

Young Children of Newcomer Families

Drawing from Statistics Canada and research, this edition of Migration Matters summarizes recent trends on the socioeconomic status, education, and mental health of young children of immigrant families. It also provides resources of research and best practices to meet the needs of immigrant children and families.

Introduction

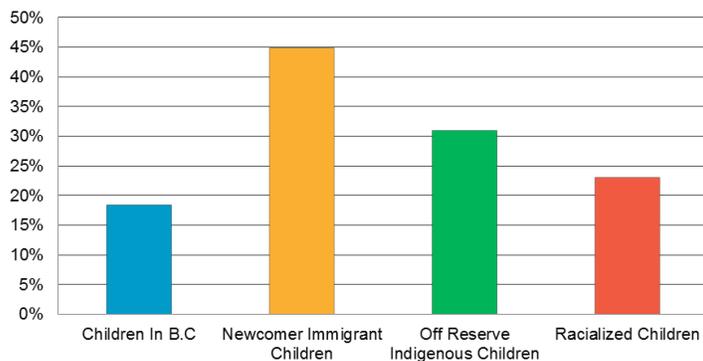
Each first-generation family is unique and experiences settlement differently. Certain trends, however, affect a sizeable portion of families, especially their young children.

According to the 2016 Census, young children (aged 0-14 years) are 14.9% of B.C.'s and 16.6% of Canada's population¹. In B.C. alone, 6.6% of young children are immigrants² while 3.6% are "newcomer" immigrants, meaning they arrived in Canada within the last five years of the Census (between 2011-2016)⁴. Provincially, most immigrants between 0-14 years of age live in Vancouver, comprising 10.3% of the population for this age range; followed by Fort St. John, where 4.5% of young children are immigrants⁵. There are various indicators that researchers use to evaluate how well immigrant children are integrating into their new community.

High Poverty Rates

As of 2015, 1 out of 5 (or 18.4%) children aged 0-17 in B.C. live in poverty, as measured by the Low Income Measure (LIM) after income taxes⁶. Within this group, some children are more at risk of living in poverty than others. Newcomer immigrant children are the most vulnerable of experiencing poverty. Almost half (44.9%) live in poverty.

B.C. Children Poverty Rate



This subgroup of children is followed by 30.9% of off-reserve⁷ Indigenous children and 23% of racialized or non-white children who live in poverty. Intersecting these identities, racialized immigrant children are among the most at risk subgroup to be in poverty.

Higher Education

Variables ⁹	Business class	Skilled-worker class	Live-in caregiver class	Family class
High-school graduation rate	97.8%	96.2%	93.3%	88.3%
University completion rate	58.9%	49.7%	19.0%	21.3%
Annual earnings	\$46,700	\$46,400	\$33,500	\$39,200

Children who immigrated to Canada with their parents before the age of 18 (aka: the "1.5 generation" or "childhood immigrants") outperform their peers of Canadian-born parents in educational attainment. This trend, however, is contingent upon the immigration admission class of their parents.

Immigrant children in the business and skilled-worker classes have the highest high-school and university completion rates when compared to Canadian-born children, and immigrant children admitted through the live-in caregiver and family admission classes⁸.

On average, children from live-in caregiver and family classes have a similar high school completion rate but a sizably lower university completion rate than Canadian-born children⁸.

Surprisingly, despite their higher educational level, immigrant children of the business and skilled-worker classes earn about \$3,000 less annually than second-generation children⁸.

References and Comments

¹ Statistics Canada. 2017. [British Columbia \[Province\] and Canada \[Country\] \(table\)](#). Census Profile of 2016 Census.

² Includes both permanent residents and naturalized citizens.

^{3,4} Statistics Canada. 2017. [Immigrant status and period of immigration, % distribution 2016, both sexes, age \(0 to 14\), Canada, British Columbia and census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations, 2016 Census – 25% Sample data](#). Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity Highlight Tables. 2016 Census.

⁵ Statistics Canada. 2017. [Immigrant status and period of immigration, % distribution 2016, both sexes, age \(0 to 14\), Canada and census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations, 2016 Census – 25% Sample data](#). Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity Highlight Tables. 2016 Census.

Children of refugees moderately outperform their live-in caregiver and family classes peers in university graduation though have somewhat similar high school completion rates. Refugee children also outperform third generation children in both high-school and university graduation, but have a lower graduation rate than second generation children. Privately sponsored refugees earn a higher annual income than government assisted refugees by \$2,800, and both earn a higher income than children in live-in caregiver and family classes. Compared to Canadian-born children, however, refugees earn moderately to significantly less⁸.

Variables ⁹	Government-assisted refugees	Privately sponsored refugees	Second generation	Third generation or higher
High-school graduation rate	91.0%	91.2%	94.9%	88.8%
University completion rate	28.7%	31.7%	40.6%	24.4%
Annual earnings	\$41,100	\$43,900	\$49,600	\$46,100

The effects of parents' admission class on the educational outcome of childhood immigrants is important because admission classes reflect the differences in parents' education level, official language ability, and pre- and post-migration experiences⁸.

Cultural Distance and Mental Health

Until the 1970s, Canada's immigration policy purposefully gave preference to immigrants from majority-white countries (e.g., Western Europe, Australia, USA, and New Zealand). In 1967, the point-system was introduced, leading to a major shift in the source countries of immigrants. Most immigrants today come from more culturally distant (CD) regions than pre-1970s immigrants. This has some implications for mental health outcomes.

The greater the distance between a newcomers' culture of origin and the host country's culture, the greater the likelihood of experiencing difficulties with integration and well-being.

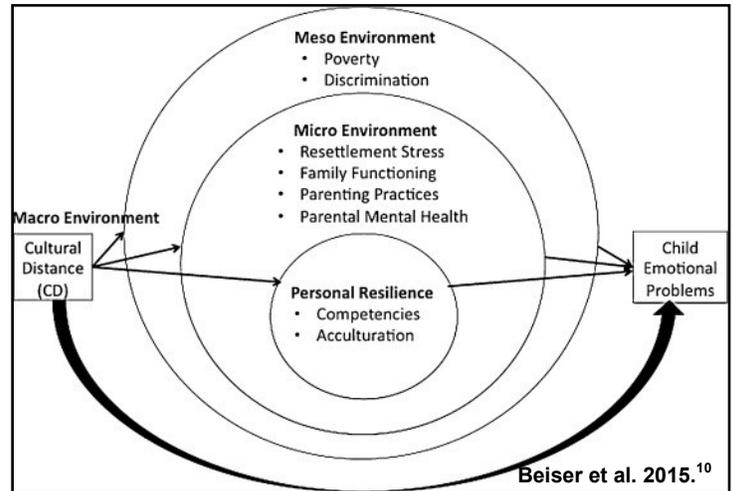
References and Comments

⁶ First Call: BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition. 2017. [BC Child Poverty Report Card](#).

⁷ Statistics Canada's reports on poverty do not capture on-reserve poverty or territories where close to half of Inuit people live. The poverty rate of Indigenous People and Canada is thus higher than captured by Statistics Canada.

^{8,9} Statistics Canada. 2016. [Table 3: Educational and labour market outcomes for childhood immigrants 25 to 44 years of age, by admission class](#).

¹⁰ Morton Beiser, Sofia Puente-Duran, and Feng Hou. 2015. [Cultural distance and emotional problems among immigrant and refugee youth in Canada: Findings from the New Canadian Child and Youth Study \(NCCYS\)](#).



Such is the finding of a new study¹⁰. However, there is a caveat. The impact of cultural distance on the well-being of a child is small and mediated by intervening factors—including poverty, family functioning, and speed of acculturation.

Results show a positive relationship between cultural distance and mental health *difficulties* of immigrant children. The strength of this relationship is mainly affected by resettlement stress, harsh parenting style, parental depression, and discrimination. Indeed, resettlement stress can render parents to be less patient and warm with their children than they are when in better conditions. These findings emphasize the need for a multipronged stress-reduction policy lens to resettlement, a culturally-sensitive family-approach to mental health, and the mental health benefits of an inclusive, anti-discriminatory host community.

Resources

- CERIS. 2008. [The Needs of Newcomer Youth and Emerging Best Practices to Meet Those Needs](#).
- BSRC. 2010. [Growing Up in a New Land: Strategies for Service Providers Working with Newcomers](#).
- AMSSA. 2011. [Promising Practices of Early Childhood Education for Immigrant and Refugee Children in British Columbia](#).
- CMAS. 2015. [Settlement Needs of Newcomer Children: Research Synthesis Report](#).
- BC Ministry of Education. 2015. [Students from Refugee Backgrounds: A Guide for Teachers and Schools](#).
- BGCC. 2016. [Facilitating the Integration of Newcomer Children and Youth](#).

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