



SYRIAN REFUGEE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS IN METRO VANCOUVER: CHANGING PATTERNS AND NEW INFLUENCES NOVEMBER 4, 2015–DECEMBER 31, 2016

April 2017

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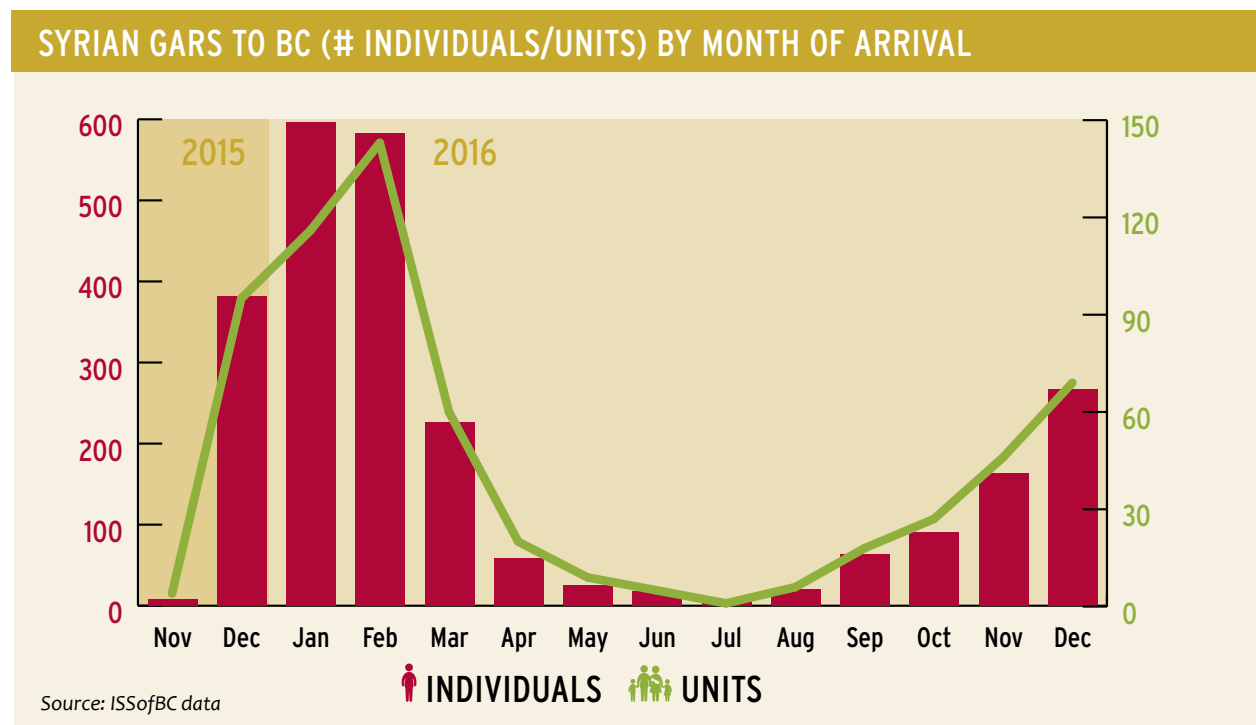
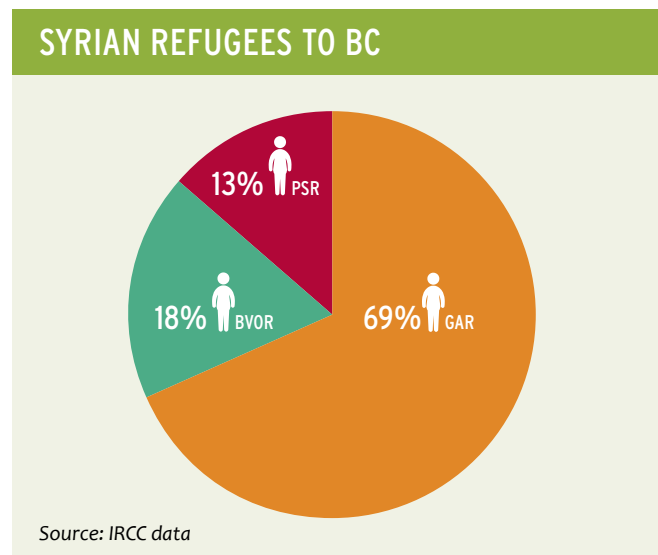
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SYRIAN REFUGEE SETTLEMENT PATTERNS WITHIN METRO VANCOUVER

Operation Syrian Refugee and ongoing resettlement efforts marked the largest refugee resettlement mission in Canadian history. From November 4, 2015 to December 31, 2016 over 40,000 Syrian refugees were resettled through Canada’s humanitarian immigration stream. Within British Columbia, over 3,600 Syrians settled in sixty-nine (69) different communities throughout the province, primarily as government assisted refugees (GARs), with the majority residing within Metro Vancouver.

According to IRCC data (Open Data – November 4, 2015 – November 30, 2016), over 3,200 Syrians arrived in BC through the private sponsorship (430), blended visa officer referred (580), and government assisted refugee (2,200) streams.

In total, British Columbia welcomed two thousand, five hundred and seven (2,507) Syrian GARs from November 4, 2015 to December 31, 2016. As can be seen, the majority of arrivals came in two main influxes: Operation Syrian Refugee (November 4, 2015 – February 28, 2016), as well as a smaller influx in the Fall (September 1, 2016 – December 31, 2016) as part of ongoing resettlement efforts.



ISSofBC has been the sole provider of the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for Government Assisted Refugees (GARs) destined to British Columbia, meaning that all GARs resettled to BC are initially destined to Vancouver.¹ To meet the needs for Syrian resettlement given significant time pressures, the large number of arrivals within a short period of time, the provincial government interest in settling GARs outside Metro Vancouver and the general public interest throughout BC – Immigration Refugee Citizenship Canada (IRCC) expanded GAR destining communities. Inter-Cultural Association of Victoria (ICA) became a new RAP provider in Victoria and ISSofBC established a hub and spoke model subcontracting arrangements to a number of other communities throughout BC. The combined efforts saw over five hundred (500+) Syrian GARs destined to Victoria, Abbotsford, Nanaimo, Prince George, Kelowna, Vernon, Kamloops and Penticton. ISSofBC directly supported the immediate needs including temporary reception and housing for one thousand, nine hundred and fifty-two (1,952) Syrian GARs, or seventy-eight percent (78%) of Syrian GARs to BC.

One thousand and eighty-two (1,082) Syrian GARs or forty-three percent (43%) of GAR arrivals in BC settled in the City of Surrey. Besides having the largest concentration of Syrian GAR households in the province, the City of Surrey also represented 5.6% of all Syrian GARs to Canada during this time period.

¹ During the resettlement of the Kosovar Refugees in 1999, subcontracts were established in cities across BC allowing direct destining of GARs to these cities.

UNDERSTANDING REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Refugees resettle to Canada under the humanitarian immigration stream. Unlike economic immigrants who make the decision to apply to immigrate to Canada, refugees are forced to flee their homes and have been recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as meeting the Convention definition of a refugee. Resettlement is one of three durable solutions put forward by the UNHCR to enable refugees to rebuild their lives with peace and dignity. Individuals selected for resettlement do not have any other durable solution available to them, including local integration into the country of first asylum or ability to return to their home country.

Economic immigrants are selected upon factors which are seen to increase the likelihood of economic self-sufficiency, including age, language ability in one of Canada's two official languages, education, skills training, and previous work experience. By contrast, GARs are selected for resettlement on the need for protection as well as on the basis of vulnerability criteria.

The vulnerability criteria includes:

- Single mothers,
- Families with young children,
- Individuals with a medical pre-condition due to war or untreated trauma
- Survivor of torture
- Individuals with special needs – physical limitations, and
- Length of time spent in protracted refugee situation

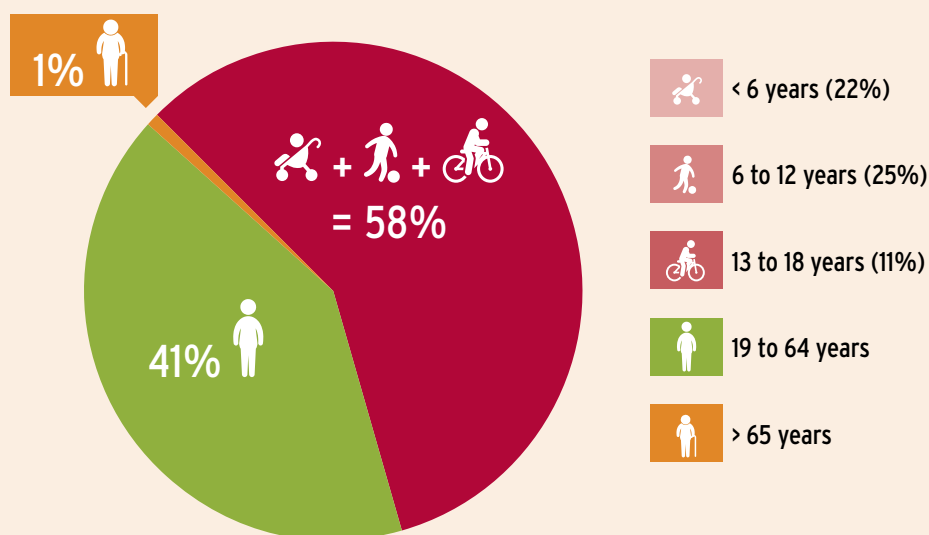
GARs arrive in Canada as permanent residents and receive initial assistance including temporary accommodations and one year of financial support from the Federal Government. Most GARs do not have pre-existing family connections in Canada. The characteristics exhibited through the vulnerability criteria were reflected by the Syrian GARs that settled in BC.

SYRIANS TO BC AND METRO VANCOUVER: UNDERSTANDING WHO THEY ARE

Most Syrian GARs resettled to BC originated from the southern city of Daraa and its surrounding region. Prior to their arrival in Canada, most Syrian GARs had spent three-five (3–5) years in urban settings or refugee camps located in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.

Syrian GARs that settled in BC tended to have larger than Canadian average size families, having, on average, six (6) members. Further, many have very young families. Almost sixty percent (60%) of Syrian GARs resettled in BC are under age nineteen (19), with forty-seven percent (47%) age twelve (12) and younger.

AGE COHORTS OF SYRIAN GARS TO BC



Source: ISSofBC and ICA data

Adults arrived with education and work experience backgrounds ranging from university educated professionals to farmers. The majority arrived with lower levels of education and limited or no English. Many had previously been employed in the construction and agricultural sectors (e.g. as truck drivers, construction workers and small scale farmers) but had been unemployed or underemployed for several years after fleeing Syria. Syrian GARs also arrived with a range of physical and mental health conditions, including untreated trauma, chronic medical conditions, significant dental issues, and physical impairments. These characteristics reflect Canada's humanitarian immigration stream.

GEOGRAPHIES OF REFUGEE SETTLEMENT

Where Syrian GAR households settle in Metro Vancouver largely correlates with where ISSofBC can locate affordable housing based on BC income assistance (BC IA) shelter allowances. Syrian GAR households receive one year of federal resettlement income assistance which largely matches BC IA rates. The level of income received on a monthly basis is dependent upon the family size and composition. A family of four (2 adults and 2 children), for example, would receive between \$1,349 and \$1,499 per month (see diagram below).

FAMILY SIZE	RAP MONTHLY ALLOWANCE		
	SHELTER PORTION	BASIC NEEDS	TOTAL
1 adult	\$375 to \$450	\$359	\$734 to \$809
1 adult + 1 child	\$570 to \$670	\$500	\$1,070 to \$1,170
2 adults	\$570 to \$670	\$555	\$1,125 to \$1,225
1 adult + 2 children	\$660 to \$760	\$500	\$1,160 to \$1,260
2 adults + 1 child	\$660 to \$760	\$649	\$1,309 to \$1,409
2 adults + 2 children	\$700 to \$800	\$649	\$1,349 to \$1,449
2 adults + 3 children	\$750 to \$850	\$649	\$1,399 to \$1,499
2 adults + 4 children	\$785 to \$885	\$649	\$1,434 to \$1,534
2 adults + 5 children	\$820 to \$920	\$649	\$1,469 to \$1,569

While ISSofBC understands that where we secure permanent housing for GAR households has implications on local services whether that is schools, health care providers and other community infrastructure securing permanent housing is the main settlement driver of where GARs will reside in Metro Vancouver. With the increased cost of rental housing compounded by low vacancy rental rates, the challenges in locating permanent rental housing are growing within Metro Vancouver, a sentiment echoed by ours partners in other communities outside the Lower Mainland. In most cases, households must augment the cost of rent by using the family’s Canada Child benefits and/or food allowance. This situation is, of course, not limited to refugee newcomers but also low income BC residents on income assistance.

The purpose of this report is to provide a visual representation by city of the settlement patterns of Syrian GAR families that received reception and temporary housing support including placement into permanent housing through ISSofBC efforts. We hope that this report and subsequent maps will have multiple purposes ranging as a planning tool for resource and service enhancement allocation to transit accessibility planning for low income newcomers.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This report and subsequent settlement maps presents the settlement locations of Syrian GAR households who arrived between November 4, 2015 and December 31, 2016. All GARs shown on the subsequent maps came directly through ISSofBC (ie they were not provided RAP services by a sub-contractor) and continued to reside in Metro Vancouver as of mid-February, 2017. Those individuals who received initial RAP services from sub-contracted agencies and/or who have moved outside of Metro Vancouver (e.g. to the interior and/or other provinces) in the intervening period were not included.

Under the Resettlement Assistance Program, ISSofBC is responsible for tracking and reporting to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) any permanent address changes during the GARs first year in Canada. We understand that some families may move one or more times within their first year in Canada. This report and subsequent settlement maps were undertaken by mapping the postal codes for each households still residing in Metro Vancouver, as tracked in our internal database system.

In analyzing these maps it is important to bear in mind they represent a specific point in time namely, the housing locations of Syrian GARs as of mid-February 2017. Consideration of previously published data of initial settlement locations will reveal notable differences owing to subsequent moves. In Coquitlam, for example, the demolition of multiple buildings in the Cottonwood area owing to both redevelopment and the impact of a fire in the summer of 2016 have resulted in multiple families moving to other cities in Metro Vancouver. As such, the number of families mapped in this report is lower than the almost two hundred (200) who initially found housing in the Tri-Cities.

In total, information is provided for one thousand, eight hundred and ninety-three (1,893) Syrian GARs – or approximately 75% of GARs to BC. Cities with three (3) or fewer families including Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and Richmond were not mapped so as to ensure privacy for the families.²

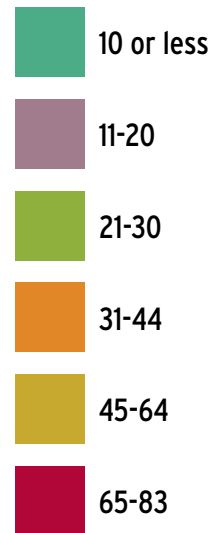
² Note: Abbotsford was a recipient of both GARs who were directly destined to our subcontractor, as well as GARs who obtained RAP services through ISSofBC but for whom permanent accommodations were obtained in Abbotsford. Similarly, Chilliwack welcomed families destined to both ISSofBC in Metro Vancouver, as well as through our subcontracted agency in Abbotsford. Figures provided above – and on subsequent maps – relate only to individuals initially destined to ISSofBC in Vancouver.

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTED REFUGEES IN THE LOWER MAINLAND

DATE OF ARRIVAL:

November 4, 2015
to December, 31 2016

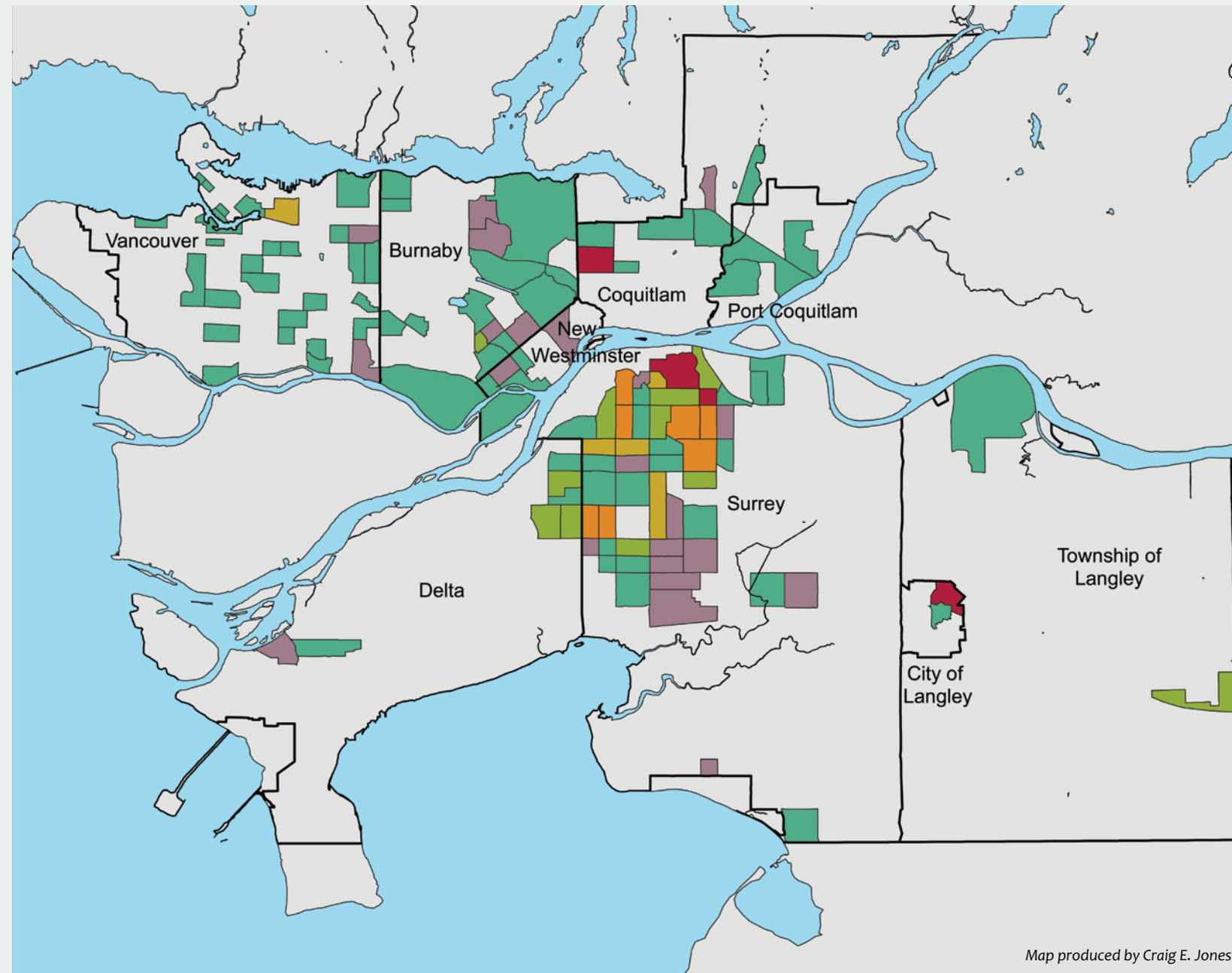
SYRIAN GARS



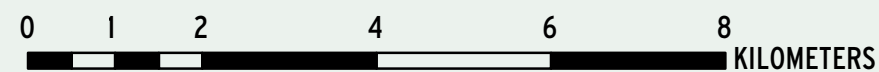
TOTAL SHOWN = 1824

NOT SHOWN:
Abbotsford = 11
Chilliwack = 27
Maple Ridge = 13
Pitt Meadows = 5
Richmond = 13

Note: Legend symbology is constant across municipal maps

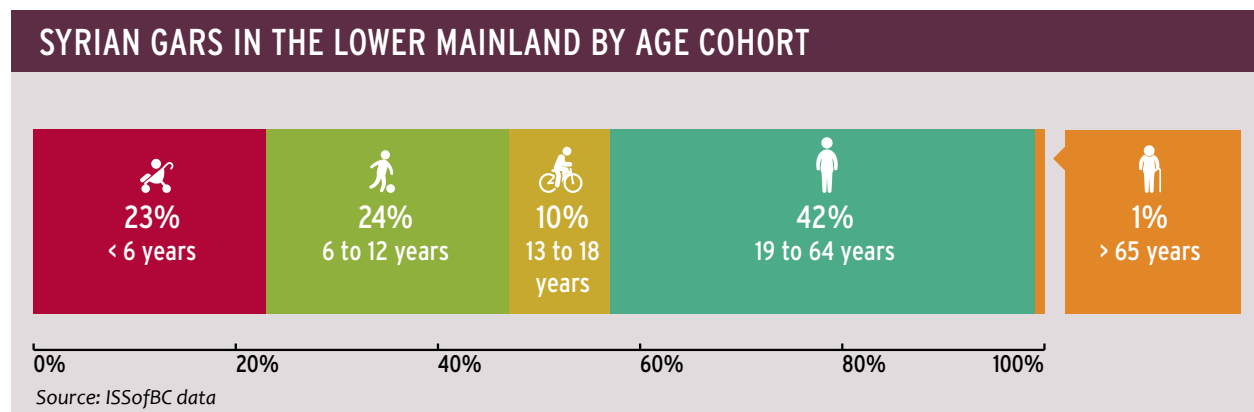


Map produced by Craig E. Jones



The Lower Mainland map represents the overall settlement pattern of Syrian GAR households throughout the region, highlighting the cities and neighbourhoods with the highest concentrations.

The current housing locations of one thousand, eight hundred and twenty-four (1,824) Syrian GARs are represented on this map. Although the location of an additional sixty-nine (69) individuals has been identified, the specific location has not been mapped in order to ensure the privacy of GARs settling in these cities.



Widespread public interest in aiding in the Operation Syrian Refugee movement from both private individuals and corporations for example, through providing reduced rents, working with ISSofBC to secure larger numbers of units within certain complexes and identifying private rental units that were available is evident in the dispersion of Syrian families throughout Metro Vancouver.

Over the last decade the cities of Surrey, Coquitlam, Burnaby, New Westminster and Vancouver have received the largest proportions of Government Assisted Refugees, a pattern which was largely reflected in the Syrian resettlement movement to BC.³ Although Syrian families have settled throughout Metro Vancouver, the map clearly shows neighbourhoods of higher concentrations in Surrey, Langley, Coquitlam and Vancouver. The location of families in non-traditional settlement cities, including Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Richmond and Ladner speaks to both the search for affordable housing, as well as public assistance in locating and securing housing.

Although this map could easily represent other low income newcomer populations, it provides a unique visual representation through a refugee resettlement lens of, in general, lower socio-economic neighbourhoods within Metro Vancouver.

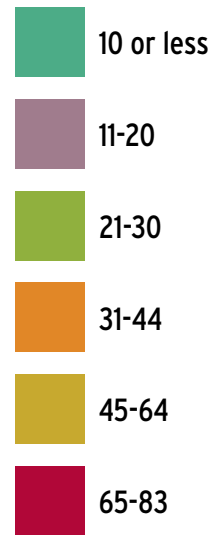
³ For more information and GIS mapping of Government Assisted Refugee settlement patterns in BC over the last decade, see ISSofBC's reports *Refugee Newcomers in Metro Vancouver (2012)*, *Refugee Newcomers in Surrey (2012)*, and *Changing Faces, Changing Neighbourhoods (2010)*. Reports are available at: issbc.org/our-work-with-refugees/reports-and-publications

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTED REFUGEES IN THE CITY OF SURREY

DATE OF ARRIVAL:

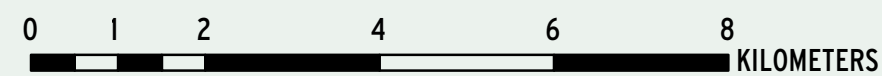
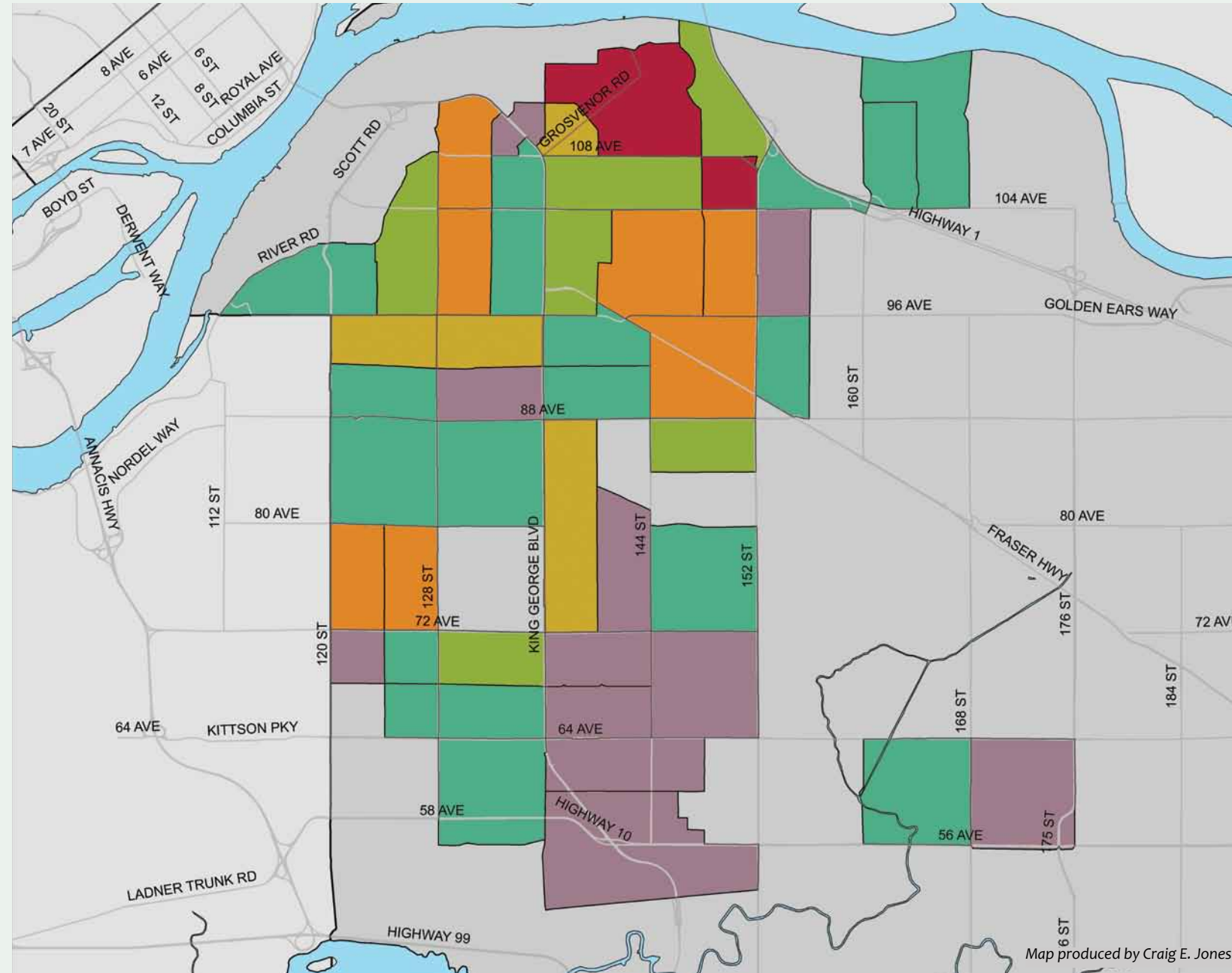
November 4, 2015
to December, 31 2016

SYRIAN GARS



City of Surrey
TOTAL = 1082

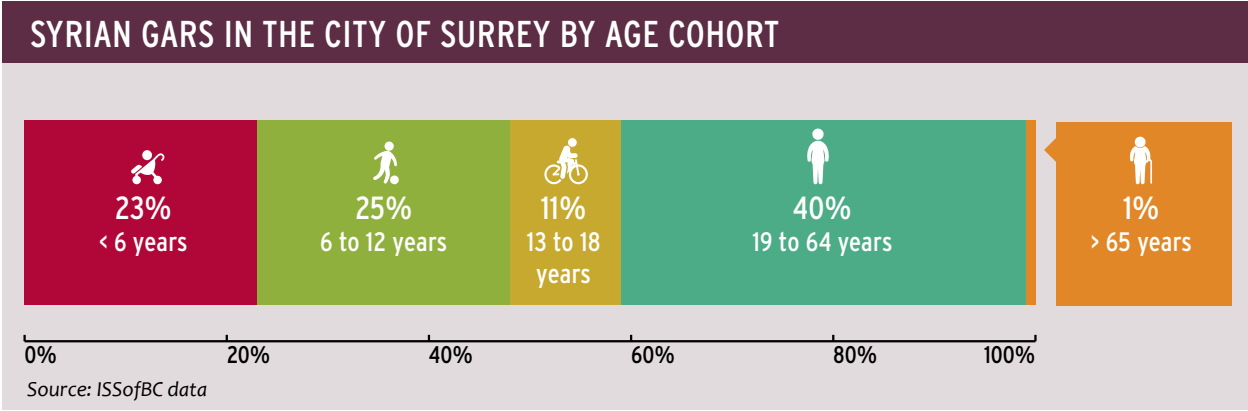
Note: Legend symbology is constant
across municipal maps



Map produced by Craig E. Jones

The City of Surrey has been the largest recipient of Government Assisted Refugees resettled to BC for over a decade owing largely to the availability of more affordable housing and larger unit sizes. Through Operation Syrian Refugee and ongoing resettlement efforts the City of Surrey welcomed one thousand and eighty-two (1,082) Syrian GARs, which represents 43% of Syrian GARs to BC and 5.6% of all Syrian GARs to Canada.

Syrian GARs in Surrey demonstrate similar age and gender (51% male, 49% female) breakdown with overall arrivals, which is not surprising given the large proportion of Syrian GARs that settled in Surrey.



This map highlights the largest concentration of Syrian GAR households in BC. Large concentrations of Syrian families are evident in primarily three (3) neighbourhoods – Whalley, Newton and Guilford areas, though smaller household concentrations can also be found in the City Centre and Fleetwood neighbourhoods.

The vast majority of Syrian GAR families who arrived expressed an interest in living in concentrated areas of similar ethnic backgrounds and languages, a finding similar to other refugee groups during their initial settlement process. We were fortunate to work with some rental property management companies to place several families together within certain building complexes in Surrey.

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTED REFUGEES IN THE CITY OF VANCOUVER

DATE OF ARRIVAL:

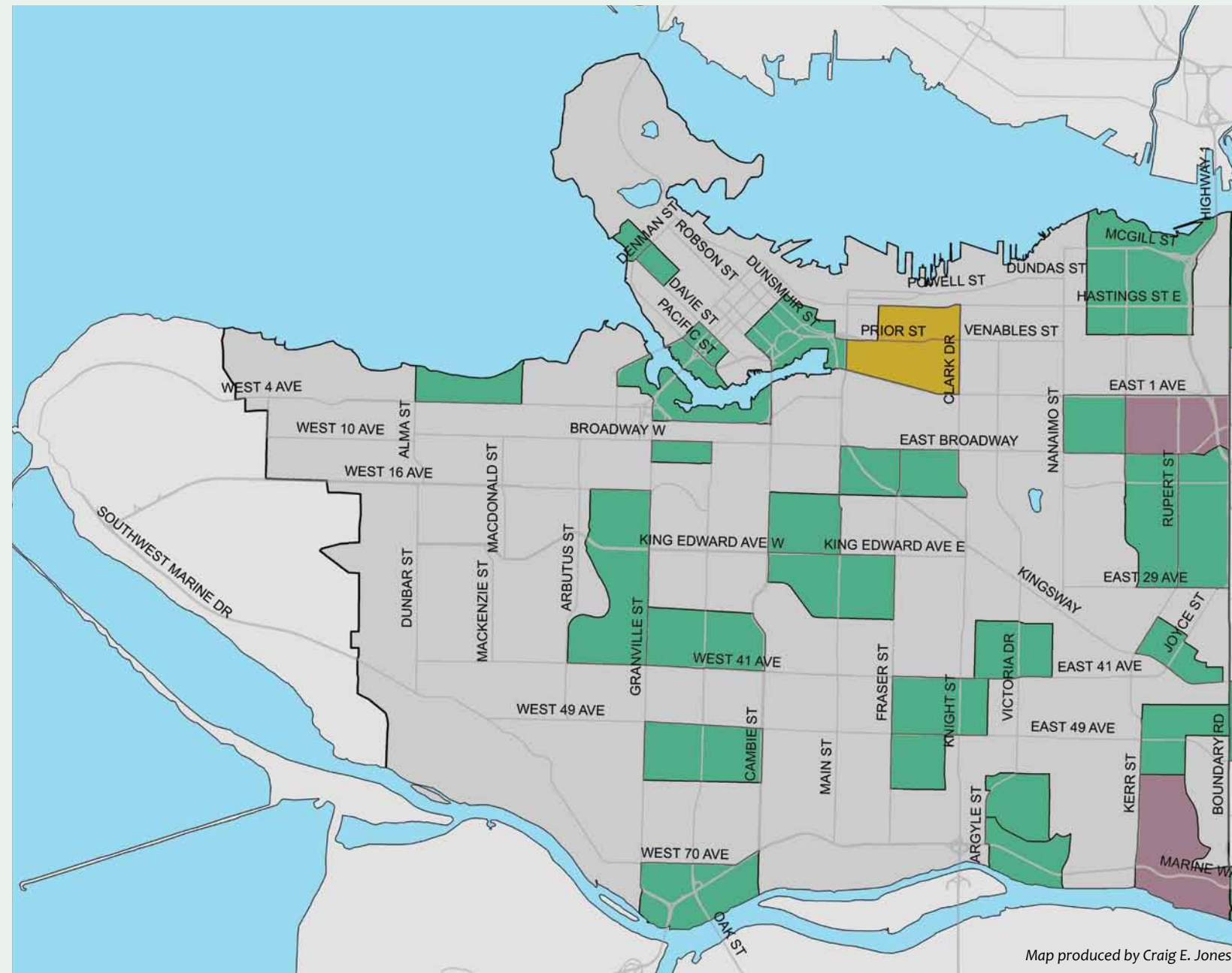
November 4, 2015
to December, 31 2016

SYRIAN GARS

- 10 or less
- 11-20
- 45-64

City of Vancouver
TOTAL = 191

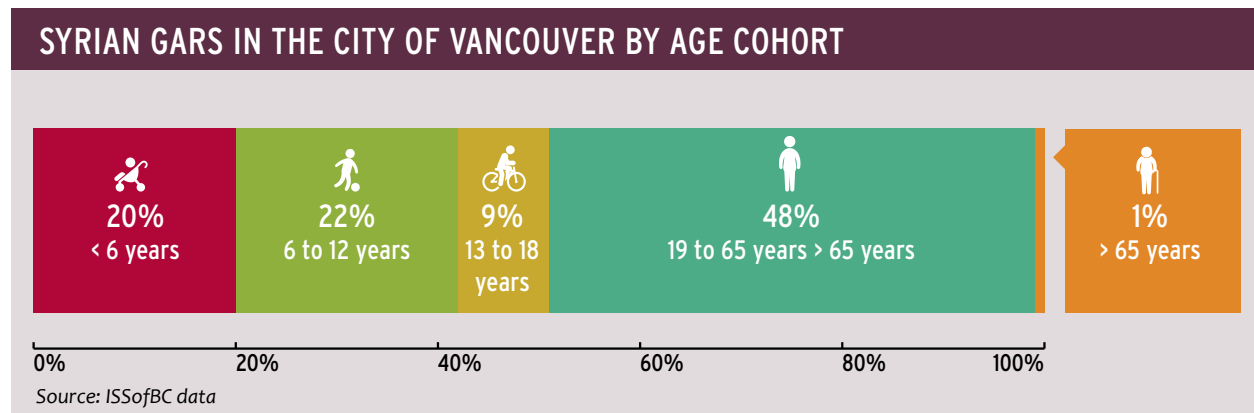
Note: Legend symbology is constant
across municipal maps



Map produced by Craig E. Jones

One hundred and ninety-one (191) Syrian GARs or approximately 7.6% of Syrian GARs to BC have settled within the City of Vancouver.

Syrians living in the City of Vancouver have a slightly higher percentage of females (46% male, 54% female), as well as an older age profile than all Syrians. Almost half of Syrians in the City of Vancouver are age 19-64, compared to 41% of all Syrians in BC.



While most Syrian GAR households settled primarily in East Vancouver with the highest concentration found in the Strathcona, Renfrew-Collingwood and Killarney neighbourhoods, the map also illustrates that some were also able to secure housing on the west side of the city. We found that some landlords, particularly on the west side, offered subsidized or reduced rent and thus made it financially possible for Syrian households to live in certain neighbourhoods that would normally be out of their reach due to shelter allowance rates.

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTED REFUGEES IN THE CITIES OF BURNABY AND NEW WESTMINSTER

DATE OF ARRIVAL:

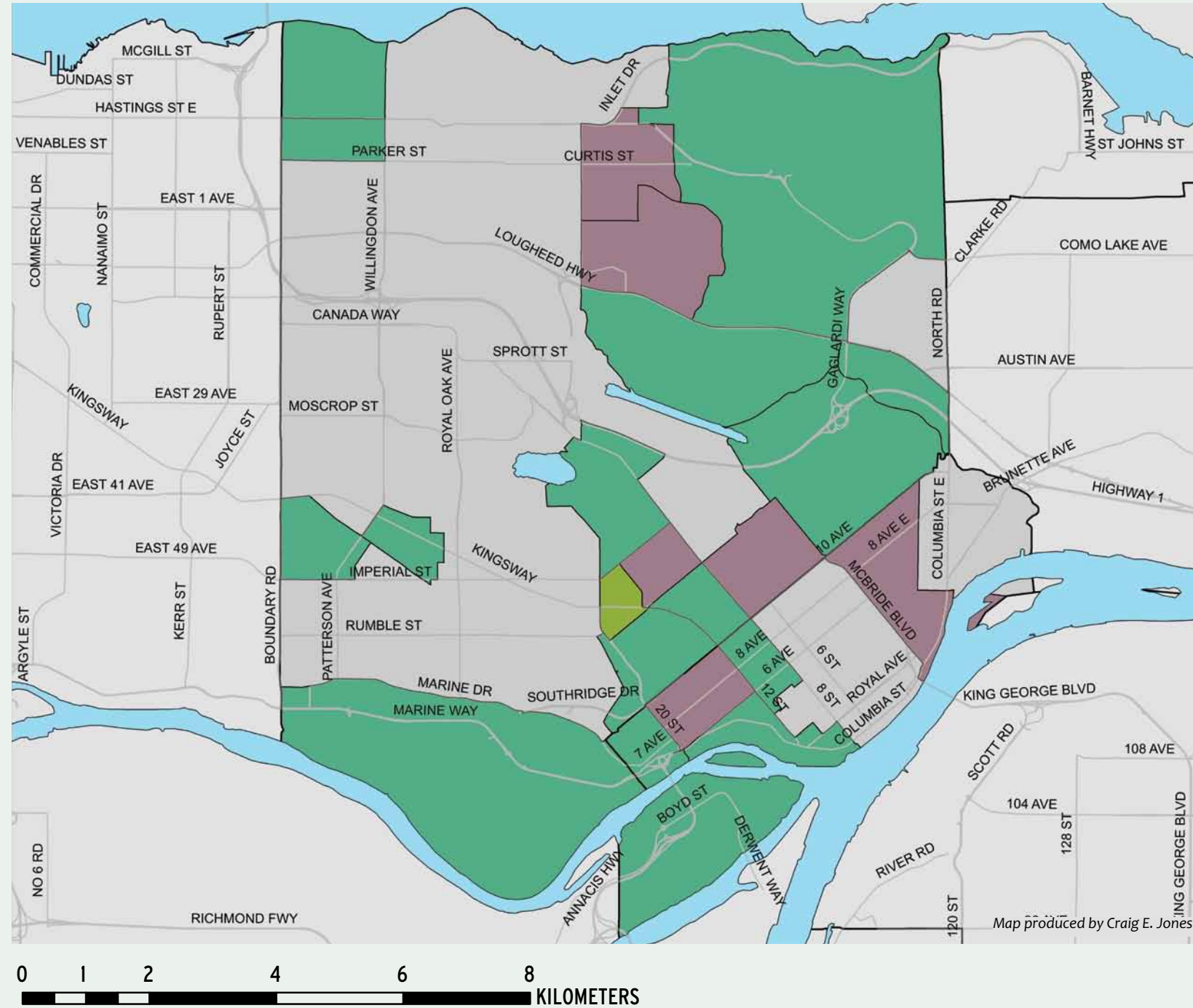
November 4, 2015
to December, 31 2016

SYRIAN GARS

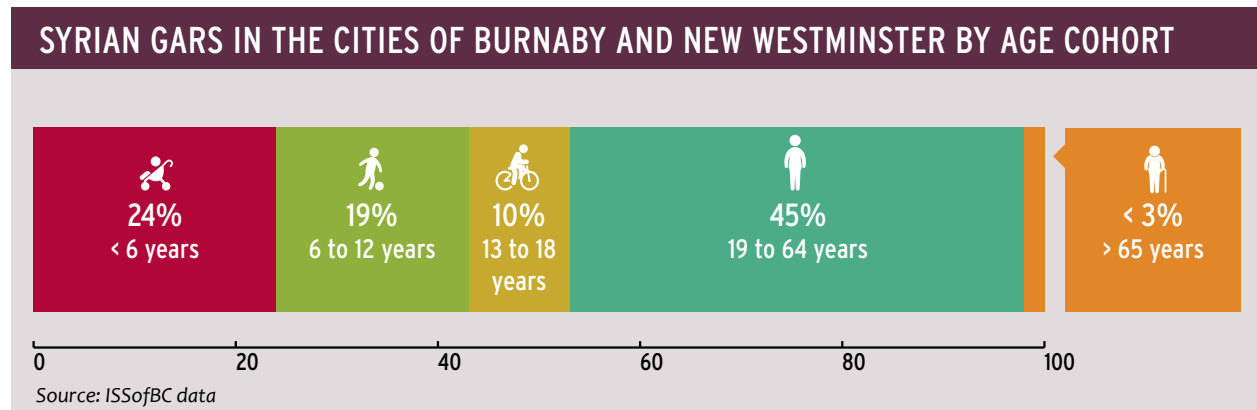
- 10 or less
- 11-20
- 21-30

Burnaby and
New Westminster
TOTAL = 197

Note: Legend symbology is constant
across municipal maps



One hundred and ninety-seven (197) or 7.8% of Syrian GAR households settled in the Burnaby-New Westminster region. Syrians in Burnaby New Westminster have a slightly higher proportion of females (48% male, 52% female), as well as a higher percentage of seniors (approx. 3%).



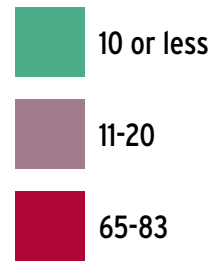
The settlement patterns of Syrian GAR households follow similar patterns of previous refugee populations that have settled in this region, primarily former refugees from Afghanistan and various countries from the African continent. Within Burnaby, the largest concentrations of Syrian GAR households can be found in Burnaby North, Edmonds and Cariboo neighbourhoods. In New Westminster, the settlement patterns follow primarily the location of low income apartment buildings. The highest concentration of families can be found in the West End and Kelvin (Moody Park) neighbourhoods, as well as Glenbrooke.

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTED REFUGEES IN THE CITIES OF COQUITLAM AND PORT COQUITLAM

DATE OF ARRIVAL:

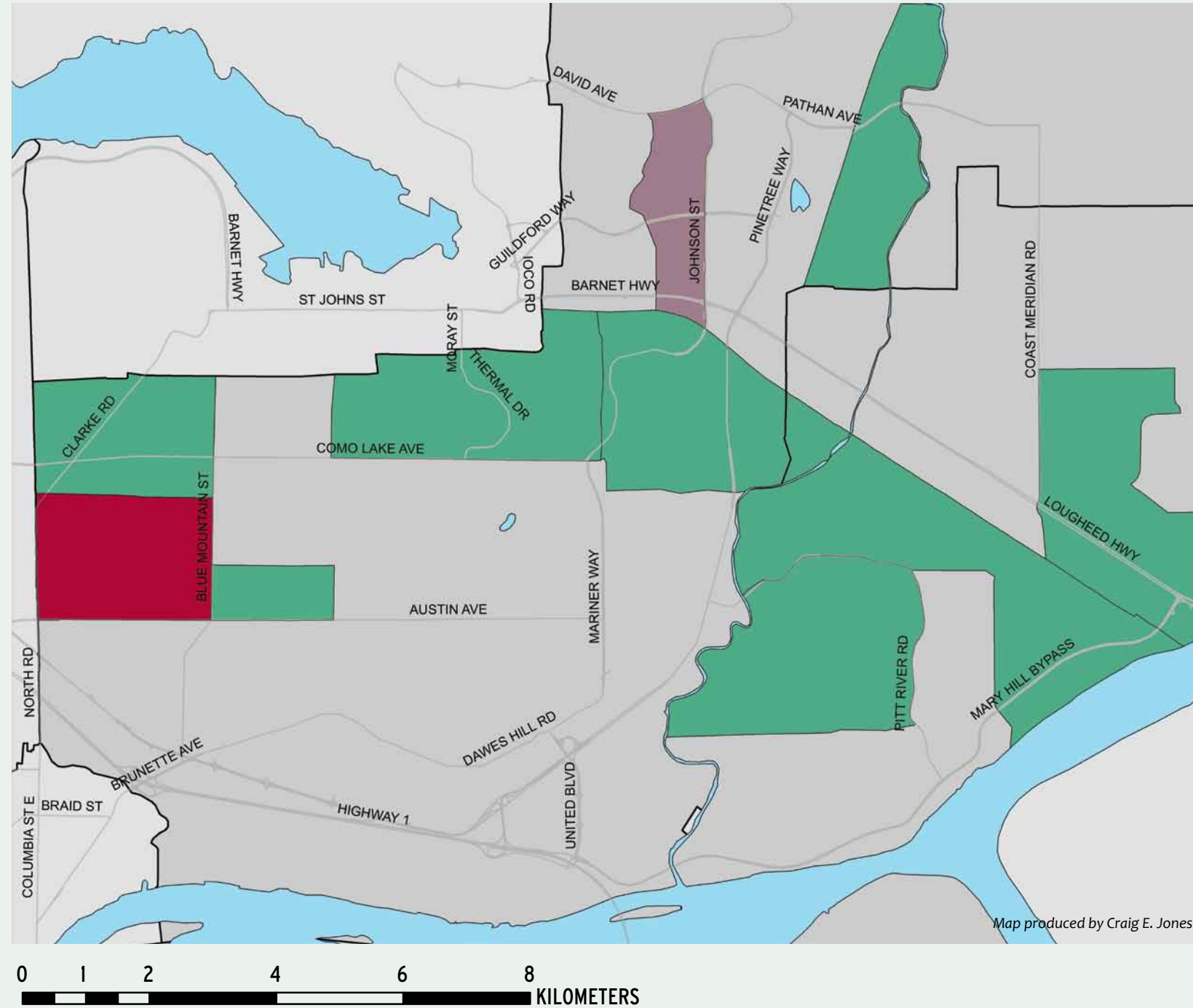
November 4, 2015
to December, 31 2016

SYRIAN GARS

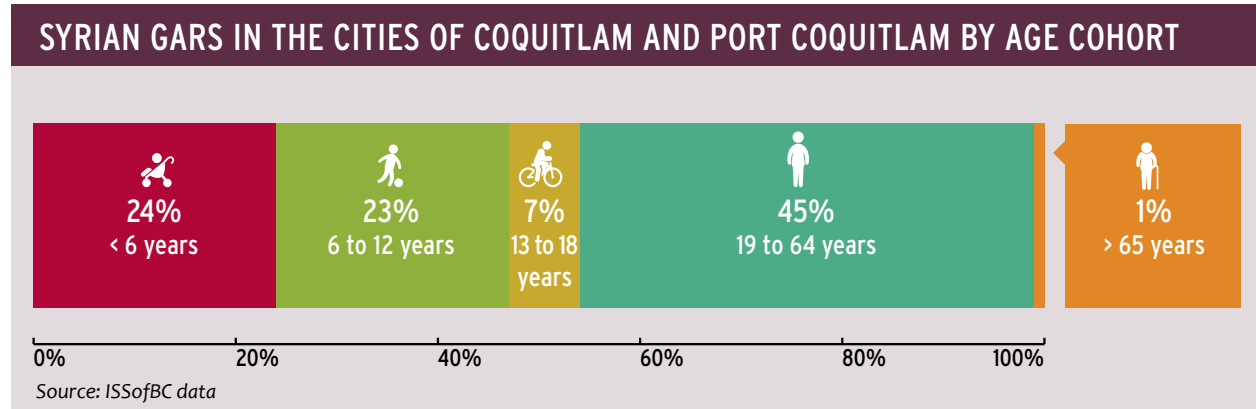


Coquitlam and
Port Coquitlam
TOTAL = 132

Note: Legend symbology is constant
across municipal maps



As of mid-February 2017, one hundred and thirty-two (132) Syrian GARs live in the Tri-Cities, representing 5% of Syrian GARs to BC.



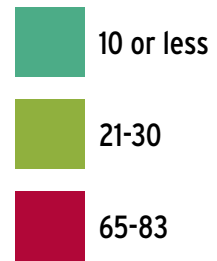
Within the Tri-Cities region, the highest concentration of Syrian GAR households can be found in Burquitlam. Many former refugees including Syrians have settled in the Cottonwood Drive area, where several low income rental buildings currently exist. A fire in the complex in 2016, as well as demolition of a number of low-cost units, has resulted in a number of families moving to other areas in the Tri-Cities, and Metro Vancouver more broadly. With the new Evergreen Sky Train line, this area is poised for significant change in the coming years. Many families are concerned about whether they will be able to continue to live in the neighbourhood as a result of new housing developments. Other higher concentration neighbourhoods include Eagle Ridge in Coquitlam. Within Port Coquitlam, Syrian GAR households have primarily settled in the Mary Hill and Citadel neighbourhoods, south of the Lougheed highway.

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTED REFUGEES IN THE CITY OF LANGLEY AND THE TOWNSHIP OF LANGLEY

DATE OF ARRIVAL:

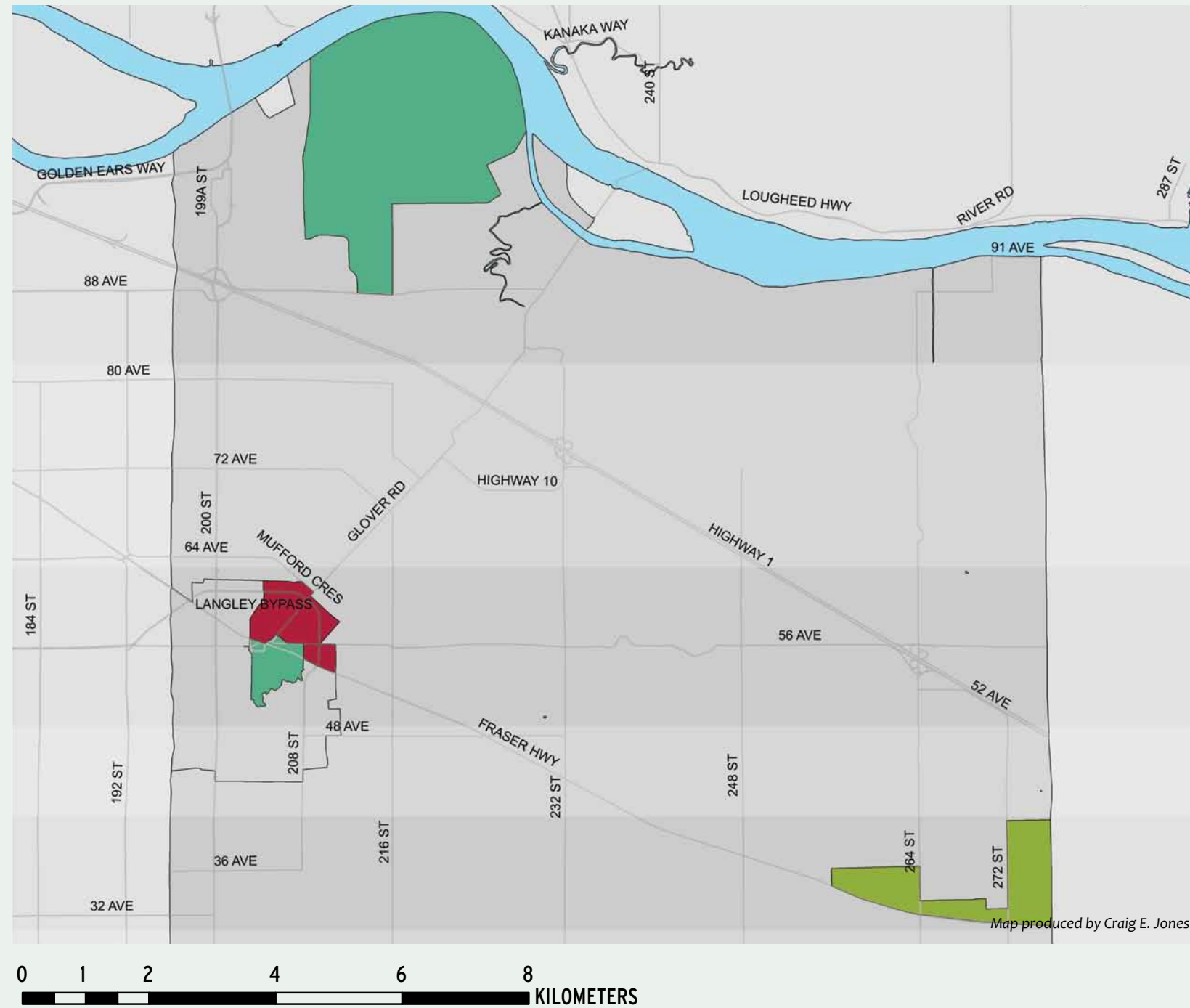
November 4, 2015
to December, 31 2016

SYRIAN GARS



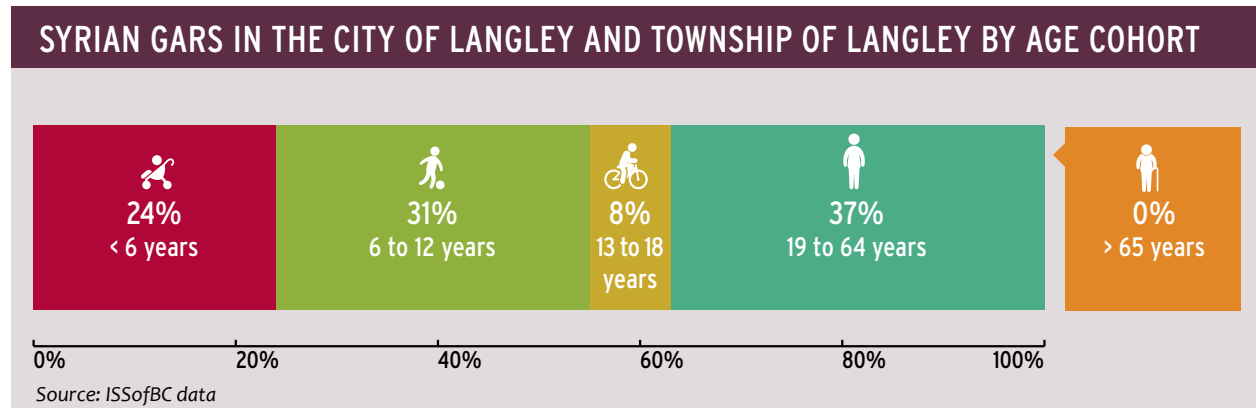
City of Langley and
Township of Langley
TOTAL = 105

Note: Legend symbology is constant
across municipal maps



One hundred and five (105) Syrian GARs have settled within the City and Township of Langley, representing 4% of Syrian GARs to BC.

Syrian GARs in the Langleys have more males (54% male, 46% female) and a younger age profile than do other cities, with 63% under 19 years old.



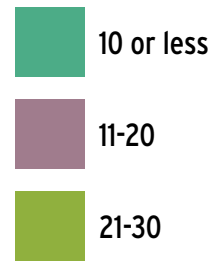
The largest concentration of Syrian GAR households can be found within the City of Langley, as a result of securing some social housing units for Syrian families. The City of Langley is also the location where significant numbers of former Karen refugees from Myanmar settled – the precursor to higher numbers of government assisted refugees settling in this region. The other main area of settlement is found in the eastern border of the Langley Township in Aldergrove.

SYRIAN GOVERNMENT ASSISTED REFUGEES IN THE CORPORATION OF DELTA

DATE OF ARRIVAL:

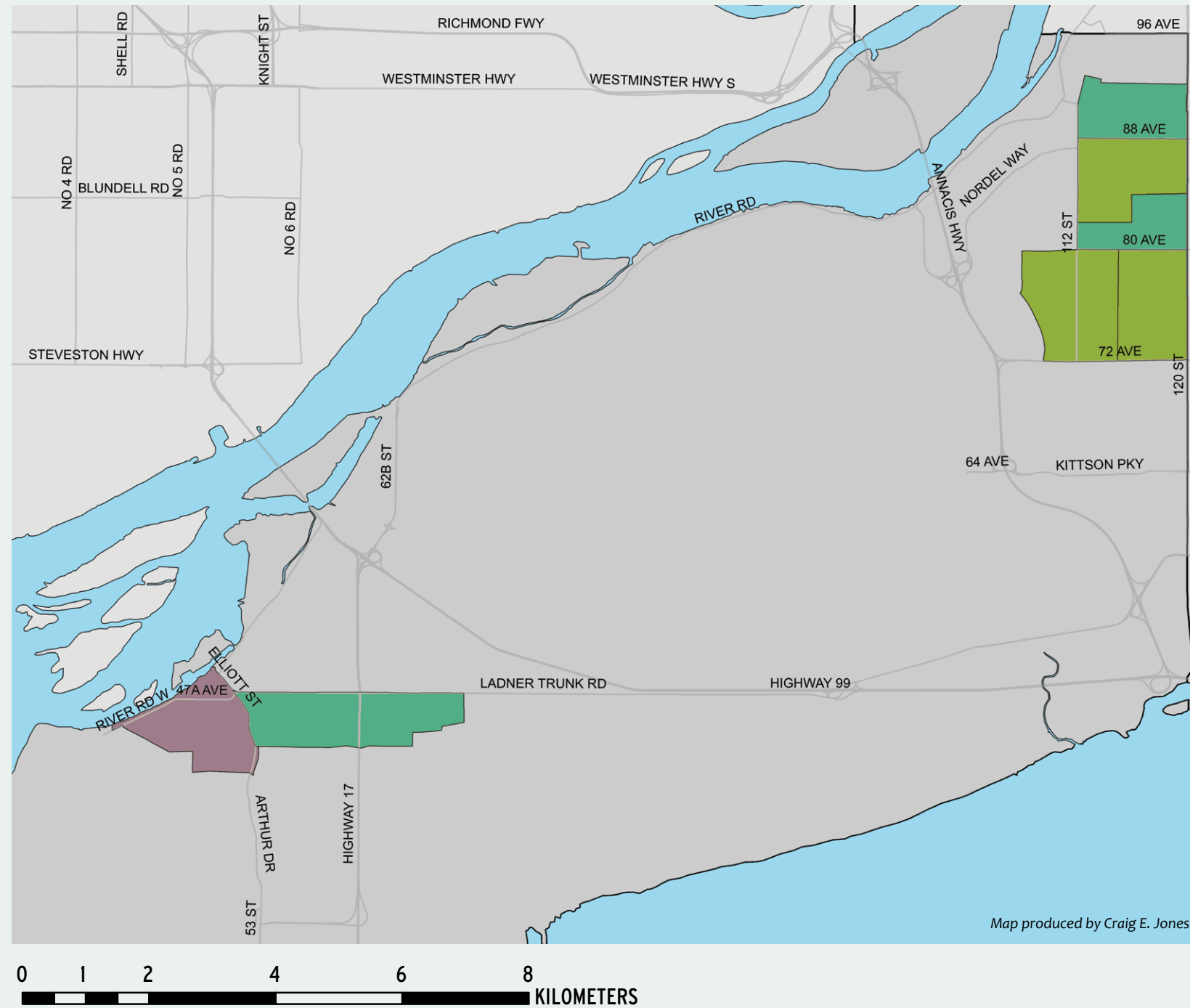
November 4, 2015
to December, 31 2016

SYRIAN GARS



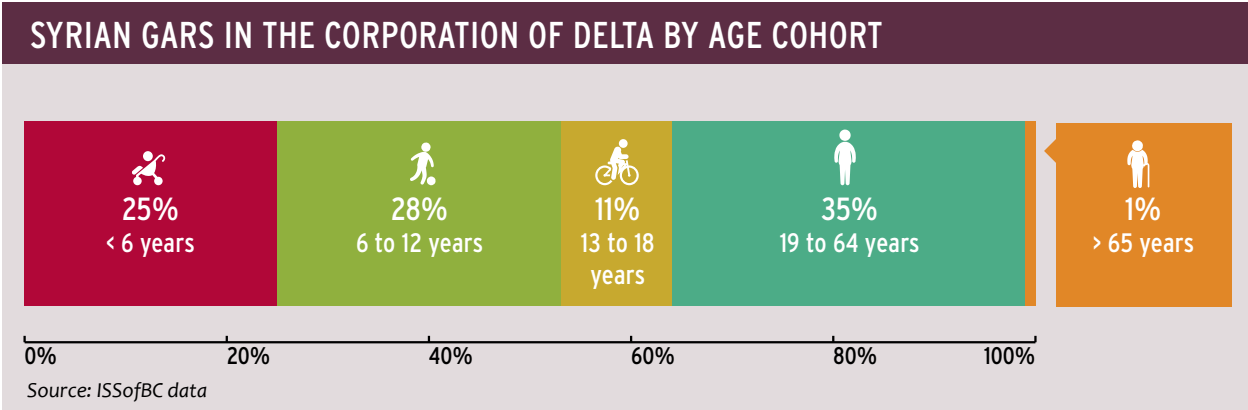
Corporation of Delta
TOTAL = 105

Note: Legend symbology is constant
across municipal maps



One hundred and five (105) Syrian GARs have settled within the Corporation of Delta, representing 4% of Syrian GARs to BC.

Syrian GARs in Delta have more females (45% male, 55% female) and a younger age profile than do other cities, with 64% under 19 years old.



Historically, Government Assisted Refugees have tended not to find permanent housing within the Corporation of Delta. However, with Operation Syrian Refugees several permanent housing units, primarily basement suites, were obtained in North Delta. In Ladner, an innovative partnership between ISSofBC and Delta Safe Haven, a local community driven initiative, allowed several housing units to be secured. In this unique hybrid type private refugee sponsorship model, some government assisted refugee families were “sponsored” by Delta Safe Haven where additional social and financial support was provided to households during their first year in Canada.

CONCLUSION: THE EMERGENCE OF NON-TRADITIONAL SETTLEMENT LOCATIONS – A TALE OF TWO PATTERNS

The geography of refugee resettlement among Government Assisted Refugees in Metro Vancouver is largely one of housing affordability. Given low levels of financial income support, roughly equivalent to BC Income Assistance (BC IA) rates, housing obtained is frequently in areas marked by lower socio-economic levels. Although the ability to leverage additional resources for shelter through Canada Child Benefits (e.g. for families with young children) and/or living in multi-unit households (e.g. for families with adult children) has enabled some families to live in houses. Regardless, the majority of GARs continue to live in lower socio-economic neighbourhoods throughout Metro Vancouver. Further, in some cases, affordable housing has been obtained in areas not well-served by transit.

The search for affordable housing is evident in the proportion of Syrian GARs located in outlying suburbs, including Surrey and Tri-Cities, as well as non-traditional resettlement destinations in Langley, Pitt Meadows, Maple Ridge and beyond. Almost three quarters (75%) of Syrian GARs directly assisted by ISSofBC have found permanent accommodations in these outlying suburbs, largely as a result of the need to find large rental units within constrained budgets to meet larger than expected family sizes.

Yet there is another, equally important story contained in these maps. Widespread interest in the resettlement of Syrian refugees and a desire to get involved directly, has resulted in the emergence of non-traditional settlement locations at both the neighbourhood and city level. The ability to procure housing on the West Side of Vancouver, in Ladner, Richmond, and more expensive areas of other cities (e.g. Fleetwood) reflects the involvement of private landlords, community groups and the public more generally. Unlike previous resettlement movements however, many of the units obtained are not in low income neighbourhoods.

Public support has somewhat offset the eastward movement in search of lower cost housing that has been evident in previous years. While the majority of Syrians continue to settle in outlying areas, the impact of public involvement and support for permanent housing options is promising.