TIEDI
Toronto Immigrant Employment
DATA INITIATIVE

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DOES SELF-REPORTED ENGLISH AND FRENCH SPEAKING ABILITY AFFECT LABOUR MARKET OUTCOMES FOR IMMIGRANTS?

By

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KEY POINTS:

- There are few significant differences when it comes to labour force participation based on language skills, but there are significant differences in earnings based on language skills.

- More than half of immigrants who speak English or French very well or fluently find work in a field related to their education / training, compared to less than 1 in 5 for immigrants with poor language skills.

- For both men and women, after 4 years in Canada, poor language ability leads to unemployment rates double those of male and female immigrants who can speak English or French "very well".

- There are substantial differences in workplace ethnic composition according to language skills: immigrants with poorer spoken English or French are more likely to work with a higher proportion of people of their own cultural/ethnic group.

- Immigrant women fare worse than their male counterparts, both over time and across language skills, in all measured labour market outcomes. Gender differences are accentuated for women with poorer language skills, while those with strong language skills have outcomes closer to their male counterparts.

INTRODUCTION TO TIEDI

The Toronto Immigrant Employment Data Initiative (TIEDI) seeks to assist organizations whose mandate includes the better integration of immigrants into Toronto's labour force. Such partner organizations include immigrant service agencies and advocacy groups, labour organizations, regulatory bodies, professional associations, training organizations, and credential assessment agencies.

The purpose of the project is to provide organizations with free access to statistical data and analysis on various aspects of immigrant labour market integration. The goal is to help organizations access the quantitative data they need in order to: identify priorities, develop programs and services, compose proposals and reports, and carrying out advocacy and public education endeavours.

TIEDI provides a unique service in which community organizations' data needs are met by a team of academic researchers and student analysts. Our partners define the data that they need - the project is thus driven by their agendas and not by academic research priorities.

TIEDI is based at York University, with a team of academic researchers drawn from York, the University of Toronto, and Ryerson University. Core members of the project team also include representatives of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and World Education Services. The project is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada under its Knowledge Impact in Society program, and by York University.

The datasets used by the project include a range of large-scale surveys such as the Census, the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, the Ethnic Diversity Survey, the Workplace and Employee Survey, the Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, the Labour Force Survey and the Permanent Residents Data System.

TIEDI Analytical Reports provide tabulations of data, some brief analysis and contextualization, and some necessary caveats about the limitations of the data and analysis. Since the data presented have not been treated to detailed statistical analysis, any conclusions must be seen as preliminary and as starting points for further, more detailed, research.

For further information, contact the TIEDI Principal Investigator, Dr Philip Kelly (pfkelly@yorku.ca), or the TIEDI Project Coordinator, Maryse Lemoine (mlemoine@yorku.ca).

While the research and analysis are based on data from Statistics Canada, the opinions expressed do not represent the views of Statistics Canada.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the labour market performance (in terms of income, participation rate, unemployment rate, full-time employment rate, jobless spells, job match with relevant training, and workplace ethnic composition) for immigrants based on their English and French language speaking ability?

BACKGROUND

There is a large literature about the importance of language fluency among immigrants. Many empirical studies suggest a positive correlation between language ability and labour market performance. For instance, unemployment rates tend to decline during an immigrant's first decade in Canada. During this time, language skills improve and by the end of the first decade after arrival their language skills are positively associated with employment (Hou and Beiser, 2001). This is supported by findings that reveal that, although recent immigrants initially earn less than their Canadian-born counterparts or more established immigrants, "they should enjoy higher earnings growth as [their] language difficulties are overcome" (McDonald and Worswick, 1998: 465). It has also been suggested that whether immigrants are highly educated or not, immigrants who could speak either English or French "were more likely to be employed than those who could not" (Badets and Howatson-Leo, 1999: 17).

The reasons for this correlation are varied:

1) Immigrants who have poor language skills appear "more visibly foreign" than other immigrants, and this "may facilitate discrimination" in the labour market (Bleakley and Chin, 2004: 481).
2) Language skills "are related to productivity, and hence the wages of workers" (Picot and Sweetman, 2005: 16) - poor language skills "probably reduce productivity" (Bleakley and Chin, 2004: 481), which would translate into lower earnings.

"Knowing the language of one's new country helps to understand that country's culture and allows one to take part in day-to-day life" – this includes becoming a part of the workforce (Badets and Howatson-Leo, 1999: 16). Having a poor grasp of official languages would limit "the range and quality of jobs that immigrants can get" (Bleakley and Chin, 2004: 481). As immigrants improve their language skills, they "form networks in Canada [and] become more familiar with Canadian (…) work norms" and therefore their labour market outcomes improve (Picot and Hou, 2003: 15).

Language skills may also be strong indicators of labour market success because they are complementary to other forms of human capital (Chiswick and Miller, 2002). . It has been shown that earnings increase with language acquisition alongside "schooling, pre-immigration experience and duration in Canada – which means that "greater proficiency in the official languages enhances the effects on earnings of schooling and pre-immigration labour market experience" (Chiswick and Miller, 2003: 469).

In Canada, the association between language skills and labour market outcomes is of particular interest, as there have been significant changes in the characteristics of immigrants over the last few decades – including a declining proportion of immigrants with either English or French as their first

language. In 2000, "almost two-thirds of recent immigrants (…) had a home language other than French or English compared to only half of recent immigrants in 1980" (Picot and Hou, 2003: 10).

Finally, it should be noted that immigrants can participate in two spheres of economic operation: the general labour market and the ethnic economy. The ethnic economy "designates an immigrant or minority business and employment sector" (Light et al. 1993: 65). There is much debate about wages in the ethnic economy when compared to the general economy (Light et al, 1994). There are thought to be both positive and negative consequences of being employed in the ethnic economy. In the ethnic economy "immigrants work in ethnically homogeneous working environments" and so they "interact mostly with co-ethnic workers, co-ethnic supervisors, or co-ethnic customers" (Fong and Ooka, 2000: 3). Although the ethnic economy is considered "an alternative avenue of economic attainment among immigrants" it may be the case that "employees earn lower returns than they would in the general labour market" (Light et al, 1994: 65). The ethnic economy is also "associated with a lower rate of acquisition of host country skills" such as language skills (Edin, Fredriksson and Aslund, 2003: 330).

THE DATA: LONGITUDINAL SURVEY OF IMMIGRANTS TO CANADA

This report uses data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC), which was a joint undertaking between Statistics Canada and Citizenship and Immigration Canada under the Policy Research Initiative.

The LSIC is a comprehensive survey designed to study the process by which new immigrants adapt to, or integrate into, Canadian society. As part of adapting to life in Canada, many immigrants face challenges such as finding suitable accommodation, learning or becoming more fluent in one or both of Canada's official languages, participating in the labour market or accessing education and training opportunities. The results of this survey provide indicators of how immigrants are meeting these challenges and what resources are most helpful to their settlement in Canada. The survey also examines how the socio-economic characteristics of immigrants influence the process by which they integrate into Canadian society.

The topics covered by the survey include language proficiency, housing, education, foreign credentials recognition, employment, health, values and attitudes, citizenship, the development and use of social networks, income, and impressions about life in Canada. The questions address respondents' situation before coming to Canada and since their arrival.

The survey involved a longitudinal design, with immigrants being interviewed at three different times: six months, two years, and four years after landing in Canada. The target population for the survey consisted of immigrants who arrived in Canada between October 1, 2000 and September 30, 2001, were age 15 years or older at the time of landing, and landed from abroad (i.e. they must have applied through a Canadian Mission Abroad). Individuals who applied and landed from within Canada are excluded from the survey (Statistics Canada, 2007). The LSIC sample design used a "funnel-shaped" approach. Thus, only immigrants that responded to the Wave 1 interview (at six months) were traced for the Wave 2 interview (at two years) and only those that responded to the Wave 2 interview were traced for the Wave 3 interview (at four years) (Statistics Canada, 2007).

The LSIC was conducted from 2001 to 2005. This time period was marked by economic growth, strong employment gains, and earnings growth in Canada (Lin, 2008: 5). Existing economic conditions (see table 1 for basic economic data) and government policies may affect the trajectories of respondents. The outcomes of the respondents presented in this report may not therefore be comparable to the experiences of immigrants who landed in different time periods. It is also important to note that this report examines solely the relationship between language proficiency and labour market outcomes. Clearly, a great many other variables are involved in shaping labour market integration and mobility for immigrants.

Table 1: Economic Performance Indicators, Canada, 2001-2005

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Overall average
Growth in Real GNP	1.8 %	2.9 %	1.9 %	3.1 %	3.1 %	2.6 %
Unemployment Rate	7.2 %	7.6 %	7.6 %	7.2 %	6.8 %	7.3 %

Source: Maslove, 2008: 228

Because of limited sample sizes, the data used in this report are for all of Canada. Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents to the LSIC. The LSIC survey instrument includes a section on language skills, with a variety of questions exploring the respondent's competence in speaking, writing, and reading official languages. In this report, we have used the results from the questions concerning competence in spoken English or French only. These questions asked respondents to self-evaluate their spoken language ability on a scale of 'poorly', 'fairly well', 'well' and 'very well'.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents* by English and French Speaking Ability,
6 months, 2 years and 4 years after landing, Canada

		MEN				WOMEN			
		NONE OR POOR	FAIRLY WELL	WELL	VERY WELL OR FLUENT	NONE OR POOR	FAIRLY WELL	WELL	VERY WELL OR FLUENT
6 mths	%	9.9	16.3	27.6	46.3	18.3	20.1	22.8	38.8
	N	6, 950	11, 440	19, 390	32, 520	11, 590	12, 770	14, 460	24, 590
2 years	%	5.6	11.6	28.8	54.0	10.1	16.4	28.2	45.3
	N	3, 950	8, 170	20, 250	37, 940	6, 390	10, 410	17, 860	28, 750
4 years	%	5.2	11.5	28.2	55.0	9.5	15.9	26.4	48.2
	N	3, 690	8, 100	19, 820	38, 690	6, 020	10, 110	16, 720	30, 560

*N has been weighted to reflect the population of immigrants included in the survey (described above)

At each wave of the survey, immigrants with stronger English and French speaking skills were overrepresented. Half of male (46.3% to 55.0%) and almost half of female (38.8% to 48.2%) immigrants spoke English or French very well or fluently. These percentages increased from the first to the last wave, while the percentage of immigrant men and women with poor or no language skills decreased from 9.9% to 5.2% and from 18.3% to 9.5%, respectively. This indicates that many immigrants improved their language skills following immigration. It is important to remember that language skills are not fixed. Over their first four years in Canada, it is assumed that many

immigrants will moved from one category to the next as they improve their language skills. It is important to keep this in mind when considering the data presented in this report.

At each wave of the survey, immigrant men had stronger language skills than immigrant women (or at least self-assessed their skills as higher). Immigrant men were overrepresented in the groups speaking well, very well, or fluently, while immigrant women were overrepresented in the groups speaking fairly well or poorly.

Note on statistically significant difference: When using samples to calculate statistics, there is a chance that the sample does not represent the entire population. Statistical significance relies on confidence intervals to indicate the range within which the real value (that is, if the entire population had been used to calculate it, instead of a sample) should fall. It is possible to compare confidence intervals to determine whether a set of numbers are significantly different. We used a 5% chance of error in this report. If the confidence intervals do not overlap, then we are confident that the difference between the two numbers is significant and not due to chance, 95% of the time. Statistics can be compared across time (for example, 6 months, 2 years or 4 years after arrival) or between different groups (for example, immigrants who arrived under different immigration classes).

RESULTS

a) Labour Force Participation

Table 3 shows the percentage rate of participation in the labour force (i.e. those working or looking for work) at three time intervals after landing among male and female immigrants.

Table 3: Labour Force Participation by Self-Reported English and French Speaking Ability,
6 months, 2 years and 4 years after landing, Canada

	NONE OR POOR		FAIRLY WELL		WELL		VERY WELL OR FLUENT	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
6 mths	72.2 %	44.5 %	76.3 %	43.9 %	85.1 %	57.0 %	88.6 %	68.0 %
2 years	88.0 %	69.7 %	91.0 %	67.3 %	92.4 %	73.3 %	92.5 %	81.0 %
4 years	88.6 %	72.6 %	94.4 %	72.5 %	95.6 %	80.1 %	95.7 %	85.8 %

In general, greater proficiency in official languages does lead to higher levels of labour force participation. At 6 months after landing, there is a very clear positive relationship between language skills and participation in the workforce (from 72.2% to 88.6% for men, and from 44.5% to 68% for women, across the spectrum of language abilities). By 4 years after landing, the effect of language proficiency is less pronounced. Indeed, the high level of participation among those with poor or no ability in official languages after 2-4 years is quite striking.

Between their first 6 months and second year in Canada, the participation rate of all groups of immigrants increased. Between their second and fourth year in Canada, the only significant increase was in the participation rates of immigrant men and women who spoke English or French well, very well, or fluently. There is consistent growth in the labour force participation of immigrant men and

women over time. However, it appears that men make more modest gains – having started at a higher participation rate, while women's participation increases substantially.

The data reveal significant gender differences. At all levels of language skills, the participation rate for male immigrants is higher than the participation rate for female immigrants. In fact, the labour force participation among women who speak an official language "very well or fluently" (ranging from 68.0% to 85.8%) is similar to the labour force participation of immigrant men with "poor" speaking ability or none at all (ranging from 72.2% to 88.6%).

High rates of participation in the labour force, especially following arrival, may help immigrant men in improving their language skills and facilitate further integration into the labour market. Indeed, when looking at immigrants with poor or no language skills in English or French, increases in labour force participation over the first 2 years in Canada happen alongside a decrease in the number of immigrants with low language skills. Further analysis is needed to verify the link between participation rates and language skills.

b) Unemployment rates

Table 4 shows the percentage rate of unemployment (i.e. those who are participating in the labour market but unable to find work) at three time intervals after landing among male and female immigrants.

Table 4: Unemployment rate by Self-Reported English and French Speaking Ability,
6 months, 2 years and 4 years after landing, Canada

	NONE OR POOR		FAIRLY WELL		WELL		VERY WELL OR FLUENT	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
6 mths	34.8 %	23.5 %	29.1 %	24.9 %	25.3 %	23.6 %	25.9	26.3
2 years	23.3 %	37.0 %	20.6 %	34.7 %	19.8 %	25.8 %	17.0	22.3
4 years	24.2 %	29.6 %	12.3 %	21.2 %	13.8 %	21.2 %	12.0	13.9

There is a significant decrease in the unemployment rates of immigrants speaking fairly well, well, very well or fluently between their second and fourth years in Canada. Immigrant men and women saw their unemployment rates decrease in all cases.

For those who speak neither official language, or speak poorly, there appears to be a persistent pattern of high unemployment. For both men and women, after 4 years in Canada, poor language ability leads to unemployment rates double those of male and female immigrants who can speak English or French "very well".

There are some significant gender differences in the unemployment rates, but there does not seem to be consistent patterns across language skills. After 2 years in Canada, there were significant gender differences at all language skills, except for immigrants speaking English or French well. After 4 years in Canada, there were significant gender differences for immigrants speaking fairly well and well.

The increase in the unemployment rate of immigrant women with poorer language skills between their first 6 months and 2 years in Canada may be due to their increased participation rates. After 6 months in Canada, only 44.5% of immigrant women with poor or no language skills were in the labour force, compared to 69.7% after 2 years in Canada (see Table 3 above).

c) Full-time Employment

Table 5 shows the percentage rate of full-time employment in the labour force (i.e. those working more than 28 hours per week) at three time intervals after landing among employed male and female immigrants.

Table 5: Full-time Employment by Self-Reported English and French Speaking Ability,
6 months, 2 years and 4 years after landing, Canada

	NONE OR POOR		FAIRLY WELL		WELL		VERY WELL OR FLUENT	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
6 mths	89.7 %	74.2 %	86.2 %	73.3 %	86.1 %	65.0 %	87.3 %	70.2 %
2 years	89.7 %	79.4 %	85.3 %	72.9 %	86.2 %	73.7 %	89.3 %	72.5 %
4 years	n/a	79.1 %	93.7 %	78.2 %	89.2 %	74.1 %	91.5 %	73.4 %

n/a: Data suppressed due to reliability and/or confidentiality issues

Language skills do not seem to impact the proportion of full-time employment over the first 4 years following immigration. There are however significant gender differences. Except for immigrant men and women having poor or no speaking ability in English or French, immigrant women are less likely to hold full-time employment than immigrant men at all levels of speaking ability.

d) Average Months to First Job

Table 6 shows the average number of months to find one's first job after arrival (i.e. the time it took to become employed) at 4 years after landing among male and female immigrants.

Table 6: Average Months to First Job by Self-Reported English and French Speaking Ability,
Canada

	NONE OR POOR		FAIRLY WELL		WELL		VERY WELL OR FLUENT	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
4 years	3.9	4.4	4.9	9.5	4.2	9.4	3.8	6.6

After 4 years, there are no significant differences among immigrant men with respect to the average number of months taken to find their first job. For immigrant women, those speaking English or French fairly well or well took longer to find their first job (9.5 and 9.4 months respectively), but the differences were only significant compared to immigrant women who spoke poor or no English or French.

The average number of months it takes immigrant men to find a job is lower than the average for women for all English and French speaking abilities. Whereas the average number of months it takes for immigrant men to find a job ranges from 3.8 to 4.9 months, for women it ranges from 4.4 to 9.5.

e) Days of Jobless Spells

Table 7 shows the average number of jobless days per month experienced by immigrants within their first 6 months in Canada, between their 6th month and second year in Canada, and between their second and fourth year in Canada.

Table 7: Days of Jobless Spells by Self-Reported English and French Speaking Ability,
2 years and 4 years after landing, Canada

	NONE OR POOR		FAIRLY WELL		WELL		VERY WELL OR FLUENT	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
6 mths	11.0	15.1	12.2	14.6	12.4	14.0	11.0	13.7
2 years	8.6	12.3	7.7	12.9	7.5	10.4	5.8	8.4
4 years	5.6	8.6	4.3	8.2	3.8	7.3	3.8	5.7

Language skills affect immigrants' jobless spells to some extent. Six months after landing, there are no significant differences in the length of jobless spells when comparing language skills. After 2 years, men and women speaking English or French very well or fluently were more likely to experience shorter jobless spells than other groups (the differences were significant). After 4 years, immigrant women who spoke very well or fluently had shorter jobless spells than other groups, while immigrant men who spoke well, very well or fluently had shorter jobless spells than immigrants with poor or no language skills.

There are significant gender differences. Except for immigrants who spoke English or French well, the length of immigrant men's jobless spells are always lower than jobless spells for women, regardless of speaking ability or time since arrival.

When comparing the experiences of immigrants over time, immigrant women who speak English or French well, very well or fluently had shorter jobless spells, while immigrant men who spoke fairly well, well, very well or fluently had shorter jobless spells between their first 6 months and 4 years in Canada. Immigrants with poorer language skills only experienced significant improvements with regards to the average length of their jobless spells between their second and fourth year in Canada.

f) Average Hourly Wage

Table 8 shows the average hourly wage of male and female immigrants at different periods after landing, in constant 2005 Canadian dollars.

Table 8: Average Hourly Wage (2005 dollars) by Self-Reported English and French Speaking Ability, 6 months, 2 years and 4 years after landing, Canada

	NONE OR POOR		FAIRLY WELL		WELL		VERY WELL OR FLUENT	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
6 mths	$ 11.20	$ 9.70	$ 13.30	$ 11.10	$ 15.20	$ 12.60	$ 19.70	$ 15.40
2 years	$ 10.60	$ 8.60	$ 12.60	$ 9.90	$ 14.40	$ 12.60	$ 18.80	$ 14.00
4 years	$ 11.20	$ 9.00	$ 15.50	$ 11.90	$ 17.30	$ 13.50	$ 20.50	$ 16.00

Better language skills in English or French result in higher average hourly wages. Differences were significant for immigrant men across all language skills. As for immigrant women, those speaking very well or fluently earned significantly more than those with poor or no language skills after 6 months, while those speaking very well or fluently earned more than other categories of language skills after 6 months. After 2 years in Canada, immigrant women speaking well, very well or fluently earned similar hourly wages. After 4 years in Canada, differences in hourly wages were significant across all language skills.

Improvements in hourly wages over time are significantly different for immigrants speaking English or French fairly well, very well or fluently after 2 and 4 years. Additionally, for immigrant men, those speaking well also have a significantly different outcome after 2 and 4 years. There are no significant differences in average hourly wages for immigrants between 6 months and 2 years.

Hourly wages are correlated to English or French speaking ability and differences between men and women are statistically significant. In general, immigrant women earn less than their male counterparts. Excluding those speaking poor or no English or French, increases in the wage for immigrant men over time is higher than the increases in wage over time for immigrant women. For men, wage increases occurring in a six month to four year time period range from $0.80 to $2.20. The range for women in the same period is $0.60 to $0.90. The wage increases are smallest (or non-existent) for immigrants speaking no or poor English/French. It also appears that the wages for men and women across language skills first drops after two years in Canada and increase after four years in Canada.

Though it pertains to all of the data presented in this report, it is of particular relevance here: there is a (likely) chance that over time (from 6 months to 4 years), immigrants will improve their language ability and move from one category to the next. Comparing the figures of women with "none or poor" speaking ability would lead one to believe that this group has experienced a decrease in their average hourly wage. But looking across categories, assuming that some women with "none or poor" speaking ability improve their language skills and change category at each wave of the survey, the average hourly wage increases from $9.70 at 6 months, to $9.90 at 2 years, to $13.50 at 4 years. These are suppositions that would require further analysis.

g) Annual Per Capita Household Income

Table 9 shows the average family income in 2005 dollars for the households of immigrants, divided by the number of household members. (This includes the earnings of all members of the economic family, and not just the respondent).

Table 9: Annual Income per household member (2005 dollars)
by Self-Reported English and French Speaking Ability, 2 years and 4 years after landing, Canada

	NONE OR POOR		FAIRLY WELL		WELL		VERY WELL OR FLUENT	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
2 years	$ 8, 500	$ 8, 800	$ 9, 900	$ 9, 300	$ 10, 800	$ 11, 900	$ 14, 900	$ 14, 400
4 years	$ 10, 900	$ 10, 200	$ 13, 100	$ 12, 100	$ 14, 300	$ 14, 200	$ 18, 000	$ 17, 600

The differences in annual income among immigrants based on language skills are only significant for immigrants speaking very well or fluently. Immigrants with other levels of language skills earn similar income per household member, except for immigrants speaking English or French well, who earn more than immigrant speaking poorly.

With the exception of immigrant women with poor language skills, the differences in annual income over time are significant for all immigrants. It can be said that annual incomes increased – regardless of language skills – over a two-year period for both immigrant men and women.

There are no statistically significant gender differences in the annual income per household member by English or French speaking ability.

It is also important to note that language skills can differ within a single household. The data included in this report do not allow us to evaluate the language skills of other household members. It is therefore recommended that these data be used with caution.

h) Appropriateness of Employment

Table 10 shows the percentage rate of an immigrant's main job relating to their training or field of study (i.e. job matched to education) at two time intervals after landing among male and female immigrants.

Table 10: Percentage of Main Job being related to Training or Field of Study
by Self-Reported English and French Speaking Ability, 2 years and 4 years after landing, Canada

	NONE OR POOR		FAIRLY WELL		WELL		VERY WELL OR FLUENT	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
2 years	14.7 %	5.2 %	29.7 %	21.0 %	42.8 %	36.8 %	54.7 %	46.1 %
4 years	20.5 %	13.3 %	46.1 %	36.4 %	50.6 %	44.3 %	59.8 %	55.4 %

The differences in job relevance among immigrants, based on language skills, are significant. Stronger language skills in English or French lead to a better match between training or education and employment, the only exception being for immigrant men and women speaking fairly well or well, 4 years after arrival. After 4 years, immigrants with very good or fluent language skills are much more likely to work in their field of study or training (59.8% for men and 55.4% for women) than immigrants with poor or no skills (20.5% for men and 13.3% for women).

When comparing the outcomes of immigrant men and women over time, immigrants were more likely to work in their field of study or training the longer they stayed in Canada. The only group with no significant improvement over time were immigrant men with poor or no English or French skills and immigrant women speaking English or French well.

While immigrant men were more likely than immigrant women with similar language skills to work in their field of study or training, these gender differences were not significant for the most part.

i) Workplace Ethnic Composition

Table 11 shows workplace ethnic composition (on a scale of 1 to 8: 1 means that no one else at the workplace is of the same ethnic or cultural group as the respondent, while 8 means that the entire workplace is of the same ethnic or cultural group as the respondent) at three time intervals after landing among male and female immigrants.

Table 11: Ethnic composition of Workplace by Self-Reported English and French Speaking Ability, 6 months, 2 years and 4 years after landing, Canada

	NONE OR POOR		FAIRLY WELL		WELL		VERY WELL OR FLUENT	
	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN	MEN	WOMEN
6 mths	5.4	5.6	4.3	4.7	3.7	3.8	3.4	3.3
2 years	5.2	5.6	4.0	4.2	3.5	3.6	3.3	3.2
4 years	3.1	2.9	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.0	1.9	1.8

The differences in ethnic composition of the workplace among immigrants, based on language skills, are significant. Immigrants with poor or no knowledge of English or French were more likely to work in environments where the majority of people were from their own ethnic or cultural group compared to immigrants with better language skills.

Ethnic composition of the workplace changes over time as well. There were no significant differences after six months and two years of arrival, but major differences exist between 2 and 4 years after landing. Immigrants were less likely to work with a high proportion of people from the same own ethnic or cultural background 4 years after arrival, compared to their 2nd year in Canada. This would seem to suggest that dependence on the 'ethnic economy' for employment declines over time.

Gender differences in the ethnic composition of the workplace are not significant.

CONCLUSIONS

Clearly only tentative conclusions can be reached from the data compiled in this report. In part this is because the English or French language ability is only one of many factors that might contribute to labour market outcomes. Furthermore, immigrants' language abilities are not fixed and can improve following immigration. A respondent may move from one category of language skill level to the next over the course of their first 4 years in Canada. It is also worth keeping in mind that language skills are based on the perception of survey respondents themselves. Respondents were asked to determine whether they spoke English or French poorly, fairly well, well or very well, but it was not specified during the interview what was meant by each of these categories. Finally, the data presented here represent only a very specific cohort of immigrants – arriving in a narrow window of time and within a particular set of macro-economic circumstances. Future research is needed to clarify these issues.

In terms of the specific labour market outcomes that we examined, the following conclusions emerge:

- Though there are few significant differences when it comes to labour force participation based on language skills, there are significant differences between language skills when it comes to average hourly wages and income per household member 4 years after landing.

- Immigrants with better skills in English or French were more likely to see their participation rate increase, and their unemployment rates and average length of jobless spells decrease, over time.

- There are substantial differences in the relevance of immigrants' work to their field of study or training, both over time and across language skills.

- There are substantial differences in workplace ethnic composition, both over time and across language skills.

- Immigrant women fare worse than their male counterparts, both over time and across language skills, in all measured labour market outcomes.

- Immigrant women speaking English or French very well or fluently have labour outcomes much closer to those of men of comparable language skills than immigrant women with poorer language skills. Speaking English or French very well or fluently narrowed the gender gap in terms of participation rates, unemployment rates, duration of jobless spells and relevance of main job.

- Language skills did not seem to have an impact on the average number of months taken to find the first job in Canada.

APPENDIX A

RELEVANT QUESTIONS FROM LSIC SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE:

1. Gender – from CIC immigration records

2. In what month and year did you arrive in Canada as a landed immigrant, a refugee or other type of immigrant? (wave 1)

3. Number of members in household (waves 1-3)

4. When did you start working for (the) employer? (waves 1-3)

5. Are you still working for (the) employer? (waves 1-3)

6. When did you stop working for (the) employer? (waves 1-3)

7. How many hours per week do you usually work? (waves 1-3)

8. Since you came to Canada, how much income in total, have "you and your family" received from all sources? (Both inside and outside Canada if applicable.) (wave 1)

9. Could you give me an estimate of the total income that "you/you and your family" received before taxes and deductions from all sources inside and outside Canada in the last 12 months? (waves 2-3)

10. How well can you speak English? (waves 1-3)

11. How well can you speak French? (waves 1-3)

12. Are/were your business partner(s) of the same ethnic or cultural group as you? (waves 1-3)

13. How many of your employees are/were of the same ethnic or cultural group as you? (waves 1-3)

14. How many of your clients are/were of the same ethnic or cultural group as you? (waves 1-3)

15. How many of the people you work(ed) with are/were of the same ethnic or cultural group as you? (waves 1-3)

16. How many of your supervisors are/were of the same ethnic or cultural group as you? (waves 1-3)

Questionnaire (wave 1): http://www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/instrument/4422_Q1_V1-eng.pdf

Questionnaire (wave 2): http://www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/instrument/4422_Q1_V2-eng.pdf

Questionnaire (wave 3): http://www.statcan.gc.ca/imdb-bmdi/instrument/4422_Q1_V3-eng.pdf

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FURTHER READING

For a report on the impact of speaking English or French on new immigrants, see:
Knowledge of Official Languages Among New Immigrants: How Important Is It in the Labour
Market? http://www.statcan.gc.ca/bsolc/olc-cel/olc-cel?catno=89-624-XWE&lang=eng