

The AMSSA Info Sheet series has been created to inform and support our members and community partners. The Info Sheets cover a wide range of topics and highlight important facts and trends from across Canada and BC. Our goal is to assist organizations in navigating the rapidly changing landscape of the BC settlement sector.\*

## Refugees — Statistics & Trends in Canada and BC

In 2012, 23,056 refugees and their families made Canada their home. This AMSSA Info Sheet looks at numbers, trends and future directions of refugee protection and resettlement in Canada and BC.

### Facts and Figures: Canada

- ⇒ **23,056** refugees and their families arrived in Canada in 2012: **5,412** Government-assisted Refugees (GARs), **4,212** Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) and **8,578** Refugees landed in Canada (RLCs) as well as **4,854** refugee dependents.<sup>1</sup>
- ⇒ In 2012, Canada resettled 26% fewer refugees than in 2011.<sup>2</sup>
- ⇒ Source countries of refugees arriving in Canada vary significantly between the three refugee categories and as a result of changes in country conditions.<sup>3</sup> See figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 – Top Source Countries of Refugees to Canada, by category, 2000-2010**

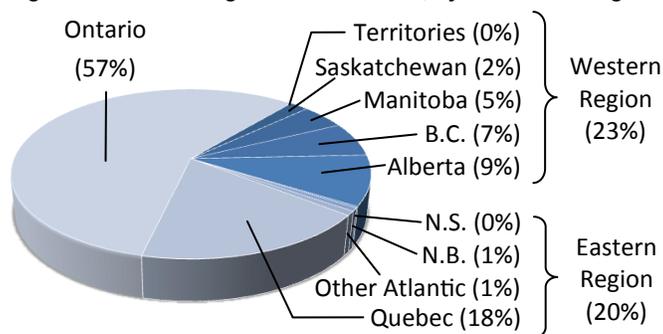
	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>
GARs	Afghanistan (12,052)	Colombia (11,967)	Iraq (6,701)	Iran (4,546)	Congo (4,334)
PSRs	Iraq (8,708)	Afghanistan (8,351)	Ethiopia (4,891)	Sudan (1,731)	Somalia (1,731)
RLCs	Sri Lanka (14,718)	Colombia (12,487)	Pakistan (9,766)	China (8,504)	Mexico (5,022)

*Table created by AMSSA. Data source: CIC.*<sup>4</sup>

### Provincial and Regional Breakdown

- ⇒ BC welcomed 711 GARs from 20 different countries in 2012.<sup>5</sup> The top source countries for GARs in BC were Iran (26%), Afghanistan (26%), Somalia (14%), Iraq (14%) and Bhutan (4%).<sup>6</sup>

**Figure 2 – % of Refugee Arrivals in 2011, by Province & Region**



*Graph created by AMSSA. Data source: CIC.*<sup>7</sup>

### Definition of Terms

**Government-assisted Refugee (GAR):** Convention Refugees selected from *abroad* by the government of Canada for resettlement. GARs hold permanent resident (PR) status upon arrival and receive financial and other support from the Government of Canada for up to one year.<sup>8</sup>

**Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR):** Convention Refugees selected from *abroad* by a private sponsor who agrees to provide financial and other support for one year. PSRs hold PR status upon arrival.<sup>9</sup>

**Refugee Claimants/Asylum Claimant:** Foreign nationals who apply for refugee protection from *within* Canada, or at a port of entry. Once their asylum claims are heard and approved by the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) they can apply for PR status.<sup>10</sup>

**Refugees Landed in Canada (RLC):** Refugee Claimants who have their asylum claim approved by the IRB.

**Convention Refugee:** Person who meets the refugee definition in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.<sup>11</sup> GARs, PSRs and RLCs are all Convention Refugees.

**Refugee Dependents:** Spouse and children of the refugee claimant who are included in the application for refugee status.<sup>12</sup>

- ⇒ The CIC Western Region of Canada welcomed 6,302 refugees in 2011, or 23% of the national total. The Eastern Region welcomed 5,494 (20%), and with 15,920 (57%) Ontario welcomed over half of all refugee arrivals in 2011 (see Figure 2). BC's share has on average been 7% of the national total over the last 10 years.<sup>13</sup>

1. CIC, 'Permanent residents by category, 2008-2012', 2013. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2012-preliminary/01.asp>.  
 2. See above: Footnote 1. Note: This reduction in refugees has been largely attributed to of the closing of the Damascus office in January 2012 as a result of the conflict in Syria.  
 3, 4. CIC, 'IMDB 2008 Immigration Category Profiles', 2012. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/research/imdb2008-cat-profiles.asp>.  
 5, 6. ISSoFBC, 'Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) Bulletin – 2012 Calendar Year', 2013.  
 7. CIC, 'Immigration Overview, Permanent and Temporary Residents', 2011. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2011/permanent/12.asp>  
 8, 9, 10. CIC, 'Glossary of Terms', 2012. Available at: [http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/glossary.asp#government\\_assisted\\_refugee](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/glossary.asp#government_assisted_refugee).  
 11. UNHCR, 'The 1951 Refugee Convention', 2011. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49da0e466.html>.  
 12. This includes a spouse, a common-law partner, dependent children, and the dependent child of a dependent child. See: CIC Application Guide, Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/guides/E16000TOC.asp#EG62>.  
 13. See above: Footnote 7.

## Recent Legal and Regulatory Changes

- ⇒ Bill C-31 came into effect on 15 December 2012, amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, and enacting important changes to Canada's refugee determination system.<sup>14</sup>
  - ◇ Designated Countries of Origin (DCOs): 35 countries are currently listed as DCOs. Claimants from these 'safe' countries will have their hearing at the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) scheduled within 30 days if they file for asylum from within Canada and 45 days if filed at port of entry (60 days for non-DCO claimants).<sup>15</sup>
  - ◇ Refugee Claimants who make their claim at the port of entry have 15 days to substantiate their claim by filing a Basis of Claim form.<sup>16</sup>
  - ◇ Irregular Arrivals: Any group of two or more asylum claimants arriving together may be designated as an "irregular arrival" (IA). IAs are automatically detained for the duration of their refugee claim process. This includes children of 16 years and older. Younger children will either be detained with their parents or be placed in state care. Accepted claimants in this category are banned from applying for PR or sponsoring family members for 5 years after their claims have been accepted.<sup>17</sup>
  - ◇ Failed claimants are given 15 days to file an appeal, followed by another 15 days to perfect the appeal with the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD). Irregular arrivals and claimants from DCOs cannot appeal their negative decision to the RAD.<sup>18</sup>
- ⇒ In June 2012, the government introduced substantive cuts to the Interim Federal Health (IFH) Program which covers basic health care for refugees and asylum claimants. Refugee Claimants from DCOs are the hardest hit and will no longer qualify for most medical services unless their health issue poses a threat to public safety. For example, cancer treatment as well as medication such as insulin for diabetics are not covered by the IFH Program.<sup>19</sup>

## Did you know?

- ⇒ The majority of refugees do not arrive as individuals but as families and nearly all Privately Sponsored Refugee (PSR) applications are filed for family reunification purposes.<sup>20</sup>
- ⇒ A comparison of asylum systems across the 34 OECD\* countries ranks Canada 16 in regards to number of asylum seekers as a share of the entire immigrant inflow. Canada ranks 13 for intake of successful asylum seekers relative to the size of the population. Lastly, with a 38% asylum claim acceptance rate<sup>21</sup> Canada ranks 7th amongst the OECD countries.<sup>22</sup>

\* OECD is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, an international economic organization. Membership includes countries from North and South America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific.

## Trends in Refugee Processing and Resettlement

- ⇒ CIC is moving to fewer source countries for GARs and towards an increasing number of multi-year refugee resettlement commitments from certain world regions. These regions have not been finalized.<sup>23</sup>
- ⇒ CIC plans to increase the number of PSRs to be resettled by 1,000 per year, starting in 2013. At the same time the numbers of GARs resettled will be reduced by 1,000 per year.<sup>24</sup>
- ⇒ Starting in 2013, the government plans to start inviting private sponsors to participate in a blended Visa-office-referred (VOR) program, meaning that the government and private sponsors will each pay part of the support costs for the resettled refugees. The refugees will be selected by the government as part of existing GAR targets. Refugees resettled through this blended program are fully covered by the Interim Federal Health Program. In 2013, the blended program is expected to accept 300 refugees and to increase that number in subsequent years.<sup>25</sup>

14. CIC, 'Protecting Canada's Immigration System', 2013. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/reform.asp>.

15. CIC, 'Designated countries of origin', 2013. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/reform-safe.asp>.

16. CIC, 'Changes at the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB)', 2012. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/reform-irb.asp>.

17. CIC, 'Cracking down on Human Smugglers who Abuse Canada's Immigration System', 2012. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/backgrounders/2012/2012-06-29j.asp>.

18. Kinbrace, 'Refugee Hearing Preparation: A Guide for Refugee Claimants', p. 18, 2012. Available at: <http://www.kinbrace.ca/ready-guide/>.

19. CIC, 'Health Care—Refugees', 2012. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/outside/arriving-healthcare.asp>.

20. Government of Canada Gazette, 'Regulations Amending the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations', 2012. Available at: <http://www.gazette.gc.ca/rp-pr/p2/2012/2012-11-07/html/sor-dors225-eng.html>.

21. University of Ottawa, 'By the Numbers: Refugee Statistics', 2012. Available at: <http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php>. Please note: Acceptance rates published by the IRB do not take into account abandoned or withdrawn applications, which accounted for 15% in 2011. Of the cases actually heard by the IRB in 2011, 45% were approved and 55% were rejected.

22. Opinion Policy Nexus, 'How Generous is Canada's Refugee Asylum Process?', 2013. Available at: <http://www.lispop.ca/blog/2013/01/24/1078/>.

23, 24. CIC, 'Departmental Performance Review', 2012. Available at: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/dpr/2012/dpr.asp#strategic2-5>.

25. Canadian Council for Refugees, 'Important changes in Canada's Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program', 2012. Available at: <http://ccrweb.ca/en/changes-private-sponsorship-refugees#FN11>.