



Demographic Diversity, Perceived Workplace Discrimination, and Workers' Well-Being: Context Matters

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Abstract

Purpose: The main objective of this article is to contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge on the determinants of perceived workplace discrimination and its consequences on workers' well-being in Canada.

Design/methodology: We used a representative sample of 7,706 workers aged 18 to 65 based on data from the 2016 General Social Survey of Canadians at Work and Home to conduct logistic regression models.

Findings: Women and visible minorities are at greater risk of perceiving that they have experienced workplace discrimination, but immigrants' perceived workplace discrimination risk is no different from that of non-immigrants. This risk is higher in public administration than in other industries and varies between provinces. Perceived workplace discrimination increases stress and is associated with a lower level of self-reported mental health.

Originality/value: Our findings are original because they suggest that visible socio-demographic characteristics (gender and visible minority) affect perceived workplace discrimination, which is not the case for invisible socio-demographic characteristics (immigrant). They point out that the province of residence is an element of the context to be considered, and they indicate that workers in the public sector are more likely to perceive discrimination than those in other industries. These empirical contributions highlight that, despite anti-discrimination laws and government efforts to promote equity, diversity and inclusion, perceived workplace discrimination persists in Canada, particularly among women and visible minorities, and it has tangible impacts on the workers' well-being.

Practical implications: Since perceived discrimination has a detrimental effect on workers' well-being, organizations should pay special attention to their employees' perceptions. Relying only on official complaints of discrimination can lead organizations to underestimate this issue because many employees are not inclined to file an official complaint, even if they believe they have been discriminated against.

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5 **Keywords:** Women, immigrant, visible minority, perceived workplace discrimination,
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Evidence-Based HRM

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, workforce demographic diversity has increased (Shore *et al.*, 2018). In 2016, half of the jobs were held by women, a quarter by immigrants, and just over a fifth by visible minorities in Canada (Martel, 2019; Statistics Canada, 2020). Past literature has shown that these groups are at a higher risk of being discriminated against in the workplace (Banerjee *et al.*, 2018; Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Stainback *et al.*, 2011; Zschirnt and Ruedin, 2016), and this growth in diversity creates challenges for organizations (Bove and Elia, 2017). In this context, providing an inclusive work environment has become an important responsibility for organizations (Lee *et al.*, 2021).

In addition to corporate social responsibility, promoting the well-being of the population, gender equality, decent work and reducing inequalities are part of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations adopted by Canada (Government of Canada, 2018; United Nations, 2016). Consequently, equity, diversity, and inclusion are among the priority issues of sustainable development in Canada. With respect to these goals, Canada is committed to adopting an inclusive approach by integrating historically marginalized groups, which include indigenous peoples, women, immigrant populations, people with disabilities and people who identify with the LGBTQ2 community (Government of Canada, 2018). Therefore, studying perceived workplace discrimination and its effect on the well-being of workers is relevant regarding these objectives.

Furthermore, Alteri (2020) examined the relationship between changes in the representation of different groups and complaints of discrimination in the federal public service of the United States. She found that the rising ratios of minority employees and women led to higher rates of complaints of racial and gender discrimination. In addition,

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3 according to Rubin and Alteri (2019), less than 1% of federal government employees filed
4 a discrimination complaint in the United States each year between 2006 and 2014. They
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6 also showed that ethnicity and gender are the two motives most often invoked in
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8 discrimination complaints. However, although effective, the focus on officially filed
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10 complaints can lead to underestimation of the problem. By comparison, in the 2019 Public
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12 Service Employee Survey (PSES), 8% of public servants in Canada perceived they had
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14 experienced discrimination in their job in the past year and the most frequent source of
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16 discrimination perceived by public servants was a person having authority over them
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18 (Government of Canada, 2020). Furthermore, Du Mont and Forte (2016) showed that 15%
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20 of Canadians perceived to have experienced discrimination over the past 5 years, which
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22 suggests that individuals who perceive they are experiencing discrimination do not all
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24 report a complaint.
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31 Lee (2020) mentioned three main reasons for focusing on perceived discrimination.
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33 First, employees who are pressured by organizational authorities may not file a
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35 discrimination complaint, even if they have legitimate reasons to do so, because of fear of
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37 reprisal or a lack of confidence in the complaint system. Second, examining perceived
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39 discrimination can help managers improve diversity management practices by addressing
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41 an underestimated problem. Third, empirical evidence shows that perceived discrimination
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43 in the workplace has a concrete impact on employee well-being (Lee, 2020; Triana *et al.*,
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45 2015).
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50 Most research on perceived discrimination focuses on individual characteristics,
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52 such as sex and race, as explanatory variables (Avery *et al.*, 2008; Ayalon, 2014; McCord
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54 *et al.*, 2018), but some studies have shown that national context and laws can affect
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3 workers' perceived discrimination (Dhanani *et al.*, 2018; Triana *et al.*, 2015). Using a meta-
4 analysis, Triana *et al.* (2019) found that the association between perceived gender
5 discrimination and employees' well-being is stronger in countries with labor policies that
6 value gender equity. This finding led them to conclude that organizations must consider
7 the national context in organizational decisions to prevent gender discrimination.
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15 Based on this evidence, our study focuses on factors related to both demographic
16 diversity (gender, immigration status, and visible minority) and the external context of
17 organizations—namely, Canadian province and industry. Given that the workforce is
18 increasingly diverse and that demographic characteristics affect perceived discrimination,
19 we used the 2016 Canadian General Social Survey database, which is representative of the
20 population, to pursue our two main objectives.
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29 First, we aimed to identify the demographic characteristics and contextual factors
30 that affect perceived workplace discrimination in Canada. Drawing a portrait of the
31 demographic characteristics leading to perceived workplace discrimination will help to
32 identify at-risk groups and to establish whether anti-discrimination laws succeed in
33 eliminating perceived discrimination among workers of the target groups. The use of
34 representative data to examine the discrimination perceived by the target groups (women,
35 immigrants, and visible minorities) is an undeniable advantage of this study, since it allows
36 to capture the social trends. Examining provincial differences is relevant since it will show
37 if perceived workplace discrimination is less common in some provinces. If so, future
38 research should attempt to investigate why these provinces are more inclusive to find
39 avenues for improvement in the other provinces. To our knowledge, our study is the first
40 to examine the effect of the Canadian provinces on perceived workplace discrimination.
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3 This is an important contribution because organizations are not hermetic systems and their
4 employees are influenced by the external context (national culture, social values, public
5 policies, and labor laws), which varies by province. Examining perceived discrimination
6 in public administrations is relevant since, as employers and legislators, they must behave
7 in an exemplary manner, especially since equity, diversity and inclusion are stated values
8 of these organizations.
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17 Second, we attempted to measure the impact of perceived workplace discrimination
18 on worker's well-being. Measuring this association is important to ascertain if perceptions,
19 whether accurate or biased, have a concrete impact on the well-being of workers in Canada.
20 Such a finding could convince some employers to focus on this perception to take a step
21 further towards promoting an inclusive workplace.
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33 **Diversity and perceived workplace discrimination**

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35 Van Knippenberg *et al.* (2004) defined diversity as “differences between
36 individuals on any attribute that may lead to the perception that another person is different
37 from self” (p.1008). This definition is based on self-categorization theory (Tajfel, 1982;
38 Turner *et al.*, 1987), which states that individuals categorize themselves at different levels,
39 such as the interpersonal level, where the self is defined as a unique individual and is
40 compared to others. Accordingly, people categorize themselves and others in social groups
41 as in-group or out-group based on characteristics such as sex, age, or ethnic origin. Hence,
42 out-group individuals are viewed less favorably, which can explain discrimination against
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3 Referring to Allport (1954), Triana *et al.* (2015) defined discrimination as “denying
4 equal treatment to individuals because of their group membership” (p.491). Workplace
5 discrimination can be objective or subjective (Lee, 2020). Objective discrimination is
6 perceived by an observer based on existing criteria, while subjective, or perceived,
7 discrimination occurs when an individual judges their situation to be discriminatory based
8 on their perception and criteria (Lee, 2020; Hopkins, 1980). Perceived discrimination refers
9 to “an individual’s perception of receiving (negative) differential treatment based on some
10 characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity)” (Xu and Chopik, 2020, p.1). More
11 specifically, Dhanani *et al.* (2018, p.148) defined perceived workplace discrimination as
12 “an employee or job applicant’s perception of unfair or negative treatment based on
13 membership in a particular social group (Chung, 2001).”
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28 Regarding the relevance of focussing on perceived workplace discrimination, Naff
29 (1995) suggested that subjective (or perceived) discrimination can be as damaging to
30 women’s careers than objective discrimination. Previous studies have shown that perceived
31 discrimination has concrete impacts on employee attitudes at work (Triana *et al.* 2019;
32 Triana *et al.* 2015). In addition, Lee (2020) suggested that perceived discrimination is a
33 relevant measure because it includes both reported and unreported discrimination due to
34 fear of reprisal or lack of trust in the complaint mechanism. Banerjee (2008) also revealed
35 that objective discrimination is associated with perceived workplace discrimination.
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47 In a meta-analysis of objective discrimination, Zschirnt and Ruedin (2016) showed
48 that ethnic discrimination is still common in hiring decisions. They found that comparable
49 minority applicants must send approximately 50% more applications to be invited for an
50 interview than applicants from the majority group. Banerjee (2008) found that immigrants
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3 were more likely to perceive discrimination in the workplace than natives. Moreover,
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5 despite their disadvantage in the Canadian labor market (Boudarbat and Boulet, 2007), new
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7 immigrants are less likely to perceive discrimination than long-term immigrants, since the
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9 latter may have higher expectations in terms of fair treatment (Banerjee, 2008). Banerjee
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11 (2008) also found that education increases the perception of discrimination among
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13 immigrants, which she also explained by the higher expectations for equity among
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15 educated immigrants.
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20 Women and minority groups are at a higher risk of perceiving workplace
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22 discrimination (Hirsh and Lyons, 2010; Triana *et al.*, 2015). Avery *et al.* (2008) found that
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24 perceived gender discrimination in the workplace is more prevalent among women than
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26 men, while perceived ethnic discrimination in the workplace is more prevalent among
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28 Black and Hispanic employees than White employees. McCord *et al.* (2018) showed that
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30 women perceive more gender-related workplace mistreatment than men, but women and
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32 men report comparable perceptions of all other forms of mistreatment. Similarly, racial
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34 minorities perceive more workplace racial mistreatment than Whites (McCord *et al.*, 2018).
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36 In the same vein, Bae *et al.* (2017) found that gender diversity reduces the perception of
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38 inclusion in organizations, and Foley *et al.* (2015) revealed that women perceive more
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40 gender discrimination because they make gender comparisons and perceive biases against
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42 women as a group.
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47 Therefore, relying on self-categorization theory and the empirical evidence
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49 presented below, we postulate that:
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52 *H1: Women, immigrants, and visible minorities are more likely to perceive that they*
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54 *have experienced discrimination in the workplace.*
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Perceived workplace discrimination in context

Recent literature has highlighted the role of social and organizational context as determinants of perceived workplace discrimination (Kartolo and Kwantes, 2019; Triana *et al.*, 2019; Triana *et al.*, 2015). Kartolo and Kwantes (2019) indicated that the demographic composition of an organization is not the only factor influencing employee perception of workplace discrimination; societal and organizational culture also play important roles. Their findings suggested that employees perceived more workplace discrimination when organizations promoted a culture of competition than when they focused on collective goals.

Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Triana *et al.* (2019) found that labor laws and cultural norms, as contextual factors, moderate the relationship between perceived gender discrimination in the workplace and employees' psychological health. The correlations between perceived gender discrimination in the workplace and employees' outcomes were stronger in countries with more broadly integrated labor policies and tightly enforced labor practices focused on promoting gender equality. The correlations were also stronger in countries where cultural practices were more gender-equal.

To study the effect of diversity management practices in public sector organizations, McGrandle (2017) used contingency theory, which indicates that organizational practices must align with organizational culture and the external environment. He indicated that, according to this theory, there is no "one best way" to manage organizations. Rather, the internal and external environment of each organization creates a unique context requiring distinctive practices to achieve optimal functioning (McGrandle, 2017). Indeed, the contingent approach to human resources management

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3 (HRM) states that the effects of HR practices depend on the context (Delery and Doty,
4 1996; Knies *et al.*, 2017) and that these practices should be chosen to fit the specific context
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6 of each organization (Clinton and Guest, 2013).
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10 Since some recent studies have noted that the organizational context influences
11 perceived discrimination in the workplace, we believe it is relevant to ascertain whether
12 other contextual factors affect this perception. For example, the Canadian province is likely
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14 to do so for several reasons. First, French is the first official language of Quebec, while the
15 other provinces are predominantly English-speaking. Second, Quebec's welfare regime is
16 more similar to the social-democratic model, which emphasizes equality and gives
17 considerable role to the state, while that of other Canadian provinces is more similar to the
18 liberal model, which insists on individual freedom (Bernard and Saint-Arnaud, 2004). For
19 example, Quebec's parental insurance plan is more generous and has a universal childcare
20 policy, which increases the participation of women in the labor market (Beaujot and
21 Ravanera, 2013). Third, while the federal grid is applied in the other Canadian provinces,
22 Quebec is the only one to have its own selection grid for immigrants received as skilled
23 workers (Boudarbat and Boulet, 2010), showing a desire to have decision-making power
24 in the choice of newcomers. In addition, Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia are the
25 three main provinces of economic immigration and the three provinces with the most
26 ethnocultural diversity according to the 2016 Census (Immigration, Refugees and
27 Citizenship Canada, 2020; Statistics Canada, 2017).
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49 Given these differences, the contingency theory, and Quebec's social-democratic
50 inclination, we hypothesize that:
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3 *H2: The risk of perceived workplace discrimination is lower in Quebec than in*
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5 *Ontario, British Columbia, and other provinces.*
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8 The distinction between public and private organizations is another contingency
9 likely to affect perceived workplace discrimination. Representative bureaucracy theory
10 postulates that the more demographically similar the public workforce becomes to the
11 general population (i.e., passive representation), the better the public administration will
12 serve citizens by reflecting the interests of various groups in its decision-making processes
13 (i.e., active representation) (Kingsley, 1944; Lee, 2020; Mosher, 1968). Therefore, this
14 theory assumes that public sector employees stand up for citizens with similar
15 demographics because of their shared experiences, attitudes, and values (Lee, 2020).
16 According to Lee (2020), these principles, which concern the public sector employee–
17 client relationship, can also be applied to the employee–supervisor relationship.
18 Supervisors of disadvantaged groups, such as minorities and women, tend to support the
19 interests of employees in these groups (see, for example, Grissom and Keiser, 2011;
20 Marvel, 2015).
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38 In Canada, the Employment Equity Act (SC 1995, c. 44), which applies to public
39 and private organizations under federal jurisdiction, aims to facilitate access to
40 employment and the organizational representativeness of women, Aboriginal peoples,
41 persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities. In Quebec, public
42 organizations diverged from other industries, since they are subject to the Act Respecting
43 Equal Access to Employment in Public Bodies (CQLR c A-2.01), which gives them
44 specific obligations in terms of the representativeness of the same target groups. In Quebec,
45 private organizations are therefore not subject to this law.
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3 Villadsen and Wulff (2018) noted three arguments suggesting that ethnic
4 discrimination in employment is more prevalent in the private than in the public sector.
5 First, public organizations are funded by taxpayers, which increases public scrutiny (media
6 and accountability) compared to private organizations. In such an environment, illegal
7 discrimination is likely to be exposed. Second, public organizations are traditionally more
8 bureaucratic and have more red tape (Rainey *et al.*, 1995). A greater prevalence of rules
9 and standards could reduce workplace discrimination because, in the presence of a highly
10 formalized hiring process, it is more difficult to disregard a candidate meeting the selection
11 criteria based on their ethnic origin. Third, public managers are more focused on the public
12 interest than private-sector managers (Perry, 2000). Using *testing*, that is, assessing the
13 hiring practices of organizations by submitting fake resumes in response to job postings in
14 Denmark, Villadsen and Wulff (2018) found little evidence that public employers are fairer
15 in their hiring decisions. Their findings suggest that there is no discriminatory difference
16 between the public and private sectors.
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35 Banerjee *et al.* (2018) sent 12,910 fake resumes in response to 3,225 job postings
36 in Canada and found that Asian-named applicants received fewer calls for an interview
37 than English-named applicants from organizations of all sizes. However, their results
38 showed that large organizations discriminated against these applicants less than those of
39 smaller size. Banerjee *et al.* (2018) suggested that large organizations discriminated less
40 because they devote more resources to candidates' evaluation, have a more professional
41 recruitment process informed by HRM knowledge, and have more experience with
42 diversity by having a larger workforce.
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3 The results obtained by Hirsh and Lyons (2010) suggest that workers with a greater
4 sense of entitlement (professional authority, promotion experience, union membership)
5 and knowledge of legal rights (level of education, age) are more likely to perceive
6 workplace racial discrimination. They also found that perceived discrimination increases
7 with organizational size but that employees in the public sector are not less likely to
8 perceive discrimination than those in the private sector. The researchers insisted on the
9 importance of the work context in understanding how individuals determine that they have
10 been unfairly treated.
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21 Despite the representative bureaucracy theory and the arguments advanced by
22 Villadsen and Wulff (2018), given the empirical evidence noting no difference in
23 workplace discrimination between the public and private sectors, we formulate the
24 following hypothesis:
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31 *H3: The risk of perceived workplace discrimination is not different in public*
32 *administration than in other industries.*
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36 **Perceived workplace discrimination and well-being**

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39 The World Health Organization (WHO) (1946) defined health as “a state of
40 complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or
41 infirmity” (p.100). Health is apprehended by both the absence of negative states and the
42 presence of positive states (Gilbert *et al.*, 2011). Psychological well-being has two facets:
43 eudemonic well-being focuses on self-realization and defines well-being in terms of
44 optimal functioning, while hedonic well-being centers on happiness and construes well-
45 being as the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain (Ryan and Deci, 2000).
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3 Therefore, well-being can be assessed using both negative indicators (depression, anxiety,
4 and stress) and positive ones (self-esteem, job satisfaction, and psychological health).
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8 In a meta-analysis, Pascoe and Richman (2009) found that perceived discrimination
9 reduces mental health and that this negative relationship is present in all ethnic groups and
10 in both sexes. Similarly, Schmitt *et al.* (2014) performed a meta-analysis to examine the
11 relationship between discrimination and psychological well-being. Their results revealed
12 that the negative relationship between these variables was weaker for positive measures of
13 well-being, such as self-esteem or positive affects, than for negative measures, such as
14 depression and anxiety. Furthermore, Berger and Sarnyai (2015) explained the
15 physiological mechanisms linking perceived discrimination to mental health outcomes by
16 looking at the stress hormones produced in the context of racial discrimination. Although
17 this evidence does not specifically focus on workplace discrimination, it does show that
18 discrimination harms the well-being of individuals in general.
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33 Regarding workplace mistreatment, Rospenda *et al.* (2009) found that workplace
34 harassment and discrimination are associated with poor mental health and problems with
35 alcohol use in the USA workforce. The perception of workplace discrimination decreases
36 both job satisfaction and performance (Choi and Rainey, 2014; Dhanani *et al.*, 2018; Di
37 Marco *et al.*, 2016; Sloan, 2012). In their meta-analysis, Triana *et al.* (2015) found that
38 perceived racial discrimination in the workplace is negatively related to psychological
39 health and that the effect of perceived racial discrimination was stronger when minorities
40 were more represented in the samples, which suggests that they are more likely to perceive
41 discrimination and/or react more strongly to perceived discrimination. More recently,
42 Triana *et al.* (2019) conducted a meta-analysis on perceived gender discrimination in the
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workplace, and their results showed that perceived gender discrimination is negatively linked to psychological health. Sloan (2012) revealed that workers with strong support from colleagues are protected from the negative effects of mistreatment, and Ragins and Cornwell (2001) found that organizational practices supporting equity, diversity, and inclusion reduce the perception of discrimination among gay employees and attenuate its deleterious effects on work attitudes.

To explain the negative relationship between perceived workplace discrimination and workers' well-being, we relied on the job demand-resource (JD-R) model of Demerouti *et al.* (2001). The JD-R model divides working conditions into two categories: demands—dimensions of the job requiring physical or psychological efforts causing costs for the employee—and resources—aspects of the job facilitating the achievement of work objectives by reducing constraints and their costs (Bliese *et al.*, 2017; Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). Accordingly, perceived workplace discrimination is conceptualized as a job demand of the working environment that requires a psychological effort of adaptation from workers, increasing their stress and reducing their well-being.

Based on the JDR model, as well as the empirical evidence presented above, we postulate that:

H4: Perceived workplace discrimination is negatively associated with workers' well-being.

METHOD

Data and sample

To test our hypotheses, data from cycle 30 of the 2016 General Social Survey (GSS) on Canadians at Work and Home were used. The GSS is a representative survey of the

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3 Canadian population that explores individuals' perspectives on their work, home, leisure,
4 and well-being. The target population for the survey includes individuals aged 15 and over
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6 who reside in the 10 Canadian provinces and do not live in an institution. Since our study
7
8 focuses on workplace discrimination, we selected paid workers aged 18 to 65. The final
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10 sample contained 7,706 workers, of which 47.9% were women, 22.1% were visible
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12 minorities, and 20.3% were immigrants.
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19 **Measures**

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21 *Perceived workplace discrimination* is sometimes a dependent variable and
22 sometimes an independent variable in our models. It was measured with the following
23 question: "In the past 12 months, have you experienced unfair treatment or discrimination
24 while at work?" This question was completed by the following definition of discrimination
25 to ensure respondents' understanding: "Discrimination means treating people differently,
26 negatively, or adversely because of their race, age, religion, sex, or anything else." This
27 variable dichotomized respondents into two groups and was coded as 1 = yes and 0 = no.
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38 *Self-rated mental health* is a dependent variable in our study and was measured with
39 the following question: "In general, would you say your mental health is...?" Possible
40 answers were excellent, very good, good, fair, and poor. We recoded the participants into
41 two categories: 1 = those with good mental health or better and 0 = those with fair or poor
42 mental health.
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49 The *stress level* is a dependent variable measured with the following question:
50 "Thinking of the amount of stress in your life, would you say that most days are...?" A
51 five-point Likert scale was used: not at all stressful; not very stressful; a bit stressful; quite
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3 stressful; and extremely stressful. Participants' responses were recoded into two categories:
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5 1 = quite stressful and extremely stressful and 0 = not at all stressful; not very stressful;
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7 and a bit stressful.
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10 *Demographic diversity* was measured using three independent variables. The first
11 is *gender*, for which females were coded 1, while males were coded 0. To measure the
12 second variable, *immigration background*, the participants were asked the following
13 question: "Are you now, or have you ever been a landed immigrant in Canada?" The GSS
14 defines "immigrant" as "a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada
15 permanently by immigration authorities." Respondents matching this definition were
16 coded 1 and non-immigrant were coded 0. The third variable, *visible minority*
17 *identification*, was measured using the following question: "You may belong to one or
18 more racial or cultural groups on the following list. Are you...?" The respondent options
19 were: White; South Asian; Chinese; Black; Latin American; Arab; Southeast Asian; West
20 Asian; Korean; Japanese; and Other. White respondents were coded 0 = not identifying
21 with a visible minority, while the others were coded 1 = identifying with a visible minority.
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38 Two more variables concerning the external organizational context were
39 conceptualized as independent variables in our study. The first was the respondents'
40 *provinces* of residence, determined by Statistics Canada from their postal code and
41 classified into ten options: Newfoundland and Labrador; Prince Edward Island; Nova
42 Scotia; New Brunswick; Quebec; Ontario; Manitoba; Saskatchewan; Alberta; and British
43 Columbia. We recoded the respondents' provinces to form four groups: 1 = Quebec;
44 2 = Ontario; 3 = British Columbia; and 4 = rest of Canada (ROC). The second variable,
45 *industry*, was measured by Statistics Canada using the North American Industry
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3 Classification System (NAICS) 2012, which is a common classification system developed
4 by Canada, the United States, and Mexico. The two-digit classification was used to divide
5 industries into 20 categories. For the purposes of our study, which aimed to identify
6 respondents from the public sector, we recoded the respondents' industry into four
7 categories: 1 = public administration; 2 = educational services; 3 = health care and social
8 assistance; and 4 = others.

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17 The literature has identified other factors affecting perceived workplace
18 discrimination or workers' well-being. We therefore used these factors as controls in our
19 analysis to prevent them from biasing the association between our variables of interest. The
20 *education level* was measured using the following categories: 1 = less than high school
21 diploma; 2 = high school diploma; 3 = trade diploma; 4 = college, and other non-university
22 diploma; 5 = university diploma below the bachelor's level; 6 = bachelor's degree; and 7 =
23 university diploma above the bachelor's degree. The variable *age* was assessed from three
24 age groups: 1 = 18–34; 2 = 35–54; and 3 = 55–65. Statistics Canada also asked respondents
25 what their *occupation* and main work tasks were. With this information, the 4-digit
26 occupation code was determined based on the 2016 Canadian National Occupational
27 Classification (NOC). For the purposes of our study, the single-digit classification was
28 used, which divides Canadian occupations into ten main categories: 1 = management
29 occupations; 2 = business, finance, and administration occupations; 3 = natural and applied
30 sciences and related occupations; 4 = health occupations; 5 = occupations in education,
31 law, and social, community, and government services; 6 = occupations in art, culture,
32 recreation, and sport; 7 = sales and service occupations; 8 = trades, transport, and
33 equipment operators and related occupations; 9 = natural resources, agriculture, and related
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3 production occupations; and 10 = occupations in manufacturing and utilities. *Union type*
4 was measured using the following categories: 1 = single; 2 = married; and 3 = cohabiting.
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8 *Parental status* was evaluated based on the number of children, while *child age* was
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10 measured from the youngest child's age and divided into four categories: 1 = no child; 2 =
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12 younger than 5; 3 = 5 to 12 years old; 4 = 13 to 14 years old.
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15 16 17 **Analytical strategy**

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19 Statistical analyses were performed using Stata Special Edition 15.1. Since the
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21 dependent variables of the study are dichotomous, logistic regression models were
22
23 estimated. Table 1 presents the proportion of perceived discrimination in the workplace
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25 according to demographic diversity. Table 2 examines the associations between
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27 demographic diversity (gender, immigrant, visible minority), context (province, industry),
28
29 and perceived workplace discrimination. Table 3 illustrates the relationship between the
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31 perception of discrimination in the workplace and workers' well-being (mental health and
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33 stress). All analyses were weighted using individual weights. The significance threshold
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35 used is $p < 0.05$.
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43 **RESULTS**

44 **Descriptive results**

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46 Table 1 indicates that 8.9% of workers perceived themselves to have been
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48 discriminated against in their workplace. This table shows that the proportion of women
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50 who perceived that they had experienced workplace discrimination (10.9%) is higher than
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52 that of men (7.0%). The proportion of immigrants who perceived that they had been
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3 discriminated against is higher than that of non-immigrants (12.3 versus 8.0%). Finally,
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5 the proportion of visible minorities who perceived that they had experienced workplace
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7 discrimination (13.1%) exceeds that of workers who did not identify as a visible minority
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9 (7.7%).
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13 *[Insert Table 1 here]*
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15 **Multivariate results**

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17 Table 2 displays the effects of variables related to demographic diversity and
18
19 context on perceived workplace discrimination. Regarding demographic diversity, women
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21 are 2.1 times more likely to perceive having experienced discrimination in their workplace
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23 than men. Visible minorities are 48% more likely to perceive that they are discriminated
24
25 against than workers who are not visible minorities. However, other things being equal,
26
27 immigrants are no more likely than non-immigrants to perceive that they have been
28
29 discriminated against. These results partially confirm *Hypothesis 1*, since immigration
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31 background does not affect the perception of workplace discrimination as it does for gender
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33 and identification as a visible minority.
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39 *[Insert Table 2 here]*
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43 Regarding the factors linked to the worker's context, the results of Table 2 show
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45 that workers in Ontario have a 45% higher risk of perceiving that they have experienced
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47 discrimination in their workplace than workers in Quebec. This risk is also 44% higher
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49 among workers in the rest of Canada. However, the risk of perceived discrimination in the
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51 workplace is not different between workers in Quebec and British Columbia. These results
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53 confirm *Hypothesis 2* for Ontario and the rest of Canada but not for British Columbia.
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3 Table 2 also reveals that workers in public administrations have a 64% higher risk
4 of perceiving that they have been discriminated against in their workplace than those in
5 other industries. The risk of perceived discrimination in educational services and health
6 care and social assistance, in which there is a significant proportion of public jobs, is not
7 different from that in other industries. This invalidates *Hypothesis 3*, which assumed that
8 the risk of perceived workplace discrimination is not different in public administration than
9 in other industries.
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19 Among the control variables (results available on request), the risk of perceived
20 workplace discrimination varies by occupation. Compared to managers, this risk is higher
21 among workers in sales and service occupations, in trades, transport, and equipment
22 operators and related occupations, and in manufacturing and utilities occupations. Married
23 workers are less likely to perceive discrimination than those who are single, and workers
24 with two children are less likely to perceive discrimination than those without children.
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33 In Table 3, we observe that perceived workplace discrimination reduces the chances
34 of being in good psychological health by 70% and increases the risk of being stressed by
35 2.36 times. These results confirm *Hypothesis 4*.
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40 Regarding mental health, Table 3 shows that visible minorities are 67% more likely
41 to be in good mental health than White workers, while women and men, as well as
42 immigrants and non-immigrants, are as likely to be in good mental health. Compared to
43 Quebecers, workers in other provinces are approximately half less likely to report being
44 in good mental health. Workers in public administration are more likely to be in good
45 mental health than those in other industries.
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3 Regarding stress, immigrants are 25% less likely to be stressed than non-
4 immigrants, while visible minorities are 30% less likely to be stressed than White workers.
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6 Men and women do not have a different stress risk. Contrary to their mental health
7 advantage, workers in Quebec are more stressed than those in other provinces. The
8 likelihood of workers being stressed does not differ by industry.
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17 **DISCUSSION**

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19 Our descriptive results showed that 8.9% of workers in Canada believe that they
20 have experienced discrimination in their workplace. This rate is worrying, especially since
21 we found that perceived discrimination reduces the well-being of workers. The descriptive
22 analyses also indicated that women, immigrants, and visible minorities are more likely to
23 perceive that they have experienced discrimination in their workplace.
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31 However, when other factors that may influence perceived workplace
32 discrimination are considered, we found that women and visible minorities are at greater
33 risk of perceiving they have experienced workplace discrimination, but this risk does not
34 differ between immigrants and non-immigrants. This empirical fact is an important
35 contribution that would be relevant to explore in future work. Thus, this suggests that
36 visible demographic characteristics (sex, skin color) further increase perceived
37 discrimination in the workplace than invisible ones (immigration). Visible differences
38 therefore appear to be more relevant for individuals in the process of social categorization
39 than those that are not visible, possibly because they are more difficult to hide. Despite
40 government efforts to promote gender and ethnic equity in Canada, it turns out that women
41 and visible minorities are more at risk of perceiving that they have experienced
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3 discrimination in the workplace. These findings suggest that additional initiatives are
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5 needed to improve HRM practices related to equity, diversity, and inclusion in
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7 organizations to reduce the perception of discrimination among these groups. The results
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9 also point out that the existing anti-discrimination laws that target gender and visible
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11 minorities fails to completely eradicate perceived workplace discrimination.
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15 In immigration policies, the governments of Quebec and Canada have put much
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17 effort into facilitating the integration of immigrants into the labor market, given the
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19 difficulties that have been noted in this regard. However, our results add that immigrants
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21 are not at greater risk of perceiving discrimination in the workplace, which is positive, but
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23 may be due to their lower sense of entitlement (Hirsh and Lyons, 2010) or their lower
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25 expectations in terms of fair treatment, especially for recent immigrants (Banerjee, 2008).
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27 An important avenue of future research would be to adopt an intersectional approach by
28
29 examining the interaction between gender, immigration background and visible minority
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31 identity on perceived workplace discrimination. Such a study would help to refine our
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33 understanding of this issue and to ascertain whether certain groups of immigrants are more
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35 at risk than others.
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41 For organizations, tackling employees' perceptions of discrimination is relevant
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43 since our results obtained using a representative survey of the Canadian population agree
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45 with those of previous studies (see, for example, Choi and Rainey, 2014; Dhanani *et al.*,
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47 2018; Di Marco *et al.*, 2016; Sloan, 2012; Triana *et al.*, 2015; Triana *et al.*, 2019), which
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49 shows that this perception is negatively linked to workers' well-being. This finding is
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51 important since Allen (2019) argues that despite legal reforms prohibiting discrimination,
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53 it persists, posing an additional health risk for historically marginalised groups and
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3 maintaining social inequalities. Thus, a workplace that promotes the well-being of
4 employees must address the issue of perceived discrimination not only to eradicate
5 discrimination, which is illegal, but also to prevent its perverse effects on workers'
6 psychological health. Since the single focus on formally filed complaints does not provide
7 a complete picture of discrimination in the workplace (Lee, 2020), organizations should
8 include questions about perceived discrimination and feelings of inclusion in their
9 employee surveys, if any. For HRM professionals, this implies that more efforts must be
10 made to implement practices that promote an inclusive work environment (Shore et al.
11 2018).

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24 Another empirical contribution of our study is that we found that workers in Quebec
25 are less inclined to perceive that they have been discriminated against in their workplace
26 than those in Ontario and the rest of Canada. This finding supports those of previous works
27 (Kartolo and Kwantes, 2019; Triana *et al.*, 2019; Triana *et al.*, 2015) showing that social
28 context impacts perceived workplace discrimination. It suggests that the Quebec model is
29 better to promote workers' feeling of inclusion. . This result can be explained by the more
30 generous employment and family policies in Quebec and/or the more social-democratic
31 and egalitarian Quebec's welfare state model compared to that of other Canadian provinces
32 (Beaujot and Ravanera, 2013; Bernard and Saint-Arnaud, 2004). Nevertheless, this could
33 also result from Quebecers' weaker sense of entitlement or other external factors that are
34 not controlled for in this study such as social values, organizational culture, or
35 organizations' diversity management practices.

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52 Regarding the difference between workers in public administration and those in
53 other industries, our results contradict *Hypothesis 3*, which is also an important

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3 contribution of this article. Despite the greater accountability and bureaucracy of public
4 organizations, the red tape forcing them to adopt highly formalized recruitment and
5 selection processes, and the greater motivation of public managers to protect the public
6 interest (Rainey *et al.*, 1995; Perry, 2000; Villadsen and Wulff, 2018), workers in public
7 administration are actually more likely to perceive that they have been discriminated
8 against than those in other sectors. Public administrations would therefore be less inclusive
9 employers. However, this finding could be explained by a more pronounced feeling of
10 entitlement (Hirsh and Lyons, 2010) and higher expectations in terms of fair treatment
11 (Banerjee, 2008) of workers in public administrations, especially due to the exemplarity
12 expected from this employer given its role as legislator. This finding could also derive from
13 the higher representativeness of public organizations in terms of the groups targeted by
14 legislation on employment equity. Indeed, Alteri (2020) found that the rise in the
15 proportions of women and minorities among public employees increased complaints of
16 racial and gender discrimination. Moreover, Ashikali *et al.* (2020) showed that inclusive
17 leadership is necessary to ensure inclusion in diverse teams. In any case, further research
18 is needed to better understand the greater propensity of public administration employees to
19 perceive discrimination in their workplaces. This empirical contribution has important
20 implications since it suggests that, despite Canada's commitments towards the promotion
21 of equity, diversity, and inclusion and the Sustainable Development Goals (Government of
22 Canada, 2018; United Nations, 2016), Canadian public administrations cannot conclude
23 that they are exemplary as employers. Even if this result is due to the greater
24 representativeness of the target groups within public administrations, it remains that
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3 additional efforts and HRM practices that promote inclusion are necessary in public sector
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5 to improve the employees' feeling of inclusion.
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8 Finally, the impact of the province and the industry on perceived discrimination in
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10 the workplace, two elements of the organization's external context, underlines the
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12 relevance of contingency theory when investigating workers' perceptions. Organizations
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14 are permeable systems that are subject to external influences not only through national
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16 culture, social values, and public policies, but also through the province, even possibly the
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18 city in which the organization is located. The context of public administration also appears
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20 to be distinct from that of other industries. Nevertheless, we cannot know whether this is
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22 due to the internal context of these organizations, such as the organizational culture or
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24 employees' motivations, or the external context, such as the distinct economic conditions
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26 of the industries or differences in the respective missions of organizations—public
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28 administrations aim to serve the population, while private organizations aim to maximize
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30 their profits. Nonetheless, this result agrees with studies that have mobilized the theory of
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32 contingent HRM (Delery and Doty, 1996; Knies *et al.*, 2017; McGrandle, 2017) and
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34 suggests that organizations should pay particular attention to their internal and external
35
36 context to put in place equity, diversity, and inclusion management practices that
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38 effectively fit their employees to reduce their perception of discrimination. A future study
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40 comparing the culture of inclusion in public administrations and private companies could
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42 provide interesting explanatory leads.
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49 This study is not without methodological limits. First, the secondary data used did
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51 not allow us to consider several factors likely to influence the discrimination perceived by
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53 workers, such as social values, organizational culture, diversity management practices in
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3 their organization, their motivation for public service, or their personality traits. These
4 variables could have improved our study by providing more explanatory power. However,
5 the GSS is a representative survey of the Canadian population that provides access to a
6 large pool of working women, immigrants, and visible minorities, a crucial point when
7 examining the perceived discrimination of these groups.
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15 Second, the data used are cross-sectional, which allows the measurement of
16 associations between the variables of interest but not to distinguish cause from
17 consequence. Thus, although we find a negative relationship between perceived workplace
18 discrimination and workers' well-being, it is not clear whether the perceived discrimination
19 leads to a lower level of well-being or vice versa.
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27 Third, another limitation of our study is that it focuses on the perceived workplace
28 discrimination based on a single item. This could lead to overestimating discrimination
29 (Allen, 2019). However, as mentioned previously, this measure includes discriminatory
30 events that is not reported by workers for fear of reprisal or lack of confidence in the
31 complaint mechanism, which are relevant when looking at the consequences on their well-
32 being (Lee, 2020). According to the results of the 2019 Public Service Employee Survey,
33 the most frequent source of perceived workplace discrimination by public servants in
34 Canada is a person in authority over them (Government of Canada, 2020), which could
35 discourage complaints.
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47 Finally, our data came from a single source—the individuals who answered the
48 questionnaire. Therefore, our study is subject to common source bias, which is likely to
49 inflate the correlations. This bias is more likely to affect the associations noted between
50 perceptual variables, such as perceived discrimination, stress, and self-rated mental health.
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3 On the other hand, it is unlikely that the variables linked to demographic diversity (gender,
4 immigration, visible minority), which are factual, will change with the source of the
5 responses. In addition, because the province of residence was determined by Statistics
6 Canada from the postal code of the respondents and the industry was coded using a national
7 classification, the risk that the correlations between these variables and the perception of
8 discrimination are artificially inflated is low.
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17 Despite these limitations, our results show that visible demographics (sex and skin
18 color) increase perceived workplace discrimination, which is not the case for the invisible
19 one (immigration). The risk of perceived discrimination in the workplace is lower in
20 Quebec than in other Canadian provinces, and higher in public administration. These
21 findings suggest that, despite anti-discrimination laws targeting women and visible
22 minorities and government efforts to promote equity, diversity and inclusion, perceived
23 workplace discrimination persists, and it has tangible impact on the well-being of workers,
24 which highlights that there is still room for improvements in equity, diversity, and inclusion
25 in the workplace in Canada.
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38 A proactive law requiring employers to eliminate workplace discrimination without
39 a complaint mechanism similar to Quebec's Pay Equity Act could be developed. Moreover,
40 in their desire to be recognized as socially responsible and employers of choice, both
41 private and public organizations must also be proactive in eliminating discrimination. To
42 promote inclusive workplaces, Shore et al. (2018) suggested that a focus on preventing
43 exclusion, in which managers commit to complying with anti-discrimination laws, is the
44 foundation of an inclusive organization. However, they indicated that if this is the only way
45 the organization demonstrates its commitment to diversity, employees who are members
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3 of historically marginalized social identity groups will not feel included. HRM
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5 professionals must go further by implementing practices that promote psychological safety,
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7 the feeling of being respected and valued, participation in decisions, and they must
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9 recognize, honor and encourage advancement of diversity (Shore et al., 2018).
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Evidence-Based HRM

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Table 1: Perceived workplace discrimination across demographic characteristics

	Discrimination (%)	CI 95%
Gender:		
<i>Women</i>	10.9*	[9.63–12.36]
<i>Men</i>	7.0	[5.92–8.19]
Immigrant:		
<i>Yes</i>	12.3*	[10.00–15.02]
<i>No</i>	8.0	[7.14–8.94]
Visible minority:		
<i>Yes</i>	13.1*	[10.57–15.86]
<i>No</i>	7.7	[6.83–8.57]
Total	8.9	-
N	7706	7706

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 General Social Survey

*p<.05

Table 2: Perceived workplace discrimination determinants (odds ratio)

Fixed part	
Constant	.03***
Independent variables	
<i>Women (ref.: Men)</i>	2.11***
<i>Immigrant (ref.: Non-immigrant)</i>	1.27
<i>Visible minority (ref.: White)</i>	1.48*
<i>Province (ref.: Quebec)</i>	
Ontario	1.45*
British Columbia	1.35
ROC	1.44*
<i>Industry (ref.: Other industries):</i>	
Public administration	1.64**
Educational services	1.05
Health care and social assistance	0.86
Fit	
Wald test	134.80
Df	(35)***
Pseudo R ²	0.052
N	7706

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 General Social Survey

***p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05, † p≤.10

Note a.: The following variables were controlled in model 2: education level, occupation, union type, parental status, child age, and age (unstandardized coefficients).

Table 3: Perceived workplace discrimination impact on well-being (odds ratio)

	Mental health	Stress
Fixed part		
Constant	10.00***	.49**
Independent variables		
<i>Women (ref.: Men)</i>	1.00	1.11
<i>Immigrant (ref.: Non-immigrant)</i>	1.31	.75*
<i>Visible minority (ref.: White)</i>	1.67*	.70*
<i>Perceived workplace discrimination (ref.: No)</i>	.30***	2.36***
<i>Province (ref.: Quebec)</i>		
Ontario	.45***	.69***
British Columbia	.53**	.57***
ROC	.46***	.57***
<i>Industry (ref.: Other industries):</i>		
Public administration	1.70*	.86
Educational services	1.03	.99
Health care and social assistance	1.30	.82
Fit		
Wald test	201.31	239.17
Df	(36)***	(36)***
Pseudo R ²	.067	.055
N	7706	7706

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 General Social Survey

***p≤.001, **p≤.01, *p≤.05, † p≤.10

Note a.: The following variables were controlled in all models: education level, occupation, union type, parental status, child age, and age (unstandardized coefficients).