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CANADA'S COLOUR CODED LABOUR MARKET

The gap for racialized workers

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Executive Summary

THE LAST AVAILABLE CENSUS DATA before the federal government cancelled the country's mandatory long form Census reveals a troubling trend in Canada.

Despite years of unprecedented economic growth and an increasingly diverse population, this report confirms what so many Canadians have experienced in real life: a colour code is still at work in Canada's labour market.

Racialized¹ Canadians encounter a persistent colour code that blocks them from the best paying jobs our country has to offer.

This report uses the 2006 long form Census data to compare work and income trends among racialized and non-racialized Canadians during the heyday of the economic boom.

It finds that even in the best of economic times, the pay gap between racialized and non-racialized Canadians is large: Racialized Canadians earn only 81.4 cents for every dollar paid to non-racialized Canadians.

The income gap stems from disparities in the distribution of good paying, more secure jobs.

The data show racialized Canadians have slightly higher levels of labour market participation, yet they continue to experience higher levels of unemployment and earn less income than non-racialized Canadians.

The work they're able to attain is much more likely to be insecure, temporary, and low paying. For example, this report shows that racialized Canadians are over-represented in a range of traditionally low-paid business services ranging from call centres to security services to janitorial services, while non-racialized Canadians are not.

The data show that if there is work to do, racialized Canadians are willing to do it: 67.3% of racialized Canadians are in the labour force — slightly higher than non-racialized Canadians (66.7%).

Though they're more willing to work, all racialized groups — except those who identify as Japanese and Filipino — tend to find themselves on the unemployment line more often than non-racialized Canadians. Racialized men are 24% more likely to be unemployed than non-racialized men. Racialized women have it worse: They're 48% more likely to be unemployed than non-racialized men. This may contribute to the fact that racialized women earn 55.6% of the income of non-racialized men.

The Census data makes clear: Between 2000 and 2005, during the one of the best economic growth periods for Canada, racialized workers contributed to that economic growth but they didn't enjoy the benefits.

On average, non-racialized Canadian earnings grew marginally (2.7%) during this period — tepid income gains considering the economy grew by 13.1%. But the average income of racialized Canadians *declined* by 0.2%.

And this was before recession hit Canada in 2008.

The findings raise troubling questions about one of the fastest growing groups in Canadian society. The demographic composition of Canada is quickly changing, but labour market policies are lagging. In the 1980s, racialized groups accounted for less than 5% of Canada's population. By the 2001 Census, racialized Canadians made up 13.4% of the population. Between the 2001 and 2006 Census taking, that population had grown by 27% — five times faster than the rate of growth for the broader Canadian population. In 2006, 16.2% of the population came from a racialized group. By 2031, it's estimated racialized Canadians will make up 32% of the population.

The country's demographic composition is undergoing major transformation. If the labour market continues to relegate workers from racialized groups to the back of the pack, the number of Canadians left behind will only accelerate — calling into question the promise that Canada is a fair and caring society committed to equal opportunities, no matter who you are and where you come from.

Default explanations like “it takes a while for immigrants to integrate” don't bear out. Even when you control for age and education, the data show first generation racialized Canadian men earn only 68.7% of what non-racialized first-generation Canadian men earn, indicating a colour code is firmly at play in the labour market.

Here, the gender gap — at play throughout the spectrum — becomes disturbingly large: Racialized women immigrants earn only 48.7 cents for every dollar non-racialized male immigrants earn.

The colour code persists for second generation Canadians with similar education and age. The gap narrows, with racialized women making 56.5 cents per dollar non-racialized men earn; while racialized men earn 75.6 cents for every dollar non-racialized men in this cohort earn.

While noting many similarities across different racialized groups, the report also highlights some differences. For example, the gap in earnings ranges from 69.5

cents per dollar for those who identify as Korean to 89 cents per dollar for those who identify as Chinese.

This report captures the ongoing racialization of poverty in Canada. Poverty rates for racialized families are three times higher than non-racialized families. In 2005, 19.8% of racialized families lived in poverty, compared to 6.4% of non-racialized families.

Finally, the report makes the links between low-income jobs, the racialization of poverty, and the impacts both have on the health of racialized Canadians.

Canada's Colour Coded Labour Market

IN RECENT DECADES, the profile of the Canadian population has changed dramatically. It has become one of the more racially diverse nations on the planet. Census data shows that between 2001 and 2006, over three quarters of immigrants to Canada came from the global South or countries with racialized majority populations. By 2006, the long form Census enumerated 5,068,100 individuals who belonged to the racialized population — 16.2% of the total population — in Canada. Between 2001 and 2006, the racialized population increased at a much faster pace than the total population. The rate of growth was 27.2%, five times faster than the 5.4% increase for the Canadian population as a whole.²

By 2006, the six largest racialized groups in Canada were, in order of size:

1. South Asian (1,262,900 or 25% of racialized groups)
2. Chinese (1,216,600; 24%)
3. Black or African Canadian (783,800; 15.5%)
4. Arab & West Asian (422,200; 8.3%)
5. Filipino (410,700; 8.1%)
6. Latin American (304,200; 6%)

Statistics Canada estimates racialized groups will make up a third of Canada's population — one in three Canadians — by 2031.³ This transformation has been rapid, from less than 5% of Canada's population in the 1980s to a projected 32% 20 years from now. It results from both changes in immigration patterns and higher birth

TABLE 1 Employment, Unemployment and Participation Rates Canada, 2006

	<i>Racialized</i>			<i>Non Racialized</i>		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Participation rate	73.1	62.0	67.3	72.2	61.5	66.7
Employment rate	67.3	56.2	61.5	67.7	57.8	62.6
Unemployment rate	7.8	9.3	8.6	6.3	6.1	6.2

Source: Statistics Canada, 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-562-XCB2006013.

rates among racialized Canadians. The racialized population will continue to be younger than the rest of the population, with 36% under age 15 in 2031 and only 18% predicted to be over 65.

THE COLOUR CODED NATURE OF WORK: WHO'S WORKING?

Table 1 shows the participation, employment and unemployment rates for racialized and non-racialized Canadians in 2006, the last year of reliable long form Census data available. These data show racialized Canadians have slightly higher participation rates in Canada's paid job market than those who are not racialized. The participation rate for racialized Canadians was 67.3%, compared to 66.7% for non-racialized Canadians. Though they tend to be more willing to work, racialized workers also experience higher unemployment rates — 2.4 percentage points higher than non-racialized Canadians. The gap is worse for racialized women, whose unemployment rate was 1.5 percentage points higher than racialized men and 3 percentage points higher than non-racialized men.

Table 2 shows a great deal of consistency in the experience of work and unemployment across racialized groups. The majority of racialized Canadians, more than 60% of the adult racialized population, have higher labour force participation rates than non-racialized Canadians. Those who identify as Japanese, Chinese, Korean or Arab/West Asian have lower labour force participation rates than non-racialized Canadians. However, all racialized communities, except those who identify as Japanese or Filipino, have higher unemployment rates than non-racialized Canadians. Of those remaining racialized communities, the differences in unemployment rates from the non-racialized population are significant. The unemployment rate for those who identify as Chinese was 21% higher than non-racialized Canadians. The unemployment rate was 95% higher for those who identify as West Asian/Arab and 73% higher for those who identify as Black.

TABLE 2 Employment, Unemployment and Participation Rates, by Racialized Group Canada, 2006

	Participation Rate	Employment Rate	Unemployment Rate
Total racialized population	67.3	61.5	8.6
Chinese	62.0	57.3	7.5
South Asian [1]	68.5	62.6	8.6
Black	70.7	63.2	10.7
Filipino	76.6	72.8	5.0
Latin American	71.9	65.4	9.0
Southeast Asian [2]	68.9	63.1	8.5
Arab/West Asian	64.1	56.3	12.1
Korean	54.8	50.1	8.5
Japanese	61.6	58.5	5.1
Visible minority, n.i.e. [3]	71.1	65.6	7.8
Multiple visible minority [4]	72.7	66.5	8.5
Non racialized [5]	66.7	62.6	6.2

Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-562-XCB2006013.

[1] For example, 'East Indian', 'Pakistani', 'Sri Lankan', etc. [2] For example, 'Vietnamese', 'Cambodian', 'Malaysian', 'Laotian', etc. [3] The abbreviation 'n.i.e.' means 'not included elsewhere'. Includes respondents who reported a write-in response such as 'Guyanese', 'West Indian', 'Kurd', 'Tibetan', 'Polynesian', 'Pacific Islander', etc. [4] Includes respondents who reported more than one visible minority group by checking two or more mark-in circles, e.g., 'Black' and 'South Asian'. [5] Includes respondents who reported 'Yes' to the Aboriginal identity question (Question 18) as well as respondents who were not considered to be members of a visible minority group.

RACIALIZED INEQUALITIES IN PAID WORK

Tables 3 and 4 show the distribution of racialized and non-racialized groups in the labour force by occupation and by industry. The *all industries* and *all occupations* figures at the top of the table show the racialized share of the total labour force, 7.7% for racialized men and 7% for racialized women. Any occupation or industry that has a racialized labour force share lower than 7% shows an under-representation of racialized women workers. Any that has a higher share has an over-representation of racialized women workers. Similarly, any occupation or industry that has a racialized labour force share lower than 7.7% has an under-representation of racialized male workers; any that has a higher share has an over-representation of racialized male workers.

Racialized men are highly over-represented in natural and applied sciences occupations and in processing, manufacturing and utilities occupations but also over-represented in management and trades, transport, and equipment operators. Racialized women are highly over-represented in health occupations, and in processing, manufacturing and utilities occupations, and over-represented in business, finance and administrative, and sales and service occupations. On the other hand, racialized women are under-represented in management; art, culture, recreation and sport;

TABLE 3 **Labour Force by Occupation** Canada, 2006 (per cent)

	<i>Racialized</i>		<i>Non-racialized</i>	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
All occupations	7.7%	7.0%	45.0%	40.3%
Management	8.2%	4.6%	55.1%	32.1%
Business, finance and administrative	5.4%	9.8%	23.2%	61.6%
Natural and applied sciences and related	15.8%	4.8%	62.4%	17.1%
Health	4.3%	12.0%	15.6%	68.1%
Social science, education, government service and religion	4.2%	7.3%	27.7%	60.8%
Art, culture, recreation and sport	5.2%	5.2%	39.6%	49.9%
Sales and service occupations	7.4%	9.1%	35.1%	48.4%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related	9.5%	0.9%	83.6%	6.0%
Occupations unique to primary industry	3.3%	1.8%	74.4%	20.5%
Occupations unique to processing, manufacturing and utilities	14.0%	11.2%	52.7%	22.1%

Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-564-XCB2006009 and authors' calculations.

trades, transport and equipment operators, occupations in primary industry. Racialized men are under-represented in business, finance and administration; health; art, culture, recreation and sport; as well as occupations unique to primary industry. It is important to note that these data do not reveal the vertical distribution of racialized women and men within these occupations.

Table 4 breaks down racialized and non-racialized groups by industry. Racialized men are highly over-represented in manufacturing, and transportation and warehousing, but also over-represented in wholesale trade, administrative, support, and waste management and remediation services as well as professional, technical and scientific services. Racialized men are highly under-represented in agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, oil and gas extraction, health care and social assistance, educational services, arts, entertainment and recreation, and public administration. Racialized women are highly over-represented in finance, insurance, health care and social assistance, accommodation and food services, and the category of activities covered by 'other services'. They are highly under-represented in mining, oil and gas extraction, agriculture, forestry, fishing, utilities, construction, transportation, warehousing, but also under-represented in public administration, the arts, entertainment and recreation, and educational services. Similarly here, we are not able to address the vertical distribution of racialized women and men in these industries.

Because these data are at a very broad industrial and occupational level, and includes all racialized groups, they do not provide the clearest picture of the racial segmentation in Canada's labour force. ⁴ However, some gender and race patterns are evident.

TABLE 4 **Labour Force by industry** Canada, 2006 (per cent)

	<i>Racialized</i>		<i>Non-racialized</i>	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
All industries	7.7%	7.0%	45.0%	40.3%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	2.9%	2.2%	67.5%	27.4%
Mining and oil and gas extraction	3.8%	1.7%	78.0%	16.5%
Utilities	5.6%	2.5%	69.7%	22.2%
Construction	6.2%	0.9%	81.6%	11.2%
Manufacturing	12.2%	6.9%	58.7%	22.3%
Wholesale trade	10.3%	6.5%	56.6%	26.6%
Retail trade	7.2%	7.9%	37.6%	47.3%
Transportation and warehousing	11.9%	3.3%	63.1%	21.7%
Information and cultural industries	9.4%	7.0%	44.5%	39.0%
Finance and insurance	8.3%	12.2%	28.5%	51.0%
Real estate and rental and leasing	8.6%	6.6%	46.0%	38.8%
Professional, scientific and technical services	10.2%	7.0%	45.2%	37.6%
Management of companies and enterprises	7.5%	7.9%	43.2%	41.4%
Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	10.2%	8.7%	45.3%	35.9%
Educational services	4.3%	6.0%	28.7%	60.9%
Health care and social assistance	3.1%	11.3%	14.8%	70.7%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	4.2%	4.3%	47.1%	44.3%
Accommodation and food services	10.2%	10.5%	29.4%	49.9%
Other services (except public administration)	6.5%	8.9%	40.3%	44.3%
Public administration	4.0%	4.1%	48.8%	43.1%

Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-564-XCB2006009 and authors' calculations.

Both racialized women and men are over-represented in administrative support, waste management, and remediation services, while non-racialized men and women are not. This industry grouping covers a range of traditionally low-paid business services, ranging from call centres to security services to janitorial services. These jobs also tend to be precarious, insecure, low-paid jobs with few or no benefits.

The data show that both racialized and non-racialized men are over-represented in Canada's manufacturing sector. However, racialized men tend to land in lower paying processing and manufacturing occupations more than non-racialized men. At the same time, more non-racialized men tend to land jobs in the higher paid trades occupations than racialized men.

Even at this level of aggregation, it is possible to see the differences in the construction of gendered labour for racialized and non-racialized women. Racialized women are more likely to work in manufacturing and processing jobs than non-racialized women. Conversely, non-racialized women are more likely to work in educational services than racialized women. Racialized men are more likely to work in natural and applied sciences than non-racialized men. Racialized women are more likely to work in natural and applied sciences than non-racialized women; although, all women are under-represented in these jobs.

From a public policy perspective, the under-representation of racialized workers in public administration is of grave concern. Both racialized men and women appear to be experiencing significant barriers to access to employment in this sector. This has implications for good policy development and suggests a need to review the effectiveness of equitable hiring programs practices in the public service.

INEQUALITIES IN EMPLOYMENT INCOME

Racialized Canadians face barriers to jobs compared to non-racialized Canadians, but they also experience a significant gap in pay. As Table 5 shows, racialized Canadians earn 81.4 cents for every dollar paid to non-racialized Canadians.

Looking at employment earnings by gender, we see a pronounced gendered dimension to Canada's racialized income gap. The gap is at its worst when comparing the earnings of racialized women to non-racialized men.

Racialized women earned 55.6 cents for every dollar non-racialized men earned in 2005. The gap narrows a bit when comparing the earnings of racialized and non-racialized men. Racialized men made 77.9 cents for every dollar than non-racialized men earned. The gap narrows even further when comparing racialized and non-racialized women. Racialized women earned 88.2 cents for every dollar that non-racialized women earned.

The impact of sexism on both racialized and non-racialized women may partly explain this smaller gap, as all Canadian women's earnings are depressed compared to men's earnings.

The overarching result along the dimensions of race and gender: the earnings of the three groups—racialized men, women and non-racialized women all trailed those of non-racialized men.

The data in Table 5 show differences in employment income for all workers. Generally, when trying to measure the impact of discrimination, it is more appropriate to compare incomes of full-time, full-year workers. These comparisons can help isolate the impact of race and gender. However, this represents a partial picture of the racialized labour market experience, since unequal access to full-time, full-year employment is one of the barriers that racialized workers and non-racialized women workers face in the labour market.⁵

TABLE 5 Average Employment Income Canada, 2005

	Racialized	Non-racialized
Men	35,329	45,327
Women	25,204	28,584
Total	30,385	37,332

Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-563-XCB2006060.

TABLE 6 Average Employment Income: Full-time, full-year Canada, 2005

	Racialized	Non-racialized
Men	48,631	60,044
Women	37,932	41,872
Total	43,979	52,345

Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-563-XCB2006060.

In Table 6 we isolate the full-time, full-year earnings of racialized workers and find that the gap shrinks somewhat to 84 cents for each dollar that non-racialized workers earn. The gap between racialized women and non-racialized men also shrinks from 55.6 cents to 63.2 cents, while those between racialized and non-racialized men goes to 81 cents.

Often, differences in outcomes in the labour market are attributed to differences in educational attainment, immigration status or factors other than race. To control for differences in educational attainment and in age structure, Table 7 compares incomes for 25- to 44-year-old workers who have completed university education, by immigration generational status.

The data show a wide gap in earnings between first-generation racialized and non-racialized workers. Racialized male immigrants make 68.7 cents for every dollar that non-racialized male immigrants make. This suggests a differential impact of immigration on the two groups. We also note the significant income differential between racialized women and non-racialized men. Racialized women immigrants make 48.7 cents for every dollar that non-racialized male immigrants make.

The earnings gap persists for second-generation workers, with racialized men in this generation earning just 75.6 cents for every dollar non-racialized men make.

The data shows a sharp drop in the gap in following generations. However, comparing this group of workers requires some caution, since the sample size for racialized workers is much smaller and therefore the standard error much larger. Moreover, the racial income gap still persists among men, although it is almost erased among women.

TABLE 7 Average Employment Income
2005, by Generation, 25–44, University Degree or Certificate

	<i>Racialized</i>		<i>Non-racialized</i>		<i>Differential (%)</i>	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1 st generation	45,388	32,165	66,078	39,264	68.7	81.9
2 nd generation	57,237	42,804	75,729	46,391	75.6	92.3
3 rd or more generation	66,137	44,460	70,962	44,810	93.2	99.2

Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-563-XCB2006060.

INCOME GAP VARIATIONS AMONG RACIALIZED GROUPS

There are also important variations among workers in racialized groups. Table 8 shows average employment incomes of various racialized groups by gender.

Employment earnings for racialized workers are lower than non-racialized workers across all racialized groups — except for the small number of Canadians who identify as Japanese. A number of groups fare particularly poorly, including:

- Those who identify as Korean: They earn 69.5 cents for every dollar a non-racialized worker earns, with an annual earnings gap of \$11,403
- Those who identify as Latin Americans: They earn 70.3 cents for every dollar a non-racialized worker earns, with an annual earnings gap of \$11,091
- Those who identify as West Asian: They earn 70.4 cents for every dollar a non-racialized worker earns, with an annual earnings gap of \$11,053
- Those who identify as Black: They earn 75.6 cents for every dollar a non-racialized worker earns, with an annual earnings gap of \$9,101
- Those who identify as South East Asians: They earn 77.5 cents for every dollar a non-racialized worker earns, with an annual earnings gap of \$8,395
- Those who identify as Chinese do better: they earn 88.6 cents for every dollar a non-racialized worker earns, for an annual gap of \$4,251.

Table 9 looks at the change in earnings between 2000 and 2005. It reveals an alarming trend during what was among the best of economic growth periods for Canada: racialized workers in Canada didn't enjoy the benefits of this economic growth. Indeed a growing economy was not a solution to the income inequalities that racialized groups face. They lost ground in that period.

On average, non-racialized Canadian incomes grew marginally, by 2.7%, between 2001–05 — tepid growth, given that GDP grew by 13.1% during this time period. But the average income of racialized workers in Canada declined by 0.2%. Only three racialized groups — those who identify as Latin American (0.8%), Chinese (1.9%), and

TABLE 8 Average Employment Income by Racialized Group

	Men	Women	Total
Arab	34,171	21,874	29,441
Black	31,233	25,336	28,231
Chinese	38,342	27,745	33,081
Filipino	33,141	26,960	29,491
Latin American	31,187	20,802	26,241
Japanese	60,004	32,647	45,116
Korean	30,474	21,122	25,929
Visible minority n.i.e.	35,414	25,938	30,666
Multiple VM	37,995	27,081	32,528
South Asian	36,904	24,081	31,102
South East Asian	34,270	23,325	28,937
West Asian	30,173	21,234	26,279
Total Racialized	35,329	25,204	30,385
Non-racialized	45,327	28,584	37,332

Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-564-XCB2006009.

TABLE 9 Earnings by racialized group 2000 and 2005 (in constant 2005 \$)

	2000	2005	Per cent change
Arab	30,452	29,441	-3.3
Black	28,215	28,012	-0.7
Chinese	32,354	32,981	1.9
Filipino	28,542	29,393	3.0
Latin American	26,034	26,241	0.8
Japanese	42,579	42,177	-0.9
Korean	27,149	25,892	-4.6
Visible minority n.i.e.	32,841	30,666	-6.6
South Asian	31,486	31,103	-1.2
Southeast Asian	28,958	28,880	-0.3
West Asian	27,101	26,279	-3.0
Total Racialized	30,451	30,385	-0.2
Non-racialized	36,353	37,332	2.7

Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-563-XCB2006010.

Filipino (3.0%) — gained ground. All other racialized groups in Canada lost ground; particularly Korean (-4.6%), Arab (-3.3%) and those that fall under the category, not included elsewhere (-6.6%).

RACIALIZATION OF POVERTY

The racial barriers to Canadian jobs and the resulting racialized income gap has a deep impact on the health and well-being of racialized Canadians. It influences the nature of poverty in Canada and the experience of health and well-being among its citizens.

The data emerging from the last long form Census survey point to an entrenchment of the racialization of poverty. **The racialization of poverty refers to a phenomenon where poverty becomes disproportionately concentrated and reproduced among racialized group members, in some cases inter-generationally.** The emergence of precarious work as a major feature of Canadian labour markets is an important explanation for the racialization of poverty.

The impact of these forces accentuates historical forms of racial discrimination in the Canadian labour market and creates a process of social and economic marginalization. The result of this marginalization is a disproportionate vulnerability to poverty among racialized communities. The racialization of poverty is also linked to the entrenchment of privileged access to the economic resources in Canadian society by a powerful minority. This access explains the polarizations in income and wealth in Canada as a whole.⁶

The 2006 Census data bolsters previous evidence that racialized Canadians are disproportionately among Canada's poorest, particularly in the urban centres. Table 10 shows the differences in poverty rates between racialized and non-racialized Canadians. It shows poverty rates for those living in economic families and for single individuals.⁷

As Table 10 shows, poverty rates for racialized families are three times higher than non-racialized families. Only 6.4% of non-racialized families lived in poverty in 2005, but three times that number, 19.8% of racialized families lived in poverty in that same year. These higher poverty rates cut across all racialized groups. Families who identify as Arab, West Asian and Korean have poverty rates above 30% — a shocking figure given the rate of economic growth during this time period. Only two groups, those who identify as Japanese and those who identify as Filipino, have poverty rates in the single digits. And those are still more than 25% higher than the poverty rate for non-racialized families.

A QUESTION OF RACIAL DISPARITIES IN HEALTH

A wealth of international data makes the link between jobs, income, health and well-being. A social determinants of health approach (SDOH), considers the full range of

TABLE 10 **After-tax low income by racialized group** Canada, 2005

	<i>In Economic Families</i>			<i>Not in Economic Families</i>		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Arab	32.0	33.1	32.5	56.5	56.2	44.3
Black	22.3	25.5	24.0	41.6	47.3	54.3
Chinese	19.6	19.4	19.5	53.8	54.7	42.3
Filipino	8.0	8.3	8.2	31.4	45.5	51.0
Latin American	19.8	21.3	20.6	46.5	57.5	41.4
Japanese	8.5	10.1	9.4	35.1	45.6	70.3
Korean	38.1	38.2	38.2	69.5	71.0	42.0
Visible minority n.i.e.	15.0	16.3	15.7	39.0	45.0	37.3
Multiple VM	14.0	14.6	14.3	38.0	36.8	44.0
South Asian	16.1	16.6	16.4	42.4	46.3	49.4
Southeast Asian	17.7	19.1	18.5	45.1	54.8	55.2
West Asian	31.5	33.4	32.4	52.6	60.1	48.7
Total Racialized	19.4	20.1	19.8	46.8	50.8	28.3
Non-racialized	5.9	6.9	6.4	25.8	26.5	

Source: Statistics Canada - 2006 Census. Catalogue Number 97-564-XCB2006009.

modifiable economic and political conditions that lead to poor health outcomes and systemic health disparities. The World Health Organization (WHO) Commission on the Social Determinants of Health states

Employment and working conditions have powerful effects on health and health equity. When these are good they can provide financial security, social status, personal development, social relations and self-esteem and protection from physical and psychological hazards — each important for health. In addition to the direct health consequences of tackling work-related inequities the health equity impact will be even greater due to work’s potential role in reducing gender, ethnic, racial and other social inequities.⁸

Work affects our health through a number of different pathways. These include the nature of work we do — whether it is full-time, part-time or contract — the income we draw, the physical or psychological strain, and the conditions of work.

A recent report from Statistics Canada provides a stark Canadian example of the impact of income and income inequality on health outcomes. It showed a clear socio-economic gradient emerged for life expectancy at age 25 for both men and women, based on data from 1991 to 2001. The difference in life expectancy between the poorest 10% and the richest 10% of Canadians was 7.4 years for men and 4.5 years

for women.⁹ While these differences are striking, an equally important finding is that life expectancy increases with each and every decile. The more you earn, the longer your life expectancy in Canada.

When the study considered health-related quality of life, it found the gap got worse. The richest 10% of men enjoyed 14.1 more years of healthy living than the poorest 10% of men. The richest 10% of women enjoyed 9.5 more years of healthy living than the poorest 10% of women. Among those in the middle of the income scale, the upper middle enjoyed an extra 4.7 years of health-adjusted life expectancy for men and 2.7 years for women.¹⁰

Unemployment, precarious work, and job strain have a negative impact on health.¹¹ In the Canadian context, a growing number of studies exploring the link between unemployment, underemployment, precariousness, and poor health establish an increase in health risks among poor Canadians.¹² Given the large share of racialized workers who are immigrants, the interaction between immigration status, occupation, income, low income and health is worth noting here as well.

According to a recent systemic review, the majority of studies showed that immigrant workers are at high risk for occupational injuries, diseases and death.¹³ While these studies did not deal directly with the social distinction related to race, they provide an indication of the health impacts of the outcomes of labour market inequality for racialized Canadians. This is an area that requires future research to deepen our understanding of the problem of racialized poverty, barriers to good jobs in Canada and their impact on the health of racialized Canadians.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

The makeup of Canadian society has changed rapidly in recent years. The past two long form Census surveys indicate a significant and rapid increase in the number of racialized Canadians. Census data also indicates ongoing discrimination in the workforce maintains barriers to good paying jobs and fuels a significant income gap between racialized and non-racialized Canadians.

As this study shows, racialized Canadians continue to face differential labour market experiences, which include higher levels of unemployment and lower employment earnings. The report suggests that racialized groups face a labour market in which racially defined outcomes persist and considers discrimination in employment as a contributing factor to these racial disparities in labour market outcomes.

The changing nature of the labour market is another factor responsible for the unequal outcomes. Precarious employment is on the rise — contract, temporary work arrangements with low wages, limited job security, and no benefits. Racialized groups are disproportionately represented in sectors of the economy where these forms of work are a major feature. This may be because of their vulnerability to employment discrimination and the barriers to access to professions and trades, particularly for those who are immigrants. The material implications are that racialized groups ex-

perience different socio-economic status, which has an impact on their well-being. These experiences are increasingly crystallized in the vulnerability to low income and what we have come to know as the racialization of poverty.

The unequal patterns of labour market outcomes and the vulnerabilities to racial discrimination that racialized group members and recent immigrants suffer do not only lead to disproportionately higher levels of low income. They structure a racialized experience of poverty that creates social alienation, powerlessness, marginalization, voicelessness, vulnerability, and insecurity both in the workplace and in the community. This combination of factors results in higher health risks for the racialized population.

These material conditions have the effect of both disadvantaging the racialized population but also undermining the legitimacy of the promise of multiculturalism as a regime of diversity management that can ensure equal access to opportunities for all Canadians.

Notes

1 The term racialized is used to acknowledge “race” as a social construct and a way of describing a group of people. Racialization is the process through which groups come to be designated as different and on that basis subjected to differential and unequal treatment. In the present context, racialized groups include those who may experience differential treatment on the basis of race, ethnicity, language, economics, religion (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2008). This paper uses data from the 2006 Census on visible minority status. Visible Minority status is self-reported and refers to the visible minority group to which the respondent belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as ‘persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. Census respondents were asked” Is this person...white, Chinese, South Asian, Black, Filipino, Latin American, Southeast Asian, Arab, West Asian, Japanese, Korean, Other (specify).

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