



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

*Executive summary*

# Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative

Evaluation Division

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Canada



## Executive Summary

A Rapid Impact Evaluation (RIE) was conducted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to assess the early outcomes of the 2015-16 Syrian Refugee Initiative. The evaluation was targeted in nature and examined the Syrian refugees who were admitted to Canada between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016 and were a part of the initial 25,000 Syrian refugee commitment.<sup>1</sup>

The evaluation focused on resettlement and early settlement outcomes for the Syrian population who were admitted as Government Assisted Refugees (GAR), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) and Blended Visa Office-Referréd (BVOR) refugees, as well as lessons learned and areas to monitor in the future. In addition, comparisons were made where possible to previous resettled refugees who arrived in Canada between 2010 and 2014.

### Comparison to Previous Resettled Refugees

The evaluation found that adult Syrian GARs tend to be less educated and less knowledgeable of Canadian official languages compared to previous resettled refugee cohorts. Conversely, the adult Syrian PSRs are more educated have more knowledge of Canadian official languages compared to the resettled PSRs admitted between 2010 and 2014. Additionally, the evaluation demonstrated that adult Syrian refugees were less likely to be referred to employment services and had gained less knowledge and skills compared to previous resettled refugee cohorts. However, the evaluation found that they were more likely to be referred to language services.

### Immediate and Early Resettlement and Settlement Outcomes

Overall, both GARs and PSRs reported that they were happy with their life in Canada. With regards to meeting the immediate and essential needs of Syrian refugees, PSRs were more likely to indicate that their immediate needs were met and reported receiving more help to resettle compared to GARs. In addition, the evaluation found that due to expedited timelines of the initiative, some challenges occurred. Most notably those challenges included finding permanent housing, lack of consistency in the standards of RAP delivery, the adequacy of RAP income support for GARs and BVOR refugees and a lack of reporting on RAP services.

### Learning an Official Language

With regards to learning an official language, the majority of resettled Syrian refugees had their language assessed, however, fewer PSRs than GARs were enrolled in language training. Syrian GARs indicated that the main reasons for not taking language training were the lack of available lower level classes and lack of childminding spaces. Given GARs' low language levels compared to other newcomers, many were unable to access employment services until a specific language level had been reached.

### Employment

At the time of the survey, half of adult PSRs had found employment, compared to 10% of Syrian GARs. Of those who reported having a job, the most common form of employment for both GARs and PSRs were in the Sales and Service occupations. The vast majority of Syrian refugees who were

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<sup>1</sup> Data collection took place between June and September 2016, and included focus groups with Syrian refugees, surveys with adult Syrian refugees, as well as other key lines of evidence.

not working at the time of the survey were looking for work or intended to look for work in the near future. The biggest challenge facing both GARs and PSRs in finding a job was associated with learning an official language.

## **Ongoing Considerations**

Additional considerations were identified in the report regarding potential issues for the Syrian refugees moving forward. Considerations included Canada Child Benefit, transitioning to “month 13”, challenges for Syrian youth, mental health, concerns for family members still overseas, PSRs and BVOR refugees getting support from their sponsors and the perception of favouritism towards Syrian refugees.

## **Lessons Learned**

While this whole of government initiative was a great success in many regards, the evaluation identified a few areas that should be taken into account to help ensure successful resettlement and settlement results.

### ***The need for end-to-end planning for a major initiative***

- IRCC should ensure that the resettlement and settlement considerations are fully integrated into the planning phase of future departmental refugee initiatives.

### ***The need for accurate and complete refugee information***

- It is essential that accurate and necessary refugee information (profile, destining, arrivals) is provided to IRCC staff, partners and stakeholders in a timely way.

### ***Provision of pre-arrival services***

- Providing pre-arrival/orientation to all refugees prior to coming to Canada is essential.

### ***A focal point for stakeholder coordination and communication***

- IRCC should consider having a focal point within the Department for future large-scale refugee initiatives to ensure effective and consistent stakeholder coordination.

### ***Administrative information quality***

- Full sociodemographic and contact information needs to be accurately captured for populations that arrive in Canada to allow for effective ongoing monitoring and results reporting.