



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

# The Immigrant Settlement Ecosystem in Canada: An Ontario Case Study

## Primary Research Report

Adnan Türegün, Rupaleem Bhuyan, Nancy Mandell and John Shields

With the research assistance of:

Jana Borras, Julia Hemphill, Omar Lujan, Janice Phonepraseuth, and  
Catherine Schmidt



## Project Team

### *Secretariat*

Adnan Türegün, Project Lead  
Naolo Charles, Knowledge Exchange Officer

### *Women's Research Domain*

Rupaleem Bhuyan, Research Lead  
Catherine Schmidt, Research Assistant

### *Youth Research Domain*

John Shields, Research Lead  
Omar Lujan, Research Assistant

### *Seniors' Research Domain*

Nancy Mandell, Research Lead  
Jana Borras, Julia Hemphill, and Janice Phonepraseuth, Research Assistants

## National Advisory Board

Rupaleem Bhuyan, Associate Professor, University of Toronto  
Noor Din, Chief Executive Officer, Human Endeavour  
Vera Dodic, Manager, City of Toronto Newcomer Office  
Debbie Douglas, Executive Director, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants  
Usha George, Academic Director and Professor, Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement  
Nancy Mandell, Professor, York University  
John Shields, Professor, Ryerson University  
Bill Sinclair, Executive Director, St. Stephen's Community House  
Evangelia Tastsoglou, Professor, Saint Mary's University  
Adnan Türegün, Adjunct Professor, York University  
Lori Wilkinson, Executive Director and Professor, Immigration Research West

## Partners

City of Toronto Newcomer Office  
Human Endeavour  
Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants  
Ryerson Centre for Immigration and Settlement  
St. Stephen's Community House

CERIS  
[ceris@yorku.ca](mailto:ceris@yorku.ca)   [www.iwys.ca](http://www.iwys.ca)

## FOREWORD

This report, along with thematic reports on immigrant women, youth, and seniors, is an output of Phase 2 (2018–2019) of our research and knowledge mobilization project that aims to document the settlement and service experiences of the three groups, as well as proposing new intervention strategies. Building on the knowledge synthesis exercise of Phase 1 (2017–2018), we conducted primary research in three Ontario communities—Ottawa, Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton, and Windsor—to revisit our earlier themes, findings, and recommendations and propose strategies for service innovation that are scalable across the country.

In this report, we present to our readers (service providers, policymakers, fellow researchers, and the general public) the perspectives of key informants, practitioners, and newcomers themselves on what we call the immigrant settlement ecosystem, particularly, for women, youth, and seniors. We have heard the voices of people holding leadership positions in a policy or service environment, settlement workers on the service frontline, and the very newcomers who are considered to be vulnerable and have special needs. For newcomer voices in particular, readers can refer to the three thematic reports that are available at: [www.iwys.ca](http://www.iwys.ca). It is our hope that these voices, told against the background of questions informing the study, will give us a good sense of the immigrant settlement ecosystem in Canada.

During our field work, the enthusiasm and generosity of local service providers—especially those in Ottawa and Windsor—far exceeded our expectations. This is a testimony to the voluntary ethos that still permeates settlement service in Canada. We also 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.

IWYS Project Team

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	v
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Settlement as an Aggregation of Outcomes .....	1
1.2 Settlement Ecosystem .....	2
1.3 Research Methodology .....	3
2. MAJOR THEMES AND FINDINGS .....	4
2.1 Definitions and Indicators of Successful Settlement .....	4
2.2 Challenges Faced by Newcomers and IWYS in Particular .....	6
2.3 Role of Services in Immigrant Settlement Outcomes.....	8
2.4 Problems of the Settlement Service Sector .....	9
2.5 Good or Promising Practices in Service .....	12
2.6 What Governments Can Do More.....	13
2.7 What Immigrants and Their Communities Can Do More .....	15
3. CONCLUSION .....	16
3.1 Determinants of Settlement .....	16
3.2 Policy and Service Recommendations .....	17
4. REFERENCES.....	19

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our findings point to a complex ecosystem of immigrant settlement in Canada. The findings are reported under seven main themes: 1) definitions and indicators of successful settlement; 2) challenges faced by newcomers to Canada, particularly, immigrant women, youth, and seniors; 3) role of services in immigrant settlement outcomes; 4) problems of the settlement service sector in terms of service availability, eligibility, and organization (programming, funding, and delivery); 5) good or promising practices in service; 6) what governments can do to improve settlement outcomes; 7) and what immigrant communities and immigrants can do to help themselves settle successfully.

By revealing the complexity of the immigrant settlement ecosystem, we aim to dispel a common myth about the role of settlement services in immigrant outcomes, that is, whatever governments fund and practitioners deliver in settlement service at public expense has to have a direct, measurable return for the public in the form of positive immigrant outcomes and contributions to the Canadian economy and society in general. This can be countered at three levels. First, compared with the annual immigrant intake, the size of national settlement funding is very modest. Moreover, new permanent residents contribute to their settlement financially by paying a right of permanent residence fee. Second, while some services such as language training and employment bridging are measurable in their impact, many other services such as community connections and “soft programming” services are not susceptible to measurement in most cases; even when they are, they can only be measured indirectly or negatively. Third, and perhaps most importantly from an explanatory perspective, generic and immigrant-specific services are only one factor among a multitude of factors that account for immigrant outcomes, positive and negative alike. Privileging services in this complex ecosystem does not do justice to them; it not only overburdens them but also may cloud our vision as to where and how they can be directed most strategically.

With this proviso, we make the following policy and service recommendations:

## Policy Recommendations

1. Build into policy a holistic understanding of immigration and settlement that takes families, rather than individuals, as the unit of analysis and practice.
2. Develop an evaluation and outcomes measurement framework in collaboration with the service sector.
3. In the true spirit of the “Canadian partnership model,” engage in trust building with the service sector. Supporting the sector to develop professional development standards and offer professional development opportunities to its workforce may go a long way to build trust.
4. Create a pathway to permanent residence and citizenship for all classes of temporary migrants.

5. Broaden the demographic coverage of the federal Settlement Program by relaxing its eligibility requirements to allow temporary migrants and recent citizens access. Launch a pilot program with refugee claimants and recently naturalized women.
6. Relax the 10-year residency requirement for immigrant seniors to be eligible for Old Age Security.

## **Service Recommendations**

7. Adopt a family-centered approach when conceiving, designing, and delivering settlement services.
8. Explore an integrated personal case management approach in collaboration with funding partners. Pilot that approach with newcomers from vulnerable populations such as women, youth, seniors, LGBTQ people, and refugee claimants.
9. Expand services to help newcomers acquire “systemic” navigational skills ranging from learning about available services and resources to connecting with civic and occupational networks.
10. Pilot employment and self-employment programs for immigrant seniors and expand existing ones, especially those with occupation-specific job placements, for immigrant women and youth.
11. Make language training more accessible and rewarding for immigrant women and seniors by expanding onsite child care, providing transportation subsidies, reaching out to rural communities, organizing flexible class schedules and locations, experimenting with new methods of delivery, and customizing content to diverse needs.
12. In addition to in-school settlement workers, employ cultural brokers to mediate between newcomer students/families/institutions of different cultural backgrounds and facilitate service provision in a school setting.
13. Approach and deliver health and mental health services in a gender-, race-, and culture-sensitive framework.
14. Expand community-based activities, including volunteering, to reduce social isolation among, and increase social support for, all three groups of immigrants.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In Phase 1 of this project, we surveyed existing research literature and service landscape concerning immigrant women, youth, and seniors in Canada and published our findings in four sets of knowledge synthesis products—one for each of the three groups along with a composite one (<http://ceris.ca/IWYS/en/iwys-ks-reports/>). The focus and scope of Phase 2 are different but our overarching research question remains the same: What role do services play in settlement outcomes for these immigrant groups who are often considered vulnerable and having special needs?

Our focus in this phase is primary research that we have conducted in Ontario. Although the scope of the research is limited to one province for budgetary reasons, we think that our findings are scalable across the country as the research sites we selected (Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton, Ottawa, and Windsor) and the people we interviewed (newcomers, practitioners, and executives) represent the urban and demographic diversity of the Canadian settlement community. When we refer to settlement issues in Ontario, we will not necessarily be dealing with them as issues unique to the province but, rather, as cases that are possible to emerge in a provincial jurisdiction.

So, where does this grounded research leave us against the background of our knowledge synthesis findings? First, while nuances exist, interview responses generally align with the holistic understanding of immigrant settlement that we demonstrated in the knowledge synthesis reports. Second, after hearing from newcomers and people involved in their settlement, we are now increasingly confident that, important as they are, services are just one component of the immigrant settlement ecosystem with its complex interplay of micro-, meso-, and macro-parts. Third, respondents' recommendations to improve immigrant settlement outcomes are largely along the lines we made in the knowledge synthesis reports.

## 1.1 Settlement as an Aggregation of Outcomes

One can think of immigrant settlement both as an outcome and as a process. While we are conscious of the processual aspect (see Türegün et al. 2018), our focus in this project is on outcomes. Just like processes, outcomes can be divided into short, medium, and long terms. However, these distinctions are not always helpful. For example, ability to get around the urban or rural community where one lives, a seemingly short-term outcome, may well remain as a long-term outcome or goal for many immigrant seniors. Conversely, long-term outcomes, such as a sense of belonging to the community or nation of settlement and engagement in local- or higher-level civic activities, may well be achieved in the short term by newcomers who are prepared, committed, and welcomed. The

variability of outcomes according to immigrant characteristics and the context of reception renders rigid temporal distinctions rather meaningless.

A second aspect of settlement outcomes is what they are about. It is not uncommon among migration scholars and, as we will see later, people involved in immigrant settlement to prioritize one outcome over another or one group of outcomes over another group. Outcomes such as housing, employment, and host language proficiency are understandably on top of many people's lists. Yet outcomes do not occur in isolation but rather in a context of intersectionality and it is often impossible to establish cause-and-effect relationships between them.

Our view of settlement outcomes is thus holistic. From a "basic," easy-to-measure needs perspective, we understand why employment, language, or housing outcomes (to name only a few) matter the most for immigrants as well as for people interested or involved in their settlement. However, this should not be a ground for ignoring other, difficult-to-measure settlement needs. Especially in the case of our three immigrant groups defined with multiple vulnerabilities, needs such as safety and protection from violence, mental health and well-being, and social interaction and participation figure prominently as well. How one satisfies these needs may well influence how s/he satisfies some of the more apparent needs.

## 1.2 Settlement Ecosystem

By settlement ecosystem, we mean the sum total of factors accounting for immigrant performance, including success and failure. The concept has been used previously concerning the determinants of immigrant employment in particular (see, e.g., TRIEC 2018). We would like to broaden the concept to explain the whole of settlement as defined above. Settlement is a function of many things between which it is neither easy nor useful to establish an explanatory hierarchy given that they intersect. They include, but are not limited to: country or region of origin, race, age, sex, place and field of education, knowledge of host country language(s), pre-migration work experience, time of arrival and length of residence in the host country, immigration class, context of reception (particularly, public policy and service landscape), and level of motivation and preparation on the part of individual immigrants (Kelly 2014; Shields and Türegün 2014).

As with outcomes, determinants of settlement are the subject of wildly different views among researchers, programmers, and practitioners of settlement (visit <http://ceris.ca/IWYS/en/iwys-ks-reports/> for our surveys of the research literature). Our interviews with key informants from the policy and service communities reflect that diversity but also, when considered together, corroborate the complexity of factors determining settlement outcomes. We hope that our findings will give our readers a good sense of the immigrant settlement ecosystem in Canada.

## 1.3 Research Methodology

Data for this report come mainly from inter-demographic interviews with key informants representing the settlement service community and different levels of government. We have also benefited from project-wide public consultations as well as demography-specific interviews and focus groups. Readers can refer to demography-specific reports for the latter's methodological details.

Twenty-one key informant interviews were conducted between November 5, 2018 and April 12, 2019, according to an ethics certificate obtained from York University. Eighteen of the interviews were face-to-face and three by phone. Other details of the interviews are presented in Table 1:

**Table 1: Inter-Demographic Key Informant Interviews by Research Site, Sector, Sex, and Position**

	<i>Research Site</i>	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Position</i>
GTA:	11	ISO: 9	Female: 15	Executive and higher: 8
Ottawa:	7	Government: 8	Male: 6	Directorial and managerial: 8
Windsor:	3	LIP: 4		Non-managerial: 5
<i>Total</i>	21	21	21	21

**Legend:** GTA = Greater Toronto Area; ISO = Immigrant-Serving Organization; LIP = Local Immigration Partnership

The distribution of participants by research site is broadly reflective of the relative size of the three urban communities. More (direct and indirect) service providers than government officials were selected purposefully given the focus of the study. While the distribution of participants by sex is reflective of a female-dominated settlement sector work force, different leadership positions have a balanced representation in the sample.

The interviews were transcribed, organized, and analyzed to identify recurring themes and supporting quotes. Given the small size of the sample, we will only refer to participants by sector and, occasionally, by position.

We also held four public consultations, three in the GTA and one in Halifax, between November 8, 2018 and March 23, 2019. Over 230 service providers, community activists, researchers, and government officials participated in the public consultations, which, together with demography-specific interviews and focus groups, form a secondary, indirect source of data for this report.

## 2. MAJOR THEMES AND FINDINGS

We report our findings under seven main themes: 1) definitions and indicators of successful settlement; 2) challenges faced by newcomers to Canada, particularly, immigrant women, youth, and seniors; 3) role of services in immigrant settlement outcomes; 4) problems of the settlement service sector in terms of service availability, eligibility, and organization (programming, funding, and delivery); 5) good or promising practices in service; 6) what governments can do to improve settlement outcomes; 7) and what immigrant communities and immigrants can do to help themselves settle successfully.

### 2.1 Definitions and Indicators of Successful Settlement

It is possible to distinguish three different—objectivist, subjectivist, and agnostic—definitions of successful settlement from the key informant responses. The objectivist definition can, in turn, be divided into holistic and one-dimensional variants.

Many respondents subscribe to an objectivist, holistic understanding of settlement, implying the generalizability of indicators across immigrant populations but not signalling out one or the other indicator. When they refer to indicators, they do so in clusters from different settlement areas, as this service provider does:

*To me successful settlement is when an individual is able to live independently in our society without the support of organizations like mine or other organizations. Basically, they have the tools to navigate the society and to connect socially in the society, and to be able to access employment. That, to me, is successful settlement. (I\_kii\_I02)*

Other indicators highlighted include affordable housing, sense of belonging, “balanced” use of time, involvement in children’s schooling, access to services, language acquisition, security or safety, stability, participation or engagement in the community, contribution, volunteering, citizenship acquisition, and inclusion.

Some respondents bring up a single dimension of settlement while remaining in the objectivist mold. Employment was singled out by two respondents. Another respondent, a municipal government employee, emphasized the accumulation of social capital which, she thought, indicates ability to navigate the “*complex ecosystem of settlement and integration*” (I\_kii\_I10).

According to those who have a subjectivist understanding of settlement, indicators vary by individual migrant perspective and characteristics such as immigration class and age. They, like most of their objectivist counterparts, stay away from prioritizing one indicator over another and, instead, refer to a multitude of indicators, including meaningful employment, sense of safety and belonging, belief in children's future, and civic participation. The following statement by an indirect service provider sums up this approach:

*I don't think I can define success for settlement because I think that varies with each individual. I would define success for settlement as when they say that they feel active, productive, connected, accepted, able to earn a living for themselves and their family and live without fear in their community. But I cannot define how will it be for each person, each one of them will have different ways in that they feel that I cannot define it as a generic statement.* (I\_kii\_I01)

A third understanding of settlement is agnostic in the sense that one can never know what true settlement is. For proponents of this view, what practitioners, policy makers, and researchers call indicators are not actually those of settlement in general; they are rather indicators of settlement as defined by the funders in accordance with their program parameters. A service provider makes the point succinctly with the help of an analogy:

*Somebody hired you to paint the room and [gave] you a bucket of red paint and said "paint this room." And halfway they ask you what do you think? I don't, I don't think anything. You get me to paint it red, I paint it red for you. You give me this funding to deliver these services, I deliver it for you. You tell me these are some indicators, successful delivery of those results in this thing.* (I\_kii\_I03)

Another service provider uses her immigration story to make the point at a personal level:

*I came to Canada 20 years ago. And I came to Canada, knowing how to speak the English language, having lived in Europe for most of my life ... having lived and travelled ... in the United States for many years. So I thought that I was going to be able to settle easily in Canada when I came. Twenty-one years later, do I consider myself settled? I don't know.* (I\_kii\_I09)

We appreciate the reflective nature of such agnostic statements as to the true meaning of settlement. However, this approach may not be analytically helpful as it does not differentiate between the immigrant experience and that of the native-born population. A holistic understanding of settlement paying attention to both general, observable indicators and immigrants' interpretation of their own situation informs our approach.

## 2.2 Challenges Faced by Newcomers and IWYS in Particular

We asked the participants about settlement challenges in two steps: first for newcomers in general and second for the three populations of interest to this study in particular. The responses validate our knowledge synthesis findings but also provide first-hand and direct-observer perspectives on some of the most salient settlement challenges in Canada.

Not surprisingly, barriers to (meaningful) employment are cited most frequently. Of particular importance to the respondents are the non-recognition of internationally earned credentials, skills, and work experience with the resultant Canadian experience requirement, unfamiliarity with the Canadian work environment, underemployment, automation in low-skilled jobs, and lack of networks and social capital in general. Concerning the last barrier, a federal government official had this to say:

*It's amazing; if you ask a room full of people how many people got their first job based on merit, almost nobody puts up their hand, right. It's always that my uncle got me a job at the you know, so immigrants tend to have less of those social networks. (I\_kii\_I12)*

A municipal government official had a similar observation:

*They don't have the uncle or the relative or the friend, because most jobs are got through these personal connections. And if you are new to Canada, you don't have these connections. So I would say that that is the biggest issue. So they're more or less dependent on organizations to help them get these connections and to get these jobs. That's what I find the most difficult piece. (I\_kii\_I10)*

Next up on the respondents' minds is discrimination. One respondent mentioned employment-related discrimination in its blatant and subtle forms, including the undervaluation of internationally earned credentials, skills, and work experience. Another respondent referred to the triplet of xenophobia, racism, and ignorance, especially, in smaller communities. The following observation is incisive about the kind of discrimination facing newcomers in Canada:

*I think in Canada sometimes we are so subtle in our discrimination that we make it really hard for people to even know what hit them and why they are not going places, and I think that, I find that has not really improved all that much in the 35 years that I have been in this sector; it has just become more covert and, therefore, more difficult to deal with. (I\_kii\_I01)*

Language barriers, including lack of fluency in official languages on the part of highly skilled immigrants who intend to work in the knowledge economy and first language illiteracy, are cited frequently as well. This is followed by ineligibility for and inaccessibility

of (federally funded) services, particularly, for refugee claimants, temporary farm workers, international students, and temporary migrants. In general, lack of access to critical human (health, education, and youth) services, lack of capacity to deliver essential services in third languages, and lack of services for LGBTQ newcomers are included in service barriers. Other issues of concern include lack of housing, health and especially mental health issues, difficulty navigating the system, lack of transportation especially outside of urban centres, family issues (including family reunification challenges for refugees), unfamiliarity with the Canadian norms and concern with children's interaction with them, fear of one's surroundings, excessive demands on newcomers to integrate, self-limiting perceptions among newcomers, and impossibility of transitioning into permanent residence for most temporary migrants.

As far as challenges specific to our three populations are concerned, the respondents came up with a long list for women. Topping the list are women's childcare and other domestic responsibilities, which, coupled with lack of institutional childcare, result in lack of access to settlement services (especially language training), unemployment or precarious and under-employment, poverty, and mental health problems. Domestic abuse and violence directed against them are near the top. Other challenges mentioned are role reversal (whereby women head households and draw the ire of their male spouses), isolation (especially of women of certain nationalities), and socialization into low-paying, female-dominated employment sectors. These challenges are of course compounded:

*So, you know, I hate to say the word intersectionality, but that comes in all the time for a woman when you're an immigrant and if you're racialized and all those things. (I\_kii\_I10)*

The most frequently cited challenge for youth is being caught up in a clash between two cultures (a parental, country of origin culture and one informed by Canadian society), of which intergenerational conflict is just one expression. Newcomer youth often find themselves negotiating between the two cultures. Mental health issues resulting from this process are exacerbated in the case of youth of Chinese origin:

*So ... we see that those who are struggling to meet this [model minority] expectation, imposed by their parents or themselves, or the world in general, they are at much higher risk of mental health issues. (I\_kii\_I05)*

A second challenge of note is youth's lack of connections with the outside world, including peers and community members (e.g, seniors as repositories of knowledge and pride). This can lead to marginalization, gang involvement, and radicalization, as pointed out by this service provider:

*The whole thing about having friends is so central to the development of their self-confidence and identity that, if they don't speak English and they're not connecting at school or in their community, they get marginalized and they tend to then connect with people who aren't, you know, in the mainstream, and*

*so this is where we've failed with the Somali community where a lot of kids ended up, then, in what one would call gangs, you know, being outsiders.* (I\_kii\_I02)

Lack of access to post-secondary education for youth without status, difficulty adapting to the education system in Canada, high drop-out rates among newcomer high-school youth living in low-income and racialized families, placement of newcomer youth at age-equivalent classrooms creating language and other learning difficulties, and vulnerability to bullying at school form a third group of challenges. Rounding the list are un(der)employment, poverty, and role reversal (whereby youth take on adult responsibilities).

As we also found in knowledge synthesis research, isolation is by far the most important challenge for seniors according to key informants. In many cases, isolation leads to depression and other health issues. Elder abuse in immigrant families is another salient issue. Under-appreciation by family and wider society, ineligibility for Old Age Security, vulnerability to un(der)employment, income precarity, poverty, food insecurity, and difficulty accessing critical services such as language training are some of the other challenges reportedly facing seniors. A LIP representative gives a good snapshot of newcomer senior reality in Canada:

*I've heard anecdotally from a lot of our service providers that they have a number of seniors turning up in their drop-ins and sort of food support programs, like Food Banks, because they don't want to get their families in trouble [for sponsorship breakdown]. So they don't want to go on social assistance but the truth is the family is no longer supporting them and so they're on their own and they're isolated. They don't speak the language and they can't access the supports that they need.* (I\_kii\_I11)

## 2.3 Role of Services in Immigrant Settlement Outcomes

Respondents generally have a positive view of the role that settlement services play in immigrant outcomes. There is an element of self-justification in this verdict as they are all involved directly or indirectly in helping immigrants. However, they also give their specific reasons why services matter. Four respondents brought up the immigrant background of many settlement workers as an advantage in helping newcomers while another emphasized the altruistic, voluntary ethos of settlement work and still another, capacity to deliver services in third languages for the same effect. Standing out among the other reported benefits of the settlement service sector for outcomes were its non-profit and community-based nature, its advocacy for newcomers, the linkages it provides to mainstream services, its contribution to multiculturalism, and its support for newcomers to help navigate the settlement journey, connect with Canadians, and build a sense of community. As a provincial government official put it:

*[A] big part of the value of community-based agencies for immigrants is that it's a place where they initially build their sense of community whether it's in a language class or in a program that's specifically structured around a support group model or friendships structure. (I\_kii\_I08)*

The respondents then raised the issue that is central to this research: how to measure the impact of services on outcomes? Several useful distinctions and qualifications were made. First, level of measurement depends on type of service. Whereas the impact of some services can be measured both objectively and subjectively, the impact of other services, such as activities targeting the acquisition of social capital, can only be measured subjectively. Second, as subjectivists argue, measuring outcomes in aggregate is risky since they are individually specific. Third, as agnostics argue, what is measurable is actually a settlement service outcome, not a settlement outcome per se. Fourth, the impact of some services can be measured negatively, namely, by things they prevent from happening. For example, users of protective services do not end up at the hands of traffickers or an abusive employer or family member. Similarly, participants of a youth engagement program never get caught up shoplifting since the program informs them about the consequences of shoplifting. Fifth, measuring the true impact of a service on its users has to be in reference to a comparison group, that is, non-users. Sixth, and perhaps most critical, is the “attribution problem,” that is, the difficulty of attributing immigrant outcomes to services among a host of factors. Failing to recognize that creates undue expectations of services, as warned by this respondent:

*I really believe that for successful integration and settlement, you need to have a welcoming community in place. So, it can't just be the settlement services themselves that are carrying all the weight. And sometimes it does feel like that. Sometimes it feels like the government is saying, “Okay. We're giving you, people, this much money.” It's a lot of money. They're giving us a lot of money. “Go and settle them.” (I\_kii\_I11)*

## 2.4 Problems of the Settlement Service Sector

While appreciating the positive role of services in immigrant outcomes as seen above, our key informants were at the same time vocal about the problems plaguing the settlement service sector. We will report these problems under three headings: availability, access, and organization (programming, funding, and delivery).

Leaving details of service gaps to the three thematic reports, we can report that lack of transportation and especially childcare services weighs heavily on our respondents' minds, as it severely reduces women's chances to access language classes and other services, thus dimming their long-term, integration prospects. Lack of transportation services is equally debilitating for seniors, especially those living in isolated communities.

As for service gaps in substantive areas such as employment, education, and health/mental health (for which, see the thematic reports), we should second a service provider to note that they are in part due to the federal government's lack of jurisdiction in these areas (I\_kii\_I02).

Concerning access to services, the respondents highlight two sets of problems. One is the lack of awareness among newcomers. Some newcomers may be aware of what they need in service but may not know if that service is available or how to get it. Other newcomers may not even be aware that they need services, as pointed out by this service provider:

*[T]hey don't know that they need services, okay, because their cousin told them this is the way you go about things; they can't imagine that this is not true or that there is a better way to do it. So, they don't know that they need a service; they don't feel the lack because it is not part of their universe.*  
(I\_kii\_I01)

A second set of problems concerns eligibility requirements, particularly, for federally funded settlement services. Echoing our knowledge synthesis findings, many respondents feel that the limitation of federally funded services mainly to permanent residents and Convention refugees until they become Canadian citizens does not make sense in light of the fact that Canada increasingly draws on temporary migrants (international students, temporary foreign workers, and refugee claimants) for its immigration program. They feel that excluding temporary migrants from services at a time of multiple vulnerabilities will have a damaging effect on their life chances during permanent residency and citizenship. A federal government official we talked to acknowledged the unfairness of this limitation at least in the cases of refugee claimants and women who are naturalized citizens (I\_kii\_I12).

As our knowledge synthesis research found, however small provincial settlement programs are in relation to their federal counterpart, they cover some of the migrant populations excluded from federally funded services. In the case of Ontario, however, even this limited fix is at risk as the future of the Newcomer Settlement Program is uncertain under the new provincial government. Service providers are concerned that, even if the program continues, it may exclude populations that it has covered to date and switch its focus to the labour market to the neglect of "soft services." Two related quotes are in order:

*[M]y worry is, if this government decides to have another stand-off with the federal government about whose responsibility refugee claimants really are, that they will decide to limit that eligibility, just to make a point. I'm hoping not.*  
(I\_kii\_I11)

*[E]ven now, to some extent, the soft services are not recognized as valuable and that's a big mistake because it's those services where you're helping people to build their self-esteem so that they can actually move into a more*

*functional state, whether it's employment or in their community. Those services are critical, but I don't think they're given high value. (I\_kii\_I02)*

The respondents commented on the substantive organization of existing services in terms of programming, funding, and delivery. Reported problems related to programming include: lack of service, employment, and professional development standards; lack of professional development opportunities for settlement workers; lack of an evaluation and outcome measurement framework in the sector; strict accountability (including reporting) requirements for service providers; and funders' emphasis on outputs (quantity) rather than on outcomes (quality). Two service providers had this to say on the last two problems:

*I think it's up to us as service providers to keep reminding ourselves that we are not sub-contractors, that we ... are supposed to be partners, and to push back if the government is intruding inappropriately into our programming. (I\_kii\_I11)*

*They keep counting beans; they don't count how well or what it accomplishes. They count how many of it did you do, which is why the funding model is a problem because it keeps rewarding me by how many, not what. (I\_kii\_I01)*

For sector representatives, the problem with funding is not so much its level (which is comparatively low) as it is its duration and coverage. Government funding, federal and provincial alike, tends to be short-term and project-specific, often resulting in overuse of staff beyond their paid hours and not allowing projects continuity to have their intended impact. Also, strict conditions attached to use of federal settlement funds put service providers in a straitjacket and sometimes force them to be creative. A service provider amusingly narrated that, in order to get around federal funding restrictions, they had to cut hamburgers (meals not allowed) into four pieces (snacks allowed) when serving their youth program participants (I\_kii\_I03). However, several service providers expressed their appreciation of recent federal initiatives to switch to a five-year funding cycle and introduce flexibility in use of settlement funds.

Problems besetting settlement programming and funding have a compound effect on service delivery. Many key informants from the service sector reported that inter-agency competition for funds and clients often leads to duplication and fragmentation of services. Using the silo analogy, a community health service provider points to agencies' forced rush to fill their client quotas as easily as possible, which she calls "cream skimming":

*Who are professional, who speak English, who come from better socioeconomic backgrounds, and who've made very intentional decisions to immigrate ... [They] shouldn't be the target of services but a lot of times they're the easy ones to serve, easy ones to get our numbers and we do know there's a lot of what is called cream skimming, which is from my perspective a very, very, very problematic reality. (I\_kii\_I06)*

Lack of a case management approach, inconsistency of services across agencies, dependency-creating effect of services among newcomer clients, funder bias against small organizations in favour of large ones, high turnover of funders' project officers, and lack of agency capacity in general are some of the other service challenges mentioned.

## 2.5 Good or Promising Practices in Service

When asked if they can name one or two good practices in settlement service, respondents gave both national/provincial programmatic examples and those of locally grounded practices. The national/provincial programs are: Community Connections (formerly Host) Program, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters Program for women with young children, Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants' professional development programs, Resettlement Assistance Program for government-assisted refugees selected abroad, Settlement Workers in Schools Program, and Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative. The federal government (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, IRCC) funds all of these programs entirely or in part. Concerning the Community Connections Program, a service provider lamented the loss of its predecessor's (Host's) community-building focus via one-on-one friendships in favour of career building via mentoring (I\_kii\_I04).

The locally grounded practices can be grouped in seven categories: 1) youth resource centres and mentorship programs aiming for leadership development and community engagement; 2) women's programs aiming for personal and career development; 3) health, mental health, and well-being projects for different newcomer groups, including seniors; 4) projects connecting newcomers with Canadians and indigenous people; 5) employment incentives and bridging programs; 6) intercultural competency training programs; and 7) accessibility initiatives. It may be worth giving one example for each of the last two categories. A service-providing agency in southern Ontario preaches "*strengths assessment*" (resilience, success, and resourcefulness of newcomers), as opposed to needs assessment, in its intercultural competency training program. This, according to the respondent who mentioned the program, is a needed step to change our mindset from highlighting the successes of service agencies to highlighting those of newcomers (I\_kii\_I01). On the accessibility front, an agency serving refugee claimants and other temporary migrants partners with a university in the Greater Toronto Area to help youth with precarious immigration status to access post-secondary education by paying domestic tuition (I\_kii\_I07).

## 2.6 What Governments Can Do More

As mentioned above, service providers are generally appreciative of IRCC's recent initiatives to allow contribution agreements for up to five years and introduce more flexibility in reporting and use of funds. An ethno-cultural community representative reflected the positive sentiment in the settlement sector concerning these initiatives:

*They [IRCC] have given the settlement agencies a voice to talk with them and to consult with them in regards to what it is we do on the ground versus we have a policy that advances the points that they want to make without taking into consideration those of us who are going to implement this policy on the ground. (I\_kii\_I09)*

Nevertheless, service providers and other key informants are quick to point out a series of things that governments, the federal government in particular, can do to improve settlement outcomes for newcomers. One is broadening the demographic coverage of the federal Settlement Program by relaxing its eligibility requirements. The case service providers make for this is more a rational, "business" one than a humanitarian one, as the following quote illustrates:

*[I]f you say that certain services are only available to certain types of statuses, you're actually delaying the whole community settlement because ... you can have somebody who's a permanent resident but has a spouse who's a temporary foreign worker or has a spouse who's a refugee claimant. So, you're fragmenting families rather than settling families as a whole. ... [I]f that person who doesn't have permanent residence can't access healthcare and ends up in the emergency room, the cost for that is going to be higher than if they were allowed to go to the doctor for preventive medicine, right. (I\_kii\_I11)*

Another respondent made a straightforward "business case" for broadening the demographic coverage of federally funded settlement services by referring to its possible benefits to the Canadian economy as in the case of international students, many of whom will be staying as tax-paying permanent residents (I\_kii\_I03).

One may wonder, as many government officials do, who will cover the cost of serving additional categories of newcomers. Although service providers agree that federal settlement funding (annually around one billion dollars across Canada, excluding a lump sum for Quebec under the Canada–Quebec Accord [SCCI 2019:13]) is small relative to the immigrant intake, they do not seek the answer in a radical increase of funding. Rather, they are willing to explore more creative and flexible ways of funding. For example, this respondent wondered if letting service providers serve "everybody" without changing the level of funding would work:

*And so IRCC is going to say, “Well, but we cannot pay for everybody all the time,” and the same is going to be the province, and you say, well, you give the agencies the same level of funding, you just remove the barrier and have the agencies manage their services as they need to manage them. Thank you very much, like there is no reason to have that in there. (I\_kii\_I01)*

Yet the same respondent was also conscious of the likely biases that such an approach would trigger towards or against certain newcomer groups. A few respondents wondered about alternative funding models, such as federal and provincial co-funding of similar services (which was experimented previously with certain provinces), that would cast the net wider in targeting newcomers.

A second area where governments need to do better according to service providers is trust in government-sector relations, which are supposed to be built on the “Canadian partnership model.” They feel that many of the stringent accountability rules and reporting requirements imposed on them are not related to the content of their work and have everything to do with the distrust that governments approach the service sector. The following is an apt observation of this distrust:

*The funder thinks they are giving us money but they have to watch us very, very closely to make sure that we’re really going to do what we promised that we would do because if they are not watching us and saying, “How many of this, how many of that”, probably I am going to become selective with my clients … and I will cheat because I have a very cushy job just watching my [clients] without having to look for other clients. So, there is an issue of trust. ... I have found government counterparts that are willing and able to engage. Many of them do not have that level of freedom in their positions; they are in their position as a bean counter and they are not given the freedom to collaborate or to expand. (I\_kii\_I01)*

Another area of improvement concerns outcomes measurement. Many respondents feel that, while IRCC frequently collects detailed information from service providers, it measures outputs rather than outcomes. They thus ask the federal Department to come up with a better outcomes measurement framework. An outcomes measurement unit recently established at IRCC may be a step in the right direction. As programmers and funders, governments can also do better in framing service delivery. The current fragmented approach that leads to duplication should, many believe, be replaced by one based on an integrated personal case management system, especially for those newcomers with unique needs. Some of the other areas of improvement flagged for governments include: targeted programming and resourcing for vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and seniors, as well as for highly skilled newcomers; gender- and age-sensitivity in all programming; professional development of settlement workers; and three-way accountability between funders, service providers, and newcomers.

## 2.7 What Immigrants and Their Communities Can Do More

The respondents are nowhere else more in agreement than their appreciation of newcomers' self-help and help-seeking behaviour. They think that newcomers are already doing what they can to help themselves and their families settle successfully, giving the examples of Syrian refugee women and other newcomers succeeding in self-employment, other business, and community initiatives. Some also point out the centrality of women as problem solvers in and for newcomer families. One service provider highlighted the resilience and optimism of newcomers in a frame of reference that can be called comparative rationality:

*[T]his is what I always admire our clients because sometimes I have the staff and most of them ... were at one point newcomers. They complain about something and I say "just look at the person sitting across from you and that's where you should get your inspiration [from] because they have all of these things they go through and they come and their smile is still there, their happiness is there." Now it doesn't mean that they're genuinely happy about everything that happened, but what they do [is that] they have a comparative life. So, they compare okay, is this better that I don't have a job here and I'm struggling, you know, my kid's going to school and I don't understand what happened or bomb drop on my kid's head? (I\_kii\_I03)*

Nevertheless, the respondents have had several tips that may help newcomers in their settlement journey. The most frequently suggested idea was developing skills to navigate the "system," including generic and immigrant-specific services; government, community, and neighbourhood resources; and labour market connections. Related to that is having an inquisitive mind to ask for help, especially how to do things, and seek out services that are out there. This is followed by taking initiative and developing a self-management approach. Engaging in the local/broader community and polity, developing realistic expectations, and establishing themselves independent of government and other support systems after receiving initial help were other ideas. In addition, there were suggestions to involve newcomers in settlement programming and encourage them to develop inter-group relations (bridging capital) alongside intra-group relations (bonding capital).

## 3. CONCLUSION

### 3.1 Determinants of Settlement

The foregoing findings already point to a complex ecosystem of immigrant settlement. Key informants themselves spelled out a number of conditions for successful settlement to take place. These include but are not limited to: sufficient knowledge of English or French as Canada's official languages, meaningful employment, access to information, connecting with social and occupational networks, community involvement, public support, and a welcoming community. Add to that list many other factors shaping the context of reception and immigrant characteristics of socio-economic/demographic type, one gets a truly complex picture.

We are pointing out this complexity to dispel a myth about the role of settlement services in immigrant outcomes, which is common among the general public and in policy circles, and which even permeates the settlement service sector. The myth is that whatever governments fund and practitioners deliver in settlement service at public expense has to have a direct, measurable return for the public in the form of positive immigrant outcomes and contributions to the Canadian economy and society in general. This can be countered at three levels. First, compared with the annual immigrant intake (about 350,000, not including any category of temporary migrants [IRCC 2018:12]), the size of national settlement funding (about one billion dollars) is very modest. Moreover, new permanent residents contribute to their settlement financially (whether or not they use public services) by paying a right of permanent residence fee (in addition to a processing fee). Second, while some services such as language training and employment bridging are measurable in their impact, many other services such as community connections and "soft programming" services (Türegün et al. 2018) are not susceptible to measurement in most cases; even when they are, they can only be measured indirectly or negatively — that is, in terms of outcomes they aim to preempt such as engagement in shoplifting and subjection to human trafficking or employer abuse as seen above. Third, and perhaps most importantly from an explanatory perspective, generic and immigrant-specific services are only one factor among a multitude of factors (including context of reception in its broadest sense, immigrant characteristics, and human agency) that account for immigrant outcomes, positive and negative alike. Privileging services in this complex ecosystem does not do justice to them; it not only overburdens them but also may cloud our vision as to where and how they can be directed most strategically.

One area of strategic intervention for the settlement service sector and its public funders is equipping newcomers of all classes with navigational skills as many key informants emphasized so often. This should not be confused with a patronizing "information and

orientation” approach that lingers in the sector, preaching “This is how we do things here!” Rather, we are referring to a skills set that enables newcomers to be inquisitive about and perceptive of what is going on around them, an environment that ranges from the organizational landscape of their neighbourhoods to national networks and resources in their areas of need or interest. A second area of strategic intervention would be developing an integrated personal case management system, which some of our key informants were keen on. The challenge for that system to be all-inclusive, however, are the size of Canada’s annual immigrant intake and the corresponding amount of resources that may need to be allocated. Perhaps, the best way to move forward is piloting an integrated personal case management approach with newcomers from vulnerable populations such as women, youth, seniors, LGBTQ people, and refugee claimants.

## 3.2 Policy and Service Recommendations

Our recommendations were informed by our project-wide primary research with all its components as well as previously completed knowledge synthesis research.

### Policy

1. Build into policy a holistic understanding of immigration and settlement that takes families, rather than individuals, as the unit of analysis and practice.
2. Develop an evaluation and outcomes measurement framework in collaboration with the service sector.
3. In the true spirit of the “Canadian partnership model,” engage in trust building with the service sector. Supporting the sector to develop professional development standards and offer professional development opportunities to its workforce may go a long way to build trust.
4. Create a pathway to permanent residence and citizenship for all classes of temporary migrants.
5. Broaden the demographic coverage of the federal Settlement Program by relaxing its eligibility requirements to allow temporary migrants and recent citizens access. Launch a pilot program with refugee claimants and recently naturalized women.
6. Relax the 10-year residency requirement for immigrant seniors to be eligible for Old Age Security.

### Service

7. Adopt a family-centered approach when conceiving, designing, and delivering settlement services.
8. Explore an integrated personal case management approach in collaboration with funding partners. Pilot that approach with newcomers from vulnerable populations such as women, youth, seniors, LGBTQ people, and refugee claimants.

9. Expand services to help newcomers acquire “systemic” navigational skills ranging from learning about available services and resources to connecting with civic and occupational networks.
10. Pilot employment and self-employment programs for immigrant seniors and expand existing ones, especially those with occupation-specific job placements, for immigrant women and youth.
11. Make language training more accessible and rewarding for immigrant women and seniors by expanding onsite child care, providing transportation subsidies, reaching out to rural communities, organizing flexible class schedules and locations, experimenting with new methods of delivery, and customizing content to diverse needs.
12. In addition to in-school settlement workers, employ cultural brokers to mediate between newcomer students/families/institutions of different cultural backgrounds and facilitate service provision in a school setting.
13. Approach and deliver health and mental health services in a gender-, race-, and culture-sensitive framework.
14. Expand community-based activities, including volunteering, to reduce social isolation among, and increase social support for, all three groups of immigrants.

## 4. REFERENCES

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). 2018. *2018 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration*. Ottawa: IRCC.

<https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/annual-report-2018.pdf> (accessed 14 August 2019)

Kelly, Philip (with research assistance from Lualhati Marcelino and Catherine Mulas). 2014. "Foreign Credential Recognition Research Synthesis 2009–2013." A CERIS report submitted to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa.

<https://ceris.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/CERIS-Research-Synthesis-on-Foreign-Credential-Recognition.pdf> (accessed 14 August 2019)

Shields, John and Adnan Türegün (with research assistance from Sophia Lowe). 2014. "Settlement and Integration Research Synthesis 2009–2013." A CERIS report submitted to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Ottawa. Especially pages 7–10 and 14–16.  
<https://ceris.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/CERIS-Research-Synthesis-on-Settlement-and-Integration.pdf> (accessed 14 August 2019)

Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (SCCI), House of Commons. 2019. *Improving Settlement Services across Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration*. Ottawa: Speaker of the House of Commons.

[https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/CIMM/Reports/RP10577155/cimm\\_rp26/cimmrp26-e.pdf](https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/CIMM/Reports/RP10577155/cimm_rp26/cimmrp26-e.pdf) (accessed 14 August 2019)

Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC). 2018. "State of Immigrant Inclusion in the Greater Toronto Area Labour Market." TRIEC: Toronto.

<http://triec.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/TRIEC-State-of-Immigrant-Inclusion-Report-final-181123.pdf> (accessed 14 August 2019)

Türegün, Adnan, Rupaleem Bhuyan, Nancy Mandell, and John Shields (with the research assistance of Jana Borras, Omar Lujan, Janice Phonepraseuth, and Catherine Schmidt). 2018. "State of the Art in Research on, and Services for, Immigrant Women, Youth and Seniors: Knowledge Synthesis Report." Toronto: CERIS.

<http://ceris.ca/IWYS/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/IWYS-Knowledge-Synthesis-Report-Composite-report-Sept-2018.pdf> (accessed 14 August 2019)