



IMMIGRANTS

Equity & Inclusion Lens Snapshot

IMMIGRANTS

We are from all over the world and have made Canada our home. Our diverse cultures enrich the city. We wish to contribute our skills and experiences to strengthening our neighbourhoods, workplaces, and the city. In Ottawa, we are growing at twice the rate of the general population and will be instrumental in replacing the aging workforce.

1. WHO WE ARE	3
2. OVERVIEW OF IMMIGRANTS IN OTTAWA	4
3. CONTRIBUTIONS WE MAKE	5
4. BARRIERS AND INEQUITIES	6
Employment and Education	6
Income	8
Language Barriers	9
Access to Information and Services	9
Varied Integration Processes	10
Racism and Subsequent Generations	11
Housing	11
Transportation	12
Health	12
Family and Parenting	13
5. WE ENVISION: AN IMMIGRANT-FRIENDLY CITY	14
6. COUNCIL MANDATES AND LEGISLATION	15
7. WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OTTAWA	15
8. RELEVANT PRACTICES IN OTHER CITIES	16
9. SOURCES	16
10. DEFINITIONS	18
11. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	19

This booklet is one of 11 Snapshots that serve as background information to aid in implementing the Equity and Inclusion Lens. To access them in an electronic version, visit the City of Ottawa Internal Site ([Ozone](#)) or the [Equity and Inclusion Lens webpage](#). Or the City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) [Equity and Inclusion webpage](#).



**A City For Everyone
Une ville pour tous**

1. Who We Are

We are the fastest growing population in Ottawa and have made Canada our home. We bring our rich and diverse skills and experiences to help build our neighbourhoods, communities, the city, and the country.

We are from all over the world. We are expanding the cultural diversity of our city as we come from more regions of the world than immigrants did in previous decades. Three in four of us are racialized, originating from Asia and the Middle East (53 percent) and Africa (17 percent) (City of Ottawa 2013). We bring a range of faith traditions. We may be Indigenous Peoples and/or refugees. However, our specific experiences are often not recognized as we settle in Canada.

We all have different experiences of settlement and the challenges we face transform over time as immigration policies and trends change. Legal immigration status makes a difference in our eligibility for various services, but it does not define us as a person or how we want to be treated by others in our day-to-day lives. Racism can make integration much harder for racialized immigrants. Coming here as a refugee carries different barriers than as an economic immigrant or skilled professional (Canadian Council for Refugees 2008).

INTERSECTIONALITY: COMPLEX, OVERLAPPING IDENTITIES

Each of us could identify with more than one group. It is this intersection, or crossover of identities of who we are that affects how we experience the city. This is called intersectionality. People's lives are multi-dimensional and complex. Lived realities are shaped by different factors and social dynamics operating together.

For more info access the [Equity and Inclusion Lens Handbook](#) and [Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide For Municipalities](#).

REFUGEE

A refugee is different from an immigrant. An immigrant is a person who chooses to settle permanently in another country while refugees have fled their countries because of fear of persecution, and are, therefore, unable to return home. Refugees selected for resettlement to Canada have often fled their homes because of unimaginable hardships and have, in many cases, been forced to live in refugee camps for many years. When they arrive in Canada, they must essentially start over again. Refugees bring their experiences and skills as well as their hopes and dreams to Canada. They contribute to an even richer and more prosperous society for us all (IRCC, 2016).

2. Overview of Immigrants in Ottawa

Ottawa's population is constantly in flux

- » Almost one in four (202,605 people) residents is an immigrant (though not necessarily racialized);
- » It has the 5th highest number of immigrants in Canadian cities;
- » 98.7 percent are permanent residents and citizens;
- » Many immigrants (16 percent) came between 2006 and 2011;
- » Female immigrants (53 percent) out-number male immigrants (47 percent);
- » 78 percent of immigrants in Ottawa are Canadian citizens;
- » The immigrant population in Ottawa is growing twice as fast as the city's general population (14.1 percent vs. 7.1 percent);
- » 8945 francophone immigrants arrived between 2006-2011 (Jedwab 2013);
- » Fewer immigrants have listed the city as their intended destination today (2.4 percent) than in 2000 (3.5 percent) (Statistics Canada 2015a);
- » The three most common immigrant languages are Arabic (8.3 percent), Chinese, not otherwise specified (3.9 percent), and Spanish (2.7 percent);
- » Source of immigrants to Ottawa by region (2011):
 - Asia and Middle East (43 percent)
 - Europe (28 percent)
 - Americas (15.7 percent)
 - Africa (12.6 percent)
- » Top countries of origin for recent immigrants include: the Philippines, China, Haiti, USA, India, Iraq, Iran, the U.K., Egypt, Congo, and Somalia.

In Canada...

- » There are 6,775,800 immigrants;
- » The foreign-born population (20.6 percent) is the highest among G8 countries;
- » The majority of immigrants live in Ontario (53.3 percent), British Columbia (17.6 percent), Quebec (14.4 percent), and Alberta (9.5 percent);
- » Almost all (91 percent) of Canada's immigrants (~6.8 million) live in a census metropolitan area (CMA);
- » Almost 60 percent of recent immigrants are between the ages of 25 and 54;
- » More than 200 ethnic origins were reported and 13 of those had populations of more than 1 million people;
- » Over half of recent immigrants come from Asia (including the Middle East);
- » Two-thirds of Canada's racialized population is immigrant;
- » Three-quarters of the immigrant population can conduct a conversation in more than one language. Most know English or French and another non-official language.

(Statistics Canada 2014)

3. Contributions we make

We are a qualified, educated, experienced and younger workforce that is driving the growth of Ottawa’s aging labour force. We are prominent in Ottawa’s business community. We bring in-depth knowledge of cultural, political and business nuances of global markets, linguistic diversity, and an ability to cater to the diverse needs of the community. These are strategic resources in acculturating Canadian businesses (City of Ottawa 2007).

Immigration represents a prominent source of population and labour force growth for the city of Ottawa. As such, immigration is central to Ottawa’s future economic and social development. (City of Ottawa 2013, 10)

We bring new opportunities to Ottawa through increased social, economic and cultural linkages to communities and markets around the world. Many of us who speak French are the key demographic that is contributing to the revitalization of French language use and Francophone culture in Canada’s capital.

We are active and engaged citizens in our city. Despite the fact that only those of us who have become citizens have the right to vote, some of us have become elected officials at different levels of government. Many of us volunteer and donate extensively in our communities and city-wide. We build informal networks of support for each other, and use our knowledge, experience and compassion to make Ottawa a welcoming community for all.

We are great contributors to arts and culture in Ottawa and its increasing diversification, as demonstrated by the numerous arts and cultural festivals that take place throughout the year. These include: [Haiti en fête](#); [Italian Week](#); [GreekFest](#); [Carivibe](#); and the [Latin American Festival](#). A full list of [Ottawa festivals and events](#) is online.

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— (City of Ottawa 2013, 10)

RACISM AND SUBSEQUENT GENERATIONS

Recent immigrants can face racism including:

- » Canadians' negative view of diversity and immigration, fearing job competition and other economic burdens;
- » ethnic hatreds that carry-over from countries of origin;
- » non-existence or lack of coordination of services that take racism into account.

(Social Planning Council of Ottawa 2002)

In addition to racism, women face gender-specific stereotypes, psychological and economic barriers that hinder employment and integration.

In addition to settlement issues, racialized immigrants – and even their Canadian-born children and grandchildren – face the added barrier of racism. Many Canadian-born children and grandchildren of immigrants are assumed to be immigrants or outsiders.

For example, they experience negative stereotyping, streaming in education, under- and unemployment, racial profiling in the justice system, or in recent years, Islamophobia (see **Snapshot – Racialized**).

HOUSING

Finding suitable housing is the second most serious problem faced by a majority of immigrants within the first six months of arrival (City of Ottawa 2007). Ottawa is a unique city with characteristics of both major metropolitan and second-tier cities. This balance may in fact impede the integration of newcomers. One potential factor could be rent levels.

Lack of affordable, adequate housing for families and extended family units can lead to overcrowding, unhealthy housing conditions, and stress or conflict in the household. In some cases, immigrants may arrive with money, but they face problems because they do not have credit history. It can also be difficult for immigrants to open a bank account, which is another prerequisite for obtaining housing.

Getting repairs is difficult when people do not have a good command of English or French or knowledge about tenancy laws. Sometimes landlords and managers take advantage of the situation and do not offer equitable service. Immigrant families, who have someone with disabilities or seniors that require care, have a hard time finding accessible housing (Social Planning Council of Ottawa 2008a).

Immigrants who live on low incomes tend to live in areas with high rates of poverty and this can lead to neighbourhood segregation by income and by race. The segregation often continues into the subsequent Canadian-born generations even after their economic conditions improve. Some immigrant parents and youth are concerned about safety and the influence of drug dealing near social housing neighbourhoods (Social Planning Council of Ottawa 2008a, Colour of Poverty 2010).

Immigrants face numerous challenges related to housing:

- » Lack of affordable housing can trap newcomers in a “cycle of deprivation,” where they are forced to divert income from essentials such as food and educational material to pay rent. In the long run, this compromises their chances of socio-economic advancement.
- » Lack of affordable housing jeopardizes immigrants’ prospects for integration, particularly in the face of discrimination on the basis of race, class and gender.
- » Poor housing leads to poor health, ranging from infectious diseases and injuries to chronic mental illness. Poor housing also causes poor health indirectly by contributing to poverty.
- » Immigrants, who do not have access to affordable housing, are severely constrained in terms of social networks and they postpone social development and civic engagement.
- » Lack of social housing leads immigrant women to face discrimination in the private market, especially if they are racialized or have children. Immigrant women suffering domestic abuse may be trapped in violence if they cannot access affordable housing to escape.
- » Immigrant children growing up in substandard housing face numerous educational and health difficulties, some of which persist strongly into adulthood.

(Wachsmuth 2008)

TRANSPORTATION

Access to transportation is key for immigrants to get to and from work, school, childcare, clinics and recreation. People who work at multiple jobs outside of regular commuting hours, seniors who seek to volunteer or socialize, parents who take care of children, the elderly or the sick and people who have mobility limitations, all need transportation that is affordable and easy to access.

HEALTH

Upon arrival in Canada, most immigrants are in better health than their Canadian counterparts. This is called the “healthy immigrant effect.” Unfortunately, immigrant health tends to deteriorate over time. This could be due to a range of factors, including the stress of migration, low income, poor working conditions, poor housing, change in the socio-cultural aspects of diet, activity, nutrition, the use of tobacco and alcohol, a lack of healthcare or culturally appropriate service delivery. Furthermore, Canadian immigration policies that can deny admission to those with certain health conditions could contribute to greater overall levels of health at arrival (Gushulak and Des Meules 2011).

New immigrants are twice as likely to have difficulties in accessing immediate care as individuals born in Canada. Language barriers to accessing health care and health promotion services exist for immigrants to Canada who do not speak an official language. Large numbers of newly arriving migrants are neither literate nor conversant in either of the two official languages (Gushulak and Des Meules 2011).

Lack of access to affordable, culturally relevant recreation services for immigrant families also affects their health and social connectedness. Racial discrimination can lead to lower self-esteem and higher levels depression among racialized immigrants (Colour of Poverty 2010). The overall health of immigrant and refugee women is often affected by the disruption in their lives, loss of familial and social networks, and living in a different socio-cultural context. Loss of social networks has a deeper impact for refugees who, unlike immigrants, are often forced out of their countries by circumstances beyond their control (Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre 2003).

“Among homeless youth in Ottawa, immigrants and refugees are over-represented, especially young women of Caribbean and African backgrounds.” — (Colour of Poverty 2010)

FAMILY AND PARENTING

Some immigrant parents feel that schools challenge their traditional values and their parenting authority, instead of working together to educate children. Immigrant seniors often feel the loss of their status and respect as elders after they move to Canada. Especially when they are seen only by their children or grandchildren as caregivers or good cooks.

Children of immigrant parents may feel split between two worlds. Many end up being the cultural interpreters for their parents and experience internalized shame about their identities.

Racial prejudice that youth and parents experience in mainstream institutions can also contribute to distrust of the system. However, many immigrants and immigrant youth develop strong adaptation skills and negotiate the different values on a day-to-day basis. Learning about their rights in Canadian society and multiple cultural competencies can build confidence and human capital (Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre 2003, Social Planning Council of Ottawa 2008a).

5. We Envision: an Immigrant- Friendly City

- » The City gives realistic and accurate information to prospective immigrants to Ottawa so as not to create false expectations when we arrive.
- » The City works closely with community agencies and immigrant groups to reduce the gap in information and services.
- » The City takes leadership in informing higher levels of government on policies and services for immigrants.
- » Immigrants can easily access information and services to meet their settlement-related and everyday needs.
- » City policies and services are designed and delivered with immigrants in minds.
- » Fair and equitable career development opportunities are available to immigrants.
- » International credentials and experience are fully utilized in the labour market and community building.
- » Cultures, languages and religions are respected, celebrated and embraced as part of Ottawa's diverse identity.
- » Leadership and positions of power in the workplace and decision-making are reflective of the community make-up.

WHAT CAN ALLIES DO?

- ✓ **Be aware of** my own culture's attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.
- ✓ **Don't** assume another culture is similar to mine.
- ✓ **Listen, observe, and describe** rather than evaluate.
- ✓ **Identify** my own learned assumptions and stereotypes
- ✓ **Make it my business** to learn about the deeper-than-visible elements of the cultures of my coworkers and clients.
- ✓ **Recognize** that initial perceptions are often inaccurate.
- ✓ **Develop** empathy. See a situation from my own and others' cultural perspective.
- ✓ **Perceive** "difference" as value added, not "less than".
- ✓ **Find out** how people want to be treated and respond accordingly.
- ✓ **Provide** on-going education to all staff in my team about cultural norms, values, communication style, approach to conflict, etc.
- ✓ **And, if I am an immigrant**, I know that my knowledge and experience can enrich the city.

(Hire Immigrants Ottawa 2008).

6. Council Mandates and Legislation

- » [Ontario Human Rights Code \(Provincial\)](#)
- » [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms \(Federal\)](#)
- » [Employment Equity Act \(Federal\)](#)
- » [Citizenship Act \(Federal\)](#)
- » [Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act \(Federal\)](#)

7. What's Happening in Ottawa

- » The City of Ottawa Council approved its 2nd Immigration Strategy. The Municipal Immigration Strategy 2016-2018 will continue to work on the following strategic areas: Planning and Coordination of Service Delivery; Communication and Public Awareness; and Employment and Economic Initiatives.
- » The City of Ottawa maintains an [Immigration Portal](#), which provides information on City programs and services of interest to immigrants.
- » The [Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership \(OLIP\)](#) is a multi-sectoral partnership involving [60 local organizations](#) working on a shared vision and common priorities designed to build local capacity to attract, settle, and integrate immigrants in 5 sectors: (1) settlement and orientation; (2) economic integration; (3) health and wellbeing; (4) language training and interpretation; and (5) socio-civic integration capacity development.
- » The [Francophone Immigration Support Network of Eastern Ontario \(RSIFEO\)](#) facilitates a process of local consultation and encourages partnerships for the development of projects aimed at the integration of francophone immigrants.
- » [ServiceOttawa's Language Line](#) offers support to clients at 3-1-1 and the Client Service Centres in over 170 different languages.
- » City of Ottawa Professional Internship for Newcomers (PIN) program provides newcomers with Canadian work experience through short term City of Ottawa paid employment positions. The program was launched in 2013.
- » The annual [Ottawa Immigration Entrepreneur Awards](#) was launched in 2012. The awards recognize the contributions of Immigrant Entrepreneurs to the local economy.
- » [The Ottawa Community Loan Fund](#) offers professional and business development loans targeted to newcomers.
- » [Hire Immigrants Ottawa \(HIO\)](#) – encourages local employers to hire newcomers and helps to facilitate the process. HIO organizes the Employer Council of Champions Summit. The City of Ottawa is proud to have received the 2010 Employer Excellence Award from Hire Immigrants Ottawa for outstanding achievement in the recruitment of skilled immigrants.

- » [LASI World Skills](#) (Local Agencies Serving Immigrants) – helps both newcomers and local employers by connecting internationally trained professionals with employers who are looking to fill labour gaps.
- » [Community and Police Action Committee](#): a city-wide community-police advisory and coordinating body representing a partnership between police and visible minority and Aboriginal communities in Ottawa. Its objective is to nurture and develop this community partnership by means of communication, respect, accountability, and freedom from fear and trust.
- » [Welcoming Ottawa Week \(WOW\)](#) is a week-long series of events, activities, and celebrations designed to convey Ottawa’s respect and genuine welcome to immigrants and refugees. Recurring annually on the last Week of June, the Welcoming Ottawa Week was initiated by OLIP and proclaimed by the Ottawa Mayor, Jim Watson on June 26th, 2013 in order to respond to two broad priorities of Ottawa’s Immigration Strategy (OIS), launched in June 2011.

8. Relevant Practices in Other Cities

[Advancing Equity and Inclusion: A Guide for Municipalities](#) presents a flexible approach to equity and inclusion and is adaptable to the diverse structures, contexts, and experiences of municipalities from across Canada. Flip through the different sections of this guide or visit [City for All Women Initiative \(CAWI\)](#) to find examples from municipalities across Canada.

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10. Definitions

IMMIGRANT – The term does not preclude Canadian citizenship status for individuals denoted with this term. Regardless of their class of immigration and date of arrival, a large majority of immigrants in Ottawa are Canadian citizens. Of the 168,125 immigrants living in the Ottawa region, 75 percent have over the years acquired Canadian citizenship. The remaining 41,695 of Ottawa’s immigrants are permanent residents of Canada (Social Planning Council of Ottawa 2004).

For the purposes of tracking the number of skilled immigrant workers at the City of Ottawa, the City defines “immigrant” more narrowly as “internationally trained worker, born outside Canada who has lived in Canada for less than 10 years.” (City of Ottawa – Immigrant Status Reporting (See Recent Immigrants)).

LANDED IMMIGRANT — “a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities.” (SPC 2004)

- » Economic immigrants are workers and their families who are accepted into Canada because of their skills or education.
- » Family Class immigrants are people who are sponsored by a family member who already lives in Canada.
- » Convention refugees are granted protection in Canada because they face persecution in another country.
- » Refugee claimants are people who are in Canada and have made a claim for protection. Over half of such claims are denied.
- » Non-status refers to anyone who’s living in Canada who, for different reasons, cannot obtain legal status or has status that expired.
- » Regularization means that non-status or undocumented people are given legal status in Canada. (Colour of Poverty #8)

NEWCOMERS — is an immigrant or refugee who has been in Canada for a short time, usually less than 3 or 5 years.

NON-PERMANENT RESIDENTS — include foreign workers, foreign students, refugees and refugee claimants (SPC 2004).

RECENT IMMIGRANTS — immigrants who came to Canada within the last 10 years, who are now, or have once been, landed immigrants. This includes individuals who came to Canada as refugees or refugee claimants, but have since their arrival acquired permanent residency status in Canada (SPC 2004; City of Ottawa 2007).

REFUGEE — a person who is forced to flee from persecution and who is located outside of their home country (CCR 2010)

11. Acknowledgments

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The original Equity and Inclusion Lens Guide and Snapshots were developed from 2008-2010 by an Equity and Inclusion Reference Group and working groups focusing on each of the 11 equity seeking groups profiled in the Snapshots.

City staff and community leaders contributed their knowledge and insights in the creation of this Snapshot.

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