

IWYS

Immigrant women,
youth and seniors

A Research and Knowledge Mobilization Project on the
Settlement Outcomes–Services Nexus

Identifying Structural Barriers to Improve Settlement Outcomes for Vulnerable Groups of Immigrant Women

Knowledge Synthesis Report

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FOREWORD

This report, along with thematic reports on immigrant youth and seniors, and a composite report, is an output of Phase 1 (2017-2018) of the IWYS project that aims to document the settlement and service experiences of the three groups, as well as proposing new intervention strategies. Building on Phase 1 (knowledge synthesis), we will conduct primary research during Phase 2 (2018–2019) in three Ontario communities—Ottawa, Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton, and Windsor—to inform strategies for service innovation that are scalable across the country.

We hope that this report on existing research provides service providers, policymakers, fellow researchers, and the general public an opportunity to consider the settlement needs and outcomes for immigrant women. We also welcome input to guide our primary research. Readers can help shape this agenda by providing feedback on the report to ceris@yorku.ca, subscribing and contributing to the project newsletter on www.iwys.ca, and participating in focus groups and interviews.

We would like to thank our partners, volunteer members of the National Advisory Board, and staff at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and York University as contribution agreement partners.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the settlement needs and outcomes for immigrant women and the role that settlement services can play to support their integration into Canadian society. Canada has maintained relatively high levels of immigration to advance its economic goals while supporting family reunification and humanitarian migration. Immigrant women represent a growing proportion of new immigrants; their specific settlement needs and outcomes, however, are often overlooked or subsumed into broader programs for all immigrants. Assessing the effectiveness of settlement services and identifying needs among immigrant women, therefore, provides important insights into the well-being of Canadian society as a whole, while informing policy and program priorities to address troubling systemic inequities that immigrant women face, including higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, racialized poverty, and poor physical and mental health outcomes, especially before and after giving birth.

The primary goals of this report are to:

- A) Identify the settlement needs and outcomes for immigrant women in Canada.
- B) Identify what role settlement services play in immigrant women's settlement.

Through a systematic review of academic literature we analyzed 171 scholarly articles published in English between 2008 and 2017, as well as relevant grey literature reports. Our review highlights the heterogeneity of immigrant women's experiences of settlement, which are often shaped by structural inequalities related to gender, economic marginalization, race, sexual and/or gender identity, age, and immigration status. Our report presents findings in the following seven interrelated areas of immigrant settlement (presented in no particular order).

Labour Market Participation

Immigrant women in Canada continue to be overrepresented in low-paying and precarious jobs despite being highly skilled and educated. Employment challenges related to deskilling and underemployment especially impact racialized immigrant women who are concentrated in low-wage jobs or unpaid volunteer positions. Factors that impact labour market participation include: lack of foreign credential recognition and devaluing of international work experience; systemic racism; loss of social networks; caregiving responsibilities; and language barriers. Precarious employment contributes to financial insecurity, lack of family time, and stress and fatigue.

Language Outcomes

The majority of immigrants arrive with proficiency in one of Canada's official languages; immigrant women, however, arrive with lower language skills than men. Official language proficiency is vital for employment, facilitates women's social and political participation, and supports the ability to negotiate with social service and education systems. Language classes are crucial for improving language proficiency; however,

attendance is difficult for women who must work immediately after immigration, have child or elder care responsibilities, lack transportation, or who are ineligible for language programs due to their immigration status.

Family, Community, and Social Network

Immigrant women's caregiving roles impact their migration experiences and settlement, especially for transnational nuclear families. Due to loss of extended family and social networks following migration, combined with the high cost of child care in Canada, many families struggle to manage family responsibilities. Immigrant women often carry the weight of household and child care work, which is a barrier to their full-time work and participation in language classes. Restrictions on family sponsorship mean that low-income immigrant families who wish to sponsor parents/grandparents are unable to do so, resulting in a loss of child care support and the emotional and cultural contributions provided by elders.

Gender-Based Violence and Settlement

National population-based survey data suggest that immigrant women experience similar or slightly lower rates of abuse than Canadian-born women. Immigrant women, however, are less likely to access services or seek help due to lack of knowledge about services, language barriers, isolation, and fear of repercussions in their families or community. Vulnerability to abuse is linked to pre- and post-migration stress, resulting from both forced migration and war trauma, as well as settlement challenges that contribute to family conflict. Women with precarious immigration status and women who are sponsored by their spouses are particularly vulnerable due to power imbalances in the sponsoring relationship and fear of being deported.

Health, Mental Health, and Well-Being

Immigrant women experience higher rates of poor health compared with non-immigrant women in Canada. Structural inequalities related to gender, economic marginalization, and racial discrimination contribute to poor health and mental health outcomes. Immigrant women are particularly vulnerable to poor mental health during pregnancy and after childbirth. Barriers to accessing health care include lack of information and/or language proficiency, distrust of medical professionals, and structural barriers such as lack of transportation, lack of child or elder care support, long wait times, and ineligibility for services. As a result, immigrant women, even those who qualify for provincial insurance, are less likely to have a family doctor or seek pre-natal health care services. Women with precarious immigration status, asylum-seeking women, and migrant women engaged in sex work are particularly vulnerable due to lack of health insurance or fear that help-seeking will jeopardize their immigration status.

Civic and Political Participation

Immigrant women have lower participation in elections and informal political engagement, such as signing petitions, than Canadian-born women. Recent immigrant women also have less knowledge of Canadian politics and government services and benefits. Factors that contribute to lower levels of civic participation include social isolation, economic marginalization, gender inequality in country of origin, and systemic

racism in Canada. Immigrant women's involvement in activism, however, facilitates civic engagement and belonging.

Conclusion

Through intersectional gender-based analysis, we considered the heterogeneity of immigrant women who make up a growing proportion of the Canadian population in relation to broader trends in transnational migration, temporary and precarious immigration status, and growing income inequality in Canada.

The limited scholarship on settlement services reveals both positive and negative service experiences. For some women, settlement services play a supportive role in establishing life in Canada, especially during times of crises such as domestic violence and housing insecurity. Language classes are vitally important for women with low English- or French-language proficiency. Research that is critical of settlement services, however, notes how some employment services channel women into low-paying jobs rather than connecting immigrants with stable employment positions in their field of expertise. Some immigrant women report facing barriers to accessing health and social services, including lack of knowledge about services, lack of child care and/or transportation, limited time due to work and family responsibilities, or eligibility criteria that exclude immigrants with precarious immigration status, including those who arrive in Canada on a temporary work or study permit.

Settlement services have historically targeted the initial years after "landing" in Canada as a permanent resident to support immigrant women's labour market participation. Our analysis of academic literature and grey literature, however, identified periods of transition and vulnerability in immigrant women's lives where the bundle of settlement services are needed to address systemic inequities to improve immigrant women's integration and overall well-being, including:

- Transitions in family status (i.e., divorce or death of a spouse/partner);
- Trauma-informed services that address the effects of war and gender-based violence;
- Access to health and mental health services during pregnancy or for immigrants who are parenting young children;
- Support for immigrant parents with a child who has a chronic illness or disability;
- Risk assessment and referral for immigrants seeking safety from domestic violence; and
- Settlement services for immigrants with temporary or precarious status who seek permanent residence in Canada.

Settlement services that target immigrant women's needs during these pivotal periods must also involve immigrant women in the development of programs and services to ensure culturally relevant and meaningful ways to assist with language learning, job assistance, social networking, health care services, support for domestic violence, and child care.

1. INTRODUCTION

Canada remains a top destination for immigrants from around the world who are attracted to Canada's reputation for economic opportunity, multicultural diversity, tolerance, and respect for human rights. Canadian immigration policies have also maintained a commitment to support the integration and well-being of new immigrants, who represent one in five people living in Canada. Through partnerships between the federal government and provincial governments, immigrant settlement services provide tools for immigrants to find employment, develop social networks, improve their language skills, and integrate into Canadian society.

This report focuses on the settlement needs and outcomes of immigrant women, whose unique needs are often overlooked or subsumed into broader analyses of immigrant settlement. Immigrant women represent a growing proportion of Canada's population, as a result of an increase in the number of permanent residents admitted annually, more immigrant women entering Canada for work or to join their families, and relatively low birth rates among Canada's native-born population (Hudon 2015). Canada's 2016 Census estimated 3,954,330 immigrant women and girls residing in Canada, representing 23% of the total female population and 11% of Canada's population overall (Statistics Canada 2018).

Responsibility for immigrant settlement has also shifted in recent decades due to the increase in temporary migration programs for temporary foreign workers and international students who live in Canada for several years before becoming permanent residents. The Centre for Policy Alternatives (2010) emphasizes that temporary migrants must "earn the opportunity to become permanent residents by proving their labour market success in a "two-step" immigration process, without the same access to settlement services and labour rights as immigrants in the past. This system places the responsibility of integration almost entirely on the immigrant" (p.5).

Against these broader trends, assessing the effectiveness of settlement services and identifying settlement outcomes among immigrant women provides important insights into the well-being of Canadian society as a whole, while informing policy and program priorities to address troubling systemic inequities that immigrant women face, including higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, racialized poverty, and poor physical and mental health outcomes, especially before and after giving birth.

In this report, we employed an intersectional gender-based analysis to systematically review academic and grey literature published between 2008 and 2017 on settlement outcomes and the effectiveness of settlement services for immigrant women. We organize our findings from this literature review to highlight seven interrelated areas that

impact immigrant women's settlement (in no particular order) followed by policy and program recommendations. We conclude with a discussion of vulnerable groups of immigrant women and recommendations to develop settlement services that target pivotal points in immigrant women's settlement trajectory to improve settlement outcomes for immigrant women and their families.

1.1 An Intersectional Approach to Gender-Based Analysis

This report adopts an intersectional gender-based analysis approach to capture the diversity of settlement needs and outcomes among immigrant women. Our intersectional approach builds upon the existing Gender-Based Analysis + framework adopted in the 1995 Federal Plan for gender equity and revised in the Fall 2015 Report of the Auditor General, "Implementing Gender Based Analysis." An intersectional gender approach must move beyond differences in gender and sexual orientation to understand how immigrants' private and public lives are simultaneously shaped by how they are admitted to Canada, their immigration status, family status, household income, how they are racialized, their religion, age, and if they or their children have a disability or chronic illness. This report focuses on adult immigrants who identify or are classified as women. While Canadian institutions are moving towards recognizing a broader range of gender identities, government statistics and academic research continue to reproduce gender as a binary construction; as a result, this report is limited to the categories used in the sample of research and reports, the majority of which focus on people who self-identity or who are identified (by researchers and state institutions) as women.

1.2 Methods

We conducted a scoping review of academic literature adapted from Arksey and O'Malley (2005) to address the following research questions: What are the settlement needs and outcomes for immigrant women in Canada? What role do settlement services play in immigrant women's settlement? Our systematic review consisted of: 1) identifying the research question; 2) identifying relevant studies, which in our study included both empirical and conceptual articles; 3) study or article selection, by establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria; 4) charting or sorting information to identify key issues and themes; 5) summarizing and synthesizing the data; and 6) consulting with key stakeholders (the project's National Advisory Board) to provide input and inform the final analysis and implications for policy and practice.

1.2.1 Search Strategy and Databases—Identifying Relevant Articles

We searched English-language academic literature that pertained to immigrant women in Canada published between 2008 and 2017. We identified 2008 as a significant turning point in transnational migration in relation to the international financial crisis and related policy changes in Canada. Our search included some studies in Quebec and cross-national comparative research.

We used a broad search string that included the following terms: [immigration OR migration OR newcomer] AND [women or gender or female] AND Canada. We searched key words, abstracts, and title fields in leading databases (e.g., Proquest Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts; Social Services Abstracts; Sociological Abstracts; PAIS International; World Wide Political Science; Canadian Research Index; Web of Science Social Sciences Citation Index; HW Wilson Social Sciences Abstracts; Taylor and Francis Online Studies on Women and Gender Abstracts).

1.2.2 Data Analysis and Management—Identifying Key Issues and Themes

Our initial sample contained 1,060 articles. After reviewing all titles and abstracts, we clarified our exclusion criteria to remove articles that a) did not substantively discuss immigrant women; b) did not discuss settlement needs, outcomes, or services; c) primarily focused on second generation immigrants; d) were not relevant to immigrant settlement (e.g., cancer screening rates); and e) addressed a country other than Canada. Screening with these exclusion and inclusion criteria produced a final sample of 171 publications.

We supplemented academic literature with a targeted sample of grey literature on settlement services. We retrieved grey literature by using a combination of the University of Toronto Library's Canadian Public Policy Collection search engine, Google searching, and recommendations from our advisory board. We included twelve reports from grey literature in our review, while consulting additional literature as needed when writing this report.

1.3 Description of the Sampled Literature on Immigrant Women's Settlement

Over one-third of the literature in our search came from the Health Sciences (n=70), primarily Public Health and Nursing. The remaining literature was produced by scholars in the Social Sciences (n=63); Social Work (n=23); and Education (n=11). Fifty-three articles reported from national survey data or primary survey research including four

Statistics Canada reports. Nine articles used both qualitative and quantitative data. More than half of the remaining empirical articles were based on qualitative research (n=90) with immigrant and refugee women. Eleven articles were conceptual and eight were based on comprehensive literature reviews. Geographic-specific research (i.e., not a national sample) came from Ontario (n=53), British Columbia (n=22), Quebec (n=18), and Alberta (n=22) with only seven studies focusing on the Maritime provinces and five in Saskatchewan or Manitoba. Almost all of the research was conducted in urban areas; six studies focused on immigrants living in small towns and rural areas.

2. MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 Labour Market Participation

Issues related to employment and poverty are predominant concerns for immigrant women addressed in one-third of the studies in our sample (n=54) of which 11 involved quantitative analyses of census data, data from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC), the Survey of Labour and Income dynamics (SLID), or the Labour Force Survey. Two studies involved mixed-methods studies and 19 were qualitative studies.

2.1.1 Overview of Labour Market Outcomes

Census data from 2011 show that overall, immigrant women have poorer labour market participation compared with Canadian-born women: for women aged 25 to 54, 76.4% of immigrant women were participating in the labour force compared with 83.6% of Canadian-born women (Hudon 2015). Labour market participation rates vary by country of origin, with immigrant women from Africa and Asia having lower participation than those from Latin America and Europe, and are influenced both by family size and lower wages (Frank and Hou 2016, Morissette and Galameau 2016). The gap in participation is greatest for women aged 25 to 34 and smallest for women aged 45–54, supporting the idea that women with young children are most likely to have lower labour market participation (Morissette and Galameau 2016). Immigrant women, the majority of whom have higher education, are overrepresented in low-paying jobs; in 2011, 48.6% of immigrant women and 60% of recent immigrant women with a bachelor's level of education or higher were employed in positions that do not generally require a degree, compared with 30% of Canadian women (Hudon 2015). The wage gap between immigrant and Canadian-born women decreases slightly with time spent in Canada (Hudon, 2015).

Racialized immigrant women are particularly marginalized within the labour market, mirroring the overall income gap between racialized and non-racialized Canadians (Premji et al. 2014; Block and Galabuzi 2011; Lightman and Good Gingrich 2013). Analysis of the 2006 long-form census data found that among university-educated first-generation immigrants aged 25 to 44, racialized women made 81.9 cents for every dollar that non-racialized women made, and 48.7 cents for every dollar made by non-racialized men (Block and Galabuzi 2011).

2.1.2 Impacts of Precarious Employment

Racialized immigrant women are overrepresented in low-paying and precarious forms of employment that are temporary, part-time, unstable, and often high risk (Fuller and Vosko 2008; Hira-Friesen 2017; Premji and Shakya 2017; Premji et al. 2010; Premji et al. 2014). Precarious employment may result in long periods of unemployment between jobs or long-term precarious work (Premji et al. 2014). Underemployment and precarious employment negatively affects immigrant women and their families due to unstable work schedules; lack of family time; lack of benefits and sick days; increased risk of food and housing insecurity; and high levels of stress and fatigue (Premji and Shakya 2017; Walsh et al. 2016; Vahabi et al. 2011). These factors affect the whole family and put women at increased risk for poor physical and mental health (Morrow et al. 2008; O'Mahony and Donnelly 2010; Premji and Shakya 2017).

2.1.3 Barriers to Labour Market Participation

Non-Recognition of Foreign Credentials and Work Experience Leading to Deskilling

Lack of foreign credential and international work experience recognition operates as a form of systemic discrimination for immigrant women's employment in Canada. Li's (2008) analysis of data from the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey showed that although foreign credentials held by white immigrants provide an earnings premium, racialized immigrants with foreign credentials experience an earnings penalty. Li (2008) contends that "foreign credentials of immigrants are racialized, since the market value of foreign credentials varies depending on the racial background of the immigrants" (p. 307). Deskilling occurs for all immigrants but the mismatch between job skill requirements and education is greater for immigrant women (Hudon 2015) and is experienced differently by women. Immigrant men may find work in taxi-driving, factories, or construction, while women end up in lower-paying jobs which may be informal or unregulated within the child care, health care, community work, and service sectors, or doing manual labour such as cleaning (Premji and Shakya 2017; Creese and Wiebe 2012). Premji et al. (2014) argue that the "racialized-gendered division of labour" channels women of colour, including immigrants, into low-wage, unstable work in traditionally undervalued female-dominated sectors, which leads to further devaluation and decline in the wage rate of these occupations.

The prominence of deskilling and underemployment is captured in a range of qualitative studies on a variety of ethno-cultural and occupational groups in different regions of Canada, including: English-speaking Caribbean immigrants in Toronto (Branker 2017); Pakistani immigrant women in Greater Vancouver area (Zaman 2010); immigrant families in Calgary (Leigh 2016); Colombian refugee women (Bonnycastle 2017); South Asian women in the Maritimes (Samuel 2009); Chinese women employed in applied sciences and engineering professions before migration (Shan, Pullman, and Zhao

2016); Filipina women who came to Canada as live-in caregivers across Canada (Tungohan 2017); and business/investor class immigrants in Nova Scotia (Bryan 2012).

Language Skills and Discrimination Based on Accent

Low language skills are associated with low employment rates (Adamuti-Trache 2013); however, immigrant women may face language-based employment discrimination even when they speak English (Branker 2017). African immigrants in Vancouver (Creese 2010) and professional Chinese and South Asian women (Das Gupta et al. 2014) who are fluent in English report barriers to employment due to their accent. Thus, requirements for “Canadian accents” can act as a form of systemic racism along with the requirement for “Canadian experience” and “Canadian credentials” described above (Creese and Wiebe 2012).

Loss of Social Networks

Research suggests that immigrant women have more limited social networks than men, which can limit their job search (George and Chaze 2009). Friends and family members help women understand the Canadian job market and workplace environments by sharing their own experiences and providing connections to their workplaces (George and Chaze 2009).

Caregiving Responsibilities

The labour market participation of many immigrant women, like that of Canadian-born women, is greatly impacted by their caregiving roles within the family unit. Due to traditional gender roles, women take on majority household and child care work (Banerjee and Phan 2015; Bryan 2012; Das Gupta et al. 2014; Dlamini, Anucha, and Wolfe 2012; Leigh 2016). Even when both partners were professionally employed before migration, families put greater emphasis on establishing the husband's employment after arriving in Canada (Banerjee and Phan 2015; Bryan 2012; Das Gupta et al. 2014). As a result of caregiving roles and financial pressure, immigrant women are thus more likely to be deskilled after immigration.

2.1.4 Strategies to Respond to Labour Market Barriers

Immigrant women employ a range of strategies to respond to the difficulty of finding stable work. Due to financial need, many immigrant women take on “survival jobs” that are not commensurate with education and experience (see Creese and Wiebe 2012); others may find work in the informal sector, running small businesses providing sewing, catering, or child care work (Premji and Shakya 2017; Maitra 2013). Some women turn to volunteer work in order to expand their social capital networks and gain Canadian work experience. In turn, they provide hundreds of hours of unpaid labour as part of their labour-market entry strategy (George and Chaze 2009; Premji et al. 2014). Women who can afford to may also pursue further training or education in Canada (Creese and Wiebe 2012; Das Gupta et al. 2014; Shan 2009). Although retraining may result in more

employment opportunities, qualitative research suggests that immigrant women's training choices can be heavily shaped by labour market factors which lead them to enter new, often lower-paying, female-dominated sectors (Ng and Shan 2010).

2.1.5 The Role of Settlement Services

In consideration of systemic barriers facing immigrant women, settlement services have an important role to play in supporting immigrant women in entering the labour market. Research suggests that settlement services must move beyond an individual "human capital" approach, to consider how being part of a "family unit" influences immigrant women's settlement experience; especially when immigrant women who enter as dependent applicants face employment discrimination or caregiving burden that limits their labour market participation and settlement outcomes (Dobrowolsky 2011; Banerjee and Phan 2015; Bragg and Wong 2016; Leigh 2016; Phan et al. 2015).

Settlement services can address deskilling by providing support to connect women with employment opportunities in their field of expertise (Creese and Wiebe 2012; Premji and Shakya 2017), but should also work across sectors to ensure that immigrant women and their families have structural support (e.g., child care, transportation, and affordable housing).

2.2 Language Outcomes

English or French language skills remain an important aspect of building social networks in Canada, finding employment, and facilitating social and political integration (Kilbride and Ali 2010). Immigrant women, however, arrive in Canada with lower official language skills than immigrant men in part due to gendered patterns of migration and Canada's immigration policy preferences. Dependent economic class applicants, family class immigrants, and refugees are most likely to have lower language skills, reflecting the fact that proficiency in official languages is one of the selection criteria for principal economic class immigrants (Adamuti-Trache 2013). Immigrant women who are isolated at home or have low-wage jobs also have more limited opportunities to develop language skills (Adamuti-Trache 2013).

Low language proficiency can be a significant barrier to employment and general well-being for immigrant women and their families (Kilbride and Ali 2010). Low language proficiency may exacerbate the vulnerability of immigrant women who are at risk of abuse, such as sponsored spouses (Merali 2009) and migrant sex workers (Bungay et al. 2012; Goldenberg et al. 2017). Language proficiency is also crucial to women's ability to be able to advocate for themselves and their children within the health care and education systems (Kilbride and Ali 2010), and to access social services (Alaggia, Maiter, and Jenney 2017).

2.2.1 Barriers to Accessing Language Classes

While research highlights the importance of language classes to improve language proficiency, immigrant women encounter several barriers to accessing language class due to work-place demands, child or elder care responsibilities, or lack of transportation (Kilbride and Ali 2010; Vanderplaat, Ramos, and Yoshida 2013; Sethi 2015). In addition, eligibility requirements exclude many immigrant women who would benefit from language class before applying for permanent residence or after the two-year period of eligibility has expired. The exclusion of citizens from language classes particularly impacts immigrant mothers with young children who delay employment or improving their language skills in order to care for children (Kilbride and Ali 2010).

2.3. Family, Community, and Social Network

The social dimensions of settlement were widely explored within a third of the articles reviewed (n=64), with 23 articles examining family life, social support, and/or social participation.

2.3.1 Settlement Challenges for the Family

For most immigrant women, settlement is mediated by their family life. It is therefore vital to consider how family roles and caregiving responsibilities, including transnational ones, shape immigrants' immigration and settlement experiences.

For many new immigrants, life in Canada involves an increased load of household responsibilities, due both to the lack of affordable domestic help that may have been available in their country of origin, and to the absence of extended family (Banerjee and Phan 2015; Bryan 2012; Das Gupta et al. 2014; Dlamini, Anucha, and Wolfe 2012; Leigh 2016; Suto 2009). For families with young children, the high cost of child care and the absence of extended care hours may impede families from using child care services (Leigh 2016). The increase in caregiving responsibilities disproportionately impacts immigrant women (Banerjee and Phan 2015; Bryan 2012; Das Gupta et al. 2014; Dlamini, Anucha, and Wolfe 2012; Leigh 2016).

Immigration can have a complex impact on gender roles in the family; some immigrant families develop new practices once in Canada that enable both parents to share the load of household and child care work (Leigh 2016; Phan et al. 2015). Some women experience the positive benefits of increased autonomy after migration, particularly if they come from countries where traditional gender roles are more dominant (Hyman, Guruge, and Mason 2008; Jibeen and Hynie 2012; Charpentier and Quéniart 2017). In contrast, Leigh (2016) found that in some families where traditional gender roles became further entrenched, women took on the majority of care work, which often led to high levels of stress as they struggled to balance domestic demands with part-time work or study. Stress related to parenting and care work can negatively impact immigrant women's health and lead to increased marital conflict.

2.3.2 Extended Family

Recent immigration policies (e.g., raising the income requirements for family sponsorship) have made it more difficult for families to sponsor their parents and grandparents, whose contributions to family and community life are overlooked within current Canadian immigration policy (Bragg and Wong 2016; Vanderplaat, Ramos, and

Yoshida 2013). Contrary to public opinion, in Vanderplaat, Ramos, and Yoshida (2013)'s analysis of LSIC data, two-thirds of immigrant parents and grandparents are employed, self-employed, or provide care and homemaking help for their families. The barriers to family sponsorship create additional financial challenges for immigrants who depend on grandparents to provide child care, and can result in women postponing or reducing paid employment in order to take on additional child care responsibilities (Bragg and Wong 2016). Family well-being may also be negatively impacted from the emotional stress of being separated from family members and the loss of the contributions grandparents make to the family, including giving youth a sense of connection to their culture, identity, and native language (Bragg and Wong 2016). In some cases, transnational extended family support is critical for families' child care arrangements and grandparents may travel to Canada on temporary visitor visas to provide child care (Da 2010; Neysmith and Zhou 2013). Transnational caregivers who do not have citizenship face social health risks because they have limited access to health care and experience language barriers and social isolation (Neysmith and Zhou 2013).

2.3.3 Transnational Families

The expansion of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program has contributed to a growing number of immigrants in Canada who have family members living abroad, but limited options for family reunification (Bernhard, Landolt, and Goldring 2009). Some mothers migrate on their own to Canada, either for work or in order to seek asylum, while their children remain in their countries of origin (Bernhard, Landolt, and Goldring 2009). Research on migrant caregivers and farm workers in the Temporary Foreign Worker Program highlights the negative impact of family separation on both parents and children for those in the "low-skilled" occupations who are not able to bring their children to Canada (Hanley, Larios, and Koo 2017; Preibisch and Grez 2010; Nakache and Dixon-Perera 2015). Other transnational family arrangements exist where the mother and child(ren) remain in Canada, while the father returns to country of origin to work due to being unable to find suitable work in Canada (Chiang 2008; Bryan 2012; Rashid et al. 2013; Waters 2011). In Bryan's (2012) ethnographic research with business and investor immigrants who settled in Halifax via Nova Scotia's Provincial Nominee Program, the opportunity for greater gender equality attracted couples to Canada. Labour market realities and their downward class mobility, however, pushed many couples to resort to gendered transnational strategies with male partners returning to their country of origin to work. Although transnational spousal arrangements can be stressful and lonely for some, other women report more positive experiences, including improved marital relationships (Chiang 2008).

2.3.4 Community, Social Support, and Social Networks

Immigrant women often experience a loss of their social networks after migration (Guruge et al. 2015). This loss is reflected in qualitative studies where women describe loneliness and social isolation after migration (see, e.g., Rashid et al. 2013). In the 1998

General Social Survey, immigrant women, particularly those with young children, report lower levels of social participation than both Canadian-born women and immigrant men, and are left out of specific kinds of participation related to family, children, and schooling (Couton and Gaudet 2008). In Maitra's (2013) research, South Asian women with home businesses were very active in their community; their contributions included helping others trying to start businesses, collaborating on work projects, and providing English and other classes to community members. Other qualitative studies show immigrant women benefiting from being well connected with ethno-cultural centres, immigrant communities, and faith-based organizations where they offer mutual aid and develop a sense of identity and belonging.

Social networks play an important role in many aspects of settlement, including finding employment, becoming integrated into one's neighbourhood and community, and establishing a sense of home and belonging. Social networks are also a key factor in political participation, with social isolation being found to have a clear inhibitory effect on immigrant voting behaviour, participation in political activities, and knowledge about Canadian government services and programs (Gidengil and Stolle 2009). In addition, social support is vital for well-being and is recognized in several studies as an important protective factor for mental health (Beiser et al. 2011; Dennis, Merry, and Gagnon 2017; Donnelly et al. 2011; Guruge et al. 2015). Lack of social support can also prevent women from seeking help if they are in a situation of abuse (Ahmad et al. 2009).

2.3.5 Identity and Belonging

Immigrant women report shifts in their sense of identity and belonging during the settlement process in relation to a) disruption and loss of their social networks, b) loneliness and social isolation, c) expectations around family roles, d) economic stress, e) food insecurity, and f) experience with family violence (from their partner/spouse or extended family). Immigrant women in Calgary, for example, reported that downward mobility after moving to Canada led to shifts in family life. With the need for their husbands to work longer hours and for many women to enter the workforce, participants were critical about the pace of life in Canada, where life is more rushed and stressed and longer hours of work are required to maintain economic status (Vallianatos and Raine 2008). Immigrant women experience both gains and losses from working outside the home. Becoming a part of society and participating in community life have positive effects, whereas the loss of dignity in the workplace combined with discrimination based on racism, religion, and class impact immigrant women negatively (Dlamini, Anucha, and Wolfe 2012).

Identity and belonging also varied for immigrant women and girls depending on when they immigrated. For Berman et al. (2009), newcomer girls (ages 15 to 29) experienced a sense of disconnection and exclusion from the "mainstream" white Canadian community but felt a sense of belonging in their newcomer-dominant neighbourhoods (Berman et al 2009:424). Women who immigrate at a later age experience more structural barriers to employment (e.g., deskilling, lack of experience recognition, and

more language challenges) (Alvi et al. 2012). Most of the older immigrant women in the study by Charpentier and Queniat (2017), however, associate their immigration experience with freedom and, despite the many challenges some experienced after arrival in Canada, report that “their status improved in terms of self-realization and personal development” (p. 442).

Identity and belonging have transnational dimensions for immigrant women. In Hogarth's (2015) research, participants reported a sense of belonging in their home country but immigrated to Canada due to lack of security. After immigration, belonging is linked to civic participation and the disconnect between expectations and the reality of their lives in Canada (Hogarth 2015). In a photovoice study with Sudanese women in Calgary, Pearce et al. (2017) reported greater resilience among Sudanese women who took part in “circles of support” based on reciprocity (accepting and giving support), faith and community, and maintaining global connections. Ethnic associations in the Atlantic provinces also provide integral support to immigrants by providing social support, friendship, and connection to cultural traditions (Samuel 2009).

2.3.6 Role of Settlement Services

Settlement programs and structures can enable new immigrants to build social networks and social capital. Based on their scoping review of research about the role of social support in the mental health of immigrant women, Guruge et al. (2015) contend that “current social and structural support systems in Canada are inadequate and hinder the successful transition, settlement and integration of immigrant women” (p. 665). Qualitative research suggests that immigrant women can establish and expand their social networks in a variety of ways, including employment, language classes, educational activities, and participation in religious and/or ethno-cultural organizations, community programs, and physical and recreational activities (Da 2010; Samuel 2009; Frisby 2011).

2.4. Gender-Based Violence and Settlement

In this section, we first discuss the prevalence and different forms of gender-based violence in studies of immigrant women. We then discuss how gender-based violence shapes immigrant women's settlement needs and outcomes.

2.4.1 Prevalence of Gender-Based Violence

National, population-based survey data from Statistics Canada and the Canadian Maternity Experiences Survey suggest that immigrant women report similar or slightly less abuse than Canadian-born women (Daoud et al. 2012; Du Mont and Forte 2012). Population survey data may underestimate the prevalence of abuse, however, since it

often relies on phone interviews in English or French, thereby underrepresenting immigrant women with low official language fluency and women who may be deterred from participating in a phone survey due to safety or privacy concerns. Smaller scale qualitative studies indicate higher rates of abuse among refugee women. In Mehta and Gagnon's (2016) research with pregnant women, 81% of migrant women who reported abuse during pregnancy were asylum seekers who left their country of origin to escape abuse, more than half of whom had been abused by their partner.

Vulnerability to abuse among immigrant women is linked to pre- and post-migration stress. While forced migration and war trauma increase stress and intermarital conflict, settlement challenges after migration also contribute to family conflict. In the context of non-recognition of credentials, deskilling, and racial discrimination, social pressure for men to support their families can lead to depression, alcohol use, conflict, and violence within their families (Guruge et al 2009).

2.4.2 Gender-Based Violence and Barriers to Seeking Help

The literature highlights several factors that may result in immigrant women delaying help-seeking, including: isolation (Mehta and Gagnon 2016); limited English or French proficiency (Merali 2009); social stigma; rigid gender roles; marriage obligations; concern for children's well-being; expected silence; loss of social support following migration; and lack of knowledge about resources and partner abuse (Ahmad et al. 2009). In their nationally based survey, Du Mont and Forte (2012) found that immigrant women who had experienced domestic violence reported lower levels of trust toward their neighbours and people at work or school, and were more likely to have experienced discrimination than Canadian-born women. These factors may prevent women from seeking help in situations of abuse (Du Mont and Forte 2012). Blum and colleagues (2016) identified barriers to help seeking for young Muslim women at risk of family violence. These included personal barriers such as shame, normalization of abuse, lack of confidence or skills to seek help, and fear of rejection by community, as well as service gaps including the lack of shelter spaces for young women fleeing family violence, lack of age-appropriate services, and lack of awareness of honour-related violence among service providers (Blum, Braiden, and Heinonen 2016).

2.4.3 Immigration Status and Gender-Based Violence

Women with precarious immigration status and immigrants who are sponsored by their spouses are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence but are less likely to access support services. Women who leave their home countries to seek safety from violence are also more likely to enter Canada on a temporary visa or without status and thus fear deportation should they be denied permanent residence in Canada. Immigrant women seeking safety from an abusive spouse who sponsored their immigration are also at risk of losing status due to sponsorship breakdown or in cases where a spouse accuses them of marriage fraud (Bhuyan, Korteweg, and Baqi In press). For older immigrant women, risk of abuse is linked with their financial dependence on their

sponsors. Matsuoka and colleagues (2012a) argue that undertaking agreements (previously 10 years and now 20 years) for sponsoring a parent or grandparent reinforce stereotypes about older adults as a burden. Older immigrant women also have limited knowledge of elder abuse; they are thus unlikely to seek support (OCASI 2012; Matsuoka et al. 2012a).

2.4.4 Role of Settlement Services

Settlement services play a critical role in identifying signs of abuse and referring immigrant women to gender-based violence support services or legal assistance, especially for immigrant women who are unlikely to access anti-violence against women services (Rossiter et al. 2018). Ethno-cultural community organizations in particular play a vital role for immigrant women who are unlikely to seek services outside their ethno-cultural community (due to language and cultural barriers). Cross-sectoral collaboration is also important to identify risk and ensure culturally safe approaches to addressing legal, health, housing, financial, and child support needs.

2.5 Health, Mental Health, and Well-Being

Our final sample of health-related literature (n=57) focused on health outcomes and access to health care services in relation to individual and structural determinants of health.

Half of the studies involved quantitative analysis of survey responses; several studies were based on the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada in addition to national surveys conducted on Canadian Maternity Experiences, the Canadian General Survey, and the Canadian Community Health Survey. Most of the quantitative studies focused on mental health, especially for women with children following the birth of a child. Several qualitative studies engaged in in-depth analysis of specific populations in relation to health outcomes or access to services (e.g., mental health for parents from China and South Asia with children who had received a cancer diagnosis [Klassen et al. 2012]).

2.5.1 Higher Risk for Poor Physical and Mental Health Among Immigrant Women

Several national and regional studies on population health indicate that immigrant women have higher rates of poor health and chronic mental health problems as compared to non-immigrant women in Canada (Alvi et al. 2012). Kobayashi and colleagues' (2012) analysis of the Canadian Community and Health Survey found that

the “healthy immigrant effect” (where immigrants are initially healthier than the native-born population) applied to middle age males but that middle age immigrant women report poorer health than their Canadian-born counterparts. Longitudinal data from the LSIC also show that immigrant women transition to poorer health at a greater rate than immigrant men, such that immigrant men are 60% as likely as immigrant women to experience a decline in health (Newbold 2009). Histories of trauma contribute to greater risk of PTSD symptoms and poor health after settlement for people who faced catastrophic events or who lived in high-conflict regions (Joly and Wheaton 2015; Beiser et al. 2011).

Mental Health of Immigrant Mothers

A large body of the mental health literature focuses on high rates of prenatal and postpartum depression among immigrant women. New immigrant mothers have higher rates of depressive symptoms (Dennis, Merry, and Gagnon 2017) and are at a greater risk for health concerns—i.e., having an assisted birth with forceps or a C-section (Mumtaz, O'Brien, and Higginbottom 2014)—despite having higher education than non-immigrant women (Gagnon et al. 2013). Settlement factors which negatively impact new immigrant mothers include isolation during pregnancy and after giving birth due to lack social support from extended family or community; and barriers to accessing prenatal and postnatal health services due to language, limited knowledge about health care services, and being ineligible for health care due to immigration status. Immigrants with limited family and friend support experienced loneliness and difficulties in eating healthy and exercising during pregnancy (Quintanilha et al. 2016). New immigrant mothers, and those who support a child with a chronic illness, are particularly vulnerable to isolation, economic marginalization, and poor health (Browne et al. 2017; Dennis, Merry, and Gagnon 2017).

2.5.2 Social Determinants of Health and Mental Health

Health-related research illustrates the negative impact of intersecting structural inequalities related to gendered immigration patterns, economic marginalization, and racial discrimination on immigrant women's health and well-being (Goldenberg et al. 2017). Stresses of migration, deskilling, financial stress, and marital strain increase women's vulnerability to poor health and mental health while decreasing their ability to address their health needs (Morrow et al. 2008). Employment conditions also impact health, with research showing the many negative effects that precarious work has on physical and mental health of immigrant women (Premji and Shakya 2017). Living conditions represent a complex determinant for immigrant women's health and settlement. Immigrant women report more frequent exposure to high marital strain, crowded living conditions, lack of social support, and poverty than Canadian-born women (Miszurka et al. 2012). Immigrant women who are being abused by a partner or older adults who experience elder abuse are less likely to report the abuse or seek help, especially immigrant women who are dependent on a sponsor or have precarious migratory status (see section on Gender-Based Violence for more detail).

Immigration Status as a Social Determinant of Health

Emerging research on immigrant pathways into Canada identifies immigration status as the “single most important factor affecting both an individual’s ability to seek out healthcare and her experiences when trying to access healthcare” (Campbell et al. 2014:165). Women with precarious immigration status, asylum-seeking women (Gagnon et al. 2013), and migrant women engaged in sex work (Ochoa and Sampalis 2014) represent the most vulnerable groups in health-related literature (Gagnon et al. 2013). Precarious migratory status is also associated with high risk for partner abuse, abuse at work, and increased vulnerability to sexually transmitted illnesses and HIV/AIDS (Ochoa and Sampalis 2014). Research with migrant sex workers or immigrant women with precarious status identifies police harassment, including arrest and fear of deportation, as negatively impacting access to health care leading to higher rates of unmet health needs (Stewart et al. 2015; Anderson et al. 2016).

2.5.3 Barriers to Accessing Health Services

Across this sample of literature, several common factors, both individual and structural, emerge as barriers to accessing services. Individual factors included lack of information about how to navigate health services, limited proficiency in the language of the province, or distrust that medical professionals would understand their experience (Khanlou et al. 2017; Higginbottom et al. 2016). Higginbottom and colleagues (2015) argue that “communication difficulties extended beyond matters of language competency to those encompassing non-verbal communication and its relation to shared meaning as well as the interplay of underlying pre-migration history and cultural factors which affect open communication” (p. 297). Structural barriers included limited or costly transportation, lack of child care or elder care support, long wait times, family responsibilities (Kalich, Heinemann, and Ghahari 2016; Klassen et al. 2012), and being ineligible for services or turned away due to confusion over eligibility.

2.5.4 The Role of Settlement Services in Promoting Immigrant Health

Across this body of literature, social support is identified as a key component for positive health among newcomers and refugees (Guruge et al. 2010; Logie et al. 2016). Settlement services can play both a direct and indirect role in promoting immigrant health through: a) supporting immigrant women’s capacity to overcome challenges and tell their stories as a form of resilience; b) assisting women to find meaning in work and being able to claim all of their identities; c) addressing barriers to accessing health and mental health services, and d) supporting a sense of belonging and security through accessing citizenship status in Canada (MacDonnell et al. 2017).

2.6 Social and Civic Participation

Research on the civic and political outcomes of immigrant women specifically is limited; overall, we found six academic empirical studies and one Statistics Canada report section focusing on the political engagement of immigrant women, as well as three articles looking specifically at immigrant women's involvement in community activism. In an analysis of the 2013 General Social Survey on voting behaviour and participation in organizations and associations, Hudon (2015) suggests that, overall, immigrant women are somewhat less politically involved than Canadian-born women. For instance, 55% of recent immigrant women, and 61% of immigrant women participated in an organization or association, compared to 67% of Canadian-born women. In addition, among eligible voters, immigrant women were less likely to have voted in the latest municipal, provincial, or federal elections than Canadian-born women. Although this difference was significant, it was not large; for instance, in federal elections, 77 % of eligible immigrant women voted compared to 81% of eligible Canadian-born women.

Feminist scholars note that women's political activity often takes place at the local level rather than within the legislative or electoral arena and therefore may be less visible within traditional social science research (Vickers 1997). To address this issue, Gidengil and Stolle (2009) examined the impact of social networks on voting behaviour and other participation in political activities, including signing petitions and participating in protests, as well as on knowledge of Canadian politics and government services and benefits. They found that immigrant women had significantly less political participation and knowledge although political incorporation was higher for those who had been in Canada more than 10 years. Higher income was found to be associated with increased political incorporation, and immigrant women who do not speak English or French were less likely to be politically active although not any less likely to vote. O'Neill et.al. (2012) found lower political participation for racialized women regardless of immigration status; visible minority status had a larger impact than immigrant status on conventional political activity such as voting and being a member of a political party. In contrast, for unconventional political activity such as participating in a demonstration or signing a petition, there was no significant difference between white Canadian-born women, white immigrant women, and racialized Canadian-born women, but racialized immigrant women engaged in significantly less unconventional political activities.

This research does not address differences in political participation across heterogeneous communities of immigrant women. Political behaviour research is generally focused on identifying tendencies among large groups of people, rather than picking out the differences among specific groups; as a result, an intersectional analysis is often limited (Harell 2017).

Qualitative studies that focus on activism consider racialized immigrant women's involvement in the settlement sector as a form of political practice (Ku 2009). Grassroots migrant women's organizations also demonstrate resistance to neoliberalism as a form of radical transformative feminism (Tungohan 2017). In their

focus groups with immigrant women, MacDonnell et al. (2017) found that engaging in activism, as an expression of belonging and political identity, can have positive, mental health-promoting effects and can enhance resilience and wellness.

2.6.1 Reasons for Lower Civic Participation

Lower civic participation among immigrant women is linked to a variety of settlement factors. Social isolation is a clear barrier to political incorporation (Gidengil and Stolle 2009) whereas strong social networks promote political participation and knowledge about government processes and services, regardless of whether networks are within one's own ethnic community or within the greater Canadian community.

Gender inequality in country of origin may also be a factor in limiting immigrant women's political participation in Canada. Bilodeau (2016) examined political survey research participation as a measure of political participation and, based on Canadian Election Studies data, found that participation decreased for immigrant women from countries where gender inequality is higher (based on the UNDP Gender Development Index—GDI). These findings also point to the possible inaccuracy of current political survey research if women from certain communities are less likely to participate in the surveys.

Socio-economic and structural characteristics are important predictors of political participation, with higher income, education, and occupational status being associated with higher levels of political participation (Gidengil and Stolle 2009; Harell 2017; O'Neill, Gidengil, and Young 2012). Civic participation must therefore be considered in connection with the economic and social marginalization experienced by many racialized immigrant women that is highlighted throughout this report. If sense of belonging is a "catalyst for civic participation" as described by Hogarth (2015), the impacts of systemic racism and discrimination on identity and belonging must also be considered. Finally, most of the political behaviour research omits immigrant women with precarious immigration status who are denied citizenship rights and are excluded from most formal forms of civic participation, including the right to vote.

These findings suggest that settlement services could have an important role to play in promoting political incorporation both by providing information about Canadian politics and key government benefits and services, and by supporting immigrant women in expanding their social networks.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Immigrant settlement organizations and ethno-specific community-based organizations provide vital support to immigrant women and their families through culturally relevant programs that are language accessible, participatory, and which respond to the identified needs of immigrant women. Our recommendations focus on action at the federal and provincial levels to improve immigrant women's settlement outcomes. Intergovernmental coordination and multi-sector collaboration are also needed to address systemic disadvantages that immigrant women face, including the need for affordable housing, affordable child care, and public transportation, all of which impede many immigrant women from participating in the labour market and fully integrating into Canadian society.

3.1 Immigration Policy

- Shift immigration policy and settlement services to consider the family unit as a whole, including the contributions and needs of accompanying family members.
- Improve accessibility of family reunification and parent/grandparent sponsorship, especially for lower-income families with young children.
- Ensure a pathway to permanent residence for all temporary foreign workers that allows workers' families to accompany them as dependents.

3.2 Employment

3.2.1 Settlement Services

- Connect immigrant women with stable employment in their fields of expertise through increased funding for skill-bridging, paid internships, and mentorship opportunities.
- Create greater transparency through providing concrete information on the labour market challenges immigrants are likely to encounter in Canada.

3.2.2 Addressing Discrimination Within Labour Market

- Reinstatement of employment equity legislation at the provincial level.
- Establish faster, fair, and accessible processes for foreign credential recognition.
- Create and enforce anti-discrimination policies and programs that educate Canadian employers about the benefits of hiring immigrants.
- Establish prior learning assessment for women whose career experience is in non-regulated professions as a way to have employers acknowledge non-Canadian experience.
- Improve regulations and enforcement for occupational health and safety and employment standards, to regulate sectors with high proportions of immigrant women (such as caregiving, housekeeping, health care, education, food services, and janitor services).
- Provide extended health coverage for precariously employed people who do not have workplace benefits.

3.3 Family/Community

- Create policies and programs which support immigrant women in caregiving roles, particularly for single parents, refugees, low-income families, and families with children with disabilities, including income supplements, child care benefits, and employment opportunities targeted specifically towards immigrant parents.
- Establish universal free or low-cost subsidized child care program accessible to all Canadian families.
- Create and fund community-based programs (e.g., sports and recreation) to reduce social isolation and increase social support for immigrant women, particularly those who are most vulnerable, including women who are pregnant, parents of young children, LGBTQ newcomers, refugees, and seniors.
- Establish transitional housing that caters to the specific needs of immigrant women.
- Establish wrap-around services for health, housing, and settlement services.

3.4 Gender-Based Violence

- Develop primary prevention strategies for settlement workers to conduct risk assessment and culturally safe referral services for gender-based violence.
 - Fund community-based and ethno-specific programs that help immigrants develop social networks in Canada towards reducing vulnerability for gender-based violence.
 - Increase funding for ethno-cultural services that provide support to immigrant women.
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- Increase awareness of gender-based violence and related legal and emotional consequences through community-based and school-based programs.
- Improve cross-sectoral collaboration among settlement, health, education, and community-based programs to ensure immigrant women who are being abused find guidance on where to seek help and support services.
- Implement rights-based orientation for sponsored spouses/partners or new permanent residents who arrive as dependent applicants that explains the conditions of sponsorship, immigrant rights as a sponsored person, and services for gender-based violence.

3.5 Health

- Establish policies and programs to support immigrant women in finding a family doctor.
- Raise awareness of perinatal health, midwifery services, and risks for maternal depression in pre- and postnatal services.
- Create programs that foster and facilitate activism and community mobilization for immigrant women to promote mental health and individual and community resilience.
- Ensure trauma assistance for immigrant families (especially survivors of war and forced migration) in settlement services.

3.6 Settlement Services

- Broaden eligibility requirements for language classes and other services to include citizens, refugee claimants, temporary foreign workers, and international students.
 - Provide onsite child care (for parents or grandparents) to children of all ages.
 - Provide transportation subsidies for classes and services.
 - Ensure that language classes and settlement services are available at a variety of different times to facilitate access for women with different work schedules, women with children, and migrant workers: e.g., classes during school hours as well as classes in the evenings and on weekends, including Sundays.
 - Create a program of public education targeted at newcomers about the benefits of language learning for women, their families, and communities.
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4. CONCLUSION

This report investigated the unique settlement needs and outcomes for immigrant women through a systematic review of academic research and a targeted sample of community and government reports published between 2008 to 2017. While the Canadian public strongly endorses immigration and the contributions immigrants make to the economic, social, and political vitality of the country (Reitz 2012), broader global trends in transnational migration, persistent racism and sexism in Canada, and growing income inequality in Canada contribute to significant settlement challenges for immigrant women in relation to their labour market participation, family and community belonging, gender-based violence, health and mental health, civic and political participation, and use of settlement services. Using an intersectional gender-based analysis framework, we identified complex structural, social, and individual factors that contribute to high rates of poverty, de-skilling and related underemployment and unemployment, declining health and mental health after immigrating to Canada, and limited use of social and health services due to family caregiving responsibilities, lack of transportation, or language barriers. We also identified the role settlement services can play to enhance immigrants' individual and collective strategies to support themselves and their families.

General themes across this literature on immigrant women's settlement include: a) concern for endemic poverty, underemployment, and unemployment for immigrant women, many of whom are unable to work in their intended occupations; b) poor health and mental health, and high rates of unmet health needs, especially regarding pre- and postnatal health; c) effects of discrimination against racialized immigrant women that can lead to isolation and contribute to immigrant women's concentration in low-wage jobs; d) growing complexity of immigration pathways and longer periods of precarious and temporary status with accompanying barriers to accessing social and health services; and e) need for trauma-informed approach to social and health services for immigrants and refugees with histories of forced migration, war-related trauma, and gender-based violence.

4.1 Vulnerable Groups of Immigrant Women

Using an intersectional gender-based analysis the reviewed literature highlights different types of vulnerability among immigrant women whose settlement experiences are shaped by intersecting inequalities. Some categories of vulnerable groups of immigrant women, several of which overlap, include low-income women and families, women with

precarious immigration status, refugees, people who identify as LGBTQ, and senior women.

4.1.1 Low-Income Women and Families

As a result of underemployment, immigrant families are at risk of poverty. The OCASI (2017) analysis of 2016 census data shows that recent immigrants had a low income rate of 31.4%, more than twice the rate of the Canadian-born population (12.5%) and racialized immigrant women are the most likely to experience poverty. A small body of literature looks specifically at how low-income immigrant women and families cope with meeting basic needs, exploring their experiences with food and housing insecurity, and the ways in which this impacts their health and well-being (Pitt, Sherman, and Macdonald 2015; Lessa and Rocha 2012; Vahabi et al. 2011; Walsh et al. 2016).

4.1.2 Women with Precarious Immigration Status

Several articles in our sample highlight the vulnerability of immigrant women with precarious immigration status, including migrant caregivers (Hanley, Larios, and Koo 2017; Vahabi and Wong 2017; Tungohan et al. 2015; Ferrer 2017); migrant farm workers (Preibisch and Grez 2010); and women who are undocumented (Magalhaes, Carrasco, and Gastaldo 2010). Women with precarious status face numerous barriers to accessing health care and social services, and are at greater risk of workplace exploitation, poverty, inadequate housing, food insecurity, and abuse (Bhuyan 2012; Bhuyan, Osborne, and Cruz 2016; Campbell et al. 2014; Magalhaes, Carrasco, and Gastaldo 2010; Ochoa and Sampalis 2014; Walsh et al. 2016). Although some provinces provide settlement services to temporary foreign workers who seek permanent residence in Canada, most low-skilled temporary foreign workers are excluded from language training and other settlement services (Rajkumar et al. 2012). Due to the increase in the number of temporary foreign workers and international students who apply for permanent residence within Canada, a growing proportion of new permanent residents are unable to access many settlement services until years after they arrive in the country (Nakache and Dixon-Perera 2015). Policies which exclude certain categories of immigrants from settlement services contribute to the marginalization of non-permanent residents, particularly migrant workers in “low-skill” occupations, and constrain their social rights (Rajkumar et al. 2012).

4.1.3 Refugee Women

A number of qualitative studies describe specific challenges facing refugees, particularly refugee claimants who have precarious immigration status (Merry et al. 2011; Stewart et al. 2015; Tastsoglou et al. 2014). Refugees are often dealing with the aftermath of traumatic events that led them to seek asylum, are less likely than other immigrants to be proficient in one of the official languages (Adamuti-Trache 2013), and may face additional barriers in accessing services (Esses et al. 2013; Tastsoglou et al. 2014).

Despite these challenges, research with Colombian women and South Sudanese women also highlights the strength and resilience of refugee women in establishing lives in Canada (Bonnycastle 2017; Pearce et al. 2017).

4.1.4 LGBTQ Immigrant Women

Stigma associated with intersecting marginalization among LGBTQ newcomers and refugees—race, gender, class, and immigration status—contributes to employment discrimination and barriers to supporting basic needs like housing and social support (Logie et al. 2016). The refugee determination process can be particularly challenging for LGBTQ refugees and may involve experiences of re-traumatization due to being forced to re-tell stories of persecution (Jordan 2009; Brotman and Lee 2011). Social support groups can provide a critical space of belonging and affirmation which help to break social isolation and build community (Logie et al. 2016).

4.1.5 Senior Women

Immigrant women who are seniors face additional economic and social challenges. Since remuneration from Canada's public pension system is tied to the number of years an individual has worked in the Canadian labour market, immigrant women are doubly disadvantaged and face high levels of poverty, particularly women who are not in a co-habiting relationship (Marier and Skinner 2008; Charpentier and Quéniart 2017; Ferrer 2017). Based on their analysis of 2006 census data, Preston et al. (2012) found that immigrant women, particularly those who are racialized, were the most impoverished seniors. In addition, senior women are more likely to experience language barriers (Adamuti-Trache 2013), experience high levels of social isolation, and are at risk of abuse (Matsuoka et al. 2012b; Alvi and Zaidi 2017).

4.2 Addressing Settlement Needs in Times of Transition

In addition to vulnerable groups, our analysis of academic and grey literature identified transitional periods in immigrant women's lives where the bundle of settlement services is needed to improve settlement outcomes for language learning, job assistance, social networking, health care services, support for domestic violence, and child care. Previous academic research identifies that use of settlement services is often hindered by family caregiving responsibilities, isolation, transportation barriers, and time constraints when settlement programs are only offered during regular business hours. The time-limited eligibility of settlement services also contributes to low levels of use among newcomers who have unmet needs but no longer qualify for settlement services.

While settlement services have historically targeted the initial years after "landing" in Canada as a permanent resident, settlement needs span across a longer range of time for immigrant women with increased vulnerability or whose settlement needs emerge

after periods of transition in their family status: immigrants who experienced trauma from war or gender-based violence; immigrant women who are pregnant or who are parenting young children; immigrant parents with a child who has a chronic illness or disability; immigrants seeking safety from domestic violence; and immigrants with a temporary or precarious status who seek permanent residence in Canada.

4.3 Limitations

Scoping reviews identify areas of knowledge to inform policy and practice but also indicate gaps in existing research (Daudt, van Mossel, and Scott 2013). For example, we initially sought to understand the role that settlement services are playing to support the settlement needs and outcomes of vulnerable groups of immigrant women, but found limited attention to settlement services in our review of academic literature. As our search criteria focused on peer-reviewed journals, our analysis does not include books, where immigration settlement may be explored in more depth. We also focused on academic and grey literature published between 2008 and 2017, thus excluding significant scholarship on immigration settlement published earlier.

To supplement our review of academic literature, we conducted a targeted review of community and government reports on immigrant settlement services in different regions of Canada. These reports used both survey data or qualitative interviews with people accessing immigrant settlement services towards providing valuable insights into who is accessing settlement services and what role they play to support immigrants who are benefitting from settlement. Both the academic research and community-based reports provided limited understanding of the differences between people who have used settlement services and those who elected not to use settlement services or did not know where to find settlement support.

The problem-focused orientation of academic research similarly focuses on challenges among immigrant women, which are demonstrably concerning, with limited attention to immigrant women who are prospering in Canada. As a result, immigrant women who find employment in their professional fields, who have a strong sense of identity and community belonging, and who are contributing to Canada's social and civic communities are less visible in our report. A small sample of studies in our literature review did include examples of advocacy and community engagement that represent vehicles for a greater sense of inclusion and belonging, but further research is needed to fully appreciate the heterogeneity of experiences among newly settled immigrant women in Canada.

We noted some methodological limitations in this literature. Several national surveys rely on phone interviews in English or French, raising questions about validity (Du Mont and Forte 2012). Immigrant women living in abusive households or who have low levels of English or French are less likely to participate in phone-based surveys. Many studies

use general terms such as “newcomer” or “immigrant” in their study design and do not ask immigrants about their length of time in Canada or their immigration status. We also noted that several studies in our sample were based on data collected by the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSCI), last collected in 2005. Future longitudinal surveys would provide added insight into settlement needs and outcomes for immigrant women over time and in relation to changes in their immigration and family status. With regard to gender and sexual orientation, we collected only limited research on immigrant women who identify as lesbian, bisexual, trans or non-binary confirming. The reviewed literature also reproduces a cisnormative construction of gender-female without exploring gender identity as distinct from sexual orientation or biological sex.

4.4 Recommendations for Future Research

We identified several areas for future research to supplement existing research on settlement outcomes and needs of immigrant women while addressing some of the limitations of existing empirical knowledge.

4.4.1 Two-Step Immigration Settlement

Examine immigration settlement needs and outcomes for new permanent residents who went through the “two-step” immigration process; immigrants who worked or studied in Canada under a temporary resident permit in order to earn permanent residency through the Canadian Experience Class or Provincial Nominee Programs.

4.4.2 Immigration Settlement for LGBTQ Immigrants

Considering the multiple intersecting oppressions facing LGBTQ immigrants, future research should examine labour-market participation, health and mental health, and access to services for LGBTQ immigrants, especially those who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming.

4.4.3 Longitudinal Research on Immigrant Settlement

Several research studies in our sample produced analysis from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada to examine how immigrant settlement needs and outcomes change over time. This data was originally collected in 2001–2002 with a follow-up in 2003 and 2005, thus warranting the collection of a new national survey on immigrant settlement over multiple time periods.

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