

## The Issue

Lack of data on immigrant children results in fewer services that can support their integration and well-being.

## TYPES OF PRECARIOUS IMMIGRATION STATUS

- **Children who are Permanent Residents (PR)** can lose their status, including children whose parent loses PR status.
- **Children born outside of Canada** (< 18 yrs) who are dependent on a parent's temporary permit.
- **Children awaiting a decision on a refugee claim or H&C application.**
- **Unaccompanied or separated children** who are awaiting a decision on a refugee claim, or living with next of kin.
- **Children with a study permit**, living alone or with a parent/guardian.
- **Children with no status or who do not know their status**, including unaccompanied minors or children whose temporary status has expired.

## Children with Precarious Status in Canada

### Introduction

In 2023, Statistics Canada estimated that 2.2 million people living in Canada are non-permanent residents, the majority of whom are racial minorities who have an uncertain or precarious legal status in Canada<sup>[1]</sup>. This includes people who entered Canada with a temporary permit to study, work, or seek asylum and non-status residents whose immigration status has expired or has been revoked. Permanent residents may also be precarious due to security or inadmissibility reasons.

Children with precarious immigration status remain largely invisible in social and health services due to inconsistent data and gaps in service eligibility. Compounded with systemic racism, precarious status negatively impacts their rights, sense of belonging and overall well-being<sup>[3,4]</sup>.

### Effects of Precarious Status on Children

- Children with precarious status may encounter **barriers to accessing education and extracurricular activities**, which can hinder their academic progress, development, and future prospects<sup>[6,12]</sup>.
- Limited or no **access to health care** results in delayed or inadequate health care<sup>[3,9]</sup>.
- Stigma and fear of deportation can increase **social isolation** and **heighten levels of stress and anxiety**<sup>[10]</sup>.
- Families with precarious immigration status may experience **financial instability**, which can directly impact a child's access to basic needs, such as adequate child care, housing and nutrition<sup>[2,8]</sup>.
- Racialized immigrant families experience disproportionately **higher rates of child protection investigation and removal** due to systemic racism, financial insecurity, and exclusion from social and health services<sup>[4,7]</sup>.

## Age Range Differences & Gaps in Reporting

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) uses different age ranges for minors (<18 years) and groups some children with other family members<sup>[11]</sup>:

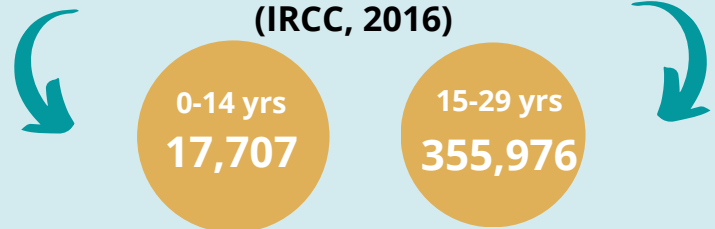
- Children ages 0-14 are included as “principal applicants” on a refugee claim, study permit, or work permit.
- IRCC reports the number of resettled refugees who are 17 years or younger<sup>[13]</sup>.
- Children (<18 years) who are “dependents” on a parent or guardian’s immigration status, are grouped with other family members, including spouses and adult children.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- For IRCC to **disaggregate data** on all non-citizen children under 18 with consistent age ranges.
- For social and health services to implement **Access without Fear** policies so children and their families can access services without fear of being detailed, detained or deported.
- For all levels of government to **engage immigrant communities** in policy development and implementation.

## IRCC DATA ON CHILDREN WITH PRECARIOUS STATUS<sup>[13]</sup>

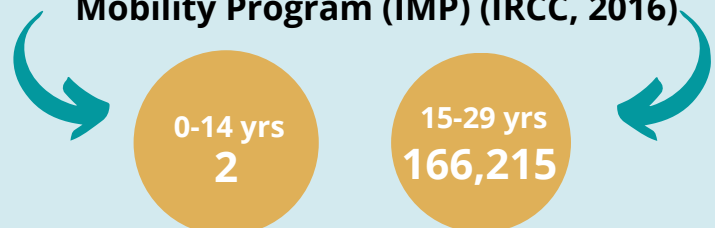
### Children/Youth with a Valid Study Permit (IRCC, 2016)



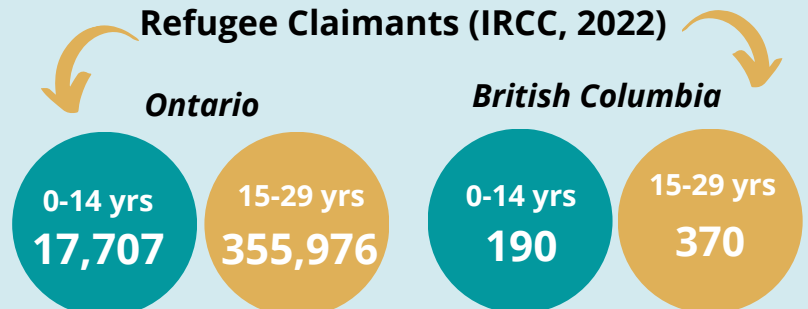
### Children/Youth in the Temporary Foreign Workers Program (TFWP) (IRCC, 2016)



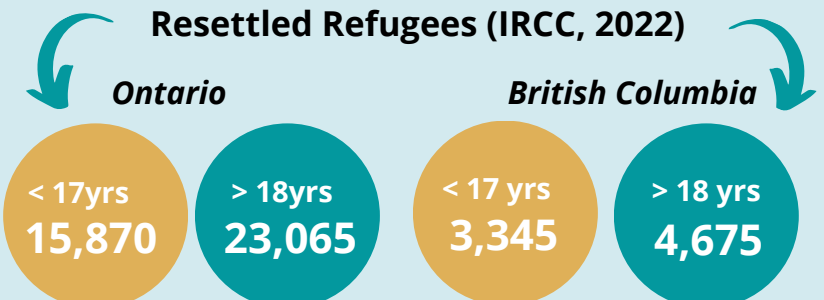
### Children/Youth in the International Mobility Program (IMP) (IRCC, 2016)



### Refugee Claimants (IRCC, 2022)

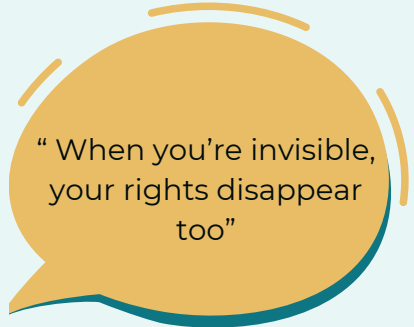


### Resettled Refugees (IRCC, 2022)



## How to Implement Access without Fear

People who have a precarious immigration status face discrimination due to harmful misinformation and stereotypes. We can combat discrimination by creating safe spaces and working with immigrants to respect their dignity and human rights.



“When you’re invisible,  
your rights disappear  
too”

Steps you can take (adapted from Toronto for All)<sup>[14]</sup>:

- Talk with your friends and colleagues about why terms like “illegal” are harmful, inaccurate, and dehumanizing.
- Reflect on your own beliefs about Canada as an “immigrant nation.”
- Learn about Canada’s history of systemic racism against Indigenous and racialized immigrants.
- Refrain from asking about immigration status, unless it is a condition of your work.
- When entrusted with the knowledge of someone’s immigration status, DO NOT share this information with anyone without their consent
- Develop “Access without Fear” practices, so you can safeguard information to protect everyone’s privacy and rights.

### Written by

Rachel Tam, MSW, Swarna Tyagi, MSW, and Rupaleem Bhuyan, PhD

### Acknowledgements

Border(ing) Practices is supported in part by funding from the **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council**. The authors also thank the Bordering Practices Research Advisory Committee for their ongoing guidance on this research.

**Suggested Citation:** Tam, R., Tyagi, S., Bhuyan, R. (2023). Children with Precarious Status in Canada: Issue Brief. Border(ing) Practices: Systemic Racism, Immigration & Child Welfare. University of Toronto & University of Victoria.

## About Border(ing) Practices

**Border(ing) Practices: Systemic Racism, Immigration & Child Welfare** is a collaborative research project led by Rupaleem Bhuyan at the University of Toronto and Mandeep Kaur Mucina at the University of Victoria working in partnership with child welfare, immigration, and gender-based violence service providers and advocates within Ontario and British Columbia. This research aims to understand how child welfare practices with immigrant children, youth and families are shaped by systemic racism and precarious immigration.

## To Learn More

For more information & resource scan the **QR Code**,

Go to <https://www.borderingpractices.com/resource>

Or contact us at [borderingpractices@utoronto.ca](mailto:borderingpractices@utoronto.ca)



## References

- Bernhard, J. K., Goldring, L., Young, J., Berinstein, C., & Wilson, B. (2007). Living with precarious legal status in Canada: Implications for the well-being of children and families. *Refugee*, 24, 101
- Bhuyan, R., & Schmidt, C. (2018). Identifying structural barriers to improve settlement outcomes for vulnerable groups of immigrant women. Immigrant Women, Youth, and Seniors Project. CERIS. <https://km4s.ca/wp-content/uploads/Knowledge-Synthesis-Report-Identifying-Structural-Barriers-to-Improve-Settlement-Outcomes-for-Vulnerable-Groups-of-Immigrant-Women-2018.pdf>
- Gagnon, M., Kansal, N., Goel, R., & Gastaldo, D. (2022). Immigration Status as the Foundational Determinant of Health for People Without Status in Canada: A Scoping Review. *Journal of immigrant and minority health*, 24(4), 1029–1044. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-021-01273-w>
- Houston, E., Ganness, A., Black, T. and Fallon, B. (2021). Examining child maltreatment-related investigations of children in newcomer and non-newcomer households in Ontario, Canada. *International Journal of Child and Adolescent Resilience*, 8(1), 110-123. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1082070ar>
- Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (2023). 2023 Annual Report to Parliament. Government of Canada. Ottawa, ON. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2023.html>
- Meloni, F., Rousseau, C., Ricard-Guay, A., & Hanley, J. (2017). Invisible students: institutional invisibility and access to education for undocumented children. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care*.
- Mohamud, F., Edwards, T., Antwi-Boasiako, K., William, K., King, J., Igor, E., & King, B. (2021). Racial disparity in the Ontario child welfare system: Conceptualizing policies and practices that drive involvement for Black families. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 120, 105711.
- Morantz, G., Rousseau, C., Banerji, A., Martin, C., & Heymann, J. (2013). Resettlement challenges faced by refugee claimant families in Montreal: Lack of access to childcare. *Child & Family Social Work*, 18(3), 318-328.
- Rousseau, C., Ter Kuile, S., Muñoz, M., Nadeau, L., Ouimet, M. J., Kirmayer, L., & Crépeau, F. (2008). Health care access for refugees and immigrants with precarious status. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 99(4), 290-292.
- Saad, S. (2013). The cost of invisibility: The psychosocial impact of falling out of status. In L. Goldring and P. Landolt, (Eds.). *Producing and negotiating non-citizenship: Precarious legal status in Canada*. University of Toronto Press, 137-153.
- Statistics Canada (2023). Canada's demographic estimates for July 1, 2023: record-high population growth since 1957. *The Daily*, Government of Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231219/dq231219c-eng.htm>
- Villegas, P. E., & Aberman, T. (2019). A Double Punishment: The Context of Post-Secondary Access for Racialized Precarious Status Migrant Students in Toronto, Canada. *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees*, 35(1), 72-82. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1060676ar>.
- Dataset are adapted the *Open Data Portal*, (IRCC). [https://search.open.canada.ca/opendata/?owner\\_org=cic&page=1&sort=metadata\\_modified+desc](https://search.open.canada.ca/opendata/?owner_org=cic&page=1&sort=metadata_modified+desc)
- City of Toronto. (2023, October 30). Toronto for all. <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/get-involved/community/toronto-for-all/>