

FINDING HOUSING FOR DISPLACED UKRAINIANS AND REFUGEES ON VANCOUVER ISLAND: REGIONAL HOUSING REPORT

Disclaimer:

As of March 31, 2024, the Refugee Readiness Team – Vancouver Island (RRT-VI) initiative has reached its completion and is no longer active. The materials presented here reflect the efforts and accomplishments of RRT-VI during its two-year duration.



Presented by:

Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria
Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region

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Note on How Data is Described in this Report

This report was produced for a general audience with the main findings highlighted and keeping technical language to a minimum. For a deeper look at the data tables and analysis that support the material in this report, please see the [Technical Annex](#).

Land Acknowledgement

Vancouver Island contains mountains, fertile agricultural lands, beaches, ancient rainforests, rivers, fjords, and archipelagos, which make up the traditional territory of more than fifty Coast Salish Nations. As newcomers and settlers we acknowledge with respect the Coast Salish people whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day. Presenting this housing report, we are aware of our uninvited presence and occupancy as settlers on this land. In the spirit of creating strong, respectful relationships, we are committed to working in partnership with all Indigenous communities who reside on Vancouver Island to reduce the impact of colonization that continues through our work with newcomers.



Charles Elliot (Canadian, Coast Salish) | Seals | 1982 |
serigraph | Gift of George & Lola Kidd (2008.003.056)

Executive Summary

This report focuses on housing and community integration for displaced Ukrainians and Afghan and Syrian refugees on Vancouver Island. The report calls for a collaborative and adaptive housing strategy on Vancouver Island, emphasizing resilience, inclusivity, and ongoing support for a sustainable future.

Information was collected through interviews, focus groups, and an online survey from January to March 2023. A total of 109 individuals responded among them displaced Ukrainians and refugees, hosts of Ukrainians, private sponsors of refugees, landlords, and settlement workers.

By incorporating the voices of these groups, this report provides a first glimpse into the housing needs, challenges, and strategies of a vulnerable population across Vancouver Island.



Main Findings:

Displaced Ukrainians and refugees struggle with high rental prices and limited housing options across Vancouver Island with many participants reporting that they spend more than 70% of their income on rent, indicating that housing is a seriously high financial burden for them.

Challenges finding housing are not just experienced by displaced newcomers, but also by their hosts, sponsors, and settlement workers who are each in their own way offering support and assistance with the housing search.

Communication challenges, including language barriers, pose difficulties. Tenants, hosts, and landlords worry about their ability to communicate with each other. Even with language barriers, several landlords in this study shared that they found renting to refugees rewarding and that they would be open to renting to refugees again.

Most hosted Ukrainians rated their hosts highly and hosts found the experience of hosting fulfilling. Both groups felt supported by community organizations like Ukrainian cultural organizations and expressed a willingness to host again.

Hosts, sponsors, and settlement workers agree that well-rounded community support makes a difference. For example, the role that Ukrainian cultural organizations played in matching and supporting hosts and hosted individuals was highly valued. All groups spoke about the importance of sharing resources and increasing or maintaining community support for displaced and refugee tenants, hosts, landlords, and sponsors.

The majority of displaced Ukrainians shared that they feel connected to their communities, citing that they like knowing their neighbors and that they feel safe in their new communities. This connection influences their preference for staying in their current neighborhoods on Vancouver Island.



Recommendations:

Information Sharing: Develop a comprehensive information-sharing strategy to disseminate resources on housing, services, and support. Ensure tenants with refugee backgrounds are well-informed about their rights and responsibilities.

Awareness and Collaboration: Recognize the challenges faced by displaced individuals and refugees in finding permanent housing. Offer ongoing support by collaborating with community organizations and partners to provide resources, share information on reliable housing opportunities, and assist in finding affordable housing. Collaborate with local immigrant serving agencies to facilitate smoother transitions for displaced individuals and refugees.

Support for Landlords, Hosts, and Sponsors: Provide tailored support for hosts, landlords, and private sponsors involved in accommodating displaced populations and refugees. Arrange regular check-ins with settlement workers to ensure hosts receive necessary support and guidance throughout the hosting process.

Communication and Interpretation: Emphasize the importance of effective communication in the landlord-tenant relationship and provide translation and interpretation to facilitate communication.

Advocate: Advocate for the development of a comprehensive support infrastructure, including financial assistance, settlement worker check-ins, and accessible online resources for all partners involved in housing initiatives.

Effective and Responsive Strategies: Encourage municipalities to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their housing strategies. Seek resident and stakeholder feedback to adapt policies in response to evolving community needs and emerging challenges.

Effective and Responsive Policies: Engage with policymakers to promote diversity in housing options and address the unique needs of different communities.

Create Community Connections: Finally, recognize the pivotal role of community connections for displaced populations. Develop programs that foster ongoing support networks, creating a sense of community and addressing the diverse needs of displaced individuals.



FINDING HOUSING FOR DISPLACED UKRAINIANS AND REFUGEES ON VANCOUVER ISLAND: REGIONAL HOUSING REPORT



1. Introduction: Housing Market on Vancouver Island

As an increasingly popular living destination, Vancouver Island has witnessed a surge in population growth (8%) from 799,400 in 2016 to 864,864 residents in 2021. The most significant growth was seen in the municipality of Langford (31.8%), and in Nanaimo (10%) and Courtenay (9.2%) regions. Greater Victoria grew 8% with a population of 397,237 in 2021 (Focus on Geography, Census of Population 2021).

This population growth, together with low vacancy rates across the Island poses significant challenges to its housing market. This is true across the Island but particularly evident in the south. At the time of the survey (late 2022), the median price of single-family homes and condominiums combined was just over \$1 million. At that same time, the average price of a two-bedroom rental in Greater Victoria was \$1,711 a month. According to the National Rent Ranking of December 2023, the average two-bedroom rental on the South Island had increased to \$2,786 a month and the region was ranked as the third-most expensive rental market in British Columbia after Vancouver and Burnaby.

As a result, across Greater Victoria, many households are overspending on housing, “renters, homeowners, and those on the verge of homelessness say that an increasingly unaffordable housing market is driving them to [consider leaving the Island]... residents ... are worried about what it means for their futures — and their ability to afford to stay on the South Island” (Fagan, CBC News, 2023, February 22).

While housing and rental prices in the Mid and North Island are not quite as high as in the South, these regions also have seen a steady increase in prices, with rents in Nanaimo, Courtenay and Cambell River coming close to those of the South Island (\$1,300-\$1,500 for a two-bedroom at the end of 2022).

Vancouver Island Average Monthly Rent for 2 bedrooms



Although there has been much effort across municipalities on the Island to build and/or secure more affordable rental housing and provide homeownership opportunities for residents, the rental vacancy rate on the Island remains low (ranging from 0.3 in Duncan to 2.2 in Nanaimo in 2022; Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2022) and housing affordability remains stubbornly unattainable.

Refugees and Displaced Populations

The housing crisis affects individuals and families across the country, but for refugees and other displaced populations who are already struggling with multiple barriers to integration in their Canadian communities, the housing crisis exacerbates the trauma of displacement and fosters a sense of helplessness in a new country.

As of February of 2023, we have seen an estimated 950 Ukrainians arriving on Vancouver Island.¹ Based on information from Ukrainian cultural organizations across Vancouver Island, there were approximately 103 families hosting displaced Ukrainians.

1 "Non-profit group sees 'massive uptick' in Ukrainian refugees arriving on Vancouver Island Vancouver Island News," Brendan Strain, CTV News (Feb. 23, 2023).

We were interested in hearing from these groups about the successes and challenges of this approach to responding to the housing needs of recently displaced individuals.

In this report, we draw insights from interviews, focus groups, and online surveys conducted with displaced Ukrainians, and Afghan and Syrian refugees. Further, we heard from hosts of displaced Ukrainians, landlords, private sponsors of refugees, and settlement workers on Vancouver Island to provide insight into the successes and challenges of those providing housing and those providing support.

By incorporating the voices of these various populations, this report provides a first glimpse into the housing needs, challenges, and strategies of a vulnerable population across Vancouver Island.

Recruitment of Participants

Participation for the Hosted Ukrainians survey was solicited through contact with Ukrainian cultural organizations on Vancouver Island who shared the link to the online questionnaire with Ukrainians living with host families. Information regarding the survey with the link to the questionnaire was also uploaded to the social media platforms of the [Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria \(ICA\)](#). Participation for the private refugee sponsors survey was solicited through contact with Sponsorship Agreement Holder agencies (SAH) across Vancouver Island, asking these agencies to share the online questionnaire with people who have sponsored a refugee. Participation for the landlord survey was solicited through ICA's social media and by sharing the online questionnaire with the RRT-VI's Housing Working Group members and asking them to pass it on to landlords in their network. Participation for the settlement worker survey was solicited through contact with immigrant serving agencies across Vancouver Island, requesting that the agencies share the questionnaire with their settlement workers, asking them to participate in the survey.

"It's getting harder every year to live here. The conditions for finding housing are too many, and there's no solution. Food is too expensive, and life is becoming hard."

[Research participant]



2. Methodology

At the height of the first arrival of displaced Ukrainians in September 2022, the Refugee Readiness Team for Vancouver Island (RRT-VI) developed questionnaires, focus group guides, and interview protocols to capture a diverse range of perspectives on the housing barriers for newly arrived displaced Ukrainians and other recently arrived refugees such as people from Afghanistan and Syria. This was a collaborative effort with input from the RRT-VI Housing Working Group and housing experts across the Island.

In addition to hearing directly from displaced Ukrainians and refugees from Syria and Afghanistan, an effort was made to gather information from the people housing them including hosts of Ukrainians, and landlords as well as from groups offering support such as private sponsors of refugees and settlement workers. Tailored questionnaires were conducted for each group to capture their unique perspectives and experiences. In addition, several focus groups were held across the Island to capture the stories of displaced Ukrainians and refugees to acknowledge the rich lived experiences that a survey cannot gather and to provide a fuller understanding of the challenges these populations face.

This rich and multifaceted approach sought to provide a nuanced understanding of the regional housing dynamics and the complexities inherent in the housing experiences of recent refugees and displaced people on Vancouver Island. Spanning from early January to the end of March 2023, the gathered data and conversations covered a range of topics, including housing searches, current accommodations, budgets, and



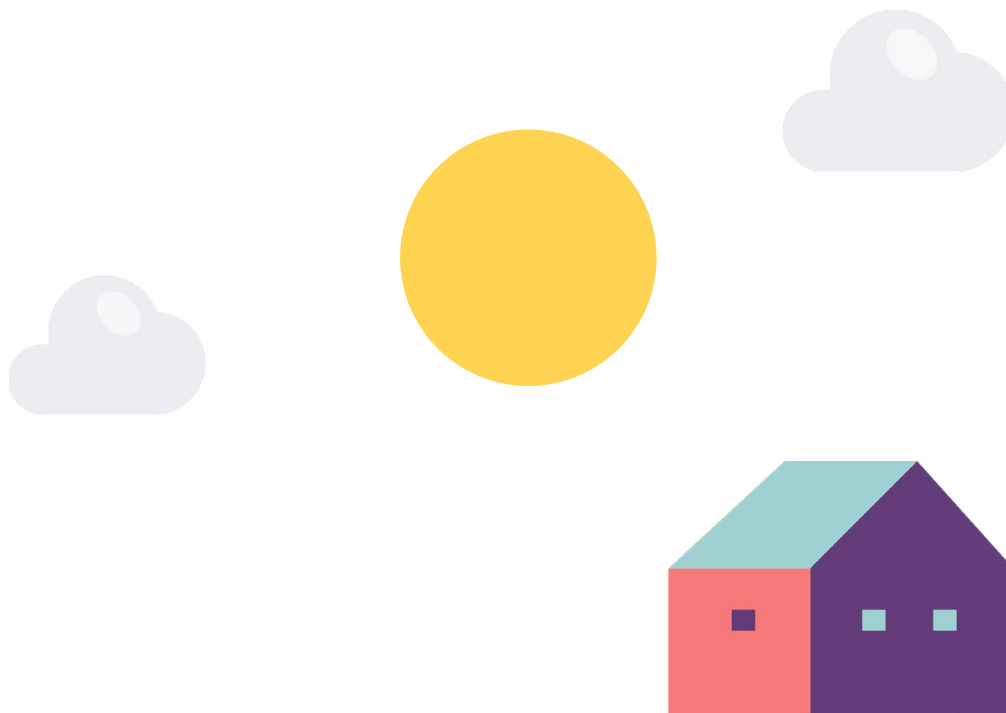
The interview and focus group guide focused on displaced Ukrainians, many of whom held Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) visas, and Syrian and Afghan refugees. Focus group sessions conducted both in-person and online from January 30 to March 29, 2023, were facilitated by ICA, the [Cowichan Intercultural Society \(CIS\)](#), and the [Immigrant Welcome Centre of Comox Valley \(IWC\)](#) across South Island/ Capital Region, Mid-Island/ Cowichan Valley, and North Island/ Comox Valley. Participants for the focus groups were recruited from various sources, including [Help Ukraine Vancouver Island](#)'s client base. In total four interviews and four focus groups were held as follows:

- South Island – 2 focus groups
- Mid-island – 1 focus group, 4 individual interviews
- North Island – 1 focus group

Interviews were mostly conducted in English. Ukrainian, Russian, and Arabic interpretations were provided in some instances.

Qualitative Analysis of Focus Groups

The interview and focus group data consisted of interviewer/facilitator field notes. Field notes were coded and analyzed by themes such as length and strategies for finding housing, types of housing, sense of belonging, surprises when looking for housing, and other such groups. This theming was done by a group of individuals, aggregated by the lead researcher, reviewed, and is available in the [Technical Annex](#).



Analysis and Reporting of Surveys

Results of surveys are reported in aggregate by specific groups (e.g., Ukrainians being hosted, hosts of Ukrainians, private sponsors of refugees, landlords, and settlement workers) as each survey contained a different series of questions.

Results for questions that spanned multiple groups surveyed, interviewed, and engaged are examined in a later section, with a discussion focusing on trends across areas where there were similar results across groups. As the respondents were allowed to skip questions they did not want to answer, the number of individuals responding to each question often varied within a questionnaire (i.e., all 7 private sponsors did not answer all questions).²

Because some of the survey respondent groups were quite small, it is difficult to report percentages or extrapolate wide-ranging conclusions from them. In those cases, when groups were small (8 respondents or fewer), discussion for these questionnaires were not reported in percentages but instead, we used the following in-text descriptors: “a couple” or “few” (2), “some” (3-4), “most” or “almost all” (5-7), all (8). A more detailed categorization of respondents along these lines can be found in the [Technical Annex](#).



² Lack of response may also be due to the individual not finishing the questionnaire before the survey was closed. Questionnaires designated as “In progress” are included in the analyses provided.

3. Findings: Housing Challenges and Opportunities for Displaced Populations

a. Participant Demographics



In total, there were 109 people who responded to questionnaires or participated in interviews or focus groups. One-half of the respondents and participants identified as Ukrainian.

With a total of 55 Ukrainians responding either with the online survey, an interview, or a focus group (29 questionnaire participants, 26 interview and focus group participants), the total number of Ukrainian participants in this study represents almost 6% of the total number of displaced Ukrainians on the Island (estimated at 950). All participants were over the age of 18.

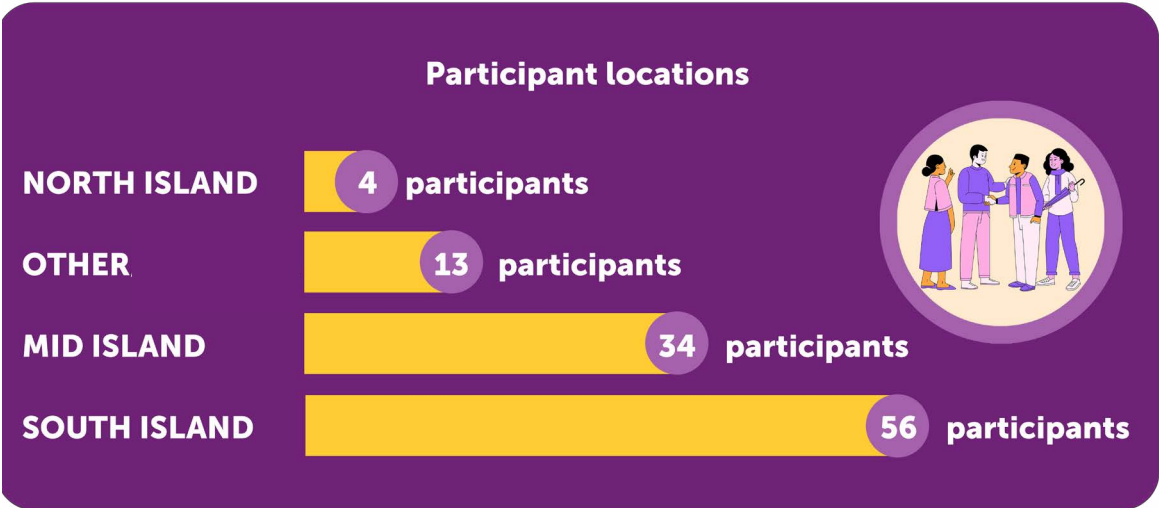
With a total of 13 hosts of Ukrainians responding to the survey, the total number of participants represents almost 13% of the total number of families hosting displaced Ukrainians on the Island (estimated at 103).

The majority of participants were living in Greater Victoria. This region was the place of residence for 21% of Ukrainian participants who were living with hosts, most of the hosts, and more than one-half of the landlords who participated in this research. The largest groups of displaced Ukrainians, Syrian refugees, and Afghan refugees were living in either Duncan (38%) or Victoria (31%).

For interview and focus group participants, we see that most interview or focus group participants were from Duncan or Greater Victoria. This is most likely due to the location of the organizations hosting the interviews and focus groups and the availability of transport to those locations.³

Private sponsors of refugees and settlement workers were asked to provide the name of the municipality or region where they lived or worked, respectively. Most private sponsors lived in the Cowichan Valley/Duncan area, while most settlement workers worked in Greater Victoria.

Individuals participating in interviews and focus groups were asked for additional demographic information. This information included gender, age, family composition, country of origin, religion, ethnic group, arrival in Canada, and cost of living/income.



Almost all focus group participants provided information regarding their country of origin, with the majority of people stating that Ukraine (72%) was their country of origin.

All focus group participants provided information regarding their ethnicity with nearly three-quarters of participants (69%) describing their ethnic background as white.

Out of the focus group participants, 64% shared their date of arrival in Canada. Since not everyone gave an exact date, we’re focusing on the year of arrival. 73% mentioned they came in 2022-2023, and most of them were Ukrainians who had been displaced due to the war, others were refugees who arrived between 2015 and 2019.

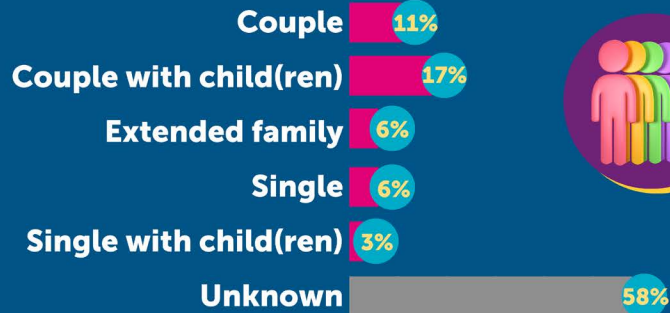
³ The full cross reference of location and category of participant can be found in the [technical annex](#).

Focus Group Demographic Information

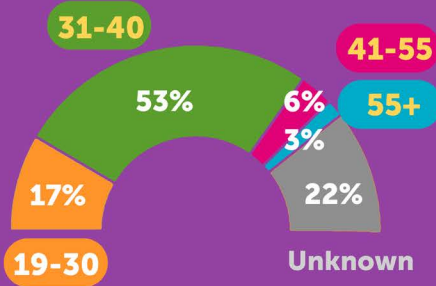
GENDER



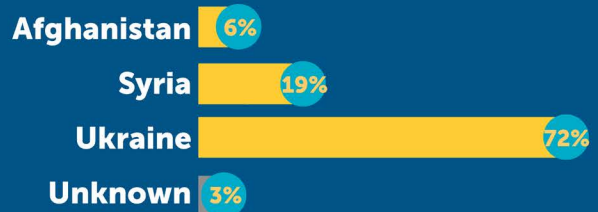
FAMILY COMPOSITION



AGE

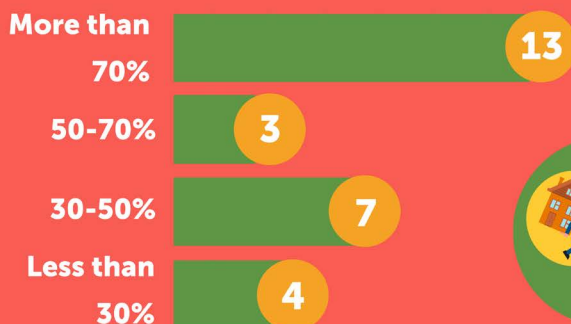


COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



Three-quarters of participants provided information regarding the percentage of their income spent on rent. The majority of participants spend more than 70% of their income on rent, with an additional one-quarter of participants spending between 30% and 50% of their income on rent. It should be noted that this is above the recommended 30% of before-tax income.

PERCENTAGE OF INCOME SPENT ON RENT



b. Finding Housing: Refugees and Displaced Ukrainians

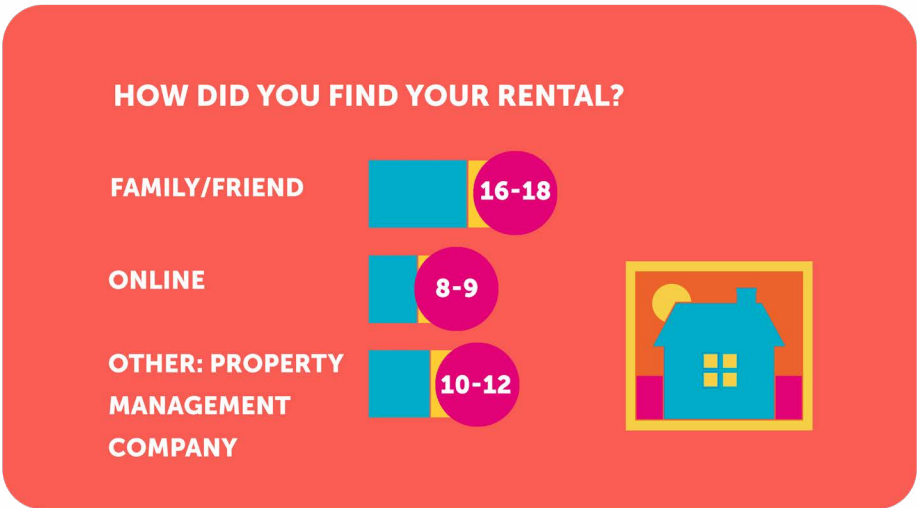
Observations from Focus Groups with Refugees and Displaced Ukrainians

Four Interviews and four focus groups with a total of 36 displaced Ukrainians, Syrian and Afghan refugees were held from January 30, 2023, to March 29, 2023. Instead of exact numbers, we will use approximation terms like few, some, most, or all to describe responses.

When asked about their experiences looking for housing, participants described how they felt and what surprised them the most. All interview and focus group participants provided information on their experiences looking for housing with almost all of those responding by stating that they were shocked by rental prices. All but one participant stated that the high rent prices and the high demand with low vacancy rates were surprising. Some were also surprised that rentals were unfurnished.

When asked about their active search for housing, with all but one participant providing information, some stated that they had been looking for housing for three to six months or that they were still looking for housing.

While not everyone had found a rental, everyone responded to the question ‘How did you find your rental?’ The chart below combines information from those who already found housing with those still in the process of searching. While it is not possible to distinguish between those who found permanent housing and those who have yet to find permanent housing, the information still paints a picture of how people are finding housing and the most common places they have looked or are continuing to look. Many found housing, or are looking for housing, through family or friends, with a few looking online or through a property management company.



Participants were asked to describe their current housing with questions ranging from describing the housing, landlords, rental agreements, and past rentals. When asked to describe their current housing all focus group participants and one interview participant provided information ranging from the number of bedrooms to satisfaction with current housing. Some participants expressed satisfaction with their current housing (e.g., 'meeting immediate needs,' 'alright,' 'okay'), while only a few stated that they were not satisfied with their current housing.

Many participants were either living with their host family or another type of shared accommodation or in an apartment. All participants provided information regarding their landlord. Twenty of the participants had a private landlord, six rented through a management company, five were still living with their host families, and one participant was living in an Airbnb rental. Two of the participants said that their landlord was a good person.

Many participants discussed maintenance issues. One-half of this group felt that there were moderate issues with their housing and these issues were addressed in a timely manner. However, this may be an 'over-estimate' of the timeliness of fixing maintenance issues given the lack of rental/ housing stock so people may be less willing to ask for issues to be fixed.

Almost all participants provided rental agreement information, with many having short-term or one-year lease agreements. There were a few individuals that were still living with their hosts. Also, it must be noted that one individual did not have any type of rental agreement and two indicated that they had verbal agreements, thus would not be afforded any rental protections if the relationship between those participants and their landlords were to change in a negative way.



When asked if there was any direct link between finding employment and finding housing, many, but not all, provided information regarding their employment status. Almost three-quarters of participants listed their sources of income, with most stating that they were employed. Almost all participants discussed the connection between employment and housing applications with some stating that *they required proof of employment when they were applying for housing.*

Looking at rents and the percentage of income spent on rent, we found that many people pay \$1,500 or more per month, and for more than 30% of participants, this exceeds their total income. Only a few managed to find rents below \$1,500 per month. Incomes seemed to vary widely between participants. Some participants reported spending over 70% of their total income on rent but paying less than \$1,500 a month, indicating that these participants are lower earners. Other participants said that they were spending less than 30% of their income on rent but paid \$1,500 or more each month, indicating a higher income.

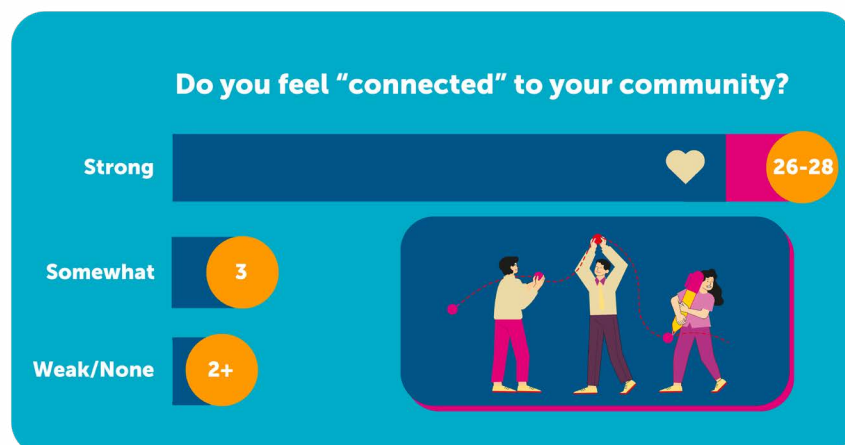
“We cannot buy everything. Enough for food and we also visit the food bank, we don’t always have enough for the right clothes, we mostly buy second-hand.”

[Focus group participant]



Many of those participating in the interviews and focus groups indicated that *they were not able to afford food and necessities once their rent was paid.* Some were relying on Ukrainian cultural organizations, foodbanks, income assistance, and community organizations for assistance, and some individuals relying on multiple sources or working overtime to afford food and necessities.

People were asked in interviews and group discussions about their ties to the community. Almost everyone said they either *felt a strong connection* or had some level of connection to the community.



Many people feel strongly connected to their community, so it's not surprising that they prefer living in their current neighborhood or on Vancouver Island. Although some are open to moving for a better job in another city, many are still influenced by their desire to remain on Vancouver Island.

Key Findings from Focus Groups

- 1. High Rental Prices:** Many refugees and displaced Ukrainians are struggling with high rental prices and limited housing options. Rental costs and high demand for housing are major barriers, with most expressing shock at the high prices and low vacancy rates.
- 2. Long Search Duration:** Participants typically spend three to six months or more searching for housing. Employment status plays a role, with some facing challenges due to the need for proof of employment in housing applications.
- 3. Financial Strain:** Some individuals spend a significant portion of their income on rent, making it difficult to afford basic needs. This financial burden leads many to rely on external support like food banks and income assistance.
- 4. Community Connection:** Despite challenges, the majority feel connected to their communities, citing factors like knowing neighbors and feeling safe. This connection influences their preference for staying in their current neighborhood or on Vancouver Island.

Recommendations

- 1. Affordable Housing Support:** Implement initiatives to support affordable housing, easing financial burdens for refugees and displaced individuals. Ensure housing costs are reasonable and accessible.
- 2. Employment Programs:** Strengthen programs supporting newcomers in finding meaningful employment, recognizing the crucial role of secure employment in securing a home.
- 3. Community Integration Initiatives:** Encourage initiatives that promote community integration, acknowledging its role in fostering a sense of belonging and well-being for newcomers.

Responses from Ukrainians Living with Host Families:⁴

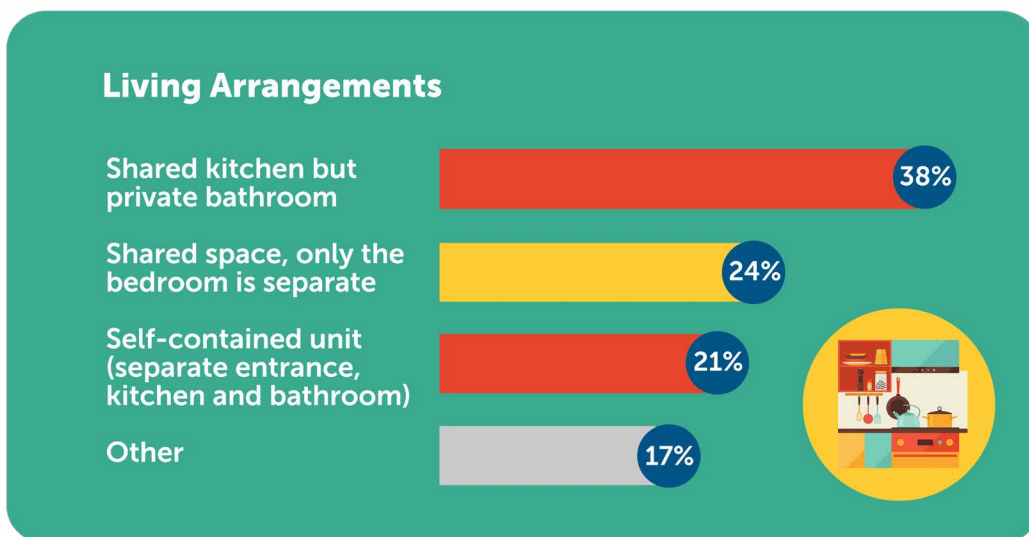
The survey data from the responses of Ukrainians living with host families on Vancouver Island provides valuable insights into their experiences and challenges.

The highest number of Ukrainians moving in with host families did so in February and March 2023, with 30% and 26%, respectively.

The family composition of the 29 Ukrainians living with hosts reveals a diverse group, with a total of 53 adults and 21 children. The family sizes ranged from one to four individuals with an average of 2.6 individuals per family which highlights the predominantly small family units.

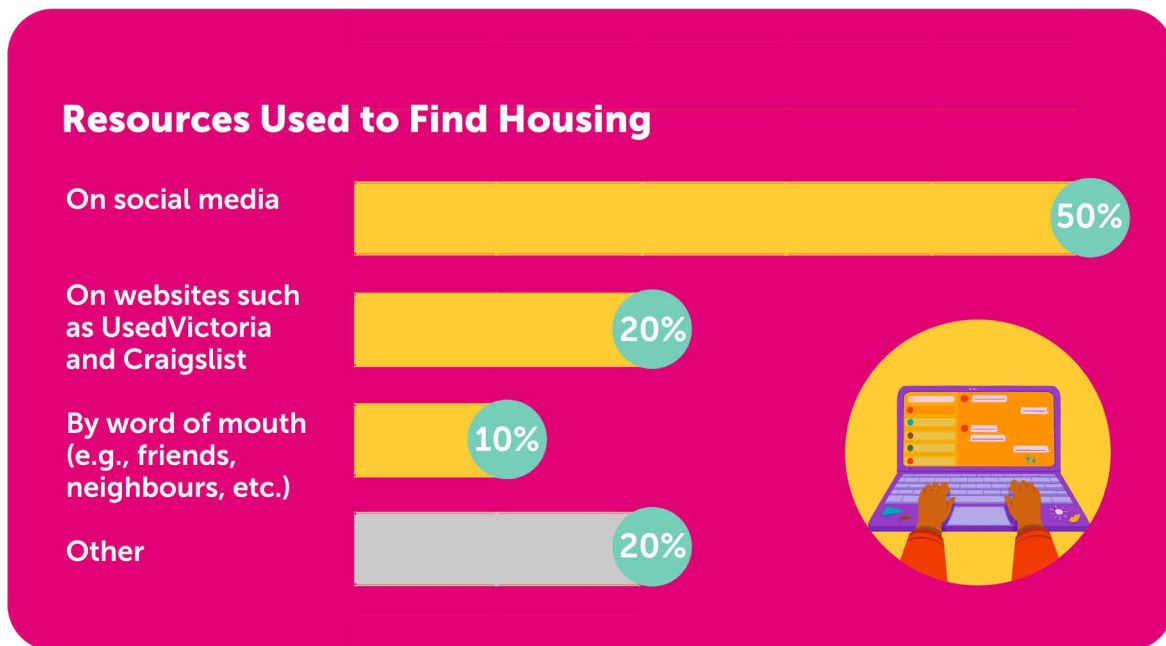
The majority of respondents were matched with host families before arriving in Canada, with a significant proportion ranking the matching process highly. This underscores the effectiveness of pre-arrival coordination, contributing to the positive experiences reported by the vast majority who did not encounter difficulties with their host families: of Ukrainians living with hosts, 92% reported no problems with their host families while other 8% mentioned language barrier and cultural differences as difficulty.

Shared accommodation emerged as the prevailing living arrangement for Ukrainian families, with over 60% reporting that they shared some living space with their hosts. This not only reflects the practicalities of available housing but also highlights the communal approach to providing support and fostering connections within the community.



⁴ In total, 18 respondents opened the “Ukrainians Living with Hosts” online questionnaire. Of those 18 individuals, there were 11 fully completed questionnaires, 2 partially completed questionnaire, and 5 partially completed questionnaires with no data. Questionnaires with no data were eliminated from further analyses, leaving a total of 13 for analyses.

Seventy-seven of the participants (29 respondents) shared that they are actively searching for a permanent home and of these, 69% told us about the resources they're using to find housing. Half of them are using social media for this purpose.



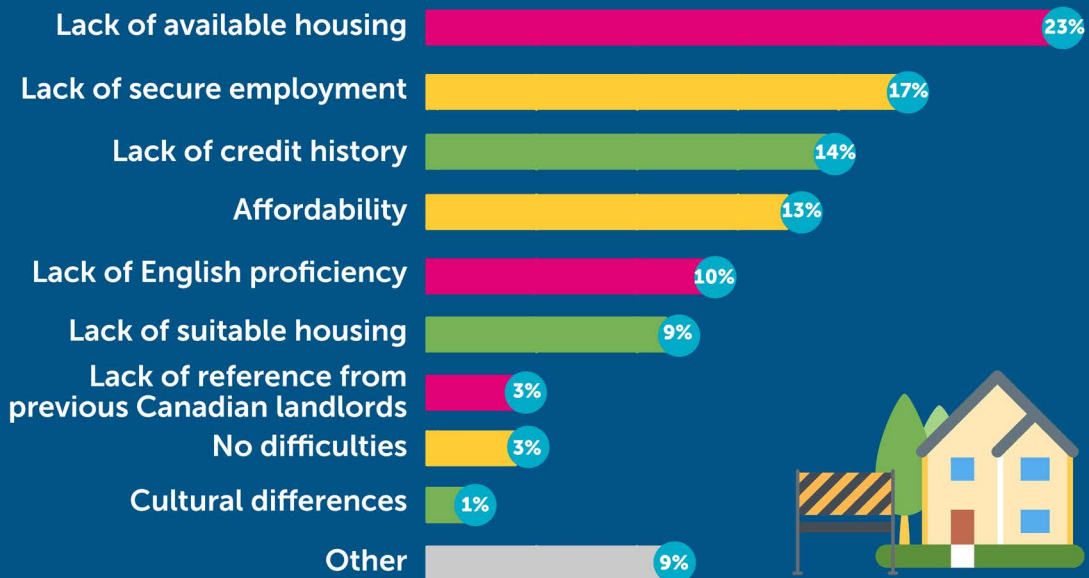
Further, 66% provided information on the number of housing listings they had applied for, with the majority of respondents indicating that they had applied for more than 5 listings and some applying to 11 or more.

Out of the people surveyed, most answered a question about searching for housing in various places. About four-fifths of them said they are looking for housing in their current area and not elsewhere.

The challenges faced by displaced Ukrainians in their search for more permanent housing reveal common barriers. Lack of available housing, lack of secure employment, and lack of credit history were identified as the top three barriers. These challenges underscore the complex nature of securing stable housing, with economic and credit-related factors playing significant roles. The fact that over three-quarters of respondents are actively looking for more permanent housing suggests a continued need for support in this crucial aspect of resettlement.

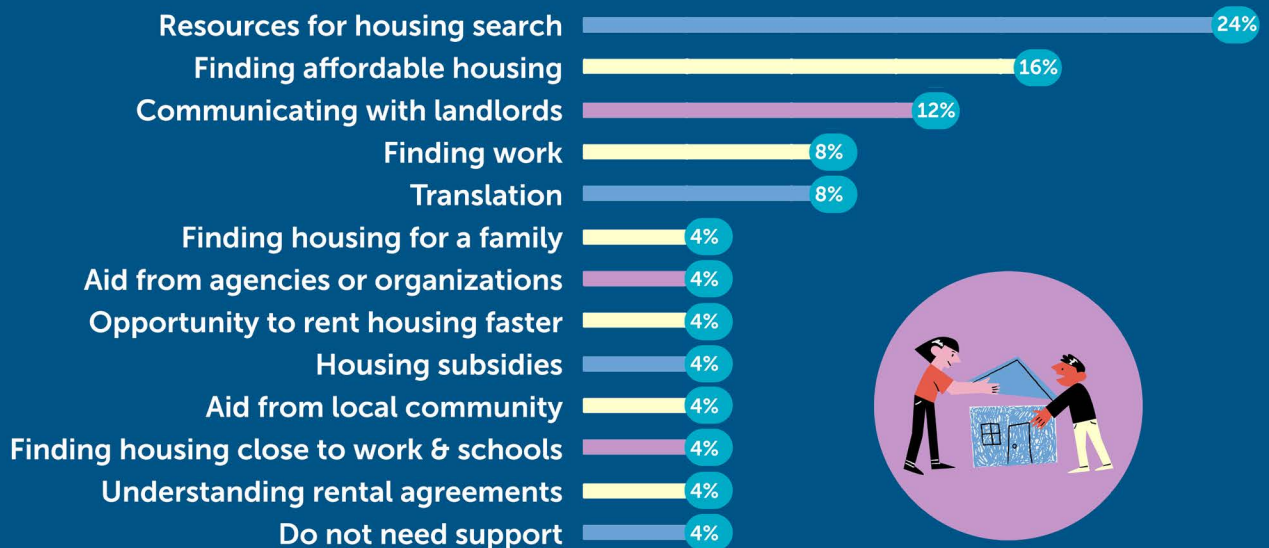
Of all participants, 36% mentioned that they received support with their search for permanent housing from their hosts and the Ukrainian community (20%). This emphasizes the importance of community connections in providing the necessary support network for displaced individuals and refugees navigating the challenges of finding housing in a new country.

Barriers to accessing housing



When asked about the support they want for finding housing, the top preference was sharing resources for the housing search. Participants clarified that this meant that they are looking for information on where to look for housing, providing rental websites, assisting with the search process, explaining how to search, offering a verified housing database, and providing information on finding reliable ads.

What support would you like?



Key Findings from Ukrainians Living with Hosts

- 1. Family Size:** Ukrainians living with host families on Vancouver Island are small families with an average of 2.6 individuals per family.
- 2. Recent Influx and Community Responsiveness:** A significant number of Ukrainians moved in with host families in February and March 2023, indicating a need for host families and community responsiveness.
- 3. Pre-arrival Coordination Success:** The majority were matched with host families before arriving, highlighting the effectiveness of pre-arrival coordination resulting in positive experiences for 92% of respondents.
- 4. Common Living Arrangements:** Shared accommodation is prevalent, with over 60% sharing some living space with their hosts, highlighting a communal approach to support.
- 5. Barriers to Housing Access:** The top three barriers are lack of available housing (62%), lack of secure employment (46%), and lack of credit history (39%).
- 6. Desired Housing Support:** Respondents express preferences for sharing resources for the housing search (32%) and support in finding affordable housing (21%).
- 7. Community Support:** 36% received support in securing permanent housing, primarily from hosts and the Ukrainian community, underscoring the importance of community connections.

Recommendations

- 1. Strengthen Pre-arrival Coordination:** Enhance efforts to match Ukrainians with host families before their arrival in Canada to ensure a smooth transition.
- 2. Address Barriers:** Address language, economic, and credit-related barriers to facilitate the housing search process for Ukrainians.
- 3. Enhance Community Engagement:** Provide targeted support for housing searches, including sharing resources, assistance with the search process, and information on finding reliable housing.
- 4. Foster Community Connections:** Continue building and fostering community connections to provide a strong support network for displaced individuals.

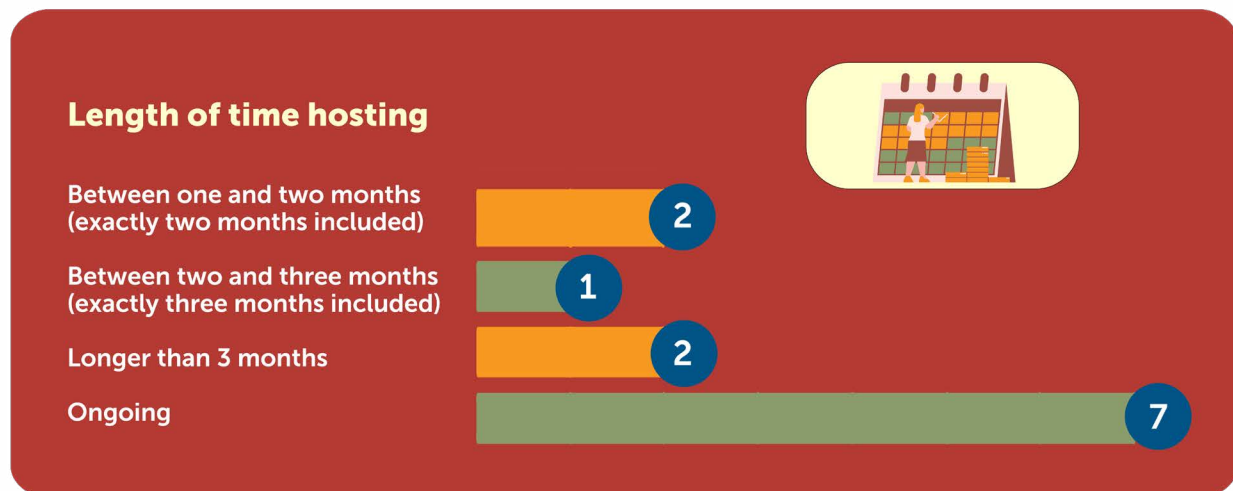


c. Housing and Hosting: Hosts and Landlords

Responses from Hosts of Ukrainians⁵

Out of the 13 hosts responding, all shared details about the housing they were providing. Most offered shared living spaces, while only a few had separate units. This matches the responses from displaced Ukrainians in the survey.

Almost all hosts of displaced Ukrainians provided information regarding the individuals and families they were hosting, providing accommodation for 19 adults and 4 children for a total of 23 guests, with an average of 2 guests per host family. Just under three-quarters of hosts provided information regarding the length of time they have been hosting displaced Ukrainians, with over one-half still hosting. _____



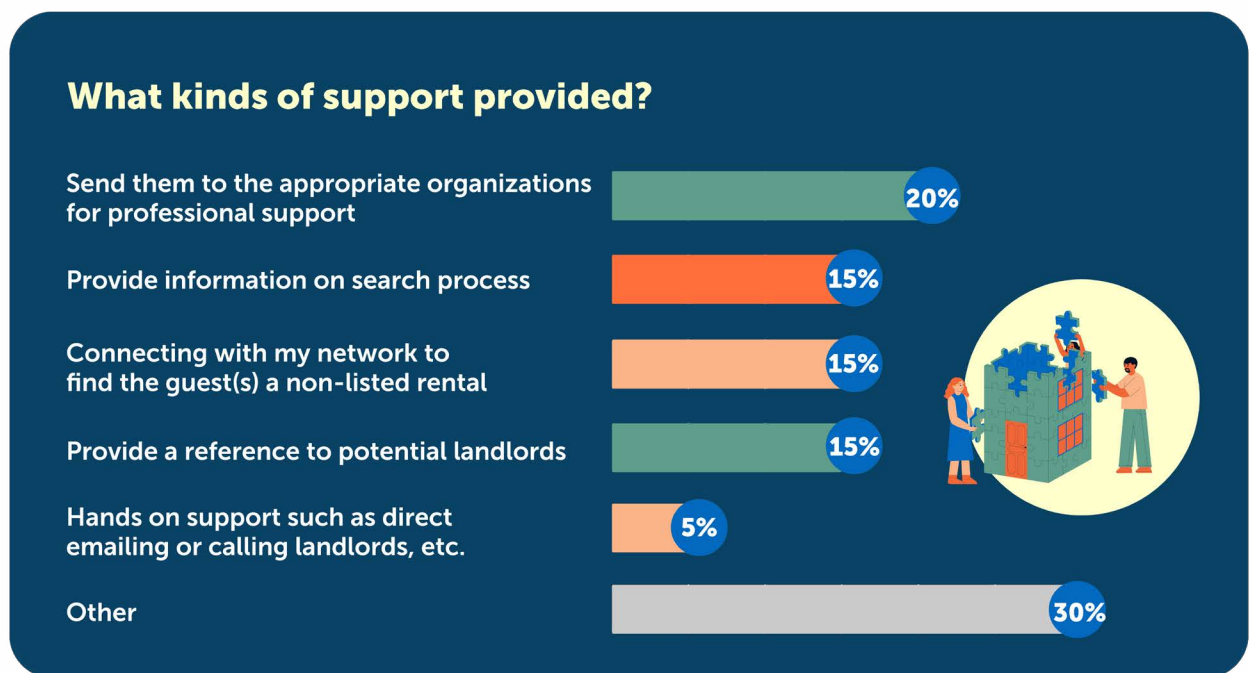
Almost two-thirds of hosts started hosting in the Spring and Summer of 2022. This aligns with the responses given by hosted Ukrainians who reported a start date of April 2022 through March 2023.

Many hosts of Ukrainians did not encounter difficulties while hosting and provided answers about what they found rewarding while hosting. Some hosts indicated that they did encounter difficulties with the language barrier marked as the main difficulty.

⁵ In total, 18 respondents opened the “Ukrainians Living with Hosts” online questionnaire. Of those 18 individuals, there were 11 fully completed questionnaires, 2 partially completed questionnaire, and 5 partially completed questionnaires with no data. Questionnaires with no data were eliminated from further analyses, leaving a total of 13 for analyses.

Responses to the question of what the hosts found rewarding were coded into three categories and included providing support, learning from guests, and appreciation. Of the 10 respondents describing what they found rewarding, almost one-half stated that providing support and/or learning from guests was rewarding.

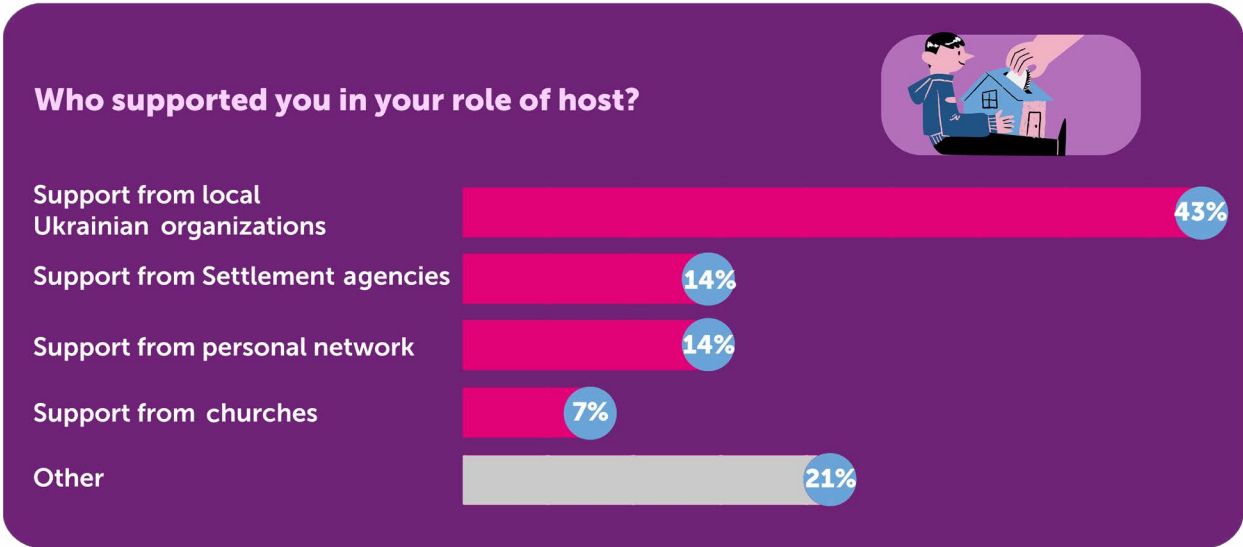
Regarding support for guests seeking permanent housing, the majority of hosts expressed commitment to aiding this transition. However, the data also highlights a subset of hosts who did not offer such support, indicating a potential area for improvement in ensuring consistent assistance for displaced individuals. Notably, for hosts providing support, the top response was directing guests to the right organizations for professional assistance.¹ This underscores the crucial role of local Settlement agencies and Ukrainian organizations in supporting hosts and facilitating smoother transitions for displaced individuals, highlighting the effectiveness of community partnerships in addressing the needs of the displaced population.



Almost all hosts replied to whether they felt supported in their role as a host, with almost two-thirds replying that they felt supported or somewhat supported in their role as a host. People who felt supported as hosts shared information about their support.

6 Of the 25 Ukrainians living with hosts almost two-thirds (64%, 16) reported that they did not receive support in their housing search. However, for a multiple selection question, of the 9 respondents (36%) who said they received support, 7 indicated that their hosts provided support with their housing search (accounting for 78% of total responses). (See the [Technical Annex](#) for details).

Almost all hosts replied to whether they felt supported in their role as a host, with almost two-thirds replying that they felt supported or somewhat supported in their role as a host. People who felt supported as hosts shared information about their support. Most commonly, they mentioned getting support from local Ukrainian cultural organizations. This suggests that *Ukrainian organizations have played a significant role in supporting those who hosted displaced Ukrainians moving to Vancouver Island.*



Looking forward, hosts expressed a willingness to continue their roles, with a majority open to hosting again.

However, a more complicated view emerges as hosts are less certain about hosting refugees from countries other than Ukraine, indicating a potential need for tailored support and guidance for those considering expanding their hosting efforts. Additionally, hosts expressed specific desires for financial assistance and check-ins with immigrant serving agencies, underscoring the importance of ongoing community support to ensure the well-being of both hosts and those

Key Findings from Hosts of Ukrainians

1. **Language Barrier:** Language barrier was a difficulty for some hosts.
2. **Rewards for hosts:** Rewards for hosts included providing support and learning from guests.
3. **Support for Permanent Housing:** The majority of hosts supported guests by helping to find permanent housing. The top support method was directing guests to relevant organizations for professional assistance.
4. **Feeling Supported:** Nearly two-thirds of hosts felt supported in their role. Local Ukrainian cultural organizations were a significant source of support for hosts.
5. **Future Hosting Intentions:** Most hosts expressed a willingness to continue hosting displaced Ukrainians. They were uncertain about hosting refugees from countries other than Ukraine.

Recommendations

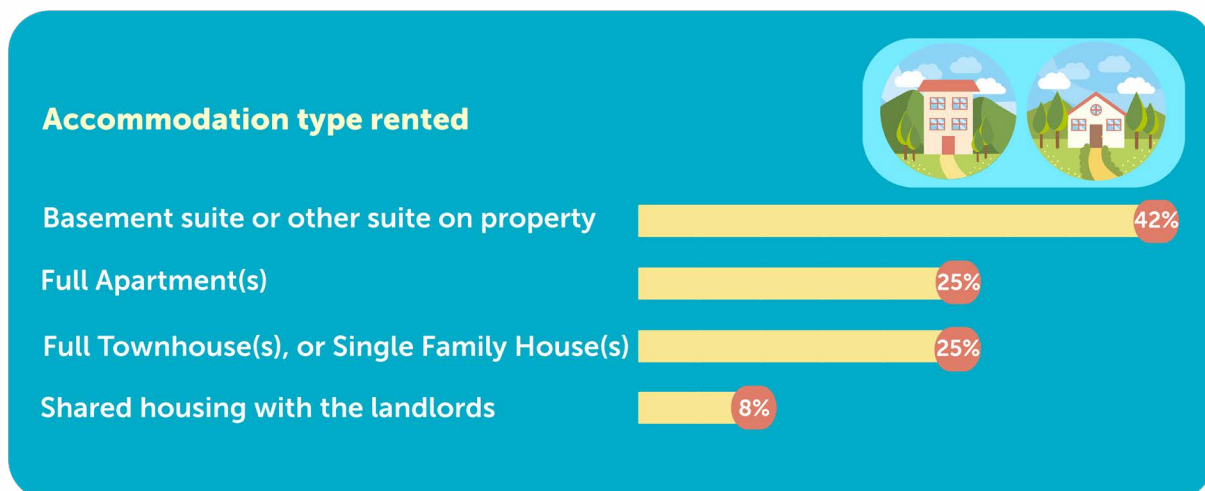
1. **Tailored Support for Hosts:** Provide tailored support for hosts willing to increase their efforts through immigrant-serving agencies and community organizations. Specifically, consider how to expand the readiness of hosts to host refugees from countries other than Ukraine.
2. **Address Views and Worries:** Address views on hosting refugees from countries other than Ukraine and provide tailored guidance to ensure diverse hosting efforts are supported.
3. **Financial Assistance and Check-Ins:** Address hosts' specific desires for financial assistance.



Responses from Landlords⁷

The insights gathered from landlords responding to the questionnaire shed light on their perspectives, practices, and willingness to rent to individuals or families with a refugee background. Almost all of the respondents identified themselves as private landlords, emphasizing the prevalence of independent property owners in the housing market. This distribution suggests that either many refugees find housing in private rental accommodations or that private landlords are more willing to participate in the survey.

All landlords responding provided self-contained spaces for those they were renting to. A self-contained space can mean a completely separate space (such as an apartment or a townhouse), but it can also mean a suite in the same building as the landlord but with separate access and amenities (a basement or other suite). As expected, landlords more often provide self-contained spaces when compared with hosts of displaced Ukrainians.



Notably, six out of ten landlords have rented to individuals or families with a refugee background in the past. Concerns about renting to refugees were relatively low, with half of the respondents expressing no concerns. Among the identified concerns, language barriers were mentioned by nearly one-third of the landlords, highlighting the importance of effective communication strategies in the landlord-tenant relationship.

Almost all landlords stated that they would be open to renting to an individual or a family with a refugee background who has no previous rental experience in Canada. This includes a rental provider managing 925 units. Only one landlord stated that they would not be open to renting to a refugee and one landlord did not respond.

⁷ In total, 13 respondents opened “A questionnaire for Landlords” online questionnaire. Of those 13 individuals, there were 8 fully completed questionnaires, 2 partially completed questionnaires, and 3 partially completed questionnaires with no data. Questionnaires with no data were eliminated from further analyses, leaving a total of 10 for analyses.

Concerns Renting to Individuals/ Families with Refugee Background



Those landlords who stated that they would be open to renting to persons with a refugee background also provided information on what might encourage them to rent to such individuals. Incentives included tenants knowing their rights, access to translators as needed, available housing funds for the first year to cover the rent if needed, and access to support workers from immigrant-serving agencies or non-profit organizations.

The linkage between landlords' concerns and encouraging incentives was dependent on language barriers and the ability to access translation services.

Incentives for renting to people with refugee background



Key Findings from Landlords

1. **Landlord Participation:** Most landlords participating in this survey, were open to renting to individuals or families with a refugee background.
2. **Concerns About Renting to Refugees:** Language barriers are a significant concern, mentioned by almost one-third of the landlords.
3. **Incentives for Landlords:** Landlords express willingness to rent to refugees, with incentives such as informed tenants, translation services, housing allocation for the first year, and support from immigrant serving agencies.

Recommendations

1. **Address Language Barriers:** Implement strategies to address language barriers between landlords and tenants with a refugee background.
2. **Provide Resources:** Offer resources to facilitate successful housing arrangements, including information on tenants' rights and responsibilities, translation services, and support from immigrant serving agencies.



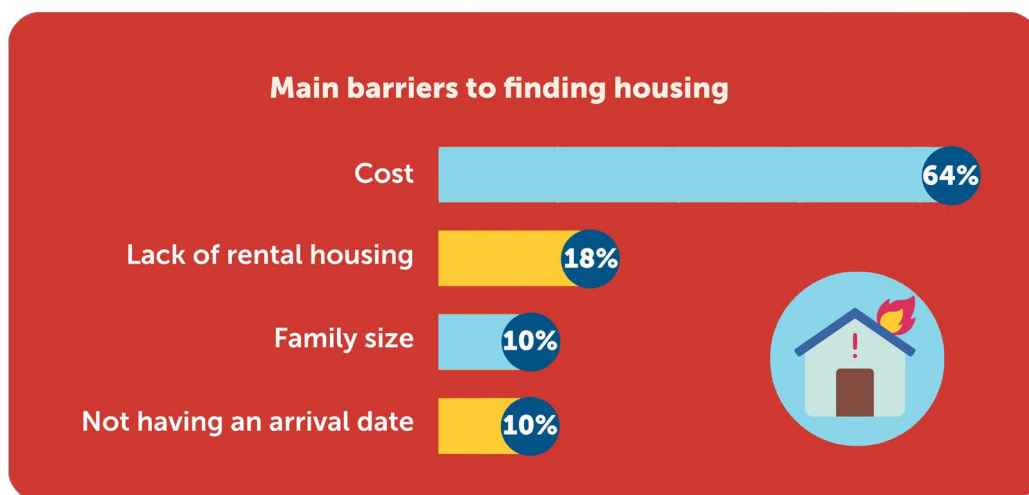
d. Supporting Housing Searches: Private Sponsors and Settlement Workers

Responses from Private Sponsors⁸

The data on refugee sponsorship provides valuable insights into the experiences of private sponsors of refugees and the challenges they face in supporting newcomers with refugee backgrounds. In contrast to the number of displaced Ukrainians supported by hosts, the sponsors have supported a larger group, totaling 39 adults and 19 children, amounting to 58 family members with a mean average of 5 individuals per family. There are likely reasons for this difference, such as sponsors not necessarily hosting the refugees they support themselves. About half of the refugees rented a place before arriving, while the other half stayed with one or more private sponsors.

All respondents sponsored refugees from Syria, except for one who also sponsored refugees from Afghanistan. Notably, four out of six respondents personally knew the Syrian refugees they sponsored because they were family members.

The challenges associated with planning for housing upon the newcomers' arrival are evident, with all 7 sponsors finding it difficult. The main barriers identified include the high cost of housing, the lack of available rental housing, family considerations, and the challenge of not having a set arrival date. These challenges underscore the complex nature of resettlement and the multifaceted support required for successful integration.

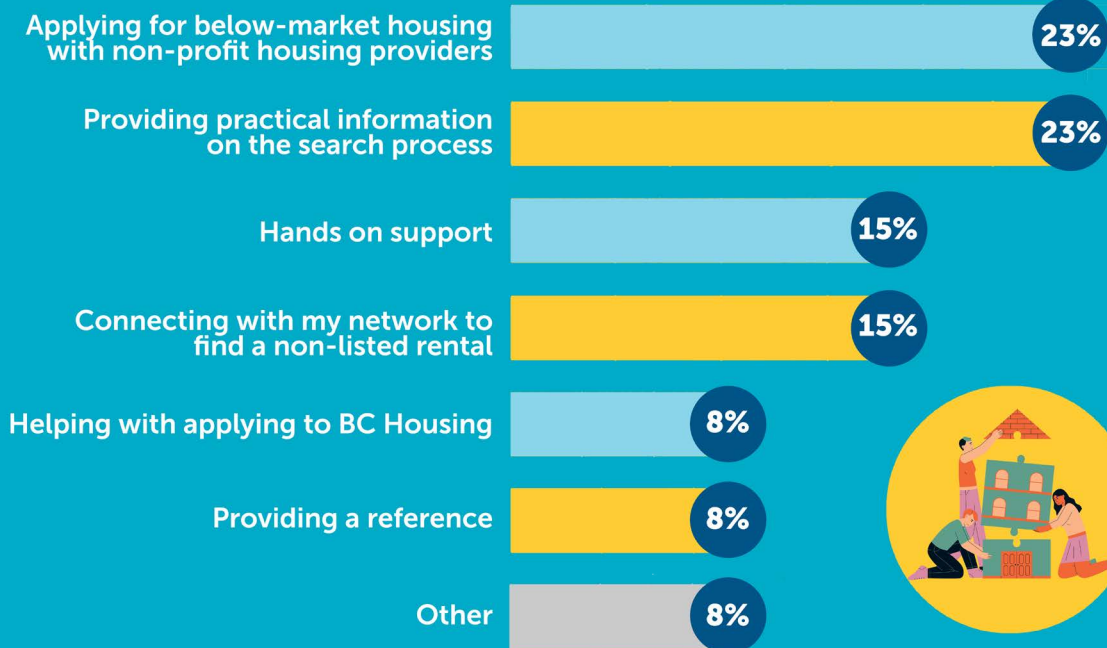


⁸ In total, 8 respondents opened the "Questionnaire for private sponsors on supporting refugees" online questionnaire. Of those 8 individuals, there were 5 fully completed questionnaires, 2 partially completed questionnaires, and 1 partially completed questionnaire with no data. Questionnaires with no data were eliminated from further analyses, leaving a total of 7 for analyses.

Main Barriers Newcomers Face Searching for Housing

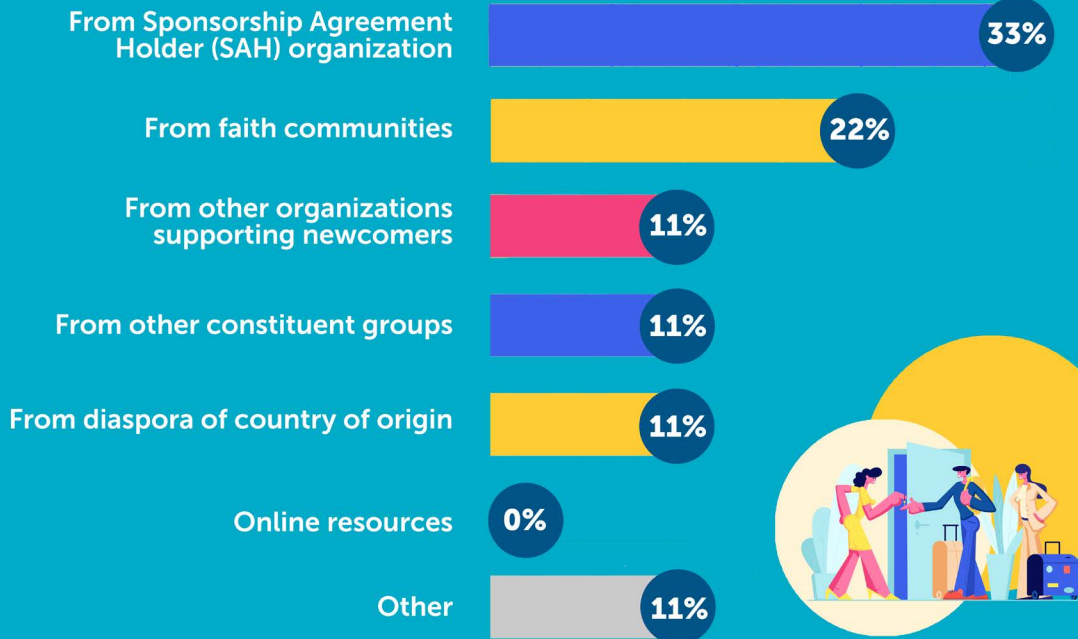


Support sponsors offered



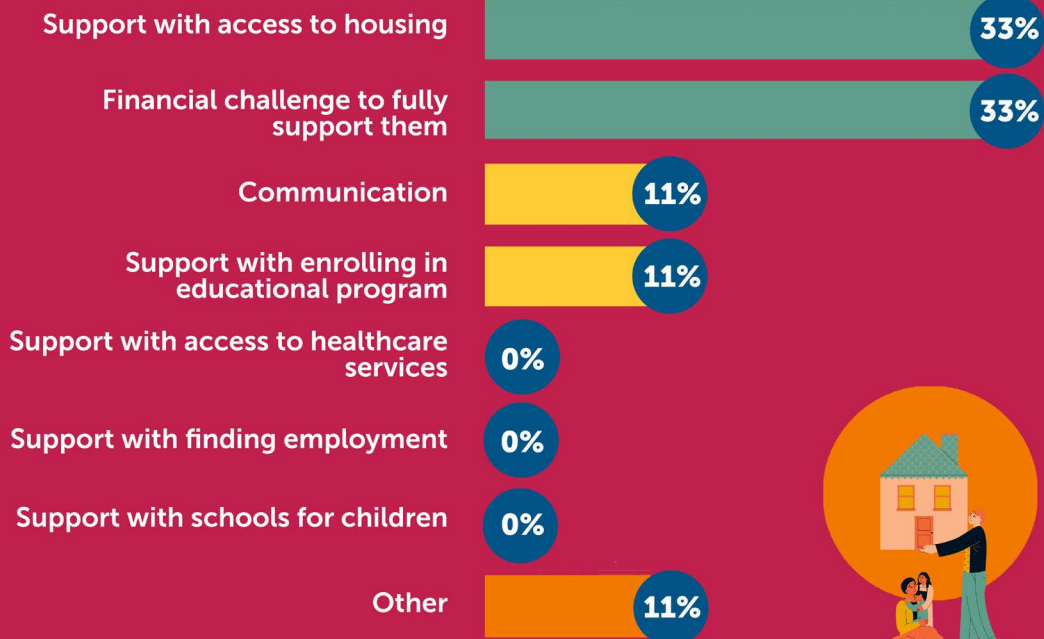
Sponsors actively involved in searching for permanent housing for newcomers indicated various types of support provided. These include helping with applying for below-market housing, offering guidance on the search process, providing hands-on support, leveraging personal networks, and assisting with applications to organizations such as BC Housing. *Finances were identified as the primary barrier for newcomers with a refugee background to find housing. Five private sponsors provided information regarding the type of support they received when sponsoring newcomers, with the majority of those respondents stating that they received support from the Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) organization.*

What type of supports do/did you receive?



In reflecting on the most challenging aspects of being a private sponsor, the sponsors highlighted challenges in supporting access to housing and facing financial constraints. These challenges underscore the importance of ongoing support mechanisms and resources to ensure the well-being of both sponsors and the refugees they are supporting.

Most challenging area as a sponsor



Key Findings from Private Sponsors

1. **Planning Challenges:** Sponsors face difficulties in planning for housing upon the refugees' arrival, with barriers including high housing costs, limited rental options, family considerations, and uncertainty about arrival dates.
2. **Financial Constraints:** Cost is a significant barrier to finding housing, identified by 64% of sponsors as a challenge.
3. **Language Barriers:** Communication challenges, including language barriers, pose difficulties for sponsors, with 11% mentioning this as a concern.

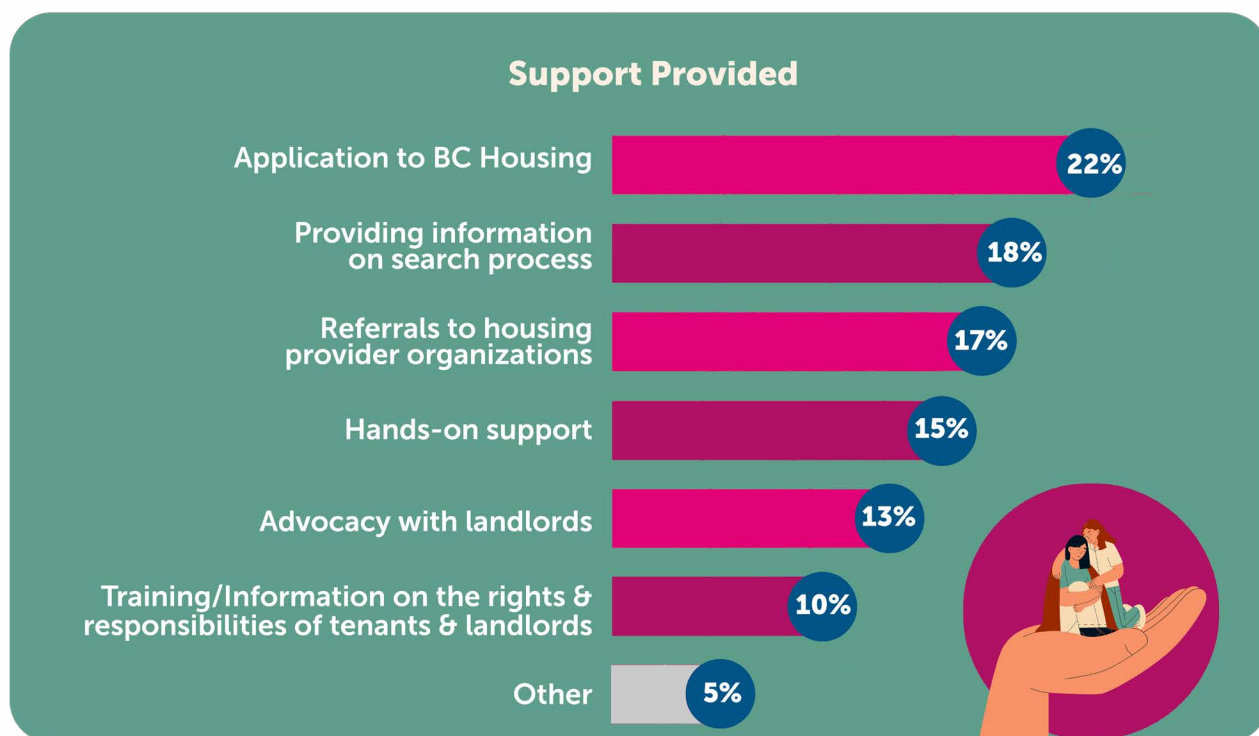
Recommendations

1. **Ongoing Support:** Sponsors and refugees can benefit from continuous support mechanisms to navigate challenges in housing, communication, and integration.
2. **Accessible Online Resources:** Providing accessible online resources, such as toolkits and workshops, can empower sponsors and refugees in their housing search and integration process.



Responses from Settlement Workers⁹

Settlement workers responding to the online questionnaire provided services for all newcomers eligible to receive settlement services or Government-Assisted refugees only. The services provided ranged from supporting applications to BC Housing to support move-in and included assistance with the housing search process, referrals to housing organizations, emailing or calling landlords on behalf of the clients, landlord advocacy, and education on tenants' rights and responsibilities.



When settlement workers were asked about how newcomers have been settling in the past two years, they mentioned that newcomers usually stay in temporary housing such as staying with relatives, in hotels, shelters, or rentals with a set end date (e.g. Airbnb) for an average of 3 months to 1.5 years. This situation affects the newcomers' feelings of stability and safety, causing frustration that diminishes their motivation to continue searching for housing. One settlement worker pointed out the challenges refugees face, especially those sponsored under the Government Assisted Refugees (GAR) program because they only have 12 months of funding. This creates difficulties in establishing a stable routine when they arrive and can give a false perspective on "starting in Canada."

⁹ In total, 16 respondents opened the settlement worker online questionnaire. Of those 16 individuals, there were 13 fully completed questionnaires, 1 partially completed questionnaire, and 2 partially completed questionnaires with no data. Questionnaires with no data were eliminated from further analyses, leaving a total of 14 for analyses.

When settlement workers were asked about the challenges that people or families with a refugee background face when searching for housing, most of them said that high rents are the main problem. Some mentioned that not having references from previous landlords and having a limited income are also obstacles. Additionally, a few said that landlords turning down applications from big families and language difficulties are significant challenges. Surprisingly, only a small number of respondents mentioned a lack of available rental properties as a barrier to finding housing.

"If you are talking about refugees that are sponsored, it is very challenging as it gives a false perspective on 'starting in Canada' and as they only have 12 months of allowance, they need to get into a routine fast."

[Settlement worker]



When settlement workers were asked if they believed that specific socio-demographic groups faced more difficulties in securing housing than others, almost all responded "yes". The most frequent responses regarding the socio-economic groups facing more difficulties included limited income, groups who cannot communicate in English, immigrants, and refugees. It is important to note that a number of settlement workers highlighted that they felt that refugees from the Middle East and Africa face more difficulties in securing housing than refugees from other regions. While we know that the settlement workers responding to the online questionnaire worked with all newcomers eligible to receive immigrant services or Government-Assisted Refugees only, we do not know the ethnic composition of the groups they supported that may have some influence on their responses.

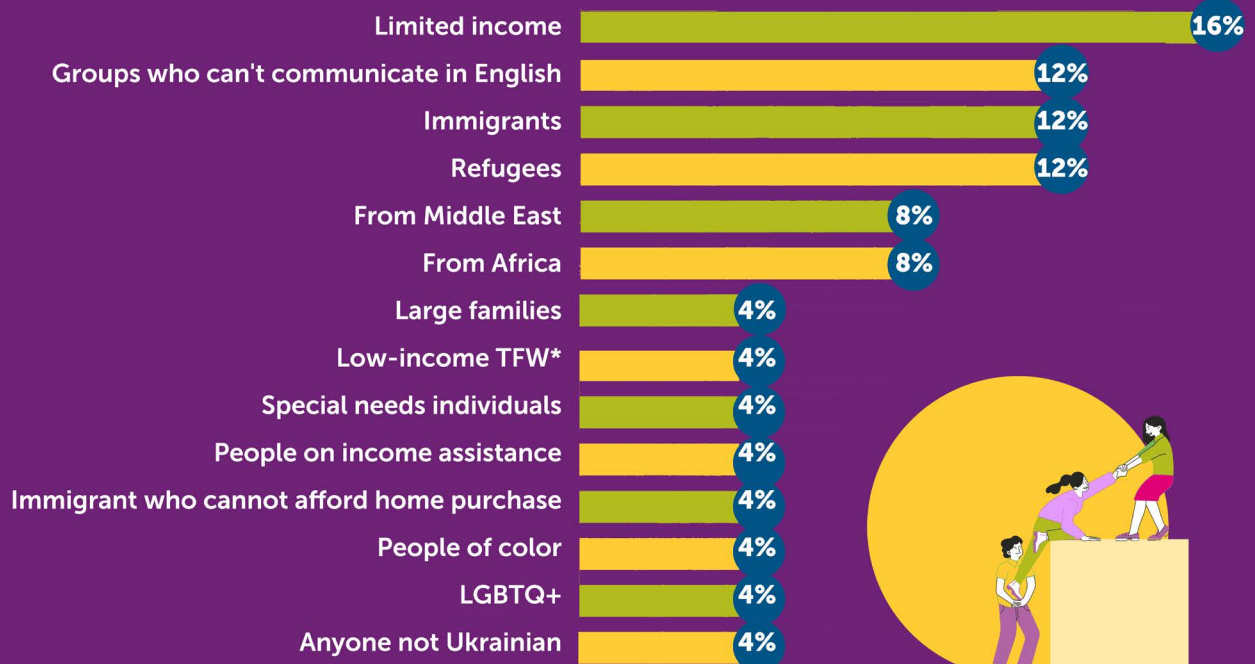
Most settlement workers shared reasons why certain socio-demographic groups might struggle to find housing. Some mentioned that refugees and immigrants face challenges because they can't express their needs directly. Others said that prejudice against people from different races or having low income and high living expenses could be factors. Less frequently mentioned reasons included a lack of suitable and affordable housing, cultural differences, the challenges of being a newcomer without community connections, and limited resources like no internet.

"Unlike international students who tend to leave after 8 months or Ukrainians who have a more familiar background to Canadians, Afghan clients are unknown to many landlords and because of their lack of English language skills landlords tend to worry about renting to Afghans."

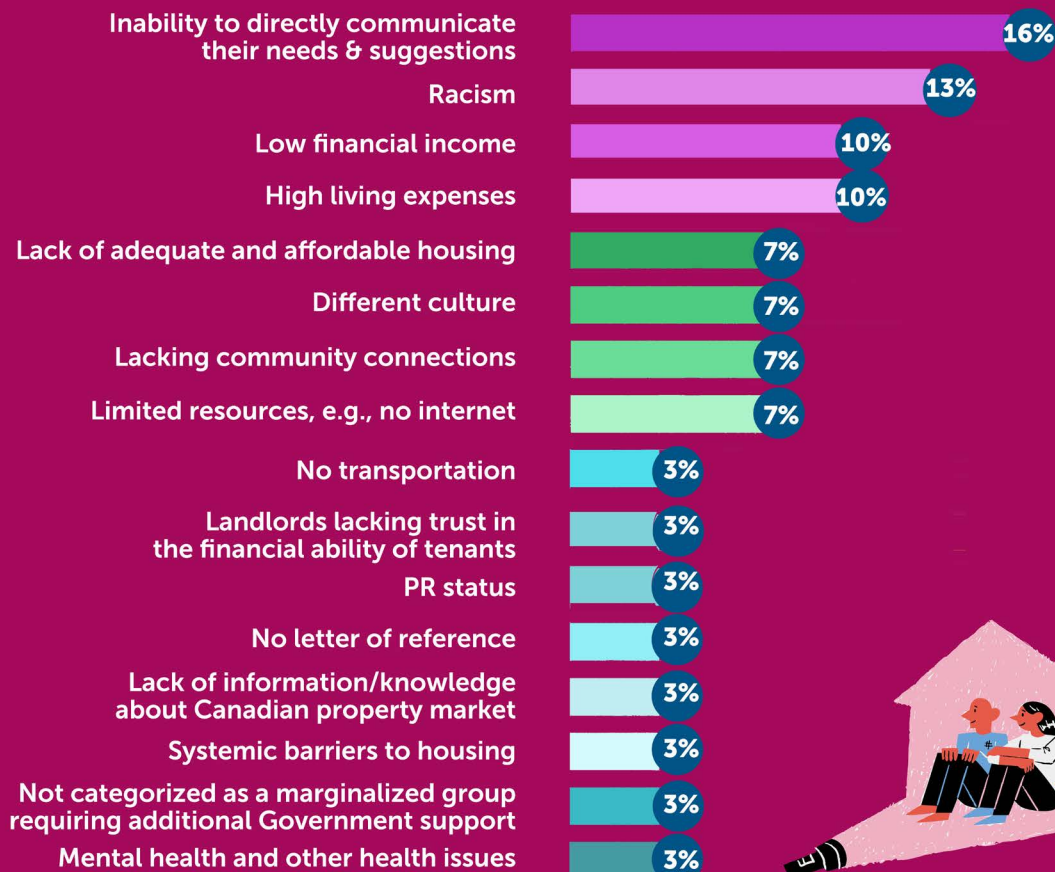
[Settlement Worker]



Socio-economic groups facing more difficulties



Reasons for Socio-Economic Group Difficulties



One settlement worker commented on the possibility that unfamiliarity with cultures from the Middle East might create issues due to biases and racism in the community. Another settlement worker commented on refugees having a “lack of privileges to have time to network to make connections.”

When asked what concerns landlords might have, almost all settlement workers provided 29 responses that were distilled into 14 categories. The top two suggestions for landlord concerns were the ability to pay rent on time and take care of the rental property. While not mentioned as frequently, some settlement workers suggested that the size of the family, language barriers, poverty/unstable income, and having no references may also have been concerns for landlords.

While not a concern, one settlement worker commented on landlords feeling renting to newcomers as “too much work for them because it is easier to rent to more affluent and local people” and that landlords feel they are “able to make more money off locals.”

Insights into landlords’ concerns and incentives reveal a nuanced picture. While financial stability and the ability to care for property remain top concerns, there is room for positive engagement. Landlords express a sense of compassion for newcomers and believe in the positive impacts of increased diversity in neighborhoods and long-term tenancy. However, challenges persist, with some landlords expressing a reluctance to rent to newcomers due to perceived complexities.

As is evident in these answers, there wasn’t much agreement on what settlement workers perceived landlords’ concerns and landlords’ responses to the survey except for both groups recognizing that language barriers could be a challenge. Because the numbers responding to these surveys was low, this is not a surprise. It is good to keep in mind as well that settlement workers work with a variety of landlords and that there are a lot of differences between landlords. Absentee landlords, landlords with inequitable practices, and landlords who are hostile to newcomers, are less likely to volunteer to answer a survey asking about their practices and their attitudes towards immigrant tenants. The differences between the answers should be seen as complementary: as examples of the needs of mostly sympathetic landlords, and the barriers that difficult landlords might create for newcomers.

Both landlords and settlement workers identified access to and collaboration with settlement services as a potential support and incentive for landlords to rent to newcomers.

Key Findings from Settlement Workers

- 1. Temporary Housing Challenges:** Refugees on Vancouver Island spend an average of 3 months to 1.5 years in temporary housing, leading to emotional stress and logistical issues.
- 2. Settlement Difficulties:** High rent, limited income, and short allowances for Government-Assisted Refugees make it challenging for newcomers to establish themselves quickly.
- 3. Obstacles in Housing Search:** Lack of rental history, hesitancy to rent to large families, and language barriers are significant obstacles faced by socio-demographic groups seeking housing.
- 4. Landlord Concerns:** Landlords worry about the financial stability of tenants and property care, with some expressing unwillingness to rent to newcomers due to perceived complexities.
- 5. Compassion and Diversity:** Some landlords show compassion and value diversity; incentives like long-term tenancy can positively influence their decisions.

Recommendations

- 1. Ongoing Support: Policy Adjustments:** Adjust policies for refugees to better align with their housing needs within the allowed time.
- 2. Enhanced Support Programs:** Enhance support programs for newcomers, including mental health services and community-building initiatives to advance their ability to establish themselves in the community.
- 3. Bias Awareness Campaigns:** Run campaigns to address biases and create an understanding of the challenges faced by newcomers and refugees.
- 4. Positive Landlord Engagement:** Engage landlords positively by showcasing success stories and providing resources for better landlord-tenant relationships.
- 5. Collaborative Approach:** Encourage collaboration between settlement workers, landlords, and communities to create a more supportive housing environment.



Limitations



Because this study is based on reaching out to two small subsets of displaced individuals, namely displaced Ukrainians and Syrian and Afghan refugees, it does not represent the broader refugee population or the challenges faced by other immigrant groups. Also, the reliance on Ukrainian cultural organizations, SAH agencies, and immigrant serving agencies for participant recruitment may have inadvertently resulted in an over-representation of individuals connected to these organizations. While the findings are valuable for providing qualitative insights into the experiences of vulnerable newcomer groups, this does impact the ability to generalize the findings to the broader population. It should be kept in mind that other refugees and displaced individuals might experience a more diverse range of challenges and opportunities in the housing market.

Responses from hosts of Ukrainians, private sponsors, landlords, and settlement workers are relatively sparse, making it challenging to draw definitive conclusions from these subsets. The limited data from these key stakeholder groups may result in an incomplete understanding of their full perspectives and experiences. In this report, these additional responses serve to offer additional qualitative framing of the results.

This study primarily focuses on Vancouver Island and findings may not be fully applicable to different regions with different housing markets and community dynamics. As well, the representation of participants in the Mid Island and North Island regions was low. Conclusions drawn from this subset should be approached with caution due to the potential for individual variation. Comparisons between regions have not been made for this reason.

While the decision to use multiple surveys and interviews tailored to specific groups was intentional, it introduces a potential limitation. The divergence in questionnaires may limit the ability to compare responses directly across different participant groups, potentially hindering the formation of a more cohesive narrative that spans all stakeholders involved.

The reliance on field notes instead of recorded conversations presents a potential limitation as well. Transcripts offer a more nuanced and detailed account of responses, aiding in a richer analysis. Subjective differences between individuals coding the conversations might also affect the ability to generalize the findings. The interviews were conducted in English, Ukrainian, Russian, and Arabic and this may have introduced language-related challenges. The choice to conduct interviews and focus group engagements both in-person and online might introduce methodological differences. All this could potentially influence the quality and depth of the data collected.

This study captures a snapshot of the housing situation and experiences during a specific period. Housing dynamics are subject to change over time, and the dynamic nature of the rental market may result in evolving challenges that are not adequately captured in a single-point study.

4. What's Next? Working Together for Suitable Housing

Considering the challenges and successes of providing housing for three vulnerable groups on Vancouver Island, displaced Ukrainians, and Syrian and Afghan refugees, it is crucial for local governments and community organizations to work together. By lowering the barriers and celebrating the strengths mentioned in this report, and by being flexible and always keeping in mind the different needs of residents, Vancouver Island can effectively and actively build a future where access to suitable housing is a central part of creating welcoming, resilient, and connected communities.

a. Key Findings Across Research Groups

Perhaps not surprisingly, this report shows that displaced Ukrainians and refugees struggle with the high rental prices and limited housing options across Vancouver Island. The cost of housing is a challenge for any tenant in the region with up to 40% of all tenants spending over 30% and 16% spending over 50% of their income on rent (Canadian Rental Housing Index, 2021). In light of this, it is especially significant to see that many of the participants in this study spend more than 70% of their income on rent, indicating a seriously higher financial burden for these individuals and families. Many of them typically spend three months to 1.5 years or more searching for suitable housing and are facing challenges such as needing proof of employment and credit checks in a country in which they have not yet had time to build up their financial history.



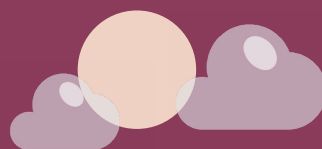
The challenges finding housing are not just experienced by newcomers, but also by their hosts, sponsors, and settlement workers who each in their own way offer support and assistance with the housing search. Bringing these different perspectives together paints a picture of a group of vulnerable tenants facing serious challenges that lead many to having to rely on external support like food banks and income assistance.

Across research groups, communication challenges pose difficulties. Tenants, hosts, and landlords worry about their ability to communicate with each other. In addition, some landlords worry about the financial stability of refugee and displaced tenants, and some express reluctance to rent to newcomers due to perceived complexities. Several landlords in this study nonetheless shared that they found renting to refugees rewarding and that they would be open to renting to refugees again.

Even though landlords and tenants have concerns, there is still much to be hopeful about. *It is interesting to see that most hosted Ukrainians rated their hosts very highly and that hosts found the experience of hosting fulfilling, both groups were feeling supported by community groups like Ukrainian cultural organizations, and hosts expressed a willingness to host again.*

We should be careful to note that this positive result cannot readily be extended to other groups of displaced refugees. Hosts were not sure if they were ready to host someone from another country other than Ukraine. This fits with the perception of settlement workers that among refugees, people from the Middle East and Africa might struggle more with finding suitable housing than people from European backgrounds. It could be helpful to develop programs encouraging hosts and landlords to rent to a wider diversity of refugees with incentives such as informed tenants, translation services, housing allocation for the first year, and support from immigrant-serving agencies.

Hosts, sponsors, and settlement workers agree that well-rounded community support makes a difference. For example, the role that Ukrainian cultural and community organizations played in matching and supporting hosts and hosted individuals was highly rated and mentioned several times by multiple groups. All groups spoke about the importance of sharing resources and increasing or maintaining community support for newcomers, tenants, hosts, landlords, and sponsors alike.



b. Recommendations

Foster Relationships

- Establish a collaborative framework between non-profit/community organizations and those supporting displaced Ukrainians and refugees. Encourage regular meetings and information-sharing sessions to enhance coordination and maximize the impact of support services.

Information Sharing

- Develop a comprehensive information-sharing strategy to disseminate resources on housing, services, and support. Utilize various channels such as social media, news media, community events, and targeted outreach to ensure wide accessibility.
- Create an online platform that consolidates relevant information, including available housing options, support programs, and contact details for key organizations. Regularly update this platform to provide accurate and current information.
- Organize community workshops or seminars to educate both newcomers and residents about housing options, tenancy rights and responsibilities, and available support services. Encourage dialogue to address concerns and foster a sense of community understanding.

Suggestions for Hosts

- Actively promote a sense of community among hosted individuals and their hosts. Encourage shared activities and interactions to build strong connections and a supportive environment.
- Consider organizing community events or support groups to facilitate bonding between displaced individuals and host families. These events can provide opportunities for cultural exchange and mutual understanding.
- Recognize the challenges faced by displaced individuals in finding permanent housing. Offer ongoing support by collaborating with community organizations and partners to provide resources, share information on reliable housing ads, and assist in finding affordable housing.
- Arrange regular check-ins with settlement workers to ensure hosts receive necessary support and guidance throughout the hosting process. Address any concerns promptly and facilitate communication between hosts and support agencies.

Suggestions for Nonprofit Organizations

- Recognize the pivotal role of community connections for displaced populations. Develop programs that foster ongoing support networks, creating a sense of community and addressing the diverse needs of displaced individuals.
- Provide tailored support for hosts and landlords involved in accommodating displaced populations. Address challenges proactively, offer resources, and establish ongoing connections with support agencies to ensure a positive hosting experience.
- Develop accessible online resources specifically for private sponsors of refugees. These resources should assist in overcoming housing planning challenges and provide ongoing support to both sponsors and refugees throughout the settlement process.
- Advocate for the development of a comprehensive support infrastructure, including financial assistance, settlement worker check-ins, and accessible online resources for all partners involved in housing initiatives.

Suggestions regarding Government and Housing Policies

- Encourage municipalities to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their housing strategies. Seek resident and stakeholder feedback to adapt policies in response to evolving community needs and emerging challenges.
- Advocate for the adoption of inclusive housing strategies, emphasizing the success of community-based approaches observed on Vancouver Island. Engage with policymakers to promote diversity in housing options and address the unique needs of different communities.

Finally, despite many challenges, the majority of displaced Ukrainians shared that they feel connected to their communities, commenting that they like knowing their neighbors and that they feel safe in their new communities. This connection influences their preference for staying in their current neighborhood on Vancouver Island.

We should all take note of this, that during a time of international crisis and war, during an ongoing national housing crisis, the success of a crisis response still relies on creating strong relationships, community connections, and to showing up as a community for each other.

5. Glossary of Terms

Affordable Housing: housing that is reasonably priced, allowing individuals or families to meet basic living expenses while still having funds available for other necessities.

BC Housing: a government agency in British Columbia, Canada, responsible for providing and managing housing solutions.

Bias and Racism: prejudice or discrimination based on stereotypes related to race or ethnicity.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC): a governmental organization responsible for providing mortgage insurance, assisting in the development of affordable housing, and conducting research on housing and real estate trends in Canada.

Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAT) visa: visa issued to Ukrainians allowing them to travel to Canada for emergency reasons, related to conflict or crisis situations in Ukraine.

Communal Approach: emphasizes a sense of community and shared responsibility.

Community Integration: efforts and initiatives that promote the active participation and inclusion of newcomers in the local community.

Condominiums: residential units within a larger building or complex, where each unit is individually owned, and common areas are shared.

Cowichan Intercultural Society (CIS): a registered nonprofit charity serving the Cowichan Valley Region since 1981. With 18 active community service programs currently, CIS is a leading community resource for immigrant services and provides education and awareness to develop welcoming and inclusive communities.¹

Demographics: statistical data relating to the population and particular groups within it, such as age, gender, income, etc.

Displaced Person: individuals who have been forced to leave their home countries due to conflict, persecution, or other crises.

Displacement Trauma: psychological distress and challenges¹⁰ experienced by individuals who have been forced to leave their homes involuntarily, often due to conflict, disaster, or persecution.

Diversity: in the context of neighborhoods, it refers to a variety of people from different backgrounds living together.

Effective Communication: clear and open exchange of information between parties to ensure mutual understanding.

10 See <https://www.cowichanintercultural.org/>

Equitable Access: ensuring fair and just access to resources and opportunities, regardless of individual differences or circumstances.

Family Composition: the structure and makeup of the families, including the number of adults and children.

Focus Group Guides: guidelines or plans for conducting focus group discussions, providing a framework for moderators to follow.

Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR): refugees whose resettlement is primarily supported by the Canadian government, including financial assistance for housing.

Host Families: families who host displaced Ukrainians, providing them with accommodation and support.

Hosts: individuals or families who provide accommodations and support for displaced individuals or refugees.

Housing Crisis: a situation where there is a shortage of affordable housing, making it difficult for individuals and families to find suitable and reasonably priced accommodation.

Housing Dynamics: the complex interplay of factors influencing the housing market, including supply and demand, economic conditions, and regional policies.

Housing Types and Lease Agreements: findings related to the types of housing and lease agreements observed.

Housing Working Group: a collaborative team or committee focused on addressing and improving housing-related matters.

Immigrant Services: services provided to help newcomers integrate into a new community.

Immigrant Serving Agencies: organizations that assist newcomers in adapting to a new country.

Immigrant Welcome Centre of Comox Valley (IWC): the Multicultural & Immigrant Services Association of the North Vancouver Island (MISA), operationally known as the Immigrant Welcome Centre, is a registered nonprofit charity serving Campbell River, the Comox Valley, and northern Vancouver Island. IWC offers immigrant services, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), and social groups and programs for newcomers. Additionally, IWC works to forge partnerships with organizations and people in the region to provide a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive community.²

Influx: a sudden arrival or increase, often referring to a large number of people.

11 See <https://immigrantwelcome.ca/>

Intercultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA): a registered nonprofit charity serving the Capital Region of British Columbia for over 50 years. ICA's purpose is to support the full integration of newcomer immigrants and refugees into the social, economic, and civic life in the Capital Region. ICA provides a variety of services and supports to newcomers and the community, as well as learning resources.³

Interview Protocols: a set of guidelines or rules for conducting interviews, ensuring consistency and reliability in the information gathered.

Landlord Advocacy: support or representation provided by settlement workers to tenants when dealing with landlords.

Lease Agreements: legally binding contracts between a landlord and a tenant, specifying terms and conditions of rental arrangements.

Mean Average: the sum of a set of numbers divided by the count of those numbers.

Mean Price: the average price of housing in a given area.

Median: the middle point of a range of values, separating the higher half from the lower half.

Methodological Differences: variations in research methods, particularly between in-person and online interactions.

Newcomer: the Canadian government defines newcomer as an immigrant or refugee who is adapting to life in Canada and does not have a specified length of time attached to this status. For example, a permanent resident who has been in Canada for 10 years could still be considered a newcomer. Once someone gets their Canadian citizenship, they are no longer a newcomer.

12

Non-Profit Housing Providers: organizations that offer housing solutions without the primary goal of making a profit.

Official Community Plans (OCPs): documents that outline a municipality's policies and goals for future development, including land use, transportation, and housing.

Percentage of Income Spent on Rent: the portion of an individual's or household's income dedicated to paying rent, often expressed as a percentage.

Pre-arrival Coordination: Planning and organizing activities before the displaced individuals arrive.

Private Sponsors of Refugees: individuals or groups who voluntarily commit to supporting and assisting refugees in their resettlement process in a new country.

Qualitative Analysis: examination and interpretation of non-numerical data to identify patterns and themes.

12 See <https://www.icavictoria.org/>

Questionnaires: structured sets of questions designed to gather information, typically used for surveys and research.

Refugee Readiness Team: A team or group organized to quickly respond to emerging situations or crises. Funded by the BC Government. There are several RRTs across British Columbia.

Refugee Sponsorship: The act of individuals or groups taking responsibility for supporting refugees, often involving providing housing, financial assistance, and other forms of support.

Refugee: A person who has fled their home countries due to fear of persecution or conflict.

Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) Agency: Agencies that help refugees resettle in Canada. SAHs are committed to financially supporting refugees during their sponsorship, providing settlement services to sponsored refugees, including helping them adjust to life in their new community, and overseeing any co-sponsors, constituent groups, or volunteers they work with.

Settlement Workers: professionals who assist newcomers, including refugees, in adapting to their new environment by providing support in areas such as housing, employment, and community integration.

Socio-Economic Groups: groups described through categories such as income levels, language proficiency, ethnicity, etc.

Subjective Nature of Responses: responses based on personal experiences and perspectives rather than objective facts.

Survey Analysis: the examination and interpretation of data gathered through surveys.

Temporary Housing: short-term accommodations where newcomers, such as refugees, stay while transitioning to more permanent housing. Often found through arrangements between immigrant serving agencies and hotels.

Tenancy Rate: the percentage of available rental properties that are currently occupied.

Tenants' Rights and Responsibilities: the legal and ethical obligations and entitlements of individuals renting or leasing property.

UsedVictoria and Craigslist: Online platforms for classified ads and services.

Vacancy Rate: the percentage of unoccupied rental units in a given area, reflecting the availability of housing.

Validity of Findings: the extent to which the research accurately measures what it claims to measure and whether the results can be considered trustworthy, credible, and applicable to the broader context.

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7. Who are we?

a. We are GVLIP :

The Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership is responsive to the needs and aspirations of newcomers and the communities in which we live. By listening, informing, researching, connecting, and collaborating on community projects and events we foster partnerships with local governments, employers, educators, healthcare professionals, and housing organizations to create a welcoming, equitable, inclusive, just, and well-connected community in which everybody has opportunities to thrive, learn, live, work, and play in safety. We have four priorities: health, housing, employment, and equity.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

b. We are RRT-VI

The Refugee Readiness Team of Vancouver Island works to make sure that Island communities are ready to welcome, respond to, and leverage the strengths and contributions of refugees and displaced Ukrainians. We are here to build safe, welcoming, and resilient communities where refugees and displaced Ukrainians can build their lives. We focus on four key areas: housing, health, employment, and education.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

The work of the Vancouver Island Refugee Readiness Team (RRT-VI) and the Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership (GVLIP) is supported by several organizations. Members include representation from government, funding, intercultural, housing, and non-profit organizations, as well as developers.

c. Partners

Government Organizations:

Capital Regional District (CRD)
City of Nanaimo
District of Saanich
City of Victoria

Funding Organizations:

United Way – United for Ukraine
Victoria Foundation

Developers:

Wild Group
Intercultural Organizations:
Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
Comox Valley Immigrant Welcome Centre

Housing Organizations:

Greater Victoria Housing Society
Pacifica Housing

Non-profit Organizations:

Alliance to End Homelessness in the Capital Region

Landlords:

Landlords BC

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To learn more, visit www.icavictoria.org

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