

# **Does the Healthy Immigrant Effect Disappear? Examining the Serbian Community in Toronto**

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A large body of research has described the healthy immigrant effect – the phenomenon that immigrants are healthier than the native-born population in terms of chronic disease, self-assessed health, obesity, and mortality levels. However, much of this research has also pointed to the fact that with extended residence, immigrant health status declines and sometimes, converges to that of the Canadian-born population. Despite this growing body of work, qualitative studies examining this phenomenon in a specific ethnic community have yet to be presented. To fill this research gap, this paper reports on the results of 15 in-depth interviews with long-term Serbian immigrant women in Toronto, to explore their health status after extended residence in Canada. Of the women interviewed, 14 reported good health despite 11 to 22 years of residence in Canada. They also reported healthy lifestyle behaviours, access to a culturally appropriate physician, as well as close ties and social support from the Serbian community in Toronto. The results underscore the importance of qualitative research on specific immigrant ethnic groups in Canada to really drill deeply into individual perceptions of health and wellbeing.