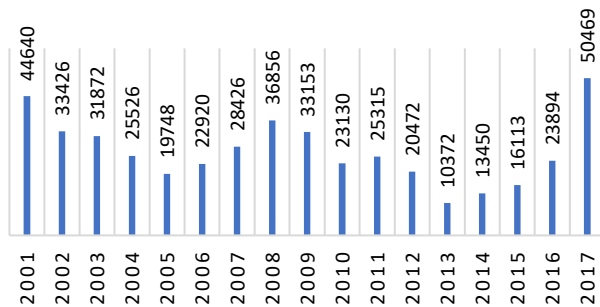


# IRREGULAR ARRIVALS AT THE BORDER IN 2017: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

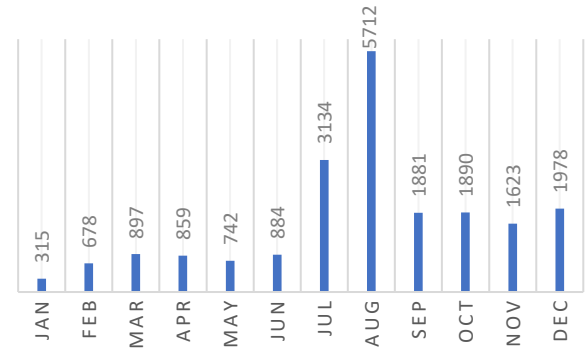
JUNE 2018

## HOW MANY?

**REFUGEE CLAIMS IN CANADA 2001-2017**



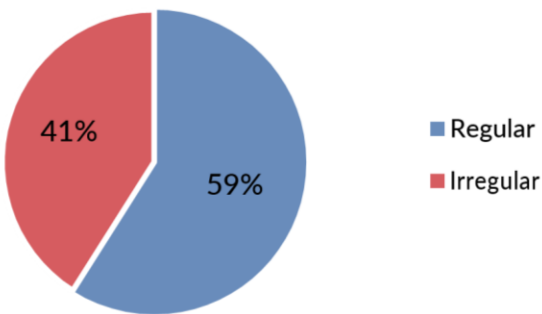
**IRREGULAR ARRIVALS IN CANADA JAN-DEC 2017**



- Total of about 50,000 asylum seekers last year.
- Comparable to numbers of claims in 2001.

- About 20,000 persons crossed the border irregularly last year to claim asylum.

**2017 ASYLUM CLAIMS DISTRIBUTION**

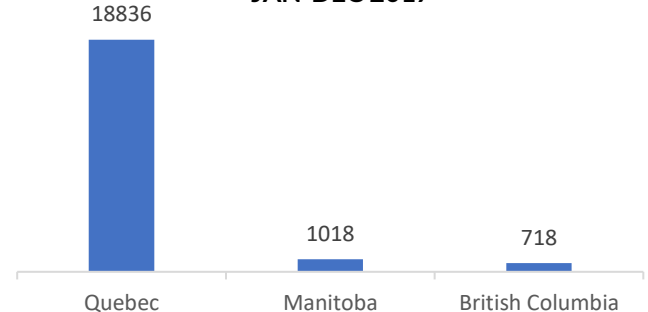


Under Canadian and international law, it is not a crime to cross a border without authorization **IF** this is to seek asylum. Due to circumstances they are fleeing, asylum seekers are often compelled to enter a territory without the required travel documents or authorizations.

## WHERE?

- 91% of irregular arrivals in 2017 took place in Quebec (96% in the first quarter of 2018).
- Why Quebec? Roxham Road is the busiest irregular entry point in Canada due to the ease and safety of the crossing as well as the publicity it received in the media in 2017.

**IRREGULAR ARRIVALS BY PROVINCE JAN-DEC 2017**



## WHO?

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**TOP 15 COUNTRIES** among irregular arrivals in 2017:

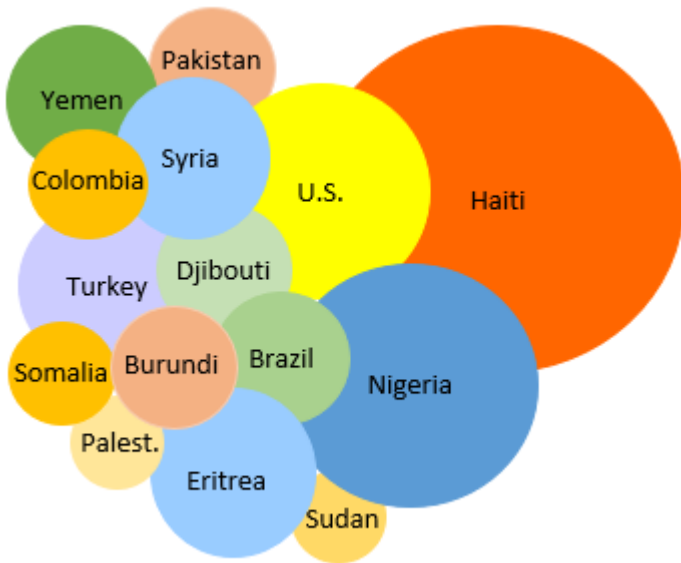
Some of those countries are at war; others have serious human rights issues.

### Top 3 :

**Haiti** → The surge last summer was mainly spurred by false accounts of guaranteed residency in Canada. Numbers dropped significantly at the end of August.

**Nigeria** → Although Nigerians claims were already among the top five source countries at the border, numbers started to increase last fall. The heightened media coverage of irregular arrivals at the Quebec border during the summer 2017 might have contributed to this increase.

**United States** → Pertain mainly to U.S. born children of non-U.S. asylum seekers.



## FAMILY COMPOSITION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS



Most asylum seekers crossing the border irregularly are a mix of families with children and persons traveling alone. According to the Quebec government, one third of irregular arrivals in Quebec last summer were children accompanying their parents.

As persecution can affect persons from all walks of life, asylum seekers arriving through the Canadian borders were of varying socio-economic/academic backgrounds.

## WHY?

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### CLAIMS FOR PROTECTION BASED ON:

#### Haiti

- Criminology/corruption (victim of common crime, family feuds, personal vendetta, etc.)
- Political opinion – activism.
- Sexual violence against women

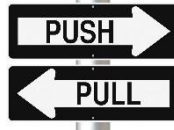
#### Nigeria

- Sexual orientation
- Risk of female genital mutilation
- Domestic violence, forced marriage.
- Religious persecution

## DECISION TO CROSS THE U.S.-CANADA BORDER:

Asylum seekers mention a mix of push/pull factors. They include:

- Having family/communities ties in Canada
- Perceived better support for refugees in Canada
- Perception that their asylum claim have better chances of being accepted in Canada



- U.S. only used as a transit point to claim asylum to Canada (U.S. visa reportedly easier to obtain than Canadian one).
- Lengthy asylum process in the U.S.
- Fear of perceived hostile U.S. rhetoric towards immigrants and foreigners.
- Fear of deportation

## IMPACT AND RESPONSE

### SECURITY CHECK

No shortcuts are being taken by the Canadian government at the border. All those entering Canada, including through irregular means, are checked by both the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canadian Border Service Agency (CBSA) regarding potential security and public health threats.



Luggage search



Fingerprinting & verification of identity



Background checks in Interpol, Canadian and American databases

According to government sources, **less than 1%** of the asylum seekers crossing the border irregularly had a serious criminal background.

### STATUS AND TIME SPENT IN THE U.S.



The majority of asylum seekers have a valid U.S. visa at the time of crossing into Canada. Others have a pending asylum claim in the U.S. A minority of people were denied asylum or have no legal residency status in the U.S.



A fair number of asylum seekers have only travelled through the U.S. on a visitor visa for a short time with the intention of claiming asylum in Canada. Others have lived in the U.S. for some time, ranging from a couple of years to more than a decade.



Under the **Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA)**, individuals in the U.S. **cannot** make a claim at the Canadian official border post **unless** they qualify for an exception to the agreement, such as having a close family member in Canada.



The STCA **does not apply** to those who cross the border in-between official border posts, as at the time they claim asylum, there are already in Canada.

## INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT



Irregular crossing at the Canadian border.



Interception by RCMP. Security screening. Transfer to CBSA.



Eligibility examination: medical and security screening, verification of identity and interview to check eligibility.

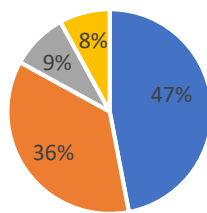


If asylum claim eligible, transferred to the Immigration Refugee Board for a hearing.

As for all asylum claims, the Immigration and Refugee Board will assess whether those who have crossed the border irregularly have a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country. Their files are not processed before, or prioritized over, those who make their claims at an official port of entry or at an inland office. The merits of each claim is assessed on an individual basis.

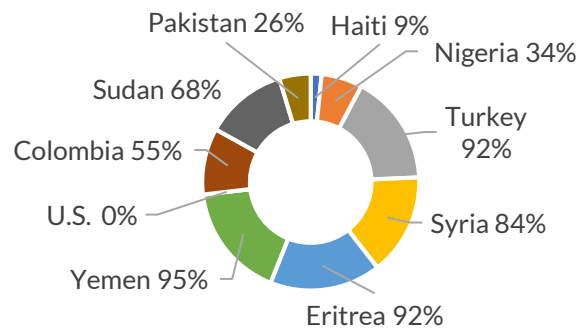
15% of those who crossed the border irregularly in 2017 had their claims finalized at the end of March 2018. 47% of them obtained refugee status:

Finalized claims - irregular arrivals



■ Accepted ■ Rejected ■ Abandoned ■ Withdrawn/other

Acceptance Rate for Top 10 Source Countries (Claims finalized between Feb 2017 - Mar 2018)



## RESPONSE MECHANISM/CONTINGENCY PLANS

The different levels of government and civil society put in place response mechanisms and additional resources in response to the surge of asylum seekers at the Quebec border last summer, which includes:

Increased capacity of border officials as well as immigration and RCMP officers (redeploying staff from other offices, opening of new processing centers)

Simplified processing and improved reception conditions at the border to accommodate larger numbers of asylum seekers (mobile processing units, transfer of eligibility interviews to inland offices, set up of winterized trailers, delivery of basic services by Canadian Red Cross)

40% increase in processing capacity of claims at the IRB thanks to measures such as the creation of a dedicated team of decision-makers to hear cases of irregular arrivals

Additional shelters in destination cities

Fast-tracking of work permit applications to minimize pressures on provincial social services

Outreach and public awareness campaign to dispel misinformation among groups of potential asylum seekers about the Canadian asylum system

These special measures have been maintained and refined in the event of another influx, along with operational contingency plans not only in Quebec but in other provinces as well.