



2023

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

December 2023

WELCOMING COMMUNITIES COALITION

MULTICULTURAL AND IMMIGRANT SERVICES
ASSOCIATION OF NORTH VANCOUVER ISLAND



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Executive Summary

Building a truly welcoming and inclusive environment that retains newcomers and allows them to thrive, requires the collective effort of an entire community. Immigrants encounter numerous obstacles and hurdles in their paths, from their initial arrival in Canada to when they become active community members where they've chosen to live. Community support plays a vital role at every stage of this journey, including the settlement process, adaptation to new cultural norms, community integration, and ultimately in their flourishing participation as valued members of the community. Newcomers have a wide array of needs depending on the individual and where they are on their journey. Ensuring the smooth integration and long-term retention of immigrants in our communities is a vital priority, as it plays a pivotal role in maintaining continuous community prosperity and promoting overall growth.

The Welcoming Communities Coalition (WCC), known nationally as a Local Immigrant Partnership (LIP) is a community development initiative coordinated by the Immigrant Welcome Centre (IWC) in the Campbell River, Mount Waddington, and Courtenay regions. Through connecting, conversation, research, public education and strategic assessment, the Welcoming Communities Coalition identifies needs and offers innovative, sustainable solutions to enhance newcomer wellbeing.



This needs assessment report, a follow up from a previous report created in 2020¹, determines the current needs of newcomers and raises awareness of those needs with WCC members, other partners and stakeholders, and the wider community with the goal of filling those gaps. It also highlights differences compared to the previous report. This study surveyed and held focus groups with newcomers who had settled in the Campbell River and the Comox Valley region within the past five years, about their integration experience. Community residents were surveyed for their perspectives about immigration and what initiatives might create a more welcoming community environment. Various stakeholders who provide services to newcomers including settlement agencies, language training providers, educational institutions, Chamber of Commerce and community organizations were interviewed on current services to newcomers and how they could be improved. In this report we have taken their voices to the core of our conclusions and recommendations.



1) Sense of Welcoming and Belonging

Social connections and community building are integral to the settlement experience. While a majority of newcomers noted feeling welcomed and a sense of belonging in their current community, 20% of newcomers did report experiencing racism or discrimination in the past five years, particularly about their language skills, ethnicity, accent and in the workplace. Some also noted difficulties finding ways to socialize or their English ability being a barrier to building relationships with established residents. Established residents we surveyed also reported experiencing racism and discrimination and many felt that their communities could be more welcoming to newcomers. This demonstrates a need for better integration and community engagement through programs that facilitate more social interactions between immigrants and established community members. An active effort to reduce experiences of racism for all community members is also important.

2) Housing and Basic Necessities

Affordable housing has become a major concern for people across Canada and this was an especially high concern for newcomers. Understanding how to find housing in Canada along with its increasing costs were unexpected difficulties for many newcomers. They also discussed difficulties with accessing healthcare, transportation, and childcare. Increased cost of living and lack of available necessary resources can be an especially difficult, even frightening and unexpected experience for newcomers who come to Canada with limited resources or enter as refugees. Supporting newcomers at the beginning of their new journey into settlement in Canada is crucial so that they can fully integrate into society and be able to fully contribute to their communities. Transparency and clear communication about the current availability of resources in Canada is also important so that newcomers can prepare before immigrating if possible and can manage expectations as to what their new life could potentially be once they settle into their new community.

3) Education

When newcomers enter Canada without a strong English ability or confidence in their English, they often find it difficult not only for communication in general but to build friendships with Canadians, access important information, speak to service providers, and to find work. Many newcomers we spoke to describe a greater need for accessible and affordable English learning programs and more opportunities to practice their English such as conversation groups with other newcomers and English speakers.

4) Employment Support

The need for greater employment opportunities and employment support was expressed by participants. Specifically, understanding the job application and hiring process and reducing discrimination when seeking employment were major concerns along with being able to find work in the newcomer's area of expertise. Often barriers such as translating documentation, English ability, and foreign credentials or experience not recognized in Canada make it difficult to find work in their field or any work at all.

5) Accessibility of Services

Many newcomers shared a strong positive experience with IWC services and other settlement supports. Respondents described interacting with helpful, friendly, informed staff who made them feel supported and understood. Service providers who created community events or provided other services such as educational support reported very positive feedback from attendees. Certain types of services such as interpretation, housing, and mental health services were not accessed as much and the few participants who reported a poor to fair experience noted barriers such as long wait times and lack of affordable options. Service providers also noted a funding and capacity issue making it difficult to provide as much care and support to newcomers as they would like. Hence, there is a need to provide accessible, affordable services and advocate for increased funding to these crucial support systems for newcomers. Some participants noted difficulty accessing information and finding the services they need to settle into Canada. Understanding how to find housing, references, taxes, and setting up bank accounts, were some examples participants provided. Noted issues included lack of translated information, confusion in which organizations or government bodies to contact, and not having support throughout the entire process to ensure it is done correctly. Participants suggested having a liaison or point-person who they can speak to if they have questions or want help translating the needed information, and having one central website or document with exactly what they need to complete before and upon arriving in Canada.

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Introduction

A vital, dynamic society is one that is open and able to welcome, integrate, and support newcomers. Immigrants, with their diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, contribute not only to the cultural richness of a community but also to its economic vitality. As such, understanding and addressing the unique needs of immigrants is not just a matter of compassion but a strategic imperative for the growth and prosperity of any community.

This report delves into the multifaceted aspects of immigrant needs and the services available to support them in our community. It is the product of extensive research, including interviews, focus groups, and surveys, conducted with immigrants, established residents, and service providers. The aim of this report is to shed light on the challenges and opportunities faced by immigrants, to place their voices at the forefront, and to provide a roadmap for improving the services and support systems that are essential for their successful integration.

This report is a follow up on an initial needs assessment report created by IWC in 2020. Our findings reflect the rich tapestry of experiences, challenges, and triumphs that make up the immigrant experience. This report also demonstrates a shift in some respects compared to the previous report such as immigrants' sense of connection with their communities, discrimination, and their experience accessing services as well as recurring concepts which emphasizes the need to address long standing concerns. This report also demonstrates the impact of recent world events including the COVID-19 pandemic and conflict in Ukraine that posit particularly devastating impacts on newcomers. Through this report, we hope to not only identify areas where improvement is needed but also to celebrate the strength and resilience of those who have chosen to call our community their home.

In the following sections, we will explore the key themes that have emerged from our research, from issues related to language barriers and systemic challenges to the pivotal role played by support services. Our ultimate goal is to provide a comprehensive and insightful analysis that informs and guides the development of policies, services, and

support mechanisms that will enable immigrants to thrive and, in turn, contribute to the prosperity and growth of our community.



Research Questions

This study addresses some of the perceived needs of newcomers, identifies the barriers and obstacles that may hinder satisfying these needs. The research questions under consideration include:

1. What has been the Immigrant/newcomer experience integrating into the Campbell River/Courtenay regions as it relates to integration into Canadian culture and sense of belonging?
2. What are the implications of barriers and challenges immigrants and newcomers experience towards their successful community settlement and integration?
3. How can settlement service providers, communities at large and government organizations foster a more welcoming and inclusive community for immigrants and newcomers?
4. How has the immigrant/newcomer settlement experience and access to services changed since the previous report in 2020?

Methodology

Primary and secondary data sources are used in this study. This study used mixed methods of qualitative and quantitative design. The data collection strategies used included surveys, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. Primary data was gathered through survey instruments and interviews from stakeholders, service providers and settlement organizations between April and August 2023. Survey questions were designed in consultation with Local Immigration Partnerships across Canada. Data was analyzed through a series of correlations, descriptive analyses, and comparison of trends overtime with the previous report. Open responses in the survey data were analyzed through content and thematic analysis. Interviews and focus group data was analyzed through the transcripts of participant responses through thematic analysis.

Secondary data sources for demographic and immigration statistics reported here include Statistics Canada (StatsCan)², the IWC Annual Report from 2022⁵, Campbell River and Comox Valley's Vital Signs Reports^{3,4}, and the previous IWC Welcoming Communities Coalition Needs Assessment report from 2020¹.

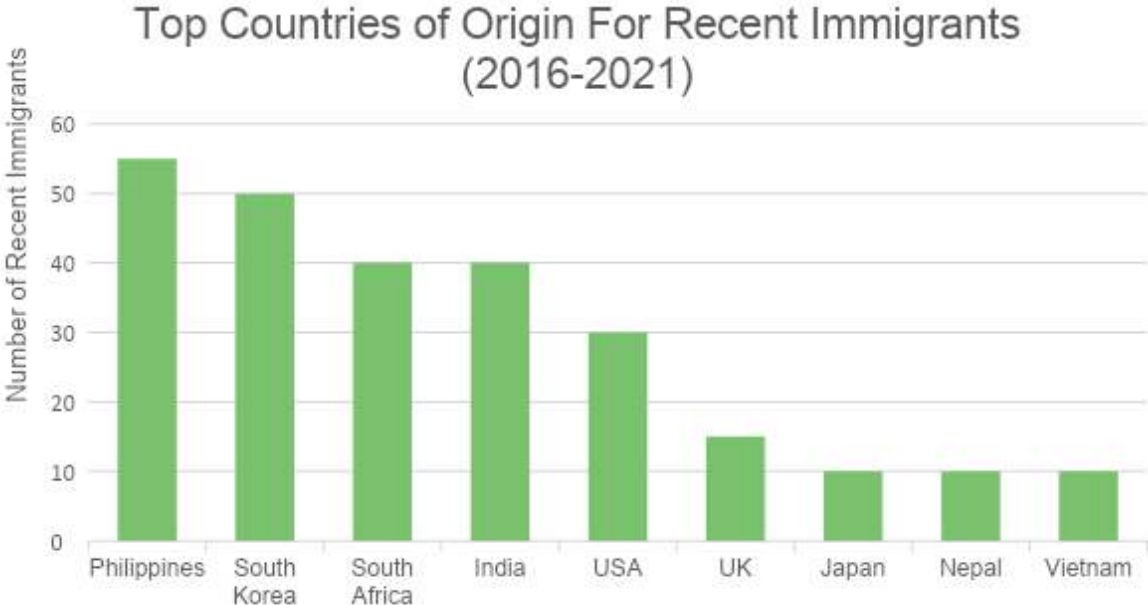
This report aims to reflect the essence of the ideas and perspectives raised during the engagement sessions and from online survey results. It does not attempt to include every comment received and does not intend to imply consensus on the part of participants. It presents a summary of what was heard from participants and aims to highlight any trends or patterns within this data set and compared to the 2020 data.

Demographic Profile on Campbell River and Comox Valley



Campbell River

According to 2021 Census Data from Statistics Canada^{2,6}, the total population in Campbell River was 38,108- up 7.5% from 35,440 in 2016. The average age of Campbell River residents is 45.7 years of age and approximately 10.3% of the population are immigrants. 415 immigrants were welcomed into the community from 2016 to 2021. In terms of annual income, individuals over 15 years old in private dwellings in 2020 earned an average of \$31,820 annually. According to recent reports, about 10.1% of the city's population currently live in poverty³. Despite inflation and rising costs of living putting pressure on residents and newcomers, the IWC continues to be a vital source of support as seen by their help of 874 clients in 2021-2022 who represented 94 different countries of origin!

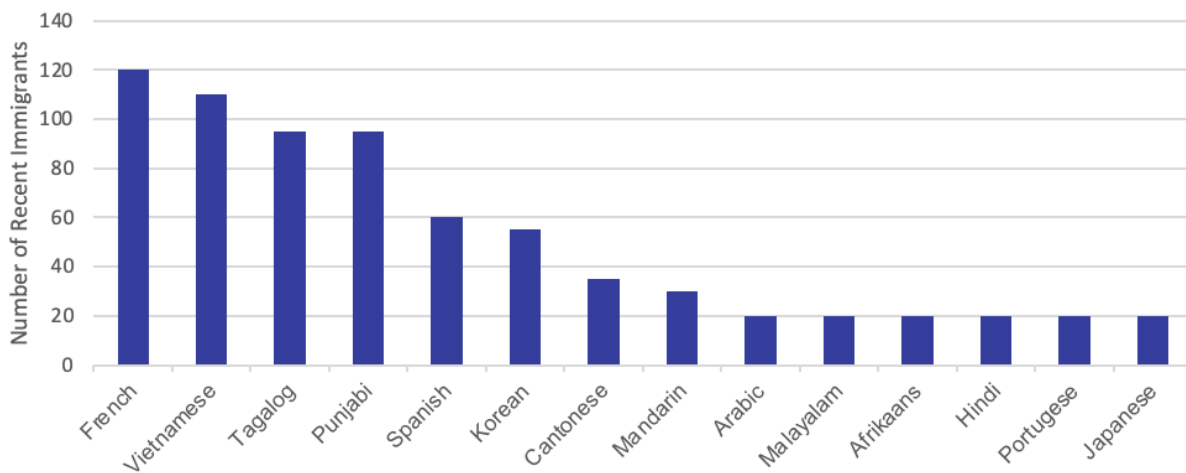


*Source: Statistics Canada - 2021 Census.



*These numbers do not include newcomers who came to the region after 2021, including the recent arrival of Ukrainians under the CUEAT program (Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel).

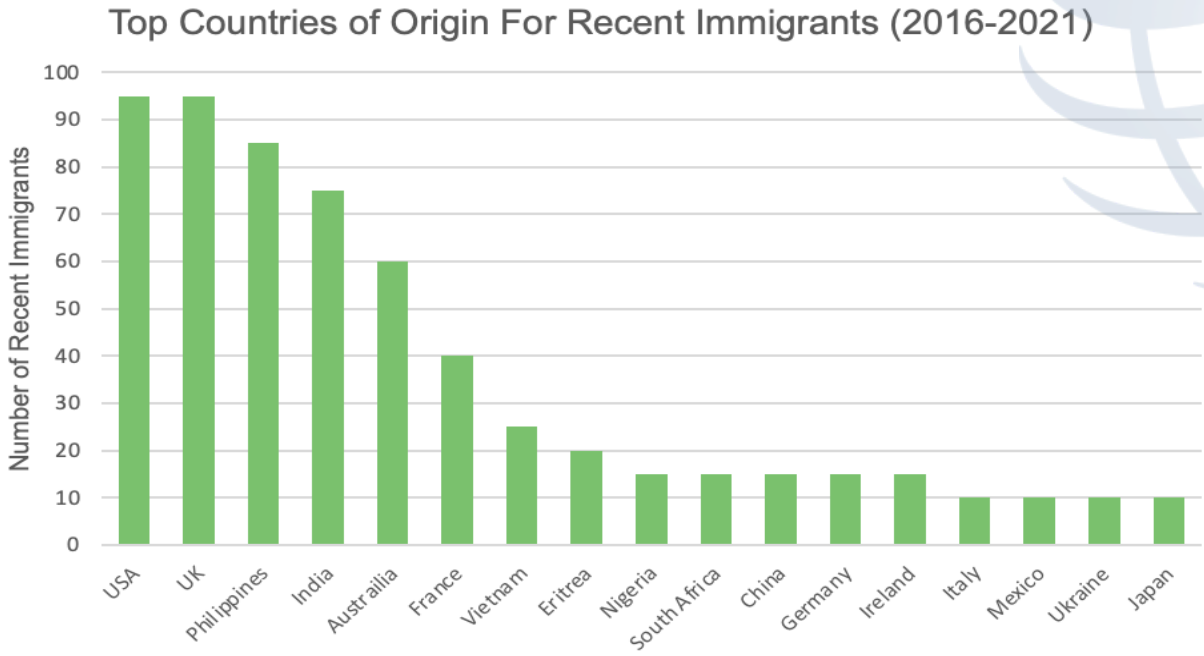
Languages Spoken Most Often At Home In Campbell River Other Than English



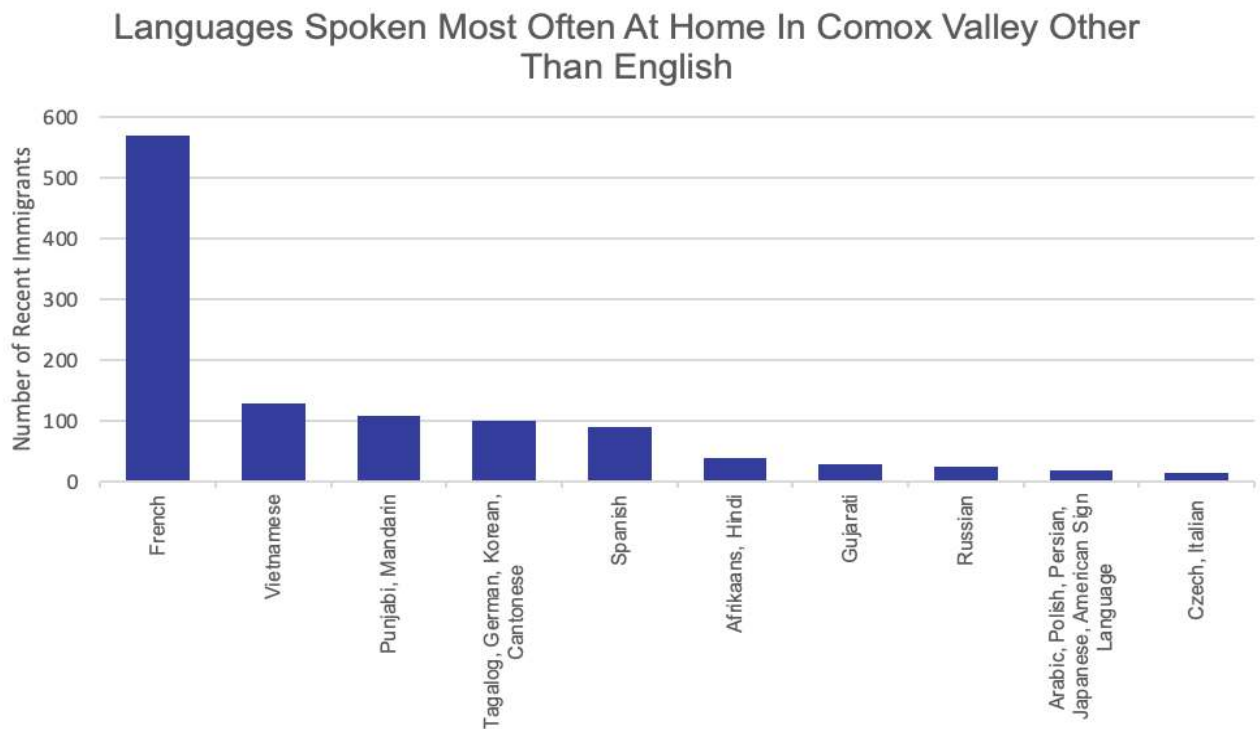
*Source: Statistics Canada - 2021 Census.

Comox Valley

Data from StatsCan in 2021²⁷ show that the Comox Valley's total population in 2021 was 72,445 Population - up 8.9% from 66,527 in 2016. The average age of the Comox Valley population in 2021 was 47.4 years old. Newcomers settle into the community every year with 775 immigrants welcomed to the Comox Valley from 2016 to 2021 and 12.7% of the community's total population identifying as immigrants in 2021. Individuals over 15 years old in private dwellings in 2020 earned an average of \$61,195 annually. According to the most recent data from 2022, the living wage in Comox Valley is approximately \$20.26.² Many community members currently rely on public transit or do not commute with a personal vehicle, with 2,745 People who commuted to work by bus, walking, or bicycling in 2021. The Immigrant Welcome Centre has continued to be an essential support service for newcomers. IWC has helped 874 clients in 2021-2022 who represented 94 different countries of origin.



*Source: Statistics Canada - 2021 Census.



*Source: Statistics Canada - 2021 Census.

Findings

Newcomer Survey

Participant Overview

A total of 94 people answered our Newcomer Survey for immigrants who have lived here five years or less. This is comparable to the 102 participants from the 2020 Needs Assessment newcomer survey. A majority of participants in this year's survey:



Identified as White
(41%)



Identified as Women
(72%)

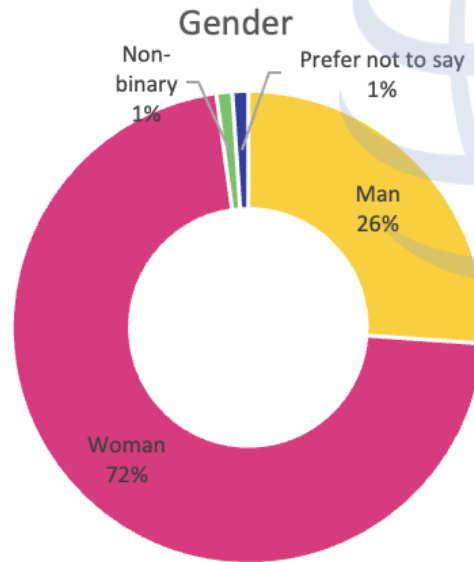
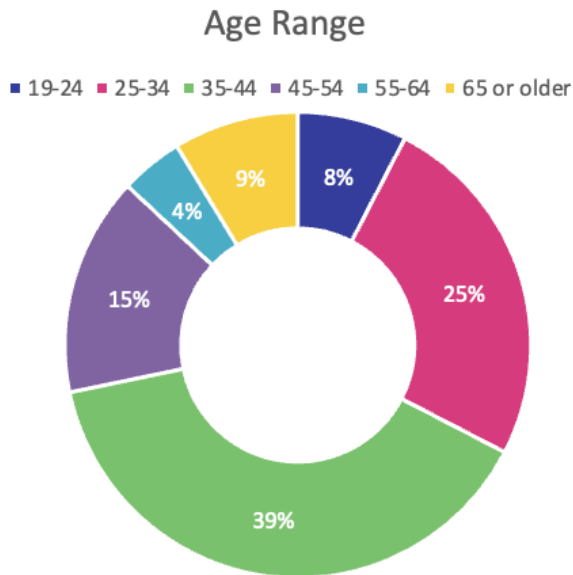


48% live in Campbell
River



39% were between
35-44 years old.

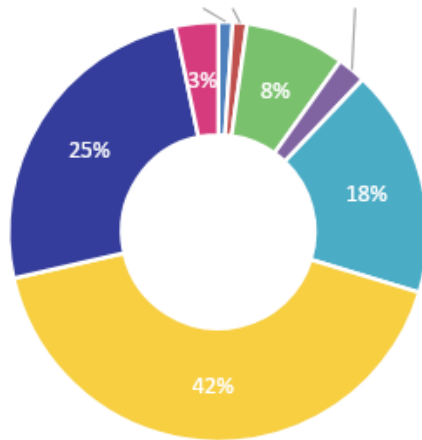
The following graphs illustrate the demographic breakdown of the participants who responded to the immigrant survey. Newcomer immigrant survey respondents represent immigrants that arrived in Canada within the past five years. The newcomer survey respondent's cultural identity and immigrant class shows respondents come from a variety of backgrounds and under a variety of entry classes. The demographics of the newcomer participants in this year's survey were comparable to the previous report with a key difference being the ethnicity of participants with 37% more newcomers identifying as white and 18 less people as Christian in this year's survey. There is also a difference in citizenship status with the introduction of the CUAET, more temporary foreign workers, and less individuals with permanent residency status which may influence their immigration experience. The potential difference in backgrounds across the two reports may contribute to the difference in responses.



In this year's survey, the majority of newcomers were in middle adulthood and identified as women. A vast majority of participants have advanced education, with some participants having no formal education or below high school level. In terms of current employment, most participants are employed however 12% are unemployed and 6% are retired. Participants mainly come from the Comox Valley, Courtenay, and Campbell River and we did not reach participants from Fanny Bay or Black Creek. Most participants were either atheist or Christian. There may be some bias in the responses in this given that respondents were not from a variety of faiths and did not represent a significant variety in ages and gender identities. Correlations between demographic variables and survey responses were not explored due to insufficient even representation across diverse backgrounds and identities in the survey sample.

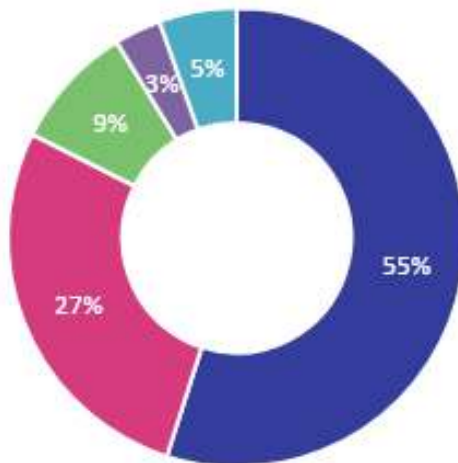


Education



- No formal education
- Elementary School
- High school or equivalent
- Trade/technical school
- College diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD

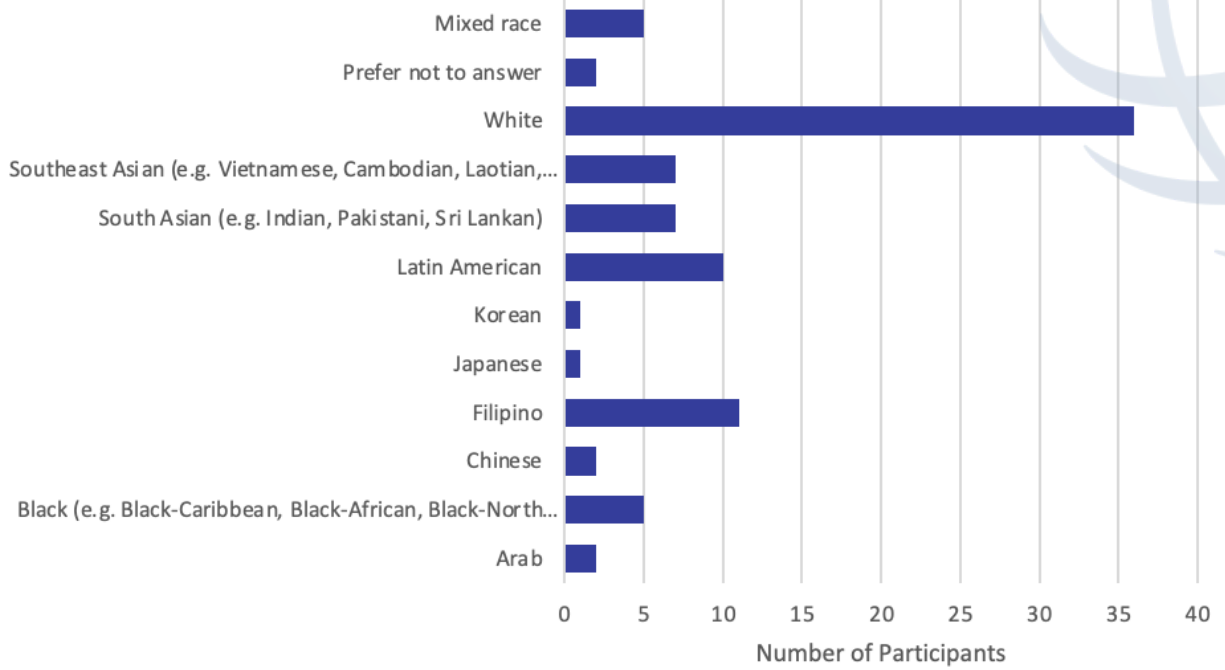
Employment



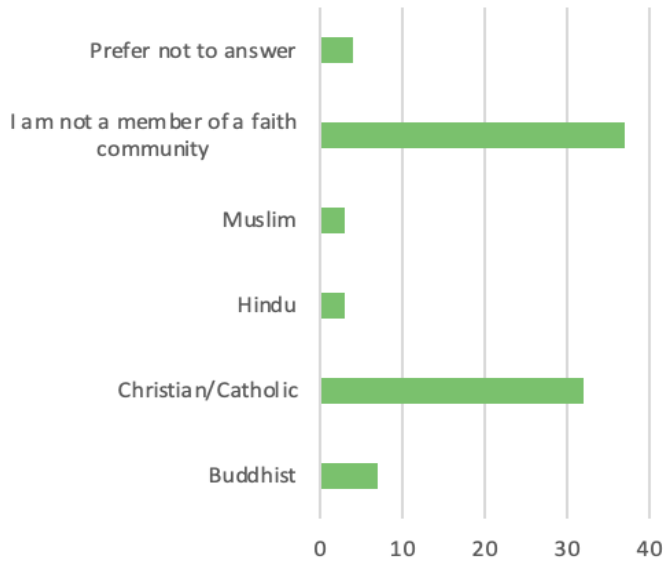
- I am employed or self-employed (working full time)
- I am employed or self-employed (working part time)
- I am unemployed (looking for work)
- I am unemployed (not working and not looking for work because of school, taking care of children, etc.)
- I am retired



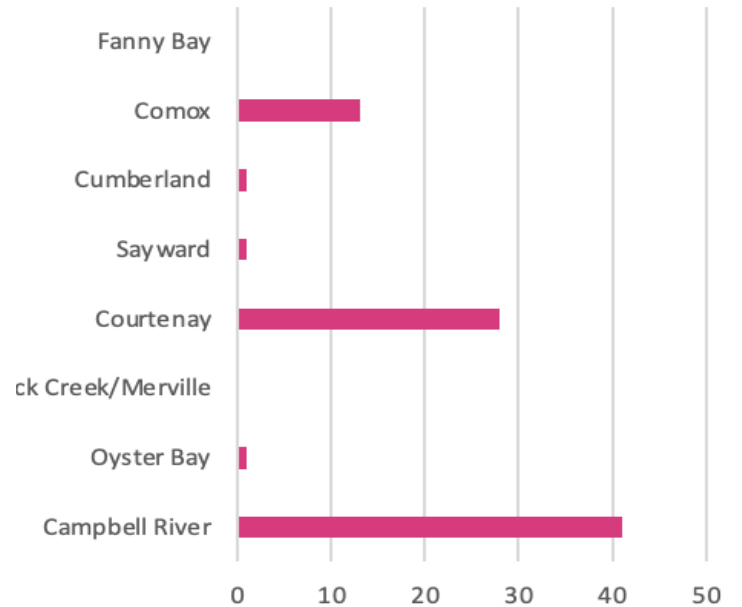
Ethnicity



Religion

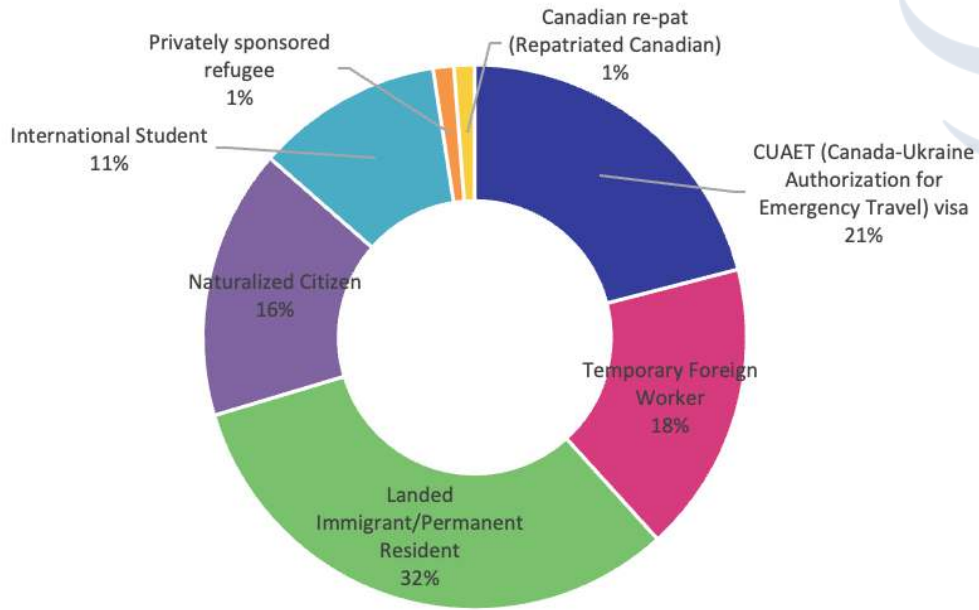


Where do you live?

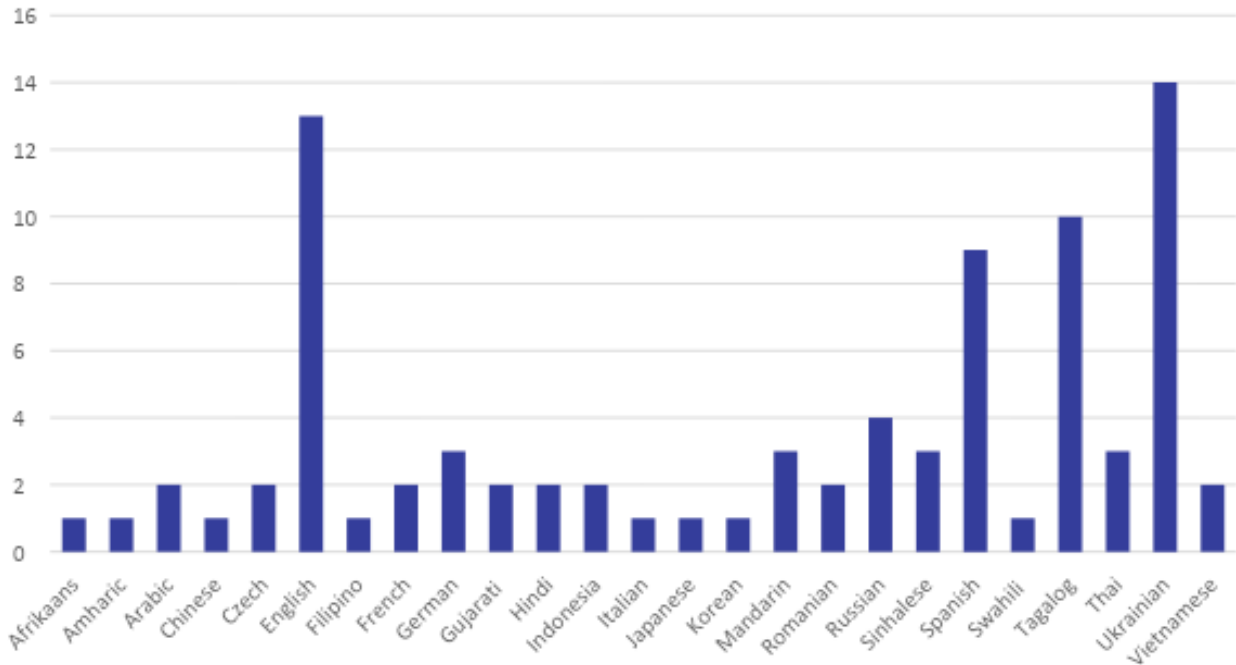


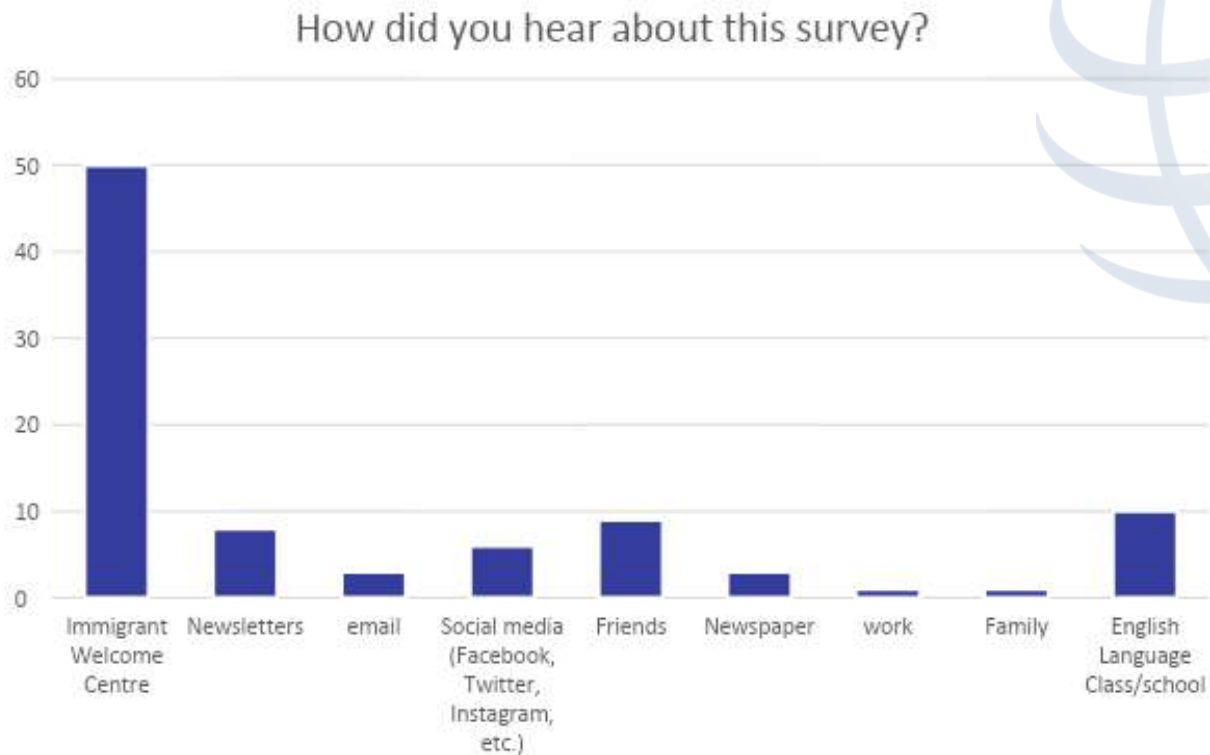


Citizenship Status



First language



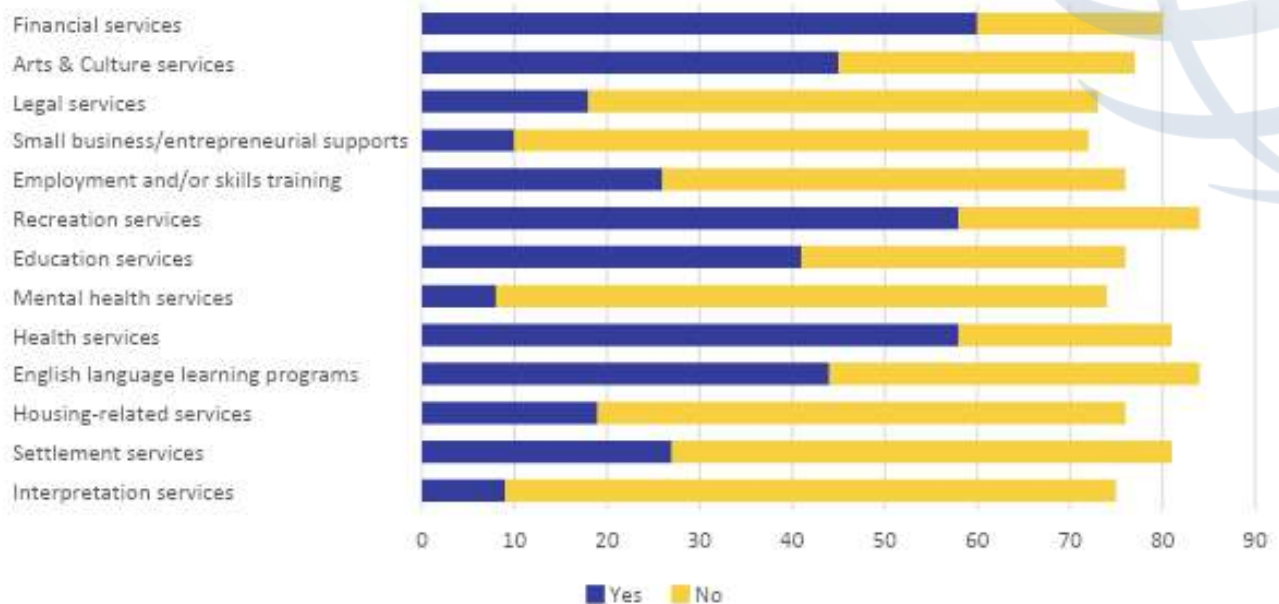


Settlement Experiences of Newcomers: Survey Responses

This section outlines the experiences and challenges at various points on the newcomer journey to community settlement and integration after arrival. It is based on survey and focus groups participants' responses. Elements considered range from basic settlement services such as orientation, language acquisition, employment and housing support and help with daily life to social inclusion and integration support. The following graphs highlight patterns and trends in newcomer experiences, and we also emphasize additional responses and comments to demonstrate specific and unique community members' needs and concerns.

Accessing Services

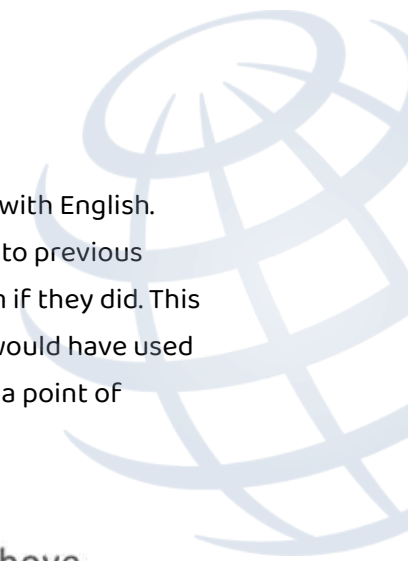
Have you or your family members used any of the following services in the community?



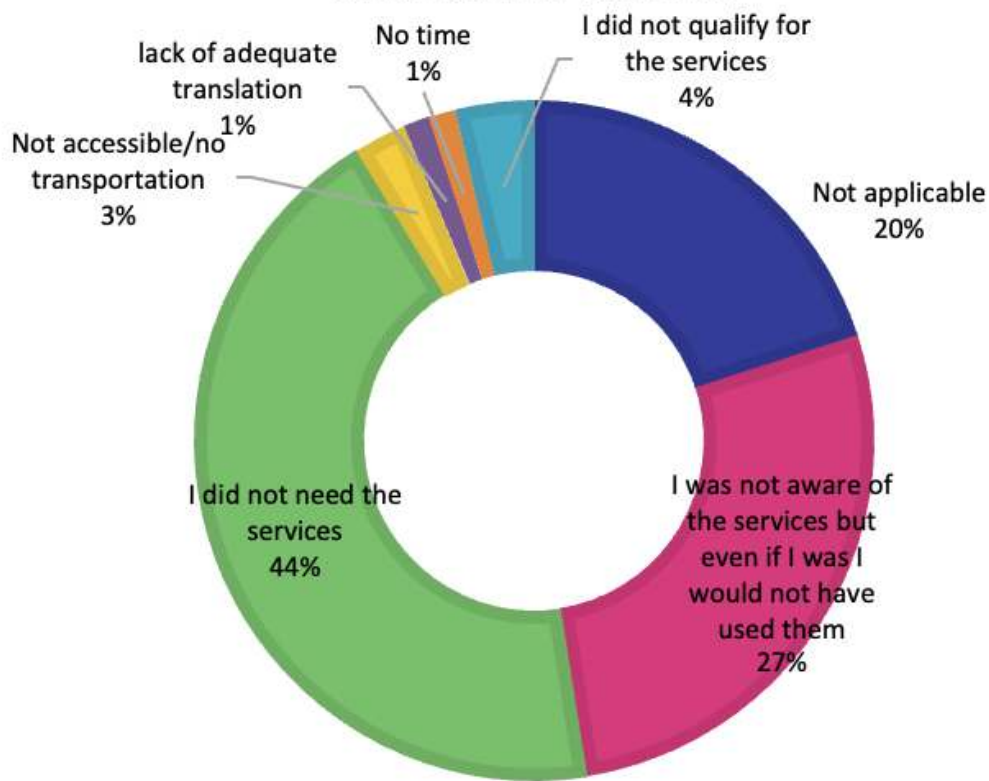
According to survey responses, the top 4 services used by participants and/or their families were Financial, Health, Recreation services (e.g., Pool, sports fields, yoga classes), and Arts & Culture. Services that were the least used include interpretation services, mental health services, and small business supports. When asked why they were not accessing IWC services, participants mainly noted that they did not need services (44%), were not aware of the existence of these services but would not have used them even if they were aware of them (27%), or felt they were not applicable to them (20%). Those who did have access and used these services reported mostly excellent experiences. The survey also asked for reasons for any poor experiences with services which included long wait times, high costs, and language barriers. When asked about their experiences with IWC services over the last five years, most participants reported that they did not access the services listed.

Compared to data from our 2020 report, more respondents accessed recreation and arts and culture programs than educational services. Small business, mental health services, and interpretation services continue to be the least accessed services. This may reveal continued difficulties in pursuing entrepreneurial goals and a continued stigma around accessing counselling or mental health services. There was also a lack of use of interpretation services yet at the same

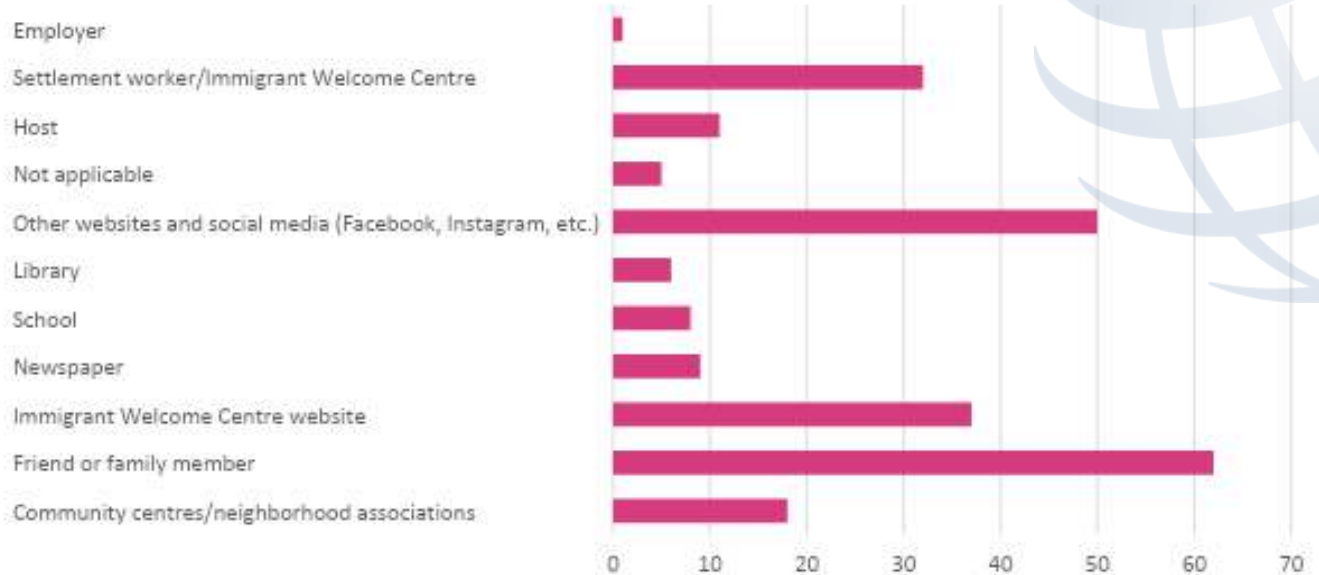
time, participants expressed a strong need for translation services and difficulties with English. Forty four percent of participants reported that they did not need services, similar to previous reports, and 27% felt that they did not know about services but would not use them if they did. This is a stark difference from the 35% of participants in 2020 who reported that they would have used services if they knew about them. Difficulty accessing information continues to be a point of difficulty for newcomers in both the 2020 and 2023 reports.



If You Have Not Used Any Of The Services Listed Above, What Are The Reasons?



How did you learn about the services you used?

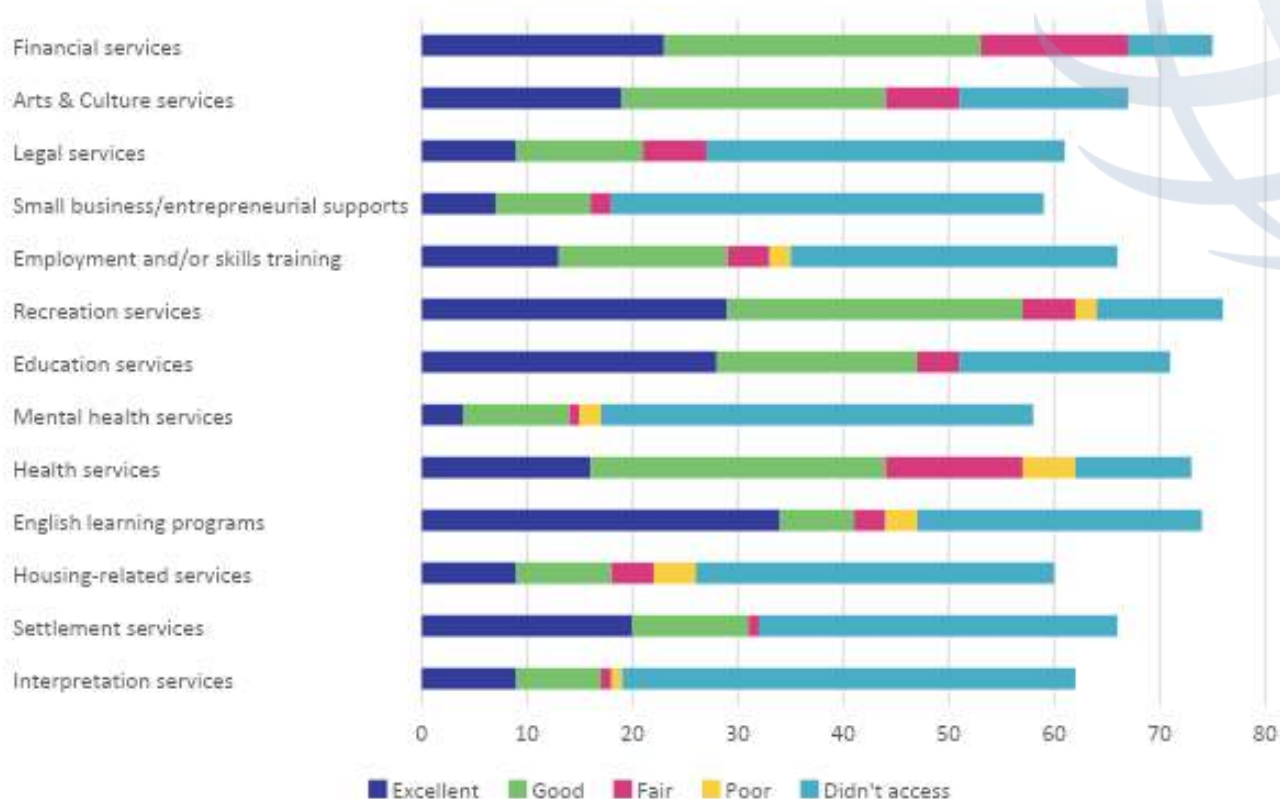


As we examined the experiences of using IWC services further, we can see a majority of participants did not use most of the services offered but those who did reported mainly a good or excellent experience. To understand their experiences with community services in depth, we asked respondents to name what their experience was like if they reported excellent but also if they reported a fair/poor experience. In the tables below, we can see that those who reported an excellent experience named their experiences with staff as positive citing friendly, helpful workers and were made to feel understood and had opportunities to learn what they needed to know. Participants also named feeling welcomed and that they were in a patient, non-judgemental environment. Some also described positive experiences with specific services such as English learning programs, settlement services and healthcare.

"Thanks to the Immigration Center for helping us, they are like a house light for a lot of immigrants. They forever have my eternal gratitude."-Newcomer Respondent

In 2020, newcomers reported the lowest quality of IWC services being legal and employment services, but we have seen a decrease in negative reports of those services this year. In fact, there were overall fewer negative reports on service quality in our current report. The common concerns from those who did report poor experiences: high cost, long wait times, and language barriers. Most respondents in our current survey report positive experiences and cite friendly and support staff.

Please rate your experience using the following services within the last 5 years.



If you had an excellent experience using a community service that you want to share, please tell us about it here:

Comment	Number of Participants	Percentage
Helpful, friendly, considerate, understanding	9	19.1%
Helped learn processes and get info e.g., with taxes	6	12.8%
Immigration Centre and Work BC are doing a great job	6	12.8%
Learning English	4	8.5%
Good healthcare/dental care	3	6.4%
Follow up	2	4.3%
Settlement service	2	4.3%
Patient/non judgemental	2	4.3%
I feel welcome to access to services	2	4.3%

Up to date info	1	2.1%
Library	1	2.1%
Fast and Efficient	1	2.1%
Discounted fitness program	1	2.1%
Ukrainian association support	1	2.1%
Positive college experience	1	2.1%
Social events that bring community together	1	2.1%
NIEFS is very helpful. I got coverage from NIEFS to pass my First Aid course and First Adult course to be employed.	1	2.1%
I am visiting the VIPL almost every day using email and other services. It helps me very good.	1	2.1%
Excellent recreation service close to the place where we are living help us to spend our days in Campbell River with fun. Swimming pool, ice arena, soccer field	1	2.1%

Those who reported a fair/poor experience cited issues such as long wait times to access services, cost of services, and difficulty communicating in English and not having adequate translation services available to help them communicate their needs. Some also felt services were not helpful or of poor quality overall or were not able to access services at all. There were also responses describing issues with specific services such as lack of available healthcare providers or felt there was not enough adequate follow up or coordination between services which made using services more difficult. These results demonstrate that while many of those who are able to access services do report having positive experiences, difficulty reaching service providers and barriers in accessing services such as cost, and language make it extremely difficult for many newcomers to feel supported and have what they need to make settlement a possibility for them.

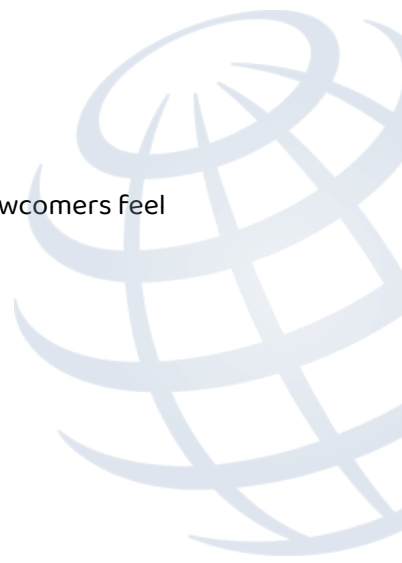
If you had "poor" or "fair" experiences with any of the services listed above, please check the box that describes why. (Select all that apply.)

Comment	Number of Participants	Percentage
Long wait times	22	21.4%
Language barriers	19	18.4%
High cost of services	15	14.6%
Services didn't help or insufficient support	9	8.7%
Poor quality of services	8	7.8%
Lack of sufficient information	7	6.8%
Cultural barriers	6	5.8%
Not able to access	6	5.8%
Lack of coordination between services	4	3.9%
Unfriendly staff	3	2.9%
Lack of doctors	1	1.0%
Lack of follow up after finalization	1	1.0%
Missing option for people age 35-50	1	1.0%
The difficulty to get a credit card because you immigrate and don't have a credit score....	1	1.0%

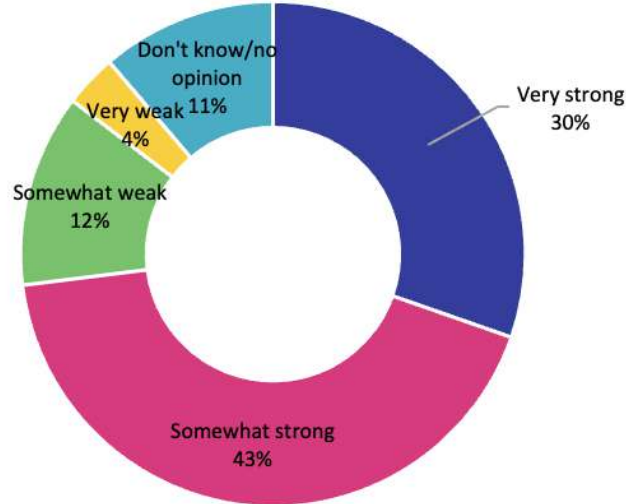
Sense of Belonging

A sense of belonging and connection is an essential component of the settlement experience. Hence, our survey also asked about participants' integration into the community and if they felt welcomed. Seventy-three percent of participants reported a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging and 89% felt welcomed by the community so most did feel a sense of social connection in their community. While this is still a high degree of participants feeling a sense of community connection, this is comparable to the 90% of respondents who felt welcomed in our previous report. In addition, 56% rarely or never felt isolated over the past year but those who did feel isolated reported that it was mainly due to feeling homesick, difficulty speaking English or lived far from family. This level of isolation may also be partly attributed to the experiences of newcomers over the pandemic and due to global conflicts, that led to their need to leave their

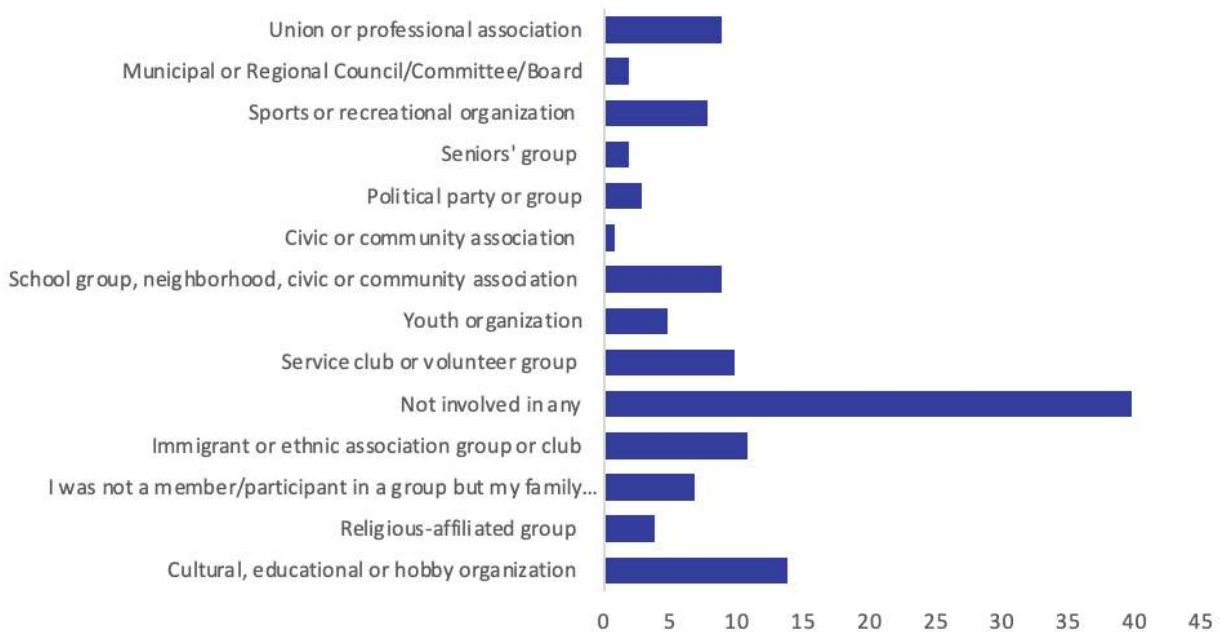
homeland that they may not have left otherwise. Relationships that have helped newcomers feel settled and happy, however include their friends, family, school, and work.

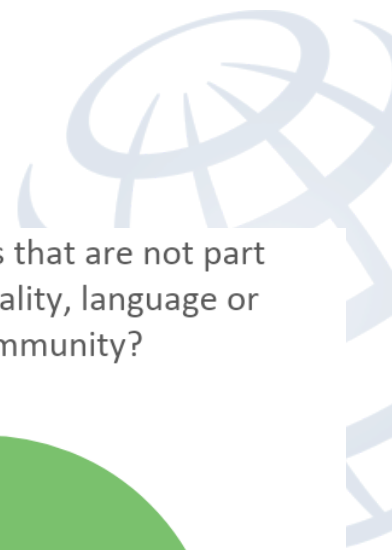


How would you describe your sense of belonging in the community?

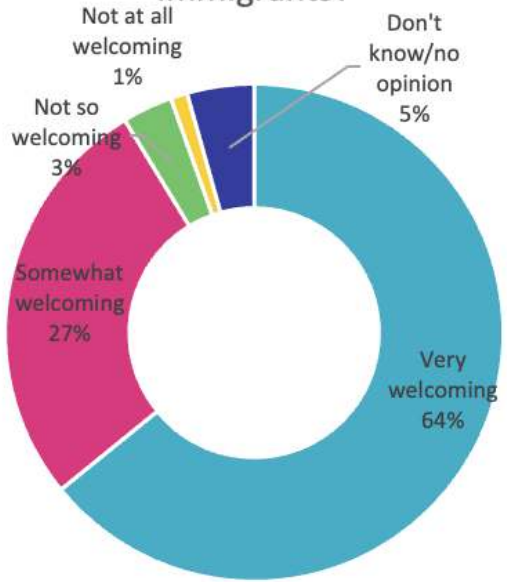


Please indicate if you were involved in any group or association within the past 5 years.

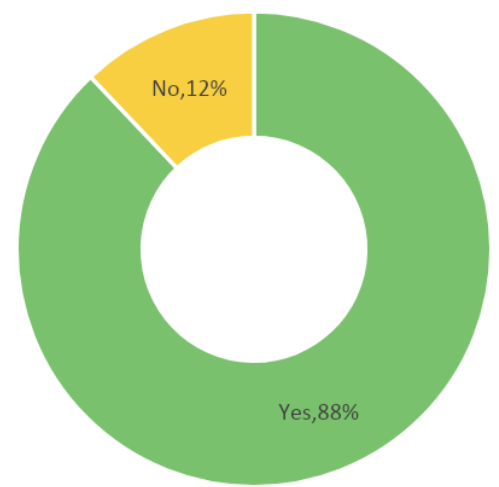




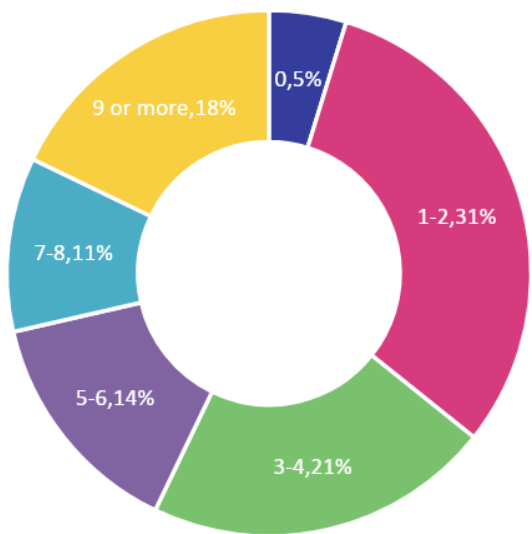
How welcoming are the people of this community towards immigrants?



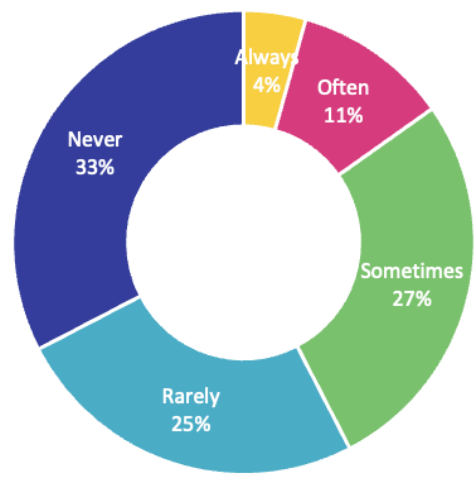
Do you have friends that are not part of your own nationality, language or religious community?



How many of these friends can you ask for help if you need it, such as close friends and neighbours?

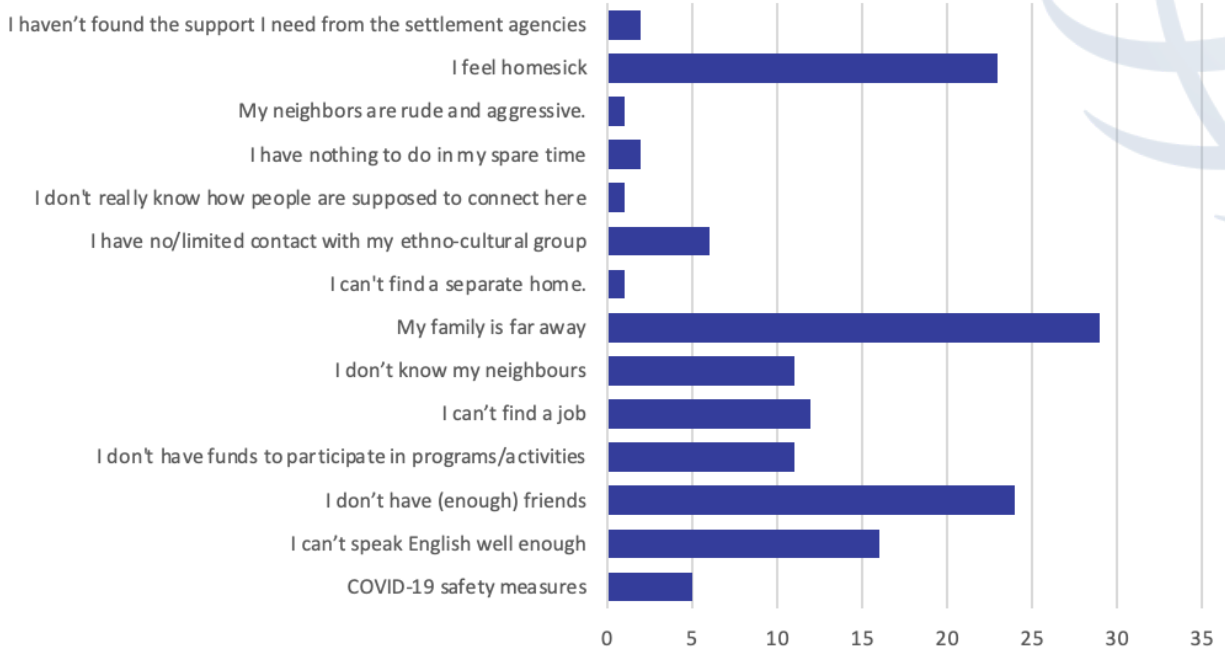


Have you felt isolated or alone in the community within the past 12 months

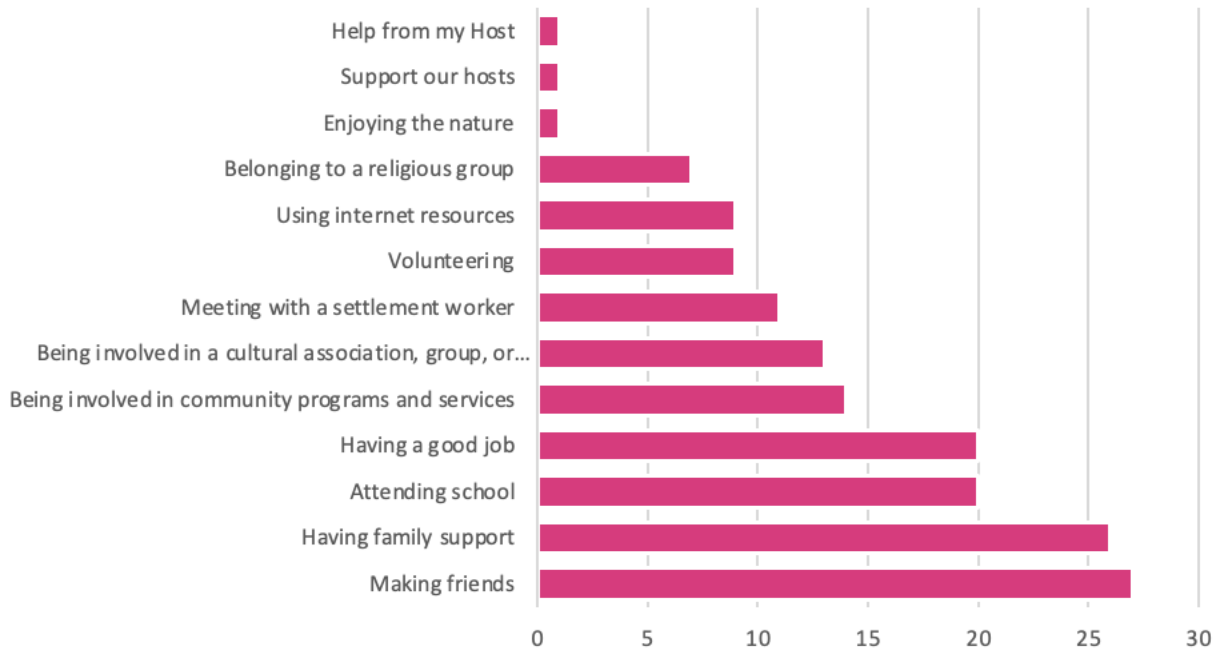




If you felt isolated, why?



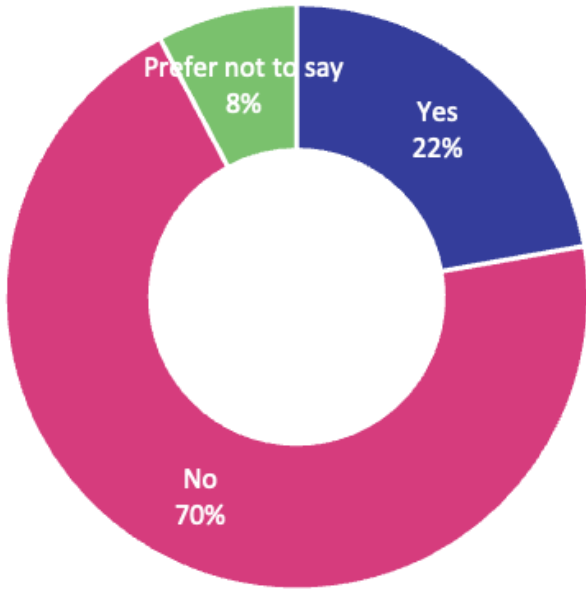
What helped you most in the last year to feel settled and happy?



Racism and Discrimination

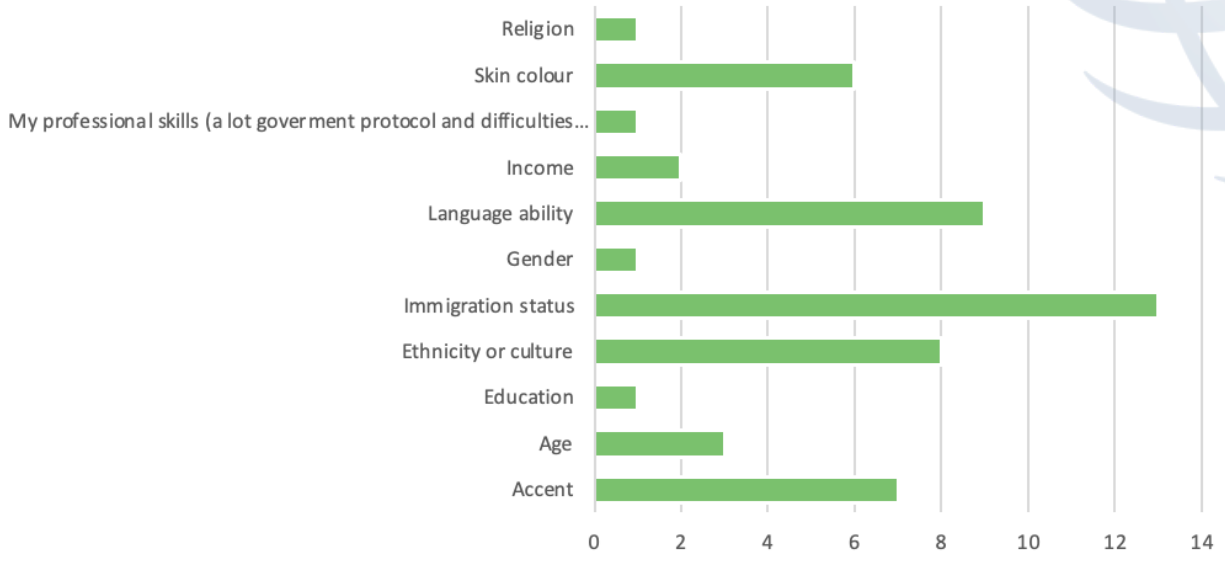
Experiences of racism or discrimination are also a concern that IWC feels should be monitored to be able to provide support to immigrants, if need be. We also asked newcomers if they experienced any discrimination or unfair treatment in the past five years. About 70% reported that they have not experienced discrimination in the past five years but 20% have. Those who did report they experienced racism felt that it was due to immigration status, accent, and language ability and a vast majority experienced racism at work or in the job application process. Compared to the first needs assessment report, reports of discrimination decreased by 9% but this may be attributed to the different mix of racial/ethnic identities in this current survey sample. Another noted difference is that most participants who reported experiencing racism in 2020 noted it occurred in a business or store with the workplace/hiring process being secondary, but this is reversed in our current sample as shown in the graph below.

In the last 5 years, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in the community?

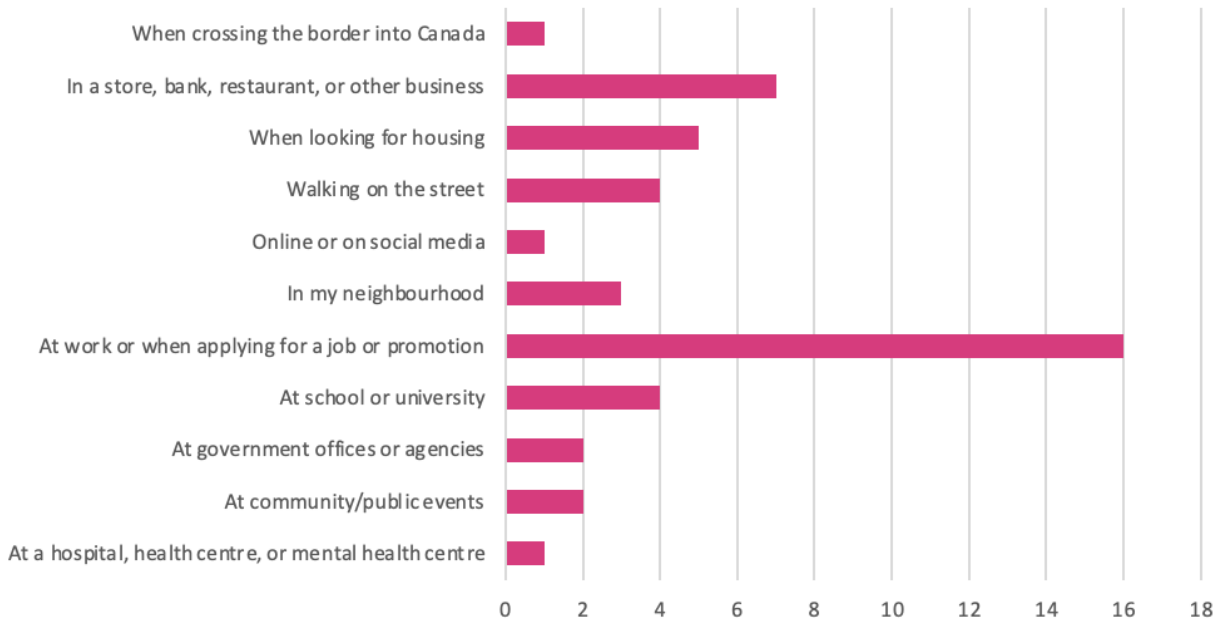




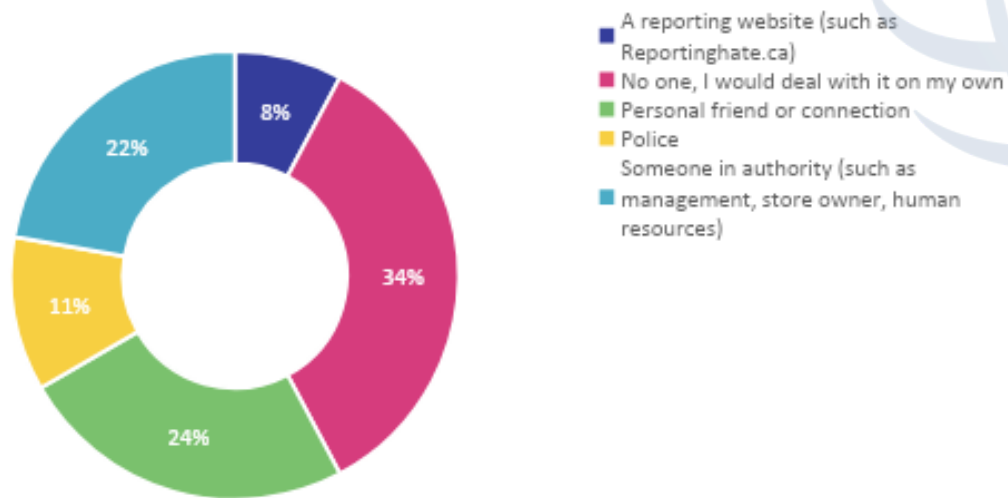
If you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others, what are the reasons?



If yes, where have you experienced discrimination?



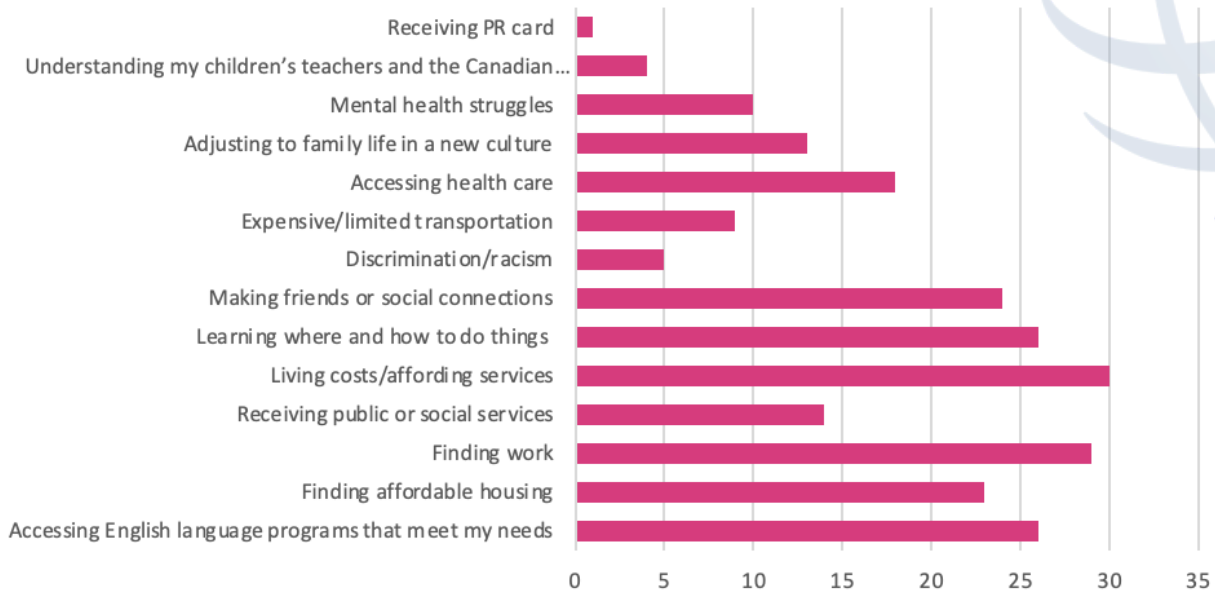
Who would you be the most likely to report the discrimination to?



Employment & Basic Necessities

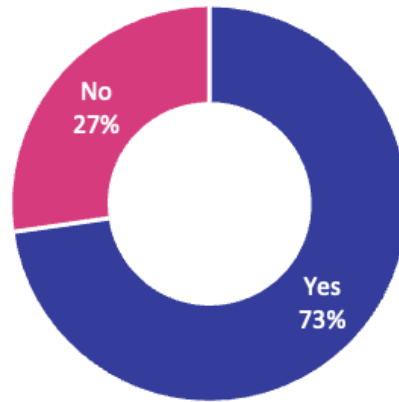
Difficulty finding employment at a level comparable to their skills or finding a job at all is also a key concern. Our survey also shows that 34% of participants feel they are in a job lower than or not related to their skills and experiences. This can be seen in the experiences of discrimination reported in the workplace or hiring process in this survey and the previous needs assessment report. Other difficulties expressed with finding work include international credentials and work experience not being recognized in Canada, English ability, and understanding the employment process in Canada. Employment and English learning were also expressed as the biggest challenges in our 2020 report but there is a notable increase in challenges meeting basic needs including affordable housing.

What are the biggest challenges you or your family have experienced in the last year in the community?

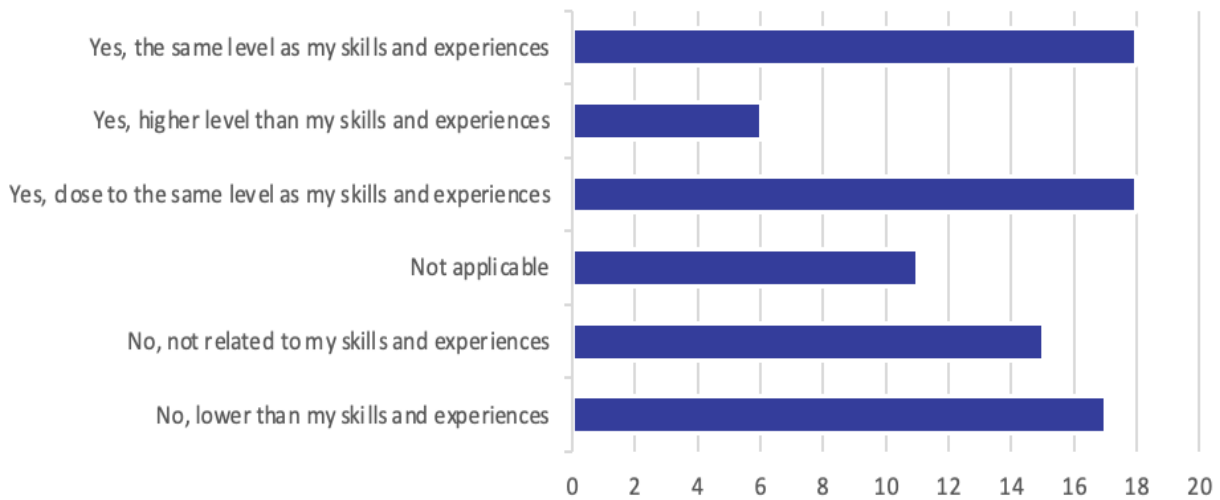


Other major challenges experienced by newcomers include current living costs and affording services, finding affordable housing, and accessing English classes. Cost of living is an especially difficult issue with 40% reported they do not have enough household income to support themselves and their families and 27% feeling that they are not in suitable or affordable housing. There are also difficulties making connections and friendships and difficulty accessing information on how to find what they need. It is extremely difficult to integrate and settle into a community when basic necessities are not readily available. These responses highlight that the basic needs of newcomers are not being met and the importance of sharing information, so immigrants feel well informed and prepared.

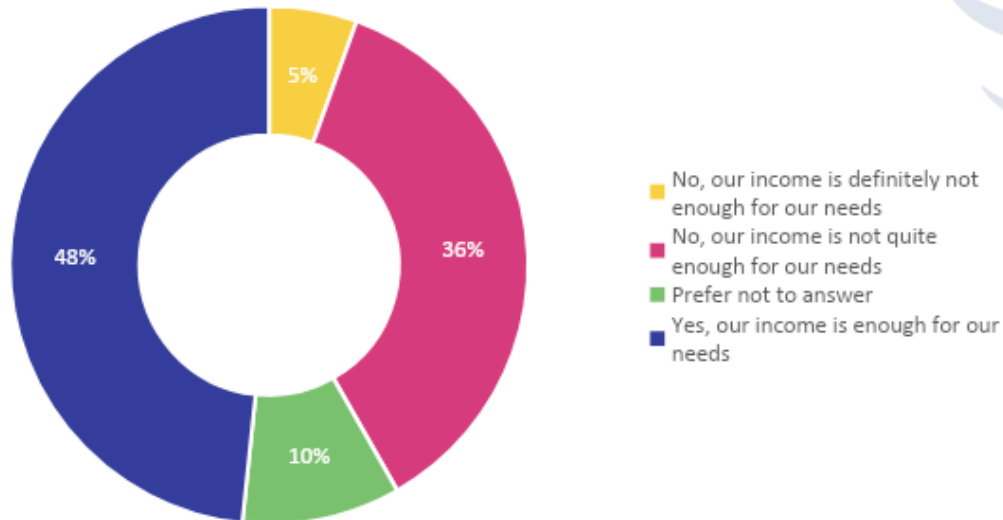
Is your current housing both suitable and affordable for you? (Are there enough bedrooms and is it in good repair, and can you afford it with your other living expenses?)



If you are employed, are you currently in a job that you would consider is at the same level or above the level of your skills and experience?



Is your household income enough for the needs of you and your family?

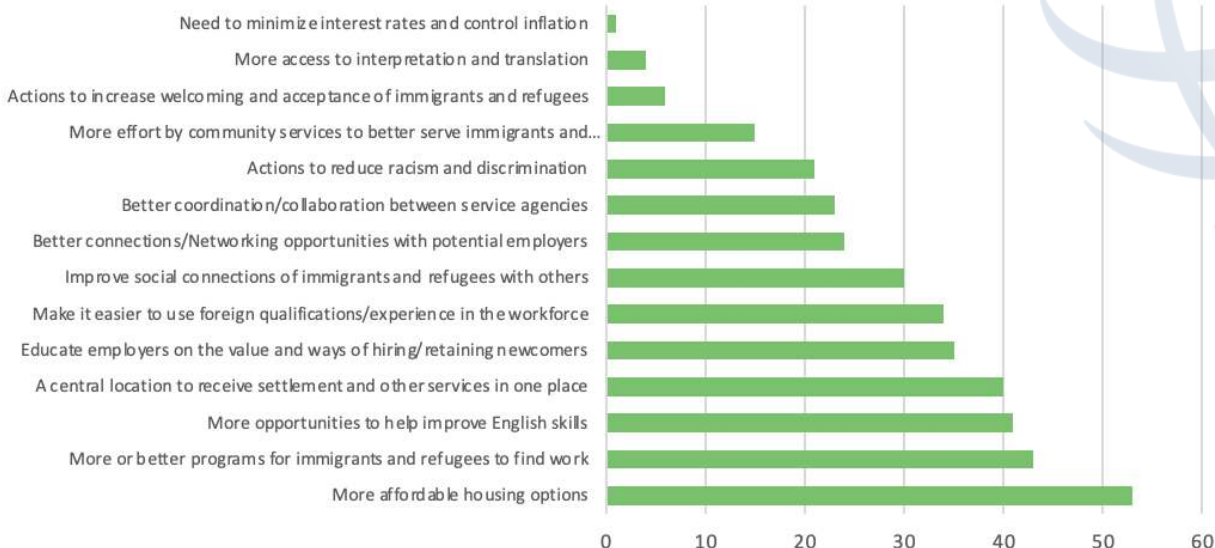


Newcomer Recommendations

It is important to ask newcomers their thoughts and insights about what it is they need in order to be comfortable and successful in their settlement in Canada. We asked participants about the top 4 changes that would better support newcomers. The top 4 responses were more affordable housing, more/better employment programs, English programs, and a single place where immigrants can access key information and support services. Other suggested changes center around improving the employment process by educating employers and providing opportunities to network and reduce barriers that prevent people with foreign credentials and experience from working in their fields in Canada. Feedback also highlights the need to involve the greater community in supporting newcomers through social events and community services as well as reducing racism and discrimination. Some suggestions also show how more inter-agency communication and support can improve immigrant experiences and offering more interpretation and translation in community services can be helpful.

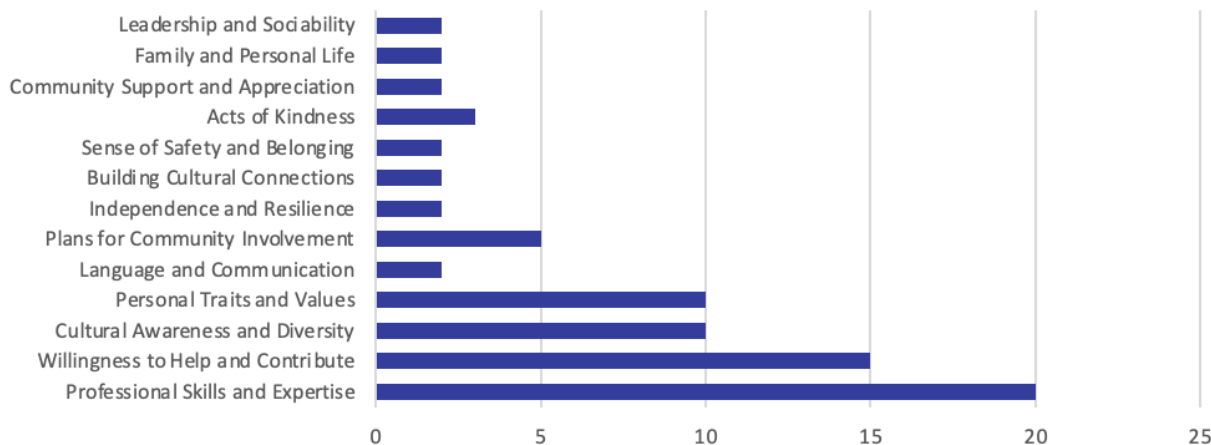


What are the top 4 changes that could be made to better support immigrants and refugees in the community?



To highlight the valuable qualities and experiences that immigrants and refugees bring when they settle into Canada, we asked participants what they are excited to contribute to their new communities. Participants felt they provide a range of talents and strengths to their new homes including professional skills and experience, willingness to help others, cultural awareness and diversity, and personal values.

What skills, knowledge, talents and strengths are you excited to bring to your new community? Please finish the following sentence: "Our community is a better community because I..."



"I would like to build a strong connection with other Ukrainians, because the number of Ukrainian immigrant increases. Probably it is a good idea to have a hub, where Ukrainians can gather, share problems, where they can organize national fests and teach their children Ukrainian language... I am a children's writer, so I hope to write something related to Ukrainian culture and present to the community."-Newcomer Respondent

Respondents were also provided with a chance to share additional thoughts and feedback around how to help improve the welcoming, integration and well-being of immigrants and refugees in our community, details are available in Appendix C. Participants expressed 5 main areas where they feel services could be improved and expressed appreciation for the services currently in place. Larger scale needs include the rising cost of living and issues finding affordable housing and childcare. There were also suggestions for improving social integration and building community such as events that celebrate different cultures and groups where newcomers can meet one another to learn about each other's settlement experiences and feel a sense of belonging. Participants also suggested ways to increase support and improve services for newcomers including providing access to legal services and funds for necessities such as transportation. They also suggested improving translation of materials and having translators available and providing clear introductory information on what they need to do and prepare for when they immigrate to Canada. Information such as how to open a bank account, how public transportation works, and cultural differences would lessen the potential impact of any culture shock and make the transition run more smoothly. Other suggestions include improving English language programs and helping immigrants use their foreign degrees and credentials to find work in Canada.

Perceptions of Community Members

Participant Overview

A total of 210 people answered our Community Survey for those who have been residents for more than five years. A majority of participants:



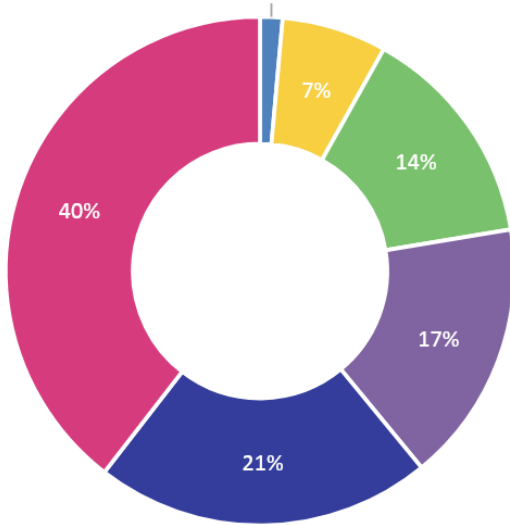
Identified as White (86 %) Identified as Women (65%) 39% live in Courtenay. 39.5% are 65 and older.

Another important component of this report is understanding the perspectives of settled residents and the existing community to understand more about their perceptions of immigration. This is an important component in understanding how to integrate and involve community members in supporting immigrants, and how to promote the importance of diversity and immigration to long-term residents. It also provides insight into how established residents view newcomers and their understanding of reducing racism and discrimination in our communities to allow everyone to feel welcomed and supported. The community resident survey was distributed to the general population and immigrants who have been residents in Canada for more than five years.

A majority of respondents reported that they identified as White, women, and as 55 or older; many live in Courtenay, were retired and have some post-secondary education (ranging from trade/technical school to PhDs). This is a slight contrast to the immigrant survey in which most respondents reported they live in Campbell River and were of middle adult age so there may be some differences in viewpoints on areas such as available services and community programs between the two regions. There are however similarities in ethnic identity, gender, and religion between the newcomer and resident surveys so this may further skew results due to the lack of responses from minority identifying communities.

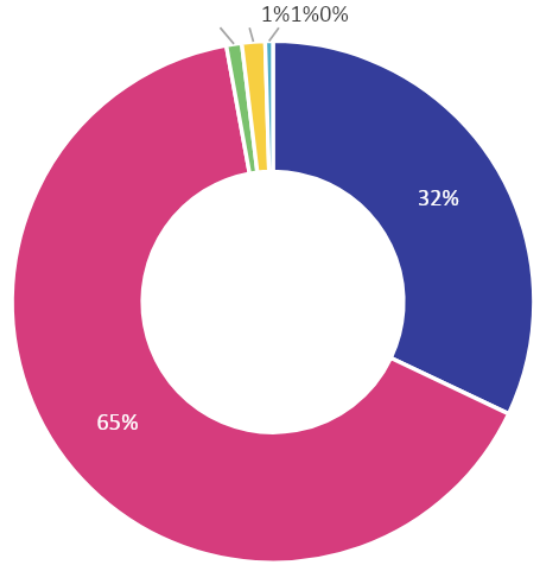
What is your age range?

19-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65 or older

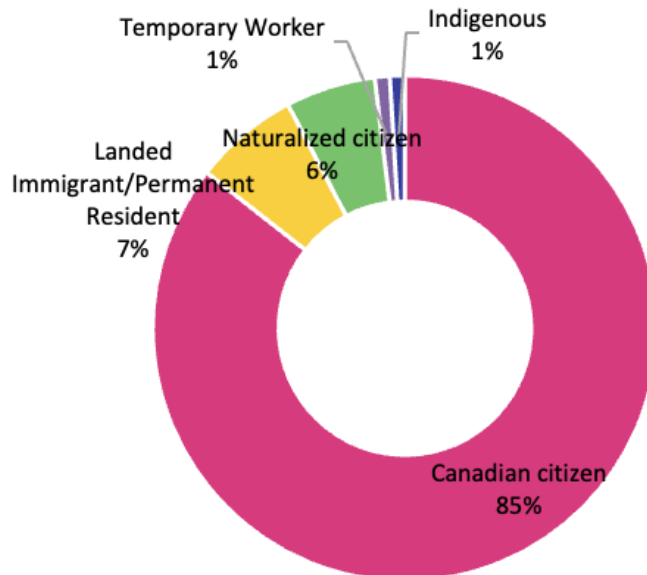


How would you describe your gender identity?

Man Woman Non-binary Prefer not to answer Other

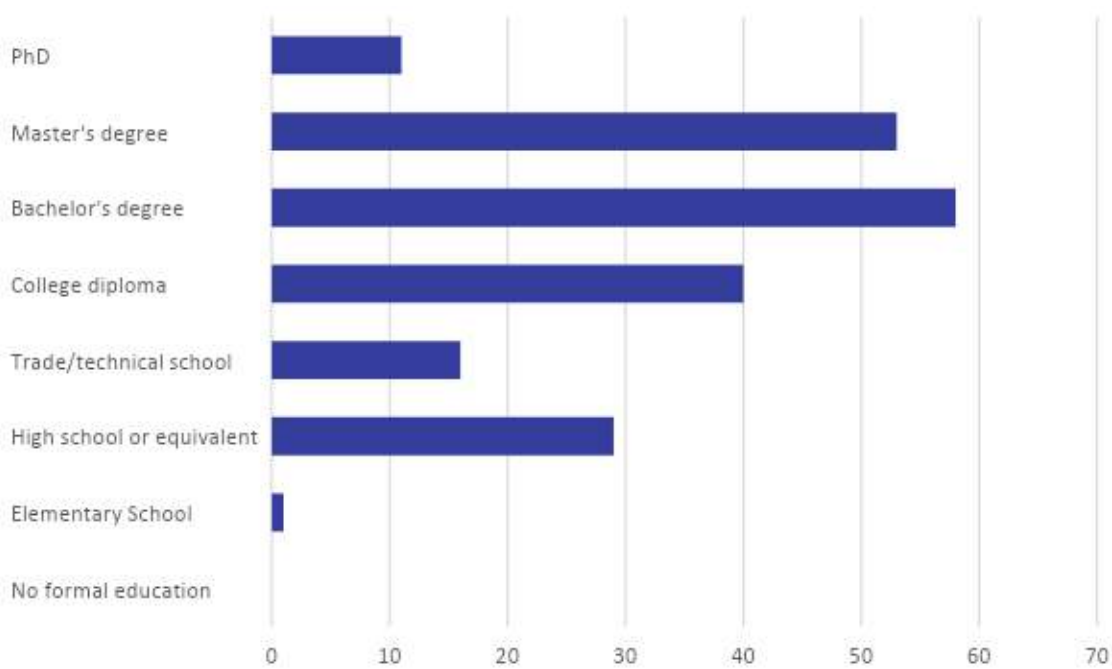


Which of the following best describes you?





What is the highest level of education you have completed?

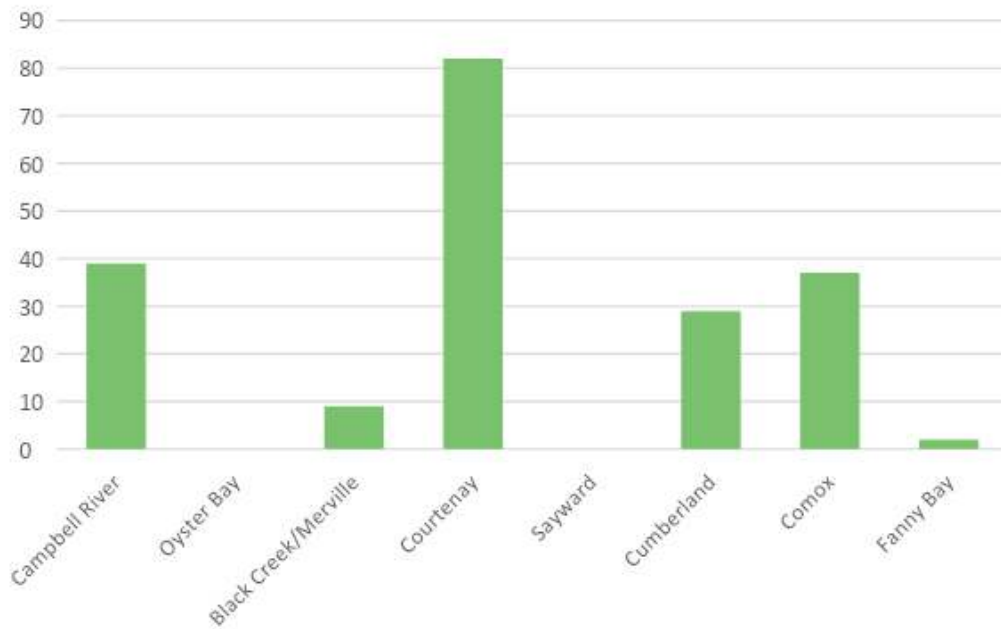


What is your current employment status?

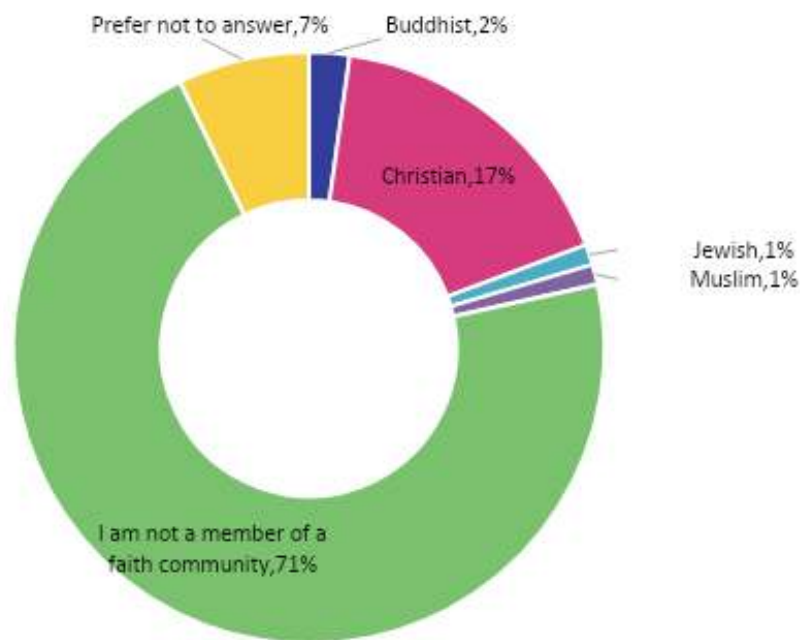




Where do you live?

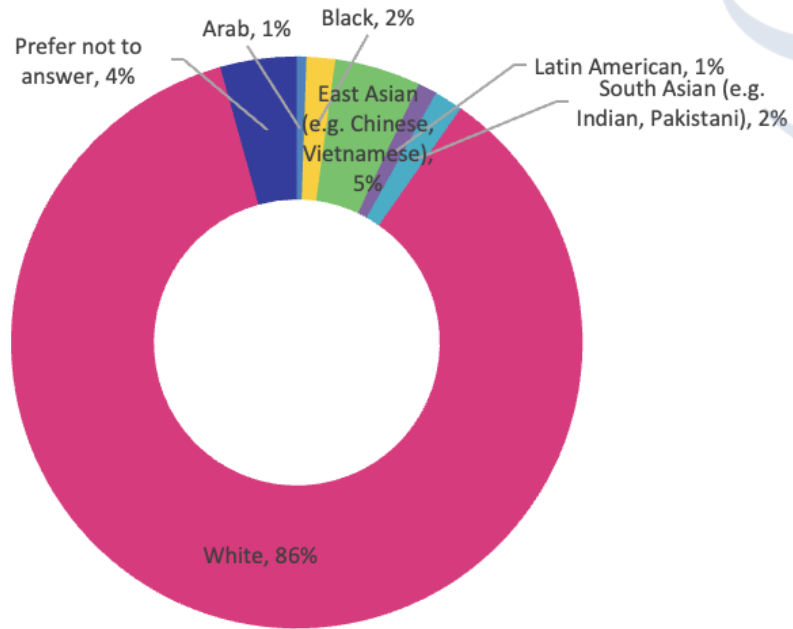


If you are a member of a faith community, please share which one:

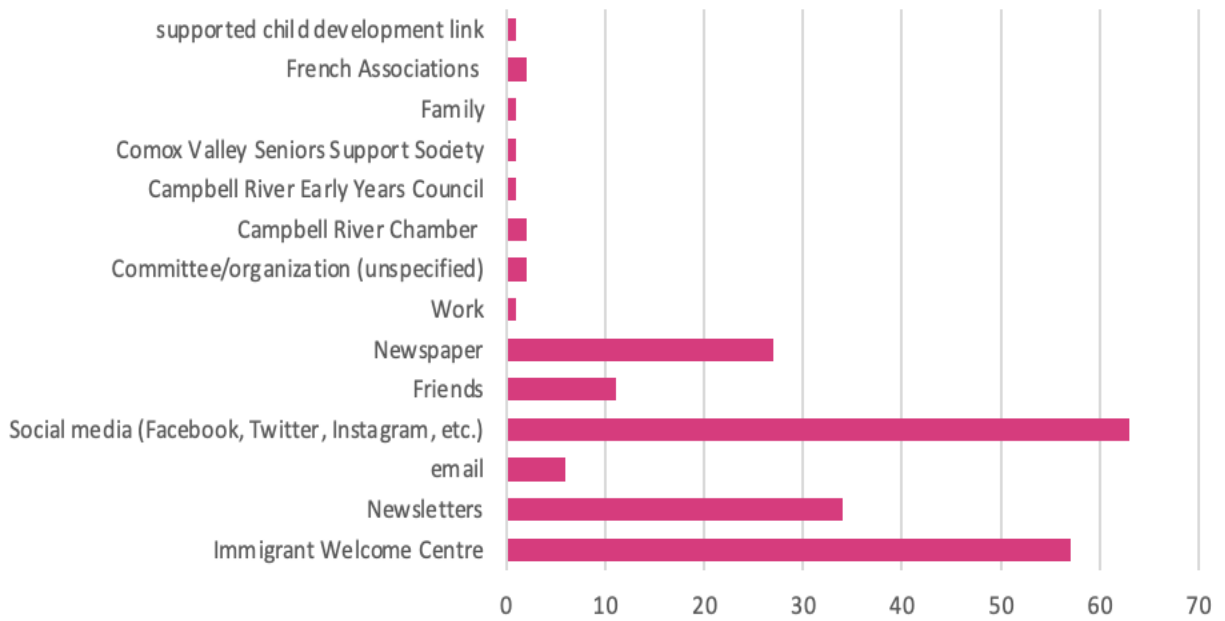




Which would best describe you?



How did you hear about this survey?



Resident Perceptions of Immigration

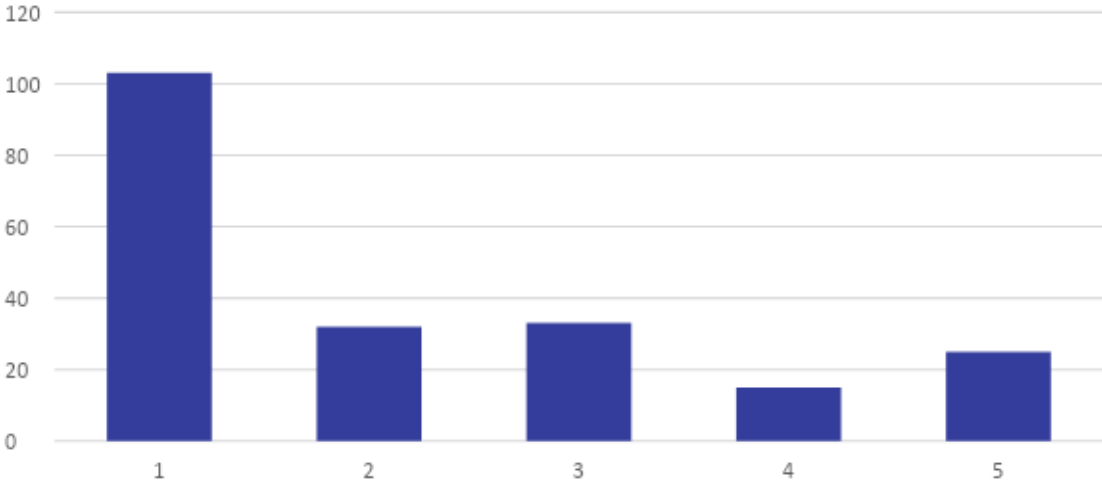
According to our survey, almost half of participants agree that immigration has a positive impact on their community with the remainder having varied levels of agreement and disagreement with that statement. Those who agreed noted several ways in which immigration is beneficial including contributing to arts and culture, innovation, economy, increasing diversity, population growth, and overall quality of life.

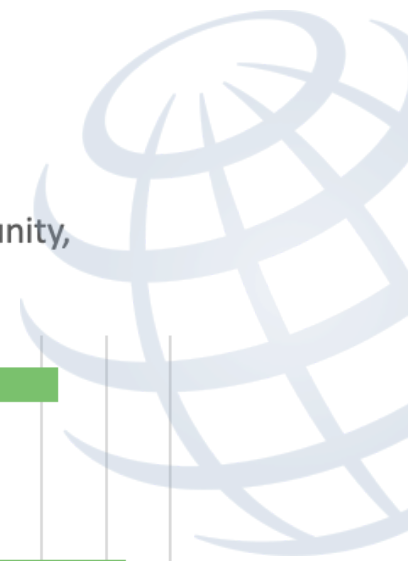
While many believe in the importance of immigration, about 19% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This demonstrates the need to further inform the community of the benefits of immigration. Compared to our previous report, we can see a 23% decrease in the percentage of participants who agreed that immigration has a positive impact in their community. Those who disagreed were asked why they believe immigration does not have a positive impact. Responses included insufficient services available for settlement and integration for newcomers, feeling that immigration puts increased pressure on already sparse public services, that there are “too many immigrants” in Canada, and that immigrants take jobs from Canadians or change Canadian values.

“Canada needs an immigration freeze in order to fix our collapsing health care system and housing crisis before we take in more immigrants.”-Established Resident

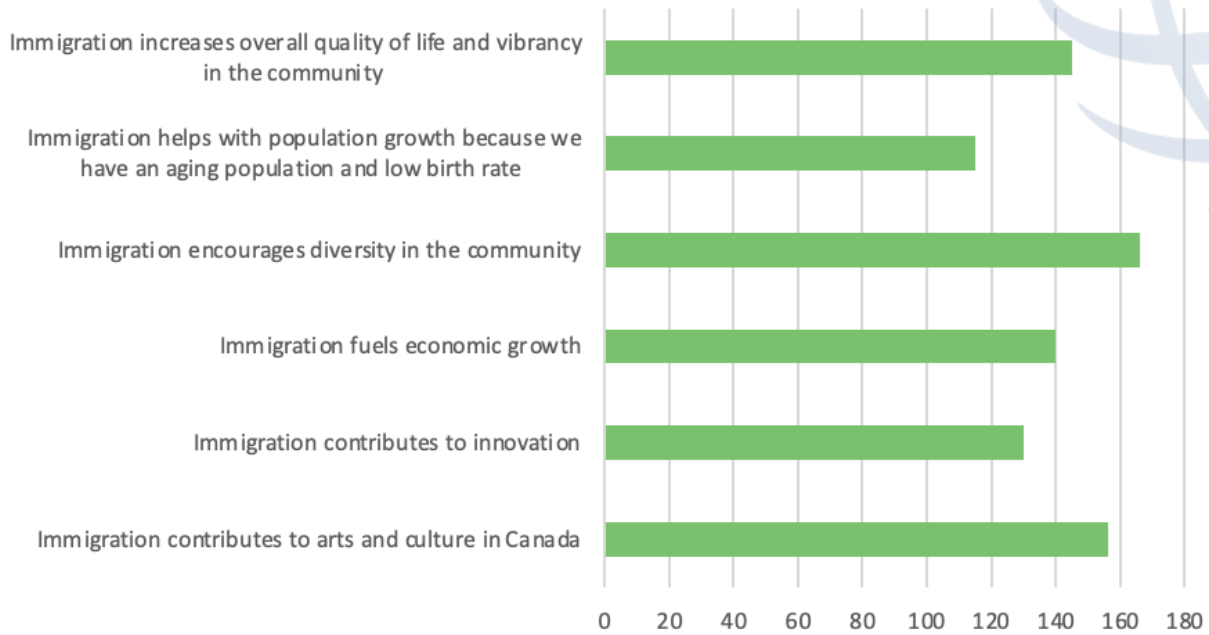
“Too much is given already to immigrants. We need to look after the population we already have. Many people do not have enough to live on as it is.”- Established Resident

What is your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: “Immigration has a positive impact on our city.”

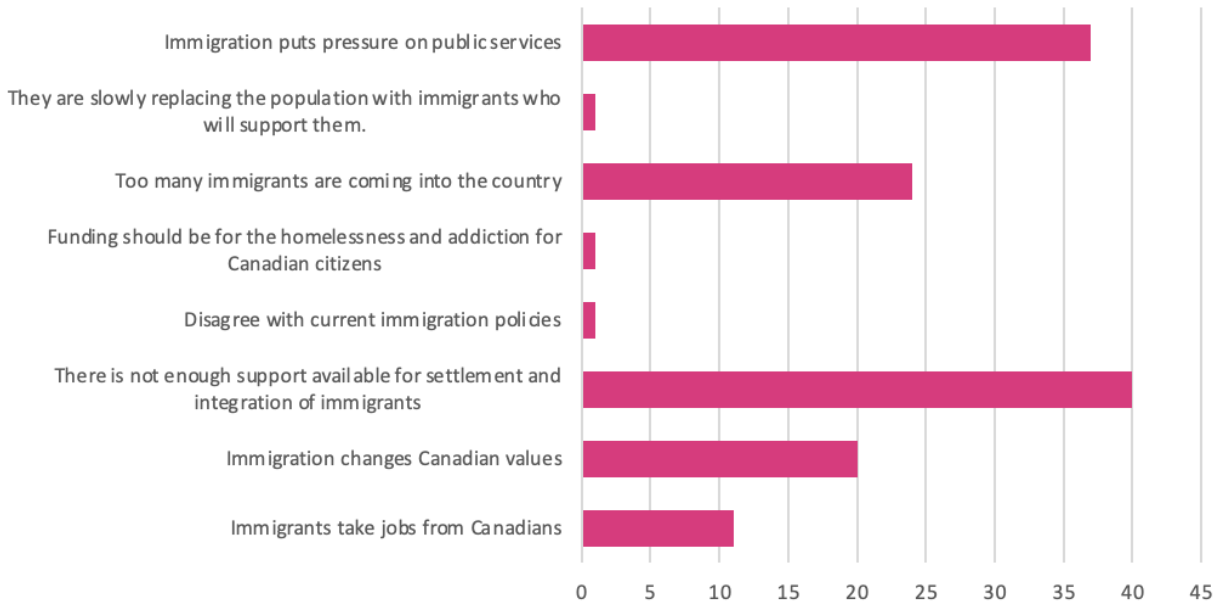


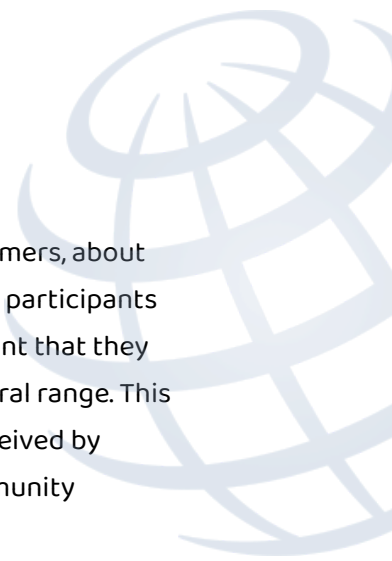


If you agree that immigration is positive for your community, what are the reasons? Please select all the apply.



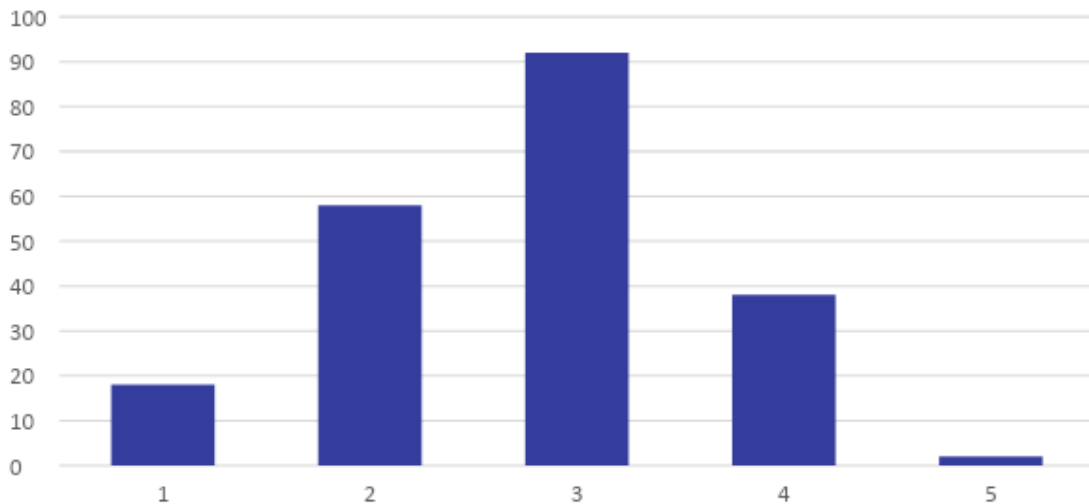
If you disagree that immigration is positive for your community, what are the reasons? Please select all the apply.



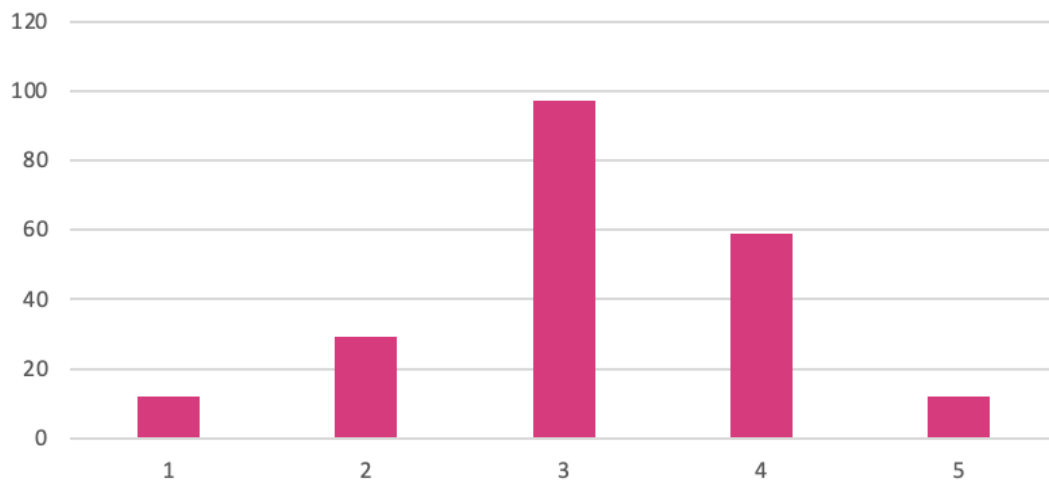


When asked if they believe their community is known for being welcoming to newcomers, about 44% of participants rated the statement in the middle or neutral range which shows participants believe their communities are somewhat inviting. In addition, 46% rated the statement that they feel their community provides enough support for newcomers in the middle or neutral range. This demonstrates to us that while there is some degree of support and connection perceived by residents, there is room for improvement and a need to increase promotion of community engagement.

What is your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: "Our community has a reputation of being open and welcoming for international immigrants and refugees."



What is your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement: "Our community does enough to support immigrants and refugees"?



The following are answers to a question where we asked community members what they feel their community needs in order to be able to provide further support to immigrants and refugees. Participants were able to select from a list of options and add any other suggestions they have. Results demonstrate that participants feel language development and employment programming as well as social events to allow immigrants to feel a sense of welcoming and social connection are important for building community. The additional suggestions provided by participants demonstrate additional needs.

What does the community need more of for the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees? Please select all that apply.

Option	# of ppl
More community initiatives to welcome and integrate immigrants and refugees (e.g., social gatherings)	128
More funding for settlement or other relevant community programs and services	116
More municipal government engagement in welcoming and integrating immigrants and refugees	100
More support for arts and cultural contributions of immigrants and refugees	84
More support for language learning and employment for immigrants and refugees	146
More targeted and culturally appropriate programming for immigrants and refugees	87
More/affordable housing	15
Improved healthcare	3
Need to prioritize current Canadian population/Canadian citizens or limit immigration	5
<u>Other:</u>	12
Support with integration and learning processes	3
More of all of the above for everyone.	1
Greater opportunities in higher education	1
More support in other necessities	1
more opportunities for us to appreciate the culture and skills that immigrants bring with them	2
supporting newcomers (especially privately sponsored) for a longer period of time.	1
We need meetings with hosts of immigrant families to better learn how to help the refugees and perhaps some basic language lessons for us so we can communicate a little bit with our refugees in their languages.	1
More training of front-line staff in business & government on how to work with people from different cultures	1
More BIPOC people as the decision maker - funder positions	1

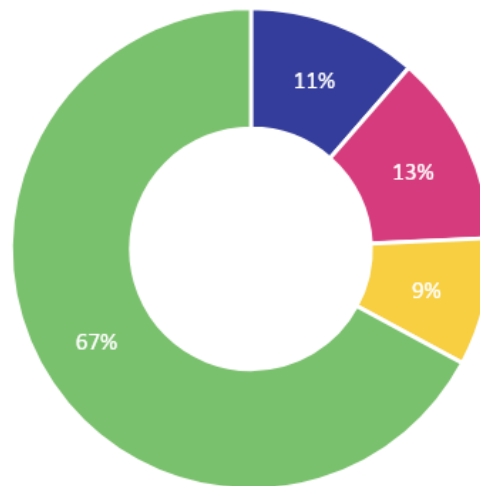
Many individuals within the community express a sense of discrimination, either through personal experiences or seeing others facing such treatment, yet there were several comments suggesting that Canada has “enough immigrants” and should prioritize its current citizens. Affordable housing, healthcare, and transportation were also identified as major concerns and many participants felt that these are their own or other Canadians’ needs as well. Hence, they felt public services should be

improved for all rather than for immigrants specifically. A notable 23% of community members reported instances of discrimination or mistreatment in the past five years, predominantly based on factors such as ethnicity, age, gender, and skin colour. Settings where discrimination was experienced were mainly centered in the workplace or during job applications. Similar experiences of discrimination are seen in both the newcomer and resident surveys but to different degrees; there are also strong negative views against immigration seen in the resident survey.



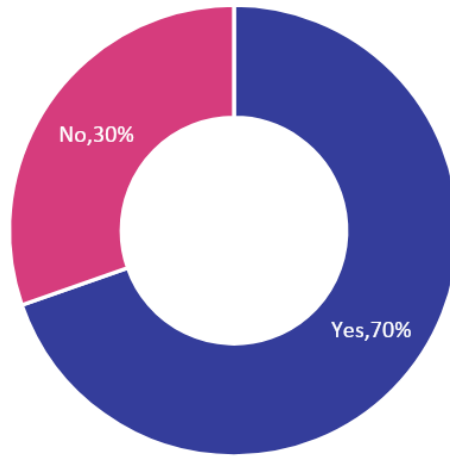
How long have you lived in this community?

■ Less than 5 years ■ 5 to 7 years ■ 7 to 10 years ■ More than 10 years

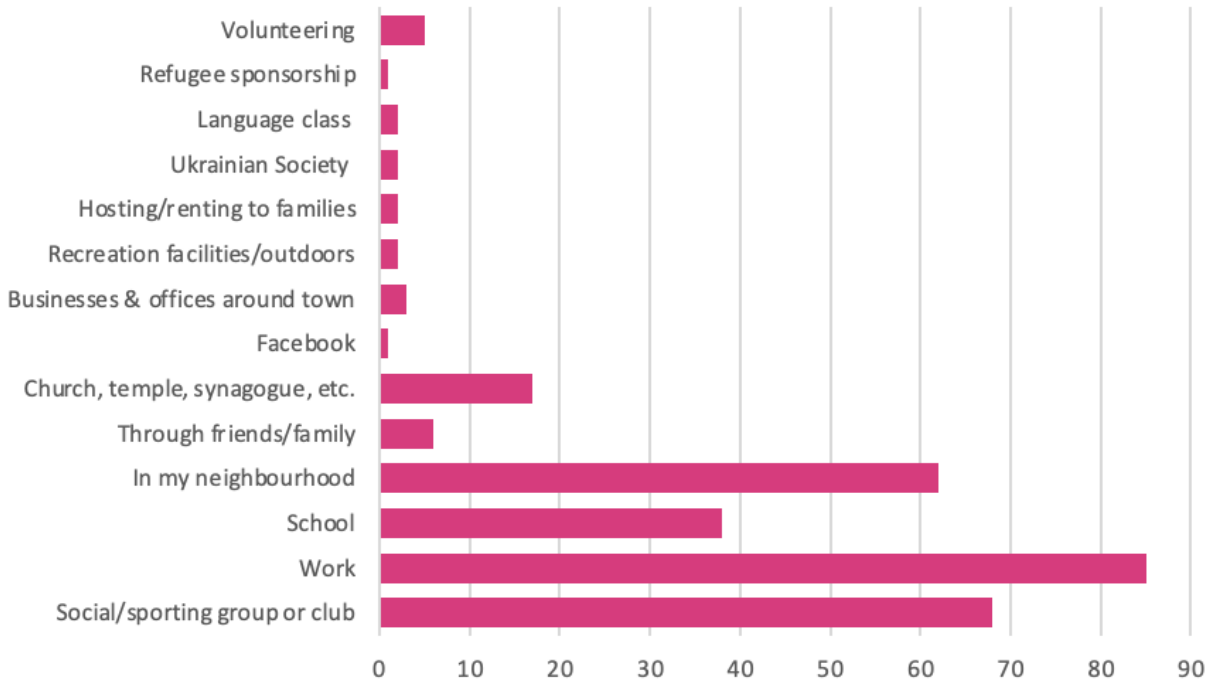




In your opinion, do you have any social relationships with immigrants in your community?

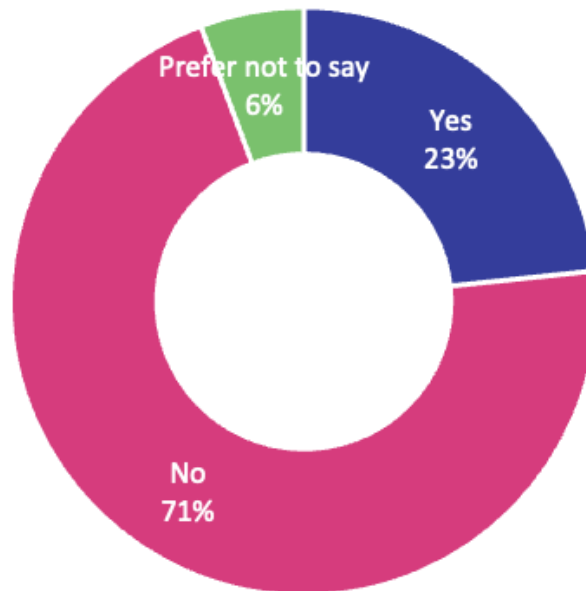


If you have social relationships with immigrants in your community, where are you forming those relationships?



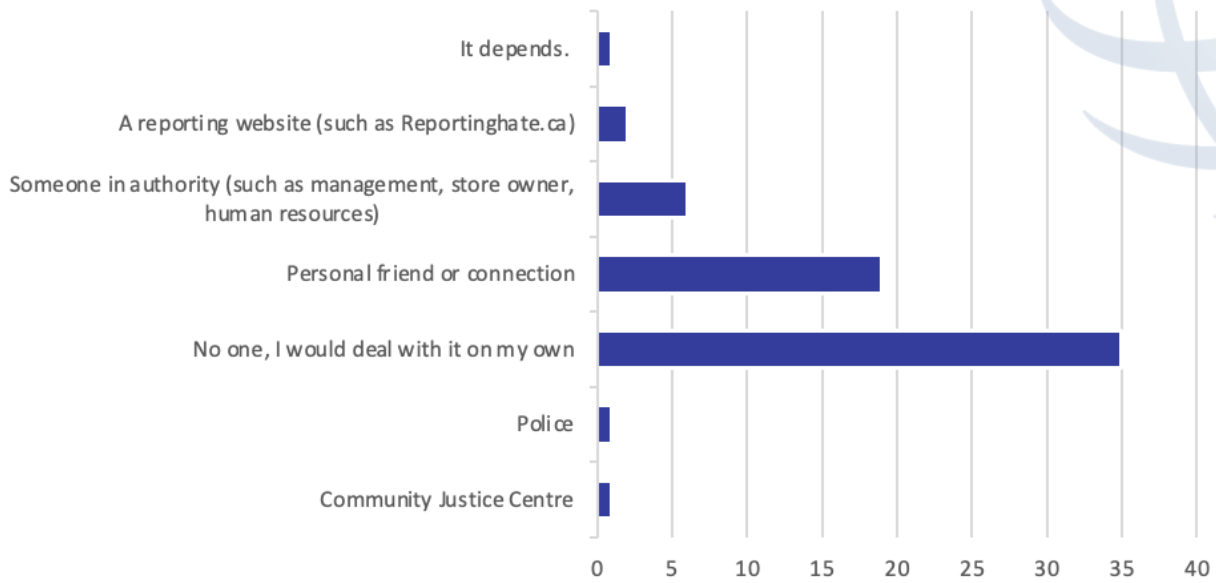
Five key themes emerged around how to foster more welcoming communities: organizing events to promote socialization and celebrate diversity, enhancing education and awareness initiatives, encouraging greater community involvement, addressing the need for affordable housing, and creating more employment opportunities. These recommendations aim to foster inclusivity, reduce discrimination, and enhance the overall well-being of the community. Addressing the immigrant community's needs is crucial, with a focus on increased support for language acquisition and employment opportunities, the implementation of more community initiatives, and securing additional funding for settlement programs. Fostering a greater sense of community between immigrants and established residents is also critical to build greater social connections, increase integration, and reduce discrimination.

In the last 5 years, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in the community?

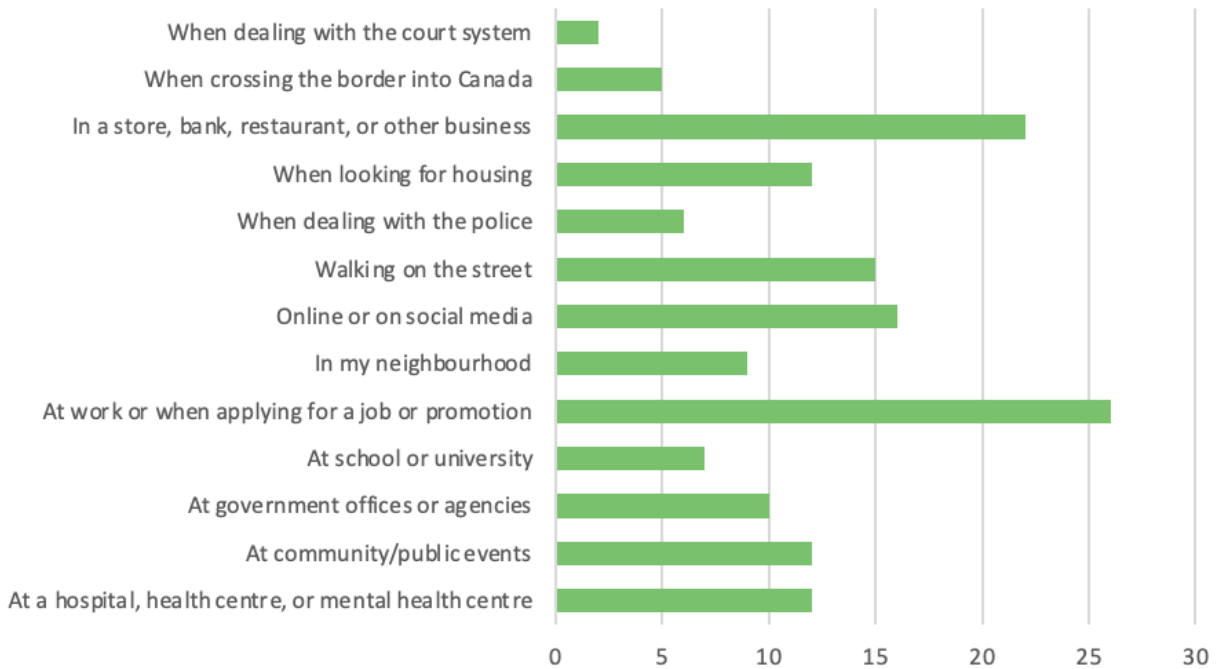




Who would you be the most likely to report the discrimination to?

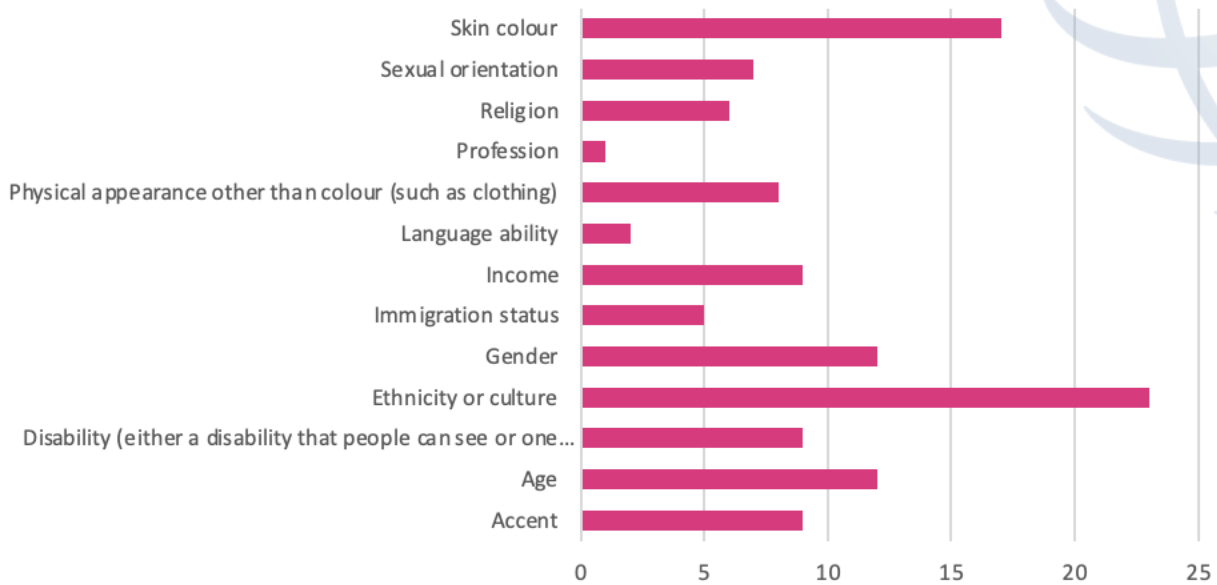


If yes, where have you experienced discrimination?

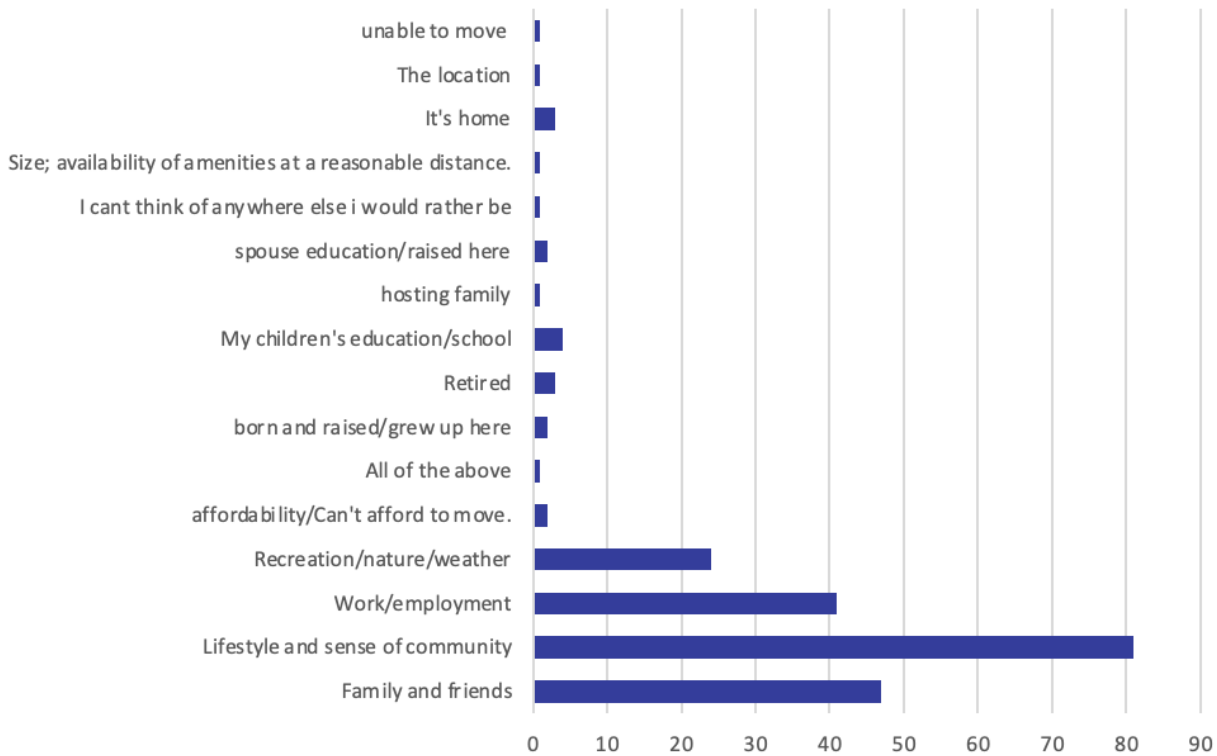


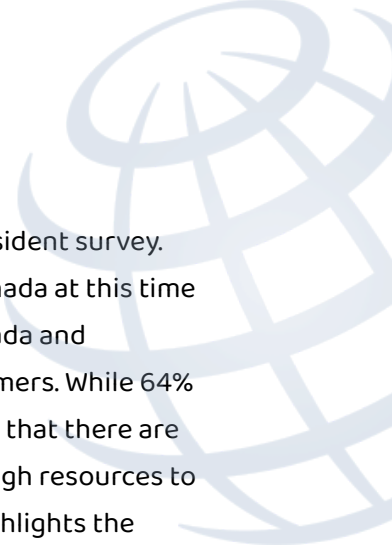


If you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others, what are the reasons?



Why have you chosen to stay in this community?





An important theme was noted in many of the open responses in the established resident survey. Some respondents described that they felt there were “too many” immigrants in Canada at this time and there needs to be a greater prioritization of those who are already living in Canada and supporting all Canadians rather than only focus on immigrants or any future newcomers. While 64% reported that they felt immigration was positive, these comments also demonstrate that there are some Canadians who have a negative view of immigration or feel there are not enough resources to support new immigrants and more should be done for other groups instead. This highlights the needs for greater awareness of the importance of immigration and supporting newcomers and fostering greater community connection. These views also demonstrate some concern that community members may not be receptive to newcomers or would be not eager to be involved in any community initiatives that help support newcomers as well. Awareness efforts should be made for the larger community in order to reduce any potentially harmful views towards newcomers and help build understanding and community connection.

The table presented in Appendix C demonstrates the additional thoughts and ideas participants provided about how to provide greater support for newcomers in their community. Initiatives promoting diversity and inclusion, such as Walks Against Racism and social events, alongside educational programs emphasizing the benefits of immigration were also suggested. Respondents pointed to the importance of greater community involvement, including volunteering and engagement with established residents. Basic needs were also emphasized including affordable housing, employment, healthcare, and daycare. Efforts to reduce stigma, discrimination, and racism within the community, coupled with English learning programs and translator services, foster effective communication. Promoting workplace diversity, government support, and accessible transportation contribute to community well-being. Respondents also suggest providing document translation and designating a liaison for services and paperwork assistance can streamline processes and acknowledge the need for increased funding for organizations like the Immigrant Welcome Centre to support their impactful work. Clarity about what immigration is like and about costs associated with immigration can help newcomers plan and manage expectations as well.

Settlement Experiences of Newcomers:

Focus Groups

A total of 24 people participated in 5 separate groups answering questions about their immigration experiences and feedback on what could be improved. The focus group discussions revealed a variety of key themes, shedding light on the experiences and challenges of newcomers in our community.



Support and Services: The IWC received praise as a great support system that is welcoming and well-connected. This highlighted the significance of having strong support services in place to guide and assist newcomers throughout their settlement journey. The focus groups also identified strengths in existing resources and some processes to obtain information and support, signifying the need to consolidate and promote these strengths to benefit newcomers effectively.

"In my experience, I found the Immigrant Welcome Centre very helpful. When I came here [to IWC] I had no idea about, for example, how to improve my English. Also, they gave me info about the Work Centre [Work BC] and how the bus system is working, about the taxes in Canada."-Focus Group Participant

Challenges and Needs: Participants shared their struggles with systemic barriers and basic needs, underscoring the importance of addressing these issues to facilitate successful settlement. Language barriers were highlighted as a significant challenge, emphasizing the need for accessible English classes to help newcomers communicate effectively and integrate into the community.

Respondents shared their high need for English classes with greater availability and more offered to reduce wait lists. Finding suitable employment emerged as a common challenge, suggesting the necessity of tailored programs to assist newcomers in securing jobs that match their skills and qualifications. Participants also discussed the difficulties associated with navigating administrative processes and bureaucracy, calling for a more streamlined and understandable system. Discrimination was acknowledged as a critical issue, reinforcing the need for measures to combat discrimination and promote equity in our community. Moreover, there was an emphasis on the importance of providing newcomers with comprehensive information and preparedness to better adapt to their new lives in Canada.

"The main one I've mentioned is work. Coming in with having experience in a certain line of work that doesn't connect exactly with what's required here. And finding a way to be of value, useful, or employable in the community. I'm aware it takes time, but that adjustment period is a bit difficult."
-Focus Group Participant



Experiences and Expectations: Participants noted that many of them initially expected to stay for less than six months but ended up staying longer, emphasizing the dynamic nature of settlement decisions. Expectations versus the reality of immigrating to Canada were discussed, emphasizing the necessity of offering accurate information to newcomers about what the immigration process entails. The impact of COVID-19 was discussed, with the closure of the IWC for in-person services and the challenges of finding housing during the pandemic highlighting the vulnerabilities faced by immigrants during crises.

"It was very hard because we moved back, and it was pandemic. Everything was closed, so for housing we moved in summer [2020] so it was a disaster to find something. We were really desperate... It was by chance that we found a place. And then the owner wanted to have it back – she told us her daughter would be moving back, but it wasn't true. And then the second time it was even harder to find something [to rent]."-Focus Group Participant

Social and Cultural Aspects: The reasons focus group participants gave for immigration ranged from following dreams and seeking better opportunities for families and children to reuniting with spouses or friends living in Canada. Participants also acknowledged positive experiences with Canadian residents, finding them welcoming and open. They were often able to connect with other immigrants, but some experienced negative encounters or found the immigration experience more challenging than expected. Some participants felt that being an immigrant posed difficulties in various aspects of life, from social integration to employment. Moreover, they expressed a sense of not fully comprehending how things work in Canada, finding the systems confusing and demanding multiple interactions with various organizations.

"For immigrants, that everything is that much harder. When you don't have contacts, when you don't have family, everything is harder. To get information when you come here is really a challenge. To get new friends, it's a challenge. Especially during the pandemic, it was awful. It's just so hard to make connections with people, it's very hard. I would like people to that it's really already hard for us to change the environment, it was hard to come here." -Focus Group Participant

Enhanced support and resources: The focus group participants desire more accessible and varied English classes, coupled with information-sharing on rental options through organizations like the IWC. Programs for children, ranging from language courses to sports activities, are sought after, along with opportunities for socializing and trying different outdoor activities. They emphasize the importance of convenient access to stores and malls, advocating for free transportation options like bus tickets or bikes. Additionally, there's a strong desire for resources guiding newcomers on essential services, healthcare navigation, and connections with employment opportunities. The call extends to shorter wait times for English classes, diverse skills workshops, and affordable driving lessons. A centralized platform or website for local events, forums for associations, and increased support from the IWC in various aspects, including medical and social support, are highlighted as crucial needs for a more inclusive and accommodating community.

Wish the community knew: When asked what participants wish the general community knew or could learn about the immigrant experience, several insightful points were shared. The welcoming nature of the community towards newcomers was shared, coupled with the challenges and nuances that immigrants face in adapting to a new environment. While the majority of the community is

described as open, friendly, and helpful, there is recognition that not everyone shares this sentiment. The experience for participants, particularly in larger centers like Campbell River, is highlighted as different from that in smaller communities. The difficulties include the lack of social connections and family, challenges in obtaining needed information, understanding cultural nuances, and difficulties faced during the pandemic. Participants expressed a need for greater understanding of different cultures, more childcare support, and assistance with leisure activities and local regulations. Instances of unfamiliarity with common practices, such as banking and car-related matters, underscore the need for increased awareness and support to facilitate a smoother integration process for newcomers.

"Canadian people are so open, it always surprises me they are so open community, they don't make you feel like you're a stranger or an immigrant, they are so open and friendly." -Focus Group Participant

These themes collectively underscore the complexity of the immigrant experience and highlight the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach to address challenges, provide support, and foster social and cultural integration in our community.



Service Provider Experiences:

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 17 different service providers from across Campbell River and Comox Valley to understand their perspectives on how current services are functioning and interactions with newcomers who access resources. The interviews with various stakeholders have revealed key themes that highlight the challenges and opportunities associated with supporting newcomers in our community.

Support for Newcomers: Immigrants often rely on the IWC as a pivotal source of support. It is frequently referred to and seen as a reliable guide for newcomers. The interviews also emphasized the importance of providing clear information and guidance to immigrants through various processes, particularly the complex immigration process. Addressing their basic needs, such as housing, education, mental health, and facilitating social connections, is pivotal for successful integration. Moreover, cultural adaptation challenges and discrimination need to be addressed to ensure fairness and equity within the community.

"International students are usually pretty happy with our communities. At school I do hear stories from our Canadian or European students who are with the students of colour and witness [racist comments] – the victims don't usually say anything."- Service Provider

Strengths and Helpful Services: These initiatives span a wide range, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to addressing the diverse needs of newcomers. Examples include registering everyone at food banks, providing welcome baskets with transit tickets, and conducting volunteer recruitment drives with volunteers offering assistance in driving and English. Services extend to addressing academic challenges and mental health support, with programs such as the Early Assist program and free peer tutoring for international students at North Island College. Assistance with job searches, resume translation, and connecting newcomers with relevant services were also helpful. The focus of many of the service providers also extends to family and youth, with orientation and emotional support for students, accessibility programs, and family-oriented drop-in opportunities. The proactive approach is evident in education on anti-racism, conversation drop-ins to help build connections and improve English, and engagement with schools through booths and supporting students. The provision of comprehensive online resources, language learning apps, childcare support, and community activities further contributes to a welcoming environment.

Service providers expressed a dedication to providing a wide array of resources and support to facilitate the successful integration of newcomers into the community wherever possible but also noted a limit in capacity and resources available for them to do so.

"I've had a couple Kindergarten students come in with basically no English – the great thing about my role is I can increase the amount of time that I spend with them. And connecting them with their peers. One little guy has gone from tears and is now one of the most talkative kids in the group"-Service Provider

Challenges and Needs: The challenges faced by newcomers and the organizations supporting them are multifaceted. Service providers noted that resources can be scarce at times. They expressed concerns with lack of funding to be able to implement needed programming, and a limited capacity in their roles to be able to provide support to newcomers. Capacity issues within organizations, such as part-time roles, budget constraints, and limited funding, impact the extent of assistance that can be offered. The complexity of immigration procedures, language barriers, and restrictions on services for certain visa categories contribute to the difficulties faced by newcomers. The need for extensive knowledge on resources relevant to newcomers, including healthcare and educational systems, highlights the importance of staff training and outreach efforts. Challenges in cultural adaptation, trauma, and the stigma surrounding counseling services also demonstrate social and emotional challenges newcomers face. Additionally, issues related to housing, food security, transportation, and disparities in services for different immigrant groups highlight the need for more inclusive and equitable support systems. Language barriers remain a significant obstacle, necessitating not only translation services but also accessible language classes to facilitate effective communication. Finding suitable employment can be a daunting task as well.

"Acknowledgement of credentials – that's a real barrier for newcomers Canada/BC as being welcoming – however, the big barrier is to recognize the credentials, and experience from their countries of origin. It's not that we don't have the diversity of thought and lived experiences that can serve the businesses in our community... it's that credentials piece"-Service Provider

The COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated the settlement process, and there is a need for effective communication and outreach strategies to reach and inform immigrants about available services. Organizations must also improve their intake and recruitment processes to actively seek newcomers and collect relevant data. Stakeholders anticipate potential changes, including labor shortages, decreased volunteerism, rising living costs, and potential challenges for CUEAT holders.



Service Enhancements: To address the identified challenges, improvements are needed in various areas. Service providers must focus on enhancing language education and overcoming communication and outreach challenges. Policies and official guidelines for diversity and inclusion are required in many organizations. Additionally, promoting and integrating existing strengths and services into newcomers' support efforts can be an effective strategy.

"The reality of many [organizations] is they are challenged with being progressive and innovative and relevant. I see a great opportunity for [us] to be bold and creative and forward thinking – inclusive in the words they use, who is at the table, etc."-Service Provider

Intake and Recruitment: Efforts to recruit or identify newcomers as clients and how they reach new immigrant clients were discussed with service providers. Organizational strategies for reaching out to newcomers, range from word of mouth, Facebook groups, and events through their resource centres to referrals, partnerships with groups like the IWC, and documentation verification for eligibility. The recruitment process extends to online platforms, including surveys, websites, and social media, with considerations for adult literacy programs and cultural societies. Various positions, such as integration coordinators, enrollment and recruitment managers, and immigration officers, contribute to the recruitment efforts. The process involves assessments, registration forms, and provincial tests, sometimes assuming immigrant status based on language spoken or family dynamics. Flyers, partner agencies, and outreach to visible minorities are also utilized. Many organizations currently do not actively reach out to immigrants to provide resources or do not have the capacity to do so. There is a greater need for organizations to identify, recruit, and integrate newcomers into their programs, with an emphasis on communication, partnership, and inclusivity.

"Yes [we can identify newcomers] – they have broken English, and they usually want to know what rules are and how to go about doing things that the average Campbell Riverite would already know. No official way of identifying newcomers though."-Service Provider

"We don't look out for them, they come to us if they need to. I'm not sure how they find me – probably word of mouth."-Service Provider

Diversity and Inclusivity Policies: When asked what policies exist within different organizations around diversity and inclusivity, some organizations noted a lack of official policies specific to diversity, while others incorporate inclusivity into their guiding principles, strategic plans, and procedures. The commitment to being low barrier and respecting the inherent worth of all individuals is highlighted, with efforts to create a genuinely inclusive and welcoming environment. Some organizations express a commitment to diversity through actions rather than formal policies, integrating inclusivity into their lived values and programming. However, there is recognition that certain organizations are still in the process of developing and implementing comprehensive diversity policies and programs. Training initiatives, such as cultural awareness and sensitivity training for staff and volunteers, are acknowledged as part of the ongoing efforts to foster a more inclusive organizational culture. This demonstrates the importance of not only having clear policies in place but also embodying inclusivity in organizational values and practices.

"When students arrive their first term is by far their hardest term, and it is because of the settlement component. You're not going to go to classes if you don't have a safe place to live. You have to be able to afford to live. You need to be able to find foods that work for you. We used to have students who said, I can't live here, I can't find the food I am comfortable eating ...We have worked with some grocery stores on that."-Service Provider

These themes demonstrate the complexity of supporting newcomers in our communities and underscore the need for collaborative, resourceful, and comprehensive approaches to immigration and settlement services.

Recommendations

In an effort to enhance the support system for newcomers, a range of recommendations have been put forward. To create a more inclusive and supportive environment for newcomers, a comprehensive set of measures and initiatives have been suggested. The following sections consolidate recommendations collected from focus groups with newcomers, interviews with service providers, and additional recommendations developed based on a holistic review of the findings from this report. These recommendations have been organized under five major themes: sense of welcoming and belonging, housing and necessities, English learning, employment support, and accessibility of services.

Sense of Welcoming and Belonging

Focus Group participants shared a variety of ideas to help improve newcomers' settlement experiences including programs for children, encompassing English language instruction and a variety of activities, such as sports, are seen as key in aiding their social integration. Access to outdoor equipment for various activities, such as sports and recreational pursuits, is essential for newcomers to engage with the local community. Initiatives like providing free bus tickets, bikes, and gym and pool coupons help remove transportation barriers and promote a healthy lifestyle.

Creating a central website to aggregate information about events in the community can be a valuable resource for newcomers. Organizing activities and events for individuals of all ages fosters community engagement and helps newcomers build social connections within the local population. Collectively, these initiatives aim to ease the transition and improve the overall experience for newcomers in our community.

Service providers shared that staff sensitivity training and trauma-informed practices are being implemented to better serve immigrants, as well as initiatives to support multigenerational connections and community activities like gardening, gym sessions, and art drop-ins. Early years and summer programs are designed to cater to a diverse audience, while collaboration with other organizations helps address capacity issues. A push to increase French-speaking staff and promote education and cultural awareness is underway in some organizations. There's a strong drive to connect newcomers with community facilities and honor Indigenous languages while promoting inclusivity within the dominant culture. Diversifying food options in grocery stores and addressing affordable housing through improved housing acquisition options and utilizing a platform to make

connections between international students and homeowners like Places4Students are essential steps that service providers have begun to make. To ensure access to healthy food, a healthy food coordinator role is being considered by one organization. Cultural exchange is fostered through initiatives like women's cooking groups, where family recipes are shared. These combined efforts strive to make the transition and integration of newcomers as seamless and enriching as possible.

Service providers are also advocating for newcomers' rights and needs, offering training programs for staff to address racism and provide resources for both perpetrators and victims, and encouraging bystander intervention through workshops such as Safe Haven training. Efforts are also underway to attract seniors and childless newcomers as clients and to attend community activities. For example, some have offered women's swim time and water safety classes, conversation clubs.



Based on what was shared by participants across survey responses, focus groups, and interviews. We also wanted to highlight additional recommendations based on the overarching themes of immigrant needs to emphasize their importance. Building a sense of belonging allows newcomers to feel integrated into their new communities and increase community support and connections. Initiatives should encourage social interaction, networking, and community involvement. Supportive programs can help newcomers establish meaningful connections and integrate into the local social fabric. In addition, immigrants come from diverse backgrounds and have varied interests. Providing a range of activities and support services catering to different age groups and cultural backgrounds can enhance their overall well-being and integration.

Outreach efforts should aim to involve the entire community in welcoming newcomers such as more volunteering programs. Community engagement initiatives, cultural events, and awareness

campaigns can foster a more inclusive and understanding environment. Organizations can also increase efforts to ask immigrants to self-identify and develop programs specifically catered to them and their needs. Participants have also expressed experiences of racism and discrimination. Hence, advocacy efforts must work toward addressing this issue. Community education and awareness campaigns can help address biases, fostering a more inclusive environment for immigrants. The experiences of immigrant students facing bullying and racism in schools underscore the need for comprehensive programs on bullying prevention, bystander intervention, and education about their rights in Canada. Empowering students to be more confident and knowledgeable in handling these situations is vital. Providing education to students who are less vocal and more likely to be victims of racism is crucial. Offering external counseling services in their native language, particularly for Russian and Ukrainian speakers, can help address emotional and psychological challenges.

Most importantly, one of the most effective ways to understand and meet the needs of immigrants is to engage with them directly. Regular dialogue and open conversations to get their input and feedback will help tailor support programs to their specific needs.

Housing and Necessities

A majority of participants including those who attended the focus groups, interviews, and survey respondents strongly expressed the pressing need to provide newcomers with further support in terms of providing them with basic necessities. Adequate housing and affordable childcare are integral to successful settlement in the community. Reinforcing knowledge about healthcare, securing housing, identifying scams, and understanding tenants' rights under the BC Tenancy Act can protect immigrants from housing-related issues. Addressing the transportation needs of students with night classes or late shifts is crucial to ensure their access to education and employment opportunities. Enhancing transportation options by increasing the number of buses or subsidizing driving lessons makes it easier for newcomers to access opportunities. Reliability and availability of local transit systems was also an expressed need. Subsidized tuition and annual transit passes aim to ease the burden of credential recognition and transportation costs. Some service providers also discussed developing increased host compensation programs.

Service providers noted that some immigrants who are struggling often do not seek support, so making these services readily available and known is vital. Service providers also heard from clients that they suggested establishing a community kitchen program that not only helps immigrants

develop culinary skills but also supports them in turning this expertise into a business is a creative and practical way to empower newcomers in our community.

Education

Focus group participants shared that organizations could offer specialized courses, possibly in collaboration with the Canadian government, to assist newcomers in acquiring practical skills, such as accounting or cooking, and certifications that are both free and affordable. Tailoring language skills to specific job requirements further aids employability as well.

Service providers and their clients also suggested expanding the availability of English classes to facilitate language learning. Expanding informal language learning options like conversation clubs is essential to assist immigrants in improving their language skills and facilitating integration. Reducing waitlists for Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) programs and making them more accessible by varying the time slots is critical to accommodate the diverse schedules of immigrants.

We have also seen from across all respondents that access to education is a cornerstone of integration. Initiatives should ensure that immigrants have access to quality education, language courses, and vocational training, enabling them to enhance their skills and contribute to the community. Increased awareness and education for community members on the experiences of immigrants and the importance of actively helping newcomers can also help boost community engagement and reduce racism and discrimination.



Employment Support

The stress and struggles of securing employment, especially in one that aligns with newcomers' credentials and previous experience has been strongly expressed across participants. Specifically, the frustration of highly trained immigrants who face obstacles in practicing their professions, particularly in high-need areas like healthcare, is a significant issue. Creating pathways for the recognition of international credentials is a high need. In addition, providing a list of jobs where strong English proficiency isn't an immediate requirement and offering support for understanding financial matters such as taxes, opening bank accounts and credit cards, can help newcomers secure their financial footing.

Accessibility of Services

To support the adaptation of newcomers, focus group participants felt that providing comprehensive information about community services and resources is vital. They also felt that better integration of basic services within the city and improved collaboration with WorkBC would further streamline the settlement process. Offering services in multiple languages and matching volunteers with those interested in different cultures helps improve accessibility of information for non-English speakers and creates a welcoming and diverse community. The need for clear, accessible information in various languages is evident. A translation service on the websites of client-facing organizations would greatly enhance immigrants' ability to access vital resources and services and was suggested by clients of service providers.

Other recommendations heard from service providers include having staff members who understand the intricacies of the immigration process and the logistics of moving businesses or assets to Canada is essential. This expertise can facilitate smoother transitions for immigrants. Building a diverse staff, maintaining a low barrier to services, and improving the translation of materials are vital goals. These efforts are complemented by promoting existing services, increasing their visibility on digital platforms, and offering support with banking instructions and income tax. Organizations are also focusing on hiring more newcomers, reducing staff turnover, simplifying complex language and documents, and clarifying documentation requirements for services. Efforts are made to enhance cross-cultural competency, including participation in the Safe Harbour program. Service providers also shared what they have heard from their clients on how services can be more efficient and helpful for immigrants. Immigrant clients express their desire for more meaningful engagement and consultation. Many feel they haven't received suggestions or

feedback, or that working with immigrants is not an intrinsic part of certain roles. It's crucial to recognize the expertise and experience that immigrant clients bring to the table and actively involve them in decision-making processes.

Additional recommendations generated from this report include supporting immigrants as they navigate complex systems and access essential information. These challenges would be alleviated by streamlining processes, creating brief information sheets on the key information, providing translations for important information, and designating individuals or resources that newcomers can consult with. Making it easier to find the key information needed and access resources will empower immigrants to integrate more smoothly into their new environment and reduce barriers to accessing support services. Helping immigrants prepare for their new life is an important first step. This includes managing expectations about cultural differences, employment prospects, and the challenges they might face. Orientation programs and information sessions can provide realistic insights and facilitate smoother transitions. It can also provide a clear overview of the available services so that immigrants can better learn how to navigate systems and who to connect with for support. Collaboration between various agencies and organizations is essential. Sharing resources, information, support, and knowledge of resources can create a more cohesive support system for immigrants. Interdisciplinary coordination ensures that no one falls through the cracks and that services are efficient and effective.

To make these recommendations effective, it's important to set clear, actionable goals and plans. This ensures that the support provided to immigrants is focused and results-oriented, leading to tangible improvements. This can also include increased efforts to develop clear policies across organizations and guidance on how to implement them.

In response to the 2020 Needs Assessment Report, IWC has already begun work on several initiatives in their continuous pursuit to expand and improve programming and support immigrants. This includes securing more funding, expanding their English language learning programs, anti-racism workshops, and hiring a settlement outreach worker to directly support newcomers according to the IWC's most recent Annual Report⁵. Incorporating these recommendations into support services will create a more inclusive and responsive environment for immigrants, addressing their immediate needs and helping them thrive in our community. By listening to the voices of immigrant clients, we can build a more compassionate and effective support system. Incorporating these recommendations will contribute to a more welcoming and inclusive community, where immigrants can thrive and enrich the cultural and social fabric of our locality.

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Appendix A

Definition of Terms

Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) – This program was developed by the Government of Canada to support Ukrainian nationals and their families through free, extended temporary status which allows them to work, study and stay in Canada until it is safe for them to return home.

Census - The population Census of Canada, which is taken at five-year intervals and counts persons and households and a wide variety of characteristics to provide a statistical portrait of the country.

Discrimination - The practice or act of making distinctions between people on the basis of prejudicial attitudes and beliefs, which leads to the inequitable treatment of individuals or groups.

Diversity - The variety of characteristics that distinguish people as individuals and that identify them as belonging to a group or groups. Diversity is a concept that includes notions of age, class, culture, ability, ethnicity, family, sex, language, place of origin, race, religion, and sexual orientation, as well as other characteristics that vary among people and groups within society.

Ethnicity - Ethnicity is a social and political construct used by individuals and communities to define themselves and others. Specifically, “ethnicity” refers to a person’s cultural background, including his or her language, origin, faith and heritage. Ethnicity comprises the ideas, values and behaviours that are transmitted from one generation to the next. It tends to be perceived in terms of common culture, history, language or nationhood. Ethnic identity and ethnicity are interchangeable terms.

Foreign Worker / Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) - A person who enters Canada on a temporary basis to work, and who has been issued a work permit. Immigrant - A person who was born outside of Canada and has been granted permanent resident status by Canada or is a Naturalized Canadian Citizen who has settlement and adaptation needs. Includes persons who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants. In government data such as census figures refer to all foreign-born persons who

have become permanent residents of Canada, whether they arrived as immigrants, refugees, or refugee claimants.

Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) - Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are planning bodies through which Immigration Refugee Canadian Citizenship (IRCC) supports the development of community-based partnerships to address the needs of newcomers.

Naturalized Canadian Citizen - A person who acquired Canadian citizenship via the naturalization process. **Newcomer** - Someone who is newly arrived, learning about and navigating one or more of Canada's social, cultural, civic and economic systems. **Permanent Resident** - An immigrant who has been granted permanent residence status by the Government of Canada, and who is not yet a Canadian citizen.

Racism - A set of mistaken assumptions, opinions and actions both negative and positive resulting from the belief that one group of people categorized by colour or ancestry is inherently superior to another. Racism may be present in organizational and institutional policies, programs and practices, as well as in the attitudes and behaviour of individuals.

Refugees landed in Canada - Immigrants who have had their refugee claims accepted and who subsequently applied for and were granted permanent resident status in Canada.

Skilled Worker Class - An immigrant selected for his / her ability to participate in the labour market and to establish himself / herself economically in Canada.

Temporary Resident - A person who is lawfully in Canada on a temporary basis under the authority of a valid document (i.e., a work permit, study permit, temporary resident permit or a visitor record) issued for the purpose of entering Canada, and an individual who seeks asylum upon or after arrival in Canada and remains in the country pending completion of processes relative to their claim.

Total population - The total population counts in private households of a specific geographic area, regardless of immigration status.

For additional Settlement related definitions, visit the Government of Canada Citizenship and Immigration website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/glossary.asp>

Appendix B



Settlement and Community Service Providers

A series of interviews were conducted with organizations in Campbell River and Comox Valley that provide services to newcomers. Participants represented a wide range of stakeholders including settlement agencies, language training providers, educational institutions, grassroots organizations, Chamber of Commerce and community organizations. This section outlines the organizations interviewed.

Comox Valley		
Organization Name	Type of Organization	Population Served
Association Francophone du Centre de L'Île	Community Non-Profit	Francophone individuals
Comox Military Family Resource Centre	Military Support	Military workers and families
Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce	Business Association	Business Community
Comox Valley Lifelong Learning Centre	Education	General
Comox Valley Regional District	Regional Government General	General
Comox Valley School District	Education	Student/General
Comox Valley Ukrainian Cultural Society	Community Non-Profit	Ukrainian individuals
Creative Employment Access Society	Community Non-Profit	General
Lake Trail Community Education Society	Community Non-Profit	General
North Island College	Post-Secondary Education	Student/General
Vancouver Island Regional Library	Regional Services	General
Women's Enterprise Centre	Community Non-Profit	Women Business Owners

Campbell River

Organization Name	Type of Organization	Population Served
PacificCARE	Childcare Services	Families/General
NIEFS	Work BC Centre	General
Campbell River School District	Community Non-Profit	General
Campbell River Chamber of Commerce	Business Association	Business Community
Volunteer Campbell River	Community Volunteer Placement Non-Profit	Volunteers/General

Appendix C

Additional Comments: Newcomer Survey

Please provide any additional comments or thoughts about how to help improve the welcoming, integration and well-being of immigrants and refugees in our community. Responses have been grouped into categories that are bolded within the tables.

Comment	Number of responses
Social Connection	9
hold immigrant meetups to share experiences as a newcomer and make social connections	
One form can't fit all. Tiny little communities are different then towns or cities. I don't think my community is better because of me. I have a lot to offer, but if they don't want to change anything, who am I to tell them to do things differently. Maybe in a few years, when I gain trust. It is also difficult for introverted people to meet anyone. There were no public activities in Covid time. Thinks are hopefully getting better now.	
Definitely newcomers have to be involved in usual community life, participate in activities.	
Organizing more events to honor diversity and improving people's awareness of appreciation for diversity	
We need to share our experience with other newcomers.	
Perhaps have more community events?	
This town is beautiful, people here are kind and friendly. I wish there were more integration events where we could celebrate different cultures. Maybe a food, music and arts multicultural event. We need more spaces to meet people who speak our languages to share our culture with everyone.	

By providing more opportunities for locals and newcomers to come together.	
Do a meeting for newcomers start in small groups cause lots of people are introverts.	
Support Services	10
A starter pack with details on how to open a bank account, obtain SIN, telephone number, use of public transport, cultural differences that we will have to adapt to	
Better translation and help to access services i.e.: funds and transportation	
I did not even know about the Immigrant Welcome Centre! I will have to go check it out. So, probably a bit more visibility would be nice.	
Having people with different languages	
Lawyer support, translator	
In my opinion, it is necessary to create courses for several emerging local working professions. For example, to organize training courses for cooks, builders, accountants and cashiers, which would last 3 months and after their completion, issue a certificate to those who passed the course exam. This would make it much easier for emigrants to find a job and be able to work there confidently.	
Putting yourself in their shoes, really feeling what the causes and reasons for migrating to this city are.	
Knowing what Canadians expect as a regular connection.	
We are all different and everyone has their own opinion and choice of lifestyle. My choice is to be independent and self-sufficient no matter what country I live in. For a person who has chosen the path of self-reliance and independence, an important role is played by: 1. Knowledge of the language. 2. Permanent work. 4. Separate housing. 5. Legal assistance in immigration matters. Real help, not only with words or information from the Internet that you can find yourself. For some reason, in most cases, families with children are helped, but when a person is independent, people think that help is unnecessary. But the reality is different, especially for women.	
Better translation and help to access services i.e.: funds and transportation	
Housing/living expenses	6
the most problem is housing, so all thoughts should be applied in this direction	
If IWC could provide more recreations for the children or youth programs in Campbell River	
Perhaps slow down the out-of-control development and destruction of natural spaces. People blame new folks for this.	
Everything is way too expensive. Real estate overvalued. Car's way too expensive. Food way too expensive.	
Make the prices for accommodation more affordable. Increase the quantity of amenities for kids' entertainment.	
It would be better if we can easily find a shelter or rental houses/apartments in an affordable prices and daycare facilities should be enough to serve those who are badly in need. We can do a lot of things if we can send our children to a good daycare facility, and it will surely help a lot.	
Positives/Expressing Gratitude	6
all well done	

Immigration welcome center employees are really helpful	
Thanks for you helping me settled in.	
Doing well. thank you	
I think they are very supportive to the foreign countries & willing to help	
You are doing very good job, you work so hard to help people, I am really appreciated it. Just keep going and be happy while you are meet a mean people.	
English Learning	3
More frequent English Lesson	
For immigrants with experience, but poor knowledge of English, an important and necessary part could be intensive courses (5 times a week for 3 hours minimum). Knowing the language well, it is much easier to express yourself and integrate.	
In my personal view, more English language classes should be run to improve immigrants' language skills by their level and needs.	
Education	2
If there are specialists in dealing with the higher educational degree from outside Canada and help to transfer their degrees to Canada.	
recognition of international degrees	

Additional Comments: Established Resident Survey

Please provide any additional comments or thoughts about how to help improve the welcoming, integration and well-being of immigrants and refugees in our community.

Events to socialize/celebrate diversity and inclusion e.g., Walks Against Racism, food event, socials	17
Education and awareness-services and benefits of immigration	16
Greater community involvement including established residents/volunteering	12
Affordable housing	11
Employment/business opportunities and support e.g., translate documents	11
Reduce stigma, discrimination, and racism in community	10
English learning programs/translators	9
Ask Them what they need/be receptive to their needs.	6
Meet Canadians' needs first-including Indigenous communities	6
Canadian recognition of foreign credentials	5
Healthcare	4
mental health/substance use support	2
more diversity in the workplace	2
More government support	2
Transportation	2
A point person or liaison to assist with local, provincial and federal services and paperwork.	1
Immigrant Welcome Centre is doing fantastic work and is a pillar of our community.	1

increased funding	1
Need Childcare	1
Sponsorship/homestay	1
Welcoming and supportive services	1
Be clear about costs associated with immigrating and the cost of living in these cities	1

