

2023 GUELPH-
WELLINGTON
IMMIGRANT SURVEY
REPORT

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to summarize the findings of the 2023 Guelph-Wellington Immigration Partnership (GWLIP) Immigrant Survey. The survey gathered 219 responses from immigrants living in the Guelph-Wellington Region. The findings highlight the real-life encounters, and the perceived benefits immigrants gain from the Guelph Wellington community, along with the challenges they encounter. The report then presents their recommendations for improvement.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 219 immigrants participated in the survey and included the major categories of immigrants-economic, family and refugee categories. The survey had an over-representation of Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel Visa holders (CUAET). Most participants had lived in Canada for 1 to 5 years.
- Participants represented multiple languages and religious categories and 82% were visible minorities. Participants from Muslim and Hindu faith communities were the highest represented (13% and 10% respectively) after Christian faith communities (29%). Most participants (80%) spoke more than one language. Ukrainian (17.4%) was the most reported language used, besides the official languages of Canada, followed by Spanish (12.5%) and Tigrinya (10.3%). More than 89% of participants reported speaking English well.

Contribution of immigrants

- The majority of participants reported being good neighbors (54.5%), speaking up when they saw unfairness (37.5%), and supporting environmental initiatives (through recycling, picking up garbage, planting trees, etc.). Other participants also reported volunteering for immigrant services, healthcare services, and leading community boards.

Education, Employment and Income

- Immigrants were highly educated with most (62.1%) possessing at least one postsecondary degree (Bachelor, Master and/or Ph.D.) compared to 23% of the general population. 37.9% of participants reported that their job was aligned with their level of education.
- Around 58% of participants were employed while 3.9% were unemployed and 7% were not a part of the workforce.

Housing

- Many participants reported frustrations with their living conditions. Many participants indicated their housing needs were unmet, especially in relation to the affordability of housing (22 participants) and the space and size needs of the dwelling (13).

Settlement Supports

- Health services were the most used community service, followed by recreation and transportation.
- Most services were rated highly by participants. Many positive responses were reported for health services (72.9%), recreational services (79.5%), and transportation services (77.6%).
- Housing services were reported as “poor/acceptable” by 54.6%, which, when read in conjunction with corresponding qualitative responses, the authors interpret as a reflection of general challenges with housing rather than dissatisfaction with housing support services.

Community Integration

- Guelph-Wellington was rated a highly welcoming community by 70.8% of the participants, while 5.6% of the participants found it unwelcoming.
- A large majority (73.6%) also felt a high sense of belonging to the Guelph-Wellington community. Participants reported feeling a sense of belonging quickly, either as soon as they arrived (17.2%) or within 2 years (47%).

- Participants moved to Guelph-Wellington mostly due to the presence of family/friends, for employment, or for post-secondary institutions.
- Settlement in Guelph-Wellington was a positive experience for participants, who reported it as excellent (32.8%) or good (42.2%). 53.7% of participants were highly satisfied with their lives while 11.4% were not very satisfied.
- Most participants reported some level of isolation (74.4%), however only 6.4% reported a great deal of it, while 25% reported experiencing no isolation at all.
- 34 participants (15.6%) reported experiencing some kind of discrimination in the Guelph-Wellington community within the last year. However, the majority of participants (179 or 81.7%) did *not* report experiencing any discrimination.
 - Among those who experienced discrimination, 7.8% attributed it to race or skin colour, and 5.9% to ethnicity or cultural factors.
 - Public places (35.3%) was the most common place where discrimination was faced, followed by in stores, banks or restaurants (23.5%), and at work or when applying for job/promotion (20.6%).

Key Challenges and Solutions

- Immigrants identified the high cost of living or economic challenges (53%) as their biggest challenge. Finding affordable housing (45.2%), finding healthcare (31.5%) and finding work (30.1%) were also challenging for immigrants.
- Respondents wanted to see improvements in housing affordability in Guelph-Wellington (57.8%), and better employment-related supports (51.8%).
- Through qualitative responses, immigrants suggested many suggestions for improvement, which were broken down into six themes:
 - **Respect and Equality:** Create a community with equal opportunities, respect, and treatment for all individuals.

- **Housing and Affordability:** These responses highlighted the concerns of immigrants regarding local housing challenges.
- **Language and Education:** Participants urged an increase in English language learning initiatives within the community.
- **Inclusion and Integration:** Inclusion efforts across the county, and in City projects and initiatives were recommended by the participants.
- **Employment Opportunities:** More support for immigrants in finding suitable employment was also recommended.
- **Healthcare Access:** Timely and accessible medical care was reported as being lacking for the participants.

Introduction

The Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (GWLIP) is a coalition of individuals and organizations addressing immigrants' socio-economic challenges. Their goal is to make Guelph and Wellington County a genuinely inclusive community for immigrants. They have a vision of a compassionate and equitable community where all individuals can prosper.

The purpose of this report is to communicate what the immigrant¹ participants of the survey have reported about their experiences and challenges in Guelph and Wellington County. This report also intends to suggest actionable recommendations to inform collective action, programming and support, policy development and public discourse.

This report is structured to begin with an overview of existing information related to immigration trends nationally, provincially, and locally. The following sections will outline the research design, methodology and the results of the data analysis and findings.

Research Questions:

1. What are the diverse experiences of immigrants living in Guelph-Wellington, as perceived by immigrants themselves (across a wide range of topics including education, employment, income, housing, service use, settlement supports, challenges and supports, belonging/isolation, discrimination, contributions) including barriers and challenges in settling and integrating into this community?
2. What are the demographic, immigration and other factors that align with or impact immigrant settlement experiences, integration/belonging, well-being, service use, and resiliency?
3. What are immigrant perspectives about Guelph-Wellington's welcoming, community character, and their suggestions for future community action?

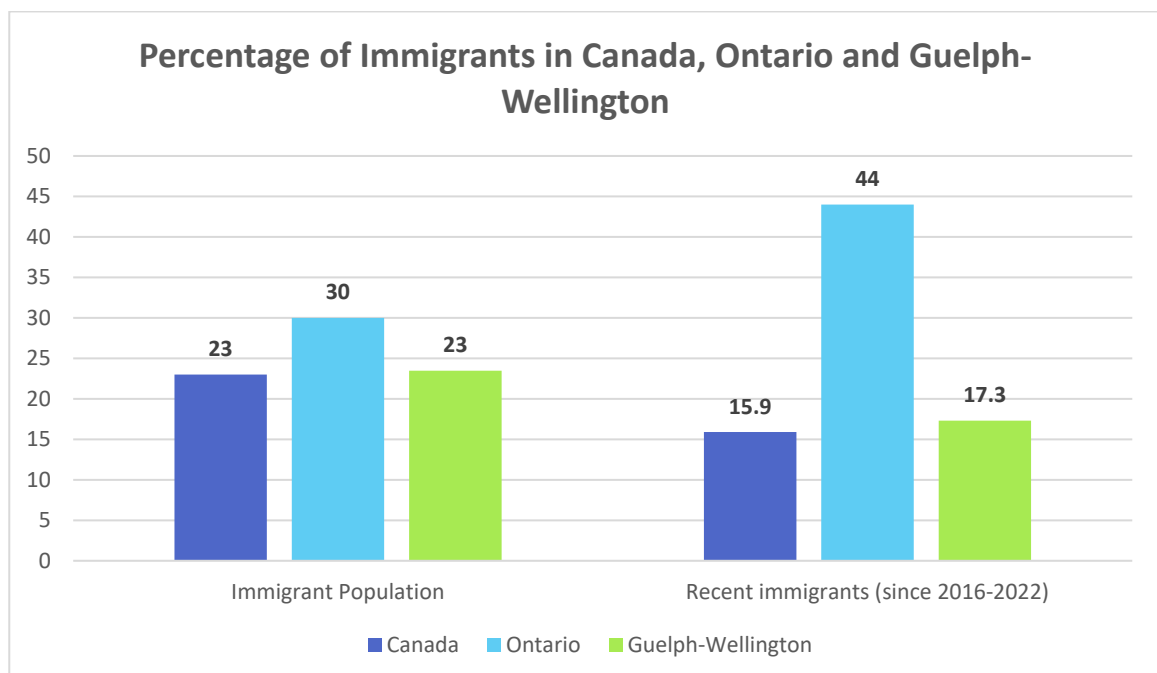
¹ Unless otherwise specified within the report, the terms immigrant/s and newcomer/s, will be used interchangeably to signify individuals residing within Guelph-Wellington who are immigrants, refugees, claimants, international students, temporary workers and their families, regardless of how long they have been in the country or their citizenship status.

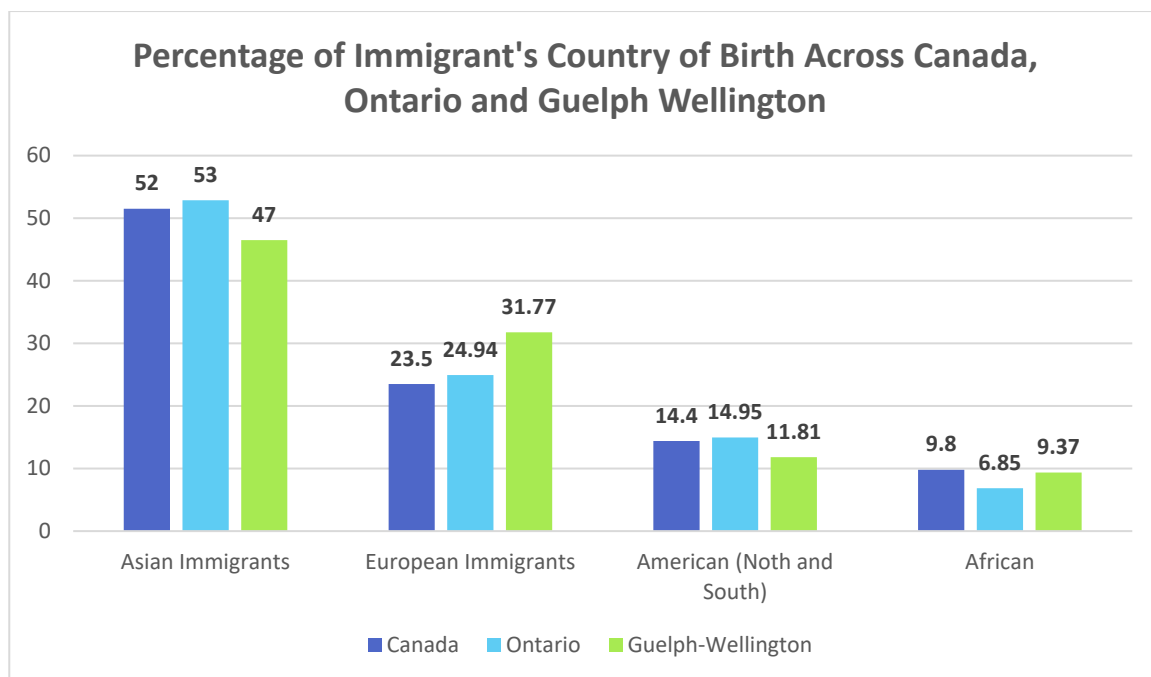
4. What do immigrants think is important for government, policymakers, community organizations and others to focus on to address their needs and desires?

Literature Review

Immigration Trends:

According to the 2021 census of Canada, every 1 in 4 (23%) individuals in Canada are immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Over 1.3 million new immigrants settled in Canada between 2016 and 2021 (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Newcoming immigrants are predominantly from Asian countries (62%), including the middle east, a trend persistent over the last few decades (Statistics Canada, 2022a). 18.6% of recent immigrants arrived from India. Recently, Canada has been welcoming more immigrants from African countries. The most common places of settlement were urban centres, with Toronto (29.5%), Montréal (12.2%) and Vancouver (11.7%) welcoming the greatest number of immigrants in 2021. However, an increasing number of immigrants settled outside these centres (e.g., Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo seeing a doubling of incoming immigrants from 1.2% to 2.1%). This trend was also observed in the Guelph-Wellington region with a 35.7% increase in immigrants from the 2011-2016 to 2016-2021 census (Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership [GWLIP], 2022).





Besides economic and family immigrants, refugees are a significant portion of newcomers.

Given the increasingly large number of newcomers to Canada and the Guelph-Wellington region, understanding their diverse experiences is very important. Knowledge of these experiences could help inform policies that promote equitable opportunities and address barriers to settlement. It could help foster social integration and belonging to promote a more unified community.

The following sections will delve into the existing literature to explore insights and findings related to the experiences of immigrants in Canada and the Guelph-Wellington region.

Immigrant experiences and perceptions:

Socioeconomic Experiences²:

The socioeconomic experiences of Canadian immigrants have been a topic of significant interest and research. Understanding the challenges and opportunities faced by immigrants in the Canadian context is crucial for understanding the dynamics of immigrant settlement and the impact on both individuals and society.

² For the purpose of this literature review, socioeconomic experiences will encompass the employment, education, income and housing experiences of immigrants.

Employment and Income:

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of immigrants in Canada's labour market. Job vacancies surged to levels higher than 80% compared to pre-pandemic numbers (Statistics Canada, 2022b). More generally, as the Canadian population continues to age, it is hoped that working age immigrants will supplement the labour market. In the 2021 Census, Guelph was home to 33,775 immigrants, 70.7% of whom were working age (15-64). In Wellington County, there were 10,990 immigrants, 58.6% of whom were working age (15-64). 2,345 immigrants in Guelph City and 835 in Wellington County were in Canada on a work visa.

Research suggests that smaller urban areas (such as Guelph) are more beneficial to immigrants, where they have seen higher earnings and better long-term job opportunities (Bernard, 2008; Fong, et al., 2015; Sano, et al., 2017). These positive results are attributed to lower labour competition, regional employment through government initiatives, etc. (Sano, et.al., 2017).

However, barriers persist for immigrants seeking employment, especially skilled immigrants. Barriers include lack of Canadian education (Boyd & Tian, 2017), lack of work Canadian experience (Trilokekar, et al., 2021), inadequate employer-specific skills such as cultural competency understanding, difficulties integrating into culturally distinct workplaces along with experiences of discriminatory practices (Lapshina & Esses, 2022). Small and mid-sized city employees in Canada also report experiences of higher interpersonal exclusion from co-workers and exclusion from an upward trajectory in ranks at workplaces (Chatterjee, 2019).

Guelph is known for its job growth and low unemployment (Singer, 2022). In the Guelph-Wellington Immigrant Survey of 2016, it was found that 65% of participants were employed. Most of the individuals were employed in Business-Finance, the health care sector, education/law/social/community and government services, and lastly manufacturing and utility services. 55% worked in the field of their specialization. The participants who found finding work in their fields difficult reported needing training (44%), lack of Canadian experience (16%), and lack of network (14%) as major reasons. Those

respondents without employment reported a lack of transportation as the main barrier (47%), followed by language barriers.

Education:

As per the 2021 census (Statistics Canada, 2022c), 40% of Guelph residents have a post-secondary degree, compared to the 32.9% Canadian population. 18.5% of the individuals in Guelph earned their degrees outside Canada, with India being the most common location for the degree. The city of Guelph reported 620 individuals with study-only visas and 1,365 immigrants with study and work visas. While Wellington County counted 120 with only student visas and 295 individuals with work and study permits. According to the most recent reports, the University of Guelph has 1,750 international students from across 30 countries (University of Guelph, 2022).

The GWLIP (2016) immigrant survey report found that, regardless of the level education, 56% of the participants reported needing extra licensing, training, or education, while 52% did not know how to address these barriers to employment. There are also reports of immigrants and visible minorities in Guelph experiencing discrimination. Individuals with college/vocational training reported the highest levels, however individuals with undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees had similar negative experiences (Lapshina & Esses, 2022).

Housing and transportation experiences

According to the most recent survey report (GWLIP, 2016), 43% of immigrants in Guelph and Wellington County found housing affordable. 11% found it difficult to afford a home in Guelph. Housing was more affordable for long-term immigrants (7 years and above).

Transportation, in the same survey, was deemed affordable by most respondents (85%). However, frustrations with Guelph transit were nonetheless present. Participants were bothered by the frequency of public transport and specified that it creates obstacles in attending events, utilizing services, enjoying amenities and even employment opportunities (GWLIP, 2022). These experiences can easily lead to

feelings of isolation. Kaur (2013) found that Guelph public transport users reduced socialization as a result of their negative experiences with transportation.

Housing is also affected by transportation. Individuals without personal modes of transportation may be forced to reside closer to rapid transit. Such housing is typically more expensive, creating an additional economic burden on the newcomer (Chahar Mahali & Ray-Yol, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected both the housing market and transportation experiences. The Institute for Canadian Citizenship survey (2020) reported that 63% of Canadian immigrants had concerns about travelling through public transit due to the fear of discrimination or prejudice. These fears reduced their use of public transport (Palm et al., 2020).

Immigrant settlement and services

Settlement services

Immigrant settlement refers to the process of assisting newcomers, such as refugees and economic immigrants, in adapting to and integrating into their new host country. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funds the majority of settlement programs in Canada (Government of Canada, 2023).

In the Guelph-Wellington area, two organizations provide settlement services to new Permanent Residents: Immigrant Services Guelph Wellington (ISGW) and; County of Wellington Settlement Services (CWSS). These organizations help individuals access health services, education, employment, language assessment and referrals, translation, and interpretation, along with community connections in Guelph-Wellington. ISGW, located within Guelph, serves Guelph residents, while the County of Wellington Settlement Services, located in Fergus, covers the entire County through multiple satellite locations such as Erin, Rockwood, Mount Forest, Drayton, Arthur, and Guelph. Some organizations such as Lutherwood Employment Services and St. George's Centre for English as a Second Language (ESL) provide tailored services to newcomers in Guelph.

As per ISGW's latest annual report, they served 4,049 clients in 2022 (Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington, 2022-23). The majority (60%) of their clients were Refugees, with 40% of them coming from Eritrea, and 8% from Syria. Most clients spoke Tigrinya (34%) and (9%) spoke Arabic. Service use data is provided in table below.

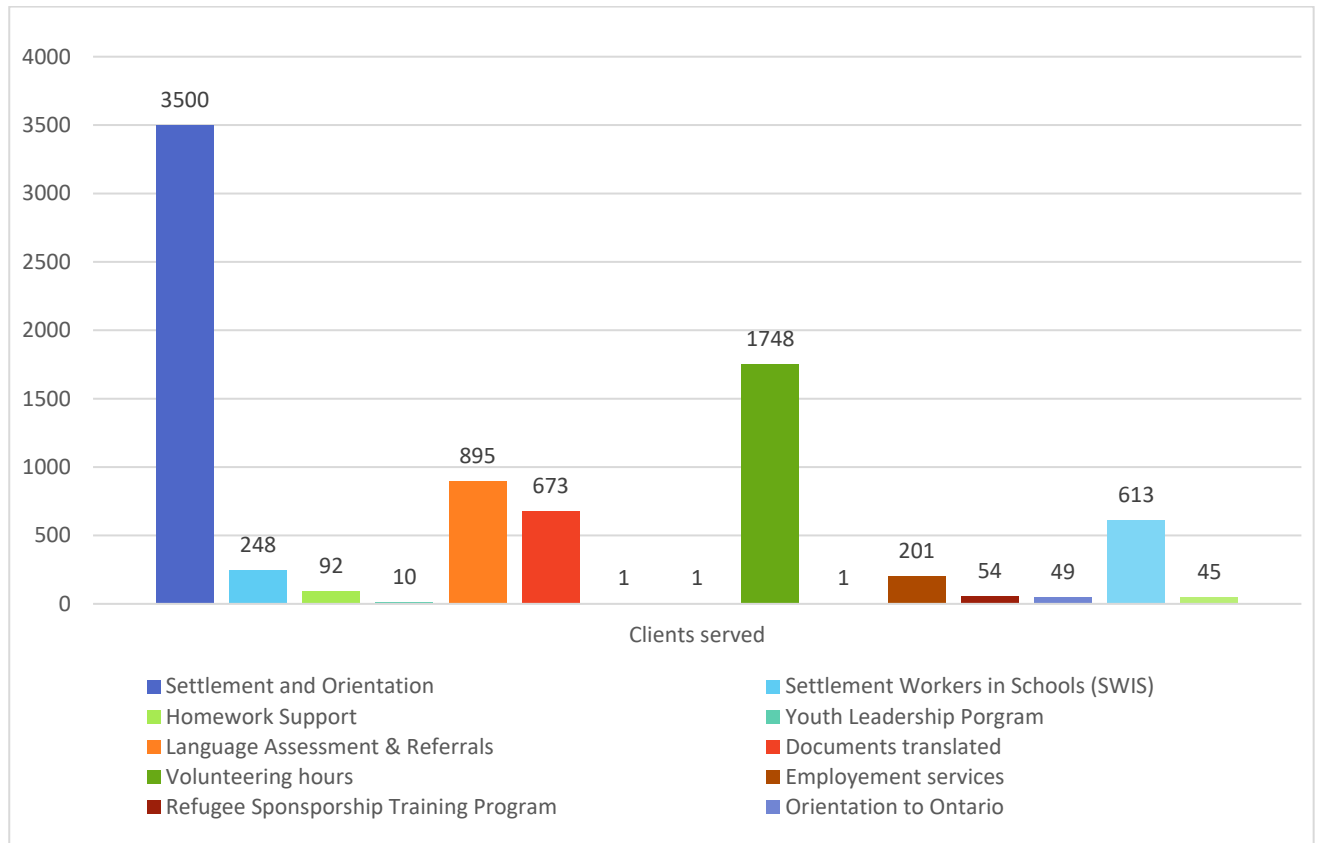


Figure 1 Clients served by ISGW as per services rendered 2022-23

Settlement experiences

As per the GWLIP survey report 2016, 80% of participants always/often had access to healthy food in Guelph-Wellington. However, a total of 42% (40 individuals) reported not having enough access to healthy food (sometimes, rarely, or never). Most immigrants reported having very good (71%) to excellent physical (71%) and mental (78%) health. This could be a representation of the *healthy immigrant effect*. This theory suggests that immigrants (excluding refugees) are typically healthier in comparison to native citizens. This is believed to be a result of the selective nature of international migration on both personal (individuals who are not healthy do not mostly choose to immigrate) and governmental fronts (governments favour the migration of individuals who are healthy) (Vang, et al., 2015).

1.1. Immigrant Challenges and Supports

1.1.1. Discrimination and Isolation

Discrimination continues to be a concern in Guelph. Guelph ranked 3rd in police-reported hate crimes in Ontario in 2017-2018 and 2020 (Vivian, 2021). The number of reported hate crimes in Guelph rose by 79.8% (rate per capita ³in 2019 was 8.4 and in 2020 was 15.1) between 2019 and 2020. The crimes mostly include vandalism and destruction of property accompanied by racist slurs, imagery, or phrases. Hate crime has reduced in Guelph in the last two years from 15.1 in 2020 to 4.8 in 2021 and 6.7 in 2022. (Statistics Canada, 2021)

A study by GWLIP and Western University in 2021 on discrimination⁴ reported that 70% of immigrants and visible minorities in Guelph experience discrimination. They also found that in immigrants the rate of having experienced discrimination was equal in women and men, unlike higher rates of discrimination for women in indigenous and White populations. Experiences of discrimination were reported highest when they lived in Guelph for over 5 to 10 years (75.7%). Sikh immigrants (74.1%) were most likely to face discrimination while Hindus were the least likely (60%). The place in which immigrants and Visible minorities reported experiencing discrimination most often was work settings (38%).

These experiences of discrimination may lead to social isolation. Other reasons for isolation are the COVID-19 pandemic (Helps, et al., 2021; Bahrefar, 2022), housing and transportation-related barriers (Chahar Mahali & Ray-Yol, 2020), along with difficulties understanding the social norms of the new groups, leading to uncomfortable social interactions (Aora & Lauzon, 2019). Some individuals may also feel isolated due to a lack of the same national/ethnic community's presence in Guelph-Wellington (GWLIP Survey, 2016).

³ Rate per capita is calculated by reporting incidents per 100,000 population.

⁴ Discrimination is the unfair and unjust treatment of individuals based on their membership in certain groups. It involves negative actions towards people from different groups and treating them less favorably than individuals from one's own group in similar circumstances.

1.1.2. Belonging

Instances of discrimination and isolation create a sense of exclusion and alienation among victims, leading to feelings of not being accepted or belonging in the community. These experiences can contribute to distrust and lack of confidence in institutions and have negative impacts on both physical and mental well-being (Lapshina & Esses, 2022).

The GWLIP 2016 survey reported that 23% of participants reported feeling welcome sometimes, rarely, or never and 22% of participants found it difficult to build social relationships. However, the majority of participants (77%) found Guelph-Wellington welcoming and safe, while 43% found building relationships easy. Similarly, most immigrants did not feel out of place in community spaces, but 1/3 of individuals felt out of place in certain contexts such as at work.

- **METHODOLOGY:**

The Immigrant Survey is a collaborative project involving 12 local immigration partnerships (LIP's) across Canada (Waterloo Region, ON; Cape Breton, NS; St. Thomas Elgin, ON; Grey-Bruce Counties, ON; Huron County, ON; Hamilton, ON; London Middlesex, ON; Niagara, ON; Bow Valley, AB; North Shore Vancouver, BC; North Vancouver Island, BC; and Guelph Wellington, ON) and seeks to improve the understanding of immigrant experiences at a local level.

The survey was funded by GWLIP which is financially supported by the federal government through Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Additionally, partner organizations and groups engaged with GWLIP contributed to the project with significant in-kind support.

- **Survey procedures and participant recruitment**

The Guelph Wellington Immigrant survey gathered responses from 219 respondents on all survey formats⁵ between May 2023 and July 2023. Ethics approval was obtained in advance from the Community

⁵ The survey was conducted on different forms (short surveys, long-form surveys and surveys in different languages).

Research Ethics Office (CREO). This ensured that the study was conducted with the utmost ethical integrity and consideration for the well-being of the participants.

The research participants were immigrants over the age of 15. Immigrants were defined broadly to include anyone born outside Canada and now living, working, or studying in Canada. Steps were taken to ensure the inclusion of a diverse range of participants. Recognizing the relative ease of access to study participants receiving settlement, language, or other support services within the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership's catchment area, various strategies were implemented to engage participants outside of those service contexts. These strategies included: the placement of posters in public spaces and ethnocultural venues; targeted advertising through platforms like Google and Facebook; and securing coverage in mainstream media outlets.

There were two primary versions of the survey- a short survey and a full survey⁶. The shorter version of the survey was a selection of questions from the full survey and was translated into French and 6 other languages, namely Arabic, Dari, Nepali, Spanish, Tigrinya, Nepali and Ukrainian. This selection of languages was based on their prevalence in the community and the frequency of requests for interpretation/translation locally. The translated surveys were only available in the shorter version; both surveys were available in English.

The primary form of data collection was online surveys (using CheckMarket survey software). Participants were also offered paper-based surveys, and the option to reach out to GWLIP for other accommodation.

The survey particulars and consent information were presented on the first page of the survey, and consent was required to proceed. Participants were informed that they had the option to skip any questions, and that they could leave the survey at any point. One question was mandatory which was to confirm the immigrant status of all survey respondents.

⁶ Both surveys are included in Appendix A

The survey garnered a total of 219 responses, out of which 128 were from the full survey in English, and the other 91 were from the short survey. After collection, the data was cleaned, and non-English surveys were translated as necessary. The data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS and Excel, while qualitative responses were analyzed through themes.

- **Limitations**

While every concerted effort was made to gather data as representative as possible, it must be acknowledged that the results may not be representative of all immigrant groups in Guelph-Wellington. It should also be noted that the survey sample was not randomized, as respondents chose to whether participate in the survey. Finally, the small sample size meant that disaggregation of findings per subcategories (e.g. gender, language...etc.) was not possible.

RESULTS

SURVEY FINDINGS

Immigration Status

The survey asked participants to specify their immigration status. This was a mandatory question that aimed to verify the eligibility to fill in the survey and to allow for further understanding on how immigration status affected the experience of the participants. The most prominent group was Family Category Immigrants constituting 28.8% of respondents, followed by Economic Category Immigrants at 23.7%. Notably, the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel Visa holders comprised 15.1% of participants total participants, which is a much greater representation than anticipated⁷.

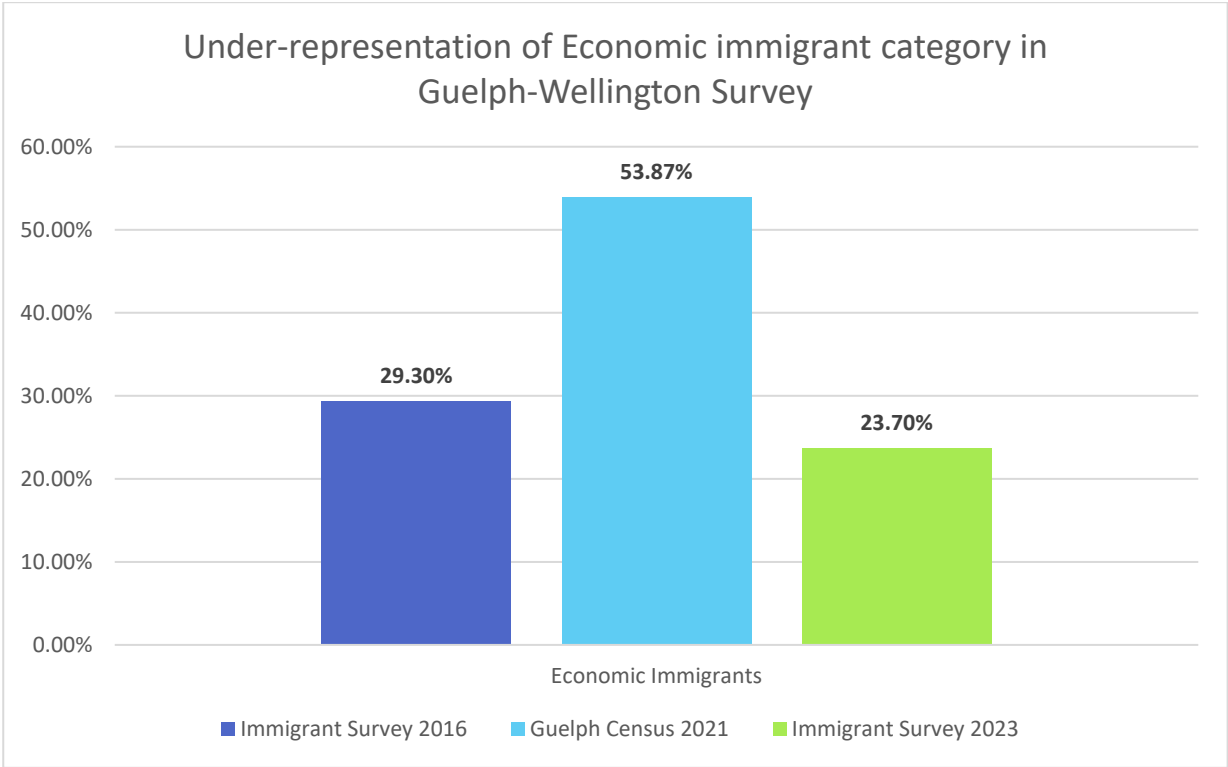
⁷ CUAET was anticipated to represent 2.5% of the survey sample, given the Canada-wide admission of about Ukrainians through CUAET was 176,000 at the time of data collection.

Table 1: Immigrant Category

Categories	Immigration status	# of Participants	Percentage
Family Categories	Family Category Immigrant (sponsored spouse, sponsored parent or grandparent, or other immigrant sponsored by family)	63	28.8%
Economic Categories	Economic Category Immigrant	52	23.7%
	Work Visa	6	2.7%
Refugee Category	Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel Visa	33	15.1%
	Assisted Refugee	18	8.2%
	Arrived as a refugee claimant and is currently Permanent resident	14	6.4%
	Sponsored Refugee	10	4.6%
	Refugee Claimant	4	1.8%
	Other Categories	International Student	8
	Others	8	3.7%
	Unknown/Prefer not to answer	3	1.4%

The most common immigrant category in Canada is economic. In 2021, 53.6% of immigrants were admitted to Canada under the economic category. This included both primary applicants and their dependent applicants. (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Guelph-Wellington has had a similar distribution of population in the immigrant categories over the years. For the 2016 survey in Guelph-Wellington, the Economic Category accounted for 29.3% of the total sample while Family Category accounted the second largest percentage of the sample (18.3%). However, it is notable that both the 2016 survey and the 2023 survey underrepresented the economic categories given the Guelph-Wellington census data (Statistics Canada, 2022). A comparison is provided below.



Time Living in Canada

Table 2: Time Spent Living in Canada

Time in Canada	# of Participants	Percent
1 to 5 years	76	34.7
10+ years	52	23.7
6 to 10 years	41	18.7
Less than 1 year	46	21.0
Total	219	100.0

A majority of participants (55.7%) were living in Canada⁸ for 5 years or less (34.7% were living in Canada for 1-5 years and 21% had been living in Canada for less than 1 year). 52 participants or 23.7% had been living in Canada for more than 10 years.

⁸ Q.2. How long have you been living in Canada? (N=218)

Age, Gender and Racialized Status

The participants ranged from ages⁹ 16-65+, with most participants between 25 to 44 years of age (see Table 3, Figure 1).

Figure 2 : Age of Participants

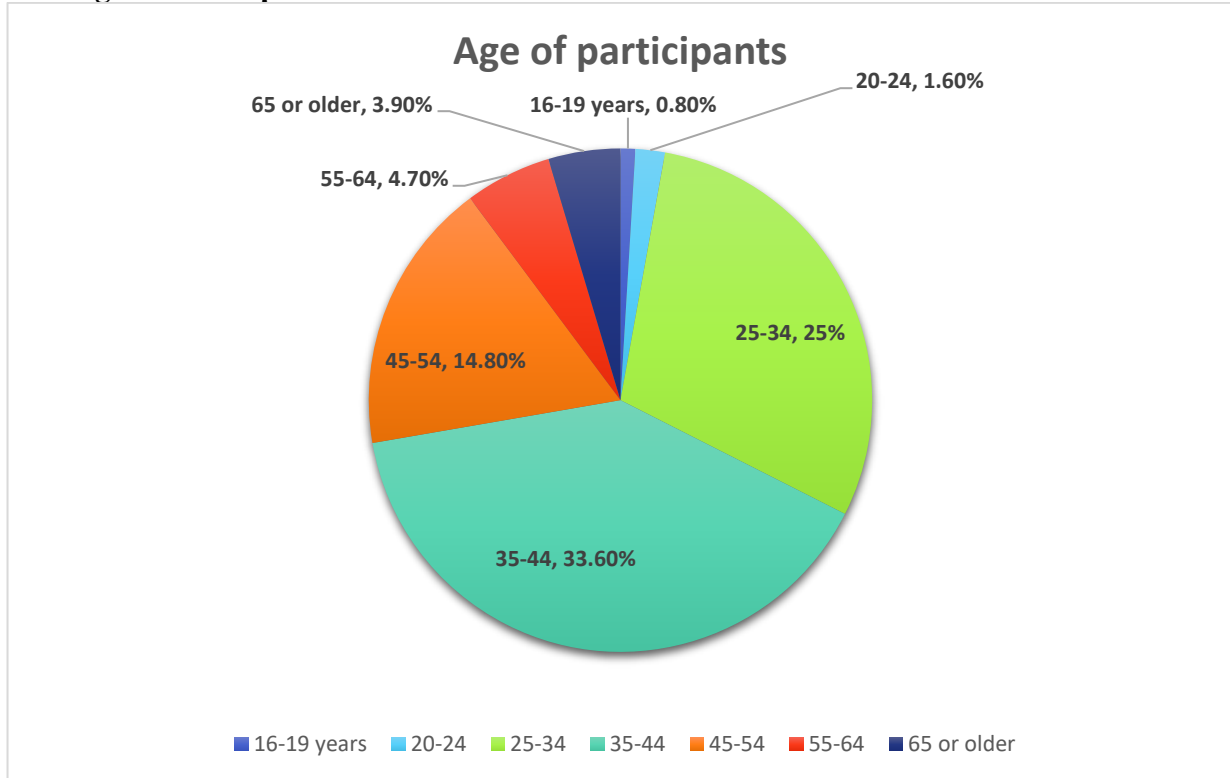


Table 3: Age of Participants

	# of Participants	Percent
16-19 years	1	0.8
20-24	2	1.6
25-34	32	25.0
35-44	43	33.6
45-54	19	14.8
55-64	6	4.7
65 or older	5	3.9
Total	128	

⁹ Q.28. What is your age? (N=128)

58% of survey participants were between the ages of 25 years and 44. This is consistent with the Canadian immigrant population. As per Statistics Canada's census of 2021, 63.5% of immigrants are between 25-44 years of age (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Regarding gender distribution¹⁰, there was a higher percentage of participants identifying as women (46%) while 36% of the participants identified as men. Only 1 individual identified as non-binary.

Table 4: Gender identity of participants

Gender	# of Participants	Percentage of participants
Woman	60	46%
Man	47	36%
Non-Binary	1	0.8%
Missing answers	21	16.3%
Total	129	

Racialized Identity¹¹

Table 5 Racialized identity

	# of Participants	% of Participants
South Asian	29	22.48%
White	21	16.28%
Latin American	17	13.18%
Filipino	13	10.08%
Black	12	9.30%
Arab	6	4.66%
West Asian	6	4.65%
Chinese	4	3.10 %

¹⁰ Q.31. How would you describe your gender identity? (N=128)

¹¹ Q.29. Which would best describe you? (Choose all that apply.) (N=128)

Southeast Asian	3	2.33%
Other	1 ¹²	0.78%
Prefer not to answer	1	0.78%

The most represented groups were South Asian (22.48%), White (16.28%), and Latin American (13.18%). Other common groups included Black (9.30%) and Filipino (10.08%).

Faith Communities:

The participants belonged to diverse faith communities¹³. The largest faith group represented was Christians, comprising 29% of the participants, followed by Muslims at 13%, and Hindus at 10%.

Table 6: Faith Communities of Participants

Faith communities	# of participants	% of participants
Christian	37	29%
Muslim	16	13%
Hindu	13	10%
Sikh	5	4%
Jewish	1	0.8%
Others	5	3.9% ¹⁴
Not a member of a faith community	20	15.6%

Faith community membership was reflective of Canadian immigrants generally. A significant portion of the Canadian immigrant population (47.03%) identify as Christian, making it the largest

¹² 1 individual reported “No”

¹³ Q.34. If you are a member of a faith community, please share which one (N=128)

¹⁴ Baha’I faith-1, Catholic- 1, Jewish-1, Roman Catholic-1, Yezidi-1

religious group. 13.42% of Canadian immigrants are in the Muslim community, 6.24% in the Hindu community, and 4.97% in the Sikh community.

In contrast, the non-immigrant population is less likely to belong to these minority faith communities, with only 2.01% of the non-immigrant population identifying as Muslim, 0.70% as Hindu, and 0.87% as Sikh.

Language:

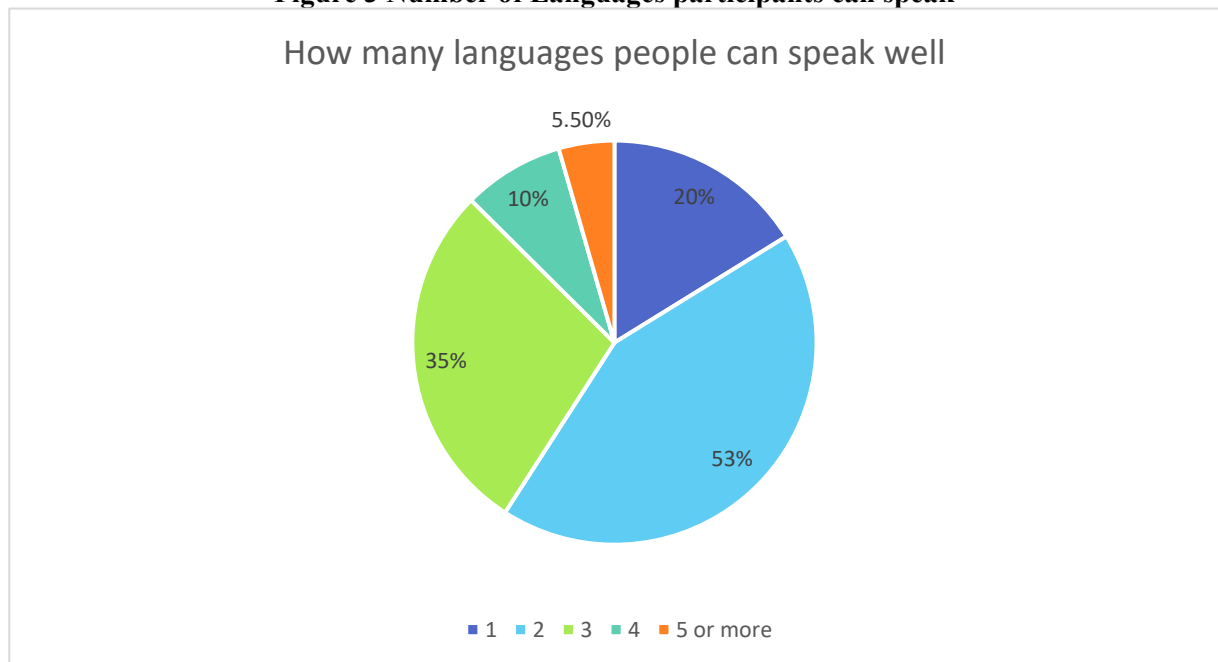
Table 7: Languages spoken by participants.

Languages	# of participants	% of participants
Ukrainian	32	17.39%
English	27	14.67 %
Spanish	22	12.5%
Tigrinya	19	10.33%
Arabic	9	4.89 %
Hindi	9	4.89%
Tagalog	6	3.26%
Farsi/Persian	5	2.72 %
Nepali	5	2.72%
Pilipino	5	2.72%
Portuguese	5	2.72%
Punjabi	4	2.17%
Gujarati	3	1.63%
French	2	1.09%
Other (please specify)	38	20.65%

The above table illustrates a diversity of languages in the Guelph-Wellington, with Ukrainian¹⁵, English, and Spanish being the most prevalent, representing 17.37%, 14.67%, and 12.5% of the immigrant population, respectively. Tigrinya, Arabic, and Hindi, are also common.

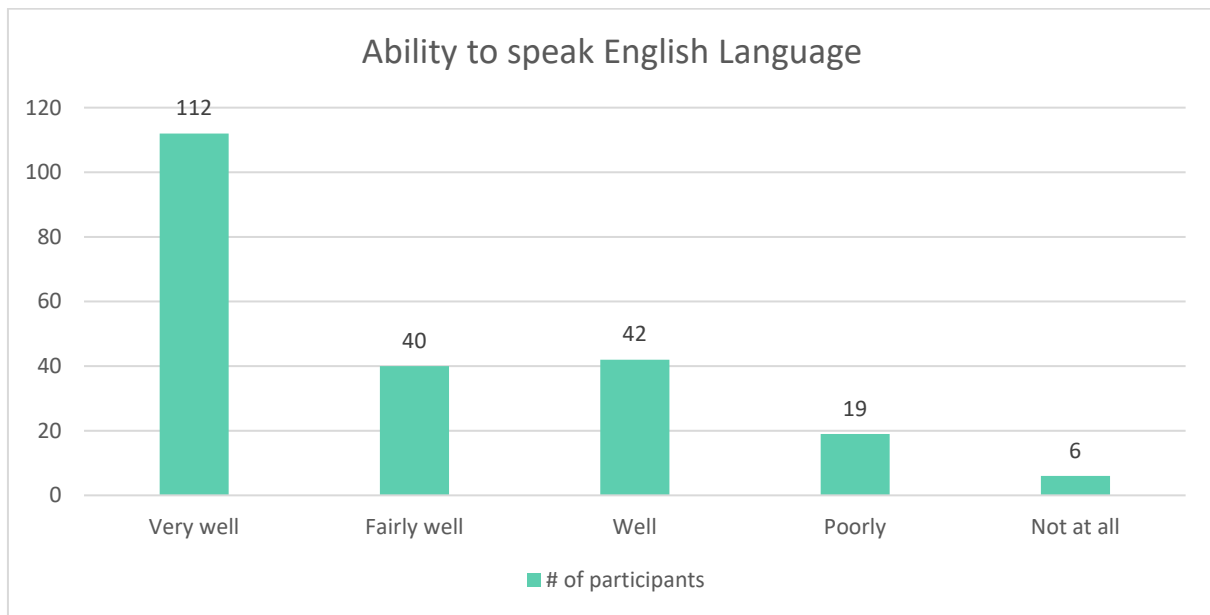
English language proficiency¹⁶ was also self-reported by the participants in the survey. 194 participants (89%) rated their ability to speak English as well (very well, fairly well, well), with only 11% of participants reporting that they did not speak English well.

Figure 3 Number of Languages participants can speak



¹⁵ It is important to recall the unexpectedly large representation of Ukrainian participants in the survey.

¹⁶ Q.6. How well can you speak and understand English? (N=219)

Table 8: Ability of Participants to Speak English**Housing****Table 9: Places of Residence**

Place of residence ¹⁷	# of participants	% of participants
Guelph	116	90%
Township of Centre Wellington	2	1.6%
Township of Guelph/Eramosa	6	4.7%
Township of Mapleton	1	0.8%
Township of Puslinch	1	0.8%
Township of Wellington North	2	1.6%
Total	128	

31% (40) of the participants felt that their current housing was not suitable for their needs, or it was not affordable. This could mean there were not enough bedrooms, it was not in good repair, or they could

¹⁷ Q.3. Where do you live? (N=219)

not afford it with other living expenses. 52.3% (67) individuals felt that they did have affordable housing that was suitable for their needs.

The following are some quotes from individuals who did not find housing affordable.

“I am the only one who is taking care of my family and my whole salary is going behind them...”

“Increased rent is not affordable.”

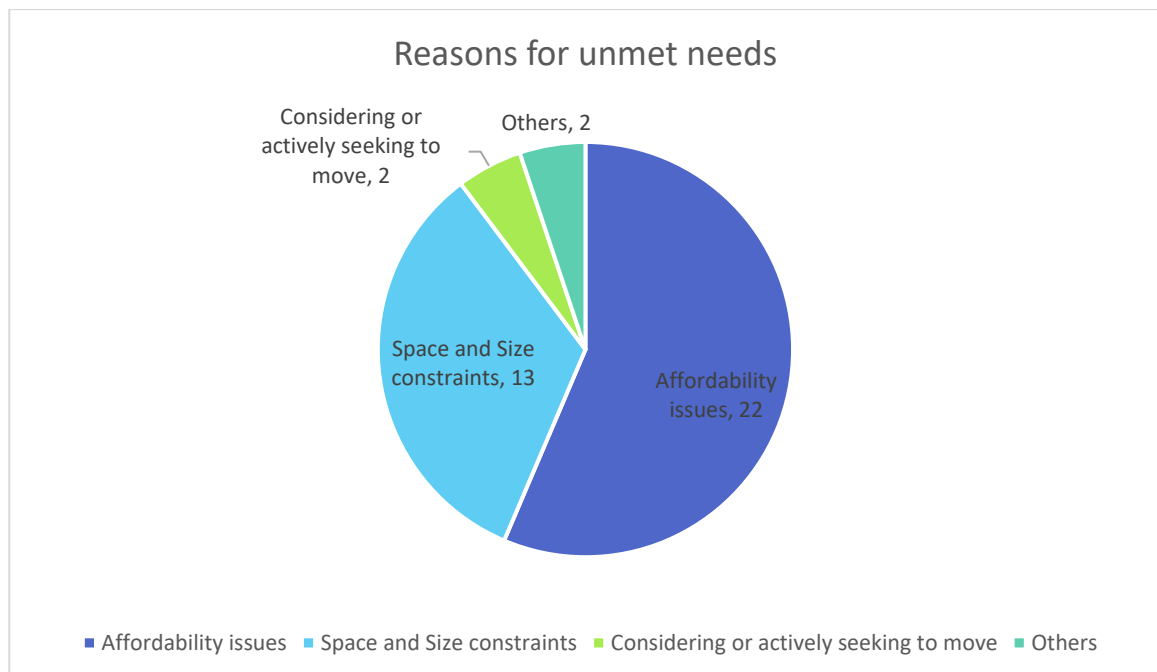
“Earning is only enough for rent.”

“International self-funded graduate student...”

“Too small (housing) but moving unaffordable.”

-Survey Participants

Those individuals who reported their housing needs unmet¹⁸ reported the following reasons:



¹⁸ Q.36. Does your housing suit your needs and is it affordable? (Are there enough bedrooms and is it in good repair, AND can you afford it with your other living expenses) (N=128)

Table 10: Unmet housing needs

Unmet needs	
Affordability issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent/mortgage exceeds income. • Unaffordable future costs. • Recent rent hikes. • High property costs. • Financial instability. • High prices and rates across houses. • Considering relocation which is unaffordable. • Income mismatch. • Tuition without work.
Space and Size constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstable, small, or expensive space. • Insufficient space/bedrooms, need affordability. • Space too small for family needs.
Considering or actively seeking to move	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering or actively seeking relocation. • Moving due to unsuitability and affordability concerns. • High prices and interest rates, contemplating a move.
Condo-specific issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor space and pet restrictions (condo-related issues)
Housing was necessary (no other options)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing was necessary and no other options were available.

The most common reason for dissatisfaction with housing was economic in nature, including the inability to pay rent for a more comfortable place, having a recent spike in their current rent, income that was significantly lower than the rent/mortgage, and higher tuition and no job prospects for students. The next most common reason was unmet space needs- current housing was too small, insufficient number of bedrooms for the number of individuals living in the housing, etc.

Education, Employment, and Income

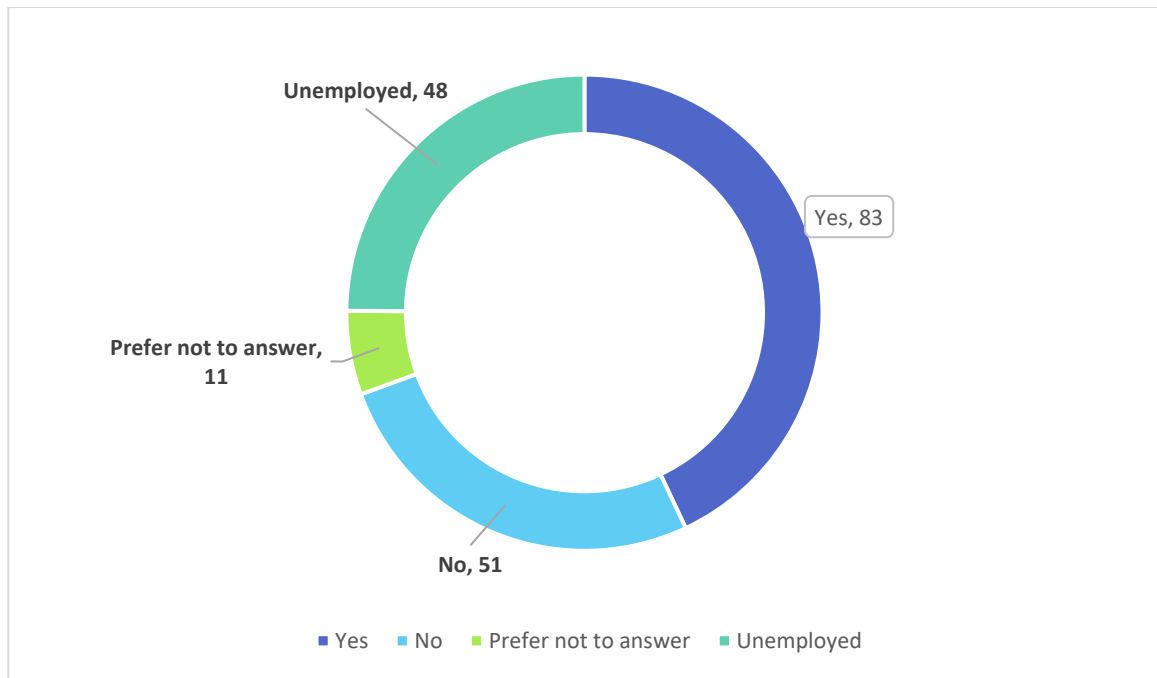
Table 11: Level of education ¹⁹

Level of education	# of Participants	% of Participants
High school or equivalent	11	8.6%
Trade/technical school	1	0.8%
College diploma	12	9.4%
Elementary school	2	1.6%
Bachelor's degree	46	35.9%
Master's degree	30	23.4%
PhD	4	3.1%
Prefer not to answer	2	1.6%
Total	128	

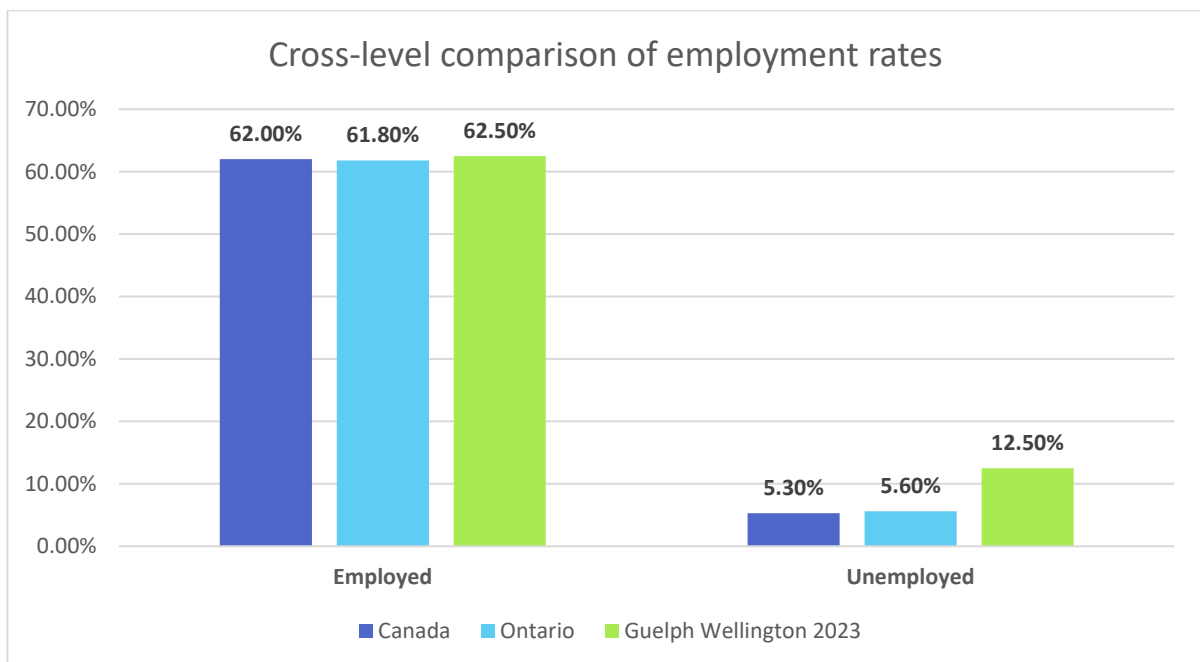
Participants were also asked if their current occupational role corresponded with the level of their education²⁰. 37.9% of participants (83) believed that their job did appropriately correspond with their level of education, however, 23.3% of the participants (51) felt it did not. 21.9 % (48) were unemployed and 5% preferred not to answer.

¹⁹ Q.30. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (N=128)

²⁰ Q.38. Are you in a job that is at the same level as your skills and experience? (N=219)

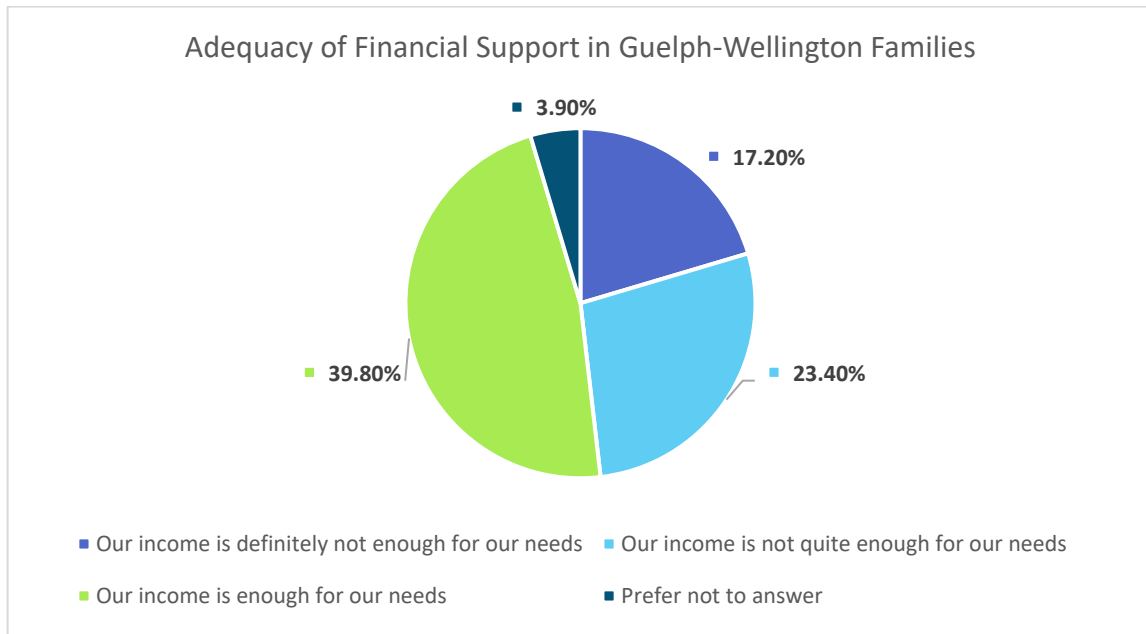


50.8% (65) of participants reported being full-time workers²¹, while 7.8% of the participants (10) were part-time workers, and 3.9% (5 participants) were self-employed. 16 participants (12.5 %) reported being unemployed and looking for work and 1 participant reported being laid off recently. 7 participants (5.5%) specified that they were not a part of the paid workforce (retired, caring for children, not seeking work, etc.).



²¹ Q. 35. What is your employment status?

In the 2016 survey, 61% of participants were employed full-time, while 29% were part-time workers. This could be an indication that the employment rates have dropped over the last few years, as a drop in employment rates has been seen country wide. Immigrant employment rates dropped from 62% in 2018 to 58.1% in 2020 (during the pandemic), but have steadily increased back to 62% in 2022.



Services Used:

Table 11: Access to services

Services accessed ²²	# of participants accessing services
Health	118
Recreation services	107
Transportation services	103
Housing	99
Employment and/or skills training	81
Education	77
Local municipal government/bylaw	76
Police	73
English language learning	60
Mental health	58
Childcare	58
Settlement/immigrant services	56
Language interpretation/translation	43

²² Q.7. Please rate your experience with following community services in the last 12 months in Guelph Wellington. (N=128)

Small business/entrepreneurial supports	42
Legal/courts	35
Other	33
French language learning	31

Health care services were the mostly commonly accessed service (118 participants). 86 of those who accessed it (72.88%) reported a positive experience (good, very good, or excellent), while 15% rated their experience as “poor”. The 2016 survey also reported similar results with 71% of participants reporting a positive experience. Recreation services were the second most accessed service and were the most positively viewed service (84.11%).

One of the most poorly rated services was housing with 54.55% of participants rating them as poor or acceptable. These results should be interpreted with caution since the participants may have misunderstood the reference to *housing services*. The question was meant to address housing support services, while the descriptive responses submitted by the participants implied their dissatisfaction with housing overall, including private landlord experiences, affordability, or the general housing difficulties they were experiencing.

In any case, all service ratings showed a decline compared to the 2016 survey. 96% of respondents had found healthcare helpful and 77% had found housing services helpful in 2016. 92% found educational services helpful in 2016 while 88.31% found it positive in 2023.

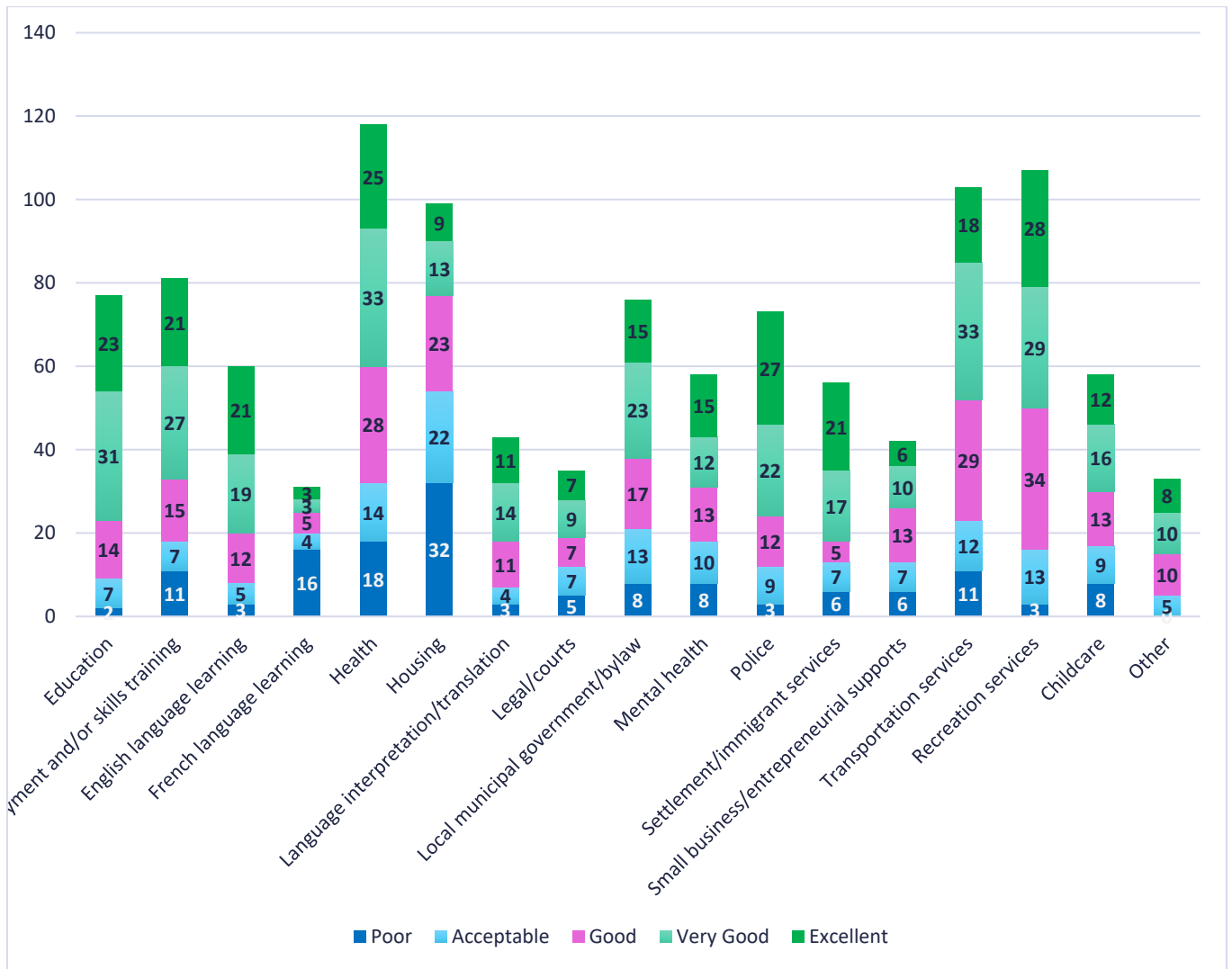


Figure 4 Rating to services accessed.

Community Integration

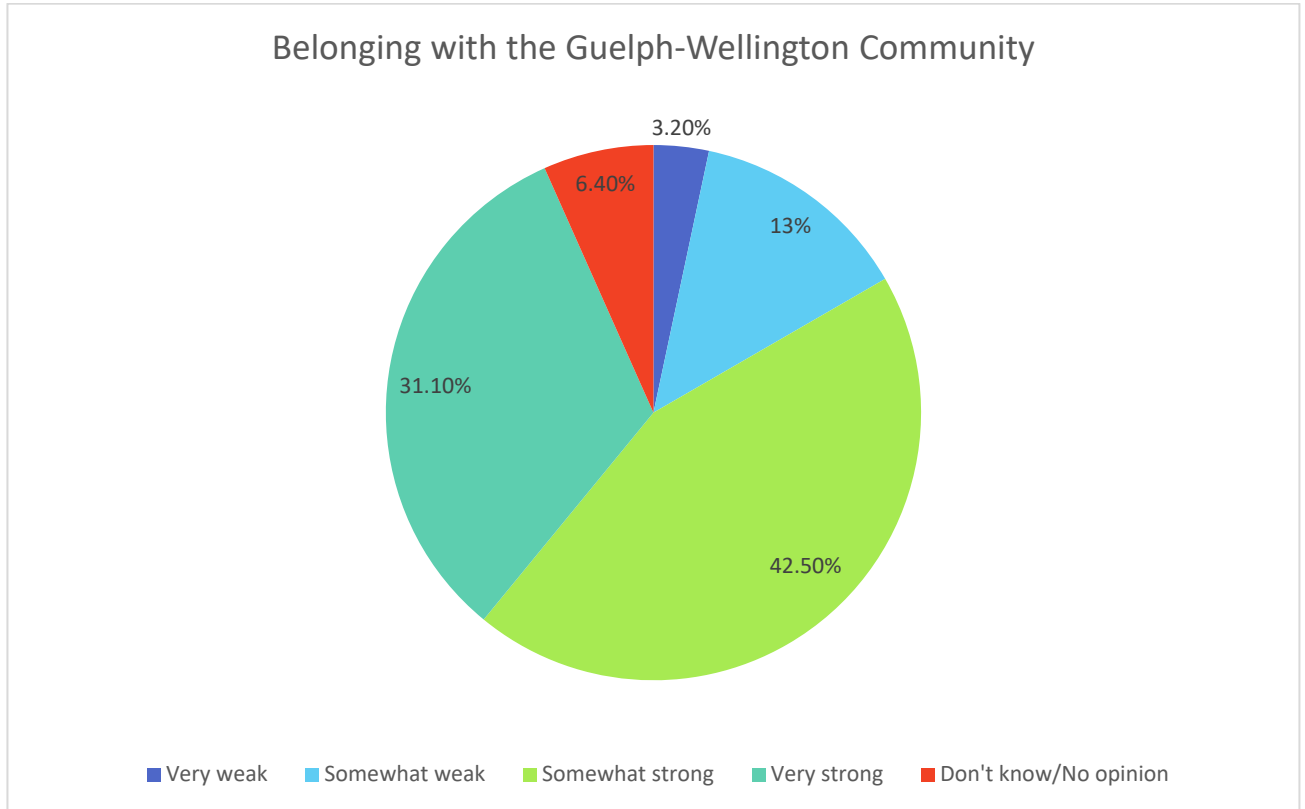
Welcome from the Guelph-Wellington community.

Most participants (28.8%) reported the Guelph-Wellington community as being highly welcoming²³ towards immigrants. 70.8% of participants scored Guelph-Wellington highly welcoming (7-10). Only 5.96% of participants rated Guelph-Wellington as unwelcoming (1-4). This is consistent with the 2016 survey, where 77% of participants reported always/often feeling welcome in the community.

²³ Q.10. How welcoming is Guelph-Wellington community toward immigrants? Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “not at all welcoming” and 10 means “very welcoming,” (N=219)

Belonging

The majority of survey participants (73.6%) felt a very strong or somewhat strong belonging²⁴ to the Guelph-Wellington community. Conversely, 16.2% participants reported somewhat weak or very weak belonging.



Most participants also reported that they *felt at home* in the Guelph-Wellington community quickly, needing *less than a year* (24.2%) or *1-2 years* (23.4%) to do so. 17% of the participants even reported feeling at home instantly (*when they arrived*). 19 participants said they needed 3 to 10 years, and some participants (14 or 10.9%) had yet to feel at home in the community.

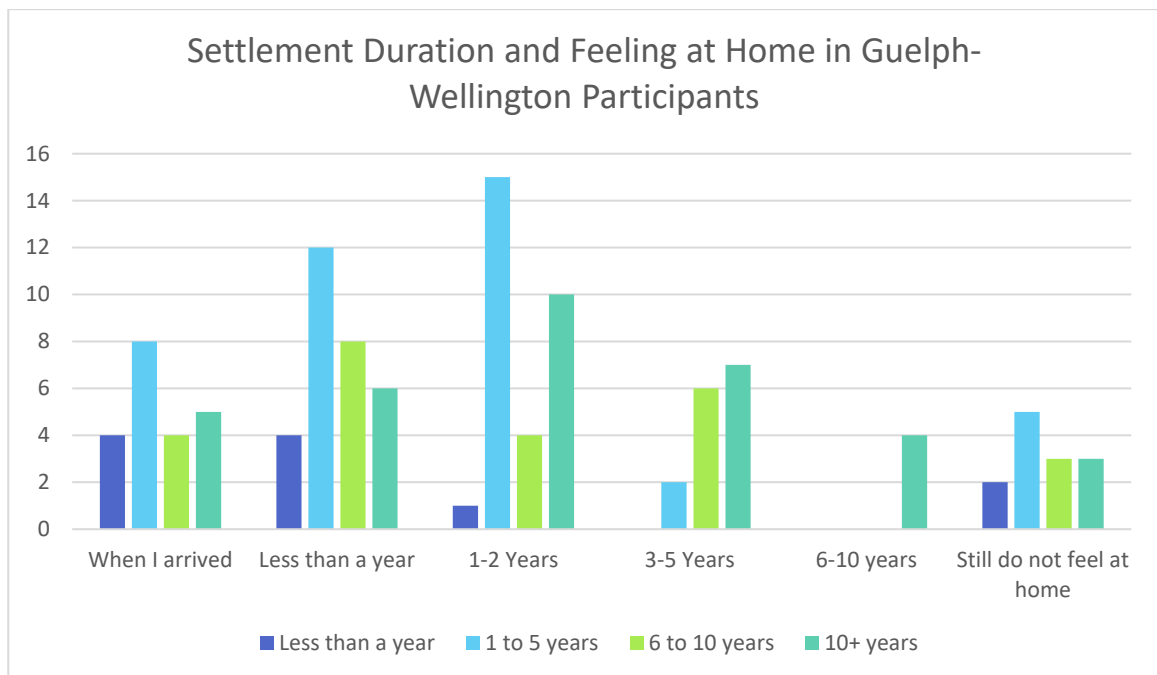
In a survey conducted in 2021 by GWLIP and Western University about experiences of discrimination experienced by Immigrants, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous peoples in Guelph, 72.6% of immigrants and visible minorities reported feeling welcomed by their community. This is despite that fact that 70% of the participants reported experiencing some form of discrimination.

²⁴ Q.11. How do you describe your sense of belonging in Guelph-Wellington? (Sense of belonging is when you feel accepted and valued by others around you. It is when you feel like Guelph-Wellington is truly your home.) (N=219)

Table 12: Time taken to feel at-home in Guelph -Wellington

Time-taken to feel at home in Guelph-Wellington Community	# of participants	% of participants
When I arrived	22	17.2
Less than a year	31	24.2
1-2 years	30	23.4
3-5 years	15	11.7
6-10 years	4	3.1
I still don't feel at home in this community	14	10.9

Among those individuals who reported that they still did not feel at home in the Guelph-Wellington Community, the duration of their residence in Canada varied, ranging from less than a year to over a decade. However, the majority of participants had been living in Canada for a period between 1 and 5 years.



Most individuals (47 participants, 36.7%) moved to Guelph because they had family or friends in Guelph. The second most common reason for moving to Guelph was for employment purposes (30 participants, 23.4%) or for post-secondary institutions (22 participants, 17.2%). Other²⁵ reasons are presented in the following graph.

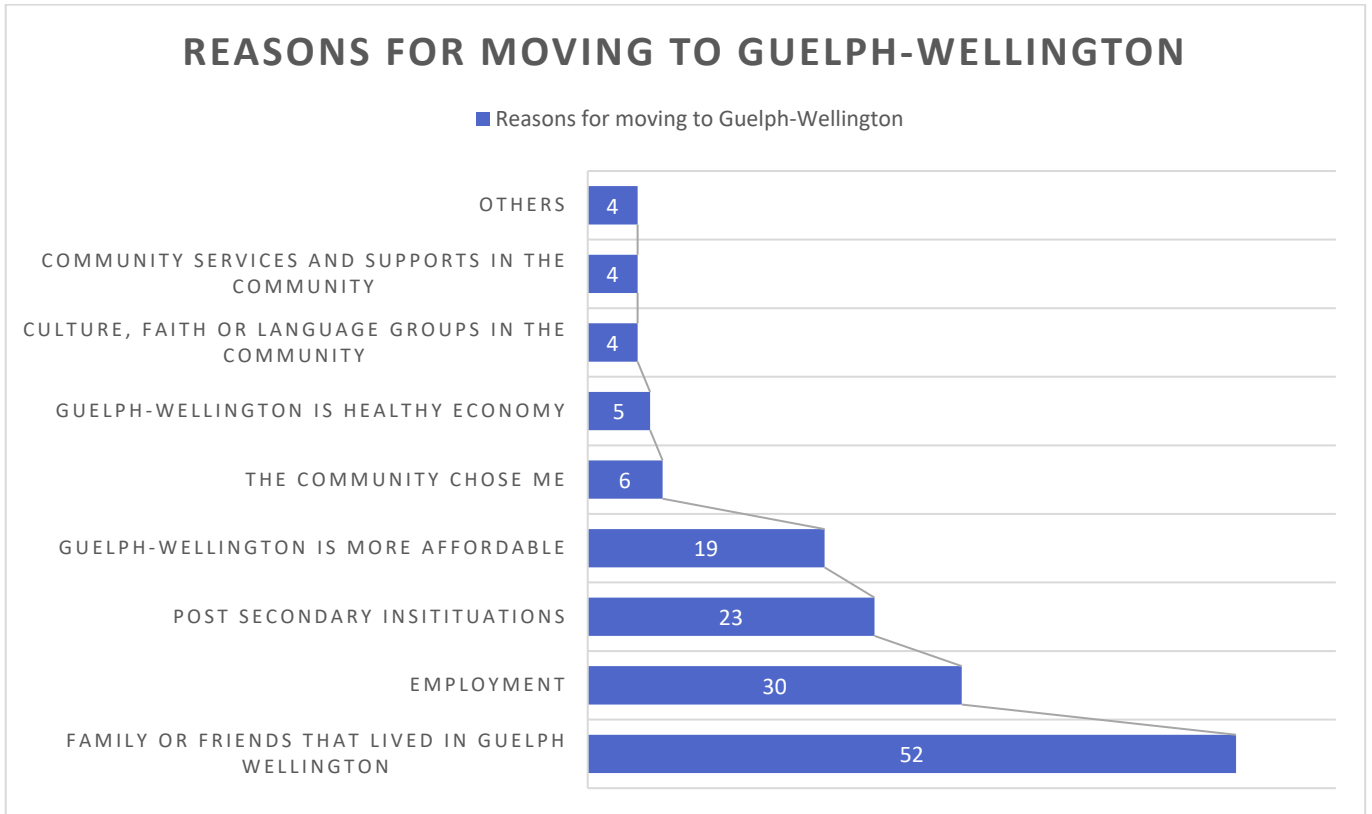


Figure 5 Reasons for moving to Guelph-Wellington

Settlement experience

The participants frequently reported an excellent (32.8%) or good (42.2%) experience of settling in Guelph Wellington. Some participants reported a neutral experience (14.8%), while only 1.6% (2 participants) reported a “not-very-good” experience.

²⁵ For “other” reasons for moving to Guelph, participants reported doing so for specific homes in Guelph, because they liked the experience of living in a university town, the beauty and organization of the city, and because they had lived in Guelph previously.

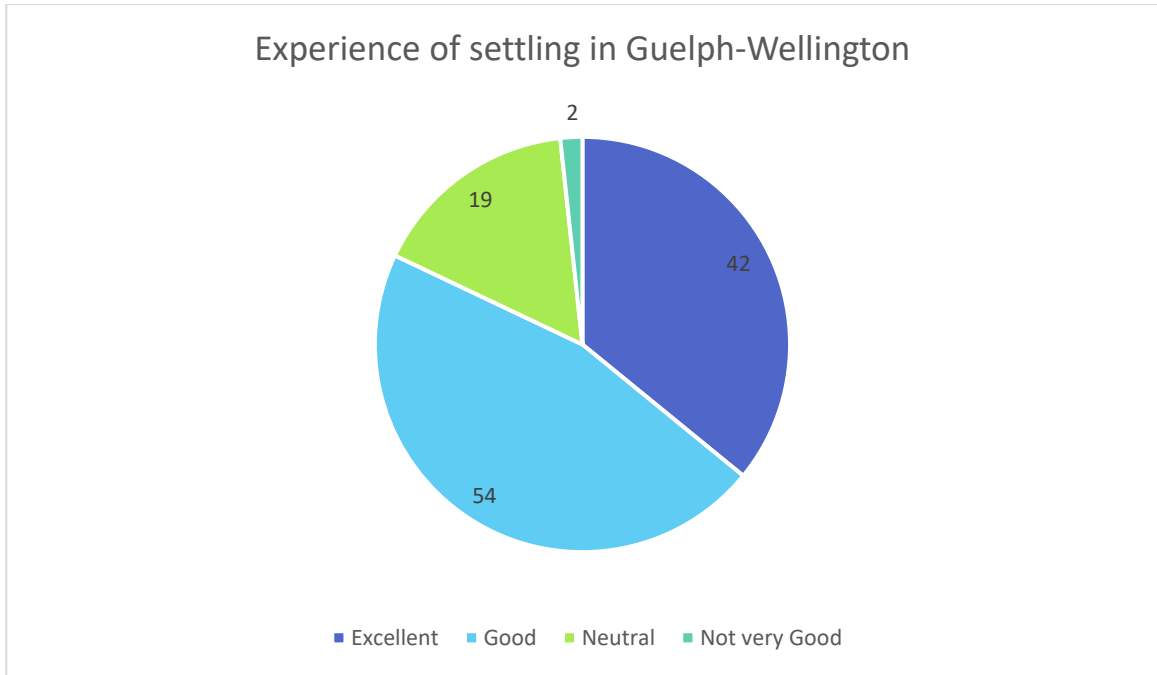


Figure 6 Experience of Settling in Guelph-Wellington

Life Satisfaction

Approximately 11.4% of the participants were not very satisfied with their life as a whole at the time of the survey. 35.0% of participants were moderately satisfied and 53.7% were highly satisfied with their lives.

Table 13: Life Satisfaction for Participants

Life Satisfaction (1 to 10 scale)	% of respondents	
10 "very satisfied"	27	53.7%
9	14	
8	25	
7	21	35.0%
6	8	
5	14	
4	5	
3	3	

2	3	11.4%
1 “very dissatisfied”	3	

Community Contribution

The majority of the participants reported being a good neighbour (70 participants, 54.5%) and helping neighbours when they needed it. 37.5% of participants (48) also reported speaking up when they saw unfairness and treating others with kindness. Other ways the participants contributed are presented in table 14.

Table 14: Participant’s contributions to the community of Guelph-Wellington

Avenues of Community Contribution	# of People	% of Participants
I help my neighbours when they need it	70	54.7%
I speak up for fairness and treat people with kindness in my community	48	37.5%
I contribute to improving the natural environment (recycling, picking up garbage, planting trees, etc.)	41	32%
I provide unpaid help for family members (children, grandparents, etc.)	40	31.3%
I donate to local charities	40	31.3%
I contribute with my skills and experience to the local economy through my job	40	31.3%
I continue to build my skills and strengthen the ways I can contribute to this community (learning English, further education, building professional skills, etc.)	31	24.2%
I help newcomers to Canada make their home in our community	29	22.7%
I volunteer in cultural, faith or ethnic association activities	24	18.8%
I vote in local/municipal, provincial or national elections in Canada	24	18.8%

I tutor or help youth learn in this community	8	6.3%
I volunteer with community organizations, groups or faith communities	8	6.3%
I am on a board of directors or other committee	8	6.3%
I volunteer with youth sports (coaching, driving youth, etc.)	7	5.5%
I am a business owner and my business contributes to our community's economy	6	4.7%
Others	2	1.6%

Participants shared their experiences illustrating their contributions to the community to better the Guelph-Wellington community.

"I have recently signed up to be a volunteer at the Guelph Wellington immigrant services."

"I helped an elderly person, who got out of the Norfolk house and lost his direction, couldn't remember where he was heading. I called 911, stayed on location till they arrived and helped him back to his residence."

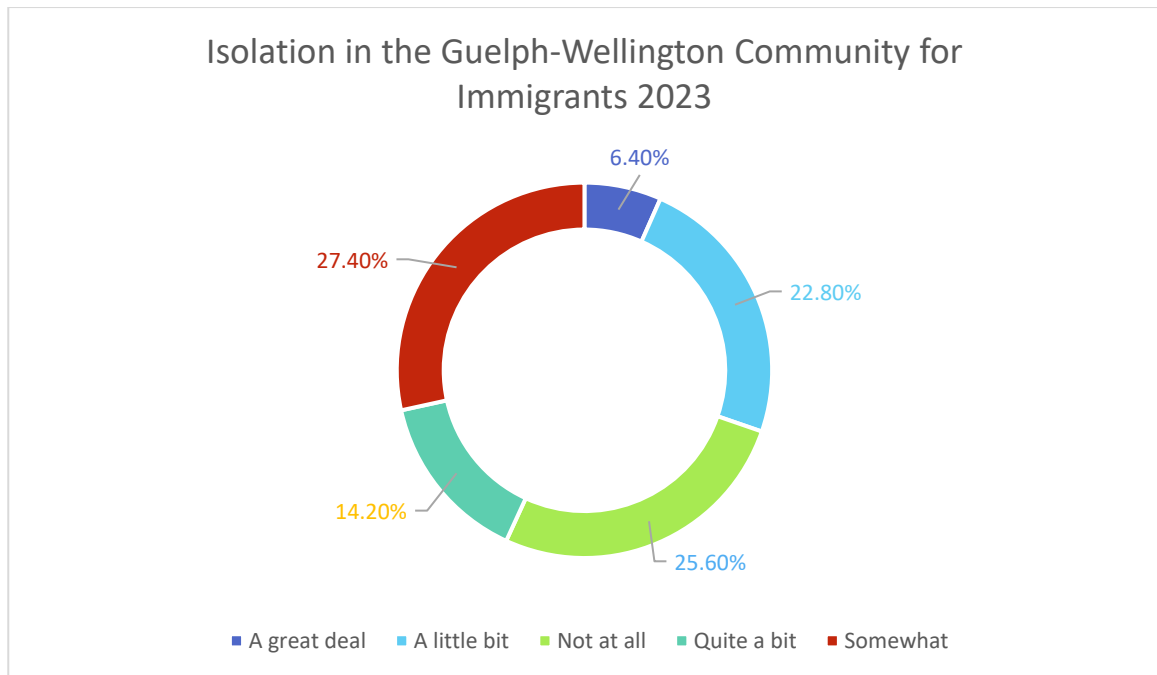
"I was involved with a neighbourhood group as a chair of the board and was a community outreach worker for 20 years. To see my clients flourish and they still remember me and the support they received from me."

"I proudly offer a no-cost financial education program called 'Total Financial Freedom.'"

"We have a Peruvian dance group, and we perform in the multicultural festival in the area to show our culture and create awareness of embracing the immigrants as a contribution to our community."

"My family and I are into recycling for the community."

-Survey Participants.



Isolation

With respect to isolation, 70.80% of the participants felt some level of isolation (6.40% felt a great deal, 14.20% felt quite a bit, 27.40% felt somewhat isolated and 22.80% felt a little bit of isolation). However, 25.6% did not report feeling any isolation²⁶.

Discrimination

Approximately 15.6% (34) of participants reported experiencing some form of discrimination, but a majority of the participants (179 or 81.7%) did not report experiencing any discrimination in the Guelph-Wellington region. This is a much lower rate than that found in the discrimination study by GWLIP and Western University in 2021, where 70% of immigrants and visible minorities had experienced discrimination of some sort. The difference in the statistics could be attributed to a few different variables. The discrimination study was conducted specifically to understand experiences of discrimination in immigrants and visible minorities and was presented as such. Individuals with experiences with discrimination may have been more inclined to participate in a survey that inquired about such experiences. Alternatively, in the 2021 survey, participants were asked about experiences of discrimination over a 3-year period, whereas the current survey asked only about the last year.

²⁶ Q.12. How much have you felt isolated or alone over the last 12 months in Guelph Wellington? (all survey, n=219)

Among respondents in the present survey who had encountered discrimination, 17 participants (50%) believed it to be because of their race or skin color, while 13 participants (38%) felt it was due to ethnicity or cultural factors.

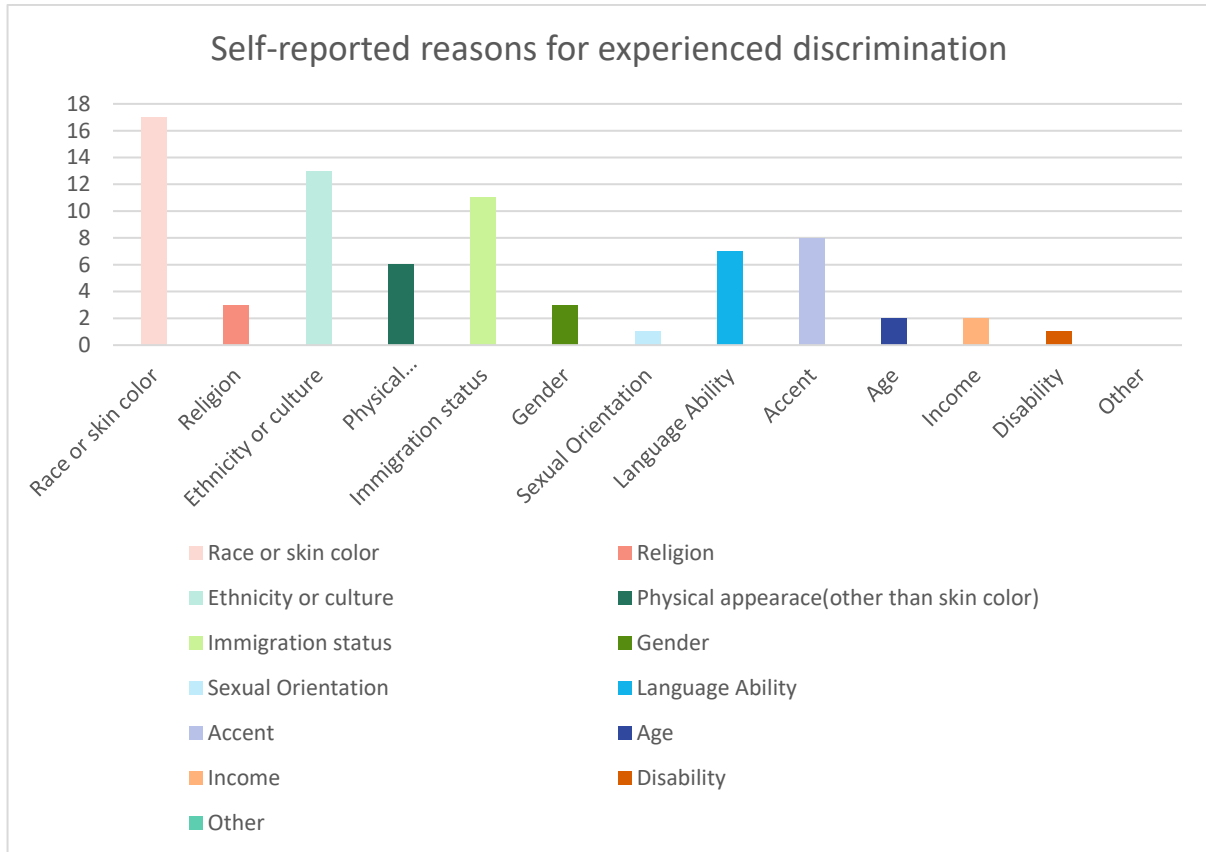


Figure 7 Self-reported reasons for discriminative experiences

Participants also reported *in what instances* they experienced discrimination. Public places (12 participants, 35.29%), in a store, bank or restaurant (23.53%), and applying for a job or promotion (11 participants, 5%) were reported most frequently.

Table 15: Situations participants experienced discrimination.

Situations in which discrimination took place	# of participants	% of participants²⁷
While using public areas	12	35.29%
In a store, bank or restaurant	8	23.53%
At work or when applying for a job or a promotion	7	20.59%
When looking for housing	7	20.59%
At school or university	6	17.65%
When using buses, trains, or taxis	6	17.65%
At community/public events	5	14.71%
When dealing with the police	5	14.71%
At a health center	4	11.76%
When crossing the border into Canada	4	11.76%
When using libraries, community/recreational centers, arenas	4	11.76%
Other²⁸	4	11.76%
When accessing services	3	8.82%

²⁷ The percentage of participants is calculated in context with only those who experienced discrimination, not the total sample.

²⁸ The others included situations such as driving, parking, and everywhere/most places.

Challenges and Supports

Key Challenges

The most common challenges immigrants faced²⁹ were the high cost of living or money-related problems (116 participants, 53%), finding affordable housing (99 participants, 45.2%), finding healthcare (69 participants, 31.5%), and finding work (66 participants, 30.1%).

Table 16: Challenges faced by participants.

Challenges Faced	# of Participants	% of Participants
Cost of living	116	53%
Finding Affordable housing	99	45.2%
Finding healthcare	69	31.5%
Finding work	66	30.1%
Making friends	57	26%
Transportation	29	13.2%
Learn where and how to do things	26	11.9%
Learning English	25	11.4%
Finding Childcare	24	11%
Getting information in a familiar language	23	10.5%
Finding relevant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.	22	10%
Children's safety in school and community	22	10%

²⁹ Q.20. What are the biggest challenges you or your family have experienced in the last year Guelph-Wellington? (Select all that apply.) (all surveys, N=219)

Mental Health support	21	9.6%
Receiving public or social services	20	9.1%
Starting a new business	18	8.2%
Understanding the education system for my children	13	5.9%
Discrimination/racism	13	5.9%

In other (8 participants) challenges, the participants reported the slow speed of government agencies or institutions in Canada (this included immigration procedures, acquiring driving privileges, etc.), having restrictions over overseas relatives' visitation, specifications of educational levels (needing to have a Canadian post-secondary degree), security of certain areas in Guelph against thefts (e.g., downtown Guelph), widespread drug/cigarette usage, and higher taxes with lower incomes.

Helpful changes

The survey asked immigrants what changes would help them reach their full potential³⁰. Most respondents wanted more affordable housing (57.8%), no other change was so unanimously reported by all the participants. A second hope for change was in programs for immigrants to find work (32%). The following table presents the changes that the participants reported would contribute to an improved quality of life in the Guelph-Wellington region.

³⁰ Q.22. What changes would help immigrants reach their full potential in Guelph Wellington? (Choose your top 3) (N=128, only longer version of survey)

Table 16: Helpful Changes to the Guelph-Wellington Community

Helpful Changes	# of participants	% of participants
More affordable housing	74	57.8%
Better programs for immigrants to find work	41	32%
Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants	24	18.8%
More opportunities to help improve English skills	23	18%
One place to get all settlement, immigration and other services	18	14.1%
More effort by community services to better serve immigrants	18	14.1%
A central place for both employers to find immigrant workers and for workers to find employment	16	12.5%
Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants	14	10.9%
Actions to improve the social connections of immigrants	9	7%
Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants	9	7%
English learning opportunities in workplaces	8	6.3%
Others³¹	8	6.3%
Availability of interpretation and translation	7	5.5%
Greater voice or involvement in community leadership and planning	7	5.5%
Service agencies working together more	7	5.5%
More immigrant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.	6	4.7%
Computer access and training	6	4.7%

³¹ Other changes for improvement included better transportation/transit (2), higher educational opportunities (1), more welcoming staff at services for immigrants (1), better funding for health and recreational services (1), and better-integrated learning about Canadian culture (1).

Improvements for Guelph-Wellington

The survey asked participants what the most important change community leaders could bring about to improve the welcoming, integration, and well-being of immigrants in the community³². One prominent theme that emerged was the importance of *Respect and Equality*. Participants consistently emphasized the significance of treating all individuals, whether they were immigrants or Canadian-born, with respect and fairness. They strongly advocated for inclusive treatment for all community members, emphasizing that being an immigrant should not imply any form of disadvantage.

Another cardinal theme was *Housing and Affordability*. Respondents voiced concerns about access to affordable housing. Affordability of housing was seen as a significant factor affecting the overall well-being of immigrants.

The participants stressed the importance of *Language and Education*, particularly English language skills, as essential for integration. Respondents suggested increasing the availability English language learning initiatives.

Inclusion and Integration into mainstream society emerged as a focus as well. Participants urged the integration of inclusion efforts across all municipal departments and projects. Participants reported experiencing lack of promotion of immigrant-related business, and cultural events, and pressed for better support for such endeavours. They emphasized the importance of fostering diversity, equality, and acceptance, especially with local employers.

Creating job opportunities that align with immigrants' education and experience was another common concern, falling under the theme of *Employment Opportunities*. Participants advocated for support in finding suitable employment for newcomers, recognizing the challenges they often face in the job market.

³² Q.27. What is the most important thing community leaders should do to improve the welcoming, integration and well-being of immigrants in Guelph (N=128)

The accessibility of healthcare services, particularly family doctors, was identified as a significant issue affecting immigrants' *Healthcare Access*. Participants stressed the need for timely and accessible medical care for the well-being of immigrants in the region.

These themes reflect the collective voice of immigrants in Guelph Wellington, providing valuable insights into their priorities and concerns. Addressing these themes can contribute to a more welcoming, integrated, and prosperous community for immigrants in the region. A few quotes from each theme are presented below.

Theme 1: Respect and equality

"I believe community leaders should treat all people with respect and help with integration if they are immigrants or not. Being an immigrant doesn't make you disadvantaged. Let's treat everybody fair, including Canadian-born people."

"Treat us as equals as Canadians. We all contribute one way or another to make this place better and prosperous."

Theme 2: Housing and Affordability

"Start developing more affordable housing, prioritize healthcare services."

"The most important thing is to lower the cost of renting a house, and the cost of food and transportation, so that people have fewer issues."

"Affordable housing should be available to new immigrants."

Theme 3: Language and Education

"Strongly encourage learning English."

"Bridge the education and skills of Newcomers so they can continue to work in their profession."

"First ESL class must be available for everyone, and everyone must learn English language skills."

Theme 5: Employment Opportunities

"Helping them get jobs that match their experience and educational certificates."

"Get more employers involved to quickly find work for new arrivals."

"Employment insurance. Educating the worker before starting work in a language that he can understand."

Theme 6: Healthcare Access

"The most important would be family doctors. It's been 1 year and we have not been able to find one."

"Quickly accessible medical care."

Theme 7: Community Support and Integration Programs

"Community Centre and some sponsored programs can bring people together."

"Provide info on basic services like childcare, schools, community recreational activities without relying on acquaintances for info."

"Accommodation, events to get to know each other."

Theme 8: Simplified Immigration and PR Process

"Simplify the process of legalizing the work of medical workers accessible to newly arrived Ukrainians with medical education and work experience."

"To make obtaining a Permanent Resident automatic for working Ukrainians who arrived under the CUAET program."

Theme 9: Financial Support and Awareness

"Put Financial Awareness camps and learning center in various places."

"Financial aid should be according to actual needs."

"Maybe set up more programs and webinars on different topics."

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