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For immediate distribution
January 11, 2007

NEWS RELEASE

Approaches Aimed at Integrating Newcomers into Canadian Society Must Improve

Visible minority immigrants and their children are less integrated than are their White counterparts, due in part to a sense of exclusion

Montreal – Newcomers to Canada have generally thrived and played an integral role in shaping the national identity. However, the IRPP study being released today reveals that for some immigrant groups and their children, living in Canada for longer does not necessarily lead to a greater sense of belonging or a higher degree of social integration on their part. This trend is particularly acute among visible minority immigrants.

Authors Jeffrey G. Reitz (University of Toronto) and Rupa Banerjee (University of Toronto) examine the findings from Statistics Canada's 2002 Ethnic Diversity Study (EDS) and investigate whether racial inequality has an effect upon social cohesion. They find that, partly as a result of a sense of racial exclusion, visible minority immigrants are slower to become integrated into Canadian society than are immigrants of European origin. More worryingly, on all indicators the children of visible minority immigrants are less integrated than their White counterparts. This chapter, part of the forthcoming volume *Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada*, serves as a warning: If Canada is to continue to reap the benefits of immigration and avoid the violence and social disruption that has plagued some European countries, problems of perceived discrimination must be addressed.

The authors look at seven indicators related to social integration: sense of belonging in Canada, trust in others, self-identification as Canadian, acquisition of citizenship, life satisfaction, volunteering for work in social organizations, and voting in elections. Their findings are a wake up call for Canadians:

- ◆ Perceptions of racial prejudice and discrimination among recent and older visible minority immigrants: Among visible minority immigrants who arrived in the last 10 years, 33.6 percent report having experienced discrimination. Among those who arrived earlier, reports of discrimination are somewhat more common, at 35.5 percent.
- ◆ Perceptions of racial prejudice and discrimination among the children of visible minority immigrants: The authors found that the percentage of those born in Canada who report experiences of discrimination varies between 34 percent for Chinese, 43.4 percent for South Asians, and 60.9 percent for Blacks, compared with 10.9 percent for the children of immigrants of European origin.
- ◆ Trust: Regarding interpersonal trust, that is, trust of one's fellow citizens, the authors found lower levels for all visible minority immigrants, especially Blacks, whose responses were over 20 percentage points lower than those of their White counterparts.

- ◆ Acquiring a sense of self-identification as Canadian: “Overall, racial minorities are slower to acquire a sense of identification as Canadian than are immigrants of European origin,” say Reitz and Banerjee. Among the second generation, for Whites, the rate of identification as Canadian is quite high – 78.2 percent – while for visible minorities it lags by over 20 percentage points.

Surveying the implications of their research, Reitz and Banerjee state that “improvements in immigrants’ earnings may contribute to successful integration, but higher earnings alone do not smooth the path to integration...experiences of discrimination and vulnerability remain, slowing the integration of minorities...these effects may be intensified for the children of immigrants, whose expectation of equality may be greater than was the case for their parents.”

In terms of policy, the authors suggest current approaches may not be specific enough. This, they say, “may reflect the lack of an interracial consensus on the significance of discrimination and also the lack of an effort to create such a consensus...The most important precondition for improved policy may be the creation of a more effective means for the full participation of minority groups in Canadian policy-making.”

Racial Inequality, Social Cohesion and Policy Issues in Canada, by Jeffrey G. Reitz and Rupa Banerjee, can be downloaded free of charge from www.irpp.org

Belonging? Diversity, Recognition and Shared Citizenship in Canada will be published in February 2007 as part of the IRPP’s Art of the State series. Edited by Keith Banting, Thomas J. Courchene and F. Leslie Seidle, the volume will shed light on Canada’s approaches to recognizing and accommodating diversity, including instruments of shared citizenship, their effectiveness to date and their capacity to respond to new pressures and concerns. Analysis of the approaches of certain other countries and the critiques that have emerged will provide a comparative perspective.

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