

The Implications of Using Artificial Intelligence in Refugee and Asylum Seeker Immigration Processes in Canada

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In 2017, the Canadian federal government adopted a multi-year plan to grow annual immigration levels to 340,000 by 2020. That same year, the government launched the Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy, announcing a C\$125 million investment in artificial intelligence (AI) research and talent, making Canada the first country to release a national AI strategy. In 2018, the University of Toronto's International Human Rights Program and the Citizen Lab at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy released a report indicating that the Government of Canada has been experimenting with the use of algorithms and AI in decision-making related to Canada's immigration and refugee system. In 2018, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada alongside the Department of Justice advertised a Request for Information for a proposed "Artificial Intelligence Solution." This was done to "understand how each respective department could leverage the benefits of AI, machine learning and predictive analytics technologies to support decisions involving legal considerations... the development of litigation strategies and generate new insights and efficiencies in the delivery of legal services and litigation support to the Government of Canada."

This paper employs an exploratory approach to understanding the implications of using artificial intelligence in immigration processes for refugees and asylum seekers looking to migrate to Canada. In particular, this paper is informed by a literature review on emerging technologies, a jurisdictional scan of states across the world implementing AI in refugee and asylum seeker processes and an examination of current and potential uses of technology and machine learning in Canada's refugee and asylum seeker processes, which closely assesses what decisions and steps the Canadian government has made thus far for the implementation and use of AI in these immigration streams.

Biography

Lucia Nalbandian is a master's student in the Public Policy and Administration Program at Ryerson University. Her research interest is tech policy, particularly in relation to migration. She is an enthusiastic learner, interested in how governments across the world are designing policies to welcome emerging technologies in a rapidly changing world.