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Sparing Room for Refugees: Some Housing Considerations for Syrians and Yazidis in Canada

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Outline of Presentation

- ❖ Background information
- ❖ Review of relevant literature
- ❖ Methodology
- ❖ Presentation of results and Discussion
- ❖ Policy implication and conclusion



Total Refugees Worldwide, 2001-2016



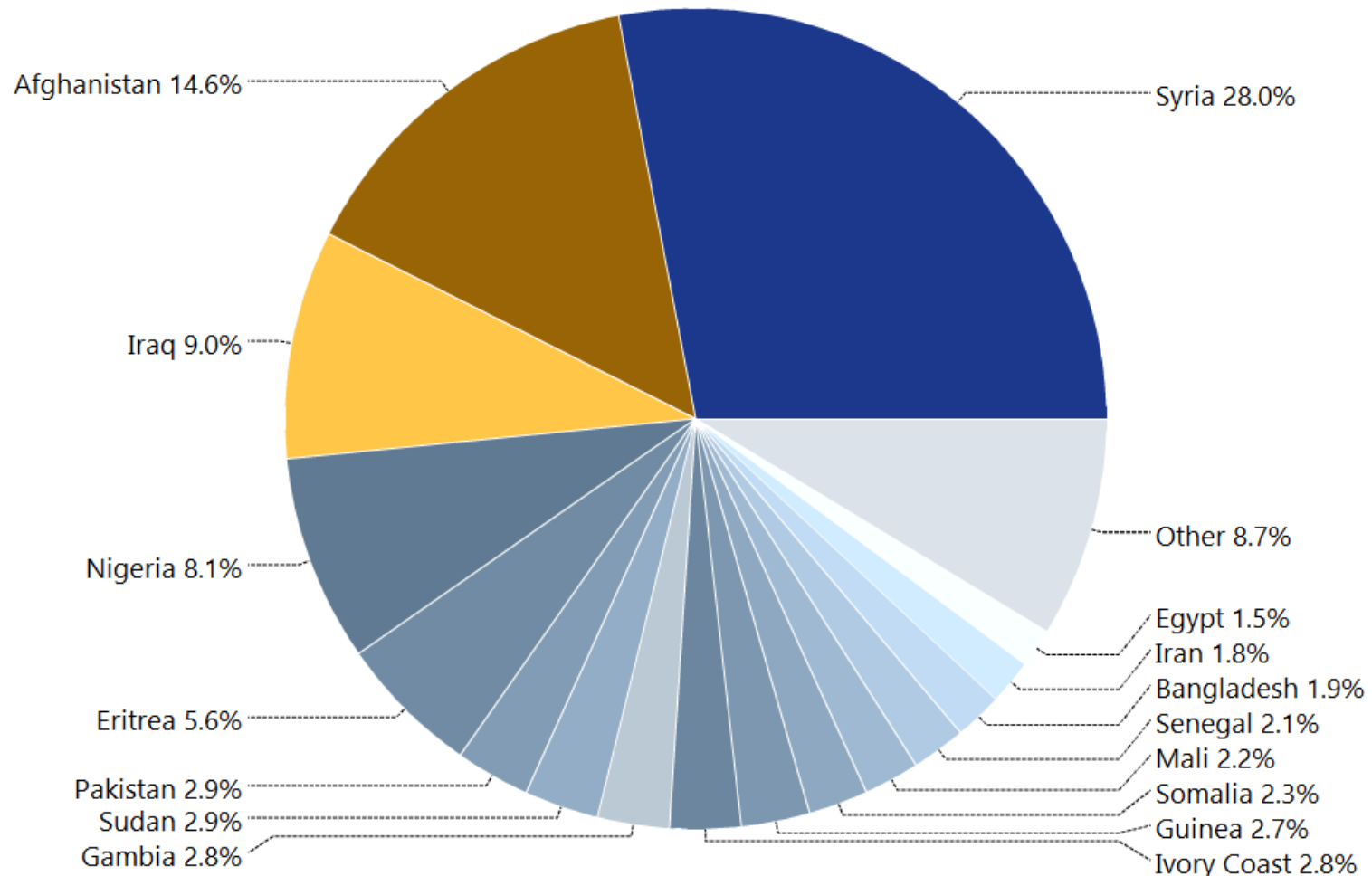
Source: IOM. *Immigration Data Portal* (2018)



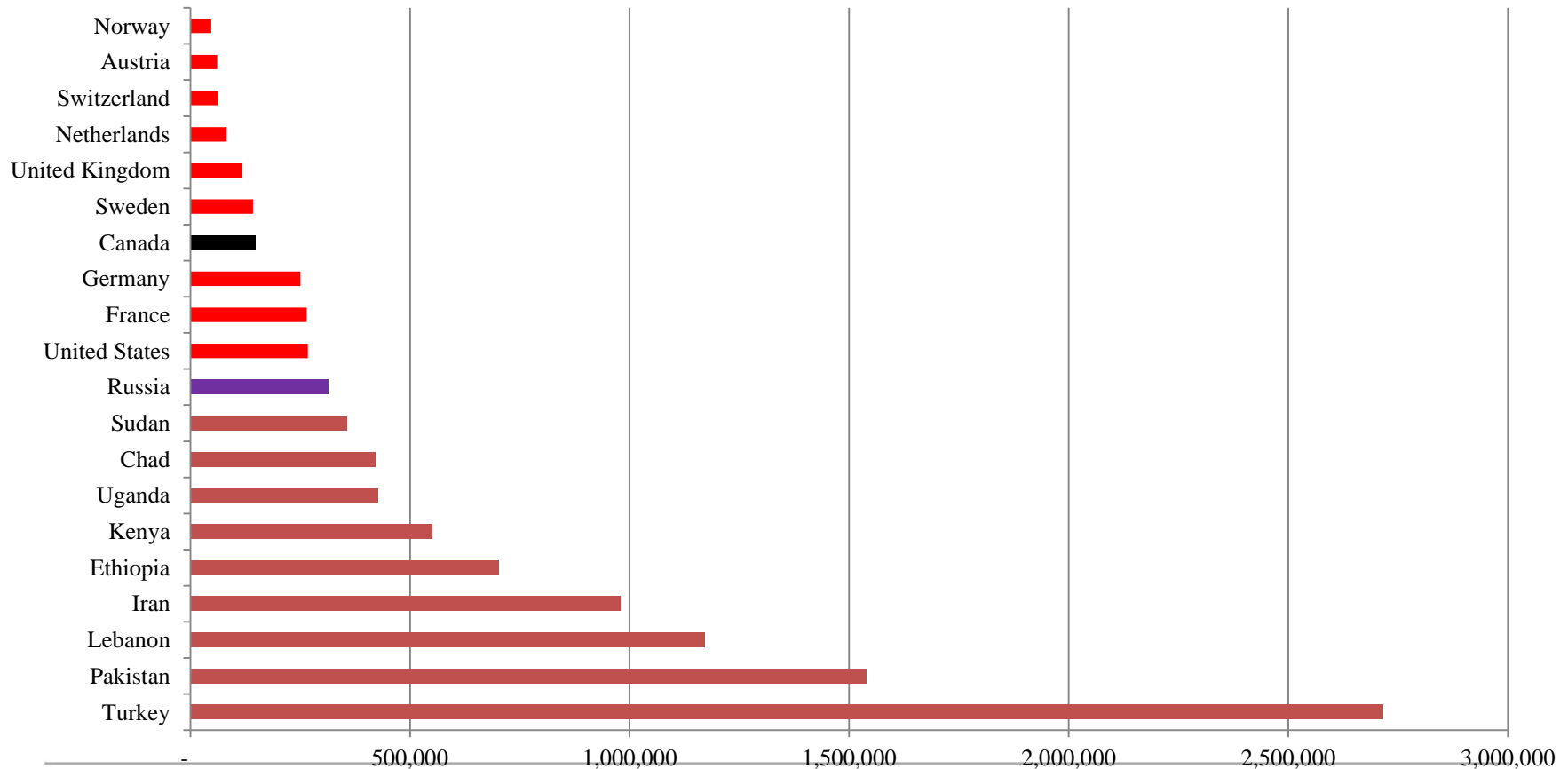
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Where are the Refugees from?

01 January to 31 August 2016



Burden of Hosting Refugees falls on less wealthy countries....



Only 3% of the world's refugees are settled in a wealthy country

Data calculated from UNHCR Mid-Year Trends, Dec 2015



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Top Ten Refugee Hosting Countries, 2016



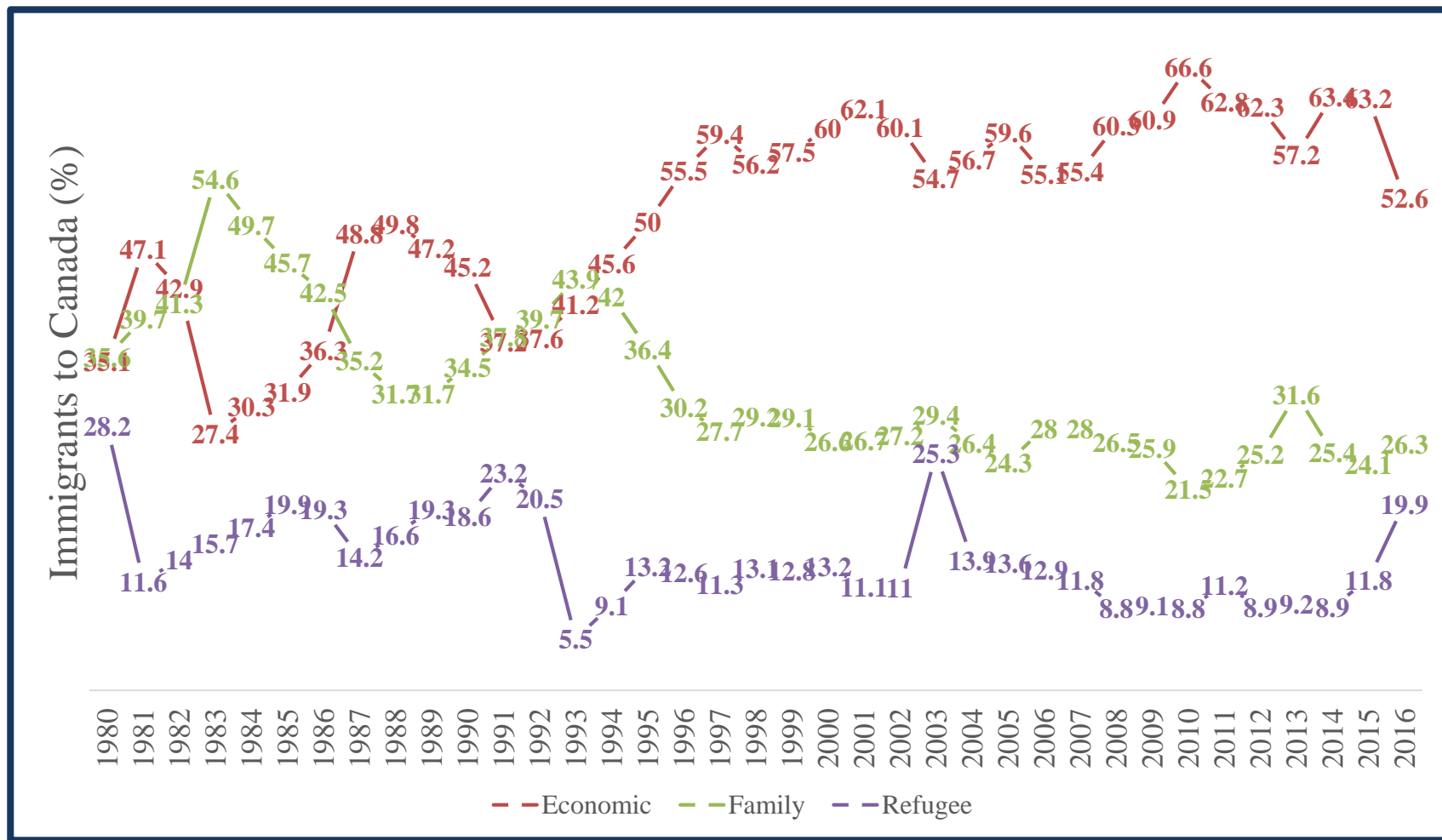
Add Germany
to this list at
449,000 asylum
applications

Amnesty International,
October 2016



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Immigrants by Class of Entry, Canada, 1980-2016

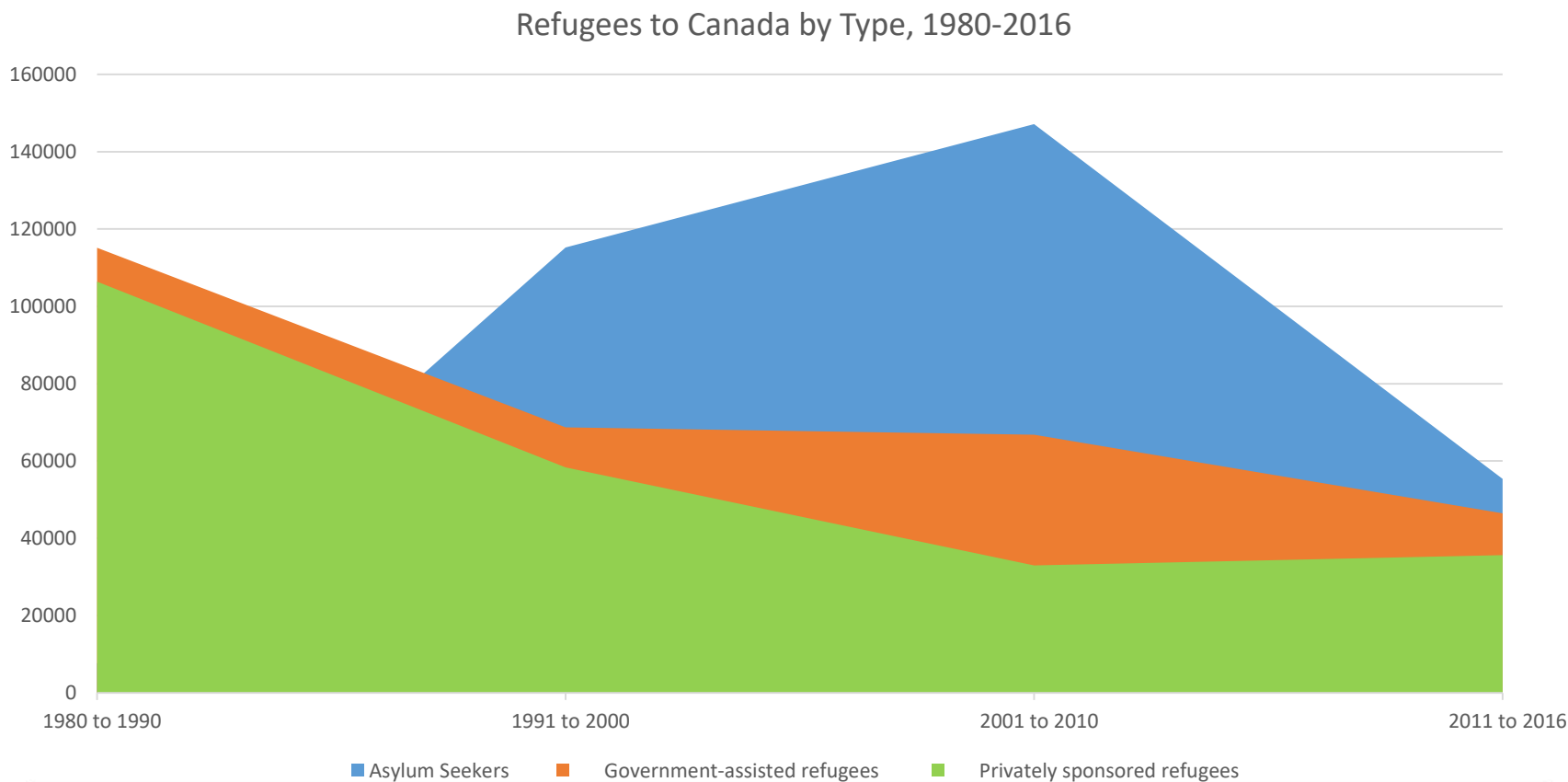


Data provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, various years
 Graph by L.Wilkinson (2018)



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Refugees to Canada by Type, 2004-2016

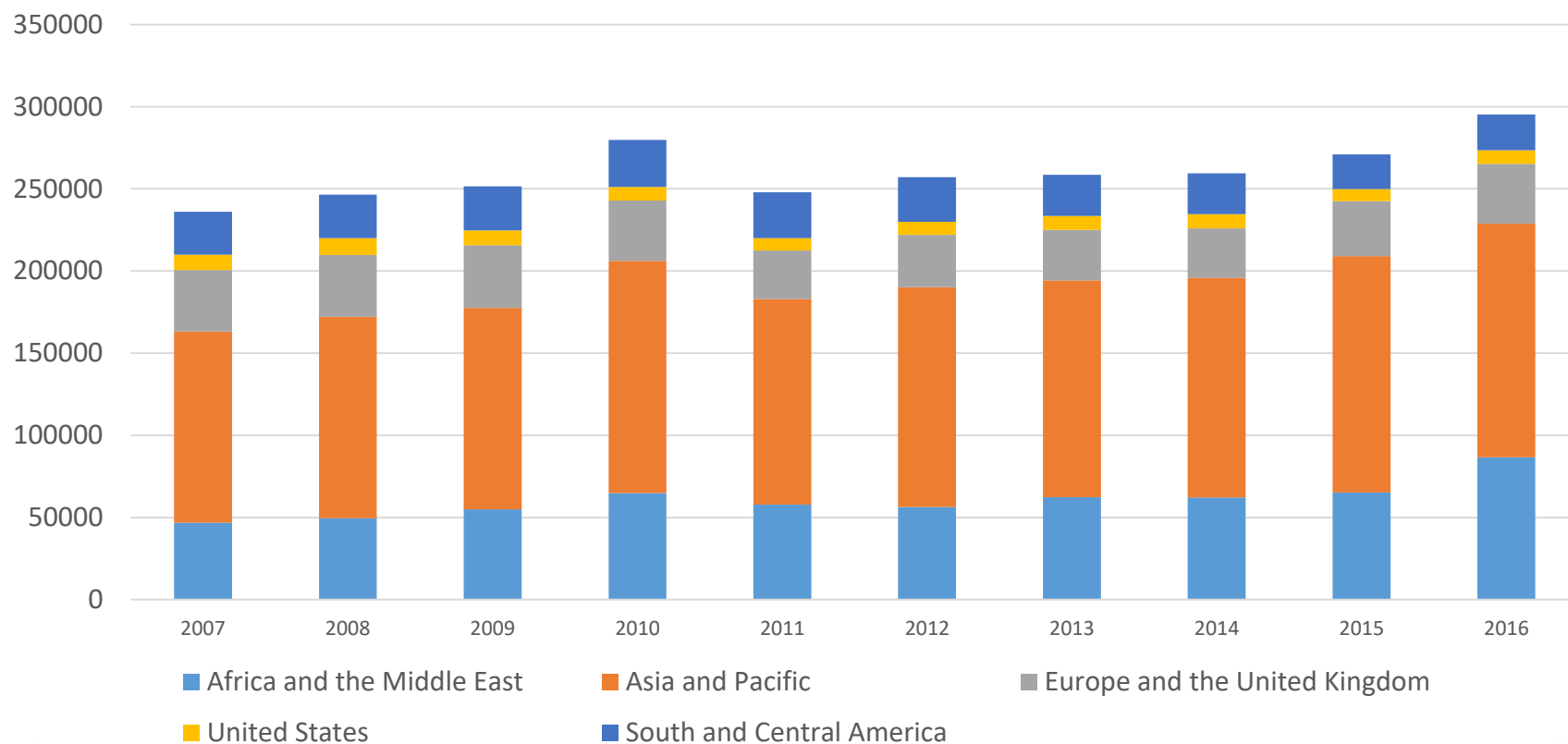


Calculations from Immigration and Citizenship Canada, 2018. Admission Category and Applicant type



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Source Region, Refugees 2007-2016



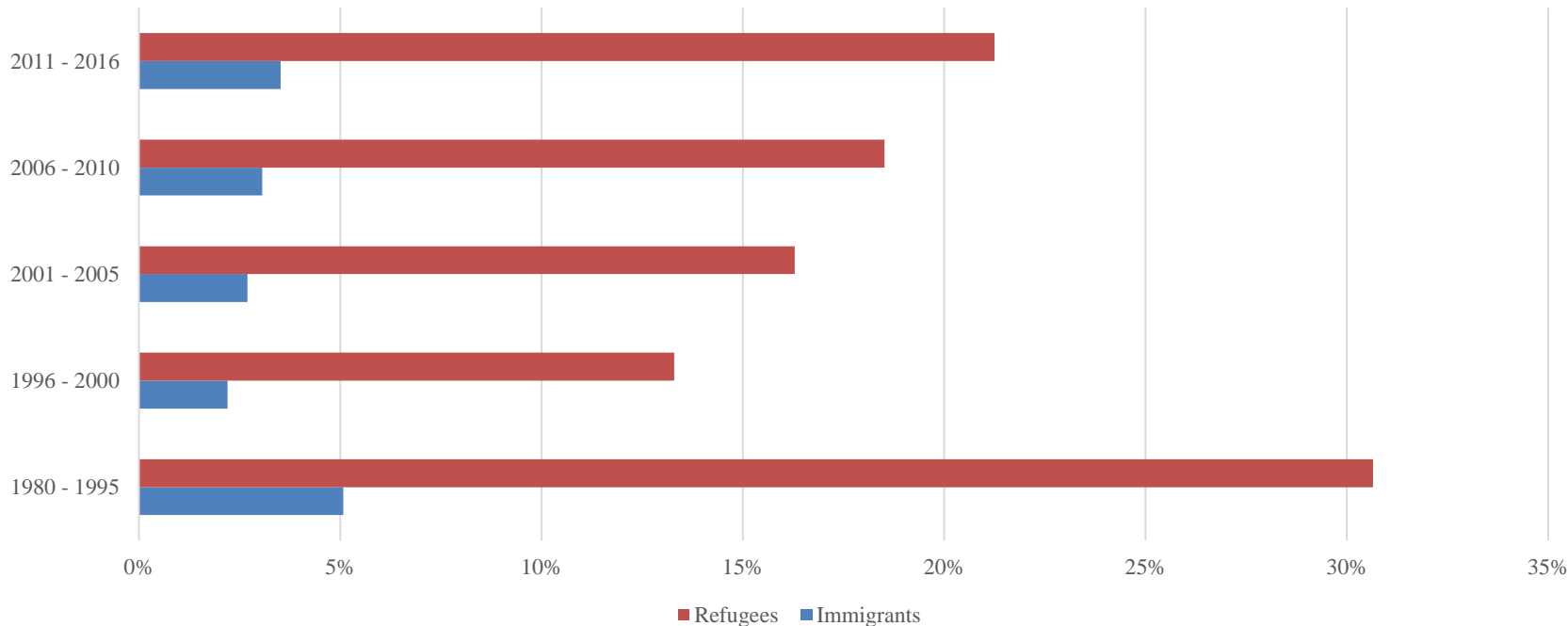
Source: IRCC 2017



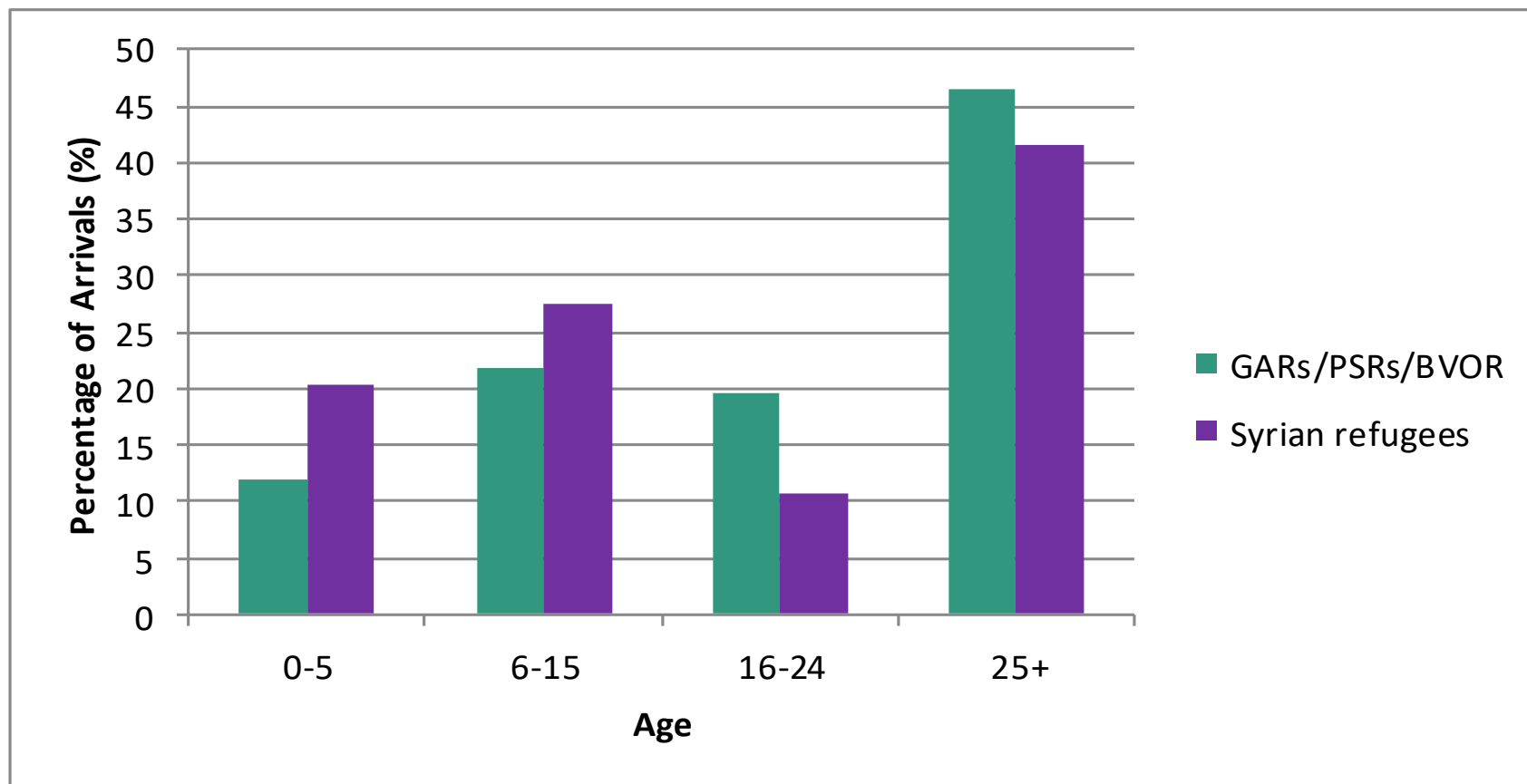
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Refugees represent 1.7% of the Canadian Population (Just over one in ten Immigrants)

Immigrants by Refugee Category in Canada, 1980-2016



Over half of all refugees are under age 25 at arrival

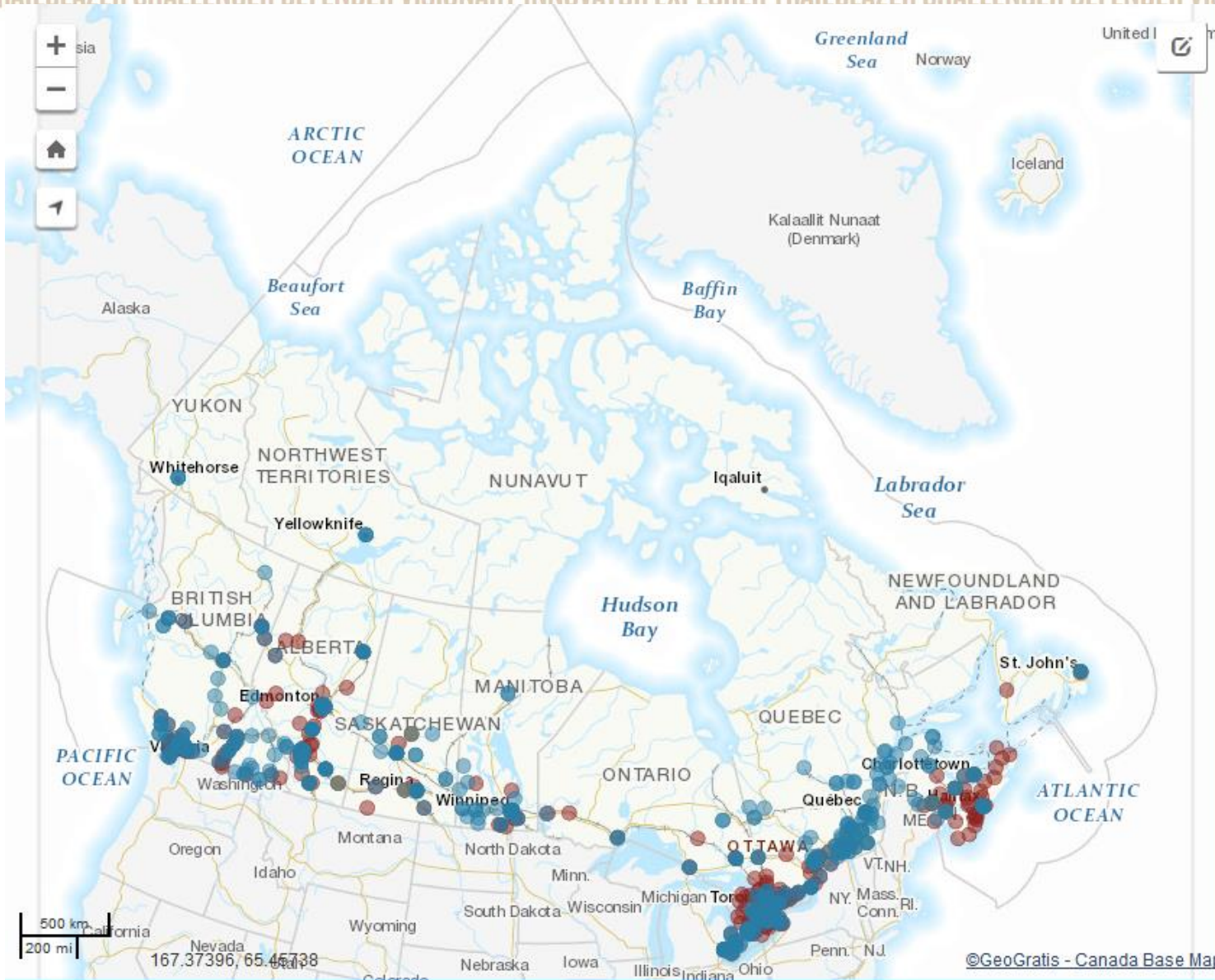


Source: IRCC. 2016. Data request tracking number: CR-16-0095

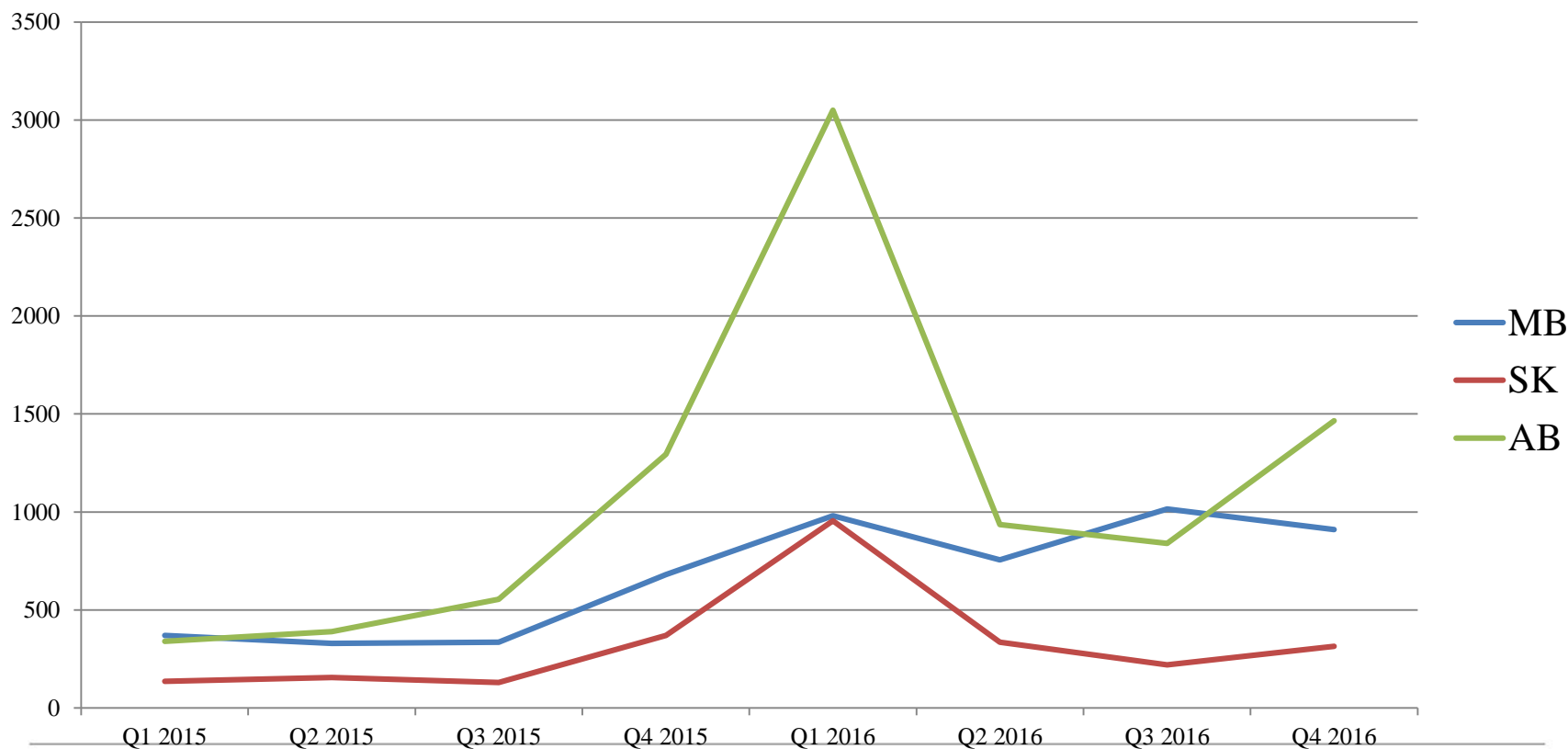


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Destination Communities for Syrians 2016



Syrians to Prairie Region 2015-2017



Source: IRCC monthly statistics, 2017



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Resettling Refugees on this scale is not new...

1956-57: over 37,000 Hungarians

1970-1980: 50,000+ Vietnamese (137,000 over 5 years)

Accounted for 25% of all immigrants that year; arrived during an economic recession; were settled outside of Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver

1992-1994 11,000+ Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian

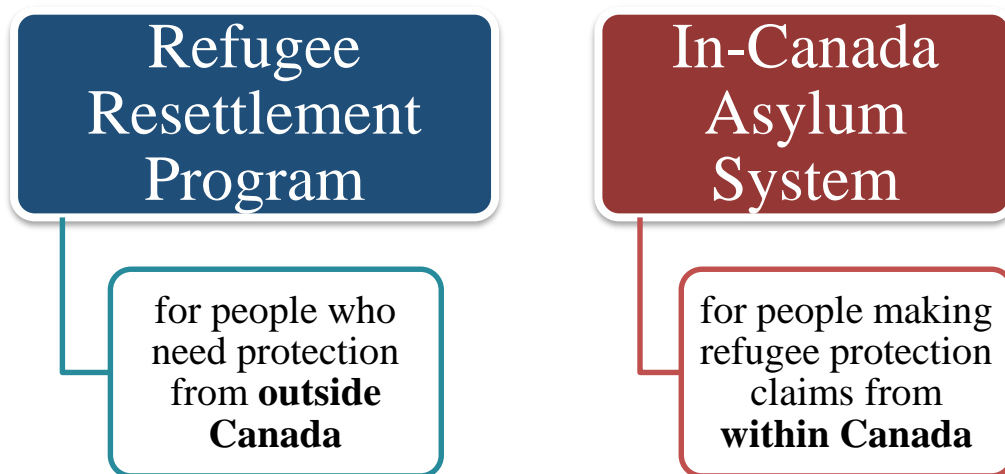
Airlifted 5,000+ Kosovars in 1999 in 6 weeks

Resettled 4,000+ Karen from Thailand in 2006

Over 25,000 high needs Iraqi arrived in 2013-14

Canada has a long humanitarian tradition of assisting refugees

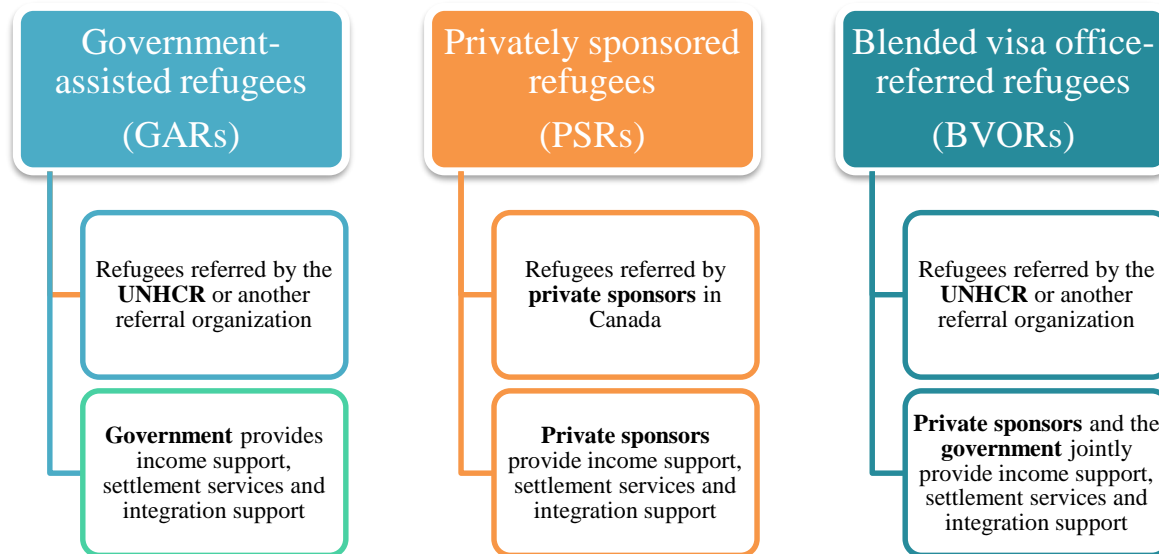
- Refugees enter Canada through 2 programs:



- These programs are enshrined in Canada's legislation and regulation which recognize that Canada's "refugee program is in the first instance about **saving lives** and **offering protection** to the displaced and persecuted".

Canada's Refugee Resettlement Program

- Resettlement reflects Canada's commitment to **share responsibility** for the world's displaced and persecuted.
- Refugees are **selected abroad**, from refugee camps and urban areas, based on their need for protection and are resettled through 1 of 3 streams:



- Upon arrival in Canada, refugees become permanent residents and have a **pathway to citizenship**.



What kind of financial support is provided?

- Housing for government assisted refugees often begins at a reception centre
- “permanent” housing located
 - Government assisted: Resettlement Assistance Program locates housing
 - Privately sponsored: small group finds housing
- Initial allowance to acquire clothing, small furniture
- Monthly allowance based on household size and market
- Federal funding ends at “Month 13”



Yazidi and Syrian refugee demographics

	YAZIDI	SYRIANS
Sex	66% female	42% female
Average age	45% age 20-29yrs	57% below 25 yrs
No formal schooling	50%	23%
Percent gov't assisted	100%	88%
Average family size	5.5	5.5
Average children per family	3	4
Knowledge of English	0%	11%
Months in Canada	0-14 months	57% 13+ months 21% 0-5 months

Content of Syrian and Yazidi studies

- Focal points include: housing, language acquisition and language ability, employment information, and settlement service use
- Both the studies were funded by IRCC
- Mainly government assisted refugees
- Both studies were conducted face-to-face by the settlement agency workers.
- Participants given \$10 grocery gift card OR \$10 honorarium



Syrians interviewed by city of arrival

	# interviewed	Actual arrivals
Winnipeg	121	1,200
Brandon	26	60
Moose Jaw	23	120
Prince Albert	33	100
Saskatoon	80	505
Regina	86	550
Brooks	26	65
Lethbridge	71	230
Red Deer	33	185
Edmonton	52	1,270
Calgary	81	1,030
Total (GAR only)	632	5,315

- Brandon 43%
- Brooks 40%
- Prince Albert 33%
- Lethbridge 31%
- Moose Jaw 19%
- Red Deer 18%
- Saskatoon 16%
- Regina 16%
- Winnipeg 10%
- Calgary 8%
- Edmonton 4%



Yazidi Refugees - Qualitative Interviews

- Interviews were conducted on a sample of 35 Yazidi in these four cities of Canada.

City	Number of Participants
Calgary	6
London	10
Toronto	9
Winnipeg	10



Housing the Syrian And Yazidi Refugees

Results



Photo credit: City of Brandon, 2017



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Temporary Housing Conditions



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Experiences with Temporary Housing

	YAZIDI	SYRIANS
Time spent in temporary housing	15 days to 3 months	Average 15 days, Manitoba 0 days
Satisfaction with housing	Satisfactory	Very satisfactory
Positive experiences	Refugees in Winnipeg were happy because they were allowed to cook their own food.	Friendly hotel staff, frequent visits from settlement service providers.
Negative Feedback	Unavailability of culturally appropriate food, size of the kitchen (Winnipeg), time of stay, too many people	Size of the rooms and having to share with many people, concerns with culturally inappropriate food

Note: no Syrian refugees destined to Manitoba stayed in hotels



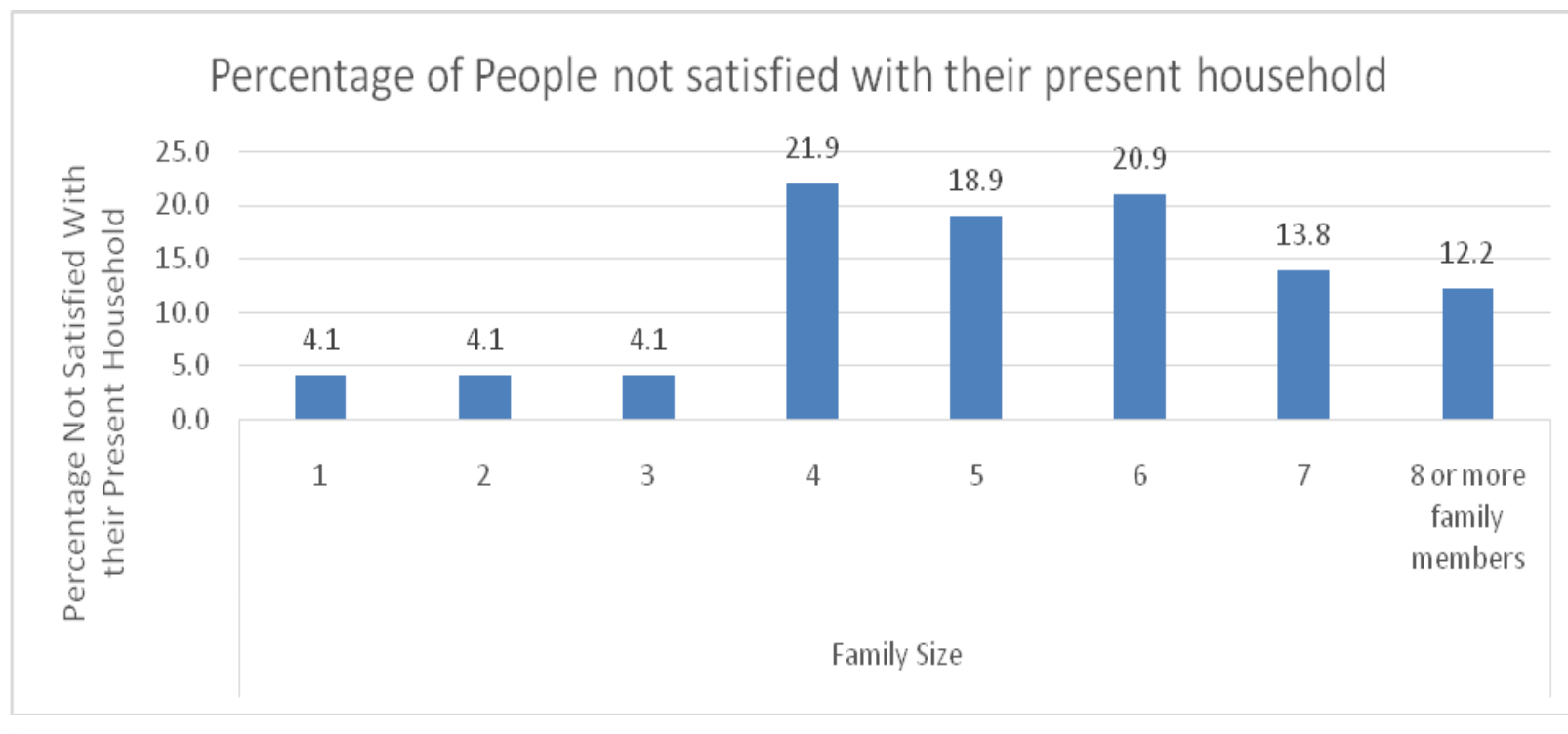
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Permanent Housing Conditions

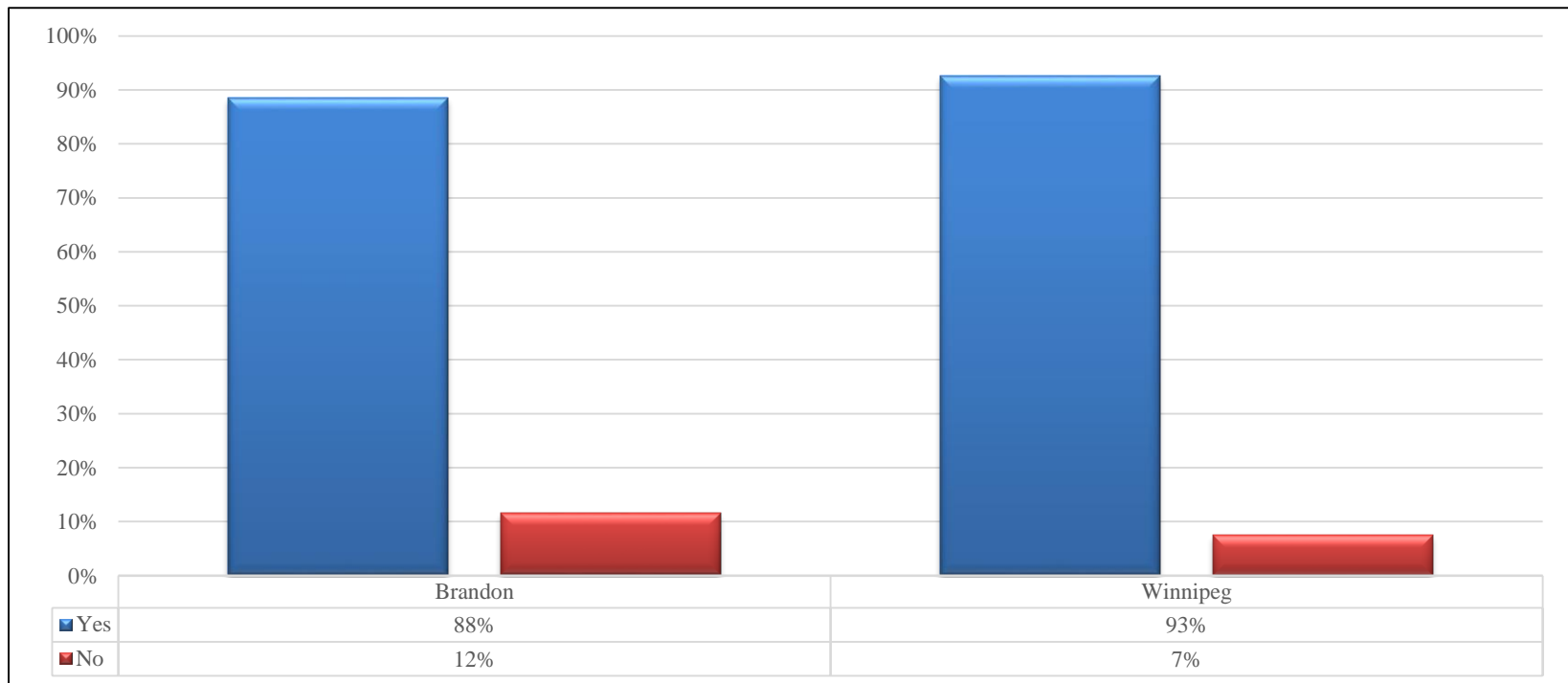


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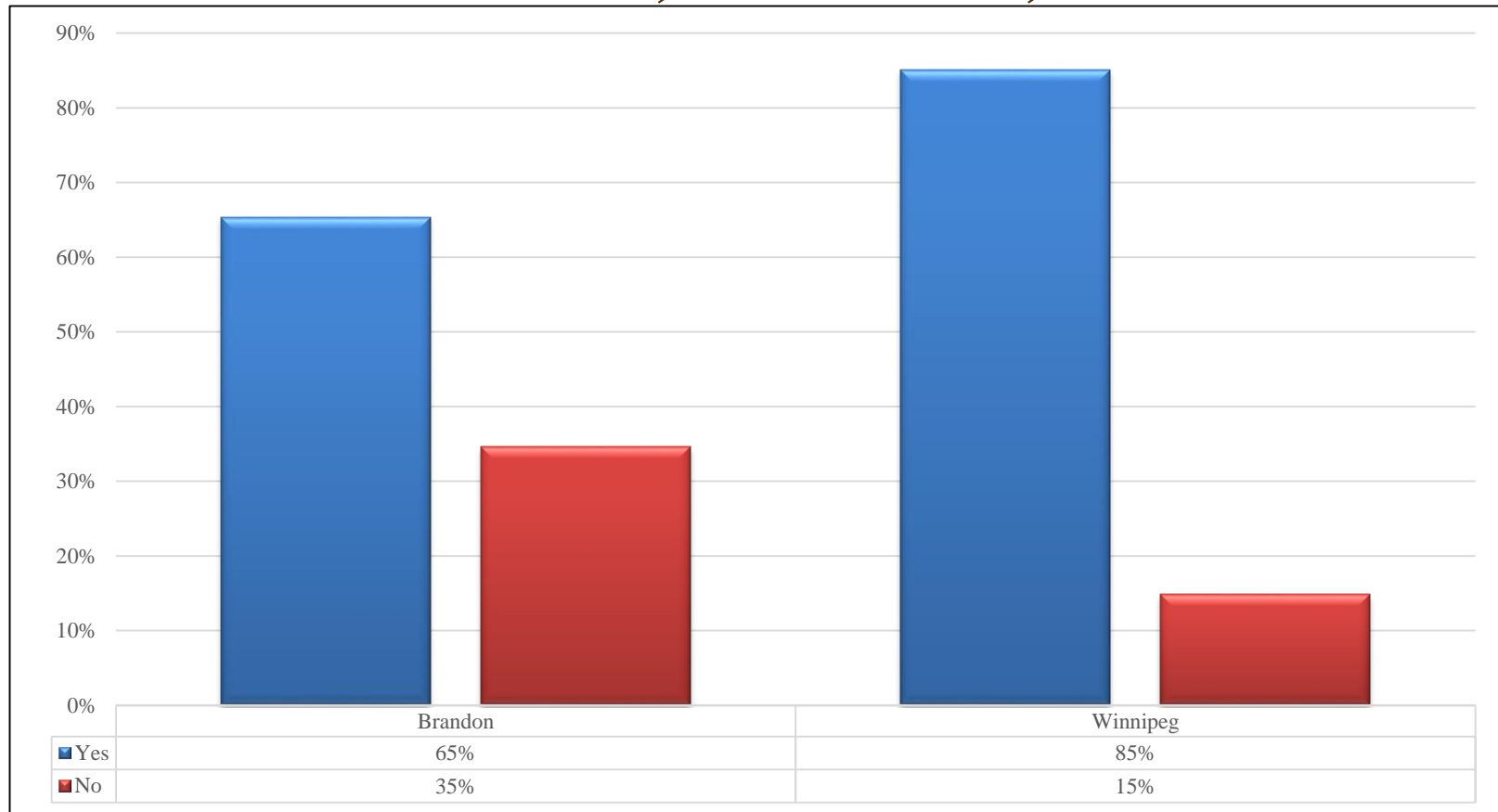
Housing satisfaction of Syrian refugees in the Prairies



Percentage Renting their House- by City of Residence, Manitoba, 2017



Does Housing meet your Needs? by City of Residence, Manitoba, 2017



Summary of Housing Complaints

	YAZIDI	SYRIANS
Size of the Units	Overcrowding for some families	Overcrowding for some families
Financial	All worried about high cost of rent	All worried about high cost of rent
Housing conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Distance to amenities ➤ Unhappy living in basements ➤ Houses were old and in need of repair. ➤ Issues with furniture received ➤ Unhappy living in downtown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Distance to children's school ➤ Lack of playground nearby ➤ Noisy neighbourhood ➤ Fear of living in housing with indoor staircases
Housing Needs	The desire to live near other Yazidis	Special needs for families with small children.



While the two groups share some similar experiences in locating housing, there are some differences

- family composition,
- gender, and
- the effect of trauma



Women & Independent Living

- Many very **young widowed mothers** in this community
- In Iraq, women were discouraged from being independent
- Women less likely to attend school
- The few adult males in this community are responsible for **caring for multiple families**



*Yazidi mother and daughter in Toronto;
photo credit: C. Ellingson, 2017*



Policy and Practical Implications

- Housing affordability + Month 13
- Additional Emergency funding
- Incentives for developers + Urban Planners
- Larger apartment units should be easily locatable and less expensive to enable refugee families.
- **Basement suites are not suitable for traumatized individuals/groups of refugees**
- Required more often for Yazidi—
 - Provide them housing near to other Yazidis
- Problems specifically mentioned by Syrians—
 - More play structures close to apartment units.
 - Baby gates with instructions on their use.



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Additional Findings, Reports and Information

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http://umanitoba.ca/about_IRW.html

Relevant Publications

- Wilkinson, L., Garcea, J., Bhattacharyya, A., Abdul-Karim, A. B., and Riziki, A. 2017. *“Resettling in the Canadian Prairies: A Survey of Syrian Refugees in Canada’s Prairies”*. Calgary: Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies and IRCC Integration Branch-Prairies and Northwest Territories Division.
- Wilkinson, L., Garcea, J., Bhattacharyya, P., Riziki, A., Abdul-Karim, A. B., and Schnieders, M. 2017. *“Initial Results of the Western Canadian Syrian Refugee Resettlement Survey”*. Presented at the Small Centre Promising Practices Learning Event, Brandon-Manitoba on June 27, 2017.
- Wilkinson, Bhattacharyya, P., L., Garcea, J., Riziki, A., Abdul-Karim, A. B., and Schnieders, M., 2017. *“Housing Considerations for Refugee Families with Children”* Immigration Research West. Unpublished paper.
- Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada. 2016a. Evaluation of the Resettlement Programs (GAR, PSR, BVOR and RAP)-Final Report. Ottawa: IRCC. Accessed online 12 September 2017 at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/resettlement.pdf>

