

# Systematic Literature Review: Barriers to Skilled Immigrant Integration in Canada- Ottawa-Gatineau CMA From Geographical and Occupational Mobility to Sustainable Livelihoods

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## Introduction

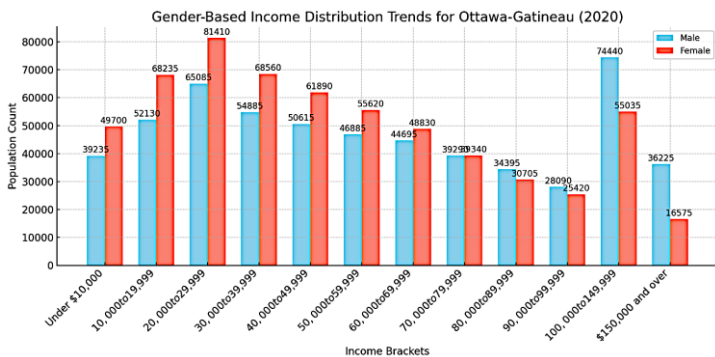
Canada increasingly relies on skilled immigration to sustain population growth and economic resilience. With immigration accounting for 100% of expected population growth by 2034 (Conference Board of Canada, 2022), policies that support integration and economic stability for skilled immigrants are essential. Ottawa-Gatineau, a bilingual and interprovincial region, has become an attractive settlement location for skilled immigrants due to its employment opportunities and relatively lower living costs. Despite Canada's efforts to create a welcoming environment, skilled immigrants face multiple barriers, including credential recognition issues, language proficiency requirements, and interprovincial policy inconsistencies that inhibit geographical and occupational mobility.

## Research Objectives

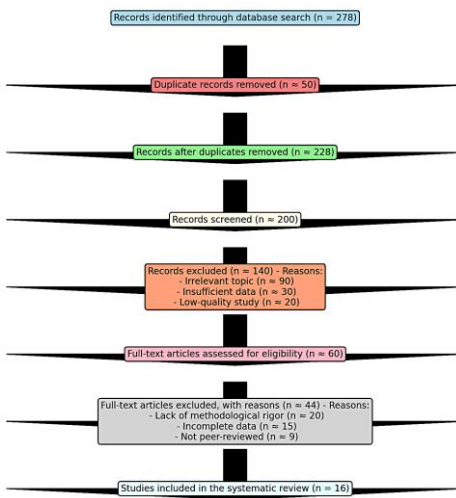
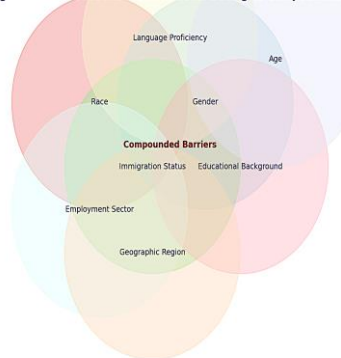
- Analyze primary barriers impacting skilled immigrants' geographical and occupational mobility.
- Assess how these barriers affect integration outcomes and economic stability, specifically in the Ottawa-Gatineau region.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and identify areas for improvement.
- Formulate recommendations to enhance labor market integration and support sustainable livelihoods for skilled immigrants in Canada.

## Methodology

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach based on the PRISMA framework, which rigorously identified relevant studies. Data sources included Scopus, Web of Science, and Statistics Canada, focusing on publications from 2010-2024. The review included qualitative, quantitative, and meta-analytic studies relevant to skilled immigrant integration, occupational mobility, and socio-economic impacts in Canada, emphasizing the Ottawa-Gatineau Census Metropolitan Area (CMA).

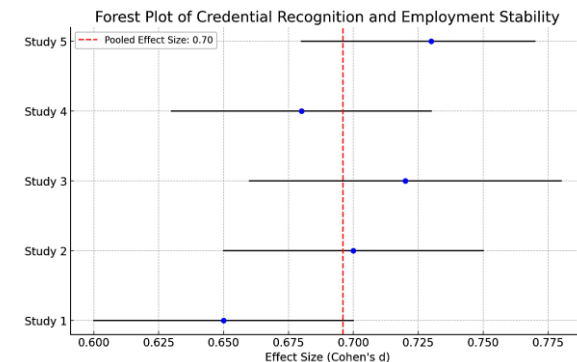
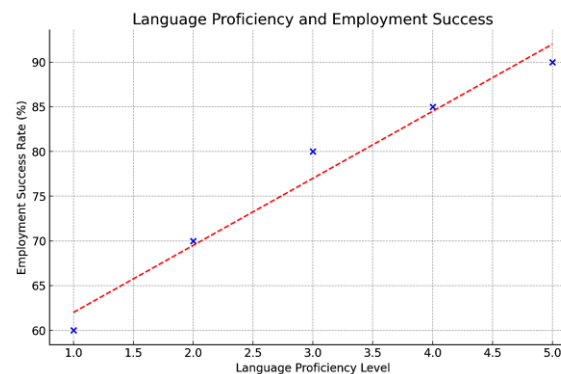


Venn Diagram of Intersectional Factors Contributing to Compounded Barriers



## Key Findings

- Credential recognition remains a critical barrier for skilled immigrants, leading to occupational downgrading, underemployment, and career dissatisfaction.
- The meta-analysis shows a moderate-to-strong pooled effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.70$ , 95% CI [0.61, 0.79],  $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that immigrants with recognized credentials experience significantly higher job alignment and stability.
- The barriers are heightened by interprovincial policy differences, especially between Ontario and Quebec, which create additional challenges for those seeking credential portability.



- Skilled immigrants proficient in both English and French achieve better job alignment, income stability, and professional advancement.
- The meta-analysis reveals a strong effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.75$ , 95% CI [0.65, 0.85]), highlighting the correlation between bilingual skills and occupational stability.
- Limited language proficiency, however, confines many to jobs that do not utilize their skills, affecting income potential and career satisfaction.

- Meta-regression analysis shows a significant positive relationship between housing affordability and immigrant retention ( $\beta = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).
- Regions with affordable housing, like Ottawa-Gatineau, have higher retention rates for skilled immigrants.
- Adjustments for regional cost of living and income levels emphasize that affordable housing is a critical factor for long-term immigrant retention.
- Gender disparities negatively impact job retention and economic stability for skilled immigrant women, especially post-COVID-19.
- Effect size of (Cohen's  $d = 0.57$ ) indicates moderate challenges for immigrant women in job security and income compared to male counterparts.
- Ottawa-Gatineau region shows significant gender-based income and job security gaps, highlighting a need for gender-sensitive policies to address these economic inequalities.

