



Vancouver READY Tours and Refugee Claimant Hearing Readiness: Impact and Learnings

An Internal Study

by Kinbrace Community Society

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Executive Summary

READY Tours offer refugee claimants an educational opportunity to experience a refugee hearing room at the Refugee Protection Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB-RPD) and learn about the hearing process prior to their hearings.

After 12 years (2008–2019) of continuous operation during which thousands of questions and feedback comments from refugee claimant participants were documented, Kinbrace Community Society (Kinbrace) commenced an internal study of the Vancouver READY Tour program to assess its effectiveness in increasing awareness about the refugee hearing process for refugee claimants, to share information learned from data gathered over the years, and to find opportunities for improvement to the program.

The study of the READY Tours was a participatory process and impact study guided by the support of an external evaluator. The methodologies used included online surveys, qualitative coding of data, data analysis, and participatory data sense-making.

Recognizing the multitude of variables influencing and affecting hearing readiness for refugee claimants, this study identifies reduced anxiety, increased confidence, and increased knowledge for those who participate in a READY Tour.

READY Tours: History and Description

READY Tours offer refugee claimants in-person access to a refugee hearing room at the IRB-RPD. It's an educational opportunity for refugee claimants to experience the physical space of the hearing room and learn about the refugee hearing process prior to their refugee hearings.

READY Tours started when those living with refugee claimants in the Kinbrace transitional housing community noted the disorientation and anxiety among residents awaiting their hearings. Refugee claimants indicated their anxiety was due significantly to a lack of understanding about the refugee determination system in Canada, particularly the refugee hearing process. The IRB-RPD was approached and agreed to provide an opportunity for refugee claimants to see and experience a refugee hearing room in person, meet IRB-RPD Registry Personnel, receive an orientation to the hearing process and have the opportunity to ask questions. Initially called Refugee Protection Division (RPD) Orientation Tours, the name was early-on switched to READY Tours to reflect the shared goal of hearing readiness for refugee claimants.

Since starting in 2008 in Vancouver, British Columbia, READY Tours have run continuously with collaborative leadership and implementation by the IRB-RPD, Kinbrace, and numerous service providers, government employees, interpreters and legal counsel who refer claimants to the sessions. The Vancouver READY Tour Advisory Board, comprised of collaborating stakeholders, meets twice-yearly to report, discuss trends, and make decisions to optimize the READY Tour experience for refugee claimants.

Each READY Tour is collaboratively hosted by Kinbrace's READY Tour Coordinator and IRB-RPD Registry Personnel. Kinbrace's role is to promote the READY Tour to refugee claimants and service providers¹, coordinate and communicate with registrants, arrange needed interpreters, meet participants on-site at the IRB-RPD 300 West Georgia Street, Vancouver location, facilitate pre- and post-Tour logistics, follow up as needed with participants and refer as necessary, collect data and report on each Tour², and coordinate

1 [Appendix J – READY Tour Promotion Strategies: In-person, In-Print, and Online](#)

2 [Appendix K – Example READY Tour Report](#)

and communicate with collaborating stakeholders. The IRB-RPD schedules READY Tour dates, secures a hearing room for the Tour, and offers Registry Personnel to tour participants through the reception area of the RPD, invite participants into a hearing room where they present the information session in English, and answer questions.

READY Tours are resourced by a mix of in-kind and funded offers. The IRB-RPD provides Registry Personnel and access to a refugee hearing room. Kinbrace receives a mix of funding (Law Foundation of BC, MOSAIC, City of Vancouver, fundraising) to run the program and benefits from volunteer assistance.

There is no formal written agreement between Kinbrace and the IRB-RPD to operate the READY Tours. The collaborative arrangement is premised on trust, a professional respect of capacities and boundaries, and the shared goal of optimizing hearing readiness for refugee claimants.

READY Tours in Vancouver have typically been held 2–3 times per month for an average of 2.5 hours. Since 2015, an average of 29 READY Tours have been hosted per year.³ READY Tours are designed specifically for refugee claimants awaiting hearings, but service providers and legal counsel are also welcome to register and attend. Interpreters are provided to claimants who would like to hear the presentation in their first language, at no cost to them.

Of the 9753 refugee claimants processed by Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) from 2016-2019, 2667 or 27% were directly impacted by the READY Tours (attended or had a family member attend).⁴

In 2013, READY Tours were adapted and made available to refugee claimants held in immigration detention, in cooperation with CBSA. Detainee READY Tours continue to be available but occur intermittently.

At each READY Tour session, attendees are provided information about:

- the key participants in the refugee hearing and each of their roles
- legal issues that are commonly addressed at refugee hearings
- hearing day check-in procedures at the IRB-RPD
- the order of proceedings for the refugee hearing
- how and when evidence can be submitted
- scheduling of hearings

During the READY Tour, refugee claimants have opportunity to ask their questions to the IRB-RPD Registry Personnel and are provided a copy of *Refugee Hearing Preparation: A Guide for Refugee Claimants* (RHP Guide). The RHP Guide, developed as a companion resource to the READY Tours in 2009 and constantly updated, provides refugee claimants with in-depth coverage (in 8 languages) of the information shared at the READY Tour, community and legal resources, government contact information, a hearing preparedness checklist and more.

READY Tour registration and the RHP Guide are available at Ready for My Refugee Hearing www.refugeeclaim.ca.

3 [Appendix A – Annual Number of READY Tours in Vancouver 2015–2019](#).

4 [Appendix B – Reach of READY Tours Among Refugee Claimants in BC 2017–2019](#).

READY Tours replicated across the country starting in 2013 and currently operate in Toronto, Montreal, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg and Vancouver. The new “READY Information Session” starting in Windsor, Ontario uses the same IRB-RPD script and is presented by an IRB-RPD officer, though not in an IRB-RPD refugee hearing room. In all cities where the READY Tour is held (with the exception currently of Montreal) the IRB-RPD works in collaboration with a local NGO to coordinate the sessions.⁵

The focus of this study is the Vancouver, British Columbia READY Tour collaboration.

Purpose of this Study

The current study was undertaken in 2019 to:

- assess the READY Tours’ effectiveness in increasing access to refugee protection for refugee claimants in Vancouver
- share information learned from data gathered over the years at the READY Tours
- find opportunities for improvement to the program.

This project specifically sought answers to the following questions:

- What barriers prevent refugee claimants from attending a READY Tour? Who is and who is not accessing READY Tours in Vancouver?⁶
- What questions do refugee claimants have about the refugee hearing?⁷
- Are refugee claimants more prepared for their refugee hearing after attending a READY Tour?⁸
- Do READY Tours assist in increasing confidence and decreasing refugee claimant anxiety about the refugee hearing?⁹
- How can READY Tours be improved?^{10 11}

5 The READY Tour concept was adopted and adapted in Toronto by the Refugee Appeal Division of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB-RAD) in partnership with FCJ Refugee Centre. “RAD Information Sessions” now occur as needed in Toronto and Vancouver, coordinated in Vancouver by Kinbrace’s READY Tour Coordinator.

6 Data Sources: Survey completed in Summer 2019 with former refugee claimants (N=31 respondents of 65 contacted), Survey completed in Summer 2019 with service providers (N=18 respondents of 72 contacted); Analysis of random sample of Pre/Post READY Tour Knowledge Tests 2013-2019 (N=333 Pre/Post Test Takers).

7 Data Sources: 1) Qualitative coding of 1512 questions asked during the READY Tours by refugee claimants between Jul 2017 - Jul 2019 (collected by Notetakers during each session); 2) the Most Important Question participants have on their minds going into the READY Tour (from Pre-Tour Survey Forms Nov 2017 – Jul 2019; N= 501)).

8 Data Sources: Survey completed in Summer 2019 with former refugee claimants (N=31 respondents of 65 contacted), Survey completed in Summer 2019 with service providers (N=18 respondents of 72 contacted); Analysis of random sample of Pre/Post-READY Tour Knowledge Tests 2013-2019 (N=333 Pre/Post Test Takers).

9 Data Sources: Survey completed in Summer 2019 with former Refugee Claimants (N=31 respondents of 65 contacted), Survey completed in Summer 2019 with service providers (N=18 respondents of 72 contacted); Analysis of random sample of Pre/Post-READY Tour Knowledge Tests 2013-2019 (N=333 Pre/Post Test Takers).

10 Data Sources: Post-READY Tour Evaluation Feedback Forms – refugee claimant suggestions for improvement Jan 2018 - Jul 2019 (N=175).

11 Data Sources: Survey completed in Summer 2019 with former refugee claimants (N=31 respondents of 65 contacted), Survey completed in Summer 2019 with service providers (N=18 respondents of 72 contacted); Analysis of random sample of Pre/Post READY Tour Knowledge Tests 2013-2019 (N=333 Pre/Post Test Takers).

Methodology

The evaluation of the READY Tours was a participatory process and an impact evaluation guided by the support of an evaluator acting as an Evaluation Capacity Builder.¹² The evaluation was participatory in that the indicators and design were co-created with the Kinbrace team. The data coding, collection and reporting was done with the Kinbrace team as part of building their capacity in evaluation and data management. Data analysis and interpretation was done using a participatory approach that included a former refugee claimant who participated in a READY Tour, service providers, Kinbrace staff and volunteers, and IRB-RPD Registry Personnel. The methodologies used included

- anonymous, online survey of former refugee claimants who attended a READY Tour and completed their refugee hearings (31 respondents)¹³
- anonymous, online survey of service providers with experience referring refugee claimants to the READY Tour (18 respondents)¹⁴
- analysis of a random sample of 333 Pre/Post-READY Tour Knowledge Test results 2013–2019¹⁵
- qualitative coding of 501 of the Most Important Question refugee claimants have on their minds going into the READY Tour Nov 2017 – Jul 2019
- qualitative coding of 1512 questions asked by refugee claimant participants during the READY Tour Jul 2017 – Jul 2019
- analyzing 175 post-READY Tour Evaluation Feedback Forms completed by refugee claimant participants Jan 2018 – Jul 2019¹⁶
- a participatory data sense-making event.

Because the study was carried out by Kinbrace with the help of an Evaluation Capacity Builder, we acknowledge the risk of favorable bias in the results. Efforts were taken to increase critical and honest feedback in surveys with former refugee claimants and service providers by providing opportunity for respondents to answer anonymously using on-line forms.

Refugee claimants attending the READY Tours have all attended an eligibility interview at Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) or Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), but they may be at different stages of preparation for their individual hearings. Some have had more access to lawyers and settlement services than others. Fortunately, 96% of claimants participating in the READY Tours in Vancouver have had access to counsel. Some have read the *Refugee Hearing Preparation Guide* and other materials available to them about the IRB-RPD process prior to the READY Tour. Varying life experiences, levels of trauma, English language ability and education will impact the level of benefit that can be derived from the READY Tour.

12 Evaluation Capacity Builders (ECB) build internal capacity for an organization to conduct their own evaluations. Meagan Sutton of Social Venture Partners (SVP) Vancouver served as ECB for this project, providing technical support and training, but did not conduct this evaluation as an independent evaluator.

13 [Appendix C – Survey Participants \(31 respondents of 65 contacted\) – former refugee claimants who attended a READY Tour and completed their refugee hearings](#)

14 [Appendix D – Survey Participants \(18 respondents of 72 contacted\) – service providers with experience referring refugee claimants to the READY Tour](#)

15 [Appendix E – Pre/Post READY Tour Knowledge Test \(sample blank form\)](#)

16 [Appendix F – Post READY Tour Evaluation Feedback Form for Participants \(sample blank\)](#)

What barriers prevent refugee claimants from attending a READY Tour?

READY Tours are available to all refugee claimants from all countries. Since 2008 over 3,000 refugee claimants and 600 service providers have attended a READY Tour in Vancouver. In 2019, 469 refugee claimants and 76 service providers attended READY Tour sessions at the Vancouver RPD.¹⁷ During this period, the top five countries of origin of READY Tour participants were: Iran, Colombia, Mexico, Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁸ Noticeably missing from READY Tour participation are claimants from India, which is a top country of origin in IRB referral statistics.¹⁹ Only 10 claimants from India participated in READY Tours in 2019 in comparison to 148 from Iran (currently the country from which the largest number of claimants are arriving in Vancouver).

The overwhelming majority of refugee claimants attending the READY Tour in Vancouver are from the BC Lower Mainland and the Fraser Valley, with very occasional participation from refugee claimants on Vancouver Island and other regions of BC. Females made up 45% of participants in 2019. Refugee claimants are referred principally by service providers (Settlement Orientation Services of Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS-SOS), MOSAIC, Vancouver Association of Survivors of Torture (VAST), Options, Inasmuch, Journey Home, Covenant House, Mennonite Central Committee, Vancouver based neighbourhood houses, Rainbow Refugee, Archway Community Services, and more), counsel, other claimants, interpreters, on-line searches and government officers.²⁰

The surveys conducted in August/September 2019 included questions about what barriers kept refugee claimants from attending a READY Tour. Thirty-one former refugee claimants with hearings completed and 18 service providers who referred claimants to the READY Tour over the course of the year participated in the survey with the following results:

- None of the former refugee claimants or service providers surveyed experienced difficulty registering for a session or communicating with the READY Tour Coordinator.
- Only one of the 31 former refugee claimants surveyed indicated that they had difficulty understanding the presenter (due to inadequate interpretation) and required a second session.
- All service providers indicated in their survey responses that they were not aware of any refugee claimants that had difficulty understanding the presentation.
- 58% of former refugee claimant survey participants indicated they required an interpreter for the session. Of those, two claimants indicated they had difficulty understanding the interpreter.
- Service providers identified the following types of refugee claimants who might not access a READY Tour:
 - single moms with no babysitting options
 - overconfident claimants who have friends who have successfully gone through the process
 - claimants who believe their lawyer will take care of everything

¹⁷ [Appendix G – Vancouver READY Tour – Annual Number of Participants 2009–2019](#)

¹⁸ [Appendix H – Vancouver READY Tour – Country of Origin – Participants 2019](#)

¹⁹ Data Source: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/statistics/protection/Pages/RPDStat2019.aspx>

²⁰ Data Source: Kinbrace READY Tour Database containing Statistical Data from 2012–2019. See [Appendix I – Vancouver READY Tour – Number of Referrals per Agency 2019](#).

- claimants who are not given information about the READY Tour at the eligibility interview
- claimants who do not attend a settlement agency where they might find out about the READY Tours
- some claimants at public shelters who may not get referred because support workers don't know about READY Tours.

Other community stakeholders (immigration consultants, settlement workers, housing providers) outside of this study, yet identified as a possible source of information by the READY Tour Coordinator, informally identified the following barriers to READY Tour participation:

- some refugee claimants are hesitant to attend READY Tour and other community workshop sessions because they do not want their countrymen to know that they are in Canada
- claimants in more established ethnic communities are often provided lawyers and orientation by family members so they do not access settlement services where they might find out about opportunities such as the READY Tour
- lack of funds for transportation
- lawyers who discourage refugee claimant clients from attending a READY Tour
- distance from IRB-RPD offices
- scheduling conflicts with work and class schedules
- fear / anxiety about entering the 300 West Georgia Street building, association of IRB-RPD with their fate, stress due to language barriers, culture shock, protocol overload, trauma

Several claimants, commenting in post-READY Tour session evaluation forms and in person, have asked why all claimants are not referred and why they had only learned about the sessions from other claimants or on-line searches.

What questions do refugee claimants have about the refugee hearing?

The READY Tours offer significant opportunity to hear the questions refugee claimants have about the refugee hearing (and about many other aspects of the refugee determination process). Thousands of questions asked by refugee claimants have been documented by the READY Tour Coordinator during the READY Tour. Starting in January 2017, Kinbrace began capturing “the burning question” refugee claimants arrive to the Tour with, in an effort to hear what’s top of mind prior to receiving the abundant detailed information offered on the Tour and the questions that arise in response. We sorted the questions asked into the following categories:

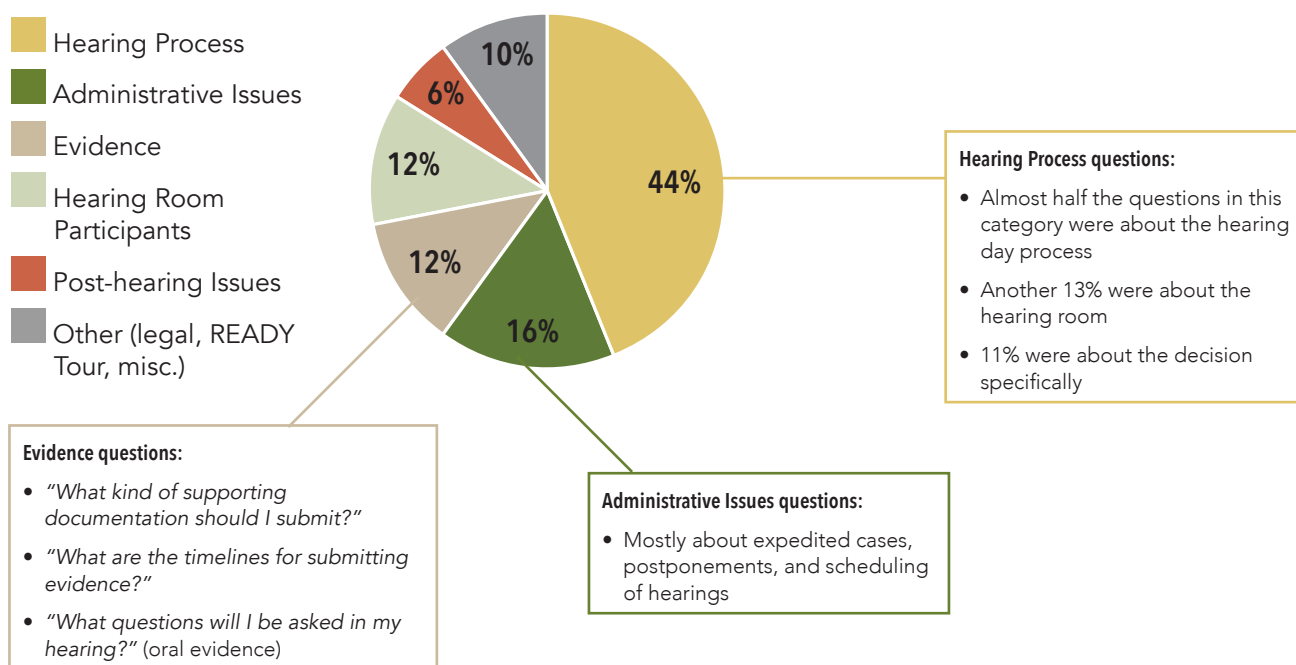
- Hearing Process
- Administrative Issues
- Evidence
- Hearing Room Participants
- Post Hearing Issues
- Other (legal, government agencies, READY Tour, miscellaneous)

When refugee claimants arrive to check-in for their READY Tour session, they are offered to write their answer to the following question posed by the READY Tour Coordinator,

“What is the most important question you hope to have answered during the READY Tour today?”

Of the 501 answers collected between Nov 2017 – Jul 2019 and analyzed, 44% percent of claimants indicated that they wanted to know about the hearing process/procedures on the day of the hearing. Sixteen percent of claimants asked about administrative issues, most commonly about the scheduling or postponement of their hearing and “expedited” hearings. Questions about evidence were often around types of evidence they need to submit, types of questions they would be asked during the hearing and timelines for submitting evidence. There was also curiosity about who would be attending their hearing and how the Presiding Member makes their decision.

Chart 1 - The most important questions on refugee claimants' minds before the READY Tour were about:



Data source: Kinbrace database 501 responses collected between Jan 2017 – Jul 2019

During and/or following the READY Tour session, refugee claimants direct many questions to the IRB-RPD Registry Personnel leading the presentation.

Of the 1512 questions asked and documented during READY Tour sessions from Jul 2017 to Jul 2019, the largest number (32%) of the questions sought clarity on the roles of the various hearing room participants, such as:

- Why would a Minister’s Representative be against my case?
- How will I know if the Minister’s Representative will be at my hearing?

- *What can I do if the interpreter is not doing a good job?*
- *Can I bring my own interpreter?*
- *Who are the Board Members? Will we know who is assigned to our case prior to the hearing?*
- *What do the Board Members base their decision on?*
- *If I have to answer all of the questions at the hearing, what is the role of my lawyer?*
- *What should I do if I cannot reach my lawyer or we do not agree on what evidence to submit or when to submit it?*
- *Can an observer also be a witness?*
- *Can a family member be a witness?*
- *At what age will children be asked to testify?*
- *Who will watch my children if I do not have a babysitter?*

24% of in-Tour questions sought clarity on hearing scheduling and postponements, such as:

- *Why was my hearing postponed and when will I be rescheduled? (this was not a concern in the second half of 2019)*
- *How long does it take to get scheduled for a hearing?*
- *Why do claimants from some countries not have to attend hearings?*
- *What can I do to expedite my hearing?*
- *How long before my hearing will I receive notification of the date?*

18% of the questions asked during the READY Tour were about evidence, such as:

- *What does the Board Member look at in making his/her decision?*
- *Should witnesses submit evidence in written form or testify over the phone?*
- *Will my spouse and children need to testify?*
- *Should I submit my evidence or should my lawyer?*
- *Who can translate my documents?*
- *How can video and audio evidence be submitted?*

Other questions commonly asked were about:

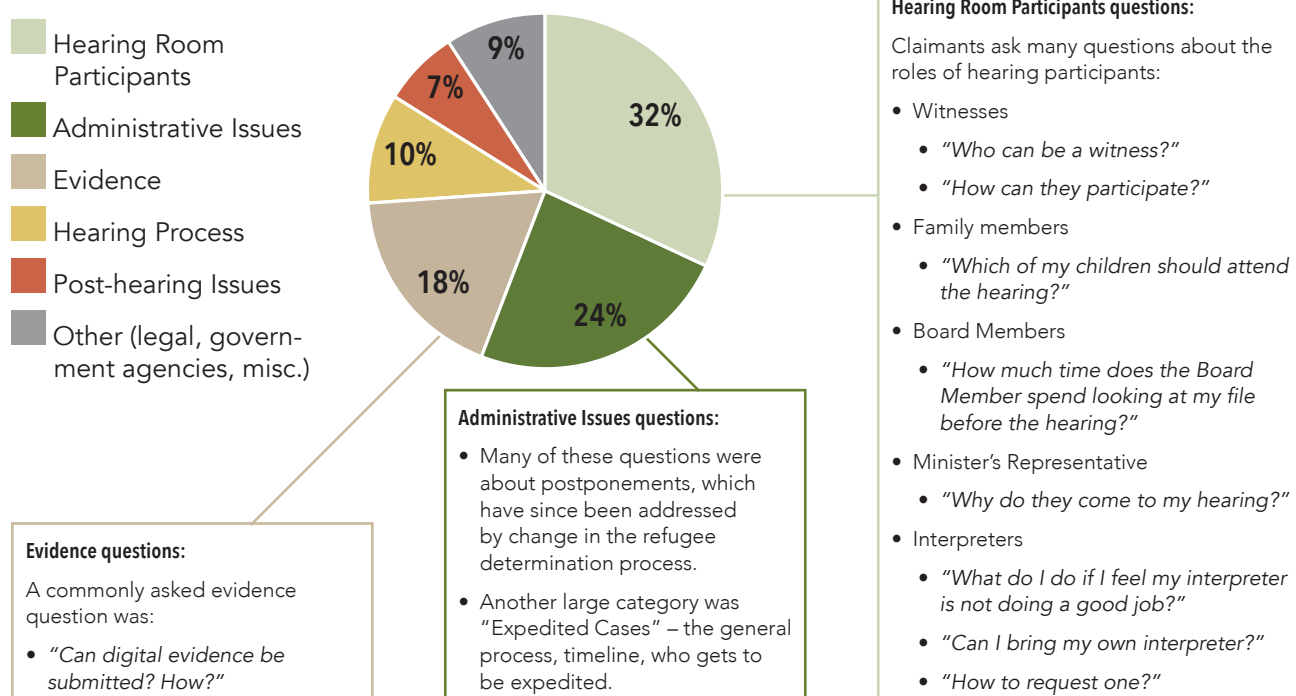
- process and procedures at the hearing (10%)
- post hearing issues (7%)
- Other (legal, government agencies, miscellaneous) (5%).

Common examples of Other questions asked were:

- *How do I change my address at all three government agencies?*
- *How long after the hearing will I receive the decision?*
- *What is the difference between a Convention Refugee and a Person in Need of Protection?*
- *Will it be a problem if I lived in another country before coming to Canada?*

- Will the Board Member understand why I can't go to the police in my country?
- What will happen to me if I am denied?
- What happens to me if my appeal is denied?

Chart 2 – The most common questions asked by refugee claimants during the READY Tour were about:



Data source: Kinbrace database 1512 questions asked and noted during READY Tour sessions from Jul 2017 to Jul 2019

Refugee claimants have many questions about Canada's refugee determination process, and the READY Tour provides a focused opportunity to ask their questions in the context of a critical venue: an IRB-RPD hearing room. Observing the questions asked before and during the READY Tour, we see a shift in emphasis. Most of the questions before the Tour are about Hearing Process (44% of all questions). During the Tour, most of the questions are about Hearing Room Participants (32%). Hearing Process questions comprise only 10% during the Tour. Why? One possible explanation is that pressing Hearing Process questions are answered during the Tour, preparing an openness to explore new information about which refugee claimants have little knowledge prior to the Tour (such as the key participants and their roles on the hearing day). This shift in emphasis may indicate a deepening of knowledge, comprehension, and grasp of the refugee determination system in preparation for the refugee hearing.

Are refugee claimants more prepared for their refugee hearings after attending a READY Tour?

Because of the numerous variables impacting hearing readiness, including but not limited to trauma, quality of legal representation, quality of interpretation, and understanding of refugee law and the processes of refugee determination, it is extremely difficult to measure how the READY Tour impacts preparation. We can only listen to the experience refugee claimants express.

To understand how the READY Tours might be impacting refugee claimants' sense of hearing preparedness, former refugee claimants who had completed their refugee hearings were surveyed and asked how they ranked themselves in terms of feeling confident, anxious, informed and prepared for the hearing prior to the READY Tour.

Of the 31 who responded:

- **80.6%** indicated they **lacked confidence** about the refugee hearing
- **85.7%** indicated they **felt anxious** about the hearing
- **70.4%** indicated they **felt uninformed** about what to expect at the hearing
- **24%** indicated that they **felt prepared** for their hearings

Service providers surveyed indicated that *prior* to the READY Tour, 44.4% of the claimants they referred were somewhat prepared and 38.9% were not very prepared at all for the refugee hearing.

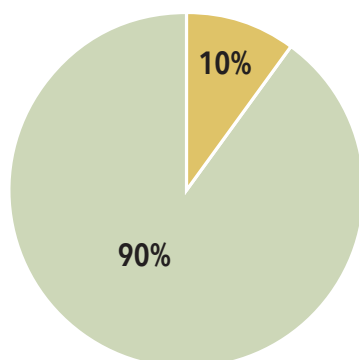
When former refugee claimant survey respondents were asked how they felt about the refugee hearing following the READY Tour,

- **90.3%** of claimants in the survey indicated that they **felt less anxious**
- **96.1%** indicated that they **felt more prepared**.

Chart 3 - What former refugee claimants who had completed their hearings said:

- about how the READY Tour affected their anxiety levels

More anxious
No difference
Less anxious



- how well they felt the READY Tour had prepared them for their hearings

More prepared
No difference
Less prepared

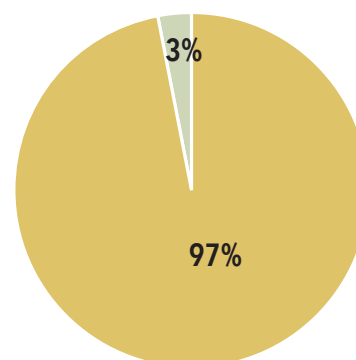


Chart 4 - How well service providers felt the READY Tour prepared their clients

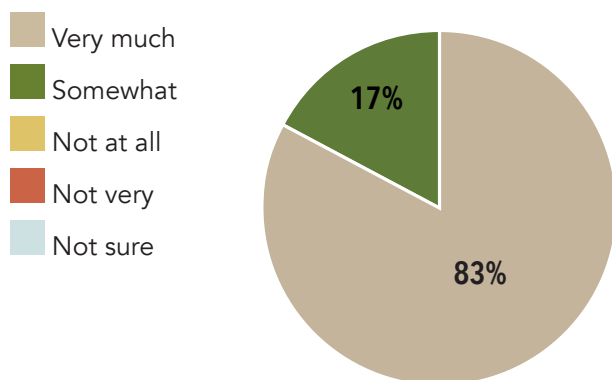
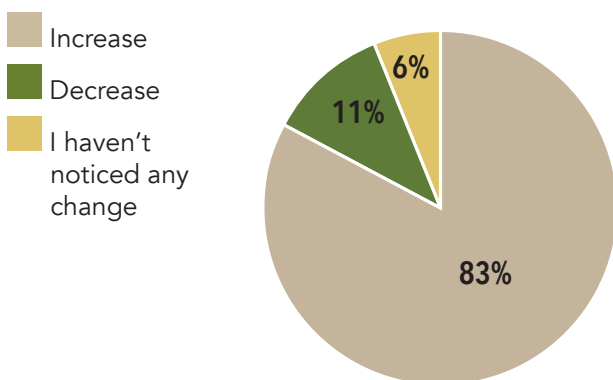


Chart 5 - What change service providers saw in client confidence levels after the READY Tour



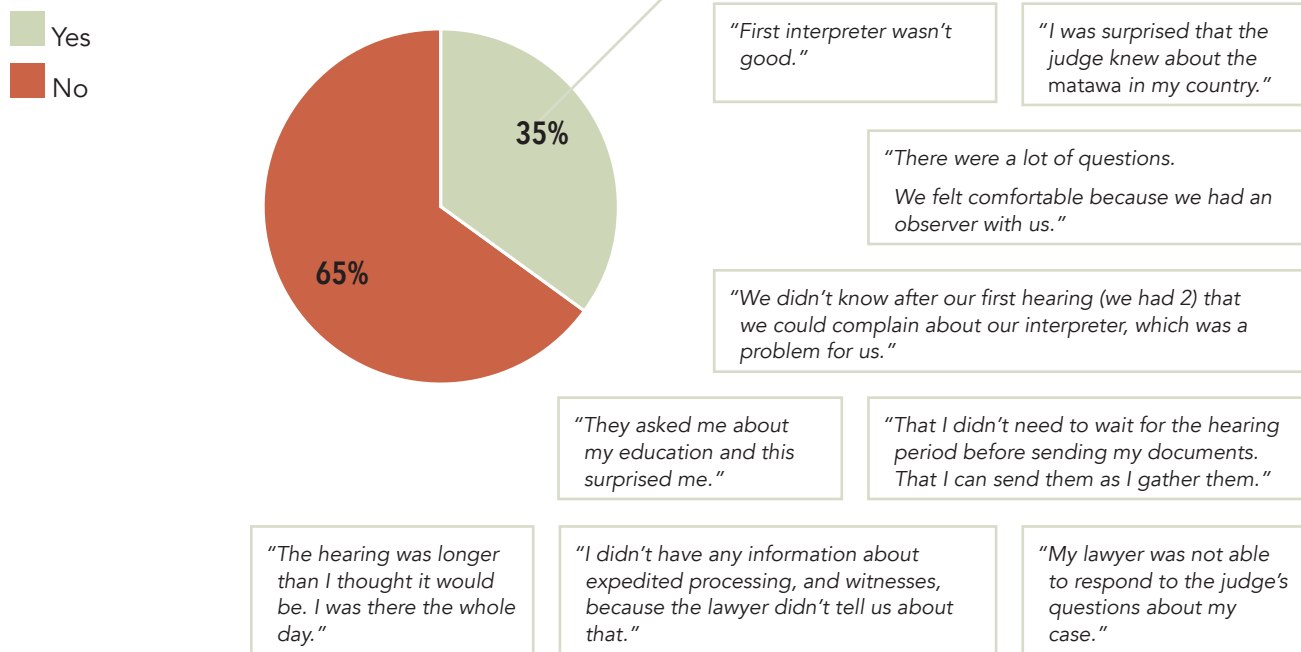
Service providers surveyed indicated that after the READY Tour, 83.3% of the refugee claimants they referred experienced a decrease in anxiety around the hearing, an increase in confidence, and a greater sense of preparedness.

In an attempt to further understand how the READY Tour might impact a refugee claimant's experience of the refugee hearing, former refugee claimant survey participants were asked:

"Was there anything about the refugee hearing day that you didn't expect?"

Of the 31 survey respondents, 35% indicated they encountered something unexpected. 80% of those appealing negative decisions indicated they encountered something they didn't expect on hearing day. The range of answers to this question included unexpected positive surprise (e.g. that the Board Member knew country details) and unexpected negative experience (e.g. poor legal representation).

Chart 6 – Was there anything about the refugee hearing day that you didn't expect?



Refugee claimants who arrive early to the READY Tour and stay until the end are invited to complete a Knowledge Test²¹, which is made up of 8 questions about the refugee determination process. They are asked to take the test before the Tour, and to take the same test at the end of the Tour.

Based on a random sample of 333 test takers:

- On average, test takers got **43%** of the questions correct before the tour and **81%** of the answers correct after the tour
- The questions that saw the most improvement from this sample were:
 - Q4** (from **30% to 90%** of test takers)

On the day of my hearing, I need to go to the ____ floor of this building for my refugee hearing.

a. 7th b. 16th c. 18th d. I don't know

and

- Q8** (from **49% to 94%**)

I can ask a service provider or friend to come to my hearing with me.

a. True b. False c. I don't know.

²¹ Appendix E – Pre/Post READY Tour Knowledge Test (sample blank form)

Test takers were *least* likely to get **Q1 and Q5** correct before and after the Tour.

- **Q1**

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is the government organization that will make a decision on my claim for refugee protection.

a. True b. False c. I don't know

- **Q5**

Only certified translators can translate my documents for the refugee hearing.

a. True b. False c. I don't know

Listening to the experience of refugee claimants and the observations of service providers and seeing the quantitative knowledge gain by READY Tour participants, READY Tours appear to positively impact the wellbeing of refugee claimants while increasing their knowledge of the refugee determination process.

How can READY Tours be improved?

At the end of each READY Tour, participants are invited to complete an evaluation form²² which prompts a range of feedback. One feedback opportunity, from the perspective of refugee claimant participants, is what could be improved with the READY Tour:

"One change I recommend to make the READY Tour better is..."

Analyzing the 175 responses from January 2018 – July 2019, the overwhelming majority of refugee claimants did not respond to this question or indicated they were very happy with the Tour as it is. Of critical feedback offered,

- 16 suggested adding a mock hearing or video of real or mock hearing
- 13 asked that more information or more in-depth information on various aspects of the process be included in the session
- 13 asked for smaller group size
- 12 asked that additional written or audio-visual materials be provided
- 12 asked for a snack and/or drink
- 11 commented that children should not be allowed in the session or that childcare be provided
- 7 asked for more frequent sessions or the possibility of multiple visits
- Other less frequent feedback: break during the session, single language sessions, divide English and non-English speaking participants

In the survey of former refugee claimants who had already attended their refugee hearings, respondents were asked:

"What would you include in the READY Tour to make it better for refugee claimants?"

²² [Appendix F – Post READY Tour Evaluation Feedback Form for Participants](#)

Survey participants who responded indicated:

- Provide snacks
- Attend the READY Tour session earlier in the hearing preparation process
- Provide a FAQ/info sheet
- Provide a list of questions we will be asked at the hearing
- Don't bring children
- Be able to attend more than once
- Provide one on one sessions
- Schedule more frequent sessions
- Permit less people in the session

In the same post-hearing survey, former refugee claimants were asked,
"What was the most challenging thing about your refugee hearing?"

Those surveyed who experienced challenges responded:

- The entire process / actual hearing (4 responses)
- Listening to the decision (2)
- Interpretation was bad (2)
- Anxiety (2)
- Waiting for the decision
- Being face to face with the judge (Board Member)
- Not knowing what was going to happen and being young
- Nervousness and language barrier
- Making myself calm and able to remember all details, including dates
- Talking directly to the judge (Board Member) and being asked questions
- Convincing the commissioner of the CISR (Board Member) that you are eligible
- Provision of evidence, government representative, expectations
- Lack of knowledge about the requirements and how to prepare the file
- It was long
- So much information to digest
- The Board Member did not understand me due to cultural style
- Having a nursing baby
- Not knowing what questions I would be asked
- Waiting for the hearing
- Getting a hold of my lawyer prior to the hearing
- Fear of being refused
- That my lawyer knew some aspects of my case but gave answers that weren't relevant to what the judge (Board Member) asked

Former refugee claimants in the post-hearing survey responded that the most important things that they learned at the READY Tour which helped them at the hearing were:

- Process / procedures on hearing day (10 responses)
- Setting of the hearing room (9)
- Types of questions I would be asked/ legal issues to be addressed (5)
- I can be calm / Board Members are not so scary / I can have emotions (5)
- To tell the truth (3)
- Understanding the roles of hearing participants (3)
- How to communicate with the Board Member (3)
- Privacy of the setting (2)
- Preparation is important (Review Basis of Claim (BOC) and National Documentation Package (NDP) and get evidence translated and submitted, be organized) (2)
- How to deal with interpreter (2)

- It's in my interest not to miss or be late for the hearing (1)
- Filing deadlines (1)
- I should get a lawyer (1)

Recommendations to increase effectiveness of READY Tours

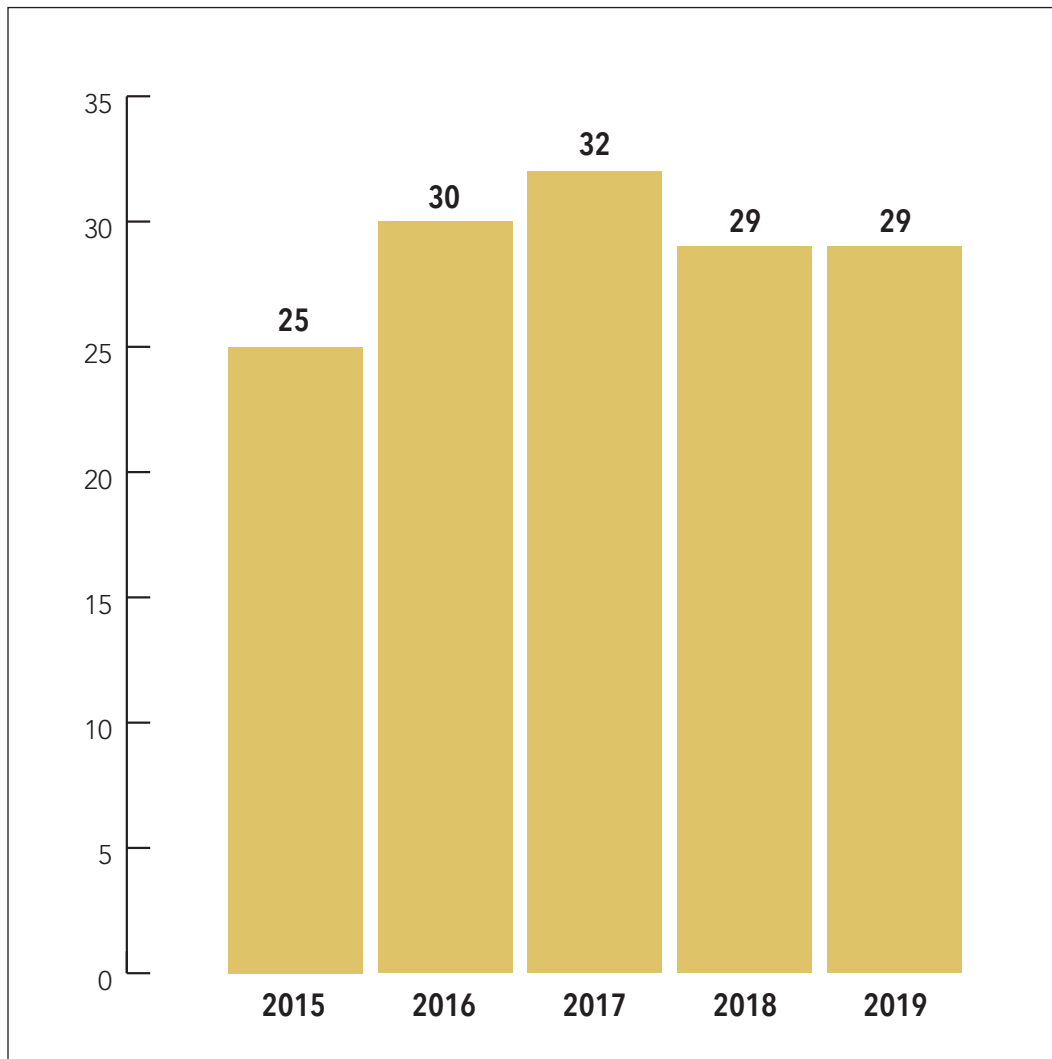
The following recommendations (some of which are already being implemented) aim to increase the positive impact of the READY Tours for refugee claimants in Metro Vancouver.

1. Develop strategic promotional approaches to reach refugee claimants from all countries of origin residing in the BC Lower Mainland.
2. Continue promoting the READY Tours to lawyers while seeking to understand any hesitance to refer their refugee claimant clients to the Tours.
3. Provide a snack and/or short break during the READY Tour.
4. Decrease READY Tour group size.
5. Organize sessions by language when feasible.
6. Continue to encourage parents of young children to find childcare (except for nursing babies) while they attend the READY Tour.
7. Investigate childcare alternatives for families attending the READY Tour.
8. Explore further complementary educational materials (audio-visual, written) and additional learning modes (mock hearings) for the READY Tour, in addition to the current offers *Refugee Hearing Preparation Guide* and the IRB-RPD's Claimant's Guide.
9. Continue to evaluate, modify, and improve data collection tools and methods.

Not captured in this READY Tour study, but constantly expressed by refugee claimants in their evaluation forms and orally, is their significant gratitude for the READY Tour and the quality of the presentation that is provided by the IRB-RPD Registry Personnel.

Appendix A

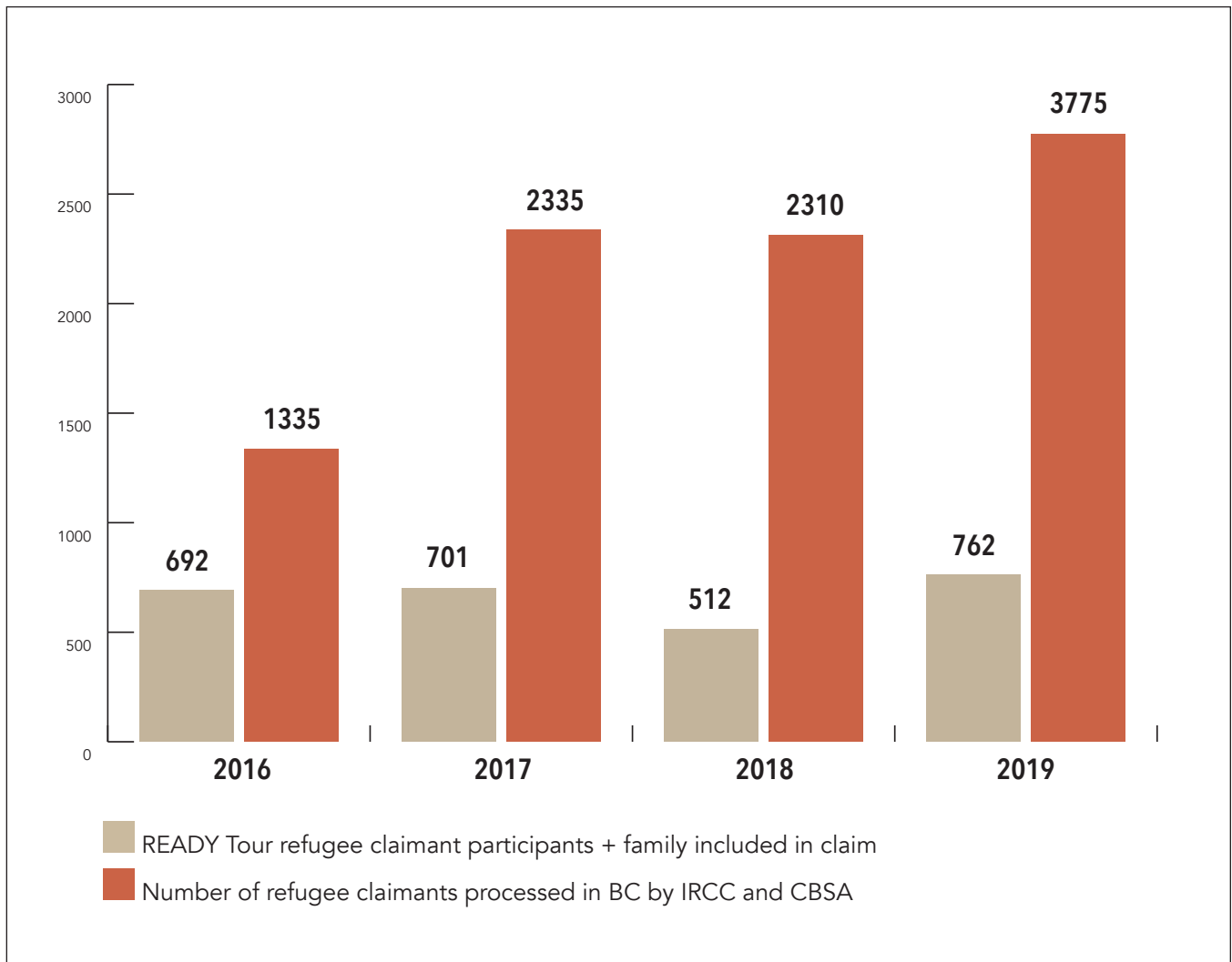
Annual Number of READY Tours in Vancouver 2015-2019



Source – READY Tour Vancouver statistics

Appendix B

Reach of READY Tours Among Refugee Claimants in BC 2017-2019



Source – www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/asylum-claims.html

Source – READY Tour Vancouver statistics

Appendix C

Survey Participants (31 respondents of 65 contacted) – former refugee claimants who attended a READY Tour and completed their refugee hearings

Current Status in Canada	# respondents	%
Permanent Resident	16	52%
Approved Convention Refugee or Protected Person	10	32%
Appellants to the Refugee Appeal Division	5	16%
Total	31	100%

months READY Tour was attended prior to refugee hearing

mean	3.67
median	2.00
mode	1
min	0
max	10

Who was at their hearing?

Lawyer	29	94%
No lawyer	2	6%
Total	31	

Former refugee claimants who attended a READY Tour and completed their refugee hearings were offered opportunity to anonymously complete an online survey in August/September 2019.

Survey Questions

- Before the READY Tour how were you feeling about the refugee hearing?
 - Confident / Not Confident
 - Calm / Anxious
 - Informed / Uninformed
 - Prepared / Unprepared
- Did you have any difficulty registering for a READY Tour or communicating with the coordinator? If yes, explain.
- Did you have any difficulty understanding the READY tour presenter? If yes, explain.
- Did you require an interpreter?
- If you used an interpreter, were you happy with the job the interpreter did? If yes, explain.
- Was there anything about the refugee hearing day that you didn't expect?
- What was the most challenging thing about the refugee hearing?
- What was the most important thing that you learned at the READY Tour that helped you at your hearing?
- Did participating in a READY Tour make you more or less anxious about the refugee hearing?
- Did participating in a READY Tour make you feel more or less prepared for the refugee hearing?
- What would you include in the READY Tour to make it better for refugee claimants?
- Did you have a lawyer or immigration consultant at your refugee hearing?
- What is your current status in Canada?
- When did you participate in the READY Tour? (Month/Year)
- What was the date of your refugee hearing? (Month/Year)

Appendix D

Survey Participants (18 respondents of 72 contacted) – service providers with experience referring refugee claimants to the READY Tour

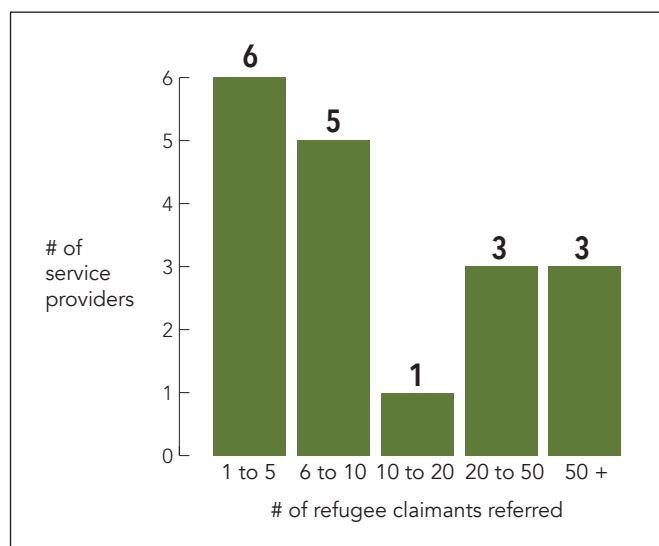
Who are the survey takers?

A housing provider	2
A lawyer	1
A settlement worker	9
Settlement agency	1
An Immigration Consultant	1
Chaplain/church ministry staff commissioned to support refugees and churches wishing to support them	1
Mental Health Provider	1
An Interpreter	1
Other	1
TOTAL	18

and % attended a ReadyTour

Yes	16	89%
No	2	11%

How many refugee claimants Service Provider Survey Participants have referred to the READY Tours?



Service providers with experience referring refugee claimants to the READY Tour were offered opportunity to anonymously complete an online survey in August/September 2019.

Survey Questions

- Approximately how many refugee claimants have you referred to the READY Tour in the last 12 months?
a. 1-5 b. 6-15 c. 16-24 d. 25+
- Are you
a. a settlement worker b. an immigration consultant
c. a lawyer d. a housing provider e. an interpreter
f. other. Define_____
- Have you attended a READY Tour? Yes / No
- Please indicate any information that is not currently provided during the READY Tour that you feel should be shared with refugee claimants (gaps).
- In general, do you notice an increase or decrease in anxiety around the refugee hearing in claimants following a READY Tour? Increase / Decrease / I haven't noticed any
- Do you notice an increase or decrease in confidence around the refugee hearing following claimant participation in the READY Tour? Increase / Decrease / I haven't noticed any
- To what degree do you feel that the claimant you referred was prepared for their refugee hearing prior to participating in a READY Tour? Very Much / Somewhat / Not Very / Not at All / Not Sure
- To what degree do you think the READY Tours helped them feel prepared for their refugee hearing? Very Much / Somewhat / Not Very / Not at All / Not Sure
- Did you or the refugee claimants you assisted have any difficulty with the registration process? If yes, please explain.
- Are you aware of claimants who are not accessing the READY Tour? If so, please identify the population group and the barriers they face to accessing the sessions.
- Did refugee claimants you worked with have difficulty understanding the presentation? If yes, please explain.
- Please share how the READY Tour may or may not have impacted the refugee hearing day experience for the refugee claimant clients you have worked with.
- Please share any feedback you might have received about the READY Tour from refugee claimant participants.
- If you are willing to receive a follow-up email or call, please provide your name and contact information.

Appendix E

Pre/Post READY Tour Knowledge Test (sample blank form)



Pre / Post-Tour Knowledge Test

Please select your answer.

1. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) is the government organization that will make a decision on my claim for refugee protection.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. I don't know
2. This important legal issue focuses on whether I am telling the truth in my refugee claim.
 - a. Subjective Fear
 - b. State Protection
 - c. Credibility
 - d. I don't know
3. I must submit all the evidence for my case _____ days before my hearing.
 - a. 30
 - b. 10
 - c. 5
 - d. I don't know
4. On the day of my hearing, I need to go to the _____ floor of this building for my refugee hearing.
 - a. 7th
 - b. 16th
 - c. 18th
 - d. I don't know
5. Only certified translators can translate my documents for the refugee hearing.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. I don't know
6. During my hearing, I should tell the Board Member if there are problems with the interpretation.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. I don't know
7. If the Minister's Representative (CBSA) comes to my hearing, they will speak in favour of my claim.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. I don't know
8. I can ask a service provider or friend to come to my hearing with me.
 - a. True
 - b. False
 - c. I don't know

***Thank you for participating in the READY Tour questionnaire.
We hope you learned a lot!***

Appendix F

Post READY Tour Evaluation Feedback Form for Participants (sample blank)



Date: _____

What is the most important question you hope to have answered on the READY Tour today?

READY TOUR EVALUATION

We want READY Tours to be valuable to refugee claimants. You can help us make the Tour more effective by providing us with feedback on your experience.

After this READY Tour, what immediate action will you take to prepare for your hearing?

What did you find most useful in the READY Tour?

One change I would recommend to make the READY Tour better is....

What is the most important information you learned about the refugee hearing?

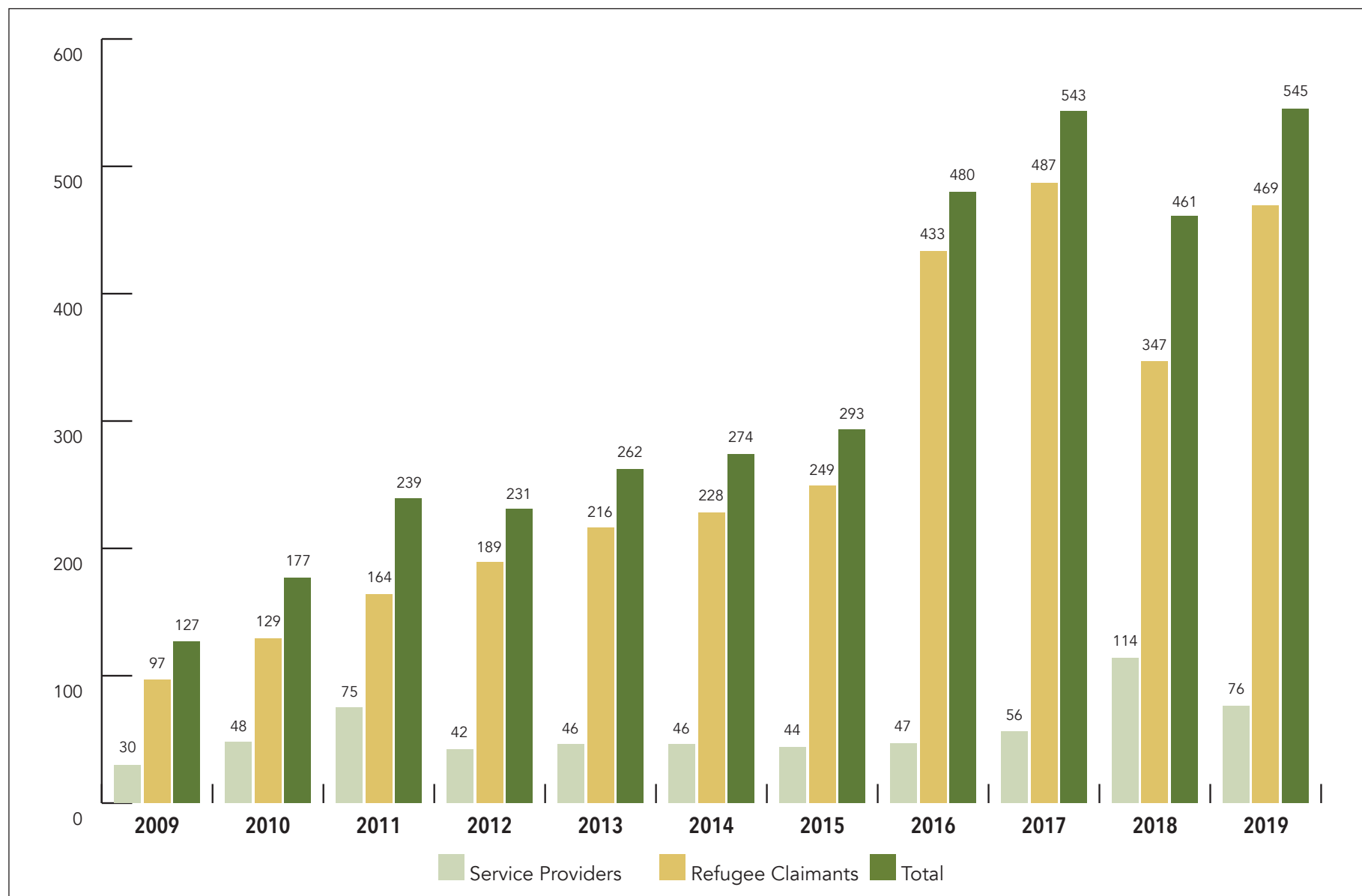
Please add any comments or feedback regarding the tour today.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation form.

Fran Gallo, READY Tour Coordinator

Appendix G

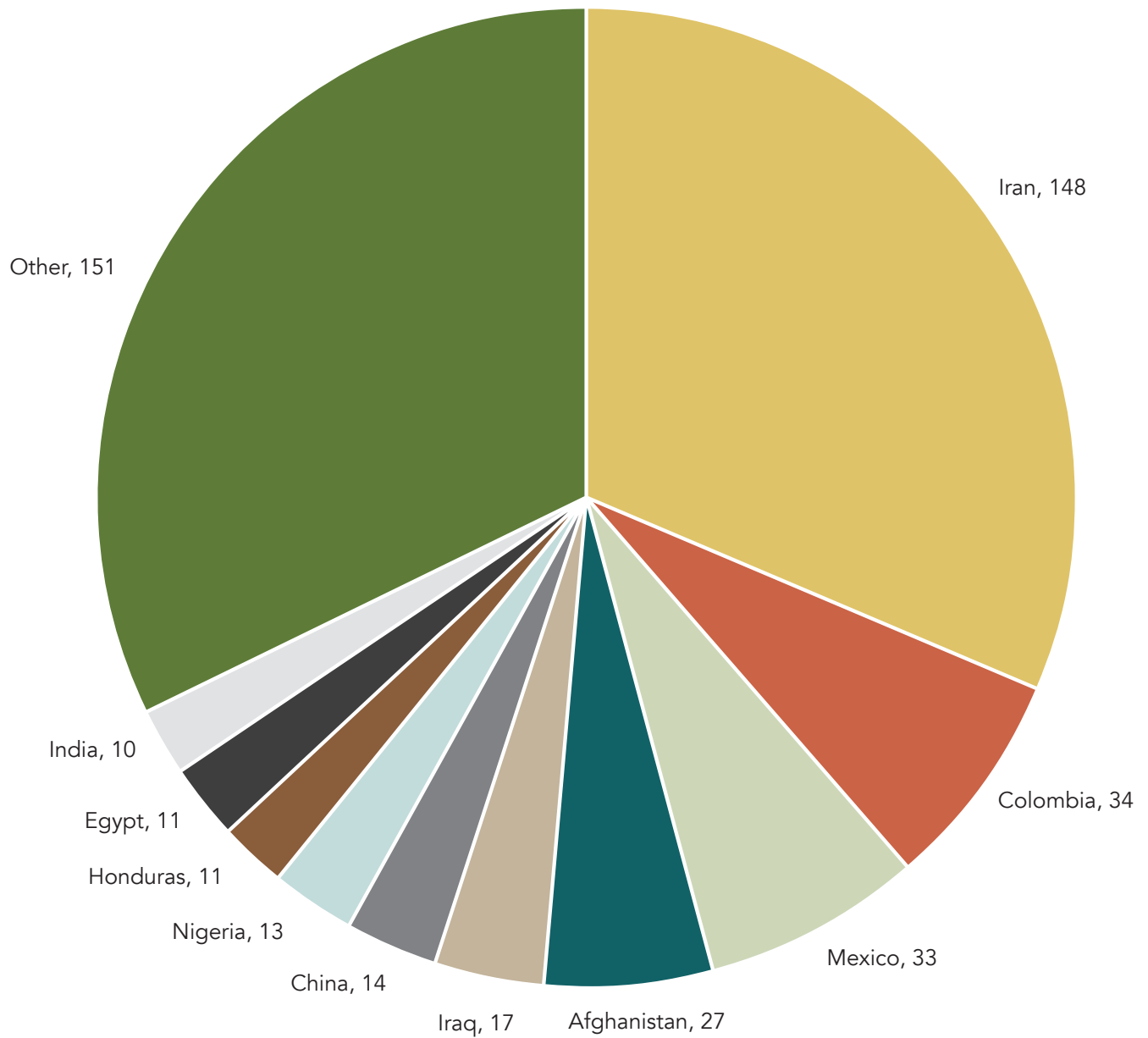
Vancouver READY Tour - Annual Number of Participants 2009-2019



Source – READY Tour Vancouver statistics

Appendix H

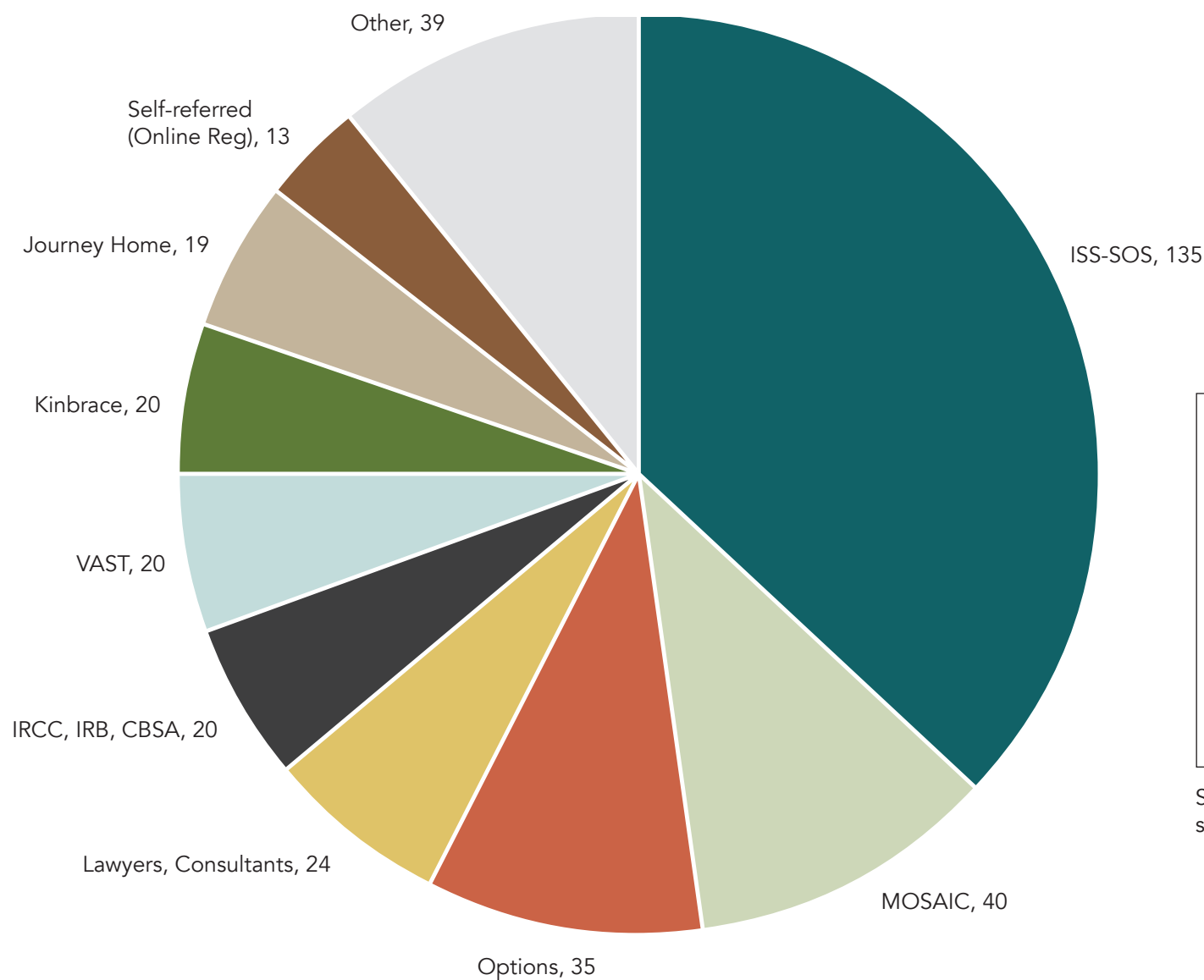
Vancouver READY Tour Country of Origin Participants 2019



Source – READY Tour Vancouver statistics

Appendix I

Vancouver READY Tour - Number of Referrals per Agency 2019



- When participants are referred by multiple agencies, the READY Tour Coordinator counts first referring agency
- Participants often cannot distinguish which government agency referred them (CBSA, IRB, or IRCC?)
- Total number of referrals for 2019 was 365 (includes families and individuals)

Source – READY Tour Vancouver statistics

Appendix J

READY Tour Promotion Strategies: In-person, In-Print, and Online

READY Tour promotion uses a mix of online, in-print, and in-person strategies to ensure the widest number of refugee claimants are reached regionally and nationally.

Personal referral – the most effective way to promote READY Tours

- refugee claimants who have attended a Tour and tell others about it
- interpreters familiar with the READY Tours
- service providers who support refugee claimants
- lawyers and immigration consultants
- staff at Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), and the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB-RPD) refer claimants on occasion to the READY Tour

In-print promotion in BC and other READY Tour regions across Canada

- READY Tour Postcards (multi-lingual) distributed to national partners, service providers and government agencies
- READY Tour Posters (multi-lingual) uniquely adapted for each region and distributed to service providers and government agencies in Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Toronto
- BC211 Refugee Claimant kit distributed at CBSA and IRCC to new refugee claimants
- IRCC Agency Referral List for new refugee claimants
- Canadian Counsel for Refugees (CCR) consultation tables with promotional materials 2 times per year

On-line promotion in BC and other READY Tour regions across Canada

- regular MailChimp notifications from ready@refugeeclaim.ca to over 330 service providers in BC about upcoming READY Tours
- Ready for My Refugee Hearing www.refugeeclaim.ca website for READY Tour registration and access to the multi-lingual *Refugee Hearing Preparation: A Guide for Refugee Claimants* (RHP Guide) (in which READY Tours are advertised for each region)
- Legal Services Society of BC distributes/displays postcards, RHP Guides and posters and hosts the RHP Guide online <https://lss.bc.ca/publications/pub/refugee-hearing-preparation>
- Legal Resources for Refugees and Refugee Claimants in BC <https://bcrefugeehub.ca/legal-resources-for-refugees-in-bc/>
- MyLaw BC hosts the RHP Guide online <https://mylawbc.com/pubs/detail.php?pub=466>
- Clicklaw BC hosts the RHP Guide online <https://www.clicklaw.bc.ca/resource/2490>
- Vancouver Multi Agency Partnership (MAP) Working Together for Refugee Claimants <https://mapbc.org/resources/refugees/>
- MAP Fraser Valley and Vancouver monthly meetings
- Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada website: <https://irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/applying-refugee-protection/Pages/ready-tours.aspx>
- occasional public presentations (immigration consultant classes)
- <https://www.amssa.org/?s=ready+tour>
- websites of partner agencies in other cities

Appendix K

Example READY Tour Report



READY Tour Report

Location: Vancouver
Date: September 27, 2019
IRB Presenter: [REDACTED]

22 Refugee Claimants

21 Refugee Claimants with Counsel

2 Non-Claimant Participants

1 Refugee Claimant without Counsel

Participants were referred by the following agencies/individuals:

ISS-SOS, friend, MOSAIC, VAST, IRB, Collingwood Neighborhood House, Journey Home, Options, Kinbrace

Interpretation was provided in the following languages:

- Farsi, Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Mandarin, French

Refugee Claimants were from the following countries:

- Iran, Afghanistan, India, China, Colombia, Mexico, Burundi/DR Congo, Palestine, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Cameroon, Egypt, Brazil

Non-Claimant Participants' affiliation or relationship: MOSAIC and Kinbrace

Immigration and Refugee Board, Refugee Protection Division presenter:

Prior to the READY Tour session - responses to, "What is the most important question you hope to have answered today?"

1. How long will the asylum hearing take?
2. How should I express what happened to me?
3. How can we make changes to our story?
4. Why are we here?
5. Should I bring my children to the hearing?
6. What will happen if my claim is denied?
7. (Service Provider) Can refugee claimants ask for a break if they feel emotional or uncomfortable during the hearing?
8. The hearing day and process.
9. Will the hearing be made on the spot or at another time?
10. Do I need to bring my 4 year-old daughter to the hearing?
11. How long will it take to bring my daughter to Canada?
12. Do I need to bring an interpreter or will one be assigned to me?
13. Do adult children have separate hearings from their parents?
14. I hope to learn everything because we need to know everything.

Questions asked by participants during the READY Tour:

1. Do I need a lawyer to appeal a negative RPD decision?
2. Is the 15 days given when the appeal is due? Is that when the appeal hearing takes place?
3. If the main applicant speaks English does the spouse need an interpreter?

4. If there is a communication problem with your lawyer how do you check to see if the documents have been submitted?
5. If you notice the interpreter is not translating properly what do you do?
6. My first legal aid lawyer had to give up my case because of a medical reason and I was then given a new lawyer. That lawyer is no longer representing me because I am no longer eligible for legal aid because I am working. This happened 2 weeks before the date of my hearing. Does the RPD need me to notify them in writing that I will no longer be represented by a lawyer during my hearing?
7. I have a witness outside of Canada. How do I submit their evidence?
8. Is a hearing held for all refugees? Is there anyone who does not need a hearing?
9. How long does a refugee claimant wait for a hearing date?
10. If you do not have a suspension letter from the minister how long will you have to wait for a hearing? My hearing date has been cancelled 3 times.
11. If you have children over 17 years old do they have to be in the hearing room with you? Will they be questioned?
12. If your child is over 17 years old can they separate from your claim?
13. If we move somewhere else in Canada will the case be transferred to the new location?
14. If you make changes to the BOC do you have to submit those changes 10 days before the hearing date?
15. During the time I was making a claim the interviewing officer asked to speak to my 9 year-old son on his own. I said no. The officer made me sign something saying I would not let them interview my son. (She received a letter from the IRB on the subject and will speak to a CMO after the READY Tour).
16. Can a husband that is outside of Canada be a witness if he is linked to her case?
17. Does IRCC have a specific timeline to refer cases to the IRB?
18. Can we ask what stage or status our claim is at with the IRB?
19. Will the election influence immigration law? Will current claims fall under past law if there are changes or the current law?
20. Does the member understand what is happening in a country before the case is heard? Does this apply to less complex claims as well?
21. Is the hearing timeline calculated from the date of referral from CBSA or IRCC?
22. I don't have a hearing date yet but I'm planning on moving to another city. Should I wait to have the hearing date scheduled before I move?
23. Is it ok for kids under 12 years old to stay in school and not come to the hearing?
24. When we crossed into Canada we were under a great deal of stress and I am worried that my answers might not be that clear. Is this looked upon badly?
25. I know you have to notify the IRB when you move but who else needs to be notified?

Questionnaire

6 refugee claimant(s) and **2** service provider(s) completed the Pre/Post Tour Knowledge Test.

Refugee Claimant Results
Pre-Tour – 23/48
Post-Tour – 43/48

Service Provider Results
Pre-Tour – 11/16
Post-Tour – 13/16

Evaluations

18 refugee claimant(s) and **1** service provider(s) completed the evaluation form.

Immediate action I will take to prepare for my hearing is:

- Find a lawyer and collect evidence.
- Look for evidence to provide. (4)
- Make sure our file is complete.



- Get more involved in my own case and inform myself.
- Read the NDP. (2)
- Get witnesses and observers.
- Get ready for hearing and prepare documents.
- Collect evidence starting now. (2)
- Document my case more.
- I will gather the evidence as soon as possible to be ready for the hearing.
- Gather my evidence and notify my witnesses.
- Review the Guide.
- I will educate myself, collect evidence.

The most useful part of the Tour was:

- More information about my refugee claim.
- Details about the hearing and how to prepare myself. (2)
- Everything. (5)
- Information about the participants at my hearing.
- Information about the hearing and the role of everyone in the hearing.
- Information about the Member participating.
- Timing of hearing and how to prepare for hearing.
- About IRCC.
- Everything about the refugee hearing.
- I got accurate information about my hearing day.
- Q&A
- Being in the hearing room.
- (Service Provider) The presenter has a lot of useful information and answers questions.

A suggested change to the Tour is:

- None. (5)
- It was handled perfectly.
- Make a presentation on screen.
- Less people at the session would be better.
- Nothing, they are very good in explaining.
- It seemed really good to me.

The most important information learned about the refugee hearing was:

- The conditions of the hearing and the participants in my hearing.
- I can have witnesses and I should provide my evidence 10 days before the hearing.
- We know more about the hearing.
- Everything. (3)
- Board Member to make decision. Lawyer will ask me questions.
- Role of Minister's Representative.
- We should appear 30 minutes before the hearing.
- All information is required for us to know. I appreciate everything they did for us.
- Seeing the hearing room was a relief to me because I am very nervous and was very frustrated. Thank you.
- Timeframes and documents that are needed for the hearing.
- Don't bring my kids under 12, I can have a witness, that the RPD is responsible for making a decision about my case.
- Familiarizing myself with the room, the dates and terminology.
- The Member may want more information before the hearing. You can update your BOC.
- I can have a witness.

- Almost all information was important.
- (Service Provider) The whole presentation is a good guideline for the refugee claimants.

Additional comments and feedback:

- I felt comfortable and it permitted me to know more about Canadian immigration.
- It was helpful, thank you!
- It was worth attending.
- I appreciate your time and support.
- Informative.
- Less people.
- Tony did a great job.
- Excellent.
- Thank you (2)
- This was an excellent opportunity to clarify any doubts. Excellent.
- (Service Provider) Thank you for offering such a good opportunity for us to learn.

The next READY Tour is scheduled for:

October 11, 2019 at 9:15am

Fran Gallo, Project Coordinator
READY for my Refugee Hearing
Kinbrace Community Society

Report prepared on September 30, 2019