

**FAMILY, SUPPORT NETWORKS,
PERMANENT HOUSING,
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES,
COMMUNITY INVESTMENT:
FAMILIAR THEMES IN A LITERATURE
REVIEW OF THE OUTCOMES OF
GOVERNMENT-ASSISTED REFUGEES
(GARS) IN SMALLER CANADIAN CENTRES**

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A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

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COWICHAN
INTERCULTURAL
SOCIETY

IMMIGRANT
WELCOME CENTRE
OF COWICHAN

**Family, Support Networks, Permanent Housing, Employment Opportunities,
Community Investment: Familiar Themes in a
Literature Review of the Outcomes of Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) in
Smaller Canadian Centres**

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Summary

Most migration stories have what researchers call push and pull factors. With government-assisted refugees (GARs), the push factors are often extreme, horrific, and exactly what qualifies them for government assistance. These factors, which include the effects of trauma, violence, and protracted periods of dislocation, animate some of the unique challenges this type of refugee faces. Yet comparatively little attention is given to pull factors with GARs. These factors— particularly permanent housing, employment, and social integration— often determine the outcomes for GARs. This is especially true the smaller the community GARs settle in because there will often be quantitatively fewer relatives, other potential co-ethnic social supports, and job opportunities. Therefore, the pull quality of all of these factors plus community investment goes a long way to determining the outcomes for GARs in smaller Canadian centers. There are, in other words, affective and symbolic “pull” qualities that should be more considered. Smaller cities and towns are also often competing directly or indirectly with larger cities to attract and keep people whether those people are fourth generation Canadians or new GARs.

There are no doubt problems to comparing GARs with other migrants, never mind the Canadian population at large. However, if the stated policy goal is **integration**, which is a recurring word in governmental and non-governmental reports, then how researchers approach GARs needs to be more integrated. Also, precisely because of some of the

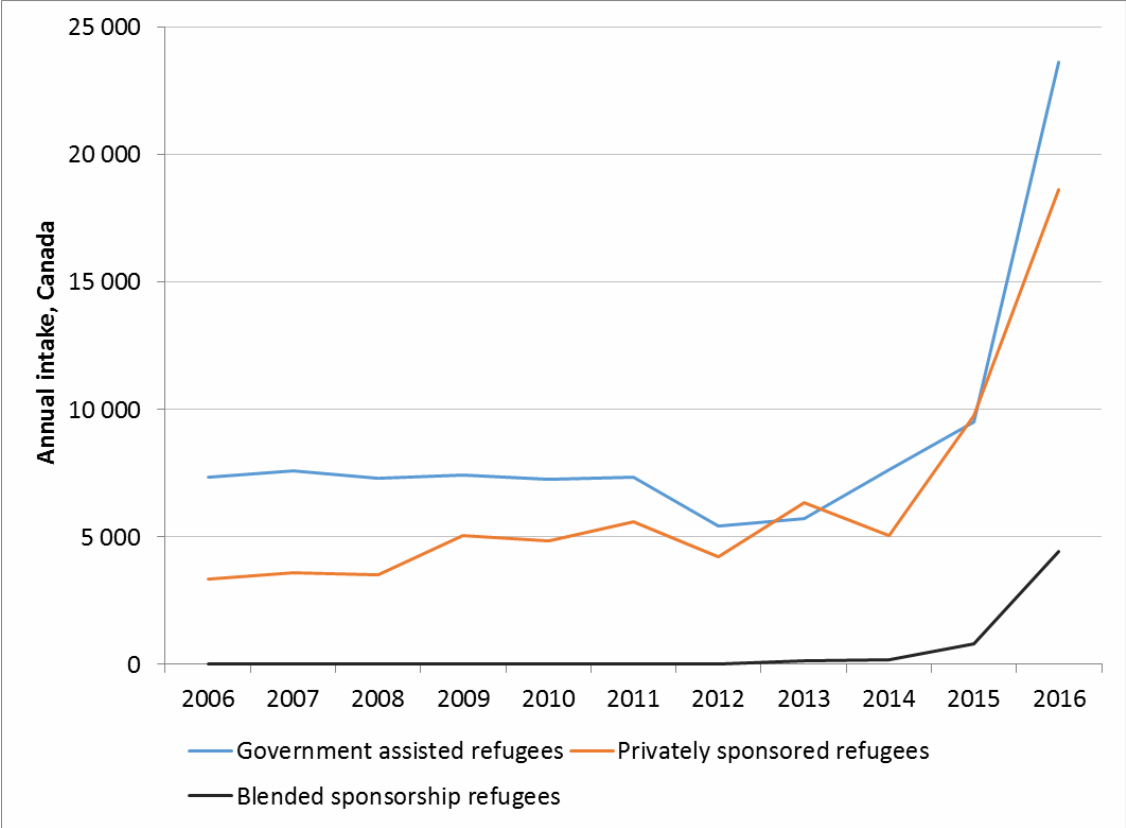
unique challenges GARs face such as traumas related to war, lower literacy and educational attainment, violence, and protracted dislocation, they need more “pull” from any community that they settle in regardless of the city’s size (ISS of BC 2017; Rose and Charette 2017; Sherrell et al. 2005; Simrich 2003). For example, Sherrell et al (2005) argue that GARs often require the kind of trauma counselling that is much more available and cost-efficient in larger cities than in smaller ones. In addition, smaller centres are seen to be more “sink or swim” situations with less co-ethnic community support (Sherrell et al. 2005). Refugee assistance, whether formally or informally, must be more dispersed or regionalized to meet the sharp increases of GARs coupled with the federal regionalization policy (Garcea 2016; ISS of BC 2017; Sherrell et al 2005). Support, investment, or “pull” from the community must take many forms and be “flexible” (ISS of BC 2017) to meet the challenges GARs face in order to facilitate better outcomes, however outcomes are defined.

There are several items mentioned in the literature that merit further study. Please see summary on page 21.

Background

November 2015 to February 2016 was the largest wave of refugees—26,000 from Syria—to resettle in Canada since the 60,000 “boat people” from Southeast Asia resettled in 1979-81 (Rose and Charette 2017). In the decade before 2015, Canada had averaged between 10,000 and 12,000 refugees per year. By March of 2017, however, Canada had resettled almost 44,000 Syrian refugees across all provinces. This recent wave echoes the challenges faced in 1999 with Kosovar refugees (Rose and Charette 2017), which this report also addresses (Sherrell et al. 2005). The 2015-16 Syrian wave was the first large scale intake in such a short time frame since the 2002 IRPA passed, which committed Canada to taking in a larger share of “high needs” refugees in the GAR stream. As a result, much of the research on this new wave focuses on the first year after landing, which is crucial for GARs. However, to take into account the full breadth of longer-term outcomes such as memberships in community organizations, graduation of children, home ownership, etc. then longitudinal research piggy-backing on the themes covered here will be important.

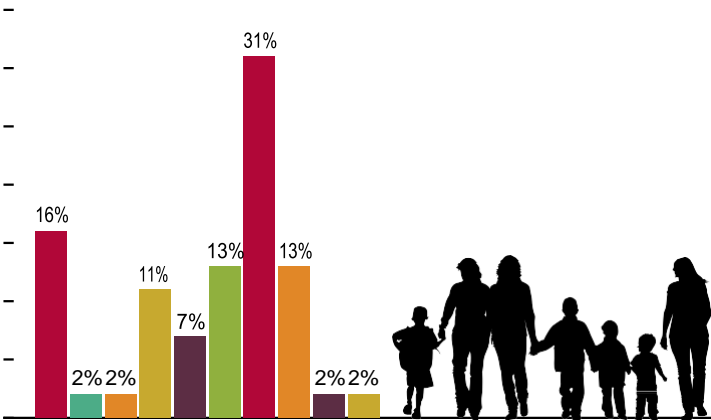
Figure 1: Refugees Resettled in Canada, 2006-2016, by Admission Category (Rose and Charette 2017)



The number of GARs has been and is projected to increase whereas the number of privately-sponsored refugees (PSRs) has decreased (IRCC 2016). At the same time, GARs do not on average perform as well economically as PSRs (IRCC 2016; Rose and Charette 2017). As of 2010, GARs took on average 10 years after landing to achieve the same employment earnings as refugees in other categories and this was only 60 percent of the Canadian average (Rose and Charette 2017). GARs are known to have more needs relative to any other refugee type. For instance, GARs have a lower incidence of employment, lower employment earnings, and more reliance on social assistance than do PSRs. They also have fewer years of education, less proficiency in English or French, and elevated experiences of violence, trauma, and dislocation. IRCC knows that not enough time is allocated to GARs overall, particularly with regard to finding permanent housing. In particular, the Resettlement Assistance Program allowance, which is calibrated to provincial social insurance rates, has been a long-standing problem for all refugee newcomers though especially for GARs (Rose and Charette 2017). GARs cannot often provide guarantors and security deposits for housing, which exacerbate their challenges. Furthermore, the large family sizes of many Syrian GARs further complicate the search for affordable housing (ISS of BC

2017; Rose and Charette 2017). The below figure shows, for example, that larger Syrian GAR family units settled in BC as the number of people per family increases from left to right (ISS of BC 2017).

Figure 2: Family Unit Size and Percent of Syrian GARs Respondents in BC Study (ISS of BC 2017)



In addition, GARs tend to have uneven arrival patterns and incomplete medical information (ISS of BC 2017; Rose and Charette 2017). These are some of the structural challenges that show up in all the studies of GARs reviewed here.

The basis of GARs being settled in smaller Canadian centres is the federal “regionalization” policy; it began as a response to growing populations in urban centers—particularly Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver—and declining populations in many smaller to medium-sized centres. In the 1990s, 73 percent of newcomers to Canada settled in Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver (Statistics Canada 2003). In 2002, 87 percent of newcomers who came to British Columbia chose to reside in the Greater Vancouver area, 2.2 percent chose Victoria, and 9.8 percent opted to settle in other locations across the province. About 70% of Syrian PSRs have settled in Canada’s two largest metropolitan areas, Toronto and Montréal (Rose and Charette 2017). Another 7% settled in Calgary. No other urban centre received more than 4%. This geographical pattern is primarily a result of the strengths of established Syrian diaspora communities in these cities, where there was a huge upsurge in sponsorship requests by faith-based organizations and small groups comprised wholly or partly of relatives of Syrian refugees.

Sherrell et al. (2005) marked the CIC regionalization policy going back to at least 2001. Garcea (2016), however, found a turn away from regionalization in the context of the current Liberal government’s policies with Syrian GARs. Between 2015 and 2016, Syrian GARs were settled in 36 Canadian cities which were deemed to be equipped as part of the Refugee Assistance Program (RAP) while privately-sponsored and blended

visa refugees were settled across 300 Canadian cities and municipalities (Garcea 2016). The ICC of BC (2017) introduced a hub and spoke model to address this reduction with the promise of “flexible regionalization.” The hub and spoke model has many practical attributes and was mobilized in a short time period to provide data on about 40 different Syrian GAR households settled in non-metropolitan centres across BC.

Figure 3: Hub and Spoke Model (ISS of BC 2017)



Collacott (2002) argued that the concentration of refugees in fewer large Canadian cities will lead to social tensions and public outbreaks of violence. No one else reviewed for this report could substantiate the argument that the concentration of refugees in larger Canadian cities was in and of itself a problem. Wallon-Roberts (2004) noted that the argument that newcomers should be encouraged to settle and remain in smaller centres in order to reduce pressures on Canada's largest cities should be questioned because it rests on the assumption that newcomers, rather than the settlement context, are at fault. In so doing, Sherrell et al. (2005) argue that the regionalization debate fails to consider why Canadians more broadly are leaving smaller centres for larger cities. In other words, there are larger “push” and “pull” factors that affect all people, some more intensely than others, and some such factors are unique to the type of refugee or migrant. As Bollman (2000) demonstrates, the overall Canadian population continues to grow in census divisions where the workforce can access large cities. Alternatively, the argument can be made that if Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver are experiencing "absorptive capacity" issues, then the logical policy solution is to increase and improve regionalization.

As smaller centres across Canada deal with the effects of rural depopulation and a changing economy, there is increasing recognition that immigrants, particularly business

class and skilled workers, can contribute a lot. There are significant challenges, however, and outcomes are often affected by how well prepared the settlement context is and how much economic, educational, employment, political, and social supports exist and continue to thrive there. This is especially so for smaller cities. The ISS of BC (2017) report on Syrian GARs, Rose and Charette's (2017) report on Syrian refugees, and Sherrell et al.'s (2005) study of Kosovar GARs support the above argument. In all three of these studies substantial efforts were made to keep at least immediate families together particularly when settling GARs in non-metropolitan contexts and yet structural challenges exist. In particular, GARs in smaller centres face a "mismatch" between their experience and the types of jobs available (Sherrell et al 2005) and affordable and accessible public transportation as well as affordable housing for larger families (ISS of BC 2017; Rose and Charette 2017) to name the most key ones. There is some data to suggest that smaller centres may improve English proficiency outcomes—at least access to LINC classes—and outcomes for school age children (ISS of BC 2017). There also appears to be less reliance on Food Banks outside metropolitan centres (ISS of BC 2017). Smaller cities may, in addition, provide better volunteer support across multiple needs for GARs (Rose and Charette 2017).

Simich (2003) examined the secondary migration of various GARs to Ontario in the early 00s and found that refugees from all backgrounds maximized their opportunities for social support in ways meaningful to them, irrespective of the logistics problems that result. Secondary migration—often to or near Toronto-- was support-seeking behaviour. They sought out immediate as well as extended family along with broader co-ethnic social networks particularly if a health emergency arose.

In 2004, services for immigrants and refugees were put out to tender in a competitive call for proposals (Sherrell et al. 2005). The competition had the effect of eliminating many small organizations that provided services, many of which were located outside of the Lower Mainland of BC. This approach to service delivery favours the largest and most experienced immigrant-serving agencies, most of which are based in Vancouver. For regionalization to work in British Columbia or elsewhere, according to Sherrell et al. (2005), services for immigrants and refugees will have to be carefully calibrated geographically to correspond to the destinations of immigrants. Official language classes, employment-related language training, and employment-related programs to assist immigrants in getting jobs are disproportionately urban. To apply dispersion policies to immigrants will require applying dispersion policies to services as well.

Inside BC, Walton-Roberts (2004) investigated immigrants in Squamish and Kelowna while Henin and Bennett (2002) looked at Latin American and African immigrants in Victoria and addressed the settlement experiences of immigrants outside British Columbia's Lower Mainland. Walton-Roberts (2004) examined practices undertaken by regional governments in attracting and retaining immigrants. Her research underscores the importance of the settlement context in facilitating negative or positive settlement experiences. Henin and Bennett (2002) identify several obstacles to inclusion, including

obtaining meaningful employment that reflects the education and training of the immigrants as well as finding adequate and affordable housing. Sherrell et al. (2005) focused on Kosovar GARs across BC and found that like GARS across Canada, those they examined arrive in Canada with fewer financial resources and educational credentials, on average than their economic counterparts. They normally do not bring significant investment capital or scarce skill sets with them, yet they are eager to work. Smaller cities want economic investment and population gain, they conclude, not warm bodies anxious to fill jobs that do not exist. Rather than sending refugees to these smaller cities from the outset or applying punitive measures to other migrants whose status would require them to settle outside of large cities before gaining permanent residency, a voluntary incentive approach would be more constructive according to Sherrell et al. (2005). They suggested that provincial governments, in concert with interested municipalities, could offer tax breaks to refugees and other immigrants who were willing to locate in smaller centres.

Inside Alberta, Abu-Laban et al. (1999) documented the settlement experiences and successive geographic mobility of refugees in seven Alberta cities of varying sizes. A second paper by Krahn, Derwing, and Abu-Laban (2003) extended this analysis by placing it within the current context of debates surrounding regionalization and dispersion. Both studies note a strong correlation between the size of a city and overall retention rates; that is, larger cities have higher retention rates (Abu-Laban et al. 1999; Krahn et al. 2003). For those who chose to leave the settlement cities, the most frequently cited reasons for leaving are the prospects of improved employment and education opportunities in another city. In the context of current debates about regionalization, this research underscores the significance of social and economic conditions in the city of settlement.

Inside Manitoba, MANSO (2018) and IRW at the University of Manitoba are pioneering policy-making and research into all aspects of migration in Canada. For example, the expansion of mental health services offered in rural and non-metropolitan centres (MANSO 2018).

2017 ISS of BC Report on the Hub and Spoke Model and Syrian GARs Outside Metro Vancouver

As of March 2017, almost 44,000 Syrian refugees had arrived in Canada with 3,725 having settled in BC. Of this 3,725, 2,550 were GARs, 685 were privately sponsored, and 490 were blended visa officer referred refugees. The key characteristics of Syrian GARs that settled in BC are: 1) most originated from the southern Syrian city of Daraa and before coming to BC had spent 3-5 years in urban settings or in refugee camps, 2) families average 6 members with 60 percent being 19 or under and 50 percent being 12 and under, 3) most have limited education and little English ability when they land, 4)

most worked in the construction and agricultural sectors, and 5) most have untreated mental and physical conditions including trauma and significant dental problems.

ISS released a report in 2016 documenting some early settlement outcomes of Syrian GARs in the Metro Vancouver area; this 2017 report was a follow up to this report but contrasted metropolitan areas with areas outside Metro Vancouver. In particular, this report included data from Abbotsford, Nanaimo, Prince George, Kamloops, and Kelowna. There is however a substantial disparity in sample size between the Metro Vancouver respondents and those in non-metropolitan locations. In particular, of the 346 total respondents in this study, 301 were in Metro Vancouver. This severe disparity may skew the data and further studies should be more symmetrical in the distribution between metro and non-metro respondents.

With “flexible regionalization” as a goal, IRCC and ICC of BC partnered to create the hub and spoke model. Seven organizations across BC were subcontracted to provide Refugee Assistance Program services according to pre-existing settlement and LINC infrastructure; the 5 communities listed above plus Penticton and Vernon were the spokes to the Vancouver Metro hub. The whole process of getting the hub and spoke model up and running took three months. As a result, significant improvements could be made.

These 7 communities outside Vancouver had specific requests in order to better match and accommodate refugees but many of these proved difficult to honor. In particular, most preferred smaller groups arriving at set times but this was very rare. Unpredictable refugee flow proved to be a dogged challenge to providing the kind of community reception and strong start which was explicitly sought.

There were other challenges with access to housing—particularly housing to accommodate larger families with some kitchen facilities—and furniture. Despite the challenges, 251 Syrian GARs were settled across Abbotsford, Nanaimo, Prince George, Kamloops, and Kelowna. In addition, GARs are such because of unique challenges that they face; they qualify as GARs because they are “vulnerable” according to UNHCR criteria which includes single parenting, young children, medical pre-conditions related to war and other untreated traumas, special needs due to physical limitations, and length of time spent in protracted refugee situations.

45 Syrian GAR heads of household representing over 250 people were invited to participate in a telephone survey between February 2015 and April 2016. These conversations were conducted in Arabic. There is no further detail about how head of household was defined and whose perspectives are excluded as a result of only speaking with heads of household. At the same time, relying solely on telephone communication constrains the breadth and depth of communication that can occur. For example, non-verbal communication and types of humor are very easy to miss or misconstrue on the phone.

The four main goals of this study were:

- 1) Assess initial settlement outcomes of GARs outside of Metro Vancouver as part of the hub and spoke model
- 2) Provide better understanding of issues facing newly arrived Syrian GARs
- 3) Assess community readiness to settle Syrian GARs
- 4) Enable Syrian GARs to identify issues of concern for themselves

Ultimately 42 Syrian heads of household gave their consent to participate. Almost half of these (49%) initially settled in Abbotsford, 20% in Nanaimo, 13% in Prince George, and 9% each in Kelowna and Kamloops.

According to The Government of Canada's overseas settlement program, head of household, spouse, and dependent children 18 years of age and younger are 1 family unit. Any adult 19 years of age or older is their own unit even if they are adult children settling with other family members. Syrian GARs settling in BC were on average larger units than those that settled in Metro Vancouver. In particular, 73% of those that settled in Metro Vancouver were part of units with 5 or fewer people whereas 62% of those that settled in smaller centres around BC were part of units with 6 or more people. The majority of those who settled outside Metro Vancouver came with family members. In other words, there was a strategy backed by research to locate larger families and/or those who valued family relationships very highly in smaller cities and towns.

Almost one year after arrival, 86% of respondents self-assessed their English proficiency as none or beginner. This number is slightly higher than those in Metro Vancouver. However, 83% of those in smaller centres said they were attending LINC classes. None of those settled in smaller centres were not in LINC classes because they were on waiting lists. However, in Metro Vancouver over 51% said they were not in LINC classes because they were on waiting lists. In other words, there was not enough LINC capacity in Metro Vancouver.

12% of respondents in smaller centres reported being full-time or part-time employed almost one year after arriving. In contrast, 17% in Metro Vancouver reported the same. Employment was in construction, services, trades, or agricultural sectors. No household reported having more than person employed. 87% of those in smaller centres were actively looking for work whereas only 64% of those in Metro Vancouver reported the same.

There was also a large disparity in satisfaction with housing. Only 48% of those in smaller centres reported being comfortable in their housing whereas 62% in Metro Vancouver reported the same. The top reasons for lack of comfort was 1) high cost of rent, 2) housing being too small for their family, and 3) housing being too old or dirty. The report notes this is not unlike findings for all low-income families in BC. However, 77% of respondents in smaller centres cited high rents as a problem whereas only 53.2% in Metro Vancouver reported the same. Of note is that 76% of those in smaller

centres live in households with 6 or more people whereas only 41% fell into that category in Metro Vancouver.

Overall most respondents had a positive view of their family's physical and emotional health. Over 1/3, however, reported that their family was in fair or poor physical health. Those in smaller centres reported slightly higher negative emotional health than those in Metro Vancouver. Most were actively anxious about their family members that were overseas. 90% in smaller centres were seeking reunification with an immediate family member not in Canada whereas only 74% in Metro Vancouver reported the same.

The majority of respondents rated their school age children as doing good, very good, or excellent in schools. 1/3, for example, rated their children as doing excellent in Canadian schools. 11% of those in smaller centres reported their school age children doing fair in schools whereas 17.5% said the same in Metro Vancouver. In other words, significantly fewer parents in smaller centres had concerns about their school age children.

Lastly, 55% of those in smaller centres reported using the Food Bank on a weekly basis whereas 66% in Metro Vancouver reported doing the same. This broader definition of income security and quality of life when measuring outcomes is welcome and could be pushed further when contrasting large and small centres.

Income security was front of mind for Syrian GARs in smaller centres going into Month 13 as they transitioned to BC Income Assistance. Prince George fared especially poorly as 4 out of 6 respondents there expressed specific concerns about finding employment. Overall, five heads of household in smaller centres reported finding employment and of those only one on a full-time basis. The report listed the following as key factors that impact a refugee's ability to find secure employment: 1) cost and availability of public transit, 2) unfamiliarity with Canadian employment search techniques, 3) lack of Canadian work experience, 4) lack of English language skills, 5) untreated pre-migration trauma, and 6) lack of child care. Further studies on the correlation between public transportation options and employment are warranted for Syrian and all GARs across Canada.

2017 Cross-Canada Syrian GARs Housing Study

Rose and Charette's (2017) study, "Finding housing for the 'Welcome Syrians' refugee newcomers: A cross-Canada analysis of initiatives, challenges and lessons learned," was one of 25 proposals funded by the Syrian Refugee Arrival, Resettlement and Integration (SRARI) program launched by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada in partnership with IRCC. This program sought "to support research and mobilize knowledge in a timely way on key issues and events" at the start of the migration and resettlement process. The call for research invited experienced

researchers to address urgent issues that would inform policymakers, service organizations, and other stakeholders.

Rose and Charette (2017) focus on housing for a number of reasons. First, they note two major changes in the last 20 years or so that greatly impact housing for newcomers: 1) local and regional stakeholders rather than federal government representatives coordinate the local resettlement process and 2) severe housing market inflation across Canada while there is little to no funding of social housing initiatives at the city or provincial levels to mitigate affordable housing shortages. In response to the second change, the federal minister responsible for the Syrian operation solicited charitable donations from corporations across Canada which got channeled into the “Welcome Fund for Syrian Refugees” hosted by Community Foundations of Canada. These funds were mainly focused on GARs and received extensive nationwide media coverage. Yet major organizations stated that however helpful this initiative was, it was a “stopgap measure” that would probably be insufficient. Rose and Charette (2017) therefore saw housing for Syrians GARs as a “fertile ground” for necessary innovations among public and private stakeholders. They also focused on housing because they found it to be a cornerstone for any newcomer, but particularly for those coming from contexts of traumatic dislocation such as GARs. They argue that the “stability and quality of the first permanent housing in Canada may take on even stronger affective and symbolic dimensions.” This argument is firmly supported across the social science and humanities literatures broadly and is also borne out by several studies in this report.

This study’s main goal was to learn more about how Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)-Service Provider Organizations (SPOs), which they saw as the centerpiece of the social infrastructure for initial resettlement, went about finding the first permanent housing for Syrian GARs. They sampled a range of housing markets across Canada which included Calgary, Gatineau, Halifax, Hamilton, Montreal, Ottawa, Peterborough, St. John, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria, Windsor, and Winnipeg. Rose and Charette (2017) also scatterplotted data—in particular of the percentages of contributions to Syrian GAR resettlement—against contributions from these cities: Abbotsford, Charlottetown, Edmonton, Fredericton, Kitchener-Waterloo, Lethbridge, London, Medicine Hat, Moncton, Moose Jaw, Red Deer, Sherbrooke, and Saskatoon.

In the winter and spring of 2017 they conducted 13 in-depth interviews lasting approximately 75 minutes each over the phone with 15 managerial level RAP-SPO personnel scattered across 7 provinces. Based on 550 pages of verbatim transcripts of these interviews, Rose and Charette (2017) did a thematic analysis of granular day-to-day issues as well as “big picture” issues. They transcribed two online meetings which took place in May 2017 of most interview participants. Rose and Charette (2017) also interviewed some key informants in Montreal while analyzing verbatim transcripts and briefs of two parliamentary hearings on Syrian refugees that took place in 2016. In addition, they compiled an exhaustive press file of housing-related stories of the Syrian resettlement operation while drawing on other SRARI-funded studies.

For resettled refugees—particularly GARs—housing is a unique and persistent challenge as compared to all other categories of migrants. Rose and Charette (2017) draw on previous studies of Canadian cities in the 2000s as well as the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) data to establish that only about 1/5 of resettled refugees are homeowners four years after landing in Canada. About 1/5 of renters also face severe affordability problems after four years where 50% or more of their income goes to housing. These studies—in particular LSIC—fails to differentiate GARs from PSRs or other refugees however.

The quality and appropriateness of housing information is key to the outcomes of refugees. However, there are known limitations to how much of this support can be provided over time through the RAP (Sherrell and ISS of BC 2009). GARs are almost as likely as refugee claimants to have experienced unhealthy conditions such as mould or infestations (Francis and Hiebert 2014; Preston et al. 2011; Rose and Charette 2014). In addition, refugees' inability to provide guarantors or security deposits increases the likelihood of them having to rent substandard units (Newbold et al. 2011). Precarious employment, which is not unique to but more prevalent amongst refugees, combined with scarcity of affordable and accessible housing along with RAP and social assistance not keeping pace with rent and cost of living increases often leads newcomers to stay in substandard housing longer than they should even as their families grow. As Rose and Charette (2017) argue, when housing upward mobility is constrained, the quality of one's first permanent housing can take on even more significance for refugees.

Advance planning amongst as many stakeholders as possible in a settlement context ahead of refugees' arrivals produced better housing outcomes. In particular, the degree of RAP SPO integration in the network of the settlement context had a large impact. If mechanisms were in place to create inventories of housing as well as to process ongoing offers of housing before, during, and long after refugees' arrivals then outcomes were better. However, even with advance planning there were challenges such as larger families than expected and the need to be proximate to medical care.

Contrary to contemporaneous media coverage, delays of one month or more in finding permanent housing were not ubiquitous (Rose and Charette 2017). Toronto and Vancouver had the longest waits as did Hamilton, which was experiencing knock-on effects of the Toronto market. Very large families and those with multiple special needs took the longest to find permanent housing. In Vancouver and on Vancouver Island about 20 percent of Syrian GARs were placed in public social housing. Housing for single people could take longer as well since they had a smaller RAP and had to be matched with other singles in shared housing arrangements. Some interviewees also reported additional challenges for LGBTQ refugees in the GAR and BVOR streams.

Extended stays in hotels were not preferred by anyone but they did afford housing search workers the time needed to find more suitable housing. Moncton, for example, sought to avoid hotels altogether and so placed families in existing house inventory.

However, that housing proved to be unsuitable and so an emergency operation with the City and the Red Cross had to be implemented to move families in a short timeframe (Belkhojda 2017).

Affordability was unequivocally the most important factor in finding permanent housing. SPOs that could provide more support tailored to GARs' needs in their housing search teams reported better outcomes. Some smaller cities such as Peterborough reported the use of "GAR support teams" for example. Unfortunately, the type of support or expertise or other identifying factors that constituted this team was left mostly vague. Rose and Charette (2017) did note that smaller cities could better integrate volunteers into their support teams. Here is one quote from a RAP SPO about such volunteers:

"So it's very similar to sponsors, except that these groups of volunteers have no involvement with money. They didn't raise the money. They don't control finances involved for the families. So they're simply meant to be a kind of a relational or... social connection to the community. And then they take care of a lot of stuff around you know transportation, rides, child-minding, spending time with them on the weekends, having conversations with them to see where they're at, things like that" (RAP-SPO, Peterborough).

More description and/or research on such teams, particularly in smaller centres, would be beneficial.

Softer markets such as Windsor reported landlords connecting duplexes to accommodate larger families. Even in tighter markets such as Halifax some landlords made minor structural changes to connect apartments. Where possible, housing search workers tried to keep families and known friends close by. Proximity of family and friends to housing was a key factor in better outcomes not only for housing, but for social integration. Housing search workers also had to be sensitive to conditions that would evoke trauma for GARs such as basement apartments.

In Ontario, for instance, the shelter component of the RAP allowance for a couple with two children is \$795 out of a total RAP income of \$1439, but in the Toronto CMA the low-end-of-market rent for the 3-bedroom apartment that the family would need if their children were of different sexes and age ranges is \$1300. Even with the Child Benefit, they will pay 49% of their meagre income on rent (this may or may not include utilities). The same family configuration in Hamilton will fare a little better (40% of their income on rent). Very large families are able to deploy their quite substantial Child Benefit (approximately \$500 per child) to cover their rents, but may well still have to supplement their basic needs by using food banks (CBC [no byline] 2016). Conversely, small families and those without children have more severe affordability ratios, and for single people, a self-contained unit is out of the question on a RAP income (a basic studio apartment would use up 83% of the RAP income in Calgary, for example). A Hamilton interview pointed out that even a room in a rooming house was \$450 (57% of the RAP allowance). Interviewees also told us that their clients often also needed to use the

transportation allowance component of RAP (one transit pass per adult in the major cities) to help cover rent and other essentials—echoing a wider problem of transit affordability for low-income Canadians.

Rose and Charette (2017) echo other research that refugees need basic and reliable information about landlord-tenant legal frameworks as well as what to expect in terms of facilities in rental buildings and developments. They also need this learning process to be reinforced at appropriate moments during the early months. A few interviewees saw cultural norms about the outdoor supervision of children as a significant issue, as some Syrian newcomers had to reconcile traditions of collective models of supervision with the constraints imposed by the high density, spatial configuration and mixed demographics of Canadian apartment complexes.

The transition for GARs in Month 13 was described as most severe in BC though there was no further elaboration.

Below are the key policy recommendations for municipalities and other local stakeholders:

- It is important to make local housing tables and task forces permanent, where this is not already the case, and to foster not only outreach to, but also active participation in these tables, by the full range of local housing providers, including private developers and landlords as well as the public and non-profit sectors.
- Municipalities are well positioned to make essential contributions to receiving and coordinating offers of volunteer assistance, and should establish and fund permanent procedures and protocols for this, in consultation with settlement sector organizations and existing volunteer networks.
- Municipalities should also maintain the infrastructure and knowhow developed in the ramp-up of housing banks and portals for the Syrian operation, including procedures for evaluating the physical condition of housing.
- Multi-sector newcomer support networks need to work out protocols for clearly establishing and delimiting the respective roles of the various local stakeholders including new volunteer groups.

The policy recommendations for IRCC were:

- Adequate advance notification of the profile of GARs, especially their family sizes, and the estimated arrival dates in each city, are crucial to local planning efforts for an efficient and timely resettlement into their first permanent housing. A more predictable arrival timetable for the PSRs would also alleviate the burden and stress on sponsor groups in regards to housing.
- The RAP providers we interviewed strongly believe that the lack of pre-arrival information/training for the Syrian operation refugees increased the challenges of settling these newcomers into their first housing. It is important to reinstate pre-arrival orientation and, in so doing, to fully utilize the expertise of CMHC's newcomer housing information resources team. Ongoing reinforcement of

newcomers' learning about the housing system and living well in rental housing are also crucial to successful settlement outcomes. We encourage IRCC to collaborate with provinces, cities and non-profit agencies to enhance what is presently a spotty patchwork of support to such programs. 30

- The Syrian operation has crystallized and brought to the forefront the need to revisit income support to GARs, as a result of the challenges that organizations faced in settling substantial numbers of these refugee newcomers in expensive housing markets. Our study shows that, in a number of cities, the Welcome Fund played a major role in helping RAP providers bridge the housing affordability gap for their most precarious or vulnerable clients. However, the substantial deployment of charitable and philanthropic contributions to resolve the housing “emergencies” of the Syrian operation has raised some important issues of equity, ethics and sustainability: 1) Earmarking donor contributions to refugee newcomers of a particular origin excludes equally needy individuals who are not part of that subgroup. If the federal government opts to mobilize private charitable and philanthropic contributions, for future large-scale refugee operations, it will need to persuade donors to refrain from such targeting, so that local organizations making use of these funds will not face uncomfortable ethical dilemmas. 2) Canadians are accustomed to supporting charitable fundraising drives for emergencies and extraordinary needs. However, housing affordability is a long-standing and chronic problem for most of those whose income is tied to provincial social assistance levels, the exceptions being the minority who have access to rent-geared-to-income housing. IRCC needs to confront head-on (in collaboration with other federal agencies and provincial governments) a fundamental paradox. This is that relying on an income support mechanism calibrated to the aid-of-last-resort system of provincial social assistance is incompatible with Canada’s international commitment to provide adequate support for refugees to resettle with dignity—a process which takes time, especially for those with high needs facing major barriers to economic self-sufficiency in the short or medium term.
- The family composition of the Syrian GARs has also foregrounded some important broader issues stemming from the federal government’s (and the provinces’) increased deployment of the Child Benefit as an anti-poverty measure. The 2016 improvements to the Child Benefit for low-income families coincided with the Syrian operation. While fortuitous in helping to avert a housing affordability crisis for large families, it highlighted the untenable income support situation for refugee newcomers without children. IRCC should not rely on the Child Benefit to resolve the paradox set out in the previous point.

More generally, Rose and Charette (2017) recommend:

“It is important for all stakeholders, from local community organizations to the federal government, to develop protocols for preserving “institutional memory” so that valuable lessons learned in the course of one refugee operation can be drawn upon, years or

even decades later, to inspire and assist decision-making the next time. For example, the problems associated with earmarked donor funds, and the issue of boundary crossing by untrained volunteers, are not new; they came up during the Kosovo resettlement operation (Abu-Laban et al. 2001). Providing the resources for stable archiving of research studies and evaluation reports by local organizations, governments and academics would mitigate the effects of staff turnover and generational change that challenge such memory-building.”

They further point to the need for all entry categories of Syrian refugees to be tracked with regard to housing trajectories and the success of housing outcomes after the first year which are matched with comparisons in different housing markets. A four-year tracking study currently underway (Refugee integration and long-term health outcomes in Canada, led by Michaela Hynie of York University), focussing on the health outcomes of Syrian and other refugees in the 2015-2017 arrival cohorts, should be very useful in this respect. It includes a block of questions on housing, and targets Vancouver, Okanagan Valley, Kitchener-Waterloo, Windsor, Toronto and Montréal. Rose and Charette (2017) conclude by arguing for the value of longitudinal studies which could enable SPOs in different cities to use mapping and qualitative studies so as to better understand the causal factors between the spatial patterns, and to track and compare longer-term outcomes, such as housing adequacy, access to rent-geared-to-income housing, and home ownership.

1999 Case of 905 Kosovar GARs in Seven BC Sites

Sherrell et al. (2005) examined 905 government-assisted refugees (GARs) Kosovar refugees which arrived in smaller and medium-sized cities in British Columbia in 1999 after a UNHCR humanitarian evacuation of camps in Macedonia. In response to the displacement of Kosovars to Macedonia and Albania in 1999, Canada accepted 7,271 Kosovar refugees for immediate settlement. Once settled, these refugees could apply for permanent residency. Kosovars were also given a unique option: they had two years to determine if they would like to stay in Canada or return to Kosovo. Meanwhile, the Federal government would assume all expenses if they chose to repatriate (Sherrell et al. 2005). The government chose cities where large numbers of Kosovar refugees could be settled together based on CRS and CERIS (2001) research. This CRS and CERIS (2001) study analyzed data from 706 questionnaires completed by Kosovars living in Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Windsor, London, Kitchener, St. Catharines, and Thunder Bay. The research identified a number of difficulties encountered by the refugees, including language acquisition, lack of appropriate housing, and insufficient income. At the time of that research, few of the Kosovars had obtained meaningful employment, and many were experiencing difficulties with the English language. As a result, the majority of the 905 Kosovar refugees that arrived in BC settled outside the Greater Vancouver area in the hopes that keeping families together produced better outcomes.

Sherrell et al. (2005) claim this case as the first in which GARs were settled outside the Lower Mainland of BC. When the Kosovars settled in Canada, they benefited from an expanded definition of family which included parents, adult children, and siblings. A decision was made to settle extended families in the same city in an effort to enhance settlement and reduce secondary migration (CRS and CERIS 2001). Eight of the ten families who settled in Vernon, for example, were related. This settlement strategy enabled family members to support one another during the transition. The presence of family members as well as other Kosovars reduced feelings of isolation and enabled network-building. The LSIC report corroborates the finding that the presence of family and friends significantly shapes immigrants' destination experiences upon arrival in Canada. Of immigrants who settled outside Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver, 35.6 percent chose their destination based on the presence of family or friends; another 32.3 percent picked their destination based on job prospects, while 5.5 percent based their decision on business prospects. In Vancouver, 41.3 percent chose the city because of family or friends residing there; in contrast, only 6 percent selected the city on the basis of job prospects (Statistics Canada 2003b). The proximity of family or other Kosovars appears to be a significant factor in determining where people live. According to the LSIC, such sentiments are evident for all immigrants, since 63 percent of newcomers indicated "all or most of their new friends were from the same ethnic group" (Statistics Canada 2003b).

This research draws on 42 individual interviews and 7 focus groups conducted between May 2002 and March 2003 and highlights the importance of employment prospects and the presence of family in determining settlement success. In particular, researchers juxtaposed those that settled in Vernon, Kelowna, Chilliwack, and Abbotsford—the 4 smaller centers—with those that settled in Surrey, Burnaby, and Greater Vancouver—the 3 metropolitan centers. The two key questions framing this research were: 1) how well did Kosovars fare in obtaining employment, housing, and official language proficiency and 2) what factors influence refugees to stay or leave particular centers?

This research was conducted in collaboration with Immigrant Services Society (ISS) of BC. The Kosovars interviewed included approximately equal numbers of women and men, aged twenty-one to seventy-eight, from both rural and urban backgrounds. The English language ability of the Kosovar participants varied from those with little ability to speak English to those who claimed fluency. Interpreters were provided during focus groups and individual interviews to ensure people could respond in the language with which they felt the most comfortable. + terms of education and profession. Sixteen of the twenty-eight participants in Vancouver, Surrey, Chilliwack, and Abbotsford were university students in Kosovo/a or hold university degrees or professional diplomas, compared to two of the eight participants in Kelowna and Vernon.

Three years after their arrival, the vast majority of the Kosovars interviewed (29 of 34) intended to settle permanently in Canada, with most remaining in their original host city. This finding is consistent with research on Kosovars in both Alberta and Ontario (Abu-

Laban et al. 2001; CRS and CERIS 2001), as well as with the LSIC (Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada), which found that 91 percent of newcomers to Canada intend to settle here permanently and obtain Canadian citizenship (Statistics Canada 2003b). Their continued presence in these cities, however, may relate as much to a lack of financial resources needed to move as it does to satisfaction with their host city. This study could not definitively prove either case.

Older refugees were much more likely to repatriate or return to Kosovo. Abu-Laban et al. (2001) found similar results: 28 percent of those who repatriated were aged 45 and older. Reasons given for repatriation involved a desire or need to return home, rather than a dislike of Canada. The primary reasons for leaving cited in both our study and that of Abu-Laban et al. (2001) related to factors in Kosovo; that is family obligations, the search for loved ones, homesickness, and/or the need to rebuild as opposed to factors in the host city. According to their interviewees, all of the people who returned to Kosovo/a did so within the two-year window in which the Government of Canada would finance the costs of repatriation. Many, the researchers heard second-hand, came to regret this decision.

The majority of Kosovars interviewed for this study (29 of 34, or 85%) received English language training after their arrival. Similarly, 45 percent of respondents in the first wave of the LSIC pursued some type of educational training within six months of arrival. Of these, 58 percent took English training (Statistics Canada 2003b). Of the Kosovars who took language classes, eight completed advanced English training (that is, above level 3) through adult learning centres and local colleges. Many of the Kosovars who sought advanced language training were professionals who believed better language skills will facilitate access to employment in their previous occupations. Of the five Kosovars who did not receive English language training, three claimed to already be fluent in English, and two cited old age as their reason for not participating.

Three years after settlement, 43 percent (15 of 35) of the Kosovars interviewed were employed on either a full-time or a part-time basis, 11 percent (4 of 35) were full-time post-secondary students (none of whom were employed), and 46 percent (16 of 35) were unemployed. A larger proportion of Kosovars had obtained employment than in the study done much earlier by CRS and CERIS (2001), a finding that is not surprising, given the different time periods when the studies were conducted. In the earlier study, only 13 percent of the heads of families and 3 percent of spouses had obtained either full- or part-time employment. Over one-third of participants in the CRS and CERIS (2001) study had made no efforts to obtain employment.

In Chilliwack and Abbotsford, one of the nine (11%) Kosovars interviewed is unemployed, compared with eight of the eighteen (44%) participants in Vancouver and Surrey, and seven of the eight (87.5%) participants in Kelowna and Vernon. Some Kosovars, particularly in the Lower Mainland, spoke of fairly constant attachment to the labour force, albeit in a variety of jobs, while those in Kelowna and Vernon spoke of a more transient or fleeting attachment. The high unemployment levels among Kosovars

in Kelowna and Vernon also reflected wider unemployment trends in the region. During the period in which the Kosovars were settled in the Okanogan, the jobless rate in the Thompson-Okanogan was 2 percent above the provincial average. According to the 2001 Census, both Kelowna and Vernon had unemployment rates significantly above the provincial average, while all of the other areas studied had unemployment rates that were slightly below the provincial average. The majority of Kosovars who obtained jobs were employed in lower-paying jobs that did not necessarily reflect their educational background, credentials, experience, or skills, a finding consistent with those of Kosovars in Northern Alberta (Abu-Laban et al. 2001). Sixty percent of the newcomers surveyed in the LSIC are working in an occupational field different from the field worked in before coming to Canada (Statistics Canada 2003b).

One theme that emerged in the interviews was a spatial mismatch between the jobs available in a city and the job experience and skills of the refugees. A lack of factory jobs was mentioned in a number of interviews, suggesting a mismatch between the job skills of some of the refugees (for example, in manufacturing) and the types of jobs available (in service industries such as tourism, for example). This mismatch was most evident in Kelowna and Vernon, where the economies are predominantly based on forestry and agriculture with a large service sector, including tourism. Front-line jobs in tourism were seen as out of reach for those without fluent official language skills.

The biggest demand among the refugees was for employment placement services. Participants often expressed a desire for jobs or job placement programs, as the practical, hands-on assistance of job placement programs was seen to be much more beneficial than courses related to resume-writing. Working with employers is an important part of job placement. The preparation of a host city and its employers emerged as crucial to attracting and keeping newcomers.

Although the majority of Kosovars planned to stay in their original host cities, those who intended to move spoke of leaving for larger centres in British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario, echoing the findings of Abu-Laban et al. (1999, 2001). This experiment in regionalizing refugee settlement to smaller centres met with mixed results. On the one hand, Kosovars in Kelowna and Vernon were more likely to talk about moving to larger centres across Canada than were Kosovars settled elsewhere. On the other hand, they liked the communities in which they found themselves, but lacked sufficient employment prospects or family and friends to keep them there (Abu-Laban et al. 1999). With the exception of a number of young, single women from Surrey who spoke of moving to Toronto and Ottawa to pursue education and careers, the majority of people in the centres in and around the Lower Mainland (including Chilliwack and Abbotsford) were content to stay in British Columbia, whether in the initial host city or by moving to the Lower Mainland.

Kosovars who settled farthest from Greater Vancouver experienced the most difficulties in acquiring official language skills and obtaining employment. Kosovars with professional backgrounds in all centres are least likely to settle, particularly those in

Kelowna who feel their skills are unsuited to employment demands. For the most part, people were satisfied with their host cities; they appreciated the amenities such as schools, parks, and recreation centres, but without jobs, they could not fully settle. Larger centres were seen to offer a wider range of services and co-ethnic communities. Smaller centres were seen to force immigrants and refugees to integrate faster in a "sink or swim" environment.

Those who come to Canada as GARs, Sherrell et al. (2005) argue, may require services that other immigrants do not need such as trauma and torture-related counselling. At that time, immigrant and refugee-serving agencies in Vancouver were funded to provide these services. Spreading these services across British Columbia would cost more, the argument goes, than providing them in one place. Based on MANSO (2018) and ISS of BC (2017), there appears to be an outstanding need for more mental health support services for GARs.

Conclusions

The literature argues that GARs must be better integrated not only into their communities or settlement contexts, but also into larger research frameworks. One of the most common and influential frameworks for understanding migrants of any type is push and pull factors. Negative circumstances such as war, dislocation, trauma, material deprivation, lack of employment, etc. are some example of push factors. Positive circumstances such as affordable, comfortable permanent housing, family reunification, peace, social integration, community investment, better educational outcomes for children, etc. are some examples of pull factors. GARs are often marked by their extreme push factors and yet relatively little attention is given to the “pull” factors that often translate into better economic, educational, employment, and social integration outcomes. In particular, the symbolic and affective dimensions of, for example, permanent housing for GARs are mostly understudied (Rose and Charette 2017).

Below is a matrix to summarize the key advantages and disadvantages for GARs in smaller Canadian centres in the top row followed by the advantages and disadvantages for those centres in accommodating more GARs:

Advantages for GARs	Disadvantages for GARs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More housing options for larger families (ISS of BC 2017; Rose and Charette 2017; Sherrell et al. 2005) • More access to LINC classes and better English proficiency outcomes (ISS of BC 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less satisfaction with housing (ISS of BC 2017) • Fewer sufficient employment prospects and “mismatches” (Abu-Laban et al. 1999; Sherrell et al. 2005)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better educational outcomes for school-age children (ISS of BC 2017) • Less reliance on Food Banks (ISS of BC 2017) • Better multi-need support teams (Rose and Charette 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More difficulty acquiring official language skills (Sherrell et al. 2005) • Less co-ethnic community support (Abu-Laban et al. 1999; Sherrell et al. 2005) • Less diversity of services such as trauma counselling (Sherrell et al. 2005) • Fewer affordable transportation options (ISS of BC 2017) • Fewer affordable child care options (ISS of BC 2017)
<p>Advantages for Smaller or Non-Metro Centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More diverse population amid broader depopulation outside metro centres <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural enrichment • ... 	<p>Disadvantages for Smaller or Non-Metro Centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irregular arrival flows relative to other refugees and migrants (ISS of BC 2017; Rose and Charette 2017) • Greater demands for a diversity of services that require more initial investment (Sherrell et al. 2005)

There are several items mentioned in the literature that merit further study.

Below are some key ones:

- English and French language proficiency outcomes when Sherrell et al. 2005 assert worse outcomes in smaller centres and ISS of BC (2017) asserts better outcomes
- Symbolic and affective dimensions of not just permanent housing (Rose and Charette 2017), but also memberships in community organizations, volunteering, library memberships, and other measures of social integration
- Composition of support teams tailored to specific municipalities and communities and sub-groups of GARs (Rose and Charette 2017)
- More nuanced differentiation of types of GARs, particularly mapped on to their settlement contexts
- How recent Child Benefits helped GARs with larger families but how it may be leaving those without children in increasingly difficult situations (MANSO 2018; Rose and Charette 2017)
- More in-person rather than phone or remote interviews and more inclusion of those other than the head of household in any study

- If and how tax incentives to both GARs that choose smaller centres to resettle in and local businesses that invest in GARs could produce better outcomes (Sherrell et al. 2005)
- Longitudinal work on health outcomes, especially mental health (MANSO 2018; Sherrell et al. 2005) in smaller centres
- How SPOs can improve institutional memory practices (Rose and Charette 2017)

General research gaps:

Most GAR research respondents are in an urban context (for example of 346 total respondents in the ISS study, 301 were in Metro Vancouver).

What is the role of family reunification in refugee retention in smaller centres? (90% in smaller centres were seeking reunification with an immediate family member not in Canada whereas only 74% in Metro Vancouver reported the same)

55% of those in smaller centres reported using the Food Bank on a weekly basis whereas 66% in Metro Vancouver reported doing the same. This broader definition of income security and quality of life when measuring outcomes is welcome and could be pushed further when contrasting large and small centres.

Further studies on the correlation between public transportation options and employment are warranted for GARs across Canada. Public transit tends to be less effective (in terms of routes and schedules) in smaller centres.

How did issues around housing access and affordability (chronic issues in many communities) contribute to public opinion of government assisted refugees?

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