



FACTSHEET

# Barriers to Economic Empowerment of Black Youth

This factsheet identifies the barriers that Black youth encounter as they explore their potential in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and wealth management.

01.

## ECONOMIC MARGINALIZATION

A history of **discriminatory practices** restricting access to high-wage employment and financial capital, such as home ownership and personal and business loans, have hindered intergenerational wealth creation in Black communities. This economic marginalization is **active and ongoing**:

Black Canadians earn **80.4 cents to a dollar** compared to white Canadians. This translates into disparities in savings and investment, which contribute to the racial wealth gap.<sup>7</sup>



80.4¢

**2 in 3 Black families** are in the bottom half of the income distribution in Canada. For Black families, this percentage remains the same over time, while the outcomes of racialized Canadians improve across generations.<sup>6</sup>



2 in 3

In Canada, **the lack of disaggregated race-based data** makes it difficult to assess racial disparities in critical economic indicators, such as student loan access and debt.<sup>15</sup> Evidence from the United States suggests that Black youth have higher student loan debt than their peers.<sup>9</sup>

02.

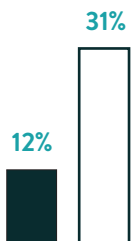
## DISPROPORTIONATE OUTCOMES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Schools are **sites of contention** for Black youth and their families, where they experience painful, everyday racism from educators, administrators, and peers.<sup>2</sup> Issues of race equity within Ontario's education system – and, more specifically, the presence of anti-Black racism – have been documented for **over forty years**, and include:<sup>2,8</sup>

- » The **erasure of Black history and Black excellence** in the curriculum
- » **Race-based streaming practices**, which limit the ability of Black youth to pursue post-secondary education and strive for meaningful careers
- » The **underrepresentation of Black Ontarians among educators**, which denies youth an important source of informal guidance and role modelling
- » **A lack of trust** between Black students and school staff
- » **High rates of disciplinary action** against Black youth
- » The **violence of low expectations**, which undermines Black youth's notions of what is possible in their education and careers

The **systemic discrimination** that youth face leads many to entirely disengage from the education system, resulting in **disproportionately high dropout rates**.<sup>8</sup>

Although Black youth only account for **12%** of students in Toronto public schools, they represent more than **31%** of all suspensions.<sup>11</sup>



### 03.

## LACK OF ACCESS TO CRITICAL SOCIAL CAPITAL

**Social capital** enables young people to gain access to information, advice, and assistance that can facilitate a successful transition from education to employment.<sup>1,13</sup>

Due to income inequality and housing discrimination, racialized youth tend to live in low-income, racially-segregated neighbourhoods.<sup>4</sup> As a result, they may not have the same networks and relationships that provide their wealthier peers with access to job leads, internship opportunities, and other employment-related supports.<sup>4</sup>

**Lack of access to critical social capital** is evident across Black youth's journey to post-secondary education and employment, and may present as:

**Lack of visible role models and contacts** in the fields they aspire to enter, due to discrimination in education and employment<sup>5</sup>



**Lack of access to information** about academic and career pathways, often due to low expectations of teachers and guidance counsellors



**Lack of formal and informal connections** and business networks for young Black entrepreneurs<sup>3</sup>



### 04.

## DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

Black youth and adults experience **discrimination and segregation** throughout the job selection process: they are judged on their names, physical appearance, assumed backgrounds, postal code, etc.<sup>2,7,10,14</sup>

“Black students who whiten resumés get **2.5 times** more callbacks. For Jamal to be considered equal to Greg, he needs **8 more years** of experience.”<sup>12</sup>

– Hadiya Roderique, *The Globe & Mail*



Black youth who are able to successfully secure employment often experience **racism and discrimination in the workplace**, and are given fewer opportunities for skill development and career advancement.

**One-third** of Black Ontarians surveyed reported experiencing challenges in the workplace due to their race, including having their competency questioned, dealing with racism and stereotypes, and having their qualifications overlooked or not recognized.<sup>5</sup>



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