

Persons in a Visible Minority Group

“The value that employees who are members of a visible minority group bring to the work is much more than actual visibility. It is much more than their skin colour, or language or physical abilities. Their presence signifies change and it is only when old ideas, processes and assumptions are challenged that we discover their true worth. The only way to reach truth is in constructive conflict between competing ideas and opinions. The real value of a diverse group is that it brings together a range of approaches, skills and ideas.”

Sammy Watson, Federal National Council for Visible Minority Conference, October 1999

According to the EEA, visible minorities are persons (other than an Aboriginal person) who are Non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. They include groups such as Blacks, non-white Latin Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, South Asians, non-white West Asians, North Africans or Arabs, Southeast Asians and persons of mixed origins.

Statistical Overview

According to the 1996 Census, Canada is home to 3.2 million persons who are members of visible minority groups, representing 11.2% of the total population of Canada. One in three persons who are members of visible minority groups was born in Canada.

Most immigrants are fluent in one of Canada’s official languages. In addition, 15.63% of the visible minorities living in this country have completed university compared to 10.69% in the Canadian population as a whole. However, the unemployment rate of visible minorities is higher than the national average, especially among certain groups and the immigrant population. Many studies attribute this to systemic barriers such as cultural bias in the selection process, non-recognition of foreign credentials and diverse experiences, and a greater need for networking, kinship and social ties in hiring and promotion which put under-represented groups, such as visible minorities, at a disadvantage.

Recruitment Issues*

There are many misconceptions about recruiting employees who are members of visible minority groups. Among them:

- qualified employees are difficult to find
- candidates perform poorly in job interviews

*Source: Feedback from PSC managers, internal interviews and conference reports.