



# IMMIGRANT SURVEY 2023

## SUMMARY



IMMIGRATION  
PARTNERSHIP  
WATERLOO REGION

# Immigrant Survey 2023

## Summary

This report provides the aggregate findings of the 2023 Waterloo Region Immigrant Survey. The Immigrant Survey is a biannual, multilingual survey is for immigrants who live, work and/or study in Waterloo Region. It covers a range of topics impacting the ability of immigrants to reach their full potential and contribute to a thriving, prosperous community. It was conducted in June 2023<sup>1</sup> with 1,676 participants. The majority of participants filled out the survey online. It was conducted in long and short versions in English and 10 other languages: 71% of participants (1,187) filled out the full version and 29% (489) filled out the shorter, translated version.<sup>2</sup>

The overall sample size is fairly robust for a community the size of Waterloo Region. Care should still be taken when interpreting the data – particularly with any smaller numbers. Findings for groups of less than 5 individuals have been suppressed for privacy reasons. The data presented here reflects the experiences of all survey participants and is not disaggregated in any way. This report will be followed with a series of topic and population-specific reports throughout 2024 which will include disaggregated results.<sup>3</sup>

**Additional information and reports released in the future can be found at:**

[www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/immigrantsurvey](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/immigrantsurvey)

**The summary report of the 2021 Immigrant Survey can be found at:**

[www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey2021report](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurvey2021report).

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<sup>1</sup> The majority of responses were received in June 2023. Another 120 international student responses were gathered in March/April 2023.

<sup>2</sup> The full-length survey can be found at [www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurveyPDF](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurveyPDF) and the shorter, translated version at [www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurveyPDFshort](http://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ImmigrantSurveyPDFshort)

<sup>3</sup> Snapshots will include Housing; Public Perceptions of Immigration; Immigrant Top Issues; Service Experiences, Employment/Income/Basic Needs; Community Participation & Contributions; Health & Mental Health; Youth; Belonging/Inclusion/Discrimination; Immigrant Attraction & Retention; and International Students.

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## Section A: Basic Information

### Immigration category

Q1. Which of the following best describes you? (n=1676)<sup>4</sup>

Category	# of participants	% of participants
I immigrated to Canada as an economic-category immigrant (e.g. Federal Skilled Worker Program, Provincial Nominee Program, Canadian Experience Class, and dependants of economic applicants)	379	23%
I immigrated to Canada as a family-category immigrant (sponsored spouse, sponsored parent or grandparent, or other immigrant sponsored by family)	270	16%
I immigrated to Canada as a government assisted refugee	123	7%
I immigrated to Canada as a privately sponsored refugee	69	4%
I immigrated to Canada as a refugee claimant and am now a permanent resident or citizen	119	7%
I am currently in Canada as a refugee claimant	44	3%
I am currently in Canada as an international student	341	20%
I am currently in Canada on a temporary work visa	84	5%
I am currently in Canada on a CUAET (Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel) visa	190	11%
Unknown or I prefer not to answer	34	2%
Other (please specify)	15	3%

### Length of time living in Canada

Q2. How long have you been living in Canada? (n=1668)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Less than 1 year	523	31%
1 to 5 years	589	35%
6 to 10 years	201	12%
10+ years	355	21%

**67%**

Two thirds - 67% have been in Canada for 5 years or less (this number may differ from the sum of above percentages because of rounding.)

<sup>4</sup> "n" for each question is the total number of individuals that responded to the question.

## Years in the community

Q18. How many years have you been in this community? (n=998, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Less than a year	309	31%
1-2 years	216	22%
3-5 years	218	22%
6-10 years	86	9%
More than 10 years	167	17%

\*\*Note: 2 additional responses were unclear – “recent” and “na”

**75%**

Had been in the community 5 years or less

## Municipality of residence

Q3. Where do you live? (n=1173, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Cambridge	146	12%
Kitchener	595	51%
Waterloo	354	30%
Township of North Dumfries	6	1%
Township of Wellesley	6	1%
Township of Wilmot	12	1%
Township of Woolwich	11	1%
Other listed locations	43	4%

**3%**

Rural (This number may differ from the sum of above percentages because of rounding)

## First language

Q4. What is your first language? (n=1178 long survey plus n=456 translated surveys equals total n=1634)

Top languages included:

Category	# of participants	% of participants
English	228	14%
Ukrainian **	254	16%
Arabic **	149	9%
Spanish **	143	9%
Serbian **	75	5%
Chinese languages (Mandarin, Cantonese and Chinese not otherwise specified) **	66	4%
Farsi/Persian **	65	4%
Turkish **	42	3%
Tigrinya **	40	2%
French **	27	2%
Somali **	26	2%
Rohingya **	17	1%
Malayalam	57	5%
Hindi	47	4%
Gujarati	46	4%
Urdu	43	4%
Portuguese	42	4%
Punjabi	40	3%
Russian	33	3%
Tamil	16	1%
Korean	15	1%
Amharic	13	1%
Yoruba	13	1%
Dari	11	1%

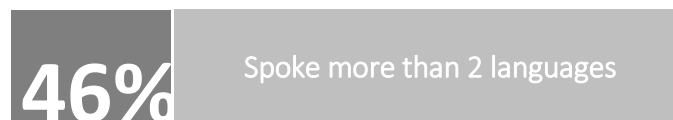
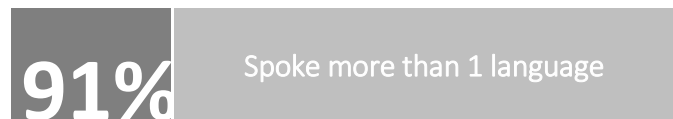
\*\* Includes both respondents that shared a specific first language and the languages in which the translated surveys were filled in

Participants reflected 75 different first languages

## Number of languages spoken

Q5. How many languages can you speak well? (n=1180, long survey only)

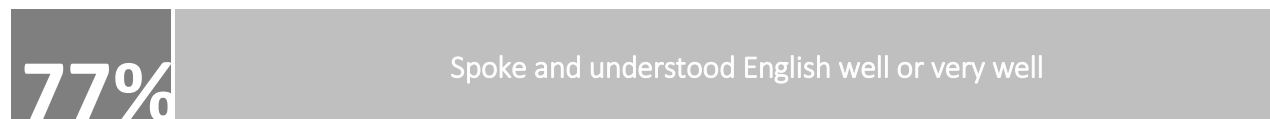
Category	# of participants	% of participants
1	110	9%
2	525	44%
3	380	32%
4	129	11%
5 or more	36	3%



## English ability

Q6. How well can you speak and understand English? (n=1671)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Very well	920	55%
Well	367	22%
Fairly well	239	14%
Poorly	127	8%
Not at all	18	1%



## Section B: Education, Employment and Income

### Education

Q29. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (n=1040, but without “Prefer not to answer” n=1040, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
No formal education	14	1%
Elementary school	12	1%
High school or equivalent	106	10%
Trade/technical school	15	1%
College diploma	116	11%
Bachelor's degree	419	40%
Master's degree	317	30%
PhD	41	4%

**75%**

Had a Bachelor's degree or above (Note that this number may differ from the sum of above percentages because of rounding)

### Employment

Q34. What is your employment status? (n=1045, but without “Prefer not to answer” n=1028, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
I am working full time	449	44%
I am working part time or casual	199	19%
I am unemployed but looking for work	266	26%
I am self-employed	35	3%
I am not in the paid workforce (retired, caring for children, not seeking work, etc.)	77	7%
Other (please specify)	**	**%

\*\*Note some data was suppressed due to small numbers to protect privacy

## Housing affordability/suitability

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**Q35. Does your housing suit your needs and is it affordable?** *(Are there enough bedrooms and is it in good repair, AND can you afford it with your other living expenses)* (n=522)



**58% were in housing that was suitable and affordable** (i.e. There are enough bedrooms and is it in good repair, AND they can afford it with their other living expenses).

- The **42%** of participants that were **NOT** in housing that was suitable and affordable gave various reasons and situations but most were about affordability
  - 63% of participants that didn't have suitable/affordable housing) mentioned affordability
  - 14% suitability issues
  - 19% both affordability AND suitability issues

## Income sufficiency

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**Q36. Is your household income enough for the needs of you and your family?** (n=1034, but without "Prefer not to answer" n=972, long survey only)

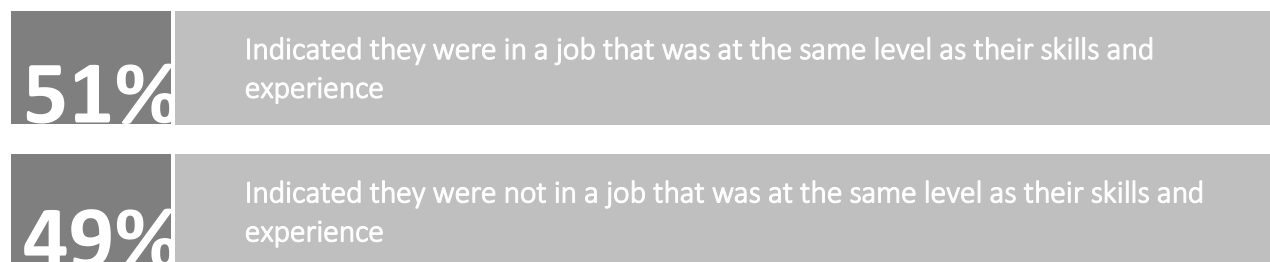
Category	# of participants	% of participants
Our income is <b>enough</b> for our needs	324	33%
Our income is <b>not quite enough</b> for our needs	388	40%
Our income is <b>definitely not enough</b> for our needs	260	27%

## Job commensurate with experience

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**Q37. Are you in a job that is at the same level as your skills and experience?** (n=1012)

Among those that responded and were employed, **51%** indicated they were in a job that was at the same level as their skills and experience and **49%** were not.



## Section C: Use of Community Services

### Service ratings

Q7. Please rate your experience with the following community services in the last 12 months in Waterloo Region. (“n” varies by the individual services listed)

Category	Positive (excellent, very good or good)	Negative (acceptable or poor)
Education	87%	14%
Police	81%	20%
Recreation services	79%	21%
Settlement/immigrant services	78%	23%
English language learning	74%	25%
Local municipal government/bylaw	73%	27%
Transportation services	72%	29%
Legal/courts	71%	30%
Childcare	68%	32%
Language interpretation/translation	68%	32%
Mental health	68%	33%
Small business/entrepreneurial supports	68%	33%
Employment and/or skills training	67%	33%
Health	62%	37%
French language learning	60%	40%
Housing	47%	53%

### Specific ratings included:

Category	Excellent (%)	Very good (%)	Good (%)	Acceptable (%)	Poor (%)	# of participants that accessed each service
Education	24%	35%	28%	10%	4%	1295
Employment and/or skills training	14%	22%	31%	18%	15%	1175
English language learning	21%	25%	28%	15%	10%	1083
French language learning	10%	19%	31%	19%	21%	650
Health	13%	20%	29%	21%	16%	1317
Housing	9%	13%	25%	23%	30%	1044
Language interpretation/translation	15%	20%	33%	20%	12%	964

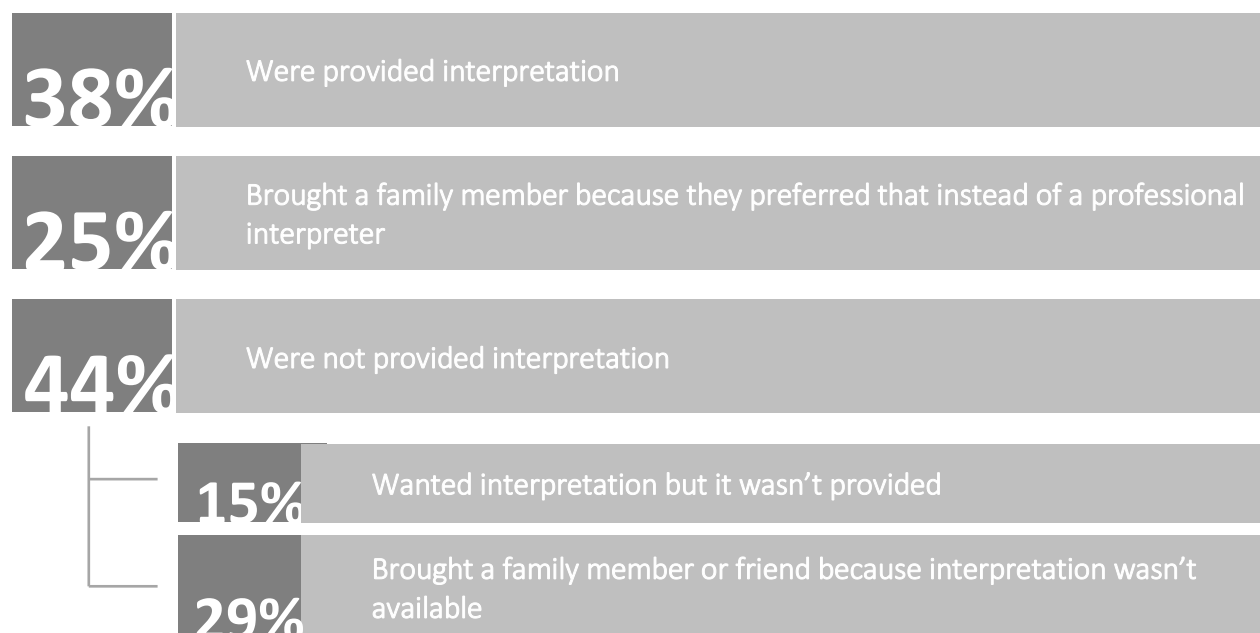
Legal/courts	15%	21%	35%	19%	11%	602
Local municipal government/bylaw	14%	23%	36%	18%	9%	872
Mental health	15%	21%	32%	19%	14%	830
Police	23%	28%	30%	12%	8%	868
Settlement/immigrant services	21%	25%	32%	14%	9%	998
Small business/entrepreneurial supports	13%	19%	36%	20%	13%	602
Transportation services	16%	26%	30%	19%	10%	1389
Recreation services	17%	28%	34%	14%	7%	1233
Childcare	18%	22%	28%	16%	16%	716

## Interpretation

Q8. If you or a family member went to a hospital, health clinic or talked to a health professional in the past year, did the clinic provide in-person or phone/video interpretation? (n=1630)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Language interpretation was provided for me	142	9%
I wanted language interpretation but did not receive it	55	3%
I brought a family member or friend because interpretation was not available	107	7%
I brought a family member or friend because I prefer this instead of a professional interpreter	91	6%
I did not need language interpretation	927	57%
I did not go to a hospital, clinic or health professional	351	22%
Other	34	2%

Among the **23%** (369 individuals) that went to a health setting **AND** needed interpretation in the past year:



## Information preferences

Q38. Where do you prefer to get information about community and settlement services? (“n” varies by the individual options listed, long survey only)

Category	Yes (%)	Maybe (%)	No (%)	# of participants that responded
Emails	70%	16%	14%	934
Community organization websites	62%	22%	17%	890
Immigration Waterloo Region Weekly email	51%	25%	24%	865
www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca website	51%	25%	24%	849
Information sessions	39%	33%	28%	843
Settlement worker or other community organization staff	39%	30%	31%	844
Local media (newspaper, radio)	38%	29%	33%	847
Facebook	45%	21%	34%	904
Instagram	46%	16%	37%	868
Messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.)	40%	21%	39%	834
LinkedIn	37%	23%	40%	852
Twitter	24%	19%	56%	842
Other	10%	15%	76%	382

## Section D: Belonging

### Overall wellbeing

**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)



Category	# of participants	% of participants
Very Satisfied - 10	165	10%
9	162	10%
8	352	22%
7	300	18%
6	188	12%
5	224	14%
4	74	5%
3	72	4%
2	37	2%
1	42	3%
Very Dissatisfied - 0	8	<1%

**42%**

Were quite satisfied with their life (rated 8 to 10)

**44%**

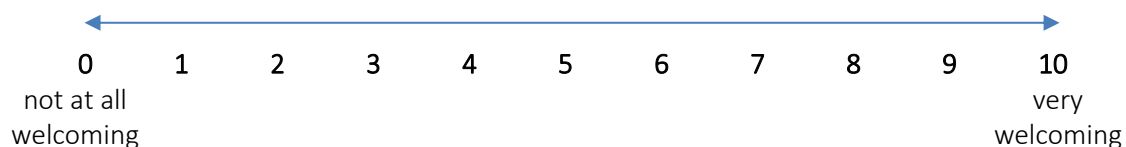
Were somewhat satisfied with their life (rated 5 to 7)

**14%**

Were dissatisfied with their life (rated 0 to 4)

## Welcoming

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=1616)



Category	# of participants	% of participants
10	358	22%
9	216	13%
8	336	21%
7	221	14%
6	137	8%
5	185	11%
4	51	3%
3	41	3%
2	26	2%
0 & 1	45	3%

\*\*Responses 0 & 1 were combined due to small numbers to protect privacy<sup>5</sup>



## Sense of belonging

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”)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Very strong	326	22%
Somewhat strong	760	51%
Somewhat weak	314	21%
Very weak	103	7%

<sup>5</sup> When a small number (<5) is suppressed, categories may be grouped or the “Other” or next smallest category may also be suppressed to protect privacy.

**72%**

Had a strong sense of belonging (Very or Somewhat)

**28%**

Had a weak sense of belonging (number may differ from the sum of above percentages because of rounding.)

**10%**

Felt that Waterloo Region community was not welcoming (rated 0 to 4)

## Isolation

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

Category	# of participants	% of participants
A great deal	137	8%
Quite a bit	282	17%
Somewhat	408	25%
A little bit	397	24%
Not at all	405	25%

**26%**

Were quite isolated (A great deal or Quite a bit)

**49%**

Were not very isolated (A little bit or Not at all) (Numbers may differ from the sum of above percentages because of rounding.)

**10%**

Felt that Waterloo Region community was not welcoming (rated 0 to 4)

## Safety

Q13. How safe do you feel in Waterloo Region? (n=1144, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Extremely	201	18%
Very	551	48%
Moderately	328	29%
Slightly	48	4%
Not at all	16	1%

**66%**

Felt quite safe (Extremely or Very safe)

**34%**

Did not feel safe (numbers may differ from the sum of above percentages because of rounding.)

## Discrimination

**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)

**24%**

Experienced discrimination

## Reasons for discrimination

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

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Race or skin color	218	48%
Ethnicity or culture	163	36%
Accent	141	31%
Language ability	121	27%
Immigration status	118	26%
Religion	97	21%
Physical appearance (other than skin color)	69	15%
Income	43	9%
Gender	33	7%
Age	34	7%
Sexual orientation	14	3%
Disability (either a disability that people can see or one that is invisible)	11	2%
Other (please specify)	33	7%

## Where discrimination happened

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

Category	# of participants	% of participants
At my job – for example from supervisors, co-workers or clients	143	31%
When applying for a job or a promotion	142	31%
In a store, bank or restaurant	140	30%
When looking for housing	103	22%
When interacting with my neighbours	87	19%
At community/public events	76	16%
At school or university	75	16%
While using public areas, such as parks or sidewalks	75	16%
While using buses, trains or taxis	73	16%
When accessing other community services	46	10%
When seeing a doctor or in other health care settings	45	10%
Other (please specify)	41	9%
When interacting with the police	31	7%
While using libraries, community/recreational centers, arenas	27	6%
When crossing the border into Canada	25	5%
When interacting with the courts	16	3%

## Feeling at home

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

Category	# of participants	% of participants
When I arrived	132	12%
Less than a year	331	30%
1-2 years	197	18%
3-5 years	154	14%
6-10 years	42	4%
More than 10 years	15	1%
I still don't feel at home in this community	223	20%



When asked how long it took for them to feel at home in this community, cumulatively:

- 12% felt at home when they arrived
- 42% said it took less than a year
- 32% said it took 1-5 years
- 6% said it took more than 6 years
- 20% said they still don't feel at home (53% of these respondents had only arrived in the past year)

The median time it took immigrants to feel at home in this community was about 1 year

## Section E: Belonging

### Why Waterloo Region

Q22. Why did you come to Waterloo Region? (Choose only your top 3) (n=1062, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
I had family or friends that live in Waterloo Region	352	33%
Post-secondary institutions	337	32%
For a job	255	24%
Waterloo Region was more affordable than other communities	177	17%
I didn't chose Waterloo Region - the community was chosen for me	95	9%
A healthy local economy	75	7%
Cultural, faith or language groups in this community	62	6%
Community services and supports in this community	32	3%
Other (please specify):	72	7%

### Settlement experience

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)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Excellent	282	18%
Good	882	56%
Neutral	344	22%
Not very good	73	5%



## Challenges

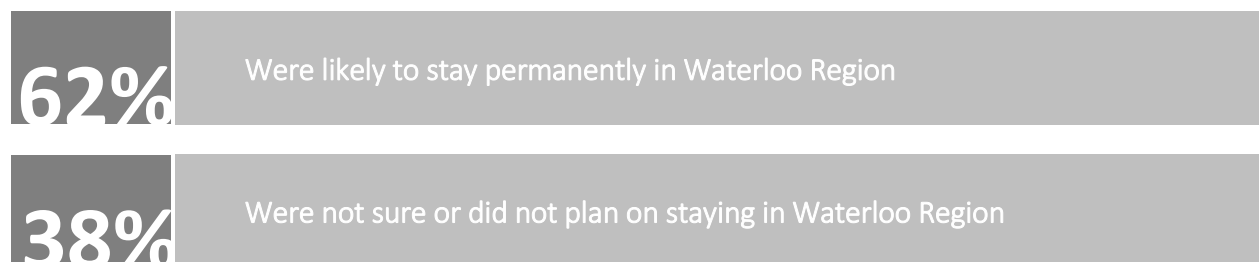
Q20. What are the biggest challenges you or your family have experienced in the last year in Waterloo Region? (Choose all that apply.) (n=1527)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Cost of living or money problems	894	59%
Finding affordable housing	747	49%
Finding work	744	49%
Finding health care	568	37%
Making friends	382	25%
Transportation	263	17%
Learning where and how to do things	225	15%
Finding childcare	194	13%
Learning English	179	12%
Finding relevant programming in local community centers, arts and culture spaces, libraries, etc.	169	11%
Making sure your children are safe and happy at school and in the community	171	11%
Discrimination/racism	130	9%
Receiving public or social services (e.g. settlement services, government services, etc.)	142	9%
Finding mental health care	127	8%
Getting information in a language you understand	110	7%
Starting a new business	114	7%
Other (please specify)	55	4%

## Likelihood of staying

Q23. How likely are you to stay permanently in Waterloo Region? (n=1544, but without “Not applicable” n=1522, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
I definitely plan on staying permanently	393	26%
I might stay permanently	553	36%
I’m not sure	483	32%
I don’t plan on staying	93	6%



## Section F: Community Contributions

**Q24. What are some of the ways you help create a thriving and prosperous community for everyone?**  
(Choose all that apply) (n=1030, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
I help my neighbours when they need it	572	56%
I contribute to improving the natural environment (recycling, picking up garbage, planting trees, etc.)	410	40%
I continue to build my skills and strengthen the ways I can contribute to this community (learning English, further education, building professional skills, etc.)	397	39%
I contribute with my skills and experience to the local economy through my job	388	38%
I volunteer with community organizations, groups or faith communities	353	34%
I speak up for fairness and treat people with kindness in my community	337	33%
I donate to local charities	318	31%
I provide unpaid help for family members (children, grandparents, etc.)	308	30%
I help newcomers to Canada make their home in our community	310	30%
I vote in local/municipal, provincial or national elections in Canada	191	19%
I volunteer with youth sports (coaching, driving youth, etc.)	127	12%
I tutor or help youth learn in this community	88	9%
I am on a board of directors or other committee	76	7%
I am a business owner and my business contributes to our community's economy	39	4%
Other	32	3%







## Section G: Calls to action for Community Leaders





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

Category	# of participants	% of participants
More affordable housing	732	68%
Better programs for immigrants to find work	461	43%
More opportunities to help improve English skills	249	23%
Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants	228	21%
One place to get all settlement, immigration and other services	191	18%
A central place for both employers to find immigrant workers and for workers to find employment	192	18%
Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants	112	10%
Actions to improve the social connections of immigrants	112	10%
More effort by community services to better serve immigrants	85	8%
Availability of interpretation and translation	77	7%
English learning opportunities in workplaces	64	6%
More immigrant programming in local community centers, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.	55	5%
More funding for...	55	5%
Greater voice or involvement in community leadership and planning	48	4%
Service agencies working together more	44	4%
Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants	33	3%
Computer access and training	22	2%
Other	41	4%

**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)

Respondents shared many specific suggestions for change and improvement that can be categorized as follows:

-  248 regarding information about & experiences with community services
-  209 regarding employment
-  187 regarding belonging, inclusion & community connections
-  144 regarding housing
-  89 regarding cost of living, income & basic needs
-  82 regarding health & wellbeing

-  71 regarding language learning, interpretation & translation
-  33 regarding immigration processes
-  28 regarding education
-  95 other suggestions

The details will be shared in upcoming data snapshot reports.

## Section H: Demographics

### Age

Q27. What is your age? (n=1053, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
16-19 years	31	3%
20-24	121	11%
25-34	330	31%
35-44	341	32%
45-54	151	14%
55-64	52	5%
65 or older	27	3%

### Race

Q28. Which would best describe you? (Choose all that apply.) (n=1042, but without “Prefer not to answer” n=1015, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
South Asian (e.g. East Indian Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	284	28%
Black (e.g. Black-Caribbean, Black-African, Black-North American)	192	19%
White	195	19%
Latin American	114	11%
Arab	69	7%
West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghan)	51	5%
Chinese	33	3%
Filipino	14	1%
Korean	13	1%
Southeast Asian (e.g. Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai)	12	1%
Japanese	5	<1%
Other (please specify):	76	7%

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% as participants were able to select more than one option.



76% were racialized. Racialized refers to groups, other than Indigenous peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour. In Statistics Canada’s [2021 Census](#), it is referred to as “visible minority”.

## Gender

Q30. How would you describe your gender identity? (n=1049, but without “Prefer not to answer” n=1034, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Man	416	40%
Non-binary	**	**%
Woman	609	59%
Prefer to self-describe	**	**%

\*\*Note some data was suppressed due to small numbers to protect privacy

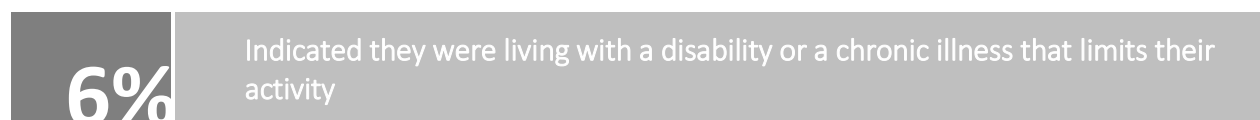
## LGBTQ+

Q31. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community? (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) (n=1041, but without “Prefer not to answer” n=1000, long survey only)



## Disability

Q32. Are you living with a disability (physical or mental) or a chronic illness that limits your activity? (n=1048, but without “Prefer not to answer” n=1012, long survey only)



## Faith

Q33. If you are a member of a faith community, please share which one: (n=1044, but without “Prefer not to answer” n=999, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Christian	358	36%
I am not a member of a faith community	235	24%
Muslim	214	21%
Hindu	127	13%
Sikh	32	3%
Buddhist	7	1%
Jewish	**	**%
Other (please specify)	**	**%

\*\*Note some data was suppressed due to small numbers to protect privacy

# Section I: Information

## Heard about this survey

Q39. How did you find out about this survey? (n=1022, long survey only)

Category	# of participants	% of participants
Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership	261	26%
A community organization	254	25%
A friend or personal connection	192	19%
A university or college institution	165	16%
Newspaper/media	85	8%
At work	65	6%
Poster	15	1%
Other (please specify):	143	14%