

# **Using Longitudinal Participatory Action Research to Support Syrian Refugee Mothers in the Resettlement Period**

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## **Background**

Since 2015, Canada has resettled over 50,000 Syrian refugees in response to persistent humanitarian crises. Refugees may face overwhelming stress related to experiences of forced migration. Many women that have experienced forced migration are of childbearing age, experiencing pregnancy and mothering across their migration journey. Little is known about social factors that support Syrian refugee mothers across migration and resettlement.

## **Aim of the study**

The goal of this study was to understand in-depth the intersecting contextual factors shaping social support from the perspective of Syrian refugee mothers in the Canadian context.

## **Methods**

Using a longitudinal intersectionality-framed participatory action research design, Syrian refugee mothers' perspectives on social support during various phases of resettlement were explored. Four peer research assistants (PRAs) worked collaboratively to champion the research process. Forty Syrian mothers were recruited by PRAs and participated for 18 months. Data sources included in-depth interviews, monthly diaries, and telephone conversations with participants.

## **Results**

Multiple themes emerged to impact the social supports of Syrian refugee mothers in resettlement: steps in the migration journey, pathways to integrated holistic health care, intersecting social determinants of refugee health, harnessing strength-based capabilities, pandemic impacts of resettlement and the PRA experience.

## **Conclusions and implications**

Our in-depth analysis contributes to understanding Syrian mothers journey's over time and across migration contexts. These findings bring nuanced understanding to Syrian mothers' capabilities and resilience as they intersect with multiple social factors during their integration and resettlement. Issues raised by Syrian mothers, combined with the supportive network of community members and researchers increase the likelihood of a stronger collective voice in enhancing appropriate support and access to community support services.