

Newcomer Men: Unique Challenges and Considerations

This issue of Migration Matters discusses the unique challenges that newcomer men face, both in their migration journey and in their new home. It also provides additional resources to support those working with newcomer men and boys.

Introduction

In 2017, men made up more than half of total refugees accepted into Canada, and the majority of economic class admissions (except for the caregiver category).¹ Despite the fact that men make up a large percentage of the newcomer population and the fact that they face unique pressures and struggles, there is limited research or support aimed specifically at newcomer men.

Men and migration

Unaccompanied men face unique barriers in the migration process. While women and girls experience higher rates of sexual violence in conflict, men are still vulnerable -- yet receive fewer supports.² Humanitarian aid organizations are more likely to deem women and girls “vulnerable” and thus deserving of help, whereas men are seen as more capable and are often overlooked for aid.³ Men might even be associated with violent behaviour and be deemed more of a threat than a vulnerable refugee needing help.⁴

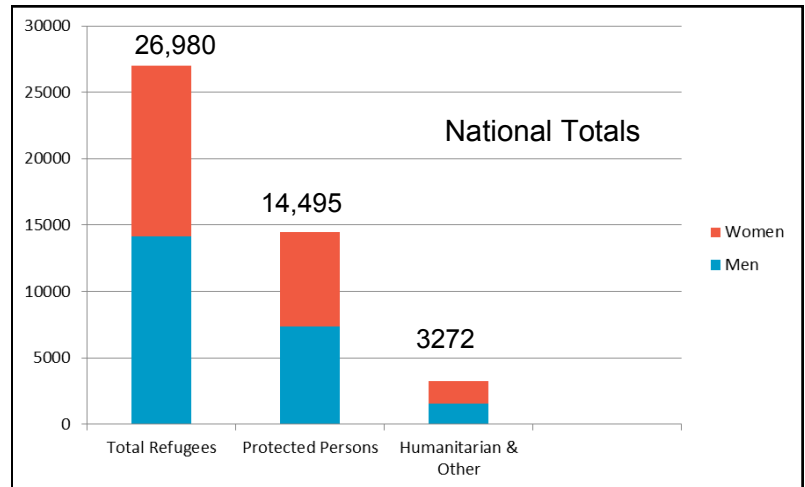
Gender identity and sexual orientation

In many countries around the world, LGBTQ+ folks are not safe. Men in particular may face discrimination and violence due to traditional ideas of masculinity and they may have a harder time receiving or seeking help. Even the migration journey is more dangerous for LGBTQ+ migrants, and they often face discrimination from other migrants.⁵ While there is little research done specifically on LGBTQ+ newcomer men, there is evidence that even once in Canada, many may still experience discrimination, exclusion, or even violence. They may experience racism or xenophobia within the LGBTQ+ community, as well as homophobia or transphobia in their diasporic community.⁶

References

- ¹ IRCC. (2018). [Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration](#)
- ² Chynoweth, S. (2017). [Sexual Violence Against Men and Boys in the Syria Crisis](#). UNHCR.
- ³ Turner, L. (2016). [Are Syrian Men Vulnerable Too? Gendering The Syria Refugee Response](#). Middle East Institute.
- ⁴ El Feki, S., Heilman, B. and Barker, G., Eds. (2017) [Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey \(IMAGES\)](#) – Middle East and North Africa. Cairo and Washington, D.C.: UN Women and Promundo-US
- ⁵ Human Rights Campaign. (2008). [The Crisis at the Border is an LGBTQ Issue. Here's Why.](#)
- ⁶ Canadian Encyclopedia. (2018). [LGBTQ+ Refugees in Canada](#)
- ⁸ Lu, C. and Ng, E. (2019). [Healthy immigrant effect by immigrant category in Canada](#). Statistics Canada
- ⁸ Kisilu AL, Darras L. (2018). [Highlighting the gender disparities in mental health among Syrian refugees in Jordan](#). *Intervention*;16:140-6
- ¹⁰ ¹¹ CARE (2017). [Men and boys in displacement Assistance and protection challenges for unaccompanied boys and men in refugee contexts](#). CARE & Promundo

Refugee (all categories), protected person* & humanitarian admissions (2017)⁷



*A protected person may or may not be a Convention refugee (refugee claimant) but is in need of protection from persecution

Men's health

In terms of physical health, there are no significant gender differences among recent immigrants. Recent immigrants generally report better health than their Canadian-born counterparts, a phenomenon called the “healthy immigrant effect” (HIE). The HIE is much lower in refugees than in immigrants, with refugee men reporting slightly poorer health than their female counterparts.⁸

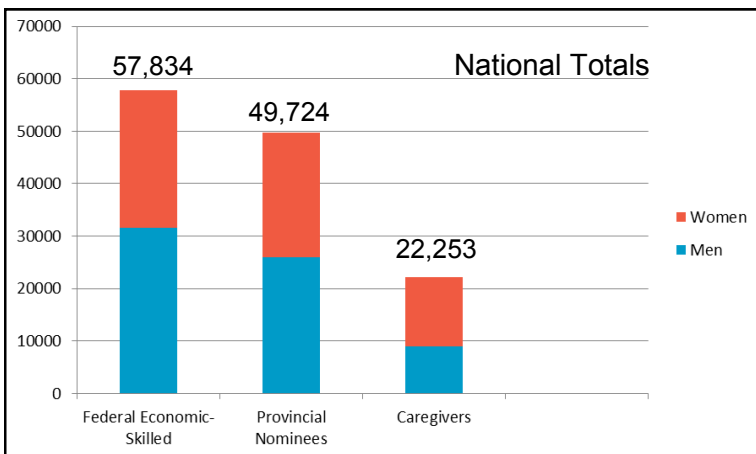
Mental health

A recent study showed that, despite struggling with mental health issues and trauma, Syrian refugee men were less likely than their female counterparts to access mental health services due to the stigma.⁹ When they do seek out help, it is more likely to be from peers but there is often a lack of formalized peer support networks for men and boys.¹⁰ In fact, there is a shortage of services specialized for men and boys. The marginalization and lack of support of unaccompanied boys and men can also lead to addiction or substance abuse.¹¹

Labour and employment

Newcomers are important contributors to the Canadian economy. However, they face a number of barriers in accessing the labour market, including language and cultural barriers, and lack of recognition for qualifications. Being unemployed, underemployed, or being a secondary earner in the house can have unique effects on men and their identity.

Economic class admissions, 2017 ¹²



Effects on identity and mental wellness

If masculinity in the country of origin means being a sole provider, some newcomer men may experience a dual-provider household or a reversal of traditional roles in the host country as disempowering or a loss of dignity.¹³

Men in Middle Eastern & North African countries reported feeling high stress and depression when they lost work or income as a result of displacement or conflict.¹⁴ Furthermore, not only is there the potential for identity re-negotiation, there is also pressure that comes with financially supporting a family and often also sending money to family in the country of origin.¹⁵

Workplace injury

Overall, men make up 72% of those involved in serious workplace injuries.¹⁶ This is likely due to the kinds of work they do. Recent immigrants and refugees have an even higher likelihood of injury than their Canadian-born counterparts, making newcomer men particularly vulnerable to injury or death in the workplace.¹⁷ They may have trouble refusing dangerous work either because of language barriers, power differentials, or lack of workplace protection.

References

¹² IRCC. (2018). [Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration](#)

¹³ ¹⁵ Donaldson, M. and Howson, R. (2009). [Men, migration and hegemonic masculinity](#). In Donaldson, M, Hibbins, R, Howson R & Pease, B (ed) *Migrant Men: Critical Studies of Masculinities and the Migration Experience*, Routledge, 210-217

¹⁴ El Feki, S., Heilman, B. and Barker, G., Eds. (2017) [Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey](#) (IMAGES)

¹⁶ WorkSafeBC (2016) [Serving British Columbians: 2016 Statistics](#).

¹⁷ Yanar, B., Kosny, A., & Smith, P. M. (2018). [Occupational Health and Safety Vulnerability of Recent Immigrants and Refugees](#). *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 15(9), 2004.

¹⁸ Ensign, P.C. & Robinson, N.P. (2011). [Entrepreneurs because they are Immigrants or Immigrants because they are Entrepreneurs](#). *The Journal of Entrepreneurship* 20(1) 33–53

Entrepreneurship

Many newcomers may find it more empowering to start their own business than to navigate the labour market as immigrants or refugees. For many, it allows them freedom and upward mobility.¹⁸ Furthermore, a business that celebrates their ethnic origins such as a restaurant or food truck allows them to maintain their culture rather than feeling pressure to assimilate. For men having to renegotiate identity, this may provide an alternative to struggling in the labour market.

Conclusion

Newcomer men face unique barriers based on their gender. Depending on their country of origin, there may be acculturation stress around changing gender roles and an adjustment to gender role expectations. Despite vulnerabilities and struggles, including mental health, newcomer men are less likely to access supports or to have specialized resources. Newcomer men who are racialized, identify as GBTQ+, and/or live with disabilities have additional barriers.

Further resources

- [Men - UNHCR](#)
- [Portal-Pathway - White Ribbon](#)
- [Just for You - Men - Health Canada](#)
- [Refugee Men's Health and Well-being: A Resource for Language Instructors – BC TEAL](#)
- [Men's Mental Health & Substance Use Information – Here to Help](#)
- [Trans Newcomers Resource Hub - MOSAIC](#)
- [Men in Change Program - MOSAIC](#)

Webinar & e-symposium

- [Men's Health and Well-being: Strategies for EAL Instructors – Tutela login required](#)
- [Newcomer Men's Integration: Challenges & Perspectives - AMSSA](#)

AMSSA also has a *Newcomer Men* online video in the works!