

FCJ REFUGEE CENTRE

Walking with uprooted people

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON REFUGEE CLAIMANTS AND OTHER PRECARIOUS POPULATIONS

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This document is thanks to the support of the





AGENDA

- **Who is considered a precarious migrant?**
- **Barriers faced by precarious migrants are magnified by COVID-19**
- **COVID-19 and the new measures implemented on the refugee process**
- **Impact of COVID-19 on the immigration system and how it is affecting precarious populations**



FCJ | **Refugee Centre**
Walking with uprooted people

FCJ Refugee Centre serves refugees and others at risk due to their immigration status, and welcomes anyone asking for advice, counsel and support.



Settlement Program

**Immigration Help &
Refugee Protection**

Anti- Human Trafficking Program

Popular Education

Networking

www.fcjrefugeecentre.org

WHO WE ARE...

Non-profit organization which serves refugees and others at risk due to their immigration status...



WWW.FCJREFUGEECENTRE.ORG

Shelter for women/kids

Settlement services

PRIMARY CARE CLINIC

Public Education

Immigration Help & Refugee protection

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Anti-human trafficking

Migrants Workers Mobile Program

Networking

Youth network

**WHO IS CONSIDERED
A
PRECARIOUS MIGRANT ?**

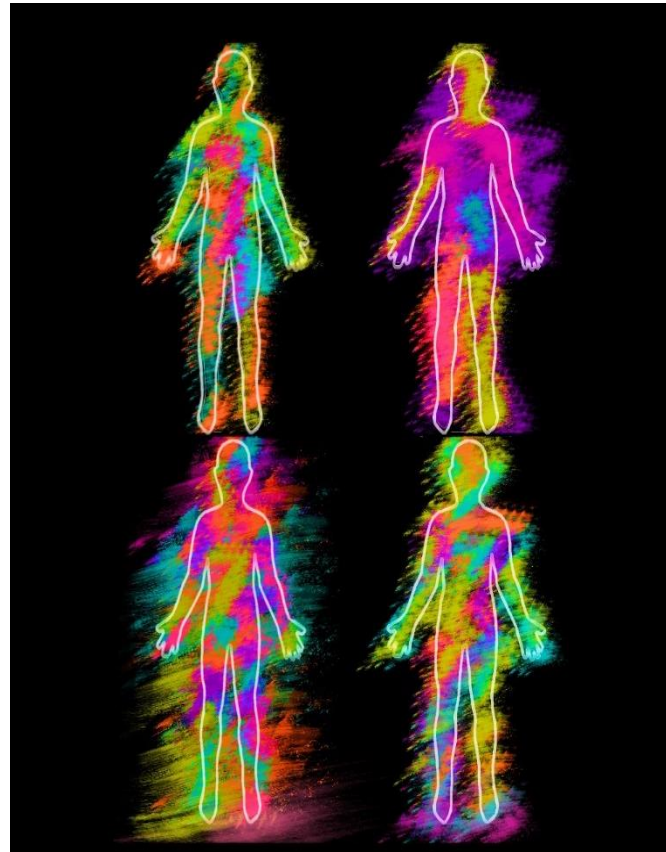
PRECARIOUS MIGRANTS

Refers to those populations that hold some form of uncertain migration status – often lack work authorization, the right to remain in the country permanently, social citizen rights, etc.

LIFE OF A REFUGEE AND OTHER PRECARIOUS MIGRANTS

HOME COUNTRY

Anxiety
Nervousness
Illness
Trauma
Family separation
Shock
Fear
Insecure
Self-doubting
Risk/Persecution
Need to escape
Lack of trust
Loss of a sense of belonging
Leaving everything behind



INTERSECTIONALITY

IN CANADA

- Flashbacks/Trauma
- Illness
- Insecure/Self-doubting
- Culture shock
- Language barrier
- Lack of credential recognition options
- No access to education
- Prejudice
- Lack of trust
- Confusion
- Financial crisis
- Loss of everything
- Isolation/separation

❖ May differ between individuals

PATHWAYS TO PRECARITY INCREASED DURING COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we've seen how longstanding inequities have been disproportionately magnified and continue to affect and marginalize refugee claimants and other precarious populations.

PATHWAYS TO PRECARITY INCREASED DURING COVID-19

- Lack of appropriate support
- Lack of information
- Domestic violence and abuse in newcomer families
- Delayed removals
- Backlog and legacy cases
- Overstaying as a visitor
- Worker exploitation
- Lack of access to medical services
- Etc.

BARRIERS FACED BY PRECARIOUS MIGRANTS

- Recent immigrants, low-income families, and families with children are disproportionately impacted by income loss caused by COVID-19
- No access to emergency income support (leaving behind vulnerable communities)
 - Social Assistance
 - Canada Emergency Response Benefit
 - Canada Emergency Student Benefit
 - Employment Insurance

BARRIERS FACED BY PRECARIOUS MIGRANTS

- Lack of awareness regarding public measures and new policies implemented during the COVID-19 emergency
- Language barriers to understand COVID-19 public measures

BARRIERS FACED BY PRECARIOUS MIGRANTS

- Access to Health support: Necessity of a long-term plan for providing continuing medical and emotional support
- Facing school closures and online education: limited access to technology and internet connections
- Housing challenges:
 - Landlords creating barriers for newcomers
 - Required documents
 - Discrimination
 - Scams/Charging higher rents
 - Eviction, finding shelter, etc.

COVID -19 AND MEASURES

New temporary public policy will allow visitors to apply for a work permit without having to leave Canada:

Visitors who are currently in Canada and have a valid job offer will be able to apply for an employer-specific work permit and, if approved, receive the permit without having to leave the country

COVID-19 AND MEASURES IN THE REFUGEE PROCESS

- New temporary measures have been implemented to provide permanent residency to asylum claimants working in Canada's health-care sector during the pandemic. To qualify, you must meet **all** of the following criteria
 1. have claimed asylum before March 13, 2020
 2. were issued a work permit
 3. have worked in the health-care sector
 4. have worked in a designated occupation for no less than 120 hours between March 13, 2020 and August 14, 2020. The designated occupations that are included in this special measure are orderlies, nurses, nurses' aides, patient service associates, assistant orderlies, and certain home support workers.
 5. demonstrate 6 months of experience in the designated occupation before being granted permanent residence. Applicants will have until August 31, 2021 to acquire this experience.
 6. have a Certificat de sélection du Québec (CSQ), if applicants wish to reside in Quebec
 7. meet existing admissibility requirements, including those related to criminality, security and health

COVID-19 AND MEASURES IN THE REFUGEE PROCESS

IRCC has announced that they are not processing renewals of the Refugee Protection Claimant Document (RPCD). They have asked service providers to accept expired RPCDs as still valid, until further notice.

This situation has created a lot of confusion among refugee claimants and service providers

COVID-19 AND MEASURES IN THE REFUGEE PROCESS

- On September 14th, the IRB started its transition to its pre-COVID model for refugee hearings with all parties in the same hearing room.
- This include members, interpreters, and Minister's counsel, with some exceptions that existed before the pandemic.
- Claimants under 18 years of age do not need to appear unless it is required.

Impact of COVID-19 on migration control and internal movement

- Increase in state surveillance, screening (people entering Canada) and the impact on the mental wellbeing of refugee claimants and precarious migrants (based on previous trauma from country of origin).
- Increase of backlog leaves more immigrants in limbo
- COVID-19 and Internal Flight Alternatives
- Stays of Removal
- Detention: the number of immigration detainees dropped by more than half. This was due to increased pressure to provide early release of detainees that presented little risk to public safety.

Impact of COVID-19 and inadmissibility

- Inadmissibility due to COVID-related criminal offences: an immigrant can be found inadmissible, removed from Canada and banned from entering for 1 year
- The penalties for not following a quarantine plan once you're in the country can include a fine of up to \$750,000, 6 months of jail time, and being found inadmissible, removed from Canada and banned from entering for 1 year

Impact of COVID -19 and STCA

- Canada announced that its southern border will remain closed until at least October 21, 2020
- Claims for refugee protections made at official ports of entry continue to be processed in accordance with the Canada-US Safe Third Country Agreement. If the claimant meets an exception under the STCA (e.g. family member in Canada) the claimant will be allowed to make a refugee claim (but will need to comply with 14 days of isolation requirement)
- Those entering through irregular border crossings are returned to the U.S.
- There is an increased demand for Humanitarian and Compassionate Applications

Impact of COVID-19 and family reunification

- Delays in Family Reunification: COVID-19 has delayed spousal sponsorship applications
- Processing times are 12 months but many of these cases exceed that amount of time
- Extended periods of separation may cause severe emotional distress, anxiety, and depression

COVID- 19 AND THE H&C APPLICATIONS

- Humanitarian and Compassionate as an alternative for regularization of status
- Elements from country of origin that should to be considered in this type of application (i.e. Hardship)
 - Adverse childhood experiences are associated with mental health problems
 - Social disruptions: lost of social interactions with others
 - Depressive symptoms: students who were restricted at home reported having a depressive symptoms

IMPACT OF COVID-19 :DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- The COVID-19 pandemic has been linked to the increase of domestic violence cases: social isolation can lead to the normalization of abuse.
- In cases of domestic violence, immigrant and refugee women have reported a ‘fear of’ the legal system because:
 1. It is unpredictable
 2. They know women who had a hard time going through the system
 3. They were unfamiliar with the Canadian legal system
 4. There was no cultural interpretation provided in family court
 5. They came from countries where the legal system was unjust or even corrupt
 6. Stereotyping and discrimination

THANK YOU



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