

Refugee Integration & Long-Term Health Outcomes in Canada (SyRIA.lth)

What it is:

Refugee Integration and Long-term Health Outcomes in Canada is a pan-Canadian longitudinal study funded by The Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR). The project is a partnership between settlement service agencies and academic research institutions in three of Canada's largest refugee resettlement provinces: British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec.

We are looking at how different resettlement programs support the social integration of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) and Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) and the impact of integration pathways on their long-term physical and mental health. Our goal is to improve the health and well-being of new Canadians by understanding what leads to successful integration outcomes and for whom so that we can tailor resettlement programs to best suit newcomers' needs and circumstances.

Our research goals:

To produce knowledge that will:

- Inform promising practices for refugee resettlement and integration
- Strengthen knowledge exchange in the settlement sector
- Identify the impact of settlement policies on refugee health and well-being
- Deepen our understanding of the influence of social conditions on long-term health and well-being

Our approach:

Interviews will be collected once a year for four years with Syrian adults who resettled in Canada between 2015 and 2017. In year two and year four, we will also conduct focus groups to gain more insight into the nature of people's experiences.

These interviews will follow key integration markers at the material or functional level (e.g., employment, housing and social services accessed), the social level (e.g., social networks, discrimination), and the subjective or psychological level (e.g., sense of belonging, stress).

Project Updates

Work up-to-date:

- As of today July 31, 2017 over 1,700 participants have been interviewed nationally (1,658 participants as of July 24th, 2017- numbers breakdown in the table below)

Which phase are we at now?

Year 1 survey data collection phase runs from March-July during the four years of the study. The project is at its final Year 1 phase of survey data collection and going into its 2nd Year that has two phases:

- I. Focus Groups phase (fall 2017)
- II. Round 2 survey data collection phase (spring & summer 2018)

Next Steps:

- Planning for preliminary data analysis and early findings dissemination
- Following Montreal's example, each site is to invite agencies working with Syrian refugees to be part of their advisory committee so that they are involved and benefitting from our work
- Focus Groups phase is around the corner with the plan to start in fall 2017
- Start thinking about the next survey round in Year 2

Professional development series (continuing training and skills building):

- Dr. Branka Agic did a self-care webinar with our team members on July 25th, 2017
- Start drafting ideas about future webinar topics
- Start thinking about Focus Group training

Site	GARs	PSRs	BVORs	Other	Total
Kitchener	84	48	4	2	138
Montreal	67	605	2	2	676
Okanagan Valley	24	20	17	0	61
Toronto	235	196	37	3	444
Vancouver	167	33	7	1	208
Windsor	112	15	4	0	131
National (all sites)	689	890	71	8	1,658

Our team's stories

Dr. Ben Kuo



Syrian Mom Flees Violent Country, Violent Husband, Finds Hope in Windsor

Between November 2015 and the end of 2016, Windsor and Essex County took in almost 1,500 Syrians. Mariam Hasno and her four children are among those who have fled the horror and destruction in Syria. Hasno wasn't just fleeing the trauma of war, however, but also the cruelty and random brutality of a domestic situation she believed was of a far greater threat to the lives of herself and her children.

"We think of war and bombing, but it's the things at the individual family level that are the primary stressors," said Ben Kuo, a professor of clinical psychology at the University of Windsor who works with refugees. "This woman is incredibly courageous," Kuo said of Hasno, who, now in a safe place, hopes her story might help other women break their silence and seek help. Mental health supports and getting counselling beyond an initial assessment is difficult enough for anyone in the Windsor area, but that's especially true for refugees and newcomers, said Kuo and other local experts. Hasno's two oldest daughters only recently began receiving counselling after being on a waiting list since last year.

After learning to open up during counselling, Hasno now wants to share her story, to serve as a warning, but also a message of hope, to other women caught in dire domestic circumstances.

Read the full story on: windsorstar.com

Our team's work

Dr. Farah Ahmad



Expanding the Meaning of 'being a peer leader': Qualitative Findings from a Canadian Community-based Cervical and Breast Cancer Screening Programme

Engagement of community members to act as peer workers is a key feature of many community-centred health promotion programmes. However, little is known about their experiences beyond the commonly reported themes of fulfilment through helping people in need and improvement of personal confidence, self-esteem and self-care.

Read the full article on: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/



Dr. Ahmed Bayoumi

Open Pharma Wants Public to Know Ties between MDs and Pharmaceutical Industry

If you live in the United States, you can easily find out if your doctor receives payments from drug companies. Ditto if you live in Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, France, Denmark and many other European countries.

But not Canada. This country is seen as an international “laggard” when it comes to transparency about financial ties between the pharmaceutical industry and physicians.

Read more on: thestar.com

Dr. Yogendra Shakya



Access Alliance: Refugee Health and Resettlement-Lessons Learned from the Syrian Response Summary Report

Ontario resettled more than 16,000 Syrian refugees (Government of Ontario, 2015). Of this, a third (5345 Syrian refugees) came to the City of Toronto. Region of Peel and Region of Waterloo resettled 1066 and 1495 Syrian refugees respectively.

With funding from United Way Toronto and York Region, Access Alliance conducted an environmental scan study to cross-sector collaborations and organizational innovations that were mobilized to meet the unique demands of rapid, large-scale delivery of services for hundreds of Syrian families arriving on a weekly basis. The study has captured the key success factors that facilitated these collaborations and innovations including engagement of senior leaders, public goodwill, and relationships based on trust. Study findings also shed light on the many challenges faced along the way including funding and communication gaps, coordination challenges, fairness and equity concerns, and meeting needs specific to Syrian newcomer families. Results from this study have important best practice implications for refugee health and settlement, particularly in terms of planning services and supports for future large-scale arrivals of refugees to Canada.

Read the report on: [accessalliance](#)

OCASI: Refugee Settlement Pilot Report

Many cities across Ontario have welcomed resettled refugees, the vast majority from Syria, in recent years. To fully support new arrivals, the local settlement sector infrastructure needs to be augmented with GAR-, BVOR- and PSR-related resources, training and information. This pilot project set out to identify the unique needs and issues related to providing settlement services to resettled (Syrian) refugees in order to better understand how to help frontline staff work with refugee clients in the immediate and long-term.

Read the report on: [OCASI](#)

To help settlement workers serving refugee clients easily access relevant resources, centralized hub called “ **Working with Refugees** ” was created.

Explore the community of practice organized by OCASI on: [settlementatwork.org](#)

Reports

“The following report calls for more research showing the relationship between refugee outcomes and local services and policies - something for us to think about.”

Dr. Susan McGrath

How Are Refugees Faring? Integration at U.S. and State Levels

The United States has long operated the world’s largest refugee resettlement program, admitting nearly 85,000 refugees in fiscal year 2016. Over the years, those admitted have come from a wider range of countries and, as the cost of living rises in urban centers, increasingly been settled in small and medium-sized cities. Most find employment soon after arrival, in line with the resettlement program’s strong work-first philosophy. But as federal funding for many of the transitional assistance programs that help refugees find their footing in the United States fails to keep up with demand, states, local communities, and civil society have come under increased pressure to bridge the gaps.

While research has detailed how different refugee populations fare nationwide, less is known about how these newcomers fare across states—and, crucially, whether state policies affect their long-term integration.

Using a unique MPI methodology, this report analyzes census and administrative data to compare the state-level integration outcomes of five large refugee groups (Burmese, Cubans, Iraqis, Russians, and Vietnamese), including in terms of employment, income, education levels, English language proficiency, and public benefits usage.

Despite considerable variation in the generosity of public welfare programs in the study states (California, Florida, New York, and Texas), the authors conclude that the U.S. resettlement program’s “lottery effect” may be less pronounced than previously thought. National origins, rather than settlement location, seem to be more highly correlated with how refugees fare. And further research into other factors that may even out state-to-state policy differences—including refugee resilience, the work-first focus of the resettlement program, and the broad network of voluntary agencies—could foster understanding of the challenges to successful integration that different groups and their host communities face.

Read more on: migrationpolicy.org

Dr. Branka Agic



Self-care Webinar with Dr. Branka Agic

Many interviewed Syrian families experienced war related trauma which they expressed to our team during interviews. Such interviews are very difficult, and the frustration in our limits in being able to assist is also challenging. Dr. Branka Agic, our co-investigator on the SyRIA.lth project, works with IRCC to deliver self-care webinars to visa officer who interview refugees in Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Dr. Branka offered the self-care webinar to our research team on July 25th, 2017 as an opportunity to get together and discuss this important topic.

Don't forget your ABC:

Awareness: be aware of emotions, limits, needs and resources

Balance: keep balance between work, rest and play

Connection: communicate and stay connected to both self and others



*The self-care webinar will be offered throughout the project and is part of RAs' mandatory training.



Toronto team Eid Celebration

With nice company and delicious home made food, Toronto team celebrated Eid at Dr. Michaela's house.

June 26, 2017

News & Events



Explore more on: searchingforsyria.org

Searching for Syria: Google and UNHCR Offer Answers to World's 5 Top Questions About the Syrian Refugee Crisis

Continuing Education Opportunities:

Course/ Webinar	Website
Refugee Mental Health: Focus on Syrian Refugees, by CAMH	rmhp/courses
Torture, Trauma, Psychosocial Impact and Mental Health: Meeting the Needs of War and Torture Survivors	ccvt.org

Upcoming Events:

Date	Event	Location	Website
Oct 29-31 2017	Canadian Conference on Global Health 2017	Ottawa Canada	www.csih.org/en/events
Aug 17 2017	Working Effectively with Professional Interpreters	On-line	register.gotowebinar.com



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