

Institutions and Migrant Resilience

Although migrants largely settle with help from friends and family, institutions of all types and sizes are often crucial for successful integration. The BMRC-IRMU partnership investigated the roles of diverse institutions from religious organizations to government-funded immigrant-serving agencies in migrant integration. The projects demonstrate the impacts of migrants' immigration status as permanent and temporary residents, provincial policies in Ontario and Quebec, and the social, economic, political and cultural character of the various cities where migrants settle.

To document and raise awareness of the role played by faith groups in migrant settlement and integration Dr. Frédéric Dejean and his team interviewed pastors and priests in Haitian and Oriental churches in Montreal as well as Syrian refugees and Haitian asylum seekers. Their [project](#) found that Churches develop a holistic approach to caring for people, meeting all their needs, both material and spiritual. They do not simply duplicate services offered by government and nonprofit organizations. The research also showed the centrality of religion to asylum-seekers' and refugees' efforts to make sense of their experiences.

In [“Refugee Families and Building Resilience in a Second-Tier City of Quebec: The Resettlement Experiences of Syrian Refugees in Gatineau”](#) Dr. Dauphin and colleagues investigated how the municipal context affects the resettlement of refugee families. The longitudinal study of the resettlement of Syrian refugees in Gatineau demonstrated that private sponsorship offered refugees more diverse, intensive, enduring, and valuable support than government sponsorship in Gatineau. The municipal context played a significant and complex role in refugees' exposure to French, their capacities to learn the language and their access to the job market. It appears that resettlement services in a medium-sized city face specific challenges dealing with unplanned and rapid waves of arrivals. They lack the capacity to scale up services found in big cities and the flexibility of service providers in small towns.

In [“Sanctuary Cities in Canada: practices, needs, and policies”](#), a team of Quebec and Ontario researchers led by Dr. Mireille Paquet examined the official and informal practices associated with the concept of sanctuary in Canadian cities. Drawing on a content analysis of municipal publications, and a pan-Canadian online survey of government-funded immigrant-serving organizations, they identified policies that enhance and promote sanctuary practices. The research highlighted the importance of additional services for immigrants without status and those living with precarious status.

A collaborative project entitled “[The Future of the Settlement Sector](#)”, investigated how the immigrant-serving agencies in Ontario and Quebec responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Surveys of managers and workers at member organizations of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) and la Table de concertation des organismes au service des personnes réfugiées et immigrantes (TCRI) revealed the remarkable resilience of the agencies. Fuelled by their commitments to social justice, success adopting hybrid forms of service delivery, collaborations with other non-governmental agencies, and the flexibility provided by government funders, workers and managers successfully served the increasing and diverse needs of migrants during the pandemic.

[Refugees’ and refugee claimants use of formal and informal information sources](#) was examined by Dr. Michaela Hynie and collaborators including the United Way of Toronto. Based on interviews with migrants in York Region and the agencies serving them, the study concluded that awareness of available services, migrants’ stage of settlement, and their future goals influenced their use of information sources. Migration pathways, specifically whether migrants arrived as government-sponsored refugees or as refugee claimants affected whether migrants were connected to specialized settlement services or navigated the early stages of settlement on their own. The researchers recommend enhancing community-led initiatives to improve all migrants’ early access to accurate, trusted and relevant information.

With collaborators, Dr. Jelena Zikic [unpacked migrant resilience at the individual level](#). They interviewed professional migrants identified as 'successful' in their adaptation and integration in Canada. Analysing the factors that contribute to careers success, they found that learning to navigate the urban environment was key. Personal and institutional factors played important roles in migrants’ careers. However, learning about available services and building social connections in the new city were also crucial aspects of success.

Two publications explored the vital question of affordable, suitable, and well-located housing for migrants. The research digest entitled [Resettled Syrian Refugees' Housing Transitions: The Early Years in Canada](#) examined how Syrian refugees found housing. The longitudinal study showed that in their first year in Canada, community organizations and family sponsors played key roles in helping refugees find housing. By the second year, many Syrian refugees moved locally to improve their housing situation, often relying on friends or family. Moves were more likely in cities like Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo, Windsor, and Montreal than in small urban centres with fewer housing alternatives.

Focusing on the Toronto metropolitan housing market, [Toronto’s Housing Crisis: When Immigration and Housing Policies Don’t Align](#) examined trends in housing affordability for temporary migrants, refugees, family-sponsored immigrants, and economic class

immigrants. Housing affordability is a more serious issue for temporary migrants than for any immigrant group living in Toronto. Although immigrants' housing affordability issues improve the longer they live in Toronto, the rate of improvement has deteriorated, especially for refugees. Immigrants who arrived after 2006 struggle more with housing affordability than earlier arrivals.