

# **Current Employment Conditions and Learning Practices of Canadian Immigrant Workers: An Analysis of the WALL 2004 National Survey**

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## **Introduction**

### **The Goals**

The main aim of this section is to compare the employment status and learning conditions of “Recent Immigrant” groups versus the “Canadian Born (CB) and Earlier Immigrant” groups of the WALL 2004 National Survey population.

### **Definition of Recent Immigrants**

From the Non-Canadian Born groups of the WALL general survey population, “Recent Immigrants” are those who immigrated to Canada in the current decade (i.e. during the 1996-2004 periods).

### **Summary of the Findings**

At a glance, the findings from the WALL 2004 National survey sit well within previous research findings that, recent immigrants, “irrespective of their level of expertise and education, face tougher challenges in accessing the Canadian job market” (Reitz, 2005, p7) that is, recent immigrants are *more likely to be unemployed and when employed they face Under-Employment in much higher proportions*. Compared to the CB and the older generations of immigrants a larger percentage of recent newcomers tend to “attend school”. The analysis shows that not only recent immigrants hold higher educational credentials than the average, but also they tend to be more active in terms of the learning activities for finding/changing jobs.

## **Research Methods**

### **Analysis**

Standard statistical approaches, i.e. cross-tabulation, and correlation analysis (where appropriate) are used for the analyses. However, as an immigrant myself, I have tried to draw the final conclusions by intermixing my personal experiences with qualitative inquiry approaches with the interpretation of the quantitative statistical analyses.

### **Dependent Variables**

- “Rates of Employment”
- “Credential Under-Employment”
- “Performance Under-Employment”
- “Perception of Over/Under-Qualification”
- “Job Related Discrimination” across gender/ethnicity,

- “Usefulness<sup>1</sup> of Formal Training”, as well as informal learning practices of workers

### Grouping Factors

- “Canadian Born” vs. “Immigrants” and “Period of Immigration” for the latter
- “Gender”
- “Regional Source of Immigration” and “Country of Origin” of immigrants
- “Race/Ethnicity”
- “Age”
- “Educational Level”

### Changes in the demographics of newcomers to Canada in the past few decades

The WALL 2004 National survey sample of 9063 Canadian workers (which includes both waged and non-paid workers) is composed of 7211 (80%) Canadian-Born and 1885 (20%) Non-Canadian-Born and reflects the ethnic, racial, and linguistic mosaic of the current Canadian society. For instance, it is well known that up to the 1960s the Canadian immigration policy favored immigrants from the UK and Western Europe. After that time, changes in the immigration policy of Canada have resulted in accepting newcomers from virtually all over the world. This is reflected in Table 1, which analyzes the regional source of immigration of the WALL 04 sample.

Table 1: Regional source of immigrants of the WALL 2004 sample

<u>Regional source of immigration</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%*</u>
Africa, Middle East, & S E Asian Countries	362	19.5%
East & South East Asian Countries	268	14.6 %
East European ” countries	148	8.0%
South & Central American Countries	257	14.0%
Western Industrialized countries including Australia & NZ	739	40 %*

\*Proportion of the Non-Canadian Born groups (N = 1885) of the WALL 2004 National Survey.

Table 2 indicates that the racial make-up of the WALL 2004 sample *well reflects the realities of Canadian population at large*, e.g. majority of older generations of immigrants to Canada come from White European backgrounds (87.9%).

	<u>Total WALL 2004 population</u>	<u>Non-Canadian Born groups of the WALL 04 sample</u>
Sample size	N = 8869	N = 1708
Non-whites	N = 1098 (12.1%)	N = 708 (42.7%)

The rising proportion of **Non-Whites from only 12.1 % of the total population to 42.7% of the Non-CB groups** also indicates that over the time, the accumulative effects of the emerging multi-racial immigrant population will (as already has) change the overall racial mosaic of Canadian population further.

<sup>1</sup> “Usefulness” in terms of helping trainees find/change jobs.

## The Findings

Recent immigrants face tougher challenges in accessing the Canadian job market (Reitz, 2005), which results in higher rates of “Unemployment” as well as “Under-Employment”.

Educational credentials. As chart 5 indicates, on the average more recent newcomers hold higher educational credentials than both the Canadian born as well as the older generations of immigrants.

Employment status of recent immigrants. The analysis reveals a rising trend of unemployment amongst the newcomers according to recency of immigration (Chart 5). This chart shows that the proportion of unemployed rises from about 3.5% for the 1961-70 group to 10.3% for those who immigrated during the 2002-04 period. Chart 4 indicates the same phenomenon, that is, the proportion of full time jobholders sharply drops from 75.5% for the immigrants of the 1971-79 period, to 41.1% of the 2002-2004 group. Chart 7 again indicates that the proportion of immigrants holding non-permanent, seasonal jobs is growing according to the recency of immigration.

Under-employment (UE) of recent immigrants. It should be noted that for professional immigrants the UE is as much of an issue (if not more) as is unemployment itself. Other terms for this problem include under-utilization of immigrant skills, mis-employment, and under-employment. There are many forms of under-employment (Livingstone, 2004); we examine three: “Credential UE”, “Performance UE” and “Perception of UE”.

Credential under-employment (CUE) of recent immigrant is defined as the attained credentials of the individual minus the entry credential requirements of the job. The analysis indicates that recent immigrants are more likely to feel the problem of credential UE. Chart 10 for instance reveals that the proportion of those whose job requirement and attained credentials “match” decreases, according to the recency of immigration, although the decrease is in a slow pace.

Performance under-employment (PUE) of immigrants is defined as the attained credentials minus the skills and knowledge used to perform the job. With respect to the PUE Chart 11 shows the proportion of the under-employed category and those who thought their education and the skill/knowledge required to do the job matched. Chart 12 indicates the proportion of the under-employed within each group of the population. The falling trend in the proportion of the “match” category, according to the recency of immigration and the rising trend in the proportion of the under-employed in Chart 12, both indicate that the more recent groups of immigrants are more likely to be under-employed.

Perception of credential under-employment is defined as whether the worker feels that her/his credentials “Matches”, is “Over” or “Under” the qualification that is needed to do the job. The analysis reveals that the recent groups of newcomers are more likely to think that they are over-qualified at their current job. Chart 13 clearly shows the proportion of those who thought that they are “Very over –qualified” is rising according to the recency of immigration.

Perception of being discriminated against at work. Chart 14 shows the proportion of those who thought they have been discriminated at job during the past 12 months, grouped by gender and period of immigration. The chart shows an overall rising trend of job discrimination according to recency of immigration for both genders. Overall job related discrimination is not a gender-free tendency. Within the female group the recent immigrant women are more likely to be discriminated against on the job than other groups of women.

The effects of formal training courses. An analysis of the responses to the question of the usefulness of formal training courses in terms of helping workers find/change jobs grouped by race and gender indicates that, overall much higher proportions of respondents thought the formal

training courses were not helpful to them. However, Non-White Females followed by Non-Whites Males seems to have found the courses more useful than their White counterparts.

Usefulness of informal learning practices. With respect to the effect of informal learning practices (in terms of helping respondents find/change jobs) the analysis indicates mixed responses between men and women. While Chart 18 indicates that men find informal learning practices slightly more useful according to the recency of immigration (up to 2001), the responses from the females do not seem to follow a stable pattern.

Age group and educational level.

While the analyses indicated that inter-group differences between the age group as well as educational level groups are not significant on the selected variables, but in a different study I observed that the “40+ year old age groups” thought that they face more serious barriers than the younger generations of immigrants in terms of finding employment in a field relevant to professional backgrounds.

Below are selected samples of the charts from the full report.





