



"MY DISABILITY MAKES ME A SECOND-CLASS CITIZEN"

A REPORT ON THE DISCRIMINATION
EXPERIENCED BY THE DISABLED IN
EVERYDAY LIFE

SUMMARY



YHDENVERTAISUUS

VALTUUTETTU

DISKRIMINERINGSOMBUDSMANNEN
NON-DISCRIMINATION OMBUDSMAN
OVTTAVEARDÁSAŠVUOĐAÁITTARDEADDJI



OIKEUSMINISTERIÖ
JUSTITIEMINISTERIET

A disabled
person
has the same
human rights as
everyone else.

NON-DISCRIMINATION OMBUDSMAN

Ministry of Justice and Discrimination monitoring system

This is a summary of the report prepared by the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman regarding the discrimination experienced by disabled people. The full report is available online at www.syrjinta.fi/vammaisselvitys (in Finnish).

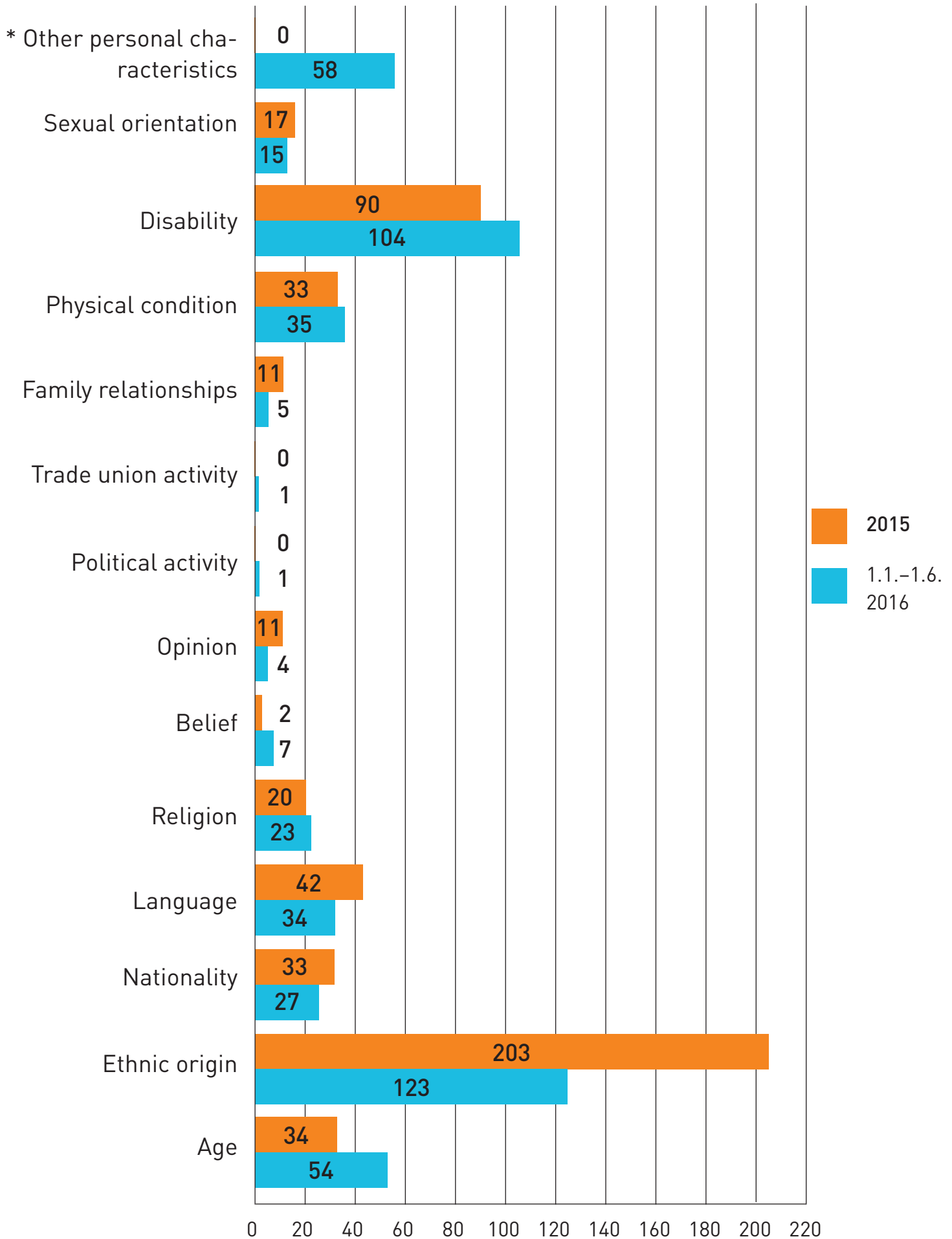
IN GENERAL

The material clearly indicates the need for low-threshold legal protection agencies as a recourse to judicial review for those who have faced discrimination. By volume, the role of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, the Ombudsman for Equality, the National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal, and the labour protection authorities is more significant in discrimination matters than that of the general and administrative courts. To ensure the legal protection of those facing discrimination, it is important that prosecutors and courts request a statement from the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman regarding the application of the Finnish Non-discrimination Act. Due to the low number of discrimination cases, they may not have acquired the required knowledge on the different reasons for discrimination and how to apply non-discrimination in different areas.

The low-threshold legal protection agencies play a vital role in the disabled understanding and knowing who they can contact if they face discrimination. An even more challenging task is for the legal protection agencies to gain the trust of the groups at risk of discrimination. One highly concerning result of the report is that the single most important reason for the respondents not reporting cases of discrimination was that they did not believe it would result in anything.

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COMPLAINTS BY GROUNDS FOR DISCRIMINATION AT THE OFFICE OF THE NON-DISCRIMINATION OMBUDSMAN 2015 AND 1.1–1.6.2016



* Other personal characteristics: for example residence, social status, conscription

VIEWS AND EXPERIENCES OF THE DISABLED REGARDING DISCRIMINATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE

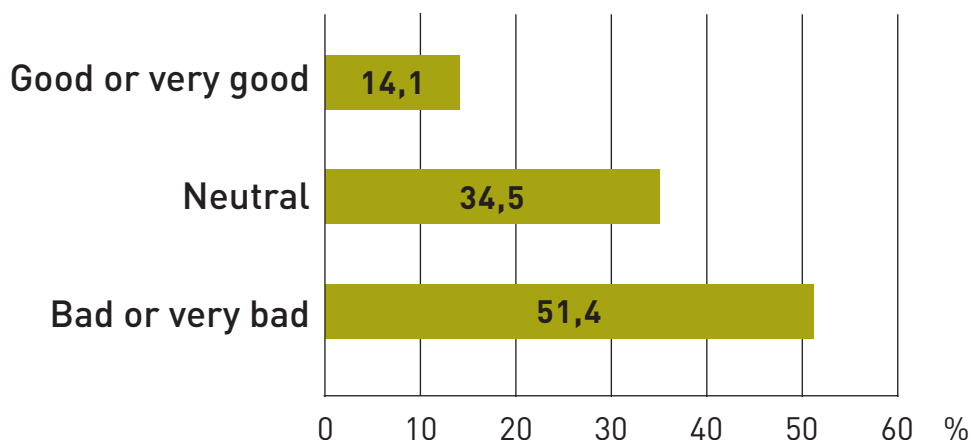
- Over half of the respondents indicated that the attitudes towards the disabled are poor or very poor in Finland.
- Over 60 per cent of the respondents said they had experienced discrimination in some aspect of their lives in the past year. The most often quoted reasons for discrimination were disability, physical condition and age.



"No one recognises that there exist disabled people with brains that could perform any sort of IT or sales work. It is a problem with the media, and perhaps more widely a problem of society, that the disabled are narrowly perceived to be a certain kind only."

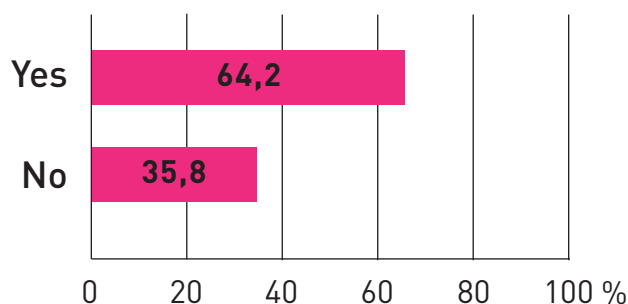
Reviewing the results of the report to discover a common denominator as to why the disabled face challenges in social participation and finding equality, the current attitudes in society are a strong contender.

HOW DID THE RESPONDENTS FEEL THE GENERAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (%)



Only 14.1 per cent (n = 60) of the respondents (n = 426) considered the attitudes towards the disabled in Finland to be good or very good in general. The opposite view was held by 51.4 per cent (n = 219) of the respondents. Attitudes were considered neutral by 34.5 per cent (n = 147) of the respondents.

IN YOUR OPINION, HAVE YOU FACED DISCRIMINATION IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS FOR ONE OR MORE REASONS? (%)



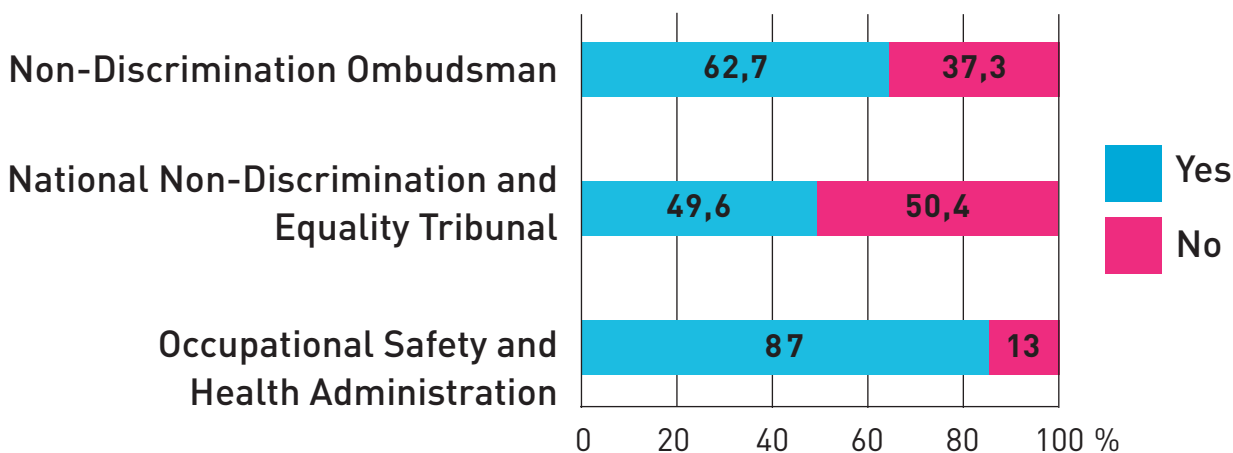
In your opinion, have you faced discrimination in the past 12 months for one or more reasons? Yes (64.2 %). No (35.8 %).

A clear majority, 64.2 per cent, of the online survey respondents indicated that they had experienced discrimination in some aspect of their lives in the past 12 months. The majority of the respondents, 53.9 per cent, stated that their disability had been the reason for discrimination. Many also said they had faced discrimination due to their physical condition or age.

It can be stated that the rights of the disabled are officially good in Finland, but the issue is having the rights be effective in everyday life, as the attitudes towards disability and the disabled still stem from past decades. In some areas and for some people, the negative attitudes are deliberate, whereas for others they are the result of a lack knowledge and understanding.

The results of the online survey make it apparent that measures should be directed towards improving the awareness of the disabled regarding their rights. In their own opinion, many respondents are well aware of what discrimination is, but far fewer find that they know their rights when facing discrimination or harassment. There is a particular need to improve the awareness of the disabled regarding the legal protection agencies that exist.

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE FOLLOWING JUDICIAL BODIES? (%)



DISCRIMINATION IN WORKING LIFE

- The share of disabled people in working life is low, despite them having a relatively good level of education. Nearly half of the respondents, 45.4 per cent, are retired.
- 89.7 per cent of the respondents consider disability to be a hindrance for jobseekers, despite equal skills and competence.
- The majority of the respondents, 57.1 per cent, indicated that the attitudes towards the disabled are poor or very poor in workplaces.



"They [the director of the kindergarten] would decide for me where my limits were and what I could and could not do."

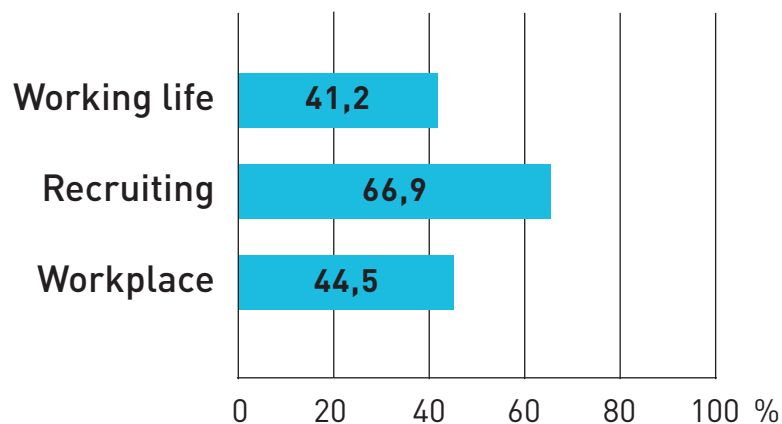
"When I entered working life, with experience, I was overlooked in favour of a non-disabled person, and my disability was given as the reason. I was good enough to be a substitute, and I had more experience than the selected person."

The results of the online survey make it clear that much remains to be done in Finland to improve the position of disabled people in the job market. The large majority of respondents indicated they were retired. The position of the respondents in the job market is even more concerning given their high level

of education. The number of retirees does increase naturally with age, but the percentage of retirees is high across all age groups.

The online survey distinguished between discrimination faced during recruitment and at the workplace. The view of the respondents regarding the effect of disability on recruitment left no doubt: disability is a disadvantage compared to other applicants.

EXPERIENCES OF THE RESPONDENTS CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION IN WORKING LIFE, RECRUITING AND WORKPLACE IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS

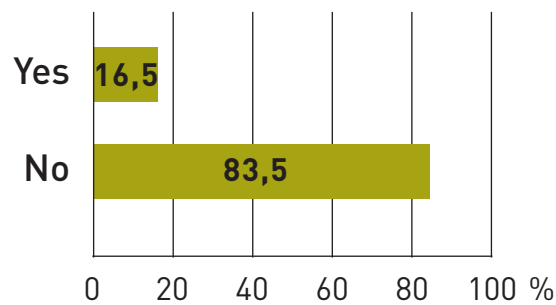


The majority of the respondents considered disability to be a disadvantage for jobseekers, compared to other applicants with equal skills and competence. A total of 89.7 per cent of the respondents (n = 426) held this view.

Experiences further reinforce this, as 41.2 per cent of the respondents reported discrimination in working life due to disability in the last five years. The younger generations reported more cases of discrimination than the older respondents, which indicates challenges in finding one's first job and starting one's career. 66.9 per cent of the respondents who had sought employment reported facing discrimination during recruitment due to their disability.

Harsh attitudes are represented in all areas of the report, but the online survey respondents reported the worst attitudes to be in the workplace. Currently, the typical situation is that a disabled person is unemployed or retired, and employed disabled people are the exception. Respondents active in working life also reported discrimination and mistreatment from their work community. Here the threshold for reporting is lower than in recruitment, but these cases are still under-reported. The main reason for not reporting discrimination in recruitment and in working life is the lack of trust.

DID YOU MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT DISCRIMINATION YOU EXPERIENCED IN THE WORKPLACE? (%)



Regardless of whether the respondents were aware of the existence of the labour protection authorities or the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, the trend appears to be the same: discrimination is not reported, even if the respondent knew who could help and provide guidance for the victims of discrimination. The phenomenon is the same for both recruitment and workplace discrimination.

ACCESSIBILITY OF ELECTRONIC SERVICES

- Common issues indicated by the respondents: poor access with aids for the visually impaired, lack of clear language and lack of user-friendliness.
- Many disabled people do not have bank identifiers.
- Workplace IT systems are also a problem for many: work is poorly organised, the implementation of reasonable adjustments is unclear, insufficient induction is given for new systems and IT support lacks necessary skills.



"My disability prevented me from getting bank identifiers. Although I did get a mobile certificate, it is useless, as I cannot locate the certificate button with my screen reader program."

"My bank allows me to reach an agent by chat or email, good service."

"The TE office and Kela websites have instructions in sign language, which is superb!"

The cases brought to the attention of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman suggest a larger theme of accessibility issues in electronic services.

The results of the online survey regarding electronic services indicate that guaranteed accessibility is still a long way away.

The services of both the private and public sector are increasingly moving online, and many jobs require employees to operate in a digital environment. The use of electronic services is not straightforward for disabled people. The design and implementation of the services too often neglect the needs of the disabled and are not concerned with their user experience. The report finds that the disabilities of disabled people present difficulties for them in finding the information they need online, buying goods and services, as well as taking care of their affairs. This observation applies equally to all of the above.

For the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, the cases regarding electronic services have concerned services that require strong authentication. The main issue has been that the disabled persons reporting the cases do not have or cannot get bank identifiers. This issue was also raised by the online survey respondents. Furthermore, the respondents stated that the online services typically had issues because they hindered the use of aids and modified displays, and did not meet the service needs of disabled people. This indicates that the needs of the disabled are neglected in the design and implementation of the services, and that they are not concerned with their user experience.

Both the private sector and state administration are investing heavily in digital services. Electronic services create new opportunities for disabled people and make their lives easier, just like they do for the rest of us. However, the implementation of electronic services will too often discriminate against disabled users. The move to electronic services may also create problems for services that were previously not problematic. The use of touchscreens is increasing in various services, but the ability of the visually impaired to use them is rarely considered.



"I had to leave my job when the systems were updated in a way that prevented their use with assistive devices."

"I cannot use our payroll software at all, because it is not accessible by my screen reader program."

