

UNEQUAL ACCESS

A Canadian Profile of Racial Differences in Education, Employment and Income

*A Report Prepared for Canadian Race Relations Foundation
By the Canadian Council on Social Development*

The CCSD Research Team

Jean Lock Kunz, Ph.D, Project Manager and Senior Research Associate

Anne Milan, Ph.D, Research Associate

Sylvain Schetagne, M.A., Senior Research Associate

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the Canadian Race Relations Foundation for the opportunity to carry out this important project and for funding the research. Specifically, we thank the Foundation staff for their support and invaluable comments, and Patrick Beauchamp of Ekos Research Associates for conducting the focus groups. To all those visible minority and Aboriginal men and women who participated in our focus groups, your open, insightful, and constructive comments deepen our understanding of the dynamics of race and employment. We applaud CRRF for keeping anti-racism on the public agenda through projects like this one. The views expressed in the report and any possible errors, however, remain with the authors.

Executive Summary

Is there equity in Canadian society for Aboriginal peoples and visible minorities? Do racial minorities still face barriers to success in the workplace? A feasibility report prepared for the Canadian Race Relations Foundation in March, 1999, pointed to a need to examine issues of racial inequality in Canada on a regular basis (Gentium Consulting and John Samuel & Associates Inc., 1999). This report documents the differences among racial groups with regard to education, employment, and income. A primary objective of this report is to establish baseline information on the topic for future comparisons. Results of the report are based upon quantitative data, mainly, the 1996 Census, as well as focus group discussions among visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples across Canada. Highlighted below are some of the key findings:

Quantitative Analysis

- High school non-completion rate is highest among Aboriginal youth, compared to visible minority and non-racialized youth. Among Canadian-born youth aged 15 to 19 in 1996, about three in ten Aboriginal youth did not finish high school, and were not attending school in the past year, compared to less than one in ten among visible minorities.
 - Visible minorities generally have higher education levels than either non-racialized groups or Aboriginals.
 - In spite of their higher educational attainment, visible minorities still trail behind non-racialized groups with regard to employment and income.
 - Compared to non-racialized groups, visible minority and Aboriginals with university education are less likely to hold managerial/professional jobs.
 - Foreign-born visible minorities experience greater education-occupation discrepancies compared to other groups as less than half of those with a university education have high skill level jobs.
 - Even though as many visible minorities as non-racialized groups have managerial jobs, most of these visible minorities are self-employed.
- Aboriginals and foreign-born visible minorities are over-represented in the lowest income quintile and they are under-represented in the highest income quintile. Given the same level of education, non-racialized groups, whether foreign-born or Canadian-born, are three times as likely as Aboriginal peoples and about twice as likely as foreign-born visible minorities to be in the top 20% income distribution. Moreover, even if they are born in Canada, visible minorities are still less likely than foreign-born and Canadian-born non-racialized group to be in the top 20% income distribution.
- Even when racial minorities have attained a university level education, they are still less likely than non-racialized groups to be in the top income quintile. About 38 percent of the Canadian-born non-racialized group with a university education were in the top income quintile, compared to 29 percent of Canadian-born visible minorities and 21 percent of foreign-born visible minorities.
 - In most cases, the earnings of Aboriginals and foreign-born visible minorities are lower than Canadian-born non-racialized groups, regardless of region of residence, field of educational study, age, or gender. Foreign-born visible minorities earned, on average, about 78 cents for every dollar earned by a foreign-born non-racialized person.

Focus Group Discussions

Seven focus groups were conducted in five cities across Canada based on a random sample of the Aboriginal and visible minority populations. Most

members of these racial groups feel that they have better access to the Canadian labour market than before, but the access is still limited and unequal.

- Participants agreed that one's perceptions of ultimate success in the labour market depends largely on skills and education, particularly technical/computer skills.
- There is a consensus among participants that some groups of people in Canada have more difficulty than do others in finding employment. These people include visible minorities, recent immigrants, youth, and seniors.
- Participants stated that there is racial discrimination in the labour market and in the workplace. For some, this view is based on personal experience of having been victimized or having seen others discriminated against.
- In each group, there were one to three participants who have experienced unequivocal racial discrimination at work or in trying to obtain work. Blacks are the most likely to have experienced discrimination.
- These participants are convinced that they have been the victims of racism, and they most often used the word "**subtle**" to describe their experiences. Examples of this "**subtle discrimination**" include being passed over for promotion, being assigned unpleasant tasks at work, being stereotyped, and being excluded from the "inner circle" of their workplace.
- Many participants observed that the higher up the organizational ladder, the lighter the skin-tone one would find.

- Participants generally agreed that public education and legislation would be crucial in removing barriers for racial minorities in the workplace and in society. Most hoped that their children would have a better future than they have.

Conclusions

- Although Canada's labour force is becoming increasingly diverse, racial minorities still face limits in their access to employment. Getting a job is hard, but it is even harder to find a job that matches their qualifications or to move ahead on the job.
- This report demonstrates that racism is still persistent at the individual and systemic levels, although overt forms of racism are generally seen as socially unacceptable.
- Many racial minorities have difficulties finding jobs that are fulfilling to them. For recent immigrants, the challenge is to have their foreign-trained credentials recognized.
- Employment equity measures should move beyond recruitment to focus on retention and promotion. While legislation may alter the behaviour of employers, attitudes toward racial minorities have been slower to change.
- Racial discrimination today has become more subtle or hidden compared to the overt forms of the past. Public education is important for raising awareness of racial inequality in order to eliminate it in the future.