

Research Report

COMMITTEE: Discrimination and equality (ILO2)

ISSUE: How to fight off racism in the workplace?

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PRESENTATION OF THE CHAIR:



Hey Delegates! My name is Adrienne Husny and I am in première at the Lycée International de Ferney-Voltaire in France. In my free-time, I like dancing, reading, and crocheting. This year will be my second year of MUN at my school and at this conference, I will be one of the three chairs for this committee which is charged to debate over discrimination and inequalities in our world. Our committee will especially concentrate on racism and gender stereotypes in the workplace even though we acknowledge that there are many other inequalities. I am already looking forward to our debates because even though we are only modelling the real conferences, the solutions we find at the end can also have an impact on our future life and how we create it.

KEY WORDS

Discrimination: Treating somebody or a group of people differently and less fairly because of their race, gender, age, etc.

Racism: The belief that people are divided into different entities, called races. The belief that one race is superior to the other because of their ethnicity, nationality or external characteristics such as the colour of their skin. Racism is a form of prejudice which can lead to discrimination but discrimination can also occur without racism.

Racial discrimination: To treat a person or a group of people differently and unfairly because of their colour, descent or national or ethnic origin.

Social security: A national program that provides individuals an income when they are faced with situations like old age, survivorship, disability, unemployment or raising children.

Judicial protection: A fundamental law which provides means of evaluating and responding to all threats against the judicial system.

Xenophobia: Fear or hatred towards strangers or foreigners.

Equality: Each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities.

Equity: Each person has different circumstances and allocates/divides the exact resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

OVERVIEW

Racism was the form of discrimination that first called the international community into action from the ILO's inception in 1919 till today.

In 2022, 43 % of all of the reported discrimination cases in Germany occurred in the context of racism (Justus Kliss, 27.06.2023, "Jahresbericht der Anti-Diskriminierungsstelle vorgelegt", 29.06.2023). This reaction was partly exacerbated by the period of the holocaust. Over the last decades, the world has further moved from denial of racial discrimination to an international demand for tolerance and action.

Even though the tolerance for coloured people increased, during times of uncertainty and economic distress, perceptions, rather than objective facts, shape people's opinions about the abilities and attitudes ascribed to individuals belonging to certain groups. This can lead to intensified racial discrimination in the world of work.

1. Lack of access to legal procedures and justice

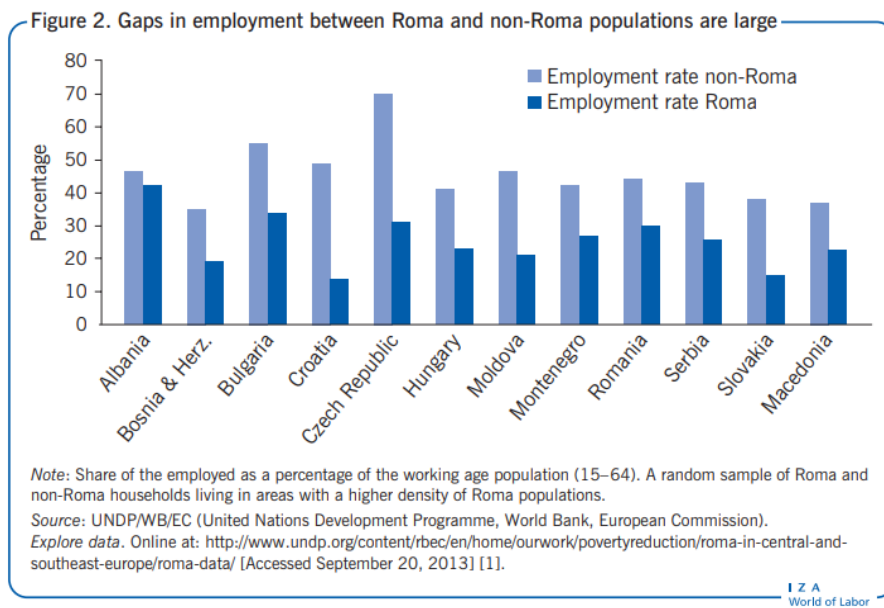
To begin with, there is a need to guarantee all victims of racial discrimination access to legal procedures, justice or judicial protection. In many countries, they cannot always bring their case to court, due to their disadvantaged social position, lack of access to legal assistance or distrust of the judicial system. Other reasons for the difficulties to receive justice for workers are also often a lack of knowledge, means and support.

The length and high costs of legal proceedings are other significant obstacles to overcome, which can be a risk to take because of the unequal treatment racial minorities can get in front of the court.

2. Racism against Roma and migrants

The Roma, also commonly known as Gipsies, are Europe's biggest minority with about 10 to 12 million people. Although there exists a discrimination ban across the EU states, it is still one of the most pressing political, social and human rights issues facing Europe.

With it come considerable gaps between Roma and non-Roma people on the labour market, especially in Eastern Europe like you can see in the graph below.



<https://wol.iza.org/uploads/articles/39/pdfs/roma-integration-in-european-labor-markets.pdf>, page 5

The employment gaps and those to access healthcare are important and can be related to discrimination or differences in human capital.

Another major factor is low education but even Roma with tertiary education (colleges, universities, etc.) have double the unemployment rate as non-Roma with the same education.¹ Moreover, wage gains for each year of education are smaller which creates an ethnic pay gap.

Racial discrimination also manifests itself in a higher proportion of Roma workers engaged in unskilled work irrespective of their actual level of education.

On the other side, migrants may also be concerned by racial discrimination, specifically coming from neighbouring continents.

They often work in the informal economy, one that is neither taxed nor monitored by the government which is why they can be legally excluded from social protection such as insurance. Migrants are frequently concentrated in low-skilled jobs, particularly in the agricultural, construction and domestic sectors. Because these occupations are often temporary or seasonal, they may not be covered by labour rules and inspections.

Moreover, the persistent lack of inspections is hard to overcome because of the limited financial and human resources.

Even if workers receive the work and employment terms they were promised before, they can still be subject to labour rights violations during their employment which might be tied to the recruitment process. For example, they can be victims of wage deductions for recruitment fees, housing or the issue of creating or renewing their identity documents. But sometimes migrants have to pay to retain their job. These wage deductions are systematic and supposed to prevent the workers from leaving their job which can even lead to forced labour.

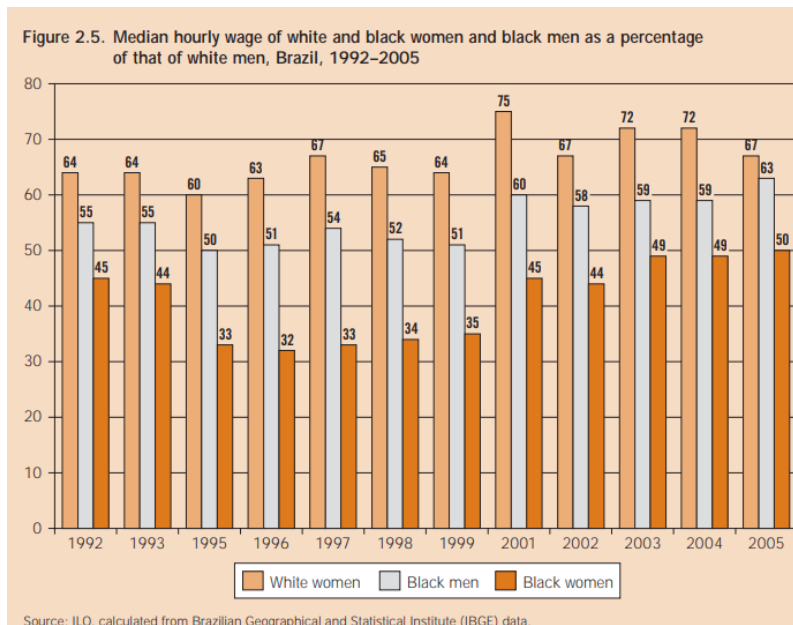
Furthermore, migrant workers often receive less money than natives for work of equal value, they suffer under the work and health conditions or even face restrictions on freedom of movement.

¹ "Equality at work: Tackling the challenges", ILO, 10 May 2007

Attitudes against migrant workers were not great before but they worsened due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In AESAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations with 10 member states), there have been reports of increased verbal abuse against certain nationalities and migrants presumed to bring the Covid-19 virus to the communities. This racial discrimination can put migrant workers and their families, especially women, at risk of xenophobic violence and harassment.

3. Racism against people of African descent

A small black middle class of people of African descent – commonly referred to as black people – has emerged in the past decades in several countries. But the majority continue to be overrepresented among the jobless and at the bottom of the job and pay ladder. This happens everywhere, regardless of the social or economic circumstances of the countries in which they live. And like you can see below ², this earning gap is very important.



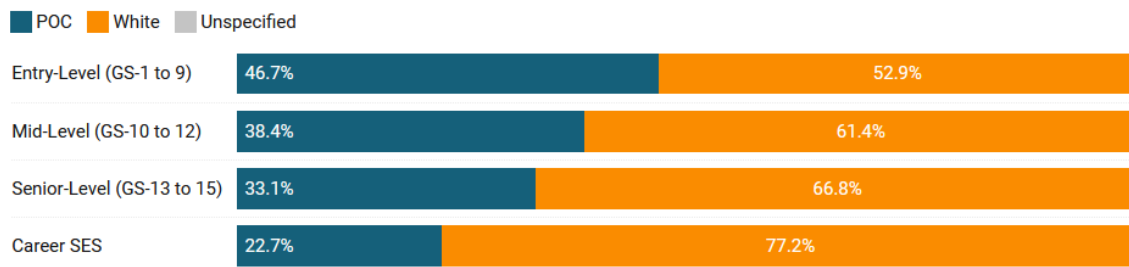
Especially between black and white women which shows the presence of racial discrimination. As a result of racism, 19,5 % of African people were poor in 2021 in the U.S. against 8,2% white people (Statista Research Department, 30.09,2022, “Poverty rate in the United States in 2021, by ethnic group”, 29.06.2023).

Another difficulty for people of colour is to get jobs in the federal service, the diagram below shows that in the U.S. in March 2021, nearly half of the younger employees are of colour, which shows the evolution, but the key positions are still occupied by seniors and white people.

This is caused by racism, xenophobia or stereotypes that say that “African-Americans are unintelligent, lazy, violent, and criminals” (Evi Taylor et al.,07.05.2019). Which leads to the highest rate of job rejections according to the 2005 Citizenship Survey.

² “Equality at work: Tackling the challenges”, ILO, 10 May2007, page 2

Racial Diversity of Federal Workforce by Level



Data Coverage: Full-time, nonseasonal, permanent workforce as of March 2021.

Chart: Partnership for Public Service • Source: FedScope • Created with Datawrapper

source: <https://ourpublicservice.org/blog/a-revealing-look-at-racial-diversity-in-the-federal-government/>

RELEVANT UN TREATIES AND EVENTS

ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998)

It is an expression of commitment by governments and employers' and workers' organisations to uphold basic human values and rights at the workplace. One of the principal rights is to not tolerate any racial discrimination.

International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Art. 6, 21 December 1965, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

All the UN states must ensure protection and remedies to all people within their responsibility for acts of racial discrimination. Every person has the right to seek reparations for any damage suffered as a result of racial discrimination.

All ILO members have the obligation to respect, to promote, and to realise the fundamental principles and rights concerning discrimination in employment and occupation.

Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949 (No. 97) Art. 6(1)(d)

The UN states should treat migrant workers the same way as nationals, without discrimination based on race (nationality, sex or religion) and grant the migrant access to legal proceedings.

UN International Roma Day (8th April)

This day was created to let UN members remember that they should fully include Roma people and provide them equal safety and security. Especially in times of conflict like the war in Ukraine, people should remember to give Roma people the same protection while fleeing a country without permitting any racial discrimination.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

- **Workplace policies**

In general, creating a workplace policy on ethnic diversity is one of the first steps towards publicly demonstrating that the company takes the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of equality in the workplace seriously. Racial equality can be easier created if certain conditions are met, the most important of which are political commitment and clear and transparent rules.

- **Help for migrants**

It is very important that they have the access and right to complain if abuse occurs and to also get help that is effective without having fear of retaliatory measures (including blacklisting, detention or deportation). This should be done regardless of their legal status, personal identity, absence or presence in the State.

All the other (racially) discriminated people should get equal treatment and access to justice which means that governments should promote policies that aim at identifying and eliminating legal barriers to solve problems and unfair treatments.

- **The PRESS road map**

Unlike society at large, the workplace very often requires contact and cooperation among people from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds.

For racial equity in the workplace, organisations can move through the stages of the so-called [PRESS road map](#) (Problem awareness, Root-cause analysis, Empathy, Strategy and Sacrifice). So first establishing an understanding of the underlying condition is very important, then developing genuine concern, and finally focusing on correcting the problem. This is a very large concept but the basic questions organisations must ask themselves in order to fight racism are firstly about the condition: Do I understand the problem and where it comes from?. Then afterwards comes the Concern stage : Do I care (enough) about the problem and the people it harms?. And finally we focus on the Correction: Do I know how to correct the problem and am I willing to do it?.

With the help of this technique, organisations and the people will understand the root problem, how to solve it and furthermore change their mindset about racism.

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