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Identifying Best Practices in Combating Discrimination in the Settlement Process

Association for Canadian Studies
6-7-2024

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Executive Summary

This research project, conducted by the Association for Canadian Studies and funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), aims to inform and improve the settlement process by identifying barriers related to racism and discrimination. The study addresses barriers to integration related to discrimination when accessing settlement services. The primary objectives are to generate best practices, identify valuable lessons, and promote positive changes within the settlement sector concerning anti-discrimination and anti-racism efforts.

Utilizing qualitative research methods, the project explores the challenges faced by racialized newcomers regarding systemic racism, discrimination, and service accessibility. The research provides insights into the lived experiences of these newcomers, highlighting both systemic barriers and effective practices within the settlement sector.

The project aims to enhance the settlement sector's ability to assess and address the obstacles faced by racialized newcomers during their integration process. The findings offer key insights and recommendations for effective programming and policy development related to anti-discrimination and anti-racism. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure the best possible integration outcomes for racialized immigrants and refugees, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Summary: Barriers to Integration of Newcomers

Linguistic Discrimination

Linguistic discrimination significantly hinders newcomers' integration into Canadian society. Settlement workers highlighted this as a primary barrier, noting its prevalence in 85% of their interviews. Language barriers limit access to essential services, such as healthcare and legal assistance, and restrict employment opportunities. Discrimination based on accents and proficiency, even for those fluent in English or French, exacerbates these issues. For instance, websites for administrative services are often only in English or French, complicating matters for non-speakers. Accents also contribute to employment discrimination, with employers doubting the capabilities of those who don't speak "Canadian English." The shortage of language classes and assumptions about newcomers' proficiency based on their origin further complicate integration efforts.

Housing

Housing poses another significant challenge for newcomers, especially racialized refugees. Discrimination from landlords, who often refuse to rent to refugees due to stereotypes about their reliability and property maintenance, is a common issue. Those who do secure housing often face substandard

conditions. While settlement organizations help in navigating the housing market and understanding tenant rights, these efforts are limited. Programs aimed at helping with housing are often restricted to permanent residents, leaving other groups like international students and temporary foreign workers in precarious situations. Structural issues, such as a lack of affordable housing, exacerbate these challenges.

Employment Discrimination

Employment discrimination emerged as a critical barrier in 90% of interviews. Newcomers, despite having valuable skills and qualifications, face significant hurdles in entering the Canadian labor market. Discriminatory hiring practices, non-recognition of foreign credentials, and biases based on ethnicity and cultural background contribute to high unemployment and underemployment rates among racialized newcomers. Even when employed, these individuals often encounter workplace discrimination that affects their job stability and career progression. Settlement organizations offer various programs to support job search efforts, but these are insufficient to address the systemic discrimination prevalent in the employment sector. Broader systemic changes are needed to effectively tackle these issues.

Summary: Identifying Best Practices

Areas of Success

1. Inclusivity and Community Building:

- Settlement organizations have excelled in creating welcoming environments by emphasizing workplace diversity and inclusivity.
- Employing staff from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds makes the organization more relatable and accessible to newcomers.
- Diverse teams allow clients to see themselves reflected in the staff, fostering a sense of belonging.

2. Inclusive Services and Programs:

- Organizations ensure services and programs are inclusive, organizing activities and workshops catering to diverse cultures and interests.
- Conducting community surveys helps tailor services to meet the needs and interests of newcomers.

3. Anti-Racism and Discrimination Efforts:

- Organizations are committed to anti-racism and discrimination, offering cultural sensitivity training and workshops.
- Mental health support and partnerships with external organizations are in place to assist clients in need.
- Workshops to raise awareness about recognizing and addressing discrimination and racism are organized for newcomers.

4. Self-Education and Continuous Learning:

- Organizations encourage self-education and provide opportunities for staff to attend relevant training and webinars, fostering continuous professional development.
5. **Client Feedback and Adaptability:**
- Organizations actively solicit feedback from clients to improve services, making necessary changes to better cater to newcomers' needs

Areas for Improvement

1. **Training on Racism, Discrimination, and Cultural Sensitivity:**
 - Current training is often sporadic, not mandatory, and insufficient to prepare staff for assisting racialized newcomers.
 - There is a need for continuous, structured training programs that evolve with changing demographics and specific needs of newcomer groups.
2. **Resource Constraints:**
 - Organizations face significant resource constraints, including limited funding, staffing shortages, and insufficient infrastructure.
 - These constraints lead to long wait times for essential services and limit the organizations' capacity to expand services or invest in improvements.
3. **Awareness of Services:**
 - Many newcomers are unaware of the range of available services, hindering their ability to utilize resources effectively.
 - Insufficient communication strategies and outreach efforts by settlement organizations contribute to this lack of awareness.
 - There is a need to leverage modern communication channels, such as social media, and engage directly with community leaders and organizations to disseminate information effectively.

By addressing these areas, settlement organizations can enhance their effectiveness in supporting newcomers and fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Summary: Fostering Inclusive Environments and Combating Discrimination

Commitment to Anti-Racism

- **General Sentiment:** Most settlement workers believe their organizations are committed to fostering anti-racist environments, although gaps remain.
- **Indicators of Commitment:**

- **Diversity:** Many cite the diverse makeup of their teams as evidence of their commitment to anti-racism.
- **Visual Representation:** Display of diverse images and frequent discussions on anti-racism.
- **Diversity Limitations:**
 - **Insufficient by Itself:** Simply having a diverse team doesn't eliminate biases or systemic issues.
 - **Need for Training:** There is a call for more comprehensive training to address internalized racism and biases.

Policies and Actions

- **Zero-Tolerance Policies:**
 - Some organizations have policies against discrimination, often involving a multi-step warning system before taking action.
- **Training and Education:**
 - Efforts are made to educate staff and employers on anti-racism and cultural sensitivity. Training includes workshops and initiatives to address biases in hiring processes.

Challenges and Attitudes

- **Reluctance to Emphasize:**
 - Some workers, particularly racialized newcomers, prefer not to heavily emphasize anti-racism policies. They believe overemphasis could magnify the issue or lead to tokenism rather than genuine inclusion.
- **Focus on Practical Needs:**
 - There's concern that focusing too much on racism could detract from other critical newcomer needs like employment and housing assistance.

Effective Strategies and Examples

- **Employer Education:**
 - Training employers to recognize and overcome biases and showcasing statistics on newcomer productivity to encourage hiring.
- **Community Engagement:**
 - Projects like Transcultural Communication Workshops engage local businesses and educate them on cultural sensitivities and subconscious biases.

Cultural Sensitivity and Specific Needs

- **Understanding Cultural Expectations:**

- Awareness of cultural expectations is crucial for effective engagement. For example, mental health discussions might need to be approached sensitively, especially with clients from the Middle East.
- **Gender-Specific Workshops:**
 - Gender considerations are important in workshop settings. Separate workshops for men and women can help participants feel more comfortable and open.

By addressing these areas, settlement organizations can better support newcomers and foster truly inclusive environments.

Recommendations

1. Develop Extensive Anti-Racism Training for Settlement Workers

- Implement mandatory, ongoing anti-racism training for all settlement workers. This training should focus on identifying and mitigating implicit biases, understanding cultural diversity, and promoting equitable treatment of newcomers.
- Create detailed training modules incorporating case studies, role-playing, and interactive discussions. Training should be regularly updated based on new research and feedback from participants.

2. Establish Clear and Accessible Reporting Mechanisms for Racism and Discrimination

- Implement a transparent system for reporting incidents of racism or discrimination within settlement services for both settlement workers and newcomers. This system should allow all reporting to be done anonymously as well as be easy to access and navigate, ensuring newcomers feel safe and supported when raising concerns.
- Develop an online reporting platform with multilingual support.
- Make sure there is a structured follow-up process to address reported incidents promptly and effectively.

3. Create Accountability and Feedback Process within Settlement Agencies

- Create mechanisms to hold settlement agencies accountable for addressing incidents of racism and discrimination, including regular audits and feedback loops from newcomers. This will ensure issues are identified and resolved promptly, enhancing trust and efficacy.
- Introduce anonymous surveys for newcomers to provide feedback on their experiences, using the data collected to inform continuous improvements.

4. Integrate Anti-Racism Policies into Settlement Services Frameworks

- Embed anti-racism policies into the core operational frameworks of settlement services. These policies should clearly outline standards and practices for equitable service provision and be actively implemented and monitored.
- Develop comprehensive anti-racism policies in collaboration with experts and community stakeholders. Regularly review and update these policies to address emerging issues and incorporate best practices.

5. Promote Awareness of Cultural Nuances Among Settlement Workers

- Enhance training programs to include education on cultural nuances and regional differences among newcomers. Settlement workers should understand that individuals from the same country may have distinct languages, customs, and cultural practices.
- Incorporate modules on cultural nuances into existing training programs. Use case studies to illustrate potential misunderstandings and provide practical strategies for addressing these issues effectively.

6. Establish Partnerships with Private Enterprises for Anti-Racism Hiring Practices

- Form collaborative networks of settlement services and private enterprises to facilitate regular dialogue on anti-racism hiring practices. These networks can be platforms for stakeholders to share best practices to improve the hiring and retention of newcomers
- Work with private enterprises to develop and deliver anti-racism training programs for HR teams and hiring managers
- Launch pilot programs that involve settlement services working directly with employers to identify and overcome barriers specific to the hiring of racialized newcomers.

7. Encourage Community Engagement and Intercultural Dialogue

- Encourage initiatives that promote intercultural dialogue and engagement between newcomers and local communities by organizing community events, cultural exchange programs, and discussion groups that bring together newcomers and long-term residents.

8. Strengthen Advocacy and Legal Support for Newcomers

- Establish partnerships with legal aid organizations to offer free or low-cost legal services. Provide training for settlement workers on how to support newcomers in accessing these resources effectively.

9. Create Safe Spaces for Newcomer Voices

- Establish forums and platforms where newcomers can share their experiences, concerns, and suggestions regarding racism and discrimination. These spaces should be confidential and action-oriented, ensuring that newcomer voices are heard and valued.

Background

In 2022, 437,000 permanent residents settled in Canada. As part of the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Immigration Levels Plan, that number is set to reach 500,000 in 2026 with the expectation that these newcomers will be contributing to Canada's economic growth (IRCC, 2023). IRCC's Settlement Program is important in supporting the successful integration of newcomers by providing a wide range of services including assistance with housing, employment, language training as well as other essential services to help newcomers feel welcome in Canada. In addition to the growing number of newcomers arriving in Canada, the demographics of these newcomers are becoming increasingly diverse and settlement services need to work to be able to serve the variety of needs of these newcomers (Ashton et al., 2018).

While IRCC-funded settlement services are key in facilitating the smooth transition of newcomers, there remain numerous barriers to accessing them. Immigrants and refugees with permanent resident (PR) status and their immediate family members are eligible for settlement services, whereas temporary residents and refugee claimants are excluded (Praznik & Shields, 2018). As refugees have the highest usage of settlement services, specifically excluding refugee claimants from receiving support can exacerbate their settlement issues and needs (*ibid*). Additionally, when these individuals eventually obtain Canadian citizenship, they no longer have access to these services. Moreover, settlement service options are greatly limited in smaller and rural communities information regarding services are often only available in English and French and various studies have reported on the difficulties newcomers have accessing health care and mental health services (e.g. Sanmartin and Ross 2006; Ashton et al., 2018).

For racialized newcomers, barriers to accessing settlement services are often multiplied. Discrimination, systemic inequities, and cultural barriers compound newcomers' struggles and underscores the need for a better understanding of the complexities of their settlement experience (Este, Lorenzetti, and Sato 2018; Ferrer 2018; Guruge et al. 2010; Martinez-Brawley and Zorita 2011). According to IRCC, the Settlement Program has been successful in its stated goal of helping newcomers integrate, as findings from the Labour Force Survey show that the "employment rates for immigrants are generally consistent with the national average" (Whalen, 2019). However, these statistics fail to account for the reality that many racialized newcomers are underemployed or forced into survival jobs or gig work in order to support themselves and their families (Ng & Gagnon, 2020). In Ng & Gagnon's study on Employment Gaps for Racialized Groups and Immigrants in Canada, immigrants from Asia, Latin America, and Africa have higher unemployment rates than native-born Canadians. The study shows that racialized immigrants who have been in Canada for fewer than five years are overrepresented in low paying industries such as hospitality, warehousing and manufacturing. Furthermore, racialized newcomers working primarily as temporary foreign workers in the agricultural sector face specific vulnerabilities. These vulnerabilities are exacerbated by factors such as geographic isolation and dependence on employers, which limit their ability to assert their rights and report grievances.

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Research has highlighted the difficulties faced by groups such as Syrian refugees, who struggle with language barriers and credential recognition, impeding their employment opportunities (Boss et al., 2022). Similarly, discriminatory practices in the labor market affect racial and gender equality in employment (Branker, 2017; Thomas, 2021). The elusive requirement for "Canadian experience" serves as a further barrier which prevents skilled immigrants and refugees from utilizing their qualifications (Kosny et al., 2020). Canadian experience refers to having prior work experience in Canada, which employers often consider as a key requirement for candidates in order to ensure new hires are a fit for the Canadian workplace. However, this requirement is a barrier for newcomers as it undervalues foreign credentials and experience which can lead to prolonged job searches, underemployment, and financial instability for newcomers (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2023). The Ontario Human Rights Commission emphasizes that requiring Canadian experience can be discriminatory unless it is a proven job requirement (ibid).

Thomas (2021) expands on this discussion by exploring the employment experiences of newcomers in mid-sized Canadian cities, revealing that systemic barriers and subtle forms of racism are pervasive. Thomas argues for equitable assessment of international credentials and stresses the importance of pre-arrival information, and funding for anti-racist programs to mitigate biases against foreign-born

employees (*ibid*). Racialized refugees in particular experience significant downward mobility and less job security compared to their pre-displacement employment (Krahn et al., 2000; Picot et al., 2019), and they also face a number of unique barriers including lower levels of proficiency in the host country's language.

Employment is not only a key outcome for resettlement but also crucial for the mental health and integration of refugees into their host country (IRCC, 2019b). Racism and discrimination impede the economic integration of newcomers and also creates barriers to accessing housing and education. This leads to socioeconomic disadvantages and contributes to broader cycles of poverty and exclusion. According to Berry and Hou (2016), discrimination can lead to lower levels of life satisfaction and hinder active engagement with their new community which in-turn impacts their mental health. Experiences of racism and discrimination are linked to adverse health outcomes, including stress, depression, and engagement in unhealthy behaviors, as highlighted in studies by Naidu et al. (2023) and Nakhaie & Wijesingha (2015). The challenges faced by specific subgroups of newcomers and refugees, further emphasize the importance of targeted programs and interventions. Francis and Yan (2016) highlight the difficulties faced by young African newcomers in accessing formal support services due to limited funding and cultural barriers. Similarly, Muszynski and Gassim (2014) bring attention to the impact of racism on the health and well-being of refugees, emphasizing the need for policy changes to address systemic inequalities.

There is also evidence that racialized newcomers face systemic discrimination in various public service sectors, including health care. Issues such as language barriers, denial of service, and cultural insensitivity, discussed by Pollock et al. (2011), not only limit their access to essential services but also increase their chances of further discrimination and marginalization. Ratnayake et al. (2022) highlight the role of settlement service organizations in facilitating access to healthcare for immigrants. However, disparities in funding and service provision pose challenges, which calls for an increase in collaborative efforts between settlement agencies and health systems to address the health needs of immigrant populations effectively. Furthermore, racism influences social relationships and family dynamics among immigrants. For instance, Lorenzetti et al. (2023) show how the stress of racial discrimination impacts family wellness and the personal well-being of immigrant men, affecting their social roles and family interactions.

Mackay-Brown and Ashton (2021) criticize the one-size-fits-all approach to settlement services, arguing that such models often fail to consider the dynamic and individualized nature of integration, particularly the profound impact of discrimination and racism. They explain that integration models should more explicitly address these issues and recognize the responsibility of the receiving society and community in creating an environment of acceptance. However, as integration needs and expectations are highly location specific, the requirements for successful integration will vary across different communities. Jedwab (2006) advocates for a more personalized approach to integration, suggesting that it should be continuously redefined to meet the individual needs and circumstances of each newcomer. This perspective challenges the current model and emphasizes that ongoing adjustment is required for settlement programs and services to be successful.

It is a necessity to understand both the strengths and weaknesses of current settlement services in order to identify what these organizations are doing effectively to combat discrimination and racism and where they can improve. Understanding the gaps in knowledge and service provision for racialized newcomers will allow settlement services to develop targeted interventions that address specific needs and challenges.

The following study involved a series of comprehensive interviews with both newcomers and settlement workers across Canada. These interviews were designed to capture the lived experiences of racialized newcomers, focusing on their encounters with systemic racism and discrimination when accessing settlement services. Additionally, the study sought to uncover effective strategies and practices currently in place, as well as areas needing improvement.

Our objectives align with the values of the Service Delivery Improvement (SDI) fund, emphasizing the importance of understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by racialized immigrants and refugees. By conducting focus groups and key informant interviews, we aimed to gather deep insights into these individuals' experiences, highlighting both the successes and the gaps in the current settlement services framework.

Methodology

This research project was conducted in two phases. The first phase focused on scanning and planning, identifying research gaps and relevant information for settlement workers. The team used IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, Version 29.0 for Windows) to analyze data from the "Impacts of COVID-19 on Canadians - Experiences of Discrimination, 2020" survey in order to dashboards that visually depicted discrimination incidents across Canada. Data collected was organized in a series of MS Excel files, which were linked to Tableau Desktop (Professional edition, 2024, 1.2.) for data visualization which are available in the Appendix. An extensive literature review followed, with abstract searches in three databases using specific terms related to immigrants, discrimination, and settlement. From these, 46 articles were selected for full-text review. Key informant interviews were also conducted, with interview guides developed for both racialized newcomers and settlement workers, and ethical approval obtained from the Community Research Ethics Office. In the second phase, we recruited 109 newcomers and 31 settlement workers across five provinces and ten cities through settlement organizations. Interviews were conducted in person and over Zoom. Of the 109 newcomers interviewed, 89 interviews were analyzed for this report. 20 newcomers were excluded from the analysis due to audio issues and quality. Data was analyzed using NVivo software with deductive coding, identifying themes through narrative analysis to understand the experiences of participants and inform best practices for combatting discrimination and racism in the settlement process.

Settlement Workers

Frontline settlement workers and staff, as defined in this report, are the professionals who engage directly with newcomers to provide critical support and facilitate their integration into Canadian society.

The primary aim of interviewing these settlement workers was to gain insights from frontline staff regarding the specific challenges faced by racialized newcomers during their settlement journey, as well as the barriers they encounter in accessing settlement services. These interviews sought to identify issues of discrimination and racism that specifically impact racialized newcomers, to discuss potential improvements in the settlement sector, and identify actions needed to facilitate better integration for these newcomers.

This study involved interviews with 31 settlement workers occupying diverse roles such as employment counselors, case managers, and language teachers within various settlement organizations and agencies across Canada. These professionals play a pivotal role in assisting immigrants and refugees as they navigate their new lives in Canada.

Table 1 below outlines the geographic distribution of the settlement workers interviewed for this study.

Table 1: Geographic distribution of settlement worker participants

Province	City	# of Settlement Workers Interviewed	Total by Province	Percentage
Quebec	Montreal	4	6	19.35%
	Gatineau	2		
Manitoba	Winnipeg	4	6	19.35%
	Brandon	2		
British Columbia	Vancouver	2	4	12.90%
	Prince George	2		
Alberta	Calgary	8	10	32.26%
	Edmonton	2		
Ontario	Toronto	3	5	16.13%
	Thunder Bay	2		

n=31

The settlement workers revealed several challenges that newcomers face, including language barriers and issues securing adequate employment and housing, as well as navigating complex bureaucratic systems. These challenges underscore specific shortcomings in settlement, and areas for improvement within settlement organizations. Additionally, the interviews highlighted various instances of racism and

discrimination faced by racialized newcomers, emphasizing the need for more resources and better training among staff to properly address these issues.

Barriers to Integration of Newcomers

Linguistic discrimination

Linguistic discrimination refers to the unfair treatment of individuals based on their language, dialect, accent, or perceived vocabulary, often reinforcing unequal power dynamics and intersecting with racial discrimination (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). For the settlement workers interviewed, this was a primary barrier in the settlement process for newcomers, with 85% (n=26) of interviews highlighting this issue.

Language discrimination and barriers affect immigrants' integration by limiting their access to essential services and employment opportunities (Schachter, 2016; Chiswick & Miller, 2015). One of the immediate impacts of language barriers is on newcomers' ability to access public services such as healthcare, legal assistance, as well as other administrative necessities like getting a driver's license. As a settlement worker in Montreal explained,

These services, like obligatory administrative services that are provided online are only in English and in French. It is crazy that websites catering to immigrants are only in two languages...and maybe sometimes in Spanish, but I think that is more recent. The team, like my team, spends way too much time ever day helping our clients translate and understand these websites to do like anything. (MON-002)

The issue is also highlighted for francophone newcomers who are accessing services where French is not widely spoken. As a participant from Prince George who works primarily with Francophone newcomers observed, "I didn't have the challenge of the language barrier, but many of our [Francophone] clients do, and it makes accessing services incredibly difficult for them". (PrG-001).

A participant from Winnipeg highlighted a case where a client struggled to receive adequate medical care when she went to urgent care for treatment:

She's a diabetic person, so she constantly told them I need something. She feels thirsty all the time because of the medication. She wanted more water, more liquids, they only provided her with juices with a lot of sugar and she keeps telling them I want something without sugar, I cannot take sugar (WIN-002).

Language barriers significantly affect newcomers' employment opportunities, especially for racialized newcomers who may be faced with other forms of discrimination. Employers are often hesitant to hire

employees with limited English proficiency, even if they are otherwise qualified, due to concerns about workplace communication and integration and this is amplified in customer-facing roles. However, even when newcomers arrive with a high level of English proficiency, they are perceived to be less capable due to their accents, affecting their chances of securing employment for jobs they are qualified for because their English is not “Canadian English.” As one participant noted:

A few clients mentioned microaggressions at work, whether that would be unintentional mentioning about their accent, right. Or your accent is, you know, not understandable or we're not saying like this in Canada, we say like that and you should be mindful of your accent and so on” – (CAL-007)

In a study on African Immigrant women to Canada, Creese & Kambere (2023) explain “Canadian English constitutes a border allowing only partial and provisional crossing for those with an African English accent.... thus, accents form a site through which racialized power relations are negotiated and ‘Others’ are reproduced materially and figuratively in Canada.”

This issue is exacerbated by long waiting lists for English language classes, making it difficult for newcomers to improve their language skills. Settlement organizations have trouble providing enough English language lessons. The direct correlation between language proficiency and the ability to find meaningful employment highlights the necessity for accessible, comprehensive language training programs.

One settlement worker explained some instances where despite their high proficiency, newcomers were pushed by their caseworkers to take English classes, regardless of their actual language skills because it was assumed based on their country of origin that they were not proficient in English.

Maybe they say, oh, I guess this is my identity now, even though it's not.... It takes years usually to convince those people... that these English classes only should be for people who really need to learn English.... So I think it affects creating this identity for newcomers. And they kind of feel separated.... many still feel more excluded by having to take all these English classes... because they feel like they won't be included in Canadian society, and they have to do all these things to be included. - (TOR-001)

The need to participate in language classes, even when unnecessary, suggests a deeper issue of perceived linguistic inadequacy tied to racialized assumptions, which can complicate their integration and feelings of acceptance in Canadian society.

While settlement workers often praised the linguistic diversity within service organizations, there remain significant gaps, particularly when employees fluent in specific languages are unavailable. This limitation can hinder effective communication and support for certain newcomer groups. One participant in Winnipeg highlighted this issue by noting, “It was surprising that a government-run residence doesn't have

an employee who speaks Arabic, because we know that especially in the last few years, a lot of Syrian refugees came. So obviously they need someone who speaks Arabic” (WIN-002). Also, it is clear that keeping up with the different waves of immigrants and their linguistic needs is a challenge:

So for instance, now they are welcoming many refugees from Latin America. But the amount of Spanish speakers working in this organization is so little. Somebody can be nice, but then they don't speak the language and they cannot assist with what's going on. It would be very difficult to help those people. So I think if we are helping newcomers, we should also think that our organizations, ours and external organizations should represent those newcomers. - (TOR-001)

Housing

The interview transcripts reveal that finding appropriate housing is a significant obstacle for newcomers, with racialized refugees seemingly the most impacted. Settlement workers recount experiences where landlords expressed reluctance or outright refusal to rent to newcomers due to their preconception about their unfamiliarity with Canadian laws and how they might maintain a property.

One settlement worker in Calgary, who had previously worked as a housing liaison, described direct interactions with landlords hesitant to rent their properties to refugees.

I used to work in Housing Liaison when I started. For some landlords, when we reach out to them introducing ourselves and who will be living in the house they will be quite afraid of housing what I would call non-white refugees in particular. They would say they have no understanding of the Canadian law and how they will be treating the house badly. But because we do a lot of training and orientation with our refugees and teach them rules and obligations in Canada, especially in Calgary, we are able to convince landlords and get housing. But most people to be honest were racist in terms of not wanting newcomers in their house. (CAL- 008)

Another settlement worker spoke about the difficulties refugees have finding housing.

They are mostly in the first year...the first two years on social aid, so they don't get accepted [for housing] because they [landlors] don't think they're gonna have stable income. There's nothing more stable than having social aid because you know, it's gonna be there every month so that is a subject of discrimination always...and because this is always the stereotypes and because their too loud because they are smelly because they don't respect our culture...- (MON-001)

Newcomers who do find housing found that their housing is not ideal. They may have to deal with issues such as inadequate heating, poor maintenance, or unsanitary or insecure conditions. A settlement worker in Winnipeg shared a story of a female Muslim client living in social housing: “A male staff member would just, you know, without knocking the door, would open her room door and just get inside the room. That's, you know, even if she's not wearing hijab or whatever, that's unacceptable.” (WIN-002)

Several programs aim to alleviate these housing challenges. Settlement organizations often provide support in navigating the housing market, understanding tenant rights, and accessing emergency shelters or temporary housing solutions. Settlement organizations also forward their clients to various municipal and provincial housing assistance when possible. However, another limitation outlined by a settlement worker in Winnipeg is that a lot of these programs are limited to permanent resident newcomers only.

I mean, rent is so high and newcomers can't afford that. And that's so, so important for so many people. But it's only for PRs. So we have so many international students, they're bunking up in rooms... a small room within a house, which is considered like a illegal rooming house... then there's, you know, other groups like, uh, temporary foreign workers who aren't able to get this rent assist either and find themselves in precarious housing situations. So you see the trickle, like what the actual impact is if you follow the connections between, okay, so immigration status, how you arrived, what you have access to, you're not eligible for this program. You can't afford your rent. (WIN-003)

A few settlement workers shared that newcomers have expressed satisfaction with the help they received finding suitable housing. However, the overall satisfaction with housing programs varies and settlement workers are quick to point out the structural issues, such as lack of affordable housing, that exacerbate the situation. Many of the settlement workers interviews feel that more solutions are needed to address the root causes of housing insecurity.

Employment Discrimination

Discrimination and racism in the employment sector emerged as a primary theme in the interviews revealing the various challenges racialized newcomers face in securing jobs. This issue was highlighted in 90% of interviews, and ranged from the brushing off of resumes based on ethnic-sounding names to workplace discrimination affecting job stability and career progression.

Many newcomers arrive in Canada with valuable skills, qualifications, and work experience from their home countries. However, they frequently encounter significant barriers when attempting to enter the Canadian labor market. For settlement workers whose task it is to help newcomers find employment, discriminatory hiring practices, lack of recognition of foreign credentials, and biases based on ethnicity or cultural background contribute to the employment challenges faced by these individuals. Newcomers' job applications are often judged harshly on the basis of having foreign education or credentials that are seen as less valuable. Racialized newcomers are doubly affected by the devaluation of their credentials and of their racial or cultural background. As a participant from Thunder Bay noted

I don't want to say that employers.... whether they are racist towards newcomers but discriminated against for sure....their credentials are a lot of times not recognized. They are put into like stereotypes of, hey, you know what? You're from so and so country. So you must be an Uber driver who has come over here...unless they have a credential from the college and university

from here or from anywhere in Canada that they are worth, uh, their value from whatever university or college that they've graduated from and that they can perform those jobs and skills.(THB-001)

Racialized immigrants, particularly those from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East, often experience higher unemployment and underemployment rates. This is the case even for highly skilled immigrants. (Banerjee, Verma, & Zhang, 2023; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). As one participant explained,

Mostly I have noticed that those who go for interviews, they are hired. But most of them do not get the interview call. So what we do is we try our best to make their resume so good, so perfect, and so appealing for the employer that they call them for an interview, because of course, they are very passionate, they work hard.....but the problem is when they see the education. I was talking to someone who is from HR and that person told me about a profession...finance is not a regulated field in Canada, as far as I know...but she mentioned that when the resume comes to them, they look at the education first, whether it's from Canada or not. So, if you are saying that for fields that are not regulated, [Canadian] education is not required, then why are HR people looking into [where] they got their education from? – (BRA- 002)

Even after overcoming these initial barriers, racialized newcomers often face discrimination within the workplace. As a settlement worker who is a career advisor explained, when this happens, many newcomers are unwilling to outright declare their mistreatment was due to discrimination.

An individual, an engineer from another country, joined our program and found a job with an oil and gas company. However, he was laid off within a few months, possibly due to cultural team issues and underlying discrimination. We provided him with information on local services and legal advice, ensuring he knew his rights. Building strong relationships with clients is crucial, as they are more likely to seek support if they feel judged fairly. Even when they hesitate, we encourage them to pursue their rights if the issue is serious. - (CAL-006)

Every settlement organization we spoke to offer various programs to support newcomers in overcoming employment barriers. These include job search assistance, resume writing workshops, interview preparation sessions, job fairs and practicums. Some settlement workers shared the success stories of these programs. Organizations are also trying to work closely with private sector to find opportunities:

One of my students, I sent her to the credit union and she was a financial analyst back home. Last week she got the job and she said that she got the job because of her work placement, because she gave my name as reference, so when an employer calls me, she asks about the work practicum, how she performed in the work practicum. So she got the opportunity on the basis of that practicum. – (BRA-002)

However, despite these efforts, many found the support insufficient for newcomers to fully overcome the biases and systemic discrimination they face. Many settlement workers expressed that more could be done to address the root causes of employment discrimination. A participant from Calgary emphasized the need for broader systemic changes:

...this is not an issue of the immigration sector. This is an issue on the other end. So if we can get more back from them for not rectifying the situation...then that can help quite a bit because it's not immigrant's issue at all, they're just coming here and we have to give them knowledge. It's the way system has been and the system has to change. (CAL-006)

This was a sentiment expressed often by settlement workers, that while current programs are helpful, they are not sufficient on their own.

Identifying Best Practices

Where are settlement Organizations Succeeding

Initiatives designed to create an environment where all newcomers feel welcome and supported were highlighted as the main areas where their settlement organizations are succeeding. Particularly in the area of workplace diversity, inclusivity as well as building community.

The settlement workers (n=13) underscored the importance of having a diverse team and believed that their organizations reflected the diversity of their clients. For them, their organizations' emphasis on employing staff from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds made the organization more relatable and accessible for newcomers.

We have our team, which is very diverse and in our team too we allow everyone to be able to express themselves because having diverse minds...because when they come here, they feel like they can see themselves in one of us. - (PrG-001)

Like our office and any other offices that they came to for applying for any official documents, it's diverse and you can see people from all over the world. People wearing hijab or national clothes, it's a plus, it's always welcome and you feel like it's diverse. It's so inclusive and it's like home. – (CAL-005)

Several respondents also mentioned their organizations' efforts to ensure services and programs are inclusive and welcoming to all, regardless of background. This includes organizing activities and workshops that cater to a wide range of cultures and interests. One participant in Calgary highlighted the

importance of "diversifying our activities to be open to everyone" and conducting surveys to gauge community needs and interests.

In addition, the majority of respondents noted the efforts of their organizations to create and foster inclusive and safe environments that are committed to anti-racism and discrimination. Many organizations offer workshops and provide training on cultural sensitivity, to ensure that the workers are well equipped to properly serve a diverse newcomer population. In addition, many participants spoke about the mental health support available to their clients and their partnerships with external organizations to refer clients who needed support. Some organizations are going a step beyond, arranging workshops for newcomers to raise awareness about recognizing and addressing discrimination and racism.

...we have a really good mental health counselor and she has been having some workshops regarding discrimination, uh, in Canada and she has always been telling us that if we have any clients that feel that they want to talk to anyone or have any concerns, we have to contact the counselor and she will talk to them one by one. (TOR-002)

...for the people that don't feel comfortable enough to go to them [the team] I contacted [an organization] so that we can organize a workshop with a lawyer who gave us details to explain what is discrimination, what is racism, where to go to for the information, who to talk to, how long the process is. We did have that workshop and they also gave us a bunch of different resources that we can keep giving in the future to clients that might experience things like that. (PrG-001)

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Others emphasized their organization's commitment and encouragement of self-education and self-training outside the training they receive as part of their role.

They promote self-education. So if I see there is trainings that I would be interested in, I could sign up myself. And then they ask in the end of quarter or year, like, "oh, which trainings have you attended for yourself?" There are many webinars. So I think this is really nice because maybe some topics, I know more and some I know less, and then it's good for me to be able to choose where I think I lack knowledge. – (TOR-001)

Two settlement workers highlighted that their organizations are actively soliciting feedback from their clients to improve their services. They emphasized that organizations are attentive to the input from participants, making necessary changes and adjustments to better cater to the needs of newcomers.

We found that many of the people want to start a small business. Seed has a program for newcomers and they are giving training to entrepreneurs, potential entrepreneur who are trying to open new businesses. We think we can render this kind of training also that will have an impact, that will have a positive impact on our community and help people to open a small businesses with minimum cost or funding this kind of thing we can provide. This year, we have found that many people are coming to us for citizenship from a refugee claimant, passport renewal and peer renewal and work permit. If we can open a full fledged wing in this sector. Then people will get more benefit from us. (WIN-002)

Where Settlement Organizations Can Improve

Interviews revealed that settlement workers identified key areas where settlement organizations need improvement to better serve newcomers. The main concerns were insufficient training for staff, a lack of awareness among newcomers about available services, and the overarching issue of limited resources. These factors collectively hinder the effectiveness of support provided to newcomers.

Lack of Training on issues such as racism, discrimination and cultural sensitivity

The issue of inadequate training on the topic of racism, discrimination and cultural sensitivity is compounded by the fact that training is often sporadic and not mandatory, which fails to adequately prepare staff for the complexities of assisting racialized newcomers. This point was consistently highlighted in interviews with settlement workers across various cities, who expressed frustration over the current cultural sensitivity training.

For instance, a settlement worker from Montreal highlighted this gap,

So for me the trainings are not enough. I personally think that we should be doing better specifically with those community that even here and in the other side of the world have already been marginalized. So there's double triple oppression within them and I think that some of the trainings are mostly white based and directed by white people with just the touch of diversity ...having a POC presenter..... but it's not enough... these people should be the one's doing the trainings and unfortunately, we do not see that capacity yet in here.... - (MON-001)

According to the settlement workers, the training that is provided is typically in the form of one-off workshops provided during the onboarding process rather than a continuous, structured program. This approach does not allow for the development of deep, sustained knowledge or the reinforcement of skills necessary to effectively support newcomers facing racism and discrimination. The lack of continuous

training has led some settlement workers to feel that they are required to learn on the job leaving many workers to feel unprepared and unsupported in their roles.

Settlement workers also noted the absence of continuous training programs that evolve with the changing demographics and needs of the newcomer population. With various waves of newcomers from different countries, specific tailored trainings are not offered to address the specific needs of the newcomer groups.

Trainings help you understand the needs of each population context, colonization, their history and everything behind that so you could provide good resources and not just do what mostly white people do which is whitewashing of everything and I'm just gonna give you everything we think it's gonna help you and not have a differentiate process on how to give a specific resource for each specific population. (MON-001)

Moreover, all participants mentioned that their organizations provide training, whether during the onboarding process or workshops throughout the year, or emergency meetings to discuss specific events. However, when pressed, many settlement workers said that while their specific managers strongly encouraged their participation in diversity and inclusion workshops, they were not mandatory and it was often highly dependent on who your manager is and what department you worked in.

Let's say even apart from the specific dedicated trainings that we have sometimes, sometimes it's online and lately is being voluntary. Let's say we are presented with a set of trainings and encouraged to take them, but it's not mandatory. - (CAL-002)

We recently had training for cultural competency. They are working on diversity and inclusion thing and equity, so they're trying to be more equal. But I think it's mostly for management position.... But some trainings are more sector specific or the manager assigns like new people, if you recently joined and you didn't have enough trainings before, then the manager says like, oh, you can take those trainings and other people take different trainings. It depends, I think, with which programs people are working. And then it's not like they're gonna check.....- (TOR-001)

Resource Constraints

In the settlement worker interviews, a recurring theme was the significant resource constraints that hinder the effectiveness of settlement organizations. These constraints manifest in various forms, including limited funding, staffing shortages, and insufficient infrastructure, all of which severely impact the ability of these organizations to provide adequate support to newcomers.

One of the most pressing issues highlighted by settlement workers is the long wait times for essential services. These delays can be attributed to the high demand for services coupled with inadequate resources to meet this demand. A settlement counselor from Thunder Bay mentioned, *"The wait times*

are astronomical, anywhere from 3 to 6 months. Or maybe a year if it's a doctor. We work very closely with them in that sense, but wow, it's a hit and miss" (THB-001).

Internal program wait times have also become a significant problem. A job search facilitator in Calgary noted a marked increase in wait times for appointments:

"I remember when I first resumed with SOPA seven years ago, our clients didn't have to wait for appointments, neither six, five, four years ago. But now our clients would come to us and say, 'Look, I asked you to recommend post-arrival services, but I've been waiting two, three weeks and nobody has time to see me" (CAL-005).

The resource constraints faced by settlement organizations are further compounded by funding limitations. Many workers indicated that their organizations operate on tight budgets, which restricts their capacity to hire additional staff, expand services, provide trainings or invest in infrastructure improvements.

We don't have a lot of PD dollars. There's lack of funding from our funders to support us with professional development. Imagine a team of 17, we don't even have two grand for the year. It again comes down to lack of funding, we're unable to provide good trainings I would say, so we do try to access external trainings. (TOR-003)

Lack of Awareness of Services

The interviews with settlement workers reveal significant shortcomings in the awareness and accessibility of settlement services among newcomers. Many newcomers are not fully informed about the range of services available to them, which hinders their ability to utilize these resources effectively. This lack of awareness can be attributed to several factors, including insufficient communication strategies and outreach efforts by settlement organizations.

A recurring theme in the interviews was the need for better dissemination of information about available services. Settlement workers frequently noted that newcomers do not know where to go for help or what services they are entitled to.

Another significant issue is the inadequate use of modern communication channels to reach newcomers. Many settlement organizations still rely heavily on traditional methods of communication, which may not be as effective in reaching the younger, tech-savvy immigrant population. Leveraging social media platforms and community networks could bridge this gap. For example, using popular social media channels to share information about workshops, language classes, and other services could significantly increase awareness and participation.

Additionally, there is a need for targeted outreach programs that engage directly with community leaders and organizations that work closely with newcomers. These community-based approaches can help in building trust and ensuring that information reaches those who might otherwise be missed. For instance, collaboration with cultural associations and faith-based organizations can be an effective way to disseminate information within specific communities.

Fostering Inclusive Environments and Combating Discrimination

Settlement workers were asked if they believed their organizations were committed to anti-racism. While almost every settlement worker we spoke to believed that their organization was actively working to foster an environment free of discrimination to some degree, they also pointed out that there are notable gaps and areas for improvement.

When asked if their organization is committed to anti-racism and anti-discrimination practices and policies, respondents who believed their organizations were committed often cited diversity as the primary indicator of this commitment.

Oh, yeah. We have a lot of pictures about this on every wall in our organization. A lot of talks about this and also all my colleagues, [we are a] multi-nation team. It is very interesting and this is huge. – (VAN-001)

Of course it's one of the core values and more than policies, it's an action. Like if you walk in to our organization, I'm proud to say it, you have people from all different backgrounds, all different countries. If you see the staff, you can see that here everyone that is hired, was hired for their skills. So if you ask me what is the policy, just if you observe who we are as an organization, you can see that you have people from every different backgrounds, religions, countries. So it's easy to see it. – (BRA-002)

Or they believed that because settlement workers were often immigrants themselves, they instinctively knew how to handle every situation, “.....but also me being an immigrant myself, I know how it works and I know how I should behave...”, (CAL-001).

While diversity is crucial for fostering safe environments, merely having a diverse team is insufficient. Representation alone does not eliminate biases or other issues that need to be unlearned. One participant pointed out that merely having a diverse team might not be sufficient to address systemic issues of racism and discrimination.

But I think as a service provider we need a lot of training to unpack a lot of internalized racism or even our own biases and prejudices of stereotyping people.....I think at this time we are moving a lot forward in terms of providing training to the staff on understanding, anti-oppression framework and working from that lens. However, we all get caught up in our day to day, and it really just trickles down to you as a person, how you're going to mitigate or behave with your client who's in front of you. (TOR-003)

A few participants mentioned that their organizations have zero-tolerance policies against discrimination. However, in some cases, the zero-tolerance policy is a three-strike policy in place before any action is taken to let someone go.

If they hear that you have misbehaved against a client, then you have to have a meeting with the manager and you get a warning. Next time he writes down. So you have it on writing that you have misbehaved or something like that. Then the third time I think they kick you out. (TOR-002)

Some settlement workers, particularly those who are racialized newcomers themselves, expressed a reluctance to heavily emphasize anti-racism policies and programs.

My personal thing is that if you put so much emphasis on a problem, it becomes a bigger problem. That's my thing, so I don't put too much pressure on it....I'm not too keen on like, you know, making policies. Like there are policies already set, but I'm not going to make a big deal out of it, because once you make a big deal, that's when people actually make a bigger deal out of it. – (PrG-001)

“We do have some [anti-racism policies], but I don't think it will be the major one... but it shouldn't be so extrapolated you know, overemphasized. Sometimes when you overemphasize something and then the client will take advantage of it as well.” – (VAN-002)

This attitude may be rooted in several underlying factors. One reason for this could be the belief that overemphasizing these issues can inadvertently magnify them, leading to a more significant problem. Additionally, some racialized individuals may feel that emphasizing anti-racism policies could reinforce a sense of victimhood or dependency rather than empowerment. There is also the perspective that these policies, if not carefully implemented, could lead to tokenism rather than genuine inclusion and equality. Another aspect is the concern that too much focus on racism might detract from other critical areas of support that newcomers need, such as employment and housing assistance (Banerjee, Verma, & Zhang, 2023).

In contrast, the settlement workers who felt that their organizations are leading the way in fostering environments committed to anti-racism, are those that actively educate and engage both their staff and the broader community, fostering an environment where diversity is celebrated, and inclusion is deeply embedded in their operational practices.

One such initiative involves educating employers on hiring newcomer talent. A participant from a shared their organization's strategy to train employers on recognizing and overcoming biases in their hiring processes. They explained,

So currently we are planning to educate employers on hiring newcomer talent so that they can identify and they can reflect on their hiring process. I think if we look at the statistics, statistics also say that newcomers work really well. Showing such statistics in conferences and in meetings, community gatherings to the employers that if you hire newcomer, the productivity can increase this much, for example. – (BRA-002)

Another example from an organization in Calgary,

So I was personally engaged in a project called Transcultural Communication Workshops, and this was directed toward employees from businesses in Calgary. I was surprised to see how much the community was engaged in that project, and to see that people wanted to know more and how culture sensitivities sometimes create barriers, and they want to know how others could receive it as discrimination, even though they did not mean it, and also education on educating public on their own subconscious bias. So this as well will be very helpful. (CAL-004)

Settlement organizations must enhance their awareness of the cultural expectations and sensitivities of their clients to better engage with them and ensure they derive maximum benefit from the services provided. For example, some clients may be hesitant to directly engage with a mental health counselor, necessitating efforts to learn how to broach the topic of mental health sensitively or to train caseworkers to better assist newcomers in this regard. For instance, one participant revealed that his clients preferred speaking to him over the mental health worker at his organization because they perceived him as their equal.

But usually 95% of the cases, they don't want I ask them "do you want to talk to our mental health counselor?" But they talk to me...they see me as an equal person....I think from the countries we are coming from, Middle East we don't usually talk about issues that we have. So it's very common. You have to have big, big problems if you want to go and talk to a psychologist, otherwise you want to have it inside the family or inside friends or something. You don't want to go and talk to anybody about this. So it's mostly, you know, a Middle Eastern thing. (TOR-002)

Also, other cultural factors to consider when creating workshops like this. For example, the issues regarding having men and women in the same workshops might not acceptable in some cultures

But the workshops like that because when you have men in these workshops, then women tend to not say anything. They're quiet. So you can have a workshop for men, of course, it's no problem. But gender based workshops would be perfect so you can talk about these kind of things, and then

these people would be open much more to, you know, communicate and express themselves.
(TOR-002)

Summary

While many settlement organizations are committed to fostering inclusive environments, there are significant areas for improvement. Although diversity is frequently highlighted as evidence of anti-racism efforts, it is not sufficient on its own to address deep-seated biases and systemic discrimination. Active measures, such as comprehensive training on internalized racism and unconscious biases, are essential for creating truly inclusive environments.

The effectiveness of zero-tolerance policies against discrimination can be undermined by inconsistent enforcement, such as implementing a three-strike rule. Additionally, some racialized settlement workers express reluctance to overemphasize anti-racism initiatives, believing that it could exacerbate the problem or lead to tokenism.

However, leading organizations are adopting proactive strategies to combat systemic discrimination. Initiatives like educating employers on the benefits of hiring newcomers and providing transcultural communication workshops are essential steps toward genuine inclusivity. By focusing on education, engagement, and systemic changes, these organizations are setting a standard for what it means to be actively anti-racist.

In conclusion, fostering inclusive environments requires more than just diversity; it demands ongoing education, consistent policy enforcement, and proactive engagement with both staff and the broader community. Only through these comprehensive efforts can settlement organizations effectively support newcomers and combat discrimination.

Newcomers

In this section, we present the stories of the racialized newcomers who participated in interviews across Canada. To ensure that their voices are heard, we chose to conduct a narrative analysis of these interviews. This approach allowed us to capture the full depth and complexity of their settlement experiences, including the reasons they chose—or were compelled—to immigrate to Canada, the challenges they faced, their interactions with settlement services, and their encounters with discrimination and racism. By focusing on their personal stories, we aim to provide an empathetic understanding of the newcomers' journeys and the realities they face in adapting to life in Canada.

Demographics

Study participants (n = 89) were racialized individuals who immigrated to Canada within the last 5 years. In order to contextualize their experiences, participants were asked to provide demographic information (i.e., age, gender, ethnicity).

Table 2: Geographic distribution of newcomer participants

Province	City	Number of Newcomers	Total by Province	Percentage
Quebec	Montreal	7	11	12.36%
	Gatineau	4		
Manitoba	Winnipeg	11	17	19.10%
	Brandon	6		
British Columbia	Vancouver	3	10	11.24%
	Prince George	7		
Alberta	Calgary	13	21	23.59%
	Edmonton	8		
Ontario	Toronto	22	30	33.70%
	Thunder Bay	8		

n=89

Table 3: Newcomer Demographics

Measure	Items	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Gender	Male	25	28.09%
	Female	64	71.91%
Age	20-24	9	10.11%
	25-29	18	20.22%
	30-34	20	22.47%
	35-39	13	14.60%
	40-44	10	11.23%
	45+	6	6.74%
	N/A	13	14.61%
Ethnicity	Sub-Saharan African (e.g., Eritrean, Sudanese, Nigerian)	38	42.70%
	North African (e.g. Algerian, Moroccan)	8	8.99%
	Latin American (e.g., Brazilian, Columbian)	9	10.11%
	Middle Eastern (e.g., Arab, Iranian, Turkish, Afghan)	13	14.61%
	South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi)	14	15.73%
	East Asian (e.g., China, Hong Kong, Vietnam)	6	6.74%
	N/A	1	1.12%
Visa Type	Permanent Resident	39	43.82%
	Work Permit	8	8.99%
	Student Visa	3	3.37%
	Refugee	21	23.60%
	Citizen	1	1.12%
	N/A	17	19.10%
Employment Status	Employed	26	29.21%
	Unemployed	53	59.55%
	Self-Employed	3	3.37%
	In school	1	1.12%
	N/A	6	6.74%
Time in Canada	Less than 1 year	13	14.61%
	1-2 years	23	25.84%
	2-3 years	13	14.61%
	3-4 years	9	10.11%
	4-5 years	4	4.49%
	5 years	9	10.11%
	N/A	18	20.22%

Reasons for Choosing Canada

Safety and stability

When asked about the factors which led the newcomer participants to immigrate to Canada, reasons included fleeing violence and war, and to improve their circumstances for economic opportunity.

Escape conflict

Participants mentioned conflict and violence in their country of origin as a reason for fleeing. Examples include the war in Ukraine, and violence against civilians in Congo and Sudan. Of all participants included in the report, 25% (n=22) were refugees, with 6 assigned to Canada through the UNHCR application process. Participants spoke of Canada's freedom and respect for human rights.

I am from Iran... I chose Canada because they care for human rights for other countries. Because one journalist Iranian-Canadian, her name is Zahra Kazemi. She is tortured in Iran and died. But Canada closed embassy in Iran for this problem...Canada believes in human rights, like help to Ukraine for example, helped with other countries with their problems. I think is a good country, is democratic country, is a freedom country. – (TOR-002)

Refugee support

Some refugee participants describe dire circumstances, including sex trafficking, escaping powerful terrorist organizations like the Taliban and Boko Haram, and the persecution of ethnic minorities.

In Afghanistan on August 2021, the government collapsed and terrorist groups who was fighting during the last 20 years, they came to the power. So, I as a Hazara ethnic groups who are experiencing, genocide in Afghanistan. We have no safe place in Afghanistan. And also the girls were stopped from going in the schools. Women stopped working. So that was the reason I was forced to leave the country. And the reason why I selected the Canada... we were looking for a safe place. A place where there is not any discrimination. There is humanity and equality. – (BRA-001)

Not all participants citing safety as an immigration factor were refugees; some newcomers on work permits (other than CUAET) cited safety and political unrest as reasons for choosing Canada: “When my daughter turns five, there's going to be a circumcision, which I'm trying to prevent from happening right now... I was thinking, Canada is going to be the safest place for me and my children, to prevent that from happening.” – (CAL-008)

Economic Opportunities and Quality of Life

Economic and Professional Opportunities

When the participant's country of origin had economic issues, it caused "push factors" for participants to emigrate, for example theft and violence. 29% (n=26) of the newcomers interviewed spoke about Canada's opportunities to grow professionally and educationally, and were drawn to Canada's reputation in their professional field.

The economy is not so good there and the environment obviously is sometimes difficult in Colombia with some violence going on. Because the economy is bad, many people sometimes are stealing and somethings like that. We have more opportunity here [in Canada], more quality of life. – (CAL-006)

Before we got married, he was preparing to come to school in Canada because he's an aircraft maintenance engineer in Nigeria. And he wanted to just further his career and know more and have some license here so he could work in our country, work better and everything. I think the airline here in Canada is very wide and big. – (WIN-002)

Education

The desire to learn or provide a Canadian education to children was expressed by participants.

We moved to here for absolutely for the kids, because I think here they have more freedom for learning. They have a great education system to support them. – (VAN-002)

For my daughter's education, I decide to leave from China... I was a teacher in China and we are told not to talk about the political things...we even are not allowed to use some words or talk (about) some political leaders in our country. And some teachers was reported by their students... to the government, that was unacceptable. I was afraid maybe one day I was reported by a student. So I don't want to be like that. I want to get more freedom of my speech, of my thoughts. – (BRA-001-04)

Cultural diversity and accepting society

Before immigrating to Canada, 12% (n=11) of participants believed that Canada's diversity and the presence of refugees would make it a more receptive place for newcomers. Some participants, especially refugees, expressed their appreciation for Canadian society, calling it a "sane environment" and a good place to raise kids. Many participants described Canada as a quiet, peaceful place of coexistence.

We applied for Canada because my husband told me that Canada is better. Canada is a big country. It is a good country. Here there are more refugees, here there is more different people, good culture, let's go to apply to Canada. – (CAL-001)

I was looking for better opportunity and a place that I thought would be much more accepting because I'm aware of bad things happening to black people around America and the rest of the world. – (GAT-004)

With Canada, they are very welcoming... The fact that you can come as a permanent resident straight up and with your family... There might be systemic racism here and there, but Canada is more accommodating compared to some other countries that don't even offer as much. – (EDM-002)

Family

At least 21% (n=19) participants family as the primary motivator for coming to Canada. This included reuniting with family already living in Canada, providing their children better opportunities, as well as to support their spouse in pursuing their career.

The idea is just to come to Canada, be in a better environment for my family. And also, I don't know if it's a common thing for all of the Africans, but for Nigerians, if you're outside your country, you're not just making money for your immediate family, you're making money to take care of the family back where you're coming from. – (EDM-006)

I am from Hong Kong... All that I did is for my family, my children. I hope they have a better education and living conditions in Canada for their growth and future. – (VAN-001)

My sister first relocated before I did... Having family close by is something that I was always open to. Even when I was looking for a house. I just always put in proximity as my verb because I wanted our children to bond together – (EDM-001)

Immigration Journey

When reflecting on their immigration journeys, the newcomers shared the adversities they faced in their home countries, including conflict, political instability, and economic hardship. They detailed the complexities of navigating the visa application process and the emotional and logistical challenges involved in relocating to Canada. Their narratives also highlighted their hopes for a better future in Canada, despite the obstacles encountered along the way.

I left my country because we have crisis in our country. We are facing a lot of difficulties. Killing, burning houses. So we had to run for our dear life. When I went to Algeria to look for a job... I was deported back to Niger. From Niger, I tried to enter Libya through Sabah... I was kidnapped there. I spent nine months there with my three months (baby). We were sleeping with different men at the time because they asked us for money. They said we should call our parents to give us money, but I couldn't. So they said, we have to be there, men will come and take us. We will go and have sex with them just like that, so the men to give them money, because they were asking at least 1 million francs CFA. So when my stomach was very big, I was almost about nine months, they asked me to leave... Where some of us Africans we are passing through is very critical. Like when you are already in this Arab country like Algeria, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, it's very difficult because the people treat us very poorly, very bad. So if you had an opportunity to leave Algeria you thank God definitely... They have a name for us, [like] Negro. – (THB-002)

When I was in Afghanistan when Taliban came there, I was in the military. I was five months pregnant. Every day the Taliban was searching for me and I hid with my husband. I had such difficult situation. I was in the mountains with my security guards and with my husband, but I had bleeding. I had more concern about my baby. But we don't have access to water and bread and the health system. It was in the mountain. After nine days, we were moving by walking... from Bamyan province to Kabul. It was so hard. I have so bad story about that. Three of my security guards were killed by the Taliban. They gave my brother, my home, everything. When I was in Albania, in the refugee camp, I had mental health problems. I had more concern about my mom, my brother, my security guards. But when my baby was born, after that I was good because I am a mom and now I have another baby. She's Canadian. – (CAL-001)

When I went out from my country, it was illegal. Even to go across to the sea like the Port Sudan sea, it's illegal like I paid \$6,000 for that. Even after getting to the Port Sudan... we slept in the floor. Even it doesn't have enough food, even enough water. Then after that, I was going to Libya, then in the Libya, oh my God. It's a lot of trouble in my life even it is shortage of water. So, you don't have wash the body, if you don't have something like dirty some itching in the skin. It's just hard. So we pass like that. Then, after one year, like in a store, the smuggler is if you don't pay, you beating every person with, it is bad... then after one year, I paid for the sea. Then I'm across to the sea. But I'm not lucky. The Libyan police, they are catching us. Then they get to imprison us. From like, it's like one half of this room we collect together, like, 100 people. Then after five days we (were) sent to another prison... MSF, oh my God, I appreciate them. They give us like nutritious food, some clothes, like panties, like t shirt... treatment, they give (medicine) for itching. So we are lucky we got them. Then after that, they send it to another prison. Like in that there was the UNHCR registered us. Then I interview with the Tunisian UNHCR with the Libyan they're connecting. Then after one year or two year, I came to Canada.” – (THB-007)

Visa and Immigration Process

Types of visas and the application process

Participants were interviewed from a range of immigration statuses. At least 9% (n=8) of participants held a work permit on their arrival to Canada, at least 20% (n=18) held permanent residency, at least 22% (n=20) arrived with refugee status, 3% (n=3) held a student visa, and others did not disclose their immigration status. Difficulties of the application process varied according to the nature of their immigration. For example, some refugee participants felt it traumatic to repeat their testimonies multiple times. Other PR participants described feeling stressed by the lack of communication from IRCC, or the application process taking longer than expected. While some participants were satisfied by the support and information they received from the Canadian immigration system, family or friends, other participants felt underprepared and unsupported during the pre-arrival period of immigration.

It was like an investigation... Because already the United Nations recognized us as a refugee, and they gave us the right to travel outside the country, that we can be safe there... Every like three months they call us and we go to the United Nations and say the story and tell the story again, which is like not easy to tell and then go back home and recover like two months or three months recovering from only just telling the story and then again and again. So after they told, okay, you will go and have the interview in the embassy and they will just ask you, like if you can fit in there in the community, like how you think because it is different country. So we were like happy. When we went there, it was another investigation, which is like what happened with you in Sudan, blah, blah blah. It was like one and a half an hour. It was just investigation. Nobody asked about Canada. Nobody asked us like how we can raise our child there, what we are planning to do there, maybe like to see if we want to go and study and have work and something like that. No, it was like what happened there, why you cannot go back to Sudan. And after I finished the interview, I went outside, I was like, oh my God, what is this like? Till when they will torture us like this? Till when?
– (THB-008-02)

...the information is quite confusing. And I have lack of the Canada knowledge and the experience. So actually that time I filled out the wrong document, I wasn't filling the updated version. It makes me very nervous because I already sent the document by FedEx. So I try to contact the immigration in many, many ways, like email or live chat or by phone call. But still, no one can give me the very direct answer. Am I using the not the most updated one, document? Did I fail my application? Can I apply now before I get the rejection message? Like this kind of information, I cannot get some advice for the officer because they always send some very standard reply. It made me really, really nervous that time and the same experience with some of our plans in the church group as well.
– (VAN-002)

The major challenge we faced was just basically the delay coming in our processing because I realized that people from where I come from do not get the required attention you need from the IRCC. We do not get the required attention and it takes a while. Even when you send an email,

they take forever to respond and all of that. And when they respond, they don't give you the information you need and all of that. So basically, that was a major challenge because we kept sending messages. I sent tons of emails without responses. – (CAL-010)

Resilience and hope for future

While participants shared difficult experiences fleeing their home countries and their journey to Canada, many newcomers also shared their feelings of resilience and hope for their future in Canada. They mentioned their aspirations and future prospects, believing in the “Canadian dream.” Other participants spoke of positive experiences with cultural diversity, in healthcare, feeling a sense of belonging, and enjoying Canadian culture and society.

Our community have a big group, we celebrate all festivals and like we represent from last two years at the Stampede Parade too. So it's very welcoming people, they really appreciated everything, like our culture, our dress, our dances. – (CAL-002)

When I was pregnant and I'm going for my checkup, ultrasounds and all that. When I use the bus, I noticed some kind of help, even from the elderly women trying to get up from the chair for me to sit because I was heavy... And I was happy, they made space for me. Allowed me to sit when I go for ultrasound, (not) to stand on a queue... I must commend them for their assistance and always trying to render help to me when they see me. – (EDM-004)

If I'm going to stay in any country in the world, I would love to stay in Canada because of the way they accept people. No matter your colour... That was my fear. If they were going to accept me because of my colour... even back in our country, like I grew up in the North (of Nigeria) and I'm a Christian... it's hard sometimes for you to blend in because you're Christian. And I have always feel like, okay, maybe if I go to another place, would I be blending in because of I'm black. But I came here. I found out that Canada is quite different people accept you, respect your culture. - (WIN-002)

Challenges in Settlement

Employment Barriers

Gaining employment was among the most prominent struggles for the newcomer participants. 39% of participants (n=35) cited employment as a primary challenge, whether being required to work a survival jobs or to continue their already established careers. These barriers are reflected in the unemployment rates data, which as of 2022, were 8.3% for immigrants compared to 4.5% for Canadian-born (Ghadi et al., 2023).

The differences between job-seeking in Canada and their country of origin posed difficulty for some participants, including the unfamiliarity with job application and the professional technologies used. Participants voiced confusion about whether these differences were the source of their trouble finding employment. Participants expressed frustration regarding how much was within their control, especially when it came to participants who felt that they were qualified or overqualified for jobs they weren't hired for. Additionally, participants mentioned that the recurring requirement by employers for Canadian work experience is an unrealistic expectation of newcomers.

For the few who gave me feedback... I know of two who were able to tell me that, 'oh, the only reason why we went with the other person was that he had Canadian experience.'...it seems like there's a lot of disconnect between what the government is saying and between what the employers are saying. It feels like there needs to be a better handshake. So if the government is working so hard to bring these people in, and the people that are supposed to give the jobs are pushing back because we don't have Canadian experience... With this process I felt like, was it really about Canadian experience?... It gave me a lot of moments of self-doubt. I came from a place where I was very accomplished in my career, I've done big things in my young age. – (EDM-007)

In Hong Kong, I was a successful businessman and manager in my 20-year-long career journey. In that company, I built my career path right from junior to senior level. And I thought this experience is enough to fulfill this criteria in Canada for an entry level job. I don't seek the high level, you know. I know I cannot compete with- I cannot get there. I'm humble. I just I want an entry level. That's okay. Entry level for the job is enough for me because I have another part-time job... my wife's classmates are mostly from other countries, some people, they were lawyers, architects, engineers in their home country. But here, they cannot find a job, they have nothing. I think we feel this is unfair, you know, the Canadian government says 'Hey, we welcome to Canada,' right? Every year about 500,000 people immigrate to Canada, but we think the problem is a lack of the support from the government to help them settle down here with a variety of life needs... – (VAN-001)

Consistent with the literature, lack of credential recognition was a leading obstacle to integrating into the Canadian job market (Ghadi et al., 2023). Unrecognized credentials was named as an obstacle by 13% (n=12) of participants. Despite procedural clarity issues with credential recognition and understanding the Canadian job market, participants who came as skilled workers, and whose professions required recertification, mostly accepted the requirement of recertifying. However, participants cited that the monetary cost of taking exams was a professional setback, requiring them to work survival jobs in the interim, delaying the resumption of their career. Difficulties finding work prevented some from making ends meet.

The keywords were very different, even though I feel myself capable for that job, you know office kind of jobs. Because back home I was working as a HR manager. When I see the job title or job description, I know that I can do this thing, but I don't know how to apply or where to apply. What are cover letters? What are CVs or resume differences or where do I need to go? – (CAL-005)

I'm a plastic surgeon... it's been very hard to try to do something professionally here. When I arrived, I did two fellowships at Foothills Hospital. But once you finish, you feel so lost. I've been trying to start a business, but then I have no idea. You have to learn about all these taxes and business management. You know what I mean? It's so hard when it's not your language, not your rules, not your government. — (CAL-011)

Of course, I needed to write my professional exams before I could practice what I was practicing back home. My professional exams were not cheap, and it takes a long period of one year to get through the exams. And before then, you have to be earning something. So yeah, getting a job towards it was also a hassle. So I had to settle for doing something just to make ends meet and all that.” – (EDM-00)

A few participants shared experiences where they felt vulnerable to predatory employers, lacking family and friends in Canada who could offer safety or support. Others mentioned that the months-long time it took to find a job caused them to live off of their savings was a major professional and financial setback.

After some time you get to know because you are in that position, you start talking about switching jobs and everything. And then he realized, oh my goodness, I was here for just basic pay. I worked in that company two years, just basic. Then the person sitting next to me was getting what I was getting, double of that... I have two kids. One is high school which we are very concerned about.— (CAL-009)

What I don't like is black work. You know, everybody here does black work [unregulated work]. I live here, I would like to continue in this country, I [would] like to pay money for insurance, for tax because I a good person. This is one example of [what] organization can do. Find a work for us, general work is a good experience work. Because I speak four languages Persian, Turkish, English for example... I found a home, it's a good home, I am satisfied. But this big problem I want to find

a work because I can't pay money for my rent. I have borrowed money from everybody I know. Give give give give. I don't know how many months I (will have to work) to pay back for my friend.
– (TOR-002)

If you want to be a security guard in Canada, you have to have a certificate. You need to pay certain amount, which I did, but unfortunately, I couldn't meet with the cut off mark. I was told to come and sit for the exam, but right now, because I have a lot of things going on in my mind, I couldn't think right. When I read now, in a few minutes I'm out. Because I was thinking, how am I going to feed these people? ... I just want the best for my wife and my kids. But unfortunately, it's very sad. Very, very sad for me. I was here with about basically about 20,000 USD. Everything is gone... I exhausted all my savings.”– (EDM-008)

“... I was fired from my work just to say that I'm not compatible for my work. And I was on work permit. I don't know anybody here. I don't have any family here. And I was in Fort McMurray all the way down... I don't have a home. Again, I found work a work permit. Actually, a cash job. And because I need money to live and pay my rent and food, that was the basic requirements. Then I changed my employer. I found somebody who can give me a work in cash. I started with them, and then I talked with them, they said, okay, we will do your work permit. Then they applied for as a nanny. Okay. They apply for me, I pay them for my work permit. I start working with them and again I was kicked out from my work after 6 months.....I was kind of lost for one year, I was lost... She didn't even pay my salary for four months. And I was thinking, okay, I'm living in their home, I have a roof on my head, I'm having food and everything, it's okay. I talked with her nicely, and she was very nice to me. She was treating me as a family member. She was so nice. I'm not blaming that on her, but the thing is that she was not paying me for four months, and I said okay if you are not paying then that's fine, because I was feeling kind of family relation with her.” – (CAL-003)

Language and Communication Challenges

Language barriers and accents account for difficulties among one quarter (n=22) of participants. Some participants expressed that language barriers were a main concern to employment, connecting with locals and accessing services, like healthcare. Francophone participants located in Quebec expressed frustration at there being an unofficial bilingualism requirement in French and English, an expectation which had not been clear at the outset of their immigration, but one which was affecting their career and social network.

When I was pregnant and when my baby born in that moment I have a amazing problem, because in that moment I have a low level in English. But when you are in the moment, in the birth it's difficult to express what you think and what you feel. And when I come to the hospital I have the translator. A nurse that was my translator, but she only worked some hours. And then she finished the day. When I go to the surgery and the nurse finished her job and I don't have any person that translate in that moment with me. And I say, oh my goodness, what I do in that moment... You try

to speak because you have pain and it's difficult and I don't have any help in that moment. It was terrible and I said it's not good. And I have other problems because in that moment they don't have a lot of doctors and I needed to wait for a long time and I had a lot of pain and don't have doctor to do my C-section. – (CAL-006)

I really think this needs to be re-evaluated. It's about helping us. It's about helping us to find a job in their field more effectively. To tell us clearly, it's better to be bilingual... they tell us, yes, you are coming to Quebec... Most of the time, you really need to be bilingual. This has been a problem for me. It has really caused me significant issues in my field... The main challenge, I would say, is the language barrier. Because it amplifies the challenges related to my social integration and my job search. – (translated MON-001)

Donc, je me dis que c'est vraiment à revoir, c'est de les aider. C'est de les aider à mieux trouver un emploi dans leur boulot. À le leur dire exactement, c'est mieux d'être bilingue... on nous dit que oui, vous venez au Québec... La plupart du temps, c'est il faut être, faut être vraiment bilingue. Moi ça m'a posé un problème. Vraiment ça m'aggrave poser un problème dans mon domaine d'activité... Le défi principal, je dirais que c'est la barrière linguistique. Parce qu'elle vient amplifier les défis liés à mon intégration sociale et à ma recherche d'emploi.” – (GAT-001)

Some language issues affected refugee populations in specific ways, especially in language acquisition. One participant expressed that the one year's worth of refugee resettlement assistance funding is insufficient time to grasp the language while seeking employment and readjusting.

The government funded the money for one year, it doesn't enough for newcomers, especially when you go to school. If you go to school, if you don't have work, you didn't eat, you didn't sleep. So it is hard to continue to the English... It is good, but it's careless. Even the refugees (life) is not improved. I have my people here, they don't they didn't go to school, but they go to work. But they didn't speak English. So it is hard even they didn't get citizenship.– (THB-007)

Besides language barriers, some participants who already spoke English were told that their English language level was unsatisfactory for potential employers. One participant was dismayed relating an experience after speaking English his whole life, “I wanted a customer service job once and I was told I can't because I don't speak Canadian.” (GAT-004) Another participant spoke to her husband not getting hired due to his accent: “He's an IT specialist, a software engineer with over 18 years of experience. They were impressed with everything, but they sent an email stating that because of the way he speaks, they can't take him.” - (CAL-010)

Housing Difficulties

Housing was reported as a major difficulty for about one in four participants (n=22) from all immigration backgrounds. The cost of housing, lack of rent control, low vacancy rates, and unfamiliarity with the new environment in conjunction with newcomers' economic situations are just some of the factors that disadvantage newcomers in the housing market, and make them vulnerable to homelessness (Daswani et al., 2012). Requirements such as credit checks and guarantors were problematic for newcomer participants to fulfill, and caused some to pay up to a year advance on rent, due to lack of other options. The lack of affordable housing also caused participants to use their savings on Airbnb. Participants stated that their settlement journey could not truly begin until they were settled and found adequate housing.

“My first challenge was finding a house because, of course, most landlords didn't want to rent out their houses to somebody who was a newcomer for various reasons. Some said they had bad experiences where newcomers weren't able to afford their rent subsequently. Some of them required three months upfront payment, which add it up it's a lot of money. I also had a landlord tell me that he wasn't comfortable with newcomers because they didn't know how to maintain their houses... I also had others that wanted us to show proof of employment, which, of course, we didn't have at the point of entry. So that also was a hassle. Ultimately the landlord we settled for was the one who just wanted a guarantor, which my sister had to come and be the guarantor. Which, if I didn't have that, I would have also had a problem there.” – (EDM-001)

Rents and mortgages are too high. When I was not working, half of my husband's salary goes to the rents... And still, now it's too high. We need something, like we need some, discount for newcomers. That's my appeal for you. – (BRA-001)

It was really very hard. We stayed in a hotel for forty-five days. We moved from a hotel to Airbnb, just to find an accommodation. You can imagine when you have a baby and how many stuff you have with you and just to move is difficult. And we are not smoking, both of us we are not drinking. – (CAL-007)

Social and emotional integration

Family and community changes

Participants cited social isolation and a lack of social networks as a challenge affecting their settlement. Specifically, there were difficulties making connections or feeling a part of a community, especially outside of expatriate circles. Loss of contact with their family and friends back home was discouraging. A 2018 General Social Survey showed that recent immigrant adults (in Canada for 10 years or less) consistently reported higher loneliness than Canadian born individuals (Stick, Hou & Kaida, 2021). Some participants mentioned difficulty at both grasping a new culture, while simultaneously observing the loss

of language and culture their children were experiencing. Others indicated the need to bridge their culture of origin with the cultural expectations in Canada.

Loss of status

The participants who experienced a loss of socioeconomic status expressed frustration with stereotypes portraying immigrants as taking advantage of Canada's generosity. In some instances, participants expressed regret about their decision to immigrate citing the poverty they now faced, and the lack of support from those around them.

I'm from the royal family (in Nigeria)... Now I'm in Canada now, I can't even put food on the table. I can't even afford to provide what I need. We are living from my savings and now I'm getting to the to the age of nothing, now. – (CAL-008)

It was tough because at home, you knew everyone on the street that you live in. You literally know pretty much everybody... You don't pass an elder without greeting or someone guiding you or saying something about maybe your parents and so on and so forth. But here it's like more individual. Everybody is their own. Like, you can see your neighbor maybe once a month or even if you see them, there's no smile, no nothing...in my country, I had so many friends. So I was feeling really, really alone. For the first whole year. I was really feeling alone. That's the most difficult part for me because I was losing like, friends. And I wasn't getting any friends here. – (PRG-002)

I think the friends are the ones that are going through the same situation as me. So that's why I think in the way that you need to build a social network and like all of us feel the same. All of us feel we're not from here. And it's not that that you think about it constantly, but it's just like, oh, guys, be careful with the streets. And, don't go here because they probably won't be very friendly but go there because in this place, if you want to take your license, they are very nice and they speak Spanish. – (CAL-011)

Cultural and seasonal adaptation

13% (n=12) of participants mentioned the weather as a challenge. While a few of participants mentioned enjoying the snow, others felt underprepared for winter. Decreased mental health was a shared experience for participants from countries with warmer climates, citing a lack of motivation or feeling down. Many expressed that a pre-arrival briefing on appropriate winter gear would have been beneficial

And when we arrive in Calgary it was very nice. But the first difference we find is the cold, because it's totally different of what we have in Africa, where it is cold in Africa we are around 19 degrees... But that is another thing. The extreme cold... it's the first winter for us and, yeah sometime I just want to stay at home. Because I don't want to feel some situations. – (CAL-012)

The weather, I kinda underestimated it at first. And because I arrived around the November ish, so it was already kinda cold this winter... seeing the snow for the first time and I was just being a kid, I just went out in my tank top and started playing with the snow. The next day I was shivering in the bed. – (PRG-002)

The weather, you know, that's the first thing. That the lack of sun that I'm like, how did they survive like this for days like that. Like I get why the personality is different, uh, like in general from the country because it's like impossible to be jumping of happiness if the sunlight is not there. – (CAL-011)

Challenges in Settlement and Experiences of discrimination and racism

No experience of discrimination

When newcomer respondents were asked whether they had experienced racism or discrimination since arriving in Canada, 16 out of 88 participants (19%) reported not having any distressing encounters. Those who did not experience racism or discrimination attributed their positive experiences to supportive settlement organizations and the multicultural nature of their communities, which they felt were open and welcoming. These newcomers believed that the multiculturalism in their cities facilitated their smooth integration, helping them avoid overt discrimination. These findings suggest that an inclusive and welcoming environment significantly enhances the newcomers' experiences, making them feel more comfortable and accepted.

For instance, a participant from Thunder Bay explained:

Not really. I think that well here in Thunder Bay they have a lot of multiculturalism....but I think that I don't seem too different, I don't look too different. So I think that it could help me. When I start to talk, they maybe realize he had some mistakes or whatever, he could be a newcomer. But I didn't feel like some kind of discrimination. (THB-004)

Similarly, a newcomer from Calgary stated:

When we moved to Canada, not really no. I mean we've been welcomed by everyone and wherever we got it's all good we didn't face any issues about that. I mean everyone is, everyone is welcoming that is good, they have a very good attitude. (CAL-007).

In Toronto, a newcomer highlighted the inclusive nature of Canadian society:

Yeah, well one of the interesting things in Canada is that Canada accepts every religion, every color, every people. So I haven't been faced myself, any discrimination. Whenever I talk to the people, those who speak English, they answer me with a smile (TOR - 001).

When analyzing the transcripts of some of the participants who had initially responded that they had not experienced racism or discrimination, there were indications of minimizing or rationalizing language used to explain away potentially discriminatory behaviors. Some newcomers might downplay their experiences with discrimination, attributing negative encounters to other factors or believing they are isolated incidents. Additionally, it's important to consider that some newcomers might not fully recognize subtle forms of discrimination or might choose to overlook them. A participant from Edmonton reflected on this tendency:

Oh, you know, several things have several interpretations. If I'm being very literal, I would say yes. Okay. But because personally, I don't tune to such things, so I've not really noticed it. Or to me, I can explain them away (EDM - 005).

Additionally, another participant from Winnipeg expressed a similar sentiment:

I haven't really had the experience of Anti-racist...even though they are doing it to me, I don't really know because I think I have the mindset that everyone should be respected and I respect myself, I respect people, so I don't think I've ever got to be, um, discriminated because of my color (WIN - 002).

This participant in Prince George initially explained that he had never experienced racism, then recounted multiple incidents, including one at work with another employee he calls the boss's spy who closely monitors the actions and work of other racialized employees to report back to their supervisor.

Um, I haven't experienced too much.... I can't remember, there definitely have been times, and comments where I felt like they were discriminating because you're a different person.... And there is this person at work that likes to, that I've noticed watches a lot and takes notes. And he'll bring it up to the managers or something. But I noticed that he doesn't do it with white people or something like that. (PrG-01-004)

Overall, while many newcomers report positive experiences and a lack of overt discrimination, there is an underlying complexity in these narratives. The mix of genuine acceptance and possible minimization of negative experiences provides a nuanced understanding of the integration process for newcomers in Canada.

Experiences of Discrimination

The experiences of newcomers to Canada reveal multiple instances of discrimination in various aspects of their lives. These instances can be broadly categorized into several types of discrimination, including racial discrimination, systemic racism, workplace discrimination, housing discrimination, social discrimination, and educational discrimination. These categories encapsulate the primary challenges faced by immigrants as they integrate into Canadian society, highlighting the multifaceted nature of discrimination and its pervasive impact on their daily lives.

Public Discrimination

- 43% of participants who said they felt discriminated against, said they experienced discrimination/racism while in public spaces, public discrimination. Six participants reported instances of being verbally accosted
- Alberta (46%) and Manitoba (39%) were the provinces where participants reported the highest rates of public discrimination. In third place was Quebec with 11%.

Discrimination in public spaces, as recounted by newcomers, reveals a troubling pattern of hostility and exclusion based on race and nationality. Instances of discrimination on public transit, in streets, and various public settings are alarmingly common, reflecting a broader societal issue.

A participant shared a more direct confrontation on the bus,

....I tied up my braids so I didn't know it touched the person sitting behind me. I didn't know. But I just noticed he kept cussing.....and I just I didn't know why. I just kept quiet. So he kept talking, saying words, cussing words,So I didn't turn, but when I got to my destination to go into another train, as I came down, I noticed he was pointing at me through the window. So I was like, "oh, he has been talking to me all this while. I didn't even know... As I was crossing the train, I noticed he was behind me....I noticed he was following me and he was still saying those words. I was so scared.... As I got there, thinking I will receive help from people seeing my situation as a pregnant woman, nobody came to my aid. Instead they shifted. I went towards where guys were. They shifted. So I felt bad. In fact, I started crying at that point. In fact, because I didn't remember to call 911, I had to call 911..... (EDM - 006)

Some incidents of discrimination occurred when the participants' children were present or were directed specifically at the child, which was particularly distressing for the interviewed participants.

My experience is that I was on the public bus and I was spat on by a stranger, no one said anything! It was scary and I was with my child. I was wondering what is happening with this country! This happened middle of last year. He said why I'm here, go back to your country, no more immigrants. (WIN – 001)

Once, we are at the city hall with my friend. We had just completed skating with the kids, she has two and I have one. We just think to go Tim Hortons, take a coffee and hot chocolate but there is one lady shouting on us and saying "go back to your country, don't come here" and came very near us. So we were very scared, our kids too. So we didn't go in the Tim Hortons, we just took a train and went home. We complained to a police officer at that time. (CAL-002)

Another participant tearfully recounted an incident that occurred when he brought his child to a play area and their parents subsequently removed their children from the play area in an act the participant perceived to be an act of racism.

We went there and my daughter was playing with the other kids and sometimes also the mother of the other babies came and pick up their children. Three times. I don't know why. But maybe I just thought they wanted to study the children, but it was three times. I don't know why. At that moment I felt bad for..... Excuse me. I was really mad. (CAL-012)

Employment Discrimination

Employment discrimination was a recurrent theme among the participants, with many sharing their struggles to find and retain jobs. The experiences detailed by the participants highlight the various forms of discrimination they faced, including bias during the hiring process and unfair treatment in the workplace.

Discrimination During Job Search

Many participants recounted their difficulties in securing employment, attributing their challenges to discrimination. This often stemmed from biases against their accents, cultural backgrounds, or foreign credentials. Despite having the necessary qualifications and experience, they found it difficult to find employment. A participant from Edmonton mentioned that "racism isn't so pronounced, but it's more of a systemic racism, especially when it comes to getting a job" (EDM-002). This participant's experience reflects a common sentiment that discrimination is often subtle and embedded within the hiring processes. Many participants said that while they rarely faced outright discrimination or racism during the hiring process, there was a pervasive feeling that they were not considered good enough, and their foreign credentials were undervalued. provoked feelings of being discriminated against, highlighting the nuanced and systemic nature of employment discrimination faced by newcomers.

I'll say, in terms of employment, that was my biggest one. Also, I think this, um, conscious bias because, you know, when you hear my name [redacted] of course, you feel like when I sometimes when I talk, people don't even know. "Oh, you're a black girl or something like that." Like, they didn't know. But once they see me, they're like, "oh." I see it on their face. It's not like they'd be like, "oh, we can't employ you," or "we can't hire you." I could just see the bias immediately, like,

"um, we'll get back to you" or something like that. Whereas on the phone it sounded very promising that you would get the job or something I've had. (EDM-008)

I don't have tangible evidence to say that I got discrimination, but I feel this is very much in feeling. And nobody would say that I racist [against] you, you know. Nobody is saying that I hate you because you are Asian or I don't recruit you because you are Asian newcomer. But it's difficult...(VAN-003)

A male participant shared his experience of applying for the same job as a white Canadian friend who had less experience for the role. Despite having more years of experience and qualification, his friend received a call back while he did not.

...I know that I met a Canadian, a white man who was very frank with me. There was a job we looked at together. We worked on my resume...at first they said it was my resume, so I enlisted the services of those who work on resumes in Canada. Both in Brandon, in Winnipeg and Ontario, and we revised the resume.....We applied for the job together....I didn't get any call, he did. The last time we met, which was like two weeks ago, he told me something: "He said...I don't think your resume was the issue. The issue was with the hiring manager. He felt that maybe that you are even more qualified than him." (BRA – 001 -3)

A participant recounted his extensive experience working in luxury hotels in the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, where he led teams of 500 people. Despite his decades of experience, he struggled to get hired as a restaurant manager in Canada due to his lack of local experience. Instead, the position was given to someone with significantly less experience in the field. This situation underscores the challenges faced by highly skilled newcomers in overcoming biases related to foreign work experience and credentials.

I think I have this a lot here in Canada from my friends and colleagues that the priority is for someone you know despite the experience or the education or what you have done before. Even when I worked to the restaurant itself, I mean the person who they hired instead of me, good luck for him, I am happy for him, but there's a big big gap in terms of experience. I'm more confident. I can bring more good experience to the guests.....So like I can understand someone knows someone brought him into the job, that's it. And that's because I don't have the local experience so I understand.... (CAL-007)

Several participants mentioned feeling the need to change or "whitewash" their names on their resumes to improve their chances of finding employment. Some were even advised to do so.

....Someone once told us if we're looking for a job, we should try to take out our native names, and if we have English names, we should just put it on our resume. We did it. And funny enough, we got some calls at the time... (EDM-003)

Discrimination in the Workplace

Even after securing jobs, participants faced discrimination at their workplaces from their colleagues or employers. Participants shared stories of racist jokes by other colleagues, preferential treatment to certain employers, getting less networking opportunities and chances for advancement.

Uh, one guy. Yeah, in the work. He's not black....He said the black people like monkey, but we are not monkey. Then one guy, he heard that and said don't say like that, it is forbidden in Canada he said to him. Even when I work with them they didn't like me by the color of my skin. But I [am not] racist. – (THB – 007)

Besides that, even in the workplace, I do sort of, you know, there are comments here and there and some sometimes even people make jokes about race. That does happen and it's a bit difficult to deal with. – (PrG-001-02)

...like I do art workshops and everything, but whatever I have done, whoever I met, never ever have I got any help from a white person...they even never tell me about networking event or something related to enhance your career. They just want me to help them as a volunteer and not pay me. (CAL-009)

The first year I got a job it was in a place where most of the employees are Canadians, so they have some of their own phrases or slang they use that we don't use, and we have very different accents on them. I mean, it's not explainable, but you can feel that they will just isolate you or be not nice. So like the managers, they do some small talks with the white employees, but they won't do that to us. So yeah, I faced them. I don't know if it happens to everyone, but yeah, for me that was the case. (WIN-001)

A participant shared a story of an incident between his wife and her manager

She told me that she had a discussion with the manager. The manager said some very bad things about her. She have to take care of herself, she has to be more clean because sometimes she can smell and make children and colleagues uncomfortable. It was really upsetting....(CAL-012)

Some newcomers reported that even when they experienced racism at work, they felt compelled to stay in their jobs due to the necessity of gaining work experience and maintaining financial stability. They felt the need to adapt to fit in, despite facing discriminatory behaviors. The imperative to secure employment often outweighed the distress caused by these negative experiences.

One participant reflected on enduring harassment to gain work experience which would lead to better prospects later:

It was a bit like harassment [from a colleague]..despite everything, I wanted to stay...I wanted to gain work experience, so despite everything, I know, often enduring to have better outcomes later...(translated GAT-003)

Another newcomer recounting feeling the need to adapt and “perfect himself”:

...even when I was applying for jobs and so on and so forth, you know, like the minute they can just detect or hear the accent, it was just a big ax for me. But with time that I knew how to, I don't want to say, perfected myself, but how to avoid maybe all these negative things that I knew where and where not to step. So even at work, was a lot of people, especially in the trades, they usually make these little comments about race to the point that you feel uncomfortable. So those were always there, present. And until now, like it's getting a little better, but people just usually discuss it as a joke, which is still not okay.... – (PrG – 001)

A newcomer participant in Calgary explained that she stayed in a toxic environment because she believed that she could experience racism/discrimination anywhere:

So I felt really bad, that time was really hard for me because I was about to leave the job. But I decided not to leave because racist people are everywhere, you know? – (CAL – 003)

Housing Discrimination

Housing discrimination emerged as a significant challenge for many participants, affecting their ability to secure stable and adequate living conditions. The experiences shared reveal a pattern of bias and unfair treatment based on race, accent, and immigrant status, complicating their efforts to find suitable housing. Many newcomers were hesitant to explicitly state that their housing difficulties were due to their racial background, but they recounted stories indicating otherwise. Participants mentioned landlords providing unconvincing excuses for not renting to them, noticing landlords' different attitudes upon meeting them in person, and being asked to provide an excessive number of documents. These obstacles suggest a systemic bias that disproportionately affects racialized newcomers, making it significantly harder for them to secure housing compared to others.

Research highlights the pervasive nature of this issue. For instance, the Canadian Centre for Housing Rights (CCHR) found that newcomers in Toronto face up to 11 times more discrimination than non-newcomers when searching for rental housing. Racialized newcomers, in particular, experience more discrimination compared to their non-racialized counterparts, with factors such as race, accent, and family composition exacerbating these challenges (CCHR, 2022).

You can reach out to a landlord, and after interacting with you, they just give you a flimsy excuse about not giving you the house, or all of a sudden someone takes the house. Uh, I can't confirm [if

it's discrimination]. Like I said, they don't outrightly, you know, tell you it's because of this or that, but at some point you start feeling, "is it because...?" But not outrightly telling you. (EDM-002)

Participants also recounted instances where their appearance or perceived financial status led to discriminatory treatment.

The different places we went to even with our baby, they kept saying, oh, the moment they saw us, 'Oh, can you provide this? How are we sure you can pay the bills?' But how do you know I don't have the money? You don't judge me for my appearance that I don't have money." This prejudice based on appearance or ethnicity adds a layer of stress and humiliation to the already challenging process of finding a home. (CAL-010)

Newcomers also underscored the financial burdens placed on immigrants in securing housing because they may not have access to employment, or they do not have access to credit, do not have requirements such as a guarantor.

I couldn't get housing without showing proof of employment, and just hearing my accent alone, some landlords didn't even want to do business with me. And when I finally paid, I paid a year or a year upfront, which I shouldn't have done. (GAT-004)

[Where we are from] we just pay and you must welcome and if you break something you have to pay deposits and things like that. But here is really difficult. So I have to pay more than what others are paying just to secure an accommodation for us to sleep. (CAL – 007)

Impact of Racism on Newcomers in Canada

The experiences of racism and discrimination have impacted the mental health, sense of security, and overall well-being of the newcomers interviewed. These impacts are pervasive, influencing various aspects of their lives, including their employment options, daily interactions, and overall perception of safety. 100% of the respondents who reported feeling unsafe were women.

Fear and Insecurity

I am afraid of taking the bus, I am afraid of going in public by myself, the downtown is bad, very bad. So many stories, like with people harassing with the hijab. (WIN-001-08)

I didn't see a lot of security and police there to protect the people that are coming to the downtown. That's my issue. I cannot start with Manitoba Start because they are far and I cannot go there. I need to feel safe. And there is classes in English and it's also in the downtown. I'm afraid to start. I can't go there. I want somebody around to help me. (WIN-001-07)

I'm on mat leave but throughout that period, once I get to the train station, I'm scared. Bus station, I'm scared. I'm always watching. I'm not relaxed until I get home. So I just feel totally unsafe (EDM-006)

A participant recounting that her children had been brutally bullied in school when they arrived from Hong Kong. The kids are now fearful at school, and the parents accompany them to school every day and during recess to watch their children, and make sure they are safe. She believed that his children were bullied because they were Asian.

Because one of the things Asian compared to the local[s] where we are very small, you know, they are short. ...they may need some counselor to follow-up, because they are very scared. They feel unsafe in school. They need some counselor..... We still very rarely having recess, we go to the school and look at the kids to make sure they are safe. (VAN-002)

The fear of discrimination also extends to the workplace. Participants often feel pressured and fearful of losing their jobs if they speak out against unfair treatment or fear that they may lose their work permits.

Like I was on a work permit and when a person is on a work permit, they have to face a lot of pressure from their employers, like from their bosses. The person on work permit has to do almost all of the difficult tasks. I was kicked out from my first job...somewhere I feel kind of scared because I was on a work permit and I was feeling, oh, I have to go back to India if I will file any complaint against anybody... (CAL-003)

One participant recounted her fear of having more children after a very bad, scary experience and poor treatment from medical staff when she gave birth:

...I don't want another baby because it might happen the same. I prefer don't have other babies. But my husband and me would like to do other baby but not with this risk. (TOR-004-01)

Psychological Toll

Discrimination and the resulting fear can have a profound psychological toll. One participant recounted seeking medical assistance during her pregnancy and feeling discriminated against, treated poorly, and dismissed by the emergency room staff. Having a history of miscarriages, this incident deeply disturbed her mental well-being, exacerbating her anxiety and stress during an already vulnerable time.

So that time I felt really bad because I had a history of miscarriages. So I was quite mentally disturbed. And of course, I had pain and bleeding. I was mentally prepared that I already had a miscarriage, you know. (CAL-005)

This participant, who arrived in Canada on a work permit and later gained permanent resident status, was sentenced to four years in prison following an incident where the child she was caring for as a nanny sustained burns. During her 4-month employment with the family, she was not paid for her work. On the advice of her legal counsel, she accepted a plea deal, admitting to the act as deliberate. However, the participant revealed she was not provided a translator during her interactions with legal aid and initially did not understand the meaning of "deliberate." After her sentence, she was deported but returned to Canada because her daughter is a Canadian citizen. Since her conviction, she has struggled to find employment and lives in constant fear of deportation. She believes she was discriminated against throughout the legal process.

I think that I need a chance. I need to make myself strong every day. I sometime lose hope, I don't want to live. I feel like I'm in kind of a vulnerable position because I cannot work anywhere, I cannot do anything. My parents are over there. I lost my brother. I have lots of other stuff going on. I still my mind don't have the peace. (CAL-003)

Considering Leaving Canada

The constant fear and experience of racism can lead to doubts about their decision to move to Canada. A participant from Vancouver expressed their frustration and self-doubt after months of unsuccessful job applications. "I sometimes do feel like this is not for me, a place for me. I want to go back... Because I doubt myself if I am good enough for Canada because I want to contribute for this country." (VAN-003). This sentiment is echoed by another participant from Calgary, who questioned their decision to migrate and the apparent inequity in treatment: "I keep asking myself, did I make a mistake coming here? Why are we not being accepted? Are we not humans?" (CAL-010)

Others have seriously considered leaving Canada due to the adverse impacts of racism. A participant from Gatineau shared their contemplation of leaving:

I do not regret coming here... but at the same time, in the long term, I don't know, honestly, I don't see myself staying here. I think, to be more comfortable later, I would prefer either to return home or certainly to be in another country (translated from GAT-001)

Racism and discrimination hinder the integration of newcomers to Canada, creating significant barriers in employment, housing, and daily interactions. These systemic issues prevent newcomers from fully participating in and contributing to Canadian society. The impact is multifaceted, instilling fear, exacerbating mental health issues, fostering isolation, and sometimes leading newcomers to consider leaving the country. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive anti-racism strategies, policy reforms, and a commitment to inclusivity. By acknowledging and actively combating these barriers, we can foster a more equitable and welcoming society, ensuring all newcomers have the opportunity to thrive.

Newcomers' Perspectives on Settlement Services

Positive Experiences with Settlement Services

A thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with newcomers revealed several positive experiences that frequently appeared when discussing their interactions with settlement services. These positive experiences significantly aid in the integration process and highlight the essential role that these services play. The analysis identified key areas where newcomers expressed satisfaction, including practical support and resource provision, employment and educational assistance, emotional and social support, efficient and responsive services, and personalized, culturally sensitive assistance. These themes underscore the importance of comprehensive and responsive settlement services in helping newcomers navigate their new environments and establish a sense of belonging in Canadian society. Participants from Edmonton and Thunder Bay were the most likely to report positive experiences using settlement services.

Type of Positive Experience	Quotes
<p>Supportive, Efficient and Responsive Settlement Services</p>	<p>"When we first came in, they assisted us with diapers and wipes. Almost every other week or so, they kept supplying till my baby turned one. So it's been very resourceful" (EDM-006).</p> <p>"When I just landed in Canada, they told us we will be shipped to a hotel and at the hotel there will be some settlement workers that will be handling our further process. I'm just very happy that they are just doing their best to solve the newcomers' problems in a short time" (TOR-005).</p> <p>Especially from....[they helped process out immigration cases], so everything was just done (for us) and I was living in a hotel just for a month....after that I just found an apartment and just relocated to the Oakville...all of the processes were just done in a month, that was like amazing. All the work is done in a short time. So I'm just very happy. (TOR-005)</p>
<p>Employment and Education Assistance</p>	<p>"So I said, okay, since I had the time, let me sign up for one of the others, get ready for Canadian workplace kind of training. So I did one for about two months where it was really expository. I learned a lot from them." (EDM-007)</p> <p>But after coming to Canada, I struggled a little, like 3 to 4 months to get a job. But now I got a job with the help of this multi program. It helped me to improve my skills in all. (BRA-001-02)</p> <p>But, uh, second one is that I'm very lucky to attend this multi courses and this course give a lots of knowledge about the workers, work culture place and the customer trading and so many others like that, CPR. (BRA-001-05)</p> <p>I went to that workshop and it was very helpful because there was Tim Healy there, he was quite experienced. So he was giving us clear guidelines about that. Like how to apply, what are the keywords, he gave us an idea about how many jobs print and how many jobs do internal hiring. (CAL-005)</p>

	<p>"They train us to get our resume ready for Canadian standards. So I think they are very, very (good). They are awesome" (WIN-002).</p> <p>"It's a business simulation. I was able to do an initial internship there, learned a lot, and the second time, as I mentioned, I participated in a fast-track program because they assessed that I had the skills necessary to enter the job market directly. It was a four-week training." (GAT-003)</p>
Community and Social Support Networks	<p>"I got some services from Made by Mama. There are other organizations that I am into right now. They are Mom-to-Mom here is also a group of community for Black African women, They did great. And any woman, new mom or nursing mom that wants to get help from this program will be so, so helpful for them. (EDM-004)</p>
Helpful and Friendly People	<p>"In the services, I didn't find anything negative. Actually, they are very friendly. They are very smiley. But I found this in the people. The white people here in this. I'm still fresh, still, I didn't face issues or something like that." (WIN-001)</p> <p>"The people here are so nice. They show us a lot of places and ways to finish our paperwork. All the time we come here and ask for help, it is very good" (THB-004).</p> <p>Like helpful people. They help us for the papers. They help us.</p> <p>I love them. They helpful. And here I come. It's very good, modern. We have something very good here and people. are very nice. (THB-003)</p>
Assistance with Basic Needs	<p>"It's been a blessing, even with my baby, [they have been] assisting us. When we first came in, they assisted us with diapers and wipes. Almost every other week or so. And then vitamin D is something they always give us." (CAL-010)</p>
Effective Pre-arrival and Integration Programs	<p>"So, before we landed in Canada, we received some pre-arrival guidance from settlement services in Canada. They provided us with webinars and some training, also information on how to prepare our departure from our home country to Canada. I think for us, it was very helpful."(MON-005)</p>

Newcomers appreciated the immediate assistance with essential items, which alleviated initial stress and allowed them to focus on other settlement aspects such as housing and employment. The swift assistance and quick resolution of problems were praised, making the initial settlement process smoother for newcomers. Job placement assistance, resume workshops, and networking opportunities were highly valued. Educational support, such as language classes and career training, also received positive feedback. Newcomers expressed more satisfaction with employment services when they included training experiences or practicums where they could gain firsthand experience in the workplace. Settlement services provided a welcoming environment, which reduces feelings of isolation and anxiety, and facilitated social connections that helped newcomers build a sense of community. Community support networks provided emotional and practical assistance, which is important for newcomers, especially

those with young children or specific needs. The kindness and helpfulness of individuals, both within settlement services and the general community, were frequently mentioned. Positive interactions with locals, including diverse communities, contributed to a sense of acceptance and belonging for newcomers. Assistance with clothing and other basic needs helped newcomers cope with immediate challenges, especially when they were unfamiliar with the local environment. Pre-arrival programs provided essential information and support that eased the transition process for newcomers, making them feel more prepared.

Positive experiences were mostly concentrated in Edmonton and Thunder Bay with 100% of respondents from Edmonton and 82% of respondents in Thunder Bay sharing positive experiences about their settlement organizations. In Thunder Bay, a smaller cultural association catered primarily to refugees arriving in the area. This organization provided a very hands-on approach to assisting participants, which included personalized support and direct resource provision. This tailored, one-on-one assistance likely contributed to the high satisfaction levels reported by newcomers.

In Edmonton, positive experiences were noted among women who were part of a larger settlement organization with locations across Alberta. These women were involved in a program specifically targeting African mothers. The specialized nature of this program, along with the hands-on support and feelings of connectedness, contributed to their high satisfaction levels. The program's focus on the unique needs of African mothers helped create a supportive and inclusive environment, facilitating better integration outcomes for participants interviewed.

Research supports the importance of tailored and culturally sensitive programs in enhancing newcomer satisfaction with settlement services. Smaller, community-based organizations often provide more personalized support, which can lead to better outcomes for newcomers. For instance, Esses et al. (2010) found that tailored services that address specific needs and provide direct support are crucial for the successful integration of immigrants. Similarly, Wayland (2006) emphasized the importance of culturally sensitive services in building trust and fostering positive experiences among newcomers.

Negative experiences with settlement organizations

Types of Negative Experiences and Shortcomings	Key Quotes
Inadequate and Delayed Support	<p>"Since July, August, September, October, November, December, January, February. It's eight months. It's a long period, and still, I am on the waiting list [for English classes]" (BRA-001).</p> <p>"One day in August 2023, I have my hand swollen. So I went to my case manager from Westman Immigration Service. I told him, please, can you help me? He told me I can't do anything" (BRA-001).</p>

<p>Insufficient Communication and Transparency</p>	<p>"Whenever I request something....they should be sending my request to the IRCC. This is my right. But normally they will not send me the answer" (TOR-005).</p> <p>My problem is with that organization because they are liars and I hate liars. Do you know I guess for liar person I don't like it. Why is this liar sharing (wrong) information is it a competition. Why say to me I am registered in the top-up, but there is nothing (top-up referring to money given every month to refugees). (TOR-002)</p>
<p>Lack of Personalized Support</p>	<p>"Tons and tons and tons of links. Try this, try this. Oh, we're leading to nowhere. I got a lot of information that couldn't even help me" (GAT-004).</p> <p>"They tell you they help with employment, but when you really talk, it's just more of, you know, they Google on Indeed, print like a template, give it to you to go figure out" (EDM-008).</p> <p>Maybe more communities has these kind of the services or a kind of a secure place that gives good support and good help. Not just sitting on a chair and just listening and writing down on papers and the paper adding up, piling up. There should be help. Like it should not be like that. (CAL-003)</p> <p>"They tell you they help with employment, but when you really talk, it's just more of, you know, they Google on Indeed, print like a template, give it to you to go figure out" (EDM-008).</p>
<p>Dissatisfaction with Settlement Support and Services</p>	<p>"The man was rude. He was really rude to me" (EDM-007).</p> <p>"Because when I contacted them, I automatically thought I would find a job. And most of these establishments, the employment-related services such as help with writing a resume and preparing for interviews, I find it all very basic." (GAT-002)</p> <p>Yeah just for one year. But it is not just enough for one year. I have like my relatives, my friends in Europe. It's different from here. In Europe, like the system it is nice. When you come to Europe, you should have to go to, school. Then you learn the language of them, the system of them. I think four years or three years. After finishing the level or the school, they have to work like in the company. But in Canada, if you don't like the school you left and you can't go to the work. It's not good even for the refugee. (THB-007)</p> <p>But I'm searching about services and more of them are just to advance people, maybe the ones that already have the permanent residency and are ready to become a citizen. It's like we are in the middle. We are not like at the beginning that they have a lot of service on that. We are not at the end of the journey that they have a lot of service for them as well. And like they say, well, we came here because we wanted, so we are supposed to have like different tools. It's not always like that, but it must be. (THB-001)</p>
<p>Insufficient Mental Health Support</p>	<p>But when somebody has problems, they can't share it [here] because they think it is not safe. First for refugees and for newcomers is they need to feel safe in a situation. When he or she think here is safe, everything is safe. She can share or he can share everything. When, if she or he have problem, but he is not sure he cannot share if it's safe or not. But I think first it needs to be a safe situation. (THB-001)</p>

**Inappropriate Behaviour –
Lack of boundaries**

But when we came here, we no understand the language. We didn't know how can we share this, with who, who is the manager. Who is the director who can help me about not touching? But she was from Ukraine and she was crying and they were saying why you need shampoo, you are so beauty – CAL – 001

Because first thing is employees publish my information with Arab people. They told them about a lot of things about me. When I go to supervisor, I told her, please, please don't share my information with people, please that's dangerous! No one should know my information because you know I am refugee and some people not refugee and that's dangerous about me okay? Do you know what's happened with me? This employee let her husband also when he see me or see my sister. Scary. Made me scary. – BRA-001-06

When newcomers expressed dissatisfaction with settlement services, their primary concerns centered on housing and employment assistance. This dissatisfaction is understandable, as these are among the top reported reasons the newcomers in this study sought out settlement organizations, alongside English language courses. However, finding employment and securing housing are areas where settlement services have limited influence due to factors beyond their control, such as high rent prices and employers' hiring preferences or biases against newcomers. There is seemingly a disconnect between the expectations of newcomers and the practical limitations of settlement organizations.

Newcomers frequently expected direct assistance in securing job and housing because they believed that settlement workers have more influence over these outcomes than they actually do. They also anticipated more personalized and consistent hands-on support from the settlement organizations and their caseworkers that go beyond the agency's scope. For instance, one participant expressed frustration that their case manager did not forward job-related emails to the IRCC, which they believed was essential for finding employment. Another participant was upset that they did not receive transportation support to search for housing in and around the GTA. While a third was dissatisfied with the lack of support received when he wanted to have his son circumcised.

Male participants were more likely to express dissatisfaction with settlement services (26%) compared to female participants (20%). The primary focus of male participants' discontent was the lack of assistance in finding employment. This trend is not surprising given that as the previous section shows, those who expressed positive sentiments toward settlement organizations often appreciated community support and connectedness. These individuals were typically involved in smaller, multicultural organizations or programs that emphasized forming community bonds. Male participants were less likely to engage in community activities or smaller support groups offered by these organizations, potentially missing out on the benefits of networking and community support. This difference in engagement likely contributes to the higher levels of dissatisfaction reported by the male newcomers.

Studies show that immigrant men often face unique challenges in integration, partly due to societal expectations and personal reluctance to seek help or engage in community activities (Beiser, 2021; Hynie,

2018). These challenges are compounded by societal norms and expectations around masculinity, which can discourage men from seeking support and participating in community activities. Immigrant men may feel a strong pressure to fulfill the role of the family provider and leader, making them less likely to engage in activities that they perceive as unnecessary or not directly related to employment.

One female participant spoke about her husband's role and expectations of being the primary breadwinner

I try to go for study. But as a man in our culture, man has the responsibility to raise the family. It's my choice if I want, like in our culture, it's not mandatory [that] I should go out and make money. But it's my husband's responsibility, he should go. That's the culture. It's not like I don't want to work or he doesn't want me to go out, because we [are] raised that way. So we want to maintain that and our culture. (CAL – 010)

And a male participant shared his difficulties and the toll it was taking on his mental health.

I don't know if you can understand and feel my situation right now. I have two kids. I can stay without eating. But what about my kids? I can decide not to eat for the whole day, can I do that for my kid? Then I believe that, okay, I'm coming to Canada to give these people a good life, but I'm having the opposite. You know, I don't even know who to talk to. (CAL-009)

Experiences of Discrimination and Racism in Accessing Settlement Services

The majority of newcomers interviewed expressed positive experience when accessing settlement services and reported no discrimination/racism in settlement services. However, 11% of newcomers interviewed over the course of this study shared experiences reflecting both overt and subtle biases when accessing settlement services. When interviewing settlement workers, 95% reported that they had not witnessed or heard of any racism or discrimination within their organizations, insisting that any discrimination and racism faced by newcomers was solely outside of settlement organizations. However, the accounts shared by newcomers indicate a different reality. It is possible that newcomers experience higher levels of racism and discrimination within settlement services than is currently understood, as they may not feel comfortable reporting such incidents in the very environment in which they occurred. Moreover, during our interviews, settlement workers noted the lack of clear reporting mechanisms or structures for addressing these issues, begging the question that if settlement workers themselves are uncertain about where and how to report instances of discrimination, how are the newcomers expected to navigate the process?

Racial Bias and stereotyping by service providers

One form of discrimination encountered by newcomers is racial bias and stereotyping by service providers.

For example, a newcomer of Chinese descent recounted an interaction with an employment counselor. The counselor dismissed the newcomer's aspirations to switch to a career in education.

So as I said, most of the people are helpful and friendly. But, the last experience [accessing settlement services] was with a little bit racist. I went to get employment information because I wanted to change careers. My employment counselor said "you're Chinese, you're good at math, you can only do an office job, you should not change to the education system because you wouldn't be good at it, that is not what Chinese people are good at" which I heard from a Korean lady.... I think it's not really makes sense because you won't know if I don't try. You won't know. I'm not qualified for that job, right? (VAN – 002)

Or another newcomer who believed that her settlement worker who made assumptions about her knowledge and competence

....I mentioned that during the initial interviews [with an employment counselor] to understand, for example, what my needs were in terms of job search, the lady I spoke to immediately labeled me as someone who did not have computer skills, someone who did not master anything related to administration, who had no knowledge. Even though during our first phone call, I told her that I had diplomas and had experience in administration. So after that, it was difficult, it was difficult to go back to her for help in my job search....Because to her, she had already labeled me as someone who didn't have the necessary qualifications. As if my diplomas meant nothing..(translated, GAT-001)

Unequal distribution of resources and preferential treatment

Real or Perceived inequality in service delivery also exacerbates feelings of discrimination. Newcomers have observed that certain groups receive preferential treatment.

Um, just to keep an eye, I think. I have seen the discrimination where the money is involved or where the resources are involved. When I was doing my....paid practicum...I lost my job and then luckily, I went there and the manager was there and she said okay, don't worry, we have some kind of paid practicum. You have to come here, but you are just not coming to study, on the side, you will get an hourly wage. But I knew there was a waiting list, but because I was from her same country, she gave me the choice and I didn't have to do the sign-up, the screening process". (CAL-005)

I mean they make difference between the people, but even between the families and also between the people from different country. Yeah, they make difference. Yeah. Sometimes, but not obviously. (BRA-001-02)

But, you know, [redacted] I observe that the government providing the settlement program differently for different groups of people. I saw that there are many new Ukrainian newcomers and they got more support. They got job immediately, they got housing immediately. But we are struggling to find those kinds of services....I don't know if it be because they are white and blond and blue eyes or not, but....(VAN-003)

One refugee from recounted his experiences of encountering discrimination immediately upon his arrival in Canada, particularly during their stays in hotels.

I am only one Iranian person in the hotel. Everybody is a Syrian, Afghanistan. And I think a little bit discrimination for me as a non-Arab person. Example (the government gives) a weekly money, it is a \$550 each week for one person. But 50 days going to office and (they) don't speak with me, this manager. I forget his name he is a Syrian person. But he said he put me on the top-up list, but he didn't, I never got my money! (TOR -002)

One newcomer recounted her difficulties when she first arrived in Canada and was placed in a hotel in Calgary. She detailed the discrimination she faced based on her ethnic background, which resulted in a particularly distressing situation. Her story highlights the need for more equitable and culturally sensitive practices in settlement services to ensure all refugees receive the necessary support for a successful integration process.

Newcomer: *But then, last year, the English was not good. But I asked him, my English is not good how can I ask? But he told me, here [are] some people from your country, they come to help with you because they are understood your language. But one Friday because we lost a big bag in Toronto airport. Inside this bag was my son's clothes, diapers and baby formula. He was almost six months. But also, I was pregnant one month. He used baby formula. I called this phone number, and he answered me. He was from our country. But the language is different. Our country is different people. For example, different tribes. I don't know if you heard about that but each tribe ha a genocide. I am Hazara but in our country it is different than Pashtun, but Pashtun is Taliban. He was Pashtun. When he understood I am Hazara, he told me, oh, we don't have baby formula. Why, he is a six month old baby, how can I find baby formula for him?*

The person is still working with them. But [they] hired him because he understood our language, but the language is different. [He said] oh, here is Pashtun, here is different. But I say please, my baby is crying, I don't have formula, please help me. But told me we don't have formula. Tomorrow is Saturday and Sunday, we don't have formula for three days. My son was very crying.

We didn't know where the market is, how can we find it? We didn't have phone to call for ask someone. Yeah, it was so bad. My son was so crying. I called again, please, we need formula for my son and also we need diapers for him. He was saying we don't have formula. But my husband was going to the reception and my husband told me, oh, they gave another lady two packets of formula. My husband followed her and he knocked the door and asked her how can you find the formula? [She said] here is formula, you can go to reception, there is agents....my son is crying, he's a baby, he no understand we are refugee here. He come to eat some food, but he's still not six months. But he said no, we don't have formula, please go. I don't have time for you.

But I talk to a counsellor....I can't stop crying because it was so bad. For one day, my son didn't have formula. He was so crying. But she [the counsellor] was asking me why? What happened here? We have more formula. We have people you. Why? What happened? But she emailed the manager. The manager came here and knocked on the door and said what happened? I think he was also from my country. It was same language which is Pashtun. But I [told him] I don't have formula. I asked him [the man at the reception] three or four times and he told me we won't have formula for baby tomorrow or after tomorrow, you need to wait. But he [the manager] is saying to me "Oh, it is so bad I apologize, please forget it" and he brought me a bottle of formula and diapers and he asked me, please don't talk with anyone. Don't share this with anyone.

Improvements Suggested by Newcomers to Settlement Services

Newcomers were asked how they believed settlement services could be improved to better serve them and aid in their integration process. Below is a summary of their suggestions.

1. Enhancing Communication and Awareness of Services

One of the most common suggestions from newcomers is the need for better communication and awareness about available services. "Many people don't even know about the settlement programs, especially for people who don't speak the language" (VAN-003). Many newcomers were unaware of the resources available to them upon arrival and often did not fully understand the range of services offered by the settlement organizations they were working with. Additionally, there was confusion about whether these services were free, which deterred some from seeking help.

One participant suggested that providing settlement information at ports of entry or initial contact points like Service Canada could be beneficial. They stated, "Maybe having an awareness about settlement at that point—having like a settlement advisor there—would probably just, 'Oh, you're a newcomer. Come over here. Let me show you some centres you can join in'" (EDM – 008).

2. Providing Personalized and Practical Support

Newcomers also emphasized the importance of more personalized and practical support. Many settlement services provide general information, but newcomers often need tailored advice that considers their specific circumstances. For instance, a participant from Calgary mentioned the need for more direct and practical support in job searching, including tailored resume building and interview preparation. As one newcomer explained: “The services, you know, I feel all the settlement counsellors are reading from the same sheet of paper, because nobody could give me particular advice tailored to me. So I think the services for settlement for newcomers, that was a waste of my Uber.” (EDM-005)

There is also a call for more hands-on assistance in navigating daily life in Canada. One participant suggested that settlement services could offer more practical support by accompanying newcomers to essential appointments and helping them understand processes step-by-step, much like a tourist guide. They said, “It’s better if some person helps you and goes with this person to this building, tell you this is the process going to this building” (CAL-006).

3. Fostering Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity

Cultural sensitivity training for service providers is another critical area for improvement. Newcomers often face cultural barriers that can lead to feelings of isolation or misunderstandings. One participant from Montreal highlighted the need for service providers to have training in cultural sensitivity and diversity to better understand and appreciate the backgrounds of newcomers. They stated, “I think know to understand and appreciate the diverse backgrounds and cultures of newcomers is very, very important” (MON-004).

4. Increase Practical Training and Partnerships

The feedback from newcomers underscores the critical need for settlement services to focus on facilitating practical training opportunities and fostering partnerships with employers. This approach is vital for bridging the gap between newcomers’ skills and the demands of the Canadian job market, ultimately aiding in their successful integration.

Practical training programs provide newcomers with hands-on experience, which is crucial for understanding the specific requirements and work culture in Canada. This experience not only enhances their resumes, but also boosts their confidence in navigating the job market. Studies have shown that practical training significantly improves newcomers’ employability by providing them with the necessary skills and familiarity with workplace expectations (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018).

Three respondents in Brandon, Manitoba who are part of a practicum programs expressed their happiness with the program, but they wanted more, longer program to extend beyond 3 weeks.

....I'm looking at a situation where the practicum period could be extended. I think three weeks is not enough to get the experience that is important on the resume of Canadian job experience. I

think maybe like eight weeks, let it be two months or three months job experience so that you would have learnt how it is the workplace culture in Canada. (BRA-001-03)

I like this program. We had a good program. Uh, we need more such programs for newcomers. (BRA-001-02)

Okay. Yeah, the multi is a very good program. I just hope that the government can [make] more of this kind of programs...(BRA-001-04)

Also, suggestions of engaging employers or producing legislature that requires employers with a certain number of employees to recruit newcomers or to enlist newcomers for practicums:

...what I'm trying to say is we have different employers with different workforce and uh the capacity to absorb newcomers... a workplace that has a hundred and above workers or a workplace that has within it, a certain number that with that number, one can say that workplace reflects the workplace culture in Canada.... (BRA-001-03)

Peut être collaborer avec les employeurs?? Parce que pour moi la réussite d'un nouvel arrivant se mesure lorsqu'il obtient un emploi à la hauteur de ses compétences. Et je peux dire que ça peut lui permettre de participer à la croissance économique de ce pays. D'après moi, parce que c'est ce que je cherche. (GAT-002)

5. Implement Feedback Mechanisms

The newcomers expressed the desire to have more opportunities to have the chance to provide feedback and critiques to settlement organizations or to have the chance to recommend workshops, training etc. This desire seems to demonstrate a need for effective feedback mechanisms for newcomers to ensure services meet their evolving needs.

...if the government closely monitor and providing them, feedbacks through interviewing the newcomers, even you know that right now you have research you're providing, you're developing a report....Never any guys or any person from the government never came to us or never came to the newcomers to ask their experience with the resettlement organization visits. (BRA-001-01)

6. Promote Cultural Sensitivity and Inclusivity

Settlement services should prioritize cultural sensitivity and inclusivity, ensuring staff understand and respect diverse backgrounds. Additionally, newcomers suggested that settlement services could play a more active role in addressing racism and discrimination. This includes providing information on how to handle racist situations and where to seek support. For example, a participant from Calgary mentioned the importance of having clear guidelines and support mechanisms in place to deal with discrimination.

Um, maybe more classes. We need to take a part in many more classes and the teachers need to teach us how to face this and if we do face experience discrimination, what can we do. (CAL-004)

In summary, newcomers recommend that settlement services improve their communication strategies, provide more personalized and practical support, and enhance cultural sensitivity training. By addressing these areas, settlement services can better support newcomers in their integration process and help them navigate the challenges of starting a new life in Canada.

Conclusion

The analysis of interviews with settlement workers highlights both the strengths and gaps in current settlement services. The settlement workers interviewed are committed to helping newcomers navigate the settlement process, yet they face significant limitations. These include insufficient funding, lack of comprehensive training, and inadequate resources to meet the diverse needs of newcomers. Many workers expressed the need for more support from the government to enhance their capacity to assist effectively.

The Newcomer narratives provide an account of the challenges they encounter when arriving in Canada. Employment remains an important issue, with many newcomers struggling to secure jobs that align with their qualifications due to credential recognition issues and the demand for Canadian experience. Settlement services, though valuable, often fall short of newcomers' expectations, leading to frustration. This gap is partly due to insufficient communication about the scope and accessibility of these services. Furthermore, discrimination and systemic biases present additional barriers, compounding the difficulties faced by racialized newcomers in particular.

The interviews with newcomers and settlement workers reveal nuanced perspectives on racism and discrimination in the context of settlement services. While these issues are significant, they are not uniformly pervasive within settlement services themselves. Instead, incidents of racism and discrimination more frequently occurred in broader contexts, such as in the search for employment, securing housing, and dealing with public interactions. These systemic challenges have profound effects on newcomers' integration and mental health, overshadowing the supportive efforts made by settlement organizations.

However, instances of racism and discrimination did surface within settlement services. These issues often arose from implicit biases held by settlement workers and misunderstandings of cultural or regional nuances among newcomers. For example, assumptions that newcomers from the same country share a common language or culture can lead to significant communication and service delivery problems. Additionally, settlement worker, may unconsciously carry biases into their daily work, influencing their interactions and the support they provide.

Settlement services strive to address these issues through support and resources, but their efforts are constrained by the broader systemic nature of discrimination. The need for improved communication about available services and the establishment of clear reporting mechanisms for discrimination was highlighted by both newcomers and settlement workers.

Addressing these issues demands a collaborative approach with both the public and private sector that goes beyond the capacity of settlement services. Enhancing policies to recognize international credentials, enforcing anti-discrimination laws, and providing comprehensive support systems for

newcomers are crucial steps toward a more inclusive and welcoming Canadian society. Only by addressing these systemic barriers can Canada effectively support the integration and well-being of all newcomers.

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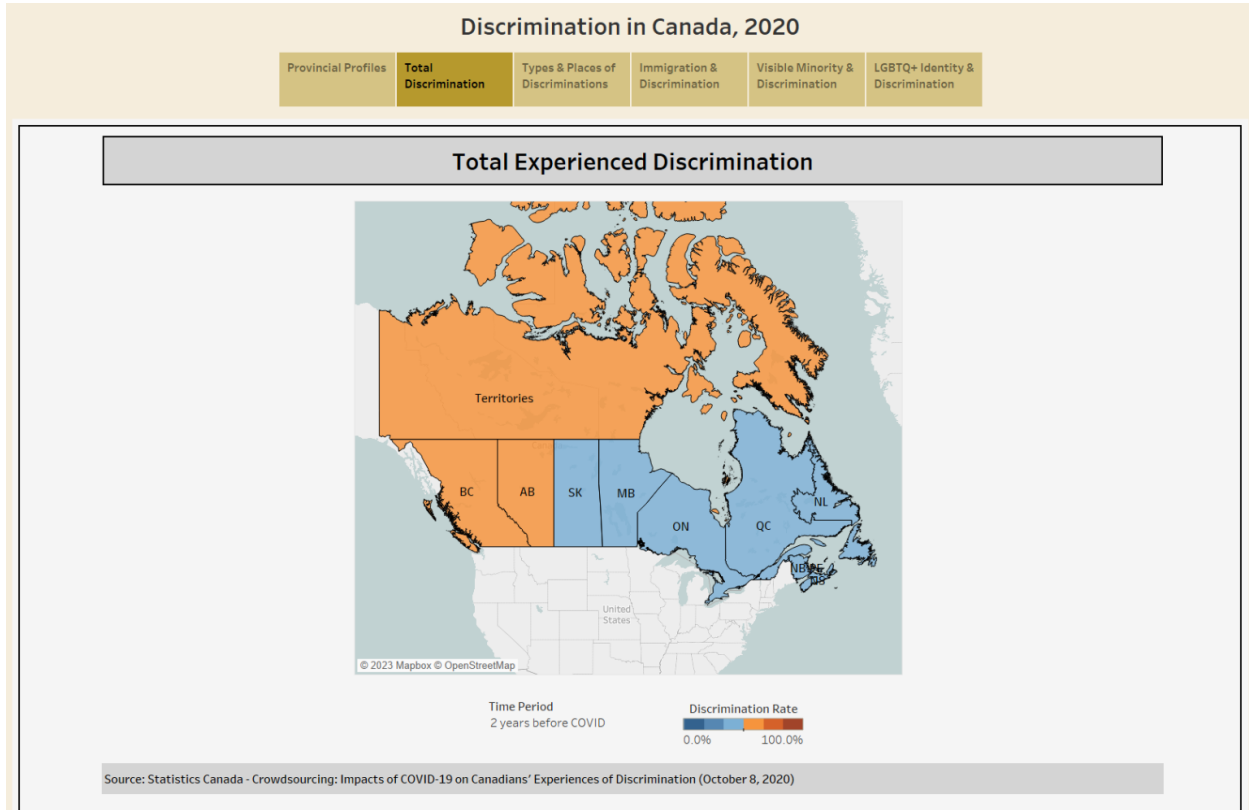
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Appendix A.1 – Discrimination Profile by Province



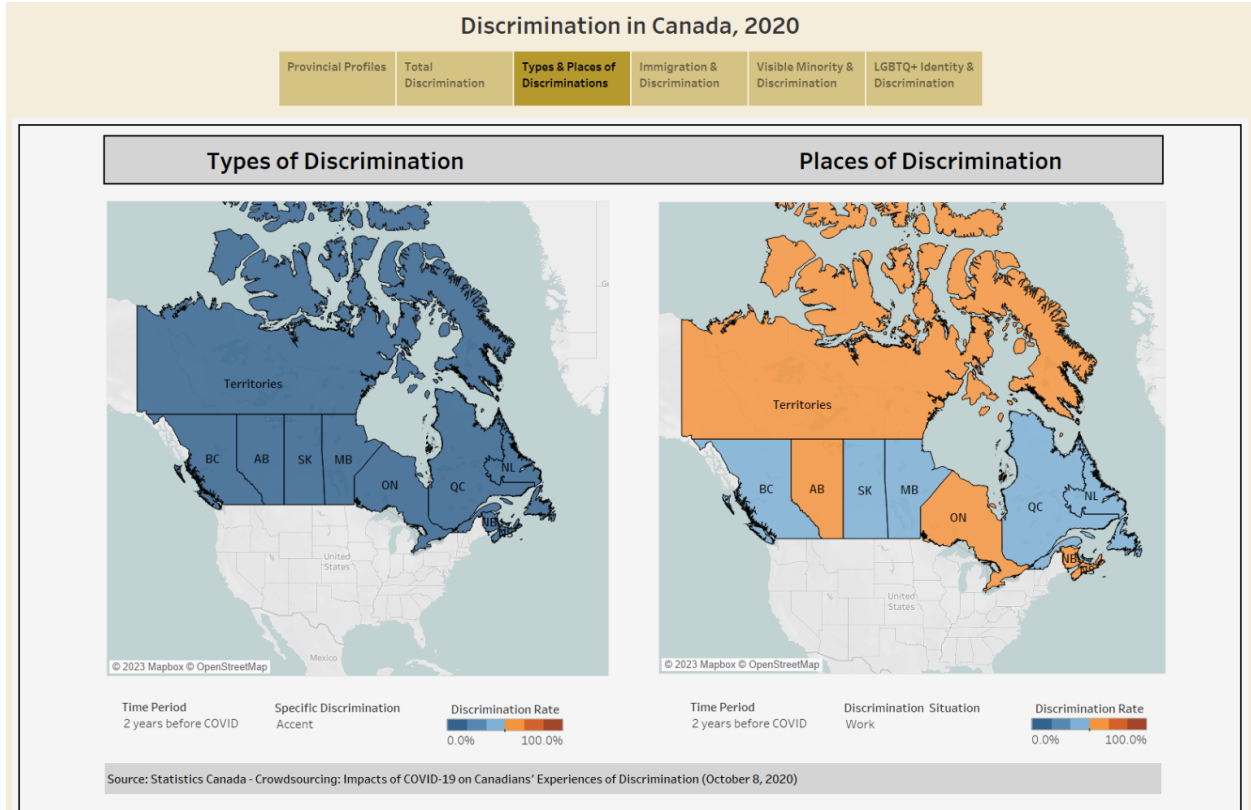
Appendix A.2 – Total Experienced Discrimination

Please feel free to use the links provided under each dashboard image to access the interactive dashboards on Tableau.



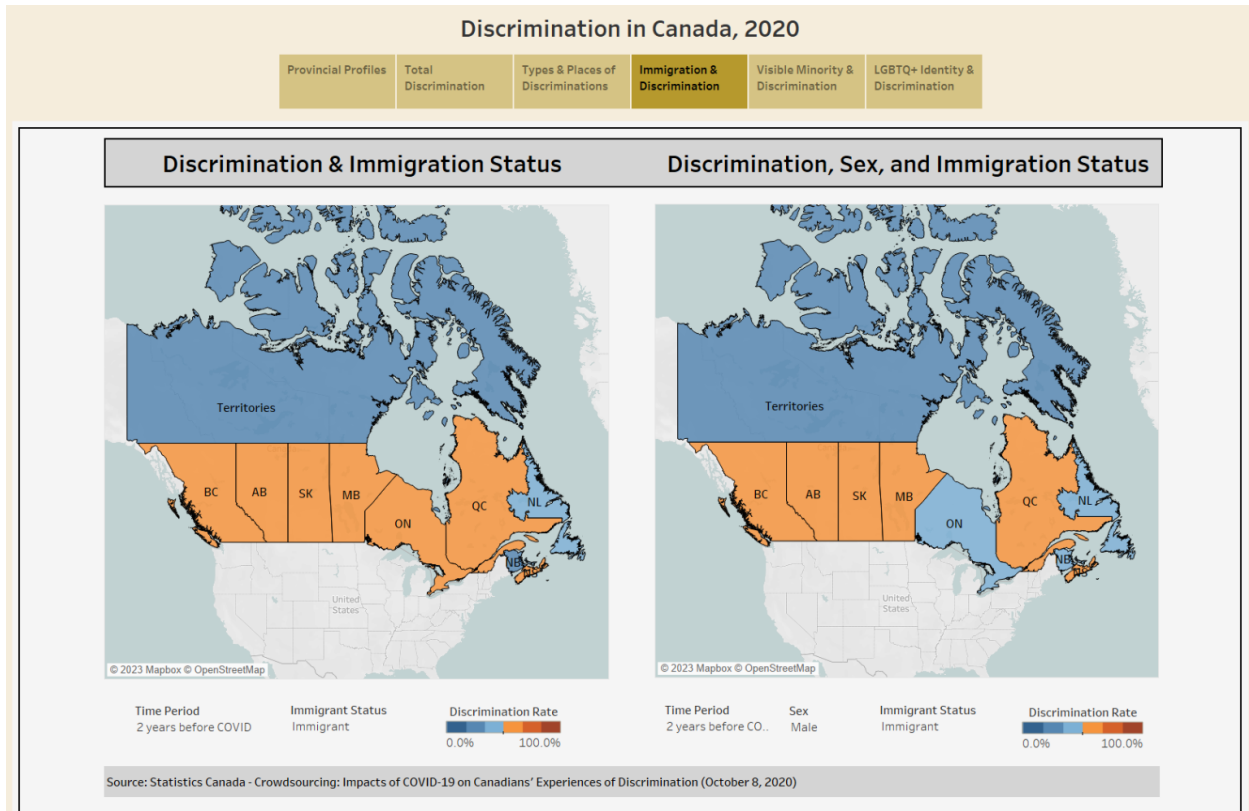
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Appendix A.3 – Types and Places of Discriminations



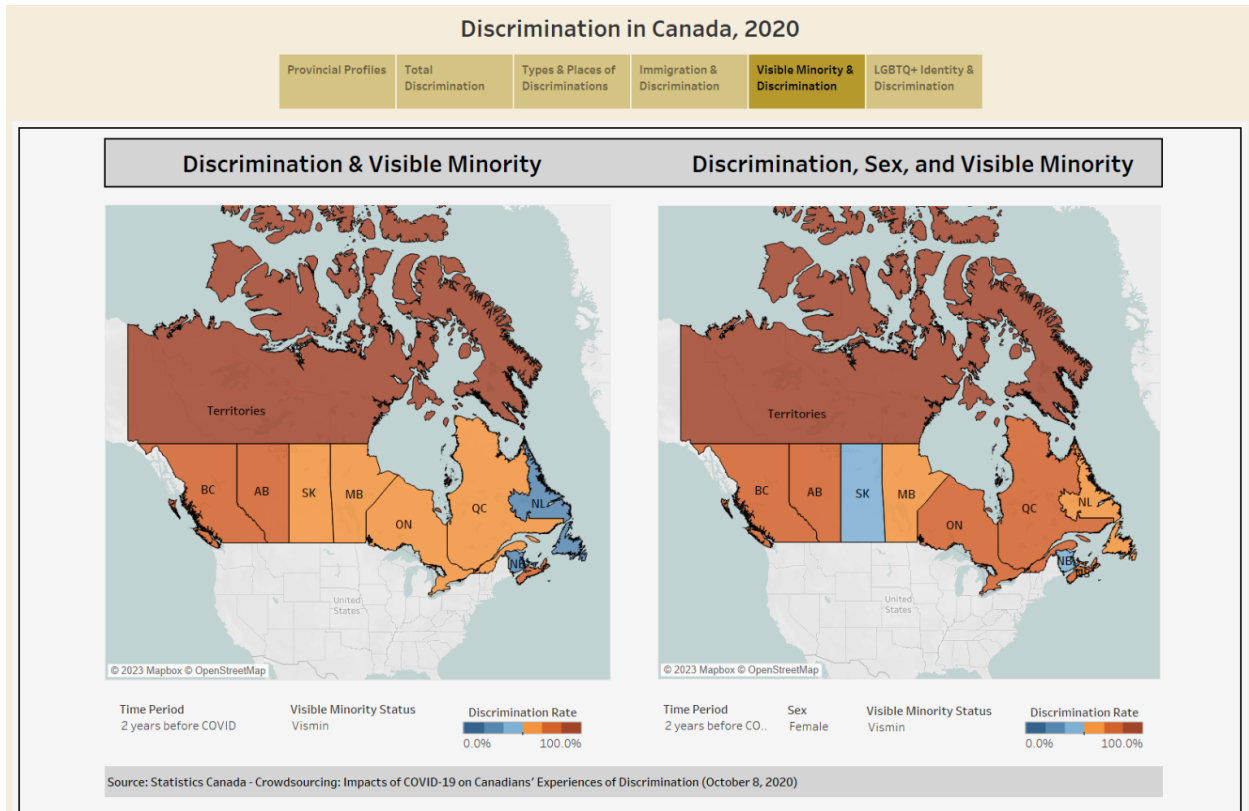
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Appendix A.4 Immigration and Discrimination



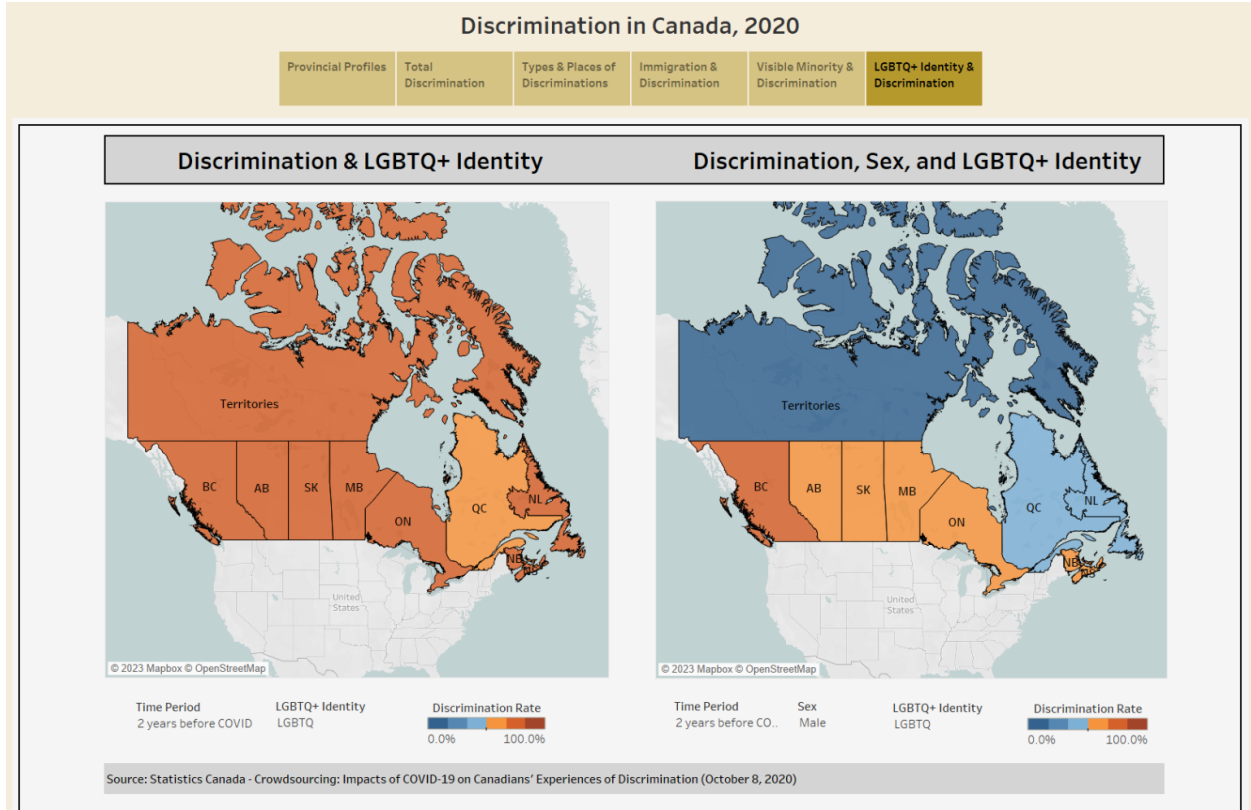
https://public.tableau.com/views/DiscriminationinCanada-TotalExperiencedDiscrimination/Dashboard-MapsImmigration?:language=en-US&:sid=&:display_count=n&:origin=viz_share_link

Appendix A.5 Visible Minority and Discrimination



https://public.tableau.com/views/DiscriminationinCanada-VisibleMinorityDiscrimination/Dashboard-MapsVM?:language=en-US&:sid=&:display_count=n&:origin=viz_share_link

Appendix A.6 LGBTQ+ Identity and Discrimination



https://public.tableau.com/views/DiscriminationinCanada-LGBTQIdentityDiscrimination/Dashboard-MapsLGBTQ?:language=en-US&:sid=&:display_count=n&:origin=viz_share_link