



LIP – LANARK & RENFREW IMMIGRANT AND NEWCOMER RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT

2024

Eastern Ontario



Local Immigration Partnership
Partenariat local pour l'immigration
LANARK & RENFREW



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Executive summary

This report highlights the findings and recommendations derived from the LIP – Lanark & Renfrew Immigrant and Newcomer Research Project. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the experiences faced by immigrants and newcomers in Lanark and Renfrew counties, focusing on the challenges encountered during their settlement and integration into these communities. While immigrants and newcomers bring valuable skills, perspectives, and contributions, they often face significant barriers, including limited access to suitable employment, housing challenges, transportation difficulties, and instances of discrimination. The findings from the Eastern Ontario Immigrant & Newcomer Survey—Lanark & Renfrew Counties, along with subsequent focus groups, form the basis for actionable recommendations aimed at improving support for these populations.

Key Findings

Although many immigrants and newcomers report positive initial experiences marked by warmth and support upon arrival, they continue to face persistent challenges that hinder their full integration. Key findings include:

Employment Barriers

Despite possessing relevant skills, many participants struggle to translate their experience into appropriate job opportunities due to a lack of Canadian work experience, discrepancies in professional expectations, or challenges in having foreign credentials recognized.

Cultural Sensitivity and Discrimination

Participants reported experiencing various forms of discrimination, including microaggressions, biased assumptions about their backgrounds, and challenges related to their names or accents. These barriers not only affect their social integration but also their mental well-being.

Rural/small Community Living

While these communities may be smaller and more rural, they offer a unique, peaceful lifestyle that many families with children find appealing. Smaller towns often foster a strong sense of community, providing more opportunities to build meaningful relationships and enjoy a close-knit, supportive environment.

Housing and Affordability

Affordable housing remains a major obstacle for newcomers, significantly impeding their ability to settle and establish a stable life. This challenge is compounded by the broader issue of housing affordability, which also impacts many long-term residents in the region.

Sense of Belonging

While some participants felt a strong sense of belonging through community engagement and volunteer work, others faced isolation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. A sense of belonging improves over time with increased social connections and independence, which are often facilitated by employment and access to personal transportation.

Community Support

Active involvement in community activities and volunteer opportunities plays a crucial role in enhancing newcomers' sense of belonging and easing their integration into local life.

Recommendations

To enhance the settlement and integration of immigrants and newcomers in Lanark and Renfrew counties, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

Formalized Settlement Services

Establish a designated settlement and support center to provide newcomers with comprehensive resources and guidance during their transition into the community.

Language and Integration Support

Offer tailored language training and integration workshops to help newcomers navigate the practicalities of daily life in Lanark and Renfrew counties.

Community Networking

Create a platform or database that allows newcomers to connect with each other, helping to establish social networks that support integration and well-being.

Employer Engagement

Encourage employers to recognize and value the transferable skills of newcomers, as well as to support efforts to bridge gaps between international qualifications and Canadian professional standards.

Mentorship Programs

Develop mentorship networks that connect newcomers with local professionals and community leaders. This will facilitate career guidance and provide newcomers with valuable insights into the local community. Expanding initiatives like the Learning and Connections Circle Mentorship Program (through LIP – Lanark & Renfrew) would be a significant step forward.

Cultural Sensitivity Education

Increase the frequency of cultural sensitivity training programs for local residents and public servants. These programs will help reduce discrimination and foster mutual respect and understanding between newcomers and the broader community.

Public Awareness Campaigns

Launch campaigns that educate the public on the value of diversity, challenge stereotypes, and address misinformation that can contribute to discrimination.

Next Steps

By implementing or expanding on the recommendations outlined in this report, Lanark and Renfrew counties can foster a more inclusive and welcoming environment for newcomers. This will not only benefit immigrant populations but also contribute to the growth and enrichment of the broader community. It is essential that community leaders, organizations, and residents prioritize these initiatives to ensure newcomers are able to integrate successfully, thrive in their new home, and contribute to the local economy.



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Introduction

Purpose of the study

This project aims to evaluate the effectiveness of services and information provided to immigrants in the Eastern Ontario region by implementing the Eastern Ontario Immigrant Attraction and Retention Strategy. The survey developed for this project evaluates the inclusive nature, relevance and quality of the surrounding environment as well as the future retention prospects of immigrants in the rural communities of the Eastern Ontario region.

By improving the inclusivity and quality of the surrounding environment, the retention prospects for immigrants in Eastern Ontario rural communities will be enhanced.



Background on LIP – Lanark & Renfrew and its role

Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are multi-sectoral planning tables that bring a cross-section of stakeholders together to identify ways to support settlement and integration of immigrants into local communities. LIPs are underpinned by the understanding that:

01. Newcomers play an important role in the Canadian economy and society;
02. In the near future, some industries and regions will depend on immigration to fulfill their labour needs;
03. Municipalities and community groups are best positioned to improve settlement and integration outcomes for newcomers; and
04. The provision of basic settlement services is not sufficient to ensure success – consideration of newcomer needs must be incorporated into all aspects of community planning.

In Lanark and Renfrew Counties, the work of the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) is administered by Algonquin College's Pembroke Campus. To enable this work to happen, LIP – Lanark & Renfrew staff regularly conduct research to identify challenges that are preventing newcomers from fully participating in the economic, social, cultural and recreational life of the community.

The LIP team also identifies new opportunities to help newcomers settle in rural areas. A key principle of LIP – Lanark & Renfrew's work is developing relationships and linkages between like-minded organizations to encourage collaboration that builds on the strengths of multiple partners. Welcoming communities are created by helping municipalities understand the benefits of newcomer attraction. Additionally, the LIP team assists with planning and execution of activities that support immigrants settling in their communities.

Methology

Based on similar surveys facilitated by the Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)^[1] and other Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs)^[2], this study surveyed local immigrants in our region in Fall 2024.

The mixed-method study employed surveys and focus groups: the survey was conducted over one month and respondents who were interested in participating in a focus group were recruited to attend one-hour sessions to further elicit their perspectives. An ethics review of the study was conducted and approved by [Algonquin College's Research Ethics Board](#).

Survey timing and participant recruitment

The LIP – Lanark & Renfrew Immigrant Survey was open from November 1 to November 30, 2024. Existing LIP networks were leveraged to engage with the immigrant and newcomer populations in Lanark and Renfrew (Eastern Ontario), as well as other supporting regional organizations. The LIP – Lanark & Renfrew Research Officer and Project Assistant coordinated efforts to connect with additional potential participants.

Participants were recruited through various channels including paid social media promotion, partner media outlets like the Pembroke Observer, and community partners who work with newcomer populations.

Data collection

The survey questions were drawn from a question database curated by the [National LIP Secretariat \(NLS\) Research Group](#) (which includes Waterloo Region LIP). The questions were developed based on key measurement indicators and feedback on previous immigrant surveys. In collaboration with other Local Immigration Partnerships across Canada conducting similar surveys, the questions were modified to address emerging challenges, findings and needs.

Quantitative data was collected through a voluntary survey developed using SurveyMonkey and shared with newcomers and immigrants across the region, with an incentive offered to encourage participation. The survey questions were aimed at identifying newcomers' feelings and thoughts during their transition to a new environment. Qualitative data was collected through interviews with newcomers residing in the region. Interview sessions were conducted via Zoom. Participants' data were stored on secure servers and could only be accessed by researchers on this project.

Participants were pre-informed that the sessions would be recorded and that they could turn off their cameras if they wanted. Interview sessions were transcribed solely by the researchers through notes and the recording. The notes and recordings were saved on the password-protected Microsoft Teams site and can only be accessed by the research team through their work computers.

[1] For more information, please refer to the [Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership's 2021 Immigrant Survey report](#).

[2] Some other LIPs that have conducted this survey include Hamilton LIP, St. Thomas Elgin LIP, Cape Breton, Niagara LIP, North Vancouver Island, Huron County LIP, Regina LIP, Guelph-Wellington LIP, Chatham-Kent, Grand Prairie LIP (AB), Bow Valley LIP (AB), and Welcoming Communities Coalition (North Vancouver Island, BC).

Data analysis

At the end of the survey collection period, the data was cleaned. A total of 746 responses were deleted because they had been generated by a bot or included inappropriate or unintelligible language, leaving 41 viable responses. Quantitative responses were analyzed using aggregate and proportional analysis while qualitative responses were categorized into themes. The findings presented in this report are the most noteworthy, with substantial differences when considering immigration category, gender, etc. In general, differences were considered substantial when there was more than 5% difference between two or more participant categories.

To understand the differences between subgroups within the survey respondents, the data was disaggregated using subgroups adapted from the NLS Research Group's past surveys^[6]. For the LIP – Lanark & Renfrew survey, only subgroups that had a sufficient number of respondents were chosen and subgroups without respondents could not be analyzed^[7]. Additionally, LIP – Lanark & Renfrew was unable to develop a Resilience-Vulnerability Index based on our own context due to the survey's small sample size. Thus, the Waterloo Regional Local Immigration Partnership's Index was used as a framework.

It is important to note that some survey questions had an 'other' option. In some cases, participants chose the 'other' option but proceeded to note down an available option. Where applicable, we have chosen to merge the responses with the appropriate value in the option list. In other cases, we have included the 'other' option in the table with an explanatory footnote.

Additionally, some quotes from the focus group sessions were edited for clarity, removing repetitive or non-essential words (e.g., "the the" or "you know"). These minor edits were made solely to improve readability.

Limitations of the study

Although several strategies were employed in recruiting participants, the results may not necessarily be representative of all groups and subpopulations in the region. Given the small sample sizes for some subpopulations, the findings should be interpreted with caution^[8]. Additionally, given language and cultural differences, some groups or individuals may understand certain words or concepts differently (e.g. belonging, isolation, discrimination, etc.), and this could impact the findings.



[6] The Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership developed a list of subgroups based on a Resilience-Vulnerability Index and input from their advisory group and local partners. The subgroups were identified as potentially more likely to have vulnerable or challenging experiences. Hence, it is important to understand their unique experiences in our community.

[7] Given the limited sample size, we could not break down our data to a deeper level of granularity. Therefore, we opted to disaggregate the data at a higher level, such as by racialized status instead of specific racial groups.

[8] The low survey response rate is expected as this is the inaugural year, and many individuals are unfamiliar with the research project. This is consistent with reported first-year response rates from other LIPs, which also experienced low participation rates in their first year followed by significant growth in subsequent years.

Demographics and Profile of Lanark and Renfrew counties

Situated in Eastern Ontario and bordered by the National Capital Region, Renfrew and Lanark counties encompass a combined area of 10,679km². The region is sparsely populated with considerable distances between communities.

Population Growth

Between 2016 and 2021, the population of Renfrew County rose from 102,394 to 106,365, a 3.9% increase while Lanark County's population grew by 10.3%. By comparison, the population of Ontario increased by 5.8% over the same period (Table 1). The Town of Petawawa, which is the largest municipality in the region has a population of 18,000 while the other municipalities have a population ranging between 1,000 to 8,000 residents.

Table 1. Population Change

Census Division	2016	2021	Population Change
Renfrew County	102,394	106,365	3.90%
Lanark County	68,698	75,760	10.30%
Ontario	13,448,494	14,223,942	5.80%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 Census of Population

There are varying population change patterns by municipality as can be seen in Table 2 below. In the period of 2016 to 2021, the population change ranged from as high as 18.01% in Beckwith to as low as -4.75% in Madawaska Valley. A total of 4 municipalities experienced a population decline between 2016 and 2021.

Table 2. Population Change Patterns in Renfrew and Lanark counties from 2016 to 2021.

County	Municipality	Population 2016	Population 2021	Percentage Change
Lanark	Perth	5,930	6,469	9.09%
	Smiths Falls	8,780	9,254	5.40%
	Carleton Place	10,644	12,517	17.60%
	Mississippi Mills	13,163	14,740	11.98%
	Beckwith	7,644	9,021	18.01%
	Tay Valley	5,665	5,925	4.59%
	Drummond/North Elmsley	7,773	8,183	5.27%
	Lanark Highlands	5,338	5,737	7.47%
	Montague	3,761	3,914	4.07%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 Census of Population

Table 2. Population Change Patterns in Renfrew and Lanark counties from 2016 to 2021 (continued).

County	Municipality	Population 2016	Population 2021	Percentage Change
Renfrew	Petawawa	17,187	18,160	5.66%
	Pembroke	13,882	14,364	3.47%
	Arnprior	8,795	9,629	9.48%
	Renfrew	8,223	8,190	-0.40%
	Laurentian Hills	2,961	2,885	-2.57%
	Laurentian Valley	9,387	9,450	0.67%
	Whitewater Region	7,009	7,225	3.08%
	Madawaska Valley	4,123	3,927	-4.75%
	Deep River	4,109	4,175	1.61%
	Bonnechere Valley	3,674	3,898	6.10%
	McNab Braeside	7,178	7,591	5.75%
	Killaloe, Hagarty and Richards	2,420	2,410	-0.41%
	Admaston/Bromley	2,935	2,991	1.91%
	Greater Madawaska	2,518	2,864	13.74%
	North Algona Wilberforce	2,915	3,111	6.72%
	Horton	2,887	3,182	10.22%
	Pikwakanagan	440	490	11.36%
	Brudnell, Lyndoch and Raglan	1,503	1,552	3.26%
	Head, Clara and Maria	248	267	7.66%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 Census of Population

Immigrant Population

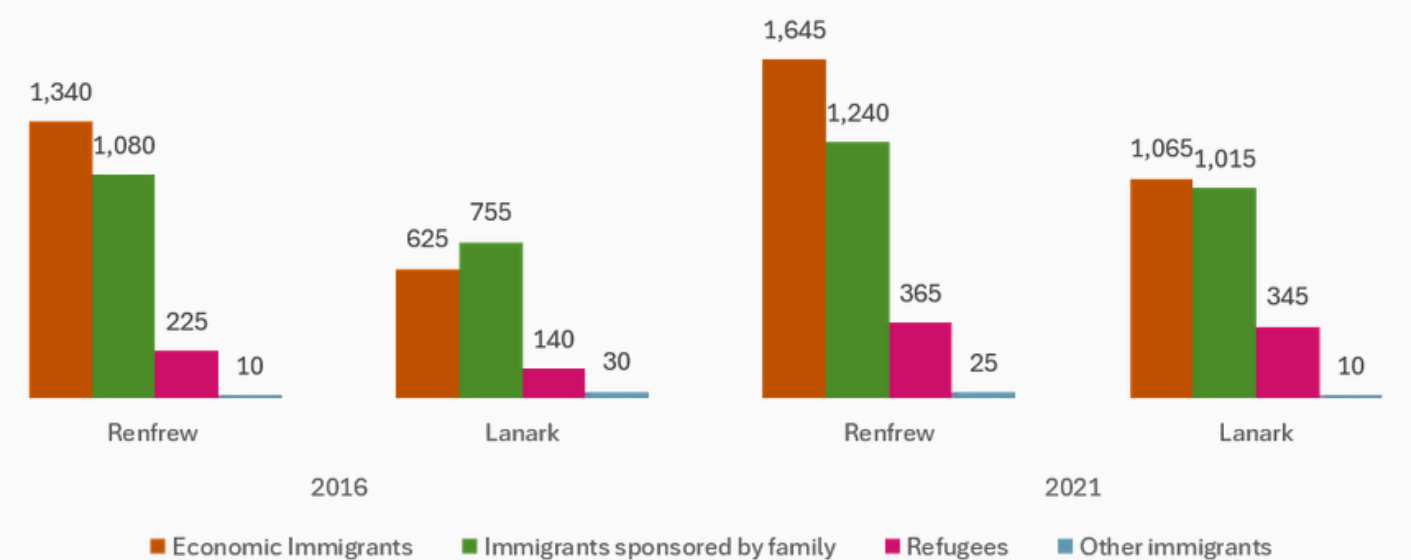
According to the 2021 census, 5.5% (5,690 people) of the population of Renfrew County are immigrants. Between 2016 and 2021, 435 new immigrants arrived in the region, resulting in a 4.12% growth. These recent immigrants make up 7.6% of the immigrant population of the county.

In both Renfrew and Lanark counties, the top three places of birth among immigrants living in Renfrew County in 2021 were the United Kingdom, the United States and Germany. Most recent immigrants in Renfrew County were born in India, the United States and Brazil while in Lanark County, most recent immigrants were born in the United States, the United Kingdom and India.

In Lanark County, 6.7% of the population (4,940 people) are foreign-born, 445 of whom arrived in Canada between 2016 and 2021 (a 19.03% increase from 2016). These recent immigrants make up 9% of the immigrant population in Lanark County.

Economic immigrants accounted for the greatest percentage of immigrants both in 2016 and 2021 (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - Immigrant Population by Admission Category

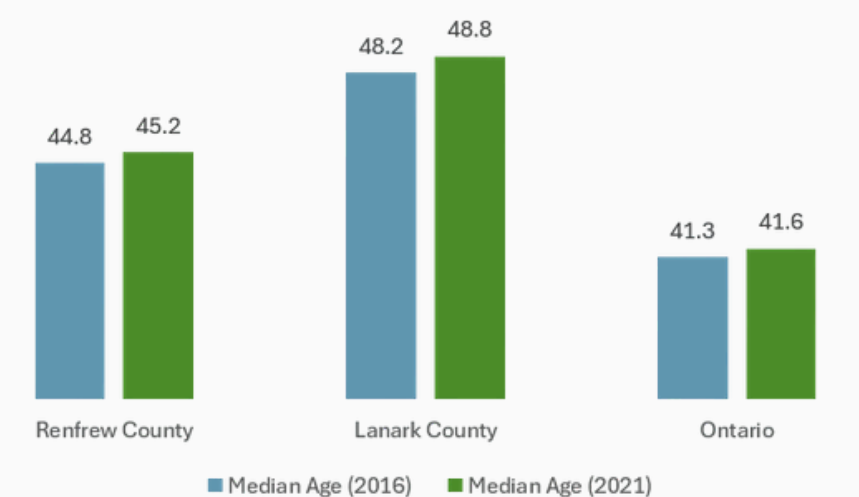


Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 Census of Population

Immigrant Population Age

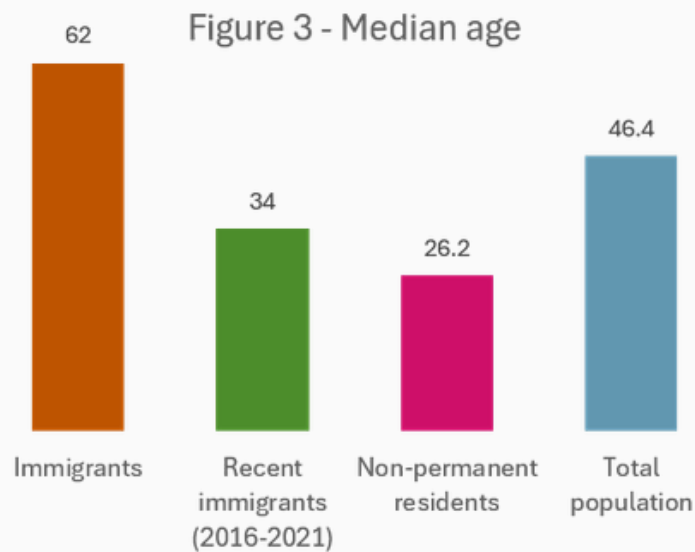
Both Lanark and Renfrew counties have an ageing population. According to the 2021 census, the median age of the population in Renfrew County is 45.2 years while the median in Lanark County is 48.8 years. In comparison, the median age of Ontario is 41.6 years (Figure 2).

Figure 2 - Immigrant Population Age



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 and 2021 Census of Population

On the other hand, the median age of recent immigrants in Lanark and Renfrew counties is 34.0, which is well below the median age of the total population (Figure 3).

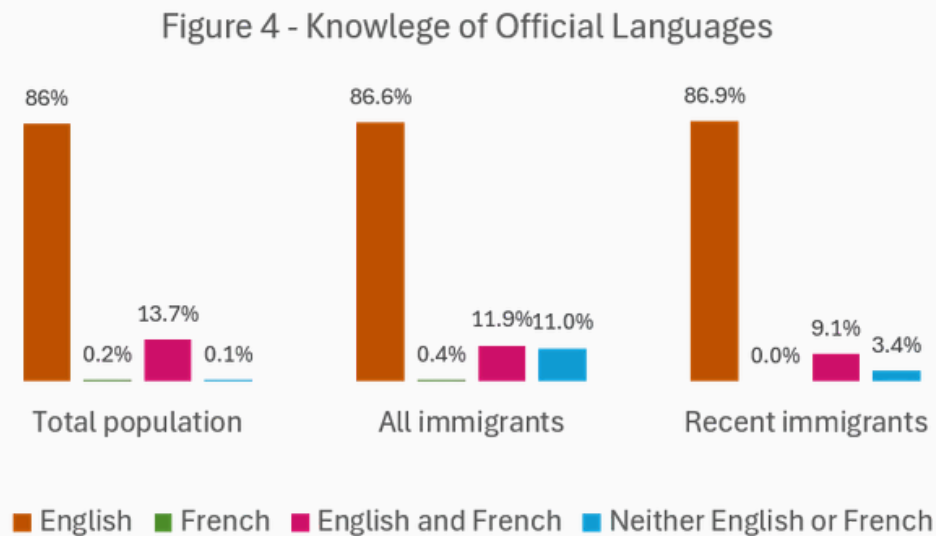


Knowledge of Official Languages

By far the most spoken language, English is spoken by 86% of the total population of Lanark and Renfrew counties. 0.2% of the population speak French, 13.7% speak English and French while 0.1% speak neither English nor French (Figure 4).

Among immigrants and recent immigrants (2016 – 2021), English remains the most spoken language. 86.6% of immigrants speak English, 0.4% speak French, 11.9% speak both French and English, and 1.1% speak neither English and French.

Similarly, 86.9% of recent immigrants speak English only, 0% speak French, 9.1% speak both English and French, and 3.4% speak neither English and French.



Languages Spoken at Home

Amongst immigrants, the majority (80.8%) speak English at home. The second most spoken language at home is English and non-official languages (3.5%), and the third most spoken language is French (1.3%). A significant percentage (59.1%) of recent immigrants speak English most often at home, followed by 9.1% who speak English and non-official languages, and 6.8% who speak Arabic most often at home.



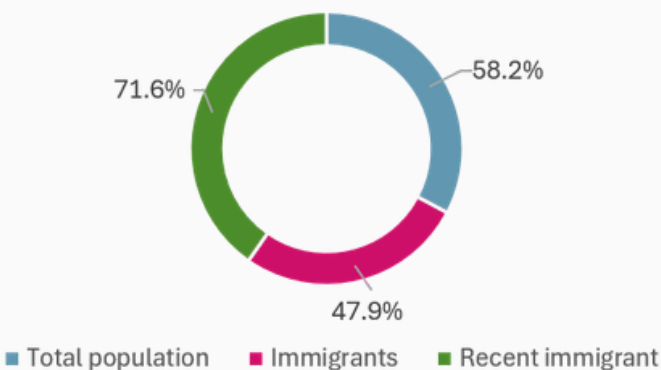
Education

Immigrants in Lanark and Renfrew Counties had higher levels of education than the total population. 65.7% of immigrants had at least a postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree, while 72.9% of recent immigrants are more likely to have completed postsecondary education.

Employment and Income

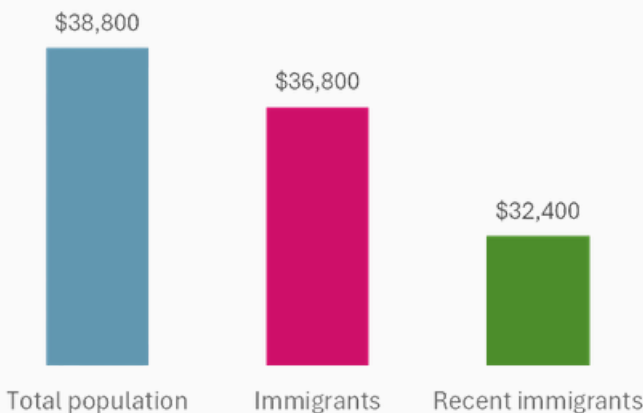
The total population of Lanark and Renfrew counties has a labour force participation rate of 58.2%. In comparison, the labour force participation rate is lower amongst immigrants at 47.9% and higher amongst recent immigrants at 71.6% (Figure 5). Recent immigrants have the lowest unemployment rate at 7.2%, followed by 8.6% of immigrants and 8.8% of the total population.

Figure 5 - Labour force participation



Immigrants in Lanark and Renfrew are likely to have lower incomes than the total population as indicated by the median after-tax income and Community Data Program. The median after-tax income for the total population in 2020 was \$38,800 compared to \$36,800 for immigrants, and \$32,400 for recent immigrants (Figure 6).

Figure 6 - Median after-tax income



According to Community Data Program, which assesses low-income populations using two criteria – low-income cut-off before tax (LICO-BT) and low-income measure after tax (LIM-AT)⁹ – there is a higher prevalence of recent immigrants in low-income families in the counties of Lanark and Renfrew. Specifically, 8% of recent immigrants fall under LICO-BT and 13.1% in LIM-AT while 4% of all immigrants are classified under LICO-BT and 10.2% are in LIM-AT households. In contrast, 3.8% of the total population reside in LICO-BT households while 9.8% are in LIM-AT households.

Survey Findings and Analysis

Demographics

Immigrant Status

The survey had a total of 41 respondents. The survey respondents have a diverse range of immigration statuses such as temporary residents, permanent residents, and Canadian citizens. The greatest category of immigrants arrived in Canada as economic-category immigrants (23.09%) or as family-category immigrants. A significant proportion arrived as temporary residents, with 12.82% on a temporary work visa, followed by 10.26% as international students (Table 3).

Table 3. Immigration Status of Participants

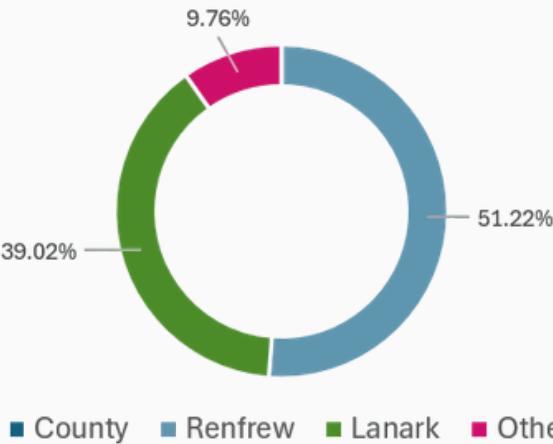
Immigration status	% of Participants n=39
Economic-category immigrant	23.09%
Family-category immigrant	23.09%
Government-assisted refugee	0%
Privately sponsored refugee	2.56%
Refugee claimant, currently Permanent Resident or Citizen	2.56%
Refugee claimant	5.13%
International student visa	10.26%
Temporary work visa	12.82%
Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel Visa	2.56%
Unknown, or prefer not to answer	2.56%
Other (please specify)	15.38%

Place of Residence

The majority of participants were residents of Renfrew County (51.22%) while 39.02% were residing in Lanark County (Figure 7, n=41).

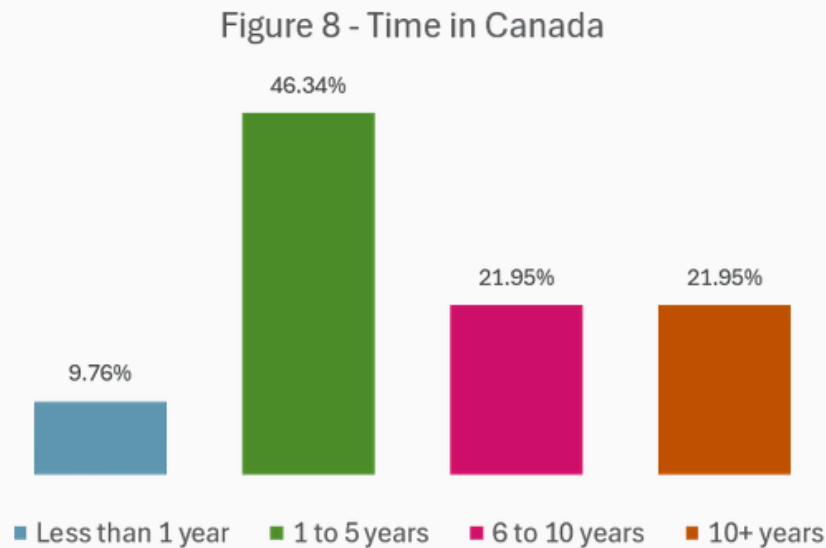
Most respondents are definitely planning to stay permanently in the region (29.27%) or might stay permanently (31.71%), with only 7.32% who do not plan on staying permanently. 29.27% were not sure of their future plans while 2.44% thought the question was not applicable to them.

Figure 7 - Place of Residence



Time in Canada

More than half of the participants had been in Canada for fewer than 5 years (Figure 8, n=41).



Reasons for Choosing Community

The respondents had various reasons for choosing to live and work in the community, including family/friend ties (26.83%), affordability (19.51%), work (24.39%), and a healthy local economy (7.32%). For 12.20% of respondents, the community was chosen for them (Table 4). Other reasons provided include recreation, community activities and personal life circumstances.

Table 4. Reasons for Choosing the Community

Reason	% of Participants n=41
Family or friends live in the town	26.83%
The town I live in is more affordable	19.51%
Post-secondary institutions	12.20%
Employment	24.39%
A healthy local economy	7.32%
Cultural, faith or language groups	2.44%
Community services and supports	7.32%
The community was chosen for me	12.20%
Other	19.51%

Age

Participants' ages varied from 20 to over 65, with the majority between 25 and 44 years old (Table 5).

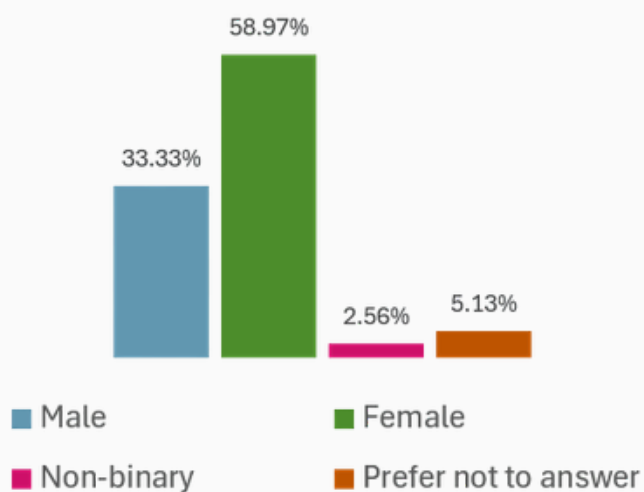
Table 5. Participant Age

Participant age	% of Participants n=40
16-19 years	0%
20-24 years	5%
25-34 years	32.50%
35-44 years	45%
45-54 years	7.50%
55-64 years	2.50%
65+ years	7.50%

Gender

58.97% of participants identified as female while 33.33% identified as male. (Figure 9, n=39)

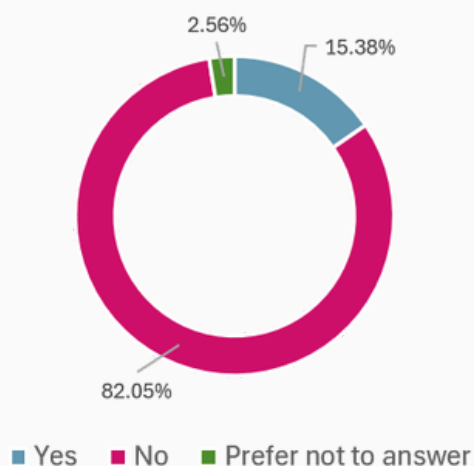
Figure 9 - Gender



LGBTQ+ Identity

15.38% of participants self-identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community; 82.05% answered that they were not part of the community, while 2.56% preferred not to answer (n=39).

Figure 10 - LGBTQ+ Identity



Racialized Status/Ethnicity

The survey respondents represented a vibrant diversity of races. 27.50% of respondents self-described as Latin American, closely followed by 22.50% who identified as White, and 12.50% as Arab. A total of 65% of the participants identified as racialized (not including 'Other' and 'Prefer not to answer') and 5% of participants preferred not to answer (Table 6).

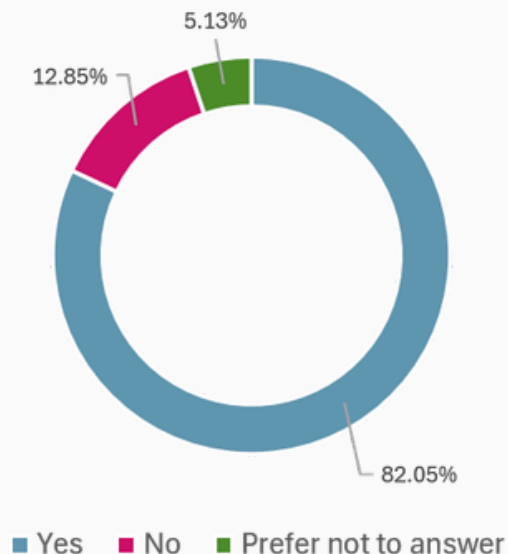
Table 6. Racialized Status

Group	% of Participants n=40
Arab	12.50%
Black	10%
Chinese	10%
Filipino	10%
Japanese	5%
Korean	2.50%
Latin American	27.50%
South Asian	15%
Southeast Asian	2.50%
West Asian	2.50%
White	22.50%
French	2.50%
Mexican	2.50%
Slavic	2.50%
Prefer not to answer	5%

Persons with Disabilities

Most participants self-identified as not living with a disability (82.05%), while 12.82% self-identified as living with a disability, and 5.13% preferred not to answer (Figure 11, n=39).

Figure 11 - Persons living with disability



First Language

The most common first language reported among participants was English (30%), followed by Spanish (20%), Filipino (10%), and 7.5% Arabic (Table 7).

Table 7. First Language of Participants

First Language	% of Participants n=40
English	30%
French	2.5%
Arabic	7.5%
Urdu	2.5%
Gujarati	5%
Filipino	10%
Spanish	20%
Malayalam	2.5%
Ukrainian	5%
Portuguese	2.5%
Cantonese	5%
German	5%
Other	2.5%

Language Proficiency

Most participants (82.9%) could speak 2 or more languages well (Table 8).

Table 8. Number of Languages Spoken

Number of languages	% of Participants n=41
1	17.07%
2	41.46%
3	26.83%
4	12.20%
5+	2.44%

Most participants could either speak English well (14.63%) or very well (70.73%). Only 2.44% rated their English as poor (Table 9). Conversely, a majority could not speak French at all (41.46%), and only 2.44% could speak very well (Table 10).

Table 9. English Language Proficiency

English Language Proficiency	% of Participants n=41
Very well	70.73%
Well	14.63%
Fairly well	12.20%
Poorly	2.44%
Not at all	0%

Table 10. French Language Proficiency

French Language Proficiency	% of Participants n=41
Very well	2.44%
Well	9.76%
Fairly well	14.63%
Poorly	0.3171
Not at all	41.46%

Faith Community

33.33% of respondents did not belong to a faith community. Out of those who belonged to a faith community, 38.46% were Christians, 10.26% were Muslims, and 5.13% were Hindu. 10.26% of respondents preferred not to answer (Table 11).



Table 11. Faith Community

Faith	% of Participants n=39
Buddhist	0%
Christian	38.46%
Hindu	5.13%
Jewish	0%
Muslim	10.26%
Sikh	0%
Not a member of a faith community	33.33%
Prefer not to answer	10.26%
Other	2.56%

Housing, Education, Employment, and Income

Housing: Affordability and Suitability

Most participants perceive their housing situation to be affordable and suitable. 69.23% of participants asserted that their housing was affordable and suitable, while 30.77% felt their accommodation was neither suitable nor affordable, primarily because it was expensive, cramped, in need of repairs or due to the high cost of utilities (n=39).

Education

A majority of participants (69.23%) have a higher degree at the Bachelor's, Master's or PhD level. However, 5.13% do not have a high school diploma or equivalent (Table 12).

Table 12. Educational Attainment

Educational Attainment	% of Participants n=39
No formal education	2.56%
Elementary school	2.56%
High school or	10.26%
Trade/technical school	5.13%
College diploma	7.69%
Bachelor's degree	41.03%
Master's degree	23.08%
PhD	5.13%
Prefer not to answer	2.56%

Employment

Approximately 72% of respondents are in the workforce, with 41.03% working full-time, 28.21% employed part-time, and 2.56% who are self-employed. Another 5.13% reported being unemployed but looking for work, while 12.82% were not in the paid workforce (Table 13).

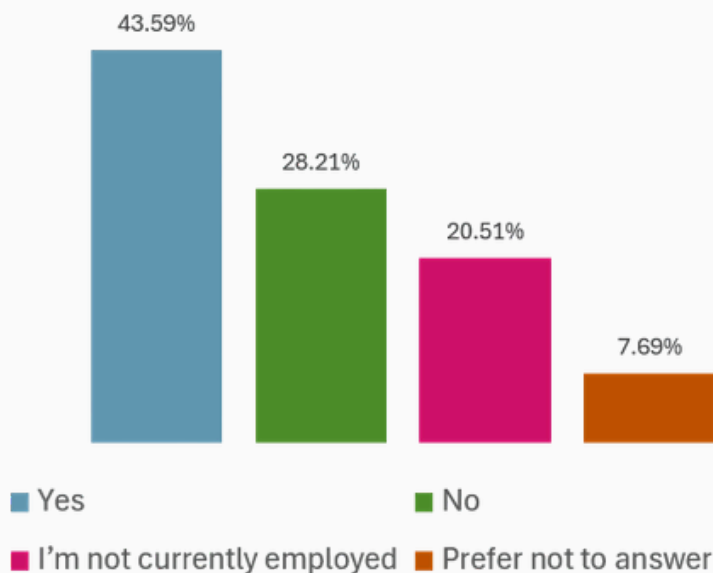
Table 13. Employment Status

Employment Status	% of Participants, n=39
Full-time work	41.03%
Part-time or casual work	28.21%
Unemployed and looking for work	5.13%
Self-employed	2.56%
I am not in the paid workforce	12.82%
Prefer not to answer	2.56%
Other	7.69%

Alignment of Job with Skill Level and Experience

Most participants (43.59%) perceived their jobs to be at the same level as their skills and experience, while 28.21% did not think that their jobs measured up to their skills and experience (Figure 12, n=39).

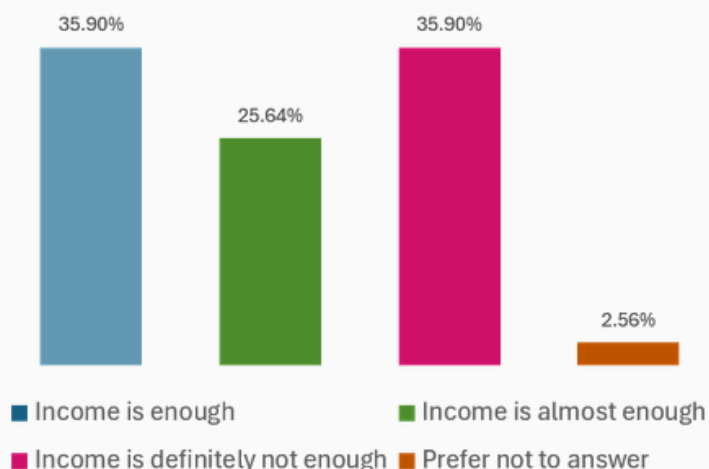
Figure 12 - Suitability of Job to Skill and Experience Level



Income

35.90% of participants asserted that their income was not enough for their needs, 25.64% reported that their income was almost enough for their needs, while 35.90% felt it was enough for their needs (Figure 13, n=39)

Figure 13 - Income sufficiency



Accessibility of Services

Survey respondents were asked which community services they accessed in the last 12 months in the town they live in and to rate their experiences (Table 14, n=41). Some of the services include:

- Health: 67% of respondents rated their experience of accessing healthcare services as at least acceptable, while 7.50% accessed it outside their town.
- Employment and/or skills training: 62.5% reported at least an acceptable experience while 15% reported a poor experience.
- Housing: 51.21% of respondents recorded an at least acceptable experience with housing while 39.02% rated their experience as poor.
- Settlement/immigrant services: 41.46% of participants had an at least acceptable experience, while 17.07% had a poor experience, and 2.44% accessed the service outside their town.

Table 14. Services Accessed and Rating

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Did not access	Unavailable in my town	Accessed outside of town
Education	17.07%	19.51%	24.39%	7.32%	0%	21.95%	4.88%	4.88%
Employment and/or skills training	15%	10%	24.39%	12.50%	15%	17.50%	0%	5%
English language training	12.2%	9.76%	24.39%	2.44%	9.76%	39.02%	7.32%	2.44%
French language training	0%	4.88%	24.39%	9.76%	12.20%	46.34%	19.51%	0%
Health	12.5%	12.5%	24.39%	27.50%	15%	5%	5%	7.50%
Housing	7.32%	17.07%	24.39%	9.76%	39.02%	9.76%	0%	0%
Language interpretation/ translation	4.88%	9.76%	24.39%	7.32%	4.88%	56.10%	4.88%	0%
Legal/courts	7.32%	17.07%	24.39%	9.76%	4.88%	51.22%	4.88%	0%
Local municipal government/ bylaw	15%	20%	24.39%	20%	10%	17.5%	0%	0%
Mental health	7.32%	14.63%	24.39%	12.2%	12.2%	36.59%	2.44%	2.44%
Police	7.32%	24.39%	24.39%	14.63%	4.88%	31.71%	0%	0%
Settlement/ immigrant services	7.32%	14.63%	24.39%	4.88%	17.07%	34.15%	4.88%	2.44%
Small business/ entrepreneur supports	14.63%	9.76%	24.39%	9.76%	4.88%	43.9%	0%	0%
Transportation services	2.44%	9.76%	24.39%	4.88%	43.9%	17.07%	17.07%	0%
Recreation services	12.2%	14.63%	24.39%	19.51%	4.88%	9.76%	0%	0%
Childcare	12.2%	7.32%	24.39%	4.88%	12.2%	53.66%	0%	0%

The top five best-rated services (good, very good, and excellent) were recreation services (65.85%), education (60.98%), Local municipal government/bylaw (52.5%), employment and/or skills training (50%), and police (48.78%). Among poorly rated services, housing (39.02%) and transportation services (43.90%) had at least 10 participants who rated them poorly.

Access to Language Interpretation

The majority (66.67%) of respondents who accessed a health service (hospital, health clinic or consultation with a health professional) in the past year did not need language interpretation. Of those who needed an interpreter, 2.56% relied on a friend or family member as a matter of preference, while 7.69% brought a family member due to the unavailability of a professional interpreter (Table 15).

Table 15. Access to Language Interpreters

Options	% of Participants, n=39
Language interpretation was provided	0%
I wanted language interpretation but did not receive it	0%
I brought a family member or friend because interpretation was not available	7.69%
I brought a family member or friend because I prefer this instead of a professional interpreter	2.56%
I did not need language interpretation	69.23%
I did access health services	20.51%

Community Building

When asked to identify ways in which they contributed to building a thriving and prosperous community, 62.16% said they helped their neighbours, 51.35% volunteered, 51.35% spoke up for fairness and treated others with kindness, 51.35% contributed through their jobs, 48.65% contributed to improving the natural environment, 45.95% stated that they continued to build their skills and strengthen the ways they can contribute to the community, 40.54% donated to local charities, and 40.54% helped newcomers to make the community their home. Some were business owners (8.11%), while 18.92% tutored a youth in the community (Table 16). Other ways (13.51%) participants contributed to fostering a thriving and prosperous community were by fostering dogs, assisting neighbours and friends financially, rescuing cats and creating habitat for local wildlife, organizing big community events, and supporting diverse initiatives such as the multicultural celebration in Pembroke and Petawawa.



Table 16. Creating a Thriving and Prosperous Community

Options	% of Participants, n=37
Helping neighbours	62.16%
Unpaid help for family members (children, grandparents, etc.)	29.73%
Volunteering with youth sports	27.03%
Tutoring or helping youth to learn	18.92%
Volunteering with community organizations, groups or faith communities	51.35%
Participating in board of directors or other committees	27.03%
Donating to local charities	40.54%
Helping newcomers	40.54%
Speaking up for fairness and treating people with kindness	51.35%
Voting	32.43%
My business contributes to our community's economy	8.11%
Contributing with my skills and experience to the local economy through my job	51.35%
Building skills and strengthening the ways of contributing to this community (learning English, further education, building professional skills, etc.)	45.95%
Contributing to improving the natural environment (recycling, picking up garbage, planting trees, etc.)	48.65%
Other	13.51%

Community: Sense of Belonging and Safety

Most participants (72.50%) reported an at least somewhat strong sense of belonging, while 20% had a somewhat weak or very weak sense of belonging (Table 17).

Table 17. Sense of Belonging

Options	% of Participants, n=40
Very strong	30%
Somewhat strong	42.5%
Somewhat weak	10%
Very weak	10%
Don't know/no opinion	7.5%

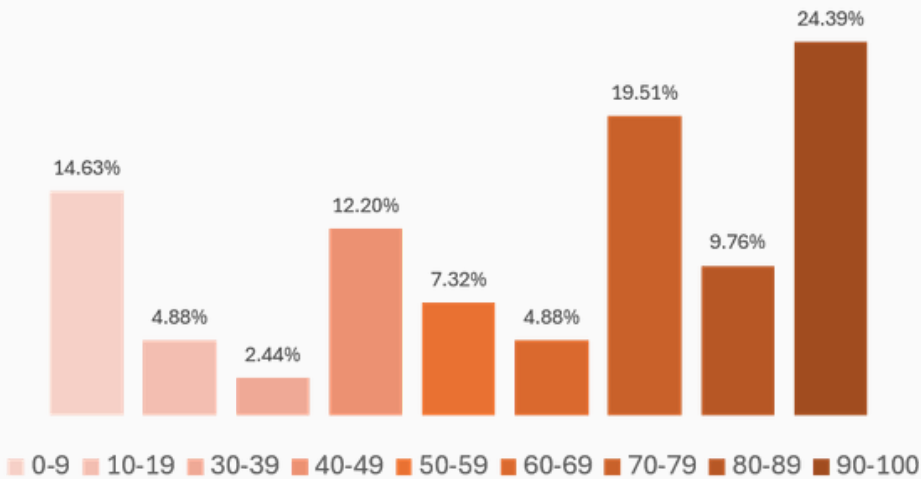
Most participants (68.29%) reported that they felt at least very safe in their communities. On the other hand, 9.76% felt slightly safe, while 2.44% did not feel safe at all (Table 18).

Table 18. Community Safety

Options	% of Participants, n= 41
Extremely	29%
Very	39.02%
Moderately	19.51%
Slightly	9.76%
Not at all	2.44%

When asked to rate the communities they live in based on how welcoming they felt it was (on a scale of 1 – 10), most participants (54.76%) felt their community had a ranking of at least 7. The average rating was 6.1 (Figure 14, n=42).

Figure 14 - How welcoming is your community



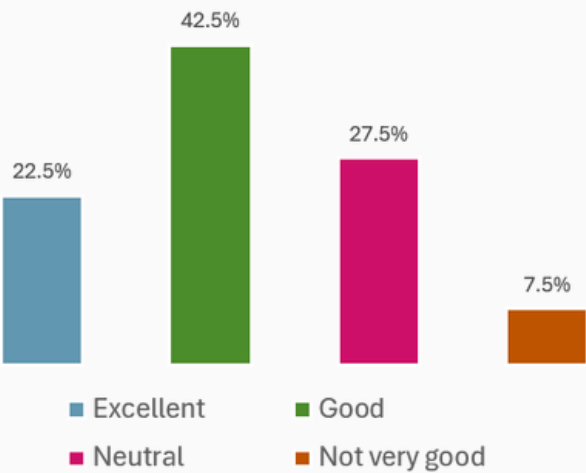
The majority of participants started to feel at home in their community within 1 – 2 years of arriving; 20% felt at home in less than a year, while 22.50% still do not feel at home in their community (Table 19).

Table 19. Time Taken to Feel at Home

Time Taken	% of Participants, n=40
When I arrived	15%
Less than a year	20%
1 – 2 years	27.50%
3 – 5 years	15%
I still don't feel at home	22.50%

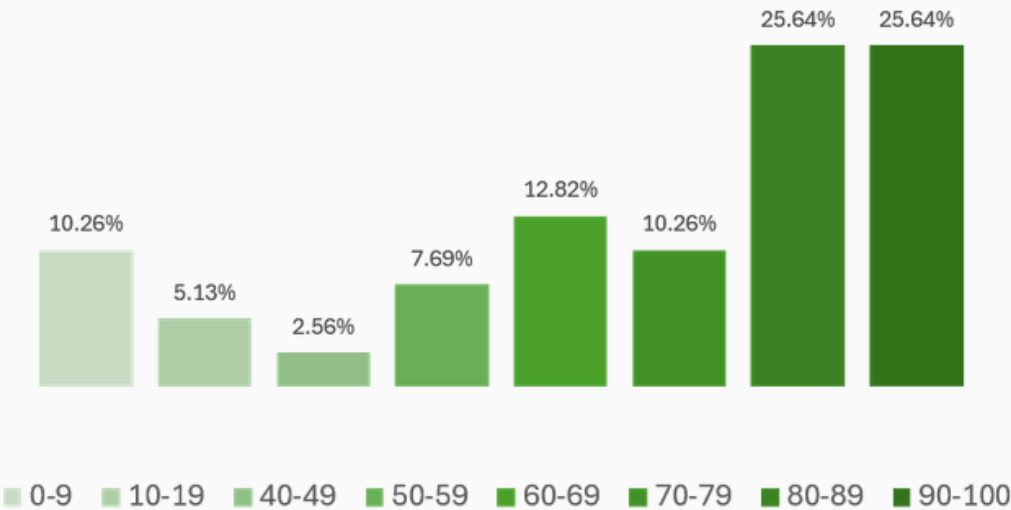
65% of participants have had at least a good experience settling in the town in which they live, while 7.50% did not have a good experience (Figure 15, n=40).

Figure 15 - Settling in and Integrating



When asked to rate how satisfied they felt with their lives at the moment, a large proportion (61.54%) of respondents had a rating of 7 or higher. The average rating was 6.8 (Figure 14, n=39).

Figure 14 - Level of Life Satisfaction



Challenges

Participants reported that they had experienced different challenges in the past year, including transportation (56.10%), financial problems (51.22%), finding healthcare (46.34%), finding affordable housing (39.02%), making friends (29.27%), and learning where and how to do things (21.95%). The least common challenge reported by participants was finding information in a language they understood (9.76%) (Table 20). Some other challenges experienced by participants include financial issues and dealing with homophobic people. One participant also indicated that neighbours reported them to the bylaw and vandalized their gardens, which they believe was racially motivated.

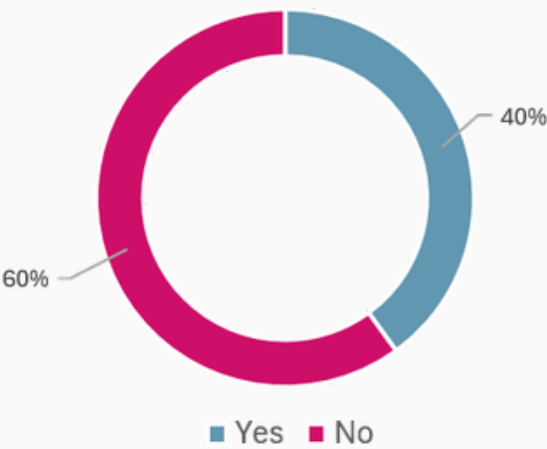
Table 20. Challenges Experienced in the Past Year

Challenge	% of Participants, n=41
Finding health care	46.34%
Finding mental health care	19.51%
Finding relevant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.	21.95%
Cost of living or money problems	51.22%
Discrimination/racism	12.20%
Finding affordable housing	39.02%
Finding childcare	17.07%
Finding work	24.39%
Getting information in a language you understand	9.76%
Learning English	17.07%
Learning where and how to do things	21.95%
Making friends	29.27%
Making sure your children are safe and happy at school and in the community	19.51%
Receiving public or social services (e.g. settlement services, government services, etc.)	19.51%
Starting a new business	12.20%
Transportation	56.10%
Other	9.76%

Discrimination

Out of 40 respondents, more than half (60%) of the participants reported that they had not experienced discrimination in the town they live in in the past year, while 40% said they experienced discrimination. (Figure 16, n=40)

Figure 16 - Experience of discrimination



Of those who had experienced discrimination, 54.55% felt it was based on race or skin colour, 50% felt it was motivated by immigration status, 36.36% believed it was because of their accent, and 27.27% attributed it to ethnicity. Other bases for discrimination included abilities or intelligence, and harassment and national identity (Table 21).

Table 21. Perceived Reasons for Discrimination

Reason	% of Participants, n=22
Race or skin colour	54.55%
Religion	18.18%
Ethnicity or culture	27.27%
Immigration status	50%
Gender	18.18%
Sexual orientation	22.73%
Language ability	18.18%
Accent	36.36%
Age	9.09%
Income	9.09%
Visible or invisible disability	9.09%
Other	22.73%



Respondents experienced discrimination in different situations, including while at a store, bank or restaurant (40.91%), while using public areas like parks (40.91%), at community/public events (36.36%), and 31.82% while at work. Some other locations where discrimination was experienced was on social media and “just about everywhere” (Table 22).

Table 22. Where Discrimination Occurred

Situation/location	% of Participants, n=22
In a store, bank or restaurant	40.91%
When applying for a job or a promotion	22.73%
At my job – for example, from supervisors, co-workers or clients	31.82%
At school or university	13.64%
At community/public events	36.36%
When interacting with my neighbours	22.73%
When looking for housing	22.73%
When crossing the border into Canada	18.18%
When interacting with the police	13.64%
When interacting with the courts	4.55%
When seeing a doctor or in other healthcare settings	18.18%
While using libraries, community/recreational centres, arenas	18.18%
While using public areas, such as parks or sidewalks	40.91%
While using buses, trains or taxis	9.09%
When accessing other community services	18.18%
Other	22.73%

More than half (59.26%) of the participants who experienced discrimination did not seek support or report it. 18.52% reported the discrimination to a colleague, while 11.11% reported it to the police. Other services sought by participants to address discrimination include paralegal services and the Canadian Human Rights Commission (Table 23).

Table 23. Support Services used for Reporting Discrimination

Options	% of Participants, n=27
None of the above	59.26%
Police	11.11%
Colleagues at work	18.52%
Human resources at work	7.41%
Local Immigration Partnership	7.41%
Other	14.81%

Isolation

Participants were asked how often they felt alone or isolated in their communities. 19.51% reported that they did not feel lonely at all, while 12.20% said they felt isolated all the time (Table 24).

Table 24. Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness

Options	% of Participants, n=41
All the time	12.2%
Very often	14.63%
Sometimes	39.02%
Rarely	14.63%
Not at all	19.51%



Focus Groups

LIP – Lanark and Renfrew conducted a series of two focus groups in March 2025 with the aim of supplementing our survey findings and identifying areas for improvement and recommendations. This provided an opportunity for in-depth conversations on the participants' personal experiences moving to and integrating into our communities. Participants who completed the survey and indicated interest in participating in the focus group were invited to participate.



Focus group participants lived in Carleton Place (33%), Pembroke (33%), Perth (17%), and surrounding areas (17%). 50% of participants had not experienced discrimination, 33% experienced discrimination, while 17% were unsure if they had experienced it or not. The majority (67%) had moved to the region directly from their countries of origin, while 33% moved to Lanark and Renfrew from elsewhere in Canada. 50% of participants stated that they always felt like they belonged in their communities, 33% usually felt like they belonged, while 17% rarely felt like they belonged. The study uses the code P# to refer to focus group participants, and preserve their anonymity.

The appendix includes the recruitment email and questions for the focus group.

Key Findings

Reasons for Moving/Choosing Renfrew or Lanark

Participants' reasons for moving to Canada include family reunification, as P5: "Me and my family, I have 3 kids and one kid is with Down syndrome, and it's very nice, the small country, the small city or this is the 1st option we prefer Pembroke." Others moved as a result of war. Some chose the region due to its proximity to Ottawa, its size and their love for small-town living, as P3, "Yeah. So my partner and I lived in Ottawa, and we just drove by Perth, and we thought it was cute, and we decided to move here. And we have a family so small-town life."

First Impressions

Participants generally had a positive first impression of the communities in which they live. Most participants thought the community was friendly, as P3 said, "It's a really friendly community. Everyone seems again really friendly. I am really involved in the community; I do a lot of volunteering. So I'm able to meet a lot of different people from different backgrounds that way, especially immigrants." P1 described it as welcoming: "But again, all in all very, very welcoming. That sort of breaking new ground feeling." P6 noted that the communities are close-knit with small friendship circles.

However, this close-knit nature of the communities might present challenges to newcomers, making them feel like outsiders and making it harder to make friends, as P1 "Everyone sort of knows everyone. And so it can sometimes feel, I think, like breaking into a friendship group that's been around a lot longer than you have in saying that those who, you know took the time to have a conversation with you know, myself, they're always very, very intrigued, and have been fairly welcoming. It's just maybe that's just part of the experience. Being a newcomer, you know, you feel like you're stepping on someone else's turf."

Some participants also reported experiencing microaggressions due to a predominantly white and older population, as P3 said, “And in a town that's so white it's nice to see that being outside of a city does come with its downsides. I have had many people, I don't think in a mean way, but just be rather condescending, and say, my name sounds very exotic and just rather like little microaggressions like that that I'm not a big fan of, but it's overall, it's fine. I mean, it's an older community. So I guess I expect that.” P6 reported that locals are not prepared for huge migration, which can be a cultural shock for both parties, “My 1st impression to the community was really good. I find priority. Yes, it's a small area. So people who a lot of times they are not prepared to huge migration and cultural shock. So I have situation like that here.”

Successes

Participants had some positive stories to recount about their experiences living in the community. For instance, P2 and P5 highlighted that they were pleased with the educational system, and P4 had a positive experience with resolving a health issue. Additionally, P6 pointed that there was always someone in the community who was willing to help “I would say there is always someone, an institution or a friend; there is always someone there wanna help you. And it's not a help like it's not an interest help. It's a real help like like immigration societies, like just friends like just Canadian people like gonna be people there all the time who wanna you know, open the doors.”

Challenges

Moving to a new place can be challenging and overwhelming (“This is so, I find it. A lot of things are very convenient here. But as long as you are a new person it's just overwhelming,” P2). The focus group participants identified several challenges they had experienced while living and working in the region. For instance, one participant said that it can be difficult for newcomers to break into established friendship groups amongst locals (P3). Generally, the challenges identified by participants can be categorized as underemployment, housing, transportation, healthcare, access to services, and discrimination, which are further discussed below.

Employment

Participants said they experienced challenges with finding suitable employment (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6). This was particularly surprising to P1, who found it challenging to find a job even as a native English speaker: “Challenge was for particularly for finding employment. Even as a sort of native English-speaking person. I very much had a preconception about what it would be like to move to Canada and potentially what the job market would be like. Definitely making some assumptions about being another English-speaking person, that everything would translate from one country to another, and that was very much underestimated.” P3 experienced a similar situation and had to take their partner's last name to ease the job search process. P4 stated that they missed some job opportunities due to the lack of/inability to obtain security clearance.



Housing

With respect to housing, participants pointed out high housing costs and limited availability of suitable accommodation as challenges ^[1] (P2, P3, P4, and P6). This is summarized by P3 as “Regarding housing like we moved here just before pandemic. So, I mean, this was our 1st well, not this one previous home where we lived was our 1st home. So like there were all the challenges of navigating, getting a new home, which would be the same everywhere. But we were very lucky that we got here just before pandemic, before the prices went a little bit haywire and a little bit of a challenge to a lot of the houses here. And Perth I mean are older houses. Even some like century homes which have their own challenges in themselves, you know, renovations, and so forth.”



This situation can further be exacerbated by differences in housing application processes between one's country of origin and Canada, as well as the lack of a credit history, as noted by P2, who is president of a newcomer community: “I know a lot of stories where people don't have any recommendations. They don't have any history here in the country. Also, we have a bit different situation back home in Ukraine. Like here landlord is choosing who will live in the house, and like in my country, you choosing the house to live. So it's a different approach and different situations which is stressful for a person who are not used to it.”

P2 also noted that houses are more available than apartments, and renting a house can be tasking, involving yard work, which newcomers may not be prepared or equipped to do, “There are not that many apartments here, only houses which have additional needs. Let's say you still need to manage everything around like snow and grass, and whatever, while you have no time for that, because you're working a lot. So probably there should be some different approach for housing.”

Transportation

Participants (P2, P6) found it challenging that there was no public transportation in the region, as P2 sometimes experienced missed opportunities: “The only thing what I would like to say. The public transportation, there is no public transportation from Carleton Place to Ottawa. If you don't have a car, you are stuck in the in the town, and you have much less opportunities, especially if it's work. So I don't know how it should be solved, but I guess this distance in this case matters, and also like opportunities for accessing all kind of services is also either you should have everything at the place, or in other case you need to provide the option for people to get there.”

[1] The housing crisis is not peculiar to Lanark and Renfrew counties as many people across Canada are currently facing housing issues. Based on a recent report by Habitat for Humanity Canada, approximately 59% of Canadians are sacrificing other basic necessities of life to afford rent or mortgage [Habitat for Humanity Canada, 2024](#)

Healthcare

Limited access to healthcare was another challenge that participants reported (P1, P2, P3). P1 noted that it was challenging finding a family doctor, and there are no walk-in clinics: "I'm happy to go just because I fairly similar experience to P3, at least in terms of healthcare like I haven't even bothered looking for a family doctor, because everyone's told me how bad it is out there, and I just it's put me off even looking or exploring that one time it was close. It was exactly what P3 said: where it was, just went to the emergency room and sat there for 8 hours." P2 highlighted that the long wait times at the hospital can be frustrating.



Access to Services

Participants stated that they had experienced difficulty accessing public services like employment services, banking, etc. For instance, P1 found it challenging to access services that would have helped them to integrate better: "It was all very new for me, and also I found that accessing the sort of services that would be helpful to find out what I needed to do differently from you know the way I was raised, was somewhat difficult to find."

These difficulties sometimes stemmed from the disparities in operational systems between newcomers' countries of origin and their new homes, like P3: "Outside of that I haven't accessed a huge amount of like settlement style services, banking, and all of that. It was the main experience that I had. It was just a there's a lot I don't know. Shift in mentality everything that I thought I knew about how banks worked, and things like trying to get a phone number and being told, you don't have a sin number. So you can't get a phone number and then going trying to go and get a bank, and you can't get a bank account without this. All things which, as far as I was used to. I could walk in with a driver's license and be able to get that access to a bank account to be able to get access to everything else, because it kind of, there are a few of those services that you kind of rely on other things for so it was just a bit of an adjustment as to what the status quo is in Canada. Yeah, and I have. I haven't accessed anything else. That's probably the some of my experience." P2 also noted that the banking system was not convenient in comparison to what they were used to in their country of origin.

In other cases, the limited access to services was attributed to discrimination, like P6: "And he basically use words like, suspicious of my what documents so they really denied me the health card at that moment. Of course I come back right now, I have a health card, but when I talk with a lot of with more people about this in my job with my supervisor, too. They told me that I am not the first one or the unique one to have troubles in Service Ontario for this kind of... So I really would like see improvement in that, the same with my license". In addition, P6 asserted that they had to reach out to a supervisor in Ottawa before they could access a service."

P6 noted that some services are only available to permanent residents and not available to temporary residents like students or those on work permits: "It's like, we really don't have access to the employment service as international students, as newcomers, only workers just gonna have access to that service, the complete service when you are a resident. What I find pretty unfair, because I remember when I was international student, they were helping workers. And now that I am a worker, they're helping residents."

Some factors that can limit access to these services include language barriers (P5) and lack of credit history in Canada ("And at first you don't have a credit history. And so you have to build that up. And I remember the first time I went to the bank, they said, well, if you give us a thousand dollars. We'll give you a thousand dollar credit card, and I was like what? And I had Scotiabank credit in Mexico. But they said, we're a different bank, we don't recognize it, anyway.", P4). P3 was affected by a lack of credit history, "Yes, for sure. Regarding the banks, I mean, I have pretty similar experience with other people. Even though I had a credit, it accounts for nothing here. So in a way, I'm hate saying kind of lucky that I married a Canadian because he had a credit history himself but I just don't like that. I had to rely on him for that."

Discrimination

Another challenge reported by participants is discrimination and disparaging remarks (P3, P6). Participants who had experienced discrimination felt that it was based on factors like name, country of origin, accent, or language barrier, as P6 said, "What I notice is like as soon as they see my name, I have 2 names and I have 2 last names, and as soon as I speak I have an accent..., the treatment is differently". Unfortunately, participants reported that discrimination and microaggressions could also come from friends and associates, like P6, "I remember, actually, I have a really close friend of mine, and I love her with my soul. However, she sometimes could say something like she don't notice that it's discrimination. To say something like, one day she says something like immigrants should not drive. But she was like, I don't mean you. I mean other kind of like yeah, we are all in the same kind of group."



P3 reported hearing disparaging remarks about newcomers: "I don't want to focus too much on those aspects, but I'll share that people in service positions (e.g., hospital workers, library staff, etc.) have often commented on my name, saying it sounds 'exotic'. Some have even assumed they know what language I speak and started speaking to me in it. Others have told me how good my English is—thinking it's a compliment—when, in reality, I have a BA in English Literature, so it's not the praise they imagine. I've also been told I 'don't look like I come from' my country of origin, or have had people make incredibly racist and ignorant remarks about it—like asking if we use toilet paper or ride donkeys. There are many more examples, but I think these give a clear enough picture. The only factor influencing these experiences is simply that people learn something personal about me."

According to P6, a contributing factor to discrimination is widespread misinformation amongst locals, “You are less like you are coming and stealing the jobs and everything like. That. Oh, it’s a lot of that here misinformation. Yeah.”

Sense of Belonging

The focus group participants differed in their opinions when asked if their sense of belonging had changed since moving to the region. Some participants asserted that their sense of belonging had not changed, perhaps because they became active in the community as soon as they arrived, as P2 said, “I can say that there was no shift. It was a evolving process, you know.” On the other hand, other participants felt that their sense of belonging had evolved since they moved to the region, like P6: “And I will say that I wasn’t feel really belonging here the first year, the first 3 years. Right now, I wouldn’t say that. I feel that Pembroke is my home, and this area is my place. I will say that what really helps or does different is like now, I know more people. I have more freedom to, you know. I well. Now I have a car like helps a lot to move around. I know more people. I have job.”



Participants identified several ways in which they have improved their sense of belonging over time. Some strategies participants employed to improve their sense of belonging in the community include volunteering, helping others and community engagement, as P3 said, “But for me, what really helped was getting involved with the community just volunteering. And then, there’s my kids going to school here, too, like. No matter what have, they’re involved in their own little groups. So then I have to be involved because they’re involved. So that has definitely helped me meet new people.” Similarly, P1 noted that “Somewhat similar to what P3 had said, though, the main thing for me at least was sort of a two-part combination. It was pushing myself outside of my comfort zone. And trying to engage within the community, and to a degree, almost creating like an ambassador out of some of the locals where you know... And I introduced myself to them, and then they introduced myself to their circles, and it sort of helped break in. And you start to get more familiar with who everyone is and break into those circles?” In addition, P3 suggested that newcomers should create their own communities instead of trying to break into established friendship groups.

Recommendations

During the focus groups, participants shared some recommendations that would improve the process of settling and integrating into the community. The participants derived these recommendations either from their personal experiences or general suggestions and ideas, and acknowledged that change will take time to happen (“I will say that I know that we won’t see results in a short period of time. However, I will say that time will help a lot”). Some of the recommendations are listed in the following page:

Mentorship Programs: Since mentors are likely to help newcomers find jobs and integrate into the community, P2 suggested creating mentorship networks. Recognizing the significant role played by mentors in assisting newcomers with job searches and community integration, P2 suggested creating mentorship programs tailored specifically to newcomers.

While mentorship programs already exist in our region (for example, the LIP – Lanark & Renfrew Learning & Connections Mentorship Program), there might be a significant opportunity to enhance their visibility within our communities, ensuring that more individuals are able to benefit from the resources that are already available.

Language Training: Provide language training to those who need it (P2). This is essential for fostering inclusivity, personal development and enhancing communication skills for newcomers.

Integration Programs: Integration programs will serve several purposes, including helping newcomers understand how things work as P2, “Maybe it should be a combined social worker that will help them on a different directions, because people live this kind of things every day in their regular life, and for a newcomer everything is new, even you know how to say separate paper and plastic, and all those things like where to get the app with the schedule of your pick up.” Additionally, they can help newcomers translate their experience and skillsets into the Canadian equivalent as P2, “I went to this career center that we have here in girls are very helpful. But they said me exactly the same as you can see in any place, they said to me, you should choose what you want to do, and then you should make your CV or resume according to the job you are applying, which need to pick up out of my skills whatever applies to this one, which is, I think very challenging for the country. So if it's possible to look at the whole story from the perspective of people having a set of skill and helping them to understand where that sort of skill could be applied. I think it would be more efficient for everyone, because this is my main pain point.”

Networking Opportunities: Create a database of newcomers and their locations to help them connect (P2). This would serve a dual purpose of facilitating communication, collaboration and networking among immigrants while allowing service providers to better understand and meet their needs.

Education: Educate locals and public servants. Participants who had experienced discrimination advocated for the establishment of cultural sensitivity training programs as P6: “Education will help a lot like I mean more cultural activities will help a lot because you will discover more? This person is not just an immigrant who doesn't speak your language fully, is a person who have a whole cultural, a whole different language, a whole different traditions, that you might know, like, you might like it,” Similarly, P3 asserted that educating locals is necessary for mitigating discrimination “Education. If it's not a question you would ask anyone, you probably shouldn't be asking it at all—especially if the situation doesn't warrant it. If someone is seeking help with language, services, etc., then those questions might be relevant, but that has never been my experience.”

P6 also highlighted that education should not be restricted to locals but should also include newcomers, and provide them with information about the realities of living in the region, “I will say that it's good for newcomers be informed. How life is in each place, and if they could have access or Hey, this place is, you know, Renfrew County. It's amazing, it's a small community, you're gonna find. But this happened too. Nothing wrong with that like gonna happen in all the world, in every place. So definitely, I think that you should be informed before what you're gonna face. Not just the nice things.”

Summary of Findings

A total of 41 immigrants participated in the LIP – Lanark & Renfrew Immigrant and Newcomer Research Project survey. These participants represented various immigration statuses, including economic-category immigrants (23.09%), family-category immigrants (23.09%), temporary residents (12.82%), and international students (10.26%). Over half (56.10%) of respondents had lived in Canada for fewer than 5 years.

The survey participants were of significant racial diversity, with 65% identifying as racialized. Among them, 27.50% self-described as Latin-American, 22.50% as White, 12.50% as Arab, and others identifying across a range of ethnic backgrounds. This rich diversity highlights the unique perspectives and experiences that newcomers bring to the region.

The survey revealed several key insights into the experiences of immigrants and newcomers in the region:



Employment Barriers

Despite possessing relevant skills and higher education levels – 76.93% of participants had a college diploma and/or above – many participants reported difficulties in securing suitable employment. Factors contributing to these barriers included a lack of Canadian work experience, recognition of foreign credentials, and the challenge of adjusting to local professional expectations. This mismatch resulted in a significant number of participants indicating that their jobs did not align with their skill sets.

Cultural Sensitivity and Discrimination

Participants reported experiencing various forms of discrimination and microaggressions related to their names, accents, and cultural backgrounds. About 40% indicated that they had experienced discrimination in the past year, with the majority attributing it to race or immigration status. These negative experiences not only hindered social integration but also impacted the mental health and overall well-being of participants, leading to increased feelings of isolation.

Housing and Affordability

Housing emerged as a significant challenge, with 30.77% of participants feeling their accommodation was neither affordable nor suitable. Many newcomers reported high rental prices and limited availability, exacerbated by disparities in housing application processes and a lack of credit history.

Sense of Belonging

A significant percentage of participants (72.50%) reported a strong sense of belonging in the community, while about 12.20% reported feeling isolated all the time. Increased community engagement, such as volunteering or participating in local events, was associated with enhanced feelings of belonging and social connectivity. Notably, some participants indicated that their sense of belonging improved over time, especially with the establishment of social networks through activities that involved their children and community service.

Community Support

Many participants emphasized the importance of community involvement and volunteering, which served as a means of building social networks and providing support. Active participation in community activities was recorded by 51.35% of respondents as a way to foster connections and enhance integration. Furthermore, active involvement in community activities facilitated introductions to locals, thereby aiding in developing friendships and easing the process of community integration.

Challenges and recommendations

Participants reported some challenges experienced in the past year, including transportation (56.10%), financial problems (51.22%), difficulty finding healthcare (46.34%), affordable housing (39.02%), and making friends (29.27%).



Focus Group Insights

The focus group discussions provided additional context about the challenges newcomers face and some strategies they employ to overcome them. Participants provided some recommendations to improve the process of settling and integrating into the community.

- **Mentorship programs:** Facilitate career guidance by expanding existing mentorship programs to connect newcomers with local professionals and community leaders.
- **Language training:** Offer tailored language training to foster better communication and integration.
- **Integration programs:** Create programs to help newcomers navigate daily life in Lanark and Renfrew counties.
- **Community networking:** Establish a platform for newcomers to connect with each other and build supportive social networks.
- **Cultural sensitivity training:** Reduce discrimination and foster mutual respect by increasing cultural sensitivity training for local residents and public servants.

Conclusion

This report provides valuable insight into the experiences of newcomers in Lanark and Renfrew counties. The findings are reflective of a complex landscape where, despite a strong sense of belonging, many newcomers encounter significant challenges. Some of the emerging critical barriers in the region include employment mismatches, housing affordability, inadequate public transportation, and limited access to healthcare and public services. The presence of these challenges highlights the need to identify and address systemic issues to improve the overall immigrant experience in these communities.



The qualitative results gathered from the focus group discussions reveal the nuanced experiences of immigrants as they navigate the social dynamics of their new homes. Many participants alluded to the warmth and friendliness they experienced upon arrival while simultaneously articulating the difficulties in forging connections within established social networks. The prevalence of microaggressions and discrimination emphasizes the need for cultural sensitivity and awareness within the wider community, as these negative interactions can cultivate feelings of alienation and discomfort for newcomers trying to integrate.

While many newcomers have relevant skills and experience, they find it difficult to translate them into suitable employment opportunities. This is not only a loss for the individuals and their families but also a missed opportunity for local economies. The local community must recognize the potential contributions of newcomers and support them in overcoming barriers that prevent them from engaging fully in the workforce.

For effective immigrant retention, stakeholders such as the municipal government, civic organizations, and educational institutions, amongst other key organizations, must collaborate to implement targeted strategies that address the identified needs. The recommendations highlight some important ways that systemic, attitudinal, and communicative barriers can be addressed to create a supportive environment that empowers newcomers and acknowledges their contributions to the community. Some recommendations include leveraging existing mentorship programs to connect newcomers with local professionals, expanding and tailoring existing language training^[1] programs to diverse groups, and creating community integration workshops that emphasize cultural exchange and understanding. By facilitating connections and providing resources, these initiatives can contribute to significantly improving the immigrant experience in the region.

In conclusion, fostering an inclusive environment requires ongoing efforts to educate newcomers, service providers and the community as a whole about each other's backgrounds and cultures. This educational interchange can diminish stereotypes and dispel the misinformation that often leads to discrimination. Supporting newcomers is not merely a matter of providing services; it is about cultivating a sense of shared community, belonging, and mutual growth that benefits everyone involved.

[1] Some language training programs available in our region include ESL (English as a Second Language), LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), ELTOC (English Language Tutoring for the Ottawa Community) and LBS (Literacy and Basic Skills).

Appendices

Recruitment Email - Survey

Subject: Are you an immigrant or a newcomer in the Eastern Ontario Region? – We Want to Hear from You!

I would like to invite you to participate in an online survey led by the Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew team between [insert date] and [insert date]. The purpose of this survey is for Local Immigration Partnership to gather information on your experience as a resident of Eastern Ontario. The valuable information that you provide will then be used to help us better recognize what makes the Ottawa Valley so attractive to newcomer and immigrant agricultural workers like you.

To thank you for participating, those who participate in the survey and a consequent interview will receive a chance to win one of five \$200 e-gift certificates. We encourage you to participate and share your experience if you can. Please fill out the survey between [insert date] and [insert date], [insert link here].

Thank you.

[Local Immigration Partnership team member signature]

Recruitment Email – Focus Group

Good morning,

Thank you for your recent participating in the Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew's Eastern Ontario Immigrant & Newcomer Survey for Lanark & Renfrew Counties. The information you provided will have a significant positive contribution towards making Lanark & Renfrew Counties more welcoming and inclusive communities for all.

We would like to invite you to participate in a virtual focus group. This focus group will delve deeper into some of the trends observed following the survey and help us to identify more specific ways that LIP can help newcomer and immigrant populations moving to our regions. You are encouraged to share your thoughts and opinions regarding the questions asked and provide any feedback on the survey.

This focus group will be hosted via Zoom and run for 1 hour. There will be 3 times offered for the focus group, we kindly ask you to register for ONE session at your preferred time/date.

- Monday, February 24th 5pm-6pm - Focus Group 1: [Zoom registration link1]*
- Wednesday, February 26th 4pm-6pm - Focus Group 2: [Zoom registration link2]*
- Tuesday, March 4th, 6pm-7pm - Focus Group 3: [Zoom registration link3]*

During your session, we ask you to please only use your first or preferred name. You can edit your name prior to entering the Zoom space or when you enter the Zoom space. You can find instructions on how to change your name here: https://support.zoom.com/hc/en/article?id=zm_kb&sysparm_article=KB0061891

Attached is an Information & Consent Form that we ask you to sign and send back to us prior to your focus group session. If you have any questions about the Consent Form, require support in navigating the language, or are not comfortable signing the consent form, please reach out to the Local Immigration Partnership team for assistance.

Please reach out if you have any questions about the information above, thank you for your participation in the Eastern Ontario Immigrant & Newcomer research project. We greatly appreciate your time and input.

Kind regards,

[Local Immigration Partnership team member signature]

Consent Form – Survey

APPENDICES A: INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM - *Information and Consent Form - Attraction and retention of newcomers and immigrants to the Eastern Ontario region*

Dear participant,

The information shared in this study is being used for research purposes by Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew, a community service department of Algonquin College's Pembroke Campus. Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew is funded by Immigration, Refugee, and Canadian Citizenship Canada (IRCC), a branch of the federal government.

This research is being undertaken to learn from the data provided by participants to understand the attraction and retention of immigrants and newcomers to the Eastern Ontario region. Questions will focus on individual demographics and location as well as questions related to peoples' behaviours and experiences. The questionnaire/survey, followed by interviews/focus groups, is an opportunity for residents to share their experiences in a safe environment. The data collection will be the basis of a report on what makes the Eastern Ontario region attractive to immigrants and newcomers, which will be provided to community stakeholders.

All personal identification data shared during the research will be omitted from the final research report and will only be accessible by the Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew research team, composed of two research officers and a manager. All data will be secured using a private Microsoft Teams site supported by Algonquin College ITS that is password-locked. After seven years, the digital data will be destroyed. The meeting will be recorded using the Zoom record function so that the researcher(s) may review the information shared.

The questionnaire/survey will take place online using SurveyMonkey, an online survey tool with an anticipated duration of under 20 minutes. Participants are not obligated to participate in the study and are free to withdraw from the research project at any time. You can skip any question you do not want to answer. There are no consequences for participants who withdraw from the project. Incomplete data from participants who withdraw from the research project will be omitted from the final report. Our research sponsor, IRCC, will not have access to any of the data provided.

For more information on the immigrant and newcomer in the Eastern Ontario region project, please contact:

Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew

Website: <https://liplanarkrenfrew.ca/>

Email: Localimmigrationpartnership@algonquincollege.com

Phone: 613-735-4308 x 2878

Participants may also contact Algonquin College Research Ethics Board (REB) to discuss ethical issues surrounding the project. Please contact:

Algonquin College REB

Website: www.algonquincollege.com/research-ethics-board

Email: REBAdmin@algonquincollege.com

Phone: 613-727-4723 x 5213

By signing the consent form, you the participant is indicating that you have read and understood the information in the form, have had an opportunity to have all questions regarding participation answered, and agree freely to participate in the research according to the terms set out in the consent form.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

By consenting to participate, participants have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

Thank you for your support.

Consent Form – Focus Group

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Dear participant,

The information shared in this study is being used for research purposes by Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew, a community service department of Algonquin College's Pembroke Campus. Local Immigration Partnership – Lanark & Renfrew is funded by Immigration, Refugee, and Canadian Citizenship Canada (IRCC), a branch of the federal government.

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Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

By consenting to participate, participants have not waived any rights to legal recourse in the event of research-related harm.

Thank you for your support.

Survey Questionnaire

Section A: Basic Information

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- ☐ I immigrated to Canada as an economic-category immigrant (e.g. Federal Skilled Worker Program, Provincial Nominee Program, Canadian Experience Class, and dependents of economic applicants)
- ☐ I immigrated to Canada as a family-category immigrant (sponsored spouse, sponsored parent or grandparent, or other immigrant sponsored by family)
- ☐ I immigrated to Canada as a government assisted refugee
- ☐ I immigrated to Canada as a privately sponsored refugee
- ☐ I immigrated to Canada as a refugee claimant and am now a permanent resident or citizen
- ☐ I am currently in Canada as a refugee claimant
- ☐ I am currently in Canada as an international student
- ☐ I am currently in Canada on a temporary work visa
- ☐ I am currently in Canada on a CUAET (Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel) visa
- ☐ Unknown or I prefer not to answer
- ☐ I was born in Canada (**This survey is for people who were born outside of Canada and now live, work or study in Eastern Ontario Region.)
- ☐ Other (please specify)

2. How long have you been living in Canada?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 to 5 years
- ☐ 6 to 10 years
- ☐ 10+ years

3. Where do you live?

4. What is your first language?

(Your first language is the language you first learned at home.)

- ☐ English
- ☐ French
- ☐ Arabic
- ☐ Farsi/Persian
- ☐ Mandarin
- ☐ Rohingya
- ☐ Serbian
- ☐ Somali
- ☐ Spanish
- ☐ Tigrinya
- ☐ Turkish
- ☐ Ukrainian
- ☐ Other (please specify)

5. How many languages can you speak well?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5 or more

6. How well can you speak and understand English?

- ☐ Very well
- ☐ Well
- ☐ Fairly well
- ☐ Poorly
- ☐ Not at all

Section B: Use of Community Services

7. Please rate your experience with the following community services in the last 12 months in the town you live in.

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Did not access
Education	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Employment and/or skills training	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
English language learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
French language learning	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Housing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Language interpretation/ translation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Legal/courts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local municipal government/ bylaw	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mental health	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Police	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Settlement/ immigrant services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Small business/ entrepreneurial supports	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transportation services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recreation services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Childcare	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other community services (please specify)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. If you or a family member went to a hospital, health clinic or talked to a health professional in the past year, how did the clinic provide in-person or phone/video interpretation:

- ☐ Language interpretation was provided for me
- ☐ I wanted language interpretation but did not receive it
- ☐ I brought a family member or friend because interpretation was not available
- ☐ I brought a family member or friend because I prefer this instead of a professional interpreter
- ☐ I did not need language interpretation
- ☐ I did not go to a hospital, clinic or health professional
- ☐ Other (please specify)

Section C: Belonging

9. 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"

10. How welcoming is your community toward immigrants?

Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means "not at all welcoming" and 10 means "very welcoming,"

11. How do you describe your sense of belonging in the town you live in?

(Sense of belonging is when you feel accepted and valued by others around you. It is when you feel like this town is truly your home.)

- ☐ Very strong
- ☐ Somewhat strong
- ☐ Somewhat weak
- ☐ Very weak
- ☐ Don't know / no opinion

12. How much have you felt isolated or alone over the last 12 months in the town you live in?

- ☐ A great deal
- ☐ Quite a bit
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ A little bit
- ☐ Not at all

13. How safe do you feel in the town you live in?

- ☐ Extremely
- ☐ Very
- ☐ Moderately
- ☐ Slightly
- ☐ Not at all

14. In the last 12 months, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in the town you live in? (Discrimination is when others treat you unfairly because of your race, skin colour, religion, ethnicity or other reasons.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

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

- ☐ Race or skin colour
- ☐ Religion
- ☐ Ethnicity or culture
- ☐ Physical appearance (other than skin colour)
- ☐ Immigration status
- ☐ Gender
- ☐ Sexual orientation
- ☐ Language ability
- ☐ Accent
- ☐ Age
- ☐ Income
- ☐ Disability (either a disability that people can see or one that is invisible)
- ☐ Other (please specify):

16. If you did experience discrimination, in what types of situations did you experienced that (Choose all that apply.)

- ☐ In a store, bank or restaurant
- ☐ When applying for a job or a promotion
- ☐ At my job – for example from supervisors, co-workers or clients
- ☐ At school or university
- ☐ At community/public events
- ☐ When interacting with my neighbours
- ☐ When looking for housing
- ☐ When crossing the border into Canada
- ☐ When interacting with the police
- ☐ When interacting with the courts
- ☐ When seeing a doctor or in other health care settings
- ☐ While using libraries, community/recreational centres, arenas
- ☐ While using public areas, such as parks or sidewalks
- ☐ While using buses, trains or taxis
- ☐ When accessing other community services

Other (please specify):

Section D: Challenges and Solutions

17. How would you describe your experience of settling in the town you live in? (Settling includes your whole experience of moving to, settling and integrating in this town.)

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Not very good

18. How many years have you been in your community? (If you have been here for less than a year indicate zero.)

19. How long did it take you to feel at home in your community?

- ☐ When I arrived
- ☐ Less than a year
- ☐ 1-2 years
- ☐ 3-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ More than 10 years
- ☐ I still don't feel at home in this community

20. What are the biggest challenges you or your family have experienced in the last year in the town you live in? (Choose all that apply.)

- ☐ Finding health care
- ☐ Finding mental health care
- ☐ Finding relevant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.
- ☐ Cost of living or money problems
- ☐ Discrimination/racism
- ☐ Finding affordable housing
- ☐ Finding childcare
- ☐ Finding work
- ☐ Getting information in a language you understand
- ☐ Learning English
- ☐ Learning where and how to do things
- ☐ Making friends
- ☐ Making sure your children are safe and happy at school and in the community
- ☐ Receiving public or social services (e.g. settlement services, government services, etc.)
- ☐ Starting a new business
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Other (please specify):

21. What changes would help immigrants to reach their full potential in the town you live in? (Choose only your top 3). Immigrants includes people born outside Canada who are now living, working or studying in this community (permanent residents, Canadian citizens, refugees, temporary residents, refugee claimants, and international students).

- ☐ More opportunities to help improve English skills
- ☐ Availability of interpretation and translation
- ☐ More affordable housing
- ☐ One place to get all settlement, immigration and other services
- ☐ More effort by community services to better serve immigrants
- ☐ Better programs for immigrants to find work
- ☐ Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants
- ☐ English learning opportunities in workplaces
- ☐ A central place for both employers to find immigrant workers and for workers to find employment
- ☐ Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants
- ☐ Actions to improve the social connections of immigrants
- ☐ Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants
- ☐ More immigrant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.
- ☐ Greater voice or involvement in community leadership and planning

- ☐ Service agencies working together more
- ☐ Computer access and training
- ☐ More funding for... (please specify using "Other" below)
- ☐ Other (please specify):

Section E: Community Contributions

22. Why did you come to this town? (Choose only your top 3)

- ☐ I had family or friends that live in the town you live in
- ☐ The town I live in is more affordable than other communities
- ☐ Post-secondary institutions
- ☐ For a job
- ☐ A healthy local economy
- ☐ Cultural, faith or language groups in this community
- ☐ Community services and supports in this community
- ☐ I didn't choose this town- the community was chosen for me
- ☐ Other (please specify):

23. How likely are you to stay permanently in this town?

- ☐ I definitely plan on staying permanently
- ☐ I might stay permanently
- ☐ I'm not sure
- ☐ I don't plan on staying
- ☐ Not applicable

24. What are some of the ways you help create a thriving and prosperous community for everyone? (Choose all that apply)

- ☐ I help my neighbours when they need it
- ☐ I provide unpaid help for family members (children, grandparents, etc.)
- ☐ I volunteer with youth sports (coaching, driving youth, etc.)
- ☐ I tutor or help youth learn in this community
- ☐ I volunteer with community organizations, groups or faith communities
- ☐ I am on a board of directors or other committee
- ☐ I donate to local charities
- ☐ I help newcomers to Canada make their home in our community
- ☐ I speak up for fairness and treat people with kindness in my community
- ☐ I vote in local/municipal, provincial or national elections in Canada
- ☐ I am a business owner and my business contributes to our community's economy
- ☐ I contribute with my skills and experience to the local economy through my job
- ☐ I continue to build my skills and strengthen the ways I can contribute to this community (learning English, further education, building professional skills, etc.)
- ☐ I contribute to improving the natural environment (recycling, picking up garbage, planting trees, etc.)
- ☐ Other (please specify):

25. If you would like to share a story about your community contributions that you are particularly proud of, please share it here:

26. What is the most important thing community leaders should do to improve the welcoming, integration and wellbeing of immigrants in your community?

Section F: Demographics

These final demographic questions are intended to help us build programs and services that meet the needs of diverse groups. While all these questions are optional, your answers are important. We want to hear from immigrants in all different groups in your community.

27. What is your age?

- ☐ 16-19 years
- ☐ 20-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65 or older

28. Which would best describe you? (Choose all that apply.)

- ☐ Arab
- ☐ Black (e.g. Black-Caribbean, Black-African, Black-North American)
- ☐ Chinese
- ☐ Filipino
- ☐ Japanese
- ☐ Korean
- ☐ Latin American
- ☐ South Asian (e.g. East Indian Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
- ☐ Southeast Asian (e.g. Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai)
- ☐ West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghan)
- ☐ White
- ☐ Other (please specify):
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

29. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ No formal education
- ☐ Elementary school
- ☐ High school or equivalent
- ☐ Trade/technical school
- ☐ College diploma
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ PhD
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

30. How would you describe your gender identity?

- ☐ Man
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Woman
- ☐ Prefer to self-describe (please specify):

☐ Prefer not to answer

31. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community? (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

32. Are you living with a disability (physical or mental) or a chronic illness that limits your activity?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

33. If you are a member of a faith community, please share which one:

- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Christian
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Sikh
- ☐ Other (please specify):
- ☐ I am not a member of a faith community
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

34. What is your employment status?

- ☐ I am working full time
- ☐ I am working part time or casual
- ☐ I am unemployed but looking for work
- ☐ I am self-employed
- ☐ I am not in the paid workforce (retired, caring for children, not seeking work, etc.)
- ☐ Other (please specify):
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

35. 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)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (please explain):

36. Is your household income enough for the needs of you and your family?

- ☐ Our income is enough for our needs
- ☐ Our income is not quite enough for our needs
- ☐ Our income is definitely not enough for our needs
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

37. Are you in a job that is at the same level as your skills and experience?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm not currently employed
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

38. Where do you prefer to get information about community and settlement services?

liplanarkrenfrew.ca website	Yes	Maybe	No
Twitter	☐	☐	☐
Facebook	☐	☐	☐
Instagram	☐	☐	☐
Linkedin	☐	☐	☐
Community organization websites	☐	☐	☐
Emails website	☐	☐	☐
Information sessions	☐	☐	☐
Settlement worker or other community organization staff	☐	☐	☐
Local media (newspaper, radio)	☐	☐	☐
Messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.)	☐	☐	☐
Other (please specify)	☐	☐	☐

39. How did you find out about this survey?

- ☐ Local Immigration Partnership
- ☐ A community organization
- ☐ A university or college institution
- ☐ At work
- ☐ Poster
- ☐ Newspaper/media
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ A friend or personal connection
- ☐ Other (please specify):

40. Are you interested in participating in future surveys or research by the Local Immigration Partnership? The participants will receive a \$25 gift card of their choice from Valley Eats, Amazon or Walmart. You can always say no in the future if you change your mind.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If yes, please enter the following information for one of the research officers from the LIP to contact you.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email: _____

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Study Procedure

Attraction and retention of newcomers and immigrants to the Eastern Ontario region

Intro

Hello, welcome to this study. I'm [name]. Today, I will be guiding this conversation today as part of the Eastern Ontario Immigrant & Newcomer Research project for Lanark & Renfrew Counties. We thank you once again for the time you dedicated to completing the survey in November 2024. In this study, you will be asked questions about your lived experiences as a newcomer to our region.

There is no pressure. We want you to be open and honest,

Before we begin, we'd like to inform you that the session will be video recorded and transcribed for data analysis purposes. But none of your personally identifiable information will be used in any way.

We'd also like to confirm that you consent to having this session recorded [wait for response]. If you haven't signed the consent form, please do so after the session and send it back to us.

Great! Any questions so far- [address any questions].

Questions

1. Where do you live? [poll question]
2. How long have you been living in the community? [poll question]
3. Did you move straight to this community or did you move here from somewhere else in Canada? [poll question]
4. Regardless of where you moved from (country of origin or elsewhere in Canada), what influenced your decision to move to Lanark & Renfrew?
5. What was your first impression of the community, and how has that changed (if at all) over time?
6. What are some success stories or challenges you have had in finding employment, housing, education, etc. while living in the community?
7. Can you speak a little bit on some services (bank, healthcare, school, settlement agencies, etc.) you have accessed recently and what the experience was like for you?
8. What ideas or suggestions do you have for making these services more accessible?
9. What kind of resources do you wish existed in the region to support newcomers (for example, public transportation, formalized settlement services, employment services, etc.)?
10. How would you rate your sense of belonging (sense of belonging describes the state of feeling accepted and valued by others around you, and that your community is truly your home) in the community where you live? [poll question]
11. How has your sense of belonging changed over time, and what factors (if any) have contributed to that change?
12. Have you experienced any form of discrimination living in your community? [poll question]
13. If you feel comfortable, can you speak to what you think the experience was based upon? What may have been an underlying factor in that situation/s which contributed. This can be viewed from the lens of the individual, organization, community, or group.

14. What do you think are some of the strategies that can be put in place to mitigate discrimination in our communities?
15. How do you think your experiences as a newcomer in the region compare to those of your family or friends in other parts of Canada?
16. Is there anything you wish you had known before moving to the region, and what advice would you give to others in a similar situation?

Debriefing Session

Thank you so much for participating in this study. We are currently working on a report on the attractions of living and working in our region. The experiences and knowledge you have shared with us will be instrumental not only to creating this report but also in helping communities in Lanark & Renfrew make informed changes/decisions to create more welcoming environments for newcomers to the region.

Participants go into a draw to win one of 5 \$200 gift cards

Again, thank you for your participation.