

# Guide to Welcoming Newcomers in Montreal



SAMUEL CENTRE  
FOR SOCIAL  
CONNECTEDNESS

# Global forced migration at a glance...

**70.8** million  
displaced  
**3.5** million asylum  
seekers  
**92,000** refugees resettled



# Drivers of Displacement

- War
- Political persecution
- Violence (gang, domestic, sexual, generalized)
- Poverty
- Insecurity
- Climate-related disasters



# Terminology

- In Canada, the term 'refugee' is used to describe anyone whose refugee claim was successful
- The term 'asylum seeker' is used to describe anyone fleeing persecution and looking for protection; the term can be applied to someone who may or may not be eligible to apply for refugee status. The term asylum seeker is often used interchangeably with 'refugee claimant'
- Those houses at the YMCA and Royal Victoria are asylum seekers/refugee claimants. They will only be approved for official refugee status after a successful hearing in front of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.

## Refugee

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. They have a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. They most likely, cannot return home or are too afraid to do so.

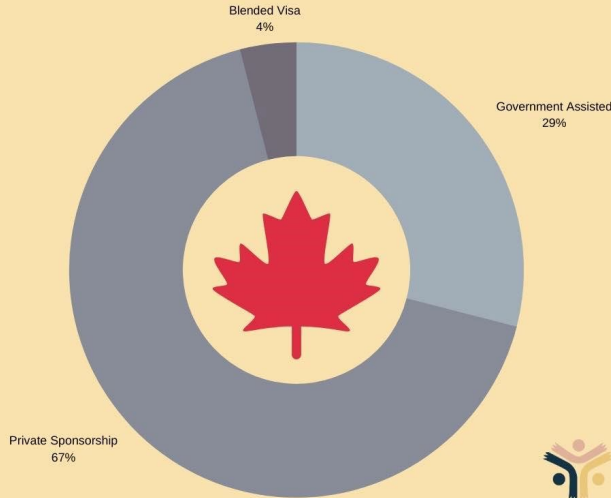
(UNHCR)



Credit: [The Refugee Centre](#)

# Coming to Canada as a Refugee

## Canada has 3 different resettlement programs



Private Sponsorship  
67%

Government Assisted  
29%

Blended Visa  
4%



## 1. Government Assisted (29%)

*Referred by: UNHCR*

*Financial assistance: From federal government for 1 year*

## 2. Private Sponsorship (67%)

*Referred by: Private Sponsor*

*Financial assistance: By the sponsor for the first year*

## 3. Blended Visa (4%)

*Referred by: UNHCR*

*Financial Assistance: 6 months from the sponsor & 6 months from the government*



# Seeking Asylum in Canada

- Individuals can make an asylum claim in Canada at a port of entry or at an inland CBSA or Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) office
- Entering Canada: some cross into Canada by land, others fly into the airport



Roxham Road



YUL Airport

# Barriers to Seeking Asylum in Canada

- Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) between Canada and U.S.
  - States that asylum seekers must request refugee protection in the first “safe country” they arrive in, namely the United States, unless they qualify for an exemption (i.e. have family in Canada, are an unaccompanied minor, etc.)
  - Only applies to those crossing into Canada through an official border crossing - does not apply to irregular border crossings. Many choose to cross through an irregular border crossing known as Roxham Road between New York State and Quebec because they would be denied entry at an official border crossing under the STCA
- Budget Implementation Act (Bill C-97)
  - Introduces a new ground of ineligibility for refugee protection if a claimant has previously made a claim for refugee protection in another country with whom Canada has an information-sharing agreement (notably in the US). Read more [here](#).



# Border Crossing Quiz

<https://www.riddle.com/showcase/147669/quiz>





# Countries of Origin of New Refugee Claims in 2018

## GLOBALLY

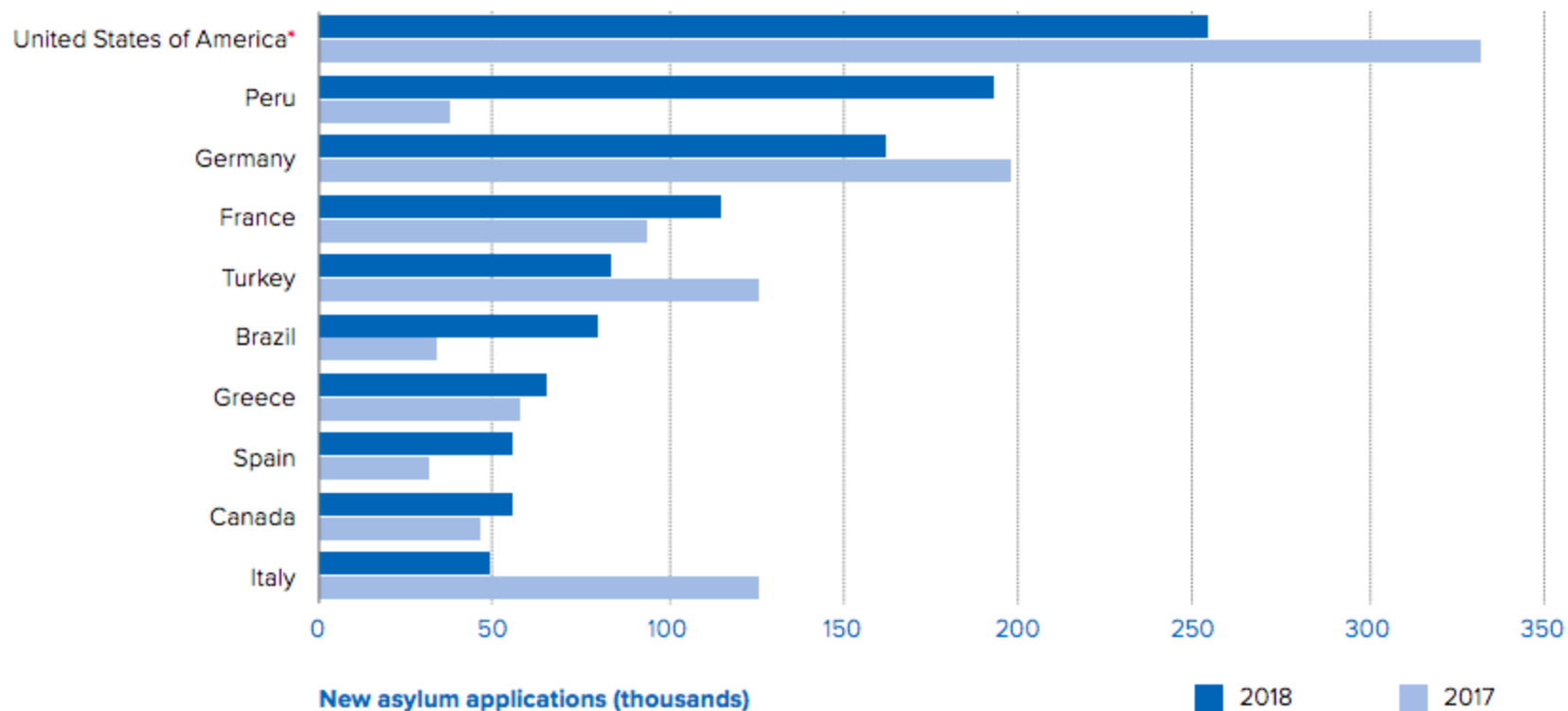
- Venezuela (341,800)
- Afghanistan (107,500)
- Syria (106,200)
- Iraq (72,600)
- Democratic Republic of the Congo (61,100)
- Others include: El Salvador, Honduras, Eritrea, Nigeria, Pakistan

## IN CANADA

- Nigeria
- India
- Mexico
- Iran
- Colombia
- Haiti
- United States



Figure 17 | **Major recipient countries of new asylum applications** | 2017-2018




\* Cases are multiplied by average number of persons per case.

# **Programme régional d'accueil et d'intégration des demandeurs d'asile (PRAIDA)**

# PRAIDA's Mandate

- Psychosocial evaluation
- Orientation to community resources
- Temporary housing
- Collaboration with community organizations to facilitate access to different services

Workshops offered by partners:

- Social aid
  - Housing (14 organizations mandated for this)
  - Legal orientation
  - Health orientation
  - Role of police
  - Role of youth protection (DPJ)
  - LGBTQ+ Rights
  - Detention
- 

# What benefits do asylum seekers receive?

- Temporary Housing (2 weeks)
- Interim Federal Health Plan (IFHP)
  - Basic coverage (hospital services, pre- and post-natal care, laboratory, diagnostic and ambulance services)
  - Supplemental coverage (limited vision and urgent dental care, home care and long-term care, clinical psychologists, assistive devices, medical supplies and equipment)
  - Prescription drug coverage
- Work/Study Permit (~ 1 month to process)
- Social Aid
- Legal Aid
- Preschool, elementary and secondary education (5 - 18 yrs old)
- Free French Classes (without subsidy)



# What do asylum seekers NOT have access to?

- Subsidized daycare (subsidized daycare is \$7.50/day, non-subsidized daycare starts at \$35/day)
- No reduced tuition fees for universities (only after gaining PR)





# Welcome Sessions

# Our Journey since April 2019



## WELCOME SESSIONS

Connecting newly arrived asylum seekers with local residents.

### 800+ ASYLUM SEEKERS WELCOMED



We welcomed over 700 asylum seekers in 36 Welcome Sessions.

### VOLUNTEERS 100+

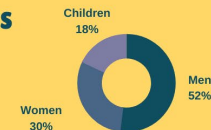
We have developed a strong volunteer base of over 90 Montrealers of all ages and backgrounds.



### LANGUAGES SPOKEN

56%	37%	30%	5%	4%
SPANISH	ENGLISH	FRENCH	ARABIC	PORTUGUESE

### PARTICIPANTS



A Common Threads initiative at the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness.  
LEARN MORE AT [SOCIALCONNECTEDNESS.ORG](https://SOCIALCONNECTEDNESS.ORG)

# Facilitating Welcome Sessions

## **Recruitment**

Head over to the YMCA and invite residents to join us for conversation about life in Montreal. Let them know we are volunteers from the city and that we can share resources related to finding housing, free French classes, festivals in the city, etc.

## **Opening the Conversation & First Questions**

Build a rapport with whomever you are speaking to. You can start with a joke about the weather or by telling them a bit about yourself, and then asking them how they find the city so far. It may be useful to get a sense of when they arrived and what they already know about the city. Let them lead the conversation.



## **Common Concerns**

Housing is a key concern, other commonly asked questions are around driver's license, education/degree equivalency, language classes, etc.

## **Wrapping Up**

Offer participants the internet coupons, let them know that they can reach out to us with any questions they may have using the email listed, share information about the Facebook group, collect their email if they want to receive updates about events they can attend.

## **Kids**

Kids are kids - play with them, read to them, get to know them!



## What to **AVOID**

Never make assumptions. People come from all different walks of life, with different educational, socio-economic, cultural backgrounds

Do **not** ask participants about what they were fleeing or what their journey arriving here was like. If they choose to share this with you on their own accord, then that is up to them.

Do **not** offer legal advice. Direct participants to PRAIDA for legal queries.





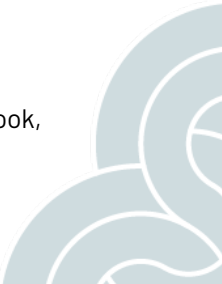
# Sensitivity to Trauma

# What is Trauma?

“Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape or natural disaster. Immediately after the event, shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. While these feelings are normal, some people have difficulty moving on with their lives.”

-The American Psychological Association

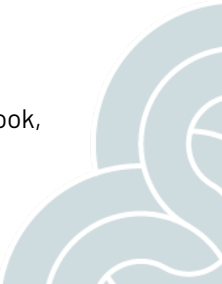
Credit: New Sanctuary Coalition (members: Sara Gonzalo, LJ Amsterdam, Jillian White, MJ Engel, Elliot Oberholtzer, Adrienne Klein, Felipe Cook, Chloe Tomlinson, Peter Temes, Ann Currier, Morgan Currier, Archana Palaniappan, Becky Smith, Bronx Legal Services)



# Actions that Exacerbate Trauma

- Undermining, disbelief, gaslighting
- Inattentiveness, checking phones
- Being distracted, scattered, or high-stress
- Pushing someone to talk about trauma without preparation
- Bureaucratizing - focusing on boxes rather than creating a meaningful connection
- Creating a spectacle of the experience
- Assuming someone's story represents a bigger community

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# Thank you!

If you would like to learn more, here are some extra resources:

- [Guide for Asylum Seekers in Quebec Wishing to Obtain Government resources](#)
- [Cerda's Toolkits for Supporting Interventions for Asylum Seekers in Quebec and flyers on physical and mental health](#)
- [UNHCR's 2018 Global Trends: Forced Displacement Report](#)
- [CBC Documentary: The Migrant Road to Canada](#)



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