

Measuring Integration in Practice

Literature Review: Refugee Urban Integration

A FEINSTEIN INTERNATIONAL CENTER BRIEF 

Karen Jacobsen and Charles Simpson

with Marina Lazetić, Jessica Sadye Wolff, Madison Chapman, and Anna Cumming

This is a section of a broad literature review on refugee urban integration that was conducted by the Refugees in Towns Project (RIT) at Feinstein International Center, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University beginning in December 2017 and being continually updated with new publications. It was conducted to inform the public, academics, and policymakers about the state of refugee urban integration, and to prepare the RIT project for analysis of original data on refugee integration collected from towns around the world.

All references that are available online have a URL link provided in text. Full citations are in the Works Cited document.

A Range of Different Practices for Measuring Integration

Different institutions each use different measures, indicators, methods,¹ and timeframes² for evaluating refugee urban integration.

National Indices

While national indices tend to measure integration in terms of “work, housing and language skills,” with little attention paid to social or cultural integration,³ there is nonetheless widespread variation between countries’ and between supranational organizations’ methods for measuring integration:

- Indices used in the U.S. tend to focus on economic metrics of integration, with other metrics—including political participation, education, and housing—measured as means toward achieving economic ends.⁴ For example, educational attainment is measured as a means toward economic self-sufficiency of migrants.
- Canadian indices look beyond economic indicators and include social indicators.⁵ The national Canadian index includes four domains of integration: economic (wages, income, labor force participation, employment status, use of housing subsidies, and non-official language at work), social (number of close friends, number of close friends in the same community, sense of belonging to community, province and country, and experiences with victimization), civic participation (unpaid volunteer work, involvement in organizations, and participation in provincial and national voting), and health (having a doctor, unmet healthcare needs, costs as a barrier to healthcare access, self-perceived life stress, satisfaction with life), using census and survey data.⁶
- African countries rarely have robust national-level datasets and instead rely on city-level measures and indicators of integration that are usually the same as those used for evaluating development of other groups of urban poor. These include presence/absence of documentation, housing status, experiences with racism, and perceptions of competition with host communities.⁷

¹ [ATHA 2017](#); Hussein 2002; [Livelihoods Centre 2015](#)

² [Greenberg, Gelatt, Bolter, Workie and Charo](#)

³ [Goodall 2011](#)

⁴ Boston Analytics 2017; Fix 2007; [Kallick and Mathema 2016](#); [Kasser, Kanner and Ryan 2007](#); [Ott 2013](#)

⁵ [Wong and Tezli 2013](#)

⁶ [Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada 2018](#)

⁷ Jacobsen and Landau 2004

- Organization for Economic Development (OECD) countries use a robust index for measuring integration using census and survey data for “27 indicators organized around five areas: Employment, education and skills, social inclusion, civic engagement and social cohesion.”⁸ The OECD has in the past also attempted to measure the “localization” (i.e., integration) of refugees based on regional capacity for integration such as employment rates.⁹
- Each country within the European Union (EU) will use unique national metrics for integration:
 - Belgium uses a national index from census and survey data focusing on “varying contexts of immigration and settlement, and more or less conflicted ethnic relations between immigrants and hosts” aimed at documenting “the uneven character of cultural change across generational, gender and class divides within immigrant communities.”¹⁰ The Belgian index does not disaggregate refugees from other migrant groups.
 - The Italian national index for measuring integration focuses on social, cultural, political, and economic integration, with indicators including language proficiency, political awareness, personal values, social networks, housing, legal status, citizenship pathways and prioritization, lifestyle and habits, places of holding financial capital, and multigenerational desires such as education, intermarriage, and place of residency for children. See chart below.¹¹
 - A national study of integration in the Netherlands was closer to the Canadian national index, focusing on the domains of social and civic integration as measured by national identification of migrants and social ties.¹²

CONSTRUCTION OF THE INTEGRATION INDEX

Variable	Indicator	Sub-index	Index
Understands Italian Speaks Italian Reads Italian Writes Italian Uses Italian at home Uses Italian at work/school Uses Italian in free time Language of TV programmes Language of newspapers/magazines Interest in Italian current affairs How s/he likes living in Italy How far s/he feels a sense of belonging to Italy Agreement with value (1) Agreement with value (2) Agreement with value (3)	Knowledge of Italian Use of Italian Language of the media used Interest in Italian current affairs How s/he likes living in Italy Sense of belonging to Italy Agreement on values accepted in Italy	Cultural integration	Integration index
Nationality of friends Participation in ethnic/mixed associations Knows general practitioner Agreement with Italian habit (1) Agreement with Italian habit (2) Agreement with Italian habit (3) Agreement with Italian habit (4) Agreement with Italian habit (5) Agreement with Italian habit (6) Intends to remain in Italy Where would like children to study Would approve of son's marriage to an Italian Would approve of daughter's marriage to an Italian <i>Different approvals for son and daughter (constructed variable)</i>	Friendships Associationism Knowledge of general practitioner Agreement with Italian lifestyle Intends to remain in Italy Desires for children	Social integration	
Importance of gaining Italian citizenship Importance of children gaining Italian citizenship Legal status Enrolment at registry office	Importance of citizenship Legal status Enrolment at registry office	Political integration	
Housing situation Employment situation Definition of economic situation Possession of a bank account	Housing situation Employment situation Definition of economic situation Possession of bank account	Economic integration	

⁸ [OECD 2015](#)

⁹ OECD, 2010

¹⁰ [Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003](#)

¹¹ Caselli 2012: 11

¹² de Vroome et al. 2011

Supranational Indices

Confusingly, the EU as a whole uses different methods for measuring integration than its member states, relying on census and survey data to assess a long series of indicators across eight domains of integration: economic, education, housing, language, political participation, culture, space, and health.¹³ Specific indicators of migrants compared to hosts used by the EU are:

- Access to the labor market
- Employment/unemployment rates and duration
- Occupation and levels
- Proportions in dangerous/dirty jobs by age and sex
- Proportions in key professions such as architects, lawyers, teachers, engineer, doctors, and in managerial and governmental posts
- Proportions in vocational training
- Professional training by type of training, sex, and age
- Proportions gaining vocational and professional qualifications, and entering employment or further training
- Relative earnings, hours worked, and self-employment rates
- Rates of use of housing and social services
- Concentration and segregation in districts, quality of housing, and overcrowding
- Proportions in public, rented, and self-owned housing
- Numbers needing housing
- Social indicators
- Proportions claiming social security benefits
- Proportions accessing child benefits, maternity benefits, and state pensions
- Distribution in types of schools relative to areas of residence
- Participation in pre-school education
- Rates attaining secondary education certificates
- Rates participating in tertiary or higher-level education
- Participation rates of adult language training
- Rates of voting registration, and participation in local and national elections
- Degree of ethnic polarization of votes
- Proportions nominated as candidates and comparative election success rates
- Proportions of deputies in immigrant constituencies
- Participation rates in key institutions and organizations
- Proportions on boards or ruling bodies (e.g., trade unions, school boards, work councils)
- Rates of mortality, fertility, and demographic changes
- Proportions of immigrants affected by major illnesses as a proxy for healthcare access
- Birth rates
- Rates of inter-ethnic marriage as a proxy of social integration
- Rates of arrest, conviction, and acquittal
- Numbers of complaints of racial harassment and discrimination

Academic Indices

Academic institutions have yet another set of indices that tend to be very broad and use a mix of subjective and objective measures and indicators:

- The European University Institute uses composite indices that are tuned to different contexts depending on the availability of data. EUI includes measures of refugee participation in the “labour market, education and access to citizenship.”¹⁴
- The [Center for Study of Immigrant Integration](#) measures municipal offices’ capacity for integration based on ten indicators:
 1. Whether the mayor makes significant efforts toward improving immigrant integration

¹³ [Council of Europe 2000](#); see also [Batsaikhan, Darvas and Raposo 2018](#)

¹⁴ [Di Bartolomeo, Kalantaryan and Bonfanti 2015](#)

2. Whether the municipal office fosters relationships and positive interactions among receiving populations and immigrants
3. Whether the municipal office publicizes the beneficial impacts of immigrants on the local economy
4. Whether the municipal office develops and organizes services for immigrants such as translation and employment assistance
5. Whether the municipal office conducts activities to help other branches of government coordinate on immigration policy and programming
6. Whether the municipal office works with law enforcement to make policing more effective for migrant populations
7. Whether the municipal office attempts to communicate the message to all members of its constituency about the process and importance of migrant integration
8. Whether municipal offices promote civic engagement
9. Whether the importance of integration is stressed in communications with policymakers
10. Whether assurances are made at a regional level that migrant integration is an interest of the municipality

Measuring Economic Integration

Compared to other domains, academics and practitioners have developed well-established methods and indices for measuring economic integration. However, these measures still vary from organization to organization and from study to study:

- Early Chicago School measures of economic integration focused on six metrics: “(1) demographic characteristics, such as gender, age, ethnicity, educational attainment, and household composition; (2) flight-related characteristics, such as cause of flight, type of movement, and attitude toward displacement; (3) host-related characteristics, such as economic conditions, ethnic composition, and attitudes toward the refugees within the host society; (4) policy characteristics, including international, national, regional, and local policies and their implementation; (5) residency characteristics, including length of residence and secondary migration (movement within the host country); and (6) noneconomic aspects of adaptation, such as adaptation stresses and acculturation characteristics.”¹⁵
- Connor (2010) highlights six indicators of migrant populations to measure economic integration: levels of language ability, educational attainment, family support (typically measured as financial support from family members), mental health measures, physical health measures, and places of residence.¹⁶
- [Zetter and Ruaudel's 2016](#) survey of the 20 countries hosting 70% of the world's refugees used three indicators of economic integration: “the right to work and labor market access: refugee and employment law, policies and practices that facilitate or constrain the right to work: and mediating socioeconomic conditions.”
- The World Bank's “risks and reconstruction model” measures economic integration using quantified measures of landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, loss of access to common property resources, increased morbidity, and community disarticulation.¹⁷

Measuring Social Integration

The domain of social integration is the least defined, the most difficult to objectively measure, and has limited predictive power.¹⁸ However, researchers aiming to measure social integration might borrow from other bodies of literature for ideas. The psychosocial literature offers numerous ideas for methods to measure refugee social and cultural integration; for example, the Social Provisions Scale.¹⁹

Another example from the literature on wellbeing comes from [Steuer and Marks \(2008: 24\)](#) who subdivide wellbeing into three levels with three different measurements:

¹⁵ [Ott 2013](#)

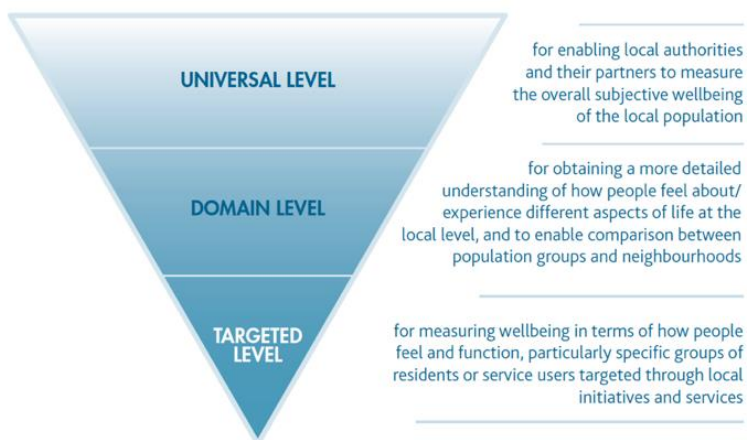
¹⁶ Connor 2010

¹⁷ [Cernea 1996](#)

¹⁸ David 2013: 148; Tang 2015; see as an example de Vroome et al. 2011

¹⁹ Chan et al. 2015. Other examples are available in David 2013: 146; Yoon et al. 2013; [Dryden-Peterson 2015](#); Montgomery 2008; Yoon et al. 2013

FIGURE 1: FRAMEWORK FOR MEASURING WELLBEING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL



20

These three levels can be organized into a matrix of both objective and subjective indicators:

	PERSONAL			SOCIAL			PLACE		
DOMAIN	Health & mental wellbeing	Material & financial wellbeing	Engaging activities & achievement	Family & relationships	Social support & engagement	Sense of belonging & cohesion	Quality of local area & environment	Safety & security	Access & opportunities
OBJECTIVE INDICATORS	All age all cause mortality rate (NI 120)	Working age people on out of work benefits (NI 152)	GCSE or equivalent qualifications (NI 75)	Proportion of children in poverty (NI 116)	Civic participation in local area (NI 3)	Population in transience (Local Indicator)	Level of air quality (NI 194)	Serious violent crime rate (NI 15)	Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living (NI 141)
	Adult participation in sport (NI 8)	Average earnings of employees in the area (NI 166)	Young people's involvement in positive activities (NI 110)	Under 18 conception rate (NI 112)	Participation in regular volunteering (NI 6)	Number of racially motivated incidents (Local Indicator)	Street & environmental cleanliness (NI 195)	People killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents (NI 47)	Number of new affordable homes (NI 155)
SUBJECTIVE INDICATORS	Self-reported measure of overall health & wellbeing (NI 119)	% people who feel they are coping on present income (NEW)	% people who feel they seldom have time to do things they really enjoy (NEW)	% people satisfied with their personal relationships (NEW)	% people who feel they have other people to turn to/discuss problems with (NEW)	% people who believe people from different backgrounds get on well together (NI 1)	Overall/general satisfaction with local area (NI 5)	Fear of crime during day and at night (Local indicator)	% people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality (NI 4)
	Self-report limiting long-term illness (Local indicator)	% people satisfied with present standard of living (NEW)	% people who feel unable to demonstrate competence in daily life (NEW)	Experiential measures of time spent with family (NEW)	% people satisfied with support received from others (NEW)	% people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood (NI 2)	% people satisfied with access to local green spaces (NEW)	Perceptions of anti-social behaviour (NI 17)	Fair treatment by local services (NI 140)

21

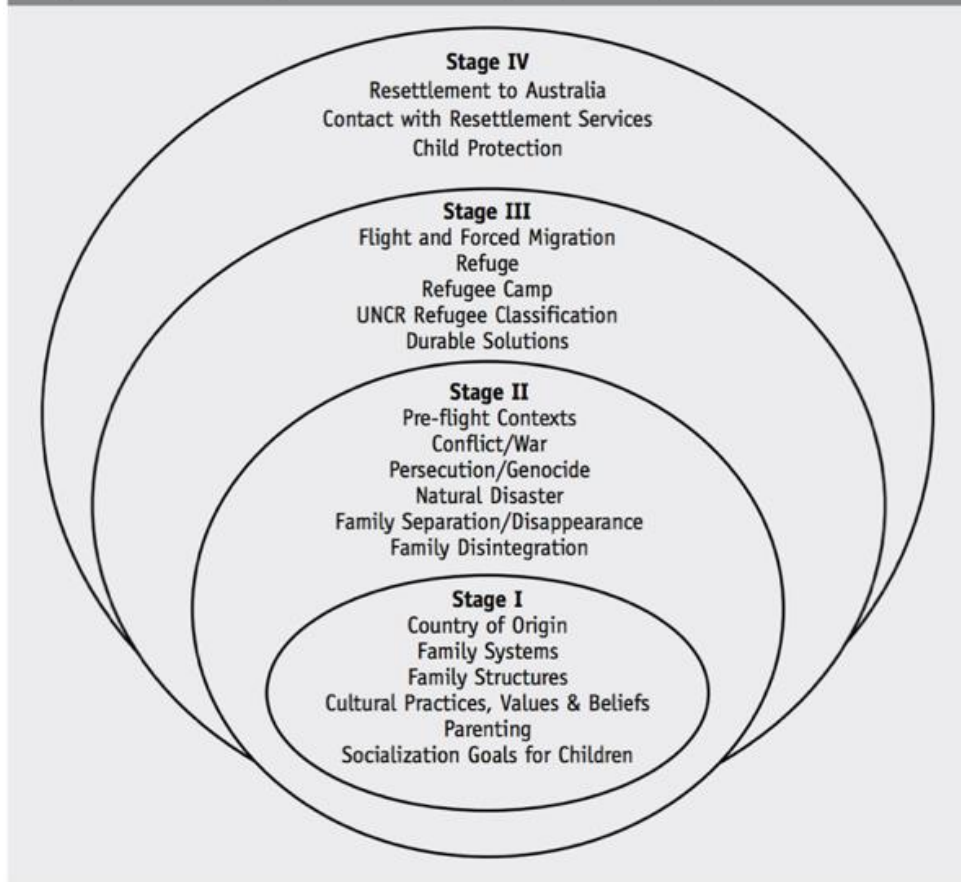
²⁰ [Steuer and Marks 2008: 36-37](#)

²¹ [Steuer and Marks 2008: 36-37](#)

The wellbeing literature also emphasizes the importance of pre-arrival measures in assessing social capacity to integrate²² because traumatic experiences²³ of refugees that occur before arrival in a host country will have negative consequences on capacity to integrate,²⁴ particularly among children,²⁵ with lasting effects for years.²⁶

[Williams'](#) ecology model (2010: 42) illustrates the many levels of experience that occur before arrival in a host country that nonetheless effect refugees' capacity to integrate, meaning that measures of capacity to integrate should be taken not only in destination countries, but also in countries of first asylum.²⁷ See figure below.

Figure 1: An ecological model of refugee parenting in pre-settlement



28

²² [Dryden-Peterson 2015](#); Montgomery 2008; [Varvin 1998](#)

²³ E.g., detention, persecution, torture, or death

²⁴ [BenEzer and Zetter 2014](#); July 2002: 7

²⁵ [Dryden-Peterson 2015](#)

²⁶ [Wilson, Bar-Anan and Gilbert 2009](#)

²⁷ [Fielden 2008](#)

²⁸ Williams 2010: 42