

# What is racism?

## RACISM

A belief that race fundamentally determines “human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race”<sup>1</sup>

“A belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human races determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one’s own race is superior and has the right to rule others”<sup>2</sup>

1. Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *Racism*

2. Dictionary.com. (n.d.). *Racism*.

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# Race is a socially constructed category

- Created to classify people on the basis of “innate and immutable” (natural and unchanging) physical characteristics and biological differences, which are **untrue**<sup>3</sup>
- Rather than solely racial, these categories have been related to natural “**moral, intellectual, and other non-physical attributes**” and **deficiencies**, which are untrue beliefs<sup>4</sup>

Racial differences are instead more reflective of cultural and social understandings and “based on geographic, historical, political, economic, social and cultural factors, as well as physical traits”<sup>5</sup>

The use of racial categories has continued to maintain and establish large imbalances in the distribution of resources and power.<sup>6</sup>

3. York University, 2006

4. Ibid

5. Nicol & Osazuwa, 2022

6. Smedley & Smedley, 2005 as cited in National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCIH), 2013

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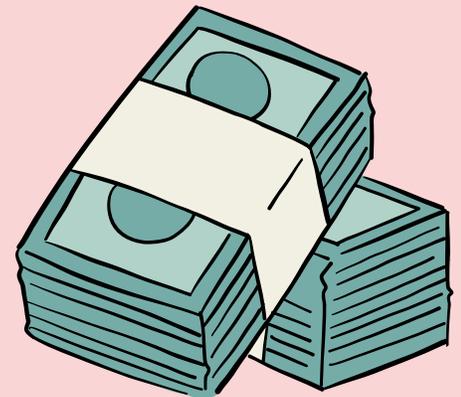
# Racialization

A social process where certain groups of people are defined on the basis of race

- The term '**racialized**' has become increasingly used to signify that race is a social construct that is imposed on people rather than objective

This term moves away from the idea that race is a biological or natural category

- The process of racialization labels a minority group, who have a supposed natural and unchangeable identity, based on race
- Through racialization a majority group is able to establish domination that results in economic, political, social, and cultural oppressions



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“The idea of race and its persistence as a social category is only given meaning in a social order structured by forms of inequality - economic, political, and cultural - that are organized, to a significant degree, by race”<sup>7</sup>

Racial categories take “on meaning and subjects groups of people to different and unequal treatment”<sup>8</sup>

The use of racial categories has become socially and culturally significant, which has only reinforced the use and prevalence of these categories

- Racial categories continue to be used in most applications and surveys. Racial data is also collected by the government, including in the Census
- The purpose of collecting racial data in Canada is to promote equal opportunities, proving that racial categories are structured by forms of inequality

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7. Omni, 2001, p. 254 as cited in NCCIH, 2013

8. Nicol & Osazuwa, 2022

# Visible Minorities

Classified as South Asian, Chinese, Black, Filipino, Arab, Latin American, Southeast Asian, West Asian, Korean, and Japanese peoples

- In Canada, the term visible minority has been used by the government and is a racially-coded category. While it does not refer to race per-se, it is meant to encompass several non-white peoples.

The government continues to collect data on Canada's visible minority population to promote equal opportunities for all. However, this category often lumps folks of different racial categories, with different histories, and who are differentially disadvantaged together in one catch-all solution for *all* visible minorities

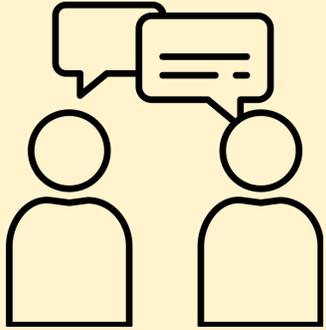


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# Interpersonal or Everyday Racism



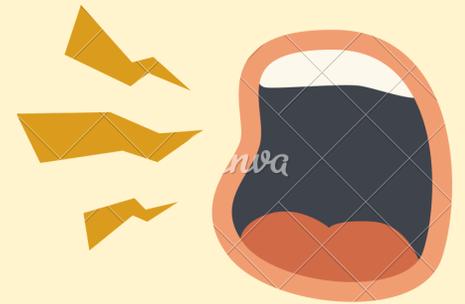
Interpersonal racism occurs in human interactions between individuals and impacts how folks are treated. This is the form of racism that we often pay more attention to

**Interpersonal racism** occurs when a person's attitudes towards another is informed by misinformation and stereotypes based on race

**Overt (open and undisguised)** acts of interpersonal racism include harassment, exclusion, discrimination, marginalization, assault, etc.

- These overt acts are often what we point to as instances of racism

However, interpersonal racism is **not** always so visible and can also include subtle, covert, and unintentional discrimination and microaggressions



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# Structural Racism

Defined as the “economic, social and political institutions and processes of society, and the moral and cultural systems that underpin them”<sup>9</sup>

Structural racism continues to produce inequities as power dynamics are continually (re)produced, causing further social, economic, and political inequities

Structural racism influences the ways in which our **schools, workplaces, carceral systems, healthcare systems, etc operate**



While imposed, racialization has material impacts that we can attribute to structural racism

- Racialized peoples receive different and unequal treatment in economic, political, and social life

9. McGibbon, Waldren, & Jackson, In press as cited in NCCIH, 2013

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Canada's past and present history of domination, through exercising control or influence, has impacted differently racialized communities in different ways. Canadian domination has historically been used to promote the idea that white people are superior to other racial groups

- In attempts to establish domination over **Indigenous peoples**, Canadian policies have attempted to push forced assimilation through residential schools, the Sixties Scoop, and bans on Indigenous cultural and spiritual practices
- For **Black folks**, enslavement was used by the Canadian government to establish white domination. The demolition of Africville, a predominately African community in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and destruction of Hogan's Alley, home to many of Vancouver's Black population, are evidence of continued racism and discrimination
  - Furthermore, domination continues in the carceral system as Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples are overrepresented in carceral systems and disproportionately subject to practices of police brutality and carding
- For **Chinese peoples**, legislation, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act, have been used to establish white dominance.

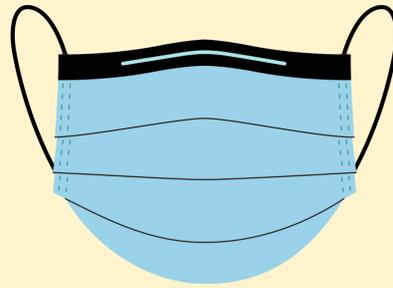
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# More examples of inequities:



Some of these inequities were evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic, where

- Frontline workers were often racialized and/or low-income folks
- Racialized and/or low-income folks often suffered worse health outcomes when contracting COVID-19



In healthcare, Black, Indigenous, and other racialized patients are often not given the same amount of care or respect as white patients, leading to worse health outcomes<sup>10</sup>

10. NCCIH, 2013

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# Canada and Multiculturalism

Yes we are a diverse society. However, diversity is not always valued at all levels of our society

- Colour-blind rhetoric, arguing that we are all one race (the HUMAN race) continue to uplift and invisibilize systemic racism
- We cannot pretend we're all one in the same because this continues to perpetuate inequities
  - Instead, we need equitable ways of addressing folks' differences including differences in race, sexuality, gender identity, ability, etc

## But, my children are Canadian

CCNCTO and partners have found in focus groups with Asian parents that many parents who migrated to Canada believe their children will not experience racism because they grew up Canadian and speak fluent English. However, this is not necessarily the case. Racism is prevalent and continues to manifest in various ways, including in schools!

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# Combating Racism



Discrimination, racism, violence, and hate hurt our communities

Racism is a systemic issue that requires long-term, committed action by individuals, institutions, and governments at all levels and in all sectors

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**What else can I do?:**



- Stay in touch with **CCNCTO** through WeChat or follow us on Instagram **@CCNCTO**
  - Check out the our most recent [2021 anti-Asian racism report](#) and our [Frontline Workers Pandemic report](#)
  - Fill in [this form](#) to join our volunteer team. You can support our various organizing, anti-racism, and equity work
- Talk to others in your social circles about racism
- Call out all levels of racism
- Share this information with others
- Engage with local community members and organizations to advocate for change



## Check out these Ontario-based community organizations involved in racial justice work on Instagram!

- **Butterfly: Asian and Migrant Sex Worker Support Network** [@butterflycsw](#) an organization that provides support to, and advocates for, the rights of Asian and migrant sex workers
- **Circles for Reconciliation** [@circlesforreconciliation](#) a non-profit organization working to establish trusting and meaningful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
- **The Council of Agencies Serving South Asians (CASSA)** [@cassaonline](#) an umbrella organization supporting and advocating for the needs of the Canadian South Asian community
- **The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM)** [@nccm\\_community](#) an organization that protects Canadian human rights and civil liberties, challenges discrimination and Islamophobia, builds mutual understanding, and advocates for the public concerns of Canadian Muslims

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READ MORE



- **Ontario Alliance of Black School Educators @onabse\_org** an organization that works to promote equity for African Canadian students, educators, and professionals at all levels in schools

- **Platform @platform\_ca** civic leadership for young Black, Indigenous, and racialized women & gender-diverse people

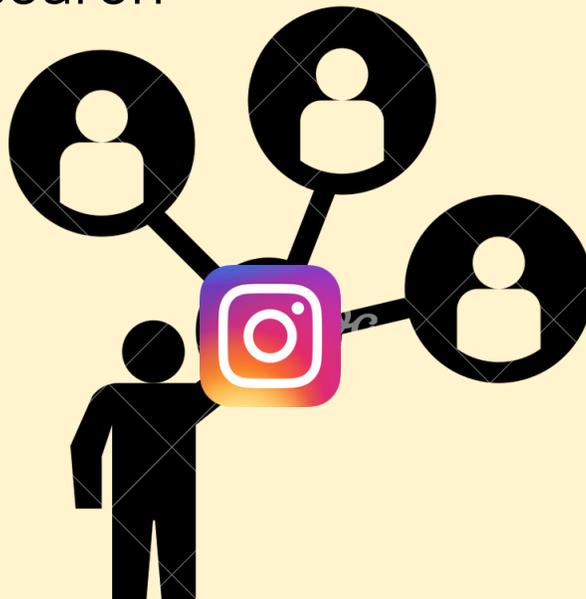
- **Tamil Canadian Centre for Civic Action (TCCCA) @tamilcivication** an organization working towards the success of all Tamil Canadians in the social, political, economic and cultural spheres of Canada

- **Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR) @uarrtoronto** non-profit organization working to address inequality with educational programs, advocacy & research

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