



Photo by City of Edmonton

### Background

Canada's experience with immigration has never been a solely economic process, but one of managing the reality of social and cultural diversity along with political equality. Immigrants, particularly the newly arrived, have been identified to be more susceptible to low income, poverty, and social exclusion than Canadian-born individuals (Shields, Kelly, Park, Prier, & Fang, 2011). A study

conducted by Lightman and

Gingrich (2012) found that gender, visible minority status, age, and length of stay in Canada are predictors of economic exclusion, with a particular emphasis on the labour market exclusion of young new immigrants and racialized women.

In 2006, Canada's population reached 31.2 million; of those 20% (6.2 million people) were born outside of Canada (Chui, Tran, and Maheux, 2007).

Among the more than 1.1 million who arrived between 2001 and 2006, 58.3 % or nearly 6 out of 10 were born in Asian countries, including the Middle East (Chui et al., 2007).

A study conducted by Shields et al. (2011) that uses Canadian census data found the average rate of poverty measured by low-income cut offs for Canadian born was 13.8%, while for the foreign born population on the whole it was 22.0%. Those who arrived between 2001 and 2006 recorded an especially high rate of poverty—45.5%, or three times the Canadian-born rate.

Robert and Gilkinson (2011) found higher levels of stress in immigrants with lower incomes, who had no interactions with friends, and who had problems accessing health care.

### Immigration in Canada

In 2002, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) replaced the Immigration Act of 1976. Since then, the IRPA governs who can become a permanent resident in Canada: those who seek to reunite with family, those who can contribute to the economic growth of Canada, and those who need humanitarian assistance (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012).

Temporary entry is also promoted for those who contribute to Canada's economic development in the labour market,

trade, and goods and service industry (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2012).

Barriers to obtaining employment occur for the following reasons: foreign qualifications are not recognized, language difficulties, translation issues, being overqualified, and discrimination (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2013).

Research has shown that immigrants face discrimination when it comes to finding a home, due to their immigration status and their social, economic, racial and cultural background. As a result, immigrants tend to rent or buy households outside their means, which forces them into debt and leads to financial instability (Preston, 2009).

### Immigration in Alberta

Between 2013 and 2041, Alberta's population is projected to grow by 2 million people, reaching approximately 6 million in 2041. This is mainly due to international migration necessitated by an aging population and low birth rates (Alberta Treasury Board and Finance, 2013-2041). While the demand grows for immigrants with the skills that Alberta's labour market needs, new immigrants are more likely than Canadians to work in jobs that are below their level of education and skill, and they also tend to earn less on average than Canadian-born workers (Macleans, 2013). The reasons for this are related to inadequate language skills, issues with foreign qualification recognition, and a lack of Canadian work experience (Alexander, Burleton, Fong, 2012).

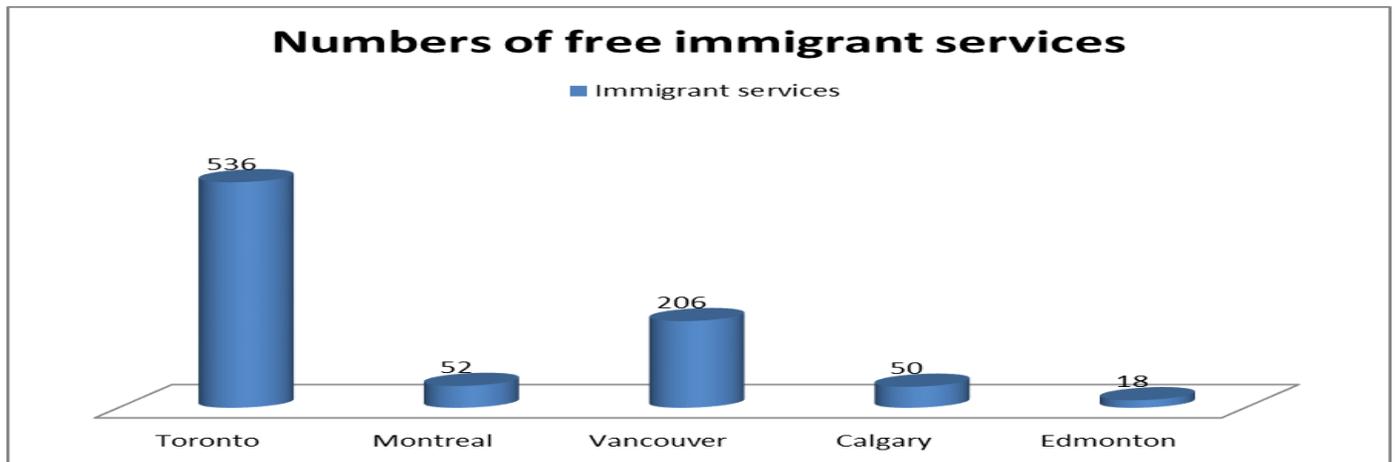
To assist immigrants in Alberta, the federal and provincial governments co-funded the Canada-Alberta Integrated Services Program. The purpose of this program is to coordinate the funding and accountability processes for contracted, community-based, and non-profit organizations that provide programs and services to increase the ability of new immigrants to access information, services and resources, and enhance their workforce participation and economic independence (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011). In addition, the Government of Alberta developed *Supporting Immigrants and Immigration to Alberta*, a long-range policy that attempts to address the social, cultural and economic needs of immigrants in Alberta.

### Immigration in Edmonton

Since challenges due to low incomes, housing affordability issues and an increased risk of homelessness are more common amongst recent immigrants, this population requires higher levels of social services (FCM, 2009, p. v). However, new immigrants access free services less frequently than non-immigrants (FCM, 2009, p. v). This may indicate

*(Continued on the other side of page)*

Fig. 1 Data Source: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/map/services.asp>



immigrants lack essential information about accessing services, due to income levels or language barriers (City of Edmonton as cited in FCM, 2009, p. 27). For example, if services are not located near newcomers who have settled in suburban neighbourhoods, those immigrants will find it difficult to learn a new language, find jobs, or otherwise integrate into Canadian society (FCM, 2009, p. 27).

Services that are important for newcomers include language assessments and classes, assistance in looking for jobs, assistance in integrating into society, and information on community resources. The chart above indicates the number of free immigrant services in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary and Edmonton (Fig. 1). Among these cities, Edmonton provides the fewest immigrant services.

## References

- Alberta Treasury Board and Finance. (2013). *Alberta population project: 2013-2041*. Edmonton, Canada: Government of Alberta.
- Alexander, C., Burleton, D., & Fong, F. (2012). *Knocking down barriers faced by new immigrants to Canada: Fitting the pieces together*. Toronto: TD Economics.
- Chiu, T., Tran, K., & Maheux, H. (2007). *Immigration in Canada: A portrait of the foreign-born population, 2006 Census*. Ottawa, Canada: Statistics Canada.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2011). Evaluation of the immigrant and settlement adaptation program. Ottawa, Canada: Citizenship and Immigration Canada. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/isap/2011/appendixC.asp>.
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities, (2009). *Immigration and diversity in Canadian cities and communities*. Retrieved from [http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/Immigration\\_and\\_Diversity\\_in\\_Canadian\\_Cities\\_and\\_Communities\\_EN.pdf](http://www.fcm.ca/Documents/reports/Immigration_and_Diversity_in_Canadian_Cities_and_Communities_EN.pdf)
- Government of Alberta. (2005). *Supporting immigrants and immigration to Alberta: An overview*. Edmonton, Canada: Government of Alberta. Retrieved from: [http://eae.alberta.ca/documents/WIA/WIA-IM\\_framework\\_overview.pdf](http://eae.alberta.ca/documents/WIA/WIA-IM_framework_overview.pdf).
- Lightman, N., & Gingrich, L. G. (2012). The intersecting dynamics of social exclusion: Age, gender, race and immigrant status in Canada's labour market. *Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal*, 44, 121-145.
- McMahon, T. (2013). Why the world's best and brightest struggle to find jobs in Canada. *Macleans*'s. Retrieved from <http://www2.macleans.ca/2013/04/24/land-of-misfortune/>
- Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2013, February 1). Policy on removing the "Canadian experience" barrier. Retrieved from [http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-removing-%E2%80%9CCanadian-experience%E2%80%9D-barrier#\\_edn5](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-removing-%E2%80%9CCanadian-experience%E2%80%9D-barrier#_edn5)
- Preston, V. (2009). *At risk in Canada's outer suburbs: A pilot study of immigrants and homelessness in York Region*. Toronto: University of Toronto. Retrieved from [http://www.homelesshub.ca/ResourceFiles/Documents/5\\_3\\_Preston\\_et\\_al\\_-\\_Immigrants\\_in\\_York\\_Region.pdf](http://www.homelesshub.ca/ResourceFiles/Documents/5_3_Preston_et_al_-_Immigrants_in_York_Region.pdf)
- Research and Evaluation Branch, Citizenship and Immigration Canada. (2012). *Canada facts and figures: Immigration overview, Permanent and temporary residents*. Ottawa: Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/research-stats/facts2012.pdf>
- Robert, A. M., & Gilkinson, T. (2012). *Mental health and well-being of recent immigrants in Canada: Evidence from the longitudinal survey of immigrants to Canada*. Ottawa, Canada: Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- Shields, J., Kelly, P., Park, S., Prier, N., & Fang, T. (2011). Profiling immigrant poverty in Canada: A 2006 census statistical portrait. *Canadian Review of Social Policy*, (65/66), 92-111.

**Contributing Volunteer Researchers:** Aneesa Gill, Manuel Escoto, Diana Varvis, and Lilian Lai



Tel: (780) 423-2031

[www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca](http://www.edmontonsocialplanning.ca)  
Suite 37, Commonwealth Building, 9912 - 106 Street

Fax: (780) 425-6244

Email: [info@edmontonsocialplanning.ca](mailto:info@edmontonsocialplanning.ca)