

# Refugee children’s earnings in adulthood

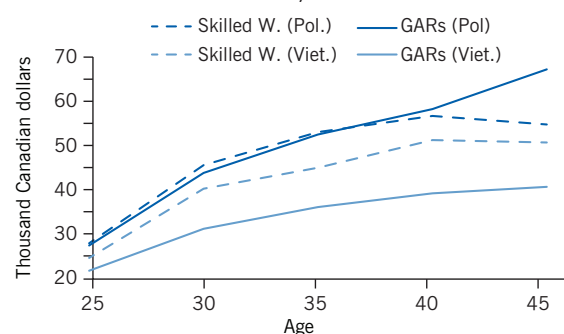
## Refugee status and country of origin shape the economic outcomes of newcomer children later in life

Keywords: refugees, immigrants, children, earning trajectories, race, ethnicity

### ELEVATOR PITCH

The number of refugees has increased worldwide, and about half of them are children and youth. These refugee children arrive in resettlement countries with a unique set of challenges caused by, for instance, extreme stress and trauma that call for specific policies to address their needs. Yet, the long-term effect of refugee status on newcomer children’s economic trajectories varies by country of origin, signaling the need for effective resettlement support and initiatives to tackle broader systemic barriers for newcomer children, beyond refugees. Such findings challenge the commonly held notion of refugees as a distinctive, relatively homogeneous group with similar trajectories.

Earnings trajectory of Vietnamese and Polish newcomer children in Canada, 1980–1994 arrivals



Note: Skilled W. = skilled workers; GAR = government assisted refugees. Source: Based on Figure 2.

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### KEY FINDINGS

#### Pros

- + Refugees often share similar experiences such as forced migration, violence, and trauma across national contexts.
- + Even when economic trajectories are similar among refugee and non-refugee children, their experiences and needs may differ.
- + Different paths to similar economic outcomes should be recognized in provisions of support for resettlement services.

#### Cons

- Refugees are not a homogeneous group, and they likely have much in common with other migrants leaving their country of origin.
- The long-term effects of refugee status on children’s economic outcomes are shaped by contextual factors in both their country of origin and resettlement country.
- Similar earnings between refugee and non-refugee immigrant children show that the effects of refugee status are transient rather than fixed.

### AUTHOR’S MAIN MESSAGE

Despite negative experiences encountered during different phases of migration, refugees have a high degree of resilience, and, with the necessary support, their economic trajectories may be similar to those of other migrant children. These insights challenge misconceived notions that refugees contribute little to the resettlement country’s economy. With provisions of assistance in the initial resettlement process of refugees such as psychological counselling and language training and broader policies to remove systemic barriers, refugee children may achieve earning trajectories similar to non-refugee children in the long term.