

Systemic Anti-Black Racism by the Numbers

(Canada vs. the United States)

November 2023



A Note on Terminology

The terms African Canadians, African Americans, Black Canadians, Black Americans, people of African descent, and Black are used interchangeably throughout this report.

These terms refer to all people of African ancestry residing in Canada or the United States, regardless of whether they arrived in these countries directly from their ancestral homeland on the continent of Africa or from other parts of the world.

This language reflects the various terms used among the diverse Black communities in both countries.

Canada has an official policy of multiculturalism, embraces diversity, and welcomes thousands of refugees and immigrants each year. There is also legislation across the country that protects the human rights of all Canadians, including African Canadians.

Despite these attitudes and policies, anti-Black racism, and specifically systemic anti-Black racism, is still a very present and persistent force creating unequal experiences and outcomes for Black Canadians.

There are various studies that measure people's perceptions of racism in Canada¹ or experiences of racism.² But another way to explore the extent of racism in Canada and the United States is to examine the data and compare the outcomes for Black communities on both sides of the border.

This report includes six charts that compare systemic anti-Black racism in Canada and the United States.

It's difficult for Canadians to hold in their minds at the same time this idea, this fervent belief, that they live in a democratic and even a multicultural society, and that racism can exist in that same society. When they see acts of racism like George Floyd's death, they're convinced that racism is perpetuated by only a few individuals or bad apples, but it's not widespread ... The reality is that racism is expressed not just as conscious acts of hate or violence, but it's far more complex than that. It evolves out of a set of deeply rooted systems in our country. So deeply rooted that it might be easy to miss.

~ **Andrea Davis, PhD** ³

¹ Angus Reid. (2021). Diversity and Racism in Canada: Competing views deeply divide country along gender, generational lines. <https://angusreid.org/diversity-racism-canada/>

² Neustaeter, B. (2020, June 9). In Their Words: Canadians' experiences of racism. CTV News. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/in-their-words-canadians-experiences-of-racism-1.4974360?cache=pawumraq%3FautoPlay%3Dtrue%3FclipId%3D89619>

³ Slaughter, G. & Singh, M. (2020, June 6). Five charts that show what systemic racism looks like in Canada. CTV News. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/five-charts-that-show-what-systemic-racism-looks-like-in-canada-1.4970352?cache=%3FclipId%3D86116%3FcontactForm%3Dtrue>

Defining Systemic Racism⁴

Systemic racism describes how policies, institutional practices, organizational culture, individual attitudes, and other norms within a system work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial inequity. Systemic racism is not something that a few people or organizations choose to practice. It is a key feature of our social, economic, and political systems.

Systemic racism describes how racial inequities can flow from one part of a system (e.g., labour market, education system, healthcare system, child welfare system, criminal justice system) to another part of a system that includes various institutions.

⁴ This definition is adapted from:
The Aspen Institute. *Glossary for Understanding the Dismantling Structural Racism/Promoting Racial Equity Analysis*.
www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf

Structural Racism Explained. Othering & Belonging Institute.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ_8eOaiz8o&t=132s



The Analysis

Canada and the United States are culturally very different. They also have different social, economic, and legal systems. As a result, it would not be fair to directly compare the unemployment rates of the Black population, their health outcomes, and other indicators of systemic racism in both countries.

For a more fair comparison, this report uses two indicators to compare the experiences and outcomes for people of African descent in Canada and the United States:



Racial disparity rate

This indicator compares the extent of the gap between the Black population and White population (or the general population depending on the available data) in both countries. This gap in Canada is then compared to the gap in the United States.



Racial disproportionality rate

This indicator compares the extent to which the Black population in Canada has a particular outcome compared to the Black population in the United States. For example, it divides the proportion of Black people carded to their representation among the general population.

Why Conduct This Analysis?

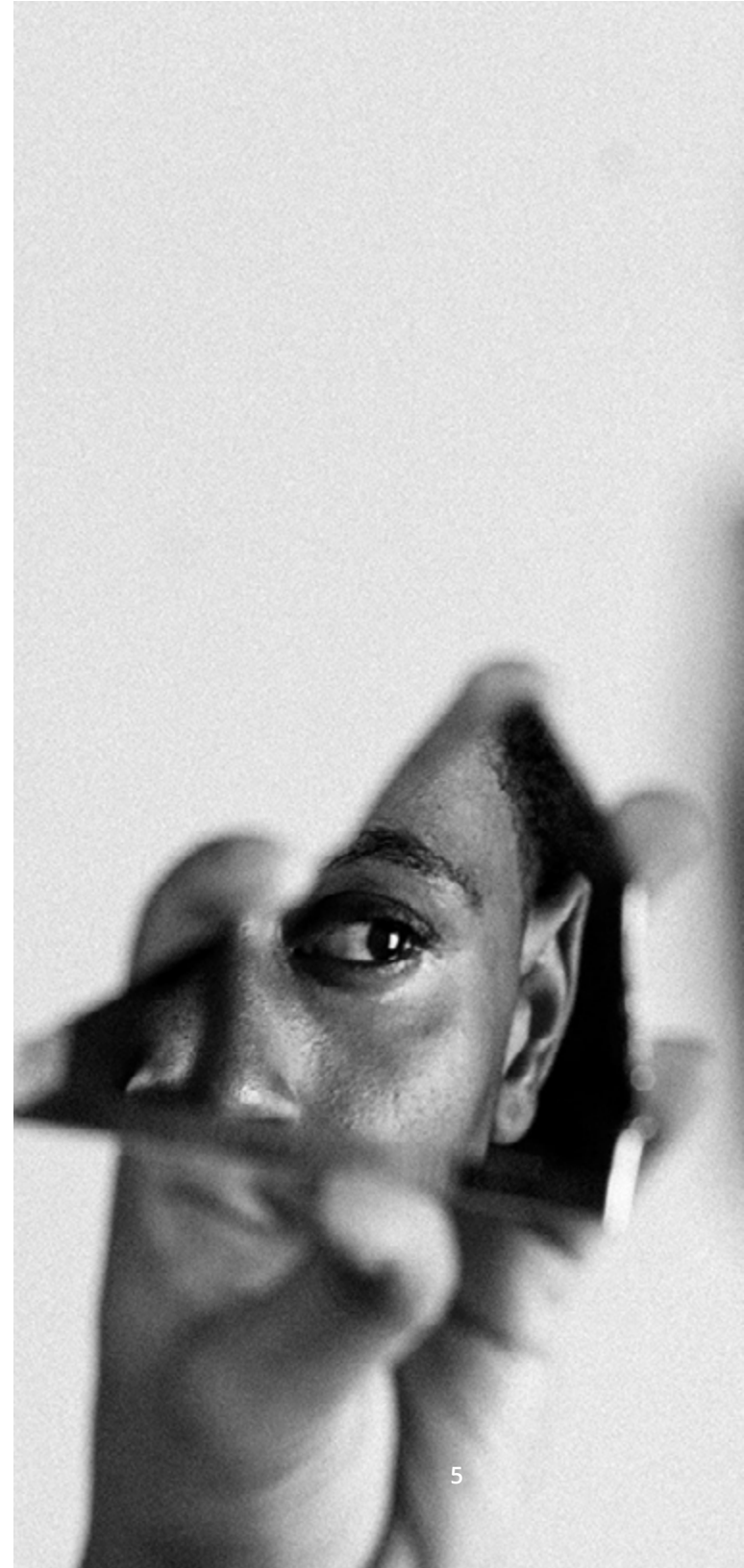
Many Canadians believe that interpersonal anti-Black racism does not exist in Canada to the same extent as it does in the United States. As such, they believe African Canadians fare much better than African Americans.

Systemic anti-Black racism has a much more significant impact on the lives of Black people. But because systemic anti-Black racism is invisible, people tend to blame Black people for the unequal outcomes they experience rather than the systems that create and maintain these disparities. This analysis will help shift the gaze from Black people themselves onto the institutions and systems that create racial inequities.

This analysis also highlights the similar experiences of Black people in Canada and the United States and on how systemic anti-Black racism operates in both countries to perpetuate racial inequity.

It's not race, it's racism. The data are quite clear that this isn't about biology. This is about the environments where we live, where we work, where we play, where we sleep.

~ @Tiffany_L_Green



Defining Disparity and Disproportionality

Ontario's Anti-Racism Directorate identifies the racial disparity rate and the racial disproportionality rate as ways to analyze systemic racism.⁵

The **racial disparity rate** identifies whether there is a gap between a certain group and their reference group, in this case Black and White populations (or general population).

$$\text{Disparity} = \frac{\% \text{ representation for the Black population}}{\% \text{ representation for the White population}}$$

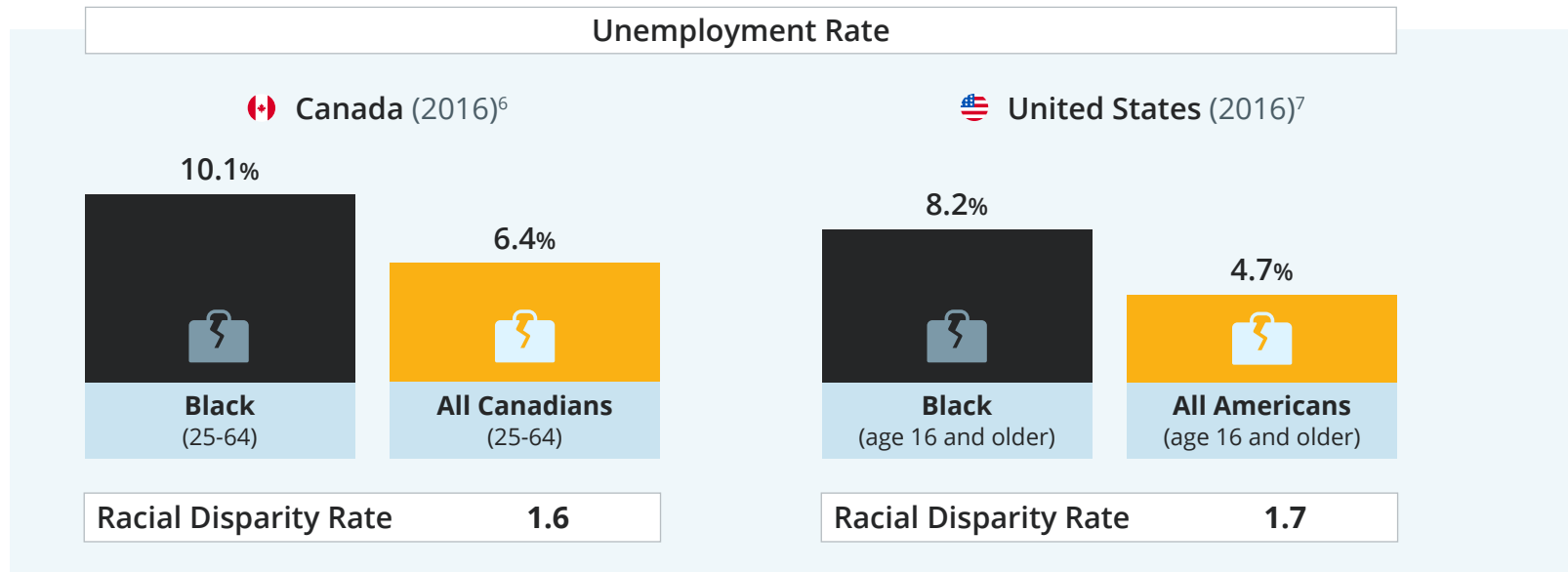
The **racial disproportionality rate** measures a racial group's overrepresentation or underrepresentation relative to the group's representation in the reference population.

$$\text{Disproportionality} = \frac{\% \text{ representation of Black people in the group of interest}}{\% \text{ representation of Black people in the general population}}$$

⁵ Government of Ontario. *Data standards for the identification and monitoring of systemic racism*.
<https://www.ontario.ca/document/data-standards-identification-and-monitoring-systemic-racism>

Unemployment

One key feature of systemic racism in both Canada and the United States is the consistent 2-to-1 disparity in unemployment that exists between Black and White workers. The racial disparities in unemployment are observed for each level of education, all genders, and for each age cohort.



In 2016, the unemployment rate for Black Canadians was 10.1%, compared to 6.4% for all Canadians, resulting in a disparity rate of 1.6. The unemployment gap between Black (8.2%) and all Americans (4.7%) is similar, with a disparity rate of 1.7.

⁶ Spiteri, Suzanne, (2023). What can the data tell us about Black Canadians and the labour market? Labour Market Information Council.

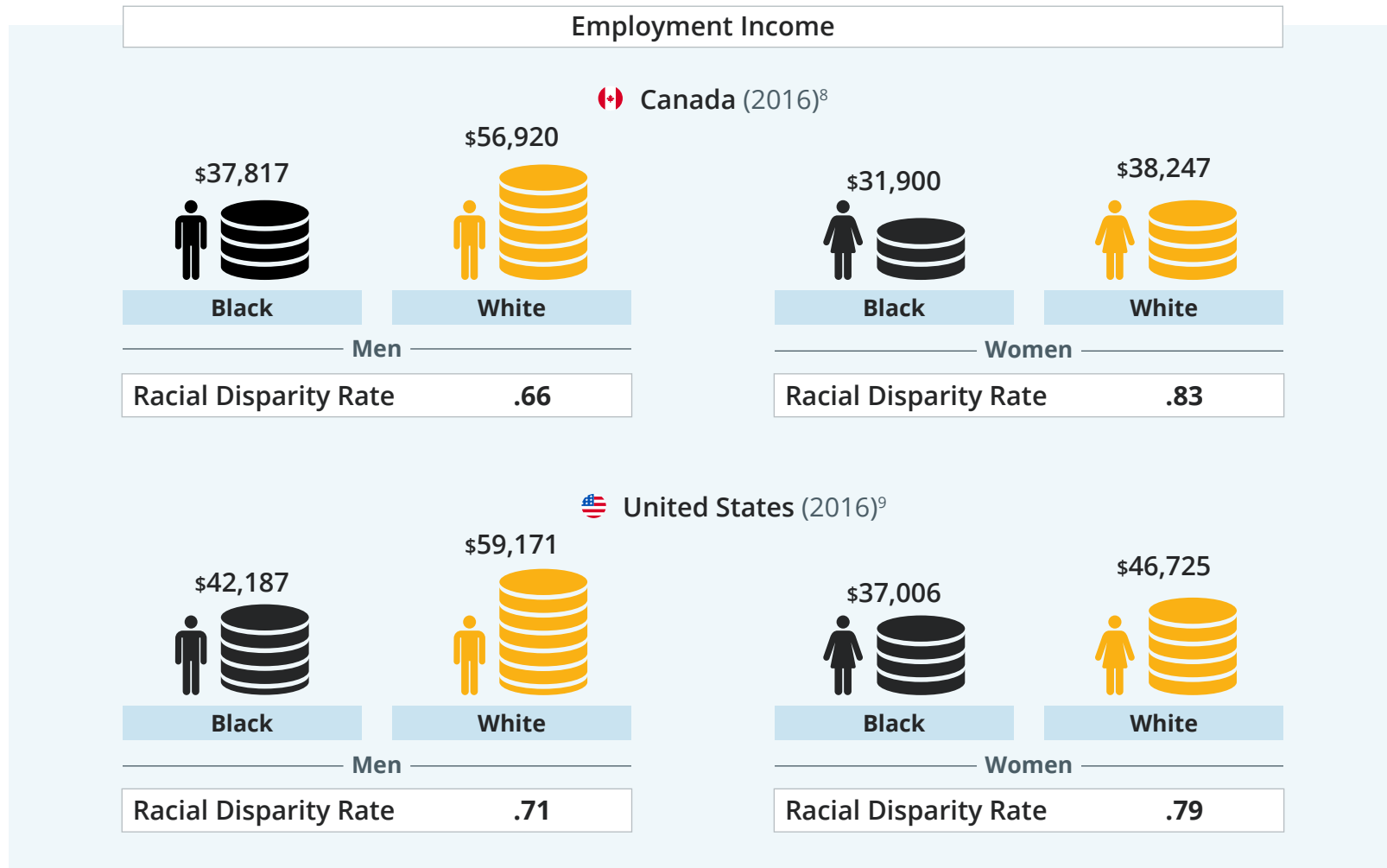
[https://lmic-cimt.ca/part-3-what-can-the-data-tell-us-about-black-canadians-and-the-labour-market/#:~:text=For%20those%20of%20working%20age,Canadian%20youth%20average%20\(15.5%25\).](https://lmic-cimt.ca/part-3-what-can-the-data-tell-us-about-black-canadians-and-the-labour-market/#:~:text=For%20those%20of%20working%20age,Canadian%20youth%20average%20(15.5%25).)

⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. (2017). Digest of Education Statistics.

https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d17/tables/dt17_501.10.asp?referer=raceindicators

Employment Income

Another defining feature of structural racism is the persistent racial gap in employment income in both countries. Research shows that even when one controls for education, Black men and women earn less than their White counterparts.



A Black Canadian man earned 66 cents for every dollar a White man earned in 2016, while a Black Canadian woman earned 83 cents for every dollar a White woman earned.

The racial wage gap was slightly smaller in the United States for men (a Black American man earned 71 cents for every dollar a White American man earned). The reverse was true for women in 2016; the racial wage gap was slightly smaller in Canada than in the United States (a Black Canadian woman earned 83 cents for every dollar a White Canadian woman earned, compared to 79 cents in the United States).

Also notable from this data is that in both countries, Black men earned less on average than White women.

⁸ Block, S., Galabuzi, G.E., & Tranjan, R. (2019). Canada's Colour Coded Income Inequality. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

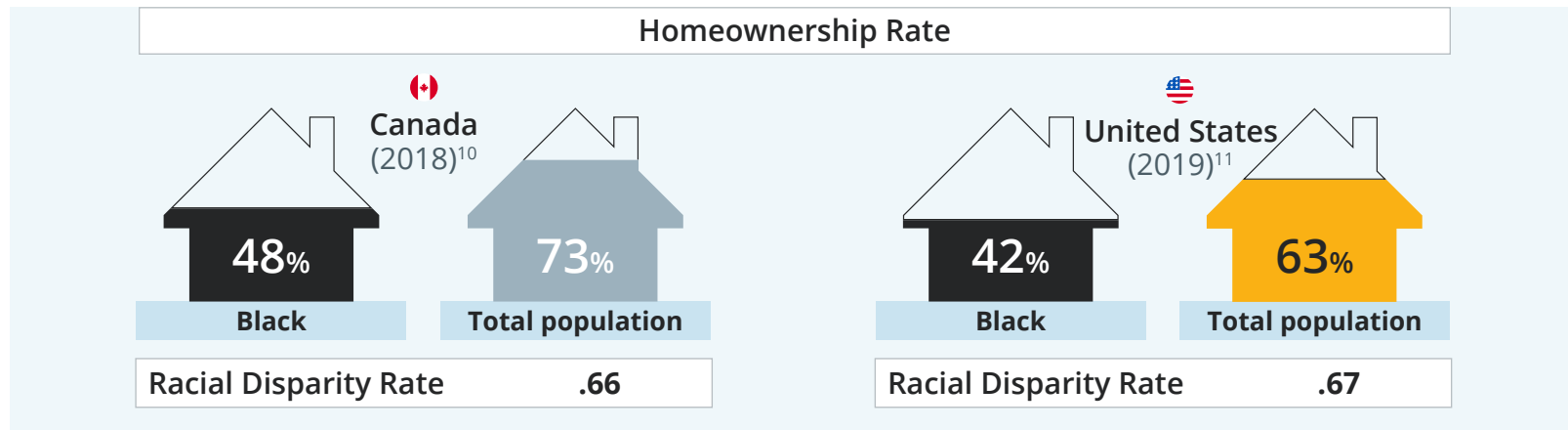
<https://policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/canadas-colour-coded-income-inequality>

⁹ Gould, E., Jones, J., & Mokhiber, Z. (2018). Black workers have made no progress in closing earnings gaps with white men since 2000. Economic Policy Institute.

<https://www.epi.org/blog/black-workers-have-made-no-progress-in-closing-earnings-gaps-with-white-men-since-2000/>

Homeownership

One of the defining factors of economic well-being, net worth, and family wealth is homeownership. However, discrimination in education and the labour market result in gaps in employment income, which impacts one's ability to purchase a home. This contributes to economic inequity for future generations as it affects the ability of one's parents to help young people purchase their first home.



The homeownership rate for Black Canadians as of 2018 is 48%, compared to 73% for the total population. The homeownership rate for Black Americans as of 2019 is 42%, compared to 63% for all Americans.

This results in a disparity rate of 0.66 in Canada and 0.67 in the United States.

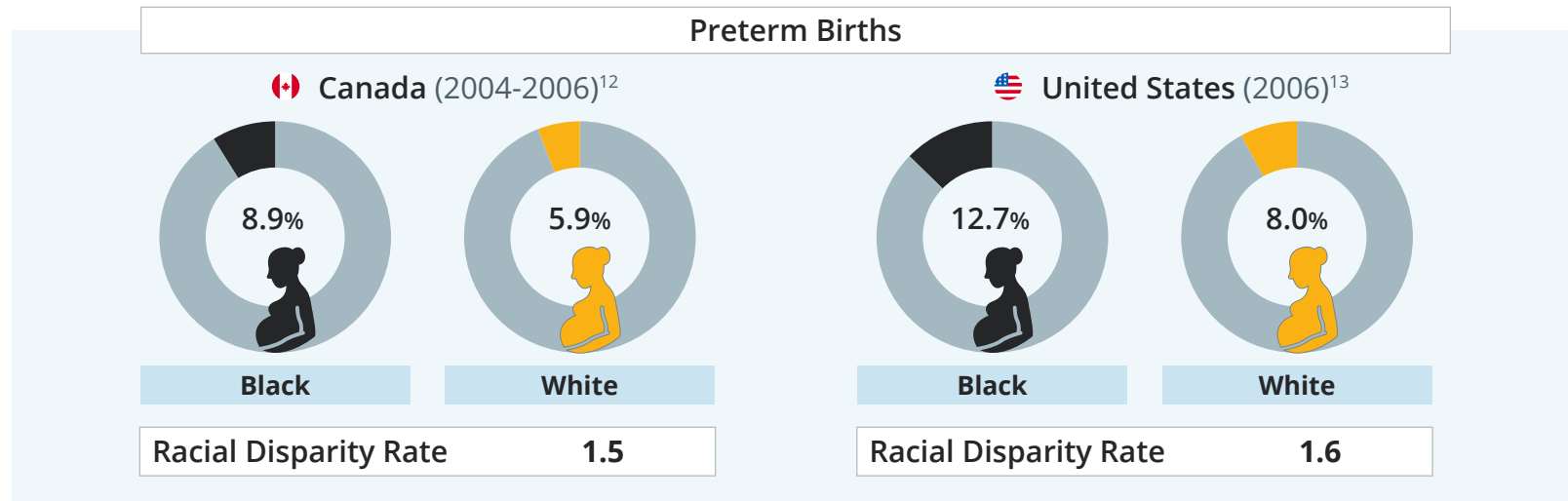
The homeownership rate for Black people in Canada (48%) is slightly above that of Black Americans (42%). Because the homeownership rate is lower in the U.S. there is a similar disparity gap for Black Canadians and Black Americans compared with the total populations in each country.

¹⁰ Randle, J., Hu, Z. & Thurston, Z. (2021). Housing experiences in Canada: Black people in 2018.
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/46-28-0001/2021001/article/00006-eng.htm>

¹¹ Asante-Muhammad, D., Buell, J., Devine, J. (2021). 60% Black Homeownership: A radical goal for Black wealth development.
<https://ncrc.org/60-black-homeownership-a-radical-goal-for-black-wealth-development/#:~:text=After%20declining%20for%20much%20of,in%202019%2C%20a%20record%20high>

Preterm Births

The preterm birth rate is the number of live births with a gestation age at birth of less than 37 completed weeks, as expressed as a proportion of all live births. The prevalence of preterm births is a marker of a healthy population and access to health care.



Given differences in the healthcare systems in both countries, the preterm birth rate for Canadian White women (5.9%) is lower as of 2006 than it is for White women in the United States (8%).

However, Black people experience a higher preterm birth rate in both countries, and the disparities between Blacks and Whites in both countries are similar. Research attributes the disparity to various factors such as lack of social support, unhealthy behaviours like poor nutrition and lack of physical activity, and near constant racial discrimination.¹⁴

¹² McKinnon, B., Yang, S., Kramer, M.S., Bushnik, T., Sheppard, A.J., & Kaufman, J.D. Comparison of black-white disparities in preterm birth between Canada and the United States. CMAJ January 05, 2016 188 (1) E19-E26; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.150464>

¹³ *Ibid*

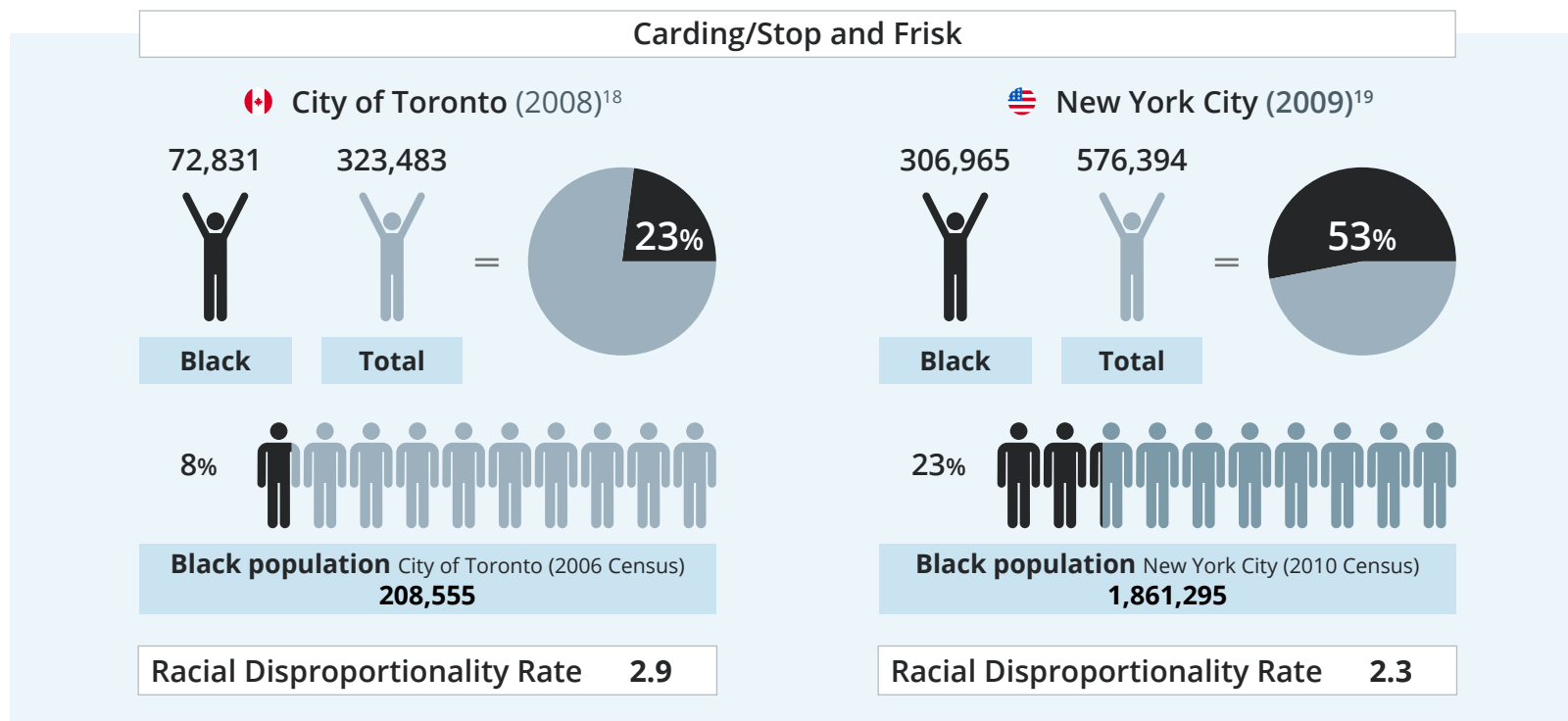
¹⁴ The Health News Team. (2020). Black women's risk of premature birth. Sharp Health News. <https://www.sharp.com/health-news/black-women-s-risk-of-premature-birth>

Carding/Stop and Frisk

Carding (or “street checking”) is the practice of police officers questioning people who are not suspected of having committed any crime and are not thought to have knowledge of any particular criminal activity. Carding has been found to consume a considerable amount of police resources and to be ineffective in deterring or solving crimes.¹⁵ The practice of carding is a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.¹⁶

Police in New York City engage in “stop and frisk,” which is when a person is stopped, interrogated, and searched on the sole basis of “reasonable suspicion.” The U.S. courts have ruled that stop and frisk is unconstitutional and an indirect form of racial profiling.¹⁷

Both programs have been found to target low-income neighbourhoods and Black people.



While the Black population represented only 8% of the City of Toronto population in 2006, they represented 23% of those carded in 2008 by the Toronto Police Service. This resulted in a disproportionality rate of 2.9, meaning Black people were carded at almost three times the rate of their representation in the population.

In New York City in 2009, the Black population represented 23% of the population, yet they represented 53% of those stopped and frisked by the New York Police Department. This resulted in a disproportionality rate of 2.0, smaller than that experienced in Toronto.

¹⁵ Devet, R. (2017, April 19). Carding ineffective and harmful, study shows. The Nova Scotia Advocate. <https://nsadvocate.org/2017/04/19/carding-ineffective-and-harmful-study-shows/>

¹⁶ Law Union of Ontario. (2014, May 25). Submissions to Toronto Police Services Board Re: Community Contacts Policy. <http://www.lawunion.ca/tag/carding/#:~:text=The%20design%20and%20use%20of,Charter%20of%20Rights%20and%20Freedoms>

¹⁷ Thompson, T. (2013). NYPD's Infamous Stop-and-Frisk Policy Found Unconstitutional. The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. <https://civilrights.org/edfund/resource/nypds-infamous-stop-and-frisk-policy-found-unconstitutional/>

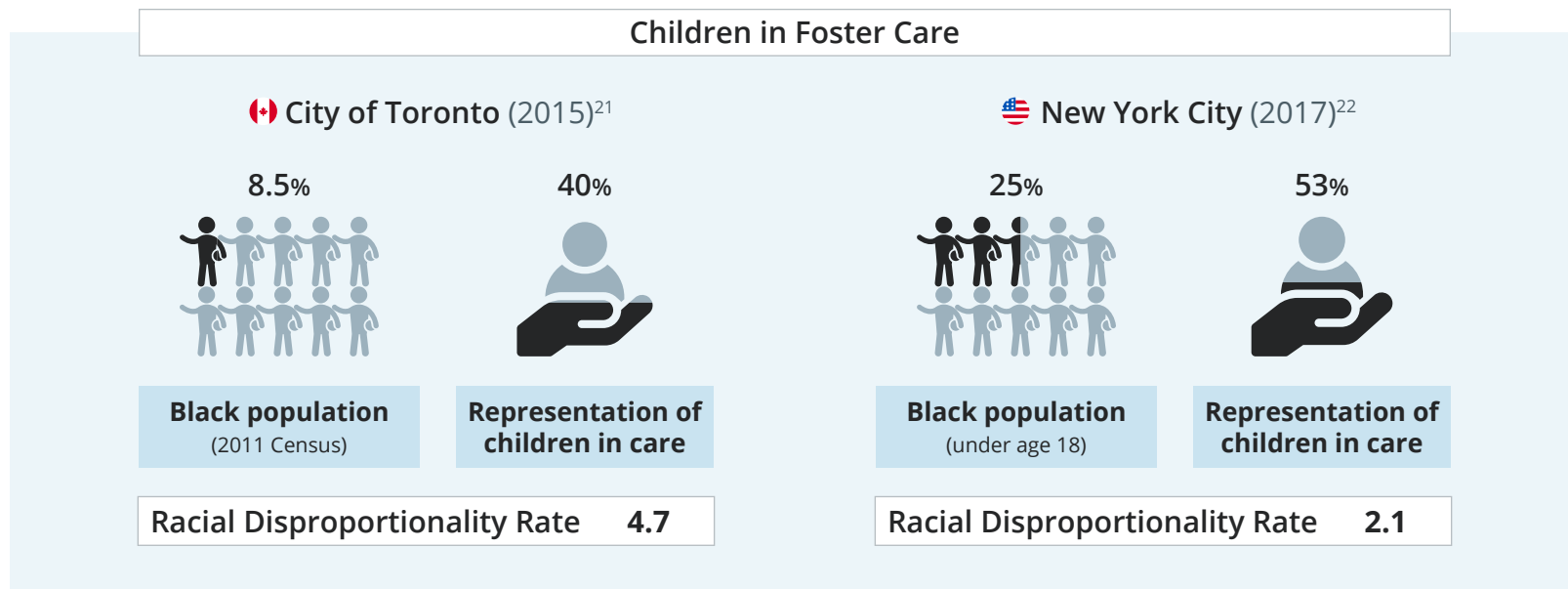
¹⁸ Toronto Star analysis of Toronto Police Service CIPS data.

¹⁹ NYPD Stop-and-Frisk Statistics. 2009-2020. Center for Constitutional Rights. <https://ccrjustice.org/files/CCR-Stop-and-Frisk-Fact-Sheet-2010.pdf>

Child Welfare

Black children are often represented disproportionately in the child welfare system—not because Black parents are more likely to abuse their children, but because Black families are more likely to be reported to local child welfare agencies and investigated. Who is reported, who is investigated, and outcomes of investigations are affected by anti-Black racism.

Black children are also more likely to be removed from their home and taken into foster care. This separation from their parents causes childhood trauma. It weakens family bonds and the ongoing support children have as they age. Children who age out of care of the child welfare system are more likely to experience low academic achievement, higher unemployment, higher rates of homelessness and housing insecurity, early parenthood, higher criminal justice involvement, and poorer physical and mental health.²⁰



While the Black population represented only 8.5% of the City of Toronto population in 2011, Black children represented 40% of all children in care of the Toronto Children's Aid Society. This resulted in a disproportionality rate of 4.7, meaning Black children were in foster care at almost five times the rate of their representation in the population.

In New York City, Black children represented 25% of all children, yet they represented 53% of children in care. This resulted in a disproportionality rate of 2.1—less than half the disproportionality rate experienced in Toronto.

²⁰ Kovarikova, J. (2017). Exploring youth outcomes after aging-out of care. Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. <https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/exploring-youth-outcomes-after-aging-out-care#:~:text=Typical%20outcomes%20for%20youth%20who,and%20mental%20health%3B%20and%20loneliness>

²¹ Francis, A. (2022, June 22). How child welfare investigations play a role in overrepresentation of Black kids in children's aid. Toronto Star. https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/how-child-welfare-investigations-play-a-role-in-overrepresentation-of-black-kids-in-children-s/article_6a20c0d3-cfea-5ba7-97f6-384cc60bf924.html

²² Fitzgerald, M. (2019, February 27). New York City Confronts Massive Overrepresentation of Black Children in Foster Care. The Imprint. <https://imprintnews.org/featured/new-york-city-de-blasio-black-foster-care/33992>


Conclusion

Regardless of how people perceive the experiences of anti-Black racism in Canada and the United States, the data is clear.

The experiences and outcomes for African Canadians and the inequities they experience compared to their White counterparts is no better in Canada than in the United States.

Systemic anti-Black racism in both countries works to harm individuals, undermine families, and create and perpetuate racial inequities; therefore, it must be dismantled.





Learn More About Systemic Racism

Structural Racism Explained
Othering & Belonging Institute

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQ_8eOaiz8o&t=132s

Five charts that show what systemic racism looks like in Canada

<https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/five-charts-that-show-what-systemic-racism-looks-like-in-canada-1.4970352?>