

Immigrant and Refugee Policies, Politics, and Spaces of Integration

Erika Young, Toronto Metropolitan University

Abstract

Climate change has become a considerable threat, globally. However, some countries are more susceptible to its effects than others. The increasing risk of human displacement will have a profound impact on millions of people. The UNHCR states that approximately 21.5 million people have been forcibly displaced by catastrophic weather events annually, since 2008. Experts predict that over the next decade, with the increase of catastrophic weather events, droughts, floods, and rising sea levels, 1.2 billion people could be displaced by 2050. Such displacement will not only push people out of their countries, but will also cause many to become displaced within. Although Canada is a global leader in accepting high numbers of refugees when the need presents itself, like most countries it does not have a clear category under their Immigration and Refugee Protection Act that pertains to those who are forced to flee from climate-related events. Moreover, scholars and practitioners continue to argue whether to refer to those displaced by climate events as “climate migrants” or “climate refugees”. This ongoing debate has challenged any attempts to establish policies to accommodate the group, as there is no legal framework that specifically protects “climate refugees”. Through comparative policy analysis, this paper examines how Canada could create effective policies to respond to a climate-induced refugee crisis. However, with its current lack of climate-specific policies, Canada will not be prepared for the anticipated influx of climate refugees unless the country establishes responsive policies.

Biography

Erika Young is a master's student at Toronto Metropolitan University in the Public Policy and Administration Program. She completed her Honours BA at Vancouver Island University with a major in Political Studies and a Minor in Psychology. While completing her BA, she developed an interest in improving the circumstances of those experiencing forced migration, specifically through a policy-based lens.