

Educated immigrants having difficulties accessing high-skill occupations

March 17 2014, by Christine Elias

Highly educated immigrants to Canada are facing more difficulties in accessing professional and management occupations than in the mid-1990s, say University of Toronto researchers.

In a recent study published by the Journal of International Migration and Integration, sociologist Jeffrey G. Reitz and doctoral candidates Josh Curtis and Jennifer Elrick analyzed trends in the success of [immigrants](#) with university degrees in census data from 1996, 2001, and 2006.

They discovered that although recent immigrants are much more likely to have university degrees than earlier immigrants, lower proportions are obtaining high-skilled jobs.

In 1996, 50.4 per cent of recently immigrated [men](#) with higher education succeeded in obtaining a high-skilled occupation, as compared to 70.7 per cent of educated, native-born men. In 2006, only 43.5 per cent of educated immigrant men had these occupations, while the percentage for native-born men remained the same.

Educated immigrant women fared even worse, with their success rate in obtaining high-skilled jobs decreasing from 34.6 per cent in 1996 to 34.4 per cent in 2006. Meanwhile, the success rate for native-born women with similar education levels increased from 64.5 per cent in 1996 to 66.9 per cent in 2006.

Furthermore, the researchers found that the proportion of university-

educated immigrants working in low-skill occupations, like sales and manual labour, has steadily increased since 1996.

Reitz, Curtis, and Elrick calculated the total value of work lost from the Canadian economy as a result of this skill underutilization has increased from \$4.80 billion in 1996 to \$11.37 billion in 2006.

"These figures indicate that while we have begun to address the problem of immigrant 'brain waste,' the growth of the problem has outstripped our efforts to address it", explains Reitz, who is the Director of Ethnic, Immigration and Pluralism Studies at the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs.

Since 1996, Canadian policy-makers have targeted immigrant skill underutilization through programs like credential assessment, career bridging, and mentoring. These programs aim to help immigrants adjust to new work environments and gain "soft" skills, while also connecting them with employers and colleges.

However, these findings show that barriers for immigrant skill utilization still persist.

More information: A summary of the policy brief is available here: sociology.uwo.ca/cluster/en/PolicyBrief14.html

Provided by University of Toronto

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