

Title: Economic Vulnerability and Ethnicity in Canada's Metropolitan Workforce: An Exploratory Analysis of Census Classifications

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WP Number: 10-04

Research Questions:

Using data drawn from 2006 Census classifications, this paper addresses questions related to the economic vulnerability of workforce members aged 25-54 from ethnic groups residing in the 15 major metropolitan areas of Canada. Using multivariate analysis techniques such as latent class and principal components analysis, it pays special attention to the interrelationships that exist between various indicators of vulnerability comprising labour market, employment, income and poverty-related attributes. The paper identifies the main dimensions of economic vulnerability, lists the most vulnerable groups in the various metropolitan areas, examines gender differentials as well as pinpoints the most important predictors of vulnerability.

Importance:

This research is relevant because there is now a substantial degree of policy concern about the ethnic profiles of the economically vulnerable segment in the Canadian labour force. This segment appears to be quite substantial as well as a long-term phenomenon in the labour force. Vulnerable workers are typically characterized as having a weak integration to labour markets and have limited influence on their conditions of employment, while many remain outside the reach of existing policy frameworks.

Research Findings:

Census classifications corresponding to individuals reporting Non-European ethnic origins (i.e., Somali, Afghan, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Colombian, and Korean) as well as Aboriginal (North American Indian) were found ranking at top levels of global and income economic vulnerability scores. Higher levels of vulnerability were frequently found among visible minority groups of recent immigration history in Canada. The case of the Somali ethnic group appeared unique as their members (both men and women) appeared to be challenged across many economic fronts. The research undertaken also suggests that higher economic vulnerability is typical among ethnic groups who have with limited linguistic and human capital and have over-representation of first generation members.

Implications:

Profiles of the most economically vulnerable ethnic groups in Canada need additional study in order to get more insight into the factors that drive poor labour market and economic outcomes in metropolitan labour markets, and in turn, to better inform, design, and carry out appropriate intervention programs. Given that economic vulnerability may cut across generations and different periods of stay in the country, it is important to carefully design these interventions so that the most affected sub-populations may benefit from these programs.