

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



Housing and Neighbourhood Exclusion of Ottawa's Visible and Ethnic Minority Communities

A project funded by Canadian Heritage, Immigration and Aboriginal Unit, City of Ottawa
and United Way Ottawa with the Collaboration of Carleton University



Overview of the Presentation

1. Housing – a quick snapshot of issues
2. Geographic distribution of the various communities – a brief summary of the implications
3. Main focus and central to the question of exclusion:

Are visible minority groups more likely to live in poor neighbourhoods than non-visible minority groups?

Housing

Affordability:

- Access to affordable housing a significant issue in light of lower median incomes and higher rates of poverty

Quality:

- Disrepair a concern in public housing and in some older residences in Chinatown

Suitability:

- Overcrowding an issue for many – related to some larger families including extended family structures. Ability to afford suitable housing is part of the issue. Shortage of housing for larger families. Need a more diverse housing stock.

Access:

- Some incidences of discrimination in rental practices.
- Also credit check, rental history a barrier for visible minority residents who are new immigrants.

Housing for Distinct Needs

Social Housing

- With higher rates of poverty within the communities, research participants very conscious of a trade off with respect to housing: addresses affordability but results in ghettoization within a poor quality neighbourhoods
- Results in some communities being over-represented among social housing tenants in relation to their percentage of the population (e.g. Somalis)
- Consequence is that some communities disproportionately affected by social housing policies – e.g. whole family evicted if one person charged with a crime, administrative requirements, etc.

Housing for Seniors

- Critical shortage of culturally appropriate housing and service supports for vulnerable seniors, including long term care and supports to aging in place
- Significant concern re isolated seniors – living on their own, or isolated during the day in the home of their adult working children in neighbourhoods without appropriate services / peer network

Home Ownership

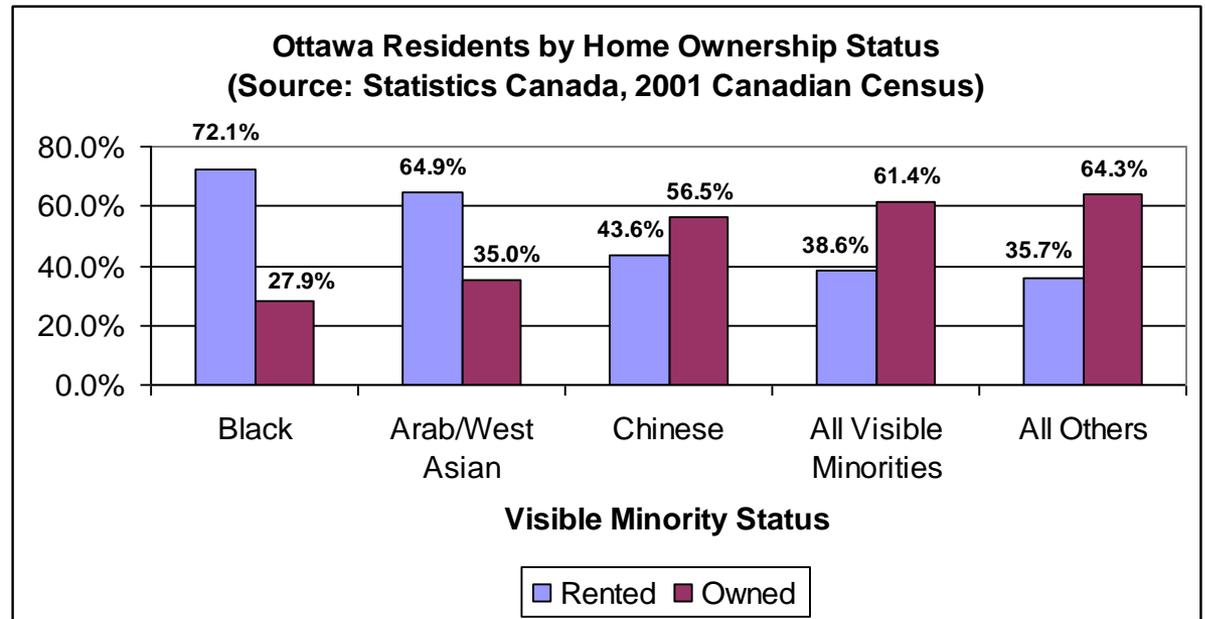
- Seen as an important asset building strategy
- Slightly lower level of home ownership among visible minority residents (61.4%) compared to all others (64.3%)
- Some sub-groups within the visible minority category have significantly lower home ownership rates (see Chart)

Barriers:

- Cost of mortgage
- Interest (in commercial mortgages) a problem for some re. religion

Need

- Affordable ownership strategies
- Alternate financial instruments to commercial mortgages



Why a Neighbourhood Level Focus?

- Exclusion faced by individuals and families can be compounded by living in neighbourhoods which themselves are disadvantaged within the City (SPC, 2006 / 2007)
- Neighbourhood impacts are more significant for low income residents, families with young children, seniors and adolescents (Séguin, 2002; 9). All are populations of concern within this research
- The neighbourhood is often a place of civic engagement – in the local school or community group
- All neighbourhoods have strengths and vulnerabilities. Low income neighbourhoods may be cohesive in many ways, resilient and have many assets including good social capital (can be a place of inclusion)
- Currently a public policy interest in neighbourhood level strategies
- Exclusion within particular neighbourhoods can result in lack of cohesion within a city which can negatively affect safety and the economy. (Infrastructure Canada, 2006; 54)

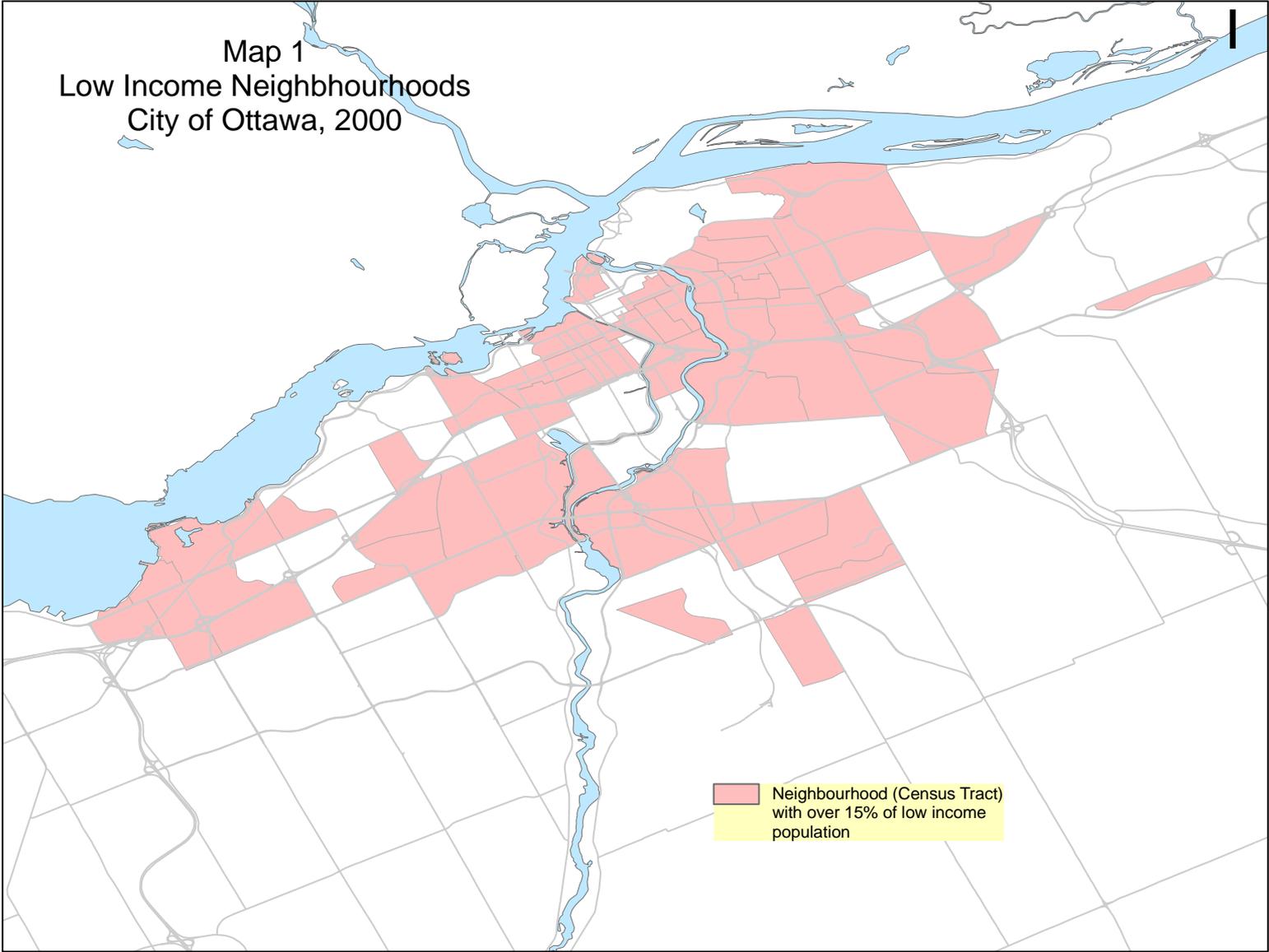
Distribution of Case Study Communities

- Ottawa does not have a strong pattern of significant geographically defined neighbourhoods where people of a common background live in high concentrations (sometimes called “ethnic enclaves or clusters”)
- Some neighbourhoods are viewed as such enclaves, but are actually quite diverse (Chinatown as an example)
- Members of the case study communities, and visible minority residents are spread throughout the City
- This is a strength of our City
- However, the lack of concentrations presents challenges with respect to
 - Determining best location for culturally specific services
 - Achieving inclusion in mainstream services, given the diversity in each neighbourhood (one size does not fit all)
 - Community members connecting with each other – highlights importance of cultural and recreational activities to facilitate community networking
 - Degrees of isolation for members of distinct communities who do not find peers in their neighbourhood

A Dimension of the Geography of Exclusion in Ottawa

- Defining “poor neighbourhoods”
- Poor neighbourhoods can be defined as Census Tracts (CTs) with above city averages of low income population
- There are 59 poor neighbourhoods (CTs) in Ottawa, representing 34% of all CTs – see Map 1
- These neighbourhoods show various magnitude of poverty (medium, high and very high) – see Map 2
- 70% (78,500) of all low income persons live in the poor neighbourhoods

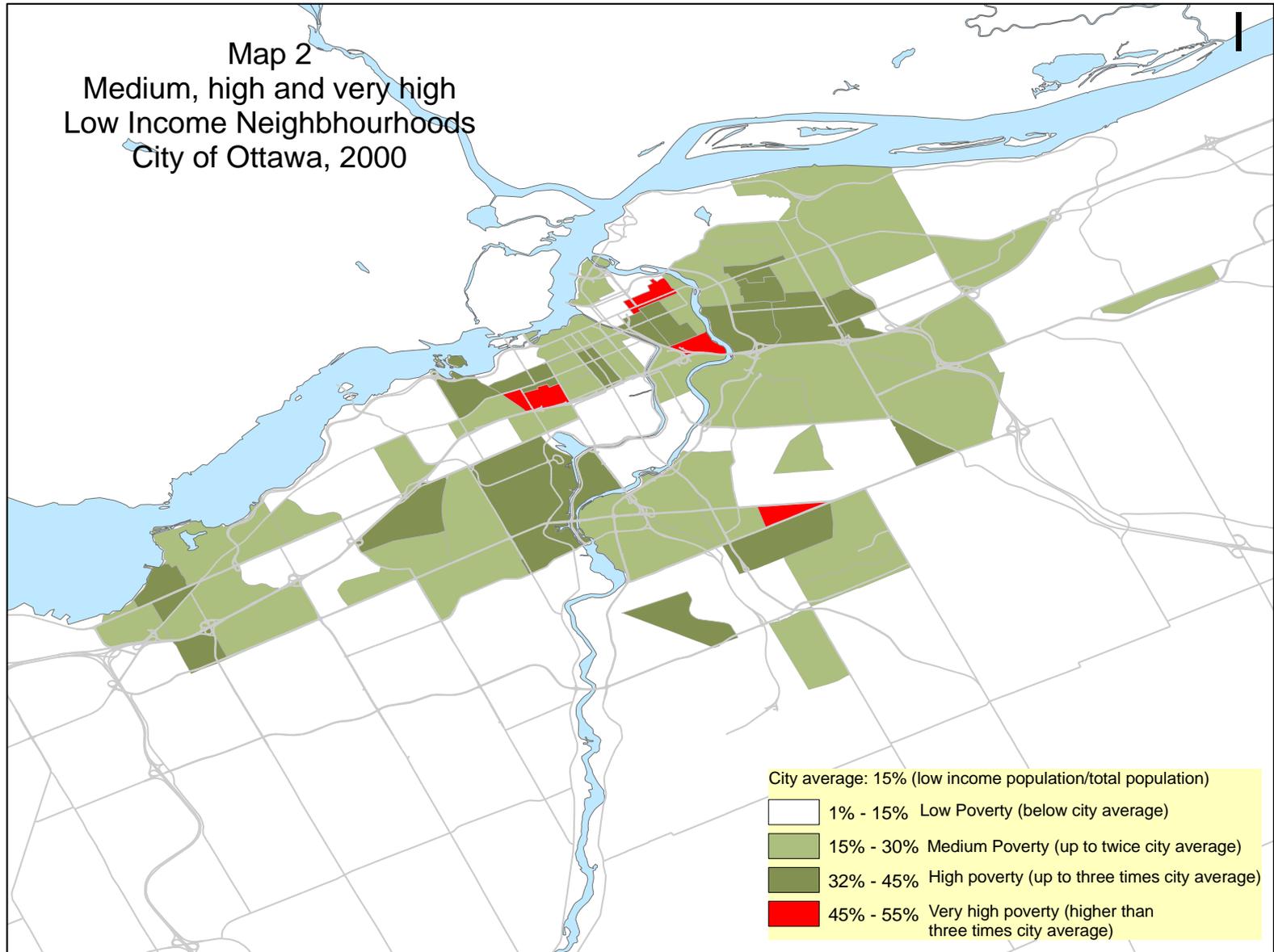
Map 1
Low Income Neighbourhoods
City of Ottawa, 2000



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census, DMTI Spatial

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Map 2
Medium, high and very high
Low Income Neighbourhoods
City of Ottawa, 2000



Visible Minority Groups

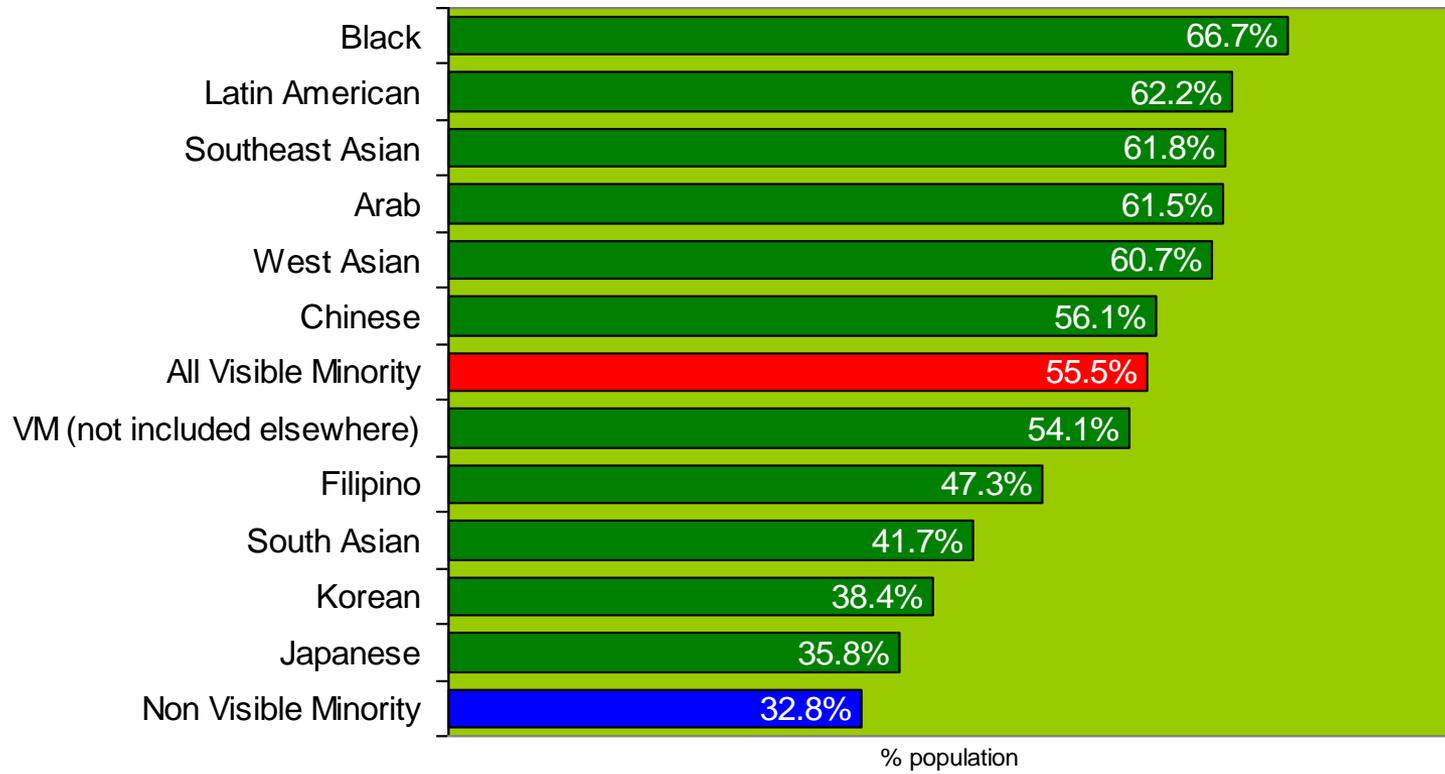
- 18% (136,000) of the population belong to visible minority groups
- The major visible minority groups are:
 - Black (which included Somalis)
 - Chinese
 - South Asians
 - Arab (which includes Lebanese)
- 30% of all visible minority groups are low income versus 11% of all others

Visible minority group members in poor neighbourhoods

- Over half (55.5%) of all visible minority group members live in poor neighbourhoods – see Table 1
- Less than one-third (32.8%) of all others (non-visible minority group members) live in poor neighbourhoods
- Living in these neighbourhoods are:
 - 66.7% of the Black group
 - 62.2% of the Latin American group
 - 61.8% of the Southeast Asian group
 - 61.5% of the Arab group
 - 60.7% of the West Asian group
 - 56.1% of the Chinese group

Table 1

Proportion of Visible Minority Groups living in poor neighbourhoods, Ottawa, 2000

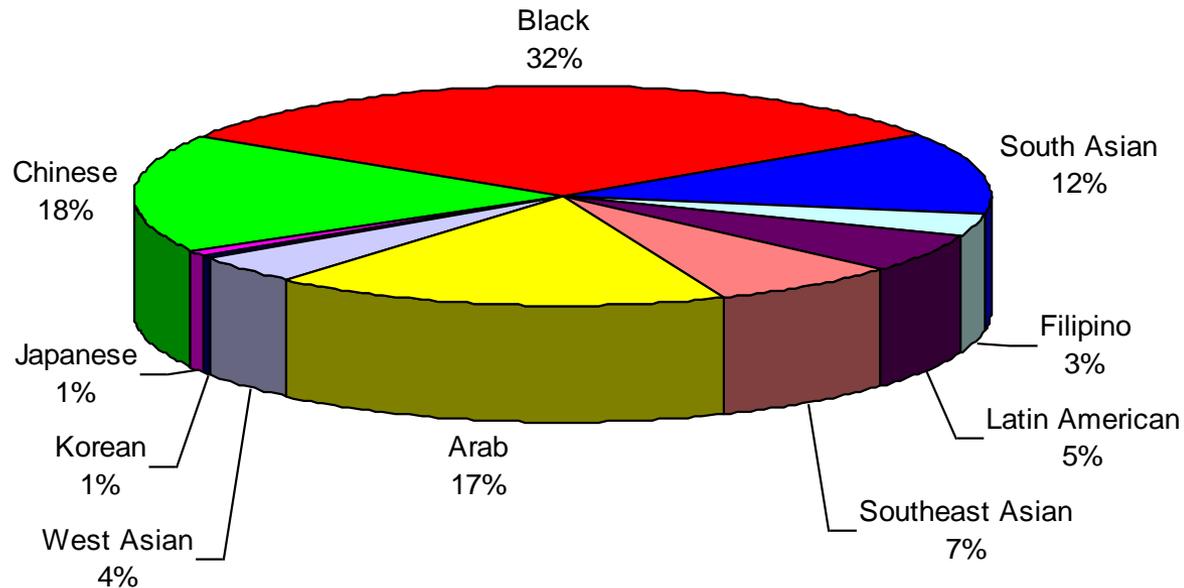


Composition of Visible Minority populations living in poor neighbourhoods

- As shown in Chart 1, about 80% of the visible minority population living in poor neighbourhoods are represented by four groups
 - Black (32%)
 - Chinese (18%)
 - Arab (17%)
 - South Asian (12%)

Chart 1

Percent distribution of VM population living in poor neighbourhoods



Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census

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Geographic Dimension to the Exclusion of Visible Minority Residents?

Yes, visible minority groups are more likely to live in poor neighbourhoods than the non visible minority population.

56% of visible minority group members versus 33% of all others (Non-visible minority group members)

The intersection of the racialization of poverty and the geography of exclusion create an extremely divisive tendency in Ottawa and a critical issue in the social and economic exclusion of visible minority residents.

Addressing the Geography of Exclusion

- Improve supports for individuals and communities to access resources and opportunities
- Build inclusive environments (systemic change)
- Support the capacity of community actors to be engaged in making change

Improved access to resources for individuals and communities

- Improve living conditions of people experiencing exclusion, particularly low income residents
- Develop a strategy to meet the housing and care needs of a diverse seniors population, including culturally appropriate long term care and supports for aging in place
- Improve core community infrastructure, particularly in poor neighbourhoods, including municipal services and voluntary sector services

Build inclusive environments (Systemic Change)

- Develop inclusive housing policies, inclusive neighbourhood planning policies and resources for affordable housing
- Examine public housing policies to determine where visible minority residents may be disproportionately impacted
- Ensure inclusive policy and practice within local school boards and individual schools – through collaborative and reciprocal strategies between community representatives and school structures
- City of Ottawa develop a framework to support geographically focused economic development
 - Support investment in neighbourhoods
 - Counter disinvestment (e.g. flight of basic commercial and retail services from low income neighbourhoods)
 - Work with ethnic and visible minority organizations supporting small business development

Support Community Actors to be Engaged in Making Change

- Funders and decision makers support community initiatives to establish meeting “spaces” which build social capital within ethnic and visible minority communities (e.g. community meeting spaces, cultural activities, community gardens, etc.)
- Enhance initiatives related to a community based safety and crime agenda which creates safe spaces and builds trust and understanding between racialized communities and the justice system
- Ensure that exclusion is explicitly considered in neighbourhood level planning processes, through the implementation of best practices

Bibliography

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- Séguin, Anne-Marie and Divay, Gérard (2002), Urban Poverty: Fostering Sustainable and Supportive Communities Discussion Paper F/27 Family Network. Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks.
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