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TORONTO'S MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE

A HOMOGENEOUS ELITE IN A DIVERSE CITY

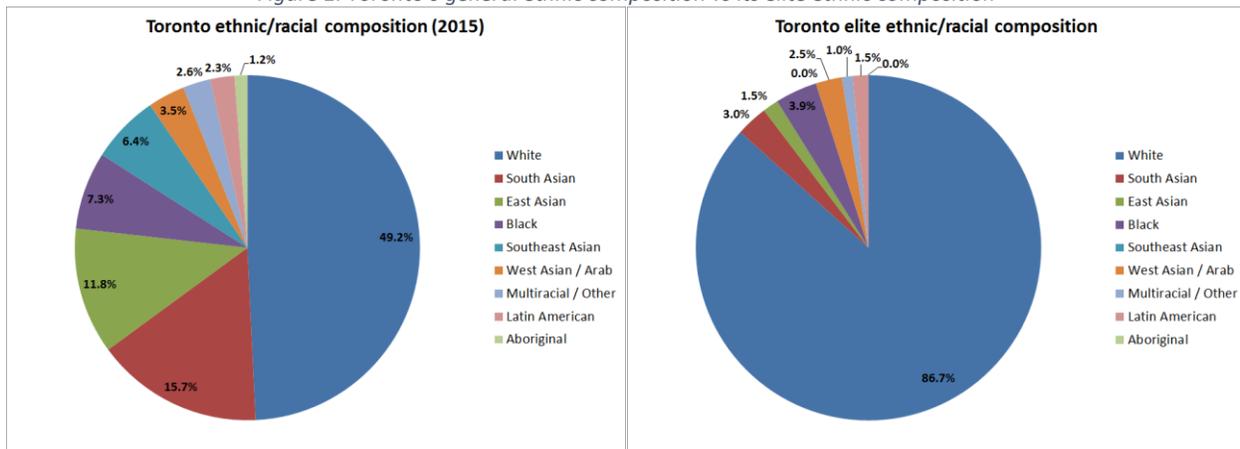
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

Toronto is arguably the most ethnically diverse city in the world. Almost half (48.6%) of its population is foreign born and over half (50.8%) belong to a visible minority group.² Toronto is known and feted worldwide as a multicultural city that works. Ethnic identity is encouraged through Canada's official policy of multiculturalism, and Toronto is especially known as a tolerant place where immigrants have found success.

But in spite of its outward appearance as a multiethnic beacon to other cities, the power structure of Toronto remains a bastion of male and white dominance. Among the city's highest echelon of power and influence, women count less than 1 in 5 (18.7%). But Toronto's elite is even more white than it is male, with visible minorities numbering about 1 in 8 (13.3%). The dearth of visible minorities – a group that is still more male than female – is especially surprising when accounting for the fact that many of the traditional factors that limit women in the workplace (and Toronto's elite are all active in the labour market) are not present amongst male visible minorities. Toronto's ethnic elite also do not mirror the status of the communities at large. (E.g. Although East Asians generally have more favourable socioeconomic indicators than blacks, it is blacks that are more widely represented at the elite level than East Asians.)

The data suggest that diversity in Toronto (and elsewhere) has an even bigger gap vis-à-vis race/ethnicity than with respect to gender. Some theories are posited on why visible minorities are so overwhelmingly underrepresented in the spheres of influence in a city that celebrates its diversity and what consequences the inequitable power structure may create. Finally, some suggestions are offered on what policies and initiatives can help break the glass ceiling faced by women and the "mosaic ceiling" faced by visible minorities.

Figure 1: Toronto's general ethnic composition vs its elite ethnic composition



Source: Statistics Canada; Toronto Life Magazine

¹ Most recent version available for download at www.KaiLChan.ca/policy/politics

² Source: Statistics Canada 2011 National House Survey (NHS) extrapolated to beginning of 2017