

research snapshot

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Affordable Housing Is Crucial to Successful Integration of Immigrants in Toronto

What is this research about?

Adequate and affordable housing is one of society's most important needs. Finding housing for newcomers is a crucial step toward their integration into Canadian society. However, cities like Toronto have very low vacancy rates and high costs for rental housing. These problems as well as the low availability of social housing make it hard for immigrants to find affordable housing when they arrive in Toronto.

What did the researcher do?

Using a questionnaire survey and focus group interviews the York researcher looked at the housing experiences of recent immigrants from three distinct ethnic groups (Poles, Jamaicans, and Somalis). The people surveyed had to have lived in Toronto for at least two years, made at least three moves, and live in rental housing in Toronto. The survey focused on people's experiences in searching for housing and their overall satisfaction with their homes.

What you need to know:

The present rental housing market in Toronto does not have the variety, affordability, and access that is needed to help immigrants to successfully integrate into Canadian society. More attention needs to be paid to the unique housing challenges faced by many of Toronto's immigrant groups. These groups face challenges based on size of household, income, and discriminatory barriers when searching for affordable housing.

What did the researcher find?

The researcher found that different ethnic groups in Toronto experience varying degrees of difficulty in finding affordable rental housing. There are four major factors that determine the ease in finding affordable housing in Toronto:

- Assistance from informal and formal social networks
- Educational background and household income
- Household size
- Discriminatory barriers

It was found that the Poles had the greatest amount of help from their community in finding housing in Toronto. Somalis faced the greatest difficulty and paid a very large part of their income for housing. Somalis and Jamaicans felt that they were racially discriminated against when looking for rental housing.

How can you use this research?

Policymakers and community groups may find this research helpful in understanding that different ethnic groups of immigrants to Toronto experience their search for rental housing differently. It is important to look at the factors that shape the experience of these groups when improving policies on social housing, rent controls, and urban planning.

About the Researcher

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