



# Exploring newcomer integration into a Canadian metro city from an occupational perspective

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## Background

- › Newcomers to Canada face numerous challenges that influence their integration into the society.
- › Personal & environmental factors created barriers to achieve career development, maintain routine, and engage in meaningful occupations.<sup>1</sup>

## Purpose of this Study

To gain insight into factors that affect engagement in meaningful occupations for immigrants and refugees.

## Methods

Study Design	Scoping review using established methodological framework <sup>2</sup>
Databases Searched	Canadian Business & Current Affairs, CINAHL, EMBASE, Medline, PsycINFO Sociology Collection and Web of Science.
Search Terms	<i>Location:</i> Vancouver, Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond, Metro Vancouver, Metropolitan Vancouver or Greater Vancouver <i>AND</i> <i>Population:</i> immigrants, migrants, refugees or newcomer <i>AND</i> <i>Focus:</i> integration, settlement, resettlement, adaptation, housing, education, transition, social network, employment, job or health. <sup>3</sup> <i>AND</i> <i>Method:</i> qualitative, ethnography, narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, interview, or focus group
Eligibility Criteria for articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settlement or integration experiences of immigrants or refugees specific to the Census Metropolitan Area of Vancouver</li> <li>• Peer reviewed articles</li> <li>• Published in English bet. Jan 2006 &amp; Oct 2017</li> <li>• No grey literature</li> </ul>

## Findings

Five themes were identified:

1. systemic discrimination
2. contextual influences
3. gaps in information and services
4. language learning
5. change in support circles and roles

All had an impact on immigrants' & refugees' occupation.

## Themes

### 1. Systematic discrimination

Accent discrimination, lack of recognition of foreign credentials and foreign employment experience can cause difficulty entering the labour market, downward career mobility, and longer work schedules. As a result of lower socioeconomic status and long hours employment, a wider range of occupations, including leisure, self-care, and personal development are impacted.

### 2. Contextual influences

The transition into the host society involves new learning, changes and adaptations, which bring opportunities for new occupations. The unique past experiences of immigrants and refugees influence their decision making regarding everyday occupations and their connections with new societal norms and cultures, all of which influence their integration. Understanding how these factors are inter-connected can inform Canadian policies aimed at shaping an environment that facilitates integration.

### 3. Gap in information and services

Low recognition of immigrants' and refugees' needs in non-productive participation was identified as an important gap. In general, a lack of information in various areas of settlement was identified repeatedly. Studies indicated that services facilitating participation in active information access was more valuable than services providing abundant, but passive, information.

### 4. Language learning

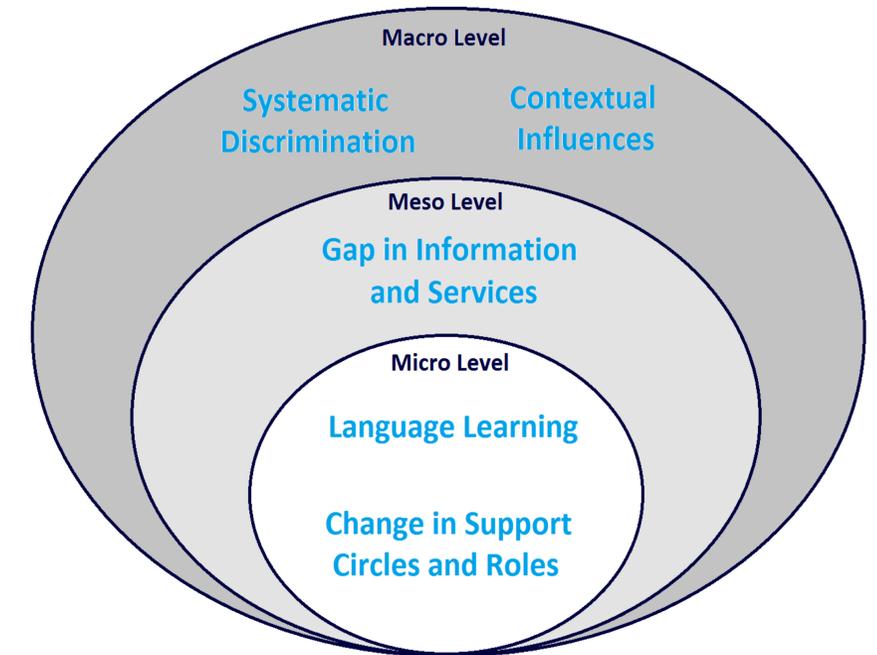
Learning the English language was essential for flourishing in most structured occupations in Metro Vancouver. Without this fundamental skill, many simple structured occupations became more challenging. This may negatively impact immigrants' and refugees' motivation to participate in meaningful occupations, which could lead to withdrawal or avoidance.

English language competency was considered for many newcomers as an important factor for feeling a sense of belonging, and as a first step of integrating into the Canadian society.

### 5. Change in support circles and roles

Newcomers and their family members heavily rely on each other in the settlement and integration process. Immediate family support can determine and impact individuals familial roles and integration experience. With support from extended family, a family unit can engage in a wider range of roles and occupations. However, individual family members still face limited choice in their desired occupations as they are required to support dependent family members' participation in the host society. Those with dependents were found to often feel obligated to make individual sacrifices to better the lives and experiences of their family members in the settlement and integration process.

Immigrants and refugees who do not have family support in the host country are expected to manage all household occupational roles and responsibilities.



## Practice Implications

- I. Globalization & international migration have expanded substantially in the past few decades, leading to an influx of new perspectives, cultures and diversity in Canada.
- II. Occupational therapists have a responsibility to be culturally informed to support meaningful occupations that assist immigrants and refugees in their transitions.
- III. Understanding the factors highlighted by the themes in this review and the interaction with their occupations may assist with services that facilitate newcomer integration into Canadian society.
- IV. Participating in meaningful occupations is the key for immigrants and refugees to optimize engagement in the Canadian society.
- V. Occupational therapists have the expertise to understand their experiences and needs and can work with community organizations to enable, support and facilitate meaningful occupations that promote settlement and integration.

## Reference

- <sup>1</sup> Bennett, K. M., Scornaiencki, J. M., Brzozowski, J., Denis, S., Magalhães, L. (2012). Immigration and its impact on daily occupations: A scoping review. *Occupational Therapy International*, 19(4), 185-203. doi:10.1002/oti.1336
- <sup>2</sup> Arksey, H., & O'Malley, L. (2005). Scoping studies: Towards a methodological framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 19-32. doi:10.1080/1364557032000119616
- <sup>3</sup> Nourpanah, S. (2014). A study of the experiences of integration and settlement of Afghan government-assisted refugees in Halifax, Canada. *Refuge*, 30(1), 57-66.