

# Challenges Immigrant Students Face and the impact it has towards their overall well-being

## The Problem

When immigrant adolescents arrive in a new country they face unique challenges. These challenges consist of language barriers, cultural differences, discrimination, and stereotyping which can leave the student feeling alone and isolated. Which in turn ultimately impacts their mental and emotional health affecting their overall well-being.

## Why Does it Matter?

- Immigrants are more likely to struggle with mental health challenges compared to non-immigrants, which can negatively impact their overall well-being.
- With this evidence, there are still limited to no resources in place despite the increasing number of immigrant students.
- British Columbia alone welcomes over 150,000 students to both elementary and secondary school each year.
- Additionally there are added stressors to bear in mind with immigrant students coming to a new country such as family pressure, isolation and feelings of not fitting in.
- 30% of students are immigrants.

### Misconceptions

- Immigrant students find school too easy and they don't have to try.
- Immigrant students are taking spots in jobs and universities over people who are citizens of the country.
- Immigrants don't want to learn English.

### Actuality

- School is a privilege, when coming to a new country the students won't take it for granted. Working extremely hard in turn doing well in school.
- Immigrant students are an important part of a diverse society, and contribute both to academics and the workforce.
- Many immigrants do already speak English. Children have the opportunity to learn in school, as well as many adults seek out programs that will teach English.

## The Specifics

- Taking a closer look at the difference between mental health and the overall well-being of immigrant adolescents to non-immigrant adolescents. Evidence from the Canadian Health Measures Survey explored different factors that may play a role such as sex, income and education.
- Seeking to find the extent specifically among children, because there is evidence that there are higher mental health problems among immigrant adults compared to non-immigrant adults. But there is little coverage on adolescents.
- It's important to be mindful that whilst there aren't statistically significant differences in terms of mental health and well-being, immigrant students do face unique barriers that implement further challenges. Which in turn can affect their overall well-being.

## Stats

- A survey was conducted using 4 cycles over the years of 2009-2015.
- The reasoning for this was to enhance the study representative by having an expanded sample. Another factor to take into consideration was the timing and severity of the period of the study.
- Results found that there was an association between the mental health of immigrants vs non-immigrants. Higher chance of emotional problems and hyperactivity. As well as lower socioeconomic class was associated with poorer mental health.
- However, there was no evidence of a difference associated with mental health in immigrant adolescents compared to non-immigrants. Nonetheless, there were differences in hyperactivity and emotional problems, which can affect their overall well-being.
- It's important to be mindful that there aren't statistically significant differences in terms of mental health and well-being. Immigrant students do face unique barriers that implement further challenges.
- Overall to expand on these conclusions it's evident that there is a distinction between immigrant adults' overall well-being compared to non-immigrants. In terms of adolescents, there isn't a ton of research to expand on this hypothesis however we do know there is a lot of mental health issues stem from the adolescents to be most likely the factor in mental health.



## Potential Solutions

- School counsellor services range from academic concerns and seeking help with personal concerns. Having individuals in these students' lives is crucial.
- Cultural centers within schools would be a valuable resource and focus on specific programs within this organization. Such as specifically focusing on immigrant students, this could take the form of looking like a support group.
- Peer support programs encourage other students to connect with all students in their class. Create meaningful friendships.
- Language support programs, offering programs will help build students' confidence in learning a new language and will also help them learn quickly.

## References

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