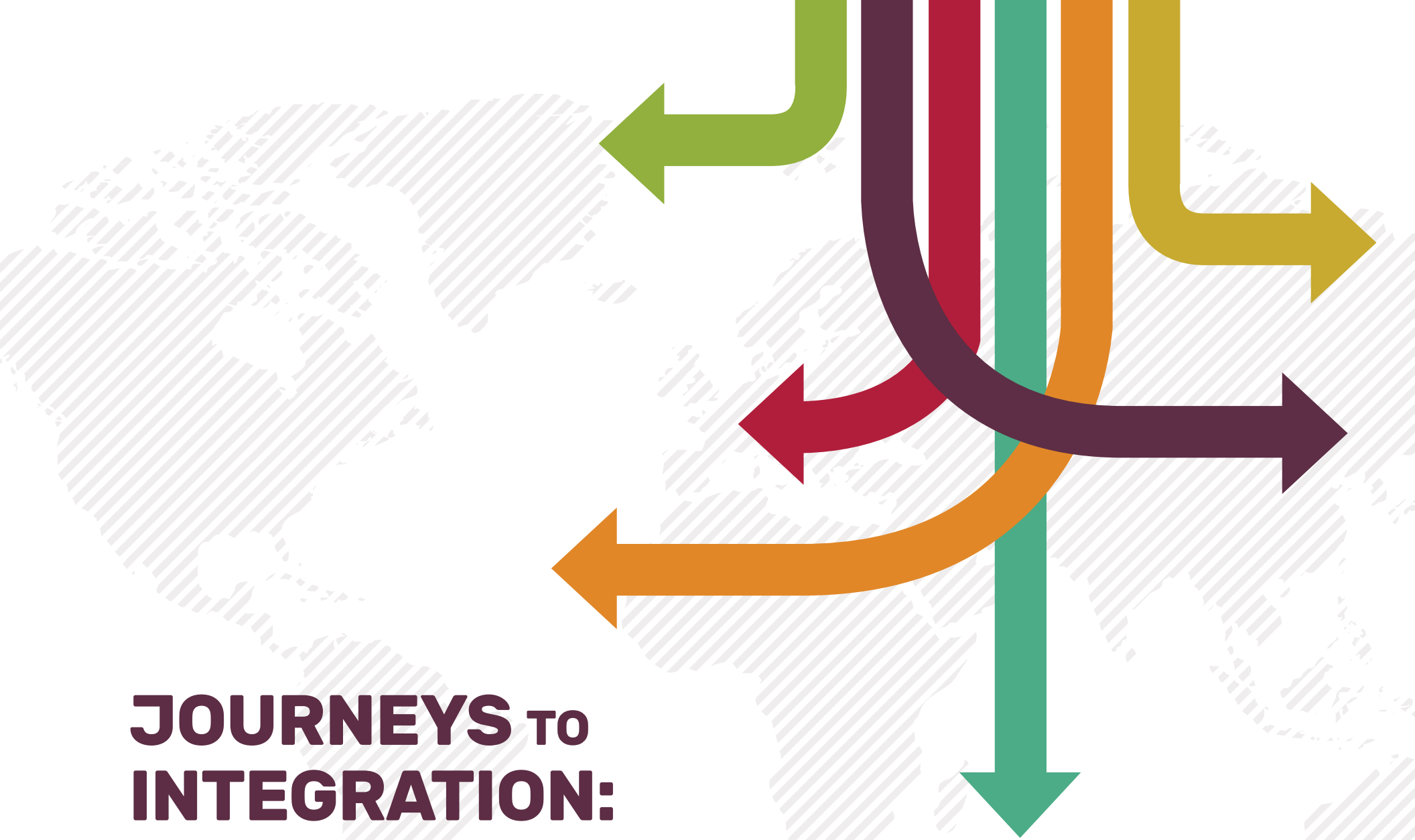


JOURNEYS TO INTEGRATION:

Government-Assisted Refugees in BC

(JANUARY 2007-DECEMBER 2016)

ISSofBC Kathy Sherrell (PhD) and Grace Newton (MA) FEBRUARY 2020

Acknowledgements

Our heartfelt gratitude is extended to the government-assisted refugees who shared their experiences, stories, and insights. Without you, this work could not have been accomplished.

Thank you to IRCC for funding this research, to our Advisory Committee for their insights and guidance, and to our research assistants and interpreters who made the research happen.

— **CHRIS FRIESEN**, Director – Settlement Services

— **KATHY SHERRELL**, Associate Director – Settlement Services

Contents

List of Abbreviations

BC	British Columbia
BVOR	Blended visa office referred refugee
GARs	Government-assisted refugees
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
ISS*of*BC	Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia
IRPA	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
LGBTQ2S+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, two-spirit
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
OSR	Operation Syrian Refugees
PSRs	Privately sponsored refugees
RAP	Resettlement Assistance Program
UBC	University of British Columbia
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Executive Summary

This report focuses on the integration experiences of government-assisted refugees (GARs) who settled in British Columbia between January 2007 and December 2016. After briefly summarizing literature on the development of integration as a concept and previous studies undertaken in the Canadian context, we present the results of mixed-method fieldwork completed from January through September 2019.

Funding for this research was provided to Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS*of*BC) by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) through the Service Delivery Improvement call for proposals.

Two separate but related questions guide this research:

1. How is this cohort of post-IRPA GARs faring in relation to economic and social indicators?
2. How do post-IRPA GARs themselves define integration?

METHODOLOGY

We conducted this research to better understand the social and economic integration of refugees—including how refugees themselves define integration—through a multi-method approach consisting of an online survey available in 9 languages, individual semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. Our research project was guided by an advisory committee consisting of leading migration-related academics, representatives from Federal, Provincial and Municipal Governments, and immigrant serving sector colleagues. Our potential target group included all post-IRPA GARs who were 14 and older at the time of their arrival and who were destined for British Columbia between January 2007 and December 2016 (n – 6,045). Attempts were made to reach all targeted post-IRPA GARs through targeted and broad-based recruitment strategies. Our use of multiple methods was critical to ensuring we did not exclude any individuals by using a particular method (e.g., digital literacy, materials not translated into their language). Using individual interviews allowed us to delve deeper into key themes than could be obtained through the survey alone. The results draw upon information obtained from 405 online survey respondents, 50 qualitative, semi-structured interviews, and four focus groups (n – 20 participants). Survey responses represent approximately 4.5% of post-IRPA GARs destined for BC during this period, and 6.7% of those age 14 and older.

RESULTS

Demographics

- Respondents were slightly more likely to be male (52%) and age 24 to 34 (30%). Fifty-nine percent were married, and 67% had one or more children.

- Twenty-eight countries of origin were represented; the top three were Iran (29%), Afghanistan (22%), and Iraq (12%). Top languages were Arabic (22%), Dari (17%), Farsi (14%), and Persian (11%).
- Level of education ranged from those with no formal education (12%) to others with advanced degrees (5%); 60% reported education levels below secondary school completion.
- Almost half spent fewer than five years outside their country of origin, while 24% spent 15 years or more. Twenty-two percent had lived in refugee camps before resettling to Canada.

Aspects of integration

Following a review of the literature, this research largely draws upon Ager and Strang's (2008) model of integration to frame key findings. Their model envisions integration as a function of four broad indicators, as follows:

1. Achievement in and access to employment, housing, education, and health services
    - Employment
        - Among survey respondents, 59% reported being employed (n – 326). Reasons for not being employed (n – 130) included disability and health (30%), family responsibilities (22%), senior/retired or cannot find employment (12% each), language proficiency, currently a student (8%), and other (8%). Twenty-six percent of respondents who are employed (n – 115) indicated employment status as self-employed. The majority of those employed were working full-time (55%). Almost three-quarters who were working reported being employed in entry-level jobs (42%) or technical and skilled trades (31%). English language ability was positively associated with employment outcomes. Employed survey respondents reported a higher level of English on arrival, as well as a greater improvement in the intervening period. The direction of this relationship, however, is unclear. While interactions in the workplace may allow refugees to practise their English, refugees who are actively working to improve their communication skills may be more likely to secure and maintain employment.
        - Paid work was cited as the most significant source of income, accounting for 59% of primary (n – 321) and 50% of secondary (n – 226) sources of income. Forty-three percent of respondents said they lived in households where paid work is the sole source of income; 20% of households depended solely on government transfers. Time of arrival and language proficiency were not significant determinants of reliance on paid work or government transfers. Those who arrived with no English were almost equally likely to report paid work (51%) as government transfers (49%).
    - Housing
        - Overall, survey respondents were highly mobile with only 15% still living in their initial accommodations (n – 323). Sixty-four percent reported having moved one to three times, 16% four to six times, and 4% more than six times. Time of arrival did not have a significant influence on the number of moves. While 58% of survey respondent were satisfied with their housing (n – 322), 28% were unsatisfied, and 13% unsure of how to answer. Within these latter groups (unsatisfied

or unsure), the most frequently cited concern was rent being too expensive (67%), followed by accommodations being too small (50%), old, dirty, or in poor repair (34%). Affordability challenges plague GAR households, shown by 64% of survey respondents and most participants who were interviewed are allocating over 50% of their household income to housing.

- Education and language
  - Self-assessed English language proficiency has improved substantially since arrival, as evidenced by increases in the percentage of respondents who identified as speaking English on an intermediate, well, and fluent level as well as the corresponding—and significant—declines in those with little or no English. Perceived language improvement among those who identified as having no English when they arrived is notable. Almost half (47%) now identify as speaking English at an intermediate level or above. Over 80% of respondents have accessed English language classes since arriving in Canada (e.g., Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada, LINC); the vast majority of those accessing language classes reported increased English language proficiency. Forty percent of respondents who provided their LINC level (n- 234) currently exceed the required language level to obtain Canadian citizenship.
- Health
  - Over half of survey respondents indicated they are healthy (34%) or very healthy (17%), compared with 16% who reported being unhealthy (16%) or very unhealthy (2%). Seventy percent reported being in good mental health. Seventy-two percent of respondents agreed it is easy to access healthcare in Canada (n – 320). Of those who did not agree, reasons provided included language barriers or lack of interpretation (40%, n –87), expenses not covered by insurance (29%, n – 87), difficulties in finding culturally competent healthcare workers (27%, n – 85), and lack of understanding where to go to get healthcare (6%, n – 83). Ongoing family separation was cited as a cause of psychological stress and a barrier to integration. Other reasons largely centred on long wait times, difficulties finding family doctors and specialists, and challenges in obtaining accurate diagnoses.
  - Respondents reported being pretty (36%) or very (28%) happy with their life in Canada (n – 322).

2. Assumptions and practices concerning rights and citizenship

- Over half the respondents (51%) have obtained Canadian citizenship (n – 293); four others said they were waiting for their citizenship ceremony. The top reasons for not becoming a Canadian citizen (n – 131) were not meeting language (37%) or residency requirements (16%), or the application being in process (23%). All but one planned to apply for Canadian citizenship in the future.

3. Social connections with co-ethnics and others

- Eighty-eight percent of respondents reported having friends in Canada (n – 320). Those who indicated they do not have friends in Canada cited the challenges faced in integrating into a new country and culture, including language, health, and day-to-day responsibilities. Fifty-five percent said their friends are a mix of the same and different ethnicities. Ten percent reported their friends are

from different ethnicities from themselves (n – 281); only 36% indicated all their friends are from the same ethnicity.

- Twenty-five percent of respondents reported (n – 312) regularly volunteering, which is identified by some as a key means of making connections with the broader community, learning about Canadian society, and understanding the work environment.

4. Structural barriers to these connections (e.g., differences in culture and language)

   - The vast majority of respondents indicated it is easy to access social services (85%, n – 317). But the responses to the survey question, *Why is it difficult to access social services?* (n – 41) indicated more widespread difficulties associated with settlement and integration, including the impact of language barriers, time constraints, lack of Canadian experience and employment networks, barriers experienced by those with physical disabilities, insufficient stock of subsidized housing, and transportation.

   - Some interviewees and focus group participants mentioned being mistreated for their status as refugees, but most of the abuse was directed toward those with secondary marginalized identities. LGBTQ2S+ and Muslim participants, especially, were likely to have experienced targeted harassment. Prejudice and discrimination manifested in unexpected ways. While interviewees reported incidents of maltreatment, very few connected them to being immigrant newcomers. Muslim refugees—particularly women who wear a hijab – were likely to report verbal abuse in public spaces, something they attributed to their religious identity.

   - Social media is a key site of social interaction, and experiences online should be considered when investigating social integration. Social media should be seen as a double-edged sword in the case of refugee newcomers: although it allows individuals to stay in contact with family left behind, it exposes users to hate speech and outright harassment.

The respondents' reflections on their settlement experience and advice to those who will follow underscore the need for realistic information about the challenges that refugees will face in Canada, the importance of having language and skills-based training before arriving, and age-specific issues associated with education and integration. Perhaps one of the key messages that came out of the survey was the length of time it takes to integrate and find meaning in life in Canada.

Defining integration

Throughout much of the literature, newcomer integration is measured against definitions and indicators established and defined by others (e.g., government agencies, service providers, academics). One of the foremost goals of this project was to understand how post-IRPA GARs themselves define integration, and in the interviews and focus groups we conducted, respondents provided a range of answers to that question. One common theme was the multi-faceted nature of integration, while another was the desire to hold onto aspects of the home culture while adopting Canadian practices and norms. The definitions were strikingly similar to those offered by scholars like Ager and Strang (2008), incorporating many of the indicators outlined above.

CONCLUSION

The integration of post-IRPA GARs is complex and multi-faceted. Although economic and social integration have often been addressed separately, they are closely related, and indicators like language proficiency help to determine outcomes in both domains. Post-IRPA GARs continue to struggle with obtaining meaningful employment, frequently working in jobs that differ from those held pre-migration. They pay high rents, dedicate a high proportion of their income to repaying debts, and worry about neighbourhood safety and crime. Post-IRPA GARs report physical health problems, mental health concerns and trauma, and a diverse range of educational backgrounds, from no formal education to advanced degrees. Newcomers who are not literate in their first language may find it more difficult to acquire written English, while highly educated individuals encounter barriers to using degrees earned abroad. Prolonged family separation and ongoing concerns about family left in precarious situations creates additional stresses that may impair integration.

Income security continues to be of paramount concern for post-IRPA GARs in BC. Un(der)employment, inability to obtain meaningful employment, high rental burdens that are amplified by inadequate financial supports, and lack of proficiency in English complicate successful integration. For post-IRPA GARs, the need to repay government transportation loans further reduces money available to meet basic needs. Although housing is recognized as a critical component of settlement and integration, post-IRPA GARs continue to encounter significant challenges in accessing adequate, affordable, and suitable housing owing in part to a combination of inadequate financial resources and larger family sizes.

Individuals who hold marginalized personal identities, be they religious, sexual, or cultural, are more likely to face prejudice and discrimination. While few respondents connected these experiences to immigration status, Muslim and LGBTQ2S+ participants were most likely to suffer negative treatment based on their beliefs and identity. Islamophobic and homophobic experiences may negatively impact integration, though the relationship is not clear.

Beyond financial independence, belonging, and a successful future for their children, post-IRPA GARs conceptualize integration as a complex journey toward a sense of belonging—a journey underlain by aspirations of active citizenship through volunteering and voting. Post-IRPA GARs grappled with the understanding of the need to adapt to Canadian norms while maintaining their own identity

Less frequently spoken of by respondents and the literature is how Canadian society shifts to understand the beliefs of newcomers. It is positive to note, however, that hints of this two-way integration emerged in some comments, including from those newcomers learning to accept Canadian beliefs about gender and sexuality, and from Canadians becoming more familiar and accepting of cultural norms of newcomers.

Ensuring refugee – and other newcomer – voices are incorporated into definitions of integration is critical in moving beyond unidirectional models. The changing profile of post-IRPA GARs underscores the diversity of newcomers admitted to Canada, as well as the need for definitions of integration to incorporate multiple outcomes.

Introduction

This report focuses on the integration experiences of government-assisted refugees (GARs) who settled in British Columbia between January 2007 and December 2016. After briefly summarizing literature on the development of integration as a concept and previous studies undertaken in the Canadian context, we present the results of mixed-method fieldwork completed from January through September 2019 and provide recommendations for consideration.

Two separate but related questions guide this research:

1. How are GARs who arrived during this period faring in relation to economic and social indicators?
2. How do GARs themselves define integration?

Our first question is informed by the changing demographic profile of GARs following the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) being passed in parliament 2001, which established a new standard by which would-be GARs to Canada were selected. Prior to IRPA, GARs were selected for resettlement in Canada based on their ability to integrate into Canadian society; after IRPA came into effect in 2002, individuals in most urgent need of protection were prioritized. The changing profile of post-IRPA GARs landing in Canada is well documented and includes a greater number of individuals who face multiple barriers.

Since 2003, when the first refugees under the IRPA framework began arriving in Canada, there has been an increase in individuals arriving with little or no literacy in first language, limited exposure to formal education, and significant physical and mental health issues. As well, there have been more single-headed households and seniors in the population. Many have experienced protracted refugee situations (Hiebert and Sherrell, 2009; Hyndman, 2011).

Existing literature of refugee integration in British Columbia has largely focused on smaller-scale, ethno-specific studies (e.g., Brunner et al., 2010; Francis & Hiebert, 2014; Hyndman, 2011; ISS*of*BC 2016a. 2016b; Marchbank et al.,2014; Sherrell et al., 2011). There is a dearth of recent, large-scale research into outcomes among post-IRPA GAR newcomers in the province. We attempt to fill this gap by providing the results of a survey of 418 post-IRPA GARs who arrived predominantly between 2007 and 2016, while contextualizing these numbers within individual interviews and focus group discussions.

The second research question delves more deeply into the utility of integration as a concept and incorporates refugee voices to provide new insights. While we predicted that refugees might define integration differently from academics, we found their feedback reflected aspects of integration offered in previous definitions by Ager and Strang (2008) and Hynie et al. (2016). To our knowledge, no Canadian study has sought to build a refugee-centred definition of integration using refugees' own voices, and thus, we hope to fill this gap by presenting our findings.

CONTEXT

Refugees enter Canada through one of two broad streams: 1) overseas protection (denoting those who have been recognized as meeting the international legal definition of a refugee by the UNHCR abroad) and 2) inland protection (those who come to Canada of their own accord, claiming refugee protection at the border or inland). Individuals entering Canada through one of the three overseas protection streams—government-assisted refugees (GARs), privately sponsored refugees (PSRs), and blended visa office referred (BVORs)—do so with the right to permanent residency. Each receives one year of financial support, and assistance in finding accommodations, and is eligible for the full range of settlement, language, and employment programming funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

The key difference between the different streams of resettled refugees is who bears the cost of resettlement: GARs are financially supported by the federal government, PSRs receive sponsorship and monetary support from community groups, and BVORs receive financial support from government and private sponsors (Hyndman, 2011). In contrast, refugee claimants must simultaneously navigate the initial settlement process and the complex legal process to be recognized as a Convention refugee.[1] Although ineligible to receive federally funded services (other than interim federal health coverage), refugee claimants in BC. can access Settlement and Integration Services while their claim for refugee protection is pending. Refugee claimants remain temporary residents until they have received a positive determination.

1 Convention refugees are individuals who have been recognized by the UNHCR as meeting the international legal definition of a refugee.

They have limited access to provincially funded supports and remain temporary residents until they have received a positive determination.

The literature indicates there are substantial differences in settlement experiences and outcomes among these groups (Ager & Strang, 2008; Castles et al., 2001), and it is therefore important to distinguish between categories of entry in undertaking refugee research. Given the position of the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISS*of*BC) as the primary—and until 2016 the sole—contract holder for the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) in BC, this research focuses specifically on post-IRPA GARs.

Between January 2007 and December 2016, 8,995 GARs landed in BC, including 6,045 individuals age 14 years and older (based on ISS*of*BC statistics). During this period, BC also received large flows of Syrian refugees, which required massive mobilization on the part of the settlement sector. Although the changing profile of post-IRPA GARs resulted in new research and the introduction of targeted programs to meet their distinct needs (e.g., case management, refugee early childhood development programs), interest in refugee outcomes has skyrocketed in the years following Operation Syrian Refugees (OSR) and the arrival of over 50,000 Syrian refugees, which brought refugee resettlement to the fore among government, academics, settlement practitioners, and the Canadian public. Consequently, it has become important to academics and the settlement sector alike to better understand the characteristics and needs of newly arrived post-IRPA GARs, and how these may influence social and economic integration.

SELECTED LITERATURE[2]

This research largely draws upon Ager and Strang's (2008) model of integration which envisions integration as a function of four broad indicators (see Figure 1):

1. Achievement in and access to employment, housing, education, and health services
2. Assumptions and practices of rights and citizenship
3. Social connections with co-ethnics and others
4. Structural barriers to these connections

Figure 1: Model of Integration (based on Ager and Strang, 2008)

These four categories include 10 domains of integration, as shown in Figure 1. The authors' inclusion of bridging, linking, and bonding connections echoes the earlier work of Bourdieu, and emphasizes the ways in which social capital (i.e., how networks and relationships of people) is significant to integration. Ager and Strang's model is helpful in that it incorporates many of the factors that have previously been determined as significant, and acknowledges that integration is complex. The authors recognize the "challenge of any framework seeking to reflect normative understandings of integration is for it to accommodate the diversity of assumptions and values of different settings while retaining some conceptual coherence" (Ager & Strang, 1981, p. 185). In other words, an accurate reflection of the nuanced and highly variable experiences of refugees is difficult to capture in a model, which is why context-dependent findings are so important in understanding this issue.

Hynie et al. (2016) build on the work of Ager and Strang, presenting a more relational and less individual model that shifts the onus for integration onto the receiving community. In doing so, they imply the question: What must the Canadian state, civil society, and the settlement sector provide to allow refugee newcomers to participate fully in Canada? Hynie and Hyndman (2016) further discuss integration by moving beyond the ways in which refugees themselves change (e.g., through changes in their knowledge, skills, behaviour, and feelings) to incorporate analysis of the need for host communities and institutions to change as well. This two-way model is consistent with Canadian approaches to integration which "involves commitment on the part of immigrants

2 For a more substantial literature review, see Grace Newton's literature review (Newton, 2019) at http://bit.ly/GNewton_LiteratureReview2019. Further, the CERIS Refugee Research Synthesis prepared by Hyndman, D'Addario, and Stevens (2014) and Hyndman's 2011 research summary on resettled refugee integration in Canada submitted to the UNHCR provide authoritative analyses of existing refugee research, highlighting gaps and identifying areas of future study.

to adapt to life in Canada and on the part of Canada to welcome and adapt to new peoples and cultures" (IRCC 2017, p. 1). While the focus of literature is often on refugees themselves, Hynie and Hyndman (2016) assert, "A social context where communities and institutions are welcoming and adaptive creates the social spaces needed for refugees to build connections and access needed services and opportunities." Yet, this remains an often-overlooked aspect of integration research.

In almost all research, integration and its markers remain externally defined by academics, government, and the public more broadly, and are imposed on newcomers. In contrast, the research in this report seeks to build on discussions of integration by considering how refugees themselves define integration.

Theoretical writing on integration suggests it is important to look at outcomes as a function of policy factors, social environment, and personal characteristics. The following sections explore some of these variables in more detail.

Labour market attachment

Labour market attachment is a key facilitator of integration. In Canada, Frank (2013) noted that refugees of all arrival categories take significantly longer to find a job match than do immigrants in the skilled worker class, and that immigrants in larger cities tend to take longer to find appropriate employment than those living in smaller cities and rural areas. After controlling for work experience abroad, language, and educational attainment, however, the disadvantage for refugees disappears. Frank's findings suggest that when refugees are disadvantaged in the labour market, the explanatory variables may be language proficiency and quality of resumé rather than immigration status. This speaks to the complicated relationship between place, category of arrival, and employment outcomes.

Research findings from Bokore (2013), Derwing et al. (2010), Hiebert (2009a, 2009b), Hyndman et al. (2013), and Sherrell (2010) highlight the impact of language proficiency on labour market attachment among GARs.

In many ways, labour market outcomes underpin every other aspect of integration because they influence wages, social connections, and mental well-being. Bauder (2005) mobilizes Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to explain the experiences of immigrants in the Vancouver labour market. He notes that non-economic immigrants are typically less prepared to enter the job market than those in the economic class, attributing this to a lack of knowledge about "labour market rules" in Canada (p. 81). Among study participants, refugees tend to do poorly in situations where "rigid conventions in the application and interviewing processes" are used (p. 94). Bauder further notes that refugees included in his study tended to pursue different employment strategies than economic immigrants and were less likely to use social networks to find a job. In cases where refugees fail to secure appropriate employment, there may be risks to mental health.

According to psychiatric researchers Affleck et al. (2018), unemployment and underemployment are associated with poor self-image among Canadian refugee men. And in a study of Sri Lankan Tamil men, respondents reported feeling "redundant" and "useless" because of their inability to provide for their households (p. 846). The literature supports the conclusion that refugee economic integration is an issue of paramount importance; poor outcomes carry risks for mental and financial health.

Housing

Access to safe and secure housing is an important aspect of settlement and integration, which refugees often lack—like many other low-income populations. In larger cities like Metropolitan Toronto and Metro Vancouver, the housing affordability crisis has had a strong impact on the refugee population, who often rely on limited incomes and government transfers to pay rent. Work by Hyndman (2011) indicates that while most refugees remain in the province in which they landed, newcomers may move houses or apartments frequently.

Refugees are at a disadvantage in the housing market compared to other categories of immigrants, often living in poor-quality, overcrowded, and unaffordable accommodation (D'Addario et al., 2007; Francis & Hiebert, 2014), Rose (2019) identifies three primary housing related challenges facing refugees: a lack of affordable housing, limited housing for large families, and a mismatch between where housing and services are available. Low vacancy rates, particularly among more affordable housing, amplifies the challenges faced by refugees and other low-income Canadians. Sherrell's (2011) analysis of GARs and refugee claimants in Vancouver and Winnipeg after IRPA was implemented underscores the ways in which overcrowding and lack of income security negatively impact well-being and shape integration among participants. Regulatory requirements and occupancy rules may further disadvantage families by limiting the number of adults allowed to reside in a single unit, as well as implementing age- and gender-based standards for room sharing among children (Sherrell, 2010). As dependants come of age, families are forced to make impossible choices between finding new—often more expensive—housing for the entire family or forcing their children to move out of the family home when they turn 19.

Service utilization

Given differences in selection criteria and migration experiences among economic immigrants and resettled refugees, service needs frequently differ substantially. In a paper focused on Canadian refugees and immigrants, Nakhaie (2017) finds that refugees are more likely to report service needs than are economic immigrants. In analyzing data collected from clients of a Windsor, Ontario, YMCA, he discovered that refugees typically reported unmet needs in three areas: social integration; building social networks; and language and skills training. He notes a negative correlation between education, English proficiency, and connections with co-ethnics and service needs. Generally, highly educated newcomers with strong social connections need fewer services than others. Refugees as a whole are at a disadvantage compared to other newcomers and may require additional services to integrate successfully.

Newcomer youth are disproportionately affected by a lack of services, and refugees are particularly likely to have unmet needs. In a study of African refugee and immigrant youth in Vancouver, Francis and Yan (2016) note that racialized youth encounter many barriers in accessing services. Existing services do not address the diverse needs of newcomers, and youth are unlikely to trust service providers, which creates a reluctance to use existing services. Consequently, many participants report negative integration in the form of social exclusion. Using these findings, Francis and Yan urge the government and not-for-profit sector to provide targeted services for youth and those from marginalized communities in order to support healthy integration into Canadian society.

Health and mental health

Recent refugee populations have had more significant healthcare needs than previous cohorts; because GARs are selected on a "need for protection" basis, they are among the most vulnerable. One study of Syrian refugees identified multiple barriers to healthcare access, including insufficient insurance coverage and low cultural competence among healthcare professionals (Oda et al., 2018). The authors also identified a significant gap between privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) and GARs, with the latter reporting "significantly lower perceived physical and mental health, as well as … higher unmet healthcare needs" (Oda et al., 2018, para. 1). Research psychiatrists Beiser and Hou (2017) argue refugees experience poor mental health compared to other categories of migrants; among Canadian refugees, perceived discrimination and sense of belonging are significant negative factors. These findings are echoed by Hyndman (2011) who also discusses the high physical and mental health needs of refugees.

Finally, the literature suggests that refugee youth tend to exhibit emotional problems and aggressive behaviour much more frequently than other immigrant youth. Beiser and Hou (2016) conclude that many refugee youth experience pre-flight trauma, and that refugee girls and visible minorities are more likely to struggle emotionally (p. 466). They also note that boys are significantly more likely to display aggressive behaviour, while girls tend to "internalize" problems (p. 467). Walker and Zuberi (2019) discuss the impact of trauma on academic achievement among school-aged refugee youth, concluding that negative pre-migration experiences can be a barrier to success in Canada.

On the other end of the age spectrum, immigrant seniors are especially susceptible to depression and stress, but they are "least likely to seek out mental health services" compared to other age groups (Koehn et al., 2014; p. 146).

Despite these findings, age-specific research on refugee mental health is sparse, even as an increasing proportion of refugees are very young or old. Factors such as gender, age, and visible minority status often shape health outcomes among refugees, and group-specific research allows us to understand the specific relationship between a demographic factor and health. While it is widely recognized that refugees, particularly those from protracted refugee situations, experience physical and mental health issues, Hyndman et al. (2014) identify the impact of these on social and economic integration remains unknown.

Discrimination and prejudice

Discrimination and prejudice against newcomers also has implications for integration. Studies in Toronto indicate that racialized refugees perceive a high degree of prejudice and connect this experience to discrimination in housing and the labour market (Danso, 2002). In Vancouver, however, the situation is seemingly more positive. Reports by ISS*of*BC (2016a; 2016b) suggest Syrian refugees who arrived as part of OSR tended not to perceive or report discrimination in Vancouver up to two years after arrival. A study of Syrians by Scott and Safdar (2017) has similar findings. The authors argue that this general openness to Syrians can be attributed to multiculturalism policy in Canada. However, none of these studies addressed the possible roles of cultural distance and racialization in differential outcomes between Syrian refugees and others, or the high levels of public acceptance of OSR, which began in late 2015.

Many of the studies that find a high degree of prejudice against refugees focus on racialized populations from countries where

the culture is substantially different from Canada's. For instance, the Danso (2002) study relies on interviews with East African refugee claimants, who face different and arguably deeper forms of racialization than Syrians, who arrive with their status already confirmed. Furthermore, cultural distance (in terms of religion, rural vs. urban background, manner of dress, etc.) may play a role in mitigating or exacerbating discrimination and "othering of migrants. This variable, however, is difficult to measure in a rigorous way.

Other scholarly work complicates our understanding of racialization, discrimination, and place. A 2013 study by Canadian scholars Ray and Preston finds that individuals who speak a language other than English or French, were born outside of Canada, or are less educated as compared to the sample mean are less likely to report discrimination. This supports the notion that individuals with less contact with the majority culture perceive less discrimination, while the more assimilated are more likely to pick up on and express discomfort with discriminatory attitudes

Intersectionality

Age, diversity and gender influence settlement and integration experiences. Hyndman (2011), for example, asserts men are less likely than women to complete Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes, a finding which may be related to the gendered pressure to earn an income. Hyndman (2011) identifies a lack of Canada-specific research on integration outcomes among LGBTQ2S+ refugees, despite the fact that these individuals often become displaced due to identity-related violence in their home countries (30). She also notes that LGBTQ2S+ youth often have greater service needs than other young people, and the scarcity of youth-oriented services thus has a disparate impact on them (30). In a recent study of Iranian refugee men who identify as gay, Karimi (2018) found that this group faces exclusion and violence from co-ethnics and others. Participants described being fetishized or excluded by the Canadian gay community, and many also faced prejudice from Iranians. Karimi urges scholars to acknowledge the complicated lives of LGBTQ2S+ refugees, and he argues that this group has specific needs that should be addressed by the settlement sector.

As another vulnerable segment of the population, newcomer seniors can face family conflicts, loneliness and isolation, and elder abuse by caregivers (Koehn et al., 2014). There is insufficient refugee-specific research on the integration of seniors in the Canadian context, but immigrant seniors as a whole are at increased risk of depression and "relocation stress" (Hyndman 2011, pp. 146-147).

It is our hope that our study will shed light on outcomes within these understudied groups and will offer a point of comparison with less specific work on the elderly and LGBTQ2S+ immigrants in Canada.

CONCLUSION

We approach the topic of integration through several domains that we believe are relevant to integration. In so doing, however, it is important to place these discussions within the context of policy. In Canada, IRCC defines integration as "a two-way process that involves commitment on the part of immigrants to adapt to life in Canada and on the part of Canada to welcome and adapt to new peoples and cultures" (IRCC 2017, p. 1). This balance between the adaptation of newcomers and existing Canadians is a critical and often overlooked aspect of integration.

Methodology

ISS*of*BC has a long history of community-based research, partnering with academics and engaging in self-funded research. Unlike most community–university partnerships, where the project is identified and led by the university, this research was identified and led by ISS*of*BC. Funding for this research was provided to ISS*of*BC by IRCC through the Service Delivery Improvement call for proposals. We established a partnership with the University of British Columbia (UBC) Department of Geography, which included four semesters of funding for a geography graduate student based on UBC research assistant rates; this project formed the basis of her graduate thesis.[3] An advisory committee consisting of key stakeholders from federal, provincial and municipal governments; the settlement sector; and academics was convened to provide feedback on study design, recruitment, and dissemination of findings.[4] We collected additional feedback from refugees who had experience through the Surrey Refugee Youth Council. Input and feedback from all of these sources was critical in finalizing study design, recruitment methods, and guiding overarching decision-making.

We conducted this research to better understand the social and economic integration of refugees—including how refugees themselves define integration—through a multi-method approach consisting of an online survey, individual semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. Our potential target group included all post-IRPA GARs who were 14 and older at the time of their arrival and who were destined to BC between January 2007 and December 2016 (n – 6,045). Youth below the age of 14 were excluded from the survey, and only those age 18 and older were interviewed. Our use of multiple methods was critical to ensuring we did not exclude any individuals by using a particular method we engaged (e.g., digital literacy, materials not translated into their language). Using individual interviews allowed us to delve deeper into key themes than could be obtained through the survey.

SURVEY

We drafted a survey that included 69 multiple-choice, yes/no, and short-answer questions to better understand the settlement and integration experiences of respondents (see Appendix A for final survey). Questions focused on 10 areas: demographics, education,

3 Newton, G. (2019). *Building a life: integration outcomes among government-assisted refugee newcomers in Greater Vancouver*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of British Columbia: Vancouver, BC. Available online at: https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0380554.

4 We would like to acknowledge this research has benefited from the contributions of our Advisory Committee:

- Umit Kizitlan, Director General, Research and Evaluation Branch, IRCC NHQ
- Tiana Solares, Assistant Director, BC/Yukon, IRCC
- Maia McKinley, Senior Policy Advisory, Immigration Policy Branch, Ministry of Jobs, Trade and Technology, Province of BC
- Aileen Murphy, Senior Planner, City of Surrey
- Dan Hiebert, Professor, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia
- Jennifer Hyndman, Professor, Departments of Social Science and Geography, and Director for Centre for Refugee Studies, York University
- Patrick Mackenzie, CEO, Immigrant Employment Council of BC
- Fariborz Birjandian, CEO, Calgary Catholic Immigration Services
- Mario Calla, CEO, COSTI
- Chris Friesen, Director—Settlement Services, ISS*of*BC
- Kathy Sherrell, Associate Director—Settlement Services, ISS*of*BC

language, migration experience, employment, housing, services, social integration, health, and overall thoughts.[5] The survey and consent forms were translated into eight languages—Arabic, Dari, Kurdish (Sorani), Nepali, Persian, Spanish, Swahili, and Tigrigna—based on the top mother tongues of arrivals during each of the study years.

The online survey used Hosted in Canada Surveys to ensure all data collected was stored in Canada. Branching logic was used to exclude certain questions based on the respondent's previous answers. All questions were coded as optional, which allowed participants to skip questions as they saw fit; survey settings were configured to prevent users from answering twice from the same IP address. We recognize multiple family members could respond on different devices; results are presented at the individual – not the household – level. Consent and adolescent assent forms, followed by a basic eligibility question, were added to the first page of the survey; respondents were required to affirm consent before continuing to the survey questions. Finally, an optional question on the last page allowed participants to communicate their interest in participating in further research.

The survey was piloted for eight days in January 2019. We sent targeted invitations to a small group of post-IRPA GARs who landed in BC from 2007 to 2016 and who had received services in English. Nine individuals responded to the survey pilot, and we made two changes based on pilot results. First, we added a category for agricultural work to our questions about work experience. Second, we eliminated a question about self-identifying as LGBTQ2S+ as those who did not complete the survey tended to quit after this question. Our intention was to convene a LGBTQ2S+-specific focus group to obtain more nuanced understanding of how identifying as LGBTQ2S+ may impact social and economic integration. While we were ultimately unable to attract sufficient interest to organize a session, we did interview a number of individuals who identified as LGBTQ2S+.

The full survey was launched in February 2019 and remained active until August 2019. We carried out promotional activities from February to May 2019: sending targeted emails to former post-IRPA GARs who had received services from ISS*of*BC; distributing recruitment posters; sending targeted social media blasts (e.g., BC Refugee Hub, ISS*of*BC); visiting service providers, mosques, and churches to promote the research and answer any staff questions; and holding information sessions at youth hubs and women's groups. We also made follow-up calls to other service providers to encourage recruitment among clients accessing their services. Given the challenges in recruiting former post-IRPA GARs who may no longer receive services or want to identify as refugees, and recognizing that digital literacy varies across populations, we also set up at two large events: the Surrey Fusion Festival and the Iranian Summer Festival, both located in areas with high refugee settlement during the targeted arrival period. Potential participants were provided the opportunity to learn more about the research from first-language staff and to complete the survey online or on paper. (We entered paper responses into the online system.) Finally, individuals who were interviewed were encouraged to promote the survey to eligible family and friends. These activities allowed us to collect additional responses from former post-IRPA GARs in Metro Vancouver.

Following analysis of the profile of initial survey respondents compared to post-IRPA GARs age 14 years and older who arrived during the sample time period, ISS*of*BC first-language research

5 Where possible questions were drawn from the Syria Long-term Health and Integration (Syria.lth) project, a four-year longitudinal study of a cohort of over 1,300 Syrian refugees in order to allow for further analysis and comparison between the findings.

assistants contacted eligible clients by phone in August and September 2019. Efforts focused on ensuring diverse groups in terms of both arrivals by year and language were contacted. Individuals were contacted by phone; responses were directly entered into the online system or collected on paper and entered later. While we were ultimately unable to reach all eligible clients—because of capacity limitations and out-of-date contact information—these efforts allowed an additional 248 responses. In total, 418 post-IRPA GARs responded to our survey.

The data from those who answered "no" to basic eligibility questions was quarantined. While this data was counted toward the total responses, it was excluded from analysis of individual questions. Google Translate was used to help us understand open-ended survey responses provided in a language other than English.

INTERVIEWS

We conducted 50 individual interviews with post-IRPA GARs between February and August 2019. A question in the online survey asked people if they were interested in participating; those who were received an email invitation to schedule an interview. Interviews were held at a time and place of the interviewee's choosing; interpreters were provided so participants could respond in the language of their choice. Participants received a $50 honorarium in appreciation of their participation and to offset transportation and childcare costs. We obtained informed consent prior to the start of each interview, and we reminded participants of their right to refuse to answer any question or terminate participation at any time.

The semi-structured interview contained 10 open-ended questions about integration and everyday life (see Appendix B). Where participants gave permission, the interviews were recorded (by digital voice recording). The research assistant kept a notebook to record basic information and impressions of the interview in order to contextualize factors that might have introduced bias. Two research assistants transcribed approximately half of the interviews; the remainder were prepared by REV, an online transcription service. To protect the privacy of interviewees, we deleted the recordings after transcription. Interviews lasted from 20 to 90 minutes depending on what the participant chose to share and whether we were using an interpreter. ISS*of*BC retained contracted interpreters for the project, and most of those hired were individuals who had been refugees themselves. In a few cases, the interviewee chose to bring a family member or friend to help with interpretation. Finally, participants were offered the opportunity to review transcripts; only one interviewee took advantage of this opportunity.

Interview transcripts were prepared word-for-word, excluding filler words (e.g., like, um), and subsequently imported into NVIVO qualitative data analysis software. Sixteen key themes emerged from our analysis: conflict with service providers, de facto segregation, connections with co-ethnics, the desire to "give back," health, housing, connections with those from different cultures, language, LGBTQ2S+ issues, leaving family behind, prejudice, skills and education, refugees and media, trauma, "starting from zero," and being a "taker." We drew on these themes in our research findings.

FOCUS GROUPS

Four focus groups were convened in the summer of 2019 to collect information from smaller, targeted segments of the sample population who might otherwise have been underrepresented in our results. Participants included Arabic-speaking women from Syria, Spanish-speaking GARs from Central America, refugee mothers with preschool children, and Karen (Burmese) refugees. Our original goal was to include 10 to 15 participants in each group, but due to our strict eligibility criteria, the final groups comprised 3 to 15 people each. In total, 33 people participated in the groups.

Participants were asked to reflect on 10 questions related to integration and access to social services (e.g., government, settlement, employment and language) and to work together in small groups to create "thought maps" of different aspects integration (see Appendices C and D). These thought maps provided insights into how post-IRPA GARs themselves understand integration and allowed us to visualize the complicated relationship between indicators and outcomes. Participants who were not literate were encouraged to sketch their ideas (e.g., drawing a house to represent home ownership).

Focus groups used a combination of large- and small-group discussions to encourage participants to share their ideas. The research assistant moderated the discussion with the help of an interpreter; groups lasted one and a half to two hours. We provided participants with refreshments and compensated each of them with a $10 Safeway gift card. Given the challenges of creating verbatim transcripts (language; long, untranslated conversations; background noise from other participants), we used recordings of the focus groups to generate notes of key themes.

It should be noted that we relied on a self-reported category of arrival to assess study eligibility, and this may have introduced some other non-related subject matters into our dataset. Although all focus group participants confirmed they were post-IRPA GARs who arrived between 2007 and 2016, one of the focus groups contained a few individuals (<3) who may have been refugee claimants rather than post-IRPA GARs. These individuals believed themselves to be eligible for the study, but later related details about claiming asylum in Canada, which created some confusion. We did include the feedback from this group in this report, but this bit of context is important in understanding their answers. Asking each participant to prove their status as a GAR seemed overly burdensome and logistically difficult; consequently, we chose to rely on verbal or written confirmation from study subjects.

CONCLUSION

We chose to pursue a mixed-methods approach to answering our research questions, which led us to conduct a survey, individual interviews, and focus groups. Our findings are informed by both quantitative and qualitative data, and they are shaped by our choice of analysis tools.

Results and Discussion

This section provides results and analysis of our findings, focusing primarily on the survey results. We clearly delineate where the discussion draws on interview or focus group responses and themes. Eight key themes frame our analysis: housing, language, employment and degree recognition, trauma, prejudice and discrimination, access to social services, personal identity, and definitions of integration.

The following analysis includes only those individuals who responded "yes" or "no answer" to the basic eligibility question asked at the beginning of the survey. Out of 418 respondents, 13 indicated they did not meet the eligibility criteria. The remaining 405 were included, but a number of these individuals chose not to answer every question. Consequently, the percentages provided below were calculated using the total number of post-IRPA GARs who answered the question, rather than the total number of respondents. The number of respondents is noted in brackets for each question. Furthermore, a handful of respondents (<5) indicated they met the study criteria, but later supplied information that cast this into doubt. In those cases, we elected to trust the initial response of the survey respondent and attributed the mismatch to typographical error. In total, our respondents (n – 405) represent approximately 4.5% of post-IRPA GARs destined for BC during this period, and 6.7% of those age 14 years and older. The following results incorporate findings from the cleaned dataset.

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The demographic breakdown of survey respondents is as follows: 46% of respondents identified as female, 52% as male, 2% as other (n – 340). One person indicated they preferred not to respond. Respondents were primarily of working age (18 to 54 years), with 1% of respondents age 14 to 17 years and 19% age 55 and older (n – 355).

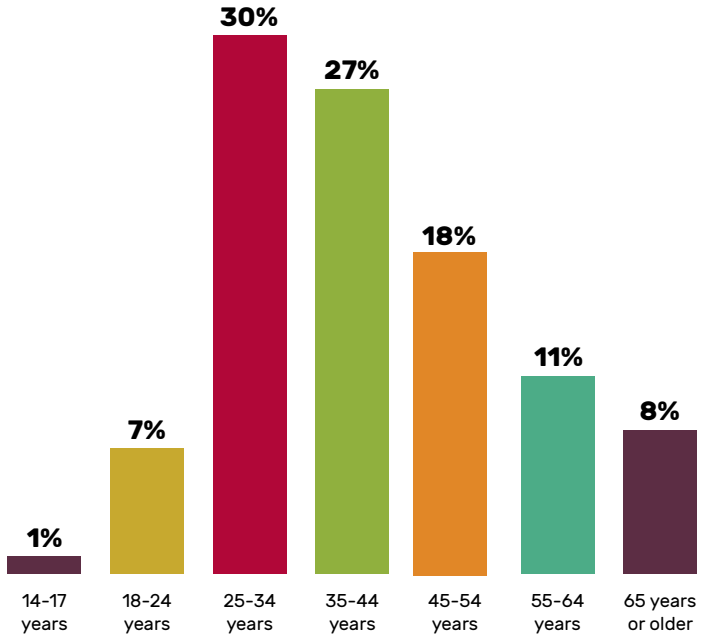


Figure 2: Age of survey respondents (n – 355)

Fifty-nine percent of respondents were married, 1% common law, 9% divorced, and 31% single (n –339). Sixty-seven percent had children (n – 337); the average number of children was 3.09. Fifteen percent of respondents reported having 8 or more children, including one individual with 10 children. Among respondents with children, over half (54%) indicated none of their children were born in Canada while 13% indicated all of their children were born in Canada; the remainder had some but not all of their children born in Canada (n- 218).

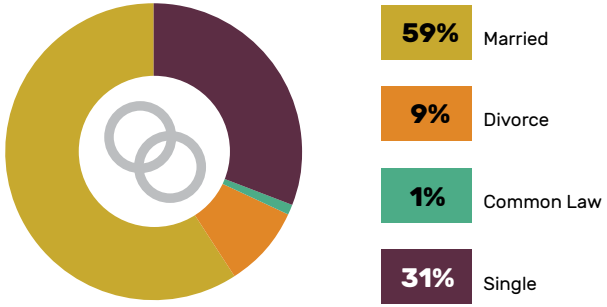


Figure 3: Marital status of survey respondents (n – 339)

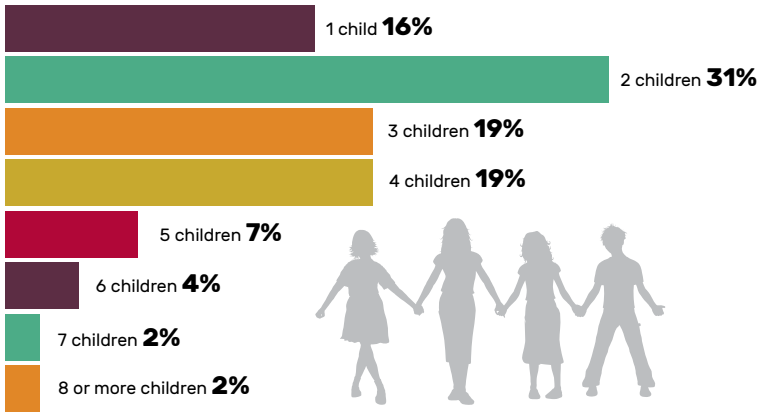


Figure 4: Number of children of survey respondents (n – 217)

Figures 2, 3, and 4 illustrate these demographics.

Respondents came from 28 countries (n –316), the top six of which were Iran (29%), Afghanistan (22%), Iraq (12%), Somalia (9%), Bhutan (8%), and Syria (8%). When asked to describe their ethnicity (n – 311), the top five cited were Afghan (23%), Persian (16%), Iranian (9%), Nepali (8%), and Somali (8%). Given that we coded the survey to allow free responses to this question, some categories may overlap (e.g., Arabic and Iraqi).

Thirty-four separate mother tongues were represented (n – 310), including a number of individuals who listed multiple mother tongues (Somali and Arabic). The top seven languages were Arabic (22%), Dari (17%), Farsi (14%), Persian (11%), Nepali (9%), Somali (8%), and Pashto (7%).

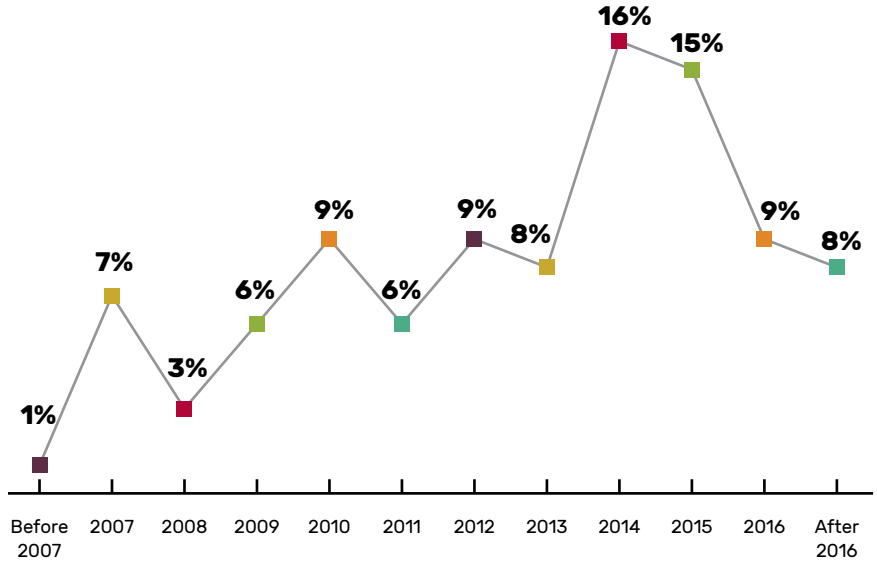


Figure 5: Year of arrival of survey respondents (n - 298)

Nine percent of respondents arrived outside the target years of January 2007 to December 2016 (n – 298). The top years of arrival among respondents were 2014 (16%) and 2015 (15%) (see Figure 5). Challenges in identifying potential respondents increases over time, owing to a combination of out-of-date contact information and lack of ongoing contact with settlement-serving organizations as people integrate into Canadian society.

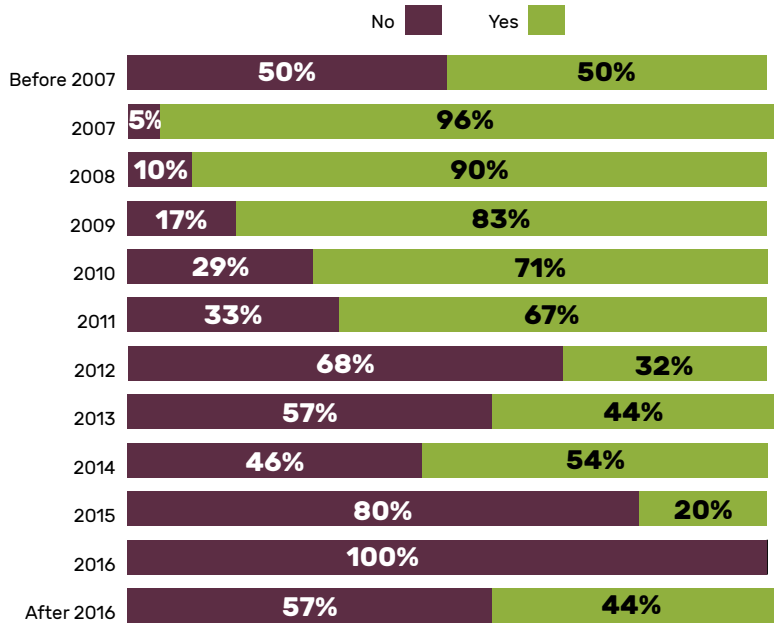


Figure 6: Canadian citizenship by year of arrival of survey respondents (n - 293)

Over half the respondents (51%) said they had obtained Canadian citizenship (n – 293), including a small number who appeared not to meet residency requirements of four of the last six years based on their year of arrival in Canada (see Figure 6). Four individuals (3%) were waiting for their citizenship ceremony. The top five reasons provided for not becoming a Canadian citizen (n – 131) included not meeting language (37%) or residency requirements (16%), the application being in process (23%), and the individual being either too busy (e.g., with family/work) or planning to apply soon (8% each). All but one person indicated they planned to apply for Canadian citizenship in the future (n – 155), which bodes well for integration; the other is unsure.

Level of education among respondents (n – 328) ranged from those with no formal education (12%) to those with advanced degrees (5%) (see Figure 7). Eight individuals indicated where education had occurred, the majority of which was obtained in Canada and another country (5 respondents). Eighty-one respondents indicated they were currently a student.

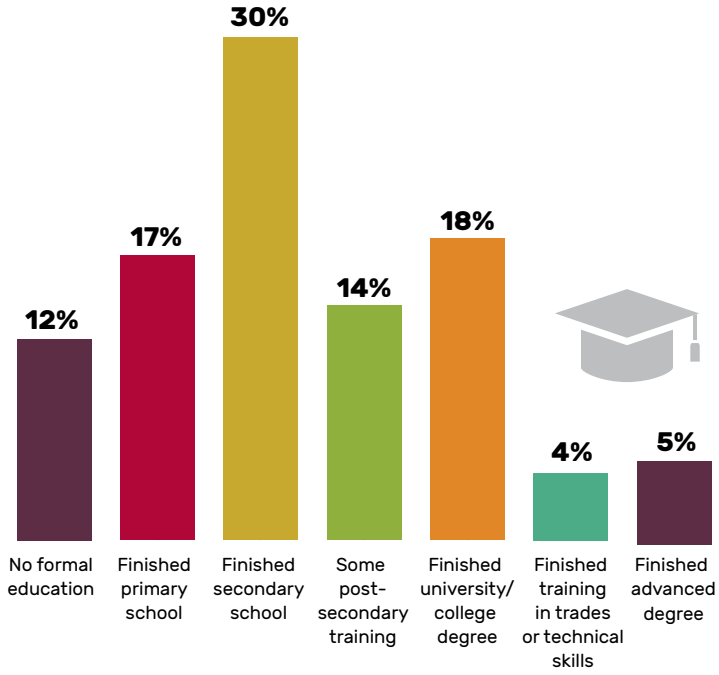


Figure 7: Education levels of survey respondents (n - 328)

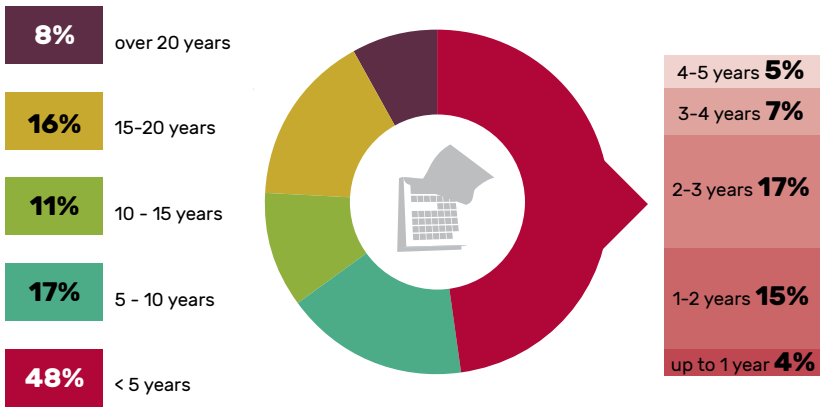


Figure 8: Years spent outside of country of origin (n - 286)

Almost half the respondents had spent five years or less outside their country of origin (48%); almost one in four (24%) spent more than 15 years in exile before resettling to Canada (n – 286) (see Figure 8). Twenty-two percent of respondents had spent time in refugee camps (n – 323)—more than five years for most of them (84%, n – 69). Countries of origin among this group included Afghanistan, Bhutan, Congo, Eritrea, Iraq, Nepal, Somalia, and Sudan.

LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

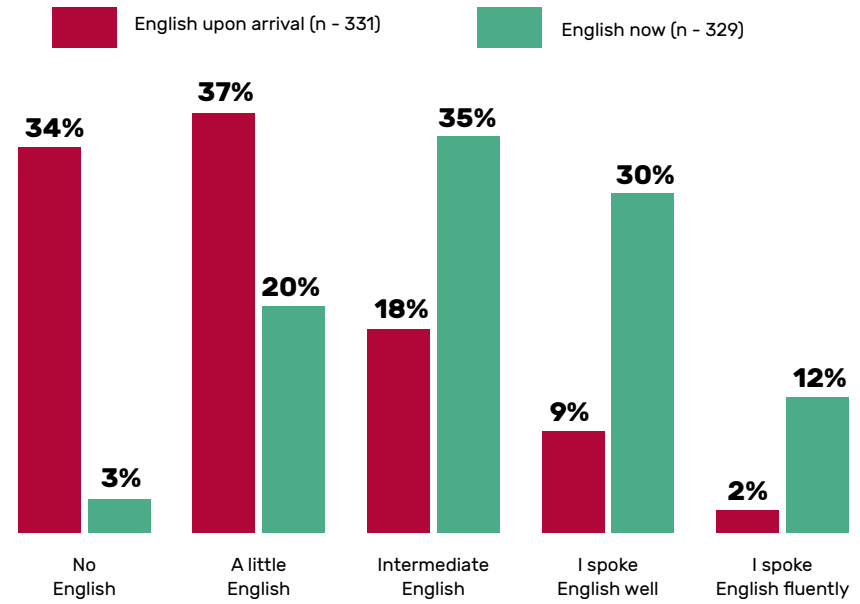


Figure 9: English language proficiency on arrival vs now (n - 328 upon arrival; n - 329 now)

English proficiency was one of the most prominent themes in all stages of the study, and most participants drew a connection between the ability to communicate in English and successful integration. Self-assessed English language proficiency had improved substantially since arrival, as evidenced by increases in the percentage of respondents who identified as speaking English at an intermediate, well, and fluent level, as well as the corresponding—and significant—declines in those with little or no English (n – 331 on arrival, n – 329 now). Nine individuals continue to identify as having no English at present, a significant decline

from the 114 who identified similarly upon arrival; the period of arrival for this group ranged from 2007 to 2019. Seven were age 65 and older at the time of the survey (see Figure 9).

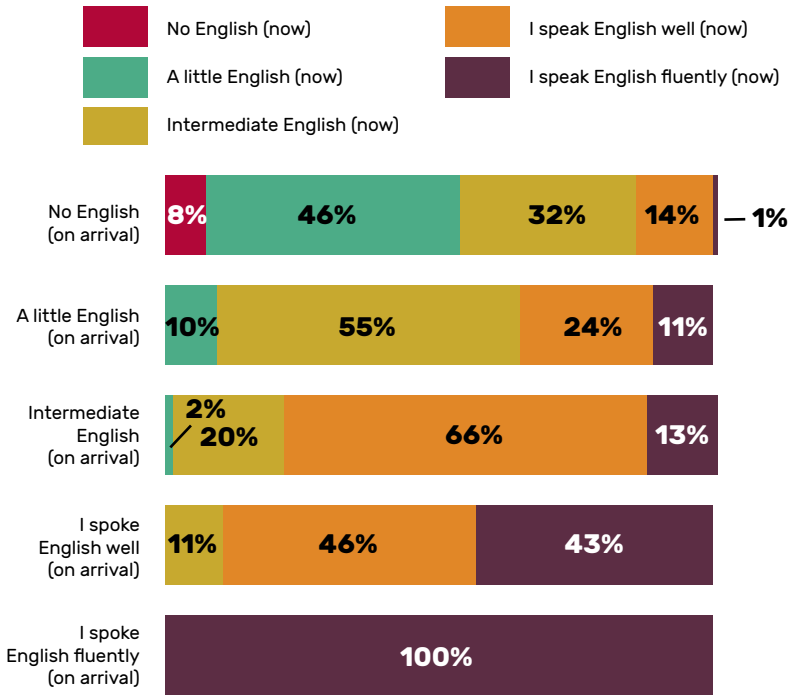


Figure 10: Self-identified current language proficiency of survey respondents on arrival

Perceived language improvement among those who identified as having no English upon arrival is notable (see Figure 10). Almost half (47%) identified as speaking English at an intermediate level or above. One notable exception was individuals age 65 years and older (n – 28), who—based on year of arrival—were 53 years or older when they came to Canada. Over two-thirds of older arrivals reported having no formal education or having completed primary school. Seventeen reported no English on arrival; all but one continued to identify as having either no or very little English. Of those who had attended language classes in Canada (n – 12), all but two had CLB Level 1 or below. All had obtained Canadian citizenship, likely through age-based language exemptions. Given the paucity of targeted settlement services for naturalized citizens, this may further impair integration.

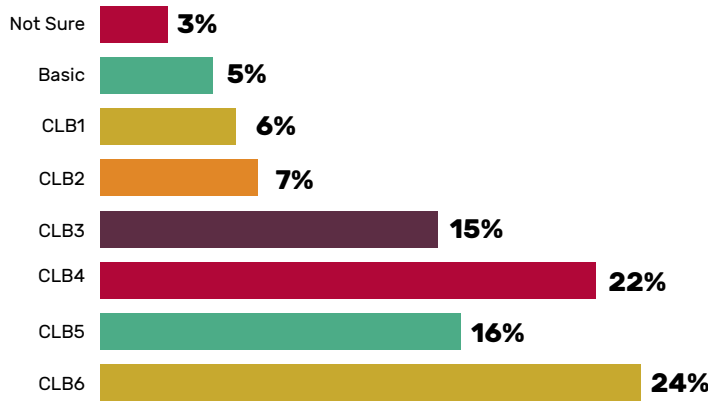


Figure 11: Reported LINC levels of survey respondents (n - 234)

Over 80% of respondents said they had accessed English language classes (e.g., LINC) since arriving in Canada; the vast majority of those reported increased English language proficiency). Fifty-three respondents provided reasons for not accessing language classes, which included not needing help with language (53%), time of day (25%), the location of classes (11%), lack of childcare (6%), and transportation (6%). Puzzlingly, almost half of survey respondents who indicated they did not need help with their language reported having no (14%) or minimal (25%) English on arrival. Forty percent of respondents who provided their LINC level

(n – 234) currently exceed the required language level to obtain Canadian citizenship (see Figure 11).

Most interviews and focus group participants recognized the importance of English language proficiency to integration. One interviewee, for example, asserted that learning English is the most important factor in successfully integrating in Canada. Unfortunately, many expressed dissatisfaction with their command of English; several indicated a wish that they had started learning English before coming to Canada. Participants shared struggles of navigating the medical system and daily life without a firm command of English. Several relied on their children to provide interpretation, which had implications for the parent-child dynamic.

The most mentioned barrier to accessing language classes was time. One two-parent family took turns, with one enrolling in English classes while the other worked; this slowed language acquisition for both of them. Other respondents struggled to schedule classes in between childcare responsibilities, work, and medical appointments, and many wished that English instruction had been available to them in their transit countries. Finally, a few interviewees lacked formal education beyond primary school, and low literacy presented an additional challenge to English language learners. While young people generally enjoyed a higher level of English proficiency, communication remained a challenge within all age cohorts.

Having strong English skills helped respondents to make social connections with neighbours, co-workers, and others who did not speak their mother tongue; respondents who were confident in their English communication skills appeared more likely to approach others for conversation. One interviewee described overcoming her neighbours' initial distrust, and she attributed her success to her relatively fluent English:

> *"Now we spent three years here. And in this time, I become friends with the First Nations around here. Let me see anyone, we talk with them. They say that we are very, very nice. And they understand why we came here … [W]hen they see you for the first time maybe they're scared, but I think that you can connect with them."*

Here, the interviewee was able to use her English proficiency to forge a connection with her neighbours and connect to the wider community. Language was the most frequently cited determinant of integration mentioned by study participants, underscoring the importance of English proficiency to integration outcomes.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME SECURITY

There is an intuitive link between employment and economic integration, and whether post-secondary degrees are recognized the recognition of post-secondary plays a role in securing employment. This section discusses some of the struggles faced by recent refugees in the labour market and includes data from the survey as well as qualitative sources.

Among survey respondents, 59% were employed (n – 326). Reasons for not being employed (n – 130) included disability and health issues (30%), family responsibilities (22%), being a senior or

retired (12%), not being able to find employment (12%), language proficiency (8%), being a student (8%), and other (8%) (see Figure 12).

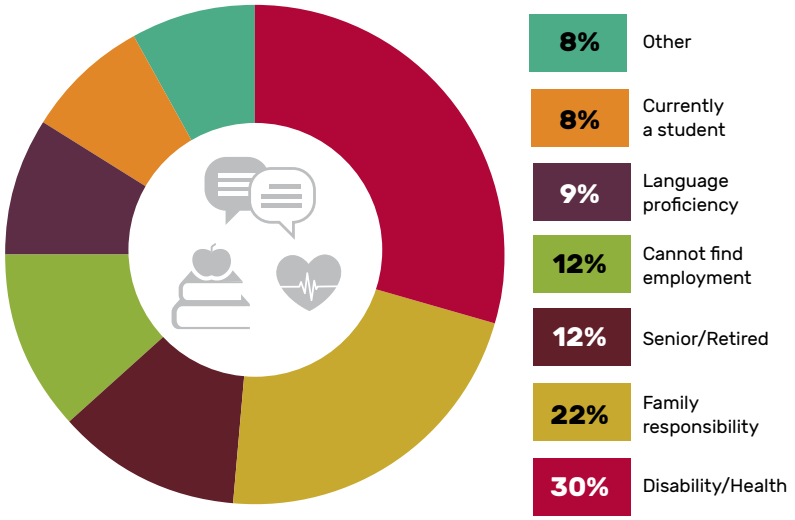


Figure 12: Reasons for not being employed of survey respondents (n - 130)

The difficulties in finding employment speak to larger issues facing newcomers to Canada. Participant responses highlight the strategies and challenges they face:

> *"I tried to apply to many [jobs but] I couldn't get one. Even I did volunteering, and I did study at BCIT, plus I participate in employment program three times … I send emails, and apply through company websites, and I had couple of interviews, sometimes I walk in to pass my resumé, but no is the answer always."*

> *"When I arrived I started a job that I never worked before as I didn't know what to do and then I couldn't continue working [in] that field, I studied architecture engineering but I didn't find a job in my field."*

> *"Because I am considered a senior. Also, no available jobs for non- or little-English speakers."*

Self-employment provides a valuable opportunity for individuals to participate in the labour market. Twenty-six percent of respondents who indicated employment status were self-employed (n – 115). The majority of employees were employed full-time (55%) (see Figure 13).

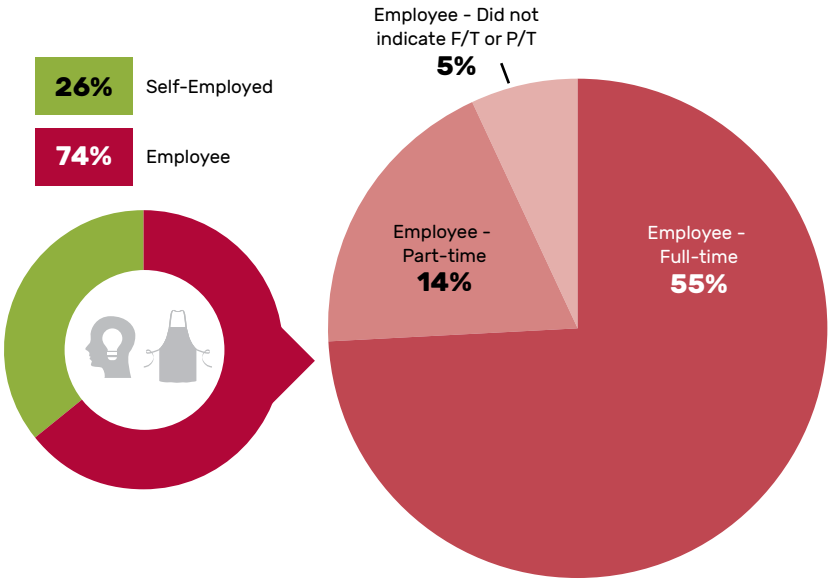


Figure 13: Employment status of survey respondents (n - 115)

Respondents were also asked about the type of job currently held, using seven broad categories: agriculture (e.g., farmer), entry level (e.g., cleaner), intermediate (e.g., truck driver), technical job or skilled trade (e.g., electrician), professional (e.g., doctor), or management (e.g., restaurant manager), or other (see Figure 14). Self-employment was frequently cited as an "other" response. The most mentioned field was entry level (42%), followed by technical/ skilled trade (31%), intermediate (15%), and management (8%). Almost one in four respondents (23%) reported working in a similar job in Canada as they held prior to arrival (n – 191). This relationship was strongest for those with lower levels of education (primary school 39%, secondary school 27%) and those with advanced degrees (27%).

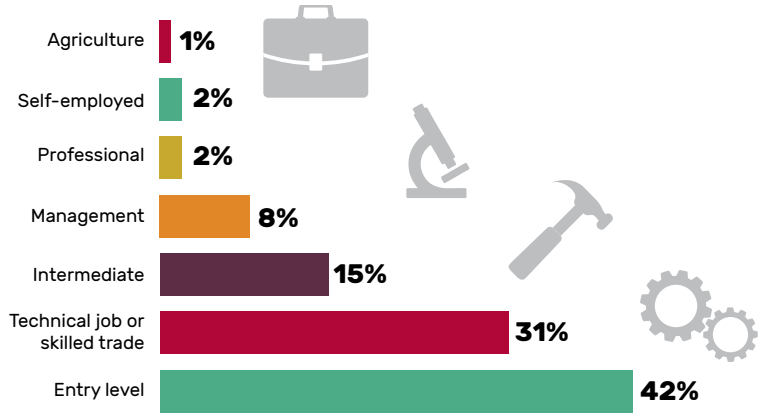


Figure 14: Types of jobs held by survey respondents (n - 194)

Fifty-one percent of respondents who reported having worked since arriving in Canada had two to five years of Canadian work experience (n – 192); 36% had more than five years. Eight percent of respondents (n – 311) had been unsuccessful in obtaining employment; another 18% had not looked for work. Of those who had worked in Canada (n – 230), over half had found employment within their first year in Canada, 32% within one to two years of arriving, and 17% more than two years after arrival (see Figure 15).

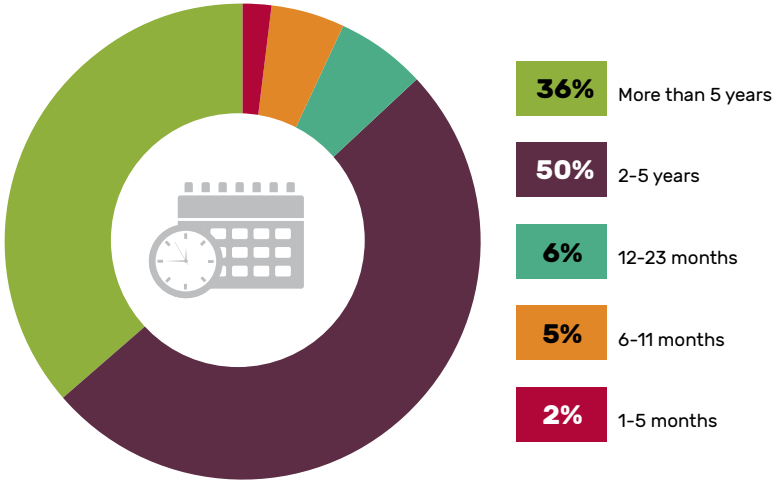


Figure 15: Length of time before respondents found first job after arriving in Canada (n - 230)

Seventy percent of respondents with some post-secondary education who answered the question related to vocation (n – 118) were employed at the time of the research, 19% of whom were working in the same or a similar type of job as what they held prior to arriving in Canada. At the time of the survey, 38% were in entry-level jobs, 15% were in intermediate positions, 29% were in technical or skilled trades, and 3% were self-employed (n – 80).

English language ability was positively associated with employment outcomes. Employed survey respondents reported having a higher level of English on arrival, as well as a greater increase in language skills in the intervening period. The direction of this relationship, however, is unclear. While interactions in the

workplace may allow refugees to practise their English, refugees who are actively working to improve their communication skills may be more likely to secure and maintain employment.

Almost half the respondents reported working 31 to 40 hours per week (n – 191), while 28% said they worked more than 41 hours per week. One-quarter of respondents reported holding two or more jobs (n – 20) at the time of the survey, of whom 25% worked more than 51 hours per week, while one in five worked 11 to 20 hours per week (see Figure 16).

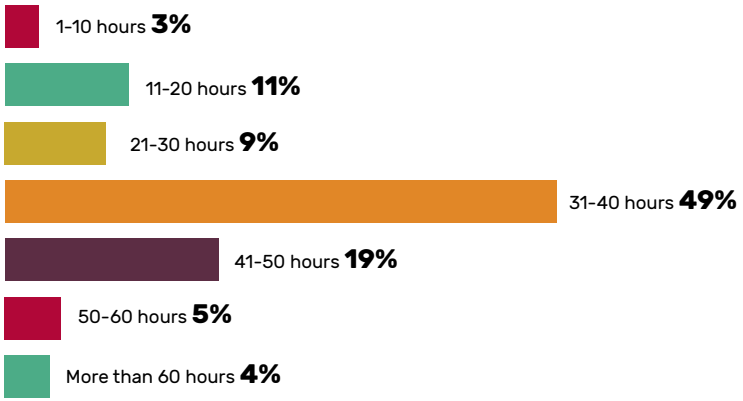


Figure 16: Total hours worked per week by survey respondents (n - 191)

Source of income is an important factor in understanding income security, as well as an indicator of economic integration. When considered individually, paid work was the most significant source of income of respondents, accounting for 59% of primary (n – 321) and 53% of secondary (n – 226) sources of income.

The data on primary and secondary sources of income, considered together (n – 225), revealed that many households depend on multiple income sources (see Figure 17). Forty-three percent of respondents said their household sole source of income was paid work; 20% of households solely depended on government transfers. Time of arrival was not a significant determinant of reliance on paid work or government transfers as the sole source of income. While respondents in each time frame were slightly more likely to rely on paid work than government transfers, the total range was 13% (see Figure 18).

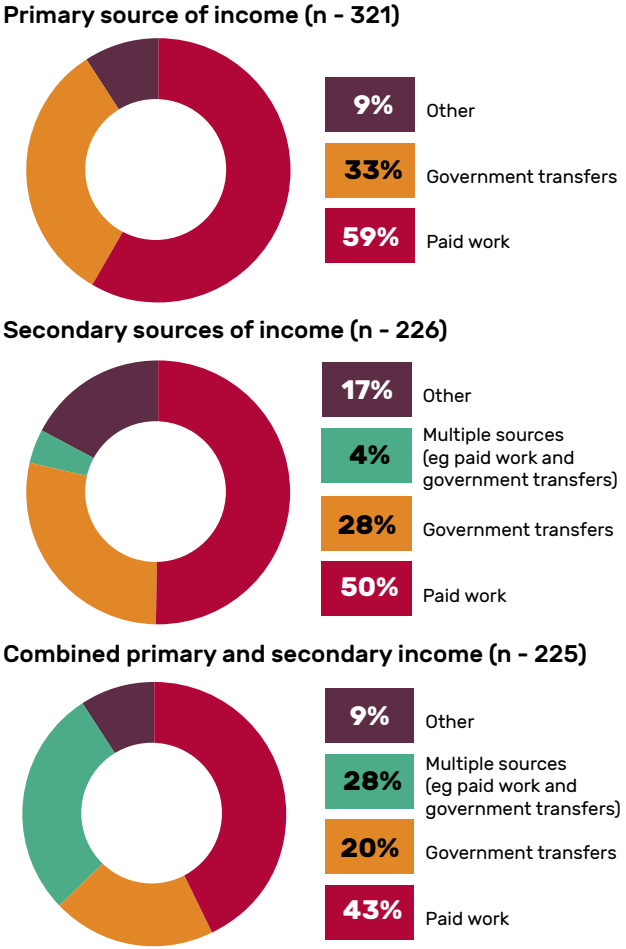


Figure 17: Sources of income of survey respondents (n - 225)

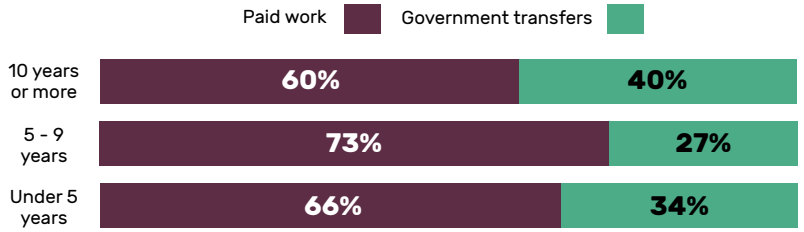


Figure 18: Sole source of income at time of arrival of survey respondents (n - 136)

Working age respondents (18 to 54 years) were much more likely to report paid income as the sole source of income, while those age 55 and older were more likely to depend on government transfers. The percentage of individuals solely dependent on paid work was highest among those age 24 to 34 (90%) and declined until age 65 and older, when no individuals reported being solely dependent on paid income (see Figure 19).

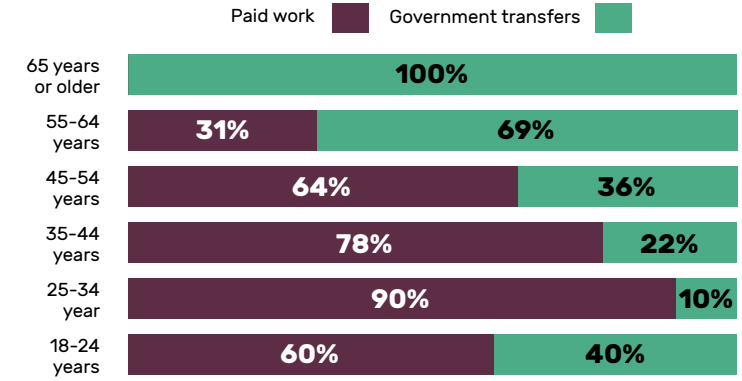


Figure 19: Sole source of income by age of survey respondents (n - 141)

Similarly, language proficiency upon arrival was not a significant indicator of reliance on paid work. Those who arrived with no English were almost equally likely to report paid work (51%) as government transfers (49%) (see Figure 20).

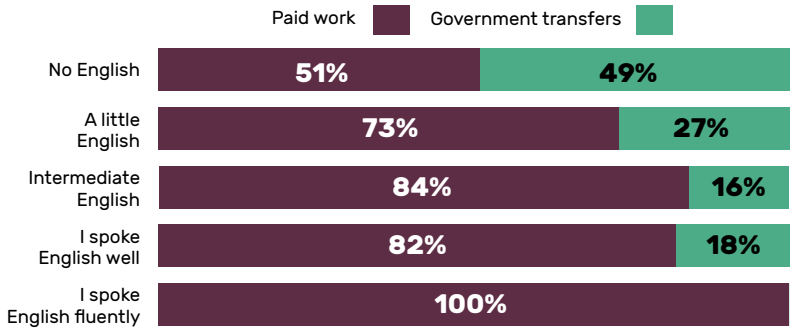


Figure 20: Sole source of income by English language proficiency on arrival of survey respondents (n - 141)

Survey respondents cited multiple barriers in obtaining employment, including limited English language proficiency, lack of Canadian experience, requirements and cost of credential recognition, the importance of employment networks, and the need to adjust expectations given their ability to access similar employment to what they enjoyed before they migrated.

> *"Knowing the language, etc. It's a broad question. Some [people] come here and settle easily, but for me it was hard to find a job good. I am still looking [to] improve my work, get my credentials recognized, etc. It's a big process. I was at a high position but now [I] have to start from zero."*

> *"Better job search services, need connection for getting a job. Even if you know English, connections [are] important."*

> *"I couldn't find the job that I used to do … due to language and I don't have Canadian experience."*

Underemployment was a prominent theme in survey responses and interviews, and policies on recognizing credentials and post-secondary degrees earned abroad seemed to drive poor outcomes. Rates of underemployment were higher among college-educated respondents, and even holders of advanced degrees found themselves working in poorly paid entry-level jobs. Interviewees attributed this to the long, arduous, and costly process of seeking recognition for degrees earned at foreign universities. Where refugees succeeded in leveraging their degrees, they still faced an employment market that tends to value Canadian experience above experience earned abroad. Bauder (2005) observes that some refugees are unfamiliar with workplace norms in Canada, and this can make navigating the interview and hiring process more difficult. Even those respondents who worked in numbers-focused fields, where language of instruction may be less relevant, struggled to have their qualifications accepted by employers. Professional degrees (e.g., medical doctor, midwife, lawyer) were often unusable because of differing education and licensing requirements by country. Based on respondent answers, complicated regulatory assessment and recognition processes appear to represent a significant barrier in some fields, contributing to underemployment and poverty among some highly educated GARs. A contributing factor to difficulties in credential recognition is the relative lack of familiar third-party validators that regulators and employers often rely on when evaluating the credentials of domestic applicants. For example, many regulators require domestic applicants to have graduated from an accredited program but do not have access to equivalent third-party validation for international programs of study.

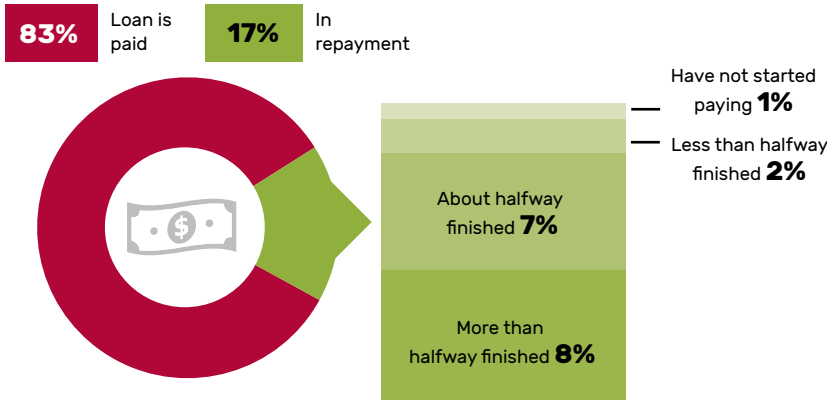


Figure 21: Repayment status of transportation loans of survey respondents (n - 263)

The issue of debt, especially the repayment of transportation loans, is also tied to underemployment. Many survey respondents and interviewees mentioned the burden of repaying transportation loans to come to Canada; some were struggling to pay more than ten years later. Eighty-three percent of respondents reported having received a transportation loan (n – 321), a number that may be underrepresented given only 8% of survey respondents were from Syria. This issue was less evident among Syrians, for whom the Government of Canada waived all transportation costs. Eighty-three percent of respondents reported having already paid off their loan (n – 263). Of those who said they were still repaying their loans (n – 39), two have been here more than 10 years. Two others,

who arrived three and five years ago respectively, had not started repaying loans (see Figure 21).

GARs generally have sparse resources to allocate to repaying these loans, further reducing their ability to afford everyday expenses along with a high rent burden. And adding to that burden for many is sending funds to their family in their country of origin. One-third of survey respondents (n – 314) said they sent money back to family. Sixty-five percent who reported sending money (n – 103) were from three countries—Afghanistan (30%), Somalia (22%) and Iran (13%). Two-thirds (n – 96) arrived in Canada more than a decade ago.

HOUSING

In all three stages of the project, concerns about housing emerged, including lack of affordability, poor physical quality of housing stock, and neighbourhood safety. Overall, survey respondents were highly mobile with only 15% still living in their initial accommodations (n – 323). Sixty-four percent reported having moved one to three times, 16% four to six times, and 4% more than six times. Time of arrival did not have a significant influence on number of moves. One in five people who had moved four or more times arrived in the last five years (n – 61), compared to 64% of those who have never moved (n – 44). Two-thirds of the more mobile respondents said they were employed and over half were from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, and Somalia.

A small percentage reported living alone (4%) or with roommates (4%), and two-thirds of respondents reported living with immediate family (spouse and/or children) (n – 296). Others live with extended family members—often multi-generational. While 58% of survey respondents were satisfied with their housing (n – 322), 28% were unsatisfied and 13% were unsure how to answer. Within these two latter groups (unsatisfied or unsure), the most frequent concern was rent being too expensive (67%), followed by accommodations being too small (50%), or old, dirty, or in poor repair (34%). Smaller numbers cited concerns about distance from work or social services, as well as neighbourhood safety (see Figure 22).

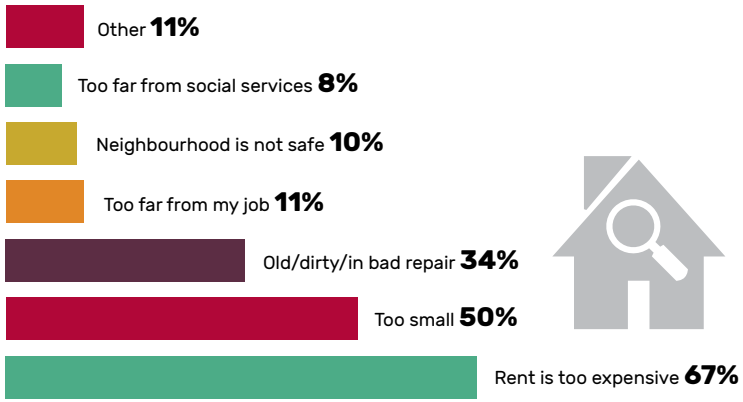


Figure 22: Housing challenges cited by survey respondents (n - 134)

Concerns identified in open-ended responses (other), largely reinforced previously mentioned concerns, and pointed to noise, unit security, and vermin as additional challenges. Long wait times and a limited stock of BC Housing compounds housing-related challenges.

While these concerns echo broader issues facing low-income households in Metro Vancouver, the extent to which refugee households report problems associated with poor quality, overcrowding, and unaffordability is concerning. Affordability guidelines established by the Canada Mortgage and Housing

Corporation suggest housing costs should not exceed 30% of household income; those allocating upwards of 50% of housing are considered in severe housing need. According to these criteria, 64% of respondents are in severe housing need (n – 314), with only 8% spending less than one-quarter of monthly income on housing. Although several respondents lived within large households, the mode was two-person households, with the average household size was 4.2.

Interviews and focus groups reaffirmed the struggles of post-IRPA GARs in an unstable and expensive housing market. Participants deployed many strategies to cope, from living with roommates to moving to more affordable suburbs. Most GAR households allocated more than half of monthly income to rent, and housing stock was often of poor quality. Respondents complained of buildings in disrepair, pests and vermin, local crime, and trying to fit large families into small dwellings. One interviewee mentioned moving her large family into a house infested with mice, while another expressed concerns about homelessness and drug use in her neighbourhood. Although some refugees expressed a preference for living in areas with high populations of co-ethnics, there did not seem to be a high level of this opinion among those in our study. Syrians were most likely to live near others of the same ethnicity, possibly because they arrived in the same recent cohort. Respondents seemed aware that living with and around co-ethnics could impact their integration within the broader community; several Arabic-speaking interviewees spoke of making a conscious effort to spend time with non-co-ethnics.

SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND SATISFACTION

Survey respondents were asked about their friends in Canada in order to get at issues of social integration. Eighty-eight percent of respondents reported having friends in Canada (n – 320). Those who indicated they did not have friends in Canada cited the challenges faced in integrating into a new country and a new culture, including language, health, and day-to-day responsibilities.

> *"Because life here is very busy. Nobody has time for making friends."*

> *"[It is] hard to make friends; language [is a] barrier. Some people just ignore people like me."*

> *"I am an old man. I don't go outside often unless I have doctor appointments. Besides that, in Canada everyone is busy with their live[s]."*

> *"I am working 16 hours a day and have no time for socializing."*

These challenges speak to larger barriers faced by many new arrivals to Metro Vancouver regardless of immigration status, including forming and maintaining friendships.

> *"I have only one as it is so hard to break the ice between Vancouverites."*

> *"It's pretty difficult and very complicated to make friends here. Although I tried my best … I couldn't. The community seems super friendly but not willing to make new friends."*

> *"Vancouver society is selfish, closed, and not friendly."*

> *"There is no social life in Canada! Other people of my age range are less interested in building friendship relations. I belong to [the] LGBT society, and that makes it more difficult in making comfortable friendship relations with others."*

Not all respondents, however, are interested in forming friendships; one said, "I don't want to have any [friends]. I prefer family friends, older friends."

Despite the challenges, 55% responded their friends are a mix of the same and different ethnicities. Ten percent reported their friends are from different ethnicities from themselves (n – 281); only 36% indicated all their friends are from the same ethnicity.

Volunteering represents one way of increasing involvement and social connectedness in the broader community. Twenty-five percent of respondents (n – 312) said they volunteered regularly, from less than two to more than 10 hours per month (see Figure 23). Five people provided further information on where they volunteer, including ethnic, cultural, or religious organizations, community policing offices, and settlement service agencies. Others identified volunteering as a key means of making connections with the broader community, learning about Canadian society, and understanding the work environment.

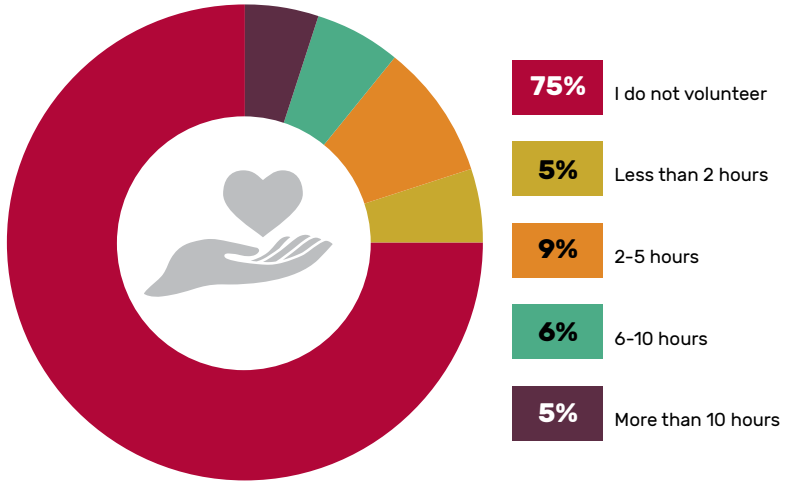


Figure 23: Time respondents spend volunteering per month (n - 312)

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Physical and mental health play an important role in settlement and integration. Pre-existing health concerns and ongoing impacts of trauma may exacerbate the emotional impacts of the cultural adjustment process.

Over half of survey respondents indicated they are healthy (34%) or very healthy (17%), compared to 16% who reported being unhealthy (16%) or very unhealthy (2%). Thirty percent, however, reported being neither healthy nor unhealthy (n – 322) (see Figure 24). When asked about indicators of mental health (e.g., feeling sad, depressed, or having a low mood), 70% reported being in good mental health (n – 320) or experiencing symptoms either occasionally (52%) or never (18%) (see Figure 25). The number of individuals reporting they felt sad, depressed, or in a low mood

more than half (11%) or all the time (5%) was consistent with literature stating that while the majority of individuals may self-heal during the integration process, between 5% and 15% may require deeper interventions.

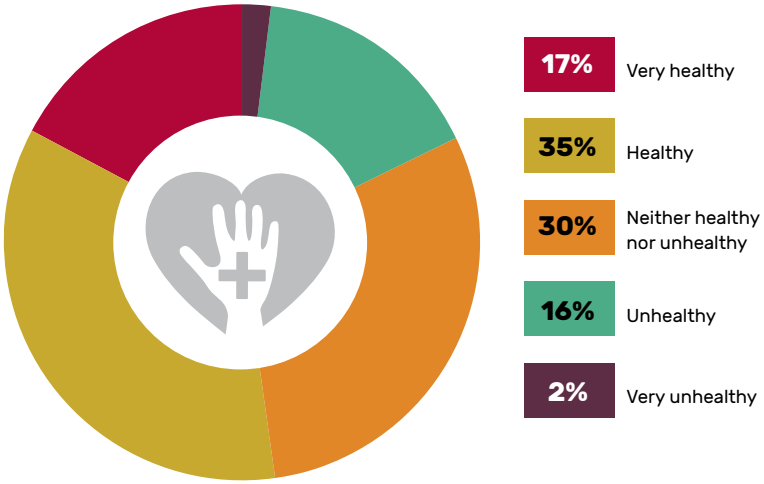


Figure 24: Health status of survey respondents (n- 322)

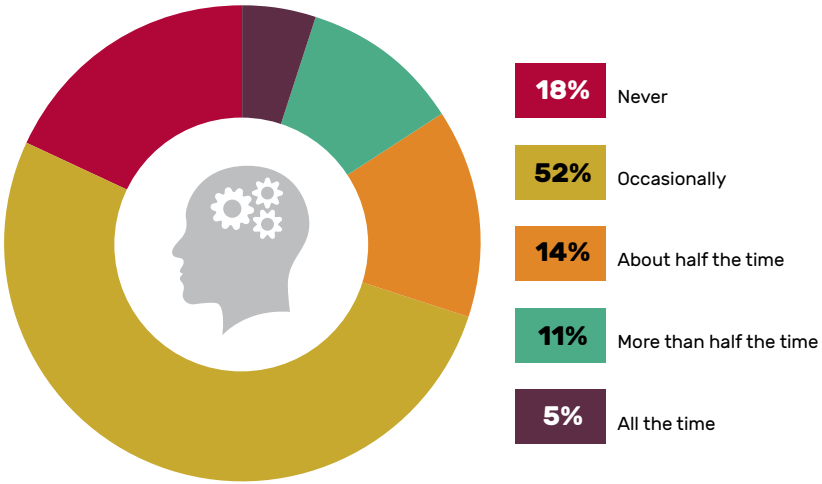


Figure 25: Indicators of mental health cited by survey respondents (n-320)

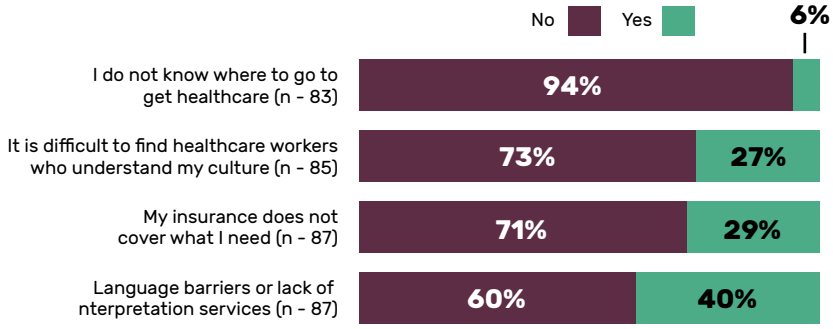


Figure 26: Barriers to healthcare cited by survey respondents (n – 320)

Seventy-two percent of respondents agreed it is easy to access healthcare in Canada (n – 320). Of those who did not, reasons provided were language barriers or lack of interpretation (40%, n – 87), expenses not being covered by insurance (29%, n – 87), difficulties in finding culturally competent healthcare workers (27%, n – 85), and lack of understanding where to go to get healthcare (6%, n – 83) (see Figure 26). Other reasons largely centred on long wait times, difficulties finding family doctors and specialists, and challenges in obtaining accurate diagnoses. One person was highly critical of the medical system: "Not so professional medical care system. I don't trust it. I am thankful that I haven't had any health problems so far. No specialist available and time-consuming. I don't like the health care process here." Concerns about the availability of culturally competent healthcare and long wait times for specialists were echoed by interview participants.

Overall, respondents reported being pretty happy (36%) or very happy (28%) with their life in Canada (n – 322) (see Figure 27). Sixty-nine percent (n – 318) felt prepared to begin their life in Canada when they arrived.

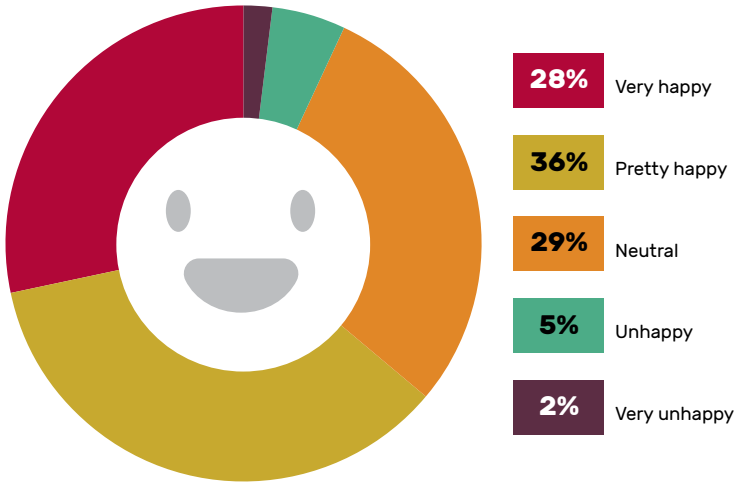


Figure 27: Reporting on happiness by survey respondents (n - 322)

Although we did not ask explicitly about trauma, many participants mentioned that adverse migration-related experiences were a barrier to integration. As part of the survey, we asked whether individuals had spent time in a refugee camp; this question allowed us to conduct a comparative analysis of camp versus non-camp GARs.

GARs who had lived in refugee camps were less likely to report living in their initial accommodations (camp – 9%; non-camp – 17%, n – 319), and over twice as likely (7% vs 3%) to have moved more than six times since arrival. Although approximately 30% of camp and non-camp GARs reported regularly having symptoms of depression (50% or more of the time), their experiences varied. Refugees who had spent time in camps were more likely to report feeling depressed about half the time (25% camp; 11% non-camp), while non-camp refugees were more likely to express feeling depressed much more frequently (19% non-camp; 6% camp). Further, camp refugees reported being in better physical health than others, and they also tended to report higher levels of life satisfaction.

Many interviewees identified trauma and consequent mental health concerns as factors in integration. When asked what she liked most about living in Canada, one woman answered, "feeling safe." Another respondent, a North African man who identifies as gay, described Canada as "95% safe."

Despite the relatively secure environment in Canada, many respondents reported continuing to struggle with the longer-term impacts of trauma. One woman, who requested that her country of origin be withheld, relayed that experiences of forced marriage and domestic violence left her with post-traumatic stress disorder, something she believes has prevented her from thriving in Canada. Another woman referenced trauma more obliquely, saying, "we leave from bad situations: war, we were sick—my husband is still sick, and they give him medical treatment here...we came from a bad situation." A woman, who identifies as transgender, described experiencing ongoing nightmares and depression as a result of having lived in constant fear of physical and sexual violence in her home country. Some refugee parents mentioned that their children continued to struggle with past trauma. One mother related that her daughter panics when someone knocks on their door, and "always dreams at night and shouts and cries. She imagines that someone is coming to kill her." Several interviewees mentioned receiving mental health supports such as therapy and medication; most were very satisfied with the help received from professionals. Nevertheless, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideations continued to manifest for some interviewees.

Further, many interviewees and focus group participants described the psychological toll that ongoing family separation has on their mental health, including guilt and an inability to be fully present as they worry about family left behind in refugee camps or other precarious situations. One Syrian respondent described surviving torture and fleeing his country of origin, only to leave his family in a refugee camp in Turkey. Another, a Karen woman, described leaving her elderly father without a caretaker. A few individuals mentioned feeling a sense of guilt. One woman explained:

> *"I left my family in Syria … I just feel like… I'm like in heaven, but at the same time, there is something missing. It's like a flower without a smell…that is our feeling here. We have everything but at the same time we feel like there is something missing in our life."*

Many refugees expressed a hope that family sponsorship rules would be relaxed so they could be reunited with relatives. Although it would be logistically impossible to accept every refugee with a family member in Canada—and not all family members are interested in coming to Canada—expediting family reunification could have a positive impact on integration outcomes. More research is needed to understand the costs and benefits of such a policy change, but our study indicates that addressing the impact of family separation on mental health would be useful.

ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES

Finally, our project sought to understand service utilization and relationships with service providers within the context that these services facilitate GAR settlement and integration process. It is important to understand that services in this context include government programs (e.g., social assistance, WorkSafeBC); settlement and employment services, language/adult education, and housing providers.

As part of the survey, we asked respondents if they had accessed four broad types of social services, including settlement and employment agencies and programs, and government and other non-governmental programs and services. Eighty-two percent of respondents accessed settlement and employment agencies and programs (n – 328), 62% LINC programming (n – 324), 26% BC Housing or co-op housing (n – 321), and 17% BC disability or income assistance (n – 322) (see Figure 28).

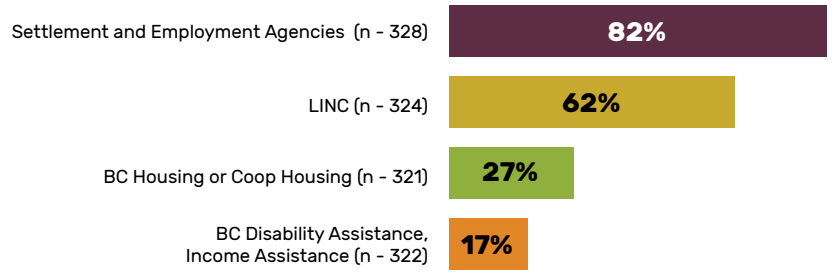


Figure 28: Access to social services by survey respondents

The vast majority of respondents indicated it is easy to access social services (85%, n – 317). Ease of access was higher for settlement, employment, and language services (89%, n - 558) compared to other social services and government agencies such as BC Housing, BC Disability, and the Ministry of Social Development (82%, n- 158). An open-ended follow-up question was included to better understand difficulties experienced by the remaining 15%.

The responses to the question, *Why is it difficult to access services?* (n – 41) reinforced more widespread difficulties associated with settlement and integration, including the impact of language barriers, time constraints, lack of Canadian experience/employment networks, barriers experienced by those with physical disabilities, insufficient stock of subsidized housing, and transportation.

> *"Because of the language; I need to find someone who can support me [with] English."*

> *"Physical movement limitations and costly."*

> *"Because of illness …. And I don't speak English very well."*

> *"I was working 5/6 days a week and I have no time to contact them."*

> *"It's not easy to get connected and [gain] access, such as BC Housing and co-op housing."*

Some spoke of having done things for themselves. "I didn't use much so I don't know. I like to find things on my own." A small number of respondents spoke about challenges related to the availability and efficacy of services received. One opined, "it is too complicated, and it takes [too] long and… [there are] not enough competent individuals to help sort problems." Another indicated:

> *"I didn't know about the services and how to access them. I think newcomers need to get orientation about the service providers and how to access them. Furthermore, the newcomers need guidance about the services each organization provides."*

It is not clear whether concerns about services resulted from the inability of social service providers to address the needs of post-IRPA GARs due to government policies (e.g., inability to reunite with family members), the quality of services provided, or a lack of social housing stock.

Participants in interviews and focus groups echoed challenges in accessing social services, including government services. Some participants complained that workers would have benefited from more targeted knowledge to meet their needs, did not always speak their language, or were too busy to meet all of their needs. Some interviewees mentioned being in a fragile or vulnerable state on arrival in Canada and wished that service providers in general would treat them with more sensitivity.

Understanding the cause of the dissatisfaction is challenging owing to competing and overlapping demands, both from clients and staff. While some of the dissatisfaction with services may be due to misunderstandings, high expectations, culture shock, or cultural differences in communication, it must be acknowledged that client needs may be impossible to address given program and funding limitations. Many Syrians, especially, reported negative experiences, which may be explained by the rapid influx during the height of OSR, and slower systemic response. One Syrian woman described her large family being pressured to leave temporary accommodations before they had secured what they deemed suitable housing

Challenges of obtaining housing were highlighted during Operation Syrian Refugee owing to the number of arrivals and public interest. These included availability of adequately sized and affordable units, as well as navigating client expectations within existing financial and housing resources. Drawing on media analysis and

interviews with RAP providers across Canada, Rose (2019) provides insights into the complex process. Whatever the reason, this dynamic may create a reluctance on the part of refugees to access social services, which may negatively impact integration. Without having a picture of the context of arrival, however, it is difficult to fully understand what transpired.

In their discussion of economic outcomes of resettled refugees in Canada, Hyndman et al. (2014) note there has been little change compared to prior cohorts.

> *"[T]he economic outcomes of resettled refugees are less likely a reflection of their human capital or individual integration potential and more likely a result of the support provided upon arrival (Iriyama 2011). Still, measuring the impact of support services for resettled refugees remains elusive" (Hyndman et al., 2013, p. 13).*

While the vast majority of respondents felt it was easy to access services, it is important to reflect on the environment into which they arrive. Resettled refugees arrive into a context that has not fully evolved to meet their unique needs. In spite of the changing profile of arrivals, for example, current RAP goals and service standards have remained largely static since its introduction in 1998. The disparity between housing costs and income assistance rates has continued to grow. The provincial government is addressing housing affordability through a range of investments and approaches, including increasing the number of units of affordable market rental, non-profit, co-op, supported social housing, student housing and owner-purchase housing; however, there is more work still to be done. At present, the stock of affordable housing across Metro Vancouver has continued to decline, and landlords – including BC Housing – continue to rely upon occupancy standards that unintentionally penalize larger sized families and those with young adults. Refugees are selected for resettlement based on need for protection and arrive with physical and mental health needs, yet there remains little or no resources to address mental health needs. And while mainstream services and government agencies have increasingly tried to expand languages of service, there remains little access to interpretation in health care unless within a hospital setting and legal services. Families who have been forced to flee, leaving family members behind in tenuous and unsafe conditions, remain separated long after requests for reunification have been made or rejected due to eligibility criteria or long wait times for private sponsorship. Given the overarching context, the frustrations expressed are understandable.

RACISM, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, AND DISCRIMINATION

This theme was present in interviews, and participants discussed the ways in which having a minority sexual or gender identity shaped their integration experiences. Our conversations yielded interesting findings about intra-community discrimination and the ways in which refugees from conservative cultures navigate a society where attitudes toward LGBTQ2S+ individuals are becoming more tolerant.

Several interviewees disclosed identifying as LGTBQ2S+, which influenced their integration experience. Some identified sexual orientation or gender identity as the reason for coming to Canada, perceiving Canada as being safer and more tolerant than their countries of origin. Others, however, shared post-arrival experiences of hostility, including a lack of social acceptance

from co-ethnics, being forced to stay in the closet in order to maintain friendships, and in one case being the target of street harassment owing to gender identity. They reported that cultural barriers related to being LGTBQ2S+ remained an obstacle to social integration.

Themes related to sexuality and gender identity also emerged in the responses of some cisgender and heterosexual post-IRPA GARs who expressed "there are no homosexuals in [my country]" or spoke of being uncomfortable with their children's exposure to LGBTQ2S+ communities in Canada. One Syrian father expressed the hope that none of his children would turn out to be gay or lesbian. While the rights of LGTBQ2S+ people are protected under Canadian human rights law and general acceptance of minority sexual orientations and gender identities appears to be growing, at least in some arenas, but LGBTQ2S+ respondents report they still face prejudice within and outside of their ethnic communities.

Prejudice notwithstanding, all LGBTQ2S+ refugees interviewed agreed that Canada was safer than their home countries, and most found ways to build community despite the attitudes of others. One pair of refugee men, who both identified as gay, forged a strong friendship after meeting in an LGBTQ2S+ space online. Another, also a gay man, was able to share his culture and bridge barriers with co-workers. One heterosexual refugee mother spoke of having overcome her own prejudices against gay and transgender individuals, and is teaching her children to respect all people, regardless of identity. Interviewees from conservative societies shared that it was difficult to adjust to more open attitudes of sexuality and gender, but most understood respect for diversity to be a key Canadian value. A Muslim interviewee shared that she rarely felt judged for wearing hijab; she hoped that she could extend the same courtesy to those with beliefs and values different from her own. So, although LGBTQ2S+ refugees are at an increased risk of marginalization and exclusion, connections with others in the community and the existence of open-minded co-ethnics help to mitigate negative outcomes.

Interview and focus group participants were asked about their experiences of prejudice and discrimination. While some mentioned being mistreated for their status as refugees, most of the abuse was directed toward those with secondary marginalized identities. LGBTQ2S+ and Muslim participants, especially, were likely to experience targeted harassment.

Prejudice and discrimination manifested in unexpected ways. While interviewees reported incidents of maltreatment, very few connected them to immigration status. Muslim refugees—particularly women who wear hijab—were likely to report verbal abuse in public spaces, something they attributed to their religious identity. A Syrian woman shared:

> *"I have had just one bad experience. I went to my bank, and I was waiting for the bus. One guy spoke with me, and he said, 'you don't have to be here. You are a terrorist; you have to leave now.' Why did he talk to me like this? I didn't answer. There was a woman across the street [who] stopped to see if he would hurt me or do something bad. He just left. I didn't want to be face-to-face with him again [while waiting]; I was scared. I think it's because I was wearing hijab, and he called me a terrorist, like 'I know terrorists wear this.'"*

LGBTQ2S+ individuals reported having experienced prejudice both within and outside their own ethnocultural communities. Several Arabic interviewees who identified as LGBTQ2S+ indicated

they avoided interacting with co-ethnics fearing that traditional attitudes about gender and same-sex relationships would lead to discrimination. This echoes findings by Karimi (2018), who cites discrimination by co-ethnics as a barrier to social inclusion. Only two interviewees (one Arabic and one Southeast Asian) mentioned being the target of anti-refugee or xenophobic comments. In both cases, the remarks were related to competition in the labour market ("refugees are stealing our jobs"). These findings complicate the idea that discrimination against refugees can be explicitly connected to newcomer status and indicate that holding more than one marginalized identity puts individuals at increased risk of ill-treatment.

Another interesting finding deals with experiences of hate speech online. Many interviewees reported seeing anti-Muslim or anti-refugee content on social media sites. One woman mentioned encountering content that stereotyped Muslims as terrorists and ISIS, and this made her feel hurt and misunderstood. Another man was the target of xenophobic and Islamophobic remarks after posting a picture of his wife in a headscarf.

Social media is a key site of social interaction, and experiences online should be considered when investigating social integration. Social media can be a double-edged sword for refugee newcomers; although it allows individuals to stay in contact with family left behind, it exposes them to hate speech and outright harassment. A recent study by Marlowe (2019) makes a similar argument, suggesting that social media can be both a site of connection for refugees and a place where users are exposed to hateful and offensive material. One of our interviewees, an aspiring baker, used social media to network and learn new skills; in this case, the site benefited her economic integration by enabling her to start building a business. Still, the impact of social media on integration appears mixed, and the topic is only beginning to be addressed in the literature.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SETTLEMENT EXPERIENCE AND ADVICE FOR THOSE WHO WILL FOLLOW

Responses to the question, *What would have helped you be more prepared?* provide insight into pre-arrival and immediate needs, overarching advice useful for future arrivals, and their own experiences since arriving in Canada. Accurate and timely information is critical both in the period preceding arrival, as well as in the early years after arrival in Canada.

> *"Getting more REALISTIC information about life in Canada, besides [the] weather. They only tell you about weather and kindness of people, ok, but nobody provides you realistic information about how difficult [it is] to get a job that you are happy with, or a house that you feel comfort[able] in, or building a social life."*

> *"I wanted to hear more about the problems and difficulties in Canada. Lots of people think that here is honey and milk forgetting that we have to fight for our well-being."*

Language and skills-based training provided overseas would have made early integration easier. Further, the lack of accessible written materials in first language created additional barriers.

> *More training on life in Canada in refugee camps, English language course in camps, long-term employment training.*

> *Some materials, brochure, or guidelines in my language [would have helped]. I find it's hard to understand new terms, culture even though I was studying English. The language they use in papers and documents here are hard to understand for intermediate level.*

Looking to the future and reflecting on their own experiences, many spoke of the need for newcomers to "keep a positive mind," "help yourself," "give it time," and get involved in the community.

> *We left a good life in Iran and Turkey. We were lost at first here in Canada and where to start. It's typical for anyone. At first we were depressed but really getting into the community and adapting and feeling like belonging helped us to prepare for life here.*

> *Time helped in integrating and find[ing] meaning in life in Canada.*

The presence of family helped in the integration process. "It wasn't too difficult because I came with my family." For others who are separated, the stresses associated with separation can delay integration. "I had my family members left in Iran and was not very happy. Now that my second daughter is here, I feel better." Another stated it would have helped "if I wasn't alone."

Given the importance of social connections and belonging it is important to consider where opportunities exist to interact and form relationships (e.g., school, work), as well as what role these communities could play in facilitating newcomer integration.

For youth, the challenges of settlement and integration are amplified by age-related concerns.

> *I was a teenager and it was hard for me to imagine going to another country that I haven't been [to] and leaving all my friends.*

> *I was just teenager and I didn't know where and what to start.*

> *... the first two years it was very difficult. I had no language. I went to adult school but I was 18. I felt lonely and had no help.*

One respondent provided heartfelt feedback and recommendations for change premised on a client-centred service model:

> *I really think that we need a department that can study the background and the person['s] education ... to assist the refugee what to do first and not waste their time in unhappy jobs that leads them to depression [and] culture shock .... I have a translation bachelor's degree that I couldn't know what to do with it. Expensive life made me forget about everything and live helpless as I'm single and I can't take one day off to see how can I make my life better.*

We also need … trained case workers that know what they are doing instead of somebody who do[es] nothing because they don't want to offer something that make them work harder.

It's really important to find a system that can study each case and … accurately offer good help instead of just pay welfare to newcomers without actually helping them, specially youth. A few simple steps can change newcomer's life and help the Canadian economy."

Provision of tailored services that meet the needs of GARs and other newcomers facilitate access to meaningful employment and contributes to individual's ability to rebuild lives with dignity.

HOW POST-IRPA GARS DEFINE INTEGRATION

Throughout much of the literature, newcomer integration is assessed according to definitions and indicators established defined by others (e.g., government agencies, service providers, academics). One of the foremost goals of this project was to understand how post-IRPA GARs define integration themselves, and interview and focus group respondents provided a range of answers. One common theme was the multi-faceted nature of integration, while another was the desire to hold onto aspects of the home culture while adopting Canadian practices and norms. The definitions were strikingly similar to those offered by scholars like Ager and Strang (2008), and they incorporated both economic and social indicators.

Respondents were provided a list of characteristics and asked how they would define integration in Canada. Learning English, becoming a citizen, and making Canadian friends were the top three responses (see Figure 29). It should be acknowledged, however, that finding employment was inadvertently omitted from the list.

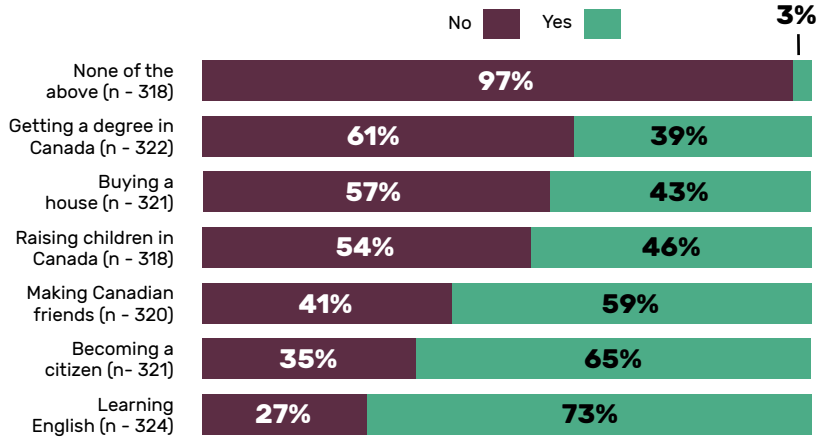


Figure 29: Defining integration among survey respondents

Survey respondents were subsequently asked to reflect on what "successful integration" means to them. Responses highlighted both the pressing needs and challenges (e.g., learning English, finding adequate and affordable housing), as well as longer-term goals associated with social and economic integration.

"*A dignified life which is possible only after social and economic independence and social acceptance.*"

"*Being healthy, being able to study or further one's career easily, and successfully being employed so that one gets a home to call their own.*"

> *A successful integration starts with 'belonging' and being able to make connections that support the journey of becoming a great citizen. The depression, anxiety, and being lonely destroys all of our dreams and makes us no longer passionate, or even proud to be safe and alive in this beautiful country. A successful integration starts at the moment you step out the airplane, if you were lucky enough to find the right people and the appropriate connections you are set for success.*

> *Actively integrating with people whom [you] met in your new home country (Canada) by participating [in] volunteer activities such as: political, economical and social activities. Getting your Canadian passport is also a successful integration of joining the official Canadian family.*

> *Affordable housing, children['s] education, and getting employment.*

> *For me, it is social acceptance and living a dignified life where no one makes me feel I'm an outsider or [an] immigrant or a refugee and can live without any economic stress. Source of income through work is important and it should be enough to live. I feel that I'm working just because I want to work to survive. I've no skills that can help me find permanent and good jobs. I've [got a] chronic health condition and still working 10 hours a day.*

> *First is to feel comfortable with my own skin here. Adapt to a new lifestyle, culture is hard. Plus, we don't have the privilege those who [are] born and raised here have, it is hard to compete with them in schools, finding jobs, etc... But once it happens, everything will come naturally.*

These statements speak to the multi-faceted nature of integration, something characterized as a journey and culminating in a sense of belonging. Responses demonstrate the importance of obtaining stability and establishing roots in Canada.

> *Becoming a citizen, buy[ing] a house, and knowing that my children will have a safe and better education for me is successful integration.*

> *Coming from a war zone area I never had a safe and stable life. For me successful integration is becoming a good Canadian citizen and hav[ing] a family here knowing that I will be safe and have a better lifestyle.*

Finally, some respondents stressed self-efficacy and the importance of advocating for themselves as a critical part of successful integration.

> *[Successful integration] depends on people's own hard work, people should try themselves to integrate.*

Many refugees responded to the integration question by expressing a desire to balance assimilation with preservation of their original cultures. As mentioned above, English fluency was

frequently cited, along with knowledge of Canadian culture and cross-ethnic friendships. One interviewee shared:

> *People believe when you come to the West, you westernize immediately. It is not like that. Integration is the way you feel to get adapted in the community you live in. When you come here, you see a lot of multiculturalism, and it's up to you how you adapt with that. Accept it and then live with it…Once I get my Canadian citizenship, I will get the full privilege of voting and deciding who I want to vote for.*

This individual saw adaptation to the community as a responsibility, but he also mentioned the privileges of settling in Canada, such as citizenship and voting rights. Another interviewee mentioned that "it's very important to respect the Canadian values, to make friends, and to have a social life," while another stated that integration entails "making friends—native friends, especially, learning the culture, [and] blending with people." Finally, one woman agreed that assimilation into the local culture was important, but she expressed the hope that she could hold on to the positive aspects of her home culture, too. Overall, study participants wanted to connect with and integrate into the Canadian community, even though many still sought to preserve their original cultural identities.

Many other interviewees presented a list of what they felt to be important to integration, viewing it through a technocratic lens, and defining it as a function of social and economic variables. One man defined integration this way:

> *Successful integration is having a good life here, feeling that I am really a part of this community, feeling that this country is my home, like other Canadians having a house, a decent job, a Canadian bank account—I think that's it. Trying to help more, trying to be active in this community, knowing my rights, practising my rights, participating in political life here, being active in economic life.*

> *For me, it's to fit into the community, to understand the culture, to understand the habits and the terms when they speak. To understand…when they speak English, sometimes something is not in the dictionary, but it has meaning and context in the culture. I'd like to be able to understand these things. I'd like to finish my education. For me, education is the main thing in becoming part of this community.*

Both these definitions touch on multiple aspects of integration, and they cohere with much of the academic writing on the topic. While they include more subjective aspects ("having a good life"), they also incorporate more objective indicators like active citizenship and English proficiency.

Finally, interviewees also reflected on the degree to which different members of their family have been able to successfully integrate, noting different rates of acculturation. One mother attributed her son's more rapid integration to the fact that "he was able to learn English fast, while my husband and I are learning slowly." For some, successful integration remained an elusive goal.

> *"[Integration] means a big thing. I have not reached it yet. I always feel that I did not do anything in my life. I tried to do something. I tried to be successful, because this my goal. Even if one day in my life I feel successful, I will be better."*

Conclusion

The integration of post-IRPA GARs is complex and multi-faceted. Although economic and social integration have often been addressed separately, they are closely related, and indicators like language proficiency help to determine outcomes in both domains. Post-IRPA GARs continue to struggle with obtaining meaningful employment, frequently working in jobs that differ from those held pre-migration. Furthermore, we found that refugees struggle with some of the same economic obstacles as other low-income British Columbians—they pay high rents, dedicate a high proportion of their income to repaying debts, and worry about neighbourhood safety and crime. Post-IRPA GARs participating in this study also report physical health problems, mental health concerns and trauma, and a diverse range of educational backgrounds, from no formal education to advanced degrees. Newcomers who are not literate in their first language may find it more difficult to acquire written English, while highly educated individuals encounter barriers to using degrees earned abroad. Prolonged family separation and ongoing concerns about family left in precarious situations overseas creates additional stresses that may impair integration.

Income security continues to be of paramount concern for post-IRPA GARs in BC. Un(der)employment, inability to obtain meaningful employment, high rental burdens that are amplified by inadequate financial supports, and lack of proficiency in English complicate successful integration. For post-IRPA GARs, the need to repay government transportation loans and financially support family members left behind further reduces money available to meet basic needs. Ameliorating burdens that post-IRPA GARs face, including elimination of government transportation loans, would go a long way toward helping to establish themselves in Canada. Although housing is recognized as a critical component of settlement and integration, post-IRPA GARs continue to encounter significant challenges in accessing adequate, affordable, and suitable housing owing in part to a combination of inadequate financial resources and larger family sizes.

Individuals who hold marginalized personal identities, be they religious, sexual, or cultural, are more likely to face prejudice and discrimination. While few respondents connected these experiences to their immigration status, Muslim and LGBTQ2S+ participants were most likely to suffer negative treatment based on their beliefs and identity. Islamophobic and homophobic experiences may negatively impact integration, though the relationship is not clear.

Beyond financial independence, belonging, and a successful future for their children, post-IRPA GARs conceptualize integration as a complex journey toward a sense of belonging—a journey underlain by aspirations of active citizenship through volunteering and voting. Post-IRPA GARs grappled with the understanding of the need to adapt to Canadian norms while maintaining their own identity.

English language proficiency was identified as the most significant precondition for integration, as it facilitates better labour market attachment, social connections, and ability to act independently. Without a firm command of English, participants shared struggles navigating the medical system and daily life. Providing pre-arrival English classes would facilitate post-IRPA GARs' readiness to begin the integration process upon arrival and reduce challenges associated with balancing the need to learn the language, obtain employment, and begin the rest of their lives. However, while participants acknowledged the importance of language proficiency and time in successful integration, the majority of respondents are happy with their life in Canada.

Research findings often reinforce a unidirectional understanding of integration, defined by "experts" and imposed on refugees and other newcomers. Yet, integration is a function of both internal and external factors. Although we do not have ability to fully understand the impact of environment (e.g., labour market, government policies) or services on refugee integration, it is important to note individual characteristics (e.g., level of education, previous work experience, language proficiency) and that social service and government agencies will also contribute to outcomes. Further, less frequently spoken of by respondents and the literature is the discussion of how Canadian society shifts and responds to the newcomers. It is positive to note, however, that hints of this two-way integration emerged in some comments, including newcomers learning to accept Canadian beliefs about gender and sexuality, as well as Canadians becoming more familiar and accepting of cultural norms of newcomers. Ensuring refugee – and other newcomer – voices are incorporated into definitions of integration is critical in moving beyond unidirectional models. The changing profile of post-IRPA GARs underscores the diversity of refugee newcomers resettled to Canada, as well as the need for definitions of integration to incorporate multiple outcomes.

Works Cited

Affleck, W., Thamotharampillai, U., Jeyakumar, J., & Whitley, R. (2018). "If one does not fulfil his duties, he must not be a man": Masculinity, mental health and resilience amongst Sri Lankan Tamil refugee men in Canada. *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry, 42*, 840-861. doi:10.1007/s11013-018-9592-9

Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 21,* 166-191. doi:10.1093/jrs/fen016

Bauder, H. (2005). Habitus, rules of the labour market and employment strategies of immigrants in Vancouver, Canada. *Social & Cultural Geography, 6,* 81-97. doi:10.1080/1464936052000335982

Beiser, M., & Hou, F. (2016). Mental health effects of premigration trauma and postmigration discrimination on refugee youth in Canada. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 204,* 464-470. doi:10.1097/NMD.0000000000000516

Beiser, M., & Hou, F. (2017). Predictors of positive mental health among refugees: Results from Canada's general social survey. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 54*, 675.

Bokore, N. (2013). Suffering in silence: A Canadian-Somali case study. *Journal of Social Work Practice, 27.* 95-113.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education, Westport, CT: Greenwood: 241-58.

Brunner, L., Hyndman, J., & Friesen, C. (2010). Aceh-Malaysia-Vancouver: Settlement among Acehnese refugees five years on. Vancouver, BC. Available online: http://issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/16_-_AchWP10-12_Nov_2010.pdf

Castles, S., Korac, M., Vasta, E., & Vertovec, S. (2001). Integration: Mapping the field. Report of a project carried out by the Centre for Migration and Policy Research and Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.

D'Addario, S., Hiebert, D., & Sherrell, K. (2007). Restricted access: The role of social capital in mitigating absolute homelessness among immigrants and refugees in the GVRD. *Refuge, 24,* 107.

Danso, R. (2002). From "there" to "here": An investigation of the initial settlement experiences of Ethiopian and Somali refugees in Toronto. *GeoJournal, 56,* 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021748701134

Derwing, T., Munro, M., Mulder, M. & Abbott, M. (2010). An examination of the Canadian Language Benchmark data from the Citizenship Language Survey. Report prepared for CIC. Accessed December 10, 2010 at: http://www.ci.gc.ca/english/pdf/research-stats/language-benchmark.pdf.

Francis, J., & Hiebert, D. (2014). Shaky foundations: Refugees in Vancouver's housing market: Shaky foundations. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien, 58,* 63-78. doi:10.1111/j.1541-0064.2013.12056.x

Francis, J., & Yan, M. (2016). Bridging the gaps: Access to formal support services among young African immigrants and refugees in Metro Vancouver. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 48,* 77-100. doi:10.1353/ces.2016.0010

Frank, K. (2013). Immigrant employment success in Canada: Examining the rate of obtaining a job match. *International Migration Review, 47*, 76-105. doi:10.1111/imre.12014

Hiebert, D. (2009a). The economic integration of immigrants in Metropolitan Vancouver. *IRPP Choices, 15,* 1-42.

Hiebert, D. (2009b). The economic integration of immigrants in Metro Vancouver. Working Paper Series, 09(08), 1-99. Retrieved from http://mbc.metropolis.net/assets/uploads/files/wp/2009/WP09-08.pdf

Hiebert, D., & Sherrell, K. (2009). The Integration and Inclusion of newcomers in British Columbia. Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper Series, 09(11), 1-44. Retrieved from http://mbc.metropolis.net/assets/uploads/files/wp/2009/WP09-11.pdf.

Hynie, M., Korn, A., & Tao, D. (2016). Social context and social integration for government assisted refugees in Ontario, Canada. In Poteet, M. & Nourapanah, S. (Eds.), *After the Flight: the Dynamics of Refugee Settlement and Integration* (pp. 183-227). UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Hynie, M., & J. Hyndman (2016). From newcomer to Canadian: Making refugee integration work, Policy Options, Institute for Research on Public Policy.

Hyndman, J. (2011). Research summary on resettled refugee integration in Canada Centre for Refugee Studies, York University.

Hyndman, J., D'Addario, S., & Stevens, M. (2014) *Refugee Research Synthesis 2009-2013.* Toronto, CERIS. Available at http://ceris.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/CERIS-Research-Synthesis-on-Refugees.pdf.

Immigrant Services Society of BC. (2016a) Syrian refugee operation to British Columbia: One year in—a roadmap to integration and citizenship. Vancouver, BC.

Immigrant Services Society of BC. (2016b) Syrian refugee youth consultation & community stakeholder forum: Summary report. Vancouver, BC.

Immigrant Services Society of BC (2017). A roadmap to integration for GARs destined outside Metro Vancouver. Vancouver, BC. Available online: http://issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/1_-_Syrian-GARs-to-British-Columbia-A-Roadmap-to-Integration.pdf.

Immigrant Services Society of BC (2018). Syrian refugee operations to British Columbia: Taking stock two years after arrival. Vancouver, BC. Available online: https://issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ISSofBC-Operation-Syrian-Refugees-Taking-Stock-Two-Years-After-Arrival-May-15-2018.pdf.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC, 2017). Settlement Program performance information profile. Ottawa, ON: Government of Canada

Karimi, A. (2018). Sexuality and integration: A case of gay Iranian refugees' collective memories and integration practices in Canada. *Ethnic and Racial Studies.* doi:10.1080/01419870.2018.1550207

Koehn, S., Jarvis, P., Sandhra, S., Bains, S., & Addison, M. (2014). Promoting mental health of immigrant seniors in community. *Ethnicity and Inequalities in Health and Social Care, 7,* 146-156. doi:10.1108/EIHSC-11-2013-0048

Marchbank, J., Sherrell, K., Friesen, C., & Hyndman, J. (2014). Karen refugees after five years in Canada—Readying communities for refugee resettlement. Available online: http://issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/9_-_Karen_Refugees_After_Five_Years_in_Canada_CS.pdf.

Marlowe, J. (2019). Refugee resettlement, social media and the social organization of difference. Global Networks, doi:10.1111/glob.12233

Nakhaie, M. R. (2017). Service needs of immigrants and refugees. *Journal of International Migration and Integration, 19,* 143-160. doi:10.1007/s12134-017-0534-0

Newton, G. (2019). Integration outcomes among recent government-assisted refugees (GARs) in Greater Vancouver (unpublished literature review). http://bit.ly/GNewton_LiteratureReview2019.

Oda, A., Hynie, M., Tuck, A., Agic, B., Roche, B., & McKenzie, K. (2018). Differences in self-reported health and unmet health needs between government assisted and privately sponsored Syrian refugees: A cross-sectional survey. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, 21,* 439-442. doi:10.1007/s10903-018-0780-z

Ray, B., & Preston, V. (2013). Experiences of discrimination and discomfort: A comparison of metropolitan and non-metropolitan locations: Discrimination and discomfort in metropolitan and non-metropolitan locations. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien, 57*, 233-254. doi:10.1111/cag.12026

Rose, Damaris. (2019). *Creating a Home in Canada: Refugee Housing Challenges and Potential Policy Solutions.* Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.

Scott, C., & Safdar, S. (2017). Threat and prejudice against Syrian refugees in Canada: Assessing the moderating effects of multiculturalism, interculturalism, and assimilation. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 60,* 28-39. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2017.06.003

Sherrell, K. (2010). Legal status, place, or something else? The housing experiences of refugees in Winnipeg and Vancouver. *Canadian Issues*, 52-57.

Sherrell, K. (2011). Finding a home: The housing experiences of government assisted refugees and refugee claimants in Winnipeg and Vancouver. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Vancouver, Canada. Available at: https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0072245

Sherrell, K., Friesen, C., Hyndman, J., & Shrestha, S. (2011). From 'One Nation, One People' to 'Operation Swaagatem': Bhutanese Refugees in Coquitlam, BC. Available online: http://issbc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/13_-_Operation_Swaagatem_Pre-Arrival_Planning_Process_-_May_2011Working_Paper_2.pdf.

Walker, J., & Zuberi, D. (2019). School-aged Syrian refugees resettling in Canada: Mitigating the effect of pre-migration trauma and post-migration discrimination on academic achievement and psychological well-being. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, doi:10.1007/s12134-019-00665-0

Yu, S., Ouellet, E., & Warmington, A. (2007). Refugee integration in Canada: A survey of empirical evidence and existing services. *Refuge, 24,* 17.

Appendices

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Are you a former government-assisted refugee (GAR) who arrived in Canada between 2007 and 2016?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Demographics

How old are you?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ 14-17
- ○ 18-24
- ○ 25-34
- ○ 35-44
- ○ 45-54
- ○ 55-64
- ○ 65 or older

What is your postal code?

Please write your answer here:

What is your gender?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-Binary
- ○ Other
- ○ Prefer not to respond

What is your marital status?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Single
- ○ Married
- ○ Divorced
- ○ Common Law

Do you have children?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

How many children do you have?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 6 (Do you have children?)

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

How many of your children were born in Canada?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 6 (Do you have children?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ None
- ○ Some, but not all
- ○ All

Where were you born? (examples: Syria, Sudan)

Please write your answer here:

What is your ethnicity? (examples: Chinese, Punjabi)

Please write your answer here:

When did you come to Canada?

Please enter a date:

If you arrived in a province other than British Columbia, when did you come to British Columbia?

Please enter a date:

Are you a Canadian citizen?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

When did you become a citizen?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 13 (Are you a Canadian citizen?)

Please enter a date:

What is your citizenship?

Only answer this question if the answer was "No" at question 13 (Are you a Canadian citizen?)

Please write your answer here:

Why are you not a Canadian citizen?

Only answer this question if the answer was "No" at question 13 (Are you a Canadian citizen?)

Please write your answer here:

Do you intend to apply for Canadian citizenship in the future?

Only answer this question if the answer was "No" at question 13 (Are you a Canadian citizen?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not Sure

Education

How much education do you have?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ No formal education
- ○ Finished primary school
- ○ Finished secondary school
- ○ Some post-secondary training
- ○ Finished training in trades or technical skills
- ○ Finished university/ college degree
- ○ Finished advanced degree

Where did you get your education?

Only answer this question if the answer was at question (How much education do you have?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Canada
- ○ Some other country
- ○ Both Canada and some other country

Are you currently a student?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Language

What is your mother tongue? (examples: Dari, Arabic)

Please write your answer here:

How would you rate your English when you arrived in Canada?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ No English
- ○ A little English
- ○ Intermediate English
- ○ I spoke English well
- ○ I spoke English fluently

How would you rate your English now? (check one)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ No English
- ○ A little English
- ○ Intermediate English
- ○ I spoke English well
- ○ I spoke English fluently

Have you accessed English classes (e.g., through LINC)?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Why have you not taken English classes?

Only answer this question if the answer was "No" at question 24 (Have you accessed English classes (e.g., through LINC)?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ No childcare
- ○ No transportation
- ○ Location of classes
- ○ Time of day
- ○ I do not need help with my English

If you have used LINC, what level are you?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question '24' (Have you accessed English classes (e.g. through LINC)?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Basic
- ○ CLB1
- ○ CLB2
- ○ CLB3
- ○ CLB4
- ○ CLB5
- ○ CLB6
- ○ Not Sure
- ○ My English classes are not through LINC

Migration Experience

How many years did you spend outside your country of origin before arriving in Canada?

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

Did you spend time in a refugee camp?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

How long did you spend in a refugee camp?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 28 (Did you spend time in a refugee camp?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Less than 6 months
- ○ 7-11 months
- ○ Between 12 and 23 months
- ○ 2-5 years
- ○ More than 5 years

Employment

Do you currently have a job?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Why do you not have a job?

Only answer this question if the answer was "No" at question 30 (Do you currently have a job?)

Please write your answer here:

Are you:

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 30 (Do you currently have a job?)

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ Self-employed
- ○ Employee
- ○ Part-time
- ○ Full-time

What kind of work do you do?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 30 (Do you currently have a job?)

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ Management (e.g., restaurant manager)
- ○ Professional (e.g., doctor)
- ○ Technical job or skilled trade (e.g. ,electrician)
- ○ Intermediate job (e.g., truck driver)
- ○ Entry-level job (e.g., cleaner)
- ○ Agriculture (e.g., farmer)
- ○ Other:

How many total hours do you work per week?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 30' (Do you currently have a job?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ 1-10
- ○ 11-20
- ○ 21-30
- ○ 31-40
- ○ 41-50
- ○ 51-60
- ○ More than 60

Do you hold more than one job at the moment?

Only answer this question if the Answer was "Yes" at question 30 (Do you currently have a job?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

How many different jobs are you doing?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 35 (Do you hold more than one job at the moment?)

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

How long have you worked in total in Canada?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 30 (Do you currently have a job?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ 1-5 months
- ○ 6-11 months
- ○ 12-23 months
- ○ 2-5 years
- ○ More than 5 years

When you came to Canada, how long did it take you to find your first job?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ 1-5 months
- ○ 6-11 months
- ○ 1-2 years
- ○ More than 2 years
- ○ I could not find a job
- ○ I did not look for a job

Do you do the same/a similar job in Canada as you did before arriving?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 30 (Do you currently have a job?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

What type of job did you hold before coming to Canada?

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ Management (e.g., restaurant manager)
- ○ Professional (e.g., doctor)
- ○ Technical job or skilled trade (e.g., electrician)
- ○ Intermediate job (e.g., truck driver)
- ○ Entry-level job (e.g., cleaner)
- ○ Agriculture (e.g., farmer)
- ○ I did not work before coming to Canada
- ○ Other:

Do you send money back to friends or relatives in your country of origin?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Did you take a transportation loan to come to Canada?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

How close are you to paying off the loan?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 42 (Did you take a transportation loan to come to Canada?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Loan is paid
- ○ More than halfway finished
- ○ About halfway finished
- ○ Less than halfway finished
- ○ Have not started paying

What is your primary source of income?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Government transfers
- ○ Paid work
- ○ Other

What are your secondary sources of income?

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ Paid work
- ○ Government transfers
- ○ Other

Do you volunteer? If so, how much time per month do you spend volunteering?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Less than 2 hours
- ○ 2-5 hours
- ○ 6-10 hours
- ○ More than 10 hours
- ○ I do not volunteer

What kind of volunteer work do you do?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question 46 (Do you volunteer? If so, how much time per month do you spend volunteering?)

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ Education (e.g., tutoring)
- ○ Ethnic or cultural organization
- ○ Recreation (e.g., youth sports; knitting class)
- ○ Settlement organization (e.g., volunteer translator)
- ○ Religious (e.g., mosque or church)
- ○ Other:

Housing

How many people live with you?

Only numbers may be entered in this field.

Please write your answer here:

Are they all family members? If not, who else lives with you (e.g., friend)?

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ Immediate family (spouse and/or children)
- ○ Mother or father
- ○ Grandparent or great grandparent
- ○ Grandchild or great-grandchild
- ○ Brother or sister
- ○ Aunt or uncle
- ○ Cousin
- ○ Other family member (e.g., brother's wife)
- ○ Friend(s)
- ○ Roommate(s)
- ○ Other:

How many times have you moved since getting your first house/ apartment in Canada?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ I have not moved
- ○ I have moved 1-3 times
- ○ I have moved 4-6 times
- ○ I have moved more than 6 times

Is your housing here in Canada comfortable/appropriate for you and your family?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Not sure

Why are you unhappy with your housing?

Only answer this question if the answer was "No" or "Not sure" at question 51 (Is your housing here in Canada comfortable/ appropriate for you and your family?)

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ Too small
- ○ House is old/dirty/in bad repair
- ○ Rent is too expensive
- ○ House/apartment is too far from my job
- ○ House/apartment is too far from social services
- ○ Neighbourhood is not safe
- ○ Other:

How much of your monthly income do you spend on housing?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Less than ¼
- ○ Less than ½
- ○ About ½
- ○ More than ½

Services

What social services/assistance have you accessed in Canada? (examples: LINC, BC Housing)

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ LINC
- ○ BC Housing
- ○ ISS*of*BC
- ○ MOSAIC
- ○ S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- ○ BC Disability Assistance
- ○ Other:

Is it easy for you to access social services?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Why is it difficult for you to access services?

Only answer this question if the answer was "No" at question 55 (Is it easy for you to access social services?)

Please write your answer here:

Social Integration

Do you have friends in Canada?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Why do you not have friends?

Only answer this question if the answer was "No" at question 56 (Do you have friends in Canada?)

Please write your answer here:

Are your friends of the same ethnicity as you?

Only answer this question if the answer was "Yes" at question '56' (Do you have friends in Canada?)

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Same ethnicity
- ○ Different ethnicity
- ○ A mix of same and different ethnicity

Health

How would you describe your health?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Very healthy (5)
- ○ Healthy (4)
- ○ Neither healthy nor unhealthy (3)
- ○ Unhealthy (2)
- ○ Very unhealthy (1)

Do you often feel sad/ depressed/ have a low mood?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ All the time (1)
- ○ More than half the time (2)
- ○ About half the time (3)
- ○ Occasionally (4)
- ○ Never (5)

Do you feel that it is easy to access healthcare in Canada?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

What makes it difficult to access healthcare in Canada?

Only answer this question if answer was "No" at question 62 (Do you feel that it is easy to access healthcare in Canada?)

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ It is difficult to find healthcare workers who understand my culture
- ○ My insurance does not cover what I need
- ○ I do not know where to go to get healthcare
- ○ Language barriers or lack of interpretation services
- ○ Other:

Overall Thoughts

Overall, how happy are you with your life?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Very happy (5)
- ○ Pretty happy (4)
- ○ Neutral (3)
- ○ Unhappy (2)
- ○ Very unhappy (1)

When you arrived in Canada, did you feel prepared to start your life here?

Please choose only one of the following:

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

What would have helped you to be more prepared?

Only answer this question if the answer was "No" at question 65 (When you arrived in Canada, did you feel prepared to start your life here?)

Please write your answer here:

How would you define integration in Canada?

Please choose all that apply:

- ○ Becoming a citizen
- ○ Learning English
- ○ Buying a house
- ○ Making Canadian friends
- ○ Getting a degree in Canada
- ○ Raising children in Canada
- ○ None of the above
- ○ Other:

In your own words, what is "successful" integration?

Please write your answer here:

Participation in Future Research

Are you interested in participating in the next phase of this research project? If yes, please type your email address or telephone number below:

Please write your answer here:

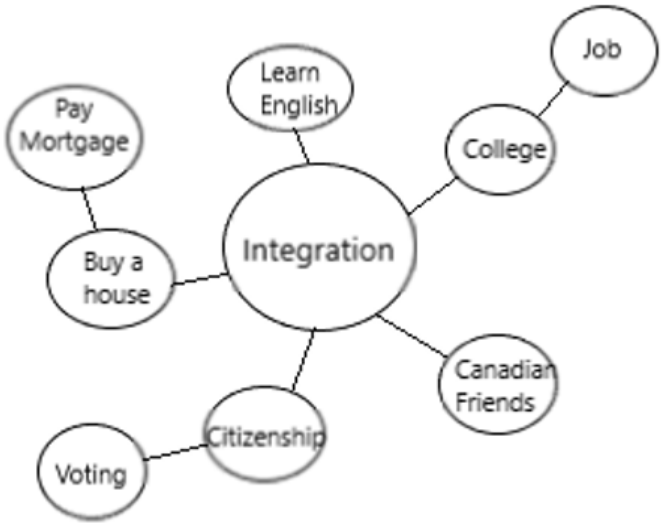
Thank you for participating!

APPENDIX B: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about yourself. What is a typical day in your life like?
2. What does "successful" integration mean to you?
3. Do you feel that you and your family have integrated successfully? Explain.
4. What things (e.g., friends, social services, religious community) were most helpful to you in integrating?
5. What challenges did your family face in integrating? How have you navigated these challenges?
6. What goals do you have for the next five years (e.g., buy a house, bring relatives to Canada, go to university)?
7. If you have children, what do you hope for your children (e.g., I hope my children go to university, get married, take over my small business, etc.)?
8. What is your favourite part of living in Canada? Your least favourite?
9. Do you have friends in Canada?
   a. If yes, where did you meet them?
   b. If not, what things have made it difficult for you to find friends?
10. What cultural differences have you observed between your country of origin and Canada? How do you navigate these differences?
11. How often do you interact with people from your ethnic group? How often do you interact with people outside of your ethnic group? Where do these interactions occur?
12. Do you think that there are negative stereotypes about refugees in Canada? If yes, what are they?
13. If you have a job, how did you find that job (e.g., through a co-ethnic friend, through an advertisement)?
14. What advice would you give to a refugee coming to Canada?
15. Is there anything else you think I should know about your experience in Canada? Feel free to share whatever you'd like.

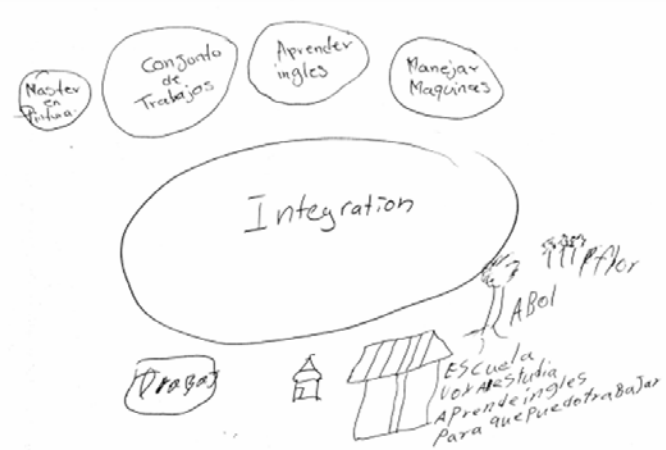
APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

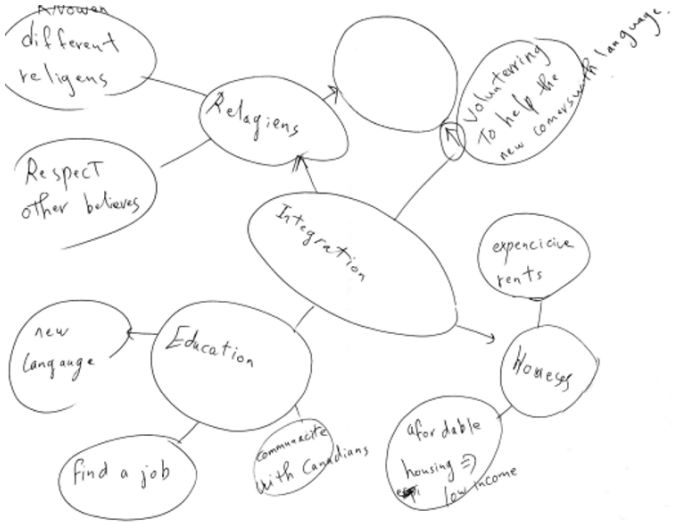
1. (Entire group) When I say the word "integration," what do you think of?
2. (Split into smaller groups) Activity: drawing "thought maps" of integration. Participants will be given large pieces of paper and markers and instructed to draw a large bubble in the centre. The bubble will be labelled "integration." Participants will then be encouraged to draw smaller bubbles and connect them to each other/the centre bubble, labelled with different aspects of integration. See below for example "thought map" created by the research assistant.

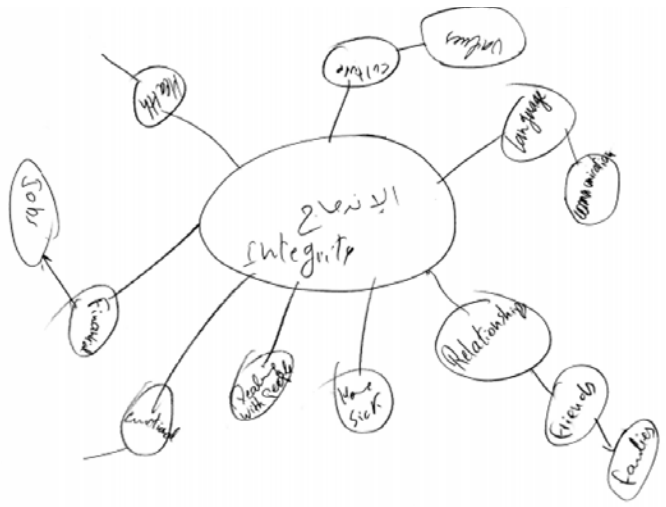


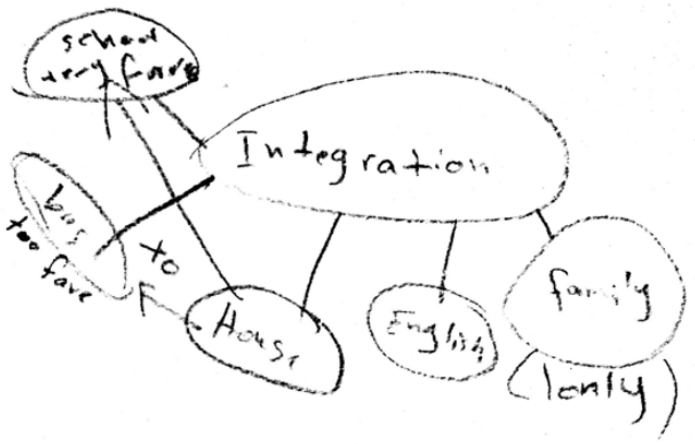
3. (Entire group) Smaller groups will be encouraged to share their maps with the rest of the room.
4. (Entire group) Did making the map/seeing others' maps change the way you think about integration?
5. (Entire group) Do you think it is accurate and helpful to talk about refugees' experiences in Canada in terms of integration? Why might it be a good term to use? How might it be bad?
6. (Split into smaller groups) Participants will be encouraged to discuss the two questions below:
   a. Do you think it is easy to access services in Canada (e.g., LINC, BC Housing)?
   b. What would make it easier to access services?
7. (In smaller groups) Participants will be encouraged to discuss the four questions below:
   a. Do you think Canadian society is welcoming to refugees?
   b. Do you think Canadian society is welcoming to refugees who are also religious minorities (e.g., Muslims, Sikhs)?
   c. Do you think Canadian society is welcoming to refugees who are visible minorities (e.g., Congolese, Persians)?
   d. How might we make Canada more welcoming to refugees, including those who are religious/ethnic minorities?
8. (Entire group) Smaller groups will be encouraged to share their answers.
9. (Entire group) What advice would you give to a refugee who has just arrived in Canada?
10. (Entire group) What advice would you give to the settlement sector to help refugees integrate more smoothly?

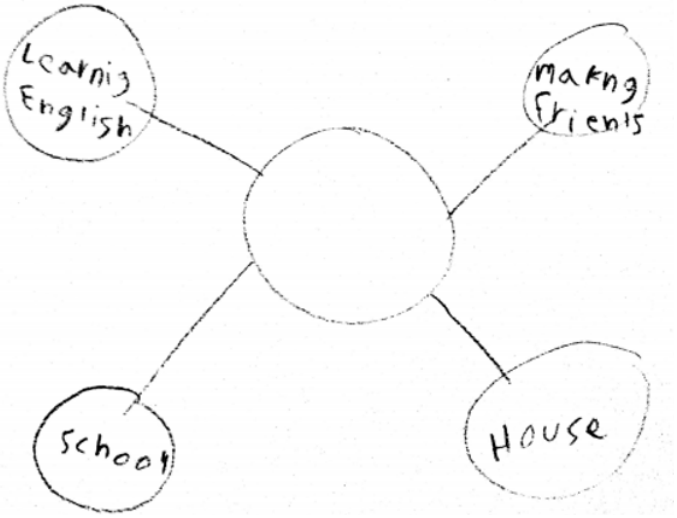
APPENDIX D: THOUGHT MAPS CREATED BY PARTICIPANTS

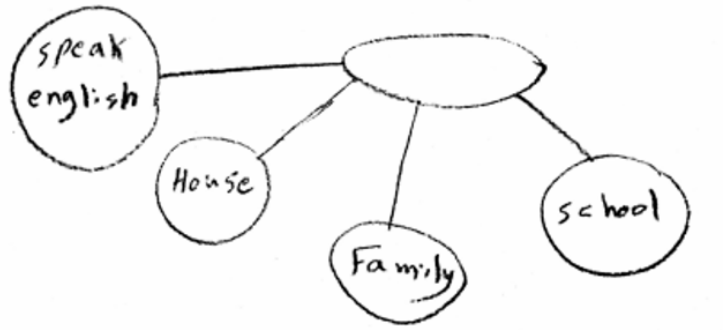







school very far
Integration
bus too far
House
English
family
(only)


Learning English
making friends
school
House


speak english
House
Family
school