




Belonging, Inclusion and Discrimination

2023 Immigrant Survey Results



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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 a community that is welcoming and where people feel that they are included and belong.

This snapshot explores sense of belonging and inclusion for immigrants living in Waterloo Region, using responses from nearly 1,700 participants in the 2023 Immigrant Survey. These participants spanned different immigration streams, lengths of time since they immigrated, ages and other demographic dimensions. This report includes their recommendations for community leaders about how to create a community where all 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 facing our growing community.

Key Insights

- More than half of immigrants (56%) felt that the Waterloo Region was quite welcoming to immigrants - though 1 in 10 felt that it was not welcoming.
- A quarter of respondents (26%) felt isolated and alone. This was down from two years earlier (31%) but had not dropped to pre-pandemic levels (19%).
- A quarter of immigrants (24%) experienced discrimination - most often in work settings and frequently due to race/skin colour, or ethnicity/culture.
- Three-quarters (74%) had a positive experience of settling and integrating in Waterloo Region.
- Three-quarters (72%) of survey participants felt a strong sense of belonging in Waterloo Region, and it took five years or less for most (74%) to feel at home in this community.

A Welcoming Community

Immigrant Survey participants were asked about how welcoming they felt the Waterloo Region community was toward immigrants. While more than half (56%) felt it was quite welcoming, on the other end of the spectrum, 10% felt it was not welcoming.¹

Waterloo Region Welcoming (0 to 10 scale)	% of respondents	
10 ("Very welcoming")	22%	56% - Quite welcoming
9	13%	
8	21%	
7	14%	34% - Somewhat welcoming
6	8%	
5	11%	
4	3%	10% - Not welcoming
3	3%	
2	2%	
1	3%	
0 ("Not at all welcoming")		

Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

Note that some of the numbers may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

¹ Q10. How welcoming is the Waterloo Region community toward immigrants? Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "not at all welcoming" and 10 means "very welcoming" (n=1,616). Quite welcoming was defined as between 8 and 10, somewhat welcoming included a rating of 5 to 7, and not welcoming included a rating of 0 to 4.



Two years earlier in the 2021 Immigrant Survey, the responses were slightly different with only 50% feeling that the community was quite welcoming to immigrants, 40% somewhat welcoming, and 11% felt it was not welcoming.

In 2023, the groups that were more likely to feel that Waterloo Region was not welcoming were: respondents that had low wellbeing, didn't feel at home in Waterloo Region, weren't planning to stay in this community, had a weak sense of belonging, had a poor settlement experience, experienced discrimination in the past 12 months, or were relatively isolated.²

- Immigrant Survey participants

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

"Show concern and encourage the locals to welcome immigrants."

"Should make available groups to welcome new immigrants and also to make the transition easy and fair for immigrants."

"It is super intimidating coming to a new country where you may not speak the language so having warm and inviting programs is necessary."

"Make us aware that you welcome us or have some welcoming event every year."

"It is important to have people who speak the same language and/or share the same culture as the people coming to Waterloo Region. In some community centers they make an effort to help others in their language, but the immigrant feels better when they find a person who speaks their language."

² Other groups were also more likely to feel Waterloo Region was not welcoming but had a smaller number of respondents (<25 individuals) and were not included in this list.

Isolation

In 2023, a quarter of immigrants (26%) shared that they felt relatively isolated. This was a decrease from 31% in the 2021 Immigrant Survey.³

Feeling isolated or alone over the last 12 months in Waterloo Region	
Category	% of participants
A great deal	8%
Quite a bit	17%
Somewhat	25%
A little bit	24%
Not at all	25%

Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

A recent report by Statistics Canada explored 2019/2020 data from the Canadian Health Survey on Seniors⁴ and found that 19% of older Canadians experienced loneliness, with women being more likely to be lonely than men. Among men, immigrants were more likely to experience loneliness than Canadian-born individuals. Among women, the likelihood of loneliness was higher among European immigrants than among those born in Canada. The study also found that immigrants who immigrated as adults (from ages 18 to 44) and long-term immigrants (20 years or more in Canada since immigration) were at higher risk of loneliness than the Canadian-born population. Statistics Canada also found that the likelihood of being lonely was higher among people with additional barriers to social participation.

- Immigrant Survey participants

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

“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.”

“I feel people are more reserved and stick to just their own friends and family.”

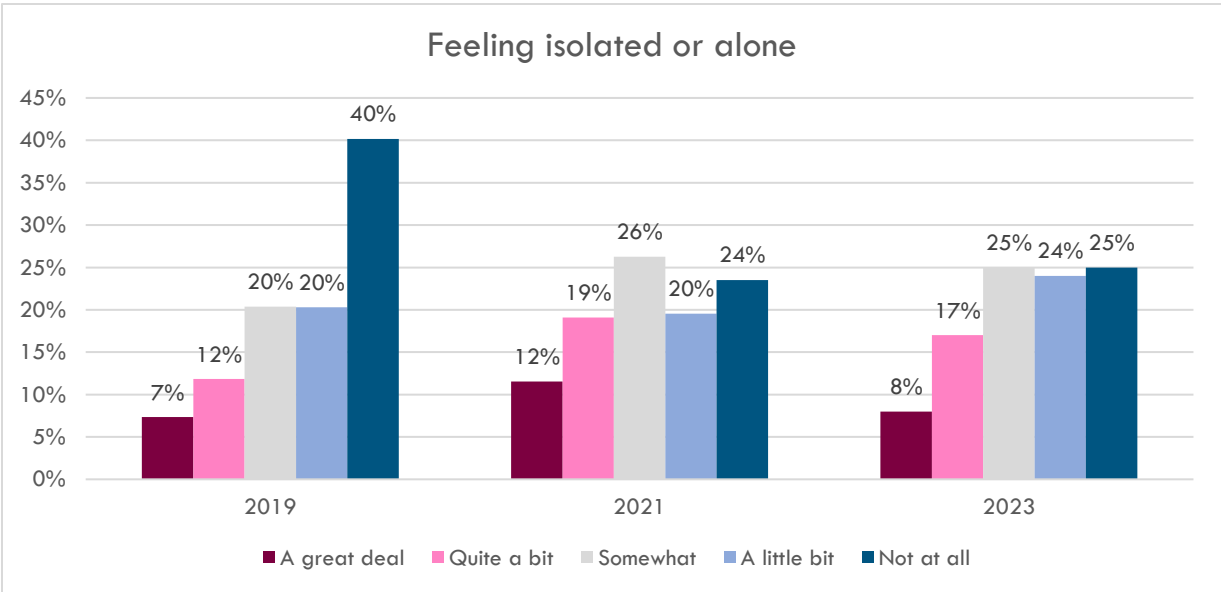
“As a newcomer who moved in the middle of pandemic, I still don't feel integrated as there is no one to talk to.”

³ Q12. How much have you felt isolated or alone over the last 12 months in Waterloo Region? (n=1629)

⁴ Islam, M. K., & Gilmour, H. (2023, July 19). *Immigrant status and loneliness among older Canadians*. Statistics Canada.

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted feelings of isolation for many people. The proportion of Immigrant Survey respondents who felt relatively isolated increased from 2019 to 2021 (19% to 31%). The drop to 26% in 2023 did not reach the baseline from 2019.

Looking at the specific responses to this question, the largest difference was among respondents that didn't feel isolated at all. This dropped from 40% before the pandemic, to 24% in 2021 and 25% in 2023 – meaning more people are feeling isolated to some degree.



Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey, 2021 Immigrant Survey, 2019 Immigration Matters Survey

Discrimination

Experiences of discrimination negatively affect a person’s feeling of welcome and inclusion. Survey participants were asked about whether they had experienced discrimination in the past year⁵.

A quarter of respondents (24%) experienced discrimination in the past year. This is largely unchanged from previous years (24% in 2021, and 22% in 2019).



Among those who had experienced discrimination, the most frequently cited reasons were race/skin colour (48%), ethnicity/culture (36%) accent (31%) or language ability (27%).⁶

Reasons for discrimination	
Category	% of participants
Race or skin color	48%
Ethnicity or culture	36%
Accent	31%
Language ability	27%
Immigration status	26%
Religion	21%
Physical appearance (other than skin color)	15%
Income	9%
Gender	7%
Age	7%
Sexual orientation	3%
Disability (either a disability that people can see or one that is invisible)	2%
Other (please specify)	7%

Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

⁵ Q14. In the last 12 months, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in Waterloo Region? (Discrimination is when others treat you unfairly because of your race, skin colour, religion, ethnicity or other reasons.) (n=1626)

⁶ Q15. If you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others, what were the reasons? (Choose all that apply) (n=456)

Discrimination most frequently occurred in situations connected to **work** – either when applying for a job (31%) or at work (31%).⁷

Reasons for discrimination	
Category	% of participants
When applying for a job or a promotion	31%
At my job – for example from supervisors, co-workers or clients	31%
In a store, bank or restaurant	30%
When looking for housing	22%
When interacting with my neighbors	19%
At school or university	16%
At community/public events	16%
While using public areas, such as parks or sidewalks	16%
While using buses, trains or taxis	16%
When seeing a doctor or in other health care settings	10%
When accessing other community services	10%
When interacting with the police	7%
While using libraries, community/recreational centers, arenas	6%
When crossing the border into Canada	5%
When interacting with the courts	3%

Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

⁷ Q16. If you did experience discrimination, in what types of situations did you experienced that? (Choose all that apply.) (n=463)



- Immigrant Survey participants

Experiences of discrimination occurred across all survey groups and demographics. However, those that experienced discrimination were⁸ more likely to speak English well, and somewhat more likely to be from racialized group, female, or living with a disability. They were somewhat more likely to be living on a lower income and more likely to be in housing that wasn't affordable/suitable.

The data suggests an association between discrimination experiences and lower rating of community services, overall settlement experience, life satisfaction, sense of welcoming and belonging, feeling at home or wanting to stay in Waterloo Region. Those who experienced discrimination were also more likely to feel isolated and unsafe.

Other local research studies had similar findings:⁹

- The 2022 Waterloo Region Wellbeing Survey¹⁰ found that a quarter (26%) of immigrants who had immigrated in the last 10 years reported experiencing discrimination on a regular basis on account of their ethnicity, culture, race, or skin colour. This compared to 12% of immigrants who had lived in Waterloo Region for more than 10 years and 6% of Canadian-born individuals.
- The 2023 Youth Impact Survey in Waterloo Region found that immigrant youth (age 9-18) were similarly likely to Canadian-born youth to experience at least one type of discrimination in the past year (46% vs 48%) – though for immigrant youth this was more likely to be due to race/colour (27% vs 14%), ethnicity/culture (26% vs 14%), religion (19% vs 10%) or language (14% vs 6%). Comparing

"[Community leaders] 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"

"Intervene in discrimination."

"Challenge unwelcoming remarks about immigrants in the community and at work."

"Acknowledge white supremacy, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-black and anti-brown racism is rampant in this region and hire immigrants of colour to advise, plan, combat this issue in all areas of community services."

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

"Provide safe environment free from racism and discrimination."

"Treat everyone equally regardless of their skin color."

⁸ Note that this analysis doesn't presume that discrimination caused these differences. Some differences may be impacted by sampling variation. "Somewhat more likely" is considered to be between 5 and <10 percentage points difference, "more likely" is between 10 and <20 percentage points difference, and "much more likely" is at least 20 percentage points difference.

⁹ Because of different methodologies, survey questions, definitions, timeframes and contexts, direct comparisons of raw percentages to the 2023 Waterloo Region Immigrant Survey cannot reliably be made. The results of these studies are shared to provide additional context.

¹⁰ Folkema, A., Vandebelt, D., & Vythilingam, M. (2024, June). Waterloo Region Immigration Profile. Region of Waterloo Public Health and Paramedic Services, and Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership. Experience of discrimination of individuals in this community due to ethnicity, culture, race or skin colour were assessed on a 7-point scale from 1=never to 7=all the time. Responses equal to or greater than 5 were classified as experiencing discrimination on a regular basis.

Canadian-born and immigrant youth beyond discrimination, immigrant youth were similarly likely to have a strong sense of belonging, feel lonely or isolated, and be satisfied with their life in general.

- The Coalition of Muslim Women of Kitchener-Waterloo’s annual Snapshot of Hate in Waterloo Region¹¹ noted that global and other events impact incidents at a local level, and highlighted increasing cases of reported hate/discrimination.
- Other Local Immigration Partnerships across Canada conducted the 2023 Immigrant Survey in their communities,¹² with experiences of discrimination ranging from 16% to 43%.
- A 2022 research study in several Southern Ontario communities¹³ explored discrimination experienced by immigrants and visible minorities over the previous three years. In more than half of the communities surveyed, over 60% of immigrants and racialized individuals had experienced discrimination. The study found discrimination was most commonly attributed to racial and ethnocultural factors and most commonly occurred in employment settings and a variety of public settings. As in Waterloo Region, this study found that those who experienced discrimination were more likely have a lower sense of belonging and welcoming.
- The 2022 research study was followed by over 100 interviews¹⁴ exploring the barriers faced by racialized newcomers in accessing settlement services in small and mid-sized communities in Southwestern Ontario. The study found experiences of racism and discrimination while accessing settlement services – both at immigrant-serving and mainstream organizations - due to racial or ethnic background, English language proficiency, immigration class, and sexual orientation. These experiences impacted if and how newcomers engaged with these services.
- Statistics Canada’s General Social Survey surveyed Canadians aged 15 and older¹⁵ and found that just over a third (36%) of respondents experienced some form of discrimination in the previous five years. Race or skin colour was the most common reason, followed by physical appearance and ethnicity/culture. It also found that self-reporting of discrimination has stayed relatively stable since 2021, and that discrimination disproportionately affects racialized and other groups. Furthermore, reports of discrimination were more common among the Canadian-born racialized

¹¹ Gordon, J., Mazhar, F., Shafiq, S., & Farooque, M. (2024). Snapshot of hate in Waterloo Region: A review of 2023. Coalition of Muslim Women of Kitchener Waterloo (CMW).


¹² Because of different methodologies, it is not possible to make direct comparisons between results of the Immigrant Survey in Waterloo Region and other communities.

¹³ Vaswani, M., Sutter, A., Lapshina, N., & Esses, V. M. (2023). Discrimination experienced by immigrants, racialized individuals, and Indigenous peoples in small- and mid-sized communities in southwestern Ontario. *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 60(1). <https://doi.org/10.1111/cars.12413>.

¹⁴ Agoston Villalba, Z., Eloulabi, R., Nielsen, E. G., Esses, V. M., Van Klink, A., Ofori, O. D., Pienah, C. K. A., Qiu, N., Thakur, S., Budhathoki, R. T., Waseem, H., & Yakushko, V. (2024, July). Discrimination and other challenges experienced by racialized newcomers when accessing settlement services in Southwestern Ontario. Western Network for Economic and Social Trends (NEST) and Pathways to Prosperity Partnership (P2P).

<http://p2pcanada.ca/library/discrimination-and-other-challenges-experienced-by-racialized-newcomers-when-accessing-settlement-services-in-southwestern-ontario>

¹⁵ Statistics Canada. (2024, May 16). Half of racialized people have experienced discrimination or unfair treatment in the past five years. The Daily. Retrieved from <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/daily>



population (57%) than among racialized people who recently immigrated to Canada (48%) or who immigrated more than 10 years ago (49%). Discrimination most commonly happened in the work environment. This research found that people who experienced discrimination reported lower measures of quality of life (lower mental health, life satisfaction, sense of belonging, etc.).

- Statistics Canada explored experiences of Canadians at work,¹⁶ finding that 12% of those who worked in the previous 12 months had experienced unfair treatment, racism or discrimination at work. Race/skin colour was the most common reason. Immigrants (15%) and racialized groups (12%-27%) were more likely to have experienced discrimination at work than non-immigrants (11%) and non-racialized individuals (10%).

¹⁶ Statistics Canada. (2023, October 10). Participation in Canadian society through sport and work. The Daily. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/231010/dq231010b-eng.htm>

Settlement experience

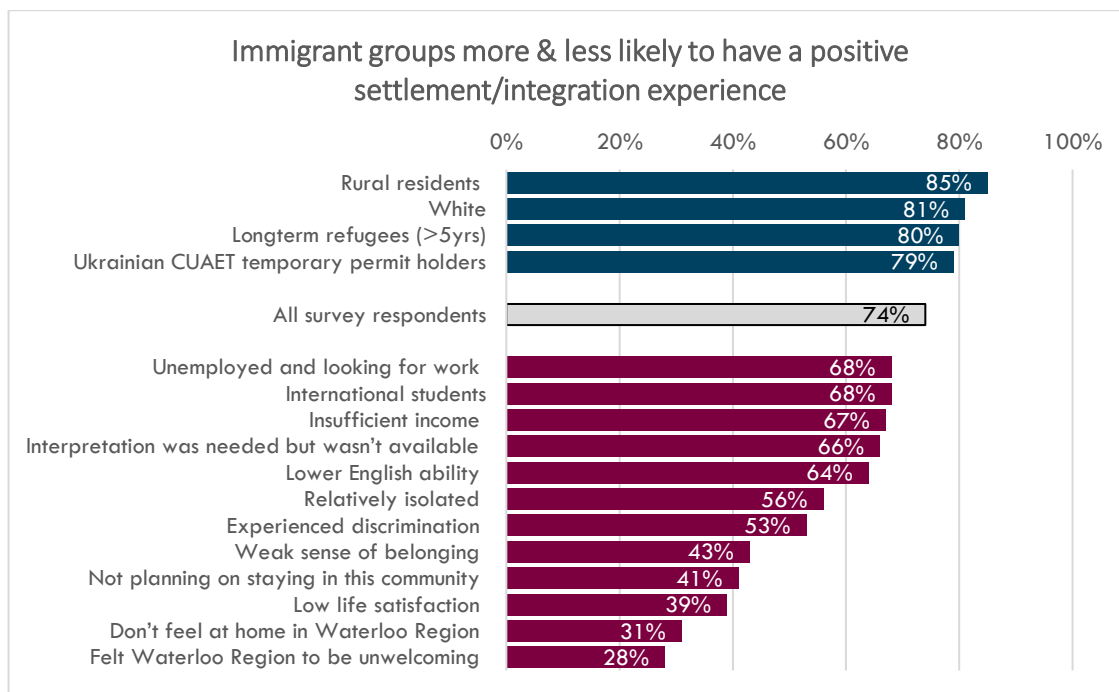
Survey participants were asked about their overall experience of moving to and integrating in Waterloo Region. Approximately three quarters (74%) had a positive settlement and integration experience. On the other hand, 22% described their experience as “Neutral” and 5% had a negative overall experience.¹⁷

- Immigrant Survey participants

“This isn't what i thought it would be like here.”

“I was left on my own and I managed the best I knew how. It is a very bad experience and a bad feeling when you come to something unknown.”

Some groups were less likely to have had a positive settlement and integration experience, including those who: found Waterloo Region to be unwelcoming (28%), do not feel at home in Waterloo Region (31%), have 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%), needed interpretation but it wasn't provided (66%), had insufficient income (67%), were unemployed and looking for work (68%), and international students (68%).¹⁸



Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

¹⁷ 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”.

¹⁸ 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.

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

- Immigrant Survey participants

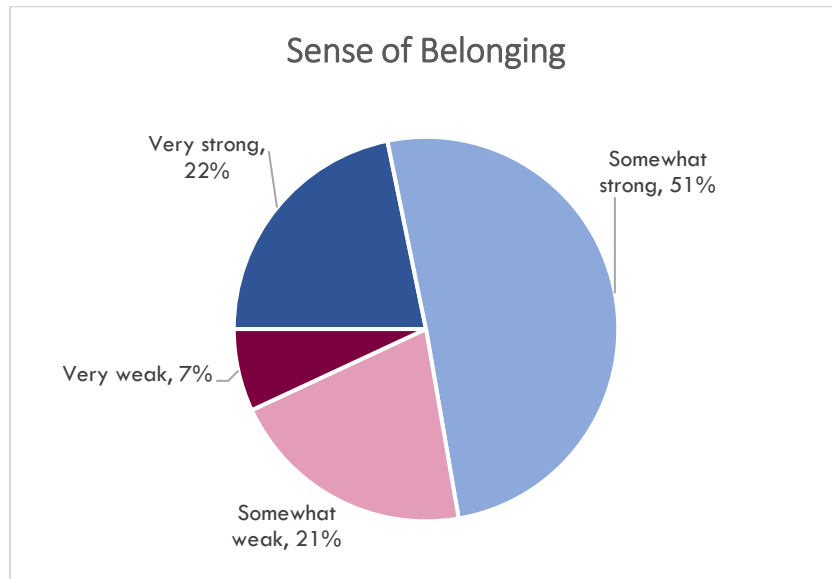
“Successful integration is a collective effort that involves the participation of the entire community.”



In 2021, a similar proportion had a positive settlement and integration experience (76% in 2021 compared to 74% in 2023).

Sense of Belonging

Nearly three-quarters of survey participants (72%) had a strong sense of belonging in Waterloo Region in 2023, similar to 2021 (71%).¹⁹



Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey
Note that some of the numbers may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

The 2022 Waterloo Region Community Wellbeing Survey found that 68% of immigrants who arrived in the past 10 years reported a high sense of belonging, compared to 75% of those who arrived more than 10 years ago and 70% of Canadian-born individuals.²⁰

- Immigrant Survey participants

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

“Make sure the newcomers don’t feel alone”

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

¹⁹ Q11. How do you describe your sense of belonging in Waterloo Region? (Sense of belonging is when you feel accepted and valued by others around you. It is when you feel like Waterloo Region is truly your home.) (n=1503, with an additional 128 that provided an answer other than “Don’t know/no opinion”)

²⁰ Folkema, A., Vandebelt, D., & Vythilingam, M. (2024, June). Waterloo Region Immigration Profile. Region of Waterloo Public Health and Paramedic Services, and Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership. Data was from the 2022 Community Index of Wellbeing, Wellbeing Waterloo Region Community Survey. Weighted data was used for this analysis.

Feeling at Home

All the above experiences may impact whether and to what extent residents feel at home in this community. When asked how long it took for them to feel at home in this community 20% did not feel at home in the community at the time of the survey (half of these respondents had arrived in the previous year and half had lived here longer). Among respondents, 12% felt at home when they arrived, and an additional 30% felt at home within the first year.²¹

Feeling at Home	
Category	% of participants
When I arrived	12%
Less than a year	30%
1-2 years	18%
3-5 years	14%
6-10 years	4%
More than 10 years	1%
I still don't feel at home in this community	20%

Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

Note that some of the numbers may not add up to 100% because of rounding.

Overall, three-quarters of survey participants (74%) shared that it took 5 years or less for them to feel at home in this community.²²

Survey participants who did not feel at home in Waterloo Region were:²³

- slightly more likely to be male, have more education, or be employed
- less likely to be racialized
- less likely to be a member of a faith community
- more likely have insufficient income and much more likely to be in housing that wasn't affordable/suitable

- Immigrant Survey participants

"Host diverse cultural events to help them feel at home and be involved."


"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."

"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

²¹ Q19. How long did it take you to feel at home in this community? (n=1094)

²² Among respondents that had been living in Waterloo Region for at least a year and who eventually felt at home here, the median time it took them to feel at home was about 1 year: 52% said it was when they arrived or within the first year, and 48% said it took a year or more.

²³ When comparing survey participants that didn't feel at home in Waterloo Region with all respondents, "somewhat more likely" is considered to be between 5 and <10 percentage points difference, "more likely" is between 10 and <20 percentage points difference, and "much more likely" is at least 20 percentage points difference.



They were less likely to have used English learning services, settlement services and slightly less likely to have used employment services – and generally less likely to rate various community services positively.

Survey data suggests a possible association between not feeling at home in Waterloo Region and: lower life satisfaction, finding Waterloo Region is not welcoming, weak sense of belonging, isolation, lack of safety, experiences of discrimination.

Survey participants who did not feel at home in Waterloo Region were much less likely to plan to stay permanently.

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 Region²⁴ were related to cost of living, housing, employment, and health. After those, making friends was the next most common challenge - highlighted by 25% of survey participants.

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) ²⁵	4%

Source: 2023 Immigrant Survey

²⁴ Q20. What are the biggest challenges you or your family have experienced in the last year in Waterloo Region? (Choose all that apply.) (n=1527)

²⁵ "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.



- Immigrant Survey participants

Making friends was less frequently cited as a challenge in 2023 than in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic (25% vs 34%).

Discrimination and racism were a significant challenge for nearly 1 in 10 participants (9%). Similarly, 1 in 10 participants (10%) suggested that actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants would be most helpful to help immigrants reach their full potential in Waterloo Region.

“Create more activities for newcomers that want to integrate to the community.”

“In general, there should be more cultural events and maintenance of places where people can meet.”

“There should be avenues for people to meet and get to know one another, so they are comfortable enough to provide job or opportunity sponsorships.”

“Create groups from different immigrants to make friends.”

“Encourage holiday activities such as Christmas or Thanksgiving to help new immigrants understand Canadian culture and make friends.”

“Make them feel welcome and appreciated. Events for them to get together with locals.”

Changes Over Time

Comparing the experiences of survey participants who arrived in Canada more recently to those who lived here longer, a number of differences can be seen. Those who had lived here for at least 5 years were more likely to have increased life satisfaction, see Waterloo Region as welcoming, have a stronger sense of belonging, and less likely to feel relatively isolated. They were also more likely to report feeling unsafe and discrimination experiences.²⁶

What Should Leaders Do?

Participants shared specific ideas for the most important things community leaders should do to improve the welcoming, integration and wellbeing of immigrants in Waterloo Region.²⁷ This open-ended question was answered by over 500 individuals who referenced many urgent priorities and specific ideas. There were 187 comments about strengthening belonging, inclusion and engagement, including actions such as:

- 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

- Immigrant Survey participants

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

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

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

“Community leaders should actively promote and cultivate an inclusive environment that values diversity. This can be done through public statements, policies, and initiatives that emphasize the importance of embracing different cultures, traditions, and backgrounds.”

²⁶ This analysis compared survey participants that arrived in Canada within the past year, 1-5 years previously, 6-10 years previously, and more than 10 years ago. Sense of belonging showed an increase at least up to 6+ years in Canada. There was little difference in sharing that they had a positive settling experience.

²⁷ 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).

Data Sources, Limitations and Cautions

Much of 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, most 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.

Some 2023 data is compared to the findings from the 2021 Immigrant Survey which heard from a similar mix of 1,507 immigrants. Because this is not a longitudinal survey, comparisons between survey cycles should be interpreted with caution.

Survey responses were disaggregated along many demographic lines and analyzed to uncover the varying experiences of different groups of immigrants. This snapshot highlights a few of the areas where specific groups differed more dramatically from the average (by at least 5 percentage points). Because of small numbers for some subgroups, the findings should also 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.

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) if you have questions about the data or suggestions for how it could be used to impact change across our community.

The Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership is a 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.



For more information contact:

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