



**EMPOWERING  
WORKPLACES  
COMBAT  
EMOTIONAL TAX  
FOR PEOPLE OF  
COLOUR IN CANADA**

JENNIFER THORPE-MOSCON, PHD  
ALIXANDRA POLLACK  
OLUFEMI OLU-LAFE, PHD



# Empowering Workplaces Combat Emotional Tax for People of Colour in Canada

People of colour are an engine of Canada’s economy—they make up over 21% of the population<sup>1</sup> and almost 22% of the workforce.<sup>2</sup> Canadian companies that want to succeed must become better at attracting and developing this growing workforce sector. Most importantly, they must learn to retain people of colour—a tall order since one study found that Canada has the fourth-worst rate of employee attrition in the world at an average 16%.<sup>3</sup>

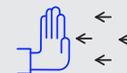
In our study of over 700 Canadian women and men of colour, we found a worrisome story of Emotional Tax and consequent attrition. Emotional Tax—which we first described in 2016—is the combination of feeling different from peers at work because of gender, race, and/or ethnicity, being on guard against experiences of bias, and experiencing the associated effects on health, well-being, and ability to thrive at work.<sup>4</sup> We focus in this report on the key component of Emotional Tax: being “on guard”—anticipating and consciously preparing for potential bias or discrimination.

In Canada, we found that Black, East Asian, and South Asian professionals who are highly on guard have a dangerously high intent to quit, ranging from 50% to 69%.<sup>5</sup> But we also found a way that Canadian employers can start to counter this alarming number: by creating empowering work environments for their employees.

## WHAT IS EMOTIONAL TAX?



Experience of **BEING DIFFERENT** due to Gender, Race, and/or Ethnicity



Being **ON GUARD** to Protect Against Bias



**RISKS** to Employee Well-Being and Productivity



## Key Findings

- Being on guard is a shared experience.
  - > 33% to 50% of Black, East Asian, and South Asian professionals report being highly on guard to protect themselves against bias.
  - > In in-depth interviews, 77% of women and men of colour shared harrowing stories of exclusion and being on guard. In many cases, these stories did not come to light until well into the interview—indicating the importance of going beneath the surface to better understand the experiences of people of colour.
  - > Even when they are on guard, Canadian people of colour have a strong drive to contribute and succeed.
- Emotional Tax is linked to Canada’s retention problem.
  - > 50% to 69% of Black, East Asian, and South Asian professionals who are highly on guard against bias have a high intent to quit.
- Emotional Tax is associated with threats to health and well-being.
  - > 22% to 42% of Black, East Asian, and South Asian professionals who are highly on guard against bias report high rates of sleep problems.
- Leaders who create empowering work environments that support people of colour can drive intent to stay by ensuring that they feel valued for their uniqueness.

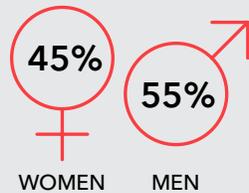
**LEADERS  
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## ABOUT THIS STUDY

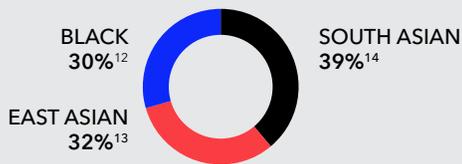
This study<sup>6</sup> is part of Catalyst's research identifying challenges and solutions to workplace inclusion centered on gender, race, and ethnicity. It builds on two prior reports on Emotional Tax<sup>7</sup> that have been frequently cited in top-tier media<sup>8</sup> and used by business leaders to create more equitable and inclusive workplaces.

We surveyed 734 people of colour and interviewed 21 additional individuals,<sup>9</sup> focusing on Black, East Asian, and South Asian people because they represent three of the most populous racial/ethnic minority groups in Canada.<sup>10</sup>

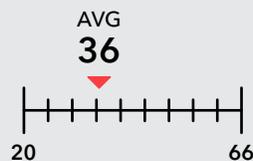
### GENDER



### ETHNICITY<sup>11</sup>



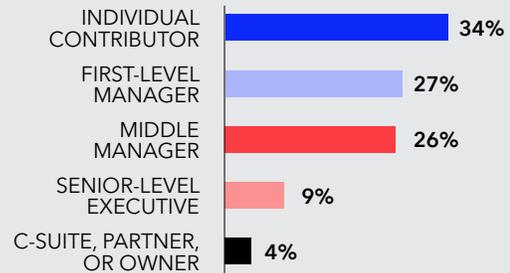
### AGE



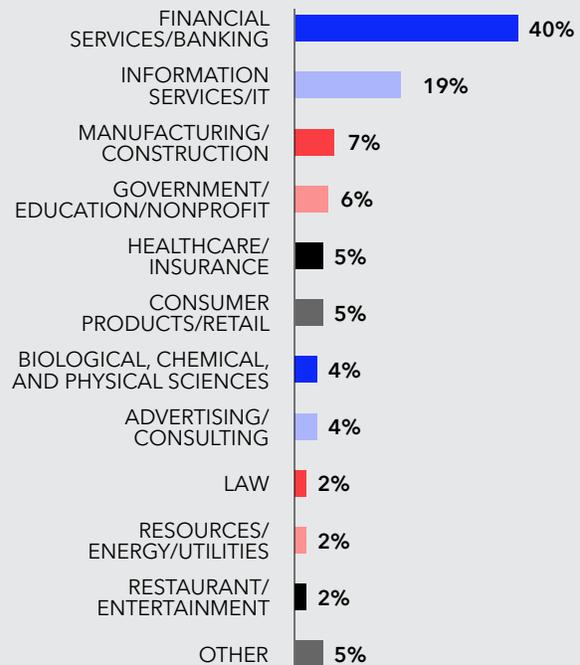
### BIRTHPLACE



### JOB LEVEL



### INDUSTRY<sup>15</sup>



TAKE ACTION

# FOSTER EMPOWERMENT BY VALUING ALL EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES



Empowerment came up over and over again in our interviews and survey<sup>16</sup> as a key factor in fostering an environment where people of colour are valued and included at work. Previous Catalyst research bears this out, linking employee feelings of empowerment to leaders who show them that their unique perspectives, skills, and experiences are valued.<sup>17</sup> In this study, we were also able to show that empowerment plays a powerful role in predicting both a decreased sense of being on guard (Emotional Tax) and lessened intent to leave.

Creating empowering work environments requires skill, supportive resources, and confidence in your employees' abilities to succeed. The stories Black, East Asian, and South Asian employees told us about being valued illuminate four broad avenues for empowering employees from which all leaders can learn:

**CREATING EMPOWERING WORK ENVIRONMENTS REQUIRES SKILL, SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES, AND CONFIDENCE IN YOUR EMPLOYEES' ABILITIES TO SUCCEED**



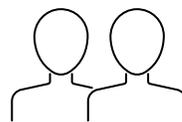
### TALK TO ME

Encourage me and your other direct reports and colleagues to have open discussions of our unique experiences.



### TRUST ME

Trust me to do my work. Give me the autonomy to do my work where and when works best for me.



### STAND BY ME

When issues occur, back me up and give me air cover.



### EQUIP ME

Enable me to do my job to the best of my ability.



**TALK**

**TO ME**

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### WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY

Encourage me and your other direct reports and colleagues to have open discussions of our unique experiences.<sup>18</sup> Be vulnerable. It's ok to reach out to those who are different from you in some way.

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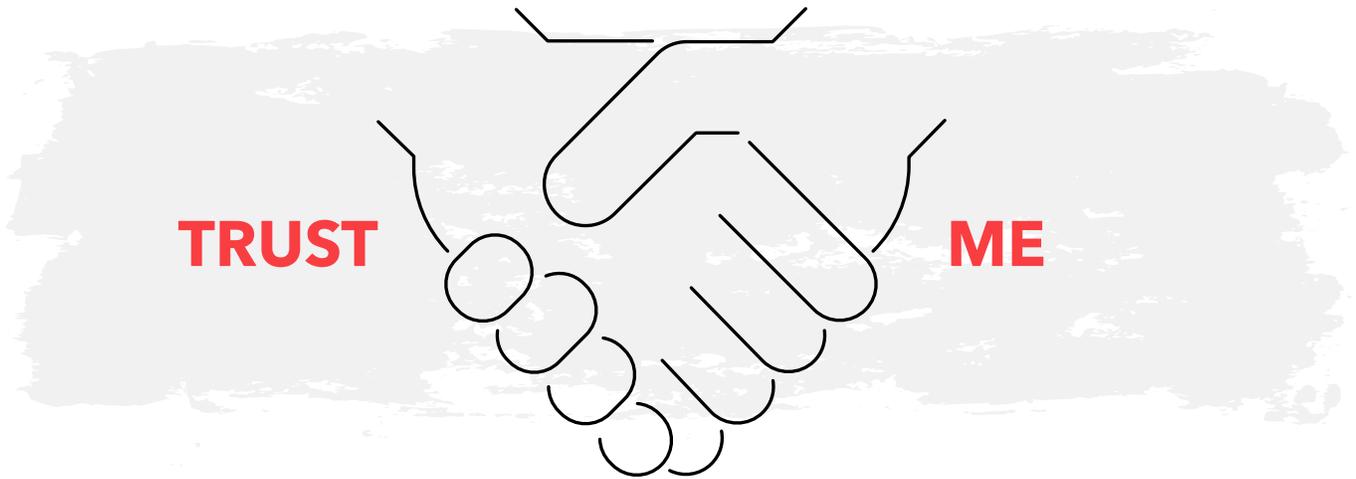
### TAKE ACTION

- Inquire across differences: explore the experiences of others through genuine curiosity.
- Suspend judgment: actively refrain from adding your own editorial comments or lens to someone else's experiences—take yourself out of other people's stories.
- Demonstrate vulnerability: acknowledge your shortcomings and share elements of your experience that may feel uncomfortable or risky.
- Self-disclose: share information about yourself that is personal. Be transparent about struggles and leadership challenges.



“Sometimes they have questions, which I think is completely okay. People should ask questions.”

– Kay,<sup>19</sup> South Asian Woman, Manager



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### WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY

Trust me to do my work. Give me the autonomy to do my work where and when works best for me.<sup>20</sup> Be confident in my ability to achieve results.

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### TAKE ACTION

- Recognize the talents of employees and create opportunities for ongoing development.
- Ensure flexible working arrangements are equally available and accessible to all employees.<sup>21</sup>
- Do not penalize employees who use flexible working arrangements or treat them differently than those who choose not to use them.<sup>22</sup>

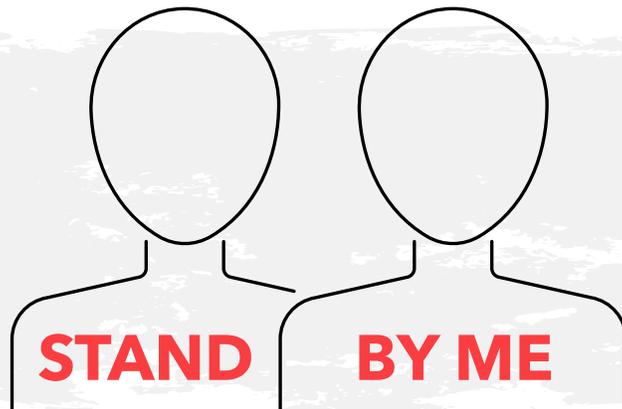


“[I appreciated] the confidence from my direct manager in allowing me to really lead the initiative and own it 100%. [It showed] the trust, the rapport, and the confidence that they were willing to let go and at least give me that latitude.”

– Hiroshi, East Asian Man, Director

“The flexibility, the empowerment, was that he trusted me to get my work done however I get my work done, whenever I get my work done. And I honored it by making sure that people that I need to deal with have access to me within reasonable limits.”

– Dalia, East Asian Woman, Senior Executive



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### WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY

When issues occur, back me up and give me air cover.<sup>23</sup>  
Focus on solutions rather than blame.

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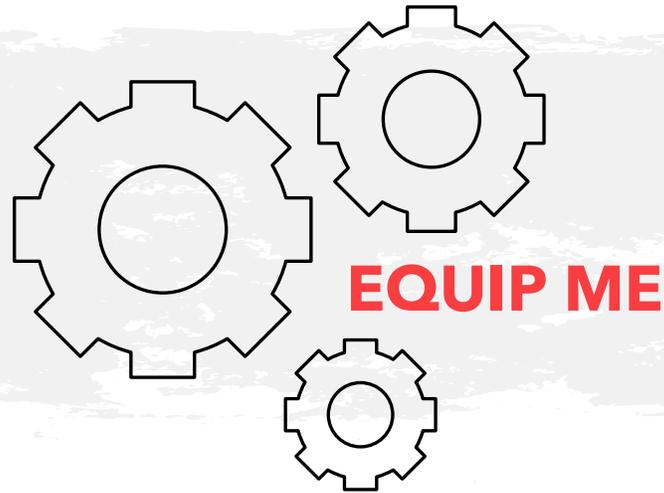
### TAKE ACTION

- Treat missteps and challenges as learning moments.
- Assume positive intent.
- Approach difficulties with a growth mindset, helping employees to develop and improve.



“Sometimes in meetings [my manager would] ask the question, people would jump in, sharing their thoughts....And then after that he’d be like, ‘Do you have something to say?’.... He always said ‘[You have] good thoughts, so say them.’ In a positive way, not like telling me to speak. But he encouraged me on multiple occasions and now I’m at that place where I feel very comfortable doing so.”

– Kira, South Asian Woman,  
Manager



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### WHAT EMPLOYEES SAY

Enable me to do my job to the best of my ability. Provide me with the tools and support I need to thrive.

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### TAKE ACTION

- Make sure employees have sufficient access to the information and resources they need to do their job well.<sup>24</sup>
- Ensure employees are kept in the know about all issues that are critical to their job performance.



“It’s very good [to get] feedback when I [am working on] something...

It’s good to have the autonomy but it’s also good to know that you have a support system and a team to help you when you really need them.”

– Anuja, South Asian Woman, Manager

# Emotional Tax in Corporate Canada Is Common



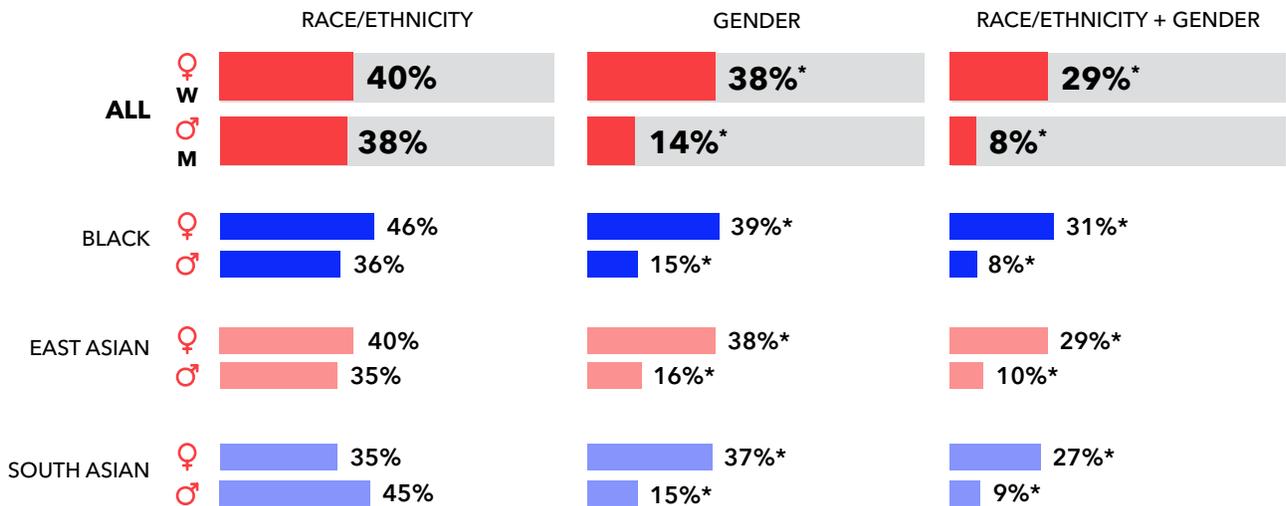
## **“I Don’t Feel Like I’m the Insider”: People of Colour Are on Guard Against Racial and Gender Bias**

For many Black, East Asian, and South Asian professionals in corporate Canada, being on guard can be an everyday experience. Far too many of our survey respondents describe being on guard to protect against bias or discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, and/or gender—and often other aspects of identity (e.g., physical appearance, physical ability, age, sexual orientation, immigrant status, and religious beliefs). These experiences can end up affecting them both personally and professionally—and lead to Emotional Tax.

We explored the experiences of survey respondents by asking them to report why they are on guard for potential bias or discrimination.

- The most common reason people are on guard is that they anticipate racial or ethnic bias.
  - > 40% of women of colour and 38% of men of colour experience being on guard for this reason.
- Gender is also a top reason for being on guard.
  - > 38% of women of colour and 14% of men of colour report being on guard to protect against gender bias.
  - > The percentage for men of colour may be a result of the ways in which the experience of masculinity intersects with race/ethnicity, and the extent to which different masculine norms are rewarded or punished.<sup>25</sup>
- Approximately 30% of women of colour report being on guard against both racial and gender bias—demonstrating how intertwined the experience of these two identities is.

**BEING ON GUARD TO PROTECT AGAINST RACIAL/ETHNIC AND/OR GENDER BIAS**



\*The difference between genders within racial/ethnic group is significant,  $p < .01$ .

People of colour also experience being on guard to potential bias due to other dimensions of diversity, including physical appearance, physical ability, age, and spiritual beliefs. Judgments about these additional personal characteristics may also be linked to and intersect with a person's race or ethnicity. For example, a South Asian woman wearing a hijab who is on guard might attribute potential bias to her race/ethnicity, her religion, her outward appearance, or any combination of the three.

- 26% of women and 24% of men respondents report being on guard to protect against bias due to their physical appearance.
  - > Percentages across groups ranged from 19% to 30%.
  - > Research shows that bias and discrimination based on skin tone<sup>26</sup> or facial features<sup>27</sup> are pervasive across cultures. Certainly, these factors intersect with racial and ethnic identity.
- 42% of Black men are on guard to protect against bias based on their physical ability.
  - > Notably, this is the most highly ranked reason for being on guard among Black men. While we cannot say for certain how participants interpreted "physical ability," this response may be due to cultural and societal expectations for Black men and stereotypes about their physical and athletic ability.<sup>28</sup>
  - > Between 7% and 26% of other groups were on guard to bias due to physical ability.
- 26% of South Asian men and 19% of South Asian women report being on guard to protect against bias based on their spiritual or religious beliefs.
  - > Between 5% and 17% of other groups reported being on guard to this type of bias.
  - > While we do not know participants' religious affiliations, the higher numbers for South Asians may be a result of increasing anti-Muslim sentiment<sup>29</sup> and violence against Muslims in Canada.<sup>30</sup>
- 25% of East Asian women and 23% of East Asian men report being on guard because of their age.
  - > Our interviews with participants bear this out—East Asian women in particular are on guard against presumptions of youth and inexperience.
  - > Between 16% and 20% of other groups reported being on guard against this type of bias.

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ABOUT THESE  
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OR ETHNICITY.**

## “I Don’t Want to Stick Out”: How Being on Guard Differs Among Women and Men of Colour

People who are on guard take different steps to deal with the bias they anticipate. Many of their actions fall into the category of “covering”—conscious efforts to not only prepare for bias, but also to try to block it.<sup>31</sup> People of colour often cover by downplaying aspects of their identity to help shield against bias or negative reactions.<sup>32</sup> For example, people we interviewed shared in-depth accounts of changing their behavior, physical appearance, and communication style to ward off bias.

### **Black Women and Men Act Protectively to Combat the Effects of Racial Stereotyping**

Black women and men interviewees revealed personal stories of how they try to blend in, fly under the radar, or counteract being treated differently because of their race. For example, several interviewees described changing aspects of their appearance to guard against standing out or being judged based on racial stereotypes.



“I have tried to subdue some of my cultural expression in the workplace because that’s not what I see in the workplace, and I want to fit in.... I don’t want to stick out like a sore thumb.... So I dress like everybody else dresses. I will rarely wear something very ethnic....I have an African dress, for example. I will never wear this at work.”

– Victoria, Black Woman,  
Senior Manager



“I think people draw perceptions of people and of certain communities based on their first impression and what they look like. You want to avoid being caught in any particular stereotype. You need to avoid it.”

– Luthor, Black Man, Senior Executive

Other interviewees detailed how they modulate their “voice,” carefully choosing words that will put others at ease, even if they have to hide or cover their true sentiments.



“[When you speak up,] it has to be tempered. It has to be couched in a way that you have to sanitize it. Right? To make it look like you’re not being defensive or not being the angry Black woman. So you have to come across almost like you’re talking about somebody else.”

– Josie, Black Woman, Manager



“At work I’m always processing how much of myself, my true authentic self, I can share. I have to think about, ‘Will anyone find this off-putting?’...When I’m looking up the ladder, I’m asking myself, ‘Well, how is this going to play with that person or this person if they find out?’”

– Jordan, Black Man, Director

### **Asian Women Are on Guard Against Stereotypes of Not Being Credible**

Many Asian women we interviewed described being on guard to challenges to their credibility as leaders. Many were fighting stereotypes and bias linked to perceptions about their age, which led to assumptions about their experience. Several Asian women talked about how certain physical features, such as smaller stature or youthful appearance, which are related to their racial/ethnic identity, undermined their credibility or their perceived ability to belong. Some tried to appear older or come across with more authority to combat assumptions about their rank or capabilities.



“I do feel that sometimes people would think well, because maybe I’m Chinese and...I’m a woman and small in stature, [they] don’t feel like I may be able to share certain jokes or whatever with them the same way they would with another person....I don’t feel like I’m the insider.”

– Shen, East Asian Woman, Senior Executive

## Asian Men Exhibit On-Guard Behavior in Different Ways

While a few Asian men described being on guard, many did not. We heard a diverse range of behavior and experiences from Asian men and no clear theme emerged related to on-guard behavior.



“I’m not about to create any more divisions than I already feel I have to on the racial front.

So this is where you have to sort of live through kind of like spheres of difference and you say, well jeez, what are some of the differences that maybe you want to downplay.”

– Dev, South Asian Man, C-suite Executive



“I think honestly it’s dependent on the context of what I’m being thought of for. My own experience, there’s times when I feel like I am an outsider, and there are times where I just feel because I have such a unique perspective I’m actually adding a ton of value.”

– James, South Asian Man, Individual Contributor



"I try to make sure my i's are dotted and my t's are crossed. So no one can come up and say the quality of the work [isn't good enough]. So again, that's another burden, another string. The feeling that I cannot afford to make any mistakes. We're human beings, we all do make mistakes at times. But the perception is that I cannot make a mistake. It can bite me harder if I make a mistake."

– Jacque, Black Woman, Individual Contributor



"[People have underestimated my level in the hierarchy, my skills, or my leadership capacity because of the way I look.] I think it's a combination of my race, my gender, as well as my stature and my size, and how...I actually look visibly younger than most people. I do watch [how I am] presenting myself....So I definitely try not to dress myself in such a way that I'm not representing that I am actually substantial.... [For example,] I don't giggle as much if it's in a workplace situation."

– May, East Asian Woman, Senior Executive



"I'm pretty much  
the exact same  
person at home  
or at work."

– James, South Asian Man, Individual Contributor

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**TAKE ACTION**

## **EMPOWER TEAM MEMBERS TO TALK ABOUT DIFFERENCES**



You can't value differences if you aren't aware of them or don't understand how they affect a person's experiences. To gain this insight, encourage open discussion of your colleagues' unique perspectives and pay attention to their accounts of their day-to-day experiences of exclusion and inclusion.<sup>33</sup>

Employees feel empowered when they can talk (without repercussions<sup>34</sup>) about how being on guard and ultimately not being able to bring your whole self to work comes with personal and professional costs. When people can't talk about these things and feel they have to hide parts of their identity, their sense of self can suffer,<sup>35</sup> as well as their sense of available opportunities and commitment to their organization.<sup>36</sup>

Indeed, for many of the people of colour we interviewed, simply being given the opportunity to discuss these issues provided affirmation, encouragement, and even relief. Several respondents said that the interview with our researchers was the only occasion, or one of very few occasions, in which they had been asked to share their stories. Leaders who invite genuine and open dialogue with people of colour can have a profound impact on their experiences of inclusion.



"As I talk about [my experiences], you may sense a little bit of frustration, but it's just harder. It's just everything is harder. Harder to reach where you believe you should be, right? I'm not saying I want this easy road, but it's just very hard, and it gets discouraging."

– Angelica, Black Woman,  
Manager

# For Women and Men of Colour, Being on Guard Carries a Cost



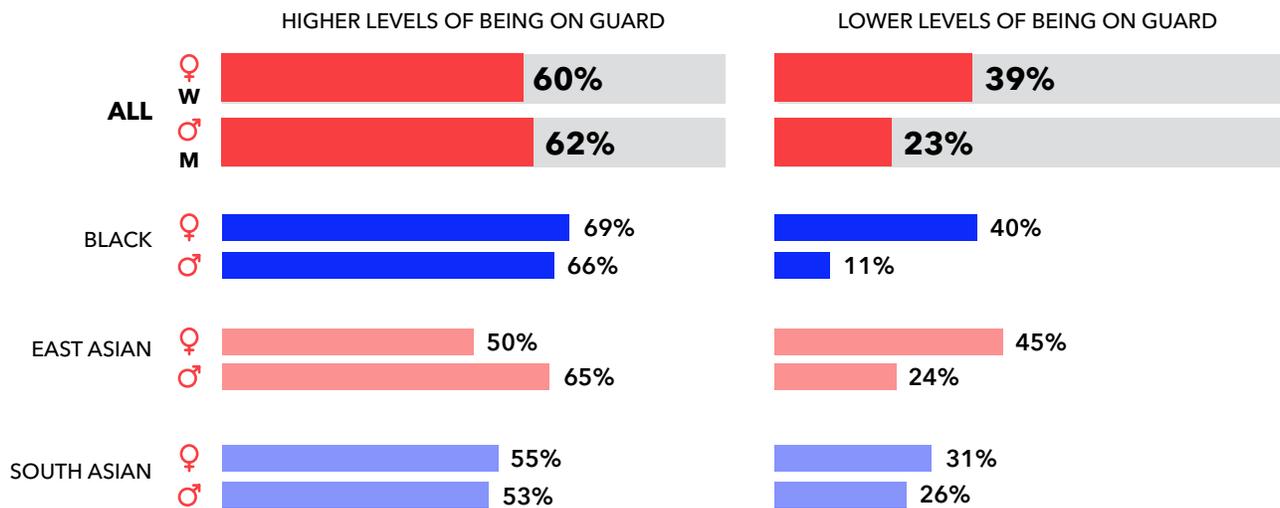
## **“I Just Gave My Resignation Letter”: Retention Challenges Are Linked to Emotional Tax**

We have seen that for people of colour living in Canada, being on guard against bias is common, and that as a result they self-protect in ways that can hide their true identities and unique selves.

We also found that being on guard against bias predicts a higher intent to quit for Black, East Asian, and South Asian employees<sup>37</sup>—a correlation that should trouble all Canadian companies and managers struggling with retention.

- Across race/ethnicity and gender, respondents who experience higher levels of being on guard<sup>38</sup> were more likely (61%) to consider leaving their jobs than those with lower levels (31%).
- For people highly on guard, intent to quit was consistently high at 50% or more for all groups.
- Interestingly, for people less on guard to bias, intent to quit varied in important ways by group. In particular, Black and East Asian women were more likely to report thinking about quitting than their male counterparts.<sup>39</sup>

**PERCENTAGE REPORTING THINKING ABOUT QUITTING<sup>40</sup> BY EXPERIENCE OF BEING ON GUARD**





"I stood up, and I did not think about my job, and I did not think about the money, I did not think about anything....I said, 'I'm a human more than a Muslim. I'm a human more than a Pakistani woman....But you are judging me as a Pakistani Muslim woman.'....After [speaking out], I went to my manager and I just gave my resignation letter. Because this is too much. And I hope after leaving that office people would have a little bit of sense of respect for the people that are facing these... issues of [feeling excluded]."

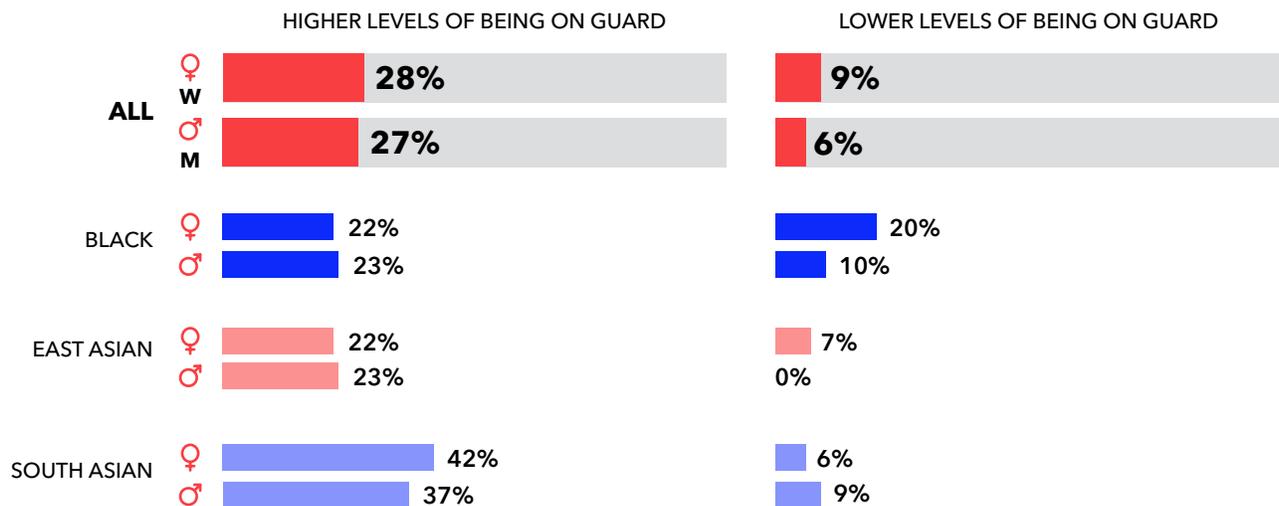
– Kay, South Asian woman, Manager

## “Because This Is Too Much”: Being on Guard Predicts Sleep Problems

Emotional Tax does not end when employees leave the workplace. It consists of many adverse experiences, and often affects health and well-being.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, we found that Canadian people of colour experiencing Emotional Tax have a higher rate of sleep problems than those who don't experience Emotional Tax.<sup>42</sup>

- Across race/ethnicity and gender, respondents who experience higher levels of being on guard were more likely (27%) to report high rates of sleep problems than those with lower levels (8%).<sup>43</sup>
- South Asian professionals—and in particular South Asian women (42%)—who were highly on guard reported the highest rates of sleep problems.
- Sleep problems for people less on guard to bias varied by group, with Black women (20%) reporting the most.

### PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE OF COLOUR REPORTING HIGH RATES OF SLEEP PROBLEMS<sup>44</sup>



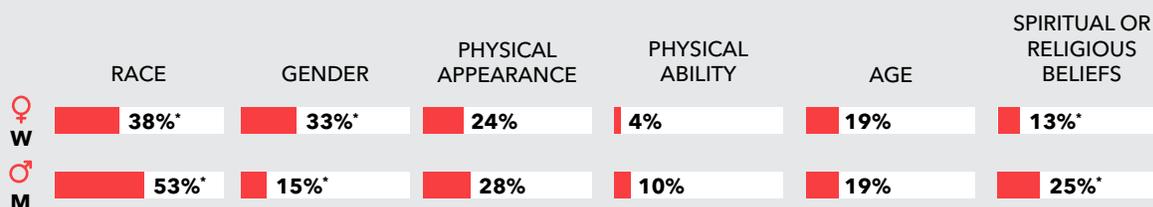
## “YOU WANT TO FEEL COMFORTABLE”: THE IMMIGRANT STORY IN CANADA<sup>45</sup>

Forty-five percent of survey participants report being born outside Canada.<sup>46</sup> As immigrants, they likely experience many obstacles to career success including the devaluation of their labour and prior experience,<sup>47</sup> language barriers,<sup>48</sup> and pressure to suppress their cultural identities and assimilate into dominant-group culture.<sup>49</sup>

The immigrants we surveyed also experience Emotional Tax in ways that are mostly consistent with the experiences of the larger group.

- 38% of women and 53% of men are on guard to protect against racial bias.
- Protecting against gender bias is a top concern among Black, East Asian, and South Asian immigrant women.
- Roughly a quarter of immigrants are on guard due to physical appearance.
- More men (25%) than women (13%) are on guard due to spiritual or religious beliefs.

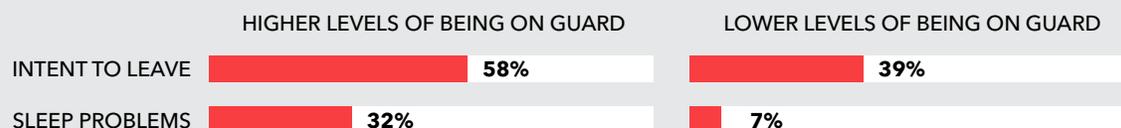
### REASONS FOR BEING ON GUARD AMONG BLACK, EAST ASIAN, AND SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANTS<sup>50</sup>



\*The difference between genders is significant,  $p < .01$ .

In addition, Black, East Asian, and South Asian immigrants who are highly on guard were more likely than those not on guard to consider quitting their jobs<sup>51</sup> and suffer from sleep problems.<sup>52</sup>

### COSTS OF EMOTIONAL TAX FOR CANADIAN IMMIGRANTS



Given the importance of immigrants to Canada’s workforce and economy, business leaders must pay attention to the unique pressures they face. It is essential for managers to demonstrate that they value the experiences and contributions immigrants bring to work teams. They can do this by asking tough questions about experiences of Emotional Tax and ensuring that teams encourage and leverage different viewpoints.



“Canada is an immigrant-heavy country. When someone joins a place like [my company]... a general normal human thing is that you want to feel comfortable.”

– Grant, South Asian Male, Manager

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## TAKE ACTION

# EMPOWER YOUR TEAM THROUGH TRUST



Trust is the glue that holds any successful team together. Trust begets trust; leaders who trust and are confident in their teams gain the trust and confidence of their teams. When you show that you trust your employees, you show you value them. There are many ways to create an empowering work environment through trust, including by providing job autonomy and flexible work arrangements.

- **Engage.** Ask employees about their talents, experiences, and aspirations.
- **Develop.** Provide access to challenging projects and equip employees with the tools they need to succeed—particularly when challenges occur.
- **Optimize.** Give honest, helpful feedback to employees.<sup>53</sup> Call people out when their behavior (verbal or non-verbal) excludes others, and let everyone know that you welcome similar feedback when your own behavior is exclusionary. Treat these mistakes as learning opportunities.<sup>54</sup>
- **Flex.** Create an agile, responsive workplace by trusting employees to work in a way that both works for them and achieves results.



“If you look at the overall organization, and my work environment, there’s not [a sense that the diversity I bring is a] value-add. I feel more like [the message is] ‘be grateful you’re here.’”

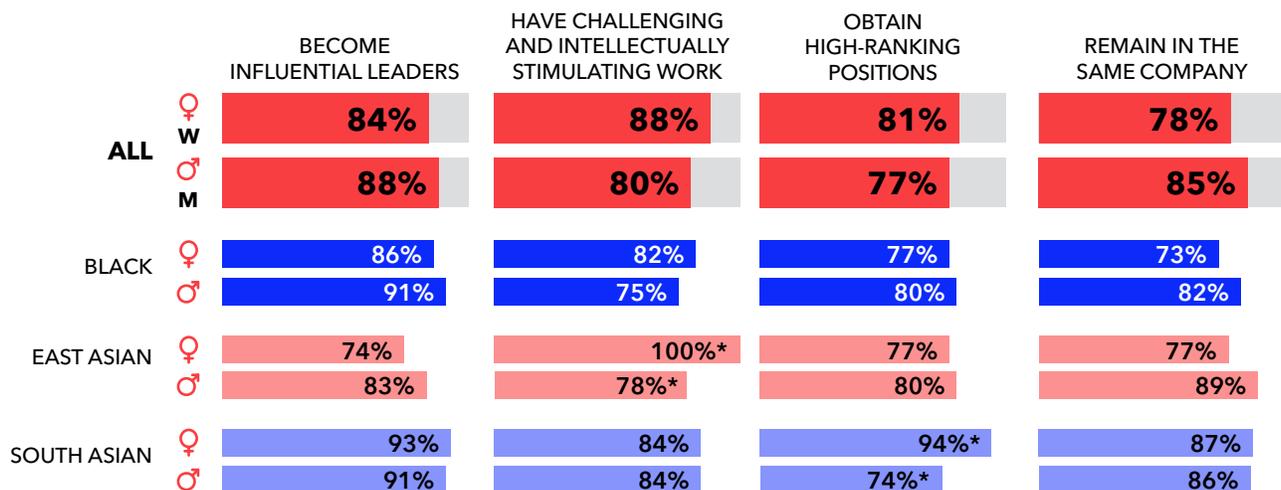
– Denise, Black Woman,  
Individual contributor

# Despite Emotional Tax, People of Colour Want to Succeed And Contribute

You might imagine that people in Canada facing the continual stress of Emotional Tax would reduce their aspirations. But we found that people of colour who reported being on guard actually had consistently high aspirations to contribute.

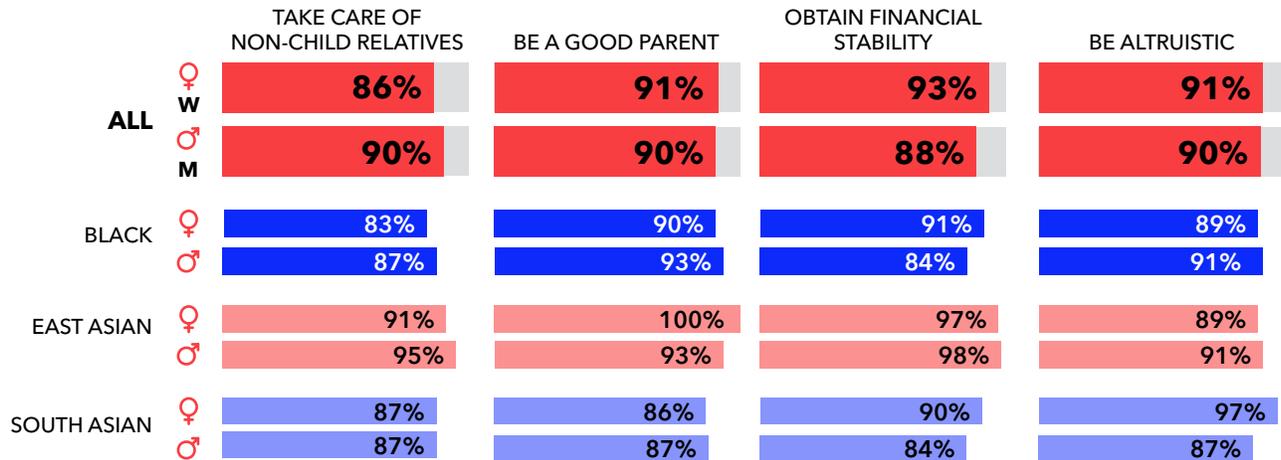
Across race/ethnicity and gender, over three-quarters of professionals experiencing Emotional Tax report high aspirations to contribute at work, in their communities, and at home.

## ASPIRATIONS TO SUCCEED AND CONTRIBUTE DESPITE BEING ON GUARD<sup>55</sup> (1 of 2)



\*The difference between genders is significant,  $p < .01$ .

**ASPIRATIONS TO SUCCEED AND CONTRIBUTE DESPITE BEING ON GUARD<sup>55</sup> (2 of 2)**



\*The difference between genders is significant,  $p < .01$ .

Interviewees were resolute in the face of Emotional Tax, expressing determination to advance their careers. For some, attempts to realize those ambitions were met with further bias and discrimination.



“There was resentment when I joined. This is where I’d say [you] need to speak like a leader, you need to speak up, you need to add value. You earn your respect at the table, too.”

– Ming, East Asian Woman, Senior Executive



“As part of my nature, I always try to go beyond and seize my opportunities. [But] when it comes to race, it doesn’t depend on whatever skills you have. That’s my conclusion. Whatever I do, if that person doesn’t like me, doesn’t want me to be there, they won’t pick me....It was not a priority. I couldn’t find a person who would consider me a priority.”

– Amara, Black Woman, Individual Contributor

Yet respondents continue to have a strong desire to contribute.



"[Representing my racial community is] a source of strength, and it drives my commitment. It kind of reminds me just how hard I have to work."

– Darius, Black Man, Director



"I do want to promote and create an environment where my people or where my team members do feel that they belong so that's something that I try to do."

– Jay, East Asian Man, Manager

If leaders want those contributions to be made in their companies and teams, rather than in a competitor's, it is critical to act to retain these employees.

# Empowerment Is Key to Retaining People of Colour



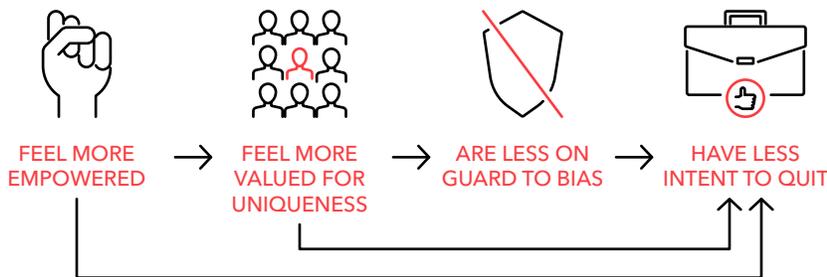
We know that empowerment—employees’ ability to have the autonomy, resources, and support they need to succeed—is critical to building a workplace where people feel included.<sup>56</sup> We also know that being valued for your uniqueness is a key aspect of feeling included. This feeling can help limit employees’ intention to quit<sup>57</sup> and bolster attitudes and behaviors that are beneficial to the employee and the organization.<sup>58</sup>

We were curious to see how empowerment might relate to experiences of Emotional Tax. To do this, we tested a model that links employee feelings of empowerment to feelings of being valued for uniqueness, which is then linked to decreased experiences of being on guard for bias and ultimately intent to quit.

We found<sup>59</sup> that employee feelings of empowerment had a significant relationship with feelings of being valued for their uniqueness, being on guard, and intent to quit.

“The women that I’ve worked for, for the most part have been very receptive and supportive. They go out of their way to try to get me to shine in some kind of way.... They recognized that I had something to offer, something of value, and if they were in the way, they would quickly get out of the way and help me out ....It’s gotten me opportunities, experiences that I would otherwise not have had.”

– Darnell, Black Man, Director



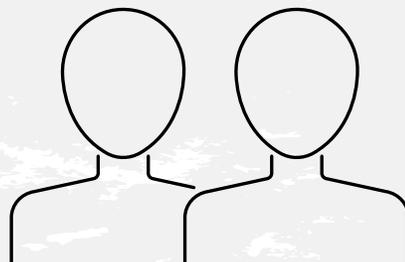
This is important because it means that leaders who create empowering environments for people of colour to thrive may be able to diminish experiences of Emotional Tax and mitigate intent to leave.

Emotional Tax is a shared experience among people of colour in Canada, and it is draining their well-being. They have high aspirations to succeed but are considering taking their talent elsewhere. Leaders who can help employees feel empowered and in so doing value their differences will be more successful in creating an inclusive environment for all employees. Address Emotional Tax in order to address attrition, and both people of colour and companies will benefit.

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## TAKE ACTION

# ROLE MODEL EMPOWERING BEHAVIOURS



To help people of colour feel valued for their unique backgrounds and contributions, actively create an inclusive culture where they can thrive. As a leader, you are a role model for behavior in all situations—reflect on how you talk about differences, how you advocate for all your employees, and how you work to dismantle systemic barriers to people of colour’s success.

- **Be an Ally.** Stand up for people from underrepresented groups so that others can see that doing so is valued by your company and that members of the majority group have a role to play in inclusion efforts. Share your struggles, be vulnerable, and lead with heart.<sup>60</sup>
- **Measure.** Work with leaders in your organization to build trust by measuring and tracking diversity metrics (e.g., representation data), measuring and tracking experiences of inclusion and exclusion, and addressing perceptions of bias and unfair treatment.
- **Diversify.** The saying “if you can see her, you can be her” is true. When people of colour are not represented in your senior ranks, junior employees will not believe there is a place for them at your company. Understand your talent deeply throughout your company and offer advancement opportunities through sponsorship<sup>61</sup> and high-profile assignments<sup>62</sup> to your talented people of colour.
- **Troubleshoot.** Stomp out Emotional Tax and other barriers to advancement. Recognize that experiences of Emotional Tax vary by person and group. A granular approach may be uncomfortable and complex,<sup>63</sup> but it will help you more effectively pinpoint problems and solutions.



“I think you have to have individuals that will be supportive of you... I think you have to have individuals that would say ‘you know what, I know what [this person is] doing [and] they just need a chance.’”

– Priya, Female, South Asian, Director

## Endnotes

1. According to Statistics Canada, as of 2016 Canada's total visible minority population was 7,674,580 and the total population of Canada was 34,460,065. Statistics Canada, "Visible Minority (15), Generation Status (4), Age (12) and Sex (3) for the Population in Private Households of Canada, Provinces and Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2016 Census – 25% Sample Data," *Data Tables, 2016 Census* (2019).
2. According to Statistics Canada, as of 2016 there were 4,038,855 visible minority Canadians in the labour force, and 18,672,470 total Canadians in the labour force. Statistics Canada, "Labour Force Status (8), Visible Minority (15), Immigrant Status and Period of Immigration (11), Highest Certificate, Diploma or Degree (7), Age (13A) and Sex (3) for the Population Aged 15 Years and Over in Private Households of Canada, Provinces and Territories, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2016 Census – 25% Sample Data," *Data Tables, 2016 Census* (2019).
3. "Canada Ranks Fourth Globally for Highest Employee Turnover," *Canadian HRReporter* (March 15, 2018).
4. Dnika J. Travis, Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, and Courtney McCluney, *Emotional Tax: How Black Women and Men Pay More at Work and How Leaders Can Take Action* (Catalyst, 2016).
5. Intention to quit is a five-point scale ranging from 1 ("all the time") to 5 ("never"). Participants who selected a 1 ("all the time"), 2 ("frequently"), or 3 ("occasionally") were coded as having a high intent to quit.
6. This report is part of Catalyst's research on gender, race, and ethnicity in the workplace, which creates knowledge and actionable insights that 1) recognize current realities and deep-rooted inequities, and 2) help leaders and organizations nurture inclusive organizations where all can thrive and succeed.
7. Dnika J. Travis, Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, and Courtney McCluney, *Emotional Tax: How Black Women and Men Pay More at Work and How Leaders Can Take Action* (Catalyst, 2016); Dnika J. Travis and Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, *Day-to-Day Experiences of Emotional Tax Among Women and Men of Color in the Workplace* (Catalyst, 2018).
8. See for example: Alina Tugend, "The Effect of Intersectionality in the Workplace," *The New York Times*, September 30, 2018; Julia Carpenter, "The 'Emotional Tax' Afflicting Women of Color at Work," *CNN Money*, March 5, 2018; Ruth Holmes, "Study Highlights Discrimination's Impact on Wellbeing," *Relocate*, February 16, 2018; Valerie Bolden-Barrett, "Women of Color Face an 'Emotional Tax' That Harms Their Progress and Health," *HR Dive*, February 16, 2018; Ellen McGirt, "Women and Men of Color Pay an Emotional Tax at Work," *Fortune RaceAhead*, February 15, 2018; Breanna Edwards, "Women and Men of Color Pay an 'Emotional Tax' at Work That's Detrimental to Their Overall Health and Ability to Thrive: Report," *The Root*, February 15, 2018.
9. This sample of 21 comprises 52% women, 48% men and a roughly even sample of Black, East Asian, and South Asian Canadians.
10. According to Statistics Canada, the largest ethnic group is East Asian, primarily comprising Chinese, Korean, and Japanese people; next is South Asian, primarily comprising East Indian people; next is Black, primarily comprising Jamaican, African, and Haitian people. [Statistics Canada, "Ethnic Origin," Data Tables, 2016 Census \(2019\)](#); [Statistics Canada, "Population by Visible Minority Group and Median Age, Canada, 2011 and 2016," Focus on Geography Series, 2016 Census \(2019\)](#).
11. Ethnicity does not sum to 100% because there is overlap in groups due to survey respondents selecting more than one racial/ethnic group. Among Black respondents, 2% also identified as East Asian and 3% also identified as South Asian. Among East Asian respondents, 3% also identified as South Asian and 2% also identified as Black. Among South Asian respondents, 2% also identified as East Asian and 2% also identified as Black. 14% of Black respondents, 5% of East Asian respondents, and 4% of South Asian respondents also identified as White.
12. The Canadian Census does not distinguish by ethnic identification. Among 222 survey respondents who identify as Black, 81% were born in Canada, 5% in Jamaica, 4% in Nigeria, 2% in the United States, and 1% in each of Zimbabwe, the United Kingdom, Kenya, and France.
13. Among 238 East Asian survey respondents, 92% identified as Chinese, 6% identified as Korean, and 5% identified as Japanese. Additionally, 54% of East Asian respondents were born in Canada, 17% were born in China, 16% in Hong Kong, 3% in South Korea, 2% in Taiwan, and 1% in each of Japan, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Jamaica.
14. The Canadian Census does not distinguish by ethnic identification. Among 283 South Asian survey respondents, 36% of were born in Canada, 33% in India, 8% in Pakistan, 4% in Bangladesh, 3% in Sri Lanka, 2% in the United Kingdom, and 1% in each of China, Kenya, Kuwait, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, and Jamaica.
15. Total exceeds 100% due to rounding.
16. To offer further insight into the experience of Emotional Tax, we also conducted a deep-dive supplementary survey of 83 people who participated in the larger survey: 69% identified as women and 31% identified as men; average age was 42. Among 24 East Asian survey respondents, all 24 (100%) identified as Chinese; none identified as Japanese or Korean. 50% of East Asian respondents were born in Canada, 25% in Hong Kong, 17% in China, and 4% in each of South Africa and Vietnam. Of the 31 South Asian respondents, 29% were born in Canada, 39% in India, 6% in Guyana, and 3% in each of Bangladesh, Kuwait, Malaysia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, the United Arab Emirates, and the United Kingdom. Of the 30 Black survey respondents, 61% were born in Canada, 11% in each of Jamaica and Nigeria, 7% in Ghana, and 4% in each of Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom. We do not have ethnic identity data for the South Asian or Black survey respondents because the Canadian Census does not distinguish ethnicity for these groups. Among survey respondents, some identified as multiracial (identifying as more than one of East Asian, South Asian, and Black), and some identified as White as well as a racial/ethnic minority. Some numbers may not be reported to protect confidentiality in this smaller sample.

17. Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, *Inclusive Leadership: The View From Six Countries* (Catalyst, 2014).
18. Catalyst, *Engaging in Conversations About Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace* (2016).
19. Names of all interviewees are changed to protect anonymity.
20. Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, *Inclusive Leadership: The View From Six Countries* (Catalyst, 2014); Anna Beninger and Nancy M. Carter, *The Great Debate: Flexibility vs. Face Time—Busting the Myths Behind Flexible Work Arrangements* (Catalyst 2013); Nicholas Bloom, James Liang, John Roberts, and Zhichun Jenny Ying, "Does Working from Home Work? Evidence From a Chinese Experiment," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 130, no. 1 (February 2015): p. 165-218.
21. Emily Cohen, Liz Mulligan-Ferry, and Jan Combopiano, "Flex Works," (Catalyst, 2013); Nicholas Bloom, James Liang, John Roberts, and Zhichun Jenny Ying, "Does Working from Home Work? Evidence From a Chinese Experiment," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 130, no. 1 (February 2015): p. 165-218.
22. Anna Beninger and Nancy M. Carter, *The Great Debate: Flexibility vs. Face Time—Busting the Myths Behind Flexible Work Arrangements* (Catalyst, 2013)
23. Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, *The Secret to Inclusion in Australian Workplaces: Psychological Safety* (Catalyst, 2015).
24. Anna Beninger, *Managing Flex 2: Successfully Managing Employees Working Flexibly* (Catalyst, 2014).
25. Dnika J. Travis and Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, *Day-to-Day Experiences of Emotional Tax Among Women and Men of Color in the Workplace* (Catalyst, 2018).
26. Catalyst, *Engaging in Conversations About Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace* (2016); Keith B. Maddox and Stephanie A. Gray, "Cognitive Representations of Black Americans: Reexploring the Role of Skin Tone," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, vol. 28, no. 2 (February 2002); Eric P.H. Li, Hyun Jeong Min, Russell W. Belk, Junko Kimura, and Shalini Bahl, "Skin Lightening and Beauty in Four Asian Cultures," *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 35 (2008): p. 444-449.
27. Irene V. Blair, Charles M. Judd, and Kristine M. Chapleau, "The Influence of Afrocentric Facial Features in Criminal Sentencing," *Psychological Science*, vol. 15, no. 10 (October 2004): p. 674-679; Irene V. Blair, Charles M. Judd, and Jennifer L. Fallman, "The Automaticity of Race and Afrocentric Facial Features in Social Judgments," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 87, no. 6 (2004): p. 763-778.
28. Monica Biernat and Melvin Manis, "Shifting Standards and Stereotype-Based Judgments," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 66, no. 1 (January 1994): p. 5-20.
29. Siham Elkassem, Rick Csiernik, Andrew Mantulak, Gina Kayssi, Yasmine Hussain, Kathryn Lambert, Pamela Bailey, and Asad Choudhary, "Growing Up Muslim: The Impact of Islamophobia on Children in a Canadian Community," *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Summer 2018).
30. "Canada Hate Crimes up 47% as Muslims, Jews and Black People Targeted," *The Guardian*, November 29, 2018.
31. Catalyst, *What Is Covering?* (December 11, 2014).
32. Kenji Yoshino and Christie Smith, *Uncovering Talent: A New Model of Inclusion* (Deloitte, 2014).
33. Dnika J. Travis and Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, *Day-to-day Experiences of Emotional Tax Among Women and Men of Color in the Workplace* (Catalyst, 2018).
34. Catalyst, *Engaging in Conversations About Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace* (2016).
35. Kenji Yoshino and Christie Smith, *Uncovering Talent: A New Model of Inclusion* (Deloitte, 2013).
36. Deloitte, *Uncovering Talent: A New Model of Inclusion* (2018): p. 11.
37. Intent to Quit is a single item measured on a scale of 1-5 where 1 reflects "all the time," 3 reflects "occasionally," and 5 reflects "never." For correlations among the continuous variables, the coefficients are negated so that positive correlations reflect the relationship between vigilance and higher intent to quit, for ease of interpretation. The correlation between vigilance and intent to quit is significant for Black women ( $r = .20, p = .05$ ), Black men ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ), East Asian men ( $r = .40, p < .01$ ), South Asian women ( $r = .28, p < .01$ ), and South Asian men ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ). It is marginally significant for East Asian women ( $r = .17, p = .06$ ).
38. Higher levels of being on guard is defined as the top third of the distribution; lower levels of being on guard is defined as the bottom third.
39.  $p < .05$
40. "Thinking About Quitting" is defined as those considering leaving their jobs "Occasionally", "Frequently", or "All the Time" (3 or lower on a 1 to 5 scale).
41. Ronald C. Kessler, Kristin D. Mickelson, and David R. Williams, "The Prevalence, Distribution, and Mental Health Correlates of Perceived Discrimination in the United States," *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, vol. 40, no. 3 (September 1999): p. 208-230; Mary S. Himmelstein, Danielle M. Young, Diana T. Sanchez, and James S. Jackson, "Vigilance in the Discrimination-Stress Model for Black Americans," *Psychological Health*, vol. 30, no. 3 (2015): p. 253-267.
42. Sleep problems is a composite of three questions on a 1-7 scale asking about the frequency of problems with: 1) falling asleep, 2) waking in the middle of the night, and 3) waking up early. The correlation between vigilance and sleep problems is significant for Black women ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ), Black men ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ), East Asian women ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ), East Asian men ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ), South Asian women ( $r = .40, p < .01$ ), and South Asian men ( $r = .48, p < .01$ ).
43. While sleep problems are consistently higher among those highly on guard to bias, there are important differences in the experience. As with retention, Black women who are less on guard to bias report a higher rate of sleep problems than their male peers, and East Asian women do as well to a lesser extent, though these differences are not significant. Among those highly on guard to bias, South Asian professionals across gender report higher rates of sleep problems than other people of colour.
44. Participants who selected 5 or higher on average (i.e., more frequently than "sometimes") were coded as having a high rate of sleep problems.
45. The reported country of birth among participants: 55% born in Canada; 45% born outside Canada (13% in India, 6% in China, 5% in Hong Kong, 3% in Pakistan, 2% in Jamaica, 2% in Bangladesh, 1% in each of Nigeria, South Korea, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, the United States, Kenya, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates, and less than 1% in Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Bolivia, Burma, Chad, Fiji, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Kuwait, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mali, Nepal, Rwanda, Saudi

- Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Switzerland, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda, Ukraine, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Zimbabwe).
46. 13% of immigrant survey respondents identify as Black; 56% identify as South Asian; 34% identify as East Asian.
  47. Harald Bauder, "Brain Abuse, or the Devaluation of Immigrant Labour in Canada," *Antipode*, vol. 35, no. 4 (November 14, 2003): p. 699-717.
  48. Barry R. Chiswick and Paul W. Miller, "The Complementarity of Language and Other Human Capital: Immigrant Earnings in Canada," *IZA Discussion Paper No. 451* (March 31, 2002); Kevin Pottie, Edward Ng, Denise Spitzer, Alia Mohammed, and Richard Glazier, "Language Proficiency, Gender and Self-reported Health: An Analysis of the First Two Waves of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada," *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, vol. 99, no. 6 (November-December 2008): p. 505-510.
  49. Hongxia Shan "Learning to "Fit In": The Emotional Work of Chinese Immigrants in Canadian Engineering Workplaces," *Journal of Workplace Learning*, vol. 24, no. 5 (February 2012): p. 351-364.
  50. Gender, race, and both gender and race differences are significant,  $p < .01$ .
  51.  $r = .28, p < .001$ .
  52.  $r = .34, p < .001$ .
  53. Joseph Folkman, "The Best Gift Leaders Can Give: Honest Feedback," *Forbes*, December 19, 2013.
  54. Catalyst, *Engaging in Conversations About Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace* (2016).
  55. "Being on guard" is defined as being on guard "sometimes" (4 on a 1 to 7 scale) or more often.
  56. Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, *Inclusive Leadership: The View From Six Countries* (Catalyst, 2014).
  57. Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, *Inclusion Is Key to Keeping Canadian High Potentials* (Catalyst, 2015).
  58. Team citizenship and creativity, Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, *Inclusive Leadership: The View From Six Countries* (Catalyst, 2014); employee satisfaction, Jennifer Thorpe-Moscon, *Inclusion Is Key to Keeping Canadian High Potentials* (Catalyst, 2015).
  59. Model fit was very good: NFI = 1.0, AGFI = 1.0, CFI = 1.0, RMR = .001, RMSEA < .001. Overall, 15% of the differences we see in employees' intention to quit can be explained by its relationships with empowerment, valuing uniqueness, and being on guard to bias as shown in the diagram. This is a large portion of intention to quit that is being explained. For comparison, the Gini coefficient, a common measure of income inequality, explains at most 15% of health/mortality, and these two factors are known to be highly related.
  60. Jeanine Prime and Elizabeth R. Salib, *The Secret to Inclusion in Australian Workplaces: Psychological Safety* (Catalyst, 2015).
  61. Nancy M. Carter and Christine Silva, *Mentoring: Necessary but Insufficient for Advancement* (Catalyst, 2010).
  62. Nancy M. Carter and Christine Silva, *The Myth of the Ideal Worker: Does Doing All the Right Things Really Get Women Ahead?* (Catalyst, 2011); Christine Silva, Nancy M. Carter, and Anna Beninger, *Good Intentions, Imperfect Execution? Women Get Fewer of the "Hot Jobs" Needed to Advance* (Catalyst, 2012).
  63. Catalyst, *Engaging in Conversations About Gender, Race, and Ethnicity in the Workplace* (2016).

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## ABOUT CATALYST

Catalyst is a global nonprofit working with some of the world's most powerful CEOs and leading companies to help build workplaces that work for women. Founded in 1962, Catalyst drives change with pioneering research, practical tools, and proven solutions to accelerate and advance women into leadership—because progress for women is progress for everyone.

Catalyst thanks and acknowledges [Ascend Canada](#) for collaborating to launch and help build Catalyst's "Research Collective," a large group of survey respondents—including women and men of all racial and ethnic backgrounds—who share firsthand insights about challenges and opportunities related to achieving inclusion.

We are grateful for all the insights gained from our quantitative and qualitative study participants. Thank you for your contributions to this research.



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