Fair Employment Practices

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FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

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Fair Employment Practices

1 Introduction

1.1 The Manpower Research and Statistics Department conducts regular surveys to measure the prevalence of workplace discrimination. Each survey aims to capture the incidence of workplace discrimination among Singapore residents. Respondents are asked if they had experienced discrimination, based on actual incidents they encountered during their job search (e.g., when filling up job application forms or during interviews) and/ or while they were working as employees. The survey also asked employees if their organisations had in place formalised procedures to manage workplace discrimination, and the actions they took after experiencing discrimination. This report looks at data that were obtained from the latest survey conducted in 2021.

1.2 To ensure that our survey results can be generalised to the entire resident workforce, the sample for each survey is 1) representative of Singapore's resident workforce in terms of key characteristics such as age, gender, and labour force status, and 2) selected randomly. The reference period is limited to the year prior to the time of the survey. This enables comparability across the years when the survey is being conducted.

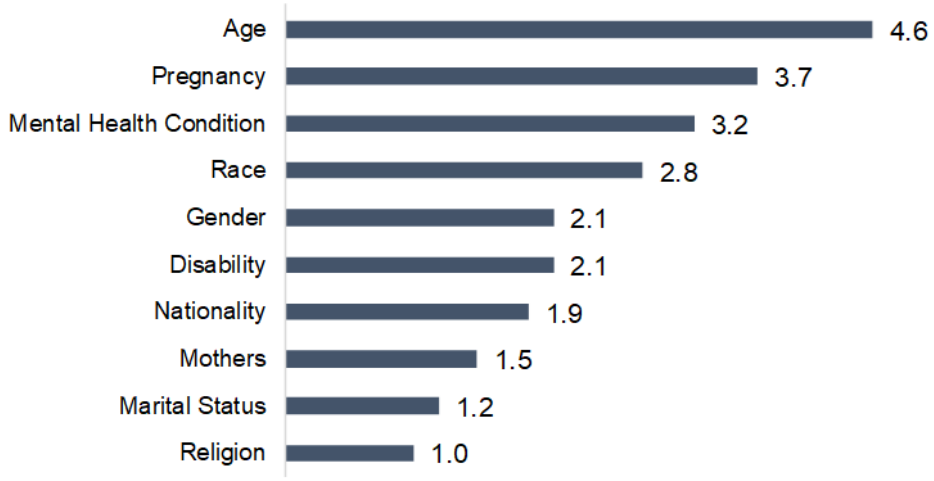
2 Prevalence Of Workplace Discrimination

2.1 In general, the incidence of discrimination is lower in 2021 compared to 2018 for employees, and job applicants. The decrease reflects efforts by MOM and TAFEP to correct stereotypes and promote fair employment practices. In addition, the tight labour market in 2021 could result in employers valuing candidates with the right skillsets and placing less emphasis on their preference for workers with certain demographic profiles.

Employees

2.2 8% of employees experienced workplace discrimination in 2021, lower than 24% in 2018. Age-based discrimination was found to be the most common form of discrimination. Employees who were discriminated due to their age were mainly in their 40s and over. On the whole, the instances of discrimination were mostly related to career development, salary, and promotion.

Figure 1: Proportion Of Resident Employees Who Were Discriminated At Work Due To Their Personal Attributes, 2021 (%)

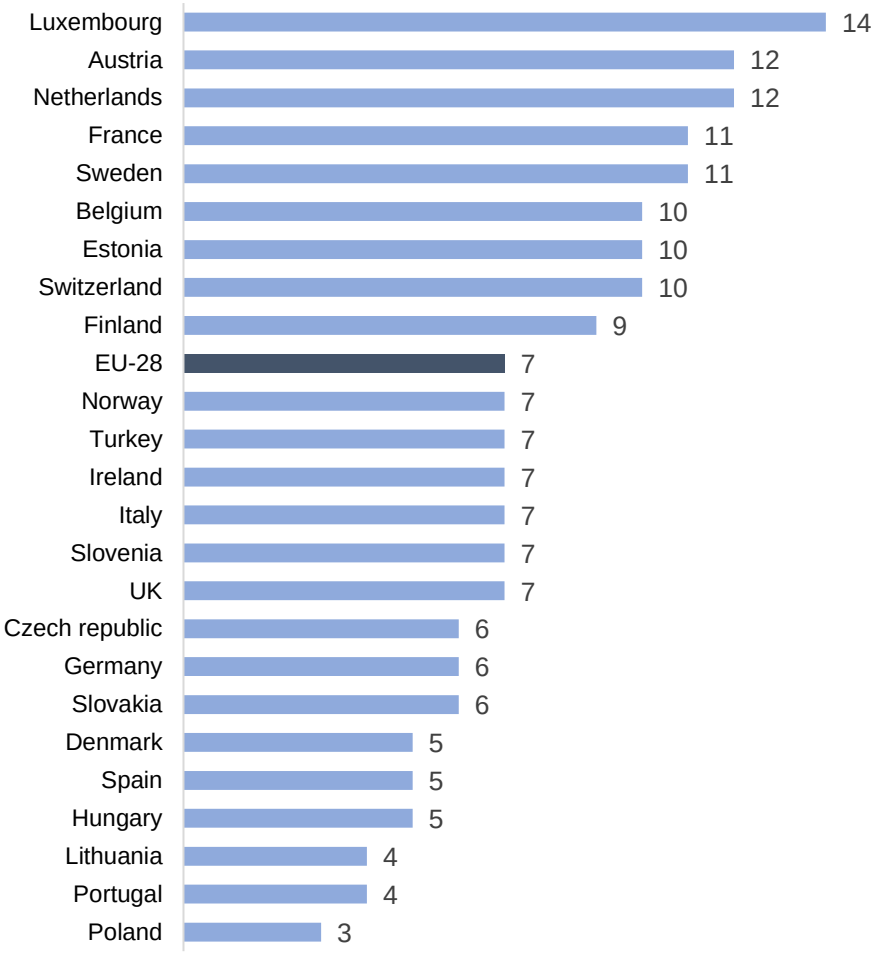


Source: Supplementary Survey on Fair Employment Practices, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Notes:
(1) Breakdown of discrimination at work by personal attributes is only available for the 2021 survey. Prior to this in the 2018 survey, respondents were asked if they encountered discrimination at work based on a similar set of personal attributes but were not asked to provide a breakdown.
(2) Data are based on those who have worked as an employee in the year prior to the conduct of the survey.
(3) The data used to derive the incidence of discrimination for each attribute is different. Hence, the incidence of discrimination for each specific attribute do not sum up to the overall incidence of 8%.

2.3 Eurofound[1] conducts a European Working Conditions Survey[2] which measures the prevalence of discrimination among workers in 28 European Union (EU-28) countries. Similar to Singapore, workers who take part in Eurofound's survey are asked if they had faced discrimination at work in the 12 months prior to the survey. The latest available data were for 2015. Comparing with findings from Eurofound's survey, Singapore's incidence of discrimination among employees, at 8%, is comparable with that of the EU-average which stands at 7%. It is lower than countries such as France, Sweden, Switzerland, and Finland, but higher than others like Germany, Denmark, UK, and Italy. Similar to Singapore, age-based discrimination was the most common form of discrimination.

Figure 2: Proportion Of Workers Who Were Discriminated In The Last 12 Months Due To Their Personal Attributes, In Selected European Countries, 2015 (%)



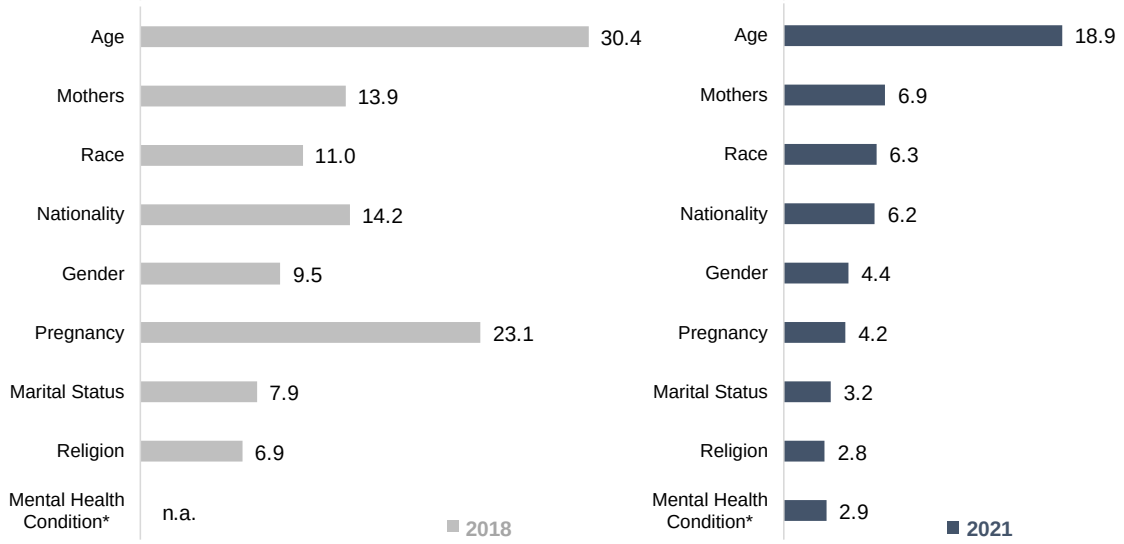
Source: Sixth European Working Conditions Survey, 2015, Eurofound

[1] Eurofound is the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.
[2] The European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) collects data on working conditions in Europe, including adverse social behaviours and discrimination, work organisation, health, and well-being. The EWCS is conducted once every five to six years, with the latest 2021 survey scheduled to release findings in end 2022.

Job Applicants

2.4 The survey also found that 25% of job applicants faced discrimination during their job search, lower than the 43% from a similar survey conducted in 2018.[3] Discrimination due to age, and towards mothers, were more common.

Figure 3: Proportion Of Resident Job Applicants Who Were Discriminated During Job Search Due To Their Personal Attributes (%)



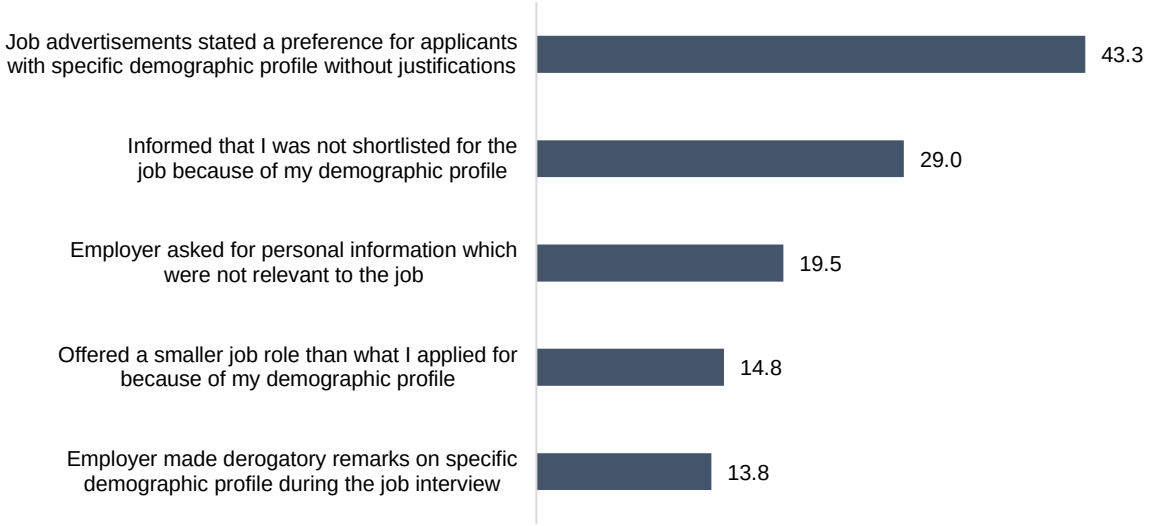
Source: Supplementary Survey on Fair Employment Practices, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Notes:
(1) Data are based on those with job search activity in the year prior the conduct of the survey.
(2) n.a.: not available. Discrimination during job search due to an individual's mental health condition was newly collected in 2021.
(3) As disability is an uncommon occurrence, there were insufficient responses among job applicants to provide an estimate.
(4) The data used to derive the incidence of discrimination for each attribute is different. Hence, the incidence of discrimination for each specific attribute do not sum up to the overall incidence of 43% in 2018 and 25% in 2021 respectively.

[3] The incidence of discrimination among job applicants in 2021 (25%) was also lower than in 2014 (35%).

2.5 Job applicants highlighted that job advertisements stating a preference for candidates with a specific demographic profile (commonly relating to age requirements) without any justifications were the main source of discrimination.

Figure 4: How Job Search Discrimination Occur, As A Percentage Of Job Applicants Who Were Discriminated During Job Search In The Year, 2021 (%)



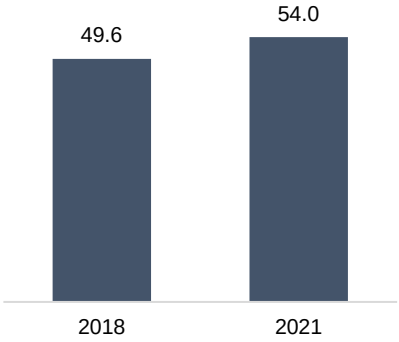
Source: Supplementary Survey on Fair Employment Practices, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Note: Respondents are allowed to indicate more than one option.

3 Seeking Help For Workplace Discrimination

3.1 54% of employees reported that their employers had formal procedures to manage workplace discrimination. This has increased from 50% in 2018. Among the 46% who did not report their employers had formal procedures, it could reflect a lack of awareness among the employees. It is thus important for employers to not just develop structures and processes in their organisations to manage workplace discrimination, but also to effectively communicate the information to their employees.

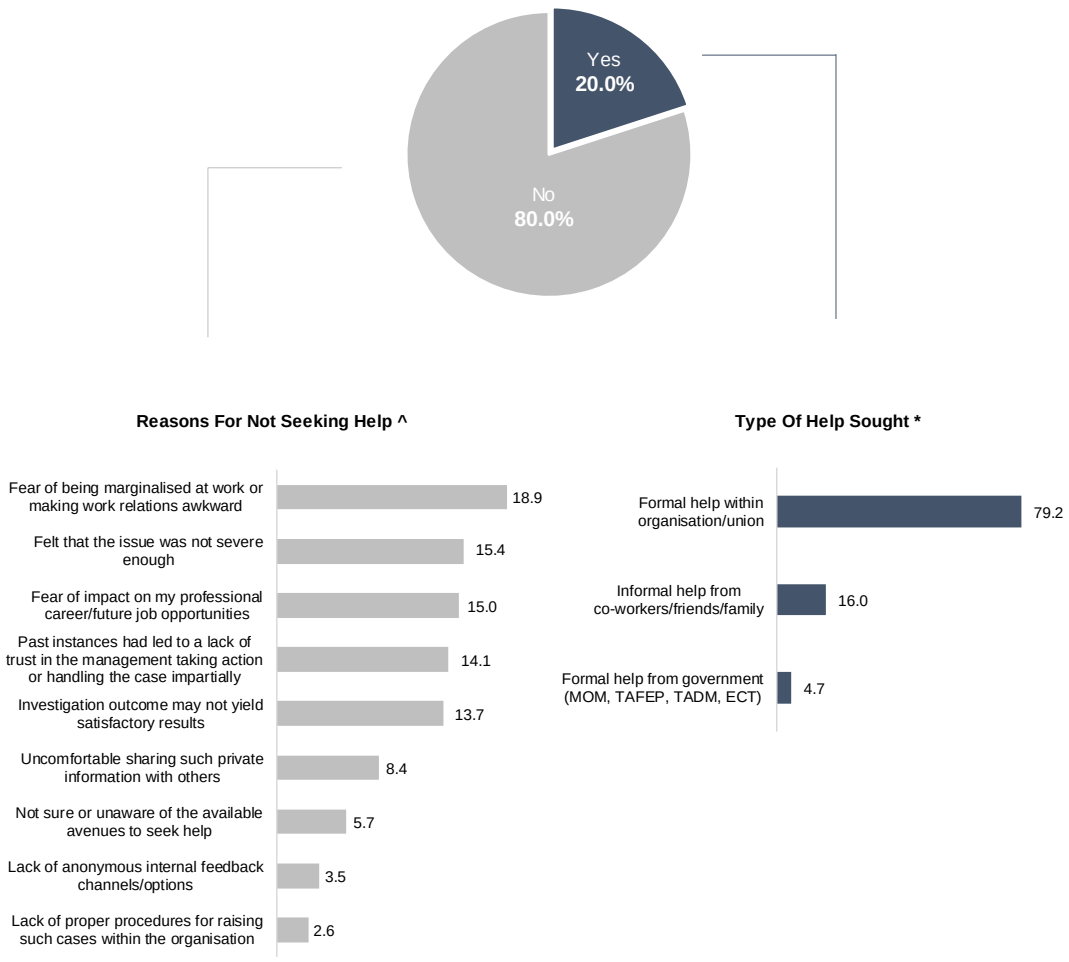
Figure 5: Proportion Of Resident Employees In Organisations With Formal Procedures To Manage Workplace Discrimination (%)



Source: Supplementary Survey on Fair Employment Practices, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

3.2 One in five resident employees who faced workplace discrimination sought help. This was unchanged from 2018 (20.1%). Among them, most chose to raise the incident to their organisation or union.[4] Those who remained silent were more concerned over the possible repercussions at work or in their careers, or felt that the issue was not severe enough to warrant a report. These findings signal the need for employers to have formal and impartial processes to handle workplace grievances, and to create a safe environment for victims to seek help.

Figure 6: Proportion Of Resident Employees Who Were Discriminated In Their Organisations By Whether They Sought Help, 2021 (%)



Source: Supplementary Survey on Fair Employment Practices, Manpower Research & Statistics Department, MOM

Notes:
(1) ^ Data are based on those who did not report or seek help for discrimination experienced in their organisations.
(2) * Data are based on those who sought help or made a formal report for discrimination experienced in their organisations.

[4] 79% of those who sought help, did so formally through their organisation or union. This was up from 73% in 2018.

Annex

SURVEY COVERAGE AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The *Supplementary Survey on Fair Employment Practices* was conducted by the Manpower Research and Statistics Department of the Ministry of Manpower under the Statistics Act (Chapter 317). The survey was conducted from 3 September to 13 November 2021.

Objective

The survey was conducted to collect information on the prevalence of workplace discrimination during the 12-month period ending June 2021 (i.e. 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021), and procedures related to fair treatment at work.

Coverage

The survey covered residents in the labour force aged 15 years and over (excluding full-time National Servicemen). A total of 3,682 residents in the labour force were surveyed, of whom 3,067 or 84% responded to the survey.

Methodology

The survey was conducted using mail questionnaires. Respondents could submit their returns online, by post, email or fax, with clarifications made over the phone.

Data Collected

Individuals were asked:

- whether they were discriminated during job search in the past year because of their personal attributes.
- whether they were discriminated at work in the past year because of their personal attributes, and in various aspects of employment (e.g. career development, salary, promotion, appraisal).
- whether the company they worked in had formal procedures to manage workplace discrimination.

Reliability Of Data

In a sample survey, inferences about the target population are drawn from the data collected from the sample. Errors due to extension of the conclusions based on one sample to the entire population are known as sampling errors. The sampling error of an estimate is the extent of variation between the estimated value obtained from a sample and the true value from the population. Factors influencing the sampling error include the sample size, the sample design, method of estimation, the variability of the population and the characteristics studied.

A common measure of the sampling error of an estimate is its standard error, which is a measure of the variation among the estimates derived from all possible samples. An alternative measure is the relative standard error of an estimate which indicates the standard error relative to the magnitude of the estimate. A sample estimate and an estimate of its standard error can be used to construct an interval that will, at specified levels of confidence, include the true estimate. By statistical convention, the confidence level has been set at 95 per cent.

Estimates of the sampling variability of selected indicators are as follows:

	Estimate (%)	Standard Error (%-points)	Relative Standard Error (%)	95% Confidence Interval (%)	
				Lower	Upper
Proportion Of Resident Job Applicants Who Were Discriminated During Job Search Due To Their Personal Attributes	25.5	1.5	6.0	22.5	28.5
Proportion of Resident Employees Who Were Discriminated At Work Due To Their Personal Attributes	8.5	0.5	6.1	7.4	9.5
Proportion Of Resident Employees Who Were Discriminated In Their Organisation And Sought Help	20.0	2.5	12.7	15.0	25.0