



WHO ARE REFUGEES AND IMMIGRANTS IN CANADA?

The words we use matter. Using the correct words can clear up misconceptions, preventing divisive rhetoric and undue alarm about who people are and why they have come to Canada.

Refugee — a person who has been **forced to flee** from their country of origin due to persecution, war, or violence. **Under Canadian law, refugees have the right to safe and dignified aid**, and should not be expelled or returned to places where their lives or freedom would be at risk.

Immigrant — a person who has settled permanently in another country. Immigrants leave their home countries to seek work, be reunited with family, etc.

Refugee Claimant — a person who arrives in Canada and applies for refugee status once here, **but whose case is still being evaluated**. The term ‘asylum seeker’ has increasingly been used by the media, but has no basis in Canadian law. Every refugee claimant has the right to a fair hearing of their refugee claim.

Resettled Refugee — refugees resettled to Canada are selected abroad, are recognized as refugees by the Canadian government before they arrive, and become permanent residents as soon as they arrive in Canada. (eg. Government Assisted or Privately Sponsored Refugees.)

Newcomer — a person who has recently arrived in a new country, regardless of whether they are an immigrant or refugee. Many newcomers prefer to use this term to avoid the negative assumptions that immigrants and refugees are helpless or needy.

Refugee claimants are among the most vulnerable people in our society. Inaccurate and inflammatory language about refugee claimants risks harming people whose lives may depend on Canada treating them fairly. (Canadian Council for Refugees)

REFUGEE FAMILIES ARE OUR FAMILIES

- When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. (Lev. 19:33-34)
- Welcoming refugee claimants at Canada's borders is not only a legal requirement, it's a faithful response to our Christian calling to love our neighbours from all around the world.

FACTS ABOUT REFUGEE CLAIMANTS IN CANADA

Are people illegally crossing the border into Canada?



- No. Canada has an obligation under international law to accept refugees, and so **it is not illegal to cross the border into Canada at any point to make a refugee claim.**
- Refugee claimants cannot be punished for entering at an irregular location if it is necessary for their safety, therefore their entry is not *illegal* but simply *irregular*.

Are refugee claimants flooding into Canada beyond what our country can handle?



- The number of refugee claimants crossing into Canada has increased in recent years, but is now decreasing, and is not out of line with past periods of global instability.
- **Canada has not “lost control of the border.”** 97% of irregular refugees are met by the RCMP and immediately declare themselves to authorities.

Are refugee claimants displacing needy Canadians from housing?



- Shelters were overcrowded and waitlists for affordable housing were at record highs **before** the current influx of refugees. The recent spike in demand from refugee claimants reveals how chronically underfunded Canadian housing supports have been for years, rather than being a ‘refugee problem’.

Are refugee claimants jumping the queue ahead of others already facing long wait times to enter Canada?



- Canada predetermines separate numbers for resettled refugees and refugee claimants to be processed each year. **An increase of refugee claimants at the border does not slow or reduce** the processing of resettled refugees from overseas.

Do refugee claimants pose a security risk to Canada?



- Refugee claimants go through rigorous security checks before entering Canada, and any who are found to have a history of criminality are not permitted entry into the country. In all of Canada’s long history of welcoming refugees, **not one has committed an act of terrorism.**

Why should Canadians care about refugees when we have so many of our own social issues? Shouldn’t we ‘take care of our own’ first?



- All people in Canada, who are not Indigenous, come from immigrant origins. Welcoming new immigrants and refugees, in the context of the greatest crisis of displacement since World War II, is the right thing to do.
- The cost is not extreme. For example, funding to help municipalities integrate refugee claimants would be less than 0.001% of the total spending of Ontario’s 2018 budget.

Sources for above facts and further information can be found on

crcna.org/CanadaRefugeeFacts

