

Title: Social Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Canada's Urban Neighborhoods

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Research Question:

Does the social integration of immigrants improve from one generation to the next? Is living in an ethnic enclave (or residential segregation) a barrier to the social integration of immigrants? Does the social integration of immigrants and their children differ between visible minorities and whites?

Importance:

This study examines the complexities of the social integration process, focusing on whether immigrants feel they belong to Canada or feel out of place there. It contributes to our understanding of this process by examining whether intergenerational progress is conditional on local context and racial status. In general, a lack of integration decreases a person's incentive to contribute to collective enterprises or community institutions. Hence, promoting the social integration of immigrants and their children is essential for preserving social cohesion.

Research Findings:

The core finding is that the relationship between immigrant status and integration is not straightforward but instead depends on a combination of things, including intersections between generational status, place of residence, and racial status. For sense of belonging to Canada, the generational effect is mainly a function of individual-level characteristics (who you are), such as ethnic status. Some residual effects remain, depending on where immigrants live: first generation immigrants living in ethnic enclaves have a lower sense of belonging to Canada than all others. In regards to feeling out of place, first generation immigrants are worse off than third and higher generation Canadians. This generational effect is most pronounced for visible minorities and does not depend on where immigrants live.

Implications:

The high proportion of visible minorities among the first generation is not a trivial matter, and other Canadian research suggests that concentration of these recent immigrants in urban enclaves could be a barrier to their integration. However, our findings also suggest a small protective effect of enclaves, as feelings of discomfort are the lowest among immigrants living in these neighborhoods. It is important not to overstate the size of these effects, which are modest.