

Social services for immigrants and refugees to Canada: A systematic review of the evidence on provision, management, and outcomes of available services



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Background: Canada's population is composed of a diverse group of people, approximately 20% of whom are immigrants.¹ In fact, it is projected that by 2025, immigrants will be the only source of population growth in the country.² Moreover, Canada has provided asylum to over 160 000 refugees,³ with more arriving every year as the number and intensity of global conflicts rise.

In 2010, \$53 million was cut from Citizenship and Immigration Canada's (CIC) budget for immigrant settlement services, \$44 million of which was from Ontario funding, a primary destination for new immigrants to Canada.⁴ A budget cut of this magnitude proved to be disastrous for organizations working with the immigrant and refugee community; multiple organizations lost funding, resulting in a large number of service cuts, loss of physical assets, and hundreds of lost jobs.⁵

This research seeks to answer the following question: *What services are available for immigrants and refugees to Canada and how are they provided, managed, and evaluated?*

The question consists of three components that are examined through a systematic review.

1) What specific social services are available to immigrants and refugees in Canada?

2) How are services determined, funded, organized, and governed, and by whom?

3) How are outcomes for those who access the services measured and assessed?

Methodology: This study is a systematic review of the published literature using 5 Health Science (CINAHL, Global Health, Medline, Ovid HealthSTAR, PsycINFO) and 2 Social Science databases (PAIS, Sociological Abstracts). A comprehensive search strategy was used and included the following key words: 'immigra*', 'emigra*', 'migrant*', 'refugee*', 'social', 'service*', and 'Canada'. In order to be included in the systematic review, studies must focus on social services for immigrants and/or refugees in Canada, and must be published 1995 or later, in English.

The systematic review will analyze both quantitative and qualitative evidence published in the key selected databases. In addition, literature on immigrant and refugee social services in other countries and specific grey literature will be consulted to situate the research in its current context.

Findings & Conclusions: Results pending completion of the study.

Global Health Relevancy

Currently, there are more than 30 major, violent conflicts occurring across the globe. Conflicts often result in the displacement of populations, who often immigrate or seek asylum in other nations. Examining the programs that exist for immigrants and refugees will be critical to ensuring that these populations are provided with the resources they need to integrate and succeed in Canada.