

[Lived Experiences: Ethnic Women as Full Participants in Canada](#)

Emily Beckett

Immigrant families account for more than one-fifth (22%) of Canada's population and they make diverse and unique contributions to communities and workplaces across the country. ((Learn more in [A Snapshot of Family Diversity in Canada](#) (February 2018).)) Unfortunately, some experience barriers to full inclusion in society and, as a result, their talents, voices and perspectives are often overlooked.

To increase awareness of these family experiences and foster inclusiveness, the Vanier Institute of the Family has partnered with New Canadian Media (NCM) on the theme of "Ethnic Women as Full Participants in Ontario." This series of articles focuses on immigrant women in Canada, exploring their diverse experiences including (but not limited to) settling into Canada, finding and building careers, mental health, family caregiving, intergenerational relationships, family violence and more.

Summaries and links to select articles from this series can be found below (a full list is available on the New Canadian Media [website](#)).

[Ethnic Women Are Full Participants in Canada](#)

Summer Fanous

In "Ethnic Women Are Full Participants in Canada," Summer Fanous details many of the milestones women around the world and in Canada have reached in terms of making their voices heard. Though there has been significant progress, many women still face barriers when it comes to employment and leadership opportunities, and those barriers may be increased when combined with the experience of being an immigrant. Fanous introduces the series of articles aimed at giving immigrant women in Canada a voice to maintain the momentum of progress.

[Adapting to a New Country](#)

Sukaina Jaffer

In "Adapting to a New Country," Sukaina Jaffer tells the stories of several women who immigrated to Ontario and had to adjust to new ways of living. Transition and integration into a new country involve complex and diverse adaptations and adjustments, such as the absence of a familiar cultural

atmosphere, drastic weather changes that could be daunting to those who come from warmer and more stable climates, and cultural barriers when it comes to language and housing. Jaffer says that the financial well-being of immigrant women in Canada can be affected by new immigrant women's lack of social connections and supports, as reflected in her account of one woman's difficulties opening and managing a massage practice after immigrating to Toronto. As noted by Jaffer, immigrants benefit from knowledge of *and* access to resources, programs and social networks in their new communities.

Getting Ahead: Taking the First Career Steps

Jennilee Austria

In "Getting Ahead: Taking the First Career Steps," Jennilee Austria breaks down some of the barriers immigrants face in pursuing employment in Canada. Many immigrants turn to "survival jobs" to support themselves and their families because some employers may not hire them if they do not have enough "Canadian experience," despite any education and employment they may have obtained in their countries of origin. This frequent education–employment mismatch among immigrants is reflected in research: in 2011, 43% of immigrant women aged 24 to 35 with university degrees obtained *outside* Canada or the United States were working in positions that required only a high school education or less. Austria says that mentorship programs have played an important role in dismantling the barriers immigrants may face by providing access to professional networks and offering participants the opportunity to practise soft skills that will be beneficial in the workplace.

Being Brown and Depressed

Aparna Sanyal

In "Being Brown and Depressed," Aparna Sanyal details her turbulent experiences with mental illness, a systemic lack of support and racial micro-aggressions during her integration. Sanyal shares her difficulties of finding reliable, well-paid employment in her field that also provided a supportive and fulfilling work environment. Her chronic depression was exacerbated by the feelings of isolation and alienation in her personal and professional life. Though she exhibited many symptoms, the health care professionals and police officers she encountered offered few supports or pathways to resources to address the difficulties she was facing.

Grandparents at Home: A Blessing

Asfia Yassir

As discussed in [*A Snapshot of Family Diversity in Canada*](#), immigrants are more likely to live in multi-generational households than their Canadian-born counterparts. In “Grandparents at Home: A Blessing,” Asfia Yassir presents the benefits of living with elderly members of the family. She found that having grandparents in the household can alleviate daycare costs, as parents may be able to rely on them to provide child care for young children. The benefits also include providing companionship and a source of relief, as living in a new country can feel isolating. Though older members of the family may require more intensive health care and caregiving supports, immigrants commonly feel that the benefits of living with grandparents outweighs any negatives.

[*Ontario’s Caregivers: Double the Work, Half the Benefits*](#)

Shan Qiao

When it comes to caregiving, family members are often the first to provide, arrange or sometimes pay for care. In “Ontario’s Caregivers: Double the Work, Half the Benefits,” Shan Qiao shares the experiences of several immigrant women who took on caregiving responsibilities of a family member. Qiao notes that an increased workload at home can lead to financial constraints and may limit the time a caregiver can commit to additional work. Working outside the home is a way to financially support the family, but it is also something caregivers can do to support themselves emotionally and psychologically. One woman’s experience with the programs and resources provided by the health care system allows her to explore her role outside of being a caregiver for her husband. Qiao also examines the dual roles that women take on within the family when it comes to caregiving. Although this was the case for one of the women in the article, many others are unable to become a full-time caregiver to family members.

[*Understanding the Roots of Abuse*](#)

Tazeen Inam

In “Understanding the Roots of Abuse,” Tazeen Inam shares some statistics, barriers and experiences relating to domestic violence in immigrant households in Canada. Since the beginning of 2018, there has been a dramatic increase in homicides against women, with five women killed in the span of six days in Ontario. Due to financial dependence, language barriers and a lack of knowledge about community resources, immigrant women may have more difficulty accessing resources and safe havens, and could be more likely to be vulnerable to abusive situations. Sharing stories with people who have

similar experiences can alleviate trauma and help rebuild self-esteem.

[*Ethnic Women as Active Participants in Ontario*](#) features 20 articles, all of which are available on the New Canadian Media website.

Learn more about family diversity and immigrant families in Canada:

- [A Snapshot of Family Diversity in Canada](#)
- [Family Diversity in Canada: 2016 Census Update](#)
- [Immigrant Families at Work in Canada](#)
- [Sharing a Roof: Multi-generational Homes in Canada \(2016 Census Update\)](#)

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