A MATTER OF NEED: IMMIGRANTS AND USE OF SETTLEMENT SERVICES IN WESTERN CANADA

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The question of who accesses services, who needs services and who does not get services is a valuable consideration among service providing organizations, government agencies and newcomers themselves. This article uses information gleaned from recent telephone surveys of recently arrived newcomers (those in Canada for 5 years or less) to ascertain the rate that services are used, to identify some of the characteristics of those who do not access services and to make suggestions about settlement policy.

The question of service usage among immigrants to Canada is one that causes significant discussion, particularly among government officials and service providers. The source of the concern is vital as successful settlement, particularly in the early stages of integration, plays a significant role in predicting success in finding employment, settling into society and becoming Canadian. Despite our concern about successful settlement, there are competing interests in seeing immigrants successfully integrate. On one hand, the service provider community wants to ensure that all the people who need settlement services get them. From a social equality perspective, those requiring services must obtain the assistance they need to successfully compete with other Canadians for jobs, housing, education and other opportunities. On the other hand are questions concerning the accountable spending of meagre funds and a desire for an efficient and effective service delivery model. Are the services available meeting genuine needs of immigrants? Are they easily accessible? Do the services provide genuine avenues for success? While this article does not examine the utility of these services nor does it purport to offer a systematic examination of client satisfaction, it does provide valuable information related to the access of services among newcomers.

A few words need to be said about the interpretation of service usage among newcomers, which can be considered a caveat to the proceeding analyses. The definitions of settlement services or service use may be understood in multiple ways. When asked about settlement service use, newcomers may not recognize that they have, in fact, received what service providers, policymakers, or researchers would call "a service". For example, if newcomers receive initial settlement information from a faith-based or ethnocultural organization they may interpret this as a friendly inquiry from a peer rather than a settlement service. A monthly "wellbeing call" to a dependent spouse might be interpreted by the newcomer as someone simply caring about their health rather than being part of a newcomer service. Further, it is possible that some have forgotten about services they were given. As our data and others show, we cannot be certain that the newcomers misunderstood the question, but rather that misinterpretation or memory can influence the extent to which one recalls that a service was accessed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since settlement services are considered essential in helping immigrants integrate, find good jobs and feel part of Canadian society, it is surprising, then, that few studies have systematically studied settlement service use across Canada. A number of studies on settlement service use in Canada are centred on the province of Ontario and/or the greater Toronto region (Lo, et al. 2010; Sadiq, 2004). Toronto attracts the greatest number of immigrants to Canada and as such there is a need to ensure that immigrants' needs are being met there, but what about those settling in other provinces and regions? More comprehensive studies are required to comparatively examine the nature of settlement service use across Canada with the purposes of drawing attention to regional and provincial differences.

When studying settlement services, attention has been given to the unique settlement needs of different groups of newcomers. The literature demonstrates that not all newcomers are the same and that settlement needs vary depending on immigrant status, sex, source country, entrance class, or ethno-cultural group (Stewart, et al. 2008). Such studies also identify groups that are vulnerable to social exclusion and marginalization with the purpose of identifying barriers to service use and successful settlement. It is absolutely necessary to acknowledge that the settlement service needs of different groups of newcomers can vary considerably and if such differences are not considered then we may continue to erect barriers in the process of successful settlement. As such, this article details settlement service use across Canada's western provinces and territories, illustrating provincial and territorial differences and variations in service usage across such variables as sex, source country, employment status and entrance class.

METHODOLOGY

Survey respondents were contacted through information obtained from a Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) file of all newcomer landings between January 1, 2008 and December 31, 2012. Individuals were 18 years of age or older and reside in one of the four western provinces or territories. From that data file random samples were contacted from each province and territory.

The survey was conducted over the telephone between April and May 2013. The total sample includes 2,977 immigrants, 18 years of age and over, who had been living in one of the four western provinces and territories for between 3 and 60 months. The sample includes 744 respondents in British Columbia, 729 in Alberta, 713 in Saskatchewan, 750 in Manitoba and 40 in the Territories. The individual sample sizes for each province provided a margin of error of +/-4% and a confidence level of 95%. The response rate was 27%. All respondents were given a choice of English, French, Mandarin, Punjabi or Spanish in which to conduct the survey.

FINDINGS

Results from Table 1 below might be concerning to some; among those newcomers living in the western provinces and territories, only 33% indicated that they have accessed services, with some variation amongst the provinces. Initially this figure seems shockingly low. How is it possible that only about one-third of newcomers access services? Surely all newcomers need services? Our results, however, are not significantly different from other sources who have asked the same or similar questions. Results of the 2012 Alberta Settlement Survey find that 47% of newcomers access services in that province. A settlement service study of the York Region in Ontario found that less than a third of recent immigrants used such services (Lo, et al., 2010). These findings mirror those from ICAM, a CIC database that records the unique client visits to each

government sponsored settlement organization, where only 30% of newcomers ever access service nationally. So despite our initial concerns that we were somehow undercounting service use among immigrants, the available evidence from surveys and administrative databases indicates that while our figures may reflect actual service utilization, they may not accurately represent the 'true' number of service users.

TABLE 1: SETTLEMENT SERVICE USE

	Have Used Services	Have Not Used Services
	33.3% (n = 931)	66.7% (n = 1936)
British Columbia	31.7% (n = 226)	68.3% (n = 487)
Alberta	29.9% (n = 213)	70.1% (n = 500)
Saskatchewan	29.8% (n = 208)	70.2% (n = 491)
Manitoba	41.9% (n = 306)	58.1% (n = 424)
Territories	20.0% (n = 8)	80.0% (n = 32)

So, who comprises the one-third of newcomers accessing services? Our calculations reveal no sex differences with women being just as likely to access services as men. There is some age variation with those between the ages of 45 and 54 most likely to access services and those between 18 and 24 the least likely to use services. Not surprisingly, job status makes a difference; those who are unemployed and looking for work are more likely to access services than those who are working full- or part-time. Entrance class also makes a difference; 59.3% of refugees access services compared to 37.6% from the skilled worker (principal applicant) class. This is not a surprising revelation given that refugees at the pre-arrival stage often have more extensive contacts with service providers and government departments.

What about the other 67% of newcomers who report not accessing service? Do they actually need services? Are they accessing services but not locating them? Why have they not accessed services? One answer to concerns about limited service use is that newcomers might not require services because they obtain information through other means. When asked where they get information about settling, newcomers' most popular answer was "family and friends" (57.3%) followed by government websites (52.5%). In other words, many newcomers rely on already established networks that help them settle, integrate and obtain other services related to settlement. This is not to suggest that this group doesn't need services, nor do they not access them, but when asked about settlement and services, it was family and friends that first came to mind as sources of information.

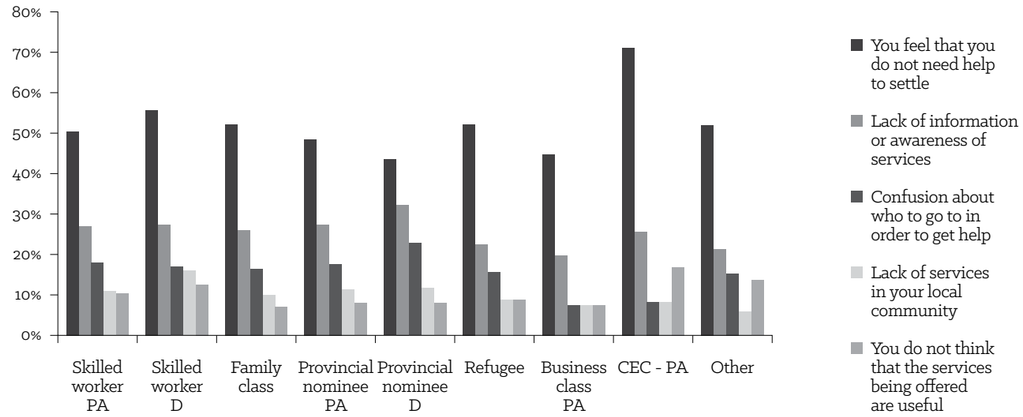
When asked why they have not used services, newcomers' most popular response was "You feel you do not need help to settle in your Province". The selection of this response varies considerably by birth region, though; newcomers born in Europe (64.7%) or North America (65.9%) are most likely to feel they do not need help. There is little variation by sex, with men being only slightly more likely than women to feel they do not need help. Unsurprisingly, those who are unemployed (41.1%) are most likely to need services, while those who are retired (76.9%) are most likely to not need services. Entrance class also influences reasons for not accessing services, as illustrated in Figure 1. Those in the Canadian Experience Class (CEC) are most likely to not need help to settle (71.4%) while those in the dependent (D) category of provincial nominees (43.5%) are least likely to not access help. Dependent provincial nominees are also most likely to lack information or awareness of services in their local community (32.4%) and feel confused about where to go to get help (23.1%).

Feeling that one does not need help settling does not necessarily mean that services have never been accessed; it may, however, be an indication that pre-existing or emerging networks other than organized services are used to assist in locating what newcomers need to successfully settle in Canada. So, the information received from family and friends may sufficiently address their needs. Or perhaps some newcomers exhibit considerable autonomy and agency over their own settlement processes and their lack of need indicates good pre-arrival preparation. It is not uncommon, for those who can afford it, to make reconnaissance missions to Canada prior to relocation. This makes good sense. Why give up everything at home before moving to a foreign land without doing extensive preparation? Evidence suggests that some skilled workers take leave of absences from their jobs rather than resigning as insurance in case relocation does not work. Sadly, statistics on return migration are not collected in Canada, but we wonder how many do return to their country of origin after struggling for a few months or a year. Another possibility is that the selection of immigrants, particularly the point system and provincial nominee programs, actually work. It is conceivable that immigrants with required skill sets and language fluency are appropriately selected for permanent residence and don't need as many services as we would expect.

CONCLUSION

To be clear, by presenting the notion that some newcomers may not feel they need services, we are not advocating a change or cut to the services provided to newcomers in Canada. In fact

FIGURE 1: REASONS FOR NOT ACCESSING SERVICES, BY ENTRANCE CLASS



it is quite the opposite. The researchers are acutely aware of the very good and necessary work done by community service providers. This is a group that is chronically underfunded, over-extended and often serves more clients than they record. We have evidence to suggest that some organizations extend their service mandates to assist undocumented and temporary workers, two groups that are largely ineligible for services. This important work is not counted, not funded and not appreciated by the larger society. While the number of newcomers actually accessing services may be alarming to some, it is useful to speculate what would happen if the other 67% of newcomers who do not use services suddenly started to access these services. Organizations would be completely overwhelmed.

Our purpose, then, is to begin an exercise in distinguishing between and identifying those who don't use services because they don't need them and those who do not access services but may be in great need of them. We cannot ignore that one-quarter of the respondents lacked information or awareness of services and 17.4% face confusion about who to go to in order to get help. Such information is troubling and suggests that there are newcomers who want services but face challenges in navigating the complicated network of services in their community. One clear recommendation from this is to give community organizations more assistance in advertising their services to raise awareness of what exists and how help may be obtained if needed. It may be worthwhile to target service advertisements to family and friends who are considering assisting (whether formally or informally) others to migrate to Canada since they provide invaluable and important information to newcomers. This group, however well intentioned, may not be providing the best services or the most up-to-date information about settlement given the continually evolving nature of practices around immigration. As well, Citizenship and Immigration Canada might consider providing basic settlement service information in visa acceptance letters.

Given that most newcomers have access to the internet prior to their arrival and that over 50% access settlement information online, increasing agencies' capacities to advertise and reorganize their websites would be a good investment. Easy and efficient access of services is vital to ensuring that those who need services can get them. If we were serious about providing the best settlement services to newcomers, we would make considerable efforts in locating services near to one another. While this may not be financially feasible, when the Ottawa YMCA relocated to across the street from a Citizenship and Immigration Canada service centre, the number of newcomers requiring assistance in completing government forms more than doubled. Having services located in close proximity with one another not only makes accessing services more convenient for newcomers, it may help create new synergies between immigrant serving organizations so they can better use their talent to assist newcomers in successful settlement in Canada.

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UNE QUESTION DE BESOINS : LES IMMIGRANTS ET L'UTILISATION DES SERVICES D'ÉTABLISSEMENT DANS L'OUEST CANADIEN

Jill Bucklaschuk est une candidate au doctorat au département de sociologie à l'Université du Manitoba. Dans sa thèse, elle examine les possibilités grandissantes pour les migrants temporaires de devenir des résidents permanents en abordant les expériences des migrants temporaires peu qualifiés alors que ceux-ci négocient leur situation sociale et leur statut temporaire au Canada.

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Janine Bramadat a grandi à Winnipeg, au Manitoba et elle a obtenu un baccalauréat en justice pénale de l'Université de Winnipeg. Elle vient tout juste d'obtenir sa maîtrise de l'Université du Manitoba et son principal intérêt de recherche est la violence conjugale envers les femmes nouvellement arrivées au Canada. Son sujet de thèse aborde la question complexe et délicate de la violence conjugale envers les femmes nouvellement arrivées au Canada, elle y examine les politiques entourant le système canadien d'immigration, le Code criminel canadien et les procédures provinciales. Elle travaille actuellement comme analyste des politiques à l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba.

Déterminer qui bénéficie des services, qui a besoin de services et qui n'a pas accès à des services est une considération importante pour les organismes de prestation de services, les agences gouvernementales et les nouveaux arrivants. Cet article est basé sur des données recueillies par des sondages téléphoniques menés auprès de nouveaux arrivants récemment établis au Canada (cinq ans ou moins) qui visaient à déterminer le taux d'utilisation de ces services, cerner les caractéristiques de ceux qui n'ont pas recours à ces services et formuler des recommandations à propos des politiques d'établissement.

La question de l'utilisation des services d'établissement par les nouveaux arrivants au Canada en est une qui entraîne de nombreuses discussions, en particulier parmi les représentants du gouvernement et les prestataires de services. Accorder une attention sérieuse à cette source d'inquiétude est essentiel puisque la réussite de l'établissement, en particulier lors des premières étapes de l'intégration, joue un rôle déterminant lors de la recherche d'emploi, de l'adaptation à la société et du processus de devenir Canadien. Malgré nos inquiétudes face à la réussite de l'établissement, il existe cer-