



BARRIERS TO INTEGRATION:

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AMONG REFUGEES IN CANADA

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CITIZENS FOR
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INTRODUCTION

Like many, I am a first generation Canadian. I came to this country as a refugee through private sponsorship and have called it home for the last 11 years. I went to university and graduated with a bachelor's degree, started a family, had two kids, and eventually sponsored my mother and two siblings. In the words of Warsan Shire, "One does not leave home unless home is the mouth of a shark". I relate to these words in so many ways, as do many other refugees who come to this country because they are escaping away from life threatening situations. Refugees are forced to flee their home countries because of wars and other life altering situations and most often do not have any other option but to leave.



Most often, Canadians regard themselves as 'caring' and quite accepting towards 'others', of different races, religions and ethnicities. There is, however, another side of our society, one that is not as good as we would like to think of: an uncaring side of Canadians when it comes to refugees (Domise, 2019). Aspects of this have come to light in recent years and months following the election of Donald Trump and the increase of refugees crossing our borders. Rhetoric towards refugees from right-wing

media have sparked conversations about acceptance of refugees in this country. An article published by Maclean's earlier this year titled "*The rise of uncaring Canadians*" shows a shift that is happening in terms of some Canadians' attitudes towards refugees and visible minorities. More and more Canadians see refugees as a threat to their culture and jobs, and as being unable to integrate into Canadian society (Domise, 2019). Meanwhile, many refugees find themselves in limbo after their arrival here, facing both cultural and socio-economic barriers to fully integrate into the Canadian society. This research paper investigates the socio-economic factors that hinder refugees from reaching their potential in this country and achieving their dreams.

Research Question

This paper attempts to answer the question: "What are the socio-economic challenges/barriers that refugees face in integrating into Canadian society?" An analysis of the contributing factors to social exclusion and barriers to integration that refugees and newcomers face was conducted, while at the same time exploring the effectiveness of existing social policies and programs designed to tackle this issue. The scope of social exclusion is also explored, particularly the high rates of unemployment and underemployment among former and current refugees, the economic implications, and the kind of services available to combat social exclusion and enhance integration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Terms

Integration: From an immigration perspective, integration is the process of attaining economic mobility and social inclusion for newcomers. It involves accepting newcomers and their culture while at the same time expecting them to take in their host nation's culture and norms.

Newcomer: According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, a newcomer is someone who has been in the host country (Canada) for a period of five years or less.

Refugee: According to the United Nations 1951 Convention, a refugee is a person who is outside his or her country and has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

Social Exclusion: According to Barnes and Mercer (2005), social exclusion is defined as the condition by which individuals in a society are socially, economically and politically more disadvantaged than others depending on a variety of factors.

Historical Context

Refugees were first defined as a distinct group of immigrants in Canadian law in the 1976 Immigration Act thus requiring the government to meet its obligations to refugees under international agreements. Following this, the Canadian government started a new program that allowed private groups

and individuals such as churches and community organizations to sponsor refugees and settle them in Canada as permanent residents. Since 1979, the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program has welcomed more than 327,000 refugees (Dirks, 2019), over and above those resettled with government funding.

Canada's immigration act was changed after the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States and became the [Immigration and Refugee Protection Act \(IRPA\)](#). While this new act maintained most of the principles regarding immigration and refugees from the previous one, it introduced two significant changes to Canadian immigration and refugee law. First, it gave the government more powers to detain and deport landed immigrants who were suspected of posing a security threat to Canada. Secondly, it created the [Safe Third Country Agreement \(STCA\)](#) between Canada and the United States. In the latter, refugee claimants are required to request refugee protection in the first "safe" country in which they arrive, unless they qualify for an exception to the Agreement (IRCC, n.d.).

Due to conflicts in the Middle East and continued civil wars in some sub-Saharan African countries, there has been an increase in the number of refugees seeking refuge in western countries, particularly in Europe and North America. With the Trump Administration's [Travel Ban](#), the United Nations has pleaded with the Canadian government to settle more refugees.

Canada admits large number of refugees each year; however, in response to the current context there has been an uptake of refugees from the Middle East, particularly from Syria. According to Houle (2019), Between November 4th, 2015, and April 30th, 2019, 63,938 Syrian refugees were admitted to Canada, and while Canada admits refugees to give them protection and new beginnings, the Canadian immigration system also attempts to recognize their social and economic contribution to the country.

Despite what may seem like a noble commitment to refugee resettlement, Canada's history of immigration is at the same time filled with discrimination and exclusion. From the Chinese head tax to the deportation of Japanese immigrants, Canada's immigration policy had been rife with social and economic discrimination. While much has improved in the past decades, some members of Canadian society have a preconceived notion of who should be a "Canadian" and who should be accepted into our labour market. Most of the time, these assumptions are deeply rooted in discriminatory racial ideology (Jackson et al. 2006). This leads us to the topic of social exclusion being experienced by newcomers today.

Contemporary Context

In the immigration and settlement studies field, social inclusion (or exclusion) is often conceptualized in terms of social capital and support (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Hynie et al., 2011). Social capital refers to the social connections and networks among individuals. It encompasses people's ability to invest

resources (time, energy, or even money) in relationships with an expectation of reciprocity (Hynie et al. (2011). Immigrants have fewer social networks compared to non-immigrants, and as result can experience a prolonged period of social exclusion. Because of the interrelationship between social support, networks, and capital; poor access to social networks means newcomers and refugees may have fewer resources to begin with (Hynie et al., 2011).



Social capital can create pathways to social inclusion; however, social exclusion prevents and diminishes social capital by reducing the levels of trust between host communities and newcomers/refugees. Social capital is required for newcomers to better function in society and have better economic outcomes. There are three types of social support that newcomers need – basic food, transportation and housing; emotional support offered through empathy, love, trust and caring; and thirdly, information in the form of ideas and suggestions to seek opportunities and solve their problems (Hynie et al., 2011). The more social capital newcomers have access to, the greater their chances of integrating into society are (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Hynie et al., 2011).



Social and economic discrimination typically leads to a kind of social exclusion that significantly impacts the lives of refugees and newcomers in this country hindering their social and economic integration into Canadian society. Social exclusion is a multidimensional issue that affects both the individual and society in general. Individuals in a new country may be rejected by their host communities when they are deemed ‘unfit’ and are perceived as different from the local people in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, and background (Jackson et al. 2006). In a Canadian context, refugees and newcomers tend to be rejected by many employers solely based on their immigration status and ethnic background and not by their lack of skills or experience (Jackson et al. 2006).

Recently, at a conference entitled, “[Informing Migration Policy: International Experience and Evidence Conference](#),” hosted at Carleton University, the issue of social exclusion was one of the main

topics of discussion. Presenters from organizations that work directly with refugees explored why some Canadian customer service businesses do not hire refugees and newcomers. It was pointed out that some employers fear losing customers because of the accents of immigrant workers. Most notably, it was mentioned that some Canadian customers make the assumption that their jobs are being outsourced to workers overseas and that the person on the other side of the call is not actually in Canada. The effects of these assumptions are borne by refugees and newcomers who just want to be financially independent and to integrate well into their new communities.

Similarly, the literature suggests that there are pre-conceived assumptions held by many Canadian business owners that refugees’ education from their home countries is of low quality and inequivalent to Canadian education (Reitz, 2001). Furthermore, many Canadian businesses do not consider pre-

landing work experience of refugees. While some studies have shown that refugees tend to have lower educational levels (particularly in [Protracted Refugee Situations](#)), painting all refugees with the same brush is neither fair nor accurate.

A 2019 study by Picot, et al (2019), on labor market outcomes of refugees and immigrants from 13 different countries concluded that among the refugees who gained university degrees, those from Somalia, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan earned only a little more than their high school graduate counterparts, while those from Cambodia, Poland and Sri-Lanka earned significantly higher than their high school counterparts. This shows that even though higher levels of education improve the overall earnings of most refugees, there are other 'unknown' factors that could hinder them from being fully competitive in the labour market. Another possible reason for the earnings gap could be a lack of recognition of foreign credentials, skills, work experience and expertise of refugees from the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Krahn et al.'s study also indicates that managerial/professional refugees from Yugoslavia were marginally advantaged compared to refugees from Africa and Middle East. Although the marginal advantage of refugees from Yugoslavia could be attributed to their typically higher post-secondary credentials, the results support speculation that "white" refugees or those from European backgrounds fare better in the Canadian labour market. Similarly, Bevelander and Pendakur (2014) assessed the employment and earnings trajectories of

refugees and family re-union immigrants in Canada and Sweden using two national level sources of data. In both cases, refugees' country of birth made a significant difference in employment rates and earning trajectories for men and women. Those from former Yugoslavia had much higher integration to the labour force and earned more compared to refugees from Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

Refugees often experience difficulty accessing lucrative occupations in the Canadian labour market. Studies have shown that refugees who were in professional or management positions prior to their arrival in Canada typically end up in precarious employment situations. Despite their generally higher academic attainment, refugees experience much higher rates of unemployment and underemployment than Canadian-born individuals (Houle & Yssaad, 2010). In addition, the majority of refugees who held managerial and other professional occupations are observed to have experienced a downward mobility into clerical/sales/services and technical occupations (Krahn et al. 2000).

There exist structural factors in the Canadian labour market that help explain the "downward mobility" of these highly qualified refugees. As emphasized by Krahn et al. (2000), refugee professionals face structural barriers imposed by licensing bodies (such as the Canadian Medical Association), and many of them face difficulty in having their professional credentials recognized. Picot, et al (2019), further mentions that there is a lack of research and data on the pre-landing experience of refugees. Their study also highlights the connection between

income/earning of refugees and their pre-landing educational level, which is one of the key factors that determine their economic integration in Canada.

In addition to credential recognition, refugees also face discrimination in the labour market, as hiring companies are reluctant to offer jobs to qualified refugees due to their race, language, or other “non-Canadian” characteristics. Tied to the multidimensionality of social exclusion is the concept of intersectionality. [Intersectionality](#), or discrimination

based on overlapping social identities such as immigration status, gender, race, sexual orientation, and religion, compound the discrimination suffered by refugees, the majority of whom are racialized (Iyar, 2019). As Reitz, (2001) noted, race is another factor that determines how foreign education and work experience of immigrants from outside Europe are evaluated in Canada.

In light of these findings in the literature, this study sought to understand the lived experiences of social exclusion among refugees in Canada.



METHODOLOGY

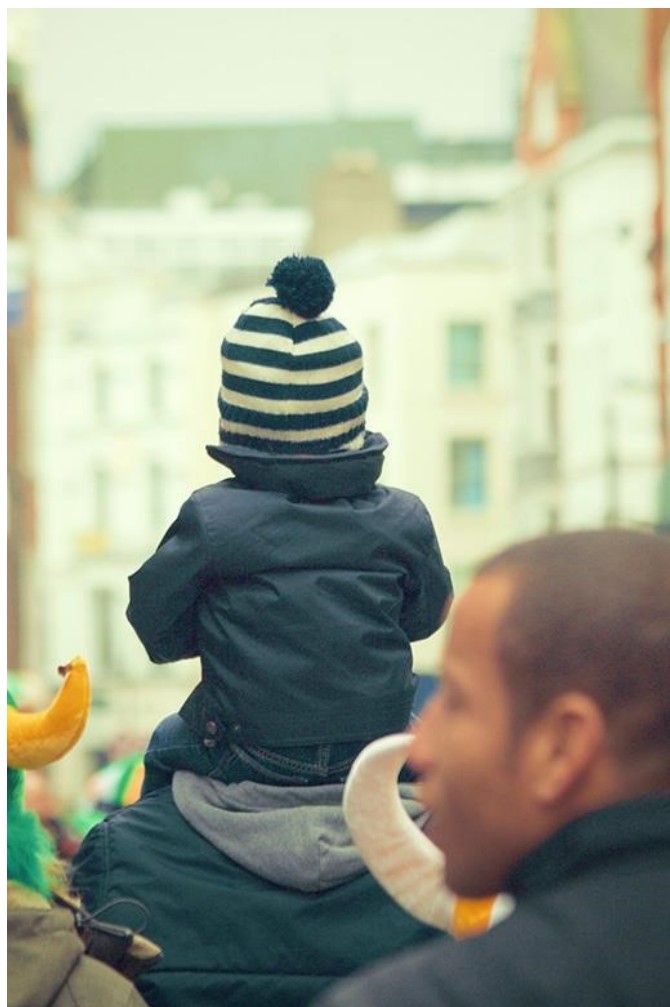
Conceptual Framework

Rather than look at historical and quantitative data alone, a community-based approach was used for this study in an attempt to focus on the lived experiences of refugees facing social exclusion. Since refugee integration is strongly embedded within the Canadian immigration and refugee policy, a quantitative data analysis was also conducted to examine the effectiveness of the programs that government implemented to sustain smooth integration. This study also explores existing research on agencies that work directly with immigrants and refugees such as sponsorship agreement holders (SAHs), private sponsors, and faith-based organization that support refugees, to explore connections between the successful integration of refugees and their sponsorship programs.

Data Collection

The participants in the research included twenty current and former refugees who currently live in five different provinces (AB, BC, MB, ON and NS). An e-mail requesting their participation was individually sent to some participants, some of whom I know as former refugees who have come through the [student refugee program](#), while others

were recruited through non-profit refugee organizations. A detailed description and the overall scope of the research project was shared with the participants and agencies, giving them the opportunity to make an informed decision regarding their participation in the project. Confidentiality and self-determination were also clearly stated and explained to the participants before the research was conducted.



Participants Demographic Information

Participant	Gender	Age	Province of Residence	Country of Origin	Year of Entry
1	Male	30-40	AB	South Sudan	2007
2	Female	20-30	NS	Iraq	2014
3	Male	30-40	NS	Syria	1986
4	Male	30-40	ON	Somalia	2011
5	Female	20-30	NS	Rwanda	2012
6	Male	30-40	ON	Somalia	2010
7	Female	50+	ON	Burundi	2019
8	Female	30-40	ON	Burundi	2016
9	Female	50+	ON		2015
10	Female	30-40	ON	Uganda	2015
11	Female	30-40	MB	Somalia	2007
12	Female	40-50	ON	Nigeria	2017
13	Female	40-50	ON	Uganda	2017
14	Male	20-30	BC	Somalia	2011
15	Male	20-30	NS	Somalia	2018
16	Male	50+	ON	Nigeria	2019
17	Female	16-20	ON	Burundi	2019
18	Female	20-30	ON	Burundi	2019
19	Female	20-30	ON	Burundi	2019
20	Male	30-40	ON	Zimbabwe	2019

The study used a semi-structured focus group discussion and survey questionnaires with both open and closed-ended questions to allow participants to qualify their responses and allow for comparisons across participants (Neuman & Robson, 2009). Participants also had the option of completing the questionnaires online. The survey questionnaires were divided into four sections: demographics; education and language training; employment and labour force participation; and social capital.

A conversational method was used in the focus group discussion, allowing the participants the opportunity and support to freely discuss their opinions regarding the research topic. Kovach (2010) explains that “story telling has a holistic nature that provides a means for sharing remembrances that evoke the spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental ...” (p. 43). Using a focus group discussion encouraged participants to be dialogic and collaborative as they shared their lived experiences of the subject matter. Participants were

then asked to share any lived experiences of social exclusion and how it impacted their economic outcome. During the focus group discussions, questions were asked at the end of the session to get final input from the participants.

Notes were taken during the entirety of the discussion and observations recorded both physical and emotional reactions to the questions being asked within the group. This process gave me the opportunity to reflect on the importance of this issue without losing sight of the research question. It also put a human perspective on the study such that it was not just done to get numerical measures, but to explore the true scope of this issue and highlight the human side of it through participants' feelings. A major gap in the existing studies, for

example, is the lack of focus on the connection between the individual as the refugee and their connection to their culture/ethnicity.

In an effort to show appreciation and hospitality, refreshments were provided to participants in the focus group discussion. The aim of providing honoraria like refreshments was to acknowledge the importance of their input and validate the significance of their participation and time in this study. While Norton and Manson (1996) suggest that compensation for the entire community be considered in marginalized communities such as Indigenous peoples and refugees, the scale of this project restricted any direct honoraria to the focus group participants, with the hope that the results and recommendations of this study will be of benefit to the broader community.

Method of Analysis

Content analysis was conducted on all data collected from survey responses and focus group notes. This enabled me to collate information from all the participants to reveal major themes in response to the research question. A reflection on the interviewing process was conducted to make sure all facts were correctly collected and were respectful of the responses given by participants. A comparative analysis approach was used to conduct a comprehensive examination of existing literature with lived experience as the major focus. Both a descriptive and exploratory analysis were then done to compare variables of interest, with a view to proposing appropriate nationwide policies.



FINDINGS

Focus Group Discussion

The participants of the focus group discussion were mainly current refugees who were in the process of obtaining legal status in Canada. This section discusses the plights they currently face.

1. Difficulty in Attaining Work Permits

One of the first issues that refugees face is finding employment. “The main reason for seeking asylum is getting a better life, and employment is the gateway to that”, said one participant. Most refugee claimants need work permits and social insurance numbers in order to work in Canada, however, as noted by some participants, not everyone gets a work permit, and while it is free for refugee claimants to apply, other documentations such as medical exams are required to obtain social insurance numbers. Most participants indicated that the key reason they want to get work permits and social insurance numbers is to find employment and not rely on government social assistance.

““We came here to better our lives, and finding a job is good for that. I think we don’t want to rely on welfare.”

– Focus Group Participant

This sentiment of being financially independent was universal among the participants. Some even mentioned that if going to school means incurring debt, they would prefer finding employment first and then start thinking about going back to school. This all

shows the importance of employment to refugees, and defies the narrative that refugees come here to take advantage of the Canadian welfare system.

2. The 900 series Social Insurance Number as a form of discrimination

The 900 series SINs are temporary social insurance numbers issued to temporary workers who are neither Canadian citizens nor permanent residents such as refugees and international students. The 900 Social Insurance Number exposes the vulnerability of refugees in the Canadian labour market. It identifies them as temporary workers and creates uncertainty for those seeking employment and employers who might be willing to hire newcomers but are not confident enough to hire a refugee (Jackson, 2010).

“If they see my social insurance number, even if I qualify for the job, they say, so you are a refugee or temporary worker! That means you are not here permanently.”

– Focus Group Participant

This is one of several statements about the 900 series Social Insurance Numbers that the participants raised. They explained that the 900 series SIN is a clear means of discrimination against refugees who are seeking employment. As one participant stated, it is saying, “I am a refugee to a stranger without knowing how they will react”.

The results of the lack of work permits and the 900 series SIN numbers impose far-reaching implications for the economic and social outcome of refugees. Refugees are forced to work in unregulated and informal markets and risk their lives doing unsafe work out of necessity to survive. Most of the participants noted that they do not get their work permits until their refugee claim application is assessed, a process that takes sometimes several months to finalize. During this period, with no options for earning their own income, refugee claimants become reliant on government social assistance.

3. Cuts to Legal Aid in Ontario

With the help of refugee organizations such as Matthew house, most of the residents applied for legal aid and were able to hire lawyers. However, when the provincial government [introduced cuts to legal aid funding to refugees](#), they become worried, unaware of how or if their asylum process will continue. As one participant noted, “it was very stressful not having the financial capacity to hire a lawyer, and now risking your whole life and being deported if your process doesn’t go well”.

All the participants agreed on the importance of legal aid to their asylum process. They brought this issue up because of the impact it has on the processing time of their refugee claim application. They also noted that such uncertainty affects their economic stability and their general wellbeing and ability to support themselves. During the discussion, they also expressed their gratitude towards the federal government’s help in funding

legal aid. As one participant put it; “I was happy when my lawyer called and said she will be able to continue processing my application because they received money from the government.”

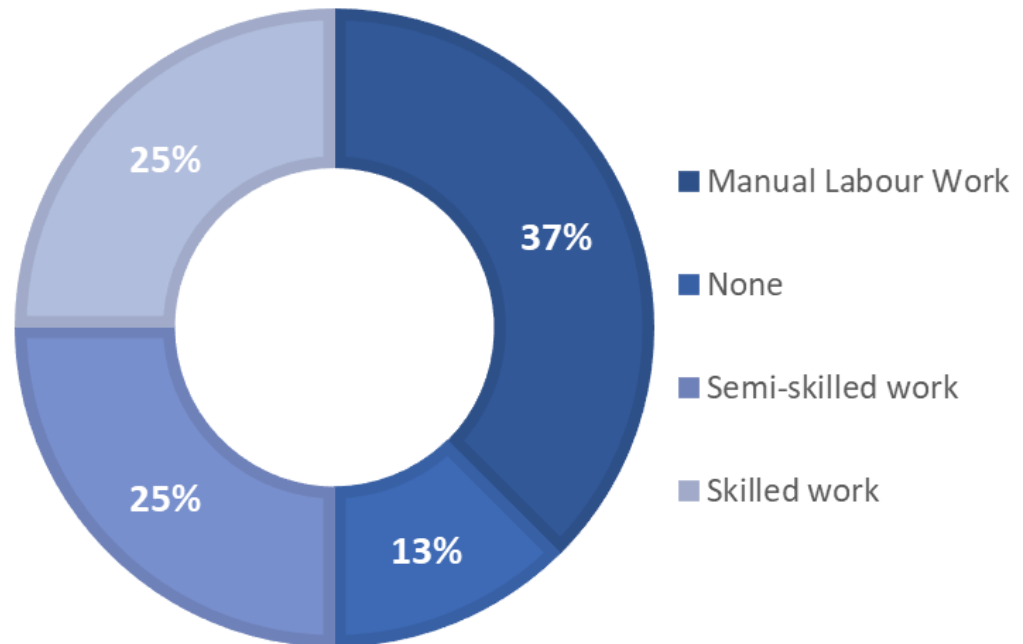
Survey Findings

1. Education and Foreign Credential Recognition

Overall, lack of recognition for foreign credentials affects most newcomers, and while it disproportionately affects economic immigrants, previous studies on labour participation of refugees suggest that refugee professionals face particular structural barriers imposed by licensing bodies in Canada (Krahn et al., 2000). The results of this study support this statement. Most of the respondents shared experiences of undervalued credentials and work experiences. Eight of the twelve participants who needed foreign credential assessment did not get the results they hoped for. As one participant put, “I came here with a university degree, but they wouldn’t recognize it, so I had to work at Walmart and earn a low wage”. This shows how the lack of foreign credential recognition can often lead to underemployment of refugees and immigrants. Despite their immigration status, many have the capacity to do professional jobs such as dentistry, nursing, or social work, but because of their lack of Canadian work experience and credential recognition, they end up doing menial jobs and over time lose their ability to secure a career in their original field of study.

Of the 20 respondents, eight of them were college or university educated before coming to Canada.

TYPE OF WORK IN FIRST 18 MONTHS



Out of these eight immigrants, only two of them stated that they landed a skilled job in the first 18 months of their arrival in Canada, whereas the rest found either semi-skilled or manual labour jobs. This is an indication of the lack of education and credential recognition of those refugee immigrants.

2. Underemployment and Skills Matching

Most of the survey participants pointed out that Canadian work experience superseded their foreign work experience even if the work done was the same. In other words, 93 percent of the respondents indicated that they experienced difficulties in finding jobs that match their academic and employment background. Educational training and work experience from their home countries was deemed impractical and irrelevant by most

employers as Canadian employers prefer Canadian work experience over their foreign work experience.

Of the 20 survey participants, 14 of them indicated they were currently employed, with the majority working in the public sector. Only 21 percent of the employed respondents were working in the private-service sector. All things being equal, there could be an indication of hidden factors that seem to hinder immigrants from finding employment in the private sector. The reason for the greater employment in the public sector could be anti-discrimination hiring policies such as blind hiring techniques aimed to reduce unconscious bias and promote gender and ethnic equality. While it is beyond the scope of this research paper, the low rate of employment in the private sector versus public and non-profit sector needs to be further

explored. This finding seems to agree with the conclusions of the previously mentioned conference themed as [Informing Migration Policy: International Experience and Evidence Conference](#), in which presenters pointed that some employers fear losing customers because of the accents and other characteristics of immigrant workers.

Of the 14 employed respondents, only 29 percent of them indicated that the skills used in their current work matched their academic training and previous work experience, while the rest were either skeptical or felt their skills and training did not match their current job.

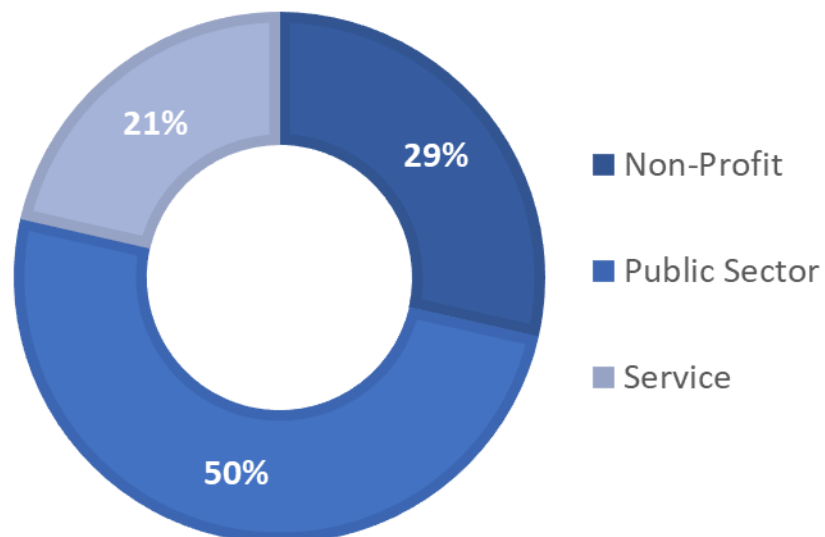
3. Social Capital

The connection between social capital and employment income is critical in terms of the social and economic integration of newcomers and refugees. Unlike economic immigrants, refugees often [lack pre-established networks](#) in their new host country where they can easily connect and find

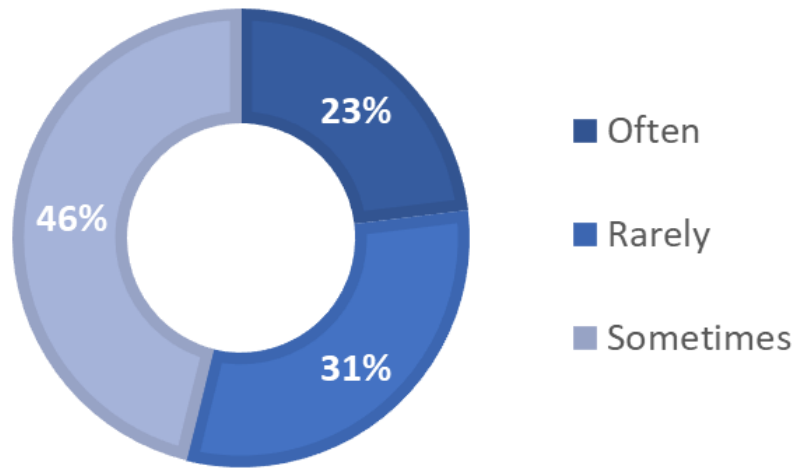
employment. As the [number of refugees](#) in Canada increases each year, the development of their social networks is as important as finding a stable job for a successful integration. The results of my study show that most participants (13 out of 20) value social connections and engage in some type of social activities, mostly in religious gatherings. In terms of their frequency of engagement, 92 percent of the respondents indicated that they attend social or religious gatherings. This suggests social networks and connections are an important factor for integration.

At the same time, many of the respondents indicated they did not attend social gatherings outside of their circle of friends or people from their ethnicity. 77 percent of the respondents stated that they either rarely or sometimes attended social activities outside of the circle of friends. Social engagement with similar ethnic and cultural community members can be both

AREA OF EMPLOYMENT



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT OUTSIDE OF CIRCLE OF FRIENDS/ETHNICITY



beneficial and a barrier to integration. For example, having pre-established social contacts such as family members has been found to be helpful in finding quality and long-lasting employment. On the other hand, having ethnic/cultural contacts with little or no information about opportunities or career-related networks can be crippling particularly for new immigrants trying to integrate into the Canadian society, and to find careers matching their skills. New immigrants can be trapped in this social condition with no reach into the larger Canadian society.

One reason why new immigrants may not reach out and engage in social and networking activities with Canadians outside their own ethnicities could be attributed to social barriers experienced due to their religious, racial, cultural, and language characteristics. The impact of co-ethnic networks on refugee integration is beyond the scope of this paper and needs more research and investigation.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the barriers that refugees face in integrating into Canadian society, focusing on their lived experiences of social exclusion. The research provides analysis of the different forms of social exclusion that refugees face and demonstrates that their lived experiences are distinct and characterized by barriers that are both specific to them, and common among newcomers. The study also supports existing literature on the integration and economic success of refugees. Immigrants and refugees contribute significantly to the Canadian labour market. However, their economic contributions and potential are underutilized and as a result the Canadian economy is losing its edge in an increasingly competitive global market (Reitz, 2001). While many refugees' ultimate goal is to find permanent employment that pays a living wage, many end up in precarious work, while still paying taxes and not relying on government assistance. Similar to the findings of this study on non-recognition of foreign credentials, Houle & Yssaad (2010) argue that some Canadian employers deny the legitimacy of foreign credentials and skill development of new immigrants and refugees, even when they are admitted into the country based on these same credentials.

According to the findings of this study, Canadian work experience often supersedes refugees' educational level, work experience, and ability to speak one of Canada's official languages as a

determinant of successful integration. This study further supports the claim that refugees and newcomers are discriminated against when it comes to employment, particularly during the hiring process. For example, newcomers are required to have Canadian work experience in most jobs, yet they are not given the opportunities to attain that experience.

The two main dimensions of newcomers' experiences in their host countries (whether they come in as refugees or immigrants) are social and economic integration. Such integration requires active participation of both the refugees and the people of the host country. According to the 2001 IRCC report, such integration needs to be holistic; it must include and consider a variety of factors from both sides into consideration and not just expect newcomers to abandon their own cultural identity. The emphasis should rather be on finding ways to integrate the differences in a multicultural and diverse society (IRCC,2001).

The Canadian government should, therefore, enact policies that prevent employers from implementing discriminatory hiring guidelines and processes that prevent refugees from equally participating in the Canadian labour market, including removing the requirement for Canadian work experience. The Canadian government should also implement a policy that restricts employers' ability to discreetly discriminate against refugees and newcomers. The first step in creating such policy is to eliminate the temporary 900 SIN series which identifies refugees

as neither permanent residents nor citizens of this country, giving employers opportunity to discriminate against them on the sole basis of their immigrant status.

One of the major findings of this study is the importance of social capital. Social networks and connections were found helpful to refugee claimants and resettled refugees. The results of my study show that most participants (13 out of 20) value social connections and engage in some type of social activities, mostly in religious gatherings. This finding supports the outcome of previous studies on the significance of social networks for privately sponsored refugees. According to DeVoretz et al. (2004), privately sponsored refugees performed better economically than asylum seekers who often lacked support mechanisms from relatives and friends. Unlike other streams of refugees, privately sponsored

refugees are immediately connected to an established group of people who are already there to help them navigate their host communities. Through this program, sponsors can create and establish social networks for the refugees they sponsor. These connections help refugees acquire language training, find employment opportunities, and increase their knowledge and understanding of their host community and the country at large (Krivenko, 2016). Considering these findings, the government should enhance private sponsorship program by removing restrictive barriers that hinder the sponsorship of refugees from certain parts of the world such as Africa. While the Canadian government has made significant improvements in terms of increasing the admissions target for private sponsored refugees to 20,000 refugees for the 2019-2020 period, it should equally increase the admission targets for



government assisted refugees and create better integration policies.

While there is extensive research on the integration and economic outcomes of immigrants, data on the labor market integration of refugees and their economic outcomes tend to be limited in scope. However, there is substantial quantitative data on post-landing experiences such as language acquisition and social integration. This data is often recorded at the time of landing of refugees and is made available through evaluation programs done by the [IRCC \(Wilkinson & Garcia, 2017\)](#). In order to better understand the social and economic exclusion of refugees in Canada, we need more data that separates the pre-landing and post-landing experiences of refugee. Differentiating pre-landing factors such as home country education, work experience, and foreign credentials from post-landing factors such as language acquisition and Canadian work experience, is deemed very useful in determining the integration of refugees.

In Ontario, the human rights code states that “it is public policy in Ontario to recognize the inherent dignity and worth of every person and to provide for equal rights and opportunities without discrimination”. What this code signifies is the importance of inclusion and participation. All people, regardless of their immigration status, ethnic background or race have equal rights to participate and contribute to their communities’ wellbeing and that includes participation in the labour market. With this in mind, this study has suggested ways in which improved understanding of refugees’ experiences of social exclusion and employment in Canada can inform the development and implementation of government policies that uphold their dignity, worth, and rights to full participation in Canadian society.

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