



Prairie Centre Regional Workshop

Workshop Presentation Abstract

Poverty and Inter-generational Mobility of Immigrants in Canadian Cities

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The period since the late 1970s marks a drastic change in economic and technological configurations of the industrial societies, e.g., declining economic growth rates, successive recessions, gradual erosion of welfare state, and the emergence of 'information' sector in economy. The social and political forces associated with these developments have been producing powerful new configurations of inequality and poverty. The term 'new poverty' is often used in the poverty literature to refer to the unprecedented nature of these changes. 'New poverty' is new not only in terms of its magnitude but also the composition of its victims. The terms, '*feminization*' and '*racialization*' of poverty have been closely associated with 'new poverty'.

In Canada, the new surge of poverty was highly visible in the 1990s. While in the 1980s, except for the recession years of 1983 and 1984, the poverty rate of Canadian families remained relatively stable, and even declined towards the end of decade, it rose to 15.6% in 1991 and 16.3% in 1996. It is well documented that those most heavily stricken by poverty in Canada have been the female-headed single parent families with children, women, unattached individuals, common-law families, young adults of 18-24, and the elderly. The *racialization* (or *ethnicization*) of poverty in Canada, however, has not received much attention. Any stress on the ethnic dimension of poverty does inevitably bring into the picture the 'immigration' factor source of Canada's ethnic diversity. The present study examines this dimension of poverty in Canada.

The study of immigrants' poverty in Canada shows that they have a poverty level higher than non-immigrants, that is, they are over-represented among the poor. The poverty levels of immigrants living in different cities highly match this general pattern. Despite this general consistency, those immigrants living in certain regions, i.e., French-speaking environments and the Prairie Provinces, experience the most severe level of poverty.

Table 1:
Poverty Rates, by Immigrant Status and CMA, 1991

CMA	Poverty Rate			
	Immigrants	Non-immigrants	Total Population	Difference Between Immigrants and Non-immigrants
Montréal	31.4	19.1	21.7	12.3
Québec	29.4	18.0	18.3	11.4
Ottawa-Hull	21.1	12.2	13.9	8.9
Edmonton	24.6	16.8	18.6	7.8
Sherbrooke and Trois-Rivières			20.1	
	27.4	19.8		7.6
Calgary	23.2	16.0	17.7	7.2
Winnipeg	25.2	18.1	19.5	7.1
Toronto	17.5	11.2	14.4	6.3
Vancouver	20.9	14.7	17.1	6.2
London	16.6	12.4	13.4	4.2
Kitchener	14.7	10.5	11.7	4.2
Hamilton	17.5	13.5	14.8	4
Regina and Saskatoon	18.9	16.8	19.5	2.1
Windsor	16.1	14.1	14.9	2
St. Catharines - Niagara	12.5	12.6	12.6	-0.1
Oshawa	8.6	8.7	8.7	-0.1
Halifax	12.6	12.8	12.9	-0.2
Victoria	13.1	13.5	13.5	-0.4
Sudbury and Thunder Bay	12.1	12.6	12.6	-0.5

Not do all immigrants living in the same city, however, have identical poverty experiences. Immigrants of certain ethnic origins, such as West Asian, Arab, Latin American, Spanish, and Vietnamese have poverty levels more than two times the national rate. This means that the poverty they experience in Canada is close to what they have had in their home countries.

The mentioned trends in immigrants' poverty refer to the current status, that is, they provide a static view of their poverty. While valuable, such a static view does not give any insight as whether or not the observed trends are going to change in the future. To address this question, two indices of inter-generational mobility, in terms of education and occupation, have been developed. The former measures the degree of educational advancement of different groups immigrants over two generations. The latter represent the extent to which the younger generation of immigrants has been able to improve their occupational status. These indices show that for some groups of immigrants, the future is even darker, since the younger generation has a weaker record of human 1 qualifications compared to the generation of their parents. For this segment of immigrant population, poverty is more than a temporal problem. They are likely to struggle with persistent poverty.

A preliminary step is taken to address some of the factors that may increase the odds of living in poverty for immigrants. A series of logistic regression models is developed, comparing the total population as well its immigrant and immigrant segments. The findings indicate that immigrants are affected by factors pertinent to the whole population, i.e. human capital factors as well as those related to the general economic trends in society. In addition to those immigrants suffer from some disadvantages associated with their immigration adventure, that is, their age at the time of arrival, and the period in which they have migrated.

What the present study tries to highlight is the peculiar situation of immigrants far as poverty is concerned. This corroborates the absolute need to design particular programs in order to improve the immigrants' status, through increasing the marketability of their skills, and addressing the hidden barriers they may face in terms of taking advantage of the available opportunities such as education.

Poverty Rates, By Immigrant Status and Ethnicity, 1991				
Ethnic Origin	Poverty Rate			
	Immigrants	Non-immigrants	Total (immigrant and Non-immigrant)	Difference Between Immigrants and Non-immigrants
Other East and South East Asian	30.8	14.2	26.1	16.6
West Asian	40.5	26.1	41.0	14.4
Polish	26.1	13.3	20.5	12.8
Arab	40.9	28.9	39.4	12.0
Jewish	20.3	10.1	13.9	10.2
Chinese	23.9	13.9	23.5	10.0
Ukrainian	20.8	14.4	15.2	6.4
Hungarian (Magyar)	21.2	15.0	18.7	6.2
Other European	17.8	12.2	14.6	5.6
Balkan	15.0	10.4	14.1	4.6
South Asian	18.0	14.4	18.6	3.6
Filipino	16.8	13.9	20.6	2.9
Italian	13.2	10.6	11.9	2.6
Other Western European	11.7	10.0	10.8	1.7
Vietnamese	35.4	33.9	35.1	1.5
German	13.6	12.1	12.5	1.5
Greek	21.6	20.4	21.1	1.2
Portuguese	15.2	14.2	15.1	1.0
Canadian	12.0	11.6	11.6	0.4
French	16.9	16.6	16.6	0.3
Latin, Central and South American	38.1	39.5	41.1	-1.4
Dutch (Netherlands)	9.2	10.9	10.4	-1.7
Spanish	36.8	36.6	38.5	-1.8
British	11.9	14.0	13.8	-2.1
Black/Caribbean	29.4	36.1	32.7	-6.7