



EXPERIENCES WITH DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM IN EMPLOYMENT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY WITH PARTICIPANTS IN THE CAREER PATHWAYS FOR RACIALIZED NEWCOMER WOMEN PILOT PROJECT

Pathways to Prosperity National Conference – Ottawa, Ontario, November 15, 2022



Gratitude and Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that we are on the traditional unceded territory of the Anishnaabeg nation.

Our acknowledgement of this truth is a small but important part in honouring and showing respect for the diverse histories and cultures of First Nations people.

What we will cover in this session



- Backdrop for the study
- Genesis and rationale for the study
- Highlights from *Experiences with Discrimination and Racism in Employment: An Exploratory Study with Participants in the CPRNW Pilot Project*
- Actionable insights to improve services for newcomer women
- Q&A (at the end of the presentations)



CAREER PATHWAYS FOR
**VISIBLE MINORITY
NEWCOMER WOMEN**

Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

- 3-year pilot (FY18/19-FY21/22) + 1 year extension (FY22/23)
- **Goal:** Test four models of employment services to learn what works to support racialized newcomer women in finding and keeping good quality employment.
- Comprised of 12 interventions being implemented by 8 service partners:

- British Columbia –



- Manitoba –



- Ontario –

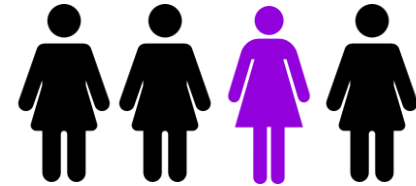


- Nova Scotia –

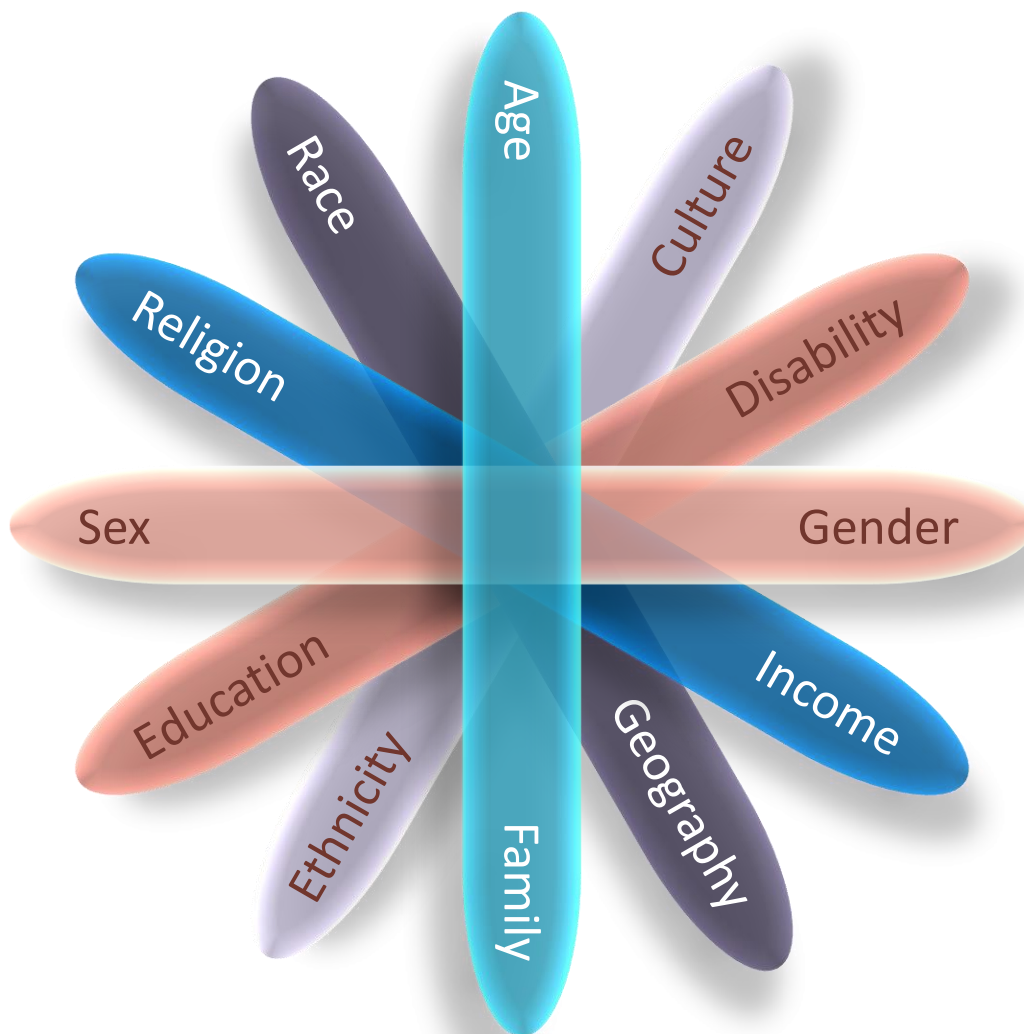


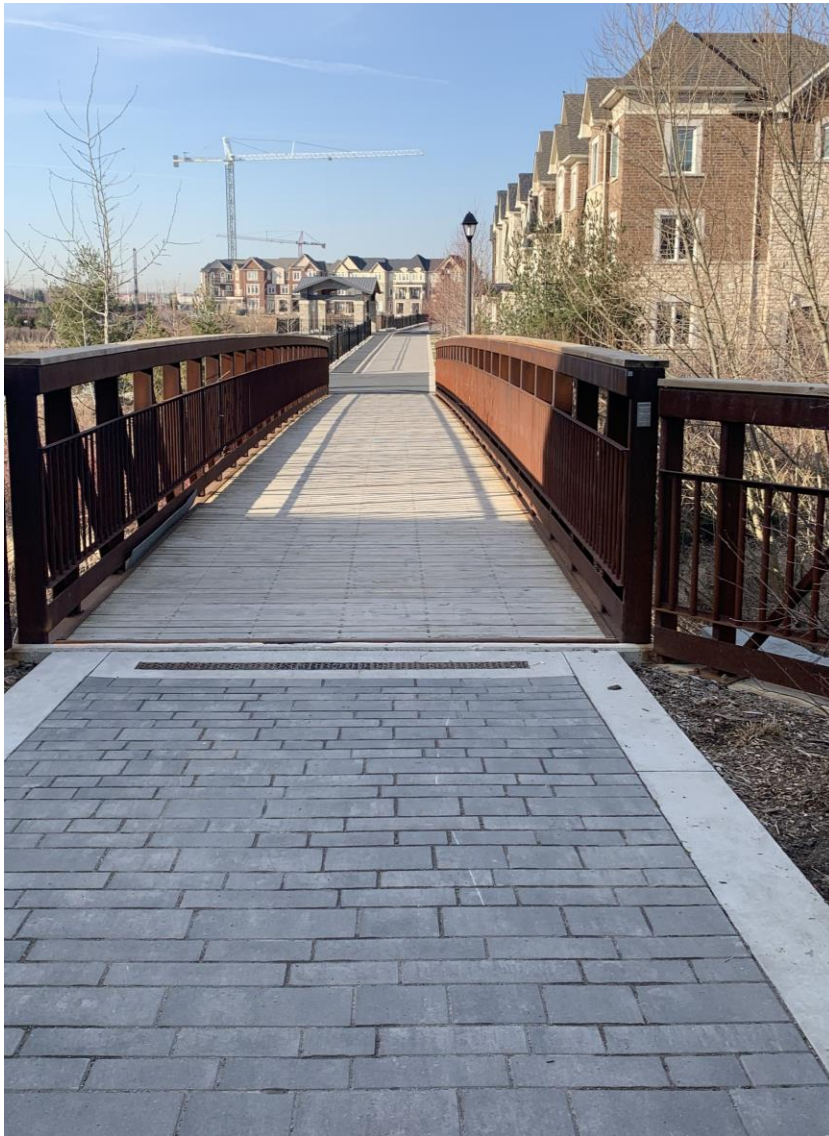
What a recent poll tells us

- Research Co. and Glacier Media report:
- More than one in four women in BC face “significant” (8 per cent) or “moderate” (19 per cent) gender discrimination in the last three years
- Education and age affect the proportion of women who experience significant or moderate gender discrimination—women with university degrees and women ages 18-34 compared to their counterparts
- 53 per cent of respondents say they experienced one of 12 different types of discrimination, including unfair treatment in the workplace, loss of a potential employment opportunity and exclusion from social groups within work



Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+)





“Talent is equally distributed across all sociocultural groups; access and opportunity are not.”

Byars-Winston and Dahlbert, 2019, p. ix

Byars-Winston, A., Dahlberg, M, L., (eds) (2019). A Consensus Study Report of The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine The National Academies Press, Washington, DC

Highlights from



Experiences with
Discrimination
and Racism
in Employment:

*An Exploratory Study with
Participants in the Career
Pathways for Racialized
Newcomer Women Pilot Project*

by Susanna Gurr and Sol Park

Funded by:  Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada / Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada



Study participants



- 13 racialized newcomer women
- In Canada for less than five years
- From eight different countries (India, Nigeria, Ghana, Iran, Jamaica, Jordan, Nepal and Pakistan)
- All university graduates with four holding post-graduate degrees
- Age from 27 to 40 (mean age is 34)
- 8 women are married or in common-law relationships
- 5 women have children
- Most have worked in Canada

WHAT WE HEARD

Overall, the women felt they were welcomed as racialized newcomers in Canada, but there were some nuances

- Newcomers can be treated differently based on locations with low or high ethnic diversity

“So, where there was less diversity, I have always faced those looks and those surprises. ‘Oh, my God, you speak very good English for an Indian’ without knowing that India has English as one of the official languages. So, it’s very weird.”

Participant who immigrated from India

- Experienced microaggressions, which participants thought happened because of their identifies, and often culturally specific

“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 hijab.”

Participant who held both Master and PhD degrees

Health and Employment Services: Access and Discrimination

- Preference to seek health care practitioners of the same ethnic or cultural background.
 - One reason for seeking medical care from physicians who were from their home countries included being able to speak in their mother tongue when talking about physical or mental health. This finding is common in the literature.
- Several women reported experiencing racism or stereotyping when receiving employment services. Instead of the focus being on their assets and upskilling, they felt pushed to take survival jobs.

“I was asked to hand out flyers. I was asked to give directions for the TTC for another position. I was asked to do some filing. None of which I did, because that, of course, leads to depression. Once you’ve studied for that many years, and that’s what employment service agencies are calling you for. I applied for numerous jobs that were on their websites and that I thought would be best for me based on my work experience and my qualifications. And I was never called to be interviewed for one of those positions. It was always an entry level position, even though I came here with over a decade of experience and very qualified.”

Experiences with looking for employment

- All the women indicated some experience with racism and discrimination in their job search.
- Lack of Canadian work experience was a main systemic barrier in finding meaningful employment in Canada
- Besides gender and education, they also mentioned forms of discrimination related to ethnicity, culture and colour that have been found to be the most common forms of discrimination against immigrants.
- Other examples of the microaggressions the women faced in finding meaningful employment as racialized newcomers
 - Having an accent
 - Assumption of low levels of English language skills
 - Treating candidates differently because of religious clothing (e.g., hijab)
- The experiences of our participants support the findings of Nagia and Arora and suggest the intersection of gender, racialization and newcomer status tends to amplify the barriers to employment for newcomers.



Mixed experiences in the Canadian workplace related to discrimination and racism

- Most participants who are currently employed said they are happy in their current workplaces and have not experienced or perceived any unfair treatment as racialized newcomer women.
- According to the women, some factors that contributed to a positive work environment included a large number of employees, an ethnically diverse workforce and a workplace with many women colleagues and supervisors

“There are different colours of every human on this planet. So, it’s going to be very difficult to feel left out because you look to your right, you see somebody who looks like you. You look to your left; you see somebody who talks like you. You look to your back; you see somebody who is just like you. So you feel really, really at home.”

Mixed experiences in the Canadian workplace related to discrimination and racism - Cont

- Negative workplace environments due to poor inclusivity practices
 - A few participants did not feel socially included with their colleagues because of language barriers or lack of knowledge about the topic of conversation

“I find that especially at the workplace, I don’t have a lot to contribute because I don’t have a lot of local knowledge. I have a language barrier. Sometimes I can’t understand questions, or they speak too fast in the group. So sometimes I stay very quiet and I feel I don’t have any contribution in group work.”

Mixed experiences in the Canadian workplace related to discrimination and racism - Cont

Other examples provided include:

- Microaggressions from customers in the workplace--comments from customers over the phone:
 - *“Where are you from?”*
 - *“Can I speak to someone from this country?”*
- Microaggressions from supervisors/managers

Mixed experiences in the Canadian workplace related to discrimination and racism - Cont

- Most participants were in entry level positions and did not have much Canadian work experience at the time of the discussion; their experience may differ over time
- One participant, despite being happy in her current workplace and not perceiving racism or discrimination foresaw barriers when she's ready to advance her career

“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.”

Effects on well-being

- Experiences with discrimination and racism affected the women's mental health—they expressed feelings of sadness and frustration and lower confidence and self-esteem

“So going to work every day, I fear going to work. You know when you open your eyes in the morning and you’ve been sleeping and then you have to go to work. I just have these things like this string is pulling my hat.”



Coping strategies

Two strategies came up in the discussion:

- 1) Overt resistance by being vocal
- 2) Covert forms of resistance
 - For example, changing identifies to avoid unfair treatments (e.g., removing higher credentials from resumes or anglicizing names)

Feeling disempowered at work but needing to move on

“I thought about it for just one minute, and that was the end. That’s the first thing you have to do, because the moment you keep on thinking someone has said something to you or you don’t feel good about something, then it takes a toll down your day, your week, the whole month and then you just feel shattered inside. So I didn’t want that to spoil my day. I just thought, whatever. And I just moved on with my life.”

Implications for policy

- Don't fix the women, fix the system. Solutions need to address systemic barriers to employment linked to discrimination and racism and not just on the personal barriers newcomer women may have.
- Be an anti-racist organization – like diversity and inclusion, it's a process, a journey requiring commitment from the organization and employees
- Inclusivity and diversity training – organization-wide approach and delivered to all levels in the organization
- Anti-racism and discrimination training to build awareness (e.g., unconscious bias)

Implications for program and practice

- Program design (e.g., recognize the assets and unique experiences of racialized newcomer women)
- Incorporate a strength base approach
- Safe places for tough conversations
- Training on employee rights
- Build awareness to recognize discrimination and racism in workplaces and strategies to address them

Actions we took from the findings

- We have taken a closer look at the CPRNW surveys from an anti-racism and discrimination lens in order to identify areas to collect specific data, providing evidence to support meaningful conversations for action for systemic changes.
- We have enhanced and added questions with this perspective to the surveys, including an additional module to look at discrimination in looking for work and in workplaces, as well as the individual consequences of these actions.
- We are committed to seeking and/or developing questions that collect information on discrimination and racism in ways that are relevant to racialized newcomer women.
- We will be conducting smaller group discussions or interviews that may work better to deal with sensitive issues and ensure trauma-informed practices are used to facilitate the discussions.

Reflecting on actionable insights

What change can you make to reduce or remove systematic barriers to delivering employment and/or settlement services to racialized newcomer women?

Questions and Follow-up Details

Project website: <https://cpvmnw.ca/>

The screenshot shows the website header with the logo for Career Pathways for Visible Minority Newcomer Women (CPVMNW) and navigation links: HOME, PROJECT OVERVIEW, SERVICE PARTNERS, REPORTS, and RESOURCES. The main content area features a large image of two women shaking hands, with the title 'Experiences with Discrimination and Racism in Employment: An Exploratory Study with Participants in the CPRNW Pilot Project' overlaid. A 'VIEW REPORT' button is visible below the title. The footer includes the text 'ABOUT THE PROJECT' and 'The Career Pathways for Visible Minority Newcomer Women (CPVMNW) Pilot Project is a... Co-leading research project'.

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