

NEW BEGINNINGS



Insights of Government-Assisted Refugees in British Columbia into their Settlement Outcomes

December 2006



IMMIGRANT SERVICES SOCIETY
of British Columbia

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British Columbia into their Settlement Outcomes

Prepared by

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for



IMMIGRANT SERVICES SOCIETY
of British Columbia

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About the author

Dug Cubie, LL.M, is an independent consultant currently based in Vancouver. Previously, Dug has worked for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Belgium, Nepal, the Republic of Congo and the United Kingdom, as well as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Irish Refugee Council in Dublin, and the Council of Ministers of the European Union in Brussels.

Executive Summary

Project Description and Methodology

Following a proposal presented to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Immigrant Services Society of BC undertook a review and evaluation of the services provided under the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and settlement outcomes for Government Assisted Refugees in British Columbia. The aim of the project was to obtain the views of Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) on their arrival and subsequent settlement outcomes, challenges and successes. GARs over the age of 19 from the top eight countries of origin who arrived in BC during the calendar years of 2003 and 2005 were selected for interview from the ISS database, ensuring a geographical, gender and age balance of interviewees.

Between February and March 2006, a total of 152 Government Assisted Refugees were interviewed by 24 Cross Cultural Facilitators. Coming from 12 countries of origin, the respondents represent nearly 10% of all GARs who arrived in BC during 2003 and 2005. Additionally, although clients were interviewed as individuals, and in some cases more than one family member from the same household was interviewed, the clients interviewed represent over 450 family members of GARs, or nearly 30% of all GARs who arrived in BC during 2003 and 2005.

Countries of origin			Year of arrival	Gender breakdown
Afghanistan	Iran	Rwanda	2003: 57 clients (37.5%) 2005: 95 clients (62.5%)	Male: 52% Female: 48%
Colombia	Iraq	Somalia		
Ethiopia	Liberia	Sudan		
Indonesia	Myanmar	Vietnam		

The interviews were conducted in the clients' first language and took around 90 minutes to complete. The aim was to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data as to the clients' own perception of their arrival and settlement in BC, by covering such areas as: pre-arrival orientation, arrival in Vancouver, initial RAP orientation, and subsequent housing, education, health, employment, ESL and social outcomes. Time constraints necessitated that only certain analytical approaches to the resulting data were taken, namely comparisons between year of arrival, country of origin and gender.

The report based on the interview data is split into three main sections:

1. Pre-departure information
2. Arrival and orientation
3. Subsequent settlement outcomes

1. Pre-departure Information

A series of questions were first asked to respondents regarding their experiences and living situation prior to their departure for Canada.

More than half of all respondents had been living in an urban refugee setting prior to their arrival in Canada, and a further 31% had been living in refugee camps. Meanwhile, 45% of

respondents had been living outside their country of origin for more than 5 years and over 25% of respondents had been living outside their country of origin for more than 10 years.

The Integration Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) provides pre-departure orientations for Government Assisted Refugees. The majority of respondents had received some form of pre-departure orientation, although there were variations between countries in the extent of orientation and the topics covered. There was a clear desire on the part of many respondents for more information prior to their departure, for example about employment and educational opportunities, and the need for English language skills and availability of ESL classes. Additionally, 15% of respondents highlighted the need for more information about Canadian culture and lifestyle. More than a quarter of respondents already had family or friends in BC or Canada, who provided important settlement assistance as they adjusted to their new environment.

2. Arrival and Orientation

Respondents were next asked about their experiences during their first six weeks in Vancouver, starting from their arrival at the airport to the services provided by ISS during the orientation period.

The respondents eloquently expressed the complex range of emotions felt as they arrived at Vancouver International Airport. These ranged from excitement and happiness, to fear, anxiety and exhaustion. On the whole, the experience at the airport seems to be a positive one for clients – respondents stressed the excellent treatment by immigration officers, the warm welcome and the smiling faces and positive attitude of everyone they met.

The survey included a question on the respondents' views as to their place of settlement in British Columbia. More than 75% of all respondents stated that they would prefer to live in a big city such as the Greater Vancouver Regional District due to the range of services (such as ESL and health facilities) or employment and educational opportunities available. However, 15% of respondents did not have a preference or stated that they would prefer to live in a smaller urban area.

Welcome House Accommodation

ISS is contracted by CIC to provide temporary accommodation to all GARs for up to 15 nights after their arrival. "Welcome House" is the accommodation program of ISS' office in Drake Street, and comprises of 12 one and two bedroom self-contained apartments with a total sleeping capacity of 85 persons. Respondents when asked to rate the accommodation at Welcome House expressed their appreciation for the level of accommodation and services provided, with 50% of respondents rating Welcome House as 'Excellent' or 'Very Good'. However, some problems were identified, such as the lack of privacy, the size of the rooms and the difficulty in finding appropriate and cheap food in the first few days after arrival.

RAP Orientations

As part of the CIC-funded Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), ISS Counsellors provide 13-18 hours of orientation to all GARs during their first six weeks in Vancouver. These orientations cover an initial assessment of the client's needs, immediate health care needs, a

financial orientation and explanation of RAP services, settlement information and linking clients to broader based programs such as ESL or employment assistance.

When asked which sessions were most useful, the largest proportion of respondents highlighted the financial orientation, although respondents also highlighted employment, housing, education and the need for English language skills. These issues reflect the immediate needs of the clients, but many respondents also stressed their desire for more information about Canadian culture and the Canadian way of life in their orientation sessions.

The ISS Counsellor is often the “face” of the RAP program for GARs, and so a variety of comments were made specifically relating to the Counsellors. Many respondents stressed the experience of and assistance provided by the Counsellors and how happy they were with the services provided. Of the criticisms made, several related to the lack of attention or time that the clients felt that their Counsellors were able to give to them. This may relate to the limited number of RAP Counsellors at ISS and their high caseloads, rather than being a criticism of the Counsellors’ themselves. Additionally, clients expressed frustration at the difficulties in finding housing and employment, and perceived this as a lack of assistance by ISS.

Bridge Community Health Clinic

All Government Assisted Refugees are provided with the opportunity to visit the Bridge Community Health Clinic (BCHC) in Vancouver on their arrival to receive primary health care screening and treatment or onward referral for any medical conditions that they have. The vast majority of clients (59%) attended at least three times and 19% visited the Bridge Community Health Clinic six or more times. Several clients noted that they had visited more than 10 times, or that they visited the BCHC on a regular basis.

It was clear from the comments made by the clients that the staff and Clinic itself are extremely well regarded. Clients were particularly impressed with the quality of doctors, nurses and other staff members at the BCHC, and they were also extremely pleased with the level of care and attention that their medical problems received.

Housing Search

It is recognized how difficult it can be to find reasonably priced accommodation in the GVRD. Therefore, ISS recently received core funding to provide GARs with assistance in searching for accommodation once they arrive. Clients from both 2003 and 2005 felt that the biggest challenges that they faced were the high rents and their limited income, along with language barriers and finding housing large enough to accommodate their family. Clients from both years also felt that they did not know enough about the different areas, and rental prices, within various parts of the GVRD.

The majority of clients (73%) stated that they felt prepared for living independently by the time they moved out of Welcome House. However, there were some clients who were unsure as to how they were going to cope once they left Welcome House. Some clients stated that they felt lost and unprepared since they did not speak English and did not know anyone in the city. For high needs clients such as these, further follow up and assistance is necessary.

3. Subsequent Settlement Outcomes

Respondents were next asked a wide range of questions regarding their subsequent settlement outcomes in the GVRD, covering:

- English language classes
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Family well-being
- Employment and family income
- Finances
- Racism and discrimination
- Information sources
- Local community
- Long-term plans

Despite some of the challenges which individuals reported facing in their settlement process, 92% of all respondents stated that they were either *'Very Happy'* or *'Happy'* at having moved to Canada, and many wished to express their thanks to both the Canadian Government and the Canadian people for the welcome that they have received. Additionally, 66% of all respondents stated that they would like to be living in the Greater Vancouver Regional District in 5-10 years time. Parents in particular highlighted the opportunities that they and their children have in Canada, in terms of education and employment possibilities. Respondents also pinpointed areas where they are having difficulties, and provided suggestions as to how these areas could be improved.

ESL and Education

In regards to English language training, nearly 60% of respondents from both 2003 and 2005 rated their English language skills as *'Not at all'* or *'Beginner'*. The length of time that individuals have to wait for their ESL classes was one point that many respondents felt needed to be improved. Beyond English language classes, only 9% of respondents have undertaken additional education or skills training, and only 8.5% respondents have undertaken computer classes since their arrival in Canada. From these statistics, it would appear that GARs are not accessing educational opportunities after their arrival. This may be as a result of the financial implications of commencing further education programs, lack of childcare or the need to find a job to earn money.

However, it is clear that parents have had positive experiences of the Canadian school system with 63% of parents rating their experience as *'Excellent'* or *'Very Good'*. Many GARs only possess limited computer skills: 72% of respondents do not have an email address and 78% of respondents rated their computer skills as *'Not at all'* or *'Beginner'*.

Finances and Employment

Many of the other major issues identified by respondents related to their financial vulnerability. For example, 26% of clients reported relying on food banks to feed themselves while receiving RAP assistance, while 26% of respondents reported spending 50-59% of their monthly income on rent and 28% of respondents reported spending more than 60%. This financial instability is often linked to the fact that the unemployment rate of GARs is much higher than the provincial average.

Families where no one is working	Families dependent on Government assistance	Unemployment rate of all respondents
66%	74%	78%

While it might be expected that individuals who arrived during 2005 would not yet be in a position to seek employment, 53% of GARs who arrived in 2003 are still unemployed. Even if people have found employment, 44% are working in part-time jobs and 78% stated that their current employment did not match their skills. Many respondents requested more assistance in searching for jobs, for example through the provision of a dedicated GAR Employment Counsellor based in ISS, and respondents also stressed the need for skills training, skills upgrading and the need for an orientation on how to look for jobs in Canada, which would cover resume writing, internet searches and interview preparation.

Health

One of the more surprising findings of the research was that respondents from 2003 rated their physical health less well than those who arrived during 2005. It is not clear if the 2003 arrivals are now reporting their health status based on Canadian standards, and therefore feel that they are less healthy in comparison to others in society; or has the health of GARs who arrived during 2003 deteriorated while they have been in Canada? More detailed studies, preferably by medically qualified researchers, will be required to determine what, if any, are the causes of these differences between the two years. However, respondents from both years reported high levels of dental health problems, which were not covered by either the Interim Federal Health Program or the BC Medical Services Plan.

Racism, Discrimination and Physical Safety

Racism, discrimination and physical insecurity do not appear to be a major problem for most GARs. The vast majority of respondents (83.5%) stated that they had not faced any racism or discrimination since their arrival, and only a minority (12.5%) reported some form of racism or discrimination. Of the clients who did report racism or discrimination, 74% had been subjected to verbal abuse, 21% had faced physical violence, and 5% did not wish to comment. Similarly, half of all respondents stated that they felt very safe in their local neighbourhood, while a further 26% reported feeling safe. However, a proportion of clients, in particular women, expressed certain reservations. This included concern about walking in the streets after dark, high crime rates, presence of drug addicts in their neighbourhood, robberies and a fear of their landlord.

Introduction

During February and March 2006, the Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS) undertook a review and evaluation of the services provided under the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) and settlement outcomes for Government Assisted Refugees in British Columbia, entitled the ISS RAP Client Monitoring Project.

The aim of the project was to interview 25% of all Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) from the top eight countries of origin who arrived in BC during the calendar years of 2003 and 2005, to obtain their views on their arrival and subsequent settlement outcomes, challenges and successes. The project provides feedback for service enhancements during the clients' first six weeks in Canada, as well as identifying other issues of RAP policy and program consideration.

The information gained from this process has been compiled and the data analysed to provide qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Background Information

Canada has a long and extensive tradition in welcoming refugees and people in need of protection, both through Government programs to allow recognized refugees and other protected persons to come to Canada, and for refugee claimants who arrive spontaneously in Canada.¹ At an international level, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recognizes that there are three durable solutions for refugees and persons of concern; namely voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement to a third country. Through the Agenda for Protection and the Convention Plus initiative, UNHCR has promoted resettlement as a durable solution for vulnerable refugees who are unable to voluntarily repatriate to their country of origin, and where local integration in their country of first asylum is not an option.²

The Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) came into law on 28th June 2002, replacing the Immigration Act 1976. One of the major changes from the Immigration Act is that IRPA provides that the Canadian resettlement programs will focus more on an individual's protection needs, rather than their ability to successfully settle in Canada. This means that there is a greater likelihood that individuals who have arrived since the entry into force of IRPA will have greater settlement needs, for example as a result of previous trauma suffered, illiteracy, single parent families or medical needs.

Through the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Canada accepts refugees and persons in need of protection³, and offers a program of support and assistance to these individuals once they arrive. In 2005, a total of 35,768 protected persons⁴ were admitted into Canada, of which 7,416 were Government

¹ Information in this section comes from the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada website (www.cic.gc.ca) and the *Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration: 2006*, Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

² For more information on UNHCR's Agenda for Protection and the Convention Plus initiative, see: www.unhcr.org

³ Three classes of persons are eligible under the Refugee and Humanitarian Program: the Convention Refugee Abroad Class (CR1), the Country of Asylum Class (RA3) and the Source Country Class (RS1).

⁴ "Protected persons" includes Government Assisted Refugees, privately sponsored refugees, refugees landed in Canada and dependents abroad.

Assisted Refugees. All GARs are eligible for a minimum of 12 months of Government assistance through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), with refugees who are deemed to have additional special requirements receiving up to 24 months of RAP assistance.

This report focuses specifically on certain Government Assisted Refugees who arrived in British Columbia, to gain a better understanding of their settlement outcomes once they had arrived in Canada. This report does not examine the settlement outcomes of privately sponsored refugees or Convention refugees recognized in Canada by the Immigration and Refugee Board. However, many of the issues raised by the respondents may also apply to these two other groups of refugees.

Ongoing Review of Settlement Outcomes for GARs

This project was intended to provide a snapshot of the arrival and settlement outcomes of GARs who arrived during 2003 and 2005. As such, it does not provide an on-going review or measurement of GARs settlement achievements and challenges over time. However, Governmental and non-governmental organizations do undertake regular performance reviews and customer satisfaction reviews.⁵ The data that is obtained during these reviews is used to refine and enhance the settlement programs and service delivery. While this is an important and necessary process, one result is that clients may be requested to partake in numerous review or questionnaire processes. For example, both the Acehnese and Sudanese refugee communities have taken part in recent settlement outcomes research separately to this current piece of work.⁶

1. Project Description

1.1. Statistical Overview

Between February and March 2006, a total of 152 Government Assisted Refugees who arrived in BC during the calendar years 2003 and 2005 were interviewed by 24 Cross Cultural Facilitators. Coming from 12 countries of origin, the respondents represent nearly 10% of all GARs who arrived in BC during those two years. Additionally, although clients were interviewed as individuals, and in some cases more than one family member from the same household was interviewed, the clients interviewed represent over 450 family members of GARs, or nearly 30% of all GARs who arrived in BC during 2003 and 2005.⁷

Total figures	Gender breakdown	Year of arrival	Form of interview
2003 – 57 clients	52% male	2003 – 37.5%	74% by phone
2005 – 95 clients	48% female	2005 – 62.5%	26% in person

⁵ For example, CIC's Contribution Accountability Framework Settlement Programs Evaluation Strategy, the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, the BC Provincial Government's Accountability Framework for BCSAP, Student Tracking and Reporting System (STaRS), or the customer satisfaction reviews undertaken by non-governmental organizations.

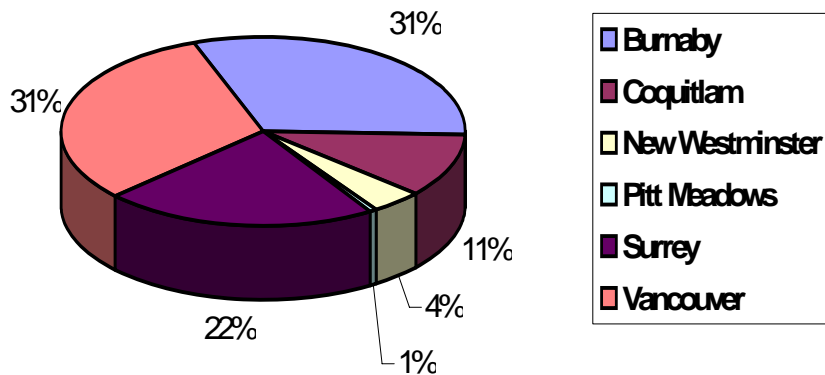
⁶ For example, *The First 365 Days: Acehnese Refugees in Vancouver, British Columbia*, James McLean, Chris Friesen and Jennifer Hyndman, RiIM June 2006 Working Paper 06-07 and the recent research into the Sudanese refugee community, *Sworn Enemies get together for a kiss and coffee in multicultural Vancouver*, Moussa Magassa, June 2005.

⁷ A total of 832 GARs arrived in BC during 2003, and 802 GARs arrived in BC during 2005.

The age of interviewees ranged from 20 to 87 years old, and clients were randomly selected from the ISS database of GARs. Interviews were conducted primarily by phone, but many of the Cross Cultural Facilitators, at their own initiative, organized for the interviews to be conducted in person for cultural reasons and to improve the quality of the information obtained.

Municipality of residence

Efforts were made to ensure that the clients who participated in the survey represented the geographic breakdown of GARs in the Greater Vancouver Regional District (GVRD). While this was mainly achieved, a larger proportion of the respondents currently reside in Vancouver than the overall spread of GARs in



No. of respondents: 152

the region. This is primarily due to the fact that both the Myanmarese and Vietnamese communities predominantly live in the Vancouver area, although respondents living in Vancouver came from 11 of the 12 countries of origin. The majority of other respondents live in the municipalities of Burnaby and Surrey, as would be expected due to the general spread of refugees across the GVRD. More information on the geographic breakdown of GARs in the GVRD can be found in the recent ISS publication entitled: "Faces of Refugees: Settlement Patterns in the Greater Vancouver Regional District".

1.2. Methodology

1.2.1. Questionnaire

Information was obtained by way of a Questionnaire⁸ drawn up by the Project Co-ordinator and ISS staff, following consultations with some of the relevant external stakeholders and testing of the Questionnaire by ISS Counsellors on selected clients. The interviews were conducted in the client's first language and took around 90 minutes to complete. The aim was to obtain qualitative and quantitative data as to the client's own perception of their arrival and settlement in BC, by covering such areas as: pre-arrival orientation, arrival in Vancouver, initial RAP orientation, and subsequent housing, education, health, employment, ESL and social outcomes.

The Questionnaire itself was split into three distinct sections:

- Pre-arrival information
- Arrival and orientation (covering the first six weeks in BC)
- Subsequent settlement outcomes (covering week 7 to date)

⁸ For the full text of the Questionnaire, please see Annex II.

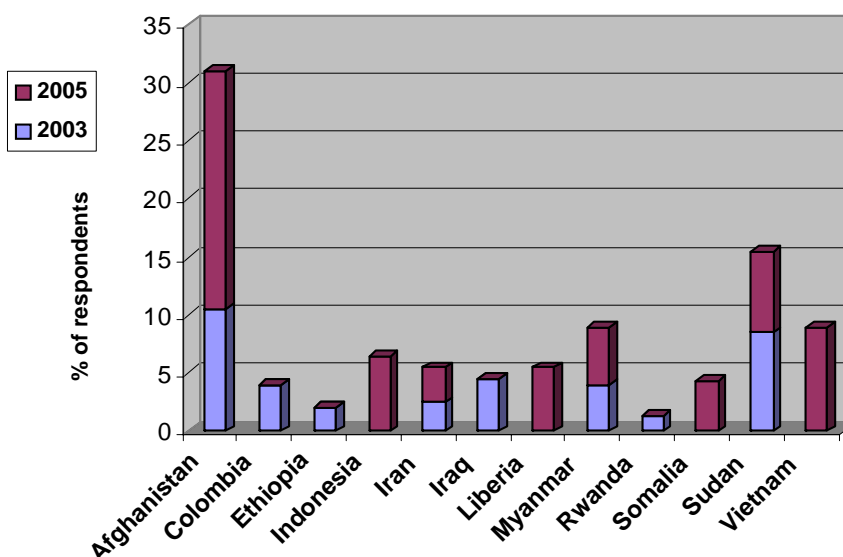
It was hoped that it would have been possible to translate the Questionnaire into all the project languages⁹, however due to time constraints and budgetary limitations, the Questionnaire was only translated into Arabic (which covered the Iraqi and Sudanese clients).

1.2.2. Cross Cultural Facilitators

A total of 24 Cross Cultural Facilitators were hired to undertake first language interviews, with the selected clients. Group orientation sessions were held with all the Cross Cultural Facilitators to ensure that everyone understood the aim of the project and the questions being asked in the Questionnaire. As far as possible, there was a gender balance between the Cross Cultural Facilitators for each country, with female Cross Cultural Facilitators interviewing female clients, and male Cross Cultural Facilitators interviewing male clients.

1.2.3. Selection of Clients

The project was based on the top eight countries of origin of GARs who arrived during the calendar years of 2003 and 2005. There is some overlap in countries for both these years, so clients from 12 different countries were interviewed. The graph sets out the countries of origin of the 152 GARs covered in the report and the percentage of the total respondents from each country.



As a partner of the Federal Government in providing settlement services to GARs, ISS has a database of all clients who avail of their services. Project participants were randomly selected from the ISS database, although to ensure a representative breakdown of clients, those selected were reviewed on the basis of the following criteria:

- Country of origin
- Gender
- Age
- Municipality of residence in GVRD
- Family composition

Over 230 clients in total were selected from the ISS database, and letters in their first language were sent to their last known address. Following this, the Cross Cultural Facilitators contacted the selected clients by phone to obtain their oral consent to participation in the project. Only a handful of clients decided not to participate in the survey, although many letters were returned

⁹ Amharic, Arabic, Burmese, Chin, Dari, English, Farsi, Indonesian, Kinyarwanda, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese.

to ISS because of incorrect addresses. To ensure client confidentiality and anonymity, no personal, identifying characteristics of the client's interviewed are contained in this report, although some of the personal testimonies of the clients have been included.

1.2.4. Note on Quotations, Statistics and Sources

The information and quotations contained within this report are derived primarily from the data received from the completed questionnaires; in other words, the refugees' own views. However, certain other sources have been used from Governmental, academic and non-governmental sources. These sources are not intended to be an exhaustive review of the published information on refugees in BC or Canada, but relevant sources have been quoted in the appropriate sections of the text.¹⁰

The quotes that have been used are occasionally not attributed to any particular nationality, gender or year grouping, either for confidentiality reasons or due to the generic nature of the quote. Additionally, a high proportion of the quotes used come from the Afghani and Myanmarese communities. This reflects the greater numbers of respondents who came from these communities, in particular the Afghani community, but also speaks to their eloquence and manner in which they expressed their opinions.

Finally, the statistics that are used in this report all come from the data obtained in the survey. However, the questionnaire itself was very detailed, and often respondents would not provide responses to every question, or alternatively provided a large amount of information in response to a single question. Therefore, in some cases, the statistics will not add up to 100%, either because a proportion of respondents did not respond to the question or because respondents reported multiple answers.

1.3. Constraints

1.3.1. Timescale

The project timeframe was from 31st January until 31st March 2006. It was always recognised that this was an ambitious timeframe to undertake a detailed survey of over 150 individuals. While the project was completed on time, certain issues were raised by this short timeframe. First of all, it was not possible to organize face-to-face interviews with all the clients, and so many of the interviews were conducted by telephone. Due to the length of the Questionnaire and the detailed personal questions which were being asked, face-to-face interviews might have improved the quality of the information gathered, and assisted both the clients and the Cross Cultural Facilitators by ensuring that all questions and responses were fully understood.

1.3.2. Format of Interviews

As stated above, 26% of the interviews were conducted in person. These face-to-face interviews were organised by the Cross Cultural Facilitators themselves, often as they felt that from their own cultural background a telephone interview would not be appropriate. Ideally, all of the interviews would have been conducted in person, and it was due to time pressures, and the lack of a transportation budget for the project, which limited the possibilities for such interviews.

¹⁰ A list of key sources is contained in Annex III.

As the Questionnaire took roughly 90 minutes to complete, and contained detailed questions as to the individual's own views and perceptions, telephone interviews of this length were probably too long.

1.3.3. Database Records

One of the major constraints faced by the project was actually contacting ISS clients to establish if they wished to participate in the survey. Understandably, many people have moved address or changed their telephone number, particularly for the clients who arrived during 2003. There is no requirement for clients to inform ISS of such changes, and therefore the internal ISS database did not always hold the correct contact details. In some cases, the ISS Counsellors had been informed of changes of address or phone number, or handwritten changes had been included in a client's paper file, and these changes had not yet been updated on the electronic database.

1.3.4. Extent of Analytical Review of Data

The completed questionnaires from this project contain a huge amount of data concerning the current views and settlement outcomes of a certain group of GARs. Time constraints necessitated that only certain analytical approaches were taken, although further analysis on the basis of comparison between countries of origin, within countries of origin on the basis of gender or date of arrival etc would be possible from the data already collected. As it is, the data has been reviewed where appropriate from the context of date of arrival, country of origin and gender.

At a national level, CIC has funded a database system covering all GARs in Canada; but there is a need for greater measurement and monitoring of GARs' settlement outcomes. First of all, there needs to be a nationally agreed definition of the expected settlement outcomes for GARs, with input and participation from GARs themselves, plus a mechanism to monitor and track these outcomes over time. Ideally, an electronic database (national or Provincial) would be developed where GARs' settlement outcomes could be subjected to multi-dimensional analysis.

2. Pre-departure

To gather some background data on the composition of the client group as a whole, a series of questions were asked about an individual's situation prior to their departure to Canada. No questions were asked as to the reasons for an individual's basis for refugee status or the protection concerns which led to their resettlement to Canada.

2.1. Place of Residence Pre-arrival in Canada

As would be expected from a diverse group from 12 countries, the clients had been living in a variety of different settings immediately prior to arrival in Canada. These ranged from refugee camps, urban and rural settings in a country of first asylum and also a small number of clients who had been resettled directly from their country of origin.¹¹

Setting	% of respondents
Urban area in a country of asylum	53
Refugee camp	31
Rural area in a country of asylum	8.5
Country of origin	4.5
No response	3

The largest group of clients, comprising of more than half of all respondents, were resettled from an urban setting in a country of asylum, followed by refugees who had been living in refugee camps.¹² The difficulties faced by urban refugees in particular have been highlighted by UNHCR¹³, including the marginalization and uncertainty surrounding legal status of many urban refugees in the South. These difficulties have a direct impact on the needs of GARs on arrival in Canada.

If we then look at the length of time respondents had spent outside of their country of origin, it becomes clear that many GARs have been in a refugee or refugee-like situation for a considerable period of time.

45% of all respondents had been living outside their country of origin for more than 5 years.

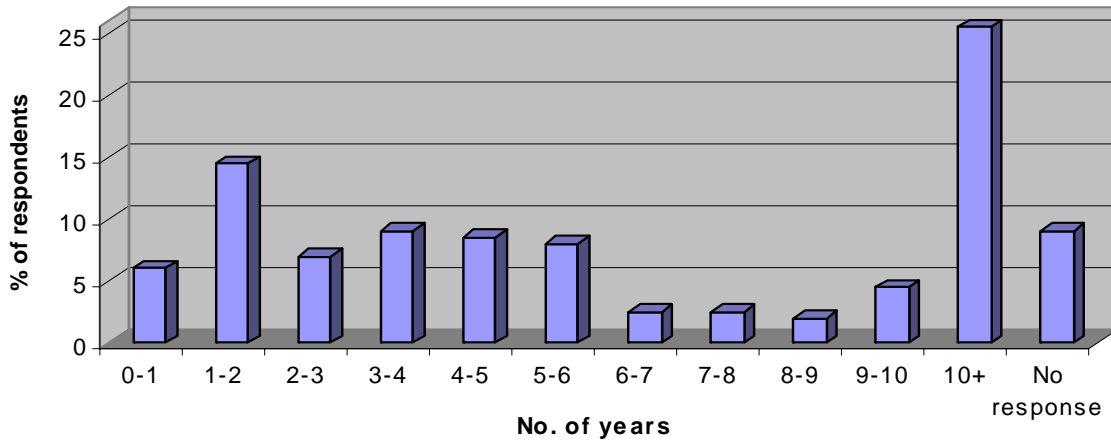
Over 25% of all respondents had been living outside their country of origin for more than 10 years.

¹¹ Source country class refugees come from specific source countries as designated by the Minister for Citizenship and Immigration. The current list of source countries is: Colombia, DR Congo, El Salvador, Guatemala, Sierra Leone and Sudan.

¹² Clients from Afghanistan, Iran and Myanmar were more likely to have been living in an urban area prior to resettlement. Clients from Indonesia, Liberia, Somalia and Vietnam were more likely to have been living in a refugee camp prior to resettlement. Clients from Sudan had been based in both urban settings and refugee camps.

¹³ See for example, Refugee Livelihoods Network, Edition September 2005.

Length of time spent outside of country of origin



No of respondents: 152

These two points may reflect the potentially increased needs of long-term refugees, particularly where children have been born or raised in a refugee setting. In educational terms, children who have been in insecure physical or legal settings for a long period of time may face particular problems in integrating into the Canadian school system, while long-term refugee adults may face difficulties in (re-) entering the labour market if certain employment or skills training is not available.

2.2. Pre-departure Information

Since 1998, the Integration Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) has provided for pre-departure orientations for Government Assisted Refugees, independent immigrants and members of the family class based on one, three and five day modules. In January 2006, CIC issued a call for proposals for the deliverance of the Canadian Orientation Abroad initiative in various countries throughout the world. One aspect of the proposal is to develop a mechanism to facilitate feedback from participants once they are settled in Canada.

Did you receive any pre-departure orientation before you arrived in Canada?
Yes – 71%
No – 26%
No response – 5%

“The topics were useful, but seemed too vague and confusing, but it all made sense once we started living in this country.”
Afghani female (2003)

The majority of respondents had received some form of pre-departure orientation – of those who did, 40% received it from the Canadian Embassy or Government, 28% from the International Organization for Migration, 18% from the UN or UNHCR, while a further 14% could not remember who had provided the orientation.

However, although a large proportion of clients had received some pre-departure orientation, it would appear that the extent and depth of such orientations varies between countries of asylum.

Nearly one fifth of respondents who received pre-departure orientation¹⁴ stated that it was less than 1 hour, and these appeared to be more briefings on travel arrangements rather than full pre-departure orientation sessions. In contrast, 28% received orientations of over 10 hours, covering subjects such as Canadian geography and history, as well as employment and educational opportunities. When asked what topics were covered, the largest number of respondents replied Canadian lifestyle, followed closely by the weather or climate, and then Canadian culture and general information about Vancouver or Canada. Other topics, which a number of respondents remembered, were: the need to obey the laws of Canada, issues around children's and women's rights, equality and multiculturalism. As one Ethiopian female client stated, "The orientation about the general life situation was very helpful as it controlled my expectations".

<p>"The pre-departure orientation has left little for me to be surprised about in regards to Canada." Afghani male (2003)¹⁵</p>	<p>"Unlike some immigrants whom I have come to learn had orientation sessions to better prepare them once they arrived in Canada; I was not privy to such an introduction. In that sense, I am finding that everything about Canada and its values seems surprising to me because in many ways it is diametrically opposed to the values that I was brought up with." Afghani male (2003)</p>
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When asked which of the topics were most useful to them, 28% stated that all the topics had been helpful, while a further 18.5% replied that the topics on Canadian culture and lifestyle were most useful, and 9% highlighted school and educational opportunities. One client stressed that being informed about Canadian society and culture, and particularly the notion of culture shock, had prepared them for their arrival in Canada. While most people were positive about the pre-departure orientation sessions they had attended, 9% stated that none of the topics were useful, that the topics were too general or that they could not remember any of the topics covered.

"When I first came here, I thought that the topics were not going to help me. I felt like I was just born into a new culture. However, now I believe that all those topics were helpful, especially the one about life in Canada and education."
Afghani female (2003)

In general, those respondents who received comprehensive pre-departure orientations found the information provided useful and it assisted them in their immediate settlement. However, it would also seem that the availability of pre-departure orientation is not evenly provided for GARs. 26% of respondents had not received any pre-departure orientation, and a further 12% had received less than 1 hour.

In addition to the Canadian Government sponsored pre-departure orientations, 25% of respondents had received some English classes prior to their departure¹⁶, and a further 6% of respondents came from Liberia where English is one of the main languages.

What further information would you have liked to have known prior to your arrival?

It is difficult to do justice to the range of information that individual respondents would have liked to know prior to their arrival. However, the responses can be placed into several main categories.

¹⁴ 17% of respondents who had received some pre-departure orientation. These respondents were mainly from Myanmar and Vietnam.

¹⁵ This respondent received four days of pre-departure orientations.

¹⁶ In particular, Iranian, Myanmar and Vietnamese respondents had attended English classes. These classes were either private classes or were organized by NGOs in the country of asylum.

While over a quarter of respondents replied that they did not feel the need for further information about Canada prior to arrival, there was a clear desire on the part of many respondents for more information about employment and educational opportunities, in particular the need for English language skills and availability of ESL classes. Additionally, 15% of respondents highlighted the need for more information about Canadian culture and lifestyle.

Respondents also highlighted some of the negative issues which they would like to have known about ranging from loneliness, racism, lack of financial support, the difficulties in finding employment and general comments about how hard life is for a new immigrant.

Many of the issues that respondents highlighted may only appear relevant once an individual has arrived and started to adjust to their new life. However, the desire for more information about employment, education and cultural issues was a clear theme through many of the replies.

When asked what information they would tell a friend coming to Canada, the largest proportion of responses stressed the need for English language skills. Additionally, many respondents highlighted their positive experiences here, and that Canada was a good country and Canadians are kind and friendly. The peace and stability of the country were also raised by many respondents, as was the beauty of Vancouver and Canada. However, several respondents stated that they would tell their friends that life is hard in Canada, and it is not easy to find employment. One respondent stated: "It is better to stay where you are rather than coming".

"First I will tell them to learn the language. This is the most important of all. I feel like a newborn now that needs to learn everything from the parents."
Afghani female (2003)

Is there anything you wish you had brought with you to Canada, which you did not?
63% – nothing
10% – family or friends
6% – warm or cultural clothing
5% – food from home country

"I was a refugee in a camp - what could I bring?"
Liberian female (2005)

2.3. Friends and Family

Did you have family in Canada or BC before you arrived?	Did you have friends in Canada or BC before you arrived?
24% – Yes	30% – Yes
73% – No	66% – No
3% – No response	4% – No response

More than a quarter of respondents had pre-existing family or friends in BC or Canada¹⁷, and around 10% of these respondents were coming to join immediate family members. Although the

¹⁷ Although there were no obvious trends evidenced in terms of countries of origin, Indonesians seemed to be more likely to have friends in Vancouver already, while Iranians seemed to be more likely to have family members in Vancouver.

survey did not ask specifically where the family or friends were living, from the responses received the majority seem to be based in the GVRD. As would be expected, family and friends provided important settlement assistance for recently arrived GARs: 33% of GARs were assisted in finding accommodation, 18% received orientations to the city, 14% received assistance in where to shop, and 11% received social or emotional support.¹⁸ Help was also provided in registering children at school, health care issues, interpretation, and with the provision of furniture, clothing and food.

However, 11% of respondents stated that they did not receive any assistance from their family or friends here. As one respondent put it: “They were refugees themselves – they couldn’t help, they needed help themselves”.

3. Arrival and Orientation

3.1. Arrival

3.1.1. Arrival at the Airport

The respondents eloquently expressed the complex range of emotions felt as they arrived at Vancouver International Airport. These ranged from excitement and happiness, to fear, anxiety and exhaustion. On the whole, the experience at the airport seems to be a positive one for clients – respondents stressed the excellent treatment by immigration officers, the warm welcome and the smiling faces and positive attitude of everyone they met. Respondents also highlighted the beauty of Vancouver, its cleanliness and the weather.

“I felt emotional – happy and sad at same time. A country that I had never dreamt of coming to, and the reality that I am now in a foreign country.”

Myanmar female (2003)

“It was a pleasant surprise. I was happy. For the first day ever, I saw my family being so happy and at the same time to be honest, it was my first time in life feeling really happy, because I was sure that my child’s life was secured from then on.”

Afghani female (2005)

However, not all respondents had positive memories of the airport. Several stressed that they were nervous and confused when they arrived, and their recollection is of being interviewed while either themselves or their children were tired and hungry. As in the quote above, many respondents were also torn between the knowledge that they had arrived in a safe country, and sadness at leaving family and friends behind.

41% of respondents were met by someone who spoke their language at the airport, and another 5% were met by someone who spoke their second or third language¹⁹. However, 48% of respondents stated that they did not meet anyone who spoke their language.²⁰ As one respondent put it, “we just followed her like cows going to the butcher”. Despite this, some of the respondents or their family members knew English, and other respondents stated that although they were not met by someone who spoke their language, the officials at the airport helped them.

¹⁸ For more information on the role played by friends and the Host Program in the settlement process, see Section 4.9 *Information Sources*, below, p.51.

¹⁹ Mainly Sudanese clients were met by someone who spoke their second or third language.

²⁰ In particular, Indonesian, Myanmar female and Vietnamese clients were not met by someone who spoke their language.

3.1.2. Place of Settlement²¹

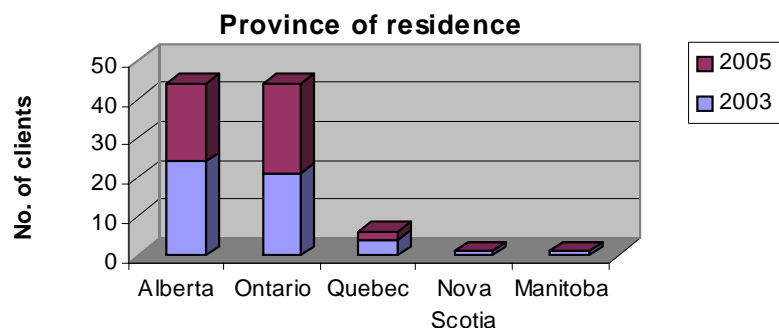
The survey included a question on the respondents' views as to their place of settlement in British Columbia.²² This was included to see whether or not GARs had any preferences in terms of large cities, smaller cities, towns or villages, for example outside of the GVRD. More than 75% of all respondents stated that they would prefer to live in a big city, such as those in the Greater Vancouver Regional District, due to the range of services (such as ESL and health facilities) or employment and educational opportunities available. Some respondents explained that their preference for a big city was because they were used to living in a big city, or conversely since they had been living in a refugee camp or rural area, they wanted to experience the diversity and excitement of a big city.

A proportion of respondents (15%) stated that they did not have a preference or that they would prefer to live in a smaller urban area. Their explanations were based on the cost of living and the more relaxed lifestyle provided in smaller cities or towns, while others stated that it would depend on the job prospects or weather in other parts of BC or Canada. Additionally, 7% stated that they did not know any areas outside of the GVRD so could not answer the question.

3.1.3. Secondary Migration²³

While the project did not specifically look into the question of the secondary migration of GARs from BC, during the course of the research we were able to gain some insight into the extent of secondary migration within Canada. From reviewing the ISS database, and subsequent information that we received,

we found that 51 GARs who arrived during 2003 have left BC for other provinces; while 45 GARs who arrived during 2005 have already left BC. The two main destinations are Alberta and Ontario. Of particular note is the proportion of Sudanese GARs who leave BC for Calgary, apparently due to the increased job opportunities there.



²¹ For more information on GARs settlement patterns in BC see: *Faces of Refugees: Settlement Patterns in the Greater Vancouver Regional District 2003-2005*, ISSBC, September 2006.

²² A recent Special Issue of the Canadian Ethnic Studies Journal, Vol. XXXVII, No. 3, 2005, focussed specifically on "Thinking about Immigration Outside Canada's Metropolitan Centres". Contained in the issue are two articles relevant to British Columbia: *Sharing the Wealth, Spreading the Burden? The Settlement of Kosovar Refugees in Smaller British Columbia Cities*, Kathy Sherrell, Jennifer Hyndman and Fisnik Preniqi, pp.76-96, and *Regional Immigration and Dispersal: Lessons from Small- and Medium-Sized Urban Centres in British Columbia*, Margaret Walton-Roberts, pp.12-34.

²³ For information on secondary migration in Ontario see: *Paved with Good Intentions: Paths of Secondary Migration of Government-Assisted Refugees in Ontario* (A Study for the Ontario Administration of Settlement and Integration Services, Citizenship and Immigration Canada), August 2001, Laura Simich, Morton Beiser, Farah Mawani, Jane O'Hare, Culture, Community and Health Studies, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, University of Toronto.

Additionally, ISS is contracted by CIC to provide settlement assistance to GARs who migrate to BC from other provinces in Canada. Between 2003 and 2005, a total of 304 individuals migrated from other Provinces of Canada and were receiving services from ISS. There was a 28% increase in the number of self-transfers from 2003 to 2005. As can be seen, a greater number of GARs are migrating to BC, than are leaving.

3.2. Welcome House Accommodation

Having asked a series of questions about the individual's experiences prior to departure and their initial arrival in Vancouver, the second part of the survey focussed on the services provided to GARs during their first six weeks, namely; accommodation at Welcome House, RAP Orientations by ISS Counsellors, medical services at the Bridge Community Health Clinic and their search for housing.

ISS is contracted by CIC to provide temporary accommodation to all GARs for up to 15 nights after their arrival. "Welcome House" is the accommodation program of ISS' office in Drake Street, and comprises of 12 one and two bedroom self-contained apartments with a total sleeping capacity of 85 persons.

Respondents were asked about their first impressions of Welcome House, whether or not they found the documents given to them by Welcome House were useful, to rate the accommodation at Welcome House, whether or not the accommodation was adequate for their family and what could be improved.

In terms of individuals' first impressions, most clients were impressed with the accommodation, the helpful and friendly staff and felt welcomed and happy to be there. Clients also reported that they received all the services and assistance which they needed while they were in Welcome House, and that they felt safe. As one respondent said, "I felt I had arrived at a place of safety, as if I were returning to my parents' home".

"Since my family and I were living a real hard life in Pakistan, the first time that I entered Welcome House I felt peaceful. The couple of people who helped us out and showed us our room, made me feel like I have entered paradise and am talking to angels. I was really glad to be there."

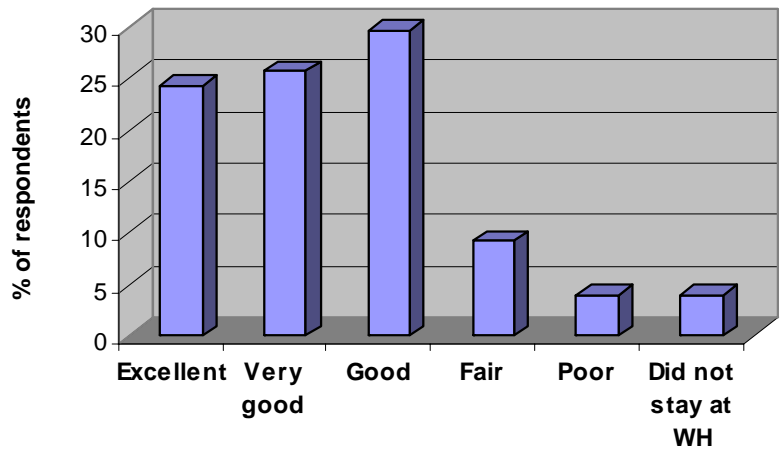
Afghani female (2003)

"I thought it was a jail. I was given one room with my 2 children and there was another Sudanese family of 6 whom we couldn't communicate with but shared the kitchen. We didn't eat the same things but had to share 3 pots, there was no privacy, no cleanliness. We had to share bathrooms/shower. I was depressed. We were left on our own for 3 days."

Female (2003)

However, not all clients felt this way. It seems that although many clients had a positive experience at Welcome House, those who do not had a particularly hard time. This may be partly due to the difficulties of arriving as a refugee, in a new country and culture, with language barriers and the uncertainty of what is going to happen next, as well as an individual's expectations of how their life will be in Canada.

3.2.1. Rating of Welcome House Accommodation



50% of clients stated that they would rate the accommodation at Welcome House as **Excellent or Very Good**

70% of respondents felt that the accommodation at Welcome House was **adequate** for their family.

No. of respondents: 147

As shown by the chart, the vast majority of respondents (80%) rated the accommodation at Welcome House as 'Excellent', 'Very Good' or 'Good'. Meanwhile, 70% of respondents felt that the accommodation was adequate for their family, and 16% felt that it was not adequate. However, although the majority of clients were satisfied with the service provided at Welcome House, certain issues were raised by a number of clients that should be addressed.

The first point which several respondents raised was that they were unhappy or felt that it was not culturally appropriate for them to share rooms with other refugees who they did not know. Additionally, respondents stressed that they felt that they had no privacy while in Welcome House, that guests who visit can disturb the residents, and that there was not enough space.

Another point that was raised by several respondents was the problems that arise if an individual or family arrives late in the day or at the weekend. In particular, the difficulties in buying groceries for the first couple of days were mentioned by male and female respondents from both 2003 and 2005, and the fact that staff does not work during the weekend was raised by clients who had arrived on Friday afternoons. Furthermore, one disabled client pointed out that due to the stairs in Welcome House, disability access to the building could be improved.

"They can buy some basic stuff for the kitchen. There was just water that we were able to boil and drink. We arrived really late and at that time, all the stores were closed. We had to basically starve until the next day."
Afghani male (2003)

"I had a little problem with the kitchen. The kitchen is missing all the basic needs. I was too tired to go and buy everything for my kids and myself. However, when I went to the kitchen I couldn't even find sugar or salt. Therefore, I had to go the extra mile to find a place where I can buy things."
Afghani female (2003)

3.3. RAP Orientations

As part of the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), funded by CIC, ISS Counsellors provide 13 hours of orientation to all GARs during their first six weeks in Vancouver. Clients who are deemed to have additional special requirements receive a further 5 hours of orientation. The format of the orientations is determined by CIC nationally, as set out in CIC's "Resettlement Assistance Program Delivery Handbook".²⁴

These orientations cover an initial assessment of the client's needs, immediate health care needs, a financial orientation and explanation of RAP services, settlement information and linking clients to broader based programs such as ESL or employment assistance.

For the financial year 2005-2006, ISS is contracted by CIC to provide orientations to approximately 800 GARs, of whom an estimated 75% may be deemed to have additional special requirements.²⁵ Additionally, ISS RAP Counsellors assist GARs who migrate to GVRD from other Provinces in Canada. During the period of arrival for the respondents, ISS had only the equivalent of 3 full-time staff members who were funded to provide RAP Counselling to GARs. Therefore, each RAP Settlement Counsellor had a caseload of around 300 clients, which clearly has an impact on the level of service that can be provided to individual clients. From April 2006, ISS will have 4 full-time RAP Counsellors, which is a welcome increase. However, if the numbers of GARs arriving remains constant, this means that each RAP Counsellor will still have a caseload of around 225 clients.²⁶

3.3.1. Topics Covered in the Sessions

When asked what topics they remembered from the orientation sessions provided by the Counsellors, 57% of respondents mentioned the session on banking and finance. The next top three areas mentioned by clients were housing, employment and education (with between 13-20% mentioning each of these sessions). Other topics which a number of clients remembered were: information on children's and women's rights, where to buy cheap food and clothes, the transportation system and health matters.

A proportion of clients (13%) could not remember anything from the orientation sessions. The reasons stated for this were that they were relying on another family member to remember the information or because they were not happy with the manner in which the orientations were provided, either due to the quality of interpretation or the Counsellor's approach.

A number of clients also mentioned information about life in Canada that they found useful during the orientations, such as whom to give their telephone number to, not to stare at people in the street and general information about Canadian culture. Several respondents specifically mentioned how helpful their Counsellor had been, although some commented that they did not even know who their Counsellor was, or that the Counsellor was always in a rush.

²⁴ *Resettlement Assistance Program Delivery Handbook: Transition Services for the first 4-6 weeks in Canada*, Refugee Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, July 1998.

²⁵ Information from the ISS Resettlement Assistance Counselling Proposal 2005-2006 Fiscal Year, p. 2, as presented to CIC.

²⁶ These statistics include children so do not represent the number of family units each Counsellor works with. However, children are also ISS clients as they are in need of education, housing and health services themselves.

When asked which sessions were most useful, the largest proportion of respondents highlighted the financial orientation, as well as employment, housing, education and the need for English language skills.

“Childcare because it is different from our way – to know how to deal with your children without beating them.”

Sudanese female (2005)

Several female clients mentioned the importance of information on childcare and women’s rights, and Canadian laws regarding appropriate child discipline.

77% of respondents felt that the orientations had helped them to adjust to their new life in Canada, and a further 4% felt that the orientations had partly helped them adjust or were not comprehensive enough to fully assist them. However, 10% of respondents stated that the orientations had not helped them to adjust to Canadian life. As one respondent stated: “The orientations did not really help me adjust: only (English) language can do this”.

“I would say that the sessions have allowed me to adjust partially; maybe 40% of my mental and physical faculties have adjusted to the Canadian way of life.”

Afghani male (2005)

“The information was helpful, but it is still difficult to adjust to life here.”

Sudanese female (2003)

It is clear that most respondents felt that the issues of immediate concern to them were the most useful, i.e. banking and finance, housing, education and ESL, and employment opportunities. Respondents also felt that a lot of the information provided was useful to them in their daily lives and helped them to live independently. However, clients’ interest in more information about Canadian culture and the Canadian way of life was also evident. Understandably, these issues may need to be dealt with in more detail once a client has been in the country for a longer period of time, and been able to satisfy their immediate needs such as opening a bank account and finding accommodation.

“All the information provided was helpful. Everything said was useful and it still seemed that we needed more.” **Afghani male (2005)**

3.3.2. Culture and Values

Respondents were also asked if there was any part of Canadian culture or values that they had found particularly difficult to understand. The range of responses was extremely varied, although 41% of respondents replied that there was nothing in particular which had surprised them or that they had found difficult to understand. Several mentioned that they already had an idea of North American culture from TV, films and books.

Issues which some respondents stated they had been surprised about were:

- The number of cars and the orderly traffic
- Body piercing and tattoos
- Linguistic difficulties
- Flags everywhere
- Same sex marriages
- Gender equality
- The way people socialize
- The importance of multiculturalism
- Clothing and dress
- The extent of social freedom
- The individualism of Canadian society
- Shows of public affection
- Lack of respect by children
- Alcohol and drugs
- The emphasis on machines and technology
- Many obese people

3.3.3. Community Links

Respondents were asked if they had wanted to meet other members of their community when they arrived, if ISS had assisted them to make contact, and if so what links and assistance they had made with members of their community already living in the GVRD.

80% of respondents stated that they did want to meet members of their community²⁷, while 13% of respondents stated that they did not want to meet other members of their community.²⁸ In 37% of cases, staff from ISS assisted the individuals to make contact with their community, but in 44% of cases no one from ISS assisted the clients to make contact. Once contact was made, most respondents stated that they became friends with community members already here, and pursued either religious or social activities with them. Additionally, community members assisted newcomers to find accommodation, provided social or emotional support, information about Vancouver and Canada, and directed respondents to cheap places to shop.

“They helped us to adjust to our surroundings and deal with culture shock, after all it’s always good to have a familiar face in a strange place.”

Afghani male (2005)

The questionnaire did not specifically ask whether or not a client had a Host Volunteer under the ISS Host Program. Therefore, from the findings of the survey, it is not possible to review the Host Program. Additionally, it is not clear from the majority of responses whether clients view their RAP Counsellor or their Host Volunteer as a “member of their community” or as the staff of a service provider organization. This issue also arose in Section 4.9 *Information Sources* in regards to the definition of a “friend” for information provision.

However, the majority of GARs do want to have ties with their own community in Vancouver, and receive some form of assistance or information from their own community, and from ISS in linking them to their community. This reinforces the role which friends and community members play in the settlement outcomes of GARs, as can be seen in the arrival information in Section 2.3 *Friends and Family* and in Section 4.9 *Information Sources*. It also highlights the multi-organizational aspect of settlement, and the need to ensure that a wide range of actors are actively involved in the settlement process, in addition to ISS providing 13-18 hours of RAP orientations.

3.3.4. ISS Counsellors

As their main point of contact, many respondents made specific comments relating to their opinions and experiences of their ISS Counsellors. The ISS Counsellor is often the “face” of the RAP program for GARs, and as such a variety of complements and criticisms were made specifically of the Counsellors. In addition to other quotes in the rest of the report, the following is a sample of the positive comments made.

“My Counsellor referred me for a volunteer job in a hospital, though I didn’t get a job, the letter she gave me really was a big help.”

“The PR Card for my wife was taking longer than expected. Our Counsellor helped us to find out why.”

“I received lots of help when I was in Welcome House. Welcome House staff helped me with my initial groceries.”

²⁷ Afghani clients seemed particularly interested in meeting members of the Afghan community already in the GVRD.

²⁸ Sudanese clients seemed least interested in associating together, although it would appear that in reality many make links with the Sudanese community here.

“My Counsellor was very experienced and she knew what she was talking about. I am really happy about the job she did.”	“My Counsellor was very helpful. I remember everything she told us and everything was very helpful. I really cannot pinpoint three things. Everything was helpful.”	“Our Counsellor reassured us that our needs would be met. Said to just relax and start to adjust to life in Canada. She wished us a warm welcome and best wishes for life in Canada.”
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Of the criticisms made, several relate to the lack of attention or time that the clients felt that their Counsellors were able to give to them. This may relate to the limited number of RAP Counsellors at ISS and their high caseloads, rather than being a criticism of the Counsellors’ themselves. Additionally, clients expressed frustration at the difficulties in finding housing and employment, and perceived this as a lack of assistance by ISS.

“Counsellors should talk more about job search.”	“Our Counsellor never took the time to explain things to us.”	“I don’t even know my Counsellor.”
“I cannot remember the orientations because the Counsellor was always in a rush.”	“If the Counsellor would have taken more time explaining about housing and relocation.”	“Sometimes I feel like some of the Counsellors at Welcome House are ignoring us. They are not happy to see us.”
“I was surprised that the Counsellors would not respect us and that I would not get any help from Welcome House.”	“Perhaps if we could be assigned a new Counsellor who is more responsive to our requests, especially since we are to be off RAP assistance in 6 months.”	“I still don’t know where I can get the services I need. When I go to Welcome House they tell me that I need to book an appointment. The Counsellors often are not available, and my problems have not been resolved.”

3.4. Bridge Community Health Clinic

“Health care is very important; I don’t believe there is anything ‘least’ important when it comes to health and well-being. I appreciate all their efforts.”
Afghani male (2005)

All Government Assisted Refugees are provided with the opportunity to visit the Bridge Community Health Clinic (BCHC) in Vancouver on their arrival to receive primary health care screening and treatment or onward referral for any medical conditions that they have.²⁹ Although a small number of respondents (5%) stated that they did not visit the BCHC at all³⁰,

²⁹ For more information on health care issues see Section 4.3 *Health*, p.34.

³⁰ This figure includes clients with serious medical conditions who were referred immediately on arrival to hospital based care.

the vast majority of clients (59%) attended at least three times and 19% visited the Bridge Community Health Clinic six or more times. Several clients noted that they had visited more than 10 times, or that they visited the BCHC on a regular basis.

It was clear from the comments made by the clients that the staff and Clinic itself are extremely well regarded. Respondents were asked what was both most useful and least useful in their visits to the BCHC.

Most useful		Least useful	
Good and attentive staff	26%	Nothing	74%
General health check-up	15%	Long waiting time	6%
Tests / treatment	14.5%	Lack of interpreter	0.7%
Good care and service	14.5%	Number of patients they have to attend to	0.7%
Vaccinations, especially for children	13%	Too many sections in the Clinic so not knowing where to go	0.7%
Everything	10.5%	Too much medication	0.7%
Receiving proper medication for health problems	8%	No follow up on results	0.7%

As can be seen from the table above, clients were particularly impressed with the quality of doctors, nurses and other staff members at the BCHC. They were also extremely pleased with the level of care and attention that their medical problems received. As a result, nearly three quarters of all respondents felt that there was nothing least useful in their visits to the BCHC. Of those who identified a problem in response to this question, the major issue that was raised was that the waiting times were too long.

Of the respondents, 43% stated that their visits to the BCHC had resolved immediate health problems that they were facing, while a further 22% stated that they did not have any immediate health problems. However, 20% responded that their visits did not resolve their immediate problems. It is not clear from the responses whether this is because of the complex nature of their medical problems, or because they felt that they had not received sufficient treatment. When we look at the rest of the data though, with the high level of appreciation for the care and treatment provided by the BCHC, it would seem to be that the vast majority of clients are very satisfied with the medical services provided. There does appear to be a reasonable proportion of clients who return on a regular basis and use the BCHC as their primary source of on-going medical care.³¹ This has implications for the use of resources and client breakdown of the BCHC.

“Everything is helpful. If it were not helpful I would have stopped going there. But now I still go there, though it is far away from where I live, but I feel really connected to the staff there. They help me out the way I need.”
Afghani female (2005)

This quote shows the success, but also the challenge faced by the BCHC to ensure that GARs are able to access mainstream medical services, such as family doctors, in their municipality of residence and maintain the same level of confidence in those services as they have in the BCHC.

³¹ As stated above, 19% of respondents had visited the BCHC six times or more.

3.5. Housing Search

In September 2005, through one-time funding from CIC, ISS recruited a staff member with the responsibility for assisting GARs in their search for permanent housing. As of April 2006, ISS has now received core program funding for a part-time staff member to assist GARs in their accommodation search. This was due to the recognition of the difficulties in finding adequate rental accommodation in the GVRD, and is an important addition to the settlement team. Therefore, in asking questions about clients' initial housing search, we expected there to be a difference in the responses of the clients who arrived during 2003, prior to the appointment of a dedicated staff member, and those who arrived towards the end of 2005.

These expectations were borne out to some degree, with only 24.5% of respondents from 2003 stating that they had not faced any difficulties in accessing housing, compared with 40% of respondents from 2005. Yet since the dedicated staff member was only available for the last four months of 2005, a large proportion of clients from 2005 still stated that they had faced difficulties in finding adequate permanent housing. Clients from both years of arrival felt that the biggest challenges that they faced were the high rents and their limited income, along with language barriers and finding housing large enough to accommodate their family. Clients from both years also felt that they did not know enough about the different areas, and rental prices, within various parts of the GVRD.

Additionally, although only 26% of respondents from 2003 said that they had received other assistance from ISS in accommodation matters, the figure only rose to 38% for the respondents from 2005. This may be in part because the vast majority of Vietnamese clients who arrived during 2005 were assisted by community members already here in Vancouver, and therefore

"The person who is helping immigrants find a place is very busy. Two people are needed for that."

Afghani male (2005)

they did not seek the assistance of ISS to find housing. Still, clients from both years felt that they could have received more assistance from ISS in their initial housing search.

The suggestions and recommendations of the clients who arrived during 2003 as to how the service could be improved mirror to a large extent the changes ISS had already put in place through the recruitment of an additional staff member dedicated to housing issues. However, clients from 2005 also felt that they had not had enough access to information about the locations and levels of rent in different parts of the GVRD. Additionally, clients from both years felt that ISS needed to be more proactive in directly contacting landlords and building managers. Clients also stated that they had not received enough assistance or information from ISS regarding the possibilities of BC Housing.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of clients (73%) stated that they felt prepared for living independently by the time they moved out of Welcome House. Of the 20% who responded that they did not feel prepared, the high levels of rent and low financial assistance were one of the main reasons. However, there were some clients who were unsure as to how they were going to cope once they left Welcome House. Some clients stated that they felt lost and unprepared since they did not speak English and did not know anyone in the city.³² For high needs clients such as these, further follow up and assistance is necessary.

"I was not given enough of an orientation regarding life in Canada - I feel I needed further assistance."

Somali female (2005)

³² It would appear that Somali clients were least likely to feel prepared for living independently. This should be examined in more detail by ISS.

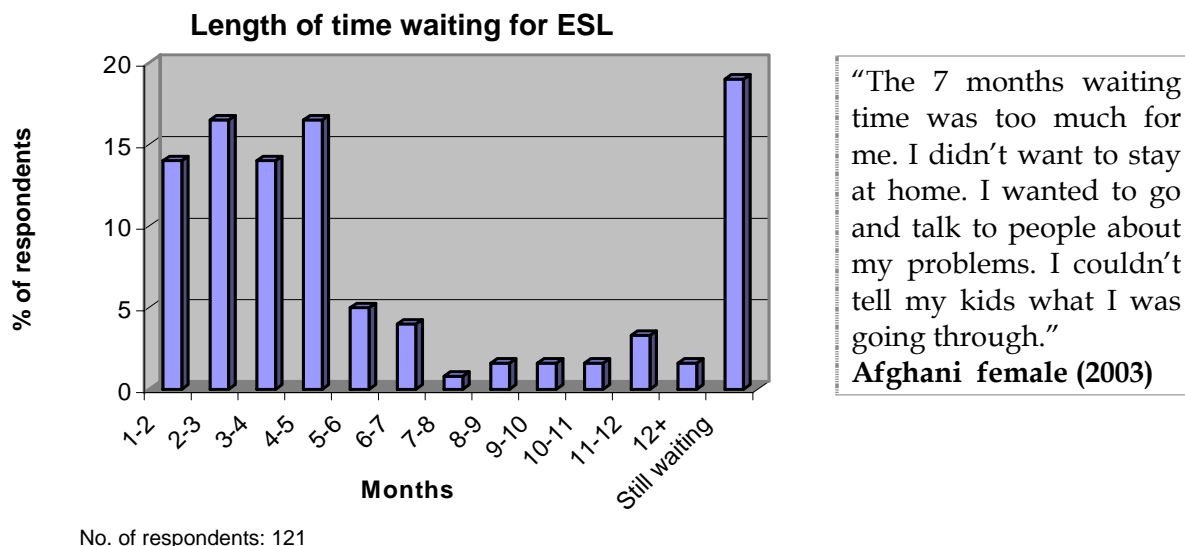
4. Subsequent Settlement Outcomes

4.1. English Language Classes

English language skills are recognised nationally as a fundamental aspect of refugee and immigrant settlement. For example, the objective of the BC Provincial Government’s English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) is to provide English language training to adult immigrant and refugee newcomers “in order to facilitate their social, cultural, economic and political integration into Canada so that they may become participating members of Canadian society as quickly as possible”.³³ Considerable resources are provided by Federal, Provincial and non-governmental sources to ensure that refugees and immigrants can access ESL classes. However, this is an area where the needs will always remain greater than the available resources. Having said that, various issues arose from the survey in regards to the provision of ESL classes for GARs.

2003	2005
58% of all respondents rated their English language skills as Not at all or Beginner	59% of all respondents rated their English language skills as None or Beginner ³⁴

In British Columbia, the Provincial authorities provide English Language Services for Adults (ELSA) up to Level 3. Most GARs are therefore eligible for a certain number of hours of free ESL classes, depending on their measured level of English. Of the respondents interviewed, 81.5% were eligible for ESL classes, with the other respondents either not responding to the question or stating that they were not eligible for the classes. Of those who were not eligible, several come from Liberia where English is spoken, others were deemed to already have a high level of fluency in English and four clients either had health problems or very young children so could not attend classes.



³³ Information from the website of the Settlement and Multiculturalism Division of the Ministry of the Attorney-General: www.ag.gov.bc.ca/sam/index.htm

³⁴ The statistics for 2005 include respondents from Liberia where English is spoken. Excluding the Liberian clients, the figure for 2005 stands at 65%.

As can be seen from the chart³⁵, the length of time that a client has to wait for the start of their ESL classes varies considerably. While some clients only had to wait a couple of weeks, 15% of respondents waited over six months for their ESL classes and a further 19%, as reiterated during the interviews, were still waiting. This wait time includes the wait for an initial assessment of an individual's level of English competency. Once a client has been assessed, it is their responsibility to source appropriate ESL classes, for example classes that provide daycare if the client has young children.

Clients who had to wait felt that this was time wasted, and that it delayed their settlement and adjustment into Canadian life. Many clients talked about the impact that this wait had on their lives, which ranged from some female clients not leaving their houses, to boredom, isolation and difficulties in daily tasks. Alternatively, 28% of respondents said that the wait did not have a great impact on them, and as one client pointed out:

“While waiting I attended the local library to improve my English, so in that sense waiting for the classes to commence actually prepared me for studying in a classroom setting even more so.”

However, once clients were able to start their ESL classes, there was a high level of satisfaction with the teachers and course content. Of the clients who had started their ESL classes, 88% were happy with the class they had been assigned to. In particular, clients stressed the quality of the teaching, the good atmosphere for learning, and the friendly teachers, as well as the fact that they made friends with other students in the classes. Some respondents felt that they had been placed in too high a class, and so felt overloaded or that it was difficult to follow what was being taught. There were also clients who are illiterate in their own language so felt extra pressures in trying to learn English. Several clients made comments, both positive and negative, about being placed in classes with students from other cultural backgrounds to themselves. While some clients appreciated the fact that there were other members of their own community in the same class, or the opportunities the classes provided to mix with people from other

“We were mixed with people of different backgrounds who do not respect other people.”

Sudanese male (2005)

cultural backgrounds, a minority of respondents stated that they were unhappy in the class because they were the only person from their community in the class, or that there was a lack of respect between the students.

If you have finished your free English classes, do you feel comfortable communicating in English for your daily tasks?	If additional free English classes were provided would you have taken it?³⁶
71% – Yes 27% – No	65% – Yes 9% – No

Have you accessed other English classes?	If yes, were they:
15% – Yes 78% – No	Free classes – 61% Paid classes – 30% Other – 9%

³⁵ The following statistics are based on those clients who were eligible for ESL classes and who responded to the questions. A total of 121 clients responded to these questions.

³⁶ A further 25% did not respond to this question, and 0.7% stated that they were not sure.

From the above tables, we can see that although the majority of clients who have finished their ESL classes feel comfortable communicating in English for daily tasks, most would prefer to have received additional classes. However, very few clients have actually accessed other forms of ESL classes beyond the Government provided courses. This is despite a range of non-governmental organizations, civic and community groups providing free English classes. When asked why they had not accessed other classes, the largest group of respondents (20%) stated that they were not aware of other free classes, or did not know how to access them. A number of clients also mentioned that they had not accessed further classes due to cost, lack of childcare or the need to find a job to earn money.

As will be examined in more detail in Section 4.6 *Employment and Family Income*, large numbers of respondents also felt that their lack of employment, or their difficulties in finding adequate employment, stem from their poor English abilities or language barriers. This highlights the fundamental connection that the refugees themselves place on English language abilities and their economic integration into life in Canada.

What type of English classes would you have been most interested in?		Have you had any difficulties in accessing English classes?	
Full time	36%	34% – Yes	43% – No
Part time	31.5%	17% – No response	5% – Did not need English classes
In the evening	16%	If yes, for what reason?	
During the day	16%	Childcare – 25%	Transport – 16%
At the weekend	0.5%	Cost – 15%	Health problems – 10%

“Our women are lagging behind considering their weakness in English. This factor is affecting their lives and contribution that they are supposed to make. My point is, if the Government could help them further, this would be appreciated.”

Sudanese male (2003)

4.2. Education

4.2.1. Skills Training

Beyond English language skills, respondents were asked if they had accessed other educational opportunities since their arrival in Canada.

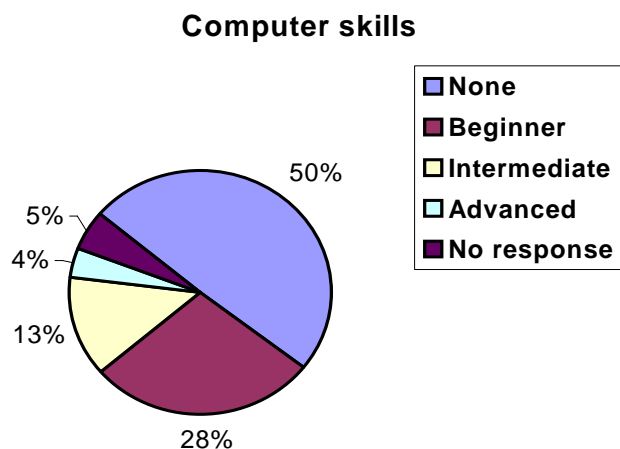
Only 9% of respondents have undertaken any form of education or skills training, apart from ESL, since they arrived in Canada.

Of the clients who have accessed other educational opportunities, the courses taken included carpentry, janitorial skills, parenting classes, residential care, university preparation courses, human resources and building services skills. The low level of skills training in Canada on the part of clients from both 2003 and 2005 is surprising. Understandably, some respondents stated that they were in full time ESL classes so did not have time for other forms of education, and

others felt the need to search for employment immediately.³⁷ However, if refugees are not able to access skills training courses, there is a risk that they will not be able to effectively integrate into the job market – either at their desired level of competence, or for others not at all.

4.2.2. Computer Skills

Respondents were asked about their levels of computer skills, whether or not they had an email address or if they had attended any computer classes in Canada. As can be seen from the statistics below, the level of competence and familiarity with computers is low. Once again, this has an impact on an individual’s ability to access the labour market. While not all jobs require direct computer skills, increasingly job searching is done through the Internet, and job applications request emailed copies of resumes.³⁸ Therefore, individuals who do not have a basic level of computer skills will face increased difficulties in accessing the labour market.



72% of all respondents do not have an **email address**

78% of all respondents rate their computer skills as **None or Beginner**

Only **8.5%** of respondents have undertaken any form of **computer classes** since their arrival in Canada

No. of respondents: 152

The lack of skills training and computer competence within the client group is unfortunate when ISS, and other service provider organizations, offer a whole range of specific classes aimed at newcomers and refugees.³⁹ One reason for the low uptake by GARs may be the cost involved; given the financial limitations faced by GARs⁴⁰, the cost of such courses may be prohibitive.

As there are already a wide range of pre-existing courses covering English language skills, computer skills and employment skills upgrading, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. The barriers to access for GARs for these courses would seem to be cost, and the eligibility criteria placed on for-profit courses. As part of their first 12 months assistance and support, refugees could be provided with the means to access such skills training courses without it having a financial impact.

³⁷ For further information on respondents’ views on the need for skills training as well as recommendations, see Section 4.6 *Employment and Family Income*, p.44.

³⁸ Information provided by the ISS Richmond Career Centre, March 2006.

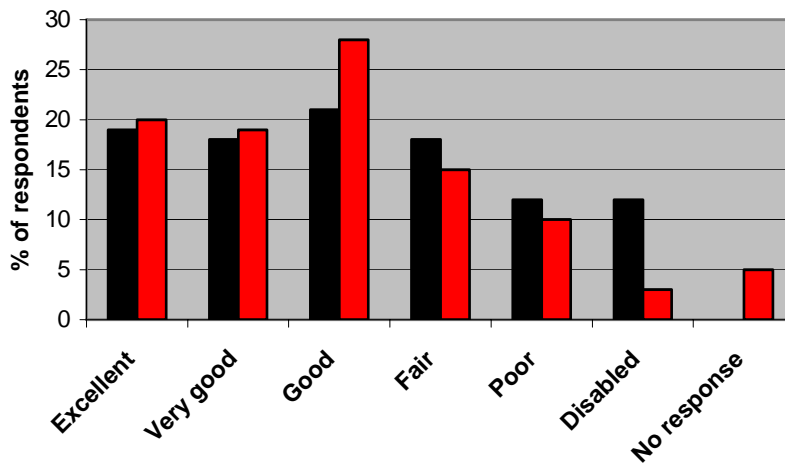
³⁹ For example, ISS runs a Community Assistance Program, which is a 7-week program that includes career exploration and planning, English instruction, and life skills and job search skills training. A certain number of free places can be reserved for refugees, but at present there are not sufficient resources available to offer these classes as a matter of course to GARs. Of the 178 students who have undertaken this course since 2003, 45 (25%) have been Convention refugees, Government Assisted Refugees or refugee claimants, and many of these clients have been in Canada for several years already.

⁴⁰ For more information see Section 4.6 *Employment and Family Income*, p.44.

4.3. Health

4.3.1. Self-reported Health Data

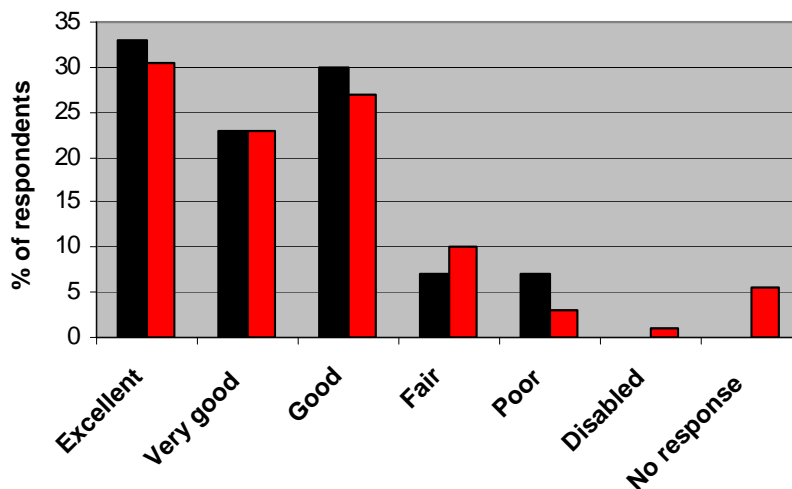
Gathering information on an individual's health is a particular skill as "health" covers such a wide range of issues, and there are cultural, gender and age components that need to be taken into account. Therefore, while the survey asked respondents to self-report on their physical, mental and dental health, these results should not be seen as definitive in regards to the overall health of GARs in GVRD. However, having said that, certain trends and issues were evident from the results. The simplest manner to show some of these trends is by a series of graphs.⁴¹



Self-reported physical health

■ 2003
■ 2005

"Good, but I have had seven operations for kidney stones since I arrived."
Male (2003)

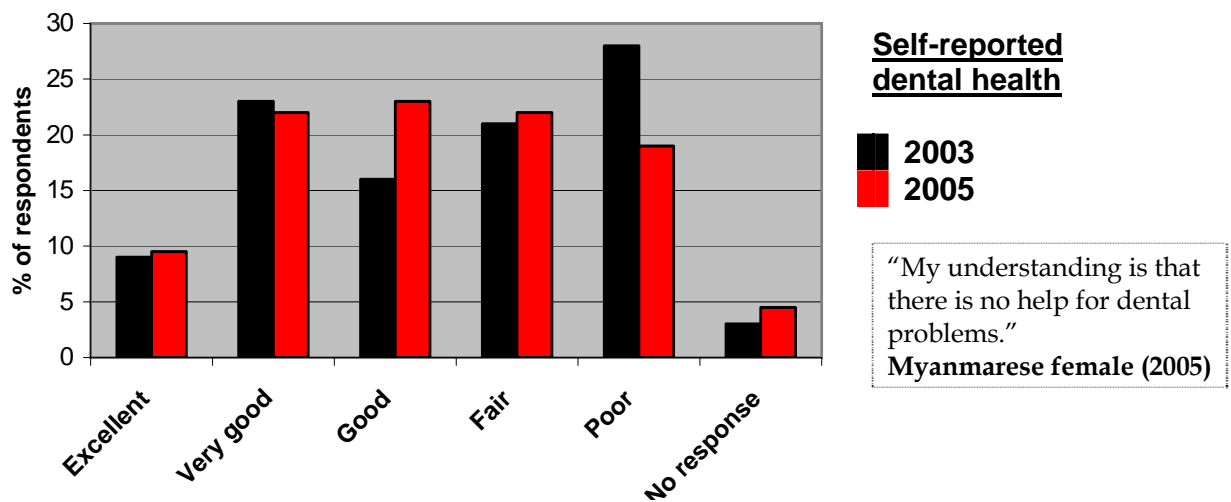


Self-reported mental health

■ 2003
■ 2005

"Fair, because I am stressed out about finding a place to live."
Somali female (2005)

⁴¹ All three graphs include the responses of all 152 respondents.



These graphs raise several issues. From the first graph it would seem that respondents from 2003 actually rate their physical health less well than those who arrived during 2005, including the number of respondents who rate themselves as disabled. With the introduction of IRPA in 2002, and the removal of the requirement that resettled refugees could be held to be inadmissible on the basis of excessive demand on health and social services, one would have expected that a larger proportion of GARs from 2005 would rate their health as ‘Fair’, ‘Poor’ or ‘Disabled’, and that those who have been in Canada for a couple of years would have been able to access medical treatment and therefore their health status would have improved. As this does not seem to be the case, this raises two questions: are 2003 arrivals now reporting their health status based on Canadian standards, and therefore feel that they are less healthy in comparison to others in society; or has the health of GARs who arrived during 2003 deteriorated while they have been in Canada? If it is the second, what has caused this deterioration? More detailed studies, preferably by medically qualified researchers, will be required to determine what, if any, are the causes of these differences between the two years.⁴²

The charts also show that, in general, respondents from both years feel that their mental health is ‘Excellent’ to ‘Good’. This is reassuring; particularly due to the traumas refugees may face prior to arrival, as well as the difficulties of adaptation to a new country. This higher reporting of mental health may be based on the relief and reduction in daily physical insecurity when a refugee arrives in a safe country. It may also be that many respondents had spent a considerable period of time outside their country of origin prior to arrival in Canada, and therefore were not arriving with memories of very recent persecution.

Finally, the poor level of respondents’ dental health stands out in comparison to their physical and mental health. Once again, it would appear that respondents from 2003 are less happy with their dental health than respondents from 2005. However, across both years a much higher proportion of respondents rate their dental health as ‘Fair’ or ‘Poor’.

⁴² AMSSA and the Public Health Agency of Canada are currently undertaking a project entitled “Mapping Key Multi-Ethnic, Multi-Lingual Communities in BC” which may provide important information on the health issues for communities across BC.

How many days out of the past 30 would you say your health was not good?		Have any health problems stopped you from doing anything?	
0 days	33%	Nothing	51%
1 day	8%	English classes / school	25%
2 days	13%	Paid work	13%
3 days	16%	Daily tasks	5%
4+ days	26% ⁴³	Outdoor activities	2%
No response	4%	Other	4%

Respondents were also asked about how they accessed their medical needs. As can be seen, while most of the respondents from 2003 have a family doctor, only a small proportion of those who arrived in 2005 have been able to register with a family doctor. Of those respondents who had a family doctor, 75% had been referred to the doctor by family or friends. Others had located doctors near to where they lived or through the Yellow Pages.

Do you have a family doctor?	
2003	2005
79% – Yes	32% – Yes
21% – No	63% – No
	5% – No response

The vast majority of respondents from 2005 who do not have a family doctor still access the Bridge Community Health Clinic for their medical needs.⁴⁴ Due to the distance many respondents live from the BCHC, using the BCHC for their medical needs must entail a considerable amount of travel on the part of the clients. Additionally, after the first six weeks of RAP orientations and the primary health care screening, the BCHC, as part of the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, only has jurisdiction for refugees living in Vancouver, North Vancouver, West Vancouver and Richmond. GARs living in Burnaby, Surrey and New Westminster, as most do, fall under the jurisdiction of the Fraser Health Authority, and so should be accessing their medical needs through the Fraser Health Authority structures.

There are also a proportion of respondents from both years who visit walk-in health clinics or public hospitals as their main form of access to medical needs. Interestingly, 70% of respondents stated that they do not have any medical issues which they are having difficulty treating, although those that are having difficulties cited cost, language barriers, wait times and lack of a family doctor as the main reasons for their lack of treatment.

There was a fairly even split between respondents as to how they communicated with medical staff: 45% used the services of an interpreter, 41% spoke in English, 7% in their first language and 7% in their second or third language.⁴⁵ The interpreters ranged from professional interpreters to family and friends, including children.

⁴³ 3 respondents reported that they had been sick for more than 4 days as a result of a cold or the flu.

⁴⁴ As would be expected, this finding reflects the high levels of repeat visits to the BCHC by some clients.

⁴⁵ In general, Colombian clients had family doctors who spoke their first language, while some Sudanese and Afghani clients spoke to medical staff in their second or third language.

4.3.2. Interim Federal Health Program and BC Medical Services Plan

Have you accessed the Interim Federal Health Program since your arrival in Canada? ⁴⁶	If yes, for what services?
53% – Yes 41% – No	Pharmaceutical care – 51% Emergency dental – 26% Vision – 19% Other – 4%

The Interim Federal Health Program (IFH) is administered by CIC, and refugees are eligible for benefits under the IFH Program until their Provincial health plan coverage begins. Once Provincial coverage has started, refugees are eligible for supplemental coverage under the IFH Program, which covers emergency dental, vision and pharmaceutical care.

30% of respondents stated that they had had a medical, dental or optical problem that had not been covered by either the Interim Federal Health Program or the BC Medical Services Plan⁴⁷. Of these respondents, 74% reported that dental work had not been covered. This reflects the poor standard of dental health reported by the respondents, and the limited nature of both the Federal and Provincial dental coverage. Clients reported that this lack of coverage had a financial as well as physical impact on them. Several clients reported that they were in pain or had difficulty eating because of the lack of treatment.

<p>“It was not covered; I didn’t know what to do. I had to give up some of the spending at home in order to pay for my dental and vision care. It was very stressful making the decision about which part of expenses should be cut back.” Afghani female (2003)</p>	<p>“It’s hard, but I don’t complain. In fact, I’m thankful to all the other assistance they gave me. And I do understand that they cannot do <u>everything</u> for refugees.” Afghani female (2005)</p>
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Only 30% of the clients who reported medical, dental or optical problems not covered by the two plans accessed treatment by another means, with clients reporting that they borrowed money or used their RAP assistance to pay for the treatment. The rest of the respondents stated that they had not received any treatment for the problem.

4.4. Housing

4.4.1. General Accommodation Information

A series of questions were asked to all respondents to gain further information about their current housing situation, including the number of people in their house, number of times they had moved since leaving Welcome House, and if they had had any problems with their accommodation. All respondents stated that they were living in rental properties.

⁴⁶ GARs can access the IFH up to a maximum of 12 months after the date of their arrival in Canada.

⁴⁷ GARs can access the BC Medical Services Plan up to a maximum of 12 months after the date of their arrival in Canada.

Was the furniture you received appropriate for your family's needs?		If not, why not?	
Yes – 72%	No – 25%	33% – Poor quality 31% – Broke easily	21% – Not sufficient 14% – Other

<p>“Yes, we are still using the furniture allocated.” Myanmarese female (2003)</p>	<p>“No, I don't have them anymore. They wore out really fast. I wish they had given us money to purchase our furniture and kitchen equipment ourselves.” Afghani female (2003)</p>
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As part of the initial assistance provided to all GARs, CIC funds a certain amount of furniture for GARs. A package of furniture and household goods is provided to all GARs, based on their family composition, the first time they secure accommodation. ISS informs the furniture contractors when GARs secure accommodation, and the furniture is then delivered to the clients' house or apartment. Nearly three quarters of respondents were happy with the furniture provided, but three main issues were raised by those who felt the furniture was not appropriate: that the furniture was poor quality, that it broke easily or was falling apart, and that the furniture given was not sufficient for their family's needs. Other respondents commented on the fact that the furniture was selected without consulting them as to what their needs were, and that it was old and dirty.

Is your house comfortable / appropriate for your family?		If not, why not?	
Yes – 59%	No – 38%	Too small – 41% High rent – 13%	Dirty – 4% Other – 14%

While more than half of respondents felt that their accommodation was appropriate for their family, a sizeable proportion did not. Of these, the two main issues raised were the small size of their accommodation and the high rent (or low financial assistance received). However, some of the other comments made by respondents were that people in their building were drug addicts who asked for money, that landlord's were drunk and caused a nuisance, and that there had been robberies and they felt insecure in their building.

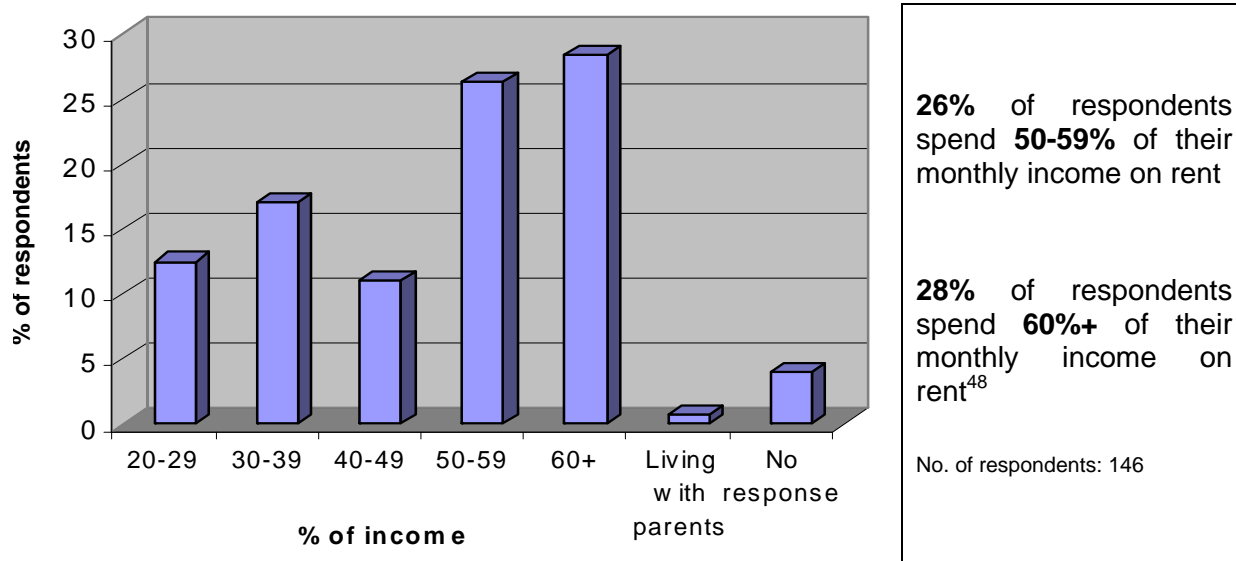
Some of these issues may be faced by many people in certain areas of the GVRD who are looking for accommodation in the lower end of the market. However, the difficulties that respondents face in securing appropriate accommodation reinforces the need for greater assistance from ISS. As stated by respondents about their initial accommodation search, there is a desire on the part of clients for more information and guidance as to where, and where not, to rent.

80% of respondents live in houses with less than 6 people in them, although some respondents stated that they were sharing accommodation with up to 13 people. Yet over 90% of respondents live in accommodation with 3 bedrooms or less. This confirms respondents' views that finding accommodation that is large enough is a problem for them. A small number of clients also live in bachelor suites without any dedicated bedroom. Despite this, 73% of respondents live in accommodation where all the members in the house are their own family members. This reflects the family composition of many GARs, with only a small number of single persons arriving. Clients who are sharing with non-family members are more likely to be

living with a greater number of people in the house. Additionally, reflecting the family composition of the clients, a larger proportion of Indonesian males and Vietnamese males and females are living in accommodation with non-family members.

The group of respondents interviewed had moved accommodation less frequently than had been expected, with 35% never having moved once they left Welcome House, 38% having moved once, and 15% having moved twice. However, these figures may be deceptive, considering the difficulties that were faced in contacting clients to participate in the study. Therefore, it is possible that the clients interviewed were clients who were less likely to have moved often, which may be why the ISS database had their current contact details. Having said this, the most number of times that any respondent had moved was seven.

4.4.2. Proportion of Monthly Income Spent on Rent



According to Statistics Canada, pre-determined low-income cut-off levels “convey the income level at which a family may be in straitened circumstances because it has to spend a greater proportion of its income on necessities (i.e. food, shelter and clothing) than the average family of similar size”. The 1992 Family Expenditure Survey found that, on average, families spend 44% of their after-tax income on these necessities. Families who spend 20% more than this figure, i.e. 64% of household income on food, shelter and clothing, are determined to be significantly worse off than the average family.⁴⁹

The figures for proportion of monthly income spent on rent from our survey were self-determined by the respondents, so were not based on actual calculations of monthly income and rent paid. However, they show that large numbers of clients are spending a considerable amount of their income simply on accommodation. The survey was not intended to be a comprehensive review of GARs total income and expenditures, and so expenditure on food and clothing was not covered. However, considering the fact that many GARs are also unhappy with

⁴⁸ It would appear that Afghani clients are more likely to spend a greater part of their monthly income on rent. This may partly be due to the larger family size of many Afghani families.

⁴⁹ Information from the Statistics Canada Survey of Labour and Income Dynamics, available at: www.statscanada.ca For general information on the housing and Government assistance rates see: *Left Behind: A comparison of living costs and employment assistance rates in British Columbia*, Michael Goldberg and Kari Wolanski, Social Planning and Research Council of BC, December 2005.

the size or quality of their accommodation, this shows that the financial pressure accommodation alone places on GARs is considerable. As can be seen in several of the other sections of this report (such as skills training, family income and recreational activities) it is the limited financial situation of many GARs which prevents them from accessing skills or services, whereby they could break the cycle of dependence on Government assistance.

4.4.3. Specific Problems with Accommodation

Beyond the issues covered above, respondents were asked if they had faced any particular problems with their accommodation, such as disputes with their landlords or problems over their lease. Encouragingly, 80% of respondents reported that they had not faced any other particular problems.

However, some respondents reported a range of issues, from drunken and impolite landlords, to discrimination and non-return of deposits. Conditions within buildings that had caused problems were lack of heating, repairs not being conducted, insect infestations, robbery and a lack of laundry facilities.

“Our landlord increased the rent by \$200 within 2 months of our tenancy. We were threatened with eviction. Occasionally he is drunk and becomes a nuisance.”

Female (2005)

“We didn’t really talk to anyone about it (discrimination) since we assumed this was the law about newcomers.”

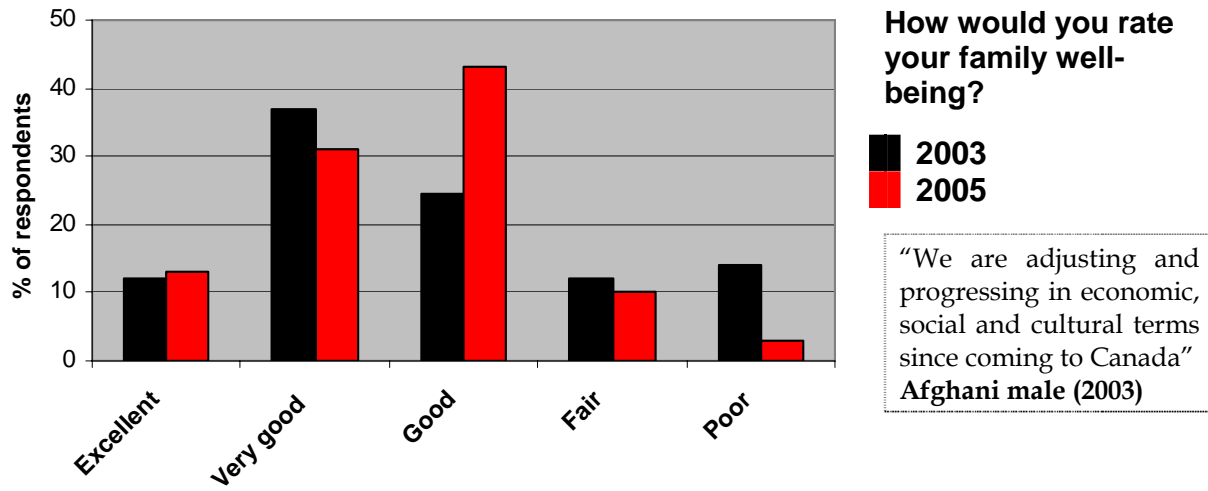
Afghani female (2005)

Of clients who had faced problems, 31% had not sought assistance from anyone to solve the problem, 27% had visited ISS, and other respondents mentioned that they had spoken to the building manager, landlord, religious organizations, social workers and in one case the dispute was taken to court. 63% of respondents reported

that the problem had been solved, while the problem was ongoing in 14% of cases and had not been solved in 23%.

While it is a minority of clients who face problems in their accommodation, of those who do the problems appear to be resolved through a variety of means. Nevertheless, around a third of clients who faced problems did not seek any assistance. This may be because they were able to deal with the dispute themselves, but may also be due to a lack of information as to where to turn for advice. When asked what form of assistance would have been most useful to solve the problem, clients requested more assistance from ISS and also highlighted their view that if they had easier access to BC Housing, problems in regard to their accommodation would be less likely to arise.

4.5. Family Well-being⁵⁰



As with the health reporting, it would appear that although high proportions of clients from both years report their family well-being as ‘Excellent’ to ‘Good’, clients from 2003 are more likely to report that their family situation is only ‘Fair’ or ‘Poor’. When asked if there were particular problems facing their family at present, 45% of respondents replied affirmatively. The six largest problems facing families were:

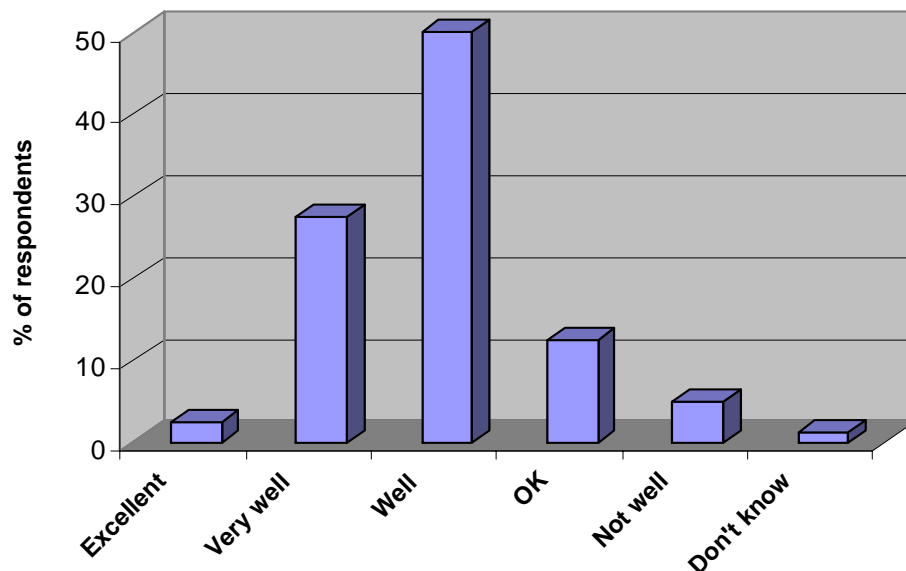
Lack of money / poverty	25%	No ESL / language barriers	11%
Family health problems	24%	Lack of employment	9%
Housing	18%	Dental problems	9%

In addition, clients stated that they were not able to repay their Government Transportation Loan, that they and their children were facing racism, deductions from the Government Assistance because one member of the family is working, and delays in family reunification and the difficulty of family separation.

4.5.1. Children and Schooling

Parents were asked to rate their views of their children’s performance at school. Very few parents felt that their children were not doing well at school, although only a handful rated their children’s performance as ‘Excellent’.

⁵⁰ Only clients who arrived with their family, or whose family have subsequently arrived in Canada, were asked about their family well-being. A total of 120 clients (49 from 2003 and 71 from 2005) responded to this section.



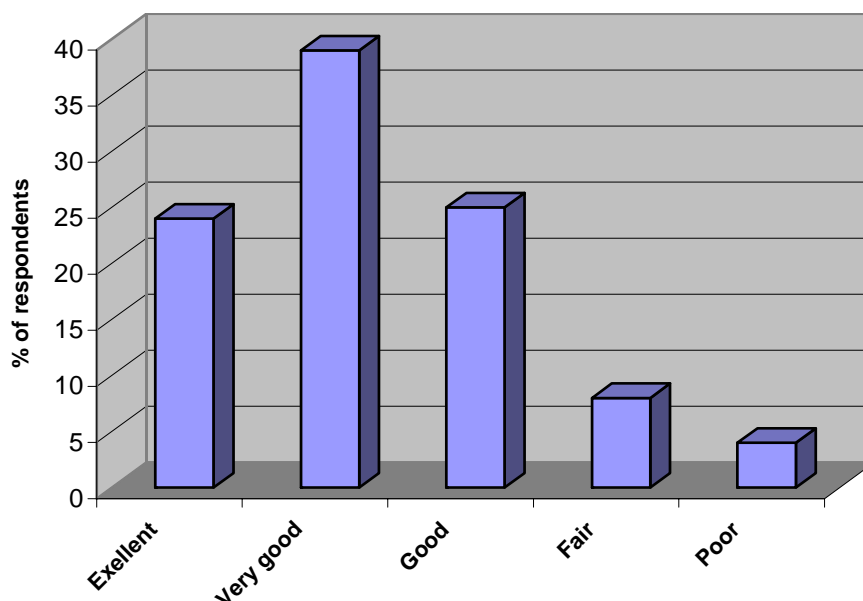
“I think my daughter is really picking up because she can speak a few words in English which she couldn't until she went to school.”
Myanmar male (2005)

No. of respondents: 80

Parents were also asked to rate their experiences of the Canadian school system. As can be seen there are extremely high satisfaction ratings. Some of these responses may reflect the parents' own learning experiences in ESL classes, as well as their children's experiences in the school system.

63% of parents rate their experience with the Canadian school system as **Excellent** or **Very Good**.

“Excellent, but I would like to suggest that children have uniforms since we have economic pressure to buy clothes for them.”
Afghani female (2003)



No. of respondents: 83

Children are also actively involved in out-of-school activities: 63% of parents reported that their children took part in out-of-school activities. The activities most commonly mentioned were sport (47%), religious groups (10%) and music (6%). Parents also mentioned that their children took part in dance, theatre and painting. Although 37% of parents reported that their children did not take part in out-of-school activities, this might have been as a result of clients' understanding of the phrase “out-of-school activities”. For example, a higher proportion of Afghani parents reported that their children did not take part in out-of-school activities than other nationalities. However, preliminary results from an ISS pilot project working with school-going Afghani

children in Burnaby and Surrey seem to show that large numbers of Afghani children from refugee families do take part in a wide range of out-of-school or school organized activities.

4.5.2. Childcare

When parents are at English classes or at school, the majority of children are either looked after by family members (36%), or are at school themselves (19%). A further 14% reported that their English classes provided daycare for them, and 20% that their children were on their own or were old enough to be left on their own.

Of the parents who responded to the questions about childcare, 78% stated that they felt that their childcare needs were currently being met. 15% stated that they were not⁵¹, but not many respondents provided suggestions as to how their childcare needs could be better met. Of those who did respond, the need for daycare so that parents can attend English class and increased financial assistance or Child Tax Benefit were mentioned.

4.5.3. Family Reunification⁵²

All GARs have a one-year window of opportunity to apply to sponsor other immediate family members to come to Canada. Clients were only asked one question regarding family reunification – whether or not they had made an application for other family members to come and join them in Canada. Of those surveyed, 72% had not applied for family reunification, 21% had made an application, and a further 2% stated that they had not yet made an application.

“Yes, I am happy I moved to Canada but I will be so happy if my son joins me here.”

**Sudanese female
(2003)**

Some of the respondents added more detail to their responses, and explained that applications had been approved and family members had already joined them, or that they were waiting for their family members to arrive. However, some respondents reported that their applications had not been successful. From the information provided, Vietnamese clients were most likely to have made applications for family reunification, with 79% of Vietnamese clients having made an application.

From the small amount of data collected in this part of the survey, it is hard to draw any concrete conclusions regarding family reunification for GARs in BC. However, in responses made in other parts of the survey, it is clear that being separated from family members can cause distress and increased anxiety to refugees already here. This was particularly marked where immediate family members (such as spouses, children or fiancés) had not yet arrived. For example, several respondents mentioned that separation from family members was the worst thing about living in Canada, when asked how they pictured their life in 3 years time a number of respondents stated that they hoped that their husband, children or fiancé would be with them, and family reunification came out strongly as the one change respondents would like to see to their lives.

⁵¹ Some respondents answered this question from the perspective of their children’s overall needs, and mentioned that their children did not have enough clothes or were not receiving adequate dental treatment. These answers have not been included in these statistics.

⁵² The Spring 2006 edition of Canadian Issues Journal has a special focus on *Immigration and Families*, including articles on: *Canadian Family Reunification Policy in the Context of Resettlement*, Jessie Thomson, pp.50-52 and *Ending the Nightmare: Speeding up Refugee Family Reunification*, Janet Dench, pp.53-56.

4.5.4. Improving Family Well-being

All respondents were asked what one change in their life, if any, would have the biggest positive impact on them or their family's well-being. The range of responses was as individual as the clients themselves – from winning the lottery to becoming a Canadian citizen. However, certain trends and themes stood out:

Nothing	19%	Opportunities for children	6%
Family reunification	17%	Transportation / car / driver's license	6%
Employment	14%	Improved accommodation	5%
ESL classes / improved English skills	7%	Ability to buy a house	4%
Improved income / financial security	7%	Further / higher education	3%
Improved health	7%		

“Canada is a good place to live. So many opportunities are available and the freedom of being what you want to be.”	“Nothing - I was a refugee in Iran and my rights were violated and same here; I don't feel very different. Yeah, this city is better looking and it is pretty but that does not give me anything.”	“My ability to graduate from college and go forward and attain a skill-oriented occupation would help.”
“To have a career preparation session for the family.”	“RAP assistance was the biggest positive impact for our family's well-being.”	“I wish I had my Dad with us, but he is dead. That is one thing I cannot change.”

4.6. Employment and Family Income

One of the expected results of the Resettlement Assistance Program is that GARs receive Government assistance for up to 12 months or until they become self-sufficient, whichever comes first.⁵³ However, respondents indicated that they would benefit from targeted support for skills training and employment search assistance to better access the labour market.⁵⁴

The desire of the vast majority of GARs is to obtain sufficient English language skills, suitable skills training aimed at employment, and then to find a job commensurate with their skills and

⁵³ Information from the Treasury Board of Canada website: www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/eppi-ibdrp/hrdb-rhbd/rap-par/2005-2006_e.asp

⁵⁴ The Metropolis Project at the University of British Columbia is currently examining the role that English language ability, as opposed to other pre-existing or gained skills sets, plays in employment earnings. From this research, it would appear that pre-existing skills are a greater determinant of GARs income potential than English language skills on arrival. The implications of these findings will need to be considered at all levels, from policy to service provision. See also, *Canadian Immigration and the Selection-settlement Services Trade-off: Exploring Immigrant Economic Participation in British Columbia*, Dan Hiebert, RiIM February 2002 Working Paper 02-05.

abilities. The lack of employment was raised numerous times by respondents as one of the major challenges that they were confronting.⁵⁵

4.6.1. RAP Income Support Assistance

During the first 12 months after arrival, all GARs are eligible for RAP Income Support Assistance from the Federal Government, which is intended to provide the basic necessities for daily living. GARs who are determined to have special needs may continue to receive RAP Income Support Assistance for up to 24 months. However, after the end of RAP assistance, GARs who have not found employment transfer onto the Provincial Government's Income Support Program through the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. In addition to assistance for accommodation, clothing and food, one of the main forms of assistance that is proposed by CIC for Government Assisted Refugees is help in finding employment and becoming self-supporting.⁵⁶ However, it would appear that in reality few GARs receive adequate assistance in finding employment, and the financial difficulties and beginnings of economic marginalization commence from the date of arrival for many GARs.⁵⁷

26% of clients reported relying on food banks to feed themselves while receiving RAP assistance.

The survey revealed that 26% of respondents had had to rely on food banks to feed themselves during the period of their RAP assistance, a further 8% were had some form of personal income to supplement their RAP assistance, while other clients reported having to borrow money, or relying on financial assistance from established family members. One client reported that they were only able to survive on the RAP income support since there were five single refugees sharing one apartment.

"I used to visit food banks but I stopped because my children do not like canned food."
Liberian female (2005)

4.6.2. Employment

The issue of employment and family income, or lack of, ran through the responses of many of the clients in the entire questionnaire. However, a series of specific questions were asked to gain a better understanding of the financial and employment status of GARs and their families. From their responses, it would seem that GARs are facing exceedingly difficult challenges in accessing the labour market, and therefore achieving a level of economic stability and security, for a variety of reasons. It would also seem that although GARs have found protection and physical security in Canada, their economic lives have not yet restarted, for many even after nearly three years in the country.

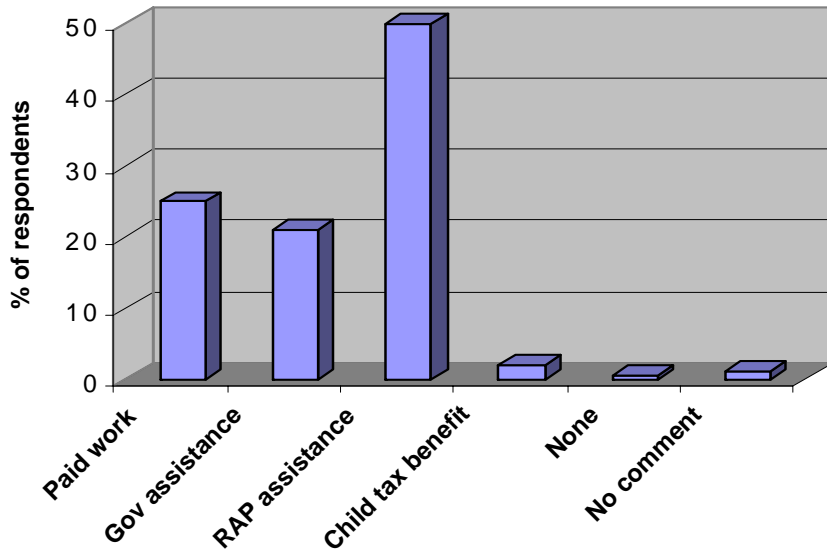
⁵⁵ The economic insecurity of Government-Assisted Refugees in Vancouver has also been highlighted in *The First 365 Days: Acehnese Refugees in Vancouver, British Columbia*, Riim Working Paper 06-07, June 2006, and in *Economic Insecurity and Isolation: Post-Migration Traumas among Black African Refugee Women in the Greater Vancouver Area*, Riim Working Paper 06-17, October 2006.

⁵⁶ Information provided by CIC on their website: www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/resettle-gov

⁵⁷ In November 2005, the Canadian Council for Refugees passed a Resolution urging the Federal and Québec Governments to raise the RAP rates to at least the low-income cut-off (LICO) rate to bring the Government-Assisted Refugees out of poverty.

Families where no one is working	Families dependent on Government assistance	Unemployment rate of all GARs
66%	74%	78%

In contrast, according to the Statistics Canada, the overall unemployment rate for British Columbia in March 2006 stood at only 4.4%, a 30-year low. What is more, over the past year, British Columbia has enjoyed the nation's fastest employment growth, at 4% adding 85,000 jobs in the past 12 months.⁵⁸



What is your main source of income?

Only **25%** of families have **paid work** as their main source of income

51% of families who arrived during **2003** are still dependent on **Government assistance** as their main source of income

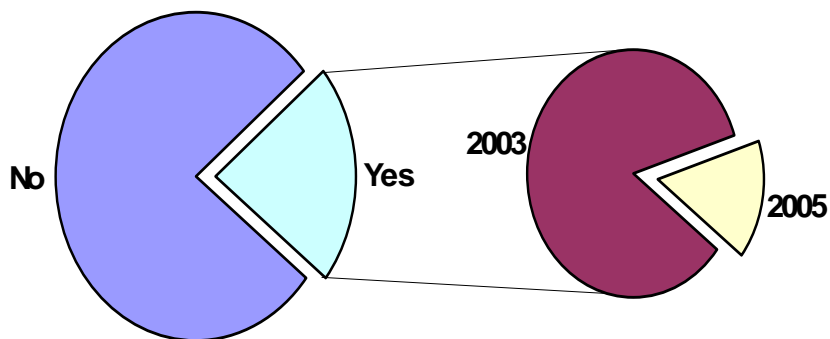
No. of responses: 157⁵⁹

78% of all GARs from 2003 and 2005 are **unemployed**

53% of GARs from **2003** are **unemployed**

95% of GARs from **2005** are **unemployed**

Are you currently employed?



Of the minority of respondents who are working, most have not been able to access jobs that are commensurate with their experience and educational background and many clients are not working in the same

44% of those working are in **part-time jobs**

78% of those working stated that their current employment did **not match their skills**

⁵⁸ Sources: Statistics Canada (www.statscanada.ca) and CBC (www.cbc.ca).

⁵⁹ The total number of responses to this question was 157 as some respondents provided more than one answer to the question.

endeavours as they did previously. Of the different nationalities, it would seem that the Myanmarese have been most successful in obtaining employment, but often below their level of skills and abilities.

<p>“No, I worked as an administrative officer in a Government office before.” Female (2005)</p>	<p>“I have a Masters Degree and I am working at an elevator company.” Male (2005)</p>
<p>“I used to drive and operate heavy machines such as evacuator, but I couldn’t get a driving license here.” Male (2003)</p>	<p>“No, I am working in a gas station. I am an expert in computers and was working for the UN.” Male (2003)</p>

4.6.2.1. Employment Search Assistance

“It was helpful in the sense that I knew what jobs were out there. However, my poor communication skills in English are a significant obstacle in finding employment.”
Afghani male (2005)

From the responses given, 31% of all respondents reported receiving assistance in searching for employment during their first 12 months, and 41% of respondents who had been in Canada for more than 12 months reported receiving assistance afterwards. However, in the majority of cases, it was friends who had provided this assistance, rather than formalized job-searching programs.⁶⁰ Only 13 % of respondents reporting having received assistance from Government programs, while 11% reported assistance from service provider organizations.

Accessing the labour market for any new immigrant can be difficult, and these difficulties for refugees are well documented.⁶¹ For refugees, who have either recently fled a situation of persecution, or have been based in a country of asylum for a period of years, being able to integrate into the Canadian job market appears to be particularly challenging. When asked what form of assistance would be most useful to them, respondents offered a range of suggestions as to how they felt they could be assisted to find a job.

“Short-term training would have been best in order to make us prepared for a decent job in the job market.”
Afghani female (2005)

Clients were asked both why they thought that they did not have a job, and what would be most useful to help them find a job. Some clients mentioned that they were still undertaking their ESL classes or other educational courses, which meant that they were not currently looking for employment at present. Similarly, several older clients had already reached retirement age, and some clients stated that they were full-time parents.

⁶⁰ One caveat that needs to be placed on this statement is that the definition of “friend” was not set out in the questionnaire. Some respondents may classify their Host volunteer or RAP Counsellor as a “friend”, and therefore assistance provided through them may have been recorded as being given by a friend although it was from an official source.

⁶¹ See for example: *The Economic Experiences of Refugees in Canada*, Don DeVoretz, Sergiy Pivnenko and Morton Beiser, RiIM, May 2004 (Working Paper 04-04, Revised).

However, of the clients who were actively seeking employment, many highlighted their need for further ESL classes, or the language barriers that prevented them getting a job. Clients also stressed the need for skills training and skills upgrading and the need for an orientation on how to look for jobs in Canada, which would cover resume writing, internet searches and interview preparations. Several respondents also stressed the need for an Employment Counsellor at ISS

“ISS or the Government of Canada should provide the newcomers with a Counsellor who could guide them in choosing the right training, education and college.”
Myanmarese male (2005)

or for ISS to provide more information as to what jobs were available and how refugees could access and apply for these jobs. One client criticized the reduction in RAP assistance that occurs if a family member has earned income of more than 25% of the RAP assistance. However, this has already been changed, as of 1st April 2006, so that through the Employment Income Incentive GARs may now earn 50% of their total RAP income support during their first 12 months without any deductions being made.

Some of the comments made by respondents as to why they did not have a job, or on whether their current job matched their skills were:

“I am applying only a small percentage of my skills.”	“No, I am more educated. I don’t feel good at what I do.”
“No, but I am taking classes at BCIT to upgrade my skills.”	“I don’t have the Canadian certificate related to my skills.”
“I’m not working in my field of interest.”	“No, but I am learning new skills.”
“I have no skills up to the present time.”	“Yes, because I got training here.”
“I guess I was very interested in electricity since my childhood and now I am working in the same field.”	“If my language skills improved I am sure I could seek less labour intensive work.”

One of the other findings was that only 10% of clients had undertaken voluntary work, practicums or internships. These had ranged from service provider organizations (including ISS), local schools, churches, as well as businesses such as hotels and bakeries. However, respondents noted that their entry into the job market is hindered by the fact that they do not have Canadian work experience.

4.7. Finances

4.7.1. Family Financial Management

Following on from employment and family income, a series of questions directly related to the individual’s finances were asked. These questions were not to obtain numerical figures of the client’s financial situation, but to see how the individual or family was managing their finances.

Who manages your family finances?				Do you, or any members of your family, have a credit card?	
Myself	41%	Wife	5%	20% – Yes	76% – No
Jointly	33%	Father	5%		
Husband	7%	Mother	2%	4% – No response	

4.7.2. Financial Orientations

As part of the initial RAP orientation sessions provided by the ISS Counsellors, all GARs receive a financial orientation during their first six weeks in Canada. As noted in Section 3.3 on *RAP Orientations*, a large proportion of clients specifically highlighted the banking and financial orientations as the most useful and memorable of the orientation sessions.

78% of all respondents stated that the financial orientation session prepared them for Canadian financial institutions and money management, and only 3% specifically stated that they did not assist them. The session assisted clients gain a better understanding of the Canadian banking system, including deposits, withdrawals and ATMs, how to plan and budget the money which they receive each month, as well as to have a better understanding of the cost of living in Vancouver.

4.7.3. Government Transportation Loan

Through the Immigrants' Loan Program (ILP), all Government Assisted Refugees are expected to start repaying the cost of their travel to Canada⁶² after they have been in the country for six months. The ILP is funded from the Federal Government's Consolidated Revenue Fund and repayments on the loans replenish the fund. Interest is payable on the loans, as set by the Department of Finance, after an initial interest free period of 12 months. The amount an individual or family needs to repay depends on their point of departure, the travel route that they have taken, the time of year of their departure and the number of people in their family. It is common for a family to have to repay several thousand dollars for their transportation to Canada. Therefore, respondents were asked if they had started repaying their Government Transportation Loan and if they were able to pay the minimum amounts each month.

63% of respondents stated that they had commenced payments, while 4.6% had completed the payments. 29% had not started repaying the Loan, and of these 31% had not yet been contacted by the Government about the repayments since they had been in the country for less than six months. 65% of respondents⁶³ said that they were able to pay the minimum monthly amounts, while 19% said that they were not able to pay even the minimum. Despite the reasonably high proportion of clients who said that they were able to pay the minimum amounts each month, of these 9% stated that they could only meet the minimum amount with difficulty, a further 8% stated that they made the repayments from their RAP assistance, and 4% stated that they made the repayments out of their Child Tax Benefits.

⁶² This includes the cost of medical examinations abroad, travel documents and the cost of transportation.

⁶³ 65% of respondents who had been contacted by the Government requesting repayment, i.e., 138 clients. Additionally, 16% of clients did not respond to this question.

“Is it possible not to repay my loan because my health stops me working? At least if I can pay part of it.”
Sudanese female (2003)

Are you able to pay the minimum amounts to repay your loan?

19% of all GARs stated they **could not pay** the minimum amount for their Transportation Loan.

9% stated they could only pay with **difficulty**

8% stated they could only pay from their **RAP assistance**

4% stated they could only pay from their **Child Tax Benefits**

From other information gathered about clients’ family incomes, as well as the specific information gained in this section, it is clear that GARs want to repay the Government Transportation Loan and sacrifice other things to repay it. However some clients stated that they were not aware that their transportation was a loan, that they did not know they had to pay interest on the loan or were worried about what would happen to them if they were not able to repay the loan.

4.7.4. Remittances

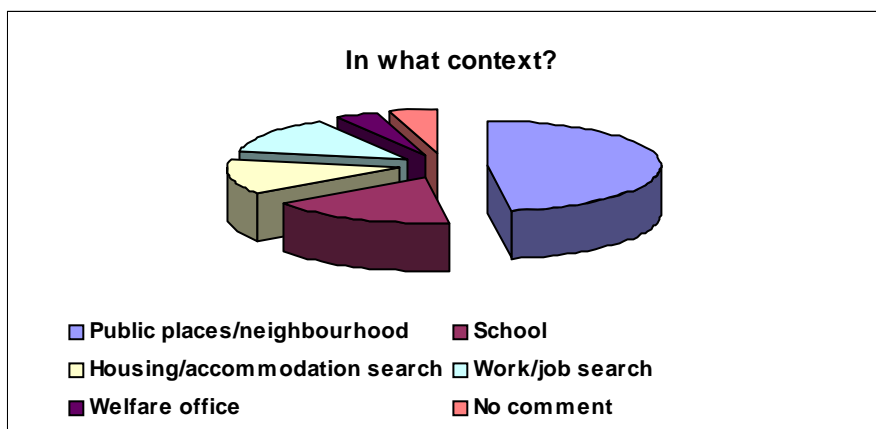
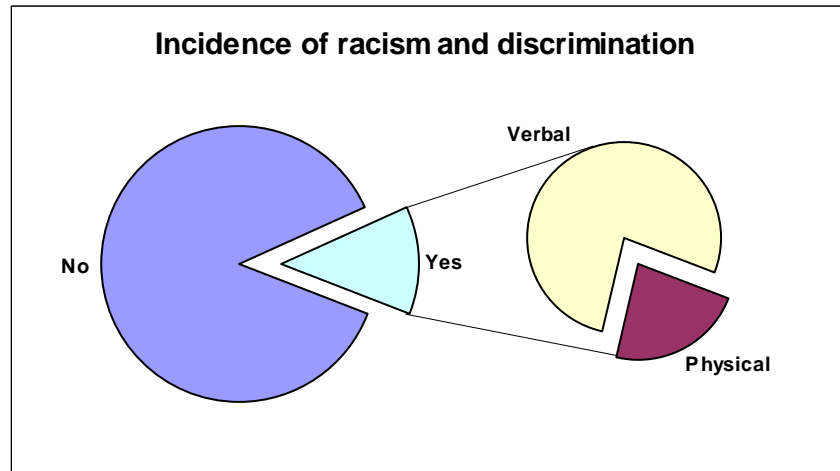
Remittances are broadly defined as monetary transfers that migrants make to their country of origin. The World Bank estimates that in 2003, the global value of migrant remittances was US\$90billion.⁶⁴ Clients in the current survey were only asked limited questions regarding remittances, and of the survey respondents 21% reported sending remittances to family or friends. Of these, around a third have only sent one remittance since they arrived, mainly in connection with a cultural or religious celebration. The small proportion of respondents who have sent remittances, compared to the global scale of remittances, may be an indication of the financial pressures which GARs face. Understandable, if one does not have a job and the main source of family income is Government assistance it is unlikely that there will be enough money left over to send back to relatives. As one respondent (who is working) put it: “No, we can hardly survive here”.

4.8. Racism and Discrimination

While the survey included some questions on racism and discrimination, it did not go into great depth into this complex subject area. However, all respondents were asked if they had faced racism or discrimination since their arrival in Canada. Those respondents who reported facing some form of racism or discrimination were then asked two follow up questions, in terms of the form and context of the abuse faced.

⁶⁴ *Migrants’ Remittances: Background Note*, International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, 2005.

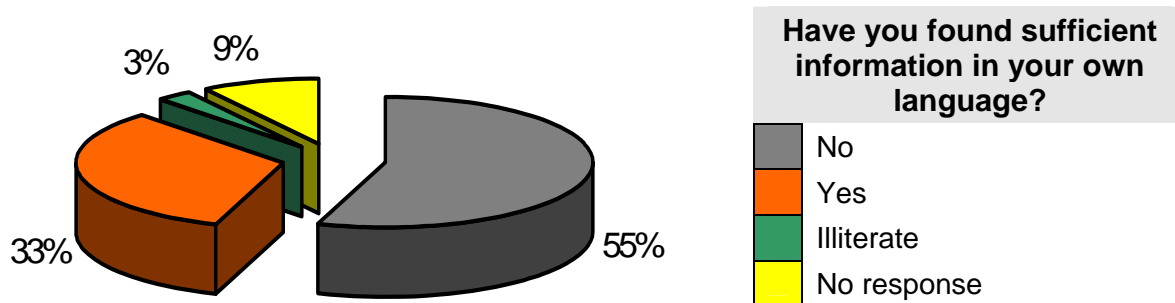
The majority of respondents (83.5%) stated that they had not faced any racism or discrimination since their arrival. However, a minority (12.5%) did report racism or discrimination, while 4% did not respond. Of the clients who reported racism or discrimination, 74% had been subjected to verbal abuse, 21% had faced physical violence, and 5% did not wish to comment.



49% of respondents reported verbal abuse in public places, although there were also incidents of racism or discrimination in schools (17%), housing and the search for accommodation (13%), in the workplace and job searching (13%), and from the welfare office (4%).

From these findings, it is clear that racism or discrimination is not a major daily problem for most GARs. However, there is a minority of GARs who have been subjected to a range of abuse, and for these clients it has an understandably negative impact on their lives. Additionally, from the information gathered, 13 of the 19 respondents who reported racism or discrimination come from predominantly Muslim countries (Afghanistan, Iraq and Sudan), and of these respondents, the majority were women (8 out of 13). Since most of the verbal insults come in public places, it may be that the racism is based on an individual's perceived religious beliefs or based on an individual's appearance.

4.9. Information Sources



“A person at my age will need help just with anything. I don’t think language is the only problem for me. Even if I knew the language or there were enough resources in my language, I wouldn’t be able to use them since I cannot do anything on my own.”

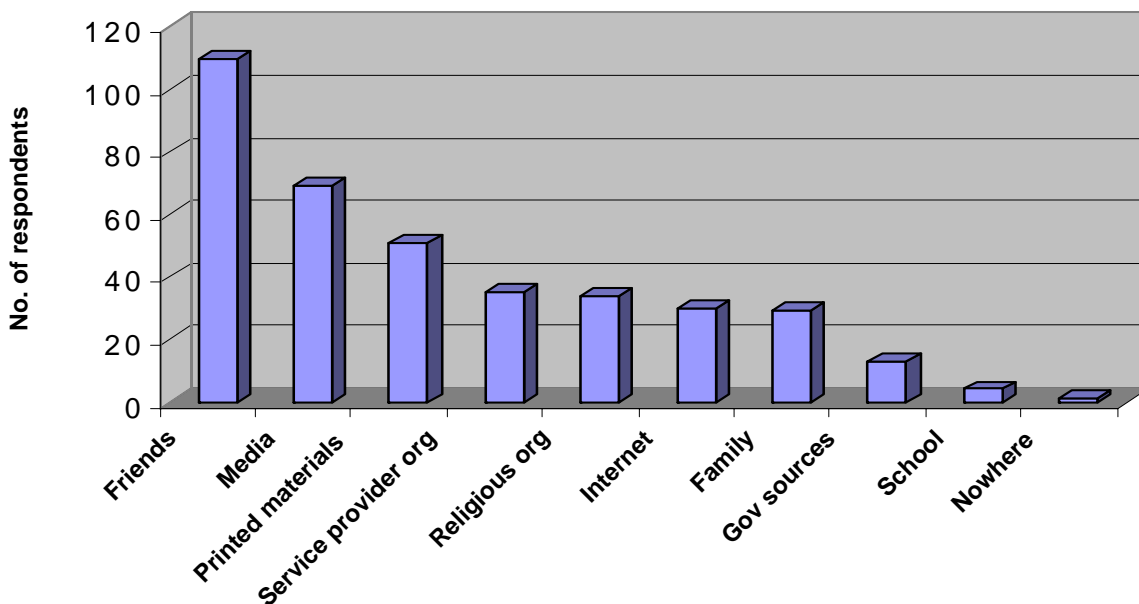
Afghani female (2005)

“No, but I understand that if an English speaking person goes to Afghanistan, s/he will not be able to find enough information in English too.”

Afghani female (2005)

ISS Counsellors provide the initial 13-18 hours of RAP orientation to GARs who arrive in BC. However, the question of where individuals’ subsequently gather information about life in Canada was asked to see whether or not the current strategies for information dissemination are effective, as well as to establish whether or not GARs were finding sufficient information in their first language.⁶⁵

As can be seen from the following chart, the vast majority of respondents stated that their main source of information about Canada was friends⁶⁶, and to a lesser extent family members. This response points to the fundamental role that community members play in the settlement of GARs once they arrive in Canada, and the need to ensure that communities themselves have reliable and up-to-date information.



However, the media (TV and radio), printed materials, as well as the Internet make up important additional sources of information for GARs. According to respondents, the Government, service provider and religious organizations provide only a portion of information to GARs, which may suggest a need to review how information is disseminated to GAR newcomers.

As can be seen from the chart and quotes above, there is a range of issues that affect an individual’s ability to access information, either in their first language or in English. Considering

⁶⁵ For general background on newcomers’ information sources see: *Social Inclusion of Newcomers to Canada: An Information Problem?* Nadia Caidi and Danielle Allard, Library & Information Science Research (2005) Vol. 27, No.3.

⁶⁶ As noted above, the term “friends” was not defined in the questionnaire so some respondents may have interpreted the term “friend” to include their Host volunteer or their RAP Counsellor.

the variety of nationalities and linguistic skills covered by the respondent group, it may be difficult to always provide first language information. However, 31% of those clients who stated they had not found sufficient information in their own language reported difficulties in finding first language information anywhere. This reflects some of the smaller nationality or linguistic groups represented in the survey, but also covered Arabic and Dari speaking clients. Additionally, 25% reported a lack of first language information in doctors' offices, and 18% in schools. Several clients mentioned a lack of first language information in the ISS office or in other service provider organizations.

<p>"Why are there no Arabic interpreters at Vancouver Airport and doctors offices?" Sudanese female (2005)</p>	<p>"Is there any way that we can have our own community Counsellor at Welcome House? It is extremely difficult for all of us to seek advice, information and help from Counsellors who don't understand our culture, background and language." Myanmarese male (2003) ⁶⁷</p>
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In addition to the question of finding first language information, a proportion of respondents stated that they were illiterate and so even if printed information in their first language was available they were not able to access the contents of this information. Similarly, two respondents were vision impaired, and as the quote above highlights, older clients felt an extra need for assistance to understand and access information about Canada.

4.10. Local Community

4.10.1. Community Involvement and Recreation

Exactly half of the respondents reported that they mainly socialised within their own ethnic / cultural community, although 17% reported that they mainly socialised at the church or mosque and 14% reported that they socialised in both their own community and other ethnic / cultural communities.

How many of your friends in Canada belong to the same ethnic or cultural groups as you?			
All of them	34%	"I only have one friend." Liberian female	"Only with my Host volunteer."
Most of them	24%	"With my own ethnic group since I speak no English." Somali female	"I don't have any friends." Afghani male
About half of them	14%		
Few of them	16%		
None	0.7%		

Although nearly 60% of respondents stated that all or most of their friends were from the same ethnic or cultural community as themselves, there is also a clear integration into the multicultural society of the GVRD by a large proportion of respondents. Children, through the school system, are much more likely to be leading a multicultural life, with 87% of parents reporting that their children had made many friends outside of their own ethnic / cultural community. However, many respondents also highlighted their own enjoyment and participation in activities with people from other cultures.

⁶⁷ As of May 2006, ISS has received funding for a Myanmarese RAP Counsellor for the Karen community. This position should be filled in the near future.

Do you take part in any recreational activities?	If yes, what? ⁶⁸
Yes – 37% No – 59% No response – 4%	Sport – 71% Going for a walk – 18% Community based activities – 5% Other – 16%

Are you a member of any voluntary organizations or associations? ⁶⁹	
None	57%
Religious social groups	24%
Libraries	12.5%
Ethnic associations	9%
Community centers	5%
School groups (e.g. Parent's Association)	5%
Social, civic or fraternal clubs	0.7%

However, one of the issues that was raised by several respondents was their feeling of isolation, or the fact that they do not have a social life outside of the home.⁷⁰ Over half of all respondents stated that they were not part of any voluntary organization or association, and the largest group of respondents reported being actively involved in religious social groups.⁷¹

Several respondents mentioned that their Counsellor had assisted them in completing the forms for their Leisure Access Card, and so they had been able to access recreational activities. Of the 59% of respondents who stated that they did not take part in recreational activities, the reasons given for not taking part were responsibilities at home or childcare, a lack of time, a lack of interest, limited budget, health problems and a lack of information on how to access recreational activities.

“I would really like to do so, but I have kids and they need to be looked after. Once I arrange for their full time daycare, I will take part in such activities.”
Afghani female (2005)

4.10.2. Neighbourhood Safety

How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood?
Very safe – 50%
Safe – 26%
Relatively safe – 12.5%
Not safe – 8.5%
No response – 3%

Half of all respondents stated that they felt very safe in their local neighbourhood, while a further 26% reported feeling safe.

However, a proportion of clients, in particular women, expressed certain reservations about their local neighbourhood. This included concern about walking in the streets after dark, high crime rates, presence of drug addicts in their neighbourhood, robberies and a fear of their landlord.

⁶⁸ These statistics add up to more than 100% as some respondents reported taking part in more than one activity.

⁶⁹ These statistics add up to more than 100% as some respondents reported being members of two or more of the organizations listed.

⁷⁰ The Pacific Immigrant Resources Society (PIRS) recently announced a tender for a community involvement program for New Westminster residents. Capacity building programs such as this which aim to actively increase community involvement are an excellent way to minimise the marginalization and isolation some respondents reported.

⁷¹ The largest number of respondents stated that they were members of Christian religious social groups, with the Myanmar and Vietnamese communities most actively involved in Christian groups. Several Afghani clients reported that they were members of mosques or Muslim religious groups.

The high levels of safety reported by many clients may reflect the security conditions in the places where they were living prior to arrival in Canada, and therefore their perceived level of safety is higher than they had previously experienced in their own country or country of first asylum. The concern expressed by some clients reflects the challenges in securing suitable accommodation, and re-enforces the need for additional accommodation support and guidance by ISS to ensure that GARs do not live in neighbourhoods where their physical security is in doubt.

4.11. Long-term Plans

For refugees, some of whom only arrived in Canada in the last few months, it may be difficult to picture where their lives will be in the future. However, respondents were given the chance to project forward three years to see what their lives would be like. Once again, a huge range of responses was given, but employment topped the list of things respondents hoped to have obtained in three years time with 40% of responses. This was closely followed by obtaining further education (24%) and improved English language skills (21%). Other areas which were raised by several respondents were: to own a car (14%), to own a house (13%), to live in a better house (7%) and that their children's lives will have improved (7%). Other comments included to have obtained Canadian citizenship, improved health, financial security, to pay off the Government Transportation Loan and to become a parent.

<p>"I cannot get a job without training or recognition of qualifications." Iraqi female (2003)</p>	<p>"From the way life is now, I really think that my entire focus is to save and pay for my children's higher education. I don't want them to live the same life as I do." Afghani female (2003)</p>
<p>"I would like to enrol in courses at BCIT and upgrade my skills." Afghani male (2003)</p>	

Where would you like to be living in 5-10 years time?		Are you generally happy that you moved to Canada?	
Unsure	23%	Very happy	20%
Greater Vancouver Area	66%	Happy	72%
Another part of BC or Canada	6%	Generally happy	3%
Country of origin	2%	Not sure	1.4%
Third country	3%	No	0.6%

Despite some of the challenges faced by refugees, the vast majority of respondents are happy to have come to Canada, and expect to be living in the GVRD in the next 5-10 years time. As can be seen from the chart above, 66% of respondents saw their future in the GVRD. Those respondents who foresaw moving somewhere else generally stated that it was because of family and friends or because of job prospects. One group that appeared to be particularly unsure as to where they viewed their lives in 5-10 years time were the Sudanese, who were more likely to reply 'Unsure' than any other group.

"Everyone is really polite and respectful. We are greeted with good and warm feelings everywhere in Vancouver."

"Yes I am happy, but I would have preferred that I did not have to become a refugee. I miss home but feel good that I am united with my children and have accepted that my long-term country is now Canada. I will have to accept that my children may never learn Burmese. This is now home."

Myanmar female (2005)

92% of all respondents were either **Very Happy** or **Happy** at having moved to Canada.

Respondents who expressed some reservations about their move to Canada generally did so on the basis of family and friends left behind in their country of origin or of asylum, or expressed their hope that family members could come and join them in Vancouver soon.

When asked what was the best thing about living in Canada, respondents provided a whole range of responses. As with other questions, educational and employment opportunities and the security of their children's future were high up on the list. However, the largest number of respondents (28%) said that the peace and safety here in Canada was the best thing. Linked to this, many respondents mentioned the levels of freedom that they can enjoy in Canada, in terms of freedom of movement, freedom of choice, or freedom of religion. Respect of human rights, equality and multiculturalism were also issues that respondents highlighted.

"I have rights as a woman and I can go freely wherever I want to go. I don't need a male member to be with me in order to feel safe. Thus, I feel safe all the time. I really like this life and enjoy it."

Afghani female (2003)

Many respondents also wished to express their appreciation for the assistance and protection provided to them by the Canadian Government, and felt that Canadian people are kind, friendly and welcoming.

"I want to say that I am really happy here. My life has an aim now. I know that I can gain higher education. I know that my dreams came true. Thank you Canada, thank you!"

Afghani female (2005)

Respondents were also asked what was the worst thing about living in Canada. A high proportion of clients (41%) stated that they had not yet found anything bad about life in Canada. However, other respondents identified issues as diverse as the rain, lack of employment, lack of English skills, same sex marriages, isolation and loneliness, and drug abuse. Several respondents felt that the level of social freedoms enjoyed in Canada also have a darker side, and provide possibilities for people to "get out of control" or "spoil your life". These views were represented in several ways, both in parent's fears about their children, and in adults' concerns for themselves. A selection of quotes shows the range of views expressed.

<p>"Elderly people have fewer rights, less respect from the family and the authorities. We respect old people in our country."</p> <p>Male (2005)</p>	<p>"I'm scared of some people around me. My boy was beaten and my girl is being taunted at school."</p> <p>Female (2005)</p>	<p>"Young children are more concerned of their personal freedom and enjoyment. They ignore the good advice from their parents due to lack of respect for them."</p> <p>Myanmar male (2005)</p>
<p>"Youth wandering about without any control."</p> <p>Afghani male (2003)</p>	<p>"Uncertainty of my children's future due to pressure from various forces."</p> <p>Sudanese female (2005)</p>	<p>"If you don't have money, it is worse than Africa."</p> <p>Liberian female (2005)</p>

<p>“My son associated with a poor crew due to lack of English and was arrested due to association.” Female (2005)</p>	<p>“Individualism and its corollary the supremacy of the almighty dollar.” Afghani male (2005)</p>	<p>“People are concerned with personal freedom and this leads to the breakdown of many relationships.” Myanmarese male (2003)</p>
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5. Conclusion

Resettlement remains a fundamental component of Canada’s humanitarian tradition of protecting protection and assistance to vulnerable refugees. The respondents in this survey recognise the huge positive changes that have been brought about in their lives as a result of their resettlement to Canada – their increased physical safety and security, improved access to medical care and educational opportunities, and the opportunities which they and their children have been afforded by the Canadian Government and Canadian society. As a result, a large proportion of the respondents see their future here in Canada and hope to gain Canadian citizenship in the future. Respondents are clearly grateful and appreciate the efforts that have been made on their behalf.

However, certain issues remain to strengthen and improve their settlement outcomes once they have arrived. Respondents stressed the importance of comprehensive pre-departure orientations for all GARs to ensure that they are prepared for their arrival in a new country and culture as well as more in-depth orientations and support once they arrive. The 13-18 hours of RAP orientations provide an important entry into the Canadian way of life and Canadian society. However, during the first six weeks in a new country, many GARs are focussed particularly on their immediate needs, such as financial orientations and securing accommodation, and may well be experiencing culture shock. Therefore, there is likely a need for further orientations, in terms of in-depth information about Canadian culture and society, as well as a more integrated case management approach to cover accommodation assistance and monitoring through home visits, and information provision as to available services. These services need to be provided in the municipality of residence of GARs, as the transportation costs and difficulties for clients with young children or health problems may create a barrier to access for particularly vulnerable clients.

There is also a need to reduce the wait time for the provincially funded ELSA classes, so that GARs can access their daily needs in English, and further assistance is necessary to prepare GARs for the Canadian labour market more effectively. For the individual, but also for the funding agencies, it is preferable for GARs to be able to gain independence and access meaningful employment in the shortest period of time. Therefore, much greater resources need to be put into employment assistance, skills training and upgrading, and employment searches for GARs.⁷² The economic marginalization and stagnation of this group through high rental costs and low financial assistance does not benefit either the refugees or Canadian society.

Similarly, the health care needs of GARs need to be examined in much more detail. If it is correct that some GARs health status actually diminishes the longer that they have been in Canada, questions need to be asked regarding the Resettlement Assistance Program and the service provision model currently being used.

⁷² Two other research papers have recently highlighted the economic insecurity of Government-Assisted Refugees in Vancouver. See Section 4.6 Employment and family income above.

Finally, there is a need for greater monitoring and tracking of the settlement outcomes of GARs. This report can only provide a snapshot of a certain group of GARs in BC. It is through the involvement and input of refugees and their communities that Canada will be able to continue to improve and respond to the multi-dimensional needs of these clients, and so provide the best and most appropriate settlement support to Government Assisted Refugees.

Annex I Statistical Overview

2003

Country of origin		Interviewed	% of total	Telephone	In person	Total
Afghanistan	Male	10	6.5	10	0	16
	Female	6	4	6	0	
Colombia	Male	3	2	2	1	6
	Female	3	2	3	0	
Ethiopia	Male	0	0	0	0	3
	Female	3	2	2	1	
Iran	Male	4	2.5	4	0	4
	Female	0	0	0	0	
Iraq	Male	4	2.5	4	0	7
	Female	3	2	2	1	
Myanmar	Male	3	2	2	1	6
	Female	3	2	0	3	
Rwanda	Male	0	0	0	0	2
	Female	2	1.3	1	1	
Sudan	Male	6	4	6	0	13
	Female	7	4.5	6	1	
Sub-total	Male	30	20%	28	2	57
	Female	27	18%	20	7	
Total		57	38%	48	9	

2005

Country of origin		Interviewed	% of total	Telephone	In person	Total
Afghanistan	Male	19	12.5	19	0	31
	Female	12	8	12	0	
Indonesia	Male	6	4	0	6	10
	Female	4	2.5	4	0	
Iran	Male	5	3	5	0	5
	Female	0	0	0	0	
Liberia	Male	4	2.5	4	0	9
	Female	5	3	2	3	
Myanmar	Male	4	2.5	2	2	8
	Female	4	2.5	0	4	
Somalia	Male	2	1.3	1	1	7
	Female	5	3	5	0	
Sudan	Male	3	2	3	0	11
	Female	8	5	8	0	
Vietnam	Male	6	4	0	6	14
	Female	8	5	0	8	
Sub-total	Male	49	32%	34	15	95
	Female	46	30%	31	15	
Total		95	62%	65	30	

2003

Municipality of residence	Afghanistan	Colombia	Ethiopia	Iran	Iraq	Myanmar	Rwanda	Sudan
Burnaby	9	0	1	1	1	0	0	2
Coquitlam	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
New Westminster	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4
Pitt Meadows	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Surrey	1	2	0	0	3	1	0	6
Vancouver	0	4	2	1	2	5	2	0
Total	16	6	3	4	7	6	2	13

2005

Municipality of residence	Afghanistan	Indonesia	Iran	Liberia	Somalia	Sudan	Myanmar	Vietnam
Burnaby	19	6	1	3	3	1	0	0
Coquitlam	6	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Surrey	2	1	0	6	3	8	0	0
Vancouver	4	3	1	0	1	2	8	14
Total	31	10	5	9	7	11	8	14

2003 + 2005

Municipality of residence	Total number of respondents	% of total respondents
Burnaby	47	31
Coquitlam	16	11
New Westminster	6	4
Pitt Meadows	1	1
Surrey	33	22
Vancouver	49	31
Total	152	100

Annex II Questionnaire

A. Arrival and Orientation (i.e. weeks 1-6 after arrival)

Introduction

Facilitator:

“Hello, my name is I would like to speak to, is s/he available?”

I will be speaking in _____ language, do you understand me?

I am calling about the Immigrant Services Society – Welcome House review of client services. You should have received a letter from Welcome House asking if you wanted to take part in this survey. Your participation is voluntary. The interview should take around 1½ hours to complete, and you will receive a \$20 honorarium for your time.

The answers you provide will be used to evaluate the services for future Government Assisted Refugees in Vancouver and help improve them. They will be added to the answers from many other refugees and then studied.

All personal information will be kept strictly confidential, and your name will not be used in the final report. If you do not wish to answer any of the specific questions I ask you, please let me know. Do you agree that I can ask you some questions about your arrival and settlement here in Vancouver?”

If no, thank the client and hang up.

If yes, commence questions below.

a) Contact details

Facilitator:

“First of all, can I confirm your personal details?”

- Can you confirm your full name?
- Can you confirm your full address?
- Do you have an email address? If yes, would you share it with us?

b) Pre-departure

Facilitator:

“I would like to start by asking you some questions about the time before you arrived in Canada”

- Where were you living before coming to Canada:
 - Refugee camp _____
 - In a rural area in a country of asylum _____
 - In an urban area in a country of asylum _____
 - Living in my country of origin _____
- How long were you living outside of your country of origin before coming to Canada?
- Did you receive any pre-departure orientation before you arrived in Canada?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
 - If yes:
 - From whom (e.g. Canadian Government, international organization, NGO etc)?

- How many hours was the pre-departure orientation?
- What topics / content were/was covered during the orientation?
- What topics / content did you find most useful?
- Did you receive any English classes before you left?
- What three things would you liked to have known before you arrived in Canada that you were not told?
- What things about life in Canada would you tell a friend who was coming to Canada?
- Is there anything you wish you had brought with you to Canada, which you did not?
- Did you have family in Canada or BC before you arrived?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
- Did you have friends in Canada or BC before you arrived?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
 - If yes, how did your family and / or friends help you when you arrived in Canada?

c) Arrival

- What were your first impressions on arrival at Vancouver airport?
- Were you met and helped through the formalities (immigration, customs etc) by someone who spoke your first language?
- If you had had the choice, would you have preferred to live in a big city, such as the Greater Vancouver Area, or in a smaller town or village outside of the Greater Vancouver Area? Please explain why.

d) Orientation process

Facilitator:

“I would now like to ask you some questions about your first few weeks here in Canada”

Welcome House (temporary accommodations)

- What were your first impressions of Welcome House?
- Did you find the following documents useful:
 - Local map _____
 - General information on Welcome House _____
 - Reception House orientation handbook _____
- How would you rate the temporary accommodation at Welcome House?
 - Excellent _____
 - Very good _____
 - Good _____
 - Fair _____
 - Poor _____
 - Was your temporary accommodation adequate to accommodate your family? If not, why not?
- What could be improved in the temporary accommodations?

RAP Orientations (provided by Counsellors)

- What three things do you remember from the orientation you received from your Counsellor?

- What were the most useful orientation sessions and why? (e.g. the sessions on banking, housing, employment etc)
- Did the information provided at the orientation sessions help you to adjust to life in Canada?
 - If yes, how did the sessions help you?
- Are there any topics that were not covered that would have been useful for you to know?
- Is there any part of Canadian culture or values that has surprised you, or that you have found particularly difficult to understand?
- Once you arrived in Canada, did you want to meet members of your community who were already living here?
 - If yes:
 - Did your Welcome House Counsellor link you with members of your community already living in Greater Vancouver?
 - What links did you make with members of your community?
 - What help did these community members give you?

Bridge Health Clinic

- How many visits did you make to the Bridge Health Clinic?
- What did you find most helpful in your visits to the Bridge Health Clinic?
- What did you find least useful in your visits to the Bridge Health Clinic?
- Did your visits to the Bridge Health Clinic resolve any immediate medical problems that you had? Please explain.

Housing Search

- What was the biggest problem for you to find permanent housing?
- Did you receive other assistance from ISS staff regarding housing (e.g. dealing with problems with landlords, negotiating leases, etc.)?
- What other services would have been useful to you to help you find permanent housing?
- Did you feel prepared for living independently when you moved into permanent housing?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____ – If not, why not?

B. Subsequent settlement outcomes (i.e. week 7 to date)

Facilitator:

“We have talked about your arrival and first few weeks in Canada. I would now like to ask you some questions about your life here since your first two months in Canada”

a) English language classes

- What level is your English now?
 - Not at all _____
 - Beginner _____
 - Intermediate _____
 - Advanced _____
- Were you eligible for free English classes?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____ – If not, why not?
 - If no, how would you rate your English skills when you arrived in Canada?
 - Beginner _____
 - Intermediate _____
 - Advanced _____

- How long did you have to wait to start English classes?
- What impact, if any, did this wait have on your daily life?
- Did you feel comfortable in the class you have been assigned to?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
- Why did you feel / not feel comfortable in the class?
- If you have finished your free English classes, do you feel comfortable communicating in English for your daily tasks?
- If additional free English classes were provided would you have taken it?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____ – If not, why not?
- Beyond the eligible number of free hours of English classes, have you accessed other English classes:
 - If yes, were they:
 - Free classes (e.g. with NGOs) _____
 - Paid classes _____
 - English for a profession or trade _____
 - If no, why did you not access other English classes?
- What type of English classes would you have been most interested in:
 - Full time _____
 - Part time _____
 - In the evening _____
 - At the weekend _____
 - During the day _____
- Have you had any difficulties in accessing English classes?
 - If yes, for what reason:
 - Childcare _____
 - Transport _____
 - Location of classes _____
 - Cost _____
 - Time of day _____
 - Other – please specify _____

b) Education

- Have you undertaken any training courses or educational programs other than English classes since you arrived in Canada?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
 - If yes, in what subjects and organized by whom?

c) Health

- How would you rate your overall physical health:
 - Disabled _____
 - Excellent _____
 - Very good _____
 - Good _____
 - Fair _____
 - Poor _____

- How would you rate your overall mental health:
 - Disabled _____
 - Excellent _____
 - Very good _____
 - Good _____
 - Fair _____
 - Poor _____
- How many days out of the past 30 would you say your health was not good:
 - 0 days _____
 - 1 days _____
 - 2 days _____
 - 3 days _____
 - 4 days + _____
- Have any health problems stopped you from doing:
 - Paid work _____
 - English classes _____
 - Other activities – please specify _____
- Do you have a family doctor?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
 - If yes, how did you locate your family doctor?
 - If no, how do you access your medical needs?
- How do you communicate with medical staff?
 - In English _____
 - In English (if English is first language) _____
 - In your first language _____
 - In your second / third language _____
 - Through an interpreter _____
 - If through an interpreter, who is the interpreter:
 - Family _____
 - Friend _____
 - Professional _____
 - Other – please specify _____
- Do you have any health care needs outstanding which you are having difficulty treating?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
 - If yes, why:
 - Cost _____
 - Language barriers _____
 - Wait times _____
 - Lack of a family doctor _____
 - Other – please specify _____
- How do you rate your overall dental health:
 - Excellent _____
 - Very good _____
 - Good _____
 - Fair _____
 - Poor _____

- Have you accessed the Interim Federal Health (IFH) Program since your arrival in Canada?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
 - If yes, for what services:
 - Emergency dental _____
 - Vision _____
 - Pharmaceutical care _____
 - Other – please specify _____
- Have you had any medical, dental or optical services that you required that were not covered by the Interim Federal Health Program or the Provincial Medial Plan?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
 - If yes:
 - What was not covered?
 - What impact did this have on you?
 - Did you receive treatment through another means?
 - How did you pay?

d) Housing

- Is your house comfortable / appropriate for your family?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____ – If not, why?
- Was the furniture you received appropriate for your / your family's needs?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____ – If not, why?
- How many people are living in your house / apartment?
- How many of the people living in your house / apartment are your family members?
- How many bedrooms are there?
- How often have you moved since leaving Welcome House?
- Are you currently living in rental property?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
- What percentage of your monthly income do you spend on rent?
 - 0-10% _____
 - 10-20% _____
 - 20-30% _____
 - 30-40% _____
 - 40-50% _____
 - 50-60% _____
 - 60%+ _____
- Have you had any of the following problems in your rental accommodation?
 - Disputes with your landlord _____
 - Problems over your lease _____
 - Not receiving your deposit back _____
 - Discrimination _____
 - Other – please specify _____

- If you have had any of these problems:
 - Who did you seek help from to resolve the problem?
 - Was the problem solved?
 - What form of assistance was provided?
- If no, what other forms of assistance would have been most helpful to you?

e) Family Well-being

Facilitator:

“We have been talking about your own situation. Now I would like to ask you some questions about your family (spouse, partner and children). Any information about your family will also be kept strictly confidential”. *(NB If the participant does not have any family members in Canada, only ask the last two questions)*

- If you came as a family, how do you rate your general family well-being?
 - Excellent _____
 - Very good _____
 - Good _____
 - Fair _____
 - Poor _____
- Are there any particular problems facing your family at present?
- How well do you feel that your children are doing at school?
- Have your children made many friends outside of your own ethnic / cultural community?
- Do your children take part in out of school activities (e.g. sports, music, clubs, religious groups etc)?
- As a parent, how would you rate your experience with the Canadian school system?
 - Excellent _____
 - Very good _____
 - Good _____
 - Fair _____
 - Poor _____
- When you are at work or at English classes, what happens to your children?
 - They are on their own _____
 - Family members look after them _____
 - Friends look after them _____
 - They attend paid childcare _____
 - Other – please specify _____
- Are your childcare needs being met?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
 - If no:
 - How could your childcare needs be met?
- Have you made an application for other family members to come and join you in Canada? Alternatively, have other family members already joined you here in Canada?
- What one change in your life, if any, would have the biggest positive impact on your family’s well-being?

f) Employment and Family Income

- What are your main sources of family income? (e.g. paid work, government assistance etc)
- How did you feed yourself when you were on RAP assistance (your first 12 months in Canada):
 - Family / personal income _____
 - Food banks _____
 - Other – please specify _____
- Who is doing paid work in your family?
- Are your children over the age of 19 doing paid work?
- Did you receive assistance in searching for a job during your first 12 months in Canada when you were part of the RAP program?
 - If yes, from whom:
 - Government _____
 - Organizations such as Welcome House _____
 - Family / friends _____
 - Other – please specify _____
 - Was this assistance helpful to you?
 - If not, what other form of assistance would have been most helpful to you?
- Did you receive assistance in searching for a job after your first 12 months in Canada once you had left the RAP program?
 - If yes, from whom:
 - Government _____
 - Organizations such as Welcome House _____
 - Family / friends _____
 - Other – please specify _____
 - Was this assistance helpful to you?
 - If not, what other form of assistance would have been most help to you?
- Are you currently employed?
 - If yes, are you:
 - Self employed _____
 - Employee _____
 - Part-time _____
 - Full-time _____
- How many hours do you work a week?
 - 0-10 hours _____
 - 10-20 hours _____
 - 20-30 hours _____
 - 30-40 hours _____
 - 40-50 hours _____
 - 50-60 hours _____
 - 60 hours + _____
- Do you hold more than one job at the moment? If yes, how many different jobs are you doing?

- How long have you worked in total in Canada?
 - 1-3 months _____
 - 3-6 months _____
 - 6-9 months _____
 - 9-12 months _____
 - 12 months + _____
- Have you worked as a volunteer for any business or organization since you arrived in Canada?
 - If yes:
 - For what kind of business / organization _____
 - For how long _____
- Are you working in the same field as you did before you arrived in Canada?
- Do you feel that your current employment matches your skills? Please explain.
- If you are not currently employed, why do you think you do not have a job?
- What would be of most use to help you find a job?

g) Finances

- Who manages your family finances?
 - Myself since I live alone _____
 - My husband _____
 - My wife _____
 - Jointly _____
 - My mother _____
 - My father _____
 - Other _____
- Did the financial orientation you received at Welcome House prepare you for Canadian financial institutions and money management? Please explain your answer.
- Have you started paying off your Government transport loan?
- Are you able to pay the minimum amounts to repay your loan?
- Do you, or any members of your family, have a credit card?
- Are you sending any money back to family or friends in your country of origin?
 - If yes, how often and what proportion of your monthly income do you send back?

h) Racism and discrimination

- Have you suffered any racism or discrimination since you arrived in Canada?
 - Yes _____
 - No _____
 - If yes:
 - What form – physical, verbal etc
 - In what context – work, school, public places etc

i) Information sources

- Where do you look for information about life in Canada? (Please give top three sources)
 - Family _____
 - Friends _____
 - Service provider organizations _____
 - Religious organizations _____

- Printed materials (e.g. books, newspapers, leaflets etc) _____
- Media (TV and radio) _____
- Internet _____
 - Have you accessed the Government Integration.Net website? _____
- Government sources (e.g. Government offices, “Advice for Newcomers” publication etc) _____
- Other – please specify _____
- Have you found sufficient information in your own language?
 - If no, in what areas was such information lacking, e.g. at schools, in work, in doctors offices etc

j) Local Community

- Where do you normally socialise – in your own ethnic / cultural community or elsewhere?
- How many of your friends in Canada belong to the same ethnic or cultural groups as you? Would you say:
 - All of them _____
 - Most of them _____
 - About half of them _____
 - Few of them _____
 - None of them _____
 - Don't know _____
- How safe do you feel in your local neighbourhood?
- Are you a member of any voluntary organizations or associations such as:
 - School groups (e.g. Parent's Association) _____
 - Religious social groups _____
 - Community centres _____
 - Ethnic associations _____
 - Social, civic or fraternal clubs _____
 - Libraries _____
 - Other – please specify _____
- Do you take part in any recreational activities?
 - If yes, what?
 - If no, why not?

k) Long-term Plans

- How do you picture your life in 3 years time (e.g. what job will you be doing, will you have taken more education, what kind of housing will you have (rent/own) etc)
- Where would you like to be living in 5-10 years time?
 - Unsure _____
 - Greater Vancouver Area _____
 - Another part of BC or Canada: _____
 - If yes, please specify where _____
 - For what reason would you like to move there:
 - Family / friends _____
 - Employment prospects _____
 - Cost of living _____
 - Other – please specify _____

- Your country of origin _____
 - If yes, please specify where _____
 - For what reason would you like to move there:
 - Family / friends _____
 - Employment prospects _____
 - Cost of living _____
 - Other – please specify _____
- A third country _____
 - If yes, please specify where _____
 - For what reason would you like to move there:
 - Family / friends _____
 - Employment prospects _____
 - Cost of living _____
 - Other – please specify _____
- Are you generally happy that you moved to Canada?
- What is the best thing about living in Canada?
- What is the worst thing about living in Canada?

I) Other

- Are there any other comments you would like to make?
- Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?

Conclusion

Facilitator:

“Thank you for your time and your participation in this survey. Welcome House will combine the information that you have given today with information from other Government Assisted Refugees to produce a review of client services. All personal information will be kept confidential, and your name will not be used in the final report.”

Annex III Selected Resources

- *Mapping Key Multi-Ethnic, Multi-Lingual Communities in BC*, AMSSA and the Public Health Agency of Canada
- *Social Inclusion of Newcomers to Canada: An Information Problem?*, Nadia Caidi and Danielle Allard, Library & Information Science Research (2005) Vol. 27, No.3
- *Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration: 2005*, Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada
- *Resettlement Assistance Program Delivery Handbook: Transition Services for the first 4-6 weeks in Canada*, Refugee Branch, Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, July 1998
- *What Colour is my English: Research into Africans in Vancouver*, Gillian Creese, RiiM
- *Ending the Nightmare: Speeding up Refugee Family Reunification*, Janet Dench, Canadian Issues Journal, Spring 2006, pp.53-56.
- *The Economic Experiences of Refugees in Canada*, Don DeVoretz, Sergiy Pivnenko and Morton Beiser, RiiM May 2004 Working Paper 04-04 (Revised)
- *Left Behind: A comparison of living costs and employment assistance rates in British Columbia*, Michael Goldberg and Kari Wolanski, Social Planning and Research Council of BC, December 2005
- *Multiculturalism and Local Government in Greater Vancouver*, David W. Edgington and Thomas A. Hutton, University of British Columbia, RiiM, 2002 Working Paper 02-06
- *Canadian Immigration and the Selection-settlement Services Trade-off: Exploring Immigrant Economic Participation in British Columbia*, Dan Hiebert, RiiM February 2002 Working Paper 02-05
- *Voices of Immigrant and Refugee Women: Learning from their Stories*, Immigrant and Refugee Mental Health Symposium, 2004
- *Faces of Refugees: Settlement Patterns in the Greater Vancouver Regional District 2003-2005*, Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia, September 2006
- *Resettlement Assistance Program Service Manual*, Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia, January 2003
- *Migrants' Remittances: Background Note*, International Organization for Migration and the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, 2005.
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