

# Resilience-Vulnerability Index (2021)

This Resilience-Vulnerability Index provides a high level approximation of groups of respondents from the 2021 Immigrant Survey that were most likely to be more resilient or more vulnerable to shocks/challenges in life across the 10 domains in the index. These domains cover settling, working, belonging and overall wellbeing of immigrants in Waterloo Region.

In total, 1507 immigrants<sup>1</sup> participated in the Waterloo Region Immigrant Survey conducted in June 2021. This includes 1127 participants that filled out the full-length version of the survey in English and 380 that filled out a shorter version, which was translated into 10 different languages. For more information about the survey methodology and findings see [www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey).

## Index Design

The Index was developed using the following 10 questions from the 2021 Immigrant Survey:

1. English Ability - How well can you communicate in English? (Q4)
2. Settling Experience - How would you describe your overall experience of moving to and integrating in Waterloo Region? (Q23)
3. Housing Affordability - Is your current housing suitable and affordable for you? (Q40)
4. Employment Status – What is your paid employment status? (Q39)
5. Education - What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Q34)
6. Income - Is your household income enough for the needs of you and your family? (Q41)
7. Isolation - Have you felt isolated or alone in the last 12 months in Waterloo Region? (Q20)
8. Belonging - How would you describe your sense of belonging in Waterloo Region? (Q19)
9. Discrimination - In the last 12 months, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in Waterloo Region? (Q21)
10. Life Satisfaction/Wellbeing – How do you feel about your life as a whole right now? (Q17)

Responses to each of the 10 questions were converted into scales from 0 to 4, with 0 being responses that were more likely to translate into vulnerability to shocks/challenges in life and 4 being responses that were more likely to translate into resilience to shocks/challenges. The resulting numbers for all 10 questions

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

were averaged for each respondent giving them their individual resilience-vulnerability score. The averages in the sections below, provide an average of the individual Resilience-Vulnerability Index scores for all respondents that provided each respective response listed below.

## Limitations

While the Index may have some usefulness in identifying groups that may tend to be more resilient or vulnerable within the Waterloo Region Immigrant Survey and this may suggest different beneficial approaches or services, there are several limitations to this Index that should be kept in mind:

- The Immigrant Survey was not a fully representative survey sample, though it did utilize a diverse promotion strategy. For example, seniors that responded to the survey are not necessarily representative of all immigrant seniors in Waterloo Region.
- The numbers below may suggest some sort of connection between resilience and a particular group or response, but do not necessarily mean the one causes or directly influences the other. If respondents indicate that a settlement worker was one of the things that helped them the most, for example, the relative vulnerability that the low index value suggests does not mean that involvement with a settlement worker causes vulnerability or that vulnerability necessarily results in the connection to a settlement worker.
- Not all survey respondents responded to all 10 questions in the Index. Some questions were only included on the longer full version of the survey and therefore not all respondents provided answers to those questions.
- Some of the questions noted below are also variables in the Index and may be slightly more pronounced as a result.
- Each Index value is not meaningful in and of itself, but rather is more relevant as a means of comparing between groups (i.e. this value is much higher than this one or this is much lower than the average).
- The 10 variables in the Index weren't tested as meaningful components of a more broadly validated index. They were selected only from the pool of questions within the existing 2021 Immigrant Survey.
- The Index provides averages across groups of individuals and may not reveal differences within a group. There may be distinct differences within a group (e.g. Spanish-speaking women might be more vulnerable but Spanish-speaking men might be doing fine – therefore resulting in a more neutral score for Spanish-speaking respondents in general). There may also be areas where one variable in the index may be particularly high and another low resulting in a more average total Index value which doesn't reveal the highs and lows contained within it.

## Overall Trends Identified by the Resilience-Vulnerability Index

The Resilience-Vulnerability Index was used to identify subgroups within the 2021 Immigrant Survey for further analysis and findings disaggregation.

- Overall, the 10 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, those for whom their income was definitely not enough to meet their financial needs, were very isolated, and who experienced discrimination
  - Additional factors that had less connection with vulnerability included low education, housing affordability/suitability, employment services that weren't useful for them, those that were unemployed but seeking work

- Overall, the 10 groups that were the least likely to be vulnerable were (in order): German speaking, those that weren't isolated, who had an excellent settlement/integration experience, strong sense of belonging, English speakers, high life satisfaction (overall wellbeing), Russian speakers, very good English ability, sufficient income and Hindi speakers
  - (*While German, Russian and Hindi speakers had a large enough sample to be included in this screen – at least 20 respondents – there were not many more than the cut-off and so may be more impacted by sampling variation*)
- Considering these groups that were most and least likely to be vulnerable, 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

## Resilience-Vulnerability Index Values

See the following average Resilience-Vulnerability Index values for each question response. The statements about vulnerability or resilience are statements about the relative vulnerability or resilience according to the index domains.

Some of the responses included a smaller number of respondents and should be interpreted with caution. Items with less than 20 responses are highlighted in grey and should be interpreted with caution. Items with 5 or fewer responses are suppressed for confidentiality.

As a reference, the average mean score across all respondents and all questions was 2.95 (n=1495).

### IMMIGRATION CATEGORY

- No large variation by immigration category, though government assisted refugees tended to be slightly more vulnerable according to the index domains and economic immigrants slightly less
  - economic immigrants – Index average score 3.08
  - family sponsored immigrants -- 2.96
  - government assisted refugees -- 2.72
  - privately sponsored refugees -- 2.93
  - refugee claimants -- 2.82
  - temporary work visas -- 2.83
  - international students -- 2.89
  - all refugees combined -- 2.79
  - all current temporary residents -- 2.85

### FIRST LANGUAGE & LANGUAGE RESPONDED IN

- The most vulnerable groups were Farsi/Persian, Amharic, Somali (small sample size however), and Tigrinya.
- Respondents with German as a first language tended to be least vulnerable, as well as English and Russian (some of this may be an association with length of time in Canada, countries of origin, immigration stream, income, etc. - German respondents had higher income scores, Russian had higher education scores)
  - English -- 3.27
  - Arabic -- 2.81
  - Chinese -- 2.91
  - Spanish -- 2.93
  - Urdu -- 2.98
  - Portuguese -- 3.11
  - **Tigrinya -- 2.69**
  - **Farsi/Persian -- 2.50**
  - Turkish -- 2.86
  - Hindi -- 3.18

- **Amharic -- 2.52**
- Russian -- 3.23
- French -- 2.83
- German -- 3.72
- Serbo-Croatian -- 2.95
- Somali -- 2.62 <sup>2</sup>

## TIME IN CANADA

- Respondents that had been in Canada for less time tended to be more vulnerable. Those that immigrated 10+ years ago tended to be less vulnerable.
  - Less than 1 year -- 2.74
  - 1 to 5 years -- 2.84
  - 6 to 10 years -- 2.84
  - 10 or more years -- 3.15

## AGE

- Youth 24 years of age and under tended to have increased vulnerability. Seniors tended to be less vulnerable – though there may also be an association with length of time in Canada, countries of origin, or other factors.
  - 15-19 years -- 2.58
  - 20-24 years -- 2.56
  - 25-34 years -- 2.83
  - 35-44 years -- 2.87
  - 45-54 years -- 2.93
  - 55-64 years -- 2.98
  - 65 years or older -- 3.04

## GENDER

- No large variation by gender
  - Woman -- 2.84
  - Man -- 2.91
  - Prefer to self-describe – [suppressed due to small number of responses]
  - Prefer not to answer -- 2.20

## EMPLOYMENT STATUS

- Respondents that were unemployed (and seeking work) tended to have higher vulnerability, while full time employed (and all employed to a lesser degree) tended to be less vulnerable.
  - I am employed (working full time) -- 3.08
  - I am employed (working part time) -- 2.82
  - I am unemployed but seeking work -- 2.31
  - I am not in the paid workforce (retired, caring for children, not seeking work, etc.) -- 2.84
  - I am self-employed -- 3.01

## MUNICIPALITY OF RESIDENCE

- No large variation by place of residence
  - Kitchener -- 2.96

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<sup>2</sup> Index scores for groups with less than 20 individuals are considered too small of a sample to make conclusions about and are in grey font.

- Waterloo -- 3.06
- Cambridge -- 2.99
- Township of North Dumfries -- 2.70
- Township of Wellesley -- [suppressed due to small number of responses]
- Township of Woolwich -- 3.21
- Township of Wilmot -- 2.55
- all rural in WR combined -- 2.97
- all urban in WR combined -- 2.99

## ENGLISH ABILITY

- Respondents that didn't speak English well were more likely to be vulnerable while those that spoke English well tended to be less vulnerable
  - Very well (and English first language) -- 3.21
  - Well -- 2.87
  - Fairly well -- 2.55
  - Poorly -- 2.39
  - Not at all -- 1.85

## SERVICE USE

- No large variation by usage of specific types of services
  - any service use -- 2.86
  - Education -- 2.85
  - Employment and/or skills training -- 2.81
  - English language learning -- 2.76
  - Health -- 2.87
  - Housing -- 2.79
  - Interpretation/translation -- 2.74
  - Legal -- 2.78
  - Local government/bylaw -- 2.85
  - Mental health -- 2.77
  - Police -- 2.83
  - Settlement/immigrant services -- 2.75
  - Small business/entrepreneurial supports -- 2.80
  - Other community services (please specify) -- 2.56

## REASONS FOR NOT USING SERVICES

- Those that didn't qualify for services (and therefore didn't access services) tended to be more vulnerable
  - I was not aware of the services but if I was I would have used them -- 2.70
  - I was not aware of the services but even if I was I would not have used them -- 2.62
  - I did not need the services -- 2.98
  - I did not qualify for the services -- 2.54

## PANDEMIC SERVICE METHOD

- No large variation by service method used during the pandemic
  - In-person -- 2.92
  - Virtual - online -- 2.86
  - Virtual - by phone or other ways other than online -- 2.74
  - I did not access services -- 2.97

## NOT USING VIRTUAL SERVICES

- Those for whom services were not available virtually in their language or who were not comfortable accessing virtual services tended to be more vulnerable. While the sample size was small, not having the tools to access services (internet access, laptop, mobile phone or other device) may also be an area of concern.
  - I didn't need any virtual services -- 3.01
  - Services were not available virtually -- 2.71
  - Services were not available virtually in my language -- 2.63
  - I didn't have the tools to access services (internet access, laptop, mobile phone or other device) -- 2.29
  - I am not comfortable accessing virtual services -- 2.60
  - Not applicable or unsure -- 2.86

## USEFUL EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- Those that used employment services in the past year but didn't find them as useful tended to be more vulnerable
  - Very useful -- 2.99
  - Somewhat useful -- 2.76
  - Not very useful -- 2.51
  - Not at all useful -- 2.28
  - I did not access employment services in the past year -- 2.99

## USEFUL HOUSING SERVICES

- Those that used housing services in the past year but didn't find them as useful tended to be more vulnerable
  - Very useful -- 2.91
  - Somewhat useful -- 2.77
  - Not very useful -- 2.50
  - Not at all useful -- 2.10
  - I did not access housing services in the past year -- 2.98

## USEFUL LANGUAGE SERVICES

- Those that used language services in the past year but didn't find them as useful tended to be more vulnerable
  - Very useful -- 2.88
  - Somewhat useful -- 2.49
  - Not very useful -- 2.62
  - Not at all useful -- [suppressed due to small number of responses]
  - I did not access English language learning services in the past year -- 2.95

## INTERPRETATION

- Respondents that wanted language interpretation at a hospital, clinic or with a health professional but did not receive it tended to be roughly as vulnerable as those that brought a family member or friend to communicate with the health professionals. Respondents for whom language interpretation was provided for them at a hospital, clinic or with a health professional were less likely to be vulnerable, and in fact were roughly similar to those that did not need language interpretation when they were at a hospital, clinic or with a health professional.
  - Language interpretation was provided for me at a hospital, clinic or with a health professional -- 2.89

- I wanted language interpretation at a hospital, clinic or with a health professional but did not receive it -- 2.51
- I brought a family member or friend with me to communicate with the health professionals in English -- 2.58
- I did not need language interpretation -- 2.94
- I did not go to a hospital, clinic or health professional -- 2.87

## LIFE SATISFACTION

- Respondents with low overall life satisfaction (i.e. wellbeing) tended to be more vulnerable and those with high life satisfaction tended to be less vulnerable
  - 8-10 rating -- 3.24
  - 6-7 rating -- 2.69
  - 4-5 rating -- 2.32
  - 2-3 rating -- 2.04
  - 0-1 rating -- [suppressed due to small number of responses]
    - 0-3 rating combined... -- 1.97

## WELCOMING COMMUNITY

- Respondents that considered Waterloo Region to not be a very welcoming community tended to be more vulnerable and those that considered it to be very welcoming tended to be less vulnerable
  - 8-10 rating -- 2.38
  - 6-7 rating -- 2.03
  - 4-5 rating -- 2.01
  - 3-4 rating -- 2.17
  - 0-2 rating -- [suppressed due to small number of responses]

## BELONGING

- Respondents with low sense of belonging tended to be more vulnerable than those that had a higher sense of belonging
  - Very strong -- 3.28
  - Somewhat strong -- 2.96
  - Somewhat weak -- 2.24
  - Very weak -- 1.90
  - Don't know / no opinion -- 2.72

## ISOLATED

- Respondents that described feeling more isolated tended to be more vulnerable and those that were not
  - A great deal -- 2.19
  - Quite a bit -- 2.52
  - Somewhat -- 2.74
  - A little bit -- 3.07
  - Not at all -- 3.41

## DISCRIMINATION

- Respondents that had experienced discrimination in the past year tended to be more vulnerable than those that did not
  - Yes -- 2.19

- No -- 3.07

## OVERALL SETTLEMENT/INTEGRATION

- Respondents that didn't feel that they had a very good overall settlement/integration experience tended to be more vulnerable than those that did
  - Excellent -- 3.35
  - Good -- 2.92
  - Neutral -- 2.27
  - Not very good -- 1.99

## CHALLENGES

- Respondents tended to be more vulnerable where their top challenges were discrimination/racism, negative public opinion, getting information they need in a language they understand, or accessing and using technology/internet
  - Learning English -- 2.62
  - Finding work -- 2.59
  - Learning where and how to do things -- 2.56
  - Receiving public or social services (e.g. settlement services, government services, etc.) -- 2.56
  - Making friends or social connections -- 2.70
  - Being socially isolated -- 2.70
  - Discrimination/racism -- 2.11
  - Negative public opinion -- 2.41
  - Finding affordable housing -- 2.62
  - Transportation -- 2.60
  - Accessing health care -- 2.68
  - Accessing mental health care -- 2.62
  - Accessing relevant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc. -- 2.67
  - Making sure your kids are okay at school and in the community -- 2.78
  - Starting a new business -- 2.71
  - Accessing and using technology/internet -- 2.56
  - Getting information you need in a language you understand -- 2.50

## HELPED MOST

- No large variation by what helped most
  - Making friends -- 2.96
  - Finding work -- 2.84
  - Having family support -- 2.91
  - Belonging to a religious group -- 2.85
  - Worker at an organization that helps recent immigrants -- 2.89
  - Settlement worker -- 2.58
  - Community programs and services -- 2.80
  - Being involved in a cultural association or connection with others that share your background or language -- 2.86
  - Volunteering -- 2.94
  - Other community group -- 3.04

## SOLUTIONS

- No large variation by suggested solutions responses
  - More opportunities to help improve English skills -- 2.80

- Availability of interpretation and translation -- 2.91
- More affordable housing options -- 2.80
- A central location where immigrants and refugees can receive many settlement and other services in one place -- 2.90
- More effort by community services to better serve immigrants -- 2.80
- More or better programs for immigrants to find work -- 2.79
- Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants -- 2.83
- English learning opportunities in workplaces -- 2.83
- A central place for employers to find immigrant workers and where workers can find employment opportunities -- 2.94
- Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants -- 2.71
- Actions to improve the social connectedness of immigrants -- 2.98
- Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants -- 2.84
- More relevant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc. -- 3.09
- Greater voice or involvement in community leadership and planning -- 3.02
- Better collaboration and coordination between service agencies -- 2.93
- Better internet/technology access and training -- 2.86
- More funding for... (please specify using 'Other' below) -- 2.88

## WHY CHOSE WATERLOO REGION

- Respondents that chose Waterloo Region for either cultural/language groups, or community services/supports, tended to be more vulnerable – as well as those who didn't chose Waterloo Region specifically (i.e. the community was chosen for them). Those that came for a job tended to be less vulnerable.
  - Family or friends that live in Waterloo Region -- 2.85
  - Waterloo Region was more affordable than other communities -- 2.83
  - Post-secondary institutions -- 2.88
  - For a job in Waterloo Region -- 3.05
  - A healthy local economy -- 2.95
  - Cultural or language groups in this community -- 2.56
  - Community services and supports in this community -- 2.53
  - I didn't chose Waterloo Region - the community was chosen for me -- 2.64

## CONTRIBUTION

- Respondents tended to have less vulnerability who: donated to local charities, participated in political activities, were a business owners and through that contributed to the economy, and those who contributed with their skills and experience to the local economy
  - I help out my neighbours when they need it -- 2.90
  - I provide unpaid help for family members (children, grandparents, etc.) -- 2.83
  - I am on a board of directors or other committee -- 2.97
  - I volunteer with youth sports (coaching, driving youth, etc.) -- 2.90
  - I tutor or help youth learn in this community -- 2.81
  - I volunteer in cultural or ethnic association activities -- 2.74
  - I volunteer with other community organizations, groups or faith communities -- 2.86
  - I donate to local charities -- 2.99
  - I help newcomers to Canada as they make their home in our community -- 2.80
  - I speak up for fairness and treat people with kindness in my community -- 2.89
  - I participate in political activities (voting, writing to my political representative, etc.) -- 3.09
  - I am a business owner and my business contributes to our community's economy -- 3.16
  - I contribute with my skills and experience to the local economy through my job -- 3.04

- I build my skills so I can better contribute to this community (learning English, further education, building professional skills, etc.) -- 2.79
- I contribute to improving the natural environment in my community (recycling, picking up garbage, planting trees, etc.) -- 2.93
- I help people to stay healthy by working in the health care sector during the current pandemic -- 2.84

## HOUSING AFFORDABLE/SUITABLE

- Respondents that were in housing that was not affordable/suitable tended to be more vulnerable
  - Yes -- 3.07
  - No -- 2.28

## RACE/POPULATION GROUP

- Some racial groups may have tended to have more vulnerability but the sample size was too small to draw solid conclusions. Respondents that identified as White (and to a lesser degree Chinese) tended to have less vulnerability than other groups.
  - Arab -- 2.75
  - Black -- 2.72
  - Chinese -- 2.98
  - Filipino -- [suppressed due to small number of responses]
  - Japanese -- 2.88
  - Korean -- 2.51
  - Latin American -- 2.94
  - South Asian -- 2.83
  - Southeast Asian -- 2.82
  - West Asian -- 2.24
  - White -- 3.09
  - Prefer not to answer -- 2.74

## LGBTQ+

- No large variation by LGBTQ+ identity
  - Yes -- 2.94
  - No -- 2.86
  - Prefer not to answer -- 2.80

## DISABILITY

- Respondents that had a disability tended to be more vulnerable
  - Yes -- 2.51
  - No -- 2.90
  - Prefer not to answer -- 2.80

## FAITH COMMUNITY

- Muslim individuals tended to be more vulnerable and Hindu individuals tended to be less vulnerable
  - Christian -- 2.87
  - Muslim -- 2.68
  - Jewish -- 2.90
  - Hindu -- 3.04
  - Sikh -- 3.04

- I am not a member of a faith community -- 2.97
- Prefer not to answer -- 2.76

## EDUCATION

- Respondents with high school or less education tended to be more vulnerable and those with a Masters degree or higher tended to be less.
  - Elementary school -- 2.26
  - High school or equivalent -- 2.61
  - Trade/technical school -- 2.85
  - College diploma -- 2.82
  - Bachelor's degree -- 2.85
  - Master's degree -- 2.99
  - PhD -- 3.14

## INCOME SUFFICIENCY

- Respondents that described their income as not enough for their needs tended to be more vulnerable than those whose income was sufficient.
  - Our income is enough for our needs -- 3.20
  - Our income is not quite enough for our needs -- 2.58
  - Our income is definitely not enough for our needs -- 2.18
  - Prefer not to answer -- 2.73

## WORK COMMENSURATE WITH SKILLS/EXPERIENCE

- Respondents that described their job as not commensurate with their skills/experience tended to be more vulnerable than those for whom their job was commensurate.
  - Yes -- 3.15
  - No -- 2.64
  - Prefer not to answer -- 2.82

## PROMOTION METHOD

- No large variation by promotion method (those that responded to the survey because of a poster may be an area of vulnerability but the sample size was too small to make solid conclusions)
  - A community organization I am connected to shared the link with me -- 2.84
  - Poster -- 2.45
  - Social media -- 2.96
  - Someone in my community told me about it -- 2.80