

New workplaces can be both exciting, daunting for immigrants

BY UMME SAIKA KABIR

AS AN immigrant living and working in Canada, I am intimately aware of the unique challenges newcomers face when joining the workforce. My name is Umme Kabir and as a PhD student, I am involved in the Northwestern Ontario Workplace and Worker Health Study (NOWWHS). This study is conducted by the Enhancing the Prevention of Injury and Disability at Work (EPID@Work) research institute at Lakehead University, and it aims to explore the complex interplay between workplace factors and the mental and physical health of workers in this region.

Since its launch in September 2023, NOWWHS has been gathering data to understand how workplace conditions affect worker health over time. My specific focus within this study is on immigrant workers. Under the guidance of EPID director and senior scientist Vicki Kristman, my research will examine the mental health challenges faced by immigrant workers in Northwestern Ontario, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Navigating the nuances of a new work environment can be both exciting and daunting for immigrants like myself. Challenges such as cultural adaptation, language barriers, and balancing work demands can significantly impact mental well-being. It is essential to address these challenges to foster



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The Thunder Bay Anti-Racism and Equity Advisory Committee and Diversity Thunder Bay produce this monthly column to promote greater understanding of race relations in Northwestern Ontario

a supportive and inclusive work environment that promotes the mental health of immigrant workers.

As part of the NOWWHS, I am collecting a wide range of information through our survey. We ask about workplace demographics, mental and physical health indicators, workplace factors like leadership and job demands, as well as personal factors such as stress levels and social support networks. With a target sample size of at least 6,000 participants and a long-term goal, we are hopeful that this study will become a powerful tool for change.

Collaboration with community organizations, local businesses and individual workers is integral to the success of our study. Together, we hope to better understand the landscape of mental and physical health in workplaces across Northwestern Ontario.

If you are an immigrant in Northwestern Ontario, whether you arrived recently or have been here for years, I encourage you to participate in this study. Likewise, we welcome participation from all workplaces in the region, regardless of your industry or workforce demographics. Your involvement will contribute to a better understanding of workplace health and help shape future interventions.

Join us in making workplaces in Northwestern Ontario healthier and more supportive for everyone. Together, we can make a meaningful impact on the well-being of immigrant workers and the broader workforce community. For more information on the NOWWHS or to take our survey today, visit www.workinghealth.ca or contact workinghealth@lakeheadu.ca.

Umme Saika Kabir is a PhD student at Lakehead University in Canada, specializing in health sciences. Originally from Bangladesh, Umme embarked on the journey to Canada to advance her academic and professional career. As an immigrant, Umme balanced rigorous academic demands with the complexities of settling in a new country. Her research on the workplace mental health of immigrant workers aims to contribute meaningful insights and solutions to the field, reflecting her dedication and passion. The views and opinions expressed in this column are those of the author.