

# SYRIAN REFUGEE FACT SHEET

**People in Need of Assistance:** 12.5 Million

**Refugees:** 4 Million

**Internally displaced people:** 6.5 Million

**Deaths:** over 230,000

As of October 2014, the three-year conflict in Syria has displaced nearly 9.5 million people, more than 40% of the country's pre-war population. Of these, over 3 million have found temporary asylum in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, Iraq, and Egypt. Only about 15% of the Syrian refugees live in refugee camps. The rest live outside camps, in cities, towns, and rural areas, often in difficult circumstances and in locations not easily reached by humanitarian aid organizations. The great majority of the refugees are Sunni Muslim Arabs, but the population also includes ethnic and religious minorities, such as Kurds, Druze, and members of various Christian and Shiite Muslim sects.

The influx has stretched to the breaking point the capacity of asylum countries to provide protection and assistance to the refugees. In an effort to relieve the pressure—and enable asylum countries to continue providing sanctuary to Syrians fleeing the war—the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has asked resettlement countries to admit some of the refugees. As of October 2014, 24 countries, primarily in Europe and the Americas, have agreed to resettle Syrians.

## Halton Statistics

In 2014, of the 260,404 new Canadians welcomed into Canada, 23,286 were refugees. 11,400 of those refugees settled in Ontario. Between 2003 and 2012, the annual number of newcomer residents landing in Halton was 13,150. Of those, 1760 or 13% were refugees. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, 400 people in Halton reported a Syrian ethnic origin.

## What is Canada doing about the crisis in Syria?

Canada is working to welcome 25,000 Syrian and Iraqi refugees in 2015/2016 expected to arrive from Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon and landing mainly in Toronto and Montreal.

## What assistance do refugees receive in Canada?

Refugees are either privately sponsored or government sponsored.

Government-assisted refugees receive monthly financial support based on provincial social assistance rates for **up to a year** starting from the refugee's arrival in Canada or until the refugee becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first. It is the minimum amount needed to cover only the most basic food and shelter needs. These refugees also get a one-time "start-up" allowance to cover basic needs, such as clothes, necessary household items and phone installation. Privately-sponsored refugees are supported by sponsors who agree to provide them with care, lodging, settlement assistance, & social support. A private sponsor supports a refugee **for one year** starting from the refugee's arrival in Canada or until the refugee becomes self-sufficient, whichever comes first.

## What are the primary locations receiving Syrian refugees in Ontario?

Windsor, Ottawa, London, Toronto, Kitchener, Hamilton.

### **What health coverage will be available to these refugees?**

Syrian refugees are eligible for Type 1 benefits under the **Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP)**. Both Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) and Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) would receive Type 1 benefits. Type 1 benefits include:

- Basic coverage/ Prescription Drug Coverage
- Supplemental coverage (includes psychotherapy counselling or psychology counselling in a private clinic or addiction centre, for a maximum of 10 sessions.)

Syrian refugees will receive a federal health card upon arrival at Pearson Airport and that will entitle them to health care through the IFHP until they transition across to OHIP coverage.

### **Syrian Demographic Characteristics**

#### **Language**

- Languages spoken in Syria include Arabic (official language) Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic and Circassian. Arabic is the native language with 90% of the population

#### **Literacy**

- Universal literacy was a major goal of the Syrian Government before the conflict. As a result, 84% of the population is literate (90% men and 77% women)

#### **Religion**

- The majority religion in Syria is Islam, which makes of 87% of the population, including 74% who are Sunni Muslim and 13% who are Alawi, Ismaili and Shia Muslim. Approximately 10% practice Christianity and identify as Orthodox, Uniate and Nestorian Christians. The remaining 3% are Druze.
- In Syria, devout Muslims pray five times a day in private and at scheduled time. Syrian Muslims may fast during the lunar month of Ramadan, during which eating, drinking and smoking is prohibited from sunrise to sunset. Devout Christians attend church regularly and all Muslim and Christian holidays are official holidays in Syria

#### **Food and Dietary Restrictions**

- Syrian food consists of grains, meat, fruits and vegetables including pita and hummus, baba ganoush, shawarma and salads such as tabouleh and fattoush
- Islam forbids any action that can be harmful to an individual or society. Alcohol, smoking and other intoxicants, pork and pork products are not permitted. Also, food processed in concordance with Muslim dietary laws is called Halal which is when an animal is slaughtered in an Islamic way. Islamic slaughtering involves a blessing by a Muslim and the use of sharp knife so that the blood of the animal (cow, sheep or goat) can flow forth.

#### **Healthcare**

- Health care providers should consider religious and cultural beliefs when providing services. This includes practices such as providing long hospital gowns that cover the lower legs and same-sex health care providers.

#### **Employment**

- The Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) recently conducted a labour market analysis on Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The majority of Syrians worked in the construction and agriculture sectors in Syria. 70% of the Syrian refugees were working in construction before leaving Syria.