



Canada has seen an increasing number of immigrants, refugees, migrants, and non-status people coming to and settling across the country. While immigration slowed at the beginning of the pandemic, since 2022 we have seen the highest numbers of the last century. These numbers are in response to an aging population and low birth rate, with the Canadian government attempting to grow the labour force and the economy.¹ Global issues like conflict and growing climate displacement are also increasing the number of applicants seeking refugee status in Canada.²

In the past, many newcomers settled in large cities like Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, but now more people are settling in smaller centres.³ Unlike large communities, these areas often have fewer resources and supports for immigrants, refugees, migrants, and non-status people, which requires existing organizations to adapt to provide needed and unique services and supports.

For five years, Women's Shelters Canada operated a community of practice (CoP) on supporting immigrant, refugee, and non-status survivors of violence against women.⁴ Over this time, participants gained skills, knowledge, and resources to better serve newcomers experiencing violence. To understand if more resources are needed, we asked the question: **In the last year, have you seen an increase in immigrant, refugee, migrant, or non-status women seeking services from your shelter or transition house?**

Among responding organizations, 64% indicated they had seen an increase in the number of immigrant, refugee, migrant, or non-status women seeking services, while only 36% did not.⁵ There are many unique challenges experienced by women without status experiencing violence, particularly related to language barriers, limited access to services, withholding of documents by an abuser, fear of authority, and/or concerns that leaving a violent relationship will impact their status. While shelters do their best to support newcomers, navigating the intersection of immigration status and domestic violence (DV) can be extremely complex, and addressing challenges related to immigration status in the context of DV requires specific expertise.

The following are some of the resources, tools, and supports to provide tailored, high-quality services to immigrant, refugee, migrant, and non-status people experiencing violence.

- [Women's Shelters Canada CoP Resource List](#) (created Oct 2019)
- [Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants \(OCASI\) Initiative to End Gender-Based Violence \(GBV\)](#): provides resources, education, and leadership to the immigrant- and refugee-serving sector and the broader community on gender-based violence prevention and survivor support
- [Gender-Based Violence Settlement Strategy Project – Online Course](#): collaboration between the anti-violence and settlement sectors to address GBV for newcomers, immigrants, and refugees

Shelter Trends is a way for Women's Shelters Canada to monitor trends across the VAW shelter/transition house (TH) sector. These simple surveys are emailed to shelters/THs approximately six times a year.

Photo from Canva

[1] Levinson-King, R. (2022) Canada: Why the country wants to bring in 1.5m immigrants by 2025. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-63643912>

[2] Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. Refugee Claim Statistics. <https://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/statistics/protection/Pages/index.aspx>

[3] Conference Board of Canada. (2024) Where to? Mapping Immigrants' and Temporary Residents' Settlement in Canada. https://www.conferenceboard.ca/in-fact/mapping-immigrants-and-non-permanent-residents_2024

[4] <https://endvaw.ca/communities-of-practice/>

[5] The survey was sent to 448 shelters/THs, with a response rate of 33%.

