



Newsletter

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Language Learning for the Win

The centrality of strong local language skills to an immigrant or refugee's success in their new country cannot be overstated. The federal government has found that language ability is one of the human capital characteristics which most strongly predicts the earning potential of immigrants in the short and intermediate term. Ontario's Immigration Strategy recognizes that, "Mastering language fluency and cross-cultural communication quickly is critical for immigrant success and building strong, two-way global connections in our economy."

In our 2017 community survey, over 200 immigrants and refugees shared their experiences of settling and belonging. A full 35 per cent felt that learning English was one of the biggest challenges they experienced, second only to finding work. Over 100 local service providers, employers and interested community members agreed that language was the key barrier to providing service to and/or hiring immigrants and refugees. Conversely, investing in English language learning opportunities was seen as the solution that would make the biggest difference for the success of immigrants and refugees. Success of immigrants and refugees is success for the whole community.

For the Immigration Partnership, language learning is one of the nodes at which the efforts of all our stakeholder groups converge. This latest issue of our Newsletter focuses on language learning in Waterloo Region. It discusses the language profile of Waterloo Region and why language learning is so important. It shares insights from immigrants and refugees living in the community. It profiles language learning programs which build the capacity of immigrants and refugees. It includes information about people who have immigrated to Canada and are now involved with the Immigration Partnership, as well as work being done by our partners.

We hope you enjoy this Newsletter and that you are inspired to reflect on the process of learning a new language and how you can support newcomers who are learning English in Waterloo Region.

Tara Bedard

Executive Director, Immigration Partnership

Language Learning – An Investment in the Future

While Waterloo Region is linguistically diverse, the majority of interactions, commerce and services are in English. Learning English is a critical step for many newcomers as they seek to settle, work and belong in this community.

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada data from 2016 shows that most recent immigrants who come to Canada know English or French but one in four did not know either official language. While most economic immigrants knew English or French when they first came to Canada, only 40 per cent of all refugees arrived with this advantage.

The Challenge of Language Learning

Learning another language is not an easy undertaking. The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) differentiate levels of ability in English as a second language (ESL) in speaking, listening, reading and writing. The Niveaux de compétence linguistique (NCLC) is the equivalent for French as a second language. The 12 CLB levels range from basic language ability (benchmarks 1-4), intermediate language ability (benchmarks 5-8) and advanced language ability (benchmarks 9-12). Most employers currently require intermediate or advanced language ability. Becoming a Canadian citizen requires at least CLB/NCLC 4 ability in listening and speaking English or French.

Language learning takes time and effort but the speed of it depends on many factors. Children often learn languages more quickly than adults. The amount of formal learning (like ESL classes) and informal practice interacting with English speakers has a significant impact. Adults who are taking ESL classes five days a week and practicing regularly still may take 6 to 12 months to advance through each CLB level.

ESL classes for people wanting to learn or improve their English in Waterloo Region are provided by Conestoga College, English at

First and St Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education. There is a trend in these ESL classes towards more immersive and interactive methods, as well as practical situation-based learning rather than a more traditional classroom teaching model. Newcomers can also learn English through online or distance education, community conversation circles, or through practicing on their own and talking to native English speakers.

“As a newcomer to Canada, it’s important to learn English because that will help me to communicate with others easily and develop my skills so that I can start a job or study a new course. I can also help my kids more to develop their English skills.”
– ESL student

Last year the Immigration Partnership surveyed about 200 people who had immigrated to Waterloo Region. The survey revealed that language learning was one of the biggest challenges to settling and belonging in their new community. Immigrants were relatively pleased with English language learning services – 66 per cent felt these services were very good or excellent and only 9 per cent felt they were only fair or poor.

Language Learning is an Investment in the Future

While it takes time and effort to learn a second language, learning English or French is a good investment in the future. Not only is language learning valuable for individuals, there are also significant benefits for the community at large and business in particular.

“As a newcomer to Canada it is very important to learn English. First, it is the main language in this country. Second, it is very important to make connections. For me, learning English means being born again, so I have to learn a new language.”
– ESL student

“Having an internationally-integrated workforce will be critical for our community to continue to be a leader in a globalized world,” says Nora Whittington, of the Immigration Partnership. “But we can only tap into that diverse experience if we can communicate well. Investing in ESL in our community is so critical for businesses to thrive, our community to grow and employees to realize their full potential.”

What Are Newcomers Saying?

Immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region were asked about learning English and why language learning is so important for settling, working and belonging in their new community. This is a sample of what they shared.

As a newcomer to Canada, how important is it to learn English?

- It is a must to learn English.
- It is necessary, because newcomers need to have communication with people and ask question or get lots of new information. If they can't speak or communicate they feel detached from the society and will be homesick.
- English is important for us as newcomers to Canada because we need to communicate with people who live here.
- It's really important since I'm going to spend the rest of my life in Canada.
- I think that speaking English is very important, otherwise you feel lonely and you always depend on others.
- Learning English is important and people all over the world decide to study it as a second language. As a newcomer to Canada, learning English helps me to learn about other people and cultures.
- I think learning English is the first step. It will help us to find a good job, continue studying and communicate with society.
- We have to speak English everyday. Good English skills help us communicate with other people easier and help us have better life in Canada.
- Very important, most important thing to integrate in Canada.
- If we learn English, we could communicate more, share our thoughts, ideas and knowledge with our community in Canada.
- It is very important to learn English as a newcomer to Canada. Canada is a bilingual country and people use English, especially in Ontario. If I want to successfully settle here, I must use English well.

How does learning English help you living in Waterloo Region?

- It is helpful in every situation because everything here is in English, writing resume, have communication with people who want to help us for finding job, settlement and shopping.
- If you speak and read English, you will find a job or apartment or house easily.
- Although I have learned English in my home country, I find the classes very useful to learn the idioms and the expressions that community used in Canada.
- Learning English plays a very important role and helps us to live in Waterloo Region. I can grow as a person, develop my knowledge base and improve myself for the better to communicate with other people.
- In school, beside learning English, we also learn about job interviews, medicals and so many other things which is helpful in community.
- English is the main language in this region. That means everything you see, listen or do and all your surroundings are in English so for successful life here you really need to learn English.



TIPS FROM NEWCOMERS

How to learn English more quickly or easily:

- First you need to take ESL classes. Attend conversation groups.
- Practice every day, everywhere: At the school, bus station, at stores, wherever you go where there is people try to speak to them. People are very kind and happy to help.
- Speak with local people.
- Listen to English conversations when you are eating or taking a rest or when you are driving. Listen to English speaking people to know the right pronunciation of each word.
- Read newspapers, novels and magazines to learn new vocabulary. Listen to the news in English. Have as much exposure as possible to English.
- Watch movies.
- Use Google/dictionary.
- Don't be shy about your accent.
- Find a friend who speaks English to practice with.
- Have a good and friendly attitude in order to practice your English and learn from other people and their way of speaking.
- Look for [a] job or volunteer.
- Do not be shy to make mistakes.
- Try to not give up. It is not easy but if you attend class regularly you can improve.
- Online study is effective. There are so many video resources: Online, academic, or casual.
- Go out, meet with people, join communities, go to the libraries and attend programs.
- Write a list of new words and then fix this in a place in your home to have it under your eyes. Whenever you get a new word you can add it to the list and you can review the old words continuously.
- Think about everything in English.
- Take every opportunity you can find. Do not waste time thinking without doing any action.

- Working, shopping, appointment, talking to neighbor, volunteering, acceptance, talking with teacher of my kids.
- Without English it's very hard, almost impossible to find a job.
- I can say it's more important than anything. Without knowing the language we can't grow here.
- Waterloo Region is where I live. I need to buy food, furniture, decorations and everything I need for a living. I need to apply for my health card and driver license. I need to talk with my neighbors and my classmates. I need to work in the near future. I want to blend in with the local community and know what happens around me. English skills are required everywhere in Waterloo Region.
- Without English, finding a job, shopping, taking the bus, or communicating with others can be so hard, almost impossible.
- I have to use English, especially to get a job and talk with my children's teachers.
- Learning English helped me search for a property and understand the sales agreement so I can settle down here. It also helped me write a resume, communicate with people and to find a job.
- Waterloo is a nice city and the people here are so friendly. Actually, people here help us to speak English fluently. They also try to correct us when we make mistakes. On the other hand, finding a job is not easy as we need good language skills.
- If you know English, you will be able to find a decent job, which you will enjoy. You will also enjoy the life and culture of the community and you will have good friends in the surrounding places where you live.



How has being able to speak several languages benefited you?

- Knowing how to speak several languages helped me a lot because I am able to communicate with people in different languages, it also helped me in learning English.
- [You] can help others from the same language to understand English and help them with other services.
- [Speaking several languages] makes me more confident and comfortable with society.
- As a bilingual or multilingual, obviously you have many benefits in comparison with the people who just speak one language. For example, you have more advantages to get a job that needs communication with clients. In my case, I am a Chinese language instructor in Canada.
- Being able to speak many languages benefits from the point of view of getting a specific job and being able to travel around the world.
- I can be an interpreter for Chinese people who know less English when they need to go to government service offices.
- Knowing several languages helped me ...to apply for jobs where a second language was an asset.
- If you can speak different languages you can easily understand different people from their different culture, since Canada is full of different nationalities.

Apprendre le français dans la région de Waterloo / Learning French in Waterloo Region

Margaux Court, L'Association des francophones de Kitchener-Waterloo (AFKW)

Vous venez d'arriver dans la région de Kitchener-Waterloo et vous souhaitez apprendre le français, ou vous voulez simplement avoir l'occasion de pratiquer votre seconde langue ? Vous n'êtes pas seuls ! Nous sommes plus de 10,000 francophones dans la région venant de tous les horizons.

Le français est une langue de communication internationale et la plus largement enseignée après l'anglais dans le monde ! L'Association des francophones de Kitchener-Waterloo (AFKW) offre une multitude de services en français, notamment un cercle de conversation deux fois par mois, et ce gratuitement pour tous nos membres.

De nombreuses activités en français sont prévues durant l'année : fête de Noël, festival du film, Franco-Fête (St-Jean), activités pour enfants, etc. Ce sont de parfaites occasions pour pratiquer votre français et rencontrer d'autres francophones de la région ! Pour plus d'informations sur l'AFKW, et les services offerts en français, visitez www.afkw.org ou écrivez-nous à : coordonnatrice@afkw.org.

Have you just arrived in the Kitchener-Waterloo area and want to learn French, or do you just want to have the opportunity to practice your second language? You are not alone! There are more than 10,000 Francophones in the region from all walks of life.

French is a language of international communication and is the most widely taught language in the world after English! The Association of Francophones in Kitchener-Waterloo (AFKW) offers many services in French, including a conversation circle twice a month, free of charge for all our members.

Many activities in French are planned during the year: a Christmas party, film festival, Franco-Fête (St-Jean), activities for children, etc. These are perfect opportunities to practice your French and meet other people who speak French in the region! For more information about the AFKW and services available in French, visit www.afkw.org or write to us at: coordinator@afkw.org.

Census Profile: Language in Waterloo Region

The 2016 Census reveals how diverse the language mix is in Waterloo Region:

- There are over 120 mother tongues represented in Waterloo Region. A person's mother tongue is the first language they learned and still understand.
- While English was the most common mother tongue, there were 129,930 people whose mother tongue was not English, an increase of 9.6 per cent from 2011.
- Some people regularly speak a language other than English at home. In Waterloo Region, 83.1 per cent of individuals spoke English as their primary home language, while the remaining proportion of the population spoke French (0.3 per cent), a language other than English or French (12.1 per cent), or a combination of English and a nonofficial language (4.2 per cent).
- In 2016, Mandarin replaced German as the most common home language after English. Between 2011 and 2016, Mandarin rose from being the ninth most spoken home language to being the first. After Mandarin and German, the next most common home languages in Waterloo Region were Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, Serbian and Punjabi.
- While 98.2 per cent of the population of Waterloo Region had a working knowledge of at least one of Canada's official languages (English or French), there were 9,300 individuals or 1.8 per cent of the Region's population that didn't know English or French. These 9,300 individuals spoke a variety of mother tongues, the most common being: Portuguese (1,210 individuals), Arabic (1,125), Mandarin (930), German (640), Punjabi (540), Spanish (465), Serbian (325), Persian/Farsi (315), Romanian (280) and Gujarati (270).

For more information see the fact sheets and reports at: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/factsheets.

Learning English at Work

Nora Whittington, Immigration Partnership

English language can often be a key barrier to employment for immigrants and refugees in Waterloo Region.

What the Immigration Partnership and many service providers hear from employers on a regular basis is that they can't hire without solid English language skills - both written and verbal. Some employers will accept lower English language levels depending on the risks within the role or how much customer interfacing the role requires.

With a shrinking workforce and employers challenged to fill positions, there is a need to have more English language training available or to find ways for employers to access workplace English language training. "Immigration Partnership Work Steering Group has this on their agenda for the coming year and will look at what other communities are doing and what programs can be created to support employers. It is critical that this issue is addressed

since there are many immigrants and refugees available to work and employers need them," said Ian Mclean, CEO of the Greater KW Chamber and Chair of the Work Steering Group.



Knowing several languages is very useful as it is very good for your resume and it helps us to have more opportunities for finding a job.

– ESL student

Newcomer Programs in Waterloo Region

St. Louis Adult Learning & Continuing Education Centres – English Language Programs

Janet Waito, St. Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education Centres

At St. Louis we aim to provide hope, opportunity and success for all.

For over 30 years, St. Louis has helped language learners improve their English to strengthen community connections, expand work opportunities and broaden education choices. We offer classes at a variety of convenient times and locations in Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge. We regularly add new classes to fill needs that come up. For example, we just started a new Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) class for seniors!

Along with language instruction, we offer support to students preparing for the Citizenship Test and the International English Language Testing System exam and to those who want to improve their computer skills.

Attending English language classes allows learners to meet others who have similar goals

and experiences and to develop a greater sense of connection to the community. Refugees, permanent residents, landed immigrants, Canadian citizens and visitors to Canada are all welcome to join our morning, afternoon, evening and Saturday classes.

For more information about St. Louis programs visit: <https://stlouis.wcdsb.ca/programsandcourses/english-language/esl>.



Conversation Circles: A Place to Learn and Build Community

Kristin Johnson-Perlock, Kitchener Public Library

As a library, Kitchener Public Library (KPL) wants to offer learning opportunities and foster a sense of belonging for everyone in our community. One way KPL supports newcomers is by offering English Conversation Circles.

English Conversation Circles are 90-minute programs where participants can practice speaking English in an informal and supportive environment. The focus is on everyday English topics like public transit, shopping, or those topics selected specifically by participants. But in addition to being a place to practice listening and speaking English, it's an opportunity for newcomers to socialize with others, experience a sense of belonging and learn more about their new community and country.

In the last year, participants representing over 25 countries attended this KPL program, which was offered four times a week. Participants shared that the

program increased their confidence with speaking English, helped foster friendships and increased their connection to the community. As one participant remarked "I have more confidence when I speak and now I am also practicing my English skills by volunteering in the community."

KPL currently hosts several English Conversation Circles at three library locations. We offer one program in partnership with YMCA Immigrant Services and the others are facilitated by library volunteers. All programs are drop-in and open to all adults who are 18 years of age and older. A full listing of locations and times can be viewed on the KPL website: www.kpl.org/esl.



Immigration Partnership People

Laura Stoutenburg, Settle Steering Group Vice Chair and Language Learning Task Group Chair

I grew up in a monolingual prairie town. I didn't start learning a second language until high school, but then got hooked on language through learning French. From there, I headed to university and studied more languages. This started my vocational journey, which led to my first ESL classes teaching low-German speaking Mennonites from Mexico and Paraguay.



I moved with my family to Waterloo Region in 2000 and began teaching ESL at Conestoga College in 2001. What a privilege to help create a sense of community with groups of people from all over the world and to hear the stories of their journey to Canada.

Conestoga College has been creating language programming in response to the needs of the community since long before I came to the area.

I feel very lucky to have been able to teach, develop curriculum and coordinate Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), Occupation-specific Language Training (OSLT), English Language Studies and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)

training programs. These programs help newcomers to participate fully in our Region, both socially and economically.

Truly responsive language programming must be based on input from all stakeholders and thus, I found myself on one of the former Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network working committees at its beginning and then participating and now providing leadership to the Immigration Partnership's Settle Steering Group. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue to collaborate with community partners to make Waterloo Region a welcoming and supportive environment for all newcomers.

Elba Martinez, Belong Steering Group Vice Chair

I was born in El Salvador and came to Kitchener as a refugee in 1990. I have a degree in Nutrition and a Master's degree in Food Science and Technology from the University of San Carlos de Guatemala. I also have a Master's degree in Community Psychology from Wilfrid Laurier University.

Issues of social justice, inequality and gender have always been a passion of mine, both in El Salvador and Canada. I worked as a Nutritionist with the Ministry of Health and as a professor for the School of Nutrition at the National University in El Salvador. In Canada, that translated into continuing to work on food issues with the Food Bank of Waterloo Region and Region of Waterloo Public Health. I've always strongly believed in the importance of volunteering – often giving my time on projects that focus on community development, gender issues and access to resources.

I joined the Immigration Partnership on the Belonging Steering Group – largely because of the commitment of this group to work on issues of

diversity and inclusion. It is so important for us to continue to welcome new arrivals to participate and bring their voices to the table. We need to find ways to reach out to ethnic groups and create a safe and welcoming space for immigrants and refugees.

My initial experiences as an immigrant are similar to others who come to Canada in the same circumstances: Language barriers, no relatives, no employment, lack of social networks, lack of knowledge



and understanding of Canadian society and lack of knowledge of government and community resources. And yet, in spite of the struggles, it has been worth it and inspires me to help others.

I would encourage newcomers to keep working hard. Commit yourself to learn to speak and write English fluently. Give yourself time as this is a key area to

master in your integration process. Take English courses, read books, listen to news on the radio, or find a tutor if possible. Inquire about available resources and opportunities. Talk to your neighbours. Get help from members of your own ethnic or religious group, staff from local agencies, ESL teachers and others. Volunteer and share your skills and experiences. Recreate yourself. Be open to trying new things!

Yasir Dildar, Immigration Partnership Council Member and Evaluation Advisory Committee Chair

I moved to Canada from Pakistan in 2007 with my family. As with many other immigrants, Toronto was my first destination before moving to Kitchener in March 2008.

I hold Master's degrees in Development Studies and Sociology. I worked with the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) until 2012 and conducted research and evaluation studies for various immigration related initiatives. Through these studies and my personal experience, I found that English language skills are extremely important for immigrants to 'settle', 'work' and 'belong' in the community.

There are many ways to gain or strengthen language skills, including volunteering. The year I landed in Canada, I volunteered for the United Way Greater Toronto and then continued volunteering with United Way Waterloo Region Communities and currently serve as a volunteer board member with the Kitchener-Waterloo Multicultural Centre (KWMC). In addition to the language, volunteering serves several other purposes for recent immigrants, including: a) being a great way to give back to the community by sharing your expertise and time; b) helping to understand the community better by interacting with local people; and c) providing networking opportunities.

I joined the Immigration Partnership Council in 2017 as Chair of the Evaluation Advisory Committee (EAC), the position that Theron Kramer, a great community builder, held for a few years. Prior to my involvement in the Immigration Partnership, I had been part of the CCBR team that conducted evaluation studies of the Waterloo Region Immigrant Employment Network (WRIEN) and worked closely with Theron to develop the initial strategy for the Immigration Partnership. Being part of the EAC is very rewarding as this group is instrumental in listening to the voices of newcomers by gathering frequent data and communicating the findings to individuals and organizations responsible for providing needed services. The Immigration Partnership serves as an excellent bridge between newcomers, service providers and employers.



Immigration Partnership Updates

Settle

The Settle Steering Group has been bringing together English language learning partners, settlement workers and people who support newcomers to explore gaps and new directions. We will be working more closely with the Work Steering Group to investigate ways to cultivate more language learning opportunities in local workplaces.

The Housing Task Group has been developing a shared list of landlords interested in providing housing for recent immigrants and refugees. We are also excited to continue to celebrate landlords who have gone above and beyond in supporting newcomers at the National

Housing Day Celebration on November 15.

Interpretation is a critical need before newcomers have become fluent in English or French. We continue to work with the Waterloo Wellington Local Health Integration Network as they implement significant interpretation supports for local hospitals, doctors, healthcare provider clinics and other health settings. We will be connecting with local organizations to support them in accessing interpretation and more effectively serving our diverse community.



“Speaking several languages makes me feel proud and happy to learn more and more new things.”
– ESL student

Work

A Work Steering Group (WSG) committee has been researching and planning for a specialized, one-stop service to help employers hire immigrants and refugees as part of their talent attraction strategies. During Manufacturing Day on October 5, we hosted two buses which toured immigrants and refugees around four manufacturers in Waterloo Region: Kuntz Electroplating Inc., Tigercat, Ontario Drive and Gear and Erwin Hymer. This non-traditional networking event provided participants a great opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes look at how local manufacturers operate and helped these employers connect with some of the available immigrant workforce in the region.

We have been busy this year with the #HireImmigrantsWR campaign and it continued this fall with more advertising and promotions on local transit and in newspapers. The bus shelter and CTV campaigns concluded and were a huge success

with many employers seeking support in hiring immigrants and refugees. We continue to look at ways to bring awareness to local employers about hiring immigrants and refugees. As more employers face hiring challenges, immigrants and refugees can be a solution but employers need to know how and where to access this talent pool.

WSG also participated in a few networking events this fall and provided a networking training to immigrants where they learned new skills for this very important part of their job search process. We are always open to ideas as we work at bridging the gap between employers and immigrants!

Belong

The Belong Steering Group (BSG) had a busy summer and fall working on the three actions outlined in our Community Action Plan. On July 19, the Welcoming and Inclusive Municipalities Working Group hosted a presentation for recent immigrants on local government at Council Chambers in Kitchener City Hall. Thanks to Mayor Berry Vrbanovic and municipal staff for welcoming the 80 ESL students from Conestoga College who attended the sessions.

In Immigration Partnership's 2017 Community Survey of over 200 immigrants and refugees, 52 per cent told us they feel isolated in Waterloo Region. They reported having family, making friends and participating in community programs and services helped them most. For the past few months, BSG's Social Isolation Working Group has been working to address these findings. On November 3, the group will host a "Multicultural Connections" event that aims to provide an opportunity for ethno-cultural groups to network, exchange experiences and explore ways to strengthen social connectedness in Waterloo Region's multicultural communities.

The Public Education Working Group is currently organizing the second annual Waterloo Region Global Migration Film Festival, which will take place from November 28 to December 18. This worldwide initiative is led by the International

“
Learning English
make me independent and
give me possibility to have
conversation with Canadian
people, make appointments,
visit doctor and others.

– ESL student
”

Immigration Partnership's
work is guided by its Community
Action Plan 2017-2019.

www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/CAP

Organization
for Migration
and features films
and documentaries
that capture the promise and challenges
of migration as well as the unique
contributions that migrants make to their
new communities. We hope you will join us
for one of the screenings and post-screening
discussions.

Partnership-wide

In the lead-up to the municipal election in October, Immigration Partnership promoted local all-candidates meetings and shared a Municipal Election Primer, which highlighted key questions that we have been collectively seeking action on. Partners used the Primer at all-candidates

meetings and one-on-one with candidates. The questions were sent as a survey to all candidates for election and responses have been widely shared online. We continue to raise the profile of immigration matters on the agenda of elected representatives in Waterloo Region.

Upcoming Events

National Housing Day Celebration

Celebrate National Housing Day at an awards celebration hosted by the Region of Waterloo for those who have made a difference in our community! Immigration Partnership, together with organizations across the community, is sponsoring the Newcomer Landlord Award. For more information visit:
www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/landlordaward.

When: Thursday, November 15, 9:00-11:00 am
Where: CIGI, 67 Erb St W, Waterloo

Global Migration Film Festival (GMFF)

The GMFF will feature films and documentaries that capture the promise and challenges of migration.



For more information about the screenings and post-screening discussions in Waterloo Region visit: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/wrmigfest.

When: November 28 to December 18
Where: Various locations

Immigration Partnership 10th Anniversary

2019 will mark ten years of partners across Waterloo Region coming together through the Immigration Partnership to help immigrants and refugees settle, work and belong. Watch www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca for more information on upcoming celebrations.



Support Local Programs

In recognition of the overwhelming support for newcomer settlement in Waterloo Region, the **Immigration Partnership Fund for Immigrant and Refugee Initiatives** was created at the Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation.

It encourages the generosity of residents to respond to emerging needs to ensure the successful settling, working and belonging of immigrants and refugees. Visit kwcf.ca and choose this fund to donate today.

“ Learning English is very important because it will be my second language as I decided to be part of the Canadian community. – ESL student ”

New to Waterloo Region?

Check out the Immigration Waterloo Region calendar (www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/calendar) and get weekly updates about upcoming immigrant and refugee-focused programs and events at: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/subscribe.



2017 Community Survey Brief

This brief summarizes findings from the 2017 Immigration Partnership Community Survey. Over 300 immigrants, refugees, international students, service providers, employers and interested community members provided insight on the local immigrant and refugee experience of settling, working and belonging in Waterloo Region.

This brief focuses on responses from immigrant, refugee and international student survey participants. While the findings are not representative, they do provide a useful snapshot of the experiences of immigrants and refugees currently living in Waterloo Region to inform policy, service and other planning.

Immigrants are people who were born outside of Canada and have settled permanently in the country and who have arrived under the economic, family, or refugee categories.

At the time of the 2016 Census there were 119,335 immigrants in Waterloo Region, making up 22.6% of the total population. In the five years before the census, 14,045 immigrants arrived in Waterloo Region. Statistics Canada projects that the immigrant population in the Waterloo Region area could grow up to 31.2% of the population by 2036.

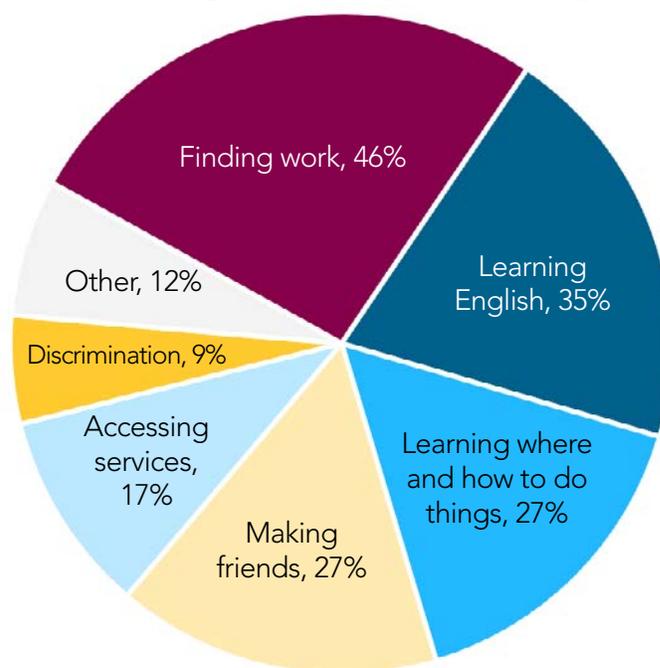
Demographic Overview of Survey Participants

- **201 immigrants, refugees and international students completed the survey.**
 - 76% self-identified as immigrants, 32% were refugees and 2% were international students..
- **Approximately half arrived in the previous five years and the rest were more established.**
 - 24% of participants had been in Canada for one year or less, 28% between one and five years, and 48% had been in Canada six or more years.
- **Of the participants whose first language is not English, most spoke English well.**
 - 66% of participants said they speak English “Well” or “Very well” and 11% said they speak English “Poorly” or “Not at all”.
- **Almost 50 mother tongues (first language learned) were represented.**
 - The most frequently reported mother tongues by participants were Arabic (17%), Spanish (15%), English (11%) and Turkish (7%).
- **Participants were highly educated.**
 - 80% of participants had completed post-secondary education. A majority had a Bachelor’s (34%) or Master’s (21%) level degree and 7% had a Ph.D.
- **Half of the participants reported being employed.**
 - 70% of participants who had arrived in the last five years and had a Bachelor’s degree or lower were unemployed.
- **The median household income of survey participants was between \$35,000 and \$45,000.**
 - According to the latest Canadian census, the median income of all households in Waterloo Region in 2015 was \$77,530.

Settlement Supports and Experiences

- 91% of participants reported they had **used at least one of the 8 local service types** (settlement, interpretation, ESL, health and mental health, housing, employment, education, other) and 68% used 3 or more services
 - 63% of participants used health and mental health services and more than half reported using ESL programs (58%) and settlement services (54%).
- Participants were most satisfied with settlement and ESL services with 71% and 66% rating those services as at least "Very Good".
- Participants were least satisfied with their experience using health/mental health and employment services with 25% and 30% rating them as "Fair" or "Poor".
- The main **factors negatively impacting service experience** were wait times (43%), language barriers (28%) and uncoordinated services (27%).

Main Challenges for Immigrants & Refugees



Community Integration

- 59% of participants reported a "Strong" or "Very strong" **sense of belonging to Waterloo Region**.
- 57% of participants reported **participation in a group/association**.
 - Of those, 36% had been in a leadership position.
- Over 59% reported feeling **isolated**; 18% felt "Quite a bit" or "A great deal" isolated.
- 27% of participants reported experiences of **discrimination**. This most often occurred at work or when seeking work.

Social connections are an important influence on the experiences of immigrants and refugees. When asked what had helped them most in the past year, 44% of participants said "Having family", followed by "Making friends" (35%), and community programs and services (28%).

Notes

Immigration Partnership of Waterloo Region (IP) is a collective of community partners that collaboratively develop and implement strategies for the successful settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in the region.

This is a summary of a more detailed report. To access the full report go to: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/IPsurveys.

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