

Advancing Socio-Economic Research for Evidence-Informed Public Health Decision Making: IENs

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Introduction

- Ontario’s nursing shortages continue to worsen
- Internationally educated nurses (IENs) are a valuable resource but remain underemployed or unemployed.
- Understanding the socioeconomic factors that impact licensing processes and limit IEN registration and employment is crucial for effective future planning.

Objectives

- Explore stakeholder and IEN awareness of licensure supports, including the CARE Centre, to identify gaps in outreach in Ontario.
- Identify socio-economic factors that support or hinder IEN licensing in Ontario.
- Prepare a set of targeted dissemination activities and materials.



Methodology

Design

- Qualitative Description

Interviews

- Semi-structured one-on-one interviews
- Stakeholders (*n* = 22) and IENs (*n* = 17)
- Data collection: November 2024–June 2025

Sampling

- Purposeful & Snowball sampling.
- IENs and stakeholders in southern Ontario (Niagara Falls, Hamilton, Kitchener, London, & Windsor).

Data Collection Tools

- Interview guides (Stakeholders & IENs)
- IEN demographic questionnaire



Preliminary Findings: IEN Professional Characteristics

Variable	Categories	<i>n</i> (%)
Profession Before Migrating	RN	12 (86)
	RPN	0 (0)
	Other	2 (14)
Years of Nursing Experience	1–5 years	4 (29)
	6–10 years	3 (21)
	11–15 years	4 (29)
	16–20 years	2 (14)
	> 20 years	1 (7)
Class of Licensure Application	RN	8 (67)
	RPN	1 (8)
	Both RN and RPN	3 (25)
Participated in IEN Initiatives	Yes	3 (21)
	No	11 (79)
Preceptorship Support	Yes	7 (58)
	No	5 (42)

Preliminary Analysis: Stakeholder Interviews

Themes	Subtheme
Navigating Regulatory and Licensing Barriers	• Unfamiliarity with CNO standards and expectations • Lengthy, unclear and costly registration processes • Differences in healthcare standards • Passing the NCLEX is not indicative of readiness
Varied Institutional Workplace Capacity to Support	• Limited orientation and/or training opportunities • Employers’ concerns about supervision and temporary licenses • Lack of mentorship and educational resources
Financial and Socioeconomic Constraints	• High cost of credentialing and exams • Family and childcare responsibilities limit participation • Limited eligibility for financial aid (OSAP, loans, etc..)
Inequities in Program Accessibility and Policy Misalignment	• Variation in program requirements and outcomes (CARE, INLAB, and College bridging programs) • Language and documentation barriers • Immigration and licensing policy disconnect
Workplace Reception	• Need for culturally sensitive mentorship and inclusion practices • Underemployment and deskilling (IENs working as PSWs) • Lived experiences as a main driver for leadership and advocacy

Preliminary Analysis: IENs

Themes	Subthemes
Challenges IEN Encounter	Workforce Challenges • Disillusionment with migration to Canada and the disconnect between federal (IRCC) and provincial (regulatory body) policies • Licensing process, experiences, and challenges • Financial and economic struggles • Emotional toll • Lack of formal IEN support networks
	Workplace Challenges • Lack of employment opportunities • Mismatch with their clinical expertise • Transitioning and adapting to the workplace • Career advancement barriers • Logistics in the workplace • Culture and communication adjustments • Discrimination and racism
Sources of Information	Formal Sources • Gaps in knowing about them Informal Sources • Friends and social networks • Outdated knowledge often includes policies and practices that change regularly

Conclusion

Next Steps for Further Analysis

- Identify region-specific barriers and facilitators to IEN integration and retention.
- Investigate policy changes to improve work permit systems and PR pathways.

“Ontario has a strong IEN workforce. We need policies that support them instead of pushing them away.” – S 1 & 3



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