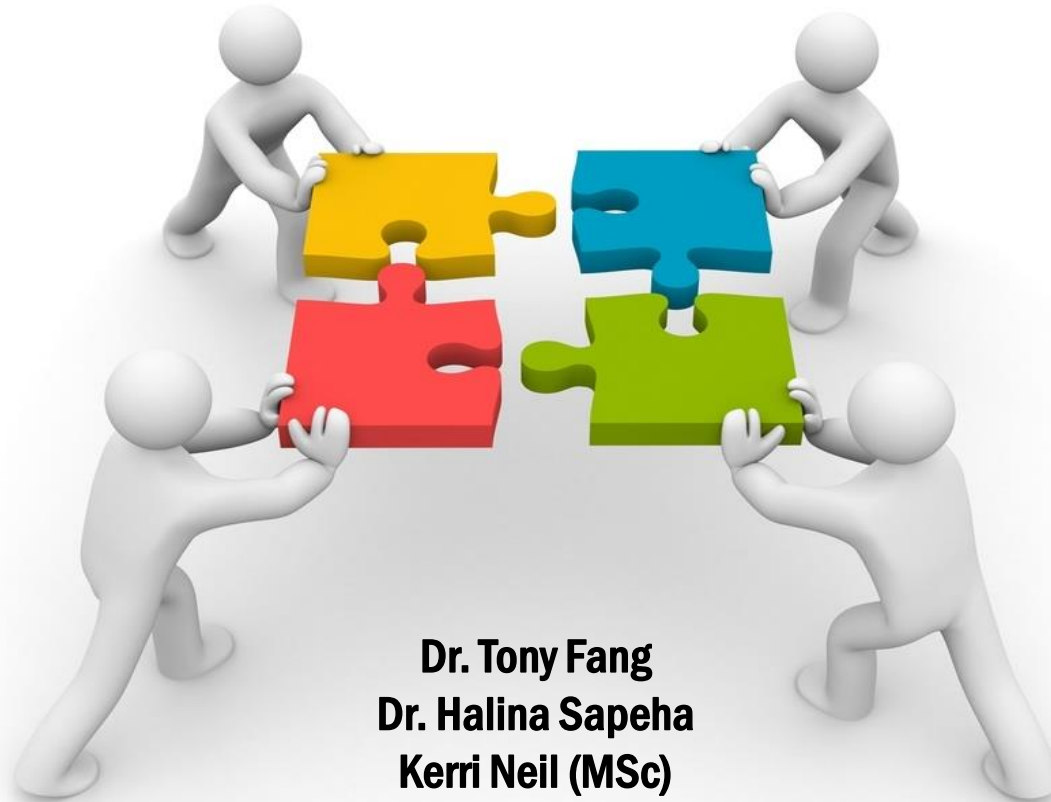


# Syrian Refugee Arrival, Resettlement and Integration in Newfoundland and Labrador

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**Dr. Tony Fang**  
**Dr. Halina Sapeha**  
**Kerri Neil (MSc)**  
**Opeyemi Jaunty-Aidamenbor (MSc, PhD Candidate)**

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# Acknowledgement

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## Partners

🎁 Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)

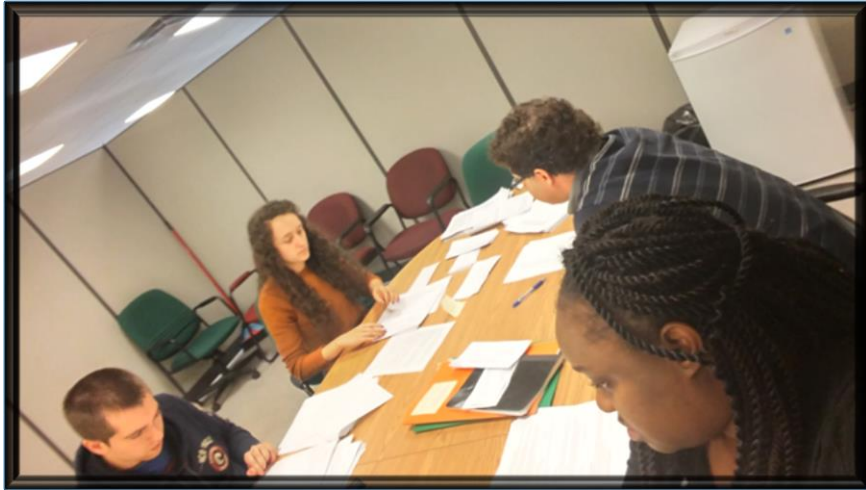
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# Fieldwork



# Outline

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- Introduction- Who is a refugee?
- Aims and Objectives
- Theoretical background
- Methodology
- Fieldwork Results from Interviews with Syrian Refugee
- Project Continuity
- Conclusion



A Refugee is ....

**“A refugee is a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail him/herself of the protection of that country.”**

**-United Nations Convention relating to the status of Refugees (1951)**

**In 1967, this was expanded to included persons who had fled war or other violence in their home country.**

## A peek into a refugee's world

“.....I do not know where I am going, where I have come from is disappearing, .....I watch the news and my mouth becomes a sink full of blood. The lines, the forms, the people at the desks, the calling cards, the immigration officers, the looks on the street, the cold settling deep into my bones, the English classes at night, the distance I am from home. But .....all of this is better than the scent of a woman completely on fire, or a truckload of men, who look like my father pulling out my teeth and nails, .....”

— Warsan Shire, Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth

“Waves of destruction roll over the land, until it lies in complete desolation. Suddenly my tents are destroyed; in a moment my shelters are crushed.”



# Vietnamese Refugee Crisis in 1970s

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# Purpose



# Objectives

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- 🎯 Examine Factors Influencing Syrian Refugees' intention to stay in or leave the province
- 🎯 Analyze challenges facing provincial stakeholders that could decrease Syrian refugee retention in the long run
- 🎯 Illuminate the opportunities for the province of Newfoundland and Labrador that successful Syrian refugee integration can present
- 🎯 Review existing successful practices in refugee retention and integration in Canada and internationally that could be implemented in NL
- 🎯 Identify measures to increase refugee retention rate in the province



# Relevance

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- 🎯 The experiences of refugees who recently settled in the province are yet to be explored in detail
- 🎯 Refugees are prone to a number of challenges which if not properly addressed will subject them to the ‘MTV’ effect.
- 🎯 There are not many studies on Refugee integration based on smaller communities.
- 🎯 The provincial government desires to improve retention rate of refugees and other immigrants

# Methodology



# Data collection and analysis

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- ❑ In-depth semi-structured interviews with 44 Syrian Adults and 24 minors
- ❑ Recruitment of participants by circulating posters among the Syrian refugee community by a community group. Posters were translated to Arabic by volunteers from the same group.
- ❑ Interviews focused on refugees ranged from 10 to 60 minutes depending on the level of detail provided by participant.
- ❑ Interviews conducted with the help of interpreters.
- ❑ Minors were children of school age, ranging from grade 1 to 12
- ❑ Data collected were analyzed with the use of Nvivo, a qualitative data analysis software.





# Theory

1. Push and Pull
2. Social Capital
3. Human Capital

# Background

The main factors that influence refugee integration based on the Push and Pull Factor Theory, Social Capital Theory and Human capital Theory

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**Social Capital  
and Language  
barriers**

**Employment**

**Housing**

**Welcoming  
Communities**

# i. Social capital and Language Barriers

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Refugees come into Canada with low social capital, and are as a result, generally settled in locations where they can more easily access informal family and ethnic based support systems, or formal assistance from the government and non-governmental organizations (Hugo 2008b, Teixeira, 2009).

Upon arrival, most refugees lack proficiency in Canada's official languages. This limits their integration into the local labour market, especially in finding suitable employment and housing. (CIC,2011)

These factors combined, may cause many refugees to relocate.



## ii. Employment

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Employment facilitates refugees' integration into Canada's social and economic networks and is often cited by migrants as the most important factor in their decision to stay in or leave their initial destination. (Goss Gilroy Inc.,2005; Carter et al.,2009)

Many refugees do not have access to desirable employment nor do they possess sufficient information about the local labour market upon arrival. The local labour market in Newfoundland and Labrador especially presents the greatest challenge to the economic integration of refugees as they may be unable to find suitable employment when compared to economic class immigrants (Goss Gilroy Inc (2005), Bevelander, 2016).

When faced with poor job prospects, relocation from their initial destination is more likely to occur. (Hugo 2008a; Carter et al., 2009)

# iii. Housing

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Unaffordable housing and unsuitable accommodations can serve as disincentives to long-term settlement (Griffiths et al.,2010; Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2014)

High cost of housing is a widely reported concern among refugees and other immigrants, because they are more prone to having low-paying and/or precarious employment.

Large family sizes are common with refugees and this can result in overcrowding and insufficient spaces.

High quality, reliable information on housing may be out of reach for many refugees due to low social capital, financial and language constraints.

## iv. Welcoming Communities

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The presence of a 'welcoming community' in a new society is a prerequisite for the successful social and cultural integration of immigrants. (Teixeira and Li, 2009)

'Successful' implies that communities encourage the participation of migrants in local activities. (Wulff and Dharmalingam, 2008)

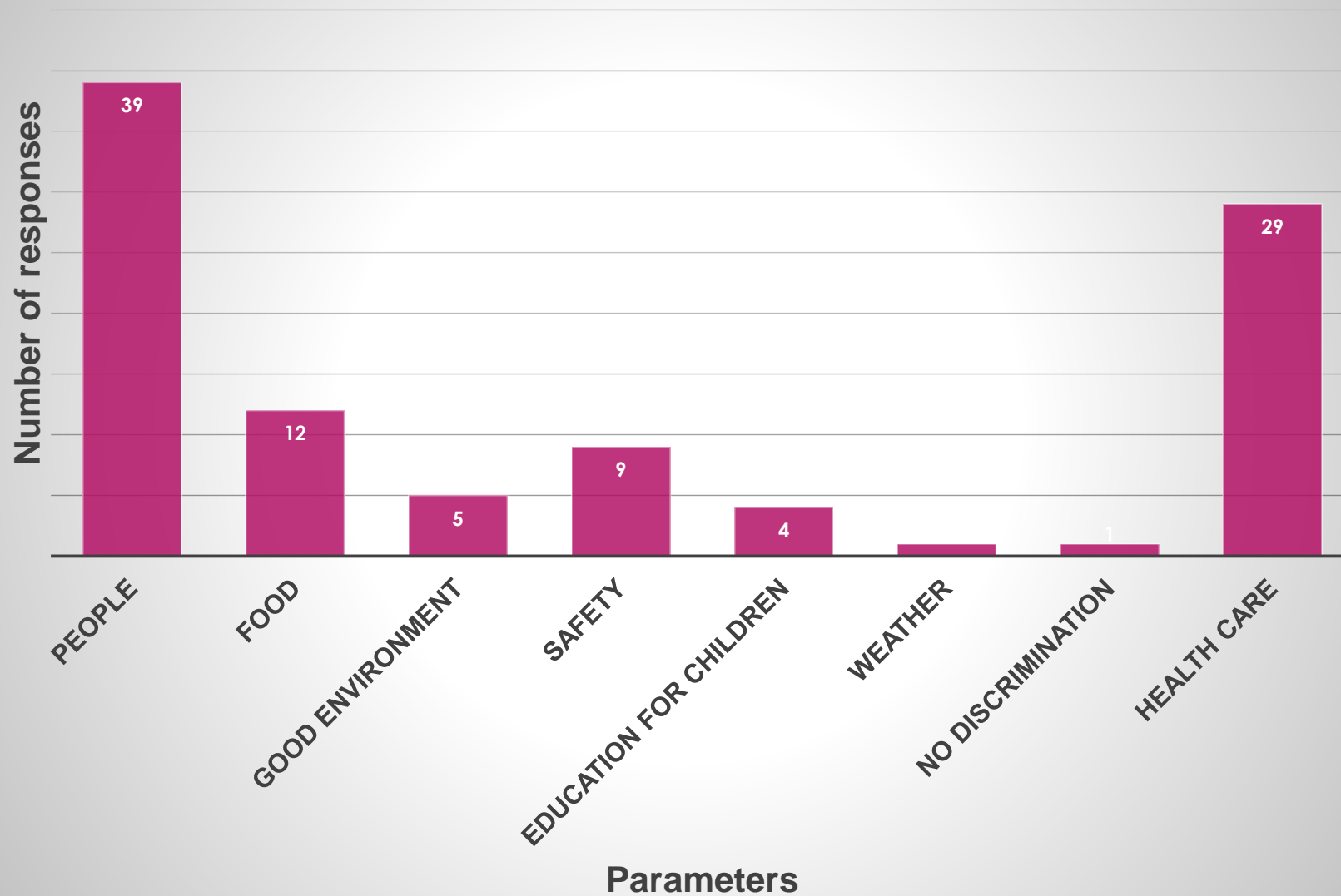
Refugees that develop strong local ties through activities such as volunteering and joining community organizations are less likely to relocate as they evaluate the importance of these local ties against other factors.

Immigrants seem to display a greater willingness to develop their lives in areas with a significant population of their own ethnic group (Han and Humphreys, 2005).

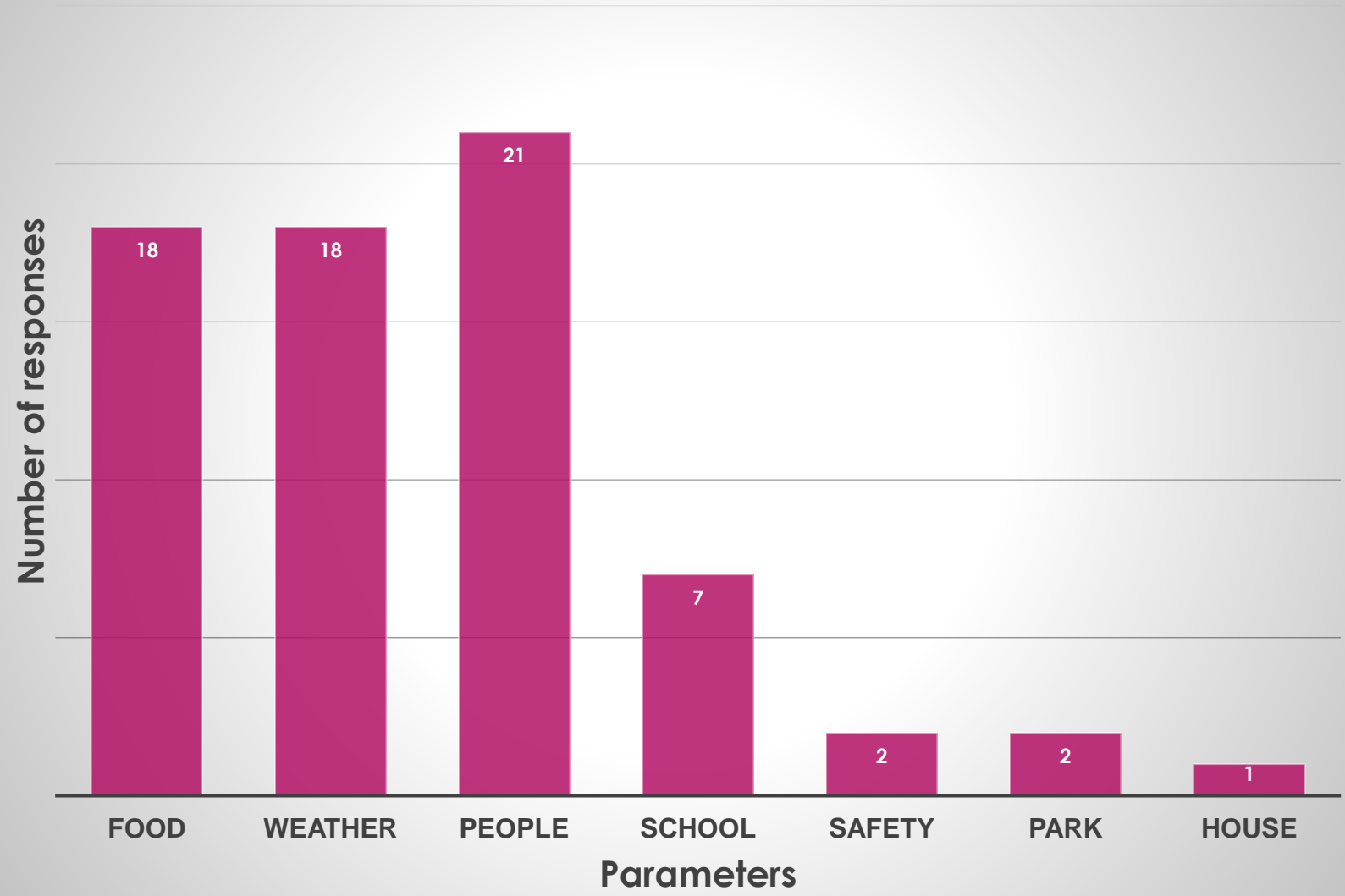
Over time, the social networks of immigrants extend beyond their own ethnic and cultural groups as they integrate themselves into the community, increasing the likelihood of retention.



## Positive Impression of Newfoundland- Syrian Adults



## Positive Impression of NL- Syrian Minors



# Positive Impression

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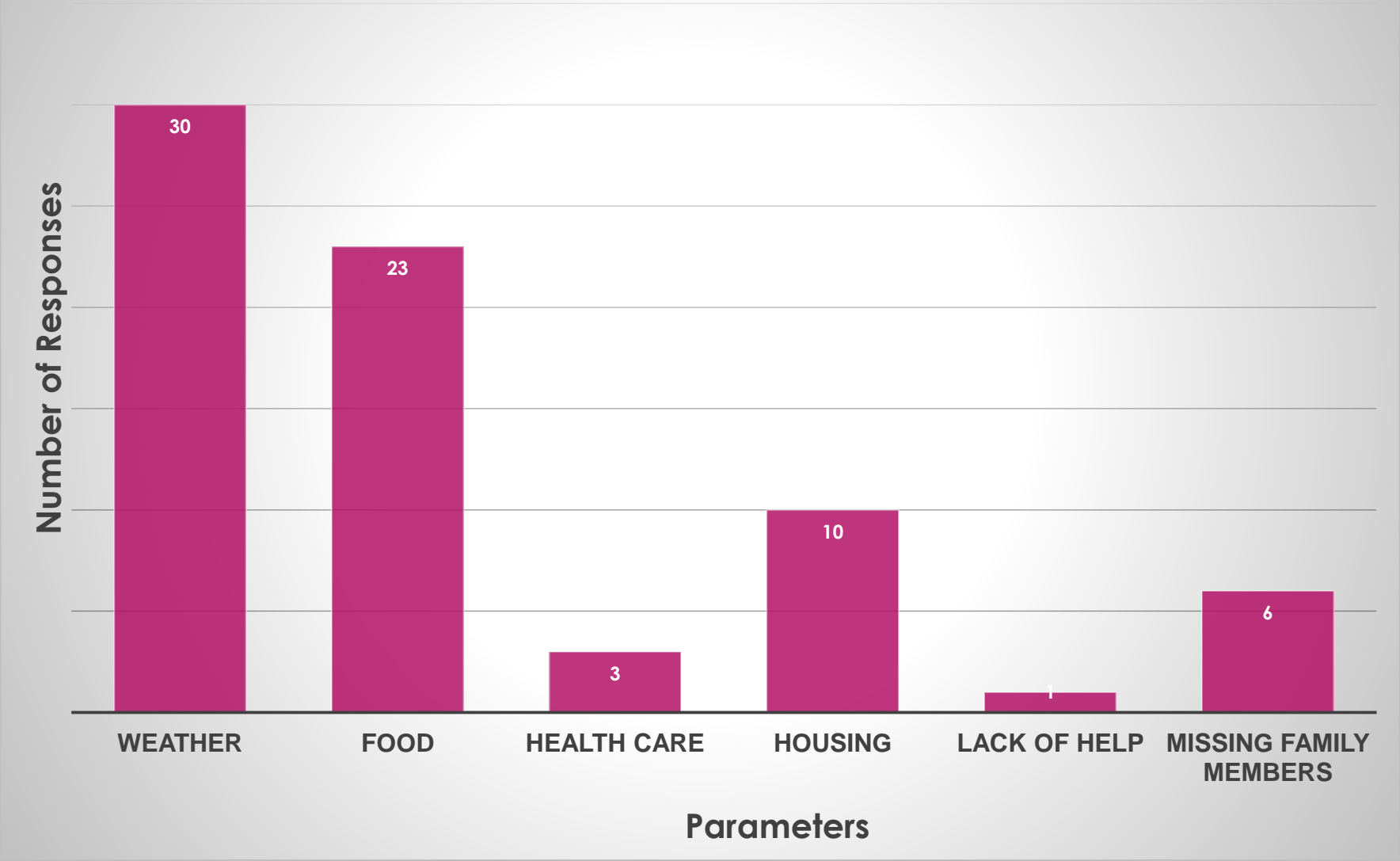
- Friendliness of locals- Locals are described as friendly, welcoming and respectful. The welcome at the airport was an especially noteworthy.

A common sentiment is represented by this quote:

*“People are very nice in here. As I was coming I thought I was going to move away from here but as I met the people then I changed my mind and now I want to stay here”.*

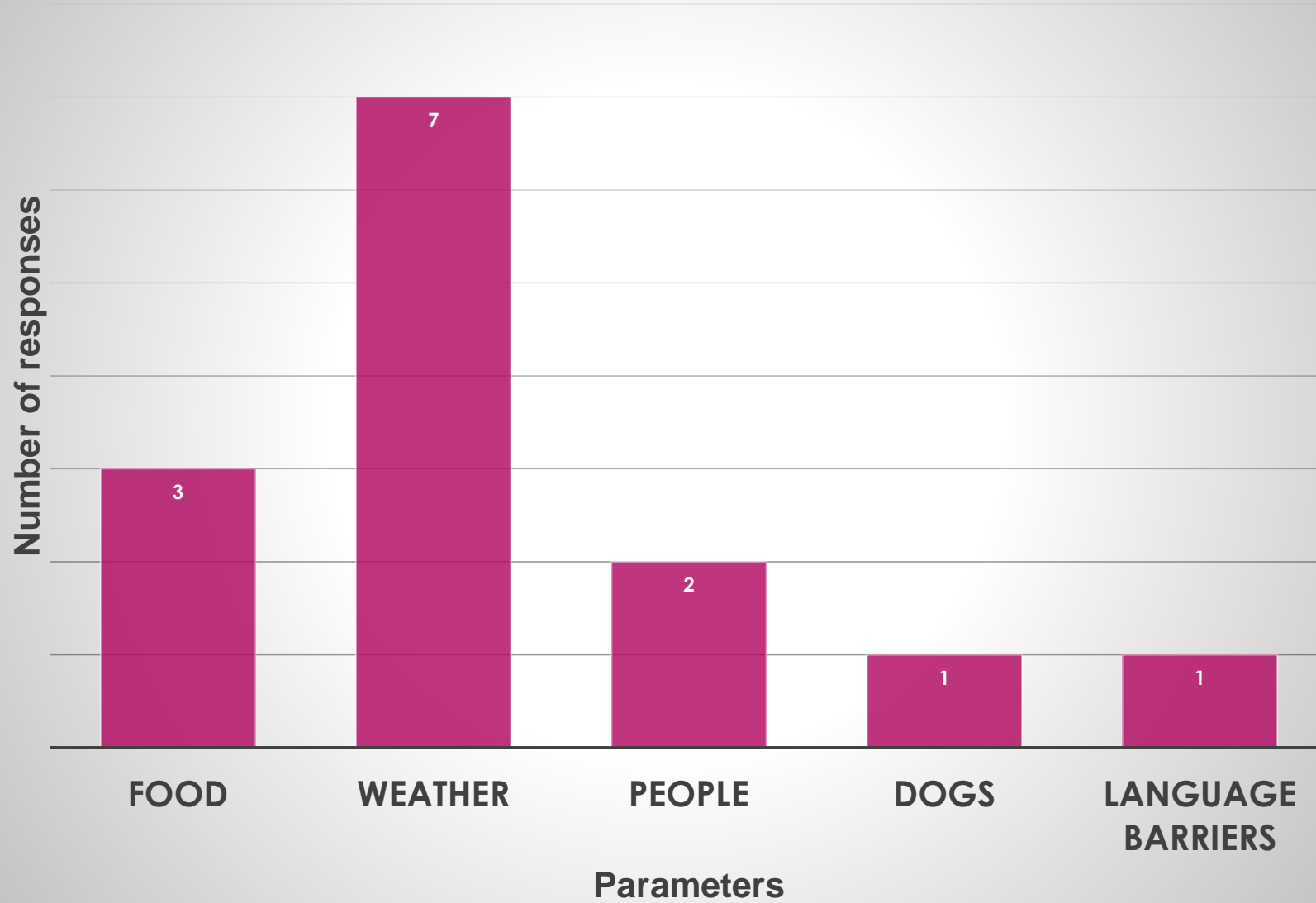
- Access to good health care
- Safety; sense of security; low crime rate; friendly police force
- Access to good and affordable education for children
- Natural landscape of the city- Some of the minors like the snow

# Negative Impressions- Syrian Adults





## Negative Impressions of NL- Syrian Minors



# Negative Impression

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- The weather posed a challenge to most adults. While this was mainly due to personal reasons, there were professional reasons attached.

One of the respondents said;

*“[I don’t] like the weather because home [I] worked as a farmer.*

*[I] would like to work as a farmer here as well but because of the weather it is difficult.”*

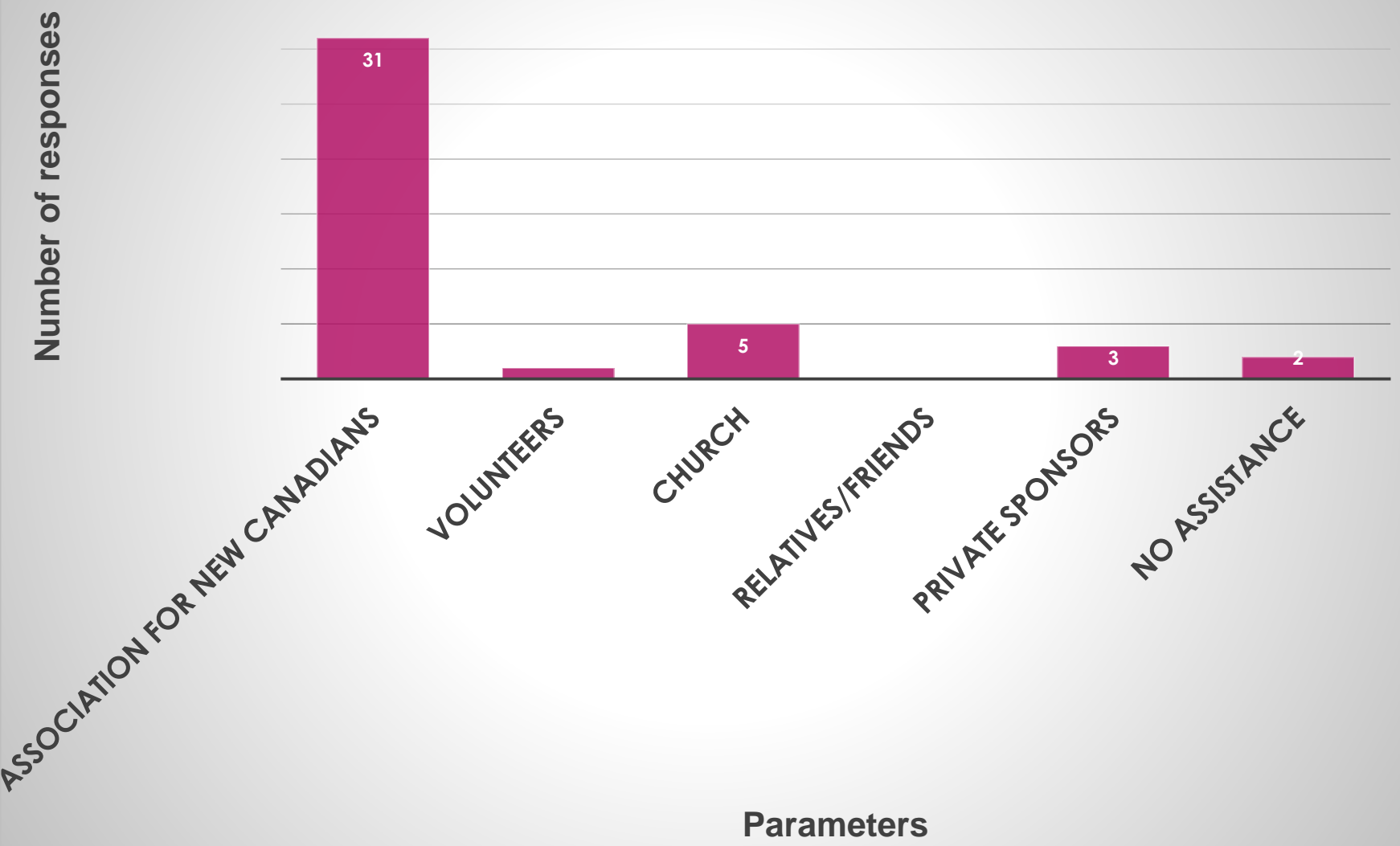
- Minors adjusted to the food in NL, more readily than adults. The fresh food which the refugees were used to in the home country are expensive in NL.
- The minors had encountered more cases of unfriendliness than the adults.

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- Long waiting times for health care was decried, but the quality of health service downplayed the concerns over long wait times.
  - Housing challenges left negative impression on the refugees. Some wanted to leave their accommodations due to various reasons of unsuitability, but were locked into contract agreements.

One respondent said: *“When [I] arrived at the place, they found for [me] was a bit strange for [me]. [I don’t] like the structure of this house. [I dislike] the noise from upstairs. [We] are going to leave this house.”*

- 3 respondents felt they were not getting enough help from settlement agencies. A disconnect from information is a likely cause.
- Difficulty in getting other family members to Canada made it difficult for refugees to settle into the province

# Settlement Assistance Sources



# Settlement Assistance

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## **Government assistance**

**74% of the Syrian refugee adults interviewed had received settlement assistance from the ANC**

**ANC is federally funded to help refugees settle in NL**

## **Service refugees claimed to have received include:**

- **Welcome arrangements at the airport**
- **ESL classes**
- **help in finding and furnishing a home**
- **connecting them with medical services and translators**
- **Being accompanied to medical appointments**



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## **Other settlement assistance providers:**

12% received assistance from Churches

7% from private sponsors

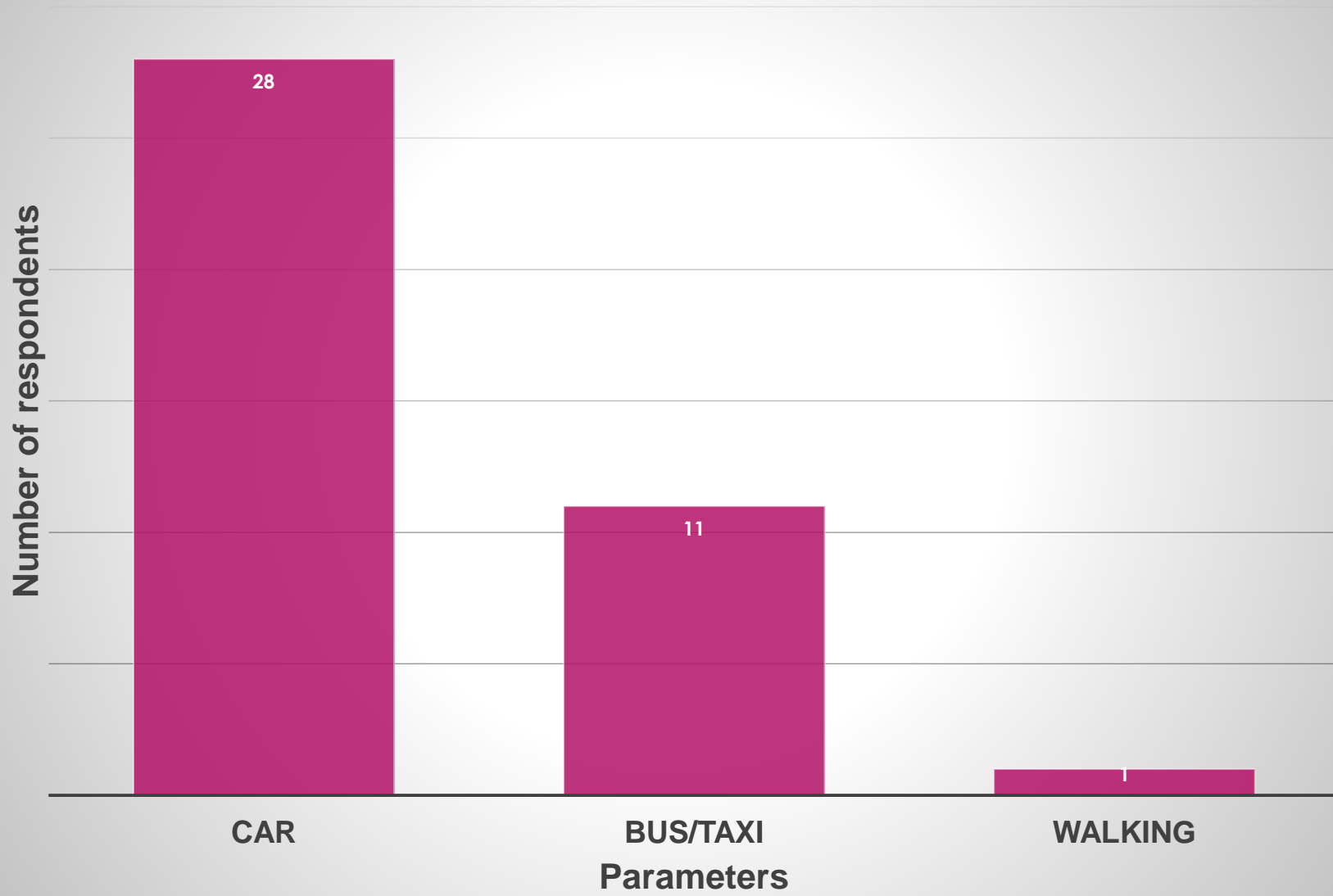
5% claimed to have had received assistance. Some of these had migrated from another province in Canada.

0% claimed to have received assistance through relatives and families

## **Services received from other settlement assistance providers include**

- Help in securing accommodation
- Transportation to appointments
- Grocery supplies and Grocery shopping

# Transportation



# Transportation

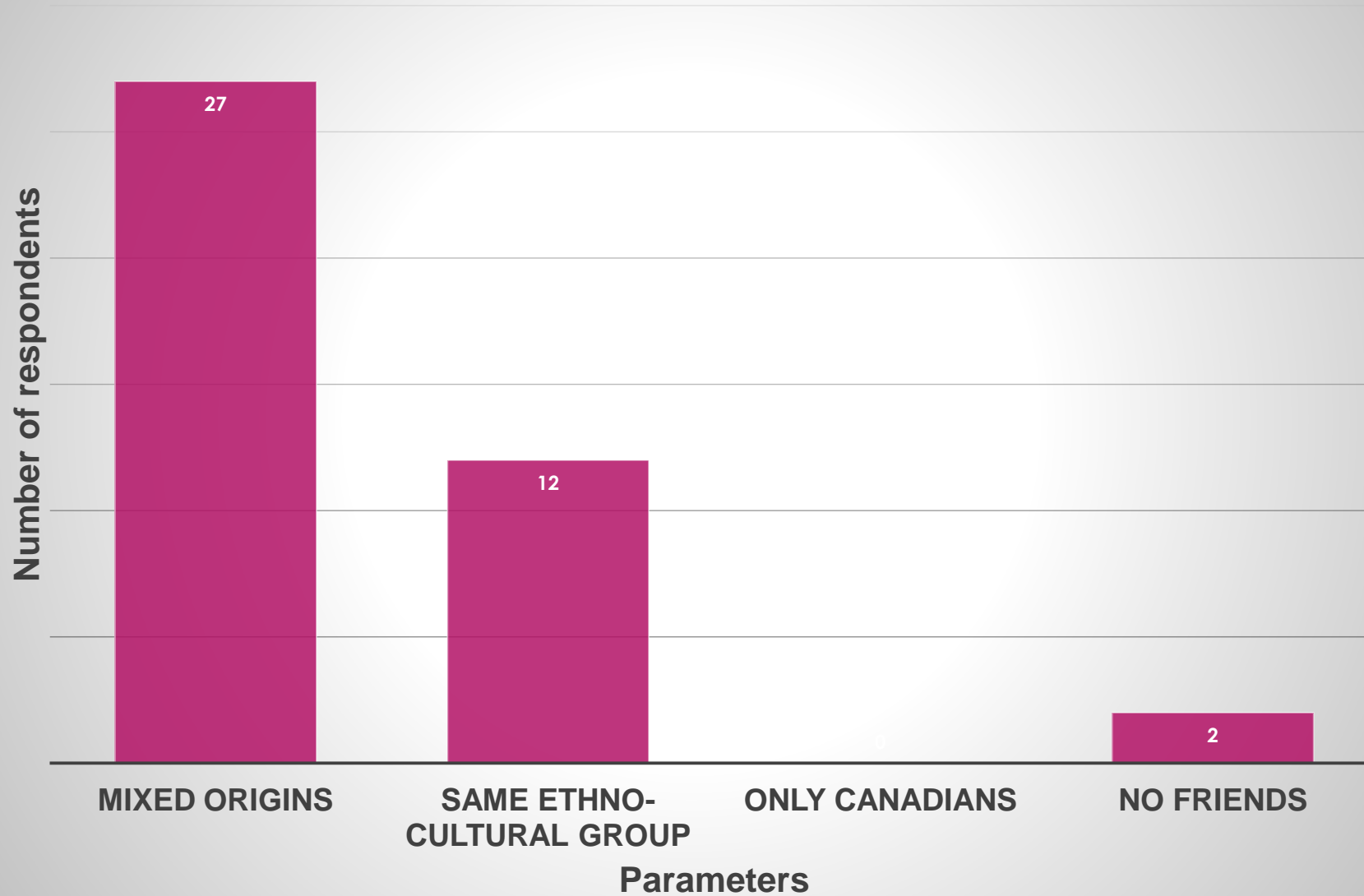
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- 70% of participants owned cars.
- 27% used public transport; mainly buses
- 3% got around mainly by walking

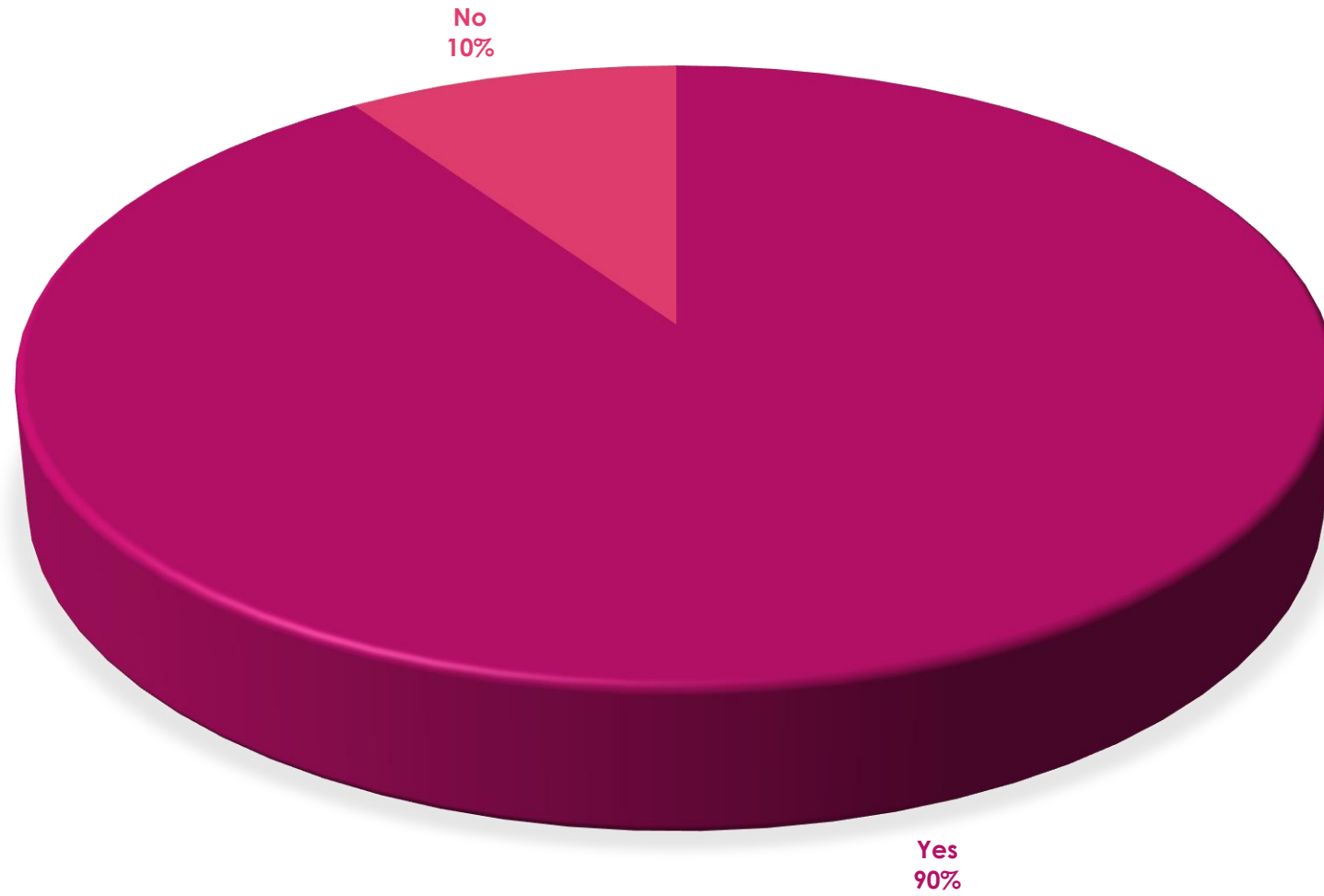
Refugees are able to move around the province fairly readily. This is aided by:

- Ease of owning cars
- Support from the community
- Positive experience with public transportation, except during winter.

## Social Ties- Syrian Adults



## SOCIAL TIES- SYRIAN REFUGEE MINORS





Most respondents both among the adults and minors had a social network comprised of people from different origins, i.e. Syrians, other immigrants and Canadians.

5% of the adults reported having no friends, while 10% of the minors reported the same

The ESL school, neighborhoods and friendly locals were named as sources of most friendships for adults

One respondent said;

*“People from the neighborhood started to visit [me] and [we] became friends.”*

Those who volunteered with the ANC or other groups tended to have more Canadian friends.

All minors interviewed reported enrollment in English classes taking place either 2 or 3 times per week. More cases of no friends among minors because of isolation due to lack of language proficiency

# Language

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All but 2 of the participants had accessed ESL classes; either by attending the school for six hours each week day or through home visits by ANC volunteers

Of the two who had not accessed ESL classes;

- one had moved to NL from another province

- one who was deaf and could communicate only in Arabic sign language.

ESL classes was reported to be helpful in improving English Language skills and was appreciated for culturally sensitive schedule and allowance for holidays.

Respondents wanted the classes to be shorter, more practice-based and better prepare students for the labour market.

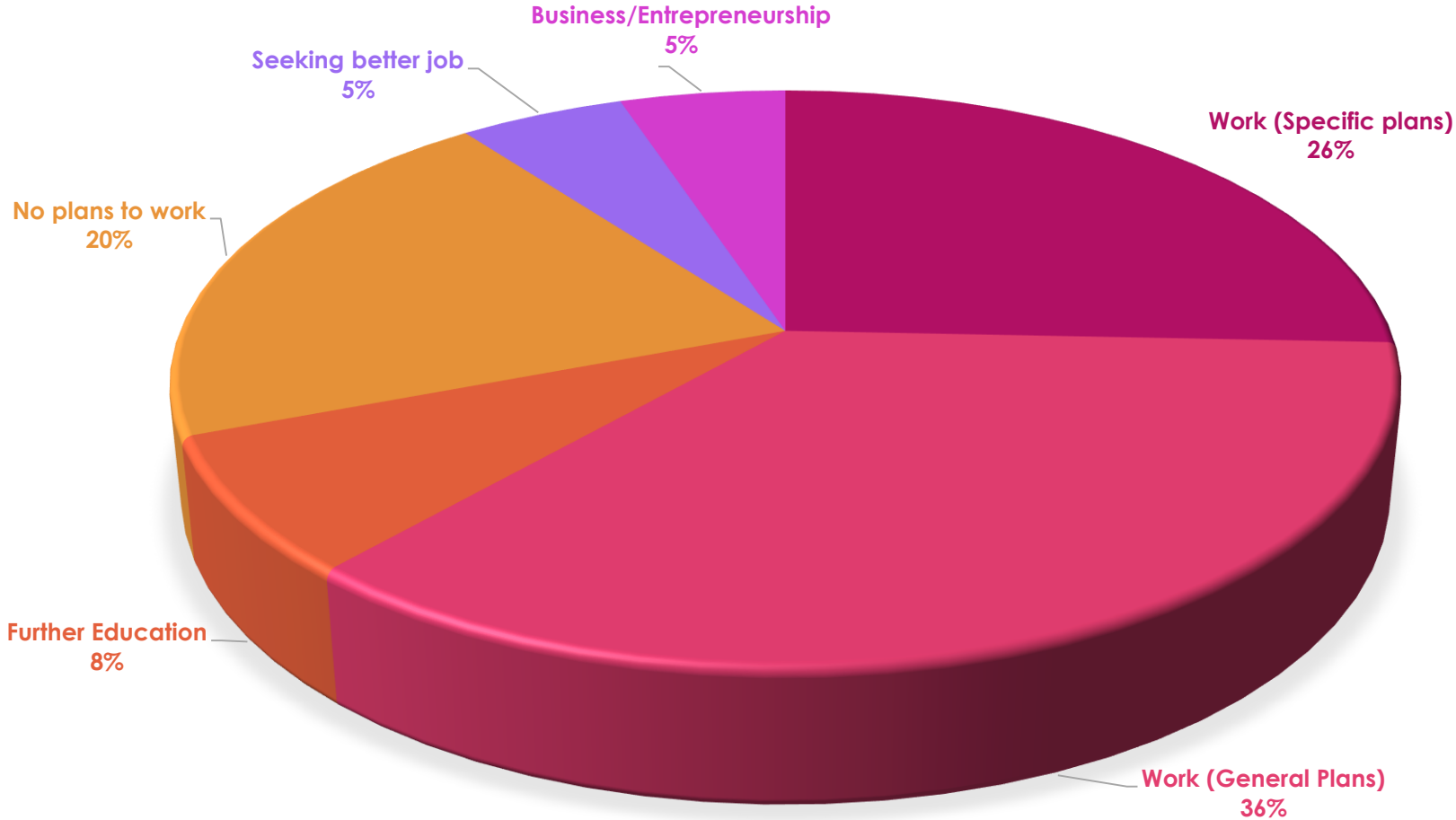
Nursing mothers expressed preference for class attendance over home-based teaching by volunteers

# Cost of Living

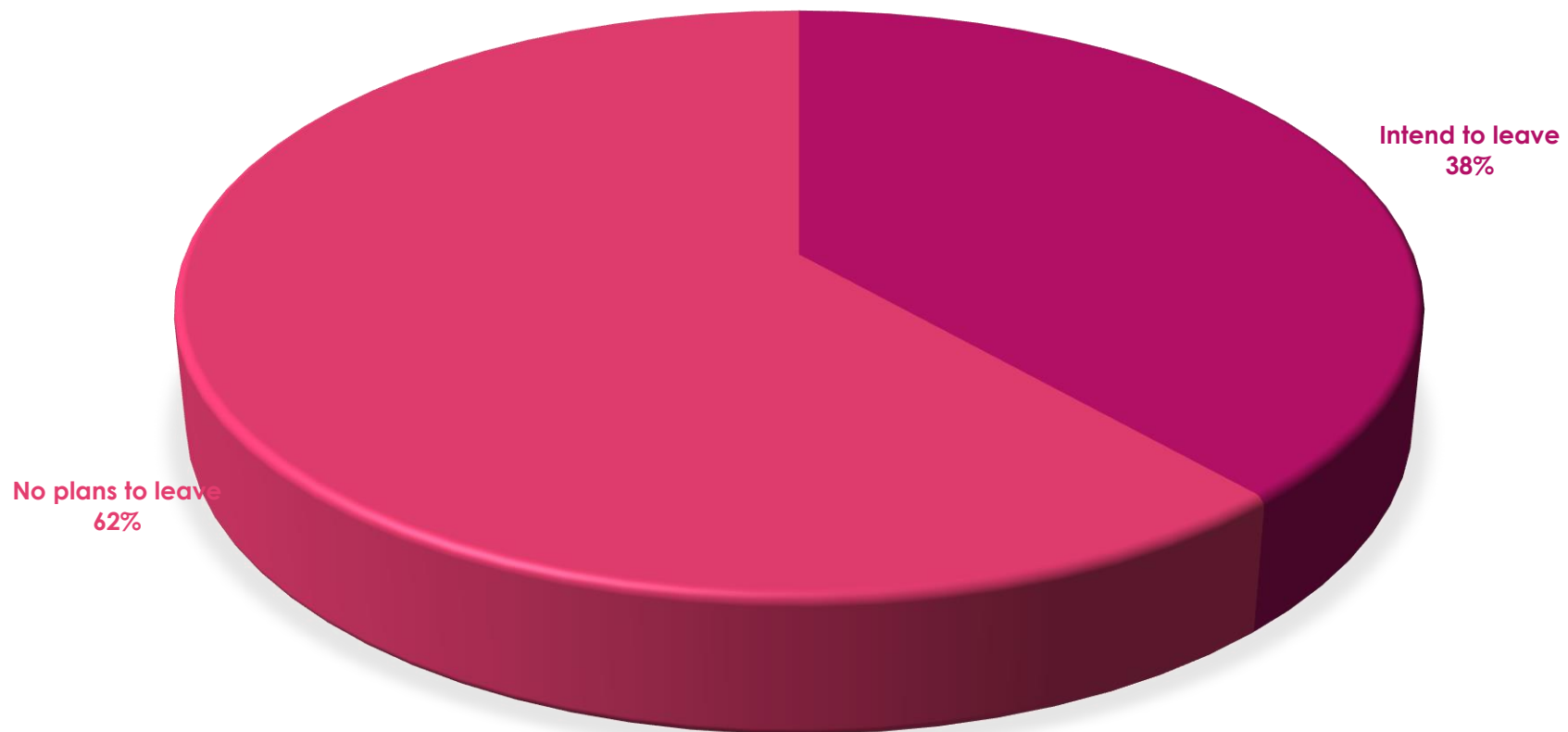
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- Respondents claimed that the cost of living in NL is high. Many could still not cope with payment for rent, groceries and utilities, even after combining the government and child tax benefit
- Many households that had gone beyond the one year mark had only the husband working. It was common to find women who had no plans to work.
- The desire for fresh food contributed to the high cost.

# CAREER PLANS

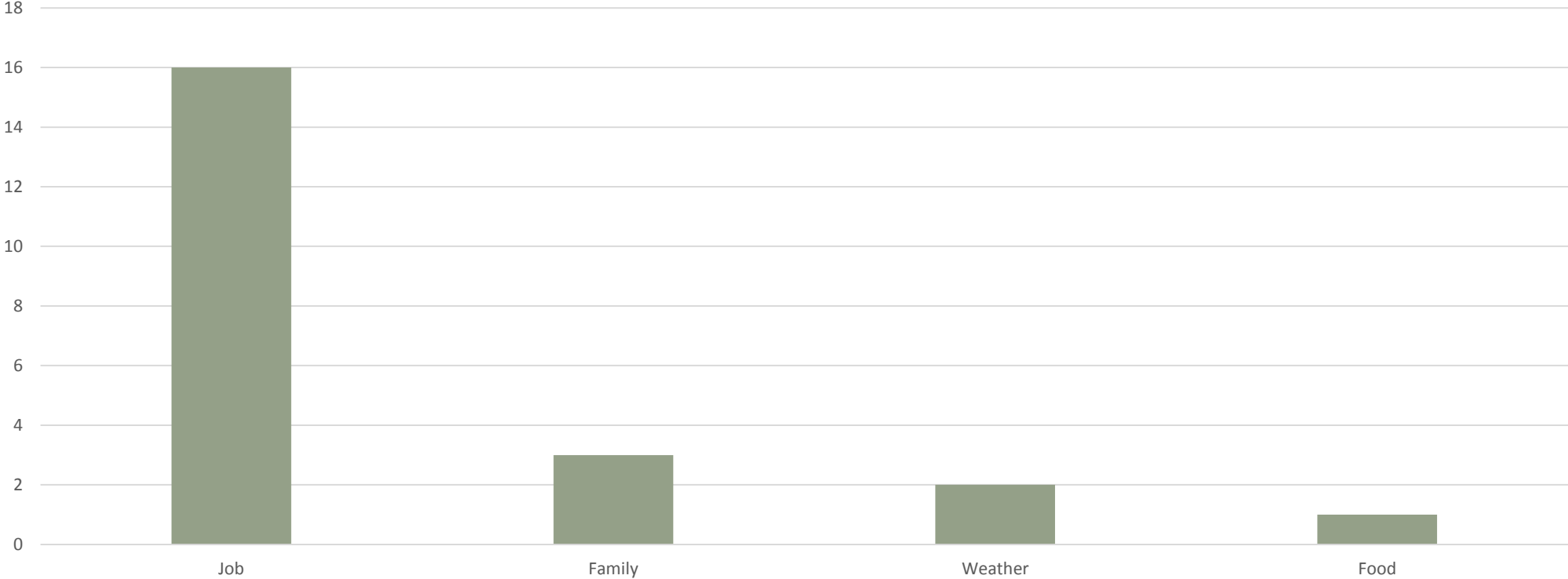


# EMIGRATION PLANS



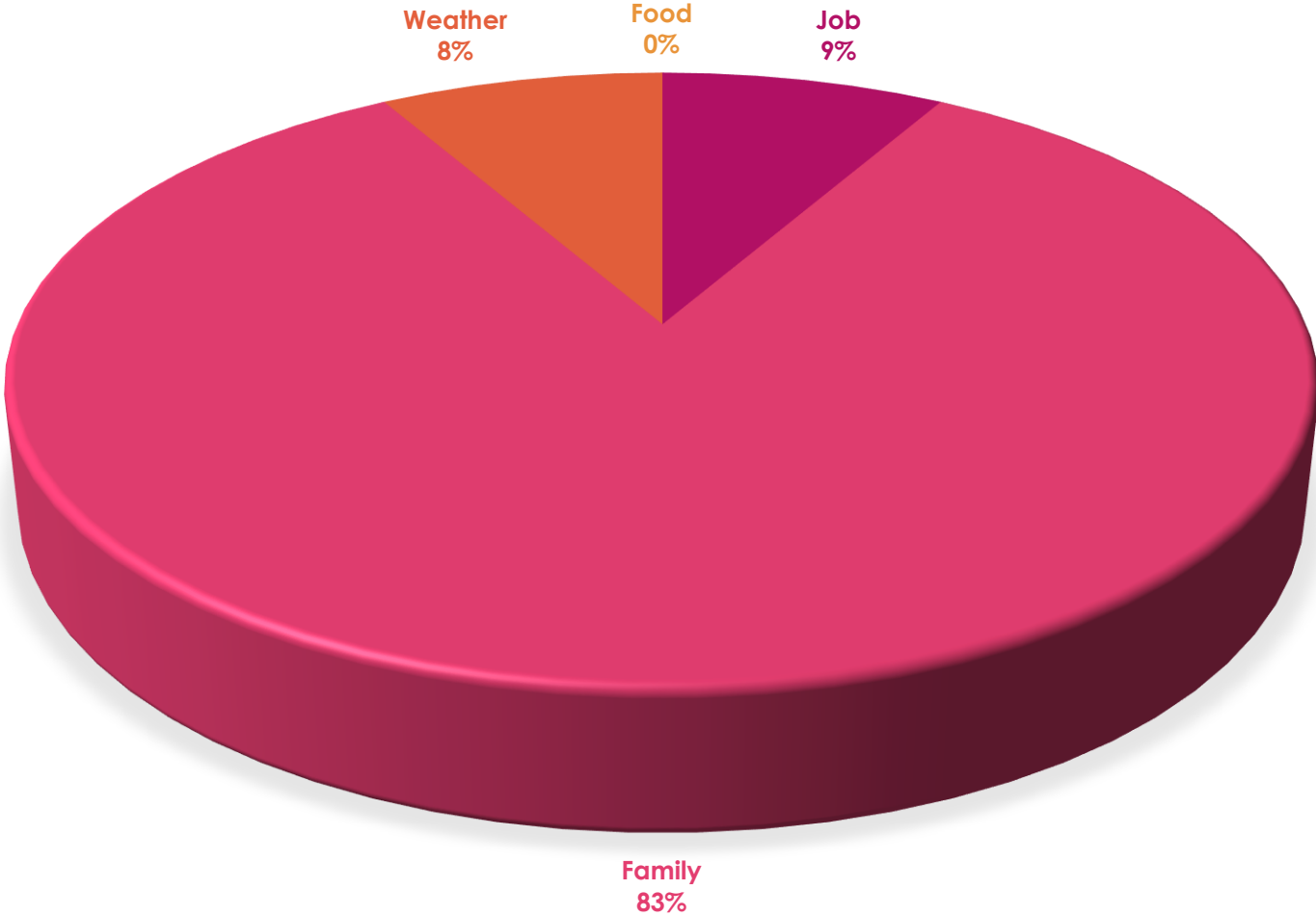
# Reasons for moving

Reasons for Moving, # of responses





# REASONS FOR EMIGRATION OF OTHER REFUGEES KNOWN TO PARTICIPANTS



# Discussion and Conclusion

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Newfoundland possesses a lot of Pull factors which if leveraged on, will enhance the integration of refugees: These include a welcoming community, affordable education for children, safety and security, good health care system and relative ease of getting a means of transportation.

Our study on Syrian refugees did not give us much insight into the Labour market, as most of the participants are still within the one year bracket of receiving funding from the government. However, many who had the intention of leaving the province raised doubts about getting employment in the province, after their one year funding from the government runs out.

Most refugees had plans to work or become entrepreneurs. This is a lot of potential for the labour market and as such refugee integration should be encouraged.

Much information being disseminated to refugees may be slipping through the cracks as a result of language barriers, and limited access to the right social networks.

# Recommendations

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- Vetting of information by translators to ensure that details on housing, medical insurance, etc. are not missed out by refugees
- Wait times by physicians should be shortened.
- Minors should have more contacts with their Canadian peers, to deal with sense of being isolated
- Mental health appears to be stigmatized. No one in our study reported seeking out mental health services but each seemed rather amused or offended at the enquiry. More enlightenment on mental health should be given to refugees.
- Increased attention should be given to refugees with special needs, such as English sign language training.

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- **The speaking of vernacular in ESL classes should be minimised, to facilitate language proficiency**
  - **Shorter duration of classes, so that refugees can have time to get a hand on the labour market before the funded one year runs out.**
  - **Awareness should be created among the women on various means of contributing to the family income.**
  - **Farming should be encouraged**

*Thank  
you*

