



*Services for Syrian Refugees in Ontario*  
*Environmental Scan Report*

February 2016

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## Executive Summary

OCASI - Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants with financial support from the Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration, and International Trade (MCIIT), undertook an environmental scan to assess the existing capacity and service gaps of refugee and immigrant-serving organizations in Ontario to meet the needs of large numbers of Syrian refugee arrivals.

The findings of this environmental scan are based on an online questionnaire sent out in December 2015 to OCASI member agencies and non-OCASI members in Ontario funded by the Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). While a total of 100 complete responses were received, a relatively high response rate, the report cannot be assumed to be representative of the reality in Ontario. It provides useful insights into the experience and capacity of the responding organizations.

### Key Findings

Overall, the information collected indicated that organizations are already providing a lot of services that are pertinent to Syrian refugees. However, glaring capacity problems and service gaps remained. Some of these gaps were greater in some regions. Toronto had the highest overall capacity on most indicators. Below are some of the findings:

- Organizations had more volunteers than employees who could speak Syrian languages<sup>1</sup> - 65 percent were volunteers compared to 22 percent full-time frontline staff.
- Arabic is the most widely spoken Syrian language. However, a quarter of the responding organizations had no Arabic-speaking capacity at all (i.e. neither employees nor trained volunteers).
- Based on service reports for 2014, in general few clients spoke a Syrian first language. However, this does not necessarily reflect the number of Syrians accessing services at these organizations.
- Most clients who accessed services in a Syrian first language did so at a Toronto based organization.
- A sizeable number of organizations reported that they provided services in Arabic, either directly or with in-house interpreters. Forty percent of organizations provided information and referral services in Arabic; 39

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<sup>1</sup> Syrians speak Arabic (the official language), but Armenian, Kurdish, Assyrian/Neo-Aramaic, and Circassian are also widely understood. These five languages are hereinafter referred to as 'Syrian languages' for the purposes of this report.

percent provided housing and settlement services in Arabic. Provision of other services such as health and legal services in Arabic was less common (eight and four percent, respectively).

- Few organizations provided targeted services for people with particular health conditions and for survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking. This is even more so for services in Arabic.
- Most organizations provided additional support such as extended working hours, online presence, and childminding services to facilitate service access.
- While most organizations (92 percent) reported that they were accessible to people with disabilities, only a few (20 percent) had expertise in serving people with hearing or visual impairment.
- Receiving and distributing donated goods was already a part of the work of some (39) organizations. Many others (21 organizations) were prepared to provide this service.
- While a high number of organizations (47) reported providing services in French, most are located in Toronto.
- Based on qualitative responses, linguistically and culturally appropriate mental health supports and affordable housing were most needed to support refugees.
- Training for settlement workers was identified by many as a gap and a priority, specifically training on addressing mental health needs, working with trauma survivors and working with refugees.
- The need to educate private sponsors on cultural sensitivity and human rights as well as the need for public education on countering myths about refugees were highlighted.
- Almost all respondents received funding from either IRCC or MCIIT or both.

### **Implications for sector planning and funders**

The findings from the report have implications for sector planning and funders.

- In general, staff language capacity in Syrian languages (especially Arabic) is limited; and it is particularly lower for full-time employees. Given early landing statistics from IRCC,<sup>2</sup> the majority of refugees from Syria do not have capacity in English or French. They will thus require language support to

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<sup>2</sup> IRCC (2016). Syrian Refugee Profile: Addendum – January 2016

access services. Resettlement support should be provided by trained employees and not volunteers.

- Given that only a small number of clients accessed services in a Syrian first language in 2014, organizations would likely face new pressures and challenges to accelerate services when they confront the sudden and increased demand. This has staffing as well as programming implications.
- Given that few organizations outside Toronto reported serving clients with a first Syrian language, they may have to build knowledge, expertise, and personnel to increase their capacity to address this new demand.
- Clients who spoke only Arabic (that is, most refugees from Syria) could face difficulties accessing some services, particularly those targeted for people with particular health conditions and for survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking. Even with adequate referrals, efforts may be required to ensure the services are appropriate as well as accessible in Arabic. These services may not always be available outside Toronto.
- There is a significant expertise gap in services for people with disabilities.
- The gap in services in the areas of housing and mental health confirms existing realities of the immigrant and refugee-serving sector, as well as the social services sector in Ontario. It highlights the need for culturally-appropriate mental health services and affordable housing.
- The survey qualitative responses identified funding gaps that need to be addressed not only by IRCC and MCIIT, but also by other funders in areas such as housing, health and mental health, employment, language access for services, childcare, specialized services for youth, women, people with disabilities, and legal education and public awareness of human rights.

## 1. Introduction

OCASI with the support of MCIIT undertook an environmental scan to assess the existing capacity and service gaps of refugee and immigrant-serving organizations in Ontario to meet the needs of large numbers of Syrian refugee arrivals.

This report provides preliminary information about organizations' capacities and service gaps in order to achieve the greatest possible impact with allocated resources, and ensure that all refugees have access to services. It helps funders and refugee and immigrant-serving organizations to make an informed decision on how best to support Syrian resettlement and provide a coordinated response.

The report is divided into eight sections. After this brief introduction, Section 2 provides the profile of responding organizations. The next section addresses the capacity of staff in terms of speaking languages accessible to refugees from Syria. Section 4 examines the capacity of organizations in serving clients generally, and more specifically clients from certain linguistic groups. The types and ranges of settlement services provided by organizations are analyzed next. Section 6 offers some insights into service accessibility. Section 7 looks at other service gaps and priorities, including issues of funding. The last section concludes the report. The Annex contains some basic descriptive statistics in tables and graphs for further details.

## 2. Respondents' profile

Given the urgency of the matter, a short and rapid environmental scan was undertaken. Online questionnaires were e-mailed throughout Ontario to the Executive Directors and contact person of each of the 231 OCASI member agencies and 101 non-OCASI members funded by the Immigration Refugee and Citizenship Canada (former Citizenship and Immigration Canada). The questionnaire was made available in both English and French on SurveyMonkey. OCASI requested only one completed response back from each agency.

Despite the short turnaround time given to respondents to complete the questionnaire (7 working days), the response rate was relatively high. A total of 123 responses were received from 120 organizations – 100 complete and 23 incomplete. For the purposes of this environmental scan, incomplete questionnaires were not considered.<sup>3</sup> The total response rate was 30.1 percent for complete responses. OCASI members' response rate was 32 percent, whereas the figure was 27 percent for public institutions (not members of OCASI).

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<sup>3</sup> Unless noted otherwise, the number of organizations in the sample is 100.

Seventy-three of the 100 completed responses were from OCASI members,<sup>4</sup> and the remaining from public institutions. Responses from public institutions included seven from School Boards, two from Community Colleges, two from municipalities (self-identified as Local Immigration Partnerships), two from faith-based organizations, and one from a Library. Some of these public institutions reported that they do not provide direct services. Four Francophone OCASI member agencies (out of 17) submitted a completed response.

OCASI regions are subdivided as follows:

- **Central East:** Barrie, Bradford, Durham Region (Ajax, Oshawa, Pickering, Whitby) Peterborough, York Region (Aurora, Markham, Newmarket, Richmond Hill, Vaughan)
- **Central West:** Peel Region, including Brampton, Halton, Malton, Mississauga and Oakville
- **East:** Belleville, Kingston, Ottawa
- **North:** Kenora, North Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Thunder Bay
- **South:** Beamsville, Brantford, Fort Erie, Guelph, Hamilton, Niagara, St. Catharines, Welland, Kitchener, Cambridge, and Waterloo
- **Toronto:** City of Toronto
- **West:** Chatham, Leamington, London, Sarnia, Windsor-Essex

Cities that were not originally in OCASI's breakdown and that respondents provided included Aylmer (West), Nepean (East), Woodstock (South), and St. Thomas (West),

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<sup>4</sup> Three OCASI member agencies completed two questionnaires each (satellite offices).

**Table 1 - Regional Breakdown/Distribution: OCASI Member Agencies**

Region	Number of agencies	Complete responses received	Percentage of complete responses by region*	Percentage of total complete responses**
Central East	13	4	31%	4%
Central West	20	8	35%	8%
East	16	5	31%	5%
North	10	5	50%	5%
South	15	6	40%	6%
Toronto	138	37	27%	37%
West	19	8	42%	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>73</b>		<b>73%</b>

\* This calculation is based on the number of complete responses received from OCASI member agencies in each region divided by the number of agencies in that region.

\*\* This calculation is based on the number of complete responses received from OCASI member agencies in each region divided by the total responses from both OCASI member agencies and non-OCASI organizations in Ontario.

**Table 2 - Regional Breakdown/Distribution: Non-OCASI Organizations**

Region	Number of agencies	Responses Received	Percentage of complete responses by region*	Percentage of total** complete responses
Central East	6	5	83%	5%
Central West	13	3	23%	3%
East	21	3	14%	3%
North	4	2	50%	2%
South	26	6	23%	6%
Toronto	19	4	21%	4%
West	12	4	33%	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>27</b>		<b>27%</b>

\* This calculation is based on the number of complete responses received from non-OCASI organizations in each region divided by the number of organizations in that region.

\*\* This calculation is based on the number of complete responses received from non-OCASI organizations in each region divided by the total responses from both OCASI member agencies and non-OCASI organizations in Ontario.

Sixty-nine organizations had satellite offices. Under satellite offices, a significant portion of organizations included the number of itinerant services sites (services provided outside local offices).



**Table 3 - Organizations by number of satellite offices**

Number of satellite offices	Number of organizations
0	31
1-4	42
5-9	21
10-14	2
15+	4
TOTAL	100

To ensure the highest quality data reasonably possible, each completed questionnaire was checked by the OCASI staff member with primary responsibility for the environmental scan.

### **3. Staff language capacity**

Syrians speak Arabic (the official language), but Armenian, Kurdish, Assyrian/Neo-Aramaic, and Circassian are also widely understood. These five languages are hereinafter referred to as 'Syrian languages' for the purposes of this report.

The term employee in this report includes paid staff involved in any type of direct service delivery, but excludes administration and management staff. More specifically, employees comprise receptionists, full-time frontline employees, and part-time frontline employees of scanned organizations.

Volunteers in responding organizations who have already received some training in service delivery or interpretation are simply referred to as volunteers in this report.

From among Syrian languages, Arabic is by far the most widely spoken language by employees and volunteers alike and Circassian the least spoken, as shown in the figures below:

- Arabic (83%)

- Armenian (7%)
- Kurdish (6%)
- Assyrian (Neo-Aramaic) (3%)
- Circassian (1%)

Regional differences showed that Arabic was more dominant among employees and volunteers in the East region, but less so in Central East region; Arabic-speaking employees and volunteers were as high as 91 percent of total staff who spoke Syrian languages in the East Region, or as low as 63 percent in the Central East region. The Central East Region had the highest concentration of Armenian speakers, with 35 percent of all employees and volunteers who spoke Syrian languages. Kurdish speaking employees and volunteers constituted 17 percent of total staff who spoke Syrian languages in the Central West Region - the highest proportion.

In terms of Arabic speakers, organizations had on average about two frontline employees (full-time), one part-time frontline employee, and six trained volunteers who spoke the language.<sup>5</sup> There were differences in capacity between organizations. Some organizations employed over 10 Arabic speaking frontline employees and had access to over 100 Arabic speaking trained volunteers. A close look at Table 4 suggests that 72 organizations did not have an Arabic-speaking receptionist, 47 did not have Arabic-speaking full-time frontline employees, 66 organizations did not have Arabic-speaking part-time frontline employees, and 50 had no Arabic-speaking trained volunteers. Moreover, a quarter of the responding organizations had no Arabic-speaking staff at all (i.e. employees and volunteers).

**Table 4 - Number of organizations whose employees and volunteers spoke Arabic**

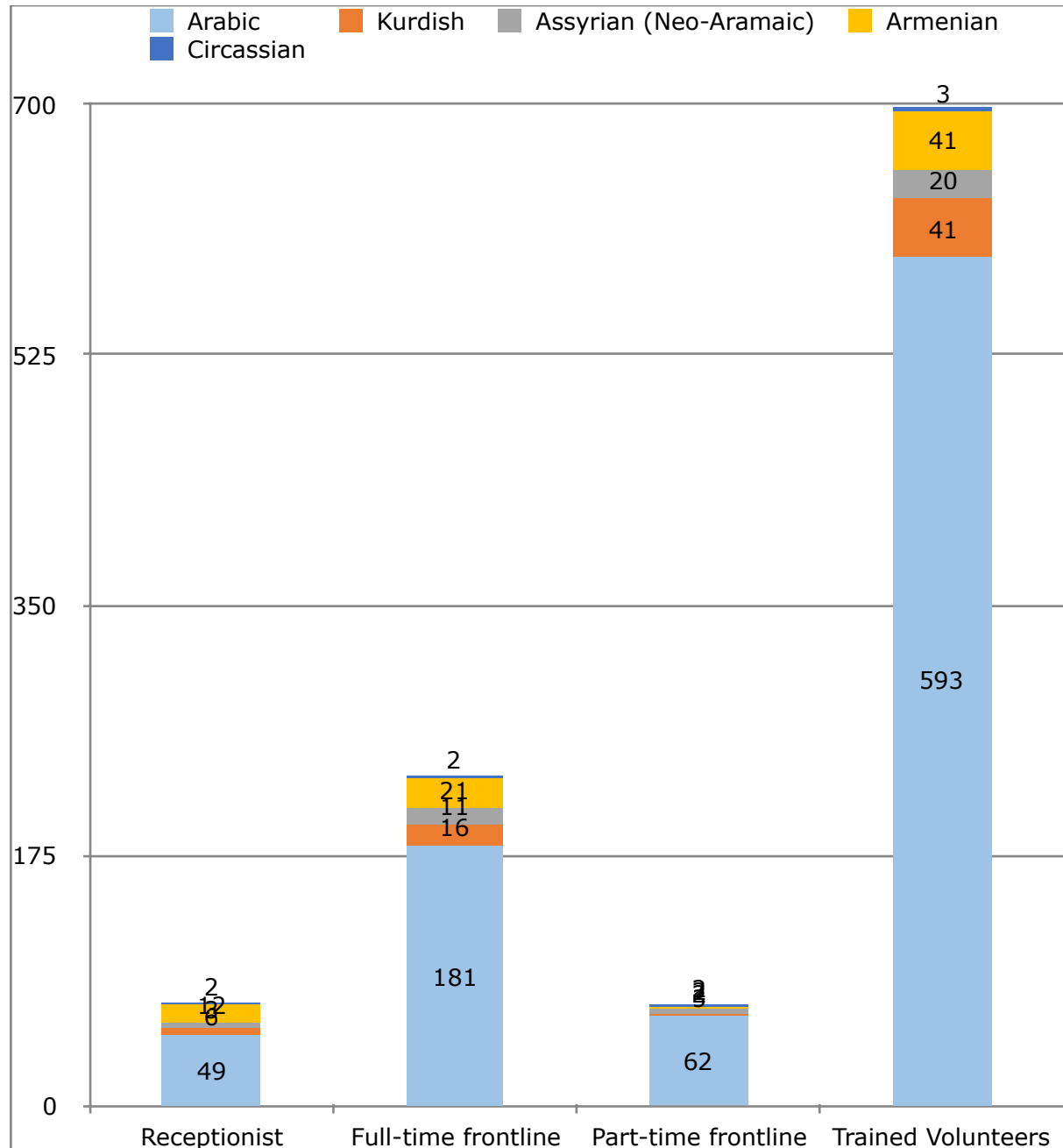
	Number of staff				
	None	1-4	5-9	10-14	>15
Receptionist	72	27	1	0	0
Full-time frontline employees	47	42	8	3	0
Part-time frontline employees	66	30	4	0	0
Trained volunteers	50	26	11	3	10

There were at least 292 Arabic-speaking, 35 Armenian-speaking, 25 Kurdish-speaking, 16 Assyrian-speaking, and 6 Circassian-speaking employees working in scanned organizations in Ontario. An additional large number of volunteers who

<sup>5</sup> The questionnaire did not request the type of Arabic dialect spoken in Syria.

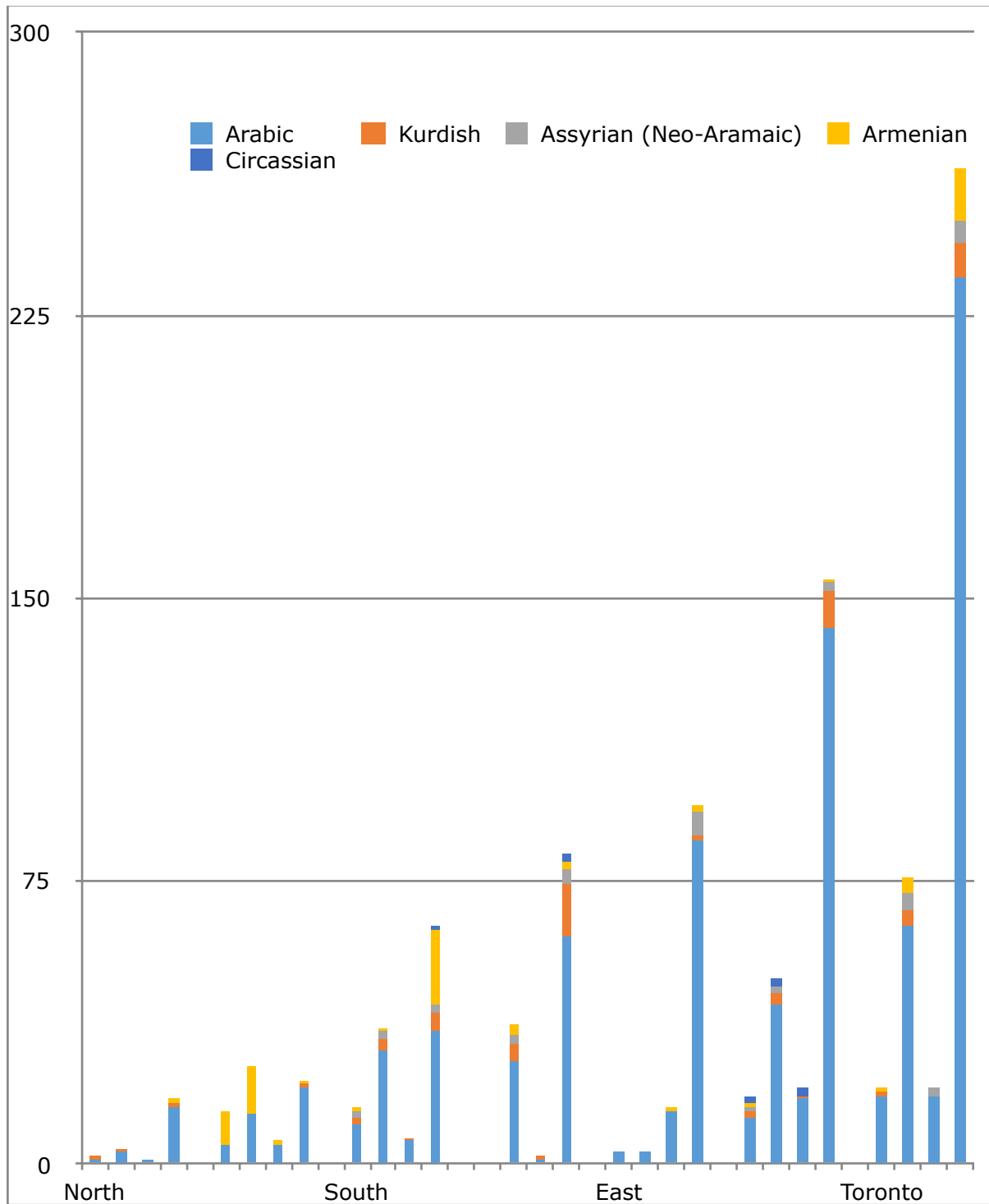
spoke Syrian languages was available.<sup>6</sup> In fact, organizations had more volunteers than employees who could speak Syrian languages. Of the employees and volunteers that spoke at least one of the Syrian languages, 65 percent were volunteers whereas only 22 percent were full-time frontline staff.

**Chart 1 - Number of employees and volunteers by Syrian languages spoken**



<sup>6</sup> The data from the environmental scan cannot tell us whether volunteers who spoke the aforementioned languages might be double-counted in a given location, as they may have volunteered for more than one agency.

**Chart 2 - Number of employees and volunteers, by Syrian languages spoken and by region**



\* Further information is presented in Table 9 in the Annexes.

In all but one region, volunteers who spoke Syrian languages were more numerous than all employees who spoke these languages. In absolute numbers, Toronto (264) and the West Region (155) had access to the highest number of trained volunteers who spoke one of the Syrian languages, whereas the North (17) and Central East (22) regions had the lowest.

The proportion of volunteers was highest in the East Region, where 82 percent of all staff who spoke Syrian languages were volunteers. By contrast, Central East - the only region with more employees than volunteers who spoke Syrian languages - had less than one-third of its staff as volunteers.

## 4. Capacity to serve clients

Unique clients are distinct individuals that an organization served, regardless of how often they visited that organization or accessed their services. Respondents were asked to count children separately as unique clients.

In 2014, the typical organization reported serving about 1,900 unique clients, of whom 6 and 2 percent were refugees and refugee claimants respectively.<sup>7</sup> Of the total clients served, approximately 65 (or 3.4 percent) spoke as their first language one of the Syrian languages.

Organizations had different sizes, ranging from those that served less than 30 unique clients per year, to those that reportedly served more than 20,000 in 2014. Organizations also had different levels of exposure to clients who spoke a Syrian language as their first language. Ten organizations reported that over 25 percent of their client base spoke one of these languages as a first language (see Table 6). Furthermore, 21 organizations served over 500 clients annually from this linguistic group (see Table 5). However, over a quarter of the organizations had no client who spoke a Syrian language as a first language. The majority of organizations served up to 500 clients each from this linguistic group in 2014.

Sixteen organizations reported that 25 percent or more of their clients were refugees, and five organizations reported that a similar share of their clients were refugee claimants. In terms of absolute numbers, 28 organizations each served over 500 refugees in 2014 whereas only six served a similar number of refugee claimants over the same year.

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<sup>7</sup> These numbers represent the median.

**Table 5 – Responding organizations, by number and type of clients served in 2014**

	Number of unique clients				
	None	1-499	500-1,999	2,000-3,999	>4,000
Total clients	4	20	26	23	27
Refugees	14	58	20	5	3
Refugees claimants	28	66	5	0	1
Syrian first language	23	56	17	3	1

Note: Numbers in this table represent the number of responding organizations serving a particular numeric range of clients of a particular status. For example, 27 organizations served over 4000 clients in 2014, and 20 organizations served 500-1999 refugees in 2014.

**Table 6 - Responding organizations, by share of clients and type of clients served in 2014**

	Percentage share of unique clients				
	None	1-24.9%	25-49.9%	50-74.9%	>75%
Refugees	14	70	8	4	4
Refugees claimants	28	67	5	0	0
Syrian first language	23	67	7	2	1

Note: Numbers in this table represent the number of responding organizations serving a particular percentage range of clients of a particular status. For example, seven organizations reported that between 25 and 49.9 percent of their clients had a Syrian first language in 2014, and 14 organizations did not serve refugees in 2014.

In terms of regional distribution, Toronto had the highest number of organizations (7) that served over 500 clients who spoke a Syrian language as their first language in 2014. No organization in the North or Central East regions served so many such clients in 2014 (see full list in Annex). Regarding capacity to serve refugees in general, 28 organizations each served over 500 refugees per year in 2014. Well over half of these organizations were based in Toronto. None were based in the North or East regions.

## 5. Service inventory

According to respondents, 56 percent of organizations made written materials such as brochures, pamphlets and flyers available in at least one of the Syrian languages, predominantly in Arabic. The materials were about services provided by the organizations themselves, or by other service providers. One organization has a webpage in Arabic about their services.

Several respondents provide the following government materials in Arabic to clients: Welcome to Canada guide, Orientation to Ontario workbook, Neighbours, and Friends and Families Campaign materials. Others mentioned using Arabic materials from Settlement.Org and In My Language websites. Some have English-Arabic picture dictionaries at the organization as well as language materials in various formats such as books, DVDs, newspapers and online resources.

Some respondents have translated certain materials into Arabic such as information about healthcare, housing, transit, LINC attendance policy, library card application, parenting, breastfeeding, finding a public school for your child, diversity and inclusion in education, fighting the flu, and employment. One respondent has translated information regarding Syrian Refugee Medical Clinics into Arabic, Assyrian, and Armenian and has the capacity to translate into Kurdish if necessary.

Moreover, a sizeable number of organizations reported that they currently provided services in Arabic, either directly or with in-house interpreters. Up to 40 organizations out of a 100 undertook information and referral services in Arabic, whereas only four organizations provided legal services in Arabic. The distribution for services provided in Arabic either directly or with in-house interpreters was as follows:

- Information and Referral (40)
- Settlement services (39)
- Case management (32)
- Housing related settlement services (29)
- Interpretation services (certified interpreters) (26)
- School integration (23)
- Community connections (former HOST Program) (21)
- Landlord liaison/eviction prevention (19)
- Specialized housing search support (19)
- Employment counselling (17)
- Job Search training (16)
- Trauma counselling / mental health services (13)
- Job development/ placement (11)

- Language training (11)<sup>8</sup>
- Employment mentoring (10)
- Health services (8)
- Legal services (4)

The list shows that clients who speak only Arabic could face difficulties accessing some services in that language. Legal and health services as well as employment mentoring deserved particular attention, among other services.

Regional differences in particular highlighted capacity gaps. East and West regions, as well as Toronto had at least one agency that provided these services in Arabic; for example, almost half of the 13 organizations that provided trauma counselling in Arabic either directly or with in-house interpreters were based in Toronto. However, some services were not provided in Arabic, either directly or with in-house interpreter in the North, Central West, South, and Central East regions, as indicated in Table 7. Obviously, the fact that organizations do not provide direct services in Arabic does not necessarily mean that clients cannot access these services if adequate referral processes are in place.

**Table 7 – Selected services provided in Arabic, by region**

	Job development / placement	Landlord liaison/ eviction prevention	Language training	Trauma Counselling	Health services	Legal services
West	X	X	X	X	X	X
East	X	X	X	X	X	X
Toronto	X	X	X	X	X	X
North	X	X		X	X	
Central West	X		X	X		
South	X	X	X			
Central East		X	X			

Note: X denotes the presence of services provided directly or with in-house interpreters in Arabic, whereas cells highlighted in yellow indicate the absence of such services.

Many organizations reported providing referral services. Half or more responding organizations provided referrals for the following top five services:

- Housing related settlement services (63),

<sup>8</sup> It is not clear from the responses what the respondents meant when they reported that they provided language training in Arabic. Neither the federal nor the provincial governments fund language training in Arabic other than heritage language in some schools.



- Legal services (55),
- Health services (55),
- Trauma counselling (53), and
- Landlord liaison/eviction prevention (50),

These top five referral services largely corresponded with the lowest six direct services. Less than one-third of the organizations provided the following direct services:

- Legal services (4)
- Health services (14)
- Trauma counselling / mental health services (26)
- Specialized housing search support (31)
- Job development/ placement (32)
- Landlord liaison/eviction prevention (33)

The full list of services is provided in the annex.

Eighty-five organizations provided a list of key partners and referral organizations for the services they offered totaling several hundred different referrals. The referrals and partnerships included community organizations providing settlement, health, employment and legal services and other specialized programs (ie. youth, mental health, housing), municipal and regional public institutions such as public health, libraries, school boards, local police, government services such as social assistance, Service Canada and Revenue Canada, various Community Colleges across Ontario, faith-based groups (ie. mosques, churches), various hospitals and various food banks.

Respondents were asked to list services they plan to provide in the future for which they have applied or secured funding. Forty-seven organizations answered this optional question.

Most respondents reported they had applied for additional funds to increase settlement service (including HOST/Community Connections) and language training capacity for in-person and online service delivery, as well as to capacity to provide services in Arabic. They had applied for or secured funding to provide the following specific services: mobile trauma and mental health counselling services, training for frontline workers on dealing with trauma-affected clients, HIV/AIDs peer support, financial literacy, employment, entrepreneurship, youth programs, addiction counselling, legal services for immigrants, French language club for children, RAP for French-speaking refugees, Arabic radio program, language training for Deaf-blind learners and diabetes information and screening.

In terms of targeted services, most organizations reported providing targeted services for refugees, women, and clients within different age groups. Much fewer organizations provided targeted services for people with particular health conditions and for survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking. Some smaller towns also reported less experience with refugees. For example, one organization in such small town noted:

*“We have not had refugees in this community since 1979.”*

The following is a list of target groups, sorted by the number of organizations that provided targeted services.

- Refugees (80)
- Women (78)
- Youth (14-24 years old) (77)
- Seniors (65+ years old) (73)
- Children (0-13 years old) (70)
- People with disabilities (55)
- LGBTQIA+ people (positive spaces and/or programming) (55)
- Survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking (35)
- People with HIV or AIDS (33)
- People with Hepatitis C (29)

Despite having a relatively limited client base of refugees (typically, six percent of total clients), many organizations (80) reported that they provided targeted services for refugees. Some of these respondents mentioned the following programs targeted to refugees and/or refugee claimants in particular:

- Intensive and, if necessary, longer term case management for refugees and refugee claimants with a heavy emphasis on housing.
- More intensive service to refugee claimants who don't qualify for other IRCC funded programs
- Initial health assessment clinics to Syrian refugees.
- Workshops and specific programming for refugees.
- ‘Acculturation’ services to refugees in community connections program

Some organizations reported that their services are ‘targeted’ to all refugees and immigrants. The following qualitative responses provide some insights:

*“They are all our priority populations and all services are oriented to these groups.”*

*“Our agency has been serving refugees from all walks of life and health.”*

*“We provide settlement services inclusive and do not discriminate against any population.”*

Qualitative responses are not sufficiently detailed to further examine the nature of the targeted programs reported by all organizations.

Few organizations provided targeted services in Arabic for people with particular health conditions and for survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking, in addition to women and certain other groups. The following is a list of target groups, for whom organizations provided services in Arabic.

- Refugees (34)
- Youth (14-24 years old) (29)
- Children (0-13 years old) (22)
- People with disabilities (20)
- Seniors (65+ years old) (19)
- LGBTQIA+ people (positive spaces and/or programming) (18)
- Women (15)
- Survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking (15)
- People with HIV or AIDS (10)
- People with Hepatitis C (9)

Regional variations indicate that certain services are not provided in Arabic. Organizations in the Central East region seemed particularly lacking in essential targeted services in Arabic. Those in the South, North, and Central West regions also had gaps to a lesser extent, as indicated in Table 8. The gaps were less acute in the East and West regions, as well as in Toronto, all of which had at least one organization that provided targeted services in Arabic. Here again, the fact that organizations do not provide direct targeted services in Arabic does not necessarily

mean that clients cannot access these services if adequate referral processes are in place.

**Table 8 – Selected targeted services provided in Arabic, by region**

	Youth	People with HIV or AIDS	LGBTQIA + people	Survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking	Children (0-13)	Seniors (65+)	People with disabilities	People with Hepatitis C
<b>Toronto</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>East</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>West</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Central West</b>	X	X		X		X	X	X
<b>North</b>	X	X	X		X	X	X	
<b>South</b>	X	X	X	X	X			
<b>Central East</b>								

Note: X denotes the presence of targeted services provided in Arabic, whereas cells highlighted in yellow indicate the absence of such services.

Respondents were asked to provide a brief description of services specifically designed for each group. Of the seventy-five responses received, most said that they served all the groups identified in an appropriate manner. In addition, the following population specific services were identified by several respondents:

**Women** - Violence against women prevention, transitional housing, crisis counselling, fitness classes, social empowerment, healthcare, pre, post and peri-natal healthcare.

**Youth** - High school completion, improve parent-child relationships, leadership, employment, mentoring, recreation, volunteering, peer support, homework club, literacy, and mental health.

**Seniors** - Use of technology, assistance with physical or cognitive impairments, community development, and social programs.

Other programs mentioned include safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ immigrants and refugees, support for sex-trafficking survivors, support for people with certain disabilities (Autism), addictions, mental health and trauma counselling, French language retention supports, music, and support for people with HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C.

Forty organizations responded to the optional question, that they had applied or secured funding to provide targeted services in the future.

Responses included services for people with trauma, mental health, for people with HIV/AIDS, LGBTQIA+ newcomers, employment that does not require high language skills for refugee youth, senior level employment for newcomer women, expanding existing targeted services to more locations, economic development, clinical intervention services for youth, and support for homeless.

## 6. Service accessibility

Almost half of the organizations (47%) in Ontario provided services in French; this figure ranged from four organizations in the Central East region to 15 in Toronto.

Forty respondents provided optional details on French services. Some are Francophone organizations and provided their entire range of services (settlement, language training, employment, some specialized services) in French while others were more limited in their French language service capacity (ie. one frontline worker speaks French).

In addition to settlement, language training and information and referral services, responses included mental health services (one respondent), youth programs and employment services and supports.

Ninety-two percent of all organizations were accessible to people with disabilities, in terms of building/site accommodation but also in accessibility of services. A regional disaggregation of the responses indicates that all organizations in the Central East and North regions were accessible, whereas those in the East and West regions were accessible to a lesser extent, with 88 and 75 percent of the organizations in the two respective regions.

However, only 20 percent of all organizations had expertise in serving people with hearing or visual impairment. Again, this provincial figure was characterized by regional variations, the highest being the East region with 50 percent of all organizations in the region reporting to have expertise in this area, and the lowest figure attributed to the West region with just 8 percent.

Seventeen respondents provided optional details. One respondent serves clients with hearing and visual impairment and provides ASL interpretation, and one provides language training for deaf/blind/visually impaired newcomers. Most respondents said their service locations were fully or partially accessible, and they refer clients with disabilities to organizations such as the Canadian Hearing Society and CNIB. A very few said they have limited capacity or experience in this area of service.

Most organizations provided additional support to facilitate service access. Organizations made services available online or by phone, and during evenings and weekends. Child-minding for example makes most services accessible to parents in

low-income households, particularly to single mothers. Other types of support included transportation support as well as refreshments to facilitate participation in program activities.

- Services available online or by phone (81%)
- Services available evenings and/or weekends (79%)
- Snacks and refreshments provided (75%)
- Tokens provided (70%)
- Child-minding provided (60%)

Due to the benefits of child-minding in making most services accessible to parents in low-income households, particularly to single mothers, an increase in organizations providing this service would be ideal.

Between 55 and 59 organizations provided optional comments on each of the services.

Forty six respondents provided optional details on services provided online or on the phone. They included employment and settlement counselling, information and referral, supportive counselling, English conversation circles, case management, victim support, language training, housing information and support, mental health support, computer training, services for seniors.

Forty seven respondents provided optional details on services provided in the evenings or weekends. Some offered settlement services, language training and employment services on weekends on some weeknights. The majority of services offered were information and referral, self-directed access to onsite resources, mentoring, networking, drop-in, workshops and community events. Some services were specifically targeted to youth or women (mothers).

Several respondents (range 43-37) respondents provided optional details on providing additional supports to facilitate participation such as transportation, childminding and refreshments.

Most respondents said they provided public transit tokens to participants to access the services at the organization (ie. language classes) or to external referrals such as employment interviews. Most supports were provided on the basis of a needs assessment such as income criteria. Several supports were targeted to specific groups such as women, youth and seniors. Some respondents said that funding for supports such as childminding and transportation was discontinued due to funding cuts and they are no longer able to provide them. Some respondents said they provided light refreshments and snacks for workshops, group activities and drop-ins, and some said they were limited only for childminding services. One respondent said the supports were resourced through fundraising.

Fifty-four organizations normally provided services during the holiday season. Of the remaining 45 that didn't, more than a quarter were willing and able to consider providing services this holiday season (from December 24, 2015 through January 2, 2016 inclusive), should their services be required.<sup>9</sup>

Given the outpouring of support for Syrian refugees from the public, the environmental scan asked organizations whether they were able to receive and distribute donated goods, as public interest in donations increased in recent weeks. A relatively large number of organizations reported being able to receive and distribute such goods. Only 30 percent of all organizations mentioned that they were unable to receive and distribute goods. Of the remaining 70 organizations, 39 reported being able to receive and distribute goods, whereas another 21 stated that they could do so, but with some limitations. Half of the organizations in the East region stated that they were not able to receive and distribute donated goods, while only eight percent were unable in the West region. In absolute numbers, Toronto had the highest number of organizations (19) that could provide this service.

Of the 18 respondents that provided details in the optional question, most said they can accept only monetary donations and lacked space to store material goods. One or two said they can accept only clothing, or can make an exception in the case of new items for which there is an immediate need. A very small number said they can receive, store and assist in the distribution of donated goods.

## 7. Other service gaps and priorities

Ninety responses were received for this optional question. While a great deal of detail was provided on gaps and priorities there was a lot of repetition in the responses. They are summarized into the two major themes of *Services for Refugees* and *Organizational Capacity*, with responses outside of these themes captured under *Other Needs*.

*“What is most lacking is longer-term supports that address the integration needs of the entire family in a holistic fashion. Current funding tends to assume a very fast settlement process, and focuses on economic outcomes. These are very important, but so is the hard-to-measure level of integration in the community and community development, which typically take longer to foster.”*

Services for refugees- Mental health supports (linguistically and culturally appropriate) and (affordable) housing were identified most frequently as needed

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<sup>9</sup> One organization skipped this question.

services. Other needs include: employment including mentoring, Bridging and other programs for labour market integration; language access for services; childcare, specialized services for youth, women, people with disabilities; and public education on tenant rights.

*“Rural sites often have very limited budgets. For instance, we do not receive MCIIT funding and need to serve them without funds. We need to be specialists without adequate resources for PD, transportation, and HR.”*

Organization capacity - Training for settlement workers was identified by many as a gap and a priority, specifically training on addressing mental health needs, working with trauma survivors and working with refugees. Training for healthcare providers on working with refugees and understanding what is covered under IFH was identified. Several respondents identified the need to re-build after having lost capacity through previous funding cuts. Several mentioned that they saw a need to build capacity to provide services in Arabic and other needed languages, or increase existing capacity. Increasing organization capacity in smaller centres (where one agency is typically expected to be the expert in everything) and especially in Northern Ontario, and building serving coordination (including creation of service hubs) were identified as priorities.

*“Children and youth especially need programming that can support their full transition to Canada.”*

Other Needs - Some respondents identified the need to educate private sponsors on cultural sensitivity and human rights; one mentioned the need for public education by the province on countering myths about refugees.

*“Finding employment is especially challenging for refugees and immigrants new to Ontario. It is important that newcomers in Canada learn about their employment rights and their health and safety rights so that they can protect themselves from being treated unfairly or injured at work.”*

Seventy-seven percent of organizations provided an answer to the optional question, whether they are aware of funders that have signaled an intention to offer new funding in response to the refugee crisis, with most identifying IRCC and MCIIT.



Other funders mentioned are certain municipalities, United Way, Trillium, Community Foundation of Kingston, other foundations (no others were mentioned by name), Corporations, Ministry of Health and LHIN.

In terms of funding for services that organizations provided primarily to immigrants and refugees, almost all organizations received financial support from IRCC.<sup>10</sup> The number of organizations that reported receiving funding is listed below by funder. All except three organizations that received funding from MCIIT, also received funding from IRCC.

- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (89)
- Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade (65)
- Municipalities<sup>11</sup> (48)
- United Way (40)
- Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (30)
- Ontario Trillium Foundation (27)
- Service Canada (21)
- Ministry of Community and Social Services (15)
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (14)
- Ministry of Children and Youth Services (8)
- Canadian Heritage (7)
- Office of Francophone Affairs (1)

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<sup>10</sup> Respondents had the option to select more than one funding sources.

<sup>11</sup> Municipalities included Hamilton, London, Mississauga, North Bay, Ottawa, Timmins, Toronto, and St. Catharines. Some respondents also mentioned Regions of Halton, York, Peel, and Waterloo.

- Other<sup>12</sup> (34)
- None (1)

Individual responses ranged from over 20 funders per organization, to one or no funder. The typical organization had four funders. Regional disparities were minimal; the typical organization in Central East, South, or West region received support from three funders, whereas an organization in Central West or North received funding from at least five sources.

Fifty-five respondents answered the optional question on other sources of funding. The funders that were named included federal, provincial and municipal governments (various Departments, Ministries, and grants programs), public and private foundations, private sector foundations, and private donations.

Forty-five respondents commented in the optional closing question on final thoughts. They responded that there is a need for youth programming, additional funding to hire new staff with (Arabic) language capacity, web-based training to address specific needs, and more housing resources. One respondent mentioned that Community Health Centres are organizing health assessment clinics and one suggested that LIPs can help to coordinate responses regionally.

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to fee-for-service, and individual and corporate donors, respondents provided the following long list of funders: Canadian Women's Foundation; Catholic Charities; Community Foundation of Canada; Community Foundation of Kingston and Area; Department of Justice Canada; Employment and Social Development Canada; Etobicoke Brighter Futures Coalition; Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario); FedNor; Girls Action Foundation; Greenshield Foundation; Hamilton Community Foundation; Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; Innoweave(McConnell Foundation); Jewish Federation; Legal Aid Ontario; Local Health Integration Network (Toronto Central, and Centre East); Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure; Ministry of Education; Ministry of the Attorney General; Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation; Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport; Ontario Seniors Secretariat; Ontario Women's Directorate; Overseas Korean Foundation; Prosper Canada; Public Health Agency of Canada; Rainbow Foundation; Sikh Foundation of Canada; Status of Women Canada; University Health Network; and Zonta Club of Hamilton. Corporate donors included Accenture; BMO Financial Group; Canadian Tire; Jays Care Foundation; Scotiabank; TD Bank Group; RBC; and Tim Hortons.

## 8. Conclusion

This environmental scan report provides preliminary information on staff language capacity, client base, service inventory, service accessibility, and other service gaps and priorities.

Overall, the information collected indicated that organizations were already providing a lot of services that are pertinent to Syrian refugees. Organizations had some employees who spoke a Syrian language. In 2014, they served a large number of clients who spoke a Syrian language as their first language. The majority of organizations had written material in one of the Syrian languages. Four in six organizations provided referral and information services, as well as settlement services, in Arabic. An overwhelming majority had experience providing targeted services to refugees, youth, women, and seniors, among other groups.

Almost half of respondent organizations provided services in French as well, and almost all reported being accessible, in terms of site accommodation and accessibility of services. Most provided additional support to facilitate service access, whether it was through remote online services or by having convenient opening hours or additionally by providing supports for transportation and childminding. Many organizations were either normally open during the holiday season, or were willing to accommodate such requests if the need were to arise. Finally, receiving and distributing donated goods was already a part of the work of some organizations. Many others were prepared to provide this service.

However, glaring capacity problems and service gaps remained.

The current capacity of most organizations in providing services in a Syrian language rested more on volunteers than on employees. In terms of client base, not all organizations had prior experience serving clients who spoke a Syrian language as a first language. One in four organizations had no such client in 2014. Clients who speak only Arabic could face limited access to legal and health services, employment mentoring, and job development among others, due to the paucity of such services in Arabic.

Moreover, only few organizations provided targeted services in Arabic for people with particular health conditions and for survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking, in addition to women and certain other groups such as LGBTQIA+ people. Regarding the types of services provided, most organizations made referrals rather than providing such services as trauma counselling, health, legal, and housing related services in-house. An increase in referred clients might thus increase the work load on just a few organizations that provide these direct services. Finally, only 20 percent of all organizations had expertise in serving people with hearing or visual impairment.

Some of these gaps were further exacerbated by regional variations. Toronto had the highest overall capacity on most indicators due to the sheer number of organizations in the city. While a consistent pattern is not clearly discernible for other regions, organizations in the North and Central East had capacity limitations in providing certain targeted services. The North and Central East regions served notably less clients who spoke one of the Syrian languages. No targeted service was currently provided in Arabic by organizations in the Central East region for people in different age groups (children, youth, and seniors), people with certain health conditions (HIV or Hepatitis C), people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people, and survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking. Organizations in the North, Central West, and South also did not provide some of these targeted services in Arabic. Organizations in the West region lacked expertise in serving people with hearing or visual impairment. And finally, in the East region, volunteers who spoke a Syrian language outnumbered such employees by a factor of over 1:4 – the highest in the province.

### **Implications for sector planning and funders**

The findings from the report have the following implications for sector planning and funders.

- In general, staff language capacity in Syrian languages (especially Arabic) is limited; and it is particularly lower for full-time employees. Given early landing statistics from IRCC,<sup>13</sup> the majority of refugees from Syria do not have capacity in English or French. They will thus require language support to access services. Resettlement support should be provided by trained employees and not volunteers.
- Given that only a small number of clients accessed services in a Syrian first language in 2014, organizations would likely face new pressures and challenges to accelerate services when they confront the sudden and increased demand. This has staffing as well as programming implications.
- Given that few organizations outside Toronto reported serving clients with a first Syrian language, they may have to build knowledge, expertise, and personnel to increase their capacity to address this new demand.
- Clients who spoke only Arabic (that is, most refugees from Syria) could face difficulties accessing some services, particularly those targeted for people with particular health conditions and for survivors of torture, violence, and human trafficking. Even with adequate referrals, efforts may be required to

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<sup>13</sup> IRCC (2016). Syrian Refugee Profile: Addendum – January 2016

ensure the services are appropriate as well as accessible in Arabic. These services may not always be available outside Toronto.

- There is a significant expertise gap in services for people with disabilities.
- The gap in services in the areas of housing and mental health confirms existing realities of the immigrant and refugee-serving sector, as well as the social services sector in Ontario. It highlights the need for culturally-appropriate mental health services and affordable housing.
- The survey qualitative responses identified funding gaps that need to be addressed not only by IRCC and MCIIT, but also by other funders in areas such as housing, health and mental health, employment, language access for services, childcare, specialized services for youth, women, people with disabilities, and legal education and public awareness of human rights.

## 9. Annexes

**Table 9 - Regional distribution of organizations whose staff spoke Syrian languages**

	Arabic	Kurdish	Assyrian (Neo-Aramaic)	Armenian	Circassian	Sub-total
<b>Total – Ontario</b>						
Receptionist	49	6	3	12	2	72
Full-time frontline	181	16	11	21	2	231
Part-time frontline	62	3	2	2	2	71
Volunteers	593	41	20	41	3	698
Sub-total Ontario	885	66	36	76	9	1072
<b>Central East</b>						
Receptionist	5	0	0	9	0	14
Full-time frontline	13	0	0	13	0	26
Part-time frontline	5	0	0	1	0	6
Volunteers	20	1	0	1	0	22
Sub-total Central East	43	1	0	24	0	68
<b>Central West</b>						
Receptionist	0	0	0	0	0	0
Full-time frontline	27	5	2	3	0	37
Part-time frontline	1	1	0	0	0	2
Volunteers	60	14	4	2	2	82
Sub-total Central West	88	20	6	5	2	121
<b>East</b>						
Receptionist	3	0	0	0	0	3
Full-time frontline	3	0	0	0	0	3
Part-time frontline	14	0	0	1	0	15
Volunteers	86	1	6	2	0	95
Sub-total East	106	1	6	3	0	116
<b>North</b>						
Receptionist	1	1	0	0	0	2
Full-time frontline	3	1	0	0	0	4
Part-time frontline	1	0	0	0	0	1
Volunteers	15	1	0	1	0	17
Sub-total North	20	3	0	1	0	24

South						
Receptionist	10	2	2	1	0	15
Full-time frontline	30	3	2	1	0	36
Part-time frontline	6	1	0	0	0	7
Volunteers	35	5	2	20	1	63
Sub-total South	81	11	6	22	1	121
Toronto						
Receptionist	18	1	0	1	0	20
Full-time frontline	63	4	5	4	0	76
Part-time frontline	18	0	2	0	0	20
Volunteers	235	9	6	14	0	264
Sub-total Toronto	334	14	13	19	0	380
West						
Receptionist	12	2	1	1	2	18
Full-time frontline	42	3	2	0	2	49
Part-time frontline	17	1	0	0	2	20
Volunteers	142	10	2	1	0	155
Sub-total West	213	16	5	2	6	242

Note: This table represents the number of staff (in responding organizations) who spoke Syrian languages.

**Table 10 - Responding organizations, by number and type of clients served in 2014**

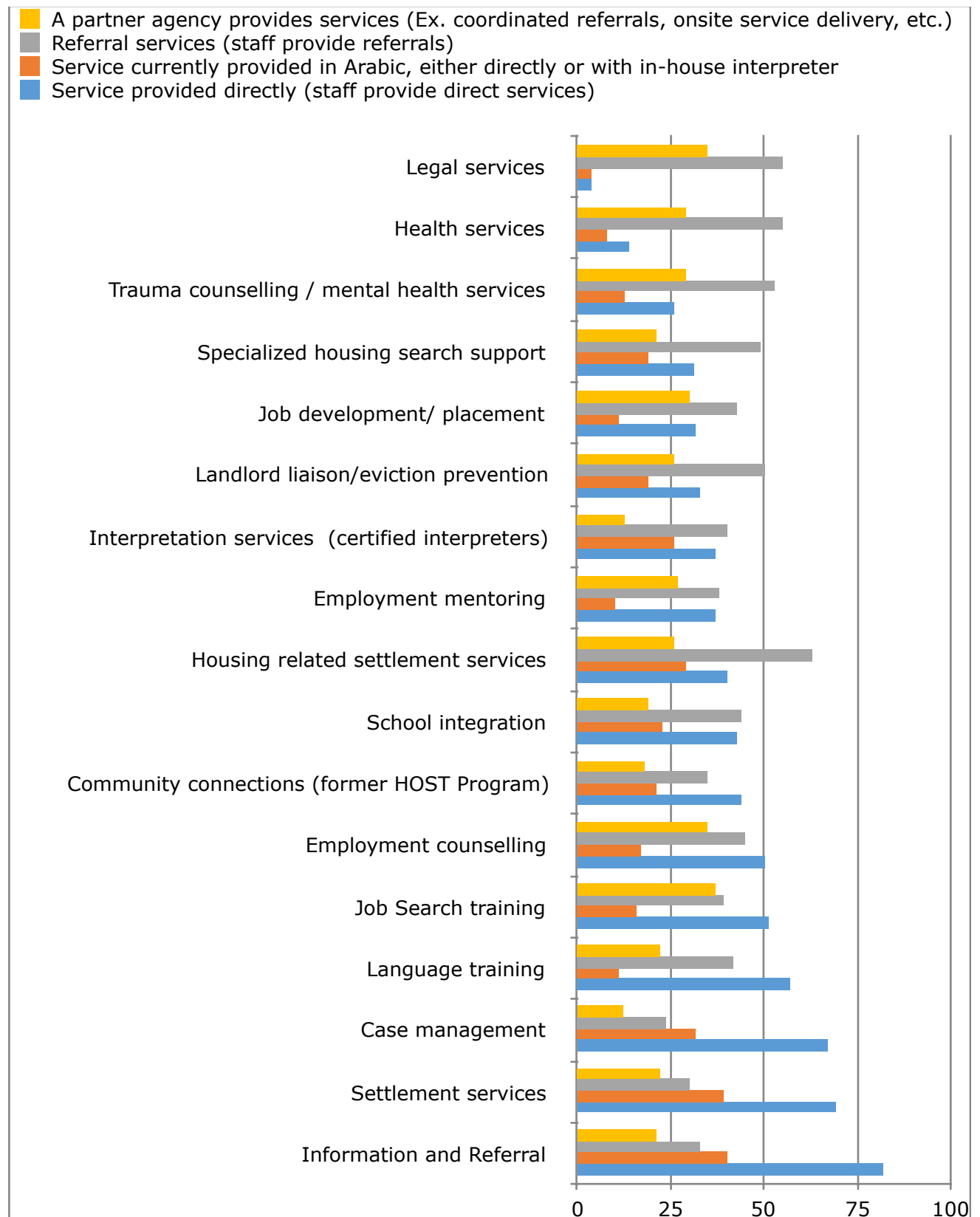
	Number of unique clients				
	None	1-499	500-1,999	2,000-3,999	>4,000
<b>Ontario</b>					
Total clients	4	20	26	23	27
Refugees	14	58	20	5	3
Refugees claimants	28	66	5	0	1
Syrian first language	23	56	17	3	1
<b>Central East</b>					
Total clients	1	2	2	1	3
Refugees	1	7	1	0	0
Refugees claimants	2	6	1	0	0
Syrian first language	2	7	0	0	0
<b>Central West</b>					
Total clients	1	1	3	1	5
Refugees	2	5	3	0	1
Refugees claimants	3	7	0	0	1
Syrian first language	2	4	3	1	1
<b>East</b>					
Total clients	0	1	3	3	1
Refugees	0	8	0	0	0
Refugees claimants	1	7	0	0	0
Syrian first language	0	7	1	0	0
<b>North</b>					
Total clients	1	3	3	0	0
Refugees	2	5	0	0	0
Refugees claimants	3	4	0	0	0
Syrian first language	2	5	0	0	0
<b>South</b>					
Total clients	1	3	3	4	1
Refugees	1	6	4	0	1
Refugees claimants	4	8	0	0	0
Syrian first language	3	5	3	1	0
<b>Toronto</b>					



Total clients	0	4	10	12	15
Refugees	6	19	10	5	1
Refugees claimants	10	27	4	0	0
Syrian first language	12	22	6	1	0
<b>West</b>					
Total clients	0	6	2	2	2
Refugees	2	8	2	0	0
Refugees claimants	5	7	0	0	0
Syrian first language	2	6	4	0	0

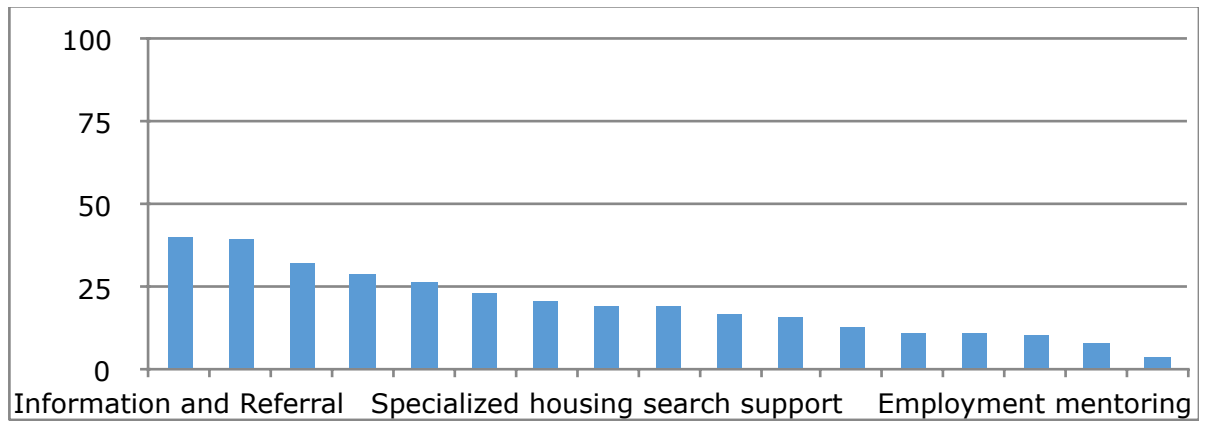
Note: Numbers in this table represent the number of responding organizations serving a particular numeric range of clients of a particular status. For example, 27 organizations in Ontario served over 4000 clients in 2014, and 10 organizations in Toronto served 500-1999 refugees in 2014.

**Chart 3 - Number of organizations by service type<sup>14</sup>**

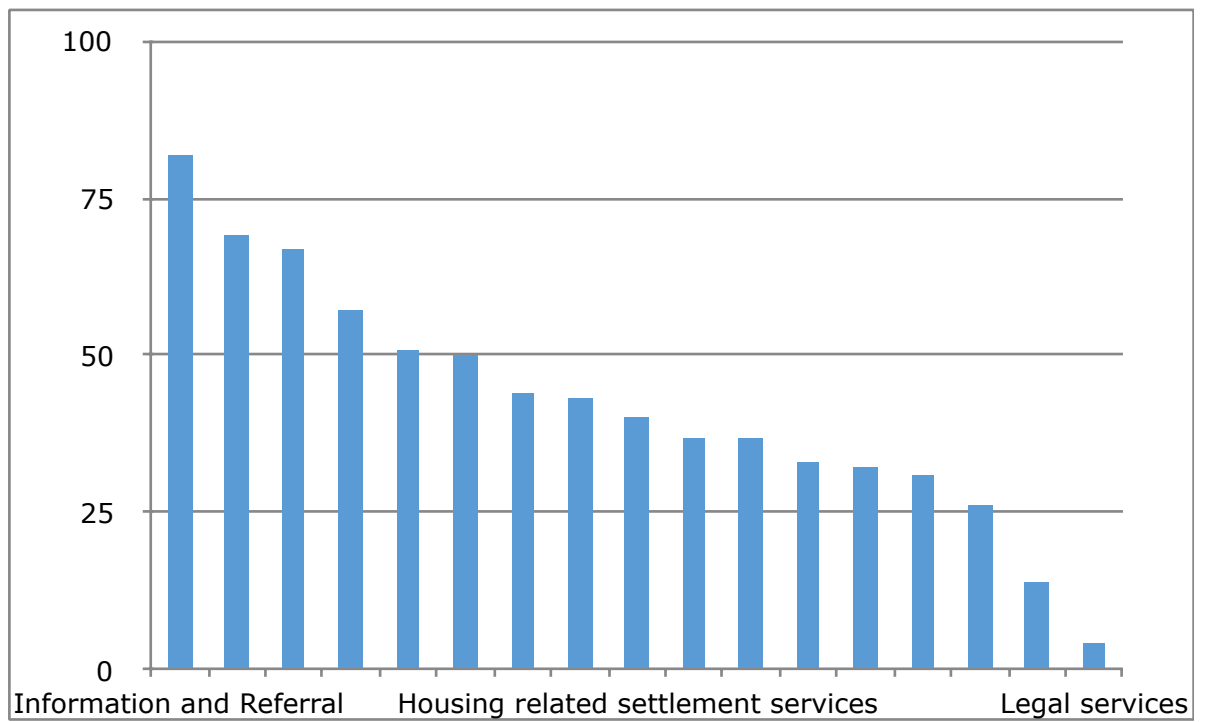


<sup>14</sup> Respondents were given the option to select more than one delivery mechanism for each of the 17 services; hence the combined number of organizations that use the different mechanisms can exceed 100 percent for each of the 17 services.

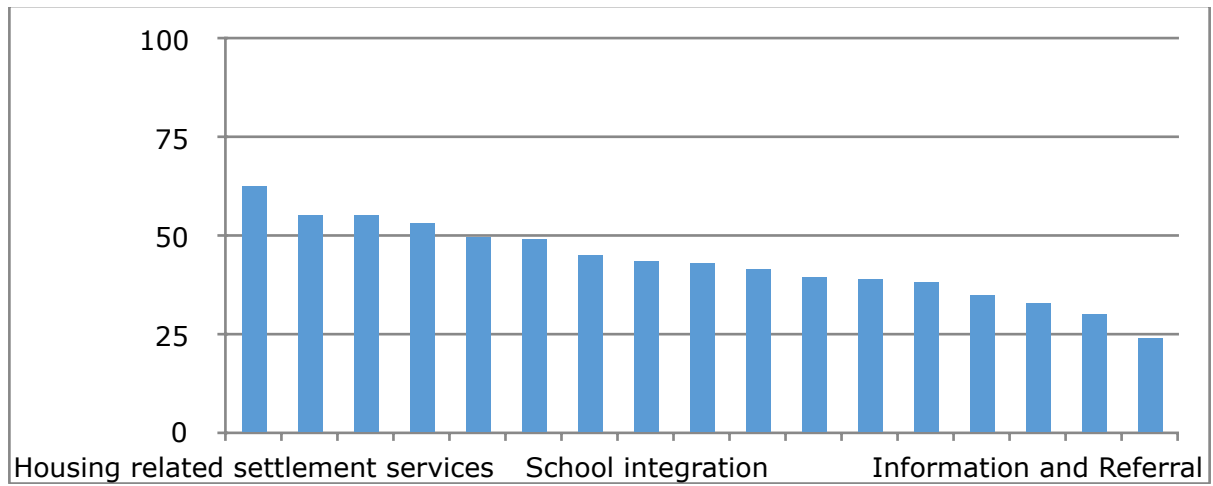
**Chart 4 - Number of organizations that currently provided services in Arabic, either directly or with in-house interpreter**



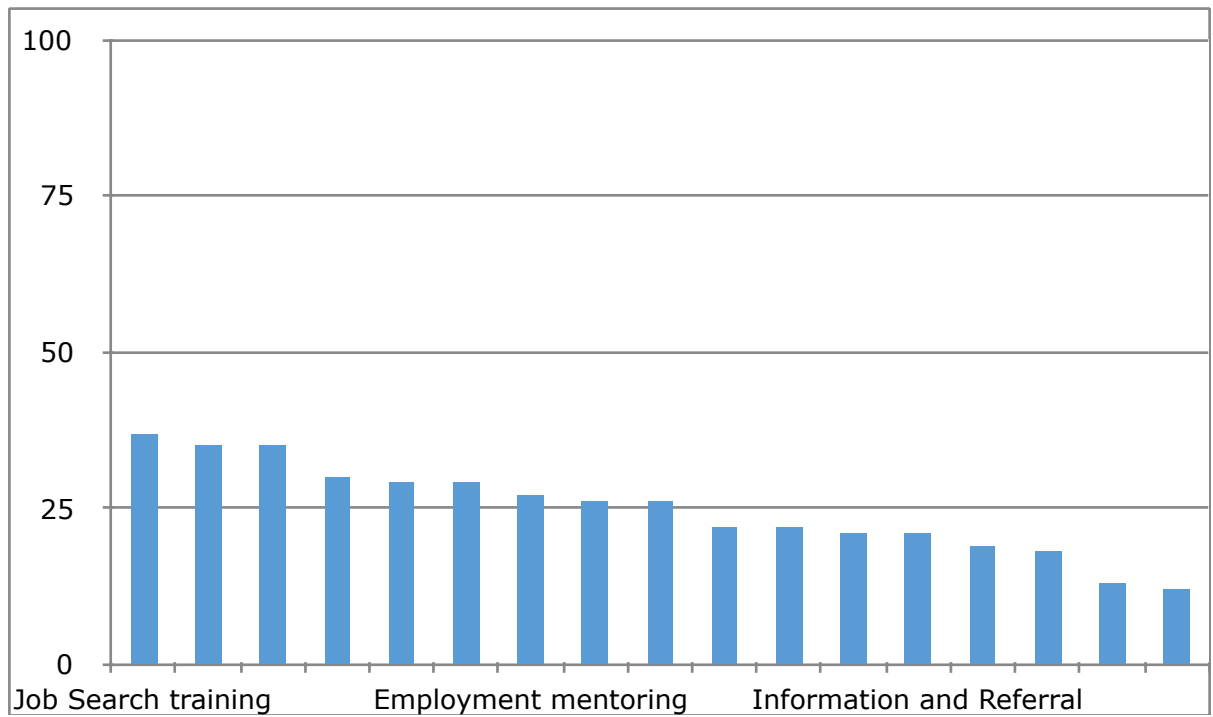
**Chart 5 - Number of organizations that currently provided services directly**



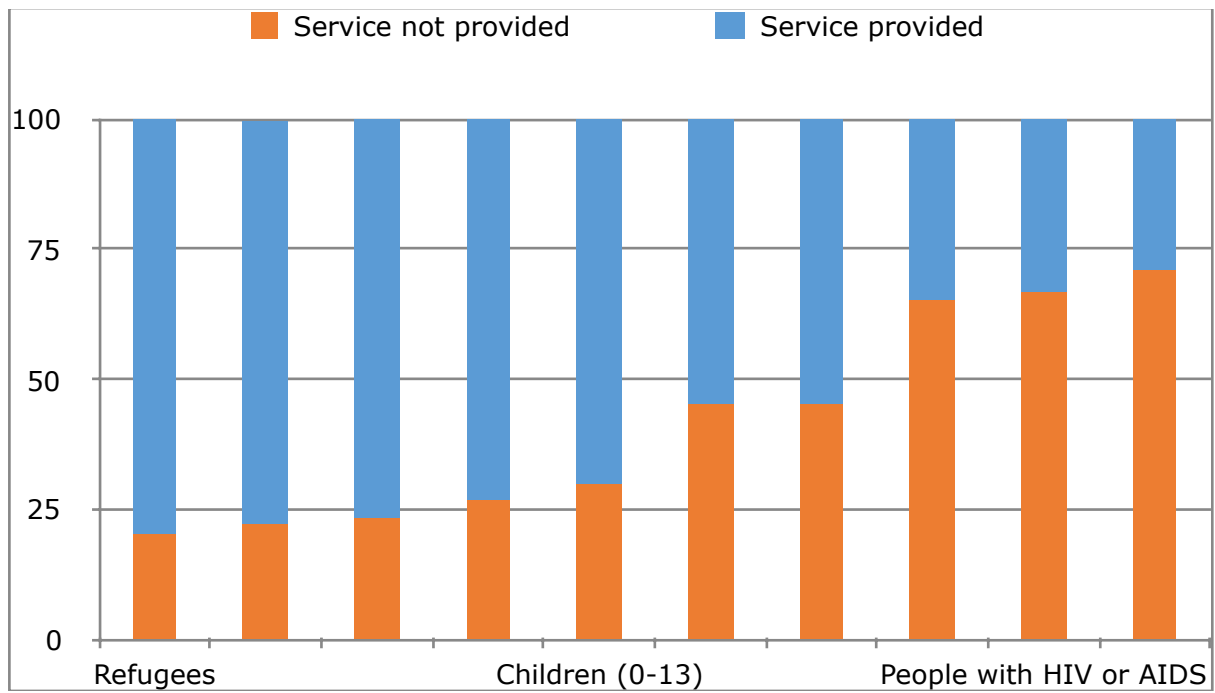
**Chart 6 - Number of organizations that currently provided referral services**



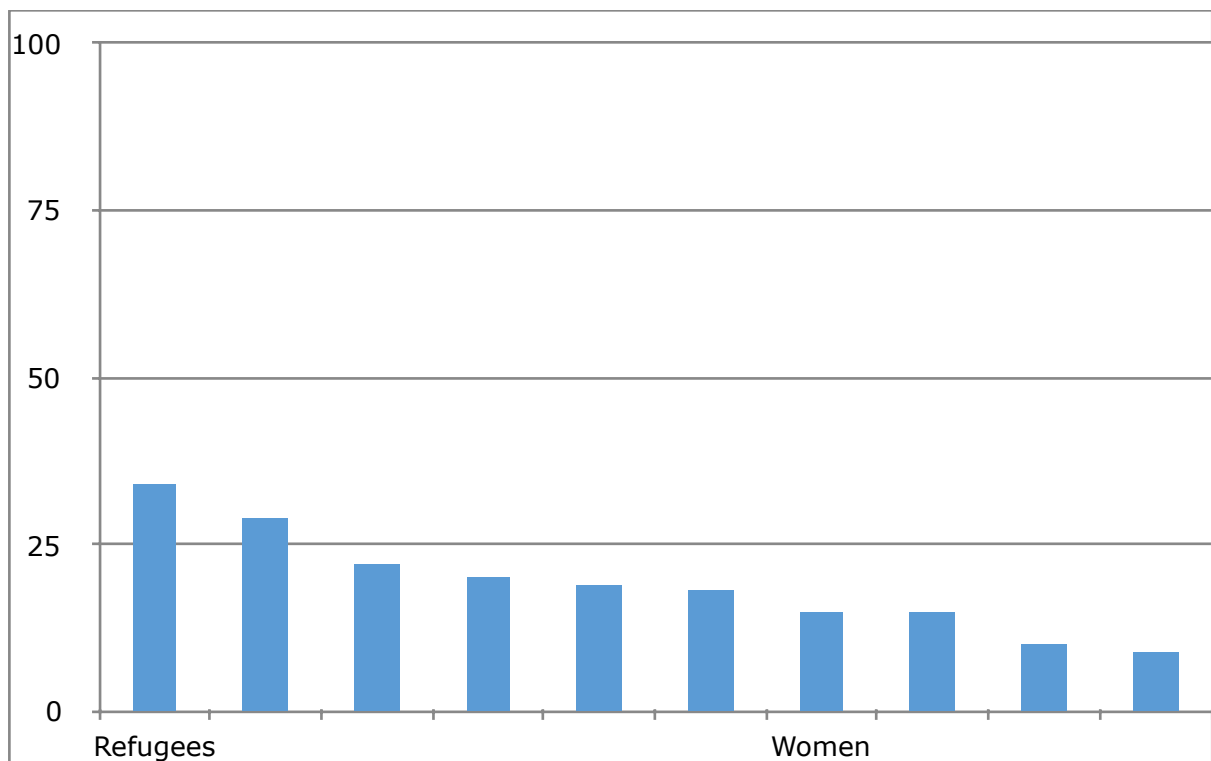
**Chart 7 - Number of organizations for which a partner agency provided services**



**Chart 8 - Percentage of organizations that provided targeted services to client groups**



**Chart 9 - Number of organizations that provided targeted services in Arabic**



**Table 11 - Organizations that provided services in French**

	<b>Number of Agencies</b>	<b>Regional percentages</b>
Central East	4	44%
Central West	6	55%
East	5	63%
North	5	71%
South	6	50%
Toronto	15	37%
West	6	50%
Ontario Total	47	47.0%

**Table 12 - Organizations accessible to people with disabilities**

	<b>Number of Agencies</b>	<b>Regional percentages</b>
Central East	9	100%
Central West	10	91%
East	7	88%
North	7	100%
South	11	92%
Toronto	39	95%
West	9	75%
Ontario Total	92	92.0%

**Table 13 - Organizations with expertise in serving people with hearing or visual impairment**

	<b>Number of Agencies</b>	<b>Regional percentages</b>
Central East	2	22%
Central West	5	45%
East	4	50%
North	2	29%
South	2	17%
Toronto	4	10%
West	1	8%
Ontario Total	20	20.0%

**Table 14 - Number of Funders**

	<b>Number of Funders</b>					<b>Total</b>
	<b>None</b>	<b>1-4</b>	<b>5-9</b>	<b>10-14</b>	<b>&gt;15</b>	
<b>Organizations (%)</b>	1	57	37	3	2	100