TRACKING INTERREGIONAL MOBILITY AMONG RECENTLY ARRIVED REFUGEES IN CANADA

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Using the Immigration Database (IMDB),the purpose of the study was to track the interregional mobility among three cohorts of refugees arriving to Canada between 2000 and 2013. Confirming previous studies, favourable gains were made by the Prairies region although Ontario and Québec also benefited from migratory interchanges. All refugee subcategories participated in these movements. Newly arrived refugees will eventually embark into interregional migration a few years after arrival bringing settlement challenges to both the sending and receiving regions.

À l'aide de la Base de données sur l'immigration (BDIM), l'étude visait à suivre la mobilité interrégionale entre trois cohortes de réfugiés arrivant au Canada entre 2000 et 2013. Confirmant les études précédentes, des gains favorables ont été enregistrés dans la région des Prairies, bien que l'Ontario et le Québec aient également bénéficié d'échanges migratoires. Toutes les sous-catégories de réfugiés ont participé à ces mouvements. Les réfugiés nouvellement arrivés se lancent habituellement dans la migration interrégionale quelques années après leur arrivée, ce qui entraîne des problèmes de peuplement dans les régions d'origine et d'accueil.

Between 2012 and 2014, 92,881 refugees were admitted to Canada and these represented approximately 12% of the total intake for this period. Like in the past, Canada's five major geographical regions (Atlantic, Québec, Ontario, Prairies, and British Columbia) were important macro-contexts for refugee settlement. They are the hubs for labour force markets, industry, trade, commerce and significant demographic concentrations. They also differ in the ability to attract and retain newcomers. Ontario, Québec and British Columbia offer a wide range of social and economic opportunities, which are highly attractive to both refugees and other immigrant groups. They are "magnets" for both immigrants and refugees. Things are less clear cut in the Prairies and the Atlantic struggle with both attracting and retaining newcomers.

Refugees are social actors whose migration decisions occur within very constrained choices. In order to cross regional boundaries, refugewes mobilize considerable financial and social resources and overcome significant distance, institutional, and linguistic related barriers. If opportunities in cities

or towns close to their place of residence, refugees may embark on "long-distance" migration across their host countries. Like other immigrants, residential decisions of refugees in their new countries are tied to the perceived costs and benefits of moving elsewhere. Costs may range from losing access to local welfare, housing and social services to leaving established social networks and government or sponsors' support. Benefits may include better, higher paying jobs and being closer to co-ethnics residing in the major urban centers of the host societies.

Based on these considerations, there are several important research questions worth pursuing. For instance, what is the general picture of refugees' interregional mobility? Does interregional mobility increase after arrival to Canada? Looking at regional inflows and outflows, what are the typical socio-demographic characteristics of refugees participating in interregional moves? Focusing on three cohorts of refugees arriving between 2000 and 2013, this analysis utilized tabular data from the Canadian "Immigration Database" (IMDB) to track refugees' geographical mobility during this particular period to provide a historical summary and address some these important research questions. It should be noted that the major thrust of this paper was to identify the broad patterns of interregional mobility and, in this sense, the work undertaken is essentially descriptive.

DO REFUGEES STAY OR LEAVE?

Interregional mobility and period or residence: Out of the 181,005 thousand refugees entering Canada during 2000-2013, 15% had already left their original region of landing by 2013. For the 2000-2004 cohort 17% moved, for the 2005-2009 cohort 12% moved, and 9% for the 2010-2013 one. The likelihood of interregional moves, thus, increases with the length of residence of refugees in the country.

"Winners" and "Losers" of Mobility Exchanges: In terms of regional gains, between 2000 and 2013, Alberta benefited the most from the influx of immigrants, including refugees. Net migration rates or *NMRs* calculated for Alberta were found positive for arrival cohorts in this period. In absolute terms, Alberta received more than 4,000 refugees from the first two refugee arrival study cohorts (2000-2004 and 2005-2009) and about 2,300 from the third one (2010-2013). British Columbia was also a net gainer in the first two arrival cohorts and Ontario gained only in the first arrival cohort. The Atlantic and Québec regions lost the most refugees to interregional interchanges. The Atlantic region lost 3,100 refugees from the first arrival cohort, 6,400 from the second and 4,800 from the third.

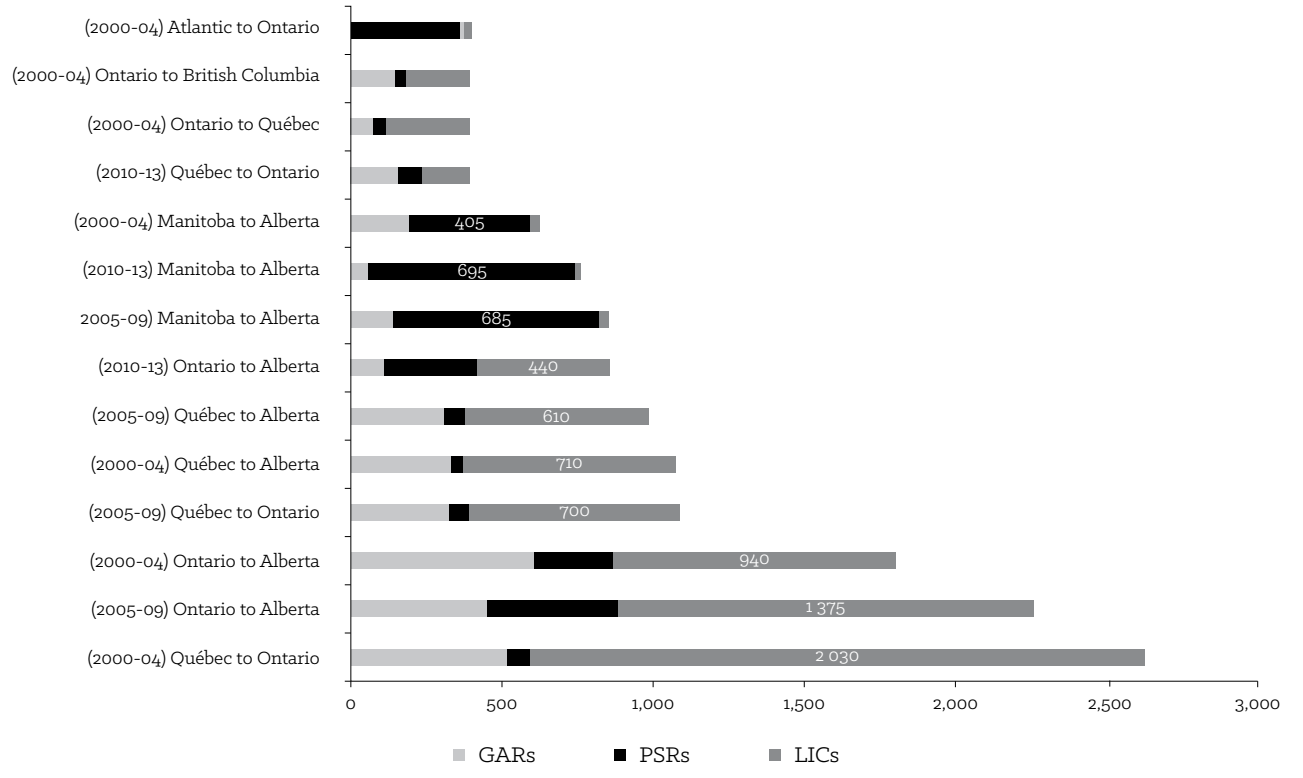
Refugee subcategories and interregional mobility exchanges: Both Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) and Privately Sponsored Refuges (PSRs) contributed to positive *NMR's* with respect to their in-migration to the Alberta region. Net migration gains of 1,400 GARs were noticeable for the 2000-2004 arrival cohort, 1,200 for the 2005-2009 cohort and 400 for the 20010-2013 one. PSR net gains for the Alberta region totaled 1,200 for the 2005-2009 cohort and less than one thousand for the other cohorts. Net gains in Ontario were attributed to inflows of GARs coming from Québec and the Atlantic region. Positive *NMRs* for Ontario were observed for the three arrival cohorts of GARs. With respect to Landed in Canada (LICs), all Prairies Provinces and British Columbia displayed mostly positive net migration rates for first and second arrival cohorts suggesting greater inflows to these areas for this refugee category.

Prairies Provinces and British Columbia displayed mostly positive *NMRs* for first and second arrival cohorts suggesting greater inflows to these areas for this refugee category. Alberta's net gain of LICs totaled 1,600 and 1,900 among those from the first and second arrival cohorts. Patterns for dependents resembled those of the general population of refugees in terms of in-flows direction towards Ontario and the Prairie region.

Historical Flows 2000-2013: Figure 1 shows the largest interregional mover flows for the three arrival cohorts by the major refugee categories observed at tax year 2013. LIC refugees were over-represented in the largest flows particularly those from to Québec to Ontario and Ontario to Alberta Also noticeable was the presence of PSRs in three flows directed from Manitoba to Alberta for the three arrival cohorts as well as that of GARs in the flow from the Atlantic region to Ontario for the first arrival cohort.

Socio-demographic correlates of the mover status of flows: To identify the major socio-demographic correlates of interregional mover status of flows, socio-demographic characteristics of 71 interregional "mover" flows were contrasted to those of 21 interregional "stayer" flows. Principal Components Analyses (PCA) was used to identify these and reduce the data to a number of "manageable" dimensions. It produces bi-plots reported in Figure 2, which presents a bi-plot comprising 15 indicators related to the socio-demographic composition of refugee flows including gender, age, birthplace, official language proficiency and educational characteristics of flows. Indicator vectors found the closest to the interregional mover status vector were those related to the percent of males, percent of those aged 25-34 at arrival, percent of African-born, 3 of high school education and percent lacking official language skills. The refugee subcategory vectors were not as closely situated to the status vector as the former vectors. These all play important roles in determining interregional mobility compared to refugee landing categories.

CHART1: TOP INTERREGIONAL MOVER FLOWS OF REFUGEE ARRIVAL COHORTS, TAX YEAR (2013)



Source: IMDB especial table, 2016 IMDB especial table, 2016

REFLECTIONS

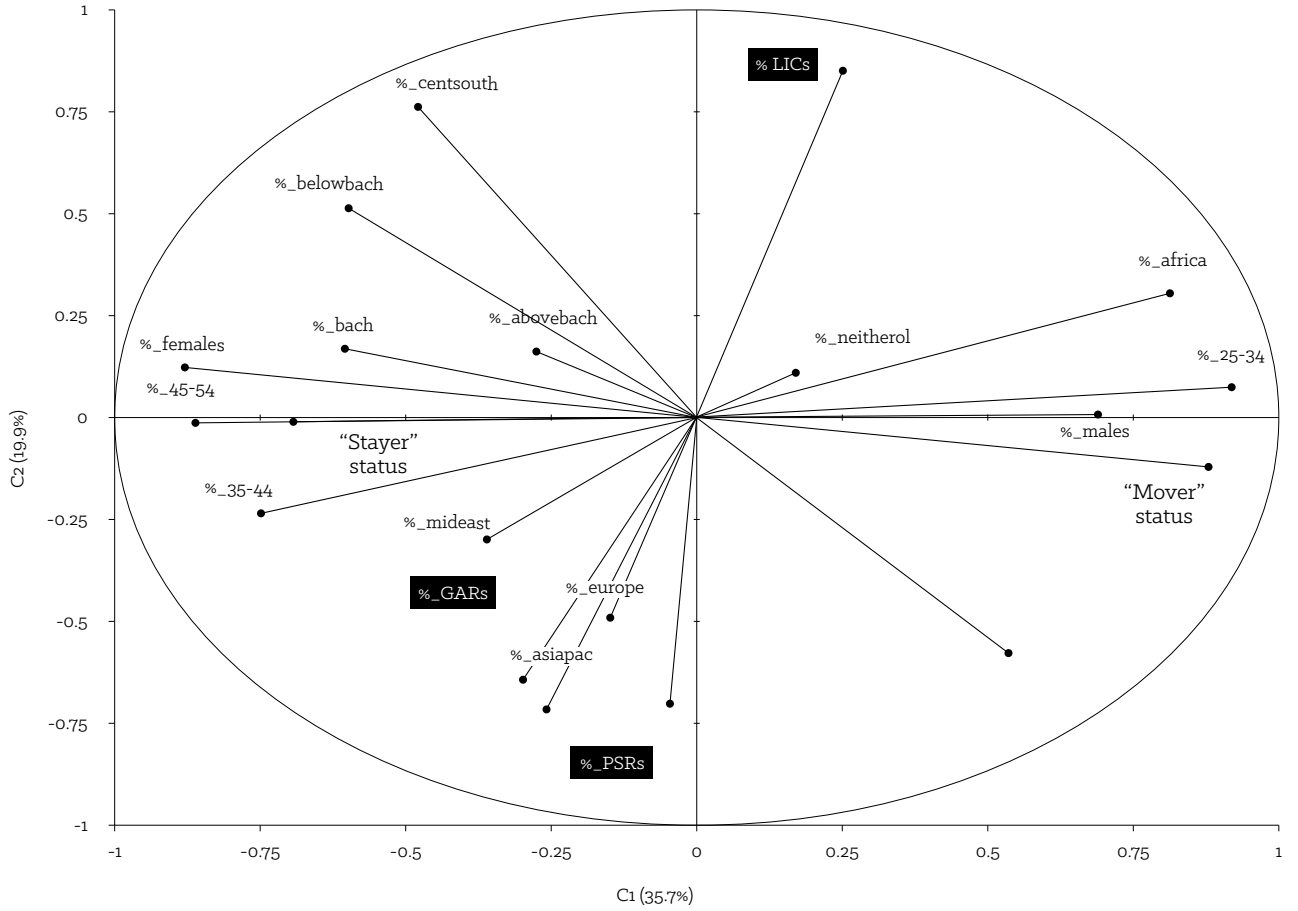
The data tracking suggests that, during 2000- 2013, the likelihood for refugees' undertaking interregional migration increased with the length of residence in Canada. The major mobility interchanges involved Québec, Ontario and the Alberta regions where the latter one was a clear "winner". The Atlantic region appeared as the region that lost the most refugees during this period. Although most refugees' subcategories participated in interregional movements, LICs were among the most over-represented in the historical flows occurring during the period. PCA analysis suggested also that age, gender, birthplace, educational levels and official language proficiency were more important socio-demographic correlates of interregional mobility than refugee category themselves.

Although the interregional mobility of refugees is a smaller fraction of the overall mobility occurring across the country their impacts on sending and receiving communities are not negligible. Newly arrived refugees may relocate elsewhere in Canada a few years after arrival. In this quest, refugees may resettle multiple times at different locations, which may include metropolitan or non-metropolitan centers such as smaller cities, towns or rural areas where secondary refugee settlement is now happening. A final reflection refers is that the heterogeneity of birthplace related backgrounds of refugees presents significant challenges for federal, provincial and local institutions as well as service providers supporting newcomer integration. In light of the findings presented, the issue of creating local opportunities and support for refugees and their families comes to the fore. While those refugees who stay in their original regional location need to be reassured that there are adequate long-term employment and educational opportunities for them, potential refugee movers need be provided information on opportunities in possible destinations and logistical support for their future interregional moves.

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CHART 2: PCA BI-PLOT,SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATES OF INTERREGIONAL "MOVER" AND "STAYER" STATUS OF FLOWS



Symbols: %_high school=% refugees with high school education in flow, %males=%male refugees in flows, %_25-34=% refugees aged 25-34 at arrival in flow, %_africa=% refugees born in the African region in flow,%_neitherol=% refugees speaking no official language at arrival, %_abovebach=% refugees with education above bachelor level in flow, %females=% female refugees in flows, %_45-544=% refugees aged 45-54 at arrival in flow, %_35-44=% refugees aged 35-44 at arrival in flow, , %_mideast=% refugees born in the Middle East region in flow, %_europe =% refugees born in the European Middle East region in flow, %_asiapac% refugees born in the Asia Pacific region in flow, %_PSRs=% of Privately Sponsored Refugees in flow, %_GARs=% of Government Assisted Refugees in flow, %_LICs=% of Landed in Canada Refugees in flow

Source: IMDB especial table, 2016