French-speaking immigrants* outside Quebec and the labour market


French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec have higher rates of labour force participation

According to the National Household Survey (NHS), French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec have higher overall rates of labour force participation compared to Canadian-born francophones and non-francophone immigrants. In 2011, among men, the rate of labour force participation was 73.1% for French FOLS immigrants and 71.0% for French-English FOLS immigrants, compared to 68.3% for both francophone Canadian-born and non-francophone immigrant males outside Quebec. Among women, 60.9% of French FOLS immigrant women and 62.3% of French-English FOLS immigrant women participated in the labour force, whereas 59.5% of native-born francophone women and 56.4% of non-francophone immigrant women participated in the Canadian labour market.

In 2011, men in the French-speaking immigrant population were more likely than women to be labour force participants. In addition, French FOLS immigrant men fared better in the labour market than French-English FOLS immigrant men, whereas among women, the opposite was true and French-English FOLS immigrants had higher rates of labour force participation.

French-speaking immigrants have higher rates of unemployment

Despite being more likely to participate in the labour market and having higher levels of educational attainment, French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec have higher rates of unemployment relative to Canadian-born francophones and non-francophone immigrants.

In 2011, the overall rate of unemployment among French-speaking immigrant men aged 15 and over was 9.0% for French FOLS immigrants and 10.3% for French-English FOLS immigrants, compared to 7.0% for non-francophone immigrants and 8.7% for Canadian-born Francophone males. Among women aged 15 and over, the proportion unemployed in the French-speaking immigrant population was 10.5% for French FOLS immigrants and 11.4% for French-English FOLS immigrants in 2011, while the share was 8.7% for women in the non-francophone immigrant population and 6.2% for Canadian-born francophone females. French-speaking immigrant women, like non-francophone immigrant women, had higher rates of unemployment than males, while Canadian-born francophone women fared better in the labour market than their male counterparts.

Sociodemographic characteristics of French-speaking immigrants affect their degree of integration into the labour market

As the age-specific rates of labour force participation shown in Figure 1 indicate, French-speaking immigrant men are more likely to participate in the labour market at slightly younger ages than are French-speaking immigrant women. In 2011, the highest rates of labour force participation for both French FOLS (91.5%) and French-English FOLS (90.5%) immigrant men were among those aged 35 to 44, whereas immigrant women between the ages of 45 and 54 in both the French FOLS (82.0%) and French-English FOLS (81.0%) group had the highest labour force participation rate.

As the rates of unemployment by age group in Figure 2 show, in 2011, both men and women in the 15 to 24 age group had the highest rates of unemployment. However, among men in this age group, the unemployment rate of French-English FOLS immigrants was 27.8%, 8.9% percentage points higher than the rate for French FOLS immigrants. French FOLS female immigrants in this age group, had an unemployment rate of 25.8%, slightly higher than the rate of 23.3% for French-English FOLS immigrant women.

The length of time French-speaking immigrants outside Quebec have lived in Canada affects their

*For the purpose of this study, French-speaking immigrants living outside Quebec comprise those with only French as their first official language spoken (French FOLS) and those with both French and English (French-English FOLS). When French FOLS and French-English FOLS immigrants are examined as separate sub-populations of French-speaking immigrants in Canada, differences emerge in the representation and composition of the French-speaking immigrant population outside Quebec.

Note: The category ‘FOLS other’ includes FOLS groups ‘English’ and ‘neither English nor French’.
integration into the labour market. In general, recent immigrants are less likely to be labour force participants and more likely to be unemployed than immigrants who have lived in Canada for longer periods of time. In 2011, the predicted rate of unemployment for French FOLS immigrants who had come to Canada since 2006 was 13.7%, while the rate was 7.8% for their counterparts who had arrived in 1980 or before. Similarly, French-English FOLS immigrants who had arrived between 2006 and 2011 were less likely to be labour force participants than those who came to Canada in 1980 or before, with predicted rates of labour force participation being 69.9% and 76.5% respectively.

French-speaking immigrants’ country of origin impacts their participation and unemployment in the Canadian labour market outside Quebec, with African nationals being particularly disadvantaged. Among French-FOLS immigrants, those who had come from Africa had the highest rate of unemployment (11.8%) and the lowest rate of labour force participation (75.3%) in 2011 when compared to French FOLS immigrants born in other regions. Among French-English FOLS immigrants, Asian nationals fared the worst in 2011, and had the highest predicted unemployment rate (11.7%) and lowest participation rate (72.2%). However, African nationals among French-English FOLS immigrants fared only slightly better, with a predicted unemployment rate of 11.0% and participation rate of 73.1%. Conversely, for both French-English FOLS and French FOLS immigrants, those born in Europe were generally the most likely to integrate into the Canadian labour market in 2011. Among French-English FOLS immigrants, European nationals had the lowest unemployment rate (7.4%) and the highest participation rate (81.6%). For French FOLS immigrants, those from Europe also had the lowest unemployment rate (6.9%), while their participation rate was only slightly lower (81.2%) than American nationals (81.4%).