GWLIP Research Committee

Auburn Larose, Waterloo Wellington Dufferin Public Health
Caroline Duvieusart-Dery, Community Engaged Scholarship Institute, University of Guelph
Edward Koning, Department of Political Science, University of Guelph
Jamile Elamin, Community Member
Kim Chuong, Community Member
Sarah Haanstra, Toward Common Ground
Shakiba Shayani, United Way, Guelph Wellington Dufferin

Many hands, voices, and minds have contributed to the creation of this report. The Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (GWLIP) gratefully acknowledges the contributions of all members of the GWLIP Research Action Committee, the support of Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington, and the County of Wellington Settlement Services.

We are thankful for the financial support from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, and the United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin, which made this project possible. Finally, thanks are due to Toward Common Ground for their facilitation and guidance through the development of the Theory of Change which underlies this research.

In gratitude,
Dipti Patel
Project Manager
Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership

Alternate accessible formats are available upon request in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. Contact GWLIP Project Manager at 519-822-1260.
Introduction

The Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (GWLIP) is a large coalition of individuals and organizations addressing the social and economic challenges that immigrants face. Our intent is to make Guelph & Wellington County truly welcoming communities for immigrants. We envision a caring, equitable community where everyone thrives.

The purpose of this report is to reflect what immigrants have told us about their experiences and challenges in Guelph and Wellington County, and to suggest actionable recommendations to improve the social and economic wellbeing and inclusion of newcomers in these communities. This research was guided by the GWLIP’s recently completed Theory of Change (2015) and guided by five research questions.

This report begins with an overview of existing data related to immigration trends nationally, provincially, and locally. The next sections will outline the research design and methodology, followed by descriptive data results and research analysis and findings. The final section presents recommendations based on the survey, focus groups and interview participants’ input.

Research Questions

Do immigrants have access to resources to meet basic needs in Guelph and Wellington County?

Do immigrants have access to services and support in Guelph and Wellington County?

Do immigrants have a sense of belonging and community connection in Guelph and Wellington County?

Do immigrants have access to meaningful employment in Guelph and Wellington County?

Do immigrants have access to education, training and skill development opportunities in Guelph and Wellington County?

Research Design and Methodology

The study is based on a mixed research paradigm: Secondary data review and primary data collection using a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative and qualitative parts of the study were conducted concurrently.

Secondary Data Review

A review of secondary data was conducted to provide background and context to the primary data collected. Major sources consulted included Statistics Canada’s Census and National Household Survey, labour market information reported by the Waterloo Wellington Dufferin Workforce Planning Board, and client data provided by local immigrant settlement agencies.

Population and Sampling Procedures

The population of the study includes immigration statuses such as permanent residents, citizens, refugees, international students or temporary residents, and visitors who have been living in Guelph or Wellington County for 10 years or less.

The sample of the study was selected by the GWLIP’s recently completed Theory of Change (2015) and guided by five research questions.

The first stage sampling includes 218 eligible participants who were immigrants with different immigration statuses, living in Guelph or Wellington County, and who had been living in Canada for 10 years or less. The respondents participated in an online quantitative survey which was accessed through the GWLIP website. Links to the online survey were circulated to the GWLIP contact network via email.

Second Stage Sampling

The second stage of sampling included both focus groups discussions and telephone interviews. Two focus group discussions were held in Guelph, including a total of 8 participants. In Wellington County, there were not enough participants in one location to hold a focus group, therefore 5 telephone interviews were conducted.

Data Collection Tools

The data collection tools used for this study were a survey questionnaire (delivered online and in hard copy) and a focus group discussion guide. The questionnaire and qualitative tools were developed based on research objectives and Theory of Change indicators developed by the Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership in 2015. Face validity and content validity techniques were used to assess the reliability of the survey tool.

\[1\] Unless otherwise specified in the text, the terms immigrant, newcomer, and permanent resident are used interchangeably throughout this report to refer to persons who have been in Canada for 10 years or less.
Ethical Considerations

Special care was taken to maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the information provided by participants in this research. All participants signed consent forms or gave consent online before participating in this research study. Participants who were interviewed by phone received a consent form by email and their consent was verbally recorded before beginning each interview. GWLIP will be responsible for keeping all the consent forms and research documents safe and will ensure that confidentiality is strictly maintained.

Limitations of the Data

Results of this research should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size and the convenience sampling methodology chosen. Researchers relied heavily on service providers, particularly in the local settlement agencies, to recruit participants. The result is that the sample is influenced by the client eligibility criteria of these service agencies, and skewed for those who are already aware of at least one support service provider.

Immigration Trends - Canada

Today, 1 in every 5 people in Canada was born outside of the country. Newcomers account for 6,775,800 people, roughly 20% of the Canadian population. From 2006 to 2011 approximately 1,162,900 people immigrated to Canada, predominantly from Asia (including the Middle East), followed by Africa, the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Currently, people born outside of Canada mostly live in four provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec and Alberta. Most newcomers settle in the major Canadian urban centres.

Recently, driven by the rapidly increasing numbers of people fleeing the ongoing civil war in Syria, the Canadian government committed to welcoming 25,000-35,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016. As a result, in 2015-16, 320,932 people landed across Canada, the highest number of arrivals in a single year since modern record-keeping began.

With the recent national influx of newcomers and immigration policy shifts, immigration demographic trends are also shifting. New immigrants are starting to settle in secondary cities and rural areas beyond city centers.

Immigration Trends - Ontario

In the province of Ontario, one in four people is foreign-born. Every year, over 100,000 immigrants arrive in the province. This is almost half of all immigrants arriving in Canada. In 2015-16 Ontario received the greatest share of immigrants (37.3%) of the 320,932 people that landed in Canada.

Immigration Trends - Guelph and Wellington County

This section presents a profile of recent permanent residents arriving in Guelph Wellington in terms of numbers, immigration class, and top non official languages spoken at home.

In 2011 there were 208,360 people living in Guelph Wellington. Immigrants born outside of Canada made up 21% of Guelph’s entire population and 11% of Wellington County’s.

Secondary Data Review

Imigration Trends - Canada

Recently, driven by the rapidly increasing numbers of people fleeing the ongoing civil war in Syria, the Canadian government committed to welcoming 25,000-35,000 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016. As a result, in 2015-16, 320,932 people landed across Canada, the highest number of arrivals in a single year since modern record-keeping began.

With the recent national influx of newcomers and immigration policy shifts, immigration demographic trends are also shifting. New immigrants are starting to settle in secondary cities and rural areas beyond city centers.

Immigration Trends - Ontario

In the province of Ontario, one in four people is foreign-born. Every year, over 100,000 immigrants arrive in the province. This is almost half of all immigrants arriving in Canada. In 2015-16 Ontario received the greatest share of immigrants (37.3%) of the 320,932 people that landed in Canada.

Immigration Trends - Guelph and Wellington County

This section presents a profile of recent permanent residents arriving in Guelph Wellington in terms of numbers, immigration class, and top non official languages spoken at home.

In 2011 there were 208,360 people living in Guelph Wellington. Immigrants born outside of Canada made up 21% of Guelph’s entire population and 11% of Wellington County’s.

Figure 1: Permanent resident arrivals in Guelph and Wellington County, 2010-2015

Source: IRCC 2018. Permanent Residents by Census Division and Immigration Category

7 National Household Survey, 2011.
Between 2006 and 2011 approximately 700 newcomers immigrated directly to Guelph-Wellington every year.

From 2011 to 2014, the number of permanent residents immigrating to Guelph and Wellington County remained more or less similar to the earlier period between 2006 and 2011. However, 2015 showed a 7% increase from 2014, reaching a record high of 730 Permanent Residents arrivals in Guelph and Wellington.

**Permanent Residents in Guelph and Wellington County by Immigration Category**

Figure 2 below demonstrates trends in the number of permanent residents arriving in Guelph and Wellington County from 2011 to 2015 by immigration category.

Notably, we see a fairly steady increase in the number of Economic immigrants. The number of people arriving in the Family and Refugee classes has remained fairly consistent, ranging between 205 - 280, and 45 - 65, respectively. It is important to note the trends in the immigration classes of newcomers to our communities for the purposes of service delivery and planning. For example, those arriving under Economic immigrant categories will have higher language proficiency and education level, and may require greater support for employment in their professions. Those arriving in the Family class may have a greater need for language training.

**Figure 3: Top 10 languages of permanent residents in Wellington County**

Figure 3 and 4 show the top 10 languages spoken most often at home (other than French or English) in Guelph and Wellington County according to the 2011 National Household Survey. This data provides a historical perspective as it shows languages for immigrants overall, not just recent immigrants.

**Settlement Services in Guelph and Wellington County**

There are two organizations that provide settlement services to newcomers in Guelph and Wellington; Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington (ISGW), and the County of Wellington Settlement Services. The services provided include support in understanding and accessing health, education, employment, language training and translation / interpretation services, as well as programs and activities to promote social connections. Both organizations serve newcomers arriving under Permanent Resident, Convention Refugee, and Caregivers categories. ISGW is also able to support Canadian Citizens with settlement and immigration needs. Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington is located in Guelph and mainly serves residents of the city. The County of Wellington Settlement Services are based in Fergus, and are able to provide service to immigrants throughout the County through satellite locations in Erin, Rockwood, Mount Forest, Drayton, Arthur, and Guelph.

Figures 5 and 6 show the top 5 countries of origin for clients served by ISGW and County of Wellington, Settlement Services in 2015.

---


Source: IRCC 2016. Permanent Residents by Census Division and Immigration Category


---

The top languages spoken by ISGW clients in Guelph in 2015 were Tigrinya and Amharic, languages spoken in Eritrea and Ethiopia. In Wellington County, the top language of clients accessing Settlement services was Tagalog, which is spoken in the Philippines.

**Education Level of Immigrants in Guelph and Wellington County**

As per the National Household Survey data of 2011, the number of recent immigrants to Guelph Wellington between 2006 and 2011 was 3345; 2965 in Guelph, and 380 in the County of Wellington. The Education level for immigrant population aged 15 years and above is represented in Figure 7.

Interestingly, recent immigrants to Guelph and Wellington County are more likely to have a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree. This can be correlated to the trend of more economic immigrants coming to Guelph and Wellington. Economic Immigrants tend to have higher educational levels as this is one of the prerequisites for selection in the immigration process. Wellington County has more than double the percentage of recent immigrants with no certificate, diploma or degree compared to Guelph. This may be reflective of the employment opportunities and workforce needs in urban versus rural communities. It would be interesting to see if a correlation exists between their education and labour force status and income level.

**Immigrant Employment in Guelph and Wellington County**

In 2011, there were 2690 recent immigrants 15 years and older in the labour force in Guelph and Wellington; 2385 in Guelph, and 305 in Wellington County. Figure 8 shows the labour force status of recent immigrants in both Guelph and Wellington.

Interestingly, almost one third of recent immigrants above the age of 15 years were not in the labour force in Guelph and Wellington.

**Comparison of Median income of Recent Immigrants and the General Population in Guelph and Wellington County**

Figure 9 shows a comparison between the median incomes. It should be noted that the data for the general population includes recent immigrants.

The median income of recent immigrants in Guelph is 64% of the income of the general population. In other words, recent immigrants to Guelph had a median income that was $12,106 lower than that of the general population, in spite of their higher level of education. Interestingly, they seem to be doing better than the general population in Wellington County. A note of caution here in drawing this inference as the number of recent immigrants in Wellington County is low and that can skew the data.

**Occupation of Recent Immigrants in Guelph and Wellington**

In 2014 there were 42,593 local jobs in Guelph and Wellington County. This is a growth of 13% over the previous 5 years. Immigrants involved in the Guelph Wellington labour force in 2011 were predominantly working in the manufacturing industry. Figure 10 (next page) demonstrates the top 5 sectors of employment for immigrants in Guelph and Wellington County (excluding Guelph).

The manufacturing industry is at the top for employing recent immigrants in Guelph and Wellington. The health care and social assistance industry is in second place for County of Wellington – possibly due to Personal Support Workers or Live in Caregivers.

Of the 270 local businesses consulted for the County of Wellington Economic Development Strategy in 2014, many reported experiencing difficulty attracting employees from beyond Wellington County. Of those consulted, 39% expressed difficulty with hiring because of lack
of skill or not enough applicants for a posted position. In 2014, manufacturing, agriculture, health care, construction and transportation were the top sectors providing employment in Wellington County overall. Agriculture, manufacturing and health care sectors experienced the most growth between 2009 and 2014.

According to the 2016 Employer One Survey (conducted annually by the Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin), of 184 employers who completed the survey, 10% reported receiving free assistance from an employment agency serving immigrant and visible minority groups to meet their workforce needs. The Workforce Planning Board reported that there were no survey responses to the question: “Do you know how to access immigrant talent?” in the 2016 Employer One survey. One survey respondent did comment: “I would be interested to learn how to assist new immigrants into our workforce.”

Agriculture, Arts and Manufacturing is the only sector to report including international recruitment in their staffing strategies in addition to recruitment nationally, provincially and locally. Among respondents to the Employer One survey who anticipated growing their business, 51% were within the manufacturing sector. This finding is consistent with the top growth industries noted in the 2014 County of Wellington Economic Development Strategy.

While immigrant employment is currently concentrated in manufacturing and educational services, the results of both the Employer One survey and the research conducted for the Guelph Wellington Economic Development Strategy suggest that there is an opportunity to increase employers’ capacity to recruit and hire immigrants beyond these sectors.

Research Results & Analysis

This section provides a detailed analysis of the primary data collected using quantitative and qualitative methods. In total 218 participants completed a quantitative survey (including online and hard copy surveys). Qualitative data was also collected in two focus groups and five telephone interviews.

Survey Participants Profile

Data was collected about survey participants’ current community of residence, age, sex, length of time in Canada, immigration status, countries of origin, languages spoken most often at home, and highest level of education completed.

Table 1 below provides survey participants’ geographical representation by their residence in Guelph and townships of Wellington County. Almost 90% of survey respondents lived in Guelph and the remaining 10% lived in various townships in the County of Wellington. Table 2 provides a summary overview of the survey participant profile.

Table 1: Percent distribution of survey respondents by place of residence in Guelph and Wellington

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Residence</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guelph</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre Wellington (Fergus, Elora)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington North (Arthur, Mount Forest)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guelph/Eramosa (Rockwood, etc.)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minto (Minto, Harriston, Palmerston)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Puslinch, Aberfoyle, Morriston, Erin, etc.)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GWLP Immigrant Survey, 2016
Access to Resources to Meet Basic Needs

For the purpose of this research, “basic needs” is defined as access to healthy food, good physical and mental health, and affordable housing and transportation. The findings presented below reflect data collected through quantitative and qualitative methods.

Access to Healthy Food

Figure 11 shows that respondent’s reported access to healthy food is almost identical in urban and rural communities. Overall, approximately 80% of participants in both Guelph and Wellington County reported having access to healthy food “always” or “often.” Between 19% and 21% of participants in Guelph and Wellington respectively, reported only having access to healthy food “sometimes,” “rarely,” or “never.” Looked at in another way, it is striking that 42% of respondents in both Guelph and Wellington reported not having access to healthy food at least some of the time. It was mentioned during the focus groups and interviews that it can be difficult to access culturally familiar foods, particularly in smaller rural communities.

Physical and Mental Health

Figures 12 and 13 show respondents’ self-rated physical and mental health.

Data Analysis and Findings by Research Question

Table 2: Survey respondent profile summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>36% and 29% respondents were in the age group of 15-24 years and 25-44 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>74% female, 24% male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time in Canada</td>
<td>Fairly recent immigrants: 53% less than 3 years, 37% between 3 and 7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Status</td>
<td>Family reunification, Federal Skilled Workers, and International Students representation on survey range between 20-25% each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Origin</td>
<td>Top 5: Philippines, India, China, Eritrea, and Mexico. Survey participants represented 63 countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages spoken most often at home</td>
<td>Top 5: Spanish, Tagalog, Arabic, Tigrinya, and Uzbek and Nepali (tie for 5th). Total: 41 languages reported. It is worth noting that although Spanish was the most commonly reported language, Spanish speaking participants were from 11 different countries and so are not reflected in the top five countries of origin as might be expected.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest level of education completed</td>
<td>64% university degree at Bachelor level or higher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


71% and 78% of survey participants reported ‘very good’ to ‘excellent’ physical and mental health respectively. This is consistent with what is widely known as the “healthy immigrant phenomenon,” which describes the impact of the selective nature of international migration resulting in above average health among recent immigrants. Those who are healthy tend to be the ones who can endure the migration.
Reported Physical Health Rating. (N=201).
Source: GWLIP 2016 Immigrant Survey, Self-reported physical health in Guelph and Wellington.

Figure 12: Survey respondents’ self-reported physical health in Guelph and Wellington

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reported Mental Health Rating. (N=200).
Source: GWLIP 2016 Immigrant Survey, Self-reported mental health in Guelph and Wellington.

Figure 13: Survey respondents’ self-reported mental health in Guelph and Wellington

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Access to Affordable Housing and Transportation

43% of the survey respondents found housing affordable in Guelph and Wellington County, while 47% found it somewhat affordable. The remaining 11% found housing not affordable. It is striking that a total of 58% of respondents reported challenges with the affordability of housing. Housing was considered more affordable for survey participants who had been in Canada for more than seven years. This provides evidence to suggest that newcomers to Guelph and Wellington County (in this case, less than 7 years) may not have affordable housing.

The majority of survey respondents (85%) find transportation affordable, while only 15% of the participants do not. However, challenges and frustrations related to transportation were strongly emphasized by both rural and urban focus group and interview participants for whom access to transportation impedes employment, events, services, and amenities. For example, two participants related the following experience. Furthermore, receiving countries often have admission policies that result in positive selection for healthy individuals. In Canada, potential immigrants are evaluated using a points system that includes factors such as age, education level, English/French language proficiency, work experience, and other attributes that are shown to contribute to better settlement outcomes, including good health.36

Access to Other Basic Needs

In addition to challenges in accessing affordable (and reliable) transportation, several focus group and interview participants reported concerns around lack of affordable housing, access to culturally familiar food and adequate clothing for winter months. A recently arrived refugee living in rural Wellington County shared the following experience:

“Shelter is ok, food is not that bad. […] it is a bit complicated we don’t have most of the things I am used to, the ones that we can get it are ok. We don’t have them in [my town], the sponsor might take us to Kitchener to try and get some. Clothing we have some, but to deal with the cold not enough but ok (…) After we have gone through one year of sponsorship we have to take things on our own for now the house is expensive.”

(Focus group participant; September 19, 2016)

“We have one car and my husband had to start work early in the morning one day. He waited for the bus and it did not come. So I had to wake up my kids at six in the morning put them in the car, as I needed car to take the kids to school […] I think buses should be more frequent for everyone […]”

(Focus group participant, September 26, 2016)

“Shelter is ok, food is not that bad. […] it is a bit complicated we don’t have most of the things I am used to, the ones that we can get it are ok. We don’t have them in [my town], the sponsor might take us to Kitchener to try and get some. Clothing we have some, but to deal with the cold not enough but ok (…) After we have gone through one year of sponsorship we have to take things on our own for now the house is expensive.”

(Focus group participant; September 19, 2016)

Access to Other Basic Needs

In addition to challenges in accessing affordable (and reliable) transportation, several focus group and interview participants reported concerns around lack of affordable housing, access to culturally familiar food and adequate clothing for winter months. A recently arrived refugee living in rural Wellington County shared the following experience:

“In Guelph, if you miss a bus, you are stuck for a half hour.”

(Focus group participant; September 19, 2016)

“We have one car and my husband had to start work early in the morning one day. He waited for the bus and it did not come. So I had to wake up my kids at six in the morning put them in the car, as I needed car to take the kids to school […] I think buses should be more frequent for everyone […]”

(Focus group participant, September 26, 2016)

Access to Other Basic Needs

In addition to challenges in accessing affordable (and reliable) transportation, several focus group and interview participants reported concerns around lack of affordable housing, access to culturally familiar food and adequate clothing for winter months. A recently arrived refugee living in rural Wellington County shared the following experience:

“In Guelph, if you miss a bus, you are stuck for a half hour.”

(Focus group participant; September 19, 2016)

“We have one car and my husband had to start work early in the morning one day. He waited for the bus and it did not come. So I had to wake up my kids at six in the morning put them in the car, as I needed car to take the kids to school […] I think buses should be more frequent for everyone […]”

(Focus group participant, September 26, 2016)

In contrast to the above quotes, it is worth noting that a few interview and focus group participants had recently been able to buy homes in Guelph and Wellington County, despite earlier financial hardships.

Basic Needs Conclusions

The results of the survey, focus groups, and interviews show that participants are generally able to meet their basic needs. The primary concerns are with transportation and affordable housing, which were stressors especially for more recent immigrants. In general, although challenges persist for many

years in some cases, participants reported greater worry and difficulty with meeting basic needs in their early years in Canada.

Access to Services and Support

This section presents research participants’ experiences with regard to awareness and access to various services, as well as the barriers or challenges that they experienced in trying to get the help that they needed in a timely way. This section presents the results of both quantitative and qualitative research.

Figure 14 illustrates immigrants’ awareness about settlement and non-settlement services in Guelph and Wellington County.

Survey participants had a high level of awareness of health, education, and settlement/immigration services in Guelph and Wellington and comparatively lower awareness of Employment, financial, and housing support services. These lower awareness scores should be correlated to the fact that 53% of survey respondents had been in Canada for less than 3 years. During these initial years, settlement priorities are very specific to individual family circumstances and priorities.

Figure 15 shows which services survey respondents had accessed at the time that they completed the survey. Only those respondents who reported knowing about a service are counted in Figure 15. The use of services remains fairly consistent with respondents’ awareness of services; health, education, and settlement/immigration services were the most utilized among participants who were aware of them. Some focus group and interview participants stated that they were unable to access the settlement and language training due to eligibility criteria.

For example, Citizens, Visitors, international students are not eligible for free settlement and language training.

Figure 16, below, shows the percentage of respondents who found the services that they had accessed to be useful.

Focus group and interview participants from the City of Guelph and County of Wellington reported high levels of satisfaction with most services that they accessed, particularly health, settlement/immigration, social, and education services. These services are often the first point of contact and promote initial feeling of connection in a community. According to one participant living in Wellington County:
Another focus group participant shared:

“It was hard to get to the family doctor clinic as it is far off from and clinic hours’ conflicts with my work shift.”

(Focus group participant; September 19, 2016).

Access to Service Conclusions

Overall, participants reported a good awareness of settlement, education, and health services, and found them to be useful when they did access them. However, many focus group and interview participants expressed challenges in accessing health services, including difficulty with transportation, trouble accessing doctor/specialist appointments due to language barriers, and difficulty understanding the referral and waitlist process. Services with slightly lower awareness were employment, financial, and housing supports. These results suggest that more could be done to increase awareness about various services, including how to navigate different service systems like accessing a medical specialist.

Belonging and Community Connection

The factors that contribute to immigrants’ sense of belonging include positive experiences of being welcomed in the community, a sense of safety and security, the belief that diversity is understood and valued in the community, the ability to meet their basic family needs and ensure a decent standard of living, and the ability to make social and professional connections. This section presents the results of both quantitative and qualitative data collection.

Welcoming and Safe Communities

Survey participants were asked to rate the degree to which they felt welcome in Guelph and Wellington County. 77% of the survey respondents reported feeling welcome “often” or “always,” and 81% reported that they have friends from different religions and cultures in Guelph or Wellington County. For example, one participant living in Wellington County explained: “People we know are in the community are 100% welcoming; we feel at home and have a lot of friends” (Interview participant; September 24, 2016).

Despite these positive findings, about 23% of survey respondents found it difficult to meet others and build social relationships, while 43% of respondents found it easy to meet others and build social relationships. Despite this, the majority of interview participants reported feeling welcome, “Always” or “Often” (68%, and 24%, respectively) in Guelph and Wellington County. Some participants reported feeling a sense of covert discrimination. One participant explains this feeling: “You don’t hear it directly but you sense and feel it. You have to be very strong to persist. It’s not as bad as some other places.” (Focus group participant; September 19, 2016). Despite this, the majority of interview and focus group participants reported feeling safe, “Always” or “Often” (68%, and 24%, respectively) in Guelph and Wellington County. For example:

“I am so happy that I don’t have to worry about violent crimes in Guelph. Safety is the first thing that comes to my mind. In the summer I take the last bus at midnight and I feel safe as a female. I have friends. It’s a friendly and a comfortable community.”

(Focus group participant, September 26, 2016)
Access to Community Space for Cultural Events and Feeling out of Place

66% of survey respondents said that they had access to community spaces for cultural events. Table 3, below, illustrates participants’ reported feelings of being “out of place” in various settings due to their language, culture, religion, or ethnicity.

Table 3: Rounded percentage of participants who feel out of place at particular locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Spaces</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Participants’ responses were also generally positive regarding not feeling out of place because of their culture, religion, race, or language. However, it is worth noting that about 1/3 of respondents report having feelings of being out of place in certain contexts, most strikingly at work, school, and in neighbourhoods. The following two quotes offer a good example of the very different experiences had by parents of young children in the school system.

“I find it difficult especially with my child who is 6 years old. School registration was simple but because of my language barrier, I find communicating with teachers difficult. If they sent homework notes, I don’t understand what they are trying to communicate and I can’t have an interpreter all the time. It is very confusing at times, my child tells me what teacher has said to him and it sometimes makes me feels uncomfortable and unsure. I do not know whether it is discrimination or maybe the teacher treats my child differently from other children in the class because of the language. That is how I feel and how my child feels sometimes.”

(Focus group participant; September 26, 2016)

“I started connecting with my kids’ school, before we arrived here. Even my experience with my daughter’s daycare was very positive. They even asked me to write most common phrases in Portuguese, for them to use with my daughter. My kids learned English very fast. I was more concerned about them but they learned English language better than me. My son has made friends. I am very thankful for the friends that I have found through the school system.”

(Focus group participant; September 26, 2016)

Volunteering Opportunities

Civic engagement and opportunities to have one’s voice heard foster a sense of belonging and community connection. Experiences reported by focus group and interview participants about their ability to engage in volunteer opportunities were varied. While some felt connected and engaged in the community through volunteer activities, others encountered difficulties related to awareness of engagement and volunteer opportunities, or not receiving replies to their applications for volunteer opportunities. Still others reported that they would like to be involved in the community, but did not have time as their priority was to earn an income to support their family. Below are some experiences shared by the participants:

“I am convincing people to come to Wellington County and succeeded in bringing two families. It is not easy because it is too far of a drive from Toronto but we have a good place here, which allows for bonding with family away from shopping malls.”

(Interview participant; October 3, 2016)

“We have a lot of volunteer work here; we are involved in community […] We volunteer and teach Spanish. I am a member of Lions Club; I have a lot of stuff going on. We have a community garden in my company and we grow tomatoes and peppers and share it with people at work and at post office.”

(Interview participant; September 24, 2016)

Belonging and Community Connection Conclusions

The findings of the section indicate that participants generally consider Guelph and Wellington County safe and welcoming. Many have access to spaces for cultural events, and find it easy to build relationships with people from other cultures. However, the findings also show that many participants face barriers to community involvement, have felt out of place because of their language, culture, religion, or ethnicity, and that inclusion experiences within the school system are varied.

Nevertheless, immigrant communities have made demonstrably positive contributions to the community such as the Guelph Punjabi Cultural Group’s fundraising of $10,160.00 for Guelph General Hospital, and the Muslim Cultural Group’s fundraising of $1000.00 annually to both the Upper Grand, and Wellington Catholic District School Boards for student scholarships.

Access to Meaningful Employment

This section reports the findings of qualitative and quantitative research tools on questions related to immigrant employment in Guelph and Wellington.
Survey Respondents’ Sectors of Employment

65% of the participants were employed in some fashion at the time that they completed the survey (August – October 2016). Of those employed, 61% had full time employment (30 hours or more per week), and 29% were working part time (less than 30 hours per week). The survey participants’ top 4 sectors of employment are shown in figure 17.

Figure 17: Survey respondents’ top 4 sectors of employment in Guelph and Wellington County

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business/finance/realtor/administration</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/law/social/community and government services</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing and utilities</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GWLIP 2016 Immigrant Survey. Participant employment by sector. (N=133)

The manufacturing and utilities sector tops the list in terms of employing immigrants, followed by education/law/social and government services, health, and the business/finance sector. This finding is consistent with the Census data on top 5 industries hiring immigrants in Guelph Wellington (see Figure 10 on page 12 of this report).

Job Search Methods

One of the settlement services provided to immigrants at no cost to them in Guelph and Wellington is job search support. Figure 18, below, provides information on job search methods used successfully by survey participants to find the job that they had at the time that they completed the survey.

Figure 18: Top 4 job search methods used by survey respondents to find current job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment services</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional networks</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet search</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GWLIP 2016 Immigrant Survey, Participant use of job search methods to find current job. (N=131)

The top three methods used were internet search, getting information through friends, and professional network. It is noteworthy that only 9% participants stated use of employment services for job search.

Work Place Integration

Participants were asked whether they felt that they were treated “differently” at work because of their ethnicity. 55% said no and 45% said yes. When interpreting this finding, it is important to keep in mind that it was not specified in the question wording whether being “treated differently” referred to positive or negative differences. The majority of participants reported feeling that employers have positive attitudes towards immigrants’ skills and experience.

Employment in Chosen Fields

55% of the survey participants who were employed either part time or full time were working in the fields for which they had education or training. 44% of respondents were not working in their field of education or training.

Of those who reported not working in their field, the majority (44%) cited needing additional training as the reason. Lack of Canadian experience (16%), lack of network in the community (14%) followed, and “I don’t know how to get into my field” and “lack of jobs” were almost tied at about 12%. Interestingly, only 2% of respondents indicated that language was a barrier to working in their field.

Employment in Chosen Fields

55% of the survey participants who were employed either part time or full time were working in the fields for which they had education or training. 44% of respondents were not working in their field of education or training.

Of those who reported not working in their field, the majority (44%) cited needing additional training as the reason. Lack of Canadian experience (16%), lack of network in the community (14%) followed, and “I don’t know how to get into my field” and “lack of jobs” were almost tied at about 12%. Interestingly, only 2% of respondents indicated that language was a barrier to working in their field.

Barriers to Employment

Figure 19 illustrates the distribution of reasons for not working as reported by respondents who were not working at the time that they completed the survey.

It is striking that of the 36% of respondents who reported not working at the time of the survey, 47% identified transportation as a barrier to employment. Focus group and interview participants identified similar obstacles to employment, including language barriers and lack of personal and professional networks, difficulty with the Canadian professional accreditation system, a sense that employers don’t understand their skills, international credential recognition processes, and shifting labor markets. The following quotes from participants illustrate these various challenges:

“I do not speak English so it is difficult to find job. I have applied to [a temp agency] and their process requires me to take tests which are difficult with my language barrier. With jobs I think the best way is to have family and friends and have the rights contacts … that can help you get a job.”

(Focus group participant; September 26, 2016)

“I was a Restaurant manager back home. It is hard to apply for manager job. As one is required to accept position at lower wages and need to demonstrate your skills and capabilities to your employer, I...”
Access to Meaningful Employment Conclusions

The research results show that immigrants still face significant barriers to finding meaningful employment that matches their skills and experience in Guelph and Wellington County. Although 65% of the survey participants are working full-time, only half are working in their chosen professions.

While transportation was emphasized as a barrier in both qualitative and quantitative data, participants also reported other intersecting challenges, including difficulty relating work experience to the Canadian context, lack of personal and professional networks, lack of recognition of international experience and credentials, and the perception that employers do not consider international qualifications to be equivalent to Canadian qualifications. There is an interesting difference to note between the employment challenges described by focus group and interview participants and the fact that the majority of survey respondents reported feeling that employers have positive attitudes towards immigrants’ skills and experience.

The majority of employers in Guelph and Wellington are small and medium-sized companies that may have limited knowledge and experience with foreign credential recognition and international work experiences. Constantly shifting labour market demands also impact employment outcomes for immigrants. For example, jobs that were in demand when immigrant applicants are considered for immigration, may change by the time they land in Canada.

Access to Education, Training and Skill Development Opportunities

This final section presents survey participants’ experiences in accessing education, training and skill development opportunities to integrate into their chosen professions. In many cases these are professions in which they have a high level of training and experience. In Canada regulated professions require licensing, while other non-regulated professions might require additional training to comply with industry standards and processes.

Survey participants were asked if they need additional licensing, training, or education to work in their field. 56% participants said yes, 33% said no, and 11% did not know. Of the 56% of respondents who indicated that they needed education or training, 52% did not know how to access education, licensing, training and skill development opportunities and 76% did not know about financial support available for education, licensing, training and skill development opportunities.

Access to Education, Training and Skill Development Opportunities Conclusions

The majority of the participants who said that they needed additional education or training to get into their chosen profession need information about the services and programs that exist to support them. There is a particularly striking lack of awareness of financial supports to help with professional development and accreditation. These findings suggest both a service gap, and an opportunity to improve promotion and referral to education, training, accreditation, and financial supports in Guelph and Wellington County.

“Since landing in Canada I am not able to work in my professional field as credential recognition is strenuous process. So far I have to pay for certified translation of more than 200 documents. And there is no help and proper guidance for these processes.”

(Focus group participant; September 26, 2016)

“It is really hard for people to get their head around what I have done. If I could explain myself, it would be good but I’m not using all the right buzz words or the Canadian terms. I want to sit with someone who is not trying to get me a minimum wage job but who can help me to pitch myself at the kind of work that I want to do.”

(Focus group participant; September 19, 2016)

“Since landing in Canada I am not able to work in my professional field as credential recognition is strenuous process. So far I have to pay for certified translation of more than 200 documents. And there is no help and proper guidance for these processes.”

(Focus group participant; September 26, 2016)
Key Findings and Recommendations

The purpose of this research was to reflect what immigrants have told us about their experiences and challenges in Guelph and Wellington County, and to suggest actionable recommendations to improve the social and economic wellbeing and inclusion of newcomers in these communities. This section presents a summary of key findings and recommended actions.

Mental Health, Physical Health, and Safety

71% and 78% of survey participants reported “very good” or “excellent” physical and mental health (respectively), and 98% reported feeling safe “always” or “often.” It should be noted that the sample is not representative of the immigrant population for this survey. However, it is encouraging that participants reported such high levels of health and feelings of safety in Guelph and Wellington.

Access to Healthy Food

While 58% of survey respondents said that they “always” had access to healthy food, the remaining 42% responded that they had access to healthy food “often,” “sometimes”, “rarely”, or “never”. It is concerning that almost half of all respondents in Guelph and Wellington face some difficulty in accessing healthy food.

Transportation

The majority of survey respondents (85%) find transportation to be affordable. However, of the 36% of respondents who were not working, 47% identified transportation as a barrier to employment. It is important to note that the research covered urban and rural areas in which the availability of public transportation varies widely. Challenges related to transportation have a ripple effect through aspects of social and economic wellbeing including the ability to meet basic needs, access services, and earn a living.

Access to Healthy Food

Recommendations

- Include immigrant perspective and access to culturally appropriate food in food security planning.
- Ensure that information about food supports is accessible to immigrant communities.

Recommendations

- Include immigrant perspective in housing policy development, including differences in family size and multi-generational living norms to increase access to affordable, decent housing.
- Improve promotion and communication about housing assistance resources, including specific strategies to reach immigrant communities.

Housing

Survey respondents reported concerns around the affordability of housing and low familiarity with housing and financial support services. 58% of respondents reported finding housing to be either “somewhat affordable”, or “not affordable”. Participants who had been in Canada for less than 7 years were more likely to face challenges with the affordability of housing. In addition, 43% of respondents were unaware of housing support services.

Recommendations

- Include immigrant perspective in housing policy development, including differences in family size and multi-generational living norms to increase access to affordable, decent housing.
- Improve promotion and communication about housing assistance resources, including specific strategies to reach immigrant communities.

Employment

Of the 65% of respondents who were working either full-time or part-time, almost half of them (44%) are not working in their area of education or training. Of those not working in their field, 44% said that they needed additional training. 49% of respondents had accessed employment services, and only 9% of respondents who were employed had used employment services to find their current job. This apparently low engagement with employment services could be an area of opportunity, considering that employment service providers are able to not only support job search, but also to offer referrals to other supports such as training, wage subsidy incentive programs, professional mentorship, and internships.

Recommendations

- Include immigrant perspectives in cultural and recreational planning including increasing access to affordable public spaces for cultural events.

Belonging and Community Connections

Almost one quarter (23%) of survey respondents reported feeling unwelcome at some times, and 22% reported finding it difficult to meet others and build social relationships. In addition to this, participants’ experiences of having ever felt out of place in public or community spaces because of their language, culture, religion, or ethnicity indicate opportunities to do more to increase inclusion and belonging: 27% reported having felt out of place in their neighborhoods, 29% at work, 23% at school, and 25% in community spaces.

Recommendations

- Increase awareness and provide supports for employers to understand international credential assessments and the educational and professional sector profile of immigrants in the area.
- Target promotion of employment support services to immigrant communities.
- Increase opportunities for information-sharing, connection with employers, and professional networking for immigrant job-seekers.
- Ensure that realistic and up to date information about career paths, required education and accreditation, and labour market needs is available to immigrants both pre- and post-arrival.

Recommendations

- Include immigrant perspectives in cultural and recreational planning including increasing access to affordable public spaces for cultural events.

Recommendations

- Include immigrant perspectives in cultural and recreational planning including increasing access to affordable public spaces for cultural events.
• Increase connection and collaborations between community groups to promote awareness and celebration of diversity.
• Develop initiatives to increase inclusion in neighborhoods, workplaces and schools.

Suggestions for Further Research

Mine 2016 Census to compare immigrant and non-immigrant populations on a variety of factors including income, education, employment, community connections, and sense of belonging.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Detailed profile of survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (N=214)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24 years</td>
<td>10.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 years</td>
<td>35.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 years</td>
<td>28.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 years and above</td>
<td>8.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (N=216)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>72.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer not to respond</td>
<td>1.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time in Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-3 years</td>
<td>52.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years (+) up to 7 years</td>
<td>36.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years (+) up to 10 years</td>
<td>10.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration categories/status (N=215)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal skilled workers</td>
<td>22.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Sponsorship/reunification</td>
<td>20.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>14.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International students</td>
<td>21.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work permit holders/temporary foreign workers</td>
<td>6.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in care givers</td>
<td>9.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 5 countries of Origin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top 5 languages spoken at home (N=197)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tigrinya</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbek and Nepali (tied for 5th)</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level (N=214)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No formal education</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary/elementary school</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school or equivalent</td>
<td>18.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade/technical school</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community college diploma</td>
<td>9.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>33.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master degree</td>
<td>22.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>8.41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top 5 countries of Origin:
- Philippines: 12.4%
- India: 6.5%
- China: 6%
- Eritrea: 5.5%
- Mexico: 4%

Top 5 languages spoken at home:
- Spanish: 13.7%
- Tagalog: 7.6%
- Arabic: 7.1%
- Tigrinya: 4.1%
- Uzbek and Nepali (tied for 5th): 3.6%
How to get in touch with us:
Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership, Project Manager
Dipti Patel
dipti.patel@guelph.ca
519-822-1260 ext. 2565
guelphwellingtonlip.ca