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Workforce utilization of Canadian men with a nursing education

by Christoph Schimmele and Feng Hou

Little is known about the workforce utilization of Canadian men with a nursing education, who accounted for 12% of people eligible to practise nursing in 2021 (Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2022).

Broad differences in the workforce utilization of people with a health education have been found between Canadian-born people and foreign-educated immigrants, and between White and racialized people (Hou & Schimmele, 2020). Using data from the 2021 Census of Population, this article compares racialized and White men aged 25 to 64 years with a nursing education[1] in terms of their skill utilization in the workforce. The comparisons disentangle the role of racialized status from that of immigrant status.

Many Canadian men with a nursing education are immigrants and from a racialized group

In 2021, about 49,500 men aged 25 to 64 years had a nursing education.[2] One-half (53%) were from the White population group, and a large proportion (47%) were from racialized population groups. Men from the Filipino population group accounted for almost one-quarter (23%) of the supply of men with a nursing education. Men from the South Asian and Black population groups each accounted for 7%, or under 1/10, of the supply of men with a nursing education, and men from all other racialized groups accounted for 1/10 of the supply.

Most racialized men with a nursing education were Canadian-educated (34%) or foreign-educated (54%) immigrants, and a small proportion were Canadian-born people (12%). Most White men with a nursing education were Canadian-born people (90%), and a small percentage were Canadian-educated (6%) or foreign-educated (4%) immigrants. As detailed below, these compositional differences between racialized and White men have implications for their occupational outcomes.

Most Canadian men with a nursing education had a health occupation, but foreign-educated immigrants had less favourable outcomes

Most men with a nursing education were employed in 2021 (88%). Of those who were employed, three-quarters (77%) had a job in the health sector. Of those who were employed in the health sector, a large percentage (86%) had a job that matched their education.[3]

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1. This includes 25 broad fields of postsecondary education in registered nursing, nursing administration, nursing research, clinical nursing, practical nursing, vocational nursing and nursing assistants. See the 2021 Classification of Instructional Programs (sections 51.38 and 51.39) for the complete list.
2. Statistics in this article exclude residents of collective dwellings, Indigenous peoples and temporary foreign residents.
3. Education–occupation match refers to men with a nursing education who were employed as nursing coordinators and supervisors, nurse practitioners, registered nurses, physician assistants, midwives, or licensed practical nurses.

As a result, three-fifths (58%) of all men with a nursing education had a job that fully utilized their skills. The other two-fifths had a mismatched health job, a non-health job or no job.

Canadian-born men with a nursing education (85%) had a lower employment rate than Canadian-educated (90%) and foreign-educated (91%) immigrant men (Table 1). Among the employed, the percentage who had a job in the health sector was similar for Canadian-born men (83%) and Canadian-educated immigrant men (86%), but lower for foreign-educated immigrant men (59%). Among those employed in the health sector, almost all Canadian-born men (93%) and Canadian-educated immigrant men (92%) had a job that matched their education, while this was the case for three-fifths (61%) of foreign-educated immigrants.

Table 1

Employment outcomes among Canadian men aged 25 to 64 years with a nursing education by population group and immigrant status, 2021

	Employed			Employed in the health sector[2]			Employed in the health sector with a nursing job[3]		
	Canadian-born people	Canadian-educated immigrants	Foreign-educated immigrants	Canadian-born people	Canadian-educated immigrants	Foreign-educated immigrants	Canadian-born people	Canadian-educated immigrants	Foreign-educated immigrants
Observed percent									
Total	**85.2**	**90.4**	**90.5**	**83.2**	**85.5**	**58.9**	**92.6**	**91.5**	**61.3**
White (ref.)	84.2	86.6	82.4	83.0	84.4	67.8	92.3	89.8	88.1
South Asian	91.0	91.9 *	93.1 ***	79.6	78.6	64.5	96.5	90.3	60.0 ***
Chinese	96.8 ***	92.2 *	x	88.2	95.5 **	x	100.0 **	95.0	x
Black	88.2	92.3 **	86.9	80.3	86.9	64.0	86.4 *	86.2	68.1 ***
Filipino	94.6 ***	90.4	92.1 ***	88.9 *	86.5	55.3	93.9	95.5 **	55.3 ***
Arab and West Asian	x	89.9	84.0	x	86.9	65.3	x	94.4	74.3 *
Latin American	x	91.8	81.4	x	76.7	65.8	x	86.8	76.1
Southeast Asian	91.8	93.4	91.2 *	93.2 *	82.7	59.6	95.8	100.0 *	71.6
Adjusted percent[1]									
Total	**85.2**	**90.4**	**90.5**	**83.2**	**85.5**	**58.9**	**92.6**	**91.5**	**61.3**
White (ref.)	85.2	86.9	82.1	83.5	84.2	72.7	92.5	89.1	87.6
South Asian	81.6	92.9 *	93.8 ***	75.1 *	78.5	64.7	94.6	90.3	61.1 ***
Chinese	87.5	92.7 *	x	81.9	94.3 **	x	93.4	93.4	x
Black	83.0	91.1 *	86.0	80.9	86.5	68.9	85.5 *	87.8	91.1
Filipino	85.3	91.6 *	91.7 **	85.4	87.1	53.7 ***	92.4	95.1 **	51.6 ***
Arab and West Asian	x	86.5	86.8	x	85.9	68.9	x	95.2 *	79.1
Latin American	x	91.0	84.9	x	78.7	86.5	x	85.3	94.1
Southeast Asian	82.4	94.1	91.8 *	88.8	84.0	59.3	94.3	99.2 *	64.9 *

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

** significantly different from reference category (p < 0.01)

*** significantly different from reference category (p < 0.001)

1. The adjusted estimates are based on regression models that control for the highest level of education (below a bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree, graduate degree), the world region of education, age, mother tongue and knowledge of English or French, age at arrival in Canada, province of residence and census metropolitan area.

2. The denominator is all group members with a nursing education who were employed.

3. The denominator is all group members with a nursing education who were employed in the health sector.

Note: The results for the Korean and Japanese population groups were excluded to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act* .

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

In sum, two-thirds of Canadian-born men (66%) and Canadian-educated immigrant men (71%) with a nursing education were fully utilized in the workforce, compared with one-third of foreign-educated immigrant men (33%) (Table 2).

Table 2

Skill utilization rates among Canadian men aged 25 to 64 years with a nursing education by population group and immigrant status, 2021

	Canadian-born people	Canadian-educated immigrants	Foreign-educated immigrants	Canadian-born people	Canadian-educated immigrants	Foreign-educated immigrants
	observed percent			adjusted percent[1]		
Total	**65.7**	**70.8**	**32.7**	**65.7**	**70.8**	**32.7**
White (ref.)	64.5	65.6	49.2	65.8	65.4	51.7
South Asian	69.9	65.2	36.0 ***	57.7	66.1	37.1 **
Chinese	85.4 ***	83.7 ***	x	71.7	81.8 ***	x
Black	61.1	69.2	37.8 **	56.6 *	69.2	56.6
Filipino	78.9 ***	74.7 **	28.2 ***	67.6	75.7 **	24.8 ***
Arab and West Asian	x	73.8	40.7	x	71.1	44.2
Latin American	x	61.1	40.8	x	61.1	74.0
Southeast Asian	82.0 **	77.3	38.9	69.6	77.2	36.2 *

x suppressed to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act*

* significantly different from reference category (p < 0.05)

** significantly different from reference category (p < 0.01)

*** significantly different from reference category (p < 0.001)

1. The adjusted estimates are based on regression models that control for the highest level of education (below a bachelor's degree, bachelor's degree, graduate degree), the world region of education, age, mother tongue and knowledge of English or French, age at arrival in Canada, province of residence and census metropolitan area.

Notes: The skill utilization rate is computed as the product of the employment rate, the rate of employment in a health occupation among the employed and the rate of employment in nursing occupations among those who were employed in health occupations, as reported in Table 1. The results for the Korean and Japanese population groups were excluded to meet the confidentiality requirements of the *Statistics Act* .

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population.

Rates of employment in the health sector were similar across population groups

Among Canadian-born men with a nursing education, no racialized population group had a lower employment rate or a lower rate of employment in the health sector than the White population group (Table 1). A similar pattern was observed among Canadian-educated and foreign-educated immigrant men with a nursing education. In a few cases, it was racialized men who had the advantage.

The percentage of employed Canadian-born men with a nursing education who had a job in the health sector was significantly higher for those from the Filipino (89%) and Southeast Asian (93%) population groups than it was for those from the White population group (83%) (Table 1, middle panel, observed percent).

If Canadian-born men from the Filipino and Southeast Asian population groups had the same sociodemographic profile as those from the White population group, their level of employment in the health sector would have been similar (Table 1, middle panel, adjusted percent). Thus, their sociodemographic characteristics (e.g., the highest level of education, age) contributed to an advantage in getting a health job.

Canadian-educated immigrant men with a nursing education also had success finding a job in the health sector. Among those who were employed, a higher percentage of those from the Chinese population group (96%) had a job in the health sector than those from the White population group (84%).

Among employed foreign-educated immigrants with a nursing education, men from a few racialized groups (South Asian, Filipino and Southeast Asian) had higher employment rates than White men, but there were no significant differences in the percentage of those who had a job in the health sector.

Across all population groups, a lower percentage of foreign-educated immigrant men with a nursing education had a job in the health sector than their Canadian-born and Canadian-educated immigrant counterparts.

The variation between racialized and White men in education–occupation match was concentrated among foreign-educated immigrants

Among those employed in the health sector, the percentage of Canadian-born men with a job that matched their education was higher for those from the Chinese population group (100%) but lower for those from the Black population group (86%), compared with the White population group (92%) (Table 1, third panel, observed percent). There were no other significant differences between racialized Canadian-born men and White Canadian-born men in education–occupation match.

Most Canadian-educated immigrant men with a nursing education who were employed in the health sector had a job that matched their education, and there were no disadvantages among racialized men. The percentage of those who had a job that matched their education was higher for those from the Filipino (96%) and Southeast Asian (100%) population groups, compared with those from the White population group (90%).

Of those who were employed in the health sector, fewer foreign-educated immigrants from the South Asian (60%), Black (68%), Filipino (55%), and Arab and West Asian (74%) population groups had a job that matched their education, compared with those from the White population group (88%). The difference between those from the Black and the Arab and West Asian population groups and those from the White population group was not significant after controlling for characteristics such as the highest level of education, the world region of education and age at arrival in Canada. However, these characteristics did not explain the lower rate of education–occupation match for those from the South Asian, Filipino and Southeast Asian population groups.

Skill utilization rates were low among foreign-educated immigrants

Among Canadian-born men, no racialized group had a lower rate of skill utilization than the White population group. The rate of skill utilization refers to those who had a job that fully utilized their nursing education versus those who were underutilized or not employed. A higher percentage of Canadian-born men from the Chinese (85%), Filipino (79%) and Southeast Asian (82%) population groups were fully utilized workers than those from the White population group (65%) (Table 2, first panel). At every step in the labour market—i.e., employment, employment in the health sector and education–occupation match—Canadian-born men from the Chinese, Filipino and Southeast Asian population groups had an advantage over White men, which contributed to their higher rate of skill utilization. Their sociodemographic characteristics explained this advantage, as the difference with White men became non-significant in the adjusted estimates (Table 2, second panel).

Similar patterns were observed among Canadian-educated immigrants. In this group, Chinese men (84%) and Filipino men (75%) were more likely to be fully utilized workers than White men (66%). Canadian-educated immigrants from the Chinese and Filipino population groups also had an advantage at every step, accounting for their higher rate of skill utilization.

Conversely, among foreign-educated immigrants, men from several racialized groups had a lower rate of skill utilization than White men. A lower percentage of those from the South Asian (36%), Black (38%) and Filipino (28%) population groups were fully utilized workers, compared with those from the White population group (49%). The skill utilization rate among men from these racialized groups was attributable to a disadvantage in getting a job that matched their nursing education and, to a lesser extent, to a disadvantage in getting a job in the health sector. Socioeconomic characteristics explained the disadvantage among those from the Black population group, but the difference with the White population group persisted for those from the South Asian and Filipino population groups even after controlling for these characteristics.

Conclusion

The findings reported in this article suggest that occupational disparities between racialized men and White men with a nursing education occur within the context of the penalties that foreign credentials impose on entry into the nursing profession. There was little difference between racialized and White men with a nursing education among Canadian-born people or Canadian-educated immigrants. However, because a large proportion of racialized men are foreign-educated immigrants, their disadvantages on the labour market shape the overall patterns of occupational disparities. Over one-half of racialized men with a nursing education were foreign-educated immigrants. Three-fifths to two-thirds of these men were underutilized in the labour market or not employed.

Authors

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Acknowledgments

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