

Waterloo Region Immigrant Survey Summary Report (2021)

This report outlines findings from the Immigration Partnership's 2021 Waterloo Region Immigrant Survey.¹ It encompasses responses from over 1500 immigrant² individuals. The findings provide a snapshot of immigrant experiences of living in Waterloo Region, as perceived by immigrants themselves, and some of the many benefits immigrants bring to the community. They highlight some challenges in the delivery of service supports to immigrants, as well as the need to tackle systems and policy level change.

Summary of Findings

- 1507 immigrants participated in the survey. They represented all major categories of immigration, and both permanent and temporary residents (economic, family and refugee categories, international students, temporary workers and refugee claimants), with half of participants having lived in Canada for 5 years or less. Survey participants represented all 3 cities within Waterloo Region, as well as the rural townships
- Participants were diverse, representing many racial and language groups. Nearly three quarters of participants (70%) were racialized individuals – meaning they indicated their connection to a specific race/population group other than White. Participants spoke more than 80 languages. 84% had a first language other than English – with Arabic (19%), English (16%), and Chinese languages (11%) being the most common first languages. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of participants whose first language wasn't English, still spoke English well or very well

Contributions of Immigrants

- Immigrants contribute to the vitality and life of the community in many ways, from helping out their neighbours when they need it (63% of participants), providing unpaid help for family members (children, grandparents, etc.) (35%), donating to local charities (35%), or contributing through their job (33%). Other community contributions included improving the natural environment, speaking up for fairness and treating people with kindness, helping newcomers to Canada, volunteering with community organizations/groups/faith communities, among other contributions to a thriving community.

Education, Employment and Income

- As in previous years, employment was a key issue for immigrants. It was the most frequently mentioned challenge and employment-related solutions were among those most regularly mentioned by immigrants as likely to help them succeed.

¹ The Immigration Partnership of Waterloo Region (IP) is collaboration of over 100 community service, business, municipal, post-secondary and ethno-cultural organizations and Waterloo Region residents working together to create the conditions for immigrants to succeed and help build a welcoming, dynamic community. Contact the Immigration Partnership for any in-depth questions about methodology, findings particular to specific subpopulations or additional detail about participant's qualitative comments. The survey was conducted in June 2021.

² The term immigrants is used broadly in this report to include all who were born outside of Canada and now live in Waterloo Region, including immigrants, refugees, international students, permanent residents, temporary residents or foreign nationals and people who immigrated and have become Canadian citizens.

- Survey participants were more highly educated when compared to the overall population in Waterloo Region with 71% having completed a Bachelor's degree or above, compared to 23% of the general population.
- Despite being highly educated, 51% of immigrants indicated that their job was not at the same level as their skills/experience.
- A bit more than half (55%) said their incomes were enough for their needs and the remaining 45% were struggling financially. Some groups were more likely to report income insufficiency, including: Francophone individuals, youth, individuals that were isolated, with a disability, recent immigrants, individuals with a poor settlement experience, individuals that were Black, Muslim, with low education, low English, recent government assisted refugees, unemployed, recent refugees, and recent refugee claimants.
- 63% of participants were employed (47% full time and 16% part time) with 7% self-employed and 16% unemployed and seeking work.
- 5% of participants shared that they are business owners with their business contributing to the regional economy.

Housing

- Housing was also a key issue for immigrants – one of the top 3 issues and more affordable housing was the most frequently suggested solution that would help them succeed.
- 26% noted that their current housing was not suitable and/or affordable for them. While the corresponding 74% of all survey respondents were in housing that was affordable/suitable, some groups were less likely to have appropriate housing, including: Kitchener residents, recent government assisted refugees, recent immigrants, recent refugee claimants, individuals that were isolated, Muslim, unemployed, with a disability, Black, those with poor settlement experience, recent refugees, and low income individuals.

Settlement Supports and Experiences of Immigrants

- Community service use was high among survey participants with 98% noting they used at least some of a broad range of community services.
- Services were generally rated highly, with 95% rating at least one service positively. 58% rated at least one service negatively. The services that were most consistently rated positively were: Education services (85%), English language learning programs (82%), Settlement services (80%), and Police (80%). The services with the largest percentage of respondents rating them negatively were: Other community services (46%), Housing (40%), Small business/entrepreneurial supports (33%), Mental health services (31%), and Mental health (31%). Compared to previous surveys, participants were less likely to give positive ratings to many types of services.
 - 68% of participants that used employment services in the past year found them useful in finding employment, 61% found housing services useful in finding housing, and 89% found English language learning services useful in helping them learn English.
- 62% accessed virtual online services during the pandemic with 45% accessing them in other virtual means (phone, etc).
- 32% that went to a hospital/health setting and needed interpretation were provided it, 24% wanted it but it wasn't provided and 55% brought a friend/family member to interpret.

Community Integration of Immigrants

- 93% of survey participants chose to come to Waterloo Region – most frequently because of family or friends that live here (42% of participants), for a job (30%) or for post-secondary institutions (25%).
- Their reasons for wanting to stay in Waterloo Region were similar – most commonly because of family and friends, job/economy, the community feeling/sense of welcoming, or a feeling of “home”.

- The majority of participants (71%) reported having a strong sense of belonging in Waterloo Region – which was similar to previous surveys.
 - Some immigrant groups were less likely to have a strong sense of belonging, including: Francophones, individuals who were unemployed, international students, those with low English, isolated, temporary work permit holders, and those with a poor settlement experience.
 - On the other hand, some groups were more likely have a strong sense of belonging including: recent refugee claimants, individuals with low education levels, recent government assisted refugees, and recent refugees.
- Isolation was a key issue for participants. As well, an increased percentage of immigrants noted they felt isolated to some degree during the pandemic than prior to it (76% vs 59% 2 years ago).
 - Some groups were more likely to feel isolated including individuals that were unemployed, international students, recent immigrants, with low income, youth, individuals with a disability, temporary work permit holders, Francophones, and individuals with a poor settlement experience.
- 50% of participants felt that Waterloo Region was quite welcoming, 40% felt the community was somewhat welcoming and 11% felt it was not welcoming.
- Approximately one quarter (24%) experienced discrimination or being treated unfairly in the past year (similar to previous years). Some groups were more likely to experience discrimination, including those who were: racialized, men, temporary work permit holders, Muslim, unemployed, Black, LGBTQ+, youth, isolated, Cambridge residents, rural residents, individuals with low income, living with a disability, and a poor settlement experience.

Key Challenges and Solutions

- Half of immigrants were quite satisfied with their life (overall wellbeing) with 40% somewhat satisfied and 11% dissatisfied.
- 76% of immigrants had a positive experience settling and integrating in Waterloo Region.
- The most common challenges immigrants faced in the past year were: finding work (37%), making friends or social connections (34%), finding affordable housing (32%), and being socially isolated (24%). These top challenges are similar to previous surveys, though making friends/connections was mentioned more frequently during this pandemic period and a lower percentage mentioned finding work.
- Survey participants most frequently mentioned the following solutions to their challenges: more affordable housing options (49%), more or better programs for immigrants to find work (31%), more opportunities to help improve English skills (30%), educating employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants (28%), and actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants (21%).
- Groups that most frequently reported having a more difficult time across a spectrum of areas included those who were: isolated; with less ability to communicate in English; living on low income; unemployed; living with a disability; Francophone; Muslim; temporary permit holders; recent immigrants; Black; international students; recent refugee claimants; as well as immigrants who reported: a poor settlement/integration experience in Waterloo Region, low sense of belonging, low life satisfaction/wellbeing, or who experienced discrimination.
- Family support was more frequently mentioned as an important overall support than before the pandemic (46% compared to 37% previously). Participants reported that the things that helped them most in the past year were: having family support, making friends (33%), belonging to a religious group (22%), and finding work (21%).

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Survey Findings

In total, 1 507 immigrants³ participated in the survey. This includes 1 127 participants that filled out the full-length version of the survey in English and 380 that filled out a shorter version, translated into 10 different languages.

Immigration Status

Survey participants represented all major categories of immigration, and both permanent and temporary residents (Table 1).⁴

Table 1: Immigration Category and Status of Participants

Immigration Status	# of participants	% of participants
I immigrated to Canada as an economic-category immigrant	432	29%
I immigrated to Canada as a family-category immigrant	453	30%
I immigrated to Canada as a government assisted refugee	155	10%
I immigrated to Canada as a privately sponsored refugee (including BVOR – Blended Visa Office Referred)	77	5%
Permanent residents that were accepted as refugee claimants or under humanitarian & compassionate grounds ⁵	12	1%
I am currently in Canada as a temporary resident (refugee claimant)	102	7%
I am currently in Canada as a temporary resident (on a temporary work visa)	87	6%
I am currently in Canada as a temporary resident (international student)	106	7%
Other/unknown ⁶	83	6%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Of the 294 temporary residents that responded to this question, 58% were hoping to stay permanently in Waterloo Region, 23% were unsure, and 7% were not intending to stay permanently.⁷

Approximately half of participants had been living in Canada for 5 or fewer years (Table 2).⁸

Table 2: Time Living in Canada

Time living in Canada	# of participants	% of participants
Less than 1 year	69	5%
1 to 5 years	669	44%

³ The term “immigrants” is used broadly in this report to include all who were born outside of Canada and now live, work or study in Waterloo Region - including immigrants, refugees, international students, permanent residents, temporary residents or foreign nationals and people who immigrated and have become Canadian citizens.

⁴ Q1. Which of the following best describes you? (n=1507)

⁵ This option was not included on the actual survey tool but was coded after from “Other” responses.

⁶ “Some open-ended responses to this question were categorized into the above categories (e.g. Individuals that initially came to Canada as international students but are now permanent residents were assumed to have immigrated under economic categories). Unknown responses includes open-ended “Other” responses that did not clearly fit within the above categories.

⁷ Q6. If you are a temporary resident in Waterloo Region, are you hoping to stay permanently in Waterloo Region? (full surveys – temporary residents only, n=294)

⁸ Q2. How long have you been living in Canada? (n=1505)

6 to 10 years	208	14%
10 or more years	559	37%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

It is estimated that the survey reached about 1.7% of all immigrants that arrived in Waterloo Region in the past year, 3.4% of those that immigrated 1 to 5 years before the survey, 1.5% of those that immigrated 6 to 10 years before the survey and approximately 0.7% of immigrants that immigrated 10 or more years before.⁹

Age, Sex and Racialized Status

Participants ranged in age from 15-65+, with most participants between 25 and 44 years of age (Table 3).¹⁰

Table 3: Participant Age

Participant age	# of participants	% of participants
15-19 years	28	4%
20-24 years	36	5%
25-34 years	202	26%
35-44 years	272	35%
45-54 years	131	17%
55-64 years	64	8%
65 years or older	36	5%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Sixty-three percent of participants identified as female and 37% as male. Less than one percent preferred to self-describe.¹¹

Five percent of participants self-identified as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.¹²

Twenty-four percent of participants described themselves as White, with Black (18%), South Asian (16%) Latin American (12%) and Arab (11%) being the next largest groups. Seventy percent of participants indicated their connection to specific racial or population group other than White (not including “Other” or “Prefer not to answer”). As a group these are sometimes called “racialized” individuals (Table 4).¹³

⁹ In the year before the survey 3,975 permanent residents settled in Waterloo Region, and 1 to 5 years before the survey 19,435 settled here (IRCC 2021). These figures are approximations as they do not include temporary residents. The figures also do not account for secondary migration of immigrants that moved to or from Waterloo Region after their initial immigration. During the period that roughly lines up with 6 to 10 years before the Immigrant Survey the census shows there were 14,045 recent immigrants. (Statistics Canada, 2016 Census) Based on census data and the above figures, there were likely a bit fewer than 100,000 individuals in Waterloo Region that immigrated 10 or more years before the survey.

¹⁰ Q32. What is your age? (question asked on full surveys only, n=769)

¹¹ Q35. How would you describe your gender identity? (full surveys only, n=757) An additional 8 participants preferred not to answer this question.

¹² Q36. Do you self-identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community? (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) (full surveys only, n=764) An additional 42 participants preferred not to answer this question.

¹³ Q32. Which would best describe you? (Select all that apply) (full surveys only, n=726) An additional 39 participants preferred not to answer this question.

Table 4: Population Groups/Racialized Status

	# of participants	% of participants
Arab	77	11%
Black	130	18%
Chinese	31	4%
Filipino	5	1%
Japanese	9	1%
Korean	13	2%
Latin American	88	12%
South Asian	119	16%
Southeast Asian	43	6%
West Asian	8	1%
White	175	24%
Other	77	11%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Nine percent noted they were living with a disability or chronic illness that limits their activity.¹⁴ Some subgroups were more likely to indicate they were living with a disability/chronic illness, including isolated individuals (14%), recent government assisted refugees (16%), individuals with lower education (16%), Cambridge residents (16%), and LGBTQ+ individuals (24%).

Nearly three-quarters of participants (73%) indicated they were a member of a faith community with Christian (38%) and Muslim (33%) being the most common (Table 5).¹⁵

Table 5: Faith Community

Faith community	# of participants	% of participants
Christian	276	38%
Muslim	182	25%
Hindu	47	6%
Sikh	9	1%
Jewish	8	1%
Other	11	2%
I am not a member of a faith community	199	27%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

¹⁴ Q37. Are you living with a disability (physical or mental) or a chronic illness that limits your activity? (full surveys only, n=741) An additional 21 participants preferred not to answer this question.

¹⁵ Q38. If you are a member of a faith community, please share which one: (full surveys only, n=732) An additional 30 participants preferred not to answer this question.

Language

Eighty-four percent of survey participants had a first language other than English. The most common first languages of participants were English (16% of participants), Arabic (19%), and Chinese languages (11%; Table 6).¹⁶ Participants noted a total of 80 different first languages.¹⁷

Table 6: Top First languages

Language	# of responses	% of responses
English	240	16%
Arabic*	176	12%
Chinese languages* (Mandarin, Cantonese and Chinese not otherwise specified)	174	11%
Spanish*	128	8%
Urdu	77	5%
Serbo-Croatian*	74	5%
Portuguese	74	5%
Tigrinya*	63	4%
Farsi/Persian*	52	3%
Turkish*	43	3%
Hindi	33	2%
Amharic*	31	2%
Russian	31	2%
French*	26	2%
German	21	1%
Somali*	19	1%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey. * Starred languages include first languages from the full length survey as well as the number of surveys in that language from the short translated version of the survey.

Most respondents that didn't have English as a first language still spoke English well or very well (71%) (Table 7).¹⁸

Table 7: Ability to Speak English Among Non-English First Language Speakers

Ability to speak English	# of participants	% of participants
Very well	571	46%
Well	313	25%
Fairly well	256	20%
Poorly	93	7%
Not at all	21	2%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

¹⁶ Q7. What is your first language? (all surveys, n=1125) First language (i.e. mother tongue) is the first language a person learned at home and still understands.

¹⁷ First languages of participants included: Afrikaans, Akan, Akuapem Twi, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Bilen, Burmese, Cantonese, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, English, Farsi/Persian, French, German, Ghanian, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Hmong, Hungarian, Igbo, Italian, Japanese, Kannada, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Konkani, Korean, Kurdish, Laotian, Lingala, Luganda, Luo, Malay, Malayalam, Maltese, Mandarin, Marathi, Nepali, Oromo, Pashto, Patois, Plautdietsch, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Pushto, Rohingya, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Serbo-Croatian, Shanghaiese, Shona, Sindhi, Sinhalese, Slovak, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Syriac, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tshiluba, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian, Ukranian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba.

¹⁸ Q4. If your first language is not English, how well can you speak English? (all surveys – non-English first language, n=1254)

Housing

Nearly half of survey participants lived in Kitchener (49%), with 31% lived in Waterloo and 13% lived in Cambridge (Table 8).¹⁹

Table 8: Place of Residence

Place of residence	# of participants	% of participants	% of Waterloo Region immigrant population (2016 Census)
Kitchener	547	49%	51%
Waterloo	344	31%	22%
Cambridge	150	13%	22%
Township of North Dumfries	8	1%	1%
Township of Wellesley	5	<1%	1%
Township of Woolwich	15	1%	2%
Township of Wilmot	10	1%	2%
Other (please specify)	34	3%	

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey & 2016 Census

Twenty-six percent of participants noted that their current housing was not suitable and/or affordable for them.²⁰

Some groups were less likely to have appropriate housing, including: Kitchener residents (69%), recent government assisted refugees (69%), recent immigrants (68%), recent refugee claimants (65%), individuals that were isolated (68%), Muslim (66%), unemployed (66%), with a disability (66%), Black (64%), those with poor settlement experience (62%), recent refugees (60%), and low income²¹ individuals (56%; Figure 1).

"I am paying more than 60% of my income for rent"

"My rent for 3 bedroom is 2200 and that's all the income i made for the whole so its stressful to pay rent plus utilities"

"Rent is on average but my income is too low"

"Rents and prices are too high"

"The house is being sold so I will have to move into a new one, my rent was 1850 and now the similar houses' rent start from 2350"

"Me and my husband are now working from home and we just have one bedroom open concept place. It is very difficult for me to study. I often sit and study in our lobby."

"So hard to find housing, current apartment unit is quite small"

"We r very packed in 3 bedroom apartment with 3 grownup kids and both of us."

"We share house with other tenants"

"2 adults and 3 kids living in a 2 bedroom apartment. Not enough space. Can't afford rent or home ownership"

"I live in a basement with my 2 kids we only have one bedroom"

"Very expensive and poor in quality"

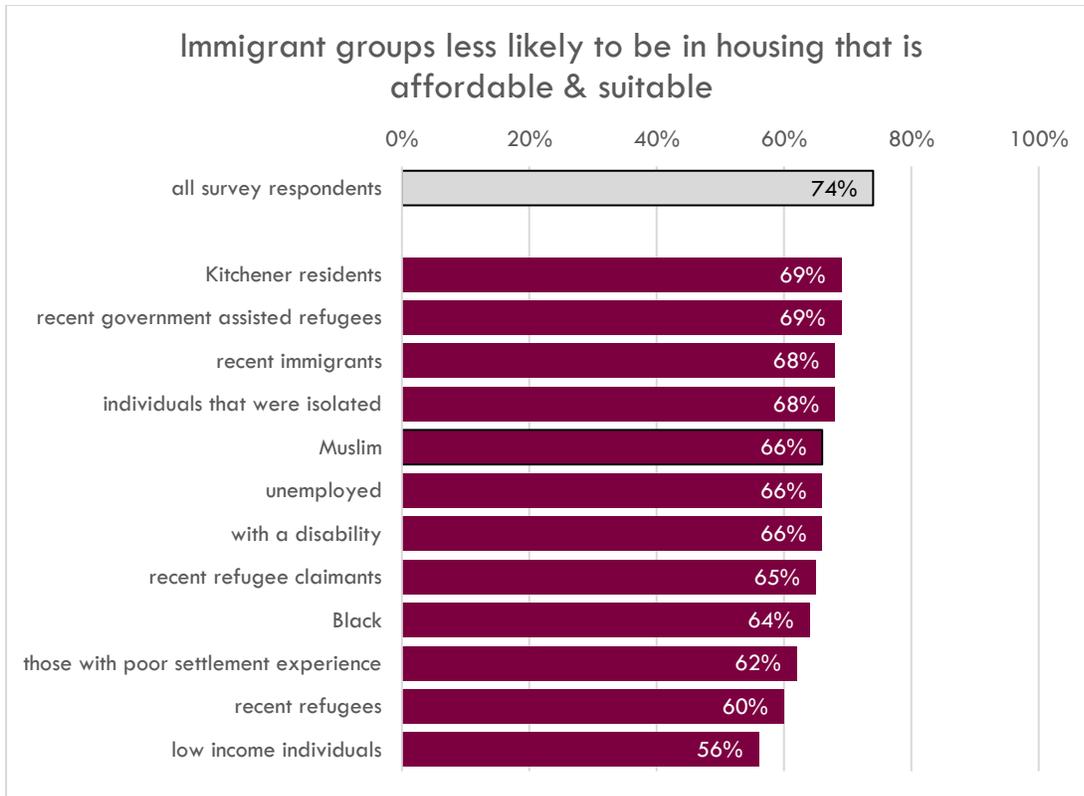
– survey participants

¹⁹ Q5. Where do you live? (full surveys only, n=1113). Most of the respondents that lived in "Other" places noted they live in municipalities adjacent to Waterloo Region and may have worked or studied in Waterloo Region.

²⁰ Q40. Is your current housing suitable and affordable for you? (full surveys only, n=757)

²¹ Low income includes participants that indicated their income was not sufficient for the needs of them and their family.

Figure 1: Housing Affordability/Suitability - Subgroups



Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Those that did not feel their housing was suitable or affordable shared comments related to:

- Affordability (105 comments)
- Suitability/Adequacy (26 comments)
- Affordability and suitability/adequacy (30 comments)
- Other issues (12 comments).

Education, Employment and Income

Immigrants tend to be highly educated. Seventy-one percent of survey participants had completed a post-secondary bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 22% of Waterloo Region's general population (Table 9).²²

Table 9: Highest Level of Education Completed

Highest level of education completed	# of participants	% of participants	% of Waterloo Region population over age 15 (2016 Census)
No formal education	8	1%	19%
Elementary school	22	3%	
High school or equivalent	72	10%	29%
Trade/technical school	15	2%	6%
College diploma	102	14%	21%
Bachelor's degree	275	36%	16%
Master's degree	217	29%	5%
PhD	43	6%	1%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Sixty-three percent of participants were employed (47% fulltime, and 15% employed part time), with an additional 6% self-employed, 13% not in the paid workforce, 16% unemployed and seeking work and 6% "other"²³.

Some groups had lower rates of employment, including: recent refugee claimants (44%), recent government assisted refugees (25%), individuals with low English (23%), low education (35%), Muslim individuals (51%), immigrants with a disability (56%), recent refugees (45%), rural residents (52%), and youth (38%).

More than half of participants (55%) shared that their income was enough for their needs – with 33% sharing that their incomes were not quite enough for their needs and 12% with incomes that were definitely not enough for their needs.²⁴

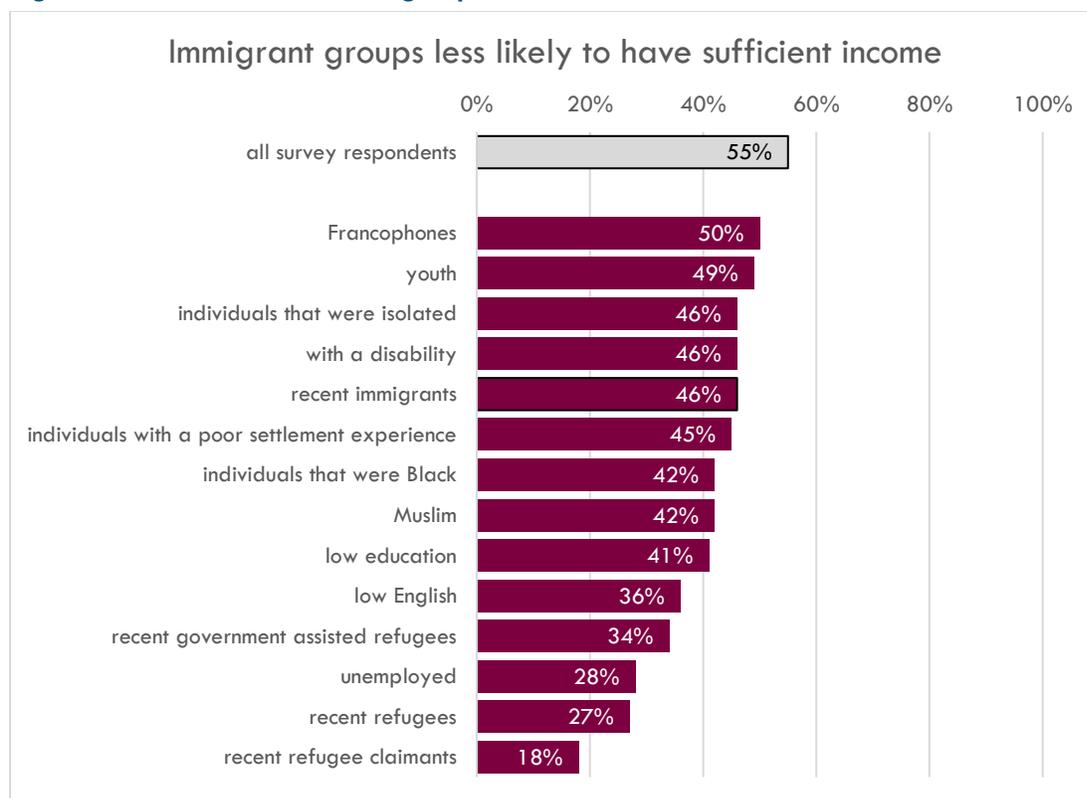
Some groups were less likely to have sufficient income, including: Francophones (50%), youth (49%), individuals that were isolated (46%), with a disability (46%), recent immigrants (46%), individuals with a poor settlement experience (45%), individuals that were Black (42%), Muslim (42%), with low education (41%), low English (36%), recent government assisted refugees (34%), unemployed (28%), recent refugees (27%), and recent refugee claimants (18%; Figure 2).

²² Q34. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (full surveys only, n=754)

²³ Q39. What is your paid employment status? (full surveys only, n=743)

²⁴ Q41. Is your household income enough for the needs of you and your family? (full surveys only, n=730)

Figure 2: Sufficient Income - Subgroups



Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Approximately half (49%) of participants that were working felt that they were in a job that was at the same level as their skills/experience, with the remaining 51% indicating that their job was not at the same level as their skills/experience.²⁵

Among respondents that were in the workforce²⁶, 58% were in a job that was at the same level as their skills and experience. This differed based on type of employment, including:

- 65% of full time employed respondents
- 37% of part time employed respondents
- 60% of self-employed respondents.

Among respondents with a Bachelor's or higher education, 46% were in a job that was at the same level as their skills and experience.

Participants in jobs commensurate with their skills/experience were more likely to have sufficient income (74% vs 55% for all respondents), were more likely to be working full time (73% vs 47% for all respondents), and similarly likely to have at least a Bachelor's degree or higher (73% vs 71% for all respondents) - and they were more likely to have higher life satisfaction (i.e. overall wellbeing) (63% vs 49% of all respondents)

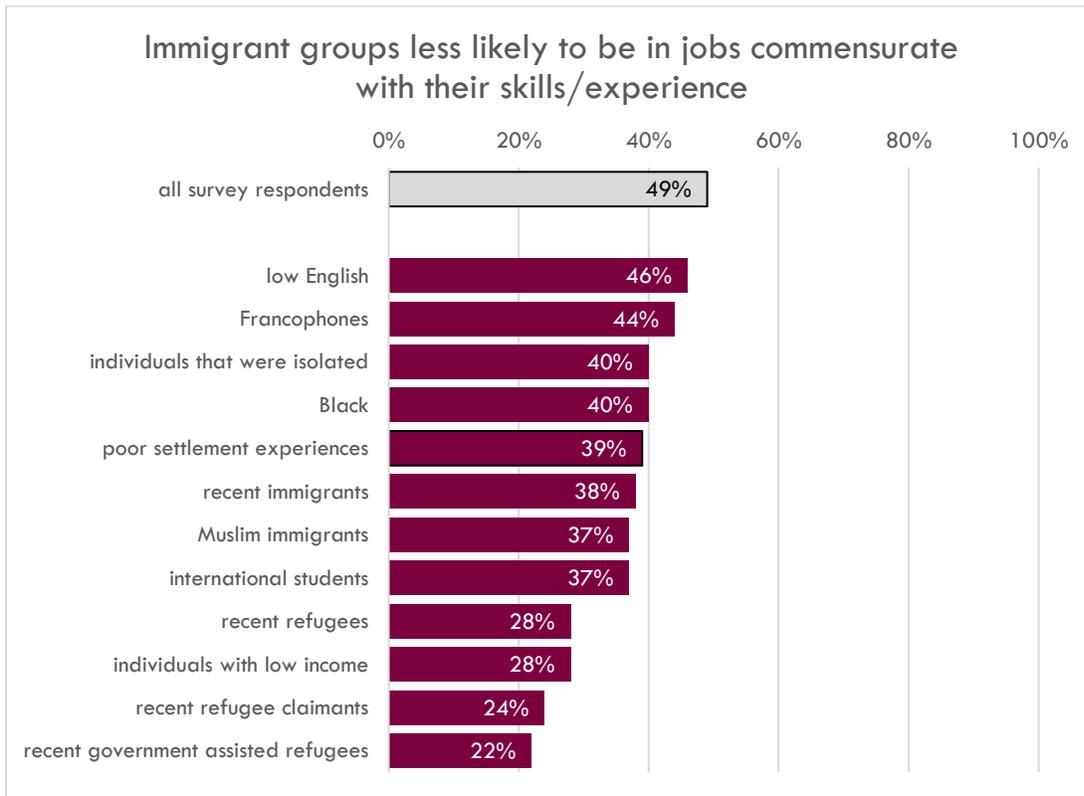
Some groups were less likely to be in jobs commensurate with their skills/experience, including: individuals with low English (46%), Francophones (44%), individuals that were isolated (40%), Black (40%), with poor settlement experiences (39%), recent immigrants (38%), Muslim immigrants (37%), international students

²⁵ Q42. Are you in a job that is at the same level as your skills and experience? (full surveys only, n=613)

²⁶ This incorporates not just part time and full time employment but self-employment as well.

(37%), recent refugees (28%), individuals with low income (28%), recent refugee claimants (24%), and recent government assisted refugees (22%; Figure 3).

Figure 3: Job Commensurate with Skills/Experience - Subgroups



Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Service Use

Service use was high among survey participants. Nearly all used at least one listed service (98%). The most frequently used types of services were Health services (90%), Education services (71%), and Housing programs (71%; Table 10).²⁷

Services were generally rated highly, with 95% rating at least one service positively (i.e. Excellent, Very good or Good). However, 58% rated at least one service negatively (i.e. Acceptable or Poor).

The services most consistently rated positively were: Education services (85%), English language learning programs (82%), Settlement services (80%), and Police (80%).

The services with the largest percentage of respondents rating them negatively were: Other community services (46%), Housing (40%), Small business/entrepreneurial supports (33%), and Mental health (31%).

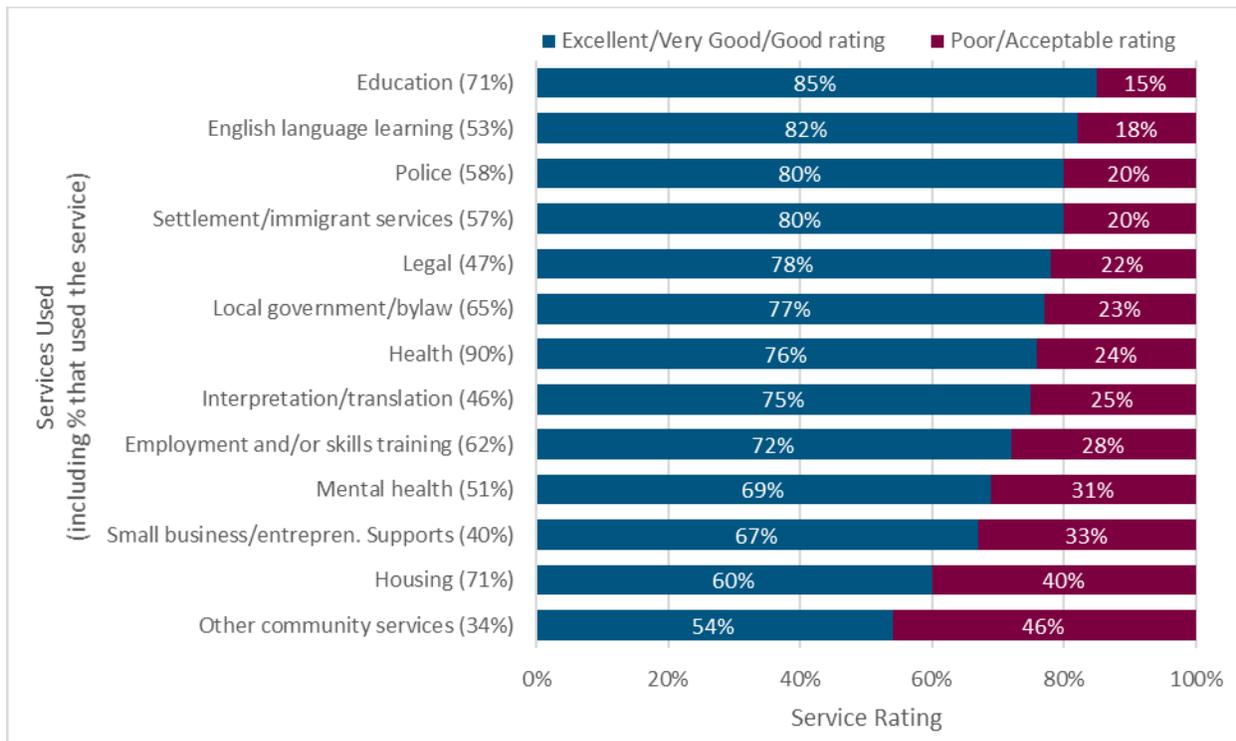
Table 10: Service Use and Ratings

Types of services used	% of participants using that service	% of participants rating the service positively	% of participants rating the service negatively
Education	71%	85%	15%
English language learning	53%	82%	18%
Settlement/immigrant services	57%	80%	20%
Police	58%	80%	20%
Legal	47%	78%	22%
Local government/bylaw	65%	77%	23%
Health	90%	76%	24%
Interpretation/translation	46%	75%	25%
Employment and/or skills training	62%	72%	28%
Mental health	51%	69%	31%
Small business/entrepreneurial supports	40%	67%	33%
Housing	71%	60%	40%
Other community services (please specify)	34%	54%	46%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

²⁷ Q7. Please rate your experience with following services in the last 12 months in Waterloo Region? (all surveys, n=1268)

Figure 4: Service Use and Ratings



Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Except in a general way, direct comparisons between 2019 and 2021 should be made with caution as the questions were asked slightly differently and some services were added in 2021. The top rated services in 2021 were Education, English language learning, Settlement/immigrant services and Police. Other than police, which was a new option, these were the top rated services in 2019 as well. The services that were least likely to have positive ratings in 2021 were “Other community services”, Housing and Small business/entrepreneurial supports. In 2019 the services that were least likely to have a positive rating were Small business/entrepreneurial supports, Housing, and Mental health.

Compared to 2019, immigrants were less likely to give positive ratings for Other community services (54% vs 84%), Housing (60% vs 74%), Interpretation (75% vs 88%), Settlement (80% vs 90%), Health (76% vs 85%), Mental health (69% vs 77%), English language learning (82% vs 89%), Education (85% vs 91%), Employment (72% vs 78%), and similarly likely to give positive ratings for Small business (67% vs 71%), and Legal services (78% vs 78%). Police and Local government/bylaw were new options in 2021.

Among participants who had not accessed one or more of the services listed, 30% didn't use services because they didn't know about them (including 25% who would have used them if they were). Two thirds of participants said they didn't use the services because they didn't need the service (68%), with 6% said they didn't qualify and 4%

*“I did not find out [about available services] because of lack of English, being a single mother and taking care of my children which keeps me very busy
 “Language remains as barriers to access resources”
 “The time schedule available for English classes were right during the time I had to work so I was never able to take them”*

— survey participants

noted they didn't use the services for other reasons.²⁸

Reasons for not using services varied among different groups:

- Those that were more likely to not use the services because they didn't know about them (but would have used them if they did know) included recent immigrants (30%), individuals with low education levels (30%), low income (31%), youth (32%), isolated individuals (33%), Black individuals (34%), recent refugees (37%), rural (41%), and international students (46%)
- Temporary permit holders (11%) and individuals with low English levels (12%) were more likely to not use services because they didn't qualify.

When asked about accessing services during the COVID-19 pandemic, 32% accessed services in-person, 62% accessed services virtually – online, 45% accessed services virtually by phone or other ways other than online, and 2% shared other means.²⁹

Some groups were less likely to have access online virtual services during the pandemic, including: individuals with low education levels (57%), recent government assisted refugees (56%), individuals with low English (55%), Cambridge residents (55%), rural residents (55%), temporary work permit holders (51%), respondents to the non-English versions of the survey (51%) and Francophone respondents (35%).

Survey participants were asked why they might not have accessed services virtually: 9% said services were not available virtually, 4% said virtual services were not available in their language, 2% didn't have the tools to access virtual services (internet access, laptop, mobile phone or other device), 6% were not comfortable accessing virtual services, and 1% noted other reasons.³⁰

“Doctor phone and virtual appointments were great, we should keep them after the pandemic.”

“Highly satisfied and pleasantly surprised how people have accepted and accommodated change in working style. Virtual services are intact much faster and saves lots of time. Many tasks are done just sitting at the comfort of home and at a few clicks”

“I accessed KWMC over the phone and documents were sent by email. Settlement counselor was busy to be reached asap but very helpful overall”

“We were not aware of any services that would help elderly parents to access basic health services such as booking the vaccine, even in English. It was hard enough for me to book, completely fluent in English and very comfortable with the use of technology. If there are resources available, we don't know about them.”

– survey participants

“[I was] not comfortable using but had no choice”

“Sometimes I feel lost, maybe because of the language.”

“I used virtual service and I loved it”

– survey participants

²⁸ Q8. If you have not used any of the services listed above, what are the reasons? (all surveys, n=853) Other reasons noted included accessibility (time limit, budget, language, etc), COVID-19, not being able to find the services, the services didn't help, etc.

²⁹ Q9. If you accessed services during the COVID-19 pandemic, indicate if they were? (all surveys, n=915)

³⁰ Q10. If you did not access services virtually, please indicate why? (all surveys, n=331) An additional 31% of respondents to this question shared that they didn't need any virtual services and 50% said the question was not applicable or they were unsure.

Participants shared their experiences with new virtual services³¹ – both positive and negative – including:

- Good virtual services (49 responses)
- I didn't have the tools to access services (internet access, laptop, mobile phone or other device) (10 responses)
- I am not comfortable accessing virtual services due to tech and knowledge (7 responses)
- Virtual services quality should be improved (7 responses)
- Services should be more accessible (5 responses)
- Other challenges to services (6 responses)
- I am not comfortable accessing virtual services due to language (3 responses)
- Don't like it (2 responses)
- I do not prefer virtual services due to lack of social connection (2 responses)
- Other (10 responses)
- N/A (24 responses)

"...libraries should be one of the last places to close and one of first places to open as they are one of the few places that provide free internet computers for the public to use."

"...people who are at work and who do not have cell phones are disadvantaged when the doctor insists on calling you at the time of the appointment instead of you being able to call their office and waiting until they come on the line for your appointment."

– survey participants

"English leaning service was particularly good for my mother. Besides learning language the virtual group lessons was very helpful for maintaining her mental health."

"I had good experiences accessing services online. Most of the people have been very understandable of the situation and have tried to manage to be as accessible as possible given the circumstances."

"...the support that my children and I have received is incalculable."

"In the beginning of the pandemic it was hard to find services but as this pandemic continued services became more accessible."

"My experience has been good enough that unless physical interaction is necessary, I would like to continue use of virtual medical services due to convenience and not having to travel or wait as much."

"Virtual services are good. Saves lots of time. Doesn't have to worry about any transportation and childcare problems."

– survey participants

"[My experience has been] particularly difficult because our rural areas don't have reliable fast internet, so our kid can't even do online learning"

"Bad connection and felt impersonal"

"I never had computer before it a luxury so never learn how to use it."

"I had few appointments with my family physician and it was on phone. Very difficult experience and hard to explain your situation."

"Walk in Clinics need to be in-person as the doctors could examine the patients more efficiently"

"Really long wait times for some responses. Some websites were difficult to navigate."

– survey participants

³¹ Q11. If you had particularly good or particularly difficult experiences with new virtual services please share the reasons. (full surveys only, n=120)

Among participants that accessed employment services in the past year 68% found them useful in helping them find employment, while 33% did not find them to be useful.³²

Some groups were more likely to say employment services were useful, including youth (73%), individuals with lower education levels (78%), and Black individuals (81%). Some groups were less likely to find them useful, including recent refugee claimants (63%), individuals that were Muslim (62%), isolated (62%), low income (62%), with low English (60%), international students (58%), unemployed (55%), rural residents (54%), temporary work permit holders (50%), LGBTQ+ individuals (50%) and those with poor settlement experiences (45%).

Among participants that accessed housing services in the past year 61% found them useful in helping them find housing, while 40% did not find them to be useful.³³

“Housing for new comers can be very challenging, with no credit history. We had to bring in a co-signer in order to get our rental application completed after we had been rejected by more than 15 applications. It was easier when we moved by the third year however, It was a very stressful process for us and for so many friends who faced the same situation.”

“Housing is becoming expensive and not fixing anything

“Housing provided in Waterloo region takes advantage of immigrants, requiring illegal things on their contracts (against RTA) ... (such as 3 year lease, 3 last months payment, \$250 key deposit, etc).”

– survey participants

“As an international student, couldn't find even a general job for the expense of my life. Most centers cooperate with refugee people who don't spend money here opposite of students.”

“Employment services are limited for professionals who actually have skills and it is difficult for them to enter into the industry, especially when they are new to the country”

“Employment training was on-the-job training for skills improvement, education, etc., not for securing employment.”

“It is very frustrating to immigrate and have to go start afresh when one already has the qualifications.”

“...Employment services only help people with permanent resident.”

“The main hurdle for me to find the right job according to my experience and education. All the employment services were not [in] alignment with the real job market present scenario. ...As my personal experience of 8 yrs living in Canada now, still struggling and at the labour job. Real job market hesitate recruiting international experience and education person. They rather prefer non experience and with no education Canadian than to select internationally experience and educated person like me. ...My only concern and request is at least provide with opportunity to stand or have able to wear hats of our qualified job. Unless and until they open door to recruit in our expertise work field, how could we ever show our talent or even exhibit our caliber and potential. Thus, plz refer to open door to international trained professional and create platform to show their potential in their area. While coming here in Canada and doing labour job is not worth in terms of time and value of life.”

– survey participants

Groups more likely to say housing services were useful, included temporary work permit holders (69%), White (71%), youth (74%) and rural residents (75%). Groups less likely to find them useful included men (55%), individuals with low English (56%), low income (54%), international students (50%), individuals with a disability (47%) or poor settlement experiences (36%).

³² Q12. If you accessed employment services in the past year, how useful were they in helping you to look for or find employment? (full surveys only, n=330) 32% found employment services very useful, 36% somewhat useful, 21% not very useful and 12% not at all useful.

³³ Q13. If you accessed housing services in the past year, how useful were they in helping you to find housing? (full surveys only, n=246) 24% found employment services very useful, 37% somewhat useful, 23% not very useful and 17% not at all useful.

Among participants that accessed English language learning services in the past year 89% said they were useful in learning English, while only 11% did not find them to be useful.³⁴

Some groups were more likely to say English language learning services were useful, including temporary work permit holders (69%), White individuals (71%), youth (74%) and rural residents (75%). Others were less likely to find them useful, including individuals with low English (56%), low income (54%), international students (50%), individuals with a disability (47%) or poor settlement experiences (36%).

"I had a language tutor who recommended by the center since last year. We have a half hour conversation circle on weekly basis. I give thanks and credits to the center and my tutor since my English level has been improved to a higher level."

"i feel there is far too much emphasis for accommodation for immigrants such as myself in terms of providing translator, and support - this does not help us, this keeps us from learning the english language. More support / training to learn english should be offered and this would be a much bigger benefit."

– survey participants

Survey participants shared additional details about their experiences with accessing services across a number of areas:³⁵

- Health (44 responses) – 7 positive, 30 negative, 7 other
- Housing (29 responses) – 0 positive, 27 negative, 2 other
- Employment (28 responses) – 5 positive, 20 negative, 3 other

"Consulted my family doctor about a skin condition by phone, sent photos of problem, prescriptions via emails, everything went as planned."

"...it was not easy to make an appointment or meet the doctor in-person if they thought it is not serious problem. How could they decide the seriousness by not even seeing directly the patient?"

"I am a new immigrant and it's impossible to find a family doctor. It's been almost a year but I still can't find any."

"As an international student... I can not visit a professional Doctor here because I am in the minimum level of college insurance for student"

"Mental health services needs improvement, we didn't have good experience in Cambridge hospital. Also the emergency waiting time is too long, need improvement."

"There is no serious treatment of immigrants in the health system, many people suffer from bad treatment and careless of the nurses and some of doctors"

– survey participants

"I felt uncomfortable with calling to Government site, like CRA and Service Canada, because it took too long to connect with a person. Usually, it takes one and half hours to be connected, which makes me frustrated. But fortunately, if it connects with me, the problem that I had solved smoothly."

"More visible, accessible system would be appreciated especially in the outer area of the region where the transportation is limited, because some people don't have private transportation and often time the time it takes to get to some service by public transportation is not manageable for the parents with school age children."

"It is going every services good and appreciate the people who are working in health services with hard time of covid-19."

"I think these services should be promoted so, immigrants know about this."

"I just recently learned about employment services. I think the biggest issue I have is finding resources or knowing they exist. For example, I would be very interested in learning about free or affordable mental health services."

"Empathy is missing. Cultural sympathy is lacking. There is impatience in service provision. Dismissal is the word when dealing with visible minorities."

"I think there should be more immigrants hired to provide so the region has fair representation. Right now, majority of people hired or working are only white Canadians."

– survey participants

³⁴ Q14. If you accessed English language learning services in the past year, how useful were they in helping you to learn English? (full surveys only, n=248) 56% found employment services very useful, 33% somewhat useful, 8% not very useful and 3% not at all useful.

³⁵ Q16. Please share any specific reasons for your answers in the last several questions about using employment, housing, language or health services? (full surveys only, n=167)

- Interpretation (12 responses) – 2 positive, 8 negative, 2 other
- Language learning (11 responses) – 4 positive, 3 negative, 4 other
- Settlement (7 responses) – 3 positive, 3 negative
- Other services (6 responses) – 0 positive, 6 negative
- All services are good (16 responses)
- Don't need the services (10 responses)
- Knowing where to find information (8 responses)
- Discrimination (6 responses)
- Other or the survey itself (19 responses)

Language interpretation can be critical for individuals that are not able to communicate in English when accessing services, health care in particular. Among survey participants, 23% went to a hospital, clinic or health professional in the past year and needed interpretation. Of those, 32% had interpretation provided to them, 55% brought a family member or friend to provide interpretation and 24% wanted interpretation but it was not provided.³⁶

³⁶ Q15. If you or a family member went to a hospital, health clinic or talked to a health professional in the past year, did the health clinic provide in-person or phone/video interpretation? (full surveys only, n=1230) 20% of survey participants did not go to a hospital, clinic or health professional and 59% did go but didn't need language interpretation. Other comments included the difficulty of finding a family doctor (aren't accepting new patients), not being able to go to hospital to see a doctor or have a medical check-up if children are not around, they had no interpreters, there seems no interpretation services, they weren't aware that there was such as service, slow service with a lot of red tape, no interpretation was offered, respondents going to provide interpretation for family or friends, the provider didn't even ask if the patient needed interpretation and the assumption that a student should be able to understand English pretty well, generally being able to satisfy their needs and it provide a chance to improve communication skills, and that it was an awful experience.

Community Integration

Reasons for Choosing and Staying in Waterloo Region

Immigrants come to Waterloo Region for many reasons.³⁷ Immigrant survey participants were most likely to come here because they had family or friends in Waterloo Region (42%), for a job (30%) or for post-secondary institutions (25%; Table 5).

Table 11: Reasons for Choosing Waterloo Region

Faith community	# of participants	% of participants
Family or friends that live in Waterloo Region	324	42%
For a job in Waterloo Region	229	30%
Post-secondary institutions	195	25%
Waterloo Region was more affordable than other communities	147	19%
A healthy local economy	55	7%
Cultural or language groups in this community	34	4%
Community services and supports in this community	34	4%
Other	59	8%
I didn't chose Waterloo Region - the community was chosen for me	50	7%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Other reasons for choosing Waterloo Region included this community being small, quiet or safe.

“My daughter was an International Student at University of Waterloo, so we joined her as complete family together”

“As federal skilled worker immigrants, we chose Waterloo Region because we wanted to live a small family oriented community. We needed a friendly environment to grow our small family. Kitchener seemed like the best option after months of research.”

“Startup ecosystem”

“Good future and its growing up”

“A diverse and multicultural environment”

“I didn't choose waterloo region it was sponsor and Canadian government who choose for us, to Toronto Airport to Kitchener”

“This is a decision my parent's made for our family and I am very happy with the decision they made.”

– survey participants

³⁷ Q27. Why did you come to Waterloo Region? (Select your top 3 reasons) (full surveys only, n=768)

Survey participants also shared things that make them want to STAY in the region:³⁸

- Family or friends that live in Waterloo Region (94 responses)
- For a job/economy in Waterloo Region (93 responses)
- Community feeling and welcoming (46 responses)
- I'm connected to here (or no specific reasons) (43 responses)
- Safe, peaceful and quiet (36 responses)
- Education (31 responses)
- Community services and supports (30 responses)
- Size and location (28 responses)
- Diversity and cultural/language groups in this community (24 responses)
- Waterloo Region is more affordable than other communities (22 responses)
- Nature/Environment (18 responses)
- Place to raise a family (12 responses)
- Other reasons (23 responses)
- Nowhere to go (8 responses)
- Didn't want to stay/Considered leaving/Not sure (16 responses)

See Appendix B for additional examples of respondents' comments.

"I have made strong friendships and I now feel basically at home in Waterloo Region."

"This area is well-known as being progressive and offering many opportunities for employment at all levels from unskilled to post-graduate qualifications."

"It is a welcoming friendly community that is very progressive and innovative."

"I loved the Waterloo area a lot because of the community's acceptance and welcome for newcomers, ...which makes me feel reassured and comfortable"

"I consider Waterloo Region to be my home. This is where I've spent most of my life. I have family and friends here. There's has always been good opportunities for me and my family here in the region, and I believe the region is a good place to raise a family."

"Peaceful compared to big cities, good neighborhood, people are welcoming"

"This community is very peaceful and helpful. People respect the law. The government agencies are helpful. Laws are implemented very fairly with out any discrimination."

"It is a small community that provides a good quality of life and many opportunities."

"I am afraid to re-locate and find myself and family in a worse location"

"I can't afford to go anywhere else."

"Nothing actually. Housing is expensive. Our neighbours don't talk to us may be because of language barrier."

– survey participants

Community Contributions

Immigrants contribute to the community in many ways. Survey participants shared various ways through which they contribute to creating a thriving and prosperous community for everyone.³⁹ Participants most frequently said they contribute to the broader community by helping their neighbours (63%), providing unpaid help for family members (child care, elder care, etc.) (35%) and donating to charities (35%; Table 12Table 5).

Table 12: Ways of Contributing

Faith community	# of participants	% of participants
I help out my neighbours when they need it	703	63%
I provide unpaid help for family members (children, grandparents, etc.)	389	35%
I donate to local charities	387	35%
I contribute with my skills and experience to the local economy through my job	370	33%

³⁸ Q28. What makes you want to stay in this community? (full surveys only, n=396)

³⁹ Q29. What are some of the ways you contribute to creating a thriving and prosperous community for everyone? (Select all that apply) (all surveys, n=1116)

I contribute to improving the natural environment in my community (recycling, picking up garbage, planting trees, etc.)	361	32%
I speak up for fairness and treat people with kindness in my community	350	31%
I help newcomers to Canada as they make their home in our community	279	25%
I volunteer with other community organizations, groups or faith communities	247	22%
I build my skills so I can better contribute to this community (learning English, further education, building professional skills, etc.)	240	22%
I participate in political activities (voting, writing to my political representative, etc.)	182	16%
I volunteer in cultural or ethnic association activities	167	15%
I am on a board of directors or other committee	128	11%
I help people to stay healthy by working in the health care sector during the current pandemic	105	9%
I tutor or help youth learn in this community	77	7%
I volunteer with youth sports (coaching, driving youth, etc.)	67	6%
I am a business owner and my business contributes to our community's economy	61	5%
Other	41	4%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Participants shared many stories that illustrate ways they contribute to making the community better which they are particularly proud of.⁴⁰ See Appendix B for some of those stories.

“I am volunteering in YMCA computer literacy program and helped senior citizens to learn basic computer knowledge.”

“I came into Canada not up to 2 years ago. I am proud of myself because I am passionate about reaching out to my Community members. So I been able to register and running a Charitable Organization whose purpose is to invest in women and families as we empower them to engage in activities that will advance education relieve poverty, promote health, etc.”

“I was very young when I came to Canada and I was 20 years old with my parents just finishing engineering school. I now own several businesses and I count my blessing every day”

– survey participants

⁴⁰ Q30. If you would like to share a story that illustrates one of the above contributions that you are particularly proud of, please do so here (full surveys only, n=135)

"During this pandemic, I worked for the children at the emergency center whose parents are essential workers. Even the works got harder than before pandemic due to sanitizing things and wearing masks and goggles to protect Covid-19, it worth for me to support children and their parents who contribute to the economy of Waterloo region. So, this kind of thought led me to get over this unprecedented difficult situation."

"I'm textile engineer, during covid19 I played a major role in a company started producing face masks, I used to test the 'nonwoven' raw materials and determine the quality for the final product."

"My parents and I are refugees and arrived in Canada with only 2 suitcases holding all our worldly possession. My parents came to this beautiful country here to escape a communist regime and with hope for a better future for us. Over the years, they've worked hard – working in factories since their work experiences and education were not accepting here. Sometimes they worked two jobs and night shifts in order to meet ends meet. They did manage to save up to buy a house and help me go to university. My parents are very grateful to this country that took us in and to all the people that have helped us along the way. Even when they have very little, they are always donating to charities and helping new immigrants as they were helped. Today, I am a parent and am only beginning to understand the sacrifice my parents made over the years for me. I am so thankful to them and thankful that I am now a Canadian citizen."

"While I was working at the mental health services, I did manage to save a teenager's life and that was the most satisfying moment of my life. I feel proud of myself for doing something so important for someone else."

"As an amateur musician, it is a delight to perform in the region. There have been many wonderful performances, here in town, and outside - a number of us have performed in Hamilton, Elora etc over the last few years, and this year we collaborate with 3 other choirs across Canada in a virtual pandemic song that is being enjoyed worldwide"

"I volunteered local school by reading for the children and participated school councils meeting!"

"I was the lead facilitator of a Pilot Program to promote child-literacy among low socio-economical neighbourhoods by Strong Start. I wasn't a licenced Canadian Teacher that's why they gave me the title of Facilitator- no licencing required for that. It is now a well-established program in Waterloo Region"

– survey participants

"During the pandemic ...we deliver groceries to people. One of the story I am so thrilled by is: off course there are many but this one stays with me, during the stay home order a woman who is immune compromised asked for help to get special food for herself and her cat, I was able to reach out for her and she wrote me a list and went shopping and delivered them to her door! What resonates me in this that I helped for the seek for helping my community, I never knew the women and never met her. That what we need in our community, to support and empower regardless of our differences and only consider that we all human and we all smile in the same way! Thanks"

"I'm investing a lot of time in learning English and now I can understand most of what people say to me, which I find impressive since I've been here for about 1 year and 5 months."

"I have been working with English language learners in a Poetry program that I co-run. We give them a safe space to write in any language they prefer and express themselves."

"My wife and I have organized the Wilmot Terry Fox Run since 2013. Since then, we've raised about 90% of the money raised by the local run since it began in our community. In 2018, I designed the official Terry Fox Run t-shirt, which was sold across Canada. It raised \$835,000 for the Terry Fox Foundation. In 2020, I organized a plaque in a local park to mark the spot where Terry ran exactly 40 years before."

"I volunteer with the WRDSB on the Equity and Inclusion Advisory to make sure that issues of racism, harassment and discrimination as outlined in the Ontario Human Rights code are included in the Board Policy and Procedures in addition to the Curriculum for Students. I am also a part of a group that is encouraging BIPOC people to Run for Political Office."

"I regularly donate blood because I feel a sense of accomplishment when I'm able to support others."

– survey participants

Community Welcoming

Integration is a two-way process that involves both immigrants and the broader community. When asked how welcoming the Waterloo Region community is to immigrants, 50% of immigrants felt that Waterloo Region was quite welcoming, 40% felt the community was somewhat welcoming and 11% felt it was not welcoming (Table 13).⁴¹

Table 13: Community Welcoming

Waterloo Region welcoming to immigrants (0 to 10 scale)	% of respondents	
10 ("Very welcoming")	21%	50% - Waterloo Region is quite welcoming
9	11%	
8	18%	
7	15%	40% - Waterloo Region is somewhat welcoming
6	12%	
5	11%	
4	3%	11% - Waterloo Region is not welcoming
3	4%	
2	2%	
1	2%	
0 ("Not at all welcoming")	0%	

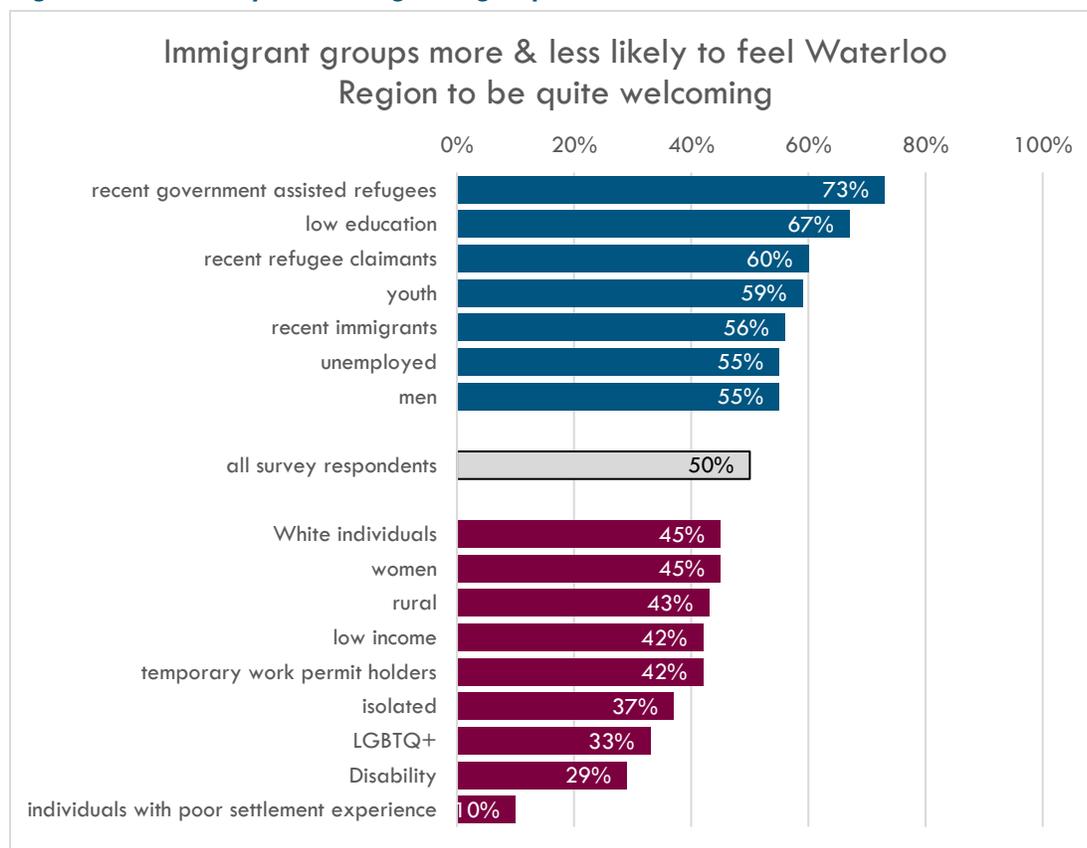
Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Some groups were less likely to feel Waterloo Region is quite welcoming, including: White individuals (45%), women (45%), rural residents (43%), temporary permit holders (42%), individuals who had low income (42%), were isolated (37%), identified as LGBTQ+ (33%), had a disability (29%), and individuals with a poor settlement experience (10%).

The groups most likely to see Waterloo Region as quite welcoming were: men (55%), unemployed individuals (55%), recent immigrants (56%), youth (59%), recent refugee claimants (60%), individuals with low education levels (67%) and recent government assisted refugees (73%, Figure 5).

⁴¹ Q18. How welcoming is the Waterloo Region community to immigrants? (Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "not at all welcoming" and 10 means "very welcoming") (all surveys, n=1229). Quite welcoming was defined as a rating between 8 and 10, somewhat welcoming included a rating of 5 to 7, and not welcoming was considered a rating of 0 to 4. Note that percentages may not add up to exactly 100% because of rounding.

Figure 5: Community Welcoming - Subgroups



Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

More than half of those that did not find Waterloo Region welcoming were individuals who had experienced discrimination (55%).

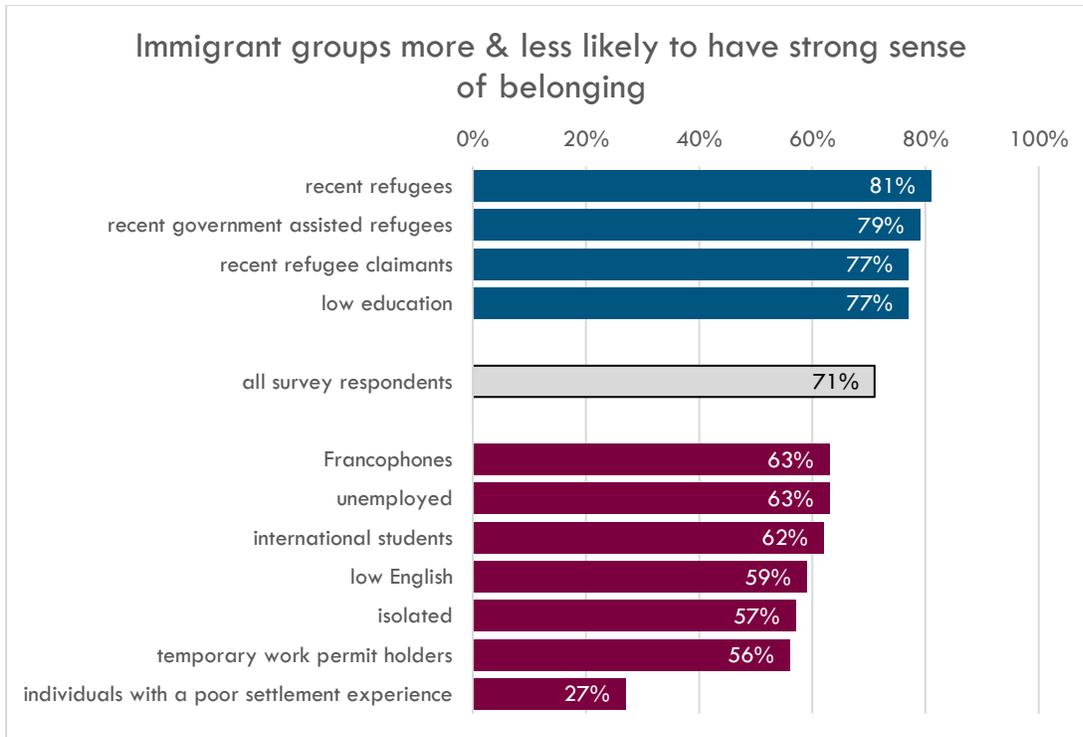
Sense of Belonging

The majority of participants (71%) reported having a strong sense of belonging in Waterloo Region.⁴² Almost one in four participants (24%) reported feeling a weak sense of belonging.

Some groups were less likely to have a strong sense of belonging, including: Francophones (63%), individuals who were unemployed (63%), international students (62%), with low English (59%), isolated (57%), temporary work permit holders (56%) and individuals with a poor settlement experience (27%). On the other hand, the groups that were more likely have a strong sense of belonging were: recent refugee claimants (77%), individuals with low education levels (77%), recent government assisted refugees (79%), and recent refugees (81%, Figure 6).

⁴² Q19. How would you describe your sense of belonging in Waterloo Region? (Sense of belonging is when you feel accepted and valued by others around you. It is when you feel like Waterloo Region is truly your home.) (all surveys, n=1238). Strong sense of belonging includes those that responded “Very strong” or “Somewhat strong”. Weak sense of belonging includes those that responded “Somewhat weak” and “Weak”. 29% of respondents had a very strong sense of belonging in Waterloo Region, 42% somewhat strong, 19% somewhat weak and 5% very weak sense of belonging, with 5% don’t know/no opinion.

Figure 6: Sense of Belonging - Subgroups



Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Compared to the 2019 survey of immigrants, immigrants are similarly likely to have a strong belonging in Waterloo Region (71% vs.70%). The [Waterloo Region Immigration Profile](#) analyzed data from the 2015/2016 Canadian Community Health Survey and related that “the proportion of immigrants arriving in the last 10 years in Waterloo Region that report a strong sense of belonging to their local community (75 per cent) is similar to that among the Canadian-born population (71 per cent).” This 75% of immigrants (arriving in the past 10 years) indicating a strong sense of belonging to their local community is similar to the 2021 Immigrant Survey findings where 71% indicated a strong sense of belonging in Waterloo Region.

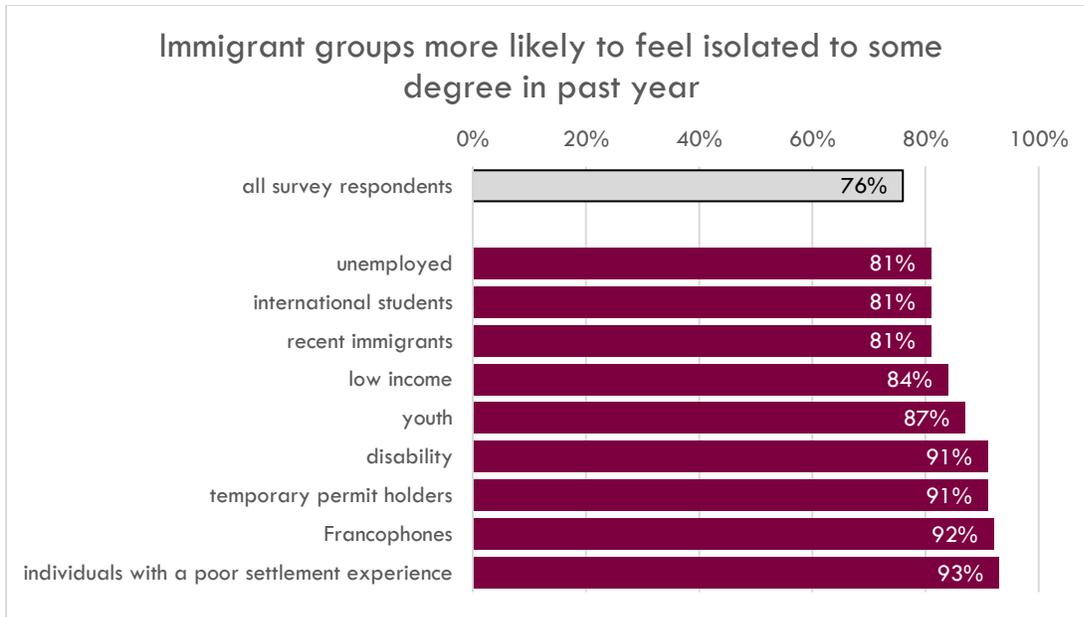
Isolation

With respect to isolation, 76% of immigrants expressed feeling isolated or alone to some degree in the last year (31%felt a great deal or quite a bit isolated, 26% somewhat and 20% a little bit).⁴³

Some groups were more likely to feel isolated, including: individuals who were unemployed (81%), international students (81%), recent immigrants (81%), with low income (84%), youth (87%), individuals with a disability (91%), temporary work permit holders (91%), Francophones (92%), and individuals with a poor settlement experience (93%; Figure 7).

⁴³ Q20. Have you felt isolated or alone in the last 12 months in Waterloo Region? (all surveys, n=1237)

Figure 7: Isolation - Subgroups



Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

In 2021, immigrants were more likely to feel isolated than two years earlier (76% vs 60%) or four years ago (76% vs 59%). The increase in isolation was driven in particular by a greater number of respondents feeling a great deal or quite a bit isolated.

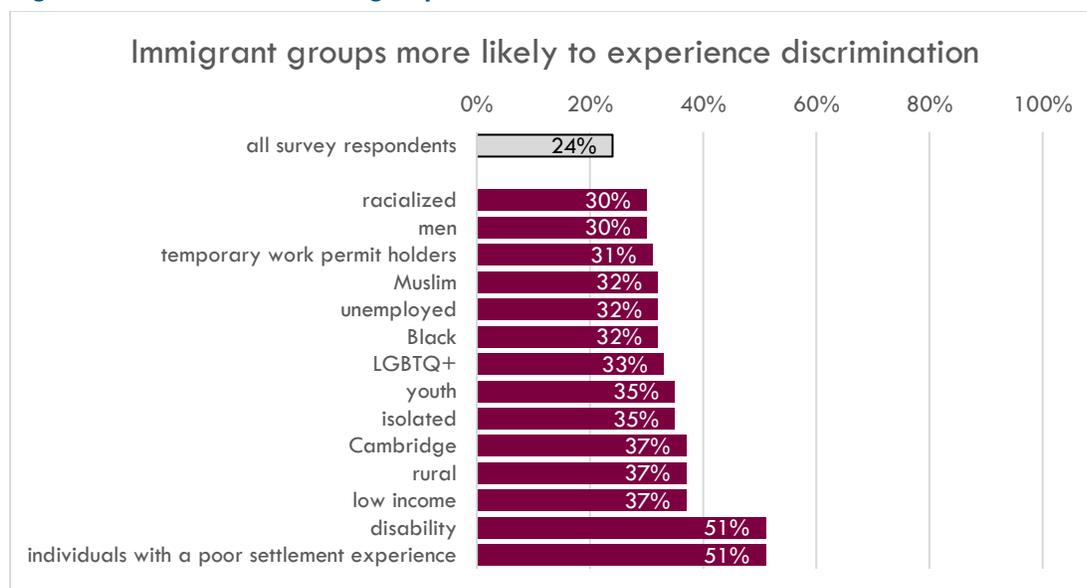
Discrimination

Approximately one quarter of participants (24%) had experienced discrimination or being treated unfairly by others in Waterloo Region in the last 12 months.⁴⁴

Some groups were more likely to experience discrimination, including those who were: racialized (30%), men (30%), temporary work permit holders (31%), Muslim (32%), unemployed (32%), Black (32%), LGBTQ+ (33%), youth (35%), isolated (35%), Cambridge residents (37%), rural residents (37%), individuals with low income (37%), a disability (51%), and a poor settlement experience (51%).

⁴⁴ Q21. In the last 12 months, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in Waterloo Region? (all surveys, n=1 237)

Figure 8: Discrimination - Subgroups



Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

The proportion of immigrants that experienced discrimination is similar what it was two years ago in the previous immigrant survey (24% vs 22%).

When asked about the situations in which they had experienced discrimination, participants most frequently cited at work or when applying for a job or promotion; in a store, bank or restaurant; or at school or university (Table 14).⁴⁵

Table 14: Situations in Which Discrimination Took Place

Situations in which discrimination took place	# of participants	% of participants (among those that experienced discrimination)
At work or when applying for a job or a promotion	110	50%
In a store, bank or restaurant	88	40%
At school or university	55	25%
When looking for housing	41	19%
At community/public events	41	19%
At a health centre	32	15%
When accessing services?	31	14%
When dealing with the police	30	14%
When crossing the border into Canada	14	6%
When dealing with the courts	7	3%
Other	24	11%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Nine percent of those responding to this question mentioned more than one situation where they had experienced discrimination in the past year.

⁴⁵ Q22. If you did experience discrimination, in what types of situations have you experienced that? (Select all that apply.) (full surveys only, n=220) "Other" responses included additional details within the above categories.

The situations where immigrants most frequently experienced discrimination in 2021 were similar to those in 2019. However, a greater proportion of immigrants this year indicated they experienced discrimination at school or university (25% vs 14%). This may have been impacted by the greater proportion of international student survey participants in 2021.

"I'm working at a childcare centre. There are many cases that the parents of the children just ignore me, asking for a Canadian teacher when they have questions on their kids."

– survey participant

Immigrants that experienced discrimination were less likely to find Waterloo Region quite welcoming (25% vs 50% for all respondents), less likely to have a positive settlement/integration experience in Waterloo Region (56% vs 76%) and less likely to have a strong sense of belonging in this community (54% vs 71%). They were also less likely to be quite satisfied with their life (33% vs 49%) and more likely to have felt isolated to some degree (88% vs 76%).

During the data collection period for this survey there was a fatal hate incident impacting a Muslim family in a nearby community. This event affected many people in Waterloo Region and sparked significant community dialogue about hate and discrimination. Muslim respondents⁴⁶ **after** the London hate incident were:

- **less likely to say that the Waterloo Region community was quite welcoming to immigrants (50% vs 55%)**
- **more likely to share that they experienced discrimination in the past year (36% vs 25%)**
- They were also less likely to have had a positive overall experience of settling/integrating in Waterloo Region (70% vs 79%) and less likely to feel isolated (76% vs 82%) - but similarly likely to say they were quite satisfied with their life as a whole (43% vs 39%) and similarly likely to have a strong sense of belonging in Waterloo Region (70% vs 74%).

⁴⁶ This compares 115 Muslim respondents that filled out the survey after the hate incident in London Ontario on the evening of June 6, 2021 compared to 73 Muslim respondents that filled out the survey before that date. Differences should be interpreted with caution because of small sample sizes and that it is possible that some differences may be due to differences in who happened to fill out the survey before and after this date. Demographically, Muslim respondents after the London hate incident were fairly similar to those that responded before in terms of immigration category, language, age, gender, living with a disability, and being employed - but were less likely to have immigrated within the past 5 years (35% vs 63%), more likely to speak English very well or well (82% vs 73%), less likely to live in Kitchener (42% vs 47%), more likely to be Black (16% vs 9%) or South Asian (30% vs 23%) less likely to have a bachelor's degree or above (63% vs 69%), less likely to be living in housing that was affordable/suitable (65% vs 70%), more likely to be in a job that was commensurate with their skills/experience (47% vs 27%), and less likely to have a sufficient income (42% vs 47%).

Challenges and Supports

Life Satisfaction

Approximately half of survey participants (49%) were quite satisfied with their life right now, compared to 40% who were somewhat satisfied and 11% who were dissatisfied (Table 15).⁴⁷

Table 15: Life Satisfaction (Overall Wellbeing)

Life satisfaction (0 to 10 scale)	% of respondents	
10 ("Very satisfied")	14%	49% - quite satisfied
9	14%	
8	21%	
7	18%	40% - somewhat satisfied
6	11%	
5	11%	
4	5%	11% - dissatisfied
3	2%	
2	2%	
1	2%	
0 ("Very dissatisfied")	0%	

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Some groups were less likely to have high life satisfaction, including those who were: recent immigrants (44%), individuals with low English (41%), Muslim (41%), rural residents (40%), Francophone (38%), LGBTQ+ (38%), recent refugee claimants (36%), international students (35%), temporary work permit holders (36%), unemployed (33%), isolated (31%), living on low income (31%), with a disability (31%) and individuals with a poor settlement experience (22%).

It is difficult to compare these findings to broader community trends as the timing of when the question is asked is critical. Statistics Canada similarly measured the life satisfaction of all Canadians in 2018 (Canadian Community Health Survey, CCHS) and June 2020 (Canadian Perspectives Survey Series, CPSS) and found that before the COVID-19 pandemic, average life satisfaction was 8.09 but it dropped during the early months of the pandemic to 6.71 ([Statistics Canada, 2020](#)). According to the 2021 Immigrant Survey, the average life satisfaction of immigrants in Waterloo Region was 7.15.

Settlement/Integration Experience

When asked about their overall experience of moving to and integrating in Waterloo Region, more than three quarters (76%) of immigrants had a positive settlement/integration experience ("Excellent" or "Good"). On the other hand, 20% described their experience as "Neutral" and 4% had a negative overall experience ("Not very good").⁴⁸

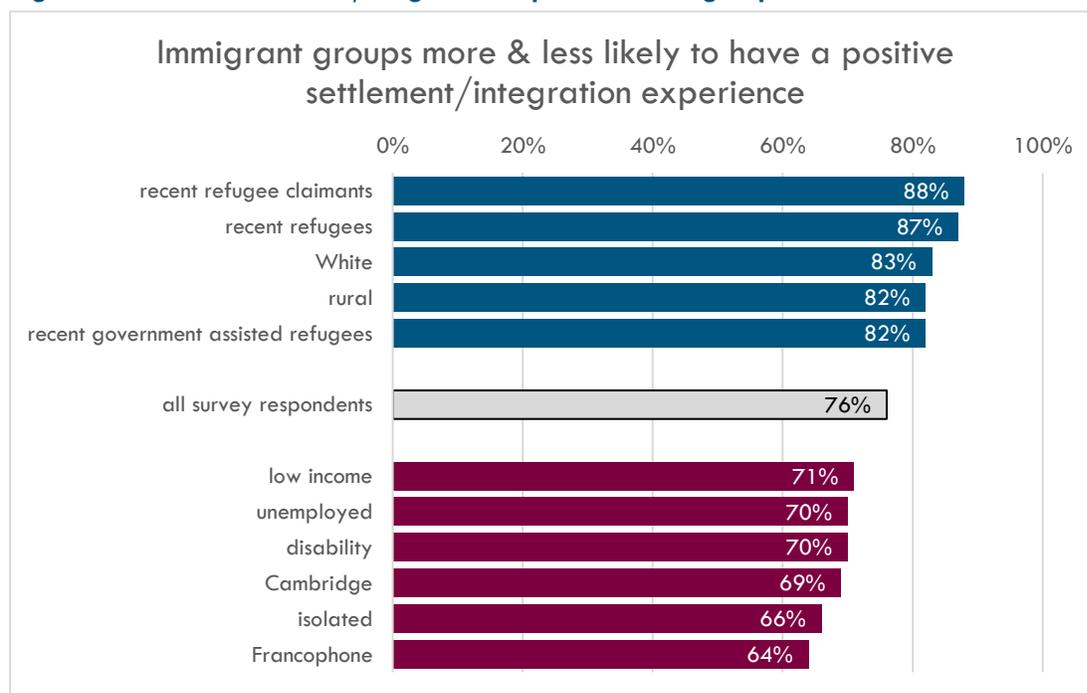
⁴⁷ Q17. How do you feel about your life as a whole right now? (Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "very dissatisfied" and 10 means "very satisfied") (all surveys, n=1231) Quite satisfied was defined as life satisfaction between 8 and 10, somewhat satisfied included a rating of 5 to 7, and dissatisfied included a rating of 0 to 4. Measures of life satisfaction are often used as an indication of overall wellbeing.

⁴⁸ Q23. How would you describe your overall experience of moving to and integrating in Waterloo Region? (full surveys only, n=803). 27% indicated "Excellent" and 49% indicated "Good".

Some groups were more likely to have had a positive settlement/integration experience, including: recent government assisted refugees (82%), rural residents (82%), White individuals (83%), recent refugees (87%) and recent refugee claimants (88%).

Groups that were less likely to have had a positive settlement/integration experience, included those who were: living on low income (71%), unemployed (70%), with a disability (70%), Cambridge residents (69%), isolated (66%) and Francophone (64%; Figure 9).

Figure 9: Positive Settlement/Integration Experience - Subgroups



Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Key Challenges

Participants were asked about the biggest challenges they experienced in the past year in Waterloo Region.⁴⁹ The most common challenges were finding work (37%), making friends or social connections (34%), finding affordable housing (32%), being socially isolated (24%), and learning where and how to do things (21%; Table 16).

Table 16: Main Challenges

Main challenges	# of participants	% of participants
Finding work	413	37%
Making friends or social connections	383	34%
Finding affordable housing	358	32%
Being socially isolated	264	24%
Learning where and how to do things	231	21%
Learning English	219	20%
Accessing health care	206	18%
Making sure your kids are okay at school and in the community	142	13%

⁴⁹ Q24. What are the biggest challenges you or your family have experienced in the last year in Waterloo Region? (Select all that apply.) (all surveys, n=1116)

Transportation	123	11%
Accessing mental health care	119	11%
Discrimination/racism	112	10%
Starting a new business	112	10%
Accessing relevant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.	107	10%
Receiving public or social services (e.g. settlement services, government services, etc.)	104	9%
Getting information you need in a language you understand	97	9%
Negative public opinion	75	7%
Accessing and using technology/internet	39	3%
Other	65	6%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Other challenges noted included the pandemic, immigration and travel.

The most common challenges noted by immigrants were similar to those noted two years previously. However, a higher proportion of immigrants highlighted certain challenges including: Making friends or social connections (34% vs 26%), accessing health care (18% vs 13%), whereas a smaller proportion highlighted finding work (37% vs 46%).

Overall Disaggregated Groups

Averages across a whole group can often obscure differences within that group. For this reason the analysis of the Immigrant Survey data in this report shares both the overall average as well as frequently noting specific subgroups that the data shows experience it differently.

Two methods of disaggregating the data were used to identify these groups:⁵⁰

1. An index was developed using ten of the survey questions to get a high level overview of all responses and which groups and responses corresponded to increased resilience or vulnerability (Resilience-Vulnerability Index).
 - Overall, the ten groups that were the most likely to be vulnerable across the variables in the index were (in order): those that had no ability to communicate in English, very weak sense of belonging, low life satisfaction (overall wellbeing), not a very good overall settlement/integration experience, low rating of Waterloo Region as a welcoming community, those that used housing services but related that those services were not at all useful for them, those that listed discrimination/racism as one of their top challenges, and

Some examples of challenges noted were:

“COVID restrictions with funeral planning when a parent passed away unexpectedly”

“Buying house in Waterloo is very very challenging for new comers”

“Finding a house at a reasonable price. First time home buyers are struggling due to the extremely tight housing market”

“Watching the housing market going 200K up for the past year and trying to win in bidding wars”

“Finding work doesn't relate what I faced. It is hard to find related work to my skills. If you want us to do under skilled jobs, then, it is not hard to find work.

“Finding good services for my non verbal child with Autism”

“We need more doctors in the region. We still do not have a family doctor as no one is taking on new patients.”

“Not being able to visit home country and to have a visit of friends/families from home country (with travel restriction).”

Our community has been trying to build a new place of worship for 18+ years and has been tied up in city/regional delays”

“For the people who are not PR [permanent resident], all the services are very expensive and that is the main problem.”

— survey participants

⁵⁰ See Appendix A: Methodology for further information about these methods of disaggregated data analysis.

those for whom their income was definitely not enough to meet their financial needs, very isolated, and those that experienced discrimination

- The clearest association with resilience-vulnerability appears to be with dimensions of 1) sense of belonging, 2) life satisfaction, 3) English ability, 4) overall settlement/integration experience, 5) income, 6) isolation
2. Based on the initial findings of the Resilience-Vulnerability Index and incorporating the suggestions of the Evaluation Advisory Group and local partners, 25 different groups were analyzed for how they differed from the average responses across all survey questions. This report highlights a few of the areas where specific groups differed more dramatically from the average (>5% difference).
- Across multiple indicators, several groups more frequently stood out in the data as having a more difficult time⁵¹ including: individuals that shared they had a poor settlement experience, were isolated, unemployed, living with a disability, low income, Francophones, Muslim, temporary permit holders, recent immigrants, Black individuals, and those with low English, international students, and recent refugee claimants.

The groups that came up most frequently as potentially having a more difficult time across these analysis methods were:

- isolated individuals
- those with less ability to communicate in English
- low income individuals
- unemployed individuals
- individuals living with a disability
- Francophones
- Muslim individuals
- temporary permit holders
- recent immigrants
- Black individuals
- international students
- recent refugee claimants
- as well as immigrants that shared that they: had a poor settlement/integration experience in Waterloo Region, low sense of belonging, low life satisfaction/wellbeing, or who experienced discrimination.

⁵¹ These highlighted groups were more likely than the average immigrant survey respondent to identify a concern in at least half of the following areas: less likely to have high overall life satisfaction (wellbeing), less likely to feel that Waterloo Region was welcoming to immigrants, less likely to have a strong sense of belonging, more likely to be isolated, more likely to experience discrimination, less likely to have had a positive overall settlement/integration experience, less likely to have sufficient income, less likely to be in a job commensurate with their income and less likely to have affordable/suitable housing. There were some groups, however, that community experience and literature suggests may sometimes experience increased vulnerability but did not come up frequently in this analysis. While this may be partly due to sampling or other methodological issues, it may also be because of internal variation within these groups that obscure more pronounced differences. Diverse groups such as women, racialized individuals, LGBTQ+ and some others did not come up as frequently, perhaps because there are some groups of women or racialized or LGBTQ+ individuals that are doing well and some that are experiencing more difficulty. It is perhaps in the intersectionality of these groups and other factors where more pronounced differences may be more evident. This could be an area for further research and exploration.

Most Helpful Factors

When asked what had helped them most in the last year, survey participants most often said making friends (40%) and having family support (37%; Table 17).⁵²

Table 17: Most Helpful Factors

Most helpful factors	# of participants	% of participants
Having family support	341	46%
Making friends	247	33%
Belonging to a religious group	167	22%
Finding work	159	21%
Volunteering	134	18%
Community programs and services	116	16%
Being involved in a cultural association or connection with others that share your background or language	96	13%
Worker at an organization that helps recent immigrants	57	8%
Other community group	48	6%
Settlement worker	32	4%
Other	57	8%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

Among immigrants that arrived in the past 5 years and used settlement/immigrant services within the past year, twice as many indicated a settlement worker (or a worker at an organization that helps recent immigrants) was one of the most helpful supports (8% vs 4%). Among those that came to Canada in the past year that increases to 20%.

Compared to 2019, immigrants were more likely to be helped most by having family support (46% vs.37%) and less likely to be helped most by making friends (33% vs.40%), volunteering (18% vs 23%), community programs and services (16% vs.21%), and a settlement worker (4% vs.13%).⁵³

Some examples of what was helpful were:

“I work full-time so that has helped me interact and stay in touch with people regularly even with the social isolation due to the pandemic.”

“My work stability, great colleagues and an employer that cares”

“Food trucks in local church parking lots drawing the community together. Friendly neighbours.”

“The library has offered excellent free services and programming for families”

“Attending the support program for immigrant women implemented by In Her Shoes”

“Daily hike. I have completed the Walter Bean and Great Trail several time. I go to the Huron Natural Area often.”

“I’m pretty fine by myself and I can pull myself up when I’m down without any kind of social involvement.”

– survey participants

⁵² Q25. What helped you most in the last year in Waterloo Region? (Select all that apply.) (all surveys, n=744) “Other” responses included outdoor activities, self-motivation, taking educational programs or virtual connections.

⁵³ While the percentage that indicated belonging to a religious group did not increase dramatically, in 2021 it was the third most frequently mentioned item rather than the sixth in 2019.

Suggested Solutions to Challenges

Participants were asked about the top three changes that could be made to better enable immigrants to reach their full potential in Waterloo Region.⁵⁴ Participants suggested a diverse spread of actions:

- 77% mentioned at least one settlement-related action
- 63% mentioned at least one employment-related action
- 43% mentioned at least one welcoming/inclusion-related action.

The most common single responses were more affordable housing options (45%) and more or better programs for immigrants to find work (31%; Table 18).

Table 18: Top Suggested Changes

Suggested changes	# of participants	% of participants
More affordable housing options	383	49%
More or better programs for immigrants to find work	239	31%
More opportunities to help improve English skills	233	30%
Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants	221	28%
Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants	164	21%
A central location where immigrants and refugees can receive many settlement and other services in one place	121	16%
A central place for employers to find immigrant workers and where workers can find employment opportunities	117	15%
Actions to improve the social connectedness of immigrants	96	12%
English learning opportunities in workplaces	75	10%
More effort by community services to better serve immigrants	72	9%
Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants	70	9%
Greater voice or involvement in community leadership and planning	63	8%
Availability of interpretation and translation	58	7%
More relevant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.	57	7%
Better collaboration and coordination between service agencies	47	6%
Better internet/technology access and training	22	3%
More funding for...	13	2%
Other	52	7%

Source: 2021 Immigrant Survey

⁵⁴ Q26. What are the top 3 changes that could be made to better enable immigrants to reach their full potential in Waterloo Region? (Select only 3 of the options below.) (full surveys only, n=778)

Other suggestions included: improved health services (especially more family physicians), better government services to support residents, more support for children, more convenient transportation, more affordable services, and more efforts to support education.

Compared to 2019, participants were more likely to suggest the following changes would be helpful: More opportunities to help improve English skills (30% vs 24%), and Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants (21% vs 14%). They were less likely to suggest: A central place for employers to find immigrant workers and where workers can find employment opportunities (15% vs 21%).

The 2020 survey of Immigration Partnership partners (including a wide range of social service agency, government, business and other partners) similarly felt that top solutions should include More affordable housing options, and Educating employers. However, their top solutions also included A central location for employers to find immigrant workers and where workers can find employment opportunities, and Actions to improve the social connectedness of immigrants. Their top solutions did not include: More or better programs for immigrants to find work – though that was mentioned further down the list by partners.

Some examples of other suggestions were:

“Easy access to family doctor. I have been in Waterloo for 7 yrs and still do not have a family doctor. Walk-in clinics are my only solution.”

“...Support temporary residents as much as any permanent resident and Canadian. As a temporary resident you're likely a second class resident which has to struggle to be entitled to support. The period between being a student and having a decent job with your work permit, you are totally unprotected mainly in regard of health (need permanent employment to have health care after 3 months, otherwise it lasts as long as a contract, but what happens in between?)

“Employment opportunities for highly trained international medical graduates that are not low wage jobs”

“CIC [the federal immigration ministry] should emphasize the importance of preparation for life in Canada BEFORE moving to Canada”

“Stop funding white people and white organizations to act as saviors for black people. We are tired.... we are tired of a lot of talk. We are tired. You practice systematic racism +++ and you think blacks are stupid. We are not.”

“Embed legal consequence for actions of bigotry, prejudice, abuse and violence wherever and whenever these acts of abuse and bullying are committed”

“Subsidy for daycare would be great as it's very expensive”

“Making easy for immigrants that are working to have access to college”

– survey participants

In the last question of the survey, survey participants were given an open-ended opportunity to share any additional comments or ideas. They shared the following comments about how to help improve the welcoming, integration and wellbeing of immigrants in Waterloo Region.⁵⁵

- More affordable housing options (31 responses)
- More or better programs for immigrants to find work (28 responses)
- Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants (22 responses)
- Actions to improve the social connectedness of immigrants (22 responses)
- More effort by community services to better serve immigrants (15 responses)
- Better access and quality to medical services (14 responses)
- More opportunities to help improve language skills (13 responses)
- More multicultural activities (10 responses)
- More support for settlement (9 responses)
- More efforts to improve government services (9 responses)
- Availability of interpretation and translation (8 responses)

⁵⁵ Q31. Please share any additional comments or ideas about how to help improve the welcoming, integration and wellbeing of immigrants in Waterloo Region (all surveys, n=243) Four of the comments were about the survey itself and 16 were that they didn't have any additional comments.

- Access to more information (8 responses)
- Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants (8 responses)
- More services for the elderly people (6 responses)
- More efforts to improve education in Waterloo (5 responses)
- A central location where immigrants can receive settlement and other services in one place (4 responses)
- More affordable services (4 responses)
- Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants (4 responses)
- Provide a safer environment (4 responses)
- More support for transportation (3 responses)
- More services to non-permanent residents (2 responses)
- Other suggestions or comments (26 responses)

See Appendix B for some of the specific comments and suggestions shared by survey participants.

Appendix A: Methodology

The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership, through the work of its Evaluation Advisory Committee, approved an evaluation strategy and performance measurement framework for 2020-2025.⁵⁶ The evaluation strategy outlines community and Immigration Partnership outcomes we are seeking to impact, including how we will measure our progress as a community. A number of the measurement indicators were not available through existing sources revealing the need for an ongoing way of hearing directly from immigrants about the things that matter most to them and where change is happening. A bi-annual survey of immigrants fills that gap and provides a way to center immigrants in this collective change effort.

This report includes findings from the Immigrant Survey conducted by Immigration Partnership in June 2021.

Survey Timing and Participant Recruitment

The Immigrant Survey gathered responses from 1507 immigrant⁵⁷ individuals between June 1 and June 27, 2021. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic and in-person restrictions during the data collection period, the survey was conducted online.⁵⁸ Survey participants were recruited using social media, emails and various other virtual methods. Immigration Partnership partners shared the survey with their clients and networks through programs, agency waiting areas, other means. Responses were gathered both from individuals that access traditional immigrant services and those that haven't accessed those services.

Before the survey was launched, specific targets were pre-determined for the number of responses from 42 different immigrant subpopulations in Waterloo Region covering multiple geographies, racial groups, immigration categories, languages, gender, age, and religious affiliation. Targets were based on the proportion of immigrants or recent immigrants in the general population so the responses would be as representative as possible of the entire immigrant population in Waterloo Region. Survey responses were examined at least weekly throughout the data collection period with additional survey promotion where needed to increase survey responses across all subpopulations.⁵⁹

Data collection tool

The Evaluation Advisory Committee designed the original 2017 survey questions based on performance measurement indicators and revised the 2019 and the 2021 survey tools based on subsequent survey feedback, updated indicators and emerging needs.

The 2021 Immigrant Survey tool had two versions – the full-length survey (www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey-full) and a shorter version that was translated into 10 of the top languages for translation in Waterloo Region.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ See www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/dataevaluationframework

⁵⁷ The term immigrants is used broadly in this report to include all who were born outside of Canada and now live in Waterloo Region, including immigrants, refugees, international students, permanent residents, temporary residents or foreign nationals and people who immigrated and have become Canadian citizens.

⁵⁸ While the survey was conducted online, alternate formats (paper, email, phone) were offered, although no participants responded using these alternate methods.

⁵⁹ It is acknowledged that the response targets are best estimates as most of the targets are based on the most recent available data from the 2016 census by Statistics Canada. Immigrant demographics may have shifted in the 5 years since the most recently available census data was collected. On the whole, the survey met most of the response targets though a few groups were under-represented (>5% difference), including: International students and temporary workers (the immigration category targets used 2018 pre-pandemic numbers and therefore may be high), Chinese respondents, older adults age 65 years and older, men, individuals with Christian faith affiliation and Somali speaking individuals.

⁶⁰ Top languages for translation in Waterloo Region were developed using the 2021 Top Languages report: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/toplanguages

(www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey-short). The languages the survey was completed in included:

	# responses
English	1132
Chinese	133
Spanish	56
Serbian	54
Arabic	52
Farsi	27
Tigrinya	14
Turkish	14
French	12
Amharic	9
Somali	4

Analysis

The findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics with qualitative responses analyzed by themes. The findings presented in this report are those that were most noteworthy or where there were substantial differences when considering immigration category, gender, etc. In general, differences were considered substantial when there was more than 5% difference between two or more participant categories.

Comparisons to the previous surveys of immigrants (2017 Community Survey and 2019 Immigration Matters survey) were shared only where there were notable differences.

The 1,507 survey responses does not include 37 responses by individuals that only answered the initial screening questions – either because they were born in Canada and were skipped to the end of the survey or because they stopped the survey.⁶¹

Disaggregating the data is critical to understanding differences within a group like immigrants as averages can obscure distinct differences within the group. Two methods of disaggregating the data were used:

1. An index was developed using ten of the survey questions to get a high level overview of all responses and which groups and responses corresponded to increased resilience or vulnerability (Resilience-Vulnerability Index).⁶²
2. Based on the initial findings of the Resilience-Vulnerability Index and incorporating the suggestions of the Evaluation Advisory Group and local partners, 25 different groups were analyzed for how they differed from the average responses across all survey questions (recent immigrants, recent refugees, recent government assisted refugees, recent refugee claimants, international students, temporary work permit holders, individuals with lower education levels, low income, unemployed, LGBTQ+ identifying individuals, those living with a disability, with low English, Francophones, racialized, Black, White, Muslim, Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, rural residents, youth, men, women, those that were isolated, and who had poor settlement experiences).

⁶¹ One additional response was not included as it was a duplicate entry of another respondent.

⁶² For more information about the Resilience-Vulnerability Index see www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/resilience-vulnerability-index.

Limitations

Multiple promotion methods were used to reach a wide variety of immigrants but the results are not necessarily representative of all groups and subpopulations. Because of small sample sizes for some subpopulations, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Findings were not reported if they involved fewer than 5 respondents. It should also be noted that some groups or individuals may understand specific words or concepts differently (e.g. belonging, isolation, discrimination or expectations of excellent service delivery) and this could impact the findings.

How the Results Will Be Used

The information provides a useful snapshot of the experiences of immigrants currently living in Waterloo Region to inform policy, service, and other planning. Contact the Immigration Partnership (ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca) if you have questions about the data or suggestions for how it could be used to impact change across our community.

Appendix B: Examples of Responses to Open-ended Questions

Q28. What makes you want to stay in this community? (full surveys only, n=396)

- Family or friends that live in Waterloo Region (94 responses)
 - *Family members are there. They all are very helpful to me. They help me to communicate with the people.*
 - *I have already made connections and it would be difficult to leave everything, go elsewhere and start over once again*
 - *I have made strong friendships and I now feel basically at home in Waterloo Region.*
 - *I have my friends who provided me guidance for work, social support and other help for settling in Canada.*
 - *I have personally experienced great support from my employer (management and colleagues specifically), which provided me a sense of stability and belonging to the community*
 - *Over the years, I have adjusted and have come to make good friends and have a church family that cares so much.*
 - *We love our community/neighbors. So glad we moved here 7 years ago*
- For a job/economy in Waterloo Region (93 responses)
 - *Future possible job opportunities*
 - *I found stability with my employer and overall community*
 - *This area is well-known as being progressive and offering many opportunities for employment at all levels from unskilled to post-graduate qualifications.*
- Community feeling and welcoming (46 responses)
 - *It is a welcoming friendly community that is very progressive and innovative.*
 - *I loved the Waterloo area a lot because of the community's acceptance and welcome for newcomers, ...which makes me feel reassured and comfortable*
 - *The people are friendly, and they make an effort to be better every day. I appreciate that. The region and no one has the responsibility for how immigrants feel, it is part of the process. Is alive every day.*
 - *People are fairly nice to the immigrants. I think it is thanks to the educational environments in this community, like Waterloo University, Laurier University and Conestoga College.*
- Connected to here (or no specific reasons) (43 responses)
 - *This is my home now.*
 - *I am retired now and lived here since 1982 and feel comfortable and familiar with the community.*
 - *I consider Waterloo Region to be my home. This is where I've spent most of my life. I have family and friends here. There's has always been good opportunities for me and my family here in the region, and I believe the region is a good place to raise a family.*
 - *I feel a good connection with this community. I like that it is a city, but the city is small enough that it still feels like there is a bit of 'small community' feel left. I enjoy the Kitchener Rangers and other community events.*
 - *I want to stay in this community because it has provided more opportunities and choices for me to improve my life in a safe and comfortable manner.*
 - *The community is amazing. We now call it home.*
- Safe, peaceful and quiet (36 responses)
 - *Peaceful compared to big cities, good neighborhood, people are welcoming*
 - *Safe place to live and raise kids*
 - *Safe environment very quite comfortable place and no more crime as well.*
- Education (31 responses)
 - *Good school for my child.*

- *My children study. University of Waterloo and Laurier University*
- **Community services and supports (30 responses)**
 - *Access to community services. Walkability and bikeability/safety of streets and multi-use trails. Public parks/green spaces. Friendliness of the people. ...Police, fire fighters, etc. are accessible and trustworthy. Frequent buses, lon trains and availability of Mobility Plus. Low pollution.*
 - *I want to stay in this community because there is lots of opportunities and access to many things offered by watery region*
 - *This community is very peaceful and helpful. People respect the law. The government agencies are helpful. Laws are implemented very fairly with out any discrimination.*
- **Size and location (28 responses)**
 - *Ease of access to Toronto and not too crowded*
 - *It is a small community that provides a good quality of life and many opportunities.*
 - *You can reach any place in less time as it is small community compared to Toronto or Brampton*
 - *Our local church, the location of the house is close to work, groceries store and mall. Convenient location. Hopefully the sprrts cwnters open soon as well as personal care.*
- **Diversity and cultural/language groups in this community (24 responses)**
 - *I like the diversity and the multicultural of the community*
 - *The vibrant tech community*
 - *We have a strong Muslim community. Plenty of thriving Muslim centered businesses, restaurants and services. Police is very nice to Muslims so far.*
- **Waterloo Region is more affordable than other communities (22 responses)**
 - *Housing is more affordable than GTA,*
- **Nature/Environment (18 responses)**
 - *I like where I live, it's beautiful with lots of parks and trails*
 - *The people are friendly and we enjoy the numerous parks and other green spaces available*
- **Place to raise a family (12 responses)**
 - *It is not fast-paced like the GTA and it is family-oriented.*
- **Other reasons (23 responses)**
 - *There's big opportunity for the future growth*
 - *Art is everywhere. There is an active art/music/cultural community with many cultural events (before Covid anyway).*
 - *The young population vibe attracts me. This city is a blend of students, young professionals and families, thereby, blending in the community is very easy. One is able to connect to new people from different age groups and learn from each other!*
- **Nowhere to go (8 responses)**
 - *I am afraid to re-locate and find myself and family in a worse location*
 - *I can't afford to go anywhere else.*
- **Didn't want to stay/Consider for leaving/Not sure (16 responses)**
 - *I don't feel like I belong to this community so, nothing makes me want to stay*
 - *Nothing actually. Housing is expensive. Our neighbours don't talk to us may be because of language barrier.*

Q29. What are some of the ways you contribute to creating a thriving and prosperous community for everyone? (Select all that apply) (all surveys, n=1116)

This was a multiple choice question with one option being “Other (please specify)”. Some examples of the “other” responses include:

- I volunteer in cultural or ethnic association activities
 - *have taught Tai Chi to local residents for free for a long time*
 - *Organize events to raise money to support local youth pursue post secondary education in Canada.*
 - *I'm a consultant to public services and non-profits who work across the community*
- I volunteer with other community organizations, groups or faith communities
 - *over the course of my 93 years I have volunteered for a number organizations*
 - *Now I don't do anything because of COVID, but I used to be an active member of the Serbian football organization*
- I am on a board of directors or other committee
 - *I have volunteered with community organizations and been on boards of directors in the past.*
- I mentor, tutor or help youth learn in this community
 - *I provide mentorship to marginalized groups. Those who are shy of coming to you.*
- I contribute through my work or the economy
 - *I am working in a startup project to be implemented in this community.*
- Didn't contribute or looking for opportunities
 - *Very hard to contribute during a pandemic*
 - *Honestly, I do not have time for anything*
 - *I don't feel that my contributions would be valued in the community*
 - *I 'd like to do many of the activities above, but I couldn't find place to volunteer, only my daughter could find in YMCA.*
- Other
 - *I donate blood*
 - *I try to help in all aspects even at the hospital for the non English speakers.*
 - *From April till now the schools are closed. I have to sit at home to look after my children, instead of looking for a job*

Q30. If you would like to share a story that illustrates one of the above contributions that you are particularly proud of, please do so here (full surveys only, n=135)

- *I am the national women coordinator for my community (LAC) Liberians Association of Canada CA. Reaching out to most Liberians ladies around the provinces is priceless. I communicate with them and sent out important information that they needs to know. We impower each other, I help the elderly ones around waterloo region that cannot get their groceries and drop some off for doctors appointment.*
- *I am a volunteer at City of Waterloo as an Activity Assistant at Adult recreation Centre. I am also a volunteer driver to seniors. I enjoy supporting seniors in the community. I work at University Gates, supporting the seniors in the Retirement living as a Recreation Aide. I also serve as a member in the Advisory committee on Culture at City of Waterloo and Parent Involvement Committee at WRDSB. I co-chair the immigrant engagement subcommittee to plan and implement programs to support the newcomer, immigrant-refugee parents and families.*
- *I am currently volunteering with the Mission Thrift Store in Kitchener on Frederick Street. It makes me feel tremendous in serving humanity and to a worthy cause.*
- *I am volunteering in YMCA computer literacy program and helped senior citizens to learn basic computer knowledge.*

- I am working as a Community Nutrition Worker and facilitate diverse group to follow the Canada food guide and giving information to my group to how they adopt a healthy life style to stay away from isolation and other unhealthy life styles.
 - I came into Canada not up to 2 years ago. I am proud of myself because I am passionate about reaching out to my Community members. So I been able to register and running a Charitable Organization whose purpose is to invest in women and families as we empower them to engage in activities that will advance education relieve poverty, promote health, etc. You can check afwaf.org
 - I have helped and still am volunteering in interpretation with different organizations like Shamrose, the Working Center and House of Friendship. I am proud that I even have people pass my information to their friends and family to reach out for me when they need assistance.
 - I needed help when I came in Canada, now I feel home so I think I have to give my contribution to the community, together we will be stronger
 - I volunteer with a handful of wonderful ladies in the community, we work for not for profit organizations. We have managed to create a platform to empower women and their families in the area by arranging workshops, supporting local business, supporting one another though grocery shopping and donations. We have also managed to maintain connections through virtual fitness classes, regular meetings and social distanced gatherings as well. We were more active pre-covid but we tried as much as we could to come up with ideas to make people feel belong and vent through our workshops and sessions.
 - I volunteer with a lot of organizations. For example, I help raise money to reunite refugee families, and I help Jamaican workers to improve their English literacy so they can take the English Proficiency test and apply for Canadian citizenship.
 - I'm mostly proud because I contributed to the promotion of vaccine uptake within the ACB communities in Waterloo Region.
 - I worked as volunteer in YMCA. I help newcomer's to learn basics of computer. I was a software developer back home. It helps me to improve my confidence and make me proud.
 - I was very young when I came to Canada and I was 20 years old with my parents just finishing engineering school. I now own several businesses and I count my blessing every day
 - My daughter started a not for profit organization 'Youth to Youth- A friend to count on' for new immigrants and refugees
 - My friends and I started a free little library aimed at Russian speakers.
 - We are contributing to Food Bank and to Marillac Place, this last one is the most important for us.
- Newcomers & settlement (18 responses)
- As a worker in the local software industry I interact with a lot of students and new Canadian immigrants. I try to provide them guidance from my own experience of having gone through the process of studying in UWaterloo, joining the workforce, going through the immigration process and having established myself in Waterloo. I would like to think I have helped a lot of people this way and they liked receiving my advice as well.
 - I am proud of sponsoring many families, and they brought their families to Canada. I am proud of serving the new comers by providing/sharing a living space, helping searching for a job, doing their resume, and filling immigration sponsor forms, providing informal marital counselling and informing the Canadian culture/system/new way life, etc
 - I have 2 neighbours who are Canadian elderly women who reached out and continue to reach out to my family. During winter, we always looked out for them, helping to shovel snow and gave them gifts and thank you notes over the Christmas holidays
 - I volunteered with mosques and churches in welcoming refugees in 2015 and 2016. Since then, I've been in touch with some of these refugees, inviting them to our home and offering them transportation and looking for housing support.
 - Helping people to do income tax
 - I always go out of my way and help those who are struggling, the newcomers who have poor English. I always try to go by the nearby community centre to see if anyone needs any translation or help with electronics/computers!

- **Contributing through job (17 responses)**
 - *Contributed my skill of hairstyling to the community when needed*
 - *During my working hours, I try to encourage my patients to smile every day and by letting them know how special their are.*
 - *During the pandemic I worked as a frontline worker and served people.*
 - *During this pandemic, I worked for the children at the emergency center whose parents are essential workers. Even the works got harder than before pandemic due to sanitizing things and wearing masks and goggles to protect Covid-19, it worth for me to support children and their parents who contribute to the economy of Waterloo region. So, this kind of thought led me to get over this unprecedented difficult situation.*
 - *I am a PSW. I had years experiences and skills on gerontology field. I am proud I have capability to provide quality care for senior clients.*
 - *I am trying to ensure better representation of immigrants through my job*
 - *I work for a local company that has strong roots in the local community and puts a lot of emphasis on IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility) I'm honoured to hold a seat on this committee for a number of years now.*
 - *I'm textile engineer, during covid19 I played a major role in a company started producing face masks, I used to test the 'nonwoven' raw materials and determine the quality for the final product.*
 - *My parents and I are refugees and arrived in Canada with only 2 suitcases holding all our worldly possession. My parents came to this beautiful country here to escape a communist regime and with hope for a better future for us. Over the years, they've worked hard – working in factories since their work experiences and education were not accepting here. Sometimes they worked two jobs and night shifts in order to meet ends meet. They did manage to save up to buy a house and help me go to university. My parents are very grateful to this country that took us in and to all the people that have helped us along the way. Even when they have very little, they are always donating to charities and helping new immigrants as they were helped. Today, I am a parent and am only beginning to understand the sacrifice my parents made over the years for me. I am so thankful to them and thankful that I am now a Canadian citizen.*
 - *While I was working at the mental health services, I did manage to save a teenager's life and that was the most satisfying moment of my life. I feel proud of myself for doing something so important for someone else.*
- **Provide a friendly/joyful environment (7 responses)**
 - *As an amateur musician, it is a delight to perform in the region. There have been many wonderful performances, here in town, and outside - a number of us have performed in Hamilton, Elora etc over the last few years, and this year we collaborate with 3 other choirs across Canada in a virtual pandemic song that is being enjoyed worldwide*
 - *I always be optimistic and keeps my surroundings in that way..*
- **Children care and education (6 responses)**
 - *I used to volunteer in a homework program for immigrant children. I also volunteer in church summer programs. Help to organize social activities for my community.*
 - *I volunteer at the ymca for children's basketball*
 - *I volunteered a KW multicultural society as ESL tutor in the past year (due to covid it's postponed) I am volunteering at JMC public school and member of parent council as Treasurer I taught international language to children at WRDSB every Saturday for 2 hours (postponed due to covid)*
 - *I volunteered local school by reading for the children and participated school councils meeting!*
 - *I was the lead facilitator of a Pilot Program to promote child-literacy among low socio-economical neighbourhoods by Strong Start. I wasn't a licenced Canadian Teacher that's why they gave me the title of Facilitator- no licencing required for that. It is now a well-established program in Waterloo Region*
- **Natural environment (5 responses)**
 - *In spring, my partner and I grabbed a few garbage bags and went around the neighborhood picking up garbage that accumulated over the winter. We collected at least 5 full bags! Some neighbors told us they were inspired by this.*
 - *In the school I always directly or indirectly advice the students that use minimum resources*

- Provide help to friends, family and neighbours (5 responses)
 - *I am helping my friends and family in interpreting if they need help*
- Language learning and interpretation/translation (4 responses)
 - *I used to volunteer at an organization where immigrants would come and ask to get their documents translate in order for them to present their evidence in front of the judge who would decide if they were eligible to stay in Canada*
 - *We have a group of learning English. I help my friends to learn English.*
- Make contributions during pandemic (4 responses)
 - *I worked through most of the pandemic as a frontline healthcare worker in the community*
 - *During the pandemic ...we deliver groceries to people. One of the story I am so thrilled by is: off course there are many but this one stays with me, during the stay home order a woman who is immune compromised asked for help to get special food for herself and her cat, I was able to reach out for her and she wrote me a list and went shopping and delivered them to her door! What resonates me in this that I helped for the seek for helping my community, I never knew the women and never met her. That what we need in our community, to support and empower regardless of our differences and only consider that we all human and we all smile in the same way! Thanks*
- I build my skills so I can better contribute to this community (4 responses)
 - *After I completed ELS program at Conestoga College, I started Social Service Worker program. I have a master`s degree in sociology but I try to improve myself in Canada. I`ll apply Social Work Master program for next year to become a psychotherapist. I am proud of myself because I started all over again in a different language than my mother tongue.*
 - *I`m investing a lot of time in learning English and now I can understand most of what people say to me, which I find impressive since I`ve been here for about 1 year and 5 months.*
- Provide help with finding job/employment (4 responses)
 - *I help my immigrant friends find, understand, and apply to jobs, including how to write an appealing resumé and cover letter. This has been very fulfilling.*
 - *I supported several women get trainings and finding jobs later on. They are working now. One women was from Eastern Europe, I helped her to connect with ESL group at a community center and after few years she started working part-time.*
- Provide educational assistance (3 responses)
 - *I`d like to volunteer as teaching or helping new comers in their studies, I have experience in math and French in French language.*
 - *I have been working with English language learners in a Poetry program that I co-run. We give them a safe space to write in any language they prefer and express themselves.*
 - *I have volunteered with Kidsability helping/teaching children with special needs how to ride a bike.*
- Donation/charity (3 responses)
 - *My wife and I have organized the Wilmot Terry Fox Run since 2013. Since then, we`ve raised about 90% of the money raised by the local run since it began in our community. In 2018, I designed the official Terry Fox Run t-shirt, which was sold across Canada. It raised \$835,000 for the Terry Fox Foundation. In 2020, I organized a plaque in a local park to mark the spot where Terry ran exactly 40 years before.*
- Others (14 responses)
 - *I volunteer with the WRDSB on the Equity and Inclusion Advisory to make sure that issues of racism, harassment and discrimination as outlined in the Ontario Human Rights code are included in the Board Policy and Procedures in addition to the Curriculum for Students. I am also a part of a group that is encouraging BIPOC people to Run for Political Office.*
 - *I regularly donate blood because I feel a sense of accomplishment when I`m able to support others.*
 - *I`m very happy to Canada I say to all Canadian government and peoples thank you so much and i hope to my children they become excellent Canadian to support like Canadian people*

Q31. Please share any additional comments or ideas about how to help improve the welcoming, integration and wellbeing of immigrants in Waterloo Region (all surveys, n=243)

- More affordable housing options (31 responses)
 - *Housing is a big challenge for immigrants and non immigrants alike. Maybe expand (significantly) affordable housing options through investing in constructing affordable housing projects and offering rent subsidies to those with low incomes.*
 - *I believe there should be a program or service where newcomers can get help regarding housing. A centre where they give information about affordable places for newcomers.*
- More or better programs for immigrants to find work (28 responses)
 - *Arranging a job that fits their education and experience. Short training to learn canadian work culture based on individual's education and experience*
 - *Computer literacy classes for newcomers would be very much appreciated in the community! I teach English to newcomers, and many of them struggle with basic things like checking or sending emails or using Word. ...Newcomers with basic English struggle finding a job. They often have to work at night, take English classes in the morning and then take care of their families. Very challenging.*
 - *It is very hard for immigrants to get jobs when they are asked to provide local employment experience. There's a great deal of work to be done. Immigrants do not get any guidance or support when they land here. Yes, there are services available but it takes them time to learn about the services and support.*
 - *More job opportunities will be welcome especially white collar jobs. Most immigrants are white collar workers in their home countries and have to resort to blue collar jobs here. We need the government to understand that immigrants are looking for white collar jobs here too, and don't want to end up working in retail or driving cabs only. It took my husband 15 long months to find a white collar job, and our family did not deserve that stressful wait time.*
 - *They should give us also immigrants a chance to work without a Canada experience some of immigrants like me , we are fast learners Please.*
 - *New immigrants need more work training than spending years in english class. they can learn and work at the same time.*
 - *When we came here, it felt like an insular community. Success in finding a job was based on personal connections, not in responding to ads.*
- Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants (22 responses)
 - *Canada is the best place to be but what is discouraging immigrants in waterloo Region is Racism and discrimination.*
 - *... Working towards anti-racist policies at all levels of government and implementing them in all services and in education systems is vital to build a safe trusting environment. A lot of immigrants move to Canada for a safer place to live, but the Region has not been able to provide that in my opinion.*
 - *...in some stores and sopping centers, when you are not abel to speak English they don't respect you at all*
 - *Educate people about racism. I worked for Rogers call center for 9 months and some customers were racist and the company didn't protect employees but rewarded bad behaviour and employees suffer abusive racisms customers. Having accent is not reason for others to treat others poorly or screaming 'go back to your country'.*
 - *Focus on racism and discrimination at the workplace. I have had to leave two jobs because of it. While I have dealt with racism and discrimination at my current job, I cannot afford to quit the job. I have bills to pay. It has had an impact on my mental well-being. Create more employment opportunities for skilled workers. And ensure their workplace is safe. Not everyone can quit a job and walk away, especially when you're an immigrant.*
 - *Hold people accountable for their racist and inappropriate comments and actions. Especially if they are in leadership positions.*
 - *Immigration brings a lot of psychological and emotional stress and social isolation to the life of immigrants. When this is added with inequality in distribution of wealth and opportunities through invisible/implicit discrimination, it can affect the overall health and sense of belonging on immigrants. We will have a more prosperous*

society that brings a sense of community and belonging, when the implicit barriers of getting a decent well paying job is as similar to a white person and not significantly more difficult.

- Largely, immigrants need to be treated as everyday people who chose to settle in new homes and places. Providing integration services from this perspective increases the chances of service uptake. Programming from a perspective of servicing a disadvantaged person or group of people can be regarded as offensive by immigrants, resulting in low uptake rates of services (exceptions such as uptake of employment services may occur since earning money is crucial for survival)
- Look at people as a human just like yourself or a member of your own family and not as charity cases not as victims to be patronised let them know the pitfalls of coming to Canada such as them being treated as outsiders free loaders stereotyped by ignorance difficulty to find jobs within their professional fields be given an honest history of Canada and Canada's dispossession and genocide of indigenous communities heinous treatment of dark skinned people, Asians, Jews, Muslims. This will ease the bewilderment many feel when they get to Canada. They were never told these truths but are subject to the white supremacist attitudes. This is a big rock in the path of settlement
- Please get local politicians to acknowledge that Waterloo Region is racist and Islamophobic instead of saying 'This isn't us' every time a hate crime occurs.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has shown the economic and racial inequities that reduce the wellbeing of immigrants in Waterloo Region. Racialized people were more likely: to work in jobs where they could not work from home, to catch COVID-19, to have family members who had COVID-19, to lose employment or have their hours cut due to COVID-19, to live in overcrowded housing, to work in jobs where personal protective equipment were inadequately supplied by the employer, to work in jobs without or with very few paid sick days. I hope the Immigration Partnership will be a leader in getting the attention of and effective action from government bureaucrats and leaders on these issues of economic and racial inequalities that have been highlighted yet again in Waterloo Region.
- Actions to improve the social connectedness of immigrants (22 responses)
 - Creating opportunities for newcomers to meet with different segments of society and encouraging the building of friendship and acquaintance relations through forums and activities and encouraging communication
 - By letting them know what the community has to offer them, not be afraid to knock on your neighbour's door to introduce themselves.
 - Involve locals in projects to get to know newcomers
 - I think there should be more programs for immigrants which allow us to make friends and learn more about Canada. I believe that a great idea would be like having sports and games that are new to immigrants, like for example I don't know anything about Hockey but I would like to learn and having a space where I can learn with other people new things would be really great
 - I want to blend in. I want to make more friends
 - Initiate and encourage residents associations in apartments and condos where there is zero interaction among the dwellers. Implement more inclusive programs at Community centres and libraries.
 - It seems that nearly all resources for immigrants are part of one group that is very segregated from the rest of the community. There is virtually no resources for those who don't want to be constrained to that specific social circle. Why is immigration considered our whole identity? I want to see immigrants network freely based on their interests and talents, just like the rest of the community. I think more effort should be made to integrate newcomers into all social networks within the region. I would like to see more newcomers collaborating with small businesses, playing golf, in garden clubs, and included in the same social circles that Canadians are in.
 - It is very difficult to meet new friends in the Waterloo region - everyone is very clique
 - More people who speak my language.
 - Open mind for people here. They are welcoming you but they don't make you a friend so is really difficult to socialize with someone that is not for your country. In our case we are from Spain and we don't know anyone living here from our country and coworkers and neighbors they smile but they don't invite you to their friends circles.

- *Promote meetup and face book platforms to build mutual trust, win-win and information sharing between communities*
- *We need to start at the grassroots (neighbourhoods, schools, universities) and reach out to our students/people via networks of diverse groups and individuals. Each of our communities have respected but obscure people with fresh ideas. We need their thought power to pull us out of hate motivated crises. Positive cross-cultural ideas release this energy in societies.*
- *...If more ways can be introduced where immigrants can be involved in their local community so they not only participate in local activities but also get a chance to practice speaking English in social situations without feeling judged, then that could really help. I've seen a lot of community events at libraries etc being held which is great, but people may still feel shy and hesitant to participate. Perhaps a better way could be to involve groups as a whole rather than individuals so they feel more confident.*
- *Not knowing a culture is the biggest barrier I face. It is very complex for me. Besides I do not understand the language which makes me feel like a permanent stranger. I haven't been able to feel integrated into this society. I wish I could call this country my home, but I don't think it will happen anytime soon.*
- **More effort by community services to better serve immigrants (15 responses)**
 - *As an elderly person who doesn't know English, my hope is asking all the shopping centers, when they are dealing with individuals like me, to talk with us calmly and patiently so can we understand,*
 - *I'd suggest a general orientation campaign so everyone can have some information about the immigration policies and understand why immigration is a priority for the government I believe this would help immigrants to be viewed more as contributors to the Economy rather than burdens.*
 - *Learn more about the needs of immigrants and help them in a friendly way*
 - *More outreach workers to help people settle*
 - *Social workers should be more empathetic*
- **Better access and quality to medical services (14 responses)**
 - *Access to health services is very difficult, and when I do, the quality of the service itself is terrible. I emigrated to Canada for family reasons but during the pandemic I regret having done so and I want to return to my country.*
 - *Finding a family doctor is close to impossible in the region. I have been here for almost a year and no sign of finding a doctor for my family*
 - *Culturally appropriate supports for mental health. ...Having a Mental health version of 911. ...Navigating legal/court system as person of colour/newcomer is set up to make you fail. You're treated as criminal first and then human being. You have to live in poverty to qualify for legal aid the threshold is so low. Affording a lawyer is impossible when you can barely pay your rent and bills on survivor job salary. ...With mental illness culture shock and pandemic just picking up phone to call for help even if culturally appropriate supports existed is still huge barrier.*
- **More opportunities to help improve language skills (13 responses)**
 - *I think the biggest fear of immigrants or those whose English isn't great is that it's much harder to get higher-level jobs. One of my biggest fears is that when I apply, they might ignore my resume and cover letter as they may find grammatical mistakes. Or another fear is that the hiring managers might look down upon me because they may realize during the interview that English is not my first language. I think educating the hiring managers, HR, and the workforce that we immigrants are capable of doing so much greater if given the opportunities would be helpful. We are already working much harder and competing with native English speakers, more obstacles will just make our life harder.*
 - *Language could be a barrier for new comers, facilitating free English classes and English conversational circles. Shed more light about way on how new immigrants can find ways to feel belong and cope up with the cultural chock through facilitating programs tailored for new comers needs.*
 - *Make more efforts to speak your 2nd official language which is French. We feel that this language is not welcomed. Sometimes. Especially in government services it's a bit shameful.*
 - *In Waterloo Region there is a lack of French speaking family doctors and visibility of French services*

- **More multicultural activities (10 responses)**
 - *Access for opportunities for me and others to celebrate diversity.*
 - *By organizing event that will bring immigrants together in the region most especially faith base programs*
 - *Cultural activities could help more than any thing*
 - *Organize more multicultural exchange activities to promote mutual understanding and communication among residents of different cultural backgrounds.*
 - *There should be more community programs designed for specific ethnic groups ie Iranians /Persian Culture because there are lots of older adults who are isolated and have no friends or any social life is my opinion.*
- **More support for settlement (9 responses)**
 - *Offer guidance to those who emigrate to Waterloo region on aspects such as: how credit works, how to make a loan, training programs on how to acquire a home and how to help our children to integrate into the community.*
 - *One of the biggest things I still need is help in finding a primary care physician.*
 - *There should be more communication and support for French speakers at their arrival in Canada and there should be follow-up appointments.*
 - *To educate the new comers to respect the place, follow the rules very well, avoid scattering garbage, respect each other, and spread love not hate.*
 - *Honestly immigrant services in Waterloo region are shallow and perfunctory. It might help slightly to refugees and people who doesn't know any English at all but clearly didn't provide any useful information and help for me as an immigrant from federal skilled worker program.*
 - *I think it would be good to have more people working in organizations like the Multicultural Center and the YMCA.*
- **More efforts to improve government services (9 responses)**
 - *Helping people about their housing, recognize the degree of diploma outside Canada in health care sector*
 - *I am very happy in this city, I hope we can have our permanent residence quickly so that we can build our lives in this beautiful city that we love! Thanks*
 - *I love Canada. To help us be better engaged in life in Canada, we hope to get our family reunification immigration issue resolved as soon as possible*
- **Availability of interpretation and translation (8 responses)**
 - *For Japanese newcomers who don't speak English, have a lot of difficulties to get public services. I hope we can get a translator easily at least online, on phone.*
- **Access to more information (8 responses)**
 - *Creating a housing services platform that helps immigrant communities find stable safe clean affordable housing is key to be able to create a welcoming environment. Many times immigrant families move to complexes where maintenance is poor, landlords are racist/neglect the space and language barriers that aren't addressed. Including a list of trusted compassionate landlords in our region.*
 - *I have no way to know the information of volunteer groups. The lack of information caused inconvenience for many Chinese when they want to join a certain group.*
- **Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants (8 responses)**
 - *Employers rigidly 'recruit for fit', meaning that you can generally expect that the Canadian will get the job over the immigrant.*
 - *There are also very few employers willing to hire immigrants for professional positions.*
 - *Most companies prefer to hire Canadian candidates regardless of qualification.*
 - *Please raise awareness among the Employers as well to be a little open and diverse in their recruiting practices.*
 - *Encourage organizations and employers to hire more diverse people and empower them to help take important decisions.*
 - *Find better ways to reach out to immigrants - make sure employers in the region can guide people they bring to the country to services that can help.*
- **More services for the elderly people (6 responses)**
 - *I hope to build Chinese nursing homes as soon as possible, for free or at low costs, because the old people have nowhere to go: the house belongs to their children, the*

elderly will bring him too much trouble, very inconvenient for both. ...Chinese people over 70 years old have a free bus card when going out in China, which means they can take the bus for free. The bus fares here are too expensive, even with a 50% discount. I hope this problem could be solved.

- **More efforts to improve education in Waterloo (5 responses)**
 - *The quality of education in public schools really needs to be improved. For example, teachers can be selected objectively.*
 - *Immigrant children and students have many barriers at school setting, so barriers cause them fail. They need some support for their class and programs to reduce the barriers.*
- **A central location where immigrants can receive settlement and other services in one place (4 responses)**
 - *Designate someone to turn to if you have a problem or concern. This person would be the connection to all the services and supports that the region has to offer immigrants. Sometimes it happens that there are countless programs and one does not know which one is best suited to their needs.*
 - *I believe there is a lot out there, but it's not always easy to find*
 - *I think the idea of having most services that immigrants need in one place would help a lot. When we moved here, we didn't have a car for the first weeks and it can be quite challenging to get around town to all different services.*
 - *My additional idea to improve welcoming & integration is having a community center where they can easily access service. Specially most black communities are isolated and not know or not seeking to access the service they need. A community center where they feel home will encourage all age groups. I believe this could speed up the assimilation and integrations.*
- **More affordable services (4 responses)**
 - *for the immigrants all the services are very expensive.*
- **Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants (4 responses)**
 - *Having the support system especially for students who are new immigrants*
 - *I would like Waterloo Region to make more efforts to welcome Francophone immigrants.*
- **Provide a safer environment (4 responses)**
 - *have more security patrol/checks, especially near universities*
- **More support for transportation (3 responses)**
 - *please improve public transportation and bike infrastructure. My family doesn't drive, partly for environmental reasons, and that decision has caused us some hardship, but it has also saved us thousands of dollars. I can't imagine how difficult life is for immigrants here who live in less walkable neighbourhoods but can't afford cars, or whose cars take up too much of their household income.*
- **More services to non-permanent residents (2 responses)**
 - *Services like Lutherwood and others should help temporary residents, with a work permit, to prepare and find a job. They only support immigrants with PR [Permanent Residence] or citizens.*
- **Other suggestions or comments (26 responses)**
 - *Due to the pandemic, some of the things mentioned before have been very difficult. We arrived together with my family in January 2020 and it has been a tough journey, but I am very happy to belong to this community and to be able to work with their members. Thanks*
 - *More community events could be organized. Some services could be offered to share different things, for example tandem bike or canoes.*
 - *I believe God created me to help others and protect the environment I will do kindness for anyone by what can I do in my life.*
 - *I want to share my experience, so that immigrants like me can get the care and services they deserve: I am a widow emotionally affected by the loss of my husband, murdered in my country. I have 3 kids. I have zero communication skills in English and I have no acquaintances in this country.*
 - *Settlement and employment services in the region are doing a very good job.*
 - *Thanks for all the work you do.*
 - *Waterloo Region is already doing great thing!*