



# The Impact of COVID-19 on Building Community Through Immigration

What we know right now: Data round-up Sept 2020

This briefing brings together national and local data, information and reports from multiple sources on immigration in the context of COVID-19. It was compiled as a resource for the Immigration Partnership Council in understanding how COVID is or is likely impacting immigration and immigrant experiences in Waterloo Region. It provides context for their work and others who are working to build community through immigration.

The Business Council of Canada has stated that of potentially greater significance to Canada's long term economic health than millions of unable to work and thousands of firms forced to close their doors is the impact of the pandemic on immigration. ([Globe and Mail, 2020](#))

## Immigration levels impacts

- In August, RBC released a report suggesting "At the current pace, we expect only 70% of the originally planned 341,000 new permanent residents at the end of the year." They reported that new permanent resident numbers were down 67% and temp work permits were down 50% from Apr-Jun 2020 compared to in 2019, and that just over 10,000 new study permits were processed, down from 107,000 a year earlier. ([RBC, 2020](#))
- Permanent resident immigration levels in Waterloo Region were down by more than 50% in the second quarter of 2020 (590 individuals) compared to 2019 (1,230 individuals), with 58% destined to Kitchener, 31% to Waterloo, 9% to Cambridge and 1% to rural townships ([IRCC data, 2020](#))
- International student registrations in Waterloo Region are currently estimated to be around 19,000; it is not clear where the students are physically located. More are expected to arrive in the Fall (from several 100 to several 1,000 per school), with quarantine plan in place. (Laurier International, 2020)
- The Association of Canadian Studies found "Coronavirus has slashed ... family-class sponsorship and refugee resettlement. Family sponsorship was down 78 per cent in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the same period last year. Refugee levels were ... down 85 per cent, and economic-class immigration was down 52 per cent. ([ACS, 2020](#) with quotes from [CIC](#))
- Perceptions of immigration are holding steady in Waterloo Region compared to 2019: In both January and June 2020, 68 per cent of Waterloo Region survey respondents agreed that immigration has a positive impact on their city or township; 32 per cent disagreed (representing 197,718 residents). ([Immigration Partnership, 2020](#))

## Health impacts

- Immigrants, refugees and other newcomers made up 43.5 per cent of all COVID-19 cases in Ontario as of mid-June, despite those groups representing just over 25 per cent of the province's population. Testing rates were lower for immigrants and refugees when compared to Canadian-born and long-term residents, with the exception of Ontario immigrants who are classified as "economic caregivers, many of whom are employed in the health care sector." ([ICES, 2020](#))
- In Waterloo Region, the first wave of COVID more deeply affected five neighbourhoods along the central spine of Kitchener (Vanier/Rockway, Victoria Hills, Alpine/Laurentian, DTK and Area and Mount Hope/Breithaupt), where a greater proportion of recent immigrants, Black and impoverished residents live. They have a community infection rate 57 per cent above the regional average, and recent immigrants were infected at up to 3 times their proportion of the population (just under 3% overall, between 4 and 9% in these neighbourhoods. Public Health confirms moderate increases in infection rates where immigrants settle. ([Record, 2020](#))
- "...compared to the Canadian average, Black Canadians report far worse health outcomes related to COVID-19. They are more likely to report symptoms, say they sought treatment and nearly three times as likely to report knowing someone who has died of the virus. [...] poorer health outcomes for Black Canadians may be explained by greater exposure at work to the virus. ([ACCEC & INNOVATIVE, 2020](#))

## Economic impacts

- Immigrants are essential workers. For example, in 2016, more than 1/3 of the nearly 250,000 people who were employed as nurse aides, orderlies and patient service associates in Canada were immigrants (86% of those being women, and many being Black or Filipino). ([Stats Can, 2020](#))
- Relating to immigration and the economy in Waterloo Region, only 7% of respondents who viewed immigration positively felt that immigration will help Canada's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. ([Immigration Partnership, 2020](#))
- A new Stats Canada report found that recent immigrants were more likely than Canadian-born workers to move out of employment in March and April, mainly because of their shorter job tenure and over-representation in lower-wage jobs. Prior to the lockdown, the rate of transition to non-employment was low and similar for recent immigrants and Canadian born. fluctuating between 2% and 4% from Feb 2019 to Feb 2020. As the pandemic hit, the rate jumped for both, but much more so among recent immigrants, peaking in April at 17.3% compared to 13.5% for the Canadian born and long-term immigrants. As the transition to employment increased during the partial recovery, recent immigrants transitioned at a lower rate than Canadian-born. Female recent immigrants had lower rates of transition back to employment at the start of partial recovery. ([Stats Can, 2020](#))
- In June 2020 World Education Services surveyed 1,800 Canadian newcomers that accessed their credential assessment services. "Almost a quarter (24 percent) of permanent residents reported difficulty affording rent, mortgage, or utility payments. Among international students, the financial impact was even greater. By June, more than a quarter (26 percent) reported losing their primary source of income, while over a third (34 percent) found it difficult to afford rent or utilities." ([WES, 2020](#))
- "A recent [Statistics Canada crowdsourced questionnaire](#) found that a higher proportion of respondents in most visible minority groups reported that COVID-19 has had a strong or moderate negative financial impact than did those who identified as white. Those identifying as Arab, West Asian, or Filipino were most likely to report this effect. (quoted in [WES, 2020](#))

- Black Canadians are also more likely (56% to 43%) to report layoffs or reduced working hours in their household and are more worried, over the next few months, about paying rent (45% to 36%). They are also more likely than the Canadian average to say their household finances have been negatively impacted by COVID-19.” ([ACCEC & INNOVATIVE, 2020](#))

## Social impacts

- At the end of August, of the students in Waterloo Region who planned to learn remotely for the 2020/21 school year, more lived in areas where more students are poor, recent immigrants and have a first language other than English. Experts expressed concern at potential deepening of existing inequities. ([Record, 2020](#))
- In May, immigrants were more likely than Canadian-born individuals to have higher levels of concern about the maintenance of social ties (44% vs. 30%) and about the ability to support one another during or after the pandemic. ([Stats Can, 2020](#))
- In May, immigrants were almost twice as likely as Canadian-born individuals to be concerned about the possibility of violence in the home (12% vs. 7%). ([Stats Can, 2020](#))
- In July, visible minorities perceived more frequent race-based harassment or attacks and felt these incidents had increased since the start of COVID-19 ([Stats Can, 2020](#))
- For international students in Waterloo Region, challenges include isolation, lack of family or other support, loss of employment and family-provided income support, potential impact on immigration trajectory, challenges w those who have family who died abroad, many mental health and wellness issues, etc. For those studying from abroad, issues with connectivity for studies ability to enter Canada for studies, potential impact on immigration trajectory. (Laurier International, 2020)
- 1 in 5 Ontario Non-Profits report that they will need to close operations by the end of 2020 without financial assistance to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Highest increase in demand was reported in the subsectors of Social Services (58%), Health (54%), Housing (43%), Environment (28%), and Education (25%). ([Ontario Not-Profit Network, 2020](#))

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