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The Impact of Local Policies on The Integration of Racialized Immigrants into Smaller to Mid-Sized Canadian Municipalities

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A Systematic Literature Review:

The Impact of Local Policies on The Integration of Racialized Immigrants into Smaller to Mid-Sized Canadian Municipalities

Subject Keywords: Immigrants, Local Policies, Racialized, Integration, Challenges

Geographical Keywords: Smaller Municipalities, Mid-sized Municipalities, Canada

MPA Research Report

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Miss Olivia Yeboah Sekyere.

The Impact of Local Policies on The Integration of Racialized Immigrants in Smaller to Mid-Sized Municipalities in Canada: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Local policies are essential resources that support immigrants to attain better health, social, and economic outcomes. Although several immigrants have settled all over Canada, there is a gap in research on how local policies affect the integration of racialized immigrants in smaller to mid-sized municipalities. This review relied on the PRISMA checklist to evaluate evidence from selected research articles. The review targeted quantitative and qualitative studies, studies published in the English Language, and studies published between 2000-2024. The Cochrane Public Health Group Data Extraction Template was employed for data extraction, while the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool was used for quality assessment. The results were analyzed and summarized using narrative synthesis and thematic analysis. Out of 1109 articles, only three (3) studies on housing policies and community integration fit the inclusion criteria. The findings highlighted that immigrants face discrimination, high housing costs, and limited choices. Despite these challenges, some immigrants face no challenges and report satisfaction with their communities. There is, however, a lack of substantial evidence of health, education, social and economic policies. These findings demonstrate the need for policies tailored specifically to address the diverse needs of immigrants and the creation of a welcoming environment.

1.0 Introduction

Immigration is an integral aspect of Canada that has brought about several socio-economic impacts since the 1960s beginning with the opening of borders to non-European immigrants (Murdie, 2013). Since then, there has been a significant number of immigrants admitted to the country, and as of 2022, there are eight (8) million immigrants living in the country (Morassaei et al., 2022). According to Haque, (2012), this has led to an increase in a lot of diversity of cultures molded by different blends of ethnicities, languages, and traditions in Canada (Haque, 2012). Social geographers predict that by 2031, immigrants will account for 25-28% of the general Canadian populace (Doyle et al., 2023).

Currently, the majority of immigrants reside in major cities such as Toronto, Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, etc. (Murdie, 2011). Thus, multiculturalism runs within Canada's policies, laws, and societal values demonstrating the contributions made by individuals from various cultural backgrounds (Banting & Kymlicka, 2010). Within this landscape, racialized immigrants bring an added layer of complexity with their unique perspectives shaped by their racial and ethnic identities (Liu, 2019). Whether they arrive as refugees, workers pursuing employment opportunities, or even, for family purposes, each individual contributes to the complex narrative that weaves together Canadian multiculturalism (Vega Murillo, 2022).

Local policies influence housing choices, employment opportunities, health, educational experiences, and access to social services in various communities (Tao et al., 2015). In literature, when comparing city settlements to smaller municipalities, the dynamics of immigrant integration unfold in different ways (Vézina & Houle, 2017). Some studies suggest that these smaller communities, nestled within Canada's geography create an environment where the process of integrating racialized immigrants takes on a different state compared to urban areas (Edge et al., 2020; Hynie et al., 2019; Jaworsky et al., 2012). Other studies suggest that smaller

municipalities often face limitations in terms of policies and resources for community services and economic opportunities (Slack et al., 2003). Still, others suggest that smaller communities offer opportunities that support immigrants efficiently without pressure on resources (Barber, 2013). Even though immigration laws have changed for over four decades, challenges persist that affect the full integration of immigrants in smaller municipalities (Reitz et al., 2014). This draws attention to a crucial gap in empirical research on the impacts of these policies on immigrants in smaller communities. The lack of information for migrants to obtain essential information and assistance impedes their ability to settle successfully and their general well-being.

Understanding the challenges, opportunities, and effectiveness of the policies in these areas is important for developing policies that are tailored to the context of the community. These policies are crucial in establishing connections, building trust, and ensuring that racialized immigrants feel like community members (Rice & Prince, 2013). Together these policies create a framework that shapes the integration process. The current body of literature predominantly focuses on larger cities and overlooks the issues present in smaller municipalities. In literature, there is a gap when it comes to understanding the experiences of racialized immigrants in smaller Canadian municipalities. While existing research has extensively explored aspects of integration such as economic, social, and cultural factors, there is still a significant lack of comprehensive research into the impact faced by racialized immigrants in smaller communities. This therefore creates a context for integration that requires thorough examination.

1.1 Problem statement

Numerous studies demonstrate that several elements influence immigrants' assimilation into the system; Canada is widely known for its variety and multiculturalism (Reitz, 2012). Local policies that deal with housing, career opportunities, and cultural involvement can promote an

inclusive atmosphere for immigrants (Gislason et al., 2021). According to recent research, different cities face different difficulties, including resource constraints, a lack of diversity, and unique economic structures (Koopmans, 2013). However, a thorough literature review reveals little about these elements' intricacy.

A knowledge vacuum exists about how local policies affect the integration and experiences of racialized immigrants in smaller Canadian towns because most of the research, regrettably has concentrated on cities and larger areas (McDaniel et al., 2019; Rahder & McLean, 2013). It is difficult to create successful methods that work in these situations since there is a dearth of information on how local policies affect integration in these areas (Murdie & Ghosh, 2013). It is essential to perform a thorough literature review analysis that considers the policy landscapes across smaller to mid-sized regions and comprehends the varied experiences faced by racialized immigrants to get beyond this obstacle and make well-informed judgments for community development. The objective is to comprehend the influence of local policy on the integration of racialized immigrants.

1.2 Significance of the study

The present study aims to enhance the integration experiences of racialized immigrants in smaller to mid-sized Canadian towns by providing useful insights to policymakers, community leaders, and practitioners. It will also contribute to existing conversations in this area. Studies on integration have been conducted, but none that look at how different immigrants in these smaller groups understand their experiences collectively have been performed.

This lack of representation hampers the understanding of the dynamics at play.

Second, the knowledge gathered from this thorough literature review will shed light on the difficulties faced by racialized immigrants and their integration process. Our current body of knowledge will be expanded by the systematic review's comprehension of integration patterns,

trends, and possible deviations in the consequences of policies. Additionally, the results of this study will lay the groundwork for additional investigation and learning in migration.

Nonetheless, by using these insights, policymakers at all levels can improve current policies and better serve the interests and goals of ethnically diverse immigrant populations living in smaller towns. Understanding the effects of municipal policies on integration would be beneficial for community development practitioners and leaders. The development of community programs and initiatives that are especially suited to address the opportunities and difficulties found in smaller towns and cities can be guided by this understanding. Communities can work to create conditions that benefit both newcomers and current residents by finding policies that positively contribute to integration.

Community organizations can use this knowledge to support and advocate for policies that specifically target the challenges faced by these communities. The findings, from this study, therefore, have the potential to empower communities by shedding light on policies that promote economic, social, and cultural integration.

1.3 Objectives

The main objective is to evaluate the challenges faced by immigrants and the adverse implications of the integration of racialized immigrants in smaller to mid-sized Canadian municipalities.

1.3.1 Specific objectives:

The specific objectives are to:

1. Assess the influence of economic and housing policies on the assimilation of colored immigrants in smaller Canadian municipalities.
2. Examine the effects of community engagement strategies on the assimilation of colored immigrants in smaller Canadian communities.

3. Evaluate the impact of social services policies in the integration of racialized immigrants in smaller Canadian municipalities.

2.0 Literature review

2.1 Historical patterns of Canadian immigration

Canada served as a commerce hub for French and British colonial powers during the 16th century (Mancke, 1997). The resource sectors and mercantilism drove Canada's quick transition into a separate national economy. Eighteenth-century Canadian politics were influenced by the wave of United Empire Loyalists who fled the American Revolution and settled in English-speaking Canada (Brebner, 1945).

Among the early immigrants were farmers, traders, laborers, administrators of the colonial system, and members of religious organizations (Hoerder, 1999). Following the abolition of slavery in 1834, Huguenots and runaway slaves from the United States relocated to Canada in addition to Loyalists (Jasanoff, 2008). As Britain moved from feudalism to capitalism in the early nineteenth century, British colonies provided a voice to displaced populations and dissident social forces (Richards, 2004). However, Australia emerged as the most popular location for these newcomers. British free trade economic theory and skilled worker immigration from Britain and Ireland were welcomed by the Canadian self-government (Kelley & Trebilcock, 1998). To facilitate farming, resource development, and colonization, the Canadian government forcibly removed Aboriginal people from their ancestral lands during this century (Notzke, 1994). Immigration was the target of animosity before World War II. Despite their dire circumstances, Canada took in comparatively few Jewish refugees throughout the 1930s (Abella & Troper, 2023). "None is too many," a high-ranking official allegedly remarked when asked how many Jewish refugees Canada could take in (Abella &

Troper, 2023). Those who immigrated during the war as Italian, German, or Japanese citizens were either imprisoned or subjected to punishment (Koffman & Anctil, 2021).

Japanese Canadians experienced property seizures forced camp transfers, and even attempted deportation to Japan (Sunahara, 2020). The Canadian government has recently extended formal apologies to the Chinese Canadian community and immigrants of former enemy-alien birth who were subjected to the head tax (Roy, 2011). Moreover, the Canadian government has provided compensation payments to most of these groups (Fiset & Nomura, 2011). Some members of the group, like the Japanese Canadians who have received individual reparations for these historical atrocities, have benefited from government payments to their ethnic groups and representative associations. Other distinct events in the 1980s contributed to the complexity of the dynamics surrounding migrants (Kordan & Mahovsky, 2004).

In 1985, the Canadian Supreme Court construed the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to require that every applicant for refugee status get a comprehensive and unbiased hearing (McAllister, 1990). Canada's interpretation of the 1951 U.N. Geneva Convention on Status of Refugees, ratified in 1969, is the basis for assessing refugee status, and the government created the Immigration and Refugee Board in response to this ruling (Heckman, 2008). The Immigration and Refugee Board is an independent administrative tribunal charged with this task. The longer processing times and relatively higher success rates for asylum seekers, especially in comparison to European standards, were caused by the stricter procedures that were put in place for the refugee determination process. These procedures included the legal right of appeal and the relatively independent roles of the board members (Hamlin, 2014). To address the possible backlog that could arise from the new procedure and guarantee the prompt processing of new claims, the government started an administrative review of asylum petitions in 1986. 85% of the 28,000 applications received were approved right away; further processing was not required (Shoyele, 2004).

2.2 Current immigration policy

According to Morassaei et al. (2022), there are three primary categories of individuals who are granted permanent residency in Canada: refugees, family-class immigrants, and independent or economic immigrants. According to DeVoretz et al. (2004), of the 250,386 immigrants who were allowed entry into Canada in 2001, sixty-one (61) % belonged to the economic class, 27 percent to the family class, and 11 percent were refugees. These percentages have been quite stable: of the 262,236 people admitted in 2005, immigrants from the economic class made up 60%, those from the family class made up 24%, and refugees made up 14% (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014).

Most of the immigrants to Canada come from Asia and the Pacific area. The top ten source nations in 2001 were China, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Korea, the United States, Iran, Romania, Sri Lanka, and the United Kingdom (Hanson, 2010). Similarly, Korea, Iran, France, the United States, Colombia, China, India, the Philippines, and Pakistan were the top ten source countries in 2005. In actuality, the top four source nations have always been China, India, the Philippines, and Pakistan since 1998. More than half of the immigrants were between the ages of 25 and 44, and 75% had bachelor's degrees (Hughes & Hughes, 2002).

Up to 300,000 immigrants, or one percent of the country's overall population, are sought after by Canada each year. Immigration is a significant contributor to Canada's population growth (Boyd & Vickers, 2000). According to predictions, immigration will be the primary source of population growth in Canada by 2026; in reality, by 2011, immigrants will be the only component driving the country's labor force expansion (Edmonston, 2016).

Immigration is a shared responsibility between the federal and provincial governments of Canada. Currently, only the province of Québec has the authority to select any prospective independent immigrants for settlement (Beauregard et al., 2021). Based on the demands of their labor markets, most other provinces—Yukon, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba,

New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland—have some discretion over who they hire and how they choose them (Paquet, 2014).

The independent immigrants are chosen based on a scoring system. It assigns numerical weights to a person's age, education, work history, ability to communicate in English and/or French, familial ties, and desire for a specific kind of work (Jeram & Nicolaides, 2021). Under the federal-provincial cooperation agreements on immigration, certain provinces give different levels of importance (Strazzari, 2017).

For example, on federal government applications, the immigrant must designate which of their two languages will be their first and second official language. Proficiency in both French and English is recognized (Boyd & Cao, 2009). According to (Liston and Carens, 2008), proficiency in the first official language can earn up to sixteen points, while proficiency in the second official language can earn up to eight points, for a maximum of twenty-four points. However, understanding French can get you up to eighteen points on applications processed by Quebec, whereas understanding English can only earn you up to six points. This illustrates how important it is to the Quebec government to draw in immigrants who speak French fluently, even though the bulk of immigrants to Quebec are still not from France (Solati et al., 2022). After being admitted under the points system and obtaining permanent residency status, independent immigrants are granted the majority of the rights and obligations enjoyed by Canadian citizens. To maintain their landed status, permanent residents must adhere to residency rules and refrain from criminal conduct (Rajkumar et al., 2012). A recent modification to the residency requirements stipulates that permanent residents must physically reside in Canada for at least two of every five years (Ware et al., 2010).

Two separate admittance procedures intended for groups of independent immigrants deserve special attention. First in line are the investors and entrepreneurs. This program facilitates admission for those with significant company ownership or management experience who are prepared to invest in Canadian enterprises and use Canadian labor (Walton-Roberts & Hiebert, 1997).

2.3 Integration of Immigrants

The full integration of immigrants into Canadian society is the cornerstone of the country's immigration strategy. This position is supported by the rights accorded to noncitizens, nationality laws, and Canada's multicultural policy; nonetheless, several Canadian regulations counter this fundamental viewpoint (Triadafilopoulos, 2012).

Residents have the same legal rights as citizens once they arrive. There are three noteworthy exceptions (Green & Green, 1995). First, only citizens are qualified to cast ballots and run for public office. Additionally, citizens are given preference when applying for jobs in the federal civil service; nevertheless, non-citizens may also be taken into consideration if there aren't enough qualified citizens for a certain position (Zimmermann et al., 2000).

Finally, non-citizens may be deported if they are found guilty of a major offense (one that entails a prison sentence of two years or more) (Li, 2001). Even for those who arrived as small children, this legislation applies to and is implemented against persons who have lived in Canada their entire lives. All children born in Canada, except diplomats' offspring, are automatically granted Canadian citizenship, regardless of their parents' status (Guo, 2013).

According to Kostakopoulou (2003), naturalization is likewise quite easy, requiring only three of the prior four years of residency, a basic command of English or French, some familiarity with Canadian politics and history, and the absence of a serious criminal record. Typically, minors join their parents in becoming citizens. In Canada, people of many nationalities are

welcome. Citizenship cannot be revoked unless it is obtained by deception (Macklin & Crépeau, 2010).

As of the 1996 census, 95% of Canadians were citizens, with 87% being citizens by birth and 13% being naturalized citizens. Eighty-nine percent were landed immigrants, some of whom had not yet attained the age of majority, and eleven percent were non-permanent residents (Jansen & Lam, 2003). As soon as they satisfy the qualifying conditions, the majority of immigrants who settle in Canada become citizens. By 1996, 90% of immigrants from Africa, 88% of immigrants from Southeast Asia, and 92% of immigrants from Eastern Europe had obtained citizenship (Jansen & Lam, 2003).

Of the new immigrants who arrived between 1991 and 1992, 59% had become citizens by 1996. Just 3% of Canadians overall were dual citizens, but one in five naturalized citizens did. Canada's official policy is multiculturalism (Jansen & Lam, 2003). The Charter of Rights and Freedoms legally recognizes the multicultural character of Canadian society. Diversity is explicitly stated to be an essential part of Canadian tradition and identity in the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act. It further declares that Canada will work to end prejudice, promote social integration, guarantee fair opportunities, and preserve the cultural expression of every ethnic group living in the country (Jansen & Lam, 2003).

Despite differences over elements of the nation's multicultural policy, most people agree that Canada is a multicultural society where cultural variety is respected and acknowledged (Berry, 2013).

Canada has made efforts to advance social, economic, and political inclusion as well as to improve services for immigrants and refugees. The Canadian government now recognizes that it must divide the cost of housing, language training, and matching immigrants' qualifications

to appropriate jobs. Previously, most settlement services in Canada were primarily provided by ethnocultural communities (Stewart et al., 2008).

In Canada, immigrants usually integrate in a "nested" way into their families, neighborhoods, ethnic subcommunities, and ethnic communities; the goal is to become part of the broader Canadian culture (Liston & Caren, 2008). The ability to travel around more easily and hold different citizenships are essential elements of the globalization phenomena. Offspring of second parents typically integrate well into Canadian society, but they also retain cultural ties to their parent's home country. As a result, Canada must deal with the issue of integrating newcomers and citizens (Berry & Hou, 2017).

For example, in many knowledge-based jobs, such as those in the high-technology sector, Canada lost a net number of talented individuals to the United States in the 1990s (Zhao et al., 2000). But for every university graduate that Canada lost to the US, it acquired four from outside, and the number of immigrants coming to Canada with master's or doctoral degrees was equivalent to the amount leaving for the US (Statistics Canada 2000).

2.4 Immigration in smaller cities in Canada

Up until the mid-1960s, Canada strongly prohibited immigration of non-white people. Because the original intention was to create a nation of white settlers, immigration was relatively easy for those from historically white nations (such as Western Europe and the United States) (Smith, 2015). Canada occasionally made exceptions for nations with a large white population when it considered that obtaining cheap labor was vital. For instance, a significant chunk of the Canadian Pacific Railway was built with the assistance of Chinese immigrants (Bauder, 2006).

Strict limitations, such as a "head tax" levied on each Chinese male who immigrated between 1885 and 1922, prevented them from entering the country. This example of the racialization of immigration demonstrated Canada's efforts to manage the immigration of non-white people (Simpson et al., 2011).

People who identify as racialized are labeled and shamed as being less than the dominant majority, which sets them up for future mistreatment (Udah & Singh, 2018). Racialization thus makes it possible for the ruling majority to treat persons of color significantly differently from White people. But beginning in 1967, the immigration laws were gradually relaxed to allow for a larger pool of potential immigrants. By the early 1990s, the number of immigrants to Canada was above 230,000 per year (Guillemette & Robson, 2006).

China, India, and the Philippines emerged as the top three immigration source countries in 2006 (Statistics Canada 2008), displacing the United States and Western Europe as the main immigration destination countries. Even now, there is still this tendency. Remember that members of visible minorities make up most of the population in each of the last three countries (Simich et al., 2005). Cities experience people moving about as much as other places. Ninety percent of immigrants in Canada resided in one of the country's forty-one census metropolitan areas (CMAs) in 2021—urban regions having a population of more than 100,000 (statistics Canada, 2022b). There has been a decline in the immigration to Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal. In 1980, for instance, only three of every four new immigrants settled in these three locations; by 2021, however, just slightly more than half (54.4%) did (Statistics Canada, 2022c). The top fifteen CMAs (those who came between 2016 and 2021) with the biggest relative growth in recent immigrants are shown in Table 1. It's surprising to see that fourteen of the fifteen CMAs are located outside of large cities.

Table 1
Geographic distribution of recent immigrants by census metropolitan areas (CMAs), Canada, 2016 and 2021

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Select columns

	2016 Census		2021 Census		2016 to 2021
	number	%	number	%	percentage point difference
Canada	1,212,075	100.0	1,328,240	100.0	0.0
Toronto	356,930	29.4	391,680	29.5	0.1
Montréal	179,275	14.8	162,260	12.2	-2.6
Vancouver	142,530	11.8	154,815	11.7	-0.1
Calgary	93,260	7.7	85,615	6.4	-1.3
Edmonton	78,520	6.5	74,700	5.6	-0.9
Winnipeg	52,505	4.3	46,495	3.5	-0.8
Ottawa-Gatineau	38,015	3.1	58,295	4.4	1.3
Saskatoon	18,580	1.5	17,515	1.3	-0.2
Hamilton	17,420	1.4	26,545	2.0	0.6
Regina	16,195	1.3	14,980	1.1	-0.2
Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo	13,975	1.2	27,785	2.1	0.9
Québec	13,470	1.1	14,310	1.1	0.0
London	11,955	1.0	20,490	1.5	0.5
Windsor	10,800	0.9	15,830	1.2	0.3
Halifax	9,510	0.8	18,135	1.4	0.6
Victoria	7,690	0.6	10,080	0.8	0.2
Abbotsford-Mission	5,880	0.5	6,845	0.5	0.0
Red Deer	5,235	0.4	3,925	0.3	-0.1
St. Catharines-Niagara	4,990	0.4	8,220	0.6	0.2
Oshawa	4,550	0.4	11,555	0.9	0.5
Sherbrooke	3,940	0.3	4,145	0.3	0.0
Guelph	3,680	0.3	6,000	0.5	0.2
Lethbridge	3,405	0.3	3,645	0.3	0.0
Kelowna	2,995	0.2	4,295	0.3	0.1
Moncton	2,840	0.2	6,460	0.5	0.3
St. John's	2,690	0.2	3,085	0.2	0.0
Fredericton	2,635	0.2	3,730	0.3	0.1
Barrie	2,045	0.2	4,155	0.3	0.1
Saint John	1,995	0.2	3,060	0.2	0.0
Kingston	1,725	0.1	2,730	0.2	0.1
Nanaimo	1,355	0.1	2,355	0.2	0.1
Trois-Rivières	1,340	0.1	1,460	0.1	0.0
Chilliwack	1,185	0.1	1,695	0.1	0.0
Kamloops	1,140	0.1	1,485	0.1	0.0
Brantford	1,100	0.1	2,265	0.2	0.1
Greater Sudbury	1,000	0.1	1,655	0.1	0.0
Peterborough	750	0.1	1,300	0.1	0.0
Thunder Bay	690	0.1	1,100	0.1	0.0
Drummondville	680	0.1	980	0.1	0.0
Bellefleur-Quinte West	550	0.0	870	0.1	0.1
Saguenay	405	0.0	420	0.0	0.0
Non-CMA	92,645	7.6	101,275	7.6	0.0

Note(s): Data shown in this data table are based on the (constant) boundaries of 2021 census metropolitan areas.

"Recent immigrants" refers to immigrants who first obtained their landed immigrant or permanent resident status in Canada in the five years prior to a given census.

Source(s): Census of Population, 2016 and 2021 (3901).

The city in which immigrants settle in Canada is not only an important component, but it also has a significant moderating role in the experiences, challenges, and barriers that immigrants and refugees face (Chadwick & Collins, 2015). Larger urban hubs often offer extremely distinct experiences than smaller cities. For instance, it is frequently significantly more difficult for immigrants to find fulfilling employment in smaller communities than in major metropolitan areas. Furthermore, immigrants may find it significantly more difficult to establish social networks with citizens of their native country (Edge & Newbold, 2013).

The setting of their new home greatly influences the kinds and variety of experiences that immigrants and refugees are likely to encounter, and the location of their settlement has a big influence on those experiences (Beiser & Hou, 2006). Although both Kingston and Peterborough are smaller communities with a long history of immigration, most immigrants were not considered visible minorities in the past. Racialized immigrants and refugees may therefore find it more challenging to have a strong sense of belonging (Sutherland 2008).

Smaller Canadian communities have just recently become the subject of academic inquiry, and many features of small-town life remain largely unexplained (Hiebert, 2009). Since 2005, the federal and provincial governments have provided funding for initiatives about immigration, such as the Ontario Welcoming Communities Initiative (WCI). With a mission to "engage immigrants as partners in the community building process through a more equitable, accessible and inclusive approach," the WCI is a province-wide initiative that involves 14 smaller cities, 17 universities, and the objective of gathering data and conducting research to better understand immigrant experiences in smaller cities (Sutherland, 2017). Collaborative research of this nature holds enormous promise for formulating and executing policy-related projects that will enhance the friendliness and inclusivity of smaller cities in Ontario (and throughout Canada) for newcomers. A community must have 17 distinct attributes to be deemed inclusive and welcome, per a recent report released by the Welcome Communities Initiative (Esses et al. 2010). A few of the characteristics are social contact possibilities, access to healthcare and education, employment and affordable housing opportunities, and strong links between the public and law enforcement. The development of these qualities, among others, will be very helpful in creating communities that are more welcoming of many cultures and lifestyles (Baron et al., 2014). Other studies that have been carried out outside of the three gateway cities include the one by Bergeron and Ray (2007) in Ottawa, which focused on the locations where people live and interact to analyze the geographic distribution of ethnocultural variety.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Study design

This systematic review focused on both quantitative and qualitative evidence in selected research articles. It followed the preferred Reporting Items for Systematic and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The detailed methods are presented below:

3.2 Search strategy and information sources

Eight electronic databases/search engines (Connected Papers, Ethos, Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus, ProQuest, PubMed, and EMBASE) were searched from 1st April to 25th June 2024. Publishers such as Elsevier, Taylor and Francis, Nature, JSTOR, university repositories, and government websites were relied on for all other relevant searches. Only studies published between 1 January 2000 to 20th June 2024 and written in English were identified and selected. The first search strategy was on a title basis. The entire title was typed into all the databases. Next, the title ‘The impact of local policies on integrating racialized immigrants in smaller to mid-sized municipalities in Canada’ was broken down into several keywords, general terms, and phrases such as ‘racialized immigrants’, ‘smaller municipalities in Canada’, ‘mid-sized municipalities in Canada’, ‘local policies’, ‘impact of local policies’, ‘integration’. The word ‘local policies’ was switched to specific policies such as housing, economic, educational, health, community engagement, and social services policies. The second search strategy was replacing the word ‘impact’ with synonyms of the same word such as assessment, evaluation, and effectiveness. This strategy was replicated for other words in the title. The third search strategy was employing Boolean Operators in search strings (‘AND’ to combine different aspects, ‘OR’ to include synonyms or related terms, and ‘NOT’ to exclude unrelated items). For instance, general searches included (‘racialized immigrants’ OR ‘ethnic minorities’) AND integration AND (‘local policies’ OR ‘municipal policies’) AND (‘smaller municipalities’ OR ‘rural communities’) AND Canada (Table 2).

Table 2: Search Terms

General search terms	Specific term threads
1. Local policies	"Housing policies" OR "housing regulations" OR "housing initiatives") AND integration "Economic policies" OR "employment policies" OR "economic development") AND integration AND "Educational policies" OR "education initiatives" OR "school policies") AND integration "Health policies" OR "healthcare access" OR "public health initiatives") AND integration "Community engagement policies" OR "cultural programs" OR "social cohesion initiatives") AND integration
2. Target population	"Racialized immigrants" OR "ethnic minorities" OR "immigrants" OR "new migrant"
3. Habitation	"Smaller municipalities" OR "rural communities"
4. Integration	"Incorporation OR assimilation OR joining OR fusing
5. Alternative words	Housing Experiences Economic Experiences Health Experiences OR community engagement

3.3 Eligibility criteria

This study considered primary data from quantitative and qualitative studies that investigated the phenomenon under study. The scope for included criteria and excluded criteria is summarized below:

3.3.1 Inclusion criteria

(1) Studies published between 2015-2024 (2) Quantitative research articles (3) Qualitative research articles (4) Studies conducted within smaller and mid-sized municipalities, cities, towns, villages with populations within 10,000-100,000 (5) studies that specifically address local policies such as education, health, economic, community engagement, housing, and social

services (6) policies at the municipal level that directly impact the integration of racialized immigrants (7) mixed-method studies (8) Studies published in the English language.

3.3.2 Exclusion criteria

(1) Studies published before or beyond 2015-2024 (2) Studies conducted in large urban cities or towns or populations larger than 100,000 (3) studies that do not specifically address local policies such as education, health, economic, community engagement, housing, and social services (4) studies that focus solely on national or provincial policies (5) studies that focus on general population demographics (6) studies that focus on non-racialized groups (7) opinion articles (8) Studies published in other languages (9) non-scholarly sources (10) conference papers (11) review papers (12) reports (13) policy documents (14) theses

3.4 Study selection process

The search was limited to research articles since different provinces have different legal frameworks, complex regulations, and program models that regulate the provision of local policies. Two independent reviewers carried out the procedures of data searches, screening, reviewing, extraction, and eligibility criteria. Articles that fell within the inclusion criteria were selected based on the paper's abstract, titles, and full context. Preliminary literature searches were carried out next and at this stage, the abstract and title of every study were screened, and significant studies were assessed for eligibility.

3.5 Data extraction

The Cochrane Public Health Group Data Extraction and Assessment Template (Cochrane Public Health Group, 2011) was modified to serve as a tool for the data extraction process. The variables in the data were separate and any discrepancies in the findings were examined. The variables extracted were the author's names, province, year, study objectives, type of policies, population characteristics, methods, and findings.

3.6 Quality assessment

The Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT) was used to evaluate the quality of the studies (Pace et al., 2012). The MMAT is a critical evaluation instrument created especially to assess the methodical mixed methods systematic reviews' representation of the quality of study designs (Hong et al., 2018). The two reviewers separately evaluated selected papers and examined the findings to find differences.

3.7 Data synthesis

The narrative synthesis technique was relied on to analyze and summarize the findings from multiple studies. The extracted data was analyzed to identify the studies' patterns, themes, and inconsistencies. An inductive thematic analysis of the local policies was conducted to identify patterns and themes. Thematic coding was used repeatedly to identify codes and code groupings across the selected studies. Identified thematic codes were analyzed, described, and interpreted to provide deeper and contextual meanings.

4.0 Results

4.1 Articles selected for review.

A total of one thousand one hundred and nine (1109) articles were identified after the first search. These were manually sorted, and 503 unrelated and duplicate articles were removed before screening. The title and abstract of the rest of the 460 articles to identify whether the articles fit into any of the inclusion criteria set. Five hundred and forty (540) articles were eliminated for unrelated, missing data, and ineligible content. After full-text screening, three studies were considered eligible for data extraction and review as summarized in Figure 1.

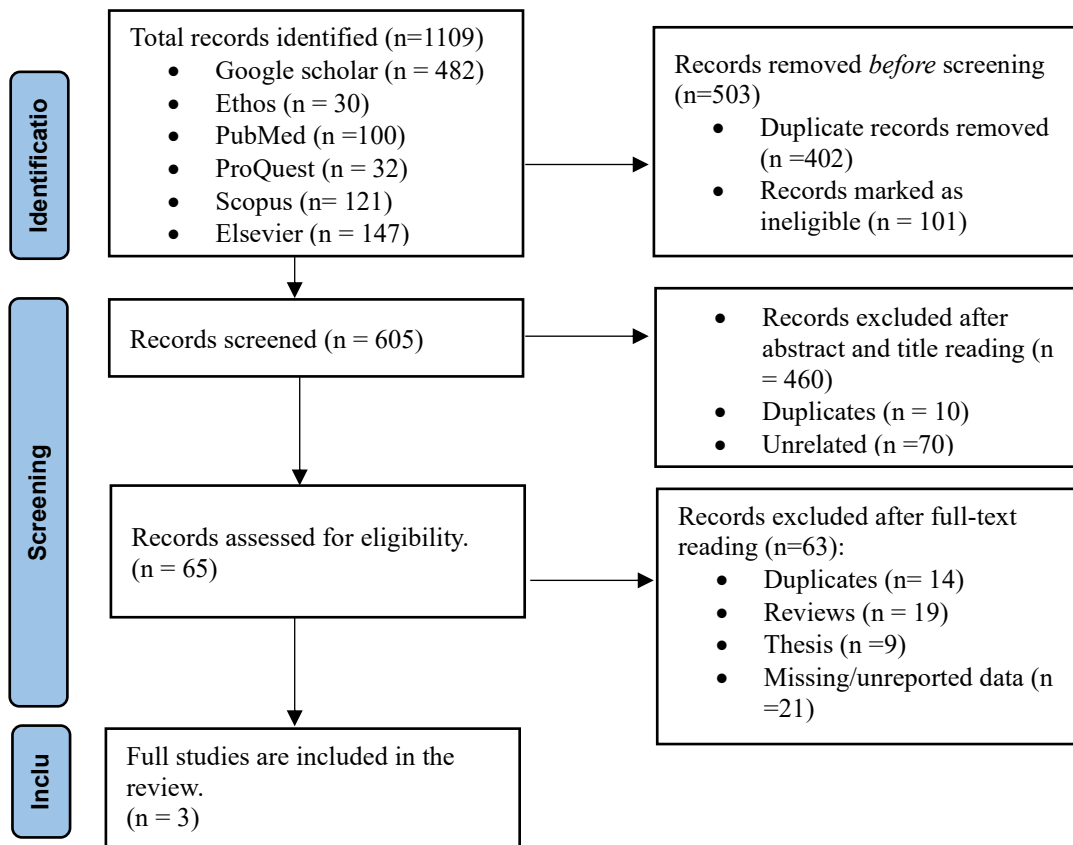


Figure 1: Flow chart of reviewed studies

Author, Year	Province	Town	Study design, data collection	Sample size, population characteristics	Summary of Findings related to study focus	MMAT rating
Teixeira and Drolet, 2017	British Columbia	Kelowna and Kamloops	Quantitative, survey	Kelowna, N=40, Male=14, Female=26 Kamloops, N=40, Male=10, Female=30	New immigrants initially rely on their social networks but face higher costs of housing	Medium
Brown, 2016	Ontario	North Bay	Qualitative, case studies, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups	N= 34 Focus groups= 23 Face-to-face interviews = 12	Immigrants are generally satisfied with their current housing situation but lack access to social amenities	Medium
Sandeep Agrawal, Pradeep	Alberta	Lethbridge	Qualitative Semi-Structured, face-to-face	Syrian refugees, staff at Lethbridge Family Services (LFS) and Alberta Health Services	Small cities like Lethbridge were nimble, and efficient in settling Syrian newcomers despite challenges such as a lack of organizations, compassion	Low

Sangapala,
2020

individual (AHS) and private fatigue, and limited employment
interviews sponsors opportunities.

4.2 Study characteristics

Out of the three included studies, one study published in 2016 is quantitative and two other studies published in 2017 and 2020 are qualitative. The survey method was relied on for quantitative while focus study and interviews were relied on for qualitative studies. All studies were focused on housing policies and community integration and their impact in selected towns in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario. According to some studies, North Bay, Kelowna, Lethbridge, and Kamloops are classified as smaller cities, towns within smaller municipalities in the provinces mentioned above (Brown, 2017; Zhuang & Lok, 2023). Commonly addressed themes included housing costs, housing situations, and settlement and housing experiences as summarized in Table 2.

Table 3: Summary of Study Characteristics

4.3 Summary of Thematic Findings

4.3.1 Housing arrangement and mobility

Teixeira & Drolet, (2018) found that at least 50% of immigrants live in multi-unit buildings due to high housing costs. While the rest either rented in the private sector and others resided in social housing (Teixeira & Drolet, 2018). The study also found that at least 50% of immigrants live in a housing unit with at least four people. Teixeira & Drolet, (2018) further reported that immigrants choose housing facilities based on proximity to work, public transport, and schools. The two studies reported that employment plays a role in easing housing searches by providing housing guides, direct assistance, and recommendations. Teixeira & Drolet, (2018) found that immigrants primarily relied on local newspapers, online platforms, and social media, as well as personal networks like relatives, friends, and employers.

4.3.2 Housing costs

Overall, studies found that the current economic market, development, increased investments, mortgage prices, and general homeownership feasibility affect housing costs. Brown (2017) cited that high housing costs and property taxes forced immigrants to live in remote areas which increases social isolation and challenges for social services. One study reported that immigrants experience financial strain as many pay as high as 30-50% of their income on housing. Limited access to subsidized and affordable housing options further worsens finances. The high cost of homeownership deters immigrants from aspiring to become homeowners (Teixeira & Drolet, 2018).

4.3.3 Housing challenges

The main findings in the studies were short-term housing options, low maintenance, poor conditions of available housing units, lack of private investments, broken promises, and inconsistencies between marketed conditions and reality. Some immigrants faced discrimination from landlords and real estate agents as some expressed hesitance renting to

immigrants on social assistance, uncertain legal status, or poor rental history. Brown (2017) identified barriers, such as lack of transportation, limited options, limited time availability, and personal circumstances like pregnancy, which made arranging viewings and conducting housing searches challenging. The study also reported that some immigrants faced difficulties in finding accommodation suitable for their expanding family size, with landlords refusing to rent to families expecting additional children (Brown, 2017). The study also reported that participants encountered challenges with administrative requirements such as credit checks, reference letters, and providing SIN numbers for housing purposes. Unfamiliarity with rental terminology and application procedures hindered their ability to navigate the rental process effectively (Brown, 2017).

4.3.4 Housing and Community Integration

One study reported that immigrants view homeownership as a way to strengthen ties within the local community (Teixeira & Drolet, 2018). They further reported that in several cultural groups, homeownership symbolized stability, achievement, and community involvement. Overall language barriers delayed participants' ability to navigate the rental market and understand application processes and requirements. Limited access to reliable information about rental market dynamics, housing types, and tenants' rights intensified challenges in the housing search. Another study found that immigrant homeowners expressed a strong preference for homeownership, viewing it as a more attainable goal in North Bay compared to larger urban areas. Some immigrants were able to purchase homes within a few years of arriving, with assistance from relatives or through their financial resources (Brown, 2017).

4.3.5 Settlement satisfaction

Teixeira & Drolet, (2018) found that at least 50% of immigrants remain uncertain about their future in the country and whether they made the right choice. Immigrants' decision to relocate to smaller communities was based on safety, public transport, family-oriented spaces,

friendliness, quiet places, employment mobility, and green spaces. Relocating decisions were also based on housing conditions, size, location, and cost. The study also reported that perceived discrimination based on family size or type restricted their housing options. Lack of familiarity with renters' rights and human rights legislation, particularly regarding discrimination, added complexity to the housing search. In the same study, the authors reported a preference for the small community because of housing improvements, lower rents, and higher vacancy rates increasing satisfaction among immigrants. The study also reported that satisfaction with current housing allowed immigrants to feel a sense of belonging. On the other hand, immigrants who did not feel at home reported factors such as unfriendly neighborhoods, noisy neighborhoods, unsafe environments, and lack of accessibility to social amenities. Despite the challenges, small communities can be more creative, nimble, and efficient in settling newcomers compared to larger cities. This can contribute to a more personalized and community-oriented approach to integration (Agrawal & Sandeep, 2020). Refugees often face challenges to cultural adjustments and social integration. For instance, single and widowed mothers with dependent children express concerns about their future and the expiration of government assistance, highlighting the need for targeted support programs (Agrawal & Sandeep, 2020).

5.0 Discussion

One of Canada's immigration plans is to increase its population yearly by at least 500,000 (Koslowski, 2014). To continue its immigration plans, it should ensure all policies are functioning effectively to create a welcoming environment for immigrants to thrive (Scott et al., 2015). In literature, there are records of large cities and towns such as Edmonton, Ontario, and Toronto with integrated immigrants under educational, economic, housing, health, and social policies (Vézina & Houle, 2017). Several studies that focus on large cities explore various intricacies of the different policies, the challenges faced in these types of cities, and

various adaptable strategies (Choudry & Smith, 2016; Mahamoud et al., 2013). However, these findings are almost nonexistent for smaller municipalities such as Kelowna, North Bay, Lethbridge, and Kamloops. The findings in this review therefore highlight the limited research that explores the impact of these policies in smaller municipalities. In 2023 alone, Canada's population grew by 1.27 million, a record high from previous years with more racialized immigrants settling in large cities (Bhuyan et al., 2023). As of 2024, there are reports indicating shortages and pressure on social amenities in several of these large cities (Rady & Sotomayor, 2024). Therefore, it is likely that in the coming years, the attention of racialized immigrants will likely shift to these smaller municipalities.

The findings of the study provide several insights. First, very few studies focus on smaller communities and only findings on housing policies and community settlement were identified. This is directly an implication that policy studies on education, economics, health, and community engagements in smaller municipalities are generally lacking in literature. Secondly, studies highlighted that high housing costs, property taxes, and mortgage costs are major challenges that put a lot of financial strain on racialized immigrants. High housing costs push immigrants to live in remote areas, leading to social isolation, lack of connection to the community, and limited access to services. The high cost of homeownership also discourages them from aspiring to own a home, delaying wealth creation and long-term stability. These identified challenges limit their ability to save and potentially incur debt. Moreover, the lack of affordable options restricts their housing choices, impacting their quality of life and can potentially lead to overcrowding. These barriers point toward the need for revising housing policies that target affordable housing projects and financial assistance programs to successfully integrate immigrants. A study identified affordable housing as an integration factor for immigrants as compared to isolated areas (Massey & Rugh, 2017). Another study identified that effective rent control helped to stabilize housing costs for racialized immigrants, allowing

them to save money and invest in their future, ultimately contributing to a smoother integration process (August & Walks, 2018). These studies prove that effective housing policies provide income families with better rental spaces and social inclusion which contributes to their overall integration.

Common factors related to the selection of housing in smaller municipalities such as reliance on multi-unit buildings, proximity to work, public transport, and schools were identified in studies. These factors were reported to be limited in these smaller municipalities. This likely hinders immigrants' mobility and access to essential services and negatively affects their well-being. The studies further demonstrated that discrimination from landlords due to social status, legal status, or family size further affected integration. Other reported issues included restrictions to short-stays, poorly maintained units, and investments that further affected the integration of immigrants. Language proficiency, limited access to information, lack of familiarity with housing applications and terminology, credit checks, reference letters, and lack of Social Insurance Numbers (SIN) also affected the integration of immigrants. These lead to exploitation and unfair treatment of racialized immigrants in these municipalities. Overall, these challenges create difficulties in securing affordable and suitable housing for immigrants. These challenges can further impact their economic security by affecting their ability to maintain jobs and hurt their physical and mental health.

The findings reveal a complex relationship between identified factors and immigrant settlement satisfaction in smaller communities. The various barriers cause many immigrants to experience uncertainty about their long-term stay, highlighting the importance of policies and programs that foster a sense of security and belonging. Discrimination based on family size and lack of knowledge about renter's rights pose difficulties in finding suitable housing. Unfriendly neighborhoods, noise, lack of safety, and limited access to amenities contributed to negative settlement experiences, feelings of dissatisfaction, and hindered integration.

The findings further demonstrate a two-way relationship between integration and housing for immigrants. First, findings highlight that homeownership serves as a powerful tool for immigrants to strengthen their bonds and boost investments within the local community. Secondly, studies demonstrate that homeownership symbolizes achievement, stability, community engagement, and a sense of belonging. The focus of housing policies should therefore be geared not only towards suitable housing units but also the influence of integration. Programs and initiatives that support homeownership, translation services, and information services for immigrants should be explored to help newcomers navigate the rental market.

Across the studies, although more attention has been on challenges, studies identified factors that influenced immigrants to stay in smaller communities. Factors like social connections, safety, family-friendly environments, and affordable housing significantly influenced relocation decisions. Other factors such as lower rents, high vacancy rates, and opportunities for housing improvements lead to increased satisfaction among immigrants. These findings highlight the need for a multifaceted approach to promote successful immigrant settlement in smaller communities. In addition, emphasis should be placed on investing in infrastructure and amenities such as public transportation, and social services in smaller communities that can help successfully integrate newcomers. The dependence on information tools such as newspapers, social media, and other online platforms suggests the need for local authorities to ensure these platforms provide clear and accessible information about housing options in multiple languages. The lack of research on other policies also highlights the need for further studies. Research on these other areas can influence policymakers in developing multifaceted approaches that successfully integrate racialized immigrants.

5.1 Limitations of the Review

Although the study's findings provide a depiction of the problem under study, it may not represent a generalized view of the impact of local policies in integrating racialized immigrants.

This is because there could be significant variations within community contexts and local policies. Moreover, since the study identified only three studies that fit the inclusion criteria, the findings may not be applicable in a broader context and may not represent the full comprehensive picture.

5.2 Policy Implications

Further research, policy initiatives, and programs are needed to address identified challenges. First research is needed to understand the complexities across other policies and other smaller municipalities. Secondly, research should not only focus on views of racialized immigrants' other perspectives that influence integration such as landlords and local authorities should be taken into consideration. Further studies can also focus on evaluating current policies to identify pitfalls that hinder integration.

High housing costs hinder the ability of immigrants to successfully integrate. Therefore, there is a need for more initiatives such as financial assistance programs, affordable and subsidized housing, single-unit housing, investments in quality housing development, and resettlement services. Other social services such as information services, translation services, public transportation, schools, safer neighborhoods, recreational facilities, and community centers are crucial integration factors that call for improving and developing a better local system. There is also a need to assess initiatives that support translation services and cultural sensitivity to facilitate integration into these local communities.

5.3 Conclusions

The study explored the impact of local policies on integrating racialized immigrants in smaller municipalities in Canada. Several conclusions can be drawn. First, research on local policies such as educational, health, economic, community engagement and social policies is lacking in literature. Social connections, safe environments, and increased access to amenities are

factors that influence integration. On the other hand, high housing costs, discrimination, language barriers, and limited access to essential services are factors that hinder integration. Although immigration is a nationwide policy, cities, towns, and municipalities must create a conducive environment for immigrants to thrive and integrate successfully. There is a need for initiatives and programs such as affordable housing projects and financial assistance programs that support the needs of immigrants.

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Search Query (Google Scholar, Web of Science, Scopus)

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|----------------------|---|
| 1. Local policies | "Housing policies" OR "housing regulations" OR "housing initiatives") AND integration
"Economic policies" OR "employment policies" OR "economic development") AND integration AND
"Educational policies" OR "education initiatives" OR "school policies") AND integration
"Health policies" OR "healthcare access" OR "public health initiatives") AND integration
"Community engagement policies" OR "cultural programs" OR "social cohesion initiatives") AND integration |
| 2. Target population | "Racialized immigrants" OR "ethnic minorities" OR "immigrants" OR "new migrant" |
| 3. Habitation | "Smaller municipalities" OR "rural communities" |
| 4. Integration | "Incorporation OR assimilation OR joining OR fusing |
| 5. Alternative words | Housing Experiences Economic Experiences Health Experiences OR community engagement |

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