

The Strengths and Resilience of Racialized People with Lived Experience who are also Frontline Workers

Ashley Wilkinson & Alana Jones



Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

The Team

Ashley Wilkinson, MHSc

Jacky Liu, MSW

Alana Jones, MA

Jordan Knapp, MSW

Jeannette Waegemakers Schiff, PhD

Development of this research took place on the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in Southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina First Nation, and the Stoney Nakoda (including the Chiniki, Bearspaw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region III. The research gathered data in many traditional territories across Canada.

Background

- Psychosocial stressors in the homeless sector range from traumatic stress to burnout and depression
- Recent evidence highlights significant levels of post-traumatic stress symptoms among homelessness service providers in some regions of Canada, and these are higher than reported prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Limited evidence on the impact of gender and ethnicity on work-related stressors
- Limited research on staff with lived experience of homelessness



Methodology



Mixed methods:
quantitative (survey) and
semi-structured interviews
with key administrators



Survey imbedded
standard instruments and
a series of questions on
organizational practices
including specific
questions about COVID
preparations/staff safety
measures

Survey Instruments

PROQoL – Professional Quality of life

- 30 items, 3 scales measure burnout, secondary traumatic stress and compassion satisfaction

PCL – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Checklist

- 6 item short list

LEC - Life Events Checklist

- 17 items including: “happened to me”, “witnessed” and “part of my job”

ACE – Adverse childhood experiences

- 10 item

Resiliency

Survey Administration



Purposive recruitment of organizations



Paper based: distributed in shelters



On-line: accessible to staff during on-line staff meetings

Results

Survey:

Respondents: 574

Interviews: 42

29 different organizations

7 cities in Alberta, Ontario and New Brunswick

Results

Female: 390 Male: 146 Non-binary: 6 No response: 5

Ethnic identity:

- Caucasian, Black, Indigenous, Asian, Arab, Latin, Multi-racial and other.

Categorized as

- Caucasian (N=303)
- Black (N=103)
- Other visible minorities (N=216)
omitted 19 responses labeled “other”.

Profile of LE Participants (N=134)

Lived Experience (LE) with homelessness**	Experience with Traumatic events
134 staff reported lived experience with homelessness <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black 37%• Visible minority 27%• Caucasian 21% ** p< .006)	Lifetime (mean no. of traumatic events) Female with LE: 5.26 Female with no LE: 3.45 Male with LE: 4.27 Male with no LE: 3.92

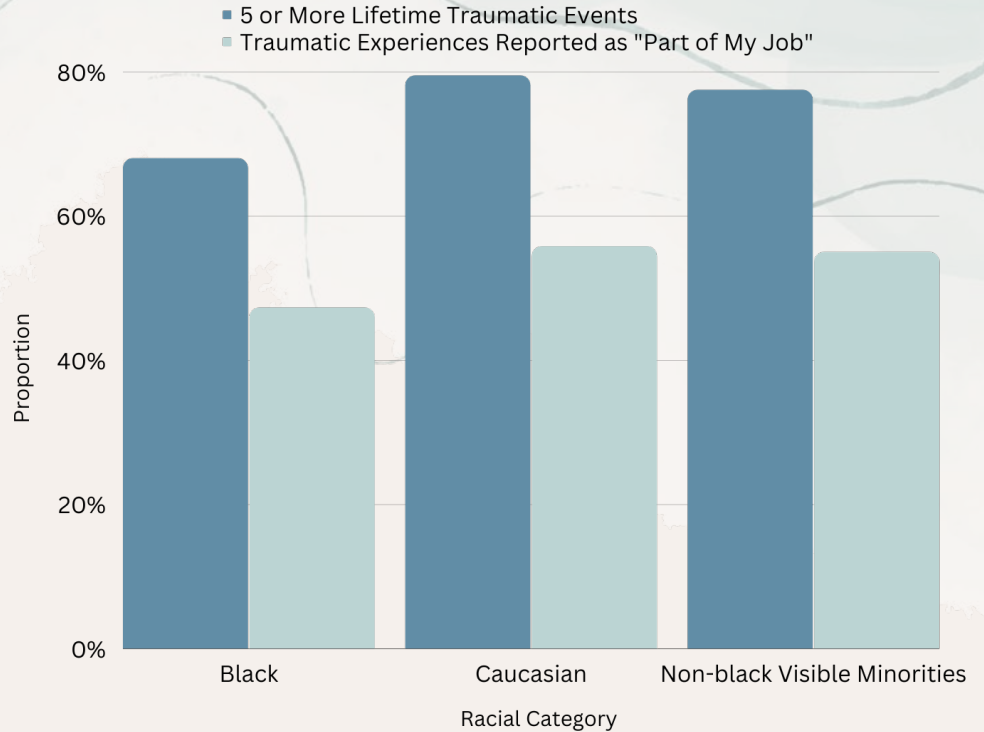
Key Takeaway: Participants with lived experience of homelessness reported significantly more lifetime traumatic experiences than those with no lived experience

Results: Traumatic Events

Black Respondents

- Report fewer lifetime traumatic events
- Report fewer traumatic experiences on the job

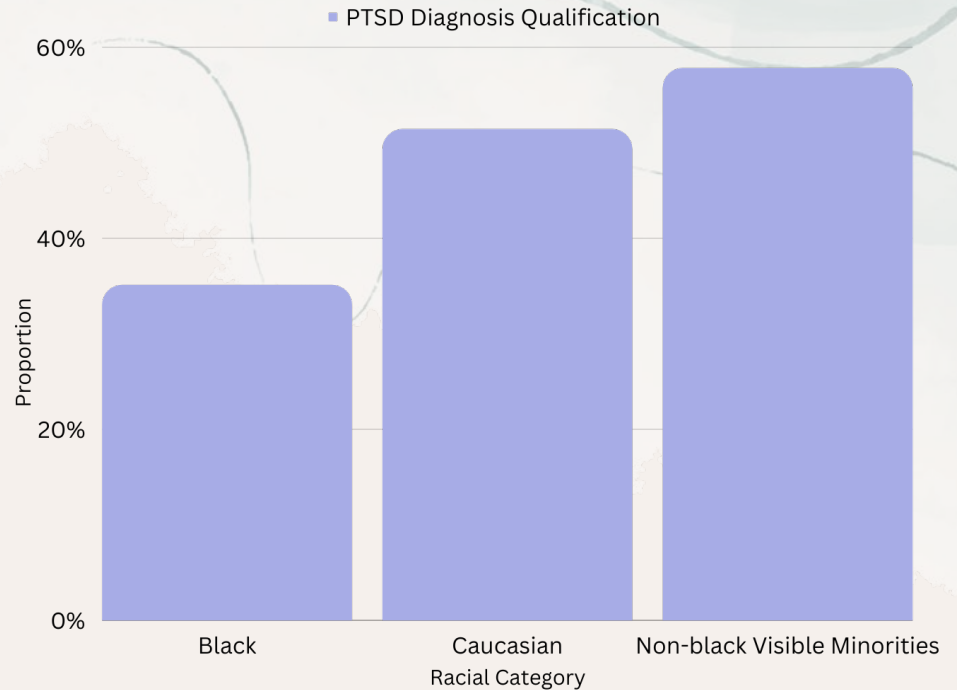
..compared to Caucasian and non-black visible minorities



Results: Traumatic Events

Black Respondents

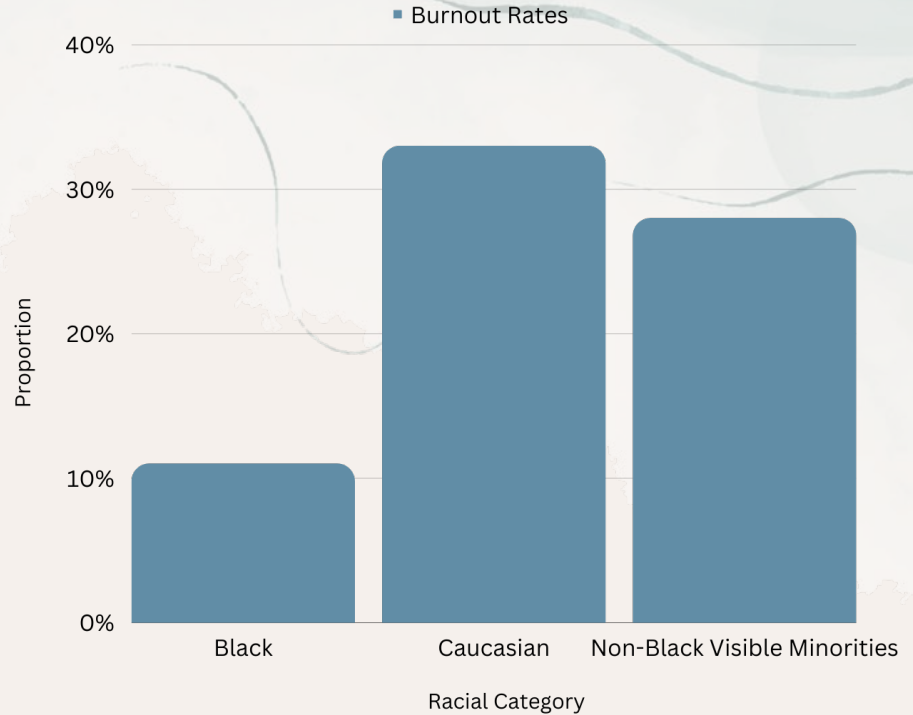
- Were less likely to qualify for a PTSD diagnosis using the PCL (score >14)
..compared to caucasian and non-black visible minorities



Results: Burnout

High rates (score over 27) were reported by:

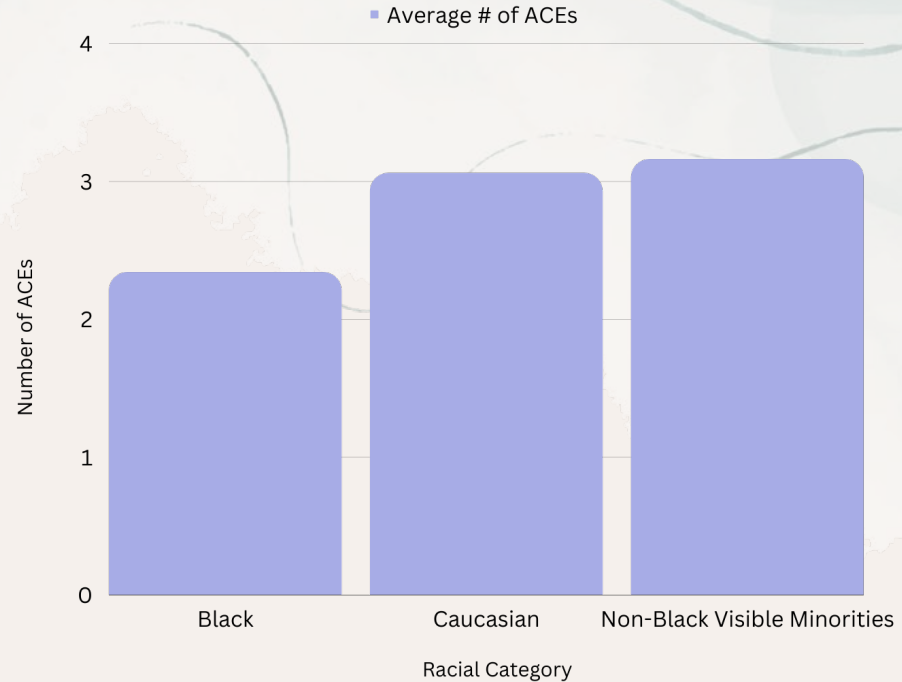
- 11% of Black respondents
- 28% of Non-black visible minority respondents
- 33% of Caucasian respondents



Results: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Average number of adverse events reported was 2.96

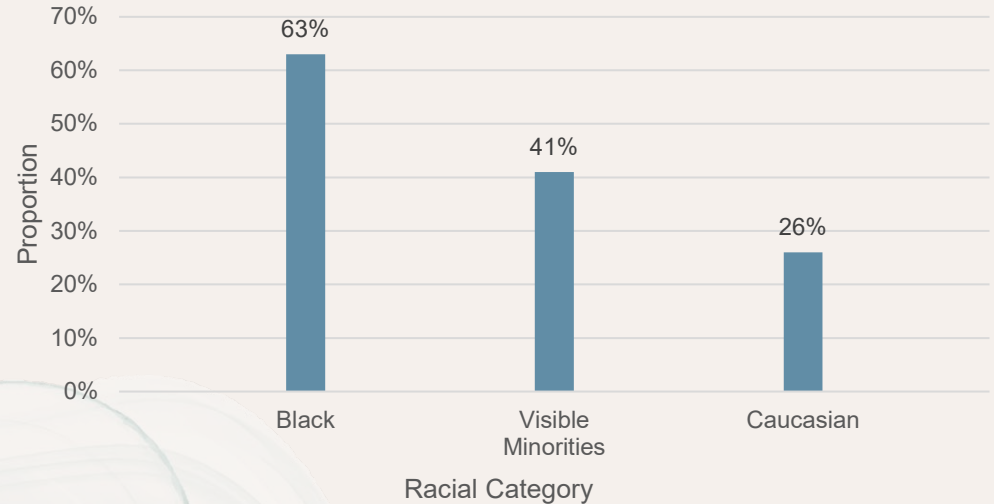
- Black respondents had a mean of 2.34
- Caucasian respondents had a mean of 3.06
- Non-black visible minority respondents had a mean of 3.16



Results: Coping Practices

- Black respondents were significantly more likely to engage in spiritual practices
- Spiritual coping strategies may contribute to lower rates of post-traumatic stress and burnout in racialized populations working in frontline homelessness service

Spiritual Coping Strategies



Key Takeaways

- Black staff have significantly fewer traumatic symptoms AND lower burnout
- Black staff report fewer on the job traumatic events than their Caucasian counterparts
- Protective factors may include greater participation in spiritual and mindfulness activities and resiliency may play a part in lower reporting of workplace stressors and trauma in visible minority frontline workers, some with lived experiences of homelessness → *These areas require additional research, particularly in a Canadian context.*
- These findings can be implemented to **honour the resiliencies that racialized staff bring to the workplace** , **support institutional or organizational changes** , **improve mental health supports** , and **promote positive mental health outcomes for racialized staff** in homelessness serving organizations

Thank You!

Ashley Wilkinson – awilkinso@unbc.ca
Jeannette Waegemakers Schiff - schiff@ucalgary.ca
Alana Jones - ajones@fredvictor.org

Feel free to reach out for more information ☺

References

- Kerman, N., Ecker, J., Tiderington, E., Gaetz, S., & Kidd, S. (2021). Paid sick leave benefits among essential frontline workers serving people experiencing homelessness in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Public Health*, 195, 142-144.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2021.04.022>
- Waegemakers Schiff, J., & Lane, A. M. (2019). PTSD symptoms, vicarious traumatization, and burnout in front line workers in the homeless sector. *Community Mental Health Journal*, 55(3), 454-462. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-018-00364-7>