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Fewer jobs for skilled immigrants; Six out of 10 leave Canada within a year of arriving: federal study

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A new Statistics Canada study shows six out of 10 skilled immigrants leave Canada within a year of arriving.

Local settlement workers say it is another indication that newcomers cannot get jobs in their profession, even though the country is in need of skilled immigrants.

However, others, like University of Western Ontario economics professor Chris Robinson, say the exodus is related to the global market and where the better jobs are.

The study shows that immigration is not a permanent move for many business and skilled worker males between 25 and 45. Four in 10 left within 10 years of arriving. One in 10 later returned.

Morteza Jafarpour, executive director of Hamilton's Settlement and Integration Services Organization, says immigrants come to build a new life and create a better future for their children, but when they can get only menial or low wage jobs leading to poverty, they are starting to leave -- a trend, he adds, that is gaining momentum. It has happened with doctors and nurses he knows who left for Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to work, and it's happening to others.

"Many of them are professionals and are coming in the prime time of their lives. They are not going to waste their lives on dreams that won't materialize."

Many from volatile countries leave their families here to live safely, however, sending money back for support.

"It's not that families are left on social assistance," Jafarpour says. "Immigrants used to come to make money to send back home to support their families. Now it's the other way around."

Their landed immigrant status in Canada or even citizenship is coveted, however, because it provides them with a safe country if they have immigrated from less stable countries, says Luke Chan, a business and international affairs professor at McMaster.

"They want to make sure their kids have a stable environment to grow up in and to have a good education."

Robinson says the real story is that there is a lot of migration taking place for people with recognized qualifications.

"It's appearing the international market is more like the internal migration (of jobs)."

Jeffrey Reitz, professor of ethnicity and immigration studies at the University of Toronto, says "moving in and out of a country is part of what you'd expect under globalization."

He says the study's main message is that "we're competing in a global labour market and often we think of ourselves sitting on the mountain and picking and choosing who we let in ... that they (immigrants) are desperate to come here."

The study found U.S. and Hong Kong immigrants had the highest likelihood of leaving. Those from Europe and the Caribbean were half as likely to leave.

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