



# **An examination of the working conditions and risk factors for work-related injuries among immigrant workers in Canada**

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## Main Research Questions

### **Comparing Immigrants to the Canadian-born population**

1. What are the labour market experiences of immigrants to Canada outside of income – specifically those related to occupational health and safety risks?
2. Are immigrants more likely to sustain work-related injuries?



## Background

The profile of immigrants to Canada has changed

- Higher levels of education/skills
- Different source countries
- Lower proficiency in English/French

Most research on immigrants early labour market experiences are based on income



## For each of these studies

### **Main measure of immigrant status:**

**Length of time in Canada:** 5yrs or less, 6 to 10 yrs, 11 to 20 yrs, 21+ yrs, Canadian-born

### **Other measures associated with immigrant status**

**Visible Minority:** Respondents who identified they belonged to one of the following cultural, ethnic or racial groups: Black, South Asian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, South East Asian, Filipino, Oceanic, West Asian & North African, Latin American.

**Mother tongue:** First language learnt and still understood (English, French, and other)

**Highest degree from Canada (SLID only):** Age when highest degree completed versus age at immigration



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# **The unequal distribution of occupational health and safety risks among immigrants to Canada compared to Canadian-born labour market participants. 1993 to 2005**



## Occupational health and safety risks among immigrants

Little research has examined occupational health and safety risks among immigrants to Canada compared to Canadian-born workers

Occupational health and safety risks may be particularly problematic for immigrants given:

- Lack of proficiency in English
- Different expectations about occupational health and safety protections



## The Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics

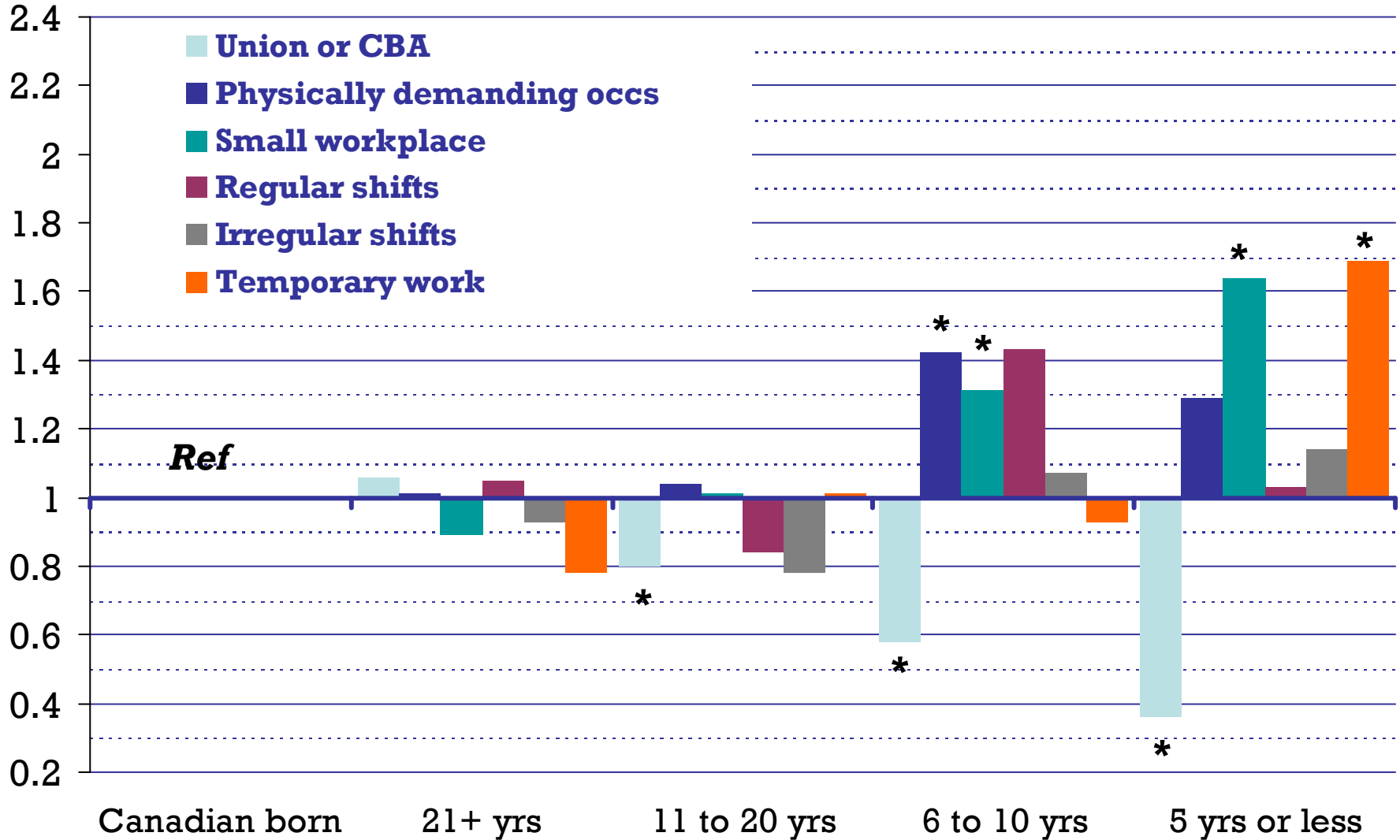
- Annual survey initiated in 1993 by Statistics Canada
- Longitudinal and cross-sectional components
- We used five non-overlapping samples (1993, 1996, 1999, 2002 and 2005)
- Sample is respondents aged 25 to 64 who completed the labour force interview in January and had worked (non-self-employed) in the previous 12 months (N = 56,250)
- Examined six labour market experiences related to the occupational health and safety risks



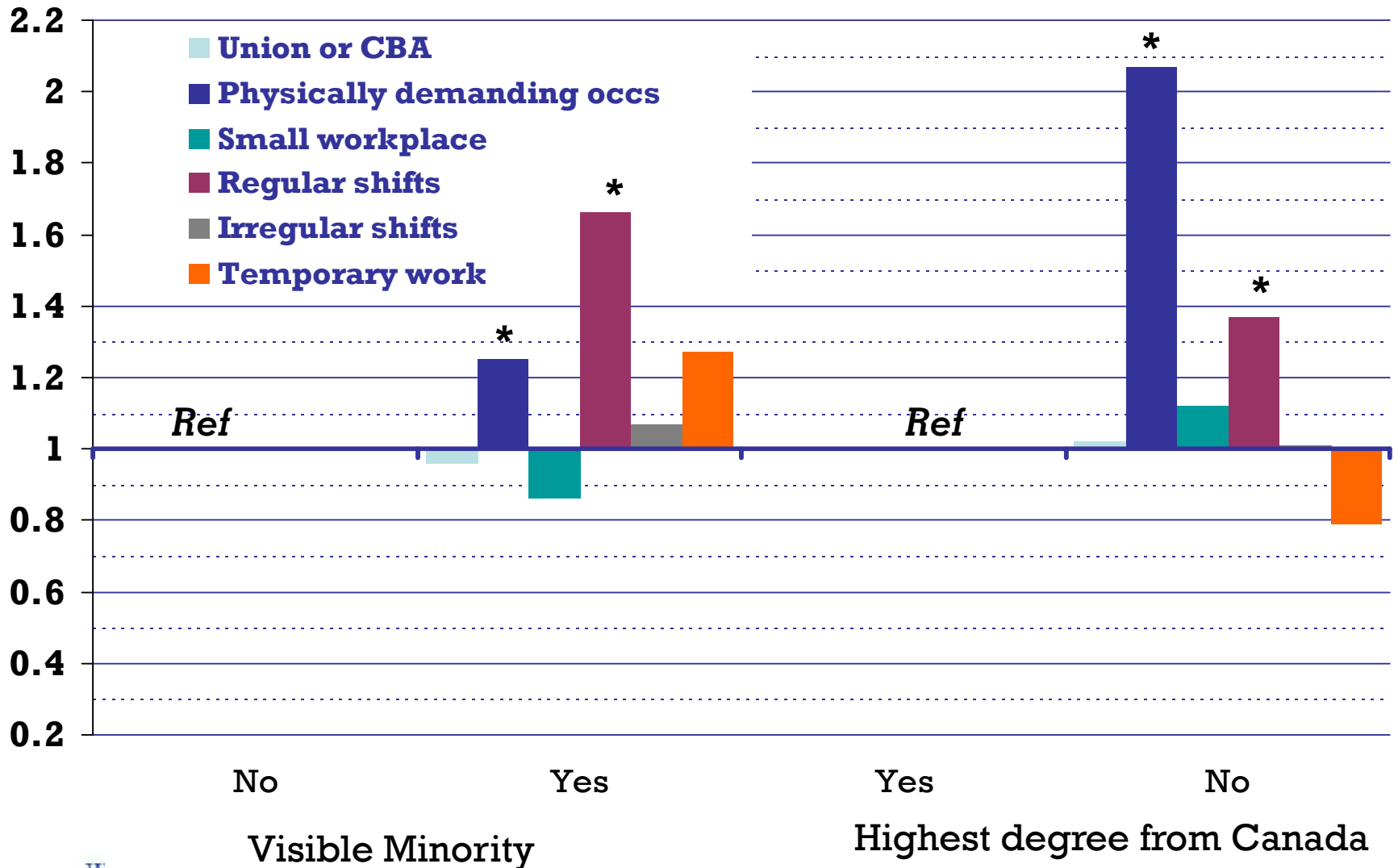
## Main outcomes

1. Membership in a union or collective bargaining agreement (reduced risk)
2. Employment in a physically demanding occupation (increased risk)
3. Employment in a small workplace (increased risk)
4. Regular shift work (increased risk)
5. Irregular shift work (increased risk)
6. Non-permanent employment (increased risk)

# Adjusted odds for various occupational health and safety risks by length of time in Canada (N = 56,250)



# Adjusted odds for various occupational health and safety risks by visible minority status and location of highest education (N = 56,250)





## Key Points

- Recent immigrants (up to 10 years in Canada) were more likely to work in physically demanding occupations and small workplaces. Those in Canada less than five years also were more likely to be in temporary jobs.
- Immigrants who had been in Canada up to 20 years were less likely than Canadian-born residents to be members of a union.
- Visible minority status and not having a degree from Canada was associated with working in physically demanding occupations and regular shift work



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# **Comparing the risk of work-related injuries between immigrant and Canadian-born labour market participants**



## Work injury among immigrants in Canada

Immigrants are exposed to numerous occupational health and safety risks at work

No information on immigration status is collected by workers' compensation boards in Canada

Majority of studies examining occupational health and safety among immigrants use U.S. population samples

Very little evidence from Canada. Mostly, using visible minority status



## The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS)

Canadian Community Health Survey collects information on  
*“Injuries that limited normal activities in the last 12-months”*

Those who respond yes are further asked if injury was work-related and if it required medical attention.

CCHS 2003 & 2005 (N = 97,067)

2,859 immigrants 5 yrs or less

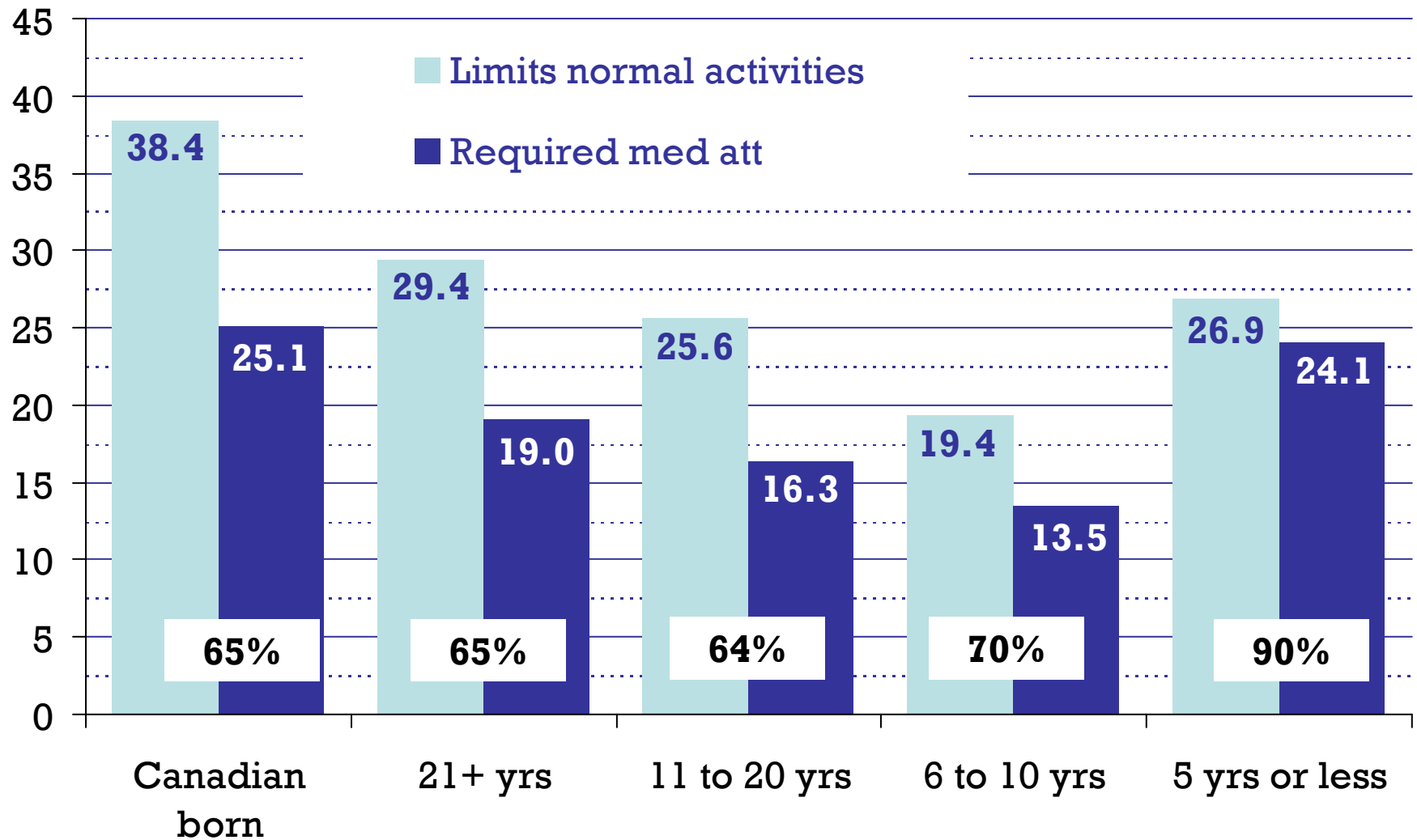
3,013 immigrants 6 to 10 yrs

4,972 immigrants 11 to 20 yrs

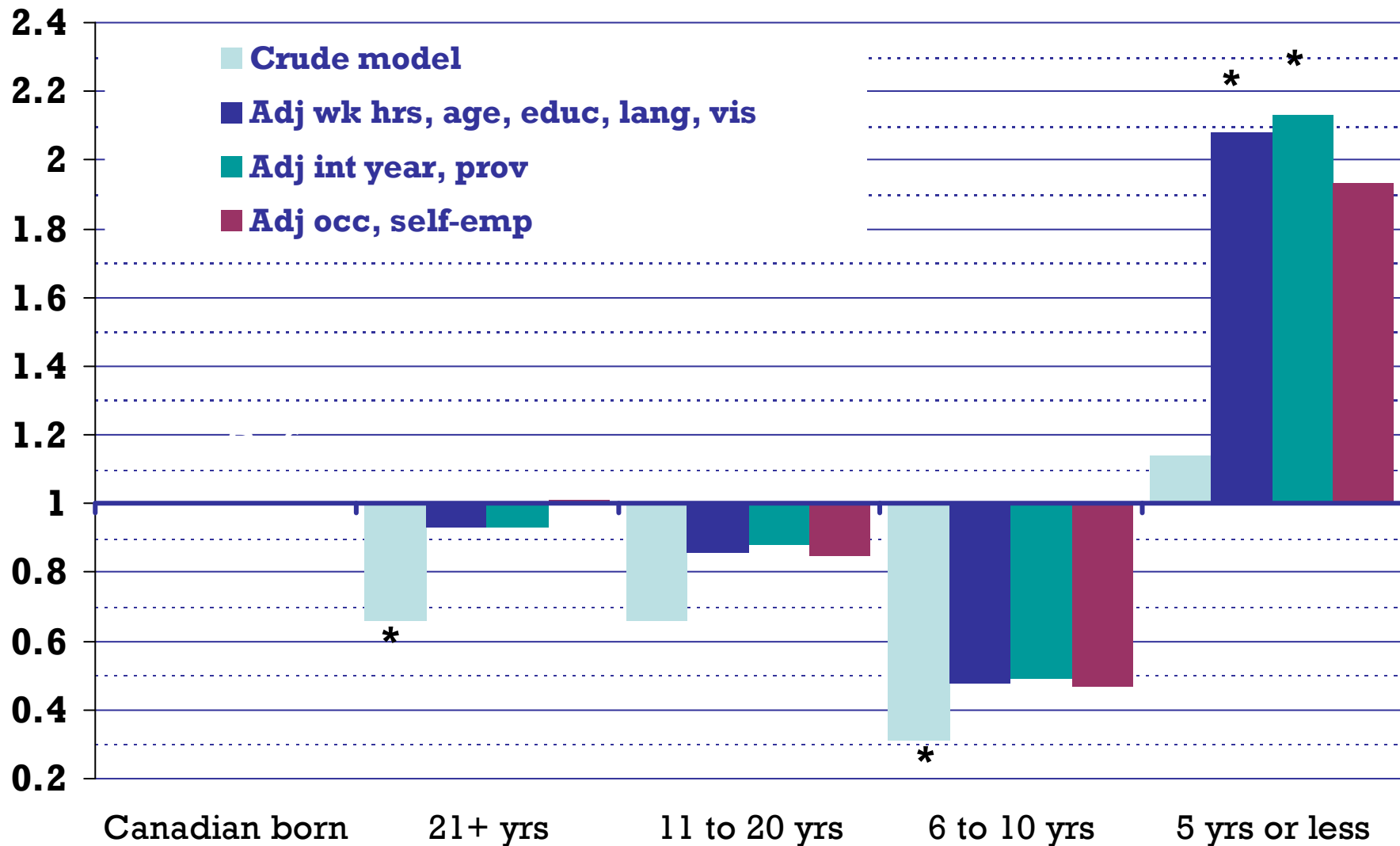
8,401 immigrants 21+ yrs

77,823 Canadian-born

# Injury rate per 1,000 persons by length of time in Canada. CCHS 2003 and 2005 files (N = 97,067)



# Odds of work injuries requiring medical attention by length of time in Canada. Men only (N = 51,551)





## Activity limitations versus medical attention

Questions on work-relatedness and medical attention are only asked from respondents with “activity limiting” injuries

- Immigrants may continue to work after injury (therefore not reporting activity limitations)
- Immigrants may define “activity limitations” different to Canadian-born respondents

Immigrants might also sustain injuries that are more severe, and thus more likely to receive medical attention?



## Key Points

The risk of serious work-related injury is twice as high for recently landed immigrant men, compared to Canadian-born men.

- The true risk of work-related injuries may be even higher
- More work is needed to assess when a work injury has occurred
- Need to understand why risk changes between 6 and 10 years after arrival.
- Need to understand why no risk is present among women (weaker labour market attachment?)



## Overall Summary

- Immigrants to Canada are exposed to numerous occupational health and safety risks
- Immigrant men are at higher risk of work-injuries that require medical attention (although true risk may be higher)



## Policy Recommendations

1. Resources need to be targeted at accurately estimating the number of work injuries that require health care among immigrants, compared to the Canadian-born population
2. Given the number of occupational health and safety risks that immigrants are exposed to, resources need to be devoted to the developing and translating tool(s) that will increase the knowledge of immigrants about their workplace rights, occupational health & safety, and workers' compensation – ideally before immigrants start work



## Other studies completed to date

1. Are immigrants less likely to receive compensation after work-related absences than Canadian-born workers
2. Among a cohort of immigrants, are there particular groups of immigrants who are more likely to end up in jobs which have higher physical demands than the jobs they worked in before arriving in Canada?



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