

THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION

EMPLOYEE DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

A Public Opinion Poll Conducted by The Gallup Organization

with support from:

Kaiser-Permanente

The Society for Human Resource Management

UPS

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INTRODUCTION

Since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and its state and local counterparts have provided leadership in protecting employees from discrimination in the workplace. As a result of that law and its enforcement by those agencies, there have been great changes in the American workplace. To mark the 40th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the creation of the EEOC, The Gallup Organization, The Society for Human Resource Management and two employers, Kaiser-Permanente and UPS, have joined resources to document the perceived situation in the workplace today. These organizations, along with broad and varied expertise from the EEOC, have conducted a survey of employees to explore perceptions of discrimination in the workplace and how those feelings influence performance.

Planning for the survey began in February 2004, and was in the preparation phase for approximately one year before the study went into the field. Gallup conducted telephone interviews with 1,252 adults who were either currently employed, had been employed within the past two years, or were actively seeking employment during the field period. A disproportionate random sampling plan was used to permit breakouts of racial/ethnic minorities; specifically, blacks, Asians, and Hispanics were oversampled. Included in the final analysis were 302 blacks, 310 Hispanics, 104 Asians, 492 whites, and 44 individuals in the “Other” category.

In total, Gallup used 26,148 numbers across the United States to locate the study target population. A 7+7 call design was used, so that each number was dialed up to 7 times to locate the correct individual in the household to complete the study and then up to 7 additional attempts were made to complete the interview with that individual. There were only 468 refusals and 1,123 individuals who failed the screener questions. The average length of the interview was 17 minutes. Additionally, 118 of the interviews were conducted in Spanish. The average length of the Spanish interview was approximately 24.2 minutes.

Incidence rate:	54%
Working number rate:	57%
Response rate:	23%
Contact rate:	67%
Cooperation rate:	35%
Completion rate:	95%

This report discusses the most important findings from the survey.

INCIDENCE OF DISCRIMINATION IN PAST YEAR

Overview

The poll shows that 15% of people employed either full-time or part-time report they have been discriminated against in their workplace, for some reason, in the past 12 months. The basis for the discrimination includes mostly the categories explicitly prohibited by federal law, but some discrimination also includes reasons that are not recognized by the federal government. These include nepotism/favoritism, sexual orientation, language, education, pay, and jealousy. If the figures are adjusted to exclude reasons other than those explicitly prohibited by federal law — gender, race/ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, and religion — the incidence of discrimination drops to 9%.

For purposes of this analysis, however, all reported discrimination will be included. While this number may somewhat overstate actual discrimination, it provides an upward bounded limit. Moreover, respondents may be misclassifying the discriminatory experiences. When they report “favoritism” or “pay” or “language,” for example, it could be that a legal expert would more accurately classify the experiences not in the above categories, but in one of the base categories recognized by federal law. “Language” could indicate discrimination on the basis of national origin, while “favoritism” or “pay” could be reclassified into one of the categories of gender, race, age, disability, or religion. Finally, some states and cities explicitly forbid discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, although the federal government does not.

Thus, the actual rate of discrimination is probably somewhere between the 15% figure, which reflects whatever respondents perceive in their experiences, to a low of 9%, which excludes some experiences that might in fact be illegal under federal, state, or municipal law. The upper bounded limit of 15% will be used in all comparisons, because that number reflects what people perceive. And what people perceive is what influences their feelings and behaviors at work.

Discrimination Compared by Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Age

Among the four racial/ethnic categories of white, black (non-Hispanic), Hispanic, and Asian, whites report the lowest incidence of discrimination at 12%. Asians (31%) and blacks (26%) report the highest rates, while the rate among Hispanics (18%) is half way between whites and blacks.

Table 1. RATES OF DISCRIMINATION COMPARED BY RACE/ETHNICITY, GENDER, AND AGE

	% Yes	Unweighted Sample Size
Overall	15	1022
<u>Race/ethnicity</u>		
White	12	409
Black (non-Hispanic)	26	241
Hispanic	18	256
Asian	31	82
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	9	437
Female	22	585
<u>Race/ethnicity by gender</u>		
White male	3	190
White female	22	219
Black male	26	78
Black female	27	163
Hispanic male	20	120
Hispanic female	15	136
<u>Age</u>		
18-29	11	181
30-39	15	244
40-49	18	280
50-59	17	219
60+	11	81

Overall, women are more than twice as likely to report some type of discrimination as are men — 22% vs. 9%, respectively. But that difference is mostly because white males are far less likely to report discrimination (3%) than are white females (22%).

Black men and women are about equally likely to report discrimination (26% and 27%, respectively), while there is only a slight difference between Hispanic men and women (20% and 15%, respectively). The number of Asians in the survey is too small to report differences by gender.

The poll also shows that discrimination appears somewhat more frequently among people in the 30 to 59 age range than among very young people (under age 30) or among people aged 60 and over. The latter two groups each reflect incidence rates of 11%, compared with 16% to 17% among the middle age categories.

Types (Bases) of Discrimination

More than a quarter of all people reporting discrimination, 26%, say it was based on gender. That is closely followed by race/ethnic discrimination (23%). Age discrimination (17%) is mentioned next most frequently, followed by a non-illegal category of “nepotism” or “favoritism” (12%). Most of the discriminatory experiences reported by white males fall into this category.

Table 2. BASES OF DISCRIMINATION

	% of Responses	% of Cases
Gender	21	26
Race/ethnicity	19	23
Age	14	17
Favoritism/nepotism	10	12
Disability	7	9
Sexual orientation	4	4
Religion	4	4
Language	2	2
Pay	1	1
Jealousy	*	1
Education	*	*
Personality conflict	*	*
Opportunities	*	*
Something else	14	17
Don't know	4	5
Refused	1	1
TOTAL	101 [^]	122 [#]
Weighted number of responses/cases	193	156
Unweighted number of responses/cases	230	171
* Less than 0.5%		
[^] Does not total 100% because of rounding error		
[#] Totals to more than 100% because multiple responses measured.		

Discrimination based on disability ranks fifth at 9%, with sexual orientation and religion each mentioned by 4%. A full 17% of people reporting discrimination said it was based on something other than the categories shown in the table.

Issues of Discrimination

The two issues that are most likely to be the subjects of discrimination are promotion and pay, mentioned by 33% and 29%, respectively, of the people reporting discrimination. Getting a job (13%) and general treatment (11%) — including sexual and other harassment — round out the top four issues. They account for 72% of all issues mentioned.

TABLE 3. ISSUES OF DISCRIMINATION

	% of Responses	% of Cases
Getting a promotion	28	33
Pay or salary	24	29
Getting a job	11	13
Harassment/way treated	9	11
Working conditions	3	3
Assignment	2	2
Discharge	1	1
Health condition	*	1
Opinions/suggestions	*	*
Training opportunities	*	*
Something else	16	19
Don't know	*	*
Refused	5	5
TOTAL	99 [^]	117 [#]
Weighted number of responses/cases	184	156
Unweighted number of responses/cases	215	171

* Less than 0.5%
[^] Does not total 100% because of rounding error
[#] Totals to more than 100% because multiple responses measured.

Other issues include working conditions (mentioned by 3% of people reporting discrimination), the type of assignment people are given (2%), being discharged (1%), and health conditions (1%).

Almost a fifth of all people reporting discrimination said the issue of discrimination was something other than those listed in the table.

WORKPLACE DISCRIMINATION AND DIVERSITY POLICY

Overview

Not surprisingly, people who report incidents of discrimination are much less likely than other employees to be satisfied with their jobs, to continue to work at the same place, and to recommend their companies to others. Moreover, companies that adopt diversity programs, to include policies that attempt to prevent discrimination, apparently instill in their employees greater satisfaction with the workplace, likelihood of retention, and loyalty than companies that make little or no effort in this area.

Effects of Discrimination on Satisfaction, Retention, and Loyalty

Few people who have experienced discrimination say they are “extremely satisfied” with their “place of employment as a place to work.” Just 10% who have experienced discrimination give their company that rating, compared with 41% who have not experienced discrimination.

TABLE 4. SATISFACTION, RETENTION, AND LOYALTY COMPARED BY EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION

	Experienced Discrimination? (Q31)	
	Yes %	No %
Satisfied with company Extremely satisfied (5)	10	41
Stay with company Strongly agree (5)	46	71
Recommend company Strongly agree (5)	17	47
Approximate sample size (unweighted)	171	846

Because of the difficulty in getting new jobs, experience with discrimination does not necessarily mean the person will leave — though retention is significantly lower among people reporting discrimination than other employees. While 71% of employees not reporting discrimination expect to be working with the same company the next year, only 46% of discrimination victims make that prediction for themselves.

The effect of discrimination can be seen especially in the percentage of people who would recommend their company to others. Just 17% who have experienced discrimination agree “strongly” that they would make a recommendation, compared with 47% of other employees. If the top two boxes on the five-point recommendation scale are included, the results show that 30% of discrimination victims might still recommend their companies to others, but that is less than half the 67% of other employees who would make a recommendation.

Company Diversity Policy

Gallup included in the survey a seven-question index that measures employees’ evaluation of their company’s efforts to provide diversity and to protect people from discrimination. The questions included:

- Awareness of company efforts to create diversity in the workplace
- Belief that the company is striving for diversity
- Evaluation of the company’s diversity efforts to make an acceptable workplace environment
- Belief that workforce diversity benefits the company
- Trust in senior management to deal with diversity issues
- Belief that head of company is committed to diversity
- Confidence that employer would resolve discrimination in fair manner

Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each issue on a five-point scale, and the items were summed to form a Diversity Policy Score. That score was divided into thirds. People’s feelings about their workplace are compared by the tier in which their company’s Diversity Policy Score falls — the upper tier indicating the highest level of agreement with each of the questions, and the bottom tier the lowest level of agreement. The results show that company satisfaction, retention, and loyalty are all highly related to a company’s Diversity Policy Score.

TABLE 5. SATISFACTION, RETENTION, AND LOYALTY COMPARED BY COMPANY'S DIVERSITY POLICY SCORE

(Among People NOT Experiencing Discrimination)

	Company's Diversity Policy Score		
	Upper Tier %	Middle Tier %	Lower Tier %
Satisfaction with company Extremely satisfied (5)	61	34	23
Stay with company Strongly agree (5)	84	69	59
Recommend company Strongly agree (5)	71	42	21
Approximate sample size (unweighted)	302	348	312

Among people who have not been discriminated against in the past year and whose Diversity Policy Score for their company is in the upper tier, 61% are “extremely” satisfied with their workplace, compared with 34% of people whose score falls into the middle tier, and just 23% of people in the bottom tier.

Retention is not as dramatically related to the Diversity Policy Score, likely because of the difficulty in transferring jobs. Still, there is a clear decline in retention from the top-tier companies (84% retention) to the middle-tier (69%) and lower-tier companies (59%).

The effect of a company’s diversity policy is most evident in employees’ willingness to recommend their own company to others. While 71% of people with scores in the top tier would be “strongly” willing to recommend their company, that percentage declines to 42% in the middle tier and to just 21% in the bottom tier.

This pattern is evident in each of the questions that constitute the Diversity Policy Score. For example, just being aware of a company’s diversity policy makes a big difference in levels of satisfaction, retention, and loyalty.

TABLE 6. SATISFACTION, RETENTION, AND LOYALTY COMPARED BY AWARENESS OF COMPANY DIVERSITY POLICY

(Among People NOT Experiencing Discrimination)

	Aware of company efforts to create diversity? (Q24)	
	Strongly agree %	Others %
Satisfaction with company Extremely satisfied (5)	50	29
Stay with company Strongly agree (5)	77	64
Recommend company Strongly agree (5)	59	31
Approximate sample size (unweighted)	458	371

People who “strongly agree” that they are aware of their company’s diversity efforts are much more likely to recommend their company to others than those who are less aware (59% vs. 31%), to express satisfaction with their workplace (50% vs. 29%), and to remain working at the company in the following year (77% vs. 64%).

If the company is seen as committed to diversity, employees also give higher ratings on satisfaction, retention, and loyalty.

TABLE 7. SATISFACTION, RETENTION, AND LOYALTY COMPARED BY WHETHER COMPANY COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY

(Among People NOT Experiencing Discrimination)

	Company committed to diversity? (Q25)	
	Strongly agree %	Others %
Satisfaction with company Extremely satisfied (5)	51	28
Stay with company Strongly agree (5)	79	61
Recommend company Strongly agree (5)	61	30
Approximate sample size (unweighted)	428	405

About twice as many employees working in companies that are committed to diversity say they are satisfied and are likely to recommend their company than are employees in companies with less commitment to diversity. Retention is also significantly higher at the companies with a strong commitment to diversity.

An even stronger association is shown between satisfaction, retention, and loyalty with employees' perceptions as to whether the head of their company is committed to diversity. This association shows the importance of having the principal leader of the company take a direct stand on behalf of diversity.

In companies where the company head is clearly committed to diversity, *more than twice* as many employees express high job satisfaction and a high likelihood of recommending their company than in other companies. And retention is almost a third higher.

TABLE 8. SATISFACTION, RETENTION, AND LOYALTY COMPARED BY COMPANY HEAD COMMITTED TO DIVERSITY

(Among People NOT Experiencing Discrimination)

	Company head committed to diversity? (Q29)	
	Strongly agree %	Others %
Satisfaction with company Extremely satisfied (5)	58	24
Stay with company Strongly agree (5)	81	60
Recommend company Strongly agree (5)	65	29
Approximate sample size (unweighted)	411	414

All of these results reinforce the general conclusion — that companies that take the time and effort to develop clear and fair diversity policies benefit both the employees and the company itself.

CONCLUSION

While there is no comparable survey of employee discrimination taken four decades ago, it is clear from other data and polls that significant progress has been made in the past 40 years to reduce race and gender discrimination in general. Both women and blacks have made significant progress in owning their own businesses, and in achieving prominent positions of authority in business and corporations. And the American public today is much more open to leadership roles of blacks and women in government. At all levels of government, such progress is evident.

Symbolic of this change in public attitudes is that today (May30-June 1, 2005, Gallup Poll) 93% of Americans say they would vote for a “well-qualified person for president” nominated by their party “who happened to be black.” In 1965, just 59% said they would vote for a well-qualified person who happened to be “a Negro.” Similarly, a 1963 Gallup Poll showed only 55% of Americans were willing to vote for a well-qualified woman, while 87% would do so today.

Despite major change in public attitudes about race and gender, and despite progress for women and minorities in the workplace, this survey shows that there remains considerable work to eliminate discrimination from the workplace completely. But it also shows that when companies take a proactive effort to establish diversity policies and prevent discrimination, these efforts benefit not just the employees, but the companies as well — by reducing turnover and by projecting the company in a more favorable light through the word-of-mouth of its employees.