

# Visible Minority Groups Vary in Social Integration

Research Brief No. 15

## Summary

On the basis of the 2001 Ethnic Diversity Survey, this study examines relationship between generation of Canadian residence and social integration. Two subjective (self-reported) measures of integration are used: sense of belonging to Canada and feelings of discomfort living in the host society. The study finds that the relationship between immigrant generation and social integration depends upon demographic and neighbourhood characteristics, as well as upon the city of settlement. The study also illustrates that while sense of belonging does not change across immigrant generations, it is higher for South Asians, lower among Chinese and French Canadians, and similar to the British-origin Canadians for other racial minorities. The study finds that visible minority immigrants are more likely to report feelings of discomfort than the Canadian-born or Whites in Canada. However, the feeling of discomfort decreases as immigrant generation status increases, and, over time, most immigrants are able to adapt and consider Canada their home.

## Key Findings

- The relationship between immigrant generation and social integration depends not only upon demographic characteristics such as age, gender and racial status, but also upon the city of settlement (large versus small city) and neighbourhood characteristics (for example, the number of people with university education or the percentage of people with the same ethnic background).
- *Sense of belonging* does not change (improve or decline) across immigrant generations.
- The *sense of belonging* to Canadian society is higher for South Asians, but lower among Chinese and French Canadians, and similar to the British-origin Canadians for other racial minorities (for example, Black and Aboriginals).
- The *feeling of discomfort* is higher for persons from Black, Chinese, South Asian or other visible minority groups, relative to persons of British origin. First generation racial minorities as well as Whites experience the highest level of discomfort or feel most out of place in comparison to other Canadians. The feeling of discomfort decreases across immigrant generations, with second and third-plus generations tending to feel less uncomfortable.
- The higher the level of co-ethnic concentration, the lower the sense of belonging to Canada. There was no association between co-ethnic concentration and level of discomfort.
- Other factors that affect feeling out of place include living in Toronto, Montreal or Vancouver and having a university education. These factors are associated with higher levels of discomfort.





## Social Integration of Visible Minority Groups

### Other Findings

- Individuals living in neighbourhoods characterized by low income reported lower sense of belonging to Canada regardless of their own earnings.
- Individuals living in neighbourhoods with high levels of income inequality reported a higher sense of belonging to Canada.
- Individuals living in neighbourhoods with high percentages of university educated people reported lower sense of belonging to Canada.

Term	Definition
Visible Minorities or Racial Minorities	According to the Employment Equity Act visible minorities are defined as "persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour". These groups include Chinese, South Asians, Blacks, Arabs, West Asians, Filipinos, Southeast Asians, Latin Americans, Japanese, Koreans and other visible minority groups, such as Pacific Islanders.
Social Integration	In this study, 'social integration' is measured using subjective responses on two dimensions: immigrants' sense of belonging to Canada and feelings of discomfort.
Sense of Belonging	The extent to which immigrants feel that they belong, are welcomed and included in Canadian society.
Feeling of Discomfort	The feeling of discomfort refers to immigrants perception of being excluded or marginalized.
Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA)	Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) "consists of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a core". CMA must contain a minimum population of 100,000 with at least 50,000 or more living in the urban core.
Census Tract	Census tracts (CTs) are "small, relatively stable geographic areas that usually have a population between 2,500 and 8,000 persons".
Neighbourhood	This study defines neighbourhoods as Census tracts.
Concentration of Co-ethnics	Number or percentage of individuals/groups living within a neighbourhood who share the same ethnicity or racial status.



# Social Integration of Visible Minority Groups

## Context

While much work has been devoted to understanding the integration of immigrants using indicators such as socioeconomic mobility, language use, and intermarriage, less is known about the subjective well-being of immigrants, that is, how immigrants assess their own happiness and satisfaction.

Previous Canadian studies on the subjective well-being of immigrants have found that both adult and young immigrants report lower levels of life satisfaction than their Canadian-born counterparts, and this is linked with their socioeconomic and ethno-racial status (Burton & Phipps 2010).

This study considers the subjective well-being of immigrants by examining two interrelated factors: (a) sense of belonging to Canada and (b) feeling of discomfort living in the host society.

Sense of belonging to Canada and feeling of discomfort (feeling out of place in the host society) were examined for immigrants, second generation Canadians, and third-plus generation.

The study also sought to determine whether racial status and neighbourhood characteristics, such as concentration of co-ethnics, influenced immigrant social integration in Canadian society.

To assess the *sense of belonging* to Canada, respondents were asked: "using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not strong at all and 5 is very strong, how strong is your sense of belonging to Canada?"

The second aspect - *feeling of discomfort* about living in the host society, was determined in response to the following: "How often do you feel uncomfortable or out of place in Canada now because of your ethnicity, culture, race, skin colour, language, accent or religion? Is it (1) all of the time, (2) most of the time, (3) some of the time, (4) rarely, or (5) never?"

## Study Sample and Methods

The study merges data from the 2001 Census and the data from the Ethnic Diversity Survey (EDS). The sample was restricted to respondents living in Census Metropolitan Areas. Standard regression analysis was used, with generation of Canadian residence as the main independent variable.

The table below presents the definitions of generations and the corresponding proportion of the metropolitan area population of Canada:

Generation Status	Definition	% of the Study Population
1.0 or First Generation	Persons born outside Canada. These people immigrated to Canada at age 13 or older	21.8%
1.5 Generation	Persons born outside Canada. These individuals immigrated to Canada at age 12 or younger.	9%
Second Generation	Persons born inside Canada. These individuals have at least one parent born outside Canada.	20%
Third and Higher Generation	Persons born inside Canada. These individuals have both parents born inside Canada.	50%



## Social Integration of Visible Minority Groups

### Implications

- The observation that all racial minorities report higher levels of discomfort than the majority group, implies that ethno-racial status is a potential obstacle to immigrant social integration. If immigrants feel uncomfortable or excluded, this is likely to negatively impact their social, political and economic integration.
- The study found that over time most immigrants adapt to their new social environment and consider Canada their home.
- Living in neighbourhoods with high proportions of people from the same ethnic background can help immigrant settlement and adaptation. Given that ethnic minority concentration may also isolate immigrants from the mainstream population and hinder their integration (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007), these questions merit further study.

### References

- Burton, P. & Phipps, S. (2010). [The well-being of immigrant children and parents in Canada](#). Working Paper No. 2010-09. Dalhousie University, Department of Economics.
- Reitz, J.G. & Banerjee, R. (2007). [Racial inequality, social cohesion, and policy issues in Canada](#). Institute for Research on Public Policy.

### About the Study

This Research Brief is based on Zheng Wu, Christoph M. Schimmele and Feng Hou, '[Self-perceived Integration of Immigrants and their Children](#)'. The full manuscript is available in *Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie* 37(4) 2012.

This brief was prepared by Bharati Sethi, Doctoral Candidate, Faculty of Social Work, Wilfred Laurier University.

For further information, please contact [Zheng Wu](#), University of Victoria.