

# Sexist and racist stereotypes in the Québec workplace

## BECAUSE WHAT MATTERS IS WHAT YOU CAN DO, NOT HOW YOU LOOK

### GENERATION INCLUSION: AN ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT BY, FOR AND WITH MINORITY YOUNG PEOPLE

Between September 2020 and June 2021, two groups of young people aged 18 to 31 got together to investigate sexist and racist stereotypes in the workplace. They share an urban (Montreal North) and rural (Lotbinière RCM) perspective and reflect the diversity of Québec society.

To find out more, read their profiles at:  
[oxfam.qc.ca/generation-inclusion](https://oxfam.qc.ca/generation-inclusion).

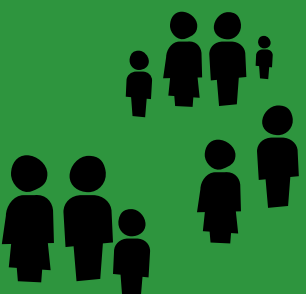


### POPULAR EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Popular education is an approach to learning that helps people outside academia look critically at their living conditions so they can change them in accordance with the principles of social justice. The action research was carried out using virtual cocreation labs, built as safe, participatory, and inclusive spaces.

### RESEARCH METHOD

The investigators from Lotbinière and Montreal North studied sexist and racist stereotypes underlying hiring and workplace discrimination by designing an online survey. They collected 108 responses from people working in the two big urban centres (Montreal and Québec City) and several rural communities (including Lotbinière RCM).



**OXFAM**  
Québec

The project was funded by  
the government of Québec/Secrétariat  
à la condition féminine



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### TESTIMONIALS\*

"I was born in Quebec. People at work assumed I'd recently immigrated and just spoke good French for an immigrant."

"I was advised to hide my name to get more job offers."

"When I had a job in customer service, customers gave me suggestive nicknames. My bosses didn't do anything."

"I'm a barmaid. I've stopped counting the customers who've asked me to have sex with them in the men's room or were waiting for me at closing time."

"I heard a customer tell my coworker he was lazy and that people of colour are like that."

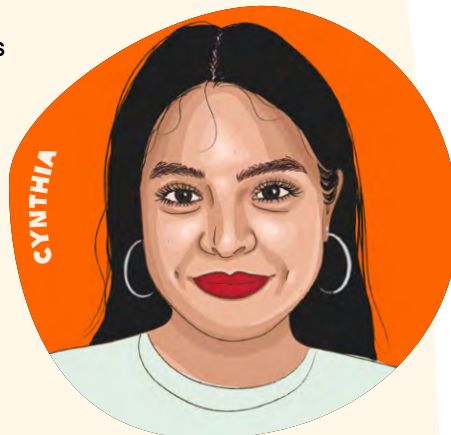
"I'm originally from Mexico. People are often suspicious of Latinos and take it for granted that we're thieves."

"My supervisor said I had the looks to work in sales. He kept giving me inappropriate compliments on my appearance."

"One boss told me in an interview that if I worked for his company, they'd give me money to get plastic surgery. I walked out."

"One of my coworkers hasn't had a promotion in 20 years on the job because our supervisor is a sexist fatphobe."

*\*The testimonials have been modified in order to respect the anonymity of the respondents and the confidentiality of their comments.*



### HIGHLIGHTS

In hiring, the **3 MAIN AREAS** of discrimination are :



On the job, people who belong to one or more minorities are more likely to report experiencing or having experienced discrimination:

**8 in 10** Immigrant people

**7 in 10** people Cultural or visible minorities

**6 in 10** people Physical, intellectual, or neurological limitations

**5 in 10** people LGBTQ+ community

People who don't experience discrimination themselves are half as likely to notice instances of discrimination as those who do, thus reducing their likelihood of doing something.

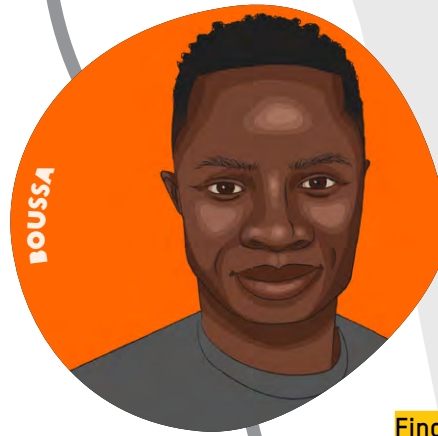
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### CONCLUSION: STEREOTYPES ARE A MAJOR OBSTACLE TO EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

- Sexual, sexist, racist, xenophobic, and fatphobic stereotypes persist in Quebec workplaces.
- Such stereotypes help normalize discriminatory remarks and behaviour. They may be dressed up as something positive, as in the case of compliments and jokes.
- Trivializing discrimination leads to frustration for the victims and a sense of impotence in those who witness it. That creates an illusion that nothing can be done about it, which reinforces the underlying dynamic.

This action research project was done by Bousssa Gouba, Cassandra Monjaraz, Cliff Belleus, Cynthia Guevara, Jonathan Paradis Caron, Nerly Michel, Rosie Moreau, and Tanya-Michelle Contente

With the support



**Education and self-examination:** Learn to recognize your own stereotypes and spot microaggressions

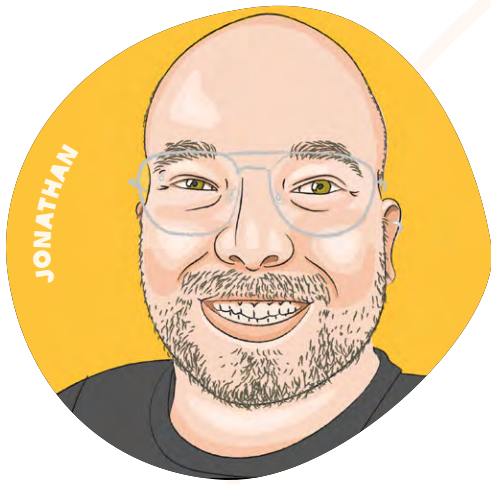
**THERE ARE SOLUTIONS:  
TAKE ACTION!**

**Find out** current best practices and apply them in your workplace (see the resources on the back of this report).



Our prejudices may be founded on a combination of more than one stereotype (e.g., hostility based on both a person's cultural identification and sexual orientation). By adopting what's known as an "intersectional" approach, you can break down more and more stereotypes and promote equity for more people around you.

**Be brave:** Call out discriminatory remarks and behaviours aimed at you or someone else.



# DEFINITIONS

## RACISM

Racism is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others [...]. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual, systemic, and societal.

Source: *Ontario Human Rights Commission*

The concept of racial discrimination is understood as unequal treatment, statements, or violence intended to disparage a person because of their physical appearance ("race") or ethnic, national, or religious identity.

Source: *Human Rights*

## ALLY

To be an ally is to work alongside people who are part of marginalized or excluded groups to fight inequality and oppression. Offering your empathy and support and calling out oppressive and problematic behaviour when you witness it can make you an ally.

Source: *Youth Inclusion*

## SEXISM

Sexism is an attitude, behaviour, ideology, or discriminatory practice that disparages, excludes, underrepresents, or stereotypes people based on their sex. Sexism derives from the belief in a hierarchy of the sexes and has the effect of discriminating against women and restricting their ability to develop their full potential as individuals. It may be fuelled by gender stereotypes and may be expressed individually or collectively.

Source: *Oxfam-Québec*

## PREJUDICE

Prejudice is when someone has a belief (usually negative) about a person or group based on a stereotype. The belief is usually based on a person's membership (or assumed membership) in a certain group.

Source: *Kids Help Phone*

## DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is a distinction, exclusion, or preference based on race, skin colour, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, civil status, age, ethnic or national origin, religion, social condition, language, political beliefs, pregnancy, or disability that tends to undermine or compromise the exercise of rights and freedoms.

Source: *Youth Inclusion*

## STEREOTYPE

Stereotypes are characteristics that society instinctively attributes to groups of people to classify them according to age, weight, occupation, skin colour, gender, etc.

Source: *Government of Quebec*



# RESOURCES

## PRIVILEGE

Within a society, certain groups have greater economic, social, or political privileges than others. This has an impact on what they can do and the recognition and influence they are granted.

Source: *Youth Inclusion*

## MICROAGGRESSION

A microaggression is an everyday behaviour that intentionally or unintentionally communicates hostility, discrimination, or prejudice towards an individual and community.

Source: *Racial Gaslighting and Microaggressions Can't Be Ignored Any Longer*

Microaggression takes on many forms, be it verbal, behavioural or environmental, and perpetuates harmful prejudices and stereotypes, including assuming someone is less senior than you, addressing them differently than other teammates and interrupting or dismissing their ideas. The privileged group often fails to detect or outright ignores these instances, even though those who are underrepresented experience them repeatedly.

Source: *CPA Canada*

### Hiring

[Toolbox \(in French\) for "Recruitment without discrimination"](#)

Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la jeunesse

[Training video and guide "Unconscious bias and recruitment"](#)

Québec Interuniversity Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Network

### At work

[The dos and don'ts to make you an effective workplace ally](#)

Chartered Professional Accountants Canada (CPA Canada)

[How to eliminate discrimination from your workplace](#)

Business Development Bank of Canada (BDC)

### In your projects

Incorporate gender-differentiated analysis plus (GDA+) into your projects to assess their potential effects on women, men, and members of minority groups: [Guide \(in French\) from Secrétariat à la condition féminine](#)

### Educational resources

[Microaggression awareness poster](#) (in French)

Chinese Family Service of Greater Montreal

[Toolbox on sexual and gender diversity](#) (in French)

CSQ committee for sexual diversity and gender identity

[Tu n'as pas l'air autochtone et autres préjugés](#) (in French)

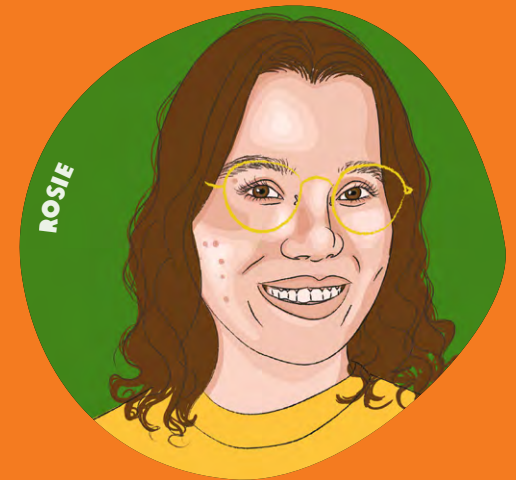
Amnistie Internationale Canada francophone and Mikana

[Zéro Cliché educational kit](#)

Table de concertation de Laval en condition féminine

### Are you experiencing or have you witnessed discrimination at work?

Your employer, HR officer, or union are there to help. You can also check out the [ressources](#) from CNESTT.



And there is lots more available.

We hope our research made you want to know more about the issue, think about it, and talk about it with the people around you.

Together we can make the places we work better and more inclusive.



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