



Settlement Experiences of Rohingya Refugees



Western
Education

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BACKGROUND

- The Rohingyas are a stateless Muslim minority from Myanmar, who have endured decades of systematic persecution and displacement by the government.

1M+ Rohingya refugees currently live in Bangladesh refugee camps.

- Canada was the first country to resettle Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh (2006–07), but little research has explored their settlement in Canada.

STUDY OBJECTIVE

Examine the resettlement experiences of Rohingya refugees in Ontario, identifying:

- Barriers and challenges to integration
- Protective factors supporting integration
- Recommendations for service providers to strengthen support.

Methodology

- Paradigm:** Qualitative study + phenomenological framework.
- Approach:** Trauma-informed, community-engaged.
- Participants:** Recently resettled Rohingya men and women in Ontario.
- Data:** Semi-structured interviews (with interpreter & cultural liaison).
- Analysis:** Thematic analysis using NVivo.

KEY FINDINGS

Women's Experiences

- Language barriers** limit access to jobs, services, and social connections.
- Financial strain** despite initial government aid; housing costs a major concern.
- Safety and freedom** highly valued, contrasted with trauma triggers
- Community support** critical for cultural preservation, but isolation persists outside the ethnic group.
- Emotional struggles** with trauma, grief, and separation from family.
- Navigating services** such as healthcare, transportation, education remains difficult.

Men's Experiences

- Employment & financial barriers** due to language gaps and non-transferable skills.
- Education** valued, especially for children, but long waitlists and high tuition block access.
- Settlement services** such as orientation, caseworkers, language classes are appreciated.
- Safety & equality** provided by the Canadian society foster dignity and belonging.
- Freedom & rights** like residency and citizenship fostered belonging and hope.
- Comparison to previous life** highlighted improvements in safety and opportunities despite access challenges.
- Community bonds** help, but loneliness exists outside their group.
- Gratitude** expressed for Canadian support, despite ongoing struggles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Language & Skills:

- Develop Rohingya-specific English classes.
- Reduce waitlist times and increase class frequency.
- Integrate language learning with employment readiness.

Housing & Community:

- Offer affordable, community-based, multigenerational options.

Extended Services:

- Extend beyond 12 month period.
- Maintain consistent interpreter & mental health support.

Mental Health:

- Expand trauma-informed, culturally sensitive services.
- Offer community-based psychoeducation workshops.

Women's Empowerment & Family Support:

- Offer culturally safe women's groups and childcare.
- Offer parent workshops & integrated family learning.

Cultural Integration:

- Partner with local organizations and places of worship for cultural and religious activities.
- Include community volunteers as cultural ambassadors.

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