

# Barriers to Service Access and System Navigation for Refugee Claimants in Manitoba

Findings from Community-Based Research

April 2026



HEALTHCARE ACCESS

HOUSING INSTABILITY

INCOME SUPPORT

LEGAL AID ACCESS

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

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April 2026

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## **Project**

Advancing Policy Advocacy for Racialized Refugee Claimants

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## **Disclaimer**

The views and interpretations expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of any funding or supporting organizations.

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# List of Acronyms

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Full Form</b>
CBSA	Canada Border Services Agency
EIA	Employment and Income Assistance (Manitoba)
GAR	Government-Assisted Refugee
H&C	Humanitarian and Compassionate (grounds)
HMF	Healthy Muslim Families
IFHP	Interim Federal Health Program
IRB	Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
MANSO	Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations
PRRA	Pre-Removal Risk Assessment
PSR	Privately Sponsored Refugee
RPD	Refugee Protection Division

# 1 Executive Summary

This report examines the systemic barriers faced by refugee claimants in Manitoba as they navigate the refugee determination process and attempt to access essential support services. The study draws on three data sources: a survey of refugee claimants, a survey of service providers, and interviews with legal professionals. Together, these sources provide insight into both lived experiences and system-level challenges within the refugee claimant support environment. This analysis is based on a community-based sample and is intended to provide insight into systemic barriers rather than statistically representative estimates of all refugee claimants in Manitoba.

## Key Findings

The findings indicate that refugee claimants encounter a system that is procedurally complex, administratively fragmented, and highly dependent on an individual's ability to navigate multiple institutions simultaneously.

Several key patterns emerge:

- i. **Procedural complexity creates barriers to system navigation:**  
Nearly half of surveyed claimants (47.2%) reported difficulty completing required forms, while over one-quarter experienced challenges understanding timelines (27.8%) and the hearing process (25.0%). A majority (72.2%) were still awaiting or preparing for a hearing, indicating that these barriers occur during active stages of the claim process.
- ii. **Language barriers limit access across multiple systems:**  
Over half of respondents reported beginner-level English proficiency, and 25.0% experienced difficulty explaining their situation to service providers. Service providers and legal professionals identified interpretation gaps as affecting both service access and legal proceedings.
- iii. **Access to services is shaped by documentation and timing constraints:**  
While 66.7% of respondents reported receiving income assistance (EIA), others experienced delays, gaps, or ineligibility due to documentation requirements. Administrative processes across systems often require claimants to provide proof of status that may not yet be available.
- iv. **Housing pathways are unstable and reliant on temporary or informal supports:**  
Two-thirds of respondents (66.7%) lived in shared housing, and 27.8% received housing assistance from shelters. Many accessed housing through a combination of emergency services, community organizations, and personal networks.
- v. **Service systems are fragmented and difficult to navigate:**  
Claimants must interact with multiple systems—immigration, legal aid, income assistance, healthcare, and housing—each with separate eligibility rules and processes. Service providers emphasized that this fragmentation creates delays and inefficiencies.

- vi. **Community organizations function as critical system navigators:**  
Community-based organizations play a central role in helping claimants access services, interpret requirements, and navigate complex systems. However, this role is not consistently supported by stable funding or coordinated policy frameworks.

### **Overall Analysis**

Altogether, these findings suggest that barriers experienced by refugee claimants are structural rather than isolated. Access to services is shaped by the interaction of procedural requirements, documentation rules, language barriers, and the lack of coordination across systems. This includes the exclusion of refugee claimants from IRCC-funded settlement services, which limits access to structured supports for language training, system navigation, and employment preparation during a critical period.

In practice, refugee claimants must navigate a system where eligibility for services is not aligned with the timing of needs, creating periods during which individuals are unable to access essential supports despite having immediate needs. As a result, outcomes are often determined not only by legal eligibility, but by access to information, language support, and external assistance.

### **Policy Implications**

The findings highlight the need to move beyond program-specific solutions toward a system-level approach that addresses how policies and services interact in practice. Key areas for policy attention include:

- i. Reducing procedural complexity in the refugee claim process
- ii. Strengthening language access across legal and service systems
- iii. Aligning federal and provincial eligibility frameworks
- iv. Improving coordination across service delivery systems
- v. Supporting the role of community organizations in system navigation

### **Key Recommendations**

This report proposes a set of policy actions across federal, provincial, and cross-system levels:

- i. **At the federal level**, improve system accessibility by simplifying claimant-facing procedures, reducing processing delays, accelerating work authorization, strengthening interpretation standards, and expanding eligibility for IRCC-funded settlement services to include refugee claimants, particularly for language training and system navigation support.
- ii. **At the provincial level**, improve access to essential services by reducing documentation barriers for income assistance, expanding healthcare access, and strengthening housing supports.
- iii. **Across systems**, address fragmentation by aligning federal and provincial requirements, establishing centralized intake and case management models, and improving coordination between institutions.

- iv. **At the community level**, strengthen service capacity through stable, multi-year funding for organizations supporting refugee claimants.

These recommendations are intended to improve access to services, reduce administrative barriers, and create a more coordinated and responsive system for refugee claimants in Manitoba.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that the challenges faced by refugee claimants are not solely the result of individual circumstances but are shaped by the design and interaction of systems. Addressing these barriers requires coordinated policy action that improves the accessibility, alignment, and responsiveness of services during the refugee claim process.

# 2 Introduction and Research Overview

This report examines the challenges and systemic barriers refugee claimants face in Manitoba when accessing support services and navigating the refugee claim process. Drawing on perspectives from refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals, the study aims to inform policy discussions and advocacy efforts aimed at improving access to justice and services for refugee claimants.

## 2.1 Background and Context

Canada has long maintained a refugee protection system intended to provide safety to individuals fleeing persecution, violence, or serious human rights violations. Canada’s refugee protection system is structured around two primary programs. The first is the *Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program*, which provides protection to individuals who are identified as needing protection while outside Canada and are resettled to the country through government or private sponsorship pathways. The second is the *In-Canada Asylum Program*, which applies to individuals who make refugee protection claims from within Canada, either after arriving at the border or from inside the country.<sup>1</sup> Together, these two programs form the core framework through which Canada delivers refugee protection.

Individuals who seek protection after arriving in Canada or at its borders submit a refugee claim, and while their claim is under review they are referred to as *refugee claimants*. During this period, claimants may spend extended periods navigating legal and administrative processes, as reflected in the growing number of pending claims with the Immigration and Refugee Board (see Table 2.1) and the experiences reported by participants in this study (see Section 6: Key Findings).

**Table 2.1. Refugee Claim Volumes and Outcomes in Canada, 2023–2025**

Year	Claims Referred to IRB	Claims Finalized by IRB	Claims Pending with IRB (Year-End)
2023	137,947	51,848	156,032
2024	190,039	73,456	272,440
2025	107,802	79,462	299,614

**Source:** Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, “*Refugee claims statistics*,” Government of Canada, accessed April 2026.

In Manitoba, the number of individuals seeking refugee protection has increased in recent years. Data from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) indicate a significant rise in the number of refugee claims submitted in the province between 2023 and 2024, increasing from 730 claims (Feb–Dec 2023) to 2,060 claims in 2024. Although the number of claims declined slightly to

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<sup>1</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, “*How Canada’s refugee system works*”, Government of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/about-refugee-system/how-system-works.html>

1,700 in 2025, it remained substantially higher than 2023 levels, placing growing pressure on social support systems that assist refugee claimants during the claim process.<sup>2</sup> Unlike government-assisted refugees who arrive through formal resettlement programs, refugee claimants often arrive with limited resources and must navigate unfamiliar legal, social, and institutional systems while their claims are being adjudicated. These challenges are also reflected in the findings of this study.

Access to support services, including legal assistance, language interpretation, housing, healthcare, and income support, is therefore critical during this period. Despite Canada's commitment to refugee protection, refugee claimants can encounter structural and systemic barriers that make accessing these services difficult. These barriers can arise from complex administrative procedures, limited program eligibility, gaps in coordination between federal and provincial systems, and insufficient interpretation or settlement supports.

Many of these challenges are further compounded for racialized refugee claimants, individuals belonging to racialized or minority communities who may experience intersecting forms of disadvantage related to race, ethnicity, language, religion, or migration status. In the Canadian context, the term *racialized* refers to individuals and groups who are assigned racial or ethnic identities through social processes that shape and often disadvantage their access to economic, political, and social opportunities.<sup>3</sup>

Community organizations in Manitoba play a critical role in helping refugee claimants navigate these challenges. Through legal clinics, settlement services, interpretation support, and advocacy initiatives, these organizations often serve as the primary point of contact for claimants attempting to understand and navigate the refugee determination process. At the same time, service providers and legal professionals working with refugee claimants frequently observe systemic gaps in policies and programs that affect claimants' access to justice and essential services.

Recognizing these challenges, Healthy Muslim Families (HMF) initiated the project *Advancing Policy Advocacy for Racialized Refugee Claimants* to better understand the barriers faced by refugee claimants in Manitoba and to support evidence-based policy advocacy aimed at improving access to services and justice. This project is supported by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, with funding provided by the Government of Canada, and aims to identify systemic barriers affecting racialized refugee claimants and develop policy recommendations to inform government decision-making and community advocacy efforts.

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<sup>2</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, "Asylum statistics, trends and data," Government of Canada, accessed April 2026, <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/statistics-open-data/immigration-stats/asylum-claims.html>

<sup>3</sup> British Columbia Office of the Human Rights Commissioner, "Racialization," <https://bchumanrights.ca/glossary/racialization/>

## **2.2 Purpose and Objectives of the Study**

This study was conducted as part of the project *Advancing Policy Advocacy for Racialized Refugee Claimants*, led by Healthy Muslim Families (HMF) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The project aimed to examine systemic barriers that refugee claimants, particularly those from racialized communities face when accessing essential services and navigating the refugee claim process.

The primary objective of this research was to generate evidence that can inform policy discussions and advocacy efforts related to refugee claimant support systems. Specifically, the study seeks to document the experiences of refugee claimants, identify gaps in access to services such as legal assistance, language interpretation, healthcare, and income supports, and highlight the perspectives of frontline service providers and legal professionals who work closely with claimants.

By bringing together insights from these different groups, the study aims to contribute to a clearer understanding of the structural challenges within existing systems and to support the development of practical policy recommendations that can improve access to services and promote greater equity for refugee claimants in Manitoba.

## **2.3 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on the experiences of refugee claimants residing in Manitoba, with particular attention to the barriers they encounter when accessing services and navigating the refugee claim process. The research draws on perspectives from three groups of participants: refugee claimants themselves, service providers working in organizations that support refugee claimants, and legal professionals who assist claimants in the refugee determination process.

The data for this study was collected through a refugee claimant survey, a service provider survey, and structured interviews with legal professionals. Together, these sources provide insight into both the lived experiences of refugee claimants and the institutional and systemic challenges observed by professionals working within the sector.

While the findings highlight important patterns and issues affecting refugee claimants in Manitoba, the study does not aim to provide a comprehensive analysis of refugee systems across Canada. The research was conducted primarily in Winnipeg, where many refugee claimants first access legal, settlement, and social services. As the largest city in the province and the primary hub for newcomer and refugee support services, Winnipeg provides an important context for understanding how refugee claimants navigate service systems in Manitoba. However, the findings should be understood as reflecting experiences within this service environment and may not capture all regional variations across the province. The study therefore offers a focused examination of local experiences and service environments with the goal of informing policy advocacy and improving support systems for refugee claimants.

## **2.4 Overview of the Report**

This report is organized into several sections. Following this introduction section, Section 3 provides an overview of the policy and system context shaping refugee claim processes and access

to services in Canada and Manitoba. Section 4 describes the methodology used in this study, including the data sources, participant recruitment, and analytical approach. Section 5 presents a profile of the study participants. Section 6 discusses the key findings that emerged from the research. The report concludes with Section 7, which outlines the policy implications of the findings and Section 8 presents recommendations aimed at improving access to services and supports for refugee claimants.

## 3 Policy and System Context

### 3.1 Canada's Refugee Determination System

In Canada, individuals who seek protection from persecution, risk to life, or cruel and unusual treatment may make a refugee claim either at a port of entry or from within Canada. These individuals are referred to as refugee claimants while their claims are under review.<sup>4</sup>

Refugee claims are first assessed for eligibility by either the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) at ports of entry or by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for inland claims. During this stage, officials determine whether the claim meets the eligibility requirements set out in Canadian immigration legislation.<sup>5</sup>

If a claim is found eligible, it is referred to the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), an independent administrative tribunal responsible for making decisions on refugee protection claims.<sup>6</sup>

The Refugee Protection Division (RPD) of the IRB conducts a hearing to determine whether the claimant meets the definition of a Convention refugee or a person in need of protection under Canadian law. During the hearing, claimants present evidence and testimony to support their claim.<sup>7</sup>

Following the hearing, the RPD issues a decision. If the claim is accepted, the individual is recognized as a protected person and may apply for permanent residence. If the claim is rejected, the individual may have access to appeal or review mechanisms depending on the circumstances of the case.<sup>8</sup>

### 3.2 Access to Services for Refugee Claimants

In the Canadian context, responsibility for services supporting basic needs is shared across levels of government. The federal government administers immigration and refugee determination processes, while provincial governments are responsible for the delivery of core social services, including healthcare, income assistance, housing and legal aid. Access to these provincially administered services is governed by eligibility criteria related to residency, legal status, and assessed need. Accordingly, refugee claimants may be eligible to access certain provincial services

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<sup>4</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, “*Claiming asylum from within Canada*” <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/asylum/in-canada.html>; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, “*Claiming asylum in Canada – what happens?*” [https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2017/03/claiming\\_asylum\\_incanadawhathappens.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2017/03/claiming_asylum_incanadawhathappens.html)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, “*Refugee claims*” <https://irb.gc.ca/en/refugee-claims/Pages/index.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

where they meet applicable requirements, while other services are tied to immigration status and administered at the federal level.<sup>9</sup>

### 3.3 Legal Services

Legal services for refugee claimants in Manitoba are provided through a combination of publicly funded and private mechanisms. Legal Aid Manitoba administers legal aid services in the province and provides coverage for eligible individuals requiring legal representation, including for immigration and refugee matters. Eligibility for Legal Aid is based on financial criteria and the nature of the legal issue. Refugee claimants may be eligible for Legal Aid services for refugee claim proceedings before the Immigration and Refugee Board, provided they meet financial eligibility requirements and their case falls within the scope of coverage.<sup>10</sup>

### 3.4 Settlement and Community Services

Settlement services in Canada are primarily funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and delivered through service provider organizations. These services may include orientation, language training, employment support, and referrals for eligible newcomers.<sup>11</sup>

Eligibility for IRCC-funded settlement services is defined at the federal level and generally includes permanent residents, protected persons, and certain temporary residents participating in specific programs or pathways. Refugee claimants are however, not included among the eligible categories while their claim is under review.<sup>12</sup>

Refugee claimants become eligible for federally funded settlement services only after receiving a positive refugee determination and being recognized as protected persons.<sup>13</sup>

As a result, when settlement agencies provide support to refugee claimants prior to a positive determination, that support is delivered outside the IRCC-funded Settlement Program and may be provided through other funding streams or community-based services.

### 3.5 Healthcare

Healthcare access for refugee claimants is supported through a combination of federal and provincial programs.

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<sup>9</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, “*Claiming asylum in Canada – what happens?*”

[https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2017/03/claiming\\_asylum\\_incanadawhathappens.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2017/03/claiming_asylum_incanadawhathappens.html)

<sup>10</sup> Legal Aid Manitoba, “*Immigration and Refugee Services*”

<https://www.legalaid.mb.ca/services/services-we-provide/immigration-and-refugee/>

<sup>11</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, “*Settling in Canada*”

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/settle-canada.html>

<sup>12</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, “*Find free newcomer services near you*”

<https://ircc.canada.ca/english/newcomers/services/index.asp>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

At the federal level, the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) provides temporary coverage for essential and emergency healthcare services for eligible refugee claimants and other protected persons.<sup>14</sup>

Provincial healthcare systems, such as Manitoba Health, are responsible for delivering healthcare services within the province. Eligibility for provincial healthcare coverage is determined by provincial residency criteria, including legal status and intent to reside in the province. A refugee claimant may become eligible for provincial healthcare coverage where they meet these criteria, including through holding a valid work permit or after being recognized as protected persons.<sup>15</sup>

### **3.6 Housing**

Housing support for refugee claimants in Manitoba includes provincially administered programs as well as services delivered by community organizations. Manitoba Housing provides subsidized and rent-g geared-to-income housing for eligible individuals and families.<sup>16</sup>

Eligibility for these programs is based on factors such as residency in Manitoba, legal entitlement to remain in Canada, income level, and demonstrated housing need. A refugee claimant may be eligible to apply for these programs if they meet the applicable criteria.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to provincially administered housing programs, emergency shelters and transitional housing services are provided by community organizations and may be accessed based on immediate need.

### **3.7 Income Support**

Income assistance in Manitoba is provided through the provincial Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) program, which supports individuals and families who are unable to meet their basic needs. Eligibility for EIA is based on factors including residency in Manitoba, financial need, and legal entitlement to remain in Canada.<sup>18</sup>

Refugee claimants may be eligible for EIA if they meet these criteria and are able to provide documentation confirming their status. Access to EIA does not depend on holding a work permit but is subject to standard application and verification processes.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Government of Canada, “*Interim Federal Health Program*”  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-within-canada/health-care/interim-federal-health-program.html>

<sup>15</sup> Government of Manitoba, “Who is Eligible for Manitoba Health Coverage,”  
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/health/mhsip/eligibility.html>

<sup>16</sup> Government of Manitoba, “*Housing, Addictions and Homelessness*”  
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/housing/>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Government of Manitoba, “*Employment and Income Assistance (EIA)*”  
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/eia/>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

At the federal level, refugee claimants may apply for work permits after meeting eligibility requirements, allowing them to seek employment while their claim is being processed.<sup>20</sup>

### **3.8 Manitoba Service Environment**

Within Manitoba, refugee claimant services are primarily concentrated in Winnipeg, which functions as the province's main administrative, service delivery, and settlement hub. As the largest urban centre in the province, Winnipeg hosts the majority of legal, settlement, and community-based organizations that provide support to refugee claimants.

Service delivery in Manitoba involves multiple actors, including provincial government departments administering healthcare and income assistance programs, federally funded settlement agencies, legal aid services and private legal practitioners, and community-based organizations providing support and referrals.

Settlement agencies deliver federally funded services for eligible populations, while community organizations provide similar and additional supports such as interpretation, system navigation assistance, and community programming.

Legal clinics and legal service providers operate alongside these systems, offering assistance with immigration and refugee-related legal processes.

Overall, the service environment consists of multiple systems operating at different levels of government, with services delivered through a combination of public institutions and community-based non-profit organizations.

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<sup>20</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, *“Information for Refugee Claimants”*  
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/information-refugee-claimants.html>

## 4 Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods consultation-based research design to examine the systemic barriers faced by refugee claimants in Manitoba. The research combined quantitative survey data with qualitative insights gathered from multiple stakeholder groups involved in the refugee claim process.

The design of the study was intended to capture perspectives from three key groups:

- **Refugee claimants**, who provided firsthand accounts of their experiences navigating the refugee claim process and accessing services in Manitoba;
- **Service providers**, who work directly with refugee claimants and support them in accessing legal, social, and settlement services; and
- **Legal professionals**, who offered insights into procedural and systemic challenges within the refugee determination process and related legal frameworks.

By drawing on these different perspectives, the research sought to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the structural barriers affecting refugee claimants. The inclusion of both service providers and legal professionals also allowed the study to contextualize claimant experiences within the broader institutional and policy environment.

The research design prioritized consultative and community-informed approaches, recognizing that refugee claimants and frontline organizations possess valuable experiential knowledge about the functioning of existing systems. Their insights were therefore central to identifying practical challenges and informing potential policy responses.

Overall, this multi-source research design enabled the study to triangulate findings across datasets and strengthen the reliability of the conclusions presented in this report.

### 4.2 Data Sources

This study draws on three primary sources of data collected as part of the project's consultations and research activities. These sources were selected to capture perspectives from individuals directly experiencing the refugee claim process, as well as from professionals and organizations supporting refugee claimants in Manitoba.

#### 4.2.1 Refugee Claimant Survey

The Refugee Claimant Survey, titled "HMF Refugee Claimant Online Survey," collected information from individuals residing in Manitoba who had made or were in the process of making a refugee claim in Canada. The survey explored participants' experiences navigating the refugee claim process and accessing essential services such as housing, healthcare, employment, language training, and legal assistance.

The questionnaire included a combination of closed-ended questions, which allowed for descriptive statistical analysis, and open-ended questions that enabled participants to share additional details about the challenges they faced. The survey was made available online and was distributed through community networks and organizations working with refugee claimants. (See Appendix A: Refugee Claimant Survey Instrument).

#### **4.2.2 Service Provider Survey**

The Service Provider Survey, titled “HMF Survey for Refugee Claimant-Serving Organizations in Manitoba,” targeted organizations and service providers that regularly work with refugee claimants in Manitoba. Participants included staff from settlement agencies, community-based organizations, shelters, and other service providers involved in supporting refugee claimants.

This survey sought to capture frontline perspectives on gaps in services, systemic barriers affecting claimants, and potential policy or programmatic changes that could improve access to support services. (See Appendix B: Service Provider Survey Instrument)

#### **4.2.3 Legal Professional Interviews**

In addition to surveys, structured interviews were conducted with two legal professionals (lawyers) who have experience representing refugee claimants. A standardized questionnaire was used to guide these interviews, ensuring consistency in the topics discussed.

The interviews focused on legal and procedural barriers encountered by refugee claimants, including challenges related to legal aid, interpretation services, documentation requirements, and the refugee determination process.

Together, these three data sources provide complementary perspectives on the experiences of refugee claimants and the systems intended to support them. By incorporating insights from claimants, service providers, and legal professionals, the study aims to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the systemic issues affecting refugee claimants in Manitoba.

### **4.3 Survey Instruments and Interview Questionnaire**

Standardized questionnaires were used to collect data across the different participant groups included in this study. Separate instruments were developed for refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals to ensure that questions were tailored to the experiences and expertise of each group.

The Refugee Claimant Survey included questions addressing participants’ experiences navigating the refugee claim process and accessing services in Manitoba. The questionnaire contained both closed-ended questions (such as multiple-choice and check-box questions) and open-ended questions that allowed respondents to describe their experiences in their own words. The survey was made available in multiple languages to improve accessibility for participants from different linguistic backgrounds. (See Appendix A: Refugee Claimant Survey Instrument)

The Service Provider Survey was designed to capture the perspectives of service providers and organizations that regularly support refugee claimants. Questions focused on service gaps, barriers encountered by clients, and policy or programmatic changes that service providers believe would improve access to services. (See Appendix B: Service Provider Instrument)

The Legal Professional Interview Guide consisted of a standardized set of questions used during interviews with lawyers who represent refugee claimants. These questions explored procedural challenges in the refugee determination process, barriers related to legal representation and interpretation services, and broader systemic issues affecting refugee claimants' access to justice. (See Appendix C: Legal Professional Interview Guide)

Using structured instruments across all participant groups helped ensure consistency in the topics explored and facilitated comparison of responses across datasets.

### **Respondent Identifiers and Data Screening**

Survey responses from refugee claimants and service providers were collected anonymously, meaning that no personally identifying information was recorded as part of the survey process. In contrast, the legal professional interviews involved identifiable participants, as the interviews were conducted directly with individual lawyers. To protect confidentiality, identifying details were removed during the documentation of interview responses, and participants are referenced in this report using anonymized identifiers. For analytical purposes, respondents across the datasets were assigned coded identifiers. Refugee claimant survey responses were labeled according to the language in which the survey was completed followed by a respondent number (e.g., AR-1, EN-2, FR-3). Service provider respondents are referenced using anonymized SP identifiers retained from the dataset, and legal professional interview participants are referenced as LP-1 and LP-2.

During the data preparation stage, a small number of survey submissions were excluded from analysis because they were incomplete or otherwise unusable. In total, eight submissions from the Refugee Claimant Survey and two submissions from the Service Provider Survey were excluded. Since respondent identifiers were not reassigned after this screening process, some identifier numbers do not appear in the analyzed dataset.

## **4.4 Participant Recruitment and Data Collection**

Participants for this study were recruited through community networks and organizations working with refugee claimants in Manitoba. The recruitment approach relied primarily on outreach through Healthy Muslim Families (HMF) programs, professional networks, and sector coordination spaces where organizations serving refugee claimants collaborate.

### **4.4.1 Refugee Claimant Survey**

The Refugee Claimant Survey was administered online and distributed through community outreach channels. In practice, many responses were obtained from refugee claimants who were already accessing services at Healthy Muslim Families (HMF). Since the survey was often completed by claimants while visiting the HMF offices for services, individuals connected to the organization were more readily reachable and therefore more likely to participate. As a result, the

respondents to the Refugee Claimant Survey primarily reflect refugee claimants served by HMF during the second half of 2025. While the experiences shared by participants provide important insights into the challenges faced by refugee claimants, the survey sample should therefore be understood as reflecting the experiences of claimants within HMF's service community rather than representing all refugee claimants in Manitoba.

#### **4.4.2 Service Provider Survey**

The Service Provider Survey was shared with service providers and organizations working with refugee claimants in Manitoba. The survey was primarily circulated through the Refugee Claimant Community Coordination Table convened by the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO). This coordination table brings together organizations and service providers who work with refugee claimants to share information, discuss emerging challenges, and coordinate responses to service needs within the sector.

In addition to this sector-wide distribution, HMF also reached out directly to a number of organizations within its professional network to encourage participation. As a result, while the survey includes responses from organizations involved in the broader coordination table, many respondents represent service providers and organizations with which HMF has established working relationships.

#### **4.4.3 Legal Professional Interviews**

Structured interviews were conducted with two legal professionals (lawyers) who have experience representing refugee claimants. These lawyers regularly work with HMF in providing legal support and advice to refugee claimants accessing services through the organization. The interviews were conducted using a standardized questionnaire to explore legal and procedural challenges faced by refugee claimants in the refugee determination process.

#### **4.4.4 Scope of the Sample**

Since participant recruitment relied primarily on HMF's service environment and professional networks, the data collected for this research largely reflects the experiences and perspectives of refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals connected to the communities with which HMF works. The findings presented in this report should therefore be interpreted as providing insights into the barriers encountered within this service ecosystem rather than as a statistically representative sample of all refugee claimants or service providers in Manitoba.

### **4.5 Data Analysis Approach**

The data collected through surveys and interviews were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and thematic analysis.

Responses to closed-ended survey questions were examined using descriptive statistics. This involved calculating the number and proportion of respondents selecting particular responses in order to identify common experiences and patterns among participants.

Open-ended survey responses and interview notes were reviewed to identify recurring issues and themes related to refugee claimants' experiences navigating the refugee claim process and accessing services in Manitoba. Similar responses were grouped together to highlight common barriers and challenges raised by participants.

Insights from the three data sources: refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals, were then compared and synthesized to identify areas of overlap as well as differences in perspective across participant groups. This comparative approach helped strengthen the analysis by situating individual experiences within broader service and policy contexts.

The findings presented in this report therefore reflect patterns and themes that emerged across multiple data sources, providing a consolidated picture of the systemic barriers affecting refugee claimants in Manitoba.

The goal of this analysis was to identify systemic barriers affecting refugee claimants in Manitoba and to inform evidence-based policy recommendations for improving access to services, legal processes, and social supports.

#### **4.6 Study Limitations**

This study is based on a community-based sample of refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals in Manitoba. Participants were recruited primarily through Healthy Muslim Families (HMF) programs, professional networks, and sector coordination spaces. As a result, the findings reflect the experiences of individuals and organizations connected to this service environment.

The sample is not statistically representative of all refugee claimants or service providers in Manitoba. In particular, refugee claimant survey respondents were largely individuals who accessed services through HMF, and service provider respondents were drawn primarily from organizations within HMF's network and sector coordination tables.

While the study does not aim to produce generalizable estimates, the findings provide in-depth insights into systemic barriers as experienced within this service ecosystem. The consistency of patterns observed across multiple data sources strengthens the analytical value of the results.

## 5 Profile of Participants

This section provides a descriptive profile of respondents who participated in the Refugee Claimant Survey. The survey dataset includes responses from 36 refugee claimant respondents residing in Manitoba, all of whom reported living in Winnipeg at the time of the survey. The survey was administered in three languages: English, French, and Arabic.

### 5.1 Profile of Refugee Claimants Surveyed

#### 5.1.1 Demographic Profile

##### Language of Survey

Most respondents completed the survey in Arabic (61%), followed by English (25%) and French (14%). This distribution reflects the predominance of Arabic speakers among the respondents.

##### Gender and Age

The majority of respondents identified as men (72%), while women represented 28%. Respondents were primarily young to middle-aged adults, with the largest age group being 30–44 years (44%), followed by 18–29 years (36%). Smaller proportions were aged 45–64 or 65 and older.

##### Country of Origin

Participants reported a range of countries of origin. The largest group came from Chad (39%), followed by Sudan (19%) and Algeria (8%), with smaller numbers representing a variety of other countries. A small number of respondents did not report their country of origin.

##### Language Background

Most respondents reported Arabic as their first language (86%), with a small number indicating other languages. Consistent with this profile, many respondents reported limited English proficiency, with the majority indicating beginner or intermediate levels.

##### Religion

Nearly all respondents identified as Muslim (94%), with only a small number identifying with other religions or choosing not to respond.

##### Race/Ethnicity

Survey respondents were predominantly from racialized backgrounds, with the majority identifying as Black (77.8%). Smaller proportions identified as Middle Eastern or other racial or ethnic groups. Overall, the composition reflects a sample largely drawn from Black and other racialized refugee claimant communities.

**Table 5.1: Demographic Profile**

Variable	Category	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	26	72%
	Woman	10	28%
Age Group	18–29	13	36%
	30–44	16	44%

	45–64	6	17%
	65+	1	3%
<b>First Language</b>	Arabic	31	86%
	Other languages combined	5	14%
<b>English Skill Level</b>	Beginner	20	56%
	Intermediate	11	31%
	Advanced	1	3%
	None	1	3%
<b>Religion</b>	Muslim	34	94%
	Christian	1	3%
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	Black	28	77.8%
	Middle Eastern	4	11.1%
	Arab	1	2.8%
	South Asian	1	2.8%

Source: Refugee Claimant Survey Data. See Appendix D

### 5.1.2 Claimant Background and Entry Pathways

In addition to demographic characteristics, the survey collected information on respondents’ immigration status prior to making a refugee claim, the timing of their claims, and their entry pathways into Canada. Together, these variables provide context on respondents’ position within the refugee claim process and the pathways through which they entered it.

#### Immigration Status Prior to Claim

A substantial proportion of respondents reported that they did not have legal immigration status in Canada prior to making a refugee claim (47.2%). Smaller proportions indicated that they held temporary status, such as a visitor visa or study permit, while very few reported having a work permit. A notable share of respondents either preferred not to disclose or did not report their prior status (33.3%). Overall, these findings suggest that many respondents entered the refugee claim process from situations of limited or precarious legal status.

**Table 5.2: Immigration Status of Respondents Prior to Refugee Claim Submission**

Response	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
No legal immigration status	17	47.2%
Visitor Visa	3	8.3%
Study Permit	3	8.3%
Work Permit	1	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	9	25.0%
No response	3	8.3%

Source: Refugee Claimant Survey Data. See Appendix D

#### Timing of Refugee Claims

Most respondents reported making their refugee claims in recent years, with the largest share indicating 2024 (38.9%), followed by 2025 (25.0%). Smaller proportions reported making claims in earlier years, while 25.0% of respondents did not provide this information. Overall, this distribution suggests that the sample largely reflects recent arrivals navigating the refugee claim process in Manitoba. It should be noted, however, that these figures indicate when respondents made their refugee claim, and do not reflect the current status or outcome of those claims. But as discussed later in Section 6.1 (Complexity of the Refugee Claim Process), many respondents reported that they were still awaiting a decision on their claim at the time of the survey.

**Table 5.3: Year of Refugee Claim Submission Among Respondents**

Response	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
2025	9	25.0%
2024	14	38.9%
2023	2	5.6%
2020	2	5.6%
No response	9	25.0%

Source: Refugee Claimant Survey Data. See Appendix D

**Entry Pathways (Canada-US Land Border Crossing)**

The majority of respondents reported crossing the land border from the United States to make their refugee claim in Canada (77.8%). A much smaller proportion indicated that they did not enter through this pathway, while a small share did not provide a response. Overall, this pattern highlights the prominence of cross-border movement from the United States as a common entry pathway among respondents.

**Table 5.4: Entry Pathways of Respondents (Canada–U.S. Land Border Crossing)**

Entry Pathway	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
From USA	28	77.8%
Other	5	13.9%
Prefer not to answer	3	8.3%

Source: Refugee Claimant Survey Data. See Appendix D.

**5.2 Profile of Service Providers Surveyed**

A total of 11 responses were received from service providers supporting refugee claimants in Manitoba. Respondents represented a range of roles within their organizations, including senior leadership, program management, and frontline staff, providing perspectives from both strategic and service delivery levels.

**Organizational Roles of Respondents**

Respondents held diverse positions within their organizations, with representation from senior leadership, management, and frontline staff. The largest groups included senior leadership and

frontline or support staff (36.4% each), followed by management-level staff (27.3%). This distribution indicates that the survey captured perspectives from both organizational leadership and staff directly involved in service delivery.

**Types of Organizations**

Most participating organizations were community-based nonprofit organizations (72.7%), and a large proportion also identified as settlement service providers (63.6%). Smaller shares of respondents represented legal clinics, faith-based organizations, and other service types. As respondents could select multiple categories, many organizations reported operating across more than one service area.

**Organizational Service Capacity**

Respondents reported varying levels of service capacity. The majority indicated that their organizations serve fewer than 100 refugee claimants annually (54.5%), while smaller proportions reported serving between 100 and 500 claimants (27.3%) or more than 500 (18.2%). This variation suggests that the sample includes both smaller organizations with targeted programming and larger providers serving higher client volumes.

**Geographic Areas Served**

Most respondents reported serving refugee claimants within Winnipeg (54.5%), while others indicated broader coverage, including Manitoba-wide or multi-provincial service areas. This reflects Winnipeg’s role as the primary service hub, alongside the presence of organizations operating at broader geographic scales.

**Services Provided to Refugee Claimants**

Respondents reported providing a wide range of services to refugee claimants. The most commonly reported services included income assistance (EIA) access and navigation and interpretation or translation services (54.5% each), followed by employment support, language training, and basic needs support. Additional services included legal information, healthcare navigation, housing support, and mental health services, reflecting the multi-sector nature of support systems for refugee claimants.

Overall, the service provider survey responses reflect a diverse network of primarily community-based organizations supporting refugee claimants in Manitoba. These organizations operate across multiple service areas and scales, providing a wide range of supports related to basic needs, settlement, employment, housing, healthcare navigation, and legal assistance.

**Table 5.5. Profile of Service Providers and Organizations**

Characteristic	Category	Count (n)	Percentage (%)
<b>Role of Respondent in the Organization</b>	Senior leadership (e.g., Executive Director, CEO)	4	36.4%

	Management (e.g., Program Manager, Supervisor)	3	27.3%
	Staff (e.g., Frontline or Support Staff)	4	36.4%
	Evaluator / program planner	1	9.1%
<b>Type of Organization*</b>	Community-based nonprofit	8	72.7%
	Settlement service provider	7	63.6%
	Legal aid or legal clinic	2	18.2%
	Faith-based organization	2	18.2%
	Health service provider	1	9.1%
	Indirect settlement organization	1	9.1%
	Shelter / housing support provider	1	9.1%
<b>Number of Refugee Claimants Served Annually</b>	less than 100	6	54.5%
	100–500	3	27.3%
	More than 500	2	18.2%
<b>Geographic Area Served</b>	Winnipeg-only	6	50.0%
	Manitoba-wide	2	16.6%
	Manitoba and other provinces	4	33.3%
<b>Services Provided*</b>	Income assistance (EIA) access and navigation	6	54.5%
	Interpretation / translation services	6	54.5%
	Employment support	5	45.5%
	Language training (English/French)	5	45.5%
	Basic needs support (food, clothing, transportation)	5	45.5%
	Legal information or legal aid	4	36.4%
	Healthcare services / navigation	4	36.4%
	Housing support	4	36.4%
	Mental health services	3	27.3%

**Source:** Service Provider Survey Data. See Appendix E.

**\*Note:** Respondents could select multiple responses, so total percentages may exceed 100%.

### 5.3 Profile of Legal Professionals Interviewed

Two legal professionals working with refugee claimants in Manitoba participated in semi-structured interviews designed to capture practitioner perspectives on systemic barriers affecting refugee

claimants. Both respondents are lawyers in private practice who regularly represent refugee claimants in immigration and refugee protection proceedings.

### **Professional Role**

Both respondents reported that their primary role is providing legal representation to refugee claimants as lawyers in private practice. Their work includes preparing refugee claims, representing clients in refugee hearings, and providing legal advice on immigration and protection matters.

### **Years of Legal Practice**

Both participants indicated that they have more than five years of legal practice experience in Canada. This suggests that respondents have substantial professional experience navigating the Canadian refugee determination system.

### **Volume of Refugee Claimant Cases**

Both legal professionals reported providing legal services to more than 50 refugee claimants in the past year. This indicates that respondents work with a high volume of refugee claimant cases and have extensive experience with the challenges faced by this population.

### **Interpretation of Professional Background**

The participating legal professionals are experienced immigration and refugee lawyers with significant case exposure. Their perspectives therefore provide practice-based insights into systemic barriers within the refugee determination process, particularly in areas such as access to legal aid, interpretation services, and administrative procedures affecting refugee claimants in Manitoba. While the number of participants is small, their experience working with a large number of refugee claimant cases provides valuable practitioner perspectives on the functioning of the system.

## 6 Key Findings

### 6.1 Complexity of the Refugee Claim Process

The refugee claim process in Canada operates as a procedurally intensive system that requires claimants to navigate multiple administrative steps, including completing forms, understanding timelines, preparing documentation, and participating in hearings. For individuals who are unfamiliar with the legal system or who face language and resource constraints, these procedural requirements can create significant barriers to effectively advancing their claims.

#### Procedural Barriers in Claimant Experiences

Survey findings indicate that a substantial proportion of refugee claimants experience difficulty navigating key procedural elements of the refugee claim process. Nearly half of respondents (47.2%) reported that completing required forms was difficult, while over one-quarter identified challenges related to understanding deadlines and timelines (27.8%), the hearing process (25.0%), and documentation requirements (22.2%) (Refugee Claimant Survey, Q16). In addition, 19.4% of respondents indicated that they could not navigate the process independently despite understanding it, suggesting a reliance on external support even among those with some level of procedural awareness.

**Table 6.1: Difficulties Experienced in the Refugee Claim Process**

Difficulty Experienced	Percentage (%)
Filling out forms	47.2%
Understanding deadlines or timelines	27.8%
Understanding the hearing process	25.0%
Knowing which documents to submit	22.2%
Needed professional help	19.4%
Understanding what help or support services were available to me	16.7%
Language used in documents or interviews	11.1%
No major challenges	13.9%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Question 16. See Appendix D

**Note:** Sum of percentages can exceed 100% as respondents were allowed multiple responses.

These findings are particularly significant given that most respondents were actively engaged in the process at the time of the survey. Nearly three-quarters (72.2%) reported that they were waiting for or preparing for their refugee hearing (Refugee Claimant Survey, Q11), indicating that these challenges reflect ongoing, real-time barriers rather than retrospective perceptions.

**Table 6.2: Stage in the Refugee Claim Process Among Respondents**

Refugee Claim Stage	Percentage
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Waiting for, or preparing for refugee hearing	72.2%
Preparing/submitted Basis of Claim (BoC)	2.8%
Waiting on final decision	2.8%
Applied, or getting ready to apply for residency on H&C grounds	2.8%
Claim was not accepted	2.8%
Claim was accepted (protected person)	2.8%
Applied, or getting ready to apply for PRRA	5.6%
Prefer not to answer	2.8%
No response	5.6%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Question 11. See Appendix D

### Reliance on Legal and Organizational Support

The procedural demands of the system are closely linked to claimants’ reliance on external assistance. Half of respondents (50.0%) reported receiving support from Legal Aid lawyers, while others relied on community organizations or legal clinics (22.2%) and private lawyers (11.1%) (Refugee Claimant Survey, Q18). Only a small proportion reported not receiving help when needed (5.6%), suggesting that access to legal or organizational support is a common and often necessary component of navigating the refugee claim process.

**Table 6.3: Sources of Legal Assistance During the Refugee Claim Process**

Source of Legal Assistance	Percentage (%)
Legal Aid lawyer	50.0%
Community organization or legal clinic	22.2%
Private lawyer	11.1%
Did not receive any legal help when needed	5.6%
Did not need any help	2.8%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Question 18. See Appendix D.

Open-ended responses further highlight claimant concerns regarding procedural delays and communication barriers. Several respondents emphasized the need for faster processing timelines, with one noting that “the response time from the date of application should be reduced” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q33, AR-3), while another recommended “speed[ing] up legal procedures” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q33, AR-8). Language barriers were also identified as affecting the process, with one respondent stating that “our main problem is the language problem in the process” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q33, AR-12).

### System Navigation Challenges Identified by Service Providers

Perspectives from service providers reinforce the view that procedural complexity extends beyond individual tasks to broader system navigation challenges. Service providers reported that refugee claimants often face “long wait times, limited availability and difficulty navigating complex systems,” alongside gaps in coordination across services (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP12; SP14). These observations suggest that the complexity of the refugee claim process is

compounded by fragmentation across the systems that claimants must interact with while pursuing their claims.

### **Administrative and Procedural Constraints Identified by Legal Professionals**

Legal professionals interviewed for this study also identified administrative barriers affecting claimants' ability to engage with the process. One respondent noted that accessing Legal Aid may require online applications and phone-based confirmation, creating difficulties for claimants who lack access to technology, have limited English proficiency, or have low digital literacy (Legal Professional Interviews, Q5, LP2). This indicates that procedural requirements embedded within support systems can themselves act as barriers to access.

In addition, legal professionals reported delays within the refugee determination system, including extended wait times for hearings and instances of last-minute hearing cancellations (Legal Professional Interviews, Q9, LP1). These disruptions introduce further uncertainty into an already complex process and may prolong periods during which claimants remain in precarious conditions.

### **Summary of Findings**

Taken together, evidence from refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals indicates that the refugee claim process is characterized by significant procedural and administrative complexity. Challenges related to completing forms, understanding timelines, accessing support, and navigating multiple systems are not isolated issues but reflect broader structural features of the process.

These findings suggest that procedural complexity functions as a key dimension of the claimant experience, shaping how individuals access legal processes and related supports. In practice, the ability to successfully navigate the refugee claim process depends not only on legal eligibility but also on access to information, language support, and professional or community-based assistance.

## **6.2 Language and Interpretation Barriers**

Language proficiency plays a critical role in refugee claimants' ability to understand administrative procedures, communicate with service providers, and access essential services. Many aspects of the refugee determination process and related service systems operate primarily in English or French. As a result, limited proficiency in these languages can create barriers at multiple stages of the claim process. The linguistic background and English language proficiency of survey respondents therefore provide important context for understanding how language barriers shape claimant experiences.

### **Language Proficiency of Survey Respondents**

Survey data indicates that a substantial proportion of refugee claimants in this study have limited English proficiency. The majority of respondents (86.1%) reported Arabic as their first language, with smaller proportions identifying other languages (Refugee Claimant Survey, Q3). Consistent

with this profile, more than half of respondents (55.6%) reported beginner-level English proficiency, while 30.6% reported intermediate proficiency. Only a very small proportion reported advanced proficiency (2.8%) or no English at all (2.8%) (Refugee Claimant Survey, Q4).

These findings suggest that many claimants are navigating legal and administrative systems in a language in which they have limited proficiency, highlighting the importance of language support in accessing services and understanding procedural requirements.

**Table 6.4: First Language Distribution of Refugee Claimants**

<b>First Language</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Arabic	86.1%
Bangla	2.8%
Bilen and Tigrinya	2.8%
English	2.8%
French	2.8%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q3. See Appendix D.

**Table 6.5: Self-Reported English Language Proficiency**

<b>English Language Proficiency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Beginner	55.6%
Intermediate	30.6%
Advanced	2.8%
Do not understand English at all	2.8%
No response	8.3%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q4 (See Appendix D)

### **Language Barriers in Accessing Services**

Survey responses indicate that language barriers affected some claimants’ ability to communicate with service providers and access support. One-quarter of respondents (25.0%) reported difficulty explaining their situation to staff or service providers, while 16.7% reported difficulty understanding written documents or filling out forms, and another 16.7% reported difficulty understanding spoken communication (Refugee Claimant Survey, Q20).

While 22.2% of respondents reported no language-related problems, qualitative responses suggest that language barriers can have a significant impact on those who experience them. For example, one respondent noted that “our main problem is the language problem in the process” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q33, AR-12).

These findings indicate that language barriers can affect multiple aspects of service access, including communication, comprehension, and the ability to complete administrative tasks.

**Table 6.6: Language-Related Barriers in Accessing Services**

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Trouble explaining situation	25.0%
No language-related problems	22.2%
Trouble filling forms/understanding documents	16.7%
Trouble understanding others	16.7%
Not offered interpreter when needed	5.6%
Language help unclear or ineffective	5.6%
Prefer not to answer	13.9%
No response	11.1%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey, Q20 (See Appendix D)

**Note:** As this was a multiple-response question, percentages may exceed 100%.

### **Service Provider Perspectives on Communication Barriers**

Evidence from service providers reinforces the importance of language as a barrier to accessing services. In the Service Provider Survey, 54.5% of respondents identified language or interpretation barriers as affecting claimants’ ability to access services provided by their organizations (Service Provider Survey, Q7).

Qualitative responses further suggest that language barriers are closely linked to broader information gaps. One respondent noted that claimants often “don’t receive information in depth,” indicating that communication challenges may limit claimants’ understanding of available services and processes (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP-11). These findings suggest that language barriers may interact with broader issues related to information accessibility and clarity.

### **Legal Perspectives on Interpretation Challenges**

Legal professionals interviewed for this study highlighted additional challenges related to interpretation services within legal processes. One respondent noted that while interpretation is generally available for major languages, it may be less reliable for certain dialects or less commonly spoken languages (Legal Professional Interviews, Q8, LP-1).

Legal professionals also emphasized that communication barriers can affect interactions between lawyers and clients, as well as proceedings before the Refugee Protection Division. In some cases, differences in dialect or terminology may lead to misunderstandings that affect case preparation and communication (Legal Professional Interviews, Q8, LP-1).

### **Summary of Findings**

Altogether, evidence from refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals indicates that language and interpretation barriers affect multiple stages of the refugee claimant experience. While not all claimants reported language difficulties, the data suggests that those who do may encounter challenges in understanding procedures, communicating with service providers, and accessing services.

These findings suggest that language access functions as a cross-cutting system condition rather than a discrete barrier. In practice, limited language proficiency can amplify procedural complexity, restrict access to information, and increase reliance on external support. As a result, language accessibility plays a central role in shaping how refugee claimants navigate legal and service systems.

### **6.3 Delayed or Restricted Access to Services**

Access to essential services for refugee claimants in Manitoba is often shaped not only by need, but by the timing of immigration processes, the availability of documentation, and eligibility criteria across different systems. Evidence from refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals indicates that these factors can delay or restrict access to income assistance, healthcare, employment, and other supports, particularly during the early stages of the refugee claim process.

#### **Documentation and Eligibility Barriers to Service Access**

Access to provincially administered services frequently depends on the ability of claimants to provide documentation confirming their immigration status. Legal professionals highlighted that administrative requirements across systems can create barriers where similar documentation is required by multiple programs. One lawyer noted that Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) often requires proof or a letter confirming refugee claimant status, and in some cases, this overlaps with documentation required by Legal Aid Manitoba (Legal Professional Interviews Data, Q9, LP1).

These requirements can be difficult to meet for newly arrived claimants who may still be in the process of formalizing their claim or obtaining official documentation. As a result, access to services may be delayed even where claimants have immediate needs.

Service providers similarly identified eligibility restrictions as a key barrier within their own programs. Nearly half of respondents (45.5%) reported that eligibility criteria limit access to services offered by their organizations (Service Provider Survey Data, Q7). These findings suggest that access barriers are not limited to government programs but also exist within community-based services, further constraining available support options.

#### **Delays in Access to Income Support**

Survey data from refugee claimants indicate that while many individuals are able to access income assistance, this access is not always timely or consistent. Approximately two-thirds of respondents (66.7%) reported receiving Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), while smaller proportions reported gaps in support, including individuals who did not receive assistance when needed (8.3%) or who were told they did not qualify after applying (5.6%) (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q24).

Open-ended responses further highlight instability in access to income support. One respondent explained, “For the first 3 months I got EIA support after that no more EIA support” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q25, EN-6).

These findings suggest that even where access to income assistance is initially granted, continuity of support may be uncertain, contributing to financial instability during the refugee claim process.

**Table 6.7: Reported Financial Support Received by Refugee Claimants**

<b>Financial Support</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Applied for and received EIA	66.7%
Did not receive help when needed	8.3%
Got financial help from a community or charity organization	8.3%
Got financial help from family or friends	5.6%
Applied for EIA but did not qualify	5.6%
Did not need financial help	2.8%
I prefer not to answer	5.6%
No response	8.3%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q24. See Appendix D.

### **Administrative and System Navigation Constraints**

Beyond formal eligibility requirements, administrative processes themselves can delay access to services. Refugee claimants are often required to complete applications, verify information, and navigate multiple systems simultaneously in order to access supports. Legal professionals emphasized that these administrative processes can be particularly challenging for individuals who lack access to phones, digital tools, or language support, yet are expected to complete online applications and follow-up procedures independently (Legal Professionals Interview Data, Q5, LP2).

These barriers are not limited to a single system but arise across multiple service domains, including legal aid, income assistance, and other support programs. As a result, delays in one system may have cascading effects on access to other services.

### **Cumulative Effects on Access to Services**

Taken together, the findings indicate that delays or restrictions in access to services are not isolated incidents but reflect broader structural features of the system. Documentation requirements, eligibility criteria, and administrative procedures interact in ways that can create gaps between when claimants need support and when they are able to access it.

Service providers highlighted the implications of these gaps and recommended more coordinated approaches to service delivery. One respondent suggested introducing, “centralized intake” and “integrated service delivery” to avoid scattering services across multiple agencies (Service Provider Survey Data, Q10, SP7). Another proposed, “a centralized reception centre with case management” to help guide claimants through available services and improve coordination (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP14). Similarly, other respondents pointed to models such as, “centralized settlement hubs” or “one-stop service centres” that combine multiple supports in a single location (Service Provider Survey Data, Q11, SP12).

These recommendations reflect a recognition that access barriers are closely linked to how services are organized and delivered across systems.

Overall, the findings suggest that access to services for refugee claimants is shaped not only by formal eligibility, but by the sequencing of processes, the availability of documentation, and the ability to navigate administrative requirements across multiple systems. Delays and restrictions in access can therefore create periods of vulnerability during which claimants may be unable to meet basic needs despite having immediate and legitimate need for support.

### 6.4 Housing Conditions and Pathways to Accommodation

Access to stable and affordable housing is a critical factor shaping the wellbeing and settlement experiences of refugee claimants. While awaiting decisions on their refugee claims, many claimants must secure housing without the financial stability, employment opportunities, or institutional supports available to permanent residents or government-assisted refugees. As a result, housing insecurity can become a significant challenge during the early stages of the refugee claim process.

Survey findings provide insight into the housing conditions and living arrangements of refugee claimants while awaiting the outcome of their claims. As reflected in Table 6.8, approximately two-thirds of respondents (66.7%) reported living in shared housing arrangements, while less than one-fifth (19.4%) reported renting their own apartment or house independently. A very small proportion reported living in temporary housing arrangements (5.6%) (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q15). These findings indicate that shared housing is a common living arrangement among surveyed claimants and may reflect financial constraints or limited access to independent housing options.

**Table 6.8: Current Housing or Living Arrangements of Refugee Claimants Surveyed**

Housing	Percentage (%)
Shared rental (house/apartment)	66.7%
Rent alone	19.4%
Temporary housing	5.6%
Prefer not to answer	8.3%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q15. See Appendix D.

Legal professionals interviewed for this study also noted that some refugee claimants face challenges in securing stable housing, with one lawyer observing that some claimants are living in shelters while navigating the refugee claim process (Legal Professional Interviews Data, Q10, LP2).

Survey data further indicates that refugee claimants often rely on a range of emergency or informal supports to secure housing. As shown in Table 6.9, over one-quarter of respondents (27.8%) reported receiving assistance from shelters, while smaller proportions reported receiving support from settlement agencies or community organizations (13.9%) or from friends or family members (11.1%). A very small proportion reported receiving assistance from Manitoba Housing (5.6%), while a similar proportion indicated that they did not receive any help with housing when needed (13.9%) (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q26).

Open-ended responses further illustrate the types of supports claimants relied on. Respondents identified organizations such as the Salvation Army and Welcome Place as sources of assistance, while others reported receiving help from Siloam Mission, New Journey Housing, or from personal networks such as friends and family (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q27). These responses indicate that housing pathways for many claimants involve a combination of emergency shelters, temporary arrangements, community-based supports, and informal networks rather than a single, coordinated source of housing.

**Table 6.9: Reported Sources of Support for Housing Needs**

<b>Source of Housing Support</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
from a shelter	27.8%
from a settlement agency or community organization	13.9%
from a friend or family member	11.1%
Did not get any help with housing when needed	13.9%
Did not need any help with housing	2.8%
from Manitoba Housing	5.6%
Prefer not to answer	8.3%
No response	13.9%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q26 (see Appendix D)

Service providers participating in the Service Provider Survey similarly identified housing as a significant gap in the support system for refugee claimants. More than half of respondents indicated that housing support is currently missing or inadequate (Service Provider Survey Data, Q8). When asked to explain these challenges, respondents emphasized that the availability of affordable housing remains limited. For example, one service provider noted that “there is often not enough affordable housing” for refugee claimants, alongside broader challenges such as long wait times and difficulty navigating complex systems (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP12).

Taken together, these findings indicate that refugee claimants in this study access housing through a combination of shared living arrangements, community-based supports, and informal networks. These patterns suggest that housing pathways are often multi-faceted and may reflect constraints in accessing independent and coordinated housing options.

## **6.5 Employment Barriers and Financial Insecurity**

Financial stability during the refugee claim process is shaped by access to employment, work authorization, and income supports. Evidence from this study indicates that refugee claimants in Manitoba experience structural barriers across all three areas, contributing to periods of prolonged financial insecurity while claims are pending.

### **Employment Status of Refugee Claimants**

Survey responses indicate that labour market participation among refugee claimant respondents was limited. As shown in Table 6.10, nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.9%) reported that they were not currently working but were actively seeking employment. By comparison, only a small

proportion reported working full-time (8.3%), while just over one-tenth reported working part-time (11.1%) (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q14). A very small proportion of respondents indicated that they were not working because they did not yet have a work permit (5.6%).

These patterns indicate that a significant proportion of refugee claimants experience barriers to entering the labour market during the claim period, even where there is willingness to work.

Open-ended responses further illustrate these challenges. For example, one respondent stated, “I want at this time, opportunity to find job” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q33, EN-13), while another indicated the need for “more help to get jobs in our fields of expertise” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q33, AR-22). These responses suggest that access to employment opportunities, including work aligned with prior skills and experience, remains limited for some claimants.

**Table 6.10: Employment Status of Refugee Claimants Surveyed**

<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Not working but looking for a job	63.9%
Working full-time	8.3%
Working part-time	11.1%
Not working due to no work permit	5.6%
Not working for personal reasons	2.8%
Self-employed or working casually	5.6%
Prefer not to answer	2.8%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q14. See Appendix D.

### **Work Authorization and Administrative Barriers to Employment**

Access to employment is closely linked to work authorization and administrative processes. Some respondents reported delays in obtaining the documentation required to work legally in Canada. For example, one respondent noted, “I am waiting for my work permit” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q33, FR-7). Another respondent indicated that they required legal assistance “filling out the claim form to obtain work papers” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q19, AR-21), highlighting the role of procedural requirements in accessing employment.

Service providers similarly emphasized the importance of timely work authorization. One respondent identified “faster work permits” as a key policy priority (Service Provider Survey Data, Q10, SP6), while another noted that “delays in work permits and income access increase financial instability” (Service Provider Survey Data, Q10, SP11).

Legal professionals also pointed to administrative barriers affecting access to income supports during this period. One interviewee noted that refugee claimants may encounter difficulties accessing Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) while waiting for documentation confirming their claim status (Legal Professional Interviews Data, Q11, LP1).

Taken together, these findings indicate that delayed work authorization and documentation requirements can limit access to employment and income supports during the early stages of the refugee claim process.

### Reliance on Income Assistance and Financial Supports

Survey findings indicate that many refugee claimants rely on income assistance while awaiting claim outcomes. As shown in Table 6.11, approximately two-thirds of respondents (66.7%) reported receiving Employment and Income Assistance (EIA).

However, responses also indicate gaps and inconsistencies in financial support. A small proportion of respondents (8.3%) reported that they did not receive any financial assistance when needed, while 5.6% indicated that they had applied for EIA but were told they did not qualify. Additional respondents reported relying on alternative sources of support, including community or charitable organizations (8.3%) and family or friends (5.6%) (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q24).

Open-ended responses further highlight instability in income supports. For example, one respondent reported, “For the first 3 months I got EIA support after that no more EIA support” (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q25, EN-6).

These findings suggest that while EIA serves as a primary source of financial assistance for many claimants, access to support may be inconsistent for some individuals, contributing to financial uncertainty during the claim period.

**Table 6.11: Sources of Financial Assistance Among Refugee Claimants Surveyed**

Sources of Financial Assistance	Percentage (%)
Applied for and received EIA	66.7%
Did not receive help when needed	8.3%
Got financial help from a community or charity organization	8.3%
Got financial help from family or friends	5.6%
Applied for EIA but did not qualify	5.6%
Did not need financial help	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	5.6%
No response	8.3%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q24 (see Appendix D)

### Service Provider and Legal Perspectives on Economic Hardship

Service provider responses reinforce these patterns. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (63.6%) identified employment support as a service that is currently missing or inadequate for refugee claimants in Manitoba (Service Provider Survey Data, Q8).

Qualitative responses highlight persistent challenges related to employment access. One service provider noted that “unemployment is still very high among RCs” (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP4), while another indicated that claimants are seeking “employment placements and/or

training that has direct connection to job vacancies” (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP6). Another respondent observed that existing employment programs “aren’t designed with refugee claimants in mind” and often focus on general job search support rather than rapid job placement (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP14).

Legal professionals similarly noted that financial hardship is a common experience among refugee claimants during the claim period. One interviewee explained that many claimants don’t have a job or are low income earners, reflecting broader constraints on economic participation while navigating the refugee determination process (Legal Professional Interviews Data, Q10, LP2).

These perspectives indicate that employment barriers are not limited to individual circumstances but are also shaped by program design and gaps in targeted employment supports for refugee claimants.

### **Structural Dimensions of Financial Insecurity**

Across data sources, a consistent pattern emerges in which access to employment, income assistance, and financial stability is shaped by the sequencing and interaction of administrative processes. Delays in obtaining work authorization can limit access to employment, increasing reliance on income assistance programs. At the same time, documentation requirements and eligibility criteria may delay or restrict access to those supports.

Taken together, these findings indicate that financial insecurity among refugee claimants is not incidental but arises from the interaction of delayed work authorization, limited access to employment opportunities, and inconsistencies in income support systems. These factors create conditions in which claimants may experience prolonged economic precarity while navigating the refugee determination process.

## **6.6 Access to Healthcare and Coverage Gaps**

Healthcare access emerged as a concern for a portion of refugee claimants participating in this study. Evidence from the Refugee Claimant Survey indicates that while many respondents were able to obtain healthcare without major difficulty, a notable share experienced barriers related to communication with healthcare providers, navigating the healthcare system, and the cost or coverage of medical services. Perspectives from the Service Provider Survey and the Legal Professional Interviews further suggest that these challenges are connected to broader structural factors, including eligibility requirements, delays in accessing certain supports, and limitations in the coverage available to refugee claimants.

### **Healthcare Access Experiences Reported by Refugee Claimants**

Findings from the Refugee Claimant Survey provide insight into the types of healthcare barriers experienced by claimants. Respondents were asked whether they or their family members had experienced any problems accessing healthcare while living in Manitoba as refugee claimants. As seen in Table 6.12, just over one-third of respondents (36.1%) indicated that they had not experienced problems accessing healthcare. However, several respondents reported some challenges.

Nearly one-fifth of respondents (19.4%) reported difficulty communicating with medical staff due to language barriers, while smaller proportions indicated that they did not know where to go to obtain medical help (13.9%). Additional respondents reported financial and coverage-related barriers, including being unable to afford needed medication (8.3%) or being told that their health issue was not covered (8.3%). A very small proportion of respondents reported other barriers, including that clinic or hospital staff did not understand their situation as a refugee claimant (2.8%) or that they had not yet applied for a health card (2.8%) (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q22).

**Table 6.12: Healthcare Access Challenges Reported by Refugee Claimants**

<b>Healthcare Access Challenges</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
No problems accessing medical help	36.1%
Trouble communicating with medical staff (language)	19.4%
Did not know where to go for medical help	13.9%
Could not afford needed medication	8.3%
Was told health issue not covered	8.3%
Staff did not understand claimant situation	2.8%
Had not yet applied for health card	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	11.1%
No response	11.1%

**Source:** Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q22. See Appendix D

These responses suggest that healthcare access challenges for refugee claimants are not limited to a single issue but instead reflect a combination of communication barriers, system navigation difficulties, and financial or coverage limitations. Language barriers, in particular, can affect interactions with healthcare providers by making it more difficult for claimants to explain medical symptoms, understand diagnoses, or follow treatment instructions. The fact that several respondents reported not knowing where to seek medical help also indicates gaps in information and orientation about how to access healthcare services after arriving in Manitoba (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q22).

**Structural Barriers Identified by Service Providers**

Evidence from the Service Provider Survey reinforces the concerns identified by refugee claimants. As reflected in responses to Question 8 in the survey, nearly two-thirds of service providers (63.6%) identified healthcare services or healthcare navigation support as areas where gaps exist (Service Provider Survey Data, Q8).

Service providers also highlighted structural barriers affecting healthcare access. One respondent noted that refugee claimants often face delays in accessing funded services, explaining that:

“Refugee claimants don't receive any of the funded services unless they have submitted their claim. A work permit usually helps them access limited services but they have to wait long to receive English classes or healthcare support. Health care is a big issue since they do not get

healthcare services or support and have to pay for it themselves.” (Service Provider Survey, Q9, SP5)

Another respondent emphasized that the scope of available healthcare coverage can sometimes be insufficient, stating: “Healthcare: Sometimes more than the basic coverage is needed.” (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP9). Similarly, another service provider highlighted the importance of timely access to healthcare, noting that, “Refugee claimants need immediate healthcare support and they cannot access that until they are on IFHP.” (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP14)

Taken together, these responses suggest that healthcare access challenges arise not only from individual circumstances but also from broader structural factors, including eligibility requirements, delays in accessing certain supports, and gaps between claimants’ healthcare needs and the coverage available to them.

### **Legal Perspectives on System Navigation Challenges**

Insights from the Legal Professional Interviews provide additional context regarding the systemic barriers faced by refugee claimants when accessing services. Though one of the legal professionals remarked that aside from issues connected to documentation and access to income assistance, healthcare-specific concerns had not been raised frequently by their clients; the other legal professional noted that refugee claimants often experience broader challenges navigating administrative systems while awaiting documentation confirming their claim status (Legal Professional Interview Data, Q11). Language barriers were also identified as a major difficulty affecting claimants’ ability to navigate services more generally (Legal Professionals Interview Data, Q9, LP2).

Taken together, the findings from refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals suggest that healthcare access challenges for refugee claimants arise from a combination of communication barriers, limited system navigation support, and gaps in coverage or affordability. While a significant share of claimants reported being able to obtain medical care without difficulty, the evidence indicates that a notable portion encounter obstacles that can complicate their ability to access healthcare during the refugee claim process.

## **6.7 Fragmented Service Systems and Navigation Burden**

Refugee claimants must often navigate multiple legal, administrative, and social service systems simultaneously while their claims are being processed. These systems include federal immigration procedures, legal aid services, provincial income assistance programs, healthcare systems, housing supports, and community-based settlement services. Since these services are delivered by different institutions with distinct eligibility rules and procedures, refugee claimants may find it difficult to determine where to seek assistance or how to move between different programs. Evidence from the surveys and interviews conducted for this study suggests that fragmentation across these systems can create significant navigation challenges for individuals seeking support.

## **Complexity of Administrative and Service Systems**

Survey evidence further indicates that refugee claimants in Manitoba frequently encounter difficulties navigating the multiple administrative and service systems that affect their settlement and wellbeing. Claimants often interact with several institutions simultaneously, including immigration authorities, legal aid services, housing providers, healthcare systems, and provincial social assistance programs, while attempting to understand procedures and documentation requirements associated with their refugee claim.

As seen in Table 6.1, nearly half of respondents (47.2%) reported that completing forms associated with the refugee claim process was difficult (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q16). Difficulties understanding forms, documentation requirements, and procedural steps can make it harder for claimants to identify appropriate services and move through different support systems effectively. These findings suggest that procedural complexity itself contributes to broader system navigation challenges.

## **Fragmentation and Coordination Gaps Identified by Service Providers**

Service providers working with refugee claimants also described challenges related to fragmented systems and difficulties navigating available supports. In the Service Provider Survey, several respondents emphasized that refugee claimants must often interact with multiple programs and institutions that are not always well coordinated. One respondent remarked that “many refugee claimants face long wait times, limited availability and difficulty navigating complex systems” (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP12). Another respondent highlighted coordination gaps within the broader support system, noting that “coordination of the system that supports refugee claimants is lacking” (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP14). These qualitative insights suggest that the distribution of services across multiple agencies and programs can make it difficult for claimants to identify where to seek help or how to access available supports.

## **Barriers Accessing Community-Based Services**

Service providers also reported that refugee claimants encounter barriers when attempting to access services offered by their organizations. As reflected in responses to Question 7, over half of respondents (54.5%) identified language and interpretation barriers as making it difficult for claimants to access services, while nearly half (45.5%) identified eligibility restrictions as a barrier to accessing those services (Service Provider Survey Data, Q7).

Given that refugee claimants often rely on multiple community organizations to obtain legal information, housing support, healthcare navigation, and other services, barriers within individual programs can further complicate the overall process of accessing support. These findings suggest that challenges within community-based service delivery systems can compound broader system navigation difficulties faced by refugee claimants.

## **Administrative Navigation Challenges Identified by Legal Professionals**

Legal professionals interviewed for this study similarly highlighted administrative navigation challenges affecting refugee claimants. One lawyer explained that the process of applying for Legal Aid Manitoba can be difficult for newly arrived claimants because many individuals lack the tools required to complete administrative procedures independently. According to this respondent, some claimants do not have a phone, have little or no English language ability, or lack digital literacy skills, yet they are expected to apply for Legal Aid through an online portal and confirm their information through follow-up phone calls (Legal Professional Interviews Data, Q5, LP2). The same lawyer also noted that navigating administrative systems in order to access services is difficult and therefore challenging for refugee claimants (Legal Professionals Interview Data, Q11, LP2). These observations suggest that administrative requirements within legal and support systems can create additional barriers for claimants who are unfamiliar with local procedures or lack access to communication and technology resources.

Recognizing these challenges, several service providers recommended greater coordination and integration of services for refugee claimants. One respondent suggested introducing “centralized intake” and “integrated service delivery” in order to avoid scattering services across multiple agencies (Service Provider Survey Data, Q10, SP7). Another service provider proposed establishing “a centralized reception centre with case management,” which could help guide refugee claimants through available services and improve coordination between services (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP14). Respondents also pointed to examples from other jurisdictions where “centralized settlement hubs” or “one-stop service centres” combine legal, housing, employment, and language supports in a single location (Service Provider Survey Data, Q11, SP12). These recommendations suggest that improved coordination between service providers and government programs could help reduce navigation barriers and improve refugee claimants’ access to essential supports.

## **6.8 Role of Community Organizations as System Navigators**

As discussed in the previous section, fragmentation across service systems can create significant navigation challenges for refugee claimants. In this context, community-based and settlement organizations—non-profit organizations that provide services such as settlement guidance, referrals, and assistance navigating administrative processes—often play an important role in helping claimants access services and understand available supports. Refugee claimants may need to interact with multiple institutions, including immigration authorities, legal aid services, provincial income assistance programs, healthcare providers, housing systems, and community organizations, each with their own procedures and eligibility requirements. As a result, community organizations frequently function as important entry points through which claimants obtain information, referrals, and assistance navigating these systems.

### **Role of Community Organizations in the Service Landscape**

Evidence from the Service Provider Survey indicates that organizations responding to the survey serve substantial numbers of refugee claimants each year in Manitoba (Service Provider Survey Data, Q4). This suggests that community and settlement organizations represent important points of contact within the broader service ecosystem. At the same time, service providers reported that

claimants often encounter difficulties navigating available programs and services. For example, one respondent explained that “many refugee claimants face long wait times, limited availability and difficulty navigating complex systems” (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP12). Another respondent highlighted coordination challenges across the service landscape, stating that “coordination of the system that supports refugee claimants is lacking” and suggesting that “a centralized reception centre with case management would really help” (Service Provider Survey Data, Q9, SP14). In addition, respondents identified several barriers affecting services delivered by their own organizations, including language and interpretation barriers, eligibility restrictions, and long wait times (Service Provider Survey Data, Q7). These findings suggest that community organizations often operate within complex service environments while attempting to assist refugee claimants.

### **Support Provided by Community Organizations to Refugee Claimants**

Evidence from the Refugee Claimant Survey further demonstrates the role these organizations play in supporting claimants. Several respondents reported that they had received legal assistance when preparing or submitting their refugee claim (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q18). Follow-up responses indicate that this assistance was sometimes provided through community organizations or legal service providers, including Healthy Muslim Families, and Welcome Place (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q19).

In addition to legal assistance, respondents also identified a range of community organizations that had been helpful to them during their time as refugee claimants. These included Healthy Muslim Families, Welcome Place, IRCOM, Family Dynamics, the Canadian Muslim Women’s Institute, Infojustice Manitoba, New Journey Housing, and NPower Canada (Refugee Claimant Survey Data, Q30).

### **Legal Perspectives on the Role of Community Organizations**

Perspectives from legal professionals interviewed for this study also highlight the important role that community organizations play in helping refugee claimants access services. One respondent explained that newly arrived claimants often face technical barriers when applying for Legal Aid, including lack of phones, limited English proficiency, and low digital literacy. As a result, “without community support, refugee claimants cannot access the system on their own, so guidance from community organizations is very important” (Legal Professionals Interview Data, Q5, LP2). This observation suggests that community organizations frequently serve as critical intermediaries helping claimants navigate administrative systems and obtain legal and settlement support.

Taken together, evidence from all three data sources indicates that community and settlement organizations play a significant role in helping refugee claimants navigate complex service systems and access essential supports. While these organizations provide important assistance, their prominent role in facilitating access to services may also reflect broader challenges within existing institutional systems, which can be difficult for newly arrived claimants to navigate independently.

## **7 Policy Implications**

The findings of this study indicate that the barriers experienced by refugee claimants are not isolated issues within individual programs, but are the result of how multiple systems interact. The implications therefore point toward the need for system-level policy responses, rather than isolated programmatic adjustments.

### **7.1 The Refugee Claim Process Operates as a Navigation-Intensive System**

As discussed in Section 6.1 (Complexity of the Refugee Claim Process), the refugee claim process involves multiple procedural steps that many claimants find difficult to navigate, including completing forms, understanding timelines, preparing documentation, and responding to procedural requirements. These challenges are further compounded by administrative delays and system-level disruptions identified in the same section.

Taken together, these findings suggest that access to refugee protection is shaped not only by legal eligibility but also by an individual's ability to navigate complex administrative processes. A system that relies heavily on procedural navigation may disproportionately disadvantage individuals with limited language proficiency, limited familiarity with legal systems, or limited access to professional support. Procedural complexity therefore functions as a structural barrier within the refugee determination system.

### **7.2 Language Access Functions as a System-Wide Constraint**

As discussed in Section 6.2 (Language and Interpretation Barriers), language barriers affect claimants' ability to understand procedures, communicate with service providers, and participate in legal processes. These challenges are not confined to isolated interactions but arise across multiple systems that refugee claimants must navigate.

Findings across Section 6.1 (Complexity of the Refugee Claim Process) and Section 6.3 (Delayed or Restricted Access to Services) further indicate that language barriers interact with procedural complexity and administrative requirements, making it more difficult for claimants to complete forms, understand eligibility criteria, and access services. In addition, evidence in Section 6.2 highlights limitations in interpretation services, particularly for certain languages and dialects.

These patterns suggest that language access should be understood as a foundational system requirement rather than a supplementary service. Inconsistent or inadequate interpretation and communication supports can limit claimants' ability to exercise their rights and access essential services effectively.

### **7.3 Immigration Status and Documentation Rules Shape Access to Services**

As discussed in Section 6.3 (Delayed or Restricted Access to Services), access to many essential supports is mediated by immigration status and the availability of documentation confirming that status. Requirements related to proof of claim submission, work authorization, and eligibility criteria can delay or restrict access to income assistance, healthcare, and other services.

Findings in Section 6.5 (Employment Barriers and Financial Insecurity) and Section 6.6 (Healthcare Access Challenges) further indicate that these delays have broader implications for claimants' financial stability and access to healthcare. In particular, delays in obtaining work permits and documentation can contribute to prolonged periods during which claimants are unable to access employment or fully benefit from available support.

These findings suggest that the structure and timing of federal immigration processes have significant downstream effects on access to provincially administered services. Gaps between systems can create periods of vulnerability during which claimants are unable to access supports despite having immediate needs.

#### **7.4 Housing Instability Reflects Both Market Constraints and System Gaps**

As discussed in Section 6.4 (Housing Instability), many refugee claimants experience precarious housing conditions, including reliance on shared housing, shelters, and informal support networks. These patterns reflect both financial constraints and limited access to stable and affordable housing options.

Findings in Section 6.3 (Delayed or Restricted Access to Services) and Section 6.7 (Fragmented Service Systems) further indicate that housing instability is shaped by broader system-level factors, including delays in accessing supports and gaps in coordination across service systems. Service providers also identified limitations in emergency and transitional housing options, particularly for families and vulnerable groups.

These findings suggest that housing instability among refugee claimants is not only a function of market conditions but also reflects gaps in policy design, service coordination, and targeted support mechanisms. Housing access is therefore closely linked to broader questions of system navigation and service integration.

#### **7.5 Economic Insecurity is Structurally Embedded During the Claim Period**

As discussed in Section 6.5 (Employment Barriers and Financial Insecurity), many refugee claimants experience limited access to employment and rely on income support while awaiting decisions on their claims. Delays in obtaining work authorization, combined with barriers in accessing employment opportunities, contribute to prolonged periods of financial insecurity.

Findings in Section 6.3 (Delayed or Restricted Access to Services) also indicate that access to income supports such as Employment and Income Assistance can be delayed by documentation requirements and eligibility criteria. Together, these factors create conditions in which claimants may struggle to meet basic needs during the claim period.

These findings suggest that economic insecurity is not incidental but is structurally embedded within the timing and design of the refugee claim process. Access to employment and income support plays a critical role in shaping claimants' ability to achieve stability while navigating the system.

## **7.6 Fragmented Service Systems Create Significant Navigation Barriers**

As discussed in Section 6.7 (Fragmented Service Systems), refugee claimants must navigate multiple systems—federal, provincial, and community-based—that operate with different rules, procedures, and eligibility criteria. This fragmentation can make it difficult for claimants to identify where to seek assistance and how to move between services.

Findings in Section 6.3 (Delayed or Restricted Access to Services) and Section 6.6 (Healthcare Access Challenges) further indicate that administrative complexity, documentation requirements, and language barriers can intensify these navigation challenges. The lack of coordination across systems may result in delays, duplication of effort, and gaps in access to services.

These patterns suggest that navigation challenges are not solely individual-level issues but are embedded within the structure of service delivery. Without more integrated or coordinated approaches, claimants may continue to face systemic barriers when attempting to access support.

## **7.7 Community Organizations Function as De Facto System Navigators**

As discussed in Section 6.8 (Reliance on Community and Settlement Organizations), community-based and settlement organizations play a central role in helping refugee claimants navigate complex systems and access services. Claimants frequently rely on these organizations for legal assistance, interpretation, referrals, and general system navigation.

Findings in Section 6.1 (Complexity of the Refugee Claim Process) and Section 6.7 (Fragmented Service Systems) further indicate that this reliance is closely linked to procedural complexity and system fragmentation. Community organizations often act as intermediaries, helping claimants overcome barriers that arise within formal institutional systems.

These findings suggest that community organizations are effectively functioning as de facto navigation infrastructure within the refugee support system. However, their ability to sustain this role is shaped by funding, staffing, and resource constraints, raising important questions about the long-term sustainability of this model.

## 8 Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations are derived from the findings presented in Section 6 (Key Findings) and are intended to address structural barriers affecting refugee claimants' access to services and the refugee determination process.

### 8.1 Federal Government (IRCC, IRB and related federal systems)

#### 8.1.1 Simplify and standardize claimant-facing procedures

**Problem:** As discussed in Section 6.1 (Complexity of the Refugee Claim Process) and Section 6.2 (Language and Interpretation Barriers), many refugee claimants experience difficulty completing required forms, understanding timelines, and navigating documentation requirements, particularly where language barriers are present. These challenges contribute to delays, errors, and increased reliance on external support.

**Recommendation:** The federal government, through IRCC and the Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB), should simplify, standardize, and improve accessibility of claimant-facing procedures. This could include redesigning forms and communication materials using plain-language standards, providing translations of key documents in commonly used languages, and developing clear, step-by-step guidance for each stage of the refugee claim process. In addition, expanding assisted application supports—both digital and in-person—would help ensure that claimants can complete procedural requirements accurately and in a timely manner.

#### Implementation Mechanisms:

- Redesign core forms and instructions using plain-language standards
- Provide official translations of key documents in commonly used claimant languages
- Develop step-by-step procedural guides for each stage of the claim process
- Introduce digital and in-person assisted application supports
- Standardize communication formats across IRCC and IRB to reduce inconsistencies

#### Expected Outcomes:

- Improved claimant understanding of procedures
- Reduced errors and delays in application processing
- Decreased reliance on external intermediaries for basic navigation

#### 8.1.2 Reduce processing delays and improve system predictability

**Problem:** As identified in Section 6.1 (Complexity of the Refugee Claim Process) and supported by legal professional interviews, delays in hearings and last-minute cancellations contribute to prolonged uncertainty and instability for refugee claimants. These delays can affect claimants' ability to access services, secure housing, and maintain financial stability while awaiting decisions.

**Recommendation:** The federal government should reduce processing delays and improve transparency and predictability within the refugee determination system. This could include

increasing adjudication capacity at the IRB, establishing and publishing service standards for key processing stages, and introducing safeguards to reduce last-minute hearing cancellations. Providing claimants with clearer information on expected timelines and case status updates would also help improve system transparency and reduce uncertainty.

**Implementation Mechanisms:**

- Establish and publish service standards for key processing stages (e.g., time to hearing)
- Increase IRB adjudication capacity through additional staffing or resources
- Implement case scheduling safeguards to reduce last-minute cancellations
- Provide claimants with real-time case status updates and expected timelines

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Reduced waiting periods for hearings and decisions
- Greater predictability for claimants and service providers
- Improved system efficiency and reduced administrative disruptions

### **8.1.3 Accelerate Work Authorization for Refugee Claimants**

**Problem:** As discussed in Section 6.5 (Employment Barriers and Financial Insecurity), delays in obtaining work permits limit claimants' ability to access employment and contribute to prolonged financial insecurity during the claim process.

**Recommendation:** IRCC should accelerate access to work authorization for refugee claimants to enable earlier participation in the labour market. This could include introducing expedited processing timelines, reducing administrative steps required to obtain work permits, and exploring options for earlier or automatic issuance of work authorization once a claim has been deemed eligible. Clear communication regarding eligibility and timelines would further support claimants in planning for employment.

**Implementation Mechanisms:**

- Introduce expedited work permit processing timelines for eligible claimants
- Enable automatic or early-stage work permit issuance upon claim eligibility confirmation
- Reduce administrative steps required to apply for and receive work authorization
- Provide clear guidance to claimants on eligibility and timelines for work permits

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Earlier access to employment opportunities
- Reduced reliance on income assistance
- Improved financial stability during the claim process

#### **8.1.4 Expand Eligibility for IRCC-Funded Settlement Services to Include Refugee Claimants**

**Problem:** Findings across the study show that refugee claimants face interconnected barriers related to procedural complexity, language access, service eligibility, and system fragmentation, which together limit their ability to access support services and shape outcomes in areas such as housing, employment, and healthcare.

These challenges are compounded by the fact that refugee claimants are generally not eligible for IRCC-funded Settlement Program services during the claim process. As a result, claimants lack access to structured supports such as needs assessment and referrals, information and orientation, language training, employment services, and community connections, and instead rely heavily on community-based organizations to navigate systems and access services.

**Recommendation:** The federal government should expand eligibility for IRCC-funded Settlement Program services to include refugee claimants during the claim process.

##### **Implementation Mechanism:**

- Amend IRCC Settlement Program eligibility criteria to include refugee claimants upon claim eligibility
- Prioritize access to language training, interpretation services, and system navigation supports
- Provide targeted funding to service providers to address increased demand
- Pilot phased or conditional eligibility models (e.g., early-stage access to core services)

##### **Expected Outcome:**

- Improved access to essential services,
- reduced navigation barriers,
- decreased reliance on informal supports
- more coordinated and equitable service system.

#### **8.1.5 Strengthen Interpretation Standards in Refugee Proceedings**

**Problem:** As discussed in Section 6.2 (Language and Interpretation Barriers), limitations in interpretation services, including issues related to quality, availability, and dialect coverage, affect claimants' ability to participate effectively in legal proceedings.

**Recommendation:** The federal government should strengthen interpretation standards across refugee proceedings to ensure equitable participation. This could include establishing consistent qualification standards for interpreters, expanding the pool of interpreters to include dialect-specific expertise, and increasing funding for interpretation services. Mechanisms for monitoring interpretation quality and addressing gaps in service provision would further support fairness and accessibility within the refugee determination process.

##### **Implementation Mechanisms:**

- Establish national standards for interpreter qualifications and performance

- Expand the pool of interpreters, including those with dialect-specific expertise
- Increase funding for interpretation services in refugee proceedings
- Introduce monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms for interpretation services

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Improved accuracy and reliability of interpretation
- Enhanced procedural fairness in hearings
- Greater ability for claimants to communicate effectively

## **8.2 Government of Manitoba (Provincial Systems)**

### **8.2.1 Remove documentation barriers and expand timely access to income assistance (EIA)**

**Problem:** As discussed in Section 6.3 (Delayed or Restricted Access to Services) and Section 6.5 (Employment Barriers and Financial Insecurity), documentation requirements and eligibility criteria can delay access to Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), contributing to financial instability during the early stages of the refugee claim process.

**Recommendation:** The Government of Manitoba should streamline access to EIA for refugee claimants. This could include accepting alternative or provisional proof-of-claim documentation, reducing duplication of documentation requirements across systems, and allowing temporary eligibility while verification processes are completed. Improving clarity around eligibility criteria and application requirements would further support timely access to income assistance.

**Implementation Mechanisms:**

- Accept alternative or provisional proof-of-claim documentation
- Reduce duplication of documentation across systems
- Allow temporary eligibility pending verification

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Faster access to income support
- Reduced financial instability
- Lower administrative burden

### **8.2.2 Expand healthcare access and strengthen system navigation supports**

**Problem:** As discussed in Sections 6.3 and 6.6, refugee claimants experience delays and confusion in accessing healthcare, particularly during periods when they are not yet fully covered under IFHP or provincial systems. Navigation barriers further limit effective access even when eligibility exists.

**Recommendation:** The provincial government should expand healthcare access where gaps exist and strengthen system navigation supports. This could include enhancing coordination between the Interim Federal Health Program and provincial healthcare systems, expanding access to

services not fully covered under existing programs, and providing multilingual healthcare navigation support. Improved communication and outreach regarding how to access healthcare services would also help address information gaps.

**Implementation Mechanisms:**

- Expand coverage where gaps exist
- Provide multilingual healthcare navigation services
- Improve coordination between IFHP and provincial systems
- Train frontline healthcare providers on refugee claimant eligibility pathways and documentation

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Improved healthcare access
- Reduced unmet medical needs
- Better system navigation

### **8.2.3 Expand housing support and create targeted pathways for families and vulnerable groups**

**Problem:** As discussed in Section 6.4 (Housing Instability) and Section 6.7 (Fragmented Service Systems), refugee claimants often rely on shelters or shared housing due to limited access to affordable and coordinated housing supports, with particular challenges for families and vulnerable groups.

**Recommendation:** The provincial government should expand housing supports and create targeted pathways for refugee claimants. This could include increasing the availability of transitional and affordable housing, developing programs tailored to families and vulnerable populations, and strengthening housing navigation and case management supports. Improved coordination across housing systems would further support more stable and timely access to appropriate housing.

**Implementation Mechanisms:**

- Increase transitional and affordable housing supply
- Create targeted programs for families, women, and vulnerable groups
- Strengthen housing navigation and case management supports

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Reduced reliance on shelters
- Improved housing stability
- Better outcomes for vulnerable populations

## 8.2.4 Strengthen access to Legal Aid and community-based legal services

**Problem:** As discussed in Section 6.1 (Complexity of the Refugee Claim Process), Section 6.3 (Delayed or Restricted Access to Services), and supported by legal professional interviews, refugee claimants face barriers accessing legal assistance due to digital application processes, language barriers, and system navigation challenges. Community-based legal services also face funding constraints, limiting their capacity to support claimants.

**Recommendation:** The Government of Manitoba, through Legal Aid Manitoba, should strengthen access to legal services for refugee claimants and support community-based legal service delivery. This could include introducing assisted application pathways, expanding funding and coverage for refugee-related legal cases, supporting community-based legal clinics, and enabling more direct referral pathways between service providers and Legal Aid. Greater coordination between legal services and community organizations would also help improve access to justice.

### Implementation Mechanisms:

- Introduce assisted Legal Aid application pathways (in-person and via community organizations)
- Expand Legal Aid funding and case coverage for refugee matters
- Fund community-based legal clinics and navigation services
- Enable direct referral pathways from service providers to Legal Aid

### Expected Outcomes:

- Improved access to legal representation
- Reduced procedural barriers
- Strengthened coordination between legal and community systems

## 8.3 Cross-System Coordination and Service Delivery

### 8.3.1 Establish integrated service delivery models and centralized intake systems

**Problem:** As identified in Section 6.7 (Fragmented Service Systems), refugee claimants must navigate multiple uncoordinated systems across legal, healthcare, housing, and income support services. This fragmentation increases reliance on community organizations and creates inefficiencies in service access.

**Recommendation:** Governments should establish integrated service delivery models and centralized intake systems to improve coordination across services. This could include developing “one-stop” service centres, introducing centralized intake and case management approaches, and co-locating services such as legal support, housing assistance, healthcare navigation, and employment services. Such models would help streamline access and reduce the need for claimants to navigate multiple disconnected systems.

### Implementation Mechanisms:

- Establish a centralized Refugee Claimant Reception Centre in Winnipeg as the primary intake point for newly arrived claimants
- Implement a case management model where claimants are assigned a navigator to coordinate access across systems
- Co-locate key services (EIA intake, healthcare navigation, legal orientation, housing support) within centralized hubs
- Standardize intake assessments across participating agencies to avoid duplication
- Fund cross-agency coordination roles to manage referrals and service continuity

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Reduced navigation burden
- improved coordination across services
- more efficient use of system resources

**8.3.2 Align federal and provincial systems to reduce service access gaps**

**Problem:** As discussed in Section 6.3 (Delayed or Restricted Access to Services), misalignment between federal immigration processes and provincial service eligibility requirements creates delays in accessing income assistance, healthcare, and other supports. Claimants are often required to provide documentation that is either not yet available or inconsistently recognized across systems.

**Recommendation:** Federal and provincial governments should establish formal mechanisms to align documentation requirements, eligibility rules, and service access pathways for refugee claimants.

**Implementation Mechanisms:**

- Improve information-sharing between systems
- Align documentation and eligibility requirements
- Establish formal intergovernmental coordination mechanisms
- Create shared service access protocols that define when and how claimants become eligible for key supports
- Develop integrated referral pathways between IRCC, provincial departments, and community organizations

**Expected Outcomes:**

- Reduced administrative delays
- faster access to essential services
- improved continuity between immigration processes and provincial service systems.

## 8.4 Community and Sector Capacity

### 8.4.1 Provide stable, multi-year funding to community and settlement organizations

**Problem:** As discussed in Section 6.8 (Reliance on Community and Settlement Organizations), community-based organizations play a critical role in supporting refugee claimants but face capacity constraints related to funding instability and resource limitations.

**Recommendation:** Governments should provide stable, multi-year funding to strengthen community and settlement organizations. This could include moving away from short-term project-based funding toward longer-term funding arrangements, supporting core operational costs, and recognizing system navigation functions as an essential component of service delivery. Strengthening organizational capacity would help ensure continuity of services and improve overall system effectiveness.

#### Implementation Mechanisms:

- Introduce multi-year (3–5 year) funding agreements
- Provide core operational funding, not just project-based funding
- Fund system navigation and coordination roles

#### Expected Outcomes:

- Increased organizational stability
- Improved service continuity
- Stronger system navigation support for claimants

## 9 Conclusion

This report set out to examine the barriers faced by refugee claimants in Manitoba as they navigate the refugee determination process and access essential support services. Drawing on evidence from refugee claimants, service providers, and legal professionals, the findings point consistently to a central conclusion: *The challenges faced by refugee claimants are not isolated service gaps, but the result of how multiple systems are structured and interact.*

Across the findings, barriers related to procedural complexity, language access, documentation requirements, and fragmented service delivery are closely interconnected. These factors do not operate independently; rather, they reinforce one another in ways that shape how, when, and whether claimants are able to access services.

In practice, this means that access to services is not determined solely by eligibility, but by the alignment between systems. Where immigration processes, documentation requirements, and service eligibility frameworks are not coordinated, claimants may experience periods during which they are unable to access essential supports despite having immediate need. These gaps are not incidental but are produced by system design. One example of this misalignment is the exclusion of refugee claimants from IRCC-funded settlement services, which limits access to structured supports such as language training, system navigation, and employment preparation during a critical period.

The findings also highlight the extent to which the current system relies on community-based organizations to bridge these gaps. While these organizations play a critical role in supporting refugee claimants, their involvement often compensates for structural limitations in system design rather than reflecting a coordinated and intentional service model.

As a whole, these patterns indicate that improving outcomes for refugee claimants requires more than expanding individual programs. It requires a shift toward system-level policy responses that address how processes, eligibility rules, and service delivery mechanisms interact in practice.

This includes:

- Reducing procedural complexity within the refugee claim process
- Strengthening language access across legal and service systems
- Aligning federal and provincial documentation and eligibility requirements
- Improving coordination across service delivery systems
- Supporting the role of community organizations through stable and sustained funding

Without such changes, refugee claimants are likely to continue experiencing barriers that delay access to services, prolong periods of financial and housing insecurity, and increase reliance on informal or emergency supports.

This study provides a focused examination of these issues within the Manitoba context. While the findings are based on a specific service environment, they point to broader systemic dynamics that may be relevant across jurisdictions.

Ultimately, improving access to services for refugee claimants requires a more coordinated and responsive system; one that aligns processes with needs, reduces administrative barriers, and ensures that individuals are able to access support at the time it is required.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A – Refugee Claimant Survey Instrument

*(Survey Title: HMF Refugee Claimant Online Survey)*

### Purpose of the Survey

During the second half of 2025, this survey was administered to refugee claimants residing in Manitoba to gather information on their experiences navigating the refugee claim process and accessing support services, including healthcare, housing, employment, and income assistance.

### Administration Details

- Mode of delivery: Online (Microsoft Forms)
- Duration: Between July and October 2025
- Available in languages: English, French and Arabic
- Target population: People living in Manitoba who are either going through the refugee claims process or have recently gone through it
- Number of sections: Three short sections
- Number of questions: 33
- Survey characteristics: Anonymous; participants could skip questions they were not comfortable answering

### Survey Introduction

#### About the Survey

This survey is part of a project by Healthy Muslim Families, supported by the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

This survey is intended for people who are either going through the refugee claims process, or have recently gone through it, while living in Manitoba.

We are interested in learning whether you faced any problems or challenges during the refugee claim process, or in getting help from support services with your legal, housing, health, or financial needs during your time as a refugee claimant.

By sharing your experience, you will help us find and advocate for ways to make programs and services more supportive and fair for others like you. For this purpose, we may use the findings of this survey in reports or presentations to raise awareness and inform service providers and decision-makers.

This survey is anonymous. It does not ask for your name or any other personal details that may identify you. You can skip any question you do not feel comfortable answering.

The survey has three short sections. If you choose to answer only the multiple-choice questions, it will take you less than 15 minutes to complete. But if you choose to write a sentence or two in the questions that ask for more details, it should take you only five extra minutes to complete.

By continuing, you agree that you understand the purpose of the survey and that taking part is your choice.

## **Survey Questions**

### **Section A: Background Information**

*This section helps us understand the background of the refugee claimants taking this survey. It helps us see how people with different backgrounds may have different challenges and problems.*

#### **1. Which city or town in Manitoba do you live in?**

- Winnipeg
- Brandon
- Winkler
- Morden
- Steinbach
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

#### **2. What is your country of origin?**

- Enter your answer

#### **3. What is your first language?**

- Amharic
- Arabic
- English
- French
- Somali
- Spanish
- Swahili
- Other [Text-box]

#### **4. How would you best describe your English language skills?**

- Beginner: I can understand and use only basic English words and short sentences.
- Intermediate: I can speak, read, and write about everyday topics and understand most conversations.
- Advanced: I can use English easily in most settings, and understand complex information.
- I do not understand English at all
- I prefer not to answer

**5. What is your gender?**

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**6. What is your age group?**

- Under 18 years
- 18 - 29 years
- 30 - 44 years
- 45 - 65 years
- 65+ years
- I prefer not to answer

**7. Do you belong to any religious or faith group?**

- Muslim
- Christian
- Hindu
- Sikh
- Buddhist
- I have no religious affiliation
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**8. Which racial or ethnic group(s) best describe you? (Check all that apply)**

- Black (e.g., African, or of African descent)
- White (e.g., European, or of European descent)
- East or Southeast Asian (e.g., Chinese, Korean, Filipino)
- South Asian (e.g., Afghan, Indian, Pakistani)
- Middle Eastern (West Asian and North African) (e.g., Egyptian, Palestinian, Iranian)
- Latin American (e.g., Mexican, Colombian, Salvadoran)
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**9. Do you identify as LGBTQ+?**

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to answer

**10. When did you officially make a refugee claim with Canada? This means the first time you told the Canadian government you were seeking asylum and received an official acknowledgment or referral. An exact date is not required. Just mention the year and month you formally made your claim. (Give date in this format: MM/YYYY)**

- Enter your answer

**11. What stage of the refugee claim process are you currently in?**

- I have submitted, or, am getting ready to submit, my Basis of Claim (BoC) form
- I am waiting for, or, preparing for my refugee hearing
- I am waiting on a final decision
- My refugee claim was accepted, and I am now a Protected Person
- My refugee claim was not accepted
- I have appealed, or, am getting ready to appeal the decision after rejection
- I have applied, or, am getting ready to apply for PRRA
- I have applied, or, am getting ready to apply for residency on H&C grounds
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**12. What was your immigration status in Canada before making a refugee claim?**

- I had a Visitor Visa
- I had a Study Permit
- I had a Work Permit
- I did not have a legal immigration status
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**13. Did you cross the land border from the United States to make your refugee claim in Canada?**

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to answer

**14. What is your current work or employment situation?**

- I am working full-time
- I am working part-time
- I am self-employed or working casually (e.g., gig work, cash jobs)
- I am not working but looking for a job
- I am not working because I do not have a work permit
- I am not working for a personal reason (e.g., school, caregiving, health issue)
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**15. What is your current housing or living situation?**

- I rent a house or apartment on my own
- I rent a shared apartment or house with other people
- I live in temporary housing (e.g., hotel, shelter, transitional housing)
- I live with friends or family without paying rent.
- I do not have a regular or stable place to live (e.g., sleeping in public places)
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**Section B: Your Experiences**

*This section helps us learn about your experience with the refugee claim process and the support services you received in Manitoba.*

**16. Was there anything about the refugee claim process that you found challenging, confusing, or difficult to understand? (Check all that apply)**

- Yes, filling out forms (e.g., Basis of Claim form)
- Yes, understanding deadlines or timelines
- Yes, knowing what documents to submit
- Yes, understanding the hearing process
- Yes, understanding what help or support services were available to me
- Yes, the language used in documents or interviews
- No, nothing about the process was too challenging, confusing or hard to understand
- I understood the process, but I could not go through it on my own without professional help
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**17. Follow up question: If you can, please tell us more about your answer to the previous question. Give details.**

- Enter your answer

**18. Did you get legal help in the claims process when you needed it? For example, help with filling out forms, preparing your claim, attending your hearing, or understanding your rights. If yes, tell us from who. (Check all that apply)**

- A Legal Aid lawyer
- A private lawyer
- A community organization or legal clinic
- Family or friend
- No, I did not get any legal help when I needed it
- I did not need any legal help
- I prefer not to answer

- Other

**19. Follow up question: If you can, give details. Briefly tell us, what legal help did you need, and who did you get it from?**

- Enter your answer

**20. During your time as a refugee claimant, did you face any problems getting help from government or community workers because of your English or French language skills? (Check all that apply)**

- Yes, I had trouble explaining my situation to staff or service providers
- Yes, I had trouble understanding what people were saying to me
- Yes, I had trouble filling out forms or understanding written documents
- Yes, I was not offered an interpreter or translation when I needed one
- Yes, I was offered language help, but it was not clear or helpful
- No, I did not have any problems because of my English or French language skills
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**21. Follow up question: If you can, give us details. Briefly tell us about your experience if you faced problems because of language.**

- Enter your answer

**22. Did you or anyone in your family face any problems getting medical help or access to healthcare as a refugee claimant in Manitoba? (Check all that apply)**

- Yes, I did not know where to go to get medical help
- Yes, I or a family member was refused a health card or health coverage
- Yes, I or a family member was told that our health issue was not covered
- Yes, the clinic or hospital staff did not understand my or a family member's situation as a refugee claimant
- Yes, I had trouble speaking with medical staff because of my language skills
- Yes, I could not afford the medicine I needed
- No, I did not face any problems getting medical help
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**23. Follow up question: If you can, briefly tell us about your experience in getting medical help. Give details. (Optional)**

- Enter your answer

**24. Did you get any financial help when you needed it during your time as a refugee claimant? (Check all that apply)**

- Yes, I applied for EIA and got it
- No, I applied for EIA but was told I did not qualify
- Yes, I got financial help from a community or charity organization
- Yes, I got financial help from family or friends
- No, I did not get any financial help when I needed it
- No, but I did not need any financial help
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**25. Follow up question: If yes, give details. Tell us who helped you? How did they help you? And if no, you did not get any financial help, then tell us why not? (Optional)**

- Enter your answer

**26. Did you get any help with housing (a place to stay) when you needed it during your time as a refugee claimant in Manitoba?**

- Yes, from a shelter (e.g., Salvation Army)
- Yes, from a settlement agency or community organization (e.g. New Journey Housing)
- Yes, from Manitoba Housing
- Yes, from a friend or family member
- No, I did not get any help with housing when I needed it
- No, I did not need any help with housing
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**27. Follow up question: If yes, give details. Briefly tell us who helped you and how? And if no, you did not get help, then tell us why not.**

- Enter your answer

**28. Did you ever feel you were treated badly or unfairly when trying to get help or service from a government or community worker during your time as a refugee claimant? (Check all that apply)**

- Yes, I felt treated unfairly because of my race or ethnicity
- Yes, I felt treated unfairly because of my religion or religious appearance
- Yes, I felt treated unfairly because of my language skills or accent
- Yes, I felt treated unfairly because of my gender
- Yes, I felt treated unfairly because of my sexual orientation
- Yes, I felt treated unfairly because of my status as a refugee claimant
- No, I did not feel I was treated badly or unfairly
- I prefer not to answer
- Other [Text-box]

**29. Follow up question: If yes, briefly tell us what happened that made you feel this way.**

- Enter your answer

**30. Is there a government agency, office, or a community organization such as a non-profit, support group, or community centre in Manitoba that has been especially helpful and supportive to you during your time as a refugee claimant? If yes, please tell us who helped you and how they supported you. (Optional)**

- Enter your answer

### **Section C: Your Voice in Policy**

*This section lets you share your ideas to help improve the refugee claim process. This section is optional.*

**31. If you could change one thing about the refugee claim process or the treatment of refugee claimants, what would it be?**

- Enter your answer

**32. Was there anything in the refugee claim process or in the support services you received that worked well for you, something you found helpful, and would like to see continue?**

- Enter your answer

**33. If you have any other comments or suggestions, please share with us below.**

- Enter your answer

### **Notes on Instrument Design**

The survey included a combination of multiple-choice, multi-response, and open-ended questions. It was designed to capture both quantitative patterns and qualitative insights regarding refugee claimants' experiences. The survey was made available in English, French and Arabic languages to improve accessibility.

## **Appendix B – Service Provider Survey Instrument**

*(Survey Title: HMF Survey for Refugee Claimant-Serving Organizations in Manitoba)*

### **Purpose of the Survey**

This survey was administered to organizations providing services to refugee claimants in Manitoba to better understand the types of services offered, the challenges faced by service providers, and gaps in support systems. The findings are intended to inform advocacy efforts and support the development of collaborative strategies across the sector.

### **Administration Details**

- Mode of delivery: Online (Microsoft Forms)
- Duration: September 2025 – March 2026
- Target population: Service providers and organizations serving refugee claimants in Manitoba
- Number of sections: Four sections
- Total number of questions: 15
- Survey characteristics: Participation voluntary; responses confidential and reported in aggregate form

### **Survey Introduction**

#### **Introduction**

Healthy Muslim Families (HMF) is conducting this survey as part of its advocacy initiative to address systemic barriers and improve access to essential and settlement services for refugee claimants in Manitoba. This work is being carried out with funding support from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

The purpose of this survey is to better understand the support services offered to refugee claimants in Manitoba, and the challenges service providers face in delivering these services. The data gathered will help inform our advocacy efforts, and the development of collaborative strategies across the sector.

This survey has four short sections:

1. Organization Background
2. Challenges & Gaps
3. Recommendations
4. Organizational Capacity (Optional)

#### **Confidentiality and Use of Responses:**

Participation is voluntary. You may skip any questions you prefer not to answer. All responses will be kept confidential and will only be used in summary form to support our report and advocacy work.

Quotations from responses may be included in reports or advocacy materials, but they will not be attributed to any specific individual or organization without consent.

## Survey Questions

### Section A – Organization Background

*(To capture key details about your organization: type, role, size, geography, and services)*

#### Q1. Organization Name (Important)

- Enter your answer

#### Q2. Your Position in the Organization

- Senior Leadership (e.g., Executive Director, CEO)
- Management (e.g., Program Manager, Supervisor)
- Staff (e.g., Frontline or Support Staff)
- Volunteer
- Other [Text-box]

#### Q3. Which of the following best describes your organization? (Check all that apply)

- Settlement service provider (e.g., language, housing navigation, employment, orientation)
- Legal aid or legal clinic
- Health service provider
- Faith-based organization
- Shelter or housing support provider
- Community-based nonprofit
- Other [Text-box]

#### Q4. Approximately how many refugee claimants does your organization serve per year in Manitoba?

- Less than 100
- 100–500
- More than 500

#### Q5. Geographic area(s) your organization serves

- Winnipeg-only
- Manitoba-wide
- Manitoba and other provinces

#### Q6. Which types of services does your organization provide directly to refugee claimants? (Check all that apply)

- Legal aid / legal information
- Income assistance (EIA) access and navigation

- Healthcare services / navigation
- Housing support
- Employment support
- Language training (English/French classes)
- Interpretation and translation
- Mental health services
- Basic needs supports (food, clothing, transportation)
- Other [Text-box]

## **Section B – Challenges and Gaps**

*(To identify barriers refugee claimants face and highlight missing or inadequate supports)*

### **Q7. What challenges do refugee claimants face in accessing the services your organization provides? (Check all that apply)**

- Long wait times
- Eligibility restrictions
- Language/interpretation barriers
- Limited resources/funding
- Other [Text-box]

### **Q8. In your view, what support services needed by refugee claimants in Manitoba are currently missing or inadequate? (Check all that apply)**

- Legal aid or legal information
- Income assistance (EIA) access and navigation
- Healthcare services / navigation
- Housing support
- Employment support
- Language training (English/French classes)
- Interpretation and translation
- Mental health services
- Basic needs support (e.g., food, clothing, transportation)
- Other [Text-box]

### **Q9. Briefly explain your choices above. Tell us what makes you say these services are missing or inadequate.**

- Enter your answer

## **Section C – Recommendations**

*(To gather views on needed policy, funding, and practice changes)*

**Q10. In your view, what policy, funding, or practice changes would improve access to services for refugee claimants in Manitoba? List them in order of importance.**

- Enter your answer

**Q11. Are there services, programs, or policies from other provinces that you think Manitoba should consider adopting to better support refugee claimants? If possible, please share specific examples.**

- Enter your answer

**Q12. In your view, what services, programs, approaches, or policies in Manitoba have had the greatest positive impact on claimants' access to support services, wellbeing, or inclusion, and should therefore be sustained or expanded further?**

- Enter your answer

**Q13. If you have any additional insights or recommendations, please share below.**

- Enter your answer

#### **Section D – Organizational Capacity**

*(To understand the challenges organizations experience in serving refugee claimants)*

**Q14. Are there any challenges your organization faces in serving refugee claimants? (Check all that apply)**

- Funding limitations
- Staffing shortages
- Lack of language capacity
- Limited cultural knowledge
- Lack of partnerships/referral networks
- Limited subject-matter expertise (e.g., refugee claimant law, policy, or system navigation)
- Other [Text-box]

**Q15. If you are open to being contacted for follow-up or to receive updates about this advocacy initiative, please provide your contact details (e.g., name, title, phone number, and email address).**

- Enter your answer

#### **Notes on Instrument Design**

The survey included a combination of multiple-choice, multi-response, and open-ended questions. It was designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative insights from service providers regarding service delivery, systemic barriers, and policy needs. Responses were collected confidentially and analyzed in aggregate form.

## **Appendix C – Legal Professional Interview Guide**

*(Questionnaire for Refugee Claimant-serving Legal Professionals)*

### **Purpose of the Interview Guide**

This interview guide titled “*Questionnaire for Refugee Claimant-serving Legal Professionals,*” was used to conduct structured interviews with legal professionals providing services to refugee claimants in Manitoba. The purpose was to gather expert insights on systemic barriers, access to legal aid, interpretation services, and broader challenges within the refugee determination system. The interviews were conducted in October and November of 2025

### **Administration Details**

- Mode of delivery: Structured interviews (in-person or virtual)
- Duration: October – November 2025
- Target: Legal professionals providing legal counsel to refugee claimants
- Number of sections: Five sections
- Total number of questions: 15
- Approach: Standardized interview guide used to ensure consistency across interviews
- Confidentiality: Responses anonymized and reported in summary form

### **Interview Questionnaire Introduction**

#### **Introduction**

Healthy Muslim Families (HMF), with funding support from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation (CRRF), is conducting consultations to identify systemic barriers faced by racialized refugee claimants in Manitoba. Your insights as a legal professional who provides direct services to refugee claimants are essential in shaping policy recommendations to improve access to justice and essential services.

This questionnaire is divided into the following sections:

1. Professional Background
2. Access to Legal Aid
3. Language & Interpretation
4. Systemic Barriers
5. Policy Gaps & Recommendations

#### **Confidentiality and Use of Responses:**

Participation is voluntary. You may skip any questions you prefer not to answer. All responses will be kept confidential and will only be used in summary form to support our report and advocacy work. Quotations from responses may be included in reports or advocacy materials, but they will not be attributed to any specific individual or organization without consent.

## Interview Questions

### Section 1 – Professional Background

**Q1. What is your primary role in providing legal services to refugee claimants?**

- Lawyer in private practice
- Lawyer employed by Legal Aid Manitoba
- Community legal worker (non-lawyer role in a legal services capacity)
- Academic or researcher specializing in refugee/immigration law
- Other

**Q2. For how many years have you been providing legal services to refugee claimants?**

- Less than 2 years
- 2–5 years
- More than 5 years

**Q3. Approximately how many refugee claimants have you provided legal services to in the past year?**

- 1–10
- 11–25
- 26–50
- More than 50

### Section 2 — Access to Legal Aid

**Q4. In your professional assessment, how accessible is Legal Aid Manitoba for refugee claimants?**

- Fully accessible — timely and adequate coverage is routinely available
- Moderately accessible — coverage is available but with significant barriers or delays
- Minimally accessible — only a small proportion of claimants obtain adequate coverage
- Not accessible — coverage is rarely or never attainable
- Not applicable to my practice

**Q5. Please explain your response to the previous question.**

- Enter your answer

**Q6. In your experience, what barriers to Legal Aid Manitoba do refugee claimants most frequently encounter? (Check all that apply)**

- Eligibility restrictions (e.g., income thresholds and documentation requirements)
- Long wait times or delays
- Limited Legal Aid funding
- Insufficient scope of coverage
- Language or communication issues
- Other

### **Section 3 — Language & Interpretation**

**Q7. In your experience, how adequate are interpretation and translation services in refugee claim proceedings?**

- Consistently adequate
- Somewhat adequate
- Somewhat inadequate
- Consistently inadequate
- Not applicable to my practice

**Q8. Please explain your answer. Provide examples if possible.**

- Enter your answer

### **Section 4 – Systemic Barriers**

**Q9. In your view, what systemic barriers or challenges do refugee claimants face within Manitoba’s legal and administrative systems?**

- Enter your answer

**Q10. Do refugee claimants face financial challenges that affect their ability to pursue their claims or access services? If yes, please describe.**

- Enter your answer

**Q11. Have refugee claimants experienced difficulties accessing healthcare or Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) while awaiting claim outcomes? If yes, please describe.**

- Enter your answer

### **Section 5 – Policy Gaps & Recommendations**

**Q12. What policy changes would you recommend to improve the refugee claims process and access to essential or support services? Please indicate the top priority.**

- Enter your answer

**Q13. Are there best practices from other provinces or territories that Manitoba should consider adopting? Please provide examples if possible.**

- Enter your answer

**Q14. Do you have any additional insights, recommendations, or experiences you would like to share?**

- Enter your answer

**Q15. If you are open to follow-up or updates, please provide your contact details (optional).**

- Enter your answer

### **Notes on Interview Method**

The interview guide included both structured and open-ended questions to capture qualitative insights from legal professionals. Responses were anonymized and paraphrased for analysis, and are presented in aggregate form in the report.

## Appendix D – Refugee Claimant Survey Data

### Overview

The Refugee Claimant Survey dataset includes responses from 36 participants. The survey was administered in three languages: Arabic (n = 22), English (n = 9), and French (n = 5).

The survey included 33 questions, consisting of:

- 15 demographic/background variables
- 10 experience and access variables
- 5 service access variables
- 3 policy feedback variables

Question types included:

- Multiple choice (20)
- Multi-response (9)
- Open-ended (4)

Respondents were assigned anonymized IDs based on survey language (AR, EN, FR).

**Note:** Respondent IDs are included only for selected qualitative responses to support traceability with cited findings. Quantitative tables present aggregated results.

### Background Characteristics

#### Question 1: Which city or town in Manitoba do you live in?

Response	Count	Percentage
Winnipeg	36	100%

#### Question 2: What is your country of origin?

Response	Count	Percentage
Chad	14	38.9%
Sudan	7	19.4%
Algeria	3	8.3%
Bangladesh	1	2.8%
Congo	1	2.8%
Eritrea	1	2.8%
Morocco	1	2.8%
Niger	1	2.8%
Somalia	1	2.8%
Western Sahara	1	2.8%
Yemen	1	2.8%
No response	4	11.1%

**Question 3: What is your first language?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Arabic	31	86.1%
Bangla	1	2.8%
Bilen and Tigrinya	1	2.8%
English	1	2.8%
French	1	2.8%
Unclear response	1	2.8%

**Question 4: How would you best describe your English language skills?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Beginner	20	55.6%
Intermediate	11	30.6%
Advanced	1	2.8%
Do not understand English at all	1	2.8%
No response	3	8.3%

**Question 5: What is your gender?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Man	26	72.2%
Woman	10	27.8%

**Question 6: What is your age group?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18 to 29 years old	13	36.1%
30 to 44 years old	16	44.4%
45 to 64 years old	6	16.7%
65 years or older	1	2.8%

**Question 7: Do you belong to any religious or faith group?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Muslim	34	94.4%
Christian	1	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	1	2.8%

**Question 8: Which racial or ethnic group(s) best describes you? (Check all that apply)**

*(Multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Black	28	77.8%
Middle Eastern	4	11.1%
Arab	1	2.8%
South Asian	1	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	3	8.3%

**Question 9: Do you identify as LGBTQ+?**

Response	Count	Percentage
No	23	63.9%
Yes	1	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	11	30.6%
No response	1	2.8%

**Question 10: When did you officially make a refugee claim with Canada? This means the first time you told the Canadian government you were seeking asylum and received an official acknowledgment or referral. An exact date is not required. Just mention the year and month you formally made your claim.**

Response	Count	Percentage
2025	9	25.0%
2024	14	38.9%
2023	2	5.6%
2020	2	5.6%
No response	9	25.0%

*(Note: These figures do not indicate open claims. Just the year the claims were made.)*

**Question 11: What stage of the refugee claim process are you currently in?**

Response	Count	Percentage
Waiting for, or preparing for refugee hearing	26	72.2%
Preparing/submitting Basis of Claim (BoC)	1	2.8%
Waiting on final decision	1	2.8%
Applied, or getting ready to apply for residency on H&C grounds	1	2.8%
Claim was not accepted	1	2.8%
Claim was accepted (protected person)	1	2.8%
Applied, or getting ready to apply for PRRA	2	5.6%
Prefer not to answer	1	2.8%
No response	2	5.6%

**Question 12: What was your immigration status in Canada before making a refugee claim?**

Response	Count	Percentage
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No legal immigration status	17	47.2%
Visitor Visa	3	8.3%
Study Permit	3	8.3%
Work Permit	1	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	9	25.0%
No response	3	8.3%

**Question 13: Did you cross the land border from the United States to make your refugee claim in Canada?**

Response	Count	Percentage
Yes	28	77.8%
No	5	13.9%
Prefer not to answer	3	8.3%

*(Note: This question refers to whether respondents entered Canada from the United States with the intention of making a refugee claim, regardless of whether the crossing occurred at an official port of entry or not.)*

**Question 14: What is your current work or employment situation?**

Response	Count	Percentage
Not working but looking for a job	23	63.9%
Working full-time	3	8.3%
Working part-time	4	11.1%
Not working due to no work permit	2	5.6%
Not working for personal reasons	1	2.8%
Self-employed or working casually	2	5.6%
Prefer not to answer	1	2.8%

**Question 15: What is your current housing or living situation?**

Response	Count	Percentage
Shared rental (house/apartment)	24	66.7%
Rent alone	7	19.4%
Temporary housing	2	5.6%
I prefer not to answer	3	8.3%

**Experiences and Process Navigation**

**Question 16: Was there anything about the refugee claim process that you found difficult or confusing? (Check all that apply)**

*(Multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Filling out forms	17	47.2%
Understanding deadlines or timelines	10	27.8%
Understanding the hearing process	9	25.0%
Knowing which documents to submit	8	22.2%
Needed professional help	7	19.4%
Understanding what help or support services were available to me	6	16.7%
Language used in documents or interviews	4	11.1%
No major challenges	5	13.9%
Prefer not to answer	5	13.9%
No response	1	2.8%

**Question 17: If you can, please tell us more about your answer to the previous question. Give details.**

#### Summary

- Most respondents did not provide additional details (34/36; 94.4%)
- Reported issues included:
  - Limited communication with legal representatives
  - Negative claim outcomes

#### Illustrative responses

- *“I did not communicate much with the lawyer they assigned to me.”* -- AR-21
- *“My asylum claim was rejected and I was issued a deportation order.”* -- AR-4

**Question 18: Did you get legal help in the claims process when you needed it? For example, help with filling out forms, preparing your claim, attending your hearing, or understanding your rights. If yes, tell us from who. (Check all that apply)**

*(Multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Legal Aid lawyer	18	50.0%
community organization or legal clinic	8	22.2%
Private lawyer	4	11.1%
Did not receive any legal help when I needed it	2	5.6%
Did not need any help	1	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	2	5.6%
No response	1	2.8%

**Question 19: Follow up question: If you can, give details. Briefly tell us, what legal help did you need, and who did you get it from?**

**Summary of responses**

- Most respondents did not provide additional details (29/36; 80.6%)
- Among those who responded, sources of support included:
  - Legal Aid
  - Community organizations
  - Specific settlement agencies

**Illustrative responses**

- “Filling out the claim form to obtain work papers.” -- AR-21
- “From Healthy Muslim Families.” -- AR-8
- “Welcome Place” -- EN-12
- “Legal Aid Manitoba” -- FR-4

**Question 20: During your time as a refugee claimant, did you face any problems getting help from government or community workers because of your English or French language skills? (Check all that apply)**

*(Multiple response question)*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No language-related problems	8	22.2%
Trouble explaining situation	9	25.0%
Trouble filling forms/understanding documents	6	16.7%
Trouble understanding others	6	16.7%
Not offered interpreter when needed	2	5.6%
Language help unclear or ineffective	2	5.6%
Prefer not to answer	5	13.9%
No response	4	11.1%

**Question 21: Follow up question: If you can, give us details. Briefly tell us about your experience if you faced problems because of language.**

**Summary of responses**

- Nearly all respondents did not provide additional details (35/36; 97.2%)

- One respondent indicated they did not experience language-related barriers

### Illustrative response

- “I did not face problems.” -- AR-21

### Access to Services

**Question 22: Did you or anyone in your family face any problems getting medical help or access to healthcare as a refugee claimant in Manitoba? (Check all that apply)**

*(Multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
No problems accessing medical help	13	36.1%
Trouble communicating with medical staff (language)	7	19.4%
Did not know where to go for medical help	5	13.9%
Could not afford needed medication	3	8.3%
Was told health issue not covered	3	8.3%
Staff did not understand claimant situation	1	2.8%
Had not yet applied for health card	1	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	4	11.1%
No response	4	11.1%

**Question 23: Follow up question: If you can, briefly tell us about your experience in getting medical help. Give details.**

### Summary of responses

- No respondents provided additional details (36/36; 100%)

**Question 24: Did you get any financial help when you needed it during your time as a refugee claimant? (Check all that apply)**

*(Multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Applied for and received EIA	24	66.7%
Did not receive help when needed	3	8.3%
Got financial help from a community or charity organization	3	8.3%
Got financial help from family or friends	2	5.6%
Applied for EIA but did not qualify	2	5.6%
Did not need financial help	1	2.8%
I prefer not to answer	2	5.6%
No response	3	8.3%

**Question 25: *If yes, give details. Tell us who helped you? How did they help you? And if no, you did not get any financial help, then tell us why not?***

**Summary of responses**

- Most respondents did not provide additional details (32/36; 88.9%)
- Among those who responded, themes included:
  - Receipt of EIA support
  - Short-term or limited financial assistance

**Illustrative responses**

- “EIA.” — AR-8
- “For the first 3 months I got EIA support, after that no more EIA support.” — EN-6

**Question 26: *Did you get any help with housing (a place to stay) when you needed it during your time as a refugee claimant in Manitoba?***

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes, from a shelter	10	27.8%
Yes, from a settlement agency or community organization	5	13.9%
Yes, from a friend or family member	4	11.1%
No, I did not get any help with housing when I needed it	5	13.9%
No, I did not need any help with housing	1	2.8%
Yes, from Manitoba Housing	2	5.6%
Prefer not to answer	3	8.3%
No response	5	13.9%

**Question 27: *Follow up question: If yes, give details. Briefly tell us who helped you and how? And if no, you did not get help, then tell us why not.***

**Summary of responses**

- Most respondents did not provide additional details (30/36; 83.3%)
- Among those who responded, sources of housing support included:
  - Shelters and community organizations
  - Friends or family members

**Illustrative responses**

- “I received help from the Salvation Army and Welcome Place.” -- AR-21

- “Siloam Mission.” -- AR-14
- “A friend of mine” -- AR-7

## Perceptions of Treatment and Fairness

**Question 28: Did you ever feel you were treated badly or unfairly when trying to get help or service from a government or community worker during your time as a refugee claimant? (Check all that apply)**

*(Multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Did not feel treated badly or unfairly	18	50.0%
Felt treated unfairly due to race or ethnicity	3	8.3%
Felt treated unfairly due to language/accent	3	8.3%
Felt treated unfairly due to refugee claimant status	3	8.3%
Felt treated unfairly due to gender	1	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	5	13.9%
No response	6	16.7%

**Question 29: Follow up question: If yes, briefly tell us what happened that made you feel this way.**

### Summary of responses

- No respondents provided additional details (36/36; 100%)

## Policy Feedback and Recommendations

**Question 30: Is there a government agency, office, or a community organization such as a non-profit, support group, or community centre in Manitoba that has been especially helpful and supportive to you during your time as a refugee claimant? If yes, please tell us who helped you and how they supported you.**

*(Open-ended question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Healthy Muslim Families	5	13.9%
Welcome Place	2	5.6%
Family Dynamics	1	2.8%
Christian mosques	1	2.8%
Canadian Muslim Women’s Institute (CMWI)	1	2.8%
EIA	1	2.8%

Infojustice Manitoba	1	2.8%
New Journey Housing	1	2.8%
NPower Canada	1	2.8%
IRCOM	1	2.8%
None	2	5.6%
No response	26	72.2%

**Question 31: If you could change one thing about the refugee claim process or the treatment of refugee claimants, what would it be?**

*(Open-ended question.)*

*(Note: Responses that conveyed the same underlying idea were combined and analyzed under a single theme.)*

**Summary of responses**

- *The most common recommendation was to fast track the refugee claim process (8/36; 22.2%)*
- *Other suggestions included:*
  - *Improving employment opportunities*
  - *Providing multilingual support*

**Illustrative responses**

- *“Speed up the refugee claim process.” -- AR-18*
- *“Provide some application examples in all languages.” -- AR-14*
- *“Create job opportunities” -- AR-21*

**Question 32: Was there anything in the refugee claim process or in the support services you received that worked well for you, something you found helpful, and would like to see continue? (Open-ended)**

*(Note: Responses that conveyed the same underlying idea were combined and analyzed under a single theme.)*

- *Positive experiences included:*
  - *Support from community organizations (5 responses)*
  - *EIA assistance (3 responses)*
- *A small number indicated no positive experiences*

### **Illustrative responses**

- *“Support from community organizations.”* -- AR-8
- *“EIA assistance.”* -- AR-14

**Question 33: If you have any other comments or suggestions, please share with us below.**

*(Open-ended)*

### **Summary of responses**

- Respondents highlighted:
  - Delays in processing and documentation
  - Barriers to employment and education
  - Language-related challenges
- A small number expressed positive views of government services

### **Illustrative responses**

- *“I suggest that the response time from the date of application be reduced.”* -- AR-3
- *“We need more help to get jobs in our fields of expertise.”* -- AR-22
- *“Our main problem is the language problem in the process”* -- AR-12
- *“speed up legal procedures”* – AR-8
- *“I want at this time, opportunity to find job”* – EN-13
- *“I am waiting for my work permit”* – FR-7

## Appendix E – Service Provider Survey Data

### Overview

The Service Provider Survey collected responses from 11 participants representing organizations that provide services to refugee claimants in Manitoba. The survey was conducted between September 2025 and March 2026 and gathered information on organizational roles, services provided, barriers to access, and policy or program improvements.

Respondents included staff working in settlement support, housing assistance, legal services, and community-based programs.

The survey included both closed-ended and open-ended questions, allowing respondents to identify service gaps and provide detailed insights based on their professional experience.

To protect confidentiality, responses are reported using anonymized respondent IDs (e.g., SP2, SP4).

**Note:** Respondent IDs are included only for selected qualitative responses to support traceability with cited findings. Quantitative tables present aggregated results.

### Organizational Profile

#### Question 1: Organization Name

*To protect the confidentiality of participating organizations, responses to this question are not reported. Out of a total of 11 respondents, 9 respondents provided their organization name, including 2 respondents from the same organization.*

#### Question 2: Your Position in the Organization

Response	Count	Percentage
Evaluator / Program Planner	1	9.1%
Management (e.g., Program Manager, Supervisor)	3	27.3%
Senior Leadership (e.g., Executive Director, CEO)	4	36.4%
Staff (e.g., Frontline or Support Staff)	4	36.4%

#### Question 3: Which of the following best describes your organization? (check all that apply)

*(This is a multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Community-based nonprofit	8	72.7%
Settlement service provider (e.g., language, housing, employment services)	7	63.6%
Legal aid or legal clinic	2	18.2%
Faith-based organization	2	18.2%
Health service provider	1	9.1%

Other: Settlement indirect service providing organization	1	9.1%
Shelter or housing support provider	1	9.1%

**Question 4: Approximately how many refugee claimants does your organization serve per year in Manitoba?**

Response	Count	Percentage
Less than 100	6	54.5%
100–500	3	27.3%
More than 500	2	18.2%

**Question 5: Geographic area(s) your organization serves**

*(This is a multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Winnipeg-only	6	54.5%
Manitoba-wide	2	27.3%
Manitoba and Other Provinces	4	36.4%

**Question 6: Which types of services does your organization provide directly to refugee claimants? (Check all that apply)**

*(This is a multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Income assistance (EIA) access and navigation	6	54.5%
Interpretation and translation	6	54.5%
Language training (English/French classes)	5	45.5%
Basic needs supports (food, clothing, transportation)	5	45.5%
Legal aid / legal information	4	36.4%
Healthcare services / navigation	4	36.4%
Housing support	4	36.4%
Employment support	5	45.5%
Mental health services	3	27.3%
Social support / connection / resource navigation	1	9.1%
Community-based settlement support	1	9.1%
Other: Partnership / coordination initiatives	1	9.1%

**Barriers to Service Access**

**Question 7: What challenges do refugee claimants face in accessing the services your organization provides? (check all that apply)**

*(This is a multi-select question.)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Limited resources / funding	7	63.6%
Language / interpretation barriers	6	54.5%
Eligibility restrictions	5	45.5%
Long wait times	3	27.3%
Other: Services only available during regular office hours	1	9.1%
Other: Public negative rhetoric and government policies	1	9.1%
Other: Difficulty finding affirming / safe settlement supports (LGBTQ+ claimants)	1	9.1%

**Question 8: In your view, what support services needed by refugee claimants in Manitoba are currently missing or inadequate? (Check all that apply)**

*(This is a multiple response question)*

Response	Count	Percentage
Healthcare services / navigation	7	63.6%
Employment support	7	63.6%
Housing support	6	54.5%
Mental health services	6	54.5%
Language training (English/French classes)	6	54.5%
Basic needs support (food, clothing, transportation)	6	54.5%
Income assistance (EIA) access and navigation	5	45.5%
Legal aid / legal information	4	36.4%
Interpretation and translation	3	27.3%
Other: LGBTQ+ affirming services	1	9.1%
Other: Emergency housing for women and families	1	9.1%

**Question 9: Briefly explain your choices above. Tell us what makes you say these services are missing or inadequate. (Open-ended)**

### Summary of responses

Service providers identified several interconnected factors contributing to gaps in services for refugee claimants:

- **Eligibility and policy barriers** were frequently cited, with respondents noting that refugee claimants are often excluded from publicly funded services or must wait until their claim is formally processed before becoming eligible
- **Insufficient funding and resource constraints** were identified as limiting the availability, scope, and responsiveness of services, particularly in areas such as interpretation, basic needs support, and community-based programming

- **Long wait times and system capacity limitations** were highlighted across multiple service areas, including housing, language training, healthcare, and mental health supports
- **Barriers related to documentation and system complexity** were noted, with claimants often unable to access services due to incomplete documentation or difficulty navigating complex systems
- **Gaps in service design and accessibility**, including a lack of trauma-informed approaches and services tailored to claimant needs, were also identified
- **Housing, employment, and language training gaps** were emphasized as key structural challenges affecting claimants' ability to stabilize and integrate
- **Limited availability of specialized and inclusive services**, particularly for LGBTQ+ claimants, was also noted

### Illustrative responses

- *“Refugee claimants don't receive any of the funded services unless they have submitted their claim... healthcare is a big issue since they do not get healthcare services or support and have to pay for it themselves.” -- SP5*
- *“Most refugee claimants are not eligible to access those services due to lack of proper documentation. Some of the services aren't trauma informed.” -- SP7*
- *“There is often not enough affordable housing, employment opportunities that match skills, or accessible language training with flexible schedules.” -- SP12*
- *“A centralized reception centre with case management would really help. ... refugee claimants need immediate healthcare support and they cannot access that until they are on IFHP. Refugee claimants lack access to language programs because they are not eligible for many and this is a problem for their full integration and reaching of their potential. Employment programs aren't designed with refugee claimants in mind. RCs want quick job placement, not support with job search.” -- SP14*
- *“our clients ask us for employment placements and/or training that has direct connection to job vacancies.” – SP6*

### Policy and Practice Recommendations

**Question 10: In your view, what policy, funding, or practice changes would improve access to services for refugee claimants in Manitoba? List them in order of importance. (Open-ended)**

### Summary of responses

Service providers identified a set of system-level reforms needed to improve access to services for refugee claimants:

- **Expanding eligibility for publicly funded services**, including settlement services, language training, and healthcare, particularly for claimants who have not yet formalized their status
- **Improving access to employment and income supports**, including faster processing of work permits, simplified access to Employment and Income Assistance (EIA), and programs that connect claimants directly to job opportunities
- **Strengthening housing supports**, including emergency housing, rental assistance, and targeted supports for families and vulnerable populations
- **Enhancing system coordination and service delivery models**, including centralized intake, case management, and integrated “one-stop” service hubs
- **Increasing and stabilizing funding**, particularly through multi-year funding models for community-based and frontline service providers
- **Addressing federal policy constraints**, including eligibility rules and broader immigration policies that limit access to services and protection pathways

#### **Illustrative responses**

- *“The federal government has to treat refugee claimants as convention refugees in terms of settlement services.” -- SP4*
- *“Faster work permits, easier access to EIA, less requirements during intake, expand English class eligibility to include claimants.” -- SP6*
- *“Centralized intake, integrated service delivery, avoid scattering services.” -- SP7*
- *“Stable, multi-year funding for frontline settlement and mental health services... predictable, flexible funding would allow organizations to retain staff and provide consistent, trauma-informed support.” -- SP11*
- *“Fund a reception centre for refugee claimants... extend public healthcare to all temporary residents... fund language and employment programs designed specifically for RCs.” -- SP14*

**Question 11: Are there services, programs, or policies from other provinces that you think Manitoba should consider adopting to better support refugee claimants? If possible, please share specific examples. (open-ended)**

#### **Summary of Responses**

Service providers pointed to promising models from other jurisdictions that could strengthen service delivery in Manitoba.

- **Centralized reception centres and intake models**, which provide coordinated access to legal, housing, and settlement supports upon arrival
- **Integrated “one-stop” service hubs**, combining multiple services in a single location to improve navigation and reduce system fragmentation
- **Expanded housing support frameworks**, particularly for claimants receiving income assistance, to improve stability and enable faster integration
- **Specialized and inclusive service models**, including supports tailored to the needs of LGBTQ+ claimants and other vulnerable groups
- **Inter-jurisdictional learning and adaptation**, with examples drawn from Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia demonstrating the benefits of coordinated and integrated service delivery approaches

### Illustrative responses

- *“Manitoba should have something like the Peel Reception Centre for refugee claimants.” -- SP4*
- *“Refugee Support Centres... like a one-stop shop... Manitoba should look into it.” --SP5*
- *“Integrated service delivery models that combine legal, housing, employment and language supports in one location improve access and navigation.” -- SP12*

### Question 12: In your view, what services, programs, approaches, or policies in Manitoba have had the greatest positive impact on claimants’ access to support services, wellbeing, or inclusion, and should therefore be sustained or expanded further? (open-ended)

Service providers identified several existing strengths within Manitoba’s system that have positively supported refugee claimants and should be sustained or expanded:

- **Community-based settlement and wraparound service models**, which provide holistic, relationship-based support and help address multiple needs simultaneously
- **Legal aid improvements**, including increased support for legal representation and processing of refugee claims
- **Emergency housing and transitional supports**, which provide immediate stability for newly arrived claimants
- **Collaborative coordination initiatives and partnerships**, including inter-agency collaboration and information-sharing mechanisms that improve service navigation
- **Language, employment, and interpretation services**, which play a critical role in supporting integration, access to services, and long-term self-sufficiency

### Illustrative responses

- *“Community-based settlement programs and wraparound support models... reduce system fragmentation and improve stability and long-term integration outcomes.” -- SP11*
- *“Legal aid increasing tariffs for lawyers who can process claims and represent claimants.” -- SP5*
- *“Getting the claim submitted is utmost. Without it, they have no health care and no access to.” -- SP6*
- *“The Refugee Claimants Coordination being led by MANSO... collaboration amongst organizations.” -- SP14*
- *“Community-based settlement agencies, language programs and employment support services have had a significant positive impact.” -- SP12*

**Question 13: If you have any additional insights or recommendations, please share below.” (open-ended)**

Service providers’ additional insights emphasized several cross-cutting priorities for improving support to refugee claimants:

- **Strengthening system coordination and collaboration** across government, non-profit, and community-based organizations was identified as essential to improving access, continuity of care, and long-term outcomes
- **Stabilizing and increasing funding for services**, particularly through multi-year funding models, was seen as critical to ensuring consistent and sustainable support
- **Expanding access to affordable and specialized legal support**, especially for claimants with complex documentation or case needs
- **Addressing gaps in specialized and inclusive services**, particularly for LGBTQ+ claimants, who may face unique risks and require tailored supports
- **Responding to emerging and longer-term needs**, including support for family reunification and post-determination processes, which may place additional demands on service providers

**Illustrative responses**

- *“Meaningful access to services requires both strong systems and strong community connections... to ensure refugee claimants experience not just basic support, but dignity, stability, and a genuine sense of belonging.” -- SP11*
- *“Stronger collaboration between government, non-profits and community organizations, along with stable multi-year funding, would improve long-term outcomes for refugee claimants.” -- SP12*
- *“There are huge gaps in service for LGBTQ+ newcomers.” -- SP13*

- “Legal support with low cost especially claimants with adequate documentation...” -- SP8
- “I can see [family reunification] being a huge priority for many.” -- SP6

## Organizational Capacity

**Question 14: Are there any challenges your organization faces in serving refugee claimants?  
(Check all that apply)**

*(This is a multiple response question)*

<b>Response</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Funding limitations	7	63.6%
Staffing shortages	5	45.5%
Limited subject-matter expertise (e.g., refugee claimant law, policy, or system navigation)	4	36.4%
Lack of partnerships / referral networks	2	18.2%
Lack of language capacity	2	18.2%
Other: Lack of SAFE referrals that are affirming for queer and trans refugees	1	9.1%
Other: There are no challenges specific to refugee claimants	1	9.1%

## Appendix F – Legal Professional Interview Data

### Overview

As part of this project, structured interviews were conducted with two legal professionals working with refugee claimants in Manitoba. The interviews were conducted between October and November 2025 to gather practitioner perspectives on systemic barriers affecting refugee claimants, including issues related to legal aid access, interpretation services, hearing delays, financial barriers, and access to provincial supports such as Employment and Income Assistance (EIA).

To protect confidentiality, respondents are anonymized as LP1 and LP2. Responses to open-ended questions were paraphrased and recorded by the interviewer.

Given the small number of participants, findings should be interpreted as qualitative insights based on practitioner experience rather than representative data.

### Professional Background

#### Question 1: What is your primary role in providing legal services to refugee claimants?

Both respondents are lawyers in private practice.

#### Question 2: How many years have you been practicing law in Canada?

Both respondents have more than five years of experience practicing law in Canada.

#### Question 3: Approximately how many refugee claimants have you provided legal services to in the past year?

Both respondents reported serving more than 50 refugee claimants in the past year.

### Access to Legal Aid

#### Question 4: In your professional assessment, how accessible is Legal Aid Manitoba for refugee claimants?

#### Summary of responses

Legal professionals provided mixed assessments of the accessibility of Legal Aid Manitoba for refugee claimants.

- One respondent described Legal Aid as **generally accessible**, noting that the application process is relatively streamlined and that refugee claimants are not required to provide extensive financial documentation
- Another respondent characterized access as **moderately accessible**, highlighting several practical barriers that can significantly limit access in practice

Overall, while Legal Aid coverage is available, access is not uniform, and claimants often require additional support to successfully navigate the system

**Question 5: Please explain your response to the previous question on refugee claimants' accessibility to Legal Aid Manitoba.**

**Summary of responses**

Legal professionals provided differing assessments of accessibility to Legal Aid Manitoba. While one respondent described the system as relatively streamlined and accessible, another emphasized practical barriers that limit access for many refugee claimants.

Key issues identified include:

- Digital and technological barriers
- Language limitations
- Reliance on community organizations for navigation

**Practitioner perspectives**

- **LP1:** The application process is relatively streamlined, and refugee claimants are not required to provide extensive financial documentation.
- **LP2:** Refugee claimants often face barriers such as lack of phone access, limited English proficiency, and difficulty navigating online systems, making support from community organizations essential.

**Question 6: In your experience, what barriers to Legal Aid Manitoba do refugee claimants most frequently encounter?**

**Summary of responses**

Legal professionals identified several key barriers affecting access to Legal Aid Manitoba:

- **Eligibility restrictions**, including income thresholds and documentation requirements
- **Delays and wait times**, particularly in application processing and assignment of legal counsel
- **Funding limitations**, including caps on billable hours available to lawyers
- **Limited scope of coverage**, with certain services, hearings, or appeals not fully covered
- **Language and communication barriers**, affecting claimants' ability to access information and interact with Legal Aid systems

**Practitioner perspectives**

- **LP1:** Eligibility requirements, including income thresholds and documentation, are a primary barrier for refugee claimants
- **LP2:** Claimants face multiple barriers, including delays, limited funding, restricted coverage, and language-related challenges when accessing Legal Aid services

## Language and Interpretation

**Question 7: In your experience, how adequate are interpretation and translation services in refugee claim proceedings (e.g., hearings, interviews, document translation)?**

### Summary of responses

Legal professionals provided differing assessments of the adequacy of interpretation and translation services:

- One respondent described services as **somewhat adequate**, indicating they are usually sufficient but may have occasional shortcomings
- Another respondent described services as **consistently inadequate**, indicating that they are frequently unreliable or unavailable and may affect claimants' ability to participate

**Question 8: Please explain your answer to the previous question on the adequacy of interpretation and translation services. Provide examples if possible.**

### Summary of responses

Responses identified several challenges related to interpretation and translation services:

- Difficulty in finding interpreters who speak specific dialects, particularly where language variations exist within broader language groups
- Concerns that meaning may be lost in translation, particularly in languages other than English and French
- Variation in quality across languages, with interpretation in English and French described as stronger than in other languages
- Concerns that limitations in interpretation services may affect claimants' ability to fully participate in proceedings

### Practitioner perspectives

- **LP1:** Finding interpreters who speak specific dialects can be challenging, as claimants may request interpretation in particular dialects that are not readily available. For example, people from Mauritania generally speak Arabic but also have their own dialects.
- **LP2:** Interpretation quality varies, with English and French services being stronger, while interpretation in other languages is often poor, and meaning may be lost in translation

## Systemic Barrier

**Question 9: In your view, what systemic barriers or challenges, if any, do refugee claimants face within Manitoba’s legal and administrative systems?**

### Summary of responses

Legal professionals identified several systemic barriers affecting refugee claimants:

- **Delays in the refugee determination process**, including longer wait times for hearings
- **Uncertainty in scheduling**, including hearings being cancelled shortly before the scheduled date for administrative reasons
- **Administrative requirements across systems**, including requests for documentation confirming claimant status
- **Language-related barriers**, affecting access to services and ability to navigate systems
- **Challenges related to housing and employment**, particularly where claimants face language limitations

### Practitioner perspectives

- **LP1:** On the legal side, one barrier relates to the Refugee Protection Division (RPD). Claimants are now waiting longer than before to receive a hearing, with average wait times exceeding six months. Another issue is the cancellation of hearings by the RPD. There has been an increasing number of hearings being cancelled shortly before the scheduled date without explanation, often only citing “administrative reasons.” On the administrative side, Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) often asks claimants to provide proof or a letter confirming that they are refugee claimants. In many cases, they are requesting the same RPD document that Legal Aid Manitoba also requires.
- **LP2:** Language barriers remain a major challenge for refugee claimants. The pool of interpreters needs to be stronger and more professional, and funding for interpretation services available to lawyers is limited. Claimants also face challenges in finding housing and employment. If a claimant speaks a language that is not readily available in Manitoba, it becomes difficult for them to access services and navigate the system.

**Question 10: In your experience, do refugee claimants face financial challenges that affect their ability to pursue their claims or access services? If yes, please describe them (e.g., costs of documentation, translation, transportation, housing, healthcare, or other expenses).**

### Summary of responses

Responses indicated that financial challenges are present but may vary in nature:

- Legal service costs are often covered through Legal Aid. However, refugee claimants may still face broader financial challenges, including limited income and unstable living conditions
- These broader financial circumstances may affect access to services and overall stability

### **Practitioner perspectives**

- **LP1:** Financial challenges relate to issues described in relation to Employment and Income Assistance
- **LP2:** While legal costs are often covered, many claimants face financial challenges due to limited income, unemployment, and living conditions such as staying in shelters

**Question 11: In your experience, have your refugee claimant clients reported or demonstrated any difficulties in accessing healthcare or Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) while awaiting claim outcomes? If yes, please describe.**

### **Summary of responses**

Legal professionals identified challenges related to accessing Employment and Income Assistance and navigating administrative systems:

- Difficulties accessing EIA while awaiting documentation confirming claimant status
- Broader challenges related to navigating administrative systems
- No additional significant issues related to healthcare access were identified in the responses

### **Practitioner perspectives**

- **LP1:** Difficulties mainly arise with Employment and Income Assistance while claimants are waiting for proof of their refugee claim
- **LP2:** Claimants experience challenges navigating administrative systems in order to access services

### **Policy Gaps & Recommendations**

**Question 12: In your view, what policy changes, if any, would you recommend to improve the refugee claims process and access to essential or support services? (e.g., healthcare, income assistance, housing, legal aid, interpretation, settlement navigation). Please also indicate which one you consider the top priority.**

Legal professionals identified several areas for policy change:

- **Reducing wait times for refugee hearings**, particularly at the federal level

- **Improving access to interim supports**, including support for claimants while they are waiting for documentation confirming their claim
- **Increasing funding for services**, including interpretation and support services
- **Funding constraints** were identified as a key limitation affecting service delivery, including the availability of interpreters

### **Practitioner perspectives**

- **LP1:** Recommends reducing wait times for refugee hearings and providing interim support to claimants while they are waiting for proof of their claim
- **LP2:** Identifies funding as a top priority, noting that limitations in funding have affected the availability of interpreters and other services

**Question 13: Are there best practices from other Canadian provinces or territories you believe, if adopted, could improve the refugee claims process or access to essential or support services in Manitoba? (e.g., healthcare, income assistance, housing, legal aid, interpretation, settlement navigation)**

### **Summary of responses**

Responses varied regarding the identification of best practices:

- One respondent indicated they were not aware of specific best practices from other provinces
- Another respondent identified funded legal clinics in other provinces, particularly those supported through Legal Aid, as a model that is not currently available in Manitoba

### **Practitioner perspectives**

- **LP1:** Not aware of best practices from other provinces
- **LP2:** Notes that in provinces such as Ontario and Quebec, Legal Aid funding is provided to community-based legal clinics, which is not the case in Manitoba

**Question 14: Do you have any additional insights, recommendations, or experiences from your legal practice with refugee claimants that you would like to share?**

### **Summary of responses**

Legal professionals provided limited additional input:

- One respondent emphasized the need to increase access to hearing dates and reduce wait times.
- The same respondent also identified a lack of local Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) presence in Manitoba as a structural gap.

- The second respondent did not provide additional insights.

**Practitioner perspectives**

- **LP1:** Recommends increasing access to hearing dates and noted that Manitoba does not have a local IRB division, which may affect access



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