

What are the settlement needs of immigrant youth in Canada and what are the impacts of settlement services?

John Shields, Omar Lujan

What is this research about?

Immigrant-receiving countries have paid increasing attention to the social and economic integration of immigrant youth. In Canada, immigrant youth have been the subject of a significant number of studies that deal with a variety of topics from social exclusion and cultural practices to radicalization, precarious employment, and poverty.

Our review of the literature found that the largest number of academic articles on immigrant youth services in Canada deal with social issues in the areas of education and health/mental health.

On the other hand, there are relatively few academic articles published in the last 10 years focusing on the civic/social contributions of immigrant youth in Canada and the services that they provide to their families and the community at large.

Also surprisingly, given the centrality of employment challenges for immigrant youth, there is only a modest number of articles that focus on the employment and economic dimensions of immigrant youth integration.

Interestingly, we found many variations in the way that immigrant youth are defined

in the Canadian academic and non-academic literature, ranging from the age of 13 to 25.

In addition, studies about immigrant youth include first-generation immigrants, immigrants who have arrived in Canada as children or in their teens (also known as 1.5 generation immigrants) and, to a lesser extent, second generation immigrants who are children of immigrants born in Canada.

Having said that, the most prevalent age range used to define youth in our surveyed literature was the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) - ages 15 to 24.

The main objectives of this research are:

- To identify the main issues affecting immigrant youth in Canada
- To identify the impact of settlement services on immigrant youth in Canada

This research is part of a wider study on the settlement outcomes of Immigrant Women, Youth and Seniors, which is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

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What did researchers do?

Through a critical review of academic and non-academic literature, researchers analyzed 102 articles published in English between 2008 and 2017. These studies deal with immigrant youth services in Canada (except for Quebec), and only English language publications have been included. One-hundred-and-two studies were selected and analyzed based on a data-abstracting template.

What did researchers find?

The high quality of schooling in Canada is a prime factor that drives immigrants to emigrate with their families hoping for a better future for their children. Reaffirming the thinking of many immigrant families, the literature shows that immigrant youth have positive academic performance and experiences in the Canadian school system.

Immigrant youth also tend to have cultural practices that help them avoid certain health risks such as eating a healthy diet and smoking less while simultaneously being more engaged in sports activities than Canadian-born youth. That said, our study found that immigrant youth do experience high levels of stress and other mental health complications.

In addition, studies demonstrate that the number of newcomer youth involved in gangs overall is comparatively small but for some immigrant youth with pre-migration trauma and those living in a low-income household, such conditions

constitute risk factors that can lead to involvement in gang activities and other anti-social behaviour. Finally, there is a gender and immigration status component to immigrant youth's family and community commitments as, for instance, child care services are generally expected to be carried out by girls and refugee youth very often become interpreters, service navigators, and caretakers for their families (Shakya et al. 2010).

How can you get involved?

This summary is based on the Knowledge synthesis phase of the research. Researchers are now completing primary research with key informants from the settlement sector and immigrant youth. If you are interested in participating, kindly contact the Research Lead.

Recommendations

According to Van Ngo (2009), service providers need to actively engage and involve immigrant youth in the planning, development, and evaluation of all services for immigrant youth.

Also, research consistently identifies the value of more family-inclusive services to immigrant youth. The adoption of a family centric approach to educational, settlement, and mental health services can further support the overall development of immigrant youth.

About the author(s)

John Shields, Research Lead
Professor, Ryerson University

Dr Shields has over thirty years of university teaching and research experience in the areas of public administration and public policy, the political economy of labour market and welfare state restructuring, immigrant settlement and integration policy and practices, and nonprofit sector studies.

jshields@politics.ryerson.ca

Omar Lujan, Research Assistant