

Racial Inequality in Canada's Housing Market

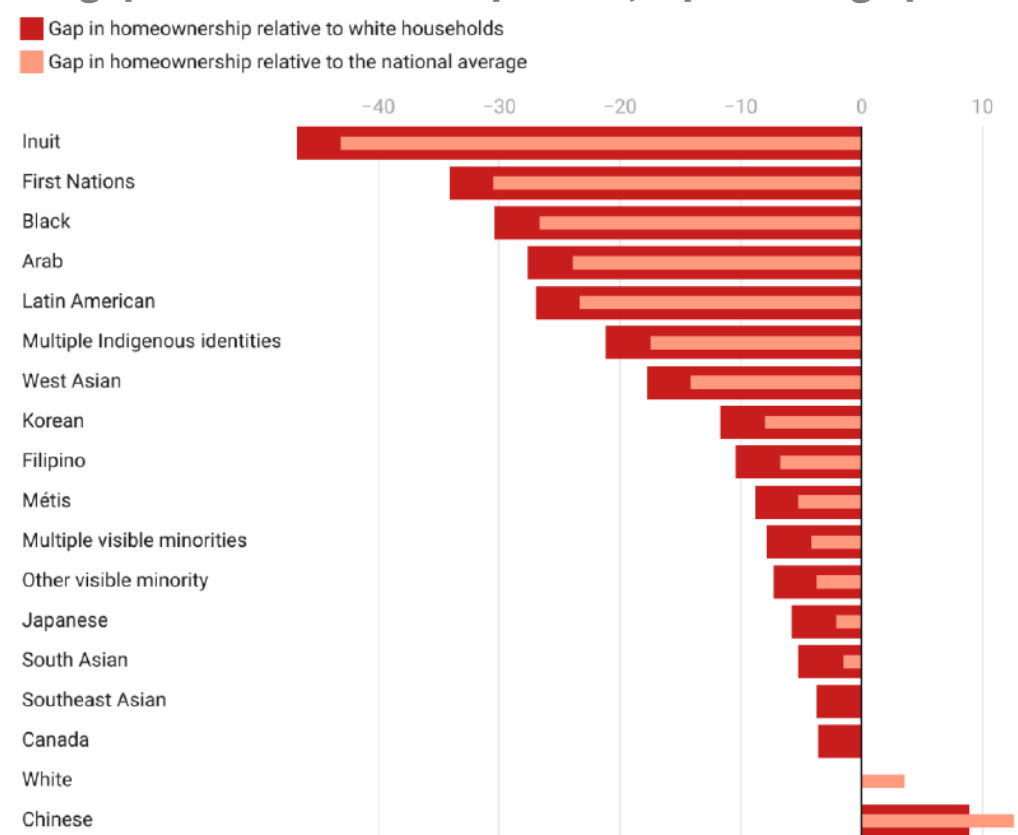
Véronique Sioufi, BC Society for Policy Solutions. *Racial Inequality in Canada's Housing Market*. 2025.
Read the full report here: bcpolicy.ca/housing-inequality.

Canada's housing crisis is a **structural equity issue**. Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities face systemic barriers to secure, adequate and affordable housing, with deep roots in colonial dispossession, discriminatory policy, and contemporary market practices. Addressing the housing crisis requires **rights-based, equity-focused reforms** that **dismantle discrimination and prioritize community-led** solutions.

Racial Gaps in Homeownership Rates

- **The largest racial gaps in home ownership** are experienced by **Inuit (-46.7pp)** and **First Nations (-34.1pp)** households.
- **Disparities in home ownership rates:** Rates for Black, Arab, and Latin American households are **26–30 percentage points lower** than white households.
- **Disparities in value:** Black homes are valued -30% and Latin American homes valued -26% vs. comparable white-owned homes.
- **Widening divide:** Communities that began the 2000s with limited homeownership footholds have slipped further behind.
- **Generational persistence:** Gaps endure across second and third generations, especially for Black and Latin American Canadians.

Racial gap in home ownership 2021 (in percentage points)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

Discrimination in the Rental Market

- **Landlords' discriminatory practices** against racialized (and especially immigrant) applicants include not responding to inquiries, denying rental without a reason, and imposing stricter requirements (including illegal rent deposits) as meta-analyses and field audits have shown. Discrimination is compounded by gender, sexual identity, and family status.
- **Racial disparities in evictions**, with Black populations most affected; census tracts with high Black populations facing double the eviction-filing rates of areas with low percentage of Black populations.
- **Distinct forms of rental discrimination** and coercion are experienced by Indigenous renters in the North.

Core Housing Need: Inadequate, Unsuitable or Unaffordable Housing

- In the 2021 Census (latest available data), this was **most prevalent among Inuit (32.6%), West Asian (19.5%), and Korean (18.7%)** populations; and Black (13.2%), Arab (14.9%), and First Nations (14.5%) households also faced core housing need at nearly twice the national rate of 7.7%.
- **Persistent precarity:** Of racialized persons who were in core housing need in 2011, **26% remained in need five years later**, with Black renters especially overrepresented group.
- **Overcrowding** affects especially Northern Inuit and First Nations communities **where 50% of Inuit renters** lived in overcrowded conditions, as well as newcomers (who are often more likely to accept **overcrowded dwellings** as a coping strategy in Canada's unaffordable housing markets).

Overrepresentation in Homelessness

- Indigenous peoples represent 4.9% of the population but 31% of national shelter users in Canada.
- Black people represent 4.2% of the national population but account for 8% of homeless people in Canada; and in Toronto represent 9% of residents but account for 31% of the city's homeless.
- Women, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+, and people with disabilities experience layered risks.



Increasing housing supply is a necessary step to solving Canada's housing crisis - however, policy interventions that ignore systemic racial inequities risk perpetuating exclusion. **Structural reform and rights-based policy interventions are required** for tangible change.

Recommendations

Policy Imperatives

- Collect and publish race-disaggregated data to monitor inequities, guide policy, and enable accountability.
- Legally define housing discrimination, consistently track its prevalence and strengthen anti-discrimination enforcement mechanisms.
- Drastically expand affordable housing supply, prioritizing investments in Indigenous, Black, and community-led housing projects.
- Address root causes of racial housing inequities (including colonial dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples, discrimination, poverty and wealth inequality) through policy reforms, reparative investments, and prevention strategies.

Community-led Solutions

- Fully implement the National First Nations Homelessness Action Plan and the Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy, respecting and supporting Indigenous jurisdiction and governance.
- Expand funding for Indigenous, Black, and community-led housing providers.
- Pair housing solutions with culturally appropriate holistic support services for marginalized groups.

Tenant Protection

- Strengthen tenant protections through legal aid, rent assistance, and no-eviction-without-rehousing rules.
- Reparative investments in communities displaced by urban renewal.
- Expand housing co-ops, community land trusts, and supportive housing.

Many well-founded recommendations[...] have emerged from years of consultation and study.

The path forward has been mapped; it is time to act.

- Racial inequality in Canada's housing market (2025), p. 31

