



Title: Shaky Foundations: Precarious Housing and Hidden Homelessness among Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Immigrants in Metro Vancouver

Authors: Jenny Francis and Daniel Hiebert, Department of Geography, University of British Columbia

Contact: jenois@telus.net / daniel.hiebert@ubc.ca

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Research Question:

What are the housing circumstances of newcomers, specifically refugees, to Metro Vancouver, including the barriers they face to securing adequate, suitable, and affordable housing?

Importance:

The report is based on findings from the Metro Vancouver portion of a large comparative national study that, for the first time, applied a single systematic methodology to the study of three groups of newcomers (economic immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers) in Canada's three major immigrant and refugee receiving centers, Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver. The study also updates research undertaken prior to the current economic downturn when acquiring good jobs and, therefore, housing may have been easier.

Research Findings:

Adolescent immigrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa face significant challenges. Drawing on results from 185 surveys and five focus groups, the report finds that immigration category and housing outcome are closely linked in that people who enter Canada through humanitarian streams are more likely than economic immigrants to lack the resources needed to find and maintain adequate and affordable housing. Overarching themes dominating the lives of both refugee claimants and sponsored refugees include poverty, substandard housing that is also unaffordable and often overcrowded, and homelessness, both hidden and absolute. At the same time, by focusing on people using settlement services, the report reveals a subset of economic immigrants who struggle alongside refugees to obtain adequate housing.

Implications:

The report identifies several critical issues for policy, including: the availability of affordable rental housing; access to subsidized housing, including transitional housing for refugee claimants; the need for a centralized, reliable Housing Resource Centre; the mandate of immigrant serving agencies; monthly RAP amounts and the requirement for GARs to repay the transportation loan; and orientation services for GARs.