

# Provincial employment equity policies towards visible minorities

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## Abstract

Members of visible minorities have been historically underrepresented in both the federal and provincial bureaucracy in Canada. The *Employment Equity Act* of 1995 implemented obligations to federal government employers in an attempt to achieve equitable representation in the public service. However, the *Employment Equity Act* applies exclusively to the federal public service. Moreover, the provincial governments, at their own discretion, are responsible for implementing employment equity policies towards visible minorities within their provincial public service. Through an analysis of government policies on diversity, employment equity, and human rights, this study seeks to reveal the provincial public service employment equity practices, specifically towards members of visible minorities, as well as the outcomes of the policies. The provincial practices are compared to the federal *Employment Equity Act* to uncover similarities and differences between the policies. Through an assessment of the provincial employment equity policies and the success of those policies, this study will offer insight into the representation of visible minorities in the provincial public service and the steps that need to be taken to ensure equitable representation.

## Introduction

The *Employment Equity Act* of 1995 defines visible minorities as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-caucasian in race and non-white in colour". In 2011, 19.1% of Canada's population were members of a visible minority<sup>1</sup>. As Canada's multiculturalism grows, the provincial governments are expected to take proactive measures to ensure that the provincial bureaucracy reflects the diversity of the Canadian population. These proactive measures, such as employment equity policies towards visible minorities, exist for the purpose of achieving equality and fostering a workplace that is representative of the Canadian population. Equitable representation of visible minorities in the civil service is valuable because it enables the bureaucracy to efficiently and effectively deliver services to the public, uses the human resources of the provincial population to its fullest capacity, and illustrates the importance of diversity and multiculturalism in the provincial governments.

## Methodology

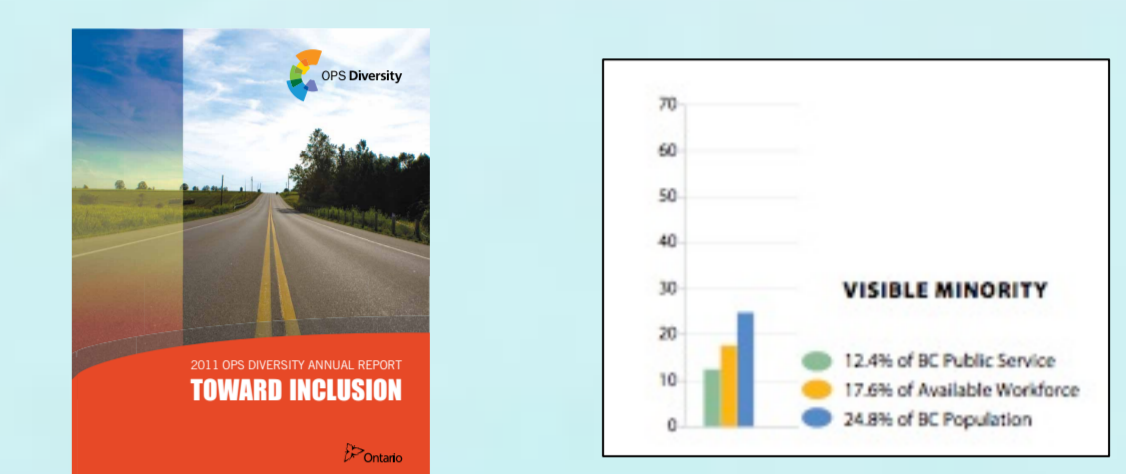
### 1. Gather Data

- Government websites
- Public service commissions
- Human rights commissions
- Literature review



### 2. Extract Data

- Policy reports
- Official statistics
- Government objectives



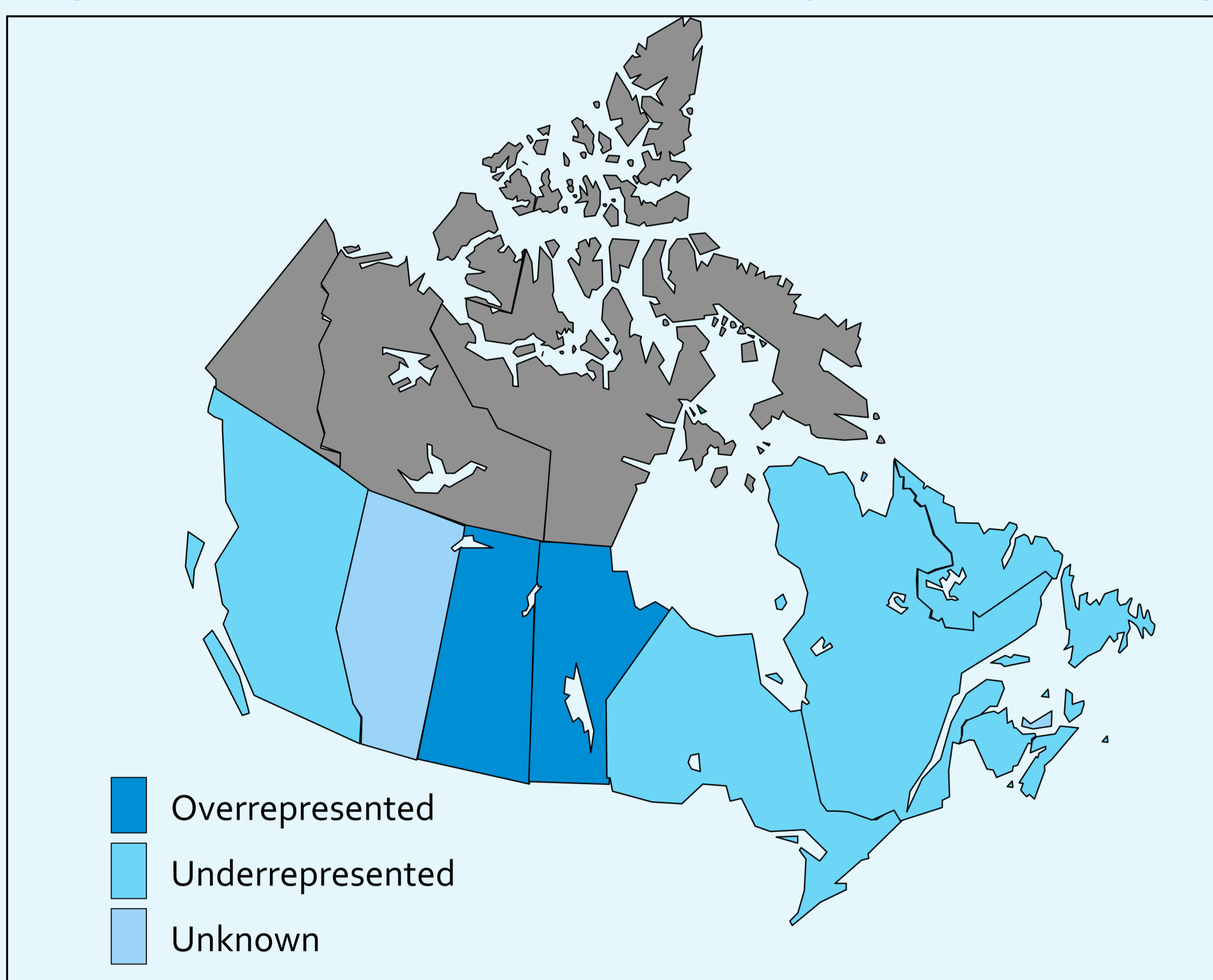
### 3. Analyze Data

- Legislation?
- Policy?
- Mandatory or flexible?
- Overrepresentation or underrepresentation?

**EMPLOYMENT EQUITY PLANS**  
Each Department shall develop a three-year Employment Equity Plan that will identify quantitative and qualitative equity goals and measures designed to both improve the representation of the designated groups and to build a corporate culture that values diversity, is inclusive and is culturally competent. These plans will be developed each year for the upcoming three-year period. The plans should include a reasonable timetable for achieving the stated goals.

## Results

### Representation of visible minorities in the provincial bureaucracy



Representation is based on the latest available data for each province.

No province has employment equity legislation.

Eight of the ten provinces have employment equity policies.

### What is the difference between policies and legislation?

- **Policies:** indicate that "general governmental priorities and directives favourable to the implementation of employment equity measures are encouraged, the specific mechanisms for implementation and enforcement vary greatly."<sup>2</sup>
- **Legislation:** "includes or has included a background of policy support, but stands as the law of the land with associated methods of enforcement and sanctions for violation."<sup>3</sup>

Provinces can be grouped into categories based on the policies towards visible minorities each province has adopted:

Policies most similar to federal employment equity legislation	Policies with loose directives and objectives	No employment equity policy
Manitoba Saskatchewan Nova Scotia	British Columbia Ontario Quebec New Brunswick Prince Edward Island	Alberta Newfoundland and Labrador

### Ontario and British Columbia

Ontario and British Columbia are home to the greatest provincial populations of visible minorities:

- Ontario: 22% of labour force population<sup>4</sup>
- British Columbia: 17.6% of labour force population<sup>5</sup>

Both provinces had employment equity legislation in the past.

- Employment equity legislation in Ontario was repealed in 1995, also calling for the destruction of all information related to the legislation.<sup>6</sup>
- In British Columbia, the Liberal election of 2001 saw the phasing out of employment equity positions and commitments, leaving the provincial bureaucracy with loose diversity objectives and no mention of employment equity.<sup>7</sup>

### Manitoba and Saskatchewan

The policies of Manitoba and Saskatchewan are most similar to the federal *Employment Equity Act*.

- Policies are grounded in the *Human Resources Manuals* of the provinces.<sup>8</sup>
- Every department is required to implement a diversity plan, which is overseen by the Deputy Ministers who also have the responsibility of reporting on the diversity plans.<sup>9</sup>
- Language: "employment equity" is used alongside "diversity" throughout the provincial websites and policies.

## Conclusion

The data on provincial employment equity policies reveals that there is no direct correlation between the percentage of visible minorities in a province and the provincial policies towards visible minorities. In fact, the provinces with the greatest numbers of visible minorities, Ontario and British Columbia, have two of the loosest policies towards visible minorities. The provinces with legislation most similar to the federal employment equity legislation, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, have an overrepresentation of visible minorities in their provincial public service. Moving forward with the data that has been collected on the various policies towards visible minorities of the provincial public service, an analysis can be conducted of the positions which visible minorities occupy in the public service, and whether or not the diversity policies create an environment which enables visible minorities to advance in their careers in the provincial public services.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada. *2011 National Household Survey* Ibid., 62. *Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada*. <sup>8</sup> Saskatchewan Public Service Commission *Human Visible Minority Population*. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-010-x/99-010-x2011001-eng.cfm#a8>.
  - <sup>2</sup> Bakan, A. Kobayashi, A. (2000). *Employment equity policy in Canada: an interprovincial comparison*. Produced for Status of Women Canada, 9.
  - <sup>3</sup> Ibid.
  - <sup>4</sup> Government of Ontario. *2011 OPS Diversity Annual Report*, 44.
  - <sup>5</sup> Government of British Columbia. *Reflecting our communities: building a diverse BC public service*, 7.
  - <sup>6</sup> Bakan, A. Kobayashi, A. *Backlash against employment equity: the British Columbia experience*. *Atlantis*, 29(1), 66.
  - <sup>8</sup> Saskatchewan Public Service Commission *Human Resources Manual*; Government of Manitoba: [http://www.gov.mb.ca/csc/employment/empequity.html#Diversity\\_strategy](http://www.gov.mb.ca/csc/employment/empequity.html#Diversity_strategy)
  - <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- Images**  
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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Luc Turgeon for supervising my research project.

As well, I would like to thank the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program for selecting me as a participant.

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