

# Settlement research: What's in it for me?

Emily Mooney





# Community Knowledge Program

Strengthening research into migration, settlement and integration,  
through collaboration in the GTA

## Welcome! Thank you for joining us today.

*Wellesley Institute  
works in research and  
policy to improve health  
and health equity in the  
GTA through action on  
the social determinants  
of health.*



# In this workshop you will...

- Consider the role of research in settlement work
- Discuss the findings of a recent needs assessment about research in the immigrant and refugee-serving sector
- Learn about community-based research, an approach to build and strengthen mutually respectful research partnerships across sectors

# What does “research” mean to you?

When you hear the phrase  
“settlement research,” what  
comes to mind?

# How does research affect your day-to-day work?

- Where and how do you learn about recent research?
- Do you participate in studies?
- Do you use research to shape your programs and services?

# Why should you know about research?

- Current trends in migration determine...
  - Who shows up for your services
  - What kind of supports they are likely to need
- Research can let you know whether your services are effective
- You can participate in research to let academics and policymakers know what you and service seekers need

# What is the Community Knowledge Program (CKP)?

An initiative to foster collaborative research and sharing of knowledge within the immigrant and refugee-serving sector in the Greater Toronto Area



# Why is the CKP important?

Access to high-quality research is necessary to the creation of effective policy, service, and advocacy in the immigrant and refugee serving sector

# The project



# First step: The needs assessment

What is happening with research in the sector?

- Covid-19 has led to rapid shifts in both research and practice
- Research work and settlement services have largely moved online

What knowledge does the immigrant and refugee-serving sector need now?  
What are the best ways to share it?

# Key findings

- Gaps exist between research and practice
- Timely research and knowledge mobilization are critical to effective settlement programs and services
- Numerous challenges exist, within and between different parts of the sector
- There are ways to close the gaps

# Stakeholders want research on...

Covid-19 and its effect on the sector

Policies and practices that empower newcomers

Feelings of connection, community, and belonging in the new society

Effects of precarious status, and contributions of people with such status to Canadian society

Use of new technologies in settlement work

Canadians' understanding of newcomer issues

Intergenerational conflict in newcomer families

Effects of marginalization such as racism, xenophobia, ableism, anti-Blackness, homophobia, and transphobia

The relationship between services upon arrival and long-term outcomes

Effectiveness of different interventions for different populations

Barriers to credential recognition

Human trafficking

# Research is happening on many of these topics



International Journal of  
Environmental Research  
and Public Health

Article

## Refugees in Canada during the First Wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Jennifer Edmonds and Antoine Flahault \*

## COVID-19, Migration and the Canadian Immigration System: Dimensions, Impact and Resilience

Research Report

John Shields  
(Professor, Ryerson University)  
&



Published Online  
February 1, 2021  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(21\)00215-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)00215-4)

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold, questions of who has been most affected and where interventions should be targeted increasingly recognise the disproportionate and long-standing health inequities faced by racialised communities (a social construct describing groups that have racial meanings associated with them that affect their economic, political, and lives) and migrant communities in other countries. In this paper, we refer to a broad range of other countries including refugees, asylum seekers, economic migrants, and undocumented migrants. Although evidence from some countries shows heavily racialised effects of COVID-19, there has been scarce discourse and intervention addressing the manifestation and role of structural racism in the pandemic's pattern and toll among social forces, institutions, ideologies, and how they interact with one another to generate outcomes faced by racialised communities).

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## COVID & Canada's Settlement Sector: Survey Results

Survey conducted in collaboration between North York Community House, Department of  
Imaginary Affairs and Freelance Consultant, Marco Campana  
Report prepared for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)

May 2020

## COVID-19, structural racism, and migrant health in Canada

## Settlement Sector & Technology Task Group Preliminary Report

December 21, 2020

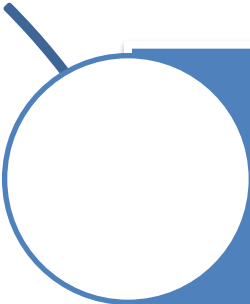
# Challenges: Structural issues

## Restrictive funding models

- Most research funding goes to universities, not community agencies or groups
- Emphasis on short-term projects leads to a lack of longitudinal data
- Research funding for agencies is project-based, and agencies must compete for it

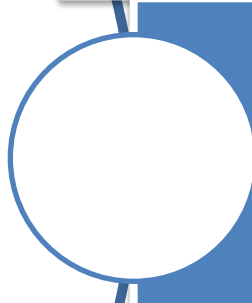
“...[there’s a fear that] ‘If you take my idea, you’ll take my funding’”

# Challenges: Strained relationships



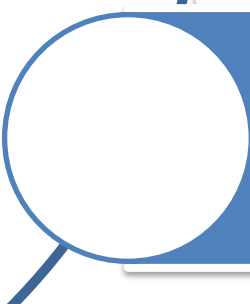
They're tired of all of the surveys, they're tired of researchers contacting them. I think part of the fatigue is that they feel as if they give, give, and nothing comes back.

– *Sector leader, discussing front-line agencies*



...we do feel a huge chasm between us and the universities. And we don't really feel included or involved in the design phase or the early stages and so we refuse to participate in their research because if they're not going to include us, then we're not going to participate.

– *Senior leader of a large multiservice agency*

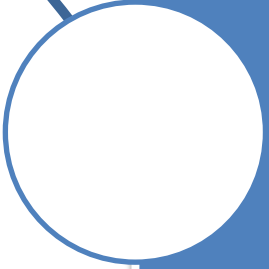


...[newcomer agencies] would be very uninterested in going to a symposium about research where they didn't get to set the research question or participate in framing it in any way.

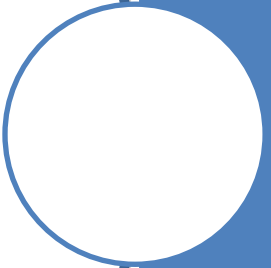
– *Senior leader of a large multiservice agency*




# Challenges: “Too much and not enough”



The research that's already out there needs to be pulled together, it needs to be really broken down and made available made accessible for people who can actually use it, [and] I don't think that's happening at all, to be honest.



A lot of the time we are reinventing the wheel. There is a lot of research out there. And yet, there's no real professional development coming out of that research and that research is not going back into the sector.



...unless you have the wherewithal and capacity to, even the time, but also [...] the language level [...] to sift through the academic kind of stuff, how do you know that you should even *start* to read this, let alone what part of it is going to have an impact on your work?

# Next steps

## Training

Training front-line staff at immigrant and refugee-serving agencies in research and KM skills

## Research portal

Establishing a “portal” or hub for stakeholders from all parts of the sector to connect and share resources

## Panels

Holding panel discussions about recent research in the sector

# Discussion

- What are your thoughts about our findings? Do they match your experiences?
- What would you like to see in training about research?

# Research on migration, settlement, and integration: Building equitable partnerships

# The landscape in Ontario



Academic  
researchers



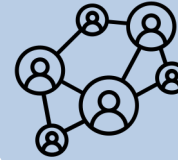
Government



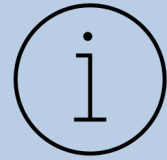
National and  
international  
organizations



Independent  
research  
organizations  
("think  
tanks")



Umbrella  
organizations  
and networks



Service  
providers

# Academic researchers in Toronto

## Ryerson University

- Centre for Immigration and Settlement
- Canada Excellence Research Chair (CERC) in Migration and Integration

## University of Toronto

- Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy
- Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work
- Dalla Lana School of Public Health

## York University

- Centre for Refugee Studies
- Building Migrant Resilience in Cities

# National and international groups

## Government

- Statistics Canada
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

## Networks and large NGOs

- Pathways to Prosperity
- Metropolis Canada
- International Organization for Migration
- Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario's National Newcomer Navigation Network

# Think tanks and networks

## Independent research organizations (“think tanks”)

- Conference Board of Canada
- Wellesley Institute
- Institute for Research on Public Policy
- Canadian Global Affairs Institute

## Umbrella organizations and networks

- OCASI
- Local Immigration Partnerships

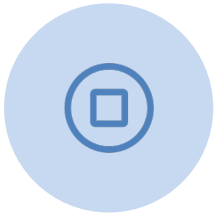


# Large Toronto service providers

- Access Alliance Multicultural Community and Health Services
- COSTI Immigrant Services

Only the largest multiservice providers can sustain formal research

# What does this research look like in practice?



FOCUS GROUPS



INTERVIEWS



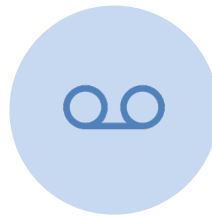
SURVEYS



NEEDS  
ASSESSMENTS



ENVIRONMENTAL  
SCANS



PROGRAM  
EVALUATION



DATA ANALYSIS

# Let's talk about partnerships!

Quick poll: how many of you work at agencies that have partnerships with...

- other agencies?
- universities?
- government?

Why are research partnerships useful? What are some of their benefits?

What can interfere with the success of research partnerships?

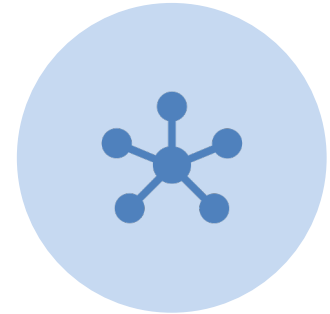
# Why are partnerships useful?



SHARED RESOURCES



DIFFERENT  
PERSPECTIVES



ACCESS TO DIFFERENT  
NETWORKS

# What can interfere with success?

## Different (and sometimes conflicting) goals

- Improving services?
- Advocating for change?
- Publishing to get tenure?

## Power imbalances

- Who controls the funding?
- Who develops the research question?
- Who owns the data? Who can use it? For what?

# A collaborative approach: Community-based research (CBR)



# Traditional vs. community-based research

Traditional	Community-based
Outside expert	Team of stakeholders
Expert defines what needs to be researched and how	Stakeholders collectively decide the focus of the research
Report may or may not lead to change	Early buy-in from stakeholders increases impact
Capacity leaves with the expert	Capacity is built internally

# Academics vs. community groups

## Similarities

- Academics and community groups are people who care
- They bring unique skills and experience
- They work in complicated and stressful environments
- They have productivity quotients
- They are often similarly over-worked and under-resourced

## Differences

- They have very specific theoretical jargon
- They have different accountability structures and “bottom lines”
- They have different timelines and calendars
- They are often not used to everyday work with each other



# Community groups vs. researchers

## **Communities bring:**

- Closer connection to lived experience of community
- Experience with strong intersectoral partnerships
- Innovative applied research ideas
- Understanding of cultural contexts
- Access to some funding
- Ability to effect grassroots change

## **Researchers bring:**

- Broad experience with research in field
- Access to some funding
- Methodological expertise
- Research infrastructure, including personnel
- Theoretical frameworks
- Access to credibility
- Ethics review process
- Ability to effect policy change

# Common barriers to partnerships

Lack of trust

Limited resources  
(time, money, etc.)

Tight deadlines

Other pressures

Competing bottom  
lines (services vs.  
research)

Limited knowledge  
or capacity

Limited interest

Perception that  
CBR lacks  
credibility

# Characteristics of a successful partnership

Formed to address genuine community concern

Builds on prior positive relationships and trust

Involves organizations and individuals as partners

Starts small... with community-based organizations that are well respected

Explicitly defines the community and who represents them

Solid process structures and leadership

Appropriate resources (human, financial)

Opportunities for mentorship and building skills

# So... what's in settlement research for you?

- Improved understanding of trends in migration and best practices for serving newcomers
- A chance to build relationships with researchers and shape research questions
- Findings that relate directly to your own work
- Data and analysis that you can use to support grant applications and inform your advocacy

# Next steps

- Build your own familiarity with research
  - Attend conferences and webinars
  - Join networks (SettleNet.org, National Newcomer Navigation Network)
  - Subscribe to email lists (IRCC, LIPs)
- Look for academic and independent researchers who work with community agencies as equal partners
- Stay tuned for the Community Knowledge Program's new training and resources

# Thank you!

## The Community Knowledge Program

[http://wellesleyinstitute.com/  
community-knowledge-program](http://wellesleyinstitute.com/community-knowledge-program)

Emily Mooney, [emily@wellesleyinstitute.com](mailto:emily@wellesleyinstitute.com)

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