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## Occupational Skills and Labour Market Progression of Married Immigrant Women in Canada

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### Abstract

We use the confidential files of the 1991-2006 Canadian Census, combined with information from O\*NET on the skill requirements of jobs, to explore whether immigrant women behave as secondary workers, remaining marginally attached to the labour market and experiencing little career progression over time. Our results show that the current labour market patterns of female immigrants to Canada do not fit this profile, as previous studies found, but rather conform to patterns recently exhibited by married native women elsewhere, with rising participation and wage progression. At best, only relatively uneducated immigrant women in unskilled occupations may fit the profile of secondary workers, with slow skill mobility and low-status job-traps. Educated immigrant women, on the other hand, experience skill assimilation over time: a reduction in physical strength and an increase in analytical skills required in their jobs relative to those of natives.

**Key Words:** skill assimilation; family investment hypothesis; labour market outcomes of immigrant women, wage gaps, female labour force participation, Canadian migration

JEL: J01, J61, F22

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