Measuring discrimination in social surveys: Experiences from Canada

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What is the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS)?

• Post-censal survey which targeted non-Aboriginal individuals aged 15 and older living in private dwellings in Canada’s ten provinces

• One of main objectives of the survey was to provide information on ethnic diversity in Canada and how ethnicity relates to peoples lives today

• **Telephone** interviews conducted across Canada between April and August 2002

• 42,500 respondents
Objectives of questionnaire design

• Questions to be asked of a diverse population, with diverse experiences, but questions have to be applicable to everyone

• Questions need to be easily understood

• Have to limit response burden: survey length and question sensitivity important considerations

• Need for high quality data: standardization of concepts
Challenges in collecting discrimination data

• Data on discrimination had not been collected in a large-scale survey in Canada in the past

• There are many dimensions of discrimination which could be assessed

• Difficult concept to measure

• Data collected are based on personal perceptions

• Potentially sensitive area
Results of testing and consultations: clarifying the concepts

- Lead-in: “Discrimination may happen when people are treated unfairly because they are seen as being different from others”.

- “Treated unfairly”: indicates that questions are asking about negative types of discrimination.

- Focussed solely on discrimination/unfair treatment due to ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour; language, accent or religion.

- Qualitative testing showed that some respondents had difficulties in answering if they had been discriminated against and for what reason(s) because the concept was based on perception.
How often do you feel uncomfortable or out of place in Canada now because of your ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent or religion? Is it....

All of the time?
Most of the time?
Some of the time?
Rarely?
Never?

For which reason or reasons did you feel uncomfortable or out of place? Was it because of...

your ethnicity or culture?
your race or skin colour?
your language or accent?
your religion
Majority had never felt uncomfortable or out of place

% of population age 15 years and older reporting experience of feeling uncomfortable or out of place by visible minority status

Never
- Total population: 78%
- Not a visible minority: 81%
- Visible minority: 55%

Rarely
- Total population: 13%
- Not a visible minority: 11%
- Visible minority: 21%

Some of the time
- Total population: 8%
- Not a visible minority: 7%
- Visible minority: 20%

Most or all of the time
- Total population: 1%
- Not a visible minority: 1%
- Visible minority: 4%
Recent immigrants more likely to report feeling uncomfortable or out of place

% of population age 15 years and over who reported feeling uncomfortable or out of place some, most or all of the time by generational status and visible minority status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generational Status</th>
<th>Visible minority</th>
<th>Not a visible minority</th>
<th>Total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st generation - arrived 1991 - 2001</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st generation - arrived before 1991</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd generation</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd generation or more</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceived discrimination or unfair treatment

Discrimination may happen when people are treated unfairly because they are seen as being different from others.

In the past 5 years, do you feel that you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in Canada because of your ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent or religion?

yes?
no?

In the past 5 years how often do you feel that you have experienced such discrimination or unfair treatment in Canada?
Was it or is it...

often?
sometimes?
rarely?
Majority reported to have never experienced discrimination or unfair treatment

% of population age 15 years and over by experience of perceived discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Not a visible minority</th>
<th>Visible minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes or often</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discrimination or unfair treatment:
Incidents occurring in Canada within the past five years because of the respondent’s ethnicity or culture, race or skin colour, language or accent, or religion.
First generation visible minorities more likely to report discrimination occurring sometimes or often

Population who experienced discrimination by generations in Canada and visible minority status

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes or often

Generational Status:
- 1st generation
- 2nd generation
- 3rd generation or more

Visible minority

Not a visible minority
Race or skin colour was the most commonly identified reason for visible minorities.

% of population age 15 years and older who reported experience with discrimination or unfair treatment by reason and visible minority status.

*Because more than one reason could be reported, the total of all reasons added together is greater than 100%.
In the past 5 years, in which places or situations do you feel that you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly in Canada? Was it ...

on the street?
in a store, bank or restaurant?
at work or when applying for a job or promotion?
when dealing with the police or courts?
or somewhere else?
Most often took place at work or when applying for a job/promotion

% of population age 15 years and over who reported experience with discrimination or unfair treatment by place or situation of occurrence and visible minority status

* Because more than one type of place/situation could be reported, the total of all situations added together would be greater than 100%. Not all types of places/situations reported are shown in this chart. Categories shown were read aloud.
Around the world

• 57th Eurobarometer survey
  – Spring 2002 in the 15 European Union countries
  – Survey population → EU citizens
  – Extent of discrimination personally experienced
    
    e.g. *In the past two years, have you personally felt discriminated against or harassed \(<at work>\) because of your…*
    
    – Race or ethnicity
    – Religion or beliefs
    – Physical disability
    – Learning difficulties or mental illness
    – Age
    – Sexual orientation
Lessons learned and knowledge gained

• Sensitive for some respondents, but questions were better received than initially expected.

• Many qualitative testing participants stated that they felt that the questions on discrimination were very important and were quite willing to answer them.

• Non-response to these questions was relatively low.

• Discrimination questions adopted in other surveys at Statistics Canada (i.e. LSIC)

• Questions on hate crimes were also asked at the end of the module on the EDS
The headlines

Toronto Star  September 30, 2003
Racial bias 20% feel the sting; Time doesn’t aid visible minorities One in five has felt unfairly treated

Ottawa Citizen  July 19, 2004
Discrimination not as common as Canadians think, study finds: Minority groups report fewer cases than widely believed

The Globe and Mail  August 31, 2006
Ottawa launches program to combat racism

The Gazette  (Montréal) September 14, 2006
Quebec to tackle problem of racism: Committee hearing from range of groups