

“Immigrants and 'New Poverty': The Case of Canada”

Abdolmohammed Kazemipur
University of Lethbridge

Shiva S. Halli
University of Manitoba

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Abstract: Studies of the economic status of recent immigrants to the United States have questioned the generalizability of some earlier findings based on assimilation theory. In Canada, however, little research has been done on this issue, and that has left mixed results. The present study attempts to address the economic performance of immigrants in Canada through an examination of their poverty status. This is particularly important now because, since the late 1980s, many industrial nations including Canada have been subjected to an unexpected surge of poverty known as 'new poverty.' The findings indicate that immigrants in Canada are consistently overrepresented among the poor; that their poverty rates are particularly high in larger cities, which have larger concentrations of immigrants; and that among immigrants, the poverty rates are higher for visible minorities, who are mostly recent immigrants. One particularly surprising finding was that the second-generation immigrants, who were expected to outperform their parents, had higher poverty rates. A series of logistic regression models are developed to shed some light on the possible reasons behind these trends. Of the three sets of potential contributors - human capital, assimilation and structural factors - the first two were found more relevant. The models also revealed that the human capital factors were less rewarding for immigrants than natives.