

# A Profile of Immigrant Health in Calgary: *Using Immigrant Health Data to Inform Community Action*

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and

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# Research Partners



# Background/Research Rationale

- Immigrant and racialized groups often experience greater access barriers to health and social services due to multiple factors, e.g. language, transportation, information gaps, service fees, and discrimination
- In Calgary, there has been little information available on immigrants' health and their access to health care services
- With growing numbers of immigrants in Calgary, there is a need to explore the association between sociodemographic characteristics and disparities in health care access, physical health status, and mental health status
  - This study is one effort to address this shortcoming in existing Canadian research on immigrant health

# The Research Questions

1. How do immigrants in Calgary compare to non-immigrants on a variety of variables capturing demographics and diversity, social determinants of health, access to health care, and health status?
2. What role does time in Canada play?



# The Healthy Immigrant Effect

- Immigrant populations in Canada (and elsewhere) often have better physical and mental health than non-immigrant populations, which is known as the “healthy immigrant effect”
- In Canada, this has been attributed to:
  - Rigorous health and medical screening prior to qualifying for immigrant status in Canada
  - Lower prevalence of unhealthy lifestyles and diets in the countries of origin, and
  - Immigration selection, which screens for younger and better educated immigrants

# But... It's Not a Lasting Advantage

- However, the “Healthy Immigrant Effect” is not a systemic (or enduring) phenomenon in Canada
- It is linked to immigrants’ duration of residence in the country
- Stronger effects are seen among recent immigrants (who arrived in Canada in the previous 10 years)
- The effect vanishes among more established immigrants
- Mortality studies suggest the healthy immigrant effect is “stronger for immigrants from poor or culturally distant countries” (Vang, et al., 2015)

# Research Design and Methodology

- Focus on social determinant of health
- Use of the two most recent merged cycles of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) – 2013/2014 and 2015/2016
- Microdata accessed in Statistics Canada's Prairie Regional Research Data Centre
- Analysis focused on a sample of **5,529** respondents aged 18 to 85, living in the Calgary Zone Community Health Region
- Survey and bootstrap weights applied to test significant differences between groups, with a primary focus on descriptive statistics

# Research Results

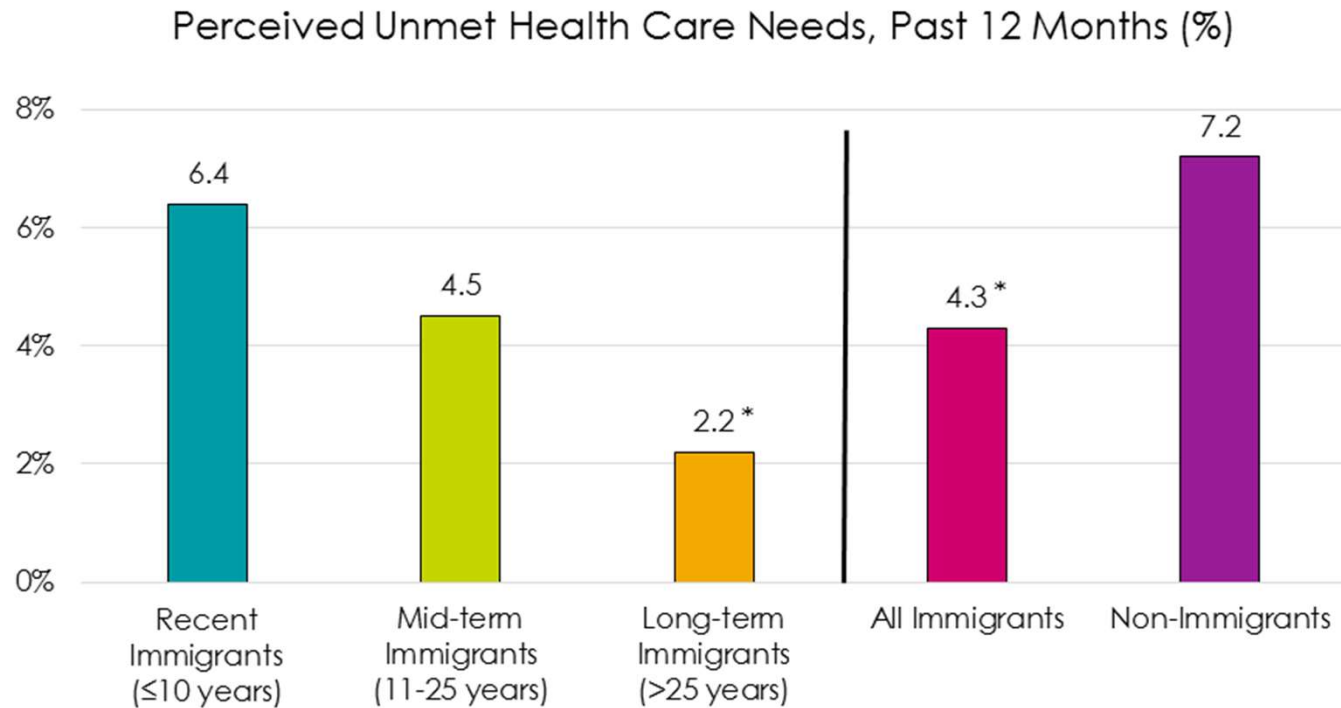
- For all the analyses, we first compared **immigrants** to **non-immigrants**
- We then stratified the sample of **immigrants by time in Canada** to compare recent, mid-term, and long-term immigrants with the Canadian-born population
  - This is also connected to the **age of immigrants**, such that older immigrants are more likely to have been in Canada longer
- A significance level of  **$p < 0.05$**  was applied for all descriptive data profiled in the report

*Now for some key findings...*

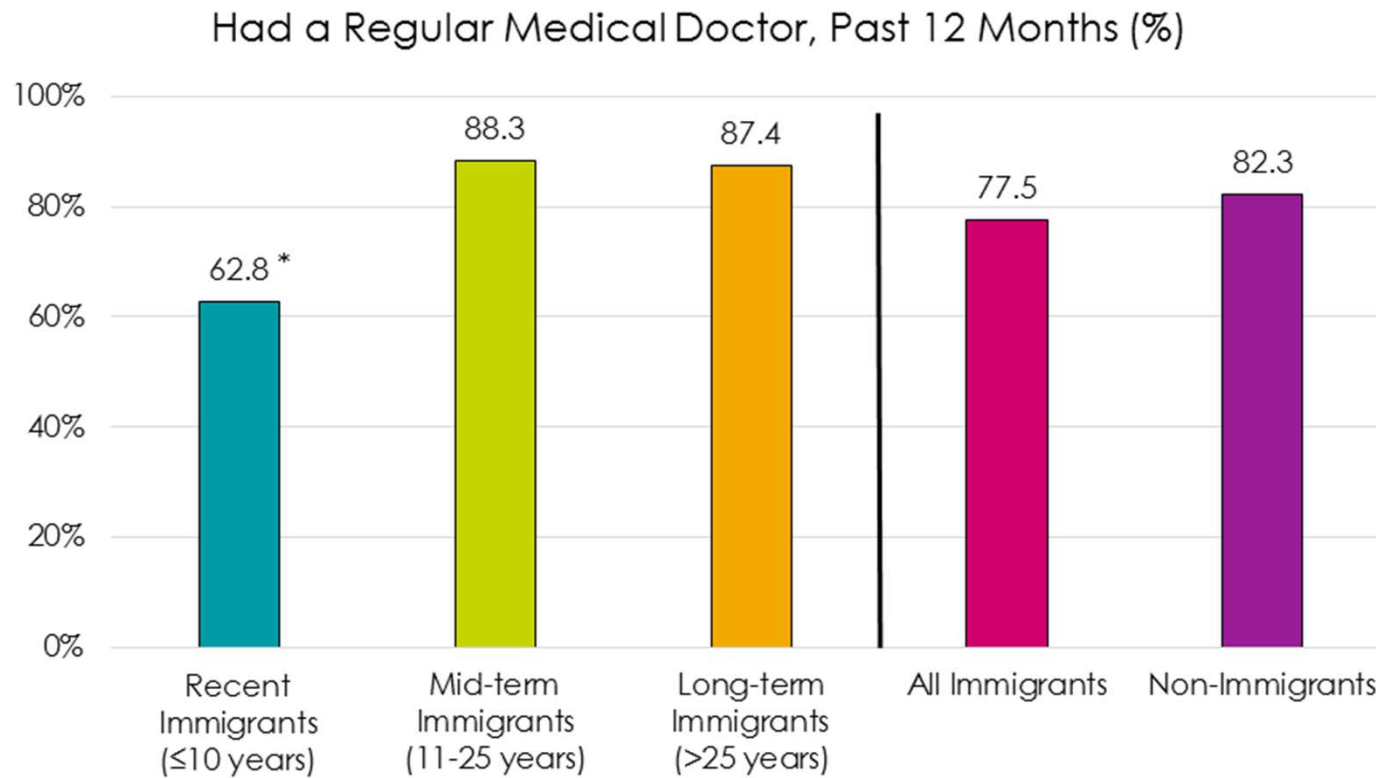




# Perceived Unmet Health Care Needs

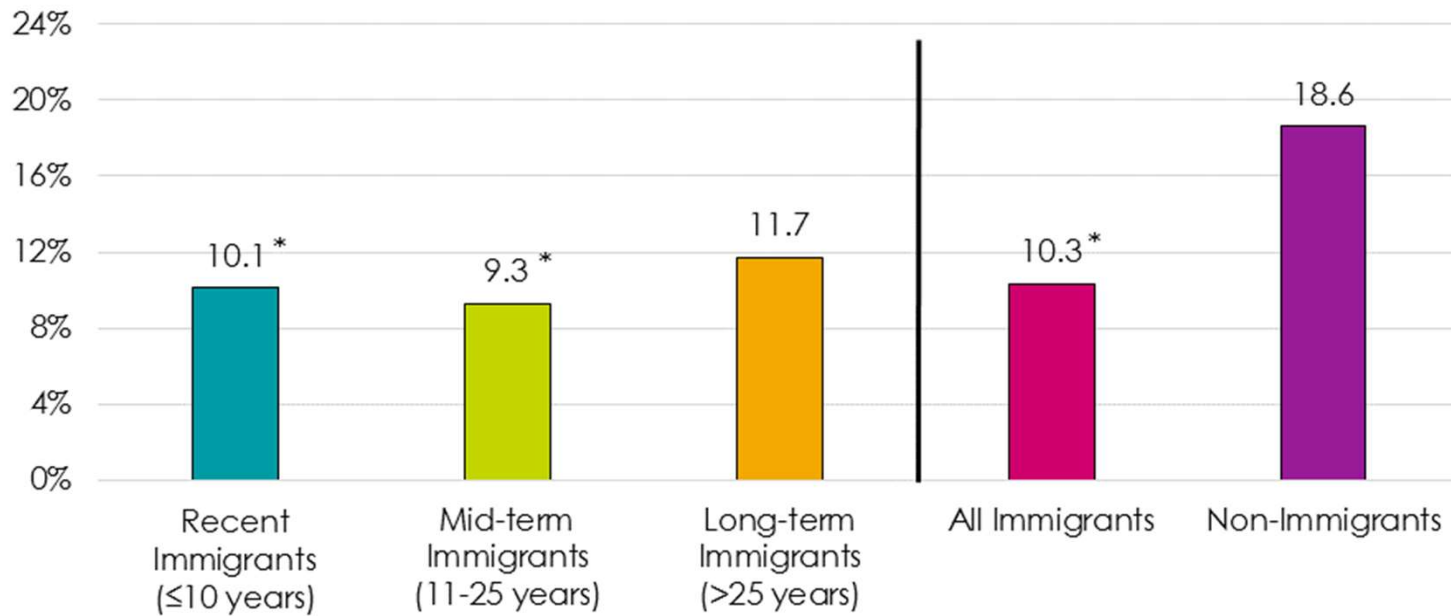


# Had a Regular Medical Doctor

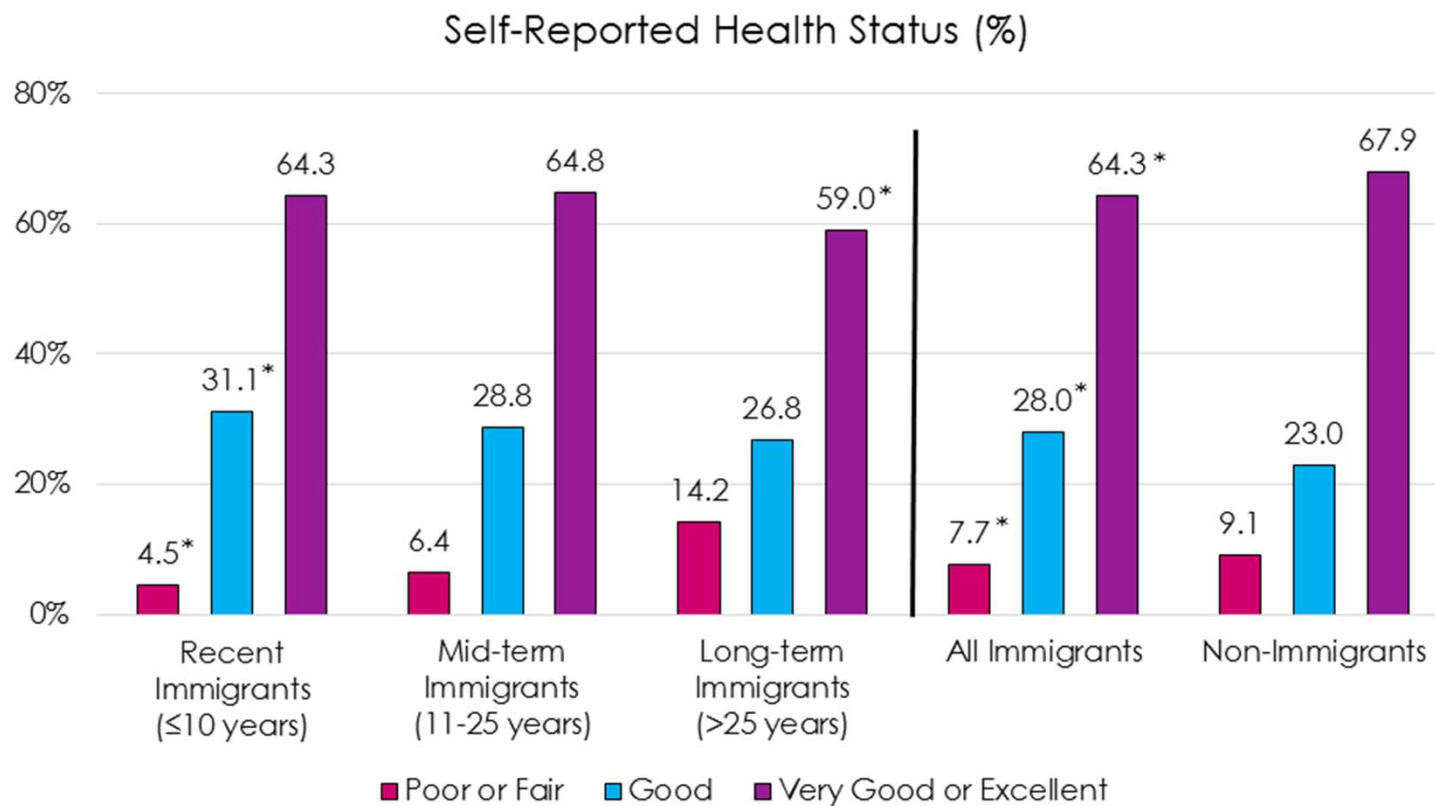


# Consulted a Mental Health Professional

Consulted a Mental Health Professional, Past 12 Months (%)



# Physical Health Status



# Regression Analysis

Controlling for relevant factors—including age, sex, education, income, and number of chronic conditions, we found that for:

- **Physical Health** – Racialized immigrants have *lower* odds of reporting “good” or “excellent” health than White Canadian-born individuals.
- **Mental Health** – People whose mother tongue is not English have *lower* odds of reporting “good” or “excellent” mental health than people whose mother tongue is English.
- **Sense of Belonging** – Racialized individuals have *greater* odds of reporting a strong sense of belonging to the local community than non-racialized individuals.

# Insights and Future Considerations

- This research was a descriptive “snapshot in time” of immigrant health in Calgary
  - Substantial support for a “healthy immigrant effect” in Calgary
- Worth considering if connection to “local” community is due to exclusion from the broader society
- Prior research finds that immigrants suffer negative impacts of a recession first and for longer
  - Suggests a need for more research to uncover possible changes to current health outcomes in Calgary, particularly after Alberta’s 2014 economic recession
- Immigrants are certainly not a homogeneous group in terms of the social determinants of health
- Future research—both quantitative and qualitative—is needed to further unpack causal relationships and the lived experiences of diverse newcomers in Calgary and comparatively

# Learn More...

The full report can be downloaded here:

[www.CalgaryLIP.ca](http://www.CalgaryLIP.ca)

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## **A Profile of Immigrant Health in Calgary**

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