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From Arrival to Citizenship: Assessing Refugee Resettlement in Canada

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Abstract:

In this thesis, I examine the role of private sponsorship mechanisms in the resettlement of refugees in Canada. Private sponsorship allows citizens and organizations to do more to help those who need assistance, though there are positives and negatives to this program and concerns about its long-term stability. My thesis discusses the impacts of these resettlement mechanisms as a whole, based on a review of prior scholarship and interviews conducted in Montreal and Toronto. I focus on the refugee experience before arrival and the role of different application processes and culture in Quebec. After arrival, the paper examines economic and social integration in host countries as refugees develop a sense of belonging in their host communities. I find that more direct assistance does prove important in ensuring positive integration experiences. However, this is something that is enhanced by characteristics that lead to faster integration which are more prevalent amongst privately sponsored refugees.

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Key Abbreviations

GAR: Government Assisted Refugee
IRCC: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, Canada
PSR: Privately-Sponsored Refugee
RAP: Resettlement Assistance Program
SPO: Service Provider Organization

Introduction

Canada's Refugee History

In a world where persecution, conflict and natural disasters continue to endanger populations across the world, personal security has become a concern for hundreds of millions of people. Although most people remain in their homes through these difficulties, millions take the step of fleeing their countries (UNHCR, 2024a). Throughout its history, Canada has taken a particularly memorable role in the welcoming of these individuals. Its historical allegiance to the United Kingdom has seen its participation in international conflicts in Europe. This active role in politics lasted following its independence: dating back to the years following World War I, Canada saw religious groups organize to advocate for and offer aid in immigration to Canada, with a focus on those in need of refuge from dangerous situations in their home countries. These organizations became more abundant following World War II, and further crises over the following decades saw religious and charity support for structured private assistance rise. Specifically, the arrival of refugees from Southeast Asia in small boats during the Vietnam War and other conflicts in the region, known as the "boat people crisis", sparked public desire for a more personal role in resettling refugees (Labman, 2016, 68-69). Among these roles is resettlement, or the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third State that has agreed to admit them – as refugees – with permanent residence status (UNHCR, 2024a).

Although the practice of organizations naming individuals for resettlement had been active for decades before this, Private sponsorship was codified in Canada's Immigration Act of 1976, which contained a provision detailing that private citizens could nominate individuals to be

considered for refugee status alongside a wider reform of Canada's immigration system (Immigration Act, 1976-77). This law allowed organizations to sign "Master Agreements", an arrangement which later evolved into the recognition of Sponsorship Agreement Holders, one of the main organization types that can submit sponsorship applications, and allowed organizations to take on legal obligations to support refugees in resettlement (Cameron and Labman, 2020, 7). Despite this formalization, the system that had developed remained largely the same after the enactment of this law (Wydrzynski, 1979, 1). Following this, between the years 1979 and 1981, Canada admitted 60,000 refugees from Southeast Asia and during this time, the country observed benefits of private sponsorship that led it to continue the role private sponsors had assumed in the resettlement process (Martani, 2021, 4).

The structured avenues for private sponsorship of refugee resettlement which have developed since the boat people crisis developed in Canada have given the country one of the more distinctive refugee resettlement systems, which has seen continued growth since the Syrian Civil War led to refugee movements and famous, heartbreaking images such as that of Alan Kurdi motivated citizens to take personal action to help those in need of refuge. The fact that Alan Kurdi's family was later revealed to have been trying to reach Canada after their relatives' sponsorship application was rejected made this matter even more pressing for Canadians at this time (Chappell, 2015). During this period, the number of refugees sponsored and the number of sponsors who engaged in sponsorship rose, with faith-based organizations offering information sessions and training to the many community members who became interested in joining. Historically, Canada has stood out for this activity, with other countries typically having seen a heavier emphasis on refugees being resettled as part of government initiatives, with the United

States only introducing a private sponsorship system in 2023 and sponsoring 7,000 individuals in total over the first year (State Department, 2023; Welcome Corps, 2024).

Since the beginning of the Syrian Civil War and corresponding increase in refugee movement globally, Canada has become a leading third country for refugees to travel to from initial destinations, resettling the world's highest number of refugees in 2018 with 28,100, ahead of its southern neighbor, the United States, despite the latter's vastly higher population and larger economy (Radford and Phillip, 2019). At this point, the American government under Donald Trump was pursuing more isolationist policies and destroying America's refugee resettlement program (Beers, 2020). In contrast, when Canada's Liberal party under Justin Trudeau won a majority government to take power in 2015, its leadership promised to accept 25,000 refugees over the coming year, with 56,000 arriving by August of 2018 (Reynolds and Hyndman, 2021).

Welcoming those who fled the Syrian Civil War continued to become the most recent and perhaps the greatest challenge for the sponsorship system to date, with the government having trouble expanding the existing programs for greater numbers of refugees. Not only were communities grappling with taking a personal role in hosting refugees but the government quickly became overwhelmed, with a backlog of over 30,000 soon emerging and a brief pause in the government assisted refugee (GAR) system taking place upon request by municipal governments in 2016 (Ormiston, 2016; Mas, 2016). This tumultuous period was followed by adaptations in Canada's refugee resettlement systems, with local organizations beginning to engage in stronger support for refugees in their communities by forming community-based resettlement groups (Rich et al., 2021, 1233). Despite these difficulties, Syrian refugees have begun to become among the largest parts of the refugee community in Canada, with almost

45,000 arriving between 2015 and 2020. They are also an important national group where large communities exist in cities across the country (IRCC, 2020).

Because of Canada's appreciable number of refugees in addition to its distinctive system, the country will provide an interesting case for an internal comparison considering that both the Arctic villages and bustling cities are valid for any refugee to be assigned to. In Canada, private sponsorship exists alongside the more traditional government-run refugee resettlement which makes up the entirety of integration efforts in most other countries. In these other countries, the government offers financial assistance to refugees and organizations which support them while private sponsors see non-government actors take this a more formal role in nominating individuals to be resettled and providing the support themselves.

The Canadian government's resettlement program has strong institutions, with the UNHCR having a role that revolved more around referral, rather than in implementation in many other countries with lower resettlement totals. To a similar effect, the national scope of the private resettlement program makes this more substantial than other nations' avenues for private sponsorship, with Germany and Ireland both having limited opportunities for citizens to help relatives from certain regions immigrate on a temporary basis. These programs were subject to availability by subnational region and only open to organizations for 25 arrivals per year respectively (Cellini, 2018).

Importantly, refugee resettlement as a concept deals with a select few refugees as a proportion of the tens of millions of refugees in the world. The ability to receive permanent residence status in a wealthy country with stable governance is something that a minuscule amount of people who flee their countries end up obtaining. Drawing on UNHCR data from 2023, one can calculate that of the larger figure of 2.4 million 'persons of concern,' less than

200,000 had been resettled (UNHCR, 2024). Regardless of how it happens, refugee resettlement is a life-changing opportunity that delivers opportunities for refugees for years into their futures following perhaps decades of temporary status in a refugee camp. The permanent residence status that resettlement grants refugees includes a relatively short period of three years present in Canada out of a five-year span after which refugees are eligible to apply for Canadian citizenship.

Modes of Refugee Resettlement

Within the different sponsorship systems, there are different modes of obtaining refugee status and permission to travel to Canada. Privately sponsored refugees (PSRs), in addition to government assisted refugees (GARs) who are placed and supported by the government, have their cases vetted by the Canadian Visa Office and must be accepted as meeting the qualifications to be awarded refugee status in vulnerability and location (Van Haren, 2019). Private sponsors can apply to have an individual be referred to the Visa Office, and the Canadian government will either approve or deny the application. The process of obtaining refugee status is followed by approval of the sponsors, visa processing and health checks before refugees are permitted to make their voyage to Canada. This contrasts with GARs as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) refers these applicants to the Canadian government before their status as refugees is considered and, if the individual is given refugee status, permission to travel is given, with final preparations such as immediate accommodations and plane tickets being arranged.

The bodies that can sponsor refugees include groups of five citizens, Sponsorship Agreement Holders or Community Groups able to commit to sponsoring refugees (Macklin et al., 2018, 37). Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) are organizations that have signed a

sponsorship agreement with the government, who take the responsibility to sponsor refugees and organize with co-sponsors. Sponsorship Agreement Holders work with sponsors to assist in the completion of the paperwork in addition to helping organize sponsorship logistics and working with the government on refugees' cases, and have a limited number of refugees they can apply to sponsor themselves each year. A majority of SAHs are faith-based organizations, with sponsorship guidance and related efforts taking place alongside a congregation (Hyndman et al, 2021, 40). Contrasting this, groups of five citizens are simply people who come together by association voluntarily to sign this agreement. People in these groups must live in the community where the refugee will settle and declare specifics of how each member will contribute and how they will support the refugee (IRCC, 2023).

Once in their host communities, sponsors are responsible for assisting the refugees for a period of time that is typically one year. During this period, sponsors are obligated to provide financial assistance through buying essentials to help acclimate after arrival, signing legal agreements affirming that they will uphold their commitments. Until the end of the sponsorship period, sponsors also help with recurring costs such as transportation or housing and also serve as the refugee's main personal support system in their new homes in addition to income support before refugees are able to obtain stable employment (IRCC, 2023). Sponsors additionally serve as a key link between refugees and the communities which they join as they make social and professional connections.

Throughout the 2010s, the number of refugees went up each year, with PSRs going from 4820 to 19,145 between 2010 and 2019, with GARs being lower, reaching just under 10,000 in 2019. Historically, Community sponsorship and Groups of Five had made up for a minority of the PSRs who arrived, with the average during this period being under 30 percent (Van Haren,

2021). Rather than having private citizens or religious organizations provide their assistance, GARs have their needs addressed by the government-run Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), which includes many of the same services that community members provide to PSRs. These include meeting refugees at the airport, providing housing and orienting newly-arrived refugees to their communities. These RAP services are offered through partners, known as Service Provider Organizations (SPOs), that are contracted by the IRCC (Perzyna and Agrawal, 2022, 7). Other than this, the refugees mainly receive support from the RAP through income support, preventing them from relying on social assistance before they find stable employment. These organizations receive compensation from the government and so have no financial connection to individual refugees who they help resettle.

Supplementing the binary approach of refugees either receiving the bulk of their assistance from the government or from private citizens, there is a hybrid approach to refugee resettlement, known as the Blended Visa Office Referral. This program combines public and private sponsorship, with refugees being nominated and pre-approved by the UNHCR and put on a list from where private individuals can decide to take the step of sponsoring these refugees and move through the process of clearing them to finally settle in Canada. After this takes place, private sponsors split sponsorship duties with the government, providing six months of financial support while still engaging personally and offering other assistance to the resettled refugees during the full 12 months of sponsorship. The remaining six months of financial support are covered by the government, leading to a system that attempts to combine government aid and the personal aid that private sponsorship offers. The program has seen some use and allowed vulnerable refugees to be sponsored straight from their countries of origin, a development that fixes a point of the system that unnecessarily harms refugees who are not already in a third

country though it has seen a small fraction of the use of the other two modes of sponsorship, limiting its overall impact. At its highest use, the program has rarely exceeded 1,000 arrivals in a year, compared to tens of thousands for the other streams (Van Haren, 2021).

Internal Variation within Canada

In addition to the system of resettling refugees into communities, Canada has geographical and cultural aspects which makes refugee resettlement there particularly interesting. With the second largest land area in the world but a comparably small population, 90 percent of Canada's population lives within 100 miles of the American border (Central Intelligence Agency, 2023). Additionally, as of 2016, almost 80 percent of all migrants living in Canada live in Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec, with these provinces having 44.2%, 18.4% and 14% of migrants respectively (Migrants Refugees, 2021, 2). Historically, immigration had been vastly directed towards the large southern cities, though recently there has been more private sponsorship of refugees into smaller cities (Lam, 2016). This greatly diversifies the experiences of refugees, as more newcomers find themselves in areas with less ethnic diversity and are therefore forced to make more connections with locals who are not as used to foreigners in their communities.

Table I: Key aspects of refugee resettlement streams

	PSRs	GARs	BVORs
Identification	Nominated by Sponsorship Group	Nominated by UNHCR	Nominated by UNHCR
Location	Resettled in the community of the sponsorship group	Matched with a location by the IRCC	Matched with location by the IRCC

Assistance	Sponsorship group provides resettlement assistance for 12 months	SPOs provide resettlement assistance for 12 months under RAP	Resettlement provided under RAP for six months and then by sponsorship group for six months
Usage between January 2015 and August 2023[1]	135,000	112,000	9,000

Canada enjoys linguistic pluralism uncommon in refugee destination countries, with French being the first language of a vast majority (over 80%) of the population in Québec and other provinces speaking mainly English and the northern territories having substantial Inuit and other indigenous language communities. This majority in Quebec translates to about a fifth of Canada's total population that speaks French as a first language (IRCC, 2021). Quebec's linguistic status has additionally kept it historically distinct from other provinces, and the continued status of French as the sole official language in the province has continued to demonstrate a commitment to keeping its identity influential going into the future.

The language communities have important social and cultural significance but also political significance, with Québec having a distinct identity from the rest of the country based around its language and related history. It has used this identity to seek greater autonomy and ensure the French language's continued prevalence in the province, with multiple referendums debating independence taking place in 1980 and 1995 (CBC News, 2024). This autonomy has extended to the province's refugee resettlement system, with the provincial government seeking a greater voice in the resettlement process. The province's contemporary politics also serve to expand the role of the French language so that it is increasingly difficult to live in Quebec

[1] Source: Holba, 2023

without knowledge of French (Schertzer, 2024). This has materialized in additional steps being needed to gain approval from the provincial government before a privately-sponsored refugee's claim moves to the federal government (IRCC, 2019). In this way, Canada's internal variation in language and identity has major implications for the experience of being a refugee or an individual who wishes to help refugees in the country.

The existence of private sponsorship interacts with these elements of Canada as they contribute to a greater difference which refugee experiences can have across different provinces as well as within those provinces. Sponsorship and government resettlement give refugees an opportunity to take residency in a Canadian locality and geographical region that they do not get to choose. Due to this, refugees may find themselves in a city with ample opportunities for interaction with their home cultures or in a remote location with no other outsiders, or even have to learn a different language than they expected to in order to integrate in professional and social life (Hyndman, 2022). This disparity exists in government-organized resettlement programs in addition to private ones, which presents more differences in refugee opportunities to feel belonging and purpose in their new communities.

Although the Syrian Civil War is no longer displacing civilians at the rate it once was, with around 25,000 displaced Syrians returning home in 2023, refugees have continued to arrive in Canada fleeing more recent crises that have emerged (UNHCR, 2024b). Millions of Ukrainian refugees are eligible for temporary work visas, with Ukrainian nationals who arrive and have family members in Canada being eligible for a new permanent residence pathway. So far, 250,000 Ukrainians have arrived on emergency visas, with 900,000 on other similar visas (Glans, 2024). Despite the Ukrainian refugees' reception generally occurring outside of the normal pathway for resettlement and often in a temporary manner, their presence demonstrates

the continued will of Canadians to welcome individuals displaced by violence going into the future. This thesis details the impact of Quebec's differences in resettlement, the economic and social integration processes as they relate to the resettlement stream, and the outlook on the system moving forward.

Literature Review

Research on refugee resettlement has largely focused on the origins of individual systems, the motivations behind their implementation, and their effects on refugee social and economic integration. Other governments, such as those in Australia, the United States and much of Europe, have more government-focused resettlement mechanisms with non-governmental organizations often assisting government agencies in integrating refugees. These systems took their modern forms after the Second World War, with charitable organizations working with the government to assist in refugee integration, while over time these partnerships became codified in law, limiting the need for long-term assistance through encouraging self-sufficiency (Fozdar and Hartley 2013; Brown and Scribner 2014).

When examining refugee resettlement streams, some research assesses overall satisfaction with the resettlement program as a whole and helps focus on what factors are most correlated with refugees describing themselves as satisfied in surveys. In Australia, a study found that overall satisfaction was most correlated with satisfaction in employment, social success and overall financial stability (Colic-Peisker 2009). Another study in Austria identified language proficiency and the resulting opportunities in a refugee's host country as most crucial for life satisfaction (Haindorfer et al 2022). Such differences indicate that varying factors can stand out

to different populations in different host countries, with employment and connections standing out as especially common.

Social connections for refugees remain a vital predictor and indicator of success within their host communities, as organizations can sponsor refugees in all areas of the country and government-sponsored refugees can be assigned to a wide range of locales. Scholars such as Simich (2003) note that the negotiation of placement takes an especially important role in Canada as many refugees who were assigned to a locality by the government without taking their preferences into consideration later moved to the more diverse and populous Ontario after an initial period of time in their host communities (2). This area of study applies to refugee resettlement and dispersal measures across the world, as many refugees have been shown to prefer larger cities in which other members of their ethnic groups and religions are plentiful (Damm, 2009; Åslund, 2005; de Hoon et al, 2020). While some of these understandings are based on other countries, their findings' implications are especially pronounced in Canada, with the nation having a handful of large cities and large areas that are sparsely populated. Within these rural communities, some scholars examining Syrian refugees note the close-knit community and social connections which led to exceptional support for refugees settled there (Haugen, 2019), while others note frequent social isolation when refugees are separated from groups they are comfortable with, serving as one of the main sources of stress even amongst other difficulties adjusting to a new country (Agrawal and Sangapala, 2020; Beiser, 2009).

The literature on economic integration as it relates to private sponsorship is generally positive. Appraisals of the system's effects on employment prospects often refer to the tendency of privately sponsored refugees, on average, to enter the labor market more quickly than government-sponsored refugees (Wilkinson and Garcea, 2017; Kaida et al, 2020). Hynie et al.

(2019) point out that despite the success of refugees who are privately sponsored, the individual case and various aspects of the location a refugee is settled must be taken into account, with different kinds of private sponsorship leading to more successful employment outcomes as well. Other studies found that the quality of employment improves with private sponsorship, as a product of the employment assistance which sponsors can offer or the social ties sponsors can help refugees develop (Macklin et al, 2018; Soehl and Van Haren, 2023). Soehl and Van Haren's study (2023) makes an important conclusion that refugees' pre-existing social capital, or connections outside of ethnic enclaves, are significant in determining the level to which refugees see their skills best incorporated into the jobs that they gain, even if PSRs are not more more likely to find employment in their first year than GARs.

Considering the generally-positive scholarship which has emerged for the private sponsorship system, some authors have taken more critical stances of this system. Studies that observed the experiences of groups of refugees adapting to life in host communities have seen that even with private sponsorship, some of the same difficulties with learning English or French, finding employment and making social connections continued at some level. When making this point, Agrawal specifically mentions the contradiction of this observation with much of the scholarship which sees private sponsorship as beneficial (Agrawal, 2019). Drawing on interviews in a medium-sized Alberta city, Agrawal notes that in this area speed of receiving services was faster for PSRs, but that the services, including English classes that could be more or less difficult depending on the city, were the same. Additionally, Labman questions how sustainable a system that relies on private sponsorship is with the argument that a group of private citizens' desire to sponsor refugees comes from a specific moment in time and could be satisfied after welcoming one round of refugees, though this sustainability has not disappeared so

far (Labman, 2016, 76). Despite this, the reliance of the government on private actors to continue to voluntarily take on this responsibility leaves it vulnerable to immense strain should large amounts of individuals stop making this choice. Considering that this is in part what the BVOR program is meant to help fix, prior studies have not seen the program have an impact on the scale that the government had hoped, with its introduction only seeing a minor role in resettlement compared to programs where assistance is given from one source throughout the sponsorship period (Labman and Pearlman, 2018).

Hyndman (2022) examined the impacts of refugees being settled in communities they do not get to select themselves for both government assisted and privately sponsored refugees. Hyndman sees this category of refugee resettlement as especially important as 70% of resettled refugees do not move from their initial location and so they are assigned a geographical trajectory, or a term the author coined for the tendency: geo-script. This term refers to how initial placement determines the language a refugee learns as well as their opportunities for employment, education and human connection over the years after they are resettled. Through this framework, Hyndman identifies a factor that impacts refugees regardless of resettlement pathway and indicates that the city, town or village may make the largest difference in integration with sponsors working more on the margins. The access to language instruction, healthcare and employment may be limited to a handful of organizations in smaller areas, while larger cities will have more variety, both for PSRs and GARs. This divergence makes cities more advantageous for refugees in most major measures of success though it is separate from the issue of resettlement stream.

Denton (2013) and Lenard (2016) have also examined the level to which the system is truly sound on an ethical level. This in part owes to the way in which private sponsorship can

allow family members to enter the country in place of even more vulnerable refugees (Denton, 2013) and also the way in which it makes refugees reliant on their sponsors, potentially across cultural differences (Lenard, 2016). Lenard in particular advocates reflection on tradeoffs in that a system of private sponsorship that can make it difficult for refugees to receive adequate assistance from private sponsors despite agreeing that the system provides an important path forward by which refugees can be resettled and receive crucial aid. Such arguments identifying the shortcomings of the system notably do not advocate a government assistance-based approach in place of private sponsorship, though the authors point out that not all downsides to government-based systems are addressed by private sponsorship and that there are aspects of private sponsorship that can prove problematic. Derwing and Mulder (2005) found many culture-related difficulties in a study regarding Kosovar refugees in Alberta. With refugees and sponsors often being unable to communicate without software themselves upon first meeting, unfounded expectations can prove especially frustrating to both sides when sponsors are not aware of common challenges going into sponsorship. Given such frustrations, the authors of this study found that the lack of mentorship of new sponsors can make these cultural differences especially costly when. Given this range of studies, prior research generally points to the existence of complex interactions between resettlement streams and other factors which impact integration.

Also important in the existing literature is the timeline, given the differences between each crisis. With many refugees from the Balkans arriving in the 1990s and 2000s, the profile of refugees changed greatly when the Syrian Refugee Crisis led to the arrival of tens of thousands more refugees in the second half of the 2010s (Hynie, 2018). Given this, studies that took place

before this event were written about a system with less use and regarding refugees with different backgrounds than became commonly examined by research at that time.

Methodology

I aimed to have my research demonstrate the extent to which the differences in sponsorship status and in communities across Canada affect the larger integration experience. I examined this through semi-structured interviews with private sponsors and sponsorship organization workers which allowed me to attach the responses to specific stories and experiences proved instructive in conducting my analysis. I expected to find that privately-sponsored refugees would feel more belonging in their communities due to the ways in which interaction with their communities is built into their financial stability from the moment they arrive. I thought this as they are connected to specific community members who are invested in their integration personally.

In terms of measuring refugees' success as it relates to sponsorship status, I specifically focused on whether individuals who I met with felt that refugees received adequate resettlement assistance services and felt satisfied with the area they live in. I also worked to gather what elements of resettlement were most influential on their overall experiences. This included whether more sponsors felt that a factor such as language, that was not related to sponsorship, was especially important or if making connections within the community was something that did the most to impact their success. I also analyzed other studies to compare my results to those of

other individuals who did research on refugees in Canada. Other studies additionally interacted in important ways with anecdotes from my interviews.

To perform my research, I made connections with private sponsors and non-governmental organizations in each city I traveled to. I reached out to organizations that assist these sponsors and other individuals who could help connect me with them. Given these connections, my research consisted of interviews that gauged the experience of refugees by asking questions regarding the overall timetable of the resettlement process, their ability to find employment and/or housing for the refugee, and refugee experiences building and maintaining language proficiency. I also asked how their relationship with their sponsor was during their initial period of sponsorship and how it has changed over time. In total, I conducted seven interviews between the cities of Montreal and Toronto in January of 2024. These cities gave crucial variety in the range of organizations and individuals with whom I spoke as I was able to hear about sponsorship experiences both in a French-speaking city and an English-speaking city as well as across multiple provinces and cities with different populations. Specifically, hearing from organizations who had to deal with Quebec's approach to resettlement and also those who did not proved important in being able to examine its relative impact in Montreal.

Organizations that I reached out to mainly included religious groups and other sponsorship agreement holders. Making connections with sponsorship organizations allowed me to have a sense of the culture of helping and refugees in the given cities. These are one kind of organizations that can help sponsor refugees coming to Canada, with the other being groups of five, two of which I found connections to through more formal organizations as some of the supporting organizations can provide assistance to private sponsors. Hearing from both of these

groups allowed me to hear both bureaucratic and hands-on perspectives from the sponsorship process.

Among the organizations I met with in Montreal, Actions Réfugiés Montréal (ARM) offers assistance to refugees in developing belonging through full integration in Canada. It has sponsored refugees in the past, it also helps organize groups that wish to sponsor refugees with groups who need sponsorship. Owing to its status as one of the main refugee resettlement organizations in Montreal, the organization had connections both with the other refugee resettlement organizations and with faith-based sponsorship groups who I was able to connect with after speaking with ARM. I was also able to speak to individuals who took part in those constituent groups.

Jewish Immigrant Aid Services (JIAS) and the Office of Refugees at the Archdiocese of Toronto (ORAT) are charitable organizations and Sponsorship Agreement Holders in Toronto, which engage in similar services to the above organizations in that they provide settlement services for refugees including English language instruction and help find lodging for newcomers. Speaking with these organizations proved useful due to its recent history of action both within Toronto's Jewish and Christian communities in the initial rise of desire for hands-on refugee aid and outside of the communities as members of other groups sought to make use of the resources and training that the organizations offered.

Other than these organizations, in Montreal, I spoke to two individuals who had been part of sponsorship groups through their churches. Both of them were involved in the groups of two to five, while being funded by their congregations. The two of them told me about their experiences as sponsors from their decisions to engage in sponsorship to the process of applying to sponsor, dealing with the organizational side and helping resettle the refugees all the way up to

their current relationships with the refugees who they sponsored. Speaking to these individuals allowed me to combine the more bureaucratic viewpoints which I heard from SAHs with details about the day-to-day lives of refugees and their sponsors. These individuals were not family members or part of refugee communities, however, and so they shared the responsibilities at times with community members or family members the refugees had in Montreal.

Aside from field work, I examined legislation at Federal and Provincial levels that can explain differences in the sponsorship streams, refugee placement as well as experiences in housing or job markets. This includes both differences which are documented more extensively in existing scholarship and those that I learned about through my interviews. This focused on refugee policy in Canada, especially that which outlines the origins of resettlement pathways in Canada and that which determines language policy as it relates to Quebec. I also looked at relevant political developments nationally and by province.

Pre-Arrival Steps in Resettlement Process

Pre-Arrival Process

Analyzing the resettlement process often starts with the refugee's arrival itself. While this is the most important part of the story as it pertains to integration into Canadian society, the means through which refugees go from initially fleeing their homes to reaching Canada is slightly different for refugees of different sponsorship streams. The people refugees interact with and the timeline of their resettlement claims' adjudication process can importantly change the challenges that they face before arriving. With SAHs forming connections with groups of private citizens called constituent groups (also known by some organizations as co-sponsors) to do the personal assistance in resettlement, the means through which refugees find themselves given the opportunity for resettlement can vary as well.

The pre-arrival process for private sponsorship starts with identification. When refugees reach out to organizations expressing their desire to be sponsored or individuals reach out to SAHs inquiring about sponsoring a refugee, the organization helps them organize their application for refugee status. Refugees can also be identified by organizations who desire to find refugees for resettlement who do not have immediate ties to Canada, with a faith-based organization I met engaging in search trips for this purpose.[2] In organizations, as well as in less-formal community groups, some individuals become specialists in navigating the paperwork. These individuals ensure that refugees relay all of the necessary information about themselves personally and their stories. They also ensure that the refugee's application is both complete and detailed enough for the organization to be confident it will be accepted.[3] It is then

[2] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024
[3] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

that the application must be submitted to the provincial or Canadian government. For those who have their applications accepted and refugee status given, the process moves forward to final checks and permission to travel, with steps such as plane ticket purchases taking place at this time.

Importantly, SAHs cannot submit as many applications to sponsor refugees as they wish. While the number of applications that can be submitted varies between SAHs and provinces, the existence of limits set by both federal and provincial governments, leads to some scrutiny by SAHs, with these organizations, who seek to maximize the number of refugees they help sponsor with the resources they have, careful to avoid losing spots by submitting applications from individuals whose stories are in some way lacking.[4] Should this happen and the application is rejected, the SAH does not get to apply an extra time to compensate for this.[5] The crucial role that faith-based organizations take by serving as SAHs and the care that they take in deciding which applications to submit is a key part of the pre-arrival experience and demonstrates the initiative of prospective sponsors to prove the refugee fits all qualifications for refugee status before the process can truly begin. Additionally, this type of process illustrates a similarity between the resettlement streams, with both having an organization, being a SAH or the UNHCR, evaluating displaced persons' statuses before moving forward to the Canadian government. While this process plays out, refugees and their sponsors are able to stay in touch regarding each their application and any preparation for moving to Canada.

SAHs are importantly divided into different sub-groups, with the SAH using different smaller organizations in each city to find groups of up to five individuals to serve as formal sponsors, submitting their applications through the national SAH (Hyndman et al, 2021). This

[4] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024
[5] By a lottery system, SAHs are given a specific number of applications that they may submit, which are not replaced in the case of a rejected application

ties together the organizations which attract sponsors with those who have more formal ties with the government. This structure is somewhat different than that of community sponsorship and that of groups of five, who take on the sponsorship process independently from any organization or government agreement. Within organizations such as churches which decide to sponsor as a community, however, sponsorship tasks and personal interactions with the sponsored refugees are typically taken on by a select group of community members, somewhat similarly to constituent groups (ibid). Through this process, there are typically a limited number of individuals providing hands-on assistance for a given refugee family, even if the family is sponsored by a larger community or organization that works as a larger group for financial purposes.

Backlogs

The problems which frequently arise in the pre-arrival process come from the speed at which this plays out. The rate at which refugees see their applications reviewed has become a major point of frustration within organizations and sponsors alike, with massive amounts of applications accumulating and waiting untouched for years before they are processed. This backlog is not a novel development: in 2017, there was a backlog of applications large enough that the government suspended new applications for 18 months while the thousands of submitted applications were read. When a fixed number of applications was accepted again on a "first come, first served" basis in 2020 following another suspension, individuals who desired to sponsor refugees slept in line for an entire weekend in the Montreal Immigration Ministry office in order to ensure their applications would be processed (Shingler, 2020). PSRs often wait around 30 months for a decision, with the backlog numbering around 99,000 at the end of 2022 (Zimonjic, 2023). Such examples are clearly extreme, though the tendency of the government to

not adjudicate refugees' applications and accommodate those who are approved in a timely manner has led to panic amongst applicants and greater dysfunction in the government.

Backlogs are not an issue unique to Quebec, with prospective sponsors in other provinces also having to wait multiple years for decisions on their applications. A report in 2022 found that only five percent of prospective PSRs had their decisions adjudicated within twelve months, while this number was 26 percent for GAR applicants (ibid). Despite this, the issue does have a significant effect on the sponsorship system in Quebec given the severity of the backlogs and the interaction of backlog-related issues with pre-existing instincts against large-scale immigration on the part of the provincial government. Backlogs frustrate sponsorship organizations, co-sponsors and refugees alike and are a major obstacle before any integration can take place. Additionally, backlogs and other pre-arrival delays can cause organizations to waste resources that could be used to support refugees on keeping housing reserved when sponsors are led to believe that their sponsored refugees will arrive quickly (Secord, 2016).

Although this takes place before the integration side of resettlement, this presence of backlogs is a negative development in refugees' ability to integrate upon arrival. While refugees wait for their claims, they are often left to live in refugee camps, where access to employment, healthcare and education are more limited. Not only is this a poorer quality of life than refugees experience when they arrive in Canada, but language skills and connections to a community cannot be built as effectively during years of waiting. Through the bureaucratic inertia and opacity in the approval process, as well as in the final clearance for travel, government processes lead to poorer functioning of the resettlement system.

Quebec: A Separate System

Quebec's separate refugee admissions practices separate the province from the rest of the country and cause additional difficulties in sponsors' attempts to see refugees approved and potential sources of stress in post-arrival adjustment. Quebec has maintained a distinct linguistic and cultural identity in Canada since its incorporation into the country, and sought to varying degrees to achieve and maintain both autonomy and nationhood. With the French language central to these deliberations, the province has seen political movements fight to maintain the existing status of French as the sole official language and majority spoken language throughout the province. As the only national subdivision in North America's main destination countries with a majority language other than English, the Quebecois government has a unique incentive to protect their province's demographic balance from replacement English-speaking populations both Canadian and foreign (McGrath and McGrath, 2013, 5).

Different Quebecois governments have sought to deal with this issue in different ways, with the current one employing a particularly strong rhetoric and practice of francisation (Paperny, 2022). Although federal laws and systems are in place, the provincial government has authority to make these laws within the existing federal framework. This is a fact that complicates the provincial government's stated intentions of being welcoming to refugees who seek resettlement in the province and the overall belief amongst Canadians across the country that their nation is made up of welcoming people (Banting and Soroka, 2020, 822). The overall hesitance to allow in refugees further contrasts the national rate of resettling refugees being higher than almost all other countries and the multicultural nature of many areas within the province including its most populous city, Montreal.

Cosmopolitan Montreal and the Province of Quebec

The difference between Montreal, one of Canada's most multicultural cities, and other areas within Quebec is palpable. Given the city's clearly-distinct political climate in cosmopolitan attitudes and electoral politics, Montreal serves as a more accepting area while still being subject to the policies enacted by the Quebec government as part of the province. Additionally, because the city of Montreal is notably closer to Ontario and the Greater Montreal area has almost half of the province's population, the city in some ways provides a separate experience for refugees who resettle there compared to those who either end up in rural areas or cities with less inhabitants who were born outside of Quebec.

Further complicating the divide within Quebec, Île de Montréal, the island where the city lies, has numerous municipalities which are legally bilingual and have a population which largely speaks English at home (Magder, 2023). Although these municipalities are largely affluent and often not home to many refugees, they are emblematic of the enhanced multiculturalism in Montreal. When GARs are resettled in Quebec, less than one in six, often those with specific health needs that require specialized care, are resettled in the Montreal metropolitan region (McGrath and McGrath, 2013, 8). Given that a majority of sponsorship cases are from pre-existing relationships, PSRs are in this way inherently more likely to end up in multicultural cities and avoid some of the more resistant attitudes towards immigration in Quebec. Conversely, few GARs will arrive in areas without the demands that come with assimilation into more insular areas. Through this contrast, Quebec's internal variations lead to the francisation policies affecting PSRs and GARs differently.

Funding Arrangement

Quebec, under the Canada-Quebec Accord of 1991, receives funding from the Canadian government for refugees resettled. This funding goes towards the cultural and economic integration of refugees who arrive in the province (IRCC, 2024). The Quebec government's desire to maintain some control over the funding of settlement services within the province is not entirely unmatched. The provincial governments of Manitoba and British Columbia had, in 1999 to 2013 and 1998 to 2014 respectively, had arrangements similar to that of Quebec's where they directed their provinces' settlement funding. With these agreements ending, the IRCC regained its status as the sole authority for running settlement services outside of Quebec (Praznik and Shields, 2018, 23). These other provincial agreements did not complicate refugee settlement the same way as Quebec's current agreement does, though their tenures demonstrate the heightened level of independence that Quebec wants in overseeing resettlement numbers and the programs that assist in resettlement.

This funding demonstrates the commitment of the federal government to ensuring Quebec's continued acceptance of refugees and other immigrants, with the funding for the 2023-2024 fiscal year totaling over $775 million CAD and over $5 billion CAD since the Syrian refugees began arriving in greater numbers in 2015 (IRCC, 2024). Despite the agreement helping incentivize cooperation with national resettlement initiatives, the issue of immigration's merits and costs continues to divide politics in Quebec, with the Quebecois nationalist party, the Bloc Québécois itself having a nearly even level of support for those who believe that there are too many immigrants in Canada and those who believe that this is not the case (Gravelle, 2018). With Quebec not being unique in its divide over the acceptable levels of immigration to the province and to Canada in general, the special status which Quebec has maintained over the past

decades remains crucial to the ability of refugees to successfully move to the province and informs the atmosphere which resettled refugees meet when they arrive.

Procedural Differences

Quebec's different system for privately sponsoring refugees has simple differences with effects that can significantly affect sponsors. Chief among those differences is the ability for a group of any number from two to five people to sponsor a refugee instead of the requirement that the group be no less than five elsewhere. This can have important implications for individuals who hope to organize a sponsorship group as they can take the step without needing to obtain a commitment from as many individuals. Regarding groups based around charities or faith-based organizations who seek to sponsor refugees, the use of a group of community members to serve as a group allows the institution to avoid burdensome paperwork to prove that their finances are sound. The same is true for individuals, as when more individuals are written on as a sponsor, they each have to make binding commitments and divulge financial information. A smaller group keeps this limited to fewer members while the organization they associate with and members outside of the sponsorship agreement can provide the financial and social assistance. Individuals who can not be sponsoring multiple groups are in this case able to begin sponsorship of other refugees[6]. Through this system, even if the differences in concept are slight, Quebec provides a useful pathway for groups to engage in sponsorship with greater efficiency. It also makes the sponsorship applications for more refugees by different community groups possible.

The presence of a Quebec-level body overseeing the admission of refugees in the province has the additional effect of limiting the cooperation between sponsors and the federal government. A clear example of this is the absence of the BVOR program in Quebec. Although

[6] Constituent group member, in discussion with the author, January 2024

this program remains a minor presence in other provinces, this demonstrates the instances in which Quebec's desire for increased autonomy in the refugee resettlement process can get in the way of the opportunities which exist for sponsorship in other provinces from existing in Quebec and prevents vulnerable refugees from receiving the benefits of community connections in the province. Given that BVOR refugees arrive in Canada within a few months of being matched with a sponsor team, the lack of a BVOR program and lower numbers of GARs in Quebec also serves as more examples of Quebec-level policies contributing to longer waits for most refugees.

The importance of Quebec's distinct culture and identity being noted, key issues remain the same and overlap with the rest of Canada is nonetheless significant. Over one hundred thousand Canadians move to different provinces each year, including tens of thousands between Ontario and Quebec (Statistics Canada, 2023). This can have mixed effects on refugee experiences, with English maintaining a presence in Quebec's larger cities in a way that can make full integration more difficult in bilingual areas though the presence of other individuals from outside Quebec adds connections with other areas of Canada. Although Quebec's sovereignty movement still enjoys some popularity, Quebec's population does still identify with the Canadian nation (Lalonde, 2020). In this way, Quebec's separation from the rest of Canada and its implications for refugee integration should be noted, though they do not imply a distinct experience such as that of another country for refugees who are resettled there.

Origins

Quebec's system of resettlement originated in the 1991 Canada-Quebec accord, with Quebec gaining a formal say in how many immigrants it receives each year in relation to the rest of the country. Other than this, Quebec gained control of services relating to the integration of immigrants in the province and received a commitment to have the federal government

reimburse Quebec for the costs of these services at a higher rate than in other provinces (Couture Gagnon, 2020, 249). This arrangement has continued to evolve over time, with events such as the Syrian Refugee Crisis leading to increased deliberation over the role of Quebec in refugee resettlement and the COVID-19 pandemic leading to increased insular policies from the Quebec government.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began to lead governments to restrict travel globally, Quebec's government took a particularly harsh stance by severely limiting the amount of refugees who could be resettled in the project and the amount of applications that would be reviewed. Quebec became one of the main epicenters of the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada, with over half of the country's confirmed cases being in the province (Dalexis and Cénat, 2020). This limitation saw the amount of refugees who arrived in the province plummet over 40 percent from 2019 to 2020 (Ministère de L'Immigration, 2020). Among the uncertainty of COVID, Quebec suspended private refugee sponsorship by organizations for one year, stating that the government had received "serious allegations" concerning the private sponsorship program. Organizations criticized this large-scale decision, noting that organizations who had carefully followed all regulations were punished along with any who had committed transgressions (Valiante, 2020).

Quebec's specific language policies have been shifting for over half a century, with the most recent updates occurring in 2011 and 2022. Under the province's premier, François Legault, who has been in office since 2018 as the leader and founder of the Quebec nationalist party, Coalition Avenir Québec, the province has seen efforts to increase the role of the provincial government in reinforcing the status of Quebec as a French-speaking province (Paperny, 2022). These measures have seen harsh regulations that mandate not only the use of French in

government and many businesses, but specifically exclude other languages in many settings barring exceptions.

Among the intentional measures that the Quebec government takes to ensure that all who live in the province cannot live easily without adapting to a Francophone bureaucracy is the practice of sending letters to individuals written only in French, even if that individual is known to not be proficient in the language.[7] This practice is indicative of the provincial government's wider stance on the issue, as the province has been in favor of more controlled immigration, and the lack of government services available to those who do not learn French serves as a more forceful push to learn the language in order to receive full respect from the community they have moved to. This is especially important given the role that private sponsors can play in providing assistance to refugees in cases where government assistance would be difficult to receive.

Provincial Backlog

Building on the existence of a backlog in other provinces, Quebec has, through its policies of delaying review of sponsorship applications, manufactured a massive backlog which compounds the problems that exist in the two-step sponsorship application process before aside from excessive delays. Refugees are unable to hear about their cases throughout a process that is already characterized by immense uncertainty, with refugees often spending years in a second country as a temporary inhabitant. The Quebec Minister of Immigration demonstrated the non-accidental nature of the backlog by declaring in 2022 that the first step of the sponsorship application process would be completed by the end of 2023 (ibid). The opaque and cripplingly slow process maintains the backlog, despite the decreased number of applications from the COVID period. When applications are submitted, the provincial government keeps them in an

[7] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

Immigration Ministry office in Montreal for months before the process of their review can even begin. This example has a particular sense of bureaucratic inertia where individuals have to fight to ensure that valid applications are read.

The province of Quebec continues to reinforce French as the only official language of the province and further cement its status in all areas. The province has additionally placed stricter limits on who can receive services in English in the new policy statement. This new designation includes immigrants for the first six months after their arrival in Quebec. The rules put further strain on refugees, among other immigrants, and arbitrarily increase the consequences for failing to learn a foreign language that is already essential for work within a short period. Additionally, most small and medium-size businesses require government certification that they operate in French and they need to meet stricter standards to justify new workers speaking other languages (Stevenson, 2022).

Each of these requirements has implications for outsiders in communities across Quebec. Refugees who arrive already face a herculean task in adjusting to a new country away from their homelands as a permanent resident. Refugees who pick up the language well or are accustomed to government services being difficult to obtain in their home countries may not find these difficulties to be a defining aspect of their experience adjusting to their new homes. However, the intentional manner in which the Quebec government enacts burdensome language policies without adequate pathways for immigrants can compound other difficulties and worsen the impact of not knowing French. These actions harm both streams' integration prospects, though the emphasis on assistance in redeeming government services indicates that private sponsorship is particularly influential on this issue.

The impact of Francization policies on refugees points to a greater issue in resettlement to Quebec. Refugees who arrive from different countries may arrive with either tremendous advantages or disadvantages in resettlement prospects. Given the pressures to learn the language, refugees from francophone areas are able to avoid one of the most difficult parts of adjusting to a new area and entirely avoid policies from the Quebec government that punish those who fail to pick up the language. Because of this, some refugees are at a significant advantage where they can obtain government services without as much assistance, make social connections with their area and obtain expedited employment outside of a specific ethnic enclave.

The language issue in Quebec interacts with refugee sponsorship in a crucial manner given the government's intense push towards francization. The vulnerability of individuals who do not speak French or English in Quebec can be somewhat alleviated when they have a personal connection with someone who can help them obtain government assistance and networks of people to help them. This being noted, the presence of the Resettlement Operations Centre in Ottawa's decision-making process which takes cultural ties and languages into account will mean that the GARs should be less likely to arrive in Quebec without family members, French-language proficiency or co-ethnic communities in their destination cities than those who have some or all of these (IRCC, 2023). While this means that refugees of both types will be likely to have some sort of assistance in forging a new life in their destinations, GARs who have no connections in Quebec are more likely to lack prompt assistance. Even refugees without ethnic connections, family or knowledge of French will have access to resettlement assistance of some sort, though as studies show PSRs feel they are more likely to receive services in a more timely manner, refugees are especially vulnerable to difficulties in Quebec (Agrawal, 2019).

The variety of experiences within Quebec point to the protection of the French language in the province not being inherently incompatible with welcoming newcomers and providing incentives for newcomers to learn the local language is not inherently problematic. It is the point to which the Quebec government knowingly leaves behind those who have been unable to learn the French language quickly enough and intentionally delivers poor governance as it relates to refugee sponsorship and resettlement that these ideas come into conflict. In this way, the lengths to which the Quebec government goes to protect the French language harms both PSRs and GARs significantly though in different manners.

Economic Integration

Housing for Refugees in Canada

Complementing the importance of receiving assistance in finding employment in obtaining self-sufficiency, the task of locating and securing housing can be a necessity to ensure that self-sufficiency built by the end of the sponsorship period will last. This can take different forms for privately sponsored refugees and government-assisted refugees. Holding a stable housing situation ensures that refugees are aware of their expenses in the longer-term and additionally proves crucial in maintaining employment in addition to ensuring that they maintain a control over their livelihoods and are able to support their families in the years moving forward. This appears both in determining commutes and in community connections, with a frequent tradeoff appearing between access to public transportation and affordability. Housing for immigrants and refugees across Canadian cities has multiple aspects that differ between different cities and provinces.

Some studies such as Murdie (2008) found that GARs often complained about the lack of assistance finding housing when moving from temporary accommodations. Contrasting this, PSRs found more frequently that housing arrangements were well-organized before their arrival (93). The assistance provided in finding housing complements that of finding employment and social support, which is more personal in nature for PSRs than GARs. There are still key connections between the forms of housing assistance and the impacts assistance has on refugees' financial situations. As a whole, based on prior analysis, immigrants and refugees in Canada do experience success in housing, with the majority finding accommodations and eventual home ownership in the long term. However, in the short term there are more difficulties that can arise

as refugees make their initial transition to the housing markets in their new communities (Hiebert, 2017).

Finding housing for refugees is not a new challenge, with the task of obtaining lodging for families just arriving being an inherently difficult task. Most directly influencing the difficulty of finding lodging for refugee families is the fact that these families are often large, with refugees from Syria during a period spanning 2015 and 2016 having families of six individuals or more in 40 percent of families (Rose, 2019). Additionally, GAR and BVOR families are more likely to arrive with children than PSR families, with a 2022 survey showing almost half of GAR and BVOR families having children under five, with this figure being only 18 percent for PSR families (Soehl and Van Haren, 2022, 3233). In both private sponsorship and government assistance, keeping up with this demand for higher-occupancy housing has proven difficult. This is especially true given that the overall supply of housing in Canada has proven to not meet the needs of even smaller refugee families. Although the often-larger GAR and BVOR families are at increased risk for housing difficulties for demographic reasons, the housing market in Canada has made securing housing difficult for PSR families as well.

Rising Housing Costs

Throughout much of the world, inflation and rising costs of housing have caused immense distress to cities and countries as a whole. Canada is no exception to this, with Toronto and Montreal, in addition to other large cities such as Vancouver, both becoming more expensive places to live in addition to holding increasingly competitive housing markets. Within this, Toronto serves as a particularly significant example of this broader trend amongst larger cities given its high refugee population and increased housing prices. In the city, one in three households experienced affordability issues (City of Toronto, 2023). This affects refugees in an

especially important manner as they often have low incomes upon arrival, limited knowledge of housing markets in new cities and additionally may have language barriers that complicate relations with landlords.

Results also differ from other individuals moving to any given city, both from within Canada and abroad, in that they have an important incentive to live near their sponsors and can feel drawn to a specific area where distance will not impede their relationship with them and their ability to receive assistance as needed. When I asked a member of an organization that assists in the resettlement of refugees whether or not they believed that Toronto was a good place to be a refugee and if that had significance in the divide between PSRs and GARs, they mentioned housing as a key factor in their answer.[8] Despite their longer-standing belief that Toronto is a good place to be a refugee considering the high quality of life and exceptionally-multicultural nature of the city, housing prices have become more of a problem that have had far-reaching effects in the overall refugee experience that have made Toronto somewhat difficult to move to. Similarly, SPOs in other studies have noted that while Toronto and other large cities have the name recognition amongst refugees and many instinctively want to settle there, the city is no longer an affordable place for refugees to move to (Perzyna and Agrawal, 2022, 10). Given the requirement that sponsors find accommodations for the refugees they settle, this becomes one of the most difficult parts of the sponsorship process for those groups and similarly for SPOs under the RAP. This issue is compounded by the often-large refugee families, which require even more uncommon and expensive accommodations.

This level of housing prices has a negative impact when it comes to refugees finding accommodations even if they have sponsors reaching out on their behalf. This is the case as the overall nature of refugees' statuses in Canada makes obtaining sought-after apartments

[8] SAH Employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

challenging when the landlord has other applicants who have savings and employment. Community members and co-ethnics have proven essential in working around these difficulties, especially when landlords are similarly hesitant to rent to those on social assistance or who have yet to find a job (Murdie, 2008, 94). Without this, new arrivals in Canada have historically had to make sacrifices when securing housing, including sub-letting parts of their residences, sharing residences with friends or relatives and working more in order to obtain stable housing in areas that have a lack of low-income housing (Teixeira, 2009, 333).

The difference between the experience of PSRs and GARs in housing results in longer-term outsider status for some refugees, specifically regarding the temporary housing experienced by GARs. With the difficulties of finding affordable and available housing accommodations for refugees affecting both sponsors who attempt to either search for apartments personally and through community connections or government settlement agencies who seek to find lodging for a larger number of refugees, the outcomes are not always favorable for integration. In Toronto, GARs have ended up receiving lodging in hotels, which serves as a key example of the area's housing market having larger-scale effects on refugee integration across Toronto and similar cities: placing refugees in hotels puts off the larger commitment to find permanent housing for newcomers. This is the case as hotels maintain an atmosphere of being temporary, which can make the arrangement feel uncomfortable to individuals who need a sense of belonging and connection with a community of which they are truly a member. GARs have also failed to receive adequate income support to make housing affordable: with a meager $100 "housing allowance" added by the RAP in 2006, in addition to low communications and transit allowances added more recently, refugees still have to balance other personal costs in order to maintain a stable housing situation (Rose, 2019, 13; RSTP, 2022). This state of affairs

demonstrates the level to which GARs are not given the same level of support as PSRs even given the nature of their assistance working towards similar goals. It also shows how the resettlement stream has a clear impact on housing outcomes.

The rise in Canada's prices, although not unique among nations, have shown significant problems in destructive potential in recent years. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, housing prices began to rise significantly, reaching its worst affordability index rating since the 1980s. At this rate, one would need to spend about half of their disposable income to pay the mortgage on the median-priced house. This catastrophic rise in the housing market has seen the rental market rise as well, with the lowest-ever vacancy rate of 1.5% ensuring that the price of renting an apartment continues to reach levels that are difficult for most Canadians to afford (Dahms and Ducharme, 2024). Rising housing prices in addition to inadequate support for refugees has led to some groups relying on more informal housing arrangements, with a study finding that the majority of Kurdish families and about half of Somali families interviewed in 2000 naming illegal basement units as their current accommodations (Miraftab, 2000, 47).

Contributing to the housing difficulties, the rate at which new housing units are being built is not keeping up with the increasing demand, stemming from demographic changes and the overall increase in inflation. Although this effect has reached far greater levels in Canada's larger cities, the trend has affected areas across the country and makes it increasingly difficult for individuals coming from war-torn countries or refugee camps to maintain a stable housing arrangement upon arriving (Perzyna and Agrawal, 2020, 10). This affects refugees of all streams, as the difficulties of affording rent or gathering the necessary funds to move in can be beyond the capabilities of both sponsors and resettlement organizations. Aside from pointing out high rents, a SAH employee also noted that tenants in Canada need guarantors in case they are unable to pay

their rent. This is something that can be difficult for refugees if they do not have or cannot quickly obtain credit ratings; even well-funded organizations that serve as SAHs are unlikely to have the resources to give financial backing to many refugees that they help settle.[9] In this way, providing effective assistance for refugees can be a significant challenge for sponsors when the rental process requires substantial personal connections and advocacy on their end.

Differences in Location

The neighborhood serves as another level of volatility when it comes to housing: while Canadian cities generally have high qualities of life, the difference between living in an ethnic enclave and in a multicultural area can greatly vary refugee experiences in any given city. Refugees generally want to live in affordable areas so that they can continue to enjoy stable housing after their sponsorship period ends. Although refugees do not necessarily arrive with clear preferences for their neighborhood, the desire for a location with long-term affordability serves as one of the main areas of consideration.[10]

Within neighborhoods that refugees can afford to live in, the social connections and resulting support that different neighborhoods offer due to cultural dynamics prove important, for refugees. Even neighborhoods that are not situated at an ideal location when considering accessibility of the city center by public transport can satisfy newcomers when they are able to maintain vital connections to other individuals or families from their native region or country. An example of this came in my interview with a SAH employee in Toronto, with Syrian refugees who lived in Scarborough, an area less connected and more distant from the city center. The individual stated that refugees did not mind the lack of public transport given that they had

[9] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024
[10] ibid

important community ties in that area and it was affordable.[11] In other areas, however, the neighborhood have a greater impact on overall resettlement experiences: in cities with poor public transportation across neighborhoods or in small cities where key services lie in surrounding municipalities, the lack of public transportation can lead to poorer experiences in the employment market and also in access to services such as language courses (Wilkinson and Garcea, 2016).

Refugees can make important connections within any community, though the demonstrated preference for living amongst others with common heritage and language can mean that separation from those areas may make finding belonging and social connections in a new city less straightforward. Building social networks is something that interacts with neighborhoods to foster a sense of belonging. Hanley et al. (2018) found that refugees attach a sense of belonging to their ethnic community in their cities more than in their neighborhood, with these existing in 63% and 52% respectively (19). Such correlations demonstrate that refugees, even if not attached to specific geographical locations within cities, see having ethnic communities and relevant support nearby as important. Given this, isolation upon arrival can worsen the stress of integrating into a new community and make adjustment more difficult, even if this isolation takes place when waiting for more suitable housing (Oudshoorn et al., 2020, 901; Rose, 2019, 15).

Given the problem of rising prices, PSRs in affected cities can have further difficulties in finding affordable housing. Importantly, because sponsors utilize their own experience and communities in order to find housing, there are wide ranges of potential outcomes for PSRs. Experienced sponsors with financial backing in their communities are better-suited to find housing for refugees while those who have more limited funds and connections are in a more

[11] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

difficult position to do this (Rose, 2019, 22). SPOs who work on finding housing for refugees have noted in surveys that the experience they have and connections with landlords make their search more effective (Rose and Charette, 2017, 26). This does not mean that sponsors without experience do not find adequate housing for refugees, but instead demonstrates the difficulties that private sponsors can have when providing assistance in exclusive housing markets. Contrasting these difficulties, the personal nature of housing assistance allows PSRs to rely on their sponsors in finding housing in a way that GARs cannot (Carter, Polevychok and Osborne, 2017). Similarly, when SPO employees offer assistance to refugees in finding housing, some have found that the budget GARs have to work with in finding this housing is objectively not enough to ensure affordability (Perzyna and Agrawal, 2022, 12).

For GARs, the difficulties with housing can come from the match-making process which can put them in areas where availability is more limited. Even though they are assured housing, decisions on where refugees are placed by the government are made of a variety of factors which includes whether or not the refugee has medical issues and family ties within Canada. Additionally, resettling newcomers in key mid-sized and smaller cities can serve as a measure against declining populations in those areas. These measures can make finding housing somewhat difficult, as assigning refugees in areas with much available housing has at times been harmful towards refugees' prospects of integrating well into the labor market (Perzyna and Agrawal, 2022, 4-14). This preference on the part of the government in this way goes against that of refugees. The greater state of Canada's cities is something that must be addressed especially considering the higher cost of living in Canada's large cities where the strongest pre-existing immigrant communities exist. Given this difficulty, smaller cities are in need of more people and so those who are resettled there do see concrete advantages in that way.[12]

[12] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

Despite this, there are lasting tradeoffs regarding the refugees who are directed to small and medium-sized cities due to the greater lack of amenities and smaller co-ethnic communities.

These shortcomings in the housing experience for GARs is well illustrated by those of the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Initiative, a program that took place during the main influx of refugees from Syria in 2016. In this case, due to gaps between income support and rents, a refugee housing backlog quickly emerged and caused delays in resettlement (Rose and Charette, 2020, 196). The vulnerable nature of GARs economically also has led to SPOs organizing rent subsidies moving past the sponsorship period in order to ensure that refugees with particularly harsh economic transitions did not experience immediate rent insecurity upon the arrival of the thirteenth month (Rose and Charette, 2017, 22). Given these relationships, RAP providers, over time, can develop efficient methods of assistance regarding housing, though this varies by the connections and practices of different providers and is therefore not consistent.

Building a Home

Another major element of refugees' settlement experiences involves the furnishing of units that refugees move into. This is something that both private sponsors and service providers under the RAP take the responsibility of assisting in for refugees upon arrival, alongside basic household items and food (McGrath and McGrath, 2013, 3). Although this aspect of housing may seem trivial and is indeed secondary to the essential nature of locating housing, having a well-furnished accommodation is significant in its effects on mental health and on residents being able to feel at home in their lodging (Hartwig et al, 2020). Ensuring that the lodging is well-furnished for the refugees is also one of the first acts of assistance that sponsors perform for the refugees they sponsor, with both of the constituent group members I spoke to mentioning this step when recounting their settlement experiences.[13] In this case, this step does have an

[13] Constituent group members, in separate conversations with author, January 2024

importance in the broader sponsorship relationship, though this start-up cost is something that the RAP adequately covers for refugees as well. GARs often move into more temporary accommodations and relocate relatively soon after arriving, with over 90% of GARs in a 2019 study who had children being placed into temporary accommodations (Bhattacharyya, 2019, 1422). This suggests that this start-up cost is not covered for GARs in a way that translates into permanent savings and that GARs have to build their homes from scratch in a way that PSRs do not.

The differences between PSR and GAR housing experiences indicate that the community connections and individual assistance that PSRs receive can have important implications for refugees' abilities to find affordable housing and maintain a secure housing situation over time. This difficulty is in addition to the shortcomings of housing assistance offered by the RAP which put GARs in positions without leads to longer-term housing and integration into their communities. Despite this, key issues remain that are all-encompassing, with housing prices and overall availability being dependent on the city where the individual refugees reside. These issues continue to have negative effects on refugees from both streams of resettlement and ensure that finding adequate housing will generally be one of the more significant hurdles for both groups though, as in other issues, the support that PSRs have makes them less vulnerable to experiencing overwhelming hardship from these difficulties. The demographic differences between PSR and GAR families can make this relationship appear somewhat ambiguous, though when the effects that the resettlement streams have on refugees demonstrates that the success is not fully explained by demographic issues.

Employment

Studies that gauge integration and overall success of refugee resettlement often use statistics such as income and employment to form their appraisals. When comparing resettlement streams, both the Canadian government and private sponsors, along with refugees themselves, have a desire to ensure that refugees find lasting employment as quickly as possible, the quality of this employment and the effectiveness of assistance offered to refugees varies across individuals and across sponsorship streams. Among the most important forms of assistance that sponsors can give is utilizing pre-existing connections in the community to find a fitting job for someone who has recently been resettled that fits the individual and provides necessary financial stability. This search is often a significant challenge, given that most refugees come from developing countries (UNHCR, 2023). This fact surrounding the most common countries of origin has crucial implications for refugees' abilities to find employment, with one of the most important parts of refugee backgrounds being the inability to have qualifications from many of these home countries recognized as permissible in Canada, and refugee countries of origin frequently having low rates of possessing advanced degrees. Additionally important is the comparably higher professional experience rate amongst PSRs, with refugees arriving with vastly different levels of human capital that, to a large point, is correlated with sponsorship stream. Additionally, finding a job while also acclimating personally and learning the language makes this period particularly challenging for refugees.[14]

In the interviews that I conducted with employees of SAHs, I was able to gain some insight into the ways in which refugees find employment after arriving in their new communities and what the most important ways that the sponsors impact the refugees are in terms of finding

[14] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

employment. The individuals who I spoke to named finding employment as a crucial way in which having community connections can help refugees gain a foothold in new communities. Some of this can be attributed to the nature of private sponsorship, understanding that a majority of private sponsors are pre-existing connections such as family members seeking to help relatives immigrate as well. In the context of employment, sponsors who have immigrated themselves, as refugees or otherwise, know what job opportunities are available to those who have recently arrived in the area.

Importantly, studies have found that the likelihood of a refugee obtaining some kind of employment is not affected by their sponsorship status although the quality of this employment can see important changes with advocacy from sponsors or other co-ethnic groups (Soehl and Van Haren, 2023, 3237). This includes an understanding of home-country experience and direction as one searches for a job as well as stability and higher wages after one is employed (ibid). The overall impact of sponsorship in finding employment can be difficult to gauge when considering the dual-role of family members as private sponsors in a majority of sponsorship cases. Family members who are present and offer assistance in a new city may have connections to an employment opportunity regardless of whether they themselves are a sponsor.

Facing the Recognition of Credentials

Refugees do not arrive in Canada without experience or expertise, though a variety of factors prevent them from seamlessly transitioning to a similar role in Canada. The lack of recognized credentials for many refugees can have significant effects on a refugee's ability to find employment and overall refugee integration (Lamba, 2003, 59). This interacts with the overall resettlement experience through the limitations it puts on what jobs refugees can obtain. Because refugees arrive in an inherently unfavorable environment for finding employment which

causes them to rely on low-skilled jobs, they are in a position where social assistance is likely to play a larger part in their livelihoods during times of financial hardship stemming from a job transition or unemployment. Krahn et al (2004) found that while the majority of refugees from any given region had employment before fleeing, refugees were less than one third as likely to have professional or managerial positions in Canada (68). In the study, this was one of the main employment-related complaints amongst refugees.

Canada has a credential evaluation system that leaves the decisions on whether or not foreign credentials are valid in Canada to organizations themselves rather than a more centralized body (Loo, 2016, 6). The lack of recognized qualifications on the part of refugees has a significant impact on the starting point for sponsors and settlement organizations who seek to find employment for refugees. By frequently not recognizing credentials from refugees' home countries, Canadian labor practices force many newcomers into unskilled labor despite refugees having arrived with experience and expertise from their countries of origin. This issue is particularly jeopardizing for refugees given their inability to easily obtain documentation from a country that they cannot return to. Associations often demand documents that might be inaccessible if conditions in the home country make correspondence with those who remain impossible or refugees' connections there have fled.

This also compels resettled refugees to abandon their field of expertise lest they make the difficult time commitment to achieve self-sufficiency while pursuing education for a job they have already mastered, though some are able to avoid this and find ways to either make use of their experience or obtain the necessary education. Refugees can take advantage of resources such as automobiles which they obtain to supplement their incomes through modes such as Uber.[15] Additionally, despite the difficulties of transitioning to the Canadian labor market, the

[15] Constituent group member, in discussion with the author, January 2024

permanent residence status that both PSRs and GARs receive as resettled refugees gives them the stability necessary to maintain jobs and advance their careers over time. This is something that is especially difficult for refugee claimants who are present in a way that is somewhat temporary (Jackson and Bauder, 2014, 370). Even as language skills improve, this is something that can limit refugees to lower-income industries for years after they arrive in Canada (Ilcan and Connoy, 2021). The greater problem of recognized qualifications in the Canadian labor market is a crucial reason for this area of resettlement having similar long term outcomes for GARs and PSRs, even though PSRs are more likely to arrive with professional experience and the lack of recognized credentials is something that harms refugees overall.

Notably, refugees who arrive as children are able to progress through Canada's education system and are not limited by this gap in credentials, which allows them to obtain jobs that require higher education. While this has not yet played out for many refugee families who arrived after fleeing the Syrian Civil War, this journey through higher education has historically brought its own challenges regarding information about how to best pursue an education as well as adaptation to an educational setting following traumatic experiences (Bajwa et al., 2017). Additionally, refugees drop out of primary education more often than Canadian-born students, which can limit refugee children's ability to avoid the difficulties that those who arrive as adults face as a result of their qualifications being foreign.

Disparities Before Arrival

The difference between labor markets in different Canadian cities further points to the importance of sponsor-based assistance in successful integration. As is the case in most countries, different Canadian cities have different costs of living in addition to different salary statistics. In Canada, the divide between Quebec and Ontario extends to the cost of living in the

provinces' largest cities. In Toronto, a greater percentage of the population has acquired a bachelor's degree or higher than in Montreal. The differences apply to other cities as well, with Vancouver having a similarly high cost of living to Toronto. Across cities, apartment prices, condominium prices and welfare reliance for refugees each can vary (Hiebert, 2011, 7). Although the goal of finding gainful employment remains the same in each area, having continuous access to an individual who better understands wages and conditions in a given area can ensure that refugees find fair employment opportunities.

Also, the experiences and surroundings of PSRs in their initial countries of refuge as they communicate with sponsors and wait for approval means that many of these refugees arrive having been able to prepare some language and work qualifications that give them greater abilities to choose their lines of work (Jackson and Bauder, 2014). Contrasting this point, GARs, such as those who come from Syria, are likely to have been internally-displaced for years before being able to move to Canada. These individuals are unable to prepare for entry into the Canadian labor force and arrive with strong qualifications. In some of these cases, arriving from this situation with only access to jobs with low barriers to entry and poor hours or conditions leads refugees to choose not working and relying on social assistance over continuing these jobs. Agrawal (2018) found that because GARs get less financial assistance when they get jobs, they are at a disadvantage to PSRs as well as refugee claimants, who more often have obtained work experience, language skills or accepted credentials since fleeing their home countries (586). Overqualification is also a problem that goes beyond the unfavorable professional and financial elements of failing to find employment commensurate with experience, with this problem amongst new immigrants being associated with poor mental health due to dissatisfaction with their jobs (Chen et al., 2010, 617). Through challenges such as these, transitioning from

countries with vastly different labor markets to that of Canada can lead to stressful searches and outcomes for all refugees.

Cultural and Personal Impacts of Sponsorship on Finding Employment

Related to the disparity of qualifications, the role of faith-based or nationality-based cultural differences in finding employment is something that has appeared in other studies. Senthanar et al (2021) found that amongst Syrian refugees, GAR women in particular were more likely to have a level of discomfort when finding employment, with a particularly prevalent one being working alongside men after arriving from Syria, where such arrangements were less commonly accepted (587). Contrasting that discomfort in the group of GAR women they interviewed, the four PSR women all found employment in their first year, including that which involved working alongside men (585). These differences in culture between demographic groups in common countries of origin show how personal norms can also contribute to different employment outcomes between the two streams.

Both PSRs and GARs, owing to their status as permanent residents, can access development programs offered by the federal government. These programs help refugees acclimate to Canadian workplaces as well as expand on marketable skills for finding employment, with refugees making up a particularly high percentage of participants in these programs, at 25%. Despite these programs' presence, some refugees have difficult times accessing them and those who are able to frequently cannot do so for the entirety of their eligibility (Wilkinson and Garcea, 2016, 12). These programs provide important opportunities for refugees to ensure that all have the ability to expand on their skill sets and gain confidence in their searches for lasting gainful employment. The accessibility problems demonstrate the ways in which government assistance programs are unable to fully make up for more personal

relationships (Wilkinson and Garcea, 2016, 23). With GARs less likely to have advanced qualifications in general, the difficulties of accessing government programs further compounds employment-related troubles for these refugees.

Similarly, sponsors who are family members of newly arrived refugees have an understanding of where the refugee is coming from and what jobs are most likely to be compatible with their experience and their language abilities. Sponsors who were not related to the refugees they sponsored still have the personal connections within the community to advocate for refugees before they arrive[16]. Leveraging community connections to help refugees find jobs is something that sponsors can put the necessary attention towards. Additionally, sponsors have an important role in advising refugees on budget considerations before they gain an understanding of the main expenses that come with living in their city, given that many refugees do not have prior knowledge of Canada's banking systems and other financial aspects (Lenard, 2019, 69). Even if sponsors do not have specialized knowledge or relevant connections that lead to employment, this knowledge will still prove important.

One of the most significant factors that contributes to a refugee's ability to find employment is their knowledge of the local language, with refugees not yet working finding this to be the greatest barrier to employment (Foley, Bose and Grigri, 2018, 6). Given this barrier, the job market has interactions with language issues including both the specific challenge of learning a new language and additionally the requirement that refugees make time for this task. Across the country, this can be something that is difficult to do while working. Because all refugees in Quebec and GARs in other provinces are paid to take these courses, refugees face a difficult choice, having to balance finding and maintaining employment with learning French or English when both tasks are essential. A study by Hanley et al. (2018) found that, amongst refugees who

[16] Constituent group member, in discussion with the author, January 2024

had arrived recently in Montreal, only 30 percent of the refugees had employment while 70 percent were in French language classes. This, to the authors, indicated that the language courses took the place of employment for respondents at this point in time (142). The balancing of language learning and employment additionally puts pressure on sponsors, who seek to ensure that the refugees they sponsor are left in a good place financially when the twelve month sponsorship period ends, something that ideally includes both prompt employment and language ability. Such conflicts put the working relationships between refugees and those who are tasked with assisting them under stress, with sponsors' incentives to secure employment within a year being counteracted by refugee incentives to learn a language for longer-term employment prospects. Not all studies find language proficiency to be an independent deciding factor, however, with Kaida et al (2020) finding in their model that PSRs had higher employment outcomes even when controlling for this, something that points towards overall human capital amongst this group.

Private sponsors do not always conduct the search for their sponsored refugees' employment on their own. When communities formalize their desire to sponsor refugees and do so under a faith-based organization, the congregations generally form committees in order to organize their sponsorship-related activities. Within these, subcommittees on employment focus just on this issue and can apply their employment-seeking processes over years for many refugees while greatly lessening the burden on the refugees and those who assist them personally (Elcioglu, 2023, 105). Although GARs do receive assistance from SPOs, organizations such as those who can focus on a smaller number of refugees are an example of the sponsorship mechanism corresponding to better assistance. Senthanar et al (2019) found that refugees had been encouraged to take any available position, including volunteer roles, in order to gain

marketable experience in Canadian work environments, despite this being unlikely to lead to longer-term employment. This in particular demonstrates the partnership between constituent groups and SAHs in resettling refugees, with community members being able to personally help refugees with integration while having the backing of a congregation for assistance in major tasks such as locating employment.

Ethnic communities can serve as an important source of quality employment for newcomers across sponsorship categories. While refugees have little personal links to employers, the linguistic and cultural groups that refugees join upon arrival can offer them employment opportunities or guidance before they fully adjust to the new city and learn the language well enough to speak in a professional setting and engage in an independent job search (Hanley et al., 2018, 133). Other than looking out for newcomers of similar origins of themselves, ethnic communities can give refugees advice and refer them to common areas in which refugees of the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds find gainful employment. This can include restaurants or convenience stores in some groups, though also other tendencies such as driving for ride-sharing applications such as Uber or Lyft can give refugees direction in their longer-term employment and economic situations, especially if they do not wish to continue the job that they obtain first after arriving. These options are flexible and have low barriers to entry once refugees obtain cars, which makes it an effective replacement in these situations.[17] Given the mental health issues unfavorable jobs can bring, options such as these that somewhat revolve around community ties are important when considering sponsorship streams. This is true because access to the community is not dependent on sponsorship but more commonly within geographical reach for PSRs given the personal nature of private sponsorship.

[17] Constituent group member, in discussion with author, January 2024

Overall Impact of Employment on Integration

Refugees worldwide, given their often-sudden flights from their homes and lack of financial independence when they arrive, have lower employment rates than other types of immigrants (Bevelander, 2020). Given that both refugee streams include assistance in finding employment, the more-favorable status of PSRs as they arrive and the nature of their assistance can make this process easier when one arrives via private sponsorship. The findings of the numerous studies showing PSRs and GARs to have similar incomes and employment rates over longer periods of time after arrival are important, proving that over time, GARs do obtain employment and the relevant financial benefits (Kaida, Stick and Hou, 2022, 16).

Despite this, eventual convergence does not compensate for the stress that refugees experience in finding a job in the initial sponsorship period when they are most vulnerable personally and financially. With GARs making less money than PSRs for years following arrival and being more than twice as likely than PSRs (65% to 29%) to be using food banks (IRCC, 2016, 29). Statistics such as this demonstrates how the assistance provided to GARs under the RAP is further inadequate as it relates to employment. This puts refugees under significant stress and worsens the risk that difficulties finding employment will result in food insecurity. Given that GARs have lower rates of employment and lower incomes for the years following their arrivals, GARs are particularly vulnerable to experiencing financial hardship due to a lack of employment at this time. Additionally, some demographics see lower employment rates amongst GARs last for years, even when controlling for education (Kaida, Hou and Stick, 2020, 19). Such outcomes are directly related to poorer integration experiences and go against what all sponsorship streams are constructed to avoid both in Canada and elsewhere.

Although refugees are more likely to have language skills or advanced degrees, understanding that they face similar barriers in proving their qualifications and finding relevant jobs makes their initial higher employment rate nonetheless a key area of greater success for PSRs. This demonstrates the effectiveness of private sponsorship in helping refugees integrate fully and in a timely manner. The assistance provided amongst the two resettlement streams is overall similar, with the differences largely being the individual or organization helping in the search for employment and both consisting refugees being given broad guidance on the process of finding a job. Given this, despite the frequent difficulties in having credentials recognized in Canada, the differences in human capital in areas such as the greater education and language abilities amongst PSRs when compared to GARs appear to explain the PSRs' greater employment and income. When considering the essential nature of economic integration, PSRs are better positioned for personal success in a new country and developing a sense of stability in that location.

Social Integration

Social Consequences of Resettlement

While economic impacts as they relate to resettlement serve as the core of refugees' abilities to integrate into a society upon arriving, the accompanying ability to develop a sense of belonging and normalcy in an area where one begins to reside is especially important for refugees given the lack of choice over the terms of their reception. When refugees arrive in Canada, they are thrust into rapid adjustment to a new culture while immediately needing to acclimate to relationships with important individuals in their resettlement such as SPO workers or sponsors. Given this, the impact of refugees' personal adjustments, including their abilities to adequately address lasting mental health issues and trauma, prove vital for successful integration (Ahmad et al., 2019). Issues that come into play regarding social integration can lead to emotional issues for refugees or greater dissatisfaction with the location of their resettlement altogether. When refugees build successful relationships both within and outside ethnic communities, this indicates positive social integration outcomes.

Secondary Migration

When considering the broader experience of moving to a new country, refugees importantly do not get to choose the geographical region, province or city in which they will be resettled. Because Government Assisted Refugees do not have a true input regarding the specific location they end up being resettled in, many of these refugees in undesirable locations decide to leave the location they are originally assigned to. This phenomenon, known as secondary migration, is one of the key issues regarding government-assisted refugee resettlement, as there are numerous bureaucratic measures that revolve around the location of a GAR's initial resettlement. Although PSRs have more of a controlled introduction to the idea of living in a

given area due to the lengthy application review process and the assurance that they will have personal assistance from community members, some PSRs do end up moving to new regions as well. The practice can also harm refugee integration when they are unable to maintain the progress they made with organizations or sponsors who were prepared to host them in their initial cities.

Although this figure can vary significantly across locations within Canada, a government study of the RAP before the influx of Syrian refugees found that about one in every five GARs move from their original location within, on average, slightly less than a year after arriving. These secondary migrants usually leave their initial locations in search of better employment, government services, ethnic communities or family reunification (CIC Canada, 2011, 24). This statistic indicates that GARs who decide to leave their assigned communities usually do give their communities a chance even if the destination was not their first choice, though many still do decide even after a year of government assistance that they are willing to take the chance of relocating. The thousands of refugees who were found to take this step each year were the minority, though this indicates that there is significant variation in refugees' willingness to move to less-prosperous locations when others are assigned to the country's more populous and multicultural cities. This process also speaks to the difference between GARs and PSRs, with PSRs being more closely tied to specific areas within their host cities despite these areas typically being those with the communities that refugees of both streams desire to live in for those connections.

Regarding the rate at which GARs engage in secondary migration, there are figures that clearly tie together the practice to the resettlement of these refugees to smaller and more isolated locations. Gure and Hou's study (2022) demonstrates that the rate at which GARs continue to

reside in their initial Canadian location had significant correlation with the amount of other GARs in their municipality, with their model seeing the retention rate rising almost fifteen percent when the number of GARs increased from 20 to 500 (18). However, the correlation became more slight as the number of GARs went past a few hundred (21). This analysis demonstrates the point to which the community of other refugees in a similar status provides GARs with the necessary elements to remain in a location.

The IRCC continues to offer resettlement services to GARs and BVORs who, upon arrival in Canada or within the first year of their residence, choose to travel to a location other than their matched destination (IRCC, 2021). This allows these refugees to relocate without taking penalty, though puts stress on the SPOs who are given little time to prepare for the unexpected arrival after receiving refugee information from the initially-intended destination's SPOs. Similarly, SPOs have noted that secondary migration puts additional financial stress on refugees, stemming from the lowered quality of the support they receive upon changing their destination (Perzyna and Agrawal, 2022). Such challenges point to a source of poorer integration outcomes stemming from secondary migration, with refugees acting in what they perceive as their best interests against a matching system that has not pleased them while at the same time working against the parts of that system that are specifically purposed to help them live well in their new homes. In this way, the RAP system's effectiveness counts on acceptance of matched destinations, even though this is something that awards some refugees more desirable destinations than others.

Building on the rate of occurrence, there are notable demographic differences between GARs and PSRs that specifically make secondary migration important to consider when analyzing sponsorship. Among these, GARs tend to have lower education levels than PSRs, with

the proportion of PSRs having a post-secondary education being almost twice as high, at 17% for PSRs and only 9% for GARs. This difference has labor market consequences that can make achieving financial stability and adjusting to a new city more difficult (Kaida, 2020, 2). The greater proportion of PSRs being resetted in large cities with pre-existing ethnic communities than GARs combined with the fact that GARs already have lower education levels from their home countries makes moving to a medium-sized or small metropolitan area something that is especially difficult for some GARs. The stress of moving to a new city with fewer employment opportunities for new immigrants makes GARs particularly incentivized to seek out better opportunities in different cities, even if they do not possess any personal unwillingness to live in smaller and less diverse cities.

Additionally, refugees who struggle to pick up the language in the province they are initially resettled in may decide to seek out ethnic communities in larger cities where speaking the dominant language may be less important. An anecdote from an individual who had sponsored refugees in the past included an example of a refugee claimant who had been granted refugee status after crossing the border from the United States into Quebec and claiming asylum. Despite receiving social assistance after being given refugee status, the individual had great difficulty gaining proficiency in the French language and migrated from Montreal to Toronto in order to take advantage of their greater pre-existing knowledge of English.[18] Additionally, some refugees are mismatched in a more clear manner when medical needs or family connections to Canada that the refugees have are not taken strongly into account in matching (Perzyna and Agrawal, 2022). These examples demonstrate the belief amongst some refugees that their needs will be better served in another location even if their assigned support system will remain in their

[18] Constituent group member, in discussion with the author, January 2024

current location. They also show how the quality of support can at times fail to compensate for the draw of other areas.

A strong majority of GARs decide to stay in their matched location in the longer term, and this proportion has increased over the past decade even as fewer GARs arrive in Canada's large cities (Gure and Hou, 2022, 9). Even in rural locations with more limited employment opportunities, communities provide strong social networks and personal connections (Haugen, 2019, 55). One of the main causes of secondary migration, family reunification, is unnecessary in most cases, with 80% of GARs in an IRCC survey who had family members in Canada were assigned to a location nearby their residence (IRCC, 2016). The existence of the non-negligible numbers of refugees who take the step of moving again to a new city does still indicate that GARs are at the will of a matching system that can cause significant discomfort for those who it matches. This also speaks to the overall preferences of refugees which are more commonly met in private sponsorship. Through these preferences, refugees face integration in different manners and some are given more straightforward paths to developing belonging and stability in their new homes.

Moving Past Lasting Trauma

Because refugees, by definition, come to their places of resettlement from home countries where they cannot safely remain, the trauma that they experience plays an important role in determining their ability to mentally move forward when they arrive in Canada. Dealing with trauma is not the major goal of refugee resettlement, though the lasting effects of trauma still appear throughout refugee communities. Trauma can also cause difficulties for sponsors who have to offer trauma support, a kind of assistance that they did not anticipate giving. In one of the interviews I conducted in Montreal, the SAH employee mentioned that one major trouble that

can arise is that some refugees arrive with substance abuse issues after having to spend years in a refugee camp or fleeing their home under stressful circumstances. Refugees might not understand the lasting mental effects of their experiences at first due to a focus on the various activities that follow one's arrival.[19] From his perspective, addressing these issues upon arrival is essential for refugees in order to move on to fulfilling lives ahead in their new communities.

An example he gave was a refugee who had survived militia-based violence in his home country: this individual got a job as a factory worker which processed meat and saw his trauma all come back to him upon seeing blood.

> "They don't have the time to think, to relive to traumatize, et cetera. Usually after 6, 8, 10 months or sometime later, traumas come back because they have more stability at that moment, they begin to have a job, et cetera. They feel better in life, in the neighborhood, et cetera. And they have the time to think at that moment the image, the nightmare can come back"[20]

Huang (2021) also notes that, in the case of Syrians, the trauma that these refugees have faced also can make learning English more difficult and requires intentionality within language course instruction (Huang, 157). Additionally, trauma can lead to counterproductive mechanisms for stress management, with some refugees isolating themselves socially in their discomfort (Racine and Lu, 2015, 176). In this way, resolving the trauma in refugees' pasts is essential in order to ensure positive integration experiences, though this can affect refugees from any stream depending on the circumstances under which any individual refugee fled their home.

Even though these issues do appear in PSR communities, as was the case amongst the anecdotes that I heard personally, PSR communities are less-frequently affected by medical issues. Multiple studies' findings indicate that PSRs have about half the self-reported rate of poor mental and physical health as GARs and BVOR respondents indicate that mental health amongst PSRs is overall better than for other streams, benefiting their integration (Soehl and Van Haren,

[19] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024
[20] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

2023; Ahmad et al, 2019). These studies point to both demographic differences and varying methods of support for refugees. This discrepancy has the potential to compound heightened difficulties for GARs in the pursuit of employment, as exemplified by the anecdote where suitable employment was affected by trauma, in addition to the overall goal of self-sufficiency, with the process of healing trauma making integration more challenging. Lasting difficulties in these aspects can feed back into mental health issues, with Ahmad et al. (2019) finding that use of an interpreter after two years and dissatisfaction with housing at this point in time were significantly correlated with depression (250).

Family Relationships

Taking a closer look at the role that family members play in integration assistance is important in understanding the true differences between private and government-sponsored refugees. Larger GAR families that are all resettled to Canada are more likely to be separated in the program as the government generally defines a family as consisting of two adults and their non-adult children (Hyndman, Payne and Jimenez, 2017, 58). Nakhaie (2017) found that having family members in Canada only decreased community involvement-related needs, with needs relating to services going up, perhaps related to more long-distance relationships in cases where family members are not directly involved in resettlement. Having community ties that are not familial can also be important and ethnic communities frequently provide belonging and guidance for refugees. However, the expectations that accompany the presence of family members in a new country should provide more substantial prioritization of the refugee, given that family ties often dictate the location in which refugees are resettled. Family-related sponsorship makes up such a large portion of PSRs, however, that it can be difficult to see how family connections differ from overall community ties.

The role of family separation in refugee resettlement experiences is something that remains important as well given the disparity of opportunities to remain near family. Refugees, especially given the larger family sizes in countries of origin, often are unable to be resettled in Canada as a group. The resulting separation is a major source of mental distress which can last throughout a refugee's sponsorship period. This is something that can become more of a problem over time, with refugees initially being more concerned about having reached safety in Canada before finding that the level to which their family has irreversibly been scattered between areas either in the country of origin or within Canada is greatly distressing. This is something that can lead to depression and overall lasting anguish on the part of refugees as they reflect on their sudden separation from their families or their continued danger back in the family's home country (Morris et al., 2020, 137).

This overwhelming distress that refugees face after being separated from their families is something that can prevent any true feeling of belonging and even a desire to truly integrate as long as key parts of the refugees' personal lives remain broken. Such developments can put pressure on private sponsors to get involved in assistance in wider family issues, such as sending money back to relatives abroad (139). In this way, family separation has a particularly problematic effect on PSRs, with their broader relationships with the groups that sponsors them being at risk of strain due to their lasting discontent with their familial situation in a way which more client/employee relationships with RAP organizations are likely to.

Social ties for PSRs: Power balance

While GARs do have significant contact with individuals from organizations under the RAP who hold key roles in providing resettlement assistance, the personal relationships between the PSRs and their sponsors are vital to analyze not only as having potential for blooming into

fulfilling friendships, but also as more complicated long-term relationships that may be difficult on both sides. The status of sponsors, providing such important assistance and resources for refugees, puts them above those who they sponsor regarding relative power in that personal relationship. Both refugees and their sponsors go into resettlement with pre-existing expectations of what the experience will be like and what they will receive as part of their resettlement. Despite this, studies have found that major misunderstandings are bound to occur that can complicate the relationships, often owing to the stress of resettlement and lingering trauma. The overall nature of the relationships can be problematic, due to the customer-client relationship which can develop as is the case with GARs. Sponsors often function similarly to this despite their personal relationship to the refugee and unpaid efforts (Macklin et al., 2020, 6). As Elcioglu (2023) notes, sponsors who make the voluntary financial commitment and give their time to sponsor refugees believe that their efforts will be well received. Even if they understand, in principle, that there will be difficulties both culturally and personally, seeing refugees they expect to be overwhelmingly grateful in persistent anguish over loved ones left behind or other trauma can shatter the image they have built (107).

Language also defines the social and cultural interactions between refugees and sponsors. The personal relationships which constituent groups that resettle refugees or SAH employees have with refugees is further impacted by the frequent language barrier between these individuals and the refugees they help resettle. Given this, organizations frequently have interpreters in common refugee languages including Arabic and Pashto in order to assist both in the adjudication of cases before refugees arrive and communication as refugees are being resettled. This relationship importantly changes over time, with refugees being able to speak to

their sponsors without using translation software when they keep in touch following the sponsorship period.

Alongside the misunderstandings that can come from differing expectations, a major risk of private sponsorship is the possibility that the sponsors and refugees do not develop a productive and respectful relationship. PSRs overall achieve positive integration results, and SAHs including those that I spoke to require deposits which can be used if the sponsorship situation falls apart and the refugee is without necessary assistance before the sponsorship period is up. Similarly, sponsors generally understand to avoid unnecessary disagreements and recognize refugees' right to do their own decision-making, with an example from Macklin et al.'s (2020) survey being permitting smoking (16). Similarly, sponsors in that survey showed surprise at cultural differences such as in what manner children were disciplined (Derwing and Mulder, 2005, 226). Despite these guardrails, any major disagreements between the sponsors and refugees are more difficult to straighten out, which leaves some PSRs vulnerable to hostile situations in ways that GARs are not. Importantly, this is something that some sponsors find uncomfortable as well, and can cause them to feel awkward socializing with the family they sponsor (Macklin et al, 2020, 13). The power imbalance between PSRs and the refugees they sponsor and the lasting trauma that can come from refugees' experience can significantly impact the way refugees acclimate to life in a new country, with these each affecting PSRs and GARs differently.

When examining the effects of the different settlement streams, the social aspect is the easiest to identify as greatly divergent in the resulting experience due to the lasting partnership with a community member being compared with organization workers. These effects are not all positive, as demonstrated by the power imbalance in sponsor-refugee relationships and the

pressure to resolve major differences quickly in a vital interpersonal relationship. Despite this, the ties to community members leads to PSR families having more certainty in their resettlement process, with unplanned internal migration exceedingly rare amongst this group while this migration is not uncommon amongst GARs. Given these examples, different parts of the social integration process are more effective for different streams, though the more personal attention that sponsors can put into their relationships with refugees makes this integration often easier for PSRs. Through sponsors, refugees can be introduced to community members in addition to receiving dedicated assistance in adjusting to life in Canada (Ilcan and Connoy, 2021; Agrawal, 2018). Each of these ensure that PSRs build important networks early on. While experiences vary, studies have found that most refugees do end up developing a sense of belonging in Canada despite difficulties with trauma and cultural differences (Hynie, 2018, 9).

Assistance in Healthcare

Receiving government services, even in a country such as Canada with relatively generous medical and social benefits, can prove difficult for refugees who arrive without understanding how to obtain these services through the country's bureaucracy. When refugees first arrive in Canada, they need to register for national health insurance, obtain identification and register children in schools in their communities. Individuals both from government agencies that provide assistance and sponsors that accompany refugees through this process can make obtaining these services far more straightforward for refugees. Although once refugees have assistance they learn to obtain government services themselves over time and will need to do this only occasionally, the assistance they receive in this task proves essential in ensuring that refugees do not feel overwhelmed and can access the services they need.

Receiving medical assistance can come into play at a time when refugees are not able to easily communicate with medical professionals and deal with the related bureaucracy effectively. As in many countries across Europe and Australia which are common refugee resettlement destinations, Canada has a generous state medical insurance where patients have healthcare paid for in their taxes and do not pay out-of-pocket at a medical facility. While this system will largely ensure that individuals do not acquire medical debt, the use of these services is not always straightforward. Registering for national health insurance is a process which both settlement service providers and private sponsors help newly arrived refugees undertake, though learning to deal with this bureaucracy in cases of emergency before a sponsor or other external assistance can arrive is something that refugees must prepare for. Multiple individuals in charge of Sponsorship Agreement Holders noted registration for government services, where refugees receive their social insurance numbers and identification, as one of the most important areas of assistance, with one noting that the systems are not user friendly and assistance can prove especially helpful given these difficulties[21]. Dealing with government forms in the local language immediately after arrival is something that can prove especially difficult, making assistance something of a necessity to do this properly. This in turn puts additional stress and frustration on sponsors, who may themselves find communication difficult and the coverage of refugees' health care confusing (Derwing and Mulder, 2005, 226).

Healthcare is an essential part of successful refugee resettlement, with private sponsorship and RAP's settlement assistance coming into play when difficulties arise relating to refugees' health situations. Refugees are a group that is especially prone to health problems, given the poor situations they come from both within their countries of origin and countries of initial refuge. Because of this, their overall healthcare outcomes are worse than that of the overall

[21] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

foreign-born population in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2005). Refugees also face discrimination when it comes to receiving healthcare when providers fail to offer free interpretation services or overall cultural sensitivity in the healthcare services that they offer. Even if refugees have achieved relative proficiency in English or French, communication over healthcare can remain difficult and providers have shown an unwillingness to work with individuals with thick accents (McKeary and Newbold, 2010, 531-532).

A study by Pottie et. al (2008) demonstrated this healthcare-related risk more directly, finding in a self-reported survey that a lack of language proficiency was significantly associated with negative healthcare outcomes (Pottie et al, 2008, 505). These examples demonstrate the need for assistance on various fronts from someone who is more accustomed to engaging in these interactions with healthcare providers and can explain or interpret as needed. Additionally, Racine and Lu (2014) found that cultural competence in healthcare is lower in smaller cities without strong immigrant communities is something that can negatively impact refugees' health (182). Differences in the ways this assistance is given can lead to poorer healthcare outcomes in this way, something that can be characterized by health problems that are either not addressed or continue after a visit with a healthcare provider (Tuck et al, 2019). The timeline of assistance came up again in an interview with a sponsor, with the sponsor's congregation raising money for a dental procedure that a refugee they sponsored could not have done in the refugee camp they were in while they waited to be resettled in Canada.[22]

GARs do benefit in healthcare outcomes from the matching process in terms of healthcare availability: refugees who are given refugee status by the UNHCR then undergo medical exams before arriving in Canada, which can ensure that they are resettled to areas with facilities fit for more advanced healthcare needs (Hansen and Huston, 2016, p. S4). This part of

[22] Constituent group member, in discussion with author, January 2024

the GAR resettlement process is especially important as it directly ensures that those who are particularly vulnerable to entering a taxing healthcare situation will be protected and have the necessary resources located nearby.

Given the burdensome nature of receiving government services without experience in the process, it remains important for refugees of both streams to receive assistance in this process. The manners in which refugees receive this assistance are important, though the demographic makeup of refugees who are nominated for resettlement by the UNHCR makes this issue vastly more pressing for these refugees, with those with medical problems being more likely to be classified as vulnerable and nominated for resettlement in Canada. This vulnerability is something that leads to different experiences with medical services upon resettlement despite this not being related to resettlement assistance directly. Despite this, when refugees are able to receive services more quickly, their basic needs are better met, making this another key area where confounding factors compound the issues in a given sponsorship stream that contribute to different outcomes, with use of healthcare services being less of a major part of the resettlement period due to fewer visits (Wanigaratne et al., 2023). Despite these outside factors, studies have nonetheless tended to find that differences in the assistance offered by Canada's sponsorship streams have contributed to these better outcomes.

Language Learning in Canada: A deeper dive

Although the links between language proficiency and a range of issues including chiefly employment and social integration, though also in housing, government services and health outcomes have been noted thus far, detailing the specific experience of learning a new language and the relative proficiency obtained in different sponsorship streams is still important. The

assistance offered to each stream can vary, and the ways in which the RAP and private sponsors foster language learning outside of classroom assistance can as well. With language being one of the key aspects of living in any location, its implications for refugees' lives moving forward from their sponsorship are essential. Factors that can lead refugees to take advantage of available resources, reach key proficiency designations and use the local language outside of strictly necessary situations can also vary based on differences less related to the specific language assistance that a given resettlement stream offers.

Demographic factors in Language Learning

Again, the streams show clear differences in the language proficiency of refugees from the moment they arrive, with a survey finding that almost half of PSR respondents had high proficiency in one of Canada's official languages compared to a drastically-lower 14 percent of BVOR respondents and only 9 percent of GARs (Soehl and Van Haren, 2023). SAH employees I spoke to noted that refugees who are waiting for their refugee status to be approved while living in a second country can prepare for resettlement in Canada by beginning to learn the language in their sponsors' communities. This is contrasted by GARs, who are selected based on their vulnerable nature and are in less of a position to seek out educational materials before leaving their home country. This more-frequent pre-existing knowledge of Canada's official languages allows PSRs to arrive with some of the initial work that goes into language learning already underway and the ability to gain increased proficiency through practice out in the community.

Language learning is something that can be difficult for immigrants, and especially refugees who have had to flee their homes regardless of whether they have experience traveling beyond their region or country in their lives. Moving into ethnic enclaves during the initial resettlement process, as many do, is something that can have mixed effects on the long-term

integration of refugee families, as they will have to make difficult decisions on how to ensure they enjoy the benefits of national and ethnic connections and also have optimal long-term employment options. Many refugees are able to find work where they need little proficiency in the local language, though this can lead to a career that will remain in lower-paying jobs in the longer term and these jobs are somewhat restricting (Lamba, 2003). Additionally, some studies have found that refugees' expectations of finding jobs before learning English were not met (Ghadi et al., 2019). Agreeing with this, preparation for integration into the local job market through language study helps ensure that refugees can work in a job that more closely matches their experience (Wilkinson and Garcea, 2017). Ethnic communities can, through economic and social benefits, prove immensely helpful for refugees, though these cannot serve as a replacement for integration into the broader community.

As in other categories, demographic differences influence refugee language acquisition in a significant manner, with family responsibilities and employment interacting with language learning in different ways. Originally, government-sponsored language learning was oriented towards employment, with these efforts contributing to proficiency more often among men, while children who picked up languages easily boosted language outcomes in their households outside of government-sponsored programs (Beiser and Feng, 2000, 326). Nationality-adjacent differences also impact the success of refugees in using language skills to integrate more smoothly into society. Different ethnic and national groups, fleeing different crises from different regions, enter different countries before seeking refugee status. For example, Eritrean refugees commonly live in Israel before being resettled in Canada, where ample educational opportunities and high English proficiency amongst the local population sees a higher amount of Eritrean refugees arrive in Canada with more knowledge of English. Similarly, refugees fleeing recent

crises in the Congo region already commonly possess knowledge of French, leading to affinity with integration in Quebec[23]. Amongst refugees who do not arrive speaking English or French, Huang (2021) finds that instructors noticed particular aptitude amongst Syrian refugees in government-sponsored classes (Huang, 2021, 150). Such differences can be attributed to linguistic diversity within countries of origin as well as similar vocabulary or phonology in one's native language and the language they learn.

Additionally, there are mixed effects of living in large cities and smaller cities. While smaller cities have less resources for language instruction, the lack of speakers of most foreign languages in these cities is something that can force refugees to utilize and expand on their knowledge of the local language and lead to them learning the language faster (Haugen, 2019: 59). This is something that contrasts the benefits of having large communities who can help with language acquisition. It also points to potential difficulties in medium-sized cities where there are large enough refugee populations that newcomers can survive without extreme pressure to learn the local language and small enough that there are fewer resources to ensure that proper instruction is given.

Classes

The government-sponsored classes for newcomers have changed over time. Currently, the federal Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, funded by the IRCC, offers language classes free of cost and includes essential services such as childcare for those who need them. This system encourages all refugees to make an effort to learn English, while Quebec has a similar program for French that pays refugees of both streams. Additionally, refugees must pass LINC 4 in order to obtain citizenship, otherwise retaining permanent residence status due to not meeting all requirements (Huang, 2021, 150).

[23] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

Ensuring that refugees who have a desire to learn the local language is something that this program helps, though some refugees continue to experience difficulties even given formal instruction. Instructors in these programs need to be cognisant of both the individual language learning needs of refugees, but in tendencies and sensitivities of wider refugee populations. These difficulties, as well as broader difficulties in learning the language amongst those without natural aptitude for learning foreign languages, serve as reasons that some refugees do not graduate from these courses (Debeljacki, 2007, 60). Through such programs, refugees who otherwise do not have the materials or guidance necessary to learn the local language of their new communities. Because programs such as LINC are offered both to PSRs and GARs, programs lessen the gap between PSRs and GARs in opportunity, though the advantage that PSRs have when arriving is wide enough that courses do not meaningfully fix this. Despite this, GARs receive financial assistance and have lower employment rates in the period after they arrive, leading to increased utilization of free courses amongst this group (Kaida et al., 2020, 19). Disparities in language class utilization also interact with family dynamics, with factors such as employment or housing difficulties affecting different generations in different ways. Although some individuals make the commitment to study the local language on top of working, families where parents are unable or unwilling to learn the local language can have a significant gap in cultural integration between older and younger generations (Linder et al., 2020, 1367). This is something that, through the relative utilization of courses, will also have greater effects overall on GARs.

As noted in the analysis regarding employment, Hynie et al (2018) found that Syrian PSRs had, by a wide margin or 31.6% to 5.3% amongst GARs, more university education than GARs. This disparity extended to the knowledge of Canada's official language, with over 80% of

PSRs having knowledge of either English or French, compared to less than 20% of GARs (Hynie et al., 2018, 40). This disparity immediately stands out as problematic, and in the study interacts with other integration-related issues such as relationships both within and outside of ethnic communities with a statistically-significant relationship (42).

Personal Relationships and Language Learning

The interaction between the resettlement streams and the language-learning outcomes of refugees can take place in the personal relationships between refugees and their sponsors in the case of PSRs. One of the SAH employees I spoke to noted that refugees who move into ethnic enclaves and spend their time largely within their communities may need encouragement to take the time to learn the local language. In this way, it is not only stressing the fact that learning the local language is important but how learning the language is important that will help ensure that refugees maintain their commitment to integration, even if they experience frustration or difficulty in picking up the language.[24] This can also push refugees to integrate into the community even if they are uncomfortable doing so, with some refugees believing that their native language serves as a barrier between them and losing their identities (Hynie et al., 2018, 1368).

In this way, the personal relationships that refugees build within their own ethnic and linguistic communities can give refugees necessary motivation to learn the local language even if they do not speak the local language in their personal relationships as is the case with many family-related co-sponsors. These personal pushes from local communities, due to the personal connections, are more prevalent in PSR communities, and in this way has the potential to widen language proficiency gaps present. Conversely, language barriers can also strain relations between sponsors and refugees in a particularly problematic way, with other studies finding the

[24] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

need for refugees to learn the language being frustrating for some sponsors in cases when refugees do not appear to be putting serious effort into learning the local language (Hutchinson, 2018: 27). Through such stresses, there are potential complications that can only affect PSRs, though in the context of a desire to better communicate.

Similarly to the issue of employment, educational gaps in the country of origin have significant effects on the language acquisition rates of refugees. Those who have more substantial educational experience are more likely to benefit from language classes through poorer interaction with classroom activities and they are more likely to interact with native speakers outside of the classroom setting (Kleinmann, 1984, 216). This generally shows that GARs will be less likely to gain proficiency in the same situation as PSRs, compounding their lower average pre-existing knowledge due to disparities in language learned through education and in connections to Canada, such as those that lead to private sponsorship.

After Sponsorship Period

After the sponsorship period ends, refugees remain permanent residents of Canada and move forward as permanent residents of other categories do. At this point, PSRs become eligible for social assistance (Elcioglu, 2023, 107). The difference in the private and government-assisted resettlement streams means that PSRs and GARs go through different kinds of transitions in the period after their initial 12 months. Additionally, the sponsorship process continues after refugees gain self-sufficiency, with many seeking further family reunification through sponsorship themselves. Some refugees fail to gain adequate financial stability and require further assistance moving forward. In this process, the community resources and ties available to refugees of different resettlement streams can vary.

The "Echo" effect

An essential process that emerges following refugee integration that feeds back into the broader sponsorship process is the "echo" effect, where previously-sponsored refugees wish to sponsor family members or friends who had not been otherwise resettled. These can also be people who the originally-sponsored refugees had to leave behind in their country of initial refuge when only they obtained permission to travel to Canada (Hyndman et al., 2021, 8). Both of these situations can lead to substantial pain on the side of refugees and motivate refugees who have obtained some sort of financial stability in their host communities to reach out to SAHs and look into serving as co-sponsors for the individuals they left behind. Owing to this, a study by Macklin et al. (2018) found that over half of sponsors they spoke to had gotten requests from those they sponsored to help bring loved ones to Canada. As such, reuniting with those family members is a high priority for many refugees, with this initiative prompting action by any means necessary to attempt to help them reach safety. Additionally, refugees may sponsor family

members to come to Canada in order to benefit personally from having another family member close by through the increased financial stability another working family member can bring (St Arnault, 2019, 236). This allows refugees to escape social isolation while also avoiding financial instability if they can afford to fund or partially fund their resettlement until the family member finds a job.

This process serves as an important example of how the relationship between SAHs and the refugees they help sponsor continues after the end of the sponsorship period. In this case, it is a new sponsorship process that keeps refugees in touch with the organization that helped them and not a personal friendship. However, this still indicates that many refugees feel comfortable continuing to reach out to SAHs after their sponsorship period and that, alongside personal friendships, the sponsorship system helps refugees build upon connections they had made before moving to Canada for family reunification purposes. The echo effect also ensures that the majority of private sponsorship cases will continue to be family related or otherwise pre-existing relationships into the future.

The echo effect plays into the broader process of repeat participation by sponsors. While many sponsors desire periods without sponsorship responsibilities before resuming the process (Hyndman et al, 2021, 4), the continued participation of sponsors speaks to an aspect of the sponsorship system's sustainability. When sponsors show continued motivation to help resettle refugees, they not only build more effective networks for those who they help resettle but ensure that the overall desire of Canadians to sponsor refugees will not run out once each individual feels they have done their part (Labman, 2016). The point to which sponsors repeat in participation goes against some scholars' characterizations of one of the system's main vulnerabilities, with the continued participation of Canadians after they have already taken a

personal role in helping refugees. However, this does contribute to the family-oriented nature of private sponsorship that continues to provide the opportunity for resettlement somewhat unevenly. The ability to nominate a refugee for resettlement is nonetheless one of the most important aspects of private sponsorship, and so this will continue to play a part in Canada's refugee resettlement program moving forward.

Assistance after sponsorship period

Essential in the overall resettlement process is the understanding that refugees do not always achieve full self sufficiency in the first year after their arrival in Canada. Given this, the assistance that private sponsors and SAHs offer does not always end after the period of 12 months ends. Of the organizations which I spoke to in both Toronto and Montreal, the employees said that their involvement with refugees can last for just the initial year-long period, for three years, or even until citizenship in some cases, with one organization assigning a point of contact for each application who stays in touch with the refugee until they are fully self-sufficient.[25] This demonstrates both the commitment of private sponsors and the continued vulnerability of many resettled refugees.

Something that distinguishes PSRs and GARs in particular is the personal relationships that sponsors and refugees can build over the course of their time communicating with each other before arrival and dealing with challenges after. The lasting friendships that PSRs have makes it simpler for these refugees to receive assistance, with community groups that are committed to assisting the sponsored refugees making conscious decisions to stay in touch[26]. The relationships that refugees build with their sponsors outside of organizations continue to give them connections that they can use in times of need. The co-sponsors who I met with each indicated

[25] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024
[26] Constituent group member, in discussion with the author, January 2024

that they did not have to give extensive assistance after the sponsorship period, with the families having affordable housing upon arrival and employment relatively early on. The sponsors did keep in touch out of personal care for the refugees they had welcomed into their communities and continued to engage with them on current events, with one specifically mentioning a community celebration when the family obtained Canadian citizenship. Although they were not legally obligated to provide any assistance, financial or otherwise, making themselves available was something that they cared about.

Despite this source of aid being built-in for PSRs, given that GARs can find aid from organizations, including those that also help resettle PSRs, the assistance GARs find after their sponsorship periods can come from the same sources, making the disparity between the aid that PSRs and GARs receive smaller in these cases. The cases in which GARs do successfully receive assistance from organizations after their sponsorship period has ended is not representative of the greater GAR experience, given the frequent reliance on social assistance when the RAP period has ended (IRCC, 2016). Understanding this, PSRs have a significant advantage over GARs in receiving necessary personal assistance after their sponsorship periods have ended.

Overall Relationship after Sponsorship Period

Crucially, the ways in which the relationships between refugees and their sponsors develop during the sponsorship period can create both positive and negative consequences for the period after they have obtained a level of self-sufficiency. While refugees do become close friends with their sponsors in many cases, this can importantly lead to differences in understanding between the two parties about the nature of their expectations for the relationship moving forward (though this is different for organizations who are clearer about their continued

ability to give aid). Cultural differences can still remain that might create an expectation that sponsors can provide loans in the case of housing difficulties due to their family-like relationship, even if this is a commitment that the sponsor feels they cannot make (Macklin et al, 2020, 6). Such stories do not imply that a majority of refugees develop unrealistic expectations for their sponsors moving forward from direct reliance, though they demonstrate the presence of complexities within the personal relationships sponsors and refugees form that can lead to misunderstandings.

Political Consequences of Social Assistance

The reliance of GARs and BVORs on social assistance after their sponsorship periods end has contributed to an unfavorable political climate as it concerns the continued admission of these refugees. The use of social assistance became more common following a policy change in GAR selection, with the International Refugee Protection Act of 2002 focusing resettlement efforts on vulnerability rather than integration prospects, which had previously contributed to the decision to nominate an individual for resettlement. This is defined in the law as "in respect of a Convention refugee or a person in similar circumstances, that the person has a greater need of protection than other applicants for protection abroad because of the person's particular circumstances that give rise to a heightened risk to their physical safety" (Government of Canada, 2002). Given this, the lower education levels of vulnerable refugees led to lower labor market integration and higher need for welfare amongst refugees following this change (Kaida et al., 2020, 38). With PSRs not requiring assistance through taxpayer-funded mechanisms, the belief amongst some Canadians that refugees are taking advantage of their generosity and unnecessarily relying on others to support them falls disproportionately on GARs, despite the greater difficulties they face in many aspects of their integration (Olson et al., 2016). This

sentiment is felt, importantly, even in those who appreciate the need for refugee resettlement and the plight of refugees, with one of the SAH employees I spoke to mentioning that Canadians are welcoming but like to see immigrants supporting themselves as opposed to relying on social assistance after they are resettled.[27]

Similarly, sponsors themselves do not wish to see refugees end up on social assistance after their first year in Canada. Given that many refugees come from countries where social assistance is a more central part of their governments' appeal to their citizens, the cultural differences between sponsors and refugees can come into play here. Sponsors seek to emphasize financial independence and the negative connotations with reliance on social assistance while refugees may not feel this sense of urgency to avoid reliance on social assistance, even when their sponsors attempt to make clear that they believe that such reliance is problematic (Lenard, 2019, 71). Despite this, the better short-term economic outcomes of PSRs indicates that the inclination amongst some refugees towards use of social assistance is something that comes into play more for GARs (Feng, Hou and Stick, 2020, 16).

This type of belief amongst SAHs and sponsors demonstrates the separation of PSRs and GARs in common post-sponsorship assistance avenues. PSRs in this way more frequently avoid reliance on government assistance and achieve some form of self-sufficiency while GARs commonly have a longer journey to financial independence. Despite the increased amount of GARs who end up relying on social assistance, this is something that can happen for PSRs as well: those who arrive with low levels of education and have trouble learning the local language are in a worse position to maintain self-sufficiency even with sponsors who are dedicated to their assistance. Similarly, some adults in sponsored families show unwillingness to find jobs and not take advantage of welfare after their sponsorship period ends, something that discourages

[27] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

continued sponsorship (Macklin et al., 2020, 18-19). The gap between PSRs and GARs in requiring social assistance is still notable, with a majority of GARs declaring some sort of social assistance benefit for the first four years since arrival and almost nine in ten at one year compared to a relatively constant 30% for PSRs (IRCC, 2016, 33). Given this gap, reputations of the relevant systems have developed accordingly, even if broader systemic issues have led to this disparity.

Despite the negative reputations that have accompanied refugees in need of social assistance, refugees do generally show interest in economic integration, with challenges in employment forcing them into reliance on Canada's welfare system (Senthanar and MacEachen, 2023). Those who are suspicious of the welfare system attach this suspicion to the refugees who use it and utilize often-similar rhetoric regarding perceived voluntary reliance on welfare to tie together unnecessary public spending with the welfare system and the admission of refugees itself.

Citizenship

Another critical event that follows the sponsorship period in the case of resettled refugees in Canada is the application for citizenship. In order to become a Canadian citizen, an individual must be a legal permanent resident, live in Canada for at least three of the five years preceding their application and file necessary taxes. The refugee also must demonstrate language proficiency and pass a citizenship test on knowledge of the country (IRCC, 2024). Following this, refugees gain the right to vote, hold certain government jobs, and run for public office. Holding a Canadian passport also allows refugees to travel more freely around the world, including visa-free travel into the neighboring United States, when most refugee origin countries require often-burdensome visa processes. Becoming a citizen is not dependent on sponsorship

status, though this demonstrates an important step in integration and one where one can be considered a "full" Canadian and the overarching outsider status that comes with being a non-citizen and especially a refugee can be relinquished. This being noted, not all refugees end up choosing to obtain citizenship.

The reliance of refugees on social assistance or on continued aid from the sources which helped resettle them is something that has serious implications for the viability of the system going forward. With PSRs and GARs both often needing additional assistance after the first year, the refugees are, in theory, both on the same track, with social assistance being available to them and resettlement assistance having concluded. The availability of continued aid by private sponsors and the overall continued relationship with sponsors for PSRs is something that has a particularly powerful impact on their success when this assistance is made available. Although this is not always the case, the continuation of guidance, even if it is not financial, is something that gives PSRs additional safety nets and personal relationships that continue to prove important for them into the future (Lenard, 2019, 65). With personal involvement being one of the most distinctive aspects of Canada's private sponsorship program, PSRs often continue to sponsor family members themselves and help other newcomers as they become more accustomed to their lives in Canada and approach eligibility for citizenship.

BVOR: A Hybrid Approach

Greatly helpful in understanding the impacts of private sponsorship and government assistance is the Blended Visa Office Referral program, and its combination of UNHCR nomination with community members who engage with refugees. Private sponsorship, government assistance, and the BVOR program are all meant to supplement each other, with the

former two serving different groups of refugees and the latter adding to the options available for those who had previously only had government assistance as a resettlement option. The BVOR program does not have significant traction in emerging alongside tracks of resettlement entirely private or entirely public, though the opportunity that it gives refugees in their initial countries who do not have connections abroad to arrive in Canada with community members waiting for them and helping them integrate into their communities proves important in demonstrating the benefit of those relationships. Despite the benefits that can arise in these relationships, difficulties continue to arise in the partnership between the Canadian government and sponsorship groups due to a lack of transparency over the status of refugees. Additionally, there have been worries by sponsors about the overall impact of the program and the main benefactors. This partnership can be fixed, though the respective priorities involved in the BVOR program make this challenging.

The BVOR program, since its origins in 2013, has served over 8,500 refugees, with 2016 being the year in which the program saw its heaviest use, with 4,434 refugees arriving in this way. With the number of refugees slightly lower than at the height of the Syrian Civil War, the BVOR program will continue to serve a lower, but still notable, amount of refugees, with the target having been set at 1,000 a year between 2022 and 2024 (Labman, 2022, 149-150). The relative youth of the program, as well as its limited scope due to the intentionality of its smaller numbers relative to other modes of sponsorship, makes it difficult to truly identify the ways in which this program has successfully incorporated different resettlement streams into a single refugee experience.

The comparatively small size of the program compounds the issue to a certain point, with low recognition amongst the public meaning that convincing people to volunteer to sponsor

refugees in this way depends on promotion (Environics Institute, 2021, 4). This being noted, the small role that the program has taken does point to intentions of the government in creating such a program. Some have focused on the hybrid nature of the program understanding that if refugees have been approved by the UNHCR and the Canadian government, the program transfers costs of resettling refugees from the government to private sponsors, when these refugees would have been resettled without the sponsors' involvement (Chapman, 2014, 7).

Importantly, the BVOR program has terms that ensure the sponsors will not be accountable for any excess medical fees that the refugee they sponsor requires after arrival. Despite this, the medical conditions that refugees have are not shared with prospective sponsors. Of the Sponsorship Agreement Holders I spoke with in Toronto, one named this lack of transparency as a reason that their organization tends to avoid sponsorship through the BVOR program. The individual also claimed that their organization had been responsible for medical expenses related to refugees they sponsored in this manner.[28] This points to a potential inconsistency in the framework of the program, with the government's commitment to funding refugees not being met and at times serving to transfer costs of refugee sponsorship from the government to private sponsors.

An additional area of concern relating to the BVOR program that the individual mentioned related to the lack of personal information that sponsors can obtain about the refugees they sponsor through the program. Withholding personal information about the refugees approved for sponsorship through the BVOR program does have clear merit to the effect of ensuring the refugees' privacy and preventing any discrimination based on information that sponsors might receive. As was the case with medical histories, this confidentiality again has downsides with considerable consequences for the sponsors: the individual referred to a

[28] SAH employee, in discussion with the author, January 2024

community sponsorship group that their organization had worked with that was located in a small city in one of Canada's northern territories. This group had sponsored a refugee who had family already in Canada that the organization and its members were unaware of. After the refugee had arrived in their host community, they left after a short period of a few weeks to live closer to their relatives in a major city further South, leaving behind a strained community who had undergone lengthy preparation for their arrival.[29]

Stories such as this demonstrate the potential drawbacks of the government pairing refugees with sponsors in the way it does. The hesitance of communities to engage in this kind of sponsorship given past experiences of their generosity not being rewarded is understandable given the amount of work that sponsors go through to welcome refugees especially when procuring housing and employment for newcomers in small communities. Despite the clear faults in the BVOR program that have emerged, the program does clearly still have important benefits for refugees coming from situations where they are vulnerable. BVOR comes directly into play when considering the status and treatment of vulnerable refugees, as the UNHCR uses an assessment of displaced peoples' protection needs in order to decide who to nominate for resettlement in this manner (Hyndman et al, 2021, 8). Additionally, BVOR refugees have a distinct set of backgrounds, with this group being especially likely to hold higher-skilled jobs, with this figure being 49% for BVORs compared to 38% and 33% for PSRs and GARs respectively (Soehl and Van Haren, 2023). This makes them better suited to finding employment in Canada than the other streams and in that way on a clearer path to financial stability than GARs despite having some of the RAP assistance that performs somewhat more poorly than for PSRs. Contrasting these statistics amongst the larger populations for these sponsorship streams, however, other studies have found the reasoning for any individual refugee to be more

[29] SAH Interview, January 2024

ambiguous, with outside factors within vulnerable populations not appearing to change the likelihood of a given refugee being assigned to the BVOR program rather than resettled as a GAR (Soehl and Van Haren, 2023). This makes the assignment to the BVOR program into something that is both arbitrary and a major difference in experience for refugees, with the relationships with private sponsors being entirely absent for GARs.

Although it is still a relatively recent addition to the modes of resettlement, the BVOR program has not taken a major role in resettlement nationwide. The appearance from government actions that the BVOR program is meant to transfer away costs, the lack of transparency on key aspects of a refugee's history, as well as the program's outright absence in Quebec all point to systemic reasons that the program was unable to become a larger presence and continues to have low targets for the years ahead. If the BVOR sees these problems alleviated through policy changes, the program will be an effective manner of seeing that more vulnerable refugees without family connections receive assistance from community members. In this way, the program serves as an important opportunity for UNHCR-nominated refugees to receive some of the assistance of PSRs and increase the overall system's equity into the future. Additionally, the process through which refugees are cleared for resettlement before being matched with a sponsor expedites the process on the sponsorship end, with refugees being able to leave for Canada quickly after being matched (Secord, 2016).

Conclusion

The Canadian refugee resettlement program has emerged as one of the most successful in the world, with the country serving as an example of successfully welcoming refugees and integrating them into broader society. With both high numbers of refugees resettled and a system that guarantees ample assistance in housing, employment, language learning and receiving government services, along with strong immigrant communities across the country, the country is well positioned to serve as a leader in this pursuit. The greater use of the private sponsorship stream is also important, with the Syrian refugee crisis seeing thousands of Canadians mobilize, involving community members in resettlement, offering refugees the life-changing opportunity of resettlement in Canada and providing policy makers with a chance to identify the manner in which the nation's sponsorship system operates in times of mass displacement. This recent example, and observations of this which build upon past use of Canada's resettlement streams, demonstrated the opportunity that private sponsorship gives to communities, though also the inequities and overall vulnerabilities that exist in the system.

The generally positive outcomes of PSRs when compared to GARs make clear both the effectiveness of private sponsorship and the networks that refugees build through this, though the studies of PSRs often find that these refugees hold a variety of advantageous traits that make them more likely to succeed in their communities even outside of their sponsorship-related assistance.

Furthermore, one of the key elements of private sponsorship is the ability of individuals in the host community to name a refugee for resettlement. Although social networks and search trips by charitable organizations do play a part in identifying refugees for this nomination, the ability to name a refugee for resettlement has largely been manifested in the form of

family-related resettlement. The presence of family reunification in private sponsorship itself is not a negative development, though the heavy use of the private sponsorship program for pre-existing relationships leads to inequities in the program, with individuals without family ties to Canada being vastly less likely to be resettled unless they are recognized as vulnerable by the UNHCR. Through these elements of the resettlement program, the chance for resettlement is not realized evenly for each individual who has fled their home and those without pre-existing ties to Canada are less likely to be in the category with traditionally more positive social and economic integration outcomes. Focusing on both this inequity and the state of GAR assistance will be essential moving forward in order to identify the next steps for ensuring that private sponsorship and government resettlement can serve as complementing pathways and not first and second tier opportunities.

Policy Recommendations

Given the connections that refugees make with their sponsors and the positive impacts they have, which I found both in other studies and in the interviews I conducted, working to maximize the use of this pathway is something that the government can do more of. The government has already taken recent steps in this direction, with the federal Minister of Immigration, Sean Fraser, announcing a further increase in the number of refugees who can be sponsored by SAHs to 13,500, which amounts to a ten-fold increase since this limit was established in 2012 (IRCC, 2023). Given the structure that these organizations bring to the process, letting these organizations work with fewer restrictions on the vital work that they do will help improve the overall state of the resettlement system. In doing this, the government must come up with ways to clear the backlog in the application process. Although a straightforward recommendation, and one that is surely being examined, this effort will lead to increased

efficiency in the organizations which the government relies on for resettlement services and also improve the experiences of refugees who seek resettlement by saving them years of waiting temporarily in a foreign country.

Similarly, the federal government should re-examine its relationship with Quebec as it relates to refugee resettlement. The separate system that the Quebec government enjoys is not inherently unfair, though the provincial government continues to use its control over refugee resettlement to unnaturally decrease the number of refugees who are resettled. With refugees and sponsors waiting for years before their applications are even reviewed due to intentional delays, the disparity between other provinces and Quebec in this issue is significant. The government also uses problematic means of forcing refugees to learn the French language, which should be addressed to ensure that no refugees experience any sort of vulnerability in receiving government services due to language barriers.

Lastly, the government must find ways to ensure that the opportunity to be resettled is not afforded to individuals with prior connections to Canada in an uneven manner. Similarly, ensuring that UNHCR-nominated refugees are able to benefit from the connections formed through private sponsorship is something that should be worked on. Expanded use of the BVOR program could prove to be an important avenue for beginning to implement such a change, with individuals without connections to Canada receiving this assistance with reduced commitment for sponsors and lower cost to the government through RAP use. The program has, in its short tenure, consistently been underutilized compared to the two vastly more well known resettlement streams. This makes its expansion a process that could ensure that the program's efficacy is better understood and also allow the effect of private sponsorship on UNHCR-nominated refugees to be better understood.

Limitations and Future Research

My research could have used significantly more interviews across different groups which would have made the effects of the sponsorship on each the overall state of the system and refugee experience more clear. Most importantly, I was unable to speak with refugees themselves, meaning I relied on a sponsor and organization-side narrative as it relates to the information I obtained directly from interviews, though I sought out other sources to ensure I incorporated refugees' experiences and stories in my analysis. I also only spoke with individuals in two cities in one region of the country. Although one francophone and one anglophone city was important, this left out the experiences of refugees in rural areas or medium-sized cities and the views of sponsors there. Future research can more directly isolate the causes of positive integration experiences by interviewing a wide range of refugees across resettlement streams about how they feel the assistance they received impacted the trajectory of their lives in Canada during the years following their arrivals.

The Future of Refugees in Canada

With Justin Trudeau's tenure as Prime Minister approaching ten years, the political scene in Canada has the potential to become less favorable towards refugees in the near future. With the next general election to take place on or before October 20, 2025, the House of Commons and the Prime Minister are considered very likely to change to an administration of the Conservative party. Should this happen, a new administration would likely restrict the number of refugees, particularly amongst GARs, who could be resettled in Canada, with Conservative voters being more anti-immigration than partisans of other parties (Banting and Soroka, 2020, 832) Although this is a major event that has not yet been determined, the ways in which the

resettlement system has changed since the Liberals first gained their majority in 2015 have not yet been tested by a Conservative government. This is something that must be recognized as a vulnerability for organizations who wish to see resettlement continue to rise, with the political aspect of resettlement being something that will eventually lead to changes at the highest level at some point in the future. Immigration, and refugee resettlement, are not always widely invoked in political discourse in a lack of major developments, though this has begun to change recently, with Justin Trudeau recently stating that immigration is at an unsustainable level amongst rising housing prices (Baxter, 2024).

Private Sponsorship Moving Forward

Canada's private sponsorship system has allowed for a community-based approach to resettlement, which is something that, until recently, was unique amongst nations engaged in resettlement. Since the Syrian refugee crisis and again in response to the fall of Kabul in 2021, countries have begun to incorporate systems that allow for community-based resettlement and the nomination of specific individuals for resettlement. These have included countries both in Western Europe and North America. In these countries, Canada has specifically served as an example on which to model novel efforts for private sponsorship and the Canadian government has engaged in efforts to export its model to other countries (Harris, 2016).

Importantly among these countries, the United States, Canada's southern neighbor often believed to have harsher views on immigration and the accommodation of refugees specifically, launched the Welcome Corps in 2023. This initiative is a private sponsorship program specifically in response to the arrival of refugees from Ukraine, Venezuela and Afghanistan in the wake of war and gang violence (Department of State, 2023). With the first group of private sponsors being matched with pre-approved refugees by the United States Refugee Admission

Program (USRAP), this first iteration of private resettlement will more closely resemble Canada's BVOR program. Although the nomination of specific refugees for resettlement that characterizes much of Canada's private sponsorship program is not present, the use of private organizations to resettle refugees is an expansion of private sponsorship to a country that has historically settled fewer refugees per capita than Canada and other common host countries (Radford and Phillip, 2019). These developments, some of which are more recent than others, further point towards a more prevalent role of private sponsorship in future periods of mass displacement, with the bureaucratic infrastructure being put in place to support this practice.

Regardless of the various shortcomings in Canada's refugee resettlement program, thousands of refugees have successfully arrived in Canada and integrated into their communities each through government resettlement assistance and community member assistance. Even when there are difficulties in the integration process, these individuals all are able to benefit from an opportunity that the vast majority of displaced individuals are unable to receive, arriving in a country with a high quality of life and employment prospects with a sense of permanence that cannot be found in refugee camps.[30] Aspects such as language, cultural differences and economic adjustment issues can all prove difficult to overcome, though these are challenges that are universal to living in a new place and the assistance that refugees receive puts them in a good position to live secure and fulfilling lives in Canada.

[30] Constituent group member, in discussion with the author, January 2024

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Appendix: Interview Questions

For Sponsors
Why did you choose to sponsor refugees?
How did you choose which refugees to sponsor?
Why did you choose the private sponsorship mechanism that you did?
Can you tell me about your overall sponsorship experience?
How did you decide which group to sponsor with?
How long does your total involvement with an individual last for?
Do you feel refugees have preferences for certain areas?
Was language an issue at all with the refugees you sponsored?
How has your relationship with the refugees changed over time?
What kind of assistance do you feel was most helpful during the sponsorship process/period?
Did you have any role in finding employment for refugees?
Do you feel that your area is better or worse-equipped for refugees than other cities or provinces?
Can you talk about the positives and negatives of your experiences?
For Organization Workers/Volunteers:
What kinds of assistance do you think are most important for the refugees you work with? Is there a reason that the need is so pressing?
How does your organization interact with sponsors, if at all?
Does your organization encounter more PSRs or GARs?
Do you see PSRs or GARs needing more assistance from your organization that they are not given elsewhere?
Do refugees typically disclose or discuss their sponsorship status?
Do you see any systemic factors that make language-learning more difficult in your area?