

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 to date:

- Year 2 data has been cleaned and sent to sites for analysis
- Sub-teams within the national team have been created to lead national analyses based on the following topics:
 1. GAR vs. PSR sub-team
 2. Health sub-team
 3. Mental health sub-team
 4. Settlement services sub-team
 5. Social networks sub-team
 6. Qualitative sub-team
 7. Housing sub-team
 8. Employment sub-team
 9. Smoking sub-team
- We are working on dissemination:
 - Academic dissemination- publishing papers (see page 3 for details)
 - Community dissemination- WhatsApp blast to our participants (see page 4 for details)

Next steps:

- Continuous work on data analysis, reports writing and dissemination
- Year 3 survey preparation for March 2019



Results Dissemination: Academic

- 1) Our first paper based on Montreal year 1 data has been published:

Jill Hanley, Adnan Al Mhamied, Janet Cleveland, Ouja Hajjar, Ghayda Hassan, Nicole Ives, Rim Khyar and Michaela Hynie, **“The Social Networks, Social Support and Social Capital of Syrian Refugees Privately Sponsored to Settle in Montreal: Indications for Employment and Housing During their Early Experiences of Integration,”** Canadian Ethnic Studies 50 no. 2 (2018): 123-148.

Abstract:

Beginning in 2015, Canada undertook an exceptional undertaking of sponsoring of more than 40,000 Syrian refugees to resettle in Canada. As the excitement of their initial arrivals dissipates, it is important to consider their longer-term settlement and integration in their new communities. This article offers a portrait and analysis of how Syrian refugees sponsored to Montreal are able to create social networks and access social support in order to build social capital for employment and housing purposes. Part of a larger, three-province, 4-year longitudinal study, here we report on the first wave of survey data collected from 626 Privately-Sponsored Refugees living in Quebec. We report on their family support and friendships, as well as the ways that these social connections helped them in terms of employment and housing. Differences in terms of age, gender and time in Canada are analyzed. We find strong evidence of bonding social capital among recently resettled Syrians in Montreal, and growing bridging capital.

Read the paper on: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/700983>

- 2) Our second paper based on national year 1 data has been submitted for publication:

Michaela Hynie, Susan McGrath, Jonathan Bridekirk, Anna Oda, Nicole Ives, Jennifer Hyndman, Neil Arya, Yogendra B Shakya, Jill Hanley, Kwame McKenzie and SyRIA.lth, **“What Role Does Type of Sponsorship Play in Early Integration Outcomes? Syrian Refugees Resettled in Six Canadian Cities,”** Under review in Refuge

Results Dissemination: Participants

Results Dissemination: Participants

Here is a sample of some of the results we will be sharing with our study participants:

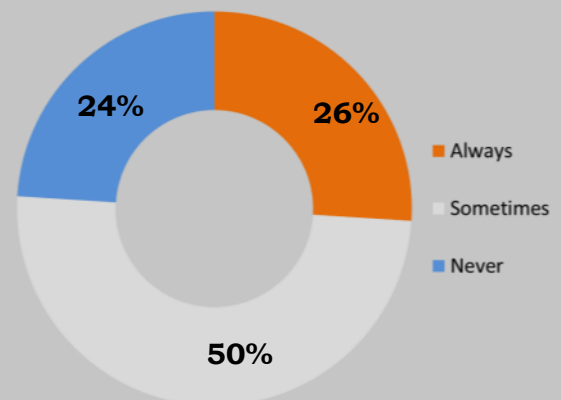
- Number of participants who participated in year 2 focus groups and survey:

A sub-sample of participants (n=153) participated in Year 2 focus groups across Canada.

A total of 1805 participants participated in Year 2 survey:

Site:	Year 1 sample:	Year 2 sample:	Year 2 attrition:
Kitchener	141	133	5
Toronto	546	512	29
Windsor	235	220	15
Montreal	697	643	50
Vancouver	246	231	13
Okanagan Valley	67	66	1
National total	1932 (excluding 24 pilots)	1805 (excluding 13 pilots)	113 (excluding 8 not eligible and 6 withdrew in year 1)

- Need for interpretation services in year 2:



- 72% reported attending language classes nationally in year 2

- 19% reported attending other schooling nationally in year 2

The Social Determinants of Refugee Mental Health in the Post-Migration Context

With the global increase in the number of refugees and asylum seekers, mental health professionals have become more aware of the need to understand and respond to the mental health needs of forced migrants. This critical review summarizes the findings of recent systematic reviews and primary research on the impact of post-migration conditions on mental disorders and PTSD among refugees and asylum seekers. Historically, the focus of mental health research and interventions with these populations has been on the impact of pre-migration trauma. Pre-migration trauma does predict mental disorders and PTSD, but the post-migration context can be an equally powerful determinant of mental health. Moreover, post-migration factors may moderate the ability of refugees to recover from pre-migration trauma. The importance of post-migration stressors to refugee mental health suggests the need for therapeutic interventions with psychosocial elements that address the broader conditions of refugee and asylum seekers' lives.

Read more on: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0706743717746666>

Syrian Refugee Youth Use Social Media

In this paper, we examine the role of social media in facilitating and building transcultural communication and connections for forced migrants in today's contexts of resettlement. For refugees, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and mobile technologies can help with relocation, provide the means to stay connected to family and friends, and learn about the new cultural environment. Our focus is on recently resettled Syrian refugee youth in Ottawa, who arrived in Canada as part of a federal government resettlement initiative in 2015-2016. Based on the findings of a qualitative study comprised of focus groups with Syrian refugee youth, both female and male between the ages of 16-25, we investigate the everyday use of social media in the process of resettlement and integration.

Read more on: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/700981>

Health care needs and use of health care services among newly arrived Syrian refugees

Canada welcomed 33 723 Syrian refugees between November 2015 and November 2016. This paper reports the results of a rapid assessment of health care needs and use of health care services among newly arrived Syrian refugees in Toronto. A cross-sectional study was conducted in Toronto among Syrian refugees aged 18 years or more who had been in Canada for 12 months or less. A total of 400 Syrian refugees; of the 400, 52.2% were privately sponsored refugees, 44.2% were government-assisted refugees, and 3.0% were refugees under the Blended Visa Office-Referred Program. They reported high levels of self-perceived physical and mental health. Over 90% of the sample saw a doctor in their first year in Canada, and 79.8% had a family doctor they saw regularly. However, almost half (49.0%) of the respondents reported unmet health care needs, with the 3 most common reasons reported being long wait times, costs associated with services and lack of time to seek health care services.

Read more on: <http://cmajopen.ca/content/5/2/E354.abstract>

Differences in Self-Reported Health and Unmet Health Needs Between Government Assisted and Privately Sponsored Syrian Refugees

A cross-sectional study with a sample of Syrian refugees was conducted to assess healthcare access, and perceived physical and mental health status. Results indicate demographic and healthcare access differences between GARs and PSRs. GARs reported significantly lower perceived physical and mental health, as well as, higher unmet healthcare needs than PSRs. GARs are among the most vulnerable refugees; they report higher needs, more complex medical conditions and tend to have more difficulty re-settling. These factors likely combine to help explain lower self-reported health and higher health needs in our sample compared to PSRs.

Read more on: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-018-0780-z>

Preliminary Investigation into Private Refugee Sponsors

Faith-based and other civil society organizations, along with more ad-hoc groups of Canadians, have sustained a continuous program of private refugee sponsorship in Canada for 40 years. The Syrian refugee exodus inspired thousands of Canadians with little or no prior experience to also take up refugee sponsorship. Little is known about private sponsors, their characteristics and experiences, and the impact of sponsorship on them. This article undertakes two tasks. First, it sketches the contours of a large, interdisciplinary project investigating the phenomenon of private refugee sponsorship from the perspective of Canadian sponsors of Syrians, including both long-term and new sponsors. The project asks how the project of welcoming refugees remakes the citizenship of Canadians. Second, the article presents original data selected from a survey of over 500 sponsors of recently arrived Syrians. We conclude with future directions for research and analysis.

Read more on: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/700979>

The Settlement Experiences of Syrian Newcomers in Alberta

A Syrian refugees resettling in Alberta face complex integration challenges. Social connections are a key foundation to successful integration. The goal of this exploratory study was to better understand the nature of social networks, social support and social capital among Syrian refugees arriving in Alberta in 2015 and in 2016. The study also focused on comparing the resettlement experience of refugees from larger centers and small centers in Alberta, differentiating the experience of government assisted refugees (GARs), privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) and blended visa office referred (BVOR) refugees. The data are drawn from a larger study that sought to understand the resettlement experience and the challenges faced by incoming refugees.

Read more on: <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/700982>

Relevant Findings

Syrian Refugees in Toronto

COSTI Immigrant Services conducted a survey with 351 Syria GAR families (1,755 adults and children) about 80% of the Syrian refugees the organization assisted to settle in Toronto:



For more survey findings, please visit: <https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2018/11/16/html> Source: COSTI

News & Events

Happy 2019 Holidays
from the SyRIA.lth team!

Continuing Education Opportunities:

Course/ Webinar	Website
Immigrant and Refugee Mental Health Project Webinars	https://irmhp-
Course: The Immigrant and Refugee Mental Health Project, by CAMH	rmhp/courses

Upcoming Events:

Date	Event	Location	Website
June 14-16	North American Refugee Health Conference: Health Means the World to Us	Toronto Canada	www.northamericanrefu
June 24-28	2019 International Metropolis Conference: The Promise of Migration: Inclusion, Economic Growth and Global Cooperation	Ottawa Canada	www.internationalmetro



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