



# MORE THAN A PLACE OF REFUGE

## Meaningful Engagement of Government-Assisted Refugees in the Future of Work



**Aatif Baskanderi** is the Director of Startup Edmonton

**Katie Davey** is the Founder of Femme Wonk

**Jo Flatt** is the Vice President, Corporate Strategy & Planning at Allied REIT

**Sandra Isimbi** is the Senior Advisor, Quality Management at the Canadian Red Cross

**Dr. Jason McVicar** is an anesthesiologist at The Ottawa Hospital and an Assistant Professor at The University of Ottawa

**Jonathan Williams** is the Vice President and Director of Research at Higher Education Strategy Associates

---

We would like to thank: Action Canada and the Public Policy Forum for allowing us to be part of this incredible opportunity; our task force adviser, Guillaume Lavoie, for his invaluable advice and guidance; and the many stakeholders who shared their time and expertise with us. We were reminded of the importance of doing this work and looking beyond the numbers to the individual people who are impacted.

In this report, we humbly seek to build upon the work being done already by community stakeholders and advocates.

---

This project has been undertaken pursuant to an Action Canada Fellowship, a national policy engagement and leadership development program delivered in partnership by PPF and Action Canada. The views, opinions, positions and/or strategies expressed herein are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, positions or strategies of PPF, Action Canada, Action Canada Foundation or the Government of Canada.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary .....	4
Meet Farid .....	6
Introduction .....	7
The Challenge .....	8
Jurisdictional Context .....	13
Analysis and Recommendations .....	15
Integrating Language Learning and Employment .....	15
Enhancing Social Capital .....	18
Strengthening Income Support .....	21
Improving Data Collection .....	25
Combatting Discrimination .....	26
Conclusion .....	29
Definitions .....	30
Interviews .....	32
References .....	33

## LIST OF TERMS

- **BVOR:** Blended Visa Office-Referred program
- **GAR:** Government-Assisted Refugees program
- **IRCC:** Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- **PSR:** Privately Sponsored Refugee
- **RAP:** Resettlement Assistance Program
- **SPO:** Service Provider Organizations
- **UNHCR:** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) praised Canada for resettling 46,700 refugees the previous year, stating it was “the largest amount of refugees admitted [to] Canada since the implementation of the 1976 Immigration Act.”<sup>1</sup>

The demand for safe havens such as Canada is expected to only grow due to the effects of various global crises, including climate change. According to the UNHCR, there are 70.8 million displaced people worldwide, 25.9 million of whom are refugees.<sup>2</sup> Through its Immigration Levels Plan, Canada remains committed to continuing to admit a stable number of refugees moving forward.<sup>3</sup>

With such a commitment, it is important for Canada to ensure it adequately supports refugee newcomers to successfully transition into meaningful employment. The evolution of the Canadian labour market threatens to aggravate the challenges facing resettled refugees. This applies especially to government-assisted refugees (GARs), who tend to have the most difficulty transitioning into work in Canada due to lower skills levels and a lack of social networks, among other compounding barriers — including discrimination. Indeed, only 57 percent of GARs reported employment income within five years of arrival.<sup>4</sup> The evolving labour market is likely to compound the challenges facing GARs, as labour demand declines overall and shifts towards a greater emphasis on social skills — which are culturally mediated and subject to bias in their assessment by potential employers.

We propose six recommendations for the Government of Canada to better support GARs to succeed in the labour market. The first of these focuses on settlement services and we recommend the government support the development of collaborative options for GARs to simultaneously improve language skills, acquire Canadian work experience and earn wages. We further recommend the government make efforts to help GARs build social capital through its settlement programs.

Other recommendations focus on the income assistance the federal government provides to GARs during their first year in Canada. We recommend reducing the claw-back on federal income assistance

for earned income by recipients to encourage GARs to find employment, as the current claw-back rate greatly undercuts the incentive to work. The government should also extend eligibility for federal income support to 24 months so that this threshold can be more relevant to the actual settlement pathways of GARs.

Our additional recommendations focus on issues that impact both GARs and other populations, specifically, data collection and combatting discrimination. The federal government should direct Statistics Canada to work with partners to collect and deploy timely data on resettled refugee experiences with social programs and employment. Finally, government should establish a national strategy to combat discrimination, with an emphasis on Islamophobia and anti-black racism, which tend to disproportionately affect resettled refugee groups.

*The report uses the term “former refugee” because refugee is not an enduring description of someone’s status in Canada. Once GARs arrive in Canada they are granted permanent residency status and no longer refugees. We think it is important to acknowledge them as such.*

1 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2019. Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018.

2 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2019. Figures at a Glance.

3 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2018. 2019-2021 Immigration Levels Plan. Government of Canada.

4 Median employment income in 2012 was \$32,700.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1** The Government of Canada should support the development of collaborative options in which GARs can access programs to simultaneously improve their language skills while acquiring Canadian work experience and earning wages.
- 2** The Government of Canada should support the prioritization of creating enhanced social capital for GARs through an emphasis on social bridging.
- 3** The Government of Canada should reduce the amount of the claw-back on income above 50 percent of the Resettlement Assistance Program amount from 100 percent to 50 percent to encourage former refugees to find full-time employment.
- 4** The Government of Canada should extend Resettlement Assistance Program eligibility to 24 months.
- 5** The Government of Canada should direct Statistics Canada to work with federal ministries, provincial governments and settlement agencies to collect and publicly distribute relevant, updated, and on-time data regarding newcomer refugees, and especially relating to uptake of different social programs and employment.
- 6** The Government of Canada should establish a national strategy to combat discrimination against former refugees, with an emphasis on Islamophobia and anti-black racism.

## MEET FARID



Farid and his family arrived in 2015 as government-assisted refugees (GARs) during the wave of Syrian refugees to Canada. As GARs, they were provided with monthly Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) payments and a settlement worker to support their immediate needs. Unlike the privately sponsored refugee (PSR) or Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) programs, Farid and his family did not have access to a broad social network of Canadians. They were settled in Edmonton and offered temporary housing for the first two months.

Advised by his settlement worker, Farid immediately enrolled in English classes to prepare for his entry into the workforce. In Syria, he had worked for five years in a factory that made clean wipes, where he developed skills in overseeing complicated technical operations. He was hopeful of finding an opportunity in Edmonton to apply his skills and provide for his family. After six months of English lessons he started to look for work. He quickly learned that his lack of Canadian experience made it difficult for him to find a job in his field. The employment services offered by his local social service agency did not lead to much success, since they were not connected to relevant factories that could use his skills. He was offered funding to take courses that would prepare him for college or university, but Farid didn't want to delay working to attend school. He didn't want to depend on income assistance and was committed to once again becoming the family

breadwinner. For Farid, the future of work is about giving his children what they need to succeed.

As he started to look at different employment opportunities, he realized the claw-back on the RAP made it hard to accept most low-paying jobs — repayments to the government were so high that much of the additional income he could earn would be taken away. He finally found a job as a cross-country trucker. He knew the work would be precarious and possibly dangerous, but he was committed. His first trip was a long-haul from Edmonton to Vancouver. Once he got to his destination, he learned the company would not finance his trip home. Broken-hearted and short on cash, he hitchhiked back to Edmonton with other truckers he met along the way. He immediately quit his job and started working as an Uber driver, another precarious line of work. Many of his friends also work as drivers, whereas in Syria they had been doctors, engineers or technicians. **It's not the future they envisaged for themselves, but it's the only future they have been able to create.**

For confidentiality purposes we have not used Farid's real name. We thank the individual who trusted us to include their lived experience in this report. We are grateful for the lessons and insights it has provided us and readers.

# INTRODUCTION

**Policies implemented today will shape the economy and workforce of tomorrow. The future of work must be inclusive and equitable; just like the country we aspire to be.**

In 2017, the UNHCR praised Canada for resettling 46,700 refugees the previous year, stating it was “the largest amount of refugees admitted in a year since the implementation of the 1976 Immigration Act.” Canada is committed to continue admitting large numbers of refugees moving forward.<sup>5</sup> But how will policy-makers ensure these refugees can find a place in the country’s changing labour market? Workers with less recognised formal education are falling further behind while across the wage spectrum there are growing returns to social skills — which are highly contextual and subjective and many government-assisted refugees (GARs) may be perceived as lacking.

This report offers recommendations for the federal government to improve integration of GARs into the labour market. The following economic and normative principles guide our analysis:

- **The future of work should be inclusive and equitable;**
- **GARs are comparatively disadvantaged and vulnerable to further economic dislocation;**
- **Canada will continue to exercise leadership in resettling refugees, while global trends suggest needs for resettlement will remain extensive; and**
- **Refugee newcomers contribute to a more vibrant and prosperous Canada.**

The research informing this analysis took place between October and December 2019. The research team adopted several approaches to gather and analyze data and documentation, beginning with a review of academic journals, government policy and

advocacy literature. We have focused on articles on Canada specifically from the past five years, with an emphasis on information related to the influx of Syrian refugees since 2015. However, in many cases, we have had to rely on evaluations that were much older due to a lack of relevant and timely data and research.

The research team also consulted various stakeholders, with interview questions informed by the literature review. Stakeholder sources included former refugees, settlement agencies, Service Provider Organizations, social workers, advocacy groups, researchers with expertise in refugee settlement policy, and staff working for the federal government. Certain interviews sought to review and validate potential recommendations. See Appendix B for a full list of those consulted.



<sup>5</sup>Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2018. 2019–2021 Immigration Levels Plan. Government of Canada.

# THE CHALLENGE

Global needs for refugee resettlement are high and show little sign of subsiding. According to the UNHCR, “the global population of forcibly displaced increased by 2.3 million people in 2018. By the end of the year, almost 70.8 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. As a result, the world’s forcibly displaced population remained yet again at a record high.”<sup>6</sup> Of those people forcibly displaced, 25.9 million are considered refugees.

**Refugees represent a population that have been forced to flee their country of residence because of persecution, war or violence. “A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so.”<sup>7</sup>**

Refugees often arrive in Canada in waves as a function of both events driving people away from their places of origin and events in Canada that lead the country to accept more refugees. Major past waves of refugees<sup>8</sup> to Canada include 64,000 Syrian refugees between 2015 and 2019, 60,000 Vietnamese in 1979-1980 following the Communist victory in the Vietnam War, 37,000 Hungarians around 1956 when the Soviet Union crushed the Hungarian Revolution, and 250,000 people from Central and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. These refugees have arrived through all streams of resettlement,

not solely as GARs. Figure 1 demonstrates the differences between the categories of resettled refugees to Canada.

It is impossible to predict exactly what events might spur future waves and their possible size. However, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change anticipates that under a business-as-usual emissions scenario, climate change could displace well over 200 million people by 2050.<sup>9</sup> The United Nations Human Rights Committee has recently ruled that those fleeing climate-related issues may seek asylum status without presenting an immediate threat to their lives, further demonstrating the complexity of this challenge.<sup>10</sup> Since Canadian greenhouse gas emissions per capita are three times the world average,<sup>11</sup> and we are comparatively less vulnerable<sup>12</sup> to the effects of climate change than many other countries, Canada has both ethical obligations and greater ability to accept a share of those affected. The evolving nature of the world’s refugee population will continue to raise questions and challenges for governments across the world.

In 2018, Canada resettled 28,100 refugees, the most of any single country and 30.4 percent of the global

<sup>6</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2019. Figures at a Glance.

<sup>7</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Refugee Facts: What is a Refugee?

<sup>8</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Canada: A History of Refuge. Government of Canada.

<sup>9</sup> International Organization for Migration. 2008. Migration and Climate Change.

<sup>10</sup> UN News. Jan. 21, 2020. UN human rights ruling could boost climate change asylum claims.

<sup>11</sup> The World Bank. 2018. CO2 emissions.

<sup>12</sup> University of Notre Dame. 2017. Country Rankings by ND-GAIN Country Index, Vulnerability and Readiness.



# *In 2018, Canada resettled 28,100 refugees, the most of any single country and 30.4% of the global total.*

total.<sup>13</sup> Over the last four years, Canada has taken on tremendous global leadership in resettling refugees, a role the federal government has committed to maintaining. Refugees as a share of new immigrants<sup>14</sup> to Canada increased to 21 percent in 2016 from 13 percent in 2015, and Canada's current Immigration Levels Plan aims to maintain the share of refugees and protected persons among total immigrants between 15 and 20 percent even as total immigration numbers rise. However, once they arrive in Canada, refugee newcomers can encounter considerable difficulties transitioning successfully into the labour market.

Unlike other immigration streams to Canada, refugee newcomers are not selected based on their economic skills. Refugees are more diverse in the range of their skills and, as such, results from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies<sup>15</sup> indicate former refugees on average have significantly lower literacy and numeracy than other immigrants in Canada, as of 2012. These results relate largely to refugees having lower academic attainment, less English- and French-language proficiency, and less education in western educational institutions. Former refugees also have lower levels of social capital<sup>16</sup> in Canada, and many have experienced significant trauma and face acute health challenges.

Some refugees are more vulnerable than others. GARs are Convention refugees "selected from applicants referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other referral organizations."<sup>17</sup> A convention refugee is defined as: "A person who is outside of their home country or country where they normally live and fears returning to that country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion." Unlike other refugee streams they are settled with support from the federal government exclusively, without private sponsors or social networks. Among the 25,000 Syrian refugees who landed in Canada between Jan. 1, 2015, and May 10, 2016, only 20 percent of the GARs knew English or French and less than three percent had a university degree, compared with respective figures of 67 percent and 25 percent among those privately sponsored.

This added vulnerability is apparent from GAR labour market patterns and income. From 2002 to 2012, only 12 percent of GARs found employment in their first year in Canada, according to the federal government's July 2016 Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs report.<sup>18</sup> GARs receive up to 12 months of federal income support as they transition to life here and 93 percent of

13 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2019. Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018.

14 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2018. Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration.

15 Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. 2017. Skills Proficiency of Immigrants in Canada: Findings from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Government of Canada.

16 Social capital is a component of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework with the following core elements: networks and connectedness; membership of more formalized groups with mutually agreed norms; and relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchanges.

17 There are three classes of refugees in Canada: government-assisted refugees (GAR), privately sponsored refugees (PSR), and Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR). For the purpose of this study, we will focus on GARs. Canada also receives a large number of asylum seekers who claim refugee status upon arrival in Canada.

18 IRCC. 2016. Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs (GAR, PSR, BVOR and RAP). Evaluation Division.

**Figure 1: Categories of Resettled Refugees in Canada**

	Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR)	Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR)	Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR)
Selection Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ UNHCR or other referral agencies</li> <li>→ Based on their protection needs as per IRPA (Immigration and Refugee Protection Act)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ UNHCR or other referral agencies and identified by Canadian visa officers for participation in the BVOR program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Sponsored by permanent residents or Canadian citizens either via:           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), or</li> <li>2. Group of Five (G5), or</li> <li>3. Community Sponsors (CS)</li> </ol> </li> </ul>
Government Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Up to one year of income support</li> <li>→ Settlement services until citizenship provided by RAP and other programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Up to six months of income support</li> <li>→ Essential arrival services 2-6 weeks</li> </ul>	N/A
Private Sponsor Support	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Up to six months of income support</li> <li>→ Social and emotional support for at least the first year after arrival</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Up to one year of financial support or a combination of financial and in-kind support</li> </ul>

**Figure 2: 2019-2021 Immigration Levels Plan for Refugees and Protected Persons – Government of Canada (Excluding Quebec)**



\*Notional targets for 2020 and 2021 will be confirmed by November 1 of each year.

GARs received at least one month of social assistance after their first calendar year in the country. Only 57 percent of GARs reported employment income within five years of arrival and it took GARs, on average, 10 years to earn \$32,000 in annual income, which is below the median income.<sup>19</sup> For GARs, Canada may be a safe country free from prosecution, but it cannot yet claim to be a land of inclusive economic opportunity.

The evolution of the Canadian labour market threatens to aggravate the challenges facing former refugees. While reports of reductions in the total number of jobs due to automation are likely overstated, automation does appear to be reducing labour demand.<sup>20</sup> As jobs disappear, the effects tend to cascade down the skills ladder as displaced workers take positions for which they previously would have been over-qualified, leaving the most vulnerable workers such as GARs feeling the worst effects.

At the same time, labour market demand is shifting from routine and even some complex cognitive tasks to an emphasis on social skills.<sup>21</sup> There is evidence this pattern is disadvantaging members of ethnic minorities, presumably because social skills are culturally mediated, often dependent on fluency in the relevant language, and their assessment by employers may be subject to prejudice.<sup>22</sup> Such forms of implicit discrimination are not necessarily unique to former refugees, but there has been an unfortunate increase in anti-refugee sentiment worldwide, which could also have implicit and explicit impacts here in Canada.<sup>23</sup>

An essential factor in the labour force integration of refugees is their unique experiences of intersectional discrimination in Canada, wherein barriers are compounded on the basis of race, faith, gender, ability and mental health challenges.<sup>24</sup> The majority of refugees come from predominantly Muslim countries and are people of colour.<sup>25</sup> Islamophobia and anti-black racism remain salient issues in Canada. A 2018 survey found 81 percent of Canadians believe

# 93%

**of GARs received at least one month of social assistance after their first calendar year in the country**

# 57%

**of GARs reported employment income within five years of arrival**

<sup>19</sup> Median employment income in 2012 was \$32,700.

<sup>20</sup> Canadian Heritage. 2019. Building a Foundation for Change: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019–2022. Government of Canada.

<sup>21</sup> Deming, D.J. November 2017. The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 132, Issue 4.

<sup>22</sup> Borghans, L., Weel, B.T., and Weinberg, B.A. 2014. People Skills and the Labor-Market Outcomes of Underrepresented Groups. *ILR Review*, 67(2), 287–334.

<sup>23</sup> Domise, A. June 5, 2019. The rise of an uncaring Canada. *Maclean's*.

<sup>24</sup> Ontario Human Rights Commission. 2001. An intersectional approach to discrimination.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2019. Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018.



# *Canada would benefit from providing refugee newcomers the opportunity to exercise their full potential.*

Islamophobia exists here.<sup>26</sup> Hate crime incidents against Muslims in Canada rose to 349 in 2017 from 99 in 2014, an increase of 253 percent.<sup>27</sup> Research has shown employers discriminate against equivalently educated and experienced job applicants who have names that sound African, Asian or Muslim.<sup>28</sup> Racialized immigrants and refugees are also over-represented in precarious and part-time work that provides lower wages, no benefits and no job security.<sup>29</sup> This discrimination exacerbates former refugees' existing vulnerability.

Yet despite the challenges GARs face, they bring substantial benefits to the Canadian economy. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, refugees "bring skills and contribute to the human capital stock, as well as stimulate trade and investment."<sup>30</sup> They could help fill labour shortages and spur innovation and more dynamic and inclusive communities. Canada would benefit from providing refugee newcomers the opportunity to exercise their full potential.

---

26 Alsaieq, M-N., Gallo M., Majzoub S., Ross, G., and Woodley, T. 2018. A Grave Problem: EKOS Survey on Islamophobia in Canada. The Canadian Muslim Forum & Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

27 Armstrong, A. 2019. Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2017. Statistics Canada.

28 Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change. 2019. Racialized Poverty in Employment.

29 Ibid.

30 Andersson, L. and Khoudour, D. 2017. Assessing the contribution of refugees to the development of their host countries. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

# JURISDICTIONAL CONTEXT

**The federal government holds the primary constitutional responsibility for border control and classification of citizenship and status as per section 91(25) of the Constitution Act, 1867, which includes refugee admissions. The federal government remains the preeminent order of government for determining who can be admitted to Canada as immigrants, and especially refugees, except in the case of Quebec, which has sought and obtained fully devolved authority over immigration right up to admission.**

Immigration, however, is a concurrent responsibility of both the provinces and federal government as expressed in section 95 of the Act, such that both provinces and the federal government may legislate on matters of immigration as long as the legislation does not infringe on the other order of government. However, federal legislation on the matter may supersede the provinces, except broadly in Quebec. There have been many jurisdictional challenges relating to immigration, particularly when resources are required; especially past the one-year, federal-funding stage, including by providing income support, health-care coverage, and other assistance to former refugees. The wave of Syrian refugee resettlement presents the perfect example. The federal government sets the numbers at entry, but provinces have the predominant responsibility to resettle these newcomers. In addition, there is a direct relationship with service-providing organizations who do the heavy lifting of resettlement. They are often funded by both the federal and provincial government, depending on the programming and support offered.

Immigrant and refugee settlement is an outlier in terms of social policy in Canada. Over the past few decades, the federal government and the provinces have endeavoured to resolve overlapping and duplicative responsibilities in social policy by having provinces take on the primary role in service delivery. However, the federal government is still the primary funder of newcomer programming delivered by Service Provider Organizations (SPOs), through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and Settlement Program. The Settlement Programs offer services to all newcomer populations, including: needs assessment and referrals; information and

orientation; language training and skills development; employment-related services; support services; and community connections. Additionally, the RAP delivers 12 months of income support to GAR families that reflects the social assistance rates in their resettled province, and funds immediate arrival services in the first two to six weeks.



Government-assisted refugees are processed for admission by the federal government, receive federal income assistance for their first year in the country, and depend on settlement services from a mix of federally and provincially/territorially funded service providers. The federal government clearly has an important role to play in strengthening the labour market integration of former refugees, even though labour market policies fall largely under the jurisdiction of the provinces.



## Arrival to Canada

### Initial Resettlement Assistance Program Support

4-6 Weeks



Initial Orientation



Housing & Documentation Assistance



Community Orientation



Referrals to Services



Help Filling out Forms



Group Workshops



Transportation Services



Life Support Skills



Accompaniment (When Possible)



Mental Health Support



Community Navigation



Employment Services



Orientation to Canada



Arrange Appointments



Language training



Interpretation Services

# ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

GARs face unique challenges relating to meaningful integration to the labour market. Some of these challenges relate to their specific vulnerabilities, others are compounding factors related to discrimination and identity within Canada. We have identified five key areas of focus to ameliorate GARs' meaningful entrance to the labour force:

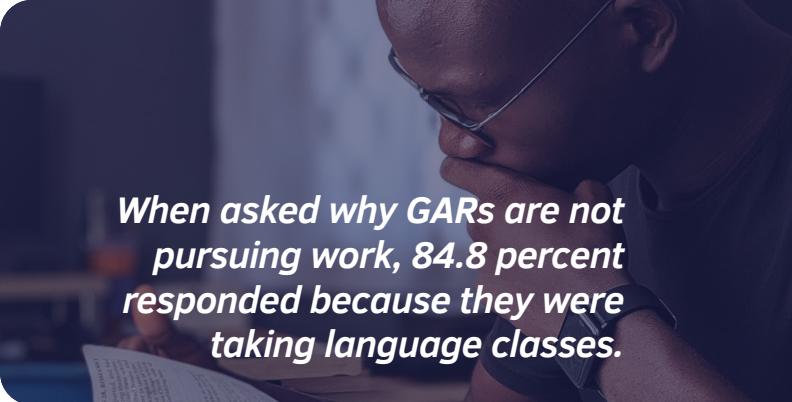
- **Integrating language learning and employment**
- **Enhancing social capital**
- **Strengthening income support**
- **Improving data collection**
- **Combatting discrimination**

## INTEGRATING LANGUAGE LEARNING AND EMPLOYMENT

Where necessary, newly arrived refugees are expected and encouraged to focus on improving their language skills in English or French. To facilitate this process, the federal government provides funds for language training for all resettled refugees through the Settlement Program.

Historically, the government has emphasized the need to acquire language skills in the first year before entering the workforce. While language is critical for long-term success, this approach has also prevented GARs from entering the labour market earlier. When asked why GARs are not pursuing work, 84.8 percent responded because they were taking language classes.<sup>31</sup> Balancing both language classes and work hours puts significant demands on individuals and families. While there are part-time and full-time language classes, the pressure of learning and working can be strenuous for a newcomer to Canada — and may not even provide vocabulary that is applicable to their job. Former refugee families need to balance daycare among a myriad of other daily needs and responsibilities, which raises the question of how to integrate language learning and paid work.

There is evidence that a combined model could lead to positive outcomes. The 2017 Evaluation of the Settlement Program<sup>32</sup> found employment-related services had the most positive outcomes for clients, whereas language training had no observable impacts on former refugees. The evaluation also found employment-related services had the greatest impact on reported language skills improvement, greater than language training alone. The evaluation recommends Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) improve the effectiveness of its language-training



***When asked why GARs are not pursuing work, 84.8 percent responded because they were taking language classes.***

<sup>31</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2016. Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative. Government of Canada.

<sup>32</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2016. Evaluation of the Settlement Program. Government of Canada.

programs and optimize the benefits of its employment-related services and employment-specific language training. In response, IRCC has agreed to “launch a federal Newcomers’ Employment Strategy, including an implementation plan that will optimize the benefits of IRCC’s Employment-Related Services and leverage available support, such as those provided by Economic and Social Development Canada and Provinces/Territories.”<sup>33</sup>

The 2019 Settlement Program call for proposals for SPOs also highlights a shift in the conventional approach to workforce integration by seeking to better integrate language and work experience, including “joint partnerships between language providers and employers”.<sup>34</sup> While businesses are eligible to apply for funding, interviews with SPOs highlighted a gap between settlement programs and employers and a need to greater connect, integrate and incentivize employer engagement in the hiring and training of GARs.

GARs face a unique set of barriers compared to other newcomers. Yet, the federal government’s Settlement Program does not currently offer employment services customized to specific immigration pathways, but rather

is focused on the general needs of newcomers. While this ensures many groups are able to access the services, the unique challenges facing GARs reiterates the need for targeted support of this population. There are some signs of progress, including the Visible Minority Newcomer Women Pilot and a commitment by IRCC in its 2019 call for proposals to provide “customized service and 360 supports for clients with unique barriers.”<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, however, SPOs and employers should consider how to best respond to and support GARs entering the labour force based on their unique needs and circumstances.

As demonstrated in Farid’s story, the current language and employment model forces GARs to choose between upskilling and earning a living — to sacrifice their long-term success in the labour market for the chance to provide for their family now. Unless a new approach to language and training is considered, many refugees to Canada will continue to face this difficult choice.

*Employment-related services had the greatest impact on reported language skills improvement, greater than language training alone.*



33 Ibid.

34 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2019. Call for proposals 2019: Settlement and Resettlement Assistance Programs funding guidelines.

35 Ibid.



## RECOMMENDATION 1

### **The Government of Canada should support the development of collaborative options in which GARs can access programs to simultaneously improve their language skills while acquiring Canadian work experience and earning wages.**

There are various ways the government could support this type of collaborative language training and skills development model, including:

- A tax credit such as the Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit for employers who provide a flexible work schedule to allow language and skills training for GARs in their first two years in Canada;
- Granting programs such as the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant for Women to further support GARs entering the workforce and improving their skills in their first two years in Canada;
- Expanding the Federal Internship for Newcomers Program to resettled refugees, particularly GARs, in their first two years in Canada. Through the revised program, employers would offer internships to entry-level positions, not requiring a post-secondary education; and
- Work with The Future Skills Centre to explore opportunities for funding and piloting programming that combines language learning and employment for former refugees in their first two years in Canada.

The costing of this recommendation varies depending on the scope the federal government takes in its implementation. Based on our discussions with service provider organizations, there is an argument that existing programming dollars could be more effectively spent on a collaborative language and employment model.





***Employers tend to hire on the basis of trust, which is both subjective and often lacking for refugee newcomers.***

## ENHANCING SOCIAL CAPITAL

In North America, 85 percent of jobs are filled through social networking.<sup>36</sup> Employers tend to hire on the basis of trust, which is both subjective and often lacking for refugee newcomers.<sup>37</sup> Former refugees face more discrimination than economic immigrants and that is compounded by the lack of social networks available to GARs.<sup>38</sup>

Privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) have demonstrated better employment outcomes and incomes than GARs. They are 13 percent more likely to report employment income within five years of arrival and their incomes are on average 14.4 percent higher after one year in Canada and 6.6 percent higher after 10 years.<sup>39</sup> PSRs have higher reported skill levels than GARs, but their stronger social networks are also an important factor in their greater labour market success.<sup>40</sup><sup>41</sup> PSRs and Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) refugees arrive in Canada with immediate access to support networks via their private sponsors, who is responsible for their care and support. GARs, on the other hand, may not know a single person upon arrival and likely had no choice in which country they would be sent to.<sup>42</sup> PSRs and BVORs

***Access to strong social networks is a greater factor in resettlement location than employment opportunities.***

36 Adler, L. 2016. New Survey Reveals 85% of All Jobs are Filled Via Networking.

37 Elliott, S., and Yusuf, I. 2014. 'Yes, we can; but together': social capital and refugee resettlement. *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 9:2, 101-110.

38 Bonikowska, A., and Hou, F. 2016. Educational and Labour Market Outcomes of Childhood Immigrants by Admission Class. Statistics Canada.

39 Hou, F., Picot, G., and Zhang, Y. 2019. Labour Market Outcomes Among Refugees to Canada. Statistics Canada.

40 Hoye, B. Dec. 29, 2017. 'I applied for over 100' jobs: Refugees struggle to find employment in Manitoba. CBC News.

41 The Together Project Interview, Dec. 13, 2019.

42 Bonikowska, A., and Hou, F. 2016. Educational and Labour Market Outcomes of Childhood Immigrants by Admission Class. Statistics Canada.



are provided with community supports that offer a stronger sense of belonging and often connections to employment opportunities, whereas GARs receive only institutional support.<sup>43 44</sup> Access to strong social networks is a greater factor in resettlement location than employment opportunities.<sup>45</sup> The majority of economic immigrants stay in their arrival city in large part due to connections to other immigrants from their home country.<sup>46</sup>

This pattern of settlement close to members of the same diaspora is reflective of **bonding** social capital — the notion that people of shared origin, language and religion stay together. Private sponsorship helps to build **bridging** social capital, which results in connections across ethnicities, incomes and cultures. While bonding social capital offers better short-term outcomes, bridging social capital can offer greater long-term economic value. Bridging social capital can offer greater economic value to members of disadvantaged communities by connecting them to communities with greater networks and resources,

beyond what their socio-economic group has ready access to.<sup>47 48</sup> The social capital challenges of former refugees also have an intersectional impact. In particular, women who are former refugees are disproportionately disadvantaged with the loss of support networks from their home country and have difficulty accessing support once in Canada.<sup>49</sup> Not only is this apparent in the literature, but many stakeholders we spoke with referenced the unique challenges that women face.

Farid's experience highlights the difficulty of evaluating employment opportunities without a trusted network. Limited by his options and lack of Canadian experience, he ended up in an exploitative employment situation that compromised his safety.

43 RefugeeHub Interview, Dec. 4, 2019.

44 Elliott, S., and Yusuf, I. 2014. 'Yes, we can; but together': social capital and refugee resettlement. *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 9:2, 101-110.

45 Hyndman, J. 2014. Refugee Research Synthesis 2009 - 2013. CERIS.

46 Frenette, M. 2018. Economic Immigrants in Gateway Cities: Factors Involved in Their Initial Location and Onward Migration Decisions. *Statistics Canada*.

47 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2008. Social Capital and Employment Entry of Recent Immigrants to Canada.

48 Lancee, B. 2012. Immigrant Performance in the Labour Market: Bonding and Bridging Social Capital. Amsterdam University Press.

49 Wilbur, A. 2017. Refugees Face Enormous Barriers in Canada, Particularly Women. *The Tyee*.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

### **The Government of Canada should support the prioritization of creating enhanced social capital for GARs through an emphasis on social bridging.**

There are a number of ways settlement programs could help GARs build bridging social capital:

- SPOs could consider deepening partnerships with volunteer communities and individuals to provide additional social support and connections for GARs;<sup>50</sup>
- Programs such as the Canada Connects Program could expand and the federal government could support organizations such as Together Project, a Tides Canada initiative with a mandate to connect refugee newcomers and Canadians to build social support systems that result in stronger, more integrated communities; and
- ESDC could develop an awareness campaign to target workplaces and other relevant communities. In many cases, the costs associated with implementing this recommendation would be minimal. A retooling of existing ESDC workplace inclusion programs could more efficiently use existing resources, while also providing a roadmap for expanded funding to organizations that are already being funded through settlement programs.

---

50 Alipour, L., Hadžiristić, T., and Smith. D.C. 2017. Volunteer & Settlement Sector Interactions in Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis. Together Project.



## STRENGTHENING INCOME SUPPORT

GARs receive direct financial support for basic living costs in their first 12 months in Canada through the federal government's Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), except in Quebec, of course. The RAP could be greatly improved to better support refugee labour force integration.

An important element of the RAP is how it claws back when recipients earn other income. A high claw-back rate reduces effective wages and disincentivizes employment. Currently, RAP recipients can "earn up to fifty percent of their total monthly RAP income support

*A high claw-back rate reduces effective wages and disincentivizes employment.*

payment before any deduction is made to the monthly income support entitlement." However, above this threshold, additional income is clawed back by 100 percent, with some exceptions for education funds or childcare expenses.<sup>51</sup> This eliminates any financial incentive for earning income between 50 percent and 150 percent of the RAP monthly amount, as SPOs confirmed in interviews. Indeed, one former GAR expressed that he and his peers "want to work, but when they work they lose benefits, so they [...] make a decision that is best for their family" and work fewer hours.

<sup>51</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP): Calculating the 50% additional income incentive. Government of Canada.





### **RECOMMENDATION 3** The Government of Canada should reduce the amount of the claw-back on income above 50 percent of the RAP amount from 100 percent to 50 percent to encourage former refugees to find full-time employment.

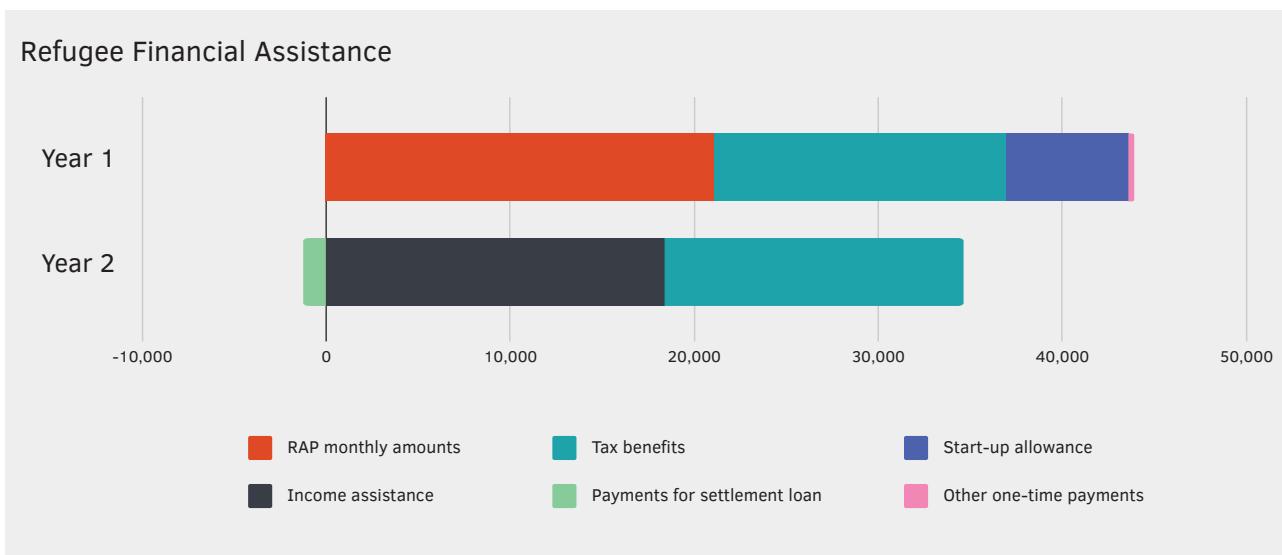
GARs should be encouraged to gain employment if possible, therefore the claw-back should be reexamined. A reasonable adaptation would be to claw back 50 percent of income above the 50 percent threshold, which is somewhat consistent with Ontario Works, only with a higher base exemption, and even closer to the Ontario Disability Support Program.<sup>52</sup> The claw-back could increase to 75 percent for additional income above 100 percent of monthly RAP income support.

Much attention has also been paid in recent years to the “13th month”, when income support under the RAP ends (as do expectations of support

from private sponsors for privately sponsored refugees). To understand the significance of this transition, Figure 3 presents the resources in years one and two of a hypothetical refugee family in Toronto with two adults and two children ages four and six, applying the policies of the income support programs and tax credits for which they are eligible under various assumptions.<sup>53</sup>

The evidence in Figure 3 shows that families lose resources when transitioning out of the RAP program; \$10,502 in the case of the family above. The decline relates mostly to substantial one-time funds in year one to help with their transition to Canada, which are perhaps not justifiably comparable with monthly

Figure 3: Hypothetical financial implications of GAR transition from RAP to provincial social assistance in Toronto



52 Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. As an Ontario Works client: When you earn money. Government of Ontario.

53 We assume that: the family arrives in July or August; the family had assets below the maximum allowable limit before there are claw-backs; no family member pursues employment either year; the family receives the full shelter supplement; the family receives transportation support equivalent to the monthly cost of an annual transit pass in Toronto; none of the children or adults have disabilities or other relevant health issues; the adults are not seniors; the family obtains a maximum settlement loan worth \$10,000; and in year two the parents both participate in full-time training activities to be eligible for the full Ontario Works transportation subsidy.



## *GARs use most of their RAP income support to pay for housing costs, with little remaining after.*

income for living, though some are still relevant and finance purchases that amortize (e.g. cleaning supplies, clothing — especially for growing children). If you exclude one-time funds from year one, the loss of total annual income falls by \$3,542. This reduction is because RAP monthly benefits are more generous than income assistance (Ontario Works), for instance by \$2,701 per year in Toronto, while families also have to make payments for their settlement loan beginning after their 12th month in Canada.<sup>54</sup>

Complaints are widespread that income support for former refugees is inadequate. According to the

federal government's Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs<sup>55</sup>, only 53 percent of GARs and 35 percent of BVOR refugees agreed that RAP income support covered their basic necessities. GARs use most of their RAP income support to pay for housing costs, with little remaining after. While the RAP is designed to match provincial social assistance rates, some lags can occur in matching. IRCC has previously acknowledged these findings and recommendations, but has not fully addressed them. Of course, it is also widely acknowledged that these challenges are a reflection of very low support for income assistance recipients in general. It is reasonable to assert that former refugees require special assistance to transition to life in Canada, but differential treatment can be justified for only so long.



Nevertheless, our evidence suggests the one-year cut-off for RAP eligibility is hard to justify, other than to reduce costs to the federal government while increasing them for the provinces. There may also be administrative grounds to extend the RAP eligibility period as this would reduce the administrative burden of transitioning between programs and keep more costs with the federal government, which decides on refugee intakes in the first place. Finally, our current approach may be a missed opportunity to support former refugees towards employment. Research from Denmark indicates declines in assistance can boost employment among former refugees, but only two or more years after arrival.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> In truth, access to whatever amount from the Immigration loan programme in year one is left after paying for transportation to Canada further bolsters family resources in year one. Given settlement loans are interest free with a delay in time to repayment, from a purely financial standpoint families are incentivized to maximize their loan.

<sup>55</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2016. Evaluation of the Settlement Program. Government of Canada.

<sup>56</sup> Roshholm, M., and Vejlin, R.M. 2007. Reducing income transfers to refugee immigrants: does starthelp help you start? IZA Discussion Papers, No. 2720, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), Bonn.

## RECOMMENDATION 4

### The Government of Canada should extend RAP eligibility to 24 months.

Extending RAP eligibility to 24 months could change the transition to income assistance into a clearer signal of labour market integration at a time when that integration can be more reasonably expected. Combining this extended eligibility with a more moderate claw-back could create more gradual steps through settlement. Former refugees would receive relatively high levels of support in year one, then a more modest reduction in support than under provincial programs in year two (receiving \$2,701 more in Toronto as described earlier), with a somewhat generous claw-back regime for other (namely employment) income throughout these years. Modest participation in the labour market could allow families to avoid poverty. In year three, they would be fully integrated into the same social safety net as other Canadians.

Costing these RAP recommendations is not a straightforward proposition as it is a function of both the number of refugees coming to Canada, program uptake, how much former refugees earn to reduce their RAP amounts and how their behaviour changes as a result of the policy. In 2017-18, the federal government spent \$95.175 million on the RAP for 17,925 recipients.<sup>57</sup> An approximate ballpark estimate would see our recommendations doubling federal RAP spending because of longer eligibility, with almost all GARs continuing on income assistance at the end of year two. However, provincial governments would reduce their spending on income assistance by a substantial part of the rise in federal costs, so the net cost to all governments would be considerably more modest.

---

<sup>57</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Details on Transfer Payment Programs of \$5 Million or More. Government of Canada.





## IMPROVING DATA COLLECTION

Data relating to refugee newcomers to Canada is often remarkably outdated. While we have the 2016 census, very few recent refugee newcomers would be included in that data — particularly those originating from Syria. Not only is this problematic for those looking to conduct research regarding this population, it poses a serious problem for the federal government to evaluate its interventions to support refugee settlement. There is, of course, the Longitudinal Immigration Database, which provides an excellent

picture of employment-related data over time, but nuanced data is necessary to understand the usage of income assistance and services, the challenges of former refugees in securing safe and affordable housing, and how newcomer refugees are integrating into the labour market. Much of this data may exist, but it's in silos across different federal departments, provincial governments and their departments, and settlement agencies.

## RECOMMENDATION 5

**The Government of Canada should direct Statistics Canada to work with federal ministries, provincial governments and settlement agencies to collect and publicly distribute relevant, updated, and on-time data regarding newcomer refugees, and especially relating to uptake of different social programs and employment.**

The federal government has considerable funding power and could integrate a robust system of data collection and reporting into its funding agreements. Indeed, the cost of this recommendation would be concentrated in an investment to get the collection systems working properly, but the ability to better target programming dollars based on evidence should offer considerable returns. There is also broad support among stakeholders for more accurate labour market information.



*Islamophobia and anti-black racism remain pertinent issues in Canada and currently the majority of refugees arriving in Canada originate from predominantly Muslim and/or Sub-Saharan African countries.*

## COMBATTING DISCRIMINATION

An essential factor in the labour force integration of former refugees is their unique experiences of intersectional discrimination, where one's personal and social identities (race, faith, gender, disability and mental illness) may combine to form unique modes of discrimination.<sup>58</sup> These forms of discrimination are not necessarily unique to former refugees, however there has been an unfortunate increase in anti-refugee sentiment worldwide, as well as growing Canadian discontent with visible minorities entering Canada over the last 15 years.<sup>59</sup>

Islamophobia and anti-black racism remain pertinent issues in Canada and currently the majority of refugees arriving in Canada originate from predominantly Muslim and/or Sub-Saharan African countries.<sup>60</sup> A 2018 survey found 81 percent of Canadians believe Islamophobia exists in Canada.<sup>61</sup> Hate crime incidents against Muslims in Canada rose to 349 in 2017 from

99 in 2014, an increase of 253 percent.<sup>62</sup> The Ontario government has noted that, "black men are more

likely to interact with the justice system than their white counterparts."<sup>63</sup> Also, black women are more likely to be unemployed than white women, despite having higher levels of education.<sup>64</sup> "Racialized men are 24% more likely to be unemployed than non-racialized men. Racialized women are 43% more likely to be unemployed than non-racialized men."<sup>65</sup> These are challenges former refugees may face in addition to the specific barriers outlined throughout this paper.

*Racialized immigrants and former refugees are also over-represented in precarious and part-time work that provides lower wages, no benefits and no job security.*

Research has shown employers discriminate against equivalently educated and experienced job applicants who have names that sound African, Asian or Muslim.<sup>66</sup> Racialized immigrants and former refugees are also over-represented in precarious and part-time work that provides lower wages, no benefits and no job security.<sup>67</sup>

58 Ontario Human Rights Commission. 2001. An intersectional approach to discrimination.

59 EKOS Politics. 2019. Increased Polarization on Attitudes to Immigration Reshaping the Political Landscape in Canada.

60 Statista. 2018. Ranking of the major source countries of refugees, as of 2018.

61 Alsaieq, M-N., Gallo M., Majzoub S., Ross, G., and Woodley, T. 2018. A Grave Problem: EKOS Survey on Islamophobia in Canada. The Canadian Muslim Forum & Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

62 Armstrong, A. 2019. Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2017. Statistics Canada.

63 Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate. Anti-Black Racism Strategy. Government of Ontario.

64 Ibid.

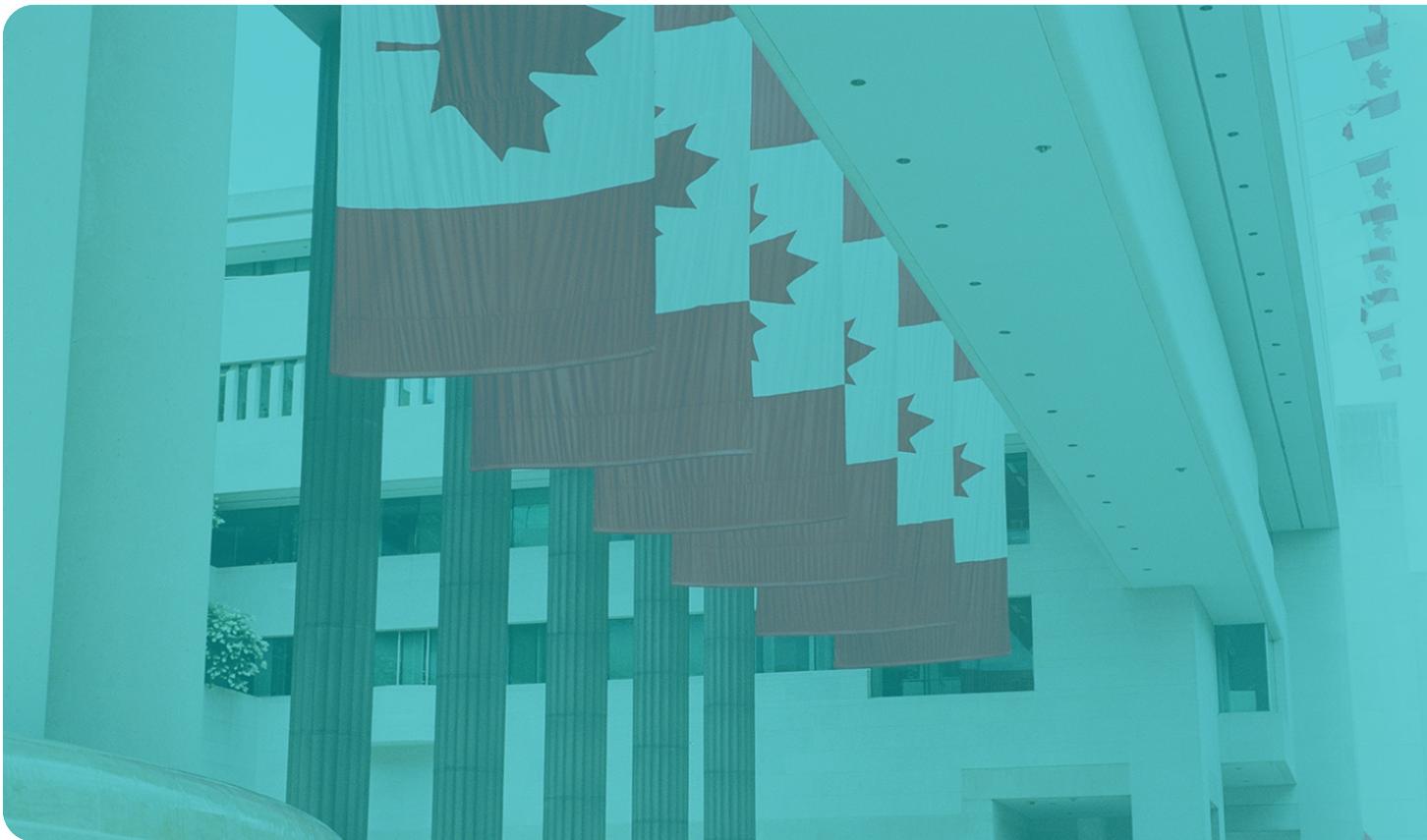
65 Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change. 2019. Racialized Poverty in Employment.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

Discrimination compounds former refugees' low levels of social capital.<sup>68</sup> As research by Ryan Endicott from Western University's Department of Sociology argues, "Canada's policies on the economic integration of refugees can be improved to foster a better context of reception, where refugees have more success in the labour market and face less discrimination."<sup>69</sup> In the 1990s and early 2000s, both Germany and the Netherlands exhibited higher income and occupational status for ethnic minority immigrants who engaged in social bridging with society and employers.<sup>70</sup> However, "there is no (Canadian) government plan to address issues that have a disproportionate impact on workers of colour and immigrant workers such as: employers violating employment standards

provisions with impunity; employees being unable to recover lost wages due to recalcitrant employers; and fear of losing one's job and being blacklisted in the community."<sup>71</sup> Hostile media messages build distrust and bias in society that impact identity, employment and social services. At the same time, minority communities such as Muslim and black newcomer communities are also seeing this media and public perception and becoming impatient with the lack of representative leadership.<sup>72</sup> The prime minister's recent mandate letter to the Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth highlighted the need to address systemic discrimination and unconscious bias across Canada and to develop more welcoming communities for newcomers.<sup>73</sup>



68 Endicott, R. 2017. The Economic Integration of Canada's Refugees: Understanding the Issues with Canada's Approach. Western University, MA Research Paper. 12.

69 Ibid.

70 Lancee, B. 2012. Immigrant Performance in the Labour Market: Bonding and Bridging Social Capital. Amsterdam University Press.

71 Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change. 2019. Racialized Poverty in Employment.

72 Beynon, R., Flynn, D., Griffiths, D., Pasha, T., Sigona, N., and Zetter, R. 2006. Immigration, social cohesion and social capital. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

73 Office of the Prime Minister. Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth Mandate Letter.

## RECOMMENDATION 6

### The Government of Canada should establish a national strategy to combat discrimination against former refugees, with an emphasis on Islamophobia and anti-black racism.

There are a number of existing programs, policies, or practices that could be amended and enhanced to significantly address the challenge of discrimination among refugee newcomers. These enhancements would also have an impact on tackling discrimination overall in Canada:

- Expand and advance Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy and ensure community-based projects are prioritized and meet the goals and outcomes of the strategy;
- Anti-Islamophobia and anti-black racism policy needs to be a key component of Canada's 2019–2022 Anti-Racism Strategy to combat racism, discrimination and reduce the rates of hate crimes against Muslims in Canada.<sup>74</sup> The Anti-Racism Strategy should build on existing annual events to promote trust building, education and interconnections that recognize the identity of refugees to

empower pathways for socio-economic development such as World Refugee Day, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia, Islamic History Month, and Black History Month;<sup>75</sup>

- Funding for settlement agency programs for workplace sponsorship should require anti-racism and unconscious bias training to raise awareness, provide strategies to effectively speak up and improve social integration;
- As the federal government pursues initiatives to employ former refugees within the civil service, extend federal government pay equity policies to cover newcomers and visible minorities, as well as non-unionized employees and temporary and contract workers working under federal jurisdiction. Couple this with a "proactive pay equity model that outlines steps and timelines for achieving and maintaining pay equity in the public and private sectors."<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Canadian Heritage. 2019. Building a Foundation for Change: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019–2022. Government of Canada.

<sup>75</sup> The National Museum of African American History and Culture. Knowing the Past Opens the Door to the Future: The Continuing Importance of Black History Month.

<sup>76</sup> The Conference Board of Canada. 2017. Racial Wage Gap.



# CONCLUSION

**The landscape of work is changing in Canada. We believe any future of work must be both equitable and inclusive.**

We have demonstrated both the unique and compounding barriers that GARs face when integrating into the labour market in Canada. Canada shows no signs of closing its doors to refugees and, indeed, the labour market in Canada is experiencing labour shortages across the board. It is therefore critically important that GARs be considered in the conversation around the future of work. We believe the recommendations we have made in the categories of integrating language learning and employment, working to foster bridging social capital, strengthening income support, improving data collection, and combatting discrimination would help GARs to better transition to the labour market. The successful implementation of these recommendations could also provide an avenue for shared learning and benefits far beyond GAR population.

**Farid brings a great deal to Canada. By providing him and his family with the supports and resources they need early on in their arrival, we can ensure they are well-positioned for the future of work, both its challenges and opportunities.**

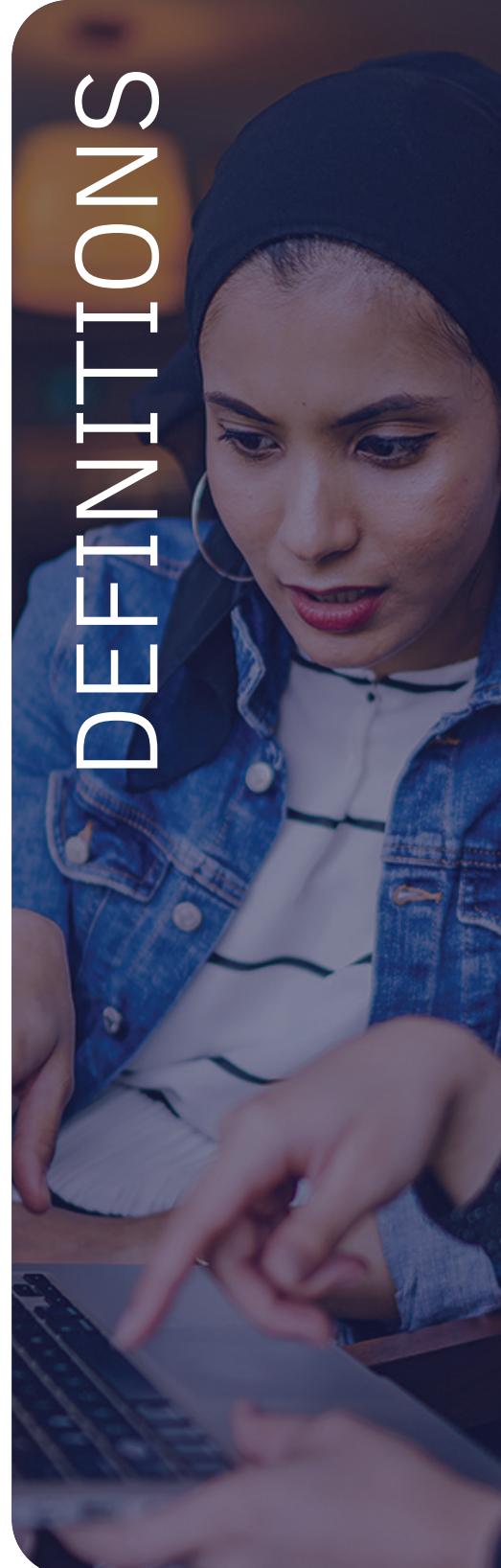


# DEFINITIONS

- **Protected Persons:** Those who, after having requested asylum at a port of entry or at a domestic office, are determined to be a Convention refugee or a person in need of protection by the Immigration and Refugee Board. People who are granted protected person status may apply for permanent residence status, both for themselves and their dependent family members, under this category.
- **Asylum seekers vs. resettled refugees:** “Asylum seekers in Canada may make a claim based on the provisions of the Refugee Convention, the fear of facing torture or the risk to life, or risk of cruel and unusual treatment or punishment. On the other hand, refugee applicants abroad must meet either the criteria of a Convention refugee or be a member of the Humanitarian-Protected Persons Abroad Class.”
- **Convention refugee:** “A person who is outside of their home country or country where they normally live and fears returning to that country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.”
- **Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program:** “The Government of Canada’s program under which refugees from abroad, who meet Canada’s refugee resettlement criteria, are selected and admitted to Canada.”
- **Blended Visa Office-Referred refugee program:** “This program matches refugees identified for resettlement by the UNHCR with private sponsors in Canada. This program allows the Government of Canada to engage in a three-way partnership with the UNHCR and private sponsors, which allows both new and experienced sponsors to cost-share with the government and become involved in protecting refugees with whom they have had no previous contact. Under this program, the federal government provides up to six months of income support through the Resettlement Assistance Program, while private sponsors provide another six months of financial support, and commit to providing a year of social and emotional support and to ensuring the refugee’s integration.”
- **Government-assisted refugee:** “A person who is outside Canada and has been determined to be a Convention refugee and who receives financial and other support from the Government of Canada or Province of Quebec for up to one year after their arrival in Canada. GARs are selected from applicants referred by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other referral organizations.”

# DEFINITIONS

- **Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program:** This “enables organizations and private individuals to submit undertakings for refugees and persons in refugee-like situations (members of the Humanitarian-Protected Persons Abroad Class (HPC)) for consideration for resettlement. Upon approval, the sponsor is responsible for providing financial assistance for a limited period and assisting the refugee with integrating into Canada.”
- **Joint Assistance Sponsorship:** “This program is intended for Convention refugees selected as government-assisted refugees with higher than normal settlement needs, including refugees whose personal circumstances may include a large number of family members, trauma from violence or torture, medical disabilities or the effects of systemic discrimination. Joint Assistance Sponsorship allows the Government of Canada and a private sponsorship group to share the responsibilities of sponsorship for refugees who need assistance over and above that which is provided through federal government assistance alone. The federal government assumes full financial responsibility while the private sponsorship group provides social and emotional support and, together with a service provider organization funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, is committed to ensuring the refugee’s integration. The period of sponsorship may be typically extended for two years and up to three years for exceptional cases such as separated minors.”
- **Refugee claimant:** “A person who has applied for refugee protection status while in Canada and is waiting for a decision on his/her claim from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.”
- **Refugee landed in Canada:** “A permanent resident who applied for and received permanent resident status in Canada after their refugee claim was accepted.”
- **Refugee protection status:** “When a person, inland or overseas, is determined to be a Convention refugee or protected person, they are said to have refugee protection status in Canada. Refugee protection is given to a person in accordance with the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act.”





# INTERVIEWS

- Ali Abukar, Executive Director, Saskatoon Open Door Society
- Mohja Alia, ISANS, Nova Scotia
- Emilie Coyle, Director of National Programs, Refugee Hub
- Aliza Dadani, Child and Youth Therapist, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society - Centre for Refugee Resilience
- Sally Dimachki, Manager, Programs & Engagement, Refugee 613, Ottawa
- Robert Falconer, Immigration & Refugee Policy, University of Calgary School of Public Policy
- Michael Haan, Canada Research Chair in Migration and Ethnic Relations, Western University
- Anna Hill, Co-Director, Together Project
- Saima Jamal, Co-Founder, Calgary Immigrant Support Society
- Bushra Khan, Youth Support, Brampton Multicultural Centre
- Bayan Khatib, Executive Director, Syrian Canadian Foundation
- Government of Canada staff
- Jessica-Rae Linzel, BVOR Fund 2019 Program Officer, Refugee Hub
- Andrew Lusztyk, Co-Director, Together Project
- Jonathan Medow, Medow Consulting
- Nicoleta Monoreanu, Manager, Client Support Services, YMCA of Greater Toronto
- Sam Nammoura, Co-Founder, Syrian Refugee Support Group Calgary
- Denise Otis, UNHCR Head of Field Unit, Montreal
- MJ (Mary Jean) Sakurai, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia
- Nicola Satter, Academic Director, Eurocentres, Bridgewater, Nova Scotia
- Oliver Sheldrick, Medow Consulting
- Allie Shier, Program Coordinator, YMCA of Greater Toronto
- Amy Soberano, Counsellor Therapist, Access Alliance Multicultural Health and Community Services
- Kelly Toughill, Associate Professor, Dalhousie School of Journalism

We also spoke with a number of refugee newcomers not listed here and we want to thank them for sharing their experiences and stories with us.

# REFERENCES

Adler, L. 2016. New Survey Reveals 85% of All Jobs are Filled Via Networking.

Alipour, L., Hadžiristić, T., and Smith. D.C. 2017. Volunteer & Settlement Sector Interactions in Response to the Syrian Refugee Crisis. Together Project.

Alsaieq, M-N., Gallo M., Majzoub S., Ross, G., and Woodley, T. 2018. A Grave Problem: EKOS Survey on Islamophobia in Canada. The Canadian Muslim Forum & Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East.

Andersson, L. and Khoudour, D. 2017. Assessing the contribution of refugees to the development of their host countries. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Armstrong, A. 2019. Police-reported hate crime in Canada, 2017. Statistics Canada.

Beynon, R., Flynn, D., Griffiths, D., Pasha, T., Sigona, N., and Zetter, R. 2006. Immigration, social cohesion and social capital. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Bonikowska, A., and Hou, F. 2016. Educational and Labour Market Outcomes of Childhood Immigrants by Admission Class. Statistics Canada.

Borghans, L., Weel, B.T., and Weinberg, B.A. 2014. People Skills and the Labor-Market Outcomes of Underrepresented Groups. *ILR Review*, 67(2), 287–334.

Canadian Heritage. 2019. Building a Foundation for Change: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019–2022. Government of Canada.

CBC News. Jan. 1, 2020. No imminent 'doomsday' threat of AI, robots replacing Canadian workers, but report cites concerns.

Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change. 2019. Racialized Poverty in Employment.

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. 2017. Skills Proficiency of Immigrants in Canada: Findings from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). Government of Canada.

Deming, D.J. November 2017. The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 132, Issue 4.

Domise, A. June 5, 2019. The rise of an uncaring Canada. *Maclean's*.

EKOS Politics. 2019. Increased Polarization on Attitudes to Immigration Reshaping the Political Landscape in Canada.

Elliott, S., and Yusuf, I. 2014. 'Yes, we can; but together': social capital and refugee resettlement. *Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 9:2, 101–110.

Endicott, R. 2017. The Economic Integration of Canada's Refugees: Understanding the Issues with Canada's Approach. Western University, MA Research Paper. 12.

Frenette, M. 2018. Economic Immigrants in Gateway Cities: Factors Involved in Their Initial Location and Onward Migration Decisions. Statistics Canada.

Hou, F., Picot, G., and Zhang, Y. 2019. Labour Market Outcomes Among Refugees to Canada. Statistics Canada.

Hoye, B. Dec. 29, 2017. 'I applied for over 100' jobs: Refugees struggle to find employment in Manitoba. CBC News.

Hyndman, J. 2014. Refugee Research Synthesis 2009 – 2013. CERIS.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2008. Social Capital and Employment Entry of Recent Immigrants to Canada.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2016. Evaluation of the Settlement Program. Government of Canada.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2016. Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative. Government of Canada.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2018. 2019-2021 Immigration Levels Plan. Government of Canada.

# REFERENCES

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2018. Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2019. Call for proposals 2019: Settlement and Resettlement Assistance Programs funding guidelines.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Canada: A History of Refuge. Government of Canada.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Details on Transfer Payment Programs of \$5 Million or More. Government of Canada.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP): Calculating the 50% additional income incentive. Government of Canada.

International Organization for Migration. 2008. Migration and Climate Change.

Lancee, B. 2012. Immigrant Performance in the Labour Market: Bonding and Bridging Social Capital. Amsterdam University Press.

Office of the Prime Minister. Minister of Diversity and Inclusion and Youth Mandate Letter.

Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate. Anti-Black Racism Strategy. Government of Ontario.

Ontario Human Rights Commission. 2001. An intersectional approach to discrimination.

Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. As an Ontario Works client: When you earn money. Government of Ontario.

Rosholm, M., and Vejlin, R.M. 2007. Reducing income transfers to refugee immigrants: does starthelp help you start? IZA Discussion Papers, No. 2720, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), Bonn.

The Conference Board of Canada. 2017. Racial Wage Gap.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture. Knowing the Past Opens the Door to the Future: The Continuing Importance of Black History Month.

The World Bank. 2018. CO2 emissions.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2019. Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2019. Figures at a Glance.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Refugee Facts: What is a Refugee?

UN News. Jan. 21, 2020. UN human rights ruling could boost climate change asylum claims.

University of Notre Dame. 2017. Country Rankings by ND-GAIN Country Index, Vulnerability and Readiness.

Wilbur, A. 2017. Refugees Face Enormous Barriers in Canada, Particularly Women. The Tyee.





## ABOUT PPF



The Public Policy Forum builds bridges among diverse participants in the policy-making process and gives them a platform to examine issues, offer new perspectives and feed fresh ideas into policy discussions. We believe good policy makes a better Canada.

© 2020, Public Policy Forum  
1400 - 130 Albert Street  
Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1P 5G4  
613.238.7858



[ppforum.ca](http://ppforum.ca)



[@ppforumca](https://twitter.com/ppforumca)

More than a Place of Refuge:  
**ISBN: 978-1-988886-99-2**

## ABOUT ACTION CANADA



During the 10-month Action Canada Fellowship, Fellows enhance their leadership skills, forge lifelong connections with people and communities across the country and promote greater civic engagement among all Canadians as they dive into critical public policy topics. In 2017, the Public Policy Forum and Action Canada joined forces to expand Canada's top accelerator of emerging leaders.



[actioncanada.ca](http://actioncanada.ca)



[@actioncanada](https://twitter.com/actioncanada)

---

## WITH THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

---

