



NATIONAL SURVEY ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF EQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

August 15, 2017

SUMMARY

Compiled By



A SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL SURVEY ON PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF EQUALITY AND DISCRIMINATION IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

INTRODUCTION

The Equal Opportunity Commission (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Commission’) is a public body that was created in accordance with the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act, Chapter 22:03 (Act No. 69 of 2000 as amended by Act No.5 of 2001). Section 27 of the Act, mandates the Commission ‘to work towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunity between persons of different status.’ Moreover, Section 27 (1) (e) charges the Commission ‘to develop, conduct and foster research...for the purpose of eliminating discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity...between persons of different status grounds’. The Act provides for the protection against discrimination in four (4) Categories – Employment, Education, the Provision of Goods and Services and the Provision of Accommodation; and seven (7) Status Grounds – Sex, Race, Ethnicity, Origin, Religion, Marital Status and Disability.

The Commission is cognizant of the importance of legislative, policy and programmatic interventions in addressing discrimination in all forms. The Commission is also mindful of the dynamic socio-economic and cultural changes in our society, which in turn necessitates change to existing policies and legal frameworks. In this regard, the Commission discerned the need for a national survey in order to explore the forms of discrimination and the contexts in which they are manifested.

The National Survey on Public Perception of Equality and Discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago was commissioned by the EOC and undertaken by TER K Solutions between May 2017 and July 2017. The primary objectives of the survey were to determine the public perception of equality and discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago; uncover the types of discrimination that exist; the extent to which persons feel discriminated against and; the extent of the public’s awareness of the Commission and its effectiveness. In addition, the findings of the survey would provide the Commission with a strategic and evidence based work agenda.

This document provides a brief summary of the survey and the principal findings. The conclusions are those of the survey team and no attempt is made to interpret or analyse the results. Readers are advised to examine the full report before using the information and the report should be fully cited in any references.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was based on a mixed method of research. The research process included a review of the 2011 MORI Caribbean Survey entitled ‘Opinion Leaders Panel, Wave 19’, a project of the Ministry of Public Administration. This survey polled public opinion on the Equal

Opportunity Commission, awareness of the Equal Opportunity Act and issues facing the nation among others. There were two (2) major differences between the 2011 and the 2017 survey design. Firstly, in the 2011 survey report, the settings related to ‘employment’ and ‘education’ were simply stated as ‘in employment’ and ‘in education’. The 2017 research design provided for the capture of public perceptions of personal experiences of discrimination in new settings such as ‘in personal life among family and friends’, ‘in seeking employment’, ‘while employed’, ‘in seeking placement in education’ and ‘while in school’. Secondly, the 2017 research design also provided new data regarding perceptions of personal experiences of discrimination on the basis of the individual characteristics such as age, ethnicity/race, class/income/status/occupation, educational level, HIV/AIDS status, disability, location of residence, geographic origin, marital status, parental status, political views, religious affiliation, sex and sexual orientation. The 2011 survey report did not reflect those.

The 2011 National Population and Housing Census was used to determine the estimated size of the island’s regions and the number of persons to be interviewed. In order to achieve a representative sample with an appropriate margin of error of 2.5% - 3%, the total sample size of 1,278 – 1,841 respondents was identified. Surveys were conducted using a convenience-quota sampling method (door to door methodology) with identified quotas across each of the fourteen (14) Regional Corporations in Trinidad as well as Tobago, totalling one thousand, three hundred and one (1,301) respondents. Of those respondents, 607 or 47% were females and 694 or 53% were males. In terms of Ethnicity/Race, 40.43% were African, 34.82% were East Indian, 7.53% were Mixed African/Indian and 15.14% were of Mixed (Other).

During the survey administration process, respondents were invited to participate in focus group sessions. Five (5) focus group sessions were held; four (4) in Trinidad and one (1) in Tobago. The focus group sessions provided for more qualitative data and provided deeper insights into public perceptions of equality. Thematic areas for discussion included:

- Personal experiences and perceptions of equality and discrimination
- Opinions on why there was a significant difference in how persons perceived discrimination in the wider society versus their personal experiences
- Concrete recommendations for reducing discrimination and promoting equality in Trinidad and Tobago.

RESULTS

The following are the principal findings of the survey.

Issues Facing the Country

- Crime was perceived as the most important issue facing Trinidad and Tobago. Other issues rounding off the top ten (10) most important issues included:-
 - Unemployment/Jobs
 - Corruption in government
 - The Economy
 - Discrimination/Racism
 - Lack of Values/Spirituality
 - Poverty/Inequality
 - Governance
 - Inflation/Prices and
 - Issues related to Youth/Family Life
- New issues emerged in the top ten (10) most important issues facing Trinidad and Tobago when compared to the findings of the MORI Caribbean Opinion Survey 2011. These were:-
 - Discrimination/Racism,
 - Lack of Values/Spirituality,
 - Governance and
 - Issues related to Youth/Family Life.

Public Perception on Equality

- Respondents were asked, ‘how much was needed to be done,’ to achieve equality in Trinidad and Tobago. Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents indicated that ‘a lot’ needed to be done while fourteen percent (14%) indicated that ‘some’ needed to be done and only two percent (2%) responded that ‘nothing at all’, was needed to be done to achieve equality in Trinidad and Tobago.
- On the question of the *possibility* of achieving equality, nineteen percent (19%) believed it was ‘extremely achievable’ while fifty-eight percent (58%) believed it was ‘somewhat achievable’. Twenty-one percent (21%) believed that it was ‘unachievable’.

Public Perception on Discrimination

- Of those surveyed, ninety-two percent (92%) believed that discrimination is a problem in Trinidad and Tobago, with fifty-seven percent (57%) defining discrimination as ‘a very big problem’ and thirty-five (35%) as ‘somewhat a problem’.

- Ninety-four percent (94%) of respondents believed that one or more forms of discrimination exist in society.
- Discrimination based on Ethnicity/Race, Class/Status/Income/Occupation, Religion, Sex (Gender), Political Views, Location of Residence and Educational Level were the most frequent responses to the forms of discrimination that exists.
- When asked the extent to which they felt discriminated against in their personal life among family and friends, twenty-six percent (26%) of respondents responded this happens “always” or “sometimes”. This response ranked above experiences of discrimination ‘in the private sector’ (23%), ‘in trying to get into a school’ (18%), ‘while in school’ (18%) and in ‘trying to lease, rent or purchase a property’ (14%).
- Of the fourteen (14) types of discrimination listed in the survey questionnaire, discrimination based on Ethnicity/Race was perceived to be the most prevalent form of discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago. This was followed by discrimination based on Political Views; followed by discrimination based on ‘Class/Status/Income/Occupation.’
- Respondents confirmed that discrimination based on Educational Level, Sexual Orientation, HIV/AIDS Status, Location of Residence, Disability, Religion, Age, Geographic Origin/Nationality, Parental Status and Marital Status also exist in society.
- Respondents also perceived discrimination based on three (3) additional categories, ‘How you look,’ ‘In Employment,’ and ‘Who you know’.
- Discrimination in Employment (in seeking jobs) and in the Provision of Goods and Services in the Public Sector were perceived as the settings in which discrimination most frequently occurred.
- Respondents perceived that more discrimination exists in the society than they experienced themselves.

Discrimination by Sex (Gender)

- Males perceived and experienced discrimination in society differently from females.
- Males experienced more discrimination in their personal experiences with respect to Ethnicity/Race, Class/Status/Income/Occupation, Educational Level and Political Views than females.
- Females experienced more discrimination with respect to Location of Residence, Marital Status, Parental Status, Disability and Sex (gender).
- Overall females perceived and experienced more discrimination than males.

Discrimination by Ethnicity

- There were differences among ethnicities with regard to their societal perceptions of discrimination. ‘East Indians’ and ‘Other,’¹ perceived less discrimination while ‘Mixed African/East Indian’, and ‘Mixed Others’ perceived more.

- There were differences among ethnicities with respect to personal experiences of discrimination. ‘Mixed (African/East Indian)’ and ‘Africans’ perceived discrimination in their personal experiences more, while ‘Others’ experienced the least.
- All groups perceived discrimination in their personal experiences based on ethnicity/race more than any other form of discrimination. Persons who defined themselves as ‘Other’, as well as, those who defined themselves as ‘Africans’ perceived discrimination in their personal experiences with respect to ethnicity/race more than any other group.
- The Mixed (African/East Indian) group perceived discrimination in their personal experiences with respect to location of residence and marital status more than any other group.
- East Indians perceived discrimination in their personal experiences with respect to religion more than any other group.

¹ Those who defined themselves as Portuguese, Syrian Lebanese, Chinese, Caucasians, Trinidadians.

Discrimination by Age

- There were significant differences between age groups with respect to all aspects of discrimination: Class/Status/Income/Occupation, Ethnicity/Race, Location of Residence, Religion and Political Views. In general, the younger age group (18-34) perceived and experienced more discrimination.

Discrimination by Religion

- Societal perceptions of discrimination were greatest among Pentecostals and least among Muslims. Perceptions of personal experiences of discrimination were greatest among Other Religions², Pentecostals and Baptists. Perceptions of personal experiences of discrimination were least among Anglicans and Presbyterians.
- All religious groups perceived and experienced discrimination in their personal experiences based on ethnicity/race more than any other form of discrimination.
- Presbyterians, Hindus and Seventh Day Adventists perceived discrimination in their personal experience with respect to political views more than other groups.
- Muslim and Seventh Day Adventists perceived discrimination in their personal experience based on religion more than other groups.

- Persons who indicated their religion as ‘None’, perceived discrimination in their personal experience with respect to Disability more than other groups.
- Respondents belonging to Other, Baptists and persons who indicated their religion as ‘None’, perceived discrimination in their personal experiences with respect to location of residence more than other groups.

Discrimination on Purpose or Knowingly

- Of those surveyed, approximately forty percent (40.35%) of respondents felt discrimination was done ‘On Purpose’. Approximately eighteen percent (17.9%) of respondents believed that discrimination was done ‘Unknowingly,’ while approximately forty percent (39.8%) felt that discrimination was done both ‘On purpose’ and ‘Unknowingly’.

Pressure to Discriminate

- Of those surveyed, approximately twenty-two percent (21.68%) felt pressured to discriminate, while approximately seventy-seven percent (77.3%) felt no pressure to discriminate.
- An analysis by sex (gender) revealed that approximately twenty-three percent (23.4%) of male respondents and approximately twenty percent (19.6%) of female respondents admitted feeling pressured to discriminate.

² Comprising of Rastafarian, Orisha, Jewish, Jehovah Witness, Methodist, Moravian and others not stated.

- An analysis by religion revealed that approximately thirty-two percent (31.7%) of respondents of the ‘Other’ group felt more pressure to discriminate. Presbyterians, Seventh Day Adventists and Anglicans felt the least pressured.
- An analysis by ethnicity/race revealed that approximately thirty-three percent (33.3%) of respondents of the ‘Other’ group felt more pressure to discriminate, while approximately twenty percent (20.5%) East Indians felt the least pressured.

Reactions to Discrimination

- Of those surveyed forty-eight percent (48%) of respondents, walked either away or ignored situations where they felt personally discriminated. Only twelve percent (12%) tried to do something about it while twenty-four percent (24%) indicated that they never experienced discrimination.

- Of those surveyed, ninety-three percent (93%) of respondents considered religion and spirituality to be ‘extremely important’ or ‘somewhat important’ at promoting equality and reducing discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago.

Public Opinion on the EOC

- Of the survey respondents, 50.35% never heard of the Commission and 27.67% heard “not very much”. Only 4.53% heard “a great deal” and 16.91% heard “a fair amount”.
- Of those surveyed 69.36% of persons in the 18-34 age groups never heard of the Commission.
- Analysis of the results revealed that 89% of Baptists, 81.78% of Christians, 80.77% of Pentecostals and 79% of Hindus, 75% of Muslims, 74% of Roman Catholics, 73% of Anglicans, 70% of Seventh Day Adventists, and 67% of Presbyterians never heard of the Commission or heard “not very much”.
- Ninety-four percent (94%) of respondents heard of the Commission mainly through traditional media i.e. television, newspapers and radio. Of the 5% that heard about the Commission from the internet, 56% were less than 44 years old and 84% were less than 55 years old.

Public Opinion on the Impact of the EOC

- When asked the extent to which they believed that the Commission made an impact on trying to reduce discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago, 35% responded “a great deal” or “a fair amount.”
- Sixty-one (61%) of respondents felt that the Equal Opportunity Commission had to do much more to make an impact on reducing discrimination in Trinidad and Tobago.



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