**Diversity Snapshot**

**VISIBLE MINORITIES**

We are diverse, and the fastest-growing population sector in Ottawa. One third of us are Canadians by birth and our families have been part of building Ottawa for more than a century. We are grouped together for being nonwhite, but in reality, we are a rich mix of ethnic origins and cultures from as many as 100 different nationalities.

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This document is one of 11 Diversity Snapshots that serve as background information to aid the City of Ottawa and its partners in implementing the Equity and Inclusion Lens. To access, visit Ozone or contact us at EILens@ottawa.ca.
1. Who we are

We are diverse, and the fastest-growing population sector in Ottawa (SPC 2008-a). Many of us (32.8 per cent) are Canadians by birth and our families have been part of building Ottawa for over 100 years (SPC 2008-b). More recently, more of us (67.2 per cent) are choosing to live in Ottawa as new immigrants.

As defined by Statistics Canada, “visible minorities” are “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour.” By this definition, we are grouped together simply for being non-white; but in reality, we are a rich mix of ethnic origins and cultures from as many as 100 different nationalities and numerous religions (SPC 2008-b). For example, one in every four members of visible-minority communities in Ottawa is Black – however, there is great diversity among us (e.g., a Black person may be from Canada over many generations, a relative newcomer from the Caribbean, Europe, or different countries in Africa). Most importantly, each of us has a unique personality that makes us who we are as an individual.

In this document, the term “visible minority” is used in keeping with the City of Ottawa Equity and Diversity Policy. However, there is a debate about the use of the term “visible minorities” (See Definitions). Some of us prefer to be called people of colour or racialized, while others prefer more specific language (e.g., Black, Chinese, Somali). The key is to respect each person’s self-identity and dignity. If you are not sure what a person or a specific community prefers to be called, just ask: “How would you like to be addressed?”

Racial prejudice and racism are a historical reality that still persists in Ottawa today among individual attitudes and institutional practices. This limits our ability to fully participate in and contribute to the life in our city. We are pleased to join with the City of Ottawa to prevent racial discrimination and create a racism-free city.

IN OTTAWA

Ottawa has the second highest proportion of visible minorities in Ontario after Toronto (20.2 per cent).

The visible minority population is younger and growing at the rate of four times Ottawa’s general population.

Population breakdown:
- Black 4.9 per cent
- Chinese 3.8 per cent
- South Asian 3.3 per cent
- Arab 3.0 per cent
- Other visible minority 5.2 per cent

Ottawa is a multi-ethnic city, with 156 ethnic groups and more than 70 languages.

Almost 30 per cent of Ottawa residents speak non-official languages. The top five are: Chinese, Arabic, Italian, Spanish and German.

Women are predominant in visible minority population (51.4 per cent), particularly in the Filipino (60.5 per cent), Japanese (59.6 per cent), Latin American (54.5 per cent) and Black communities (52.5 per cent).

There is greater diversity of religious affiliations among the visible-minority population than among the non-visible minorities.

(SPC 2008-a; 2008-b)
2. Contributions we make

We are important players in Canada’s labour force in the face of the labour shortage. By 2016, we will contribute 0.5 per cent to Canada’s labour-force growth ($80.9 billion in value) (Antunes 2004). We bring unique assets to the workplace through our cultural, linguistic, and racial diversity. This enables organizations to better understand and respond to the needs of increasing diverse citizens and customers (Gandz 2001). In Ottawa, we are employers, entrepreneurs, workers and tax payers. Some members of visible-minority communities (for example, Lebanese, Chinese, etc.) have achieved significant economic inclusion in Ottawa (SPC 2008-b).

Many of us are active volunteers in our communities, schools and faith groups. We are political leaders at different levels of government and engaged citizens who strengthen our city every day. We enrich the diversity and vibrancy of Ottawa’s arts, cultural, and music communities – Chinatown Remixed, Carnival of Cultures, CARIBE-EXPO and Lebanorama are just a few examples. We have contributed to the building of Ottawa’s infrastructure and institutions, and we look forward to building our city’s future.

A GROWING WORKFORCE

According to Statistics Canada, one in five Canadians will be a “visible minority” by 2017. For every 100 visible minority persons old enough to leave the labour force...there would be 142 old enough to join the labour force. The knowledge, skills, and analysis required to proactively address racism in the workplace and community will become increasingly important as we become more racially diverse.

(Lopes 2006)
3. Barriers and inequities

Racial discrimination is a major barrier for visible minorities. It is present in individual attitudes and behaviours such as in interpersonal relations. It is also present in how society is organized, including the norms and assumptions that underpin institutional practices or the way we do business. This results in advantages for those who are considered “white” and inequities for those who are considered to be the “other” or “non-white”.

1) Attitudes

Consciously or unconsciously, people are socialized to perceive certain physical and social characteristics (e.g., skin tone, hair texture, cultural habits, dress, language, accents, as well as religions, political beliefs and surnames) as a sign of racial differences, and what is desirable and undesirable (Lopes 2006).

As a result, people may think, say or do things that have a negative effect on visible minorities, even when they did not mean to do so. For example, making assumptions about women who wear a hijab or niqab that get in the way of seeing a particular woman for who she really is. Such attitudes are also embedded in institutional and organizational assumptions and practices. For example, assuming a particular group does not need a service or that it is not worthwhile to advertise a job posting in a specific community.

When we catch ourselves making unconscious negative assumptions and work to unlearn them, we are taking a positive step to end racism. When we check for assumptions that are embedded in institutional practices, we are contributing to a racism free institution, workplace and community.

2) Stereotypes

While it can be helpful to distinguish characteristics of specific groups of people in order to know how best to work with them, assuming that all people in a given group are the same is stereotyping (e.g., “Black people are…”; “Chinese students are…”; “Muslim men are…”; “Latina women are…”). Such stereotypes ignore the diversity within a group of people and can perpetuate false assumptions. For example, many visible minorities are often seen as recent immigrants – even if they were born and raised in Canada, or have lived here for many decades. This makes visible minorities “feel like outsiders in our own country” (SPC 2009), and negatively affects their sense of belonging.

Stereotypes also work to keep groups out of professions, work teams, neighbourhoods, and services. In Canada, stereotypes have contributed to policies and practices that limited the immigration of Chinese, Jews and Blacks; as well as the cultural assimilation of Aboriginal people. This history still shapes our institutions today.

By looking beyond a racial stereotype to see the individual for who he or she is, staff can better serve clients and create a welcoming workplace. As we check for institutional practices based on stereotypes, we begin to create inclusive workplaces and services.
3) Denial of racism
For people who don’t experience racism in their everyday lives, its effects are difficult to see. When a person is white, they often do not realize the privilege they have, simply because they have not had the experience of being a person of colour. (For example, not having to worry whether I will be accepted or welcomed based on my race.) (McIntosh 1988). At the same time, many people feel uncomfortable discussing racism.

Consequently, one of the biggest barriers that visible minorities encounter is the denial of racism, or “colour-blindness”– i.e., ignoring the racial aspect in social problems or inequities. For example, people may try to explain an issue as a non-racial phenomenon, but fail to recognize the racial patterns in segregated neighbourhoods, schools and friendship networks as the result of racist structures in society (Jeske 2009).

Visible minorities are often expected to prove that racism exists – by providing personal anecdotes and evidence. They must prove that they don’t have a personal agenda while managing the pain these discussions evoke. Visible minorities are often extremely careful in how they name racism and racial privilege or disadvantage for fear of reprisal or claims of preferential treatment (Lopes 2006). When all people, white and people of colour, take care to recognize when racism is happening and acknowledge it, we make it visible and easier to in our day to day lives as well as in the society at large.

4) Income
Visible minorities represent almost 50 per cent of Ottawa’s poorer citizens, which is grossly disproportionate to their numbers in the general population. However, the nature and degree of economic exclusion varies between visible-minority groups (SPC 2008-b).

In 2001, more than 40 per cent of Black residents in Ottawa had incomes below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) threshold – six times more than the non-visible minorities. Visible-minority women, especially Black women, are more likely to be living below the LICO than any other group in Ottawa, including Black and visible-minority men as well as non-visible minority women (SPC 2007) (See Community Snapshot – Poverty). Both Canadian-born and immigrant visible-minority families experience a disproportionate rate of poverty compared with non-visible minority families (SPC 2008-b; Colour of Poverty #6).
5) Employment
Many visible minorities experience pre-employment barriers that limit access to entering the labour market or access to good jobs (Saloojee 2003). For example, employers tend to discriminate against applicants with non-English names, though maybe unconsciously (Oreopoulos 2009).

Higher proportions of visible minorities face labour market exclusion and turn to self-employment – but this often results in long hours, lack of benefits and lower incomes (Census 2001). To address this barrier, the City is working toward a strong and diverse workforce that is representative of the community it serves.

6) Advancement opportunities
In Ottawa, the cultural context of hiring and promotion, the lack of access to networks, the importance of French-English bilingualism, racism and Islamophobia since 9/11 are all barriers to meaningful employment for visible minorities, and often lead to precarious jobs. A shortage of affordable, culturally appropriate child care can also be a barrier especially for single parents and mothers.

Many visible minorities experience the glass ceiling at their workplace, which inhibits promotion to higher skilled, better paying jobs (Saloojee 2003). As well, a study found that despite objective performance measures, visible minorities often receive a lower rating in anonymous customer feedback surveys than white males, due to subjective biases of customers (Hekman).

7) Workplace harassment
Harassment leads to many negative repercussions in the workplace, such as unhappiness, loss of self-esteem, low productivity, low morale, depression, higher rates of absenteeism to avoid the harasser and higher turnover. The effects often reach beyond the individuals directly involved in the situation, and can lead to a poisoned work environment that affects all employees and clients. Beyond the workplace, it can also affect the victim’s family members. If left unchecked, workplace harassment can have psychological and physical impacts on its victims and their families.

Examples of labour market exclusion:

- Job requirements that have nothing to do with what is needed to perform the job.
- An unfair assessment of qualifications and work experience from abroad.
- Invisible barriers – biases, stereotyping and discrimination based on a person’s colour or name, rather than an assessment based on his/her actual skills or performance.
- The vicious cycle of lower expectations leading to lower achievement.
- A poisoned work environment caused by racial jokes, abusive slurs and, on occasion, physical abuse (harassment).

(OECC 1999)
Racial harassment can take the forms of:

➤ racial epithets, slurs or jokes;
➤ being subjected to racial name calling or nicknames;
➤ racial jokes, cartoons or graffiti, including when circulated by e-mail;
➤ ridiculing comments related to race-related characteristics;
➤ being subjected to references to racist organizations, such as having “KKK” painted on a locker (Ontario Human Rights Commission 2008).

8) Racial profiling

No race is inherently more violent than another, but many visible minorities, especially young Black men and boys, are suspected, targeted and monitored more in policing and security, the justice system, schools and stores. This has a devastating impact on people’s self-esteem and attitudes but also results in unfair imprisonment and disruption in career and family lives. Since 9/11, Muslim men are often suspected and questioned because of Islamophobia and the stereotypical view that all Muslim people are the same or dangerous (Service Ontario 2007; Lopes 2006; Colour of Poverty #7).

As reported in the study by SPC Ottawa (2008-b), just as adults experience racism in the workplace, many visible-minority students experience discrimination and alienation from elementary to secondary school through to colleges and universities. Teachers and role models often do not reflect the community make-up, and stereotypes in the schools are manifest, for instance, in the streaming of children away from university. Many Muslim students experience disrespect for Islam within their school – and many become the targets of Islamophobia (see Definitions), bullying and violence. Female students are particularly at risk, especially if they wear the hijab (SPC 2008-b; Colour of Poverty #3).

HATE CRIMES

Race or ethnicity is the most common motivation for hate crimes in Canada (60 per cent), followed by religion (24 per cent) and sexual orientation (10 per cent).

Black people are targeted most often, along with Arab and West Asian people.

(Statistics Canada 2009).

In Ottawa, Black, Arab and Southeast Asian students are disproportionately represented among early school leavers compared to their percentage in the general population (36 per cent vs. 27 per cent, 21 per cent vs. 18 per cent, and 8.2 per cent vs. 5.6 per cent).

In Ontario, Black suspects are 5.5 times more likely to be killed or seriously injured from police use of force than white suspects, and they are 10 times more likely to be shot by police.

In Ontario, African Canadians make up 14.0 per cent of the federal offender population but only 3.3 per cent of the provincial population.

Low income visible-minority women are among the fastest growing groups in the prison population in Ontario.

Seven times more Black women than white women are sent to Ontario prisons. One of three women in prison is from a visible-minority group.

(SPCC 2008-c; Colour of Poverty #7)
A disproportionate number of Black and/or Somali male students are directly or indirectly discouraged from aspiring to higher education and streamed into basic non-academic levels or special needs programs. There are higher rates of school drop outs and push outs among visible-minority students, especially males (SPC 2008-b; Colour of Poverty #3). Although visible-minority youth as a whole are not over-represented within early school leavers in Ottawa, Black, Arab and Southeast Asian students are disproportionately represented among early school leavers compared to their percentage in the general population (36 per cent vs. 27 per cent, 21 per cent vs. 18 per cent, and 8.2 per cent vs. 5.6 per cent) (SPC 2008-c).

9) Housing and neighbourhood
Due to higher incidences of poverty and limited affordable housing, many visible minorities experience housing difficulties, such as lack of access to capital for home ownership; poor housing conditions; overcrowding and stress for larger or extended families; and risk of eviction and homelessness (SPC 2008-b).

High concentrations of poverty and substandard housing can lead to geographic segregation (i.e., neighbourhood exclusion by race and income). People become segregated into neighbourhoods with poor community design, limited public services, lower quality of schools, few stores or businesses, restricted transportation and lack of places for arts, recreation or just to gather.

Such a neighbourhood becomes known as a bad area, and people living there become labelled as “bad” which, in turn, has an impact on the future generations growing up there (Service Ontario 2007; SPC 2008-b; Colour of Poverty #9). The City of Ottawa’s Neighbourhood Planning Initiative works to address such inequities at the neighbourhood level (See What’s happening in Ottawa).

10) Civic and political engagement
Many visible-minority communities have a strong practice of civic engagement in their own community infrastructure and support networks, both based in their culture and tradition and out of necessity resulting from exclusion from mainstream society. Circumstances such as poverty, work and family responsibilities (can’t afford to hire caregivers), an unwelcoming political and cultural environment and discriminatory processes in mainstream institutions, experience of exclusion at the personal and community level, and fear of being rebuffed, dismissed or misunderstood contribute to people’s hesitance to enter into political, social or community activities (SPC 2008-b, 2006).
4. We envision – a racism-free city

➤ The City takes leadership and is committed to addressing the issues of racism.

➤ The City works closely with communities to create shared solutions to address racism.

➤ People of colour are included as an important part of the cultural fabric of the city.

➤ Visible minorities are integral and respected in the workplace, and work as staff, supervisors, managers and Councillors, along with non-visible minorities.

➤ Ottawa, as the nation’s capital, takes leadership to work with other cities against racism (e.g., UNESCO Coalition of Canadian Municipalities against Racism).

➤ Individuals take ongoing responsibility to address systemic and individual racism.

➤ Clear and efficient processes are in place, and have clear outcomes, to support individuals who experience racism and discrimination.

➤ Groups of people are no longer racialized – i.e., negatively defined or disadvantaged based on skin colour, culture, language, religion, etc.

➤ Managers and decision makers are proactive in eliminating institutional practices and assumptions that may perpetuate systemic racism.

➤ The contributions that diverse racial and ethno-cultural communities make to the workplace and community are valued.

WHAT CAN I DO?

✓ Listen to the voices of people of colour and learn from them.

✓ Avoid viewing white or European culture as the norm and other ethnicities or cultures as strange or exotic.

✓ Ensure our workplace, systems and services respect people of diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds.

✓ Remember that just because I don’t see racism doesn’t mean it isn’t there.

✓ Let go of misinformation.

✓ Recognize that sometimes I will feel uncomfortable with the topic of racism, and know it’s OK to feel that way.

✓ Object when I see or hear something that I think is racist (a joke, insult), even though it may be unpopular.

✓ Partner with community organizations working with visible minorities.

✓ Notice when people of colour in my team are not heard in a discussion, and draw them into the conversation.

✓ Check for organizational practices and assumptions that may perpetuate systemic racism.

✓ And, if I am a visible minority, I know that I can use my knowledge and experience to challenge the city as well as to enrich it.
5. Council mandates and legislation

- City of Ottawa Equity and Diversity Policy
- City of Ottawa Duty to accommodate
- City of Ottawa Workplace Harassment Policy
- Ontario Human Rights Code (Provincial)
- Employment Equity Act (EEA) (Federal)
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA) (Federal)
- Multiculturalism Act (Federal)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- The United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

6. What’s happening in Ottawa

- City of Ottawa Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee (EDAC) – works with the City on policies and programs affecting members of visible minority groups, women, Aboriginal persons and GLBT individuals and on the elimination of discrimination based on race, religion, gender and sexual orientation.
- City of Ottawa Neighbourhood Planning Initiative – engages communities and groups that tend to be marginalized into the neighbourhood planning processes (e.g., visible minorities, seniors, people living in poverty and Aboriginal peoples).
- City of Ottawa Visible Minority Youth Initiative (VMYI) – a project offered through Youth Zone Jeunesse (YZJ) employment resource centre, geared towards maximizing the participation and placement of visible-minority youth in employment activities. The goal is to increase access to employment supports, services and job opportunities for visible-minority youth, including Francophones receiving Ontario Works (OW) support and other community participants.
- Ottawa Police Service – The Diversity and Race Relations Section works to ensure that the police respond effectively, appropriately and sensitively to all members of the community, particularly those who have traditionally been marginalized by society. They work to strengthen communication between police and immigrants, visible minorities and Aboriginal peoples through the Community-Police Action Committee (COMPAC).
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board – Anti-racism and Ethnocultural Equity Education (AREE) provides equity of access and treatment for all learners. The Community Council for Ethnocultural Equity (CCEE) is made up of community volunteers and mandated to develop an enriched, equitable, anti-racist education, which prepares all students to make their full contribution and live harmoniously in a diverse global society.
- MOST (Making Ottawa Safer Together) – a community group focusing on youth, schools, community policing and diversity in the media.
7. Relevant practices in other cities

- Canadian Coalition of Municipalities Against Racism and Discrimination (CMARD) – Participating municipalities: Gatineau (in French only), Calgary, Edmonton, Montréal, Oakville, Saskatoon, Toronto, Vaughan, Windsor, Winnipeg.
- City of Toronto Plan of Action for the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination, City of Toronto Diversity Management and Community Engagement.
- Ontario Ministry of Education – Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy. Recognizing Ontario’s growing diversity as a strength, the Strategy addresses barriers related to sexism, racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination in Ontario schools, which may prevent students from reaching their full potential. See also: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation.
- Canadian Heritage. A Canada for All: Canada’s Action Plan Against Racism – An anti-racism action plan set out by the federal government.

8. Sources

- Canadian Race Relations Foundation.
  – 2007. CRRF’s response to the concluding observations of the CERD.
- Colour of Poverty. Fact Sheets – “#3 Education”; “#6 Income”; “#9 Housing and Homelessness”.
- Jewish Resources and Culture for Independent Schools. “Resource Materials for Developing Allies in Dismantling Racism”.
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- Statistics Canada
- Social Planning Council of Ottawa
  - 2009. “Immigrants’ Economic Integration: Successes and Challenges – A Profile of Immigrants in Ottawa Based on the 2006 Census.”
  - 2008-a. “This is Who We Are – A Social Profile of Ottawa Based on the 2006 Census”

9. Definitions

“Ally”: A person with white-skin privilege who chooses to take an active and strategic role in confronting racism. (Jewish Resources and Culture for Independent Schools)

“Ethnic /Ethnicity”: Describes a person or community’s cultural heritage in the broadest sense, including linguistic, historical, geographical, religious or racial identity. Everyone belongs to an ethnic group. However, the word is often used to identify only non-dominant or less powerful cultural identities in Canada. Individuals who are members of the same ethnic group can experience and express their ethnicity in different ways. (Ottawa Carleton District School Board; Lopes 2006)

“Islamophobia” / “Anti-Arab racism”: A term recently coined to refer to expressions of negative stereotypes, bias or acts of hostility towards individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general, especially after 9/11. In Canada, the examples of anti-Arab racism include the negative stereotyping of Muslim people and the depiction of Islam as essentially violent and fundamentalist. It is reflected in the depiction of all Arabs as Muslim, and all Muslims as Arab. (Canadian Race Relations Foundation; Lopes 2006)

“People of colour”: Many visible minorities prefer to identify themselves as people of colour, as this is a term to name ourselves as people with a positive self-identity. This is different from being labelled as “non-whites,” “coloured,” “ethnics,” or “visible minorities” which view whiteness as the standard by which everyone is defined (Lopes 2006).

“Race”: A social concept that differentiates people into a hierarchy based on arbitrary criteria such as skin colour, hair texture, facial features, etc. Race is not about inherent characteristics of a group. In fact, there is no clear scientific or biological basis for differentiating humans into different races. But socially, race still affects the lives of many people of colour negatively. (Lopes 2006; Saloojee 2003)
“Racialization”: Using social markers (e.g. skin colour, cultural habits, dress, language, accents, religions, political beliefs and surnames) to label or perceive a person of a certain community as different from “whiteness”. If you are racialized, you are likely to receive unequal treatment in society (Lopes 2006; SPC 2008-b; Canadian Race Relations Foundation 2005)

Racism: Aspects of society that overtly or covertly attribute value and normality to White people or Whiteness and that devalue, stereotype, and label racialized communities as “other”, different, less than, or render them invisible.

~ Individual racism: The beliefs, attitudes and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism. Individual racism can be unconscious or conscious, active or passive.

~ Systemic racism: The conscious or unconscious policies, procedures, and practices that exclude, marginalize, and economically disadvantage racialized communities or people of colour. Systemic racism is supported by institutional power and by powerful (often unexamined) ideas which make racism look normal and justified. (Lopes, 2006).

“Racial/skin privilege”: The invisible advantages that are attached to being a member of the dominant white culture in Canada, and anywhere European colonialism has created racial inequity. This privilege is often not identified by those people who have it.

Many white people think about racism in terms of the “disadvantage” that others face, but often don’t recognize the privilege that comes with having lighter skin in our society (e.g., the ability to be unaware of race and racism; the assurance that police will not stop them because of their race; the assumption that getting hired or promoted was due to their competence and not because of their race.)

People who are white may face discrimination because of their class, gender, sexual orientation, religion and age, or because of their nationality, ethnicity, language, etc. (e.g. Armenian, Italian, Jewish, etc.). However, this does not erase the racial privilege. (AMSSA BC 2004; CRRF 2005; Lopes 2006; McIntosh 1988)

“Visible minority”: A category used in the federal Employment Equity Act to identify people who are non-Aboriginal, non-Caucasian in race and non-white in colour. Statistics Canada divides visible minorities into ten groups, each of which is very diverse (Statistics Canada 2008).

The term visible minorities evokes much controversy. In March 2007, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination urged Canada to review its use of the term “visible minority” because it singles out a group in a way that perpetuates racism. Groups comprising “visible minorities” have little in common with each other, and the term does not distinguish between groups that face more severe discrimination than others. This not only prevents an effective intervention strategy but reinforces stereotypes to view all those defined as “visible minority” as the same. (CanWest News Service 2007; CRRF 2007; Hum 2007.)
10. Acknowledgments

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