



Family physicians caring for recent immigrants

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Canada has a rich history of immigration, with more than 250 000 new immigrants arriving each year. Nearly 20% of Canadians were born outside of Canada; in Toronto, Ont, the percentage has reached 45.7%.¹ The 2006 Census Snapshot showed that 79.7% of new immigrants to Canada came from Asia, the Middle East, South America, and Africa, and newcomers settled predominantly in large urban centres.¹

Recent immigrants might face challenges in accessing primary health care—a national shortage of family physicians, cultural and language differences,² and an increasingly complex health care system are only a few obstacles these immigrants face. The vast majority of recent immigrants report good health²; however, there are subgroups of recent immigrants, such as children, pregnant women, and refugees, who might require timely access to health services.

Who provides care for recent immigrants?

According to the 2007 National Physician Survey (NPS), 69% of family physicians provide care for recent immigrants to Canada; of those, 6.5% report that recent immigrants make up greater than 10% of their practices. *Recent immigrant* is not explicitly defined in the NPS. **Table 1** compares FPs with greater than 10% of their practice comprising recent immigrants with the total population of FPs. Noteworthy results for family physicians caring for a high volume of immigrants (N=1917) include the following:

- 41.0% were younger than 45 years of age;

- 53.2% spoke 2 or more languages; and
- 79.9% were from urban or suburban and inner-city practice locations.

Resources to support family physicians

The Canadian Collaboration for Immigrant and Refugee Health is currently developing clinical guidelines to assist family physicians caring for recent immigrants and refugees. Further information is available at www.ccirh.uottawa.ca.

The NPS is a collaborative project of the College of Family Physicians of Canada, the Canadian Medical Association, and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Additional results are available at www.nationalphysiciansurvey.ca. If you would like the opportunity to develop and write a future Fast Fact using the NPS results, please contact **Scott Butler**, Manager of the National Physician Survey, at 800 387-6197, extension 416, or sbutler@cfpc.ca. 🍁

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Competing interests

None declared

References

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Table 1. Percentage of FPs who report practices comprising more than 10% recent immigrants compared with all FPs, by population characteristics

CHARACTERISTIC	FPS WITH HIGH VOLUME OF IMMIGRANTS (N = 1917), %	ALL FPS (N = 30 393), %
Female	42.8	42.0
Younger than 45 years of age*	41.0	64.9
Speak 2 or more languages*	53.2	34.1
Practice open to new patients*	21.6	20.2
Satisfied with relationships with patients	88.2	85.3
Collaborate with nurse practitioners*	24.3	22.2
Work in inner-city, urban, or suburban areas*	79.9	63.0

*Difference is significant at $P < .05$.