



## National GAR Case Management – Client Support Services

### Secondary Migration Report

#### SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

In 2019, the federal government resettled approximately 6,500 Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) in receiving communities across Canada (IRCC, 2019). Of these individuals, 5,096 are Client Support Services (CSS) clients. While resettlement agencies and CSS Sites aim to provide essential supports and services to GAR clients to facilitate their smooth resettlement into their new communities, many GARs elect to relocate to a different city or province from their initial destination in Canada. This relocation is defined as secondary migration. According to Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada, **secondary migration** is “**a client initiated change in destination (city or province) either shortly after arrival while still in temporary accommodation and before the end of their first year in Canada.**”

Secondary migration has increased amongst CSS clients in recent years, and this trend contributes to a variety of issues for both CSS Staff and clients. This report shares and explores the literature around secondary migration trends in Canada, the causes of secondary migration amongst refugees, CSS statistics and analysis regarding secondary migration trends within the program, needs and challenges resulting from increased levels of secondary migration, and recommendations.

*This report presents the following main points:*

- More funding is necessary to provide the same level of support for secondary migrants as the level provided to non-secondary migrants at CSS Sites with high levels of secondary migration.
- The increase in caseloads due to high rates of secondary migration causes a strain on CSS Staff as well as receiving communities, and negatively impacts the quality of CSS service provision.
- As family ties, friendships, and social support are often the main factors contributing to secondary migration, the presence of secondary migrants’ social support networks should be taken into account when considering GARs’ initial destining location.

#### SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

While the existing literature examining the causes and effects of secondary migration amongst GARs in Canada is limited, studies have found key trends in this realm that align with CSS’s data on secondary migration. In Simich et al.’s 2002 study, the authors noted that many refugees move after their initial settlement based on self-interest, which disrupts their settlement path with negative implications for both the refugee and host government. They also found that refugee relocation is mostly due to the need for social support. Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (2019) noted that refugees may decide to move to be closer to family, friends, and members of their religious or cultural community. Other reasons for moving include cost of living and employment prospects. Despite the fact that the federal government recognizes minimizing subsequent refugee resettlement as an important goal (Simich et al. 2002), CSS has found that there has been an increase in GAR secondary migration in recent years.

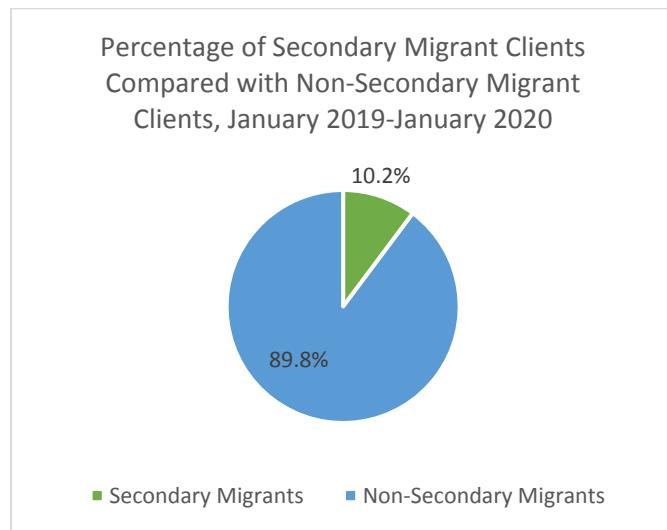
To better understand why secondary migration occurs and why it leads to more complications for GARs, support workers and host communities, it is helpful to explore how decisions are made regarding GARs' initial place of resettlement. Upon arrival, settlement decisions are largely made based on the capacity to provide support to refugees at the local level (Bloem and Loveridge 2015). Other factors considered by officials are refugees' preferences, the presence of family, friends, and members of their cultural group, and employment opportunities; however, there are many reasons why refugees may not share their preferred destination with officers. Reasons include past trauma and negative experiences with authority, along with the fear of being denied their refugee claim or financial support (Simich et al. 2002). In Simich et al.'s study, 64% of refugees expressed a preferred destination because of the presence of family members but were placed elsewhere, which could in part explain the increase in secondary migration. Clearly, there are a variety of reasons why secondary migration occurs, often rooted in circumstances prior to entering Canada. **GARs should be given accurate information about resettlement communities so they can be active agents in this decision making process.**

### SECTION 3: CSS TRENDS AND ANALYSIS

#### Secondary Migrants Compared to Non-Secondary Migrants CSS Clients

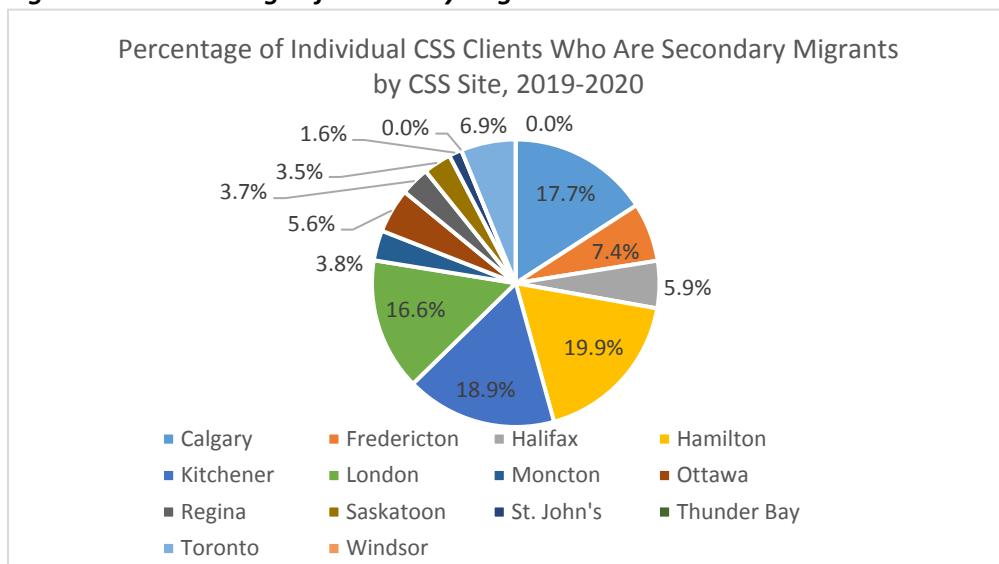
Within the first year of arrival, GARs are entitled to financial support from Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) to help them with immediate and most pressing settlement needs. In addition, CSS clients are provided with intensive case management support comprised of needs assessments, case management activities, referrals, and information and orientation sessions to help them settle and navigate their communities independently. This requires a lot of time, energy, and resources from both CSS Staff and other service providers within the community. While 10% of CSS clients are secondary migrants (see Figure 1.1), CSS Sites are not given financial support for these clients.

**Figure 1.1 - Percentage of Secondary Migrant Clients Compared with Non-Secondary Migrant Clients**



While the percentage of secondary migrants has increased across Canada, there are some CSS Sites for whom this poses a greater issue than others (see Figure 1.2). The CSS Sites with the highest numbers of secondary migrants are Hamilton (19.9%), Kitchener (18.9%), Calgary (17.7%), and London (16.6%).

**Figure 1.2 – Percentage of Secondary Migrant CSS Clients Served**



These four Sites provide essential services to support secondary migrant clients, including needs assessments, community referrals, home visits, and help with finding permanent accommodation. Life skills support, however, is only provided in exceptional circumstances as determined at the first needs assessment. In the case of Toronto, life skills support is not provided for their 6.9% of clients who are secondary migrants. While each CSS Site has their own policies regarding secondary migrants, the high needs of these clients often cause Staff to work beyond their capacity and outside of their mandate to provide essential support. On average, 9% CSS clients receiving support services (interpretation, childcare, translation, crisis counselling, and disability services) are secondary migrants, while 89% are non-secondary migrants. As these percentages are proportionate to the breakdown of secondary migrant clients (10%) compared to non-secondary migrant clients (90%), it is clear that secondary migrants typically receive the same standard of support as the rest of CSS clients. This proves that **more resources are needed to compensate Caseworkers for the support provided to secondary migrants.**

### Secondary Migrants Caseloads at CSS Sites

The four Sites that have the highest percentages of secondary migrants overall also have the highest caseloads of secondary migrants (Calgary (18%), Kitchener (18%), Hamilton (15%), and London (14%); see Table 1.1). These percentages exceed the average percentage of caseloads of secondary migrants (9%). This is compounded by other related issues; for instance, secondary migration requires extra paperwork and documentation. In London, extra demands on Caseworkers are exacerbated by crowded office space, and in Ottawa, youth workers serve higher numbers of clients. As secondary migration impacts service provision for GARs and places a strain on Caseworkers who are tasked with providing support for these clients, it is clear that **Sites with high caseloads of secondary migrants require additional funding to maintain CSS's high standard of care.**

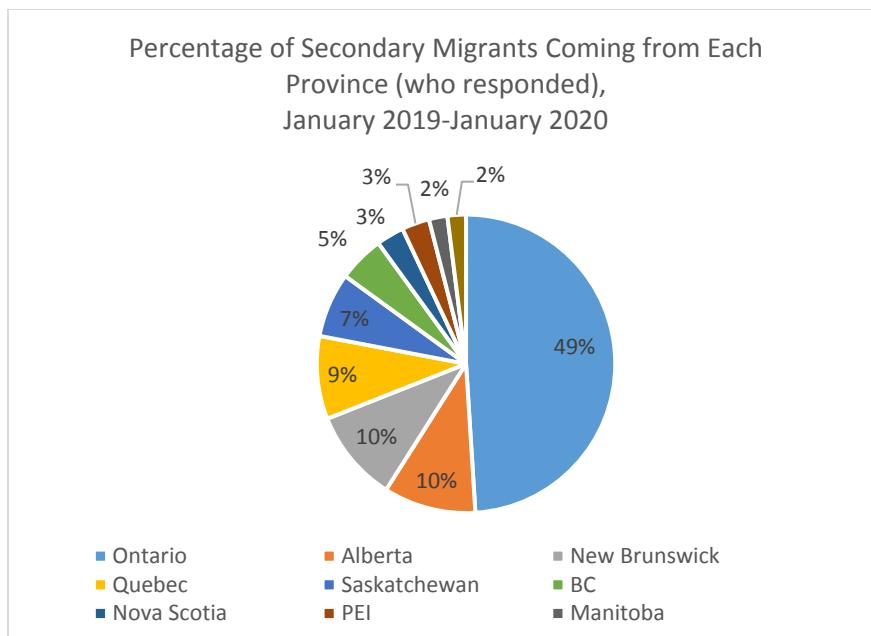
**Table 1.1 – Percentage of Caseload that is Secondary Migrants by CSS Site, 2019-2020**

% of Caseload that is Secondary Migrants	CSS Site
18%	Calgary
6%	Fredericton
6%	Halifax
15%	Hamilton
18%	Kitchener
14%	London
4%	Moncton
5%	Ottawa
5%	Regina
10%	Saskatoon
3%	St. John's
3%	Thunder Bay
6%	Toronto
0%	Windsor
<b>9%</b>	<b>Average</b>

### Secondary Migrants Relocation Trends and Motives

When considering the above trends, it is also valuable to examine where most secondary migrants are placed when they first arrive in Canada (see Figure 1.3). Nearly half (49%) of secondary migrants (who responded) first arrived in Ontario. As the majority of Sites with the most secondary migrants are also located in Ontario (with the exception of Calgary), one could deduce that most secondary migrant Clients are In-Province Secondary Migrants (Clients who transfer from another in-province city).

**Figure 1.3 – Percentage of Secondary Migrants Coming from Each Province (who responded)**



Research indicates that the desire to be near social support is the most salient reason for moving after initial resettlement (Simich et al 2002). This has an influence on settlement outcome, as isolation from one's family, friends, and cultural community can increase post-migration stress (Simich et al 2002).

This aligns with CSS GAR clients' reported reasons for relocating (for those who responded): the majority of Clients indicated that the decision was driven by the desire to be near family, friends, and relatives. Other reasons include moving for better employment opportunities, education opportunities, cost of living, community services (especially in smaller communities, i.e. as stated by clients moving to Ottawa from Thunder Bay), and, in rare cases, domestic violence and separation from spouse. Social support is a factor that can be taken into account when first resettling GARs in Canada by considering where friends, family, or the clients' cultural community resides. **GARs should be active agents in their settlement journey and decision-making process, and should be given accurate information about prospective host communities in order to make informed decisions and set reasonable expectations.**

## SECTION 4: SECONDARY MIGRATION NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

### Secondary Migrants' Top Needs

As is the case with all GARs, secondary migrants have high settlement needs, which is why they require intensive case management. Table 2.2 illustrates that secondary migrants' top needs align with those of non-secondary migrants: health, life skills, and community services. In the area of health, secondary migrants' needs (62%) are higher than non-secondary migrants' needs (57%). This 6% difference can partially be explained by higher physical health needs amongst secondary migrants (61.5% compared to 53.3% of non-secondary migrants – see Table 2.3). As most clients have high health needs, Caseworkers spend a lot of time making referrals, connecting with doctors, and arranging appointments. In 2019-2020 narrative reports, Ottawa, London, and Calgary reported that secondary migrants' health concerns have been particularly pressing. A lack of service availability and long doctor waitlists are impediments to addressing secondary migrants' health concerns and therefore their smooth and timely resettlement.

Secondary migrants also have higher life skills needs than non-secondary migrants. 57% of secondary migrants compared to 53% of non-secondary migrants reported that they have life skills needs. In the area of life skills, each CSS Site has their own policies for addressing life skills needs amongst secondary migrants, with some Sites providing limited support here due to capacity limitations. As a result, **more funding is needed to properly address these high needs for secondary migrants.** The only area where non-secondary migrants (56%) have higher needs than secondary migrants (54%) is community services, but the difference between the two groups is minimal; therefore, more IRCC support is still needed.

**Table 2.2 - Average Percentage of Top Client Needs, January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 – January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020**

Secondary Migrants		Non-Secondary Migrants	
Need	Percentage	Need	Percentage
Health	62.10%	Health	56.50%
Life Skills	57%	Life Skills	53.40%
Community Services	54%	Community Services	56.30%

**Table 2.3 - Top Client Health Needs, January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019 – January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020**

Secondary Migrants		Non-Secondary Migrants	
Need	Percentage	Need	Percentage
Physical	61.50%	Physical	53.30%
Dental	51%	Dental	52.80%
Vision	43%	Vision	43.70%

While the two tables above demonstrate that secondary migrants and non-secondary migrants' top needs are similar, there are other issues that secondary migrants and Caseworkers often face:

- **Housing concerns:** For sites such as London, Ottawa, and Hamilton, housing needs are critical and very challenging for secondary migrants. Ottawa reported that housing issues are exacerbated by costs of moving, recent furniture delivery problems, and health issues for secondary migrants, while Hamilton stated budget limitations in addressing housing concerns.
- **Issues with RAP services and funding:** Since secondary migrants are often no longer eligible for RAP, Caseworkers are often tasked with providing initial life skills and temporary accommodation for high needs secondary migrants. Kitchener, Hamilton, and Calgary all expressed issues with this. Calgary reported that RAP funding for transferred clients has decreased and that IRCC has been delaying many families' monthly allowance. Caseworkers in Hamilton often help with RAP support such as opening bank accounts, orientation, etc.
- **External service provider organizations:** Sites such as Kitchener report that secondary migrants who CSS Staff refer to external service providers in the community are often returned back to CSS for support, rather than being served by the external service providers. This contributes to the added caseload for CSS Caseworkers and therefore impacts service delivery for all clients.
- **Rights and responsibilities:** Secondary migrants across Ontario generally arrive in their new communities with an incorrect understanding of their rights and responsibilities as secondary migrants, and an incorrect understanding of the services they are (or are no longer) eligible for. The result is that these GARs report feeling overwhelmed by the lack of process and support.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As in recent quarterly and annual CSS reports, we recommend that **IRCC provides more notice, direction, and resources** to CSS locations experiencing high rates of secondary migrants. We also recommend effort in **coordinating referrals** of these migrants between RAP SPOs. Finally, we recommend that **more funding** is allocated to SPOs experiencing an influx of secondary migrants, for more Caseworkers and resources.

Aside from these key recommendations, we also recommend the following:

- As suggested by Simich et al. (2002), GARs should be given accurate information about host societies, costs, and benefits, to make their own informed resettlement decisions.
- CSS Site COSTI in Toronto has developed a new tool to assess the needs of secondary migrants to ensure equitable access to services. A comprehensive tool should be developed for all SPOs supporting secondary migrant GARs.

- As family, friends, and social support are often the main factors contributing to secondary migration, the presence of secondary migrants' social support networks should be taken into account when considering GARs' initial destining location in Canada.

It is evident from the data gathered from statistical and narrative reports from CSS Sites that there has been an overall increase in secondary migrants; that these Clients, like most GARs, have high health, housing, life skills, and other general settlement needs; and that supporting secondary migrants impacts Caseworkers' service delivery, impeding GARs' smooth resettlement into their new communities.

## REFERENCES

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