs d'emploi et 9 % des travailleurs ont été victimes de discrimination en milieu de travail. L'analyse des données indique que lorsqu'une personne s'identifie à deux groupes marginalisés, elle est plus susceptible d'être victime de discrimination, et qu'avec trois groupes marginalisés, cela augmente encore le risque d'être victime de discrimination. Il est difficile cependant d'examiner l'effet différentiel de quatre groupes marginalisés ou plus avec cet ensemble de données, car la taille de l'échantillon diminue avec l'ajout de chaque nouveau groupe. Les résultats de la régression logistique montrent que l'intersection de deux, trois ou quatre groupes défavorisés sélectionnés augmente substantiellement la discrimination en milieu de travail, étayant ainsi la théorie

de l'intersectionnalité. Toutefois, cette perspective ne s'applique pas à certaines compositions de groupes marginalisés.

Mots clés: discrimination, discrimination intersectionnelle, groupes désignés, groupes marginalisés, milieu de travail, demande d'emploi

INTRODUCTION

The Employment Equity Act (1995) aims "to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability" (Minister of Justice 2019: c. 44: 1). The purpose of this Act is to rectify the disadvantage experienced in employment by four designated groups, i.e. women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of the visible minorities. This Act defines Aboriginal peoples as persons who are Indians, Inuit, or Metis; persons with disabilities as those with a long-term or recurring physical, mental, sensory, psychiatric, or learning impairment; and visible minorities as persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. In the Annual Report 2018 of the Employment Equity Act, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour noted that in the labour market, the disadvantaged groups, particularly "women, Aboriginal peoples and persons with disabilities continue to be underrepresented. …. Although members of the visible minorities continue to be more successful designated group, they are still underrepresented in certain sectors and occupational groups" (Employment and Social Development Canada 2019 p. 52).

Besides the designated groups, there are other marginalized groups, such as persons from lower social class, older workers (55-64 years), refugees, and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other (LGBTQ+), who are targets of discrimination. Findings from a nationally representative data set from the 2013 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) show that while gay men face discrimination based on sexual orientation, Blacks, Asians and Indigenous people report experiences of racial discrimination, and Arabs, South, and West Asians report incidents of religious discrimination (Godley 2018).

In their meta-analyses of studies conducted between 1990 and 2015 across the countries of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Zschirnt and Ruedin (2016) observed that discrimination in hiring is a common practice in all these countries as "members of the minority group need to send around three applications

for every two applications a member of the majority group needs to send in order to be called back for an interview" (1126-1127).

While blatant or overt discrimination is unacceptable and can be challenged legally, workers from marginalized groups are also targets of subtle forms of discrimination that often go unnoticed. Subtle forms of discrimination involve mockery and disempowerment of marginalized groups in everyday interactions, such as jokes on their culture, disrespect, avoidance, incivility, and deprivation of resources (Van Laer and Janssens 2011). There is a large body of research that explores the psychological impact of discrimination with studies consistently showing an association between discrimination and depressive symptoms (Noh and Kaspar 2003; Jones et al. 2013). Contrary to the popular belief, Jones and colleagues (2013) noticed in their meta-analysis that adverse consequences of subtle and overt discrimination are equally harmful.

There are innumerable studies on discrimination in the workplace that have focused on a single marginalized group, the most common groups being the gender and race. In 1989, Kimberly Crenshaw noted that the experiences of discrimination of Black women were worse than either Blacks or women and subsequently she developed the theory of intersectional discrimination, where both gender and race were considered simultaneously (Crenshaw 1989). Since then many studies have used this theory to examine the intersection of various marginalized groups, though much of the research has focused on the intersection of gender and race (Smith 2016). Intersectionality has also been used to examine the experiences of several groups simultaneously as they together constitute a distinct entity. The present study uses the intersectional approach to examine workplace discrimination in Canada. It focuses on several marginalized groups, namely women, Indigenous people, persons with a disability, racialized persons, older workers, homosexuals, refugees, and persons from a lower social class. Before further discussion on this theory, this paper provides a short prereview of literature on discrimination in the labour market against members of the designated groups and other marginalized groups.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST DESIGNATED GROUPS

According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2008), discrimination includes making stereotypical assumptions about attributes of individuals, not assessing their merits and capacities properly, denying them benefits, and excluding them from participation in various activities. Dis-

crimination occurs when some people are treated differently and unfairly than others. Unfair treatment due to individual traits or membership of a social group can have negative consequences for the individuals and their groups. Discrimination can be direct and intentional or indirect and unintentional. It is felt when a particular conduct has a discriminatory effect (OHRC 2008). The following paragraphs describe how discrimination in the workplace affects various groups.

Women: Despite the progress made toward gender equity and greater participation of women in the Canadian labour force, women continue to face systematic barriers and other challenges in the workplace including advancement in jobs, the wage gap, harassment, and sexual advances. Although the wage gap between women and men has decreased over time, several studies show that women are still paid less than their male colleagues. In 2018, women earned $0.87 for every dollar earned by men and the reasons stated for the prevalent wage gap were greater participation of women in low-paying jobs, their over-representation in part-time work, lesser work experience, and biases of the employers (Pelletier et al. 2019).

Analyzing the data from National Graduates Survey, Boudarbat and Connolly (2013) noted that among recent post-secondary graduates in Canada, female graduates earn 6-14 percent less than their male counterparts. In cases where women have more education or greater qualification than men they still remain a minority in leadership positions and high-paying jobs.

Indigenous (Aboriginal) People: Though the two terms, Indigenous and Aboriginal are often used synonymously, the term Indigenous has gained prominence over Aboriginal in recent years as it is more inclusive and highlights the connection of people to traditional territories (Indigenous Awareness Canada n.d.).

According to Statistics Canada (2018a), the employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people has widened and the unemployment rate among Indigenous people has increased. Indigenous workers who find jobs, experience more discrimination in the workplace than non-Indigenous people. The CBC News (2008) reported that Indigenous people in Saskatchewan were twice as likely to experience mistreatment at the workplace as non-indigenous people. Pendakur and Pendakur (2011) found substantial gaps in the earning of Indigenous men and women in comparison to their White counterparts. The gaps were particularly high between Indigenous men and White men due to their respective presence in different types of work, which might have resulted from choice or as a consequence of the challenges Indigenous

men might have faced in obtaining employment in the same fields as White men.

Prior to colonization, Indigenous men were embedded in familial and communal responsibilities, however, the skillful jobs Indigenous people excel in (such as hunting and fishing) are not given the same prestige and materialistic benefits as working for big companies (Waziyatawin 2012). Consequently, Indigenous people are compelled to take on mainstream jobs and education, in turn, facilitating capitalistic values and the destruction of the land. Educational attainment plays a significant role in the labour market; however, the system is dominated by the Western teaching style where the Eurocentric knowledge system perceives the Indigenous knowledge system as inferior (Hokowhitu 2009).

Persons with disability: The Canadian Survey on Disability highlighted that 6.2 million Canadians over the age of 15 have at least one disability with 43 percent of them having a 'more severe' form of disability. In 2017, the employment rate for working-age adults was 59 percent for persons with disabilities compared to 80 percent for those without disabilities (Statistics Canada 2018b). When hiring, employers are concerned about the work performance and safety of employees with disabilities. While searching for secure employment, individuals with certain forms of disability often fear stigmatization and labelling as a result of disclosing their condition to their employer (Shier et al. 2009).

Respondents from a qualitative study exploring barriers to employment among disabled people in Calgary and Regina reported that having a disability was not the only barrier in obtaining a job but also in maintaining employment (Shier et al. 2009). Lack of knowledge and experience of working with people with disabilities causes discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards this marginalized group. A systematic review of the workplace disclosures indicates that the main challenge for individuals with disabilities is disclosure and asking for accommodation (Lindsay et al. 2019).

Racialized groups (Visible minorities): The Ontario Human Rights Commission recognises that race is a social construct and uses the term 'racialized person' or 'racialized group' instead of 'visible minority' which is considered an outdated and inaccurate term (OHRC n.d.).

Several studies have shown that racialized persons face more discrimination than White people. Reitz and Banerjee (2007) found that racialized persons with a similar qualification earned up to 25 percent less than the Whites. Pendakur and Pendakur (2011) also reported a persistent wage gap for Canadian-born racialized men and women compared to their White counterparts with small improvements between 1996 and 2006 in some ethnic groups. In their discussion on labour

market discrimination in Ontario, Block and Galabuzi (2018) noted that racialized women earned 58 cents for every dollar earned by non-racialized men. They also found that income inequality between racialized and non-racialized persons extended to the second and third generations of immigrants.

According to the 2016 census, 64.5 percent of all the immigrants to Canada belonged to the racialized groups and their representation increased to 81.7 percent amongst the recent immigrants who entered between 2011-2016 (Statistics Canada 2019). Though immigrants are not a marginalized group per se, a large body of literature focuses on their discriminatory experiences as a racialized group. Immigrants spend their initial years in the host country working towards obtaining recognition of foreign credentials and work experience (Reitz and Banerjee 2007). Those who receive accreditation often struggle to find jobs in their field. The labour market outcomes for immigrants are determined not only by their educational level and language proficiencies but also by racialization (Block and Galabuzi 2018). Economic sustainability and integration are key to the settlement of immigrants and their mental health in the host country. The practice of devaluing the skills of highly skilled immigrants leads to downward social mobility. Creese and Wiebe (2012) have noted that the devaluing of university degrees is greatest for immigrant women of colour who experience double disadvantage as they are already marginalized in the male-dominated labour market. Immigrants also face other challenges while integrating into the workforce where they navigate unfamiliar practices without the same cultural capital that may be prevalent among native-born employees. Going back to school to gain cultural capital and Canadian credentials does not improve their employment opportunities significantly. They experience "racialization processes", where better jobs are preserved for White Canadians, and labour or manufacturing jobs are left for immigrants (Creese and Wiebe 2012).

Analysis of the New Immigrant Survey (United States) 2003 demonstrates that immigrants with the lightest skin colour earn more than immigrants with dark skin colour by an average of 16–23 percent (Hersch 2011a). Newcomer immigrants are more likely to experience ethnic discrimination and social exclusion than native-born racialized persons (Banerjee 2008). Additionally, immigrants who cannot speak with a native accent are considered less qualified (Souza et al. 2016) and discrimination is justified based on competency and accent (Ng 2007). Thus, ethnicity, culture, race, and colour are the most common forms of discrimination against immigrants (Nangia 2013).

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST OTHER MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Older workers: Given Canada's growing senior population and economic difficulties, more older Canadians continue to participate in the labour force. In 2015, one in every five seniors (over 65 years) reported having worked during the previous year and one-third of them had a full-time job (Statistics Canada 2017).

Several studies have reported the prevalence of ageism in the labour market (Ahmed et al. 2012; Albert et al. 2011; Lahey 2005). With market fluctuations, the closure or downsizing of several companies has become a well-known phenomenon. Though closure affects everyone, downsizing targets certain workers. Older workers who are laid-off find it more difficult to obtain another job. There is a widespread belief that older workers are incompetent, less productive, and demand a higher salary. Lahey (2005) observed that compared to an older applicant, a younger applicant is 45 percent more likely to be shortlisted for an employment opportunity. In terms of work performance either there is no difference between older and younger workers or older workers outperform younger workers (Malinen and Johnson 2013), yet, older employees still receive poor performance evaluations (Rupp et al. 2006).

Homosexuals: People with homosexual orientation experience challenges in securing employment and are often discriminated against in the workplace (Escoffier 1975). While discrimination based on sexual orientation is legally prohibited, many homosexuals are targeted to negative prejudice and subtle discrimination at the workplace, such as purposeful exclusion, taunting, or slurs. Several studies have demonstrated that sexual minorities earn less than heterosexual men (Badgett 1995; Denier and Waite 2016). In organizations, where anti-discrimination policies are enforced, gay men earn significantly more than in organizations without such policies, suggesting the importance of anti-discrimination policies (Klawitter 2014).

Refugees: Refugees share similar barriers as immigrants, such as language proficiency, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, and racial and ethnic discrimination (Picot et al. 2019). Refugees are often denied access to professional positions to maintain the workplace standards set by professional associations (Lamba 2008). In his study, Lamba found that 70 percent of the interviewed refugees felt unsatisfied in their current occupation and 60 percent reported they were overqualified for the position they held. Moreover, 75 percent of them had not received opportunities for advancement or promotion. Length of stay in the host country, age, and sex all play a key role in career development

and economic wellbeing. With time spent in the host country, individuals develop strategies to increase their social capital. Many refugees suffer from grief, loss of family members, material loss, and stress, and consequently, have difficulties adjusting to the host country. Turmoil in their life can affect their education and ultimately their employment.

Social class: Social class is a vague concept that may include income, education, occupation, and other traits which vary from time to time in an individual's life. In that sense, the class is fluid and incorporates the prospects of social mobility. This concept can also be used to include identity and acculturation which affect social experiences (Liu and Ali 2008). Though it is an unstable concept, it reflects one's position in society related to power, prestige and control over resources.

Workplace discrimination is related to hiring and firing practices, promotions, wage and salary determination, acceptance of certain skills, and the type of work assigned. It is not only the working class that experiences discrimination, even the middle-class people are vulnerable to workplace discrimination if they belong to a racialized group (Roscigno et al. 2012). Reay (2005) argues that the concept of class prevails at conscious and unconscious levels. It prevails in "everyday interactions, in institutional processes, in struggles over identity, validity, self-worth and integrity" (p. 924).

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Racial formation theory proclaims how socio-economic and political forces shape racial hierarchies (Omi and Winant 2015). The construction of race has been induced by White people in which whiteness reflects superiority and people of colour or Indigenous people are perceived as inferior (Solomona et al. 2005). White supremacy ideologies are recognized as being the primary source of the exclusion of marginalized groups, who experience multilayered oppression in everyday life that is influenced by power dynamics and public discourse. Though all Whites are privileged, the level of privilege may vary according to their intersecting identities (Strmic-Pawl 2020). The categorization of race creates an "us and them" dichotomy in which the 'other' group is segregated from 'our' group. As a result, concepts such as race, ethnicity, and nation create stereotypes and perpetuate discrimination leading to oppression of marginalized groups (Solomona et al. 2005).

Racism prevails systemically in the "ideology, attitudes, emotions, habits, actions and institutions of whites in the society" (Omi and Winant cited in Strmic-Pawl 2020 p. 105). Systemic racism exists in the labour

market in the form of stereotyping the marginalized groups, creating a hostile environment for them and favouring Whites in promotions (Strmic-Pawl 2020).

The social identity theory promulgates that individuals tag themselves in two groups: in-group and out-group. In-groups are based on demographics, race or ethnicity, kinship, professional contacts or colleagues, religious groups, or other commonalities. This group membership creates a social identity and a sense of belonging to the social world (Everett et al. 2015). People are more likely to favour in-group members at the cost of out-group members. The biases toward the in-group and out-group members lead to stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination (Everett et al. 2015).

Discourse in the media is more likely to misrepresent marginalized groups. These misrepresentations give power to the dominant group to exclude marginalized groups (Crenshaw 1991). The distorted portrayal of specific marginalized groups in the media includes exaggeration of negative associations, such as violence, criminal behaviour, low socio-economic status, and substance abuse (Mahtani 2001). Public discourse affirms the negative attributes of specific marginalized groups and poses a risk to their self-esteem and mental health.

These theoretical perspectives focus on one social identity and any analysis of discrimination based on a single marginalized identity cannot fully capture the lived experiences of individuals with multiple marginalized identities (Richman and Zucker 2019). Since social identities intersect, ignoring the intersectional effect of marginalized identities may lead to deceptive interpretation (Bauer and Scheim 2019). Intersectional theory captures the effect of multiple marginalized identities on discrimination.

INTERSECTIONAL THEORY

The intersectional theory was outlined by Crenshaw when she argued that Black women are discriminated against based on both gender and race (Crenshaw 1989). Since then many scholars have used it to examine discrimination (Veenstra 2013; Harnois and Ifatunji 2011; Healy 2009; Hernández 2005) as this perspective deals with several marginalized groups simultaneously (Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2015). The intersectional theory assumes that all people hold concurring multiple social identities where each of these identities is rooted in some form of inequality or power, and these identities of the individuals are characteristics of the social group to which they belong (Else-Quest and Hyde 2016). De-

pending on their group identity and social context, people can experience both oppression and privilege. Eaton (1994) argues,

> [I]ntersectional oppression arises out of the combination of various oppressions which, together, produce something unique and distinct from any one form of discrimination standing alone (cited in Ontario Human Rights Commission 2001: no pagination).

In a study of African Americans and Caribbean Black adolescents, Seaton and colleagues found significant intersections of ethnicity, gender, and race in perceived discrimination. Intersectional discrimination has significant implications in the workplace including employment attainment, skill development, and professional achievement (Seaton et al. 2010).

Healy (2009) found that majority of the women of colour between the ages of 16-34 years had difficulty in obtaining a job compared to one-third of the White women. More women of colour also reported accepting jobs that were lower for their qualifications than White women. Similarly, ethnic minorities belonging to the LGBTQ+ community were considered different than their White counterparts. While both experience marginalization, members of ethnic minorities experience greater challenges (Healy 2009). Intersectionality can be used as a tool to examine the root causes of inequality (Smith 2016).

Jones and colleagues (n.d.) identified three different approaches to intersectional studies, *i.e.* inclusion, relational, and systemic. The inclusion approach focuses on the disadvantaged groups and speaks about their experiences and perspectives. The relational approach looks into the patterns of relationships between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The systemic approach considers all categories of identity as equally salient and acknowledges that statuses in each category change depending upon the context.

Intersectionality is more than a theoretical approach that can provide more effective interventions (Strmic-Pawl 2020). In recent decades, intersectionality has moved from a theory to an application in methodology (Richman and Zucker 2019). Initially, qualitative methods were used to examine intersectionality, but now, in many disciplines, scholars have started employing quantitative methods to investigate this perspective (Bowleg and Bauer 2016). Hancock considers intersectionality as both a theoretical argument and a methodological approach to conducting empirical research (cited in Moore 2012 p. 36). Collins (2015) identified three interdependent aspects of intersectionality, i) as a field of study of the object of investigation, ii) as an analytical approach to providing new perspectives to a phenomenon, and iii) as a critical praxis for social

justice. In this paper, the analytical approach is used to investigate discrimination in the workplace. This is another contribution to the literature on various methodological approaches used by scholars to examine intersectional discrimination. Though many of the past studies focus on the intersection of race and gender (Smith 2016), this study examines the intersection of several social identities.

PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

This study aims at examining discriminatory experiences reported by the designated and other marginalized groups (combinedly called marginalized groups) in Canada when looking for a job and the basis of such discrimination. For those already employed, it investigates the frequency, basis, and type of discrimination at the workplace. The main objective is to explore the incremental and intersectional effect of multiple marginalized identities on reported experiences of discrimination at the workplace.

DATA AND METHODS

This study uses data from the General Social Survey, Cycle 30, 2016. This cycle focused on Canadians at work and home and collected data from non-institutionalized persons 15 years of age or older living in ten provinces. The survey used stratified probability sampling and self-administered questionnaires as well as computer-assisted telephone interviews (Statistics Canada 2018c). The Public Use Microdata File (PUMF) used for this paper contained information from 19,609 individuals.

In this survey discrimination was defined as treating people differently, negatively or adversely; disability as physical or mental disability; and refugees as those who became landed immigrants in Canada under the refugee program. For the current study, as per the availability of data, disabled people were considered those who have permanent or reoccurring pain 'often' or 'always', older workers as persons in the age group 55-64, and homosexuals as people who have a same-sex partner. For social class, the survey asked, "Which [social] class would you describe yourself as belonging to?"

In this study, we used the bootstrap method to compute percentages of persons who felt discriminated against in each marginalized group when looking for a job and at the workplace for those already employed. For those in a job, discriminatory experiences reported during the past

12 months were investigated. Discrimination at the workplace was examined by frequency, basis and type of discrimination. Workplace discrimination was further analyzed for those who held multiple marginalized identities. Finally, logistic regression was employed to predict the probability of experiencing discrimination at the workplace. For this analysis, self-reported discrimination experienced in the past 12 months (yes=1, no=0) was used as the dependent variable and age group (< 35=0, 35-54=1, 55-64=2, 65+=3), gender (Male=0, Female=1), social class (Upper/Upper-Middle/Middle=0, Lower-Middle/Lower=1), racialized status (Non-racialized=0, Racialized=1), Indigenous status (Non-Indigenous=0, Indigenous=1), and disability (Daily activity limitation – pain level - Never/Rarely/Sometimes=0, Often/Always=1) were used as independent variables. This statistical procedure was also used to examine intersectional discrimination, where separate logistic regressions were run for each interactional combination (up to the interaction of four marginalized groups). For data analysis, SPSS version 26 was used.

FINDINGS

Discrimination when looking for a job

During the 12 months before the survey, 1,570,654 Canadians had applied for or were interviewed for a job, and nearly 17 percent of them believed that they were treated unfairly or discriminated against. Table 1 shows that about 25 percent of the lower-middle/lower (LML) class and 23 percent of the older applicants (55-64 years) reported experiencing discrimination when they applied for a job. Among the other groups, 19 percent of members of the racialized communities and 17 percent of the females believed they were discriminated against when looking for a job.

The largest proportion of those who reported discrimination believed that it was based on age (55 percent) and between 11 to 16 percent stated that it was based on sex or race. Nationality or immigration status was the least reported basis of discrimination (6 percent).

The majority of those who felt discriminated against in job applications (56 percent) were not called for an interview and a much smaller proportion (8 to 11 percent) were offered a lower salary, tested differently, and were not accommodated for their disability.

The data were not analyzed further by marginalized groups because of the small sample size and high standard error.

Discrimination at the workplace

In this survey, a question was asked, "In the past 12 months, have you experienced unfair treatment or discrimination while at work?" Less than one-tenth (9 percent) of all the workers reported experiencing discrimination at the workplace. Of those who reported discrimination, 9 percent experienced it almost every day and another 18 percent quite often (Table 2). The reported experiences of discrimination at the workplace varied from 29 percent for those who were suffering from a disability to 9 percent for older workers or homosexuals.

Over a quarter of those who experienced discrimination at the workplace reported that it was based on sex (27 percent), which was closely followed by age-based discrimination (24 percent). Religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity were the least common basis of discrimination. Only 4 percent of workers reported that they were discriminated against at their workplace due to each of these characteristics.

The most common form of discrimination in the workplace was making the person feel uncomfortable (51 percent). The next common complaint was that colleagues talked behind their back (32 percent). The least common concern was that they were given too much work (19 percent).

Incremental effect of marginalized identity on discrimination

Table 3 highlights the incremental effect of identification with different marginalized groups on the reported experiences of discrimination at the workplace. For two marginalized group identities, the experiences of discrimination were highest for the females with a disability (27 percent) and lowest for Indigenous older workers (7 percent). Between 18 and 19 percent of the female refugees, female Indigenous people, racialized LML social class, racialized refugees, and racialized older workers reported experiences of discrimination at the workplace. Identification with three marginalized groups tended to increase discriminatory experiences, which varied from 22 percent for female racialized refugees to 18 percent for female racialized older workers. Incremental discrimination was conspicuous for certain marginalized groups, e.g. 11 percent of the females, 14 percent of the racialized persons, and 13 percent of the persons from LML social class reported experiences of discrimination at the workplace (Table 2), whereas 15 percent of the racialized females (two marginalized groups), 16 percent of the females from LML class (two marginalized groups), and 19 percent of the racialized females from LML class (three marginalized groups) experienced workplace discrimination (Table 3). However, for some combination of identities

(5 out of 17 examined in Table 3), experiences of discrimination were not incremental, for example, females with a disability. This could be due to higher standard error of estimates, depletion of sample size when the groups were combined, or the result of some confounding factors. It could also be that the combination of some marginalized identities did not increase the level of discrimination.

The incremental effect of four or more marginalized groups was difficult to assess with this dataset due to the depleting sample size with the addition of every new group.

Determinants of discrimination at the workplace

Logistic regression was used to examine the likelihood of feeling discriminated against at the workplace (Table 4). In this analysis, all the marginalized groups were taken as independent variables, except for homosexual and refugee groups because of their small sample size. Results showed that racialized persons were more likely to be discriminated against compared to non-racialized persons (Odds Ratio (OR)=2.35)) after controlling for other predictors. Workers with a disability were also more likely to be discriminated against compared to those without any disability after controlling the effect of other variables (OR=2.35). Older workers (55-64) were less likely to report experiences of discrimination at the workplace compared to younger workers (< 35) (OR=0.54). The other marginalized groups considered in this model did not show any effect on discrimination when all the other variables were controlled.

When interactional variables were introduced in the logistic model presented in Table 4, they showed an insignificant effect after controlling for other variables. Since they also reduced the explanatory power of the model they were removed from the analysis, and separate logistic regressions were computed for the intersection of two, three, and four marginalized groups (Tables 5a and 5b), as permitted by the sample size. The results in Table 5a show that Indigenous females are more likely to report experiences of discrimination in the workplace compared to non-Indigenous males (OR=2.61). Similarly, racialized female workers have greater chances of reporting discrimination in the workplace compared to non-racialized male workers (OR=1.85). Other highlights of the two group interactions (Table 5a) show that females with a disability, females from LML class, indigenous people from LML class, older workers with a disability, disabled persons from LML class, racialized older workers, racialized refugees, racialized persons from LML class, and refugees from LML class have significantly higher chances of experiencing discrimination compared to their other counterparts. For three-group inter-

actions (Table 5b), Indigenous females from LML class, and racialized persons with a disability who belong to LML class have significantly greater chances of feeling workplace discrimination compared to their counterparts. For four-group interaction (Table 5b), racialized female refugees coming from LML class have a significantly higher probability of experiencing discrimination compared to their counterparts. In brief, many of the interactions included in Table 5a and Table 5b show a significant multiplicative effect of marginalized group identities on the experiences of discrimination at the workplace.

DISCUSSION

One-fourth of the job applicants from LML social class reported experiences of discrimination in the job applications. When applications are rejected, people may start doubting their capability and skills. Their uncertainty about the future can cause an inferiority complex (Diane 2005), mental stress and depression. Even after securing employment, a substantial proportion of them feel discriminated against at the workplace which can affect their productivity, commitment, satisfaction, and psychological wellbeing. The hurdles in getting and retaining a job can also become barriers to social mobility.

The most frequently used basis of discrimination in job applications is the age of the applicant. Older applicants are considered slow, less healthy, lacking appropriate job skills, and less adaptive to technology, still expecting higher wages (Lahey 2005). Several experimental studies have concluded that ageism also persists in the labour market in other parts of the world (Ahmed et al. 2012; Albert et al. 2011). Older workers who are already employed do not believe they have been discriminated against to that same extent as some other marginalized groups. However, some employers and colleagues make them feel uncomfortable (data not shown in table); a method commonly used to get rid of the older workers and save money by replacing them with younger workers who may be less expensive, more active, and ready to adapt to new technologies. Suggestions of older workers may be ignored as their ideas may be considered conservative and outdated for the current labour and economic environment. Since older workers may be assumed to be slow at learning they may be given fewer opportunities for training on new technologies affecting their human capital. Employers may doubt their ability, give them less challenging work, and deny them promotion.

Racial discrimination promulgates from lack of human capital (education, work experience), social capital (networking, language fluency),

ethnic hierarchies (race, skin colour), cultural distance (dress, other visible markers), and discourse in media (negative stereotypes) (Zschirnt and Ruedin 2016). Immigrants, especially racial minorities, have to face the challenge of recognition of their foreign earned education and work experience. They lack social networks and become more dependent on their ethnic community for initial support and guidance. This leads to the development of ethnic enclaves with distinct cultural and linguistic traits segregated from the majority population and other ethnic groups. Media discourse creates negative stereotypes about certain ethnic groups and their applications for jobs are not received well by employers. Their cultural and linguistic differences become a barrier in their job applications and eventually many of them start their own business.

Similarly, Indigenous people also face discrimination in job applications due to the prevalence of negative stereotypes. A substantial proportion of those who are already employed faces discrimination at the workplace. When they practice Indigenous culture, they experience racism and when they withhold from traditional practices to hide their Indigenous identity, they feel helpless, hopeless and frustrated (Currie et al. 2012). Without creating environments that allow Indigenous peoples to succeed, they will continue to face career concerns and live unfulfilled lives.

Women have benefitted most from the Employment Equity Act. The labour force participation rate for women has increased steadily from 24 percent in 1953 to 84 percent in 2014 (Statistics Canada 2015). Nevertheless, a substantial proportion of women report experiences of discrimination in the job application process. Gender discrimination in employment stems from the perspective of employers who think women give more importance to their personal lives and families compared to their job; they are less intelligent and too emotional, not suitable for certain types of jobs, and become potential liabilities (Bobbitt-Zeher 2011). This attitude creates a glass ceiling beyond which women find it difficult to rise in their career ladder.

Analysis of this data shows that one-tenth of the working women report experiencing other forms of discrimination at the workplace; the majority of them occasionally. They are made to feel uncomfortable, people talk behind their back, and ignore them and their perspectives. They are targets of verbal abuse, humiliating behaviour, sexual harassment, threats, and physical violence. Since they are often considered physically weaker they are given less challenging work. (Results of this analysis are not shown here as the sample size for comparative marginalized groups is small for computing reliable estimates for those groups.)

Different types of occupations may demand different abilities. For example, the ability required in military service would be different than teaching kindergarten children. Some employers accommodate job applicants for their disability but others do not. The GSS data do not specify what kind of disability is a hindrance in job applications. More than a quarter of the workers with a disability are discriminated against in the workplace.

Sometimes, physical appearance can also be linked to disability. Physical appearance is related to body size, shape, and weight. In certain occupations, it may be justified to hire workers with specific body sizes and shapes, such as modelling and some sports. A study conducted by Hersch (2011b) did not find any association between discrimination and attractiveness, height, or weight, but our analysis of GSS data shows that one in nine Canadian workers felt discriminated against at the workplace based on their physical appearance.

Language can easily be used as a basis for discrimination in the job market. Discrimination is justified based on competency and accent to exclude some groups (Ng 2007). Immigrants who cannot speak with a native accent are considered less qualified by some prejudiced employers (Souza et al. 2016). The first-generation Asian, African, and Latin American immigrants usually have a non-native accent which puts them at a greater disadvantage in the labour market, especially in situations where they may be discriminated against on the basis of their skin colour.

Exposure to discrimination is a complex phenomenon as individuals have multiple social identities (Richman and Zucker 2019). The incremental effect of identification with two marginalized groups is obvious on discrimination at the workplace. The effect of three marginalized identities further amplifies the probability of discrimination. For example, racialized refugee females (three identities) report greater discrimination compared to racialized refugees or racialized females or female refugees (two identities) which is greater than discrimination felt by female or racialized or refugee (one identity). However, incremental discrimination may not be true for all combinations of marginalized identities. In this study, five out of seventeen combinations of marginalized identities did not show any incremental effect.

The intersectional theory suggests the need to consider multiple grounds of identity in the construction of a social world where discrimination is augmented by the intersection of various identities (Crenshaw 1991). Results from logistic regression in this study clearly show that the interaction of two, three, or four marginalized groups increases the likelihood of discrimination in the workplace, thus supporting the theory of intersectionality. However, all interactions may not increase experiences

of workplace discrimination significantly. Due to the depletion of the sample in the interaction process, the analysis could not be conducted for groups with smaller samples, neither it could be performed for job applications for the lack of appropriate data. Future studies may use larger datasets for quantitative analysis of intersectional discrimination at the workplace. They could also add more marginal groups and investigate which group combinations have an incremental effect on discrimination. An intersectional approach should also be used to examine discrimination in job applications.

CONCLUSION

One in six Canadians report experiencing discrimination when looking for a job. The most common basis of discrimination is age. Job seekers are also discriminated against based on race, gender, disability, physical appearance, language, ethnicity or culture, and nationality or immigration status. Generally, discrimination is expressed by not calling applicants for the interview. A smaller proportion is offered a lower salary or tested differently or not accommodated for disability.

Once employment is secured, persons with a disability report the most experiences of workplace discrimination. The other groups which face discrimination above the national level are refugees, racialized persons, Indigenous people, LML class, and females. The most common form of discrimination is to make the targeted person feel uncomfortable. The other forms of discrimination are talking behind their back, ignoring them, denying them promotion or training, giving them less challenging work, and giving them too much work.

There are substantial differences in the basis of discrimination during the job application process and at the workplace. For example, age is the main reason for discrimination in job applications with more than half of the applicants reporting age-based discrimination, whereas sex is the main basis of discrimination at the workplace with one-fourth of workers reporting sex-based discrimination.

Multiple marginalized identities have an incremental effect on discrimination in the workplace. Individuals who have three marginalized identities are more likely to face discrimination compared to those who have two, who, in turn, have greater chances of experiencing discrimination than those with one marginalized identity. This study supports the intersectional theory of discrimination by providing evidence from the General Social Survey. It also pinpoints which group interactions have a higher probability of feeling workplace discrimination and which group

combinations do not show an incremental effect. Workers with multiple marginalized identities have greater chances of experiencing discrimination in the workplace compared to those who do not have any of those identities. It is recommended that workplace policies that address the issues of equality and human rights should also consider the problem of intersectional discrimination.

The Employment Equity Act aims to achieve equality in the workplace by rectifying the disadvantages experienced by four designated groups but this study has identified some other marginalized groups that also report experiencing similar discrimination in the labour market. It is recommended that the scope of this Act should be widened to include other marginalized groups that face discrimination.

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Table 1: Discrimination when looking for a job, Canada, 2016

Group / Basis / Type	Percent of job seekers who felt discriminated	Standard error	Confidence interval (95%)	Sample size n
All applicants	16.5	1.3	13.8 – 19.1	780
Marginalized group				
Female	16.6	2.0	12.8 – 20.7	350
Indigenous people	21.4	5.5	11.6 – 32.7	56
Disabled (chronic pain often/always)	F	13.2	F	13
Racialized	19.0	3.1	13.2 – 25.8	168
Older workers (55-64)	22.5	3.5	15.7 – 29.0	151
Refugees	F	11.7	F	15
Lower-middle/Lower class	25.0	2.8	19.3 – 30.6	236
Basis of discrimination				
Age	54.8	4.5	45.2 – 63.5	126
Sex	11.1	2.8	5.6 – 16.7	126
Race	15.9	3.4	9.5 – 23.0	126
Nationality or immigration status	6.3	2.2	2.4 – 11.1	126
Ethnicity or culture	7.9	2.4	4.0 – 13.5	126
Physical appearance	8.7	2.5	4.0 – 13.5	126
Disability	9.5	2.7	4.8 – 15.1	126
Language	8.7	2.5	4.0 – 13.5	126
Other things	23.8	3.8	16.7 – 31.7	126
Type of discrimination				
Not called for an interview	56.0	4.3	48.0 – 64.0	125
Offered lower salary	11.2	2.8	6.4 – 17.6	125
Tested differently	9.6	2.6	4.8 – 14.4	125
Not accommodated for a disability	8.0	2.5	3.2 – 12.8	125
Other form	36.0	4.2	28.0 – 44.0	125

Note: The authors used the bootstrap method to compute percentages and confidence intervals from Public Use Microdata Files.
A large confidence interval means less reliable estimates, e.g. for Indigenous people. Readers are advised to use such estimates with caution.
F – Estimates are not provided due to very high standard error (> 10) and small sample size.

Data source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey 2016.

Table 2: Discrimination at the workplace, Canada, 2016

Group / Basis / Type	Percent of workers who felt discriminated	Standard error	Confidence interval (95%)	Sample size n
All workers	9.1	0.3	8.5 – 9.6	12270
Marginalized group				
Female	10.9	0.4	10.1 – 11.8	6222
Indigenous people	13.5	1.5	10.5 – 16.4	512
Disabled (chronic pain often/always)	29.3	3.8	22.2 – 36.9	140
Racialized	13.9	0.8	12.2 – 15.6	1757
Older workers (55-64)	8.5	0.5	7.4 – 9.5	2680
Homosexual	8.7	2.6	4.0 – 14.0	127
Refugees	14.8	2.6	10.1 – 19.9	189
Lower-middle/Lower class	13.4	0.8	12.0 – 15.0	2049
Frequency of discrimination				
Once	17.5	1.1	15.3 – 19.8	194
Occasionally	55.2	1.5	52.1 – 58.1	612
Often	17.9	1.1	15.7 – 20.1	198
Daily or almost daily	9.4	0.9	7.8 – 11.2	104
Basis of discrimination				
Age	24.4	1.3	21.7 – 27.1	1077
Sex	27.3	1.4	24.5 – 30.0	1077
Race	16.1	1.1	13.8 – 18.3	1077
Nationality	9.6	0.9	7.8 – 11.3	1077
Ethnicity	10.2	0.9	8.5 – 12.0	1077
Physical appearance	11.0	0.9	9.1 – 12.8	1077
Religion	3.9	0.6	2.8 – 5.0	1077
Disability	7.0	0.8	5.6 – 8.5	1077
Sexual orientation	3.6	0.6	2.5 – 4.9	1077
Language	8.9	0.9	7.1 – 10.7	1077
Gender identity	3.5	0.6	2.5 – 4.7	1077
Other reasons	28.2	1.4	25.4 – 31.2	1077
Type of discrimination				
Ignored by others	26.0	1.3	23.3 – 28.6	1101
Made to feel uncomfortable	51.2	1.5	48.2 – 54.0	1101
People talked behind your back	32.2	1.4	29.3 – 34.9	1101
Promotion or training denied	23.8	1.3	21.1 – 26.3	1101
Was given too much work	18.9	1.1	16.6 – 21.3	1101
Was given less challenging work	20.9	1.3	18.5 – 23.4	1101
Other	29.0	1.3	26.3 – 31.5	1101

Note: Authors used the bootstrap method to compute percentages from PUMF.

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey 2016

Table 3: Discrimination at the workplace by intersecting marginalized identities, Canada, 2016

Identification with marginalized groups	Percent reported discrimination	Standard error	Confidence interval (95%)	Sample size n
Two marginalized groups				
Female and Racialized	14.7	1.2	12.4 – 17.3	882
Female and Older workers	9.8	0.8	8.2 – 11.3	1400
Female and Indigenous	18.7	2.4	13.7 – 23.6	251
Female and Disability	26.8	4.9	17.9 – 37.0	82
Female and Homosexual	10.7	4.2	3.4 – 19.6	56
Female and Refugee	19	4.4	10.9 – 28.4	79
Female and LML class	15.6	1.1	13.5 – 18.0	1021
Indigenous and Older workers	7.4	2.9	2.3 – 13.5	81
Indigenous and LML class	16.9	3.3	10.6 – 23.6	124
Racialized and Older workers	18.2	2.8	12.9 – 23.8	198
Racialized and Refugee	18.2	3.3	12.3 – 25.4	132
Racialized and LML class	18.8	2.1	14.9 – 23.4	336
Older workers and LML class	11.0	1.5	8.1 – 14.2	446
Three marginalized groups				
Female, Racialized, and Older workers	18.3	3.9	11.4 – 26.7	104
Female, Racialized, and Refugee	22.2	5.7	11.8 – 34.9	54
Female, Indigenous and LML class	20.3	4.7	11.6 – 29.7	69
Female, Racialized and LML class	19.1	3.2	13.3 – 25.8	152

Note: Authors used the bootstrap method to compute percentages and confidence intervals from PUMF.

Percentages shown in the table were computed for the specific combination of marginalized groups. Discrimination was reported in the past 12 months.

A large confidence interval means less reliable estimates, e.g. female and homosexual, female and disability. Readers are advised to use such estimates with caution.

Estimates are not provided for groups with n < 50.

LML – Lower-middle/Lower

Data source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey 2016

Table 4: Marginalized groups as predictors of self-reported discrimination at the workplace (n=1,456)

Predictor	Category	Odds ratio	Confidence interval (95%)
Gender	Male - R		
	Female	1.29	0.94 - 1.76
Racialized	Not racialized - R		
	Racialized	2.35*	1.16 - 4.79
Indigenous	Non-Indigenous - R		
	Indigenous	1.53	0.91- 2.58
Disability (Chronic pain)	Never/Rarely/Sometimes - R		
	Often/Always	2.35***	1.51 - 3.66
Age group	< 35 - R		
	35-54	0.76	0.53 - 1.07
	55-64	0.54**	0.35 - 0.84
	65+	0.16***	0.06 - 0.44
Social class	UUMM - R		
	LML	1.26	0.89 - 1.76

* p < .05   ** p < .01   *** p <.001

R – reference category
UUMM – Upper/Upper-Middle/Middle   LML – Lower-Middle/Lower

Data Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey 2016

Table 5a: Intersectional discrimination at the workplace – two marginalized groups

Interactions	Reference groups	Odds ratio	Confidence interval (95%)
Two groups			
Female **x** Indigenous	Male **x** Non-Indigenous	2.61***	1.89 – 3.62
Female **x** Disability	Male **x** No disability	2.16**	1.29 – 3.59
Female **x** Racialized	Male **x** Non-racialized	1.85***	1.51 – 2.25
Female **x** Older worker	Male **x** All other workers	1.1	0.91 – 1.33
Female **x** Homosexual	Male **x** Heterosexual	1.21	0.51 – 2.82
Female **x** Refugee	Male **x** Non-refugee	1.74	0.97 – 3.10
Female **x** LML class	Male **x** UUMM class	2.01***	1.67 – 2.41
Indigenous **x** Disability	Non-Indigenous **x** No disability	1.32	0.28 – 6.16
Indigenous **x** Older worker	Non-Indigenous **x** All other workers	0.87	0.38 – 2.01
Indigenous **x** LML class	Non-Indigenous **x** UUMM class	2.27**	1.41 – 3.65
Disability **x** Marginalized	No disability **x** Non-marginalized	2.6	0.89 – 7.54
Disability **x** Older worker	No disability **x** All other workers	3.79***	1.86 – 7.72
Disability **x** LML class	No disability **x** UUMM class	3.19**	1.64 – 6.21
Racialized **x** Older worker	Non-racialized **x** All other workers	2.28***	1.58 – 3.33
Racialized **x** Homosexual	Non-racialized **x** Heterosexual	1.0	0.12 – 7.89
Racialized **x** Refugee	Non-racialized **x** Non-refugee	1.66*	1.04 – 2.65
Racialized **x** LML class	Non-racialized **x** UUMM class	2.41***	1.82 – 3.20
Older worker **x** Homosexual	All other workers **x** Heterosexual	0.84	0.19 – 3.54
Older worker x LML class	All other worker **x** UUMM class	1.25	0.92 – 1.70
Refugee **x** LML class	Non-refugee **x** UUMM class	1.97*	1.00 – 3.90

*p <.05   **p <.01   ***p <.001

UUMM – Upper/ Upper-middle/ Middle   LML – Lower-Middle/Lower

Note: The number of cases included in the analysis is not shown here as they vary for each intersectional group.

Data Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey 2016

Table 5b: Intersectional discrimination at the workplace – three and four marginalized groups

Interactions	Reference groups	Odds ratio	Confidence interval (95%)
Three groups			
Female x Indigenous x Disability	Male x Non-indigenous x No disability	1.98	0.39 – 9.9
Female x Indigenous x Older worker	Male x Non-Indigenous x All other workers	1.37	0.48 – 3.88
Female x Indigenous x LML class	Male x Non-Indigenous x UUMM class	2.83**	1.56 – 5.11
Disability x Racialized x Older worker	No disability x Non-racialized x All other workers	3.78	0.63 – 22.76
Disability x Racialized x LML class	No disability x Non-racialized x UUMM class	11.51*	1.04 – 127.40
Racialized x Older worker x LML class	Non-racialized x All other workers x UUMM class	2.09	0.86 – 5.06
Four groups			
Female x Racialized x Old worker x LML class	Male x Non-racialized x All other workers x UUMM class	2.7	0.89 – 8.16
Female x Racialized x Refugee x LML class	Male x Non-racialized x Non-refugee x UUMM class	3.28*	1.12 – 9.51
Female x Indigenous x Disability x Older worker	Male x Non-Indigenous x No disability x All other worker	2.97	0.26 – 32.96

*p <.05   **p <.01

UUMM – Upper/ Upper-middle/ Middle   LML – Lower-Middle/Lower

Note: The number of cases included in the analysis is not shown here as they vary for each intersectional group.

Data Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey 2016