

**The Labour Market Transitions of Newly Arrived Immigrant Youth:  
A Tri-Provincial Study**  
Draft 5 July 7 2010

A Report Submitted to the National Metropolis Secretariat

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## Executive Summary

- This project examines pertinent aspects of the school-to-work transitions among a group of recently arrived newcomer youth. Using Statistics Canada’s Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) and a matched sample of 82 youth from Vancouver, Winnipeg, Hamilton and Toronto, we use quantitative and qualitative methods to uncover the transition from school to work among newcomer youth who arrived in Canada between October 2000 and September 2001. These combined data sources allow us to follow the initial integration experiences of youth aged 15 to 29 years over a 7 year period immediately after arrival.
- Newcomer youth are highly educated at arrival. Just over 60% of the LSIC sample reported some education beyond the high school diploma with over one-quarter reporting holding a Bachelor’s degree. Nearly one in five has some high school education but has not obtained a high school diploma. Another 16.7% have completed the high school diploma without attempting any post-secondary education. Very few respondents arrived in Canada without formal education (0.3%), while another 2.8% reported having some or completed elementary education. The educational characteristics of the LSIC sample closely match those of the interview group.
- When examining only those newcomers who have entered high school up on arrival, 71% are at least one or more years behind in their education when compared to Canadian-born students. Typically, a Canadian-born student would enter Grade 9 at age 14 or 15. Findings from LSIC indicate that newcomers, regardless of their gender, entrance category or country of origin, are more likely to be behind in their high school education. Some do ‘catch-up’ however; two years after arrival, 56% of newcomer students remain one or more years ‘behind’ in their high school education. Four years after arrival, only 55% of those aged 15 to 19 at arrival (who would now be 19 to 23 years at the time of the conclusion of LSIC) will have finished high school, significantly lower than the 82% of similarly aged Canadian-born students (Statistics Canada, 2008). This has significant policy implications as most provinces have an age cap policy at which time students are forced to leave publicly funded education.
- There are sex, area of origin, language proficiency and other factors that influence the high school trajectories of immigrant youth. Males, particularly those from Africa and the Caribbean, are the most ‘behind’ in their high school education starting, on average, 2 years behind their similarly aged Canadian-born peers. Females from African and Caribbean countries start off disadvantaged as well, but their trajectory through high school is steeper, meaning they ‘catch-up’ to similarly aged Canadian-born females faster than males. Those arriving as refugees or who are placed in FCLS/EAL/ESD classes are most likely to be placed in grades too low for their age and have difficulties completing high school.
- While the newcomers are overwhelmingly returning to schooling once they enter Canada, they are having a difficult time completing their education. Over 80% of newcomer youth who arrive in Canada without a high school diploma have not completed their secondary education four years later. Another 89% arriving with some post-secondary education also have not completed their studies four years later. Three-quarters of those arriving with a high school diploma have not advanced in their education during this time period.
- Those arriving in Canada with completed trade certificates or other diplomas, and particularly those with completed university degrees, have difficulty having their credentials recognized in the education system and labour market. One-third of those with completed university degrees are in some sort of post-secondary training even four years after their arrival, some even returning to high school. The qualitative

interviews corroborate the LSIC findings. Young migrants with post-secondary credentials prior to arrival are having difficulty having their education evaluated and in making a transition to the labour force.

- Several of the participants in the matched qualitative interviews mentioned the difficulties they faced having their secondary and post-secondary credentials recognized. We interviewed several university students who were forced to return to high school for up to three years in order to gain entry to a Canadian university. Some were told prior to their arrival to Canada that having their university education recognized would not be difficult.
- The economic returns for migrants returning to school in Canada are uneven. Some youth, particularly those from France and the United States, have significantly positive returns to the education they attain in Canada. For others, particularly those from Taiwan and Hong Kong, have more years of education in Canada but have very low income once they enter the labour force. For others, a small investment in an education in Canada has netted significant economic returns.
- Females, racialized minorities, those arriving at younger ages and those without secondary or post-secondary credentials at arrival had the most difficulty finding work (full- or part-time) six months, two years and four years after arrival. The effects of entrance class are mixed, though those arriving in the business or refugee classes were the least likely to find work in the six months, two and four years after arrival. Those proficient in either of Canada's official languages were significantly more likely to find work over the three time periods. Social capital effects were also mixed, though having family in Canada prior to arrival made finding employment significantly more likely in all three time periods.
- Females, racialized minorities, those without high school diplomas or university degrees at arrival also found it more difficult to obtain full-time work six months, two years and four years after arrival. Entrance class and language proficiency had no statistically significant effect on finding full-time work, though having a sponsor did help those six months and two years after arrival. The effects of social capital are dependent on the number of years after arrival.
- While family social networks appear to have a significant influence on labour force participation and finding full-time work, the newcomer youth interviewed downplayed their significance. Youth tended to discount the importance of family networks in finding a job on the grounds that their parents and loved ones often lacked the social networks necessary to find good work. Friendship networks were more valued by the participants in the qualitative interviews.
- Many of the participants indicate they use government employment services and non-government immigrant serving organizations to help them find work. Most were satisfied with the assistance they received but some felt that many of the programs did not successfully deal with the unique issues faced by newcomers. Many of the interviewees indicated that campus employment services needed to become more aware of the special needs of newcomer youth in order to provide better assistance.
- Volunteering was a popular past-time for the newcomer youth. Many discussed their volunteering experiences in a positive way. Some were able to locate employment due to their experiences and some indicated that the ability to practice French or English 'on the job' was an invaluable experience. Others, however, were highly dissatisfied. Volunteering was suggested as a way of gaining entry to the Canadian labour force by many government- and non-government organizations. The problem is that many of the volunteer opportunities were exploitive (such as volunteer dishwasher) and did not offer any opportunity to increase language or technical skills.

- Discrimination was a common experience for many of the newcomers who participated in the qualitative interviews. Participants indicated that racially motivated discrimination occurs at job interviews and on the job. Others felt that their status as immigrants negatively affected their ability to find employment, particularly in the government where permanent residency is required for some jobs.
- Linguistic barriers and discrimination due to accent were the biggest barriers to employment identified by the youth in our study. Accent affects their ability to secure employment and negatively influences some of the interactions they have with clients once they are employed. The ability to be understood by other Canadians is one of the most frustrating experiences of integrating.
- There are many similarities in the school-to-work transitions of newcomer and Canadian-born youth. There is anxiety about finding work, particularly in the 2009 recession, finding work that matches their training, and the issue of working low-end or dead-end jobs to 'get by'.
- There is transborder movement among the newcomer youth in our sample. Many leave Canada as they are frustrated in not finding employment in their field of choice. Some return to Canada after months or years elsewhere as the global labour market shrinks. There are a number of respondents indicating significant discontent at not finding good work in Canada and are seriously considering leaving the country.
- What is clear from the LSIC analysis and interviews is that there is no single 'pathway' from school-to-work. Just as the paths for Canadian-born youth are varied, so are the trajectories of newcomers. Their paths may be complicated in terms of the challenges of repeating schooling, having foreign credentials recognized, learning a new language and culture. They also have similarities with Canadian-born youth such as being frustrated about the difficulties of finding good employment and living through the recession.
- More programs and services aimed specifically for newcomer youth in making the transition from school-to-work are needed. These programs should focus on issues related to foreign credential recognition, gaining suitable "Canadian" experience, language and accent training and information about how the Canadian school system and labour market works are needed in order to ease the transition to the labour market.
- Significant effort must be made to assist newcomers in completing high school. Programs that help refugees, males, those from African and Caribbean countries as well as those taking language classes may help increase the school completion rate for these groups. School boards may reconsider the mandatory age-caps or increasing the funding for older youth to complete their high school diplomas. We are aware of several 'best practices' among school boards and immigrant-serving agencies. The problem is that there are few mechanisms for sharing these ideas. Additional investment in disseminating this knowledge would be helpful.
- School boards should work closely with immigrant serving organizations to provide more programming regarding post-secondary education and labour market realities for newcomers. Those having experience in these 'bridging' programs rate them very highly and may help youth negotiate these institutions.
- Credential recognition is not just an issue for adult immigrants. It is clear from the LSIC and interview results that schools are ill-equipped to evaluate both high school and post-secondary education for newcomers.

## Acknowledgements

The team is grateful for the assistance we received from various sources in order to complete this project. Our community partners contributed to the development of our successful proposal, development of the interview guides, assisted in recruitment of participants and in Winnipeg, acted as participants to the Master's thesis of Ms. Jasmine Thomas. They include: Employment Solutions for Immigrant Youth (Winnipeg), Manitoba Labour and Immigration-Immigration Branch, the Immigrant Centre (Winnipeg), Aksyon Ng Ating Katataan (ANAK Inc. Winnipeg), MOSAIC (Vancouver), and Settlement and Integration Services (Hamilton). The Research Data Centres of Statistics Canada at the University of Manitoba, University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto not only facilitated the access to data, but various teleconferences and countless advice on bootstrapping and other aspects of the data analysis. Service Canada distributed recruitment posters at various employment centres nationwide that assisted us to identify participants for this study. This resource was particularly helpful in Winnipeg. We had an advisory panel, consisting of Jean Bergeron (Research and Evaluation, Citizenship and Immigration Canada), Michel Caron (Youth and Official Languages, HRSDC), Uttara Chauhan (Metropolis Secretariat), Howard Duncan (Metropolis Secretariat), Robert Keely (Youth and Official Languages, HRSDC), Fernando Mata (formerly Research, Multiculturalism Branch, CIC) and Stéphane Pronovost (Canada Economic Development/Regionalization Coalition) who were helpful in providing advice early in the project.

A number of individuals helped us to complete this project. We are especially grateful for the support of Dr. Ian Clara from the University of Manitoba RDC for coordinating the data release and other aspects related to data analysis and merging of a tricky dataset. Dr. Bosu Seo, a post-doctoral fellow at the Faculty of Medicine University of Manitoba, provided expertise for Lori in developing some of the education models and in coordinating the quantitative data release. The team is indebted to the hard work and dedication of our graduate research assistants. They recruited and interviewed participants, transcribed and analysed interview and quantitative data and generally made our lives as researchers more enjoyable. They are: Fadi Ennab, Jasmine Thomas and Swati Mandal (University of Manitoba), Da Rae Lee and Christine Hauchbaum (University of British Columbia, and Kirandeep Sibia (McMaster University). We are grateful to the participants in two National Metropolis workshops and one round table at the 12<sup>th</sup> National Metropolis Conference in Montreal for their candid and informative feedback on our research to date.

We would also like to recognize the seed-money we each received from the Prairie Metropolis Centre, Metropolis BC and CERIS-the Ontario Metropolis Centre. Without this support, we feel we would not have been successful in obtaining the first national SSHRC/Metropolis Strategic Joint Initiative. These three small projects gave us a chance to develop our partnerships and pilot test some of our qualitative instruments. The National Metropolis Secretariat deserves recognition as without such an initiative, we would not have been able to undertake such an ambitious project.

Finally, we could not have accomplished this study without the participation of the 82 youth participants who gave their time, shared their experiences and ideas with us.

## **The Labour Market Transitions of Newly Arrived Immigrant Youth: A Tri-Provincial Study**

Finding employment is a significant marker of integration in a new society and is a marker of the transition to adulthood for a majority of youth. There is a large body of research that chronicles the varied transition paths of native-born youth, but virtually none of it investigates the experiences of immigrant and refugee youth. This is remarkable given the importance our society places on becoming a competent, participating adult.

Employment assists in various aspects of integration. Meaningful work increases newcomer participation in other social institutions. Individuals with jobs that are meaningful and match their level of education and training are “more invested in society and through their connection to economic life, are likely to develop an interest in the political context in which they work, which can also lead to increased community and political participation” (UN, 2007, n.p.). Furthermore, “the economic security provided by stable work gives people the opportunity to engage fully in domestic, social and political activities” (UN, 2007, n.p.).

Why should we care about the school-to-work transitions of newcomer youth? First, over half of all migrants worldwide are under age 29 years at arrival (UN, 2007). In Canada, although the figures are not directly comparable, 35.5% of newcomers in 2008 were under the age of 24 years (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009). Second, youth between the ages of 15 and 24 comprise 31.1% of all unemployed persons presently in our country (Statistics Canada, 2009), rates that are 3.5 times higher than for adults during the same time period. Unemployment among young people during the summer of 2009 was the worst year since records were kept, over 21.1% were jobless (Statistics Canada, 2009), translating into 190,000 fewer jobs. Recessions affect youth disproportionately. Youth are more likely than adults to be unemployed and when they do enter the labour market, they make 8 to 9% less than comparatively educated peers entering in non-recession periods and take longer to transition between jobs in the labour market (Pagliaro, 2010; Mendelson, 2010). This is not a phenomenon that is unique to Canada. Third, being an immigrant or refugee has a significant and negative effect on unemployment among newcomer youth in Canada. When the effects of immigrant status are controlled we find that the unemployment rate of immigrant and refugee youth is approximately two times greater than the rate of youth born in Canada (Wilkinson, 2008).

This report is an overview of the findings of our study of the school-to-work transitions of newcomer youth to Canada. The study is conducted in two parts. Part 1 consists of a statistical evaluation of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada while Part 2 provides detailed information from a series of interviews conducted in Vancouver, Winnipeg, Hamilton and Toronto. The report consists of a literature review, description of methodology, summary of our results and a discussion of the policy implications.

### Literature Review

#### *Education and Newcomer Youth*

Research on newcomer youth and education offers mixed views on whether or not the school experience is largely positive or negative for newcomer youth. On one hand, newcomers are some of the most successful students in our education system. They are more likely to aspire to (Krahn and Taylor 2005) and attend (Boyd, 2002) post-secondary institutions. They are over-represented among those with the highest grade point averages (Suárez-Orozco et al, 2009) and have high career aspirations, mainly due to parental pressures (Okubo et al., 2007). On the other hand, there are many newcomer youth who flounder in the educational system because they face significant challenges not normally faced by those born in Canada. Recent evidence suggests that many youth have significant gaps in their educational record. McAndrew (2009) and her colleagues find that those whose primary language at home is not English have greater gaps in their high school trajectories than those who use primarily English or French at home. This group is far less likely to graduate from high school. These gaps in education are further compounded by the mandatory age cap in



secondary school. Most provinces require that those still in high school after a certain age transition to adult education. In most provinces, students are asked to leave the system after their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday.<sup>2</sup> Derwing (1999) and her colleagues' study of Edmonton school board data reveals that about 10% of newcomer youth are pushed out of school because of this policy. As a result, the age cap policy may have unintended consequences that directly affect the ability of newcomers to obtain the education necessary to become competitive employees in Canadian society. While there is funding for some adult education programs, many require additional financial hardship to migrants who might be struggling economically. As well, adult education may not be appropriate for those who have never attended school, or had difficult transitions to their new culture, language and country. What makes the issue more problematic for newcomer youth is the fact that they are the most likely to have significant gaps in their education, particularly those arriving as refugees as many would have several years of missed schooling and may be functionally illiterate in their mother tongue. As a result, this group has the most significant difficulties finding meaningful and sustainable employment as adults.

Another issue that separates newcomer youth from those born in Canada is the need to make multiple role transitions. Psychologists Ahearn and Athey (1991), among others, have identified this phenomenon as a role reversal. The role reversal occurs when newcomer children and youth are asked to take on adult responsibilities because their parents have not yet learned the language or way of life in a new culture. Children and youth may be asked to translate delicate and personal documents and conversations, becoming involved in activities that they otherwise would not be involved in. For example, a youth may be asked to translate the personal medical histories of a parent with a physician or may be asked to translate sensitive financial documents, tasks that Canadian-born youth would not normally be asked to do. In doing so, the youth can take on a pseudo-adult role, being responsible for assisting the adult family members to negotiate various aspects of the new society. Once the adults have learned sufficient French or English to conduct business on their own, the youth must usually resume their role as child-family member. Some youth have difficulty relinquishing such roles and family conflict results.

Despite their many differences, newcomer youth face similar transitions to adulthood as their Canadian-born peers including finishing their education, obtaining employment, leaving home and making a partnership. They may make these transitions in varying order and some transitions may be longer than others, but most experience all four events. Some transitions, however, are unique to newcomers alone. All newcomers, whether they are immigrant or refugee, must learn a new culture and way of life. Many newcomers have to learn a new language; 28% of all newcomers to Canada in 2008 were not fluent in either one of Canada's official languages (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2010). This affects refugees to a greater extent, with nearly 70% unable to speak English or French upon arrival. Being enrolled in English as an Additional Language or le français langue additionnelle pour immigrantes et immigrants class in elementary and secondary school has significant influence on the educational trajectory of youth. A controversial study by Watt and Roessingh (1994, 2001) finds that 74% of ESL students in Calgary schools do not complete high school. Derwing and associates' (1999) estimates are lower, but just as alarming. They find that 46% of youth entering school and enrolled in ESL classes do not finish high school. Anisef (2010) and his colleagues using data from the Toronto District School Board, indicate that dropout rates among newcomers vary by ethnic group. Forty percent of students from the Caribbean do not finish high school, compared with 15% from Europe, 10% from East Asia and 16% from South Asia, rates lower than Canadian-born youth. Dropping out puts these groups at a significant disadvantage to others; they are less likely to obtain a high school diploma as adults, making it

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<sup>2</sup> The rules vary by province but tend to cap school attendance at age 19. In Manitoba, students may remain in school until their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, but there are instances where exceptions are made. Personal communication between L. Wilkinson and representative from Manitoba Education.

impossible for them to move forward into post-secondary education and difficult for them to become gainfully employed.

In addition to these issues, many newcomer youth face issues related to foreign credential recognition, though these are not largely discussed in the literature. Gilmore and Petit (2008) in their study of adult immigrants find that among the recently arrived, those with university degrees obtained overseas are three times more likely to return to school than those born in Canada. There is some debate about whether or not a Canadian education has benefits for newly arrived immigrants. Gilmore and Petit (2008) also argue that the investment in Canadian education has positive economic benefits in the long run, though several others (i.e., Shields et al., 2010) argue that immigrants who return to university in Canada take longer to integrate into the labour market and their interrupted work careers result in lower incomes over the lifetime of their employment.

### *Work and Newcomer Youth*

Unlike the extensive work done with newcomer youth and educational trajectories, their experience in the labour market remains understudied. Wilkinson (2008) uses the Annual Labour Force Survey and the Alberta Refugee Study to compare the employment status of Canadian-born, immigrant and refugee youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years. She finds that immigrants have the highest unemployment rate, followed by Canadian-born and refugee youth. Kunz's (2003) study of immigrant youth and the work place also reveals some interesting trends. Immigrant youth particularly those who are visible minority, are two times less likely to have worked during their secondary and post-secondary education than those youth born in Canada. This puts them at a distinct disadvantage when looking for permanent, full-time work as adults. Even though much of the work done by youth during their schooling years is part-time, menial and poorly paid, this work record provides them with an 'edge' having had some experience prior to embarking on a full-time career, a finding echoed by Kilbride (2004) and her associates. Perreira (2007) and her colleagues similarly argue that work experience during adolescence and young adulthood helps young people accumulate resources such as job references, certain job skills and work ethic that lead to better economic outcomes as adults. Immigrant youth, are less likely to accumulate these resources and may find it difficult to compete for career jobs as adults since they are less likely to work during their post-secondary schooling. They also find that the school and work biographies of immigrant youth differ by age at arrival and that those arriving before age 6 have school-to-work trajectories similar to those born in Canada. Similarly, Brekke (2007) and Crul and Vermeulen (2004) find that as time in Canada increases, so do the economic outcomes of immigrant youth.

Beaujot and Kerr's (2007) analysis reveals that immigrant, along with Aboriginal youth, are likely to have lower incomes despite their level of education and whether or not it was obtained in Canada. Like their parents, young immigrants are finding it difficult to secure jobs and are taking a much longer period of time to reach income parity with their Canadian-born counterparts. As a result, this group of young people have higher rates of unemployment, lower income on average, are more likely to delay leaving the parental home, despite being, on average, better educated than their Canadian-born peers. This echoes Galabuzi's (2007) findings that newcomers are three times more likely to live in poverty, regardless of their employment status. Shea et al. (2007) find that youth from low income families may actively discourage their children from pursuing higher education and careers that require a substantial investment of time and money. The added burden of supporting youth during their pursuit of higher education may place the family at further economic risk. Kilbride and her associates (2004) remind us that newcomer youth facing challenges in the school system will likely face barriers to the labour market as adults. Newcomer youth coming from families who are struggling economically themselves are just as likely to experience difficulties transitioning to the labour market as adults. Among those with employment, 28% had left their previous job due to difficulties with language or accent.

Ethnicity and race play a role in economic disadvantage among newcomer youth. Galabuzi (2007), Kunz (2003), Brekke (2007) and others all find that the economic disadvantages faced by visible minority immigrant youth are substantially higher than those who are white. Bradley and Taylor (2004) also find that visible minority youth are slightly more likely to be unemployed than their white newcomer counterparts. Preston's (2010) examination of the 2006 Census of Canada reveals that the income disparities between visible minority and white Canadians diminishes across the generations for females but persists for males. Other research by Sheilds (2006) and his associates outlines the frustrations experienced by visible minority newcomer youth in terms of the systemic structural and cultural barriers to finding meaningful employment, their observations are confirmed by Nesdale and Pinter (2000). Openheim (2007) questions whether they will ever be able to overcome the 'colour barrier'. In his research, he finds that employers are more likely to hire people of similar ethnic backgrounds to themselves.

Networks are an important source of jobs. A growing body of research on youth transitions to the labour market reveals that family networks are a significant source of information about employment opportunities. Leu (2009) reports that nearly 70% of all jobs in the US are obtained as a result of family and friendship networks. Immigrant youth, however, are less likely to benefit from social network ties for several reasons. Individuals with smaller or less effective networks are much less likely to find employment, a finding supported by research conducted by Kunz (2003), Kilbride (2004) and her colleagues. Preston (2010) finds that when immigrants rely on their friendship networks, because their social ties are small and less robust, they are less likely to find good work. This difference cannot be accounted for by differences in job search strategies as immigrants use similar strategies to native-born. Perreira, Harris and Lee (2007) find that visible minority youth are less likely to obtain good occupational opportunities due to their smaller and less powerful networks than those who are non-visible minorities. These groups are almost completely reliant on government services to locate work. Finally, Yan and his associates (2008) find that despite the economic boom in British Columbia in the mid-2000s, the benefits of social ties to new generation youth looking for work are slim.

### Methodology

Our study consists of two phases. In Phase One, we examine various aspects of the transition from school-to-work using a sub-sample from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) (Statistics Canada, 2007a). Our participants are aged 15 to 29 years and participated in all three waves of data collection. Our original intention had been to exclude those between the ages of 25 and 29 at arrival as we expected their experiences to be qualitatively different. While there are some differences, their similarities were remarkable so we included them in the sample which allowed us to conduct more complex modeling due the larger sample size. In total, there were 52,569<sup>3</sup> (weighted) respondents to LSIC who were between the ages of 15 and 29 years.

The LSIC is the only randomly selected national longitudinal sample of newcomers to Canada. The design incorporates a representative sample of immigrants by category of entry for each province and has over-sampled those living in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal (Justus and MacDonald, 2003), the major destination cities. To be eligible, participants would have arrived in Canada between October 2000 and September 2001. Immigrants were contacted and interviewed six months after their arrival (interviewed fall 2001) and subsequently re-interviewed two (December 2002) and four years later (November 2004) (Statistics Canada, 2007b). Participants are representative of the major immigrant-sending countries and major entrance classes

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<sup>3</sup> The number of unweighted cases is under 2,500 which limited our ability to examine the results of individual countries and characteristics in greater detail.

except for refugee claimants who were excluded from the sample. Interviews were conducted in 15 different languages, giving LSIC a significant advantage over other surveys as it allows respondents less fluent in to respond in a language they are most comfortable. It provides detailed information about their reasons for migrating, education in Canada and outside Canada, recognition of foreign credentials, job history, occupational and income information (Statistics Canada, 2007b). We discuss the selection of the independent and dependent variables later in this paper. Our results are weighted and bootstrapped<sup>4</sup> according to guidelines outlined by Statistics Canada Research Data Centres<sup>5,6</sup>.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews conducted in Phase Two is to obtain a more holistic account of the processes of the transition from school-to-work. The survey is intended to provide more detailed information about their transition from school to work and to investigate some of the factors that may have influenced their experiences. For instance, we asked about the influence of family and ethnic community networks on the job search process. We also inquired about issues related to the recognition of the schooling or training they received outside of Canada. As a result, we are able to provide a more complete picture of the short-term integration experiences of newcomer youth to the four study cities: Vancouver, Winnipeg, Hamilton and Toronto. Toronto and Vancouver are selected for obvious reasons as they and their outlying communities are the top two destination cities of immigrants to Canada. We include Winnipeg and Hamilton for several reasons. First, the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) of Manitoba is the most successful in the country. Last year, nearly 13,000 newcomers came to Manitoba under the PNP (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2010). This constituted over 70% of immigrants to the province and 49.9% of all immigrants to Canada under this program. It has been the most successful implementation of the PNP to-date. Second, Winnipeg is the fifth most popular destination for newcomers to Canada despite the fact that it is Canada's tenth largest city. Hamilton presents similar characteristics. With a population of just over 692,000 (Statistics Canada, 2007c), it is similar in size to Winnipeg. Like Winnipeg, Hamilton is a tier-two city that attracts a large number of immigrants. Between 1997 and 2006, 32,252 immigrants arrived in Hamilton (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2007). It is the third most popular city of destination for migrants to Ontario. This makes Winnipeg and Hamilton interesting case studies on migration to mid-sized communities and fulfills a mandate of the Metropolis Project in Phase 3.

Our questionnaire was developed by the research team then discussed with various immigrant serving agencies and the study's advisory panel<sup>7</sup>. We used a variety of means for recruiting participants. Given our close connections with the various immigrant settlement agencies and ethnocultural community organizations in our respective cities, obtained their assistance to recruit some of our participants which was the most successful mode of obtaining sample participants. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada was able to distribute a call for study participants through their Youth Employment Offices. Winnipeg obtained several participants in this manner. While traditional poster and pamphlet methods of recruitment were used, these were less successful. Once recruited, all respondents completed a consent form before participating in the

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<sup>4</sup> No proxy responses are used in this study.

<sup>5</sup> The analysis of Phase One data is based on confidential microdata received from Statistics Canada and the opinions expressed do not represent the views of Statistics Canada.

<sup>6</sup> Data analysts from the Research Data Centres of the University of Manitoba and University of British Columbia provided invaluable advice relating to the statistical analysis and access to the data. All errors and omissions are the responsibility of the study authors.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1 for list of advisory committee members.

research and were given an honorarium of \$25. The average length of interviews varied, though 30-40 minutes is a good estimate.

We selected participants who best matched the characteristics of participants in the LSIC database. This meant that participants had to arrive in Canada between October 2000 and September 2001 who were between the ages of 15 and 29 years at the time of the interview. Another criterion for inclusion in Phase Two included participation in schooling and work activities for at least one year. Those who have not participated in work or school are excluded from this phase of the study. We aimed for samples of 25 youth per city to enable a cross-city comparison. Due to time constraints and the difficulty locating participants with some of the characteristics below, our final sample for Phase Two consists of 82 participants. There were other characteristics involved in the sample selection. This was done to provide sub-samples that were large enough to capture a large variety of school-to-work transitions. For instance, we tried to locate youth with a variety of educational credentials, similar numbers of employed and unemployed, and who arrived to Canada from major immigrant-sending countries. Table 1 outlines the three characteristics of Phase Two participants by city.

**Table 1: Selected Characteristics of Participants in Semi-Structured Interviews by City**

	<u>Vancouver</u>	<u>Winnipeg</u>	<u>Hamilton</u>	<u>Toronto</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Sex</u>					
Female	60%	55%	55%	35%	51%
Male	40%	45%	45%	65%	49%
<u>Education in Canada</u>					
Less than high school	0%	23%	10%	25%	15%
High school diploma only	20%	23%	15%	15%	18%
Post-secondary in progress	15%	0%	50%	10%	18%
Trade certificate or diploma	15%	0%	0%	25%	10%
University	50%	55%	25%	25%	39%
<u>Employment Status</u>					
Employed	95%	77%	35%	65%	68%
Unemployed	5%	23%	65%	35%	32%
<u>Area of Origin</u>					
Africa	20%	32%	35%	20%	27%
Asia	60%	59%	25%	45%	48%
Middle East	5%	0%	20%	10%	9%
Latin America, Caribbean & Pacific Is	15%	5%	10%	5%	9%
Europe and US	0%	5%	10%	25%	10%

There is variation in the educational credentials held by participants in our study. Approximately 39% of participants in our study had university-level education that they had obtained in Canada at the time of the interviews in Phase Two, while one-third had a high school diploma or less. Another 10% were in some type of post-secondary education either trade/diploma or degree program at the time of the interview. Nearly 70% of participants were employed at the time of the interview. Readers should note that all the interviews were conducted during the summer of 2009 so this figure would be artificially high in terms of its reflection of actual

labour market participation. Study participants came from across the globe<sup>8</sup>, with nearly 30% from Africa, 48% from Asia, 9% from the Middle East, 9% from Latin America, the Caribbean and Pacific Islands and 10% from Europe and the United States. There are nearly equal numbers of female and male participants. Their average age at arrival was 19.9 years while the average at the time of interview was 24.1 years.

## Results

Given the ages of the participants in Phase One and Phase Two, it is not surprising that almost all had some education prior to arrival and a significant majority sought placement in secondary or post-secondary schooling at arrival and in the subsequent two and four years after arrival. For those whose knowledge of one of Canada's official languages at arrival was good, the transition to schooling in Canada was relatively seamless. Those who lack English or French at arrival face more challenges. Participants in LSIC and the interviews indicate that they were likely to be placed at a lower grade and enrol in EAL, ESD or FCLS classes at the same time.

For those who had the opportunity, preparation to come to Canada was seen as essential. Some prepared for the migration for years. A Russian female living in Hamilton relates, "I lived in the United States and I lived in Belgium and I lived in New Zealand so I have seen a lot and I decided that Canada is a good country to come because I learned English when I was in Belgium. I learned French and Canada is a bilingual country, not so much in Ontario I thought that this is a good place for me because I know the language". Another respondent who has lived in Jordan and the US prior to her arrival to Canada tells us that prior to her arrival, in Jordan I was in an international school, I did an international baccalaureate, and I did the diploma ahh.. and that's umm 6 courses and in the summer we have to write an extended essay, and extended essay was 2000 words. And that actually helped me while I was in Michigan because I was able to transfer 21 credits from High school into ahh university so it got fine" (female from Jordan now living in Toronto).

The results of both analyses are presented below and contain information from the analysis of the LSIC master data file along with the semi-structured interviews we conducted across the country.

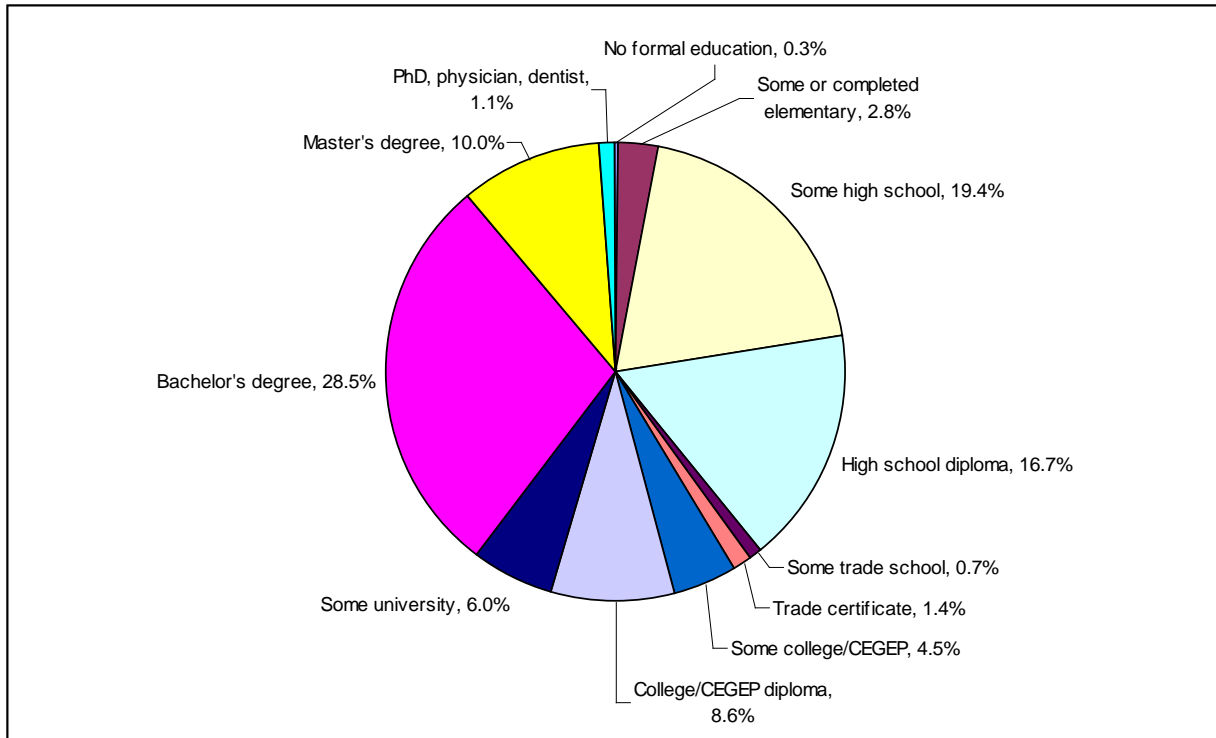
### *Trajectories through High School*

A significant majority of youth arriving in Canada between the ages of 15 and 29 years were in the midst of completing either secondary or post-secondary education at the time of the first LSIC interview. Figure 1 shows the distribution of highest level of education obtained outside of Canada for the LSIC sample. Just over 60% of the LSIC sample reported some education beyond the high school diploma. The Bachelor's degree is the modal category of education for this group, with over one-quarter reporting in this category. Ten per cent have a master's degree, roughly 30% higher than their Canadian-born counterparts. Nearly one in five has entered high school but did not obtain a high school diploma. Another 16.7% have completed the high school diploma without attempting any post-secondary education. Very few respondents arrived in Canada without formal education (0.3%), while another 2.8% reported having some or completed elementary education.

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<sup>8</sup> Participants from Africa came from Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe. Those from Asia came from Bangladesh, Burma, China, Hong Kong, India, Korea, Nepal, Philippines and Taiwan. Those from the Middle East came from Afghanistan, Iran, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. Those from Latin America, Pacific Islands and the Caribbean came from Fiji, Barbados, Mexico, Peru and Colombia. Those from Europe and USA come from England, Greece, Russia and the USA.

**Figure 1: Highest Level of Education at Arrival**



Source: Statistics Canada (2007) *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, master datafile.

We were particularly interested in the trajectory through high school given the large number of youth in the LSIC who entered (or returned to) high school throughout their first four years in Canada. Of those enrolled in high school, nearly two-thirds indicate that the grade they were placed in was not appropriate given their level of education prior to arriving in Canada.<sup>9</sup> Respondents were then asked to indicate why they felt their grade placement was too high or too low<sup>10</sup>. Figure 2 shows the distribution of their responses. Over 40% report that the qualifications they had obtained prior to entering Canada were not recognized by the high school. In other words, they felt they had already mastered the material and skills in their schooling obtained outside of Canada, an indication that the youth felt there are issues having their high school credentials recognized. As the data and results from the interviews will show later in this paper, there is strong evidence to suggest that there are problems with foreign credential recognition at the high school level. Nearly 30% of the youth report that they were placed in this grade because they needed extra time to learn English or French. Another 6.3% of participants report that they needed additional time to adjust to life and schooling in Canada. Twenty per cent provided an alternative reason<sup>11</sup> for why they felt their grade placement was inappropriate. The results may

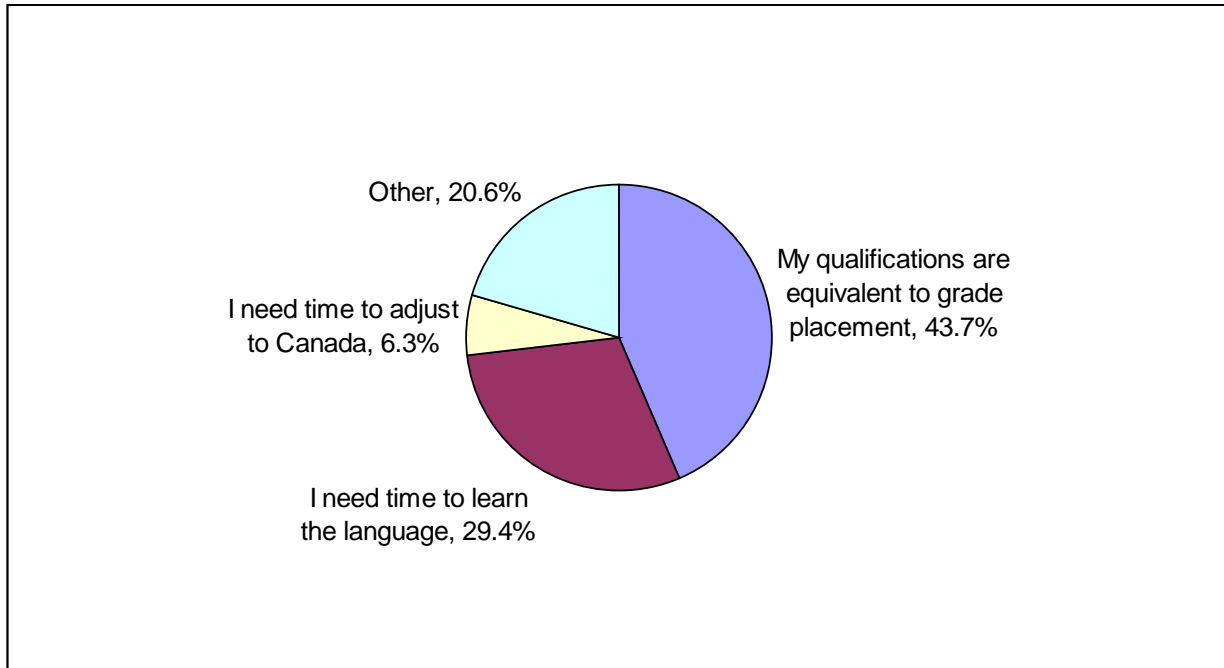
<sup>9</sup> Respondents who returned to high school at arrival were asked, “is your grade higher or lower than when you left your country of birth?” (ED1Q040). Nearly two-thirds indicate positively. The remaining 35.7% of respondents report that the grade was appropriate for their level of education. Teachers were not asked to verify this assessment.

<sup>10</sup> Refers to ED1Q041.

<sup>11</sup> This data is not available in the master data file for LSIC.

contradict the age-appropriate grade assignment policy followed by many school districts. We discuss the implications of this issue at the end of this report.

**Figure 2: Reason Your Grade Placement is too High or too Low**



Source: Statistics Canada (2007) *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, master datafile.

We wanted to investigate the transition through high school in greater detail. We defined being behind in education as being in a grade that was at least two or more years beneath what a similarly aged Canadian-youth would be and follows the definition proposed by McAndrew (2009) et al<sup>12</sup> and Wilkinson (2002). Figure 3 shows the results from LSIC at six months after arrival. Seventy-one percent of immigrant youth are at least 2 years behind in their education six months after arrival while only 29% are in a grade that is associated with their age. By two years after arrival, 44% of newcomers had ‘caught up’, meaning they were attending a grade that is comparable to their age (or had finished high school). Over half (56%), however, remained significantly behind in their education two years after arrival. This trend does not bode well for a seamless integration into post-secondary education or labour market.

We wondered if there were differences in the groups of individuals who were on-track or behind in their education. One of the differences we discovered had to do with the entrance class in which they (or their parents) were admitted to Canada. Figure 4 outlines these differences. Those entering as family class (77.2%) or as refugees (76.7%) were the most likely to be classified as behind in their high school education compared with those arriving in the skilled worker (69.3%) and business classes (60.9%) at time of arrival. These differences continued at time two, with family class and refugees being the most likely to be behind in their

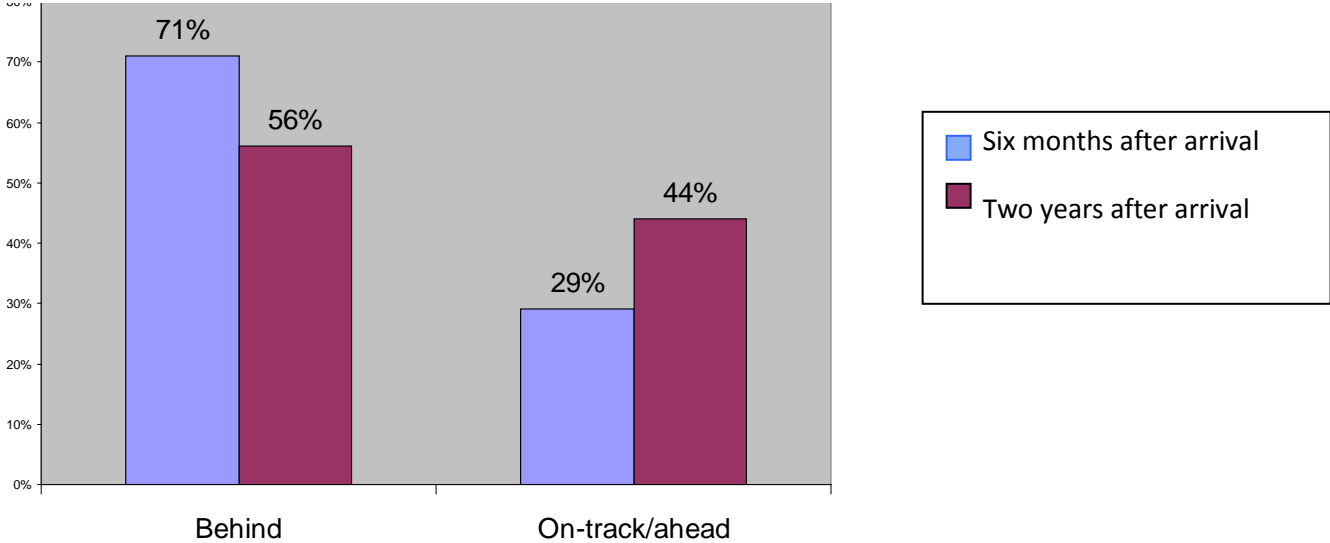
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<sup>12</sup> Several EAL consultants and experts were consulted regarding the construction of this variable and all suggested this was an adequate way of defining age-appropriate grade placement (personal conversations with L. Wilkinson).



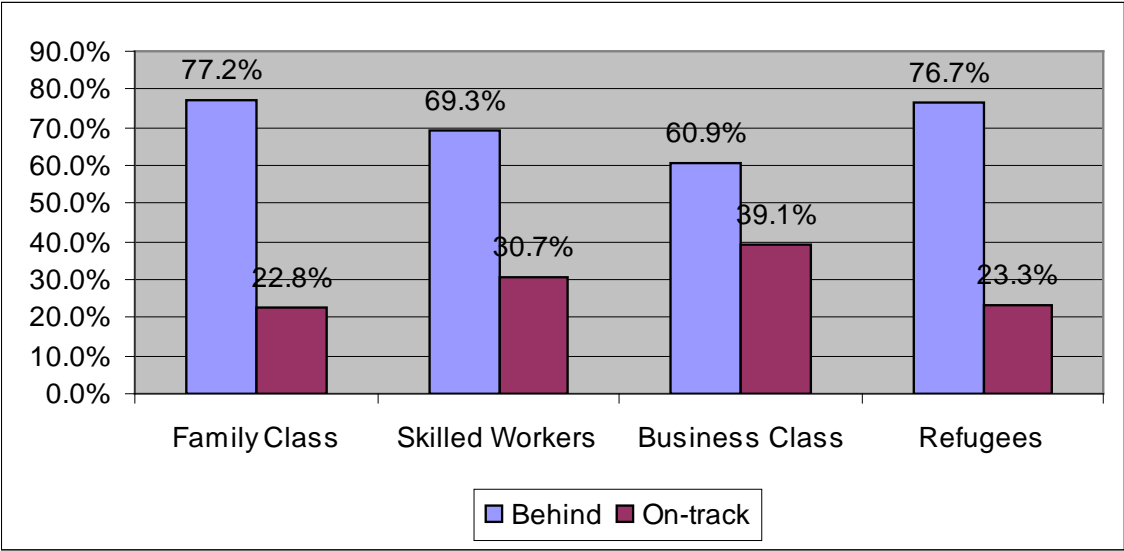
high school education. These differences remain when gender, age at arrival, family income and place of birth are controlled<sup>13</sup>.

**Figure 3: High School Trajectory of Immigrants at Six Months after Arrival and Two Years after Arrival**



Source: Statistics Canada (2007) *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, master datafile.

**Figure 4: High School Trajectory of Immigrants Six Months after Arrival by Entrance Class**



Source: Statistics Canada (2007) *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, master datafile.

Note: P<0.01

<sup>13</sup> Table is not shown.

While we were unable to release information by country of birth due to small sample sizes<sup>14</sup>, we were able to detect a relationship between area of origin and being on-track or behind in education<sup>15</sup>. Youth arriving from countries in the Middle East, Africa, Caribbean and Central or South America were the most likely to be 'behind' in their education in high school compared with those originating from European, American or Australian school systems (59.7%). Asian youth fared the best with slightly more than 50% (50.6%) defined as on-track two years after arrival. This relationship holds six months after arrival<sup>16</sup>.

One way to measure progress through the education system is to see if the newcomer youth has successfully completed a grade at the end of the school year. Unfortunately, this is not possible using LSIC given the strict data protection protocols. What we can do is provide an aggregate table that shows progression through the education system over the four year period of the LSIC study. Thus, a 15 year old ought to be placed in Grade 9 so that he or she may graduate from high school by age 18. If we understand this as the norm or ideal, then those arriving in Canada as 15 year olds should be finished high school by the end of year four. Those older than 15 years would likely be in some sort of post-secondary education or in the labour force by the end of the LSIC study period. As Table 2 indicates, this is not the case with the majority of newcomer youth arriving between the ages of 15 and 19. Over half (55.8%) of that group have not finished high school four years later. Another 18% have completed a high school diploma but have not gone on to post-secondary education. Recall that this group would be ages 19 to 23 years by year four. In comparison, 13.8% of Canadians aged 20-24 years<sup>17</sup> have not completed high school while 86.2% have finished a high school diploma (Statistics Canada, 2008<sup>18</sup>), a rate of school completion much higher than the LSIC newcomer group. Of those arriving in Canada between the ages of 20 and 24 years (aged 24 to 28 at year four), 41.5% have completed some type of college, trade, technical or university program. Participation in post-secondary education is slightly higher among the 25 to 29 year old group, though readers are reminded however, four years after arrival, this older group is now aged 29 to 34. By comparison, 66.7% of Canadians between the ages of 25 and 34 years have a trade, certificate or degree (Statistics Canada, 2008), significantly greater than the oldest LSIC newcomer group. The gap in rates of university degree attainment between the LSIC and Canadian-born group is not as wide. While 28.8% of Canadians aged 25 to 34 years have a university degree (Statistics Canada, 2008), our data from LSIC indicates that 22% of those aged 25 to 29 years at arrival have a university degree. The findings indicate that

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<sup>14</sup> Due to disclosure rules by the Statistics Canada Research Data Centres, we are unable to release information about country of birth—so area of origin was used as the categorizing factor. The numbers of youth from Caribbean, African, and Middle Eastern countries is very small. We were forced to combine these heterogeneous groups further. African and Caribbean origins were combined as were Asian and Middle Eastern origins. Central and South American origins (inclusive of Mexico) were also combined. Those from Australia, the United States and Europe were also combined into a single category.

<sup>15</sup> Table is available on request.

<sup>16</sup> Table is available on request.

<sup>17</sup> This is the group of Canadian-born closest in age to our group at year four given Statistics Canada's reporting of age ranges.

<sup>18</sup> Figures calculated from 2006 Census table located at <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/tbt/Rp-eng.cfm?TABID=1&LANG=E&APATH=3&DETAIL=0&DIM=0&FL=A&FREE=0&GC=0&GK=0&GRP=1&PID=97683&PRID=0&PTYPE=88971,97154&S=0&SHOWALL=0&SUB=0&Temporal=2006&THEME=75&VID=0&VNAMEE=&VNAMEF=>

some newcomers experience difficulty completing high school ‘on time’ and that many of the newcomers have lengthened pathways in the post-secondary education system.

**Table 2: Level of Education Four Years after Arrival by Age at Arrival**

	<u>15-19</u>		<u>20-24</u>		<u>25-29</u>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than High School	7,401	55.8%	1,707	13.6%	1,609	6.0%
High School Diploma	2,368	17.9%	2,587	20.7%	2,010	7.5%
Some Post-secondary	2,502	18.9%	5,190	41.5%	12,506	46.8%
College/technical diploma, trade certificate	991	7.5%	1,788	14.3%	4,568	17.1%
University complete	suppressed		1,234	9.9%	6,054	22.6%

Note: the total figures exclude those arriving between the ages of 15 and 19 years with university complete.

P<0.001

We then conducted a series of generalized linear models to examine the high school pathways of immigrant youth at time of arrival and two years after arrival<sup>19</sup>. While some of our results appear below, the results of others are discussed and tables are available upon request.

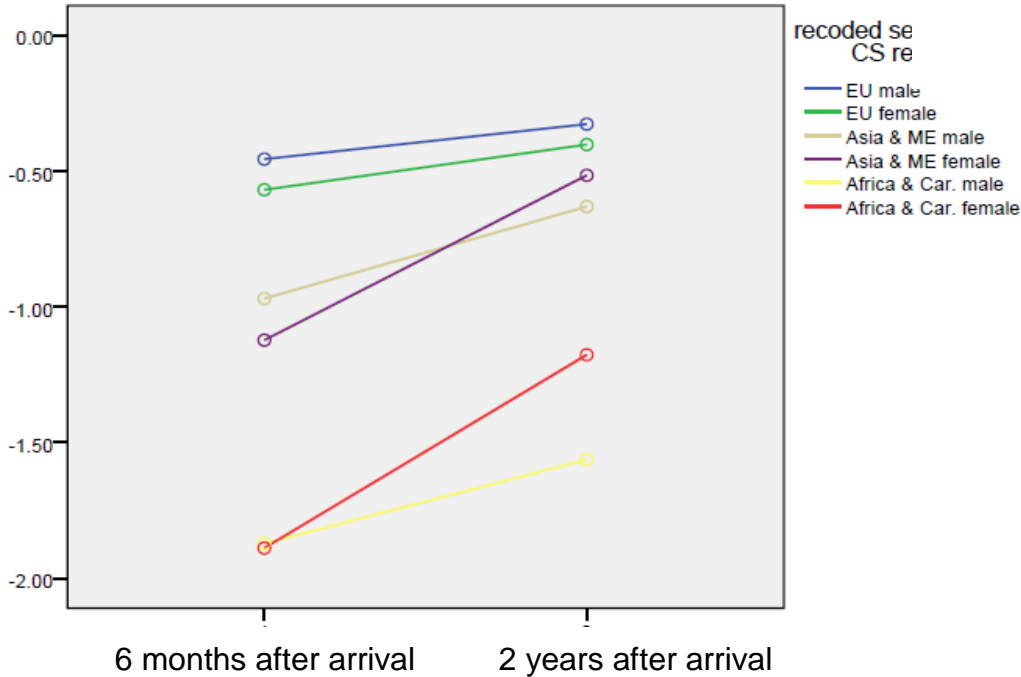
Figure 5 presents the results of the GLM examining the effects of area of origin and sex on high school trajectories. At the onset, we can observe several interesting points. Generally, no sex or origin group is ‘on-track’ in their high school education at arrival. In examining the Y-axis, we see that some groups such as males and females from Caribbean and African countries (shown in yellow and red lines), are almost two years behind their similarly aged Canadian-born counterparts in high school at arrival in Canada. Males and females from the US, Australia and the European Union are best positioned six months after arrival, being about half a year behind their similarly aged Canadian-born counterparts. We can also make some observations about the slopes of each line. All lines point upwards, indicating a positive trajectory through high school. That means as time in high school increases, so does their progression towards completion. The slope of the lines also has meaning. Lines with steep slopes indicate a rate of ‘catching up’ that is fast while those with less or no slope (see for example males and females from European Union countries) where the progression is not as fast.

The results in Figure 5 reveal some interesting trends. As mentioned earlier, males and females from African and Caribbean countries are the most ‘behind’, an average of 2 years at time of arrival. Females, however, have one of the steepest trajectories. Two years after arrival, they have caught up by nearly one full year. Males from African and Caribbean countries, however, do not fare as well. Their trajectory is rather flat and by two years after arrival, they remain 1.5 years behind in their education. Females and males from Asian and Middle Eastern countries enter high school approximately 1 year behind similarly aged Canadian-born counterparts. Females have a steep trajectory, only half a year behind their Canadian-born counterparts two years after arrival. For males, the trajectory to year two is not as steep. Both males and females from Australia, US and European Union countries have flat trajectories, though are less than half a year behind in their high school education.

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<sup>19</sup> Given the small sample sizes, we were unable to conduct a meaningful analysis of high school trajectories at time three (four years after arrival).

**Figure 5: GLM for High School Trajectories, Controlling for Sex and Area of Origin**



Source: Statistics Canada (2007) *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, master datafile.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that newcomer youth from fractured families may be at a disadvantage to those arriving with complete family units. The belief is that the trauma experienced by separation, whether permanent or temporary, may adversely affect their academic achievements. This belief is plausible as studies have shown that Canadian-born children from divorced or separated household units tend to have lower educational performances than those from unified family units. We examined this phenomenon using LSIC data and found support for this belief<sup>20</sup>. Males and females from fractured families, meaning those arriving in Canada with close relatives missing (i.e., mother or father or siblings) not only entered high school with larger deficits (females being 2 years behind and males at just over 1.5 years behind in high school), after two years in Canada, they remained the furthest behind. The good news is the educational trajectory for females is quite steep, though for boys, the trajectory is more flat. Two years after arrival, boys were over one year behind in their education. Neither group had 'caught up' to those who arrived in united families. By year two, females in complete family units were only half a year behind similarly aged counterparts, while males were close behind. This evidence suggests there is an effect of family fracture on educational trajectories.

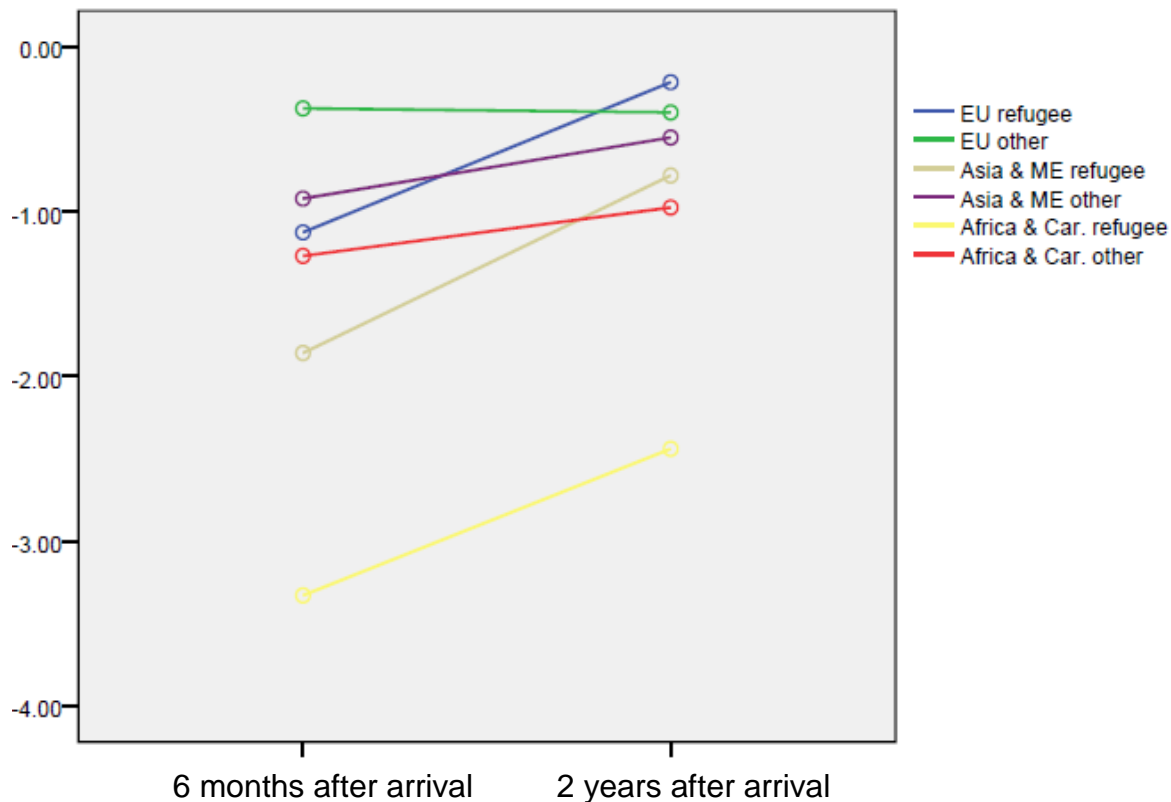
We wanted to examine the effect of area of origin on refugee status to answer the question does area of origin have an interaction with being a refugee in terms of educational success? In other words, do refugees from some areas do better at school than others? Evidence from Wilkinson (2002) indicates that refugees from European countries do significantly better in high school than those who are from elsewhere. Data from LSIC presented in Figure 6 confirms this observation<sup>21</sup>. Those from European countries (blue and green lines) have

<sup>20</sup> Table available upon request.

<sup>21</sup> We were forced to exclude data from refugees arriving from Central and South American countries due to identity disclosure concerns.

grade placements closer to their actual age at arrival and two years after arrival than those from elsewhere. In fact, refugees from the EU (blue line) slightly outperform all other groups including those arriving as immigrants from EU countries (green line). Note the African and Caribbean refugee group (yellow line). They have the most significant gap in their education, being placed over 3 years behind at time of arrival and remaining over two years behind in wave 2. The good news is the positive trajectory of this line. There is less positive news about immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean (red line). Note the flatness of this line. It indicates that two years after arrival, this group has not progressed nearly as far as the other groups, an indication of a significant number of high school dropouts. Refugees from Asia and the Middle East are, on average, 2 years behind similarly aged Canadian-born youth at time of arrival. By year two, they have caught up and are about 0.8 years behind in their high school education.

**Figure 6: GLM for High School Trajectories, Controlling for Area of Origin and Refugee Status**



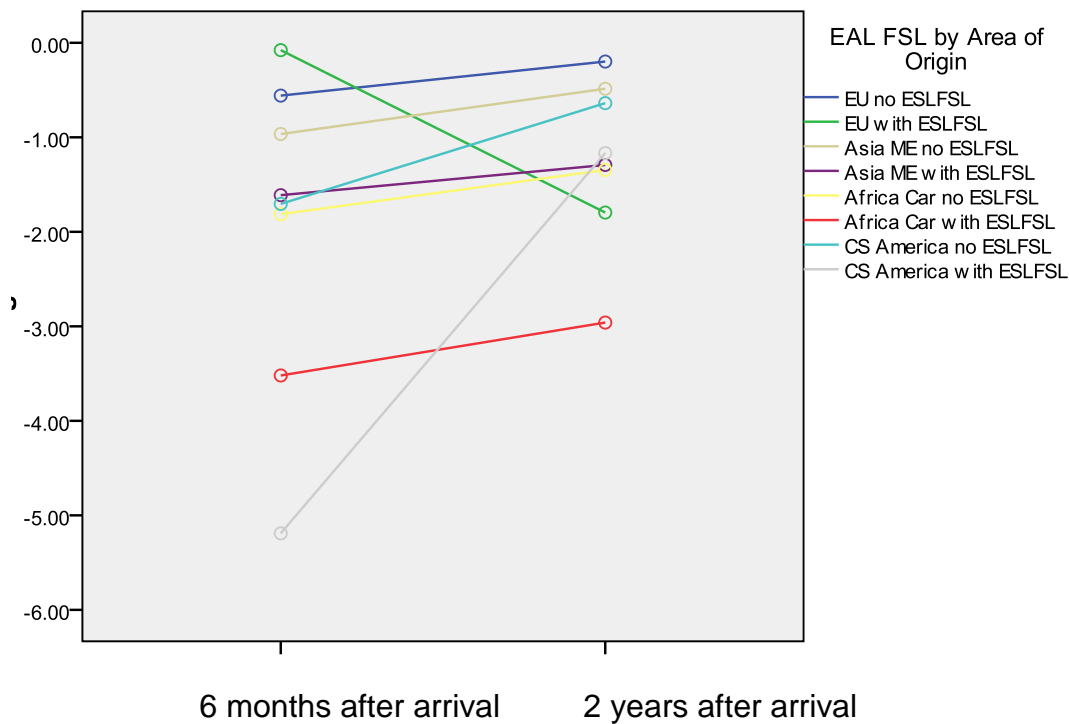
Source: Statistics Canada (2007) *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, master datafile.

Finally, we wished to examine the effect of being enrolled in an EAL or FCLS class on school trajectories. Studies have shown that those who take EAL or FAL classes, even for a short period of time, have slower high school trajectories than other youth. This makes sense as it takes time to master a new language, syntax and grammar, particularly for those who are not functionally literate in their own language<sup>22</sup>. Not surprisingly, those who know English or French prior to their arrival have a smaller gap in their education (about 1 year for this group).

<sup>22</sup> Table is not shown

We wondered if there were country of origin effects on the observed differences between EAL and FCLS students. Figure 7 shows these results. There are significant differences. European youth having no English or French upon arrival show a steep downward trajectory in the two years after arrival. This signifies a significant high school dropout rate for this group. Others have a rather flat trajectory, meaning that they may be experiencing difficulty in school (combined with a high dropout rate which does not exceed the numbers that stay in school). Observers will also note that those from African and Caribbean origins, regardless of whether or not they know French or English, start their high school education more ‘behind’ than others. Their school trajectories remain ‘flat’ meaning there is a problem with advancement and dropout as well. The grey line, representing those youth coming from Central or South America and enrolled in EAL or FCLS classes have a steep upward trajectory. While they start, on average, nearly 5.5 years behind in their education, two years after arrival, they have made up nearly 4.5 years in high school.

**Figure 7: GLM for High School Trajectories, Controlling for Area and Enrolment in EAL/FCLS Class**



Source: Statistics Canada (2007) *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada*, master datafile.

In summary, the trajectory through high school for most newcomer youth is not as straightforward as we believe. On average, all youth face challenges having their high school education and diplomas recognized in Canada. It does not matter what country they have migrated from, what immigrant entrance class they or their families have entered, or how much prior education (including university level education) they have obtained. Our results from the LSIC reveal that all will face the prospect of repeating some education after arrival. Age at immigration seems not to have an effect on this relationship as evidence from LSIC reveals several individuals, even those with post-secondary education arriving to Canada in their late 20s having to return to adult education to upgrade this basic level of education.

The next section examines their trajectories through post-secondary education.

## *Post-secondary Trajectories*

Despite the trials and tribulations faced by newcomer youth in the Canadian high school system, many do go on to post-secondary education. Given their age at arrival (recall that this study includes those who migrated to Canada between the ages of 15 and 29 years), many of them would not have completed post-secondary schooling before migrating to Canada. Others who had completed post-secondary schooling in their home country find it necessary to upgrade their post-secondary education after their arrival here.

Almost all of the participants in Phase two semi-structured interviews had also participated in some form of post-secondary education in the time after their arrival in Canada<sup>23</sup>. For many, this experience was positive, but for others, it was a source of failure and frustration. The next section on recognition of foreign credentials deals with the need for some youth to return to high school and foreign credential recognition issues. This section outlines some of the general experience in post-secondary schooling.

Like Canadian-born students, some newcomer youth find the post-secondary experience in Canada rewarding and useful for finding employment. Earning diplomas and degrees are seen as essential accreditations needed to make a successful transition to the workplace. A female South African of Indian descent tells us

R: I applied to lots of other places. I actually got called back a lot more than I thought I would. I called back... probably I dropped off my resumes at ten places. I got called back like 6 out of 10.

I: Oh, that was pretty good.

R: A lot better than food court. I thought it was because I had my...

I: You had your diploma?

R: Yeah, I did my certificate course.

Almost a third of the respondents in Phase Two of our study indicated that what they learned in post-secondary school in Canada was not useful in finding employment. A male respondent from the Philippines tells us about his experiences in college and how it did not help him find employment in his field. "Yes, there's some of the things in (name of college). I don't even, I just don't know what... from what I can remember was it was useless. I guess I don't remember really anything that was really helpful to me". Another participant from Nepal, arriving with a Masters in Social Sciences in Literature with almost seven years of work experience in non-profit organizations and community colleges who now lives in Toronto tells us about his experiences.

Q: then you came to Canada. When you just came here, did you try to look for work?

A: as soon as I came here, I realized that I was not job ready because I need to have references to succeed in the job interview. I didn't look for work in the first six months and after the first six months, I started looking for work. With my experience from back home, I didn't get any interview; I went for the resume and cover letter writing workshop and I went for interview preparation workshops; I learned the job search methodology and I extensively used my network but I was not successful. I looked for six months; So I decided to upgrade myself. I enrolled in a certificate program offered by George Brown College and JVS Toronto. I graduated in 2008; as soon as I graduated, I started to look for job again in job development

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<sup>23</sup> Recall that having had some secondary or post-secondary schooling experience in Canada was one of the desired characteristics of participants in this phase of the study.

field and employment counselling. Till now, I'm still looking for a job and I haven't got one. But I got some interviews now."

Obtaining a post-secondary credential has future resource implications. For most, family support was a central source of assurance as they continued their post-secondary journeys. About 75% of respondents in Phase Two indicate that their parents had very high expectations of them with regards to post-secondary credentials. The majority indicated they had been 'reminded' or 'pushed' by their parents, depending on their perspective, to do well in school in order to obtain good careers in the future. A female from Fiji who lives in Vancouver says this about her family's influence, "so education is a huge thing in our family. Yes, so through our school, they may show we're the best and they pushed, you know, and pushed; made us feel like we had some... had our papers, especially people from a third world country". However, since their parents did not have adequate knowledge of the Canadian education system, most parents were unable to give anything more than emotional support to help their children while they pursued post-secondary education. A 23 year old Filipino in Vancouver tells us about his experience selecting a post-secondary route. "Actually it was, yeah I was deciding on my own because, uh they don't really have any uh knowledge, you know, of how education system was in Canada. They weren't really informed and even if I asked them, they're gonna actually ask me to ooh, why don't you find out yourself because we really don't know and we don't have the time because they are working full-time too".

Despite having high expectations for their children, many parents could not afford to support their children financially as they pursued a post-secondary education. Most of the youth in our study turned to part-or full-time employment to assist them while they attended school. A 19 year old male from the Congo tells us about his life as a worker and student. "I had to go working in the evening and go to school in the morning, so you know, that's a new life for me. So it was crazy. Yeah, I just come home from work, I'm so tired. I still have to do my homework. When I go to bed, I go like six hours". An American female living in Hamilton informs us, "well money is a struggle, so it's pretty much my mom because she is doing everything on her own and my dad doesn't send us any money or anything and my mom is not making enough money right now especially when I move into university. So she is like, you really got to work, you know because it's pretty much impossible for me to stay at home and do nothing".

Some newcomer youth have had to postpone their post-secondary education to support their struggling families. Although they were aware of the need to obtain an education beyond high school to further careers, the financial needs of their family were more significant. In Hamilton, a male from Afghanistan reports "you know the economy is not good and right now the situation with my family is not good because of the bad economy. So I need to find a job to solve some problems in the family and then maybe I'll go back to college. You know, it's so hard to find a job these days". Similarly, a participant from Tibet, now living in Toronto, tells us:

I took 1 year gap so I can just work and then try to pay for my college

**Q:** it's a good strategy

**A:** I also try to help my family too cause ummm, right now it's only my mom who is working alone, you know. So my dad he is basically in back home right now and my mom is working alone and umm and she is getting basically 9 dollars right now. I am getting more than her actually. Like I am getting \$11 dollar per hour and umm yeah cause I have brothers and sisters too that's why.



In addition to postponing their post-secondary education, many of our respondents indicate that they felt compelled to send money home to their parents and family members, even when they struggled financially in Canada. A 20 year old male from the Congo reports “because I have a sister in Africa and my dad called me every month to send her money”.

Table 3 is another way of showing the trajectory of the LSIC group through the Canadian education system. Here, we chart the education at time of arrival by their education at year four. In a ‘smooth’ transition, those arriving in Canada with less than high school should have completed high school and hopefully moved on to post-secondary training four years later. As the data in column one clearly illustrates, this is not the case. Eighty-one percent of newcomers arriving in Canada with incomplete high school do not have a high school diploma four years later. Among those with high school diplomas, very few have attempted or attained post-secondary diplomas or degrees after four years. Three-quarters of those arriving in Canada with high school diplomas have not progressed in their education. Fifteen percent have earned some post-secondary qualifications but have not completed a degree or certificate over the four years. Another 8% have completed university.

Just as the high school diploma and high school incomplete groups remain stagnant in their trajectory through the education system, so too does the group arriving in Canada with some trade, technical or university education incomplete. Four years after arrival, 89% of these newcomers still have not completed their post-secondary education. This may be explained by a few things. Some have had to start their education ‘from scratch’ not having their prior training recognized, others have spent time trying to have their training transferred for full or partial credit in Canadian institutions. Still others have given up on their education. They have been unable to return to school upon their arrival to Canada, an indication of difficulties having foreign credentials recognized and/or issues with economic survival. There is some positive news on the educational pathways among the LSIC study group. Returning to school does not seem to be a popular trajectory among those arriving in Canada with trade, technical or college degrees. Almost all (85%) remain at that level of education. What is surprising is the difficulties experienced by those with university degrees. Among university graduates four years after arrival, 55% have returned to post secondary education, mainly to upgrade their university degrees. Some have even returned to high school! In sum, there is an issue with qualifications recognition among newcomer youth, particularly those with university-level education.

**Table 3: Education Four Years after Arrival by Education at Time of Arrival**

	<u>Less than high school</u>		<u>High school diploma</u>		<u>Some post-secondary</u>		<u>Trade, Technical College Complete</u>		<u>University Complete</u>	
	N		N		N		N		N	
Less than High School	9,563	81%	251	3%	suppressed		suppressed		693	3%
High School Diploma	^1737	15%	6,539	75%	257	4%	269	5%	suppressed	
Some Post-secondary	suppressed		1,278	15%	5,255	89%	536	10%	11,500	55%
College/technical diploma, trade certificate	suppressed		suppressed		suppressed		^4434	85%	1,342	6%
University complete	^554	5%	^685	8%	360	6%	suppressed		7,260	35%

^ indicates cells have been combined to prevent identity disclosure for cells containing less than 10 cases

Given the entrance status effects we observed in high school trajectories in Figure 4, we wondered about any effects on education levels four years after arrival. The results indicate a difference by entrance class. Youth arriving in the business class or as refugees had the lowest levels of education, 37% and 41% respectively having not completed high school on arrival. Those arriving in the skilled worker category (44.2%) were more likely to come with some but not all of their post-secondary education complete as were 35.5% of the family

class migrants. Additional details regarding entrance class effects on educational and labour market trajectories are discussed later.

**Table 4: Level of Education Four Years after Arrival by Entrance Category**

	<u>Family Class</u>		<u>Skilled Worker</u>		<u>Business</u>		<u>Refugee</u>	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Less than High School	3,754	19.7%	3,894	15.3%	1,086	37.1%	1,832	41%
High School Diploma	3,538	18.6%	1,795	7.1%	677	23.1%	854	19%
Some Post-secondary	6,764	35.5%	11,229	44.2%	819	27.9%	1,091	25%
College/technical diploma, trade certificate	2,744	14.4%	3,709	14.6%	suppressed	na	521	12%
University complete	2,247	11.8%	4,788	18.8%	349	11.9%	137	3%

Note: the figures for business class having college, technical or trades are combined with university complete.

P<0.001

### *Recognition of Foreign Credentials*

Recent research suggests that a foreign credential is worth only 70% of the value of a similar credential attained in Canada and that foreign work experience is worth only one-third of similar experience obtained in Canada (Sharma, 2010). Foreign credential recognition is believed to be problematic for migrants arriving in later adulthood. Our study reveals that foreign credential recognition is a serious problem for youth, including those arriving as young as 15 years of age. As the LSIC analysis reveals, six months and two years after arrival, having some post-secondary education prior to arrival has no statistically significant influence on the attainment of full-time work among newcomer youth. We also uncovered significant backwards regressive pathways in the LSIC data.

Phase Two interviews corroborate our observations from LSIC. One of the striking features of the LSIC and interviews is the backwards pathways through post-secondary education abroad to secondary school in Canada. A 26 year old Nigerian respondent from Winnipeg laments the troubles he has experienced having his university education recognized. He was a second year engineering student in Nigeria when the professors went on strike for over six months. This was the impetus for him to move to Canada. An immigration agency told him that he could resume his university studies in Canada without difficulty. Upon arrival, he was told his two years of university education was the equivalent of a grade 11 education here. After completing two years of high school, the young man returned to university, only to be told he could not transfer to the BSc program in Science as he did not have the right biology credit from high school, “because now they were looking at my Canadian record and not my Nigerian record”. A second trip back to high school has meant a three year backwards trip through high school in order to attain the “Canadian” credentials needed to undertake the courses he needed to complete university. Unfortunately, his case is not unique, given the results calculated from LSIC data. A Nepalese participant living in Toronto reports,

... due to educational differences, my master degree back home is equivalent to a bachelor degree here in Canada.

Q: what do you think of this?

A: I am a bit upset but I guess to some extent, it’s logical. Because in Canada, it takes you 16 years in total from elementary school to university to get your bachelor degree but in Nepal,

from elementary school to graduate school, 17 years you can get a master degree. So one more year you can get a master degree in Nepal.”

Several other respondents indicated that they had to return to high school upon their arrival to Canada despite having post-secondary credentials at arrival. A 20 year old male from the Philippines (living in Vancouver) expresses his frustration at having to return to high school even though he has already attained post-secondary qualifications<sup>24</sup>. “They don’t recognize my diploma (high school and onwards). I guess I have to go back to school and then just start ESL... that’s what they told me and I basically say, you know, that I’m a very proud person, so I uh basically I did not want to go back to school”. Similar sentiments are expressed by a 26 year old female from Mexico (living in Hamilton). “For me, having a degree in Canada is good but I went to an interview (with a major bank), most of the employees come from York University with a business degree; even if I have all the qualifications for that position, they said that your business degree is not from Canada. But I have a degree from Canada too” (in Globalization Studies). These examples illustrate the reluctance of young people to return to education, particularly those who have to return to high school.

Some respondents indicated that they were under the impression that the route to having their educational credentials recognized would be relatively seamless. Another Nigerian respondent living in Winnipeg reports “what I have been told before I can use my education, I am needed to go to the office of credential recognition assessment office. Unfortunately, when I got there, we were told (by the entry program) that they cannot do the assessment unless an employer or a school asks for it. I wanted to follow my education at the college in Winnipeg but I couldn’t because I was asked to bring my Canadian benchmark. No one assessed (it) so I can’t say”. Another respondent from Winnipeg has “a feeling they won’t recognize everything because that what I have been hearing from all immigrants”.

The process for credential recognition among this group is long, lasting several months, with many respondents being disappointed at the conclusion. The process begins for many prior to their entry to Canada as they try to obtain the information necessary to have their credentials recognized prior to entry and/or for entrance purposes. An Indian respondent from Winnipeg describes the process

It will take two to three months more. I started last month, but the process is so slow there. Nobody’s caring even if you were out of country, nobody’s going to listen to you if you’re calling and you know calling is not cheap for us, right? So you’re calling, ‘okay I applied for my transcripts’ and they will say ‘okay I will do this thing’ but after that they forget so yah, it’s a different to do the work in India to make the people do work.

Credential recognition is particularly difficult for youth arriving in the refugee classes. In addition to having significant gaps in their education as a result of war, many have difficulty providing sufficient documentation outlining the qualifications they have obtained as the institutions may no longer exist or the records were lost due to war. One refugee respondent relates her experiences, “there is grade one to... in the refugee camp we do not finish grade 12, we just have grade 10. They call it high school”. UNICEF is a central provider of educational support in refugee camps. Their school-in-a-box program provides a culturally neutral, locally developed curriculum and materials. While admirable, there are clearly educational gaps as the students lack textbooks, supplies and adequate school infrastructures. Many students from refugee camps have significant

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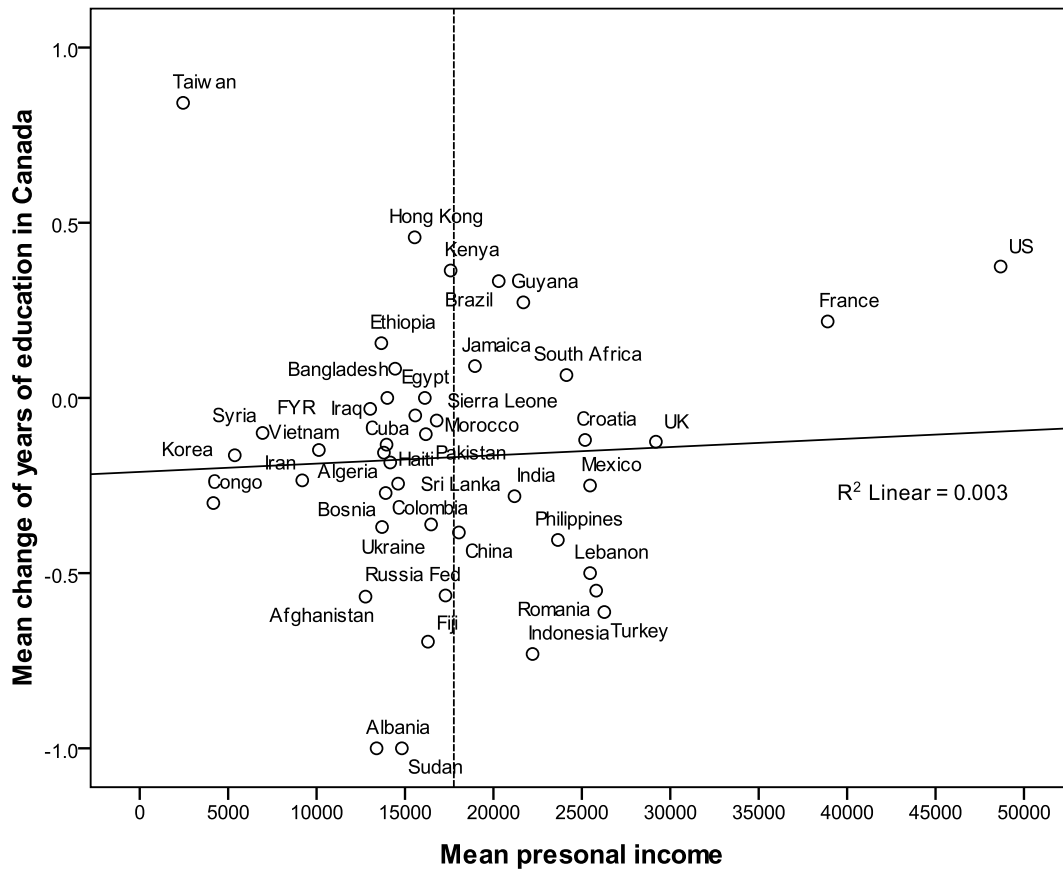
<sup>24</sup> This is a typical response of newcomers from the Philippines in this and other studies. Many have been required to return to high school despite having university and trade certificates due to the fact that compulsory secondary schooling ends at Grade 10 in the Philippines.

educational deficiencies, may be functionally illiterate in their mother-tongue, and may be experience significant difficulties in the Canadian education system as a result.

The economic returns of education are another measure of integration. Figure 8 shows the economic returns to education attained in Canada by country of origin. Readers should note that each point represents an aggregate figure of all individuals from that country of origin. Data from countries having fewer than 10 cases in the data set have been removed from this analysis for anonymity purposes. This table measures how education attained in Canada influences mean personal income by country of origin. If education acquired in Canada is more valued in the labour market, then those with more years of schooling here should see a corresponding increase in income. Ideally, this graph would have all its points in the upper right hand quadrant, indicating that as years of education in Canada increases so too does income. A glance at the table indicates this is not the case.

Rather than explaining all points, we highlight a few. Among those experiencing success in the Canadian labour market, France and the US stand out. They have the highest incomes (France nearly \$40,000, and US nearly \$50,000) and receive the highest returns to their education attained in Canada. There are, however, many groups doing poorly. Those from Albania and Sudan, although they have to return to school—often have to go ‘backwards’ in their education. For instance, an Albanian who arrives in Canada with Grade 11 education may have to repeat Grade 10. As a result, their entrance to post-secondary education and the Canadian labour market is delayed. Similarly, a Sudanese youth arriving with a trade certificate may also have to retrain upon arrival to Canada. What this table shows is that even returning to school in Canada does not net the same income results. On average, Albanians and Sudanese have to repeat at least one (if not more) years of schooling and earn less than \$15,000 as a result. Those from Afghanistan, Russian Federation, Fiji and others have similar results. They must retrain either in high school or in post-secondary institutions and have lower incomes than other groups regardless of the degree of retraining in Canada. Some groups, such as those from India, Mexico and the Philippines, may have to return to school but have above average incomes. For instance, those from Mexico and India may have to repeat less than one year of school (on average) but have mean incomes of about \$25,000. Those from Indonesia, Romania and Turkey, however, may have to repeat more of their schooling to obtain the same income. Those from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Ethiopia, and Kenya face a situation where they repeat more schooling than other newcomers, on average, but have very low economic returns from this Canadian training. Migrants from Taiwan have to repeat more years of schooling than all other groups but also have the lowest income at \$5000. Those from Hong Kong do better economically (\$15,000), but the returns on their extra education are not as high as other groups. In summary, this table shows that even with some education attained in Canada, many newcomer youth continue to experience low economic returns to their education—an indication of a foreign credential crisis much like that experienced by adult immigrants.

**Figure 8: Total Income by Years of Education attained in Canada by Country of Origin**



*Employment Experiences*

Working in Canada forms an important part of the experience of newcomer youth. Table 13 describes the work experience of newcomer youth using LSIC data. Most newcomer youth have some experience with the Canadian labour market within the first four years of their arrival. The table shows that 53.5% of respondents had some work experience by the time of their first interview. Although there is some predictable variation by age, there is a convergence in experience by the third interview when 84% of the respondents had at least some work experience in Canada.

**Table 5. Percent with employment experiences**

<i>Age at Arrival</i>	<i>Before arrival</i>	<i>Six months after arrival</i>	<i>Two years after arrival</i>	<i>Four years after arrival</i>
<i>15-29yrs</i>	<i>15.8</i>	<i>29.5</i>	<i>67.8</i>	<i>83.1</i>
<i>20-24yrs</i>	<i>42.6</i>	<i>56.5</i>	<i>80.0</i>	<i>82.2</i>
<i>25-29yrs</i>	<i>85.6</i>	<i>64.0</i>	<i>81.2</i>	<i>85.2</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>57.7</i>	<i>53.5</i>	<i>77.5</i>	<i>84.0</i>

Although most newcomer youth find work and many enter the labour market quickly, this does not imply that those experiences are uniform or seamless transitions. Table 6 provides a snapshot of the employment experience for those respondents that had some work experience by the Wave 3 interview four years after arrival. On average, newcomer youth changed jobs one or two times during the four year span, and over 90% of these youth experienced at least one jobless spell of 7 days or longer. Many youth have secured full-time employment, particularly among older youth, but over 30% of respondents report either being dissatisfied with their job or actively looking for a new job at the time of the interview.

**Table 6. Employment experience at year four**

<i>Age at Arrival</i>	<i>Number of jobs held</i>	<i>Jobless Spells</i>	<i>Employed Full-time</i>	<i>Dissatisfied or looking for work</i>
<i>15-29yrs</i>	<i>2.37</i>	<i>98.1</i>	<i>36.2</i>	<i>31.9</i>
<i>20-24yrs</i>	<i>2.50</i>	<i>94.5</i>	<i>67.5</i>	<i>31.3</i>
<i>25-29yrs</i>	<i>2.38</i>	<i>91.2</i>	<i>75.1</i>	<i>31.0</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>2.40</i>	<i>93.7</i>	<i>63.6</i>	<i>31.3</i>

*Finding Work: The Market Value of Family and Friends*

The value of social ties, including family, friends and acquaintances, are often considered resources for people in search of work. It is also commonly recommended that job seekers draw on their ties when searching for work. Using the LSIC we can patch together a picture of the job search process of newcomer youth and supplement this with details from our Phase Two in-depth interviews. The LSIC includes information on all the jobs a newcomer held during the four year period of the survey. For each of those jobs, respondents were asked exactly how they found their job including whether they used relatives or friends. In this analysis we focus on the first job a respondent held after arriving to Canada. Table 7 below compares the use of family and friends directly in securing that first job.

**Table 7. Friends and family in the job search**

<i>Age at Arrival</i>	<i>Family (%)</i>	<i>Friends (%)</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
<i>15-19yrs</i>	<i>21.5</i>	<i>36.5</i>	<i>1.70</i>
<i>20-24yrs</i>	<i>29.0</i>	<i>25.4</i>	<i>0.88</i>
<i>25-29yrs</i>	<i>12.0</i>	<i>24.1</i>	<i>2.00</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>18.3</i>	<i>27.5</i>	<i>1.50</i>

The table shows that family and friends are important for securing work among newcomer youth with just over 45% of new jobs secured through the ties of family and friends. Family ties appear to be most important among 20 to 24 year olds, while friends are most important to the youngest newcomers from 15 to 19 years old. Another interesting finding from the table above is the ratio of importance of friends versus family. Overall, newcomer youth are 1.5 times more likely to use friends to secure a job than family. This ratio reverses in the period from 20 to 24 years when family become slightly more important than friends, but is very strong among the other age groups examined.

These observations from the LSIC data are echoed by our Phase Two interview participants who indicate that networks are useful in searching for work in Canada. In these in-depth interviews the quality and usefulness of family and friendship networks also varies. Most participants in Phase Two indicate that family networks were only marginally helpful in the job search process, a finding that is juxtaposed by research recently conducted in the US which indicates that over 70% of young people find their first 'career' employment through family and friendship networks (Leu, 2009). Help took the form of settlement support and information, more indirect forms of assistance than are provided by friends. One reason respondents give for not using family ties in the job search process was the lack of knowledge their parents and relatives have about the labour market in Canada. Being newcomers themselves, many adult family members do not have the specific knowledge that can help young people secure jobs. For similar reasons, family members also lack viable employment networks themselves. For instance, one respondent in Winnipeg indicates of his family that "they really don't know much. They usually call me for advice". A 29 year old female respondent from China currently living in Vancouver states, "I can't say they're familiar with the labour market information 'cos it's quite specific". The information and support of family members was only effective if the family member was already well functioning in Canadian society. A Ghanaian participant, living in Vancouver, reports, "yes my dad sometimes go to um mechanic shops, drops off my resume, talks to them about what a good boy I am. He goes to friends to drop my resume to give anybody they know but still uh some of them call me for interview. I go and they don't call me back after they see my face".

Few respondents reported job search assistance from more distant relatives. A couple had found work in the public sector from aunts and uncles or brothers and sisters. This reflects a predicament that many immigrant families face. A lack of close familial networks and a truncated social network due to migration does negatively affect their chances to use these venues to locate work. A participant living in Toronto, originally from Kenya tells us that he has few friends working and none in the computer science field where he was trained. He tells us "I don't have a lot of acquaintances in the job market or other people that I do know are not necessarily white collar jobs, you know they are doing different types of jobs just to get by pretty much yeah". His chances of finding work in his field are slim, "if I know someone within the government or whatever right I could easily just tell them find out if your department is there, are they hiring or what not right, at least I would have some sort of in though its not guaranteed but its much better than not having anything, right"?

Friendship networks are overwhelmingly perceived to be more valuable than family networks by study participants. A 29 year old Korean male in Vancouver reports that friends are "the fastest way because through other job search routes, it takes long time since you have to go through all the stages". They rated the assistance of friends much higher than that of family members.

But there is a difference in the value of friendship networks when “Canadian” is considered. Significant numbers of respondents indicate that they preferred job market information from “Canadian” friends. In fact, there are many references to “Canadian” friends. One respondent from Winnipeg reports “I asked my friend for help. She is Canadian. I know my English is poor, I need practice and I also feel nervous when talking with another person. It is good to talk to another person who is good in English”. “Canadian” can often be interpreted as a codeword for white and native-born. A male respondent from Zimbabwe and living in Hamilton reports, “basically, why did I ask them? Because basically they have resources or access to certain resources and they have certain knowledge that I haven’t. given that I’m still new to Canada and I still don’t understand how the processes happen, so those people who have been here understand how the system works so I need their advice”. A female from Zimbabwe goes on to say that “well the people I did ask for, my white friends, that I did ask for job opportunities, they had high places in the job place”

Although our Phase Two respondents express this preference for help from ‘Canadians’, the LSIC data suggests that these types of ties are used less often than co-ethnic ties for initially finding work. In fact, as Table 8 shows, LSIC respondents were more than three times as likely to use co-ethnic friends as non co-ethnic friends to secure a first job in Canada. This may reflect the types of network ties respondents hold after arrival, particularly when first entering the labour market. Drawing on non co-ethnic, ‘Canadian’ help might be preferred but those resources may not be available for newcomers who are entering the labour market for the first time.

**Table 8. Help from Co-ethnic Friends**

<i>Age at Arrival</i>	<i>Co-ethnic (%)</i>
<i>15-19yrs</i>	<i>75.4</i>
<i>20-24yrs</i>	<i>82.5</i>
<i>25-29yrs</i>	<i>80.4</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>79.2</i>

Our Phase Two respondents did describe seeking help from co-ethnic friends, particularly those who had been in the country for longer periods of time. A 29 year old Saudi Arabian woman in Hamilton reports “I wouldn’t say ‘newcomers’ they have been here for more than ten years. Q: so they are still immigrants? A: yes. So they know how to help newcomers and what’s the challenges you face”. Several Chinese respondents indicated that their longer-term friends assisted them with resume and cover letter writing.

### *Evaluating Service Agencies and their Helpfulness in the Job Search*

Participants in our Phase Two interviews were asked about their experiences with community and government organizations in the process of school-to-work transition. Additionally, our master’s student, Jasmine Thomas, interviewed service providers in Winnipeg to learn more about how they view the process and an executive summary appears in Appendix Two. Looking again at the LSIC provides some context for these interviews. Table 9 compares the use of employment agencies, including the Canada Employment Centre with the use of informal job search strategies through family and friends. From the table it is clear that newcomer youth are securing their first jobs far more often through the informal sources rather than employment agencies. Employment agencies are somewhat more useful among the older youth, but still the value of friends and family far outweigh that of the agencies.



**Table 9. Employment Agencies in the job search**

<i>Age at Arrival</i>	<i>Friends/Family</i>	<i>Employment Agencies</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
<i>15-19yrs</i>	<i>58.0</i>	<i>2.9</i>	<i>20.00</i>
<i>20-24yrs</i>	<i>54.4</i>	<i>5.0</i>	<i>10.88</i>
<i>25-29yrs</i>	<i>36.1</i>	<i>9.9</i>	<i>3.65</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>45.8</i>	<i>7.0</i>	<i>6.54</i>

Despite the conclusions from the table above, many respondents across the country who participated in our Phase Two interview did report using the resources of a non-government or government agency in their search for employment and re-training upon their arrival to Canada. A Chilean female living in Winnipeg tells us “First, I asked my husband and I also have a counsellor, like my psychologist. He is from Chile. We were talking about work and pressure. Through him I met this woman from XXXX (name of non-government organization helping immigrants) and I stayed there to try to look for a job”.

Others felt that family and friendship networks resulted in better job connections than those provided at government and non-government organizations.

In the (name of ethnic group) community centre, when people arrive from XXX, new immigrants, there is a YYYYY (name of service organization). All newcomers go there and there is a person there who tells you where you should go, get your social insurance number etcetera. They advised everyone to go to ZZZZ (another organization that services immigrants) I didn't go there and because my family told me it is a waste of time. So I was just looking and found a job by myself. It might be helpful for other people, but because I had family here, I didn't need this initial help.

Some participants observed that the service organizations were very busy and they felt badly about asking for assistance. Several others suggested that they were dissatisfied with the career services provided at secondary and post-secondary institutions. They felt that the unique needs they had as newcomers were not taken into consideration by the places that serve Canadian-born youth. A female respondent from Mexico now living in Hamilton observed that the guidance offered by immigrant service agencies contradicted what she was told by more general employment agencies. “That is a different thing from McMaster career counsellor and they were telling me all positive things. Here (at the immigrant centre) it was like, okay. Try to move all your Canadian things into the first line; all the things that you have done in Canada and (on) the second page, all the things you have done in Mexico”. Her experience is one of many that suggest that immigrant youth need information that is suitable for their career and educational pathways. There are several reasons for this. First, they may require information about labour market entry, job search and interview expectations that many Canadian-born youth do not require. Second, the suggestions provided to Canadian-born youth might not be applicable in the case of newcomers, especially those with prior working experience abroad. Some youth, especially those

who were highly skilled, felt that the agencies could provide more career-specific counselling, much like what is provided to adult immigrants in certain professions.

The views of federal government agencies and public secondary and post-secondary institutions were mixed. Many participants used their services in conjunction with networks of family and friends. One makes the observation that “there are many advisors in the agencies and (they are) very friendly and try to help you, but the working opportunity they can provide is limited to the lower paid or entry level ones”. This was a theme that was echoed throughout the interviews conducted across the country. While the government service programs were helpful, they were good only for entry level, low paid employment and were far less useful for making connections with jobs that would provide careers. A respondent from Vancouver reports that the programs offered at her school “couldn’t help me understand the culture and the background, uh especially how to communicate with your employer and their expectations”. As a result of these deficiencies, many of the youth we interviewed had decided not to initiate contact with these organizations based on the perception that the programs could not help them find jobs and there would be little consideration of their special needs as newcomers.

Thomas’ interviews with the service providers provided valuable information about the transition process of newcomer youth. Their organizations provide a number of services to assist newcomer youth navigate the Canadian labour market. Each organization fears funding cuts, particularly in the current economic climate. Almost all of the organizations survive from grant-to-grant. This precarious funding situation makes it difficult to keep employees and maintain particular programs. As funding is often tied to new innovations, some tested and dependable programs may suffer. All of the service providers identified discrimination, language and accent issues, foreign credential recognition and lack of Canadian experience as the major barriers faced by immigrant youth. They dealt with these issues in varying unique ways. All organizations, however, called for more stable funding so that they could do more to assist in the school-to-work transitions process of newcomer youth.

#### *Volunteering: The Positive and Negative*

In our Phase Two interviews we learned that many newcomers are given advice to volunteer, especially if they are having difficulty transitioning to the labour market. Volunteering is supposed to assist newcomers in developing that all important ‘Canadian’ experience in order to attain employment in their field. It is also purported to assist newcomers who need more confidence in speaking the official languages have opportunities to use it in an employment setting. It may also increase their social and friendship networks, helpful in getting the ‘word out’ that they are looking for work.

Table 10 provides a snapshot of the volunteering activities of newcomer youth from the LSIC. The first thing that becomes clear is that volunteering is a common pursuit of newcomer youth. Column 1 describes the percent of participants who volunteered at least one time during their first four years in Canada. Fifteen to nineteen year olds in particular were very likely to volunteer their time. Following on the suggestion that volunteer work is pursued in order to gain important skills and experience for employment, the table also examines the amount of instrumental volunteering in which these young newcomers participated.

Instrumental volunteering includes youth that volunteered in order to achieve a goal beyond the volunteering itself; this includes volunteering to get Canadian experience, to be able to work in their field of expertise, or in

order to develop skills including language skills. Column 2 shows that, of those who volunteered at least some of their time, volunteering with instrumental motivations was very common. Over 40% of newcomer youth hoped to gain some external value from their volunteer work. For some, this paid off. Over 20% of those who volunteered some of their time found work directly from the volunteer experience. Of course this means that many newcomer youth that volunteered for instrumental reasons did not find work as a result of this experience.

**Table 10. Volunteering for work experience**

<i>Age at Arrival</i>	<i>Ever Volunteered</i>	<i>Instrumental Volunteering</i>	<i>Volunteering Lead to Job</i>
<i>15-29yrs</i>	<i>57.0</i>	<i>44.5</i>	<i>26.1</i>
<i>20-24yrs</i>	<i>33.2</i>	<i>45.6</i>	<i>18.8</i>
<i>25-29yrs</i>	<i>39.5</i>	<i>42.5</i>	<i>20.0</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>42.4</i>	<i>43.8</i>	<i>21.8</i>

Our Phase Two interviews reflect the mixed value of volunteering in order to secure work. While some respondents had positive experiences that led to full-time, permanent employment, others did not. A primary motivation for many newcomers to volunteer is in the hopes that the experience will lead to a job offer from the organization. Speaking about the positive aspects of volunteering, a 20 year old male from the Congo reports “I was at home and then I figured out that to get in easier and to get to know people, I think I have to volunteer in there and then in the future it will be easier for me because I already know the people and if I apply, they will see my name and know this guy volunteered”. At the time of the interview, this respondent was unemployed so we are not sure if this tactic worked.

Like many Canadian-born youth, a few respondents reported that the volunteer experience was helpful in determining whether or not their chosen field of study would suit their career trajectory. A young woman from Hamilton reports “volunteer will help you network and gain experiences and know what you like and what you don’t like. And it’s easier to get a volunteer job, see what your strengths are and what your weaknesses are”. Unlike the Canadian-born youth, volunteer experience did assist some of our respondents in learning how to speak English more fluently. For one respondent in Winnipeg, the volunteer experience allowed her to articulate her skills on her resume which led to several interviews and eventually a full-time job as a settlement worker.

Volunteering isn’t always done with the expectation of obtaining employment. A few of our respondents indicated that they felt they needed to give back to their community and to assist other newcomers in their settlement process. A young woman from the Congo used her volunteer experience with African communities in Winnipeg to better her English. Later, she assisted other newcomers from the Congo, Uganda, and Rwanda as she could work in the four languages of that area.

Volunteering isn't always a rewarding experience. For some youth, the experience has led to frustration and exploitation. Many youth are told that if they volunteer, they can gain the "Canadian" work experience needed for entry level jobs in their professions. Unfortunately, employers don't often see it this way. A participant in Winnipeg relates her experience. "I have been volunteering for the Manitoba environmental organization, here in Canada. I was doing work there for 5 months, but (when she went for an interview) the interviewer said it is not a job, that volunteer experience in Canada is not acknowledged as a job. So I don't know if it is relevant". An Iranian respondent living in Vancouver agrees, "But anywhere else you put under your volunteer, people just, they either skip it or they don't really look at it, take it seriously." A participant from Toronto agrees, without volunteering,

*you don't have any Canadian reference at all. But even if you go and volunteer there, chances are they don't give you good reference; they are very picky and very serious; it's very difficult. However, it's good to learn and interact with people and it's a good place to have some experience though. But it's hard to keep the balance between your personal life and volunteer commitment. You have to work and pay your bill every month.*

*Q: do you feel you are exploited through doing volunteer work?*

*A: if I don't have a job for a long time, I feel I am being exploited doing volunteer work. I am the most dedicated and most helpful person there but eventually when there is nothing in my hand, I feel I'm exploited by them.*

#### *The Challenges of Finding Work: Linguistic Barriers, Racism and Being an Immigrant*

Our Phase Two interviews show that accent and language skills pose the most significant challenges facing the newcomer youth as they made the transition from school-to-work in Canada. A typical response can be summarized by a participant in Winnipeg, "when I talk to Canadians, they do not understand and when most of them talk, I found it hard to hear them, but now I am adjusting better". Another indicates that at work, "because of my accent, sometimes you have good days to speak English and sometimes you have bad days, so you can't express yourself".

These observations are also reflected in the LSIC data on problems finding work. Table 11 shows that a majority of respondents have had some difficulties finding work at some point in their first four years in Canada. This is particularly true for older youth who move into the labour market more quickly. Of this group having problems, language problems are a large proportion of the difficulties they encounter, matching the findings from our Phase Two interviews.

**Table 11. Problems finding work**

<i>Age at Arrival</i>	<i>Any Problems finding work</i>	<i>Language Problems</i>	<i>Discrimination Problems</i>
<i>15-29yrs</i>	<i>53.4</i>	<i>32.0</i>	<i>7.5</i>
<i>20-24yrs</i>	<i>60.4</i>	<i>38.0</i>	<i>10.0</i>

<i>25-29yrs</i>	<i>71.9</i>	<i>34.7</i>	<i>11.4</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>64.5</i>	<i>34.9</i>	<i>10.3</i>

Any amount of discrimination is troubling, but direct discrimination is less commonly expressed in the LSIC data than language difficulties . In our Phase Two interviews we find that the problems of discrimination and language can often be subtly linked as accent and skin colour combine to play a role in the perceptions of newcomers. One respondent indicates “because you are a visible minority I think that people know your English is not as good as a native speaker before they meet or talk to you”.

I’ve had a lot of times where people don’t talk to you because they would be like, ‘I can’t understand you’. Well I just think they are being unnecessarily, because I talked to a log of people and I get through interviews with these people regardless of how I speak. Oh, they’d be like ‘you have an accent and I can’t understand you’ and then they’d hang up. Yeah, so, but then I talked to a whole bunch of other people so those particular people that do that, I think that they probably don’t want to participate or they, I dunno. They just had to say that or something. In a lot of ways, I would say that it is a challenge because I look at it like okay, if someone else who didn’t have my accent happened to get this person on the phone, maybe they would have got an interview, but because I do, then I wouldn’t (give me an interview).

A Zimbabwean male working for an investment firm reports his experiences about accent and interaction with clients. “Now my accent, you may not be able to detect it but if I am talking to a client and I have this heavy ‘new Canadian’ accent and I am not a normal Canadian that they expect. They would not trust me to handle their money, basically”.

Others, however, perceive that language and accent issues are largely unfounded. A Chinese respondent living in Hamilton reports, “I think for immigrants who want to get a job, it’s not really the English and the accent, it’s the courage. Many immigrants don’t apply for a lot of jobs because they feel that their English is not good enough and they are not confident in themselves. So I would just say keep trying and don’t give up easily and youth need some courage and do some preparation before you had the interview”.

Several respondents in all the cities report they felt discriminated in the job search or at work. While many had reported they had experienced an incident of racism since arriving in Canada, it was limited to isolated events. One respondent in Winnipeg tells us, “like not very strong. But sometimes I do feel biasness from some people, but mostly it is okay. It’s not a bad place to live as an immigrant”. A respondent from Vancouver tells us, “when I am going to interview, I (wish) I could change the colour of my skin to become like a white person and then go and get the job and then change back. But it’s not flexible. Once I’m Black, I will always be black and I don’t think people like black people working for them for a fact, what I have seen”.

For some, the requirement to be permanent residents to apply for certain jobs, particularly those with the provincial or federal government, was a significant impediment to finding good work in Canada.

R: It would have been easy if I was a citizen here. Being an immigrant and looking different from other people. Like biasness, I can talk about that. Sometimes I do feel like people have different, how they view immigrant(s), but in most cases it is okay, so far.

I: by biasness, you mean in the sense?

R: Looking different, and like pronunciation, and so that is hard sometimes.

His experience is echoed by respondents living in the other three cities. One participant living in Hamilton reports "... the moment I got my immigration paper, I was a free man. So basically I can do whatever I want, of course legally, and I can make my choice". Another participant in Hamilton points out a discrepancy in the immigration policy regarding skilled immigrants.

Like there are many immigrants coming here as skilled labour and Canada accepts them as skilled labour but when they land in Canada, they don't get a job. So there is a discrepancy right there and the government should either change that or they should create jobs for those skilled labour because they came here as skilled labour... doctors came here working as taxi drivers? What's the use? The government should create jobs or stop deceiving people.

Newcomer youth are very aware of the discrepancy between entrance policies and labour market outcomes. While the government awards 'points' to those with particular skills and qualifications, this assessment does not guarantee an equivalent job once they arrive in Canada. All levels of government are aware of this issue. What may be useful is moving toward a system like Australia where degrees and work experience are evaluated prior to their arrival so that potential newcomers have an idea of how well or poorly their skill sets will be recognized in the labour market. This would provide valuable information for those contemplating the move to Canada and will help them make the decision that is right for them.

Some participants expressed reservations about the fairness of hiring processes. Although they could not point to a direct incident, the perception that racism occurs, especially when they see their Canadian-born white friends finding work faster. A female from Zimbabwe reports, "once I applied for a position in a store and it is primarily a white store. And it was my friend and I and my friend is white and obviously I am black. We both applied and I had a bit more experience because I volunteered before as a cashier, so I know a little bit about the position, but she got hired and she had no job experience". Whether or not race really played a role in the selection of candidate is not the issue. The perception that racism might have played a role is a powerful force that influences a person's feeling of belonging in Canadian society. A respondent from Afghanistan relates her observations.

Actually, I have never experienced anything about this but this is what I think. You know what I mean. I'm not trying to be racist or something, but if a white guy is trying to find a job, they can get a job in a week. You know my friends, they quickly got a job. And I told them that you can find a job because you guys are white.

A Ghanaian living in Vancouver tells us his perceptions about racism and the hiring process. "I have spoken on the phone with about 25 to 30 different companies on the phone and I know they did not call me back because of my accent and I have been to about 14 interviews and I know because of my skin colour and the way I sound. Then I have faxed a lot of resumes. Maybe its my last name or where I come from".

Discrimination is not only faced by racialized youth. A Russian male living in Toronto tells us about the barriers he faced in looking for a job.

well I don't have any data to support this of course but sometimes I feel the employers here they exercise some sort of anti-Slavic discrimination because my last name , because my name is hard to pronounced. I know a lot of Asian people they adapt English names so you see some Kimberly but she is not always Kimberley because you know you found out she is from Canton, right then again it sort of helps . I noticed that in Toronto at least employers are very much used

to retain services of certain ethnicities like Asians, Hindi or Indian people. Russians, not so much, I don't know. It's just the feelings that I get sometimes. Russians are minority and Russians have this stereotyped of not speaking English well and when they see this name."

For some, however, the experience of finding a job and working in Canada did not present significant barriers. For them, their immigrant status and prior experiences did not prevent them from finding suitable employment in Canada.

### *Linguistic Barriers*

Accent and language skills appear to be the most significant challenges facing the newcomer youth as they made the transition from school-to-work in Canada. A typical response can be summarized by a participant in Winnipeg, "when I talk to Canadians, they do not understand and when most of them talk, I found it hard to hear them, but now I am adjusting better". Another indicates that at work, "because of my accent, sometimes you have good days to speak English and sometimes you have bad days, so you can't express yourself".

Accent and skin colour combine to play a role in the perceptions of newcomers. One respondent indicates "because you are a visible minority I think that people know your English is not as good as a native speaker before they meet or talk to you". Another respondent says,

I've had a lot of times where people don't talk to you because they would be like, 'I can't understand you'. Well I just think they are being unnecessarily, because I talked to a lot of people and I get through interviews with these people regardless of how I speak. Oh, they'd be like 'you have an accent and I can't understand you' and then they'd hang up. Yeah, so, but then I talked to a whole bunch of other people so those particular people that do that, I think that they probably don't want to participate or they, I dunno. They just had to say that or something. In a lot of ways, I would say that it is a challenge because I look at it like okay, if someone else who didn't have my accent happened to get this person on the phone, maybe they would have got an interview, but because I do, then I wouldn't (give me an interview).

A Zimbabwean male working for an investment firm reports his experiences about accent and interaction with clients. "Now my accent, you may not be able to detect it but if I am talking to a client and I have this heavy 'new Canadian' accent and I am not a normal Canadian that they expect. They would not trust me to handle their money, basically". While on the job, a participant from the Philippines reflects on the difficulties communicating with his Canadian-born workers, "I just don't know, I'm just so shy like to open up, like to talk to other people especially when they grow up here in Canada. And when they start speaking in English, some accent I don't understand and I am just so shy to ask them." These kinds of experiences do not appear in the LSIC data as this information is not available and is difficult to corroborate in a survey.

Others, however, perceive that language and accent issues are largely unfounded. A Chinese respondent living in Hamilton reports, "I think for immigrants who want to get a job, it's not really the English and the accent, it's the courage. Many immigrants don't apply for a lot of jobs because they feel that their English is not good enough and they are not confident in themselves. So I would just say keep trying and don't give up easily and youth need some courage and do some preparation before you had the interview". His comments, however, were not representative of the others who were interviewed.

## *Working Low-end Jobs*

Like Canadian-born youth, most newcomer youth find their first jobs in low skilled, low pay jobs in the service and retail sectors. For them, these types of jobs are temporary, useful for 'getting by', to gain job experience, to meet people and to provide income for their households and/or pay for further education. A 24 year old male from the Philippines who lives in Vancouver tells us that his job is temporary. "I'm just doing part-time for my work at Future Shop and then part-time as a promoter at the club. So I still pursue my photography but haven't enough to sustain my living and pay for my bills and my living expenses".

Many feel pressure from their parents to pursue employment while still in school. A 22 year old female who lives in Hamilton and is originally from Zimbabwe tells us

Well I was pushed to it because from what I have been hearing, it's hard to get a job after school if you don't have work experience. After all, that's the reason why my parents had a tough time because they don't have Canadian experience. So my parents were pushing me, my dad especially, to get as much experience as you can while I'm in school so that it's easier after school.

Others were forced to work 'underground' while their immigration applications were being processed. A respondent interviewed in Toronto tells us,

I did some underground work while I was waiting for my work permit, which was ok for me; I need to survive so I did the underground work. I didn't have the work permit then, so I couldn't apply for other jobs.

Q: how did you find that underground job?

A: through friends; I was very smart that I was trying to connect with my community; I asked my friends: "did you have numbers to call?" it was a bad job, very hectic and I worked in a factory."

What differentiates the newcomer experience from Canadian-born youth is that lower end jobs are promoted as a way of getting "Canadian" work experience. They are told that this will open doors for them to jobs in which they were trained and may have worked in their countries of origin. Another respondent from Vancouver tells us, "(t)hey keep saying get Canadian experience. I said, OK, I'm get a job at MacDonald's, I get a Canadian experience then" (20 year old male from the Philippines). For some, this type of work is meaningful and does get them experience, particularly in improving their English and communication skills. It also helps them learn more cultural knowledge of our society. For a 23 year old female from the Philippines, working at a service job "I think that I'm matured a lot as a person and most of the stuff I learned at work didn't really learned at home or either school", so for her, the experience was necessary and worthwhile.

For others, however, the low end jobs are long term and an example of significant downward trajectories in their careers. A female respondent from Winnipeg tells us "my husband put a lot of pressure on me and tells me not to be spoiled and that I won't get a job in what I used to do, so I started looking in other places like coffee places, fast food restaurants and malls". After 18 months of searching and despite having Master's degrees from both Canada and Bangladesh, she remains unemployed.



## *Relocation and Transnational Border Movement*

The migration process for this group of newcomers, while starting in the teens and early twenties, sometimes does not end in Canada. There is a good amount of internal migration during the initial settlement phase. This is not particularly surprising as evidence from other studies indicate that immediately after arrival most move within the city of arrival and some may relocate to new provinces and cities. What differentiates our study from many others is that we are able to track international movement among our respondents. A number of youth, particularly in the Toronto and Vancouver sites, relocate outside Canada in the early years after arrival. For some, migration is a periodic and long-term event. These youth move back and forth between Canada and their home country. Others move to a third or fourth country.

What links these transnational and internal migrants together is the purpose of these trans-border movements. Almost all relocate for employment purposes. If job prospects in Canada remain poor for significant periods of time, youth may choose to look elsewhere, particularly their home country, for suitable employment. This option was used by several youth, particularly those having difficulty finding work that reflects their education and career trajectories. Most newcomers indicated in the interviews that they would move to a new city, province or country to pursue educational and work opportunities. An Iranian female respondent from Hamilton indicates that "because I only care about the education so I will go to Toronto and maybe my family will move to Toronto where the university is". A respondent living in Toronto traces his route to and from Canada. "From Uganda, we went to live in the UK... went back to Uganda to help people in the home country there....Came to Canada to study and work for some years... and I plan to return to Uganda". Another respondent living in Toronto describes how she was born in Nepal, came to Canada for school, returned to Nepal to look for work but when she could not find any, she returned to Canada. Several participants in the Toronto group chronicled several cross-border transitions, many temporary. Canada was not the final destination for all of the respondents.

For other respondents, the need to relocate outside Canada is due to deep-seeded frustration with the challenges of being a newcomer in this country. A female from Mexico relates conversations she has had with other international students about the difficulty finding work and having their foreign credentials recognized in the labour force.

I have these connections with former graduates from my school but they are newcomers and they are passing through my same problems. We have the same problems. They could (just) be my connections, but one of them was saying that I spent all my savings and all my money coming to Canada, but at the end of the day, it hasn't been what I was thinking and he was sending the link of notCanada.ca. And yes, because (Citizenship and) Immigration Canada is just a business because they are just taking our money. At the end of the day, we come here and we don't find jobs... People think if you don't find a job you need to leave.

The frustration is particularly evident among the international students in our study. They require employment in their field of training in order to remain in Canada after their student visa expires. If they do not find employment quickly they will be forced to leave the country and the anxiety and fear around not finding suitable employment and the potential for being deported is significant among international students. Our findings echo results from Mandal's (2009) study of international students in Manitoba, nearly 90% of international students would stay in Canada if they could find suitable employment. Another 50% would stay in Winnipeg if employment was available. Even after all their best efforts, there is a sense of frustration that leads them to question their decision to come to Canada. Remember that this is a group of people with post-secondary training attained in Canada. This causes many to reflect on their experiences of racism and discrimination.

Others remain tied to Canada because they have formed romantic relationships. A Russian female living in Toronto tells us that her plans to remain in Canada remain tenuous. "(I)f it wasn't for him, I would probably be in Russia right now. He is the reason as to why I am actually here because of the job situation I wouldn't be here. He is doing his masters here right now, that's why we can't move, I plan to move out of here because of the job situation. We're planning to move maybe somewhere in Europe. Umm, maybe to the US".

### *Summer 2009 and the Recession*

Given that our interviews took place in the greatest recession experienced since the Great Depression, we have a unique insight into the perceptions of immigrant youth. When asked about whether the recession has affected their school to work trajectories, most of the respondents felt the economic crisis had a negative influence on their employment possibilities. Several indicated that there were fewer jobs available for them and that they considered prolonging their education in order to postpone their search for full-time employment. On the whole, most indicate that although the recession did not directly affect them, it has touched the lives of those around them. One participant reports, "Yah, there is my one friend. Actually he is my husband's friend. He said ... that the store is going to close because of the recession. We are not in profit, we are losing. So I think there will be a lot of those who are losing their jobs". Another respondent relays an incident from her community in Winnipeg.

Yes (it has affected our community). But you know, (XXXX a woman I know). She's new you know. She came to Canada, almost maybe two weeks. She found a job, just like cleaning. She doesn't accept it in her brain, you know? Before, back home, she's a manager. So she came to Canada and it's very different, a different job, you know? So she killed herself, you know?

An African participant living in Toronto shares his feelings about the current recession and his difficulties finding work in his field. "(r)ight now most places they are actually not hiring, there is a lot of people who are being let go, so it's quite difficult and knowing also that I don't have a lot of experience y'know like coming from school I don't have that added advantage of having experience in the field right so if me and another person who has been in the field apply for the same job they'll look at the person who has experience right so I don't have that competitive edge." Like youth born in Canada, there is a perception that the current recession has made it extremely difficult to transit into the labour force into fields related to their education.

Some of the respondents in Winnipeg felt they were spared much of the hardship experienced elsewhere in Canada. One participant states, "Maybe, I'm started to think that the economic crisis does affect me although they said it won't affect Manitoba. But in some places, they weren't hiring people, so yes, this could be a reason for the shortage of jobs". A 24 year old female from Peru reports "It affected my parent... they were going to come this summer but now they are not because it affected Peru. It is hitting harder than here. When it hits, it hits everyone".

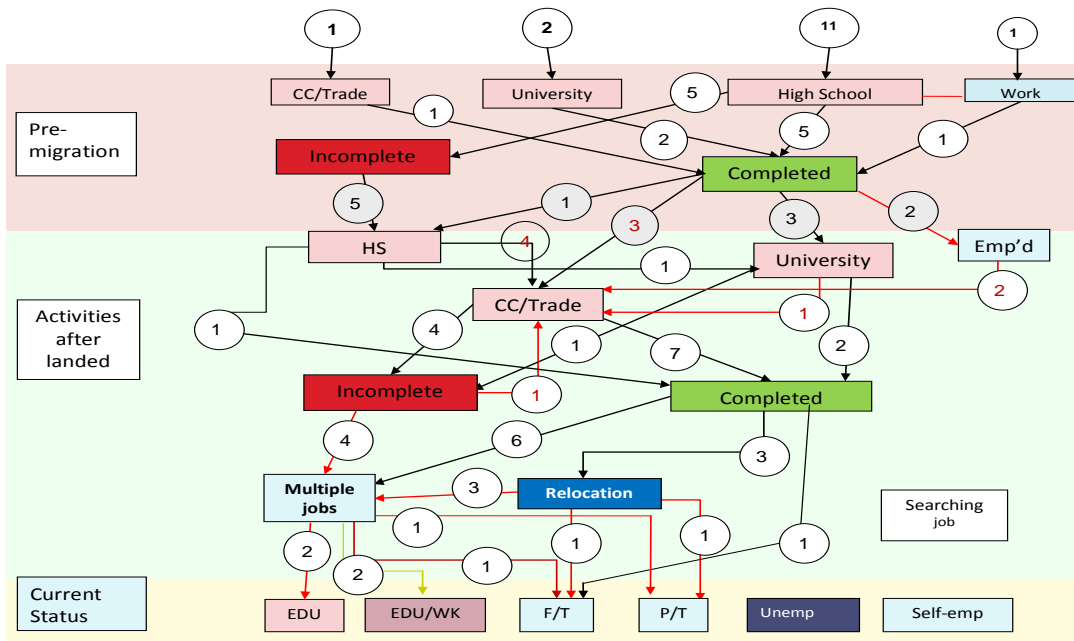
### *Snapshot of School-to-Work Transitions*

Despite our in-depth interviews and examination of LSIC data, we needed another way to capture the varied transitions from school-to-work as described by our participants. The Vancouver team traced the transitions of 15 participants and the result is presented in Figure 4. The pink band refers to the school and work pathways of the 15 youth prior to their arrival in Canada. Eleven had some high school at time of arrival; of those, 5 completed high school and three had entered university. Two had completed university prior to their arrival and were employed. The blue band represents their primary activity at arrival (between October 2000 and

September 2001). Five had entered high school, 3 entered university and two were unemployed. One of the participants had returned to high school even though they had completed a high school diploma prior to entering Canada. Seven entered into trades courses during this time while four entered university. By the time of the interview, most had multiple jobs, some had relocated to other places in Canada and some were still in school, six years later.

As the diagram in Figure 9 shows, the transitions for fifteen respondents were complex. It was not possible to depict the trajectories of all the respondents in Phase 2, but the chart gives an indication of the variations.

**Figure 9: School-to-Work Transitions of 15 Participants**



*Outlook and Future Plans*

Despite the challenges in transitioning to a new country and finding a job, the youth in our study remained optimistic for the future. Several respondents report being very satisfied with their current work, “I think because I really enjoy my current work, I think I will continue. Yeah, so even five years from now, I think I will do the same job”.

Almost all of the respondents indicated that their future remained in Canada. Some, however, were leaving their options open.

I’m just hoping that if things work out well, I want to try and you know, I want to try and help people. I want to be there. ... even if it is in companies because that’s why I have been trying to apply now in Alberta. Even if it is in oil companies, or you know, in home or social worker kind of thing. Provided that every day I wake up and I’m excited to go to work, and when I come back its more like ‘ready for tomorrow’. Where ever I find myself in 5 years I want to be happy and comfortable going to work every day.

I would like to work with people and things that matter that will change your life. I would like to work in something related to development. Here in Winnipeg or another part of Canada or even go back to Peru, but I want to stay here. Maybe I can work with some organization and get training to be a community development worker to get into the field. I also want to do my masters but that is in BC but I do not have money. Maybe I will save for a student loan. Right now, I can't even if I wanted to because we already have all the debt but I would like to do these things.

### Discussion and Policy Implications

Our research contributes to two policy priority areas for Metropolis: 1) Family, Children and Youth and, 2) Economic and Labour Integration.

The first challenge in suggesting policy implications arising from this research is that programs tend to develop to resolve specific problems related to adult immigrants rather than those arriving to the country as youth and younger adults. We have programs to help immigrants locate housing upon arrival, language training for those who need it, and generalized settlement services. These programs have a proven track-record and greatly assist many of those using them. Transitions, however, are highly varied, differ by person and result in a variety of unique combinations. For example, education is highly connected to work. Yet programs tend to focus exclusively on work or education, not both. This is due to assumptions that immigrant youth, having experienced some education in Canada, are less vulnerable to difficulties finding work than adults. Programs at the high school and post-secondary level that are designed to address the unique issues faced by immigrant youth may be one step to address their transition to work. To be most effective, they should work together. That means bringing together a wide variety of stakeholders from educators, educational institutions, administrators, immigrant service providers, employment agencies professional organizations and employers. It may be difficult to bring them together but it may be worthwhile to begin this dialogue so we can create innovative transitional programs. We should note that all youth, regardless of their immigrant status, would greatly benefit from such programs, particularly given the great dissatisfaction expressed by immigrant youth regarding advice from educational and guidance counsellors. Recall that these youth have weaker community ties as many have parents who too are struggling to find work or employment related to their field of training. Their parents may also have less knowledge of the Canadian school system which puts their children at greater risk of difficulty themselves. As a result, a 'one size fits all' program will not work given the varied transitions our young people undertake. Should such an endeavour be contemplated, a program that focuses on immigrant youth should be considered as the transitions undertaken by this group are unique. Coming to a new society, many, even those with experience in the Canadian education system, will have limited knowledge about the school-to-work transition. They may lack the familial and social networks that informally guide Canadian-born youth.

Another difficulty we faced in articulating specific recommendations is translating the frustrations and bad experiences we learned as we interviewed the youth into usable policy. Qualitative research is a valuable tool to obtain information about individual experiences that secondary data is unable to provide. We can get 'hints' with existing secondary data such as to whether or not an individual has experienced discrimination on the job or at school through LSIC and the EDS, but the qualitative information provides context and meaning. Unfortunately, it is the quantitative information that gets priority. Our work, combining the two approaches ought to help policy makers make decisions based on the magnitude of the problem and the experiences of the individuals. Yet there is a second and vital piece of information that is missing from much of the existing research which is the viewpoint of employers and employment and immigrant serving agencies. How do they interpret the same events? As recent research conducted by Oreopolous (2009) reveals, there may be a subtle form of discrimination among employers at the hiring phase where candidates with non-Anglophone names

are less likely to be selected for interview and to be hired for positions. We cannot identify these incidences without qualitative research amongst the employers. This is why examining the role of employers and fellow employees are essential in developing policies around a racism free workplace and more welcoming society.

Community partners and practitioners in EAL/FCLS tell us that it may worthwhile considering intensive language programs for students needing to learn English or French prior to entry into high school or post-secondary education. For some, especially those who are not fluent in their mother tongue or have significant gaps in their education prior to coming to Canada, this may be necessary to prevent dropouts later on. The challenge for these youth is to learn to speak, read, communicate and write in an entirely new language and some may need intensive instruction without the 'distraction' of learning how to calculate fractions or interpret Shakespeare. This may not be a program that fits all EAL/FCLS students but may be useful for those with significant language barriers. Given the high dropout rate for EAL/FCLS males, it may be worth considering.

We also suggest a role for community organizations to advocate for youth in the school system. Many parents lack the linguistic capabilities or are reluctant to question the authority of teachers and principals in the education of their children. While there are many successful programs already in place, including the fact that many schools with significant numbers of newcomer youth have translators available for parents and students, there is a need for professionals to help them navigate through the complex systems we have designed around education. Some ideas we propose include better training for school counsellors in regards to the needs of newcomer youth and their families. We also propose the addition of more youth counsellors in community organizations that can act as liaisons between youth, the school, and the labour force. Some of our ideas involve parents as integration and the transition to work are family decisions. Parents may not realize that the career pathways for their children are no longer linear or positive. For Canadian-born and immigrant-born youth, new economic realities may change the way they enter the labour market. It is not uncommon for recent university graduates, for example, to work at jobs that do not require this education.

Gaining work experience becomes a critical path for many young people to enter the job markets. Many of our own students have found this type of temporary, unstable employment is needed prior to obtaining the first job-offers from governments or non-governmental organizations. It is why we suggest that parents (not just newcomers) need a mechanism to learn about these new economic realities. A young professionally trained woman we spoke to indicated that her parents constantly 'hounded' her about getting a 'real job' or going back to university to obtain a professional degree as they felt her work as a settlement counsellor was unstable, low paying and unsuitable for someone with her educational background. The reality, particularly in the current labour market, is that all labour market entrants need to be flexible in terms of their short-term employment goals. While the entry job may be unpleasant, it does provide experience necessary for future labour market success. What is needed is a greater understanding from parents and governments that the transition from school to work is sometimes bumpy and circular. We feel that this knowledge would go a long way in helping newcomer parents adjust their expectations towards their young adult offspring. It is worth noting that this information would likely benefit Canadian-born parents as well, particularly those from working class families who sacrifice to send their children to university only to discover that employment prospects are not as good as those who attend trade schools. In short, unrealistic expectations are not only the prerogative of parents, particularly those who are new to our society.

The idea that university education is the most positive pathway to good employment is no longer true, but immigrant parents may not always understand this. What separates immigrant from native-born parents is the overly high expectations they may have for their children. This is linked with the fact that many newcomer parents lack basic information about the education system and labour force. As researchers and policy makers have assumed for years that youth who have 'some' Canadian education will do well in the labour force,

newcomer parents may also feel the same. This may create unrealistic expectations. We need to find a way to make the trades more attractive to both youth and their parents as these sectors are the areas in highest demand at this time. Indeed, youth unemployment is a most neglected global phenomenon due to an unexamined assumption that enriching one's human capital, such as education and qualification, is the placebo of youth unemployment. This belief that university education is the only path that can lead to success may be the reason that we discovered in our study that immigrant youth do not turn to their parents for labour market information. In conjunction with their (perceived) limited knowledge of the Canadian-labour force, it could be that discussions of occupations outside the university may be discouraged by their parents. Changing this attitude towards trades certification will be difficult and will require a system-wide 'rethink' of the way we categorize education and training. We are uncertain how receptive immigrant- or Canadian-born parents would be to these ideas but feel that the message would be better relayed if information workshops could be provided for parents, either by immigrant-serving organizations or the schools that would help them to better understand the educational, vocational and training opportunities outside the professional faculties of universities. Meanwhile, governments also need to develop a youth employment policy and program that can support youths and their parents who have never been properly prepared for these new structural challenges. This is particularly important for newcomer families when their adult members themselves are struggling with their own settlement.

How have our results contributed to the Policy Priorities of the Metropolis Project? We have made contributions to Priorities 1 and 5 from the Economic and Labour Market Domain. Using the LSIC data, we have identified several factors influencing the economic and labour market outcomes of newcomer youth and how they may differ by various socioeconomic characteristics. In the interviews, we were able to contribute to Policy 5. While the statistical analysis of the LSIC can identify some of the barriers faced by newcomers as they transition to the labour market, the survey was designed to study immigrants in general. There are likely issues unique to those arriving to the country as youth that have not been addressed in the LSIC study, particularly in regards to strategies and networks youth use to locate employment.

We were able to make some contributions to Priority 5 of the Family, Children and Youth Domain as well. Using the analysis of LSIC data, we showed the differences in school trajectories of newcomers by gender, refugee status, area of origin and other characteristics. Through the interviews, we addressed some of the issues related to educational barriers and transitions to the labour market. Using a social network approach, we were able to contextualize their experiences within the broader context of their families.

We are aware that no single program or policy is sufficient in resolving the challenges faced by immigrant youth as they transit to the labour force. Even if some of these ideas are implemented, some will 'fall through the cracks'. What is significant to us however, is that the level of pessimism and the number of barriers identified by the youth in our study.

### Conclusion and Future Research Directions

After reviewing all the findings, a number of questions remain to be answered. These are:

- How do we define a successful transition from school-to-work? This is a question we constantly considered as we undertook this research. It certainly cannot entail the university degree and acquisition of a professional, well-paying job, though this certainly can be one of the many definitions of success. The problem with measuring success is that there are many desirable outcomes. We need more research that looks at the outcomes of those who aspire to trades diplomas and certificates among immigrant- and Canadian-born youth as these occupations are equally, if not more, employable than the university educational trajectory. LSIC, the Census, the Annual Labour Force Survey and others can help us partially achieve this goal, but they only help us partially. In order to truly

understand success, we need to reject the current objectified outcomes (i.e., the pursuit of a university education or using income as a measure of success) we need to examine the individual's personal definition of success. What are their short- and long-term goals? Do they achieve these goals? Are they satisfied? How do their parents define success? Is there an overlap or disconnect between parents and children regarding their views of success? These are questions we must also ask of Canadian-born youth. This information will greatly facilitate our understanding of labour market integration and sense of accomplishment among newcomer youth.

- How well are immigrant and refugee youth prepared for education in Canada prior to arrival? As we begin to emphasize preparation strategies, particularly for adults in moving into the labour market, it is worth considering preparing their children for the move to the Canadian education system. This may be complicated given the provincial jurisdiction over educational matters but is worthwhile considering given the significant gaps in education faced by all classes of immigrants.
- Further explore the link between successful integration of families and their children in school. If parents are experiencing difficulties integrating successfully in the labour market, their children may not feel compelled to undertake further post-secondary education. For them, it may be a logical choice. If mom or dad have higher education that does not result in good employment, their children may be less likely to attend post-secondary institutions and may even drop out of school. We need to explore this link further.
- There is a need to access data from school boards nation-wide in order to better capture academic success. Work by McAndrew and her colleagues (2009) and Sweet and his colleagues (2009) on the educational pathways and academic success of newcomer youth is promising but only captures information from Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. We would like to access data from second-tier cities such as Hamilton (with a population consisting of over 25% newcomers), Winnipeg (with a significant number of refugees and Aboriginal students). Data from the Atlantic region and those representing third-tier cities such as Winkler Manitoba or Brooks Alberta, who have received significant numbers of newcomers and their families in the past ten years need also be examined.
- A longitudinal follow-up of youth is needed. What happens to them after age 30? After age 50? Understanding the transition to work is a life-long process. We know very little about the long-term labour market integration of those arriving to Canada as children or youth. We are greatly interested in any possibility that would extend existing datasets such as LSIC from a lifecourse perspective. This perspective needs to be holistic, including family planning, divorce, health and other life events in order to capture life-long labour market trajectories, another indicator of successful integration for both immigrant and Canadian-born youth.

This leads us to the big question, how much do we really understand the situation of immigrant youth in our society? By focusing on school-to-work transitions, we get a larger than 'average' picture of the integration experiences of immigrant youth, but as social scientists, we are aware that all facets of life are intertwined and interconnected. We are also aware of the great diversity of any sample of newcomers. They come from many social classes, live in different income categories as they settle in Canada, have parents with varying levels of education and backgrounds, represent many different linguistic abilities and religious characteristics and vary in relation to ethnicity, gender, province/territory/urban or rural area, and age. To describe all trajectories using a singular pathway would do them a great disservice. What we are concerned with is the significant number of dropouts, particularly among young men who have limited English or French ability. What can we do to reduce the number of dropouts? How can we encourage academic success?

It is no surprise that many of the findings and recommendations in this study may be applied to the school-to-work transitions of youth born in Canada. Many of the issues discussed by the youth in our study mirror the problems and experiences of those born and raised in Canada. Perhaps this is understandable given the

anxieties we all have around growing up and getting a job. This is particularly the case in the current economic climate.

In considering the school-to-work transition, however, we must question several assumptions that we make about newcomers. First, immigration is largely considered a 'one-off' event, something that individuals do that has a one time consequence, both for themselves and their family. Clearly, this is not the case. Decisions made by families have ramifications for their children. Secondly, like their Canadian-born counterparts, we cannot identify a 'common' pathway between school and work that is shared by immigrant youth. Their paths are far from linear. There are, however, unique issues related to being an immigrant or refugee that makes their transitions unique. Their status as newcomers may be tenuous. Some in the early stages of their integration may not be eligible for certain types of employment due to their immigration status. They are also far more likely to face linguistic barriers—with significant consequences to their schooling and work trajectories. They have smaller networks that make it difficult to make the connections needed to become successfully employed. As well, given their global connections, some youth may find it expedient to return to their country of birth to pursue further educational and occupational opportunities if the barriers in Canada seem too high, and some of our respondents have done just that. Thirdly, their families have been transformed by the immigration process. Their parents may have experienced significant downward mobility which increases depression and family tension. In these instances, it may not seem logical (or possible) to encourage their children to pursue higher education. The youth themselves may not see this as a logical choice, especially as they watch their parents struggle through the integration process.

Barriers, however, are difficult to prove empirically. The perception that one has not obtained a job because of the colour of her skin, the way she speaks or the origin of her education is a powerful one. While it may be the case that this kind of discrimination is less common than we think it is, what needs to be remembered is the power of perception. The perception that one has been discriminated against because of ascribed characteristics plays a significant role in one's outlook on life.

In summary, while the trajectories are varied and mixed, migrant youth face different expectations, circumstances and barriers throughout their transition from school to work. While many may find success in education and work, others will find heartache and hardship. Some may stay in Canada, integrate successfully and live 'happily ever after'. Others may lead lives of low income, frustration and despair. Some may even leave Canada for other, more fruitful and accommodating locales. We can no longer take for granted Canada as a premier destination for employment and a better life. Our world has become smaller and more competitive and we stand at a crossroads to determine our role in the successful settlement of newcomers to Canada.



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## **APPENDIX ONE**

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## APPENDIX TWO

### Immigrant Serving Organizations and the School-to-Work Transitions of Newcomer Youth in Winnipeg

by Jasmine Thomas, University of Manitoba

#### Executive Summary

Despite increasingly popular discourse that identifies Canada as being inclusive of newcomers, it is clear that difficulties remain for young people who are trying to integrate and obtain stable, meaningful employment. The pattern of employment transitions varies considerably across provinces, but there is evidence that many highly-educated newcomer youth experience a delayed transition (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 2008). It raises questions about how accepting and multicultural Canada is as a society. Are these meaningful concepts, or are they simply an ideal that is trumpeted to the world as a badge of honour while all too often newcomers are marginalized into low-status jobs and a precarious existence?

These important questions are difficult to answer in such a broad context, and the focus of this thesis is upon a crucial time in a young person's life; the school-to-work transition. Additionally, the goal is to incorporate a wide range of perspectives to gain a balanced interpretation as an effective social theory must contain the individual, organizational and societal levels of analysis (Battilana 2006: 655). This recognizes that social life is an interconnected web of relations between people, groups and structural conditions. Therefore, in order to examine the employment transitions of newcomers, this thesis includes the perspectives of youth, service agencies, and governmental immigration strategies.

The transition from compulsory school to the workforce is an important process for all youth, and for newcomers to Canadian society, it is a significant measure of successful integration. It is important to include an examination of both structural and individual factors that impact this process. This is essential because from the structuration perspective of Anthony Giddens, "society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do" (Giddens & Pierson, 1998: 77). If this is the case, during the transition between education and the labour force, individuals will recreate, modify, or revolutionize the structure as their cohort progresses through these processes. However, the society might attempt to restrict any extreme changes, and if systemic discrimination is present, it might be difficult for newcomer youth to actively take part in the employment transition process. This research seeks to determine how immigrant communities and related organizations attempt to fill in the gaps in the transition process that youth must overcome as they move into the workforce. These strategies illustrate how individuals come together as active participants to change the forces of structures, including patterns of discrimination, and combat their exclusion from finding meaningful, stable employment. This can be understood through the structuration perspective to develop a comprehensive view of how structural constraints limit members of immigrant communities, and subsequently, how such communities develop alternative strategies to deal with structural or institutional racism as newcomer youth enter the labour market.

#### **Methodology**

Interviews were conducted between January and June of 2009 with governmental departments and organizations focused upon ensuring immigrant youth find meaningful career related employment opportunities. In addition to the stories shared by participating groups, I include portions of the interviews that have been conducted with newcomer youth for a more detailed interpretation of newcomer employment.

The goal in selecting respondents was to include as many different newcomer service agencies and groups as possible that compose a fair representation of the organizations in Winnipeg. Although small, the group was diverse enough to gain an accurate picture of the agencies that are working with newcomer youth. The recruitment strategy was not a random sample as this is not the goal of qualitative research, nor would it be possible due to the small number of immigrant serving agencies within the city of Winnipeg.

As the interviews progressed, the focus centered on the services provided to newcomer youth during their school-to-work transition. This often would include job search techniques, social networking, language instruction, and other factors that influence the likelihood of obtaining access to the labour market. I also probed to facilitate discussion with the agency workers that were useful in identifying the limitations of the organizations assisting youth to find meaningful employment. It should also be possible to ascertain what needs of youth and organizations are not being met by the government offices meant to assist during the integration or transition process.

The participating organizations for this project were International Centre Inc., NEEDS Inc., Manitoba Labour and Immigration, Aksyon Ng Ating Katataan (ANAK Inc.), Success Skills Centre, Employment Projects of Winnipeg, the Entry Program, Youth Employment Network (funded by Service Canada and provided by Alicia Rae Career Centre Inc.), the University of Manitoba Career Centre, African Communities of Manitoba Inc. (ACOMI) and the William Whyte Residents Association.

### ***Key Findings***

Central themes were clearly evident throughout the interview process. They included the importance of the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program, the challenges of providing services and the challenges that faced newcomer youth as they search for meaningful employment opportunities.

The Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program was developed in 1998 and is a mechanism that selects skilled workers and business immigrants who “demonstrate strong Manitoba connections and abilities to make significant economic contributions” (Manitoba Labour and Immigration 2006: 21). Many of the agencies identified the nominee program as a challenge to their operations. They recognized that demands for their services will increase substantially as a result of the Manitoban government's strategy, and were concerned about their ability to expand their organizations to accommodate the growth of the population. The economic growth provided by immigration is significant for the province, and there must be an equal contribution provided by local services to ensure that newcomers are receiving the support they need during this process.

Agencies in Winnipeg offered numerous employment related services with a focus upon preparing newcomer youth for the expectations of the workplace, the job search and interview process, and matching youth with job training and volunteer opportunities. Organizations were often specialized to focus on a particular group such as young professionals, high school students and war affected youth. Other agencies had a broader focus on the general newcomer population. All groups were concerned about the challenges they faced when providing services.

Adequate funding was the major challenge cited by a significant number of agencies that participated in this study. Stable year-to-year funding would allow newcomer service providers to focus more of their time on services rather than writing proposals to ensure they have funding to continue. As a result of precarious funding, many agencies were struggling to meet demand due to a lack of resources. Many agencies stated that individualized attention will become increasingly difficult to provide as the numbers requiring support place further demands upon the agencies.

Accessibility was another concern of the agencies that I spoke with, and it is important that newcomers are aware of the myriad of services available to them during their employment transition and settlement process. Some agencies suggested that some financial support for marketing and reaching out to newcomer communities would be helpful to increase awareness. There was also a perceived disconnection between agencies and newcomer communities. It would be very beneficial for agencies and the communities they are assisting to be well integrated with each other to prevent any real or perceived disconnection between the two groups. In order for service providers to help effectively they need to be responsive to the community, and it is clear that this is an active goal of all the agencies who participated in this study.

There are many challenges that are faced by newcomers as they search for employment, and many of these came up in my discussions with service providers and youth. Although there are a considerable number of difficulties that can be faced, there were similarities in most, if not all, of the interviews conducted. Agencies stated quite clearly that discrimination, credential recognition, Canadian experience and language skills were the main challenges that newcomers struggle with. There was some concern that employers had a tendency to prefer Canadian-born employees over newcomers.

Foreign credentials and foreign experience are not necessarily valued by Canadian employers. When newcomers arrive in Canada it is nearly impossible that they would have acquired any “Canadian” work history, and yet, these individuals are denied entry into the labour market because of this prerequisite they lack through no fault of their own. Therefore, newcomers are faced with an impossibly frustrating situation as they try to break into a labour market that often places these unnecessary expectations on people. In addition to the problems of having their foreign experience recognized by employers, many newcomers also face the difficulty of having their foreign educational credentials recognized by employers and regulatory bodies. This process can be extremely time consuming and even expensive (Grabke 2008: 7; Erisman & Looney 2007). This issue is often not raised in the limited research on newcomer youth, and as noted in the introduction it is clear that some youth arrive in Canada and are forced to repeat high school before they can obtain post-secondary training. The unequal value placed upon of foreign credentials and experience is a consistent challenge that was discussed by service providers and the youth that were interviewed. Perhaps instead of primarily focusing upon the challenges facing newcomers on the individual level, it would be beneficial to develop a more holistic approach that would place more emphasis on education for local employers about foreign credentials and experience.

The importance of language as a method of understanding culture is significant, and in a society that places such an importance on interpersonal communication it is understandable that proficiency in English is a substantial concern. However, it is also clear that many employers assume newcomers will have language deficits, especially if the applicant speaks English with an “accent” (Kilbride et al 2001). This assumption is highly related to the requirement from employers that newcomers have work experience within the Canadian context.

The Provincial Nominee Program is a major challenge for agencies who are not receiving an increase in funding. It is important that funding bodies are aware that the demand for services will continue to increase as the number of newcomers arriving in Manitoba doubles over the next five years. The challenges facing youth clearly illustrate priority areas for program and policy development; the education of local employers about the skills and experience newcomers bring to Winnipeg from their place of origin, a timely credential recognition process and resources for agencies to provide more services with a focus on those newcomers who have lower English or French language skills.

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