

Housing challenges for refugee newcomers: existing research and its relevance to the #WelcomeSyrians experience

Damaris Rose, with Alexandra Charette

Université INRS – Centre Urbanisation Culture
Société

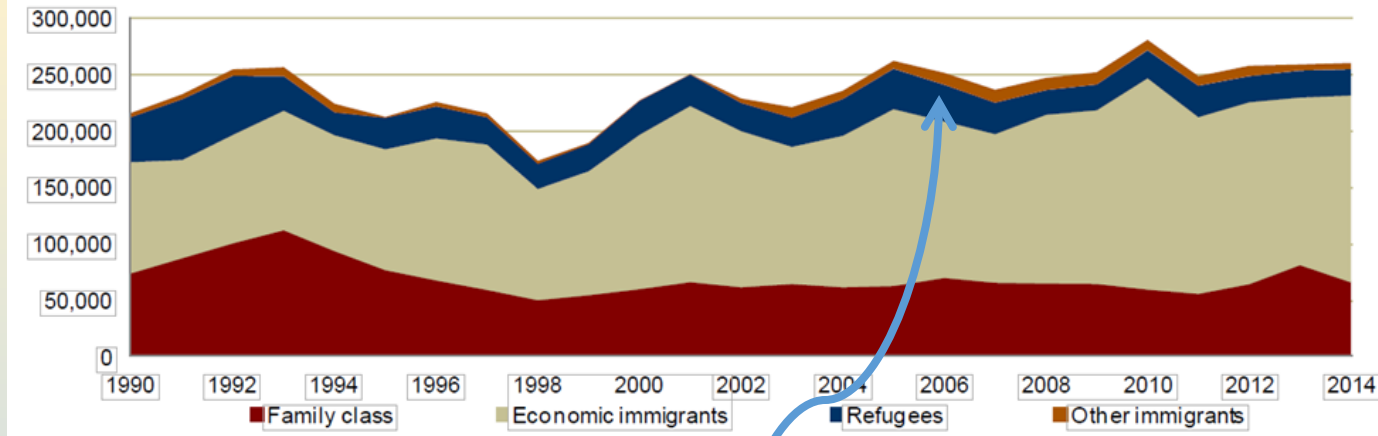
Canadian Housing and Renewal Association webinar,
11 October 2016

Outline

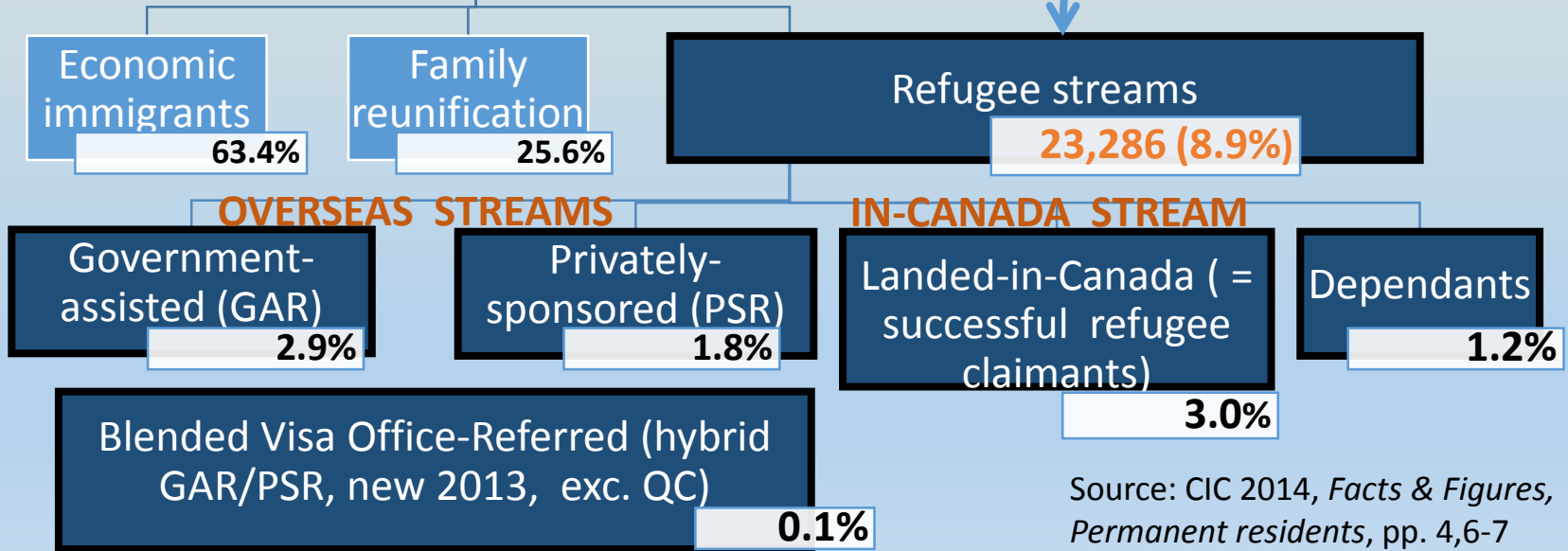
- Background on refugee stream admissions to Canada
- Housing experiences and trajectories of newcomers in the refugee streams - views from research
- Welcome Syrians
- By the numbers
- Finding housing: tactics and challenges: emerging knowledge, emerging questions

Refugee admissions in context

Canada – Permanent resident admissions by category, 1989 to 2014



Total permanent resident admissions, 2014
260,404 (100%)



Source: CIC 2014, *Facts & Figures, Permanent residents*, pp. 4,6-7

Federally-funded settlement assistance for refugee streams

- Overseas-processed and landed-in-Canada refugees: access to same settlement programs as other immigrant newcomers, **plus**:
 - + GAR & PSR: immigration transportation loan, [IFHP](#)
 - + GAR: **temporary housing on arrival**, start-up allowance, 1 yr income support (\cong provincial social assistance rates)
- PSR sponsor groups must provide basic needs including housing for 1 yr
- Refugee claimants awaiting decision are not eligible for federally-funded settlement services, except limited IFHP and **help finding housing**

Provincial supports & program entitlements vary ...

Refugee newcomer housing issues: types of research evidence

- Metropolis Project (1995-2012) → academic-community collaboration → improved evidence base
- **Point-in-time** studies with **retrospective** component
 - Qualitative research & small-scale surveys
 - Some larger, representative-sample surveys
 - Mostly single-city studies, limited comparability
- **Longitudinal** surveys of permanent resident settlement & integration **trajectories**
 - *U. of Toronto Refugee Resettlement Project*, 1979-81 boat people (10 yrs)
 - *ENI* (QC), 1989 cohort (10 yrs)
 - *LSIC* (StatCan-CIC) 2000-2001 cohort (4 yrs)
(In-Canada refugee claimants not included)

The pivotal role of rapid access to stable and decent housing

For newcomers to Canada, obtaining decent and affordable housing in a safe and welcoming neighbourhood is an anchor point for a new start. In addition to fulfilling the elemental need for shelter, it provides a base from which to seek out other key resources such as health-care providers, schools, language training and job counselling. It is also the scaffolding for rebuilding a sense of feeling settled, being “at home.”

POLICY **OPTIONS**
POLITIQUES

Damaris Rose, article in Policy Options Politiques, 2016-05-20

<http://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/may-2016/affordable-housing-for-refugees-is-a-major-challenge/>

- Whereas **prolonged** stays in **temporary** accommodation lead to delays in accessing resources needed for settlement, which can delay eventual economic self-sufficiency...

Personalized orientation services, key to positive first housing experiences...

'Manolo', **government assisted refugee**, Montréal, 2011:

*"The greatest gift that God could have given to me and my family was to come to Canada, **stabilization**. The first place that I came to was here with [female settlement organization worker] (...) We had just arrived at the hotel and the snow was beginning to fall (...) We arrived, a **large family** and (...) she was the one that did everything with us, she (...) placed us, all the family, in two 5½ [5 room] apartments (...) in the same building"*

'Lara', **refugee claimant**, Montréal, 2011

"When I arrived, I didn't know Montreal and I had no idea where I'd landed. When you look for housing (...) you don't know anything about anything. You are just desperate to find a place to put yourself. I only saw the problems after I moved in. The mould, the rats (...)"

Main housing challenges in the early months/early years

- Lack of credit history/references
- Financial precariousness
 - exacerbated by transportation loan repayment
- Discriminatory practices

Particular vulnerabilities

- **Refugee claimants:** precarious immigration status
- **GARs:** large families, limited education/literacy, 'high needs' (impact of 2002 IRPA) ⇒ barriers to economic self-sufficiency

Problematic outcomes

- channeling into deteriorating rental stock, risk of inadequate housing (substandard, unsanitary...)
- unsuitable housing (overcrowded)
- at risk of homelessness ($\geq 50\%$ income to rent...)

For example, in Montréal study of 200 settlement organization clients, 2010-11

- GARs faring as badly as refugee claimants in experience of insanitary housing (35%)
- GARs much more likely to experience housing difficulties due to family size
 - Options often limited to ‘refugee-tolerant’ buildings in mediocre neighbourhoods
- GARs at risk of multiple forms of discrimination
 - Vs refugee claimants’ vulnerabilities ← precarious legal status
- Similar findings in Vancouver, Toronto, Winnipeg

See Rose & Charette 2014; Preston et al. 2012; Francis & Hiebert 2014; Sherrell 2010.

Longer-term outcomes: very positive, say longitudinal studies. And yet ...

- LSIC (2000-01 cohort) : After 3-4 years, all refugee streams are catching up with economic and family class immigrants in terms of housing outcomes, even including home-ownership rates
- But since the GAR profile has greatly changed since 2002 – to what extent is the LSIC out-of-date?
- IRCC longitudinal data: GAR economic integration is slower, PSRs' has improved
- PSR housing outcomes???
 - only 1 recent study (Winnipeg): strongly positive, but points to sponsorship breakdown as risk factor for loss of housing
 - Big expansion of PSR (Syrians) → key research need

The #WelcomeSyrians operation: numbers, categories

**30 862
arrivals
2015/11-
2016/09,**

**of whom
26 202 in
first 4
months**

Government assisted
refugees: 16 417,
53.2%

Privately-sponsored
refugees: 11 360,
36.8%

Blended Visa-Office
Referred: 3 085, 10%

Selected from UNHCR-referred
in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey
Families with children, women
at risk, LGBTQ (Canada's
"pragmatic humanitarianism")

Meet UNHCR criteria

Can be relatives or unknown to
sponsor group members

Comparison of GAR and PSR streams (Preliminary IRCC data 2016/01)

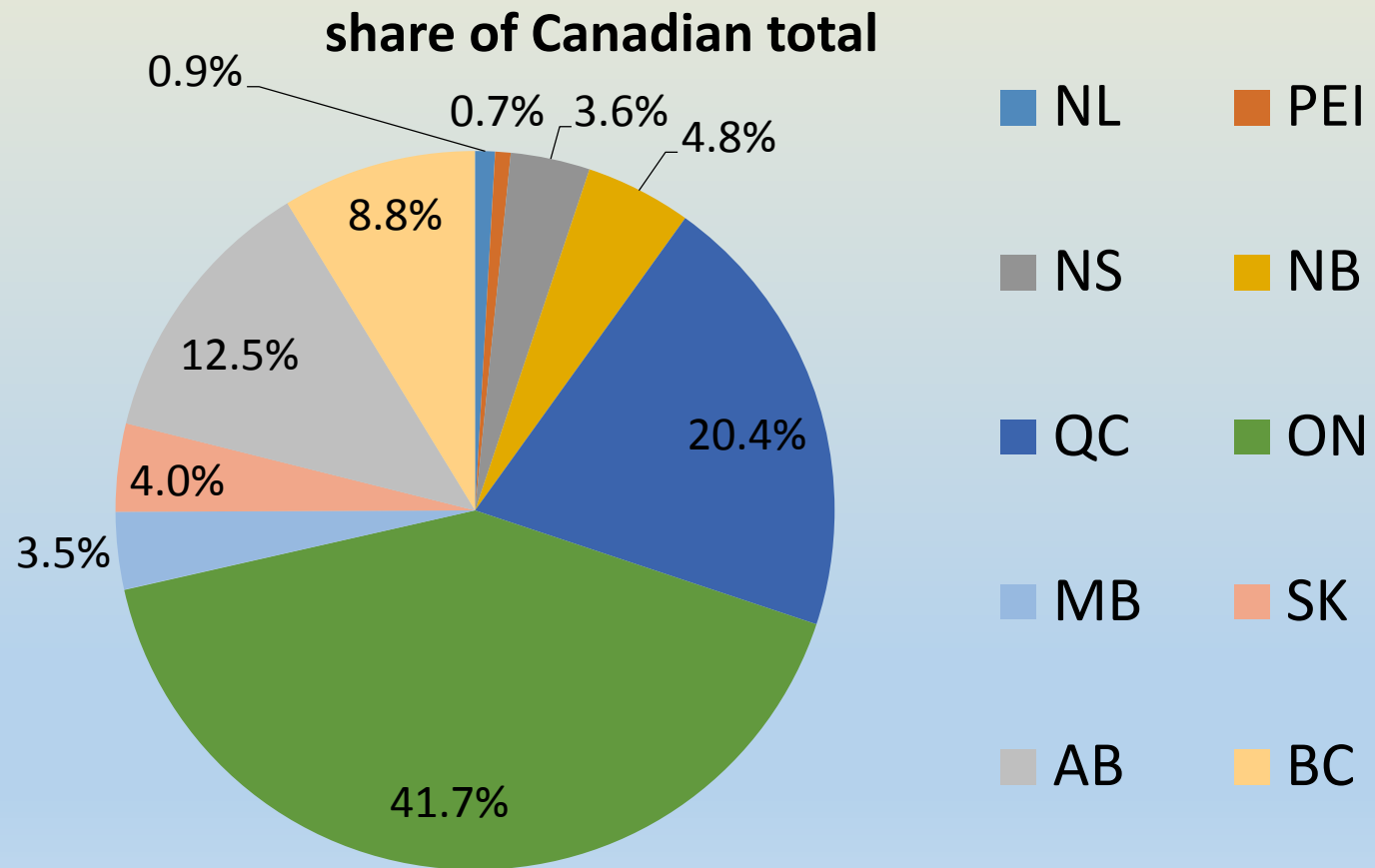
GAR

- Large families migrating together
 - Majority have 5-8 people on application, often more
- No English or French
- Low literacy levels in Arabic
- Majority are rural people, with low education levels
- Some more educated, with more urban work experience (from Aleppo or Lebanon)

PSR

- Smaller families
- Solo migrants
- Majority know some English or French
- No less likely to have experienced trauma than GARs...

#Welcome Syrians: distribution of settlement destinations (as of 2016/09)



Source: calculated from online data, IRCC and MIDI

2016-10-11

Syrian refugees by category, selected CMAs (as of 2016/09)

	Total	GAR	PSR	Blended
CANADA	30 862	53%	37%	10%
Toronto	5 601	35%	56%	9%
Montréal	4 396	4%	96%	-
Vancouver	2 073	82%	13%	5%
Ottawa	1 724	70%	17%	13%
Calgary	1 590	45%	48%	7%
Edmonton	1 593	63%	30%	8%
Hamilton	1 162	89%	8%	3%
Winnipeg	978	86%	8%	7%
Halifax	924	85%	10%	5%
Fredericton	484	94%	1%	5%

Housing in year 1: tactics, challenges—preliminary overview

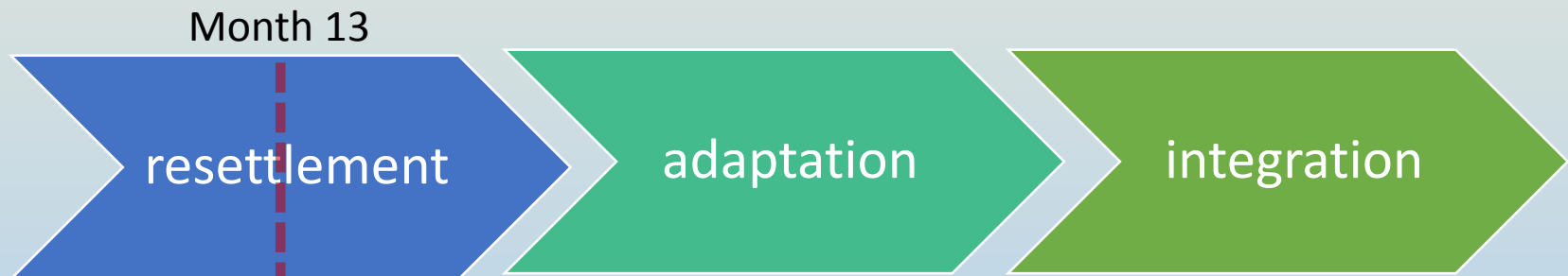
- Impacts of delays in finding “permanent” housing
 - Lost time for settling, finding work - 12 month clock ticking...
 - Short-term secondary migration to cheaper housing market – what happens to their settlement organization support?
- Affordability & suitability
 - GARs with large families + low incomes in tight markets – settlement organizations not fully forewarned
 - Settle in smaller cities or suburbs with cheaper housing
 - Access to specialized assistance (critical mass)?
 - Access to training, jobs (transportation)?
 - Opportunities for intercultural contacts?

Housing in year 1: tactics, challenges— preliminary overview (contd.)

- Affordability & suitability (contd)
 - Recourse to private sector largesse
 - Welcome Fund
 - Ad hoc local solutions (developers, landlords)
- Adequacy - physical condition
 - trade-offs for affordability
 - Use of short-life housing (slated for demolition) for refugees needing stability...
- Readiness of private sponsors
 - Knowledge of housing system/market?
 - Preparedness for full-year commitment?

Impacts of “month 13”???

- Does end of GAR support and PSR commitments mean end private-sector subsidies – by individual landlords? Via Welcome Fund?



- Disruptions due to involuntary moves/secondary migration?
- Trade-off between other essentials to pay rent?
- How many refugee families will be affected?
- Different provincial eligibility criteria/availability of social housing / government rent supplements ?

Research in progress...

« *Finding housing for the “Welcome Syrians” refugee newcomers: A cross-Canada analysis of initiatives, challenges and lessons learned* - SSHRC-funded project, (890-2016-4027) - Damaris Rose (INRS) with collaborators Valerie Preston (York) & Kathy Sherrell (ISSBC)

- Main housing challenges and successful initiatives across Canada - commonalities and sources of variation from place to place?

Data sources:

- witness testimony to H of C, Senate committees, May-June 2016
- On-line media coverage from all cities welcoming ≥ 50 refugees
- Small number of key informant interviews
- Webinar discussions of findings with settlement organizations
- Time frame: short! (2016/09 – 2017/07)

Selected bibliography

(includes hyperlinks to grey literature)

- Beiser, Morton. 2003. "Sponsorship and resettlement success." *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 4 (2):203-215.
- Carter, Tom, and John Osborne. 2008. *The Resettlement Experiences of Privately Sponsored Refugees*. Phase One Report, and [Phase Two Report](#). Winnipeg: University of Winnipeg, Department of Geography.
- Citizenship and Immigration Canada. 2015. [Evaluation of the Immigration Loan Program](#). Ottawa: Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- Cubie, Dug. 2006. [New Beginnings: Insights of Government-Assisted Refugees in British Columbia into Their Settlement Outcomes](#). Vancouver: Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia.
- D'Addario, Silvia, Dan Hiebert, and Kathleen M. Sherrell. 2007. "Restricted Access: The Role of Social Capital in Mitigating Absolute Homelessness among Immigrants and Refugees in the GVRD." *Refuge* 24 (1):107-115.
- Francis, Jenny, and Daniel Hiebert. 2014. "Shaky foundations: Refugees in Vancouver's housing market." *The Canadian Geographer* 58 (1):63-78.
- Haan, Michael. 2011. "Does immigrant residential crowding reflect hidden homelessness?" *Canadian Studies in Population* 38 (1-2):43-59.
- Haan, Michael. 2012. [The housing experiences of new Canadians: Insights from the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada \(LSIC\)](#). Ottawa: Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
- Hiebert, Daniel. 2009. "Newcomers in the Canadian housing market: a longitudinal study, 2001-2005." *Canadian Geographer* 53 (3):268-287.
- Hyndman, Jennifer. 2011. [Research summary on resettled refugee integration in Canada](#). United Nations High Commissioner for refugees.
- Klodowsky, Fran, Benham Benhia, Tim Aubry, Marta Young, Marta Nemiroff, and Carl Nicholson. 2007. "Comparing Foreign-born and Canadian-born Respondents: The Panel Study on Homelessness in Ottawa." [Our Diverse Cities](#) 4:51-53.
- Murdie, Robert, and Jennifer Logan. 2011. [Precarious Housing & Hidden Homelessness Among Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Immigrants: Bibliography and Review of Canadian Literature from 2005 to 2010](#). Report Submitted to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) of Human Resources and Skills Development, Canada (HRSDC). Toronto: CERIS, Working Paper No. 84.
- Preston, Valerie, Robert Murdie, Silvia D'Addario, Prince Sibanda, Ann Marie Murnaghan, Jennifer Logan, and Mi Hae Ahn. 2011. [Precarious Housing and Hidden Homelessness Among Refugees, Asylum Seekers, and Immigrants in the Toronto Metropolitan Area](#). Toronto: CERIS - The Ontario Metropolis Centre. CERIS Working Paper no. 87.
- Rose, Damaris, and Alexandra Charette. 2014. "Housing experiences of users of settlement services for newcomers in Montréal: does immigration status matter?" In *Immigrant Integration: Research implications for Public Policy*, edited by Kenise Kilbride, 151-196. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press. Full report: 2011 http://www.im.metropolis.net/medias/wp_45_2011.pdf.
- Sherrell, Kathleen M. 2010. "Legal Status, Place, or Something Else? The Housing Experiences of Refugees in Winnipeg and Vancouver." [Canadian Issues / Thèmes canadiens](#) 2010 (Fall): 52-57.
- Ville de Montréal, comité de suivi pour la coordination de l'accueil des réfugiés syriens. 2016. [Coordination montréalaise pour l'accueil et l'intégration des réfugiés syriens 2015-2016](#). Document préparé pour le maire de Montréal. Montréal: Ville de Montréal.
- Yu, Soojin, Estelle Ouellet, and Angelyn Warmington. 2007. "Refugee integration in Canada: A survey of empirical evidence and existing services." *Refuge* 24 (2):17-34.