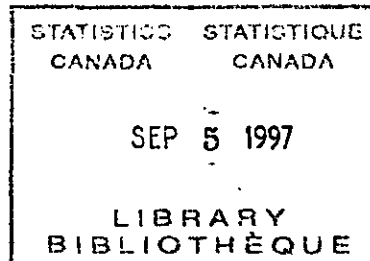


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Testing 1991 Census Ethnic Ancestry,  
Ethnic Identity and Race Questions:

Results of Two Surveys



Paper presented  
Canadian Population Society  
Windsor, Ontario  
June 5, 1988

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# ABSTRACT

In preparation for the 1991 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada has been testing ethnic origin, ethnic identity and race questions. The paper outlines some of the major findings of the Overcoverage Study and the Modular Test #2. Where appropriate, concerns raised in Focus Group testing are included.



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In preparation for the 1991 Census, Statistics Canada has been testing differing versions of ethnic origin/ancestry, ethnic identity/affiliation and race/visible minority questions. Several testing approaches have been used, including surveys, focus groups and consultation with interested groups and individuals.

It is the objective of this paper to discuss the results of two surveys: Overcoverage Study conducted in July, 1986 and the Modular Test #2 which was in the field January, 1988. Where appropriate, findings originating from the focus group testing undertaken in July/August 1987 and February 1988 will be introduced.

It should be mentioned at the outset that two other studies undertaken by Statistics Canada which will also influence 1991 Census question development shall not be discussed at this time: the Labour Market Activity Survey (January 1988) and the National Census Test (November 1988).

### 1.1 BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Three major assumptions underlie the discussion presented in this paper.

- 1: The data needs required under Bill C-31 Employment Equity Legislation form the *raison d'être* of a Statistics Canada race/visible minority question.
- 2: In order to meet the needs of the Employment Equity legislation and accompanying regulations, a Statistics Canada race question must be able to identify as two separate groups, the targeted visible minority and the non-visible populations. Thus, a Statistics Canada race type question must identify two sub-populations -- one that conforms to the Bill C-31 regulations which defines visible minorities as those persons who are non-white in colour or non-caucasian in race. Excluded by this definition are those persons who do not fit the visible minority definition and so comprise the non-visible population.

Not included in the Employment Equity visible minority population are those groups which may be socially 'visible' because of their dress, Old Order Mennonites for example, persons visible because of their age -- the elderly. Also excluded are the groups that are in a visible minority situation because of population spatial distributions, for example, the non-Native nurse living on an Indian reserve. All of these groups could be viewed as being in a 'visible minority' but are not defined as such under the Employment Equity Act.

- 3: In order to fully meet the data demands of Employment Equity, various subgroups within the visible minority population may need to be identified. Thus, it may be necessary to ask more than one question in order to identify various racial, ethnic or cultural groups.

#### Structure of the paper

The paper will discuss the Overcoverage Study first and then consider the MT2 results. Conclusions based on these two studies and the focus groups will be summarized at the end of the paper.

#### 2.1 1986 Census Overcoverage Study -- Purpose and Methodology

The Overcoverage study was conducted six weeks after the 1986 Census with a view to the verification of census responses. All questions in the study were interviewer administered using a face to face methodology with the interviewer reading both the questions and the response boxes to the designated household member. The household member 15 years of age and over whose birth date was closest to the interview date, but not before, was the respondent designated to answer the aboriginal, ethnic and language questions. Only one member of the household was selected and proxy interviews were not permitted.

In total, 9,110 respondents provided additional cultural and linguistic information about themselves. The Overcoverage study sample was enriched in order to obtain a varied linguistic, ethnic and racially differentiated population\*.

#### 2.2 Ethnic origin, Ethnic identity and affiliation and Race questions

Four questions were developed to evaluate the 1986 Census ethnic origin data (see Annex A). The ethnic questions in the study followed three aboriginal questions and preceded thirteen language questions.

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\* For greater detail on the sampling and methodology please see R. Boyer, Rationale of the Sample Design of the Overcoverage Study Private Dwelling Component. Statistics Canada, 1986.

Also see P. White, Report #1: Summary of Findings from the 1986 Census Overcoverage Study -- Visible Minority Question. Statistics Canada, January, 1988.



Questions 18a and 18b asked the respondent to report paternal and maternal ethnic origins. The 18a question was: To which ethnic or cultural groups do or did your paternal ancestors (on father's side) belong? The 18b question was: To which ethnic or cultural groups do or did your maternal ancestors (on mother's side) belong?

Question 19 measured the respondent's ethnic or cultural self-identity. Question 19 was: To which ethnic or cultural groups do you consider yourself to now belong?

Question 20 measured the ethnic and cultural affiliation of the respondent. Question 20 asked: How often you identify yourself with the ethnic or group to which you or your ancestors do or did belong?

Question 21 asked the respondent to identify the visible and racial group to which he felt belonged. Question 21 asked: Do you consider yourself to belong to Canada's visible or racial minority population?

Questions 18 (a, b) and 19 used the 1986 Census ethnic origin question format. Fifteen mark-box origins were provided on the question and up to three additional write-in origins were permitted. This was done to facilitate comparison between the Overcoverage Study and the 1986 Census ethnic origin question. Questions 20 and 21 of the Overcoverage Study used a format different to that used in the 1986 Census.

Question 20 allowed the respondent to rank their participation/affiliation with their ancestral and self-identified ethnic origins. Question 21 grouped the visible and racial minority groups into eight categories and up to two write-in entries were permitted.

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\*\*Data file

All data (Overcoverage Study and Modular Test #2) presented in this paper are unweighted and unrounded. National population estimates based on the Overcoverage Study data and the Modular Test #2 have not been made. Data from these two studies must not be used to estimate the size of Canada's ethnic, cultural or racial groups.

The analysis presented in this paper was based on unedited data files. Where it is relevant, tables shown in the paper will note coding errors, inconsistency in response and non-response by respondents.

### 2.3 Overcoverage Study question non-response

The levels of non-response for the ethnic questions are shown in Table 1. The level of question non-response ranged from 2.3% for Question 21 to 4.8% for Question 20. Such levels of non-response are comparable to 1981 and 1986 Census non-response levels for the cultural variables.

It is interesting to note that the racial and visible minority question had the lowest non-response rate of all of the ethnic questions asked by the Overcoverage study. In this question, respondents could give an YES/NO response and only in the YES instance did they have to provide further information.

### 2.4 Discussion of Results of Question 21: Do you consider yourself to belong to Canada's visible or racial minority population?

Question 21 which identified the visible minority population was the last of the ethnic questions asked of respondents. The question required respondents to answer in the positive or negative as to whether they considered themselves to be part of Canada's visible or racial minority population.

Respondents could answer NO, I do not consider myself to belong to Canada's visible or racial minority population. Or they could answer Yes to the question and in which case they were directed to specify the racial or visible minority group to which they belonged. There were eight mark-boxes and two write-in spaces provided for the specification of racial and minority groups.

In total, 8,456 respondents said that they did not belong to Canada's visible or racial minority population. Some 441 answered YES to this question and two respondents did not answer Yes or No, but did write-in a response in the space provided. Of the total 443 affirmative responses, 25 (5.6%) gave only a YES response and did not elaborate as to the group to which they belonged.

Tables 3 and 4 provide a listing of the Question 21 responses. It is important to note that of the 443 who provided a positive response, 252 (56.9%) matched the criteria of the Employment Equity definition of a visible minority population. Another 166 (37.5%) self-identified as being in a visible or racial minority in Canada, but their write-in answers did not meet the Employment Equity definition. Table 5 presents a summary of the distribution of valid and invalid visible minority responses.

TABLE 1: NON-RESPONSE BY QUESTION, 1986 CENSUS OVERCOVERAGE STUDY

OVERCOVERAGE STUDY QUESTIONS	Q. 18a	Q. 18b	Q. 19	Q. 20	Q. 21
TOTAL IN SURVEY	11,271	11,271	11,271	11,271	11,271
REFUSALS BY QUESTION	2,428	2,471	2,421	2,599	2,369
SURVEY REFUSALS	2,158	2,158	2,158	2,158	2,158
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN QUESTION REFUSALS AND SURVEY	(270)	(313)	(263)	(441)	(211)
SURVEY RESPONSE	9,113	9,113	9,113	9,113	9,113
QUESTION RESPONSE	8,843	8,800	8,850	8,672	8,902
NON-RESPONSE RATE PER QUESTION	2.96%	3.43%	2.89%	4.84%	2.32%

TABLE 2: RESULTS OF Q.21, "DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BELONG TO CANADA'S VISIBLE OR RACIAL MINORITY POPULATION?"

TYPE OF RESPONSE	Q.21 RESULTS
YES, VISIBLE MINORITY	441
NO, NOT A VISIBLE MINORITY	8,456
DID NOT SPECIFY YES OR NO BUT DID WRITE-IN GROUP	2
CODING ERRORS	3
QUESTION NON-RESPONSE	211
TOTAL RESPONSE	9,113

TABLE 3: RESPONSE COMBINATIONS OF SELF-DEFINED VISIBLE MINORITY GROUP  
MEETING EMPLOYMENT EQUITY DEFINITION

VISIBLE MINORITY GROUP MEETING DEFINITION	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
BLACK	62
YES + BLACK	1
YES + BLACK + JAMAICAN	3
YES + HAITIAN	1
YES + CANADIAN BLACK	1
YES + WEST INDIAN N.I.E.	2
CHINESE	54
YES + CHINESE	1
YES + CHINESE + OTHER AFRICAN	1
YES + CHINESE + VIETNAMESE	1
S.E. ASIAN	26
YES + S.E. ASIAN	1
YES + KOREAN	1
SOUTH ASIAN	43
YES + SOUTH ASIAN	1
YES + SOUTH ASIAN + PACIFIC ISLANDS	1
YES + SOUTH ASIAN + S. AMERICAN	1
YES + SOUTH ASIAN + PUNJABI	1
YES + SOUTH ASIAN + EAST INDIAN	2
YES + SOUTH ASIAN + MALAY	1
YES + EAST INDIAN	3
YES + EAST INDIAN + PUNJABI	1
YES + SIKH	3
YES + SIKH + PUNJABI	3
PACIFIC ISLANDS	13
YES + PACIFIC ISLANDS	1
YES + PACIFIC ISLANDS + FILIPINO	2
YES + FILIPINO	1
FILIPINO	1
ARAB	6
YES + ARAB	1
YES + ARAB + S. AMERICAN	1
YES + ARAB + IRANIAN	1
WEST ASIAN	2
YES + WEST ASIAN	2
INDIGENOUS CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICAN	12
YES + CENTRAL/SOUTH AMERICAN	1
YES + MEXICAN	1
YES + OTHER CENTRAL, SOUTH AND LATIN AMERICAN	1
TOTAL MEETING DEFINITION	252

TABLE 4: SELF-DEFINED VISIBLE MINORITY POPULATION  
NOT MEETING EMPLOYMENT EQUITY DEFINITION

SELF-DEFINED VISIBLE MINORITY POPULATION NOT MEETING DEFINITION	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
YES + BRITISH NIE	4
YES + OTHER BRITISH	7
YES + ACADIAN	1
YES + QUEBECDIS	1
YES + FRENCH CANADIAN	9
YES + YUGOSLAV	2
YES + SWEDISH	1
YES + SLOVAK	1
YES + HUNGARIAN	2
YES + CROATIAN	1
YES + GREEK	3
YES + PORTUGUESE	7
YES + RUSSIAN	1
YES + MENNONITE	1
YES + FRENCH	5
YES + ENGLISH	3
YES + SCOTTISH	2
YES + GERMAN	5
YES + GERMAN +YUGOSLAV	1
YES + ITALIAN	7
YES + UKRAINIAN	4
YES + DUTCH	1
YES + JEWISH	3
YES + POLISH	8
YES + INUIT	3
YES + NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN	49
YES + NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN + AMERINDIAN	1
YES + METIS	24
YES + AMERINDIAN	5
YES + CANADIAN	2
YES + CANADIAN + YUGOSLAV	1
TOTAL OF SELF-DEFINED GROUP NOT MEETING DEFINITION	165

Table 3 shows the response combinations for the group which identified as being in a visible minority in Canada and whose answer complied with the Employment Equity definition. The mark-box entries were used by 218 of the 252 respondents (86.5%). A further 12 or 4.8% used both mark-boxes and write-in entries and another 22 or 8.7% used only the write-in spaces.

An example of the 8.7 per cent who gave only write-in responses and did not use the mark-boxes were the 3 Haitian and 1 Canadian Black respondents who did not check the box Black. As well, all of the six respondents who gave Sikh as a write-in response did not check the South Asian mark-box and four respondents preferred to write-in East Indian instead of marking the South Asian box.

Further some respondents of mixed ethnic background wished to state their origins. This group, 4.8% of respondents, checked a mark-box and also provided a write-in entry. Answers included, for example, Chinese and Vietnamese, South Asian and Malay, Arab and Iranian, and South Asian and Other African.

Table 4 shows the response combinations of respondents, 166 in total, which did not meet the Employment Equity definition of a visible or racial minority group. Included were those who gave their background as being British (16 or 9.6%), French (16 or 9.6%), Canadian (4 or 2.4%), and European (48 or 28.9%). The largest group which considered itself to be a visible or racial minority were Native Peoples. In total, 82 or 49.2% of the group which did not meet the Employment Equity definition wrote-in Inuit, Metis or North American Indian.

In the Overcoverage Study sample, 37.5% of respondents who answered YES to the visible minority question did not meet the definition. Thus, some respondents considered their group to be in a minority position and so answered affirmatively to a question directed at 'visible' minorities. The findings of the focus group testing that occurred in Montreal, August, 1987 also gave evidence to such a tendency. For example, francophones tended to ignore the wording 'visible' minority in a race question and answer affirmatively to the question because they defined themselves as being a 'minority group in Canada'.

As for Aborigines, they are considered by Employment Equity to be a separate target group and so are not included in the definition of visible minority groups. However as many of these persons are non-caucasian in race and non-white in colour they self-defined as belonging to Canada's visible and racial minority population.

## 2.5 Summary of Visible Minority question findings

The Overcoverage Study visible minority question did have a high response rate but there was also a high level of false identification or association of belonging to Canada's racial or visible minority population. The next section of the paper examines responses from the other ethnic questions in the study in order to evaluate the quality of the Overcoverage Study visible minority data.

### 3.1 Discussion of Overcoverage Study ancestral and self-identity questions

In Questions 18a and 18b, respondents were asked to indicate their paternal and maternal ethnic origins. Evaluation of this data in Table 6 shows that for most groups the paternal line of origins yielded counts which were higher than the maternal line of origins. An interesting exception was the aboriginal population as counts were higher for maternal origins than for paternal origins. In the case of the Employment Equity defined racial and visible minority population, tracing origins on the paternal side yielded the highest counts for all groups except Korean, Filipino and S.E. Asian.

The ethnic or cultural self-identity question (#19) produced counts for the racial and visible minority groups that in most cases were lower than the counts obtained from the maternal ethnic origin question (#18b). Also Question 19 counts for these groups tended to be higher than were shown in the visible minority question (#21).

Table 6 which compares the responses for the designated groups for the ancestral and self-identity questions and the direct visible minority question shows that many respondents (380) did have a paternal racial and ethnic background that included one or more of the Employment Equity designated groups. However as was shown by the number of responses to Question #21 (252), the respondent may not have considered himself to belong to Canada's visible or racial minority population and/or may not have wished to indicate this ethno-racial heritage on a government questionnaire.

For example, 78 respondents gave their paternal origins as being Black as compared to 71 who said their maternal origins were Black. This compares to a count of 69 Blacks who self-identified as belonging to Canada's visible or racial minority population. For the Chinese group, 96 respondents had paternal Chinese origins, while 92 said they had maternal Chinese origins. This compares to 56 Chinese who self-identified as being a visible minority in Canada.

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF RESPONSE TYPES, Q.21, "DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF TO BELONG TO CANADA'S VISIBLE OR RACIAL MINORITY POPULATION?"

Q. 21 TYPE OF RESPONSE	RESULTS
YES + MEETING EMPLOYMENT EQUITY DEFINITION	251
WRITE-IN RESPONSE FILIPINO, YES /NO NOT SPECIFIED	1
TOTAL MEETING EMPLOYMENT EQUITY DEFINITION	252
YES RESPONSE + NOT MEETING EMPLOYMENT EQUITY DEFINITION	165
WRITE-IN RESPONSE CANADIAN, YES/NO NOT SPECIFIED	1
TOTAL YES RESPONSES NOT MEETING DEFINITION	166
YES ONLY RESPONSE	25
NO, NOT A VISIBLE MINORITY	8,456
CODING ERRORS	3
QUESTION NON-RESPONSE	211
TOTAL POPULATION	9,113

TABLE 6 : COMPARISON OF RESULTS BY QUESTION FOR EMPLOYMENT EQUITY DEFINED GROUPS

VISIBLE MINORITY GROUP(1)	Q.18a PATERNAL ORIGINS	Q.18b MATERNAL ORIGINS	Q.19 SELF IDENTITY	Q.21 VISIBLE MINORITY(4)
BLACK(2)	78	71	67	69
CHINESE(3)	96	92	81	56
JAPANESE	10	9	10	5
KOREAN	6	6	5	5
FILIPINO	28	28	23	18
SOUTH ASIAN	84	83	65	59
WEST ASIAN + ARAB	38	35	30	10
S.E. ASIAN	25	25	25	16
OTHER(LATIN AMERICANS)	15	19	12	14
TOTAL VISIBLE MINORITY	380	368	318	252
% OF QUESTION POPULATION	4.30%	4.18%	3.59%	2.83%
TOTAL POPULATION BY QUESTION	8,843	8,800	8,850	8,902

1. GROUPS SELECTED ON THE BASIS OF EMPLOYMENT EQUITY DEFINITIONS  
2. BLACK INCLUDES WRITE-IN ENTRIES OF HAITIAN, JAMAICAN, CANADIAN BLACK, ETC.  
3. THE WRITE-IN OF CHINESE + VIETNAMESE HAS BEEN INCLUDED IN THE CHINESE GROUP  
4. QUESTIONNAIRES WERE EXAMINED TO MAKE COMPARISONS WITH Q.18a, 18b AND 19

	Q18a PATERNAL ORIGINS	Q18b MATERNAL ORIGINS	Q19 SELF IDENTITY	Q21 VISIBLE MINORITY
ABORIGINAL ORIGINS	139	183	148	82



Conversely, 139 respondents stated their paternal cultural origins to be aboriginal as compared to 183 who gave maternal aboriginal origins, while 148 said their ethnic self-identity included aboriginal origins. On Question #21, 82 aboriginals declared themselves to be in a visible minority in Canada.

What is particularly striking is that some groups which showed a high correlation between paternal, maternal and ethnic self-identity did not self-identify as belonging to Canada's visible or racial minority population. For example, 10 respondents had paternal Japanese origins and 9 had maternal Japanese origins. In total, to Question #19 on ethnic or cultural self-identity, 10 gave the write-in answer Japanese. However, only 5 Japanese respondents identified as belonging to Canada's visible or racial minority population. Given the history of this group in Canada, some Japanese respondents may not wish to identify as belonging to a visible or racial minority population.

Another group which showed considerable difference in their answers to the questions on paternal and maternal origins, self-identity and belonging to Canada's visible or racial minority population was the West Asian group. For example, 38 gave paternal West Asian origins and 35 gave maternal West Asian origins, while 30 said they had an ethnic self-identity with the West Asian/Arab ethnic or cultural group. However, only 10 considered themselves to belong to Canada's racial or visible minority population. This finding was also evident in the August, 1987 Toronto and Montreal focus group tests. At these sessions, West Asians seemed to be surprised to discover that Employment Equity included them as part of Canada's visible minority population. This was particularly true for those focus group participants who were of Armenian or Iranian background.

#### 4.1 Summary: Overcoverage Study

The Overcoverage Study reveals some interesting aspects of the identification of ethnic, cultural and racial groups. First, there were problems with the questions used in the Overcoverage Study, in particular the question on belonging to Canada's visible or racial minority population.

The Overcoverage Study response to a visible minority question indicated a reluctance on the part of some racial groups to self-identify. This may have been a result of the survey methodology: the face to face interview, though it would have been expected that persons might have been less likely to underreport visible or racial minority status under such an interview situation.

It could also reflect respondent hesitancy, suspicion as well as a lack of knowledge about Affirmative Action and Employment Equity type programs. There was no debriefing of interviewers so it is not possible to ascertain the impact on the respondents of the face to face methodology, or their hesitancy, suspicion and lack of knowledge about Employment Equity. Certainly at the Montreal and Toronto focus groups, participants showed some suspicion of government motives and there was a general lack of knowledge about the Employment Equity program.

A self-perception type of question, for example 'do you consider yourself', does fit the context of the Employment Equity legislation. However, a self-perception question is open to interpretation by the respondent. In the Overcoverage study, 37.5% of respondents who said they belonged to Canada's visible and racial minority population did not meet the Employment Equity definition. This included persons who said their background was British, French, European or Aboriginal. In economic terms members of these groups may be more disadvantaged than the targeted visible minority groups and perhaps they believe that they have been overlooked by government programs. For others, a positive answer may indicate a 'backlash' response.

This raises the issue of the use of a self-perception question to collect racial and visible minority data. The interference with data collection occurs when respondents are asked to match their perception of a 'visible' minority group with the definition established elsewhere. Thus data collectors in this situation measure perception and awareness of policy and not some more or less objective or factual event or situation.

Another factor which may have contributed to poor levels of affirmative response to Question 21 was the phrase 'visible minority'. It was qualified by the word 'racial', even so there is general lack of understanding about the term. Difference of opinion concerning the definition of the term 'visible minority' was evident at the August, 1987 focus group meetings held in Toronto and Montreal. Unfortunately, as there was no debriefing of interviewers or reinterview of Overcoverage Study respondents, there is no guide other than the responses provided in the study of the respondents' understanding of the term 'visible minority'.

## 5.0 Modular Test #2

The Modular Test #2 (MT2) race or colour question represented a different approach from that used in the Overcoverage Study question as the term 'visible minority' was not used. The MT2 question asked: Which of the following best describes your race or colour? (Please mark or print as many as apply, regardless of your country of birth.) Eight of the targeted Employment Equity groups were listed. Also included was a mark-in box for aboriginal peoples, a mark-in box labeled White and a write-in space for the other racial groups not mentioned specifically in the question. In the MT2 questionnaire, the race question (#15) followed two ethnic questions as well as several questions on language, place of birth and religion.

Of the two ethnic questions, Question 13 (ethnic ancestry) asked about the ethnic or cultural origins of the respondents' parent and grandparents. Question 14 (ethnic identity) asked the respondent to record ethnic identity. Both questions 13 and 14 allowed for separate write-ins for the South Asian and the Black groups. As well, on one-half of the sample, the mark-box Canadian was included on these questions, while the other half of the questionnaires did not show such a box (see Annex B).

### 5.1 MT2: Methodology and Sample

The MT2 study was conducted in January, 1988 in six sites across Canada -- Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver. It had a final respondent size of 9,111 individuals and specific ethnic, racial and linguistic groups were targeted. The 1986 Census mother tongue data was used to select the MT2 sample population so that ethnic groups with high levels non-official language usage would be included in the study.

The survey methodology involved the drop-off of the MT2 questionnaire and the pickup of the completed questionnaire about one week later. All persons in the household were instructed to complete the questionnaire. As well, respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in a discussion group at which the MT2 questionnaire would be discussed. From this question, participants for the February focus groups were selected.

### 5.2 Question 15: Race or Colour

The MT2 race question (#15) seeks to address the data demands of Employment Equity. Based on the results from this question, the study sample population can be divided

into two groups -- the targeted visible minority population and the group which is not visible on the basis of race or colour. As well, the visible respondents could be grouped into the specific sub-populations declared to be of interest to the Employment Equity program.

Further, the MT2 race question was an attempt to move away from the perceptual type of question which had proved to be so problematic in both the 1986 Census question #7 (aboriginal identity) and the Overcoverage Study where the term visible minority was used. Thus by devising a more factual type question, it was expected that respondents would be better able to provide accurate answers.

However, several factors worked against the success of the question, including a high non-response rate. As well, response conflicts amongst the ethnic ancestry, ethnic identity and the race question raised questions about question design and more important the usage of terms in these questions. The non-response issue will be discussed first, followed by a more extensive examination of the response conflicts amongst the three questions.

### 5.3 Question non-response

There was a relatively high level of non-response to the MT2 race question -- 11.3% overall. Non-response was especially high in the Quebec City site -- 20.5%, though elsewhere the level was generally in the 10-11% percentage range as is shown in Table 7. By contrast, the non-aboriginal section of the ethnic ancestry question had a non-response rate of 6.5% and the ethnic identity had a 7.4% non-response rate.

Resistance to the race question was very evident in the focus group meetings held in Vancouver, Winnipeg and Halifax with participants from both the visible and non-visible sectors of the population. From the 'public at large' focus group participants the view was expressed that the race question was racist and offensive. In particular, this group was concerned that visible minorities would consider the question to be objectionable because of its implied racist overtones. Focus group participants originating from Europe also shared this view.

Amongst the visible minority participants at the focus groups, the view was expressed by many that they wanted to obtain their employment on the basis of merit not quota. The desire to be treated fairly and equitably was at the center of their concerns.

Table 7: Non-Response Rates, Question 15 - Race or Colour,  
MT2 Test Sites.

MT2 Test Sites	Non-response rates (%)
MT2 - Total	11.3
Halifax	9.1
Quebec City	20.5
Montreal	11.8
Toronto	8.3
Winnipeg	11.2
Vancouver	11.0

As well, many of the visible minority participants expressed considerable suspicion that the question could be used to limit immigration of non-whites. This was a significant fear and was expressed by all of the visible minority groups which attended focus group discussions.

The observed high level of question non-response may well have been in response to a widespread fear, distrust and suspicion about the use to which the data would be put. The February, 1988 focus groups also confirmed that the Employment Equity program and its objectives were not widely known or understood.

As well, the three cultural questions, ethnic ancestry, ethnic identity and race appeared to some respondents to be very similar. Participants at the focus groups identified the problem of response burden as a deterrent to the completion of the questionnaire.

Thus factors of suspicion, lack of knowledge about the Employment Equity program and response burden affected the level of non-response. Quebec City showed a particularly high level of non-response. Lack of relevancy of the question and perceived offensiveness of the question may have been the major contributors to the higher non-response levels shown for this test site.

#### 5.4 Ethnic groups and question format

The second factor which effected the quality of question response and hence its' usefulness, were the categories used in the Questions 13 (ethnic ancestry) and 14 (ethnic identity) to categorize responses. It is important to recall that the sample targeted non-official mother tongue groups and in particular groups which have had considerable recent immigrant population additions.

Preliminary analysis of the data showed that many respondents were confused by the term South Asian and the format of the write-in entry space which accompanied this term in the Questions 13 and 14. As well, some respondents were confused with the Black write-in entry space in these two questions.

It would appear that the design of the Questions 13 and 14 contributed to the inconsistency in response patterns shown for selected groups in Table 8. Moreover, confusion on the part of some respondents appears to be greater factor in the difference in counts between questions than would be due to change in concept from ancestry to identity to race.

For the purposes of this paper, discussion will center on the groups shown in Table 8: Comparison of Selected Groups, MT2 Questions 13, 14, and 15. The groups included in the table are: Chinese, Korean, Filipino, South Asian and Black.

Table 8 shows some interesting differences in the response patterns for the selected groups. The Chinese population, which appeared as a mark-in box in all three questions had a count for the race and ancestry questions that was very close -- a difference of only two cases. The identity count was lower, 342, as would be expected as the response box Canadian on the Questions 13 and 14 could have been marked instead of Chinese.

The counts across questions for the Korean and Filipino groups show a different picture. Both of these groups were write-in responses in the other ethnic or cultural group category for the ancestry and identity questions. However, on the race question both groups appeared as mark-in boxes. Both groups show higher counts in the race question than were recorded in the ethnic ancestry and ethnic identity questions. As was shown for the Chinese group, the identity question recorded a lower count than did the ancestry question.

However, a different trend was evident for the South Asian and Black groups. For both of these groups, the ancestry and identity counts were greater than were those recorded for the race question. In the case of the South Asian group, the race question response was 65% of the ancestry question and 74% of the identity response.

Investigation of the Question 13 write-in responses that accompanied the South Asian mark-box revealed that 29% of the South Asian responses were suspect and in the case of Question 14, 20 per cent of the South Asian write-ins responses were suspect. Responses considered suspect included the write-ins of Greek, West Asian including Egyptian, Arab, Armenian and Lebanese, South American write-ins were present as well as the entries of Haitian, South East Asian groups and Filipino. The distribution of suspect and non-problematic entries are shown in Table 9.

The response pattern for the Black population also showed a higher count for the ancestry and identity questions than for race. Investigation of write-in answers placed in the Black write-in space revealed that 18% of the entries were suspect for Question 13 and 13% were suspect for Question 14. Responses considered as suspect included Greek, Punjabi, East Indian and Tamil. The distribution of suspect and non-problematic entries are shown in Table 10.

Table 8: Comparison of Selected Racial Groups, MT2 Questions  
13, 14 and 15.

Selected Groups	Q 13 Ethnic Origin of Parents\ Grandparents	Q 14 Ethnic Identity	Q 15 Race or Colour
Mark-box All Questions			
Chinese	360	342	358
Write-in Q.13, Q.14 Mark-box-Q.15			
Korean Filipino	40 256	34 225	45 262
Mark-box, Write-in Q.13, Q.14 Mark-box Q.15			
South Asian Black	995 355	883 312	621 276



Table 9: South Asian Entries, MT2, Questions 13 and 14.

SOUTH ASIAN RESPONSES	Q 13.	% TOTAL SOUTH ASIAN RESPONSE	Q 14.	% TOTAL SOUTH ASIAN RESPONSE
Suspect South Asian Entries - write-in only	265	26.6%	155	18.6%
Suspect South Asian Entries - markbox and Write-in	24	2.4%	16	1.9%
Non-problematic South Asi Entries - write-in only	216	21.7%	217	26.1%
Non-problematic South Asi Entries, mark-box and Write-in	395	39.7%	335	40.2%
Other Entries South Asian markbox onl Canadian write-in	87 1	8.7%	101 5	12.1%
Coding errors	7	0.7%	4	0.5%
Total South Asian Respons	995	100.0%	833	100.0%

Table 10: Black Entries, MT2 Questions 13 and 14.

BLACK RESPONSES	Q 13.	% TOTAL BLACK RESPONSE	Q 14.	% TOTAL BLACK RESPONSE
Suspect Black Entries - write-in only	60	17.5%	39	12.7%
Suspect Black Entries - markbox and Write-in	2	0.6%	1	0.3%
Non-problematic Black Entries - write-in only	94	27.4%	84	27.4%
Non-problematic Black Entries, mark-box and Write-in	156	45.5%	149	48.5%
Other Entries Markbox Black only	26	7.6%	29	9.4%
Coding errors	5	1.5%	5	1.6%
Total Black	343	100.0%	307	100.0%

Two factors appear to have contributed to this high level of suspect responses. First, there may have been a widespread misunderstanding about the meaning of the term South Asian. Secondly, the formatting of the question write-in spaces may have confused respondents and caused them to answer in the first convenient space in order to complete the questionnaire as soon as possible.

Focus group testing has shown that for many respondents, the Census questionnaire is viewed as a burden. Respondents complete the Census only because it is required by law. However, they do not find the questions to be relevant or to be of general interest to them. Respondents seem to complete the form as quickly as possible in order to get it done and out of the way.

For both of the South Asian and Black groups, the MT2 ancestry and identity counts were inflated and corrective editing would be required before the data could be used. It is interesting to note that for those suspect South Asian respondents that did go on to complete the the race question, all but one answered something other than South Asian. A similar pattern was shown to be in evidence for the the suspect Black write-in entries.

Thus it would appear that the MT2 race question categories were less confusing and the format clearer than were the ancestry and identity questions. Persons understood the race question though they may not have liked to answer it.

## 6.0

## SUMMARY

Let us review some of the major findings of the two studies and the focus group discussions.

First, Statistics Canada has considerable indication that terms not in common usage, however well liked by the particular group(s) to which they apply, are likely to be misunderstood by the public at large. More important, such misunderstandings can effect in a detrimental way the counts of small sized populations. A misunderstanding on the part of 1 or 2 percentage of the total Canadian population can seriously inflate the counts for a particular group. Statistics Canada experienced this first hand in 1986 with the wording of the Census question on aboriginal identity as the public at large did not understand the terms aboriginal and Inuit. We can add to this list South Asian and visible minority.

The need to use simple and well understood terms does leave Statistics Canada with several major question design problems. First, in the case of the South Asian population, for which there has been criticism that the Census does not adequately count this group, the examples Indian from India, Indian from Uganda, etc., as well as a listing of the cultural regions of India were greeted with enthusiasm and understanding by the South Asian focus group participants. The South Asian group liked having a write-in space and a mark-box. As well, the group preferred the label South Asian as opposed to Indo-pakistani or East Indian which are terms used by others and is not necessarily a name of their own choice.

A further advantage of this approach was that the MT2 format avoided confusion with the mark-in boxes for the aboriginal people of Canada. In 1981, some persons of South Asian origin identified themselves as Status Indians and in 1986 considerable editing was undertaken in order to eliminate the South Asian population from the North American Indian category.

The second requirement concerns the simplicity of question design. Participants in the focus groups have stated that questions need to be simple, easy to understand and to answer. The nuances of concept and definition are lost in a general public environment, especially when factors of illiteracy and non-official language usage are important factors affecting the respondents ability to complete a census questionnaire.

Third, there was a view expressed by focus group participants that the census is to count the population of Canada and not to inquire about the number of bathrooms or to ask very personal questions. Questions which make respondents suspicious and ask of themselves "Why does the government want this information?" or "How will this information get used and by whom?" leads to non-response and to mistrust of Statistics Canada. Such a climate of mistrust and suspicion was no doubt a contributing factor in the non-response to the race question.

Statistics Canada has made considerable progress in the design of race and ethnic origin and identity questions. The National Census test which is scheduled to be in the field in November 1988 will constitute a major and significant pretest of 1991 Census questions. This test will also provide Statistics Canada with a sample size large enough to furnish national estimates. In this way the extent and regional difference in non-response and reaction to a race question can be determined. The test will also enable Statistics Canada to gauge public reaction to a race, ethnic ancestry and ethnic identity questions.

**ANNEX A**  
**Ethnic and Race Questions**

Overcoverage Study

**18.A** To which ethnic or cultural groups  
do or did your paternal ancestors (on  
father's side) belong?

(MARK AS MANY AS APPLY)

- 01 ☐ French
- 02 ☐ English
- 03 ☐ Irish
- 04 ☐ Scottish
- 05 ☐ German
- 06 ☐ Italian
- 07 ☐ Ukrainian
- 08 ☐ Dutch (Netherlands)
- 09 ☐ Chinese
- 10 ☐ Jewish
- 11 ☐ Polish
- 12 ☐ Black
- 13 ☐ Inuit
- 14 ☐ North American Indian
- 15 ☐ Métis

Other ethnic or cultural groups. For  
example, Portuguese, Greek, Indian  
(India), Pakistani, Filipino,  
Japanese, Vietnamese.

(PLEASE SPECIFY)

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→ (GO TO 18.B)

**18.B** To which ethnic or cultural groups  
do or did your maternal ancestors  
(on mother's side) belong?

(MARK AS MANY AS APPLY)

- 01 ☐ French
- 02 ☐ English
- 03 ☐ Irish
- 04 ☐ Scottish
- 05 ☐ German
- 06 ☐ Italian
- 07 ☐ Ukrainian
- 08 ☐ Dutch (Netherlands)
- 09 ☐ Chinese
- 10 ☐ Jewish
- 11 ☐ Polish
- 12 ☐ Black
- 13 ☐ Inuit
- 14 ☐ North American Indian
- 15 ☐ Métis

Other ethnic or cultural groups. For  
example, Portuguese, Greek, Indian  
(India), Pakistani, Filipino,  
Japanese, Vietnamese.

(PLEASE SPECIFY)

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→ (GO TO 19)



- 01 ☐ French
- 02 ☐ English
- 03 ☐ Irish
- 04 ☐ Scottish
- 05 ☐ German
- 06 ☐ Italian
- 07 ☐ Ukrainian
- 08 ☐ Dutch (Netherlands)
- 09 ☐ Chinese
- 10 ☐ Jewish
- 11 ☐ Polish
- 12 ☐ Black
- 13 ☐ Inuit
- 14 ☐ North American Indian
- 15 ☐ Métis



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**MARK (X)**

[illegible]

Overcoverage Study

**21. Do you consider yourself to belong to Canada's visible or racial minority population?**

01 ☐ No, I do not consider myself to belong to Canada's visible or racial minority population → (GO TO 22)

02 ☐ Yes, I do consider myself to belong to Canada's visible or racial minority population →

Would you please specify the racial or minority population to which you belong?

(MARK MORE THAN ONE BOX, IF APPLICABLE)

03 ☐ Black?  
(i.e. Caribbean Black, American Black, Canadian Black, African Black, etc.)

04 ☐ Chinese?

05 ☐ South East Asian?  
(i.e. origins in Japan, Korea, Laos, Kampuchea, Burma, Vietnam, Thailand, etc.)

06 ☐ South Asian?  
(i.e. origins in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, etc.)

07 ☐ Pacific Islands?  
(i.e. origins in Indonesia, Fiji, Philippines, Samoa, etc.)

08 ☐ Arab?  
(i.e. origins in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, North Africa, etc.)

09 ☐ West Asian?  
(i.e. origins in Turkey, Iran, Armenia, Afghanistan, etc.)

10 ☐ Indigenous Central/South American?  
(i.e. Quechuan, Mayan, Mestizo, etc.)

Are there any other visible or racial minority groups not mentioned above to which you consider yourself to belong?

(PLEASE SPECIFY)

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# ANNEX B

## MT2 Ethnic Ancestry, Ethnic Identity and Race Questions

### 13. What are the ethnic or cultural origins of your parents and grandparents?

(Mark or print as many groups as apply.)

4 ☐ Canadian

Native/Aboriginal Peoples of North America

5 ☐ French

(a) 2 ☐ North American Indian

6 ☐ English

3 ☐ Métis

7 ☐ German

4 ☐ Inuit (Eskimo)

8 ☐ Scottish

9 ☐ Irish

(b) Tribe, nation or band, if applicable. (Print, for example, Cree, Haida Nation, Inuvialuit.)

1 ☐ Italian

2 ☐ Ukrainian

3 ☐ Dutch (Netherlands)

4 ☐ Chinese

5 ☐ Jewish

6 ☐ Polish

7 ☐ Portuguese

8 ☐ South Asian (Print group, for example, Indian from India, Indian from Uganda, Pakistani, Punjabi, Tamil.)



9 ☐ Black (Print group, for example, Haitian, African, West Indian Black, Canadian Black.)



1 ☐ Other ethnic or cultural group(s). (Print group(s), for example, Japanese, Vietnamese, Mexican, Greek, Norwegian, Filipino.)



14. What is your ethnic or cultural identity?

(Mark or print as many groups as apply. See Guidelines on back cover.)

1 ☐ Canadian

2 ☐ French

3 ☐ English

4 ☐ German

5 ☐ Scottish

6 ☐ Irish

7 ☐ Italian

8 ☐ Ukrainian

9 ☐ Dutch (Netherlands)

1 ☐ Chinese

2 ☐ Jewish

3 ☐ Polish

4 ☐ Portuguese

5 ☐ South Asian (Print group, for example, Indian from India, Indian from Uganda, Pakistani, Punjabi, Tamil.)

☐☐☐

6 ☐ Black (Print group, for example, Haitian, African, West Indian Black, Canadian Black.)

☐☐☐

7 ☐ Other ethnic or cultural group(s). (Print group(s), for example, Japanese, Vietnamese, Mexican, Greek, Norwegian, Filipino.)

☐☐☐

☐☐☐

Native/Aboriginal Peoples of North America

(a) 8 ☐ North American Indian

9 ☐ Métis

1 ☐ Inuit (Eskimo)

Continue with (b) and (c)

(b) Tribe, nation or band, if applicable. (Print, for example, Cree, Haida Nation, Inuvialuit.)

☐☐☐

(c) Are you?

2 ☐ Status, registered or treaty Indian

3 ☐ Non-status Indian

4 ☐ Neither



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c. 3

MT 2 Questions

15. Which of the following best describes your race or colour?

(Please mark or print as many as apply, regardless of your country of birth.)

1 ☐ Black

2 ☐ Korean

3 ☐ Filipino

4 ☐ Japanese

5 ☐ Chinese

6 ☐ Native/Aboriginal Peoples of North America  
(North American Indian, Métis, Inuit/Eskimo)

7 ☐ South Asian  
(for example, Indian from India, Indian from Uganda, Pakistani, Punjabi, Tamil)

8 ☐ South East Asian  
(for example, Vietnamese, Thai, Laotian)

9 ☐ West Asian or North African  
(for example, Armenian, Syrian, Moroccan)

1 ☐ White  
(for example, British, French, European, Latin/South American of European background)

2 ☐ Other racial group not mentioned above. (Print group.)

