

Discrimination Experienced by Landed Immigrants in Canada

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Abstract

Immigrants land in Canada with great hopes and multiple dreams, but the General Social Survey 2009 shows that one-fifth of them face discrimination in various situations once they have arrived. Ethnicity, race, language, and religion are the major grounds of discrimination. In this paper, the experiences of discrimination of landed immigrants are compared with those of non-immigrants. A logistic regression analysis is used on GSS data to predict the probability of facing discrimination based on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of a person. Separate models are prepared for landed immigrants and non-immigrants. Results show that immigrants are much more likely to face discrimination than non-immigrants. Visible minorities and younger persons face higher levels of discrimination compared to non-visible minorities and older persons. Irrespective of their gender, household income, language, region of domicile, and number of evening activities, landed immigrants have similar chances of facing discrimination; whereas, for non-immigrants, these characteristics make a significant difference in their experiences of discrimination.

Key Words: Discrimination, immigrant, race, ethnicity, and human rights.

Introduction

Immigrants land in Canada with high hopes and multiple dreams. They are fascinated by innumerable slogans like 'rights,' 'freedom,' 'equality,' 'multiculturalism,' and 'liberal society.' Those who come from developing countries are also attracted to the idea of being in a 'developed country' where people enjoy a 'higher standard of living,' a 'good health care system,' a 'peaceful social environment,' and 'political stability.' Before immigrants land in Canada, they have a rosy picture of the country they want to adopt as their new home. Only after arriving here do they realize that they have landed in a 'cold,' 'frigid,' and 'white' country. Some of them recognize it early and return to their home country, while for others this realization comes too late, as they cannot return once they have uprooted themselves from their motherland. Others move to a third country where they think living conditions and opportunities for work will be better. By and large, however, landed immigrants attempt to struggle and survive in the country to which they have moved. They adapt to their new environment and try to integrate into the Canadian way of life.

Immigrants are generally ambitious, hard-working, and energetic persons who are open to new ideas and willing to adapt to a new culture, language, and lifestyle (Bodvarsson and Van den Berg, 2009). They are considered risk-takers, as they are willing to leave behind familiar social, economic, and political environments to explore an unfamiliar system. Settlement in a new society is not an easy task. Any available support system in the place of destination helps migrants in the process of settlement and integration in the new society. Family, friends, and even unknown persons from the same ethnic background are helpful in the process of settlement, including such aspects as the search for a suitable accommodation, child care, a job or preferably suitable work, and other required services (Yap, 1977; Hugo, 1981; Taylor, 1986; Massey and Espana, 1987). Informal migrant networks also protect new immigrants from exploitation, fraud, and crime, and

help in the reduction of stress associated with migration (Bodvarsson and Van den Berg, 2009).

In Canada, several programs have been initiated by the federal, provincial, and municipal governments for the settlement, integration, and inclusion of new immigrants (Biles, 2008; Nangia, 2012). Based on my personal experience and interaction with other immigrants, I would suggest that many landed immigrants are either unaware of these programs or unable to use them for various reasons. Instead, they use other resources for integration, especially informal migrant networks. Experiences of discrimination in various spheres of life also act as barriers to settlement and integration. The General Social Survey (GSS) from 2009 shows that one-fifth of landed immigrants face discrimination in Canada. Some of them experience multiple forms of discrimination in multiple situations. Ethnicity, race, and language are the prominent bases of discrimination.

Discrimination means treating people differently because of their physical, social, or economic characteristics and thereby putting them at a disadvantage. The *Canadian Human Rights Act* (1985) prohibits discrimination based on a person's race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability, or conviction for which a pardon has been granted (Section 3(1)). This Act came into force more than two decades ago, yet many Canadians, especially landed immigrants, still experience discrimination in various aspects of their social lives.

In 1967, immigration policy was revamped in Canada and a points system was introduced. This policy intended to remove all prevailing discrimination and prejudice by selecting immigrants based on their qualifications, language aptitude, and skills (McIntyre, 2001). Under the new policy, prospective immigrants from all over the world could compete for entrance into Canada, and those who landed could sponsor their immediate kin to join them (Driedger, 1999). As a result, the number of immigrants from non-European countries began to increase (Table 1). According to the National Household Survey 2011, nearly four-fifths (78 percent) of the immigrants who came to Canada before 1971 were from Europe, mainly from the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands. Since then, the share of the European-born immigrants has been declining steadily. This is in contrast to the sharp increase in the proportion of immigrants coming from Asia, including the Middle East. Between 1991 and 2005, nearly 60 percent of immigrants to Canada came from Asia. In the most recent period (2006-2011), their share has declined slightly to 57 percent, while the contributions of Africa and the Caribbean, as well as Central and South America, have increased to more than 12 percent, which is only slightly less than the proportion of immigrants from Europe (nearly 14 percent). Recent data indicate that the Philippines was the leading country of birth for new immigrants between 2006-2011, followed by China and India (Statistics Canada, 2013a).

Table 1: Percentage of immigrants organized by region of birth and period of immigration, Canada, 2011

Period	United States	Caribbean, Central and South America	Africa	Europe	Asia (including the Middle East)	Oceania and other
Before 1971	5.0	5.4	1.9	78.3	8.5	0.8
1971 to 1980	6.5	17.3	5.8	35.1	33.8	1.4
1981 to 1990	3.4	16.7	6.0	24.2	48.8	0.9
1991 to 2000	2.2	10.9	7.3	19.0	59.8	0.8
2001 to 2005	3.2	10.5	10.3	15.4	60.0	0.7
2006 to 2011	3.9	12.3	12.5	13.7	56.9	0.6

Source: Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011

With changing patterns of immigration, cultural diversity has also increased. People in Canada have more than 200 ethnic origins. Thirteen of these ethnicities have surpassed the one million population mark (Statistics Canada, 2013a). Nearly one-fifth of Canadians (19 percent) belong to a visible minority group (Statistics Canada, 2013a) and another 4 percent identify themselves as Aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2013b). In 1971, Canada adopted the policy of multiculturalism to encourage the full involvement and equal participation of these groups in all aspects of society. “Multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding” by promoting diverse cultures and ensuring that “all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012). In 1988, the Multiculturalism Act was passed, which recognised the need to increase the participation of ethnic minorities in Canada’s major institutions by bringing diversity into their decision-making and resource allocation processes (Dewing and Leman, 2006).

Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine discrimination against landed immigrants in Canada. It explores the bases of discrimination and situations of victimization. For the purposes of comparison, the experiences of non-immigrants are also taken into account. An attempt is made to determine how demographic and socio-economic factors relate to the discrimination experienced by landed immigrants and non-immigrant population.

Data

This research is based on data obtained from the General Social Survey (GSS), Cycle 23 (Victimization), conducted in Canada in 2009. In this cross sectional survey, the sample group was selected through a stratified sampling

technique. Data was collected from members of the Canadian population above 15 years of age and residing in ten provinces and three territories. Those living in some types of institutions (e.g., long-term care facility, jail, etc.) and personnel of the Armed Forces living in barracks were excluded from this survey. The survey included individuals living on native reserves. In the provinces, information was solicited through telephone interviews and, in the territories, through a mixture of telephone and personal interviews. According to the Residential Telephone Services Survey (2008), approximately 0.9 percent of the households in Canada do not have a telephone and about 8 percent of households use only a cellular phone (cited in Statistics Canada, 2011). These households were also excluded from the survey. The GSS had a sample size of 19,422 respondents from the provinces and 1,094 respondents from the territories. However, the downloadable microdata file (the Main Analytical file), which is used for this research paper, contained only the 19,422 cases from the provinces. Data from the territories was not available. The study sample included 16,099 Canada-born persons (82.9 percent), 2,814 landed immigrants (14.5 percent), and 344 foreign-born persons (1.8 percent), who had never been granted landed immigrant status or did not know their status.

Methodology

In this paper, estimates of the extent, type, and place of discrimination are discussed with regard to landed immigrants and persons born in Canada (non-immigrants). Those who were born in another country and were never granted landed immigration status, or who did not know about it, are excluded from the analysis. A logistic regression analysis is used to predict the probability of facing discrimination based on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of a person. Separate models are prepared for landed immigrants and non-immigrants.

Results

Findings from the GSS show that 20 percent of landed immigrants experienced some form of discrimination during the five year period prior to the survey (reference period), in comparison with 14 percent of non-immigrants. Though findings for landed immigrants and non-immigrants were very similar in terms of single experiences of discrimination (7-8 percent), they were significantly different in terms of multiple experiences of discrimination. Thirteen percent of landed immigrants had multiple experiences of discrimination compared to less than 7 percent of non-immigrants. The mean number of discriminatory incidents experienced by landed immigrants (2.4) was significantly higher than the mean number of incidents experienced by non-immigrants (1.9).

Bases of Discrimination

Discrimination based on ethnicity or culture (13 percent), followed by race or colour (11 percent), were the most common forms of discrimination faced by landed immigrants. Another important basis for discrimination was language (7 percent). Non-immigrants responded that their most common experiences

of discrimination were related to their sex (5 percent) and physical appearance (4 percent).

Table 2 illustrates that nearly 4 percent of non-immigrants faced discrimination due to their race and an equal proportion due to their ethnicity. It is clear from this table that the biggest differences in the experiences of discrimination between landed immigrants and non-immigrants are based on their ethnicity, race, language, and to some extent religion.

Table 2: Percentage of population (15+ years) who experienced discrimination in Canada, by basis of discrimination, 2009 (Table shows weighted percentage)

Basis of discrimination	Landed immigrant	Non-immigrants
Sex	4.3	4.8
Age	3.3	3.4
Race or colour	10.6	3.8
Ethnicity or culture	12.6	3.7
Language	7.2	2.0
Religion	3.9	2.1
Disability	0.7	1.3
Physical appearance	3.9	4.0
Sexual orientation	0.9	0.9
Other	0.8	0.6

Source: Statistics Canada. GSS, 2009

Generally, when a person is in trouble, he or she goes to the authorities for protection and justice. Everyone expects equal treatment from authorities, especially when that equality is enshrined in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. On the contrary, however, a substantial proportion of the population has experienced discrimination from people in authority (e.g., police, judge, teacher, etc.). Among those landed immigrants who had experienced discrimination, 28 percent reported that they were discriminated against by a person in authority. By comparison, 24 percent of non-immigrants said that they had faced discrimination from a person in authority. When discrimination is inflicted by authoritative figures people lose faith in the system. This may increase class consciousness and condemnation of the system, leading to class conflict as well as conflict with the authorities.

When one uses a service (e.g., going to a store or restaurant, or using a taxi) one pays for the service and expects fair treatment from the service provider. A substantial proportion of immigrants and non-immigrants reported that they did not receive fair treatment from various service providers. Twenty five percent of landed immigrants and 23 percent of non-immigrants who faced discrimination reported that they were discriminated against by service

providers. More than a tenth of those who were discriminated against (12 percent of immigrants and 10 percent of non-immigrants) received unfair treatment from both persons in authority and service providers. A significantly higher proportion of non-immigrants (44 percent) compared to landed immigrants (35 percent), who had experienced some form of discrimination, reported that they did not face any discrimination from a person in authority or a service provider.

The GSS also collected data on the places or situations where discrimination took place. A much higher proportion of immigrants faced discrimination in multiple situations. Sixty-two percent of those landed immigrants who experienced any form of discrimination reported that they had experienced discrimination in multiple situations compared to 53 percent of non-immigrants. The mean number of discriminatory situations for landed immigrants was significantly higher, at 2.2 in comparison to 1.8 for non-immigrants.

Table 3 shows the percentage of immigrants and non-immigrants who faced discrimination and is organized by the type of situation in which discrimination was experienced. In both groups, the largest proportion experienced discrimination at work or when applying for a job or promotion. Fifty-six percent of the immigrants and 44 percent of non-immigrants faced unfair treatment at work.

Table 3: Percentage of immigrants and non-immigrants who faced discrimination, organized by type of situation in which discrimination was experienced, Canada, 2009. (Table shows weighted percentages)

Type of situation	Landed immigrant	Non-immigrants
On the street	31.9	31.8
In a store, bank, or restaurant	34.9	38.1
At work or when applying for a job or promotion	56.3	44.2
Dealing with police or courts	10.7	9.6
On a bus, train, subway, airplane, ferry, etc.	18.9	12.5
Attending school or classes	14.8	17.5
Looking for a place to live or buying or renting a house	9.3	8.5
Participating in sports or getting involved in sports organizations	6.8	6.9
Dealing with a public hospital or health care worker	13.3	10.6
Crossing the border into Canada	20.1	5.0
Any other situation	6.7	9.4

Source: Statistics Canada. GSS. 2009

A slightly higher proportion of non-immigrants faced discrimination in stores, banks, restaurants, or while attending schools and classes. On the other hand, a significantly higher proportion of landed immigrants faced discrimination when crossing the border into Canada and when using a public transportation system, such as a bus, train, subway, airplane, ferry, etc. In other situations, the level of discrimination between the two groups was comparable.

Factors Affecting Discrimination

The findings of this survey clearly show that landed immigrants face a much higher level of discrimination in Canada compared to non-immigrants. Not only have a higher proportion of them experienced unfair treatment, but a larger proportion of landed immigrants have faced multiple forms of discrimination in multiple situations. To predict the probability of experiencing discrimination, a logistic regression analysis was employed with separate models developed for immigrant and non-immigrant populations. For both groups, the same predictor variables were considered. These variables were: gender, age, household income, household language, visible minority status, region of domicile, and the average number of evening activities for which respondents go out. Results of the analysis are shown in Table 4. For each categorical variable, the last category was used as the reference group, which is referred to as 'Ref' in first column of the table.

Results of the logistic regression analysis reveal that, for landed immigrants, only two covariates, age and visible minority status, have a significant effect on the experiences of discrimination. Younger immigrants (< 65 years) are more likely to face discrimination than older immigrants (65 + years). The odds ratio indicates that, when holding all other variables constant, the odds of facing discrimination are 2.8 times higher for young immigrants (< 35 years) and 2.1 times higher for middle age immigrants (35-64 years) than the odds faced by older immigrants (65+ years). Immigrants who belong to a visible minority group are more likely to face discrimination compared to non-visible minority immigrants (odds ratio of 2.1). Irrespective of their gender, household income, language of the household, region of domicile, and number of evening activities, landed immigrants have similar chances of facing discrimination, however, age and visible minority status affect their chances of discrimination.

For non-immigrants, all covariates selected in the model have some effect on the likelihood of experiencing discrimination. Males are less likely to face discrimination compared to females (odds ratio of 0.7), younger persons are more likely to face discrimination than older persons (odds ratio for ages < 35 is 4.4 and for ages 35-64 is 3.5). Non-immigrants who earn less than \$30,000 are significantly more likely to face discrimination compared to those who earn \$100,000 or more (odds ratio of 1.6). The other income groups do not show any significant difference from the reference category. Those who use French as their household language are less likely to face discrimination than those who use any language other than the two official languages as their household language (odds ratio of 0.3).

Among non-immigrants also visible minorities are more likely to face discrimination than those who do not belong to a visible minority group (odds ratio of 2.2). The only people who are less likely to face discrimination than

those staying in British Columbia are those living in Atlantic Canada (odds ratio of 0.6). Other regions do not show a significant difference from the reference category (i.e., British Columbia). The average number of evening activities in which one participates has a significant positive effect on experiences of discrimination. In other words, the more a person participates in the evening activities the higher are the chances of facing discrimination.

Table 4: Predictors of discrimination – demographic, social, economic, and regional characteristics

Characteristic	Immigrant			Non-immigrant		
	B	p	Odds ratio	B	p	Odds ratio
Gender						
Male	-.232	.055	.793	-.350	.000	.704
Female (Ref)						
Age group						
<35	1.043	.000	2.837	1.479	.000	4.390
35-64	.742	.000	2.100	1.248	.000	3.485
65+ (Ref)						
Household income						
<30,000	-.221	.259	.802	.477	.000	1.610
30,000 – 59,999	-.158	.322	.854	.126	.075	1.135
60,000 – 99,999	-.318	.052	.728	-.017	.807	.983
100,000 + (Ref)						
Household language						
English	.116	.389	1.123	-.301	.078	.740
French	.361	.215	1.435	-1.223	.000	.294
Other (Ref)						
Visible minority status						
Visible minority	.721	.000	2.056	.788	.000	2.200
Not visible minority (Ref)						
Region						
Atlantic	-.168	.622	.845	-.525	.000	.592
Quebec	.203	.421	1.225	.201	.192	1.223
Ontario	-.086	.623	.918	-.106	.256	.900
Prairie	.075	.705	1.077	-.037	.685	.963
British Columbia (Ref)						
Average number of evening activities for which one goes out	.008	.059	1.008	.007	.000	1.007

Ref – reference category

Discussion

Since patterns of immigration have changed in recent decades, resulting in more immigrants coming from diverse, non-European backgrounds, new immigrants tend to possess different cultural values and take more time to

assimilate to the dominant culture. At times, they have to face the strong resistance of those with conservative, dominant values. As a result, a significantly higher proportion of immigrants face discrimination compared to non-immigrants. These patterns become obvious when studying the results of the GSS. The number of times immigrants experience discrimination is also higher than that for their non-immigrant counterparts, which is to say that the mean number of discriminatory incidents faced by immigrants is significantly higher compared to that for non-immigrants. The GSS data show that the largest differences in the experiences of discrimination between immigrants and non-immigrants are related to their ethnicity, race, language, and (to some extent) religion. The first three characteristics are often easily identifiable from the looks and speech of a person, but it is difficult to know the religion of a person unless the individual makes outward displays of particular religious practices or if the individual wears distinctive religious attire. This may explain why the instances of discrimination based on religion are fewer. Further analysis of data also shows that, among non-immigrants, visible minorities are more than twice as likely to face discrimination as non-visible minorities.

In a review of the literature on media and immigration, Mahtani (2008) has demonstrated the role media has played in the creation of negative images of visible minority immigrants. She describes how stereotypes are created about visible minorities that label them as 'problem people' or potential troublemakers who steal occupations and opportunities from 'real' Canadians. They are seen as abusers of the welfare system, are often assumed to be engaged in illegal activities, and considered to be a threat to the Canadian way of life (Jiwani, 2006; Henry and Tator, 2002; Fleras and Kunz, 2001 cited in Mahtani, 2008). When the media creates negative images in association with a group of persons, it is not surprising to find that these people experience a much higher level of discrimination in various situations. Findings from the survey show that more than half (56 percent) of those immigrants who face discrimination either experience it at their work place or when applying for a job and/or promotion. Foreign credentials and experience are not given much weight in Canada and act as barriers to integration in the labour market (HRSDC, 2009; Foster, 2008), especially if they are acquired in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, or Central and South America, all of which are places from where most new immigrants now come. In addition, new immigrants find it difficult to get local references, while their foreign references are ignored by employers. Despite the good intentions expressed in the Charters of Rights and Freedoms, immigrants (especially visible minorities), have to face racism and nepotism in recruitment and a glass ceiling in promotions when trying to locate employment.

More than two-fifths of the non-immigrants surveyed experienced discrimination at their places of work. As explained earlier, among non-immigrants, visible minorities are much more likely to face discrimination. James believes that many people from dominant groups feel reverse discrimination due to the employment equity policy advocated by the government. They feel that such policies put them at a disadvantage in the labour market. Statements in job advertisements, such as "[Organization] is committed to employment equity and encourages applicants from all qualified candidates, including Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, visible

minorities (or people of colour) and women” (James, 2007: 356) are perceived as ‘unfair’ and ‘wrong’ and discriminatory against white males (James, 2007).

Other places where respondents tend to experience a higher level of discrimination are stores, banks, restaurants, and streets. Both immigrants and non-immigrants had similar experiences of discrimination in these settings.

A much higher proportion of landed immigrants (20 percent) experienced discrimination when crossing the border into Canada compared to non-immigrants (5 percent). Such discrimination can also be related to the race, ethnicity, language, and religion of the landed immigrant. Since the terrorist attacks in the United States in 2001 and other attempted or planned attacks by individuals of particular faiths, stereotypes have been developed and other immigrants coming from similar backgrounds are viewed with suspicion and scrutinized more carefully.

Results of the logistic regression analysis clearly indicate that, irrespective of their gender, household income, household language, region of domicile, and number of evening activities, most immigrants have similar chances of experiencing discrimination. Only age and visible minority status have a significant effect on the discrimination faced by immigrants. On the other hand, non-immigrants do not have similar experiences of discrimination. Non-immigrants, with certain characteristics, are more likely to face discrimination. For example, women are significantly more likely to face discrimination compared to men. Women still experience discrimination in many spheres of life on the basis of their gender. They often earn much less than men, even when they have similar educational backgrounds and occupational experience (Creese and Beagan, 2009). Visible minorities, even if they are born in Canada, face a much higher level of discrimination. Non-immigrant, visible minority persons might have several advantages over their immigrant counterparts, such as a Canadian education, work experience and local references, knowledge of either one or both official languages, a Canadian accent, and cultural adaptation. Though non-immigrant, visible minority persons are still discriminated against due to their skin-colour and/or ethnicity.

Younger people are generally more likely to experience discrimination compared to seniors (odds ratio of 1.04 for immigrants and 4.39 for non-immigrants). This could be attributed to their greater exposure to the outside world due to their participation in education, the work force, sports, and other social activities. The plausible explanation could be that younger people are more ambitious and have a greater realization of their rights. They are also less tolerant of discrimination and more vocal about unfair treatment compared to older persons who are more tolerant, docile, withdrawn from the wider society, and unwilling to speak about discrimination (Batheway, et al., 2007).

Those in the lowest income bracket are more likely to face discrimination compared to those in the highest income category. People whose income is low or who are obliged to make use of various forms of social assistance are often perceived as lazy, unmotivated, lacking strong work ethics, linguistically deficient, and abusers of drugs and alcohol (Gorski, 2008). The poor lack social and cultural capital, face discrimination in employment, and remain trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. Visible minorities and recent

immigrants are not able to take advantage of their education in the same way as majority non-immigrant population. “This is partly explained by the experience of internationally educated professionals who face barriers to converting their skills into skilled occupations” (Teelucksingh and Galabuzi, 2007: 207). According to Hou, Balakrishnan and Jurdi (2009) income inequality exists between the visible minorities and persons of European origin even after controlling for educational qualification. This “is probably related to discrimination” (Hou, et al., 2009: 270).

Those non-immigrants who use French as their household language are less likely to face discrimination than those who use other languages, with the exception of English, as their household language. Many jobs require bilingual candidates. Similarly, many services are bilingual, and francophone are able to avail them in their own language. These might be some of the reasons why they feel less discriminated against than those who speak non-official languages at their homes.

Participation in more evening activities gives greater exposure to all kinds of people, including both those with similar and different cultural experiences and values. The likelihood of discrimination increases when a person experiences greater exposure to the outside world.

Conclusion

Results of the GSS clearly indicate that immigrants face a higher level of discrimination than non-immigrants. Ethnicity and race are the major grounds of discrimination. Most of the discrimination is experienced at the work place. Other common situations of unfair treatment occur on the streets, or in stores, banks, and restaurants. A much higher proportion of landed immigrants face multiple instances of discrimination in multiple situations. The mean number of discriminatory incidents faced by immigrants is significantly higher compared to that for non-immigrants

In this study, logistic regression analysis is employed to assess the effects of various social, demographic, economic, and regional factors on the probability of facing discrimination. For landed immigrants, younger age and visible minority status significantly increase the likelihood of being discriminated against. Irrespective of their gender, household income, language of household, region of domicile, or the number of evening activities they attend, landed immigrants have similar chances of being discriminated against. For non-immigrants, these characteristics play an important role in receiving unfair treatment, with factors such as being female, young, a visible minority, coming from a low income household, and attending more evening activities all appearing to increase the likelihood of being discriminated against.

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