

All forms of labour are incredibly important to maintain cohesiveness within the community. Whether it is doctors and lawyers, or mail carriers and sanitation workers, each form of labour provides services with which the community could not successfully function without. The sad reality is that our communities' workers are not treated with equal respect. Those who are doctors or lawyers are placed on a pedestal and deemed as the ultimate professionals while those who work in community sanitation, for example, are placed at the very bottom of the job hierarchy. We put too much of an emphasis on one's educational attainment rather than their hard work and dedication to their community. This issue differentially affects refugees and newcomers to Canada as they are often unable to attain the funds for higher education and are left to take low-wage and dangerous jobs.

In our communities today, the common trend is that those jobs in which higher education is required, hold the greatest prestige (Gorman, 2000). Historically, hard work and dedication in any form of work was admired (Gorman, 2000). Post-secondary education is now valued to a much greater extent (Gorman, 2000). Those who receive university degrees are entitled to greater pay, prestige, and a higher spot on the occupational hierarchy (Gorman, 2000). Although post-secondary education is an incredibly valuable asset, those careers which do not require higher education are equally important and deserve equal recognition within the community.

Post-secondary education requires substantial funds and recourses, those of which are not readily available to all individuals. This then solidifies the segregation between rich and poor in society. According to Statistics Canada's 2020 report, the average university undergraduate degree costs over \$26,000 with an approximate \$7,000 a year for additional graduate studies. Those who are financially privileged are able to pay these substantial costs, attend post-secondary education, and consequently receive the communities' higher-paying jobs. On the

other hand, those who cannot afford post-secondary education get the low-wage jobs and remain disadvantaged financially, being less respected in the community.

Canada's immigrant population is ever-growing with a large portion of labourers being migrant workers (Government of Canada, 2020). According to the Government of Canada's 2020 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration, approximately 1 in 4 workers in Canada are immigrants. Refugees to Canada face the challenge of not having the desired skills or credentials required to find employment. They will often take whatever job they can get in order to provide for their families. There is a false belief among some Canadians that these migrant workers are "stealing all of the jobs." Individuals who hold this viewpoint fail to recognize how instrumental migrant workers are for our economic growth as a nation. It is these migrant workers who take up a large portion of low-wage jobs in Canada. According to Statistics Canada's 2020 report, approximately 22% of Canada's immigrant population work in low-wage jobs compared to only 12% of Canadian-born workers (Statistics Canada, 2020). Due to their high likelihood of working low-wage jobs, refugees are then unable to easily attend institutes of higher education for monetary reasons.

A substantial body of research has supported that immigrants are more likely to work in dangerous industries and occupations than native-born individuals (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009; Yanar et al, 2004). Findings suggest that this is due to lower levels of education and English ability among immigrants (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009). This then limits migrant's employment options and may make them more willing to accept dangerous tasks in fear of losing their jobs (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009). The more dangerous jobs in the community are the ones in which newcomers have no option but to take due to their limited skills and credentials.

As a nation, we must place greater value on one's hard work and dedication to their community, regardless of their educational attainment and career. By doing so, we can slowly abolish the job hierarchy and grant equal respect to our communities' labourers, whether they are doctors or sanitation workers. By doing so, our community members will learn to value all forms of work and immigrant workers may no longer have to choose between providing for their families and their personal safety at work. In addition, efforts should be made for those working in low wage jobs to receive greater social support services. These could include greater coverage for health insurance plans, childcare services, and mental health support. A lot of work still must be done for the contributions all labourers' to be equally valued and respected within the community. By educating community members on the value of all labour, generating greater respect towards the communities' newcomers, and providing low-wage workers with greater benefits, we can work together as a nation to make labour safe and fulfilling for all Canadians.

## References

- Gorman, T., J. (2000). Cross-class perceptions of social class, *Sociological Spectrum*, 20:1, 93-120, <https://doi.org/10.1080/027321700280044>
- Government of Canada. (2020). 2020 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/annual-report-parliament-immigration-2020.html>
- Orrenius, P. M., Zavodny, M. (2009). Do immigrants work in riskier jobs? *Demography* 46, 535-551, <https://doi.org/10.1353/dem.0.0064>
- Statistics Canada. (2020). Transitions into and out of employment by immigrants during the COVID-19 lockdown and recovery. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00070-eng.htm>
- Statistics Canada. (2020). Canadian and international tuition fees by level of study. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3710004501>
- Yanar, B., Kosny, A., Smith, P. M. (2004). Occupational Health and Safety Vulnerability of Recent Immigrants and Refugees. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 2018; 15(9):2004. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph15092004>