CANADIAN INTEGRATION: THE ELUSIVE QUEST FOR MODELS AND MEASURES

ABSTRACT

It is contened that integration is a concept around which there is little societal consensus. The author distinguishes between various aspects of integration and argues that it possible to establish criteria so as to measure economic and linguistic integration. Indicators of cultural integration are highly problematic in the Canadian context and yet, several analysts continue to unsuccessfully measure this phenomenon.

In theory, any discussion on the topic of immigrant integration should begin with the definition of the term. In practice, however, such definition is frequently absent from much of the academic and policy discussions that address this vital societal issue. It is often presumed that what is meant when referring to "immigrant integration" is sufficiently self-evident as not to require further explanation. Paradoxically, a question frequently heard at academic and policy forums is the following: "What do you mean by integration?" Immigrant integration is associated with the notions of adjustment, adaptation, settlement and/or insertion. It is also multidimensional; hence, in academic and policy conversations, the term is often preceded by reference to economic, social, cultural and, to a lesser extent, political integration. These facets of integration are interdependent of a reality that is rarely reflected in efforts to measure the phenomenon. Criteria for integration are subject to change based on what "society" regards as dominant norms during a given period. Essentially then, integration means various things to various people in varying situations.

One thing upon which there appears to be at least some agreement in most immigrant receiving societies is that there is no single definition of integration. For example, the Commission of European Communities states, "no member state has a uniform definition of integration, however they do to a certain extent agree that integration is composed of different elements and that it must be a two-way process involving both immigrants and their local community." Harris (2004) contends that "everyone in Europe concerned with migration seems to be talking about 'integration'. It is the flavour of the month with most governments. Yet it is quite unclear into what immigrants are to be integrated, why they have to do it and whether they are to have any choices in the matter." According to Penninx (2003), "the definition of integration is deliberately left open, because the particular requirements for acceptance by a receiving society vary greatly from country to country." For their part, Weinfeld and Elazar (2000) describe the term "immigrant integration" as an oxymoron to the extent that it refers to a process in which an adult immigrant to a host society (e.g., Canada or the United States) actually achieves a high measure of "integration" into that host society. A situation that, according to them, "almost never occurs." The authors maintain that "adult immigrants – especially if they arrived from a non-English or non-French speaking society – retain one foot firmly planted in the old country." They conclude that this is often overlooked in the mounting concern, within many government circles, about the "failures" of immigrant integration. In effect, they contend that at best, immigrants go through adjustment, settlement or re-settlement. Of course this idea is strongly focused on the identity dimension of integration and on the idea that adopting the language of the receiving society, securing employment and obeying the laws of the land are insufficient in meeting integration criteria. In this respect, the tendency is to focus on the degree of immigrants' attachment to Canada or to their adoption of Canadian values.

Integration policy

While some societies possess explicit immigrant integration policies, others possess implicit guidelines and programs. In European societies, it is more common for integration to be part of a legislative framework, with integration being understood as a process with certain core elements.

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Within the context of the European Union, immigration policies of one country inevitably impact on other countries. In Canada, there is no explicit integration policy although an Integration Branch, led by a Director General, exists within Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), and funds as programs aimed at integration. Immigrant integration involves coordination with a variety of branches and departments. The horizontal character of integration involves policies and programs in the domains, among others, of human resources, official languages, multiculturalism and justice. Some will recall that the Canadian government's immigration ministry (now CIC) was once "Immigration and Manpower" (reinforcing the link between immigration and employment) and in another period, "Citizenship and Multiculturalism" (linking immigration to cultural diversity).

It is acknowledged that immigration plays a special role in the majority Francophone province of Quebec, with regard to the reinforcement of its demographic character and, notably, to the protection of the French language. Such recognition was reflected in the ratification of a 1978 agreement (wherein Quebec was given a say in the selection of immigrants abroad and was allowed to define its own selection criteria), as well as in the transfer to the province, a dozen years later, of integration program funding (although Immigration et Communautés culturelles Québec uses only a small share of the allocated funds for that purpose). In 1990, Quebec issued its *Énoncé de politique en matière d'immigration et d'intégration* [Policy Statement on Immigration and Integration], titled *Au Québec, pour bâtir ensemble*. Finally, it is worth noting that in 2003, the Quebec government brought changes to its ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration [Ministry of Relations with citizens and Immigration], returning to its earlier incarnation as the ministère des Communautés culturelles et de l'Immigration [Ministry of Cultural Communities and Immigration]. This presumably reflected the current provincial government's desire to offer greater recognition to the province's ethnocultural groups whereas in the previous administration, these groups were considered citizens like all other Quebecers. In policy terms however, the name change does not appear to have resulted in any meaningful difference in terms of recognition and/or integration.

While Canada does not possess an explicit integration policy, in terms of the degree to which the federal government becomes financially and programmatically involved in the integration process, the country resembles European countries more closely than it does the United States. The federal character of immigration policy is such that the accords with Quebec render the system asymmetrical, noticeable among others in the variations in language integration requirements. Moreover, Quebec policy-makers describe their policy as "intercultural," as it fosters bilateral interaction between the majority Francophone population and minority ethnocultural groups, while multicultural influence on integration promotes a higher degree of cultural retention. In practice however, there is little difference in the degree of retention of cultural heritage – whether on the basis of non-official language retention or in terms of participation in ethnic associational life (as it reflects bonding social capital). In fact, on both indicators, ethnocultural groups in Montréal rank higher than their counterparts in Toronto and Vancouver.

Indicators of integration

Because of the fluid character of the notion of integration, it is difficult to measure its various dimensions with precision. Defining benchmarks to measure integration of immigrants is often connected to evolving expectations of non-immigrants and immigrants, and to the interaction between the two. Ray (2002) summarizes the factors usually employed in the measurement of integration.

- *Linguistic integration*: e.g., language used in public interactions, competency in a new language, language used in the home, language used in intergenerational communication.
- *Labour market integration*: e.g., education level, labour force participation of men and women, unemployment rate, labour market segmentation, socio-professional mobility, individual and/or household income.
- *Civic and political integration*: e.g., participation in political parties, unions, neighbourhood associations, religious institutions and/or community groups, registration to vote, voting behaviour.
- *Educational integration*: e.g., performance in school, drop-out rates, choice of school, post-secondary education attainment, interaction with students from receiving society, parent-teacher communication.
- *Residential integration*: e.g., degree of residential concentration/segregation, residential mobility, homeownership rates, dwelling size/crowding, discrimination in rental markets.

> It is often presumed that what is meant when referring to "immigrant integration" is sufficiently self-evident as not to require further explanation. Paradoxically, one of the questions frequently heard at academic and policy forums is: "What do you mean by integration?"

In Europe, housing issues and access to housing as well as health and social services are also considered part of the integration process. Because universal health care is guaranteed in Canada and in most European countries, access to health care is often considered an integral part of the integration process. However, this is not the case in the United States.

On the basis of the criteria applied to integration, many

Figure 1

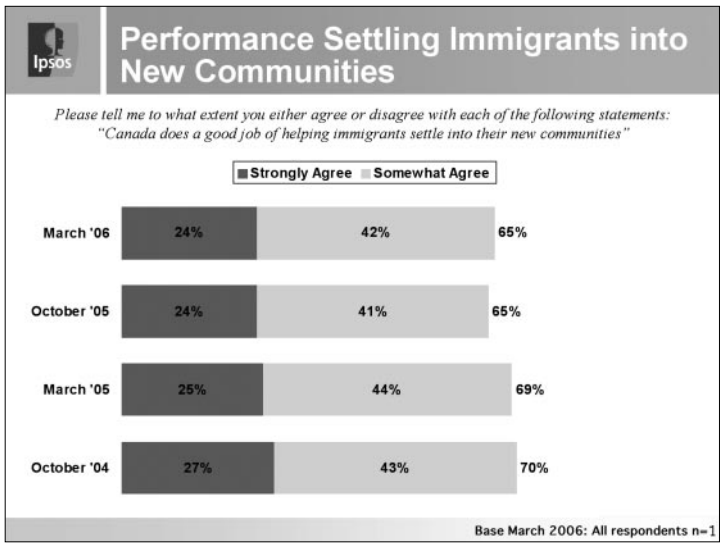
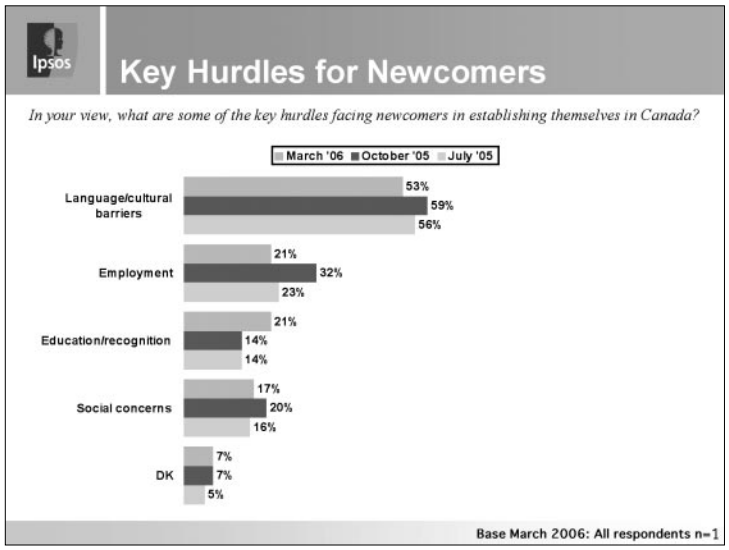


Figure 2



non-immigrants would not pass the test. At the group level and in many cases, the segment of the population composed of immigrants possesses lower rates of unemployment than the native-born segment. For instance, persons of African descent in Canada have higher rates of unemployment and lower average income than foreign-born persons of African descent. Underlying the process of integration are issues of inclusion and exclusion that, while difficult to measure, remain fundamental considerations.

There is a certain degree of intersectionality and interdependence between the dimensions of integration listed above. Economic integration is connected to linguistic adaptation, as is education, while civic participation may be connected to residential concentration.

Canadian opinion on immigrant integration

Is Canada doing a "good job" in integrating immigrants into Canadian society? The population seems to think so. According to a survey commissioned by Citizenship and Immigration Canada in March 2006 (Figure 1), some two-thirds of Canadians (65%) agree that "Canada does a good job of helping immigrants settle into their new communities." This includes 24% who say they "strongly agree" and 42% who say they "somewhat agree."

In comparison to residents of Toronto (18%) and Montréal (17%), Vancouver residents were most likely to "strongly agree" with this statement that "Canada does a good job" (41%). Paradoxically, it is those who feel that the effect of immigration on their communities is negative (35%), compared to those who say it is positive (20%), who "strongly agree."

Regarding barriers faced by immigrants when establishing themselves in Canada (Figure 2), survey results reveal that according to Canadians, "language and cultural barriers" (53%) constitute the largest hurdle. Two out of ten respondents cite "employment" (21%) and "education/credentials" (21%) as key hurdles. In contrast to the October 2005 survey, the choice of "employment" as a key hurdle decreased by 11 percentage points, "language and cultural barriers" decreased 6 percentage points, while "education/credentials" increased by 7 percentage points.

Economic integration in Canada

According to Penninx, integration is strongly influenced by the interaction between newcomers and societal institutions. However, these two players are unequal partners with respect to the direction and the ultimate outcome of the integration process. In terms of its institutional structure and the way it reacts to newcomers, the receiving society has much more say in the outcome of the process.

Employment is a fundamental dimension of immigrant integration; however, this doesn't necessarily imply that unemployment means failure of integration. To determine this, one must understand the underlying factors of the employment condition of the immigrant. The roles and responsibilities of the immigrant and the receiving society therefore need to be assessed. In the event that an immigrant does not have a job consistent with his or her skills and this situation is deemed a sign of non-integration, than the issue of responsibility comes into play. In the summer of 2004, Canada's Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) was evaluated by the firm Goss Gilroy, Inc. In the final report (CIC 2005), it was observed that key informants, particularly focus group participants, strongly indicated that newcomers were unprepared for the settlement experience.

The report also notes that: "many newcomers expressed the view that they did not know where to locate in Canada, did not know how to find accommodation, and were unprepared for the difficulty of finding a job. Some of those entering in the professional, skilled worker class, who were unable to work in occupations related to their professions, feel misinformed and disillusioned."

Still newcomers were generally satisfied with the services they received from providers. Their most consistent complaint however was the inability of the ISAP to help them find a suitable job. In the test of integration outcome, among the myriad of variables affecting newcomers (e.g., family and friends, knowledge prior to coming to

Table 1
Immigrant economic condition, according to date of arrival, Census of Canada, 2001

25-44 years Male	Immigrant population	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2001	1991-1995	1996-2001
Unemployment rate	6.9	4.2	4.8	5.6	9.2	6.9	11.3
Government transfer	3.7	2.1	2.5	3.6	5.0	4.2	5.9
Incidence of low income in 2000	19.9	6.6	9.0	15.4	29.8	20.1	38.6

Source: Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulations Census of Canada, 2001.

Table 2
Unemployment rates of immigrants according to date of arrival and place of origin, 2001

Place of origin	All groups	Before 1961	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2001	1991-1995	1996-2001
All groups	7.4	4.0	4.3	4.9	7.2	11.4	9.2	13.8
United States	5.6	4.6	4.7	4.9	7.1	7.2	6.6	7.7
Central and South America	8.3	4.5	4.3	5.2	8.4	11.2	9.4	14.0
Caribbean and Bermuda	8.7	2.7	5.3	6.7	10.3	11.7	11.2	12.7
Europe	5.2	4.0	4.2	4.1	5.4	9.2	6.9	11.7
United Kingdom	4.3	4.2	4.1	3.8	5.0	5.3	5.2	5.4
Other Northern and Western Europe	4.4	3.9	4.4	3.8	4.4	6.7	5.5	7.6
Eastern Europe	7.6	4.6	4.3	5.7	6.2	10.4	7.5	13.3
Southern Europe	5.2	3.7	4.3	4.2	5.1	10.6	7.5	14.1
Africa	11.4	4.6	4.1	5.1	9.2	17.5	13.9	20.7
Asia	8.8	4.2	4.3	5.1	7.4	11.7	9.4	14.0
West Central Asia and the Middle East	11.7	4.6	4.4	6.0	9.7	15.7	12.5	18.5
Eastern Asia	8.5	3.7	3.7	4.3	6.8	11.4	8.9	13.9
South East Asia	6.8	3.3	3.8	5.6	7.0	7.7	7.1	8.6
Southern Asia	9.8	6.0	5.3	5.1	7.1	12.9	10.6	14.8
Oceania and other	5.3	2.1	3.6	5.4	5.8	6.3	5.9	7.1

Source: Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulations Census of Canada, 2001

Canada, etc.), it is difficult to directly attribute outcomes to ISAP services.

While there is an understanding of the respective roles and responsibilities of Citizenship and Immigration Canada and other immigrant service provider organizations (SPO) the report points out that there still exists some disagreement. From the government's viewpoint, a certain number of SPOs are undertaking activities outside the scope of ISAP, including advocacy and taking clients to appointments. SPO respondents claim that it is their duty to help their clients, regardless of what is funded by government. Their perspective is that newcomers have needs that exceed the services offered and programs should be expanded to meet these needs.

Table 1 reveals that over time immigrants' economic conditions improve steadily. There is growing evidence that the latest cohorts of immigrants are suffering from greater economic challenges than previous waves of immigration. This raises the issue of how to define the period of years that corresponds to the process of economic integration.

As observed in Table 2, unemployment rates based on time of arrival vary considerably according to the place of birth of the immigrant. However, across all groups, there is obvious progress in terms of unemployment rates from one decade to the next.

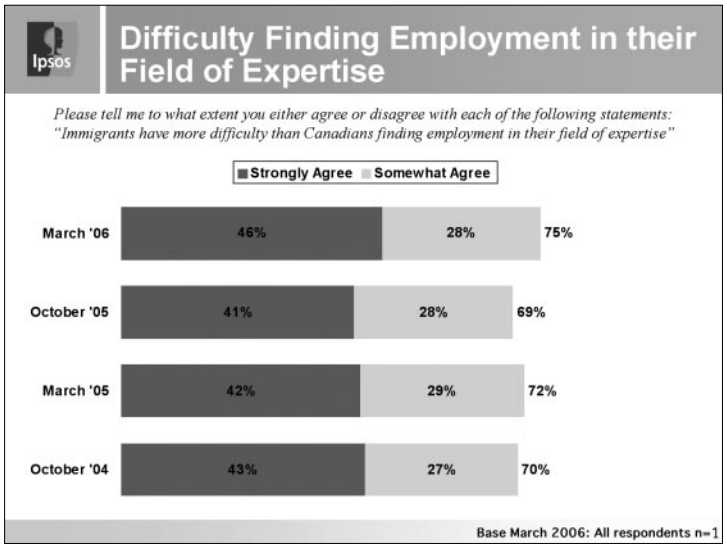
Difficulties in finding employment

Canadians continue to feel that immigrants are at a disadvantage compared to other Canadians with respect to finding employment in their field of expertise. Indeed, according to the survey, three-quarters (75%) of Canadians agree that immigrants have more difficulty in this regard; furthermore, a high proportion of Canadians (46%) "strongly agree" (see Figure 3).

The proportion of Canadians who agree immigrants have more difficulty finding employment in their area of expertise increased by a significant six percentage points since the last survey on this issue (October 2005).

An analysis across socio-demographic factors reveals that those most likely to "strongly agree" that immigrants have greater difficulty than Canadians in finding employment in their field of expertise are residents of Toronto (64%) (compared to Montréal residents (43%)), foreign-

Figure 3



born Canadians (61%) and first-generation Canadians (55%) (compared to immigrants of third-generation or more (41%)), and those with higher levels of educational attainment (peaking at 59% among those with a university education).

Linguistic integration

Research has shown that language proficiency is a determining factor in how quickly immigrants integrate into the labour market. Current training programs, largely funded through federal programs, provide immigrants with the language skills required for social interaction and employment in service and industrial contexts, where advanced language skills may not be required. An Enhanced Language Training (ELT) initiative allows immigrants to attain higher levels of language skills in order to assist them in entering and remaining in the labour market, particularly in information intensive domains, in which many skilled immigrants possess training and experience.

Cultural Integration

The cultural dimension of integration generates much debate because it is so closely related to the issues of identity, with which societies constantly grapple. This dimension also involves defining relationships between majority and minority, as well as non-immigrant and immigrant – relationships that don't necessarily reflect national or regional demographic circumstances. Penninx notes that cultural integration processes, for both individuals and groups, are of a long-term nature and their success or failure is best evaluated by examining the second generation. According to Weinfeld and Elazar, full integration is a multi-generational process of adjustment. Government may call for integration to take place within a shorter term, but this often leads to erroneous presumptions of policy failure on matters of integration. While the amount time required to find employment can be easily determined, the process of cultural integration, however defined, involves generational change.

Ray (2002) points out that integration discourse often seems wedded to a normative vision of societies as culturally homogeneous, where residents born in other countries are exceptional rather than customary participants in economic, social and cultural life. These views reflect a sort of dialectic between what immigrants adopt from the host culture and what they retain from their ancestral culture. Weinfeld and Elazar remark that what generally takes place in the case of Jewish immigrants is a three-fold, nested process of integration into the sub-community, community, and host society. Alternatively, it might be stated that multiple hosts are involved in the receiving process. Indeed, there is a much-needed debate about who or what constitutes the "host society."

Underlying the notion of cultural integration is the idea that we have competing forms of identity wherein the expression of ethnicity and religion conflict with a sense of belonging to the nation. A 2005 survey conducted by the firm Decima Research reveals that 58% of Canadians believe that strong attachment to country of origin "hurts" loyalty to Canada. However, as we shall observe, little causal evidence exists suggesting that immigrants who feel a strong attachment to their country of

Table 3
Language knowledge and immigrant status for Canada, 2001

Total	English population	French only	English only	Neither and French	English nor French
Total population	29,639,035	20,014,645	3,946,525	5,231,575	446,290
Non-immigrants	23,991,905	15,615,445	3,745,700	4,552,220	78,540 (0.3)
Immigrants	5,448,485	4,256,235	190,345	653,625	348,280 (6.4)
Before 1961	894,465	760,440	16,965	94,325	22,740 (2.5)
1961-1970	745,565	588,040	21,760	103,035	32,725 (4.4)
1971-1980	936,275	735,040	30,815	123,445	46,980 (5.0)
1981-1990	1,041,500	788,185	39,995	139,140	74,180 (7.4)
1991-2001	1,830,680	1,384,535	80,815	193,680	171,650 (9.4)
1991-1995	867,355	656,835	34,680	98,950	76,895 (8.8)
1996-2001	963,325	727,700	46,135	94,730	94,760 (9.8)

Source: Statistics Canada, Custom Tabulations Census of Canada, 2001.

origin are less loyal to their receiving country. In the absence of empirical tests demonstrating this limited loyalty, we are often asked to accept this hypothesis on the basis of anecdotal evidence. Polling has revealed however that immigrants, on average, identify more strongly with Canada than do multigenerational Francophones and Aboriginals. Paradoxically, the sense of detachment felt by these two latter groups has resulted from perceived attempts to force their integration into the English majority.

Although multiple identities are an increasingly common characteristic of pluralist democracies, some cultural integration theorists insist that Canadian identification is insufficient among immigrants, very often adding that this is also true for their children. In the aftermath of the debate over ethnic categorization in the 2001 Census, some felt that the percentage of respondents defining themselves as "Canadian only" was a test of the strength of attachment to Canada. It is worth noting that a large number of those who defined themselves as "Canadian only" were from the province of Quebec, where many support the country's breakup. Moreover, the insistence that duality, hyphenation and multiple attachments are obstacles to integration runs counter to the notion that ethnic mixing through exogamy is an important indicator of integration. When it comes to integration, the way in which the matter is presented to the population will often influence the understanding of how the process is understood. When surveyed, some two-thirds of Canadians disagree that it would be better for Canada if almost everyone shared the same customs and traditions. Does this imply that they are against integration? Or perhaps the question below, around which Canadians are divided, provides a better test of integration. Again, it is worth noting that the more ethnically-mixed segment of the Canadian population (the 18-29 group) is more inclined to encourage Canadians to try to accept minority groups, as well as their customs and language, than the less mixed segment (45 and over), for whom it is more important to encourage minority groups to become more like most Canadians. Of course, there is a need to define what is meant, for most Canadians, by such questions.

Recently, increased attention has been directed to the Muslim population, to its degree of integration and to the broader question of religious identity and societal integration. A recent survey showed that approximately 60% of Quebecers feel positively about the successful integration of Muslims. The more negative sentiment hails from persons over the age of 55 and from those who are less educated.

Quebecers and other Canadians may express concerns

Table 4
Overall what do you think should be a higher priority for Canada? To encourage Canadians as a whole to try to accept minority groups and their customs and language or to encourage minority groups to try to change to be more like most Canadians?

		Age group of respondents			
	All ages	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
To encourage Canadians as a whole to try to accept minority groups and their customs and language	43	59	45	37	30
To encourage minority groups to try to change to be more like most Canadians	45	34	43	49	54
Neither	7	6	7	8	8
DK/NA	5	1	4	6	8

Source: Focus Canada survey, Environics, March 29-April 18, 2004 for the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Table 5
Would you say that you have a very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative opinion about the successful integration of Muslims in Quebec (n=1003)?

	Very Positive Opinion	Somewhat Positive	Somewhat Negative	Very Negative	Refuse to Respond
18-24	14	71	9	5	1
25-34	11	59	22	5	3
35-44	8	53	29	3	7
45-54	8	52	22	11	7
55-64	5	40	29	15	11
65+	2	45	22	12	19
Elementary	17	25	27	9	22
Secondary	7	52	21	9	11
College	6	57	23	7	7
University	9	55	23	8	5
Total	8	53	23	8	8

Source: Association for Canadian Studies and Leger Marketing, August 2006.

about the degree of integration of Muslims in this society, but survey evidence provides no support for the idea that they feel any less a sense of belonging to Canada than others. This does not mean that some individuals within this group or other groups hold values that are not democratic; it rather suggests that the collective problem is not related to their sense of belonging to Canada. Special cross-tabulation of results from Statistics Canada's 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey reveals that approximately 83% of persons identifying as Muslims feel a strong sense of belonging to Canada compared with 79.4% of the overall population. Regarding the sense of belonging to Canada versus the sense of belonging to an ethnic group, a survey of religious groups shows that in the case of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh respondents, there is a tendency for the immigrant segment to report a higher sense of belonging to Canada than second-generation respondents.

Table 6
Religious groups: Strong sense of belonging to Canada vs. Strong sense of belonging to ethnic group, 2002

	% strong sense of belonging to Canada	% strong sense of belonging to ethnic group
No religious affiliation	76.5	32.7
Catholic	77.3	51.2
Protestant	86.8	43.1
Muslim	83.2	62.2
Jewish	82.0	61.8
Buddhist	67.5	51.8
Hindu	80.1	73.6
Sikh	80.0	73.6
Total	79.4	46.1

Source: Statistics Canada and Canadian Heritage, Ethnic Diversity Survey, 2002.

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