



## *From high school to graduation and beyond: Pathways of young immigrants in a Toronto college*

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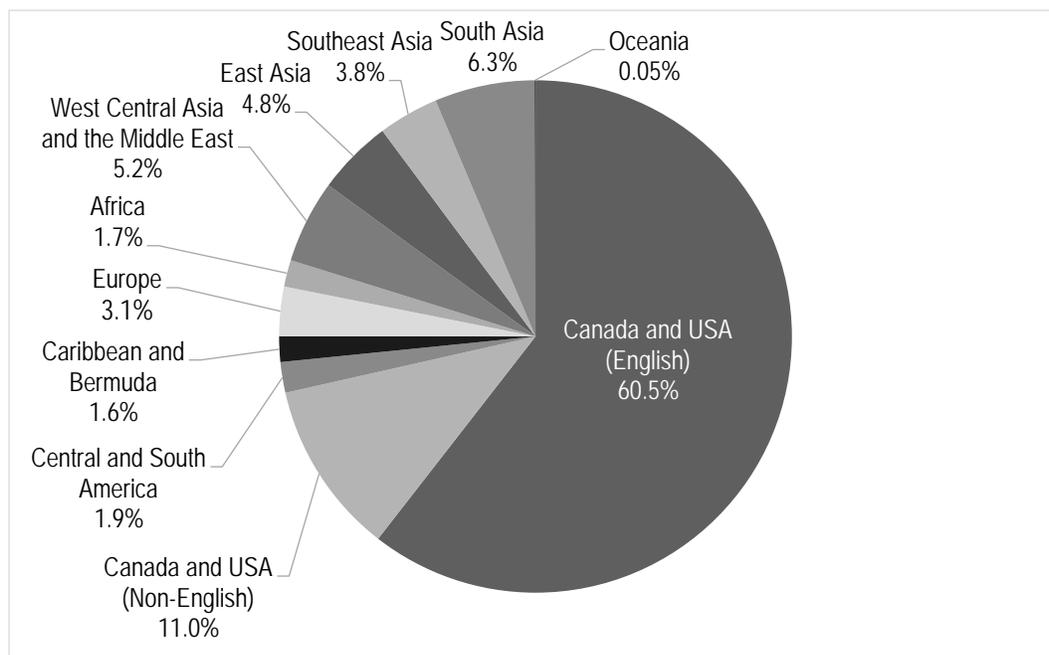
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Young immigrants who come to Canada have not been well researched, yet they are the next generation of workers upon whom Canada will increasingly rely. This study examined the pathways of immigrant students at a large multicultural college in Toronto, and the role of English-language skills and region of birth on their academic and labour market outcomes.

The study followed the pathways of 18,466 students (non-international) who entered Seneca College between 2010 and 2014, within five years of leaving an Ontario high school. Of these, 29% were born outside of Canada, with over two-thirds originating from Asia, 14% from the Americas (outside Canada), 11% from Europe, and 6% from Africa. Of those not born in Canada, the vast majority (71%) were Canadian citizens when they entered Seneca.

*Region of origin, Seneca entrants, 2010–2014*



Using a longitudinal database that links a number of data sources, the study tracked the progress of individual students from the beginning of high school through to graduation from college and their eventual transition into the labour market or to further education.

The study's overall research question was: In a large multicultural college, what is the role of immigrants' region of origin and English-language proficiency on academic and labour market outcomes?

## **FINDINGS**

Seneca students who were born outside of Canada are more likely than their Canadian-born peers to have highly educated parents, live in lower-income neighbourhoods, and to aspire to university.

Yet despite having attended an Ontario high school, many immigrants come to Seneca with weak English-language skills requiring support in language proficiency, with 59% being placed below college level English, compared to 36% of Canadian born students. Despite this, they obtain similar overall GPA, and graduation rates. Students from East Asia were the exception, despite entering with the lowest language proficiency, they also were the most likely to graduate.

Independent of region of birth, students who entered college with lower English-language proficiency were less likely to graduate and more likely to obtain lower grades.

Having high grades and taking university preparatory courses in high school was the largest predictor of student success in college. Lower-income students achieved lower grades, but were as likely to graduate as others; male students were less likely to graduate, and obtained lower grades.

In the labour market, graduates with lower language skills at college entry also had higher unemployment rates, and earned less. In addition, the unemployment rate six months after graduation was 25% for those born outside of Canada, versus 14% for those Canadian-born. This result also held true in the regression analysis, even when controlling for language proficiency at college entry. However, for those who are employed wages and job alignment were similar for both groups.

With the exception of immigration status, unemployment rates were not significantly affected by college GPA, first language, or any of the academic or sociodemographic factors. However, graduates with lower overall grades were less likely to be in a job related to their program of study, and more likely to be overqualified. For hourly earnings, females and those from lower-income neighbourhoods earned less. College grades did not have a significant effect on earnings.

## **CONCLUSION**

Colleges need to be prepared to support highly diverse students with varying levels of English-language proficiency. More than 50% of Toronto's population comprises individuals born outside of Canada, a figure that is expected to continuously increase in the coming years. Policy

is urgently needed to ensure that current and future generations of immigrants, in high school and post-secondary, have the language skills, competencies, and social and financial supports required to succeed in further education and the labour market.

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