



OPINION LEADER SURVEY: CONTRASTING PERSPECTIVES ON IMMIGRATION AND DIVERSITY IN NORTHERN AND OTHER COMMUNITIES

Project funded by Citizenship
and Immigration Canada
(Ontario) and WCI

OUR OBJECTIVES

- ▶ To assess the “warmth of the welcome” for immigrants and visible minorities in 17 Ontario cities outside Toronto, including five northern Ontario cities
 - ▶ To identify targets and strategies for change
 - ▶ To assess policy directions and help shape anti-racism and welcoming community program interventions
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MEASURING THE WARMTH OF WELCOME

- ▶ Survey of local opinion leaders who:
 - ▶ are informed about local attitudes and organizational capacity
 - ▶ influence the “climate” of the community and set the social and economic context for newcomers
- ▶ Study based on confidential telephone interviews with 10 randomly-selected opinion leaders (5 governmental and 5 non-governmental) in each municipality

THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Perceptions of:

- ▶ Local and regional government interest in immigration
- ▶ Community leader attitudes about the contribution of immigration to the community's economic, social/cultural, political/civic life and identity
- ▶ Local public interest in immigration
- ▶ Community welcome for newcomers and visible minorities
- ▶ Advantages and disadvantages of immigration
- ▶ Community capacity to serve newcomers, refugees

RELEVANCE FOR COMMUNITIES AND POLICYMAKERS

- Helps policymakers identify targets and strategies for program interventions to improve the warmth of welcome and help immigrants find meaningful work
- Accounts for local variations in the warmth of welcome
- A demographic portrait of opinion leaders:
 - ▶ Immigrant status, ethno-racial background, gender, age, length of residency

Perceptions of Government and Community Interest

- Northern respondents more likely to perceive municipal government interest in immigration
- Minorities of respondents in northern and other communities agreed community members interested in more immigration

	% North	% Other
Municipal Interest – Yes	94 (47)	83 (100)
Community Interest – Yes	38 (19)	25 (30)
Community Interest – Mixed	44 (22)	52 (62)

Contribution of Immigration to Community Life

- Respondents outside north more likely to say that community leaders would see immigration as contributing to economic growth
- Similar views on how community leaders would perceive immigration's contribution to social/cultural life and the community identity
- Relatively few respondents in both areas felt community leaders would agree that immigration contributes to the city's political/civic life

	% North	% Other
Economic growth	76 (38)	87 (104)
Social/Cultural	88 (44)	88 (105)
Political/Civic	36 (18)	43 (52)
Community Identity	56 (28)	55 (66)

Welcome for Newcomers and Visible Minorities

- Northern respondents more likely to give an unqualified “yes” response to perceived welcome for newcomers
- Bare majorities of respondents in both areas gave an unqualified “yes” response to perceived welcome for visible minorities

	% North	% Other
Newcomers welcome – Yes	66 (33)	59 (71)
Newcomers welcome – Mixed	28 (14)	23 (28)
VMs welcome – Yes	50 (25)	52 (62)
VMs welcome - Mixed	34 (17)	32 (38)

Community Capacity to Serve Immigrants and Refugees

- Respondents in other areas more likely to say their community could serve immigrants and refugees,
- They were also more likely to say their communities could *not* serve immigrants (37%) or refugees (34%)


	% North (N)	% Other (N)
Serve immigrants	54 (27)	60 (72)
Serve refugees	44 (22)	48 (57)

Who are the Opinion Leaders?

- Local opinion leaders in both areas are overwhelmingly Canadian-born and White

	% North	% Other
White	96	93
Canadian-born	86	84

HOW DO NORTHERN ONTARIO PERSPECTIVES DIFFER FROM VIEWS IN OTHER CITIES?

- ▶ Multinational firms and workforces generally linked to public receptivity to diversity
 - ▶ Prominence of First Nations issues and role in community identity
 - ▶ Friendliness and population mobility leads to greater openness
 - ▶ Visible minorities more likely to attract attention
 - ▶ Servicing religious minorities a challenge
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HOW ARE NORTHERN ONTARIO PERSPECTIVES SIMILAR TO OTHER COMMUNITIES?

- ▶ Demographic, economic diversification and labour market imperatives drive municipal interest
 - ▶ Perceived weak contribution of immigration to political/civic life linked to small size of newcomers communities, lack of outreach
 - ▶ Mixed or negative community views about immigration linked to fears about job competition and “change”
 - ▶ Public receptivity linked to historical immigration/negativity linked to stereotypes about visible minorities
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