

**Leisure as Pathway to Well-Being and Belonging among Iranian
Immigrant Women, 30-55 years of age, in Ottawa, Canada**

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Statement on the Use of Artificial Intelligence

During the preparation of this dissertation, I used AI-assisted tools, including Claude (Anthropic) and ChatGPT (OpenAI), to support language editing, paraphrasing, structural revision, and the improvement of paragraph-level fluency across drafts. These tools were used strictly for editorial purposes and did not contribute to the conceptual development, analysis, or interpretation of the research. All AI-assisted text was critically reviewed, revised, and verified by me against original sources, and integrated into the dissertation in my own academic voice. I retain full responsibility for the integrity and content of this work, and any errors or omissions are entirely my own.

Abstract

This dissertation examines leisure as pathway for well-being, social connection, and belonging among Iranian newcomer immigrant women aged 30 to 55 in Ottawa, Canada. In doing so, this study addresses a gap in the literature and praxis on newcomers and settlement services by exploring how a group of Iranian newcomer women aged 30-55 understand and experience leisure during migration and settlement; what intersecting structural, gendered, and cultural factors constrain or enable their participation; the role a settlement service community-based organization plays in mediating leisure access; and how leisure contributes to their well-being, identity, and belonging.

This manuscript-based dissertation produced three studies in collaboration with a local settlement service organization in Ottawa serving Farsi-speaking newcomers. The three distinct but interconnected studies utilized a mixed methods approach including surveys, facilitation of in-person leisure activities, post-activity evaluations, follow-up feedback sessions and participant observation. The first paper examined leisure preferences and structural access conditions among Farsi-speaking immigrant women (n=40) through a bilingual Farsi-English leisure interest survey. The second study co-designed and facilitated three community-based leisure activities: a group walk along the Rideau Canal; a Classical Persian dance workshop; and a visit to the National Gallery of Canada. Data was collected from post-activity evaluations (n=32), participant observation, and follow-up feedback sessions to explore participants' perceptions on leisure and well-being, social connection, and belonging. The third study examined how a settlement organization can play a role in mediating newcomer women's access to leisure. Grounded in an intersectional feminist theoretical framework and a community-based participatory research methodology, we demonstrate that leisure is not peripheral to immigrant settlement but a socially-

embedded dimension of everyday life through which women negotiate identity, care, connection, and belonging. Concluding reflections emphasize the importance of participant-informed and community-supported approaches to inclusive leisure programming for newcomers.

Keywords: Leisure, Iranian immigrant women; Ottawa; Canada; newcomer; resettlement; working women; well-being; belonging; settlement services; community-based participatory research; intersectionality theory.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2021, more than 8.3 million people, or 23.0% of the population in Canada, were or had ever been a landed immigrant or permanent resident (Statistics Canada, 2022c). At the local level, the 2021 Canadian Census reported that 259,215 immigrants lived in Ottawa, Canada, representing 25.9% of the city's population, including 47,415 recent immigrants who arrived between 2016 and 2021 (Government of Canada, 2022a). Within the city of Ottawa, Iranians represent a small and geographically dispersed community: approximately 6,055 people of Iranian origin, accounting for roughly 0.6% of the city's total population and less than 3% of Canada's Iranian-origin population of approximately 200,460 nationally (Government of Canada, 2022b; Statistics Canada, 2022a). Ottawa's Iranian community is smaller and more professionally concentrated than those in Toronto (88,915 people), Vancouver (45,815), and Montreal (23,705), which may contribute to a relative scarcity of women-centered community networks and culturally specific organizing spaces.

Leisure and community recreation is often considered as secondary to the other areas of focus in resettlement services. This framing understates the extent to which leisure can contribute to physical activity, emotional restoration, identity continuity, social connection, and participation in community life (Caldwell, 2005; Iwasaki, 2007; Petty & Trussell, 2021). As Caldwell (2005) argues, leisure can function as a therapeutic and health-promoting context through which people prevent stress, cope with daily pressures, and sustain well-being. In multicultural contexts, it can also provide opportunities to construct personal and cultural meanings that support resilience, quality of life, and social participation over time (Iwasaki, 2007).

This dissertation is situated within a broader SSHRC-funded community-campus project developed in partnership with PAND Settlement Services and university-based collaborators to

co-develop inclusive leisure opportunities for Farsi-speaking immigrant women in Ottawa. This partnership emerged from recognition that leisure is rarely centered within newcomer settlement services, even though it may play an important role in supporting self-care, social inclusion, and community connection. The project identified gaps in age-responsive leisure programming across the lifespan, particularly within settlement contexts where women's needs differ according to life stage, caregiving roles, work responsibilities, and social support availability. The present dissertation project builds on that broader foundation by focusing specifically on Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55, a group whose experiences of leisure are shaped by the cumulative pressures of paid employment, domestic labour, caregiving, and migration-related adjustment. By turning attention to this life stage, the study addresses an important gap in the literature and in practice: the relative lack of research on how leisure is negotiated by immigrant women who are neither framed primarily through older-age isolation nor free from the dense responsibilities of midlife. This focus allows the dissertation to examine how leisure is constrained, valued, and made possible for women whose everyday lives are characterized by multiple and overlapping roles (O'Connor et al., 2024).

Migration and settlement scholarship has moved substantially toward relational, multidirectional, and socio-spatial understandings of settlement and belonging, and away from normative models that position migrants as solely responsible for adapting to a presumed host society and that evaluate settlement largely through formal indicators such as employment, education, and social participation (Fortes, 2025; Frensch & Akesson, 2025; Lubit, 2025; Murphy & Vieten, 2025; Schinkel, 2018). This dissertation sits within that shift. While the community and relational dimensions of settlement are now well established in the literature, leisure itself has

received less sustained attention, as has the informal work settlement organizations do in mediating access to it (Charles-Rodriguez & Larouche, 2025; Hassanli et al., 2026; Salami et al., 2019).

Leisure is broadly understood across three interconnected dimensions: as discretionary time relatively free from obligation, as a state of mind characterized by perceived freedom of choice and intrinsic motivation, and as activity undertaken for its own intrinsic reward (Stodolska et al., 2024). In practice, leisure encompasses a wide range of forms, including movement-based activities such as walking, dance, and yoga; competitive and physical pursuits; artistic and creative expression; social gathering; cognitive and reflective practices; and cultural participation (Caldwell, 2005; Henderson & Gibson, 2013). What unites these diverse forms is not the activity itself but the experience of choice, meaning, and engagement that accompanies it. Leisure is not experienced uniformly across cultures or life stages: for some, it is closely tied to personal recreation and self-development; for others, it is embedded in family sociability, cultural continuity, spirituality, or community participation (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009; Stodolska et al., 2024). In this context, leisure may function simultaneously as recreation, restoration, social connection, cultural continuity, exploration of new environments, and preservation of valued aspects of self. This three-dimensional definition is the working definition used throughout the empirical chapters. Survey and evaluation items were phrased in everyday terms, asking about preferred activities, how participants would like to spend their time, scheduling and availability, and interests across several activity categories. Activities were treated as leisure where they were relatively free from obligation, chosen rather than required, and valued for their own sake.

In migration and settlement contexts, Iranian immigrant women's leisure cannot be understood apart from their migration experiences, gendered expectations, family responsibilities, and the practical conditions of everyday settlement life. Leisure therefore becomes analytically

important because it is both an arena in which the social dimensions of settlement are enacted and a domain where inequalities are reproduced through unequal access to time, money, transportation, language, culturally safe spaces, and institutional support (Smith et al., 2019). Recent Canadian scholarship increasingly shows that access to leisure, sport, and physical activity is shaped by broader structural and institutional conditions rather than by individual preference alone. Studies focused on immigrant and equity-denied populations highlight how participation is influenced by intersecting constraints such as socioeconomic inequality, cost, transportation, language, cultural accessibility, time scarcity, and the institutional design of programs and spaces (Gagliardi et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2025; Tossutti, 2023; Zagrebina, 2026). At the same time, community recreation and sport initiatives can play an important role in supporting newcomer inclusion, community engagement, and social connection when they are intentionally designed to address such structural conditions (Barrick et al., 2021; Rich et al., 2015). Research on recreation and settlement has likewise shown that supportive community programming can enhance familiarity with local environments, reduce isolation, and create opportunities for informal network-building and participation in public life (Campbell et al., 2016; Lauckner et al., 2022; Rich et al., 2015).

Leisure scholarship theorizes these limits through the concept of leisure constraints, distinguishing structural constraints such as time, cost, transportation, and the organization of programming; interpersonal constraints arising from relationships and social obligations, including caregiving and the availability of companions; and intrapersonal constraints such as internalized expectations, confidence, and beliefs about whether leisure is appropriate or deserved (Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Jackson & Henderson, 1995). Constraints are not fixed obstacles that prevent participation outright. They may ease, intensify, or recede over time, and women negotiate them by drawing on facilitators such as flexible scheduling, affordable options nearby, trusted

information, and the support of family or peers, so that participation is often adapted or made partial rather than abandoned. Reading constraints alongside facilitators therefore gives a fuller account than either alone. Research increasingly demonstrates that leisure participation is structured by more than motivation or interest. It is shaped by time poverty, caregiving responsibilities, paid work schedules, financial constraint, transportation dependence, language barriers, uncertainty about unfamiliar systems, and the cultural legibility of available opportunities (Barrick et al., 2021; Gagliardi et al., 2022; Tossutti, 2023). For immigrant women, these conditions often intersect with migration-related disruption, weakened support networks, labour-market precarity, and the practical work of navigating unfamiliar social and institutional environments (Lim et al., 2022; Stick et al., 2024). A consistent finding across scholarship on migration and settlement is that women's settlement trajectories are shaped by gendered social roles and expectations that travel across borders but are also reconfigured in the receiving context. In many cases, gendered responsibilities intensify in the early settlement period because women become central to the practical organization of family life under conditions of unfamiliar systems while simultaneously navigating language acquisition and, often, labour-market precarity (Lim et al., 2022).

Caregiving in migration contexts also takes forms that differ from those described in the wider literature on midlife care. In non-immigrant populations, midlife caregiving is frequently discussed through the idea of a sandwich generation, in which adults support children and ageing parents within the same household or city. For the women in this study, the extended family members who would ordinarily share caregiving remained in Iran, so co-resident upward caregiving did not operate in the same way. What appeared instead was care carried across distance: sustained worry about family abroad, emotional labour, and an ongoing sense of

responsibility toward people who could not be reached in person. In this dissertation, we examine this transnational dimension through the concept of transnational social fields (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). Leisure may therefore become both more significant and more difficult to access: more significant because it can offer relief, continuity, community, and embodied expression in the midst of settlement demands; more difficult because the conditions that make participation possible are unevenly distributed. Studies of immigrant women in Canada further suggest that leisure may support emotional well-being, social inclusion, and recovery from migration-related stress, while also being constrained by broader gendered expectations, settlement pressures, and unequal access to supportive environments (Rezazadeh & Hoover, 2018; Shishehgar et al., 2015; Suto, 2013).

Research on migrant well-being in smaller Canadian cities further shows that well-being is shaped by individual adaptation and access to socially meaningful places and infrastructures that support interaction, familiarity, and belonging (Zhuang & Lok, 2023). Petty and Trussell (2021) introduced and developed the concept of leisure self-care to describe leisure not simply as recreation but as a practice through which women seek restoration, self-compassion, and well-being. Their work shows that time dedicated to self-care is persistently constrained by competing demands including motherhood, caregiving, paid work, and household responsibilities, making it difficult for women to claim leisure as a legitimate and sustainable part of everyday life. Within migration contexts, women's needs for leisure and self-care may also be negotiated through racialized and migration-specific social worlds in which leisure and public spaces may or may not feel welcoming, inclusive, and familiar (Özgider & Koch, 2026).

Research advances our understanding of the multiple responsibilities a woman aged 30 to 55 may be balancing at this life stage, including remunerated full-time work, unpaid domestic

labour, caregiving, and the practical demands of settlement, all of which can reduce the time and energy available for leisure. Scholarship on women and leisure has long documented how the combination of paid work and unpaid domestic and caregiving responsibilities creates compounding demands on women's time that leave little room for discretionary activity (Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Henderson & Shaw, 2006; Petty & Trussell, 2021). For immigrant women, these pressures are further intensified by settlement demands and the loss of extended family care infrastructure that women in their countries of origin could typically rely upon (Lim et al., 2022; O'Connor et al., 2024). Their leisure is therefore not simply limited by preference or availability but constrained by competing obligations that may leave little discretionary time and often render leisure difficult to plan, justify, or sustain. Focusing on this age group allows the dissertation to gain insight on the role of leisure at a stage of life where gendered responsibility, migration, and structural constraints converge with particular intensity.

Given that Iranians represent approximately 6,055 people in Ottawa, accounting for roughly 0.6% of the city's total population (Government of Canada, 2022b; Statistics Canada, 2022a), there is little research on the newcomer Iranian experience in Ottawa, particularly for women aged 30 to 55. In large Canadian and other cities in the diaspora, researchers demonstrate that Iranian women's leisure is often negotiated through gendered expectations around family responsibility, respectability, and women's entitlement to free time (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007; Hosseini & Safdar, 2023; Rezazadeh & Hoover, 2018; Shishehgar et al., 2015). While migration may disrupt some expectations, it does not automatically erase them, as divergences emerge within heterogeneous Iranian immigrant communities shaped by political beliefs, religion, age, gender, and women's rights. Pre-migratory norms, settlement pressures, and the opportunities and constraints of the host society intersect in complex ways. Studies on Iranian migrant women

highlight how identity, autonomy, and empowerment are negotiated within intersecting systems of gender, migration, and cultural expectations (Hosseini & Safdar, 2023; Jafari et al., 2010; McDonald et al., 2023). Women's leisure in Iran has tended to be family-centred and home-based, with sociability organized around extended family, neighbours, and private gatherings rather than around formal or municipally organized community recreation (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007). Dance holds a valued place in Iranian and Persian culture and is closely tied to celebration, social connection, and cultural identity. The workshop was accordingly offered as a women-centred session facilitated in Farsi.

Ongoing research reveals that Iranian immigrant women navigate settlement experiences in relation to a broader transnational context marked by recent political upheaval in Iran, including the mobilization connected to the Woman, Life, Freedom movement, ongoing concern for family members who remain there, and the emotional strain of remaining connected to a homeland undergoing profound uncertainty and change (Mobasher, 2025; Sadeghi, 2016). In the Canadian context, Iranian immigrant women may encounter expanded possibilities for recreation and public participation while still navigating care obligations, economic pressure, language barriers, changing gender roles, and uneven familiarity with available leisure infrastructures. The loss or weakening of extended family support can further intensify the practical challenge of creating time and space for leisure within everyday settlement trajectories (Hosseini & Safdar, 2023; McDonald et al., 2023).

Leisure spaces can support confidence, social bonds, weak ties, place familiarity, and community attachment, but they can also reproduce exclusion when programs are culturally narrow, financially inaccessible, institutionally opaque, or insufficiently responsive to participants' realities (Lauckner et al., 2022; Özgider & Koch, 2026; Smith et al., 2019; Woo et

al., 2025). Recent research by Woo and colleagues demonstrates how leisure can generate a meaningful sense of community among middle-aged women when activities are culturally familiar, socially safe, and organized around shared experience, findings that are particularly relevant for understanding how community-based leisure may function for immigrant women navigating similar life-stage demands (Woo et al., 2025). Research on outdoor recreation and settlement similarly suggests that participation may support settlement, but only under conditions that make activities understandable, welcoming, and accessible to immigrants navigating new environments (Charles-Rodriguez & Larouche, 2025). Canadian research on immigrant women's settlement experiences further shows that places of comfort and discomfort shape how newcomers experience settlement in practical and emotional terms, reinforcing the importance of everyday spaces in the production of belonging (Chai, 2022). This scholarship shifts the analytical question from whether leisure works in the abstract to the more pressing question of under what social, cultural, and institutional conditions leisure can serve as a meaningful and equitable pathway to well-being and belonging.

1.1 Research Problem

While a growing body of scholarship recognizes the relevance of leisure, recreation, and physical activity to immigrant settlement, several important limitations remain. Settlement is often understood through formal markers such as employment, housing, language acquisition, and access to services, but these indicators do not fully account for how newcomers build everyday routines, social relationships, well-being, or a sense of belonging in a new social environment (Ager & Strang, 2008; Barrick et al., 2021; Schinkel, 2018). Scholarship on migration and belonging has established that settlement is shaped not only through formal systems but also through ordinary social practices, access to community spaces, and opportunities for connection

in everyday life (Crawford et al., 2023; Gagliardi et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2025; Petty & Trussell, 2021; Scuzzarello & Moroşanu, 2023; Yuval-Davis, 2006). What remains less developed within that established body of work is sustained attention to leisure as an everyday, relational activity shaped through the interaction of agency and constraint, and to the organizational conditions under which leisure opportunities are created, communicated, and sustained. Research on community-based leisure as a structured pathway to belonging among Iranian immigrant women in Canada remains particularly limited (Hurly, 2019; McDonald et al., 2023; Suto, 2013). This is important to address for immigrant women, whose opportunities for leisure are shaped by gendered divisions of labour, caregiving expectations, work schedules, mobility, financial resources, language, and the accessibility of community environments.

A growing body of scholarship within leisure studies documents the place of leisure in resettlement, community building, and diaspora experience. Researchers demonstrate that leisure can contribute to social connection, confidence, and everyday belonging, but also make clear that such outcomes are not automatic (Antoun & Karlis, 2025; Barrick, 2023; Barrick et al., 2021; Berasategi Sancho et al., 2023; Cai & O'Connor, 2025b; Campbell et al., 2016; Forde et al., 2015; Gallant & Tirone, 2017; Hassanli et al., 2026; Karlis et al., 2020a; Kim & Iwasaki, 2016; Lauckner et al., 2022; Oncescu et al., 2026; Özgider & Koch, 2026; Rich et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2019; Woo et al., 2025; Zagrebina, 2026). Participation depends on how leisure is organized, whether spaces are experienced as welcoming and culturally respectful, and whether practical constraints related to cost, transportation, physical access, scheduling, and communication are adequately addressed. Community-based organizations serving newcomers may play an important role in creating entry points into community life by providing information and support that might

otherwise remain inaccessible or unfamiliar to recently arrived immigrants (Karlis et al., 2020a; Rich et al., 2015; Salami et al., 2019).

Wider scholarship on immigrant women's settlement demonstrates that social isolation, reduced support networks, care work, and limited access to weak social ties shape everyday participation and belonging in significant ways (Lim et al., 2022; Stick et al., 2024). This dissertation examines the intersection of these dynamics among Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 who simultaneously navigate paid employment, household responsibility, caregiving, and settlement in Canada, a life stage where gendered responsibility, migration-related demands, and the search for belonging converge with particular intensity, and where leisure holds significant potential as a source of relief, self-care, social connection, and community.

1.2 Overall Aim and Research Questions

Against this background, the overall aim of this manuscript-based dissertation is to examine how leisure and community services shape the possibilities for well-being, social connection, and belonging among Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 in Ottawa, Canada, and to identify the institutional and programmatic conditions under which leisure opportunities become meaningful, accessible, and sustainable. This dissertation is guided by the following overarching research questions:

1. How do Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 understand and experience leisure in the context of migration and settlement?
2. What intersecting structural, gendered, cultural, and institutional factors constrain or enable their participation in leisure?

3. What roles do community organizations and settlement-service infrastructures play in mediating access to leisure, and what does this imply for the design of inclusive and sustainable programming?

4. In what ways can leisure contribute to well-being, identity negotiation, social connection, and belonging?

These questions are addressed through a cumulative set of analyses that examine leisure as lived experience, as structured participation, and as an institutionally mediated form of access. The dissertation is therefore concerned not only with whether women participate in leisure, but also with how leisure becomes imaginable, feasible, meaningful, and worthwhile within the conditions of everyday settlement. More specifically, it approaches leisure as a domain through which broader questions of care, access, identity, institutional support, and belonging can be examined in the everyday lives of Iranian immigrant women navigating midlife settlement in Canada.

Three interconnected studies structure this dissertation, each designed to address a distinct but related dimension of leisure among Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 in Ottawa. Study 1 examined leisure preferences and structural access conditions through a bilingual pre-activity leisure interest survey administered in partnership with PAND Settlement Services among 40 Farsi-speaking immigrant women. Its purpose was to establish a participant-informed foundation for the project by documenting not only which activities women find meaningful, but also the practical conditions that shape whether participation is realistically possible for women balancing paid work, caregiving, and settlement demands. Study 2 explored how three community-based leisure activities were experienced in relation to well-being, social connection, and belonging, drawing on 32 post-activity evaluations, participant observation, and two follow-up semi-structured feedback sessions to examine the conditions under which participation became

meaningful and accessible, and which constraints persisted across activities. Study 3 developed understanding of the organizational dimension of leisure access, examining through in-depth feedback sessions with the two participants who attended all three activities, together with a feedback session with an executive of PAND, how a community-based settlement organization mediates women's access to leisure and public life, and how organizational trust, cultural familiarity, and the transnational context of Iranian women's lives shape the conditions under which participation becomes possible. Together, the three studies offer a layered account of leisure as stated preference, lived experience, and organizationally mediated access. Because the three studies draw on different data sources and different numbers of participants, the evidence base for each research question is distinguished carefully throughout the dissertation. The leisure interest survey generated 40 responses; the post-activity evaluations generated 32 activity-level responses across the three activities rather than repeated measures from a fixed group of 32 individuals; and the follow-up feedback sessions involved two women, together with one organizational feedback session. Table 1 in Section 1.6 sets out which chapter, data source, and sample address each research question.

1.3 Theoretical and Methodological Orientation

The dissertation is guided by an intersectional theoretical orientation. Intersectionality is central to this study because it draws attention to the overlapping relations of power through which gender, migration, language, age, class, care responsibilities, religion, and institutional recognition shape access to time, space, resources, and participation (Crenshaw, 1991; Scuzzarello & Moroşanu, 2023). Foundational feminist and legal scholarship establishes intersectionality as a way of understanding how power operates through interlocking social positions and institutional arrangements (Crenshaw, 1991, 1997). In the context of this dissertation, this lens is important

because leisure cannot be approached as a neutral or uniformly available domain of life. Rather, leisure opportunities are shaped by broader social relations that determine whose time is protected, whose mobility is supported, whose participation is normalized, and whose needs are visible within dominant program designs. This orientation carries significance for a dissertation concerned with leisure as a pathway to well-being, social connection, and belonging. An intersectional lens makes it possible to examine not only whether leisure contributes to feeling well, but also for whom, under what conditions, and through which institutional and social arrangements such benefits become available. In this sense, intersectionality deepens the analysis of leisure by moving beyond individualized accounts of motivation or choice and instead situating well-being within the unequal conditions under which leisure is organized and experienced.

Within leisure studies, intersectionality has become important precisely because it resists individualized accounts of participation and instead asks how social inequalities are organized and reproduced through everyday life and institutional settings (Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Mielke et al., 2022; Watson & Scraton, 2013). Recent work in sport and physical activity has reinforced the value of this approach by showing that participation is shaped through the interaction of gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, age, and community context, rather than through any single category alone (Haggard & Giles, 2022). This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because the leisure experiences of Iranian immigrant women are shaped not only by migration itself, but by the intersection of migration with gendered care work, employment precarity, transportation access, language, cultural expectation, and the practical realities of settlement.

An intersectional lens is paired with a relational understanding of belonging and settlement. Belonging refers to the affective experience of feeling seen, welcomed, and included in a

community and place (Lähdesmäki et al., 2021; Yuval-Davis, 2006). It is shaped by intersecting forms of identity including gender, ethnicity, language, socioeconomic status, religion, migration status, and age (Scuzzarello & Moroşanu, 2023), and is understood here as socially produced through everyday interaction, recognition, and access to meaningful spaces rather than as a fixed endpoint of successful adaptation (Frensch & Akesson, 2025; Schinkel, 2018; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Together, these two frameworks support an understanding of leisure as one of the sites where settlement is lived as practice. Women encounter public spaces and institutions, test the boundaries of comfort and belonging, develop or struggle to develop social ties, and negotiate identity through activities that might otherwise appear ordinary. The study therefore approaches leisure as part of the lived infrastructure of settlement rather than as an optional addition to more formal processes.

The third paper extends this theoretical apparatus by drawing on social capital theory and on work concerning cultural infrastructure. Bourdieu's (1986) account of social capital as resources tied to durable networks of mutual acquaintance and recognition, and Putnam's (2000) distinction between bonding capital generated within homogeneous groups and bridging capital generated across social divides, both help explain why culturally familiar leisure settings can be generative and why they are not, on their own, sufficient. Scholarship on cultural infrastructure attends to the spaces and institutional frameworks through which culture is produced and consumed and to the social organizations that shape whether relationships form at all (Getzner, 2024; Klinenberg, 2018). Chapter Four develops the argument that a further condition operates beyond provision, namely the mediating work of rendering opportunities legible, credible, and practically reachable, and locates that work within the organization rather than within the individual or the network.

Methodologically, the dissertation is grounded in a qualitative research tradition and a broader community-based participatory research approach informed by asset-based community development (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Christopher et al., 2008; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). This orientation is appropriate because the study collaborates with participants to identify participant-informed, culturally responsive, and practically feasible forms of leisure participation. Qualitative and participatory research scholarship reinforces that community-based approaches are particularly valuable when the aim is to understand lived experiences in context, to engage people affected by an issue as knowledgeable participants in the research process, and to support forms of inquiry that remain attentive to local priorities and possibilities for action (Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). Recent reviews focused specifically on participatory research with migrant and refugee women likewise suggest that such approaches can strengthen cultural sensitivity, improve the interpretation of findings, and create more meaningful forms of engagement when women's perspectives are included throughout the research process rather than mediated only through organizations or professionals (Vazquez Corona et al., 2024). Related community-based work with immigrant communities has further shown the practical value of participatory evaluation for shaping program development in ways that respond to participants' needs, constraints, and everyday realities (Charles-Rodriguez et al., 2023).

Within this doctoral study, the methodological orientation reflects the view that understanding leisure access requires more than external observation of participation patterns. It requires attentiveness to participant priorities, community partnership, and the practical conditions that shape whether leisure opportunities are experienced as meaningful, manageable, and sustainable. The third article also draws on participatory, narrative methods that integrate oral history and storytelling, treating the sharing of personal accounts both as a source of understanding

and as a form of participation in its own right (Duesa et al., 2022; Goodley & Clough, 2004). A qualitative, community-based approach is therefore well-suited to a study that seeks to examine how leisure is understood, negotiated, and facilitated in the lives of Iranian immigrant women, while also remaining attentive to the organizational and relational contexts through which access is mediated.

This methodological orientation is also informed by a trauma-informed approach. Trauma-informed leisure does not mean that leisure is treated as clinical therapy, nor does it presume that all participants share the same experiences, histories, or needs. Rather, it refers to an approach to research and programming that recognizes that experiences of displacement, repression, discrimination, prolonged uncertainty, family separation, and major social or political upheaval may shape how people experience bodies, space, authority, visibility, and participation. A trauma-informed orientation therefore emphasizes physical and emotional safety, predictability, trust, transparency, choice, collaboration, and responsiveness to cultural, historical, gendered, and religious contexts (Berger et al., 2024; Darroch et al., 2020). In movement and leisure settings, this means recognizing that beneficial participation depends not only on the activity itself, but also on how the environment is structured, how facilitators communicate, whether participants retain meaningful agency, and whether spaces are experienced as respectful and socially safe.

Immigrant women's leisure may unfold alongside prior experiences of constraint or loss, ongoing settlement pressures, concern for family members abroad, or continuing ties to places marked by instability and change. In such contexts, leisure cannot be assumed to be straightforwardly relaxing or equally accessible. Rather, participation may be shaped by comfort with visibility, familiarity with settings, perceived social expectations, bodily autonomy, trust in organizers, and the extent to which activities can be approached at one's own pace. Scholars

studying leisure, sport, and movement with refugee and displaced populations show that these activities may support continuity, social connection, and adaptation, but that these possibilities depend heavily on whether programs reduce uncertainty, allow flexibility, and respond carefully to participants' circumstances (Bauer, 2025; Stack & Iwasaki, 2009). For the purposes of this dissertation, a trauma-informed approach involves attentiveness to cultural safety, flexibility, and participant agency in both the research process and interpretation of leisure experiences. In practice, this means prioritizing clear communication, voluntary participation, the possibility of modification or withdrawal from the activity, sensitivity to pace and comfort, and an awareness that women may differ considerably in what they find welcoming, manageable, or meaningful. Access to leisure is therefore understood here as depending not only on whether opportunities exist, but also on whether the conditions of participation feel intelligible, respectful, and genuinely available.

The collaboration with PAND Settlement Services in Ottawa, Ontario provides a concrete community-based research context for examining these processes. PAND Settlement Services is an Ontario-registered charity that provides culturally and linguistically appropriate pre-arrival and post-arrival supports for Iranian and Farsi-speaking newcomers, including mentorship, settlement assistance, training, employment-related services, and arts- and sport-based initiatives (PAND Settlement Services, n.d.). These organizational characteristics make PAND a meaningful partner in the broader study led by a research team at the University of Ottawa and in this doctoral study, relevant not only as a recruitment site but also as a context through which the relationship between settlement, leisure, and belonging can be examined in a contextually grounded manner. PAND's linguistic and cultural specificity is analytically significant because access to settlement and leisure opportunities is mediated by familiarity, trust, and communicative ease. Having operated in the

Ottawa Farsi-speaking community for eleven years, PAND provides a well-established community context for exploring how settlement organizations may shape women's access to leisure and belonging. Chapter Four situates PAND within the wider landscape of newcomer-serving provision in Ottawa, comparing it with municipal recreation, the public library system, and several other settlement organizations, so that the case is read in context rather than in isolation.

1.4 Research Design and Methods

The scope of this dissertation focuses on Iranian immigrant women living in Ottawa and is situated in an urban Canadian context shaped by immigration, settlement, and uneven access to community resources and everyday opportunities for participation. The dissertation proceeds from the premise that settlement is lived not only through formal systems such as employment, language acquisition, and service access, but also through the ordinary spaces and practices through which people build routines, relationships, and a sense of place. It gives particular attention to women whose everyday lives are organized around the overlapping demands of paid work, domestic labour, caregiving, and adaptation to a new social environment, and it examines the organizational settings through which leisure opportunities are facilitated, interpreted, and sustained. All data collection took place in Ottawa between October 2025 and Winter 2026: the leisure interest survey was open from 5 to 10 October 2025, the three leisure activities were held on 26 October, 19 November, and 4 December 2025, and the follow-up feedback sessions with participants and with the organizational representative were conducted in Winter 2026.

Rather than predetermining leisure activities in advance, and after receiving ethics approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (Protocol H-03-23-8562), a leisure interest survey was developed as a participant-informed instrument and distributed through collaboration

with PAND Settlement Services, who circulated the recruitment poster on their Telegram and Meta social media channels and by email on their listserve. The survey was offered in Farsi and English and circulated through PAND's communication networks to enhance linguistic accessibility and to situate recruitment within a familiar and trusted community setting. The survey was open from Saturday, 5 October until Friday, 10 October 2025, giving potential respondents approximately five days to complete it, and was designed to take approximately 15 minutes. Respondents accessed the survey through a Google Forms link embedded in the Telegram post, alongside a bilingual project description. A total of 40 women submitted responses. Participation was voluntary, responses were anonymous, and no identifying information was collected. Prior to taking the survey, respondents were provided with a consent form and were required to digitally confirm their consent before reaching the survey. Completion of the survey did not commit respondents to attending subsequent activities. This design positioned the survey as a low-pressure entry point through which women could identify their interests, constraints, and preferences in their own terms, rather than responding to activities that had already been selected for them.

Two features of this recruitment approach warrant comment. Telegram was chosen because it is the primary communication platform for the Farsi-speaking community in Ottawa and is already part of PAND's everyday channels, so for this population it lowered rather than raised the barrier to access. At the same time, a digital-only survey circulated through one organization's channels selects for women who are comfortable online and already reachable through those networks. This is a form of self-selection, and it means the survey describes the interests and constraints of women connected to PAND rather than of Farsi-speaking women in Ottawa generally. This limitation is revisited in Chapter Five.

The survey instrument collected demographic and settlement-related information, including age and length of time in Canada, and also asked about language proficiency, preferred scheduling, accessibility considerations, and leisure interests across five thematic categories: outdoor and physical activities, arts and creative expression, social and community activities, mind and relaxation, and cultural and educational activities. The questions were designed to capture not only what kinds of leisure women found appealing, but also the practical conditions under which participation might become possible or difficult, including work schedules, caregiving responsibilities, transportation access, and financial considerations. The activity categories were not intended to prescribe activities but to open up participants' own preferences; they were informed by the leisure studies literature and by prior consultation with PAND about the community it serves, and were accompanied by open-ended prompts inviting respondents to name activities and accessibility needs that the categories did not capture. The three activities that followed were selected because they emerged from what respondents themselves identified as interesting and feasible, not because they had been chosen in advance.

As a native Farsi speaker, I prepared both the Farsi and English versions of the instrument and worked to keep the meaning of each item equivalent rather than translating word for word. The survey was pretested through consultation with my supervisor, after which item wording was simplified and clarified.

Survey responses were reviewed through an initial thematic analysis attentive to recurring activity preferences alongside cross-cutting constraints and enabling conditions. The analytic aim at this stage was to identify patterns that could inform the co-development of a small set of leisure opportunities appropriate for Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55, organized during Fall 2025 in Ottawa. In this sense, the survey functioned as both a practical planning tool and an early

analytic lens onto how leisure was imagined and negotiated within the conditions of work, care, migration, and settlement. Consistent with reflexive thematic analysis, the review process involved identifying patterns across participants' responses while remaining attentive to the interpretive role of the researcher and to the conceptual aims of the study rather than treating coding as a purely mechanical exercise (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The findings from this initial analysis informed the selection of three structured leisure activities: a group walk along the Rideau Canal held on 26 October 2025, a Classical Persian dance workshop held on 19 November 2025 at a community centre, and a visit to the National Gallery of Canada during its free Thursday evening program on 4 December 2025. These activities were chosen because they reflected diverse forms of leisure engagement, outdoor, embodied, and cultural, and because they were feasible within the practical conditions identified through the survey, including affordability, transit accessibility, scheduling, and the value of culturally and linguistically welcoming environments. The survey therefore did more than identify preferred activities; it pointed to the kinds of social and spatial conditions under which participation might become possible and meaningful. All three activities were facilitated in Farsi and offered free of charge.

Recruitment for the activities was conducted through PAND's community networks, helping ensure that communication occurred in culturally familiar spaces and in the Farsi language. Group size averaged approximately 10 to 11 participants per activity and was kept relatively small to facilitate interaction and conversation. Practical considerations such as public transit accessibility, low or no participation costs, clear scheduling, simple registration procedures, and advance logistical explanation were prioritized in organizing the activities. These decisions were informed both by the survey findings and by research demonstrating that culturally responsive

design and accessible delivery are important to supporting participation among immigrant populations (Barrick et al., 2021; Gagliardi et al., 2022). Importantly, the activities were designed to create new social connections rather than to bring together an existing group. Recruitment was through PAND's open channels, and participants came as individuals who for the most part did not know one another beforehand. This matters for interpreting the findings on social connection reported in Chapters Three and Four, since the connections participants described formed through the activities rather than being carried in from prior relationships.

The dissertation draws on a qualitative multi-method design that includes the leisure interest survey, structured leisure activities, participant observation, post-activity evaluations, participant feedback sessions, and consultation with the community organization. This design made it possible to examine leisure from several connected vantage points: as stated preference, as lived experience during organized activities, as post-activity reflection, and as an issue mediated through organizational priorities and constraints. The activities were developed and implemented following best practices in leisure program design and evaluation (Stiefvater, 2000). They were facilitated by the lead researcher, who is fluently bilingual in Farsi and English, certified in CPR and First Aid, and who conducted a pre-risk management assessment at each activity location. Observational data were collected through field notes written immediately following each activity after participants had left.

Following each activity, participants completed a structured post-activity evaluation survey designed to capture their satisfaction with the activity, experiential reflections, and perceived constraints on participation. The evaluation instrument was bilingual and included between 20 and 25 questions combining Likert-scale items, checklists related to structural constraints, and open-ended prompts inviting participants to describe their experiences in their own words. Evaluations

were completed anonymously on paper immediately following each activity, and original copies are stored in the lead researcher's locked cabinet. A distinction should be kept in view when reading the findings: the constraint items asked about conditions that generally make leisure participation more difficult for the respondent, rather than only about the specific activity just completed, and were paired with an item on preferences for future programming. Findings about constraints therefore speak to leisure participation broadly, while findings about enjoyment, comfort, facilitation, and social contact are specific to the three activities. The two have different implications for how the findings transfer to other settings.

Across the three activities, 12 evaluations were completed after the walk, 11 after the dance workshop, and 9 after the gallery visit, for a total of 32. Because participants could choose which activities to attend and the evaluations were anonymous, these 32 responses represent activity-level evaluations rather than repeated measures from a fixed group of 32 individuals, and the extent of overlap in attendance between activities cannot be determined. This distinction is maintained throughout the dissertation.

The analysis of these materials was iterative and interpretive. Evaluation forms were reviewed across the three activities to identify recurring patterns in participants' responses, including what women described as enjoyable, supportive, difficult, unfamiliar, or important to future participation. Open-ended responses, field observations, and notes from participant feedback sessions were examined using reflexive thematic analysis informed by Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). This approach allowed the analysis to move beyond surface description and to consider how meaning was being constructed across multiple data sources, while remaining attentive to the role of researcher interpretation in theme development. The analysis focused on patterns relevant to the dissertation's central concerns,

including accessibility, comfort, social connection, cultural familiarity, logistical feasibility, and the organizational conditions through which leisure becomes possible.

Following the three leisure activities, in-depth semi-structured feedback sessions were conducted with the two participants who had attended all three events. Eligibility required that participants be Iranian-born women between the ages of 30 and 55 who had taken part in all three activities; two women met these criteria and agreed to take part. Both were employed full-time, lived in Ottawa without extended family support nearby, and identified caregiving responsibilities, time scarcity, and transnational worry as central features of their everyday lives. To protect their identities, given the small number of participants, no further identifying details are reported individually, and they are referred to throughout this dissertation by the pseudonyms Sahar and Shirin. Feedback sessions were conducted in Farsi, the participants' preferred language, took place virtually in a private setting, and lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Informed consent was provided by all participants prior to the sessions. Because participants did not consent to audio recording, data were documented through detailed handwritten notes taken during and immediately following each discussion. At the end of each session, notes were reviewed with the participant to confirm accuracy and ensure that the documented account reflected her intended meanings, and any corrections or clarifications were incorporated before analysis.

The prominence of these two accounts in Chapter Four requires a methodological rationale, since two participants occupy a central analytical position there. The two women were consulted precisely because they had experienced the full sequence of activities and could speak to how their familiarity with and trust in the organization developed across occasions, which is the process the third article's research questions concern. Their accounts are therefore treated as a close, detailed case of sustained participation rather than as a sample representative of Iranian newcomer women

in Ottawa, and that limit is stated explicitly in Chapters Four and Five. To reduce the risk that two voices dominate the interpretation, their accounts were read against the wider evaluation data wherever the two overlapped. The finding regarding the dance workshop, for example, is corroborated by the eleven post-activity evaluations completed after that session.

Community engagement also formed part of the research design. A feedback session was conducted with the President of PAND's board of directors, who took part in the capacity of organizational representative and is referred to in that role in Chapter Four. This consultation explored how leisure-related initiatives are understood within the organization, as well as practical considerations shaping their program development, including funding structures, program capacity, organizational priorities, and sustainability challenges commonly faced by community-based settlement organizations. The purpose of this consultation was exploratory and interpretive. Including this organizational perspective was methodologically important because it allowed the dissertation to examine leisure not only as an individual or group experience, but also as something shaped by the mediating support of an organization, resource limitations, and community infrastructure.

By combining survey data, observations, evaluations, feedback sessions, and organizational consultation, the study develops a fuller account of leisure as lived experience and as a mediated form of access. This multi-method and community-based design is particularly well-suited to the dissertation's broader theoretical orientation because it allows leisure to be examined as part of the everyday social infrastructure through which Iranian immigrant women negotiate well-being, connection, and belonging.

This dissertation examines a specific group of women in a specific city, developing a contextually grounded account of how leisure operates under conditions of gendered

responsibility, migration-related change, and organizational mediation. It does not aim to represent the perspectives of all immigrant women, all Iranian women aged 30 to 55, or all newcomer experiences in Canada, nor does it treat leisure as universally beneficial or inherently inclusive. The contextual detail provided throughout, about the population, the setting, the organization, and the design of the activities, allows readers to judge for themselves whether and how these insights may be meaningful in comparable contexts, including other Farsi-speaking or newcomer communities and other settlement organizations.

1.4.1 Positionality and Reflexivity

I am an Iranian-born immigrant woman, a Farsi-English bilingual doctoral candidate in Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa, and the lead researcher of this study. These are not background details; they are central to how this research was conceived, conducted, and interpreted. My approach is grounded in a constructivist ontology and an intersectional feminist epistemology. I proceed from the position that social reality is not fixed or singular but is constructed through lived experience, social relations, and the particular contexts in which people act and make meaning. The experiences of Iranian immigrant women in Ottawa are therefore not simply facts to be recorded but socially situated accounts shaped by the intersecting conditions of their lives, including gender, migration status, class, language, caregiving responsibility, and the political circumstances of their departure from Iran. Epistemologically, an intersectional feminist framework does not treat the researcher's social location as a source of bias to be eliminated. It treats that location as analytically relevant, requiring it to be named, examined, and held accountable throughout the research process. Reflexivity, within this framework, is not a technique

applied at the end of data collection but a continuous and disciplined practice of questioning my own assumptions, interpretations, and blind spots at every stage of the work.

I came to Canada as an international graduate student, and my immigration pathway differs in concrete and legally significant ways from those of the women who took part in this project. Participants came with varying statuses: most were newcomers at different stages of settlement, some held permanent resident status, and one or two were in Canada on a short-term basis. Despite these differences, what participants held in common was the experience of navigating daily life in Ottawa as Iranian women, largely without the extended family networks they had relied upon in Iran and often without confident fluency in the dominant institutional languages of their new environment. I have not relied on PAND's settlement services myself, nor have I faced the particular pressures of building a permanent life in Canada as a newly arrived resident. I want to be honest about that distinction, because collapsing it would misrepresent both my position and theirs. At the same time, I have lived in Ottawa without family nearby, built social connections from the beginning, managed daily institutional life primarily in English, and carried the weight of distance from home during periods of acute political crisis in Iran. These experiences overlap with those of participants in some respects and diverge in others, and holding both of those things in mind, the overlap and the divergence, was one of the central interpretive tasks of this research.

My familiarity with the community I was studying created real advantages. Facilitating the walk along the Rideau Canal, the Persian dance workshop, and the National Gallery visit entirely in Farsi meant that participants did not need to translate their experiences into a second language before sharing them. In the feedback sessions with Sahar and Shirin, both of which are pseudonyms used throughout this dissertation to protect participant identity, conversation moved into the texture of everyday life with relatively little distance to cross: the exhaustion after a full day of

work, the difficulty of leaving children at home without anyone to rely on, the specific quality of grief that comes from watching events unfold in Iran while living far away and feeling unable to do anything. When Sahar said she was “not relaxed,” I understood what that phrase held without needing her to explain it further. That kind of communicative ease is not a small thing in qualitative research, and I do not want to understate it.

A concern around insider research is not solely over-identification with participants. It is the subtler tendency to complete what participants leave unsaid with one’s own experience rather than theirs, to hear confirmation of what you already believe rather than something genuinely new. There was also a structural problem I needed to address honestly. I designed the three leisure activities, organized them through PAND, facilitated them in Farsi, and then collected evaluation data from participants before they left each session. Participants were guests at events I had organized, within a community organization they trusted, and I was physically present while they completed their feedback forms. That situation creates real and predictable pressure toward socially desirable responses, and Chapter Five returns to it as a limitation on how the strongly positive evaluation ratings should be read. Beyond the facilitation role, I had prior awareness of PAND as an organization and of the broader Farsi-speaking community in Ottawa, which raised the possibility of pre-existing social familiarity with some participants. I could not simply assume that this familiarity was neutral in its effects on what people chose to share with me or how I heard what they said.

I addressed any potential concerns through several concrete reflexive practices. At the design stage, I interrogated how I had framed the research questions and constructed the survey instrument, asking whether the activity formats I was drawn to reflected participant needs or my own prior sense of what would be meaningful. I wrote field notes immediately after each session

once participants had left, documenting not only what I had observed but also the interpretive moves I had made in the moment and the points where my certainty about the meaning of something deserved more scrutiny; these notes were treated as analytic data rather than as peripheral records. During analysis, I returned to those notes alongside the evaluation forms and feedback session notes, treating my own reactions and first readings as material requiring the same critical attention as anything participants had said. I reviewed my handwritten notes aloud with each participant at the close of both follow-up feedback sessions, inviting correction and clarification rather than treating my record as definitive. I discussed coding, emerging themes, and interpretation regularly with my doctoral supervisor and co-authors, so that my reading was checked against others, and I revised interpretations where they appeared shaped more by my own position than by what the data could reasonably support. Post-activity evaluation surveys were completed anonymously on paper before participants left each session, which reduced, although it could not remove, the likelihood that responses would be shaped by my presence. These measures do not resolve the inherent tensions of insider research, and I do not claim that they do. What they reflect is a commitment to transparency about the conditions under which the data were produced and a recognition that positionality shapes knowledge in ways that must be examined rather than wished away. This commitment is consistent with the epistemological foundations of the study and with the standards of rigor expected in qualitative and community-based participatory research (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Cargo & Mercer, 2008).

1.4.2 Definitions of Key Concepts

For purposes of clarity, five key concepts inform this dissertation.

Leisure is understood across three interconnected dimensions, as set out earlier in this chapter: discretionary time relatively free from obligation, a state of perceived freedom of choice

and intrinsic motivation, and activity undertaken for its own intrinsic reward (Stodolska et al., 2024).

Well-being refers to good mental and physical health, psychological wellness, and strong social determinants of health including social support, a sense of competence, identity, autonomy, and the possibility of living with dignity and connection in everyday life (World Health Organization, 2006). This broader framing is consistent with scholarship showing that leisure may contribute to positive emotion, self-expression, social connectedness, and continuity of self, particularly under conditions of disruption, transition, and resettlement (Caldwell, 2005; Iwasaki, 2007; Lorentzen & Viken, 2020). In this dissertation, well-being encompasses the everyday experiences through which women feel recognized, connected, and supported. It is important to note that well-being was not measured using a validated instrument; it was captured through participants' own accounts of how they felt during and after specific activities.

Settlement services are understood in this dissertation as multisectoral organizations formally or informally affiliated with municipal, provincial, or federal governments that provide information and services to welcome newly arrived immigrants and support their settlement needs, including housing, schooling, employment, banking, and access to government services (Drolet & Teixeira, 2022; Salami et al., 2019). They also serve as mediating partners through which newcomers gain access to relationships, spaces, and opportunities that extend beyond immediate practical needs.

Structural access refers to the wider social, economic, cultural, and institutional conditions that shape who participates in leisure and recreation, under what circumstances, and at what cost. In the literature on physical activity and leisure, researchers examine social and institutional constraints such as income disparities, unequal pay, and lack of transportation (Arab-Moghaddam

et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2025; Mielke et al., 2022; Ramos Salas et al., 2016). Recent Canadian research shows that time poverty and transport-related exclusion are significant features of everyday inequality, with one in five Canadians over age 24 classified as time poor, and socially disadvantaged groups, including many women and lower-income households, disproportionately affected by the combined pressures of time scarcity and transport-related constraints (Aitken et al., 2024). Structural access is therefore central to this dissertation because it shifts analytical attention toward how access to leisure is organized, enabled, and made available within women's everyday lives.

Community mediation and cultural infrastructure are used in this dissertation to name the organizational work that stands between the availability of an opportunity and a woman's ability to take it up. Community mediation refers to the practice: rendering information in a language a woman reads comfortably, scheduling around the hours she is available, explaining how an unfamiliar setting operates, arranging for a child to be accommodated, and sustaining the trust that makes an invitation credible. Cultural infrastructure, developed in Chapter Four, names where that capacity is located. Its defining feature is that it resides within the organization rather than with the individual or the network, and it persists whether or not any particular person draws on it.

1.5 Contributions of the Study

This dissertation contributes to leisure studies, migration and settlement scholarship, and community-based research by examining how leisure and community services shape the possibilities for well-being, social connection, and belonging among Iranian immigrant women in Ottawa. In the Canadian literature, leisure has increasingly been recognized as more than discretionary activity. Research has shown that recreation can support newcomer settlement by fostering enjoyment, familiarity, confidence, connection, and participation in everyday community

life (Cai & O'Connor, 2025a, 2025b; Campbell et al., 2016; Lauckner et al., 2022; O'Connor et al., 2024; Rich et al., 2015). Related work has demonstrated that culturally responsive and community-based physical activity initiatives can reduce constraints for immigrant women when language, trust, affordability, accessibility, and social comfort are taken seriously in program design (Gagliardi et al., 2022). Scholarship on immigrant settlement services has likewise emphasized that belonging is shaped not only through formal supports such as housing, language training, and employment assistance, but also through the relationships, spaces, and community connections that organizations help make possible (Salami et al., 2019). Taken together, these studies have advanced the Canadian conversation considerably. What they have not yet examined in sustained detail is how leisure is negotiated by Iranian immigrant women in midlife, how leisure opportunities can be shaped collaboratively in community settings, and how settlement-service organizations mediate access to such opportunities in practice.

Against this backdrop, this study expands current understanding in several ways. First, it treats leisure as a socially embedded and institutionally mediated dimension of settlement rather than as a secondary outcome that becomes relevant only after more formal settlement goals have been achieved. In doing so, it explores how leisure is connected to well-being, not simply through enjoyment or stress reduction, but through the everyday experiences of recognition, social connection, cultural continuity, and participation that help make life more livable in a new country. This contribution matters because much of the existing literature has focused either on constraints to participation or on leisure outcomes without examining, through an intersectional lens, how access itself is organized through time, caregiving, income, transportation, information, and institutional support.

Second, this work contributes to Canadian scholarship by centring a population that remains underexamined: Iranian immigrant women, particularly those aged 30 to 55. Existing research has shown that immigrant women's leisure is shaped by social isolation, cultural expectations, family obligations, and structural constraints, and that leisure may support mental health, coping, belonging, and social integration (Rezazadeh & Hoover, 2018; Shishehgar et al., 2015; Suto, 2013). Research on Iranian women has further indicated that leisure is often negotiated through gendered expectations regarding family responsibility, respectability, and women's entitlement to time for themselves (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007). Yet there remains limited attention to the specific experiences of Iranian immigrant women in midlife who are simultaneously navigating paid work, caregiving, household responsibility, and settlement. By focusing on this group, the dissertation expands understanding of how leisure is shaped at the intersection of gender, migration, age, care, and cultural expectation, and explores how leisure may function as a site of self-expression, connection, and relief within a particularly demanding stage of life.

Third, the dissertation examines leisure not only as lived experience, but also as organizational practice. Canadian studies have shown that recreation and outdoor participation may be associated with settlement satisfaction, belonging, and community engagement, and that organizations can play an important role in creating supportive conditions for participation. The organizational side of leisure provision nonetheless remains less developed in the Canadian literature, particularly in relation to settlement-service organizations whose primary mandates typically centre employment, housing, and language support rather than leisure (Charles-Rodriguez & Larouche, 2025; Salami et al., 2019). This dissertation addresses that gap by exploring how a settlement organization understands leisure, how community-based leisure

opportunities are developed and delivered, and what organizational limitations or possibilities shape their sustainability. The concepts of community mediation and cultural infrastructure developed in Chapter Four name the work through which potentially available activities become genuinely accessible ones. Because this account rests on a small portion of the overall dataset, it is offered as an emerging and hypothesis-generating contribution rather than as an established finding, a point developed further in Chapter Five.

A further contribution lies in the study's methodological approach. By combining a participant-informed leisure interest survey, structured leisure activities, participant observation, post-activity evaluations, feedback sessions, and organizational consultation, the dissertation develops a multi-layered account of leisure as preference, practice, reflection, and mediated access. This design allows the study to move beyond description alone and to explore how leisure opportunities can be shaped in response to women's stated interests, everyday constraints, and community realities. In this sense, the dissertation contributes not only empirical knowledge about Iranian immigrant women's leisure, but also practical insight into how more responsive and sustainable leisure programming might be developed in collaboration with immigrant communities and service organizations.

More broadly, this work contributes to ongoing discussions in human kinetics and leisure studies by showing that leisure is not separate from questions of migration, inequality, and settlement, but one of the everyday domains through which such questions are lived. By situating leisure within the realities of work, caregiving, migration, and community life, the dissertation expands understanding of how leisure can illuminate broader processes of belonging, access, and social participation in the Canadian context.

1.6 Organization of the Thesis

This doctoral dissertation is organized as a manuscript-based dissertation in which the chapters build cumulatively toward a coherent overall argument. The three empirical chapters correspond to three peer-reviewed, open-source journal articles, published after the thesis was first submitted for evaluation. Chapter Two corresponds to Hadidi et al. (2026a) in Social Sciences, Chapter Three to Hadidi et al. (2026b) in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, and Chapter Four to Hadidi et al. (2026c) in Culture. The chapters comprise the open-source published versions, with headings renumbered and citations converted to the referencing style used throughout this dissertation. As peer review continued after the dissertation was first submitted, the published versions incorporate revisions that the earlier thesis chapters did not contain, and Chapters One and Five have been revised accordingly so that the dissertation reads consistently as a whole.

Chapter One introduces the field of study, identifies the central research problem and research questions, situates the dissertation within the relevant scholarship, and outlines the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological orientations of the three studies that constitute the project. It also clarifies the significance of the research and provides the overall framework through which the subsequent chapters are to be read.

Chapter Two presents the first empirical stage of the dissertation by documenting the design and implementation of the pre-activity leisure interest survey. It details the collaboration with PAND Settlement Services, the development and circulation of the survey, the findings, and the themes generated from the survey data. It advances the argument that a pre-activity survey functions not only as a needs assessment but as a participatory communication tool, and it establishes the empirical foundation for the studies that follow by showing how leisure

opportunities were developed in response to participants' stated interests and everyday constraints. The published article is framed by four conceptual orientations: intersectionality, community-based participatory research, asset-based community development, and structural access.

Chapter Three moves from stated preference to lived experience through an analysis of how participants experienced three community-based leisure activities in relation to self-care, emotional relief, social connection, cultural continuity, place familiarity, and access. Post-activity evaluations, observational field notes, and two follow-up semi-structured feedback sessions provide the data. This chapter draws on leisure constraints theory and on the sense of community literature, and it gives particular attention to the ways participants described leisure as relief, recognition, identity continuity, and exploratory engagement with Canadian public spaces and institutions, while showing that participation remained shaped by time pressure, weather, transportation, caregiving, cost, and access to trusted information.

Chapter Four examines the organizational dimension of leisure access, integrating data from the semi-structured feedback sessions with Sahar and Shirin and an organizational feedback session with the community partner. Presented as a single case study, it situates PAND within the wider landscape of newcomer-serving leisure provision in Ottawa, and draws on social capital theory and work on cultural infrastructure to argue that what stood between availability and participation was the work of mediation. This chapter explores the implications for community organizations, funders, and policymakers.

Chapter Five is the discussion and conclusion. We return to the four research questions, synthesize the central arguments and main findings across the three studies, set out the theoretical, practical, and policy contributions, identify the study's limitations, and outline directions for future research. In doing so, the final chapter brings the dissertation together as a whole and

clarifies the broader significance of the study for understanding leisure as a socially situated and institutionally-mediated dimension of settlement and belonging.

Table 1 sets out how each research question maps onto the chapters, data sources, and samples that address it. It is included here to keep the full project in view and to make explicit which body of evidence supports which claim.

Table 1. *Mapping of research questions to chapters, data sources, and samples*

Research question	Chapter and published article	Primary data source	Sample
RQ1. How Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 understand and experience leisure in the context of migration and settlement	Chapters Two, Three and Four (Articles 1, 2 and 3)	Leisure interest survey; post-activity evaluations; follow-up feedback sessions	40 survey responses; 32 activity-level evaluations; 2 feedback sessions
RQ2. What intersecting structural, gendered, cultural and institutional factors constrain or enable participation	Chapters Two and Three (Articles 1 and 2)	Leisure interest survey; post-activity evaluations (constraint items asked about leisure in general as well as the activity attended)	40 survey responses; 32 activity-level evaluations
RQ3. What roles community organizations and settlement-service infrastructures play in mediating access	Chapter Four (Article 3)	Follow-up feedback sessions; organizational feedback session; comparative review of Ottawa leisure provision	2 feedback sessions; 1 organizational representative
RQ4. In what ways leisure contributes to well-being, identity negotiation, social connection and belonging	Chapters Three and Four (Articles 2 and 3)	Post-activity evaluations; follow-up feedback sessions; researcher field notes	32 activity-level evaluations; 2 feedback sessions

Note: The leisure interest survey generated 40 responses. The 32 post-activity evaluations are activity-level responses across three activities (12 walk, 11 dance workshop, 9 gallery visit), not repeated measures from a fixed group of 32 individuals. The feedback sessions involved two women who attended all three activities, together with one organizational feedback session.

Chapter 2

Article 1

Integrating Community-based Participatory Research Methods to Identify Leisure Preferences Among Newcomer Immigrant Women Aged 30–55 in Ottawa, Canada

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2.1 Abstract

This paper explores the benefits of adopting a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach when designing leisure activities for newcomer Farsi-speaking immigrant women aged 30 to 55 in Ottawa, Canada. Immigrant women in this age range frequently navigate complex and overlapping demands related to paid employment, family responsibilities, caregiving, and unpaid labour, yet their leisure interests and access needs remain underrepresented in both the research literature and community programming. Through sustained collaboration with a local resettlement service organization, a bilingual (English/Farsi) leisure interest survey was administered to Farsi-speaking women who had arrived in Canada within the preceding five years and fell within the designated age range. The survey invited respondents to identify preferred leisure activities, accessibility requirements, language learning goals, and scheduling preferences. A total of 40 women submitted responses, and the findings were organized into three thematic leisure

categories: (1) outdoor and movement-based activities, including yoga; (2) museum and gallery visits; and (3) social gatherings. This CBPR approach enabled these community members to articulate their leisure interests, assets, and specific needs, which in turn directly informed the development of culturally relevant and responsive leisure programming. Our discussion and conclusion emphasize that a pre-activity survey can serve as a meaningful methodological bridge between community-based participatory research and the design of culturally responsive leisure programs. Implications for researchers, community organizations, and practitioners working with newcomer populations are discussed.

Keywords: newcomers; women; leisure; Farsi-speaking immigrants; community-based participatory research; resettlement service organization; leisure interest survey; Canada

2.2 Introduction

This paper explores the benefits of adopting a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach when designing leisure activities for newcomer immigrant women aged 30 to 55 in Ottawa, Canada. Immigrant women in this age range frequently navigate complex and overlapping demands related to paid employment, family responsibilities, caregiving, and unpaid labor. Newcomer working women's leisure interests and access needs remain underrepresented in both research literature and community programming, even though it may support self-care, social connection, inclusion, and well-being after migration. As such, our project aimed to develop a collaborative community-campus partnership between an interdisciplinary research team from the University of Ottawa and a local resettlement service organization in Ottawa to co-create inclusive, asset-based leisure opportunities for Farsi-speaking newcomer women. While the larger team project focused on older immigrant women over the age of 55, the project discussed in this article is part of a doctoral study that focused on newcomer immigrant women aged 30-55 whose leisure

opportunities may be shaped by the intersecting demands of paid work, caregiving, domestic labor, settlement processes, and social adjustment. We advance the position that a pre-activity leisure interest survey serves not only the purpose of a needs assessment, but equally as a community-based participatory communication tool sharing participants' interests, constraints, and priorities to inform the design of community-based leisure opportunities.

2.3 Leisure, Settlement, and Everyday Participation

Settlement is often understood through formal markers such as employment, housing, language acquisition, education, and access to services. Important as these are, they do not fully explain how newcomers build everyday routines, social relationships, well-being, or a sense of belonging in a new social environment (Ager & Strang, 2008; Barrick, 2023; Schinkel, 2018). Recent migration scholarship has therefore questioned one-directional integration narratives that position migrants as solely responsible for adapting to a presumed host society (Fortes, 2025; Murphy & Vieten, 2025; Schinkel, 2018). Instead, settlement and belonging are increasingly understood as relational and socio-spatial, shaped through everyday encounters with people, institutions, and community spaces (Al-Hamad et al., 2026; Frensch & Akesson, 2025; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

Within this broader understanding of settlement, leisure is a significant practice, yet often underexamined. Leisure can create opportunities for enjoyment, emotional restoration, social connection, identity continuity, physical activity, and participation in public life (Caldwell, 2005; Iwasaki, 2007; Lauckner et al., 2022). For newcomers, recreation and leisure may also provide low-pressure opportunities to become familiar with local environments, meet others, and develop a sense of place. However, leisure is not automatically inclusive or inherently beneficial, its value depends on whether activities are accessible, culturally meaningful, socially welcoming, and

practically feasible within participants' everyday lives (Lauckner et al., 2022; Özgider & Koch, 2026; Smith et al., 2019). This point is especially important in diverse communities, where access to leisure is shaped by more than individual preference. Research on immigrant and equity-denied groups in Canada shows that participation in physical activity, sport, and recreation is influenced by intersecting barriers such as cost, transportation, language, time scarcity, cultural accessibility, safety, and the design of programs and spaces (Gagliardi et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2025; Tossutti, 2023). Municipal facilities or community programs do not necessarily produce equitable access simply because they exist. Participation depends on how programs are communicated, whether digitally, print advertising or word-of-mouth, where the leisure activities take place, whether they are affordable, safe, and respond to the lived realities of the communities they aim to serve.

2.4 Immigrant Working Women, Dual Workload Constraints, and Leisure

Researchers in women's leisure contributed to our understanding that leisure is not simply "free time." For working women managing dual workloads of paid work and unpaid caregiving and domestic labor, leisure may be impacted by their paid work, unpaid domestic labor, caregiving responsibilities, household expectations, and broader gender norms (Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Petty & Trussell, 2021). In the context of these challenges, leisure can also be understood as a form of self-care. As such, leisure is not merely entertainment but is also a practice through which women may seek restoration, well-being, and continuity of self. In the context of migration, familiar networks are disrupted when access to friends, extended family, and community contacts are reduced. Leisure spaces and community programs thus provide the opportunity for repeated, low-stakes interaction and support, but only if barriers are reduced rather than reproduced.

This study is focused on Farsi-speaking, Iranian immigrant women in Ottawa, Canada, aged 30-55, a group that often sits between two common frames in the literature on women, leisure,

and immigration. The first frame centers on young adult women aged 18 to 29, a life stage typically characterized by post-secondary education, the pursuit of early career positioning, geographic mobility away from the family home, and a relatively greater degree of personal autonomy over time and social activity. Leisure research on this cohort tends to emphasize identity exploration, peer socialization, and the negotiation of independence. The second frame focuses on women aged 55 and older, a period associated with shifting caregiving roles, retirement transitions, declining physical mobility, and increased attention to healthy aging and social isolation. Women aged 30 to 55, by contrast, occupy a demanding middle ground that has received comparatively less sustained attention in leisure studies. Women in this stage of life may simultaneously manage paid employment, domestic labor, caregiving responsibilities, motherhood, spousal obligations, transnational family ties, and the practical demands of settlement in a new country.

Research on Iranian women's leisure suggests that participation may be shaped by gendered expectations around family responsibility, respectability, and women's perceived entitlement to time for themselves (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007). Migration may alter these expectations, but it does not necessarily remove them. Instead, pre-migration cultural norms, new social opportunities, economic pressures, care responsibilities, language barriers, and unfamiliar leisure systems may intersect in complex ways., Koosha's (2025) recent analysis of aging policies in Iran similarly highlights policy fragmentation, weak community and intergenerational networks, and limited access to social support resources. Their research findings in a broader context strengthens the case for surveying Iranian newcomer women's leisure interests and access conditions in Canada, particularly when migration may involve fragmented support systems and uneven pathways into community life. Studies of Iranian migrant women emphasized how identity,

autonomy, and empowerment are negotiated through gendered and cultural expectations in the receiving society (Hosseini & Safdar, 2023).

2.5 Materials and Methods

2.5.1 Conceptual Orientation

Settlement organizations can play an important role in sharing leisure information and making leisure opportunities more accessible. In Canada, settlement services are often associated with referrals, language training, employment support, and community connections. They may also act as bridges between newcomers and broader community life (Ambrosio, 2026; Karlis et al., 2020; Salami et al., 2019). Settlement service organizations can reduce uncertainty, provide trusted communication channels, support culturally and linguistically appropriate engagement, and create safer entry points into unfamiliar recreational, social, and public spaces. This role is particularly relevant for community-based leisure programming. Inclusive leisure activities require more than selecting attractive activities. They require attention to the conditions under which participation becomes possible: language, scheduling, transportation, cost, location, group composition, communication, trust, and cultural familiarity.

This study is guided by four inter-connected conceptual orientations: 1) intersectionality, 2) community-based participatory research, 3) asset-based community development, and 4) structural access. Adopting intersectionality as a theoretical framework enables us to explore how leisure opportunities are shaped not by gender alone but by the interaction of migration, age, language, class, caregiving, racialization, religion, and institutional access (Crenshaw, 1991; Crenshaw, 1997; Scuzzarello & Moroşanu, 2023). Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is a collaborative research approach that positions community members as active partners

in all phases of the research process, from design through to dissemination, recognizing and building on the knowledge, relationships, and strengths they bring (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008; Salma & Giri, 2021; Vaughn & Jacquez, 2020). In community-based leisure programming, a CBPR orientation means that the interests, constraints, and lived experiences of participants are not treated as background information but as the primary basis for program design.

Asset-based community development (ABCD), as conceptualized by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) and further developed by Mathie and Cunningham (2003), offers a complementary framework. Instead of focusing on a community's needs, deficits, or vulnerabilities, ABCD emphasizes what already exists within individuals and communities: their skills, knowledge, cultural capital, social networks, and collective capacities. Applied to leisure programming with immigrant women, an asset-based orientation means treating participants as holders of knowledge about their own lives whose preferences, experiences, and strengths should actively shape what is designed and offered. This conceptual contribution disrupts deficit-based approaches to leisure planning that risk constructing participants primarily through their disadvantages, thereby reproducing axes of exclusion that inclusive programming aims to address.

Structural access, the fourth conceptual orientation, draws attention to the social, economic, cultural, and institutional conditions that shape who participates, under what circumstances, and at what cost. For immigrant women, these conditions may include transportation, affordability, scheduling, caregiving demands, language, access to information, social comfort, safety, and trust in organizers (Zagrebina, 2026). A leisure activity that is desirable may nonetheless remain inaccessible if one or more of these structural conditions are not adequately addressed. Against this background, our study examined how a pre-activity leisure interest survey can inform the

design of community-based leisure programs for Iranian immigrant women aged 30-55 in Ottawa. The supporting rationale is that this survey demonstrates preferred leisure activities and points out the practical and relational conditions under which those interests can become feasible forms of participation. In doing so, we explored whether a pre-activity leisure survey can serve as a methodological and conceptual bridge between participant knowledge and program design.

2.5.2 Survey Design and Delivery

This article focuses discussion on integrating a pre-activity leisure interest survey developed within a broader community-based research project on leisure, well-being, and social participation among Iranian immigrant women aged 30-55 in Ottawa. The survey was based on the team's larger funded project on the role of language and leisure in settlement and the co-development of a pre-activity leisure interest survey tool shared with Iranian newcomer women over the age of 55 (O'Connor et al., 2024). For this study, the survey was modified to reflect a younger cohort, pilot tested with the supervisor and modifications implemented. As such, our survey functioned as an initial point of engagement through which working women aged 30-55 could anonymously articulate interests, preferences, access needs, and constraints before specific leisure opportunities were selected. This project collaborated with PAND Settlement Services, an Ottawa organization serving Farsi-speaking newcomers primarily of Iranian origin. PAND Settlement Services provided a trusted community network through which the survey could be circulated to women connected to the local Farsi-speaking community.

For this survey, we recruited Farsi-speaking immigrant women aged 30-55, an understudied group that may experience leisure differently from both older and university-aged immigrant women. Women in this age range are often simultaneously negotiating paid work,

caregiving, household responsibilities, language learning, settlement demands, and social adjustment, making leisure both significant and difficult to access.

While the participant group was predominantly Iranian, the survey was open to all Farsi-speaking women between 30-55 years of age meeting the residency criteria; one participant of Afghan origin also took part in the first activity of the study. This mattered methodologically as well as practically. Access to leisure is shaped not only by formal availability but also by trust, language, cultural familiarity, and the perceived relevance of an invitation. By distributing the survey through a community organization already familiar to potential participants, the study enabled recruitment and delivery to be part of the relational infrastructure of participation.

The survey was provided in both English and Farsi. This bilingual format reflected the goals of our methodological and ethical design, helping to ensure that English proficiency did not determine whose preferences or constraints could be expressed clearly. The instrument was intentionally concise and accessible, organized into four sections: language proficiency and language-related goals; preferred scheduling and availability; leisure interests across five thematic categories (outdoor and physical activities, arts and creative expression, social and community activities, mind and relaxation, and cultural and educational activities); and open-ended questions addressing additional activity ideas and accessibility needs. The survey relied on checkboxes, ranking items, and short open-ended prompts rather than long written responses, and was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

In collaboration with the community partner, the survey was distributed digitally through PAND Settlement Services' social media platforms which provide a communication platform for the local Farsi-speaking community in Ottawa. Respondents accessed the survey through a Google Forms link embedded in the Telegram post. Participation was voluntary, responses were

anonymous, and no identifying information was collected. The survey was open from Saturday, 5 October until Friday, 10 October 2025, giving potential respondents approximately 5 days to complete it. Completing the survey did not obligate respondents to participate in any subsequent leisure activities; it was intended to function as a low-pressure planning tool rather than as a registration mechanism for predetermined programming.

2.5.3 Analytic Approach and Ethics

Survey responses were reviewed descriptively and interpretively to identify recurring preferences, access concerns, and feasible activity formats that could be developed through the community partnership. As respondents could identify up to three preferred activities, open-ended activity responses were reviewed as coded mentions rather than as mutually exclusive selections. The survey was used for planning data to identify patterns sufficiently clear to guide the development of participant-responsive leisure activities. This analytic approach was consistent with the project's community-based orientation. The survey's value lay in its ability to generate contextually meaningful information about activity type, timing, accessibility, language, cost, and facilitation.

Ethical and reflexive considerations were embedded throughout the larger study which received ethics approval from the University. Prior to taking the survey, respondents were provided with a consent form and needed to digitally confirm consent before reaching the landing page of the survey. In terms of positionality, the lead researcher of the doctoral study is a Farsi-speaking international graduate student who was under faculty supervision in their collaboration with the local resettlement organization.

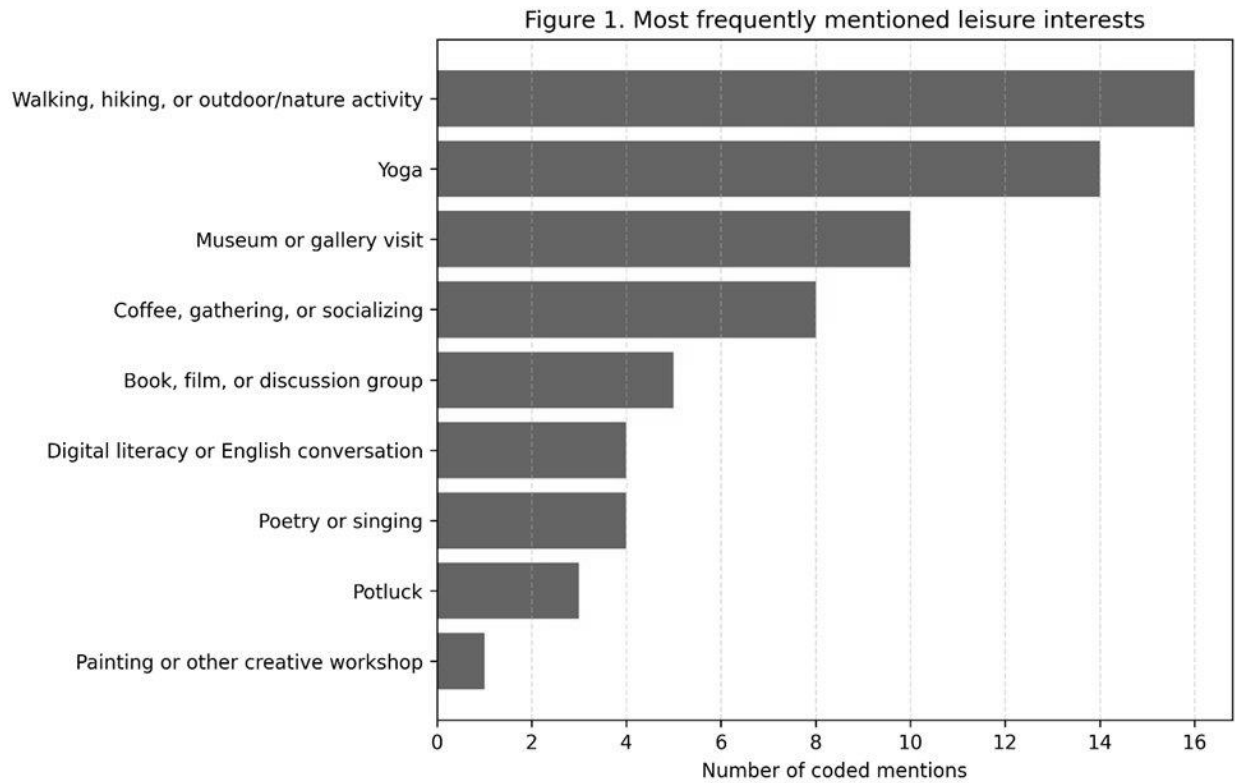
2.6 Results

Over the course of the recruitment period, forty (40) respondents who identified as Farsi-speaking immigrant women aged 30-55 in Ottawa completed and submitted their survey responses. Their responses revealed that leisure was understood as a cluster of possible experiences connected to movement, enjoyment, social contact, cultural participation, learning, and temporary respite from everyday responsibilities.

2.6.1 Preferred Leisure Interests

The survey instrument tool included an open-ended question asking respondents to identify their three preferred leisure activities from a list provided. Across the 40 responses, the most frequently mentioned form of leisure preference was outdoor and movement-based activity: walking along the Rideau Canal, hiking in Gatineau Park, or other nature-based outings were identified by 16 respondents, while yoga was identified by 14. Museum or gallery visits were the second most frequently mentioned preference, cited by 10 respondents, followed by social gatherings such as meetings for coffee or tea, cited by 8. Additional preferences included book, film, or discussion groups (n=5), digital literacy or English conversation practice (n=4), poetry or singing (n=4), potlucks and meal sharing (n=3), and painting or other creative workshops (n=1). One respondent noted that the demands of language learning, employment, and childcare left little room to think about leisure for herself, and that she would prefer not to leave her children at home unattended, a response that, while not a leisure preference as such, speaks directly to the structural barriers this study seeks to address.

Figure 1. *Most frequently selected leisure interests*



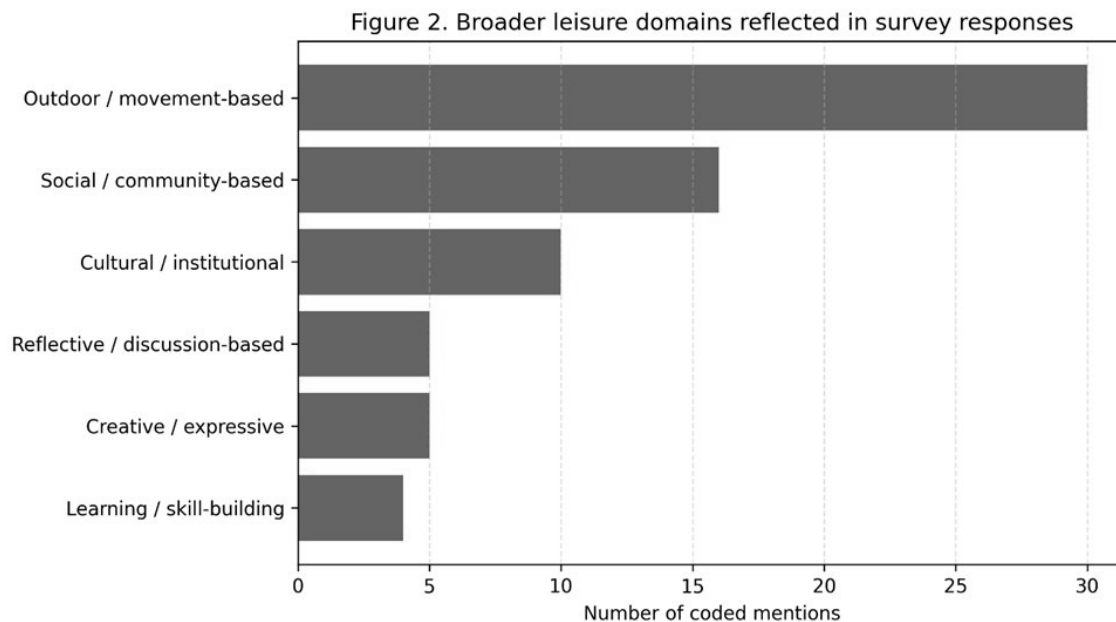
Note: Bars represent activity mentions from open-ended responses, not unique participant counts. Because respondents could list multiple preferred activities, one response may be counted across more than one category.

2.6.2 Leisure Domains

When the activity preferences are grouped into broader domains, the pattern of leisure preferences becomes even clearer. Outdoor and movement-based activities accounted for 30 mentions. Social and community-based activities accounted for 16, followed by cultural and institutional outings with 10 mentions. Reflective or discussion-based activities and creative or expressive activities each generated 5 mentions; while learning or skill-building activities

generated 4 mentions. This distribution suggests that respondents imagined leisure through several overlapping pathways rather than through a single preferred format.

Figure 2. *Broader leisure domains reflected in survey responses*



Note: Figure 2 shows that outdoor and movement-based activities formed the largest broader domain, followed by social and community-based activities and cultural or institutional activities.

2.6.3 Access Conditions and Practical Feasibility

The survey allowed participants to express that interests could not be separated from practical feasibility. One respondent expressed interest in museum visits but noted that afternoon scheduling made participation difficult. This comment is important because it shows that interest alone does not guarantee participation. An activity may be desirable, but if its timing conflicts with work, caregiving, transportation, or household responsibilities, it may remain inaccessible. Another respondent described being so occupied with language learning, income generation, and

caring for children that she rarely thought about her own leisure and would prefer not to leave her children at home to attend an activity.

Participant responses reveal several, intersecting constraints: settlement-related language needs, economic pressure, caregiving responsibility, and the difficulty of claiming time for oneself. Rather than indicating a lack of interest, it suggests that leisure may be difficult to imagine when everyday life is organized around urgent family, economic, and settlement demands. Responses related to accessibility reinforced the importance of designing activities with practical and embodied needs in mind.

While most respondents did not identify specific physical accessibility accommodations, some noted ankle pain that would make jumping or running difficult while others expressed a phobia of pets, particularly dogs in park settings. These responses reveal the pertinence of open-ended accessibility questions to gather data from the participants themselves. A general category such as physical activity may seem broadly accessible, yet the form of movement, level of intensity, setting, and environmental triggers can all affect whether a participant feels able to attend.

2.6.4 Survey Findings Inform Activity Planning

Analysis of the open-ended survey responses suggest three broad themes. First, participants expressed interest in leisure as embodied well-being and enjoyable movement. Yoga, walking, hiking, outdoor activity, and dance suggest a desire for movement that is beneficial yet socially comfortable and adaptable. Secondly, respondents described leisure as a social and community-based practice. Coffee gatherings, group socializing, potlucks, discussion groups, singing, poetry, and conversational activities indicate that leisure was valued as a way of being with others. Thirdly, the responses show that leisure was also imagined as a pathway into cultural and urban spaces.

Museum visits, gallery visits, walks along a pedestrian path beside the Rideau Canal and cultural activities, poetry, singing, and dance all point to a desire to engage with both the city and culturally meaningful forms of expression.

Findings from the survey provided a practical basis for the subsequent activity phase of the project. The findings reveal preference for activities that were low-cost, group-based, socially or culturally meaningful, and feasible within participants' constraints.

2.7 Discussion

The diversity of preferred leisure forms identified in this study aligns with a broader understanding of leisure as a multidimensional social phenomenon rather than a discrete recreational category. Participants' preference for walking, hiking, yoga, and other low-cost movement-oriented activities suggests interest in embodied forms of leisure that are social, accessible, and adaptable, rather than highly competitive, intensive, or institutionally formalized (Barrick, 2023; Stodolska, 2015). This distinction matters because leisure programming for immigrant women can sometimes be framed too narrowly around health promotion or physical activity outcomes, whereas these responses suggest that movement is meaningful precisely when it is linked to social ease, cultural comfort, and enjoyment (Caldwell, 2005; Iwasaki, 2007; McDonald et al., 2023). Museum and gallery visits reveal that leisure was not understood solely as physical activity or informal socializing; cultural and institutional spaces were also valued as opportunities for learning, exploration, and engagement with the city beyond the routines of work, family, and settlement responsibilities. Coffee gatherings, storytelling, potlucks, discussion groups, and conversational activities further point to the importance of leisure as a relational practice consistent with research showing that social participation is among the most significant functions of leisure for newcomer populations (Antoun & Karlis, 2025; Cai & O'Connor, 2025;

Hassanli et al., 2026; Lauckner et al., 2022). Dance is particularly illustrative in this regard, as it sits across multiple categories simultaneously: it is movement-based, culturally expressive, social, and enjoyable, and was associated by several respondents with both physical activity and cultural expression. Research on leisure among ethnic and racialized communities demonstrates that leisure serves multiple simultaneous functions, including the facilitation of intercultural contact, sense of community, preservation of cultural identity, social bonding, and the promotion of physical and psychological well-being (Liechty et al., 2019; Stodolska, 2015; Woo et al., 2025), and these survey responses reflect all these dimensions. Inclusive leisure programming should therefore not rely on a single activity type or format; rather, it should offer varied options that respond to different forms of comfort, interest, and participation (Stodolska, 2015). These findings are consistent with Arab-Moghaddam et al.'s (2007) observation that Iranian women's leisure participation is shaped by complex intersections of cultural expectation, identity, and the negotiation of personal time.

Scholarship on leisure participation emphasizes that leisure is shaped by a convergence of social, cultural, economic, and structural factors that simultaneously condition both what people desire and what they are able to do (Frensch & Akesson, 2025; Stodolska, 2015). This resonates in our study with immigrant working women as they indicate their leisure behavior is influenced by personal preferences, settlement, gendered responsibility, and constrained access to time and resources (Lim et al., 2022; Stick et al., 2024).

An intersectional analytical lens, as conceptualized by Crenshaw (1991), is essential to understanding these findings. Intersectionality reveals that barriers to leisure participation are not the product of any single dimension of disadvantage but emerge from the simultaneous operation of gender, immigration status, language proficiency, income, caregiving responsibility, and

cultural norms (Crenshaw, 1991). In this study, participants' scheduling constraints, accessibility concerns, and references to caregiving responsibilities illustrate precisely this kind of compounding disadvantage. Additional contextual factors specific to the Ottawa setting including the need for appropriate winter clothing, reliable and affordable transportation, and physically accessible venues further underscore how structural conditions intersect with individual circumstances to shape what leisure is practically possible (Barrick, 2023; Lim et al., 2022). While a leisure activity may be listed as a preference, it remains inaccessible if it is scheduled during a work shift, financially prohibitive, linguistically inaccessible, or geographically difficult to reach (Stodolska, 2015). A preference for a museum visit, for example, carries different practical weight depending on whether the activity is scheduled during working hours, whether admission costs are manageable, whether transportation is feasible, and whether women feel culturally comfortable participating in a group setting. Likewise, a dance class may be appealing, but it must be organized in a way that accounts for comfort, mobility, prior experience, and the need for a culturally safe environment. Leisure interest without attention to these structural conditions remains an incomplete and potentially misleading basis for program design (Hosseini & Safdar, 2023).

The CBPR framework adopted in this study provided the methodological approach to reveal these intersecting dimensions (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008; Wills et al., 2020). Research conducted "with" rather than "on" communities a foundational CBPR principle enables participants to articulate not only what they want but what stands in the way, and to do so in a trusted environment facilitated through an established community partner (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). The collaboration with PAND Settlement Services was central to this process. PAND Settlement Services was not simply a participant recruitment channel; as a resettlement organization, it had developed over time a relationship of trust and familiarity with members of

the Farsi-speaking community in Ottawa. This trusted, relational infrastructure familiar with the community, its members, their assets, and their needs made it possible to reach participants. This survey empowered participants to communicate their preferences and concerns, which in turn supported our community-campus partnership to make programming decisions that were accessible, relevant, and socially grounded.

Our findings also support an asset-based understanding of community leisure programming, as theorized by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993). Asset-based community development challenges deficit-oriented approaches that identify communities primarily through their needs, gaps, and vulnerabilities, and instead foregrounds the skills, knowledge, cultural capital, and social capacities that community members already possess (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Mathie & Cunningham, 2003). Although the survey identified constraints, it did not reduce participants to being defined or identified through those constraints. Women's responses revealed skills and assets they wanted to continue to build on in their leisure pursuits, and they expressed interests, cultural capital, social preferences, and forms of knowledge that could directly guide program design. This matters because deficit-based understandings of immigrant women's leisure risk overemphasizing gaps or vulnerabilities at the expense of recognizing what women already know and bring to community life (Stodolska, 2015). By contrast, this pre-activity interest survey recognized women as holders of knowledge about their own lives and as contributors to the design of programming that could be meaningful to them an orientation that reflects both CBPR ethics and asset-based practice (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993).

2.7.1 Practical Implications

Findings from this study provide practical implications for settlement agencies, community organizations, and municipal recreation systems. Leisure programming for immigrant women

could include participant-informed inquiry on what women find meaningful, realistic, and comfortable. Culturally responsive programming requires minority-language communication, inclusion of cultural content and being attentive to scheduling, cost, transportation, childcare responsibilities, mobility concerns, communication channels, and the social atmosphere of participation. Future research could examine whether survey-informed activities lead to sustained participation, broader social networks, improved sense of belonging, or greater confidence in using community and public spaces over time.

2.8 Conclusions

This article makes two related contributions. Empirically, it documents how Farsi-speaking immigrant women aged 30-55 described meaningful and feasible leisure in a local Canadian context. Making this connection explicit matters because "Farsi-speaking" defined the linguistic criterion for participation, while "Iranian" reflects the cultural and national background shared by most respondents, two terms that overlap substantially but are not interchangeable. Methodologically, this article shows how a pre-activity survey can function as a bridge between community-based research principles and the practical design of leisure opportunities before activities are implemented. In doing so, it contributes to discussions of community diversity, immigrant inclusion, and participant-informed program development in leisure studies.

We explored how a pre-activity leisure interest survey can be beneficial in the design of community-based leisure activities for Farsi-speaking immigrant women aged 30-55 in Ottawa. Survey respondents ($n = 40$) revealed a strong preference for outdoor movement-based activities, yoga, dance, cultural outings, and social gatherings, while also showing that these interests were shaped by intersecting concerns around scheduling, caregiving, cost, transportation, language, accessibility, and community trust. Our research reveals that a pre-activity interest survey can help

identify individual and community assets and needs, and act as a tool through which respondents could express their voice. As such, the survey can be understood as both a participant-informed communication tool and an early analytic lens onto the conditions under which leisure can become meaningful and accessible.

Integrating leisure as part of the social infrastructure of resettlement demonstrates how a participant-informed survey design can guide culturally responsive program development. Our findings contribute to discussions on the role of leisure in community development and newcomer social inclusion (Rich et al., 2015).

2.9 Funding, Acknowledgements, and Declarations

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Chapter 3

Article 2

Leisure as Catalyst for Well-Being and Sense of Belonging Among Iranian Immigrant Women Aged 30–55 in Ottawa, Canada

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3.1 Abstract

Background: Immigrant working women's well-being is shaped not only by formal health and settlement services but also by everyday opportunities for rest, social connection, cultural expression, and participation in community life. This study examined how three community-based leisure activities were experienced by Farsi-speaking Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 living in Ottawa, Canada. Methods: Organized in partnership with PAND Settlement Services, the activities included a group walk along the Rideau Canal, a Classical Persian dance workshop, and a group visit to the National Gallery of Canada. Data were drawn from 32 post-activity evaluation surveys, researcher field notes, and two follow-up semi-structured feedback sessions. Structured items were analyzed descriptively; open-ended responses and feedback sessions notes were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach. Results: Participants rated all three activities positively across enjoyment, accessibility, and social contact. Leisure was experienced as a meaningful break from routine, a source of emotional relief, an opportunity to

meet other women, and a setting in which shared language and migration experience made participation easier and more comfortable. Sustained participation remained shaped by time pressure, caregiving demands, weather, transportation, cost, and access to clear and trusted information. Conclusions: Leisure activities contributed to the well-being and sense of belonging for the women who participated in the study.

Keywords: immigrant working women; leisure; wellbeing; belonging; social connection; community-based activities; Iranian immigrants; Canada; mental health promotion; settlement

3.2 Introduction

Immigrant settlement is frequently discussed in relation to employment, housing, language acquisition, and access to formal health and social services. While these dimensions matter, they do not fully account for how well-being is constructed and sustained in everyday life. A growing body of scholarship shows that immigrant well-being is also shaped by social inclusion, access to community resources, and the practical ability to participate in meaningful daily activities beyond work and survival-oriented responsibilities (Abood et al., 2021; Crawford et al., 2023). For immigrant women in particular, well-being is closely tied to social support, family connectedness, and opportunities to participate in community life; all aspects that can be strained when connections are disrupted through migration (Nicolas & Smith, 2013; Nicolas et al., 2009). Periods of heightened isolation and reduced access to support networks, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, have been associated with lower levels of well-being among immigrants, a reminder of how sensitive mental health is to everyday social connections (Krannich & Massey, 2024).

Leisure is one domain through which broader dimensions of wellbeing become particularly visible. Leisure is increasingly understood as a meaningful social and health-related practice

connected to emotional restoration, quality of life, relationship-building, and a fuller sense of self (Caldwell, 2005; Iwasaki, 2007). In Canadian research, Suto (2013) identified leisure as an important contributor to immigrant women's well-being, especially where it created space for enjoyment, autonomy, and social connection. More broadly, research on immigrants and leisure demonstrates that recreational and community activities can support adaptation, reduce acculturative stress, strengthen settlement satisfaction, and create opportunities for connection to both people and place (Berasategi Sancho et al., 2023; Blanco-Ayala et al., 2025; Charles-Rodriguez & Larouche, 2025; Gallant & Tirone, 2017; Kim & Iwasaki, 2016; Stodolska & Alexandris, 2004). A recent scoping review further concluded that leisure remains an underutilized component of settlement infrastructure, despite consistent evidence of its contributions to well-being and integration (Hassanli et al., 2026).

At the same time, access to leisure is far from equal. Research on women and leisure has long documented how time poverty, family responsibilities, social expectations, and unequal access to resources constrain participation (Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Jackson & Henderson, 1995). These patterns are often intensified in migration contexts. Studies with immigrant and refugee women identified multiple, overlapping constraints, including limited time, transportation challenges, financial pressure, lack of information, unfamiliarity with local opportunities, cultural expectations, and discomfort in mainstream activity settings (Crawford et al., 2023; Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007; Gagliardi et al., 2022; Lauckner et al., 2022). In the Canadian context, newcomers also described recreation and leisure as difficult to access when information is fragmented, programming is not culturally responsive, or participation depends on resources that are not evenly distributed (Lauckner et al., 2022; Antoun & Karlis, 2025; Zagrebina, 2026). Leisure scholarship has long theorized these limits through the concept of leisure constraints. This

literature distinguishes between structural constraints such as time, cost, transportation, and the organization of programming; interpersonal constraints, which arise from relationships and social obligations including caregiving and the availability of companions; and intrapersonal constraints such as internalized expectations, confidence, and beliefs about whether leisure is appropriate or deserved (Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Jackson & Henderson, 1995). Importantly, constraints are not understood as fixed barriers that simply prevent participation. Women negotiate constraints, drawing on facilitators such as flexible scheduling, affordable options in proximity, trusted information, and the support of family or peers so that participation is often adapted, or made partial rather than abandoned altogether (Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Jackson & Henderson, 1995). Identifying constraints and facilitators provides an important vantage to examine the factors that limited participation but also what made leisure possible for the study participants.

While structural, interpersonal and intrapersonal constraints may affect women's leisure broadly, they take on distinct forms in the context of migration. Theories on immigrant adaptation describe how newcomers negotiate unfamiliar institutions, languages, and social norms while rebuilding networks and local knowledge that enables participation in social and community life (Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Cargo & Mercer, 2008). Layered onto the gendered constraints that nativeborn women also face, immigrant women encounter migration-specific conditions such as limited familiarity with local leisure systems, information that is fragmented or arrives through channels they do not yet use, the loss of established social networks, discomfort in mainstream settings, and the demands of acculturation. These intersect alongside factors such as language, residency status, and racialization that can further restrict access and inclusion (Zagrebin, 2026; Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Jafari et al., 2010; Israel et al., 1998). These intersecting conditions mean that opportunities available to native-born women may remain difficult to locate, afford, or feel

welcoming for newcomer women, even when formal provision exists. For many immigrant women, leisure is further shaped by gendered norms and family expectations carried across the migration process so that constraints experienced before migration are reconfigured rather than removed in their new settings (Antoun & Karlis, 2025). Understanding immigrant women's leisure therefore requires attention to how gender and migration intersect.

Iranian immigrant working women are a population for whom these considerations resonate. Existing work has shown that Iranian women's leisure is shaped by gendered norms, family expectations, and structural constraints both before and after migration (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007). Research on Iranian immigrants in Canada has highlighted the importance of social determinants, isolation, and community connection in shaping mental health and everyday well-being (Jafari et al., 2010). Yet there is limited qualitative research examining how structured, community-based leisure activities are experienced by Iranian immigrant working women in a Canadian urban setting, and how such activities may support well-being, connection, and belonging in practice.

This article addresses that gap by drawing on the activity-based component of a broader doctoral study conducted in collaboration with PAND Settlement Services in Ottawa. Three structured leisure activities were organized for Farsi-speaking Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55: a group walk along the Rideau Canal, a Classical Persian dance workshop, and a group visit to the National Gallery of Canada. Rather than treating leisure as background context, this study examines how participants described these activities in relation to emotional relief, social connection, familiarity with the city, and the practical conditions that made participation easier or harder. The study was guided by two questions: (1) How did participants experience the three leisure activities in relation to well-being, connection, and belonging? (2) What constraints and

facilitators shaped participation across the three activities? Following leisure studies scholarship, we use the term constraints rather than barriers throughout the article. Constraints better reflects that these conditions are not necessarily fixed obstacles that prevent participation altogether; they may ease, intensify, or recede over time, and women often negotiate them to take part fully or partially (Jackson & Henderson, 1995).

3.3 Materials and Methods

3.3.1 Study Design and Community Partnership

This article draws on the activity-based component of a doctoral research project on leisure and community services as potential pathways to well-being among Iranian immigrant working women aged 30–55 in Ottawa, Canada. This project emerged from the research team’s SSHRC-funded community engaged project in partnership with PAND Settlement Services. The activity component of this doctoral study included input from community members at every stage. This partnership-based approach aligns with communitybased and participatory health research principles that emphasize trust, responsiveness, and the value of working through established community relationships (Cargo & Mercer, 2008; Israel et al., 1998), as well as emerging work in leisure studies demonstrating that co-designing programming with community members can strengthen both participation and sense of belonging (Oncescu et al., 2026). In practice, this community input reflected the study’s community-based approach: the choice, timing, format, and location of the activities were guided by community members’ stated preferences, everyday constraints and accessibility needs, gathered through a preliminary leisure interest survey administered through Google Forms (Google LLC, Mountain View, CA, USA) and ongoing consultation with PAND Settlement Services organization (see Chapter Two). Many of the women

who later attended the activities and contributed evaluation data completed the earlier preliminary leisure interest survey, so activities reflected the interests and preferences of the community they were intended to serve.

3.3.2 Participants and Recruitment

Participants were Farsi-speaking Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 living in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Recruitment was carried out through bilingual posters circulated via PAND Settlement Services' communication channels, including newsletter emails and the Telegram messaging platform (Telegram Messenger Inc., Dubai, United Arab Emirates). Separate posters were prepared for each activity and included the date, time, location, eligibility criteria, registration process, and consent requirements. All materials were available in both English and Farsi, and participation was voluntary, based on self-registration. The study focused on this age range because women aged 30 to 55 typically balance paid employment with caregiving and household responsibilities. This period in immigrant women's lives is often less examined than younger cohorts such as newcomer children, adolescents or students, or studies on older adults. The descriptor working women is used in an inclusive sense throughout the article, referring to women engaged in paid work alongside substantial domestic and caregiving labour, rather than as a formal labour-force screening category.

Across the three activities, 12 post-activity surveys were completed after the group walk, 11 after the dance workshop, and 9 after the gallery visit, for a total of 32 surveys. As participants could choose which activities to attend, the survey totals represent activity-level responses rather than a count of unique individuals. Two women who had attended all three activities later participated in follow-up semi-structured feedback sessions. As the post-activity surveys were anonymous, individual respondents could not be identified across activities, so the extent of

overlap in attendance between activities cannot be determined. An overlap that could be identified with certainty was the two women who attended all three activities and took part in the follow-up feedback sessions. For the same reason, women who attended an activity but did not complete a survey could not be tracked, so some degree of self-selection among respondents cannot be ruled out. The 32 surveys therefore represent 32 activity-level evaluations across the three activities rather than repeated measures from a single fixed group. The two follow-up feedback sessions were conducted as individual, one-on-one interviews rather than as focus groups, one with each of the two women who participated in all three activities.

3.3.3 Leisure Activities

Three leisure activities were organized between October and December 2025. The first was a group walk along the Rideau Canal, held on 26 October 2025. The second was a Classical Persian dance workshop, held on 19 November 2025, at a Community Center. The third was a group visit to the National Gallery of Canada during its Free Thursday Nights program on 4 December 2025. All activities were facilitated in Farsi. Each session followed a consistent sequence: participant arrival, informed consent, activity participation, and completion of an anonymous post-activity evaluation survey before departure. Field notes were recorded in Microsoft Word (Microsoft 365, version 2607; Microsoft Corporation, Redmond, WA, USA) by the lead researcher after each session. The walk covered approximately 2.5 to 3 km round trip and lasted about 1.5 h at a relaxed, moderate pace, walking on a well-paved pedestrian pathway with few physical obstacles. Participants stopped at the halfway point for a pause to sit on the benches, drink water, and pose on the Rideau Canal bridge for a group photograph. The weather was mild and sunny, with little to no wind and no rain. The outing concluded with informal tea and conversation in the lobby of the National Arts Centre.

The three activities differed intentionally in format. The walk provided a low-cost, low-pressure outdoor experience in a familiar public space. The dance workshop created a culturally familiar, movement-based group setting. The gallery visit offered access to a major cultural institution and to free public programming. Together, these formats were designed to explore how different types of leisure might support or constrain participation among immigrant women.

3.3.4 Data Collection

Data were drawn from three complementary sources: post-activity evaluation surveys, field notes, and follow-up semi-structured feedback sessions.

The post-activity evaluation surveys were modelled after team members' comparable research projects using post leisure activity surveys with Iranian newcomer women over the age of 55. The survey contained both structured and open-ended items. Structured items addressed four areas across all activities: evaluation of the activity and its organization; experiences of well-being and social interaction; perceived constraints on leisure participation; and preferences for future programming. Open-ended items invited participants to share their motivations for attending, valued aspects of the activity, experiences of social connection, growing familiarity with Ottawa, and suggestions for future programs. All surveys were available in English and Farsi and responses submitted in Farsi were translated into English before analysis. To gather data on constraints, questions included asking about conditions that generally make leisure participation more difficult for the respondent, rather than only about the specific activity just completed, and were paired with the item on preferences for future programming to inform subsequent activities. The survey used here was pretested through consultation with the doctoral supervisor. Following that consultation, the instrument was adapted by simplifying and clarifying item wording, adjusting the list of leisure constraints to reflect the circumstances of working women aged 30 to

55, and expanding the open-ended prompts on well-being, social connection, and familiarity with the city.

Field notes were recorded by the lead researcher following each activity. These captured contextual and procedural dimensions not fully reflected in survey responses, including group atmosphere, patterns of interaction among participants, and observations about how the session unfolded in practice.

Two follow-up semi-structured feedback sessions were conducted online through Zoom (version 6.3; Zoom Video Communications, Inc., San Jose, CA, USA), in Farsi language, with women who had attended all three activities, each lasting approximately 45 min. Semi-structured feedback sessions were selected because it offers a flexible framework that keeps the conversation oriented toward the research questions while allowing participants to introduce their own meanings, emphases, and priorities (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021). The follow-up feedback sessions questions were organized thematically, moving from general experiences of leisure and daily routines through participants' responses to each specific activity and concluding with reflections on constraints, community connection, and programming preferences. Follow-up prompts invited participants to elaborate on specific moments, describe what made participation easier or harder, and reflect on how the activities compared to one another. Participants did not consent to audio-recording. Accordingly, the lead researcher took detailed notes throughout each feedback session. At the close of each session, these notes were reviewed aloud with the participant to verify accuracy and completeness before being translated into English. Although audio-recording might have preserved additional nuance, this approach respected participants' preferences and ensured that the documented content faithfully reflected what had been shared. Emerging themes were member-checked with the supervisor. Self-reflection to identify potential

bias was implemented and addressed, given the lead researcher's positionality as an Iranian international student in this age cohort.

3.3.5 Data Analysis

Structured survey responses were entered into Microsoft Excel (Microsoft 365, version 2607; Microsoft Corporation, Redmond, WA, USA) and analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. Given the small, activity-specific samples, the quantitative material was used to identify and summarize response patterns rather than to support inferential analysis.

Open-ended survey responses and feedback sessions notes were analyzed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2021) six-phase approach: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, construction of candidate themes, review and refinement of themes, definition and naming of themes, and production of the analytical narrative. Analysis began with repeated reading of all translated material, followed by systematic coding across the full dataset and the gradual development of themes capturing recurring meanings and patterns across activities. Field notes were incorporated as supporting interpretive material, particularly when clarifying how the structure, atmosphere, or logistical conditions of a session shaped participants' experience.

3.3.6 Rigor and Trustworthiness

Several strategies were employed to support the rigor and trustworthiness of the findings. First, data were drawn from three complementary sources, namely surveys, field notes, and feedback sessions, allowing patterns identified in one source to be contextualized and examined against the others. This triangulation strengthened confidence in the themes that emerged across the dataset. Second, member checking was built into the follow-up feedback sessions process:

notes taken during each feedback session were reviewed and confirmed by participants before the session closed, reducing the risk of misrepresentation. Third, the use of bilingual materials throughout the study, including recruitment posters, consent forms, surveys, and follow-up feedback sessions facilitation entirely in Farsi, supported meaningful participation and reduced language-related barriers to expression. Finally, the lead researcher maintained reflexive awareness of her position as a member of the Iranian diaspora conducting research within a community, she was also part of, attending carefully to how this dual role might shape data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

3.3.7 Ethical Considerations

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before participation in each activity and in advance of the follow-up feedback sessions. Consent forms were bilingual and clearly explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, participants' right to withdraw at any time without consequence, and the steps taken to protect confidentiality. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. Signed consent forms were stored securely and separately from the anonymous post-activity evaluation surveys, which contained no identifying information. Feedback consultation materials were handled confidentially and reported without identifying details. The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board (Protocol H-03-23-8562).

3.4 Results

3.4.1 Activity Overview and Post-Activity Evaluations

Participants positively rated all three activities. For the outdoor walk, all 12 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had enjoyed the activity, found registration and participation easy, felt comfortable during the session, and would recommend the route to others. Eleven of the 12 respondents said the walk fit their schedule, and 11 indicated they would be likely to walk the same route or a similar activity again. All 12 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt good or happy during the activity and had made at least one new acquaintance.

The dance workshop received equally strong, positive responses. All 11 respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed the session, found it easy to attend, were satisfied with the facilitation, felt encouraged to participate regardless of prior dance experience, and felt good or happy while participating. Ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the pace and level of instruction were appropriate, and eight said the workshop increased their awareness of leisure opportunities in the broader community.

The gallery visit was also rated highly. All nine respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they enjoyed the visit, were satisfied with the facilitation, and found the gallery activities engaging. Eight respondents said the visit fit their schedule and that the gallery environment supported their participation. Eight respondents also agreed or strongly agreed that the visit increased their interest in art and culture, encouraged interest in other museums or cultural spaces, and raised their awareness of free-admission programming. Table 1 provides an overview of the three activities. Table 2 presents selected structured survey findings. Table 3 summarizes the most frequently reported constraints across activities.

Table 1. Overview of the three community-based leisure activities, including date, location, main features, and number of post-activity evaluation surveys completed

Activity	Date	Location	Main features	Completed surveys
Group walk	26 October 2025	Rideau Canal / National Arts Centre	Relaxed outdoor walk followed by informal tea and conversation	12
Classical Persian dance workshop	19 November 2025	Community Center	Culturally familiar group dance session with refreshments and informal conversation	11
National Gallery visit	4 December 2025	National Gallery of Canada	Group museum visit during Free Thursday Nights with social and creative programming	9

Table 2. Selected post-activity evaluation findings from structured survey items, showing positive participation ratings, social connection outcomes, and notable activity-specific results

Activity	Positive participation ratings	Social connection findings	Notable activity-specific finding
Group walk	12/12 enjoyed the activity; 12/12 found registration and participation easy; 11/12 said the walk fit their schedule	12/12 reported making at least one new acquaintance; 9/12 wanted to stay connected through a small group	6/12 reported it was their first time on the route; 11/12 said they would do the walk or a similar activity again
Dance workshop	11/11 enjoyed the activity; 11/11 were satisfied with facilitation; 10/11 felt the pace and level were suitable	11/11 reported making at least one new acquaintance	8/11 said the workshop increased their awareness of leisure opportunities in the community and city
Gallery visit	9/9 enjoyed the visit; 8/9 said the activity fit their schedule and the environment supported participation	8/9 reported enjoyable interactions with other women; 7/9 felt more connected with the Iranian community in Ottawa	8/9 said the visit increased their interest in art and culture and raised awareness of free-admission programs

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of self-reported constraints on leisure participation across the three activities

Constraint	Walk (n = 12)	Dance workshop (n = 11)	Gallery visit (n = 9)
Lack of time	7 (58.3%)	6 (54.5%)	7 (77.8%)

Constraint	Walk (n = 12)	Dance workshop (n = 11)	Gallery visit (n = 9)
Family duties	6 (50.0%)	6 (54.5%)	2 (22.2%)
Childcare responsibilities	3 (25.0%)	4 (36.4%)	3 (33.3%)
Transportation	4 (33.3%)	4 (36.4%)	6 (66.7%)
Weather	3 (25.0%)	7 (63.6%)	9 (100.0%)
Not knowing local leisure resources	8 (66.7%)	3 (27.3%)	3 (33.3%)
Cost	2 (16.7%)	3 (27.3%)	2 (22.2%)

3.4.2 Leisure as Self-Care and Relief

Across the surveys and follow-up feedback sessions, participants described leisure as something considerably more than simple enjoyment. The activities were consistently associated with relief, lightness, and a temporary release from the demands of daily routine. In the follow-up feedback sessions, leisure was described in plainly affective terms as ‘free time without responsibility’ and ‘time that is not duty.’ These characterizations reveal that leisure was understood not primarily as a type of program, but as a qualitatively different experience of time, one not fully claimed by work, caregiving, household tasks, or continuous obligation.

This understanding appeared across all three activities. Participants used affective language to describe the effects of participation: feeling ‘good,’ ‘happy,’ ‘more active,’ ‘lighter,’ or ‘cheered up.’ One respondent in the dance workshop wrote that the session gave her ‘a lot of positive energy’ after a busy day. Another explained simply that ‘it cheered me up a lot.’ In the gallery survey, one participant described attending because she wanted ‘to do something different and take a break from my repetitive daily routine, work, home, sleep,’ while another wrote that she came because she needed ‘a break from the responsibilities of motherhood and being a wife.’ These accounts suggest that the value of leisure was not only in the activity itself but also for the respite it offered from the demands of daily life. The follow-up feedback sessions reinforced this point.

One participant reflected that the activities reminded her that she needed ‘something outside routine, even if small.’ Another, speaking about the gallery visit, remarked that the experience helped her realize she was ‘not just [a] cashier.’ Taken together, these responses show that the activities created brief but meaningful openings in which participants could momentarily step outside heavily scheduled lives and experience a different relationship to time, role, and self.

3.4.3 Activity Format Shaped Leisure Experiences

Although all three activities were experienced positively, participants did not describe them in identical terms. Each format supported a distinct kind of leisure experience.

The outdoor walk was described as especially relaxed, easy, and low-pressure. It required no special preparation, involved no prerequisite skill, and unfolded in a public outdoor environment that felt welcoming and accessible. The side-by-side movement of walking also appeared to facilitate conversation without pressure or social obligation. Survey respondents highlighted ‘walking and chatting with people,’ ‘chatting with new friends,’ and ‘enjoying the beautiful pathway’ as among the most valued aspects of the experience. This made the walk particularly effective for early relationship-building and gentle social participation.

The dance workshop generated a more energized and culturally resonant experience. Participants valued the music, movement, shared cultural references, and the workshop’s supportive atmosphere. One respondent joined because she wanted ‘to learn Persian classic dance,’ while another said the activity helped her feel connected to Iranian culture. Several women emphasized the pleasure of ‘dancing together and talking,’ and others described the session as both physically and emotionally beneficial. One participant wrote that ‘after long time, it made me feel active,’ while another noted it improved her mood ‘by improving blood circulation and boosting

mood.’ The workshop also appeared to build confidence: one woman stated, ‘I don’t feel shy anymore,’ and another said she felt ‘more courageous to dance compared to before.’

The gallery visit offered a calmer and more reflective type of leisure. Participants described the setting as peaceful, creative, and inspiring. Open-ended responses emphasized ‘the calm and inspiring atmosphere of the gallery,’ ‘the collection of the art,’ and having ‘a few peaceful hours’ in a quiet environment. The visit also had a distinct place-based dimension: it introduced several women to a major cultural institution in Ottawa and to free-entry programming they had not previously known about. One follow-up feedback sessions participant noted that the experience motivated her ‘creatively.’ These patterns indicate that format mattered in meaningful ways. The walk supported ease and unforced social interaction; the dance workshop created culturally familiar and embodied engagement; and the gallery visit offered calm reflection and cultural exploration. The value of leisure programming lay partly in the diversity of forms through which participants could engage.

3.4.4 Leisure as Social Connection

A central finding across the dataset was that all three activities created structured opportunities for social contact. Participants consistently identified interaction with others as one of the most meaningful aspects of participation. This pattern appeared in both the structured survey items and the open-ended responses: across activities, nearly all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that making new acquaintances mattered to them and that they had made at least one during their session.

The qualitative material adds depth to this pattern. Walk participants highlighted ‘walking and chatting with people,’ ‘chatting with new friends,’ and ‘making friendship’ as important parts of their experience. In the dance workshop, participants described the value of ‘chatting afterward,’

‘chatting with friends over tea,’ and meeting women who shared similar experiences. One participant wrote that she appreciated ‘hearing our immigration stories,’ while another said the women were ‘very friendly and warm.’ The gallery visit also facilitated new contacts: one respondent explained, ‘As a newcomer I didn’t know anyone, but now I’ve made some new connections that may continue.’

Shared language played a central role in making these interactions easier. One walk participant noted the activity helped her feel connected because ‘we were speaking in our mother tongue,’ while a gallery respondent similarly wrote that ‘speaking in our mother tongue helped.’ In the follow-up feedback sessions, participants suggested that shared language and shared migration experience reduced the social effort required to connect, with one woman stating that connection came naturally ‘because we all speak the same language and have kind of the same experiences.’

At the same time, connection was not uniform. A smaller but important subset of responses indicated that not every activity felt equally welcoming for everyone. In one activity, a participant wrote: To be honest, the group didn’t feel very friendly or warm this time.’ Another said she was unable to make a connection during the visit. The follow-up feedback sessions data complicated the picture further: one participant remarked, ‘If I have a friend, I go; if not, I cancel,’ suggesting that a familiar companion was sometimes a prerequisite for participation. Another noted that she ‘prefers mixed spaces sometimes,’ indicating that an exclusively Iranian group setting was not automatically welcoming for all. These responses do not undermine the broader finding that leisure supported social connection; rather, they show that group-based connection was meaningful in this age cohort but contingent and perhaps shaped by individual personality, prior relationships, and the particular social dynamics of each activity format.

3.4.5 Familiarity with Ottawa and Emerging Belonging

Beyond enjoyable social moments, the activities helped participants become more familiar with Ottawa and, in some cases, more at ease within the city. This process appeared in both direct and indirect ways. Some respondents noted that the activities introduced them to places they had not previously visited, while others described how participation expanded their awareness of community resources and made the city feel more accessible.

The walk along the Rideau Canal provided a striking example. For several women, it was their first time on that route, and they described the outing as a way of coming to know Ottawa more intimately. One respondent wrote, ‘it was my first time walking along the Rideau Canal and was more rewarding with the beauty of the fall season.’ Another said that ‘visiting [a] new place of the city made me feel part of the city.’ The gallery visit had a similar effect. Multiple respondents noted they had not previously visited the National Gallery because of time, cost, transportation, or the absence of someone to go with. Learning about free-admission evenings shifted the gallery from something distant or costly into something imaginable and reachable. The walk ended with tea and conversation which gave participants the opportunity to socialize after the outing.

Participants connected these leisure activities to a broader sense of belonging. In the follow-up feedback sessions, one woman explained that experiences like these ‘teach how [the] systems work and introduce community spaces beyond work and school.’ This observation captures an important dimension of the findings: leisure did not simply create pleasant memories; it made the city more legible. It expanded participants’ practical knowledge of Ottawa and helped them imagine a relationship to the city that extended beyond work, commuting, and obligation.

Belonging also operated within the diaspora space created by the activities themselves. The Farsi-speaking group context reduced the need for extensive self-explanation and allowed

participants to feel more at ease. Shared language, shared age range, and shared migration-related concerns created culturally comfortable settings in which women could feel recognized without having to justify themselves. Even so, the data suggest that this sense of belonging remained emergent and fragile rather than fully settled, particularly when structural constraints on participation continued to operate in daily life.

3.4.6 Constraints and Facilitators

Despite the strongly positive responses to the activities, participation was consistently described as something that required active effort to make participation possible. Across the surveys, follow-up feedback sessions, and field notes, participation was largely dependent on timing, cost, transportation, weather, available energy, caregiving responsibilities, and access to clear and trusted information.

Time pressure emerged as the most persistent constraint. Participants described daily life as tightly structured around work, caregiving, household tasks, and routine obligations. One participant summarized her typical day as having ‘no gap,’ while another said simply that ‘time is short.’ A third explained that after a full work shift, ‘my body is finished.’ These comments reflect not only a shortage of time, but also the compounding effect of fatigue, scheduling pressure, and physical depletion accumulated across long days. The structured constraint checklists confirmed this pattern: lack of time was selected by 7 of 12 walk participants (58.3%), 6 of 11 dance participants (54.5%), and 7 of 9 gallery participants (77.8%).

Weather and transportation were also prominently reported as constraints. Ottawa is a four-season city, and winter conditions are demanding: daytime temperatures average roughly -6 to -12 °C and nighttime temperatures -10 to -20 °C, and the city receives an average of 240 cm of snow each year. Weather was the most frequently selected constraint in both the dance workshop

(7 of 11 respondents, 63.6%) and the gallery visit (9 of 9 respondents, 100%). Transportation difficulties were particularly notable for the gallery visit, where 6 of 9 respondents (66.7%) identified them. Several participants explicitly linked attendance to winter conditions, public transit availability, and not having access to a personal vehicle. One gallery respondent wrote that she had not visited before due to ‘lack of time and not having a vehicle,’ while another noted that parking costs were a deterrent. These observations reinforce that formal availability does not guarantee practical access.

Leisure information functioned in both enabling and constraining ways. Many women learned about the activities through trusted channels such as PAND Settlement Services communications, Instagram, Telegram, and word-of-mouth within Iranian community networks. When information was clear and arrived through familiar channels, it reduced uncertainty and planning effort. When it did not, finding information became an additional layer of logistical work. One gallery respondent explained: ‘I’d rather receive emails to stay informed instead of searching on my own.’ Another said she lacked the time to follow these opportunities independently and would be more likely to attend if someone else coordinated the logistics. This highlights that the burden of locating, interpreting, and acting on leisure information is itself a meaningful access constraint. Alongside the facilitating factor of receiving leisure information through trusted channels of the settlement organization, participants indicated the no-cost fee of the activity served as a facilitator. Several women had not previously visited the National Gallery because, as one explained, “the admission fee and parking fee are too expensive,” and another noted she “didn’t know they offered free admission days.” Organizing the activity around weekly evenings with free admission—a barrier that had initially kept them away—was a facilitating factor. Having activities organized and led by someone else was also considered a facilitating factor; one woman said she

did not “have time to organize anything myself, but I’d like to join activities if someone else takes the lead.” Others described the importance of not having to attend alone, with one explaining she had “never had a group of people or friends who were willing to go together” and did not enjoy such activities on her own, so a group activity made participation possible.

Taken together, the findings illustrate that participation was shaped by a continual interplay between desire and feasibility. Women valued leisure and expressed the wish for more of it, but participation depended on a constellation of practical conditions: weather, affordability, trusted communication, realistic scheduling, and logistical accessibility within already busy daily lives.

3.5 Discussion

3.5.1 Leisure, Well-Being, and Everyday Relief

For the women in this study, community-based leisure activities supported well-being in ways that are immediate, social, and grounded in the texture of everyday life. Across the three activities, leisure was valued not because it was exceptional or extravagant, but because it created temporary relief from routine, obligation, and role saturation. This aligns with research describing leisure as therapeutically valuable not merely because it is enjoyable, but because it supports restoration, coping, and positive affect (Caldwell, 2005; Iwasaki, 2007; Suto, 2013). It also resonates with Canadian scholarship showing that leisure contributes to immigrant women’s well-being when it creates space for enjoyment, autonomy, and social participation (Suto, 2013).

The present findings extend this literature by grounding the connection between leisure and well-being in the specific structure of immigrant women’s daily lives. Participants did not describe leisure in abstract health terms; they described it as time released from responsibility, time that temporarily loosened the grip of work, caregiving, repetition, and pressure. In this

respect, the findings align with studies demonstrating that leisure can mediate acculturative stress and settlement distress by offering emotional replenishment, renewed meaning, and restored energy (Gallant & Tirone, 2017; Kim & Iwasaki, 2016; Kim et al., 2016). This study contributes a more grounded account of how that process was enacted through small, organized, and culturally responsive activities rather than a large-scale intervention. For research focused on mental health and wellbeing promotion among immigrant populations, this finding is promising: modest, community-embedded programming can offer immigrant women a valuable, if immediate, form of well-being support. As each activity was offered as a single session, these accounts describe immediate, self-reported responses by the women who participated in the study. Whether repeated or ongoing programming would produce more durable effects on well-being is an important question for future research.

3.5.2 Social Connection, Shared Language, and Belonging

For the women in this study, leisure also served as a social resource. Shared activities allowed women to meet others, initiate new relationships, and build familiarity through common language and common experience. This pattern is consistent with previous work showing that leisure and recreation can create low-pressure settings for social contact, inclusion, and life satisfaction among newcomers (Berasategi Sancho et al., 2023; Lauckner et al., 2022; Antoun & Karlis, 2025; Forde et al., 2015; Barrick, 2023; Barrick et al., 2021). In this study, Farsi was not merely a communication medium; it was part of the social infrastructure of comfort. Shared language reduced the need for self-explanation and allowed participants to feel understood more readily. These findings are consistent with recent research on newcomers in a comparable Canadian urban setting that identified social connection and cultural familiarity as central

motivators for leisure participation, while structural obstacles persistently constrained their ability to engage (Zagrebina, 2026).

The social connection produced in these settings resonates with foundational theory on sense of community (SOC) (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). McMillan and Chavis (1986) identify four dimensions of the sense of community: membership, influence, integration and fulfillment of needs, and shared emotional connection. The experiences participants in this study described map onto all four of these dimensions. The shared cultural setting, shared language, and shared life stage reduced social distance and supported a felt sense of membership. Participants described feeling that their presence mattered to the group, that the activities met social and emotional needs unaddressed elsewhere, and that the shared context of immigration created a basis for genuine connection. Recent leisure research with Korean middle-aged women found comparable dynamics, wherein culturally familiar and linguistically comfortable settings generated strong sense of community even within a single activity session (Woo et al., 2025). Liechty and colleagues (2019) similarly found that older adults in group fitness programs developed lasting sense of community through shared activity, reinforcing that brief but well-designed community leisure can initiate durable social bonds.

At the same time, our findings caution against assumptions that shared ethnicity automatically produces a sense of belonging. Some participants felt genuine warmth and recognition, while others described weaker connection or expressed a preference for more culturally mixed environments. This nuance is significant: culturally familiar programming can reduce social distance but does not override individual differences, prior social comfort, or the specific dynamics produced by any particular activity format. The results therefore support a relational view of belonging, one constructed through specific interactions and settings rather than

assumed on the basis of shared identity (Charles-Rodriguez & Larouche, 2025; Lauckner et al., 2022). An intersectional framing guides interpretation of the constraints reported in this study. Limits such as lack of time and weather are shared by many women, immigrant and non-immigrant alike. Yet for the women who participated in our study, these constraints were compounded by migration-related dimensions such as language, residency status, culture and religion, and if the participants identify as a visible minority or from a racialized community. In this sense, the experience of being an immigrant woman is not simply the sum of being a woman plus being an immigrant. The constraints these women described are best understood as shaped by intersecting dimensions of gender and migration together (Crawford et al., 2023; Antoun & Karlis, 2025; Jafari et al., 2010).

These leisure activities also supported place-based belonging among the study participants. Women became more familiar with Ottawa through practice: walking a route, visiting a museum, discovering free-entry programs, or entering public spaces in the company of others with shared experiences. These findings resonate with research linking immigrant leisure participation to settlement satisfaction, place familiarity, and broader social sustainability (Charles-Rodriguez & Larouche, 2025; Gallant & Tirone, 2017; Lauckner et al., 2022). In the present study, belonging remained emergent and fragile rather than fully consolidated, particularly when structural constraints including time, transportation, and information continued to impact daily life.

3.5.3 Implications for Community-Based Wellbeing Promotion

The study's findings carry several practical implications for mental health and wellbeing promotion programming targeting immigrant women. First, low-cost and culturally familiar leisure opportunities should be recognized as legitimate wellbeing supports rather than peripheral additions to settlement services. The consistently positive responses to the walk, dance workshop,

and gallery visit, all intentionally designed with few barriers, suggest that modest and carefully designed activities can be beneficial experiences for the participants (Nicolas et al., 2009; Charles-Rodriguez & Larouche, 2025; Zagrebina, 2026). This finding adds to a growing body of evidence supporting community-based leisure and physical activity programming as a viable vehicle for health promotion among immigrant populations (Blanco-Ayala et al., 2025; Hassanli et al., 2026; Ali et al., 2023). A related body of work further suggests that belonging is more likely to emerge when programs are designed with, rather than simply for, community members, and that co-design processes can strengthen participants' investment in and connection to community recreation spaces (Oncescu et al., 2026).

Second, the constraints identified in this study reinforce research in the literature on gendered leisure constraints and immigrant participation constraints (Jackson & Henderson, 1995; Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007; Gagliardi et al., 2022; Lauckner et al., 2022; Antoun & Karlis, 2025). Time pressure, transportation, weather, caregiving, and information deficits are not minor inconveniences; they are the structural conditions that determine whether a potentially beneficial activity is accessible at all. Recent research on new immigrants in Montreal documented a parallel constellation of structural obstacles, underscoring that these constraints are systemic rather than individual (Zagrebina, 2026), while studies of newcomers in Canadian leisure and sport programs have similarly shown that motivation to participate is insufficient when practical constraints remain unaddressed (Barrick, 2023). Programs aimed at supporting immigrant women's well-being must therefore attend carefully to scheduling, seasonal considerations, location, transit access, childcare implications, and the communication burden placed on participants.

Third, trusted communication channels matter. Participants repeatedly identified PAND Settlement Services, Telegram, Instagram, and direct email as the channels through which they

learned about opportunities. They also made clear that many women lacked the time and energy to search for programming independently, suggesting that communitybased wellbeing promotion must not only create activities but also reduce the interpretive and logistical work required to find and act on them. Programming communicated through community-embedded networks is more likely to reach women who are already stretched by competing demands. Notably, satisfaction with the organization, communication, registration, and setting of the activities were consistently rated high across all three activities which points to features of delivery that mattered regardless of the type of activity. A consistent element was participants' need to receive advance notice of activities taking place to plan accordingly to attend. Several women explained that they could take part more readily when information reached them early enough and through familiar channels so that they could plan attendance around work and caregiving. One participant mentioned she preferred to receive emails rather than search for activities on her own.

Finally, the variation in how participants responded to different activity formats indicates that no single leisure model will suit everyone equally well. Some women favored the informality and ease of the walk; others found deep resonance in the culturally familiar and embodied quality of dance; others valued the calm and creative atmosphere of the gallery. Programmatic diversity may therefore be a genuine asset rather than an organizational complication in leisure-based wellbeing programming for immigrant women. The growing attention to diasporic arts and cultural practices as resources for identity continuity and community building among migrants and refugees (Al-Hamad et al., 2026) further supports the case for culturally grounded and varied programming approaches.

3.5.4 Strengths and Limitations

This study brings together multiple sources of evidence, including structured surveys, open-ended written reflections, researcher field notes, and semi-structured feedback sessions, drawn from three distinct activity formats rather than a single program type. The design made it possible to examine patterns across settings and to observe how leisure experiences varied by format. The partnership with a trusted community organization enhanced accessibility and the cultural responsiveness of the study design.

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The sample was small and activity-based, and participants self-selected into the activities; the findings should therefore be understood as an in-depth account of a specific community-engaged project rather than as statistically generalizable results. Since participation was voluntary and shaped by the same constraints the study set out to examine, the women who took part may differ from those who were unable to attend, and the findings likely reflect the experiences of women who were able to negotiate their constraints rather than of all eligible women. As a result, the benefits reported here may understate what leisure could offer women who faced greater constraints and could not take part.

Across all three activities, some women who had initially registered did not attend. This gap between registration and attendance is itself consistent with the constraints participants described, since intending to take part did not always translate into being able to. Since the post-activity surveys were anonymous and participants could attend different combinations of activities, the survey data capture activity-level responses rather than those of a fixed cohort. Length of time in Ottawa was not systematically recorded so responses could not be analyzed by duration of residence. As most participants appeared to be recent newcomers within the last five years, the account may under-represent the experiences of women who have lived in the city longer. Beyond

the sample, the study was limited in how well-being itself was captured. Well-being was measured through participants' own accounts of how they felt during and after three specific activities, rather than through a validated well-being measure, so these findings speak to immediate, self-reported experience. Only two follow-up feedback sessions were conducted, and they were documented through notetaking rather than audio-recording. Although notes were reviewed with participants for accuracy, audio-recording might have preserved additional nuance. The study was conducted in a single Canadian city with one linguistic and cultural community, and the findings should not be assumed to apply uniformly across other immigrant women's groups or urban contexts. The same activities offered in another season, city, or community, or with different women, could yield different responses. Future research could build on this work through larger samples, longitudinal designs, or comparative studies across multiple immigrant communities and cities.

3.6 Conclusions

For the women who took part in this study, community-based leisure activities supported well-being in ways that allowed social connection, sense of community, and familiarity with place. For the women in this study, leisure was not peripheral to settlement. It offered relief from obligation, opportunities to meet others, a growing familiarity with Ottawa, and a deepening sense that they could inhabit the city more confidently and fully. Yet these benefits were not automatic. They depended on whether activities were low-cost, clearly communicated, culturally comfortable, and practically accessible within lives shaped by work, caregiving, fatigue, weather, and transit constraints.

Leisure-based programming should be understood as a practical and relational form of wellbeing promotion that can help immigrant women feel less isolated, more socially connected, and more at ease within their communities of settlement. For practitioners, policymakers, and

researchers working in immigrant mental health and wellbeing, these findings underscore the value of partnership-based, culturally responsive, and accesscentered approaches. Small-scale, locally embedded activities can contribute to immigrant women's well-being when designed with careful attention to the conditions that would enhance the possibility of participation. The leisure activities implemented in this study contributed to the well-being and sense of belonging of the immigrant women who participated, with implications for their perception of mental health and well-being promotion. Author Contributions: Conceptualization, M.H., E.O., N.A.-Z., L.A. and E.R.W.; Literature Review, M.H., E.O., N.A.-Z., L.A. and E.R.W.; Methodology, M.H., E.O., N.A.-Z., L.A. and E.R.W.; Data Collection, M.H.; Thematic Analysis, M.H. and E.O.; Original Draft Preparation, M.H.; Review and Editing, M.H., E.O., N.A.-Z., L.A. and E.R.W.; Supervision, E.O.; Project Administration, M.H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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and the requirement to protect participant confidentiality given the small, community-based sample. Data are available on request from O'Connor as per university safe data storage policies.

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Chapter 4

Article 3

Leisure as Pathway for Cultural Connection: A Case Study of Newcomer Iranian Women (30–55 Years Old) and a Settlement Service Organization in Ottawa, Canada

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4.1 Abstract

Community-based leisure may support newcomer women's well-being and belonging, yet its role within settlement practice remains underexamined. This article presents findings from a larger community-based research project that explored Iranian newcomer women's (aged 30–55) experiences navigating leisure, community life, and well-being during their settlement in Ottawa, Canada. In this article, the discussion focuses on data collected from virtual feedback consultation sessions with two women who participated in co-designed leisure activities, and an executive from a non-profit settlement service organization serving Iranian and Farsi-speaking newcomers. Data coding, translation, verification and reflexive thematic analysis guided our qualitative methodological approach, and findings were interpreted within an intersectional feminist framework. Our findings revealed the challenges the participating women faced in balancing employment, caregiving, and household labour while acclimatizing to Canada. The women in this

study described leisure as a vital interruption of their layered responsibilities and a chance to connect with others who shared their migration experience. Leisure did not replace formal settlement supports but addressed dimensions of settlement that conventional indicators often miss, including identity loss, unfamiliarity with the city, and the need for connection in a shared language and cultural setting. In this case, the settlement organization functioned as a cultural infrastructure that made participation in public and cultural life accessible for the women who took part.

Keywords: Iranian immigrant women; settlement organizations; leisure; culture; belonging; community participation; Canada; well-being

4.2 Introduction

Newcomer settlement is often discussed through immediate practical priorities, such as employment, housing, language acquisition, access to health care, and navigation of government services (Ager & Strang, 2008; Abood et al., 2021). These dimensions matter, but they do not fully capture how people build a livable everyday life after migration. Once initial needs are addressed, social connection, emotional belonging, place familiarity, and access to community participation remain important to settlement (Quirke, 2015; Gallant & Tirone, 2017). For immigrant women managing paid work, caregiving, household responsibilities, and weakened extended-family networks, belonging is closely tied to whether they can enter public and cultural life without barriers of language, cost, unfamiliarity, transportation, or social judgement (Suto, 2013; Rezazadeh & Hoover, 2018). Community-based leisure is one practical pathway through which such connection can begin, particularly when activities are accessible, culturally respectful, and relationally supported (Campbell et al., 2016; Lauckner et al., 2022; Berasategi Sancho et al., 2023).

This article focuses on Iranian newcomer women aged 30 to 55 in Ottawa, Canada. Research on leisure as a pathway to belonging among Iranian immigrant women in Canada remains limited, and the role of settlement organizations in facilitating leisure participation has received even less sustained attention (Suto, 2013; Rezazadeh & Hoover, 2018; Drolet & Teixeira, 2022; Salami et al., 2019). This gap is important as settlement organizations are often understood primarily through their formal service functions such as referrals, employment support, language support, or housing navigation. Yet in practice, they may also act as cultural and community infrastructure, helping newcomers move from private survival into public, social, and civic participation.

Ottawa provides a specific context for this inquiry. In the 2021 Census, 259,215 immigrants lived in Ottawa, representing 25.9% of the city's population, including 47,415 recent immigrants who arrived between 2016 and 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Within Ottawa, the Iranian-origin population is relatively small compared with larger Iranian communities in Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal. Statistics Canada data show approximately 6055 people of Iranian origin in Ottawa and approximately 200,460 nationally (Statistics Canada, 2022b). This smaller and more dispersed community context may affect the availability of women-centred, culturally familiar, and Farsi-language leisure networks.

Settlement for Iranian newcomer women also carries a transnational dimension. Participants' lives in Canada unfolded alongside concern for family members in Iran during a period of political upheaval, including the mobilization associated with the Woman, Life, Freedom movement (Shishehgar et al., 2015; Mobasher, 2025). Iranian immigrants in North America may also navigate what Sadeghi describes as geopolitical stigma, a racialized positioning shaped by strained relations between Iran and Western governments (Sadeghi, 2016). These conditions form

part of the emotional field in which settlement takes place. They also clarify why culturally familiar leisure and trusted community settings may matter not only as recreation but as forms of recognition, relief, and belonging.

We approach this research as a single case study. Iranian newcomer women aged 30 to 55 in Ottawa are a small and dispersed population, and those who take part in a connected series of community activities are fewer still, which makes sustained participation difficult to observe at scale. A case study is suited to precisely these conditions, where the value of the work lies in the depth of what a small number of situated accounts can reveal rather than in the breadth of a sample (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Following the women through the full sequence of activities allows us to trace how access developed over time. This is a deliberate methodological choice rather than a shortfall. Qualitative case study research is judged by the depth and credibility of its account, not by the size or representativeness of a sample, and its purpose is analytic rather than statistical generalization: findings are generalized to theoretical propositions, not to populations (Yin, 2018). Small numbers of participants are appropriate and often necessary when the aim is to understand a process in detail rather than to estimate its distribution across a population (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018). We therefore make no claims about newcomers or Iranian women in general. The account speaks to the experiences of the women who took part and what their participation reveals about how a settlement organization can make leisure accessible.

Two guiding research questions frame this study: How does a community-based settlement organization mediate Iranian newcomer women's access to leisure and public life? How do gendered responsibility, transnational worries, and diaspora experience shape that process?

4.3 Literature Review

Critical migration scholars position migrants as active participants shaping their own communities (Schinkel, 2018; Scuzzarello & Moroşanu, 2023). Belonging is not simply achieved through employment, language acquisition, or formal service use; it is produced through institutional recognition, everyday encounters, and repeated opportunities to participate in social and cultural life (Scuzzarello & Moroşanu, 2023; Farrugia, 2009; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Ambrosio, 2026). Recent work on refugee integration in Canada similarly calls for shifting attention from what institutions expect of migrants to what migrants need to build livable, self-directed lives (Ambrosio, 2026; Hynie, 2024). For the present study, this means examining the conditions under which Iranian newcomer women are invited, enabled, and supported to participate in the city around them.

Settlement organizations occupy an important but often less acknowledged position in this process. The literature recognizes the importance of language training, employment assistance, housing referrals, and service navigation, but their informal and relational work as community infrastructure remains less visible (Drolet & Teixeira, 2022; Ambrosio, 2026; Shields et al., 2016). Nonprofit settlement organizations often mediate between immigrant communities and state institutions (Evans & Shields, 2014), and in neoliberal policy contexts they may absorb responsibility for immigrant well-being beyond formal mandates (Valenzuela Moreno et al., 2018).

Over the last fifty years, Canadian research on leisure and ethnicity has contributed to our understanding of the leisure needs and preferences of immigrants, and reviews of this work continue to stress that ongoing research is needed as the immigrant population grows and diversifies (Karlis et al., 2020b). Case-based studies in this tradition have examined how particular

ethnocultural organizations sustain recreation for their communities, as in Karlis and Gravelle's (2020a) analysis of the cultural recreation activities of the Hellenic Community of Ottawa. Antoun and Karlis (2025) identify language, cultural difference, and everyday logistics as recurring constraints on newcomers' leisure and direct attention to the role that organizations delivering leisure services play in addressing them.

Related questions have been examined across a range of age groups and migration generations. Writing about second-generation African Canadian adolescent girls in a community basketball programme, Haggart and Giles (2022) offer an intersectional analysis of how gender, race, religion, and programme design together shape whether a young woman feels able to take part and draw attention to the role of the people running community programmes. While the participants in this study differ in age and in migration generation, the underlying focus is similar: whether culturally meaningful leisure participation is possible depends substantially on the organization and the people behind the programming.

In Ottawa, Canada, there are several organizations that provide services to newcomer women. In fact, leisure and community programming for newcomers is neither scarce nor tied to any single provider. The municipal government runs a wide range of recreational activities in the city, from aquatics and skating to fitness and the arts, with fee assistance available to low-income residents. The public library system offers free drop-in English conversation groups at branches across the city, several in the evening, and does not require registration. Among settlement organizations, a non-profit organization serving immigrant and racialized women delivers a weekly calendar of free activities with a playroom for children; a large multiservice organization programmes in dozens of languages across several sites and employs Farsi-speaking staff; the region's oldest settlement agency pairs newcomers with established residents in mentoring

relationships that often last for years; and the local branch of a national community-based sport and leisure organization offers newcomers information and services. First-language service capacity, meaning staff and programming delivered in newcomers' own languages, exists in the settlement sector, but it occurs primarily in instrumental services such as counselling, orientation, and settlement navigation rather than in leisure programming. Settlement organizations are resourced for settlement outcomes, and leisure has not generally been counted as one. What varies across these providers is not whether activities exist but the conditions that shape participation. Most settlement programming runs during weekdays, which makes it out of reach for women working full-time or in shift work. Fee assistance for municipal recreation is a significant benefit but requires familiarity with municipal systems to submit an in-person application. Most leisure programming is offered in English and French and is aimed at immigrant women broadly, so it does not always reach newcomer women who are still more comfortable in another language or who are looking for something built around their own community as they navigate their first months in a new country. This article expands this discussion by exploring the landscape of a settlement organization and the types of services provided, including filling the gaps in terms of enhancing leisure promotion through trusted, linguistically accessible, and culturally familiar routes into public and cultural life.

An intersectional lens is central to understanding immigrant women's leisure. Crenshaw's foundational work established that women's lives cannot be understood by isolating gender from racialization, class, migration status, institutional power, and other relations of inequality (Crenshaw, 1991). In leisure studies, intersectionality shows that access to recreation and free time is structured by overlapping social positions and by the uneven distribution of time, mobility, safety, resources, and recognition (Watson & Scraton, 2013; Mielke et al., 2022). Women's

entitlement to leisure is also shaped by domestic labour, caregiving responsibilities, and social expectations (Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Henderson & Shaw, 2006). For immigrant women, these gendered constraints intersect with migration, cultural unfamiliarity, language barriers, racialization, and the need to navigate multiple norms at once (Aberman, 2024; Stodolska, 2018; McDonald et al., 2023; Hack-Polay et al., 2021).

4.3.1 Social Capital and Cultural Infrastructure

Bourdieu (1986, p. 248) defines social capital as the aggregate of resources linked to the possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Two features of this account matter here. Such networks are not given but produced through the material and symbolic exchanges that establish a relationship and then keep it in being. Membership in a group also provides each member with the backing of collectivity-owned capital, so that what an individual can draw on exceeds what they personally possess. Bourdieu's own examples are institutional settings that organize sociability over time, among them clubs, schools, and families. On this account, the volume of social capital available to a person depends both on the extent of the network they can mobilize and on the capital held by those to whom they are connected, which is why social capital tends to reproduce existing inequality.

Putnam (2000, p. 19) approaches social capital as a feature of communities rather than a possession of individuals, defining it as the connections among individuals, the social networks, and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. His distinction between bonding and bridging social capital is directly relevant to settlement. Bonding capital, generated within homogeneous groups, provides support and reciprocity among people who already share a position. Bridging capital, generated across social divides, connects people to wider networks and

resources. Putnam argues that both are necessary and that they serve different functions: bonding capital undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity, and bridging capital providing linkage to external assets and information diffusion.

Examining infrastructure provides a revealing vantage for cultural analysis. In cultural policy scholarship, cultural infrastructure denotes the spaces and institutional frameworks through which culture is produced and consumed: museums, galleries, libraries, theatres, archives, studios, and the funding programmes that sustain them. Getzner (2024) situates cultural infrastructure within the broader category of social infrastructure, noting that cultural institutions serve as public places for social exchange while also functioning as welfare-state infrastructure concerned with equal access to cultural events. Klinenberg's (2018) work on social infrastructure focuses on the physical places and social organizations that shape social relations, values and communication. Both studies attend primarily to provision: whether spaces exist, how they are funded, and who can reach them.

Our findings point to a further condition beyond provision. As the summary of newcomer leisure provision above makes clear, Ottawa is well supplied with cultural and recreational spaces, most of them free or subsidized, yet the women in this study made little use of them. What stood between availability and participation was the work of mediation: rendering information in a language a woman reads comfortably, scheduling around the hours of availability, explaining how an unfamiliar setting operates, arranging for a child to be accommodated, and sustaining the trust that makes an invitation credible. We use cultural infrastructure in this article to name this mediating function. Where Bourdieu treats the maintenance of a network as something its members do, and Putnam treats the associational setting as given, cultural infrastructure specifies the organizational work that produces the occasions on which both accounts depend. It extends the

spatial concept in cultural policy toward the organizational practices that make cultural spaces usable, and it specifies, for a newcomer population, the conditions Klinenberg identifies as determining whether relationships form. Its defining feature is location: it resides within the organization rather than with the individual or the network, and it persists whether or not any particular person uses it. This framing also anticipates variation. Bourdieu's argument that social capital reproduces existing advantage implies that reliance on cultural infrastructure is not uniform. A woman who arrives with fluent English, professional credentials recognized in Canada, family already holding permanent residency, and the means to pay programme fees can enter public and cultural life through routes that require little to no organizational mediation. A woman without those resources may rely on the mediating work for more support.

Studies on Iranian women's leisure reveal that participation is shaped by expectations around family responsibility, respectability, and women's public participation (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007). Research on Iranian migrant women in Canada further shows that identity, autonomy, and empowerment are negotiated within gendered and migratory conditions rather than simply gained through arrival in a new country (Hosseini & Safdar, 2023). Mental health research on Iranian immigrants also points to migration stressors, sociopolitical context, and community connection as important dimensions of well-being (Amini et al., 2022). Across this literature, the issue is not that immigrant women lack interest in leisure. Rather, they often lack reliable access to the conditions that make leisure feasible, including culturally safe spaces, flexible scheduling, affordable programming, transportation, and trusted social networks (Hurly, 2019; Barrick et al., 2021).

Transnationalism further complicates settlement. Migrants may inhabit transnational social fields in which obligations, worries, memories, and identities are distributed across more than one

national context (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). For Iranian women whose family members remain in Iran, homeland politics may be experienced not only through public activism but also through private worry, fatigue, grief, and moral pressure (Mobasher, 2025; Sadeghi, 2016). Within this context, leisure cannot be approached as a neutral activity category. It becomes one domain through which women may momentarily recover a sense of self, connect with others who understand similar concerns, and learn how to inhabit public and cultural spaces in Canada.

4.4 Materials and Methods

This article draws on a larger community-based doctoral study on leisure, well-being, and belonging among Iranian newcomer women aged 30 to 55 in Ottawa, Canada. The broader study involved a leisure interest survey, three structured leisure activities, post-activity evaluations, field notes, and follow-up feedback consultations (see Chapter Three; see Chapter Two). The present article focuses on two data sources that directly address the organizational and cultural dimensions of leisure access: semi-structured feedback consultations with two Iranian newcomer women who participated in all three leisure activities and a feedback session with a director of the settlement service organization.

This article draws on a community-based, participatory approach. Working in partnership with a Farsi-language settlement organization, we explored settlement services and the kinds of leisure provision available to newcomers in order to identify gaps in leisure promotion and how they might be addressed. Within that partnership, we engaged with a settlement organization's executive director and two community participants using participatory, narrative methods that integrated oral history and storytelling to understand leisure experiences and interests in their own words. Participatory, narrative methods focus on lived experiences and treat the sharing of personal stories as a way to gain insight in a study concerned with how leisure becomes accessible to

participants rather than with measuring its distribution (Duea et al., 2022). Narrative and storytelling methods of this kind carry a particular purpose. By foregrounding how people recount their own experiences, they treat the telling of a story as both a source of understanding and a form of participation in itself, one that can open space for reflection and for dialogue about what a community needs (Duea et al., 2022). A storied approach draws on lived experience and a range of perspectives to bring participants into the work of making meaning, rather than fitting their words to categories set in advance (Goodley & Clough, 2004). Approaching the two women's accounts this way allowed their own sense of what the activities meant, and of what they were looking for, to guide the analysis.

The study was conducted in collaboration with an Ottawa-based organization serving Iranian and Farsi-speaking newcomers (PAND Settlement Services, n.d.). The organization functioned as the main community partner for recruitment and communication in our study (PAND Settlement Services, n.d.). Its role was methodologically significant because access to leisure was shaped not only by the availability of activities but also by trust, language, cultural familiarity, and whether invitations came through a recognizable community channel. The design of this component follows from what the research questions probe. Both questions examine a process that unfolds over time: how an organization mediates access to leisure, and how gendered responsibilities and diaspora experiences shape that mediation. Capturing that process required accounts from participants who had experienced the full sequence of activities and could therefore share perspectives on any changes that occurred between the first activity and the third. Participants were recruited through the settlement service organization. Eligibility criteria required participants to be Iranian-born women between the ages of 30 and 55 who had participated in all three leisure activities organized as part of the broader study: a group walk along the Rideau Canal,

a Classical Persian dance workshop, and a visit to the National Gallery of Canada. Two women met these criteria and agreed to participate in follow-up feedback consultations. Both were employed full-time, lived in Ottawa without extended family support nearby, and identified caregiving responsibilities, time scarcity, and transnational worry as central features of daily life. To protect confidentiality, no further identifying details are reported. The women are referred to by the pseudonyms Sahar and Shirin. A feedback session was also conducted with an executive of the settlement organization in the role of organizational representative.

The two participants were similar in some respects and differed in others, and both dimensions matter for reading the accounts that follow. Both were Iranian-born women in their thirties or forties, employed full-time, and living in Ottawa without extended family nearby. This sampling strategy produces depth rather than breadth. Sahar and Shirin could describe how participation felt across a series and how their relationship with the organization developed through it, which single-activity participants could not. They cannot describe the experiences of women who attended once, or who were never reached at all. We treat their accounts accordingly, as a detailed case of sustained participation rather than as a sample from which claims about Iranian newcomer women in Ottawa generally can be drawn. This choice is consistent with qualitative traditions in which a small number of in-depth interviews is treated as a strength rather than a limitation, since a reduced number of participants supports the close, sustained engagement through which detailed accounts are generated (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006).

Semi-structured feedback consultation sessions with Sahar and Shirin were conducted individually in Farsi, their preferred language, to support comfort and ease of expression. Consultation sessions took place virtually and lasted approximately one hour. Participants did not consent to audio recording. Accordingly, data were documented through detailed handwritten

notes taken during and immediately after each feedback consultation. At the end of each session, the notes were reviewed with the participant to confirm accuracy and to ensure that the documented account reflected her intended meanings. Corrections and clarifications were incorporated before analysis.

The organizational feedback session was conducted via Zoom (version 6.3; Zoom Video Communications, Inc., San Jose, CA, USA) and documented through detailed notes. Questions focused on the organization's approach to outreach, leisure programming, cultural responsiveness, community trust, organizational capacity, funding constraints, and recommendations for future programming. Quotations and paraphrased examples reported in this article are drawn only from notes reviewed and confirmed with participants or the organizational representative.

Reflexive thematic analysis guided the analytic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Analysis proceeded through repeated reading of the feedback session notes. This was followed by initial coding, development of candidate themes, refinement of themes in relation to the research questions, and member checking with the supervisor. Data analysis focused on how participants and the organizational representative described leisure, belonging, access, trust, gendered responsibility, community connection, and transnational stress.

4.5 Results

Iterative analysis produced four interrelated themes, summarized in Table 1. Together, the themes show that leisure participation was shaped by more than individual interest. It depended on the interaction of transnational emotional life, gendered responsibility, organizational trust, cultural familiarity, and the practical design of activities.

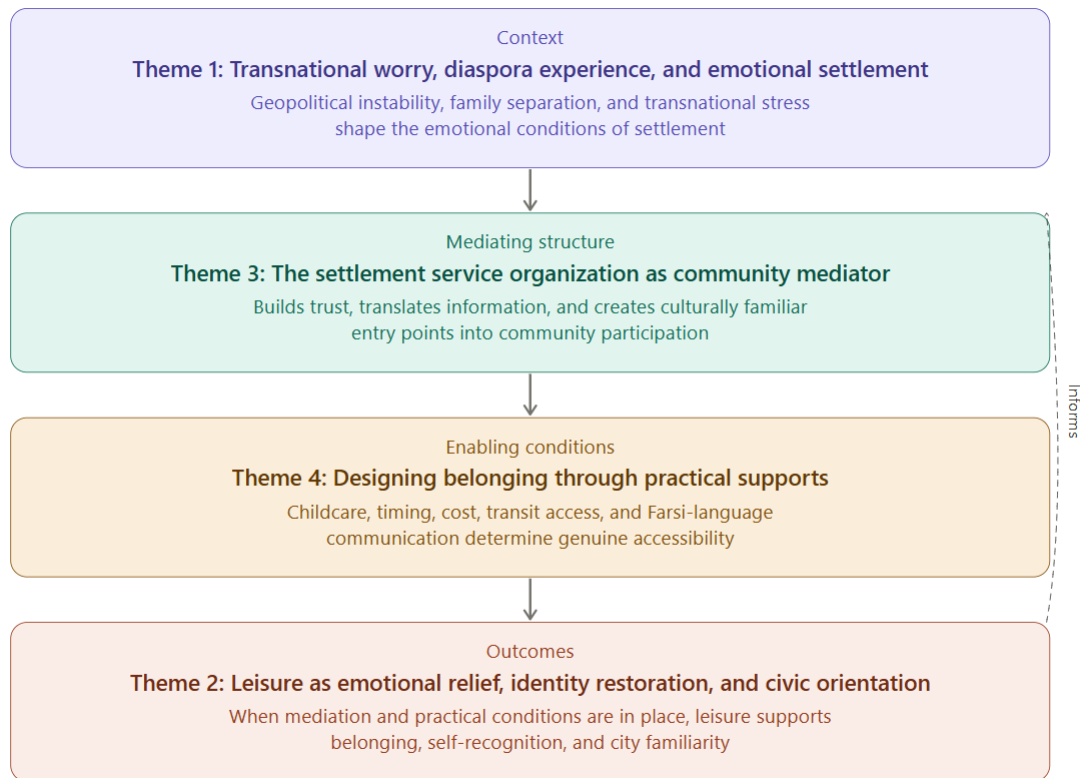
4.5.1 Transnational Worry, Diaspora Experience, and Emotional Settlement

Daily life for both participants was shaped by local settlement pressures and by ongoing emotional ties to Iran. Sahar explicitly identified worry about family back home as a persistent pressure, saying, “we are not relaxed.” This statement situates Iranian newcomer women’s emotional load within a transnational frame. Their settlement experiences in Canada were shaped partly by the cognitive and emotional work of maintaining concern for a homeland marked by instability, repression, and uncertainty (Mobasher, 2025; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Zhou et al., 2025). Table 1. Overview of themes.

Table 1. Overview of themes

Theme	Focus
1. Transnational worry, diaspora experience, and emotional settlement	How geopolitical context, ongoing ties to Iran, and family separation shaped everyday settlement and emotional well-being.
2. Leisure as emotional relief, identity restoration, and civic orientation	How the three leisure activities interrupted routine, reactivated valued identities, and supported practical familiarity with Ottawa.
3. The settlement organization as a mediating community structure	How trusted Farsi-language communication, cultural familiarity, and organizational networks transformed activities into accessible participation opportunities.
4. Designing belonging through practical supports	How childcare, timing, cost, transit access, clear information, and small group formats determined whether participation was genuinely feasible.

Figure 1. *Thematic framework: contextual, mediating, enabling, and outcome dimensions of community-based leisure*



The absence of extended family intensified these pressures. Sahar noted that all her family remained in Iran and summarized her situation as “just me here.” She added that the absence of family affected emotional support and motivation: “when you are alone, you don’t push yourself.” Shirin similarly emphasized that neither she nor her husband had extended family in Canada. In Iran, she could have relied on grandparents for childcare.

These accounts show that family separation had emotional and practical implications. It reduced the informal care infrastructure that would ordinarily support women’s mobility, social participation, and capacity to claim time for themselves. Settlement therefore appeared not as a contained local process but as a life condition shaped by the geopolitical context, family

separation, transnational emotional labour, and the gendered consequences of losing everyday support networks (Shishehgar et al., 2015; Mobasher, 2025; Sadeghi, 2016).

4.5.2 Leisure as Emotional Relief, Identity Restoration, and Civic Orientation

The three leisure activities offered different forms of relief and recognition. The group walk was valued because it was simple, low-pressure, and social. Sahar described exchanging numbers with one of the women during the walk and staying in touch afterward, a connection she spoke about with some pride. Walking side by side allowed conversation without the intensity of formal introductions, while the public outdoor setting made the activity feel accessible. For participants managing work, family, and settlement tasks, the walk offered a manageable way to be outside, speak Farsi, meet other women, and become more familiar with the city. As Sahar put it, the walk showed her that “Ottawa is not only work and bus.”

The Persian dance workshop offered a more culturally resonant form of relief. Sahar initially felt self-conscious but relaxed because the session was women-centred, Farsi-speaking, and facilitated with care. She explained that movement gave her energy after work and that dance reminded her of Iran and of “me before immigration.” Shirin, while managing her child nearby, said that dance reminded her of her life before marriage and motherhood and made her feel “alive for one hour.” In these accounts, dance was not only a physical activity. It was embodied cultural memory, self-expression, and temporary release from settlement-related role expectations. The relief participants described was not confined to these two women. Eleven women completed post-activity evaluation surveys following the dance workshop (see Chapter Three) and all reported enjoying the session, finding it easy to attend, and feeling good or happy while participating; eight said the workshop increased their awareness of leisure opportunities in the wider community. The

dance held particular meaning because it is an integral part of Iranian culture and because the session was run for women, in Farsi, and in a familiar cultural setting.

The National Gallery visit connected leisure to public culture and place-based belonging. Sahar described the Gallery as her favourite activity because her background was in a creative field and art spaces felt like “home” (Al-Hamad et al., 2026; Jamil, 2025). She said the Gallery made her feel calm and inspired and reminded her that her working life did not define her. Leisure therefore helped reactivate identities diminished by settlement-related labour-market transitions, supporting continuity and self-recognition (McDonald et al., 2023; Hack-Polay et al., 2021; Hosseini & Safdar, 2023). For Shirin, the Gallery mattered partly because it combined her own experience with her child’s learning, who attended the activity with her, which reduced guilt and made participation feel useful beyond herself.

Across the three activities, participants became more familiar with Ottawa. Leisure supported civic orientation in practical terms: participants discovered routes, free-entry opportunities, cultural institutions, and possible social connections. Belonging was not described only as a feeling. It was also practical knowledge of where to go, how to participate, and how to enter public spaces with less uncertainty.

4.5.3 The Settlement Organization as a Mediating Community Structure

In this study, the settlement organization did not simply advertise activities. It helped transform unfamiliar public and cultural spaces into socially supported opportunities for participation.

Trust was central. Sahar found the activities through the organization’s social media and trusted it more than unknown online accounts. As she put it, “I trust this settlement service organization more than random accounts,” and she added that clear, step-by-step information was

what made an unfamiliar activity feel possible: “if I know exactly what happens, I go.” She valued Farsi-language communication and suggested that future materials be clear, visual, and step-by-step, including where to go, the address, the bus route, the cost, the language used, and what to expect. Shirin also valued recruitment through trusted Farsi-language channels and preferred WhatsApp and Instagram over websites. These accounts show that information is not merely promotional. It is part of the infrastructure of access.

The organization’s cultural familiarity reduced social risk. Sahar emphasized that shared language, shared immigrant experience, similar age, and the structure of the activities made connection easier: “I’m tired of starting from zero.” Shirin described connecting with women who shared experiences of immigration and raising children far from extended family. These findings align with research showing that ethnoculturally familiar spaces can support early belonging and mental well-being by reducing isolation and facilitating social participation (Salami et al., 2019). Importantly, culturally responsive mediation did not keep women within a bounded ethnic community. It gave them confidence and practical tools to move beyond it, including into the Rideau Canal pathway and the National Gallery. The organizational representative also clarified why women-specific leisure programming matters. He noted that the organization had not previously developed specific activities for women and seniors, partly because of limited resources and capacity. The collaboration with the university created an opportunity to address this gap. He described women-focused programming as a form of empowerment rather than entertainment, especially for women whose confidence, social networks, or independence may be reduced after migration. He also noted that the organization’s existing partnership with a women-serving agency was confined to legal matters affecting Iranian women and did not extend to leisure programming, which is part of why the leisure activities filled a gap that established provision had left open.

4.5.4 Designing Belonging Through Practical Supports

Practical design features shaped whether leisure was genuinely accessible. For Sahar, the main barriers were time, energy, money, transportation, and social isolation. Her statement, “If I can find a friend, I go. If not, I cancel,” shows that social connection was both a benefit and a precondition of participation. Her account suggests that the existence of an activity does not by itself bring an isolated woman to it. Small-group formats, reminder systems, buddy structures, and post-event communication channels may help sustain connection beyond a single occasion, though this study cannot establish how widely that applies. Sahar linked this directly to the effort of starting over without an established network, noting that she was “tired of starting from zero” and that motivation itself was hard to sustain alone: “when you are alone, you don’t push yourself.”

Childcare was central for participants with children. Shirin repeatedly expressed interest in future programmes that could include children or offer parallel children’s activities. She identified child-friendly design, advance scheduling, low cost, transitaccessible locations, weekend timing, and short duration as key conditions for participation. Both participants expressed that settlement and adaptation resources should reflect the real-life circumstances of working parents rather than assuming availability during standard weekday hours. Shirin conveyed how little free time she had left for anything beyond obligation. She described her weekday routine as having “no gap,” and said that after a shift “my body is finished.” For her, leisure was “important, but not possible always,” and she framed any activity she could attend as workable only if it was built around a child’s presence rather than assuming a child’s absence.

The organizational representative agreed that combining activities with child-friendly settings, such as library play hours, would allow women to participate without choosing between caregiving and community engagement. He also recommended combining education and leisure,

for example, by teaching English through museum visits, music, or other culturally familiar activities. This approach recognizes that leisure can be woven into settlement support when skill development is embedded in enjoyable and culturally familiar contexts.

4.6 Discussion

In this case, community-based leisure programming appeared to strengthen wellbeing and belonging for the two participants when organized through a trusted, culturally familiar, and linguistically accessible settlement organization. Through the settlement organization's involvement, these activities became supported pathways into public and cultural participation.

Trust was not incidental. For the two participants, it shaped whether they showed up, whether they felt safe when they arrived, and whether they connected with others once there. Participants trusted the activities because they came through familiar Farsi-language channels and through an organization already known in the community. This finding extends scholarship on settlement organizations by showing that trust can function as infrastructure, not simply as an interpersonal feeling (Drolet & Teixeira, 2022; Salami et al., 2019; Shields et al., 2016; Evans & Shields, 2014; Valenzuela Moreno et al., 2018). Settlement organizations can expand newcomers' practical relationships to the city by making unfamiliar places more legible and socially reachable. The findings also show that the participants did not lack interest in leisure. What they lacked was stable access to the conditions that make leisure feasible. Shirin described leisure as "time that is not duty" and as "breathing space," a priority for mental health that was nonetheless not a practical priority in daily life. For women whose days are organized around paid work, caregiving, household management, and settlement tasks, access to such breathing space depends on conditions that are rarely present together. These accounts point toward understanding leisure

access structurally rather than individually (Gagliardi et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2025; Petty & Trussell, 2021).

It is worth being attentive to the heterogeneous nature of immigrant women and their diverse range of experiences. Iranian newcomer women in Ottawa include former professionals, students, and women who arrived in differing social and economic circumstances. In turn, this may impact what leisure means to them, their leisure constraints, who they trust, and where they seek information. Barriers like language, transportation, time, and cost will impact individuals differently depending on their situation. Sahar and Shirin represent this diversity. While both faced constraints of time, cost, and transportation, these constraints operated differently in each life, and the same activity carried a different meaning for each of them. The gallery visit that restored a professional identity for one was valued by the other because it allowed leisure and parenting to happen together. Variation of this kind impacts how organizational mediation could be understood. Uniform provision, offered on identical terms to everyone, tends to reach those whom it already suits. An organization with detailed knowledge of the community it serves may be positioned to receive feedback to adjust language, timing, format, and forms of communication. Provision across the city's newcomer-serving organizations varies along these lines. The insights and perspectives of the women who participated in our study cannot demonstrate the full range of this variation, which is included in our discussion of study limitations.

The geopolitical dimension of the findings adds another contribution. Transnational stress was not separate from everyday settlement. It appeared in participants' comments about family remaining in Iran, not feeling fully relaxed, and carrying worry into daily life. Locally organized leisure cannot change conditions in Iran. It can, however, create moments of recognition, collective presence, and emotional relief in Canada. In this sense, leisure may become part of a community-

level response to forms of stress that are geopolitical in origin but lived in the routines of local settlement (Mobasher, 2025; Sadeghi, 2016; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004). Leisure is therefore not peripheral to settlement. It is one domain through which pluralistic urban life can be learned and practiced.

4.7 Contributions

The findings contribute to discussions among policymakers working in newcomer settlement, leisure programming, cultural participation, and community capacity development (Table 2).

Table 2. Contributions to discussions on policy and practice

Area	Contribution	Evidence from the study
Programme scheduling	Offer evening and weekend options, short sessions, predictable monthly formats, and advance notice so that participation is realistic for women managing work, care, and settlement simultaneously.	Both participants identified time scarcity and exhaustion as central constraints.
Childcare	Treat childcare as a core access condition. Child-inclusive formats, parallel supervised activities, and family-friendly scheduling can determine whether newcomer mothers are able to attend.	Shirin attended the activities with her child because she had no childcare alternative.
Information as infrastructure	Explain how to get there, what it costs, what language will be used, and what to expect. Use trusted Farsi-language channels such as WhatsApp, Instagram, email, and community networks.	Sahar described step-by-step information as necessary for immigrant women to feel safe enough to attend something new.
Activity diversity	Support varied forms of leisure rather than one standardized model. Walking, dance, and gallery visits supported different forms of comfort, identity, sociality, and civic engagement.	Each activity created distinct value and reached participants differently.
Community mediation	Fund and formally support the often invisible labour of community mediation, including relationship-building, translation, coordination, trust maintenance, and cultural interpretation.	The settlement organization may contribute beyond logistics by sustaining community trust and translating opportunities into accessible participation.

4.8 Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations should be acknowledged. Our analysis in this chapter draws primarily on two participant feedback consultations and one organizational feedback session, supplemented by the broader activity-based context of the larger study (see Chapter Two and Three). The findings are not representative of all Iranian newcomer women in Ottawa, all Farsi-speaking immigrant women in Canada, nor all women who engage with settlement organizations. Both women attended all three leisure activities so their perspectives may reflect a degree of openness toward community participation not shared by women who could not attend, attended only once, or were never reached by recruitment efforts.

The analysis also cannot capture the heterogeneity of the population from which the participants are drawn. Iranian newcomer women in Ottawa differ in class position, educational background, pre-migration occupation, and immigration status, and these differences shape both what leisure means and what stands in its way. Two accounts, however detailed, cannot represent that range. Future research could include comparative designs that examine how women in differing circumstances, including former professionals, students, and asylum seekers, relate to leisure and to the organizations that mediate access to it.

Future research could integrate the perspectives of women who wanted to participate in leisure activities but were unable to do so, since their experiences may reveal more entrenched barriers related to childcare, work schedules, transportation, health, household finances, or family expectations. A related demographic limitation concerns the availability and use of gender-disaggregated data on Iranian newcomer populations. Statistics Canada's table on place of birth by gender and age includes relevant data for Iranian-born immigrants, but further analysis is

needed to support gender-specific population comparisons by city, age, period of immigration, and settlement location (Statistics Canada, 2022d).

The geopolitical analysis is also cautious. Participants did not provide extended political narratives, and the feedback consultations were not designed as an inquiry into political trauma or diaspora activism. Future research could examine how Iranian women in Canada experience homeland political events, family separation, diaspora community debates, and emotional identity across borders (Zhou et al., 2025; Al-Hamad et al., 2026; Jamil, 2025). Such work would need to be carefully designed with trauma-informed principles and recognition of the diversity of perspectives within Iranian immigrant communities.

Finally, participants preferred not to be audio-recorded, so the analysis relies on detailed handwritten notes reviewed and confirmed with each participant. This approach respected participant preference and supported trust, but it may limit the possibility of more fine-grained discourse analysis. Future studies could offer multiple documentation options, such as audio-recording, participant-generated notes, voice memos, or follow-up member reflection.

4.9 Conclusions

Community-based leisure programming can become a pathway to emotional relief, social confidence, place familiarity, community attachment, and civic participation for Iranian newcomer women aged 30 to 55 when it is organized through a trusted settlement organization. Leisure mattered not because it replaced formal settlement supports, but because it addressed dimensions of settlement that formal indicators often neglect: loneliness, exhaustion, identity loss, unfamiliarity with the city, and the need for connection in a shared language and cultural setting. The settlement organization recruited participants, arranged logistics, communicated in Farsi, and functioned as a mediating structure that made leisure intelligible, trustworthy, and socially safe.

Through this mediation, women entered public and cultural spaces not as isolated individuals navigating an unfamiliar city alone, but as members of a community with a shared language, a shared migration experience, and organizational support behind them.

For the participants in this study, settlement experiences could not be separated from the conditions of their gendered and transnational lives. Paid work, caregiving, household responsibilities, financial caution, transportation barriers, and worry about family in Iran shaped access to leisure. Under these conditions, leisure should not be treated as secondary or optional. It is one everyday domain where women may recover a sense of self, build social connections, learn to inhabit a new city, and come to feel that they too have a place in public and cultural life.

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Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

This dissertation set out to examine how leisure and community services shape the possibilities for well-being, social connection, and belonging among Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 living in Ottawa, Canada. Grounded in an intersectional theoretical orientation and a community-based participatory research methodology, the dissertation proceeded from the premise that leisure is not a secondary concern in the lives of immigrant women but a socially embedded, institutionally mediated, and structurally organized dimension of settlement through which everyday life becomes, or fails to become, livable. By working in sustained collaboration with PAND Settlement Services and focusing on a population that remains underexamined in Canadian leisure and settlement scholarship, the dissertation developed a contextually grounded account of how leisure is understood, constrained, facilitated, and experienced under conditions of gendered responsibility, migration-related change, and uneven access to community resources.

The three studies yield different datasets and numbers of participants. The leisure interest survey (n = 40) speaks to stated preferences and to the conditions respondents identified as shaping whether participation would be feasible. The post-activity evaluations (n = 32) are activity-level evaluations across three sessions rather than repeated measures from a fixed group, capturing immediate, self-reported experience of each activity together with responses about constraints on leisure participation more generally. The two follow-up feedback sessions, together with the organizational feedback session, provide the detailed accounts of transnational worry, identity restoration, organizational trust, and community mediation. Claims drawn from two accounts are identified as such throughout this chapter.

Question 1 asked how Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 understand and experience leisure in the context of migration and settlement. Across all three studies, participants described leisure as a qualitatively different kind of time rather than as a category of activity. Expressions such as “free time without responsibility,” “time that is not duty,” and “breathing space” recurred across the surveys, the open-ended evaluation responses, and the feedback sessions. These phrases reveal how thoroughly women’s everyday lives were organized around obligation, and how rare it was to experience time that belonged to themselves rather than to work, caregiving, or household management. Persian dance reconnected participants to a sense of themselves that migration had compressed. A gallery visit reactivated an identity as an educated, visually literate person, distinct from the roles women normally inhabited during their settlement period. These experiences speak to Caldwell’s (2005) argument that leisure restores what daily obligation depletes, and to Iwasaki’s (2007) finding that leisure generates meanings that help people sustain themselves through cultural transition and resettlement stress. What the present findings contribute is a more grounded account of what that restoration involved for women navigating midlife settlement alongside ongoing transnational responsibilities.

Participants did not describe wanting large amounts of leisure activities. They described wanting small, sustainable amounts of freely chosen time that did not require them to neglect obligations they took seriously. Sahar and Shirin were both clear that they wanted leisure to be a priority even when daily life did not allow it, and Shirin's description of leisure as "important, but not possible always" captures the gap between the balance they wanted and the balance their circumstances permitted. Programming therefore needs to do less than add leisure on top of already full days; it needs to make modest amounts of it genuinely reachable within them.

Question 2 asked what intersecting structural, gendered, cultural, and institutional factors constrain or enable leisure participation. Time pressure emerged as the most persistent constraint and was evident across the activity-level evaluation data, the open-ended feedback session material, and field observations. Aitken et al. (2024) document that roughly one in five Canadians aged 25 and older can be classified as time poor, with women and lower-income households bearing a disproportionate share of that burden. Our findings shed light on how this documented inequality was lived. Time scarcity did not operate as a single variable; it appeared alongside physical fatigue accumulated across full-time work shifts, caregiving demands that could not be deferred, inadequate access to transportation, weather, and the effort required to locate trustworthy information about programming. These conditions compounded each other. A woman who could manage the cost of transit to an activity might have no one to care for her children while she was away. A woman who could arrange childcare might be too exhausted by the end of the week to make use of any free time. This compounding quality is exactly what an intersectional analysis reveals: leisure constraints are not the product of any single disadvantage but arise through the simultaneous operation of gendered, economic, migratory, and institutional conditions that reinforce one another in ways no single programmatic solution can resolve (Crenshaw, 1991; Lee et al., 2025; Mielke et al., 2022).

Analyzing constraints and facilitators together clarifies what made participation possible, since participants named activities offered free of charge, information arriving through the trusted channel of a settlement organization rather than requiring an independent search, activities organized and led by someone else, and not having to attend alone. These facilitators operated at several levels at once: personal, in the confidence to try something unfamiliar; interpersonal, in the availability of a companion or a familiar group; community, in the credibility of the invitation;

and structural, in cost, scheduling, and transit access (Henderson & Gibson, 2013; Jackson & Henderson, 1995). Lowering a constraint far enough to permit a first attempt allows a perceived obstacle to be tested against experience, close to what the free, low-commitment design of these activities achieved for several women who had assumed the National Gallery was beyond their reach.

Community organizations may play an important role in mediating access to leisure, an insight suggested by the third study resting on evidence base of two participant feedback sessions and one organizational session at a single settlement organization, a small proportion of the overall dataset that is best read as an emerging, hypothesis-generating contribution requiring testing with larger samples and across multiple organizations serving different communities. Within that scope, shared language, cultural familiarity, and the trust PAND had developed within the Farsi-speaking community appeared to shape whether women encountered leisure opportunities at all, and whether an invitation felt credible enough to act on; Sahar was explicit that she trusted the settlement organization more than unfamiliar online accounts, and that clear, step-by-step information about where to go, what it would cost, and what to expect was what made an unfamiliar activity feel possible. This is consistent with Salami et al.'s (2019) argument about the value of ethnoculturally familiar community structures, and points toward a possible mechanism in which an organization positions itself between newcomers and a broader civic landscape, translating information, reducing uncertainty, and creating entry points that feel genuinely welcoming. Chapter Four names this capacity cultural infrastructure and locates it in the organization rather than in the individual or the network, distinguishing it from the provision of spaces and programmes that already existed in Ottawa but that the women in this study made little use of. The comparative analysis in that chapter situates this tentative contribution within a wider

landscape, showing that Ottawa is not short of newcomer-serving leisure provision: municipal recreation, the public library system, a women-serving non-profit, a large multiservice organization programming in dozens of languages, the region's oldest settlement agency, and a national community sport organization all operate in the city, much of it free or subsidized. What varied was not whether activities existed but the conditions under which they could be taken up, since most settlement programming runs on weekdays, fee assistance requires familiarity with municipal systems, and first-language capacity exists largely in instrumental services rather than in leisure; locating the single case within this landscape is what keeps the argument about mediation from generalizing beyond one organization.

Leisure contributed to well-being, identity, social connection, and belonging, though none of these outcomes were automatic or uniform. Well-being was supported through the brief but real relief that activities provided from daily routines, while identity was negotiated through cultural forms, particularly Persian dance and engagement with visual art, that connected women to dimensions of themselves predating migration. Social connection emerged through shared language and shared migration experience in small group settings: across activities, nearly all respondents reported making at least one new acquaintance, several expressed interest in staying in touch after the walk, and one participant at the gallery noted that she had arrived knowing no one and was leaving with connections that might continue. These acquaintance-level relationships, formed over the course of a single activity, were valuable because they offered a relaxed opportunity to connect with other women on a resettlement journey, and they map onto the four dimensions of sense of community identified by McMillan and Chavis (1986): membership, influence, integration and fulfilment of needs, and shared emotional connection (Liechty et al., 2019; Woo et al., 2025).

Connection was nonetheless not uniform, since a smaller but important subset of responses indicated that not every activity felt equally welcoming. Sahar's remark that she attends if she has a friend and cancels if she does not reveals that a familiar companion was sometimes a precondition of participation rather than only an outcome of it. While these accounts do not undermine the broader finding, they caution against assuming that shared ethnicity or shared language automatically produces belonging.

For the two women who took part in the full series, belonging appeared to develop gradually through repeated encounters in public spaces that became more familiar with each visit. As each activity was offered as a single session, the wider evaluation data support an emerging or initial sense of place familiarity and belonging rather than established place-based belonging; demonstrating durable belonging could require repeated participation or longitudinal evidence that this study did not seek to collect.

The same caution applies to the types of social connection the activities generated. Ager and Strang (2008) distinguish three types of connection relevant to immigrant settlement, social bonds within one's own community, social bridges across communities, and social links to mainstream institutions and civic structures, and the evidence for each differs in strength. Social bonds are well supported, since the group activities created connection through shared language, shared cultural background, and shared migration experience, and participants named these as among the most meaningful aspects of taking part; social links are also supported, as PAND connected the women to a university-led research project and to civic institutions, including a national cultural institution several had not previously entered. The evidence for social bridges, understood as durable relationships across communities, is weaker, since what the walk along the Rideau Canal and the National Gallery visit produced was contact with public Ottawa spaces and

an early orientation toward wider civic life; these are better described as emergent and conditions-creating than as established cross-community ties, and the short-term, single-session design limits what can be concluded about bridging specifically. Putnam's (2000) argument that bonding and bridging capital serve different functions is useful here, since the activities generated bonding capital readily and created some of the conditions under which bridging capital might later form, though the study cannot show that it did.

The study's focus on organized activities reflected the shape of the collaboration with PAND, yet participants' own accounts point to the continuing importance of informal, self-directed, family-based, and friendship-based leisure. Sahar spoke about the difference between going with a friend and cancelling when alone, and about socializing within the community outside any programme, a pattern consistent with the family-centred and home-based character that leisure has historically held for many Iranian women (Arab-Moghaddam et al., 2007). Informal leisure requires fewer organizational resources, though it is not costless, since it still depends on time, social ties, and the confidence to take part, and one way to read the organization's role is as helping to seed relationships through which informal leisure can subsequently continue on its own. Organized community leisure carries real costs, borne largely by community organizations and their staff and volunteers, while informal leisure carries a different and lighter resource profile and may be a more accessible pathway when organizational, financial, or scheduling constraints limit access to formal programmes

The central argument that resonates through all three studies is that leisure access is not produced by opportunity alone. It is mediated by institutions, by trust, by cultural familiarity and linguistic accessibility, and by the practical conditions of women's everyday lives. Whether leisure becomes imaginable, feasible, and meaningful depends not only on whether activities exist, but on

whether the social, institutional, and relational conditions under which participation becomes possible have been adequately addressed. This argument situates the dissertation at the intersection of leisure studies, migration and settlement scholarship, and community-based research, and it carries theoretical, methodological, and practical implications that extend beyond the specific context of Iranian immigrant women in Ottawa.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The three articles that form the empirical core of this dissertation examined leisure from three related but distinct vantage points: as stated preference, as lived experience, and as organizationally mediated access.

The first article (Chapter Two) established the methodological foundation for the study by demonstrating how a bilingual leisure interest survey, developed and distributed through PAND Settlement Services, can function as both a participant-informed communication tool and an analytical lens onto the conditions under which leisure becomes meaningful and accessible. Across 40 survey responses, participants expressed strong preferences for outdoor and movement-based activities, cultural outings, and social gatherings. Crucially, the survey revealed that leisure interest cannot be separated from leisure access: responses made visible how scheduling, caregiving responsibilities, transportation, cost, and language shape not only what is desired but what is practically feasible. The community-based participatory research and asset-based orientations ensured that participants were positioned as knowledge-holders and contributors to programme design rather than as recipients of externally determined programming. This has direct implications for how leisure programming for immigrant women should be designed: beginning not from available facilities or generic activity categories, but from participant-informed inquiry into what women find meaningful, realistic, and comfortable within the concrete conditions of their lives.

The second article (Chapter Three) reported participants' experiences across three structured leisure activities organized in partnership with PAND: a group walk along the Rideau Canal, a Classical Persian dance workshop, and a visit to the National Gallery of Canada. Drawing on 32 activity-level post-activity evaluations, two follow-up semi-structured feedback sessions, and researcher field notes, the findings demonstrated that community-based leisure activities can contribute to immigrant women's well-being in ways that are simultaneously emotional, social, and place-based. Participants described leisure as a meaningful interruption to daily routine, as time temporarily released from obligation, and as an opportunity to meet other women, discover public spaces, and experience themselves as more than their settlement-related roles. The dance workshop was particularly significant as a site of embodied cultural memory and identity restoration, while the gallery visit created opportunities for civic orientation and place familiarity. At the same time, participation was consistently shaped by time pressure, weather, transportation, caregiving demands, cost, and access to clear and trusted information. Because each activity was a single session, these findings are best understood as an in-depth exploration of participants' immediate experiences and perceptions rather than as evidence about how leisure outcomes develop and endure over time.

The third article (Chapter Four) deepened these findings by examining how a community-based settlement organization mediates Iranian newcomer women's access to leisure and public life. Presented as a single case study drawing on in-depth feedback sessions with Sahar and Shirin and a feedback session with an executive of the organization, it identified four interrelated themes: the influence of transnational worry and diaspora experience on emotional settlement; leisure as emotional relief, identity restoration, and civic orientation; the settlement organization as a mediating community structure; and the importance of practical design features in determining

whether programming is genuinely accessible. The finding that shared language, cultural familiarity, and organizational trust were foundational rather than incidental to participation extends the existing literature on settlement organizations by showing that their role reaches beyond formal service delivery into the facilitation of social participation, place familiarity, and civic belonging.

5.3 Theoretical Contributions

This dissertation makes several theoretical contributions to leisure studies, migration and settlement scholarship, and community-based research. First, and most centrally, it advances a conception of leisure as part of the lived infrastructure of settlement rather than as a secondary or optional domain. By examining leisure as a practice through which women negotiate well-being, identity, social connection, and belonging in everyday life, the dissertation moves beyond outcome-focused approaches to leisure participation and situates leisure within the relational and structural conditions under which settlement is lived. This contribution is particularly significant for human kinetics because it demonstrates that leisure research cannot remain limited to activity outcomes detached from the social and institutional conditions under which participation becomes possible.

Second, the dissertation develops and applies an intersectional framework to the analysis of leisure access and experience in a migration and settlement context. Rather than treating gender, migration, care, class, language, religion, and cultural expectation as separate factors, it consistently examines how these dimensions of social life interact in shaping whose time is protected, whose mobility is supported, and whose participation is normalized within available programmes and spaces. This analysis reveals that access to leisure is not simply a matter of preference or proximity but is organized through overlapping relations of power that are

simultaneously gendered, racialized, and institutionally mediated. The constraints participants described, such as lack of time and winter weather, are shared by many women, immigrant and non-immigrant alike; what distinguishes this account is that these constraints were compounded by migration-related dimensions including language, residency status, cultural and religious expectation, and racialization. The experience of being an immigrant woman is not the sum of being a woman and being an immigrant.

Third, the dissertation extends existing scholarship on belonging and settlement by demonstrating that belonging is not simply an outcome of formal integration but an ongoing relational and spatial process enacted through everyday practices, institutional encounters, and access to meaningful places and activities. The findings show that leisure spaces can support belonging in concrete and immediate ways, by introducing women to public institutions, creating opportunities for social ties to form, and expanding participants' practical knowledge of the city, while also revealing that such belonging remained emergent, initial, and contingent on the structural conditions under which participation is organized and sustained.

Fourth, the concepts of community mediation and cultural infrastructure developed in Chapter Four offer a contribution to the study of settlement organizations. By distinguishing the relational, cultural, and trust-building work through which organizations create accessible entry points into community life from the formal service delivery functions that dominate existing scholarship, the dissertation clarifies a mechanism through which settlement organizations shape not only information access but the social conditions under which participation becomes genuinely possible. Locating this capacity within the organization, rather than with the individual or the network, extends the spatial concept of cultural infrastructure found in cultural policy scholarship toward the organizational practices that make cultural spaces usable (Getzner, 2024; Klinenberg,

2018), and specifies, for a newcomer population, the conditions under which the relationships described by Bourdieu (1986) and Putnam (2000) are given occasion to form. Given the small portion of the dataset on which it rests, this contribution is put forward as a proposition for further testing rather than as a settled theoretical claim.

5.4 Practical and Policy Contributions

The findings carry several practical implications for settlement organizations, community recreation providers, municipal governments, and policymakers working to support immigrant women's well-being and community inclusion.

First, the dissertation demonstrates that leisure should be recognized as a legitimate dimension of settlement support rather than as an optional supplement to more formal services. The consistently positive responses to the three leisure activities, and the emotional, social, and place-based dimensions of what participants described as meaningful, make clear that organized leisure programming can function as a resource when designed with care and grounded in participants' realities.

Second, the study underscores that structural access, not simply activity availability, determines whether participation is genuinely possible. Programming designed for immigrant women must actively address scheduling, transportation, cost, childcare, language, information access, and social trust. Each of these represents a point at which the gap between available and accessible can be closed or widened by program design choices. The study also shows that providers can mitigate structural constraints rather than treat them as fixed. Activities were offered free of charge, the National Gallery visit was organized around the institution's free evening, and scheduling was arranged around participant availability including weekends. Each of these choices materially affected whether women could attend. Coordinated transportation, carpooling,

subsidized or eliminated parking and admission costs, and scheduling built around shift work are concrete provider strategies the findings point toward.

Third, taken together the findings support a reasonably clear description of what an effective leisure program for this group would look like: delivery in Farsi; women-centered settings for activities such as dance where cultural and bodily comfort matter; scheduling built around full-time and shift work, including evenings and weekends; no or low cost; childcare that accompanies the activity rather than being assumed away; advance notice delivered through a trusted community channel; short, predictable sessions; and a connected series of occasions rather than one-off events, so that familiarity and trust can accumulate. The comparative analysis in Chapter Four makes the same point from the provider side, in that no single organization in Ottawa combined all of these features.

Fourth, the role of trusted community organizations as mediating infrastructures for leisure participation deserves greater policy recognition and funding support. The labour of community mediation, including relationship-building, bilingual communication, cultural interpretation, logistical coordination, and trust maintenance, is rarely captured in funding metrics focused on service volumes or employment outcomes, yet it is precisely this labour that makes participation possible for women who might otherwise remain disconnected from public and cultural life. Organized community leisure is not free when it is done well; its costs are carried by the people closest to the community. Informal, friendship- and family-based leisure carries a lighter resource profile and may be a more accessible pathway when organizational or financial constraints limit formal provision, but it too depends on time, social ties, and confidence, and it is most likely to flourish where relationships have already been seeded.

Fifth, culturally responsive leisure education deserves consideration as a complementary intervention. Several women in this study were unaware of opportunities that already existed, including the National Gallery's free evening, and learned of them through the organization. This is, in effect, leisure education embedded in programming: developing awareness of what is available, helping identify what is personally meaningful, and supporting the negotiation of constraints. It should be stated clearly that leisure education complements rather than replaces structural change. It does not absolve providers, funders, or systems of responsibility for the structural constraints this study documents, and framing it otherwise would shift onto individual women a burden that belongs to institutions.

Finally, the methodological model developed in this dissertation, beginning with a participant-informed interest survey, developing activities in community partnership, and evaluating both the experiential and structural dimensions of participation, offers a practical template for organizations seeking to co-develop inclusive and sustainable leisure programming with immigrant communities.

5.5 Limitations

Several limitations should inform the interpretation of these findings. The study was conducted with a small number of participants in a single Canadian city, in collaboration with one settlement organization serving one linguistic community. Depth and contextual specificity are methodological strengths in qualitative and community-based research, and statistical representativeness was never the aim. The appropriate criterion is transferability rather than generalizability: the findings are offered with sufficient contextual detail, about the population, the setting, the organization, the season, and the design of the activities, for readers to judge whether and how they may be meaningful in comparable contexts, such as other Farsi-speaking or

newcomer communities and other settlement organizations. They should not be read as describing all Iranian immigrant women, all Farsi-speaking populations, or all newcomer communities in Canada.

Participants were largely self-selected through PAND's communication networks. Because the leisure interest survey was distributed digitally through Telegram and social media, it reached women who are comfortable online and already connected to the organization. Women who are less connected to organized community channels, who face more entrenched constraints, or who did not attend any of the activities are not represented in the data. Across all three activities, some women who had initially registered did not attend, a gap that is itself consistent with the constraints participants described. Beyond the broad arrival window used to recruit survey respondents, length of time in Ottawa was not systematically recorded, so responses could not be analyzed by duration of residence; as most participants appeared to be recent newcomers within roughly the last five years, the account may under-represent women who have lived in the city longer. Pre-migration leisure experience was also not asked about systematically, so it was not possible to examine how prior experience shaped how women read and took up leisure opportunities after arrival.

The conditions under which the evaluation data were collected also warrant acknowledgement. Post-activity evaluations were completed on site, immediately after each session, in my presence as the facilitator, at events I had organized and within an organization participants trusted. These circumstances may have encouraged more favorable responses. Using anonymous paper forms completed before participants left was one step taken to reduce that pressure, but it could not remove it. The consistently high satisfaction ratings reported in Chapter Three should be read with this in mind and should not be treated as independent evidence of program quality.

The account of community mediation and cultural infrastructure rests on a small proportion of the data: two participant feedback sessions and one organizational session at a single settlement organization. It is presented as an emerging, hypothesis-generating contribution rather than an established finding. Because participants in the follow-up feedback sessions did not consent to audio recording, detailed handwritten notes were taken during each session and reviewed for accuracy with participants. This approach was methodologically appropriate and respectful of participants' preferences, but it may have limited the preservation of precise wording and nuance that audio recording would have allowed, and it constrains the possibility of fine-grained discourse analysis.

Finally, the study was not designed as a longitudinal investigation. Each activity was offered as a single session, so the findings describe immediate experiences and perceptions rather than sustained outcomes. Whether short-term participation translates into lasting change in social networks, leisure habits, or sense of belonging, and whether the emerging place familiarity described here consolidates into durable belonging, remains a question to explore in future research initiatives. The same activities offered in another season, city, or community, or with different women, could yield different responses.

5.6 Directions for Future Research

The findings open several productive directions for future research in leisure studies, human kinetics, and migration scholarship. First, and most specifically, community mediation requires examination with larger samples and across multiple settlement organizations serving different linguistic and cultural communities. The present account rests on a single organization and a small portion of the data, and establishing whether the mediating capacity described here

operates similarly elsewhere, and what organizational conditions sustain or erode it, is the clearest priority arising from this work.

Second, longitudinal research examining whether community-based leisure participation produces sustained changes in social networks, leisure patterns, sense of belonging, and well-being over time would make a valuable contribution. This study documented meaningful immediate experiences; understanding whether and how these are sustained, deepened, or complicated over months and years would strengthen the evidence base for leisure as a component of settlement support, and would be necessary to establish whether the emergent bridging described above develops into durable cross-community ties.

Third, comparative research across different immigrant communities, cities, and settlement contexts would clarify which dimensions of the present findings are specific to Iranian immigrant women in Ottawa and which reflect broader patterns applicable to newcomer populations more generally.

Fourth, research that specifically centers the perspectives of women who are most structurally excluded from leisure participation, including those in precarious employment, those without access to transportation, those with significant caregiving responsibilities, and those newly arrived and not yet connected to community networks, would address an important gap in both the present study and the broader literature. The experiences of women who wanted to participate but could not are likely to reveal the most entrenched constraints.

Fifth, several variables that this study could not analyze should be recorded and examined in future work: length of residence, pre-migration leisure history, and the forms of transnational and upward caregiving obligation that emerged in participants' accounts but were not the subject of systematic data collection. Research on constraint negotiation, and on how programming can

help women distinguish perceived from actual constraints, would also be valuable, as would work that considers informal, self-directed, and friendship-based leisure alongside organized programming rather than treating the two separately.

Sixth, policy-oriented research examining how municipal recreation systems, settlement funders, and provincial governments currently support or fail to support leisure-based programming for immigrant women would help translate these findings into actionable recommendations. This could include analyses of the costs of exclusion alongside the costs of providing accessible programming, and institutional analyses of how existing funding structures incentivize or disincentivize community-based leisure initiatives.

Seventh, participatory action research projects that engage immigrant women as co-researchers in the design, implementation, and evaluation of leisure programming over extended timeframes would build on the community-based tradition developed in this dissertation while extending participant agency and community ownership over the research process. Future studies of this kind could also offer participants multiple documentation options, including audio recording, participant-generated notes, or voice memos, so that documentation practices respect preference without foreclosing analytic depth.

In sum, this doctoral dissertation provides empirical evidence and analysis on how leisure matters in the lives of a group of Iranian immigrant women aged 30 to 55 in Ottawa, Canada. Forty women to expressed what leisure activities they would find meaningful and what would make participation feasible. Thirty-two activity-level evaluations across three sessions revealed that leisure practiced in a group allowed participants to feel recognized, connected, capable, and more at ease in a new country, while also identifying the time pressure, weather, transportation,

caregiving demands, cost, and information gaps that continued to constrain participation. Sahar and Shirin, the two women who attended all three activities and took part in follow-up feedback sessions, described in greater depth what those activities meant within lives shaped by paid work, caregiving, settlement demands, and sustained worry about family in Iran. Across all three sources, access to leisure was described not as a luxury but as part of what makes life livable, and part of what makes belonging possible.

Access to inclusive, quality, culturally relevant leisure activities cannot be taken for granted. As this dissertation suggests, leisure became more legible, reachable and better supported when it was offered through a trustworthy and culturally-responsive settlement organization. Organizations of this kind maintain the relationships and the everyday translation work that constitute the social infrastructure through which newcomers can discover, enter, and begin to inhabit the public and cultural life of the cities where they now live.

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Appendices

Appendix A: REB Ethics Certificate

29/09/2025

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number

Titre du projet / Project Title

H-03-23-8562

'Peyvand': Exploring an asset-based community development approach to enhance language, leisure, and social ties among Farsi-speaking adult women in a Canadian city.

Type de projet / Project Type

Recherche de professeur /
Professor's research project

Statut du projet / Project Status

Renouvelé / Renewed

Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

03/10/2023

Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

02/10/2026

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

**Chercheur /
Researcher**

Affiliation

Role

Eileen
O'CONNOR

École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics

Chercheur Principal /
Principal Investigator

Nadia
ABU-ZAHRA

École de développement international et mondialisation / School of
International Development and Global Studies

Co-chercheur /
Co-investigator

Emily WILLS

École d'études politiques / School of Political Studies

Co-chercheur /
Co-investigator

Laura AMBROSIO

Collaborateur / Collaborator

Mahsa HADIDI

École des sciences de l'activité physique / School of Human Kinetics

Étudiant-chercheur /
Student-researcher

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

550, rue Cumberland, pièce 154 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154
Ottawa (Ontario) K1N 6N5 Canada Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5 Canada

613-562-5387 • 613-562-5338 • ethique@uOttawa.ca / ethics@uOttawa.ca
www.recherche.uottawa.ca/deontologie | www.recherche.uottawa.ca/ethics

Appendix B: Pre-Leisure Interest Survey

Leisure Interest Survey

Thank you for your interest in participating in this collaborative leisure project!
We'd like to learn more about you and your interests so we can design meaningful and enjoyable early-fall activities together. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous.

Age: _____

Have you arrived in Canada within the last 5 years? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Please let us know if you have any mobility, visual, or physical disability concerns.

Dietary needs (e.g., vegetarian): _____

1. Language Proficiency

1a. Please indicate your comfort level in the following languages:

Language	None	Beginner	Able to converse	Fluent
Farsi	☐	☐	☐	☐
English	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify): _____	☐	☐	☐	☐

1b. Please describe any language-related goals or skills you would like to develop:

2. Preferred Time for Activities

Please rank in order of preference: 1 (most preferred) – 3 (least preferred)

- ☐ Weekday evenings
- ☐ Saturday
- ☐ Sunday

Availability constraints:

- Are there specific days during the week when you are not available?

3. Interests and Passions

Please check all the activities you are interested in participating in with a group of women in Ottawa this fall. (If you're especially excited about one, feel free to star it!)

Outdoor & Physical Activities

- ☐ Walking along Rideau Canal or Gatineau Park
- ☐ Fitness Program
- ☐ Group Yoga

Arts, Crafts & Creative Expression

- ☐ Craft Workshops (knitting, jewelry-making, origami, seasonal decorations)
- ☐ Painting & Drawing Workshop

Social & Community Activities

- ☐ Coffee & Storytelling Circle
- ☐ Board & Card Games Afternoons
- ☐ Potluck Cultural Nights
- ☐ Book & Magazine Club
- ☐ Community Karaoke Night
- ☐ Indoor Family Game Night

Mind & Relaxation

- ☐ Book/Film Reflection Group

Cultural & Educational Activities

- ☐ Museum Visits (art, nature, war, science, history museums)
- ☐ Digital Literacy Workshop (basic computer skills, programs, JavaScript, Python)

Additional Questions

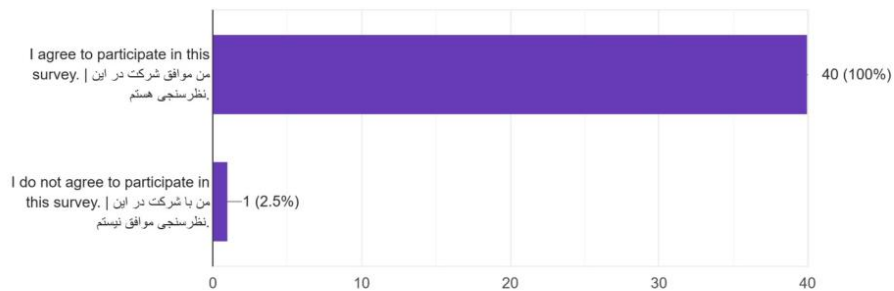
- Do you have any additional activity ideas or things you'd like to try?

- Are there any accessibility needs we should be aware of to ensure a safe and inclusive experience? (e.g., mobility issues, visual impairment, etc.)

Appendix C: Pre-Leisure Interest Survey Results

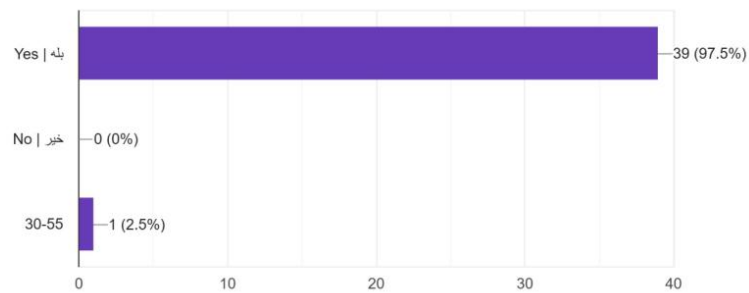
Consent to Participate | رضایت به شرکت در نظرسنجی

40 responses



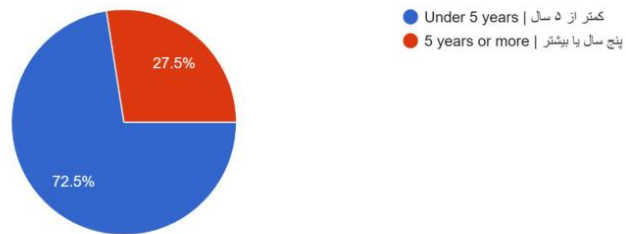
Are you between the ages of 30 and 55? آیا سن شما بین ۳۰ تا ۵۵ سال است؟

40 responses



How long have you been living in Canada? چه مدت است که در کانادا ساکن هستید؟

40 responses



Do you have specific needs or accommodations, such as mobility concerns, that should be integrated into our planning and facilitation of the leisure activities? If yes, please specify.

آیا نیازها یا امکانات خاصی مانند نگرانی های حرکتی دارید که باید در برنامه ریزی و تسهیل فعالیت های responses اوقات فراغت ما در نظر گرفته شود؟ اگر بله، لطفا مشخص کنید. 19.

No

خیر

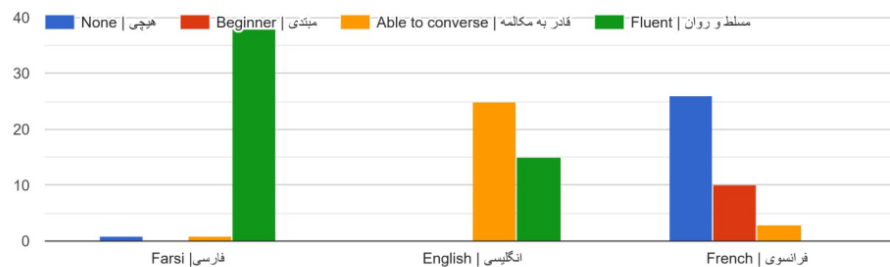
خیر

خیر

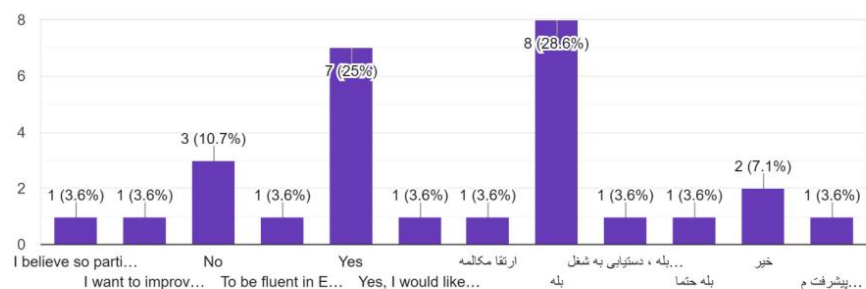
مچ پای من گاهی اوقات درد می کند و نمی توانم پرش یا دو انجام بدم

Pet phobia

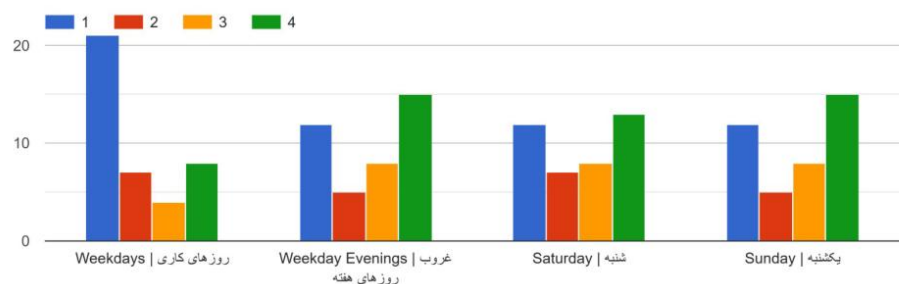
Language proficiency Please indicate your comfort level in the following languages: لطفا سطح زبان خود را در هریک از زبان های فارسی و انگلیسی مشخص کنید.



Do you have English language goals or skills you would like to develop while participating in these leisure activities? آیا هدفی در راستای ارتقای مهارت زبان انگلیس... در حین شرکت در این فعالیت های اوقات فراغت آن را هم توسعه دهید؟
28 responses

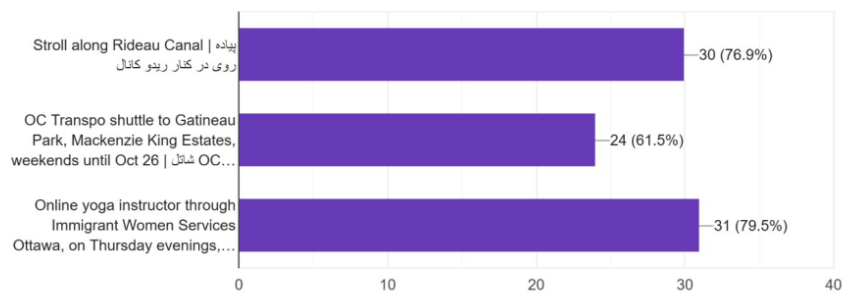


Preferred Time for Activities زمان ترجیحی برای شرکت در فعالیت ها Please rank in order of preference: 1 (least preferred) – 4 (most preferred) لطفاً اولویت های خود را از ۱ (کمترین ترجیح) تا ۴ (بیشترین ترجیح) رتبه بندی کنید



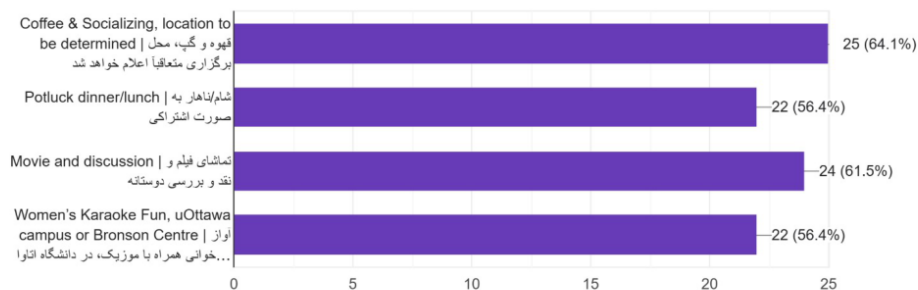
Outdoor and Physical Activities | فعالیت های فیزیکی و در محیط آزاد

39 responses



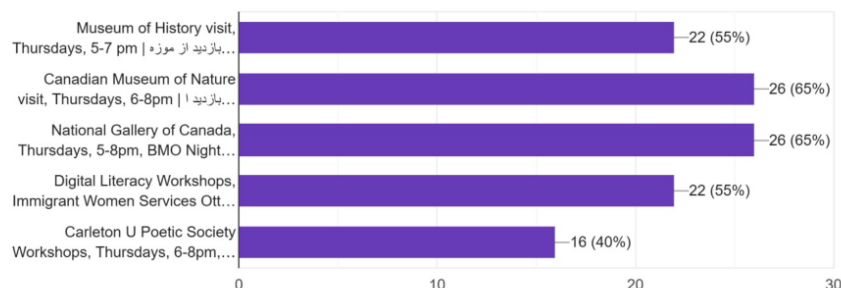
Social Activities | فعالیت های اجتماعی

39 responses



فعالیت‌های فرهنگی و آموزشی | Cultural & Educational Activities

40 responses



Open-ended Question:

From this list, what would be your 3 most preferred leisure activities to do with a group of women this Fall? |

از بین لیست فعالیت‌های پیشنهاد شده، سه فعالیتی که بیشتر از همه دوست دارید در پاییز با گروهی از زنان ایرانی انجام دهید، کدام‌اند؟

Answers:

Socializing with groups, book/movie club, visiting museums

بازدیدموزه ولی چون بعدازظهرها هستند نمیتوانم

یوگا پیاده روی

Strolling along Rideau canal, movie and discussion, digital literacy

Yoga, hiking, painting

یوگا، پیاده روی و دورهمی

پیاده روی، موزه، یوگا

Coffee time, Gallery visit

یوگا و پاتلاک

کافی شاپ، پیاده روی، موزه

یوگا، مکالمه زبان و سواد دیجیتال

این قدر دغدغه آموزش زبان و کسب درآمد دارم و همچنین مسئولیت نگهداری از فرزندانم، که به اوقات فراغت خودم فکر نمی‌کنم... اگر هم فعالیتی باشه ترجیح میدم بچه‌ها رو تو خونه تنها نزارم.

Outdoor agathering

پیاده روی کنار کانال قهوه خوری وموزه

فیلم دیدم. پیاده روی. قهوه و گپ دوستانه

برنامه شعر- بازدید موزه - یوگا

بازدید از موزه، پاتلاک، و گتینو پارک

یوگا پیاده روی آموزش و تمرین زبان انگلیسی

گردش و پیاده روی در فضای باز و طبیعت

یوگا آنلاین

Watching movies and reading books, visiting museums, going to Gatineau park for hiking

یوگا- کارگاه شعر-آواز خوانی

Yoga

فیلم ، آواز خوانی و یوگا

Museums- coffee shops-digital literacy workshops

یوگا، پاتلاک، هایک

Yoga, poem writing and stroll along the canal

Hiking

Appendix D: First Activity Recruitment Poster

Leisure Activities for Women Aged 30–55

Join me and other Farsi-speaking women for a group leisure walk in downtown Ottawa this Sunday, October 26, 2025, from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m.

This leisure activity is part of my PhD research project at the University of Ottawa, entitled: *“Reconceptualizing Leisure and Community Services as Pathways to Well-Being and Integration: Insights from Iranian Immigrant Women in Ottawa.”*

The project is part of a broader research study led by Drs. Eileen O’Connor, Emily Regan Wills, Nadia Abu-Zahra, and Laura Ambrosio on women’s leisure and well-being, and has received ethics approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board.

Who:

Farsi-speaking women between 30–55 years of age

Activity:

Leisure walk along the beautiful Rideau Canal

Date & Time:

Sunday, October 26, 2025

2:30 – 4:00 p.m.

(Walk from 2:30–3:30 p.m.; optional social time in the NAC foyer until 4:00 p.m.)

Meeting Place:

National Arts Centre (NAC) – main entrance

Activity Details:

We’ll meet at 2:30 p.m. at the entrance of the NAC. Once everyone has arrived, I’ll distribute the consent forms to sign, followed by a short introduction and an icebreaker activity to get to know one another. We’ll then start our group walk along the Rideau Canal, enjoying the fall scenery and friendly company.

Important Information:

- Upon your RSVP, more details about the meeting location and a copy of the consent form will be provided.
- Each participant must sign a consent form before taking part in the activity. Paper copies will be available to sign on site.
- At the end of the walk, a short evaluation form will be distributed.

- Please wear comfortable walking shoes and warm clothing, bring a bottle of water if you wish, and check the weather forecast (bring an umbrella if needed).
- The weather forecast for this Sunday is 10°C and sunny.
- Limited to 20 participants – first come, first served.

📧 To RSVP:

Please email Mahsa Hadidi

by the

evening of Thursday, October 23, 2025, to confirm your interest.

Come enjoy the crisp fall weather, connect with others, and contribute to meaningful research on women's leisure and well-being in Ottawa! 🍁

🌿 پیاده‌روی دوستانه برای خاتمه‌های فارسی‌زبان ۳۰ تا ۵۵ ساله 🌿

سلام!

اگر تمایل دارید در یک آخر هفته ی پاییزی با تعدادی از بانوان در مسیر زیبای کانال ریدو قدم بزنیم و، گپ بزنیم و حال و هوایی عوض کنیم و دوستای جدید پیدا کنیم، خوشحال میشیم تو این برنامه با ما همراه بشید! 🌸

این پیاده‌روی بخشی از پژوهش دکتری مهسا حدیدی در دانشگاه اتاوا هستش با عنوان «بازنگری خدمات فراغتی و اجتماعی به‌عنوان مسیرهایی برای بهزیستی و ادغام اجتماعی: دیدگاه‌هایی از زنان مهاجر» «ایرانی در اتاوا»

انجام می‌شود و از سوی Drs. O'Connor, Wills, Abu-Zahr, and Ambrosio این پروژه با همکاری uOttawa Research Ethics Board تأیید شده است.

📍 محل ملاقات: National Arts Centre (NAC) ورودی اصلی: محل ملاقات

📅 یکشنبه ۲۶ اکتبر ۲۰۲۵، ساعت ۲:۳۰ تا ۴ بعدازظهر: زمان

(تا ساعت ۴ NAC قدم‌زدن از ۲:۳۰ تا ۳:۳۰ و در صورت تمایل، گفت‌وگو و نوشیدنی در لابی)

در ابتدای برنامه همدیگر را ملاقات می‌کنیم، فرم رضایت‌نامه را امضا می‌کنی و با یک گفت‌وگوی کوتاه با همدیگر آشنا میشیم سپس با هم در مسیر زیبای کانال ریدو قدم می‌زنیم و از هوای تازه و همراهی دوستانه لذت می‌بریم 🍁

- ♦ لطفاً کفش راحت و لباس گرم بپوش، بطری آب همراه داشته باش و در صورت نیاز چتر هم بیاور.
- ♦ پیش‌بینی هوا برای یکشنبه: اقیانی و حدود ۱۰ درجه.
- ♦ در پایان برنامه، یک فرم کوتاه ارزیابی پر می‌شود.

تعداد شرکت‌کنندگان محدود است (حداکثر ۲۰ نفر).
:اگر مایل هستی شرکت کنی، لطفاً تا پنج‌شنبه ۲۳ اکتبر ۲۰۲۵ با ما تماس بگیر و ثبت‌نامت را تأیید کن

منتظر دیدنت هستیم 🌸

Appendix E: First Activity Post-Activity Evaluation Survey (English)

Post-Activity Evaluation Survey, Leisure for Iranian Immigrant Women (Ages 30–55)

Estimated time: 10-15 minutes

Confidentiality: Responses are anonymous and voluntary. You may skip any question.

- Did you attend the whole session? ☐ Yes ☐ Part of it
- To gain a better understanding of what women balance in terms of work/home/family/leisure, please share with us if you work full or part-time, and if you provide caregiving to children or older adults in the family.

Section A — Please share your thoughts on the leisure activity today.

Instructions: For each statement below, please select the number that best represents your experience.

(1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree) Optional: You can add a short comment if you wish to share more detail.

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
Overall, I enjoyed the activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Registration and participation in this activity was easy and accessible.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I was satisfied with the organization and activity led by the PhD student and assistant.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I felt comfortable doing the activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
The activity fit well with my schedule, time availability.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
This is my first time to walk along this walking path	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I would recommend this walking path to others.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

Section B — Leisure, well-being and connection

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
I felt good or happy while participating	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Making new acquaintances is important to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I made at least one new acquaintance during this activity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

Section C — Challenges to doing leisure activity

Here is a list of common challenges or barriers to doing leisure. Please check off any that you experience as a challenge or barrier to doing leisure:

- ☐ Lack of time; ☐ Childcare responsibilities; ☐ Family duties; ☐ Cost (registration, etc.)
☐ Equipment; ☐ Language; ☐ Risk and/or Safety; ☐ Transportation and distance;
☐ Cultural norms; ☐ Not knowing the local leisure resources; ☐ Beginner knowledge of the leisure activity; ☐ Gender expectations or restrictions in the family; ☐ Not a current priority; ☐ Weather;
☐ For structured leisure programs, the fixed schedule, location, and time is not convenient

Other: _____

Section D — Your next steps in leisure

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
I would be interested to join a small group (e.g., Telegram or WhatsApp) to stay connected with other participants and organize leisure activities on our own.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I am likely to do this walk or activity again by myself, with friends, or with family.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I like doing leisure activities with other Iranian women in this age group, 30-55.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I like doing leisure activities with Iranian women of any age.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

Open Reflection Questions

1. What are the main reasons you like to do leisure?
2. What kinds of activities do you enjoy doing for leisure and why?
3. What was your favorite part of the leisure activity today?
4. Did this activity help you feel more connected with others? If so, please explain how. If not, please explain why.
5. Did this activity help you feel more aware and/or connected to your new city, Ottawa?
6. Is there anything you would like us to know that could inform future activity planning?

Thank you for your time and spending the afternoon together!

Appendix F: First Activity Post-Activity Evaluation Survey (Farsi)

فرم ارزیابی پس از فعالیت

برنامه ی اوقات فراغت برای زنان فارسی زبان مهاجر (۳۰ تا ۵۵ سال)

⌚ مدت زمان تخمینی تکمیل: ۱۰ تا ۱۵ دقیقه

🔒 **محرمانگی:** پاسخ دادن به این نظرسنجی داوطلبانه می باشد و شما می‌توانید هر پرسشی را که مایل نیستید، بدون پاسخ بگذارید. تمامی پاسخ ها و اطلاعات محرمانه و ناشناس باقی خواهند ماند.

آیا برنامه را تا انتها شرکت کردید؟

☐ بله ☐ بخشی از آن را شرکت کردم

برای درک بهتر شرایط زنان در تعادل بین کار، خانه، خانواده و اوقات فراغت، لطفاً مشخص کنید آیا تمام وقت یا پاره وقت کار می‌کنید؟ و آیا از کودکان یا سالمندان خانواده مراقبت می‌کنید یا خیر؟

بخش الف) نظر شما درباره فعالیت فراغتی امروز

راهنما: برای هر جمله، عددی را انتخاب کنید که تجربه ی امروز شما را به بهترین شکل نشان می‌دهد. در صورت تمایل می‌توانید در ستون توضیحات، دیدگاه خود را اضافه کنید.

(۱ = کاملاً موافقم ۲ = موافقم ۳ = مخالفم ۴ = کاملاً مخالفم)

جمله	۱	۲	۳	۴	توضیح (اختیاری)
به‌طور کلی از این فعالیت لذت بردم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
نحوه ی ثبت‌نام و شرکت در این فعالیت آسان و در دسترس بود.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
از سازمان‌دهی و اجرای فعالیت توسط دانشجوی دکتری و دستیار او رضایت داشتم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
هنگام انجام فعالیت احساس راحتی داشتم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
زمان‌بندی و مدت فعالیت با برنامه‌ی من سازگار بود.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
این اولین بار بود که در این مسیر پیاده‌روی شرکت می‌کردم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
این مسیر پیاده‌روی را به دیگران توصیه می‌کنم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

بخش ب) فراغت، بهزیستی و ارتباط اجتماعی

جمله	۱	۲	۳	۴	توضیح (اختیاری)
در طول فعالیت احساس خوبی یا شادی داشتم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
آشنا شدن با افراد جدید برایم اهمیت دارد.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
در این فعالیت دستکم با یک فرد جدید آشنا شدم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

بخش ج) چالش‌ها و موانع انجام فعالیت‌های فراغتی

در زیر فهرستی از موانع رایج برای شرکت در فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغتی لیست شده است. لطفاً مواردی را که برای شما چالش یا مانع محسوب می‌شوند علامت بزنید:

- ☐ کمبود وقت ☐ مسئولیت نگهداری از کودک ☐ وظایف خانوادگی ☐ هزینه (ثبت‌نام و غیره) ☐
☐ نیاز به تجهیزات ☐ زبان ☐ خطر یا مسائل ایمنی ☐ حمل‌ونقل و فاصله ☐
☐ هنجارهای فرهنگی ☐ ناآگاهی از منابع محلی موجود برای اوقات فراغت ☐ ناآشنایی اولیه با فعالیت مورد نظر ☐
☐ انتظارات یا محدودیت‌های جنسیتی در خانواده ☐ در اولویت نبودن اوقات فراغت در حال حاضر ☐ وضعیت آب‌وهوا ☐
☐ زمان و مکان برنامه‌های از پیش تعیین شده مناسب نیست ☐
 سایر موارد _____

بخش د) گام‌های بعدی شما در زمینه‌ی فراغت

جمله	۱	۲	۳	۴	توضیح (اختیاری)
مایل هستم به یک گروه کوچک (مثلاً در تلگرام یا واتس‌آپ) بپیوندم تا با دیگر شرکت‌کنندگان در ارتباط بمانیم و خودمان فعالیت‌های فراغتی ترتیب دهیم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
احتمالاً این مسیر یا فعالیت را دوباره به‌تنهایی، با دوستان یا خانواده انجام می‌دهم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
از انجام فعالیت‌های فراغتی با زنان ایرانی در همین گروه سنی (۳۰ تا ۵۵ سال) لذت می‌برم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
از انجام فعالیت‌های فراغتی با زنان ایرانی در هر سن و سالی لذت می‌برم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

پرسش‌های باز و تکمیلی

۱. دلایل اصلی شما برای علاقه مندی و تمایل به انجام فعالیت‌های فراغتی چیست؟

۲. چه نوع فعالیت‌هایی را برای اوقات فراغت خود ترجیح می‌دهید و چرا؟

۳. بخش مورد علاقه‌ی شما در فعالیت فراغتی امروز چه بود؟

۴. آیا این فعالیت باعث شد احساس ارتباط بیشتری با دیگران داشته باشید؟ اگر بله، چگونه؟ اگر نه، چرا؟

۵. آیا این فعالیت باعث شد احساس آشنایی یا ارتباط بیشتری با شهر جدید خود (اتاوا) پیدا کنید؟

۶. آیا نکته یا پیشنهادی دارید که بتواند در برنامه‌ریزی فعالیت‌های آینده به ما کمک کند؟

از فرصتی که در اختیار ما گذاشتید و از همراهی گرم‌تان در این بعدازظهر پاییزی خیلی ممنونیم! 🌸

Appendix G: Second Activity Recruitment Poster

Classic Persian Dance Class for Iranian Women (Ages 30–55)

Join me and other Iranian women on Wednesday, November 19, 2025, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. for a joyful and relaxing evening together.

My name is Mahsa, and this leisure activity is part of my PhD research project at the University of Ottawa, titled *“Reconceptualizing Leisure and Community Services as Pathways to Well-Being and Integration: Insights from Iranian Immigrant Women in Ottawa.”*

This project is part of a broader study led by Drs. Eileen O’Connor, Emily Wills, Nadia Abu-Zahra, and Laura Ambrosio, and has received ethics approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board.

Participants

We welcome Iranian women aged 30–55 living in Ottawa.
Participation is limited to 20 people, first come, first served.

Activity

Enjoy a Classic Persian dance class with guest instructor Shabnam from the Baran Dance Group. Shabnam teaches dance classes through Baran Dance Group, and we are deeply grateful for her generosity in offering this complimentary class as part of this leisure activity.

Date & Time

Wednesday, November 19, 2025
6:00 – 7:30 p.m.
(6:00–6:15: Arrival, introductions, and consent forms;
6:15–6:20: Warm-up;
6:20–6:55: Dance class;
6:55–7:00: Cool-down;
7:00–7:30: Tea, conversation, and evaluation form)

Location

Bronson Centre
211 Bronson Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1R 6H5
(Room is on the 3rd floor, accessible by elevator. If the elevator is temporarily out of service, access is available via stairs. The building entrance is wheelchair accessible.)

Activity Details

We'll gather at 6:00 p.m. for brief introductions and to complete the consent forms.

The dance portion begins with a short warm-up, followed by Classic Persian dance instruction, and ends with a cool-down to relax the body.

Afterward, participants are invited to stay for tea and conversation until 7:30 p.m.

During this time, you'll be asked to fill out a short, anonymous evaluation form (available in English and Farsi) and place it in the box provided before leaving.

Important Information

- Upon your RSVP, detailed directions and a copy of the consent form will be provided.
- Each participant must sign a consent form before taking part in the activity (paper copies will also be available).
- Please wear comfortable clothing, indoor shoes or sneakers, and bring a water bottle if you wish.
- Free parking is available behind the Bronson Centre; street parking is free after 5:00 p.m.
- If you have any mobility concerns, injuries, or health conditions that you'd like me to be aware of, please let me know in advance. You may rest at any time, and chairs will be available in the room for your comfort.
- The class will be conducted in Farsi to ensure a comfortable and welcoming environment for all participants.

To RSVP

Please email Mahsa Hadidi

by the evening of

Monday, November 17, 2025, to confirm your participation.

Spots will be confirmed for the first 20 participants who RSVP.

کلاس رقص کلاسیک ایرانی برای بانوان ایرانی ۳۰ تا ۵۵ ساله

از همه دوستانی که در نظرسنجی فاز دوم پروژه شرکت کردند صمیمانه سپاسگزاریم.

بر اساس نتایج به دست آمده، برنامه دوم ما یک کلاس رقص کلاسیک ایرانی خواهد بود در روز چهارشنبه، ۱۹ نوامبر ۲۰۲۵، از ساعت ۶:۰۰ تا ۷:۳۰ بعد از ظهر.

این فعالیت بخشی از پژوهش دکتری مهسا حدیدی در دانشگاه اتاوا است با عنوان: «بازنگری خدمات فراغی و اجتماعی به عنوان مسیرهایی برای بهزیستی و ادغام اجتماعی: دیدگاه‌هایی از زنان مهاجر ایرانی در اتاوا»

این پروژه با همکاری Drs. O'Connor, Wills, Abu-Zahra و Ambrosio در دانشگاه اتاوا انجام می‌شود و از سوی Research Ethics Board تأیید شده است.

شرکت کنندگان

این برنامه ویژه زنان ایرانی ۳۰ تا ۵۵ ساله ساکن اتاوا است. ظرفیت کلاس ۲۰ نفر است و الویت با کسانی می باشد که زودتر ثبت نام کرده باشند.

فعالیت

کلاس رقص کلاسیک ایرانی با مربیگری شب‌نم از گروه رقص باران می باشد که به ما لطف داشتند و با سخاوت و مهربانی این کلاس را به صوت رایگان برگزار میکنند.

تاریخ و زمان

چهارشنبه، ۱۹ نوامبر ۲۰۲۵

تا ۷:۳۰ عصر ۶:۰۰

تا ۶:۱۵: حضور، خوش آمدگویی و تکمیل فرم رضایت‌نامه (۶:۰۰)

تا ۶:۲۰: گرم کردن ۶:۱۵

تا ۶:۵۵: کلاس رقص ۶:۲۰

تا ۷:۰۰: سرد کردن بدن ۶:۵۵

(تا ۷:۳۰: نوشیدن چای، گفت‌وگو و تکمیل فرم ارزیابی ۷:۰۰)

محل برگزاری

Bronson Centre

211 Bronson Avenue, Ottawa, ON K1R 6H5

اتاق در طبقه سوم قرار دارد و از طریق آسانسور قابل دسترسی است. در صورت خرابی موقت آسانسور، دسترسی از طریق پله‌ها امکان پذیر است (ورودی ساختمان نیز برای افراد دارای محدودیت حرکتی مناسب و قابل دسترسی است).

اطلاعات مهم

- پس از ثبت نام، جزئیات محل و نسخه‌ای از فرم رضایت‌نامه برای شما ارسال می‌شود.
- هر شرکت‌کننده باید پیش از شروع فعالیت، فرم رضایت‌نامه را امضا کند (نسخه‌ی کاغذی در محل موجود است).
- در صورت داشتن هرگونه محدودیت حرکتی، آسیب یا وضعیت جسمی خاص، لطفاً از پیش اطلاع دهید تا هماهنگی لازم صورت گیرد.
- در طول برنامه، هر زمان که بخواهید می‌توانید استراحت کنید؛ صندلی‌هایی برای استراحت در اتاق فراهم شده است.
- زبان اجرای کلاس فارسی است تا محیطی صمیمی و راحت برای همه‌ی شرکت‌کنندگان فراهم شود.
- لطفاً لباس راحت مناسب حرکت بپوشید، کفش مخصوص فضای داخلی یا کتانی تمیز و در صورت تمایل بطری آب همراه داشته باشید.
- پارکینگ رایگان در پشت ساختمان برونسون موجود است و پارک خیابانی نیز بعد از ساعت ۵ عصر رایگان است.

ثبت نام

لطفاً تا عصر دوشنبه، ۱۷ نوامبر ۲۰۲۵ از طریق ایمیل زیر شرکت خود را تأیید کنید:

منظرتان هستیم!

Appendix H: Second Activity Post-Activity Evaluation Survey (English)

Post-Activity Evaluation Survey, Leisure for Iranian Immigrant Women (Ages 30–55)

Estimated time: 10-15 minutes

Confidentiality: Responses are anonymous and voluntary. You may skip any question.

Background Questions

- Do you work full-time, part-time, (or are you a student)?
- Do you provide caregiving to children, or older adults in your family?
☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please share anything you wish: _____

Section A — Please share your thoughts on the leisure activity today.

Instructions: For each statement below, please select the number that best represents your experience.

(1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree) Optional: You can add a short comment if you wish to share more detail.

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
Overall, I enjoyed the activity	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Registration and participation in this activity was easy and accessible, and the activity fit well with my time availability.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I was satisfied with the workshop facilitation by the instructor and the PhD student assistant.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
The pace and level of the dance instruction were suitable for me	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I felt encouraged to participate regardless of my previous dance experience.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
The workshop space, equipment, building access, and overall physical environment were suitable and supported my participation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

Section B — Leisure, well-being and connection

(1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree) Optional: You can add a short comment if you wish to share more detail.

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
I felt good or happy while participating	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Making new acquaintances is important to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I made at least one new acquaintance during this activity.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
The workshop helped me become more aware of leisure activity options and opportunities available in my community and the city.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

Section C — Challenges to doing leisure activity

Here is a list of common challenges or barriers to doing leisure. Please check off any that you experience as a challenge or barrier to doing leisure:

- ☐ Lack of time; ☐ Childcare responsibilities; ☐ Family duties; ☐ Cost (registration, etc.)
☐ Equipment; ☐ Language; ☐ Risk and/or Safety; ☐ Transportation and distance;
☐ Cultural norms; ☐ Not knowing the local leisure resources; ☐ Beginner knowledge of the leisure activity; ☐ Gender expectations or restrictions in the family; ☐ Not a current priority; ☐ Weather;
☐ For structured leisure programs, the fixed schedule, location, and time is not convenient Other: _____

Section D — Your leisure preference

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
Do you like to do leisure activities by yourself?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Do you like to do leisure activities with a small group of friends/family?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
Do you like to do leisure activities with a larger group of Iranian women in your age group?	☐	☐	☐	☐	
Do you like to do leisure activities with a larger group of Iranian women of all age groups?	☐	☐	☐	☐	

Open Reflection Questions

1. What motivated you to participate in this dance workshop?
2. What aspects of the workshop did you enjoy most, and why?
3. How does dance (or movement-based leisure) contribute to your overall well-being?
4. Did this activity help you feel more connected with other Iranian women? If so, how? If not, why?
5. Did participating in this activity help you feel more confident or comfortable engaging in leisure activities? Please explain.
6. Did this workshop help you feel more aware of, or connected to, your new community in Ottawa?
7. Some goals of this research are to understand how individuals learn about leisure opportunities and how they connect with others to do leisure activities together. Please share any thoughts or ideas you may have.

Thank you for your time and for spending this evening with us!

Appendix I: Second Activity Post-Activity Evaluation Survey (Farsi)

فرم ارزیابی پس از فعالیت

برنامه ی اوقات فراغت برای زنان فارسی زبان مهاجر (۳۰ تا ۵۵ سال)

⌚ مدت زمان تخمینی تکمیل: ۱۰ تا ۱۵ دقیقه

🔒 محرمانگی: پاسخ دادن به این نظرسنجی داوطلبانه می باشد و شما می‌توانید هر پرسشی را که مایل نیستید، بدون پاسخ بگذارید. تمامی پاسخ ها و اطلاعات محرمانه و ناشناس باقی خواهند ماند.

بخش اول: سوالات پس‌زمینه

آیا شاغل تماموقت، پارهوقت، یا دانشجو هستید؟

آیا از کودکان یا سالمندان خانواده مراقبت می‌کنید یا خیر؟ ☐ خیر ☐ بله

اگر بله، در صورت تمایل توضیح دهید _____

بخش الف) نظر شما درباره فعالیت فراغتی امروز

راهنما: برای هر جمله، عددی را انتخاب کنید که تجربه ی امروز شما را به بهترین شکل نشان می‌دهد. در صورت تمایل می‌توانید در ستون توضیحات، دیدگاه خود را اضافه کنید.

(۱ = کاملاً موافقم ۲ = موافقم ۳ = مخالفم ۴ = کاملاً مخالفم)

جمله	۱	۲	۳	۴	توضیح (اختیاری)
به‌طور کلی از این فعالیت لذت بردم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
ثبت‌نام و شرکت در این فعالیت آسان و در دسترس بود و با زمان من هماهنگ بود.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
از نحوه هدایت کارگاه توسط مدرس و دستیار دانشجوی دکتری راضی بودم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
سرعت و سطح آموزش رقص برای من مناسب بود.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
صرف‌نظر از تجربه قبلی‌ام در رقص، اشتیاق به مشارکت در این برنامه داشتم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
فضای کارگاه، تجهیزات، دسترسی به ساختمان، و محیط کلی برای مشارکت من مناسب بود.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

بخش ب) فراغت، بهزیستی و ارتباط اجتماعی

(۱ = کاملاً موافقم ۲ = موافقم ۳ = مخالفم ۴ = کاملاً مخالفم)

جمله	۱	۲	۳	۴	توضیح (اختیاری)
در طول فعالیت احساس خوبی یا شادی داشتم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
آشنا شدن با افراد جدید برایم اهمیت دارد.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
در این فعالیت دستکم با یک فرد جدید آشنا شدم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
این کارگاه به من کمک کرد گزینه‌ها و فرصت‌های فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغت در جامعه و شهر را بهتر بشناسم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

بخش ج) چالش‌ها و موانع انجام فعالیت‌های فراغتی

در زیر فهرستی از موانع رایج برای شرکت در فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغتی لیست شده است. لطفاً مواردی را که برای شما چالش یا مانع محسوب می‌شوند علامت بزنید:

- ☐ کمبود وقت ☐ مسئولیت نگهداری از کودک ☐ وظایف خانوادگی ☐ هزینه (ثبت‌نام و غیره) ☐
☐ نیاز به تجهیزات ☐ زبان ☐ خطر یا مسائل ایمنی ☐ حمل‌ونقل و فاصله ☐
☐ هنجارهای فرهنگی ☐ ناآگاهی از منابع محلی موجود برای اوقات فراغت ☐ ناآشنایی اولیه با فعالیت مورد نظر ☐
☐ انتظارات یا محدودیت‌های جنسیتی در خانواده ☐ در اولویت نبودن اوقات فراغت در حال حاضر ☐ وضعیت آب‌وهوا ☐
☐ زمان و مکان برنامه‌های از پیش تعیین شده مناسب نیست ☐
 سایر موارد _____

بخش د) ترجیحات شما در انجام فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغت

جمله	۱	۲	۳	۴	توضیح (اختیاری)
دوست دارم فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغت را به‌تنهایی انجام دهم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
دوست دارم فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغت را در یک گروه کوچک از دوستان یا اعضای خانواده انجام دهم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
دوست دارم فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغت را در یک گروه بزرگتر از زنان ایرانی همسن خودم انجام دهم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
دوست دارم فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغت را در یک گروه بزرگتر از زنان ایرانی در هر گروه سنی انجام دهم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

پرسش‌های باز و تکمیلی

۱. چه چیزی به شما انگیزه‌ی شرکت در این کارگاه رقص را داد؟

۲. کدام بخش‌های کارگاه را بیشتر دوست داشتید و چرا؟

۳. فکر میکنید رقص (یا فعالیت حرکتی) چگونه به سلامت کلی شما کمک می‌کند؟

۴. آیا این فعالیت باعث شد با دیگر زنان ایرانی احساس نزدیکی و ارتباط بیشتری داشته باشید؟ اگر بله، چگونه؟ اگر نه، چرا؟

۵. آیا شرکت در این فعالیت باعث شد احساس راحتی یا اعتماد به نفس بیشتری برای شرکت در فعالیتهای اوقات فراغت در آینده داشته باشید؟ لطفاً توضیح دهید

۶. آیا این کارگاه به شما کمک کرد جامعه جدید خود در اتاوا را بهتر بشناسید یا با آن احساس ارتباط بیشتری کنید؟

۷. یکی از اهداف این پژوهش این است که بفهمیم افراد چگونه از فرصت‌های اوقات فراغت آگاه می‌شوند و چگونه راه‌هایی برای ارتباط و انجام فعالیت‌ها با دیگران پیدا می‌کنند. لطفاً هر ایده یا نظری که دارید با ما در میان بگذارید.

از فرصتی که در اختیار ما گذاشتید و از همراهی گرم‌تان در این عصر پاییزی خیلی ممنونیم! 🌸

Appendix J: Third Activity Recruitment Poster

National Gallery Visit for Iranian Women (Ages 30–55), Thursday, December 4, 2025 | 5:00–7:00 p.m.

Join me and other Iranian women on Thursday, December 4, 2025, from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. for a warm, social, and inspiring evening at the National Gallery of Canada.

My name is Mahsa, and this leisure activity is part of my PhD research project at the University of Ottawa, titled *“Reconceptualizing Leisure and Community Services as Pathways to Well-Being and Integration: Insights from Iranian Immigrant Women in Ottawa.”*

This project is part of a broader study led by Drs. Eileen O’Connor, Emily Wills, Nadia Abu-Zahra, and Laura Ambrosio, and has received ethics approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board.

About the Activity

Join me and a group of Iranian women for a relaxed and inspiring evening at the National Gallery. This leisure activity is part of my PhD research project at the University of Ottawa and has received ethics approval.

Who Can Join

Iranian women aged 30–55 living in Ottawa.
Limited to 20 participants (first come, first served).

Location

National Gallery of Canada
380 Sussex Dr., Ottawa, ON K1N 9N4
(Fully accessible and an underground parking garage)

What’s Happening

The Gallery is hosting a special event called Free Thursday Nights, featuring:

- Seasonal refreshments & music
- A playful Ugly Sweater art-making activity
- A short “3 to See” mini-tour (3 artworks, 1 theme)
- Time to explore the Gallery together

No preparation required, tickets for our group are already booked.

Meeting Plan

At 5:00 p.m., we will meet in front of the Main Entrance (Sussex Drive) and enter together as a group since our tickets must be shown at the door, so please be sure to arrive on time.

Before & After

We will complete brief introductions and consent forms before entering.

At the end, you’ll be asked to fill out a short, anonymous evaluation form (English or Farsi).

How to Register
Email Mahsa Hadidi

Deadline to register: Tuesday, December 2, 2025

The first 20 people who register will receive a detailed event email the day before the visit.

Looking forward to seeing you!

بازدید از گالری ملی کانادا برای زنان ایرانی (۳۰ تا ۵۵ سال)

پنجشنبه ۴ دسامبر ۲۰۲۵ | ساعت ۵ تا ۷ عصر

گالری ملی کانادا، اتاوا

بر اساس نتایج به دست آمده، برنامه دوم ما بازدید از گالری ملی کانادا خواهد بود در روز پنجشنبه ۴ دسامبر ۲۰۲۵، از ساعت ۵ تا ۷ بعد از ظهر.

این فعالیت بخشی از پژوهش دکتری مهسا حدیدی در دانشگاه اتاوا است با عنوان:
بازنگری خدمات فراغتی و اجتماعی به عنوان مسیرهایی برای بهزیستی و ادغام اجتماعی: دیدگاه‌هایی از زنان مهاجر ایرانی در «اتاوا»

Ottawa انجام می‌شود و از سوی Drs. O'Connor, Wills, Abu-Zahra و Ambrosio این پروژه با همکاری
Research Ethics Board تأیید شده است.

در باره برنامه

در یک عصر پاییزی کنار گروهی از زنان ایرانی، از گالری ملی دیدن می‌کنیم.
این فعالیت بخشی از پروژه دکترای من در دانشگاه اتاوا است و تأییدیه اخلاق پژوهش را دریافت کرده است.

چه کسانی می‌توانند شرکت کنند؟

زنان ایرانی ساکن اتاوا ۳۰ تا ۵۵ سال
ظرفیت: ۲۰ نفر (اولویت با اولین ثبت‌نام‌ها)

محل برگزاری:

گالری ملی کانادا
380 Sussex Dr., Ottawa, ON K1N 9N4
(محیط کاملاً قابل دسترس و پارکینگ زیر ساختمان موجود است)

چه اتفاقی می‌افتد؟

اون شب گالری برنامه ویژه دارد که شامل:

یه پذیرایی کوچیک و موسیقی

(Ugly Sweater) یه فعالیت هنری بامزه برای درست کردن ژاکت زشت

و آخرش هم کلی زمان آزاد برای گشتن تو گالری و دیدن هر چی دوست دارین

نیازی به آمادگی یا ثبت‌نام جداگانه نیست، بلیط‌های گروه ما از قبل تهیه شده است.

برنامه ملاقات

سر ساعت 5 جلوی در ورودی اصلی ساختمان (Sussex Drive) همدیگر را ملاقات میکنیم

بمصورت گروهی وارد میشویم چون بلیط‌ها باید هنگام ورود ارائه شود پس لطفا سر وقت برسید.

قبل و بعد از برنامه

- پیش از ورود، معرفی‌های کوتاه و فرم‌های رضایت‌نامه را کامل می‌کنیم
- در پایان، یک فرم ارزیابی کوتاه و ناشناس (به فارسی یا انگلیسی) تکمیل می‌کنید

ثبت‌نام

لطفا جهت ثبت نام به این ادرس ایمیل بزنید:

مهلت ثبت‌نام: سه‌شنبه ۲ دسامبر ۲۰۲۵

اولین بیست نفری که ثبت‌نام کنند، روز قبل از برنامه ایمیل جزئیات کامل را دریافت خواهند کرد

منتظر تان هستیم!

Appendix K: Third Activity Post-Activity Evaluation Survey (English)

Post-Activity Evaluation Survey, Leisure for Iranian Immigrant Women (Ages 30–55)

Estimated time: 10-15 minutes

Confidentiality: Responses are anonymous and voluntary. You may skip any question.

Background Questions

- Do you work full-time, part-time, (or are you a student)?
- Do you provide caregiving to children, or older adults in your family?
☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please share anything you wish: _____

Section A — Please share your thoughts on the leisure activity today.

Instructions: For each statement below, please select the number that best represents your experience.

(1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree) Optional: You can add a short comment if you wish to share more detail.

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
Overall, I enjoyed the Gallery visit and the activities offered today.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Registration, information, and participation in this activity were clear, easy, and fit well with my schedule	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I was satisfied with the workshop facilitation by the PhD student.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
The activities offered in the Gallery (viewing artworks, social interaction, creative activities) were enjoyable and easy to participate in.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
Exploring the Gallery and viewing the artworks was interesting and engaging.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
The Gallery environment and accessibility (lighting, seating, crowds, train or car access) supported my participation.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

Section B — Leisure, well-being and connection

(1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Disagree, 4 = Strongly Disagree) Optional: You can add a short comment if you wish to share more detail.

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
Being in the Gallery and viewing the artworks increased my interest and curiosity about art and culture.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I had enjoyable interactions with other women during the visit.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
This activity helped me feel more connected with the Iranian community in Ottawa.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
The visit increased my interest in visiting other museums or cultural spaces in Ottawa.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
The visit made me aware of Gallery programs, special activities, and free-admission days.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

Section C — Challenges to doing leisure activity

Here is a list of common challenges or barriers to doing leisure. Please check off any that you experience as a challenge or barrier to doing leisure:

- ☐ Lack of time; ☐ Childcare responsibilities; ☐ Family duties; ☐ Cost (registration, etc.)
☐ Equipment; ☐ Language; ☐ Risk and/or Safety; ☐ Transportation and distance;
☐ Cultural norms; ☐ Not knowing the local leisure resources; ☐ Beginner knowledge of the leisure activity; ☐ Gender expectations or restrictions in the family; ☐ Not a current priority;
☐ Weather; ☐ For structured leisure programs, the fixed schedule, location, and time is not convenient Other: _____

Section D — Your leisure preference

Statement	1	2	3	4	Comments (optional)
I enjoy cultural or artistic activities that include social interaction and exploration (e.g., group museum visits, community events)	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I like doing leisure activities with other Iranian women in this age group, 30-55.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I like doing leisure activities with Iranian women of any age.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
I prefer leisure activities with a small group of friends or family.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

Open Reflection Questions

1. What motivated you to participate in today's Gallery visit?
2. Have you previously visited the National Gallery of Canada or other museums/cultural spaces in Ottawa? If not, please share why.
3. Are you aware of other social or cultural leisure activities in Ottawa? If yes, how did you find out about them?
4. What aspects of today's program (artworks, socializing, creative activities, atmosphere) did you enjoy most, and why?
5. Did this activity help you feel more connected with other Iranian women? How?
6. Did this activity inspire you to organize or join future outings with friends or other women? If yes, how would you think can keep each other informed about upcoming activities?

Thank you for your time and for spending this evening with us!

Appendix L: Third Activity Post-Activity Evaluation Survey (Farsi)

فرم ارزیابی پس از فعالیت

برنامه ی اوقات فراغت برای زنان فارسی زبان مهاجر (۳۰ تا ۵۵ سال)

⌚ مدت زمان تخمینی تکمیل: ۱۰ تا ۱۵ دقیقه

🔒 **محرمانگی:** پاسخ دادن به این نظرسنجی داوطلبانه می باشد و شما می‌توانید هر پرسشی را که مایل نیستید، بدون پاسخ بگذارید. تمامی پاسخ ها و اطلاعات محرمانه و ناشناس باقی خواهند ماند.

بخش اول: سوالات پس‌زمینه

آیا شاغل تمام‌وقت، پاره‌وقت، یا دانشجو هستید؟

آیا از کودکان یا سالمندان خانواده مراقبت می‌کنید یا خیر؟ ☐ خیر ☐ بله

اگر بله، در صورت تمایل توضیح دهید _____

بخش الف) نظر شما درباره فعالیت فراغتی امروز

راهنما: برای هر جمله، عددی را انتخاب کنید که تجربه ی امروز شما را به بهترین شکل نشان می‌دهد. در صورت تمایل می‌توانید در ستون توضیحات، دیدگاه خود را اضافه کنید.

(۱ = کاملاً موافقم ۲ = موافقم ۳ = مخالفم ۴ = کاملاً مخالفم)

جمله	۱	۲	۳	۴	توضیح (اختیاری)
به طور کلی، از بازدید گالری و فعالیت‌های ارائه شده امروز لذت بردم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
ثبت‌نام، اطلاعات و شرکت در این فعالیت شفاف، آسان و مناسب برنامه من بود.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
از نحوه ی مدیریت برنامه توسط دانشجوی دکترای رضایت داشتم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
فعالیت‌های ارائه شده در گالری (مشاهده آثار هنری، تعامل اجتماعی، فعالیت‌های خلاقانه) لذت‌بخش و آسان برای شرکت بود.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
گشت و گذار در گالری و دیدن آثار هنری، کنجکاوی برانگیز و جذاب بود.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
شرایط محیطی و دسترسی‌های گالری، شامل نورپردازی، صندلی‌ها، مدیریت جمعیت و دسترسی با مترو یا خودرو، حضور و مشارکت من را تسهیل میکرد.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

بخش ب) فراغت، بهزیستی و ارتباط اجتماعی

(۱ = کاملاً موافقم ۲ = موافقم ۳ = مخالفم ۴ = کاملاً مخالفم)

جمله	۱	۲	۳	۴	توضیح (اختیاری)
حضور در گالری و مشاهده آثار هنری علاقه و کنجکاوی من را نسبت به هنر و فرهنگ افزایش داد.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
تعاملات لذتبخشی با سایر زنان در طول بازدید داشتم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
این فعالیت به من کمک کرد تا احساس ارتباط بیشتری با جامعه ایرانی در اتلوا داشته باشم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
این بازدید علاقه من را برای بازدید از دیگر موزه‌ها با فضاهای فرهنگی در اتلوا افزایش داد.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
این بازدید من را با برنامه‌ها، فعالیت‌های ویژه و روزهای ورود رایگان گالری آشنا کرد.	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

بخش ج) چالش‌ها و موانع انجام فعالیت‌های فراغتی

در زیر فهرستی از موانع رایج برای شرکت در فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغتی لیست شده است. لطفاً مواردی را که برای شما چالش یا مانع محسوب می‌شوند علامت بزنید:

- ☐ کمبود وقت ☐ مسئولیت نگهداری از کودک ☐ وظایف خانوادگی ☐ هزینه (ثبت‌نام و غیره) ☐ نیاز به تجهیزات ☐ زبان ☐ خطر یا مسائل ایمنی ☐ حمل‌ونقل و فاصله ☐ هنجارهای فرهنگی ☐ ناآگاهی از منابع محلی موجود برای اوقات فراغت ☐ ناآشنایی اولیه با فعالیت مورد نظر ☐ انتظارات یا محدودیت‌های جنسیتی در خانواده ☐ در اولویت نبودن اوقات فراغت در حال حاضر ☐ وضعیت آب‌وهوا ☐ زمان و مکان برنامه‌های از پیش تعیین شده مناسب نیست ☐ سایر موارد _____

بخش د) ترجیحات شما در انجام فعالیت‌های اوقات فراغت

(۱ = کاملاً موافقم ۲ = موافقم ۳ = مخالفم ۴ = کاملاً مخالفم)

جمله	۱	۲	۳	۴	توضیح (اختیاری)
از فعالیت‌های فرهنگی یا هنری که شامل تعامل اجتماعی و کاوش باشد لذت می‌برم (مثلاً بازدید گروهی از موزه‌ها، یا برنامه‌های فرهنگی دیگر)	☐	☐	☐	☐	
دوست دارم فعالیت‌های فراغتی را با سایر زنان ایرانی در همین گروه سنی (۳۰-۵۵) انجام دهم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
دوست دارم فعالیت‌های فراغتی را با زنان ایرانی در هر سنی انجام دهم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	
ترجیح می‌دهم فعالیت‌های فراغتی را با گروه کوچکی از دوستان یا خانواده انجام دهم.	☐	☐	☐	☐	

پرسش‌های باز و تکمیلی

چه انگیزه‌ای باعث شد در بازدید امروز گالری شرکت کنید؟

۲. آیا قبلاً از نگارخانه ملی کانادا یا سایر موزه‌ها/فضاهای فرهنگی در اتاوا بازدید کرده‌اید؟ اگر نه، لطفاً دلیل را بگویید.

۳. آیا از سایر فعالیت‌های اجتماعی یا فرهنگی در اتاوا اطلاع دارید؟ اگر بله، چگونه با آن‌ها آشنا شدید؟

۴. کدام جنبه‌های برنامه امروز (آثار هنری، تعامل اجتماعی، فعالیت‌های خلاقانه، فضا) برای شما بیشترین لذت را داشت و چرا؟

۵. آیا این فعالیت به شما کمک کرد تا ارتباط بیشتری با سایر زنان ایرانی برقرار کنید؟ چگونه؟

۶. آیا این فعالیت الهام‌بخش شما بود تا برنامه‌های آینده‌ای با دوستان یا زنان دیگر ترتیب دهید یا در آن‌ها شرکت کنید؟ اگر بله،

چگونه می‌توانید یکدیگر را از فعالیت‌های آینده مطلع نگه دارید؟

از حضورتان و شرکت در این برنامه در این عصر پاییزی خیلی ممنونم! 🌸

Appendix M: Follow-up Feedback Session for Women Participants

Research question for Study Two: Leisure Access and Constraints Among Women in the Paid Workforce (30-55 years of age)

1. How do Iranian immigrant women balance work, family, and leisure?
2. What key challenges hinder their engagement in leisure activities?
3. How do gender norms, economic constraints, and cultural expectations influence their access to leisure?
4. In what ways does leisure serve as a platform for identity negotiation, empowerment, and self-expression?
5. What strategies and recommendations can enhance the accessibility and inclusivity of leisure opportunities for this demographic?

Study 3: Exploring The Role of Settlement Service in Providing in Leisure for Immigrant Women

To what extent do settlement organizations provide leisure-related programs for Iranian immigrant women?

1. How are these programs tailored to their specific needs, and what challenges do organizations face?
2. How do settlement service providers perceive the role of leisure in immigrant integration and well-being?
3. What institutional limitations affect the sustainability of leisure programs?
4. How do Iranian immigrant women engage with and perceive the leisure services provided by settlement organizations?

Interview Guide for two participants who attended whole three leisure activities

Personal\ demographic questions

1. How long have you been living in Canada? And how would you rate your ability to communicate in English or French?
2. Do you live alone, or with family?
3. Are you single, married, divorced, or in another situation?
4. Do you have children? If yes, how old are they and who is responsible for taking care of them?
5. Are you currently working full-time, part-time, or student?

6. Do you have extended family in Ottawa?
7. What does a typical weekday look like for you?

Section 1, concepts and meaning of leisure

(Q2, Q3, Q4)

8. When you hear the word leisure, what does it mean to you personally?
 - How do you describe leisure in your own words?
 - What feelings or image come to mind when you think of leisure?
9. Has your definition or experience of leisure changed after immigrating to Canada?
 - If yes, what influenced this change?
10. How important is leisure in your life right now?

Part 2, balancing work, family, responsibilities, and leisure

(Q1, Q2, Q3)

11. When you think about your week, how do work and household responsibilities impact your ability to have leisure?
12. Does the lack of extended family support affect your ability to join leisure activities?
13. How do financial pressures influence your leisure decisions?
14. Are there cultural or gender-based expectations at home that impact your personal time?
(Does being single give you more freedom, or does it create other barriers?)
15. How does living alone influence your motivation or comfort in doing leisure activities?
16. Do you ever feel isolated, and does this affect how you approach leisure?
17. How does working in the paid workforce with or without family support affect your routines or energy?
18. How do childcare duties shape your free-time?

Section 3, constraints, challenges, and personal barriers

(Q2 and Q3)

19. What are the biggest challenges that make leisure difficult for you personally?
 - Emotional challenges

- Cultural expectations
- Financial limitations
- Social pressures
- Time and energy
- Motivation

13. Which of these feels hardest to navigate right now, and why?
14. Do you think Iranian women in your age group face unique pressures that limit their leisure?

Part 4, experiences across three activities

(Study 2: Q1-Q5, and Study 3: Q1, Q2, Q5)

15. Thinking about the walk along the Rideau canal, what stands out most?
- How did it affect your mood, stress level, or sense of connection?
16. Thinking about the dance workshop, what was that like for you?
- Did movement affect your confidence, identity, or energy?
17. Thinking about the national art gallery visit, what was different about this activity?
- Did the space, art, or environment impact you in any way?
18. When you compare all three activities, which one had the strongest effect on your well being and why?
19. Did participating in these three sessions change how you think about leisure? If yes, how?

Part 5, identity, empowerment, and self-expression

(Q4)

20. In what ways did any of these activities help you express yourself?
21. Did you feel empowered at any point during the activities?
22. Do you think leisure can help Iranian immigrant women negotiate identity in a new country?

Part 6, community, belonging, integration

(Q 4, Q 5)

23. Did you see any connection to other women during these activities?
- If yes, what created that connection?
 - If not, what limited it?
24. Did these activities help you feel more connected to the city of Ottawa?
25. Do you feel leisure activities like these support immigrant integration and mental wellbeing?

Part 7, evaluating PAND settlement Services

(Study 3, Q1-Q5)

26. How did you find the recruitment process through PAND's social media?
27. Did the activities feel relevant to your needs and interests?
28. What kinds of support or program designs would make leisure activities more accessible for you?

Part 8, recommendations & closing

(Study 2: Q5 and Study 3: Q2, Q4)

29. Here are some leisure information tool (Eileen class), and tell me did you find that helpful, and how would you want to find out about that?
30. Then what would be the result from these tools?
31. What would make it easier for you to participate in leisure regularly?
- [If they mention social media, ask: Where exactly and how would you prefer to receive this information?]
32. If you could advise organizations like PAND or ISWO, what should they do differently?
33. Is there anything you want to add that we haven't talked about?

Thank you for your time and attending this study.

Appendix N: Follow-up Feedback Session for Organizational Representative

Study 3: Exploring The Role of Settlement Service in Providing in Leisure for Immigrant Women

1. To what extent do settlement organizations provide leisure related programs for Iranian immigrant women?
2. How are these programs tailored to their specific needs, and what challenge do organizations face usually?
3. How do settlement service providers perceive the role of leisure in immigrants integration and well-being?
4. What institutional limitations affect the sustainability of leisure programs?
5. How do Iranian immigrant women engage with and perceive the leisure services provided by settlement organizations?

Interview guide for PAND, with Kaveh

Warm-up and organizational background

1. Can you briefly describe your role at PAND and how long you been involved with Iranian immigrant programs?
2. What types of services and programs does PAND offer to the Iranian community?
- 2b. Describe any leisure activities related to leisure in culture PAND been providing?

Insights on community needs

(RQ2, Q3, Q5)

3. Based on your work experience within this community, what are the main challenges Iranian women face in accessing leisure opportunities?
4. How do gender norms, family responsibility, or financial constraints influence their participation?
- 4.b How did they deal with those challenges and barrier
5. Are there specific types of leisure or programs that you feel are most impactful for this group?

Institutional constraints

(RQ4)

11. What organizational or systematic challenges affect your ability to organize leisure programs?
12. How do funding, staffing, or policy limitation shape the type and scope of activities you can offer?
13. Are there strategies you have used to overcome these challenges and how deal with?

E. Recommendations & legacy

14. Based on your experience, what can make leisure programs more accessible and sustainable for Iranian women?
15. What do you think about the role of settlement service can help to increase the activity information of people?
16. What should policymakers or funders understand about the importance of leisure for Iranian immigrant women?

Thank you for collaborating with us in this study and for your time in attending this conversation!