

Research for Policy: Responding to COVID-19 -- Immigration and Settlement

Date/time: 27 May 2020 (1:00-2:00 pm EST)

Moderator: Martin Taylor, Executive Director, CRDCN

Panelists:

- Monica Boyd, Professor of Sociology (University of Toronto)
- Jeslyn Thibedeau, Assistant Director of Outcomes Analysis, Settlement and Integration Policy Branch (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada)
- Li Xue, Director, Social Analysis and Modelling Division (Statistics Canada)
- Ted McDonald, Professor of Economics (University of New Brunswick)

Moderator notes:

- The moderator welcomed the panelists and participants in coming together to convene and connect with colleagues during this extraordinary time in our country's history, noting that 215 colleagues from universities across the country, from various levels of government and from the nonprofit sector, registered for the webinar.
- Also noted: CRDCN is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year and would like to thank CFI, CIHR, SSHRC, Statistics Canada, university partners from across the country as well as provincial government and private sector partners for their ongoing support.

Note on this summary document

There was a wealth of ideas presented and exchanged during each of the webinars and we encourage you to watch the recordings in full: <https://crdcn.org/covid-19-webinar-series>. In this summary, we present a brief overview of the discussion, framed according to a delineation that emerged in each of the webinars: (1) data and research to inform policy decisions in the shorter term, and (2) research and policy questions for the medium and longer term. That said, there are, of course, strong links between these and the research and policy questions discussed during the webinars in some way involved the full spectrum of shorter to longer term implications.

Data and research to inform policy decisions in the shorter term

- Some priority questions identified by IRCC: in pivoting to online services, how to avoid individuals in vulnerable populations falling through the cracks; how to know which clients and services are best suited to alternative service delivery; what approaches and partnerships make it possible to follow clients over time; what evaluations, assessments, other performance measurement tools are best to learn from the situation and course-correct?
- There is a need to examine gender in interaction with immigrant status: being at home for women leading to a triple day, role overload (child-raising, home maintenance, emotional labor); intimate partner violence; labour force concentration of immigrant women in some occupations (such as caregiving).
- StatCan will conduct, via LFS in the coming months, more detailed analysis on early impacts of the pandemic on labour market outcomes for immigrant populations.

Research and policy questions for the medium and longer term

- COVID has been revolutionary in forcing a rethinking of some pre-existing issues; one of these is to look at sub populations that are more affected by COVID than others, including the immigrant population (some aspects to consider: poverty, crowded living conditions, limited access to information, not being fluent in official languages).
- It will be important to look at different impacts for girls and boys in immigrant families when schooling is interrupted, when parents may not be able to fill the gap. Do we need a longitudinal study on this?
- What are impacts or “scarring effects” (labour market participation, income, education, health, etc.) for the cohort of people who became permanent residents in Canada in early 2020? What happens to them and their families in the long term?
- International students provide an important source of immigrant retention in the smaller provinces. Students may decide to study closer to home; if there is going to be a more permanent shift to a distance education model, competition may be difficult for universities outside of Canada’s large urban areas.
- Aside from the anticipated labour market issues and labour shortages that arise from COVID, some provinces rely quite heavily on the pathway of temporary foreign workers to permanent residency.

Keeping the conversation going ...

CRDCN is creating a framework based on the key research and policy questions discussed in the webinars to guide concrete next steps. We will be launching CRDCN community channels on Slack in June 2020 in order to provide a platform -- for researchers, data experts, policy-makers and program deliverers-- to connect about key questions, map out next steps and collaborate to advance research and policy efforts. Stay tuned and join us as we continue to support the important work of the CRDCN community.