

TOGETHER PROJECT

2022 IMPACT REPORT





2022 AT A GLANCE

Letter From Our Co-Directors



Together Project is growing! In 2022, we've had two new team members join us to help deliver the Welcome Group Program, added two new members to our Steering Committee, and delivered our programs outside of Ontario for the first time, working with new partners across the country.

We've also continued to learn and improve, both through the preliminary findings of our multi-year project evaluation, and an internal research project focused on understanding the social determinants of refugee mental health. As we look to 2023, we're preparing to adapt our program to better support those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, and consider how we can address the challenge posed by the growing housing crisis in major cities.

All of this is thanks to our incredible volunteers and newcomer participants, and the support of our partners and funders. Let's keep going!

- Andrew Luszyk and Anna Hill

EXPANDING OUR REACH

With partners Catholic Centre for Immigrants, COSTI Immigrant Services, DIVERSEcity, TD Bank Group, and Western University, we are leading a Canada-wide project aimed at understanding how technology can be leveraged to connect volunteers and refugee newcomers for social support.

GROWING OUR STAFF

We added two new members to our team: Volunteer Coordinator Ahmed Barbour and Communications Coordinator Jennilee Austria.



NEW STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Our Steering Committee welcomed two new members: community leader Hanen Nanaa and long-time volunteer Mohammed Ahmed.



WELCOME GROUP PROGRAM SNAPSHOT



323 Newcomers **250** Volunteers **76** Matches

This was an important year for the Welcome Group Program, in terms of both its depth and breadth. We've developed and are implementing a plan to scale the program beyond Toronto, with funding from the McConnell Foundation. In partnership with DIVERSEcity in Surrey, BC, we made our first matches outside of Ontario. We also matched volunteers with Afghan refugees that arrived in late 2021, who made up nearly half of the families we served this year, thanks to the support of United Way Greater Toronto.

With the support of IRCC, we're also embarking on an ambitious evaluation project with our partners and Western University, to not only learn more about the newcomers we serve, but also how technology can help them access our volunteers' social support and other services. You'll find some preliminary results from that evaluation included below.

It's worth noting that for the first time, nearly a quarter of our newcomer participants indicated housing as one of their household's key concerns. We expect that this will continue to increase in the following year.

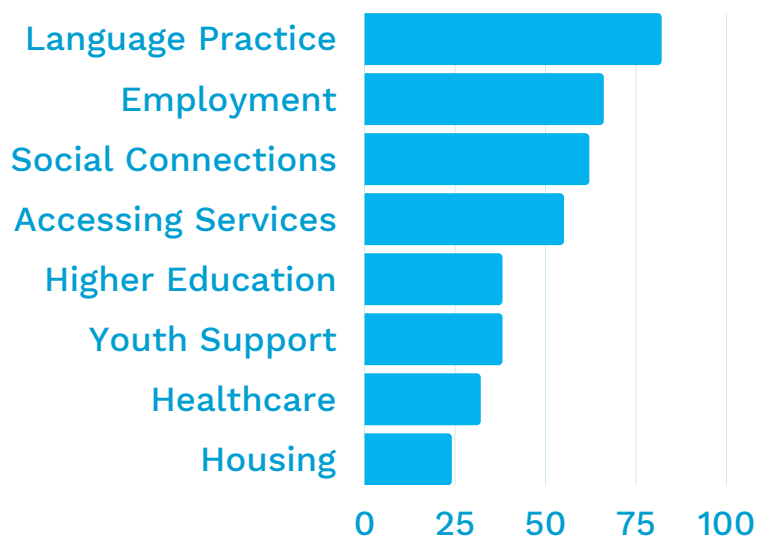
NEWCOMER PARTICIPANTS



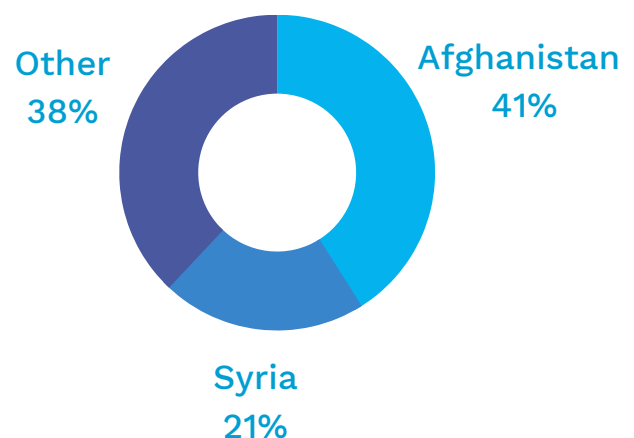
"One of the things that I'm grateful for with the Together Project is that before they pair newcomers with volunteers, they really try to understand what the newcomers' individual needs are. This is the criteria they use to find volunteers who can accurately fit the role that helps those newcomers."

- Aya, Newcomer Program Participant

Match Priorities



Countries of Origin



Tracking Outcomes

We're evaluating our matches by surveying newcomers before, during, and after their participation in the program. Below are preliminary findings from our October 2022 evaluation milestone.

Newcomers who felt they were...	Before Match	After 3 Months
Socially isolated	50%	28%
Making social connections in their community	55%	83%
Making progress towards integration priorities	40%	89%



OUR VOLUNTEERS

Of the **250** volunteers who joined our program in 2022:

- **42%** had first or secondhand experience as newcomers themselves
- **22%** are under the age of 25
- **19%** joined through our partnership with the TD Ready Commitment

2022 also marked the year that we welcomed our 1000th volunteer to the Program! Find out more about our volunteers' experiences below.

“We do important work during our day job, but being able to participate in programs like this adds another layer and definitely makes it even more rewarding.”

- Jas, TD Welcome Group Volunteer



“Let’s say we are working on language practice together, and that person is learning something. When they finally get it right, everyone cheers! This positive energy is like a battery for me. It is one of my sources of energy in my everyday life.”

- Arad

“Sometimes, it’s literally translating for fifteen minutes. You can do it. Even if you have full-time work or school, it’s a small piece of time with a big impact.”

- Paula





COMMUNITY



"If someone with no contact with refugees had false or stereotypical beliefs about refugees, and they had a friend who was volunteering in a Welcome Group, that could change their perception - and that's how you create real change." - Maria Besselink, Researcher

EVENTS

- We were excited to be able to host in-person events for our volunteers and newcomers around the GTA.
- Events included nature walks and learn-to-fish events with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, and a summer picnic organized with High Park Nature Centre. Thanks to everyone who joined us!

RESEARCH

- Researcher Maria Besselink examined the experiences of our volunteers in providing social support to their matched refugee newcomer households, and how their participation affected their perceptions of the volunteer role in building welcoming communities.
- Our multi-year project with IRCC celebrated its first knowledge collection milestone in October 2022, with the help of our project evaluators, Dr. Victoria Esses and Dr. Alina Sutter at Western University.

FOCUS

- Insights gained from serving Afghan arrivals has helped improve the adaptability of our program, helping us prepare to serve Ukrainians in 2023.
- To deepen our understanding of newcomer social isolation, we consulted experts and newcomer focus groups, updating our training and evaluation tools in the process.
- We've expanded our online guides and resources library to provide volunteers with quick access to information about services and supports.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Together Project, a MakeWay Charitable Society initiative, would like to thank our funders, partners, and program participants for helping us build more inclusive and welcoming communities.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Leith Bishop, Chair
Mohammed Ahmed
Kate Bate
Patrick Marshall
Hanen Nanaa
Vanessa Redditt
Shadi Shami

ADVISORS

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PROGRAM PARTNERS



FUNDING PARTNERS



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