Familial consequences of the Covid-19 in Québec: Comparison between immigrants and natives

Introduction

Like the rest of Canada, Quebec has experienced a substantial increase in its immigration in recent years. The immigrant population in the province thus increased from 8% in the 1990s to 13.7% of the population, or 1.2 million individuals in 2016 (Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2020). This immigration is also unique in that it has become widely diversified with more and more people coming from developing countries, and for whom integration into their new society may be more difficult. The coronavirus pandemic brings a new challenge for these immigrant populations, directly or indirectly through the tensions between the ethnic groups that it helps to generate (Coates, 2020). It is therefore necessary to understand how this pandemic affects these immigrant populations differently and the native populations in Quebec.

The coronavirus pandemic has affected nearly 100,000 people in Quebec and has resulted in more than 6,000 deaths. This makes it the worst affected province in Canada and one of the worst affected regions in the world. Although the majority of these deaths took place in homes for the elderly, and therefore affected this segment of the population more, its overall influence on individuals is not to be overlooked. In fact, in addition to the direct consequences of the pandemic, the measures taken by various governments around the world are also not without consequences on families. Several studies have thus shown excess mortality in ethnocultural minority populations Bertocchi et al. 2020), higher unemployment, greater loss of income and negative consequences for children and families in several countries.

This differentiated effect can be explained in different ways. On the one hand, in terms of the direct consequences of the pandemic, the situation of precariousness and greater poverty among immigrants exposes them more to the more harmful consequences of the disease on their state of health. Likewise, immigrants often work in jobs where social distancing is difficult to enforce. On the other hand, indirectly, the solutions to the crisis affect immigrants and natives differently. The complete shutdown of the company with its set of adjustments has greatly impeded the employability of immigrants, especially newcomers who have not yet grasped the workings of society and who cannot benefit from state subsidies. But, it is also shown that these effects are not uniform on the whole of the immigrant population, itself, very diverse.

Faced with the pandemic, the governments of Canada and Quebec have implemented a number of measures to reduce the impact of the pandemic. These policies can be broken down at two levels, direct support to families, including the Canadian Emergency Benefit, which can provide employees and self-employed workers affected by Covid-19 with a financial benefit of up to $ 2,000. On the other hand, the government supports many companies to keep their employees or supports them directly when the revenues from their activities have fallen considerably. While these measures allow families to cope better with the crisis, the fact remains that the changes brought about by this crisis can affect other dimensions of life. How these measures make a difference in the face of the pandemic remains to be seen.

This study mainly aims to understand the family consequences of the pandemic on immigrant and native Quebec populations. Therefore, we will seek to analyse in what ways its consequences differ according to the region of origin of immigrants, length of residence, age and sex.

Data

The data for this study come from an original collection of biographical data on immigrants and the native population of Quebec to analyse their participation in Quebec society in various fields (social, economic, cultural, etc.). The immigrant population is limited to recent immigration that has taken place over the past 15 years. This survey has several components that retrace the life course of individuals over a long period of time. The pandemic component uses a reduced version of the harmonized questionnaire on exposure and the impact of Covid19 on the family (CEFIS). The questions are divided into three parts, on

exposure to the disease, its impact and the policies put in place by both the federal and provincial governments. The other parts of the questionnaire focus on the characteristics of the respondents, their immigration history, their educational and family background. In short, it is a detailed questionnaire that covers the life of immigrants from birth and especially over the past 15 years.
The data collection lasted three months, from August to November 2020. In total, 1,500 people were surveyed, including around 1,000 immigrants and 500 natives throughout Quebec.

Dependent variables

We distinguish three groups of dependent variables:

1. **Disease exposure variables**: these are measured by eight questions that seek to document whether the individual through work or a family member may have been exposed to the disease. For example, it is asked if a family member has had symptoms of the disease, or if a member has been hospitalized due to the contraction of the disease.
2. **Variables on the family consequences of the disease**: several questions are asked to measure, on the one hand, the impact on the well – being of individuals and their families. For example, respondents are asked if their family income has fallen, if they have had difficulty obtaining food, or if the relationship within the family has deteriorated because of the disease.
3. **Variables on government assistance**: Finally, government support is measured by the following two questions:

- Did you receive temporary assistance for workers from the Government of Quebec (PATT)?
- Have you received the Canadian Federal Government Emergency Benefit (CEP)?

Main independent variable

The main independent variable is immigrant status coupled with visible minority status. This variable takes the following modalities: 1 if the respondent is a non-racialized native, 2 if he is a non-racialized immigrant, 3 if he is a racialized immigrant, and 4 if the respondent is a racialized native or an immigrant who has not answered the visible minority question. The other variables in the analysis are: age, sex, length of residence, minority status, size of social network.

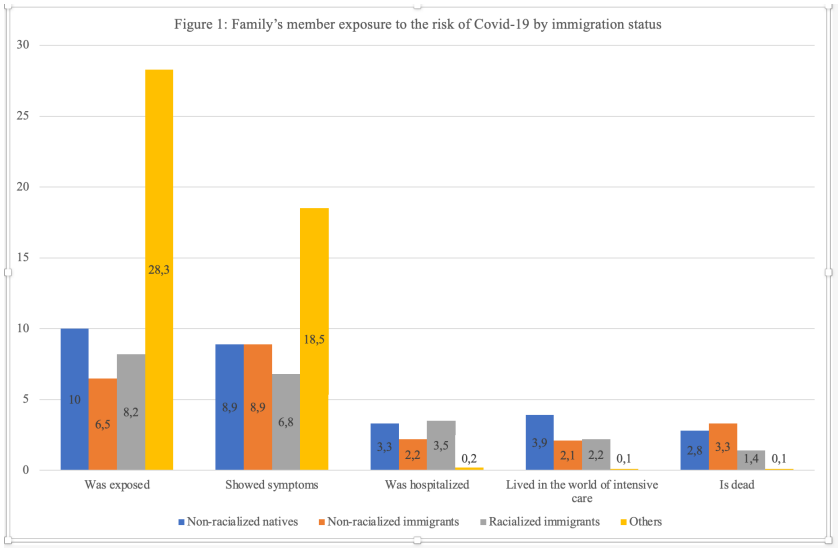
Analysis methods

We will use two main methods of analysis, a descriptive method and an explanatory method. In the descriptive method, we consider each of the independent variables in isolation and describe how they vary depending on the main independent variable. This analysis will thus allow us to see specifically which variable presents the most differentiation between natives and immigrants. We thus retain a variable from each dimension on which we carry out a more in-depth analysis through logistic modelling. Thus, by controlling for the other explanatory variables, we determine the effect of immigrant status on exposure to the pandemic (model 1), on the consequences of the disease (model 2) and on the fact of benefiting or not. government benefits (model 3). In a second series of modelling, we use the set of questions from each group of the dependent variable to create an index using the principal component analysis. Then we re-estimate the three previous models on each of the indexes.

To be able to benefit from government benefits, one must meet a number of conditions, including the loss of job due to Covid-19. As a result, the beneficiaries are not the general population but those who have lost their jobs and this may itself be due to immigrant status. Thus, for model 3, we will use Heckman's models by first estimating the fact of having lost or not a job and then, the fact of receiving or not the government benefit.

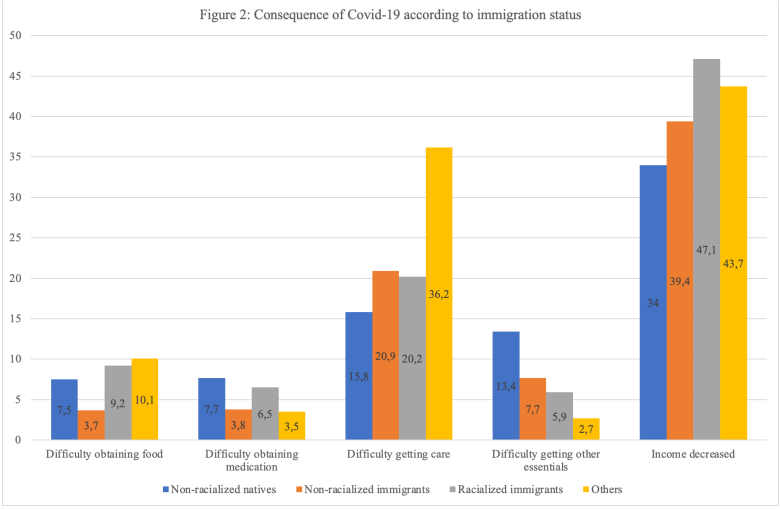
Preliminary results

- ***Exposure according to migration status***

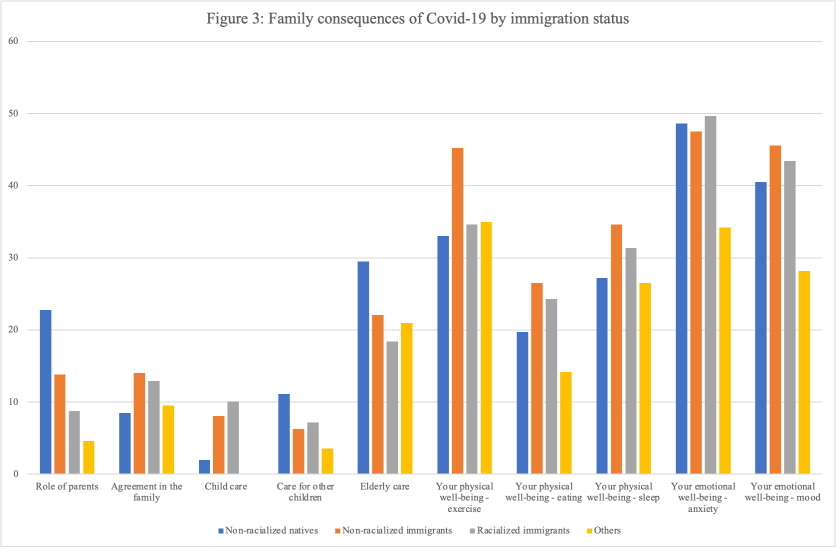


The results show greater exposure in the majority population than in the immigrant population. On the other hand, the consequences are greater on the immigrant population and especially racialized (Figure 2 and 3). Thus, it emerges that one in two racialized immigrants believes that their income has decreased compared to one third of non-racialized natives.

- ***Consequences according to migration status***



- ***Family consequences according to migration status***



Conclusion

The preliminary results of this study show that the consequences of the pandemic on the Quebec population differ according to the population groups, but also according to the type of consequences. We will continue this work by well regrouping the different consequences and also to compute the index of each dimension. We will then run the regression model to assess if the effects observed here remain after controlling for the other covariates.

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