


Gender, Skills and Integration:
Policy Issues and Implications

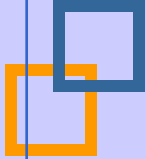


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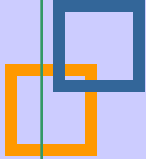
Purpose

- The purpose of this presentation is to:
 - Explore the connections between newcomer skills and their integration outcomes.
 - Draw out gender dimensions of the issue.
 - Identify policy implications.
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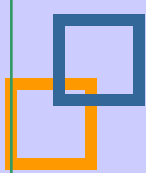
Context

- Many immigrant-receiving countries gear their programs toward attracting and retaining ‘skilled’ migrants on the basis of their:
 - Economic contribution via qualitative improvement of stock of human capital in the host society.
 - Ability to fill skilled labour shortages.
 - There is evidence that those selected on the basis of ‘skills’ tend to do better in the labour market.
 - In Canada, for example, those selected based on education level, language proficiency and work experience have generally higher average employment earnings.
 - However, the interconnections between skills, selection and integration present a complex picture.
 - Gender and other factors significantly influence the relationship between skills, selection and the process of integration.
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What does being 'skilled' mean?

- Skilled migrants are generally defined as those having post-secondary education or extensive/equivalent experience in a given field.
 - Typically includes highly skilled specialists, independent executives, senior managers, specialized technicians or tradespersons, investors and business persons (OECD)
 - Definition of skills has predominantly been from an economic perspective
 - Measured by characteristics that enhance labour market success (i.e., education and work experience).
 - Policy attention to high-skilled migrants is also focused on fields where men dominate (e.g., science and technology, engineering, computing)
 - Policy discussions on skills do not explicitly recognize gender as a factor in terms of:
 - Pathways of skills acquisition: Gender roles and relations influence how men and women acquire skills in various domains in both source and host countries.
 - Valuation of skills: Definition of skill does not include skills that more often characterise women's activities
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Canadian Approach

In Canada, an occupational skills framework (National Occupation Classification or NOC) serves as the lens for assessing skill levels

NOC O

- Senior management positions or managers in diverse fields

NOC A

- Professionals (e.g., engineers, doctors, nurses, teachers)

NOC B

- Technical and para-professional (e.g., technicians, tradespersons, cooks)

NOC C

- Requiring secondary school or occupation-specific (e.g., live-in caregivers, truck drivers)

NOC D

- Basic labour with no formal educational requirements (e.g., janitors, cashiers, construction and manufacturing labourers).



Skills and Selection

Immigration Category

Skills

- **Economic (Supply-Driven)**
 - **Skilled workers/Business**
[NOC: O, A and B]

- **Economic (Demand-Driven)**
 - **Canada Experience Class**
[NOC: O, A and B]

- **Live-in caregivers**
[NOC C]

- **Provincial nominees**

- **Social/Humanitarian**
 - **Family class**
 - **Refugees**

- **High-skilled**
- **Economic success depends on labour market conditions and credential recognition**

- **High-skilled**
- **High labour market demand**
- **High likelihood of job-skills match**

- **Many are high-skilled**
- **High labour market demand**
- **Low likelihood of job-skills match**

- **Mixed skill levels**
- **High labour market demand**
- **High likelihood of job-skills match**

- **Mixed skill levels**
- **Labour market prospects not a key consideration**





Gender and Skills 'Disconnect'

- **Men are predominant in categories that are considered skilled or in high demand**

■ Skilled worker	70.3%
■ Entrepreneur	86.4%
■ Self-employed	71.3%
■ Investor	84.8%
■ Provincial nominees	76.4%

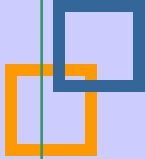
- **Women predominate in categories where skill levels are not a key consideration**

■ Live-in caregivers	95.4%
■ Family class	62.3%
■ Spouses or dependants of economic immigrants	59.2%
■ Provincial nominee spouses and dependants	66.4%



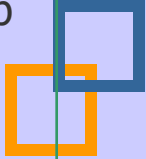


Skills and Outcomes

- Studies show that many skilled immigrants – both men and women – have lower employment rates and do not get jobs commensurate to their skills. But the situation is worse for immigrant women and members of visible minorities.
 - The transformation of pre-migration skills to ‘usable’ human capital is a timely and costly process. Outcomes for women and men in this process may differ if they have different starting points.
 - Immigrant women less likely to have university degrees compared to immigrant men
 - More likely to be unable to speak either French or English.
 - Less likely to have pre-migration exposure to host country language and culture
 - But other factors also come into play. Women are more likely to:
 - Put careers on hold due to family responsibilities and costs associated with credential recognition, particularly when they enter as family class entrants and dependants of economic immigrants
 - Face additional barriers in the labour market on account of their gender.
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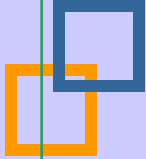
Occupational Pathways: A Closer Look

- **Engineering:** Professional degradation occurs for both sexes, but situation is worse for women.
 - There is little research on the experience of immigrant women engineers, but there is evidence that they face bigger obstacles.
 - A 2003 study of skilled migrants to Canada from China found that, with a few exceptions, male engineers ended up in technical jobs (i.e., tool and die makers) rather than work as engineers.
 - None of the female engineers practised their profession, and some ended up in low-skill occupations (e.g., seamstresses and clerical workers).
 - In cases where spouses enter with similarly high skill levels, there is more investment to get credentials recognized for husbands.
 - **Nursing:** Job-skills match does not necessarily occur.
 - Studies show that many of those who enter as nurses find it difficult to get their credentials recognized. Many are downgraded to work in health occupations that require less skill (e.g., nurse aide) and are associated with lower pay.
 - Language proficiency and cultural know-how needed to communicate effectively with patients has been raised as an issue.
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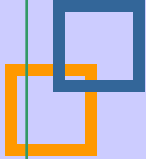
Occupational Pathways: A Closer Look

- Caregiving: In categories where 'transfer of people' (vs. transfer of skills) is the main consideration, 'de-skilling' is more significant.
 - In the case of live-in caregivers, women migrate to hold jobs that are historically viewed as 'women's jobs' regardless of their skill sets.
 - Loss of skill during the years of work under the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP) affect their prospects for finding jobs that match their skills after completing program requirements.
 - Nurses who enter the LCP find it more difficult to get their credentials recognized than those who entered as skilled workers
 - Skills of family class entrants, dependants of economic immigrants (the majority of whom are women) and refugees are largely invisible and untapped.
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Policy Implications

- The link between pre-migration skills and economic integration appears to be weak for many newcomers, even for those who are selected based on their skill levels.
 - A closer look at occupational pathways show that 'skills degrading' is widely experienced by migrants regardless of immigration category, albeit to varying degrees.
 - This may suggest the need for a concerted effort to support skills development across all immigration classes.
 - Credential recognition has been identified as a key issue, but a wider range of interventions may be required
 - Many skilled migrants are in unregulated professions – there is no formal mechanism to recognize their skills.
 - Language proficiency and contextual knowledge are needed for credential recognition and the effective use of skills in the labour market, as well as integration in the social, cultural and political domains.
 - Structural barriers in transferring skills also need to be addressed
 - Pursuit of career paths are made within the context of household survival strategies and gender roles/relations.
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Policy Implications

- Policy focus on skills is mainly about the potential for labour market success, but integration is a complex process that requires a wider range of skill sets.
 - Hard (i.e., technical) vs. soft skills (e.g., communication, interpersonal, networking skills)
 - 'Livelihood' skills vs. 'life' skills
 - *Post-migration* skills development may be equally or even more important as selection based on *pre-migration* skills
 - May be particularly important for enhancing the potential for success of immigrant women in the integration process
 - Overall, there is a need for a broad, holistic approach to supporting the acquisition of skills that enhance the potential for successful integration.
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