



## **Migration Profile of CANADA**

### **A. Executive Summary**

Canada, the world's second largest country in total area, has a long history of migration and has been characterized as a land of immigration. In the last twenty years, Canada has experienced a significant increase in migratory flows and, in 2018, became the country with the highest number of resettled refugees. Emigration from Canada is minimal, and internal displacement due to natural disasters does occur is limited. Most immigrants to Canada are of working age, between 20 and 39 years old, which underscores their vital role in the Canadian labour market. A large portion of Canada's migrant population is made up of international students, a phenomenon that has considerably increased in the last ten years. A large proportion of Canada's immigrants and resettled refugees are employed in skilled jobs. Nevertheless, migrants and refugees in Canada are sometimes portrayed negatively in the media – as failing to adapt to Canada or even as being terrorists.

Studies have demonstrated the difficulties that migrants and refugees experience at the beginning of their stay in Canada, for example because of the challenges with language acquisition. Also women are often additionally impacted by their role as primary caregivers in migrant families.

Human trafficking is a problem in Canada, involving both Canadian and foreign-born victims, primarily of the female sex. A large portion of the Canadian victims are from the Indigenous population. Women are the main victims of human trafficking predominantly linked to the sex industry. The difficulties related to the identification of the victims (in part due to portraying them as foreigners) ends up hiding the Canadian women involved in human trafficking. Moreover, the problems linked to the definition of the victims and the criminals involved in human trafficking hinder measures to protect the victims.

Government institutions, NGOs, Catholic organizations, and local churches play a fundamental role in mitigating the challenges faced by migrants, refugees, and victims of human trafficking through legislation, social services, and charity. These institutions also contributed to drafting the UN Global Compacts on Migrants and Refugees.

### **B. Country Profile**

#### **I. Basic Information**

Canada is the world's second-largest country, and its land mass is divided politically into ten provinces and three territories.<sup>i</sup> Its economy is one of the ten richest in the world.<sup>ii</sup> Men and women are equally represented in its population of 38,131,104 inhabitants. More than 90% of the Canadian population lives in the southern regions, bordering the United States, while the vast territory in the north is more sparsely inhabited. About 58.7% of Canadians speak English as their native language, followed by 22% who speak French. These are the two official languages of Canada. French-speaking Canadians live mainly in Quebec, Ontario, and New Brunswick.<sup>iii</sup> According to the census of 2011, Canada's religious demographics are 39% Roman Catholic, 20% Protestant, 6% other Christian, 2% Orthodox, 3% Muslim, 1% Hindu, 1% Sikh, 1% Buddhist, and 1% other; the balance (24%) declare no religious affiliation.<sup>iv</sup>

## **II. International and Internal Migrants**

Canada has a long history of migration, starting in the 1500s with the Portuguese fishery in Labrador. This was followed by frequent waves of immigration (e.g., colonial settlement from France and then England; the Scotland Highland Clearances; the Irish potato famine; the civil war in the United States; WWI and WWII in Central Europe; the Vietnam War; and conflicts in the Middle East, East Asia, and Africa). Migration has been a fundamental factor in shaping Canadian society and identity, which is why Canada is often characterized as a "*land of immigrants*."<sup>v</sup>

According to UN statistics from 2019, 21% of Canadians (about 8,000,000) were born outside the country, coming mainly from India, China, the Philippines, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Of these, 48% came from Asian countries, particularly from South and South-East Asia.

Recent figures indicate that "first generation immigrants" (people born abroad) constitute 24% of the population, while the second generation (persons born in Canada with one or both parents born abroad) are about 18% of the population. The next or third generation of such families, defined as born in Canada of second-generation parents, makes up 58% of the population.<sup>vi</sup>

According to the 2016 census, about 77% of all migrants to Canada live in Ontario (44.2%), British Columbia (18.4%) and Quebec (14%). Toronto is the city with the highest number of immigrants (2,705,550), followed by Montreal (936,305), Vancouver (989,540), Calgary (404,700), and Edmonton (308,605).<sup>vii</sup>

Canada also has a large temporary population of international students. In 2018, more than 721,000 students came from abroad, an increase of 68% from 2014. The same year, about 53,700 former students became permanent residents of Canada. In 2018, the top countries of origin for international students were India and China, representing together over 54%, followed by South Korea, France, Vietnam, the United States, Brazil, Nigeria, Iran, and others.

## **III. Emigration and Skilled Migration**

Quantitative data on emigration from Canada is poor. About 3% of Canadians live abroad according to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Population Division estimates. More than 60% chose the US as a destination, while others migrated to the United Kingdom, Australia, France, and Italy.

#### **IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced, asylum seekers and refugees, climate displaced people)**

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Canada remains one of the top destinations for refugees and asylum seekers. As of April 2020, there were 154,520 resettled refugees in Canada, of whom 80,770 were men and 73,740 were women.<sup>viii</sup>

The primary mother tongues of resettled refugees are currently Arabic, Tigrinya, Dari, Somali, and Swahili, while the primary countries of origin are Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nigeria, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Colombia, Mexico, and Haiti. War and human rights violations are the primary "push factors" for seeking asylum from the aforementioned countries.<sup>ix</sup> In September 2021, Canada announced it would be resettling 40,000 Afghans. The main provinces of refugee resettlement are Ontario (48,865), Alberta (20,275), and British Columbia (20,020). The main cities are Toronto, Edmonton, and Vancouver. Asylum seekers come mainly through the US border.<sup>x</sup>

During the period 2015-2016, the largest migratory flows internal to Canada were from Alberta to British Columbia and Ontario.<sup>xi</sup> In 2020, Canada registered 26,000 persons newly displaced by natural disasters, mostly wildfires but also storm and ice-jam flooding. Most such displacements are temporary.

#### **IV. Victims of Human Trafficking**

Human traffickers exploit Canadian-born citizens, including persons from the Indigenous population, as well as foreign migrants in Canada. Victims from Canada are also exploited abroad. Foreign women trafficked in Canada are primarily from Asia and Eastern Europe. Human trafficking for sexual exploitation is the most common form in Canada.<sup>xii</sup>

According to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), of the mostly female victims of sex trafficking, 72% are under the age of 25 and 26% are under 18. The RCMP also reports that these victims are disproportionately Indigenous.

The exploitation of Asian women (from South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Malaysia) in large urban areas across Canada is increasing, and a small number of victims come from Eastern European countries (Russia, Romania, Ukraine, and Moldova).<sup>xiii</sup> The majority of sex-trafficked women are located in major cities such as Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver, and international routes have specific Canadian cities of destination. British Columbia, for example, receives victims of sex trafficking from South Korea, the Philippines, Afghanistan, the US, Taiwan, Guinea, China, Hong Kong, Honduras, Russia, and India. In Edmonton and Winnipeg, victims are mainly Indigenous youth. In Quebec and Ontario, the majority of victims are Caucasian; some are from Romania, Ukraine, and Moldova. Some women from Montreal, Calgary, Edmonton, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver are transported to the USA for prostitution.

Human traffickers also exploit foreign workers from Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa through forced labour in a variety of sectors, including agriculture, construction, food processing, restaurants, hospitality, and domestic labour. Migrant workers in the caregiving and agricultural sectors were at the highest risk of forced labour due to language barriers, isolated worksites, and limited access to protections.<sup>xiv</sup>

Victims of human trafficking in Canada who are foreign nationals may apply to remain in Canada through a temporary residence permit (TRP) which provides trafficked individuals with legal immigration status for 180 days, access to health care, and the right to apply for a work permit. In addition, trafficked individuals, whatever their origin, may find other useful services, such as crisis phone lines; domestic violence outreach programmes; emergency shelters; government services for crime victims; government employment standards offices and departments of education, training, and/or labour; and many non-profit community organizations formed to assist immigrants, refugees and victims of human trafficking.<sup>xv</sup>

## **V. National Legal Framework**

Canada's geography is a barrier to 'irregular' immigration, that is, entering the country without a regular permit. Moreover, Canadian immigration law is very strict concerning visas, discouraging anyone from trying to permanently relocate to Canada by anything other than legal means. The case of asylum seekers who cross the US-Canada border illegally is different. Although the process of determining whether someone is or is not a refugee can take years, the law gives them social assistance and free medical care and allows them to work legally.<sup>xvi</sup>

The main laws on matters of migration are the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA), 2002; the Criminal Code, 1985, which was amended in 2005, 2010, 2012, and 2015; and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol), which was ratified by Canada in May 2002. In 2012, the government implemented the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, also creating a Human Trafficking Taskforce led by Public Safety Canada.<sup>xvii</sup> Most of the services to victims of human trafficking are provided by each province and territory, often in collaboration with local NGOs and service providers. Local authorities are often the ones prosecuting and investigating crimes as well, whether on a federal, provincial, territorial, or municipal level. The lack of a national database collecting data on law enforcement and investigation makes it harder for authorities to gauge their effort and account for trends. Moreover, the coordination between authorities at all different jurisdictional levels still represents a challenge, especially when cases pertain to multiple jurisdictions.<sup>xviii</sup>

## **VI. Main Actors**

### *The State*

Jurisdiction over immigration is shared between the federal and the provincial and territorial governments. Both the Ministry of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and local governments run immigration programs to review the applications of foreign workers and students. Some of these programs include the Caregiver Program, the Provincial Nominee Program, and the Quebec-Selected Skilled Workers' program.<sup>xix</sup> The IRCC is in charge of the laws governing migration and human trafficking. It also provides services and resources for immigrants and organizations working with immigrants, and deals with citizenship.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), through its Human Trafficking Coordination Centre, is responsible for recognizing and protecting victims of human trafficking and identifying offenders. Since 2019, Public Safety Canada (PSC) has led a federal interagency task force to counter trafficking.<sup>xx</sup>

The State collaborates with civil society in refugee settlement. Canada's 40-year-old Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program allows community groups (including Catholic parishes, for instance) to enter a contract with the federal government to welcome and provide financially, socially and logistically for a refugee individual or family for one full year after arrival in Canada. In that time the sponsor group, using funds it raises itself, pays for accommodation, food, clothing and other essentials; the amount is stipulated by the government, but groups may choose to be more generous. The group also assists the refugees to find language training, register their children for public education, and navigate other services. The bonds created by personal and direct connection with sponsor group members are a significant asset as the newcomers integrate into Canadian society.

### *The Catholic Church*

The Catholic Church in Canada is pastorally involved with migrants and refugees at the parish and diocesan levels. It works in partnership with the federal government's Refugee Sponsorship Program and the Refugee Advocacy Network to welcome and settle refugees, as well as with various religious organizations (e.g., Jesuit Refugee Service/Service jésuite des réfugiés)<sup>xxi</sup> and NGOs (International Catholic Migration Commission-ICMC).<sup>xxii</sup> The Church is also engaged in ministry with victims of human trafficking. A parish or diocese might collaborate with a wide range of organizations, including non-Catholic religious groups and secular groups, depending on the characteristics of the local community. Here are some illustrative examples of the many diocesan ministries with migrants, refugees and human trafficking victims.

In 2012, the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC), in collaboration with the Office for Refugees of the Archdiocese of Toronto,<sup>xxiii</sup> created the Catholic Refugee Sponsors' Council (CRSC) to be a network of Catholic refugee-sponsoring organizations across Canada. The CRSC provides a national Catholic voice to address the plight of refugees through meetings with federal and provincial ministers of immigration, advocating for issues of greatest importance to the Catholic community of Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs). The CRSC brings together Catholic SAHs to share best practices, collaborate and advocate, as well as to update the CCCC.<sup>xxiv</sup>

The Archdiocese of Montreal has helped refugees since 1970 through Episcopal Leadership in Refugee Sponsorship Programs and the Diocesan Office of Cultural and Ritual Communities. Thirty-seven parishes have been involved in refugee-sponsorship arrangements, through which 1,100 persons from 10 countries have been sponsored for at least 12 months, provided with housing, furnishing, and jobs. Parishes have also supported refugees through special programs such as "The Bridge," which provides a one-month home for 30 persons and serves 172 families, with a total of 456 beneficiaries from 46 different countries; recently, they are mostly from Syria and Africa.<sup>xxv</sup>

The Archdiocese of Vancouver works collaboratively with parishes to sponsor, welcome, and resettle refugees. Parishes that wish to sponsor refugee families organize a Parish Refugee Committee and raise the required funds to settle the family. The committee commits to support the settlement of the family for 12 months after the date of arrival in Canada. Such sponsored refugees arrive in Canada as permanent residents with immediate access to all the benefits (health care, child benefits, public education). The Archdiocese cares for Spanish-speaking migrants through its Hispanic Ministry. This population is composed of temporary farm workers, mostly from Guatemala and Mexico; people on a temporary tourist visa from Mexico; and international students

from Hispanic countries.<sup>xxvi</sup> Scalabrinian priests and the Congregation of Teresian Carmelite Missionaries Sisters work directly with the Hispanic and temporary migrant farm workers in the district. The Archdiocese also has a very active Anti-Human Trafficking Committee that works with the victims of human trafficking.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) has run an office since 2015 that collaborates with Canadian bishops and national organizations, advocating for migrants and refugees' rights and protection. The Jesuits have implemented several programmes for the integration and assistance of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants, with a focus on their integration into Canadian society. The International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), besides advocating and networking with authorities and international organizations, assists with the implementation of several community-based programs to welcome refugees, such as refugee sponsorship.

#### *International organizations*

IOM Canada conducts studies on migration and offers services to migrants and refugees.<sup>xxvii</sup> UNHCR has operated in Canada since 1976 and mostly works in four areas: protection for refugees and asylum seekers; solutions such as voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and integration; fundraising from the Canadian public and the government; and communications to inform and educate the public about the situation of refugees.

#### *Other organizations*

The Canadian Council for Refugees makes available to the public a long list divided by province of the lay and religious organizations caring for asylum seekers and refugees.<sup>xxviii</sup> The Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) is a registered charity that represents more than 200 community-based organizations in the province of Ontario. The Community Resources Serving Immigrant and Refugee Families is a nation-wide list of lay and religious organizations working with immigrant and refugee families with particular attention to children and youth.<sup>xxix</sup> The Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) offers immigrants a wide range of services, from integration and employment to youth programs, language instruction, and clinical counselling. The Immigrant Services Society of BC provides settlement, English language, and employment services to immigrants.<sup>xxx</sup>

### **Other Important Issues**

The government of Canada was actively involved in drafting the Global Compacts and in December 2018 voted in favour of them. The Catholic Refugee Sponsors' Council (CRSC) is committed to the promotion of the Global Compacts. According to its vision, the Church in Canada must play a key role in dealing with the global migration crisis.

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- <sup>xxviii</sup> Canadian Council for Refugees <https://ccrweb.ca/en/members>
- <sup>xxix</sup> [Community Resources | Caring for Kids New to Canada](#)
- <sup>xxx</sup> Immigrant Services Society of BC. <https://issbc.org/>