



The Social Planning Council of Peel

**VISIBLE MINORITIES AND EMPLOYMENT IN PEEL:
FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH
VISIBLE MINORITIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS**

SEPTEMBER 2000



A United Way
Funded Agency

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
I. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
A. Employment-Related Statistics on Visible Minorities in Peel Region	3
II. SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS	
A. Barriers Faced by Visible Minorities	4
1. Internal Barriers	5
2. External Barriers	7
B. Differences Observed Between Focus Groups with Visible Minorities and Service Providers.....	10
1. Similarities Between Visible Minorities and Service Providers	10
2. Differences Between Visible Minority Workers and Service Providers	10
3. Differences Between Employment Service Providers and Non-Employment Service Providers	11
C. A Summary Comparison of the Literature on Visible Minorities and Employment and the Findings from the Focus Group Discussions with Visible Minorities in Peel.	12
III. RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED BY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS	
A. Employment Readiness and Preparation	14
B. Vocational Training and Practical Experience	15
C. Improvement of Employment and Related Services	16
APPENDICES	
1. Focus Group Results for Specific Visible Minority Groups	17
2. Focus Group Discussion Guide	36
3. Profile of Participants in Focus Groups.....	38

FOREWORD

Few parts of Canada, and probably the world, have such a diversity of Visible Minorities as Peel Region. In 1996, Visible Minorities represented 11 percent of the total Canadian population; in Ontario, the comparable figure is 16 percent. However, in Peel, Visible Minorities comprised 31% of the total population in 1996. The comparable figure for Toronto is 37 percent.

This report is one of ten reports on the Visible Minority population in Peel Region, prepared by the Social Planning Council of Peel in 1999.

- ◆ *A Social Profile of the Visible Minority Population in Peel, 1996.*
- ◆ *A Social Profile of the South Asian Population in Peel, 1996.*
- ◆ *A Social Profile of the Black Population in Peel, 1996.*
- ◆ *A Social Profile of the Chinese Population in Peel, 1996.*
- ◆ *A Social Profile of the Filipino Population in Peel, 1996.*
- ◆ *A Social Profile of the Southeast Asian Population in Peel, 1996.*
- ◆ *A Social Profile of the Latin American Population in Peel, 1996.*
- ◆ *A Social Profile of the Arab/West Asian Population in Peel, 1996.*
- ◆ *Visible Minorities and Employment Issues in Peel: Findings from Focus Group Discussions with Visible Minorities and Service Providers.*
- ◆ *An Inventory of Agencies Services for Immigrants and Visible Minorities in Peel Region.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Social Planning Council of Peel wishes to thank the many Visible Minority persons who participated in the focus group discussions. The Council also extends its appreciation to the many service providers who participated in focus group discussions designed specifically to get the perspective of service providers on the employment needs of Visible Minorities in Peel.

The Social Planning Council of Peel also wishes to thank the following agencies in Peel who helped to recruit participants and provide facilities for the focus group discussions:

- Caribbean Association of Peel
- Cultural Interpreter Services of Peel
- Dixie-Bloor Neighbourhood Social Services
- Inter-Cultural Neighbourhood Social Services
- Malton Training and Education Centre
- Mississauga, Brampton and District Labour Action Council
- Multicultural Inter-Agency Group (MIAG)
- Peel, Halton, Dufferin Training Advisory Board: Visible/Racial Minority Reference Group
- Toronto Chinese Community Services Association (Mississauga Office)

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

DEFINITION OF “VISIBLE MINORITY” IN CANADA

The definition of “Visible Minority” used in this report is the one provided by the Federal government of Canada in its Employment Equity legislation. The following is a paraphrase of the official definition:

- A Visible Minority person is someone who is non-Caucasian or non-white and non-Aboriginal. Visible Minority groups in Canada are: Blacks, Chinese, South Asians, Southeast Asians, Arabs/West Asians, Filipinos, Latin Americans, Japanese, and Koreans.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to present information on the employment and training needs of Visible Minorities in Peel Region. As much as possible, the information is presented in the words of the focus group participants.

METHODOLOGY

The research method employed was that of the focus group discussion. A total of 12 focus group discussions were held in the Summer of 1999. Ten (10) of these focus groups were held with adults from six specific Visible Minority groups in Peel. Two (2) were held with service providers: one with employment/training service providers and one with non-employment/training service providers. Cultural Interpreters were employed to assist the focus group facilitator (since many of the participants were immigrants and some had limited proficiency in English). The only exception to this was the focus groups which were facilitated directly by people speaking Cantonese and Mandarin. Participants were provided with support for childcare and transportation services upon request; a small honorarium for individual participation was provided to each participant.

DESCRIPTION OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS	Types of Focus Groups		
	Adult	Youth	Total
Visible Minority Groups			
South Asians	1	1	2
Blacks	1	1	2
Chinese	1	1	2
Vietnamese	1	1	2
Latin-Americans	1	0	1
Mixed group of Visible Minority Professionals	1	0	1
Sub-Total	6	4	10
Types of Service Providers			
Employment/Training Service Providers	1	0	1
Non-Employment/Training Service Providers	1	0	1
Sub-Total	2	0	2
Total	8	4	12

The following topics were used to guide the focus group discussions:

- Barriers experienced by Visible Minorities in Peel with respect to employment and training
- Employment and training needs of Visible Minorities
- Recommendations for improving the employment situation of Visible Minorities

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

No focus groups were held with four (4) Visible Minority groups: Japanese, Koreans, Arabs/West Asians, and Filipinos. The reasons for this were:

- Census data on the Japanese and Koreans indicated that these groups, more than any other Visible Minority groups in Peel, were groups with a very low unemployment rate and a high employment income.
- With respect to the Arabs/West Asians, several attempts were made to recruit participants but with no success.
- In the case of the Filipino group, it was difficult to organize a focus group because of the absence of any formal Filipino organization in Peel and the relatively small Filipino clientele in the employment and social service agencies in Peel.

No attempt has been made to discuss or analyze the information obtained through the focus groups.

I. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

I. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION**A. EMPLOYMENT-RELATED STATISTICS ON VISIBLE MINORITIES IN PEEL REGION**

	Visible Minority Population	Non-Visible Minority Population
POPULATION SIZE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 265,095 persons ◆ 31% of the total Peel population <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 37% (96,690) are South Asians - 21% (55,835) are Blacks - 13% (34,870) are Chinese - 9% (23,235) are Filipinos - 5% (12,065) are Arab/West Asians - 4% (10,340) are Latin Americans - 4% (9,810) are Southeast Asians - 1% (3,130) are Korean - 1% (2,525) are Japanese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 581,160 persons ◆ 69% of the total Peel population
PLACE OF BIRTH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 29% (77,110) were born in Canada ◆ 70% (183,900) are immigrants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 73% (423,930) were born in Canada ◆ 27% (155,270) are immigrants
EDUCATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 8.3% (16,275) have less than grade nine ◆ 14% (27,355) have high school as highest education ◆ 2.3% (4,600) have a trades certificate ◆ 19% (37,870) have at least one University degree 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 7.9% (36,115) have less than grade nine ◆ 16% (73,975) have high school as highest education ◆ 3.7% (16,740) have a trades certificate ◆ 14% (62,975) have at least one University degree
LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 136,015 persons in labour force ◆ Labour Force Participation rate: 70% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 76% male - 64% female ◆ 12% unemployment rate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 10% male - 15% female - 23% youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 338,770 persons in labour force ◆ Labour Force Participation rate: 74% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 80% male - 68% female ◆ 6% unemployment rate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5% male - 7% female - 13% youth
MAJOR INDUSTRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 24% manufacturing ◆ 12% retail trade ◆ 8% health and social services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ 19% manufacturing ◆ 12% retail trade ◆ 9% business services
INCOME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$21,894 Median employment income* ◆ \$45,180 Median census family income ◆ 22% (42,005) living in poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ \$28,963 Median employment income* ◆ \$62,976 Median census family income ◆ 10% (47,380) living in poverty

* Figures are for persons age 15 and over.

II. SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

II. SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the focus group discussions was to identify barriers to employment and recommendations for removal of those barriers. On the whole, the discussions show that the Visible Minority population is a highly educated, experienced, and competent group of people. The barriers to employment identified by the Visible Minorities point to the difficulties they encounter as they attempt to find paid employment and engage in business entrepreneurship in Canada, and should not be used to undervalue their knowledge, skills, and initiative.

A. BARRIERS FACED BY VISIBLE MINORITIES

The information provided by focus group participants points to considerable problems for Visible Minorities regarding employment. These seem to be divided into three main areas:

1. Issues that are faced by everyone – particularly the problem that it is hard to get a job without the experience, and one cannot gain the experience without the job. This is an issue faced by everyone, but probably most challenging to people from other countries without Canadian work experience, and for those who find it difficult to find work due to discrimination.
2. Issues that apply particularly to Visible Minorities, but which are not necessarily a product of discrimination. Language issues are an example of this - while strong English skills may not be needed for some factory work, to hold a job in an office requires near-perfect skills in spoken and written English. Non-Visible Minority immigrants also face these issues.
3. Genuine discriminatory practices - Individuals who want to discriminate against Visible Minorities may use the previous two kinds of issues as an excuse - holding to the requirement of Canadian job experience, for example, or rejecting an applicant whose English is less than perfect. There are many cases of this non-blatant, but very real, discrimination. There are also cases of overt racism described in the focus group results.

These three sets of issues can be further categorized into two broad categories: internal barriers and external barriers. These latter two kinds of barriers are described below. (Internal barriers pertain more directly to the individual, while external barriers are more directly related to society as a whole.)

1. Internal Barriers (The Individual's barriers)

Internal barriers pertain directly to the Visible Minority person as a private individual. They are characteristics of the individual or situations over which he or she has some control. Relatedly, it is possible to address these barriers by providing the individual with information and training that he or she can use to reduce or eliminate the barriers.

a) Limited Ability to Speak English

(Many Visible Minorities in Peel are immigrants, and many of the latter are new immigrants without English as their mother tongue.)

- Limited facility in the English Language
- Strong foreign accent prevents many Visible Minorities from being understood and sometimes causes them to be stereotyped as poorly educated persons
- Limited knowledge of English for specific trades, professions, and other highly specialized fields of work

b) Having to Learn About Canadian Culture and Look for Employment at the same time

(Many Visible Minorities in Peel are immigrants, and many of the latter are new immigrants from countries quite different from Canada.)

- Limited knowledge of general, everyday Canadian culture
- The Visible Minority person experiences a high level of stress because of these two things - learning to settle in Canadian society and looking for a job - happening simultaneously.

c) Lack of Canadian Experience

This is the case for most Visible Minorities who are new to Canada. It does not apply to those who have been in Canada for many years and to the Canadian-born Visible Minorities. However, the stereotype of Visible Minorities is that they generally lack Canadian experience (on the assumption that they are new immigrants; this is yet another stereotype of Visible Minorities).

d) Lack of Information

about:

- Canadian Labour Law
- Unemployment Insurance System
- Human Rights Legislation
- Health and Safety Standards/Legislation for Industry
- Employment Services

- Employment Training Programs
- Community/Social Service Programs
- Dealing with Racism Inside and Outside the Workplace

e) Limited Skills

- Networking (for professional and social purposes)
- Computers (fear of; don't have enough money to have one at home; never used one before coming to Canada, etc.)*
- Use of the Internet*
- Resume preparation (Canadian style/appropriate for the Canadian labour market; understanding the importance of the resume ...)
- Interviewing skills

* Participants said that their limitations in the use of information technology were further compounded by the fact that Human Resources Development Canada was using computers and the Internet to provide "automated employment assistance services." Very often, the Visible Minority person, especially if that person is a new immigrant or refugee, cannot take advantage of accessing the virtual job banks and the opportunities therein. Furthermore, using the computers in the "Unemployment Office" requires a very good understanding of English. This is a major problem for immigrant Visible Minorities and especially Visible Minority women.

f) Transportation

- Difficult to travel around Peel without a car; cost of public transportation is high for unemployed people
- No public bus route to many of the industrial parks where jobs are, mostly low-paying jobs
- Lack of a driver's licence (mostly among Visible Minorities who are new immigrants)

g) Not Enough Money to Enroll in Some Training Programs

- The cost of some training programs, especially those in the high-technology fields is high.
- The policy of HRDC that recipients of EI should pay for a portion of their training fees is a major stumbling block for Visible Minorities.

h) Family Problems

- Child care
- Domestic Violence (mostly against women)
- Cultural pressures on family (especially on husband and wife relations, and between parents and children)
- Lack of family support (Many Visible Minorities do not have their extended families in Canada and have difficulty dealing with their personal and social problems by themselves, with no one close to turn to.)

i) High Level of Stress

This is the case for the individual as well for the family as a whole, especially when one or both parents are unemployed, and especially when the male is unemployed.

j) Low Self-Esteem

Not being able to find a job, being broke, feeling exploited and discriminated against, being highly-educated and under-employed, etc.; all of these things contribute to the Visible Minority person feeling despondent and losing faith in himself.

2. External Barriers (Social or Societal Barriers)

External barriers are characteristics of people, organizations, the society at large, etc. that prevent the individual from achieving his or her goals. They are things or events over which the individual has no immediate or direct control. External barriers are sometimes called systemic barriers. (An example of an external barrier is racism among the dominant group in a society. Another example is that of a public policy or regulation that discriminates against certain groups of people intentionally or unintentionally. For example: to be a member of X profession, one must be male, six feet tall, and weigh 200 pounds.)

a) Racial Discrimination in all Parts of the Labour Market/Employment System

This is compounded by sexism and ageism in the hiring process and on the job, and when the Visible Minority person is seeking employer-paid training, a promotion, etc.

- Lower salaries paid to Visible Minorities in comparison to non-Visible Minorities doing similar work

- Inequitable allocation of work duties by employers: Visible Minorities tend to be given harder and more difficult jobs, “the dirty jobs”
- Resumes of Visible Minorities “flagged” or “tagged” by white employees and employers
- Visible Minorities tend to be “passed over” for promotions more than White people
- Very little sensitivity on the part of White employers for pregnant Visible Minority women on the job
- Visible Minorities are often forced to work in unacceptable work environments and accept low wages because of their desperate financial situations
- Not being taken seriously by White employees and employers
- On-the-job harassment: verbal abuse, psychological abuse, physical abuse
- Not enough notification of lay-offs given to Visible Minorities; this makes it difficult for them to find a new job before being laid off.

b) Employers not Being Formally/Officially Accountable to the Government and the Community at Large for Providing Equal Opportunity in the Workplace

The removal of employment equity legislation by the Ontario government has seriously undermined the ability of non-white people to get equal access to employment and training opportunities. “No one is holding the employers accountable.” *(This point was emphasized mostly by service providers in agencies providing employment and training services.)*

c) Limited to No Recognition or Acceptance of Work Experience Outside Canada

(“Not enough Canadian experience”)

d) Difficulty Getting Accreditation for Trades Certificates and University Degrees Earned Outside Canada

(This barrier is linked to the well known fact that highly educated Visible Minorities who happen to be immigrants also are often unemployed, under-employed, and not able to find paid work in their area of professional/trade specialization.)

e) Not enough Language Training Programs Available

- Not enough English language training programs available
- Not enough training in English is being provided in pre-employment training programs
- Not enough training in English for people in the skilled trades and professions

- Not enough on the job-training in the use of English, especially English that's relevant to a particular job and workplace
- There should be "accent-reduction" training programs (hardly any available)

f) Insufficient Training Programs for Job Search and Job Preparation

Many of the participants felt that they could not easily find help for such things as resume preparation, how to be successful in a job interview, how to find out what their rights are in the workplace, etc.

g) Hardly any Training on how to Deal with Racism and Sexism in the Employment System, Especially in the Workplace

Very often, Visible Minorities do not know how to deal with racism in the workplace; they do not know what their legal rights are, where to turn to for help, etc.

h) Not Being Eligible for any Employment or Training Assistance Because of Ineligibility for Both Employment Insurance and Social Assistance or Welfare

i) Insufficient Number of Spaces in Childcare Centres, Including Low Numbers of Subsidized Childcare Spaces

Many participants said that they did not know where to go for information about childcare facilities and subsidies for childcare.

j) Exploitation of Many Visible Minorities by Some Immigration Consultants, Lawyers, and for-Profit Employment Agencies, Especially Those Providing Temporary Employment

k) Very Few Visible Minority Employment Counsellors and Trainers

Very often employment counsellors and trainers are not knowledgeable about the cultural backgrounds of Visible Minorities; they often assume that a Visible Minority person is an immigrant, an assumption that is problematic for Canadian-born Visible Minorities.

l) Very Few Employment Counsellors and Trainers Who Speak Non-English Languages Spoken by Many Visible Minorities

B. DIFFERENCES OBSERVED BETWEEN FOCUS GROUPS WITH VISIBLE MINORITIES AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Overall, there were many similarities in the information provided through focus group discussions with Visible Minorities and those with service providers. The service providers reinforced what the Visible Minorities said and vice versa. The differences observed were more differences of emphasis than differences of content. The following is a summary of the major similarities and differences observed between the two groups and between the different types of service providers.

1. Similarities Between Visible Minorities and Service Providers

Both groups emphasized the following issues:

- Racism in Canada's employment system/labour market
- The need for employment equity legislation
- Lack of recognition of foreign credentials and non-Canadian work experience
- The need for language training
- The need for childcare services and subsidies
- Problems with public transportation (some workplaces are not along public bus routes ...)
- Exploitation of Visible Minorities by some immigration consultants, lawyers, and for-profit employment agencies
- The importance of providing Visible Minorities with information about the employment system, human rights legislation, etc.
- Visible Minorities' not knowing how to network effectively in Canada

2. Differences Between Visible Minorities and Service Providers

The Visible Minorities tended to focus more on discrimination against them in the job search process and in the workplace. They emphasized the difficulty they experienced in finding help with regards to getting a job, training, information about their rights, etc.

The service providers tended to focus more on the lack of government legislation to deal with discrimination in the workplace and the lack of information on the part of Visible Minorities about such things as Canadian Labour Law, the Employment Insurance system, human rights legislation, how to network, etc. They also emphasized the importance of pre-employment training for Visible Minorities, especially pre-employment training that included language training and general information about Canadian society, the employment system, etc.

3. Differences Between Employment Service Providers and Non-Employment Service Providers

Employment service providers tended to emphasize how the withdrawal of employment equity legislation by the Province of Ontario was having a negative impact on Visible Minorities and women in the workplace. They also pointed out that many Visible Minorities do not know their rights in the workplace and in Canadian society as a whole. They acknowledged that there are not enough employment counsellors and trainers who are knowledgeable about the different cultures and languages of Visible Minorities.

Non-employment service providers (mainly social service/social workers) tended to emphasize the many cultural and social problems experienced by Visible Minorities and the need for pre-employment programs to deal with the emotional and mental stress caused by these problems. They also emphasized the need for Visible Minorities to know about effective ways of dealing with racism in the workplace.

Employment service providers said that government should provide language training for Visible Minorities and that service providers should be more responsible for making sure that their services are accessible to people who are not fluent in English. In contrast, the non-employment service workers emphasized that it was the Visible Minority person's responsibility to learn English as part of the preparation for getting a job. They also emphasized that government funding for English language training was declining.

C. A SUMMARY COMPARISON OF THE LITERATURE ON VISIBLE MINORITIES AND EMPLOYMENT AND THE FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS WITH VISIBLE MINORITIES IN PEEL

SUMMARY OF EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS FOUND IN LITERATURE REVIEW	FOCUS GROUPS							
	VISIBLE MINORITY GROUPS							SERVICE PROVIDERS
	General	Black	South Asian	Vietnamese	Chinese	Latin American	Filipino	
Negative images of Visible Minorities and cultural Stereotypes.	A	A Y		A	A	A		Non-Employment
Discrimination in hiring practices		A	A	A	A	A		Employment
Job advancement	A		A Y	A	A Y	A		
Prejudicial evaluation of educational qualifications	A	A	A Y	Y				A
Language barriers	A	Y	A Y	A Y	A	A		A
Cultural barriers			A		A			A
Inequitable wages of Visible Minorities for equal work	A		A Y	A	A	A		
Unfavorable labor market status of new immigrants in comparison to Canadian-born individuals	A		Y	A Y	Y	A		
Unrecognized positive contributions of Blacks and other Visible Minority groups								
Employer recruitment methodologies as well as evaluation of credentials used to discriminate against certain types of people	A	A	A Y	A Y	Y			
Under-representation of Visible Minorities in decision- making process and hiring process			A	Y				
Lack of access to information (on the part of Visible Minorities)	A	A Y		Y	A			A
Inadequate services and or programs to overcome discrimination as well as barriers in accessing employment or training	A	A		A		A		A
Dealing with unfair and prejudiced service providers			A Y	A Y				
Absence of a regulatory body to deal with discrimination and reinforce equity through penalization								
Minorities not having an outlet to effectively deal with discrimination, which leads to lowered self-esteem		A	A	A	A Y			
Need for employment policies to govern the workplace as well as to provide assessment tools to identify discrimination								A

A = Focus Groups with Adults

Y = Focus Groups with Youths

**III. RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED
BY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS**

III. RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDED BY FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Note:

The recommendations reported are, to a great extent, worded as closely as possible to what was actually said by the focus group participants. Little attempt has been made to reword the recommendations, even though this has had the effect of an uneven style in the reporting of the latter.

The recommendations do not exactly match the barriers identified by the focus group participants; hence the reader should take both the recommendations and the barriers to employment into consideration when addressing the employment needs of Visible Minorities in Peel.

Overall, the recommendations provided by the focus group participants indicate that improving access to good employment opportunities for Visible Minorities in Peel requires paying attention to issues of racism, language, culture, immigrant status, and length of time in Canada.

* * * * *

A. Employment Readiness and Preparation

- Increase availability of language training classes with a focus on topics and issues relevant to doing business in Canada and the Canadian workplace.
- Provide the supports necessary to ensure equal access to ESL by both men and women. Particular consideration should be given to location, time, and subsidies for child care and transportation.
- Employment training should be practical and relevant to labour market demands. Employment agencies, trainers and career counsellors should have access to up-to-date labour market information and analysis in order to identify program priorities and provide appropriate career counselling.
- More employment-related workshops should be developed to meet the specific needs of a diversity of job seekers i.e. professionals, skilled workers, labourers. Workshops should cover topics such as:
 - career planning
 - employment trends
 - resume preparation
 - interview skills
 - job search
 - computer training
 - networking and self-marketing
 - Human Rights and Employment Standards Legislation
 - research skills
 - Canadian business & work culture
 - balancing personal life and work
- Secondary and post-secondary institutions should provide effective career planning and job readiness training as an integrated part of the curriculum.
- Computer training which includes the basics, plus training on the Internet, and how to access job search resources.
- The Government should develop an assessment test for new immigrants which can provide information on strengths and weaknesses of the individual with respect to their employability.
- A nationally recognized accreditation process which does not only evaluate credentials academically but, where applicable, is also supported and recognized by professional associations in Canada and abroad.
- Community agencies or government should offer mentoring programs to promote opportunities to learn employment skills as well as a chance to network.
- Development of employment seekers support groups: these groups can be an outlet to practice conversational English; they can assist with general tutoring about the job search process, and they can be a mechanism for inviting different business and government representatives to update group members on employment resources.

B. Vocational Training and Practical Experience

- Government should fund programs that provide paid, on-the-job training in order to address the issue of Canadian experience for new immigrants.
- Minimum wage program incentives should be offered to employers as a way of encouraging them to employ skilled individuals who lack Canadian experience.
- Young people should be provided with the information and support necessary to involve themselves in volunteer opportunities, and to gain valuable skills and work experience
- Cultural sensitivity training for employment services program staff and employers participating in employment training programs.
- HRDC should provide funding for vocational training and apprenticeships for individuals who are not recipients of Employment Insurance or Social Assistance Benefits.
- Increase skills and trades training programs which are accessible and affordable for new immigrants.
- Increase opportunities for work placements, paid or volunteer opportunities in relevant work areas, and for apprenticeships in the trades, specifically tool and die, forklift operation, welding, and computers.
- Work placement experience should include the necessary support to ensure learner success i.e. ongoing mentoring and supportive counselling, child-minding, transportation subsidy, English upgrading.
- The creation of comprehensive self-employment and entrepreneurship programs for those who would like to start a small business. This training should concentrate on how to write a business plan, how to obtain a bank loan, and other important topics related to entrepreneurship.
- Increased access to computers and computer training. Class times and structures should be more flexible (including evenings and weekends.) Class sizes should be reduced to accommodate the learning needs of new Canadians and the challenges they face related to language and culture.
- Program evaluation for employment and training services to measure program effectiveness and accessibility to minority communities.

C. Improvement of Employment and Related Services

- There should be voluntary agencies that would advocate on behalf of Visible Minorities who face employment discrimination.
- Creation of legislation which would encourage equal access and reduce the discrimination presently being encountered by visible and racial minorities in the labour market.
- Human rights and pay equity legislation should be enforced with consequences for violators.
- Agencies and government should provide more forums (such as focus groups) where people are able to voice their opinion as to what programs and training could be improved in order to meet their needs.
- Government and employers should give more recognition to training offered by non-profit agencies. (Employers tend to respect certificates and diplomas from community colleges more than those provided by non-profits.)
- Federal government needs to hire minorities in government offices in order to serve the culturally diverse population.
- Service providers need to reflect the Visible Minority communities as well as speak the languages of the different immigrant groups in order for racial minority groups to be served adequately.
- Human Resources Development Canada should eliminate the number of temporary jobs posted in their job bank and advertise more permanent jobs
- Provide an employment related information hotline with multi-lingual services.
- Community agencies and programs need to be centralized so that people can easily access them.
- Because child care responsibilities affect women more so than men, the government needs to provide more subsidized child care services with shorter waiting lists to accommodate mothers who need to join the labour force.
- Family and personal counselling services need to forge better partnerships with agencies serving immigrant populations as a means of providing support in a variety of languages and ensuring access and referral.
- Conduct an evaluation of services to identify those communities which are under-served in Peel.

APPENDICES

1. Focus Group Results for Specific Visible Minority Groups
 - Overview and Summary
 - South Asians
 - Blacks
 - Chinese
 - Vietnamese
 - Latin Americans
2. Focus Group Discussion Guide
3. Profile of Participants in Focus Groups

FOCUS GROUP RESULTS FOR SPECIFIC VISIBLE MINORITY GROUPS

OVERVIEW

Focus groups are a good way to find out attitudes and what motivates people. They allow a researcher to “drill down” into a question to find out more, and for people in the groups to share experiences. The result is often a strong, compelling analysis, but it is difficult to put numbers and values to the data.

This information is based on focus groups held with several kinds of Visible Minorities in Peel, some groups of adults and some of youths.

Results indicate considerable problems for Visible Minorities regarding employment. These seem to be divided into three main areas:

1. Issues that are faced by everyone – such as the problem that it is hard to get a job without the experience, and you do not get the experience without the job. These are issues faced by everyone, but probably most challenging to people from other countries without Canadian work experience, and for those who find it difficult to find work due to discrimination.
2. Issues that apply particularly to Visible Minorities, but which are not necessarily a product of discrimination. Language issues are an example of this – while strong English skills may not be needed for some factory work, to hold a job in an office requires near-perfect skills in spoken and written English. Non-Visible Minority immigrants also face these issues.
3. Genuine discriminatory practices – Individuals who want to discriminate against Visible Minorities may use the previous two kinds of issues as an excuse – holding to the requirement of Canadian job experience, for example, or rejecting an applicant whose English is less than perfect. There are many cases of this non-blatant, but very real, discrimination. There are also cases of overt racism described in the focus group results.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Results for each Visible Minority are divided into categories, broadly summarized as follows:

Immigrant issues

- ◆ English skills – even if the English is fluent, the accent may be non-Canadian.
- ◆ Poor grasp of English means some people avoid going for job interviews, and this means they are stuck with employment agencies (irregular work, short assignments, low pay) or factory jobs where one just shows up ready to work (low pay, heavy manual labour).
- ◆ Foreign educational qualifications and work experience may not be accepted at par, or even close to par.
- ◆ Cultural differences: for example, South Asian women tend to look down in interviews with those they see as authority figures, as a sign of respect – and this is interpreted as lack of confidence.

Hiring

- ◆ Some people, especially South Asians, said that although they are able to arrange interviews on the phone, when they show up for the interview they never seem to get the job.
- ◆ People are hired on probation for several months and then dismissed when the probation period is over, sometimes without pay.

In the workplace

- ◆ Salaries for Visible Minorities are often lower than those paid to Whites for the same work.
- ◆ Visible Minorities are given the dirtiest, heaviest manual labour.

Advancement and promotion

- ◆ There is often room for Visible Minorities only in entry-level and lower-level positions – and rarely in managerial positions.

Job loss and layoffs

- ◆ They are frequently laid off with little or no notice.
- ◆ Visible Minorities, particularly Blacks, say they are often the last hired and the first fired.

Effectiveness of society's means of dealing with these issues

- ◆ They may receive information on programs that is erroneous – and they believe that some of these mistakes are deliberate. Several women said that they received incorrect information on maternity benefits.

Accessibility

- ◆ Most frequently mentioned were problems in getting to work. The transit system does not work well particularly for those on shift work and working off the bus routes. Many employers expect employees to drive; some cannot afford a car, or do not have a licence.

Suggestions

- ◆ More services available in their language.

Knowledge gaps

- ◆ Participants see particular need for knowledge about Canadian work cultures, how to dress appropriately, and resume writing.

Issues particular to women

- ◆ Pregnancy issues – being forced to do heavy labour, and being fired from the job
- ◆ Sexual harassment – and nothing is done to help.

Youth Issues

- ◆ School counsellors tend to steer even top students into general-level courses.
- ◆ Not enough support for career planning.

INFORMATION FROM FOCUS GROUPS WITH SPECIFIC VISIBLE MINORITY GROUPS

SOUTH ASIANS

What barriers come from being an immigrant?

Language and accent

- ◆ English may be good, but the accent is a problem.
- ◆ May have university degrees, but because of their accent cannot access high-level positions.
- ◆ Accent and language are not as much of an issue for youth born in this country.

Foreign qualifications

- ◆ Some participants came from their countries of origin highly educated and skilled, yet are streamlined into mediocre jobs and factory work.
- ◆ Accreditation of education acquired outside Canada is a major issue.
- ◆ *Participant's experience:* An immigrant electrical engineer, with six years of study in her home country, was tested by Manpower and assessed at 97% while others scored 60%. Still, she found herself placed on an assembly line. She feels that Canadians look at education from foreign countries as nothing.
- ◆ *Participant's experience:* A person with a Bachelor's degree in his country of origin was given secondary education equivalent accreditation. He felt as though his previous education did not mean much in Canada. Education and work experience from foreign countries is not counted, yet when you apply for lower skill jobs, you are told you are over-qualified.

Cultural differences

- ◆ *Participant's experience:* One woman's account describes how cultural differences caused misinterpretation when she went for job interviews: "In India a sign of respect is to look down. I found that this affected my ability to get job placements, because at the employer's end, looking down is seen as a lack of confidence. When I was 15 or 16 I had a hard time getting a job because I would not look directly or shake hands with the employer, an authority figure."

What are the issues regarding hiring?

- ◆ Friends and family are hired for posted positions, even when there are others more qualified. Some positions are filled before they are posted – or never posted at all.
- ◆ Job-seekers experience discrimination particularly when they dress in their cultural attire.
- ◆ One participant gets called to job interviews, but after employers see her, she does not get the job. She has been looking for work, off and on, for 10 years.

- ◆ Another participant, well-qualified and proficient in written and spoken English, gets calls for interviews for top-level positions, but after the interview never gets the job.
- ◆ In India, education is your ticket to employment, but in Canada, networking is what makes jobs known and more accessible to you.
- ◆ Even if the person knows someone is in position to hire them, the employer is discouraged from hiring too many minorities. There is a sense of covert racism in the professional world.

How are South Asians treated in the workplace?

- ◆ A Muslim woman told about being promoted, but being isolated in a back room so clients would not see her. She believes that this is because her religious beliefs require a head covering.

Are South Asians able to advance in their careers?

- ◆ Regarding superior corporate positions there is no place for minorities – only in entry-level and third-class positions.
- ◆ Many qualified youth feel that there is no room for advancement after working long hard hours trying to prove themselves to their employers. Lack of recognition inevitably leaves them feeling unmotivated and stressed.
- ◆ They experience salaries lower than those of non-minorities and don't get raises or promoted into management positions. Participants shared experiences in factories where pay equity and promotion were unheard of. Although they were performing the same jobs or more intense work, they found that the Whites were paid far more, and were much more likely to be promoted.
- ◆ *Participant's experiences:* A South Asian woman was working in a temporary position, and the employer required her to take a job lower in pay and status, in order to make her employment permanent. Replacements for her old position were all White, and relatives of employees.
- ◆ *Participant's experiences:* A participant said that when her husband found that an individual in a lower position was making more than he was, he took a lower-level job – only to find he was making even less pay than previously.

What are the issues regarding loss and layoffs?

- ◆ Many South Asians have found themselves laid off with little or no notice, leaving them unprepared and pressured to find new employment.

What happens when they speak out about unfair treatment?

- ◆ They believe that they may be labeled as troublemakers and may even become targets for the Police.

- ◆ Participants believe that it does not matter if they complain about inequitable treatment and employment barriers – “There always seems to be a logical reason why we did not get the job. There is not much that can be done if someone does not want to hire you unless the discrimination is blatant, and usually it is not.”

How effective are society's steps to deal with racism?

- ◆ Not enough policies and incentives are implemented to ensure that highly-paid positions are accessible to Visible Minorities.
- ◆ They note the lack of Visible Minorities employed within government, and this gives them the impression that they are not being represented in Parliament.

What are the accessibility issues?

- ◆ Public transit is limited, an issue particularly for new immigrants who do not have a drivers' license or cannot afford a vehicle.
- ◆ Lack of funding to address childcare issues when training or looking for work.

What suggestions do South Asians have for dealing with barriers?

- ◆ The belief is that working harder to get recognized will result in positive stereotypes.
- ◆ Networking with other minorities to learn about jobs, and sharing tips. Many South Asian youth look to their peers for employment information.
- ◆ South Asian youth identified cultural differences as a factor denying them access to employment opportunities. One participant suggested that there is a need for family and personal counselling to address issues of adjusting to or assimilating into Canadian culture. Learning about Canadian culture in general, as well as employer expectations (mainly how to conduct oneself during interviews or meetings with potential employers) may help eliminate some of the barriers they face.

Where are the knowledge gaps?

- ◆ How to meet the professional standards for business attire. Codes of conduct and the employer's expectations in the Canadian workplace.
- ◆ Youth participants say they need knowledge about the Canadian employment system, such as resumé writing.
- ◆ Producing resumés that meet employers' standards not widely used in India. “In our Indian culture, when you speak about yourself that way in a resumé, it makes one feel that you are proud and/or conceited.”

What are the issues particular to youth?

- ◆ School counsellors do not have the best intentions when advising them on career planning. Counsellors do not steer them into the right direction for their greatest possible employment success. Minority members are streamed into general level courses even if their grade average is “A”. Students with straight A’s are told to take general courses, and say “Counsellors are useless.” Counsellors often undermine the educational potential of minorities, leaving them unqualified for the next big transition in their lives, employment.
- ◆ No real support system or making critical career planning decisions. Guidance and career counsellors in secondary and post-secondary institutions are perceived as unhelpful and misinformed, having no expertise.
- ◆ “I was confused on which colleges or private institutes to go to and needed academic counselling. I needed to speak with someone who was knowledgeable or in the computer field. Called a particular college to make an appointment and found that they were not very helpful. Proceeded to call other colleges, but they said they were too busy to provide any individual counselling.”

BLACKS (ALSO REFERRED TO AS AFRICAN-CANADIANS)

What barriers come from being an immigrant?

Language and accent

- ◆ Having a non-Canadian accent is an issue

Foreign qualifications

- ◆ Difficult to receive accreditation for degrees and work experience outside of Canada.
- ◆ An African-Canadian woman immigrated with a university degree and found difficulty because her degree was not recognized as equivalent to Canadian standards. She re-educated herself, but even after going through what she thought was the appropriate channel, she was still unable to find work.
- ◆ A Somali-trained physician could not obtain accreditation, and now works as a health promoter.

Within the African-Canadian community

- ◆ Internalization of racist beliefs that Blacks are not equal to Whites, so they believe that they cannot and will not get ahead. Don't bother trying – defeatist attitude.
- ◆ Racism amongst Blacks, especially from those in positions of power who do not want to hire their own kind, to avoid appearing to show favouritism.
- ◆ A participant said he had considered starting his own distributing business, and that he planned to hire an all-White staff for customer contact positions. He acknowledged that he felt discrimination himself, but would make that sacrifice to make it as an entrepreneur.

Views of those outside the African-Canadian community

- ◆ Discrimination against Blacks, particularly males, causes them to not have equal access to the jobs they seek. The perception is that White employers only want immigrants to do jobs that Whites don't want to do.
- ◆ There is a stereotype that African-Canadian males are lazy and do not want to work. Participants agree that in any community there are those who do not want to work, but many African-Canadians are not allowed the opportunity to progress, and are trapped in low-paying jobs or underemployed in their field.

What are the issues regarding hiring?

- ◆ Pre-screening of resumés and applications of African-Canadian candidates.
- ◆ There is a perception that without the contacts, you don't get the job.
- ◆ "Visible differences stop minorities from getting jobs ... racism exists but nobody wants to talk about it." Other group members validated this statement.

- ◆ A group member saw a job application form that asked about race, age, sex, marital status and other variables that could be used as basis for discrimination. The group discussed whether these questions were there to create equal opportunity, to meet quotas (causing tokenism) or for further employment barriers. The consensus was that they were used to discriminate.
- ◆ Everyone in the group agreed that they shared similar experiences of discrimination. One participant said that when there were few Visible Minorities in her workplace she was treated like royalty, but when she moved to Toronto with its more diverse community, the atmosphere in the workplace changed and she was continuously singled out.
- ◆ Second and third generation African-Canadians who are educated and qualified for higher positions find that being Canadian-born seems to provide little relief from racism.

What are the issues regarding loss and layoffs?

- ◆ “Employment for African-Canadian males is difficult. They are the last to be hired and the first fired. The rules are the same for all Blacks.”

What happens when they speak out about unfair treatment?

- ◆ A participant confronted a White employer who refused to submit an application from an African-Canadian male. When the employee asked why, the employer said that the applicant would not have succeeded anyway. The woman who witnessed this concluded that the employer assumed that the applicant was of Jamaican descent, and this caused the rejection. She wrote a letter of complaint, but Management told her she should not have done that.
- ◆ A male participant said that discrimination occurs because “Most Visible Minorities are not educated about their rights.” This position was supported by others, who said, “You shouldn’t walk away. People need to be educated as to how to fight discrimination.”

How effective are society’s steps to deal with these issues?

- ◆ Blacks often receive inaccurate information about services.
- ◆ Insufficient programs for job search and job preparation.
- ◆ Long waiting lists for subsidized daycare.
- ◆ Government and organizations’ policies against discrimination are not enforceable.
- ◆ Blacks tend to ignore discrimination because of the long process to report it.
- ◆ If they try to access programs such as EI, they are given the “runaround.” EI is not available to people who quit their jobs, and participants believe that this does not take into account the harsh work

conditions faced by many Visible Minorities, particularly if they must deal with harassment through racist and sexist behaviours.

- ◆ Very little help comes from government. It should reinstate the repealed Employment Equity legislation to enforce equal treatment.

What are the accessibility issues?

- ◆ Lack of daycare: A woman said she had applied for daycare subsidy and had been on a waiting list for over a year. She was told by a social service agency she would be eligible when she registered for school. She did so, but found that all her OSAP money was being consumed by childcare costs. She was then told she had received wrong information about eligibility for the subsidy. Note: other women confirmed this experience with social service agencies.
- ◆ "A person is in a dilemma where she gets a subsidy if she stays at home, but when she does work, the subsidy is taken away. Getting employment is not the problem, keeping the job is a problem because of daycare cost... if Whites decide to stay home and raise children it's seen as OK, but if an African-Canadian person does this, they are seen as lazy, worthless."

What suggestions do African-Canadian people have for dealing with barriers?

- ◆ Educating self, by learning about own human rights.
- ◆ Continuously upgrading skills to become more competitive in the job marketplace.
- ◆ Seek out help through networking for job preparation; research available services.
- ◆ Finding faith and hope in religion and spirituality.
- ◆ Deal with racism by surrounding yourself with positive people.
- ◆ Governments should make the process for accreditation of foreign-earned qualifications, more accessible (note that some focus group members argue that accreditation is simply a ploy to discriminate against Visible Minorities).

Where are the knowledge gaps?

- ◆ Eligibility criteria for social programs, human rights.
- ◆ How to access community resources for help finding work

What are the issues particular to youth?

- ◆ Lack of work experience is a barrier, related to their age or because they are recent school graduates who have not yet gained practical work experience.

- ◆ Some feel that their age is equated with their ability.
- ◆ They feel that nobody is willing to give them the opportunity to gain the needed skills.
- ◆ Employers do not want to spend money on training, and employees do not have the money to get this on their own (the group discussed OSAP and other programs, but many do not want to go into debt).

CHINESE

What barriers come from being an immigrant?

Language and accent

- ◆ English is not good enough compared to Canadian-born. Language barriers are the core reason for problems finding desirable work.

Foreign qualifications

- ◆ They lack work experience in Canada, and work experience gained outside is not held in the same esteem as that gained in Canada. It sometimes means a need for retraining and developing new skills.
- ◆ They lack networks here. Unable to obtain references from past employers.

Cultural differences

- ◆ “Speaking up” against discrimination and other issues is viewed as going against Chinese culture.
- ◆ Ethnic sensitivity towards newcomers should be a priority for governments and for local employment agencies. Focus groups allow minorities to voice their concerns to program planners and funders.

What are the issues regarding hiring?

- ◆ They are considered over-qualified for an entry-level job, and under-qualified for managerial positions.
- ◆ For some young people finding unskilled work is not a problem – but securing a job that is relevant to one’s future career is very challenging.

How are Chinese treated in the workplace?

- ◆ Employers take advantage of Chinese based on the stereotype that they are hardworking and devoted workers.

Are Chinese able to advance in their careers?

- ◆ Most job openings are for non-skilled positions, which do not allow for career development and progression.
- ◆ Employment is concentrated in limited fields (most job postings are in sales, delivery attendants, etc.). Skilled jobs (eg. administration work) require experience and references.

What are the accessibility issues?

- ◆ Difficulty in getting to work on the transit system.

What suggestions do Chinese have for dealing with barriers?

- ◆ Concentrate more on studying in a field related to their career interest.
- ◆ Support groups for informal group discussions and information sharing, in Mandarin or Cantonese.
- ◆ To close the gap on employment opportunities, they need training in cultural sensitivity, and also in pre-employment preparation.
- ◆ HRDC should advertise more permanent jobs on their job bank, along with government employment opportunities. The group said that the idea of a job bank is good, but most of the jobs posted are temporary and minimum wage.

Where are the knowledge gaps?

- ◆ They lack resources and knowledge of where to get assistance.
- ◆ Inability to identify or market their skills; lack knowledge of labour market trends.

What are the issues particular to youth?

- ◆ Positive experiences include being able to obtain references from school counsellors, student placements through HRDC initiatives, and co-operative programs through high school and post secondary institutions.
- ◆ Among youth born in Canada (or immigrating while very young), language is not considered a barrier, but instead many find that being able to speak Chinese languages and dialects is an advantage.
- ◆ Most youth indicated that language or ethno-social background are not an issue – rather the issues are age, sex, lack of job experience and inflexible work schedules are more of a problem in finding work.
- ◆ Chinese youth who are familiar with Canadian culture are in a markedly different situation from Chinese adults who immigrated later in life.

VIETNAMESE

What barriers come from being an immigrant?

Language and accent

- ◆ Fear of being interviewed because they believe that their English skills are inadequate.
- ◆ Difficulty in handling a phone interview.
- ◆ Lack of English may make one nervous in another subject such as Mathematics, even if you have the skills.
- ◆ One woman had difficulty with interviews, and developed a phobia about them, so she now limits herself to jobs that do not need interviews. These generally involve showing up at a factory ready to work.

Foreign qualifications

- ◆ Not having any Canadian work experience.

What are the issues regarding hiring?

- ◆ Resumés are tagged by employers when Visible Minorities apply for work.
- ◆ Face-to-face conversations with potential employers are intimidating.
- ◆ Not being given a chance to prove self, even with good references.
- ◆ Employers ask for unnecessary qualifications to screen people out.
- ◆ Problems getting application forms from organizations. They may be asked to send in a resumé and someone will call for an interview; the employer usually does not call.
- ◆ One person recalls sending his application form four times to the same company regarding employment vacancies, but was not given an interview. He believes he was discriminated against because of his racial background and weak English skills.
- ◆ Participants turn to employment agencies for jobs, even though they are exploited by being paid minimum wage despite their skills. They are desperate for Canadian experience and to sustain themselves economically. Agency jobs are unstable and people must often re-start the job search process within the three-month probationary period.
- ◆ Unlike other groups, most Vietnamese adults had little problem finding work within three or four months of arriving in Canada. However, it was usually heavy manual work in factories.
- ◆ One participant believes that “some employers appreciate the hard-working character of the Vietnamese people.”

How are Vietnamese treated in the workplace?

- ◆ Inequitable treatment in assignments – Vietnamese are given hard labour jobs, Whites get light duties. Inequitable treatment is cause of grave discontent. Many participants talked of their factory positions involving “hard labour dirty jobs.” They were allocated the toughest duties, mistreated, and made victims of blatant discrimination.
- ◆ Threats of being fired as a means of coercion.
- ◆ Employers’ blatant display of favouritism towards employees.
- ◆ Employment agencies take advantage of people who are highly skilled, and underpay them.
- ◆ “We accept abuse on the job because we need the work. The employer doesn’t really need us, so we take the verbal abuse or we accept being pushed around and being given the hardest, dirtiest work -- just to have a job and get some money.”
- ◆ “Three months after arriving in Canada I got a job in a Toronto factory printing T-shirts. My employer was from Hong Kong. He also employed his family there. He told me that the heavy-duty jobs were for my kind of people and that the easy jobs were reserved for his family. On the job I was shown how to print T-shirts once, and if I burned any of them by accident it was deducted from my pay which was only \$6/hour, minimum wage. I was also verbally abused whenever I did anything wrong. I eventually quit because I couldn’t deal with the pressure and verbal abuse. I was stressed and very depressed at my job.”
- ◆ A young man was in a job training program through a Peel employment and community service agency. When he reported to work, he was seated in front of the equipment and expected to perform his duties without support from a trainer. He also found his service provider did not provide enough counselling and support.

What are the issues regarding loss and layoffs?

- ◆ “I was laid off because of my pregnancy; the employer used shortage of work as the reason for laying me off. He did not give me my separation slip and as a result I was not able to receive Employment Insurance.” She later approached her employer for her record of employment so she could apply for benefits. He insisted he could not do that because she had quit her job, even though he had laid her off.

What happens when they speak out about unfair treatment?

- ◆ They report discriminatory behaviours to superiors, but to no avail.
- ◆ A Vietnamese man was given hard labour tasks while Whites received light duty jobs. “When I questioned the employer I was told that because I was a new worker and my English wasn’t good

enough, I could go home if I didn't want to do that kind of work. I felt I was being rushed all the time and that he was harassing me instead of supporting me. They would want me to work faster on the machines and when I was tired I would slow down, and was told if I didn't hurry up, I would be laid off. I told them that was the way I worked and that they could fire me if they wanted to. After that, I was left alone to work at my own speed."

How effective are society's steps to deal with these issues?

- ◆ Vietnamese will discuss issues with settlement workers, but usually there is little that can be done.
- ◆ A woman dismissed from work due to pregnancy approached the Employment Insurance office, but nothing was done and so she did not receive maternity or Employment Insurance benefits. By the time she learned about her rights through a non-profit agency and went back to the Employment Insurance office, they said she no longer met the eligibility requirements.

"Employment counsellors are not sensitive to the needs of employment seekers. They do not spend the time to get to know their clients, their qualifications, interests and needs. They (counsellors) want to push people into doing factory work. They are not willing to give help when being asked.

Employment counsellors in Human Resources offices need training. They need to work with their hearts."

What are the accessibility issues?

- ◆ Not knowing how to use the computers in the HRDC centres.
- ◆ Working far from home – excess travel time. Not having a driver's licence, sometimes needed for jobs not on bus routes.

What suggestions do Vietnamese have for dealing with barriers?

- ◆ Service providers who speak Vietnamese.

Where are the knowledge gaps?

- ◆ Difficulty in assessing training programs

What are the issues particular to women?

- ◆ Many women described prejudice on the job when they were pregnant, the disregard for their well-being and that of their unborn babies, and emotional abuse in a hostile work environment. Many quit their jobs. Those who could not afford that risk tolerated their inhumane treatment in order to have income to support themselves and their families.

- ◆ “I worked in a factory in Mississauga, and got pregnant and wasn’t aware of pregnancy leave. I wanted to work for another two weeks so that I could get Employment Insurance, but my employer would not allow it. This White man was very harsh and had me do heavy-duty work. He expected me to climb stairs with heavy boxes and when I went slowly he would get upset.”
- ◆ One young woman was continuously being sexually harassed at work but kept quiet to keep her job. Finally, when she mustered the courage to file a complaint with her manager, nothing was done. Instead, the perpetrator bribed the manager with gifts and maintained his special privileges at work. Shortly after she made the complaint, the harassment stopped temporarily, and she was reassigned to heavier duties. She was punished for speaking out by being isolated from her co-workers so she could not solicit support from them. She eventually left the position.
- ◆ Discrimination because of gender is a major issue for many of the young women participating. One said her employer told her that if she got pregnant she would be fired. Others said that they are passed over for jobs because employers believe that they will get pregnant and go on maternity leave. Participants with children say that employers believe that childcare responsibilities will result in absenteeism, and that there are more complications in hiring women than in hiring men.

What are the issues particular to youth?

- ◆ Getting to work is a problem without a car or driver’s license, particularly for shift work or in areas off bus routes. One said, “It is very important for employers that you have a car. This is usually the first question you are asked.”

LATIN AMERICANS

What barriers come from being an immigrant?

Language and accent

- ◆ Rendered helpless to take action regarding job search difficulties, because of the language barrier.

What are the issues regarding hiring?

- ◆ Ongoing rejection in the job market has had an impact on their self-esteem.
- ◆ College and University are supposed to bring better opportunities, but this has not been this group's experience. Many employers are looking for experience and education in employees – as a new graduate, you only have one of these aspects.
- ◆ “I just graduated from Ryerson Polytechnic University with an Engineering degree. I have sent out many resumes, but failed to meet the criterion of work experience. There needs to be a willingness on part of employers to allow new graduates to get the experience they need and not always expect them to know everything on graduating from College or University.”
“Employers will hire you on probation or an incentive or subsidy program for up to six months and decide that they do not want you for an unexplained reason, and terminate your services at the end of the program, sometimes without compensation. Placement agencies will hire you with little experience and place you in jobs where you might work for weeks, sometimes months, with no pay, and then face termination.”
- ◆ When a member of a Visible Minority is hired, there is a lack of recognition of that person's skills. However, the employer eventually becomes used to that person and her or his background, and this may make it easier for the employer to understand and hire more people of this background.

How are Spanish speaking people treated in the workplace?

- ◆ “I wrote a three-page document for my supervisor, who said that I did not write it, because it was well-written and English was not my first language. There are stereotypical perceptions when you have an accent, that you cannot do as well as a “Canadian-speaking person” if you are not White.”

Are Spanish speaking people able to advance in their careers?

- ◆ Skilled immigrants often cannot find employment to match their capabilities, with compensation similar to Canadian counterparts. They feel that the government is wasting money in allowing people to work below their real capabilities.

- ◆ Some believe that the United States offers better job opportunities and is more accepting of minority cultures. Canadian companies feel they are doing you a favour in hiring you, while US employers often offer incentives to attract skilled employees.

What happens when they speak out about unfair treatment?

- ◆ They find it difficult to voice their concerns to employers regarding what they saw as unfair treatment. They expressed fears of rejection and loss of employment.

How effective are society's steps to deal with these issues?

- ◆ Human Rights tribunals take a long time to reach resolution, causing complainants to put their lives on hold.
- ◆ Employment Insurance workers are very intimidating and belittling to clients who come in for help with benefits or training. This reflects their stereotypical perceptions and lack of support for Visible Minorities.
- ◆ Not having enough Spanish-speaking Agents working in government services such as E.I. poses a communication barrier. This makes the task of employment searching very difficult and frustrating.
- ◆ Focus group participants believe that the government does not plan its spending strategically. The Spanish-speaking population has lost its organized voice in Peel, and therefore the community "as a whole" is not being well served. When Multicultural Assistance Services of Peel (MAS) was dissolved, fewer people were available to serve the Spanish-speaking community. There is a perception that there is no significant Spanish-speaking population in Peel and therefore, services have been eliminated.
- ◆ Trouble getting into employment training programs because they do not meet eligibility criteria such as being on welfare or receiving EI benefits.

What suggestions do Spanish speaking people have for dealing with barriers?

- ◆ Employment preparation programs are needed to help people find work.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

SERVICE PROVIDER FOCUS GROUPS

How are these barriers presently being addressed by:

- ◆ You as the service provider
- ◆ Your agency/organization
- ◆ Visible minority clients
- ◆ Other

Which of the responses you have just identified were effective/not effective?

How do you think these barriers can be more effectively addressed in the future?

How have visible/racial minority persons been effected by changes in the Canadian Labour Market?

What challenges do you as a service provider encounter in providing services to visible/racial minority persons?

How does the experience of visible/racial minorities differ from that of non-visible/racial minorities, with respect to:

- ◆ Education & Training
 - ability to access programs/meet program criteria
 - completion of programs
- ◆ Employment experience
 - Recruitment & Selection
 - Job retention and promotion

What if any role if any does racism/discrimination play?

How can/do employment preparation and training programs assist in reducing the barriers experienced by visible/racial minorities?

What are the employment preparation and training needs of visible/racial minority persons?

How can these needs best be met by?

- ◆ EI offices
- ◆ Employment Training & Preparation Services
- ◆ Employers
- ◆ Visible/racial minority persons

Are there other pressures not directly connected to employment which impact on the ability of visible/racial minorities in obtaining employment:

- i.e.:
- Settlement & Integration
 - Home/Family Responsibilities
 - Community Responsibilities

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

VISIBLE MINORITY FOCUS GROUPS

What programs or components of programs are most relevant or useful

What additional training or preparation services are necessary

How can the needs of visible/racial minorities best be met.

- ◆ EI offices
- ◆ Employment Training & Preparation Services
- ◆ Employers
- ◆ racial minority persons

Are there other pressures not directly connected to employment which impact on your ability to obtain employment:

- ie:
- Settlement & Integration
 - Home/Family Responsibilities
 - Community Responsibilities
 - Do you need services for your family?

Do you face barriers in accessing these services?

How can these needs best be met by.

- ◆ EI offices
- ◆ Employment Training & Preparation Services
- ◆ Employers
- ◆ Visible/racial minority persons

Are there other pressures not directly connected to employment which impact on the ability of visible/racial minorities in obtaining employment:

- i.e.:
- Settlement & Integration
 - Home/Family Responsibilities
 - Community Responsibilities

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS IN FOCUS GROUPS

Total Participants	87
Total Participants Completing Profiles	86

Country of Origin

Country	# of Participants
Bahrain	1
Canada	5
Central/South America	10
China/Taiwan/Hong Kong	21
Fiji Islands	1
India	14
Indonesia	2
Caribbean/Guyana	10
Philippines	1
Africa	2
Vietnam	17
No Response	2
TOTAL	86

Number of Years in Canada

Years	# of Participants
<1 yr	12
1-5 yrs	30
6-10 yrs.	17
10-15 yrs	11
15-20 yrs	4
21+yrs	7
No Response	6
TOTAL	87

Immigration Status

Status	# of Participants
Canadian Citizen	41
Landed Immigrant	38
Refugee Claimant	1
Working Permit	0
Other	0
No Response	7
TOTAL	87

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS IN FOCUS GROUPS**Age**

Age	# of Participants
15-20 yrs old	7
21-30 yrs old	30
30 - 35 yrs old	14
36 - 45 yrs old	25
46 - 55 yrs old	3
55 - 65 yrs old	5
65 +	1
No Response	2
TOTAL	87

Marital Status

Marital Status	# of Participants
Single	27
Married/Living with a Partner	51
Separated	2
Divorced	6
No Response	1
TOTAL	87

Dependents

Type of Dependent	# of Participants	Age of Children	# of Participants
Children	Yes -44 No -40	<1	5
Elderly or Disable Persons	7	1-5	25
No Response	2	6-12	20
		13-18	14
		18+	2

Supportive Care for Dependents

Response	# of Participants
Yes	11
No	60
No Response	16

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS IN FOCUS GROUPS**Mother Tongue**

Language	# of Participants
Arabic	1
Chinese/Mandarin/Cantonese	21
English	16
Indonesian, German	1
Hindi/Punjabi/Urdu	16
Konkani	1
Malayalam	1
Morathi	1
Spanish	10
Vietnamese	17
Zulu	1
No Response	1

English Skill Self-Assessment

Skill	Ability				Total Participants
	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Verbal	26	26	22	9	
Writing	30	29	14	10	
Reading	35	25	14	9	
No Response	1				87

Academic Level Completed

Level Achieved	# of Participants	Country	Yes	No
Elementary School	2	Canada		2
Secondary School	26	Canada	9	15
Post Secondary	57	Canada	21	32
No Response	6			

Canadian Accreditation for Academic Achievement Obtained

Response	# of Participants
Yes	13
No	39
Canadian Schooled	27
No Response	7

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS IN FOCUS GROUPS**Employment Status**

Status	# of Participants
Currently Employed	Yes - 26 / No - 57
Self-Employed	3
No Response	4

Annual Income

Total Annual Income	# of Participants
< \$10,000.00	22
\$10,000 - \$15,000+	10
\$16,000 - \$25,000+	8
\$26,000 - \$35,000+	5
36,000+	6
No Response	34

Participation in Employment Training

Currently/Previously Attended Training	# of Participants
Yes	38
No	43
No Response	5

Work History

Previous Work Experience	# of Participants
Yes	68
No	11
No Response	7

PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS IN FOCUS GROUPS

Type of Work Experience

Type of Work Experience	# of Participants
Volunteer - Revenue Canada	1
Product Engineer in a Carbon Plant	1
Volunteer at volunteer Centre of Peel	1
State Bank of India - Hong Kong	1
Secretary/Data Entry	3
Vehicle Maintenance & Inspector	1
Sewing	2
Electronics	1
Baby-sitting/Child care Worker	3
Factory Work	1
Quality Control	1
Printing	1
Driver & Mechanics	1
Teaching Languages/Tutor at High School	3
Spanish Counsellor (ISAP)	1
Wendy's Restaurant	1
Customer Service/General Labour	2
Sales/Receptionist	2
Lab Assistant	1
Financial Services	2
Medical Doctor 14 yrs Exp. in China	1
Translation & Trade	1
Mechanical Engineer/Newspaper Editor	1
Chemical Engineer - 40 yrs. exp. in China	1
Welfare Worker- Services to Elderly	1
Running Small Business	1
Banking	1
Insurance Sales	1
No Canadian Work Experience	3

Of all participants declaring previous work experience only the above number of persons specified type of experience.