

# Private Refugee Sponsorship in **CANADA**

2021 Market study



**FINAL REPORT**

June 2021

**Environics  
Institute**  
For Survey Research

{ **REFUGEE** } 613

This study was conducted by the Environics Institute for Survey Research, in partnership with Refugee613.

### **REFUGEE 613**

Refugee 613 is a communications organization created by a network of service providers, refugee sponsors and community volunteers. It provides local, regional and national partners and the public with information, connection and inspiration to improve the welcome and integration of refugees and other newcomers. Refugee 613 has supported private sponsors of refugees with resettlement information and training since 2015. In 2020-21 it led the ReSpo project, bringing civil society and government together to develop sustainable sponsorship recruitment and retention strategies.

### **ENVIRONICS INSTITUTE FOR SURVEY RESEARCH**

Environics Institute for Survey Research conducts relevant and original public opinion and social research related to issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it has been changing, and where it may be heading.

More information contact:

**Keith Neuman, Ph.D.**

[keith.neuman@environics.ca](mailto:keith.neuman@environics.ca)



# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Knowledge and opinions about refugee sponsorship in Canada</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Awareness of refugee resettlement in Canada</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Knowledge and opinions about private refugee sponsorship</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Participation in private sponsorship of refugees</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Private sponsorship experience</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Interest in private sponsorship participation</b> .....	<b>17</b>





# Introduction

## Background

**Private refugee sponsorship in Canada.** Canada is in large measure a country of immigrants, and it stands out globally as a country that has been successful in accepting and integrating large numbers of people arriving from other parts of the world (as economic migrants, reunified family members, and refugees).

Also unique is the tradition of private sponsorship of refugees, that began formally with the introduction of the Immigration Act in 1976 which provided an essential legislative framework and opened the door to resettling over 60,000 refugees from Southeast Asia in 1978-80, mostly through private sponsorship. Between 1978 and 2015, about 275,000 privately-sponsored refugees resettled in Canada (along with another 300,000 who arrived through government assistance). In recent years, the civil war in Syria prompted a renewed interest in refugee sponsorship in Canada. Between 2015 and 2018, Canada accepted close to 52,000 refugees from Syria, about half of whom were privately sponsored by Canadian individuals and organizations (e.g., churches and synagogues).

Refugees to Canada are currently sponsored through one of three resettlement programs:

- **Government-assisted Refugees (GAR)** are referred to Canada by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) or the Turkish Government, and has historically placed an emphasis on selecting refugees based on their need for protection (e.g., those with higher needs than other refugee groups); the federal government covers the resettlement costs for the initial period;
- **Privately sponsored Refugees (PSR)** are identified and sponsored by individual Canadians, groups or organizations (e.g., mosques), and in most cases involve sponsorship by family members already in Canada and who fully cover the resettlement costs for the initial period; and
- **Blended Visa Office Referred Refugees (BVOR)** are referred by UNHCR, screened by Canadian visa officers for specific criteria, and then profiled on a designated website where private individuals and organizations can select them for sponsorship to Canada. The costs for the initial resettlement period are split evenly between the federal government and the private sponsors. The BVOR program is the smallest of the three, and comprises roughly 10 percent of the total number of refugees sponsored over the previous five years.

**BVOR program.** The BVOR program is by far the most distinctive of the three because it entails private citizens and non-governmental organizations stepping up to sponsor individuals and families with whom there was no prior relational connection (e.g., “welcoming the stranger”). Established in 2013, this resettlement program was the first of its kind, and is now being emulated in several other countries.

Unlike the PSR program (which is highly popular and often over-subscribed), the BVOR program has in some years struggled to fill its annual quota, except for the period in 2015-16 when the plight of Syrian refugees was widely publicized and prompted a surge of response from both the federal government and the Canadian public. A primary challenge for the program is the absence of any proactive marketing or promotion to the potential audience of Canadians who might have an interest in participating. There has yet to be any systematic documentation or research to identify the potential market for private sponsorship of refugees among the Canadian population.

## The research

To address this information gap, the Environics Institute for Survey Research partnered with Refugee613 to conduct the first-ever research to identify the potential market for private sponsorship of refugees unrelated to the sponsor (“welcoming the stranger”) within the Canadian population. The purpose of this research is to establish a foundation upon which to identify the target audience for BVOR participation and determine how to support promotion and recruitment to the BVOR program.<sup>1</sup>

More specifically, the research is aimed at:

- Identifying the types of individuals most likely to have an interest and capacity to sponsor refugees (e.g., demographic profile, lifecycle and lifestyle characteristics, organizational affiliations);
- Determining where the target audience(s) are located across Canada; and
- Identifying the principal motivations and barriers to participation in refugee sponsorship.

The research consisted of a survey conducted online with a representative sample of 3,000 Canadians ages 25 and over and with household incomes of \$30,000 or more (includes roughly 24 million individuals).<sup>2</sup> The survey was administered by Maru/Blue using their proprietary panel between January 27 and February 5, 2021, with the sample stratified to ensure representation by province, age, and gender, according to the most recent population statistics (2016 Census). The survey was conducted in English and French (as per the respondent’s preference).

## About this report

The following sections of the report present results from the survey, as well as key conclusions with respect to marketing the BVOR program. Detailed data tables are available under separate cover, which present the results for each survey question by population demographics and other relevant characteristics. All results are expressed as a percentage unless otherwise noted.

An additional analysis of the geographic location and associated profile of the BVOR target market based on this research will be conducted through a proprietary database platform available through Environics Analytics, to provide more precise estimates of the location and characteristics of the target market. The results of this work will be provided under separate cover.

## Acknowledgements

This research was made possible with the support from a number of individuals and organizations. The Environics Institute would like to acknowledge the essential substantive contributions of its lead partner, Refugee613 (Kaylee Perez, Louisa Taylor, Stirling Coulter-Hayward), as well as the research team at Maru/Blue (Chris Andaya, Rashmi Mukherjee, Viengtha Vongphachan).

Financial support was provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

Finally, the Institute would also like to express its appreciation to the 3,000 Canadians who took the time to share their perspectives and experiences.

---

<sup>1</sup> Promotion is much less of an issue for the PSR program because it is already widely used, in most cases by Canadians sponsoring family members.

<sup>2</sup> These age and household income parameters were used to define the target market for private refugee sponsorship in the Canadian population, to exclude those who may be too young or lack the necessary financial security to be prospective sponsors. The research did not include the Territories, given they encompass a small and remote population that offers limited potential for participation in the program.



# Executive Summary

This research provides an initial picture of what Canadians know and think about private refugee sponsorship, and their potential interest in participating in the program.

## Knowledge and opinions about refugee sponsorship

Given the high profile that refugee resettlement received over the past five or so years, it is not surprising that there is widespread public awareness. More than eight in ten Canadians say they know their country accepts refugees from Syria and other countries for permanent resettlement, and one quarter know or believe there are refugees currently living in their own community.

Moreover, it is well known that it is citizens like themselves, and not just governments, who have stepped up to sponsor refugees looking to resettle in Canada. Among those who know about refugee resettlement, more than six in ten correctly identified both private citizens and governments as responsible for refugee sponsorship. Notably, one in six (15%) says he or she knows someone else who has participated in sponsoring a refugee or refugee family to Canada. Four percent of all participants surveyed say they have been directly involved in providing volunteer support to a privately sponsored refugee or refugee family (this translates into close to one million Canadians with some direct involvement).

As well, public opinion toward private refugee sponsorship on balance is very positive. Among those who can offer an opinion, the program is seen to be effective rather than ineffective by a three-to-one margin. Positive views outweigh negative ones across the population, especially among those who are most knowledgeable and connected (e.g., who know about local refugees and people who have sponsored them). The small minority (13%) of Canadians who hold a negative attitude toward private sponsorship are either critical of how the program is run (e.g., burden on taxpayer, not adequately resourced) or have issues with refugees (e.g., do not integrate, take resources from more deserving Canadians).

## Potential participation in private sponsorship of refugees

What is the potential interest in getting involved in sponsoring a refugee or refugee family? Among Canadians in the target population (who have not already become involved), close to one-fifth say they could definitely (2%) or likely (15%) see themselves participating in the program at some point over the next few years. This translates into a pool of approximately four million Canadians who are open to potential recruitment into the program (with more than 450,000 in the “definite” consideration category).

Who is most apt to be represented in this potential pool of program participants? The greatest interest is expressed by those individuals who know someone else already involved with refugee sponsorship (45% in this group would consider participation) and those who believe the program is very effective (41%). Other factors less strongly linked to program interest include knowing about refugees living in one’s community, following refugee issues in the news, getting information through personal connections (e.g., family and friends, through word of mouth), a history of volunteering, and placing a strong importance on religious and spiritual beliefs in one’s own personal life.

By comparison, interest in private sponsorship is less strongly connected to where one lives and demographic characteristics. Education plays a role, but only to a notable degree for those with a post-graduate degree. Age also comes into play, but to a small degree: interest is marginally higher among Canadians 25 to 34 and those 70 plus. Interest is somewhat higher in Atlantic Canada and among town dwellers, while lower in the prairies and among suburbanites; but these differences are not substantial.

Finally, interest in private sponsorship varies little by gender, household income or financial security, occupation, ethnic background (i.e. white versus racialized), and religious faith. While many Canadians believe it is faith-based people and organizations who mostly commonly sponsor refugees, interest in the program is essentially the same whether

one identifies as Catholic, Protestant, a member of a non-Christian faith, or as having no religious affiliation (which is distinct from the importance placed on one's religious or spiritual beliefs).

What most interests Canadians who say they would consider sponsoring a refugee is the desire to help people in need, stated in general terms or in some cases more specific to the type of assistance (e.g., helping to find employment or housing). Those *not* open to considering involvement offer a number of reasons, most of which are about personal circumstances (e.g., not being able to afford to sponsor, lack of time, other commitments), while some are not interested in or believe in the program (e.g., it is more important to support other Canadians in need). A small proportion in this group cite issues they have with refugees (e.g., too many being admitted, are not to be trusted). Among those who would not consider getting involved as a refugee sponsor, few express interest in supporting the program by making a financial donation in lieu of active participation.

Canadians who would consider getting involved in refugee sponsorship are open to helping in a variety of ways. Among options presented, Canadians expressed the strongest interest in helping with language training and assistance with paperwork, but many also identified such tasks as driving refugees to appointments, helping with education, skills training and finding employment. Some expressed a preference for interacting directly with refugees while others would prefer working in the background, but a plurality say they are fine with taking on either role.

Given that few Canadians would know any of the details about how the BVOR program works, prospective participants have many questions and potential concerns that would need to be addressed before they would sign on to volunteer. Among a list of considerations presented on the survey, the one standing out as most important is logistical: Knowing one can count on receiving the necessary support if and when challenges arise during the sponsorship. Majorities say they would like to get answers to such questions as what supports are provided by the government, the time commitment expected of sponsors,

how long a sponsorship lasts, how much it costs to sponsor a refugee and, what skills and abilities are required. Not surprisingly, almost everyone open to getting involved says it would be helpful to learn from others who have already been involved with the refugee sponsorship program.

Other important considerations in whether or not to get involved in refugee sponsorship include not having to worry about raising funds to cover costs, being able to sponsor refugees from countries and regions experiencing particular crises, and meeting someone new from another country or culture. By comparison, less priority is given to who one participates with (e.g., friends, family, organization to which one already belongs) and having the opportunity to sponsor a refugee or family with whom one has a connection (either directly or through some type of association with the relevant country or region).

## Conclusion

Private sponsorship of refugees in Canada (and the BVOR program in particular) is well positioned to be more actively promoted among Canadians. The reality of refugee resettlement and private sponsorship is well known, and the program is well regarded by most, despite the absence of the type of advertising and communications often employed by governments to promote awareness and support for public-facing programs. A significant proportion of the population can see a local connection in terms of both refugees living in their communities and friends or acquaintances who are currently sponsoring them. The number of Canadians open to considering participation in the program is more than sufficient to provide the basis for addressing the current and future need for BVOR sponsors.

This research provides the starting point for identifying the target market for refugee sponsor recruitment, and this will be further refined through the additional geodemographic profiling to be conducted in the second stage of the project. This research can then be used to more precisely identify key audiences and the appropriate messaging for the selected target groups.





# Knowledge and opinions about refugee sponsorship in Canada

## Awareness of refugee resettlement in Canada

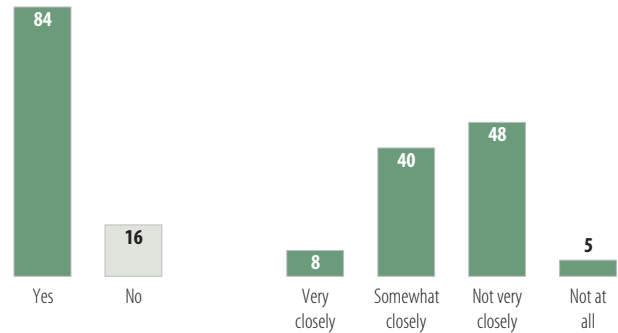
More than eight in ten Canadians know that Canada sponsors refugees for resettlement, although few follow this issue closely. One in four knows of, or believes there are, sponsored refugees living in their own community.

Canada has been resettling refugees for many decades, but it only gains public profile on those occasions when there is controversy or when the government mobilizes in response to an overseas crises. The latter took place in fall 2015 when Canada responded to the surging exodus from war torn Syria by resettling 25,000 refugees in a short space in time, through both government and private sponsorship. The plight of refugees made national and international headlines earlier that year with the publication of an evocative photo of the body of a young child refugee (Alan Kurdy) lying face down on a beach in Greece, prompting widespread demand for compassionate action.

More recently, refugees were in the news when large numbers started crossing the border from the USA into Quebec irregularly (i.e., not at manned border stations), to escape potential deportation by the Trump administration.

These events have contributed to widespread public awareness of the fact that Canada accepts refugees from Syria and other countries, for permanent resettlement. More than eight in ten (84%) Canadians say they have heard about this or are familiar with it. Notably, this high level of awareness is consistent across the country, in terms of province or region, community size, and socio-demographic characteristics. Familiarity is a bit higher among Canadians ages 70 and older (93%) and those with a post-graduate degree (90%), but in no identifiable group does the percentage drop below 78 percent.

## Awareness of refugee resettlement in Canada



Q.18

*Have you heard about, or are familiar with, Canada accepting refugees from Syria and other countries to come and resettle in this country permanently?*

Q.19

*(If YES to Q.18) How closely have you followed this issue of refugees being resettled in Canada?*

While the vast majority of Canadians know about refugee resettlement, most are not paying close attention. Among those with awareness, fewer than one in ten (8%) reports to be following the issue of refugee resettlement in Canada very closely. Almost nine in ten say they have done so somewhat (40%) or not very (48%) closely, with another five percent of this group indicating they are not following this issue at all.

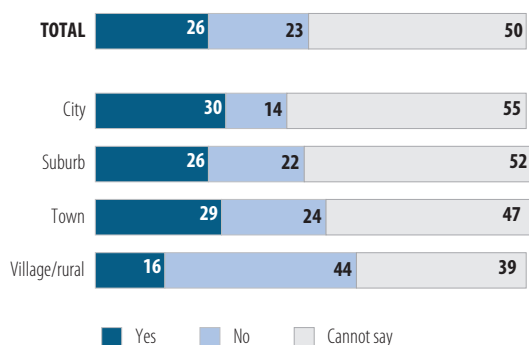
Attention given to refugee resettlement does not vary significantly across the population. No more than 10 percent in any identifiable group say they are either following the issue closely or not at all. Overall, those most apt to say they are following refugee issues at least somewhat closely include Albertans (53%), men (53%, versus 40% of women), Canadians with a post graduate degree (57%), those ages 70 and over (56%), and those who are active volunteers (56%).<sup>3</sup> This level of attention is least evident among francophones (37%) and Canadians ages 25 to 34 (37%).

Approximately 60,000 refugees have been resettled in Canada since 2015, the majority of which are residing in the major urban centres although many are settled in smaller towns across the country. Among Canadians aware of refugee resettlement (84% of the population covered in this survey), one in four (26%) knows about, or believes there are, sponsored refugees living in the community where they live.<sup>4</sup> A comparable proportion (23%) do not think this is not the case, while half (50%) are unable to say either way.

Knowledge of local refugees varies somewhat across the country. It is most widely reported by British Columbians (33%), by active volunteers (40%), and increases with education and age. This response is least apt to be given by Quebecers (17%), Canadians living in villages and rural areas (16%), those ages 25 to 34 (20%), and those who do not follow refugee issues closely or at all (20%).

## Are there sponsored refugees living in your own community?

By community type



Q.28

To the best of your knowledge, are there any sponsored refugees living in the community where you live?

<sup>2</sup> "Active volunteering" is defined on this survey as having done unpaid volunteer work for an organization over the past five years, involving five or more hours per month.

<sup>3</sup> This question was not posed to those survey participants who reported they were directly involved in sponsoring refugees (4% of the target population surveyed – see details below).

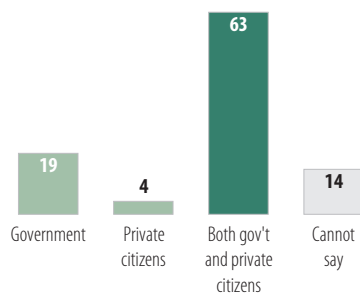
## Knowledge and opinions about private refugee sponsorship

Two-thirds of Canadians are aware that private citizens and groups are involved in refugee sponsorship, and on balance the program is seen as effective in resettling refugees in Canada. Support is strongest among the 15 percent who know someone else involved with the program.

**Knowledge of who sponsors refugees.** While the majority of Canadians do not follow refugee issues closely, there is notably strong public awareness of who takes on the responsibility for helping refugees when they arrive in the country. When asked who assists or sponsors refugees coming to Canada, more than six in ten (63%) Canadians say *both* the government and private citizens (This represents 53% of the target population). One in five (19%) believes only the government looks after refugees, while few (4%) say the responsibility rests with private citizens alone. Another one in six (14%) is unable to answer the question.

Knowledge of both government and private citizen responsibility for refugee resettlement is evident across the country, and is the majority response in all identifiable groups. It is most widely understood among Canadians who are older and more educated (for example, this is known by 50% of those 25 to 34, rising to 77% among those 70 and older). Those less apt to understand that both governments and private citizens sponsor refugees are most likely to place this responsibility on government alone, with this view most noticeable among Quebecers (24%), Canadians 25 to 34 (25%), and – counterintuitively – those who say they follow refugee issues very closely (30%).

### Who sponsors refugees coming to Canada?



Q.20

*From what you know or have heard, are refugees coming to Canada being assisted or sponsored by the government, by private citizens, or by both?*

## Effectiveness of the private sponsorship program.

The survey provided a very brief description of the private sponsorship program as having been responsible for resettling roughly half of the 50,000 Syrian refugees arriving in Canada between 2015 and 2019. Participants were then asked how successful they believe this program has been based on what they have seen or heard.

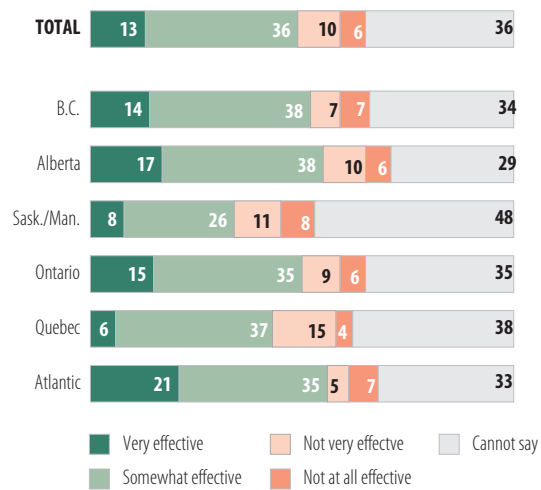
Close to six in ten Canadians surveyed were able to provide a response to this question, and by a three-to-one margin gave a positive assessment of the private sponsorship program. About half believe the private sponsorship program has been very (13%) or somewhat (36%) effective in resettling refugees in Canada, compared with one in six who says it has been not very (10%) or not at all (6%) effective. More than one in three (36%) did not feel he or she knew enough to offer an opinion on this question.

Across the country, the most enthusiastic endorsement is given by Atlantic Canadians (21% say the program has been very effective), Canadians with a post-graduate degree (22%), those ages 70 and over (26%), and active volunteers (21%). This view is also especially prevalent among those who have been private sponsors (45%), those who know others who have been private sponsors (33%), and those who know of or believe there are sponsored refugees in their community (25%) (it is also worth noting that even those who do not fit either of these categories are no less positive than Canadians as a whole).

Awareness of private sponsorship also makes a difference in opinions about the program. Among those who knew (prior to the survey) that private citizens and groups sponsor refugees, positive assessments outweigh negative ones by a five-to-one margin (67% say effective versus 13% who believe it is ineffective). By comparison, among those who were under the impression that only the government sponsors refugees, the balance of opinion is more divided (39% effective, versus 26% ineffective, and 35% who cannot offer an opinion).

By comparison, no more than one in five in any group gives the program a negative assessment, with the notable exception of those who follow refugee issues very closely. This group is the most polarized in their view of the private sponsorship program, with 32 percent saying it has been very effective, versus 28 percent who believe it has been not very or not at all effective.

Effectiveness of private sponsorship programs  
By region



Q.29

Between 2015 and 2019, Canada accepted 50,000 refugees from Syria, with about half of this number being privately sponsored by Canadians as part of groups or through organizations such as churches and local community groups. From what you know or have heard, how successful do you believe this private sponsorship program has been in resettling refugees in Canada?

**Why the program has been effective.** Those who believe the country’s private sponsorship program has been effective (49% of the target population) were asked to provide their reasons for this opinion (asked unprompted, without offering response options). Canadians offer a range of reasons for the program’s effectiveness, most of which fall into one of two broad themes.

The predominant theme covers ways in which private sponsorship has helped refugees settling in Canada (mentioned by 46% of this group, or 22% of the target population). This theme includes generic responses such as helping refugees get settled and starting new lives, and providing safety and freedom, as well as more specific areas of help, such as assistance with housing, employment, and language acquisition.

The second theme (mentioned by 37% of this group) emphasizes the success of the program in other ways, including how it is integrating refugees into society, contributing to new business start-ups, taking pressure off of government and taxpayers, and the absence of hearing about any problems. Among those who consider the private sponsorship program to be effective, one in five (19%) could not offer any specific reasons for this view. Responses to this question are strikingly similar across the population.

## Why private sponsorship program is effective

Those who say effective (49%) – unprompted responses

<b>Helps Refugees (NET)</b>	<b>46</b>
Helps refugees get settled/start new life	21
Helps/saves many people	9
Provides safety/freedom	5
Provides housing/place to live	5
Assists in employment training	4
Helps with expenses/essentials	4
Personal touch benefits refugees	4
Provides language training	2
Children enrolled in school	2
<b>Successful Program (NET)</b>	<b>37</b>
Successful integration	10
Not heard of any problems	7
Led to new business start-ups	6
Program working well	4
Takes pressure off government/taxpayers	3
Success stories in my community	3
Faster settlement than gov’t programs	3
Benefits sponsors/glad to help	2
Other reasons	14
Cannot say	19

Q.30a

*In what way has this private sponsorship program been [very or somewhat] effective?*

**Why the program has not been effective.** The minority (16%) of Canadians in the target population who believe the private sponsorship program has not been effective also provide reasons that fall into two broad themes. Within this group, three in ten (29%) cite problems with the program, either because they see it as wasteful or inefficient (e.g., burden on taxpayers) or because they believe it is not living up to its potential (supports need to be extended, limited by government red tape).

The second theme (mentioned by 27% of this group) focuses on problems with the refugees themselves, in terms of them not fitting into Canadian society, not finding jobs, or taking up resources that should go to native Canadians). Notably, one-third (35%) of those who are critical of the program cannot (or are not willing to) say why they hold this opinion.

Across the population, emphasis on problems with the sponsorship program are most apt to be mentioned by Albertans and Canadians ages 55 and older, those who are first generation in the country (i.e., immigrants themselves), and those who follow refugee issues very closely. Issues with refugees themselves is most apt to be cited by Quebecers.

## Why private sponsorship program is not effective

Those who say not effective (16%) – unprompted responses

	%
<b>Problem with program (NET)</b>	<b>29</b>
Burden on taxpayers/abuse of system	12
Support needs to be extended	6
Program needs improvements	3
Program is a waste/should be scrapped	3
Red tape imposed by government	3
Accepts wrong people/poor vetting	3
<b>Problem with refugees (NET)</b>	<b>27</b>
Do not integrate/fit in	7
Should take care of Canadians first	6
Refugees don't find jobs/lack skills	6
Refugees move to larger cities	5
Don't learn English or French	3
Too many immigrants	3
Other reasons	15
Cannot say	35

Q.30b

*In what way has this private sponsorship program been [not very/not at all] effective?*

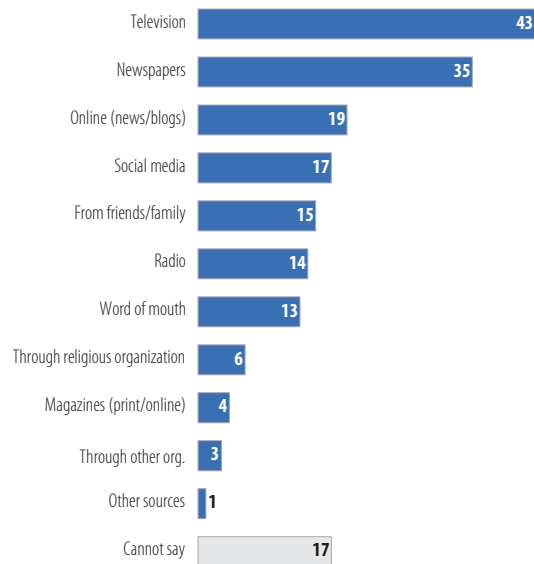
**Sources of information about private sponsorship in Canada.** The survey asked participants what sources of information they have used to learn about private sponsorship of refugees in Canada (from a list provided, plus the opportunity to add others not listed). The most common sources of information on this topic are traditional media, including television (43%), newspapers (print and online) (35%), as well as radio (14%) and magazines (4%).

A significant minority mention online sources (e.g., news, blogs) (19%) and social media (e.g., Facebook) (17%), while others identify personal connections such as friends and family (15%) and more generally word of mouth (13%). About one in ten obtains information about private sponsorship through churches or other religious groups (6%) or through other types of organizations (3%).

Reliance on information sources vary somewhat by age in a predictable pattern, with older Canadians giving placing reliance on traditional media while younger ones tend to focus more on online sources and social media; but these differences are modest in scope, as younger Canadians also make good use of television, newspapers and radio. Across language, anglophones are more apt to identify online sources and word of mouth, while francophones give more emphasis to television and radio. Canadians who closely follow refugee issues tend to make use of most sources, and most noticeably newspapers, radio and magazines.

The more sources of information Canadians rely on to learn about private refugee sponsorship the more positive they are about the program’s effectiveness. This is most likely to be the case for those who use newspapers, and to a lesser extent applies to those who get their information from religious organizations, family and friends, and through word of mouth. Canadians who identified none of these sources are among the least positive in their views about private refugees sponsorship.

Sources of information about private sponsorship of refugees



Q.31  
From which of the following sources, if any, have you learned about private sponsorship of refugees in Canada?

### What types of Canadians sponsor refugees?

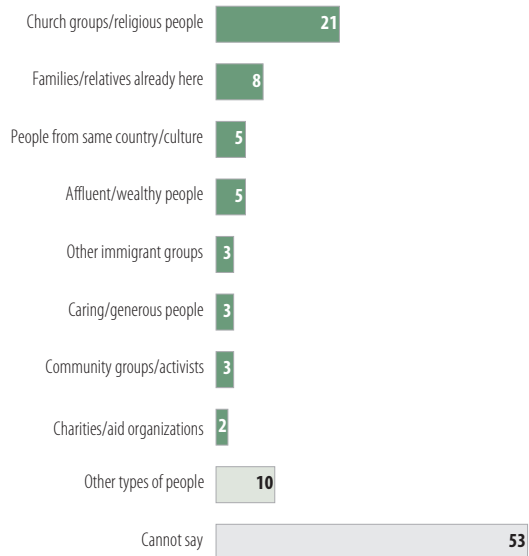
The survey explored public perceptions of private refugee sponsorship by asking participants (unprompted) what types of people in Canada they think are most likely to sponsor refugees (e.g., from what they know or have heard, or may have experienced first-hand). Just under half (47%) of those surveyed could offer any response to this question, the most common being to name church groups and religious people as the type of people who sponsor refugees (21%).

The next most common categories pertain to people who have a specific connection to refugees, including family members and relatives (8%), people from the same country or culture (5%), and other immigrant groups (3%). Smaller proportions think of organizations such as community groups (3%) and charities (2%), while others identify types of individuals, such as those who are affluent (5%), and caring or generous (3%).

Across the country, mention of church groups and religious people is most common in B.C. (31%), among older Canadians, and those who know of refugees in their community and others who are sponsors. Those least able to offer any ideas about who sponsors refugees include Canadians ages 25 to 44, Quebecers, and those who do not follow refugee issues.

### Who sponsors refugees in Canada?

#### Unprompted responses



Q.32

*From what you know or have heard, what types of people in Canada are most likely to be the ones who sponsor refugees?*



### Know others who have sponsored refugees.

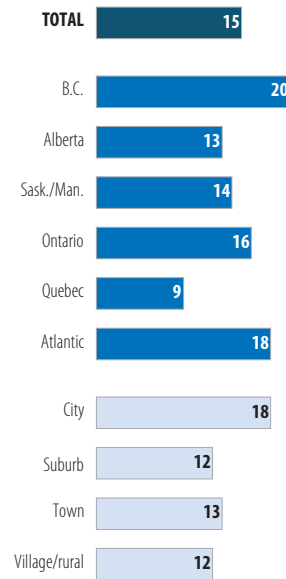
Given the breadth of participation in private refugee sponsorship over the past five or so years, it would be expected that many Canadians know someone else who has participated in the program (either PSR or BVOR). Among survey participants who have not themselves already been sponsors, one in six (15%) says he or she knows someone else who has participated as a volunteer in sponsoring a refugee or refugee family to Canada.

Knowing others who have sponsored refugees is most commonly reported by British Columbians (20%), live in urban areas (18%), identify as Protestant (22%) or of a non-Christian faith (20%), are active volunteers (28%), and closely follow refugee issues (31%). This type of connection also increases noticeably by educational attainment, but much less so by household income. Canadians least apt to say they know someone who has sponsored refugees include Quebecers (9%), those without a high school diploma (9%), and people who have done no volunteer work in the past five years (6%). Notably, there is no connection between knowledge of sponsors and age, gender, income adequacy, or generation in Canada.

Finally, knowing someone who has sponsored a refugee is closely linked to opinions about the effectiveness of the program. Canadians who say they know such persons are among the most enthusiastic supporters of the private refugee sponsorship program: 35 percent of this group say the program is *very* effective, compared with only 13 percent of those who do not know any refugee sponsors.

### Know others who have sponsored refugees

By region and community type



Q.27

*Do you know anyone else who has participated as a volunteer in sponsoring a refugee or refugee family to Canada?*

# Participation in private sponsorship of refugees

## Private sponsorship experience

About four percent of the target population reports involvement with refugee sponsorship to date, with education as the most defining characteristic of this group. Participation is most apt to be motivated by a desire to help others in need, and most say they would consider doing so again.

### Direct involvement in refugee sponsorship.

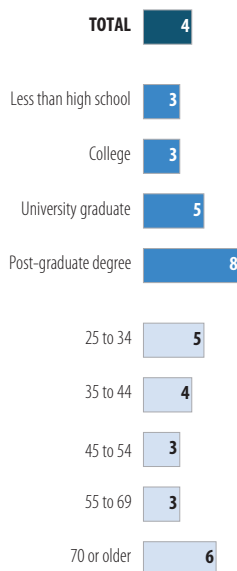
The survey explored the experiences of those Canadians who have been directly involved in sponsoring a refugee or refugee family to date. For the population covered in this survey (individuals ages 30 and over, with household incomes of \$30,000 or more) and among those who are aware of refugee sponsorship in Canada, five (5%) percent report having been directly involved in providing volunteer support to a privately sponsored refugee or refugee family. This translates into four (4%) percent of the full target population, which is equivalent to approximately 960,000 Canadians across the country (based on current population estimates).<sup>5</sup>

What types of Canadians are most likely to be refugee sponsors? The proportion varies modestly across the population.<sup>6</sup> By location, this proportion ranges from a high of six percent in Alberta and among city-dwellers, to a low of three percent in Quebec and among those who live in suburbs and villages/rural areas.

Education plays a role (with sponsorship reported by six percent among university graduates and 10 percent among those with a graduate degree), and is somewhat more common among Canadians under 45 (6%) or 70 and older (7%), and those who are active volunteers (13%). Likelihood of participation does not vary noticeably by household income, gender, employment status, or generation in Canada.

## Directly involved in sponsoring refugees

By education level and age



Q.21

Some refugees coming to Canada are sponsored by the federal government and some are sponsored privately by Canadian families and organizations. Have you yourself been directly involved in providing volunteer support to a privately sponsored refugee or refugee family?

The remainder of this section focuses on the involvement and experiences of this group of sponsorship program participants. The small size of this sample (N=134) does not support an analysis by subgroup.

<sup>5</sup> This estimate is somewhat lower but not that different from the seven (7%) percent of Canadians who reported direct involvement in private sponsorship of a refugee as recorded on a 2018 survey of Canadians (Canada's World Survey 2018, Environics Institute).

<sup>6</sup> This analysis is based on the proportion of the sample who were asked this question, which excludes the 16% who were not aware that refugees are being sponsored in Canada.

**Type of sponsorship.** Among Canadians who report direct involvement in refugee sponsorship, close to half (46%) say this was through a religious or faith-based organization, with the remainder identifying another type of organization (24%), a group of friends or family members (16%) or some other type of arrangement (5%). One in ten (9%) in this group did not provide a response to this question.

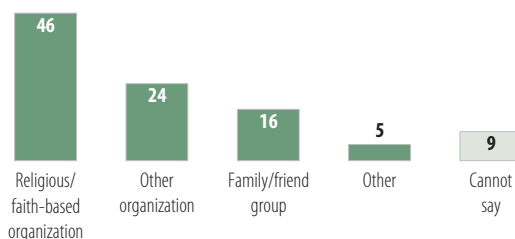
Did sponsors participate through the PSR or BVOR streams for sponsoring refugees? These program categories are often not evident to individuals who volunteer to help refugees, so the question was addressed by asking survey participants about the source of sponsorship funding: Whether, to the best of their knowledge, their sponsoring organization or group was responsible for raising all or just some of the funds required to cover the sponsorship costs (which defines an essential difference between the two streams).

Close to half (45%) of sponsoring individuals report their group was fully responsible for raising all of the necessary funds (indicating the PSR stream), while half as many (24%) say a portion of the costs were covered by the government (the BVOR stream). One-third (32%) could not answer the question.

**Motivations for participation.** Those who report direct involvement in refugee sponsorship were asked (unprompted) about the main reason or reasons they became involved in the program. Among those providing a response, the most common reason for participating was to help people in need (e.g., those in a crisis, to help them start a new life) (24%). Other reasons for getting involved was that it was the right thing to do (8%), because it was part of one's faith community (6%), they were asked by family or friends (5%), and because one's family or ancestors were also refugees (3%). Notably, more than four in ten (44%) in this group did not offer any response to the question.<sup>7</sup>

## Type of sponsorship group

Private sponsorship participants

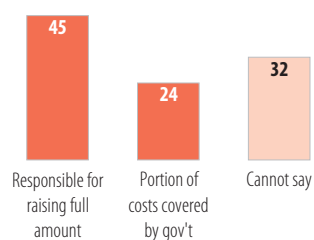


Q.22

Did you participate in sponsoring a refugee or refugee family through:

## Responsibility for sponsorship funds

Private sponsorship participants



Q.23

Did your sponsoring organization or group take responsibility for raising all of the funds necessary to cover the sponsorship costs, or were a portion of these costs covered by the government?

<sup>7</sup> It is not apparent why such a large proportion did not answer this question, but it raises the possibility that some in this group may not in fact have participated in sponsoring refugees (and so had nothing to offer when faced with this open-ended question). However, there is no clear evidence in the data to corroborate this. It is worth noting is that non-response to this question is most prevalent among Quebecers, men, Canadians without a high school diploma, and those 25 to 34 years of age.

**Likelihood of future participation.** Canadians who were involved with refugee sponsorship were asked if they would do so again in the future. Eight in ten say they would be very (41%) or somewhat (38%) likely to do so, compared with those who say this would be not very (6%) or not at all (7%) likely. One percent of this group (likely one individual) indicates he or she is already involved in another sponsorship, while six percent did not offer a response to the question.

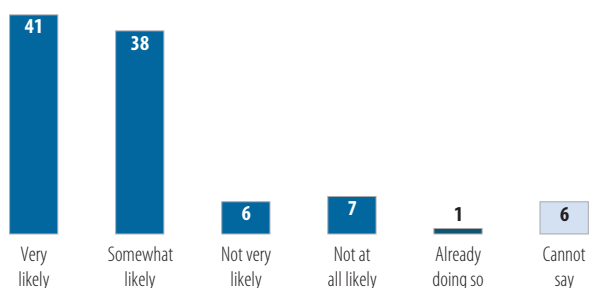
The small size of this group prevents a full analysis of group differences, but stated interest in future program participation does not appear to vary noticeably by identifiable characteristics. Strong interest in continued involvement (i.e., very likely to participate) is most evident among those individuals who are the most positive in their assessment of the refugee sponsorship program’s effectiveness.

Those who say they are very or somewhat likely to participate again in refugee sponsorship offer a range of reasons (when asked unprompted), none of which is mentioned by more than one in ten from this group. Many of the responses fall into one of two themes. The first largely mirrors the reasons they got involved initially: it is the right thing to do, there is a continuing need, being a community responsibility, and the need for compassion and kindness. The second theme emphasizes the impact on the sponsor: it was a positive/ amazing experience, and was fulfilling or satisfying. Close to half (47%) in this group did not provide a response to this question (overlapping with the non-response to the previous question about motivations for participation).

The small number (N=16) of individuals who say they are unlikely to participate in refugee sponsorship gave various reasons, the most common being that future involvement would depend on their situation (e.g., health, time availability). Just over half of this group did not offer a response.

### Participate in refugee sponsorship again?

Private sponsorship participants



Q.25

*How likely would you be to participate again in volunteering to sponsor a refugee or refugee family?*

## Interest in private sponsorship participation

One in six Canadians in the target market would consider participating in refugee sponsorship, with this group most likely to have a university degree and know someone already involved. The most important consideration in deciding about involvement is knowing there are supports when challenges arise.

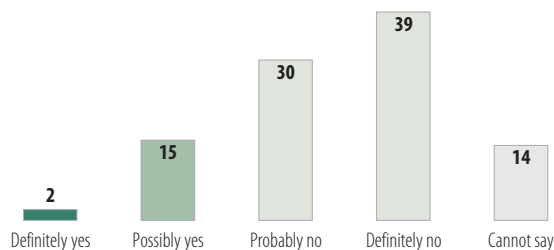
### Who is interested in helping to sponsor refugees?

The core part of the survey addressed the interest in participation in private refugee sponsorship, among Canadians in the target population who have not already been involved with the program. Of this group, just over one in six says he or she would definitely (2%) or likely (15%) see themselves participating in a group or organization to sponsor a refugee or refugee family at some point in the next couple of years.<sup>8</sup> This translates into 16 percent of the target population (24 million Canadians), which translates into a pool of close to four million Canadians who say they are open to potential involvement with refugee sponsorship (with more than 450,000 in the “definite consideration” category).

Interest in program participation appears to be broadly distributed across the target population, with some variation by location and demographic characteristics:

- The most notable dimension is educational attainment: definite/probable interest is highest among Canadians with a post-graduate degree (27%), compared with just 12 percent among those who have not completed high school;
- Across the country, interest is highest in Atlantic Canada (20%), and lowest in the prairie provinces (13% in Alberta, 11% in Saskatchewan and Manitoba);
- By community size, town dwellers (19%) are most apt to express interest, while suburbanites (14%) less so;
- Across age groups, definite/probable interest in the sponsorship program is marginally highest among Canadians 25 to 34 (19%) and 70 plus (18%), and lowest among those 55 to 59 (15%), but these differences are relatively small; and
- First generation Canadians (22%) express somewhat greater interest than those who were born in the country and are second (14%) or third plus (16%) generation.

### Could you see yourself participating in private refugee sponsorship?



Q.33

Could you see yourself participating in a group or organization to sponsor a refugee or refugee family at some point in the next couple of years?

<sup>8</sup> This question was purposely framed in terms of potential participation over the next couple of years, in order to gauge general interest rather than a more specific intention or something that might imply a commitment. The former is more appropriate and valuable in this context because most Canadians would not be familiar with the program or in a position to indicate readiness to get involved on the basis of this survey.

There is comparatively little difference in stated interest in the program by gender, household income and financial security, occupation, ethnic background (white versus other), and religion.

What most distinguishes between those who would and would not consider participation in the sponsorship program are knowledge and attitudes about refugee sponsorship generally:

- Definite or probable consideration of involvement is most pronounced among Canadians who know someone else who has participated in the program (45%), and those who believe the sponsorship program is very effective (41%);
- Such interest is also more evident among those who know or believe there are refugees living in their community (29%), those who follow refugee issues (25%), and those who get information about this topic through friends and family (38%) and/or word of mouth (32%); and

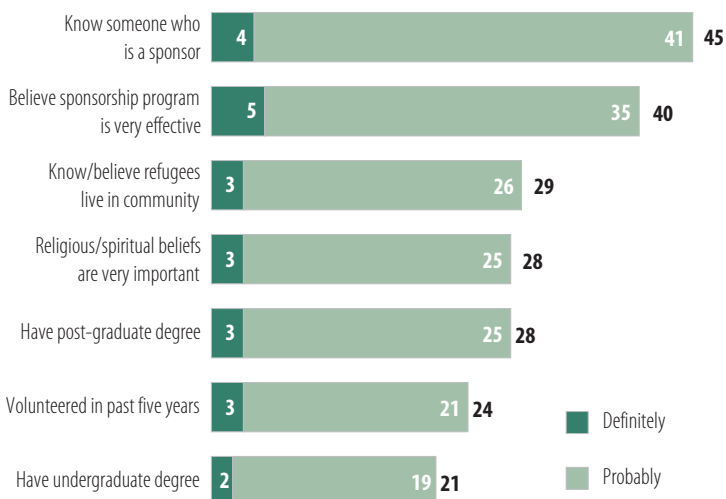
- Interest is also higher than average among Canadians who have volunteered in the past five years (actively or not) (24%), and those for whom religious or spiritual beliefs are very important (28%).

Finally, most who say they would consider participation as a refugee sponsor put themselves in the “probably” category. Very few (no more than 5%) in any of the groups identified say they would “definitely” consider such involvement (as might be expected given what it would entail and the general nature of the question).

The following sections explore further the interests, concerns and priorities of this group of Canadians who are open to getting involved in refugee sponsorship in the near future. The relatively small sample (N=539) comprising this group makes it possible to conduct only a limited analysis of results by relevant subgroups.

### Would consider participation in sponsorship program

By selected groups



Q.33

Would definitely or possibly see yourself participating in a group or organization to sponsor a refugee or refugee family at some point in the next couple of years.

### Why interested in sponsorship program

**participation.** Those saying they would definitely or probably consider participation in the refugee sponsorship program were asked (unprompted) what might interest them most in doing so. The predominant response is a general desire to help others (41% of this group) or help refugees start a new life (18%). Others are more specific in the types of assistance they would like to give, in such areas as finding employment (3%), language learning (3%), finding items such as clothing and furniture (3%), and financial support (2%).

Other themes cited as reasons for participation pertain to doing the right thing (4%) or giving back (4%), or wanting to be part of something positive (4%). Six percent say this would be an opportunity to meet new people and learn from others. One in ten (10%) from this group did not offer any reasons for his or her interest in participating in refugee sponsorship.

### Why not interested in sponsorship program

**participation.** The larger proportion (69%) of Canadians who would probably or definitely not consider getting involved with refugee sponsorship give a range of reasons for this response, none of which predominate but mostly fall into one of two themes. The first theme (encompassing seven in ten of the responses given) focuses on why the individual could not or would not consider such involvement. This includes not being able to afford such sponsorship (20%), a general lack of interest (17%), being too busy/having other commitments (16%), seeing it as too much of an obligation (5%), already giving time/money to other causes (3%), personal health issues (3%), and not having room in their home (3%).

The second smaller theme (cited by one in four in this group) focuses on issues with refugees or the program. These individuals say refugees are less of a priority than other Canadians who need assistance (10%), they do not believe in the program (5%), that Canada already has too many immigrants and refugees (4%), and have concerns about personal safety (2%) or refugees not being properly vetted and potentially untrustworthy (2%). One in ten (11%) gives other types of reasons for not being interested in refugee sponsorship, while a similar proportion (12%) offer no response to the question.

### Why interested in participation in refugee sponsorship (17%) – unprompted responses

	%
To help others	41
Help refugees settle/start new life	18
Give back/right thing to do	8
Meet new people/learn from others	6
Be part of something positive	4
Assist in finding employment	3
Help with language learning	3
Encouragement/emotional support	3
Training/mentoring	3
Provide clothing/food/furniture	3
Provide financial support	2
Help provide accommodation	1
Other reasons	9
Cannot say	10

Q.34a

What specifically might interest you most in being part of a refugee sponsorship?

### Why not interested in participation in refugee sponsorship (69%) – unprompted responses

	%
Cannot afford it	20
Not interested	17
Too busy/other commitments	16
More important to help other Canadians	10
Too much obligation/responsibility	5
Don't believe in program	5
Already too many immigrants/refugees	4
Give to/volunteer with other causes	3
No room in my house	3
Personal health problems	3
Uncomfortable with strangers	2
Refugees not vetted/untrustworthy	2
Other reasons	11
Cannot say	12

Q.34b

What in particular about the private refugee sponsorship would make you not interested in participating?

Such reasons are given by Canadians across the country, with a few notable differences. Not surprisingly, concerns about affordability are more evident among those with lower incomes and low financial security, while being too busy is most apt to be cited by those working full time. Less obvious is the result that anglophones are more likely to emphasize affordability and the need to prioritize other Canadians ahead of refugees, while francophones are more apt to mention being too busy and seeing sponsorship as too much of an obligation.

Canadians ages 70 and over are among those most likely to say they are not interested because of the need to prioritize other Canadians, because there are already too many immigrants and refugees in the country, and because of personal health issues that would make it difficult to participate. Finally, Canadians who follow refugee issues very closely are also the ones who emphasize the second theme, especially the point about the need to prioritize other types of Canadians.

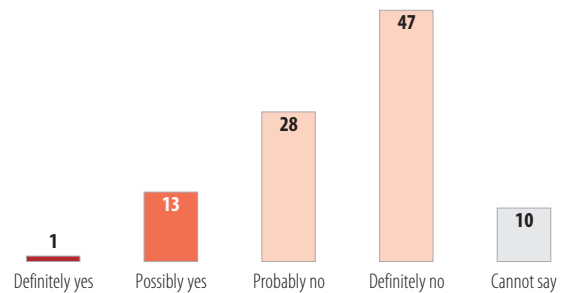
**Consideration of a financial donation in place of sponsorship participation.** Those not interested in getting involved with the sponsorship program were also asked if they would consider supporting a private refugee sponsorship group in their community through a financial donation to help cover some of the expenses. Relatively few provide an affirmative response, with less than one in six saying he or she would definitely (1%) or probably (13%) consider making such a donation. The remainder indicate they would probably (28%) or definitely (47%) not do so, with another 10 percent not providing a response to the question.

This limited interest in financial donations in lieu of program participation is more or less consistent across the population, even across the spectrum of household income. Willingness to consider such contributions increases modestly with educational attainment and is highest among those in this group who know someone else involved in refugee sponsorship (34%, although only 1% of this group say “definitely yes”).

Canadians who say they are *definitely not interested* in providing such financial support are also the ones most likely to say they would not be interested in program participation because they believe other Canadians are a higher priority, they do not believe in the program, and say the country already accepts too many immigrants.

### Consider a financial donation in lieu of program participation?

Those not interested in participating



Q.35

*If not interested or able to participate in sponsoring a refugee, would you consider supporting a private refugee sponsorship group in your community through a financial contribution to help cover some of the expenses?*



**Important considerations in deciding about participation in refugee sponsorship.** Those who expressed interest in sponsorship program participation (i.e., would definitely or probably consider in the next few years – 16% of the target market) were asked about the importance they would place on each of 10 considerations in deciding about whether or not to participate in the sponsorship of a refugee or refugee family.

Among the 10 considerations, this group as a whole places the greatest importance on *knowing they would receive the support needed if challenges arose* (55% say this would be a very important consideration, compared with only 4% who indicate this is not very important).

More than one-third consider as very important *sponsoring a refugee or refugee family from a country or part of the world experiencing a particular crisis or political turmoil* (37%) and *not having to worry about raising funds to cover sponsorship costs* (36%).

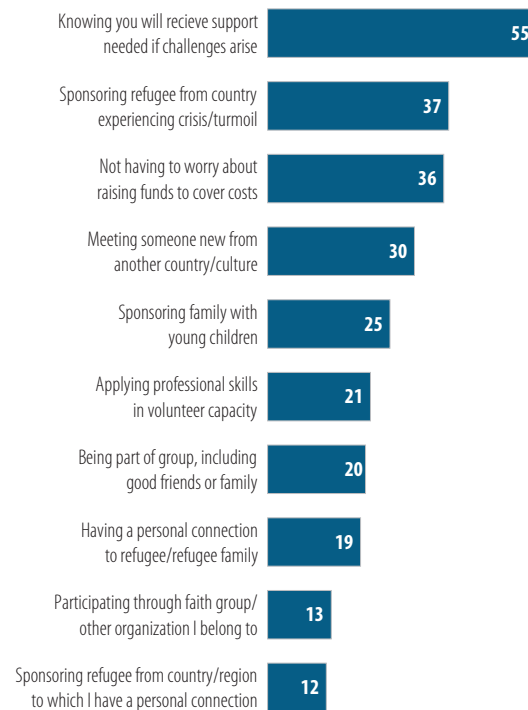
Other considerations are deemed very important by at least one in five in this group, including:

- Meeting someone new from another country or culture – 30%
- Sponsoring a family with young children – 25%
- Applying your professional skills in a volunteer capacity – 21%
- Being part of a group that includes good friends or family members – 20%
- Having a personal connection to the refugee or refugee family – 19%

By comparison, considerations given the least priority are *participating through a faith group or other organization you already belong to* (13%, versus 57% who say not very important) and *sponsoring a refugee or refugee family from a country or part of the world in which you already have a personal connection (e.g., through family, travel)* (12%, versus 55% who say this is not very important).

This sample size is too small to support an in-depth analysis by subgroup, but the results indicate that the rank order of considerations is similar across the group, in terms of region and community type, demographic characteristics, volunteer experience, and knowledge of sponsors and refugees in the community.

### Very important consideration in deciding about sponsorship participation Those interested in participation



Q.38a-j  
How important would each of the following be in helping you decide about whether to participate in the sponsorship of a refugee or refugee family?

## How people would like to be involved in refugee support.

Sponsoring refugees is typically a group effort, with volunteers taking on one or more tasks that help the newcomers get established in their new lives. Survey participants who say they would definitely or probably consider program participation were asked which of seven types of tasks they would be interested in taking on to support a refugee or refugee family.

This group demonstrates strong interest across the range of tasks, with many selecting more than one, and few (12%) not identifying at least one they could see themselves taking on. These potential participants are most likely to express interest in *helping refugees learn English or French* (50%) and *assisting with paperwork (e.g., completing applications forms)* (46%).

Of next most interest are:

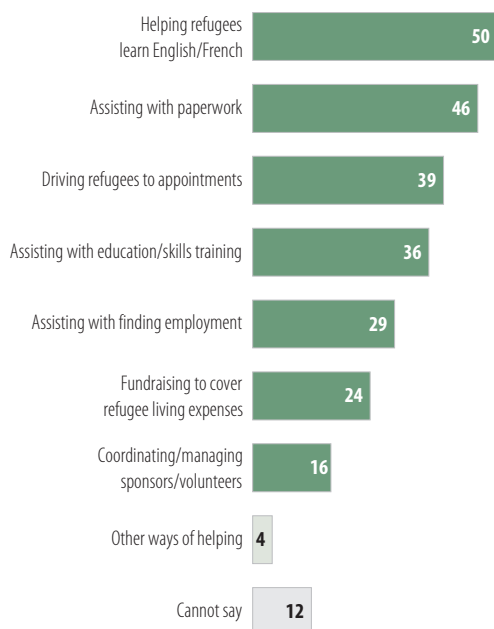
- Driving refugees to appointments (e.g., doctor, bank) – 39%
- Assisting with education and skills training – 36%
- Assisting with finding employment – 29%
- Fundraising to cover refugee living expenses – 24%
- Coordinating or managing the sponsor volunteers – 16%

A small percentage (4%) volunteered other ways in which they might be interested in helping refugees, with this including, helping refugees learn the local bus system, obtaining furniture, providing child care and playing board games with them.

The general order of preference across volunteer tasks is similar across the group. Interest in helping with language acquisition is most prevalent among francophones, as well as among those ages 25 to 34 and those with household incomes in the \$30 - \$60 K range.

## Interest in helping refugees in specific ways

Those interested in participation



Q.36

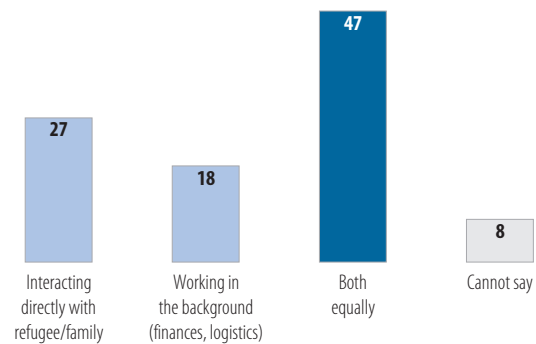
*Sponsoring refugees is a group effort with each participant taking on one or more tasks to help refugees get established in their new lives. Which of the following tasks might you be interested in doing in a volunteer capacity?*

Would those considering program participation be more interested in tasks that entail close interaction with refugees or those that take place more in the background? Among those open to sponsorship involvement roughly half express a clear preference, with 27 percent saying they would be more interested in interacting directly with refugees or refugee families, while a slightly smaller proportion (18%) expressed a preference to be working in the background (e.g. helping with logistics or finances). A strong plurality (47%) indicate they would be equally interested in both ways of helping to support a sponsorship, while few (8%) did not offer a response to the question.

Equal interest in both types of involvement is expressed by a clear plurality across this group. Preference for direct interaction is most evident among francophones, and residents in towns, villages and rural areas,

## Preferred role in helping refugees

Those interested in participation



Q.37

*In participating as part of a refugee sponsorship group, would you be more interested in:*

## Questions to be answered about sponsorship involvement.

Given that most Canadians would be unfamiliar with what is entailed in sponsoring a refugee, it is to be expected that they would have questions to be answered before giving further consideration about participating in the program. The survey asked participants who indicated they might consider participation which of eight types of questions they would be most interested in getting answers to.

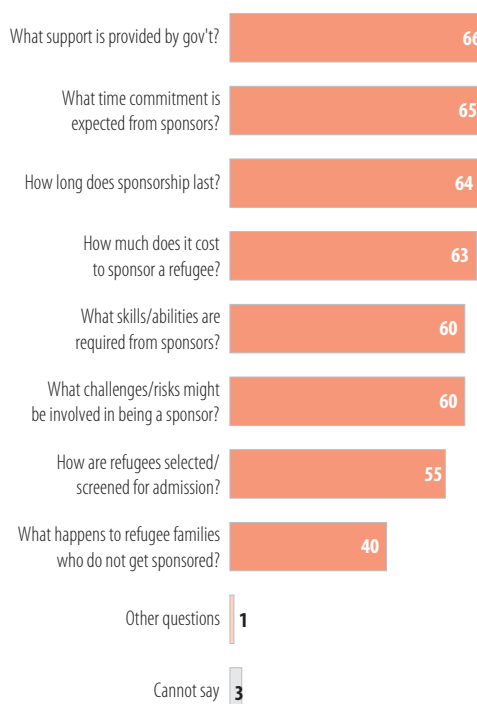
Perhaps not surprisingly, this group expressed a desire to get answers to most of the questions presented. Majorities identified six of the eight types of questions, including what support is provided by the government (66%), what time commitment is expected of sponsors (65%), how long a sponsorship lasts (64%) and how much it costs to sponsor a refugee (63%). At the bottom of the list is what happens to refugee families who do not get sponsors (40%).

A handful of participants volunteered other types of questions, such as how refugees are vetted and who would help with language interpretation. Only three percent did not identify at least one of the listed question to be of interest.

In learning more about refugee sponsorship, potential participants would clearly value hearing from others who have had experience with the program. Among those willing to consider participation, almost everyone says they would find it to be very (55%) or somewhat (41%) helpful to learn more about the program from someone in their community who has been actively involved in refugee sponsorship. This view is equally strong across this group.

## Questions to be answered about refugee sponsorship

Those interested in participation

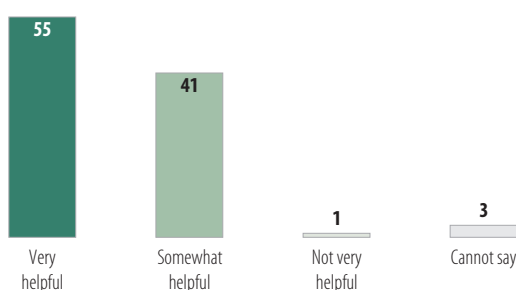


Q.39

What types of questions would you want answered before giving any further consideration about participating in refugee sponsorship?

## Would it help to learn from other sponsors?

Those interested in participation



Q.40

How helpful do you think it would be to learn more about private refugee sponsorship from someone in your community who has been actively involved in being a sponsor?

