




IMMIGRANT SURVEY 2023

Background & Methodology



IMMIGRATION
PARTNERSHIP
WATERLOO REGION



The Immigration Partnership¹ conducted the Waterloo Region Immigrant Survey in June 2023. Nearly 1,700 immigrant individuals participated. The survey provides immigrants the opportunity to share their experiences of living, working or studying in Waterloo Region, and is a tool to support organizational and community change. This overview explores the background and methodology of the survey.²

Survey Background

The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership, through the work of its Evaluation Advisory Committee, developed an evaluation strategy and performance measurement framework for 2020-2025.³ The evaluation strategy outlines planned outcomes at a community and partnership level for the Immigration Partnership, and details how progress will be measured. Numerous measurement indicators were not available through existing sources revealing the need for an ongoing way of hearing directly from immigrants⁴ about the things that matter most to them and where change is happening. This bi-annual survey of immigrants fills that gap and centers the voice and experience of immigrants in the Immigration Partnership's collective change effort.

The first Immigrant Survey was conducted in 2017, with 200 respondents. Two years later 1,100 immigrants responded, and then 1,500 in 2021. In 2023 almost 1,700 immigrants participated in the survey.

Survey Planning & Approach

The Immigrant Survey seeks to hear from immigrants on a wide variety of topics that impact their lives and settlement experience, as well as the breadth of contributions they bring to the Waterloo Region community. The original survey tool and questions were developed in 2017 based on performance measurement indicators and community input, and then revised in 2019, 2021 and 2023 based on subsequent survey feedback, updated indicators and emerging needs.

The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership worked with other Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) across Canada to evolve and expand the survey to other communities in 2023, obtain ethics approval

¹ The Immigration Partnership of Waterloo Region (IP) is collaboration of over 100 community service, business, municipal, post-secondary and ethno-cultural organizations and Waterloo Region residents working together to create the conditions for immigrants to succeed and help build a welcoming, dynamic community.

² See the Immigrant Survey webpage (www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey) or contact the Immigration Partnership (ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca) for additional analysis or information.

³ See: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/DataEvaluationFramework

⁴ 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.

through the Community Research Ethics Office and local post secondary institutions, and collaboratively ensure that the survey was rooted in the needs of individual communities and immigrants themselves.

The survey was available online and on paper. The full survey was offered in English⁵ and a shorter version of the survey was translated into 11 other languages.⁶ In 2023, survey languages included:

	# responses
English	1,220
Ukrainian	158
Arabic	71
Serbian	69
Spanish	52
Chinese	34
Turkish	24
Persian (Farsi)	14
Tigrinya	8
French	3
Somali	3
Rohingya (paper)	0

The results are not statistically representative of all groups and subpopulations but multiple promotion methods were used to reach a wide variety of immigrants and ensure the results most accurately reflected the immigrant population. Before the survey was launched, specific targets were pre-determined for the number of responses from 48 different immigrant subpopulations in Waterloo Region covering multiple geographies, racial groups, immigration categories, languages, genders, ages, religious affiliations and other groups. Targets were based on the proportion of immigrants or recent immigrants in the general population so the responses would be as representative as possible of the entire immigrant population in Waterloo Region. Survey responses were examined at least weekly throughout the data collection period with additional survey promotion undertaken as needed to increase survey responses across all subpopulations.⁷

Survey Promotion

Survey participants were recruited using social media, emails and other virtual methods, posters in community settings, in person at multicultural festivals and community events, and through ethnic/community radio promotion. Survey ambassadors were recruited from specific language and cultural groups to do targeted survey promotion and ensure the broadest reach possible. Immigration

⁵ See: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurveyPDF.

⁶ See: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurveyPDFshort. The languages were selected based on the top languages for interpretation and translation in Waterloo Region, available at: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/toplanguages.

⁷ The response targets were considered best estimates and were based on the most recent available data from the 2021 census by Statistics Canada and other data sources. Immigrant demographics may have shifted in the years since the most recently available census data was collected. On the whole, the survey met the majority of the response targets. Only eight categories were more than two percentage points under the targets: economic immigrants, international students, Kitchener and Cambridge residents, Chinese and White racial groups, older adults, and men.

Partnership partner organizations across sectors shared the survey with their clients and networks during client interactions and programs, promotion in agency waiting areas and social media, and other means. Responses were gathered from individuals that accessed immigrant services and those who have not.

Data Collection

The majority of survey responses were gathered between June 1 and June 28, 2023. An additional 120 responses were gathered from international students between March 17 and April 7 before they left for the summer academic term. In total, 1,676 immigrants in Waterloo Region participated in the survey.⁸ The majority filled out the survey online (1,624) while the rest completed the survey on paper (52).

Data Analysis

The findings were analyzed in aggregate and disaggregated forms using descriptive statistics. Qualitative responses were analyzed according to themes emerging from the data. The aggregate findings are presented in the reports as well as any noteworthy or substantial differences illustrated in the disaggregated data. Comparisons to previous Immigrant Surveys in Waterloo Region (2017, 2019 and 2021) are shared where there were notable differences.

In general, differences were considered substantial when there was more than 5 percentage points difference between two or more participant categories.⁹ The sample size is fairly robust for a community the size of Waterloo Region – ranging from an estimated 0.25% of long-term immigrants to 2% of recent immigrants and 1-3% of temporary residents. Care should still be taken when interpreting the data – particularly with any smaller numbers. It should also be noted that some groups or individuals may understand specific words or concepts differently (e.g. belonging, isolation, discrimination or expectations of service delivery) and this could impact the findings.

Given the rich diversity of the immigrant population in Waterloo Region, where possible results have been disaggregated to better understand how experiences differ between various immigrant groups.¹⁰ Disaggregating the data is critical to understanding differences within a group like immigrants as aggregate averages can obscure distinct differences within the group.

Multiple methods were used to determine which specific groups or characteristics to analyze on this deeper level. An index was developed using ten of the survey questions to get a high level overview of all responses and which groups and responses corresponded to increased resilience or vulnerability.¹¹ Recommendations by the Evaluation Advisory Committee and local partners and previous Immigrant Survey findings also informed the selection of categories for data disaggregation.

⁸ Eight hundred and forty one ineligible records were removed, including 685 bot responses primarily from American addresses, 133 records where only the first one or few eligibility questions were completed, 13 from individuals who were born in Canada, and others that were duplicates or otherwise ineligible.

⁹ Because of the smaller sample size for disaggregated groups, a 10% threshold was used for comparisons between disaggregated populations and all survey participants. Findings for groups of less than 5 individuals were not reported for privacy reasons.

¹⁰ Most disaggregation categories were based on demographic questions in both the full and shorter translated versions of the survey, but a few are based on questions only in the full version. There were not many large differences between responses of those that filled out the full and the shorter translated survey, it is important to interpret these findings with caution.

¹¹ For more information about the Resilience-Vulnerability, see: www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/resilience-vulnerability-index.

In total, 42 different groups were analyzed and compared to the aggregate results across all survey questions, including: Recent immigrants, long-term immigrants, recent refugees, long-term refugees, recent government assisted refugees, recent privately sponsored refugees, current refugee claimants, recent family category immigrants, recent economic category immigrants, international students, temporary work permit holders, Ukrainian CUAET permit holders, individuals with lower education levels, low income, unemployed, LGBTQ+ identifying individuals, those living with a disability, with low English, Francophones, racialized, Black, White, Muslim, Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, rural residents, youth, men, women, Somali individuals, those that were isolated, who had poor settlement experiences, were in precarious housing, for whom interpretation was not available, were not planning to stay in Waterloo Region, felt unsafe, felt the community to be unwelcoming, had weak sense of belonging, low life satisfaction, not feeling at home, or experienced discrimination.

How the Results Will 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 recommendations for change 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 can reach their full potential and contribute to creating and sustaining a thriving, prosperous community for everyone.

Survey participant demographics and the findings of the survey are shared at:

www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey.

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



For more information contact:

Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership
ImmigrationPartnership@regionofwaterloo.ca
www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca

To request an alternate format of this document, call 519-575-4400 or TTY: 519-575-4608



Funded by:



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



United Way
Waterloo Region
Communities