



Title: The Housing Experiences and Coping Strategies of Recent Immigrants in the Suburbs of Vancouver (Surrey and Richmond)

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WP Number: 12-03

Research Question:

The scarcity of research on the housing experiences of immigrants and minorities in the outer suburbs prevents a full understanding of (a) why certain immigrant groups are more successful than others in locating appropriate housing in a suitable or comfortable neighbourhood, and (b) the factors that facilitate or prevent this phenomenon in the outer suburbs of our metropolitan areas. This paper will address this gap by evaluating the housing experiences and coping strategies of new immigrants in the outer suburbs of Vancouver (Richmond and Surrey).

Importance:

While immigrants continue to arrive in Canada's traditional metropolitan gateway areas, recent data from the Canadian Census has sparked significant interest in immigrant dispersal to new destinations outside major urban centres, especially the suburbs. Rapid population growth and concentration of immigrants and minorities in the suburbs has led to an increasing demand for affordable rental housing.

Research Findings:

The evidence indicates that this new group of immigrants faces numerous difficulties (e.g. high rents, overcrowding, poor quality housing) in the rental housing market. Most immigrants were spending more than 50% of their monthly household income on housing, putting them at risk of homelessness. The study's findings suggest that the housing crisis affecting Surrey and Richmond – a limited supply of affordable rental housing and high living costs for many new immigrants – make these two cities a unique and challenging region of Vancouver in which to settle.

Implications:

This exploratory study points out the need for more comparative studies on the housing experiences and coping strategies of recent immigrants in the suburbs of major Canadian cities. Funding from all levels of government (federal, provincial, and local) to stimulate the creation of both for-profit and non-profit housing is urgently needed. The shortage of appropriate housing services and programs is also a major gap in the settlement services in the region.