

# Poverty linked to skin colour

## Visible minority immigrants make less, study says

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Skin colour does matter when it comes to job opportunities and wages in Canada, new studies show.

Visible minority immigrants have a higher unemployment rate, a lower average income and are more likely to live in poverty than their white counterparts, according to Canadian census data from 1991 and 1996.

"After five years of economic recovery, we are still looking at a higher representation of visible minorities below the poverty line," said University of Toronto sociologist Edward Harvey, author of an ongoing study of socio-economic differences by ethno-cultural groups and period of immigration.

"The reality is it is a selective economic recovery."

The paper, co-authored by Kathleen Reil of U of T, was one of three studies on immigrant wages and income structures presented at the fourth Metropolis Conference, which began in Toronto yesterday.

The three-day conference was organized by the Joint Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Settlement, a partnership of academics, community groups and governmental organizations in Canada.

It aims to keep track of the country's immigration and settlement trends and patterns, as well as seeking solutions to identifiable problems.

In Canada in 1996, the percentage of visible minority immigrants living in poverty doubled that of white newcomers and, on average, they made almost \$8,000 less.

The gaps between the two groups are even more drastic in Toronto, said Harvey.

Despite a stronger economy, the unemployment rate of coloured people increased from 13.1 per cent in 1991 to 13.4 per cent in 1996. During the same period, the unemployment rate for white immigrants dropped from 11.7 per cent to 7.6 per cent.

White immigrants, on average, made almost \$9,000 more than non-whites in Toronto in 1996 and their 18.3 per cent poverty rate was still far below the visible minority rate of 32.5 per cent.

"In every measure, visible mi-

by results from similar research by scholars at the University of Manitoba.

In a paper titled *Low-income Immigrants in Canadian Cities*, based on the latest census data, sociologists Shiva Halli and Abdi Kazemipur found education levels and previous work experience didn't really help immigrants' employment prospects.

Among different ethnic communities, being black — followed by Chinese and South Asians — increased the odds of poverty.

"Those most recent immigrants who are most visible are more likely to be subjected to discrimination in the job market," said Kazemipur.

Economist Derek Hum, co-author of *Wages of Colour* with Wayne Simpson, noted that visible minorities are not a homogeneous group and "hue and colour are bound up with immigration status."

With the exception of black men, Hum found no significant wage disadvantage for visible minorities who are native-born.

"We must recognize the issues of blacks in Canada ... focus more on immigration assimilation rather than simply on traditional employment equity (legislation)," he concluded.

## Visible minority im

Visible minority immigrants have higher rates of incomes and a greater percentage of them live b

In Toronto (all figures average)	Visible minorities	
	1991	1996
Unemployment rate	13.1%	13.4%
Employment income*	\$23,680	\$24,606
Per cent living below poverty line	20.9%	32.5%

In Canada (all figures average)	Visible minorities	
	1991	1996
Unemployment rate	14.4%	13.7%
Employment income*	\$21,830	\$23,298
Per cent living below poverty line	25.1%	34.3%

\*Income from employment only; does not include social assistance

SOURCE: Statistics Canada

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