

JUST SIX  
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH  
SUMMARY



## Immigrant and Refugee Youth Settlement Experiences:

### “A New Kind of War”

#### Key Details

##### KEY WORDS

Immigrant youth, refugee youth, settlement, integration, crime

##### POPULATION GROUP

Newcomer youth

##### STEPPING UP THEMES

Strong, Supportive Friends & Families;  
Diversity, Social Inclusion & Safety;  
Coordinated & Youth Friendly  
Communities

##### RESEARCH ORIGIN

Canada

##### SOURCE

Academic Article

#### 1. What is the research about?

Immigrant youth face unique challenges related to education, culture, language, socio-economic opportunities, and psychosocial wellbeing. These barriers can create challenges for their settlement, integration and adaptation to their new country. While immigrant youth face many challenges, they also demonstrate resilience. Factors that support immigrant youth resilience include: “individual traits (e.g., adaptability, self-esteem, optimism); parental psychological health, family integrity and support, availability of schooling; the school environment; and peer and community support”.

This research engages newcomer youth to understand their perspectives on the key factors that support or hinder their settlement, integration and adaptation.

This study explored two main questions:

1. What factors do immigrant and refugee youth perceive to have exerted an influence on their settlement and adaptation?
2. What services or programs have interviewees accessed? To what extent have these been perceived as helpful?

#### 2. Where did the research take place?

The research took place in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

#### 3. Who is this research about?

This research is about immigrant and refugee youth (aged 19 – 32) who arrived in Canada in adolescence from ten source countries: Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iraq, Liberia, Mexico, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Somalia.

#### 4. How was the research done?

Fourteen refugee and immigrant youths participated in this research. These youth were interviewed individually in semi-structured interviews. Eleven of them were recommended by ethnocultural or social service organizations, and three others were referred by provincial correctional centre, a community correction office or a local youth centre.

**“Greater educational support, awareness of and access to opportunities for community involvement, and knowledge of Canadian systems will inform and guide newcomer youth through their settlement and adaptation process, help them to develop a sense of belonging, and facilitate fuller participation in Canadian society. Combining these with systematic changes on the part of the receiving community... will help to promote inclusion and social cohesion.”**

Researchers believed that a qualitative approach was the most appropriate method to examine the factors that positively and/or negatively impact the settlement and integration experiences of newcomer youth in Canada.

Researchers decided to work with a small sample in order to develop themes that could then be tested against a larger sample; the data was thematically coded using an iterative process.

## 5. What are the key findings?

This study found that the settlement and integration of immigrant and refugee youth were influenced by these factors:

- pre-migration experiences – trauma from war and violence
- socioeconomic circumstances – poverty, unsafe neighborhoods
- insufficient knowledge of Canadian laws - involvement in criminal justice system; legislative reforms
- support networks – very limited psychosocial supports
- educational experiences – lack of ESL support, parents struggle to engage the system
- racism and discrimination – inter-tribal conflict, inequitable treatment within mainstream Canadian society, feelings of exclusion
- cultural identity – two cultures, intergenerational tension
- involvement in community programs – provided mentorship and volunteerism opportunities

## 6. Why does this research matter for youth work?

The researchers make the following recommendations related to youth work:

First, the researchers recommend that schools are the most suitable place to facilitate transition of immigrant and refugee youth to their new environment in Canada. To better assist these youth, support systems should be put in place; this can be done by teachers who can bridge the pre and post-migration experiences.

Second, they recommend that newcomer youth should have opportunities to participate in pro-social activities such as mentorship relationships, leadership programs, and volunteer programs to boost their sense of belonging and facilitate integration.

Lastly, the researchers recommended that the government must launch culturally-sensitive programs to better educate newcomer youth and their families about the Canadian justice system.



Rossiter, M. J., Hatami, S., Ripley, D., & Rossiter, K. R. (2015). Immigrant and Refugee Youth Settlement Experiences: “A New Kind of War”. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 6(4.1), 746-770.

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