

# OVERVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON IMMIGRANTS

PART 2 - FOCUS ON SOCIAL IMPACTS

GUELPH WELLINGTON LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP



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## OVERVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON IMMIGRANTS – SOCIAL IMPACTS

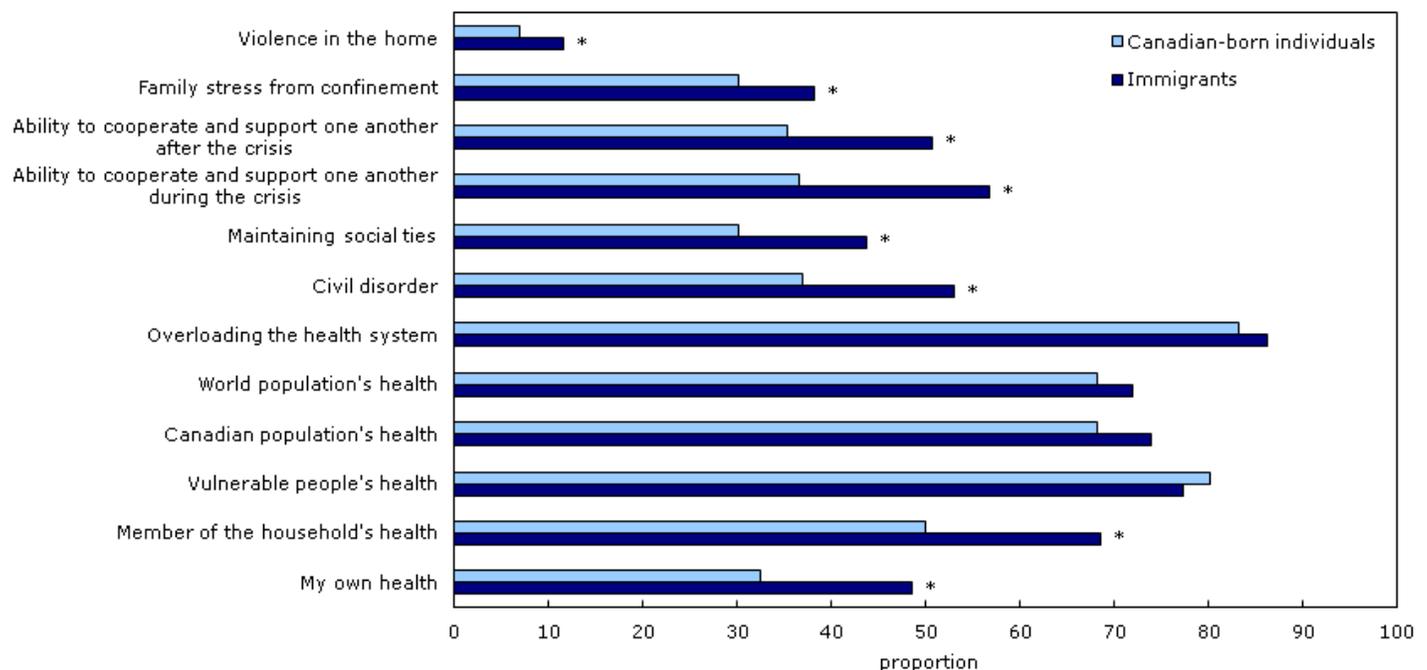
The public interest regarding COVID-19, along with the rapid pace of change of public health measures has resulted in a huge amount of research being released. It is important, therefore, to note that many studies have been released with speed in mind, and might as a result be less reliable or rigorous than one would normally expect, due to differences in sampling methods and sizes. In addition, the rate at which research is being released is likely unprecedented, which means that many studies may become outdated more quickly than normal. The authors feel that this report should be read with these points in mind.

Since March 2020, there are several indications that the impact that immigrants and visible minorities have felt is demonstrably different than the population generally. This report will attempt to highlight those differences.

In a study which took place shortly after the start of significant public health measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, immigrants generally indicated that they were more anxious regarding the impacts that the COVID-19 crisis might have on them and their families. Of particular concern were the potential impacts on their personal health, and the health of their household members. Immigrants also were more likely to indicate that they were fearful of the impacts that COVID-19 would have on social cohesion and civil disorder than the Canadian born population [See Figure 1].<sup>1</sup>

Chart 1

Proportion of immigrants and Canadian-born individuals aged 15 and older who reported that they were “very” or “extremely” concerned about selected social issues



\* significantly different from Canadian-born individuals ( $p < 0.05$ )

Source: Canadian Perspectives Survey Series, March and April 2020.

Figure 1 - LaRochelle-Cote and Uppal. 2020. [The social and economic concerns of immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)

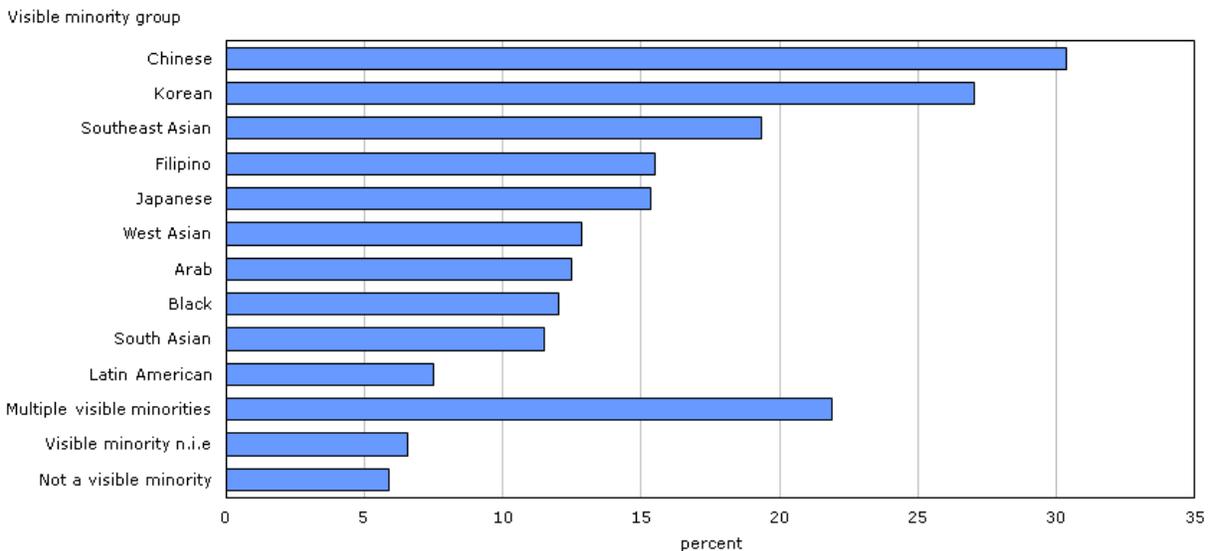
<sup>1</sup> LaRochelle-Cote and Uppal. 2020. [The social and economic concerns of immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

In the early days of the Canadian pandemic experience, immigrants were significantly more likely to anticipate that COVID-19 and the surrounding crisis would have a major or moderate impact on their ability to meet financial obligations or essential needs (36.4%) than Canadian-born individuals (26.7%).<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, this anticipation tended to be well founded. Analysis of the April 2020 Labour Force Survey shows that Employment among very recent immigrants (five years or less) fell significantly more during that period (-23.2%) than it did for those born in Canada (-14.0%). More established immigrants (those in Canada for 5-10 years or more) saw a decrease of employment of ~17%.<sup>3</sup>

A survey in June 2020 indicated that 29% of immigrants feared being the target of unwanted behaviours due to the pandemic, while only 17% of the Canadian born population felt this fear. Of those who were fearful of these unwanted behaviours, 42% of immigrants were fearful of being stigmatized due to their racial identity, compared to only 9% of the Canadian born population. Notably, immigrants were much less likely than the Canadian born population to fear being the target of unwanted behaviours for not following safety protocols.<sup>4</sup>

According to a Statistics Canada survey in May 2020, 18% of visible minority participants believe that race-based incidents had become more frequent since the beginning of the pandemic vs. 6% of non-visible minorities. Chinese participants were the most likely to have perceived an increase in race based incidents (30%)<sup>5</sup>, with Korean and Southeast Asian participants also being more likely to have felt an increase than other visible minority groups.<sup>6</sup>

**Chart 2**  
Perceived increase in harassment or attacks on the basis of race, ethnicity, or skin colour in neighbourhood since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, by visible minority group, Canada, 2020



n.i.e. not indicated elsewhere  
Source: Statistics Canada, Crowdsourcing on perceptions of safety, May 12-25, 2020.

Figure 2 - Statistics Canada. 2020. [Perceptions of personal safety among population groups designated as visible minorities in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

<sup>2</sup> LaRochelle-Cote and Uppal. 2020. [The social and economic concerns of immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada. 2020. [Labour Force Survey, April 2020.](#)

<sup>4</sup> Hango. 2020. [Fear of COVID-19 related stigmatization.](#)

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Canada. 2020. [Canadians' perceptions of personal safety since COVID-19.](#)

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada. 2020. [Perceptions of personal safety among population groups designated as visible minorities in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

A survey of 516 Chinese Canadians released in June 2020 by Angus Reid examined the issue in greater depth, and also found indications that the Chinese Canadian population has been the target of discriminatory acts during the pandemic. Around one third of those surveyed felt that during COVID-19 they had been treated with less respect, insulted, or threatened because of their ethnicity [See Figure 3].<sup>7</sup>

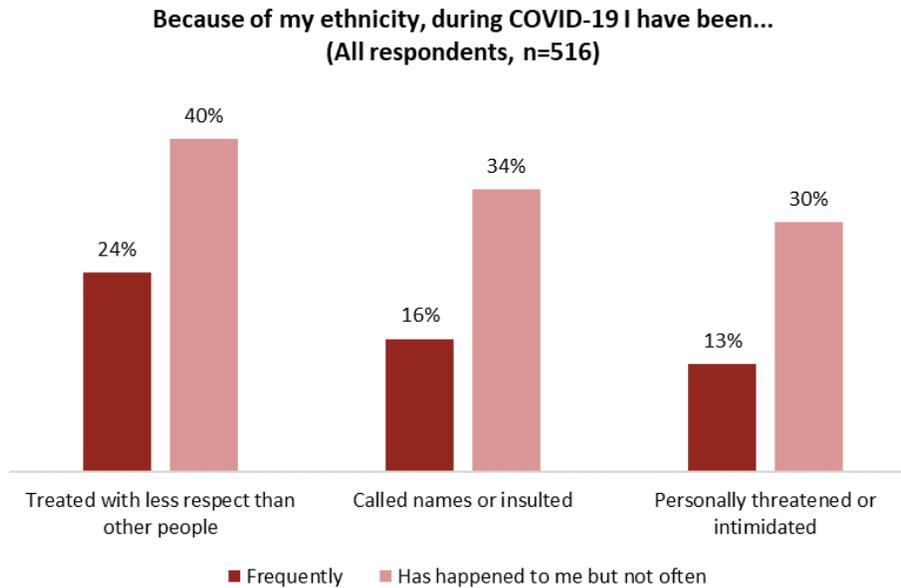


Figure 3 - Angus Reid. 2020. [Blame, bullying and disrespect: Chinese Canadians reveal their experiences with racism during COVID-19.](#)

More recent studies released by Statistics Canada in September 2020 echo these indications of increased discrimination against those identifying as Chinese, Southeast Asian, Korean and Filipino in Canada, during the pandemic. In August 2020, a crowdsourced survey examined the experiences of all types of discrimination during the pandemic.

Participants were asked whether they had “experienc[ed] discrimination or [had] been treated unfairly by others during the pandemic”. The survey found that significant proportions of Chinese (59.6%), Korean (64.4%), Black (54.6%), Southeast Asian (52.7%), and Filipino (46.6%) participants had experienced such treatment, compared to 22.4% non-visible minority participants.<sup>8</sup>

Recent immigrants (those who had arrived in Canada within the last 10 years) were more likely than Canadian-born individuals and more established immigrants to indicate that they had experienced discriminatory acts during the pandemic. Recent immigrant participants in this study were also more likely to indicate that they identified as a visible minority.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Angus Reid. 2020. [Blame, bullying and disrespect: Chinese Canadians reveal their experiences with racism during COVID-19.](#)

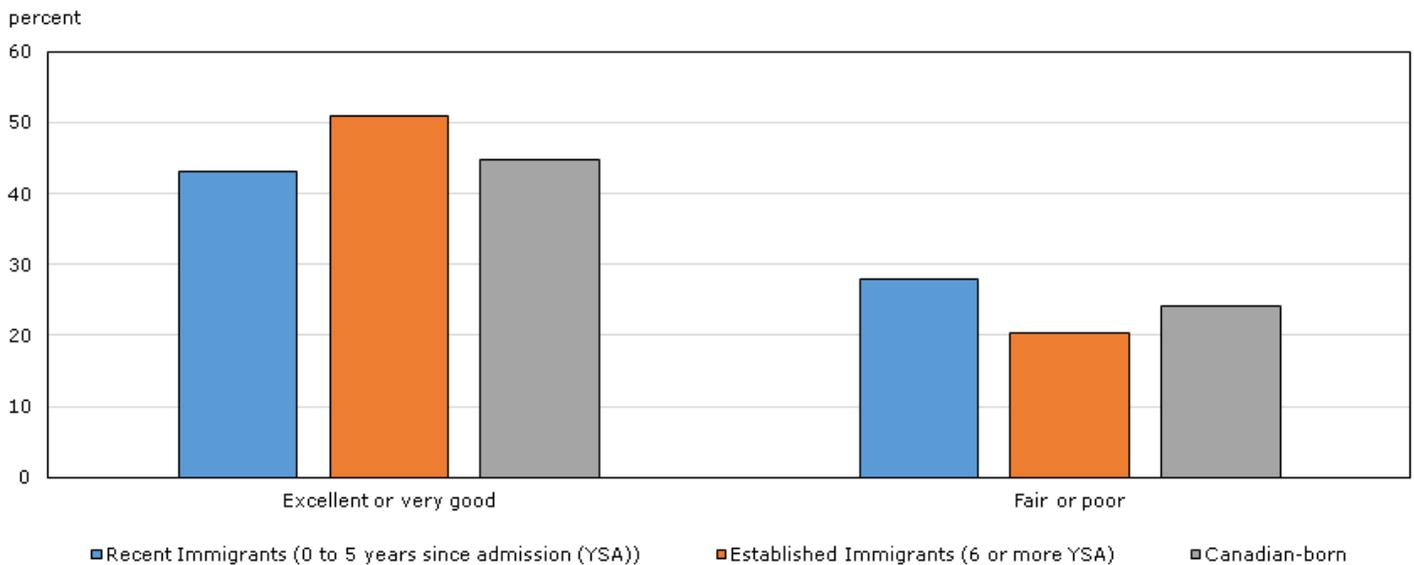
<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada. 2020. [Experiences of discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada. 2020. [Experiences of discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic.](#)

A recent crowdsourced survey found that that perceived mental health was similar for recent immigrants, established immigrants, and Canadian-born individuals [see Figure 4].<sup>10</sup> It is notable that this is before controlling for the greater level of job loss experienced by recent immigrants as a result of the pandemic. Previous studies have linked perceived stress levels with income among recent immigrants<sup>11</sup>, and surveys have indicated that 42% of recent immigrants anticipated that COVID-19 would have major or moderate impact on their ability to meet financial obligations, versus 24% of established immigrants and 23% of Canadian born individuals.<sup>12</sup>

**Chart 1**

**Perceived mental health of participants by immigrant status and period of immigration**



**Source:** Statistics Canada, Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians – Your mental health.

Figure 4 - Evra and Mongrain. 2020. [Mental Health Status of Canadian Immigrants During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)

According to one study, immigrants were generally more fearful about resuming normal activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Immigrants were particularly more worried than Canadian-born individuals about the risks of resuming gatherings for weddings and religious services (70% vs. 53%), and shows, festivals, movies and sporting events (81% vs. 61%). According to Statistics Canada, this is consistent with previous findings that indicated that immigrants were usually more concerned about the impacts of COVID-19 than those born in Canada.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Evra and Mongrain. 2020. [Mental Health Status of Canadian Immigrants During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)

<sup>11</sup> Robert and Gilkinson. 2012. [Mental health and well-being of recent immigrants in Canada: Evidence from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada.](#)

<sup>12</sup> Evra and Mongrain. 2020. [Mental Health Status of Canadian Immigrants During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)

<sup>13</sup> Langevin and Turcotte. 2020. [Concerns over resuming activities in Canada.](#)