



Language literacy and labour market outcomes among recent Canadian Immigrants

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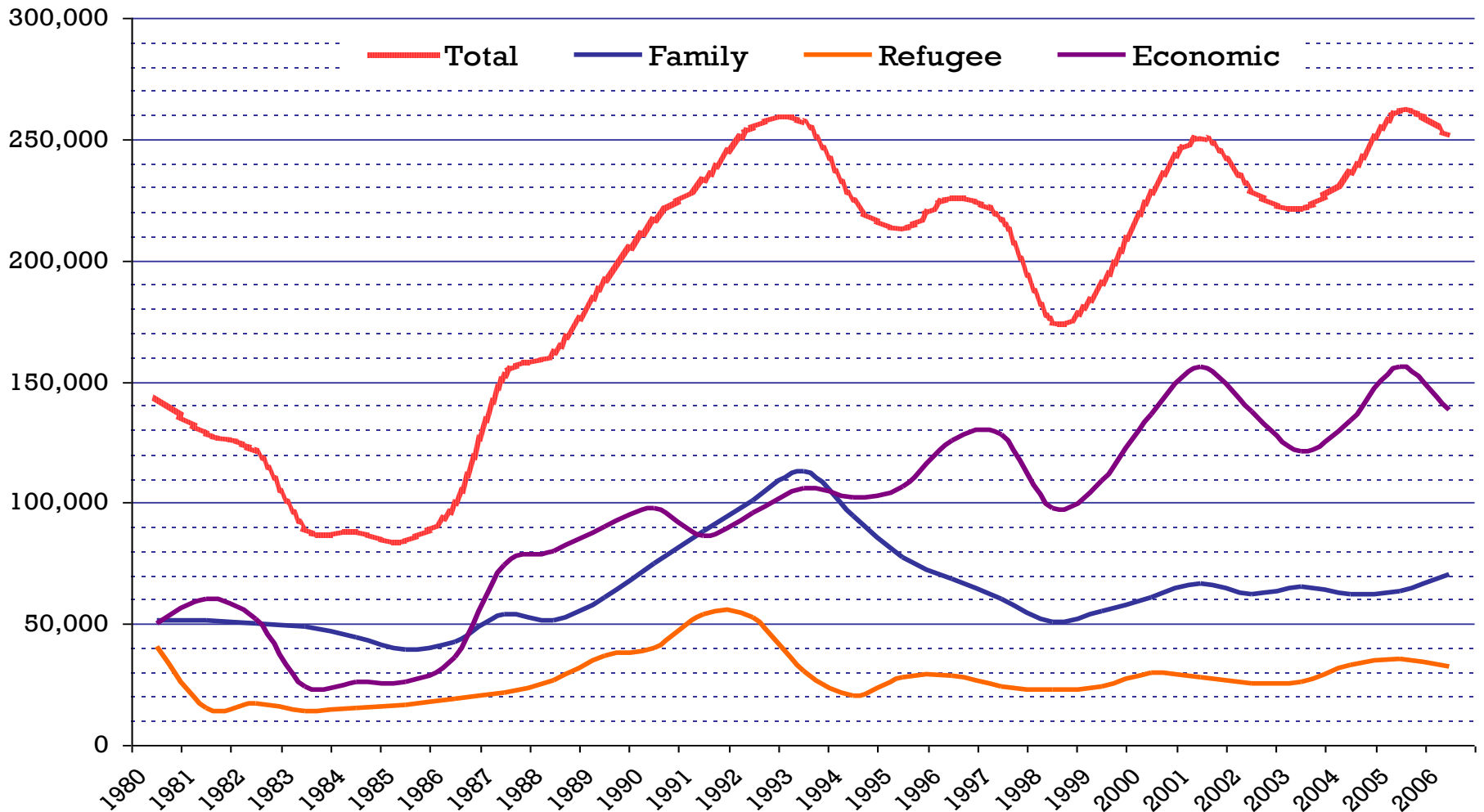


Objective

- To examine the impact of English language proficiency on two labour market outcomes among a recent cohort of immigrants to Canada.

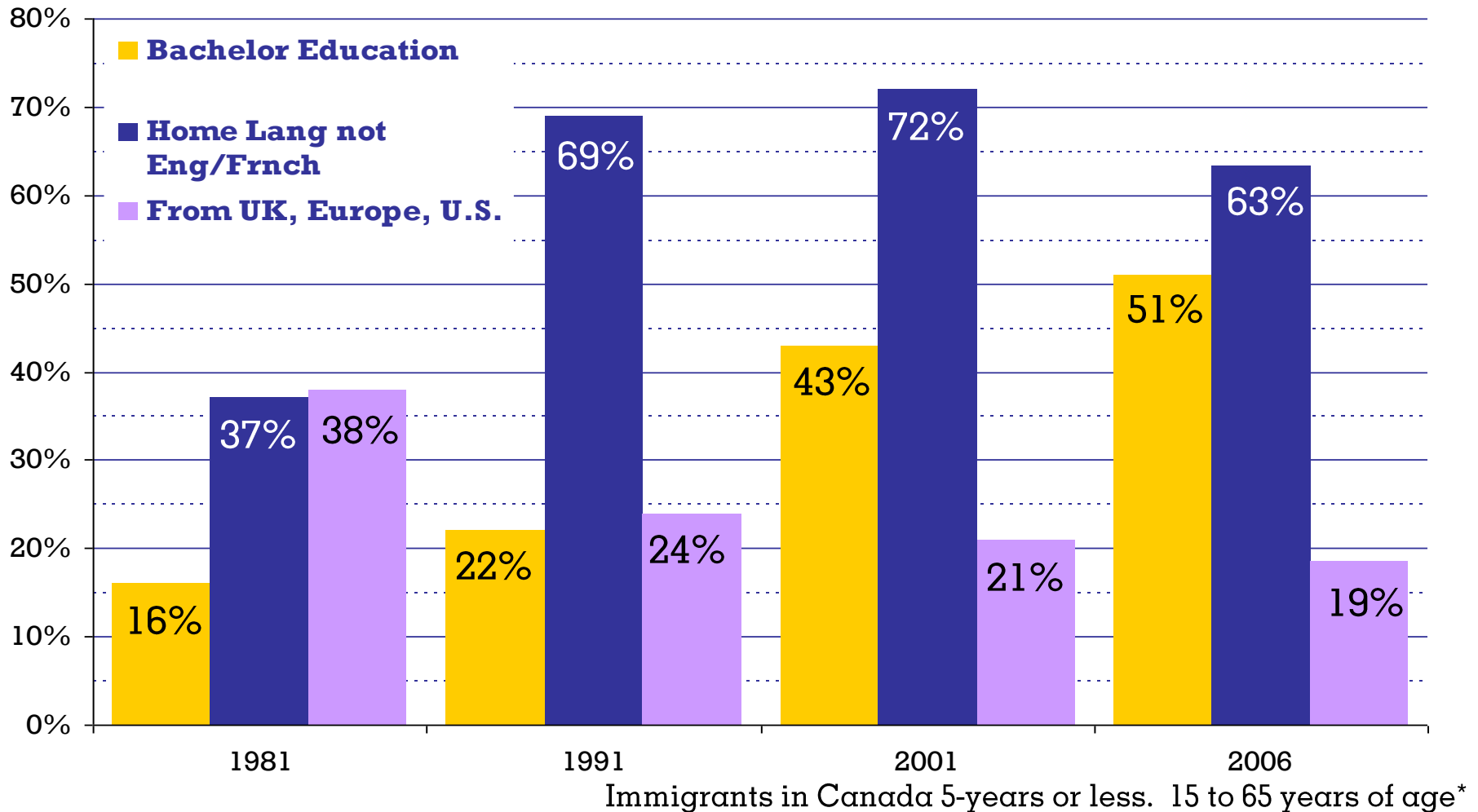


Numbers of immigrants coming to Canada. 1980 – 2006 by group





Changing type of immigrants to Canada. 1981 to 2006 Canadian Census data





Manual Occupations

Previous Canadian research has demonstrated the excess risk of work-injury in occupations with high physical demands (manual occupations).

The risks associated with employment in physically demanding occupations may be particularly problematic for recent immigrants given:

- Lack of knowledge about safety regulations or rights
- Previous employment experience being in less demanding occupations

Findings from qualitative work at IWH:

Body “not used to” this type of work, but need to get Canadian experience



Overqualification

- A situation where the occupation in which you are employed requires lower skills than the education that you possess
- Linked to declines in mental health, self-rated health and heart disease.
- Proposed pathway is via unmet expectations



The Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC)

Conducted by Statistics Canada

Consists of three interviews (waves) over a four year period among approximately 12,000 immigrants arriving in Canada between November 2000 and December 2001

For our analyses we restricted this sample to those respondents who had worked before immigrating to Canada, and who were re-interviewed in wave two (77% of the baseline sample) or wave three (65% of the baseline sample).



Main outcomes

1. Employment in a more physically demanding job (e.g. non-manual to mixed or manual; mixed to manual)
2. Employment in an occupation for which the respondent is overqualified (examined overqualification relative to education, expectations and job worked prior to arrival in Canada)

Movement into more physically demanding occupations

Job after arrival (@ 2 yrs)

Manual

Mixed

**Non-
manual**

Manual

Excluded from analysis

**Job
before
Canada**

Mixed

1

**Non-
manual**

2

1

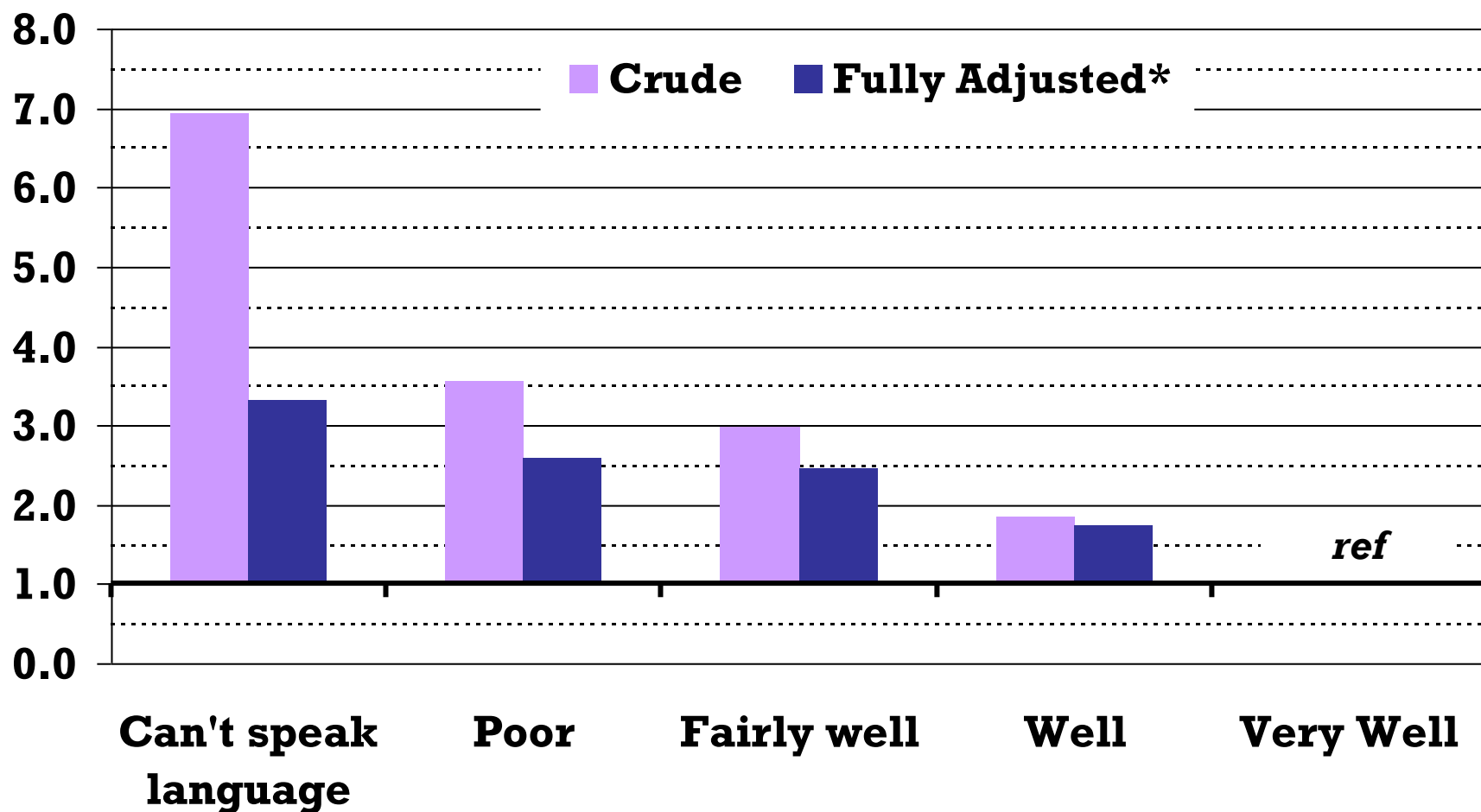


Main Independent Variable

Language proficiency: How well can you speak English? Would you say ... (cannot speak the language, poorly, fairly well, well, very well)

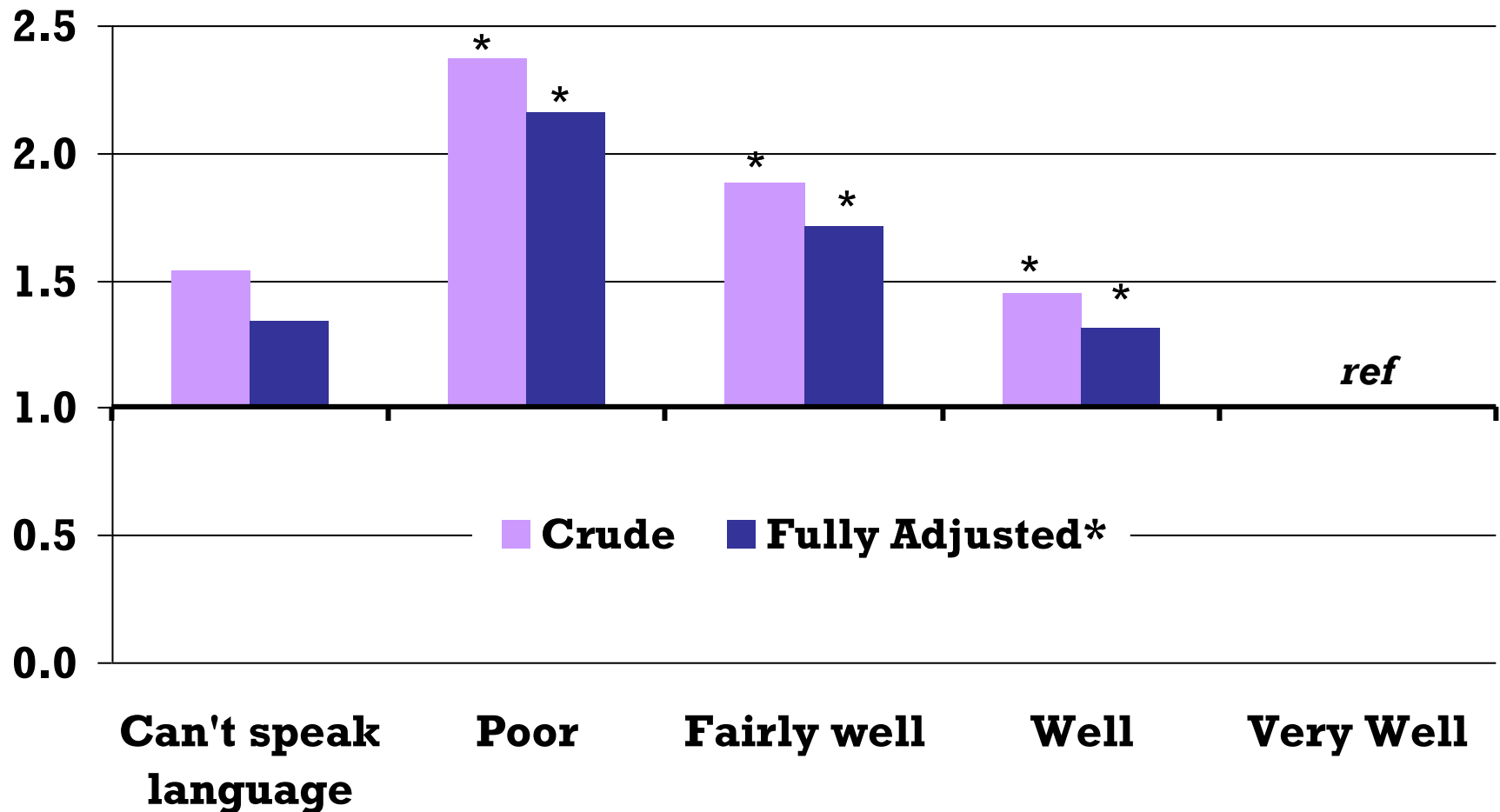
LSIC survey provides the ability to adjust analyses for: age; gender; highest level of education (including language and country); if they had studied or worked in Canada previously; the immigration application category that they came to Canada under (e.g. skilled worker); marital status; region of last residence; and applicant status (e.g. primary).

Odds ratio for employment in more physically demanding occupations (2 yrs after arrival) by language proficiency (N = 3,597)



*Adjusted for all vars except language used in highest education

Odds ratio for overqualification based on previous experience (four years after arrival) by language proficiency (N = 2,908)



*Adjusted for all vars except language used in highest education



English language proficiency and risk of injury in manual occupations

- Often immigrating from countries with very different standards of occupational health and safety
- Lack knowledge concerning
 - Workplace rights
 - Employment standards
 - Safety hazards/procedures in the workplace
 - The availability of compensation after work injury
 - The processes required to get compensation (e.g. the need to write things down)
- Language barriers often make immigrants reliant upon coworkers, bosses, family members for important safety information at work



Key Points

- Lack of proficiency in English was associated with overqualification and employment in more demanding occupations after arrival in Canada
- Important to understand how language proficiency is related to the higher probability of each outcome (e.g. interview skills, degree recognition)
- Lack of English language proficiency may intensify risk of injury in a physically demanding occupation, and may impact on the consequences of injury (e.g. access to compensation after injury)



Recommendations

- No structured information on occupational health and safety risks is given to immigrants when they arrive in Canada.
- Resources need to be devoted to developing and translating tool(s) that will increase the knowledge/awareness among immigrants of :
 - likely jobs they will be working in after arrival in Canada
 - their workplace rights, occupational health & safety, and workers' compensation – ideally before immigrants start work



For more information

Smith P, Chen C and Mustard CA (2009) Employment in more physically demanding jobs in a recent cohort of immigrants to Canada. *Injury Prevention*, 15 (4), 252-258

Chen C, Smith P and Mustard CA (2010) The prevalence of over-qualification and subsequent health status among occupationally-active new immigrants to Canada. Submitted to *Ethnicity & Health*.



Acknowledgements

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