

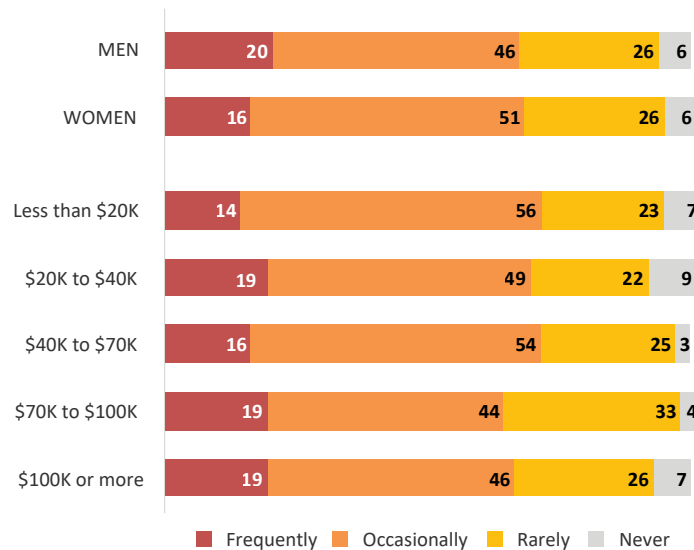


3. INSTITUTIONAL AND INTERPERSONAL RACISM IN DAILY LIFE

Overview

This Chapter examines in more detail how participants' experiences have been affected by race and racism. It addresses participants' perceptions of discrimination toward Black people generally, as well as their own direct experiences of unfair treatment and anti-Black racism, including in specific situations such as in school or in the workplace. It also considers day-to-day experiences of more subtle, but no less serious, forms of unfair treatment that can occur in the public sphere. The Chapter also addresses the issue of how anti-Black racism impacts Black people in the GTA, and how they respond to their experiences of unfair treatment. Finally, the participants were asked about their perception of the Canadian versus the United States context.

(17) Experiencing unfair treatment because you are Black
(by gender and household income)



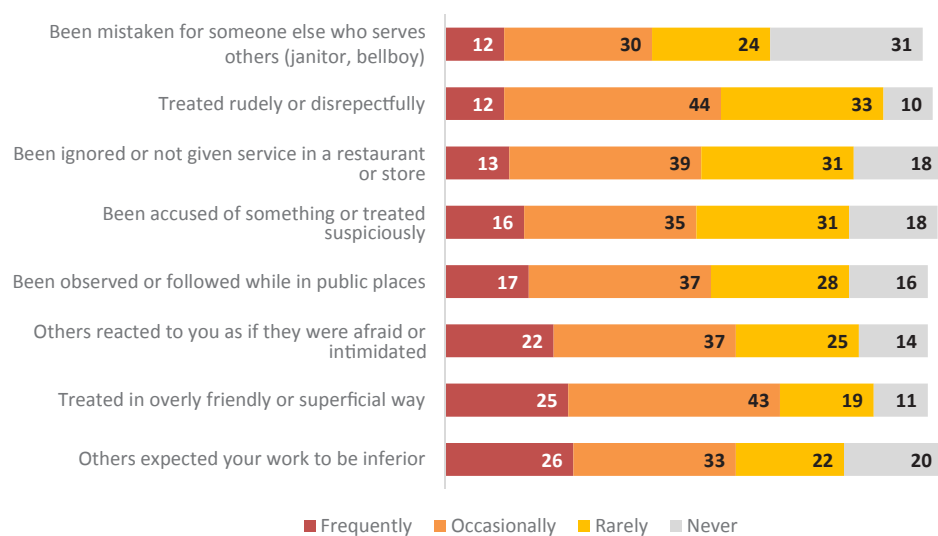


Key Findings

Notwithstanding the diversity of the Black population in the GTA in terms of identities and life experiences, there is a striking commonality of experience when it comes to being treated unfairly because of their race. Two-thirds of BEP participants say they themselves frequently (18%) or occasionally (49%) experience unfair treatment because they are Black, and this is true regardless of background. A majority of BEP participants reports having been treated unfairly because they are Black, regardless of their age, gender, income, educational attainment or country of birth (see Figure 17).

The survey also asked BEP participants about their experience of racism in more subtle ways. Four in five participants experience unfair treatment based on race in one or more forms of micro-aggressions on a common basis. This includes experiences such as having others expect their work to be inferior, being treated in a condescending way, and having frequently had others react to them as if they were afraid or intimidated, in each case because of their race (see Figure 18).

(18) Day-to-day personal experiences because of your race



Although majorities of both men and women say they frequently or occasionally have been treated unfairly because they are Black, their particular experiences differ. Compared with Black women, Black men are more likely to report being treated with suspicion and to mention an experience related to negative interactions with a public institution, notably the police. Compared with Black men, Black women are more likely to mention an experience related to being treated unfairly or being ignored or given poorer service in retail spaces, or to experiencing harassment, exclusion or being undervalued in the workplace.

While most BEP participants say they experience unfair treatment because they are Black, experiences with specific institutions or in specific settings vary.

EDUCATION EXPERIENCES. Only half of participants who attended high school in Canada say that they always or often had positive experiences in high school, such as feeling accepted by teachers (50%) or other students at school (60%), or feeling that school was a welcoming and friendly place (50%) (see Figure 19).³¹



Half (49%) indicate they felt that being Black presented challenges not faced by other students. A large proportion of participants say they “only sometimes” or “never” had these positive high school experiences, and that they also faced challenges at school that others did not because they were Black. Specifically, about four in ten say they either sometimes or never felt accepted by their teachers (37%) or that school was a welcoming place (41%).

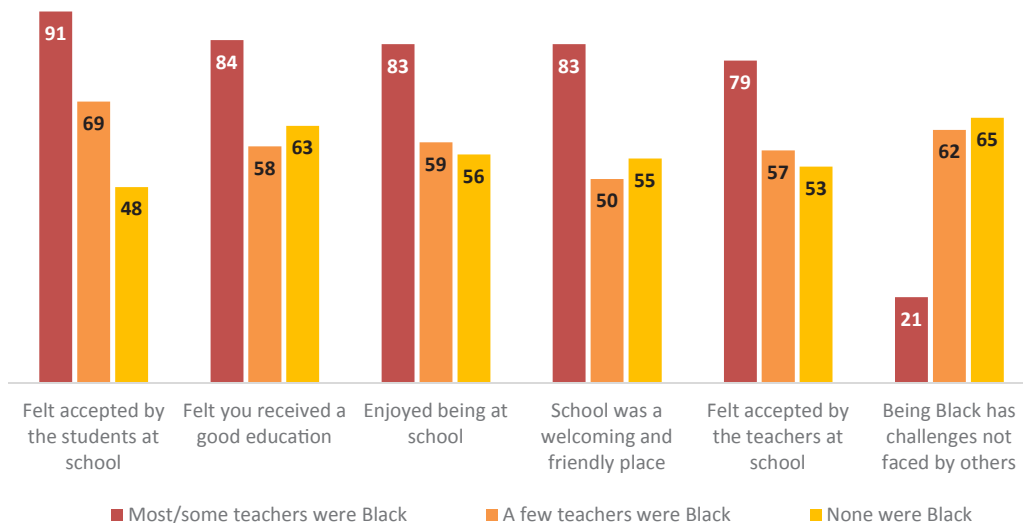
Male and female participants differ somewhat in their experiences with respect to education. Most men, regardless of age, tend to report their schools and teachers provided important support to them. In the case of women, however, age matters: younger women are much more likely than older women to say they felt supported by schools and teachers.

The survey results also show that Black students benefit from the presence of Black peers and teachers. The more Black students are in the minority in their neighbourhoods, the less accepted by their fellow students they feel, and the more they experience challenges at school related to race.

The proportion of teachers in a school who are Black is also associated with more positive school experiences. The presence of Black teachers appears to play a key role in helping Black students feel supported in general and manage issues related to race and racism in school in particular. But the reality is that most (four in five) BEP participants were educated in high schools where either a few or none of the teachers were Black, again pointing to systemic issues.

At the postsecondary level, few BEP participants who are currently students anticipate having to overcome challenges relating to racism in order to complete their college diploma or university degree. At the same time, one in five college or university graduates says having Black role models or examples would have made it easier for him or her to achieve post-secondary educational goals.

(19) High school experience by proportion of Black teachers



WORK PLACE EXPERIENCES. BEP participants were also asked about their experiences in the work place. The responses indicate that while individuals report being happy with their co-workers, they also report experiencing racism at work and believe that anti-black racism is relevant.

BEP participants report being happy with their work colleagues (92% strongly agree or agree), Approximately three quarters report that they are happy in their workplace (74%), find their work environment to be supportive (77%), and feel supported and respected by those they report to (74%). Fewer are satisfied with the progress they have made toward meeting their career goals (63%) or their goals for the development of new skills (68%).

While this study provided no comparators, other research shows that racialized minorities, particularly those who identify as Black are less satisfied with the workplace compared to others and report experiencing discrimination.³² Fully one-third of participants identify challenges linked to being Black and to navigating anti-Black racism in the workplace, whether it involves explicit racism and discrimination or an uncomfortable workplace culture in which they do not feel they are treated professionally or accepted (see Figure 20).

Men and women are equally likely to express satisfaction with their work environment, and with how their current job aligns with their income and education. At the same time, a notable exception to the general pattern is the work experiences of participants who self-identify as LGBTQ. They are much less likely than heterosexual participants to say they are happy in their workplace, find their work environment supportive, and feel supported and respected

by others working at the same level. They are also most apt to report being over-qualified and under-paid.

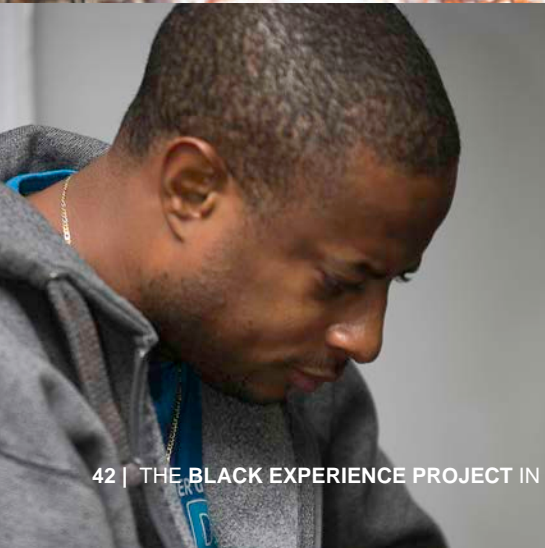
When it comes to finding meaningful employment or satisfying work, the challenge mentioned most frequently – particularly by younger participants – is that of searching for employment, including finding the right job opportunities, finding a job in a preferred field, and dealing with a weak economy.

When asked how being Black has made a difference in their work experience, BEP participants are most likely to cite negative experiences, such as having their level of competency questioned, dealing with racism and stereotypes, and having their qualifications overlooked or not recognized. Some participants also mention more positive ways in which being Black has made a difference, such as having more resilience, being able to work in multicultural settings, being able to use work to support the Black community, and being able to challenge racism.

Whatever their own personal experiences within the school system and workplace, most BEP participants believe Black people experience anti-Black racism in these sectors. About seven in ten (68%) participants say that Black people in the GTA are frequently treated unfairly because they are Black when seeking employment or work. An additional 28 percent say unfair treatment occasionally happens in this situation (versus only 2% who say this rarely or never happens). Similarly, four in ten (39%) believe that unfair treatment happens frequently to those attending school or university and a similar proportion say this takes place occasionally.

(20) Biggest challenges in finding meaningful employment

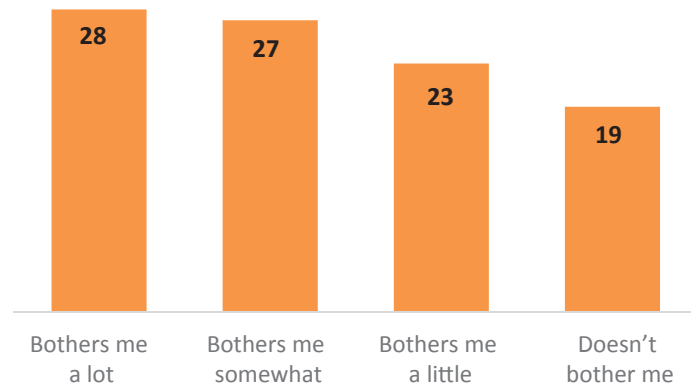




IMPACT OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM. The BEP survey findings also address issues that shed light on how anti-Black racism impacts Black people in the GTA, and how they respond to their experiences. BEP participants are affected in different ways by their experiences of discrimination and unfair treatment related to their race.

Some say they are bothered a lot by these experiences, in terms of a loss of self-esteem or self-confidence in the face of these experiences, and feel the need to consciously downplay being a Black person, especially at work or in public spaces. Others say they are less bothered by such treatment, and say their feelings about themselves are unaffected. And some maintain these experiences make them stronger or more aware, or reinforce their drive to succeed or bring about change (see Figure 21).

(21) How does your day-to-day experience with discrimination bother you?



The personal impact of experiencing day-to-day racism varies somewhat across the population, based on age, gender and sexual orientation. Younger participants and women are more apt to say they are bothered than are older participants and men. The group that stands out most, however, are those who self-identify as LGBTQ (a group that tends to be both younger and female). Half (52%) of participants in this group say such experiences bother them a lot, compared with only about half as many as those who identify as heterosexual (28%).

Overall, two-thirds of BEP participants either say they rarely or never downplay being Black (30%) or do not name a specific situation (i.e. say they don't know or provide no answer; 37%). Still, a substantial proportion do name situations in which they consciously downplay being a Black person, including one in four (23%) who does so in employment situations (at work, in job interviews), and one in five (18%) who does so in public spaces or in social situations.

In addition, almost all participants named at least one situation in which they were consciously aware of being a Black person; only three percent say this rarely or never happens. One in two (52%) says he or she is consciously aware of being Black in public spaces, including in their neighbourhood or at school, or when travelling or moving about (e.g., when driving or on public transit). Almost as many (47%) report being consciously aware of being a Black person in employment-related situations, such as being at work or interviewing for a job.

BEP participants employ different strategies for coping with anti-Black racism (see Chapter 3). Some focus on dealing with racism on their own, while others say they overcome or deal with these experiences by advocating against them. Some also share these experiences or talk about them with family, friends or the community. Experiences of anti-Black racism are linked to participants' personal well-being.

For instance, other research confirms that the experience of being treated unfairly because of one’s race is correlated with poorer health and mental health, and there is a strong relationship between being bothered by experiences of anti-Black racism and life satisfaction, health, mental health and feelings of stress (Figure 22 shows the relationship between the frequency of day-to-day discrimination across all types (from frequently to occasional) and overall life satisfaction).*

As reported in Chapter 3, experiences of discrimination are associated with more political and community engagement. BEP participants who are more likely to experience unfair treatment based on race are also more critical of public and political institutions, but do not turn their backs on political participation.

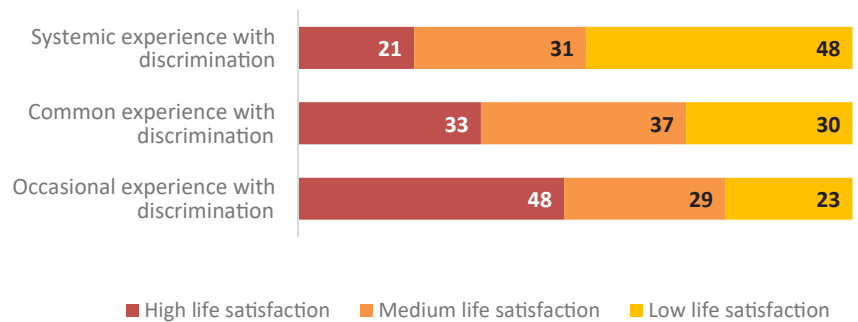
The survey also asked participants to compare the experiences of Black people in Canada and the USA. Coverage of issues relating to race in the US are prominent in the media and popular culture, and there are many untested assumptions about how experiences in the two countries compare. Many Canadians define their identities in contrast to Americans. The notion of Canadian exceptionalism extends to the belief that Canada is a diverse, multicultural, and inclusive society exempt from the issue of anti-Black racism south of the border.

Results from this research suggest that not all Black people in Canada see things the same way. Only a thin majority (55%) of BEP participants believe that Blacks are better off in Canada than the US. The most frequently cited ways in which Blacks are better off in Canada include racism being less overt, better relations with police, greater diversity in the population, and better health care (see Figure 23).

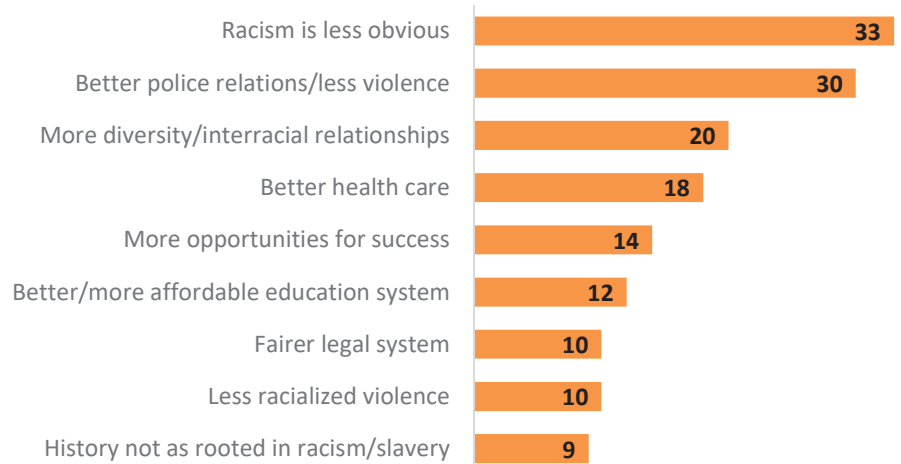
*Frequency of discrimination is measured in an index created that incorporates the results from all eight types of micro aggression experience measured in the survey, which captures both the number and frequency of such experiences reported. These data are then categorized into three groups according to frequency: systemic, common and occasional.

But while non-Black Canadians might assume that racial minorities such as Black people are better off north of the border, not all BEP participants are convinced. One third (33%) of BEP participants say that the situation of Blacks in the two countries is about the same, while close to one in ten (8%) say that Blacks are worse off in Canada than in the USA. This latter group is most likely to say Blacks have it worse in Canada because of the way racism manifests itself. They report that it is either more covert, or that diversity is a “guise” that masks the reality of anti-Black racism, as has been documented in other studies.³³

(22) Frequency of day-to-day discrimination by overall life satisfaction



(23) In what ways are Blacks better off in Canada than in the USA?

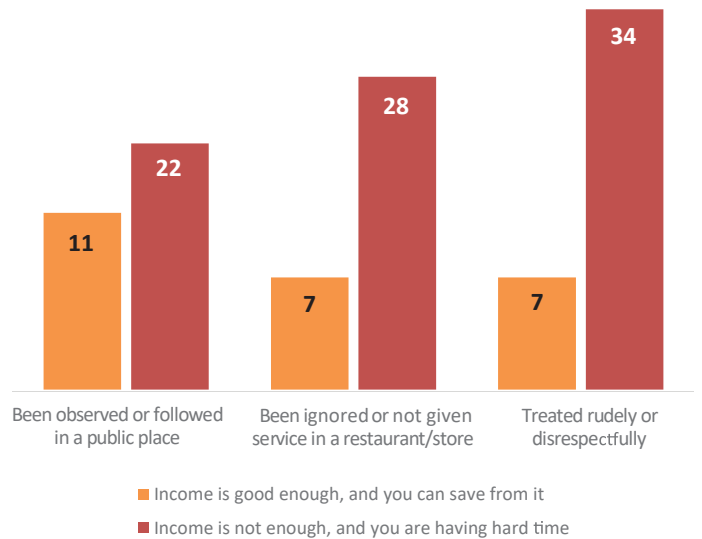




SOCIO-ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF RACISM.

In some cases, anti-Black racism is felt more acutely by BEP participants with lower incomes. For instance, those with inadequate incomes (those who report it is not enough and are having a hard time), are more likely than those with adequate incomes to have frequently experienced one or more of the eight micro-aggressions. These include being ignored, overlooked or not given service in a restaurant or store, being treated rudely or disrespectfully, being accused of something, and being observed or followed while in public places. As well, participants who are having a hard time making ends meet are also more likely to say that the lives of the Black people close to them (including family and friends) have been affected to a great extent because of their race (see Figure 24).

(24) Frequent personal experiences because of race (by adequacy of income)



In considering these patterns, it is important to note that the difference between those with higher or lower incomes is not that one group experiences anti-Black racism and the other does not – rather, the frequency of these experiences is what differs, and such differences do not appear in all situations (see next Chapter as it relates to experiences with police services). This suggests that the disadvantages of lower income compound experiences of racial discrimination for some individuals. But this does not mean that Black individuals with higher incomes are insulated from experiences of unfair treatment and anti-Black racism.

What have you found useful as ways to overcome or deal with your experiences with unfair treatment because of being Black?

Education is a golden key. It strengthens your individual identity to make you better able to analyze and even handle your experiences. I have found that work with the black community is also a great source of information.

For me, it is very important not to call that person a racist or say it's (the unfair treatment) because I'm black. I let them say it so that I am not seen as wanting to be the victim. It is more powerful when they have to acknowledge the reason they are treating you unfairly.

Islam. I became a Muslim and it taught me to have faith in God. Islam made me secure. I look at things as though God will deal with it.

Surrounding myself with other black girls has helped my self-esteem. I had to navigate a lot of micro-aggressions from white and Asian friends who didn't understand why I was offended. My black friends knew and understood what I was talking about. I became less passive and more confident being surrounded by black friends.