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What is the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB)?
What information can we draw from the IMDB?

What is the IMDB?

The IMDB holds information about immigrants who became Permanent Residents (PR) of Canada from 1980 onward. Information included in the landing records (Immigrant Landing File, or ILF) is linked with the tax files (T1 Family Files) in subsequent years after arrival (starting in 1982) as well as the Non-Permanent Resident Files (NRF). Combining the information from these administrative records, the IMDB provides detailed information on socioeconomic and demographic information about immigrants at the time of landing and afterwards. It also allows us to draw upon some information about the pre-landing histories of migrants using temporary permits and economic activities after arrival.

Who is included in the IMDB?

The IMDB covers immigrants who filed taxes at least once since landing, including: individuals who came to Canada as refugees and under humanitarian and compassionate streams, and those whose applications were made inside Canada. It also includes individuals who came as minors (children and youth). However, those who have never filed taxes since they obtained PR are not included in the IMDB. As a result, the IMDB may be limited for analyzing the characteristics of refugee children and youth who came in recent years because most of them have not yet filed taxes. Nevertheless, because of its comprehensive coverage of newcomers it is better than other existing surveys in analyzing the lives of newcomers and allows for research on smaller population areas missed by other surveys.

The potential of IMDB for research on refugee children and youth

There are several ways the IMDB can be used to study refugee children and youth:

1: Household economic situation
From the tax file component of the IMDB, we can generate information on general economic conditions of immigrants and refugee households by looking at:
- Highest education at landing
- Intended occupation at landing
- Employment and self-employment after landing
- Earning and income after landing
- Employment insurance
- Social benefit
- Child benefit

Further, the tax file also has information on household spending specific to the well-being of children, including:

- Amount for provincial children's arts tax credit
- Children's art amount
- Children's fitness amount, and
- (Ontario only) Ontario children's activity tax credit (2010-).

2: Transition of refugee children and youth into adulthood

The IMDB's coverage of children and youth is limited because they are not fully captured in the data until they file taxes. Cohorts of children and youth who have transitioned into the labour force are well captured, much can be done in studying those who arrived before 1990.

For those children and youth, we can examine several transitions to adulthood, such as:

- At what age do refugee children/youth start filing tax?
- At what age do child immigrants start generating earnings?
- At what age do child refugees start filing tax with a partner?
- At what age do they start claiming child tax benefits for their children?
- What are their marital statuses?
- Are their partners same-sex?
- What are their family types/living arrangement – i.e. when do refugee children form their family in their adulthood?
- Are their mobility (secondary migration since landing) patterns different from adult immigrants/refugees?

3: Group comparisons

All the information in the previous sections can be aggregated for specific landing categories reported in the ILF. The categories include:

- Family stream
- Skilled Worker Program
- Business stream
- Live in Caregiver program
- Government Assisted Refugees
- Privately Sponsored Refugees
- Refugees Landed in Canada, and
- Refugee Dependents.

This information will be useful to compare whether and how experiences of those who come as refugees differ from immigrants who come to Canada through other immigrant pathways.

With the IMDB it is also possible to examine whether there are different patterns in economic or demographic profiles across the landing cohort. For example, are characteristics and

experiences different between immigrants landing during 1980s compared to those who arrived during the 1990s or later.

In addition, because the IMDB includes detailed geographic information, it is possible to examine the characteristics of newcomers in specific areas. For both landing records and tax information, the geographical codes are available for the levels of:

- Province/Territory
- Census Metropolitan Area/Census Agglomeration (CMA/CA)
- Census Division (CD)
- Census Subdivision (CSD)
- Census Tracts (CTs)

These geographical codes can be converted into Economic Region (ER) and Federal Electoral District) by using the Postal Code Conversion File (PCCF).

4: Examining temporary status

The IMDB is also linked with the Non-Permanent Resident file (NRF), which contains information about temporary permits of people who eventually made a transition to permanent residency. The NRF contains demographic information about non-permanent residents and detailed information about their permits, such as permit type and valid-dates.

With this information, it is possible to trace immigrants' pre-landing history in Canada as temporary residents - international students, temporary workers, and/or those under the Asylum Program. By combining information from the landing records, as well as the tax files, we can explore whether the newcomers' pre-landing profiles affect their experience in the settlement process.

5: IMDB linked with other surveys

The IMDB itself is a product of record linkage from various administrative records. Yet, further linkage of the IMDB to other datasets are underway. For example, the IMDB is now linked with the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC-IMDB). The LSIC collected detailed data on education, training, labour market activities, identity, social and cultural engagement, mobility, and well-being of the immigrants who landed in 2000; the individuals were followed up over the first four years of settlement. The IMDB is also set to be linked to the 2016 Census. By linking this information with IMDB records, we can explore how newcomers' initial settlement experiences are affecting the long term economic activities and mobility. We can also look at the reverse and backwardly construct from surveys how economic outcomes determine characteristics in surveys linked to the database.

Further, the Immigrant Landing File (ILF), a main component of the IMDB, is also linked with other data sources, such as the Census (ILF-Census) as well as the hospital data (Discharge Abstract Database, DAD – ILF). These record linkages provide opportunities to explore

socioeconomic well-being, mobility, diversity, as health outcomes specific to various types of new comers.

For detailed information about the IMDB please consult:
Evra, Rose and Elena Prokopenko. 2017. The IMDB Technical Report, 2014. Statistics Canada.
http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-633-x/11-633-x2017007-eng.htm

For the record linkage between Immigrant Landing File to Discharge Abstract Database (ILF-DAD) please consult: Sanmartin, Claudia, Edward Ng, James Brennan, Scott McLeish, Richard Trudeau, and Doug Manuel. 2016. Linking the Canadian Immigrant Landing File to Hospital Data: a New data Source for Immigrant Health Research.
http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-633-x/11-633-x2016002-eng.htm

For more information about the CYRRC's work with IMDB data, please contact us at:
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