

# **POLICY BRIEF: Culturally-tailored community-based education on reducing cancer risk increased immigrant women’s physical activity knowledge, confidence and behaviour**

## **PROBLEM**

Physical activity (PA) can reduce the risk of 13 different types of cancer. However, immigrant women in Canada face many barriers to engaging PA, and have lower rates of PA than immigrant men or non-immigrants which increases their risk of cancer. Many immigrant women lack access to primary care or avoid it due to poor healthcare experiences.

## **NEED**

Approaches outside of primary care are needed to inform immigrant women of the importance of PA in reducing cancer risk.

- Research shows that community-based approaches are the best way to reach immigrants
- A few studies found that immigrant women appreciate accessing health promotion in local, familiar, trusted community agencies such as places of worship or immigrant settlement services because they are culturally safe
- Immigrant settlement agencies are common in urban and rural areas across Canada, and many already offer health promotion programs and services

## **STRATEGY**

An education session of the following design delivered by community agencies achieved outcomes.

Design	Features
Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education session: Benefits of PA, PA recommendations (amount, types, examples), how to overcome barriers of PA, and additional ways to reduce cancer risk (e.g. use sunscreen, avoid smoking)</li> <li>- Pre-session handout: Slides translated to multiple languages</li> <li>- Post-session handout: Links to tools that support PA, and information about cancer prevention and screening</li> </ul>
Personnel	External expert (e.g. kinesiologist) of similar ethno-cultural group as participants + agency staff
Format and delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Education session: Didactic lecture supported by slides + interactive discussion delivered in person at the agency or virtually</li> <li>- Handouts: Shared in-person in print or emailed</li> </ul>
Timing	Single one-hour session
Cultural tailoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use participants’ first language or translate materials</li> <li>- Use plain/lay and culturally-familiar language</li> <li>- Involve presenters of the same ethno-cultural group</li> <li>- Include social interaction during sessions</li> <li>- Respect cultural norms (eg. avoid discussing body parts)</li> <li>- Suggest culturally-relevant PA options</li> </ul>

## ANALYSIS

- 53 ethno-culturally diverse immigrant women took part in education sessions offered by six agencies across Canada
- Compared with before the education sessions, women's knowledge about PA, confidence to undertake PA and actual PA increased at both one and six months after the sessions
- PA knowledge, confidence and actual PA were greater among women who took part in education sessions compared with 41 immigrant women of similar age, ethno-cultural group and years in Canada recruited via nine agencies across Canada who did not
- Women who took part in education sessions were highly satisfied with session design and recommended offering such education widely to benefit more women

## IMPLICATIONS

Some limitations should be considered: despite positive results, the sample size was small, so future research should confirm these findings; and participating women could understand English language, which may correlate with higher socioeconomic status, possibly contributing to positive results. However, this study shows that health promotion to immigrant women via community agencies could address gaps in over-burdened, under-resourced healthcare systems; and help equity-deserving women to prevent or manage disease; build and expand social networks; interface and self-advocate with the mainstream healthcare system; and optimize health and wellness.