WHEN IT COMES TO MIGRANT BELONGING AND TRUST, IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY, MONEY...: A COMPARISON OF CANADA'S REFUGEES AND ECONOMIC IMMIGRANTS

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Immigrant integration and settlement is often seen as a sort of linear process. But considerable research questions this notion. Does social integration occur at a quicker pace amongst those immigrants who perform or adjust better economically? Employing data from Statistics Canada's 2013 General Social Survey (GSS Cycle 27) on social identity, the authors assess the social integration of newcomers by virtue of the economic category under which they were admitted. They describe newcomer trajectories that are often multifaceted and complex.

Over time the economic standing of skilled workers and refugees improves. On average, while refugees lag behind skilled workers on almost all economic indicators, they do better when it comes to their sense of belonging. The authors conclude that the higher sense of belonging on the part of Canada's refugees is connected to the reasons for their departure from their country of origin.

Research has shown that integration is far from linear. What we don't know is whether or not social integration occurs at a quicker pace amongst those immigrants who perform or adjust better economically. Canada's immigrant selection process favors skilled workers with a view that they have a better opportunity to secure employment and presumably hold an advantage over others when it comes to integration. By consequence, their impact on the economy is more visibly immediate. But what about the non-economic dimensions of integration? How do immigrants fare in that regard? Using data from Statistics Canada's 2013 General Social Survey (GSS Cycle 27) on Social Identity, we compare aspects of social integration for immigrants selected in the economic category (under the points system) with refugees admitted to the country.

We contend that integration patterns do not necessarily proceed in a straight line and that the trajectories followed by migrants are often multifaceted and complex. In effect, different aspects or dimensions of integration do not follow parallel lines and hence identifying connections between them is not simple.

Why is a paper comparing economic and social integration among skilled workers and refugees needed? While there is considerable research about economic indicators among skilled and other professional workers, the link between belonging and trust merits greater attention. Does money buy trust and belonging? Perhaps this relationship is different due to the circumstances which brought skilled workers and refugees to Canada. Skilled workers tend to come for economic reasons — to earn more money, to have a better standard of living for their families and other objective reasons. Refugees, in contrast, are involuntary migrants, forced from their homelands due to extreme violence. In an alternate reality, they wouldn't be in Canada. It also means that by definition, refugees come less prepared — meaning that they are much less likely to know English or French prior to arrival which is increasingly a requirement for skilled workers. They also have lower levels of education and less work experience than economic class immigrants. They are also, on average, much younger than other immigrant groups — meaning that they have less work and educational experience than their economic class counterparts. They are also a group that has experienced extreme persecution, so we might expect that their sense of belonging and trust scores would be lower than other immigrant groups. It makes a comparative study a very interesting case to analyse.

A 2010 survey of Canadians conducted by Ekos research for Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) identifies several key hurdles facing newcomers in establishing themselves in Canada. Amongst the ones that come to mind most often are language/cultural barriers (mentioned by 61% of Canadians), followed by employment (31%). Social concerns (such as housing, daycare, racism – 17%) and credential recognition (10%) were also mentioned by a number of the respondents surveyed. In this paper, we examine two key aspects to the integration process among skilled workers and refugees. We investigate various aspects related to economic integration among these two groups, followed by an examination of the sense of belonging to Canada and various kinds of trust (towards people in general, neighbors, and people at work and school) as key determinants of this type of integration. We begin with a short description of the demographic characteristics of these two groups.

SELECTED SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF REFUGEES AND ECONOMIC IMMIGRANTS

Although there are a number of assumptions about the profile of refugees, they constitute a diverse group in terms of ethnic and economic backgrounds. Neither refugees nor economic immigrants are monolithic, nor does the Canadian government treat them in the same way. There are a number of programs that comprise the refugee program in Canada. The private sponsorship of refugees program (PSR) allows groups of Canadians to financially and socially sponsor refugees selected to come to Canada. The government assisted refugee program (GAR) provides federal support to individuals who are identified as refugees from abroad. Unlike the PSR program, the GAR program is run entirely by the federal government[1]. There are fundamental differences in the time it takes for GARs to economically and socially integrate when compared with their PSR counterparts. Unfortunately, we are not able to address these differences here.

As observed below, between 2005 and 2014 the source areas of refugees to Canada shifted considerably. In 2005, 31.8% of refugees came from Africa and the Middle East compared with 33.7% from the Asia and Pacific region and 10.5% from the United Kingdom; yet by 2014, nearly 60% came from Africa and the Middle East compared with some 18% from Asia and Pacific and 5% from Europe and the United Kingdom. Conversely, economic migrants are far more likely to come from Asian and Pacific regions than any other group (54%) in 2005, a pattern that has not significantly changed by 2014. (See chart 1.)

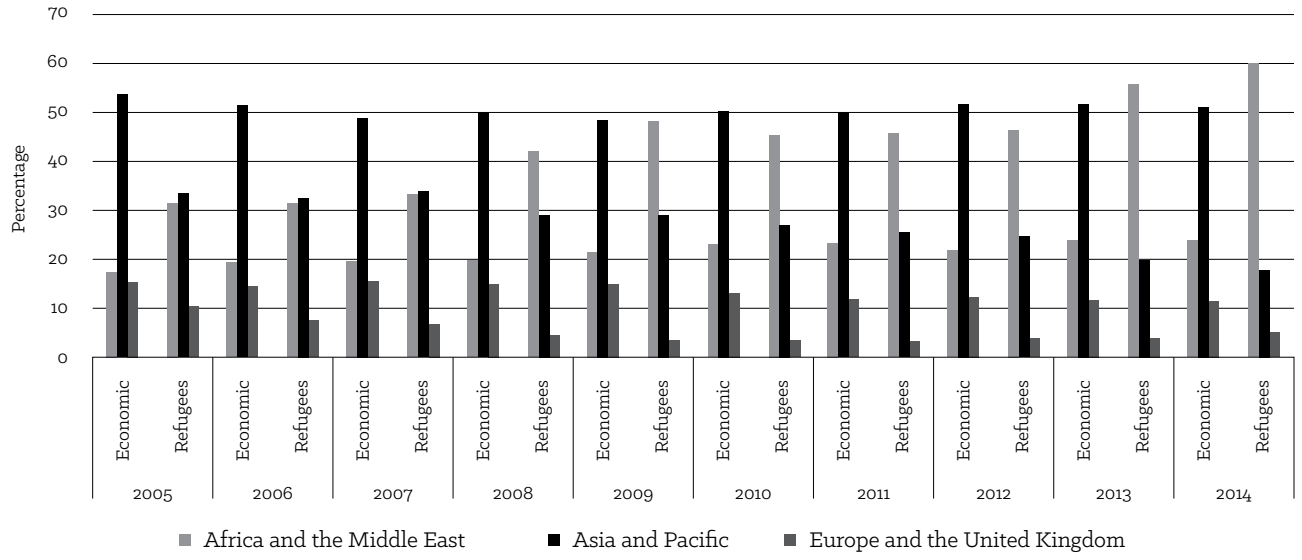
It's fair to assume that as a whole, the degree of vulnerability of most refugees upon arrival in Canada is greater than for economic immigrants that are frequently selected by the government on the basis of skills that are designed to be in line with existing economic needs. Recent research by Hou and Picot (2016) and by Bevelander and Pendakur (2012) confirm that the economic integration of refugees is much slower than among skilled worker and other economic immigrants.

LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION OF REFUGEES AND SKILLED WORKERS

Mastery of a country's official language is regarded as an important dimension of newcomer integration. Beiser and

1 The refugee assistance program is actually far more complicated, with other streams of entry including the Blended Visa Office Referral Program (BVOR) and the Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program. Please see Wilkinson and Garcea (2016) for additional descriptions of this program.

CHART 1: TOTAL BY SOURCE AREA (PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION) VS. REFUGEES (PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION)



Source: Citizenship and Immigration Canada, "Facts and Figures-2014: Immigration Overview: Permanent Residents

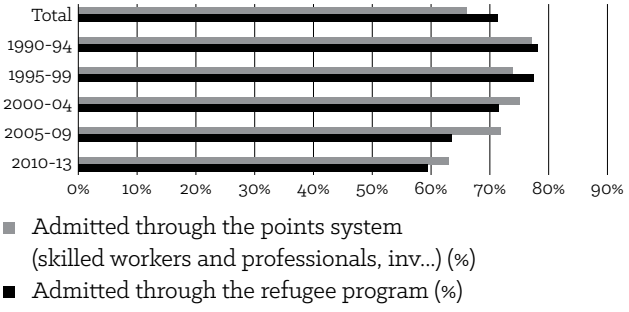
Hou (2000) noted the important role of language proficiency in unemployment and labour force participation. Data from CIC point to important differences in the extent to which economic immigrants and refugees respectively report language knowledge upon arrival in the country. More recent immigrants are far more likely to arrive with English or French language knowledge due to changes in immigration policy. In 2005, some 17% of economic immigrants spoke neither English nor French upon arrival compared with 6.8% in 2014. As for the spouses and dependants of economic immigrants, some 49.2% spoke neither English nor French upon arrival in 2005 and the share reduced to 27.4% amongst those who arrived in 2014. In the case of refugees amongst those who arrived in 2005, some 32.6% spoke neither English nor French upon arrival compared with 54.2% in 2014. This is largely due to changes in source country of origin. Refugees arriving today are far less likely to have previous exposure to English or French than cohorts arriving in the 1990s or early 2000s.

In the GSS 27 data on education levels nearly 52% of economic immigrants with university degrees in contrast with 28% of refugees. This difference is hardly surprising. Refugees come to Canada because they are forced out of their country of origin. Skilled workers, in contrast, plan to come to Canada and are rewarded in the immigration process by being awarded extra points for post-secondary education. Whether or not education has economic value after arrival in Canada has little bearing on either groups economic and social integration.

EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME

Just as there are gaps in official language knowledge and educational attainment when refugees are compared to economic immigrants, we find that there are differences in employment status, at least during the first years in Canada. The GSS data finds that the differences in employment are eliminated between ten and fifteen years after arrival. Among refugees arriving in the period between 2010 and 2013, only 59.4% were employed compared with 63.1% of those in the skilled worker program – a 4% gap in employment. But the 1990-1994 and 1995-1999 refugee cohorts are actually more likely to be employed today than those arriving under the skilled worker program at the same time.

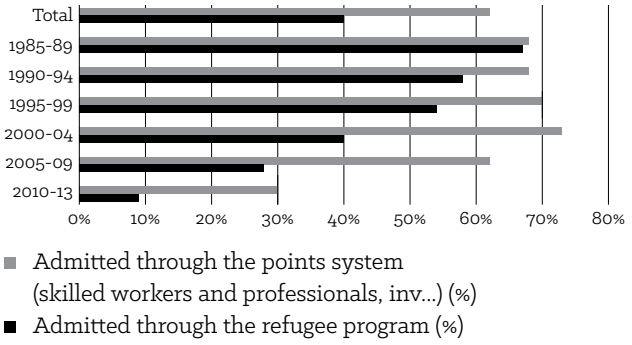
CHART 2: PERCENTAGE OF IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED THROUGH THE REFUGEE AND POINTS SYSTEM RESPECTIVELY WORKING IN WEEK PRIOR TO THE SURVEY



Source: Statistics Canada, special compilation, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

On the basis of household income, perhaps not surprisingly, the GSS data reveals that a considerably higher share of economic immigrants is in the upper most income bracket. In 2013, one-third of skilled workers were living in households with incomes between $100,000 and $149,999, compared with only 24% of refugees. That said, about 21% of refugees report income of less than $30,000. Two-thirds of all skilled workers have incomes greater than $60,000 per year compared with just under 50% of refugees.

CHART 3: IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED THROUGH THE REFUGEE AND POINTS SYSTEM RESPECTIVELY BY TIME OF ARRIVAL WITH A HOUSEHOLD INCOME $60 000 AND MORE



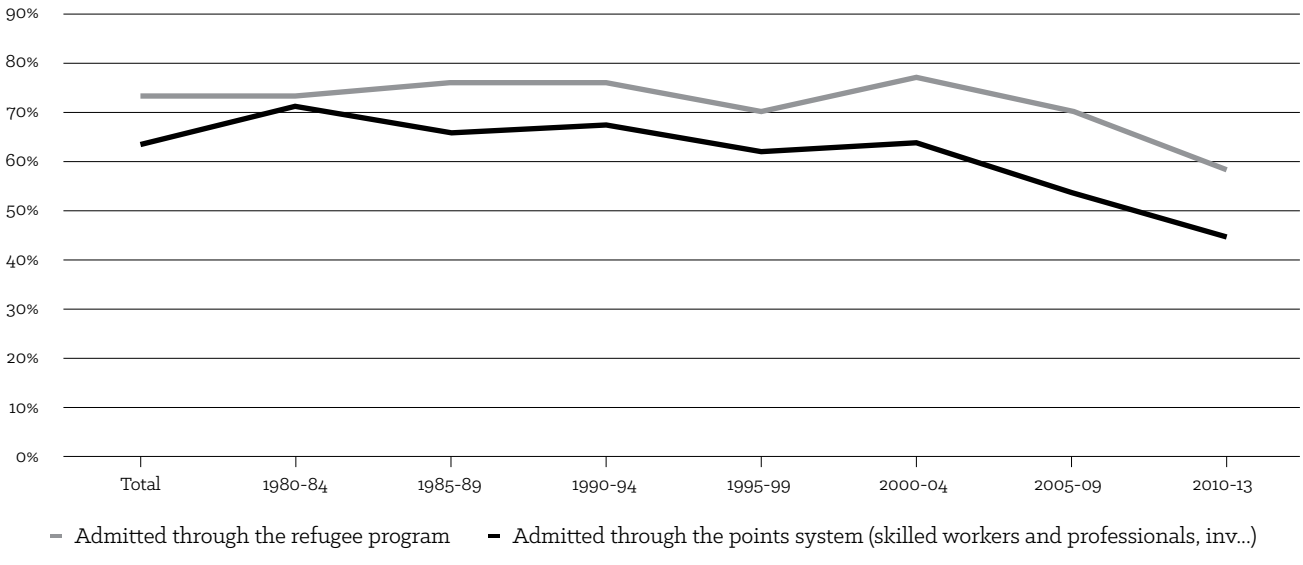
Source: Statistics Canada, special compilation, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

SOCIAL INTEGRATION: SENSE OF BELONGING

As observed above with respect to language knowledge, education and income, it might be concluded that economic immigrants might meet key dimensions of integration much faster than refugees. If indeed upon arrival refugees encounter higher levels of economic vulnerability than do economic migrants, should it follow that they encounter a different trajectory when it comes to key elements of social integration? In other words, does a stable income and job ensure social integration among newcomers? The results of the GSS are surprising.

When comparing the sense of belonging to Canada on the part of refugees and skilled workers on the basis of time of arrival, since 1980 refugees manifest higher and more positive scores on belonging than economic immigrants regardless of year of arrival. The gap is widest amongst those migrants that arrived over the past fifteen years. Among those in Canada for the longest period of time, refugees outscore skilled workers by 10% in terms of sense of belonging. Even among the most newly arrived, refugees score 13% higher than skilled workers. This is counter-intuitive because refugees are generally in precarious employment and income situations in their first three years in Canada. It could be that economic indicators are not tied to sense of belonging at all.

CHART 4: PERCENTAGE OF REFUGEES AND SKILLED WORKERS WITH STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING BY YEAR OF ARRIVAL



Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

While refugees exhibit a higher sense of belonging to Canada than economic immigrants, the former have a somewhat lesser sense of belonging to their country of origin. In comparison to other immigrants, refugees score significantly lower in this regard. Table 3 shows that is worth noting that immigrants possess a much higher sense of belonging to Canada than to their country of origin, with 31% of refugees feeling a strong sense of belonging to their country of origin

compared with 36% of skilled workers. Perhaps this is not surprising as refugees were forced to flee their countries involuntarily, many experiencing extreme violence, loss and death of loved ones.

TABLE 1: SENSE OF BELONGING TO COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND CANADA FOR IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED THROUGH THE REFUGEE PROGRAM AND THE POINTS SYSTEM

Sense of belonging to…	Canada		Country of Origin	
	Admitted through the refugee program	Admitted through the points system (skilled workers and professionals, inv...)	Admitted through the refugee program	Admitted through the points system (skilled workers and professionals, inv...)
Very strong	73.2%	63.7%	31.5%	36.5%

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

Sense of belonging is influenced partly by area of origin. As regards sense of belonging to Canada on the basis of the source areas of immigrants, the table below reveals that refugees originating from Africa report the highest sense of belonging to Canada. This too is interesting given that there is strong evidence that African immigrants are more likely to report experiencing racism and discrimination in Canada than other newcomers.

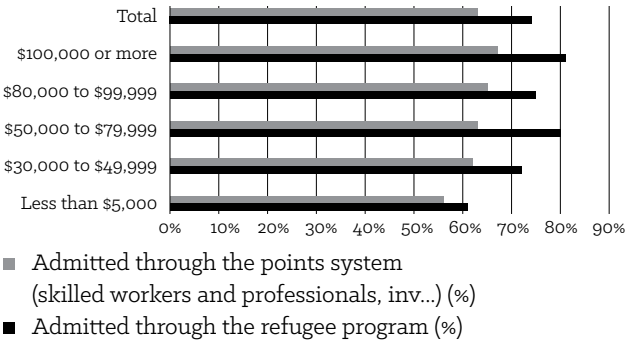
TABLE 2 : VERY STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING TO CANADA BY SOURCE FOR IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED THROUGH THE REFUGEE PROGRAM AND THE POINTS SYSTEM

Source Area	Very Strong Sense of Belonging to Canada	
	Admitted through the refugee program	Admitted through the points system (skilled workers and professionals, inv...)
Americas	69.1%	63.3%
Europe	73.9%	66.8%
Africa	80.8%	68.9%
Asia	70.7%	60.7%

Source: Statistics Canada, special compilation, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

If income is a key indicator of integration, should it be assumed that when income differences are removed for classes of immigrants, the outcome is roughly similar levels of social integration (in this case as measured by sense of belonging to Canada)? In effect, the GSS data does not provide empirical support for the link between income and sense of belonging as regards social integration. This is due to the fact that a higher sense of belonging amongst refugees persists despite relative parity in income levels with economic immigrants. For example, nearly two-thirds of refugees who don't have income have a strong sense of belonging to Canada, compared with only 56% of skilled workers. At the other end of the income bracket, 81% of refugees with household incomes greater than $100,000 feel a strong sense of belonging, compared with only 67% of skilled workers.

CHART 5: VERY STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING TO CANADA BY INCOME BRACKET, REFUGEES AND SKILLED WORKERS COMPARED



Source: Statistics Canada, special compilation, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

SOCIAL INTEGRATION: TRUST

Another key dimension of social integration examined here is the degree of trust on the part of immigrants with a focus on trusting people in general, trust of people in one's neighborhood and trust of persons at work and in school. On each of these measures, the GSS 27data reveal that refugees are less trusting than economic immigrants. Only 45% of refugees believe most people can be trusted, while nearly 60% of skilled workers feel the same. Two-thirds of skilled worker immigrants trust people at their place of work or school compared to only 57% of refugees. Less than half of refugees trust people in their neighbourhood, while nearly two-thirds of skilled workers feel trust toward their neighbours. Perhaps this finding is not surprising as trust is a very precious commodity — something that is irrevocably extinguished when witnessing large scale social violence.

TABLE 3: TRUST LEVELS FOR IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED THROUGH THE REFUGEE PROGRAM AND THE POINTS SYSTEM

	Admitted through the refugee program	Admitted through the points system (skilled workers and professionals, inv...)
Most people can be trusted	45.4%	45.4%
*People in neighbourhood	47.2%	47.2%
* Work and School	56.6%	56.6%

* Trust 4 and 5 on a 5 point scale where 1 means "Cannot be trusted at all" and 5 means "Can be trusted a lot"

Source: Statistics Canada, special compilation, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

With relatively few exceptions, the detailed table below reveals that there is no statistically significant difference between persons admitted via the refugee program and those admitted via the points system when it comes to gaps in trust regardless of when they've respectively arrived in Canada. In effect, the time in Canada doesn't influence trust measures which remain consistently higher for persons admitted to the country as refugees.

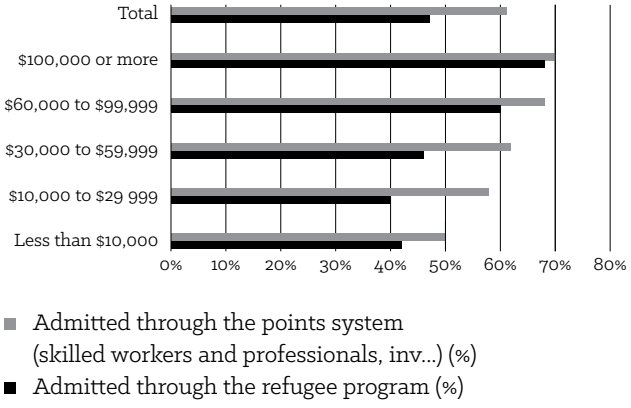
TABLE 4: TRUST LEVELS BY TIME OF ARRIVAL FOR IMMIGRANTS ADMITTED THROUGH THE REFUGEE PROGRAM AND VIA THE POINTS SYSTEM

	Trust People in General		Trust - People in neighbourhood		Trust - People from work or school	
	Admitted through the refugee program	Admitted through the points system (skilled workers and professionals, inv...)	Admitted through the refugee program	Admitted through the points system (skilled workers and professionals, inv...)	Admitted through the refugee program	Admitted through the points system (skilled workers and professionals, inv...)
TOTAL	45.4%	59.8%	47.3%	60.1%	56.6%	68.8%
1975-1979	50.0%	73.8%	39.4%	61.0%	51.7%	63.7%
1980-1984	46.9%	64.4%	46.2%	63.2%	55.8%	78.5%
1985-1989	53.3%	58.0%	57.2%	60.5%	72.4%	69.6%
1990-1994	45.2%	58.5%	52.6%	55.9%	56.2%	68.7%
1995-1999	43.8%	61.3%	42.6%	62.6%	57.2%	68.5%
2000-2004	48.8%	59.2%	54.1%	59.7%	58.6%	69.1%
2005-2009	37.2%	56.5%	32.4%	51.8%	47.1%	67.0%
2010-2013	30.0%	52.5%	35.5%	50.3%	42.3%	64.9%

Source: Statistics Canada, special compilation, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

Unlike sense of belonging, trust measures are influenced by income bracket. In general, as income increases, so does trust, though the increase is more apparent for skilled workers than for refugees. As well, there is no income bracket where trust scores for refugees is greater than for skilled workers. Although increasing economic stability does increase trust among refugees, it never reaches parity with skilled workers. In short, money does not buy trust for refugees.

CHART 6: VERY STRONG SENSE OF BELONGING TO CANADA BY INCOME BRACKET, REFUGEES AND SKILLED WORKERS COMPARED



Source: Statistics Canada, special compilation, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

SOCIAL IDENTITY: SENSE OF BELONGING AND TRUST

In the case of refugees, we observed that they generally exhibit a higher sense of belonging to Canada than do economic immigrants while they feel less trusting of others. That relationship is counterintuitive as data from GSS 27 for the total population underscore the importance of strong sense of belonging to Canada as a driver of higher levels of trust of others.

Does this relationship hold when we compare economic immigrants to refugees? The data also indicates that the same is true for immigrants, but that when economic immigrants and refugees possess a similar sense of belonging to Canada, the gap of trust in others remains quite steep between the two. Amongst those possessing a very strong sense of belonging to Canada some 47% of those admitted to Canada as refugees believed that most people could be trusted. This is in marked contrast to those with a very strong sense of belonging to Canada that were admitted under the point system where 61% felt that people could be trusted.

CONCLUSION

What we have learned is that skilled workers and refugees differ in some surprising ways. As time in Canada increases, so does the economic standing of skilled workers and refugees. Although refugees still on average lag behind skilled workers in almost all economic categories, they out-pace them in measures of sense of belonging. It is not surprising that refugees have high sense of belonging to Canada as they are fleeing vastly more dangerous and unstable situations than many skilled workers. What is surprising is that among certain groups, like Africans, sense of belonging is significantly higher—surprising considering that this group is the most likely to experience discrimination in Canada.

Less surprising is the low level of trust that refugees express relative to their economic migrant counterparts. Trust is a precious commodity. Once it is lost for any reason, it can be very difficult to regain. What is surprising is that trust is not affected by sense of belonging. Those with less trust are not necessarily more likely to have a lower sense of belonging — and vice versa. Trust is truly a distinct condition than sense of belonging.

Trust and sense of belonging, however, cannot be bought.

TABLE 5: DEGREE OF BELONGING TO CANADA AND LEVEL OF TRUST FOR THE TOTAL CANADIAN POPULATION

	Very strong	Somewhat strong	Somewhat weak	Very weak
Most people can be trusted	58%	48%	42%	37%
* Trust - People in neighbourhood	65%	54%	43%	40%
* People from work or school	72%	63%	52%	53%

* Can be trusted a lot 4 and 5

Source: Statistics Canada, special compilation, General Social Survey (Cycle 27), Social Identity, 2013

Having more money does not necessarily bring a stronger sense of belonging and higher levels of trust, particularly among refugees. That economic stability doesn't have as strong an influence on trust and sense of belonging is a reassuring finding in terms of social integration measures, at least among the newcomer population. And maybe this is an important consideration. Maybe Jesse J. was right "it's not about the money...".

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