

# Racism and Systemic Racial Discrimination



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## Since the 1800s ...

Chinese Canadians faced racism and legislated discrimination in the forms of head tax, restrictive immigration laws, segregation, the denial of the right to vote and other basic human rights. Things slowly started to change after the participation of Chinese Canadians in the World War II.

Visible minorities are defined by the Employment Equity Act as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour".

## Impacts ...



Over the decades, subsequent human rights legislation has eliminated many discriminatory practices in Canada, but it is important to keep in mind that the legacy of discrimination still has deep-rooted impacts on the Canadian society and affects the lives of many visible minorities.



## Human Rights Code ...

Ontario was the first province in Canada that enacted the Human Rights Code in 1962 to provide all residents equal rights and opportunities, and freedom from discrimination in areas of employment, education, housing, facilities and services, contracts, and membership in unions, trade or vocational associations.



## Race ...

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) defines race as: a socially constructed ideology.

Society forms perceptions about certain races based on geographic, historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors, as well as physical traits.

The socially constructed ideas of race leads to racialization, racism, and racial discrimination.

For example, in Canadian history, Chinese, as a race, were considered inferior to the Caucasians and were unable to be assimilated into Canadian society.



## Racism ...

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) defines racism as: A belief that one group is superior to others. It can be open remarks, such as racial jokes or hate crimes, or deeply rooted attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. Racism is associated with the dominant group's power and privilege. It can be covert and so deeply integrated into social systems that people are not aware they have these beliefs.



## Racial Discrimination ...

The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) refers to racial discrimination as any action, intentional or not, that expresses racism illegally. Racial discrimination actions single out people based on their race, impose burdens on them, limit or deny their access to services or benefits available to other members of society. Racial harassment, as a form of discrimination, includes inappropriate comments, jokes, name-calling, display of pictures or behaviour that insults or offends people because of their race.

Some examples of subtle racial discrimination include: 1) being assigned to less desirable jobs; 2) being denied mentoring and training; 3) being given different job standards than other workers; 4) being denied an apartment because of race; and 5) facing unfair scrutiny from police or security staff.

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## Experiences of Discrimination

According to the Vancouver Sun, an Insights West poll of 658 ethnic Chinese and South Asian British Columbians in 2014 found more than half participants said that they had experienced a “small amount” of discrimination in B.C., and 19 per cent said discrimination had been “moderate” and six per cent said it had been “significant.”



## Systematic Racial Discrimination

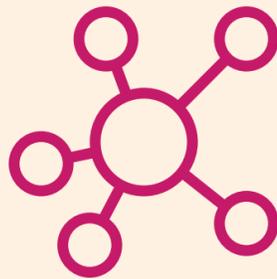
This refers to discriminating practices that happen on an institutional or systemic level. Systemic racial discrimination can be embedded in the policies or patterns of behaviour of an institution or organization which are considered as “normal practices” but nevertheless put visible minorities at a disadvantageous position. Examples of systemic racial discrimination can be stereotypes of visible minority students and streaming them towards technical programs rather than academic ones, or making decisions on leadership roles based on the cultural and organizational factors that favor Caucasian employees.



## Report on Systemic Racism ...

The most recent government report on systemic racism was released in February 2018. The report is the result of a study conducted by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage in 2017. The data included 14 meetings, 34 briefs, and testimony from 77 witnesses from national organizations, groups representing various racial and religious communities from across the country, government officials, academics and experts. The report points out that systemic discrimination has negative impacts on visible minorities in various ways such as poverty, employment, and education. Witnesses in the study indicated that more racialized families live in poverty than non-racialized families and that racialized persons are more likely to be unemployed, employed in precarious work, or have difficulty being hired. In terms of education, there is lack of adequate educational programming and opportunities for racialized youth, especially content that recognizes the contributions of racialized communities.

The report urged the Canadian government to take a “whole-of-Canada” approach to reducing or eliminating systemic racism and religious discrimination in Canada.



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