



WINS Canada: Racial, Gender and Disability-Related COVID-19 Employment Inequities 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Land Acknowledgment

WINS Canada acknowledges that we live and work on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples.

Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.

Background and Rationale

Canada was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Canadians from several cross-sections of the country's entire population were impacted considerably by the economic and social burdens brought on by employment and health insecurities.

Industries such food service, hospitality, retail, and other non-union jobs were hardest hit because of shutdowns, restricted commercial operations, and legal mandates (Lemieux et al., 2020). Many of the jobs affected had a high proportion of women job holders. A large proportion were low-paying as well.

What the numbers tell us

- 34% of front-line and essential service workers identify as visible minorities, compared with 21% in other sectors. (Government of Canada, 2021a).
- From January 2020 to January 2021, the unemployment rate increased by 5.3 percentage points among Black Canadians, compared to 3.7 percentage points among non-visible minority Canadians (excluding Indigenous people).
- The unemployment rate among Black Canadians (13.1%) was about 70% higher than that among non-visible minority Canadians (7.7%) (OECD, 2022).
- More households experienced a greater division of home care labour as a result of the pandemic (Leclerc, 2020).

What workers want going forward post-pandemic

- Many employees left jobs in search of more meaningful work.
- 60% of workers would prefer to work remotely, 25% would prefer to move to a hybrid format, and only 10% would prefer to go back to the office full time (Thompson, 2022).
- The desire for permanent remote work accounts for approximately 33% of workers' top reasons for searching out new employment.

Our Findings

Background of respondents

- A total of 610 completed responses were collected from April 21 to June 3, 2022.
- 45% identified as being of Canadian ethnicity and 16% as Indigenous Canadian ethnicity.
- 58% were women and 41% were men.
- 68% identified as being a member of a racialized group and 26% stated they had a declared disability.
- 81% were under the age of 44.
- 80% had some form of childcare responsibilities.

Nine main findings

We looked at the impact of COVID-19 for participants on their: (i) incomes, (ii) work day, (iii) amount of time spent on family support, (iv) mental health, (v) relations with their manager, (vi) workplace relations, (vii) transparency of their organization's policies and programs, (viii) perceptions of differential treatment within their organization, and (ix) perceptions of support by their organization. Race as opposed to gender was a key differentiator in seven of these cases, and gender as opposed to race in two cases. Differences in ability were a key differentiator in four cases.

Changes to income

- A negative change in income was more common for racialized survey participants (77% for both women and men) than for non-racialized participants (71% for women and 64% for men).
- A negative change in income was more common for participants with a disability than for those without (82% versus 71%).

Changes to work day and home life

- A negative change in the work day was more common for non-racialized participants (51% for men and 49% for women) than for racialized participants (43% for men and 42% for women),
- An increase in the amount of time spent on family support was more common for racialized participants (74% for both women and men) than for non-racialized participants (67% for women and 68% for men).

Impact to mental health

- A negative impact on mental health was more common for non-racialized participants (63% for men and 61% for women) than for racialized participants (58% for women and 43% for men).

Relationship with manager and workplace relations

- A perceived positive change in relations with their manager was more common for racialized participants (26% for women and 24% for men) than for non-racialized participants (16% for men and 15% for women).
- A perceived positive change in relations with their manager was more common for participants with a disability than for those without (39% versus 16%).
- A perceived negative change in workplace relations was more common for women (26% for non-racialized and 25% for racialized) than for men (20% for both non-racialized and racialized).

Organization's transparency, differential treatment and support

- The perception that their organization was not transparent about their policies and programs to assist in the removal of workplace and COVID-related obstacles was more common for non-racialized participants (71% for men and 73% for women) than for racialized participants (50% for men and 53% for women)
- The perception that their organization was not transparent about their policies and programs to assist in the removal of workplace and COVID-related obstacles was more common for participants without a disability than for those with (69% versus 24%)
- Perceived differential treatment by employers between male identified and female and nonbinary employees was more common for racialized participants (35% for both men and women) than for non-racialized participants (15% for men and 10% for women)
- Perceived differential treatment by employers between male identified and female and nonbinary employees was more common for participants with a disability than for those without (64% versus 16%).
- A perceived increase in support by their organization was more common for men (75% for racialized and 62% for non-racialized) than for women (58% for racialized and 56% for non-racialized)

Conclusions and Future Work

Overall, our survey provided evidence for a blurring of work life into home life. The picture painted by our results has many positive qualities. In general, managers were supportive of the challenges created by COVID and by and large tried to accommodate people equitably regardless of race, gender or declared ability. However, organizations and workplace team relationships did not get the attention needed for real support. Finally, our results align with other empirical evidence that remote work is not all bad; it is a matter of organizations and managers creating optimal hybrid solutions that ensure economic success and enhance work-life balance in the post-COVID age.

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