

Wilfrid Laurier University

Scholars Commons @ Laurier

International Migration Research Centre

Reports and Papers

2024

Issue 21: Temporary Shelter to Permanent Home: Advancing Permanent Residency for Ukrainian Refugees in Canada

Marika Jeziorek
Wilfrid Laurier University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholars.wlu.ca/imrc>



Part of the [Migration Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jeziorek, Marika, "Issue 21: Temporary Shelter to Permanent Home: Advancing Permanent Residency for Ukrainian Refugees in Canada" (2024). *International Migration Research Centre*. 46.
<https://scholars.wlu.ca/imrc/46>

This Policy Points is brought to you for free and open access by the Reports and Papers at Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Migration Research Centre by an authorized administrator of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact scholarscommons@wlu.ca.



IMRC
International Migration
Research Centre

Policy Points

Issue XXI, October 2024

Temporary Shelter to Permanent Home: Advancing Permanent Residency for Ukrainian Refugees in Canada



Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET)



 Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada / Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada



Marika Jeziorek

IMRC Policy Points provide current and relevant policy briefings and recommendations drawn from scholarly research carried out by our Associates and Affiliates worldwide.

Follow our series at: imrc.ca

From the IMRC we thank the Kitchener-Waterloo Local Immigration Partnership for their valuable inputs on this edition.

Executive Summary

The Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program, initiated in response to Russia's attack on Ukraine in February 2022, has provided temporary refuge to a significant number of Ukrainian nationals. While this program has been effective in addressing immediate safety needs, its temporary nature falls short of ensuring the long-term stability and socio-economic integration of Ukrainian refugees into Canadian society. Unlike Convention Refugees, who are individuals granted permanent residency in Canada because they have been recognized as needing protection under the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion (Government of Canada, 2019; United Nations, 1951; United Nations, 1967), temporary protection under the CUAET program does not offer the same level of security and rights. Consequently, this leads to persistent uncertainty, limited access to essential services, and barriers to stable employment.

This policy brief advocates for a critical shift from temporary protection to permanent residency for Ukrainian refugees. Such a transition would not only align with Canada's humanitarian commitments under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol but would also enhance the socio-economic fabric of the country. Granting permanent residency would allow these refugees to fully leverage their potential, contributing significantly to the Canadian economy and community life, and promoting a more diverse and dynamic society.

IMRC Policy Points

September 2024

The recommendations within this brief include establishing clear pathways to permanent residency, enhancing support services for integration, and adapting immigration policies to better meet the needs of Ukrainian refugees. Implementing these measures will strengthen Canada's role as a global leader in humanitarian response and foster a richer, more inclusive community, thereby aligning with the strategic interests of fostering a resilient socio-economic system.

Introduction

In response to the escalating refugee crisis following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Canada initiated the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program. As a crucial element of Canada's humanitarian response, this program has provided temporary refuge to over 210,178 Ukrainian refugees as of December 2023 (Government of Canada, 2023a). While the CUAET program has been effective in addressing immediate safety needs, its temporary nature presents significant barriers to the long-term stability and socio-economic integration of these refugees within Canadian society. A recent study by Hennebry (2023) highlighted the challenges faced by service providers in the Waterloo Region, emphasizing the acute need for enhanced support services for Ukrainian refugees holding temporary protection. This policy brief advocates for a transition from offering temporary protection to permanent residency for Ukrainian refugees who have temporarily settled in Canada via the CUAET program.

The limitations of temporary protection have resulted in persistent uncertainty for Ukrainian refugees, undermining their ability to secure stable employment, access essential services, and plan for a sustainable future in Canada. This ongoing state of limbo, compounded by documented challenges such as employment barriers and social integration difficulties (Lytvynenko, 2023; Pasioka, 2023; La Grassa, 2022), highlights the inadequacy of temporary measures and stresses the urgent need for robust, permanent solutions.

This policy brief advocates for a critical transition from offering merely temporary protection to developing a pathway to permanent residency for Ukrainian refugees in Canada. This would align with Canada's obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, and help bolster the country's socio-economic structure. By granting permanent residency to Ukrainian refugees who have arrived in Canada via the CUAET program, this transformation would help enhance their contributions to both the economy and community life, thereby fostering a more inclusive and resilient society. The recommendations herein—including establishing a clear pathway to permanent residency, enhancing support services, and actively engaging local communities—are designed to transform Canada's approach to Ukrainian refugees from mere short-term relief to sustainable stability and integration.

IMRC Policy Points

September 2024

Policy Context

Temporary protection mechanisms, such as the CUAET program, are crucial during emergencies but often place refugees in a precarious position. These regimes emerged as a rapid response to sudden influxes of displaced people, providing immediate safety and relief without the extensive vetting process required for Convention refugee status (Fitzpatrick, 2000, p. 280). However, while they offer immediate safety, they also create ongoing uncertainty for beneficiaries.

Temporary protection, unlike Convention refugee status, does not confer permanent residency upon arrival. Individuals under temporary protection have limited legal rights, restricted mobility, and often face uncertainty about their future status. This means that while they are safe from immediate danger, they do not have the same stability and security that comes with being a permanent resident. For instance, those under temporary protection have limited access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and social services, and face significant barriers in securing stable employment due to their uncertain legal status and the temporary nature of their stay.

Convention refugees, on the other hand, are granted permanent residency upon resettlement in Canada. This status provides them with a comprehensive set of rights and access to services, including the ability to work, access to healthcare and education, and the ability to plan for their long-term future. Permanent residents can fully integrate into Canadian society, contributing to the economy and community life without the looming uncertainty of temporary protection.

Canada adopted the CUAET regime as a pragmatic solution to quickly offer refuge to a large number of displaced Ukrainians without the lengthy processes involved in Convention refugee resettlement. This approach allowed Canada to respond swiftly to the urgent humanitarian crisis. However, the reliance on temporary protection over permanent resettlement has significant drawbacks, as it leaves refugees in a state of limbo and undermines their ability to build stable, secure lives in Canada.

Studies have shown that temporary protection can lead to unstable legal statuses, restricted mobility, and limited access to social rights and employment opportunities, severely hindering refugees' ability to plan for their futures and integrate effectively into host societies (Ilcan et al. 2018; Guild, 2023). The limitations of temporary protection result in persistent uncertainty for Ukrainian refugees, undermining their ability to secure stable employment, access essential services, and plan for a sustainable future in Canada.

Offering pathways to permanent residency can mitigate these issues by providing security and promoting fuller integration into the host country's social and economic fabric. Canada's ratification of the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol commits the country to uphold the rights of refugees and ensure their protection, advocating for humane treatment and permanent resettlement over temporary solutions (United Nations, 1951; United Nations, 1967).

IMRC Policy Points

September 2024

By extending permanent residency, Canada would align with its international obligations and effectively address the challenges of precarity and temporariness faced by Ukrainian refugees in Canada. Such a shift would bolster Canada's global standing as a humanitarian leader, ensuring not just immediate refuge but also the long-term stability and integration of Ukrainian refugees into Canadian society.

Analysis of the current CUAET program

The CUAET program has been instrumental in providing immediate support to over 210,178 Ukrainian refugees as of December 2023 (Government of Canada, 2023a). While effective in the short term, the program does not fully meet the long-term needs of these individuals, leading to uncertainties regarding their future status and integration prospects in Canada.

Detailed reports underline the real-world challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees under the CUAET program. They are legally entitled to work, yet face significant employment barriers, including credential recognition and employer hesitancy due to their temporary status (Lytvynenko, 2023; Pasiaka, 2023). This situation results in significant emotional and logistical difficulties for many, with some opting to return to Ukraine, while others struggle with insufficient income despite their efforts to adapt (La Grassa, 2022).

In response to these challenges and the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Canada introduced a new pathway to permanent residency in 2023, specifically for Ukrainian families under the CUAET program. This pathway, however, is limited to those with familial connections in Canada, thus excluding a significant portion of the beneficiaries (Government of Canada, 2023b). Furthermore, it involves high application fees and the requirement for updated biometrics, which pose significant barriers for those recently displaced by conflict (Government of Canada, 2023c). These measures reflect a broader trend in Canadian immigration policy, where humanitarian responses are often weighed against strategic economic and political considerations, sometimes at the expense of inclusivity and equity in refugee protection. By limiting permanent residency access to those who have familial ties in Canada or can afford the associated costs, the policy may inadvertently favour refugees who are already better positioned to contribute to the Canadian economy, thereby narrowing the scope of those who could benefit from such protection.

Justification for a pathway to permanent residency

Humanitarian Consideration:

Extending permanent residency to Ukrainian refugees in Canada aligns with Canada's obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, ensuring protection and stability for refugees. Offering permanent residency to CUAET holders not only meets these humanitarian obligations but also provides a crucial sense of security and permanence, reducing the stress and uncertainty associated with temporary status. This is particularly vital for individuals who have fled war

IMRC Policy Points

September 2024

and are seeking a new start in a stable environment. Studies show that temporary protections can often leave refugees in a vulnerable position, undermining their mental health and complicating their integration into society, which stresses the necessity for permanent solutions (Ilcan et al., 2018; Baban et al., 2021).

Economic Benefits:

Permanent residents have the potential to contribute more significantly to the economy through stable employment, consumption, and taxes than temporary residents (OECD, 2008; Jones, 2020, p. 160-161; Furchtgott-Roth, 2013). Allowing Ukrainian refugees to obtain permanent residency would maximize their economic potential. Highly skilled individuals with temporary status face difficulties in securing employment, exemplifying a waste of valuable human capital due to the instability of temporary residency and employer hesitancy. This issue is not unique to Ukrainian refugees but also affects other groups in Canada, such as temporary foreign workers, who experience similar precarity and underutilization of their skills due to their temporary status (Fudge & MacPhail, 2009; Coderre & Nakache, 2022). Transitioning from temporary to permanent status would not only stabilize these individuals' involvement in the labour market but also enhance Canada's economic diversity and innovation capacity.

Social Integration and Strengthening Community Ties:

Longer-term residency fosters better integration, enhancing social cohesion and reducing the marginalization of refugees (Soehl & Van Haren, 2023). Temporary status often exacerbates social isolation and restricts access to essential services (Baban et al., 2021). Permanent solutions enable refugees to fully participate in Canadian life, facilitating deeper community connections and more robust personal development, thereby promoting social integration (Ilcan et al., 2018). Moreover, permanent residency strengthens ties between Ukrainian refugees and Canadian communities. Secure and engaged residents are more likely to contribute to local economies, participate in community activities, and foster intercultural understanding (OECD, 2008; Jones, 2020, p. 160-161; Furchtgott-Roth, 2013). Offering a clear and accessible pathway to permanence encourages long-term planning and investment in their new communities, benefiting both the immigrants and the broader society. This approach not only enhances the multicultural fabric of Canada but also supports sustainable community development and resilience.

By incorporating these considerations into its policy framework, Canada can ensure that its response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis is both compassionate and pragmatically aligned with long-term national and humanitarian interests.

Policy recommendations

Establish a Clear Pathway to Permanent Residency:

Action: Implement a streamlined application process for all CUAET holders, removing restrictive eligibility criteria that limit access based on family ties.

IMRC Policy Points

September 2024

Justification: Broadening eligibility criteria ensures that all individuals who have sought refuge from Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine can establish stable, long-term lives in Canada. This is aligned with Canada's commitment to uphold the rights of refugees as per international agreements.

Enhance Support Services:

Action: Increase federal and provincial funding for comprehensive support services that facilitate the integration of all Ukrainian refugees, including those awaiting the approval of their permanent residency applications. Expanded services should include extensive language training, employment assistance with credential recognition, mental health support, and other critical resources tailored to the unique challenges faced by migrants.

Justification: The survey conducted by Henneby (2023) highlights a significant gap in the support provided to migrants under temporary protections, including those in the CUAET program. Service providers in the Waterloo Region reported substantial challenges due to insufficient funding, particularly in supporting individuals with temporary statuses (Henneby, 2023). Enhancing these services is crucial not only for those awaiting the transition to permanent residency but also for those who may continue to face uncertainties until their status is finalized. Strengthening the support infrastructure ensures that all refugees, regardless of their status, can overcome barriers to integration, reducing marginalization and facilitating a smoother transition into Canadian society. This comprehensive approach to support not only aids the refugees in their adjustment but also enriches the broader community by enabling these new members to contribute more effectively and quickly to the socio-economic fabric of Canada.

Engage Local Communities:

Action: Develop partnerships between Ukrainian community groups and local Canadian organizations to foster cultural exchanges and mutual understanding.

Justification: Strengthening community ties promotes a more inclusive society and supports refugees in feeling more integrated into their new environment.

Monitor and Adapt Immigration Policies:

Action: Establish a feedback mechanism to continuously assess the effectiveness of the permanent residency application process for CUAET holders. This could involve regular surveys, interviews, and collaborations with academic institutions to study the long-term outcomes of these policies.

Justification: Continuous monitoring and adaptation ensure that the transition to permanent residency meets the needs of Ukrainian refugees effectively and that Canada can quickly adjust its strategies in response to new challenges and opportunities.

IMRC Policy Points

September 2024

These recommendations will help ensure that the transition from temporary protection to permanent residency is managed effectively and meets both the immediate and long-term needs of Ukrainian refugees in Canada.

Conclusion

The Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program has provided vital temporary relief amidst the Ukrainian refugee crisis. While it has been effective in the short term, its limitations are clear, particularly in terms of offering sustainable solutions for integration and stability within Canadian society. This policy brief advocates for establishing a clear pathway to permanent residency for all CUAET holders, aligning with Canada's humanitarian commitments and addressing socio-economic needs more effectively. The insights from the Waterloo Region survey underline the ongoing challenges faced by service providers, highlighting the essential need for enhanced and targeted support for all migrants, including those with temporary protection or status.

By establishing clear pathways to permanent residency for CUAET holders and enhancing support services, Canada can better meet its international obligations and address practical challenges head-on. This approach requires not only policy adjustments but also a commitment to continuous evaluation and adaptation to ensure that the needs of refugees and the broader community are met. These steps are crucial for building a resilient and inclusive society, while also positioning Canada as a leader in compassionate and pragmatic policy-making on the global stage.

References

- Baban, F., Ilcan, S., & Rygiel, K. (2021). *The precarious lives of Syrians: Migration, citizenship, and temporary protection in Turkey*. McGill-Queen's University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780228009184>
- Coderre, M., & Nakache, D. (2022). From Working Tourists to Permanent Residents: Experiences of Migrant Workers with Youth Mobility Schemes in Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 23(3), 971–988. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00873-7>
- Fitzpatrick, J. (2000). Temporary protection of refugees: Elements of a formalized regime. *The American Journal of International Law*, 94(2), 279–306. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2555293>
- Fudge, J., & MacPhail, F. (2009). The Temporary Foreign Worker Program In Canada: Low-Skilled Workers As An Extreme Form Of Flexible Labor. *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal*, 31(1), 5–45.
- Furchtgott-Roth, D. (2013). The Economic Benefits of Immigration. In *Policy File*. The Manhattan Institute.
- Government of Canada. (2023a, December 5). *Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel: Key figures*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/ukraine-measures/key-figures.html>

IMRC Policy Points

September 2024

- Government of Canada (2023b, November 14). *Permanent residence for Ukrainian nationals with family members in Canada*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/ukraine-measures/pr-family-reunification/eligibility.html>
- Government of Canada. (2023c). *Fee list*. <https://ircc.canada.ca/english/information/fees/fees.asp#rprf>
- Government of Canada. (2019). *How Canada's refugee system works*.
- Guild, E. (2023, September 12). *Temporary protection and the future of Ukrainians in the EU*. Odysseus Network. Retrieved from <https://odysseus-network.eu/elspeth-guilds-publication-temporary-protection-and-the-future-of-ukrainians-in-the-eu/>
- Henebry, J. (2023). Survey of newcomer services for temporary residents in the Waterloo Region, Ontario. Manuscript in preparation. Wilfrid Laurier University.
- Ilcan, S., Rygiel, K. & Baban, F. (2018). The Ambiguous Architecture of Precarity: Temporary Protection, Everyday Living, and Migrant Journeys of Syrian Refugees. *International Journal of Migration and Border Studies* 4 (1-2): 51-70.
- Jones, G. (2020). The endless question for substitutes and the economic benefits of immigration. In *Hive Mind* (pp. 153–164). Stanford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804797054-012>
- La Grassa, J. (2022, November 1). This Ukrainian newcomer is an Uber driver. He says only having temporary status in Canada is hurting him. *CBC News*.
- Lytvynenko, B. (2023, August 24). Returning home amid the war: Why some Ukrainians are choosing to leave Toronto. *CBC News*.
- OECD. (2008). Reaping the economic benefits of immigration. *OECD Economic Surveys: Netherlands, 2008(1)*, 119-.
- Pasieka, C. (2023, March 9). He fled the war in Ukraine for Canada. Nearly a year later, he can't find a job — and he's not alone. *CBC News*.
- Soehl, T., & Van Haren, I. (2023). The effect of social capital on migrant labor market success: evidence from refugee sponsorship in Canada. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 46(15), 3224–3248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2023.2185102>
- United Nations. (1967). Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (adopted 31 January 1967, entered into force 4 October 1967) 606 UNTS 267 (Refugee Protocol).
- United Nations. (1951). Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (189 U.N.T.S. 150, entered into force April 22, 1954).