

## **Social Integration of Immigrants in Canada**

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Social integration provides a sense of connection to others and describes patterns of human relations in a given society. It aims at creating “a society for all based on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security and participation of all people” in the process of social development (UN, 2008). It is a necessary process of absorbing newcomers in a society and developing their sense of belonging to the community. Social integration is equally important for immigrants and the host communities for maintaining social order in a society.

When new immigrants feel accepted and included in the host society by getting similar treatment as non-immigrants, they feel integrated. At the same time, immigrants also need to merge in the host society through the adaptation of norms and values.

Canada receives nearly 300,000 new immigrants every year (IRCC, 2018). As a result of drastic changes in the immigration patterns in the past few decades, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity has increased considerably. Therefore, the social integration of immigrants is a matter of great concern.

### **Objectives**

The goal of this study is to assess the level of social integration of immigrants in Canadian society. It also examines how social integration of immigrants changes over time by comparing the level of integration of recent immigrants (landed within the past 10 years) with the established immigrants (living for 10 years or more) and non-immigrants (born in Canada). This study also assesses the factors that contribute to the integration of immigrants and non-immigrants.

### **Data**

This paper uses data from the Canadian Community Health Survey, 2015-16, which collected information from 109,659 individuals aged 12+ years, including 3,317 recent and 11,309 established immigrants. This survey excluded Canadians residing in institutions, on Aboriginal Reserves, children 12-17 living in foster care, and full-time members of the Canadian Forces.

### **Methods**

Weighted percentages were computed to provide estimates of various indicators of social integration. On the social integration scale, comparisons were made between recent immigrants, established immigrants and non-immigrants. Logistic regression was used to predict the social integration of individuals in the three groups.

Ten indicators of social integration were used, viz. emotional security, trustworthy relations, counting on someone in an emergency, depending on someone for help, enjoyment of social activities, talking to someone for important decisions, recognition of skills, sharing of beliefs, emotional bonds, and admiration of abilities.

## Results

Findings of the study reveal that on all these indicators, except for being part of a group that shares attitudes and beliefs, there is no significant difference between recent and established immigrants. However, a significant difference between immigrants and non-immigrants is observed in all these indicators. Though most of the Canadians feel socially integrated, a lower proportion of immigrants compared to non-immigrants feel integrated on every indicator of integration.

On the scale of social integration (varying from 2 to 8) there is no significant difference in the integration of recent immigrants (mean=6.65) and established immigrants (mean=6.71), but there is a significant difference in the level of integration of established immigrants and non-immigrants (mean=6.93). Thus, the social integration of immigrants does not improve significantly over time and it remains lower than non-immigrants even after spending several years in Canada.

The scale of social integration was bifurcated into high integration (value 7-8) and low integration (value < 6). This new variable was used as the dependent variable for logistic regression and separate models were developed to predict high social integration of recent, established and non-immigrants. The independent variables considered in the model were age, sex, marital status, the highest level of education, household income, life stress, sense of belonging, emotional security, trustworthy person, and people to count on in an emergency.

Results of the logistic regression show that the selected predictors have a differential effect on the integration of recent immigrants, established immigrants and non-immigrants. All selected variables have a significant effect on the social integration of non-immigrants. For established immigrants, age, level of education, sense of belonging, emotional security, and having a trustworthy person have a significant effect. For recent immigrants, only sense of belonging, emotional security and having a trustworthy person have a significant effect. Further analysis suggests that younger people and women are more likely to integrate; less educated persons, previously married persons and those with lower household income are less likely to integrate. Individuals with a stronger sense of belonging, a sense of emotional security, a trustworthy person for advice, and people to count on in an emergency are more likely to integrate.

Consideration of these results implies that there is a need to enhance the educational and economic inclusion of immigrants for their greater social integration.

To summarise, this study shows that the social integration of immigrants is limited in Canada and it does not improve with time. Even after spending more than ten years in the country, immigrants do not integrate as well in society as Canada born individual do.

## References

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). 2018. Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration.

United Nations (UN). 2008. EGM on promoting social integration. Helsinki, Finland: 8-10 July, 2008.