



**Laidlaw Scholars Undergraduate Leadership and Research Programme**

**Once Fractured, Twice Politicized: How Immigrant Women From War-Torn Regions Find  
Political Agency In Canada**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines how first-generation immigrant women from conflict-affected and war-torn areas acquire political agency after resettling in Canada. It investigates how political involvement and trust are dependent on previous experiences with political instability, violence, and institutional failure. The study uses a mixed-methods research design utilising both semi-structured interviews and Canadian Election Survey (CES) 2025 Data. Both methods show that prior political experiences have no distinguishable effect on engagement. While some participants were wary and mistrustful of Canada initially, others grew to value political rights more and were more eager to participate. Although barriers such as a lack of political awareness, a sense of isolation, and a lack of civic engagement persisted, participants typically reported greater trust in Canadian political institutions. As such, the study aims to explore how institutional experiences in Canada as well as historical experiences interact to shape political agency.

## **1. Introduction**

Canada is home to one of the largest immigrant populations in the world, with over 23% of its population comprising immigrants as measured by the national census conducted in 2021 (Government of Canada, 2024). In 2023 alone, Canada recorded 169,448 refugees, with a sizeable population from war-torn regions such as Ukraine and Syria (Government of Canada, 2024). Much of the existing literature on immigrant integration focuses on economic incorporation, social belonging, and access to public services. However, gaps exist in understanding their political integration. In itself, political integration is significant as it determines newcomer immigrants' participation in elections, the trust they hold in public institutions, and their identity as legitimate participants in Canadian politics.

Additionally, Political agency remains particularly pivotal when examining immigrants who have formerly lived through conflict, displacement, political repression, or state failure, as political attitudes are not necessarily formed only after arrival in the host country. Immigrants may enter Canada carrying earlier experiences with governments, elections, security institutions, political violence, and civic participation. For individuals whose previous encounters with political institutions involved corruption, repression, violence, or institutional collapse, participation may require renegotiating previously developed understandings of political trust, safety, and representation.

This study therefore aims to explore how first-generation immigrant women from war-torn regions find political agency in Canada. Political agency is defined as choices, actions, and strategies that individuals, alone or as part of a larger group, might take in different political spaces (Schulz & Kreft, 2022). For this study, I define political agency upon two criteria:

participation in elections (both municipal and federal) and the level of trust immigrants hold in their government.

From this broad inquiry, we also aim to study whether immigrant women from conflict-affected regions experience additional barriers to integration within the Canadian political system. Simultaneously, we wish to examine whether previous experiences with political violence or institutional failure generate persistent distrust or increase confidence in Canadian institutions through comparison with previous political systems. Finally, the research evaluates the role of Canadian institutions, including newcomer institutions and settlement organisations, in facilitating political knowledge and participation.

By addressing these, this study makes two primary contributions. First, it helps connect the political consequences of conflict with immigrant political integration. Second, it helps expand the understanding of political reintegration of conflict-affected women beyond national borders. Instead of treating migration as the beginning of political socialisation, the study examines how political attitudes evolve beyond previous experiences.

## **2. Literature Review**

Existing literature provides competing explanations of how conflict affects women's political participation. One body of scholarship suggests that conflict and political violence may reduce women's participation by making political environments more dangerous. Hadzic and Tavits (2019), drawing on the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, argue that women's political participation decreases in post-war settings while men's participation increases. They credit this divergence to the violence and insecurity associated with conflict, which makes the political arena appear inaccessible to women.

In contrast, other research argues that war can increase women's political engagement by disrupting established social and political roles. Particularly, Garcia-Ponce (2015) and Bakken and Buhaug (2021) suggest that conflict can increase women's political participation by pushing women into local and grassroots forms of political engagement. Another important strand of the literature examines the concept of political victimisation, particularly through exposure to violence and displacement. Conflict victimisation, especially displacement among women, is associated with higher levels of political participation and voting (Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs and the Joint Research Centre et al., 2023, p. 5). Similarly, war victimisation is associated with greater political participation among women directly exposed to violence. Research conducted in post-war Tigray by Desta, Gebremichael, and Hailu (2026) likewise finds that municipalities affected by conflict experience an increase in women's political candidacy. Punamäki et al. (1997) similarly find that Palestinians who personally survived aerial attacks were more likely to engage in political activism. These competing findings suggest that exposure to conflict cannot automatically be understood as either politically demobilising or politically empowering.

However, much of this literature is concentrated on studying women who remain within conflict-affected or post-conflict societies. Far less is known about what happens when women subsequently migrate into a different political system. Immigrants have to navigate the aftermath of conflict, learn a new institutional environment, and determine whether previous assumptions about politics continue to apply. For women who migrate to Canada, political agency may therefore emerge through an interaction between past political experiences and present institutional opportunities.

Existing literature on immigrant political integration provides a partial explanation. Literature highlights how immigrant women in Canada build political agency not just electorally but through relational dynamics in the form of social networks, advocacy, and eventual formal participation. Such political engagements are shaped by legal status, settlement stages, levels of education, and discrimination levels (Brettel 2020). This highlights that political agency for immigrants is moulded by both available resources and institutional barriers. Additional scholarship also highlights how pre-existing institutional exposure becomes pivotal in finding political agency, such as Aksoy et al. (2025), who highlighted how previous exposure to corrupt regimes leads to increased trust in host-country civic institutions.

In the Canadian context, political participation varies on mediums of political activity, with immigrant racialised women being weakly integrated in conventional political platforms (O'Neill, Gidengil, and Young 2012). This is furthered by intermediary access for immigrant women in the form of access to services and availability of political knowledge, which moulds their ability to enter voting or non-traditional politics (Gidengil and Stolle 2009).

A key gap within the literature thus remains in the form of the scholarly treatment of pre-existing security conditions through a monolithic lens. This has resulted in the underexploration of the role trauma plays within women immigrating from war-torn contexts and the influence of covert trauma, survival, and displacement within building political agency. This study aims to bridge this gap by examining how first-generation immigrant women from conflict-affected regions experience and exercise political agency in Canada. This study begins from the expectation that originating from a conflict-affected region may be associated with lower levels of political participation among first-generation immigrant women in Canada.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study uses a mixed-methods research design with individual semi-structured interviews with first-generation immigrant women from conflict-affected or war-torn regions living in Canada and quantitative analysis using Canadian Election Survey (CES) 2025 Data and UCDP conflict data.

#### **3.2 Quantitative Data and Variables**

This study uses the data from the 2025 Canadian Election Study (CES) as available publicly via Harvard Dataverse. The CES combines demographic information collected during the Campaign Period Survey (CPS) with reported electoral participation from the Post-Election Survey (PES). The CES was conducted as a two-wave panel, allowing demographic characteristics collected in the first wave to be connected to respondents' post-election behaviour. The analysis first restricted the CES data to respondents who completed the Post-Election Survey because the measure of actual 2025 electoral participation was collected in that wave.

From this dataset, the study uses several variables to construct the analytic sample. For exclusionary criteria, the study used `cps25_genderid` to identify respondents who self-identified as women. Second, immigrant status was operationalized using `cps25_bornin_canada`, which asks respondents whether they were born in Canada. Respondents who selected "No" were classified as first-generation immigrants. Third, citizenship was identified using `cps25_citizenship`. This distinction was necessary because the overall sample included both Canadian citizens and permanent residents; however, our study only looks for those participants

who are eligible to vote in Canadian federal elections. The analysis therefore restricted the electoral-participation sample to immigrant women who reported Canadian citizenship.

From these respondents, we studied `cps25_bornin_other`, which identifies their country of birth, and `cps25_imm_year`, which identifies the year of immigration. From this set, conflict countries were identified using UCDP Conflict data by matching conflict zones and years.

Lastly, electoral participation was measured using `pes25_turnout2025`. This was coded as a binary variable, with voted being coded as (1), "No," "I usually vote but didn't this time," "I thought about voting but didn't," or "I wasn't registered to vote" coded as non-voters (2). Responses indicating that the respondent was not eligible to vote, did not know or remember, or preferred not to answer were excluded from the calculation because they did not provide a clear comparable measure of eligible voting behaviour. The CES codebook explicitly distinguishes these response categories.

### **3.3 Qualitative Methods**

For the qualitative analysis, semi-structured interviews were chosen as they allow the participants to talk about their experiences in detail, while also giving the researcher space to identify new themes and perspectives that arise through follow-up questions. This design enables this study to investigate how political trust, distrust, and participation have been experienced by participants in the wake of what they have endured before and on the migration journey.

The study's target population was first-generation immigrant women residing in Canada who had come from conflict-affected or war-torn regions. This focus was selected for the study because the research is specifically interested in how prior exposure to conflict and displacement influences and alters political trust, participation, and agency after resettlement. A total of seven participants took part in individual semi-structured interviews. All seven had met the study's

eligibility criteria, which included migrating to Canada from war-torn or conflict-affected regions (as measured by UCDP conflict data), consenting to participate in the interviews and the research study, identifying as a woman, being 18 years of age or older, currently residing in Canada, and having held citizenship status for at least one federal election cycle. This last criterion was included because voting eligibility is central to how the study defines political agency.

Participants were recruited through a combination of channels. Some were identified through the primary researcher's personal and academic networks. Others were reached through a local newcomer settlement organisation. In addition, participants were recruited through Facebook groups aimed at immigrant and newcomer communities, which helped reach women who may not have been connected to the university or the partner organisation directly.

All participants were asked the same thematic questions about immigration status, reasons for immigrating, the political scenario in their parent country, trust and any changes in trust in the Canadian political system, first introduction to the Canadian political system, barriers (both institutional and personal) to participating, and any recommendations for newcomers or settlement organisations.

### **3.4 Qualitative Coding and Thematic Analysis**

A hybrid thematic analysis approach was used for analysing interview data. The initial codebook was created deductively, based on the research focus of the study and relevant literature on political trust, participation and immigrant political incorporation. To ensure that the analysis was responsive to what the participants were saying, additional inductive codes were

developed when participants raised ideas or concerns that did not fit into this original framework of codes.

The transcripts were systematically coded, with passages relevant to the codes selected being given one or more codes. Codes were subsequently compared against each other in interviews to uncover commonalities, distinctions, and inconsistencies. These codes were then aggregated into larger themes. A theme was only included if it expressed a pattern, meaning that is relevant to the research questions and could be clearly substantiated by evidence in the transcripts.

Interviews were also compared with one another to identify recurring themes, differences in how participants experienced similar issues, and broader points of agreement or disagreement across the sample. Where evidence emerged that ran against the dominant patterns identified in the data, this evidence was deliberately retained rather than set aside. Participants whose accounts differed from the majority were treated as analytically important, since excluding them would risk presenting political agency as more uniform across participants than it actually was.

Representative quotations are used throughout the findings to illustrate and support the themes identified. Quotations are attributed using anonymised participant identifiers and alongside their corresponding transcript locations, where applicable. Quotations are reproduced accurately and have not been altered in ways that would change their meaning.

#### **4. Quantitative Analysis**

From the first set of variables collected, our sample data set was narrowed to first-generation immigrant women who answered that they were eligible to vote in the most recent elections. This left us with the following data:

| <b>Stage</b>                                                                                           | <b>Respondents</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| CES 2025 Post-Election respondents                                                                     | 14,075             |
| Women                                                                                                  | 7206               |
| Women born outside Canada                                                                              | 1300               |
| Immigrant women coded as Canadian citizens                                                             | 1058               |
| Citizen immigrant women with a usable turnout response                                                 | 1048               |
| Reported voting in the most recent election                                                            | 960                |
| Reported not voting                                                                                    | 88                 |
| Citizen immigrant women, with a usable turnout response, who came from conflict-affected areas         | 487                |
| Citizen immigrant women, with a usable turnout response, who did not come from conflict-affected areas | 949                |

**Figure 1.0**

#### **4.1 Electoral Participation and Conflict-Affected Origins**

Figure 1.0 allows us to calculate an unweighted reported turnout rate of 91.6 percent among the first-generation immigrant women included in the analytic sample. Conversely, 8.4 percent of the usable sample reported not voting.

The study then calculated electoral participation according to participants' country-of-origin and migration year conflict classification. Respondents from conflict-affected areas were classified as 1, while respondents from non-conflict-affected areas were classified as 0. The classification was not made broadly across countries; rather, each participant's year of immigration and country-of-origin was compared with the UCDP data.

Across the full sample, not every respondent participated in the post-election survey or provided a usable turnout response; therefore, the final comparison was based on 333 conflict-classified women and 715 non-conflict-classified women. Among the 333 conflict-classified women, 302 reported voting and 31 reported not voting, producing a turnout rate of 90.7 percent. Among the 715 women classified as non-conflict-affected, 658 reported voting and 57 reported not voting, corresponding to a turnout rate of 92.0 percent.

The findings were contrary to previous expectations from the literature. Exposure to a conflict-affected political environment produced neither substantially greater nor lower electoral participation. Reported turnout was similar across both groups, with immigrant women from conflict regions reporting only 1.3 percentage points lower than those from non-conflict regions.

The study further conducted a Pearson chi-square test to assess whether the observed difference between the groups was statistically significant. The association between conflict

classification and reported turnout was not statistically significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.53$ ,  $p = .467$ . There is no evidence that conflict-origin classification was associated with whether first-generation immigrant women reported voting in the 2025 federal election.

## **4.2 Interpretation of the Quantitative Pattern**

Conclusively, the principal findings do not suggest a substantial increase or decrease in participation. Instead, the similar turnout rates across both groups suggest that conflict-affected origin alone does not distinguish electoral participation within this CES sample.

## **5. Qualitative Findings**

The interviews revealed that prior experiences of conflict did not shape political agency in a unipolar direction. The study does not reveal a singular idea about either political disengagement or political mobilisation across all participants. Differing experiences of political failure produce differing influences of political participation via several different pathways. While some participants described carrying caution and distrust into their political lives in Canada, others explained that their appreciation for political rights and participation increased.

The study explored three major themes that emerged from the interviews: (1) political experiences are carried across borders but are transformed through experience in Canada; (2) political participation is widely valued, although opportunities for participation and feelings of political inclusion remain uneven; (3) newcomer and settlement services provide important support but are perceived as offering insufficient political and civic orientation. Across these three themes, there is still nuance that results in no uniform effect being observed. The study

showcases that similar conflict exposure can result in both caution and increased political activity.

### **5.1 Political experiences are carried across borders but are transformed through experience in Canada**

The study showcased that there is a continued influence of pre-migration political environments. Participants described the political situation in their country of origin as associated with danger, instability, or consequences for openly expressing political opinions. They further shared these experiences as carrying forward in their political lives in Canada.

For example, Participant 2 described remaining hesitant:

*“It initially hindered me and made me isolate myself from political participation. Although I had some knowledge of the political setting, I held myself back and studied the situation before I engaged. My previous experience was an initial hindrance.”*

*(INT02, [00:05:40])*

Similarly, Participant 03 made a clear comparison between elections in their home country and in Canada:

*“My previous experience made me think that political situations might be the same everywhere. I had to ask whether that was actually true. I looked at whether it was worthwhile to participate, and whether there were problems or violence. My previous experience made me generalize that every political system was the same.”*

*(INT03, [00:05:48])*

The interviews showcase that participants could cognitively recognise that Canadian institutions may operate differently. However, previous political caution was not automatically eradicated by that recognition.

However, this pattern was not consistent. Some participants described previous exposure to political instability as increasing their willingness to participate in Canada:

*“Yes, I would say they (previous experiences) made me more willing. My previous experiences made me value political participation even more. Seeing the challenges in Nigeria encouraged me to become more engaged in Canada because I believe participation can strengthen democracy and bring positive change.”*

*(INT07, [00:08:35])*

This represents an important divergence. The participant did not share that their previous experience was a hindrance. The interviews, therefore, provide little support for interpreting conflict exposure as unipolarly affecting political integration.

These findings are therefore consistent with the competing expectations within the existing literature. Hadzic and Tavits (2019) emphasise the potentially demobilising consequences of violent political environments for women, whereas Garcia-Ponce (2017) and Bakken and Buhaug (2021) identify pathways through which conflict can produce greater political mobilisation. The interview evidence suggests that both mechanisms may coexist.

The second finding from this theme is that political trust was not seen as an objective idea or an abstract judgement. Rather, the participants frequently evaluated Canadian institutions in comparison to the institutions in their country of origin. Participants described Canadian

elections, public institutions, or political representatives as more reliable because of what they had previously experienced.

Participant 01, for example, explained:

*“Yes, there is a difference. In Canada, the voting process feels more organized, transparent, and peaceful. In Nigeria, elections can be more tense because of security concerns and logistical challenges. Overall, I feel more confident in the electoral process here.”*

*(INT01, [00:07:22])*

Participant 04 similarly described:

*“My previous experience played a huge part because that preconception - that assumption about political activities that I had previously - influenced me and made me feel that every political system was like that and could not improve. That actually played a part at first.*

*But, as I stated, that idea later changed.”*

*(INT04,[00:05:58])*

Interviews suggested that prior exposure to instability or weak political institutions did not automatically produce generalised distrust and political apathy. Instead, participants explained how their pre-immigration experiences often served as a reference point against which Canadian institutions were evaluated. Most participants claimed to have immigrated with lower expectations for the Canadian system due to past experiences. However, the same participants concluded that their trust in Canadian institutions substantially increased due to their new exposure to the Canadian system.

Participants identified several institutional experiences that contributed to this changing trust. These included perceptions of stronger accountability, greater citizen involvement, access to justice, institutional responsiveness, and public safety. One participant explained that her trust has substantially increased as she has observed that the government does not favour the wealthy, and instead exercises the law equally for all individuals. Another explained that her trust increased because she observed government institutions engaging citizens in decision-making and reconsidering policies that were not well received. This shows that instead of having a linear relationship with political agency in Canada, immigrants often renegotiate their trust as a combination of both their previous experiences from the host country and new exposure in the migrant country.

Importantly, increasing trust did not mean that participants regarded Canadian institutions as perfect. Participants identified limitations while maintaining that the institutions in Canada were most resourceful. One participant said institutions were “trying” but “weren’t at their best.” Another described that institutions did not “totally” understand the newcomer experience, despite providing services that made settlement easier. Participants also expressed concerns that political leaders did not always understand the specific needs of immigrant women, particularly those from conflict-affected areas.

## **5.2 Political participation is widely valued, although opportunities for participation and feelings of political inclusion remain uneven**

Although all participants shared a sense of political participation being valuable, not all participants shared feeling able to participate, due to multiple factors. This raises important questions about political agency as more than just trust in the system, but rather a continuous dynamic relationship in which you choose to participate despite the amount of trust you hold.

Political participation was seen as widely valued amongst the sample group. Despite their previous experiences, participants shared feelings that voting is an important civic responsibility and a civil right. Participants often saw political engagement as a right, responsibility, source of voice, or means of producing change.

For example, Participant 4 shared:

*“I participated in the election activities. I also cast my vote because that is what was expected of every citizen who had met the eligibility requirements.”*

*(INT04, 00:05:07)*

However, these feelings did not always translate into political action, particularly due to uneven political inclusion resources. Participants shared feeling intimidated by the political process due to their immigrant background and lack of knowledge of the Canadian political system. For example, Participant 1 shared:

*“Yes, I have felt discouraged from participating because of my background and where I came from. I feel that I am not a born-and-bred citizen of Canada and that preference may be given to people who are.”*

*(INT01, 00:10:03)*

Conclusively, these responses meant that political belonging often differs from formal political rights. While participants had the right to engage politically and had trust in the system, it did not always translate into political actions. Participants shared feeling discouraged due to their race and background, while some shared that this later changed. This is particularly useful because it shows that feelings of exclusion can change over time rather than being permanent.

Simultaneously, participants also shared that while they have trust in the Canadian political system, the system is not perfect. When asked about whether they felt the Canadian political system and Canadian political leaders understood the needs of immigrant women, most participants shared that there was definitely room for improvement. Particularly, Participant 5 shared:

“They are not aware of all the needs; they are limited to what they know. I think we should have immigrant women in Parliament.”

*(INT05, 00:06:14)*

### **5.3 Newcomer and settlement services provide important support but are perceived as offering insufficient political and civic orientation**

During the study, participants were asked how they first learned about the Canadian political system. Participants shared accessing online resources, talking to friends and family,, and receiving information from the newcomer centers. Participants did not usually describe settlement organizations as ineffective. Rather, they distinguished between the support offered for practical settlement needs and the more limited guidance available on political participation, civic rights, and the Canadian political system. However, Participant 7, when asked about whether any political resources were shared with them when they moved, answered that “no one explained anything” to them or shared any resources *(INT07, 00:05:26)*.

While not all participants echoed this sentiment, most participants provided that the information given to them by the newcomer centres was not enough. Similarly, another participant described newcomer centres as “doing a great job,” but added that “there is room for them to do more” *(INT04, 00:07:43)*. This meant that additional institutional barriers, such as a lack of political integration services, prevent immigrants from participating politically.

Participants also offered practical recommendations for improving civic orientation. These included providing resources, via workshops, seminars, pamphlets and booklets, about the political system (i.e. voting procedures), women's rights, security, and healthcare. For example, participant 7 shared:

*“They should provide more workshops on civic engagement, explain the voting process in simple terms, and create more opportunities for women to connect with mentors and community leaders.*

*That would help newcomers feel more confident participating in civic life.”*

*(INT07, 00:20:03)*

Combined, these quotations indicate that settlement and newcomer organizations are significant in the integration process, but their role remains underdeveloped. Participants value the support they received from these organisations, but often felt like it was not enough. Consequently, we find that political participation is not just dependent on individual willingness but also on whether newcomers are given clear and accessible information about their rights, political institutions, and avenues for participation.

## **6. Conclusion**

### **6.1 Methodological Limitations**

The study has several limitations concerning both its quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component enabled the researchers to collect responses in a structured and consistent manner and identify patterns across participants. However, due to the small sample size, it is not representative of the broader population. Additionally, the recruitment form being digital creates a digital-access bias because people with limited access to the internet or appropriate devices could have been less likely to participate.

The qualitative findings are subject to several limitations. Since the interviews relied on participants' self-reported experiences, their responses may have been influenced by personal interpretation, memory, or their willingness to discuss the subject openly. A particularly important limitation is that individuals who were most directly or severely affected by the issue may have been less likely to volunteer for the study in the first place, meaning that their experiences could be underrepresented in the interview data. The participants who agreed to take part may have been more comfortable discussing the subject or more willing to engage with the research process, creating a potential self-selection bias. In addition, participants may have withheld certain information because of the sensitivity of the topic. Further, the research is impacted by the Hawthorne effect, i.e., participants might have chosen or given socially desirable responses rather than the ones that reflect their actual views. The depth of responses may also have varied between participants depending on their comfort, communication style, and willingness to share personal experiences.

Finally, interpreting detailed interview responses requires the researcher to identify and organize themes, which can introduce an element of researcher subjectivity. Therefore, while the individual interviews provide valuable depth and context to the quantitative findings, they should be understood as representing the experiences of the participants who were willing and able to take part rather than necessarily capturing the experiences of everyone affected by the issue.

Similarly, the quantitative component of the research is subject to limitations, particularly in relation to its comparison with UCDP data. The CES does not capture the specific geographic location from which respondents immigrated; instead, it identifies their country of origin. This presents a potential limitation because conflict is not necessarily experienced uniformly across an

entire country. In some cases, conflict may be concentrated within particular regions, while other areas remain relatively unaffected.

Additionally, there may be non-random differences between the conflict-affected and non-conflict groups. Respondents in the two groups may differ in characteristics such as age, education, income, length of residence in Canada, or citizenship history, all of which may independently influence electoral participation. As a result, any observed difference in turnout cannot necessarily be attributed to conflict exposure alone.

Finally, the analysis is unweighted and therefore reflects the characteristics of the CES respondents included in the analytic sample rather than providing a fully population-representative estimate of first-generation immigrant women in Canada. The CES notes that survey weights are required when estimates are intended to represent the broader Canadian population. Accordingly, the results should be interpreted as descriptive findings from the CES sample rather than as precise estimates of turnout among all immigrant women in Canada.

Taken together, these limitations mean that the findings should be interpreted within the context of the study's sample, data-collection methods, and reliance on self-reported information. The combination of the quantitative research and qualitative research provides a useful balance between measurable responses and detailed participant perspectives, but neither component alone provides a complete representation of the wider population. Issues of sample representativeness, self-selection, digital access, response bias, question interpretation, limited qualitative participation, the influence of the meeting environment, and researcher interpretation should be considered when drawing conclusions from the findings.

## 6.2 Conclusion

The study explored how experiences of conflict and political instability shape immigrant women's political agency in Canada. Overall, both the quantitative and qualitative findings suggest that there is no uniform way that previous experiences interact with exploring a new political environment. Conflict experiences may make immigrant women both more willing to participate, while making some more hesitant and cautious of the political system. What seems to matter most is how these past experiences interact with what women encounter after arriving in Canada.

This finding is also echoed through the quantitative findings, which show 90.7% of women classified as coming from conflict-affected contexts reported voting in the 2025 federal election, compared with 92.0% of women in the non-conflict group. The differences observed across both groups were small and not statistically significant. Combined with similar findings from the qualitative interviews, this study shows that political agency is not fixed, but rather a dynamic process that is shaped by what immigrant women experienced before migration, what they encounter after migration, and whether they are given meaningful opportunities to participate.

While this study cannot establish that conflict directly causes particular forms of political behaviour, it does show why immigrant women's political integration cannot be understood through voting rates alone. Their experiences of trust, belonging, political learning, and access to institutions are equally important. Providing clearer civic education, stronger political orientation, and more opportunities for immigrant women to participate could therefore help make political inclusion a more meaningful part of the settlement process in Canada.

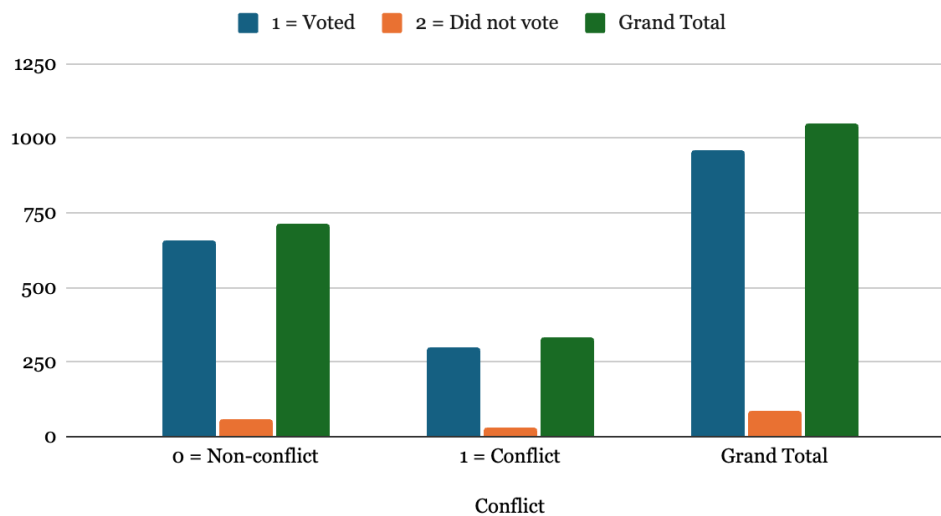
## Appendix

**Figure 1.1:**

| Origin classification | Voted      | Did not vote | Total usable | Reported turnout |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|
| Conflict-affected     | 302        | 31           | 333          | 90.7%            |
| Non-conflict-affected | 658        | 57           | 715          | 92.0%            |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>960</b> | <b>88</b>    | <b>1,048</b> | <b>91.6%</b>     |

**Figure 1.2:**

1 = Voted, 2 = Did not vote and Grand Total



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