

# Migration and Mobility: The Social Integration Challenges of Unaccompanied Refugee Minors & Youth In Canada

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## Abstract

Canada has seen a rise in unaccompanied refugee minors and youth (URM&Y), who face unique challenges in social integration due to the lack of parental support, making their situation a key concern for immigration services.

This study examines the social integration challenges faced by unaccompanied refugee minors and youth (URM&Y) in Canada, highlighting the influence of pre-migration experiences, institutional and structural barriers, and racial inequalities, especially among Black refugees

The findings highlight how systemic racial inequalities, discrimination, and psychological challenges hinder the social integration of URM&Y, with recommendations including a host-family system, cultural orientations, and translation services to support their integration

## Introduction

- ❑ **Unaccompanied Refugee Minors & Youth** According to the Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Unaccompanied and Separated Children, Unaccompanied Refugee Minors and Youth are "children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so".
- ❑ **Social Integration** is the process during which newcomers or minorities are accepted and welcomed into the social structure of the host society, Küçüksüleymanoğlu (2020).

### Global Perspective

- 103 million forcibly displaced people (UNHCR, 2022)
- 4.9 million Asylum Seekers ( UNHCR, 2022)
- 32.5 million refugees (UNHCR, 2022)
- 5.3 million are people in need of international protection

### Canadian Perspective

- 130,125 refugees were granted asylum in 2021 (Canada Refugee Statistics, n.d.)
- 91,870 asylum claimants processed by (CBSA) and(IRCC) as at January-December 2022
- About 3,000 URM&Y arrive in Canada yearly ( Reisdorf, 2021)

New Migration flows from the global South today include increasing numbers of children (Menjivar & Perreira, 2019).

## Methods and Materials

- ❑ A qualitative approach study (Vaismoradi et al., 2013; Grundy, Pollon & MacGinn, 2003).
- ❑ Target Population and Inclusion criteria
- ❑ Recruitment of participants
- ❑ Data Collection and storage
- ❑ Data Analysis
- ❑ Theoretical Frameworks (Critical Theory & Critical Race Theory)

## Findings & Conclusions

- I. A significant number of former URM&Y faced emotional and psychological difficulties, as revealed through their conversations in the interviews.  
**Conclusion:** It can be concluded that there is a pressing need for targeted interventions and support systems to address the mental well-being of URM&Y in Canada.
- II. The importance of acquiring language (English language) for URM&Y in Canada.  
**Conclusion:** Highlights the necessity of comprehensive language education programs and support services to facilitate their integration, communication, and overall well-being in Canada.
- III. The issue of discrimination (Racism and prejudice) against former URM&Y was prevalent.  
**Conclusion:** Promote inclusivity, tolerance, and anti-discriminatory measures in order to ensure URM&Y social integration, well-being, and equal opportunities in Canada.
- IV. Canada has available integration and settlement services for URM&Y depending on their refugee status (GAR, PSR).  
**Conclusion:** Availability and effectiveness of integration services vary depending on the specific refugee status of the URM&Y, such as whether they have been granted asylum, are awaiting a decision, or have been resettled through a sponsorship program.

## Recruitment of Participants

Pseudonym	Country of Origin	Gender	Ages	Years in Canada	City currently residing in Canada
Bethel-E-F	Eritrea	Female	21	6	Calgary
Suzanne-F-K	Kenya	Female	24	9	Toronto
Saleem-M-Y	Yemen	Male	27	11	Vancouver
Rudy-M-V	Venezuela	Male	22	7	Regina
Johnson-M-S	South Sudan	Male	24	8	Winnipeg
Sheila-F-S	South Sudan	Female	25	8	Saskatoon

Chart 1. Recruitment of Participants

## Discussion

- Johnson M-S** "It was a moment of confusion in our lives because we were not fully prepared to leave..."
- Rudy-M-V** "there was fear in us [respondent & sister] because we did not know what was going to happen during the traveling.
- Saleem-M-Y** "Okay, I think it was the language. I speak Arabic, you know, it is my language. So, learning English was really challenging for me. Because of this, I cannot find good work"
- Rudy-M-V** "I did not feel included". He said, "...inside the kitchen, we do the same work, but I was paid less among the others".
- Johnson-M-S** said, "Yes, I have; at school, I was snubbed by a group of friends. One of them told me later that one of the guys said I am not like them...that was crazy to think like that".

## Future research & Recommendations

- The creation of a host-family system, to pair these refugees with interested families in Canada.
- The enhancement of family reunification processes of URM&Y with their families.
- Strengthen mental health and psychosocial support for URM&Y in Canada.
- Facilitation of legal aid and advocacy services in Canada.
- Enhance interagency collaboration to help URM&Y in Canada. Promote cultural sensitivity and training to professionals working with URM&Y.

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