

## POLICY BRIEFING NOTE

**Title:** Social impacts of the securitized arrival experiences of in-Canada refugee claimants

**Author(s):** Erin Osterberg, Geography Department, University of British Columbia

**Contact:** Erin.Osterberg@geog.ubc.ca

**WP Number:** 16-09

### **Research Question:**

This multi-sited research included qualitative interviews with 19 in-Canada refugee claimants declared convention refugees under the new (since Dec 1, 2012) immigration legislation. The research sought to answer two questions: (i) What are the effects of the securitization of migration policies insofar as success in integration and feelings of trust and belonging; and (ii) Are there unintended policy consequences of rapidly changing securitized migration policies?

### **Importance:**

There were 111 new Canadian immigration policies implemented between 2002-2015, compared to 19 between 1867 and 2001 (CCR, 2015). This project uncovered critical insights into the individual effects of securitized migration policies important to preventing alienation of migrants and fostering a sense of trust and belonging to promote integration and economic participation.

### **Research Findings:**

Overwhelmingly, participants reported feelings of trust towards Canadian society. When asked about barriers to integration, many reported experiencing lengthy delays for employment authorizations. In many cases refugee claimants would be declared convention refugees by the Immigration and Refugee Board within 60 days (a shortened timeline as a result of the new legislation) and then be required to wait as long as 180 days for an employment authorization rendering them reliant on social assistance, and delaying economic participation. This research suggests that this is an unintended policy consequence because, while the timelines for determination of refugee status were shortened, the processing timelines of settlement and integration functions were not, resulting in many convention refugees left in economic limbo. Barriers to economic participation are caused by: lengthy delays for permit processing, the existence of temporary SIN numbers, and work permit expiry dates. Though prior research has examined issues of perceived racism for temporary workers and barriers to meaningful employment (Bragg and Wong 2016; Jackson and Bauder 2014; Cholewinski and Taran 2010), this study is unique as it reports the experiences of a convention refugees under the timelines of the new legislation. These barriers are legislatively unnecessary, as convention refugees in Canada legally and ethically cannot be denied an employment authorization. Processing delays have serious consequences for the settlement and integration of convention refugees, and produce serious financial implications for the Canadian economy.

### **Implications:**

Economic participation is a vital element of settlement and integration. Ensuring convention refugees in Canada have the necessary documents to be eligible for employment will have positive outcomes for feelings of belonging and experiences of settlement. Additionally, ensuring immediate employability is enormously beneficial to Canada's social welfare system as convention refugees will not be rendered reliant on social assistance resulting from bureaucratic processing delays.