

SHIFTING HORIZONS: SOCIOECONOMIC ADAPTATION AND FAMILY RECONFIGURATION AMONG SYRIAN AND IRAQI REFUGEES IN IRELAND

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Background: Forced displacement and resettlement profoundly reshape the socioeconomic lives of refugee families. For Syrian and Iraqi households arriving in Ireland, the encounter with new institutional systems, welfare structures, and cultural expectations generates both challenges and opportunities. Understanding how families navigate these transitions is essential for interpreting broader population-level dynamics under conditions of forced mobility.

Objective: This study aims to examine how resettlement in Ireland transforms the socioeconomic organisation, kinship roles, and everyday practices of Syrian and Iraqi refugee families. It explores how displacement, asylum processes, and integration policies intersect with family life, how households negotiate the tensions between continuity and change.

Subjects and methods: The study uses a qualitative, anthropological approach to examine the experiences of Syrian and Iraqi refugee families in Ireland. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, participant observation, home visits, and autoethnographic reflection, it explores how families navigate resettlement, daily challenges, support services, and adaptation processes within the Irish context.

Results: Findings indicate that resettlement produces both constraints and new forms of agency. Gendered divisions of labour shift as women increasingly enter education and employment, while men navigate altered social positions due to labour-market barriers and linguistic dependency. Intergenerational roles are reconfigured as children act as cultural and linguistic brokers, mediating interactions with schools, healthcare, and welfare systems. Structural factors – such as housing precarity, bureaucratic regimes, and limited employment opportunities – shape daily life, yet families respond with context-specific strategies that maintain cultural coherence, dignity, and reciprocity.

Conclusions: Syrian and Iraqi refugee families in Ireland are not passive recipients of integration frameworks but active agents who creatively negotiate new socioeconomic realities. Their adaptive practices illuminate how displacement reconfigures family life and contributes to wider anthropological understandings of resilience, population dynamics, and the moral economies of care in contexts of forced migration.

Keywords: Forced migration; Socioeconomic adaptation; Family reconfiguration; Gender and generational dynamics; Refugee integration (Ireland).

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