

# REFUGEES FROM SYRIA: UNRAVELING THE MYTHS

GUELPH | WELLINGTON  
Local Immigration Partnership



**Refugees bring a tremendous amount of benefit to our communities. According to the Government of Canada Citizenship Guide, “Canada is often referred to as a land of immigrants because, over the past 200 years, millions of newcomers have helped to build and defend our way of life”.<sup>1</sup> Below, we dispel four myths...**

**MYTH 1:** Refugees will steal jobs from “real” Canadians and scam the system.

**FACTS:** Data trends indicate that refugees and immigrants have had a positive impact on Canada’s economy:

- According to Statistics Canada, the proportion of refugees receiving social assistance is significantly reduced within the first year.<sup>2</sup>
- Two-thirds of refugees reported income by their fifth year on par with Canada’s average.<sup>3</sup>
- Historically refugees have positively contributed to the Canadian economy. In 1979, over 60,000 Vietnamese refugees arrived by boat to Canada, the largest single group of refugees to ever arrive. Within ten years of arrival their unemployment rate was 2.3% lower than the Canadian average. One in five had started a business, 99% succeeded in becoming Canadian citizens, and they were considerably less likely than average to receive some form of social assistance.<sup>4</sup>

**MYTH 2:** Instead of using our tax dollars to provide extravagant lifestyles for refugees, our resources should be used to reduce the poverty rate among Canada’s elderly, working-age adults, and children.

**FACTS:** According to the Government of Canada, Canadian Council for Refugees:

- Privately sponsored refugees do not receive social assistance because they are the financial responsibility of their sponsors throughout the first year.<sup>5</sup>
- Refugees do not get more financial help from the federal government than Canadian pensioners.<sup>6</sup> While government sponsored refugees receive approximately \$800 per month, seniors receive \$1,300 through Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income supplements.<sup>7</sup>
- Refugees do not jump the line or have priority access for wait-listed social services such as childcare supports, housing, or mental health support.

**MYTH 3:** If other Muslim countries don’t take Syrian refugees, we shouldn’t either.

**FACTS:** As of January 19, 2016 over 4,604,061 Syrians were registered refugees with the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).<sup>8</sup> More than half have found their way to and are languishing in Muslim majority countries, such as Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt.<sup>9</sup> The UNHCR Syria Regional Refugee Response provides an updated running tally of the staggering number of Syrians in each country:

- Turkey – 2,503,549
- Lebanon – 1,070,181
- Jordan – 635,324
- Iraq – 244,642
- Egypt – 123,585

**MYTH 4:** For all we know, some of these refugees may be terrorists.

**FACTS:** UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres states that it is “absolute nonsense” to try to blame refugees for terror attacks, stressing that they were its “first victims”.<sup>10</sup> Refugees are not a threat to security:

- The vast majority of refugees are first thoroughly vetted by the United Nations refugee agency.<sup>11</sup>
- The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act excludes refugee claimants if they are found to be inadmissible on the basis of security, serious criminality, and organized criminality or human rights violation.<sup>4</sup>
- The Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Canada Border Services Agency subject refugees to intensive security screening.<sup>12</sup>

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Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

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