

# Visible minorities in Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal

by Jennifer Chard and Viviane Renaud

In the past few decades, the visible minority population in Canada has grown considerably. In 1996, 3.2 million people identified themselves as members of a visible minority group. They represented 11.2% of Canada's population, up from 9.4% in 1991, with Chinese, South Asians and Blacks comprising the largest groups. Growth in the size of the visible minority population is due mainly to changes in immigration patterns: about seven in ten visible minorities are immigrants, with almost half having arrived in the country since 1981 and one quarter between 1991 and 1996.<sup>1</sup>

The increase in the number of visible minorities is particularly noticeable in larger metropolitan areas. Canada's major urban centres act as

1. Immigration has been the biggest contributor to the rapid growth of the visible minority population, but it is important to remember that some visible minority groups have long histories in this country. According to the 1996 Census, about two in three Japanese (65% or 44,000) and two in five Blacks (42% or 241,000) were born in Canada. As well, large numbers of Chinese (207,000) and South Asians (192,000) are Canadian-born.

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Visible minorities represented 11% of the total population in 1996, with Chinese, South Asians and Blacks the largest groups

	Canada	Census Metropolitan Area		
		Toronto	Vancouver	Montréal
		%		
<b>Total population ('000)</b>	<b>28,528</b>	<b>4,233</b>	<b>1,814</b>	<b>3,288</b>
Visible minority population	11.2	31.6	31.1	12.2
Black	2.0	6.5	0.9	3.7
South Asian	2.4	7.8	6.6	1.4
Chinese	3.0	7.9	15.4	1.4
Korean	0.2	0.7	0.9	0.1
Japanese	0.2	0.4	1.2	0.1
Southeast Asian	0.6	1.1	1.1	1.1
Filipino	0.8	2.3	2.2	0.4
Arab and West Asian	0.9	1.7	1.0	2.2
Latin American	0.6	1.5	0.8	1.4
Visible minority, n.i.e. <sup>1</sup>	0.2	1.1	0.4	0.1
Multiple visible minority <sup>2</sup>	0.2	0.6	0.6	0.1

1. Not included elsewhere. Includes Pacific Islanders and other respondents likely to be in a visible minority group.

2. Includes respondents who reported more than one visible minority group.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

important gateways for immigrants, who are drawn to these cities by family and community ties as well as by economic opportunities. In 1996, almost three-quarters of Canada's visible minority population lived in either Toronto (42%), Vancouver (18%) or Montréal (13%). These cities have been quickly transformed into increasingly vital components of Canada's cultural mosaic, each with its own distinctive composition: while Toronto has the greatest diversity of visible minority groups, Vancouver is known for its prominent Asian community and Montréal has attracted the largest number of French-speaking visible minorities.

### One in three Toronto residents are visible minorities

Toronto has both the highest concentration of immigrants and the highest concentration of visible minorities in Canada, making it the nation's most diverse Census Metropolitan Area

(CMA). Toronto was home to 1.3 million visible minorities in 1996. They represented 32% of the total population, with Chinese (335,200) and South Asians (329,800) the two biggest groups — each comprising 8% of the total population — followed by Blacks at 6% (274,900). In fact, the CMA of Toronto was home to the largest number of each of Canada's visible minority groups, except for Arabs and West Asians, and Japanese.

Recent immigrants in particular have shaped the cultural landscape in Toronto, since almost 80% are members of a visible minority group. Of the 441,000 immigrants living in the CMA who arrived between 1991 and 1996, three in five were born in Asia or the Middle East. The top five places of birth were Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, the People's Republic of China, the Philippines and India.

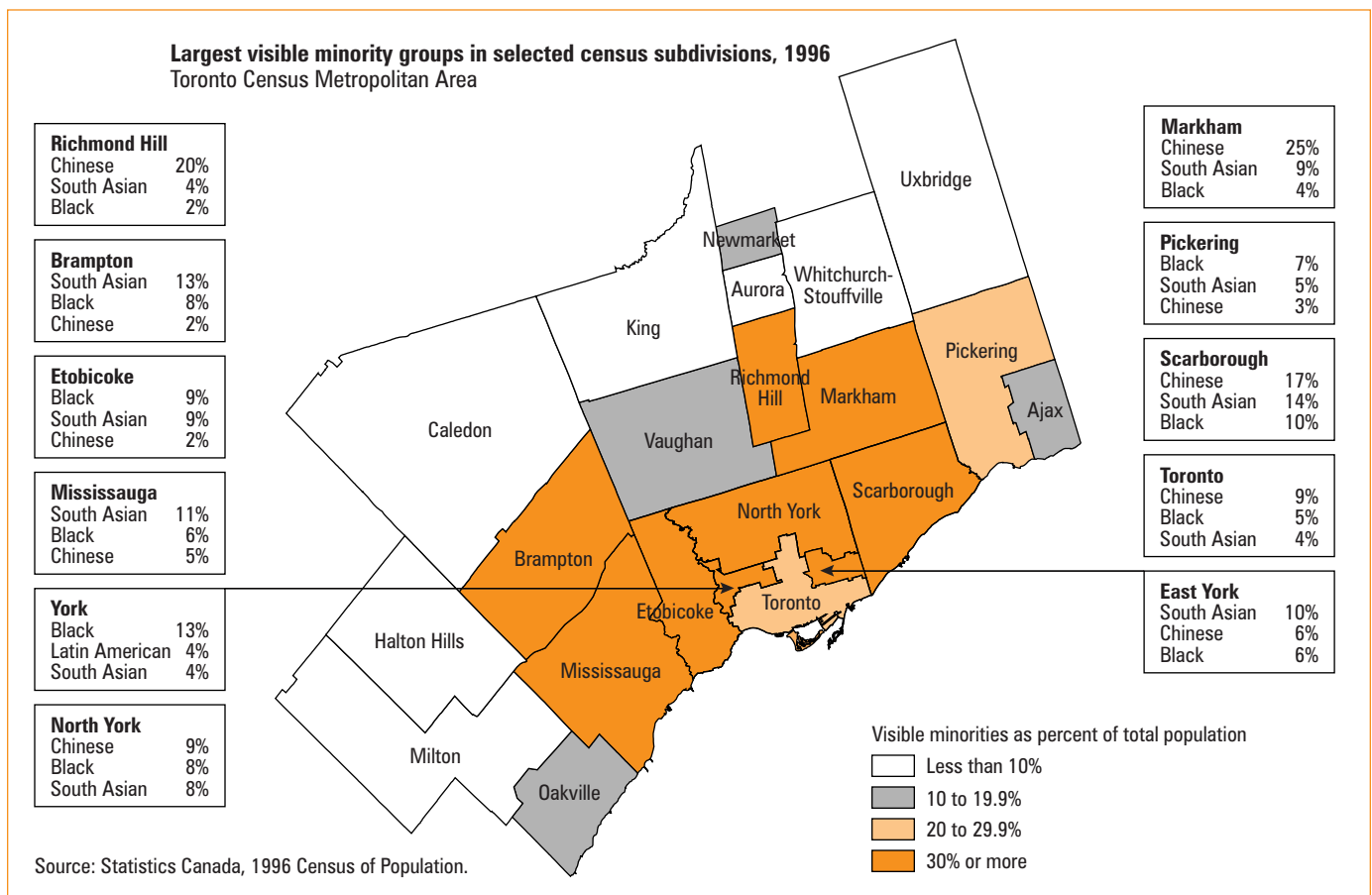
Among Toronto's visible minorities, there are considerable differences

in immigrant status and age. Nearly seven in ten Japanese and four in ten Blacks were born in Canada, compared with less than 25% of all other visible minority groups. More than four in ten Blacks, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans and South Asians were under the age of 25, while about three in ten Chinese and Japanese were in this age group — similar to the total population of Toronto (33%).

### Scarborough has highest proportion of visible minorities in the nation

Within the Toronto CMA, some municipalities stand out as having particularly large visible minority populations.<sup>2</sup> Scarborough had the highest concentration in Canada, with over half (52%) of the population belonging

2. Since most census subdivisions follow the boundaries of municipalities or townships, this article uses "municipalities" as a synonym.



	Total population	Visible minority population %
Scarborough, On.	554,525	52
Richmond, B.C.	148,150	49
Markham, On.	172,735	46
City of Vancouver, B.C.	507,930	45
North York, On.	584,675	40
Burnaby, B.C.	176,825	39
Saint-Laurent, Qc.	73,760	36
York, On.	145,785	34
Mississauga, On.	542,450	34
Richmond Hill, On.	101,480	33

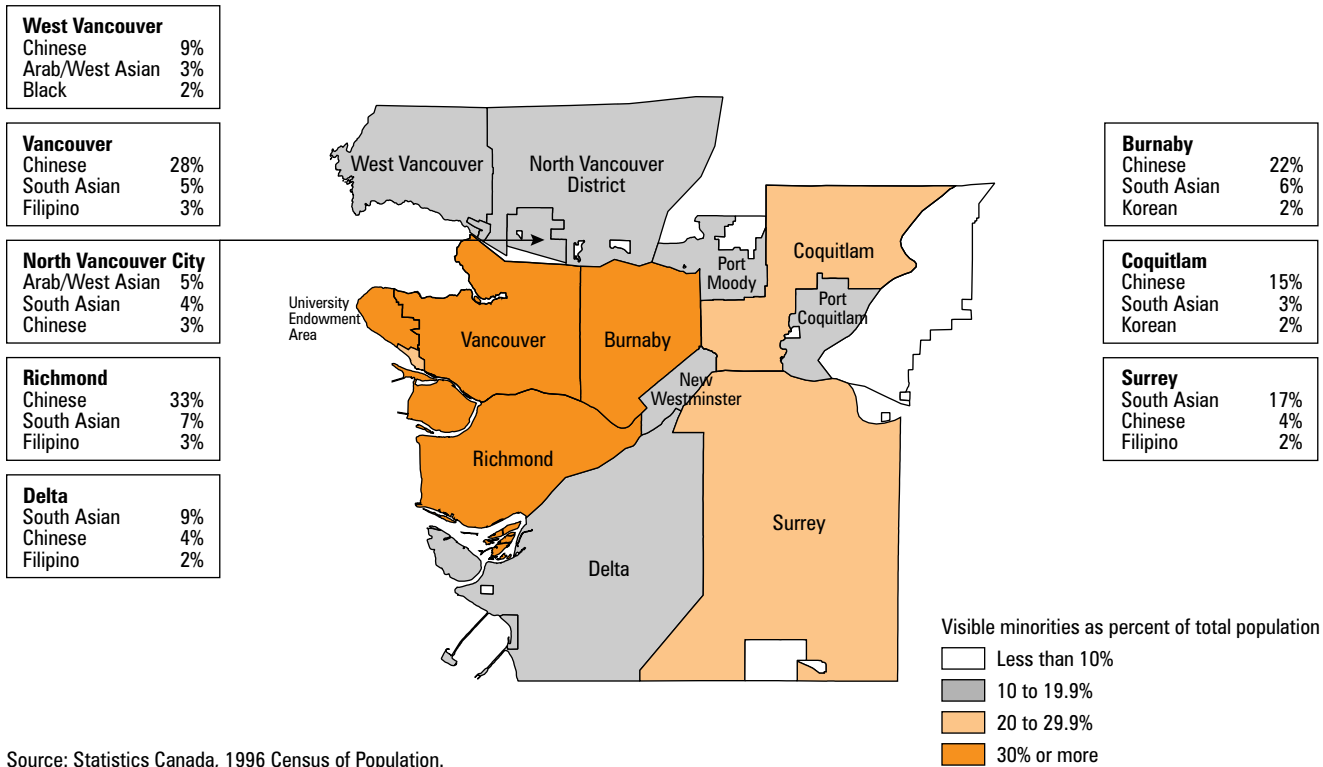
Note: Excludes the University Endowment Area, British Columbia, which is also a census subdivision. The total population was 6,680, and it had a visible minority population of 35%.

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

to a visible minority group, followed by Markham (46%), North York (40%), York (34%), Mississauga (34%) and Richmond Hill (33%). As well, about three in ten residents in East York (31%), Brampton (30%), Etobicoke (30%) and the city of Toronto (28%) were members of a visible minority group. Still, in some areas of Toronto, visible minorities comprised a very small proportion of the population, accounting for less than 5% of residents in several municipalities, including Caledon, Halton Hills and Georgina.

Chinese, South Asians and Blacks are the largest visible minority groups in almost all Toronto municipalities, though some areas have more diverse visible minority populations than others. In 1996, Scarborough and North York were among the most varied, with large proportions of Chinese, South Asian and Black residents. In comparison, Chinese were the predominant visible minority group in Markham and

Largest visible minority groups in selected census subdivisions, 1996  
Vancouver Census Metropolitan Area



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

Richmond Hill, Blacks were the most numerous group in York and South Asians the largest in Mississauga.

**The CMA of Vancouver is Canada's most Asian metropolitan area**

Vancouver is home to several large Asian communities. A total of 565,000 residents, or 31% of the total population of the CMA, belonged to a visible minority group in 1996, with the Chinese accounting for about half. Vancouver's 279,000 Chinese represented 15% of all residents, while its 120,100 South Asians comprised the second largest group at 7%. Notably, Vancouver was home to the largest number of Japanese in Canada, as well as to the second largest numbers of Chinese, South Asians, Filipinos and Koreans.

The high level of Asian representation in Vancouver is not surprising, given patterns of immigration to the CMA. Four in five of Vancouver's 190,000 recent immigrants were from Asia, with Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, India, the Philippines, South Korea, and Viet Nam among the top ten birthplaces. About three-quarters of Chinese, Southeast Asians, Koreans and Filipinos living in Vancouver in 1996 were immigrants. In contrast, over half of Japanese (54%) and one-third of South Asians (34%) had been born in Canada.

Although visible minorities tended to be slightly older in Vancouver than in Toronto or Montréal, they were still young relative to the total population. About 30% of the CMA's population was under age 25 in 1996, compared with over 40% of South Asians, Southeast Asians, Koreans, Blacks and Latin Americans.

**Richmond, City of Vancouver and Burnaby home to largest visible minority populations**

Most municipalities in the Vancouver CMA have substantial visible minority populations. In particular, almost half the residents of Richmond (49%)

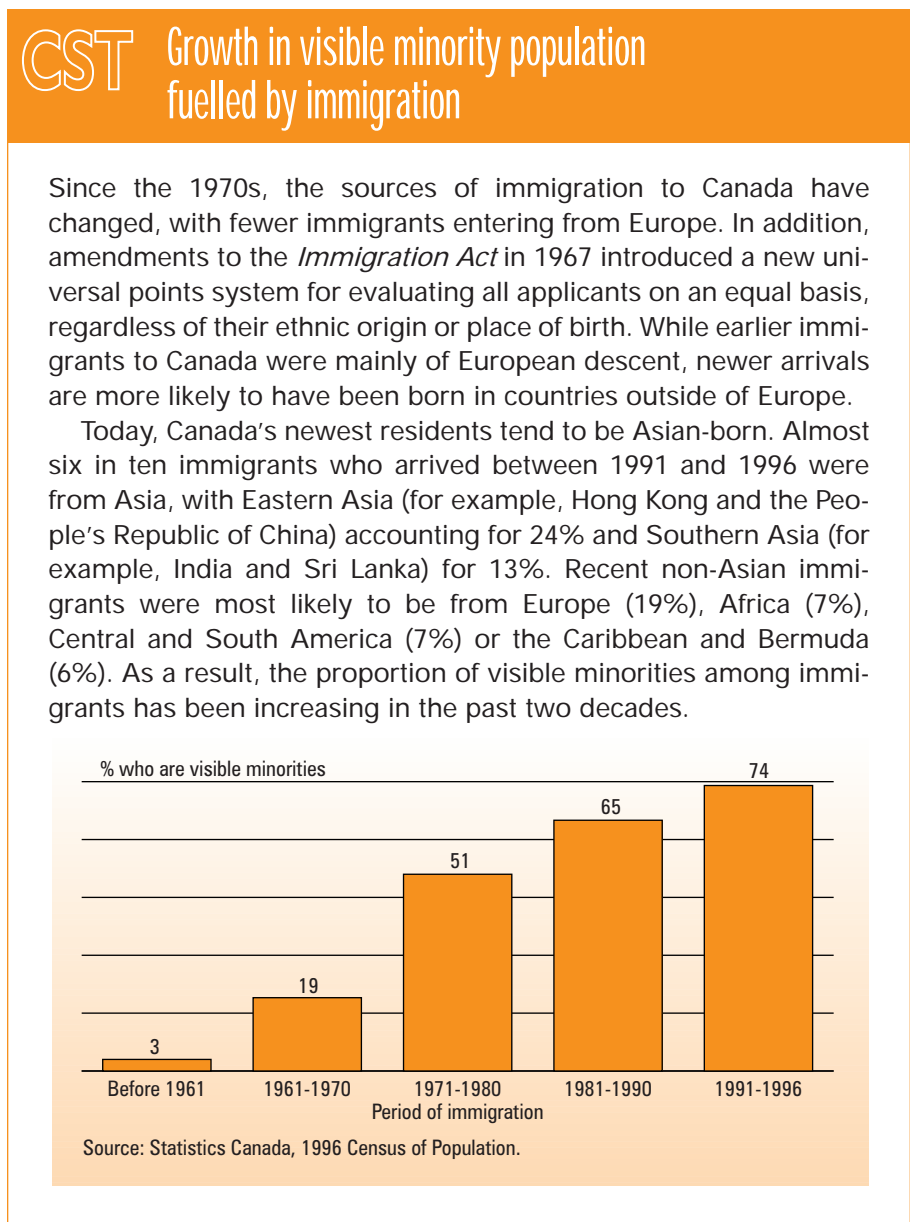
belonged to a visible minority group, as did 45% in the City of Vancouver, 39% in Burnaby, 29% in Surrey and 28% in Coquitlam. Unlike Montréal and Toronto, very few municipalities in Vancouver had visible minority populations of less than 5%.

In most municipalities, Chinese and South Asians were the largest visible minority group, followed by Filipinos or Koreans. The Chinese accounted for a very significant proportion of the population in Richmond, the City of Vancouver and Burnaby, while South Asians were the largest group in Surrey, Delta and New Westminster. Interest-

ingly though, Arabs and West Asians were the most numerous visible minority population in the City of North Vancouver.

**Blacks are Montréal's largest visible minority group**

Montréal's visible minority population has its own distinctive composition. In 1996, 401,000 people, or 12% of the total CMA population, were visible minorities. Blacks were the largest group, numbering 122,300 and representing 4% of all residents, while Arabs and West Asians, with nearly 74,000 people, made up 2%. Montréal is home



to the largest Arab and West Asian population in the country and the second largest Black, Latin American and Southeast Asian communities.

As in the other large metropolitan areas, immigrants have contributed to the growth of the visible minority population in Montréal; seven in ten recent

immigrants in the CMA were members of a visible minority group. Montréal has attracted a relatively large number of immigrants from countries where French is spoken. Between 1991 and 1996, almost 135,000 people immigrated to Montréal, with the most common places of birth being Haiti and Lebanon. Compared with Canada as a whole, Montréal has almost doubled its share of recent immigrants from West Central Asia and the Middle East, Africa and the Caribbean.

Among Montréal's largest visible minority groups, Blacks were most likely to be Canadian-born: nearly four in ten compared with fewer than two in ten Arabs and West Asians or Latin Americans. In fact, about 30% of Arabs and West Asians and Latin Americans arrived in Canada between 1991 and 1996.

Visible minorities in Montréal are younger than those in other CMAs, and are also younger than Montréal's

## CST What you should know about this study

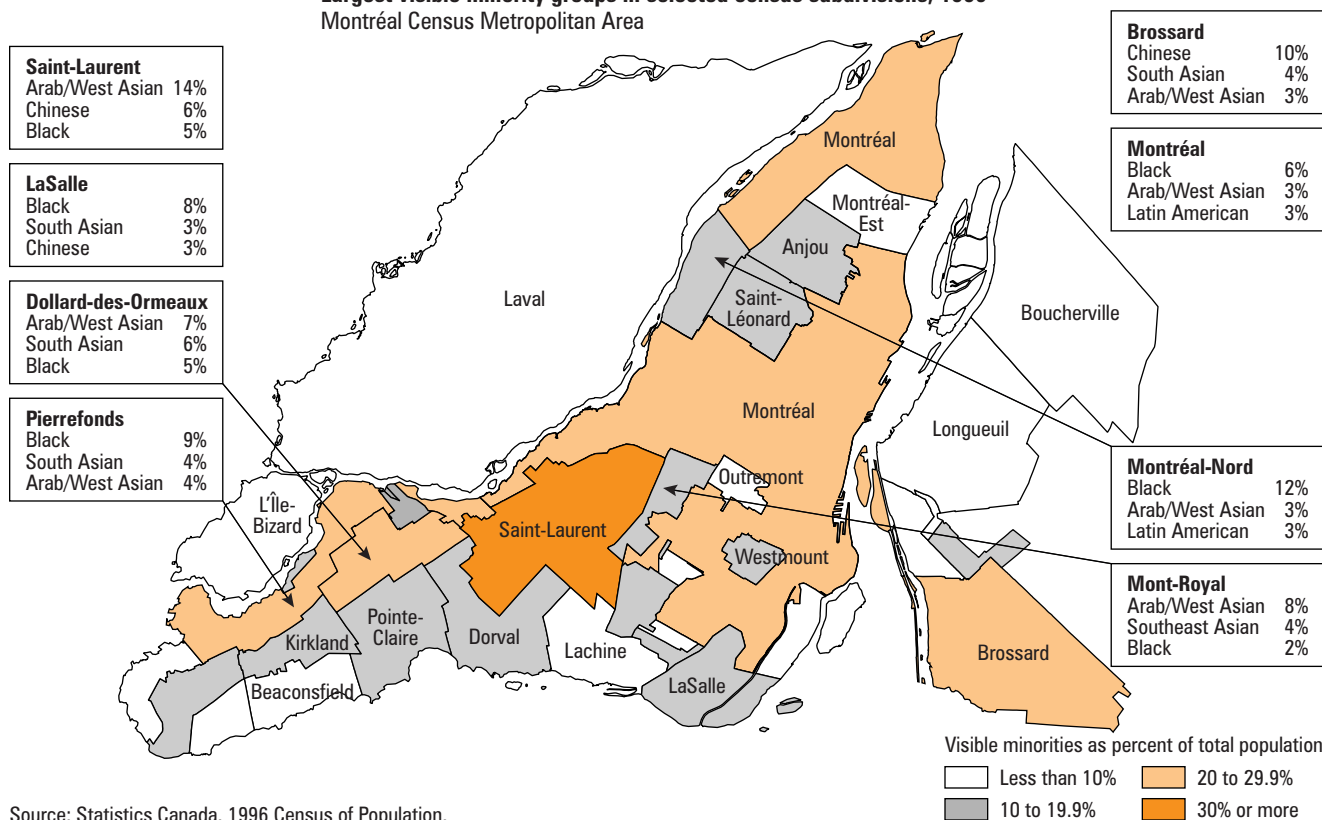
This article uses data from the Census of Population, last conducted in May 1996.

**Visible minority population:** the *Employment Equity Act* defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour." In Canada, the visible minority population includes the following groups: Blacks, South Asians, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Southeast Asians, Filipinos, Arabs and West Asians, Latin Americans and Pacific Islanders.

**Immigrants:** people who are, or have been at one time, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some are recent arrivals, while others have resided in Canada for a number of years.

**Recent immigrants:** people who immigrated to Canada between 1991 and 1996.

**Largest visible minority groups in selected census subdivisions, 1996**  
Montréal Census Metropolitan Area



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 Census of Population.

total population. While 32% of all Montréal residents were under age 25 in 1996, 42% of visible minorities were in this age group. Blacks and Latin Americans were the youngest — nearly half the members of each group were not yet 25 years old.

### Visible minorities centered in municipalities on the island of Montréal

In Montréal, the visible minority population is more geographically centralized than in Toronto or Vancouver. For the most part, visible minorities are concentrated on the island of Montréal where they comprised 36% of residents in Saint-Laurent, 26% in Dollard-des-Ormeaux, 22% in Pierrefonds and 20% in the City of Montréal. In only one other municipality, the south shore community of Brossard, did visible minorities account for more than one-fifth of the population (26%).

Blacks and Arabs and West Asians were prominent in most municipalities. Both were among the largest visible minority populations in the city of Montréal, Saint-Laurent, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Pierrefonds, Montréal Nord, Mont-Royal, Saint-Léonard and Roxboro. The Chinese, South Asian, Latin American and Southeast Asian groups were also a significant presence in many parts of the CMA, with the Chinese the largest group in Brossard.

### The future

The visible minority population is expected to grow rapidly over the next few decades, the result of continuing high levels of immigration from non-European countries and a relatively youthful visible minority population. It is projected that by the year 2016, visible minorities will account for one-fifth of the Canadian population.<sup>3</sup>

The majority of this visible minority population is expected to continue to live in Ontario in 2016 (56%), with most of the remainder in British Columbia (18%) and Quebec (14%). Thus, Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal will likely become increasingly differentiated from other regions of Canada in terms of cultural diversity and the presence of visible minorities.

3. Statistics Canada. 1995. *Projections of Visible Minority Population Groups, Canada, Provinces and Regions, 1991-2016*. Product No. 91-541-XPE.



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