

2025

# DOORS ANNUAL REPORT

A BEACON OF LIGHT ADMIST THE DARKNESS



**DOORS**  
DIOCESE OF ONTARIO  
REFUGEE SUPPORT

**Prepared By:**

Mimi Merrill  
Refugee Sponsorship  
Coordinator



# BECAUSE I HAVE BEEN GIVEN MUCH, I TOO MUST GIVE

Grace Noll Crowell

According to the UNHCR, by 2026, 2.5 million people will need resettlement. The international community aims to resettle 120,000 of these individuals, with Canada setting a target to resettle 16,000 by 2026. Unfortunately, with current processing times, this could take about six years. Many individuals waiting for resettlement face the risk of deportation, arrest, physical and sexual assault, or even death before they have a chance to arrive safely. At DOORS, we have sadly witnessed many of our clients experience these tragic outcomes.

Some Canadians believe that the country is accepting too many refugees, and this perception has influenced federal decisions, limiting the support available to the world's most vulnerable people. With 117 million people displaced worldwide, our efforts barely address the immense need.

While we cannot speak for the public or the government, we are confident that the assistance provided through the DOORS program is transformative. We recognize that it is not our mission to save the entire world, but we are dedicated to supporting those who cross our path, guided by a sense of higher purpose. It is our responsibility to offer what we can through our time, resources, and compassion.

This report aims to illustrate the current and future realities of the DOORS program, highlighting the impact and continuing challenges we face.

## DOORS COMMITTEE

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Kristin Cote  
Sandra Den Otter  
Jan Ritchie*

## ROMAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE REPRESENTATIVE

*Bronek Korczynski*

## DIOCESAN REPRESENTATIVES

*Jane Humphreys  
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## REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR

*Mimi Merrill*

# DOORS

## ACTIVITIES

Community partnership is highly beneficial to DOORS, our sponsors, and the newcomers we support. By fostering strong connections within the community, DOORS is able to broaden its understanding of local realities, effectively share the work of our ministry, and connect our clients to valuable resources that support their integration into Canadian life. We deeply value all our partners and rely on their ongoing support to maintain and strengthen the vision of DOORS. These collaborations ensure that our mission remains strong and adaptive, allowing us to continue assisting refugees for many years to come.

In 2025, DOORS actively participated in the National Sponsorship Agreement Holder's Conference, which was held in November in Toronto. Additionally, we attended the Alongside Hope Conference in the same location. This year, two committee members were able to join our coordinator at these important events, further enhancing our engagement and learning.

In December 2025, DOORS attended the Connectors Project Launch Workshop with Refugee 613 in Ottawa. The Connectors Project is focused on fostering greater collaboration between Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) and Settlement Agencies, helping to strengthen support systems for newcomers.

In April, DOORS was glad to have the chance to speak about our work at an event hosted by the Sisters of Providence Associates. This gave us a great opportunity to let more people know what we do and helped us make new connections in the community. By joining in, we were able to spread the word about how we help newcomers and keep building strong relationships with local partners.





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# HUMANS, NOT NUMBERS

Although graphs, charts, and statistics help us understand various aspects of our program, it is essential to remember that each figure represents a real person. We strive to ensure that our work remains grounded in compassion and that our advocacy is guided by the humanity at the core of our mission. As we present the data in the following sections, we encourage readers to keep this perspective in mind.

# 33

This is the number of people who arrived in 2025. Like the number of applications submitted, the number of arrivals is quite low and will continue to decline in 2026 and 2027.

# 41

Number of people we sent in new applications for in 2025.

This number is significantly lower than what we have worked with in the past.

## COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

These are the countries that the refugees who arrived in 2025 are originally from.

- Afghanistan
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Burundi
- Eritrea
- Somalia

## COUNTRIES OF ASYLUM

These are the countries that the refugees we sponsored in 2025, currently reside.

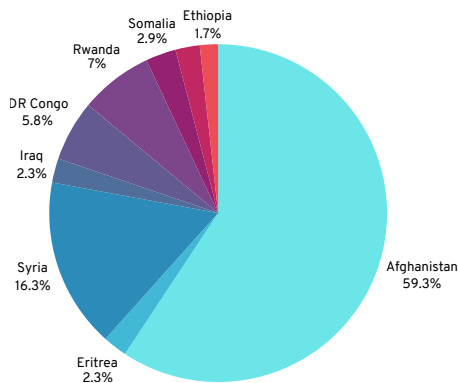
- Pakistan
- Uganda
- UAE
- Rwanda
- Tajikistan





# UNDERSTANDING THE REALITIES OF THE WAITLIST

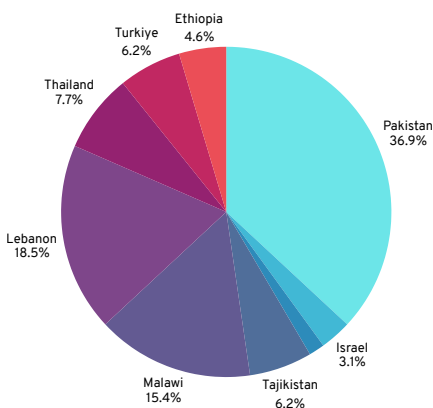
## Waitlist: Country of Origins



DOORS receives daily inquiries from individuals and groups hoping to access our program. Family members and friends, eager to reconnect with loved ones and parish and non-parish organizations seeking to offer charitable support to refugees in need. Refugees themselves dedicate significant time contacting organizations around the world in search of assistance. Although it is not possible to respond to every request, we make every effort to support as many people as we can by maintaining a waitlist for our program.

Recently, the federal government has reduced sponsorship spaces by 54% and lowered landing targets, resulting in substantially longer wait times for our applicants. In response, we have had to make the difficult decision to close our waitlist for the entire year of 2026. This decision was made after careful consideration and is deeply disappointing for those who are seeking our help. We believe it would be unfair to keep individuals on the waitlist for several years without a realistic prospect of receiving support.

## Waitlist: Country of Asylum



Within our work, we manage two distinct waitlists, each serving a specific group and purpose:

### Intent To Sponsor Waitlist

This waitlist includes people from the community who have expressed interest in sponsoring refugees through DOORS. Individuals who wish to sponsor fill out an online form providing general information about themselves and the refugees they hope to support. When sponsorship spaces become available, applicants are selected from this list. Charts accompanying this section illustrate the countries of origin and current locations of refugees represented on our intent to sponsor waitlist. Currently, this waitlist consists of more than 180 individuals.

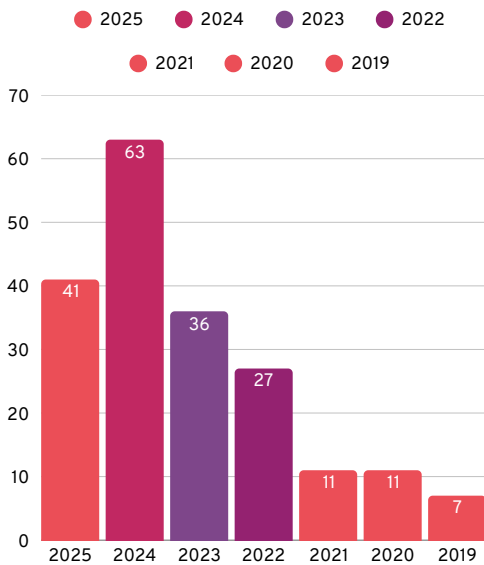
### Active Application Waitlist

The active application waitlist consists of applicants who have already submitted sponsorship applications through DOORS and are awaiting approval to travel to Canada. These applicants have been assigned file numbers by Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and are awaiting assessment at their designated Canadian visa office. Some individuals on this list have been waiting for more than six years. More data regarding this waitlist can be found on the next page.



# UNDERSTANDING THE REALITIES OF THE WAITLIST

## Active Application Waitlist

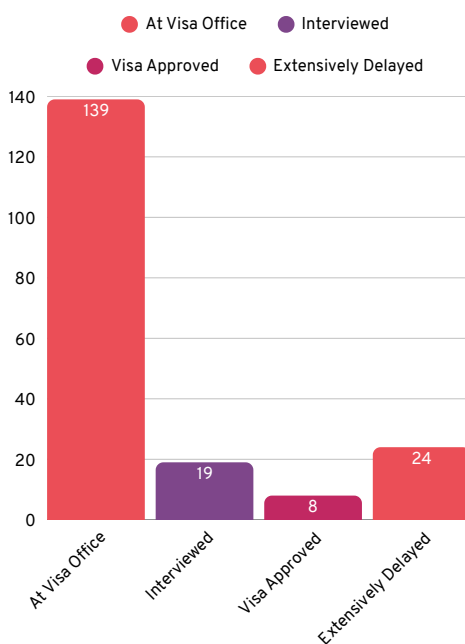


As previously mentioned, the Active Application Waitlist consists of individuals for whom DOORS has already committed to sponsorship. This means that partial or full sponsorship funds have been collected, ongoing advocacy is in place for their safe and timely arrival, and we support sponsors in preparing for their obligations. At present, 190 people are awaiting arrival. The charts on the left present two sets of data.

The first chart displays the number of individuals still waiting to arrive, organized by the year their application was submitted to Immigration, Citizenship, and Refugees Canada (IRCC). *For example, seven people who applied in 2019 have not yet arrived in Canada.*

The second chart outlines the current processing stage for each applicant, categorized as follows:

## Application Processing Stage



•**At Visa Office:** The application has reached the designated visa office, but processing has not advanced beyond this point.

•**Interviewed:** Applicants have either been interviewed by the visa office.

•**Visa Approved:** Applicants have successfully completed their interview and all required steps to come to Canada, but their travel arrangements have not yet been received.

•**Extensively Delayed:** Applicants have been waiting for over four years, some have even completed interviews and medicals, but have not arrived in Canada yet.

The figures provided in this section reflect the status of applications and arrivals as of December 2025.





# NEWCOMER CHALLENGES

Although refugees face many new challenges when they arrive in Canada such as language barriers, cultural differences and adjusting to a new environment, they are not unlike Canadians when it comes to economical and social challenges.

This section highlights some of the main challenges that are faced by our newly arrived newcomers, as well as those who arrived within the last 6 years.

## EMPLOYMENT INSTABILITY

Employment in the Kingston area has been a major challenge for newcomers. We have identified that many of the newcomers we work with are still unemployed after their first 12 months in Canada. Due to language barriers and sometimes lack of post-secondary education, a lot of newcomers are suited to entry-level and labour positions. Currently there is a significant lack of these opportunities in the Kingston area, which leaves newcomers finding they lack qualifications to secure employment.

## LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Newcomers are experiencing significant difficulties due to the lack of entry-level positions that allow them to practise and develop their English language skills. The available job opportunities increasingly require candidates to possess higher levels of English proficiency, which creates barriers to employment for many recent arrivals. English language classes throughout the city are under considerable pressure. Demand for these classes far exceeds the available spaces, and recent cuts in funding have worsened the situation. As a result, many newcomers are left searching for alternative ways to improve their language abilities.

## HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

It is unsurprising that high rental costs present a significant challenge for newcomers. While sponsors offer financial support throughout the first 12 months in Canada, newcomers are then required to bear their own expenses, a task made increasingly difficult by rising rent prices. Unfortunately, we have observed newcomers residing in cramped accommodations that do not provide adequate space for families, or in locations that lack convenient access to public transportation.

## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Many newcomers we work with, especially those in the “young adult” category (ages 18–30), have openly expressed challenges in forming meaningful connections and friendships within the community. This absence of established relationships can lead to feelings of isolation and may affect their overall sense of belonging.

As a result, some newcomers have expressed plans to relocate to larger, more diverse cities in hopes of finding a community where they feel more connected. This pattern makes it difficult for our community to retain newcomers.

We encourage newcomers to remain in our community for at least the first 12 months, and preferably longer. At the same time, we recognize that a supportive and welcoming environment is essential for successful integration.

# CONTINUED DEDICATION



The refugee crisis remains a pressing concern, and our responsibility to assist those affected is greater than ever. Despite the constraints imposed by federal policies, decisions, and our own capacity limitations, there is still much we can do to support refugees and newcomers in meaningful ways.

## **Expanding Support Beyond Financial Assistance**

Support for refugees and newcomers is not limited to financial resources. At DOORS, we are actively exploring new initiatives to address the diverse needs of those we serve. One such initiative is the development of a volunteer-run community English Conversation Circle, designed to strengthen the English language skills of newcomers and help them integrate more successfully into Canadian society. We hope to launch this initiative soon.

In addition to language support, DOORS continues to operate the Food Security Program, which provides newcomers with food gift cards. This program helps lessen the burden of rising grocery prices and ensures that families can access the nutrition they need as they settle into their new communities.

## **Building Connections and Foundations**

Our increased presence at the Diocese office has enabled us to interact more frequently with both newcomers and sponsors in a central location. This enhanced engagement is helping us lay a solid foundation for the clients we serve, fostering stronger connections and creating a more supportive environment.

These efforts, though modest, represent important ways in which we can offer meaningful support to refugees and newcomers. Every contribution, no matter the size, helps build a stronger, more supportive community.

*We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who supports our work and maintains hope in our ongoing efforts to assist refugees. Our goal is to remain mindful of the significance of helping our fellow humans, as together we contribute to the growth and enrichment of our community and country. We strive to remain a beacon of light for those we are able to assist.*



# WELCOME HOME

Although our work involves hearing some of the most heartbreaking stories of struggle and despair, we are also privileged to see the results of our efforts as refugees arrive to Canada and begin their lives.

We reached out to our newcomers to share some photos of their arrival and time in Canada so far. We are thankful to those who have shared their photographs for this report.



Our last arrival of 2025. A young woman from Afghanistan reunited with her brother (sponsor) and sister-in-law as well as her new nephew.



Our coordinator stands with an Afghan woman and her sponsor (right). This woman is now reunited with her fiancé.



Two of the 6 people from Congo who arrived in October standing with their sponsor (right).



Enjoying the Ripley's Aquarium is this little boy who's parents are from Burundi but he was born in South Africa, the country of asylum.



A Burundian couple enjoys the snow. The woman on the right was reunited with her mother after many decades apart.

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