

Immigrants' socio-cultural integration trajectories in Quebec

Introduction

The rapid growth of immigration flows in many Western societies, including Canada, contribute to a diverse cultural and ethnic population (Vertovec, 2007; Alba and Foner, 2014). This diversity is more pronounced than before due to increased immigration to address the problems of an aging population, and persistently low fertility rates (Coleman, 2008). For example, over the past three decades, the share of foreign-born people living in Canada has continuously increased to 21.9% in the 2016 Census (Statistics Canada, 2017). In addition to the volume of immigration flows in Canada as a whole, Quebec has also experienced an increase in immigration flows, and ethnocultural diversity, resulting from a shift in the origin of immigrants who increasingly come from developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Such ethnic diversity is seen as a threat and often fuels negative feelings towards immigrants. Recent studies have shown that systemic discrimination still affects racialized minorities, and immigrants in the province of Quebec (Le Gall & Meintel, 2015), and surveys have shown that Quebecers have fewer positive attitudes toward immigrants and ethnic marriages (Hamplová & Le Bourdais, 2010).

In recent years, Quebec has been the site of a collective exercise in reflection and major societal debate surrounding issues of immigration, accommodation, discrimination, cultural adaptation, diversity, and religious differences. Secularism was at the heart of two recent widely publicized and deeply controversial events: the Bouchard-Taylor Commission, or the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences created by the Liberal Party of Quebec and the Charter of Values, proposed by the Parti Québécois in 2013. Requests by members of ethnic and religious minorities for exemptions from the law have created tensions within society in the name of their religious beliefs and practices. They have undermined the project of social cohesion that Quebec has long defended (Le Moing, 2014). One of the main objectives of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission was to resolve these tensions. To do so, reflections and discussions focused on several confusing notions around the concept of reasonable accommodations, but also on the notions of non-discrimination, secularism, and freedom of religion, inclusion, and integration (Le Moing, 2014).

To ground this debate, it is important to have a better understanding of the social and cultural integration of different immigrant groups and generations in Quebec. The study of the socio-cultural integration of immigrants in Quebec, however, is severely limited by the availability of data. The existing studies have used census data that often include a limited number of indicators of social and cultural integration. Using Canadian census data, Bourgeois and Lardoux (2018), for example, estimated the fertility of mixed immigrant-native conjugal unions in Quebec and found fertility differentials depending on whether the spouses were both immigrants or natives, or one was native and the other immigrant. Finally, Adsera and Ferrer (2016) were able to compare fertility, marriage prevalence, cohabitation, and divorce of immigrants with natives from the Canadian censuses. The authors conclude that immigrant women have relatively fewer births in the two years prior to migration, but their fertility increases after one year in Canada.

In this article, we use data from the survey on individual trajectories and dynamics participation of immigrants, ethnocultural minorities, and the rest of the Quebec population (TRAJIPAQ¹) to examine the social and cultural integration of different immigrant groups (the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Asia, and Latin America). Specifically, we study the integration of immigrants in terms of their social participation, participation in cultural events such as a film festival, a movie, a music concert, an opera, theater, or comedy, and having practiced or listened to or read about one or more of the Quebec sports, in terms of religion, inter-ethnic marriage and identity to Quebec society. We also propose an analysis of the similarity between natives and immigrants along these same dimensions of socio-cultural integration.

Data and methods

1. Data

This study uses the survey data generated by the research project: *Individual trajectories and dynamics participation of immigrants, ethnocultural minorities, and the rest of the Quebec population* (TrajIPaQ). In 2020, this survey simultaneously collected retrospective pre-migration and post-migration (at the time of the survey) biographical data, including data related to marital history, fertility dynamics, labor market participation, participation in community organizations, identity-related to the sense of belonging, and cultural related to the frequentation of cultural places and the practice of certain sports.

2. Dependent and independent variables

The main socio-cultural integration variables examined in this article can be grouped under one of the following categories: (1) the couple or family where cultural accommodations and compromises are a necessity (family disposition), (2) the social entourage and the frequency of participation in a group activity or organization (social category), (3) immigrants' participation in cultural or sports events (cultural category) and subjective attitudes including the degree of identification with Quebec or the country of origin, religious attitudes (subjective category). Since we are interested in the different trajectories of socio-cultural integration, we study these indicators separately rather than constructing an overall indicator for all these dimensions. The main indicators of sociocultural integration selected are:

i. Family or couple disposition: Intermarriage.

ii. Social dimension:

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- Frequency of participation in group activities or organization (parents of students, solidarity or mutual aid, political party).

iii. Cultural dimension:

- The frequency with which immigrants attended cultural or artistic events, practiced, or listened to, or read about one or more of the following Quebec sports: hockey, snowmobiling, skating, skiing, soccer, baseball, soccer, golf during the past 6 months.

iv. Subjective dimension:

- Religious attitudes are measured by the importance given to religion and the feeling of belonging to Quebec.

The main independent variable is the immigrant group: Maghreb, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Asia, Caribbean, and Latin America. However, variables such as age, education, marital status, length of residence, and possession of a degree obtained in Quebec are used as controls in the regressions. Given the qualitative nature of the dependent variables, differences between immigrants and natives on various socio-cultural integration variables are estimated using logistic regression analysis. For each dependent variable of sociocultural integration, we estimate differences between natives and immigrants from different regions of origin. The regressions are estimated separately for men and women, providing an assessment of the gap between immigrant and native-born men and women for each of the sociocultural indicators. In all regression, the reference group is native.

Results

1. Distribution of the population by origin, residence status and gender.

Table 1 presents the distribution of the 1490 individuals surveyed by region of origin and by residence status and gender. The descriptive statistics show that most of the respondents came from the following regions: Europe and the US (42.79% for female and 40.98% for male), the Maghreb and Middle East (20.47% for female and 22.85% for male), Latin Americans and Caribbean (20.47% for female and 17.23% for male), sub-Saharan Africa (9.40% for female and 8.82% for male) and Asia (8.88% for female and 10.22% for male).

Table 1: Distribution (%) of the population by origin and by residence status and gender.

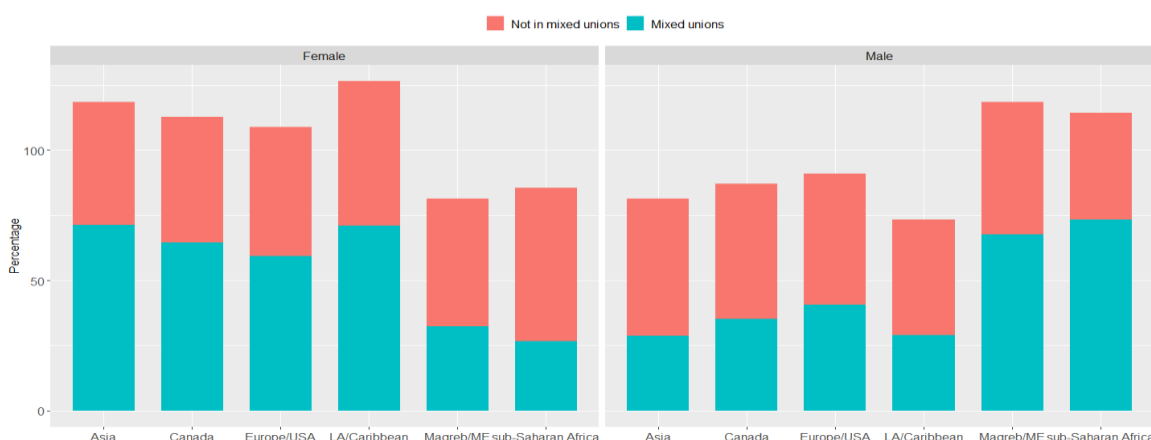
Country origin	Immigrants		Native	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Asia	6.88	10.22	-	-
Europe and US	42.79	40.98	-	-
Latin Americans and Caribbean	20.47	17.23	-	-
Maghreb and Middle East	20.47	22.85	-	-
sub-Saharan Africa	9.40	8.82	-	-
Canada	-	-	100	100
Total	100	100	100	100
Observations	596	499	249	146

Source: Data from the TrajIPaQ survey, 2020

1. Intermarriages

In this study, intermarriage is defined as the living partnership of an immigrant with a native Canadian. A marriage between a Greek and a Turk, for example, is not considered intermarriage. This restrictive definition assumes that intermarriage is supposed to indicate integration to the Quebec society. Figure 1 below shows that the proportion of intermarriage among women of Latin American and Caribbean (LA/Caribbean) origin is higher, followed by those of Asian, European, and American origin. On the other hand, among men, this proportion is higher among immigrants of Sub-Saharan African, North African, and Middle Eastern origin.

Figure 1: Distribution of mixed couples among immigrant groups

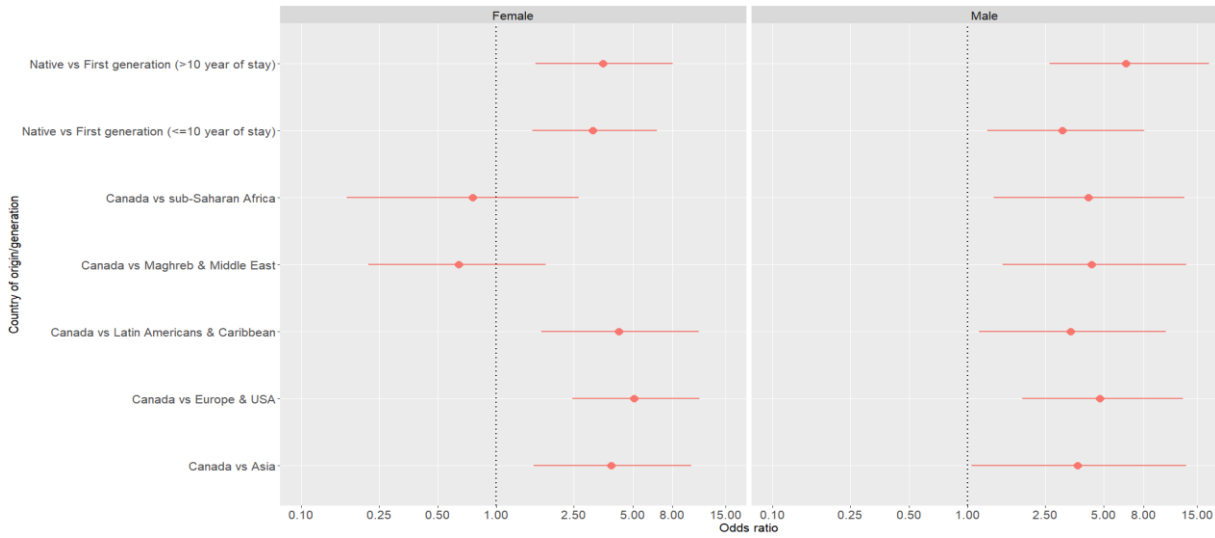


Source: Data from the TrajIPaQ survey, 2020

Figure 2 below confirms the intuition conveyed by the descriptive statistics in Figure 1. After controlling for variables such as age, education, marital status, birth cohort, place of residence, and possession of a Quebec degree, women of Latin American and Caribbean (LA/Caribbean) origin, followed by those of Asian, European, and U.S. origin, are about four times more likely than Canadian-born women to enter a mixed union. Immigrant men of various origins are also more likely to choose a Canadian

partner than their Canadian counterparts to choose an immigrant woman. It is also interesting to note that the odds ratio of being in a mixed union increases more among immigrant women and men with more than ten years of residence in Canada.

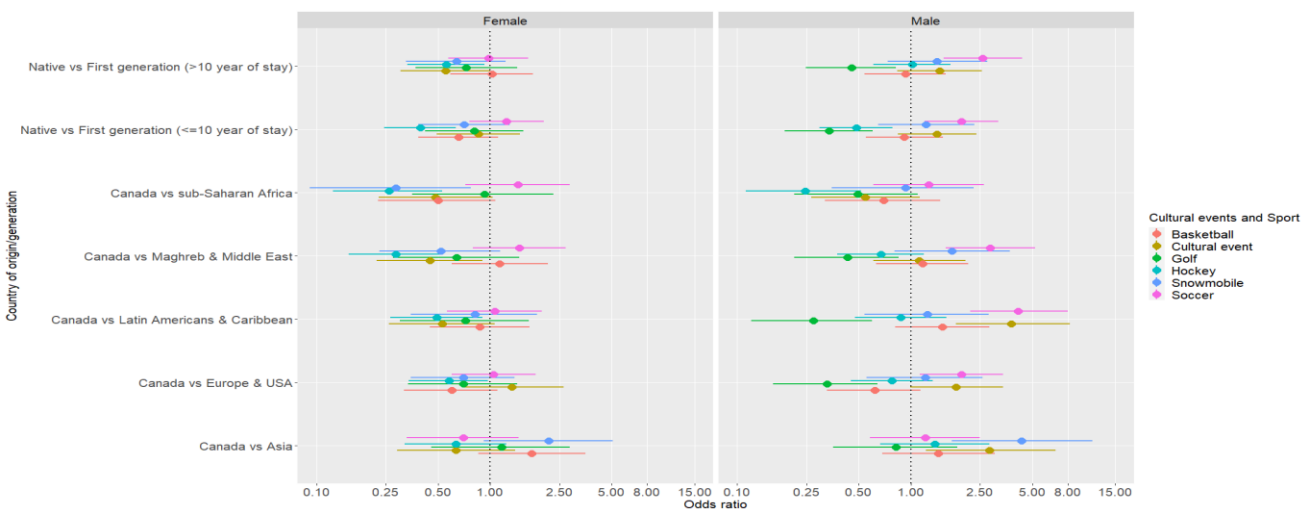
Figure 2: Odds ratios of being in a mixed union, by country of origin and generation of immigration by gender.



Source: Data from the TrajIPaQ survey, 2020.

Regression analyses show that among women, immigrants of North African and Middle Eastern origin are 55% less likely to participate in a cultural or artistic event than the Canadian-born in the six months before data collection. However, among men, immigrants of Asian origin and those from Latin America and the Caribbean are respectively 2.5 times and 3.78 times more likely to participate in a cultural event than Canadians. In terms of sports activities, golf and ice hockey are less popular among immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, and the Middle East than among Canadians. Regardless of gender, these same sports are also less practiced by immigrants who have resided in Quebec for less than ten years. Finally, Soccer is the sport most practiced by immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe.

Figure 3: Odds ratios of having attended cultural or artistic events and of having practiced or listened to or read about one or more of Quebec's sports, by country of origin and generation of immigration by gender.

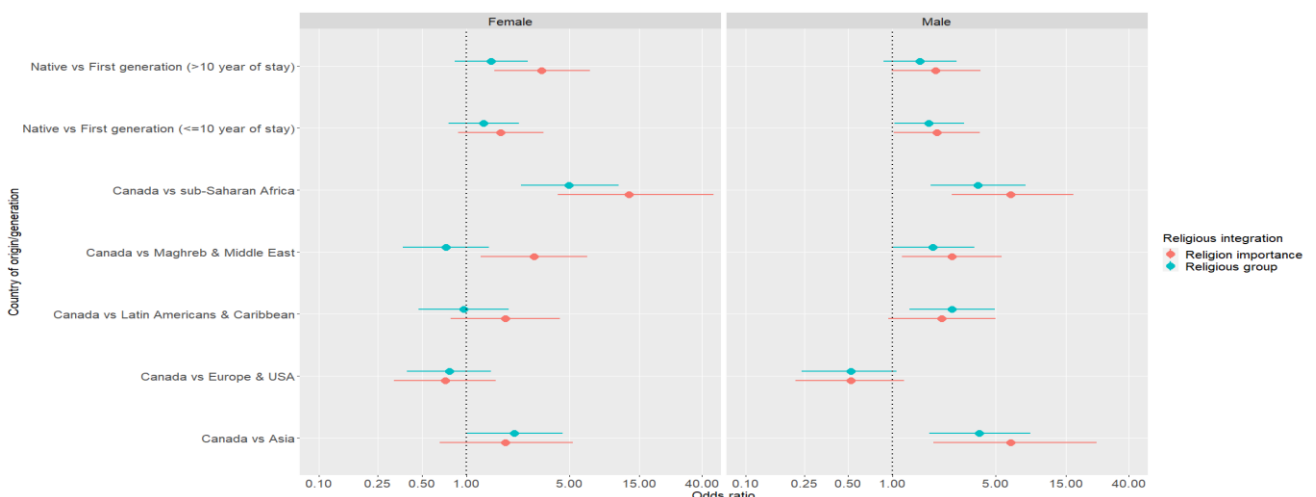


Source: Data from the TrajIPaQ survey, 2020.

2. Religious Attitudes

Figure 4 shows that, regardless of gender, immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia place more importance on religion and participate in religious group activities than natives. More frequent attendance at religious services could be explained by the fact that it is a social act that strengthens community cohesion.

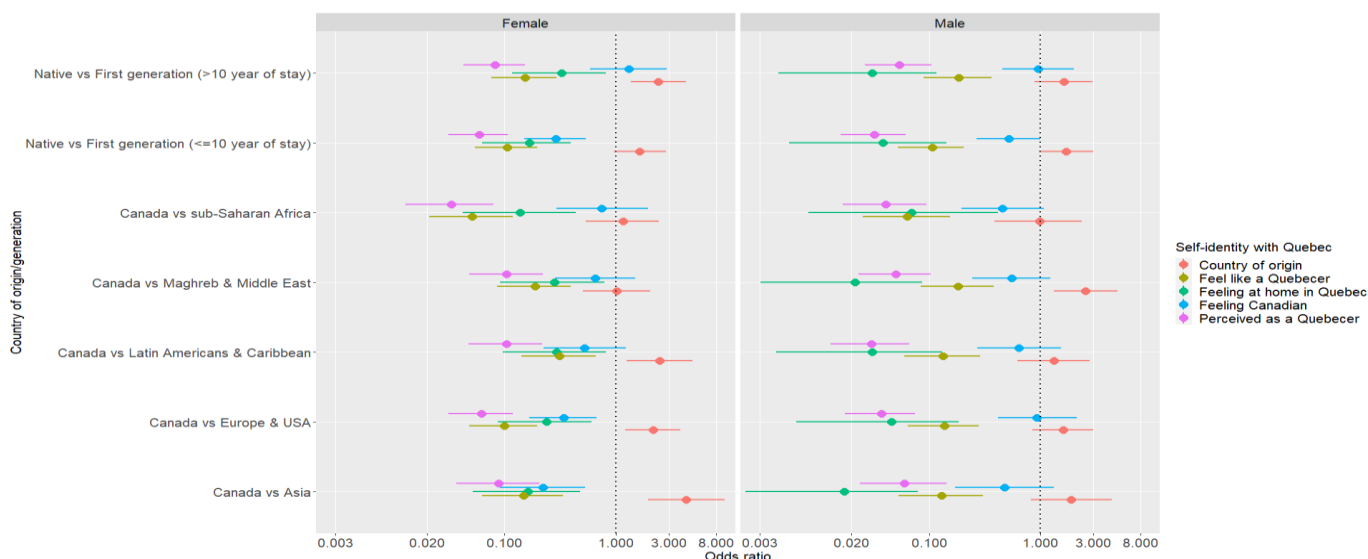
Figure 4: Odds ratios of placing more importance on religion and participating in religious group activities, by country of origin and immigration generation by gender.



5. Sense of belonging to Quebec society

Figure 5 documents the result of the feeling of belonging to Quebec society. The feeling of belonging is measured based on five variables: feeling at home in Quebec, being perceived as a Quebecer, feeling Quebecer, feeling Canadian or having a sense of belonging to one's country of birth. Results show that regardless of gender, immigrants from Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and the United States are less likely to report feeling or thinking like a Quebecer than the Canadian-born, even after controlling for age, education, marital status, birth cohort, place of residence, and possession of a Quebec degree. Among men, immigrants from North Africa and the Middle East identify more with their country of origin. On the other hand, among women, immigrants of Asian, European, and Latin American and Caribbean origin identify more with their country of origin.

Figure 5: Odds of declaring a sense of belonging to Quebec society, by origin country, generation of immigration, and gender.



Source: Data from the TrajIPaQ survey, 2020

Conclusion

This article compared the behaviors of different immigrant groups in Quebec with native-born Canadians across a broad range of indicators of socio-cultural integration. We examined intermarriage, sense of belonging to Quebec society, religiosity, and participation in cultural or artistic events, and several Quebec sports. We find substantial heterogeneity among immigrant groups, but also evidence that in some dimensions, there is a faster process of socio-cultural integration among certain immigrant groups. For example, women of Latin American and Caribbean, and Asian origin, from Europe and the United States, enter quickly into a mixed union. Similarly, immigrant men of various origins are also more likely to enter a mixed union. Length of residence in Quebec favors entry into mixed unions among immigrants. The level of integration is faster for religion among immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. However, the level of integration is much slower for the practice of several Quebec sports except Soccer, especially among immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe. For participation in cultural and artistic events, immigrants of Asian origin and those from Latin America and the Caribbean are more likely to participate in these events than Canadians and other immigrant groups. This study provides empirical evidence that the process of socio-cultural integration does occur among some immigrant groups than others in Quebec.

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