

One-in-Five Diverse Workers Have Experienced Discrimination or Unfair Treatment at Work, CareerBuilder.com and Kelly Services Survey Shows

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CareerBuilder.com and Kelly Services released the results of a new study, conducted by Harris Interactive, of diverse workers and non-diverse workers across the country. The purpose of the study was to gauge the frequency, severity and occasion for perceptions of discrimination or unfair treatment in the workplace, whether employee diversity is valued and how diversity impacts hiring decisions, compensation and career advancement. While the list of factors that makes one diverse is wide-ranging, this study focused primarily on workers in seven groups: 1) African American 2) Hispanic 3) Asian 4) Female 5) Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender (GLBT) 6) Individuals with disabilities and 7) Mature workers age 50 or older.

Incidence of Discrimination or Unfair Treatment in the Workplace

Twenty-three percent of diverse workers said they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly in the workplace based on their diverse background. Individuals with disabilities reported the highest incidence at 44 percent of workers while Asian workers and mature workers reported the lowest incidence at 21 percent each. The other diverse groups in this study averaged 28 percent (African American 30 percent; Hispanic 29 percent; Female 25 percent; and GLBT 28 percent).

Discrimination was not limited to those who classified themselves as diverse. Fifteen percent of non-diverse workers (defined as Caucasian males who are not GLBT, disabled or age 50 or older) said they felt discriminated against or treated unfairly in their workplace based on their non-diverse background.

Severity of Discrimination or Unfair Treatment in the Workplace

While half (55 percent) of diverse workers who experienced discrimination or unfair treatment categorized it as moderate, nearly one-in-five (19 percent) described it as severe. Among those reporting severe discrimination, Asian and Hispanic workers reported the highest levels (26 percent), followed by African American workers (22 percent), mature workers (16 percent), GLBT workers (13 percent) and workers with disabilities (11 percent).

Frequency of Discrimination or Unfair Treatment in the Workplace

When asked how often they feel discriminated against or treated unfairly, 36 percent of all diverse workers said it happens occasionally (defined as 1 to 3 times per year) while 24 percent reported a monthly occurrence and 30 percent reported at least a weekly occurrence. Workers with disabilities reported the highest incidence of experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment on a daily basis at 5 percent. Workers with disabilities, mature workers and female workers reported the highest incidence of experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment at least once a week at 38 percent, 34 percent and 31 percent respectively. They are followed by 29 percent of Hispanic workers, 27 percent of African American workers, 22 percent of Asian workers and 21 percent of GLBT workers. GLBT workers reported the highest incidence (60 percent) of experiencing discrimination or unfair treatment in the workplace once a month.

Discriminating or Unfair Behaviors as Cited by Diverse Workers

The most common incidents of discrimination or unfair treatment involved:

- Not receiving credit for one's work (48 percent)
- Not having concerns addressed or taken seriously (42 percent)
- Having co-workers talking behind one's back (33 percent)
- Being overlooked for a promotion (32 percent)
- Not being assigned to projects that will help worker gain more visibility in the company (32 percent)
- Having co-workers say derogatory comments to or in front of worker (31 percent)
- Feeling ideas or input are generally ignored (30 percent)

"While employers have come a considerable way in implementing fair and equal workplace practices, this study indicates that there is still much room for improvement," said Rosemary Haefner, vice president of Human Resources at CareerBuilder.com. "Diverse perspectives fuel rich idea generation, creativity and strong business performance. Companies that are not fostering a work environment that embraces and cultivates diversity and open communications are working against themselves."

Reporting of Discrimination or Unfair Treatment

Unfortunately, most of the discrimination or unfair treatment goes unaddressed. Half (50 percent) of diverse workers who experienced discrimination or unfair treatment said they did not report the incident. Of these workers, 64 percent said they didn't think reporting the incident would make a difference while 35 percent feared being labeled as a trouble-maker and 32 percent feared losing their jobs.

Three-in-ten diverse workers (31 percent) did bring attention to the discrimination or unfair treatment by reporting it to their direct supervisor. Another 25 percent reported it to Human Resources while 19 percent reported it to senior management. However, only 30 percent of those who made a claim felt it was taken seriously and, in 73 percent of the cases, the offender was not held accountable. Only 6 percent ever took legal action against their employer.

When asked why those being discriminated against stay with their current employer, more than half (64 percent) said they couldn't afford to quit.

Twenty-one percent of all workers -- both diverse and non-diverse -- said they have witnessed what they perceived to be discrimination or unfair treatment of a co-worker based on their diverse background. Sixty-one percent did not report it.

"For companies to attract well-qualified, experienced and diverse employees, it's important to have formal policies against discrimination and prescribed reporting processes to address concerns should they occur," said Nina Ramsey, senior vice president of Human Resources at Kelly Services. "It is also critical that companies routinely evaluate their hiring practices, leadership development and succession practices to ensure they are creating and enforcing a healthy, balanced, and diverse work culture."

Diversity and Hiring

The majority of diverse workers said their diverse background does not influence whether someone will hire them. While 32 percent said their diverse backgrounds work against them when interviewing for a job, 11 percent said it works in their favor. Workers with disabilities reported the highest incidence of their diverse background working against them as job candidates at 59 percent while Asian, Hispanic and African American workers reported the highest incidence of their diverse backgrounds working in their favor at 19 percent, 18 percent and 16 percent respectively.

In terms of involuntary termination, one-in-ten diverse workers (11 percent) said they believed had been fired at some point in their career based on their diverse background. Workers with disabilities were twice as likely (27 percent) to report this form of discrimination or unfair treatment.

Pay and Career Advancement By Segment

African American Workers

- 33 percent feel they are paid less than Caucasian co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 7 percent feel they are paid more; 54 percent feel they are paid the same.
- 37 percent feel they have less career advancement opportunities compared to Caucasian co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 1 percent feel they have more; 53 percent feel it's the same.

Hispanic Workers

- 22 percent feel they are paid less than Caucasian co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 6 percent feel they are paid more; 58 percent feel they are paid the same.
- 27 percent feel they have less career advancement opportunities compared to Caucasian co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 3 percent feel they have more; 57 percent feel it's the same.

Asian Workers

- 23 percent feel they are paid less than Caucasian co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 4 percent feel they are paid more; 69 percent feel they are paid the same.
- 34 percent feel they have less career advancement opportunities

compared to Caucasian co-workers who have the same skills and experience; less than 1 percent feel they have more; 60 percent feel it's the same.

Female Workers

- 27 percent feel they are paid less than male co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 5 percent feel they are paid more; 46 percent feel it's the same.
- 24 percent feel they have less career advancement opportunities than male co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 3 percent feel they have more; 49 percent feel it's the same.

Workers with Disabilities

- 20 percent feel they are paid less than co-workers without disabilities who have the same skills and experience; 2 percent feel they are paid more; 51 percent feel it's the same.
- 52 percent feel they have less career advancement opportunities than co-workers without disabilities who have the same skills and experience; 2 percent feel they have more; 20 percent feel it's the same.

Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Workers

- 12 percent feel they are paid less than heterosexual co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 10 percent feel they are paid more; 74 percent feel it's the same.
- 30 percent feel they have less career advancement opportunities than heterosexual co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 0 percent feel they have more; 65 percent feel it's the same.

Mature Workers (50 years and older)

- 18 percent feel they are paid less than younger co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 27 percent feel they are paid more; 46 percent feel it's the same.
- 25 percent feel they have fewer career advancement opportunities than younger co-workers who have the same skills and experience; 4 percent feel they have more; 51 percent feel it's the same.

Non-Diverse Workers (Caucasian Male, Under 50, Not Disabled or GLBT)

- 52 percent feel workers with a diverse background are given preferential treatment at their companies.
- 11 percent feel they are paid less than workers of a diverse background with the same skills and experience; 4 percent feel they are paid more; 84 percent feel they are paid the same.
- 24 percent feel they have fewer career advancement opportunities than workers of a diverse background with the same skills and experience; 7 percent feel they have more; 69 percent feel it's the same.

Survey Methodology

This survey was conducted online by Harris Interactive on behalf of CareerBuilder.com and Kelly Services among 953 Workers (age 18+ within the United States, employed full-time or part-time) with 803 being Diverse Workers (age 18+ within the United States, employed full-time or part-time, 461 Ethnic Workers, 155 African American/Black, 150 Hispanic, 156 Asian, 150 Disabled, 155 GLBT, 306 Mature Workers age 50 to 61, 436 Female) and 150 Non-Diverse Caucasian Male workers between March 15 and March 21, 2007. Figures for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, region and household income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

With a pure probability sample of 953 one could say with a ninety-five percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 3.2 percentage points. With a pure probability sample of 803 one could say with a ninety-five percent probability that the overall results have a sampling error of +/- 3.5 percentage points. Sampling error for data from subsamples is higher and varies. However that does not take other sources of error into account. This online survey is not based on a probability sample and therefore no theoretical sampling error can be calculated.

About Kelly Services

Kelly Services, Inc. is a Fortune 500 company headquartered in Troy, Mich., offering human resource solutions that include temporary staffing services, outsourcing, vendor on-site and full-time placement. Kelly operates in 33 countries and territories. Kelly provides employment to more than 750,000 employees annually, with skills including office services, accounting, engineering, information technology, law, science, marketing, creative services, light industrial, education, and health care. Revenue in 2006 was \$5.5 billion. Visit <http://www.kellyservices.com/>.

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