

Communities Within: Diversity and Exclusion in Ottawa

Les communautés au sein de notre ville : la diversité et l'exclusion à Ottawa

 An initiative of the Social Planning Council of Ottawa
Un projet du Conseil de planification sociale d'Ottawa



The Racialization of Economic Exclusion and Poverty

From the Social Planning Council of Ottawa publication: “Mixed Blessings and Missed Opportunities: The Intercase Study on Inclusion and Exclusion of Ottawa’s Visible and Ethnic Minority Residents”, 2008

“The common assumption is that groups like the Somalis are not perhaps working hard enough or trying hard enough to integrate, but of course this is not true. The Somalis, like many other Black communities have struggled and fought hard to secure their place in Canadian society, but systemic barriers that are so entrenched in Canadian institutions make it impossible for communities such as the Somali to fully participate in the economy and political sectors of the mainstream Canadian society.”

Study Participant

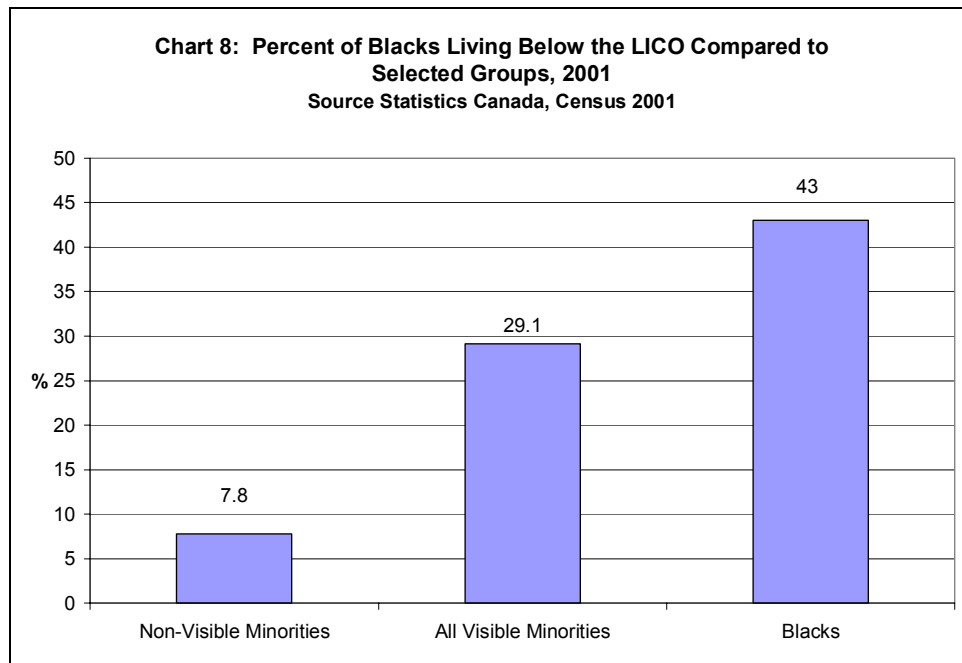
A clear theme which emerges from this report is the racialization of economic exclusion in Ottawa, particularly poverty. We have seen above that both the processes and outcomes of exclusion result in polarization of economic benefits along colour lines.

Visible minority citizens represent almost one half of Ottawa’s poor citizens, which is grossly disproportionate to their numbers in the general population. Furthermore, as we have seen in this study, the nature and degree of economic exclusion varies even between visible minority groups.

Of our case study communities, the Somali community faces the most serious economic exclusion. The Somali community is the largest community with Ottawa’s Black community. In a related report prepared as part of this project, it is clear that Ottawa’s Black community is most seriously affected by the racialization of economic exclusion. (See Mulenga, 2007).

- Members of the Black community in Ottawa are five times more likely to be poor than the non visible minority population (See chart below).
- 60% of all Black community members who work earn less than \$20,000 per year compared to 55% of all visible minorities and only 37% of non visible minorities.
- Only 10% of the Black community in Ottawa earn \$50,000 or more compared to 17% of all visible minorities and 28% of non visible minorities.

The finding of this research is consistent with national literature which has clarified that Blacks are most significantly affected by the racialization of poverty. (Teelucksingh, C. and Galabuzi, G., 2005)



For Ottawa, this is an extremely concerning trend and one which requires direct and immediate attention. The Black community is a growing community. As of 2001, Ottawa was home to the fourth largest Black community in Canada. As well, as of 2001, it was the largest visible minority group in Ottawa. The exacerbation of economic exclusion along race lines is an extremely divisive dynamic, and one which will not be resolved without an anti-racist approach. There is a pressing need to ensure that a critical race analysis is used when developing strategies to address economic exclusion in Ottawa.

