



L'OBSERVATOIRE DES INÉGALITÉS
RACIALES AU QUÉBEC

NEWSLETTER N° 2 – EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

1-INTRODUCTION

While statistics on employment inequality and discrimination based on racial identity provide a clear perspective on the gaps that need to be bridged, they do not capture the experiences of those who live through them. Discrimination is illegal in all aspects of public life, including in the areas of housing (apartment rental), services, transportation, in public places (shops, restaurants, hotels, schools, hospitals and churches), within legal documents (contracts, collective agreements, pension plans, etc.) and, of course, in employment (during the prospecting and hiring process, in terms of salaries, vocational training, promotion or transfer etc.); which is the subject of this study.

As we showed in our first study on the review of indicators of discrimination in the workplace in Quebec, a number of striking facts emerged in light of how salary gaps between recent immigrants and non-immigrants have changed over time, showing that the average hourly wage for recent immigrants is much lower than the wages of Canadians residing in Quebec; or that racial discrimination against visible minorities in the workplace varies according to the origin of the individuals targeted. It follows, logically from the literature then, that in this study, which was carried out by our team among residents of Quebec, our goal is to describe racialized people and immigrants' experiences and perceptions of racism in looking for work and in the workplace. Second, we gauge the opinions of residents of Quebec on discrimination as perceived in the province.

Clearly, with this study, we catalog different types of discrimination, including their impacts on the general well-being of the targeted individuals, as well as these individuals' reactions to discriminatory behavior. A questionnaire, designed to collect quantitative data using open and closed questions, was developed and distributed online to 137 people. Their answers help us to paint a portrait of how racial discrimination is experienced and perceived in the workplace.

2-METHODOLOGY

A call for participation in this study was distributed to members of our project partners' networks. Groups and associations of migrants and expatriate workers in Quebec were also invited to answer the questionnaires through social media networks, in particular via Facebook. The call invited anyone aged 18 or over and residing in Quebec, who had experienced racial discrimination in the workplace, regardless of their legal status, to participate. Participants were informed of the study's objectives and of the fact that no personal identifying information would be retained. The questionnaire was, therefore, completely anonymous, and, at the end of the collection period (between December 1, 2021 and February 15, 2022), a total of 137 individuals had participated.

The questionnaire included forty questions relating, among other things, to discriminatory experiences (their frequency and motive), the follow-up (complaints, answers obtained) and the stresses that victims may have felt due to minority identity status (the feeling of having to do more, to be model workers, to accept work for which one is overqualified, etc.). Questions relating to socio-demographic data (such as the age and sex of the respondent), economic indicators (such as employment status, the respondent's field of work), biographical information, migration route and information about the professional trajectory of each participant made it possible to contextualize the information collected.

3-Analysis of the results

What follows is a presentation of some results of the study. The results revolve around opinions on the social climate, that is to say the perception that participants have of the way in which society (government, public opinion, employers) positions itself in relation to racial discrimination in hiring and in the workplace.

3.1-Participants socio-demographic profile

Participants included 86 women (63%) and 51 men (37%); 33 individuals aged 18 to 34 (24%), 50 aged 35 to 44 (36%), 32 aged 45 to 54 (23%) and 19 aged 55 and over (14%); 127 members of racialized minority groups (93%); 118 immigrants (86%); 45 Christians (33%), 41 Muslims (30%) and 48 who said they have no religious denomination (35%); 129 have university education (94%). In terms of the participants' ethnic origin, 30% of the immigrants who participated are of Latin American origin, followed by 29% who are of Arab origin (see Table 1), 17% are Black, followed by 3.4% who are from South East Asia.

Table 1: Absolute and relative frequency of participants by migratory status according to their ethnic origin

Ethnic origin of the participant	Migratory Status				
	Immigrant	Non migrant	Total	Immigrant (%)	Non migrant (%)
African, Maghrebian Berber	1		1	0.8	0.0
Arab	35	2	37	29.7	10.5
Arab, Human :)	1		1	0.8	0.0
Arab, South Asian	1		1	0.8	0.0
Asian	1	2	3	0.8	10.5
Asian, Adopted	1		1	0.8	0.0
Berber (Amazigh)	1		1	0.8	0.0
White, who passes for Arab or Latino		1	1	0.0	5.3
Caucasian	1		1	0.8	0.0
Indo-European (male)	1		1	0.8	0.0
Indo-European (female)	1		1	0.8	0.0
I am a French Quebecer who has converted to Islam (I wear a hijab)		1	1	0.0	5.3
Latin American	36	5	41	30.5	26.3
Latin American, Ital-Latino	1		1	0.8	0.0
Latin American, First Nations, Métis, Indigenous	2		2	1.7	0.0
Maghrebian	1		1	0.8	0.0
Black	21	6	27	17.8	31.6
Black, White	1		1	0.8	0.0
Black, Mixed race (White (France), Black (Mozambique-Madagascar), South Asian (India)	1		1	0.8	0.0
Black, First Nations, Mixed Race, Indigenous	1		1	0.8	0.0
North African (Moroccan, I do not identify as Arab)	1		1	0.8	0.0
South Asian	4		4	3.4	0.0
No answer	5	2	7	4.2	10.5
Total	118	19	137	100.0	100.0

Source: Online survey, February 2022

3.2-Participants level of education attained and their employment status

Analysis of Table 2, below, reveals that among the immigrant populations who participated in the study, 63% hold either a master's degree or a Ph.D. 30% have obtained a baccalaureate, followed by 3% who have finished CEGEP. Moreover, the employment situation varies according to the immigration status of the participant. Therefore, the first finding that we note is that the majority of participants who answered our questionnaire hold full-time jobs. Thus, among the immigrants who participated in the study, 72% hold a full-time job compared to 90% of Canadian participants. The proportion of Canadians who participated in the study and who work part-time is relatively lower (5%) than that of immigrant populations (11%) with 2.5% of the latter who are unemployed compared to 5% of the category non-migrants (Table 3).

Table 2: Distribution of participants by migration status according to the highest level of education attained.

Highest Level of Study Attained	Migratory Status				
	Immigrant	Non migrant	Total	Immigrants	Non migrant
Bachelor's Degree	36	9	45	30.5	47.4
Cegep	4		4	3.4	0.0
Masters, Doctorate or professional diploma	75	9	84	63.6	47.4
High School (including professional training)	3	1	4	2.5	5.3
Total	118	19	137	100.0	100.0

Source: Online survey, February 2022

Table 3: Distribution of participants by migration status according to their employment situation.

Employment situation	Migratory status				
	Immigrants	Non migrants	Total	Immi-grants (%)	Non migrants (%)
Self employed	1	0	1	0.8	0.0
Full time, non-permanent employee	1	0	1	0.8	0.0
Part time employee	13	1	14	11.0	5.3
Full time employee	85	17	102	72.0	89.5
On vacation	2	0	2	1.7	0.0
Student	5	0	5	4.2	0.0
Personal break	1	0	1	0.8	0.0
Full time contractual worker	1	0	1	0.8	0.0
Precarious worker (I work depending on the surplus of classes offered at college)	1	0	1	0.8	0.0
Retired	2	0	2	1.7	0.0
Unemployed	3	1	4	2.5	5.3
Temporary, full time	1	0	1	0.8	0.0
Freelancer (male)	1	0	1	0.8	0.0
Freelancer (female)	1	0	1	0.8	0.0
Total	118	19	137	100.0	100.0

Source: Online survey, February 2022

3.3-Opinions on the social climate

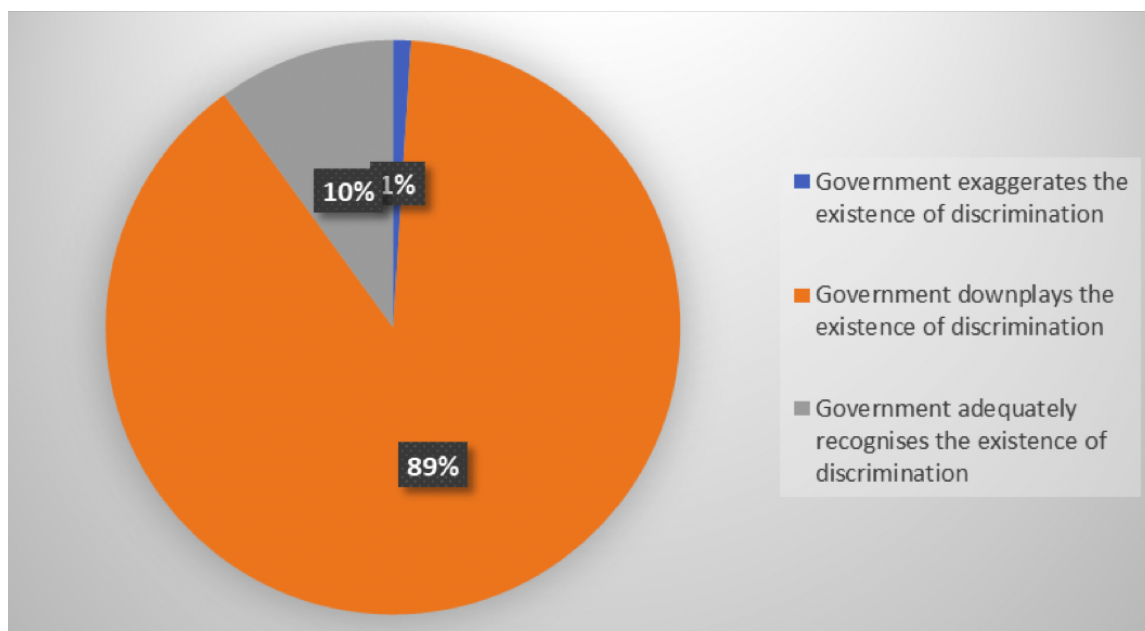
An important aspect of the way that people from racialized minority groups experience systemic discrimination involves their perception of the degree to which the problem is recognized by the government and by the public. Discrimination that manifests in subtle and indirect ways victimizes people two times, because the targeted person feels responsible for bringing the discriminatory situation's existence to light and for explaining its damaging effects. If the person in question

feels that their experiences are not believed by the majority population, the damage caused is even greater, especially on the subjective level. In addition, when society does not adequately support people who experience discrimination in their individual quests for justice - to get fair working conditions, to get inappropriate behavior sanctioned, to get compensation for harm suffered, to redress inadequate norms and practices - systemic barriers are more likely to stay in place. Indeed, each time an incidence of discrimination is recognized and redressed is an exemplary gesture and, in this sense, is a collective validation of the experiences and claims brought forward by people from racialized minority groups.

To take this aspect into account, we asked a series of questions on how the government, public opinion and society in general (with a focus on employment fields) should be perceived with regards to discrimination (Graphs 1 and 2). The first two questions focus on the degree of recognition of the phenomenon: do the government and public opinion exaggerate, minimize or adequately recognize discrimination in Quebec? The answers are overwhelmingly in the direction of considering that the issue is minimized (9 participants out of 10). Even if one could expect to collect this type of opinion, given the objective of this study and the fact that its participants are undoubtedly concerned by the question of racism, it is nevertheless interesting to observe such a quasi-consensus. Of course, our sample does not claim to be representative of the racialized population of Quebec. However, the fact that almost all of the participants in this study express a feeling of not being listened to by the rest of society and its leaders is in itself a reality that we should pay attention to.

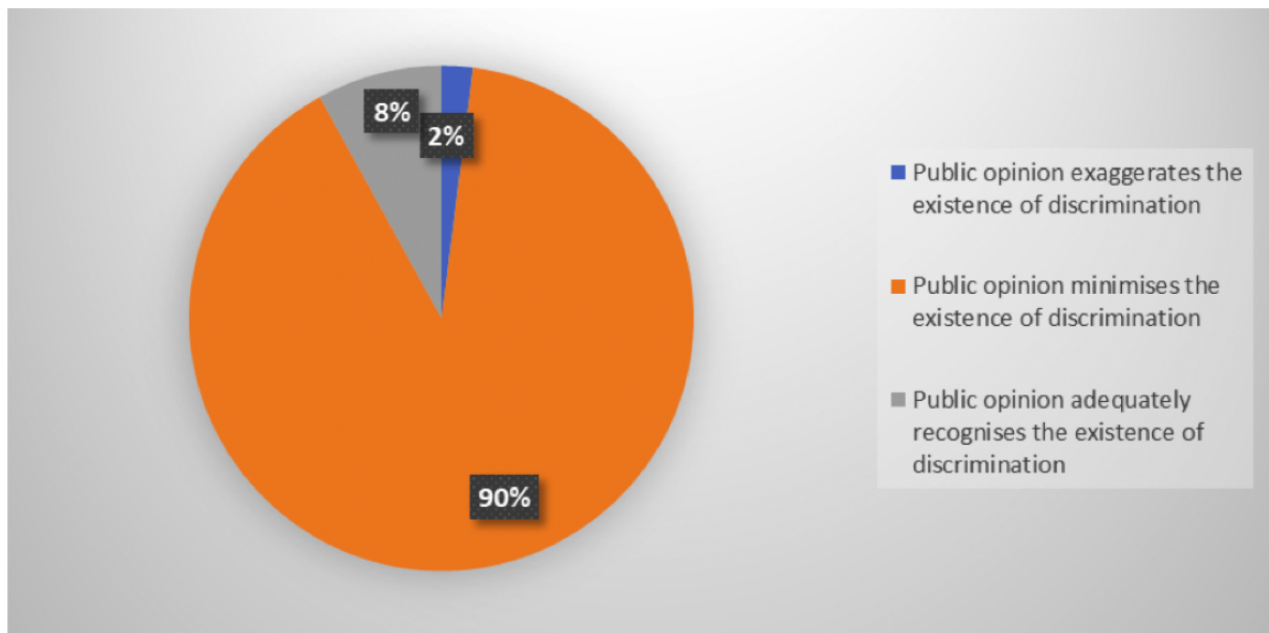
Graph 3 represents participants' level of agreement with several statements that refer to the additional stresses that racialized minority people are subject to in their daily lives and, in particular, at work. The answers are very much in line with the previous results: not only are visible or racialized ethnic minorities more likely to be victims of discrimination (82%), but they are forced to work harder to integrate at work than others (74%), they bear the stress of being model employees for fear of punitive consequences or losing their jobs (72%) and they experience more job insecurity than white people or people from white minority groups (68%). Clearly, about 7 out of 10 participants believe that a person from a racialized minority is generally held to higher job requirement standards when compared to members of the majority. It goes without saying that these requirements are linked, on the one hand, to the prejudices that many people have about them (feeling that they are, by default, due to their identity, less competent, less integrated etc.) On the other hand, when employers judge racialized employees, these workers can be deskilled, meaning they can be assigned to positions or tasks for which they are overqualified.

Graph 1 - Agreement with the statements



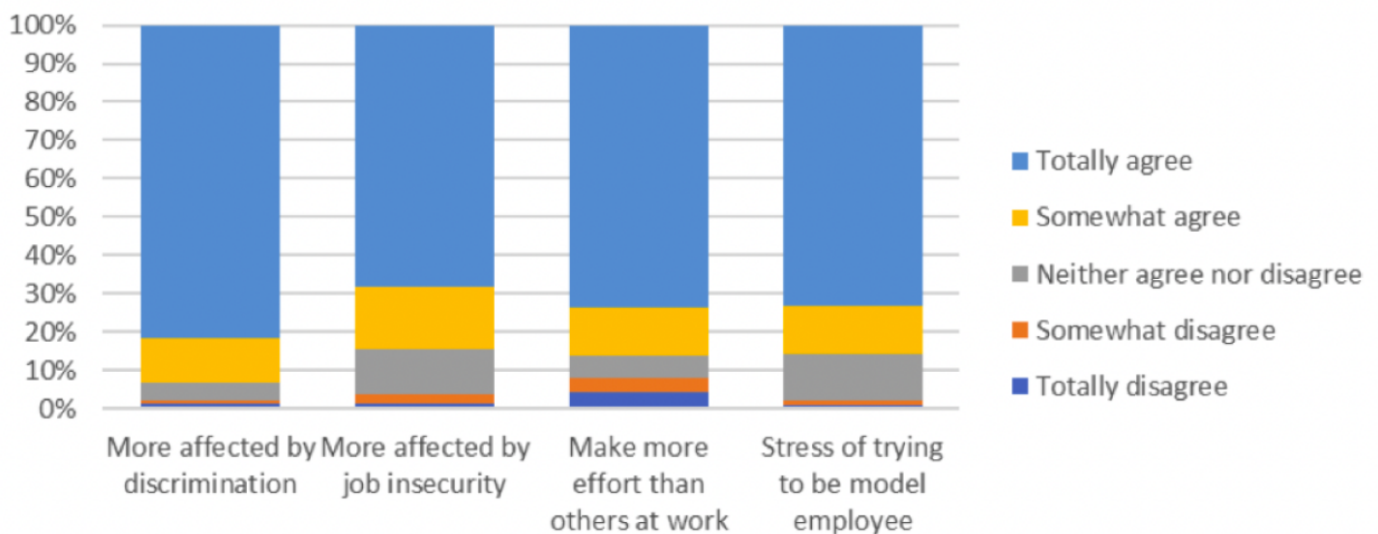
Source: Online survey, February 2022

Graph 2- Agreement with the statements (N=137)



Source: Online survey, February 2022

Graph 3 - Agreement with the statements about “people from visible or ethnic minorities” (N=137)



Source: Online survey, February 2022

3.4-Perception and experiences of discrimination in the workplace

Systemic discrimination occurs through the confluence of a number of factors, with the effect of reducing members racialized ethnic minorities' access to opportunities that are supposedly open to all on a meritocratic basis. The workplace is particularly affected by these processes, as employers seek to fill vacant positions, assign tasks and remunerate employees based on the value of each employees' work. Obviously, if judgments about skills and work performance are

biased by stereotypes (or even intercultural communication difficulties), the situation turns out to be unfair to the people being stereotyped (or those who are assessed incorrectly due to cultural differences).

This is why we wanted to understand the impact that these barriers have as they are experienced by the participants in our study. We only retained the answers from non-white people in order to understand the phenomenon better. In concrete terms, we asked them the following question: If you are devalued in the workplace, what factors are involved? Among 127 racialized people, 100 answered the question by indicating at least one area where they felt devalued (which means that 79% feel devalued at work).

Answering the question, «Have you ever experienced discrimination in your current job?» Table 4 reveals the disparities between the immigrant population who are residents and their Canadian counterparts. Thus, 53.4% of respondents born outside of Canada and residing in Quebec unambiguously state that they have suffered discrimination in their current job, compared to 32% who declared that they have not suffered any in their current job, with 12% who are not sure. Of note is that these proportions are at the expense of immigrants when compared to the category of non-immigrant participants (born in Canada) with a proportion of people who declared that they had never experienced discrimination relatively higher in the latter group (42% versus 32%).

Table 4: Distribution of participants by immigration status according to the assertion of having experienced discrimination in their current job

Have you ever experienced discrimination in your current job?	Migratory status				
	Immigrant	Non-Migrant	Total	Immigrant (%)	Non-Migrant (%)
I am not sure	14	2	16	11.9	10.5
No	38	8	46	32.2	42.1
Yes	63	9	72	53.4	47.4
(empty)	3		3	2.5	0.0
Total	118	19	137	100.0	100.0

Source: Online survey, February 2022

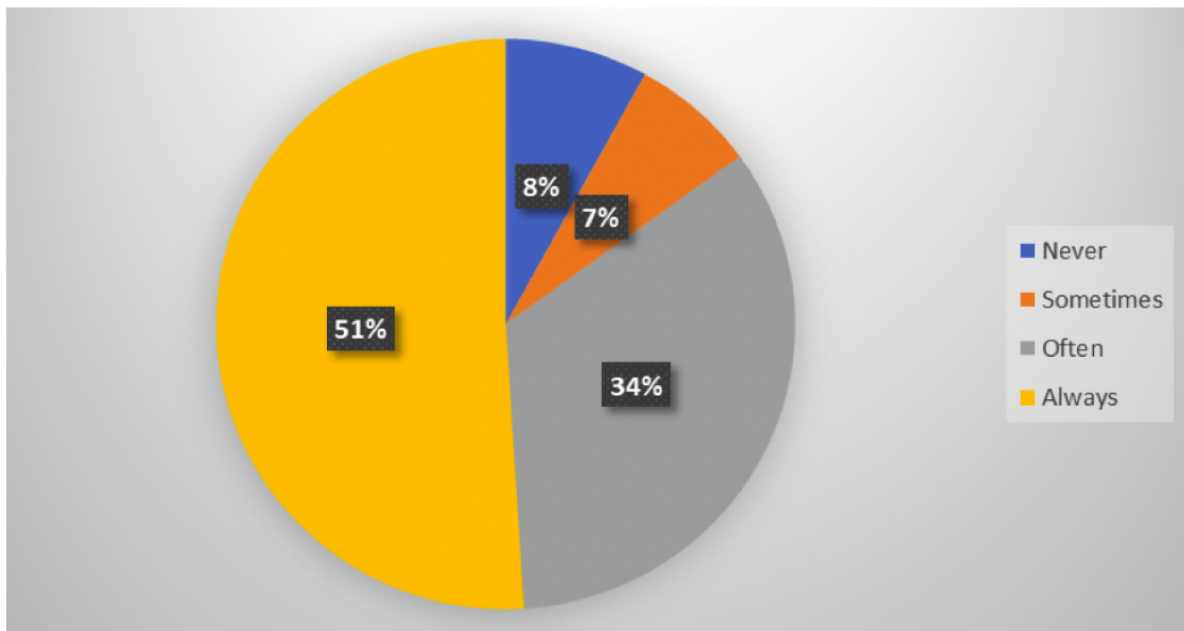
Figure 4 shows that prejudice plays a major role in devaluation, a factor mentioned by more than 7 in 10 people. The fact that diplomas obtained abroad are not adequately recognized is mentioned by half of the participants, while non-recognition of professional experience obtained abroad and deskilling (which implies a downgrading in relation to the responsibilities entrusted to the worker) are factors indicated by 4 out of 10 participants. Graph 5 helps us complete the portrait, showing us the distribution of answers to the following question: “Do you feel the need to do more than others to prove that you deserve your position?” Half of racialized participants answered that this is always the case, and a third of them said that it happens to them often. Once again, regardless of the representativeness of our sample, what we observe is a phenomenon that is worthy of interest: racialized peoples’ experience testifies to a strong feeling of injustice when their contribution to a workplace is evaluated, which goes directly to the heart of the merit principle. The idea of having to constantly prove one’s worth shows how the deficit mentality forces people to try to fill the gap between his/her true capacities and the prejudices that are projected on him/her.

Graph 4 – Proportion (%) of respondents who said they agreed with the statements below (N=100)



Source: Online survey, February 2022

Graph 5 – Agreement with the statement «Do you feel the need to do more than others to prove that you deserve your place?» (N=127)



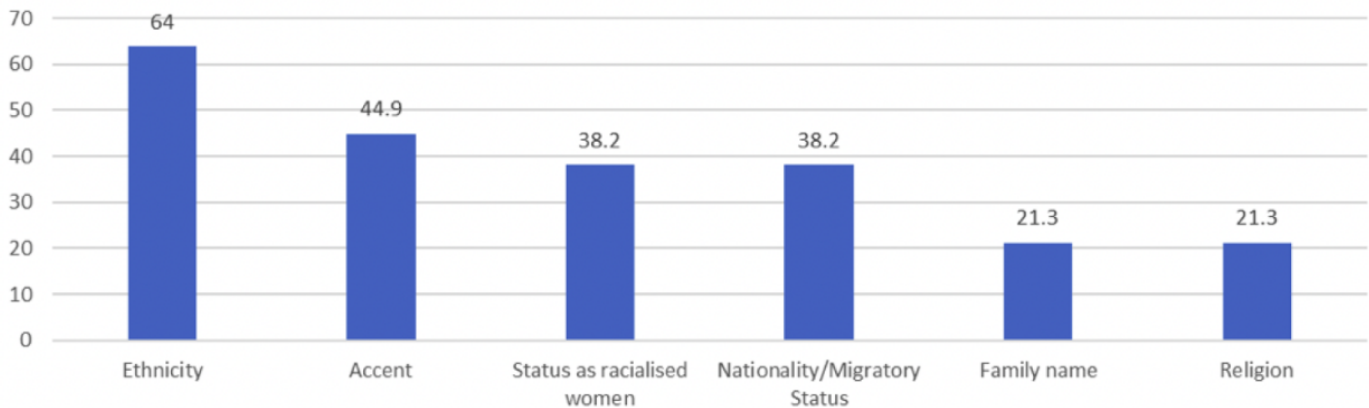
Source: Online survey, February 2022

3.5-Forms of discrimination

Discrimination in the workplace is manifested under many forms, both in terms of the motive (apparent or implied) and the way it is expressed. We asked participants to give their opinion by asking them the following questions, among others: "In your experience, what have been the grounds for discrimination against you? In what way(s) has discrimination against you been manifested directly or indirectly?" We offered a list of possible answers, while allowing participants to provide their own answers in their own words. Figures 6 and 7 present the main answers obtained from people who identify as non-white (showing the percentage of each ground or modality of discrimination out of the total of cases that mentioned at least one ground or modality). The study explores this dimension along with other questions and variables, but we want to describe here some general trends that already offer us food for thought.

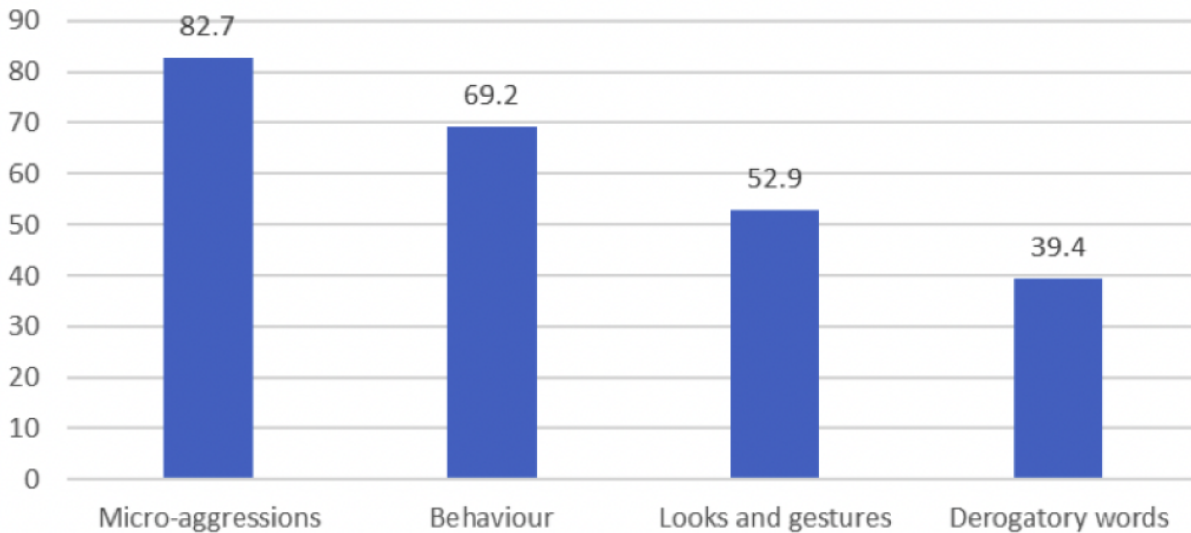
We observe that, not surprisingly, ethnicity is the reason most frequently mentioned in connection with the experience of discrimination. However, it is interesting to note that having an accent appears as another common reason for discrimination. National origin, migration status, surname and religion are also mentioned among the main reasons. It should be noted that the status of "racialized woman" highlights an intersectional dynamic whose effects are particularly virulent and emerges with considerable weight in the answers. In reference to the ways in which discrimination manifests itself, we see that microaggressions (jokes or imitations, negative innuendo, repeated criticism) the forms mentioned the most. Behaviors (ignoring, humiliating, discrediting) are also frequent, as well as derogatory or offensive words, and we noted that contemptuous looks or other non-verbal gestures characterize more than half of the lived experiences of discrimination mentioned. The importance of these subtle manifestations, which are difficult to document empirically and to prove (even more so from a legal point of view), forces victims to make painful choices: to ignore the behaviors (even if their repetitious nature and accumulation can have harmful psychological consequences) or to attempt to sensitize people who believe that the jokes, gestures, etc. are harmless and innocent.

Graph 6 – frequency (%) of respondents by grounds of discrimination suffered at current job (N=89)



Source: Online survey, February 2022

Graph 7 – distribution (%) of respondents according to the nature of the discrimination suffered (N=104)



Source: Online survey, February 2022

4-CONCLUSION

This study is the result of the survey of 137 people residing in Quebec that our observatory carried out and which focused on experiences and perceptions related to discrimination in the workplace. The main results that emerged, based on the perception of the vast majority of participants, show that people from visible or racialized ethnic minorities are highly likely to be victims of discrimination in hiring processes and in the workplace. This population feels that they have to do more than others to be seen as valuable workers. Seven out of ten participants (70%), the vast majority, therefore, believe that prejudice exists about their performance at work. Nearly half think that their diplomas and experience, obtained prior to their arrival in Quebec, are not adequately recognized and that they are given fewer responsibilities due to their visible or ethnic minority status. The main factors in discrimination mentioned by participants relate to ethnicity, language, status of women and, to a lesser extent, surname or religion. Discrimination manifests itself primarily through microaggressions, looks and gestures at work, derogatory words. For the vast majority of participants (nine out of ten), the Government of Quebec and public opinion minimize the existence and extent of discrimination in Quebec society.



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