



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative

Evaluation Division

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Acronyms

BVOR	Blended Visa Office-Referred
CA	Contribution Agreement
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmark
CPO-W	Centralized Processing Office - Winnipeg
GAR	Government Assisted Refugee
GCMS	Global Case Management System
iCARE	Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment
IFH	Interim Federal Health
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IMDB	Longitudinal Immigration Database
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
IRPA	<i>Immigration and Refugee Protection Act</i>
NAT	Notice of Arrival Transmission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHQ	National Headquarters
PSR	Privately Sponsored Refugee
RAP	Resettlement Assistance Program
RAP SPO	Resettlement Assistance Program Service Provider Organization
RIE	Rapid Impact Evaluation
SAH	Sponsorship Agreement Holder
SPO	Service Provider Organization
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

Executive Summary

A Rapid Impact Evaluation (RIE) was conducted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to assess the early outcomes of the 2015-16 Syrian Refugee Initiative. The evaluation was targeted in nature and examined the Syrian refugees who were admitted to Canada between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016 and were a part of the initial 25,000 Syrian refugee commitment.¹

The evaluation focused on resettlement and early settlement outcomes for the Syrian population who were admitted as Government Assisted Refugees (GAR), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) and Blended Visa Office-Referréd (BVOR) refugees, as well as lessons learned and areas to monitor in the future. In addition, comparisons were made where possible to previous resettled refugees who arrived in Canada between 2010 and 2014.

Comparison to Previous Resettled Refugees

The evaluation found that adult Syrian GARs tend to be less educated and less knowledgeable of Canadian official languages compared to previous resettled refugee cohorts. Conversely, the adult Syrian PSRs are more educated have more knowledge of Canadian official languages compared to the resettled PSRs admitted between 2010 and 2014. Additionally, the evaluation demonstrated that adult Syrian refugees were less likely to be referred to employment services and had gained less knowledge and skills compared to previous resettled refugee cohorts. However, the evaluation found that they were more likely to be referred to language services.

Immediate and Early Resettlement and Settlement Outcomes

Overall, both GARs and PSRs reported that they were happy with their life in Canada. With regards to meeting the immediate and essential needs of Syrian refugees, PSRs were more likely to indicate that their immediate needs were met and reported receiving more help to resettle compared to GARs. In addition, the evaluation found that due to expedited timelines of the initiative, some challenges occurred. Most notably those challenges included finding permanent housing, lack of consistency in the standards of RAP delivery, the adequacy of RAP income support for GARs and BVOR refugees and a lack of reporting on RAP services.

Learning an Official Language

With regards to learning an official language, the majority of resettled Syrian refugees had their language assessed, however, fewer PSRs than GARs were enrolled in language training. Syrian GARs indicated that the main reasons for not taking language training were the lack of available lower level classes and lack of childminding spaces. Given GARs' low language levels compared to other newcomers, many were unable to access employment services until a specific language level had been reached.

Employment

At the time of the survey, half of adult PSRs had found employment, compared to 10% of Syrian GARs. Of those who reported having a job, the most common form of employment for both GARs and PSRs were in the Sales and Service occupations. The vast majority of Syrian refugees who were

¹ Data collection took place between June and September 2016, and included focus groups with Syrian refugees, surveys with adult Syrian refugees, as well as other key lines of evidence.

not working at the time of the survey were looking for work or intended to look for work in the near future. The biggest challenge facing both GARs and PSRs in finding a job was associated with learning an official language.

Ongoing Considerations

Additional considerations were identified in the report regarding potential issues for the Syrian refugees moving forward. Considerations included Canada Child Benefit, transitioning to “month 13”, challenges for Syrian youth, mental health, concerns for family members still overseas, PSRs and BVOR refugees getting support from their sponsors and the perception of favouritism towards Syrian refugees.

Lessons Learned

While this whole of government initiative was a great success in many regards, the evaluation identified a few areas that should be taken into account to help ensure successful resettlement and settlement results.

The need for end-to-end planning for a major initiative

- IRCC should ensure that the resettlement and settlement considerations are fully integrated into the planning phase of future departmental refugee initiatives.

The need for accurate and complete refugee information

- It is essential that accurate and necessary refugee information (profile, destiny, arrivals) is provided to IRCC staff, partners and stakeholders in a timely way.

Provision of pre-arrival services

- Providing pre-arrival/orientation to all refugees prior to coming to Canada is essential.

A focal point for stakeholder coordination and communication

- IRCC should consider having a focal point within the Department for future large-scale refugee initiatives to ensure effective and consistent stakeholder coordination.

Administrative information quality

- Full sociodemographic and contact information needs to be accurately captured for populations that arrive in Canada to allow for effective ongoing monitoring and results reporting.

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Rapid Impact Evaluation

This Rapid Impact Evaluation (RIE) was conducted by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to assess the early outcomes of the 2015-2016 Syrian Refugee Initiative. The evaluation focused on resettlement and early settlement outcomes for the Syrian refugee population, examined implementation challenges, identified unmet needs, as well as lessons and opportunities.² Given the rapid nature of this evaluation, data collection took place between June and September 2016, and included focus groups with Syrian refugees, surveys with adult Syrian refugees, as well as other key lines of evidence.

The scope of this Rapid Impact Evaluation was targeted in nature, focussing on the commitment of 25,000 Syrian Refugees who arrived in Canada between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016 as Government Assisted Refugees (GAR), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR) and Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) refugees. Syrian refugees who arrived in Canada prior to or after those dates were out of scope for this evaluation.³ As Quebec is responsible for its own resettlement and settlement services, Syrian refugees destined to Quebec were not included in this evaluation, with the exception of the socio-demographic profile.⁴

1.2. Operation Syrian Refugees

In November 2015, the Government of Canada committed to welcoming to Canada 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February 2016⁵, in a massive resettlement effort that would require collaboration between IRCC and other government departments (i.e., Department of National Defence, Canada Border Services Agency, Global Affairs Canada), international partners, provinces/territories, Service Provider Organizations (SPOs)⁶, Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs)⁷ and community organizations. This whole of government initiative was delivered in five main phases, described below.

Phase I: Identifying Syrian refugees to come to Canada

The Government of Canada worked with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Jordan and Lebanon, and the Turkish Government to identify refugees. Vulnerable refugees who were a low security risk, such as women at risk and complete families, were given priority.⁸ In addition, several thousand applications that were already submitted for PSRs and GARs were processed as part of this initiative.

² The Rapid Impact Evaluation focused primarily on client outcomes for Phase V of the initiative – Settlement and integration. Additional information regarding impacts on clients for Phases I-IV, can be found in Appendix A.

³ Resettled refugees (GAR, PSR, BVOR) arriving between 2010 and 2014 were evaluated as part of the *Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs*, published in Fall 2016. This evaluation did not examine the 25,000 Syrian refugees who arrived under the Syrian Refugee Initiative.

⁴ For more information regarding the methodology used in this Rapid Impact Evaluation, please refer to Appendix B.

⁵ Canada, IRCC (2015) *Canada offers leadership on the Syrian Refugee Crisis*. News Release, 24 November 2015. <http://news.gc.ca/web/article-en.do?nid=1021919>

⁶ IRCC manages resettlement and settlement services through contribution agreements with SPOs. These organizations deliver direct resettlement and settlement services to eligible newcomers including GARs, PSRs and BVOR refugees.

⁷ SAHs are incorporated organizations that provide privately sponsored and blended visa office-referred refugees with financial and moral support.

⁸ Canada, IRCC (2016) *Identifying Syrian refugees to come to Canada*. www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/phase1.asp

Phase II: Processing Syrian refugees overseas

Once identified, Syrian refugees were processed overseas, mainly from three dedicated Canadian visa offices in Amman, Beirut and Ankara. Immigration processing, full immigration medical exams and security screenings were conducted overseas. If successful, refugees were given Canadian permanent resident visas.

Phase III: Transportation to Canada

Flights organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) brought refugees from the three main visa offices to designated ports of entry (POE) in either Montreal or Toronto.

Phase IV: Welcoming in Canada

Once refugees arrived at Toronto or Montreal airports, they were met by Government of Canada officers in designated Welcome Centres specifically set up for the admission of Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees were processed by border services officers, set up with social insurance numbers, screened for signs of illness, etc. Prior to moving on to their final destination in Canada, refugees then stayed at temporary hotels to rest and allow time for the reception communities to prepare to welcome them.

Phase V: Settlement and community integration

Once Syrian refugees arrived at their final destination across Canada, immediate settlement needs were provided through Resettlement Assistance Program Service Provider Organizations (RAP SPO) or private sponsors. As they settled into their communities, resettlement assistance programming and settlement programming were provided to the Syrian refugees to meet their integration needs. This phase is still ongoing and is the focus of the current study.

1.3. Profiles of the Resettlement and Settlement Programs

Syrian refugees were processed and admitted to Canada via one of the following three resettlement programs.

1. **Syrian Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR)** were referred to Canada by the United Nations Refugee Agency or the Turkish Government. GARs are supported by the Government of Canada who provides initial resettlement services and income support for up to one year.⁹ Since 2002, the GAR program has placed an emphasis on selecting refugees based their need for protection¹⁰. As a result, GARs often carry higher needs¹¹ than other refugee groups. GARs are also eligible to receive resettlement services provided through a service provider organization that signed a contribution agreement to deliver these services under IRCC's **Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)**.
2. **Syrian Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR)** were sponsored by permanent residents or Canadian citizens via one of three streams: **Sponsorship Agreement Holder, Group of Five, or Community Sponsors**. In each of these PSR streams, sponsors provide financial support or

⁹ Financial support may be provided for up to two years for special cases and three in some exceptional cases, or until clients become self-sufficient, whichever comes first.

¹⁰ Canada Gazette (2002) *Regulatory Impact Analysis Statement*. Canada Gazette Part II, Vol. 136, Extra.

¹¹ Examples of higher needs include high literacy or education needs, health concerns, trauma, physical disabilities, challenging family compositions, lengthy refugee camp histories and limited resilience or coping skills. Source: Manitoba Immigration and Multiculturalism (2013) *Enhanced Settlement Service Final Report*.

a combination of financial and in-kind support to the PSR for twelve months post arrival in Canada, or until refugees are able to support themselves¹², whichever comes first.

3. **Syrian Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) refugees** were referred by the UNHCR and identified by Canadian visa officers for participation in the BVOR program based on specific criteria. The refugees' profiles were posted to a designated BVOR website where potential sponsors¹³ can select a refugee case to support. BVOR refugees receive up to six months of RAP income support from the Government of Canada and six months of financial support from their sponsor, plus start-up expenses. Private sponsors are responsible for BVOR refugees' social and emotional support for the first year after arrival, as BVOR refugees are not eligible for RAP services.

After arrival in Canada, Syrian refugees have access to the following two newcomer resettlement and integration programs.

- **Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP)** funds the provision of immediate and essential services (i.e., reception at port of entry, temporary accommodation, assistance in finding permanent accommodation, basic orientation and links to settlement programming and federal and provincial programs) to GARs and other eligible clients through service provider organizations. Similar to BVOR refugees, GARs also receive monthly income support (based on provincial social assistance rates) which is a financial aid intended to provide monthly income support entitlements for shelter, food and incidentals. In the case of GARs, this income support is provided for up to one year or until they become self-sufficient, whichever comes first¹⁴.
- **Settlement Program** aims to support newcomers' successful settlement and integration so that they may participate and contribute in various aspects of Canadian life. Settlement refers to a short period of mutual adaptation between newcomers and the host society during which the government provides support and services to newcomers, while integration is a two-way process for immigrants to adapt to life in Canada and for Canada to welcome and adapt to new peoples and cultures.¹⁵ Through the Settlement Program, IRCC funds service provider organizations (SPO) to deliver language learning services to newcomers, community and employment services, path-finding and referral services in support of foreign credential recognition, settlement information and support services that facilitate access to settlement programming.

RAP had to be modified from the traditional method of service offering to adjust for the influx of 25,000 Syrian refugees. Notable key differences included immediate RAP services were provided to Syrian GARs in hotels rather than in the traditional format (e.g., at RAP SPOs facilities) and larger group orientation sessions were provided to Syrian refugees, rather than smaller groups or one-on-one sessions for families.

¹² Self-sufficient is defined as 1) being enrolled in programs normally outside public school system (e.g., language training and job training); 2) seeking employment; and 3) being employed. Source: Canada, IRCC (2015) *Inland Processing 3, Part 2*.

¹³ This was changed as a result of the Syrian Initiative, in which Community Groups and Groups of Five became eligible to sponsor BVOR refugees.

¹⁴ GARs with special needs may receive additional payments (e.g., dietary allowance, National Housing Supplement) and in some cases, income support may also be extended for up to two years.

¹⁵ Canada, IRCC (2015) *Terms of Reference for the Evaluation of the Settlement Programs*.

1.4. Characteristics of Syrian Refugees Admitted in Wave 1 - Adults and Children

The majority of Syrian refugees admitted as part of this initiative were GARs (57.2%), followed by PSRs (34.1%) and BVOR refugees (8.6%). The socio-demographic characteristics of Syrian refugees were not uniform across all three groups, as seen in Table 1.1.

The profile of the PSRs group differ from the other two groups:

- PSRs tend to be older – 7.4% are 60 or older compared to 0.9% for Syrian GAR and BVOR refugees; in addition, 33.1% were less than 18 years old, compared to 60.0% for GARs and 56.6% for BVOR refugees.
- PSRs tend to have smaller family size – 48.9% were single versus 11.7% and 20.6% for GARs and BVOR refugees, respectively. Moreover, there were no PSR cases with family sizes higher than nine, compared to 40 GAR cases and 11 BVOR cases (0% vs 1.2% and 2.1%, respectively).
- PSRs settled in fewer provinces across the country – majority of the PSRs settled in Quebec (43.2%), Ontario (38.7%) and Alberta (11.8%). GARs' intended provinces of destination were less concentrated, but tended to reside in Ontario (42.2%), Alberta (13.9%) and British Columbia (11.9%). Over half of the BVOR refugees settled in Ontario (53.9%).
- Almost a third of Syrian PSRs arrived in December 2015 with the influx of PSRs being concentrated in December and February, representing 71.6% of all Syrian PSR arrivals. GARs tended to arrive in early 2016, with 83.6% of all Syrian GAR arrivals occurring in January and February. BVOR refugee arrivals were heavily concentrated at the end of the initiative, with over half (51.4%) arriving in February 2016.

Table 1-1: Socio-Demographic Profile of the Syrian Population (Wave 1)

	GAR		PSR		BVOR		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Population	14,962	57.2%	8,918	34.1%	2,260	8.6%	26,140**	100.0%
Adults and Minors								
Minors (less than 18)	8,977	60.0%	2,951	33.1%	1,280	56.6%	13,208	50.5%
Adults (18 and over)	5,985	40.0%	5,967	66.9%	980	43.4%	12,932	49.5%
Gender								
Male	7,707	51.5%	4,542	50.9%	1,173	51.9%	13,422	51.3%
Female	7,255	48.5%	4,376	49.1%	1,087	48.1%	12,718	48.7%
Age								
Less than 18	8,977	60.0%	2,951	33.1%	1,280	56.6%	13,208	50.5%
18 to 29	1,950	13.0%	1,668	18.7%	340	15.0%	3,958	15.1%
30 to 39	2,535	16.9%	1,526	17.1%	415	18.4%	4,476	17.1%
40 to 49	1,076	7.2%	1,307	14.7%	160	7.1%	2,643	9.7%
50 to 59	289	1.9%	804	9.0%	45	2.0%	1,138	4.4%
60 or older	135	0.9%	662	7.4%	20	0.9%	817	3.1%
Province of Destination								
NL	196	1.3%	15	0.2%	36	1.6%	247	0.9%
PEI	106	0.7%	70	0.8%	14	0.6%	190	0.7%
NS	676	4.5%	73	0.8%	158	7.0%	907	3.5%
NB	1,208	8.1%	0	0.0%	129	5.7%	1,337	5.1%
QC	918	6.1%	3,857	43.2%	20	0.9%	4,795	18.3%
ON	6,316	42.2%	3,453	38.7%	1,218	53.9%	10,987	42.0%
MB	686	4.6%	53	0.6%	133	5.9%	872	3.3%
SK	1,004	6.7%	20	0.2%	49	2.2%	1,073	4.1%
AB	2,073	13.9%	1,056	11.8%	227	10.0%	3,356	12.8%
BC	1,779	11.9%	307	3.4%	260	11.5%	2,346	9.0%
YK	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	11	0.5%	11	0.5%
Not Stated	0	0.0%	14	0.2%	5	0.2%	19	0.1%
Landed Date								
November 4 – 30, 2015	51	0.3%	219	2.5%	11	0.5%	281	1.1%
December 1 – 31, 2015	2,353	15.7%	2,937	32.9%	436	19.3%	436	19.3%
January 1 – 31, 2016	6,337	42.4%	2,165	24.3%	635	28.1%	9,137	35.0%
February 1 – 29, 2016	6,158	41.2%	3,446	38.7%	1,161	51.4%	10,768	41.2%
March 1, 2016	63	0.4%	148	1.7%	17	0.8%	228	0.9%
Family Size*								
Single	358	11.7%	1,925	48.9%	111	20.6%	2,394	31.8%
2-3	321	10.5%	988	25.1%	68	12.6%	1,377	18.3%
4-6	1,705	55.8%	1,009	25.6%	301	55.8%	3,015	40.0%
7-9	633	20.7%	13	0.4%	48	8.9%	694	9.2%
10 and more	40	1.2%	0	0.0%	11	2.1%	51	0.6%

Source: Global Case Management System.

*Number is presented by **case**, rather than by client.

** For the purposes of analysis for the evaluation, the number 26,140 was used, as it was reflecting the number of admitted Syrian Refugees at the time of data extraction. However, as operational data and admissions data can differ, the official number of Syrian refugees considered part of this initiative is 26,172.

1.5. Key Differences with the Syrian Adult Population

Finding: Adult Syrian GARs tend to be less educated and less knowledgeable of Canadian official languages compared to adult GARs admitted between 2010 and 2014. Conversely, the adult Syrian PSRs are more educated and have more knowledge of Canadian official languages compared to the resettled PSRs admitted between 2010 and 2014.

1.5.1. Comparing Syrian GAR, PSR and BVOR Refugees

As seen in the table below, when considering the Syrian adult population, PSRs tend to be:

- Older – 10.2% of the adult PSRs were 60 years or older, compared to 2.3% for adult GARs and 2.1% of adult BVOR refugees. Additionally, 56.0% of the adult Syrian PSRs were between the ages of 18 and 39, compared to 74.9% for the adult GARs and 76.8% for the adult BVOR refugees.
- More educated – 31.6% of the adult Syrian PSR had achieved some form of university education, compared to only 5.3% of the adult Syrian GARs and 3.1% of the adult Syrian BVOR refugees. Furthermore, a higher proportion of adult Syrian GARs (81.3%) had secondary education or less, compared to adult Syrian PSR and adult Syrian BVOR refugees (52.7% and 48.3%, respectively).
- More knowledge of Canada’s official languages – 18.2% of the adult Syrian PSRs indicated having no knowledge of English or French compared to 83.6% of the adult Syrian GARs and 51.0% of the adult Syrian BVOR refugees.

While interviewees indicated that the needs of Syrian refugees do not differ greatly from other resettled refugees admitted between 2010 and 2014, there are some characteristics that are unique to Syrian refugees admitted to Canada during the initiative.

1.5.2. Comparing Syrian Refugees to Other Resettled Refugees

The following sub-section compares the Syrian adult refugees to resettled refugees admitted to Canada between 2010 and 2014.

Syrian GARs tend to:

- Have lower education than resettled refugee populations, with 81.3% of GARs reporting secondary or less as their highest level of education. This is in comparison to 56.7% of GARs admitted from 2010 to 2014.
- Have less knowledge of official languages compared to previously resettled GARs, 83.6% of Syrian GARs reported knowing neither English nor French compared to 68.3% for previous cohorts of GARs.
- Have larger families than previous refugee cohorts, with 56.5% being comprised of 4 to 6 family members and 21.7% comprised of a family of 7 or more. In comparison, 23.7% of GAR cases admitted between 2010 and 2014 were comprised of 4 to 6 family members and 4.0% of cases were comprised of 7 or more. Families also were reported by SPOs to be comprised of younger parents.

Syrian PSRs tend to:

- Self-report higher knowledge of English (79.5%) compared to previous resettled refugees. In addition, the Syrian PSRs are the most educated group, compared not only to previous PSR cohorts, but for all GAR/BVOR refugee cohorts as well.
- Have more cases composed of 2 to 6 family members (51.1%), compared to 39.0% for other resettled refugees. Syrian refugees also tend to have fewer cases composed of a single person (48.4%) compared to previous resettled refugees (58.7%).

Syrian BVOR Refugees:

- Prior to the Syrian Refugee Initiative, fewer refugees were admitted to Canada under the BVOR program, making the differences among BVOR refugees difficult to measure given the small population size.¹⁶ The total of BVOR refugees admitted in 2013 and 2014 (adults and children) was 216 and the Syrian Refugee Initiative represents a 453% increase over previous years (with 968 admissions).

¹⁶ The BVOR program evolved from the former Visa Office Referred program in 2013. As a result, no data exists on the program prior to 2013.

Table 1-2: Comparison of Adult Socio-demographic Profiles - Syrian Refugees (Wave 1) Compared to Resettled Refugees, Excluding Quebec

	GAR		PSR		BVOR		Total	
	Resettled Refugees (2010-2014)	Syrian	Resettled Refugees (2010-2014)	Syrian	Resettled Refugees (2010-2014)	Syrian	Resettled Refugees (2010-2014)	Syrian
Adult Population (Excluding QC)	16,244	5,630	15,943	3,310	216	968	32,403	9,908
Age								
18 to 29	40.8%	32.9%	40.7%	29.1%	50.5%	35.0%	40.8%	31.8%
30 to 39	26.0%	42.0%	28.8%	26.9%	30.1%	41.8%	27.4%	36.9%
40 to 49	17.2%	18.0%	15.8%	21.4%	10.6%	16.5%	16.5%	19.0%
50 to 59	9.0%	4.8%	8.4%	12.5%	3.7%	4.5%	8.7%	7.4%
60 or more	7.1%	2.3%	6.2%	10.2%	5.1%	2.1%	6.6%	4.9%
Education								
Secondary or Less	56.7%	81.3%	59.0%	52.7%	62.5%	48.3%	57.9%	68.6%
Formal Trade Certificate, Non University Certificate	4.7%	4.4%	11.0%	12.9%	2.8%	4.0%	7.8%	7.2%
Some University and Above	9.2%	5.3%	9.3%	31.6%	12.0%	3.1%	9.3%	13.9%
None/Not Stated	29.4%	9.0%	20.7%	2.8%	22.7%	44.5%	25.1%	10.4%
Official Languages								
English	27.1%	14.4%	45.0%	79.5%	13.9%	47.2%	35.8%	39.3%
French	2.7%	0.5%	1.5%	1.3%	0.5%	0.4%	2.1%	0.7%
Both	2.0%	0.3%	1.5%	0.8%	1.9%	0.0%	1.7%	0.4%
Neither	68.3%	83.6%	52.1%	18.2%	83.8%	51.0%	60.4%	58.5%
Not Stated	--	1.3%	--	0.2%	--	1.3%	--	0.9%
Family Size*								
Single	51.0%	11.4%	58.7%	48.4%	57.3%	20.2%	54.8%	26.7%
2-3	23.7%	10.4%	20.9%	24.7%	26.1%	12.6%	22.3%	16.2%
4-6	21.3%	56.5%	18.1%	26.4%	15.9%	56.1%	19.7%	44.7%
7-9	3.5%	20.5%	2.1%	0.5%	0.6%	9.0%	2.8%	11.6%
10 and more	0.5%	1.2%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	2.1%	0.3%	0.8%

Source: Global Case Management System.

Note: Does not include Syrian refugees destined to Quebec or those who had a Certificat de sélection du Québec.

*Family size is reported by number of cases, rather than by individual client.

1.5.3. Other Overall Differences in the Syrian Population

The following is a list of characteristics that are specific to the Syrian population, along with potential challenges for the future.

- **Dental Health:** Dental health needs were identified by stakeholders as the most pressing and unique needs for the Syrian population. As partial dental coverage is provided under the Interim Federal Health (IFH) program, some provinces and local communities have been providing additional services. For example, the Healthy Smiles Ontario program allows for low-income children to receive dental services at some Community Health Centres.¹⁷ In addition, due to the strong public engagement, some dentists also offered pro-bono services/treatments.
- **High Medical Needs:** It was noted during site visits and interviews that vulnerable refugee populations tend to have high medical needs and this has been especially true for Syrians. During this initiative, a pediatrician at the Welcome Centre in Toronto noted health conditions in Syrian children “ranging from seizures to developmental disorders, to blood transfusion dependent thalassemia and childhood cancers.”¹⁸ Services (e.g., home care services, caregivers for Arabic speakers, etc.) are currently lacking to support specific needs. It was observed in focus groups that lack of support for elderly immigrants with high medical needs (e.g., caregivers for Arabic speakers with Alzheimer’s), could prevent family members from accessing services as they are the sole source of support (given that home care services are generally not available to non-English or French speakers).
- **Mental Health:** Stakeholders and the literature also identified that mental health issues will become more pressing over time for the Syrian population as they continue to settle and feel safe. Issues likely to emerge over time include effects of post-traumatic stress disorder and mental health issues associated with the effects of war, displacement and loss.¹⁹
- **Family and Gender Differences:** Stakeholders noted that that Syrian refugees are community-oriented and maintain strong connections with their cultural and religious communities. Some cultural differences include parenting (relying on the community to take care of the children, disciplining children, etc.), the rights and roles of women and the involvement of girls in society. Given these differences, SPOs indicated the need to build more awareness among the Syrian population about parenting and roles of women and girls in Canadian society.
- **Social Media:** Unlike any other refugee populations, social media and mobile applications are very commonly used by the Syrian refugees and the population who are actively connected to each other via mobile devices, specifically WhatsApp. However, this also caused some difficulties for SPOs, as refugees were comparing what Syrian friends received in terms of services in other cities and provinces and requested equivalent services and support.

¹⁷ Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (2015) *Ontario Health System Action Plan: Syrian Refugees*. December 17, 2015.

¹⁸ Hansen, L., Maidment, L., Ahmad, R. (2016) Early Observations on the health of Syrian refugees in Canada. *CCDR Supplement*. Vol 42-Suppl 2. March 17, 2016.

¹⁹ Ibid.

2. Immediate and Essential Needs

The following two sections describe Phase V of the initiative – from departure of temporary accommodations, until the present time in a Syrian refugee’s settlement process.

2.1. Service Provision

Finding: Due to the expedited timelines of the initiative, some challenges occurred in the delivery of RAP services, namely consistency in standards of delivery and gaps in reporting.

Due to the rushed nature of the initiative and the large number of refugees arriving in a compressed time period, RAP orientation information was not always provided in a consistent way.

While all GARs should have received at a minimum one RAP service, a Departmental Lessons Learned report and site visits indicated that RAP SPOs were not able to provide orientation to Canada to the same standard provided to other refugees.²⁰ An example during a site visit indicated that the suite of what can be offered through RAP orientation sessions was not being completed by all refugees, as there were too many arriving at once, making it difficult to present on the information.

Some RAP SPOs mentioned that orientation sessions were provided to refugees as they waited at temporary hotels for other community services to be provided (i.e., vaccinations). Focus group participants indicated that the information received was not always adequate, as they could not focus on the presentation due to the distractions (e.g. more people per sessions, parenting at the same time of the sessions, etc.).

According to information reported in the Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE)²¹, 88.8% of adult GARs had received RAP services, including reception at port of entry, temporary accommodations and initial orientation, among other services. While the expectations are that almost all GARs should have received at least one RAP service (at minimum port of entry and temporary accommodations), the most likely explanations for this is that RAP SPOs may not have yet reported all clients in iCARE and that the new RAP SPOs may not have had accessed to the RAP iCARE module.

Table 2-1: iCARE - RAP Services

	Syrian GARs #	Syrian GARs %
RAP Services Received	5,002	88.8%
Total # of Adult Syrian GARs Admitted (excluding QC)	5,630	100.0%

Source: IRCC Resettlement/Settlement Client Continuum. October 31, 2016.

Population includes Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1st, 2016, are 18 years of age or older and were initially destined to Quebec.

Note: iCARE does not capture data on Settlement and Resettlement services offered in Quebec.

²⁰ IRCC Internal documentation.

²¹ The Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment is a data collection system that provides the Department with information about settlement program clients (including Syrians). Information about what services a client received is reported by RAP SPOs and SPOs.

2.2. Meeting the Needs of Syrian Refugees

Finding: Generally, PSRs reported receiving more help to resettle compared to GARs. PSRs were also more likely to indicate that their immediate needs were met.

Surveyed Syrian refugees were asked whether they had received information or help in different areas. Generally, PSRs reported receiving more help to resettle compared to GARs. The three largest differences were noted in receiving the following information or help:

- find a doctor on their own (GARs 38.8% vs. PSRs 63.9%);
- file tax forms (GARs 30.1% vs. PSRs 48.0%); and
- buy clothes, furniture and other things that refugees need (GARs 54.5% vs. PSRs 72.4%).

Table 2-2: Service/Help Received from a RAP SPO or Sponsor

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
How to look for a place to live	61.7%	76.2%
How to rent a place to live (including signing a lease and your rights and responsibilities when renting)	79.4%	82.7%
How to shop for food	69.9%	83.0%
How to buy clothes, furniture, etc.	54.5%	72.4%
How to fill out tax forms	30.1%	48.0%
How to use public transportation	78.9%	77.5%
About cultural differences in Canada (e.g., the workplace, women and children's rights, parenting, etc.)	68.4%	62.7%
How to find a doctor on your own	38.8%	63.9%
How to register your children in school	58.9%	57.7%
How to find child care so you can do other activities, such as work	28.2%	32.6%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Totals may not equal 100% as multiple options could be selected.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

Of the surveyed refugees, 63.6% of GARs and 74.9% of PSRs indicated that their overall immediate and essential needs were mostly or completely met soon after their arrival in Canada.

The survey also asked if the information or help received met their needs. The majority of both GARs and PSRs reported that the information or help they received completely or mostly met their needs; however, PSRs were more positive than GARs on every topic. The differences between GARs and PSRs ranged from 10% for how to use public transportation (71.9% of GARs vs. 82.2% of PSRs) to a 29% on how to find a doctor on their own (where 55.7% of GARs indicated the information or help received completely or mostly met their needs vs. 85.5% of PSRs).

Table 2-3: Service/Help Received *Mostly* or *Completely* Met Their Immediate Needs

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
How to look for a place to live	61.4%	82.2%
How to rent a place to live (including signing a lease and your rights and responsibilities when renting)	61.6%	85.0%
How to shop for food	62.2%	83.9%
How to buy clothes, furniture, etc.	63.1%	83.2%
How to use public transportation	71.9%	82.2%
About cultural differences in Canada (e.g., the workplace, women and children's rights, parenting, etc.)	70.0%	84.7%
How to find a doctor on your own	55.7%	85.5%
How to register your children in school	71.7%	87.1%
How to find child care so you can do other activities, such as work	62.5%	82.7%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Totals may not equal 100% as multiple options could be selected.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

2.2.1. Orientation to Life in Canada

Information about life in Canada was provided to the refugees from a variety of sources – orientation at temporary hotels in Montreal or Toronto, information at RAP SPO facilities, occasional pamphlets overseas, etc. Through iCARE, SPOs have reported that a larger proportion of GARs have received information and orientation (95.9%), compared to PSRs and BVOR refugees (76.0% and 80.2%, respectively).

Syrian refugees reported that information sessions were provided in a rushed manner, as the majority of surveyed GARs and PSRs (73.5% and 80.8%, respectively) indicated that the information was provided to them too soon after they arrived in Canada.²² A Departmental Lessons Learned report highlighted that some RAP SPOs had information pamphlets but even if they were available in Arabic, it would not have been helpful for those who were illiterate in their mother tongue.

Some refugees commented during focus groups that they had not received sufficient information regarding key settlement aspects, such as how to find a family doctor, how to find jobs, tenants' rights and responsibilities/employee rights, labour market information (e.g., what does working under the table mean), etc. A few focus group participants explained that they had encountered situations in which they were unaware of the concept of their responsibility associated with a lease; they thought that they could sign a second lease without any penalties on the first one they had rented.

2.2.2. Food and Clothing

Syrian refugees indicated that they obtained help in finding food and clothing from various sources, including sponsors, RAP SPOs, friends, church members, community members and volunteers. These individuals helped refugees find grocery stores, provided advice on which food was halal, etc.

²² Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Both GARs and PSRs surveyed (93.9% and 96.6%, respectively)²³ indicated that they understood how to shop for groceries and other necessities.

Food bank usage

It was noted by SPOs that the food allowance is low and that there were instances of refugees accessing food banks. This was supported by survey respondents: GARs were more likely to have accessed a food bank at least once (74.2%) in comparison to PSRs (50.2%). Of those who indicated that they have accessed a food bank, 24.8% of GARs and 23.0% of PSRs have frequently used a food bank (at least seven times since arriving in Canada).

2.2.3. Support Services

Considering that many Syrian refugees have a limited understanding of English/French and have large family sizes, support services for clients are crucial to ensuring that the Syrian refugees are able to access the settlement services they need, specifically the language training. The following support services were specifically highlighted in regards to the Syrian Initiative:

- **Childminding:** Childminding was identified by local IRCC office staff, SPOs and focus group participants as a critical component in ensuring that Syrian refugees have access to the services that they need. Stakeholders indicated that the wait for language training was longer if there was an additional need for childcare. Given the large family sizes, it was mentioned that four mothers could fill up all the childminding space for one language class. An additional challenge that was noted with support services is the current inability to fund childminding through RAP Terms and Conditions, as RAP SPOs cannot provide childminding services while GARs are accessing RAP services.
- **Interpretation Services:** Focus group participants also identified the limited interpretation services as an issue, especially for understanding information received from medical practitioners or school representatives. It was noted through some focus groups that it took a long time to get interpretation services, which is a particular issue when accessing specialized medical health services, as medical interpreters are difficult to find.
- **Transportation:** The issue of transportation allowances was exacerbated by the family size of Syrian GARs and as children are not eligible to receive transportation allowances under RAP funding. Highlighted as an additional financial burden for refugees, transportation costs (e.g., bus passes) are covered for adults under RAP, but not for children. Similar to the issue on childminding, as Syrian GARs have a higher number of children, bus passes for them can become quite costly for a group that already has limited funds.²⁴

2.3. Permanent Housing

Finding: While PSRs also had housing issues, finding affordable permanent housing was particularly difficult for GARs due to some specific challenges for this Syrian population.

The influx of Syrian refugees arriving in a short period of time and with a specific income range created challenges for the RAP SPOs to help find affordable housing. Furthermore, some RAP

²³ Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

²⁴ For example, a monthly bus pass in Ottawa for ages 13-19 is \$84.25 per month.

SPOs indicated that given that some landlords apply similar rules regarding subsidized housing, it was also difficult for large families to access to subsidized housing²⁵. Interviewees indicated that the influx of arrivals caused competition for affordable housing among the Syrian population.

Finding affordable permanent housing is a challenge for all resettled refugees including Syrians, as the shelter allowance rate²⁶ is linked to provincial social assistance. Rental costs tend to be higher than the shelter allowance (e.g., as reported in the 2016 *Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs*, for a refugee living in Calgary, RAP allowance for shelter and other basic allowances is \$610, while the average rent for a bachelor apartment in Calgary is \$902),²⁷ thereby making it difficult to find affordable permanent housing.

Various initiatives were undertaken by SPOs, provinces and communities to help meet the housing need for Syrian refugees. Site visit interviewees highlighted that strong relationships developed between provinces, SPOs and landlords as part of the Syrian Refugee Initiative, in which provinces and SPOs made arrangements with landlords in various cities to provide rent to Syrian refugees at reduced prices for the first 12 months.

Provinces also found alternative solutions to help ease the burden of the refugee housing problems. For example, Syrian GARs in Manitoba were able to receive a Rent Supplement where the Province of Manitoba paid the difference between “market rental rates and rent-geared to income paid by the tenant for approved units”.²⁸ The province of New Brunswick provided up to 70% discount on the rent cost for the first 12 months.

An added difficulty to the housing situation was incorrect information being communicated directly to the Syrian refugees throughout the resettlement process (from overseas resettlement to arrival in the community). An example of this reported by SPOs and focus group participants was that some Syrians were under the impression that a house would be available to them upon arrival. This created false and unrealistic expectations on the part of the Syrian refugees, with regards to their permanent housing situation.

2.4. Financial Support

2.4.1. Financial Support for Syrian Refugees

Finding: RAP income support levels are inadequate to meet essential needs of Syrian GARs and BVOR refugees.

Several indicators confirmed that the level of RAP income support is inadequate to meet the essential needs of refugees. As the RAP income support rates did not change for the Syrian

²⁵ For example, the maximum number of people in a unit is rule-based and will depend on the number of bedroom(s), also depending on the children ages, it may not be possible to have opposite sex in the same room.

²⁶ Shelter allocation includes a monthly allowance for rent and utilities based on prevailing social services shelter allowances and policies. Source: Canada, CIC (2015) *In Canada Processing of Convention Refugees Abroad and Members of the Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad Classes – Part 2 (RAP)*.

²⁷ Canada, IRCC (2016) *Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs*.

²⁸ Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Manitoba Office (2016) *Supporting Refugee Resettlement Beyond the Syrian Refugee Crisis*.

www.policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/Manitoba%20Office/2016/04/Bucklaschuck%20and%20Silvius_Supporting_Refugee_Settlement.pdf

population, the inadequacy of income support was also reported in three previous evaluations, including the 2016 *Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs*.²⁹

When asked if the financial support received (either by the Government of Canada in the GAR cases or by their sponsor in the PSR cases) was enough to cover their basic necessities, 69.8% of GARs stated that it was not sufficient, compared to 26.1% of PSRs.³⁰ This is in contrast to the resettled refugee population, in which 47% of GARs and 13% of PSRs indicated it was not sufficient.

Twelve months of income support was indicated by GARs in focus groups as being not enough time to establish themselves in Canada, given the language barrier and the medical issues they have to overcome prior to accessing the labour market. Syrian refugees felt that their level of English was too low and would require a year at least to learn the language.

BVOR refugees also felt that financial support was insufficient and provided for a too short period of time. Some focus group participants reported having to stop language training and try to find employment because the financial support they received from their sponsors was insufficient or had ended.

Monthly income support entitlements for shelter, food and incidentals are guided by the prevailing provincial/territorial social assistance rates, which vary in each province³¹ (e.g., for single adults, \$610 per month in Vancouver, \$555 per month in Halifax).³² Singles and couples received the lowest amount of income support and reported having difficult time making ends meet (e.g., \$376 is allocated for rent in Ontario for a single).³³ Because of the amount being tied to provincial social assistance rates, there is limited flexibility to adapt to the specific needs of the Syrian refugee population (i.e., shelter allowance for Ontario has allocations for up to six people, but yet, 22% of the GAR cases have a family size larger than six).

It was reported by RAP SPOs and Syrian refugees that the money received under the Canadian Child Tax Benefit³⁴ was being used to supplement the income received under RAP. The Child Tax Benefit helped provide an additional income for those with children.

Overall, timeliness of income support was perceived positively, with the exception of the initial start-up cheque, which RAP SPOs reported there being a time lag. This was viewed by RAP SPOs as being understandable given the influx of individuals. GARs and BVOR refugees in focus groups were pleased with the timeliness of their income support.

²⁹ Canada, IRCC (2016) *Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs*.

www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/resettlement.asp

³⁰ Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

³¹ Canada, IRCC (2015) *Inland Processing 3 – Part 2*.

³² Canada, IRCC (2016) *Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs*.

www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/resettlement.asp

³³ City of Toronto, Employment and Social Services (2015) *Ontario Works Rate Chart*. November 1, 2015.

³⁴ As of July 1, 2016, the Canadian Child Tax Benefit has been replaced by the Canada Child Benefit.

3. Settlement and Integration

Finding: While both GARs and PSRs identified learning an official language and finding a good job as their top difficulties, GARs also had issues with finding permanent housing, whereas PSRs had issues with getting their education/work experience recognized.

When asked what three things they had the most difficulties with since their arrival in Canada, surveyed Syrian GAR top responses were: 1) learning English and/or French and facing language barriers; 2) finding good quality housing; and 3) finding a good job. The Syrian PSR top responses were: 1) finding a good job; 2) getting education or work experience recognized; and 3) learning English and/or French and facing language barriers.

Table 3-1: Difficulties since Arriving in Canada

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
Finding a good job	34.3%	62.6%
Adapting to a new culture or new values	12.5%	12.4%
Learning English and/or French and facing language barrier	55.1%	32.7%
Getting education or work experience recognized	19.0%	40.1%
Finding good quality housing (e.g., good price, good quality, good neighbourhood)	37.0%	19.4%
Coping with financial constraints	24.5%	12.2%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Totals may not equal 100% as multiple options could be selected.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

3.1. Language

As language barriers can hinder the integration process, language needs were identified as an issue for GARs, as 83.2% had self-reported not knowing either of the official languages. Fewer adult PSRs and adult BVOR refugees self-reported no knowledge of official languages (19.0% and 50.4%, respectively).

When asked in focus groups, the average Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) was 2.6, which is considered low. Syrian refugees in focus groups highlighted the desire to learn English and a few PSR and BVOR refugees were disappointed that they were not able to pursue their English classes due to the need to work or not enough support from sponsors.

Finding: Although the majority of resettled Syrian refugees had their language assessed, fewer PSRs than GARs were enrolled in language training.

The majority of GARs surveyed (90.3%) reported being referred to language services and 81.4% of PSRs also reported being referred to language services.³⁵ More Syrian GARs reported being referred to language services compared to previous refugee populations (86%).³⁶

As indicated in Table 3.2, SPOs have reported in iCARE that 5,113 GARs, 2,652 PSRs and 830 BVOR refugees have undergone a language assessment. This represents a high proportion of Syrian

³⁵ Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

³⁶ Canada, IRCC (2016) *Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs*.

refugees receiving a language assessment (90.8%, 80.1% and 85.7% of the GARs, PSRs and BVOR refugees, respectively).

Table 3-2: iCARE - Language Assessment for Syrian Refugees

	Syrian Adults	Syrian GARs #	Syrian GARs %	Syrian PSRs #	Syrian PSRs %	Syrian BVOR Refugees #	Syrian BVOR Refugees %
Language Assessment	8,595	5,113	90.8%	2,652	80.1%	830	85.7%
Total # of Adult Syrian GARs Admitted	9,908	5,630	100.0%	3,310	100.0%	968	100.0%

Source: IRCC Resettlement/Settlement Client Continuum. October 31, 2016.

Population includes Syrian refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1st, 2016, are 18 years of age or older. Does not include Syrian refugees destined to Quebec or those who had a Certificat de sélection du Québec.

Note: iCARE data does not include services offered in Quebec.

Of those surveyed refugees, 94.5% of GARs reported having taken language classes compared to 77.6% of the PSRs. The majority of surveyed refugees have indicated enrolling in English language training and very few indicated enrolling in French language training³⁷.

Table 3-3: Self-Reported Taking Language Training

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
Taken English Language Classes	94.0%	75.3%
Taken French Language Classes	0.5%	1.5%
Taken French and English Language Classes	0.0%	0.8%
Have Not Taken Language Classes	6.0%	22.9%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100%.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

Finding: Syrian GARs indicated that the main reasons for not taking language training were the lack of available lower level classes and lack of childminding spaces. For Syrian PSRs, it was that they are currently working or that no language training was needed.

As per Table 3.4, the two most common reasons for not enrolling in English/French classes for PSRs was because they were working (39.3%) or because there was no need to improve their language (38.6%). On the other hand, GARs indicated that the waiting for available language classes (38.5%) and the lack of childcare (23.1%) or distance from home (23.1%) were the main reasons for not taking language classes.

³⁷ Language training accessed could include language training funded by IRCC or funded by a different organization.

Table 3-4: Reasons for Not Taking Language Classes

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
Classes are full, or there is a waitlist	38.5%	7.1%
No childcare offered	23.1%	4.3%
Childcare offered, but no spaces	15.4%	3.6%
I do not need to improve my English/French	15.4%	38.6%
I do not want to improve my English/French	0.0%	4.3%
I am too busy taking other courses or classes	7.7%	5.7%
I am working	0.0%	39.3%
Classes are too far away from home	23.1%	4.3%
Classes are not offered at convenient times	15.4%	9.3%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative – Survey of GARs and PSRs.*

Totals may not equal 100% as multiple options could be selected.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

Although language classes were identified by Syrian refugees as a major need, wait lists pose a problem to accessing the classes. Refugees in focus groups indicated waiting months for language classes due to general overflow (i.e., IRCC funded seats are not available, especially for lower level classes) or due to support services not being available (i.e., child minding).³⁸

Syrian refugees noted that they are also trying to learn English on their own, while they wait for language classes. For example, some are trying to learn how to communicate by using smartphones and Google Translate.

3.2. Early Economic Establishment

3.2.1. Employment Services

Finding: Although a higher proportion of Syrian PSRs were referred to employment related services compared to their GAR counterparts, fewer Syrian refugees were referred to such services compared to overall resettled refugees.

Surveyed Syrian PSRs (63.2%) are more likely to be referred to employment related services compared to Syrian GARs (27.3%).³⁹ In addition, overall Syrian refugees were less likely to be referred to such services compared to other resettled refugees (27.3% of Syrian GARs compared to 44% of resettled GARs; and 63.2% of Syrian PSRs compared to 83% of resettled PSRs).⁴⁰

In addition, GAR focus group participants indicated that they were not provided with enough information from their RAP SPOs regarding how to apply for jobs. As stated earlier, many refugees would have liked more information about employee rights, general labour market information such as what is working under the table, what is the minimum wage, etc.

³⁸ Additional information regarding waiting times for IRCC funded language training is currently being analyzed by the department.

³⁹ Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative – Survey of GARs and PSRs.*

⁴⁰ Canada, IRCC (2016) *Evaluation of Resettlement Programs*. Survey.

Finding: Given GARs’ low language levels compared to other newcomers, many were unable to access employment services until a specific CLB level had been reached.

Interviewees indicated that providing settlement services such as employment services to clients with lower levels of English and French is difficult as most of the material is targeted at newcomers with at least some basic knowledge of official languages.

A Departmental Lessons Learned report indicated that a difficulty for Syrian refugees accessing employment services is due to the program requiring CLB 2 in English or French; however, most Syrians have lower language skills than CLB 2.⁴¹ This prevents Syrian refugees from accessing employment services until they are at a satisfactory language level.

In addition, some Syrian refugees are illiterate in their native languages. Literacy and language classes are important in ensuring that Syrian refugees are able to learn a Canadian official language in order to be able to benefit from other settlement services or other community services.

Some Settlement SPOs have been creative in providing employment related services by creating Syrian specific initiatives, in developing working relationships with employers to develop employment fairs and connections. For example, MOSAIC in British Columbia provides employment services in both English and Arabic to provide employment information regarding training, compensation, regulations, breaks, etc.

3.2.2. Participating in the Labour Market

Currently Working

Finding: Half of adult PSRs had found employment, compared to 10% of Syrian GARs.

Of those surveyed, 9.7% of Syrian GARs and 52.8% of Syrian PSRs indicated they were currently working in Canada.⁴² This finding, that a larger share of PSRs had found employment, was also corroborated by focus group participants.

Table 3-5: Currently Working in Canada

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
Yes	9.7%	52.8%
No	90.3%	47.2%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

Finding: Of those who reported having a job, the most common form of employment for both GARs and PSRs were in the Sales and Service occupations.

The employment profile of GARs and PSRs are very similar. Almost half of the resettled Syrian refugees have found work in the Sales and Service occupation field (cashier, restaurant worker, grocery store, kitchen helper, cleaner, customer service, cook, etc.). The second highest occupation

⁴¹ IRCC Internal documentation.

⁴² The survey was conducted during late Summer 2016.

field was Trades and Transport occupation (construction, carpenter, technicians, welder, etc.) at 18%.

Looking for Work

Finding: The vast majority of Syrian refugees who were not working at the time of the survey were looking for work or intended to look for work in the near future.

When asked if they were currently looking for work, 43.4% of GAR survey respondents and 59.2% of PSR survey respondents indicated that they were currently looking for work.

Table 3-6: Seeking Employment

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
I am currently looking for work	43.4%	59.2%
I am not looking for work right now, but plan to look for work in the future	54.1%	31.2%
I don't plan to work in Canada	2.6%	9.6%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

However, 54.1% of GARs and 31.2% of PSRs indicated that they intend to look for work, but are not currently looking. Reasons for not currently looking for work vary between GARs and PSRs. GARs top three reasons for not currently working include: taking language classes (84.8%); still receiving services to help learn about Canada (27.6%); and taking care of children (20.0%). The top three reasons for PSRs not currently looking for work, included: taking language classes to improve English/French (64.8%); taking care of children (22.7%); and waiting for credentials to be assessed (17.0%).

Table 3-7: Reasons for Not Currently Looking For Work

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
Taking language classes to improve English/French	84.8%	64.8%
In school for something other than language	13.3%	14.8%
Still receiving services to help learn about Canada	27.6%	10.2%
Don't know how to apply for jobs	12.4%	0.0%
Medical condition preventing from looking for work	12.4%	10.2%
Waiting until no longer receiving income support from the Government of Canada	2.9%	0.0%
Taking care of children	20.0%	22.7%
Waiting for credentials to be assessed	4.8%	17.0%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Totals may not equal 100% as multiple options could be selected.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

Few survey respondents indicated that they do not plan on working, some of the reasons included age, health issues and looking after family members.

An additional difficulty regarding employment is the RAP income support clawback, in which RAP clients are allowed to earn up to 50% of their total monthly RAP income support payment before any deduction is made to the monthly income support. If additional income surpasses 50% of the monthly RAP entitlement, all RAP funds over that amount are clawed back on a dollar-for-dollar basis for each dollar earned over the allotted 50%.⁴³ Focus groups and interviewees highlighted that this clawback can be discouraging to finding employment.

Challenges in Finding Work

Finding: The biggest challenge facing both GARs and PSRs in finding a job was associated with learning an official language.

GARs indicated in focus groups that priority was placed on obtaining language prior to receiving employment services. As a result, GARs are not being connected to employment services and potential employment opportunities until later in their integration process. The most common response as to why surveyed refugees were not currently looking for work included taking language classes (82.1% for GARs, 54.8% for PSRs).

PSRs focus group participants indicated that they are having difficulty finding jobs for a variety of reasons, including: a lack of Canadian work experience; and not having their Syrian diplomas/credentials recognized.

Table 3-8: Challenges in Finding Work

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
I need to improve my English/French language skills.	82.1%	54.8%
I am taking a course/training (e.g., school, language training, apprenticeship) to improve my skills.	39.3%	16.3%
I am still settling/adjusting to life in Canada	32.1%	18.1%
I have been told I am overqualified for the jobs I've applied for.	2.4%	6.6%
I have been told I don't have enough Canadian work experience.	16.7%	31.9%
I'm not sure how to find a job in Canada.	26.2%	20.5%
I'm doing unpaid work or an internship.	6.0%	4.8%
I need to have, or am in the process of having my credentials/qualifications assessed.	15.5%	24.7%
I have not been able to find a job that matches my credentials/qualifications.	10.7%	14.5%
My qualifications were assessed as not equivalent to Canadian requirements.	1.2%	7.8%
There are not many jobs available in the area where I live.	25.0%	29.5%
There is a lot of competition for jobs in the area where I live	6.0%	13.9%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Totals may not equal 100% as multiple options could be selected.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

⁴³ Canada, CIC (2015) *Inland Processing 3: In Canada Processing of Convention Refugees Abroad and Members of the Humanitarian Protected Persons Abroad Classes – Part 2 (Resettlement Assistance Program)*.

3.3. Knowledge and Skills to Live Independently

All refugees are taught by RAP SPOs or sponsors how to complete a variety of activities associated with life in Canada – how to use public transportation, accessing health care, how to access community services and so forth.

Table 3-9: Knowledge and Skills Gained by Refugees

	GAR		PSR	
	Resettled Refugees (2010-2014)	Syrian Initiative	Resettled Refugees (2010-2014)	Syrian Initiative
Can use public transportation	93%	80.1%	95%	86.2%
Know how to get health care	86%	71.0%	96%	84.8%
Know how to enroll in school or further education	80%	55.7%	89%	72.1%
Know how to budget money	87%	62.5%	93%	75.0%
Know how to get the community services	79%	55.6%	91%	76.1%
Understand rights and freedoms in Canada	89%	92.1%	95%	96.6%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative – Survey of GARs and PSRs; IRCC (2016) Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs.*

Percentage of those who indicated agree or strongly agree.

Totals may not equal 100% as multiple options could be selected.

Note: Eligible respondents for both surveys include those who were 18 years of age and above, and residing outside of Quebec. Syrian Refugee Survey included adults who arrived in Canada between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016. Resettlement Refugee Survey included adult resettled refugees who arrived in Canada between 2010 and 2014.

With the exception of GARs’ understanding of rights and freedoms in Canada, all Syrian refugees had a lower level of understanding of Canadian activities than previous refugee populations. For GARs, the most notable difference between Syrian population and the resettled refugee population was around the knowledge of how to enroll in school or further their education and knowledge of how to access community services. For PSRs, the largest difference was in the knowledge of how to budget money.

3.4. Development of Social Networks and Connections with Broader Communities

While it is still early in the integration process, perspectives on whether Syrian refugees are making connections with broader Canadian community was mixed. Some SPO, SAHs and stakeholders indicated that there are instances of Syrian refugees remaining within their communities, while others indicated that Syrian refugees were doing well in connecting with the Canadian community. Common social network connections were through religious and community organizations.

Interviewees indicated that Syrian refugees formed connections through their common experiences – the plane rides to Canada and staying in the Welcome Centre hotels were cited as examples. It was reported that they are a very well connected group as social media use is extremely high (e.g., WhatsApp groups). Some stakeholders reported that due to the size of the refugee population that moved together, they have become linked and tend to network.

Interviewees indicated that children were integrating well and were experiencing few barriers. It was reported through focus groups that children are providing interpretation support to their parents as

they are helping them communicate with different members in the community (e.g., teachers, school representatives, doctors, neighbours, etc.).

3.5. Satisfaction with Life in Canada

Finding: Overall, both GARs and PSRs are happy with their life in Canada.

When asked, the majority of Syrian GARs and PSRs (77% for both groups) indicated that they were happy or very happy with their lives in Canada.

Table 3-10: Satisfaction with Life in Canada

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
Not at all + a little bit happy	5.6%	5.5%
Somewhat happy	17.2%	17.2%
Happy	27.0%	37.3%
Very happy	50.2%	39.9%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative – Survey of GARs and PSRs.*

Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

In addition, 90% of Syrian GARs and PSRs reported having a somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging to Canada.

Table 3-11: Sense of Belonging to Canada

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
Very weak	1.9%	1.7%
Somewhat weak	4.6%	3.6%
Somewhat strong	18.1%	28.1%
Very strong	72.2%	62.7%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative – Survey of GARs and PSRs.*

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

3.6. Resettlement and Settlement Differences by Gender

When examining the survey results by gender, minimal difference was observed between male and female clients.⁴⁴ iCARE data also indicates that there are minimal differences between men and women with regards to accessing settlement services.

⁴⁴ GAR, PSR, BVOR surveys were combined to examine overall gender and age distribution across different aspects of the resettlement and settlement process.

Table 3-12: Percentage of Adult Population who Accessed Settlement Services, by Gender

	Syrian Refugees	
	Adult Female	Adult Male
Needs Assessment and Referrals	84.1%	86.2%
Information and Orientation	87.8%	88.5%
Language Assessment	85.8%	86.9%
IRCC Funded Language Training	64.0%	68.9%
Employment Related Services	9.2%	17.0%
Community Connections	41.6%	43.8%
Total Adult Population (Excluding Quebec)	4,923	4,985

Source: IRCC Resettlement/Settlement Client Continuum. October 31, 2016.

Population includes Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1st, 2016, are 18 years of age or older and were not destined to Quebec.

Note: iCARE does not capture data on Settlement and Resettlement services offered in Quebec.

As noted in iCARE, 85.8% of Syrian women have had their language assessed and 64.0% are accessing IRCC-funded language training. This is very similar to Syrian men, of who 86.9% have had their language assessed and 68.9% are enrolled in IRCC-funded language training. Of those surveyed women who said they were not taking language training, the top two reasons were that they felt they did not need to improve their English/French, or they were working, compared to surveyed men, who indicated they were working or language classes were not offered at convenient times.

Table 3-13: Percentage of Adult Population Who Accessed a Settlement Service and received Care for Newcomer Children, by Gender

	Syrian Refugees	
	Adult Female	Adult Male
Needs Assessment and Referrals	6.8%	5.5%
Information and Orientation	18.1%	16.0%
Language Assessment	3.8%	2.1%
IRCC Funded Language Training	18.4%	4.7%
Employment Related Services	0.1%	0.0%
Community Connections	5.7%	3.2%
Total Unique clients who accessed support services	34.8%	22.6%
Total Adult population (Excluding Quebec)	4,923	4,985

Source: IRCC Resettlement/Settlement Client Continuum. October 31, 2016.

Population includes Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1st, 2016, are 18 years of age or older and were not destined to Quebec.

Note: iCARE does not capture data on Settlement and Resettlement services offered in Quebec.

In the survey, both men and women identified that childminding was a challenge for accessing language training. Surveyed women (8.8%) and men (11.4%) indicated that the reason they have not taken language training is due to no child care offered, or there were no spaces available.

With regards to employment, surveyed women were less likely than men to report that they were currently working in Canada (25.8% compared to 47.5%). Additionally, women were slightly less likely than men to indicate that they were currently looking for work or plan to look for work in the future (89.4% vs. 95.2%, respectively).

When asked what were their greatest difficulties since arriving in Canada, both surveyed men and women indicated finding a good job and learning English/French and facing a language barrier as their top two greatest difficulties. Where men and women differed in their results is in their third answer, as surveyed women were more likely to say that they had difficulty getting used to the weather, while men indicated that getting their education or work experience recognized was a challenge.

3.7. Resettlement and Settlement Differences by Age Group

Similar to gender, when examining the survey results by young adults (aged 18 to 24) and adults (aged 25 and older), overall, there were hardly any differences observed between the two groups.⁴⁵ For example, top three biggest difficulties since arriving in Canada had the same results for both young adults and adults.

One minor difference among results was that surveyed young adults were more likely than adults to have found a job in Canada (46.2% of Syrian young adults, compared to 40.1% of Syrian adults).

With regard to a sense of belonging to Canada, there was no difference between young adults and adults. The majority of surveyed Syrian young adults (91.6%) indicated having a somewhat strong or very strong sense of belonging to Canada, compared to 91.0% of Syrian adults (aged 25 to 64). Satisfaction with life in Canada was higher for surveyed young adults, with 81.2% reporting either being happy or very happy, compared to 77.9% of adults (aged 25 to 64).

⁴⁵ GAR, PSR, BVOR surveys were combined to examine overall gender and age trends across all resettled refugees.

4. Ongoing Considerations

The following section presents some of the identified ongoing considerations that are associated with Syrian Refugee Initiative moving forward.

4.1. Additional Financial Support

Canada Child Benefit

As Syrian refugees become permanent residents, they are eligible for the Canada Child Benefit, which is a tax-free monthly payment made to eligible families to help them with the cost of raising children under the age of 18⁴⁶. Canada Child Benefit payments are calculated by taking into consideration the number of children living with the parent(s), the age of the children, as well as the family net income. As a starting point, for each child under the age of six, the family is entitled to receive annually a total of \$6,400 (or \$533.33 per month); and for each child between the ages of 6 and 17, the family is entitled to receive annually a total of \$5,400 (or \$450.00 per month). The payments are reduced proportionally when the family net income is over \$30,000.

The following calculations were made based on the assumption that this income threshold was not achieved. Canada will be providing to Syrian families an estimated amount of \$76.6M between July 2016 and June 2017 for child benefits⁴⁷. This amount will fluctuate overtime as the family composition and children age change and as their family net income will augment.

Transition to Month 13

Concerns have been raised by interviewees, SAHs, SPOs and provinces regarding what will happen to Syrian refugees once the 12 months of RAP income support and financial assistance from the sponsors is set to finish. The issue of “month 13” has been raised as some additional supports were generally set up to only be available for one year (e.g., rent supplements, bus passes, etc.).

Only a few focus group participants knew about the social assistance and the majority were worried about month 13, given that they had not found jobs and did not know how they would survive without any support. It was unknown by many focus group participants that if a refugee has not found employment by month 13, a refugee is eligible to apply for provincial social assistance.

Figure 1 shows the historical social assistance rate for resettled refugees in Canada. The vast majority of GARs (93%)⁴⁸ received at least one month of social assistance⁴⁹ after their first calendar year in Canada. This proportion steadily decreases with each passing year, with 34% reporting social assistance usage after 10 years of being in Canada. Conversely, a relatively small proportion of PSRs (25%) received social assistance following their first year in Canada. This proportion increases in years two and three, though begins to decline thereafter. By year 10, 25% of PSRs had reported social assistance.

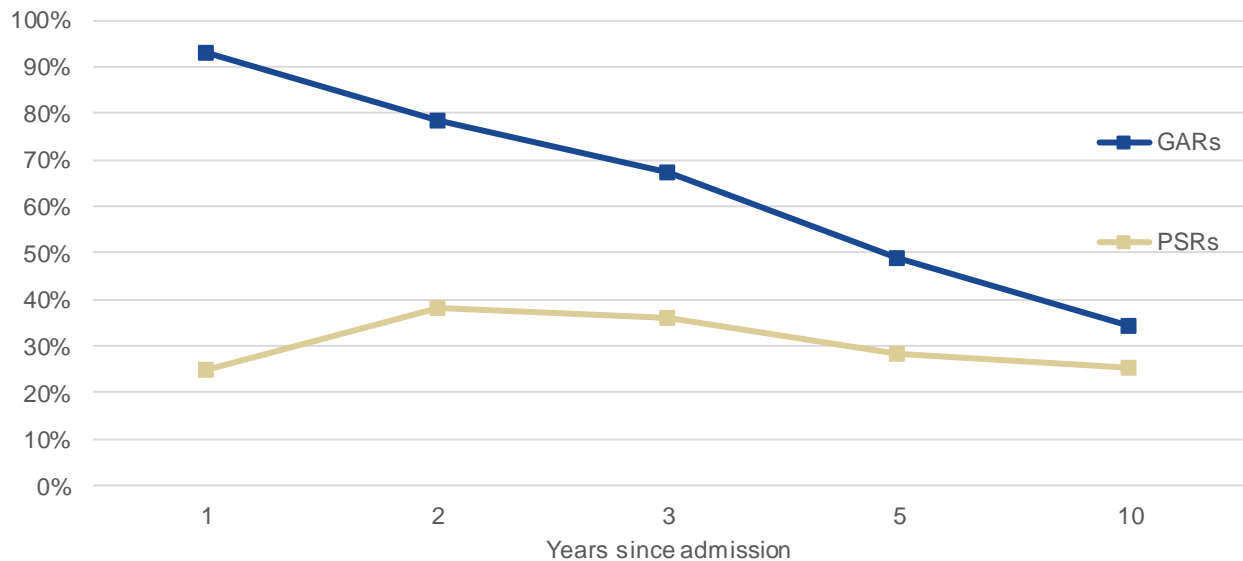
⁴⁶ Canada, CRA (2016) Canada Child Benefit – Overview. www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/ccb/menu-eng.html

⁴⁷ These estimates have been validated by Canada Revenue Agency.

⁴⁸ As the RAP income support is declared, for tax purposes, as social assistance benefits, it explains the high proportion of GARs receiving social assistance in the year of admission and the first year following admission (as the year of admission may be an incomplete year). For example, only refugees arriving in January will have a full year of RAP income support in their year “0”. GARs arriving in other months will have their 12 months of RAP income support staggered on two different calendar years.

⁴⁹ Special caution is needed to interpret these results as receiving one month of social assistance or 12 months is recorded in the Longitudinal Immigrant Database in the same way.

Figure 4-1: Historical Social Assistance Rates by Category and Years since Admission



Source: Longitudinal Immigrant Database (IMDB) 2013.

Incidence of Social Assistance is reported as the percentage of individuals who declared family social assistance income.

RAP income support is included as a social assistance benefit as RAP income support can be extended into year 1 (depending on the arrival date of the refugee within the tax year). The RAP income support is not included in the social assistance benefits after year 1.

Note: Special caution is needed to interpret these results as receiving one month of social assistance or 12 months is recorded in the IMDB in the same way.

Based on these historical trends, the split between GARs and PSRs and the monthly intake over the past years, the expected number of Syrian refugees who may be in need of social assistance can be estimated. This estimate produces a range of how many adults could be expected to apply for provincial social assistance in a given time period. It is expected that this need will peak in March 2017, with approximately 1,890 to 2,005 adults becoming possibly eligible to apply for provincial social assistance at that time.

4.2. Challenges for Syrian Youth

Interviewees indicated that children and youth should be the focus of investments in to ensure that they are set up to succeed. A focus group was conducted solely with Syrian youth⁵⁰, where they raised concerns about their own education and subsequent labour market integration. All participants indicated aspirations to attend school and have careers (e.g., becoming engineers was the most frequent occupation cited). Most participants indicated that they could not pursue their education in Canada due to their age and schooling history; however, most have been out of school for a few years and indicated requiring additional support from teachers and the community. Similar concerns were raised during interviews with key stakeholders not only regarding youth but also regarding younger children who may have never attended school or who may have been out of school for a few years.

⁵⁰ Majority of youth in the focus group were between 18 and 21 years old.

Youth programming is a potential gap area in the current programming (not only in IRCC funded programs but also in provincial programs), as due to their age, youth may not be accessing services (e.g., too old for high school, yet not finished their schooling). Many partners and stakeholders were concerned about the youth group. The perception was that given the integration challenges mentioned above, this group could become disenfranchised and have a harder time developing a sense of belonging to their communities.

The Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights also found that IRCC could do more “to work with provincial and territorial governments, along with settlement organizations to ensure adequate programming is available to youth, who face unique challenges in the integration process.”⁵¹

4.3. Mental Health

As also noted in the 2016 *Evaluation of Resettlement Programs*, there was a lack of mental health services available for all resettled refugees. Interviewees, stakeholders from site visits and literature all identified mental health issues as a potential challenge for the Syrian refugee population, which may become more pressing over time as they continue to establish themselves in Canada.

While it is still early in their settlement process, accessing mental health support and services may be necessary for the long term successful integration of Syrian refugees in the future. In terms of one form of support, the Interim Federal Health Program covers unlimited mental health counseling services to resettled refugees who have a recommendation from a physician.⁵²

4.4. Family Members Still Overseas

Some SPOs indicated that family reunification is the most frequent question they are being asked about from Syrian refugees. As many extended family members have not been resettled, SPOs expect that there will be a huge amount of work coming forward due to people wanting to sponsor family members. This was also corroborated by focus group participants.

4.5. Sponsor Support

While PSR documentation indicates that a “sponsoring group may establish a trust fund for the sponsorship but may not accept or require payment of funds from a refugee for submitting a sponsorship”,⁵³ 4.1% of surveyed PSRs indicated that before coming to Canada, they paid someone to complete their sponsorship application or to provide for their own support while in Canada. Of these people who indicated that they were asked to pay, 50.0% said they paid their sponsor, 25.0% paid an immigration consultant and 7.1% paid family or friends in Canada⁵⁴.

⁵¹ Senate of Canada, Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights (2016) *Government should strengthen Syrian refugee supports*.

⁵² IRCC has funded a variety of activities that promote the independence, health, recovery and community integration of persons with mental health and/or addiction challenges. The programming also aims to enhance capacity-building through the provision of training for settlement workers to help identify mental health issues and make appropriate referrals in the community.

⁵³ Canada, IRCC (2016) *Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program*.

⁵⁴ 17.9% of survey respondents who indicated that they paid someone to complete their sponsorship application or to provide for their own support while in Canada indicated that they paid someone other than a family member/friend, sponsor, or immigration consultant.

Table 4-1: Paid a Sponsor to Come to Canada

	Resettled Refugees (2010-2014)	PSR Syrian Refugee Initiative
Yes	3.5%	4.1%
No	96.5%	95.9%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative – Survey of GARs and PSRs. Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs.*

Note: Eligible respondents for both surveys include those who were 18 years of age and above, and residing outside of Quebec. Syrian Refugee Survey included adults who arrived in Canada between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016. Resettlement Refugee Survey included adult resettled refugees who arrived in Canada between 2010 and 2014

Sponsorship Breakdowns

Sponsorship breakdown is defined by IRCC’s operational manual as an official declaration that there is a failure to meet the sponsorship arrangement of care for the refugee applicants listed in the sponsorship undertaking, including situations where sponsorship terms are not being met for reasons beyond the sponsor’s control.⁵⁵ It was noted through focus groups and site visit interviews that some sponsors were not providing adequate support to the sponsored refugees (either BVOR or PSR).

While interviewees indicated that sponsorship breakdowns were not reported more than average, interviewees were more concerned with unreported sponsorship breakdowns among BVOR refugees. As sponsorship breakdowns are only documented if they are reported to IRCC, there are unknowns as to the exact number of sponsorship breakdowns. Of those that have been reported, these breakdowns are mostly BVOR refugees who are not sponsored by members of their families. It was observed during a site visit that sponsors may be pressuring refugees to get employment early so as they are no longer financially supporting the refugee. Instances such as these are not being reported to IRCC as a sponsorship breakdown, even though the refugee is not receiving the support they need.

4.6. Perception of Favoritism Towards Syrian Refugees

While the outpouring of community support and donations was extremely high for the Syrian refugees, interviewees, SPOs and local IRCC officers all highlighted a challenge and difficulty dealing with the perception of favoritism toward Syrian refugees compared to other resettled refugees.

Syrian refugees admitted since November 4, 2015 had major differences in terms of services and program offerings – immigration loans were waived, applications processed in a short period of time, received many donations from communities. Additional services were also being offered to help Syrian refugees integrate, such as housing discount, free recreational memberships and free bus passes. While all of these offerings are positive and extremely helpful and beneficial for the Syrian Refugees, it put RAP SPO and Settlement SPOs in difficult positions of having to explain to other refugees (Syrian and non-Syrian refugees) who arrived why they were not eligible for these same offerings.

⁵⁵ Canada, IRCC (2016) *Inland Processing 3, Part 3.*

5. Planning and Coordination

While planning and coordination of the whole of government initiative was a secondary area of focus for the Rapid Impact Evaluation, the following section presents results regarding the implications on clients associated with these aspects of the initiative. Additional information regarding Phases I to IV of the initiative and the impact on clients, can be found in Appendix A.

5.1. Lack of Planning for Phase V

The majority of interviewees and SPOs agreed that the Toronto planning and engagement session with the settlement sector and RAP SPOs in late November 2015 helped considerably in the planning process, as it brought key stakeholders together and highlighted the common goal that they were all working towards. The meeting allowed for everyone to participate and understand the national vision of the Syrian Refugee Initiative.

An overarching challenge of the Syrian Refugee Initiative, reiterated in Departmental Lessons Learned reports, in interviews and site visits, was that not enough attention was given to the settlement and integration portion of the initiative (Phase V). While there was a lot of focus on Phases I-IV in the initial planning phase by the Government Operations Centre, interviewees felt that the early planning stages focused too much on the processing, transportation and welcoming, but did not consider impacts to RAP and settlement services until after refugees had already started arriving. Many interviewees indicated that they had a lack of time to plan to most effectively deliver services. RAP SPOs and Settlement SPOs required more time to be able to ramp up and deal with volumes that were significantly higher than previous cohorts. Interviewees indicated that more innovation could have been applied in terms of planning for Phase V.

5.2. Volume and Pace

Numerous refugees arriving at once created bottlenecks in the initiative, causing difficulties for the refugees and for the RAP SPOs. There were instances of RAP SPOs asking for a pause in refugee referrals (e.g., Ottawa)⁵⁶ in order to regroup and get ready for more refugees. For example, delays in finding permanent housing meant that refugees had to stay longer in temporary accommodations. Interviewees questioned if spreading out arrivals would have had a negative impact on the initiative. While all refugees arrived by March 1st, 2016, it was a rushed operation for the refugees, for IRCC staff and for RAP SPOs, Settlement SPOs and sponsors.

5.3. Incorrect Profile Information

IRCC provided background profiles of the Syrian Refugee population to the RAP SPOs and Settlement SPOs early in the initiative. However, the profiles reflected a previous cohort of Syrian refugees and did not accurately predict the socio-demographic characteristics of the Syrian population, most notably the GARs. As a result, SPOs had anticipated different needs for this population. The information initially received did not account for the lower levels of education, lower levels of language levels and the large family sizes. The impacts were observed in the lack of lower level of language class offerings, childminding availability and finding appropriate housing.

⁵⁶ Julie Ireton (2016) "Ottawa agencies overwhelmed by fast pace of refugee arrivals". *CBC News*. January 18, 2016.

5.4. Funding for Service Provider Organizations

The funding for the Syrian Initiative was reported by many RAP SPOs, Settlement SPOs and IRCC representatives as not being delivered in a timely manner, as refugees were arriving before the funds were received. Interviewees highlighted that the funding came out sporadically, creating difficulties in staffing, renting additional classrooms, developing resources, etc. The funding delays meant that SPOs were providing services to Syrian refugees on the promise of money – they were not aware of when more money was going to come and how much they were going to receive which made it difficult for them to have the appropriate resources available (in terms of staff and services).

5.5. Volunteers and Corporate Donations

While many interviewees, RAP SPO and Settlement SPOs agreed that volunteers were extremely useful, managing and coordinating volunteers became an additional challenge. Although this high level of community engagement was overwhelmingly helpful for the SPOs, many interviewees and the Departmental Lessons Learned report indicated the need to better manage the volunteers through more formal mechanisms. While many volunteers had good intentions, at times, they did not always know the suite of services available to refugees or did not know about all the key partners within the community. Many interviewees highlighted the need for a program similar to the former Host program which would allow for a better coordination of volunteers and their activities.

While donations were helpful, many of the players involved (IRCC, SPOs, etc.) were not set up to house donations and did not have systems in place to do the inventory of such donations. Site visits and interviews indicated that IRCC had not planned for the management of all the corporate donations and that the department was not set up to handle donations and public goodwill. Similarly, SPOs indicated that they had difficulties handling the donations, as there was no structure in place.

Some corporate goodwill was channeled through the Community Foundations of Canada, which created a Welcome Fund for Syrian Refugees. The Fund was created “to provide housing, job training and skills development support for the 25,000 refugees who will be welcomed in communities across Canada.”⁵⁷ Many corporate industries donated money to this fund (e.g., CN Rail donated \$5 Million). These funds were then dispersed to communities across the country. For example, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society received \$600,000 in February 2016 to “provide direct support to refugee households.”⁵⁸

5.6. Collaboration of the Settlement Sector

A huge success was the flexibility of the settlement sector and partners to make the initiative happen and support the settlement of this population. Many stakeholders collaborated to accomplish different tasks for the Syrian refugee population (e.g., multiple school boards in a city working together to do an intake assessment that would work for all school boards). Many interviewees indicated that everyone working together (IRCC, other government departments, RAP SPOs, SPOs, stakeholders, Provinces, etc.) to find common solutions was a great success of the initiative.

The use of Local Immigration Partnerships (LIP) were also seen as a success as they were a help in various cities (e.g., Ottawa and Fredericton). Given that the groups are established, they were able to help build bridges between the community members and partners with the SPOs.

⁵⁷ Community Foundations of Canada (2015) *Welcome Fund for Syrian Refugees*.

⁵⁸ Community Foundations of Canada (2016) *Calgary the first to receive support from the Welcome Fund for Syrian Refugees*.

6. Lessons Learned

This whole of government initiative was a success in many regards: overall, Syrian refugees who were surveyed reported being happy with their life in Canada, and the evaluation found that their immediate resettlement and essential needs were being met. Early indicators also show that Syrian refugees are generally integrating into Canada at the same rate as previously resettled refugees. At the time of the survey, around half of adult PSRs had found employment, compared to 10% of Syrian GARs and the vast majority of Syrian refugees who were not working at the time were looking for work or intended to look for work in the near future.

Many of the Syrian refugees resettled by March 1, 2016, had begun using settlement services, including a high number of adults attending information and orientation sessions, and receiving a needs assessment and referral for services. Furthermore, 95% of adult government-assisted refugees (GARs) and over three-quarters of adult privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) were, at the time of the evaluation, enrolled in some form of language training, either federally-funded courses or other types.

The evaluation also identified several areas that should be taken into account with a view towards improvements - lessons the Department should consider going forward, particularly in the event of similar resettlement initiatives in the future. While there may be areas for consideration in terms of refugee and settlement programming, many of these recommendations were highlighted in the recently completed Resettlement Programs evaluation⁵⁹ and the lessons from the Syrian Refugee Initiative are more directly applicable to large-scale, time-sensitive initiatives. As such, the following key considerations should be taken into account to help ensure successful resettlement and settlement results.

The Need for End-to-End Planning For a Major Initiative

While a major component of the Syrian Refugee Initiative was focussed on the operational execution, processing and arrival of the 25,000 Syrian refugees, there was lack of sufficient planning and forward-looking preparations regarding the resettlement and early integration phases that considered the impacts of the initiative beyond the first few weeks post arrival in Canada. The expedited nature of the initiative made it challenging for the settlement sector (RAP SPOs, Settlement SPOs, partners and stakeholders) to effectively plan for the delivery of in-Canada services. Adequate pacing is critical to ensuring that the necessary human, community and stakeholder resources can be mobilized and are able to adequately prepare for the arrival and initial settlement of resettled refugees.

IRCC should ensure that the resettlement and settlement considerations are fully integrated into the planning phase of future departmental refugee initiatives.

The Need for Accurate and Complete Refugee Information

Accurate refugee profile information allows for mobilization of appropriate resources, including accounting for particular settlement challenges (e.g.; high medical needs, large family sizes) of the incoming population. The evaluation found that Syrian refugee arrivals targets were not well communicated to IRCC staff, RAP SPOs, Settlement SPOs, partners and stakeholders in a timely fashion. In addition, the initial background profiles of the incoming refugees was not always

⁵⁹ Canada, IRCC (2016) *Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs*.
www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/evaluation/resettlement.asp

complete or entirely accurate. These information gaps had an impact on the preparation for arrivals that contributed to challenges in planning and developing the necessary resources (i.e.; specialized programming or supports) to provide timely and targeted services to refugees.

It is essential that accurate and necessary refugee information (profile, destining, arrivals) is provided to IRCC staff, partners and stakeholders in a timely way.

Provision of Pre-Arrival Services

Pre-arrival services, particularly orientation, are essential to successful resettlement and setting refugees on a positive integration path. This ensures that they have received key and necessary information before arrival in Canada. While pre-arrival services are typically offered to resettled refugees, it was not a planned service as part of the Syrian Refugee Initiative, resulting in many of this group arriving in Canada lacking basic information, having gaps in knowledge and arriving with assumptions. The lack of pre-arrival services meant that the basic information they were expected to have upon arrival had to be provided in Canada, making the initial resettlement stages even more difficult.

Providing pre-arrival/orientation to all refugees prior to coming to Canada is essential.

A Focal Point for Stakeholder Coordination and Communication

A designated point of contact within IRCC allowed for consistency in communications and effective coordination with in-Canada stakeholders. This designated special coordinator role allowed stakeholders to have a focal point who could quickly help address emerging issues and act as a centralized point for communications with key partner groups.

IRCC should consider having a focal point within the Department for future large-scale refugee initiatives to ensure effective and consistent stakeholder coordination.

Administrative Information Quality

Due largely to the expedited nature of the initiative, some issues were encountered with collection of accurate refugee (client) information at various stages of the initiative. These issues included limited or missing contact information for refugees and inaccurate transliteration of refugee documentation. Additionally, poor quality profile information created challenges in reaching this population during the evaluation and could impact ongoing monitoring, research and outcomes reporting for this group.

Full sociodemographic and contact information needs to be accurately captured for populations that arrive in Canada to allow for effective ongoing monitoring and results reporting.

Appendix A: Impact on Clients - Processing and Arrival

The following section examines the processing phases, from the selection overseas to arrival in Canada and movement out to the welcoming communities, as well as the planning and coordination of the initiative.⁶⁰

Selection overseas was conducted in three phases – identification, processing and transportation. These phases relied heavily on IRCC staff in the Canadian visa offices abroad, namely Ankara, Amman and Beirut, as well as staff in other areas of the world, working through the international network. IRCC staff, other government departments and NGOs “did the impossible” and processed more refugees in a three-month span than Canada had done in all of 2013 and 2014 combined.

Identification, Processing and Transportation (Phases I - III)

While many interviewees said the initiative should be applauded for the speed in making it happen, the quick pace was difficult on refugees. Interviewees highlighted that there is sometimes a misconception that Syrian refugees want to come to Canada. Resettlement is an extremely difficult choice made by a refugee, as it is the acknowledgment that they will not go home and is not a decision to be taken lightly.

The first three phases of the initiative moved very quickly for refugees, as sometimes they only had a few days between being asked if they wanted to go to Canada and arriving at Montreal or Toronto airports. This fast turnaround impacted refugees, as it did not allow for much time to process the drastic life change. This meant that refugees did not always have time to dispose of belongings, or say goodbye to family and friends.⁶¹ Refugees did not have time to process what was happening and did not have good information about Canada or what would happen once they would arrive in Canada. In addition, interviewees indicated that this fast turnaround could explain, in part, why there was a high number of no-shows and withdrawals overseas.

Two Departmental Lessons Learned reports advised that consideration should be given to the needs of refugees, as they require time to process the information and make informed decisions.^{62,63}

Canadian Orientation Abroad

Many interviewees and focus group participants concurred that Canadian Orientation Abroad (COA)⁶⁴ is a critical aspect of the resettlement process and yet this service was not planned to be provided to refugees as part of the initiative, mainly due to the timing. The lack of COA was also highlighted through Departmental Lessons Learned reports.⁶⁵ Pre-departure orientation, like COA, can be helpful to refugees in addressing initial settlement and integration questions and raising appropriate and realistic expectations.

⁶⁰ As multiple Departmental Lessons Learned have been conducted on Phases I-IV, an overarching analysis has been used to review these phases, focusing primarily on best practices or challenges that had an impact on refugees.

⁶¹ IRCC Internal documentation.

⁶² IRCC Internal documentation.

⁶³ IRCC Internal documentation.

⁶⁴ COA is traditionally offered by the IOM, providing attendees with an enhanced knowledge of Canada and to ensure that newcomers know how to obtain assistance upon arrival in Canada. Source: Canada, CIC (2012) *Evaluation of the Overseas Orientation Initiatives*. www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/research-stats/ER20120801_OOI.pdf

⁶⁵ Canada, IRCC (2016) *Lessons Learned on Canada's Operation Syrian Refugees*. Geneva Workshop, April 2016; Canada, IRCC (2016) *Report of the External Partners Lessons Learned Exercise on Syrian Refugee Resettlement in Canada*.

RAP SPOs and local IRCC officers indicated that there was a lot of education that had to be provided by the service providers in Canada, as there were numerous instances of Syrian refugees arriving in Canada with incorrect information and assumptions (e.g., services that would be available upon arrival). While some of this misinformation could be as simple as not understanding the difference between what services are offered to a GAR (RAP, income support from the Government of Canada, etc.) compared to the support offered to a PSR (in-kind and financial support from a private sponsor), this lack of accurate information created unrealistic settlement expectations on the part of Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees have received information from unknown sources that was not always correct, leading to frustration among refugees and settlement providers. Focus group participants would have preferred to have a longer orientation session rather than getting them here quickly.

Transliteration

A challenge that was identified from Phase I related to some errors in refugees' names due to transliteration. As the Turkish government was responsible for translating the names from Arabic into English, occasionally the names were transliterated incorrectly. As a result, these errors in names were transmitted to Canadian documentation (i.e., permanent resident cards, social assistance number cards and provincial health cards). Individuals are now seeking to have these names corrected and are facing difficulties in doing so, in addition to the costs associated with having them corrected.

Matching and Destining

Matching refugees with communities and destining them to the 30 designated RAP SPOs⁶⁶ was undertaken through coordination overseas with the visa offices and with officers in Canada. When asked if there were issues with matching and destining, interviewees agreed that most GARs were well matched. There were instances of people incorrectly destined (e.g., had family in Canada, or needed to be closer to a hospital), but these matches were reported to be minimal given the high volume of refugees they were destining every day.

In addition, the majority of GARs surveyed (67.5%) were happy or very happy with the city they were destined to. PSRs had a higher level of satisfaction, as 74.5% were happy or very happy with the city or town to which they were destined.

Table A-1: Satisfaction with Destined City or Town

	Syrian GARs	Syrian PSRs
Not at all + a little bit happy	14.7%	6.7%
Somewhat happy	16.5%	16.5%
Happy + Very happy	67.5%	74.5%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative – Survey of GARs and PSRs.*

Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Note: Surveys were only administered to those Syrian Refugees who arrived between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016, who were 18 years of age or older and residents outside of Quebec.

⁶⁶ At the start of the initiative, there were 26 designated RAP SPOs where a GAR could be destined. An additional 4 RAP SPOs were added during the initiative, including: Brooks, AB; Lexington, ON; Victoria, BC; and Peterborough, ON.

Dissemination of information regarding destining communities transmitted to the communities in a timely manner, as communities did not know how many Syrians were expected until they started to receive them.

When asked if they have moved away from the city/town where they first lived in Canada (excluding the stay in Montreal or Toronto at the Welcome Centre, if applicable), surveyed GARs were more likely (12.1%) than PSRs (6.3%) to indicate that they have moved away.

Table A-2: Self-reported Secondary Migration

	GAR		PSR	
	Resettled Refugees (2010-2014)	Syrian Refugees	Resettled Refugees (2010-2014)	Syrian Refugees
Yes	21%	12.1%	25%	6.3%
No	80%	87.9%	75%	93.7%

Source: *Rapid Impact Evaluation of the Syrian Refugee Initiative* – Survey of GARs and PSRs.

Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Note: Eligible respondents for both surveys include those who were 18 years of age and above, and residing outside of Quebec. Syrian Refugee Survey included adults who arrived in Canada between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016. Resettlement Refugee Survey included adult resettled refugees who arrived in Canada between 2010 and 2014.

Notification of Arrival Transmissions

Notification of Arrival Transmissions (NAT) are typically sent to RAP SPOs and Sponsors 10 days in advance of arrival by the Matching Centre in Ottawa. For the initiative, the standard 10 business days was not met, as many times the NATs were provided 2 days in advance, on the day of, or not at all. The nature of the operation meant that there was not a lot of time and confirmation of impending arrival could only be provided very late in the process.

One of the challenges associated with the NATs was that local IRCC officers did not always receive the NATs and had to rely on the RAP SPOs to tell them who had arrived and when. This was particularly difficult for GARs, as the local IRCC officers had to create files for the RAP start-up cheques to be issued in a timely way.

Welcome in Canada (Phase IV)

Welcome Centres

The Welcome Centers at the two designated ports of entry of Montreal and Toronto airports were seen to have had a positive impact on refugees. These Welcome Centres contained border security checks by Canada Border Services Agency agents, quarantine checks by Public Health Agency of Canada officers for individuals who were ill and needed to be taken to hospital and social insurance numbers provided to refugees upon arrival by Service Canada. The welcome centres were very efficient as they were able to process and admit to Canada an entire plane load of refugees in four to six hours.⁶⁷

The passenger manifests were sometimes inaccurate, which caused difficulties and delays at the Welcome Centres. Confirmation of who was on the plane was sometimes known only once the

⁶⁷ IRCC Internal documentation.

flights were airborne. This was due to some “no shows” or people having health emergencies before arriving in Canada.

Hotels

Hotels allowed for RAP and settlement services to be accessed on site rather than having to travel to a specific location in order to obtain the services (e.g., immunization clinics from local public health). Certain hotels were in downtown city areas which allowed for refugees to go out and explore the neighbourhood. However, hotels became areas of restlessness for refugees, as many children were excited but had nothing to do in hotels. In addition, with the delays of finding permanent housing due the influx of individuals, it delayed children being able to access schooling, as they could not enrol until they had a permanent address. During the focus group, Syrian refugees indicated they would have preferred to have a shorter stay in temporary hotels and to have been set up in permanent housing sooner.

Appendix B: Methodology

Given the expedited timelines for this Rapid Impact Evaluation, a focused methodology was applied, which consisted of the following approaches.

Line of Evidence	
Document Review	A targeted document review was conducted of key documentation for the initiative. In particular, an examination of IRCC After Action Reviews and Departmental Lessons Learned were conducted, as well as a review of findings from the Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs (2016) and Iraqi Case Study (2015).
Interviews	Limited and condensed interviews were conducted with key stakeholders including NHQ IRCC staff (9), Non-Governmental Organizations (4), IRCC Regions (3) and Sponsors (2)
Administrative Data	GCMS, iCARE and Financial Data were analyzed to provide a profile of the initiative and of this population.
Online Client Survey	<p>Online email surveys were administered to adult Syrian refugees, who were 18 years of age or older and destined and lived outside of Quebec.</p> <p>The survey was conducted in English, French or Arabic.</p> <p>Limitations with the survey included that there were very few email addresses available for GAR and BVOR refugees. In addition, due to the low completion rates of the BVOR Survey, no information from that survey was used.</p> <p>Information regarding response rates and margin of error can be found in the table below.</p> <p>Survey responses from the 2016 Evaluation of Resettlement Programs were also used. For the methodology for those surveys, please refer to the evaluation.</p>
Site Visits	<p>In-person site visits to the primary reception areas (Toronto and Vancouver), a medium reception center (Ottawa), a small reception center (Fredericton) and a new reception center (Victoria) were conducted.</p> <p>Interviews (32) were also conducted as part of the site visits. Those included interviews with local IRCC officers, RAP and Settlement SPOs, SAHs, community stakeholders such as school boards, community health practitioners, Provincial representatives, municipal representatives and Mosque representatives.</p> <p>Ten focus groups were conducted during the site visits in Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria and Fredericton, with a total of 85 participants. Three focus groups were conducted with GARs, one with PSRs, two with BVOR refugees, one with GAR women only, one GAR men only, one with youth and one with professional PSRs.</p>

Evaluation	Respondent Group	Survey Completions	Response Rate	Margin of Error (95% confidence level)
Rapid Impact Evaluation of Syrian Refugee Initiative (2016)	Syrian GAR	214	70%	+/- 6.58%
	Syrian PSR	581	25%	+/- 3.69%
	Syrian BVOR	43	21%	+/- 14.61%
Evaluation of Resettlement Programs (2015)	Resettled GAR	810	76%	+/- 3%
	Resettled PSR	541	78%	+/-4%
	Resettled BVOR	20	74%	+/-21%

* There was a total of 304 emails available for GARs and 201 emails for BVOR refugees.

Limitations

A few limitations were noted in conducting the Rapid Impact Evaluation. These limitations were not believed to have had a substantial impact on the overall findings; however, people with low literacy skills may not have been fully captured, results may be skewed towards literate refugees. These limitations include:

- **Data quality**
 - **Limited Valid Email Addresses:** Upon reviewing the iCARE and admissions data, a limited number of valid GAR and BVOR emails were available. This limited the total number of potential survey respondents. While not enough emails and survey completions were obtained to have confidence in the results of the BVOR survey, a reasonable margin of error was obtained for the GAR survey, allowing the responses to be used with confidence.
 - **Gaps in iCARE information:** iCARE information is dependent solely on Settlement and RAP SPOs entering information into the iCARE system. Due to the rushed nature of the Syrian Refugee Initiative and the influx of individuals obtaining services, Settlement and RAP SPOs may not have captured all clients in iCARE to accurately represent the number of services they offered and clients served. While this information is improving, certain aspects of iCARE data were not reliable at the time of the evaluation.
- **Rapid Nature of the Evaluation**
 - As the evaluation was conducted under a shortly after their arrival in Canada, certain aspects of the Syrian Refugee Initiative were too early to assess (e.g., settlement outcomes). More information regarding settlement program and obtaining of settlement services (e.g., language services, employment services, etc.), could have been obtained if more time had passed before conducting the evaluation.
 - Due to the rapid nature of the evaluation, it was not feasible to conduct a phone survey of the Syrian Refugees. Hence, the results of the survey may favour those who are literate in Arabic, English or French and may not represent illiterate and non-Arabic speakers (e.g., Kurdish, Armenian, etc.).