




# IMMIGRANTS SPEAK:

A Call to Action for Community Leaders



IMMIGRATION  
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Waterloo Region is set to grow to 1,000,000 people in the coming decades. Of the over 300,000 new residents to be welcomed in that time, more than half will be immigrants from around the world. As we grow into the future, it is important that we build for the community that we will be. Cost of living, housing, employment, and belonging are key issues now and as we build the Waterloo Region of the future.

This snapshot explores the top issues of immigrants living in Waterloo Region, using responses from nearly 1,700 participants in the 2023 Immigrant Survey. It includes recommendations for community leaders by immigrants about the types of changes that are needed to help immigrants and others reach their full potential.

The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership prepared this snapshot to help governments, funders, business leaders and non-profit organizations understand and take action on critical issues for our growing community.

## Key Insights

- 🌈 Cost of living, housing and employment are key concerns for many immigrants. These interrelated and community-wide issues can be particularly critical for newcomers.
- 🌈 Some demographic groups came up most frequently as having a more difficult time across multiple indicators from the survey, such as: unemployed respondents, international students, recent refugees, Black respondents, and low-income respondents.
- 🌈 Immigrants are calling on community leaders in Waterloo Region to take a range of actions to make it easier for immigrants to settle, work and belong, now and as we grow to a community of 1 million people in the future.

## Overall Wellbeing

Survey participants were asked about their overall wellbeing. Less than half (42%) were quite satisfied with their life right now, compared to 44% who were somewhat satisfied and 14% who were dissatisfied.<sup>1</sup>

Life satisfaction (0 to 10 scale)	% of respondents	
10 ("Very satisfied")	10%	42% - quite satisfied
9	10%	
8	22%	
7	18%	44% - somewhat satisfied
6	12%	
5	14%	
4	5%	14% - dissatisfied
3	4%	
2	2%	
1	3%	
0 ("Very dissatisfied")	0%	

Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

Some immigrant groups were less likely to be quite satisfied with their life, including those who: had a weak sense of belonging (18%) or a poor settlement experience (18%), had lower English ability (25%), were unemployed and looking for work (27%), were relatively isolated (28%), experienced discrimination (29%), had insufficient income (34%), international students (35%), those for whom interpretation was needed but wasn't available (35%), Ukrainian CUAET permit holders (36%), and recent economic immigrants (37%).<sup>2</sup>

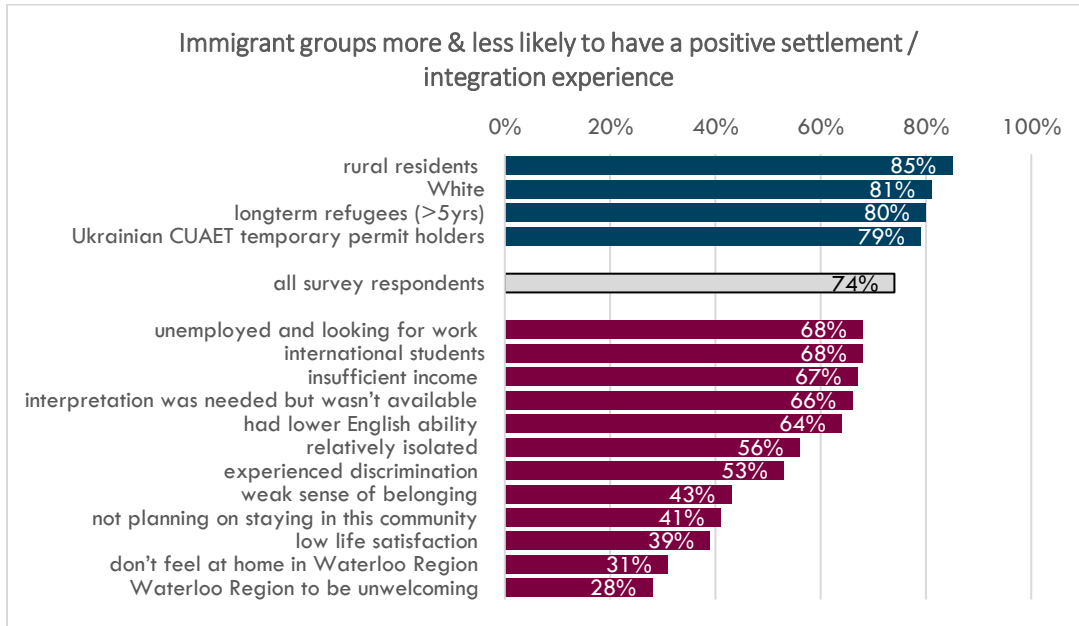
The groups most likely to be quite satisfied with their life were those who: had been in Canada for 10 or more years (50%), were White (48%), or youth ages 16-24 (47%).

<sup>1</sup> Q9. 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" (n=1624). 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.

<sup>2</sup> Other groups were also less likely to be quite satisfied but had a smaller number of respondents (<25 individuals) and were not included in this list.

## Settlement and Integration Experience

Survey participants were asked about their overall experience of moving to and integrating in Waterloo Region. Approximately three quarters (74%) had a positive settlement/integration experience. On the other hand, 22% described their experience as “Neutral” and 5% had a negative overall experience.<sup>3</sup>



Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

Some groups were less likely to have had a positive settlement/integration experience, including those who: found Waterloo Region to be unwelcoming (28%), don't feel at home in Waterloo Region (31%), low life satisfaction (39%), were not planning on staying in this community (41%), had weak sense of belonging (43%), experienced discrimination (53%), were relatively isolated (56%), had lower English ability (64%), those for whom interpretation was needed but wasn't available (66%), had insufficient income (67%), were unemployed and looking for work (68%), and international students (68%).<sup>4</sup>

“This isn't what i thought it would be like here.”  
- Immigrant Survey participant

Groups that were more likely to have had a positive settlement/integration experience, included those who: were rural residents (85%), White (81%), refugees that immigrated more than 5 years ago (80%), or Ukrainian CUAET temporary permit holders (79%).

<sup>3</sup> Q17. How would you describe your experience of settling in Waterloo Region? (Settling includes your whole experience of moving to, settling and integrating in Waterloo Region.) (n=1581) Positive experience included responses of “Excellent” and “Good”: 18% indicated “Excellent” and 56% indicated “Good”.

<sup>4</sup> Other groups may have also been less likely to have had a positive settlement/integration experience but had a smaller number of respondents (<25 individuals) and were not included in this list. Groups that rated their experience of settling in this community more similarly to all respondents (within 5 percentage points) were not mentioned in the chart.

## Top Challenges in Waterloo Region

Survey participants were asked to share their biggest challenges in the last year. The biggest challenges for immigrants in Waterloo Region<sup>5</sup> were cost of living (59%), affordable housing (49%) and finding work (49%). Finding health care (37%) and making friends (25%) were also significant challenges for many immigrants.

Biggest Challenges Experienced in the Last Year	
Category	% of participants
Cost of living or money problems	59%
Finding affordable housing	49%
Finding work	49%
Finding health care	37%
Making friends	25%
Transportation	17%
Learning where and how to do things	15%
Finding childcare	13%
Learning English	12%
Finding relevant programming in local community centers, arts and culture spaces, libraries, etc.	11%
Making sure your children are safe and happy at school and in the community	11%
Discrimination/racism	9%
Receiving public or social services (e.g. settlement services, government services, etc.)	9%
Finding mental health care	8%
Getting information in a language you understand	7%
Starting a new business	7%
Other (please specify) <sup>6</sup>	4%

Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

<sup>5</sup> Q20. What are the biggest challenges you or your family have experienced in the last year in Waterloo Region? (Choose all that apply.) (n=1 527)

<sup>6</sup> "Other" challenges included a range of issues such as: accreditation, specific areas of affordability, transportation, housing, cold weather, safety issues, accessing specific health care options, children's programming, employment, ability to participate in Canadian sports, immigration processes, learning French, education, food security, and barriers due to immigration status.

Cost of living was a **new addition** to the 2023 survey, but the other top challenges were similar to what immigrants shared in the 2021 Immigrant Survey. At that time, finding work (37%), making friends (34%) and finding affordable housing (32%) were the top issues.

Survey participants shared their recommendations for changes what would help immigrants reach their full potential.<sup>7</sup> Their responses largely matched up with the top challenges for them and their families. Two-thirds (68%) recommended more affordable housing, followed by better programs for immigrants to find work (43%). The next most common suggestion was more opportunities to help improve English skills (23%).

Changes to Help Immigrants Reach their Full Potential	
Category	% of participants
More affordable housing	68%
Better programs for immigrants to find work	43%
More opportunities to help improve English skills	23%
Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining, and promoting immigrants	21%
One place to get all settlement, immigration and other services	18%
A central place for both employers to find immigrant workers and for workers to find employment	18%
Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants	10%
Actions to improve the social connections of immigrants	10%
More effort by community services to better serve immigrants	8%
Availability of interpretation and translation	7%
English learning opportunities in workplaces	6%
More immigrant programming in local community centers, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.	5%
More funding for...	5%
Greater voice or involvement in community leadership and planning	4%
Service agencies working together more	4%
Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants	3%
Computer access and training	2%
Other (please specify) <sup>8</sup>	4%

Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

<sup>7</sup> Q21. What changes would help immigrants to reach their full potential in Waterloo Region? (Choose only your top 3) (n=1078, long survey only)

<sup>8</sup> "Other" recommendations included addressing: access to a family doctor or medical specialists, specifics about different housing types, education options, childcare availability, increased caring by service staff, length of time to immigrate, transportation, employment needs, religious accommodations, public spending, cultural norms, or experiences of discrimination.

## A Call to Action for Community Leaders

The Immigrant Survey asked participants to share specific ideas for the most important things community leaders should do to improve the welcoming, integration and wellbeing of immigrants in Waterloo Region.<sup>9</sup> This open-ended question was answered by over 500 individuals who referenced many urgent priorities and specific ideas.

1. **Information about & experience with institutions and community services** (248 comments) – Immigrant survey participants highlighted the importance of leaders ensuring service information is provided to immigrants, when, where and how they can access it, and that all services are accessible for newcomers. They suggested things such as:

- 🎯 Collaborate with local service providers to enhance access to settlement programs and services
- 🎯 Prioritize social activities and events, especially for children during winter, to foster a sense of belonging
- 🎯 Ensure accessibility to recreational and cultural facilities
- 🎯 Address concerns related to policing and patrol to promote safety and community cohesion
- 🎯 Actively engage immigrants in decision-making processes
- 🎯 Advocate for immigrant-friendly policies at local, regional, and national levels

### From Immigrant survey participants

“All services providing support for newcomers need more funding and more staff. Unfortunately, funding is not available from a federal government devoted to increasing immigration without an understanding of the impact on communities.”

“I think it will be helpful to have an interpreter/translator individual in these community centre services. I believe having a working bilingual volunteer/employee relevant to the community’s dominant ethnic attendance in the community centre will inspire more action and involvement as immigrants will feel understood and insightful of others.”

“Allow us to be eligible for certain grants and create grants like this one that help immigrants. And allow actual immigrants to be in charge of these grants as we know our needs better than the citizens of Canada.”

“Accessible interpretation services to service providers.”

“Improve public transport, which is very important for newcomers.”

“I believe simply advertising any helpful programs in an inviting manner for all cultures is important! It is super intimidating coming to a new country where you may not speak the language so having warm and inviting programs is necessary.”

“Build better partnerships with local religious or community organizations.”

“Lots of lost time driving around without an end in sight. And nobody to help on this settlement process. This is the first time I’m hearing about this organization, but no welcome package was given to me upon arrival to the country/region offering any assistance. I’m totally alone with a work permit in my Canada journey until my family joins me later this year.”

<sup>9</sup> Q26. What is the most important thing community leaders should do to improve the welcoming, integration and wellbeing of immigrants in Waterloo Region? (n=553, including 15 that gave responses of don’t know or not applicable. Responses also included 13 individuals who didn’t give specific suggestions but gave responses of “everything is good”, “leaders are doing well”, etc.). The open-ended comments were separated into themes and summarized. Some of the responses covered multiple themes.

- 🎯 Promote multiculturalism through opportunities for learning and interaction between the host community and immigrants
- 🎯 Facilitate access to affordable childcare options
- 🎯 Provide information and resources for navigating institutions and community services
- 🎯 Expand settlement programs tailored to the needs of immigrants

2. **Employment** (209 comments) – Strengthening employment opportunities was a central suggestion for improving the welcoming, integration and wellbeing of immigrants in Waterloo Region. Participants recommended:

- 🎯 Provide economic opportunities through job creation, training, financial support, and business loans
- 🎯 Address the lack of job opportunities for international students, emphasizing the financial challenges they face
- 🎯 Focus on providing more flexible employment opportunities
- 🎯 Improve the recognition process for foreign credentials and simplify licensing for professionals like doctors
- 🎯 Create initiatives for finding suitable jobs that cover housing expenses and basic living costs
- 🎯 Enhance salaries for skilled immigrants, reducing reliance on entry-level positions
- 🎯 Organize informational sessions and employment fairs, facilitating connections between immigrants and potential employers
- 🎯 Offer skills training programs paid by the government
- 🎯 Provide comprehensive support for finding work
- 🎯 Encourage employers to hire immigrants without requiring Canadian experience
- 🎯 Support community-led grassroots organizations that can help newcomers
- 🎯 Collaborate with local businesses to create job opportunities and support entrepreneurship within immigrant communities

**From Immigrant survey participants**

“Simplify the process of obtaining a license for doctors or allow newly arrived doctors to take care of at least newcomers. For newcomers, this issue is very sad and acute.”

“Helping new immigrants to find a new job to settle down. Because when they get a job, they will be able to build their network, that's when they start to feel like this community is their

“Help / create conditions for migrants to start their own business. This will create new jobs and improve the economy in the region.”

“Educate employers to welcome newcomers and value their skills without asking them if they have a Canadian work experience or credentials.”

“Providing suitable jobs so that we can pay the rent for housing and the necessary expenses for living. And paying decent living wages that cover the high prices.”

“Help newcomers to find affordable housing and assist them with employment services, provide support so that they can open up small business to contribute to the economy and create jobs”

“Don't be afraid to hire people who don't have very good English skills”

“Provide employment/make education process affordable so newcomers can update their qualifications and work in their field”



3. **Belonging & community engagement** (187 comments) – Participants asked leaders to nurture a community that was welcoming, where there was authentic engagement of immigrants and all newcomers, and where everyone feels they belong across the region.

They recommended:

- 🎨 Foster an inclusive community by actively promoting and celebrating diversity
- 🎨 Advocate for immigrant-friendly policies at the local, regional, and national levels
- 🎨 Organize multicultural events and promote intercultural dialogue
- 🎨 Encourage the participation of immigrants in decision-making processes
- 🎨 Provide resources and support for immigrants to facilitate their integration
- 🎨 Challenge unwelcoming remarks or behaviors about immigrants in the community
- 🎨 Create opportunities for community engagement and participation of everyone, including newcomers
- 🎨 Promote cultural awareness through events, activities, and training programs
- 🎨 Offer language support and assistance tailored to immigrants' needs
- 🎨 Establish support groups based on specific characteristics or interests to foster connections and friendships among immigrants

#### From Immigrant survey participants

“Keep visibly supporting people through meeting them, learning to say hello in their language.”

“Create a kind of social network with them through community programs that bring them together.”

“Make sure the newcomers don’t feel alone.”

“To create more social events and invite immigrants to participate, people are very isolated here.”

“Find ways to get connected, every[one] wants to do and willing to do so much but connections are missing badly.”

“Loneliness is terrible. Feeling alone at times is so difficult for a newcomer. It is so important that there are groups or opportunities to make friends who speak your own language.”

“Successful integration is a collective effort that involves the participation of the entire community.”

“Treat others as you would like to be treated.”

“I think having a 'community guide'/ case worker/ a person dedicated to helping them find the resources they need. It would be nice if the person comes from a similar country or speaks the same language.”

“As a Muslim, I hope that celebrations of Muslim holidays will be held and that Eid will be an official holiday.”

“They should promote inclusion and work on the racial micro aggression that is so common, and people feel it everyday as a constant way to treat and make feel an immigrant that doesn’t belong here.”

“Advocate for the underserved. Consider upstream efforts not just apply a bandaid solution. Continue equity, inclusion, and diversity work.”

“Talk more to persons in neighborhood. One cannot feel welcomed if no one speaks with them.”

“More efforts and ways to integrate newcomers to mainstream such as Eastwood Collegiate held a 'Islamic Culture Assembly' and Huron Heights Collegiate gave space during the month of Ramada for night prayers. Such initiatives make us feel at home and part of the overall community and that’s when everyone starts feeling ownership and starts contributing.”

“Intervene in discrimination.”

“Get more involved with the actual immigrants. Increase in-person interactions.”

**Housing** (144 comments) – Participants want leaders to work to ensure affordable housing is available overall, and that that immigrant-specific housing issues are also priorities. This includes addressing the types of housing available, discrimination and unfair selection processes so immigrants have fair opportunities to secure affordable and suitable housing.

They recommended:

- 🎨 Prioritize affordable housing and create affordable housing options that work for immigrants
- 🎨 Regulate housing prices
- 🎨 Ensuring that immigrant newcomers have accessible and multilingual information about housing options, rental assistance programs, and tenant rights
- 🎨 Encourage landlords, real estate agents, and property managers to understand the unique needs and challenges faced by immigrant renters and create more inclusive processes
- 🎨 Advocate for policies that take into account other forms of financial reliability for newcomers that don't have Canadian credit or rental histories
- 🎨 Establish community support networks that connect immigrants with local housing resources and support services during the housing search
- 🎨 Create programs for affordable rental housing
- 🎨 Collaborate with developers to allocate spaces for newcomers

**From Immigrant survey participants**

“Can't get a decent rent without credit report (which I obviously don't have yet). No support for new immigrants to find housing without credit history, so landlords are asking for several months of rent to be paid upfront, which is extremely hard on family finances. Housing is extremely expensive in comparison to wages.”

“Make sure there is affordable housing and helping them to find more job opportunities.”

“Make housing and daycares more affordable.”

“All education or re-training programs are expensive. Accommodation is expensive, life, in general, is very expensive in this region.”

“When we try to rent a house, Ukrainians are asked to pay several months in advance. This is also discrimination.”

“Immediately, I ask you to look into the cost of living, and the most important thing is house rent. We were about to sleep with our children on the street. Thank you, everyone, and I hope you take an interest in our cause.”

“Affordable housing programs for newcomers. It is impossible to find housing without a credit history or employment.”

“The main problem for new immigrants is house rent. If the government builds many houses, other things are good. We (my family and I) love Canada from our hearts.”

4. **Health and Wellbeing** (82 comments) – Survey participants want community leaders to prioritize accessible healthcare services, mental health support, and overall wellbeing initiatives. More specifically, it is recommended that community leaders focus on enhancing the quality and accessibility of healthcare services through reduced wait times and improved access to specialists, and new immigrant focused mental health programs. Participants recommended affordable dental care and eye care for low-income individuals. Leaders should advocate for increased funding and resources for mental health services and ensure that immigrants have access to affordable and culturally sensitive care, as well as leisure activities, social engagement, and community participation to promote a sense of belonging and overall wellbeing. Participants also recommend leaders improve communication and information dissemination about health services and resources.

**From Immigrant survey participants**

“Improve healthcare, have more public programs like family doctors because it is hard to find one these days.”

“Mental health coverage under OHIP. As a highly qualified individual working 2 part-time, stressful nursing jobs, I have no benefits and therefore have to ignore my mental health problems because I cannot afford to get them treated.”

“Easy access to family doctors”

“The cost of dental care without employment and without insurance is almost unaffordable.”

“Everyone should have accessible health care services and have a family doctor.”

“Mental health support programs for Ukrainian newcomers.”

5. **Cost of living, income and basic needs** (86 comments) – Participants urgently recommended community leaders act regarding income levels, the cost of living and meeting basic needs. They recommended enhanced income support programs, more affordable housing, and access to basic needs such as healthcare and education. They emphasized the need to address systemic barriers to economic inclusion – like the simplification of education credential recognition. They recommended community leaders advocate for more job opportunities and fair wages, and explore scholarships and sponsorships. They called on community leaders to actively engage with immigrants to understand their specific needs, such as affordable childcare, and work towards creating a supportive environment that enables newcomers to thrive financially.

**From Immigrant survey participants**

“They need to focus on the main issue of the region such as affordable housing, affordable health care system (dental care and eye care). Make sure their community [is] affordable as much as possible!”

“Provide subsidised child care and activities for children.”

6. **Language learning, interpretation, and translation** (71 comments) – Participants made numerous recommendations about language learning and communication supports for newcomers that don't yet know English or French. They recommended that community leaders collaborate with local organizations, educational institutions, and language learning organizations to expand language learning programs to include more evening opportunities to accommodate individuals who work during current class times. They recommended ensuring provision of interpretation services and translated resources to reduce language barriers to services. They recommended hiring bilingual staff and volunteers in service organizations and community centres.

7. **Immigration programs and processes** (33 comments) – Survey participants urged leaders to address challenges within the immigration and settlement process. They recommend streamlining immigration processes, speeding up immigration processing times, and reducing bureaucratic hurdles. They recommended clear and transparent communication about immigration programs and requirements, especially regarding permanent residency and visa processes. They recommend specific effort to efficiently reunite families and help immigrants navigate Canadian immigration law and regulations. Increased awareness of immigration needs, coupled with educational initiatives to inform newcomers about the available programs and resources, can significantly contribute to their successful integration.

**From Immigrant survey participants**

“Provide more English courses. The waiting list for LINC is long.”

“Many more offers and workshops in French.”

“Access to an interpreter”

“Provide language assessment sessions at weekends and in the evening (7pm) so that those who work during the day can be assessed at weekends.”

“Have people who speak different languages. It is very important to have staff who speak Spanish, many people arrive without English and don't know what to do 😞”

“Organize English courses in each of these centers.”

**From Immigrant survey participants**


“Settlement services are nonexistent or so hard to find that I haven't discovered them.”

“I believe that there is a large gap between the government's focus on increasing immigration levels and the support available during settlement.”

“Stop lying to newcomers to attract them to the region.”

“Allow access to settlement services for all types of immigrants.”

“For me the most important thing is to reunited family. I have been living here in Canada going to 5 years now single here with my 4 children I need my husband to come visit for our well being the family need him is been a long time.”

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8. **Education** (28 comments) – Survey participants shared several recommendations for education leaders at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. They recommended leaders enhance educational opportunities for immigrants through scholarships and making post-secondary tuition affordable. They recommended leaders across education, community businesses, and other stakeholders to create an environment that values diversity, promotes inclusion, and supports the educational needs of immigrants.

“Mostly importantly leaders should have attention whether community people have access to education or not and they can fulfil their dreams or not.”  
- Immigrant Survey participants

Survey participants shared 95 additional recommendations covering a range of areas, such as removing systemic barriers that hinder immigrant progress, advocating for increased government investments and funding for initiatives that directly benefit immigrants, strengthening cultural groups through grants, or actively assisting immigrants affected by global crises.

## Which Immigrant Groups Tend to Experience the Community Differently?

Looking at averages across a whole group can often obscure the differences within. Immigrant Survey data was analyzed looking at both average overall responses and across many disaggregated groups to understand how individual groups of immigrants experience life differently in Waterloo Region. The data analysis in this report shares responses by specific subgroups which differ from the average by at least 5 percentage points.

The following demographic groups came up most frequently as potentially having a more difficult time across multiple indicators from the survey.<sup>10</sup>

- 🎨 Unemployed respondents
- 🎨 International students
- 🎨 Recent refugees
- 🎨 Black respondents
- 🎨 Low-income respondents (whose income was not sufficient for their needs)

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<sup>10</sup> These highlighted groups were more likely than the average immigrant survey respondent to identify a concern in at least five indicator areas. In some cases, this was impacted by suppressed data due to smaller subgroup sample sizes. When a lower threshold was used for suppressing data (<5 rather than <25 individuals), some additional groups also came up more frequently, including respondents with lower English ability, recent privately sponsored individuals, current refugee claimants, recent government assisted refugees, Somali respondents, and individuals with a disability. Additionally, there are some groups that community experience and literature suggest may sometimes experience increased vulnerability but did not come up frequently in this analysis. In addition to smaller sample sizes, this may be because of internal variation within these groups that obscure some more pronounced differences. Diverse groups such as women, racialized individuals, LGBTQ+ and other groups may not have come up as frequently because there are some 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.

## Data Sources, Limitations and Cautions


The data for this snapshot comes from the Immigration Partnership's 2023 Immigrant Survey. This biannual, multilingual survey is for immigrants who live, work and/or study in Waterloo Region. It covers immigrant experiences on a range of topics impacting their ability to reach their full potential and contribute to a thriving, prosperous community for everyone. The survey was most recently conducted in June 2023 with 1,676 participants. Some of the international student participants completed the survey in March 2023 before they finished their winter school term.

In the 2023 survey, the majority of participants filled out the survey online. Participants reflected the whole range of immigrants living in Waterloo Region. Two thirds (67%) had been in Canada for 5 years or less, while the rest had been here for longer. More than half were permanently in Canada (57%) and 39% were here on a temporary permit. Most (93%) were living in Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo, with 3% in the rural townships. Participants answered the survey in 11 languages and had 75 different first languages. English was the first language of 14% of participants, 77% spoke English well or very well and 9% spoke English poorly or not at all. In the survey, 76% of respondents identified as racialized; 59% were female and 40% male; 3% identified as LGBTQ+; 6% were living with a disability or chronic illness. Respondents, like immigrants overall, were highly educated: 75% had a bachelor's degree or above. Almost two thirds (63%) were working (full time/part time/casual/self-employed) and 26% were unemployed and looking for work.

Survey responses were disaggregated along many demographic lines and analyzed to uncover the varying experiences of different groups of immigrants. An index was developed using ten of the survey questions to get a high-level overview of all respondents and which groups and responses corresponded to increased resilience or vulnerability. Overall, higher vulnerability was most likely to be connected to the following variables (in order): those that did not have a very good overall settlement/integration experience; a very weak sense of belonging; low life satisfaction (overall wellbeing); were very isolated; had a low rating of Waterloo Region as a welcoming community; those that rated police or recreation services or legal/courts services as poor; those that experienced discrimination; those that rated education or small business/entrepreneurial supports or settlement/immigrant services as poor; and those for whom their income was definitely not enough to meet their financial needs.<sup>11</sup> In examining both highest vulnerability and highest resilience in the index, the clearest association appeared to be with dimensions of 1) overall settlement/integration experience 2) sense of belonging, 3) isolation, and 4) life satisfaction. Based on the initial findings of this resilience-vulnerability index and incorporating the suggestions of the Immigration Partnership's Evaluation Advisory Group and local partners, 40 different groups were analyzed for how they differed from the average responses across all survey questions. This snapshot highlights a few of the areas where specific groups differed more

The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership is collaboration of over 100 community service, business, municipal, post-secondary and ethno-cultural organizations, and residents working together to create the conditions for immigrants to succeed and help build a welcoming, dynamic community.

<sup>11</sup> Most of these groups in 2023 were relatively similar to the groups identified in 2021, with the exception of low English ability which identified as more connected to vulnerability in 2021.



dramatically from the average (by at least 5 percentage points).<sup>12</sup> Because of small numbers for some subgroups, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

Further information about the survey methodology, participant demographics and the findings of the survey are shared at [www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey).

### How the Results Should Be Used

The Immigrant Survey provides a useful snapshot of the experiences of immigrants living, working or studying in Waterloo Region. It includes immigrants' own suggestions for community leaders and decision makers. It should be used to inform policy development, service planning and delivery, and advocating for changes to ensure immigrants and others can reach their full potential and contribute to a thriving, prosperous community for everyone.

Contact the Immigration Partnership ([ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca](mailto:ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca)) if you have questions about the data or suggestions for how it could be used to impact change across our community.

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<sup>12</sup> See [2023 Immigrant Survey Background and Methodology snapshot](#) for further information about these methods of disaggregated data analysis.





For more information contact:

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