

# Widespread gender discrimination still exists

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Despite the fact that women have achieved success and made invaluable contributions to society, widespread gender discrimination still exists.

## Women are discriminated against in the workplace

- More than two-thirds of women (68%) agree that *women are indeed discriminated against in terms of employment opportunities*. Black respondents felt this most strongly (75%), and whites least strongly (60%). For Capetonian women, this was slightly less of an issue than for their Durban and Gauteng counterparts - 64% of Cape Town women agreed with this statement compared to 70% for both Gauteng and Durban women. Interestingly, and perhaps not surprisingly, women in the higher income brackets do not feel as strongly about this as those earning less.
- Single/divorced or widowed women tend to feel that women are *discriminated against in terms of employment opportunities* more strongly than do women who are married/living with partners - 73% compared to 65%. Could this be because single women are possibly the more seriously affected victims of this discrimination as they may well be needing to earn a good income as well as bring up a family on their own?
- For those women who do manage to overcome the obstacles of discrimination as far as employment opportunities go, they have further issues to deal with - only 48% of women feel they *earn the same incomes as men doing the same jobs*. There is a greater tendency for white women to believe that this is the case (53%) than blacks (44%).
- *Affirmative action* has a role to play in giving women better *access to leadership positions in the workplace* - 80% of women agreed with this statement, although it is less marked amongst the 25-34 year olds (73% versus at least 80% amongst other age groups).

## Women and sex

- There is a strong belief that *women are not always free to practise their own culture or beliefs* - only 32% of women disagreed with this statement
- The majority of women (76%) feel that *sexual harassment is common in the workplace*. This is more marked amongst black respondents (82%) than whites (72%). This skew may be due to cultural influences where some black women may still feel pressured by tradition and the fact they are not always free to practise their own beliefs.
- Twenty-three percent of women feel that *prostitution should be made legal*. These figures are more prevalent amongst whites and less so amongst Gautengians. There is some evidence that the belief that prostitution should be legalized increases with affluence, although further research would be required to validate this.
- A concerning figure is that 67% of women agreed with the statement that *'sometimes when a woman is raped, there are two sides to the story'*. Due to the sensitivity of this issue, and the fact that interviews were conducted telephonically, it was decided not to pursue the specifics of this finding. We can only say with conviction that rape is not a 'cut and dried' issue - there is often more to a rape incident than meets the eye. There is an enormous difference across cultures here - with 82% of blacks agreeing with the statement, compared with 54% of whites. Issues of culture and being submissive, or being forced into the 'sexual role that a wife/partner is expected to play' no

doubt enter the equation.

## Unfair treatment for the 'fairer sex'

- *Banks often treat women unfairly in terms of providing them with credit facilities* - so say 54% of women. This sentiment increases with age and is strongly skewed towards coloureds. Women who are married/living with a partner feel that banks are unfair to a greater extent (59%) than do women who are single/divorced/widowed (48%). Interestingly, as households become more affluent, this becomes less of an issue.
- Even so, *women who are breadwinners still feel that they do not get enough recognition*. Seventy-seven percent of women agree with this statement, with skews towards young women of 18-24 years. Black and white views are not different (74% and 71% agreeing respectively), but coloured women feel this more strongly than anyone - 88% agreement.
- On the positive side, *employers are becoming more sensitive to the needs of working mothers* - 78% are in agreement with this statement. Younger women (between 18 and 34 years old) are less convinced about this (71% in agreement) compared with older women (on average 80% were in agreement)

Source : Research Surveys xpRS study : 500 interviews conducted telephonically with women over 18 years of age, from 29-31 August 2003  
Interviews were conducted in 3 major metropolitan areas - Gauteng, Durban and Cape Town using CATI - Computer Assisted Telephonic Interviewing.

As a result, this sample differs from our nationally representative Omni studies which are face-to-face interviews with 2000 respondents in all major metropolitan areas in South Africa.

However it is representative of women who have landline telephones in Gauteng, Durban and Cape Town.

## Editorial contact

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