

## Community foundations taking the pulse of Canadian communities.

### WHAT IS VITAL SIGNS?

**Edmonton Vital Signs** is an annual check-up conducted by Edmonton Community Foundation, in partnership with the Edmonton Social Planning Council, to measure how our community, is doing with a focus on a specific topic. This year we are looking at Edmonton's immigrant and refugee population. Community foundations across Canada are reporting on how their communities are doing and how Canada is doing overall.

### WHO ARE WE?

**Edmonton Community Foundation (ECF)** is the fourth-largest community foundation in Canada. ECF helps stimulate change and community growth by working with donors to grant in the following areas: community and social services; arts, culture and heritage; health and wellness; education and learning; environment; recreation and leisure; and social enterprise.

**Edmonton Social Planning Council (ESPC)** is an independent, non-profit, non-partisan, social research organization. Established in 1940, ESPC conducts research and analysis into a wide range of topics, particularly in the areas of low income and poverty. The council's publications and reports provide the public and government with current and accurate information to support informed decision-making.

### VITAL Information:

**IMMIGRANT:** A person who migrates to another country, usually to live permanently. In Canada immigrants are given the legal status of permanent residents.

**REFUGEE:** A person who is forced to flee from persecution and who is located outside of their home country; also called a "protected person."

CANADA ACCEPTS TWO CLASSES OF REFUGEES:

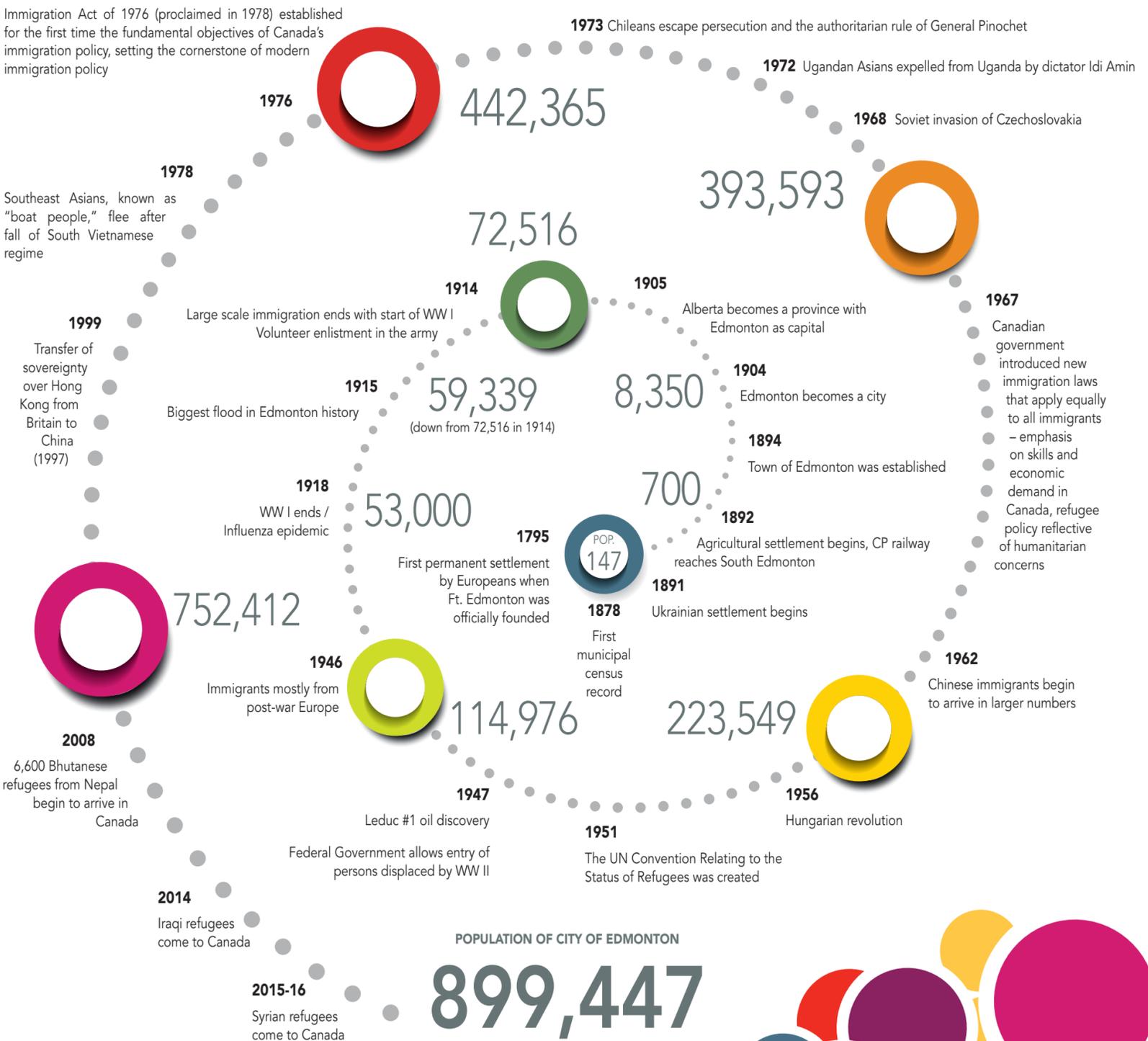
- **Convention refugee class** – A person must be outside their country of origin and have a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.
- **Country of asylum class** – A person who has fled their country and is asking for protection in another country and continues to be seriously and personally affected by civil war or armed conflict, or has suffered massive violations of human rights.

**NEWCOMER:** A person who has arrived in Canada, whether as an immigrant or refugee in the past five years. (For the purposes of this report).

## We are all immigrants.

There are many historical reasons people immigrated to Canada and Edmonton's population reflects this. Unless you are Aboriginal, your ancestors came from somewhere else.

Immigration Act of 1976 (proclaimed in 1978) established for the first time the fundamental objectives of Canada's immigration policy, setting the cornerstone of modern immigration policy



# WHY IMMIGRATION IS IMPORTANT TO CANADA

**ECF VITAL Work**  
Multicultural Family Resource Society has received \$100,000 to assist with a holistic plan for social inclusion of refugee families, including cultural brokers to bridge newcomer families and key agencies.

In 2026, the first of the baby boomers will reach the age of 80 and the number of deaths will increase significantly.

Using a medium immigration rate of 7.5 immigrants per 1,000 population and a typical fertility rate of 1.7 children per woman, the migratory increase would account for 80% of Canada's population growth. Without a level of immigration sustained at current levels, or a substantial increase in fertility, Canada's population growth could, within 20 years, be close to zero.

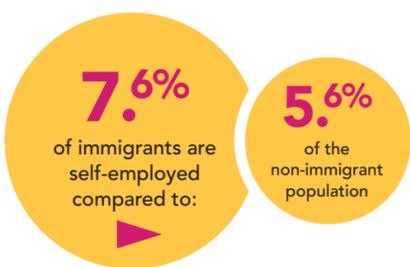
**BOTTOM LINE:** Canadians are aging faster than we are giving birth. Without immigrants we won't have a work force to sustain the growing number of seniors.



## NEWCOMERS ARE ENTREPRENEURIAL:

Many newcomers start their own business, often employing other Canadians in the process. (Immigrants who entered Canada before 1980 are considered non-immigrant for this statistic.)

Of immigrants who have entered Canada after 1980:



Almost the same amount of immigrants (4.6%) and non-immigrants (4.8%) owned incorporated businesses.

## ENTREPRENEURIAL IMMIGRANTS CREATE JOBS:



## NEWCOMERS MAKE OUR POPULATION YOUTHFUL:

Only 8.1% of immigrants and refugees are 45 years and older when they settle in Edmonton, compared to 38.2% of the total population that are 45 years and older.

## IMMIGRANTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE ECONOMY:

A higher percentage of employed immigrants, over the age of 24, worked full time in 2014:

**84.0%** COMPARED TO THE PROVINCIAL AVERAGE OF 83.5%.

## EDMONTON IMMIGRANTS ARE HIGHLY EDUCATED:

On average, immigrants arriving in Edmonton are more highly educated than non-immigrants.

IN 2011 THOSE WHO HAD OBTAINED A POST-SECONDARY CERTIFICATE OR ABOVE

**53.8%** OF ADULT CANADIAN-BORN  
**60.9%** OF ALL IMMIGRANTS

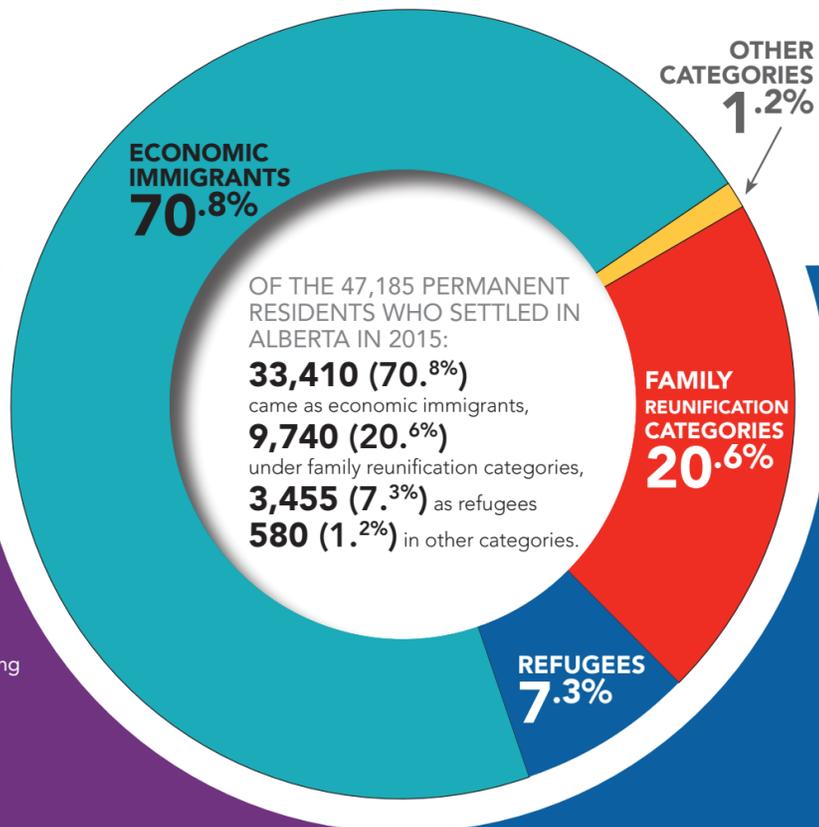


## IMMIGRATION CLASSES

### VITAL Information:

IN CANADA THERE ARE FOUR CATEGORIES OF IMMIGRANTS:

- economic immigrants (skilled workers and business people),
- family class (closely related persons of Canadian residents living in Canada),
- refugees (people who are escaping persecution, torture or cruel and unusual punishment), and
- other (people accepted as immigrants for humanitarian or compassionate reasons).



### VITAL Information:

People who have been granted permanent resident status in Canada must live in Canada for at least 730 days (two years) within a five-year period or risk losing their status. Permanent residents have all the rights guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but they do not have the right to vote in elections.

## EDMONTON'S NEWCOMER POPULATION ON THE RISE

### PERMANENT RESIDENT ADMISSIONS TO EDMONTON:

The number of persons arriving as 'permanent residents' has increased 178.2% in ten years.

	2005	2015	
Edmonton	6,016	16,739	178.2%
Canada	262,242	271,820	3.7%

In the first quarter of 2016 Edmonton had 5,747 new permanent residents settle of 86,184 who arrived in Canada.

### WELCOMING SYRIAN REFUGEES

Between November 4, 2015 and March 1, 2016:

**26,141** Syrian refugees entered Canada.  
**3,356** settled in Alberta.



The 1951 Refugee Convention was developed in the aftermath of the Second World War. People were determined not to repeat the mistakes that occurred during the Holocaust, when many countries failed to offer asylum to Jewish refugees, contributing to the death toll in the genocide (Canada, to our shame, was one of the worst offenders).

In 1993 Canada became the first country in the world to adopt gender guidelines for refugee claims (fear of gender based persecution) and set a precedent for other countries.

Canada is also the only country to have privately sponsored refugees. Canadians can individually (or as a self-organized group) sponsor a refugee or refugee family.

**VITAL Insight:** Unlike the uncontrolled migration into many European countries, Canada uses strict criteria to select refugees overseas for both government and private sponsorship. The focus of refugee selection efforts has been on helping families with children resettle in Canada.



### IN A 2016 LEGER SURVEY:

- Almost half (49%) of Edmontonians feel that the most positive thing immigrants bring to our city is diversity. 40% feel that refugees bring the same positive effect.
- 59% of Edmontonians believe that immigrants make Edmonton a more prosperous and livable city. 43% believe the same about refugees.

### VITAL Information:

PROUD TO BE CANADIAN

In a 2016 public opinion survey, 83% of Muslims in Canada say they are proud to be Canadian. In the same survey, 73% of non-Muslims said they are proud to be Canadian.

Unless otherwise stated, "Edmonton" refers to Edmonton or Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) as interchangeable terms. The Edmonton CMA includes the City of Edmonton, the City of St. Albert, Parkland County, Strathcona County (including the Hamlet of Sherwood Park), Sturgeon County, Leduc County, and all incorporated urban centres and First Nations located within the boundaries of those counties.

Source: Statistics details/page.

# FINDING A PLACE



## ECF VITAL Work

The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers received **\$94,000** over two years to support a partnership with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society to help newcomers to Edmonton establish homes.

## IMMIGRANT HOMEOWNERSHIP:

Edmonton's recent immigrants (those who arrived in the previous 5 years) have a home ownership rate of 38.7%, higher than the Canadian average of 36.5%



## NEWCOMER MEDIAN INCOME

The 2011 National Household Survey found that immigrants have a lower median income than non-immigrants.

**Non-immigrants \$43,358**  
**Immigrants \$39,612**

## ECF VITAL Work

Cultural Connection Institute - The Learning Exchange received **\$7,535** to support the delivery of Saturday adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS ON THE RISE:

The growth in the number of students enrolled in Edmonton English Language Learning (ELL) is significantly higher than enrolment growth overall.

The increase in the number of ELL students from 2010/11 to 2015/16:

**Edmonton Public Schools - 77.9%**  
**Edmonton Catholic Schools - 117.8%**

## ALBERTA ATTRACTS FEWER INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS:

Although there has been steady growth in the number of international students attending Alberta's educational institutions, Alberta has only about 5% of Canada's international students but has 12% of Canada's population.

## SETTLEMENT SERVICES:

Many newcomers to Canada access services to help with their successful settlement including help finding housing, language training, job search, and skills training.

In the 12 months between April 2015 and March 2016, 61,188 unique clients received such services in Alberta from settlement service providers.

## ECF VITAL Work

Centre for Race and Culture received **\$1,125** in bursaries for individuals working in the non-profit sector to attend a three-day anti-racism workshop.

Story by Elizabeth Bonkink

## EPS: TEACHING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CANADIAN



Sergeant Gary Willits, and Iman Saidi, Community Operations Co-ordinator, who work in the Equity, Diversity, and Human Rights Division of Edmonton Police Service (EPS) are in many ways the 'faces' that Edmonton's newcomers recognize. The pair work to take away the stigma of the uniform with those who have little trust for 'government officials.'

Last January they began working with community partners including Catholic Social Services and Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers to reach out to these vulnerable communities. Willits, who has 24 years with the EPS child protection unit, and Saidi, an Arabic speaker whose parents escaped the Gulf War, work together to create a sense of trust and to help newcomers understand their rights. The pair are often invited to attend reception houses, community BBQs, and other events to meet and learn about Edmonton's newcomers. "We are just a spoke in the wheel of partnerships," said Willits.

Willits says that outreach and introduction often leads to "drinking a lot of tea" as face-to-face contact is what makes the impact. "On our first visit they are usually very quiet," said Willits, advising that newcomers' experience with police is often very different than what we expect here in Canada. Newcomers' visits are designed to break down distrust. "They approach us eyes down, avoidance out of respect. In Canada this [behaviour] may be viewed as sketchy."

While they have been working closely with Syrian refugees, they are quick to stress this program applies to all newcomers. "They do not understand their value and that they have a voice. They do not want to ask for assistance or complain as they are fearful the government will view this as being negative and causing problems," said Willits.

One example they shared was the story of a newly-housed Syrian family that had been experiencing issues with safety. The family was living on the bottom of a three-storey walk-up and frequently individuals would bang on their windows, or buzz their door to be let into the building. It is suspected that the suite previously belonged to people who worked in the drug trade. "When following up with the family we learned that the father was robbed while doing laundry," said Willits. "They did not want to cause trouble." Saidi added, "the father stayed up all night to protect the family. They couldn't continue to live like that." Willits and Saidi were able to explain to the family that they had the same rights as every Canadian. The family was eventually moved to better housing.

"You need to appreciate where they come from and what they have been through. You are dealing with people who have been through violence, loss of jobs, and have family members in refugee camps," said Willits. "You hear their fears and anguish," said Saidi. The pair also explained that social media can play a negative role in the refugees' understanding of Canada. "They have been told that their children will be taken away from them," said Willits. Saidi said, "They worry that Canadians will think they are terrorists."

The Syrian newcomers want to integrate into the community and give back. "The willingness to be part of the community shows immediately," said Saidi. This Easter the Muslim Syrians held an Easter-egg hunt for the Christian Syrians, and it was well-covered by the media that many of them fundraised for Fort McMurray. "There was lots of support [for Fort McMurray]. It was a glimpse of what these people had gone through," said Willits.

Saidi's and Willits' advice for Edmontonians is to remember the newcomers have a lot to learn. "A plane ride [to Canada] won't change hundreds of years of cultural learning. Put yourself in someone else's shoes. Remind yourself of your family history," said Willits, referring to the fact that most of our ancestors went through similar experiences when settling. "For many of them settling here will be a success because their kids will never know what it is like to be a refugee," said Saidi.



The most highly educated international students are the most likely to become permanent residents.

Within 10 years of first study in Canada

- 49% of those arriving with advanced degrees
- 32% with Bachelor's degree, and
- 26% with post-secondary diplomas and certificates below a Bachelor's degree has become permanent residents.

## VITAL Insight:

With median incomes significantly lower than the non-immigrant population, foreign credentials often requiring Canadian certification, and the need to learn language skills (which may be difficult to get into), adaptation to Canadian culture has many newcomers struggling. The adjustment may be more difficult than even the newcomer anticipated.



## IN A 2016 LEGER SURVEY:

- 60% of Edmontonians believe that refugees often experience discrimination.
- 57% believe the same about immigrants.
- 75% of Edmontonians believe that addressing issues like racism and discrimination will contribute to quality of life.



# BECOMING CANADIAN



## ECF VITAL Work

In 2016 ECF is partnering with the Skills Society Action Lab to develop the Edmonton Shift Lab to address racism and poverty in Edmonton. Building on the work of many local initiatives, the diverse collective making up the Edmonton Shift Lab is stewarding an exploration to develop potential service, policy, system and community action prototypes that will help reduce racism as it contributes to poverty. Want to know more? [Edmontonshiftlab.ca](http://Edmontonshiftlab.ca)

## NEW CANADIAN CITIZENS:

It takes a minimum of about four years after arriving in Canada for a permanent resident to become a Canadian citizen. A large proportion of permanent residents do go on to become citizens.



In 2015, 252,152 permanent residents became Canadian citizens compared to 271,820 who came to Canada in 2015.

## NEWCOMERS FROM MANY COUNTRIES:

In the five years prior to 2011:

A total of 49,930 people immigrated to Edmonton from other countries.

The five largest countries of origin for recent immigrants were the Philippines (10,365), India (6,695), China (3,840), Pakistan (1,920), and the United States (1,735).

## SECONDARY MIGRATION:

Alberta has high rates of positive net secondary migration (newcomers that initially settled in another province). Between 2003 and 2013, 13,435 more newcomers moved to Alberta than left for other provinces.

Retention rates of immigrants and refugees who initially settled here was also high.

88% of newcomers who arrived in Alberta in 2003 were still here in 2013, trailing only Ontario's 90% retention rate.

## TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS (TFW):

TFWs in Edmonton  
2005: 1,835  
2013: 11,075  
3,275  
2015

Before 2006, most TFWs were highly skilled professionals and tradespeople. In 2006, the federal government loosened restrictions to allow people from other countries to fill low skill or semi-skilled positions where there were labour shortages.

Regulations tightened again in 2015, 3,275 TFWs arrived in Edmonton and only 985 in the first three months of 2016. There are more pathways to permanent residency for TFWs working in higher-skilled occupations in Canada than TFWs in lower-skilled occupations.

## VITAL Insight:

Many lower-skilled TFWs are seeking the opportunity to transition to permanent residency, and may have come with the understanding that they could stay indefinitely. Faced with returning home, some TFWs become undocumented migrants in the underground economy who are exploited and living at the margins.

## ECF VITAL Work

Council for the Advancement of African Canadians in Alberta (Africa Centre) received \$120,000 over three years to support a Programming Coordinator to build the capacity of the Africa Centre and to expand programming around the city.



## IN A 2016 LEGER SURVEY:

Only 38% of Edmontonians say they know about the realities of refugees. 50% say they know about the realities of immigrants.

Considering that unless you are of Aboriginal descent, someone in your family was once an immigrant. This should remind us of our own family heritage.

## CAN YOU PASS THE TEST?

The following are ten sample questions asked on the Citizenship test. It is tougher than you might think.

### 1. Who were the United Empire Loyalists?

- Settlers who came to Canada from the United States during the American Revolution
- Aboriginal peoples
- Métis
- Inuit

### 2. Name two fundamental freedoms protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

- Freedom of conscience and religion, and Freedom of association.
- Equality rights, and to care for Canada's heritage.
- Basic freedoms, and obeying laws.
- Aboriginal peoples' rights, and to volunteer.

### 3. From where does the name "Canada" come?

- The Inuit word meaning country.
- The French word meaning joining.
- The Métis word meaning rivers.
- From "Kanata," the Huron-Iroquois word for village.

### 4. Which Act granted, for the first time in Canada, legislative assemblies elected by the people? The Constitutional Act of...

- 1867
- 1791
- 1982
- 2010

### 5. When did the British North America Act come into effect?

- 1871
- 1898
- 1867
- 1905

### 6. Which was the last province to join Canada?

- Newfoundland and Labrador
- Alberta
- Saskatchewan
- British Columbia

### 7. Name six responsibilities of citizenship.

- Getting a job, making money, raising a family, paying taxes, mowing your lawn, voting in provincial elections.
- Voting in municipal elections only, joining a political party, getting a job, obeying the law, driving safely, picking up litter.
- Caring for the environment, not littering, paying taxes, obeying the law, helping others, respecting others.
- Obeying the law, taking responsibility for oneself and one's family, helping others in the community, voting in elections, serving on a jury, protecting and enjoying our heritage and environment.

### 8. Name the five regions of Canada:

- Midwest, North, South, East, Central
- Maritimes, Ontario, Quebec, Prairies, and British Columbia
- Atlantic, Central, Prairie, West Coast, and North
- West, Central, East, Prairies, and Territories

### 9. Approximately how many Canadians served in the First World War?

- 7,000
- 8 million
- About 60,000
- More than 600,000

### 10. Who was Sir Louis-Hippolyte La Fontaine?

- A champion of democracy and Aboriginal rights.
- A champion of democracy and French language rights and the first leader of a responsible government in the Canadas.
- The first Head of State.
- The first French-speaking Prime Minister.

Well, how did you do?

For more tough questions please go to: [citizenship.ca/quiz](http://citizenship.ca/quiz)

Answers: 1 a, 2 c, 3 d, 4 b, 5 c, 6 a, 7 d, 8 c, 9 d, 10 b.



## TALES OF STRENGTH: MOTHER & DAUGHTER HELPING NEWCOMERS IN EDMONTON

by Elizabeth Bonkink

Sabah Tahir and Niga Jalal Barzanji are leaders in the immigrant community as well as mother and daughter. Coming to Canada as refugees from Iraq in 1998 they had to find their way in Edmonton and have now chosen to make life better for newcomers today. Both are employed as Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB) and use their own experiences to help others navigate Canada's health, social services, education, justice, immigration and employment systems.

Over tiny cups of Kurdish coffee they shared their individual stories of struggle and triumph.

Sabah Tahir is a leader in the newcomer community and has come a long way from Kurdish Iraq where she was an outspoken advocate of women's rights on her TV show that tackled topics like honour killings.

In 1996 she was forced to flee Iraq with her children when, under the rule of Saddam Hussein, troops attacked their city. "Within a half-hour everything changed for me and my three children," Tahir said. "My neighbours said to me, 'You had better go fast.'" Tahir and her children could not make it to the Turkish border and were forced to hide. Her husband fled his office and made it to Turkey, separating them for three months. "We had a privileged life, a good life. I never planned to be a refugee," said Tahir.

Tahir's spouse, Jalal Barzanji, was a poet and journalist in Iraq. He is the author of "The Man in Blue Pajamas: A Prison Memoir" about the time he spent imprisoned by Saddam's regime from 1986 to 1989. In 2007 he was named Edmonton's first Writer in Exile. "After three months we were able to flee under a different name, fake passports," said Tahir. They joined him in Turkey as refugees. They entered Canada as refugees in 1998.

Today Tahir is using the same model with newcomers that worked for her. "You see the same themes from 15 years ago, our job is to guide and facilitate." The key is very simple, said Tahir, "friendship." Her role is an advocate for women at MCHB broker and part of the community development leadership team. "Woman is the builder of the family," she said. "People believe that Iraqi women don't have a voice, but they have relational power. I am always surprised by the power each person has." She leads a women's group supporting the individual as well as the family. "The family facilitates community development."

Niga Barzanji, Tahir's daughter, had escaped three wars by the time she was nine years old, and spent a year as a refugee in Turkey. Now she is also helping newcomers find their way. When she first started working with the MCHB at age 15, she was meeting youth from other countries. "Some I hadn't ever heard of," said Barzanji. "When you hear their stories you see that you are part of a bigger story."

She originally became connected to the organization through the homework club; connecting with other youth who had similar struggles was very important. "It was a safe place for conversations."

Initially the transition was not so ideal. "My first six months in Canada felt like another war. You feel alone in school, alone in the community." Barzanji changed high schools four times due to issues with bullying. Yvonne Chiu, executive director of MCHB, said "schools are not prepared to deal with the impact [of refugees], some may have trauma. Bullying only creates more conflict and leads to isolation." MCHB assists students who are experiencing culture shock.

What made a difference for Barzanji was "being recognized for strength. I am more than a refugee. I come with potential and strength to give back to society. Those who saw potential in me are the ones I will remember."

Now she uses her experiences to help newcomer youth connect to resources like career counsellors, youth groups, or volunteering. Barzanji says that the worst thing to do for a refugee is to decide what they need. "They have come from places where the choices have been taken away from them. Give them guidance and support, don't make the choices for them."

Barzanji graduated from U of A with a degree in Political Science and is now looking forward to returning to Kurdistan where she would like to work with people living in the camps. She does say, however, that Edmonton is now her home. "I love Edmonton. The door of opportunity is open in Edmonton and we need to learn from each other." Her advice to Edmontonians to help ease the transition of those new to Canada is, "take the time to find out about the other."

Tahir and Barzanji are both working to make their community a better place for newcomers. "I am witnessing good work [at MCHB]. Niga is a gifted youth leader and Sabah is a gifted community leader," said Chiu. MCHB is a co-operative of 75 brokers representing 25 different cultural and linguistic communities in Edmonton. They serve more than 2,000 families a year.



## HAPPY TO BE IN EDMONTON



## ECONOMY

### EDMONTON IS ATTRACTIVE TO NEWCOMERS:

Despite the economic downturn, Edmonton will continue to see many newcomers. In the first three months of 2016, there were 5,747 new arrivals in Edmonton, a faster pace than the first three months of previous years.

The Canadian government expects to admit between 285,000 to 305,000 new permanent residents in 2016, compared to 250,000 in recent previous years.

### HIGHER EDUCATION CAN MEAN HIGHER RATES OF UNEMPLOYMENT.

According to national Labour Force Survey data for 2015, the unemployment rate was:

UNIVERSITY DEGREE:	
RECENT IMMIGRANTS	11.5%
ALL IMMIGRANTS	7.0%
CANADIAN-BORN	3.5%
POST-SECONDARY CERTIFICATE OR DIPLOMA:	
RECENT IMMIGRANTS	10.4%
ALL IMMIGRANTS	6.3%
CANADIAN-BORN	5.5%

**Patrick Mbarugwa**, 39, who works part-time as a labourer in an Edmonton warehouse, is a quiet-spoken man with a quick smile. Patrick is a refugee from Congo. He and his wife Neema, 34, arrived in Canada on December 4, 2012 with their six-month-old-child. They have since had another child who is now two and half years-old. "We knew nothing about Canada or Edmonton," said Mbarugwa, explaining that the destination was chosen for them. "He [the UN official] looked at me and said 'You are strong, you will do well in Edmonton'."

The Mbarugwas spent 11 years in a refugee camp in Zambia to escape war in Congo. "Life was very difficult, very tough" in the camp where there are no jobs and no way to better their circumstances. They recently learned that their son, who they believed had been killed when their village was raided, is alive. He is living in the refugee camp they left in Zambia. Their son was six when "the fighters took him," said Mbarugwa. He is now 18.

They would like to bring him to Canada, but they did not mention their son on the paperwork when they came here. "Why would we? We believed he had died." They have started the process to reunite the family, but "it will take time," said Mbarugwa and it takes its emotional toll. "A man, he can't cry outright, you know? But I am crying in my heart. My wife, she cries often."

The family, however, is very happy to be in Canada. "Big, big difference [between Congo and Edmonton]. You can't find the beauty there like here in Edmonton. We are very happy here," he said showing his generous smile. When asked what he thought of the weather he laughingly explained that when he first saw snow on television he thought it was man-made. "I didn't think snow was true," said Mbarugwa. "It was very cold [when they first arrived], but it is OK. You can't say weather is a big problem when there is war in my country. There is no peace, no freedom. You can't compare weather to war."

Soon after arrival in Canada they were connected with Catholic Social Services which assisted in orienting them to a new life in Edmonton with things like English classes, how to use transit, and how to get to where they need to go. "I still struggle with addresses. Even now it is difficult for me," says Mbarugwa. He did well in English classes and hopes to take more but funding ran out. He also hopes to return to school to study to be a plumber. "I like school. It was the first time I had gone to school. In my country you have to pay," he said.

He is looking forward to getting his Canadian citizenship because he loves Canada. "Here there is not too many problems. People are kind, very friendly," said Mbarugwa. He was not expecting to feel welcomed because he is black and also expected issues with religion or culture, but says, "Canada is full of people from different countries, we all have that in common. Here you can have different religions and cultures. People are all [treated] the same in Canada." He did mention that the food was a bit of an adjustment, but since there are African stores he can find food he likes, and he does try new things, "If you just use your eyes, it is not so good. But if you try it, you find it is nice."

Patrick shared his hopes for the future. "I need to bring my son here." The Mbarugwas try to send him money and "sometimes he gets it" but not always. Since his son does not have ID, he has to rely on others to claim it for him. "People take their share," said Mbarugwa who says he speaks to his son about every two weeks by phone. "It is hard because I remember him as a six year-old." He says that he talks to his son about Canada, "I tell him Edmonton is very good. Everyone can go to school or get a job."

He and his wife also dream of owning their own home. "That is what is beautiful about Canada, you can work to make money to get a house," he said again showing his big smile. When asked if he still thinks of the war he responds, "No. No, you have to put it behind you."

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

### NEWCOMER HEALTH

**Immigrants and refugees tend to be healthier than those born in Canada.** This is likely due to the selection process as preference is given to the young and healthy.

Adult immigrants tend to fare better for mental health, chronic conditions, disability/functional limitations, and risk behaviors.

However, immigrant women have worse maternal health than Canadian born women.

An analysis done by Alberta Health Services found that immigrants are healthier, less likely to smoke, engage in binge drinking, and be overweight or obese.

The longer an immigrant resides in Canada, the more likely their health will mirror the Canadian-born.



**IMMIGRANT SENIORS**  
**39,145**  
in 2011

### IMMIGRANT SENIORS

**Most immigrants who are now seniors (65 years and older) have been in Canada for decades and are largely from European or U.S. origins.**

### VITAL Insight:

Since immigrants are now coming from many other countries in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, as these people age, the diversity of Edmonton's immigrant senior population will increase. Services and supports for this increasingly diverse seniors' population must also change to maintain their relevance and responsiveness.



## THINGS YOU CAN DO TO WELCOME NEWCOMERS

- Smile.**
- Invite a newcomer to your home** for dinner or host a "diversity" day at work. Be inclusive in the kinds of foods you serve, recognizing cultural or religious differences in diet.
- Donate:**
  - to the Red Cross Refugee Crisis Appeal.
  - to the Syria Emergency Relief Fund.
- Volunteer.** Some agencies are seeking mentors, tutors, and even office help. You may make a new friend or find a new skill. For a list of agencies please go to [ecfoundation.org](http://ecfoundation.org).
- Speak out against discrimination and racism.** Use social media to help change the conversation about immigrants and newcomers.
- Be aware of different cultures and practices.** Strive to be inclusive of individuals of diverse backgrounds.
- Learn about another culture.** Eg. Help understand Islam in Canada: <http://www.anewlife.ca/>
- Sponsor a refugee family.** To find out more go to: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/sponsor/>



**DID YOU KNOW** The World Bank estimates that in the second quarter of 2015, the average cost of sending remittances was 9.3%. The Canadian government is looking at ways to reduce transfer costs by using online and mobile technologies.

### SUPPORT OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS OVERSEAS:

**The World Bank estimates that residents of Canada sent \$30.7 billion Canadian in money transfers (remittances) to other countries in 2014.** Canada is one of the top ten remitting countries in the world, and the highest on a per capita basis.

Remittances are sent for many reasons including supporting family members who may not be eligible to immigrate here.



### VITAL Insight:

**What does this mean?** A lot of money is flowing out of Canada. This becomes an issue when those living on low-income go without because they feel the need to support family members back home. **Some believe that better pathways to help family members immigrate could reduce the out-flow of money.**

### IN A 2016 LEGER SURVEY:

Edmontonians believe that 'Policy and decision makers need to do more to engage refugee and immigrant communities in Edmonton'.

**49%** want to see more done for refugees and **52%** want to see more done for immigrants.

# LIVING IN EDMONTON

## POPULATION CONTINUES TO GROW

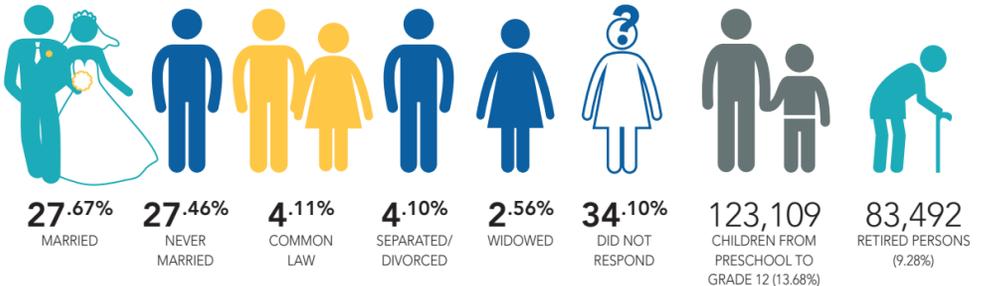
Edmonton and the surrounding area has had a population growth of 30.8% over ten years and is now the fifth largest metro population in Canada, after Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Calgary.

EDMONTON POPULATION:  
2005 **1,041,966** 2015 **1,363,277**

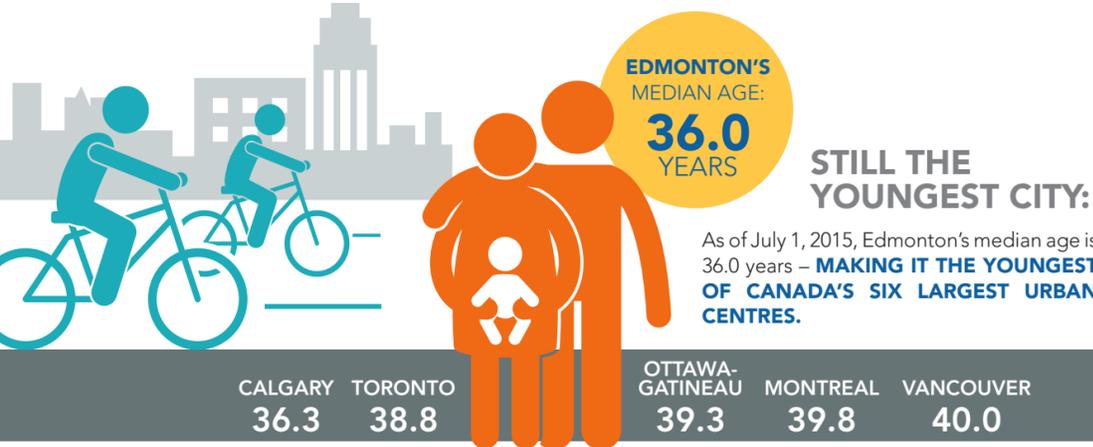
The City of Edmonton is the major population centre in the metro region and has 899,447 people (66.0%) living in the city, with the balance living in the surrounding communities. **THIS IS A 23.2% GROWTH IN THE PAST 10 YEARS; SLOWER GROWTH THAN THE SURROUNDING REGION.**

## DEMOGRAPHICS

According to the City of Edmonton Census data (2016):  
There are **463,472 FEMALES** and **434,763 MALES** living in Edmonton (and 1,212 other).



Please note these statistics do not represent metro Edmonton but the population solely within the city limits.



## PETS ARE FAMILY TOO

According to the City of Edmonton in August of 2016:

There are **195,243 cats and dogs** in the city and there are **only 189,598 Edmontonians 19 years and younger.**

**MEANING THERE ARE MORE PETS THAN CHILDREN UNDER 19 IN THE CITY OF EDMONTON.**

The city estimates that one in 3 households has a pet and many have more than one.



## EDUCATION

### RECORD SCHOOL ENROLMENT GROWTH:

Edmonton Public Schools (EPSB) and Edmonton Catholic Schools (ECSD) are experiencing record student enrolment straining, education budgets during an economic downturn.

SCHOOL YEAR:	EPSB GROWTH 15.8%	ECSD GROWTH 18.7%
2010/11	79,780 students	33,776 students
2015/16	92,358 students	40,100 students
2016/17	<b>95,355 students anticipated</b>	<b>40,870 students anticipated</b>

### HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATES ON THE RISE

The three-year high school completion rate:

**EPSB was 71.8%** in 2014-15, an improvement from 63.6% ten years earlier.

**ECSD was 81.8%** in 2014-15, an improvement over the 68.5% ten years earlier.

PROVINCE-WIDE HIGH SCHOOL COMPLETION RATE IN 2014-15 WAS **76.4% COMPARED TO 70.7% TEN YEARS EARLIER.**

### RENTAL MARKET:

A rising vacancy rate is making Edmonton rents somewhat more affordable.

THE APARTMENT VACANCY RATE ROSE FROM **1.7% IN OCTOBER 2014 TO 4.2% IN OCTOBER 2015.**

BUT RENTS STILL WENT UP BY **\$32 INCREASING THE AVERAGE TO \$1259 PER MONTH** FOR A TYPICAL TWO-BEDROOM APARTMENT.

Edmonton's average monthly rents are still **30.3% higher** than the average of the combined Canadian metro areas.

## HOUSING

**IN A 2016 LEPER POLL:** Only 30% of Edmontonians feel it is easy to find affordable housing in Edmonton. This number is up from 2014 (22%) and 2015 (21%)

**2,307 EDMONTONIANS** WERE FOUND TO BE **HOMELESS** (Oct. 2014)

### COMMUNITY HOUSING:

The economic downturn is having a profound impact on the number of Edmonton residents waiting for affordable housing.

Capital Region Housing, the major community housing provider in the region, saw its wait list more than triple over the course of the 2015 calendar year.

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2015, **4,163 FAMILIES** WERE WAITING FOR ACCOMMODATION, AND **231 NEW APPLICATIONS** WERE BEING RECEIVED EACH MONTH.

### AFFORDABLE HOUSING:

**41% OF CITY OF EDMONTON RENTERS** (47,055 HOUSEHOLDS) LIVE IN UNAFFORDABLE HOUSING – MEANING THEY SPEND MORE THAN **30% OF THEIR HOUSEHOLD INCOME** ON HOUSING COSTS.

## FOOD SECURITY

### FOOD BANK USE RISING:

From April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2016 Edmonton's Food Bank served 51,815 different people. This is an 18.3% increase from the year before, and 28.3% higher than two years earlier. This includes a rise in the number of children served from 5,699 to 7,797.

### COST OF NUTRITIOUS FOOD BASKET:

The weekly cost of a nutritious food basket for a family of four averaged \$230.30 for the first six months of 2016. The cost of a food basket is based on requirements for an adequate and healthy diet based on supermarket purchases.

### IN A 2016 LEPER POLL:

**2 in 5 Edmontonians** agree food security is a significant problem in Edmonton. This has been a consistent response since the poll started in 2013.

THE COST OF HEALTHY EATING IN EDMONTON WENT UP **60.5% IN THE PAST TEN YEARS**, INCLUDING A 2.1% INCREASE IN THE PAST YEAR.



# EDMONTON JOBS



**EDMONTON NETTED ONLY 5,000 NEW JOBS BETWEEN JULY 2015 AND JULY 2016**, much slower than the growth in the labour force, causing the unemployment rate to rise from 5.7% to 7.7% in the same time period.

Calgary lost 21,400 jobs and the entire province 50,500 jobs between July 2015 and July 2016.

COMPARED TO CALGARY AND THE REST OF ALBERTA, EDMONTON'S DIVERSIFIED ECONOMY SHIELDED IT FROM THE EFFECTS OF THE DECLINE IN ENERGY PRICES.

**\$1,119**  
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS OF EMPLOYEES IN ALBERTA

**\$981**  
ONTARIO

**\$925**  
BRITISH COLUMBIA

**\$885**  
QUEBEC

**87%**  
OF PEOPLE EMPLOYED IN CANADA LIVE AND WORK IN THESE FOUR PROVINCES.

## IN A 2016 LEGER POLL:

**ONLY 49% OF EDMONTONIANS FEEL THERE ARE ADEQUATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN EDMONTON.** THIS IS DOWN FROM 69% IN 2015 AND 76% IN 2014.

86% of Edmontonians agree that they feel safe in their home, 80% say they feel safe in their community, but only 68% say they feel safe in Edmonton.

## EI NUMBERS BETTER BUT TRENDING UPWARD:

The number of people receiving employment insurance (EI) regular benefits in Edmonton has more than doubled (117.9%) since the onset of the economic downturn in late 2014.

### THE NUMBER OF EI BENEFICIARIES AVERAGED:

**10,361** 2014    **16,648** 2015    **22,578** in the first six months of 2016

Edmonton is faring only slightly better than Calgary, which has seen a 125.9% increase, and the rest of the province which has seen a 157.3% increase in the number of EI beneficiaries in the same time period.

## IN A 2016 LEGER POLL:

**NEARLY THREE-IN-FIVE (58%) EDMONTONIANS AGREE THAT POVERTY IS A SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM IN EDMONTON** (consistent with 2015), while only two-in-five (39%) agree that adequate initiatives are in place to reduce poverty.

## 2016 LIVING WAGE:

THE 2016 LIVING WAGE FOR EDMONTON IS **\$16.69 PER HOUR – DOWN FROM \$17.36 PER HOUR IN 2015.**

This is the wage that a family of four with two parents working full-time for the entire year requires to live in economic stability and maintain a modest standard of living.

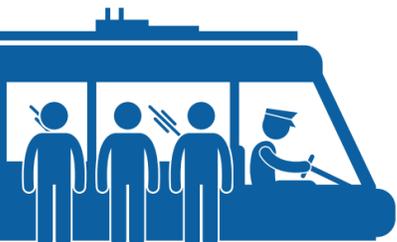
THE **\$0.67 DROP IS MAINLY DUE TO INCREASED BENEFITS** from the enhanced Canada Child Benefit, and the new Enhanced Alberta Family Employment Tax Credit.



## PUBLIC TRANSIT USE:

Combined annual ridership on Edmonton Transit's LRT and bus network **DROPPED BY 600,000** to 88.7 million in 2015, and could drop by a similar amount in 2016 (88.2 million rides as of June based on a 12-month rolling average).

Despite ridership growing each year from 2005-2014, it is not certain that the City will meet its target of 103 million rides by 2020.



## GETTING TO WORK:

The 2016 municipal census found that Edmontonians commuted via:

**78.6%** CARS, TRUCKS, OR VANS    **13.7%** PUBLIC TRANSIT    **3.8%** WALKING    **1.1%** BICYCLES    **2.7%** MOTORCYCLES, SCOOTERS & ROLLER BLADES



## IN A 2016 LEGER POLL:

Edmontonians feel that it is easiest to commute in Edmonton by car (77% easy).

## EDMONTON'S LOW INCOME RATE:

IN 2014 **10.3%** (130,670 PEOPLE OF ALL AGES) OF THE TOTAL POPULATION LIVED IN POVERTY. 14.9% (42,320) WERE CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 18.

This is a reduction compared to the most recent ten-year period for which data is available. 13.0% in 2004 to 10.3% in 2014.

## LOW-WAGE WORKERS:

Out of the 668,300 employed people in the region  
**134,800 EARN \$16/HR OR LESS (20.2%)**  
**118,800 EARN \$15/HR OR LESS (17.8%)**  
**53,000 MAKE MINIMUM WAGE (\$12.20 PER HOUR) OR LESS (7.9%).**

**62% OF LOW-WAGE WORKERS (73,700) IN THE REGION ARE WOMEN.**

## INCOME INEQUALITY IS GETTING WORSE:

Income inequality in Edmonton is growing in line with provincial and national trends.

Between 1982 and 2013, after accounting for inflation, the bottom 50% of Edmonton tax filers saw a 3.3% increase and the bottom 99% of tax filers an 8.9% increase in their after-tax incomes.

By contrast, the top 1% of tax filers saw a 53.4% increase and the top 0.1% of tax filers a 150.2% increase in their after-tax incomes.

## THUMBS UP EDMONTON



### EDMONTON GETS FIRED UP FOR FORT MCMURRAY EVACUEES

When our neighbours to the north had to evacuate on May 3, 2016, **Edmontonians stepped up quickly to assist close to 80,000 people** who fled Fort McMurray.



- The City's **Emergency Support Response Team** provided 25,000 evacuees with services and supports and served 75,000 meals.
- Alberta SPCA evacuated 1,192 animals (548 cats, 81 dogs, 66 rabbits, 83 pocket pets, 161 birds, 159 reptiles, 19 amphibians, 64 fish, 6 crabs, 5 spiders). They cared for the animals until reunited with their owners.
- The largest pet evacuation in Canadian history had **443 volunteers** and included the assistance of many agencies.
- Reports of **400 volunteers per day** show up to assist with donation collection and distribution.
- Canadians donated more than **\$299 million to Red Cross** with matching government donation.
- Edmonton Emergency Relief Services Society led and co-ordinated the early relief effort helping approximately **72,000** new individuals.
- Many business and restaurants provided discounts, freebies and waived policies to make the evacuees' lives just a bit easier.

You can tell your story or read stories of how others stepped up: [weallrespond.makesomethingedmonton.ca](http://weallrespond.makesomethingedmonton.ca).



### FESTIVAL CITY

Edmonton is known for its Festivals and the interesting thing is that no one can say for sure how many there are! According to "todoCanada.ca" Edmonton has **90+ festivals each year** but that number may be low. The City's Civic Events and Partnership department says they work with approximately **650 groups that host events and festivals.**

Events are year-round in Edmonton. The city's festivals celebrate everything from fairies to fashion to folk music... *Fabulous!*



### WILL WE SEE EDMONTON POVERTY-FREE?

When more than 130,000 Edmontonians are living in poverty, that is hardly a thumbs up, but EndPovertyEdmonton is a thumbs up.

EndPovertyEdmonton strategy aims to end poverty in one generation. This may seem impossible but we won't know unless we try.

IT COSTS **\$7 BILLION** EACH YEAR TO MANAGE POVERTY COSTS – **\$2,700 FOR EACH TAXPAYER.**



## THUMBS DOWN EDMONTON



### THE DISASTER OF DISASTER

While it is true that many Edmontonians stepped up with open arms and open wallets, there are also many who took the opportunity to dump junk. **Relief organizations were stuck with unusable items** like dirty clothing, Christmas decorations, or things that are unsanitary, most of which will likely end up at the dump.

Sorting through the mass volume of items, especially when so much is not useful, only complicates the work of the relief workers and **wastes funds that should be allocated to the disaster.**

The moral here folks – give cash or if you must donate goods, make sure it is unused and something that has been requested. No one needs your used hair brush.



### EDMONTON INEQUALITY

Edmonton has appeared on the Centre for Policy Alternatives "Worst places in Canada to be a Woman" list the past two years in a row and it looks like little has improved for women in Edmonton:

#### Sexual assault rates are up:

49 more reported sexual assaults to make a total of 1,039 reported in 2015.

Edmonton has a rate of **76.4 sexual assaults per 100,000 of the population**, trailing only Winnipeg (82.4) in this dubious distinction.

Since many sexual assaults go unreported, these numbers under-represent the scale of the problem.

In September 2016 the Mayor announced that Edmonton will join a United Nations' initiative to make cities safer for women.

The UN program develops policies and comprehensive approaches on the prevention of and response to sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls across different settings.

#### Women are the majority of low-wage workers:

**62% of low-wage workers in the region are women** making less than \$16/hour, and 66% of them make \$12.20 or less.

Maybe next year this won't make the Thumbs Down section of our report!



### RACISM RAMPANT

In September of 2016 Jessie Lispcombe was filming in downtown Edmonton when he had racial slurs yelled at him from a passenger in a car.

In July of 2016, Bashir Mohamed was cycling in downtown Edmonton when a woman swore and yelled a racial slur at him.

Also in September, 2016 there were several media reports about the confirmation of Soldiers of Odin an "extreme anti-refugee group" in Edmonton. These are just the incidents the media has recorded.

But racism isn't simply some misguided individuals acting out. It goes far deeper in less obvious ways. If we don't call out the blatant acts we will never get to shine the light on less obvious areas that infect our communities. Poverty and racism are inextricably linked.

This is also why EndPoverty Edmonton has outlined racism as an important factor to end poverty and why ECF has partnered with the Skills Society Action Lab to develop community action prototypes that will reduce racism.

You may be thinking these are only three incidences that the news focused on, so what? But, if Edmontonians don't speak up these incidents will become the norm and no longer newsworthy. **Ask yourself: Is this the Edmonton you want to live in?**

# SOCIAL INCLUSION



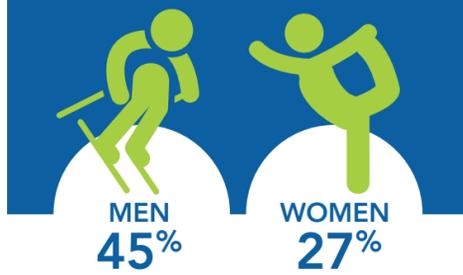
## BE A SPORT!

According to a City of Edmonton report, 82% of all Edmontonians participate in sport activities.

Those with the highest income are the most likely to participate.

LESS THAN \$30,000	18%
\$31,000 TO \$60,000	30%
\$61,000 TO \$80,000	39%
GREATER THAN \$80,000	43%

MEN ARE MORE LIKELY THAN WOMEN TO BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN SPORTS.



## CHECKING OUT EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY (EPL)

In the first quarter of 2016 despite a 15% drop in new members, there was **AN INCREASE IN THE AVERAGE DAILY VISITS BY 33%**.



EPL HAS **273,232 ACTIVE CARD HOLDERS**



IN 2015, EPL MEASURED A **9% INCREASE** IN ATTENDANCE COMPARED TO 2014.

## CULTURE CONTRIBUTION TO THE GDP IN ALBERTA BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

Culture industries in Alberta contributed \$6.5 billion to GDP (1.8% of provincial GDP). This is well below the national average (3.3%).



IN 2014, **61,800 JOBS** WERE DIRECTLY RELATED TO CULTURE INDUSTRIES IN ALBERTA, OR 2.7% OF THE 2.3 MILLION JOBS IN THE PROVINCE. THIS IS ALSO BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE (3.9%).



## IN A 2016 LEGER POLL:

Edmontonians are most likely to agree **THAT EDMONTON IS A CULTURALLY DIVERSE CITY** (87% agree), that there are adequate opportunities for sports/recreation (82% agree) and that Edmonton is a city that values the arts (77% agree).

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Edmontonians agree **TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA CONTRIBUTE TO IMPROVED SOCIAL CONNECTIONS**, trending upward since 2014.

**ALMOST HALF (46%) OF EDMONTONIANS SAID THEY HAVE VOLUNTEERED** in the past 12 months, significantly lower than 55% in 2015.

**FOUR-IN-FIVE (78%) EDMONTONIANS DONATED MONEY TO A CHARITY** or non-profit organization in the past 12 months, consistent with 2015 (79%).

## CHARITABLE GIVING:

280,780 INDIVIDUALS IN EDMONTON DONATED A TOTAL OF **\$427 MILLION TO REGISTERED CHARITIES IN 2014**. DONORS TEND TO BE SOMEWHAT OLDER WITH THE **AVERAGE AGE OF EDMONTON DONORS BEING 51 YEARS**.



CRIME SEVERITY IN 2015 IS **39% LOWER** THAN A DECADE BEFORE.

## CRIME SEVERITY INDEX:

The Crime Severity Index (CSI) measures the volume and severity of crimes reported to the police.

**THE CSI TRENDED DOWNWARD FROM 141.01 IN 2005 TO A LOW 84.30 IN 2011.**

Since then, the CSI has been trending up, most significantly by 16% over year earlier in 2015.

Among major Canadian urban centres, only Calgary saw a larger increase (29%) than Edmonton in 2015.

**DESPITE THE BIG JUMP, CRIME SEVERITY IN 2015 IS STILL 39% LOWER THAN A DECADE BEFORE.**

Over the past decade, Edmonton's non-violent CSI declined by 48% between 2005 and 2015, compared to a 17.4% decline in the violent CSI. From 2014 to 2015, however, these trends reversed, with the non-violent CSI up by 15% and the violent CSI up by 10%.

## IN A 2016 LEGER POLL:

73% of Edmontonians believe there are opportunities to get involved in their community, and 62% feel it is important to be involved in their community.



## WE ARE NOT ALONE?

According to a recent Angus Reid poll the vast majority of Canadians (79%) say it is either definitely (29%) or probably (50%) true that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe.



## ALBERTA'S NATIONAL PARKS SEE THE MOST VISITORS

The number of people visiting Alberta's national parks and historic sites was up significantly in 2014-15 to 6.87 million visitors. This comprised over one-half of the visitors to all of Canada's national parks and historic sites (13.52 million visitors).

**Please note:** Admission to Canada's parks in 2017 will be free in celebration of Canada's sesquicentennial birthday.



## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**ERICK AMBTMAN**  
Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers

**ALICE COLAK**  
Catholic Social Services

**ASHLEY DRYBURGH**  
Edmonton Community Foundation

**JOSEPHINE PALLARD**  
Centre for Immigrant Women

**CAROL WATSON**  
Edmonton Community Foundation

**JOHN KOLKMAN**  
Edmonton Social Planning Council

**YVONNE CHIU**  
Multicultural Health Brokers

**CHERYL DIEBEL**  
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**DR. BUKOLA SALAMI**  
University of Alberta

**KATHI CAMPBELL**  
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Alberta Human Services

**ELIZABETH BONKINK**  
Edmonton Community Foundation

**STELLA GORE**  
Edmonton Social Planning Council

**BOB MARVIN**  
Norquest College

**RANDY GURLOCK**  
Citizenship and Immigration Canada (retired)

**JANIS IRWIN**  
Community Member

**GARY WILLITS**  
Edmonton Police Service

**SUSAN MORRISSEY**  
Edmonton Social Planning Council

**LEO CAMPOSA ALDUNEZ**  
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**JENNIFER FOWLER**  
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**MARLENE MULDER**  
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