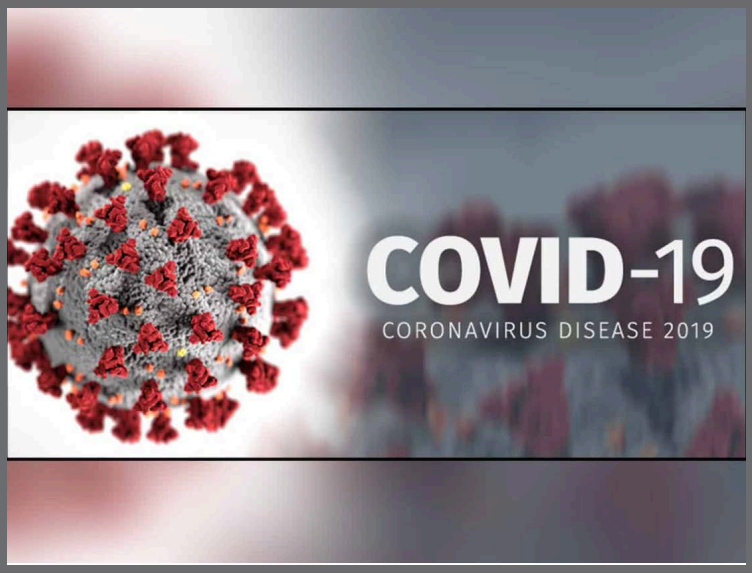
A BMRC RESEARCH DIGEST
Fall 2020

COVID-19, Migration and the Canadian Immigration System

Dimensions, Impact and Resilience



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What you need to know

COVID-19 has profoundly affected borders, migration, immigration and settlement in Canada. With the introduction of flexible immigrant supports, the settlement system and immigrants themselves have been resilient and have adapted to meet the additional challenges of settlement due to COVID-19. However, COVID-19 has brought to the fore the pandemic's inequitable negative impacts on temporary migrants and newcomers. Some government policies and programs in relation to asylum seekers, refugees, temporary migrant workers and foreign-born residents have compromised their security and rights.

What is this research about?

This report identifies, documents and assesses the many ways that COVID-19 pandemic has affected migration, borders, immigrant populations, and Canada's immigration and settlement system from March to July 2020. The study identifies underlying problems with the immigration and integration system that have been exacerbated by COVID-19. It is clear that newcomer populations, with other vulnerable groups, have borne the primary hardships associated with COVID-19.

How was the research carried out?

We undertook an extensive analysis of media sources to document developments related to COVID-19 and migration focused between March and July 2020. We also relied on data from government reports and various information sources, including Statistics Canada, academic and think tank-based studies, webinar and online conference materials, and grey literature from the community sector and civil society. This report is a preliminary and necessarily partial analysis given that the pandemic continues to evolve. We used the concept of social resilience to help frame the report

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What have we learned from the research?

COVID-19 has created many challenges, exacerbated vulnerabilities, and negatively impacted the rights, safety and well-being of various migrant and immigrant groups. The report documents many unfavourable outcomes, as well as some successes.

For example,

• the pandemic has highlighted the 'essential' work of many migrant workers, including caregivers and farm workers. Canada's immigrant selection criteria should be amended to reflect these skill needs.

• during the initial wave of the pandemic, the non-profit settlement sector innovated successfully by offering virtual delivery of services even in a context of great adversity. Going forward, IRCC should continue to enhance the capacity of the settlement sector by providing funds for innovation and enabling the use of federal funds for sector led innovative responses to local needs and circumstances.

• the value and efficacy of non-partisan evidence-informed responses to addressing the challenges of COVID-19 have shown their superiority in mitigating the pandemic threat and providing supports to Canadian residents (even in light of the gaps in service). In the post-COVID-19 period, however, there is a threat of a 'post-pandemic austerity agenda' with an entrenching of immigrant and migrant-based structural inequities. It is critical for progressive voices, including migrant organizations and migrants themselves, to push against austerity policy approaches in favour of social resilience strategies promoting structural change.

How can you use this research?

This report is aimed at providing accessible evidence-informed information and analysis on COVID-19 as it relates to migration, immigration and settlement in Canada. It can be used as a resource by civil society, the broader policy community, educators, and others to gain a deeper and broader understanding of the effects of COVID-19 on immigration and migration. As an emerging phenomenon, COVID-19 has created significant information gaps and this public resource is designed to help address gaps related to migration and immigration.

Who is leading this research?

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Learn more

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For access to the full report: https://bmrc-irmu.info.yorku.ca/files/2020/07/COVID-19-and-Migration-Paper-Final-Edit-JS-July-24-1.pdf?x82641