

Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership  
presents

# Hope for Home

Building an Immigrant  
Housing Action Plan  
Together

A Discussion Guide



# Contents

<b>Land Acknowledgement</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>I. Foundation: What You Should Know</b>	<b>4</b>
1. The Housing Landscape on Vancouver Island	4
2. Immigration in the Capital Region	5
3. No Scapegoats: Focus on Fixing the System	7
4. Purpose of this Guide	7
5. Housing Equity for Immigrants: From Dialogue to Action	9
<b>II. Immigrant and Refugee Stories</b>	<b>10</b>
1. When Systems Set You Up for Failure	10
From Financial Support to Systemic Challenges	10
Child Benefit Payments: Making Hard Choices	12
2. Either Too Large or Too Small: Effects of Family Size on Housing Searches	14
When Housing Does Not Fit	14
All Alone	16
3. Missing Connections: Suburban Living as Challenge	18
Isolation and Lack of Community	18
Remote Location Complicates Rebuilding	20
4. Housing and Mental Health: Finding Safe and Stable Housing	22
When Fear Follows You	22
Things Can Change Quickly: From Thriving to Hidden Homelessness	24
5. Racism and Cultural Differences	26
Facing Racism and Neighbour Conflict	26
When Cultural Differences Prevent Understanding	28
<b>III. Summary of Common Housing Challenges</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>IV. Glossary</b>	<b>35</b>
Endnotes	39
<b>Who Are We?</b>	<b>40</b>

First Edition 2024

[www.icavictoria.org](http://www.icavictoria.org)

# Land Acknowledgement

Vancouver Island contains mountains, fertile agricultural lands, beaches, ancient rainforests, rivers, fjords, and archipelagos, which make up the traditional territory of more than fifty Coast Salish, Kwakwaka'wakw, and Nuu-cha-nulth Nations.

As immigrants and settlers, we acknowledge with respect the Indigenous people whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Advocating for equitable access to housing for immigrants and refugees means to acknowledge the continued displacement of the original Indigenous communities in our regions. Any solutions to equitable access to housing should be tested against housing needs and affordability for Indigenous communities as well.



# I. Foundation: What You Should Know

This introduction includes specific housing and related terminology.

For an explanation of these, please see the glossary (p. 35).

## 1. The Housing Landscape on Vancouver Island

Vancouver Island is an increasingly popular living destination, gaining more than 65,000 residents between 2016 and 2021 for a current total of 864,864 residents. The most significant growth was seen in the municipalities of Langford (31.8%), Nanaimo (10%), and Courtenay (9.2%).

The Greater Victoria region (which includes Langford) saw an 8% growth to a total of 397,237 residents in 2021 (almost 30,000 new residents in the past five years).<sup>1</sup>

This population growth, together with low vacancy rates across the Island poses significant challenges to its housing market. In October 2024, the average rent on a two-bedroom apartment in Greater Victoria was \$2,838 per month and the region was ranked as the third-most expensive rental market in British Columbia after Vancouver and Burnaby.<sup>2</sup> As a result, across Greater Victoria, many households are overspending on housing. “Renters, homeowners, and those on the verge of homelessness say that an increasingly unaffordable housing market is driving them to [consider leaving the Island] ... residents ...are worried about what it means for their futures — and their ability to afford to stay on the South Island.”<sup>3</sup>

Although there has been much effort across municipalities on Vancouver Island to build and/or secure more affordable rental housing and provide homeownership opportunities for residents, the rental vacancy rate on the South Island remains low at 1.6% and housing affordability remains stubbornly unattainable.<sup>4</sup>

### LIVING IN OVERCROWDED CONDITIONS

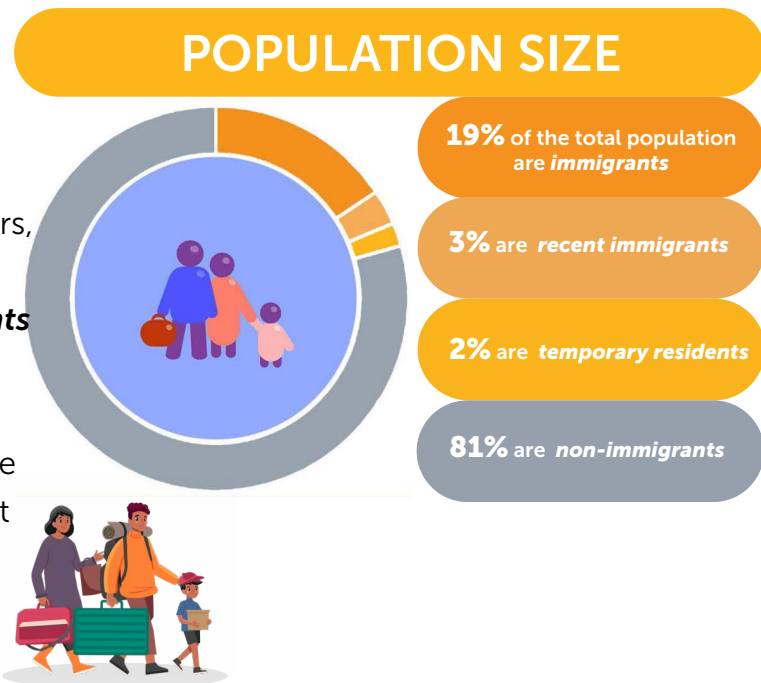
**24%** of recent immigrants   **6%** of non-immigrants



## 2. Immigration in the Capital Region

According to the 2021 Census, of the total population in the Capital Region:

- **3% are new or recent immigrants** (economic classes and refugees arriving between 2016 and 2021).
- **2% are temporary immigrants** (e.g., CUAET visa holders, temporary workers, and international students).
- **Overall, just under 20% are immigrants** (all immigrant and refugee classes together, i.e., any person who was born outside Canada and arrived in the region recently or throughout the past 40 years).



The percentage of immigrants on the South Island (less than 20%) is much lower than for the Greater Vancouver Area (42%) and slightly below the Canadian average (23%).

The housing crisis affects individuals and families across the country, but for racialized immigrants who are already struggling with multiple barriers to integration in their Canadian communities, the crisis is even more severe. The following data tracks racialized individuals (both Canadian-born and immigrants) and shows that rental spending and overcrowding percentages between racialized groups differ notably:

- Among immigrants, more families live in overcrowded conditions (see the glossary, p. 38).
- Korean, Chinese, and Arabic households pay comparatively more of their income to rent.
- Filipino households pay comparatively less of their income to rent but also are most often living in overcrowded conditions (and possibly pooling rent).

Racialized groups	% paying more than 30% of income on rent	% living in overcrowded conditions
Korean	51%	14%
Chinese	48%	9%
Arab	46%	25%
S-E Asian	43%	19%
West Asian	41%	17%
Japanese	39%	9%
Black	36%	15%
Latin American	35%	15%
South Asian	33%	27%
Multi-Race	33%	7%
Filipino	16%	28%

Access the **Immigrant Profile for the Capital Region:**



## Finding Housing for Vulnerable Populations

Among immigrants, vulnerable populations such as refugees and other displaced people (such as Ukrainians on CUAET visas) struggle the most. For them, the housing crisis may exacerbate the trauma of displacement and foster a sense of helplessness in a new country.

Throughout 2023, the Refugee Readiness Team of Vancouver Island (RRT-VI) with the assistance of the Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership (GVLIP) conducted focus groups and surveys to better understand the experiences of these vulnerable groups. Data from 65 refugees and displaced Ukrainians, 21 service providers, and 23 landlords or hosts provides helpful context for this guide.<sup>5</sup>

**Displaced Ukrainians and refugees struggle with high rental prices and limited housing options** across Vancouver Island with 60% of participants reporting that they spend more than 50% or even more than 70% of their income on rent, indicating that housing is a seriously high financial burden for them.

**Challenges finding housing are not just experienced by immigrants**, but also by their hosts, sponsors, and settlement workers who are supporting them in their search for housing.

**Communication challenges, including language barriers, pose difficulties.** Several landlords in the study reported finding renting to refugees rewarding and stated they would be open to renting to refugees again. However, tenants, hosts, and landlords did express concerns about their ability to communicate with one another.

Access the  
**RRT-VI  
Regional  
Housing  
Report:**



**Hosts, sponsors, and settlement workers agree that well-rounded community support makes a difference.**

### 3. No Scapegoats: Focus on Fixing the System

In the current political climate, there is an abundance of rhetoric blaming immigration for the housing crisis. Immigrants feel this strongly: in a survey conducted by Leger, nearly 7 in 10 new Canadians shared that they “think politicians are using immigration as a “red herring” to distract from other factors contributing to the lack of affordable housing, such as government policies and economic conditions.”<sup>6</sup>

Prentiss Dantzler, Director of the Housing Justice Lab at the University of Toronto says that with “some areas hav[ing] a higher percentage of population of new immigrants than they used to... they [new immigrants] get used as a scapegoat for the housing crisis. *People forget that this housing crisis is not new: we’ve been dealing with this for a long time.* There’s a lot of blame to go around, but a lot of time people are focusing on other individuals and not focusing on *the housing system itself.*”<sup>7</sup>

At the heart of this work is the conviction that creating **affordable, livable, suitable housing is good for everyone.** Let’s strive for a time of housing abundance!

### 4. Purpose of this Guide

This document was created to foster dialogue on immigrant housing challenges and help build an immigrant housing action plan together. We hope that you engage with these materials in a way that does not divide or scapegoat but instead encourages you to:

- recognize the complexity of the housing crisis and how that affects immigrants and refugees,
- focus on fixing systems and building relationships of trust, and
- imagine a future of housing abundance.



Through the stories, questions, and promising practices gathered in this document, we aim to:

- provide a foundation for meaningful conversations,
- foster new collaborations and partnerships,
- co-create community actions to reduce the pressure that the housing crisis has on immigrants and refugees.

This guide contains 10 stories that recount the experiences of immigrants and refugees who are searching, finding, and living in rental housing in the South Island region and other areas on Vancouver Island. The stories were gathered through a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with service providers. They are clustered around five themes:

1. Systemic challenges specific to immigrants and refugees
2. The effect of family size on finding housing
3. Isolation from immigrants communities and services when living in the suburbs
4. Mental health and finding a safe home
5. Racism and cultural differences

These themes and stories have been created with the help of the GVLIP Housing Sector Table and other community partners who work in the housing and/or immigrant services sector on Vancouver Island.

The stories included here represent the cumulative experiences of immigrants arriving on Vancouver Island, as recounted by their settlement workers and other community support workers. All personal details have been altered to maintain privacy and confidentiality. While none of these stories correspond exactly to any one individual's story, these are the voices of real immigrants recounting actual experiences.

While reading these stories, please pay attention to:

- How the housing crisis plays out in the stories.
  - For example, how is the housing crisis compounded for immigrants?
- Systemic issues and barriers to affordable and suitable housing.
- Information sharing breakdowns or gaps (if any).
- Examples of bias and prejudice (if any).
- Intersections of identities and backgrounds at play in the stories.
  - Would the story change if other intersectional identities were at play: LGBTQIA2S+ identities, disabilities, religion, or other such identities and backgrounds?



- Aspects of the stories that might cause challenges for landlords.
  - How would the experiences differ when the landlord category changes (e.g., private landlords, housing corporations, management companies, temporary hosts)?
- Please keep in mind that the housing crisis is caused by a complex interplay of factors. Acknowledging that we do not know something (e.g., missing data or not knowing how a policy affects a population) can be a first step towards finding solutions.

**We hope this guide serves as a catalyst for collective action and positive change in our communities.**

## 5. Housing Equity for Immigrants: From Dialogue to Action

**After reading each story in this guide, please ask yourself the following:**

1. What **action, policy, and/or strategy** could help immigrants in these types of situations? Choose one and notice:
  - Is this a **short-term** fix or **long-term** solution?
  - Is this known and **well-tested** or new and **innovative**?
  - Is this **feasible** or **difficult**?
  - Who is covered by this action, what are the **(un)intended** consequences of this action / policy / strategy?
2. To implement this promising practice:
  - What **tasks** are the building blocks, what **tasks** would need to be completed?
  - **Who** should be part of designing and implementing those actions?  
**Who** would take (or have) **responsibility** for these tasks?
  - Do you see any **collaboration** or partnerships that would strengthen the approach?
  - What **resources and data** do you already have?
  - What resources and data **would you need**?
  - How might you be able to **get** the resources and data you need?
  - What would be a feasible **timeline** for this work?

**After working through the questions above, what is the first step that you will take to turn these ideas into action today?**

## II. Immigrant and Refugee Stories

### **Emotional Trigger Warning:**

*The following stories could remind you of situations you or your loved ones may have experienced. While these stories may offer a sense of validation, they may also cause feelings of trauma to resurface. Please approach this material with care and compassion for yourself. Our hope is that by sharing these narratives, this guide will help raise awareness, strengthen support systems, and foster collaboration toward addressing the housing crisis and advancing equity work throughout the region.*



### **1. When Systems Set You Up for Failure**

*The two following stories describe some of the systemic difficulties that Government-Assisted Refugees experience after arriving in Canada. While there might be good reasons for each of the implemented systems and processes, these stories show that they can have unintended effects that harm the people who should benefit from them. Each story includes a little of their history and their current situation.*

**These stories refer to specific immigration categories and statuses. For an explanation of these, please see the glossary (p. 35).**

### **From Financial Support to Systemic Challenges**

Soe Myint and Yuzana arrived in Canada from Myanmar as Government-Assisted Refugees. The young couple came with hopes of rebuilding their lives in Victoria, BC.

As is common, they were first housed in a hotel as a temporary accommodation and their resettlement team started the orientation process which included teaching them how renting works in Canada. There was a lot of information that was difficult to comprehend, and much of it was overwhelming, but they were grateful to have a team and a housing coordinator working with them and helping them. For example, the resettlement team would approach landlords and housing corporations as well as joining the couple on viewings and helping them understand rental contracts.

Soe Myint and Yuzana quickly learned that landlords wanted information on two crucial factors: their income and whether they had Canadian references. Because their primary income was based on one initial year of government assistance, many landlords were worried about the long-term stability of the couple's finances. These uncertainties, combined with the family's lack of references, made securing a rental exceedingly difficult.

When they finally were able to see the first place, they found mold and evidence of rats on the property and rejected the offer. As their stay at the hotel was now extended, the federal funding process started to put pressure on their resettlement team to secure housing for them and move them out of the hotel more quickly. The couple was urged to accept their next offer, suggesting that otherwise they would need to be evicted from the hotel.

This pressure made the couple feel they had little or no leverage, choice, or agency in the situation. Even when a private landlord asked for things that by law they should not request (like bank statements and tenant insurance), Soe Myint and Yuzana gave the landlord what they wanted because they did not want to lose the chance to rent a place. Finally, they moved out of the hotel after a three-month stay and had a place of their own.

Soe Myint and Yuzana now have a few months of rest in their apartment. The strict rules and limited time frame of their government assistance add to their stress. They worry about what will happen once the 12-month financial period ends, and they are on their own. They work hard to learn English to be ready to apply for jobs that pay enough to maintain their housing. But if they don't find a job by the end of this period there will be a gap of at least a couple of weeks without income, until they can receive other government assistance. What will happen when the rent needs to be paid then?



## **Child Benefit Payments: Making Hard Choices**

The Ndinga family arrived in Canada from the Democratic Republic of the Congo as resettled refugees. Mona and Kendi envisioned a life of safety and opportunity for their three small children, but soon found that this dream would be hard to realize and their journey toward stability would be long.

Affording a first apartment required a lot of careful calculation. They received \$765 shelter allowance per month with an extra \$200 as a housing supplement for their family of five. For less than \$1,000 a month, they would not be able to afford any housing for their family in the region. Luckily their resettlement team let them know that they would be able to receive up to an extra \$500 per month for shelter if they use at least 43% (\$774) of their Canada Child Benefit (CCB) payment towards rent. This meant that they would have a total of \$2,239 towards shelter.

Due to their family size, landlords insisted they rent a three-bedroom apartment even though they could barely afford it. To afford an apartment that cost about \$3,000 per month they ended up using another 42% of their CCB.

The three bedrooms were allocated so that the boy would have his own room, and the twin girls would share a space, while the parents would have their own room. But in truth, their children, still adjusting to the massive changes in their lives, were afraid to sleep alone. Every night, the children would end up in their parents' room, huddled close for comfort after waking from bad dreams.

Just like Kendi, Mona was eager to learn English and find work, but with no CCB left and no possibility of affording daycare at \$2,000 a month for their 4-year-old daughters, Mona stayed home with the twins while Kendi tried to find work. The family's income barely covered rent and food. This money was essential to their survival but stretched thin, leaving little for anything else.

Even affording food became a problem. Having fresh fruits, vegetables, and meat was a constant challenge. Grocery trips became stressful as they had to choose between cheaper processed food and the fresh items they knew were healthier for their children. They visited a food bank, but many of the foods were unfamiliar, and their young children refused to eat them.

Currently Mona dreams of growing some of her own food. She thinks of her favorites: yams, cassava, tomatoes, and peas! But all she can manage in their small and dark apartment is a few herbs sitting in the one window that gets enough light. It makes her feel guilty knowing she is unable to provide the healthy nourishment her children need. For Kendi and her, mealtimes are a painful reminder of the struggle they continue to face.

But there is joy as well when they see that their children are curious and eager to explore their new world. Their eldest now speaks English well, loves going to school, and has made great friends. He wants to do taekwondo like his best friend, and the girls dream of dancing, but the family simply can't afford it. Seeing them enjoy their new friends gives the parents hope but whenever they ask for toys or things their friends have, their hearts break and they feel that they are falling short of the life they had hoped to provide.



## 2. Either Too Large or Too Small: Effects of Family Size on Housing Searches

*Settlement and resettlement workers report that the most challenging families to find housing for are either very large families or single individuals, most notably single middle-aged women. The two stories below recount both these experiences.*

**These stories refer to specific immigration categories and statuses.**

**For an explanation of these, please see the glossary (p. 35).**

### **When Housing Does Not Fit**

The Karzai family, two parents and four children, arrived in Canada from Afghanistan seeking safety and a new start. The family of six had always been close but had grown even closer throughout their refugee journey. Being together gave them strength and resilience and it had paid off: look how far they had come, now arriving in Canada!

Having four children did not seem like many to them. Back home, other families had many more. They soon found out that Canadians thought their family was large and most landlords expressed surprise and discomfort upon hearing about the size of their family.

Finding a suitable apartment proved very difficult. Available units with three or four bedrooms were often prohibitively expensive and very few in number. The family wanted to be flexible, and because they were used to living in small quarters, said they'd be happy staying in a two-bedroom apartment: one bedroom for the parents, one for the three little ones, and the eldest daughter could sleep on the couch in the living room. This did not change their chances, landlords referred to the National Occupancy Standards or mentioned a potential increase in utility costs as an excuse to reject them. "You really need a 3- or 4-bedroom apartment," they would say.

The Karzai family was caught in an impossible circle: large apartments were not being built or, if available, were too expensive and their flexibility to make it work with smaller available apartments was continually rejected. What could they possibly do?

Eventually, their resettlement team managed to make a deal with a construction company that had a large house available that would eventually be demolished but in the meantime was available for rent.

Living there now means that, for the first time in a long while, they feel a glimmer of hope. The children are playing outside again, their laughter slowly returning. However, they know that their relief will be short-lived. Two years from now, they will receive an eviction notice because the house will have to come down. The family would then face again the challenge of finding new housing for their large household. Some people suggest that maybe the oldest child could move out early and live on her own. But she does not feel ready. Experiencing war and violence was hard. Her family is her main source of support. How could she leave that behind?

The parents lie awake at night, calculating expenses and worrying about the future. Despite their hard work and resilience, despite everything they have done to get their family to safety, their future is still uncertain.



## All Alone

Aamira, a 48-year-old woman from Sudan, arrived in Canada as a Government-Assisted Refugee. She felt full of energy to start again. She arrived alone but did not feel alone because she received resettlement support and government financial assistance for a year to help her succeed. As is the usual practice, she was moved to a hotel while waiting to find permanent housing.

Finding housing was hard, especially as a black woman in a majority white city. Despite submitting multiple applications, she often found that landlords ceased communication as soon as they learned that she was a black woman from Sudan. This persistent bias meant that her stay in the hotel was extended repeatedly, which made her feel like she had not really arrived after all.

Limited job prospects due to her still developing language skills and the need to support herself on a tight budget made it hard to find housing within her means. The math she and her settlement team needed to do was unforgiving: her financial support from the government came to \$1,250 per month. Even if she could find housing for about \$800-\$1,000 per month then she would have only \$200-\$400 left for monthly expenses.

With a budget like this, shared housing seemed the best option and she looked forward to being able to get to know some Canadians. It would certainly make it easier to integrate and learn English. Unfortunately, many potential roommates were in their 20s and unwilling to live with someone who was both older and from a different cultural background. She was surprised to learn that even some people from her own country didn't want to share housing. She thought about this a lot and concluded that perhaps they didn't want to be reminded of the difficult times they had experienced in their homeland.



She tried to find a safe and stable place to live for a year. Now her financial support from the government has run out, and she faces homelessness. Settlement workers suggest she stay in a shelter for a few days. However, this brings back memories of the trauma and sexual abuse she experienced during her prolonged stay in a refugee camp. Just the thought of staying for a night at a place that reminds her of the camp causes panic attacks. She would rather sleep on the street than enter a shelter.

Luckily, settlement workers found her a place in a transition house where she can stay safely with other survivors of gender-based violence. But this is only a temporary solution. Worries about her future keep bothering her day and night. She misses her sister in Sudan but knows that her Refugee Travel Document does not allow her to go back, even for a short visit. Now she feels truly all alone.



### 3. Missing Connections: Suburban and Remote Living as Challenge

*Our perceptions of what constitutes an ideal and safe place to live might vary based on people's experiences. While many Canadians think that a quiet leafy suburb is ideal, not everyone feels comfortable there. As well, when immigrants find housing in very remote places, this creates extra challenges. The following stories highlight what some of those challenges are.*

**These stories refer to specific immigration categories and statuses. For an explanation of these, please see the glossary (p. 35).**

#### **Isolation and Lack of Community**

The Abadiano family was excited about their move from the Philippines to Canada! Being used to living in a large city they dreamt of living downtown, where could easily access work, schools, the Filipino Cultural Community Centre, and make friends.

The high cost of downtown housing quickly forced them to rethink that dream. Property managers downtown used different excuses to reject their applications. Forced to look elsewhere they turned to private landlords and found a basement apartment in a suburban area. They were worried that living in a dark basement, without access to a yard would affect their mental health and would restrict their children's movement, but at least it was a place to start.

The first thing they noticed was the quiet. The hustle and bustle of a lively neighbourhood had always made them feel safe. They were used to having people around and eyes always on the street. The Canadian suburbs felt very different. There were no people walking around, no sound of people working or playing in yards or sitting on their front steps. There were no neighbourhood stores within walking distance.

They could hear their landlord walking around upstairs and having people over, but the family did not worry about the noise. Unfortunately, their landlord did complain about noise when their children played inside or when they invited friends over for a gathering. Using any kitchen appliance after 8:00pm would result in a note or comment. The landlord even recorded their children playing on the sidewalk! They did not know the landlord well and he communicated mostly through knocking on walls or floors when it was too loud or by leaving angry messages on their door. They tried to be as quiet as they could be, but they had to be able to live as well.

The bus service was infrequent and unreliable, making it nearly impossible for them to plan their work schedules, social activities, and school commutes. Arranging grocery shopping without a car was challenging. In the fall and winter, they were afraid when they waited at badly lit bus stops in the dark. This constant stress left them feeling isolated and disconnected from the vibrant community life they had hoped to be part of.

Now they are thinking about purchasing a car but know that would come with high insurance premiums—exacerbated by their lack of driving experience in Canada. A settlement worker had mentioned that an e-bike might also help. They are curious about this idea. Maybe there is another way around some of these challenges. They are trying hard to make it work.



## **Remote Location Complicates Rebuilding**

Iryna, her twins, and their little dog, Luna, had to flee their home when the war broke out in Ukraine. With little savings, they were uncertain about their sudden migration. Fortunately, Canada offered them a temporary opportunity to find safety through the CUAET visa.

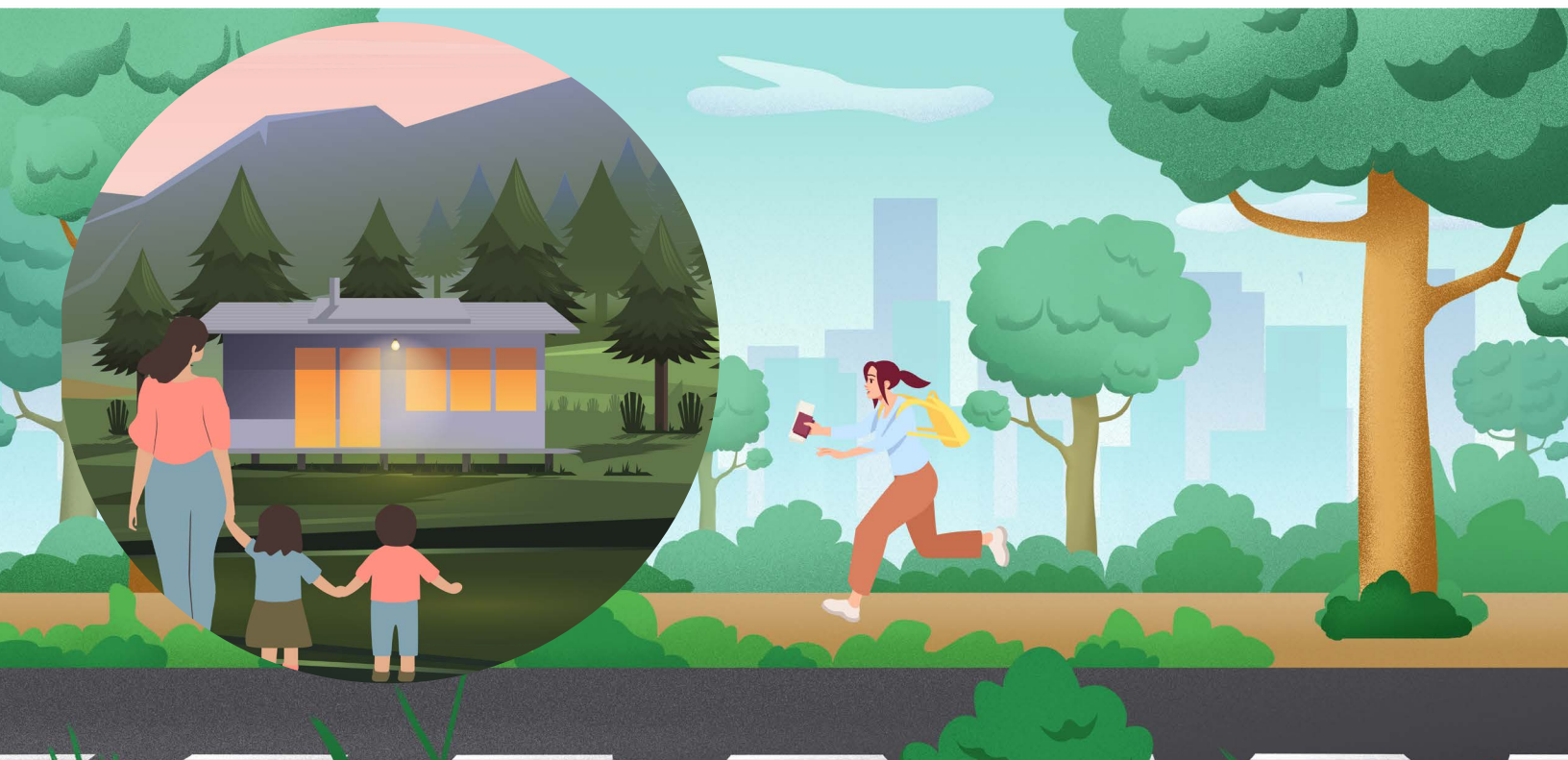
Upon arrival, they were hosted by an elderly couple in Port Renfrew who provided them with a tiny vacation house on their property for a month for free. The couple's son lived in the main house and was usually busy with his own life, leaving Iryna and her children largely to themselves. While the privacy was welcome, it also felt lonely and isolating. The remote location made it difficult to access essential services such as getting a Social Insurance Number or opening a bank account and the children had to take a 1.45 hr school bus ride to Sooke to start middle school.

The remote location also hindered Iryna's job search. Attending job fairs in Victoria required complicated arrangements such as asking neighbours for a ride to Sooke and then taking a bus, easily taking up to three hours one way.

The first month went by quickly but their hosts were accommodating, allowing them to stay longer than initially planned. As well, the Ukrainian community in Victoria was welcoming, providing contacts for potential rentals. However, the family faced challenges finding an affordable place that met the National Occupancy Standards: three bedrooms, one for her, one for her teenage son and one for her teenage daughter. Most landlords did not want the children to share a room. Also, many affordable apartments were not pet-friendly, and abandoning Luna was not an option for them.

Currently, through word of mouth, they are in contact with someone in Sooke who was going on vacation for six months. He has offered his house for a reasonable sum with the expectation that they will do some minor upkeep. This temporary solution provides some stability for now. Iryna has taken a job cleaning hotels, which is a far cry from her previous profession as a nurse, but it allows her to start saving a little money to make their next move and eventually find a long-term home. They find Canada to be a very welcoming country and all of them now speak English and have made friends. The sense of safety they feel here makes them want to live here longer or even permanently.

It looks like the Canadian government will allow them to stay for an additional three years if they apply for Work and Study permits in time. While their continuing temporary status adds insecurity and affects their mental health, Iryna and the children are beginning to rebuild their lives. They think they will be fine if they manage to find permanent housing before their snowbird landlord returns.



## 4. Housing and Mental Health: Finding Safe and Stable Housing

*A home is a place where you can find belonging and safety. When that stability is disrupted, the mental health of an individual or the whole family can be seriously affected. In this section, we present two stories about how existing trauma might affect housing stability and how the search for a home can affect one's mental health.*

**These stories refer to specific immigration categories and statuses. For an explanation of these, please see the glossary (p. 35).**

### **When Fear Follows You**

After escaping war in Somalia and spending a long time living in a refugee camp in Kenya, the Ali family arrived in Canada with a mix of relief and hope. Ahmed and Faduma with their 6-year-old daughter Malika, looked forward to rebuilding their lives in a peaceful environment.

As recent immigrants, they had no references, no Canadian credit history, and no immediate job offers since their English was limited. This made it difficult to find a landlord willing to rent to them. After a long and stressful search, they finally managed to secure a small apartment run by a property management company in a busy part of the city.

Malika struggled to adjust to the new environment. She often screamed and cried, especially at night, when the experiences of her young life haunted her. Her loud outbursts quickly became a source of tension in their new home.

The neighbours, unaware of the Alis family's traumatic background, soon began to complain about the noise. They found it difficult to understand why Malika was so loud and frequently knocked on the wall to express their frustration. The management company sent them warnings but did not want to invest too much time in settling this dispute. The language barrier exacerbated the problem, as Ahmed and Faduma struggled to communicate effectively with their neighbours and the landlord about Malika's trauma and their situation. Living in the small apartment became tense and the neighbours were constantly angry with them, even asking them why they did not go back to their own country.

But even if they would feel safe there, they cannot return because their refugee travel document would not allow them.

Currently, with help from their resettlement team, Faduma has reached out to a local counselling centre that provides services for refugees. They were assigned a counselor who specializes in working with children and families affected by trauma, and they are now attending regular therapy sessions. Slowly Malika is healing. She still wakes up at night but less frequently. But the neighbours are still upset. Malika's healing does not seem to be quick enough for the landlord who has just issued a final warning, threatening eviction if the noise does not stop completely.

The Alis realize that a detached house might offer the peace and space they need for Malika to recover and for their family to live without constant fear of eviction. However, their finances are limited. They just need some time to heal, grow, and learn how to best find their place in this new community. That is not too much to ask, is it?



## **Things Can Change Quickly: From Thriving to Hidden Homelessness**

Priya was excited to set off on her own: she had just arrived in Canada with a great job offer she had secured before her arrival. Work went well, she quickly adapted, and her employer discovered in her a reliable and hard worker. She even found a place to live! She would be sharing an apartment with Mary. She had her own room with no lock on the door, but she saw no reason not to trust Mary.

Everything went well for the first couple of months. However, as Priya began to settle in, she looked forward to finding a separate place for herself. She visited a potential rental, got approved by the landlord, and signed the lease. She planned to inform Mary about her move soon, giving her time to find another roommate.

The next day at work, Priya received a call from her new landlord, who rescinded the offer, stating that Priya was unreliable. Shocked, Priya discovered that Mary had gone into her room, found the new lease papers, and called the new landlord with false complaints. This invasion of privacy and slander left Priya feeling betrayed and violated. When she contacted the police, they dismissed it as a roommate dispute, not a landlord-tenant issue, and could offer no help.

Even more determined to move now, Priya continued her search for a new place while keeping her documents private. No longer able to trust Mary, she began to feel insecure and unsafe.

The situation took another turn when her workplace faced unexpected bad news and had to lay off several of their new hires, including Priya. Without long-term employment references and having to rely on employment insurance income for the time being, her housing options dwindled, and her stress increased.



Now, Priya is living on a friend's couch, dedicating all her time to job hunting. She is stressed, deflated, and doubts herself. The sleepless nights do not help when trying to find work. Despite her efforts and her strong start, Priya has become one of the many people experiencing hidden homelessness, struggling to find employment and secure stable housing in a new country.



## 5. Racism and Cultural Differences

*Many racialized immigrants face racism and bias when looking for a place to live. The following two stories speak to harmful and hateful interactions, conflict, and misunderstanding.*

**These stories refer to specific immigration categories and statuses.**

**For an explanation of these, please see the glossary (p. 35).**

### **Facing Racism and Neighbour Conflict**

The Lee family arrived in Canada with a sense of excitement. The family consisted of parents, Jun and Mei, and their two young children. Excited and eager to settle, they began their search for a suitable home.

Thrilled to find a beautiful house listed at a surprisingly affordable price, Jun and Mei didn't think twice about securing the deal and paid the deposit online. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a scam and the house they paid for did not exist. The family was devastated, realizing they had lost a large chunk of their money to a cruel trick. They felt so much shame that they felt inhibited from taking any possible legal action.

Determined to move forward, Jun and Mei eventually found good employment that matched their qualifications. With their combined incomes, they now could afford to rent a townhouse in a great neighbourhood, complete with some shared green space for the children to play in. The family was overjoyed, thinking their hardships were finally behind them.

However, their joy was short-lived. They soon discovered they had an exceptionally difficult neighbour, an older woman who seemed to take issue with everything they did. She looked at them with suspicion and refused to return their greetings. The landlord frequently received complaints about "weird smells" or "loud noises" made by the children, even when the children were sleeping. Her harassment was relentless, and the police were called. The police determined that this was a situation that the family and the neighbour would have to work out together. The parents tried to shield their children from the hostility, but the strain was evident. They felt scared and belittled.

The situation escalated when the neighbour threatened to call the Ministry of Children and Family Development, suggesting that the children might be taken away from them.

Now, the constant complaints and threats are weighing heavily on the Lee family, and they wonder whether they should move. But their children have finally started to adjust to their new school and make friends. The thought of losing their home and the stability they had just begun to build is devastating. Despite their efforts to integrate and contribute to their community, they feel unwelcome.



## **When Cultural Differences Prevent Understanding**

The Hassan family, a group of privately sponsored refugees from Syria, arrived in Canada with hope. They were overjoyed to have found Canadian sponsors making it possible for them to come.

Their sponsors provided 12 months of financial assistance and dedicated a significant amount of time to helping them adjust to their new life. But because they received their sponsor's financial support, they would not be eligible for subsidized housing, which made it difficult to find something for this family of three.

Once they found a place to live, they quickly discovered that they had trouble understanding many of the systems in Canada. For example, the family was confused about Canadian recycling practices. The little hand-made drawings the company had put on the bins did not help them to understand what needed to go where. Neighbours complained constantly and seemed increasingly angry when they made a mistake, but did not explain what they needed to do.

The first year was full of such misunderstandings. Their neighbours and the management company did not have the cultural competencies to help or even know how to talk to them. The worst moment came when the family tried to clean the kitchen by hosing down the floor. Being used to concrete buildings with drains in the floors, this was not uncommon in their previous residence in Syria. Here it resulted in significant water damage, and the sponsors had to use all their diplomacy to prevent eviction. The Hassans felt embarrassed as they continually had to reach out to their sponsors to mediate. They felt at a loss. They really tried to understand what was expected, but the neighbours would complain, and the property manager sent them numerous warnings they could not read.

As the sponsorship ended, the family encountered financial difficulties. Initially supported by their sponsors but now on income assistance, they struggled to afford rent. Landlords were hesitant to rent to them, doubting their financial reliability without the sponsors' backing. Many of these landlords had no experience negotiating with people from different cultural backgrounds.

The Hassans are resilient and despite struggling with language barriers have found employment. The family has moved to a small apartment in a different building. Their child has changed schools again, which has disrupted his friendships and feeling of stability. But they work hard and have no intention of becoming homeless. They will do everything they can to stay housed.



### III. Summary of Common Housing Challenges

Navigating the housing market can be especially challenging for immigrants. They come across difficulties beyond affordability. It is important to understand these complexities to develop effective solutions that help immigrants secure safe and stable housing. The information below summarizes the common issues found in the stories presented in this guide. The list is not exhaustive but provides a detailed picture of the current housing situation.

#### **Availability:**

- The housing market is currently facing a severe shortage, with vacancy rates as low as 1-2%.
- The lack of affordable housing with sufficient bedrooms for large families forces them into smaller, unsuitable spaces.
- Multi-generational families living together, which is a common arrangement in many cultures, are often not welcomed by landlords. National Occupancy Standards limit the number of people per bedroom, and, even though these standards are not law, landlords tend to use them as a reason for refusal.
- Refugees are finding themselves competing to become tenants with other immigrants, other vulnerable populations, and established residents. It is almost impossible for immigrants to win this competition due to a lack of references, credit history, savings, and employment. Landlords favor tenants with local employment and credit history.

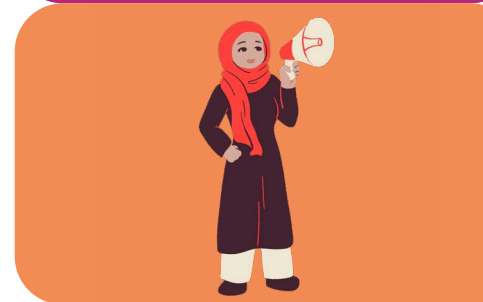
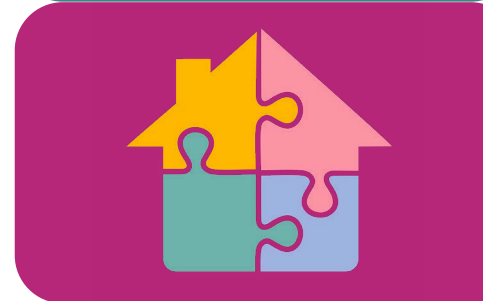
#### **Affordability:**

- The high overall cost of living, including rising rents, often takes recent immigrants by surprise and usually leads to financial difficulties. Many immigrants end up spending over 50-70% of their income on housing, which leaves very little for other essentials. As a result, some families must allocate their child benefits towards rent, which reduces the amount of funds available for their children's needs.
- High prices are causing families to relocate to distant suburbs, small apartments, or dark basements, impacting their lifestyle, health, and well-being.

- While some refugee groups receive government assistance, this is temporary (12 months), leading landlords to question long-term payment reliability. Gaps in income between the end of government assistance and the start of social services or the first paycheck at work can lead to rent payment issues.
- Single immigrants' income from government assistance is insufficient for independent housing. Shared bedroom costs are often too high, leaving little for other necessary expenses.
- Increasing prices force people to leave their rentals and seek cheaper, temporary solutions like living in houses scheduled for demolition, which affects their stability. BC Housing offers more permanent affordable rentals, but the waiting list is extremely long.

**Discrimination:**

- Many immigrants face discrimination based on their ethnicity or nationality, which complicates their ability to secure housing. Refugee families often face discrimination from landlords based on their family-size or cultural practices. This makes it extremely difficult for larger families to secure housing, even when they find properties that could accommodate them. Landlords may use National Occupancy Standards or utility cost concerns as excuses to reject them.
- Age, language barriers, and cultural differences lead to rejections in shared housing situations for single people, especially when older people are involved.
- Common social events, such as social gatherings and dinners or even children playing, often lead to noise complaints. Small tensions such as these can quickly escalate into threats of eviction or police visits. Police visits raise worries about their family's future and often include a fear of government interventions such as the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) taking their children away.



## **Eviction:**

Newcomer families are often at a higher risk of eviction due to language barriers, financial instability, discrimination, and a lack of knowledge about tenancy laws.

## **Hidden Homelessness:**

Immigrants experience hidden homelessness, having to rely on relatives or friends for temporary accommodation, rather than having a permanent place to live.

## **Lack of Awareness and Education:**

Immigrants often lack knowledge of local tenancy laws and their rights as tenants, leaving them prone to exploitation. They may also face challenges when adapting to expected Canadian rental practices, such as managing utilities, waste disposal, and noise levels.

## **Language Barriers:**

While many immigrants to this region (96% according to 2021 census) have good English-speaking skills, some of the most vulnerable immigrants, such as refugees, may have limited or no understanding of English. This complicates communication with landlords and neighbours. Navigating housing services, legal resources, and support systems is especially challenging without adequate language skills and may lead to unresolved conflicts and frustrations.

## **Rental Scams:**

Immigrants are frequently targeted by rental scams, such as being asked to pay deposits for non-existent apartments. These scams exploit their lack of familiarity with the local rental market.

## **School Placement Tied to Housing:**

Children's school placements are dependent on their family's housing situation because school catchment areas are tied to the current family address. Frequent moves due to housing instability can disrupt immigrant children's education and mental health. This adds another layer of stress for families already dealing with housing insecurity.



## Social Isolation:

Refugees who live in the suburbs may experience social isolation. Urban areas provide many refugees with a feeling of safety and community, in addition to having access to cultural hubs, language-specific services, and other support networks. The suburban environment, in contrast, can be isolating and lonely, with fewer community resources and social opportunities. This isolation can have a detrimental impact on mental health and overall well-being.

## Transportation Challenges:

Living in the suburbs often means long waits for infrequent buses. This lack of reliable public transportation makes it difficult for immigrants and refugees to access employment opportunities, healthcare, and social services.

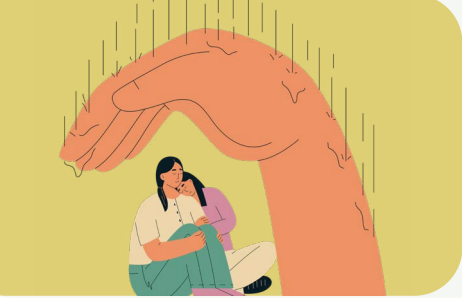
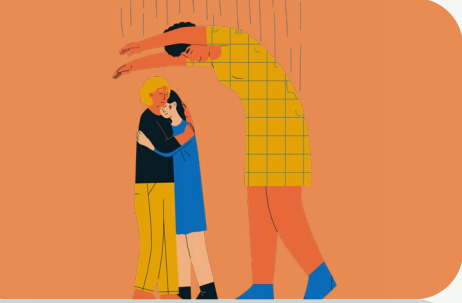
Some families feel compelled to buy cars, which adds to their financial burden. This also limits their ability to save money and improve their living conditions.

## Trauma:

Many refugees arrive with physical and emotional traumas that affect them in various ways. This complicates their search for safe and affordable permanent housing.



We hope that the resources shared in this guide have sparked ideas for collaborations, opportunities, and concrete action. **Please add them below.**



# IV. Glossary

## GENERAL IMMIGRATION TERMS

- 1. Immigrants:** Persons who were not born in Canada and immigrated to Canada under a wide variety of immigration streams (e.g., economic immigrants, family class, refugees). Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this group.
- 2. Recent Immigrants:** Immigrants who have arrived in Canada in the last five years.
- 3. Immigrant Serving Organization:** These organizations are also called immigrant welcome centres or settlement agencies. They provide a wide range of support for immigrants such as English language instruction and helping immigrants access housing, healthcare, and employment. These organizations are funded by federal and provincial governments and their services are free.
- 4. IRCC:** Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, a department of the federal government that oversees immigration policy development and implementation.
- 5. Resettlement Team / Worker:** Professionals who work at an immigrant-serving organization and assist refugees during their first year in Canada.
- 6. Settlement Team / Worker:** Professionals who work at an immigrant-serving organization and assist immigrants. They also assist refugees *after* their first year in Canada.

## IMMIGRATION STATUSES

- 1. Permanent Residents (PR Status):** Persons who have legally immigrated to Canada but are not yet Canadian citizens. Permanent residents can live, work or study anywhere in Canada. They pay taxes, are subject to all Canadian laws, and get most social benefits that Canadian citizens receive. They can apply for Canadian citizenship. Permanent Residents cannot vote, run for political office, or hold jobs that need a high-level security clearance. Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR) or Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR), economic immigrants, and family-sponsored immigrants have PR status on arrival. Asylum Claimants, CUAET visa holders, temporary workers and international students *do not* have PR status. [\[IRCC – PR Status\]](#)<sup>8</sup>
  - a. Refugees:** people who have a well-founded fear of returning to their country of origin based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinions. It also includes people who have been seriously and personally affected by civil war, armed conflict, or a violation of human rights. Some refugees apply for refugee status from Canada. Others are referred for resettlement to Canada by the United Nations or another referral organization. Referred immigrants receive resettlement support from government sources, organizations, private sector groups, or combined support from the Government of Canada and private sector partners. Refugees in Canada hold PR status.

- **Government-Assisted Refugees (GAR):** Refugees who were referred for resettlement and receive financial and other support from the Government of Canada or Province of Quebec for up to one year after their arrival in Canada. GARs hold PR status upon arrival. [[Glossary - Canada.ca](#)]<sup>9</sup>
  - **Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSR):** Persons who are sponsored by a group of private sponsors and receive financial and other support from this group for one year after their arrival. Private sponsors are known as Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) or Community Sponsors. PSRs hold PR status upon arrival. [[Glossary - Canada.ca](#)]<sup>9</sup>
  - b. **Economic Immigrants:** Immigrants who are selected for their ability to participate in the labour market and are admitted under a variety of worker programs. Economic immigrants have PR status upon arrival. [[StatCan – Immigration Status](#)]<sup>10</sup>
  - c. **Family-Sponsored Immigrants:** Immigrants sponsored by family members such as a spouse, partner, parent, and other family members. Often these family members have arrived in Canada under an economic class. They have PR status upon arrival. [[StatCan – Immigration Status](#)]<sup>10</sup>
2. **Temporary Residents:** Persons who are in Canada legally for a short period. They pay taxes and are subject to all Canadian laws. Temporary residents include students, temporary foreign workers, and CUAET Visa Holders. [[Glossary - Canada.ca](#)]<sup>9</sup>
3. **Asylum Claimants:** Persons who have left their country and are seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who have not yet been legally recognized as refugees and are waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. They have a permit to work but do not have PR or temporary resident status. Asylum Claimants pay taxes and are subject to all Canadian laws. [[Amnesty - Asylum Seeker](#)]<sup>13</sup>
- a. **CUAET visa holders:** The [Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel](#) (CUAET) visa is a special measure the Government of Canada has introduced to support the people of Ukraine. It offers Ukrainians extended temporary status to work and study in Canada for three years and can be extended for another three years. CUAET holders *do not* have refugee status in Canada, they *do not* have a PR status.. [[Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel - Canada.ca](#)]<sup>14</sup> As of March 31, 2025, CUAET visa holders will not receive settlement support from the federal government.
  - b. **Temporary foreign workers:** Workers who are foreign nationals authorized to enter and to remain in Canada for a limited period with the appropriate documentation. They *do not* have PR status. [[Temporary Foreign Workers In Canada](#)]<sup>12</sup>
  - c. **International Students:** Temporary residents who are legally authorized to study in Canada on a temporary basis. They *do not* have PR status. [[IRCC – Foreign Student](#)]<sup>9</sup>

- 4. Refugee Travel Document:** Persons who have left their country and are seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country, but who have not yet been legally recognized as refugees and are waiting to receive a decision on their asylum claim. They have a permit to work but do not have PR or temporary resident status. Asylum Claimants pay taxes and are subject to all Canadian laws. [[Canadian Council for Refugees-Travel Information](#)]<sup>14</sup>

## OTHER TERMS

- **Affordable Housing:** In Canada, housing is considered “affordable” if it costs less than 30% of a household’s before-tax income. [[Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Affordable Housing](#)]<sup>15</sup>
- **BC Housing:** BC Housing develops, manages and administers a wide range of subsidized housing options across the province. [[Mission, Vision, Values | BC Housing](#)]<sup>16</sup>
- **Canada Child Benefit (CCB):** The Canada child benefit is administered by the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). It is a tax-free monthly payment made to eligible families to help with the cost of raising children under 18 years of age. The CCB may include the child disability benefit and any related provincial and territorial benefit programs. [[Government of Canada, Canada Child Benefit](#)]<sup>17</sup>
- **Hidden Homelessness:** The hidden homelessness population falls under the category of provisionally accommodated. It refers specifically to people who live temporarily with others but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing. Because they often do not access housing supports and services, they do not show up on standard statistics regarding homelessness. [[Hidden Homelessness | The Homeless Hub](#)]<sup>18</sup>
- **Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD):** The Ministry of Children and Family Development’s primary focus is to support all children and youth in British Columbia to live in safe, healthy and nurturing families and be strongly connected to their communities and culture. [[Ministry of Children and Family Development](#)]<sup>19</sup>
- **National Occupancy Standards (NOS):** The National Occupancy Standard was created in the mid-1980s by federal, provincial and territorial governments. It provides a common reference point for “suitable” housing, which focuses on how many people a dwelling unit accommodate given the number of bedrooms. *The NOS is not a rule, regulation or guideline* for determining if a given dwelling unit can be rented to or occupied by a given household. [[Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, NOS](#)].<sup>20</sup> Under the Standard, suitable housing is based on the following criteria:
  - A maximum of 2 persons per bedroom.
  - Household members living as part of a married or common-law couple share a bedroom with their partner.

- Lone parents, of any age, have a separate bedroom from their children.
  - Household members aged 18 or over have a separate bedroom.
  - Household members under 18 years of age of the same sex may share a bedroom.
  - Household members under 5 years of age of the opposite sex may share a bedroom if doing so would reduce the number of required bedrooms.
- **Overcrowded Conditions:** Any household arrangement that does not uphold the National Occupancy Standard is considered overcrowded. That might mean having three children in one bedroom, or multiple adults, who are not a married or common-law couple, sharing a bedroom.
  - **Refugee Readiness Team (RRT):** An RRT is a team or group organized to quickly respond to emerging refugee crises. RRT's were funded by the BC Government to respond to the arrival of Afghan refugees and displaced Ukrainians throughout 2021-2024.
  - **Right to Housing / National Housing Strategy (NHS):** The right to housing under international human rights law is understood as the right to a safe and secure home in which to live in security, peace and dignity, meeting standards of adequacy, including standards relating to legal security of tenure, affordability, habitability, availability of services, accessibility, location and culture. Canada's NHS Act of 2017 does not entrench the right to housing as an individual right, but commits the government to the progressive realization of the right to housing through a rights-based housing strategy and ensures meaningful participation of rights-holders in identifying systemic issues and appropriate remedies. [\[The National Right to Housing Network\]](#)<sup>21</sup>
  - **Temporary Housing for Refugees:** Temporary housing for refugees is meant to be short-term accommodation where refugees stay while transitioning to more permanent housing. This type of housing is often found through arrangements between immigrant-serving agencies and hotels.
  - **Transition house:** A transition house is a safe house for women and their children that are fleeing violence. Transition houses offer safe and supportive environments and provide access to services and support for decision-making, short-term shelter or housing, and referrals. [\[Transition House FAQ - Westcoast Community Resources Society \(wccrs.ca\)\]](#)<sup>22</sup>
  - **Vacancy Rate:** Vacancy rates are the percentage of unoccupied rental units in a given area, reflecting the availability of housing.

## Endnotes

1. Statistics Canada. (2021). Focus on Geography, Census of Population. [<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-re-censement/2021/as-sa/fogs-spg/index.cfm?Lang=E>]
2. Rentals.ca. (2024). September 2024 Rent Report. [<https://rentals.ca/national-rent-report>]
3. Fagan, M. (2023, February 22). Unaffordable housing in Greater Victoria. CBC News. [<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/greater-victoria-unaffordable-housing-1.6756930>]
4. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (2023). Urban rental market survey data: Vacancy rates. [<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/rental-market/urban-rental-market-survey-data-vacancy-rates>]
5. ICA Victoria. (2024). Regional housing report. [<https://www.icavictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Regional-Housing-Report-Ready-for-Digital-Use.pdf>]
6. OMNI News. (2024). Immigrant survey. [<https://www.omnitv.ca/omni-news-immigrant-survey>]
7. Burrati, G. (2024, October 3). Majority of new Canadians feel they are being unfairly blamed for housing crisis: OMNI poll. OMNI News. [<https://edmonton.citynews.ca/2024/10/03/majority-new-canadians-unfairly-blamed-housing-crisis-omni-poll/>]
8. Government of Canada. (n.d.). Understanding permanent resident status. [<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/new-immigrants/pr-card/understand-pr-status.html>]
9. Government of Canada. (n.d.). Glossary. [<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/immigration-citizenship/helpcentre/glossary.html>]
10. Statistics Canada. (2024). Immigrant status in Canada. [<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-633-x/2024001/sec3-eng.htm>]
11. Government of Canada. (2022, March). Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel. [<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2022/03/canada-ukraine-authorization-for-emergency-travel.html>]
12. Library of Parliament. (2019). Temporary Foreign Workers in Canada. [[https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en\\_CA/ResearchPublications/201936E](https://lop.parl.ca/sites/PublicWebsite/default/en_CA/ResearchPublications/201936E)]
13. Amnesty International. (n.d.). Refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants. [<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/#:~:text=An%20asylum%20seeker%20is%20a,decision%20on%20their%20asylum%20claim>]
14. Canadian Council for Refugees. Travel outside of Canada for refugees. [<https://ccrweb.ca/en/travel-outside-canada-refugees>]
15. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (n.d.). About affordable housing in Canada. [<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/about-affordable-housing/affordable-housing-in-canada>]
16. BC Housing. (n.d.). Mission, vision, and values. [<https://www.bchousing.org/about/mission-vision-values>]
17. Government of Canada. (n.d.). Canada Child Benefit overview. [<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview.html>]
18. Homeless Hub. (n.d.). About homelessness: Hidden homelessness. [<https://homelesshub.ca/collection/population-groups/hidden-homeless>]
19. Government of British Columbia. (n.d.). Ministry of Children and Family Development. [<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/children-and-family-development>]
20. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. (n.d.). National occupancy standard. [<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/provincial-territorial-agreements/investment-in-affordable-housing/national-occupancy-standard>]
21. Housing Rights Canada. (n.d.). Right to housing: Legislation in Canada. [<https://housingrights.ca>]
22. West Coast Community Resource Society. (n.d.). Transition house FAQ. [<https://wccrs.ca/transition-house-faq>]

# Who Are We?

## Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria

Newcomers make our communities stronger: economically, culturally and socially. To ensure their success, the Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria (ICA) plays a critical role in helping immigrants get a positive start to their new lives in Canada by providing the services and resources they need to thrive.

As an award-winning organization, ICA takes a direct and holistic approach to helping set up immigrants for success. ICA creates essential pathways for immigrants by offering wide-ranging services that help immigrants access housing, healthcare and employment as well as English language instruction and mentorship. Alongside direct services to immigrants, ICA helps Greater Victoria be a more welcoming place by providing anti-racism programming and community education. ICA has helped more than 100,000 newcomer as they transition to a new life in Canada. ICA is supported by federal and provincial governments, foundations, and individual donors.

## Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership

The Greater Victoria Local Immigration Partnership (GVLIP) is an ICA program that is a collaborative of more than 70 community partners focused on helping immigrants integrate and thrive in Greater Victoria. The GVLIP is responsive to the needs and aspirations of immigrants and the communities in which we live. By listening, informing, researching, connecting, and collaborating on community projects and events we foster partnerships with local governance, employers, educators, healthcare professionals and housing organizations to create a welcoming, equitable, inclusive, just, and well-connected community in which everybody has opportunities to thrive, learn, live, work, and play in safety. We have four priorities: health, housing, employment and equity. The GVLIP Housing Table, includes representatives from various organizations that play a key role in addressing housing issues at multiple levels in our community. The purpose of this table is to combine efforts in gathering essential valuable resources and devising effective solutions.

We are thankful for the financial support provided by the Government of Canada through Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).



Greater Victoria  
Local Immigration  
Partnership



Funded by:

Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Financé par :

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada