



CHNET-WORKS!

Welcome to Fireside Chat #243

Friday November 4, 2011 1:00 – 2:00 PM

Housing and Health of Recent Immigrants in Canada: A Narrative Review

Advisors on Tap:

Adullahel Hadi PhD

Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa
And

Ronald Labonté PhD

Canada Research Chair, Globalization/Health Equity
Professor, Faculty of Medicine
Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa

www.chnet-works.ca

A project of
Population Health Improvement Research Network
University of Ottawa



Housekeeping

(see Fireside Chat Instructions – email Step #2)

Telephone: *All audio is by telephone*



- If your line is 'bad' – hang up and call back in
- Participant lines muted during presentations
- Recording notice

Housekeeping



(see Fireside Chat Instructions – email)

Visual Presentation: (no audio via internet)
from our computer to yours.....

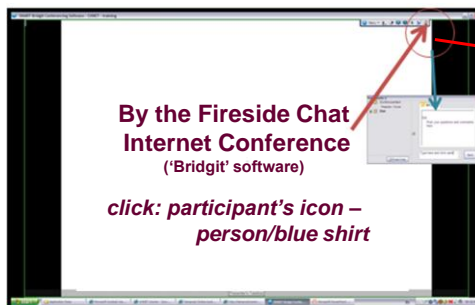


- Via Bridgit software
 - There may be a few seconds delay in transmission – this is normal

- If difficulties per firewalls:
e.g. slow reception/disconnection
 - use the back up PowerPoint Presentation posted on www.chnet-works.ca
(see step # 1 in access instructions)

3

How to post comments/questions during the Fireside Chat



Please introduce yourself!
Name
Organization
Location...
Group in Attendance?

Or... By email:
Respond to the 'access instructions email':
animateur@chnet-works.ca



4

Advisors on Tap:

Adullahel Hadi PhD

Institute of Population Health
University of Ottawa

and

Ronald Labonté PhD

Canada Research Chair, Globalization/Health Equity
Professor, Faculty of Medicine
Institute of Population Health, University of Ottawa



Housing and Health of Recent Immigrants in Canada

Abdullahel Hadi
Institute of Population Health
University of Ottawa

November 4, 2011



Focus

- Review the changes in Canadian housing policy
- Examine access to adequate and affordable housing
- Assess the effects of housing on health of recent immigrant
- Identify policy options to promote adequate and affordable housing for new immigrants.



Changes in Canadian housing policy

- First federal initiative
- Dominion Housing Act of 1935
- World War II and federal housing policy
- Supporting provincial authorities in housing
- Conflict and cooperation between the federal and provincial policies
- De-emphasizing social housing
- Re-emergence of a federal role in “Affordable Housing Supply”
- Towards creating a national housing strategy



Housing of recent immigrants

- Recent immigrants: basic facts
- Poverty and affordability
- Neighbourhood
- Homelessness



Recent immigrants: basic facts

- In 2008, a total of 519,722 people landed in Canada as permanent residents
- New immigrants generally move into temporary accommodation upon first arriving in Canada
- Recent immigrants are generally poorer compared to earlier immigrants and native-born Canadians.
- Poor living conditions, lack of privacy, safety and security are general features of their housing
- Most of the new immigrant were renters



Poverty and affordability

- Poor living conditions, lack of privacy and safety are general features of the housing of new immigrants.
- Most new immigrants spend more than 30% of their income for accommodation. Some pay 50% of their incomes as rent.
- They spend 6.3% more of their income for housing than Canadians although their average income is 18.9% less than them.
- Living in poor neighbourhood increases stress, restricts access to community support networks, and limits their employment opportunities.



Neighbourhood

- New immigrants have limited choice to select good neighbourhoods and avoid environments that lead to damaging physical and mental health.
- They generally move into temporary accommodation upon first arriving in Canada
- Most new immigrants tend to settle in neighbourhoods with inexpensive rental housing.
- They tend to live in close to ethnic clusters
- The majority (76%) tend to live in large cities like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.



Homelessness

- Nearly 150,000 (or about 0.5%) Canadians were homeless in 2005. Charity Intelligence (Ci) estimated a slightly higher (157,000) number of homeless people.
- Among recent immigrants, about 10% of home owners and 13% renters were at risk of being homeless as any event of losing work may lead them to become homeless.
- Recent immigrants opt for the cheapest accommodations available, share rents with others, and accept crowding to avoid ending up being exposed as homeless.
- Once homeless, new immigrants often experience finding a house difficult because of discrimination and financial insecurity.



Effects of housing on immigrants

- Inequity in housing
- Housing and immigrant health
- Affordable housing and health
- Cost effectiveness of housing investment



Inequity in housing

- Immigrants face serious discrimination in the housing market, if they are women, black or single with children.
- Compared to native-born Canadians, immigrant women experience an additional burden of discrimination in renting an accommodation particularly if they are single and have children.
- Existing housing provision has reinforced gender and class-based inequities in both housing and health.
- One in four homeless people living on streets in Canada is female. A large proportion of homeless women is not visible on the street to avoid the risks of sexual assault or losing their children to welfare agencies - if they have children.



Housing and immigrant health

- Recent immigrants with low incomes have experienced substantial housing deprivation that can have serious health implications.
- Resettlement stress among Canadian immigrants is associated with the re-activation of tuberculosis, diabetes and mental health while adjusting to a relatively unknown culture and very different environment.
- Although Canadian children generally experience better-housing compared to many developed countries, it has been estimated that nearly 15% of Canadian children are in 'core housing need'.
- Homelessness is a risk factor for illnesses.



Affordable housing and health

- An affordable housing increases the resources available for better food and health care that creates a space for overall improvement of health and quality of life.
- Affordable housing improves health and reduces safety hazards among the older people, including elderly migrants.
- Access to affordable housing for homeless not only reduces mental depression and environmental stress but also improves physical and mental health.
- Access to affordable housing provides a sense of security and confidence that helps new immigrants to interact with neighbours and to integrate in communities more easily.



Cost effectiveness of housing investment

- The costs of poor housing, including those of increased health care, lost productivity, and the impacts on education and social services, are far greater than the costs involved with providing adequate housing.
 - *One British study reported a seven-fold improvement of health status (in terms of reduced illness-days) by reducing overcrowding, damp conditions, infestations, risk of accidents at home, noise irritants, and better air quality over a four-year period.*



Policy implications



Strategy 1: Adopt housing services in immigrant settlement program

- The federal government should revisit the existing immigrant settlement policy and enact necessary amendments to include accommodation as a priority area. The settlement programs should begin at the point of entry of immigrants and provided assistance to find appropriate accommodation.



Strategy 2: Modify immigrant selection criteria to reduce hidden homelessness among immigrants

- Immigrant selection criteria should be routinely modified based on the projected opportunities in the job markets in Canada.



Strategy 3: Expand and diversify housing portfolio for the new immigrants

- To prevent poor housing conditions among new immigrants, we suggest to protect existing subsidized rental housing units for immigrants which are closer to job growth areas.
- Given that renting out the basement without a compliance certificate is an offence under the Ontario Planning Act, one way of increasing the stock of rental accommodation would be to temporarily allow renting basements with minor modification as low cost rental units.



Strategy 4: Promote culturally-appropriate and immigrant-friendly housing

- The cultural and religious backgrounds of new immigrants, differences in their lifestyle and housing needs should be adequately recognized and appreciated when addressing immigrant housing problems.



Thank you



Thanks for joining in!

www.chnet-works.ca

Contact animateur@chnet-works.ca for
information about partnering with
CHNET-Works!

A project of
Population Health Improvement Research Network
University of Ottawa