



# **SUMMARY: DISCRIMINATION AND EQUALITY IN WORKING LIFE**

**LITERATURE REVIEW  
AND MEMBER SURVEY**

**AULA RESEARCH OY  
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## SUMMARY: DISCRIMINATION AND EQUALITY IN WORKING LIFE

### The background and objective of the literature review

Literature review *Syrjintä ja yhdenvertaisuus työelämässä* (Discrimination and equality in working life) examines the different forms of discrimination, the factors behind them, and the effects they have on Finnish society and working life. This literature review draws from research data, statistics, legislation, international agreements, and JHL's member survey and focus group interviews about discrimination, as well as from JHL's working life survey for people of sexual and gender minorities (*Sateenkaari-ihmiset työyhteisössä*).

The central objective of the review is to identify forms of discrimination especially in working life in JHL's occupational sectors. This kind of review that covers both the broad phenomenon and everyday work provides a foundation of knowledge that enables JHL to further develop its role as an advocate of equality in working life and society.

#### 1) Discrimination as a phenomenon

Discrimination means a situation where a person is treated unfairly or disadvantageously on the grounds of a personal characteristic, such as age, gender, ethnic background, state of health, sexual orientation, political conviction or trade union activity.

Discrimination can be direct or indirect, and it can manifest as individual actions or as part of the structures and culture of a workplace. Although legislation and supervision by the authorities have improved, part of discrimination still remains hidden for example due to a threshold in reporting it, lack of knowledge, or fear.

#### 2) The effects of discrimination

Discrimination affects individuals, work communities and society in significant and wide-ranging ways. It reduces wellbeing at work, makes people more susceptible for burnout and increases staff turnover.





Discrimination in the public sector erodes citizen's trust, burdens social and health care services and makes shortages of skilled workforce harder to solve.

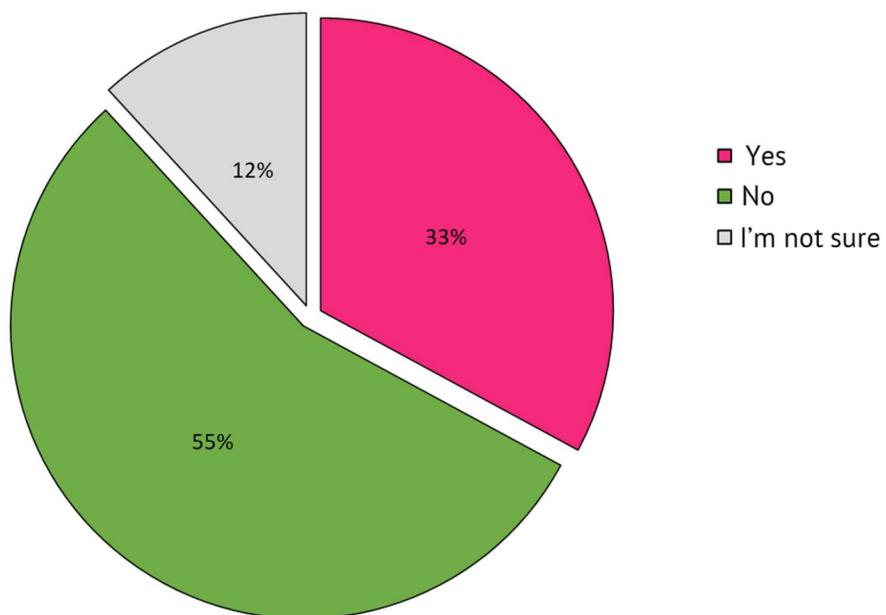
### 3) Experiences of discrimination in working life

According to JHL's member survey that was conducted in October 2025, experiences of discrimination are regrettably common among JHL members. One third of the members have experienced discrimination in working life (see Fig. 1), and discrimination occurs in all occupational sectors.

Almost 80% of those who had experienced discrimination told that it had happened in everyday work (see Fig. 2), and most often those who had discriminated against the respondents were supervisors/managers and colleagues (see Fig. 3). This makes tackling these situations particularly challenging.

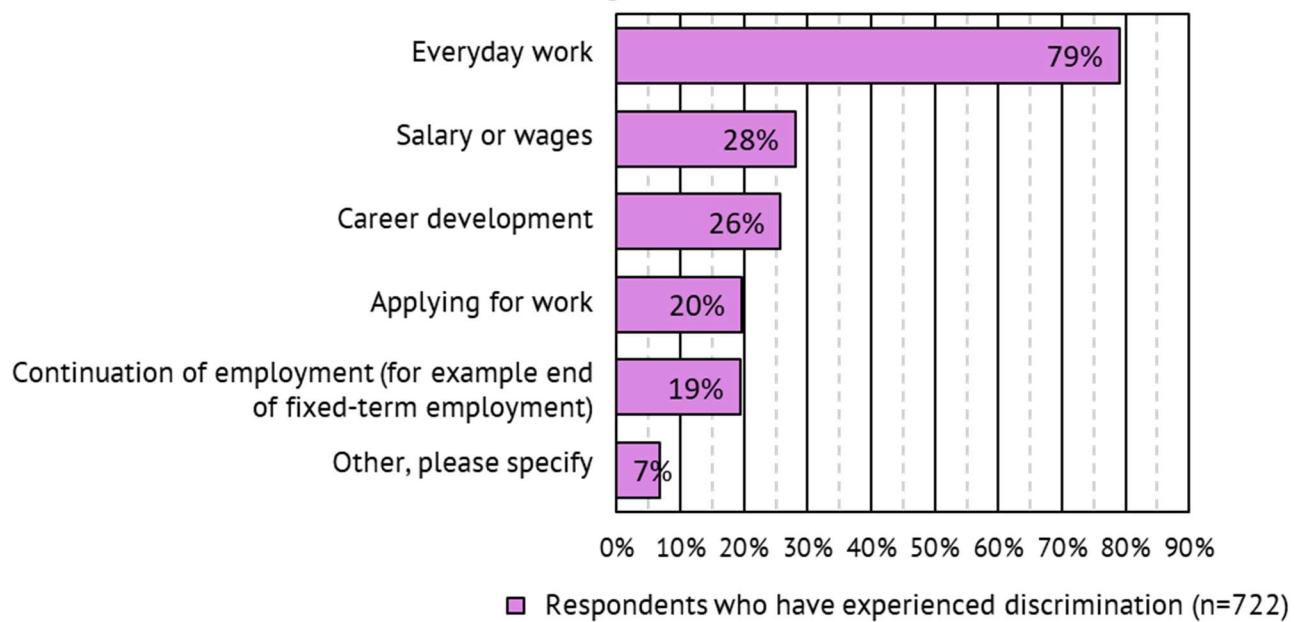
**Figure 1:** Have you experienced in working life the kinds of discrimination that are the topic of the Non-discrimination Act or the Equality Act?

JHL members (n=2223)

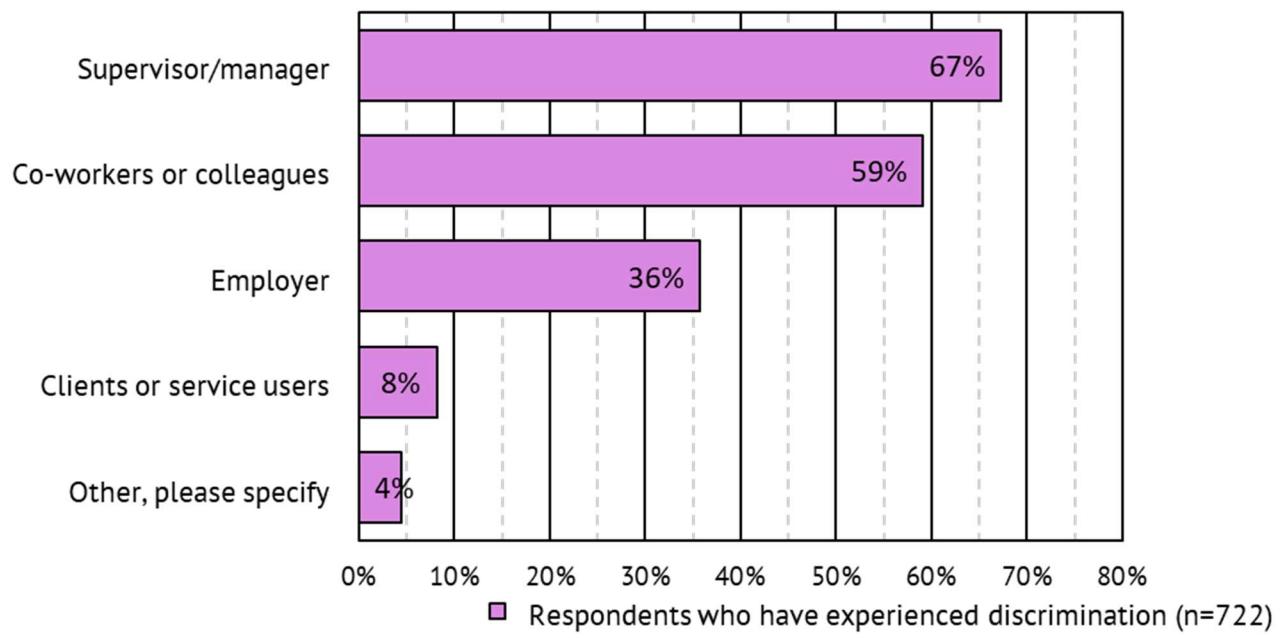




**Figure 2:** In what kinds of situations have you experienced discrimination in working life? You can select more than one.



**Figure 3:** Who have discriminated against you in working life? You can select more than one.





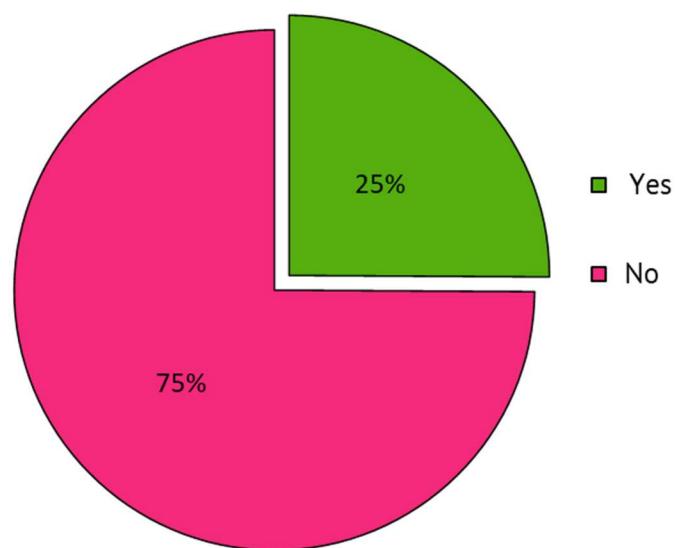
#### 4) Tackling discrimination at workplaces

Many of those who have experienced discrimination tell about their experiences to a co-worker, superior or manager, or a trade union representative, but only about one in four feels that they got help in their situation (see Fig. 4). Those who did get help were mostly helped either by a co-worker/colleague or a supervisor/manager. Persons representing the trade union or employee representatives were in the third place. Thus, the local work community and its actions can both be a source of discrimination and potentially provide a solution to it.

Frequently the reactions of workplaces to experiences of discrimination remain superficial: experiences may be downplayed or overlooked, or responsibility for discrimination is passed to the discriminated employee. Often action is not taken, and sometimes discrimination even increases as a result of telling about it. Experiences like this erode trust in the work community and the employer, and indeed many of those who have experienced discrimination consider finding a new job or have already done that.

Figure 4: Did you get help at your workplace with discrimination that you had experienced?

Respondents who answered that they have experienced discrimination at their workplace (n=546)



*The results of JHL's member survey, October 2025*





## 5) The role of trade unions and the members' expectations

In today's social climate, where equality is increasingly challenged and questioned, the role of trade unions in promoting equality becomes even more pronounced. Thanks to its large and diverse membership, JHL has a strong mandate to influence both equality in working life and the broader discourse in society.

The members expect from the trade union effective support especially in everyday situations at the workplace, active and visible communication, training, and influencing in both collective agreement negotiations and political decision-making.

### For more information about the report, contact:

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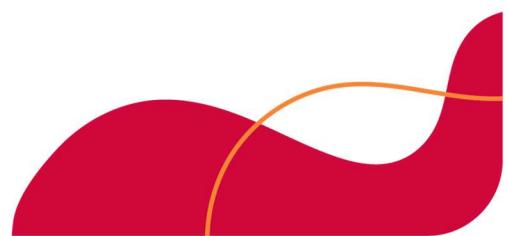
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JHL's report *Syrjintä ja yhdenvertaisuus työelämässä* (Discrimination and equality in working life) examines the different forms of discrimination, the factors behind them, and the effects they have on Finnish society and working life.

This summary highlights the key themes of a literature review and JHL's member survey. The review and survey are part of JHL's multi-year work on future trends.

**2025**

