Immigrant Earnings Differences Across Admission Categories and Landing Cohorts in Canada*

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Abstract

This study uses longitudinal IMDB micro data to document the annual earnings outcomes of Canadian immigrants in four major admission categories (skill-assessed independent economic principal applicants, accompanying economic immigrants, family class immigrants, and refugees) and three annual landing cohorts (those for the years 1982, 1988, and 1994) over the first ten years following their landing in Canada as permanent residents. The findings provide a ten-year earnings signature for the four broad immigrant admission categories in Canada.

The study's first major finding is that skill-assessed economic immigrants had consistently and substantially the highest annual earnings levels among the four admission categories for both male and female immigrants in all three landing cohorts. Family class immigrants or refugees generally had the lowest earnings levels. An important related finding is that refugees exhibited substantially the highest earnings growth rates for both male and female immigrants in all three landing cohorts, while independent economic or family class immigrants generally had the lowest earnings growth rates over their first post-landing decade in Canada. The study's second major finding is that economic recessions appear to have had clearly discernible negative effects on immigrants' earnings levels and growth rates; moreover, these adverse effects were much more pronounced for male immigrants than for female immigrants.