



Report on 2023-24 Mental and Emotional Wellness Survey

Aim of the Study: The Mental and Emotional Wellness Survey will help the RRLIP Project and the community had better understand how newcomers are coping in their new home. The findings will be shared with the broader community to inform local settlement and integration efforts and will inform future RRLIP activities especially those of the Mental and Emotional Wellness Working Group.

Translation: This survey was only available in English due to budget constraints.

Conducted by: This survey was conducted by the Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership (RRLIP). The RRLIP is a community initiative that exists to support and strengthen the community's capacity to welcome, settle and integrate newcomers. The RRLIP is guided by a multi-sector Partnership Council, informed by an Immigrant Advisory Table, and supported by working groups that implement activities to address the local priorities.

Survey Development: RRLIP staff developed this survey using SurveyMonkey software, in 2023. Content was developed in consultation with the RRLIP Partnership Council, Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT), and the Mental and Emotional Wellness Workshop (MEWWG). After initially drafting the survey questions, RRLIP staff received feedback from some clients of a local settlement agency, and this feedback was incorporated into the final survey design and content.

Survey Launch and Promotion: The survey was launched in June 2023. Once launched, promotion began by both the RRLIP and community partners. For example, local settlement agencies were very helpful in sharing the survey opportunity with their clients. Project blog and Facebook posts were used to promote the survey, along with the survey opportunity being shared in community meetings, at in-person events (whenever possible), through mass emails and personal phone calls, etc. RRLIP staff were also able to attend some in-person events to share the survey opportunity, where relevant. The survey closed Feb 19, 2024. Almost half the survey responses were collected in February 2024.

Challenges Encountered: During the collection period of this survey, there were no pandemic restrictions; however, there was still fewer in-person venues at which to promote or deliver the survey, and public access to computers and/or internet was less available than in past years. The

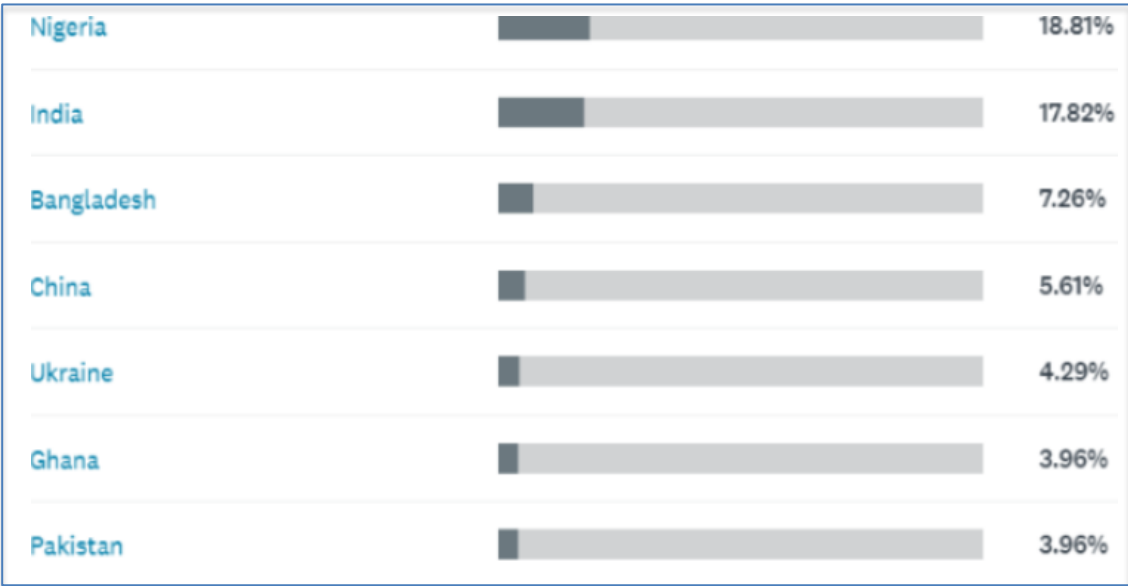
RRLIP staff continued to work remotely and only a few in-person events were delivered by local partners. Near the end of the survey period, the RRLIP Project Manager and Assistant Manager retired and new managers temporarily reduced the team’s capacity to promote the survey and support survey delivery/completion.

Survey Participants

The survey involved 303 participants, all of whom were born outside of Canada, currently living in Regina, and aged at least 15 years old. Other characteristics of the survey participants are described below.

Immigration Category: The survey responses were predominantly from International Students (43.2%), followed by various categories of Permanent Residents (19.8%); for example, Skilled Workers coming through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP; 7.92%), Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) including but not limited to those sponsored by family members (3.0%), etc. Some respondents did not specify their immigration category upon arrival, so their status is unknown (4.6%). Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW), who do not have Permanent Resident status, made up 9.6%. Displaced Ukrainians under the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) Visa (2.0%), other Temporary Residents (1.7%), those with Spousal Visas (1.3%), Visitors (2.0%), other PSRs (1.0%), and Government Assisted Refugees (GARs; 1.0%) made up the remaining participants.

Country of Origin: Among respondents to this survey, 17 countries were represented. In addition to the Top 7 shown below, other countries (each below 3% of responses) included Vietnam, Syria, Philippines, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Iran, Sudan, Kenya, Egypt, and Afghanistan. The percentages indicated here do not correspond to the percentages of these groups in Regina, only in response to this survey.



Length of Stay in Canada/Regina: Among respondents to this survey, the time in Canada and in Regina followed the same pattern. Most survey respondents had arrived in Canada and Regina within the last 6 months, followed by those who have been here 1-3 years, then more than 5 years, then 6 months to 1 year, and finally those who have lived here 3-5 years.

Age: From most to least, respondents' ages fell into the following categories:

- 35-44 (33.99%)
- 25-35 (26.40%)
- 18-24 (22.11%)
- 45-54 (12.87%)
- 55-64 (2.31%)

Gender: Most respondents to this survey identified as Female (59.41%), 38.28% as Male, and 1.32% Other.

Marital status: Most survey respondents are married (61.06%), over one-third are Single (35.64%), and only a few reported as Common-Law (1.65) or preferred not to answer (1.65%).

Highest Level of Education: Among respondents, 38.94% held University Bachelor's Degrees, 33.99% held University Master's Degrees, and 21.78% had completed High School. 6.27% held Trade-Technical School certificates, 3.96% held Doctoral Degrees, 1.98% had completed Elementary School and 1.32% reported without formal schooling.

Knowledge of English: The majority of the respondents, 78.22%, demonstrated proficiency within Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) levels 4-8, signifying moderate to advanced skills. Additionally, 17.16% indicated only basic literacy skills (i.e. below CLB 1), and 4.62% reported proficiency within CLB levels 1-3, indicating basic to low-intermediate skills. Overall, the data indicates a diverse range of English proficiency levels, with a significant majority showing moderate to advanced proficiency. The relatively high number of Literacy level respondents is unusual for an online survey of this length and complexity. This is because the staff and volunteers of at least one of the local language service providing agencies spent significant time supporting their language learners to ensure their understanding of the survey content and process.

Employment Status: The following results outline the distribution of Employment Status:

- Employment full time (36.96%)
- Currently looking for job (27.72%),
- Student full time (27.39%), Unemployed (23.76%),
- Employed part-time (15.51%),
- Employed but in a job that does not fit my skills and education (12.54%),
- Student (LINC) (6.27%),
- Employed in a job that fit my skills and education (4.95%),
- Student part-time (4.62%)

Insights on Settlement Experiences and Services/Supports

In this section of the survey, questions focused on respondents' settlement experiences. It is important to remember that respondents to this survey were at various stages of their settlement journey, from recent arrivals to longtime Regina residents.

Settlement Services received since coming to Regina:

Of the respondents, 63.37% indicated receiving settlement services, while 36.63% stated they had not received any since arriving in Regina. These services included settlement, language instruction, and employment support.

Among the 92 participants who responded on this question provided the following insights:

- 40 respondents were unaware of settlement services, or did not know how/where to find these services.
- 21 stated they did not need settlement services; some of the reasons provided by these individuals included:
 - simply have not needed services (9)
 - had received help from family/friends (7)
 - landed in/arrived from another province, where they received settlement services (4)
 - arrived at a very young age, presumably with family to care for them
- 10 reported that employment services were unhelpful to them
- 3 respondents were ineligible for services, possibly due to immigration status (e.g. not yet a permanent resident, or already citizen)
- 2 respondents were waiting to receive services
- 1 person reported being helped by a cultural community organization
- 1 respondent did not want to be a burden to others (trying to self-support)
- 1 person sourced supports on their own, for lack of anyone to help

Of the five students who commented on this question, only one was satisfied with the services offered by their educational institution (university); two were not offered services, and one tried the services available, but found them to be unhelpful.

Settlement Services received in Canada, outside of Regina:

Of the respondents, 13.25% indicated receiving settlement services from Canadian locations other than Regina, while 86.75% stated they had not received settlement services outside of Regina since arriving in Canada. These services included settlement, language instruction, and employment support.

It is perhaps not surprising that only 13.25% of respondents have received services outside of Regina, as the survey criteria included only Regina residents; from this, we can ascertain that

most survey respondents settled directly in Regina, not spending much time in other Canadian locales. Of the 32 respondents who had received settlement services outside Regina and who chose to comment,

- 7 commenters received services in **Saskatoon, SK**
- 5 respondents received services in **ON** (1 Toronto, 1 Mississauga, 3 unspecified)
- 3 survey participants received services in **Calgary, AB**
- 3 people received services in **BC** (1 in Vancouver, 1 student at University of Victoria, the third unspecified)
- 3 respondents received **pre-arrival services** (i.e. before arriving in Canada)
- 2 participants were **unaware of available services** for newcomers (1 of these may not have needed/looked for them, as they shared that they had family support upon arrival)
- 1 respondent received services in **Winnipeg, MB**
- 1 commenter reported receiving **no services**

Information that would help people settle in Regina:

The majority of respondents (72.92%) indicated that **finding work that matches their skills and education** would be helpful. This suggests a significant concern among the surveyed group regarding employment opportunities that align with their qualifications.

Following this, 47.22% of respondents suggested information on **finding affordable housing** would be helpful, indicating another prominent issue faced by newcomers to this community.

Other responses to this question indicate a range of concerns related to **basic needs, social integration, and personal development**, including:

- finding affordable food sources (39.58%)
- meeting people from one's own cultural or language group (36.46%)
- improving language skills (32.99%)
- meeting people from other cultural or language groups (32.29%)
- finding safe housing (29.86%)
- using Regina transit (16.67%)
- respondents were unsure about what might be helpful (10.74%)

29 respondents chose to add comments on this question, and they revealed several other issues, challenges, and overlapping areas of concern and opportunities for impactful change, including better provision of or access to:

- information on how schools work here
- financial supports for services, and financial education (e.g. taxes)
- information on how to access healthcare, including mental and emotional wellness services
- access to childcare (especially close to home)

- affordable and culturally familiar food sources
- better transportation options, within and beyond the city
- support for those experiencing racism and discrimination, including between different newcomer groups, as well as trust-building between newcomers and the “majority population”
- where and how to access to truly independent, honest authorities/processes regarding harassment at work
- clarity on opportunities for foreign trained healthcare professionals

Some commenters had suggestions for improving settlement experiences of international students:

- educational supports such as tutoring, mentoring, and other trainings
- free legal information for international students, especially on immigration law
- easier transition to Permanent Resident status for international graduates who stay in the province
- better systems of navigation from education to work
- educate and encourage workplaces to accept international students on open work permits

One respondent spoke of the “conflict of education from home country” - most likely referring to the very common challenge of getting foreign credentials recognized here.

Overall, responses to the questions on settlement services highlight the diverse needs and challenges faced by newcomers to Regina, ranging from practical issues like employment and housing to social and cultural integration concerns.

Experiences since coming to Canada:

As it transitioned into questions specifically about mental and emotional wellness, the survey offered respondents an opportunity to reflect on their experiences since coming to Canada. Purposely, this multiple-choice question was designed to offer options related to mental and emotional wellness without actually using those terms. The intention was to ease in respondents who might hold stigmas around speaking about mental and emotional wellness.

The following chart reflects their responses, in order of most commonly experienced to least.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ difficulty adjusting to the weather	50.17% 152
▼ loneliness	49.17% 149
▼ separation from family members	47.19% 143
▼ fear for family members left behind	33.00% 100
▼ physical symptoms such as fast heartbeat, headache, shortness of breath, stomach ache, tiredness, lack of interest, sadness, change in appetite, or other symptoms that are unusual for you	27.39% 83
▼ difficulty finding which studies are needed to qualify to work	26.73% 81
▼ fear of talking about my mental and emotional wellness challenges	22.44% 68
▼ racism or discrimination	22.11% 67
▼ fear of trying unfamiliar things (e.g. food, activities, etc.).	18.48% 56
▼ taken advantage of because of a lack of understanding of Canadian labour laws and employee rights	17.49% 53
▼ fear of speaking up when unfairly treated by an employer	16.50% 50
▼ fear of meeting new people	15.84% 48
▼ unhelpful care from a doctor	13.86% 42
▼ unfriendly community	13.20% 40
▼ trouble with someone at work	7.26% 22
▼ unsafe housing	6.60% 20
▼ violence from a family member	1.98% 6
▼ violence from a community member	1.32% 4

33 respondents chose to add comments on this question, and they revealed several other challenges experienced since coming to Canada: including finding work, language, transportation, access to health care, pressure to adapt to new life,

The following comment speaks of challenges around language assessment and learning; however, it also reveals that this respondent is not aware of language classes in Regina that are offered in evenings and on weekends nor language training for newcomers who are not Permanent Residents (PRs).

The language assessments and classes are all at workdays while I have to work. And some language training is only targeted for newcomers who have held PR cards.

Another commenter spoke of difficulties addressing workplace harassment:

Workers and work authorities, union, safety offices blocked my access/ claims about harassment.

One commenter shared uncertainty about proper waste disposal, including methods/streams of recycling and reuse to reduce waste:

I do not know how to get rid of my waste correctly such as food, plastic bottles, carton box, electric power cable and old shoes: or how to get back deposit money from plastic bottles such as milk bottles, Coke bottles, etc.

The following respondent's comments reveal various challenges experienced by international students; specifically, lack of knowledge of relevant immigration laws, very high tuition, and limitations on income earning during the academic year.

All of us who come here as immigrants want to be good members of society who contribute to the country and its economy. We want to build homes and families here but you keep shifting the goal post.

All of the above-mentioned challenges can have impacts on mental and emotional wellness and can hamper newcomers' capacities to thrive here.

Even though this question did not explicitly ask about mental and emotional wellness, some commenters described their experiences in terms that are typically used to describe mental and emotional wellness symptoms:

- Anxiety, sadness, mood drift, not feeling like waking up and want to stay in bed all day.
- I have recently conceived and started to feel fear of a new environment, panic attack.
- I feel lonely without my husband, mother and pets. Besides, I am sort of a loner, which makes me more inclined towards my family.

Mental and Emotional Wellness Experiences: Access to and/or Use of Supports/Services

This section of the survey report includes detailed information on responses related to past/recent newcomers' challenges around mental and emotional wellness (MEW), access to, and use of MEW supports and services.

Note: The phrase "mental and emotional wellness" is used instead of "mental health" in this survey and, in general, in RRLIP communications related to this topic. This includes communications that occur in and around the RRLIP Mental and Emotional Wellness Working Group (MEWWG). This has been done on the advice of a number of community partners and past/recent newcomers, including members of the RRLIP Immigrant Advisory Table (IAT).

Have you experienced mental and emotional wellness challenges in your life?

Based on the provided data, the responses regarding experiences with mental and emotional wellness challenges are as following

- 35.31% (107 respondents) experienced mental and emotional wellness challenges only after coming to Canada.

- 33% (100 respondents) stated they have never experienced mental and emotional wellness challenges.
- 21.78% (66 respondents) experienced mental and emotional wellness challenges both before and after coming to Canada.
- 7.59% (23 respondents) experienced mental and emotional wellness challenges only before coming to Canada.
- 2.31% (7 respondents) indicated they do not know what is meant by mental and emotional wellness challenges.

It is important to note that despite frequent accounts of stigma around mental health, no respondents chose to skip this question (i.e. all chose to respond). Of those 303 individuals who responded, almost one-third reported never having experienced mental and emotional wellness challenges. However, the above chart indicated that at least 1/3 of respondents had experiences of difficulty adjusting to the weather, loneliness, and/or separation from or fear for family members, all of which could be considered examples of mental and emotional wellness challenges. It is possible that cultural stigma and/or language differences may have contributed to this apparent contradiction.

It is also important to note that a few (2.31%) of people who took this survey did not know what was meant by the phrase “mental and emotional challenges” - clearly, more education and awareness is needed on this topic, including more cultural sensitivity in selecting and clarifying the language used to discuss it.

Factors contributing to Mental and Emotional Wellness challenges: Responses to this survey question highlight the correlation between challenges around employment/finances, social connections/isolation and other aspects of integration, and quality of mental and emotional wellness.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Difficulty finding work	56.38%	168
Financial stress	54.36%	162
Uncertainty about the future	45.30%	135
Isolation - few friends/family here	40.94%	122
Lack of activities in the city	33.89%	101
Extreme weather	32.89%	98
Adjusting to a new culture	30.54%	91
Separation from family	30.54%	91
Too many responsibilities	27.85%	83
Language barriers	17.45%	52
Interpersonal racism and discrimination	12.75%	38
Parenting babies/young children	11.41%	34
None - I've never experienced mental and emotional wellness challenges	11.07%	33
Not the right kind of mental and emotional wellness supports	7.72%	23
Past traumatic experience	7.38%	22
Stigma/stereotypes about mental and emotional wellness	6.38%	19
Family conflict	5.70%	17
Aging challenges	5.37%	16
Parenting youth/teens	5.03%	15

Other factors noted in the comments related to this question include:

- lack of culturally competent mental and emotional healthcare
- pre- and post-arrival stress, trauma
- worry about future in Canada - in general or about retirement
- caring for loved ones, especially those with higher needs, e.g. disabilities or trauma
- difficulties accessing legal services; the exact wording of this comment - “access to legal ways blocked by various offices” - may also suggest challenges in navigating Canadian/provincial bureaucratic systems and processes
- transportation and pedestrian safety/accessibility challenges, especially in winter (e.g. lack of sidewalks or inadequate maintenance)

Within your culture, how do people talk about mental and emotional challenges?

Responses to this question indicate that in approximately half of the cultures represented by respondents to this survey, people are not encouraged to engage in open discussion of mental and emotional wellness, and some view it negatively. Only 11.22% stated that their cultures encourage open discussions about mental and emotional wellness.

- 45.55% of the respondents mentioned that mental health discussions are rarely or not discussed in their culture.
- Another 6.60% admitted feeling apprehensive due to taboos or discomfort surrounding the topic.
- Several viewed sharing about mental and emotional challenges as weakness, or a mental illness.
- 7.26% expressed uncertainty about how to respond to this survey question.
- 14.52% indicated family or friends as the preferred option for support in their culture. A few mentioned faith-based supports.

Responses in the lower percentiles for this question included mentions of causes or symptoms of mental and emotional wellness, including:

- trauma
- work-related, financial or general stress
- depression
- suicide
- feelings of fear
- fatigue

While it should not be assumed that newcomers will always be reluctant to speak about mental and emotional wellness, these survey results do seem to indicate that many are. The need for culturally sensitive mental and emotional wellness supports is clear, and is reinforced by what the RRLIP hears often from past/recent newcomers and service providers in the course of other aspects of our work in this community.

Information that would support your mental and emotional wellness

Respondents suggested a wide variety of information that could be supportive. More than half (52.81%) of the respondents expressed their interest in information about **activities** that can support their mental and emotional wellness. Additionally, a notable portion (41.91%) emphasized the importance of knowing **where and how to access** mental and emotional wellness services and supports. More than a third of respondents wanted information on **how to speak about** their mental and emotional challenges so they can get help (38.28%). Over a third (36.96%) also wanted information on how to recognize mental illness. Over one-fifth of respondents (21.78%) indicated the need for information in their own language. Additionally, 8.25% wanted information on surviving abusive relationships.

One-fifth (20.13%) of respondents were unsure what information might be helpful.

Comments shared on this question suggested several other types of information that would help support newcomer mental and emotional wellness in Regina:

Reuniting with my family in Canada has been a priority for me as I pursue my studies.

Information readily available from the airports regarding where to seek assistance and support depending on one's immigration status would be helpful.

Affordable mental health services are lacking.

We need conferences that are related to real situations and avoid platitudes such as "everyone here are nice people", "everyone here respects the law" and so many other platitudes.

Securing a job and settling down has been a significant challenge. I possess multiple university degrees and years of preparation, yet finding promising career opportunities swiftly remains elusive.

Financial stress weighs heavily on newcomers like me, and knowing where to find work or navigate the PR process is essential.

These results and comments highlight the need to provide more and/or clearer information, resources and guidance to support past/recent newcomers in seeking and accessing help for mental and emotional wellness.

Services received for mental and emotional wellness

Responses to this question indicate that a significant majority of respondents have not received any mental and emotional wellness services. It is unclear whether this result represents a lack of need for services, a lack of awareness/information on what services are available, or the presence of cultural stigmas or other barriers to access to these services.

- 65.68%, (199) respondents said they have not received any MEW services
- 13.53.% (41) respondents indicated that they had received professional services
- 4.62 % (14) had received some form of MEW-related education & training
- 3.96 % (12) had received support from their family/friends
- 0.99 % (3) had received other support services from community organizations

Interestingly, 10.23% of responses were unclear or did not address the question, and a further four (1.32%) respondents were unsure of whether/what services they may have received; these results indicate potential uncertainty or ambiguity in respondents' experiences.

Overall, the responses highlight both the need for increased access to mental and emotional wellness services and the diverse avenues through which individuals seek support for their mental health needs.

How would you like to receive mental and emotional wellness services/supports?

Responses to this question suggest a diverse range of preferences for accessing mental and emotional wellness services.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ In person	49.83% 151
▼ On-line	38.94% 118
▼ With a mental health professional	34.65% 105
▼ By myself	26.40% 80
▼ Video call/Facetime	19.80% 60
▼ In a group	19.80% 60
▼ By chat	18.81% 57
▼ With my family	17.16% 52
▼ With someone from my faith/cultural community	16.17% 49
▼ By phone	13.53% 41
▼ With my doctor	13.53% 41

Other comments received from the respondents reveal other significant insights about how past/recent newcomers would like to receive support for mental and emotional wellness, including:

- Receiving information in my own language
- More than 3 sessions
- Adequate support for jobs and financial issues (incl. coaching, networking, etc.)
- Finding the trigger [i.e. underlying causes] for stress and challenges

One comment revealed a lack of clarity around terminology (e.g. “mental and emotional wellness”). Another suggested a perception of competition over support/resources for newcomer and Indigenous members of the community.

Final Comments

The last question of the survey invited respondents to add any other comments or questions they might have. 116 respondents chose to reply; however, most of the responses reiterated insights reported above. Comments that contributed further insights include:

- It is never easy to settle in a completely new country. As a graduate student, it is also helpful to be able to work more than 20 hours per week because that will eliminate much of your mental stress of covering living costs and tuition fees.
- It would be great if there is an option to support housing rental fees, the increasing rental is a challenge for newcomers.
- I would like to recommend this awareness of mental and emotional well-being in the school environment because it is young people who suffer enormously from it.
- We need to have interpreters for every language.
- I am a diabetic and high blood pressure patient. I do not know about the medical treatment and other things.
- Animals can help with loneliness especially when a person comes alone, but getting documents for emotional support animals is a challenge.
- Can have a special department where newcomers can get support to deal with mental health. Because I cannot find one, thanks.
- Many hidden racism issues in Regina
- Law needs to include concepts as “integrated psychopaths,” access to legal channels independent and honest from offices.
- Please try to provide something for elderly people who have some health problems and winter is very traumatic for them.
- More programs for newcomers specifically in winter; e.g. indoor walking facilities in every neighborhood to encourage people to walk in safe places.

- Train more people from different backgrounds to help with mental wellness (seeing a familiar face & communicating in your own language will help a lot) rather than telling people what is expected from them, talk to them, help them learn different parental discipline

Next Steps:

As shared earlier, the Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership will use the data acquired in this survey to inform its activities, especially those of the Mental and Emotional Wellness Working Group. Sharing this report with other community partners may inform their work with newcomers. Further reflection on the survey data will be required to maximize its positive impact in the community.

As has occurred during the dissemination of past RRLIP Newcomer Survey results, RRLIP staff are available to present the findings to any community group, agency, and/or level of government that is interested in learning more about the survey topics that pertain to their area of work. RRLIP staff can be reached at info@rrlip.ca or 306-529-6505.

Acknowledgements

The RRLIP team would like to extend its gratitude to the all the newcomers who participated in the survey and to all the community partners who helped in share and promote the survey.