



Public Opinion Survey on Immigration

On October 17, 2024, the Environics Institute for Survey Research released the results of its survey Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees. The survey was based on telephone interviews with 2,016 Canadians aged 18 and older, conducted between September 9 and 23, 2024.

For the first time in 25 years, a clear majority of Canadians said there is too much immigration, a concern that has grown stronger for the second year in a row. More Canadians now believe newcomers are not adopting the right values, that too many are arriving from minority groups, and that immigration contributes to higher crime. Even the long-standing belief that immigration strengthens the economy has weakened over the past two years as other concerns take precedence.

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Shifting Canada's Resettlement Focus

For over four decades, Canada has been a global leader in refugee resettlement, welcoming over 390,000 refugees through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program and demonstrating unparalleled generosity in response to humanitarian crises, from the post-World War II era to modern conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, and beyond. This legacy, rooted in compassion and a commitment to offering protection, has seen communities across Canada open their hearts and homes to newcomers. Yet, as Canadians continue to uphold this proud tradition, there is growing concern about the integration outcomes of resettled refugees, particularly those arriving through the Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) program.

Clear Evidence: Private Sponsorship Works: PSRs integrate more effectively into Canadian society than their GAR counterparts. A recent study reveals that PSRs have significantly higher employment rates and earnings than GARs up to 15 years after arrival, even when adjusted for demographic differences.

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World Day of Migrants & Refugees



On October 5, 2025, the Good Shepherd Chaldean Cathedral in Toronto hosted a beautiful celebration on the occasion of the 111th World Day of Migrants and

Refugees (WDMR), drawing a substantial turnout of faithful, newcomers, and supporters. Organized by the Office for Refugees, Archdiocese of Toronto (ORAT), the event featured five key moments: a solemn Mass, remarks from dignitaries, the presentation of the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers to Ms. Diane Dicks, the recognition of parish refugee committees for their resettlement efforts in 2025, and two newcomer testimonies.

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These views are fueled mainly by the housing crisis, but also by worries about the economy, over-population, and dissatisfaction with how the system is managed. Canadians place the highest priority on immigrants with specialized skills and strong education, followed by refugees and family reunification, with less importance given to temporary workers and international students. Support for all categories has declined modestly over the past year.

An increasing number of Canadians also question who is being admitted and how well newcomers are integrating. For the first time in nearly a decade, more people now believe that some refugee claims are not legitimate, a view that is most pronounced in Ontario and the Prairie provinces.

Despite growing concerns about the number of immigrants arriving and their impact on the economy and housing, Canadians remain as positive as they were 20 years ago about the broad contribution that multiculturalism has made to the national identity.

To read the full report click [here](#)

Shifting Canada's Resettlement Focus

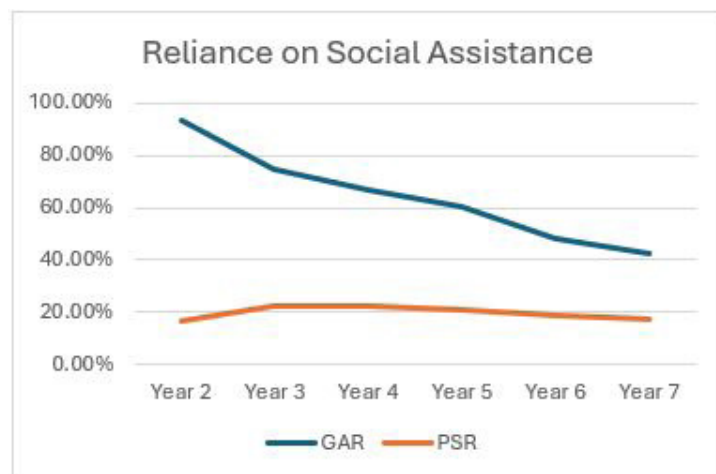
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Notably, PSRs demonstrate significantly lower reliance on social assistance. In Year 2, after receiving a full year of support from the Federal Government, 93.3% of GARs require social assistance, only declining to 42.3% by year 7. In contrast, PSRs maintain a stable low reliance on social assistance of approximately 21% over the same period. This stark contrast highlights the PSR program's community-driven model, where sponsors provide financial, emotional, and social support for the first year,

fostering faster economic independence and social integration. In contrast, GARs, who rely on government-funded Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) services, face challenges with inadequate support, which hinder long-term self-sufficiency.

Canada's generosity in welcoming refugees is a testament to its humanitarian spirit, inspired by the post-World War II generation of refugees who arrived with determination to rebuild their lives and contribute to their new home. From European displaced persons to Vietnamese boat people, these newcomers worked hard, established themselves, and enriched Canada's cultural and economic fabric. Canadians expect today's refugees to follow this model, not out of obligation but as a mutual commitment to the country that offers them safety. However, the current trajectory of the GAR program risks undermining this expectation. Poor integration outcomes evidenced by lower employment rates and prolonged reliance on social assistance can lead to social exclusion,

Fig 1. Reliance on Social Assistance



economic marginalization, and the formation of isolated enclaves, or “ghettoization.” This not only erodes social cohesion but also strains public trust in Canada's resettlement efforts. Canadians want their generosity to empower newcomers, not foster dependency.

A solution: Reducing the annual number of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) resettled in Canada by 10,000 and increasing the number of Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) by an equivalent amount presents a pragmatic and balanced solution.

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World Day of Migrants & Refugees

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The WDMR Mass, celebrated by the Most Reverend Robert Jirjis, bishop of the Mar Addai Chaldean Catholic Eparchy of Canada, with the Most Reverend Ivan Camilleri, Auxiliary Bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto as concelebrant, filled the cathedral with worshippers adorned in colorful traditional attire. The children's choir, alongside the Bishop and Deacons, led English, Arabic, and Aramaic chants and prayers, creating a rich tapestry of faith and culture. In his homily, Bishop Ivan reflected, "The Church itself is migrant, always moving outward in mission towards our heavenly homeland," inspiring all to embrace the call to welcome the stranger.



At the reception, several Members of Parliament delivered compelling speeches, urging greater attention to persecuted Christian minorities and other vulnerable groups in the Middle East and regions of religious persecution. Former Immigration Minister Jason Kenney highlighted a common misconception in the West that Christianity in the Middle East is a result of Western imperialism, reminding attendees that Christians are the indigenous community of the Middle East, and that Christ Himself was born in that region. Their messages underscored the urgency of

supporting those often overlooked in global resettlement efforts.

A highlight of the day was Bishop Ivan's presentation of the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers to Ms. Diane Dicks, honoring her over four decades of transformative work in refugee resettlement. From leading the sponsorship of the Indo-Chinese "Boat People" with St. John Fisher Church in 1980 to her roles with World Vision Canada, the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program, and ORAT's Advisory Committee, Ms. Dicks' compassion and leadership have touched countless lives. Her recognition was a testament to the power of faith-driven service.

ORAT also celebrated the remarkable efforts of parish refugee committees that welcomed and supported refugee families in 2025 through ORAT's mission trips. The following communities were honored with heartfelt applause: St. Benedict's Parish, Etobicoke; St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Mississauga; Every Nation Church, Toronto; St. Mark's Parish, Stouffville and St. Patrick's Parish, Toronto.

The event concluded with moving testimonies from two Christian converts from Islam, sharing their journeys of faith and resilience and highlighting the lifesaving work that ORAT continues to undertake.

Parishioners of the Good Shepherd Chaldean Cathedral, dressed in vibrant traditional attire, then served a generous lunch featuring Middle Eastern dishes and pastries, fostering a spirit of warmth, community, and joy.

This celebration not only honored the contributions of parishes and individuals but also reaffirmed our shared commitment to living out Christ's call to welcome the stranger (Matthew 25:35). We extend our deepest gratitude to all who made this day a beacon of hope for migrants and refugees.



Shifting Canada's Resettlement Focus

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This shift maintains Canada's international resettlement obligations while leveraging the PSR model's strengths to achieve significant cost savings and improved integration outcomes.

The PSR approach is estimated to save \$991 million in provincial social assistance costs over eight years, with Ontario alone saving \$442 million. These savings arise from PSRs' faster transition to economic self-sufficiency, which reduces reliance on public resources. Additionally, the federal government would save approximately \$91 million annually on reduced support payments to GARs during their first year of settlement.

Beyond financial benefits, the PSR program's community-based model fosters stronger social networks through tailored sponsor support. This approach helps refugees overcome barriers such as language challenges and credential recognition, promoting more effective integration into Canadian society.

Without action, the continued emphasis on GARs, with their poorer integration outcomes, could exacerbate social tensions, fuel perceptions of "abused generosity," and lead to long-term challenges like ghettoization, where isolated communities struggle to integrate.

Canada's government must act decisively: Canadians have long opened their hearts to those fleeing persecution. This generosity is a cornerstone of our national identity, but it comes with an expectation: that newcomers work diligently to establish themselves and contribute to the country that welcomes them. By prioritizing the PSR program, Canada can honor this legacy, foster stronger integration, and ensure that refugees become not just residents but active, hopeful contributors to our shared future. The time for action is now—before integration challenges undermine the social cohesion that makes Canada a beacon of hope.



EDUCATION CORNER

Israel: Country of Asylum Report

Israel, located on the southeastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, borders Lebanon to the north, Syria to the northeast, Jordan to the east, and Egypt



to the southwest. The country also borders the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which are central to ongoing regional and international political dynamics.

Geographically, Israel features a diverse landscape that includes coastal plains, central highlands, the Jordan Rift Valley, and the Negev Desert in the south. The country sits at a strategic crossroads connecting Asia, Africa, and Europe, which has historically made it a focal point of religious, political, and economic activity. Its location contributes to its complex geopolitical significance and the deep historical and cultural layers that characterize the region.

Israel's Geo-historical: Israel's history is deeply shaped by its strategic location at the crossroads of major ancient civilizations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Anatolia. The region, historically known as Canaan and later as part of ancient Israel and Judea, has been inhabited for thousands of years and holds deep religious significance for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Throughout history, it has been conquered and ruled by numerous empires, including the Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, and Ottomans. In the 20th century, following centuries of Jewish diaspora and the impact of the Holocaust, the modern state of Israel was established in 1948, sparking a series of regional conflicts and reshaping the geopolitical landscape.

Israel faces several ongoing challenges linked to its geography and history. These include territorial disputes, particularly with the Palestinians over the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem.

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Israel: Country of Asylum Report

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Despite peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan, Israel remains in a tense relationship with several neighboring countries and non-state actors. Its limited natural resources, especially water, further complicate development and regional cooperation. Internally, Israel must navigate the complexities of a diverse society that includes Jewish communities of various origins, Arab citizens, and religious minorities, all within a highly charged political climate. These geographic and historical factors continue to influence Israel's domestic and foreign policy today.

Religious Affiliation & Impact on Religious Minorities: Israel is officially a Jewish state, and Judaism plays a central role in its national identity, laws, and cultural life. Around 73–75% of the population identifies as Jewish, while the remainder includes significant religious minorities: Muslims (around 18%), Christians (about 2%), Druze, and smaller communities such as Baha'is and Samaritans. While Israel is a democracy with constitutional protections for religious freedom, the strong link between religion and state can create challenges for religious minorities and even for secular or non-Orthodox Jews.

Religious minorities in Israel generally have the right to worship and maintain their own religious institutions, but they often face systemic disadvantages. Muslim and Christian communities sometimes report unequal access to land, building permits, and state funding for religious services compared to Jewish institutions. Additionally, Israel's religious legal system can sometimes exclude non-Orthodox Jews and non-Jews from certain rights or recognition.



Despite these challenges, many religious minorities actively participate in Israeli public life, education, and politics, though tensions around religious identity and equal treatment remain a sensitive and ongoing issue.

Challenges for Refugees in Israel: Refugees and asylum seekers in Israel, primarily from African countries such as Eritrea and Sudan, face significant challenges due to restrictive immigration and asylum policies. Most of these individuals entered Israel in the mid-2000s to early 2010s via the Sinai Peninsula, fleeing war, persecution, or forced conscription. While Israel recognizes the need for refuge in principle, in practice it has granted asylum to only a very small number of applicants—less than 1% of claims—placing it among the lowest acceptance rates globally.

One major challenge is legal limbo. Most refugees are not formally deported but are also not granted official refugee status, leaving them with only temporary or conditional permits that must be renewed frequently. This uncertain legal status limits their access to healthcare, education, employment rights, and social services. Many live in poor conditions, particularly in South Tel Aviv, and face discrimination and social marginalization. Government efforts to detain, deport, or encourage voluntary departure of asylum seekers have sparked domestic and international criticism. As a result, refugees in Israel often live with economic insecurity, limited protections, and an ongoing fear of removal, despite having fled life-threatening situations in their home countries.

ORAT's Support: Since 2013, ORAT has proudly supported 283 sponsorship applications on behalf of 750 refugees seeking asylum in Israel. These individuals primarily originate from Eritrea, Sudan, and Ethiopia. ORAT's involvement has provided these vulnerable individuals with a vital pathway to safety, dignity, and the hope of rebuilding their lives.

To date, 193 of these applications have resulted in the successful resettlement of 460 refugees, enabling them to begin new lives with access to essential services, community support, and legal protection. An additional 83 applications for 262 refugees are currently in progress.

A Refugee's Story

My name is Samoel. I am a newcomer to Canada through the refugee resettlement program. On February 13, 2025, after 11 long years as a refugee, I immigrated to Canada as sponsored refugee, through the support of ORAT and my sponsor group, Joy City church.



I was born into a Christian family in a Muslim majority country of Iran, where my father served as a pastor. In 2006, I moved to Armenia to pursue studies in music an opportunity not available to me in my home country due to my Christian background. While I was away, my parents were arrested twice for their faith. After their second arrest and year-long imprisonment, they were forced to flee to Turkey and seek asylum. Two months after completing my master's degree in piano performance, I joined them in Turkey, as returning home was no longer safe or possible.

I remained in Turkey as a refugee for many years. During this time, Joy City Church generously offered to sponsor me. They encouraged me to use the waiting period wisely improving my English, learning about Canadian society, and preparing for a new life. Thanks to that preparation, my transition has been smooth. Just three months into living in Canada, I've already obtained my driver's license, opened my bank accounts obtained my health cards, Social Insurance Number and done all my necessary paper works, and found myself a good family doctor and adjusted quickly to daily life.

Based on the initiative I showed during the preparation phase, and with their confidence in my abilities, the church accepted my proposal to launch a piano studio here in the community.

I'm incredibly grateful for their trust and support. My next goal, once the studio is established and running well, is to pursue a PhD in music here in Canada. Thank you to all of you in ORAT and related congregations that care enough to pray and help people like me to move to a place of freedom and safety.

Supporting ORAT

Our work is supported by the generosity of the Archdiocese of Toronto, ShareLife, various collaborating organizations and the faithful. If you would like to donate to support the work of this office, please click the donate button.

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