

OMRA'S PORTABLE RENT SUBSIDY PROGRAM FOR RESETTLED REFUGEES:

Implementation and
Outcome Evaluation
2024

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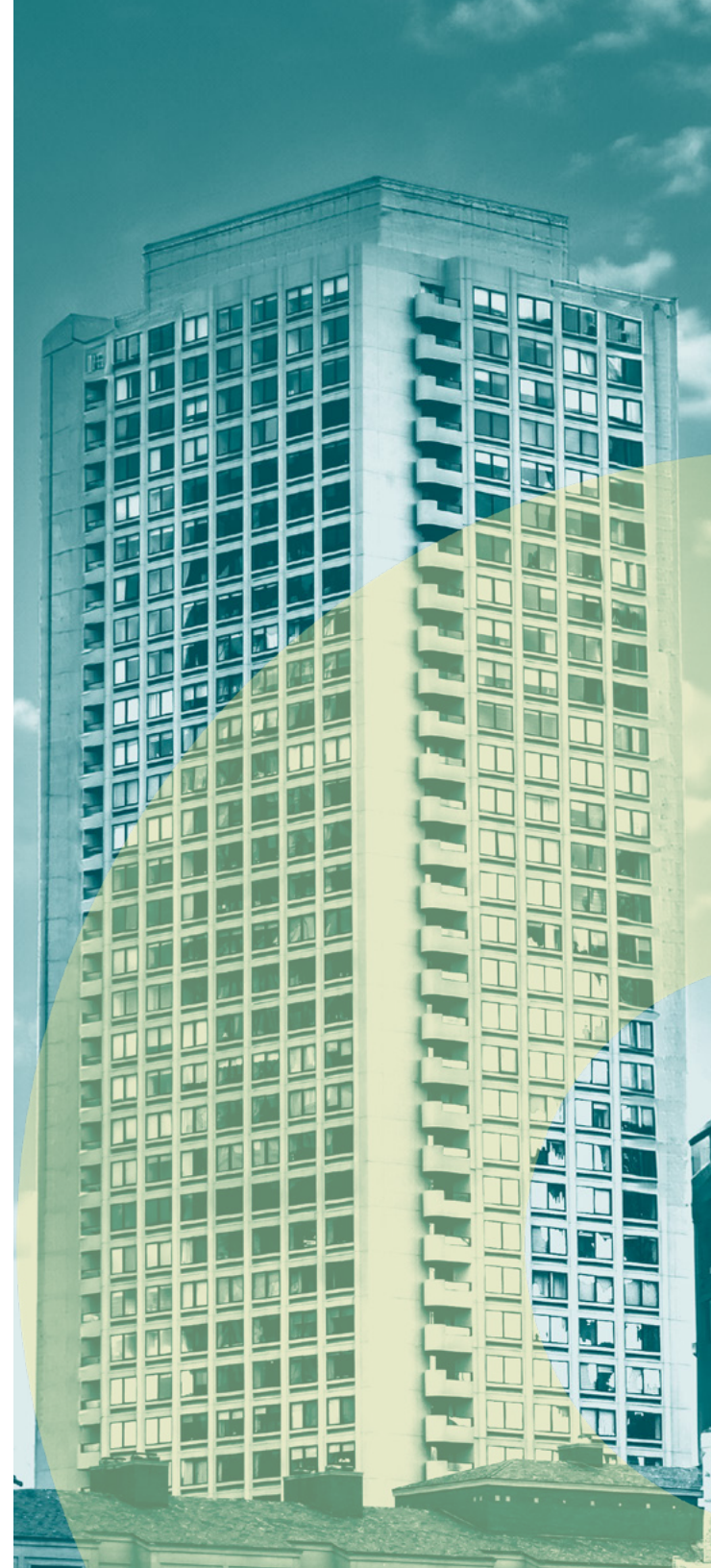
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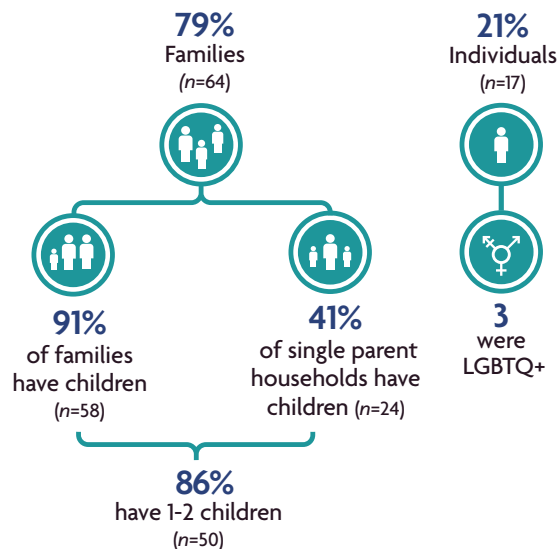
OMRA'S PORTABLE RENT SUBSIDY PROGRAM

An Implementation & Outcome Evaluation

Conducted Using Mixed Methods

From 2017-2023 OMRA Provided

81 Refugee Households With Portable Rent Subsidies



In 2023, OMRA Distributed An Annual Subsidy Amount Of

\$126,185 more than five times the amount they distributed in 2017 (\$24,318)

The Average Length Of Subsidies

1.77 Years With A Range Of 2 Months To 5 Years

Average Age Of Primary Contact

35 Years With A Range Of 19-65 Years (n=57)

OMRA Clients Were Stably Housed

80% of clients who completed the study survey were housed in private market rentals
46% of clients had 0 moves and **28%** had only one move since arriving in Canada.

Since beginning the subsidy, **80%** of clients who completed the survey had attended a **school program** and in all families with a spouse, the **spouse had attended a school program**.
52% of clients had started **working** and of the families with a spouse **24%** of spouses had started working.

Clients reported **improvements in their quality of life**, daily functioning, social connectedness as well as decreases in loneliness. They attributed these positive outcomes to receiving OMRA's services.

Average Monthly Subsidies Paid

\$377.54 for families

\$288.33 for single individuals

The Average Monthly Rent Paid

\$1,340.38 by families

\$708.82 by single individuals

"I could never afford my rent without their help"

—client interviewee

95%

Of OMRA Survey Participants Were Satisfied Or Very Satisfied With OMRA's Services.

Mean housing satisfaction ratings were significantly higher for

- Living close to shopping
- Close to public transit
- Close to services
- Having control over who can come into home
- Life since coming to Canada

Mean housing satisfaction ratings were significantly lower for

- Having choice over their housing
- Control over housing
- Condition of home
- Affordability

Program stakeholders and clients recommended that the program expand its reach, formalize its internal processes, and replicate its Rapid Rehousing program model for resettled refugees, while also continuing to call on governments to increase settlement assistance to resettled refugees.



Executive Summary

From December 2023 to May 2024, researchers conducted an implementation and outcome evaluation of OMRA's rent subsidy program, examining the implementation facilitators and challenges, and the client outcomes of OMRA's 2017-2023 portable rent subsidies for resettled refugee individuals and families.

The evaluation objectives were:

1. To determine facilitators and barriers to program implementation;
2. To provide a financial analysis of the program;
3. To evaluate the outcomes of the program for clients; and
4. To provide recommendations for program improvement, including expansion.

The evaluation questions were:

1. What are the characteristics of the program recipients?
2. Is the program being delivered to the intended population?

3. What are the program costs per year associated with rent subsidies and how have these costs changed from 2017-2023?
4. What are clients' rental costs per year (accounting for rent subsidies and additional shelter allowances) and how have these costs changed from 2017-2023?
5. What are facilitators and barriers to program implementation?
6. To what extent have program clients experienced improved housing outcomes while in the program?
7. To what extent have program clients experienced improved educational outcomes while in the program?
8. To what extent have program clients experienced improved employment outcomes while in the program?
9. To what extent have program clients experienced improved quality of life outcomes while in the program?
10. In what ways do participants attribute improvements in areas of their lives to receipt of the rent subsidies?

An Advisory Committee provided guidance and input into all stages of the study. The committee was comprised of three OMRA Board members, one community partner, the four study researchers, one of whom was both a client advisor and research assistant, and one additional client advisor.

The researchers used a mixed method sequential design—data were collected in sequence, and analyses from initial methods informed the design of subsequent methods and their analysis. The study methods included a literature and document review, an analysis of existing program data, a client survey ($N = 50$), and semi-structured qualitative interviews with 10 key informants (Board members, volunteers, external partners), and 11 program clients. The survey was distributed in English, French, Arabic, Dari, Pashto, Spanish, and Kirundi. Client interviews were conducted in English, French, Dari and Pashto.

The researchers found that OMRA is successfully implementing its program to support resettled refugees to become stably housed in Ottawa in scattered-site, private market rental housing. The subsidy meets an affordability gap between a family's shelter allowance plus additional income supports, and rent. The subsidies are flexible and adjusted regularly by the organization. OMRA also provides much-needed, short-term, focused supports in the form of housing-related guidance, English tutoring that includes orientation to Canada, and provision of furniture and apartment essentials in partnership with Helping with Furniture, another non-profit organization in Ottawa.

From 2017 to 2023, OMRA provided and managed monthly subsidies for 81 households, the majority of which were families

($n = 64$). Forty-one percent ($n = 24$) of the 58 families with children were single-parent households at the time of starting the subsidy, and 86% ($n = 50$) of the families with children had one to two children. The primary household contacts ranged from 19 to 65 years old. Three of the single individual households identified as LGBTQ individuals (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer). Recipients were from 26 different countries. The highest proportion of clients ($n = 22$) were from Afghanistan, followed by 14 from Syria. The program has grown since 2017, providing \$126,185 in total rent subsidies, compared to \$24,318 in 2017. Overall, the average monthly subsidy for families was \$377.54 and \$288.33 for single individuals.

The program is reaching its intended population, which are resettled refugees with permanent residency status, and single individuals and families with not more than two children. The subsidies are time-limited, and the subsidy amount and length of time is determined by individualized assessment and re-assessment of financial need and education and employment status. Sixty-four percent ($n = 44$) of clients started receiving the subsidy in their first year of arrival in Canada.

Ninety-five percent of the 44 clients who completed the satisfaction items in the survey said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the services OMRA offers. Individual-level program facilitators were the individualized monthly subsidy amounts, which OMRA Board members re-assessed regularly, resulting in increases in the subsidy or gradual decreases. Clients and key informants also described the individualized support OMRA offers in addition to the financial support as a facilitator, such as assistance with speaking in English, orientation to Canadian

culture, settlement guidance, and support in crises. Finally, clients valued OMRA's facilitated connections with other refugees.

Program-level facilitators included the flexibility of the program and the high level of commitment of Board members and volunteers. Additionally, key informants and clients described the value of the external partnership with Helping with Furniture. Other program-level facilitators were the clarity of the client-OMRA agreement, the annual park gathering, and the community networking that has resulted from the grocery card fundraiser, the main fundraising component of the program.

Implementation challenges at the individual-level included challenges navigating language barriers, lack of clarity of OMRA's role, and the level of settlement support OMRA provides. Clients reported experiencing a pressure to work from OMRA, and noted the need for additional education and training supports for women due to gender gaps in educational attainment in some countries of origin. Clients also said they needed higher rent subsidies and that more refugees in Ottawa needed OMRA's subsidies. Program- and systems-level challenges included the need for more sufficient government and financial support and expanded capacity of settlement agencies. Additional challenges included OMRA volunteer burnout, the need for written organizational policies and procedures, Board member succession planning, strategic planning, the need to become better known in the community, and the need to grow the organization's funding base.

Overall, the program has been successful in reaching its long-term outcomes. Eighty percent of the 50 clients who completed the survey were housed in private market rentals. When

examining clients whose subsidies had ended, 90% were in private market housing, indicating clients remain in private market housing when their subsidies end. Of surveyed clients, 46% had zero moves since arriving in Canada, and another 28% had only one move. This stability was also reflected in high rates of satisfaction with the choice of housing location.

While clients showed housing stability, survey respondents' housing satisfaction ratings were, on average, at the satisfied level. Mean satisfaction ratings were significantly higher than the mean of all other items for being close to shopping, being close to public transit, being close to services, having control over who could come into their home, and overall life since coming to Canada. Mean satisfaction ratings were significantly lower than the mean of all other items for housing affordability, the condition of clients' housing (e.g., appliances, plumbing, and things in need of repair), control over housing, and choice of their housing. In addition to housing outcomes, clients showed improved educational and employment outcomes. Since beginning the subsidy, 80% ($n = 35$) of survey respondents had attended a school program (including language school credential recognition, high school or post-secondary programs). In all of the families with a spouse, the spouse had attended a school program. Since beginning the subsidy, 52% ($n = 23$) of survey respondents had started working. Of the families with a spouse, 24% ($n = 8$) of spouses had started working. In addition, clients described improvements in their quality of life, daily functioning, and social connectedness, as well as decreased loneliness. Ten of the eleven clients who were interviewed articulated a clear link between OMRA programming and the outcomes they described.

STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate

1. Strike an implementation committee to prioritize, plan, and implement program changes.
2. Continue to formalize the individualized support role in the program.
3. Develop clear policies, procedures, and a strategic plan.
 - a. Continue the individualized assessment and re-assessment of subsidy amounts.
 - b. Continue to use the client subsidy agreements as a clear procedure and communication tool.
 - c. Expand the program's client file record management and introduce the use of simple client management software.
4. Improve internal communication (with clients and volunteers) in multiple languages.
5. Improve external marketing and the program's social media presence.

Medium-Term

6. Expand the program funding model.
 - a. Increase funding to add paid staff (addressing succession planning, fundraising needs, burnout, volunteer training and management needs).

- b. Continue to explore corporate sponsorship and additional government funding, such as provincial and municipal housing funding.
 - c. Consider additional social enterprise options, such as expanding the organization's use of townhouse ownership in order to leverage equity to fund rent subsidies.
 - d. Develop efficiencies for the grocery card fundraiser
 - e. Develop alternative fundraising initiatives.
 - f. Increase subsidy amounts.
 - g. Increase the number of subsidy recipients.
 - h. Explore possibilities and potential benefits of linking to a larger, more sustainable organization.
7. Replicate the model, drawing on key components of a Rapid Rehousing approach, and defining OMRA as a form of Rapid Rehousing to provide credibility to the program within the broader housing context.
 8. Increase the volunteer base.

Long-Term

9. Continue to call on the Government of Canada to increase settlement assistance to resettled refugees.



Introduction

From July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023, Canada's population grew by 1,158,705 people, which was its highest population growth rate (2.9%) for a 12-month period since 1957. Ninety-eight percent of this growth was accounted for by international migration (Statistics Canada, 2023).

Based on Shan's (2019) analysis of 2016 Census data, 50% of recent refugee households spent 30% or more of their before-tax income on shelter, compared to 34% of recent immigrants. Overall, resettled refugees (government-assisted refugees [GARs], privately-sponsored refugees [PSRs], and blended visa office-referred refugees [BVORs]) had poorer housing and economic conditions than protected persons (i.e., refugee claimants who have been granted protected status [Shan, 2019]). PSRs tend to have better housing and economic outcomes when compared to GARs (Shan, 2019).

Refugees are one of several vulnerable populations in Canada who are highly affected by the current housing crisis. With a lack of affordable housing, low rental stock, and increased housing demand, and not enough social housing units, vulnerable groups are facing crisis-level housing challenges, including discrimination by private market landlords, vulnerable housing, and homelessness (Bhattacharyya et al., 2020; Scoles, 2021).

Factors such as sponsorship-type, language ability, education level, household composition, and experiences of trauma also affect the housing experience of refugees (Francis, 2010; Scoles, 2021).

Refugee claimants (i.e., asylum seekers) have a higher number of moves and greater housing precarity when they first arrive in Canada compared with other refugee groups, such as GARs and PSRs (Francis, 2010). GARs stay in temporary accommodation when they first arrive in Canada, such as a reception house or hotel, then move to a more permanent accommodation. Bhattacharyya et al. (2020) noted there is not enough temporary housing to shelter GARs suitably when they first arrive in Canada. PSRs and BVORs usually move into permanent accommodations immediately upon arrival in Canada because private sponsors have arranged their housing prior to their arrival (Francis, 2010). Based on current housing trends, the shelter assistance provided to GARs and BVORs in their first 12 months in Canada (under the Resettlement Assistance Program [RAP]) is increasingly lower than private market rental rates, and private sponsors for PSRs and BVORs are increasingly financially liable and stretched to cover their beneficiaries' housing costs (Rose & Charette, 2017; Scoles, 2021).

GARs, PSRs and BVORs receive income assistance for 12 months and then it expires. “Month 13” is highly stressful financially due to resettlement policies that work under the assumption that resettled refugees will be financially independent at this point when many are not (Bhattachryya et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2024). In the 13th month many resettled refugees move into more precarious housing, join long social housing waitlists, and rely on provincial social assistance (Bhattachryya et al., 2020; Brown et al., 2024; Rose & Charette, 2017, Scoles, 2021). As well, they faced other challenges that include finding stable employment, lacking access to affordable childcare, learning a new language, facing difficulties affording transportation costs, and lacking access to education and training (Brown et al., 2024; Francis, 2010).

A Vancouver (BC) study found that 14% of GARs in their sample had experienced at least one episode of homelessness since arriving in Canada (Francis, 2010). A 2019 study of 19 PSRs who were homeless in Edmonton (AB) reported they entered homelessness in their 13th month due to increases in their rents, abandonment by private sponsors and settlement workers, discrimination, and inadequate housing (Arnault & Merali, 2019).

A 2016 evaluation of the Government of Canada’s resettlement programs (GARs, PSRs, BVORs, and RAP overall) concluded that “not enough time is allocated to the provision of RAP services for GARs with greater needs, including finding permanent housing. Evidence also indicated that RAP income support levels continue to be inadequate to meet essential needs of refugees” (IRCC, 2016, p. iv). In response, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) committed to develop policy options on potential

modifications to RAP to better meet resettled refugees’ needs.

A 2021 evaluation of the BVOR found that more than half of private sponsors under the program spent more money on sponsorship than estimated with the majority of private sponsors continuing to support refugees beyond the required period, and RAP financial supports failing match high costs of rent (IRCC, 2021).

HOUSING-LED APPROACHES WITH PORTABLE RENT SUBSIDIES

Housing-led approaches to addressing homelessness focus on providing people with immediate access to housing with individualized supports and rent subsidies as financial supports (Byrne et al., 2021). Based on the housing model used by this study’s program, as well as the general housing approach used for resettled refugees in Canada, we conducted a literature review of common housing-led approaches, applying the search to refugees and newcomers to Canada.

Housing First (HF)

Housing First (HF) is a common housing-led approach, rooted in the understanding that housing is a human right. The intervention was developed to support people experiencing chronic homelessness and mental illness to successfully exit homelessness. HF provides immediate access to housing using rent subsidies (Tsemberis, 2015). People are also provided with individualized mental health service supports, usually in the form of intensive case management (ICM) or assertive community treatment (ACT). HF clients have housing choice and approximately 85% choose regular housing

that is scattered in either private market units or social housing (Richter & Hoffmann, 2017; Tsemberis, 2015). In these scattered-site, independent units, the rent subsidies are usually portable. Hence, if people need to move, their re-housing is prioritized and their subsidy moves with them rather than remaining attached to the housing unit itself (Tsemberis, 2015).

There is a large evidence base supporting the effectiveness of HF, with randomized controlled trials having been conducted in the United States, Canada and France. These studies have shown that compared to usual services for people who are chronically homeless, HF houses people more quickly and ends homelessness for a much higher proportion of people (Aubry et al., 2016; Stergiopoulos et al., 2015; Tsemberis et al., 2004; Tinland et al., 2020).

HF has been adapted for specific populations experiencing homelessness, such as youth, veterans, Indigenous peoples, and people experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV). Based on our search we found no research specifically on HF for refugees and, relatedly, little research on HF for racialized populations. The At Home Chez Soi randomized controlled trial of HF in Canada included a HF adaptation for people from ethno-racial groups in Toronto who were also homeless with mental illness (Stergiopoulos et al., 2012). The approach combined HF with ICM and an anti-racism/anti-oppression framework of practice. Stergiopoulos and her colleagues reported ethno-cultural identity of the program participants, but the study excluded people who did not have legal status as a Canadian citizen. They reported cultural identities as Black, South Asian, Middle Eastern, East Asian, Southeast Asian, Latin American, Indian Caribbean and mixed raced. In an implementation evaluation of



the study, researchers found there were key challenges related to meeting the cultural and linguistic needs of this diverse group of program participants, which they sought to address through peer workers, linguistic translation services, diverse staff members, and a high level of staff training.

Crawford et al.'s (2020) scoping review on culturally and linguistically diverse populations and their health and housing needs emphasized the effectiveness of HF. Both Stergiopoulos et al. (2012) and Crawford et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of addressing stigma, discrimination, and oppression in housing interventions for culturally diverse groups, including when interacting with private market landlords.

Rapid Rehousing (RRH)

Another type of housing-led approach, complementary to HF, is called Rapid Rehousing (RRH). RRH also focuses on providing access to housing for people who are homeless as quickly as possible. Unlike HF, the program is time-limited and focused on providing supports largely linked to the transition into stable housing rather than the broader mental health and wraparound supports of HF (Byrne et al., 2021). RRH has a set of program standards, generated by key stakeholders and federal agencies in the United States. It has three main components (Byrne et al., 2021): 1) Housing identification—helping people find safe, affordable housing as quickly as possible; 2) Rent and move-in assistance—move-in costs and short-term rental assistance; 3) Case management—focused on helping with housing stability and connecting to other services that will support housing stability.

Relevant to the current program evaluation of OMRA, Gurdak et al. (2022) described RRH

as providing short-term rental assistance for independent, scattered-site housing with support services for up to 24 months. The intervention is considered *just enough* assistance to successfully exit homelessness. It is aimed at people who do not need the long-term assistance with no time limits provided by HF. Sometimes RRH has a stepped down approach to its rent subsidies, specifically, the client takes over more and more of the rent coverage on a set schedule (Wood et al., 2023). Subsidies are often portable—attached to the person rather than the unit. A transition out of RRH looks different from program to program but in scattered-site private market units people stay in their units and no longer receive the portable rent subsidies and short-term supports.

While HF has a large evidence base and several fidelity measures to assess the closeness of local programs to a set of key program standards, RRH is in earlier development and has variation from program to program (Gubits et al., 2016). Research shows that people in RRH are less likely to enter emergency shelter than those receiving standard care (Byrne et al., 2021).

RRH has also been adapted for various populations such as youth, LGBTQ communities, families with children, people with HIV/AIDS, and people experiencing IPV (Byrne et al., 2021; Gubits et al., 2016). The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HuD) in the United States recently allocated \$120 million for RRH vouchers for people experiencing IPV (Wood et al., 2023). In the program for IPV survivors that Wood et al. (2023) evaluated, services provided partial subsidies to IPV survivors, and they were calculated based on recipients' average income over a year. Based on our literature search, there are no studies on RRH for refugees or newcomers.

RENT SUBSIDIES FOR REFUGEES

While not referred to as HF or RRH, some housing models for refugees in the research literature and in practice align with HF and RRH. Silvius et al. (2017) conducted a case study of Welcome Place, a refugee settlement agency in Winnipeg (MB) that served all Syrian GARs who arrived in Manitoba in 2015. The organization managed two types of housing arrangements for Syrian refugees, leveraging provincial and federal housing funding that was assigned to support Syrian GARs temporarily. According to Silvius et al. (2017), “the first Syrian GARs were met by an unprecedented mobilization of housing subsidies, without which it is doubtful that Welcome Place would have been as successful in housing the incoming Syrian refugees” (p. 16). One type of subsidy was an expansion of the Manitoba Housing and Community Development and the Rent Supplement Program, assigned to the first wave of Syrian refugees. The rent supplements were calculated based on the difference between market rental rates and the calculated rent-gear-to-income for the tenant. They were attached to affordable units and applied to specific homes that had met adequacy criteria. The expansion of this program to meet the needs of Syrian refugees was due in large part to the advocacy of Welcome Place, as well as their practical support partnering with landlords and finding suitable units (Silvius et al., 2017).

The second housing arrangement was called the Rent Assist Program, which leveraged portable rent subsidies for Syrian families to rent in private market housing. It was calculated based on the difference between 75% of the median market rent and 25% of the household income. In the case of Manitoba and this first wave of Syrian refugees, the Rent Assist Program was not widely used or successfully implemented, and

the Rent Supplement Program was the preferred way that Welcome Place housed families. The calculation of the Rent Supplement Program was more straightforward, covered more rent, and settlement support workers knew what would be covered when they applied, which was not the case for the Rent Assist Program. The Rent Assist Program was also not implemented in a timely way. Unfortunately, the Manitoba government did not expand either program for meeting the housing needs of a second wave of Syrian refugees in 2016. At the time of the case study, many of the initial people housed under the program had not yet reached Month 13 and their housing funding after their first year was uncertain. The authors called on Federal and provincial governments to “restore rent supplements for resettled refugees’ long-term housing needs” (Silvius et al., 2017, p. 22).

Rose and Charette (2017) conducted a study of how RAP-serving settlement organizations support GARs to find housing. The researchers noted over-crowding of households, transportation issues, and challenges with the location of housing. GARs’ support was highly dependent on the capacity of settlement workers, networks of landlords willing to rent to GARs, and volunteers’ support. The study noted the practice of organizations adding funds to subsidize rents beyond the first 12 months, continuing to meet unique financial needs of refugees at Month 13 and beyond.

Bevelander et al. (2019) examined government administrative data for 87,150 refugees in Sweden. The authors explained that in Sweden refugee claimants could choose to live in “state housing” that was fully subsidized. Subsidies were attached to the units and often the selected housing was in small city centers. Alternatively, as a second option, refugee claimants could

choose their own housing with a lower subsidy that was portable. The researchers found that male refugees who chose their housing were more likely to be employed than those who did not choose their own housing. Authors noted the importance of choice of location and that the portability of the supplement allowed for this choice. Brown et al.’s (2024) scoping review also described the negative impacts of policies where refugees are dispersed across a country, such as the UK, removing social support and assigning people to poor-quality housing.

Overall, based on our review, there is little research on approaches to housing refugees for as long as they need, in stable, long-term arrangements. There are cases of rent subsidies being used by settlement agencies to house people, both portable and those attached to housing units, but without consistent information on the additional supports in place and without modeling programs after a housing intervention, such as HF or RRH. There is recognition, by the Government of Canada itself, and in the research literature and settlement sector, that resettled refugees face financial stress and housing precarity that is worsening due to the current housing crisis in Canada.

OMRA PORTABLE RENT SUBSIDY PROGRAM

OMRA has been assisting newcomers to settle in Ottawa for over 20 years. In 2017, OMRA transitioned from providing a rent subsidy tied to one of four OMRA-owned townhouses to providing portable rent subsidies for households to live in scattered-site private market rentals. These changes expanded OMRA’s capacity to support more families and individuals. Since enacting this expansion in 2017, OMRA has

supported 81 families and individuals. The portable, time-limited rent subsidies have helped single people and small families without being tied to a single location, and regardless of whether they are GARs, PSRs or BVORs. The subsidies are intended to fill the gap between a family's or an individual's shelter allowance and rent, taking into account any Canada Child Benefits or additional financial assistance received. The portable rent subsidies are flexible and are adjusted if family members access part-time work or school funding, or if rent or household costs increase. Subsidies typically last from one to four years. In addition to subsidies, OMRA also provides limited, individualized support, such as English tutoring, orientation to Canada, and apartment start-up assistance in partnership with Helping with Furniture, another non-profit organization in Ottawa. Since 2017, OMRA has witnessed the increased hardships newcomers face as government shelter allowances have not kept pace with rent increases and as settlement assistance and services are strained and harder to access.

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION AND OBJECTIVES

From December 2023 to May 2024, researchers conducted an implementation and outcome evaluation of OMRA's portable rent subsidy program. An implementation evaluation examines the extent that program participants correspond to the targeted population, how well a program is delivering the intended services, and if it is an acceptable program

model for the target population. An outcome evaluation provides an assessment of the benefits associated with participation in the program and is appropriate when programs have been stably implemented. The combination of an implementation and outcome evaluation provided OMRA with recommendations on how to improve and scale up the program to support additional families or other populations at risk of homelessness.

The overarching purpose of this evaluation was to assess the implementation and outcomes of OMRA's 2017-2023 Portable Rent Subsidies for resettled refugee individuals and families, in order to determine how the model could be improved and expanded. Specifically, the objectives were:

- To determine facilitators and barriers to program implementation;
- To provide a financial analysis of the program;
- To evaluate the outcomes of the program for clients; and,
- To provide recommendations for program improvement, including expansion.

See Table 1 for the program logic model, co-developed by the study researchers and study advisors. The study design and interpretation of findings was informed by the resources, activities, outputs and outcomes described in the logic model.



Table 1.
OMRA Portable Rent Subsidies Logic Model

RESOURCES/INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM OUTCOMES
Community • OMRA Advisors (legal, social housing, financial/tax, supports) • Partner organizations for referrals and provision of support/settlement services Human Resources • OMRA Volunteers • OMRA Board Financial • Donations • Funds from Credit Card Points and Grocery Card Program • OMRA Shelter Alternatives Transfer (rent from OMRA-owned townhomes) • Additional government financial support complements OMRA's subsidies (e.g., \$500/month in 1st year for government-assisted refugees under Resettlement Assistance Program, \$200 National Housing Supplement, Canada Child Benefit).	Provide monthly, portable rent subsidies for resettled refugee families and individuals for 1-4 years, including GARs, PSRs, BVORs, and refugee claimants. Manage relationships with partner organizations to receive client referrals and stay current with new settlement programs. Receive referrals from partner organizations' case managers (e.g., CCI, private sponsors, OCISO). Assess applications for eligibility. Provide navigation supports, facilitated by a "sherpa," one of the OMRA Board members who serves as the primary contact person. Includes: Facilitating signing of agreement, coordinating input and roles of other OMRA Board members or volunteers, communicating changes to the subsidy. Provide ad hoc English tutoring, housing start-up kits, and connection with Helping with Furniture. Examine financial need to determine annual increases in rent subsidies, decreases, or ending eligibility. Manage relationships with partner organizations providing settlement support and, as needed, with landlords and housing providers.	Resettled refugee families and individuals receive portable monthly rent subsidies for 1-4 years that are timely, individualized to meet their financial needs, and portable to support housing choice. Resettled refugee families and individuals receive settlement supports both by OMRA as well as by partner organizations.	Resettled refugee families and individuals settle into and stay in suitable and affordable housing. Rent subsidy recipients are satisfied with the provision of OMRA rent subsidies, the sherpa role, and additional OMRA supports. Rent subsidy recipients have improved finances due to additional rent support. Rent subsidy recipients experience reduced stress and have a sense of "breathing space" to adapt to Canadian life, learn the language, build community connections, and take steps towards meeting education and employment goals.	Resettled refugee families and individuals obtain suitable and affordable housing that remains stable over time, including after the subsidy ends. Resettled refugee families and individuals report improved quality of life. Resettled refugee families and individuals have financial stability connected to OMRA rent subsidies, which in turn is associated with improved employment and educational outcomes.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The program evaluation answered the following evaluation questions related to its implementation:

1. What are the characteristics of the program recipients?
2. Is the program being delivered to the intended population?
3. What are the program costs per year associated with rent subsidies and how have these costs changed from 2017-2023?
4. What are clients' rental costs per year (accounting for rent subsidies and additional shelter allowances) and how have these costs changed from 2017-2023?
5. What are facilitators and barriers to program implementation?

The program evaluation answered the following evaluation questions related to its outcomes:

6. To what extent have program clients experienced improved housing outcomes while in the program?
7. To what extent have program clients experienced improved educational outcomes while in the program?
8. To what extent have program clients experienced improved employment outcomes while in the program?
9. To what extent have program clients experienced improved quality of life outcomes while in the program?
10. In what ways do participants attribute improvements in areas of their lives to receipt of the rent subsidies?

See the Evaluation Matrix (Appendix A) for a summary of the data collection methods, analyses, and indicators.





Methods

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The study Advisory Committee composition was guided by three OMRA Board members who were the key contacts for the study. The Advisory Committee was comprised of the four study researchers (principal and secondary researchers and two research assistants, one of whom was also a client advisor), three OMRA Board members, and a community partner. An additional client advisor provided ad hoc input on the study throughout the development of the data collection methods. The Advisory Committee provided input at each stage of the study, including development of the logic model, finalizing the evaluation questions, developing the data collection tools and methods, and interpreting the study findings.

DATA COLLECTION TOOLS AND ANALYSES

The study's evaluation questions were answered based on an analysis of existing program data, publicly available data, a client survey, and semi-structured qualitative interviews with key informants (Board members, volunteers, external partners), and rent subsidy recipients (also referred to as clients). See Appendix B

for the study's Data Management Plan. The researchers also drew on program documents, such as the template for the OMRA agreement, the OMRA newsletter, an article about OMRA, and some internal strategic documents.

The researchers used a mixed methods sequential design. Data were collected in sequence, and data that were analyzed from initial data collection tools informed the design of subsequent data collection tools as well as their analysis. In this way, analysis of client program data informed the key informant interview protocol which then informed the client survey design which then informed the client interview protocol.

Analysis of Existing Program Data

The researchers developed a dataset from individual client files as well as an already-constructed financial summary of the subsidies that included length of time data and additional demographic data. Researchers conducted descriptive and bivariate analyses of these data. The client data were for all clients who received a portable rent subsidy from 2017-2023 ($N = 81$), although three of the included clients' subsidies began before 2017, and as early as 2012.

Review of Publicly Available Data

The researchers reviewed publicly available information on shelter allowance amounts, market rent trends, and additional funds received by clients, such as the Canada Child Benefit.

Key Informant Qualitative Interviews

The researchers conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews ($n = 10$) with four OMRA Board members, two OMRA program volunteers (tutors), and four external partners (private sponsors and partner agency representatives). The participants were identified by the three OMRA Board members on the Advisory Committee and the interviews focused on facilitators and barriers to program implementation.

The data were analyzed thematically using a cross-case qualitative matrix. The themes were directed by the evaluation questions (Miles et al., 2019). The researcher who conducted each interview inputted their interview data into the cross-case matrix. Another researcher then validated the interviews based on the interview notes and using audio recordings as a reference to clarify any missing details and to pull quotes. One researcher developed summaries of each theme in the matrix, aligning the themes with the evaluation questions.

Survey of Rent Subsidy Clients

The researchers developed the client survey, informed by the program data analysis and key informant interviews, and with feedback from the study advisors. The survey included adaptations of the Residential Timeline Followback Survey (RTLFB [Tsemberis et al.,

2007]) and the SAMHSA Housing Satisfaction Scale (Tsemberis et al., 2003), both measures used in HF studies. The survey also included program satisfaction items and information on employment and education status before receiving the OMRA subsidy and at the time of completing the survey.

Based on language information from the administrative data and input from the OMRA Board member advisors, the English survey was translated into French, Arabic, Dari, Pashto, Spanish, and Kirundi. Seven survey versions were developed: an English version, a French version, an Arabic-French version, Dari-English, Pashto-English, Spanish-French, and Kirundi-French.

The survey was distributed to 66 of the 81 rent subsidy recipients. OMRA no longer had contact information for the remaining 15 clients. The survey methodology was based on Dillman's Tailored Design Method (Dillman et al., 2014). The OMRA Board member in closest contact with each client (referred to as "the sherpa" by the program) sent the survey online link to their clients, using recruitment scripts for both email and text messages, translated into the languages assigned to each client. The scripts included additional options to receive paper copies of the survey and assistance completing the surveys, upon request. Two clients requested paper versions of the surveys. Sherpas also sent translated reminder scripts by email and text to their assigned clients twice over the course of the five weeks that the survey was available to complete.

Fifty of the 66 invited clients completed the survey, resulting in a response rate of 76% overall. However, six of these clients only

partially completed the survey so for some sections the sample size of respondents was 44 (67% response rate). Clients who completed the survey represented the overall client population on key demographic and program variables, although six survey respondents did not report their demographic characteristics. Survey respondents received the subsidy for the study period of 2017 to 2023. Twelve recipients did not indicate an end date for their subsidy; hence we assumed they were ongoing subsidy recipients at the time of the survey (March-April 2024). Twenty-seven surveys were completed in English, nine in French, three in Spanish, four in Dari, three in Arabic, and four in Pashto. Fifteen countries of origin were represented, with the highest proportion ($n = 12$) from Afghanistan, followed by five from the Democratic Republic of Congo and five from Syria. Of those who identified their gender, 27 were women (one of which was a trans woman) and 15 were men. Twenty-two were in the age range of 30-39 years, 11 were 20-29 years old, five were 40-49 years old, three were 50-59 years old, and two were 60 or older. Twenty-eight respondents were GARs, five were PSRs, four were BVORs and three were refugee claimants. Thirty-five respondents had children, and 24 had one or two children.

Qualitative survey data were translated into English. Quantitative survey data were analyzed descriptively and included some bivariate analyses. The SAMHSA Housing Satisfaction Scale items were analyzed with paired samples t-tests to identify strengths and weaknesses associated with OMRA services, where each item mean was compared with the mean of all other items. Qualitative data from the survey were analyzed thematically.



Semi-Structured, Qualitative Interviews with Rent Subsidy Clients

Finally, the researchers conducted qualitative interviews with 11 program clients. These interviews explored clients' stories of their experiences with OMRA, including additional supports provided beyond the subsidies, clients' program outcomes, and facilitators and barriers to program implementation.

The English client interview protocol was translated into French, Dari and Pashto in order to interview a majority of clients and to align with the languages the interviewers could conduct the interviews in. The interview protocol was piloted with a client advisor of the program. This piloted interview was included in the interview data for the study.

Based on input from the Advisory Committee, the researchers aimed to include a range of interview participants (families, individuals, single parent households, people from the

LGBT community, and past and current clients). The researchers used the client administrative database to create a sub-sample of potential interview participants who spoke one of the four languages then randomly selected 15 clients to invite to participate. Purposeful adjustments were made to this sample of 15 clients based on the decision to include the three clients who were identified as LGBTQ and to ensure a range of household compositions.

The sherpa contact for each of these 15 clients was then provided with a recruitment script to invite clients to express interest in finding out more about the interviews. Based on a low initial uptake from these 15 clients, the researchers added 6 more clients for their assigned sherpas to invite to be contacted by the researchers. Following this recruitment, a total of 10 clients were recruited. With the initial piloted interview, 11 client interviews were conducted. Overall, four interviews were conducted in English, three in French, three in Dari and one in Pashto. Two

clients were current recipients, eight identified as women and three as men. One interviewee was a single individual, five were single parents with children when they began the subsidy, and five were couples with children.

The interviews were audio-recorded, and notes were taken. The notes were translated into English for the analysis. As with the key informant interviews, the data were analyzed thematically using a cross-case qualitative matrix. The data were coded thematically and directed by the evaluation questions (Miles et al., 2019). The researcher who conducted each interview inputted their interview data into the cross-case matrix. Another researcher then validated the interviews based on the interview notes and using audio recordings as a reference to clarify any missing details and to identify quotes. A researcher then developed summaries of the interview themes, aligning each theme with the evaluation questions.



Results

The results of the study are reported below by evaluation question.

1. What Are The Characteristics Of The Program Recipients?

These findings are based on the client administrative data, drawn from individual client files. See Table 2 for a summary of client characteristics.

OMRA had 81 active rent subsidy clients (individuals or families) from 2017-2023. As of March 31, 2023, 28 (35%) of these clients were active (receiving monthly rent subsidies). The length of time that OMRA families or individuals received monthly rent subsidies ranged from two months to 60 months (i.e., five years). On average, the length of time clients received subsidies was approximately one year and nine months (Average = 1.77 years; Standard Deviation [SD] = 1.12 years). See Figure 1 for the proportion of clients receiving the rent subsidy by year. While all 81 clients were active from 2017-2023, three began to receive the OMRA rent subsidy earlier than 2017. These three clients were included in the study.

Arrival dates in Canada ranged from 2009 to 2023. Arrival date data were missing for 12

clients. The most common countries of origin were Afghanistan ($n = 22$, 27%) and Syria ($n = 14$, 19%). See Figure 2 for a summary of all countries of origin for clients.

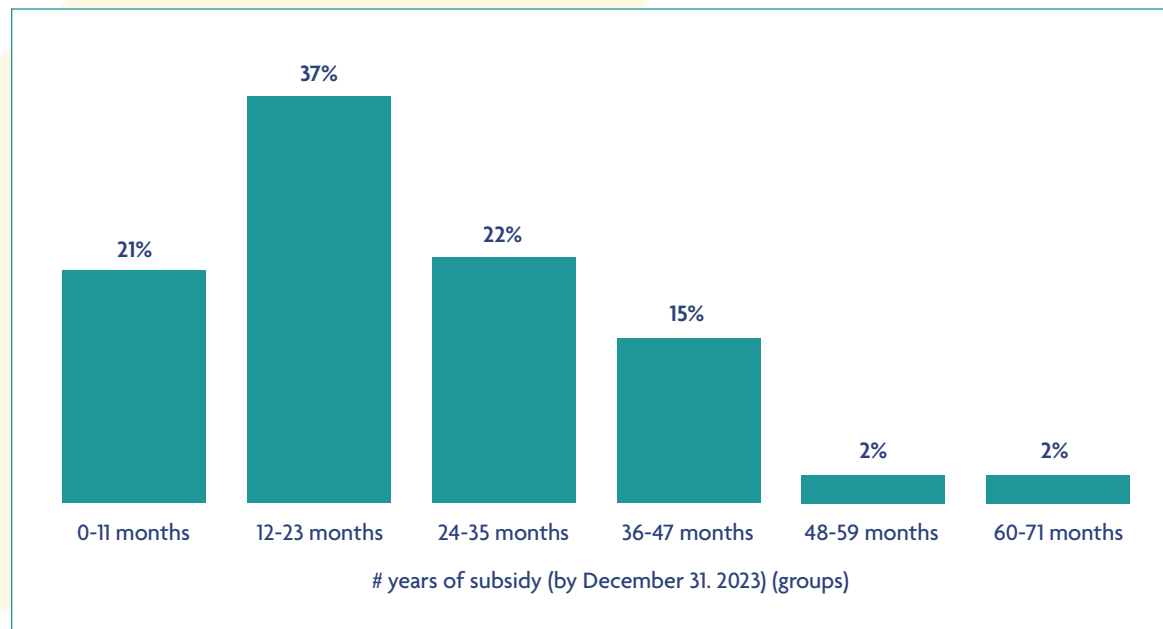
Seventy-nine percent ($n = 64$) of the 81 OMRA households were family units (more than one individual in a household). Of these 64 family units, 91% ($n = 58$) had children. Of the 58 families with children, 91% ($n = 50$) had one or two children. Of the 58 families with children, 41% ($n = 24$) were single parent households with children. Based on the available data, seven of the clients who were single individuals were identified as single women. The gender of the remaining 10 single clients was not identified in the administrative dataset. One of these seven single women was a trans woman. Three of the OMRA clients were identified in the administrative dataset as part of the LGBTQ community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer). These were all single individuals and again, one of them was a trans woman, whereas for the other two, additional gender or sexual orientation information was not available.

Table 2.

Characteristics of OMRA Program Participants, 2017-2023, N = 81.

CHARACTERISTICS			
Family Composition		Arrival date in Canada (year), n (%)	
Family, n (%)	64 (79)	2009	1 (1)
Single, n (%)	17 (21)	2017	4 (5)
Family Characteristics		2018	10 (12)
Family with children (in Canada), n (%)	58 (91% of the families)	2019	12 (15)
1 child, n (%)	27 (47% of the families with children)	2020	7 (9)
2 children, n (%)	23 (40% of the families with children)	2021	19 (23)
3 children, n (%)	5 (9% of the families with children)	2022	13 (16)
4 children, n (%)	1 (2% of the families with children)	2023	3 (4)
5 children, n (%)	1 (2% of the families with children)	Year OMRA subsidy began	
8 children, n (%)	1 (2% of the families with children)	2012	1 (1)
Single parent with children, n (%)	24 (41% of the families with children)	2016	2 (2)
LGBTQ		2017	3 (4)
Age of primary contact, Mean (SD)	35 (10.2)	2018	3 (4)
Country of origin, n (%)		2019	20 (25)
Afghanistan	22 (27)	2020	9 (11)
Syria	14 (19)	2021	13 (16)
Burundi	5 (6)	2022	11 (14)
Democratic Republic of Congo	5 (6)	2023	7 (9)
Congo	4 (5)	Length of time of OMRA subsidy, mean (SD)	
Iraq	3 (4)	0-11 months, n (%)	17 (21)
All other countries (1 or 2 clients per country)	28 (35)	12-23 months, n (%)	30 (37)
Sponsorship Type, n (%)		24-35 months, n (%)	18 (22)
Government-assisted refugees	52 (65)	26-47 months, n (%)	12 (15)
Refugee claimants with or without protected status at time of OMRA entry	10 (13)	48-59 months, n (%)	2 (2)
Blended Visa office-referred refugees	9 (11)	60-71 months, n (%)	2 (2)
Privately-sponsored refugees	9 (11)		

Figure 1.
The majority (58%) of OMRA clients received rent subsidies for less than 2 years (n=81).



The average age of OMRA clients was 35 years old ($SD= 10.2$). The minimum age was 19 years, and the maximum age was 65 years. Age data were not available for 24 clients. Fifty-two (65%) of the OMRA households were GARs, nine (11%) were PSRs, nine (11%) were Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) refugees, and 10 (13%) were refugee claimants, three of which were noted in their client file as having protected status at the time of entry into OMRA.

Twenty percent ($n = 16$) of clients did not have a secondary contact or referring agency identified in their client files. Fifty clients (62%) had a contact from Catholic Centre for Immigrants (CCI), an additional six clients (7%) had another non-profit refugee-serving agency as a secondary contact (e.g., Ottawa Community Immigrant

Services Organization, Matthew House, Nisa Homes), and nine clients (11%) had a private sponsorship group as a secondary contact or referring contact. See Figure 3 for a summary of all secondary contacts.

2. Is The Program Being Delivered To The Intended Population?

Researchers drew on all of the data collection sources to answer this evaluation question but primarily compared program documents and key informant interview data with the client administrative data. Based on key informant interviews, there was recognition that the program has evolved over the past eight years. For example, key informants described a switch to only serve families with one or two children, rather than three or more children.

Program key informants described the program as mainly serving households with permanent residence status, such as GARs, BVOR, PSRs. The program data reflected this program criteria with at least 87% having permanent residence status when they entered the program. Of the nine clients who were refugee claimants, three were current clients, and three were identified as having protected status.

The program was described by key stakeholders as starting in the 13th month that refugees had been in the country. However, many clients started receiving the subsidy within the first 12 months of their arrival in Canada. Out of the 69 clients whose files indicated arrival dates, 44 (64%) started their OMRA rent subsidy within the first 12 months of arrival in Canada. In the client interviews, participants talked about importance of sherpas helping them find housing, leveraging partnerships with landlords and expertise in housing.

The length of time in the program was determined by individual assessment and regular re-assessment of their settlement progress, namely their personal income, educational progress, and employment status. The survey findings, client administrative data, and interview data reflected this individualized assessment and re-assessment.

OMRA's program descriptions highlighted the central role of settlement workers in continuing to support their clients while they received the subsidy. However, in the interviews there was a limited role that settlement agencies played due to time constraints and strain on the sector. OMRA filled a gap in services this way, helping with housing searches, move-ins, tutoring, and orientation to Canadian culture.

Figure 2.

Rent subsidy recipients are from 26 countries. Afghanistan is the most common country of origin for current recipients and Syria is the most common country of origin for past recipients (n=81).

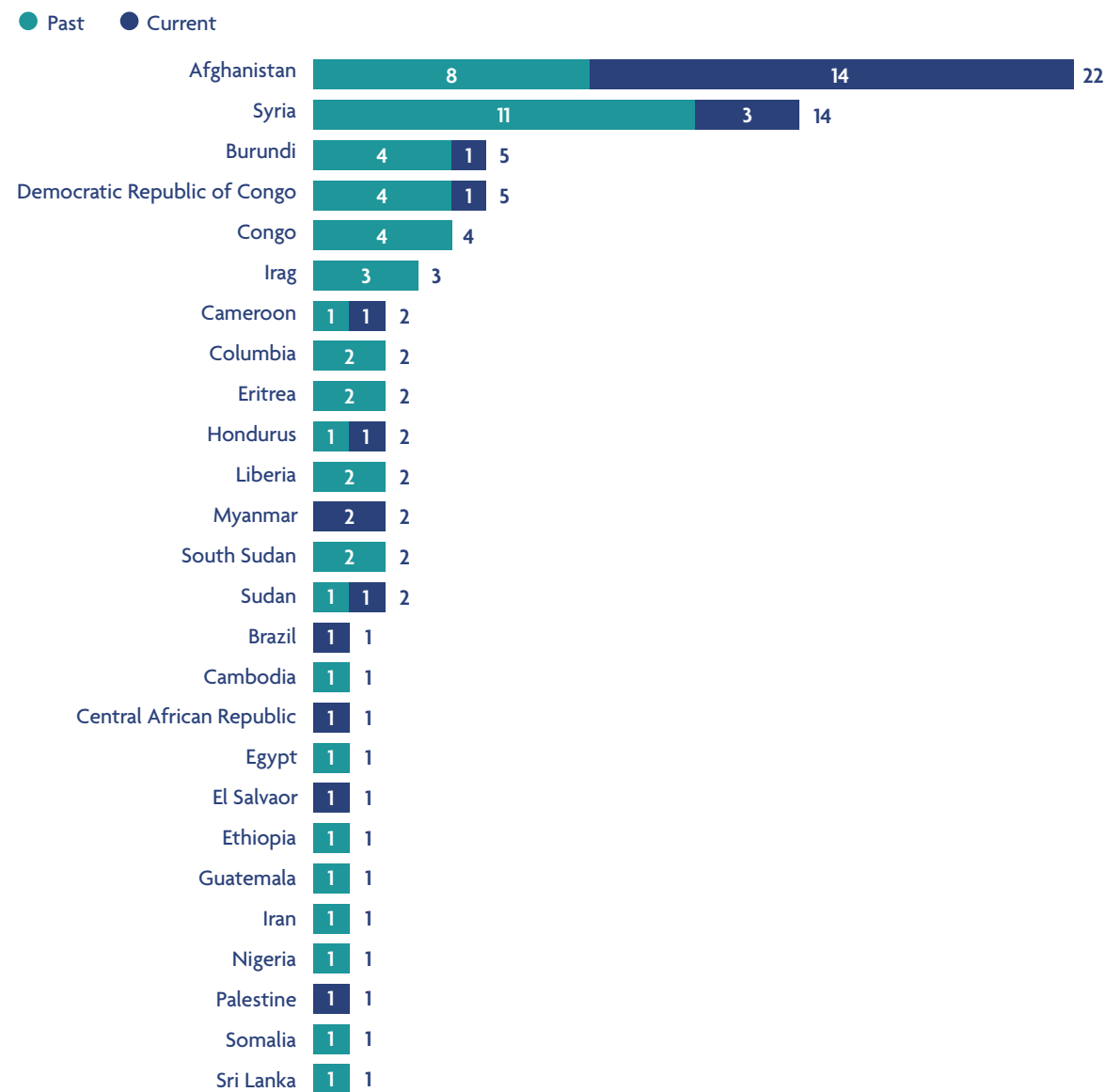
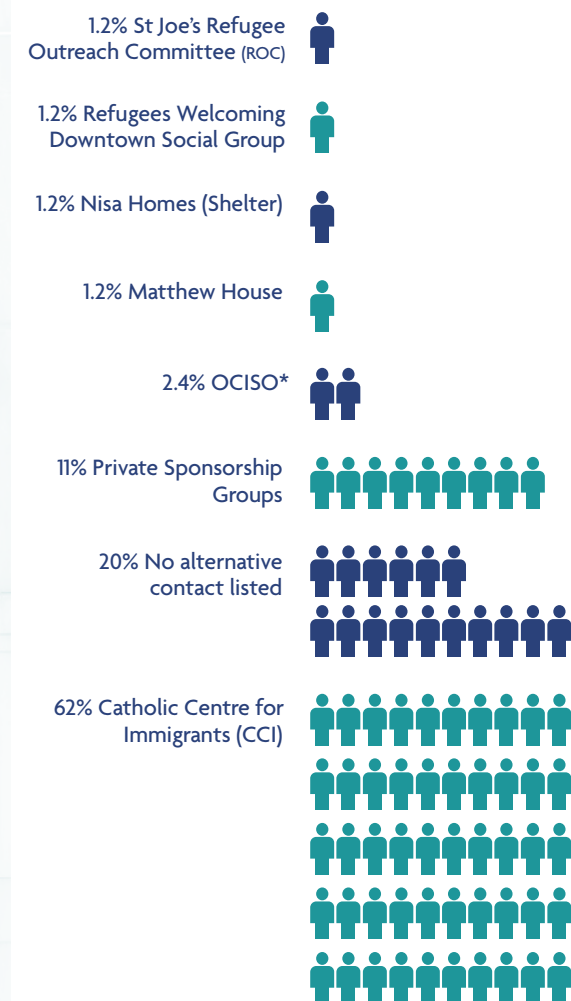


Figure 3.

Secondary Contacts. Most recipients (n=50, 62%) had a Catholic Center for Immigrants (CCI) caseworker: 16 recipients (20%) did not have an secondary contact listed (n=81).

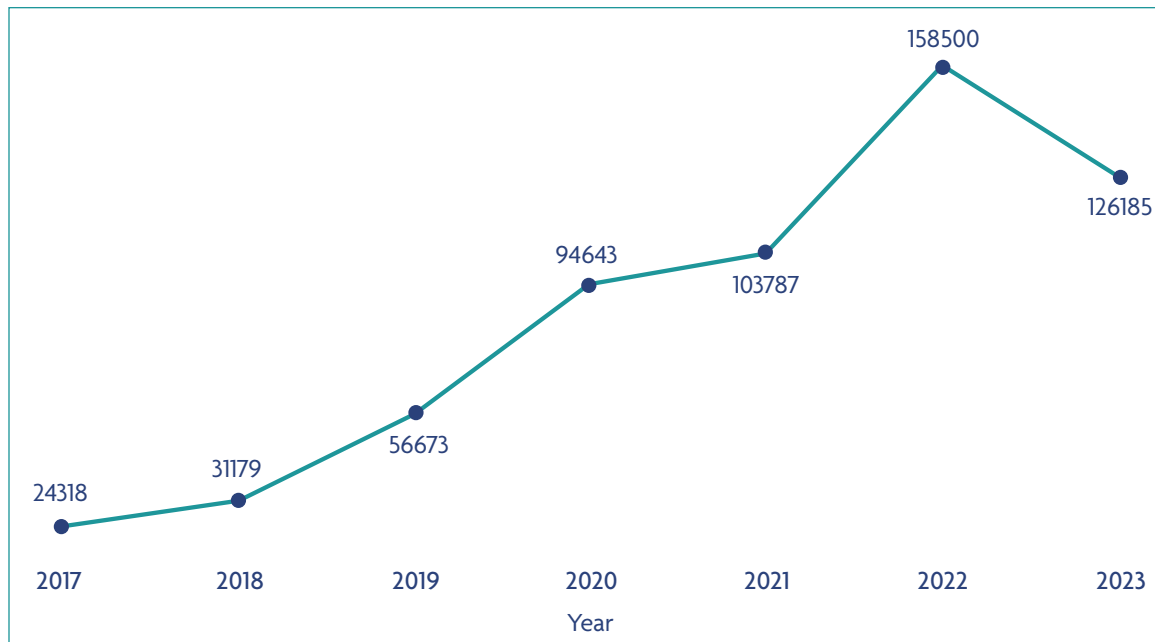


*Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization

3. What Are The Program Costs Per Year Associated With Rent Subsidies And How Have These Costs Changed From 2017-2023?

This evaluation question was answered by analyzing client program data. See Table 3 for a summary of financial characteristics of the program, including total annual OMRA subsidy amounts and average monthly client subsidies. Based on program administrative data, the total amount of rent subsidies provided by OMRA increased greatly from 2017 to 2023. The total rent subsidies provided in 2023 (\$126,185) were more than five times the amount of rent subsidies provided in 2017 (\$24,318)¹. See Figure 4 for a graph of the annual increase. The primary source of this funding was through a *Grocery Card Program*, coordinated by Board members, mobilizing churches and community members.

Figure 4. The total annual rent subsidy amount has generally increased from 2017-2023 (n=81).



¹Note that OMRA's financial report figures may vary slightly from the study's reported total subsidy amounts since these study numbers were drawn from program data rather than financial records.

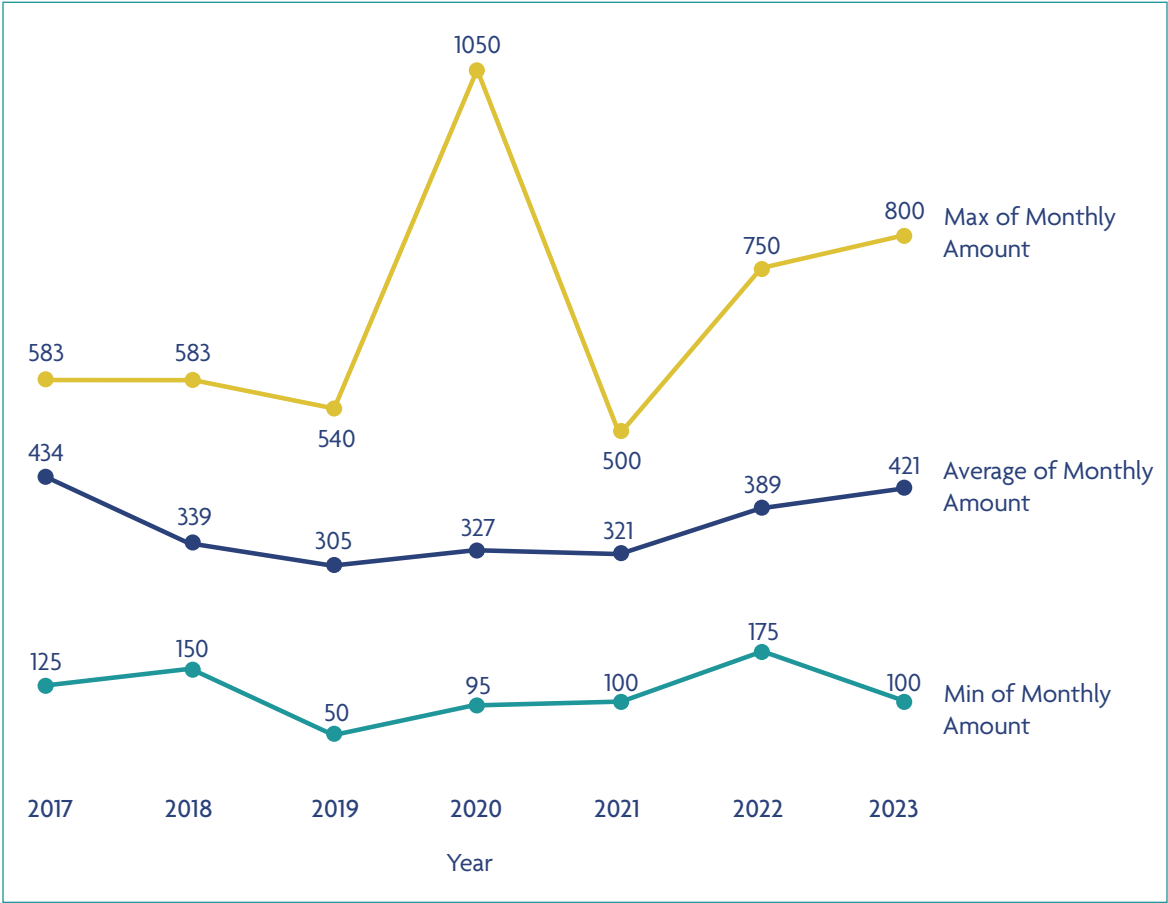
The GCP fundraises for OMRA by buying and selling grocery cards from Farm Boy, Metro, and Loblaws. The sale of these grocery cards yields five percent of their value, which goes back to OMRA.

Overall, the minimum monthly rent subsidy amount that was provided (from 2017-2023) was \$50/month (in 2019) and maximum amount was \$1,050 (in 2020). See Figure 5 for a graph of average monthly rent subsidies and their ranges by year. We compared average subsidies across families and single individuals. There was a significant difference in the average monthly subsidy amount for families versus singles ($t(77) = 2.59, p = .01 (SE = 34.50)$, effect size = .72). The average monthly subsidy amount for OMRA families ($n=63$) was \$377.54 ($SD = 124.92$) and the average monthly subsidy amount for OMRA singles ($n = 16$) was \$288.33 ($SD = 115.92$).

Table 3. Financial Characteristics of OMRA Subsidies.

FINANCIAL FACTORS		
Average Subsidy per Month (SD)		
2017	434.25	(146.00)
2018	338.89	(125.86)
2019	304.69	(103.81)
2020	327.48	(115.70)
2021	321.32	(97.64)
2022	389.43	(122.40)
2023	420.62	(188.01)
Total Monthly Rent Subsidy by Year		
2017	24,318.00	
2018	31,177.50	
2019	56,673.00	
2020	94,643.00	
2021	103,787.00	
2022	158,500.00	
2023	126,185.00	
Average Monthly Client Rent by Year, (SD)		
2017	1359.58	(93.28)
2018	1251.81	(212.86)
2019	1162.30	(259.22)
2020	1099.02	(245.18)
2021	1091.97	(357.00)
2022	1231.33	(357.00)
2023	1317.06	(429.63)

Figure 5. Average monthly OMRA rent subsidies have remained consistent over time (n=81).



4. What Are Clients’ Rental Costs Per Year (Accounting For Rent Subsidies And Additional Shelter Allowances) And How Have These Costs Changed From 2017-2023?

This evaluation question was answered by drawing on client program data as well as publicly available data. See Table 3 for a

summary of the average monthly rent paid by clients ($n = 73$). These data were missing for eight of the subsidy clients in the program data. Figure 6 provides a summary of average monthly rent from 2017 to 2023. While the average monthly rent remained consistent from 2017 (Mean = \$1,359.58, $SD= 93.28$) to 2023 (Mean = \$1,317.06, $SD= 429.63$), the variability increased

over time. In 2017 the range of monthly rent paid was \$1,200 to \$1,458 whereas the range in 2023 was \$550 to \$2100. Based on the client files, the lower rents paid (e.g., \$500-\$600) were shared living arrangements of clients who were single individuals. Additional program factors affecting the average monthly rents across time were the shift to only take smaller families with one to two children, and the provision of subsidies to more single individuals over time.

There was a significant difference in the average monthly rent amount for OMRA families versus individual clients ($t(71) = 9.53, p = .00 (SE= 66.26)$, effect size= 2.6). The average monthly rent for OMRA clients who were families ($n = 57$) was \$1340.38 ($SD = 242.98$) and the average monthly rent for OMRA clients who were singles ($n = 16$) was \$708.82 ($SD= 197.95$). See Figure 7 for a graph of this difference between average rent paid by OMRA families compared to OMRA individual single households, by year.

According to a CMHC (2024) report of 2023 rental market trends, the average rent of a two-bedroom purpose-built apartment in Ottawa in 2023 was \$1,698, which is an increase by 4% compared to 2022. The rental vacancy rate in 2023 was 2.1%. Rental vacancy rates were 2.1% in 2022, 3.5% in 2021, and 3.8% in 2020. These rates excluded condominium apartments that were rented. The average two-bedroom condominium apartment rent was \$2,085 per month in 2023, with a 0.4% vacancy rate (CMHC, 2024).

The rent subsidy met the gap in income compared to rent. Client files sometimes contained notes on the calculation of the subsidy as the difference between the client’s rent and sources of income (e.g., RAP shelter allowance plus 25%

of the Canada Child Benefit). In some files of clients earlier in the program (2017-2019) there was a calculation that showed the subsidy covered 40% of the cost of rent. Regardless of the calculation, client notes also showed that the subsidy amount was reduced in cases where income increased, such as when clients started part-time work. The amount was increased when clients had a reduction in income, such as the transition from the RAP shelter allowance to Ontario Works, or when rent increased. Overall, the client files show that initial assessments and then the regular re-assessments were individualized. When income increased through work or education there were several files that indicated continuing the subsidy for a transition period (approximately six months) before the subsidy ended.

For the first 12 months in Canada, sources of additional financial supports noted in the client files included the RAP shelter allowance, the Federal Housing Supplement (\$200/month based on determination of need), and the Canada Child Benefit. The Canada Child Benefit continued past the first 12 months and Ontario Works was also noted as income after the first 12 months. While the RAP shelter allowance matches the provincial social assistance shelter allowance, RAP recipients also receive additional allowances, which further cover housing costs. The \$200/month housing supplement is also removed after the first year in Canada. Some clients also received Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) payments. Finally, Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) income and employment income were incorporated into the subsidy calculation and led to reductions then ending of the subsidy. There were some notes in files where the client was in an affordable housing unit and the Ontario Works

shelter allowance accounted for the affordable housing. Shared accommodation arrangements reduced rents as well, and sometimes there were cases of family members contributing to housing costs.

As an example of income sources, based on publicly available information, in 2023 a family of three people – two parents and one child under six years old – who were in their first year of arrival in Canada, would receive \$697 per month in their RAP shelter allowance, plus \$200 in the Federal Housing Supplement, for a total of \$897. They would receive \$619.75 per month for the Canada Child Benefit (maximum amount). OMRA calculated that 25% of this amount would go towards housing (\$154), bringing the total income for housing to \$1,051. This amount is \$647 below the average monthly rent of \$1,698 for a two-bedroom apartment in Ottawa in 2023 and \$475 below the average monthly rent of \$1,526 for OMRA families in 2023.

Figure 6. OMRA clients' average monthly rents remained consistent: however, the range of rent amounts grew from 2017 to 2023 (n= 73).

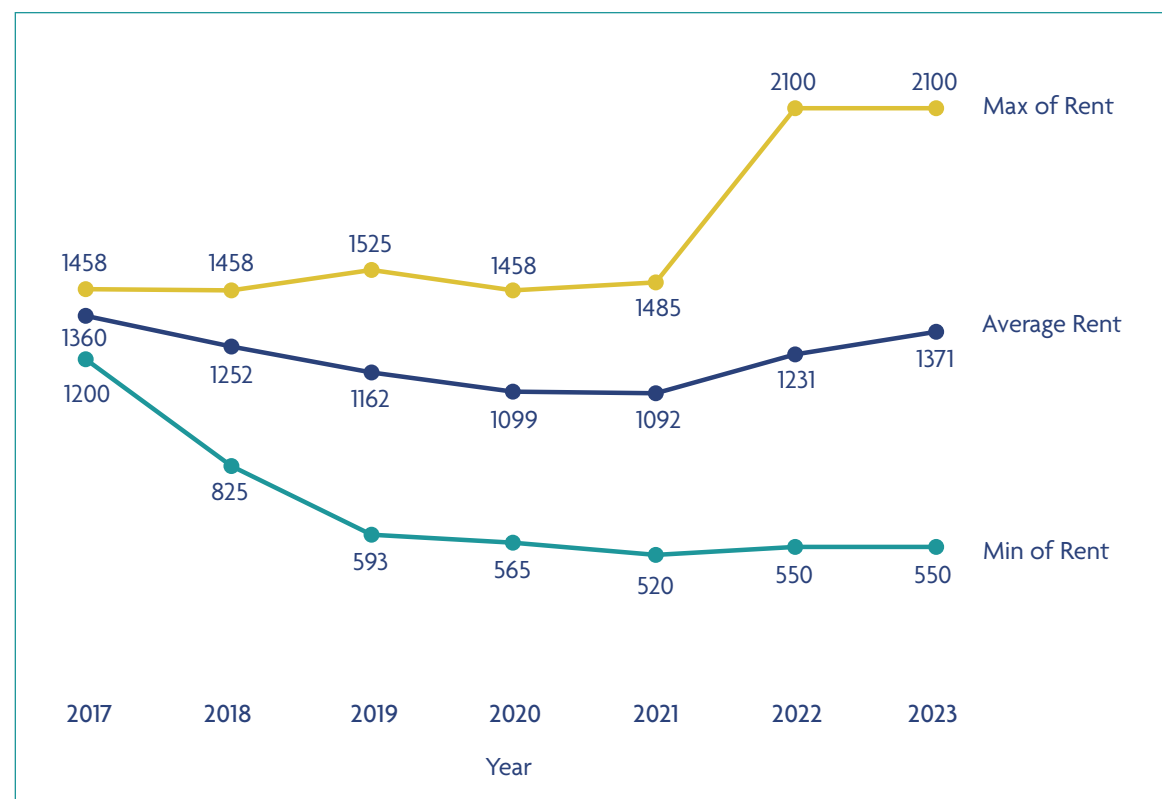


Figure 7. OMRA families' (n= 57) average monthly rents were higher than OMRA single individuals' (n= 16) average monthly rents (n= 73).



5. What Are Facilitators And Barriers To Program Implementation?

Program Satisfaction

Thirty-seven (84%) of the 44 clients who completed the program satisfaction questions on the study survey indicated they were very satisfied with the services OMRA offered and five (11%) said they were satisfied. Drawing on both the open-ended survey questions and client interviews, the majority of respondents associated their satisfaction with the financial support OMRA offered. Many clients also described OMRA as helpful, supportive and kind. Additional responses noted OMRA's individualized support, such as English tutors who also provided orientation to Canadian culture and systems, OMRA sherpas who

provided additional support, such as housing help and employment tips, and provision of furniture and apartment start-up kits. Seven of the 11 clients who were interviewed described the provision of furniture, utensils, children's bikes, computers, and additional start-up items as an important part of the services they received from OMRA.

One client interviewed described the difference between their first impressions of Canada upon arrival and the kindness and support they felt when they were connected with OMRA—

“ When we arrived in Canada, it was February, and the snow was so much. When you come here for the first time, your psychological health becomes very bad given the fact that you have been through

so much in your own country. So it was all black and dark. Once I got introduced to OMRA, I felt someone opening arms for a hug.”

Implementation Facilitators

Program facilitators are factors that support the implementation of the program. They were described in the key informant interviews and client interviews, as well as by survey respondents. Facilitators are described below at the individual level and at the program level.

Individual-level Facilitators

Ten of the 11 client interviewees described the importance of the **individualized support** OMRA offered in addition to the financial support in the form of the rent subsidies. While this support took different forms depending on needs, such as housing status and English proficiency, it was described as flexible and unique to individual circumstances. For example, some clients described regular visits with an English tutor who also talked about Canadian culture and history. A client said—

“ We have a very good, ongoing connection with our tutor.”

Others noted the role of the sherpa in providing assistance with housing searches, information on landlords in the Ottawa area, assistance with paperwork, and support in crises.

This support component was described by Board members and volunteers in the key informant interviews as well. Volunteers described themselves as providing companionship and orientation to Canadian culture in addition to English tutoring. Board members discussed

their role in addressing individualized needs and providing focused support; however, they noted that this role stretched them beyond their actual capacity and the limits of the program, and is also reported as a program challenge below.

A Board member said—

“ We’ve gone with people. One client wasn’t getting the Child Tax Benefit because the Government of Canada screwed up on the card. They were defaulting on rent. So we went to OW [Ontario Works]. OW did back payments on the rent.”

As seen in the client files, in the interviews clients also described the process of **increasing or gradually decreasing** the subsidy based on financial needs. As clients began working part-time, OMRA adjusted the subsidy gradually. Two clients described the subsidy increasing due to an increase in rent or increases in grocery prices or costs of living during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two clients noted that when they went to school or work the subsidy did not end immediately. Their understanding was that the continuation of the subsidy was a transition period to ease them into the school program and employment situation and to ensure they were financially stable. Finally, one client said that their subsidy had ended but OMRA re-instated the subsidy for a short period of time when the client faced unexpected unemployment.

Whether through an annual park gathering or connections created by a Board member, client interviewees also described the importance of **OMRA facilitating connections with other refugees**. One client described how her career plans were paused when she moved to Canada and even with employment support from

external agencies she did not know how to move forward to re-train. An OMRA Board member connected her with a refugee who had taken the same career path to re-train in Canada. Once she had this connection she was able to picture how to move forward.

Program-level

Similarly, at the program-level, volunteers, community partners and Board members described **OMRA as flexible** and able to respond to needs innovatively. Some described this as a lack of bureaucracy. One community partner said—

“ These women are all about action. If they see a need they will fill it or try to as much as possible.”

Relatedly, the small group of Board members themselves were described as **highly committed**, which had allowed the program to adjust its housing model (from housing four families in townhomes to providing rent subsidies to 81 families), and to raise funds through the growth and mobilization of the Grocery Card Program.

Additional key facilitators described at the program-level were the strong partnership with **Helping with Furniture**, a local non-profit that worked with OMRA to meet many practical needs, not limited to furniture (e.g., children’s books, small kitchen appliances, computers). Key informants also described the **community building** that resulted in the Grocery Card Program and the annual park gathering. Community members had a sense of connection and social capital through OMRA’s community mobilization efforts. Finally, nine of the eleven clients described the process of

signing the **OMRA agreement** in a meeting with the sherpas. This program component facilitated clear communication and expectations of the program for clients and the organization.

Implementation Challenges

Individual-level

At the individual-level, it was challenging to navigate **language barriers** between the program and clients, sometimes resulting in misinformation of the program and subsidy process. One of the 11 clients who were interviewed was not aware that their subsidy had ended, indicating a communication challenge. Some clients who were interviewed were **unclear of OMRA’s role** and observed an inconsistency in the subsidy amounts.

Due to the individualized adjustment of the rent subsidy based on becoming more financially independent in Canada, one client who was interviewed described the **pressure to work**, saying—

“ OMRA always puts pressure on refugees to work.”

However, they felt that they needed more practical guidance on how to proceed in their careers and professional fields. A client also noted that in their culture (in Afghanistan), there was a **gender gap in educational attainment** and women in their community needed more support to progress in the educational system in Canada. Finally, while both an individual-level challenge and a systems-level challenge, clients who were interviewed said that **more refugees needed the subsidy** and some recipients would have liked to receive a **higher subsidy** (e.g., \$500 instead of \$300). One client said—

“ The rent was so high that we could not afford it and even OMRA’s subsidy was not enough to cover those houses.”

Program- and Systems-Level

Connected to financial challenges, key informants and clients described the **need for more sufficient government financial support** for resettled refugees in light of the ever-increasing gap between government assistance and rental rates in Ottawa. A client said—

“ The government assistance provided barely covered our rent. We had nothing else. The assistance government provides was feasible for the refugees in the past, like, 15 years ago and not now.”

Also related to settlement funding, key informants and clients said that **settlement agencies were not sufficiently funded** and were not available to provide sufficient settlement supports and information for resettled refugees due to heavy caseloads.

As program challenges, the flexibility and grassroots nature of the program, described as a facilitator, was also described as a challenge by key informants. Board members said the organization had reached a stage and size where they needed to introduce more concrete, **written policies and procedures**, that they were engaging in **strategic planning**, and that they needed to develop **succession plans**. With the growth of their client base over the years, volunteers, Board members, and external partners noted the **burnout** that Board members were experiencing without such structures in place. Finally, again, the most salient theme in the key informant interviews was the need to

grow the organization’s funding base in order to provide more resettled refugees with much-needed financial support. Some key informants discussed the need for corporate sponsorship or social enterprise models. Connected to funding, community partners also said that **OMRA needs to become better known in the community**.

6. To What Extent Have Program Clients Experienced Improved Housing Outcomes While In The Program?

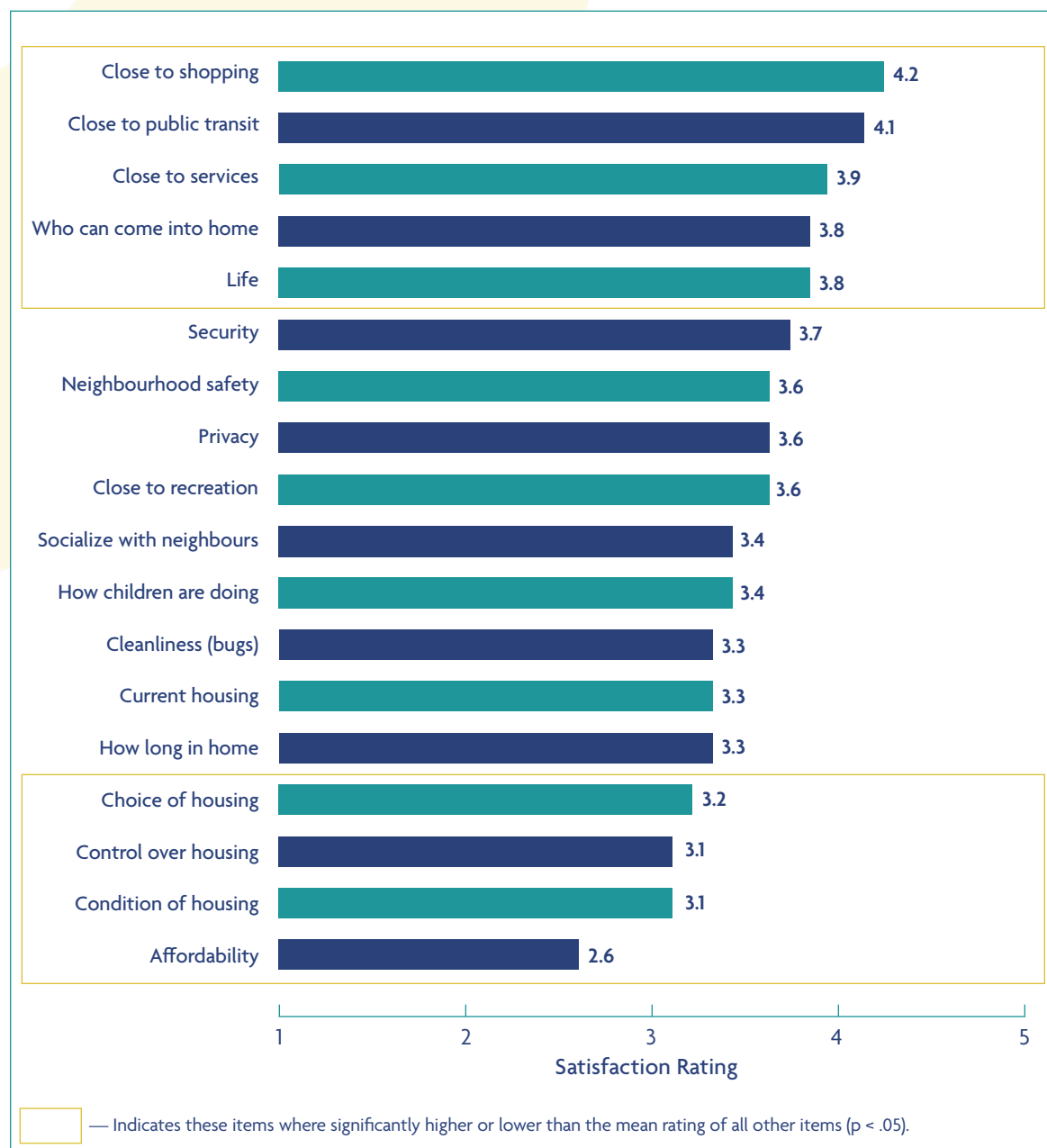
Housing Satisfaction

The results of the Housing Satisfaction Scale used in the client survey ($n = 44$) showed that overall survey respondents were satisfied with their housing. See Figure 8 for a summary of scale ratings. The average item ratings on the 5-point Likert scale ranged from 2.6 to 4.2, indicating that overall clients were satisfied or neutral (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) on the housing satisfaction items. Based on paired t-test results mean satisfaction ratings were significantly higher than the mean of all other items for five of the items, indicative of strengths of the program. The mean satisfaction rating for how clients felt about how close they were to shopping (4.2, $SD = .96$) was significantly higher than the mean of all other items (3.5, $SD = .57$), $t(43) = 5.11$, $p = <.001$, effect size = .77. The mean satisfaction rating for how clients felt about how close they lived to public transportation (4.1, $SD = .84$) was significantly higher than the mean of all other items (3.5, $SD = .59$), $t(43) = 4.77$, $p = <.001$, effect size = .72. The mean satisfaction rating for how clients felt about how close they lived to places where services are available, like day care or settlement services (3.9, $SD = .91$) was significantly higher than the mean of all

other items (3.5, $SD = .58$), $t(43) = 3.04$, $p = .004$, effect size = .46. The mean satisfaction rating for how clients felt about how much control they had over who could come into their home (3.8, $SD = .91$) was significantly higher than the mean of all other items (3.5, $SD = .58$), $t(43) = 2.51$, $p = .004$, effect size = .38. Finally, the mean satisfaction rating for how clients felt about their life since they moved to Ottawa (3.8, $SD = 1.04$) was significantly higher than the mean of all other items (3.5, $SD = .57$), $t(43) = 2.11$, $p = .041$, effect size = .32.

Mean satisfaction ratings were significantly lower than the mean of all other items for four of the items, indicative of areas of weakness. It is important to note that three of the four items still reflected satisfaction ratings that were positive in nature (i.e., > 3.0). The mean satisfaction rating for how clients felt about the amount of choice they had over the housing in which they were living (3.3, $SD = .97$) was significantly lower than the mean of all other items (3.5, $SD = .56$), $t(43) = -2.65$, $p = .011$, effect size = -.40. The mean satisfaction rating for how clients felt about the how much control they had over the housing in which they were living (3.2, $SD = 1.08$) was significantly lower than the mean of all other items (3.5, $SD = .56$), $t(43) = -3.01$, $p = .004$, effect size = -.45. The mean satisfaction rating for how clients felt about the condition of their housing, such as appliances, plumbing, and things needing repair (3.1, $SD = 1.15$) was significantly lower than the mean of all other items (3.5, $SD = .57$), $t(43) = -2.61$, $p = .013$, effect size = -.39. And the mean satisfaction rating for how clients felt about how affordable their home was (2.6, $SD = .97$) was significantly lower than the mean of all other items (3.6, $SD = .57$), $t(43) = -7.26$, $p = <.001$, effect size = -1.09.

Figure 8. Average Housing Satisfaction Ratings (n=44)



Housing Status

Based on the 50 clients who responded to the adapted RTLFB items in the survey, 80% ($n = 40$) reported that their current housing status was private market housing. Twelve percent ($n = 6$) were living in social housing (i.e., non-profit housing) and eight percent ($n = 4$) reported that their housing status was unknown. See Figure 9 for a pie chart of these proportions. When examining only the 38 past OMRA recipients' current housing status, 90% ($n = 34$) of past recipients were living in private market housing, while five percent ($n = 2$) were in social housing and five percent ($n = 2$) reported unknown housing status, indicating that housing status remained the same or improved when clients' rent subsidies had ended. See Figure 10 for a pie chart of these proportions.

Figure 9. 80% of survey respondents' current housing status was private market housing (n=50)

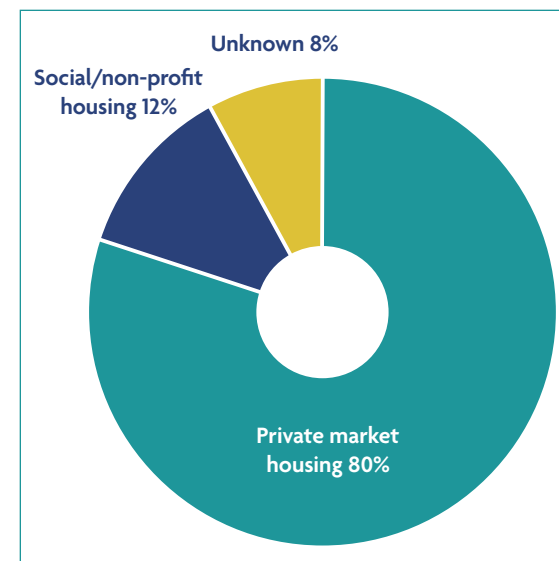
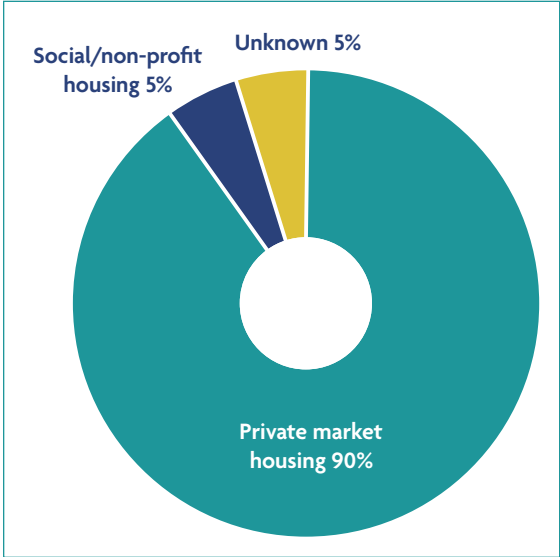


Figure 10. 90% of past recipients were still living in private market housing (n=38)



The number of times a person moves is also an indication of housing stability, with a low number of moves indicating higher stability. Of the 50 survey respondents who completed the RTLFB, 46% ($n = 23$) moved zero times since arriving in Canada, 28% ($n = 14$) moved once, 10% ($n = 5$) moved twice, and six percent ($n = 3$) moved three or more times. Two clients who had moved had previously lived in a hostel or shelter (this was not their initial place of residence in Canada), and one client had moved from an arrangement where they were living with family or friends. The rest of the clients had moved from other private market rentals. Six clients who were interviewed had moved and provided various reasons for the moves, such as to increase their space to make room for a new child, or for family members from their home country

who were moving to Canada. Two clients wanted to move to increase their space or to live in a more suitable location but could not afford it. Clients who were interviewed speculated that in the future they might need to move if they lost their jobs, needed a bigger apartment, or changed locations. Three clients said there was no reason they would move to another place. From the client interviews, clients who received the subsidy when they were looking for their first apartment in Canada said getting the subsidy at this time opened up options for them so they could rent apartments in locations that suited them and that were of good quality.

Of the eleven clients who were interviewed, nine clients' subsidies had ended. Among these nine, seven said they were paying rent from employment income at the time of the interview. At the same time, clients whose subsidies had ended said they had faced challenges paying their rent since the subsidy ended. Overall, the provision of the rent subsidy was central to clients' housing stability while they still navigated affordability strain. One client who was interviewed said—

“In the situation where the rents are extremely high, [OMRA's] contribution in the rent is significant and highly important.”

When asked to indicate additional services OMRA could provide, one survey respondent said—

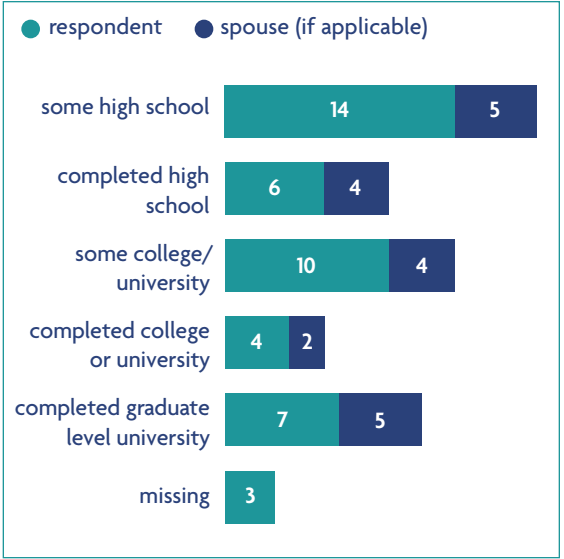
“I was just wondering if through the help OMRA I can be able move in an affordable low income apartment, as where I'm staying now price continues to go up. Now hard for me to keep up to payments date, unlike before when I used to pay on time.”

This quote illustrates the affordability challenges resettled refugees continued to face. Additional survey respondents also described continued financial strain, with one also mentioning the need to apply for social housing, another described needing to move to a larger apartment but being unable to, and another mentioned the additional financial support needed for housing.

7. To What Extent Have Program Clients Experienced Improved Educational Outcomes While In The Program?

Of the 44 clients who responded to the survey education questions, the month before receiving OMRA, 68% (30) had less than a college or university degree. See Figure 11 for a breakdown of education levels the month before receiving the OMRA subsidy. Since they began to receive

Figure 11. Education levels the month before receiving OMRA (n=44)



the OMRA subsidy, 35 respondents (80%) had attended a school program, which included language schools, credential recognition programs, or high school, college or university. In 100% of the families with a spouse, the spouse had attended a school program since they began to receive the OMRA subsidy

Of the eleven clients who were interviewed, two said they would not have been able to study in their professions without the OMRA subsidies. Client interviewees also described the subsidy ending because they began post-secondary programs and received OSAP loans. One client described how their spouse would not have been able to work part-time and re-train without the subsidy. Instead, they would have had to work full-time in a job that would not help them achieve their longer-term career goals. Another client described the importance of the subsidy in providing time to re-train, plan a sustainable career path, and attend school, rather than alternative options such as re-locating or working full-time precariously. They said—

“When I came to Canada, if OMRA hadn’t given us that subsidy for that period of time, I would have had different perceptions or ideas about getting into different things rather than focusing on going to school or taking different courses. I know OMRA was here and supporting me with rent subsidies. OMRA gave me a foundation that makes me who I am today.”

8. To What Extent Have Program Clients Experienced Improved Employment Outcomes While In The Program?

Of the 44 clients who responded to the survey employment questions, 73% (32) indicated they were either unemployed or in a volunteer position the month before receiving the OMRA subsidy. None of the respondents were working full-time the month before receiving the OMRA subsidy. See Figure 12 for a breakdown of employment status before receiving the OMRA subsidy. Since they began to receive the OMRA subsidy, 52% (23) said they had started to work. Of the families with a spouse, 24% (n = 8) of spouses had started working. See Figure 13 for a breakdown of employment status since receiving the OMRA subsidy. Note that six respondents had more

than one type of employment since receiving the subsidy (e.g., casual employment and part-time employment).

In the client interviews, clients described how the OMRA subsidy provided them with the time or space to plan their educational and career paths in a more long-term way. Five of the eleven clients who were interviewed said their subsidies ended because they found stable jobs that they could sustain and that were sufficient to pay the rent. A client explained—

“The studies provided a window of opportunity for him [spouse] to study and prepare for the exam and work in the meantime. Once he had that window of one year and increased the job, he was working and earning more.”

Figure 12. Employment status the month BEFORE receiving OMRA (n=44)



9. To what extent have program clients experienced improved quality of life outcomes while in the program?

The researchers drew on client interview data to answer this evaluation question. Six of the eleven clients who participated in an interview said that OMRA’s support had a social and psychological impact on their lives, including providing social support and community integration. One client said—

“ They check on you. You feel like you’re not alone,”

and another said—

“ Women who work in this organization are extremely kind and compassionate.

They were not only helping us in terms of the rent but they were also closely paying attention to our other needs and challenges in order to solve them.”

Four clients said OMRA’s guidance and orientation to Canadian daily life helped improve their day-to-day lives. Two clients mentioned the value of the social connections and feeling less alone when they attended the annual park gathering. A client explained—

“ They let us feel we are part of the community. Part of this whole community. We relate.”

10. In what ways do participants attribute improvements in areas of their lives to receipt of the rent subsidies?

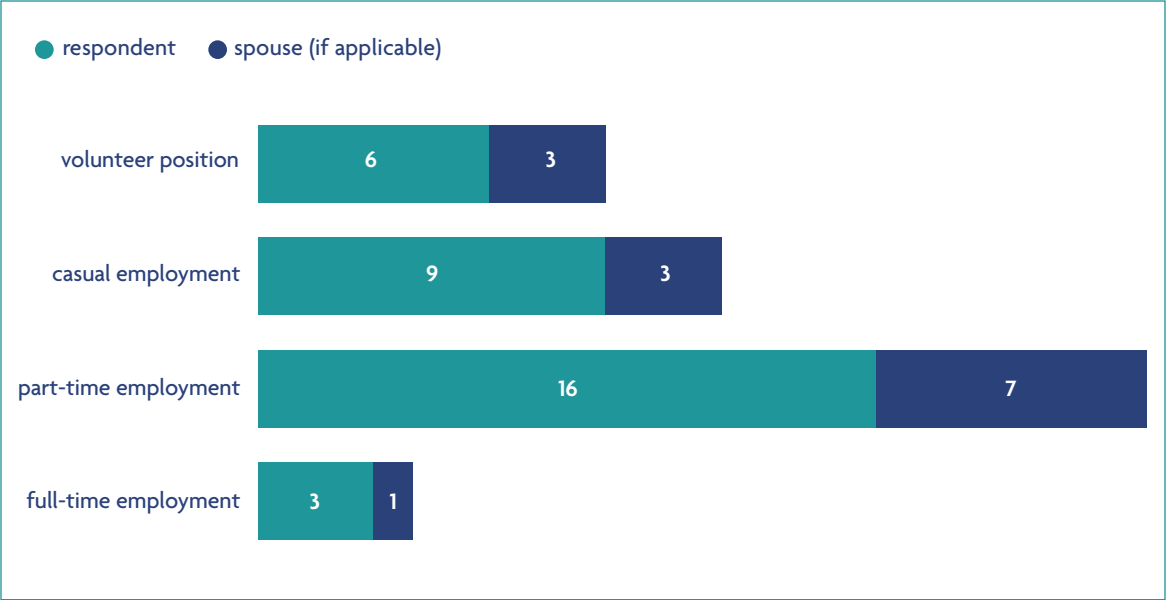
Finally, in ten of the client interviews, participants articulated a clear link between OMRA programming and the improvements (outcomes) they described. As an example, one client articulated the link between the subsidy and housing, saying—

“ We could not afford the house if it was not for OMRA’s help.”

Another client connected work opportunities and the subsidy, saying—

“ I would have been working full-time, even more than that. Trapped in that cycle and wouldn’t have been able to study. Thus, OMRA’s support provided me with the time and opportunity to use my skills and benefit from my occupation that I acquired back home to find a better job in Canada.”

Figure 13. Clients who had worked since starting to RECEIVE OMRA (n=44)





Conclusions

OMRA is successfully implementing its program to support resettled refugees to become stably housed in Ottawa in scattered-site, private market rental housing. They are meeting an affordability gap between a family's shelter allowance and rent. The subsidies are flexible and adjusted regularly by the organization. OMRA also provides much-needed, short-term, focused supports in the form of housing-related guidance, English tutoring that includes orientation to Canada, and provision of furniture and apartment essentials through a close, local partnership.

From 2017 to 2023, OMRA provided and managed monthly subsidies for 81 households, the majority of which (79%; $n = 64$) were families rather than singles. The OMRA clients were a diverse group, ranging in age from 19 to 65 years, including single-parent households, individuals who were LGBTQ, and from 26 different countries overall. The program has grown since 2017, providing \$126,185 in total rent subsidies in 2023, compared to \$24,318 in 2017.

Clients were satisfied with the services OMRA offered; however it is important to note that their average housing satisfaction levels were at the satisfied level and sometimes neutral (neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) rather than highly

satisfied, with lower levels of housing satisfaction linked to housing affordability, condition of housing (e.g., things in need of repair), and choice of housing. Higher satisfaction ratings were linked to life overall in Ottawa and satisfaction with the location of their housing, notably to its proximity to shopping, services, and public transportation.

The client interviewees emphasized the importance of the individualized support OMRA offers in addition to the rent subsidies and the process of increasing or gradually decreasing the monthly subsidy amounts. While the program has a much-needed grassroots flexibility and responsiveness, key stakeholders all recognized the need to formalize the program at this point in its size, with clearer policies and procedures, strategic planning, and a stronger funding base. One of the main program facilitators was the clarity of the agreement between OMRA and clients. Program stakeholders and clients felt additional clear policies and procedures needed to be developed for consistency, efficiency, and communication purposes.

Housing affordability remained the primary program challenge at the individual client-level, a fundraising challenge at the program-level, and a systems-level problem due to gaps between

financial supports and private market rental rates. Even with the rent subsidy the program participants continued to note this strain on affordability. At the same time, OMRA is meeting a much-needed financial gap for resettled refugees both in the first year when they arrive in Canada and also in subsequent years.

The subsidy is not just a rent top-up, but recipients change their plans when they receive the subsidy. The subsidy gives them “breathing space” to consider re-training and returning to school rather than getting stuck in low-paying work environments where they cannot move forward on career plans. The subsidy also allowed for more choice in location, which clients in the interviews noted, even though overall clients’ mean satisfaction for choice of housing was significantly low. The housing literature also highlights the importance of choice, a key feature of housing-led models that promote scattered-site private market housing and portability. Housing choice is certainly limited in today’s housing market where there is a lack of available affordable units (Bevelander et al., 2019; Steele & Kreda, 2017).

The OMRA program aligns with RRH as a housing model in that it provides time-limited housing support in the form of a portable rent subsidy in order to assist people to become stably housed. Short-term supports are also provided, which are focused on housing and the transition into stable housing. Connecting the OMRA program model to the larger housing context and conversation provides support for OMRA’s approach and also provides an example of an RRH model for resettled refugees, beyond its current application with people who are homeless, including families with children, people experiencing IPV, and people with HIV/AIDS. OMRA program stakeholders – Board

members and external partners – recognized their unique housing approach in the community and the absence of such a model for refugee households.

These study findings show the need for programs such as OMRA due to the insufficiency of public funding for refugee settlement and housing. Silvius et al. (2017) described this trend as the privatization of refugee settlement, explaining that private sponsors carry much of the financial burden of refugee settlement since government funding is lacking. Silvius et al. (2017) described the Welcome Fund in Manitoba, a fund built on private contributions that supports non-profit settlement agencies. These contributions wane when waves of refugees are not in the spotlight. Silvius et al. (2017) stated that what is needed is ongoing, sustainable public funding.

The lack of funding and labour-intensive fundraising efforts of this small volunteer-based program has created a strain on its Board members. The refugee settlement sector in Canada is highly volunteer-based and strained. Settlement workers for GARs face extremely high workloads, burnout, and low pay, often providing additional voluntary time (Scoles, 2021). Private sponsors face intense challenges. While OMRA has run a remarkably effective subsidy program, key informants described the need to add staff to their program, diversify their funding base, and broaden their capacity.

Overall, the program has been highly effective in reaching its long-term outcomes. Eighty percent of the 50 clients who completed the study survey were housed in private market rentals. Clients were stably housed, with 46% having zero moves since arriving in Canada, and an additional 28% having only one move. In addition to housing stability, clients showed improved educational

and employment outcomes, with many entering education programs, language training, and credential recognition programs, and many households indicating employment experience since beginning to receive the subsidy. Finally, clients described improvements in quality of life, daily functioning, social connectedness, as well as decreased loneliness. Ten of the eleven clients who were interviewed articulated a clear link between OMRA programming and the outcomes they described.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

It is important to note some of the limitations of this study. Some program client files contained missing information, such as birth dates, LGBTQ identity, gender information and arrival date in Canada. While overall both the client program administrative dataset (N = 81) and the survey data (N = 50) resulted in good sample sizes, most of the planned analyses comparing sub-groups were not possible due to small numbers in certain groups. For example, there was a small number of single individuals in the administrative dataset, resulting in limited analyses where we compared families and single households. In addition, there were only nine households who were private sponsorship groups; hence, we did not compare GARs and PSRs in bivariate analyses.

OMRA no longer had contact information for 15 past recipients. These recipients may have had low engagement overall or dissatisfaction with the program. It is important to note that their perspectives were not included in this study. In addition, six clients opened the survey and did not complete any questions (they were not included in any of the survey analyses), and a further six clients began to complete



the survey but stopped halfway through, often when they got to the Housing Satisfaction Scale in the survey. These 12 clients who stopped the survey at different points may be a group of recipients with lower literacy rates, who had lower satisfaction rates with the program, and/or who felt their responses may affect their receipt of services. Thirteen survey respondents did not complete the demographic survey items, such as country of origin. They may have felt that this information was too personal and could identify them. Again, the findings should be interpreted with this consideration in mind. Even with a high response survey response rate (76%), the clients not represented may have had different perspectives of the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed based on the findings of this evaluation. Some are recommendations from participants themselves and others were compiled by the research team.

Immediate Recommendations

1. Strike an implementation committee to prioritize, plan, and implement program changes.

A committee of key program stakeholders could facilitate the follow-up actions resulting from this study's findings and its recommendations.

2. Continue to formalize the individualized support role in the program.

The researchers found that the support role

was valued by clients and stakeholders, but that there were some inconsistencies and lack of clarity of the role. Some stakeholders suggested framing the tutoring role as a settlement role since tutors provide social support, orientation to Canadian culture, and practical guidance. One Board member suggested that a tutor needed to be assigned to every client. Clients also described their sherpas as providing housing search support, some system navigation supports, and informal connections with other refugees, such as those who had followed the same re-training path. Overall, the support role needs to be clarified so that clients, the program, and external partners understand what the support role is (e.g., light settlement support and orientation to Canadian culture) and what it is not (e.g., intense employment assistance and housing search). One of the external partners who participated in the study suggested to, "Institutionalize the support and friendship that is provided... it's not their mandate but their heart. Make it part of their mandate."

3. Develop clear policies, procedures, and a strategic plan.

Associated with the above need to formalize the support role in the program, Board members and stakeholders articulated the right next steps in the agency as developing clearer policies and procedures which they connected to an upcoming strategic planning process. Clients and stakeholders described clear procedures in the program that were already in place. We recommend these continue, specifically:

- a. Continue the individualized assessment and re-assessment of subsidy amounts.
 - b. Continue to use the client subsidy agreements as a clear procedure and communication tool.
 - c. Expand the program's client file record management and introduce the use of simple client management software.
4. **Improve internal communication (with clients and volunteers) in multiple languages.**
 5. **Improve external marketing and the pro-gram's social media presence.**

Medium-Term Recommendations

6. **Expand the program funding model.**
 - a. Increase funding to add paid staff (addressing succession planning, fundraising needs, burnout, volunteer training and management needs).
 - b. Continue to explore corporate sponsorship and additional government funding, such as provincial and municipal housing funding.
 - c. Consider social enterprise options, such as expanding the organization's use of townhouse ownership in order to leverage equity to fund rent subsidies.
 - d. Develop efficiencies for the grocery card fundraiser as one way to ease

the administrative tasks and burnout experienced by Board members.

- e. **Develop alternative fundraising initiatives.**
- f. **Increase subsidy amounts.**
- g. **Increase the number of subsidy recipients.**
- h. **Explore possibilities and potential benefits of linking to a larger, more sustainable organization.** While examining such linkages, also consider the possible loss of program flexibility, which was described by many study participants as a key program strength.

7. **Replicate the model, drawing on key components of an RRH approach, and defining OMRA as a form of RRH to provide credibility to the program within the broader housing context.**

8. **Increase the volunteer base.**

Long-Term Recommendations

9. **Continue to call on the Government of Canada to increase settlement assistance to resettled refugees.**

According to Rose and Charette (2017), Canada's use of provincial social assistance housing allowance levels is "incompatible with Canada's international commitment to provide adequate support for refugees to resettle with dignity – a process which takes time, especially for those with high needs facing major barriers to economic self-sufficiency in the short or medium term (p. 21).





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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Evaluation Matrix: Implementation and Outcome Evaluation of OMRA Rent Subsidy Program

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	DATA SOURCE	DATA COLLECTION METHOD	DATA ANALYSIS	INDICATORS
1. What are the characteristics of the program recipients?	Program administrative data Program clients	Analysis of existing program records Survey	Descriptive analysis (percents and means)	Family composition, ages, country of origin, arrival date in Canada, type of sponsorship, referring organization, length of time in program
2. Is the program being delivered to the intended population?	Program administrative data Program clients	Analysis of existing program records Survey	Descriptive analysis (percents and means)	Family composition, ages, country of origin, arrival date in Canada, type of sponsorship, referring organization, length of time in program
3. What are the program costs per year associated with rent subsidies and how have these costs changed from 2017-2023?	Program administrative data	Analysis of existing program records	Descriptive analysis (percents and means) and bivariate comparisons (chi-squares and t-tests)	- Average subsidy per year With subgroup analyses by: - Family composition - Year of support
4. What are clients' rental costs per year (accounting for rent subsidies and additional shelter allowances) and how have these costs changed from 2017-2023?	Program administrative data Publicly available data (i.e., City shelter allowance data)	Analysis of existing program records Review of public data	Descriptive analysis (percents and means) and bivariate comparisons (chi-squares and t-tests)	- Average rents for OMRA clients - Average shelter allowances received by OMRA clients With subgroup analyses by: - Family composition - Year of support

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	DATA SOURCE	DATA COLLECTION METHOD	DATA ANALYSIS	INDICATORS
5. What are facilitators and barriers to program implementation?	Program clients External key informants Volunteers	Qualitative interviews Survey	Thematic analysis of qualitative data Descriptive analysis of quantitative data	- Facilitators - Barriers
6. To what extent have program clients experienced improved housing outcomes while in the program?	Program clients Volunteers	Qualitative Interviews Survey	Thematic analysis of qualitative data Descriptive analysis of quantitative data and bivariate comparisons (t-tests and chi-squares)	Self-reported changes in housing. Subgroup analyses by time since completing program
7. To what extent have program clients experienced improved educational outcomes while in the program?	Program clients Volunteers	Qualitative Interviews Survey	Thematic analysis of qualitative data Descriptive analysis of quantitative data and bivariate comparisons (t-tests and chi-squares)	Self-reported changes in education. Subgroup analyses by time since completing program
8. To what extent have program clients experienced improved employment outcomes while in the program?	Program clients Volunteers	Qualitative Interviews Survey	Thematic analysis of qualitative data Descriptive analysis of quantitative data and bivariate comparisons (t-tests and chi-squares)	Self-reported changes in employment. With subgroup analyses by time since completing program
9. To what extent have program clients experienced improved quality of life outcomes while in the program?	Program clients Volunteers	Qualitative Interviews	Thematic analysis of qualitative data	Self-reported changes in quality of life.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS	DATA SOURCE	DATA COLLECTION METHOD	DATA ANALYSIS	INDICATORS
10. In what ways do participants attribute improvements in areas of their lives to receipt of the rent subsidies?	Program clients	Qualitative interviews	Thematic analysis	Self-reported attributions of change to rent subsidies

APPENDIX B

Data Management Plan for OMRA Implementation and Outcome Evaluation

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The main data collection methods the researchers (Consultants and Research Assistants) will use in the study are qualitative interviews with OMRA key informants and tenants, a tenant survey, and an administrative data analysis.

Interviews

The researchers will conduct semi-structured interviews with 2 OMRA volunteers, 4 OMRA Board members, approximately 4 external partners, and 10-12 OMRA clients. OMRA Board members will first ask clients, volunteers and external partners if they are interested in being connected with the researchers to find out more about how to participate. Researchers will invite interview participants to participate in an interview either by phone or by email. If

an email address is provided, researchers will send participants a copy of the consent form before the interview. At the scheduled time for the interview, before beginning an interview, the researchers will review the consent information with the potential participants (verbally), will check for understanding, and will consent to participation. The participants will provide verbal consent, which the researchers will audio record. With consent, the researchers will audio record the interviews and take notes. They will store the audio recordings and notes on one of the researchers' password-protected computers. Any names or other directly identifying information will be removed from these notes.

Survey

The researchers will distribute a survey with options to complete either a paper version (mailed) or an online version administered via

Survey Monkey and sent using email addresses. The survey distribution methods may change based on input from advisory committee members. Both paper and online versions will maintain anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Survey data will be stored on password protected computers or paper copies will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Survey data will be entered into a database using Excel software. The survey will include a brief introduction, describing the purpose of the study, risks and benefits of participation, details of confidentiality and anonymity, the voluntary nature of survey participation, and the right to decline to answer any questions or withdraw from the survey at any time. It will include the contact information of the researchers. This introduction will end with a statement that submitting a response to the survey is an indication that the person has consented to participate.

Administrative Data Analysis

The OMRA volunteers will provide the researchers with client data files without identifiers. These files will be stored on password protected computers. The researchers will develop a database in Excel using the data from the files. The database will be password protected and stored on a password protected computer.

DATA SHARING

If audio recordings, notes, and survey data need to be shared between researchers, they will be transferred using secure, encrypted data sharing software, called “liquidfiles.”

DATA RETENTION

Researchers will retain all data on a password-protected computer for electronic files, or a locked filing cabinet for paper files, for five years. After this period all data files will be permanently and securely deleted.

