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A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK: THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEE YOUTH AND THE SECOND GENERATION IN CONTEMPORARY CANADA

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WHAT THE RESEARCH IS ABOUT

OBJECTIVE: This project asked how well the Vietnamese population welcomed to Canada between 1979-1981, colloquially labeled "the Boat People," are doing today with respect to educational attainment and labour market integration, measured in terms of occupation and earnings. It also asks if entering as a privately sponsored refugee confers an advantage over arriving as a government sponsored refugee.

RESEARCH JUSTIFICATION: Canada's reaction to the Vietnamese refugees is sometimes framed as an ideal blueprint for addressing the Syrian refugee crisis. Yet there is very little information on the social and economic integration of the children of Vietnamese refugees or those who arrived in Canada as children (the second and 1.5 generations).

PRACTICAL GOAL: This study provides a better understanding of the social mobility of refugee children and second-generation children born to refugee parents from war-torn countries with interrupted schooling and mental health challenges.

PRIMARY AUDIENCE: academics, policy makers, and educators.

HOW THE DATA WAS OBTAINED

This study used data from the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS) and the 2016 Census of Population to compare Vietnamese refugees to those born in China, Hong Kong, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and other North and Western European countries who had arrived in Canada during the same period (1979/80-1990). The study also uses IRCC admission data merged with 2016 census of population records to study the entry cohort of adults arriving between 1980-1990 who were born in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in order to determine whether those entering as PSRs had more advantageous economic outcomes than those who entered as GARs.

CALL TO ACTION

Additional education and strategies for keeping refugee children and adolescents in school longer would help improve economic outcomes later in life.

WHAT THE STUDY FOUND

- Economic outcomes for refugees vary by the period of arrival and by the country of origin.

- Education is an important explanation for the labour force experiences of refugees. For those that immigrated during the 1979-1990 period, a great deal of the occupational and earnings disadvantages of the Vietnamese-born group are caused by low levels of education. For refugee children and adolescents, education was the main predictor of occupational attainment and earnings.

- Comparing adult refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos arriving between 1980-1990, this study found no differences between those entering as privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) versus government assisted refugees (GARs), contrasting contemporary findings that PSRs have more advantageous economic outcomes.

- Refugee accommodation is a long-term ongoing process. Some 30-35 years later, the Vietnamese boat people still bear the imprint of their exodus and the levels of educational resources they had when they left Vietnam.

View Project Webpage

ABOUT CYRRC

The Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition (CYRRC) is a network of researchers, service providers, and government partners working together to produce and share research that facilitates the integration of young refugees and their families in Canada and beyond.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Child and Youth Refugee Research Coalition.

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