

17 August 2023

Black PCS members experience workplace discrimination, survey finds

A large number of PCS members have experienced workplace discrimination, according to a recent equalities survey by PCS.

Of the 17,698 members who completed our equality survey, 16% said they had experienced workplace discrimination based on their protected characteristics.

This included many who identified themselves – in the PCS political context – as black, which includes those who identify as Asian, Chinese, African, African/Caribbean, Arabic, and people from African and Asian Diaspora, including people of dual heritage.

11% of the survey participants identified as black. Of this 11%, many reported workplace discrimination.

Racist abuse

With regards to experiences with colleagues, the testimonies range from racist comments, racist abuse and racist bullying to what one member calls “subtle racism”, defined as “throwaway comments/being ignored/ not approached to ‘act up/deputise’/ having work analysed to a deeper degree”.

There are also reports of discrimination against members, including the use of racial slurs by members of the public who use services they provide.

On occasion, the discrimination can be heightened when the member has another protected characteristic such as a disability or because of their religion, age or gender.

The findings of our survey bear a striking similarity to a landmark new study that was recently published. In [Black British Voices](#), the largest survey ever undertaken on the experiences of black Britons, a large majority said that they

have experienced racial discrimination in the workplace.

In the survey, 88% of participants say they experienced racial discrimination in the workplace, while 98% have had 'to compromise who they are and how they express themselves to fit in at work'.

Survey respondents said that 'fitting in' was a major source of discrimination – even higher than unequal pay as the primary workplace obstacle.

It was also reported that black Britons often face protracted and nonlinear career progression, encountering obstacles to promotion and being accused of benefiting from tokenism when they do advance.

What to do if you experience workplace discrimination?

Many members reported that they approached and were supported by their local PCS rep. However, others chose not to. We would like to encourage all members to approach their rep if they witness or experience discrimination of any kind.

PCS is committed to giving our reps and members the skills to tackle racism where they live and work.

Where a hate crime or incident takes place at work, your workplace rep should encourage you to report it.

But if you feel uncomfortable raising this issue with a PCS rep, PCS operates a 24-hour racial incidents helpline (for PCS members only) to report incidents involving racism at work (020 7801 26780).

Members and reps can read more about [what to do if you experience racial discrimination in the workplace](#) by logging into PCS Knowledge [on PCS Digital](#).