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EXAMINING CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MEASURES FOR SUPPORTING WAR-AFFECTED UKRAINIANS

A CASE STUDY OF ALBERTA'S RESPONSE AND LESSONS LEARNED



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

AAISA acknowledges Treaty 7 territory—the traditional and ancestral territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy: Kainai, Piikani and Siksika as well as the Tsuu T’ina Nation and Stoney Nakoda First Nation. We acknowledge that this territory is home to the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 within the historical Northwest Métis Homeland. We acknowledge the many First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have lived in and cared for these lands for generations. We are grateful for the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are still with us today and those who have gone before us. We make this acknowledgement as an act of reconciliation and gratitude to those whose territory we reside on.

INTRODUCTION

Since the commencement of the Russian invasion in February 2022, Ukrainian citizens have been compelled to seek refuge in other parts of the world. As of April 25, 2022, it is estimated that more than 6.2 million evacuees from Ukraine have been recorded globally (UNHCR, 2023). While the absolute majority (94%) decided to choose Europe, 6% chose to relocate to other parts of the world. The decision to leave Europe might be attributed to the changing attitudes of Ukrainians. Conversations within the community suggest that many Ukrainians are losing hope that the war will end soon.

Canada, renowned for its substantial immigration targets, extensive history of immigration programs, and innovative managed approaches in responding to global crises, has stepped up to help those affected by the war. Given the proximity and strong historical ties between Canada and Ukraine, and with Canada hosting the second-largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2019), Canada introduced a special immigration program, the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET), to facilitate the travel and stay of affected Ukrainians until it is safe for them to return home (Government of Canada, 2022). Over the course of two years, the program has received unprecedented interest, with 221,231 individuals fleeing the war seeking refuge in Canada as of January 27, 2024 (Government of Canada, 2024a). In comparison, as of January 25, 2024, Canada has welcomed 47,010 Afghans since August 2021 (Government of Canada, 2024b).

The disparity in the scale of arrivals stems from numerous factors. Firstly, the CUAET program differs from other protection programs such as the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP). Clients who come to Canada under RAP are provided with direct financial assistance (for up to one year) and essential services support (within four to six weeks) (IRCC, 2019). On the other hand, CUAET is designed as a temporary measure to provide Ukrainians with the opportunity to: (1) obtain visas to enter Canada, (2) attain temporary work status to allow Ukrainians to work in Canada, and (3) receive transitional financial assistance (one-time), housing support (up to 14 days), and settlement assistance (until March 31, 2025). Consequently, there is no established pathway for Ukrainian newcomers¹ to stay in Canada permanently, and formally, all Ukrainian newcomers who have arrived are perceived as temporary foreign workers (TFWs) (Government of Canada, 2022).

Given the uniqueness of the program's design and the unprecedented arrival streams since its introduction, the goal of this report is threefold: (1) to draw lessons from the two years since the program's launch, (2) identify successful practices and challenges that have arisen since its launch, and (3) define recommendations for future humanitarian crises.

¹ For the sake of brevity, the report will use the term "Ukrainian newcomers" to describe individuals who have immigrated to Canada under the CUAET stream.

METHODS

This report gathers insights from various sources, including policy statements, industry reports, and media coverage. AAISA, serving as the umbrella organization, has developed its own primary data derived from surveys, environmental scans, regular meetings, and data collection efforts to support Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) aiding Ukrainian newcomers in Alberta.

These efforts encompass:

- **Stakeholder Engagement or Stakeholder Collaboration:** During the two years since the war began, AAISA has been facilitating provincial tables across urban and rural areas. These forums bring together SPOs, community leaders, provincial entities, and government representatives to address ongoing challenges and devise strategies to mitigate the crisis. Additionally, AAISA participates in Operation Ukraine Safe Haven (OUSH), a national committee appointed by the federal government to coordinate the country's response to the Ukrainian crisis. As part of these collaborative efforts, AAISA conducted regular environmental scans to assess the needs of the Ukrainian population and the available services in Alberta.
- **Collection of Geospatial Data:** While the federal government primarily monitors interprovincial trends in arrivals of Ukrainian newcomers, provincial health authorities are responsible for gathering data on newcomers health coverage registrations to understand their geographical distribution within provinces. However, there remains a significant gap in understanding secondary migrations of Ukrainians, both interprovincially and intraprovincially. Recognizing this gap, AAISA has launched an initiative to collect client registrations from SPOs across Alberta. The objective was to gain insights into general trends in geographical dispersion, with a specific focus on secondary migration patterns.

SCOPE

This report will analyze trends at both the national and provincial levels since the creation of the CUAET program. The national discussion will primarily aim to compare various provinces and underscore overarching trends and the progression of challenges and response practices. However, the primary focus of the analysis will be on Alberta, given that it serves as the operational base of AAISA and where most of the primary data has been gathered.

LIMITATIONS

The evaluation of the CUAET program faces several limitations. Firstly, the program is still ongoing at the time of drafting this report, making it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about its impact. The full effects of the program may take several years to become evident. Additionally, there is uncertainty about how the federal government will respond after the

program ends and what permanent pathways may be introduced or adjusted in response to earlier measures.

Moreover, the conclusions presented in this report are based on the experiences of the settlement sector specifically within Alberta. While federal measures have been consistent across provinces (excluding Quebec), it is important to recognize that individual provinces have implemented their own unique support measures to complement the assistance provided to Ukrainian newcomers by the federal government. Therefore, this analysis primarily reflects Alberta's experiences, understanding that the needs and priorities in other provinces may differ.

OVERVIEW OF THE CUAET PROGRAM

On March 2022, Canada initiated the Canada Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel program (CUAET) to provide a pathway for Ukrainians affected by the war. CUAET is a unique stream that allows Ukrainian nationals and their families to apply from any location worldwide. Upon approval, eligible applicants receive a type of visitor visa at no cost, allowing them to enter Canada. Upon arrival, applicants and their eligible family members are granted an open work or study permit for up to three years, depending on their age (Government of Canada, 2022). The program commenced in March 2022 and will conclude in March 2024.

From its inception, it was clear that CUAET is not a resettlement program but a temporary measure enabling Ukrainians to work temporarily in Canada. Initially, no financial support was integrated into the process. However, supplementary support measures were introduced later for those who attained CUAET status. For example, at the federal level, CUAET holders were entitled to a one-time payment of 3000 CAD for individuals over 18 and 1500 CAD for those under 18. Additionally, CUAET holders could access temporary housing (for up to 14 days), language training, federally funded settlement support, and orientation services. It is important to note that provinces have implemented additional measures to complement existing support, which will be discussed further.

Despite adjustments and support measures, CUAET holders are still required to fund their own travel and have means to support themselves after the one-time payment. Additionally, since CUAET is a temporary measure, there are no clear pathways to permanent residency. Ukrainian newcomers must fulfill the requirements of the immigration program they choose within the duration of their open work permit status.

This report primarily focuses on the program's temporary nature, highlighting both its advantages and drawbacks. On the positive side, the Canadian government has not imposed a cap on the number of applicants eligible for a temporary visa and open work permit. However, the substantial influx of applicants has strained settlement service providers, leading to service limitations at times. It is important to note that CUAET holders may not always meet the eligibility criteria for accessing certain settlement services, given their temporary worker status.

NATIONAL RESPONSE

As of January 27, 2024, the Canadian government has received 1,189,320 applications from Ukrainian residents for the CUAET program. Of these, 958,190 (80.6%) were approved. Notably, as of January 27, 2024, only 221,231 (18.6%) individuals have successfully arrived in Canada (Government of Canada, 2024c). While the low percentage of actual arrivals might indicate low interest in the program, it is important to contextualize this figure within Canada's broader humanitarian efforts. In comparison with Afghan arrivals, the CUAET program has seen three times more arrivals (Government of Canada, 2024b).

The substantial variance between application submissions and actual arrivals can be attributed to the absence of fees for application submission. Many Ukrainian residents, even those not intending immediate relocation, applied as a precautionary measure.

The influx of arrivals placed considerable strain on SPOs. Reflecting on the feedback from SPOs throughout the two years since the program launched, it is evident that the volume of arrivals exceeded expectations. Furthermore, as the CUAET program was distinct from typical resettlement initiatives and Ukrainian arrivals were classified as temporary workers, the available support services for CUAET holders were initially limited.

As of January 29, 2023, the following summarizes the federal support available to CUAET holders:

Housing:	Up to 14 days of temporary shelter in a hotel (available only in certain cities)
Financial Support:	One-time payment of \$3,000/\$1,500 depending on age
Settlement Support:	Free English classes, job preparation programs, and orientations (IRCC-funded SPOs are the responsible bodies)

Table 1: Summary of Federal Support for CUAET holders

Source: Government of Canada, 2024d

Monitoring hotel occupancy provides insight into the accommodation demands:

As of January 19, 2023:	469 out of 560 rooms occupied (84%)
As of February 16, 2023:	497 out of 560 rooms occupied (89%)
As of March 3, 2023:	654 out of 755 rooms occupied (87%)
As of April 13, 2023:	434 out of 850 rooms occupied (51%)
As of May 11, 2023:	449 out of 810 rooms occupied (55%)
As of June 12, 2023:	431 out of 700 rooms occupied (62%)
As of July 10, 2023:	439 out of 596 rooms occupied (74%)

As of August 3, 2023:	349 out of 590 rooms occupied (59%)
As of September 17, 2023:	499 out of 580 rooms occupied (86%)
As of October 16, 2023:	451 out of 505 rooms occupied (89%)
As of November 10, 2023:	437 out of 505 rooms occupied (86%)
As of December 10, 2023:	451 out of 505 rooms occupied (89%)

Table 2: IRCC Hotel Occupancy by CUAET Holders in 2023

Source: Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2023a

Occupancy percentages offer only a partial view of the demand and availability dynamics. Several factors underscore the complexity of the situation:

1. **Regional Disparities:** Occupancy proportions vary significantly across provinces. For instance, in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) as of August 3, 2023, only 185 (58.7%) out of 315 hotel rooms were occupied by CUAET holders. In contrast, in Calgary, Alberta, 67 (74.4%) out of 90 rooms were occupied. These differences reflect varying demand patterns across regions.
2. **Fluctuating Room Availability:** The total number of available rooms fluctuated dynamically as IRCC sought to adjust room allocations in response to evolving arrival streams. For instance, in the GTA, as of August 3, 2023, 315 rooms were available due to high demand in previous months. However, by November 2023, the total number of rooms was adjusted to 265, indicating a responsive approach to changing needs.
3. **Provincial Initiatives:** Not all provinces relied solely on provincial hotel rooms. For example, on March 31, 2023, the Alberta Government allocated additional funding to augment room capacity beyond what the federal government provided (Government of Alberta, 2023). This proactive measure was in response to consistent full occupancies and escalating arrival numbers.

Understanding where Ukrainians choose to settle is crucial for equitable resource distribution and identifying areas with the highest support needs. To achieve this, we must analyze Ukrainian arrivals in each province separately. There are two primary methods for understanding Ukrainian arrivals:

Transitional Financial Assistance Applications: Tracking applications for one-time transitional financial assistance provides insight into the chosen locations of individuals. According to that data, Ontario leads with 40.42% of applications processed by the CRA, followed by Alberta with 21.5%, and Manitoba with 10.14% (Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2024).

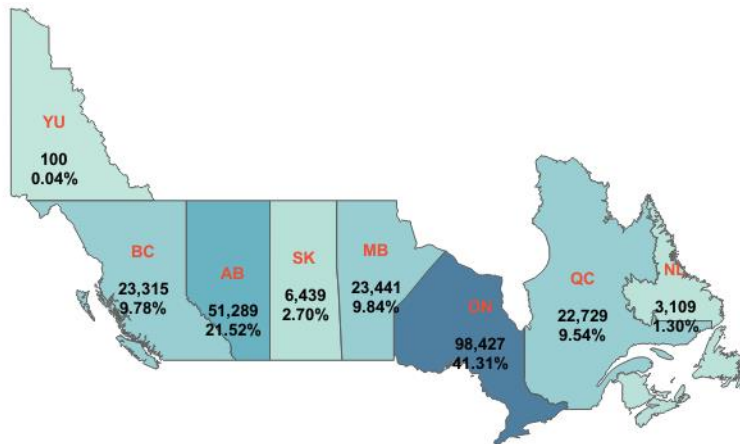


Figure 1: ESDC Financial Assistance Data of Ukrainian Newcomers as of February 18, 2024.

Source: Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2024

Health Coverage Registration Applications: Another approach to understanding Ukrainian geographical preferences is to examine their registration applications for health coverage. Every province mandates residents, including Ukrainians, to apply for health coverage. Each individual's application requires them to provide their residence, enabling identification of their choice of residence.

Similarly, data on health registration applications paints a comparable picture. Ontario leads with 40.42%, followed by Alberta at 23.59%, with Manitoba ranking third at 11.23% (Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2024).

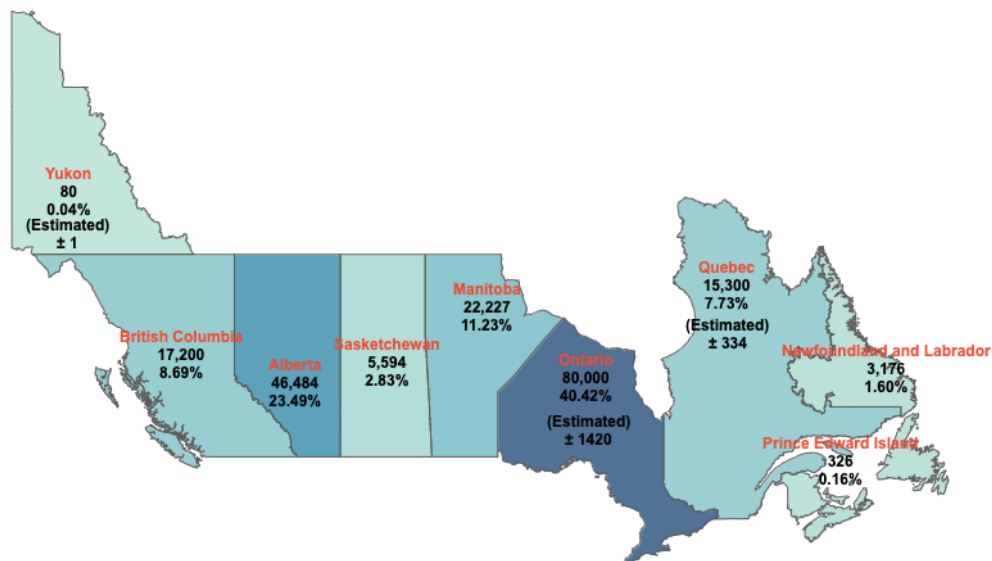


Figure 2: Health Care Registration Data of Ukrainian Newcomers as of December 2023.

Source: Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2024

Both methodologies provide valuable insights into general trends in Ukrainian distribution across provinces. However, they also present significant limitations.

Neither approach accounts for secondary migration, which could introduce considerable deviations over time. Regarding financial assistance data, CUAET arrivals have the option to apply for financial assistance on the same day they arrive, even at the airport. This is possible because the application process is conducted online and requires only the social insurance number (SIN), which Ukrainian newcomers can get at certain airports when they arrive. Ontario's popularity and accessibility through flight routes contribute to a significant influx of Ukrainians passing through its airports. As a result, Ukrainian applications are included in the count for the Ontario region, even if Ontario is not their ultimate destination. While the scale of such cases remains unquantified, we anticipate the deviation to be relatively low.

Regarding health coverage data, we anticipate that the data will better reflect where Ukrainians choose to settle in the longer term, as individuals register for health coverage when certain about their permanent residence. Should an individual decide to relocate, they must register for health coverage in their new location, which the final dataset will ultimately reflect. However, it is important to note that health coverage data inherently lags, as 1) it takes time for applicants to submit their change in coverage and 2) governmental processing delays contribute to the time before the dataset reflects reality.

Since CUAET holders are eligible to participate in IRCC-funded Settlement Support services, data on the services accessed can help observers understand priority needs of Ukrainian newcomers. The Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment (iCARE) allows examination of how many Ukrainian newcomers accessed services and which ones they accessed.

Between April 2022 and July 2023, a total of 103,000 Ukrainian clients accessed settlement services across Canada:

Total: 103,000 of CUAET holders	
89,178	Information and Orientation Services
70,118	Needs and Assets Assessment and Referrals
44,294	Language Assessment
19,388	Language Training
17,959	Community Connections
15,438	Employment-Related Services

Table 3: Settlement services accessed by Ukrainian newcomers (April 2022 – July 2023)

Source: Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2023a

Notably, upon analyzing the total arrivals of Ukrainian newcomers in July 2023, which amounted to 188,000, we can conclude that only 54% of individuals participated in Orientation and Settlement support services. Understanding the reasons behind the relatively low enrollment in settlement services presents challenges. Potential factors may include a lack of awareness about available services, language barriers hindering access, and issues related to accessibility.

Furthermore, it is worth considering that some Ukrainian newcomers may arrive already well-prepared and equipped, thus not requiring immediate access to these services, or they may not have felt ready to utilize them at the time of arrival.

SITUATION IN ALBERTA

Alberta consistently ranks as the second most popular province for Ukrainian newcomers, a notable distinction considering Alberta's status as only the fourth most populated province in Canada. As of February 1, 2024, 49,689 individuals have applied for health coverage in Alberta (Alberta Health Services, 2024). While this number may be higher in reality due to tracking lag and secondary migration, it clearly highlights Alberta's attractiveness to Ukrainian newcomers.

There are several reasons driving this trend. Firstly, Alberta boasts the second-highest number of Ukrainian Canadians in the country, trailing only Ontario, which has a population more than three times larger than Alberta's. Additionally, Alberta's lower average rents, and high incomes in relative terms made it an attractive option for Ukrainian newcomers (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2024).

Moreover, Alberta offers a variety of immigration programs, providing clear pathways for CUAET holders to immigrate. For example, the Alberta Opportunity stream requires just one year of work experience and relatively low language scores (CLB4/5, depending on the field) to apply (Government of Alberta, 2024c). This attracts Ukrainian newcomers, who have temporary status, to Alberta with their future immigration plans in mind.

Analysis of Alberta health coverage data reveals insights into the distribution of Ukrainian arrivals across the province.



Figure 3: Number of Ukrainian evacuees registered for Alberta health coverage (as of December 7, 2023).

Source: AAISA, 2024a

Unsurprisingly, Alberta's major urban centers emerge as the primary destinations for Ukrainian newcomers. As of December 7, 2023, Calgary accounted for 50.5% of all registrations, followed by Edmonton at 31.4%, and Red Deer trailing at 3.17%.

It is crucial to note that a lower percentage of newcomers in a particular area does not necessarily imply lower pressure on SPOs. Even though Calgary hosts the highest percentage of Ukrainian arrivals (23,687 or 50.5%), the overall impact of Ukrainian newcomers might not be much less in Vegreville, although only 0.19% of all Ukrainian newcomers across the province have registered there (89 registrations).

	Calgary	Vegreville
Ukrainian health coverage registrations in AB:	23,687 (50.5%)	89 (0.19%)
Total population:	1,413,800	5,629

% of Ukrainian health registrations in comparison to total population:	1.68%	1.58%
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In Calgary, where the total population was 1,413,800 as of 2022 (Government of Alberta 2023b), immigrants accounted for 32.95% (430,640) of the population, with recent immigrants comprising 6.22% (81,315) (Statistics Canada, 2023). Ukrainian newcomers constituted only 1.68% of the total population and 29.86% of recent newcomers. In Vegreville, with a total population of 5,629 in 2022, and 89 Ukrainians registered with health coverage, Ukrainians represented 1.58% of the population (Government of Alberta 2023c).

Despite the disparity in net health coverage registrations, the percentage of newcomers in relation to the total population is similar in both Calgary and Vegreville (1.68% to 1.58%), suggesting comparable pressure on SPOs. Moreover, rural areas face additional challenges due to limited or absent SPOs, highlighting the necessity for increased community support to assist vulnerable populations.

SECONDARY MIGRATION

It is important to emphasize that tracking of Ukrainian newcomers at both national and provincial levels has paid limited attention to the phenomenon of secondary migration. As of February 2024, there is no universal method for tracking the geographical movements of Ukrainian newcomers arriving in Canada since March 2022.

Alberta Health Services (AHS) data serves as the primary resource for understanding the distribution of Ukrainians in Alberta. It allows us to examine the communities where Ukrainian newcomers register for health coverage. Whenever individuals move to a different community and update their health applications, these changes are noted and adjusted accordingly.

Regarding interprovincial migration, Alberta Health began providing data on Ukrainian newcomers who relocated to Alberta starting from September 8, 2022. As of January 4, 2024, a total of 1354 Ukrainians have moved to Alberta from other provinces, with Ontario leading at 668, Manitoba following at 192, and British Columbia at 211 (Alberta Health Services, 2024). Although these numbers only offer a partial overview, they do indicate that 2.8% of Ukrainians have relocated to Alberta from other provinces.



Figure 4: Numbers of Ukrainian newcomers who have moved to Alberta from other provinces and applied for health coverage (as of January 4, 2024).

Source: Alberta Health Services, 2024

While AHS data has proven invaluable in capturing general settlement trends among displaced Ukrainians in Alberta, it has its limitations. Many Ukrainians relocate to other municipalities or regions shortly after applying for healthcare, often without updating their addresses. This issue is particularly prevalent among those who choose to settle in rural communities where AHS offices may be scarce, necessitating travel to nearby municipalities for healthcare application updates.

Prior to AHS sharing insights on Ukrainian movements from other provinces, AAISA had independently pursued efforts to understand the geographic distribution of Ukrainian newcomers. Leveraging its status as an umbrella organization with an existing network and connections to settlement service providers in Alberta, AAISA began collecting information on postal codes, birth dates, and the number of dependents of Ukrainian newcomers who sought services from SPOs across the province. These metrics were selected for their non-identifying and anonymous nature, facilitating the tracking of Ukrainian newcomer movements between communities.

The analysis of this data unveiled that Ukrainian newcomers in Alberta predominantly chose Calgary, Edmonton, and Red Deer as their top three destinations, in descending order of popularity. However, although rural regions do not have the same net populations, the data illustrates that many Ukrainians do choose to relocate to rural regions. These findings offer valuable insights for SPOs operating outside major urban centers and can potentially spur collaboration opportunities in rural areas. AAISA has been utilizing these insights to not only highlight the distribution across communities but also within them, pinpointing areas with

the most pressing needs (AAISA, 2024a). This evidence serves as a basis for advocacy efforts aimed at garnering support from donors, property management organizations, food banks, and other stakeholders invested in the welfare of Ukrainian newcomers.

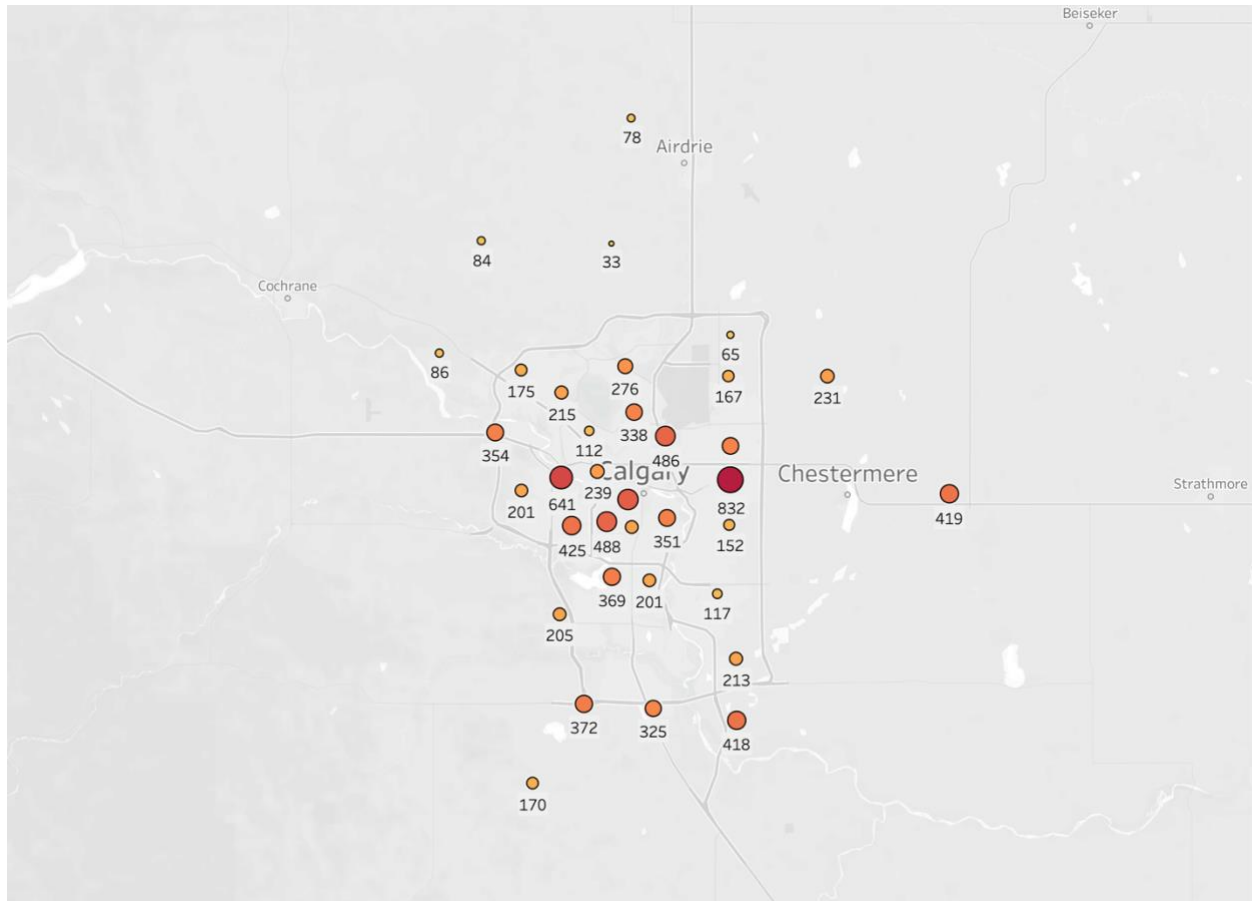


Figure 5: Heat map of Ukrainian newcomers accessing settlement services (Jan - Apr 2023).

Source: AAISA, 2024a

COMMON CHALLENGES

As part of AAISA's efforts to understand the needs of Ukrainians in Alberta, we conduct environmental scans with SPOs and communities supporting Ukrainian newcomers. The objectives include:

- Identifying the primary needs of Ukrainians.
- Recognizing the challenges faced by SPOs in supporting them.
- Tracking the evolving needs of both SPOs and Ukrainian newcomers.
- Determining how AAISA can assist in addressing these needs.

Overall Ranking:	Mean Ranking:
1. Access to short-term or long-term housing:	1.96
2. Employment needs:	2.50
3. Language needs:	2.58
4. Financial needs:	4.85
5. Food support needs:	6.00
6. Childcare needs:	6.19
7. Transportation needs:	6.73
8. Mental health needs:	7.19
9. Disability needs:	8.27
10. Elderly support needs:	8.73

Table 4: Top needs of Ukrainian newcomers in Alberta (as of August 2023).

Source: AAISA, 2023

Based on feedback from 24 Service Providers across Alberta, the top needs identified for Ukrainians are housing, employment, and language support. It is important to understand that while these needs are ranked, it does not mean that one is more important than the other, but simply highlights the frequency of requests for support that SPOs are facing. For instance, while support for the elderly ranks lower, it simply means that there is a lesser elderly population percentage-wise, but their needs still require equitable attention and resources.

HOUSING

Housing emerges as the most pressing concern for Ukrainian newcomers in Alberta, both in the short and long term. This is largely due to the fact that Ukrainian newcomers arriving in Canada under the CUAET stream are only provided temporary shelter for up to 14 days in hotel rooms, primarily in Calgary and Edmonton. However, the availability of temporary shelter depends on the allocation of rooms by the federal government to each province, which can vary.

While most SPOs acknowledge the effectiveness of the federal and provincial model for providing short-term shelter to Ukrainians, the allotted time has proven insufficient for necessary tasks such as documentation, job hunting, and securing long-term rentals.

Long-term housing presents significant challenges, notably in terms of availability and affordability. According to a 2023 Housing Needs Assessment by the City of Calgary, one in five households in Calgary struggles to afford housing. Furthermore, the vacancy rate

dropped from 6% to 3% between 2020 and 2022, while average rents increased by approximately 40% from 2020 to 2023 (City of Calgary, 2023). The absence of essential documents like credit history or references from previous landlords further complicates matters for Ukrainian newcomers in the housing market.

In response, the Government of Alberta has made Ukrainian newcomers eligible for provincial affordable housing programs under the CUAET stream (Government of Alberta, 2023d). However, since the program caters to low-income and vulnerable groups, including Ukrainians but not exclusively, wait times can extend for months, posing feasibility concerns given the two-week temporary accommodation window upon arrival. Notably, the Government of Alberta allocated additional funding in Budget 2023 to address growing waitlists, though the outcomes remain to be evaluated.

As a result, Ukrainians face similar housing challenges as the local population. These challenges are compounded by their newcomer status and their unfamiliarity with Canadian search processes and required documentation such as credit history or references, making long-term rentals even more elusive.

EMPLOYMENT

Finding suitable employment emerges as a secondary priority identified by Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) across both rural and urban Alberta. The OUSH post-arrival survey, which involved 18,296 individuals with CUAET status, sheds light on Ukrainian work engagement patterns in the Canadian job market (Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2023b). According to the survey, 80.1% of participants are employed, with 46.3% securing employment within a month. However, only 25.7% work in the same field or a higher position as they did before coming to Canada, while 20.4% work in the same field but in a lower position, and 41% work in a completely different field and at a lower position. The top three reasons for unemployment are identified as needing more time to find a position, caregiving responsibilities, and difficulties in getting professional credentials recognized. It is plausible that credential recognition remains an issue even for those who have found employment in a different field, considering that 70.1% of survey respondents hold a bachelor's degree or higher, yet only 46.1% work in their previous employment field.

Insights from AAISA's environmental scan indicate that job placement assistance is the most requested support among Ukrainian newcomers, according to SPOs (AAISA, 2023).

Overall Ranking:	Mean Ranking:
1. Job placement assistance:	1.92
2. Resume/CV writing support:	2.29
3. Interview preparation and coaching:	3.54
4. Certification procedure:	3.62
5. Professional skills upgrading:	3.62

Table 5: Ranking of employment services requested by Ukrainian newcomers in Alberta (as of August 2023).

Source: AAISA, 2023

Some of the challenges are connected with clients who come with higher skills/education, making it challenging to find employment suited to their abilities (aligned with the OUSH survey outcome). Additionally, local employment services are not always accessible for CUAET holders due to their temporary work permit status, thus Ukrainian newcomers cannot access some of the employment programs that service providers provide for other groups with different immigration statuses. SPOs also note that women are particularly vulnerable with little employment available to them, especially in cases where clients have limited English proficiency. There is also a sense that employment programs available in the province are not geared towards women's employment, with the vast majority focused on men's employment. This is partially evident in the OUSH survey as well, with women representing 11.9% of Ukrainian newcomers who are currently unemployed but seeking employment, compared to 6.1% for males (Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2023b). Additionally, only 9.2% (16.5% for males) of women are working in the same field or a higher position than they had in their previous country of residence. The percentage of those working in a different field with a lower position is also slightly higher for the female population (21.3% for women, 19.7% for men). Such trends indicate that women face stronger barriers and fewer career opportunities when seeking employment.

LANGUAGE

Housing, employment, and language proficiency are interconnected needs for Ukrainians, with language proficiency serving as the linchpin for accessing better employment and, ultimately, having better housing choices. Although the CUAET program allows Ukrainian newcomers to participate in the federal Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, accessibility and waiting times have presented significant challenges.

The enrollment process for LINC comprises two stages: 1) registering for a language assessment, and 2) enrolling in language classes based on the assessment results. Waiting times vary across cities and communities. For example, as of June 2023, the waiting period for a language assessment in Calgary exceeded 55 business days, while the wait to be allocated to a class was approximately 6 months.

This prolonged waiting period presents a stark reality for Ukrainian newcomers, who must endure months before being able to enroll in classes. Moreover, the substantial gap between the assessment and class enrollment exacerbates the issue. SPOs have reported that clients' language proficiency often improves during the waiting period, rendering the initially allocated language level potentially unsuitable by the time classes commence.

Feedback from SPOs regarding the LINC model has been mixed. In addition to concerns about accessibility and waiting times, SPOs have highlighted other issues such as insufficient class

spaces, inflexible timeslots that do not accommodate working hours, and limited in-person options in rural areas.

Very effective	3
Effective	8
Neutral	4
Ineffective	6
Very ineffective	1
No experience	2

Table 6: Feedback from SPOs on the LINC Model for Addressing the Language Needs of Ukrainian Newcomers (as of August 2023).

Source: AAISA, 2023

According to the OUSH post-arrival survey, 23.1% of Ukrainian newcomers have either no knowledge or beginner-level English, while 46.1% have only intermediate proficiency (Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2023b). It is important to note that in the OUSH survey, Ukrainians self-assess their language levels, which may differ from Canadian benchmarks. However, these survey findings align with data from Calgary Language Assessment & Referral Centre (CLARC) and AAISA's environmental scan, indicating that the majority of Ukrainians fall within the CLB 3-5 English proficiency range in Fiscal Year 2022. Notably, CLARC reported that Ukrainian newcomers represented only 28% of total client assessments for English proficiency in Fiscal Year 2022-2023 (AAISA, 2024b).

Beginner level	10
Elementary level	10
Intermediate level	1
Advanced level	0
Not applicable	3

Table 7: Feedback from SPOs on the language proficiency levels of their Ukrainian clients (as of August 2023).

Source: AAISA, 2023

It is evident that the majority of Ukrainians immigrating to Canada need to enhance their English proficiency. Due to the unplanned nature of their travels, Ukrainian newcomers often lacked the opportunity to improve their language skills, as language proficiency was not a requirement at the time of applying for the CUAET program. Given the significant demand for language programs among Ukrainian newcomers, the current system proves

unsustainable, compelling Ukrainians to explore alternative options, which will be discussed further in the following section.

SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES

In response to the evolving challenges posed by the increasing number of Ukrainian migrants, Alberta's SPOs and communities have continually adapted to meet their needs.

HOUSING

Housing remains a top priority for Ukrainian newcomers. Despite federal funding providing temporary accommodation in hotel rooms for up to 14 days, the constant influx of Ukrainian arrivals has not been sufficient to address the housing need. To address this issue, AAISA has facilitated meetings with the settlement sector, including federal and provincial governments, to identify needs and address service gaps. Additionally, AAISA has engaged with the Premier’s advisory task force on Ukraine to provide an overview of existing needs and advocate for provincial support.

These collaborative efforts have yielded tangible outcomes, with the Government of Alberta (GoA) funding additional rooms allocated in March 2023 to supplement federal support (Government of Alberta, 2023e). These supplementary accommodations for an additional 14 days are not limited to Calgary and Edmonton but also include Red Deer, Medicine Hat, and Lethbridge. Feedback from SPOs and communities indicates a positive response to the program, with many confirming its effectiveness in supporting Ukrainian newcomers settling in Alberta.

Very effective	8
Somewhat effective	9
Neither effective nor ineffective	2
Somewhat ineffective	1
Very ineffective	1

Table 8: Feedback from SPOs on the temporary housing solutions in Alberta (as of August 2023).

Source: AAISA, 2023

In various communities across Alberta, diverse models have been employed to structure housing programs to address Ukrainian newcomers' long-term needs. In Calgary, major SPOs have taken the lead in promoting hosting and engaging with landlords, while in Edmonton, a combination of settlement service providers and online platforms such as the Edmonton Host Ukrainians Facebook page have played pivotal roles. The Edmonton Host Ukrainians community, for example, has matched 1000 people (351 families) with host families as of March 2024 (Edmonton Hosts Ukrainians, 2024). In rural Alberta, hosting and housing

programs have been organized by both established Service Providers, where available, and local community initiatives. Notable among these efforts is the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) rural relocation project, which focuses on assisting newcomers in relocating from urban to smaller centers where housing and employment opportunities are more accessible. Central to this project is the establishment of connections with rural employers and communities interested in hiring Ukrainian newcomers, providing both employment and accommodation opportunities (CCIS, 2024).

Another standout initiative unfolded in the city of Vegreville, where community-driven fundraising efforts enabled the relocation and integration of 99 Ukrainian newcomers into the community (AAISA, 2024a). This support “package” included housing provisions, employment assistance, financial aid, orientation services, and language support.

AAISA developed its own framework for engaging with host families interested in providing housing for Ukrainian newcomers. The project was structured as follows:

- Through a dedicated website and email line, AAISA provided a platform for host families to register and participate in our housing program. Additionally, SPOs lacking capacity or receiving host requests from different geographic areas where our organization operates sent such requests to AAISA, and we were responsible for processing them.
- Registered host families were invited to attend a training session where we educated them about the background of the Ukrainian crisis, the requirements of being a host, expectations, how to build relationships, and how to prepare for emergencies.
- After hosts underwent screening, including interviews and background checks, we connected eligible hosts with service providers based on the location of the host's housing offer. Settlement practitioners then matched hosts with Ukrainians in need, depending on what the host family could offer.

The key to the success of our approach was the flexibility to assist host families from almost anywhere within Alberta. We developed connections and relationships with rural and urban communities through our regular meetings. Additionally, even in cases where host families decided to host independently or were already hosting, we provided resources and training on how to approach hosting and handle various situations. We informed them about available resources for Ukrainians and provided guidance on the steps to take.

We strongly believe that training and preparation for host families are as crucial as the matching process. Ultimately, this helps establish a solid foundation and mutual understanding between hosts and guests even prior to a match being established, making the experience sustainable and encouraging host families to continue participating and hosting more than one family.

EMPLOYMENT

AAISA's employment efforts primarily focused on aggregating resources in a centralized location to assist newly arrived Ukrainians in their job search. We have maintained a database of resources shared by SPOs and communities during our regular meetings. These

resources include employment orientations, job preparation workshops, guides on how to prepare for job interviews, and resume writing resources.

Initially, we also collected employment offers from employers willing to hire Ukrainians across various locations in Alberta. However, we ceased this practice when Ukrainian Canadian Congress - Alberta Provincial Council (UCC-APC) developed a dedicated job board for Ukrainians, enabling employers to post job offers directly for Ukrainians to view and apply.

Originally, the database we developed was shared with SPOs' frontline staff, who utilized its contents to assist their clients. However, we later changed our strategy and started directly providing resources to Ukrainians to broaden our outreach and assist more clients. We chose to utilize the Telegram app, which is widely popular in Ukraine and mainly accessed through smartphones, thereby enhancing the overall reach. Furthermore, all content was translated into Ukrainian to ensure maximum accessibility.

Despite initial barriers to accessing employment programs for Ukrainians due to their temporary work permit status, some programs adjusted to meet the needs of Ukrainians and help them build employability skills to transition into the local workforce (EMCN, 2024). In February 2023, the Government of Alberta expanded eligibility for apprenticeship education programs to allow Ukrainian newcomers to participate (Government of Alberta, 2023f).

In rural areas, transportation poses a significant obstacle to finding employment. In collaboration with SPOs, communities supporting Ukrainians, and the Premier's task force, we advocated for adjustments in the driving license procedure. These joint efforts resulted in the establishment of a one-year driving exchange program, allowing Ukrainians to exchange their Ukrainian driving license for an Alberta driving license without having to take any exams (Government of Alberta, 2023g).

LANGUAGE

The primary strategy to address language needs has been through providing additional language classes and conversation groups. SPOs, educational institutions, local communities, libraries, and social media platforms have offered language classes to equip newcomers with the necessary skills for daily life while they await enrollment in LINC classes. Unfortunately, the demand has consistently exceeded the available offerings.

In the Budget for 2023, the Government of Alberta announced \$7 million would be dispersed over three years for settlement and language support projects led by newcomer-serving service providers (Government of Alberta, 2023d). Some organizations have received funding to provide English classes, but the need for English language learning persists, not only among Ukrainian but also among other newcomer groups.

AAISA's key role has been to collect language resources available outside the LINC program and share them through our network to both SPOs and Ukrainian newcomers in Ukrainian via our social media channels.

Overall, current language initiatives and projects available for Ukrainians outside of the LINC program are short-term and depend on funding, leaving them unable to meet the needs of all Ukrainians. Creating a sustainable impact requires fundamental changes in the current operational structure at both the provincial and federal levels, which AAISA continues to advocate for.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The CUAET program presents a compelling and distinctive case study. The unprecedented influx of Ukrainian arrivals, arriving with different immigration statuses compared to previous humanitarian responses in Canada, has placed significant pressure on SPOs in Alberta. These providers are already stretched thin due to the high demand for their services. Compounding the situation is the fact that many Ukrainian newcomers arrive unprepared and with limited support, further straining both the newcomers and the SPOs striving to assist them.

Despite the evident need for services, some are inaccessible due to temporary worker status. This conclusion is drawn from internal feedback and observations from the national committee. While the one-time federal payment and 14-day temporary shelter may suffice for Ukrainian individuals with adequate language skills and financial resources, they fall short for those lacking these qualities.

Recognizing these gaps, provinces have implemented additional support measures to bridge the gap and offer newcomers more time and resources to adjust. Some transformative examples, among others, include:

- Alberta's monthly financial payment initiative, which provides ongoing assistance to the most vulnerable individuals (Government of Alberta, 2023d).
- Housing program in Newfoundland and Labrador, wherein local families receive \$1000 for up to five months to host Ukrainian newcomers (ANC, 2024).
- Manitoba's provision of 30 days of hotel stay for Ukrainian arrivals (Government of Manitoba, 2023).

In Alberta, provincial initiatives such as exchanging driving licenses, childcare subsidies, and health benefits programs have demonstrated their effectiveness in addressing the needs of the Ukrainian population. However, it is imperative to integrate successful practices that cover essential needs from the outset of humanitarian crisis response. This approach allows SPOs to plan and focus on assisting clients with their specific and unique needs without delay. Although highlighted examples have proven instrumental, they were not initially present and required significant community effort and time to develop and launch.

A major limitation of the CUAET program is its failure to address the needs of the most vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, seniors, and single mothers with children. The program primarily caters to individuals arriving to work in Canada, neglecting these vulnerable groups. Future humanitarian responses modeled after the CUAET program must consider the inclusion of vulnerable populations and establish clear pathways to permanent residency for them. Currently, vulnerable groups face limited options for

immigration, highlighting the need for detailed considerations in the design of future humanitarian responses.

The decision of Ukrainians to come to Canada reflects their commitment to permanent residency, particularly in light of the 2-year anniversary of the conflict with no signs of the war ending. According to OUSH's post-arrival survey, 92% of respondents intend to apply for permanent residency in Canada (Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven, 2023b).

Humanitarian crises often render affected individuals unable to return to their home countries, as evidenced by the escalating conflict in Ukraine. When the Canadian Government implements humanitarian response efforts, it is essential to incorporate coverage of essential needs, pathways to permanent residency, and additional support measures for the most vulnerable populations from the outset. Without laying this foundational framework, it is impossible to ensure that the overall impact is effective and sustainable in addressing the pressing needs of those affected by crises.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAISA - Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies

CUAET - Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel

IRCC - Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

GoA - Government of Alberta

TFW - Temporary Foreign Worker

RAP - Resettlement Assistance Program

SPO - Service Provider Organization

OUSH - Operation Ukrainian Safe Haven

GTA - Greater Toronto Area

AB - Alberta

iCARE - Immigration Contribution Agreement Reporting Environment

AHS - Alberta Health Services

LINC - Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada

CLARC - Calgary Language Assessment & Referral Centre

CCIS - Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS)

SIN - Social Insurance Number