



A PRIMER
**IMMIGRATION IN
WATERLOO
REGION**
December 2019



The Imperative

Canada is a country of immigration. Everyone who is not Indigenous to Canada has at some time in their family history immigrated here. Immigration is and will be a defining feature of the growth and prosperity of Canada and communities like Waterloo Region long into the future.

Due to aging populations and low fertility rate, Canada needs new sources of talent to enter the labour force to maintain high living standards. The Conference Board of Canada reports that between now and 2040, 1.6 million fewer people will become workers than the number of people exiting the labour force. Immigration will account for all of Canada's net labour force growth (projected around 3.7 million workers) as well as one-third of the economic growth rate.¹ Without strong immigration, the economy will shrink. The federal government is responding by increasing annual immigration targets, moving from single to multi-year immigration levels plans and adapting policy to enable more temporary residents to become permanent residents. There is fierce global competition for talent and people pushing more and more countries and communities to develop intentional strategies to attract and retain a robust immigrant population.

Statistics Canada data shows that nation-wide, immigrants have higher entrepreneurship rates than Canadian-born. Immigrant-owned firms were more likely to be job creators and have higher growth. On average, immigrants donate more to charity and they volunteer.² Culture Track Canada recently reported that immigrants consume arts and culture at higher rates than Canadian-born and that immigration is a driver of arts and culture in Canada.

When immigrants succeed, communities thrive.

Just as people and communities are dynamic and ever-changing, so too is the nature of immigration. Federal immigration policy, national economic trends, global migration patterns and national and local fluctuations in overall perceptions and support for immigration all affect immigration success in Waterloo Region.

The shifting nature of immigration has major implications for Waterloo Region in terms of community composition, cohesion, population growth, economic development planning, service delivery and more.

This document integrates findings about immigration and immigrants³ in Waterloo Region and Canada from a number of available local surveys, demographic profiles and relevant research.

Waterloo Region is a better community because ...

“...‘we’ immigrants bring to Canada education, skills, knowledge and commitment to create a better community”

“...I am a community builder and like to contribute to my community”

“...I strive to be a good person, who is kind to others and respects the rules”

“...I am an engaging, smiling and friendly person who loves helping other people”

“...I believe in diversity and appreciate the cultural differences that make Canada and Waterloo a great place”

--IMS 2019 Survey Respondents

Cover photos by: **Al Doerksen, Eliseo Martell, Ali Jabr and Immigration Partnership.**

¹ See: https://www.conferenceboard.ca/temp/1c0e602f-996d-48c8-b4c3-ff38f351ec8a/10150_Can'tGoltAlone_BR.pdf.

² See: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-008-x/2012001/article/11669-eng.htm>

³ The term immigrants is used in this report to include all who were born outside of Canada and now live in Waterloo Region, including permanent residents, temporary residents, foreign nationals and Canadian citizens.

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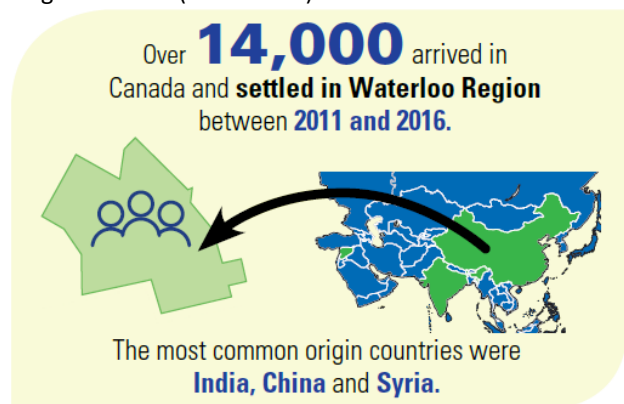
 Immigrants and community partners align on what would be of greatest help, with social connectedness, work, service improvements and welcoming/anti-racism/discrimination at the top 19

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What We Know About Immigration in Waterloo Region

Permanent immigrant arrivals are growing again and are spread across Waterloo Region

- In 2016, **119,335 immigrants lived in Waterloo Region** (22.3 per cent of total population). That's more than the total population of Waterloo and almost as large as Cambridge. Between 2008 and 2017, 28,675 new permanent residents landed here; arrivals ranged between around 2,400 and 3,800 people per year – or between 200 and 320 new residents per month. (WRIP 2019)
 - The immigrant proportion of the population is projected to grow to between 25.4 per cent and 31.2 per cent by 2036.⁴
- The **immigrant proportion of the population** increased slightly in the 10 years from 2006 (22.3 per cent) to 2016 (22.6 per cent). Compared to five years ago, Waterloo Region experienced a 15 per cent increase in the number of permanent resident arrivals. Landings in Kitchener grew while landings in the City of Waterloo stayed the same and landings in Cambridge declined. (WRIP 2019)
- Between 2011 and 2016, 14,045 **recent immigrants** settled in Waterloo Region, representing 2.6 per cent of the population. Waterloo Region had the 8th highest proportion of immigrants among Ontario's regional municipalities and third highest outside the Greater Toronto Area (WRIP 2019)
 - More than half of all recent immigrants settled in Kitchener (7,910), with a smaller number in Waterloo (3,840) and Cambridge (1,900). (SCCP 2016)
 - In 2016, immigrants made up just under a quarter of the population of the three cities combined. In the four rural townships together, immigrants made up 10 per cent of the total population. Despite the smaller proportion, the townships' immigrant population growth rate generally exceeded that of the cities. In particular, the immigrant population in Woolwich increased by over 80 per cent or by 1,190 individuals. (WRCB 2019)
- Consistent with provincial trends, Waterloo Region attracted fewer recent immigrants in 2016 compared to 2006. In 2006, there were 17,020 recent immigrants in Waterloo Region, while ten years later this number was 14,045, a decrease of close to 3,000 individuals. According to Statistics Canada, in that time more immigrants settled in the Prairie and Maritime Provinces due to economic growth and job opportunities. (WRCB 2019). But this trend is reversing, with greater numbers of immigrants landing back in Ontario since 2016.⁵



Most immigrants arrive through economic streams

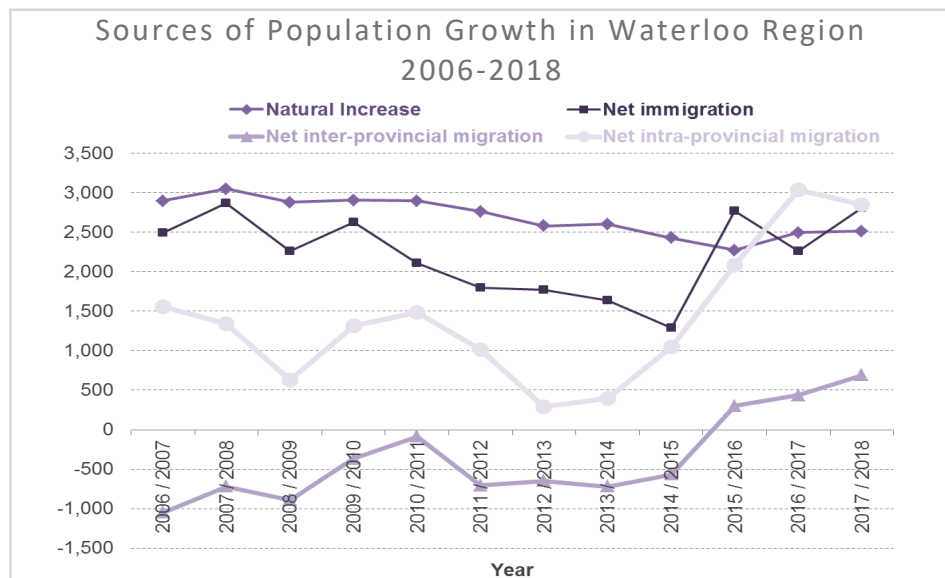
- Among the four main **permanent immigration categories**, 40 per cent of all permanent residents who landed in Waterloo Region in 2017 were in the economic category, 33 per cent came as sponsored family members and 26 per cent came as refugees. (WRIP 2019)
- Among immigration categories, refugee landings increased the most between 2006 and 2016 as a result of the Syrian resettlement initiative and mostly in Kitchener where the reception centre is located. (WRIP 2019) Between January 2015 and August 2019, 4,215 refugees (55% GARs, 8% BVORs and 37% PSRs) arrived in Waterloo Region. Waterloo Region was the 10th largest destination for GARs in Canada and 9th for PSRs (IRCC, Admissions of Resettled Refugees by Province/Territory and Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) of Intended Destination and Immigration Category, January 2015 - August 2019)

⁴ See: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2017001-eng.htm>.

⁵ See: <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/quarterly/dhiq2.html>.

Immigration drives population growth

- Immigration is a main **source of population growth** in Waterloo Region. It recently surpassed natural increase. In 2017/2018, 32 per cent of population growth was due to immigration and projections show this will increase. Together with intra-provincial migration this was the highest source. (WRIP 2019)



Waterloo Region benefits from secondary migration and retention

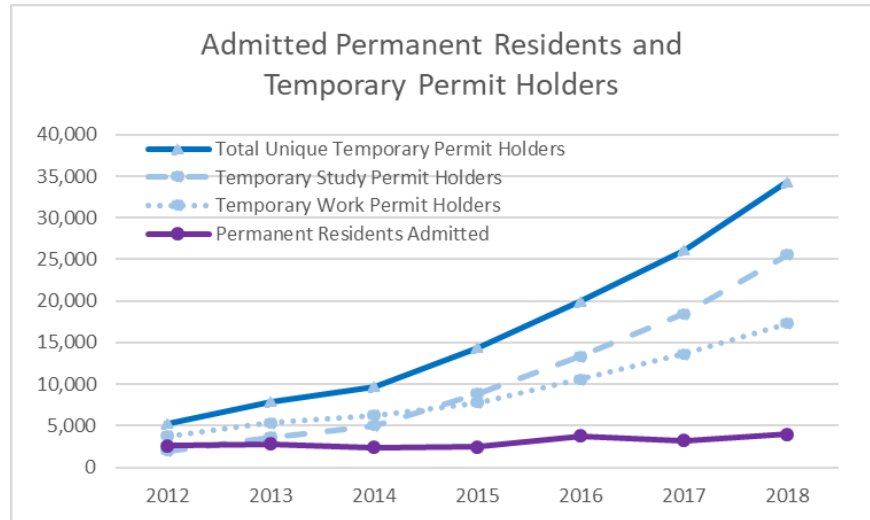
Waterloo Region gains population wise from immigrant **retention** and the **secondary migration** of permanent residents who move here from their first community of landing in the early years of residence.

- Among permanent residents who arrived in Waterloo Region in 2010, approximately one year later Waterloo Region had a net migration increase of 14 per cent – more people moved here than left. After five years, the net migration increase was 21 per cent. This varies by immigration category:
 - Economic immigrants tended to be much more mobile compared to other immigration categories. Within one year of landing there was a net migration increase of 18 per cent and after five years 24 per cent. In their first five years, 46 per cent of economic immigrants that landed in Waterloo Region moved to other communities but an additional 70 per cent moved here.
 - Family category immigrants were less mobile. Within one year of landing there was only a three per cent net migration increase and after five years still only six per cent. In their first five years, 22 per cent of family-category immigrants moved to other communities but an additional 28 per cent moved here.
 - Refugees had varied secondary migration rates. After one year, there was a 28 per cent net migration increase and after five years 39 per cent. In their first five years, 19 per cent of refugees moved to other communities but an additional 58 per cent moved here. Privately sponsored refugees tended to move less than government-assisted refugees (by almost a factor of 3). (WRIP 2019)
- Recent immigrants tend to move at much higher rates than established immigrants and Canadian-born individuals in the one year and five-year indicators, and the mobility rates of established immigrants are fairly similar to those of Canadian-born individuals. Over time, immigrants move less within Canada. Employment could influence their mobility decisions. (EIP 2019)

The temporary resident population grew significantly and seeks to stay permanently

Temporary residents now outnumber all new permanent immigrants in Waterloo Region in a given year by a factor of almost 9. (WRIP 2019) We can no longer plan for effectively supporting immigrants in Waterloo Region without considering this population.

- From 2012 to 2018 the number of **temporary resident permits** issued each year increased significantly. The number of temporary residents with work and study permits in Waterloo Region increased from 5,285 individuals in 2012 to 34,360 in 2018.⁶ (IRCC 2019, custom data request)
- The greatest increase in the temporary population has been among **international students**, from 2,000 temporary residents on study permits in 2012 to 25,580 in 2018. (IRCC 2019, custom data request)
- The number of people on **temporary work permits** also grew annually, from under 3,780 in 2012 to 17,330 in 2018. (IRCC 2019, custom data request)



- The number of **refugee claimants** grew substantially. From 2011-2013, IRCC reported an average of 80 refugee claims were made annually in Waterloo Region. In 2018 the Mennonite Coalition for Refugee Support (MCRS) supported 275 new claims representing over 630 people, at least a 300 per cent increase – estimating they see only half of all claimants in the Region. (WRIP 2019)
- Temporary migrants increasingly seek to **transition to permanent residency** and citizenship.
 - Among temporary resident respondents to the Immigration Matters Waterloo Region survey, 61 per cent were hoping to stay permanently in Waterloo Region, 27 per cent were unsure, and 13 per cent were not intending to stay permanently here. (IMS 2019)
 - Nationally, 60 per cent of international students planned to apply for permanent residence in Canada. Those attending a college were 1.44 times more likely to want to apply than those attending university.⁷
 - In 2018, 35 per cent of new permanent residents had a temporary work permit before becoming a permanent resident and 4 per cent previously had a study permit. This may increase dramatically in the next few years as we see the impacts of the recent increase in international students. (IRCC custom data request 2019)

“We anticipate that the number of international students coming to Waterloo Region will continue to increase”

--IPPS 2019 Survey Participant

⁶ Some temporary residents may have both a study and a work permit.

⁷ See: [CBIE International Student Survey, 2018](#).

Immigrants in Waterloo Region are increasingly diverse, visibly and otherwise

Changes in the main **source countries of immigrants** are transforming the overall portrait of the immigrant and general population, which has implications for overall support for immigration in the community. A recent study by EKOS that while general opposition to immigration is not that different over the past several years, the incidence of those thinking there are too many visible minorities is up significantly.⁸

- In the 2016 Census, almost two thirds of recent immigrants in Waterloo Region were born in Asia. Europe was the second most common birthplace at only 12 per cent, followed closely by Africa at 11 per cent. (WRCB 2019)
- Europe's historical prominence among immigrants' countries of origin declined significantly and has contributed to an increasingly racialized population.
 - The most common countries of origin for recent immigrants in Waterloo Region were India and China which accounted for approximately one in four recent immigrants. Syria and Iraq were the third and fourth most common countries of origin. (WRCB 2019)
 - According to the 2016 Census, racialized individuals (or visible minorities) make up 19 per cent of the total population of Waterloo Region, 50 per cent of all immigrants and 79 per cent of recent immigrants. (SCTP 2016)
 - Statistics Canada projects that in 2036 up to 58 per cent of Canada's immigrant population could be from Asia while European will account for only around 15-18 per cent, down from over 30 per cent in 2011. Together first and second generation immigrants could represent nearly one in two people in Canada.⁹
- **Religious affiliation** in Waterloo Region is changing due in part to immigration. According to the 2011 National Household Survey:¹⁰
 - Muslim religious affiliation was noted for 4 per cent of the general population but 26 per cent of recent immigrants.
 - Recent immigrants were more likely to report affiliation to Hindu and Sikh religions.
 - Recent immigrants were less likely to note affiliation to Christian (67 per cent of the general population but 44 per cent of recent immigrants) and no religious affiliation (25 per cent general pop vs. 17 per cent of recent immigrants)
- Immigrants tend to be **younger** than the general population in Waterloo Region.
 - 26 per cent of recent immigrants are youth (age 0-19) compared to 24% of the total population of Waterloo Region. A further 45 per cent of recent immigrants were aged 20-39 vs. 28 per cent of the general population. (SCTP 2016)
 - Only 12 per cent of recent immigrants were 55 years of age or older compared to 26 per cent of the total population (WRIP 2019)
- Recent immigrants are 49 per cent male and 51 per cent female. (SCTP 2016)
- Recent immigrants are more likely to be married than the general population (67 per cent v 50 per cent). (SCTP 2016; SCCP 2016)
- In a 2019 survey of immigrants in Waterloo Region, 11 per cent of all participants and 20 per cent of refugee participants were living with a **disability or chronic illness** that limits their activity. (IMS 2019)
- In the same survey, 3 per cent of participants self-identified as a member of the **LGBTQ+ community**. (IMS 2019)

⁸ See: <http://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2019/04/increased-polarization-on-attitudes-to-immigration-reshaping-the-political-landscape-in-canada/>.

⁹ See: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2017001-eng.htm>. In the 2019 immigrant survey in Waterloo Region, 61 per cent of participants were racialized individuals. (IMS 2019)

¹⁰ Statistics Canada, 2011 National Household Survey, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm>

What We Know About Immigrant Experiences in Waterloo Region

Most immigrants speak English; but language abilities and diversity present both opportunities and challenges

- Most recent immigrants in Waterloo Region **speak English**. In 2017, 69 per cent of new permanent residents spoke English. One per cent spoke French. (WRIP 2019)
- As with countries of origin, **first languages** are changing among recent immigrants compared to historical patterns. In the latest census, Arabic was the most common mother tongue language of recent immigrants (16 per cent), followed by English (13 per cent) and Mandarin (9 per cent). (WIRP 2019)

Rank	Language	Number	Per cent
1	Arabic	2,215	16%
2	English	1,880	13%
3	Mandarin	1,215	9%
4	Spanish	775	6%
5	Persian (Farsi)	705	5%
6	Punjabi (Panjabi)	495	4%
7	Urdu	405	3%
8	Gujarati	340	2%
9	Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	335	2%
10	Hindi	300	2%
11	Tigrigna	275	2%
12	Romanian	270	2%
13	Vietnamese	230	2%
14	Somali	220	2%
15	German	195	1%
16	Bengali	185	1%
17	Armenian	185	1%
18	Amharic	180	1%
19	Serbian	175	1%
20	Russian	170	1%

- The proportion of the population with a **mother tongue** other than English or French is projected to grow to between 27.9 per cent and 33.0 per cent by 2036.¹¹
- The 2016 Census recorded over 120 mother tongues¹² in Waterloo Region (WRCB 2018) and over 80 different mother tongue languages were represented in the Immigration Matters survey. (IMS 2019)
- Neighbourhoods in Wellesley and Woolwich had the highest proportion of residents with a non-official home language due to the large number of low-German Mennonite residents. Other neighbourhoods with greater numbers of residents with non-official home languages were sprinkled through Waterloo, Kitchener and Cambridge. These tended to align with residential patterns of recent and semi-recent immigrants. (WIRP 2019)



¹¹ See: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2017001-eng.pdf>.

¹² “Mother tongue language, also known as a person’s first language, is the first language they learned and still understand.

- In 2016, there were approximately 9,300 people living in Waterloo Region **without working knowledge of English or French** (less than 2 per cent of the total population).
 - Among only those that arrived in 2017, approximately one quarter of new permanent residents in Waterloo Region did not have a working knowledge of either English or French. (WRIP 2019)
 - Among individuals who did not know English or French, the most common first languages were: Portuguese, Arabic, Mandarin, German, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Spanish, Serbian, Farsi/Persian and Romanian (SUP 2019)
- From a service delivery perspective, the most common top languages of service or interpretation across newcomer-serving organizations in 2018 were more diverse than the top languages of recent immigrants. They included: Arabic, Tigrinya, Spanish, Amharic, Farsi/Persian, Somali and Mandarin.
 - Service providers indicated additional interpretation support is needed for: Oromo, Somali, Amharic, Tigrigna, Afar, Belin and other languages spoken in Eritrea/Ethiopia, Chin, Vietnamese; Turkish; Urdu; and Arabic.
- In a survey of nearly 1,100 immigrants in Waterloo Region, 23 per cent said that learning English was one of their top challenges. Refugees were even more likely to see learning English as a top challenge (37 per cent) (IMS 2019)
- In the 2018 EmployerOne Survey for Waterloo Wellington Dufferin, 77 per cent of employers who experienced barriers to hiring immigrants said English language was their greatest challenge.¹³

Immigrants continue to be highly educated yet underemployed; a gap between jobs and talent persists

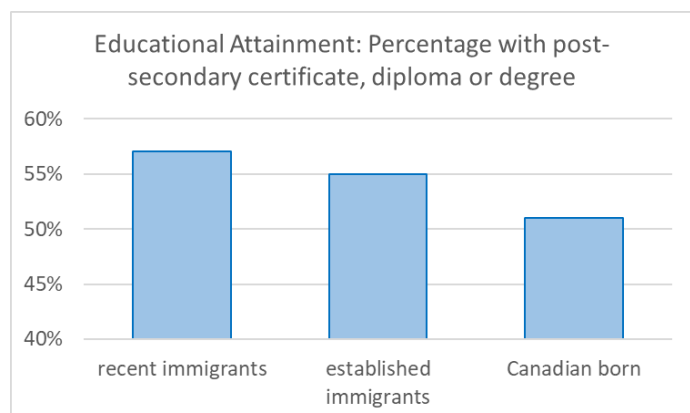
There is a talent crisis in Waterloo Region. Matching immigrants to meaningful jobs is a critical step for both immigrants and the local economy. **Finding work** is a central concern for immigrants locally, and the single most important step in their settlement journey. As we hear from local employers across sectors of their struggles to find qualified talent, the immigrant population presents one very tangible way of addressing workforce needs. When comparing education and occupational information, data indicates a level of under-employment or deskilling of recent immigrants. Better bridging immigrants into employment would also address the early income disparities of this population.

Waterloo Region is a better community...

“...because I bring my educational knowledge and technical skills along with a global experience to this place”

--IMS 2019 Survey Respondent

- Recent immigrants have a higher level of **educational attainment** than established immigrants and Canadian-born in Waterloo Region. Fifty-seven per cent of recent immigrants had a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree compared to 55 per cent of established immigrants and 51 per cent of Canadian-born. (WRIP 2019)
- Recent immigrants were less likely to think there were educational opportunities available to them. Recent immigrants are more likely to have taken formal education courses last year to help get a new job, improve skills for their current job, prepare for a future job, lead to a qualification for their current job, or for personal interest compared to established immigrants and non-immigrants. (CWBS 2018)



¹³ See:

https://www.workforceplanningboard.com/resources/knowledge_library/knowledge_library_folder/wpb_reports/employerone/2019/2019_employerone_full_technical_report_finalpdf~1.

- Despite having higher levels of education, recent immigrants (12 per cent) were twice as likely as established immigrants and Canadian-born (6 per cent) to be **unemployed** in 2016. (WRIP 2019)
 - Among university-educated racialized immigrants, unemployment rates were more than twice as high as racialized and non-racialized Canadian-born residents. (WRIP 2019)
 - Recent refugees have an unemployment rate of 21.3 per cent. That is 2.7 times higher than established immigrants (EIP 2019)
 - In a 2019 survey of 1,090 immigrants in Waterloo Region, some groups experienced lower rates of employment. While 56 per cent of all respondents were employed, only 46 per cent of racialized immigrants were employed, 44 per cent of Muslim immigrants, 35 per cent of immigrants with low income, 35% of immigrants with a disability/chronic illness and 16 per cent of immigrants with low English. International students were less likely to be employed full time (28 per cent vs 41 per cent) and more likely to be employed part time (35 per cent vs. 15 per cent). (IMS 2019)
- Recent immigrants had poorer **job fits** compared to established immigrants and non-immigrants, especially with regards to their education and training, undesirable changes to their work and poor job security. (CWBS 2018)
- In a 2019 survey of 1,090 immigrants in Waterloo Region:
 - 45 per cent of employed respondents felt that they were not in a **job commensurate with their skills/experience**.
 - 37 per cent of those working full time and 63 per cent of those working part time.
 - Some groups were less likely to be employed at a level equivalent to their skills/experience. While 55 per cent of employed respondents felt they were in a job commensurate with their skills/experience, this was the case for only 31 per cent of employed immigrants with low income, 32 per cent of international students, 47 per cent of Black immigrants, 46 per cent of Muslim immigrants and 50 per cent of highly educated immigrants. (IMS 2019)
 - 37 per cent of employed respondents were **looking for work** (27 per cent of those working full time, 62 per cent part time and 50 per cent self-employed) (IMS 2019)
 - Some employed groups were more likely to be looking for work: international students (71 per cent); low income respondents (67 per cent); Black immigrants (63 per cent); refugees (56 per cent); Muslim immigrants (55 per cent); and all racialized immigrants (54 per cent). Immigrants with low English were less likely to be looking for work (42 per cent). (IMS 2019)
- Overall, immigrants were **working in occupations which are in demand** and addressing local labour market needs. (EIP 2019) In 2016:
 - Recent immigrants were more likely to work in manufacturing and utilities occupations than established immigrants and Canadian-born individuals (16 per cent vs 12 and 7 respectively).
 - Recent and established immigrants were nearly twice as likely to work in natural and applied sciences and related occupations as Canadian-born (14 and 12 per cent respectively vs 7).

When asked how to improve the welcoming and wellbeing of immigrants and refugees, employment responses were most frequent...

“Find ways to find employment for newcomers in their field of professional training. This is the easiest way to help them feel part of the community and start contributing”

“I believe if there is opportunity to find job easily the most challenge for immigrants will be resolved.”

“Recognize our skills and experience and accept us in the community. We resigned from our work and came here because we trusted that we would find jobs.”

“By advocating for immigrants with international education and experience.”

--IMS 2019 Survey Participants

- Recent immigrants were less likely than established immigrants and Canadian-born individuals to work in business, finance, administration (8 per cent vs 12 and 16, respectively) and management (5 per cent vs 10 and 11, respectively). (WRIP 2019)
- Although recent immigrants are less likely to be working they are similar in the number of different jobs they are working and the number of hours a week they work at their main job compared to established immigrants and Canadian-born. (CWBS 2018)
- Recent immigrants were less likely to **feel secure in their job**, and more likely to have shift work and irregular work schedules, compared to established immigrants and Canadian-born. (CWBS 2018)
- Recent immigrants are more likely to find that their personal life gets in the way of their work life than established immigrants and non-immigrants. (CWBS 2018)
- In a 2019 survey of 1,090 immigrants in Waterloo Region, when asked about changes that would better support them respondents most frequently mentioned employment-oriented solutions at 65 per cent, including: More or better programs for immigrants and refugees to find work; Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring and retaining immigrants and refugees; A central place for employers to find immigrant and refugee workers and where workers can find employment opportunities; or ESL opportunities in workplaces. (IMS 2019)

Incomes tend to start low and slowly climb high due to hard work and perseverance; this is lost economic potential

- In a 2019 survey of 1,090 immigrants in Waterloo Region: (IMS 2019)
 - Approximately a quarter of respondents had a **household income** greater than the Region’s median household income of \$77,530¹⁴ and three quarters were living below.
 - 32 per cent had a household income of less than \$30,000. Certain groups of immigrants were more likely to fall into this category, including immigrants with low English (71 per cent), refugees (60 per cent), Muslim immigrants (43 per cent) and international students (39 per cent).
- In 2015, the **median employment income** of recent immigrants was estimated to be 31 per cent lower than the total population. It took many years for immigrants increase their earnings: after approximately 20 years of residence they reached and then surpassed median income levels for the region. (WRIP 2019)
- The proportion of recent immigrants (33 per cent) **living below the Market Basket Measure threshold**¹⁵ was significantly higher than established immigrants and Canadian-born (10 and 9 per cent respectively). (WRIP 2019)
- Recent immigrants are less likely to be satisfied with their financial situation and their living standards compared to established immigrants and Canadian-born. (CWBS 2018)
- Recent immigrants are less likely to have enough money for the things they need compared to established immigrants and Canadian-born. (CWBS 2018)
- **Reliance on government transfers** decreases as immigrants settle in Waterloo Region. (EIP 2019)

“I often hear from highly educated immigrants/refugees who struggle finding employment.”

“Talent shortage will grow. Need for more immigrants to fill the many job vacancies is essential.”

“We could lose immigrants from our region if specifically jobs are not being secured.”

“There has been increased competition and demand for talent among employers. Immigrants and refugees are a potential solution to that problem; however there are still many barriers for this talent pool to obtain meaningful employment.”

“In the coming year(s) there will more of a focus on employment as a key lever of settlement success and community success/welcoming.”

--IPPS 2019 Survey Participants

¹⁴ 27% of immigrant survey participants had a household income greater than \$75,000 – approximately equal to the 2015 median household income for Waterloo Region of \$77,530.

¹⁵ Canada’s measure of the poverty line.

Immigrants want to be homeowners but are more likely to face affordability issues and have different housing patterns

Finding suitable and affordable housing is a challenge across Waterloo Region, including for immigrants who face unique or additional challenges and barriers.

- A 2019 survey commissioned by Royal LePage¹⁶ found 82 per cent of immigrants to Ontario arrive with savings to **buy a home** and that immigrants buy one in five homes in Canada.
 - The provincial homeownership rate of newcomers was 29 per cent and immigrants were projected to purchase 286,000 homes over the next five years (at current migration rates).
 - Ontario's demand for detached homes was driven by the number of newcomers who arrive as a family with children (32 per cent). Of those who purchase a home, the average duration prior to purchasing was three years.
- While immigrants live across Waterloo Region, some **neighbourhoods** have higher proportions of recent immigrants, including the downtown Kitchener neighbourhoods of Victoria Hills/Cherry Hill/KW Hospital and Vanier/Rockway and City of Waterloo neighbourhoods of West Waterloo and Columbia/Lakeshore. Some concentration was likely influenced by Syrian refugee housing patterns. (WRIP 2019)
- The **housing and household patterns** of immigrants differ from the Canadian-born population. (WRIP 2019)
 - Recent and established immigrants were twice as likely (10 per cent) as Canadian-born (5 per cent) to live in **multi-generational households**.
 - Recent immigrants were less likely to live alone (3 per cent) than both established immigrants and Canadian-born (10 per cent, respectively).
 - The proportion of **renters** among recent immigrants (58 per cent) was more than double the Canadian-born population (25 per cent).
 - The proportions of recent immigrants living in **unsuitable housing or unaffordable housing** (31 per cent & 40 per cent respectively) are significantly higher compared to the Canadian-born population (6 per cent and 16 per cent respectively). (WRIP 2019)
 - Among respondents to a 2019 immigrant survey, some groups were more likely to say their current housing was unsuitable or unaffordable: recent immigrants (35 per cent); Black immigrants (36 per cent); international students (37 per cent); Muslims (37 per cent); refugees (40 per cent); those on low income (40 per cent); immigrants with a disability/chronic disease (41 per cent) and those with low English (43 per cent). (IMS 2019)

When asked how to improve the welcoming and wellbeing of immigrants and refugees, housing responses were third most frequent...

“Support in finding housing and providing financial assistance for buying a home”

“Finding houses that are spacious enough for large families whilst considering the cost.”

--IMS 2019 Survey Participants

“A big chunk of our household income goes towards rent payments”

“It is expensive. I would like to own a home but it is not possible now”

“The apartment we stayed in this place doesn't see sun and is damp”

“We are searching [for] a house because the apartment is too small for us to live”

--IMS 2019 Survey Participants

“Housing will continue to be an issue, particularly adequate and safe as the market provides either 'luxury' condos or very very poor conditions apartments.”

--IPPS 2019 Survey Participant

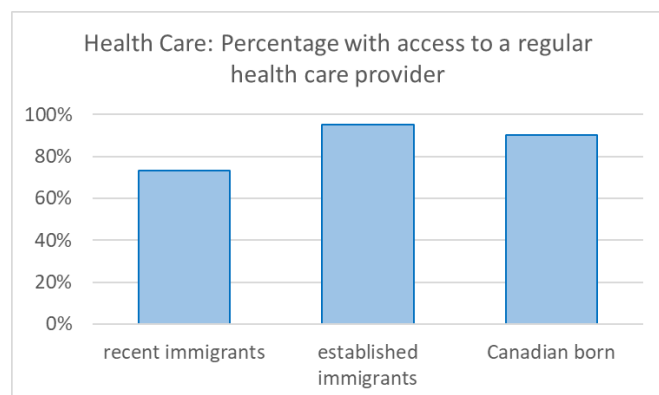
¹⁶ See: <https://www.royallepage.ca/en/realstate/news/one-in-five-homes-purchased-by-canadian-newcomers/>.

- In another survey of Waterloo Region residents, recent immigrants were more likely to spend more than 30 per cent of their income on housing¹⁷: 73 per cent compared to 38 per cent for Canadian-born. Recent immigrants were also more likely to spend at least half of their income on housing costs: 26 per cent compared to 8 per cent among Canadian-born). (CWBS 2018)
- In a 2019 survey of 1,090 immigrants in Waterloo Region: (IMS 2019)
 - 29 per cent of immigrants noted that one of their biggest challenges in Waterloo Region in the last year was finding affordable housing. For refugees this was 39 per cent.
 - The groups most likely to live in multi-generational households and most likely to have larger households (5 or more people) were refugees, those with low English, Black immigrants, Muslim immigrants and those living on low income.
 - International students were more likely to live on their own and less likely to live in multigenerational households – though 27 per cent did live in multigenerational households.
- Of immigrants who had experienced discrimination or being treated unfairly by others in Waterloo Region¹⁸ in the last year, 20 per cent said it occurred when looking for housing. (IMS 2019)
- Recent immigrants were less likely to be satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live than established immigrants and Canadian-born. (CWBS 2018)
- When asked about the top changes that would better support the settling, working and belonging of immigrants and refugees, 44 per cent of immigrants suggested there should be more affordable housing options. (IMS 2019)

Health and mental health decline the longer immigrants live in Canada

Research on physical health demonstrates that immigrants tend to be healthier than non-immigrants upon arrival in Canada but that the longer they live in the country the more their health declines. This is partly due to rigorous health screening during immigration processes, as well as income levels, official language proficiency, circumstances of arrival, original location, differing perceptions or health and mental health around the world, unfair treatment or discrimination, health literacy and ability to integrate, among others. (WRIP 2019)

- Recent immigrants are more likely to be satisfied with their **physical wellbeing** compared to established immigrants and Canadian-born. (CWBS 2018)
- Recent immigrants rated **accessibility of health care services** higher than established immigrants and Canadian-born. (CWBS 2018)
- Yet in 2015/2016, only 73 per cent of immigrants who arrived in the last 10 years reported having **access to a regular health care provider** compared to established immigrants (95 per cent) and Canadian-born (90 per cent). (WRIP 2019)
- In 2015/16, fewer immigrants who arrived in the last 10 years reported **meeting or exceeding the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines** (34 per cent) than longer established immigrants and Canadian-born (45 and 59, respectively). (WRIP 2019)
- Recent immigrants viewed themselves as being in better **physical health and mental health** compared to established immigrants and non-immigrants. Recent immigrants and established immigrants are less likely to report negative impacts of mental health issues compared to non-immigrants. (CWBS 2018) This may be attributed to differing awareness or stigma about mental health in different parts of the world.



¹⁷ Spending more than 30 per cent or more than 50 per cent of income on housing costs are often used as indicators of unaffordable housing.

¹⁸ 2017 Community Survey (CS) comparison: A lower proportion of immigrants reported experiencing discrimination than in the 2017 CS survey (22 per cent, vs. 27 per cent in CS).

Connectedness, belonging and wellbeing are complex and non-linear

Immigrants in Waterloo Region generally report a strong sense of belonging to the community but many feel isolated. Social connections are immensely helpful as immigrants settle in the community and there is a co-relation between social connectedness and work.

- The proportion of immigrants who arrived in the last 10 years who report **satisfaction with life** (88 per cent) is similar to that of the Canadian-born population (93 per cent). (WRIP 2019)
 - Yet, recent immigrants are less satisfied with their personal relationships or life in general or are less likely to feel the things they do are worthwhile or that this community fulfills their needs than established immigrants and non-immigrants. (CWBS 2018)
- 70 per cent of immigrants reported a strong **sense of belonging** in Waterloo Region while 18 per cent shared that they had a weak or very weak sense of belonging. (IMS 2019)
 - Some groups were less likely to have a strong sense of belonging: international students (50 per cent); recent economic immigrants (57 per cent), immigrants with a disability/chronic disease (61 per cent), those with low English (64 per cent) and recent refugees. (IMS 2019)
 - The proportion of immigrants arriving in the last 10 years that reported strong sense of belonging is similar to Canadian-born. (WRIP 2019; CWBS 2018) Though the influences may be different.
- Immigrants are **community-engaged**. 64 per cent of respondents were involved in at least one community/social group or association. The most frequently associated groups were: Cultural, educational or hobby organization (22 per cent), Religious group (21 per cent), and School group, neighbourhood, civic or community association (18 per cent). (IMS 2019)
 - Another survey found recent immigrants were less likely to participate in federal, provincial, and municipal politics, or local democracy (i.e., going to municipal council or neighbourhood meetings, charitable events, etc.), and less satisfied with access to educational, arts and cultural opportunities. (CWBS 2018)
- And yet, 60 per cent of respondents to a survey of 1,090 immigrants felt **isolated or alone** in the last year. (IMS 2019)
 - Some groups were more likely to feel isolated: immigrants with a disability/chronic disease (80 per cent); those with low English (79 per cent); international students (76 per cent); recent economic immigrants (69 per cent); those with low income (65 per cent). (IMS 2019)
 - Recent immigrants were more likely to feel socially isolated compared to established immigrants and non-immigrants, as measured by lack of companionship, and feeling left out and isolated from others. (CWBS 2018)

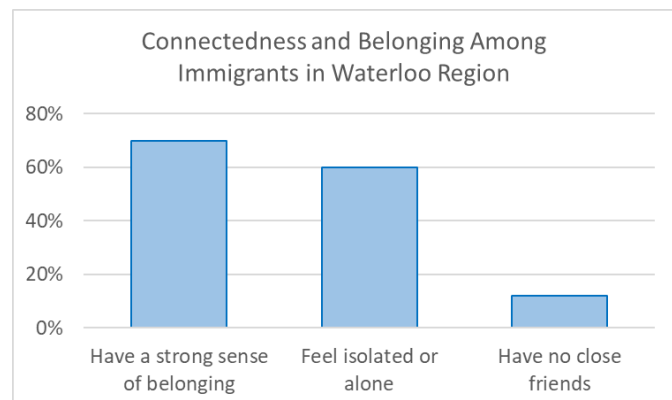
Social connections impact employment

Workforce Planning Board of Waterloo Wellington Dufferin research showed word of mouth and personal contacts are top recruitment methods locally.

https://www.workforceplanningboard.com/resources/knowledge_library/knowledge_library_folder/wpb_reports/employeroneline/2019/2019_summary_report_employeronelinepdf

A StatsCan study found having friends positively correlated with immigrant employment income. Immigrant women with friends in Canada prior to arrival earned as much as those without but after 15 years those with friends in Canada prior to arrival earned about \$7,000 more than those without. This study also highlighted the benefits of making friends after arriving in Canada – particularly beyond one’s ethnic group.

<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2019001/article/00009-eng.htm>



- 12 per cent of immigrants had no **close friends** in Waterloo Region. (IMS 2019) In another survey:
 - Recent immigrants were more likely to have zero and less likely to have 5 or more close relatives than established and non-immigrants.
 - They were more likely to have zero neighbours they knew enough to ask a favour and less likely to have 5 or more.
 - They trusted others (neighbours, co-workers, etc.) less. (CWBS 2018)
- At 26 per cent of responses, making friends or social connections was the third most commonly noted challenge for immigrants, yet when asked what helped them most in the last year, having friends and family support (40 and 37 percent respectively) ranked ahead of all other responses. (IMS 2019)

When asked how to improve the welcoming and wellbeing of immigrants and refugees, responses related to connectedness and belonging were second most frequent...

“Having local original Canadian neighbours help a lot”

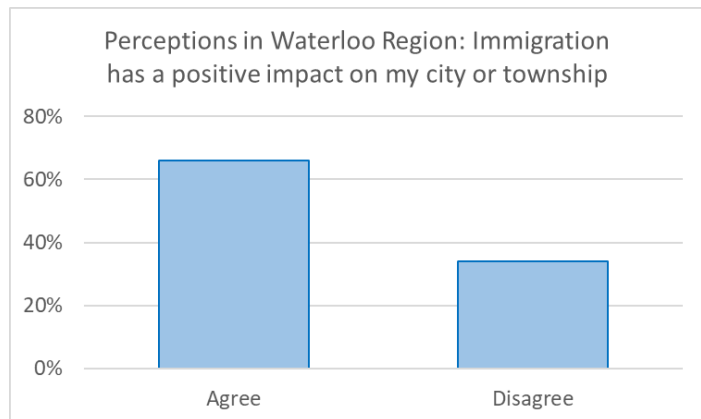
“More activities that gather us with new friends”

--IMS 2019 Survey Participants

Not everyone in Waterloo Region supports immigration and this is born out in the treatment of immigrants

Local survey results show similar trends in Waterloo Region as have been seen in Canada-wide surveys on **public perceptions of immigration**. Opinions tend to be quite positive related to questions focused on the community conditions and benefits of immigration, whereas they become less positive with questions focused on the actions of immigrants and refugees and supports to them.

- In a 2019 survey of the general public, 72 per cent agreed with the statement ‘I am proud of Waterloo Region’s reputation as an open and welcoming society for immigrants and refugees’ on the basis of: Canada’s humanitarian tradition (27 per cent), being a diverse community that attracts new people (22 per cent) and immigration increasing quality of life and vibrancy in the community (15 per cent). (WRMS 2019)
- And while 66 per cent agreed that immigration has had a positive impact on their city or township, 34 per cent disagreed.¹⁹ The top three concerns of those with negative views were that immigration puts pressure on public services (23 per cent), that immigrants are changing Canadian values (16 per cent) and that they take advantage of the system (15 per cent). (WRMS 2019)
- A further 45 percent agreed immigrants need to do more to integrate into Canadian society. When asked why, respondents said that immigrants need to do more to: adopt Canadian values (28 per cent), become fluent in English or French (21 per cent) and contribute to the economy (18 per cent). (WRMS 2019)
 - And yet 43 per cent did not agree that Waterloo Region is doing enough to support immigrants and refugees, thinking that there should be more: community integration and building initiatives (21 per cent), support for language learning and employment (19 per cent), funding for settlement or other community services (21 per cent), and targeted and culturally appropriate programming (11 per cent). (WRMS 2019)
- These views translate into negative treatment of immigrants in Waterloo Region.



¹⁹ Survey respondents were asked about their agreement to statements on a scale of 1 to 10. Agreement was defined as a rating of 7-10. The scale aligned with that used in national surveys.

- Among 1,090 respondents to an immigrant survey, 22 per cent had experienced **discrimination or being treated unfairly** by others in Waterloo Region. This was slightly lower than in 2017 (27 per cent). Ten per cent of respondents reported that discrimination/racism is one of the most significant challenges they faced in the last year. (IMS 2019)
 - The top reasons for discrimination were: Race (43 per cent), culture (42 per cent), religion (34 per cent), colour (29 per cent) and language (25 per cent). Two years earlier, the same top items were noted but in a different order: Language, Race, Culture, Religion, and Colour. Language dropped from 39 per cent from the 2017 Community Survey while the others increased.
 - Some groups were more likely to experience discrimination: immigrants with a disability/chronic disease (44 per cent), LGBTQ+ immigrants (6 of 14 respondents), recent refugee immigrants with low English (36 per cent), immigrants with low English (34 per cent), highly educated immigrants (27 per cent) and Muslim immigrants (26 per cent).
- Racialized immigrants were more likely to note that discrimination was because of religion (45 per cent vs 35 per cent) or colour (35 per cent vs. 29 per cent). Muslim immigrants were more likely to cite religion (76 per cent vs 35 per cent), culture (52 per cent vs 42 per cent) or physical appearance other than colour (24 per cent vs 14 per cent). 3 of the 14 LGBTQ+ cited sexual orientation. (IMS 2019)
- In 2018 in Waterloo Region, 21 per cent of recent immigrants arriving in the last 10 years reported experiencing discrimination in their community due to ethnicity, culture, race or skin colour. This proportion was higher than the proportion of immigrants in Waterloo Region that have been here longer than 10 years (15 per cent) and the proportion of Canadian-born (5 per cent) population who reported having experienced discrimination due to ethnicity, culture, race or skin colour. (WRIP 2019) This reveals a very similar rate of reported discrimination to the IMS 2019.
- When asked about the most important changes to improve the settling, working and belonging of newcomers in the community, 12 per cent of immigrants suggested actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants and refugees. (IMS 2019)

Most immigrants use services in Waterloo Region but the ways they get there and experiences in service vary

- 86 per cent of respondents used **community services**. Some groups were more likely to use services: Muslim immigrants (96 per cent), Black (95 per cent), immigrants with low income (94 per cent), immigrants with a disability/chronic illness (93%) and refugees (92 per cent). (IMS 2019)
- The majority of partners serving immigrants and refugees were seeing more clients than in previous years, with a diversity of backgrounds and needs. The top organizational challenges to serving immigrants and refugees reported by partners were: lack of funding, system issues, and language barriers. (IPPS 2019)

When asked how to improve the welcoming and wellbeing of immigrants and refugees, responses related to connectedness and belonging were second most frequent...

“Stop the mistreatment of people based on their skin colour. [...] value and respect the skills and efforts of human beings.”

“Actions to improve the social connectedness of immigrants and refugees”

“More activities that gather us with new friends”

--IMS 2019 Survey Participant

- The **most frequently used services**²⁰ were health (70 per cent), education (53 per cent) and English language learning (50 per cent). (IMS 2019)
- Of those that didn't use services, 48 per cent didn't need them, 42 per cent didn't know about them (of whom 36 per cent would have used them and 6 per cent wouldn't have) and 9 per cent didn't qualify. (IMS 2019) Groups had different reasons for not using services:
 - Many groups were Students were more likely to have not been aware of the services and less likely to have not needed them, including international students, francophone immigrants, and recent economic immigrants.

²⁰ From a list including: Interpretation services, Settlement services, Housing services, English language learning programs, Health services, Mental health services, Education services, Employment and/or skills training programs, Small business/entrepreneurial supports, Legal services, Other community services.

- Low English immigrant respondents were more likely to respond that they did not use services because they didn't know about them and didn't qualify and less likely because they didn't need them.
- Refugees were more likely have not qualified for the services or not known about them, and less likely as a result of not needing the services. Both were particularly true of recent refugee immigrants with low English.
- Immigrants with a disability/chronic illness were more likely to not qualify.
- Highly educated immigrants and seniors were both more likely relate that they did not need services.
- Recent, established and non-immigrants felt similarly in terms of overall trust in Waterloo Region Police Service, whether they can be relied on to be there when needed and whether they are doing a good job in our community. (CWBS 2018).
- Friends and family were the primary source of **information about services**, followed by settlement workers, community centres/neighbourhood associations and websites. Different groups had different ways of learning about services:
 - The top means for refugee respondents were friends or family (55 per cent), a settlement worker (35 per cent), or community centres/neighbourhood associations (24 per cent).
 - Immigrants with low English were more likely to learn about services from a settlement worker.
 - Racialized immigrants were more likely to learn about services from community centres/neighbourhood associations and from "other websites".
 - Immigrants with low income were more likely to learn about services from community centres/neighbourhood associations.
 - Highly educated immigrants were more likely to learn about services from websites and less likely from a settlement worker.
 - Recent economic immigrants were more likely to learn about services from websites. (IMS 2019)
- Generally, **services were rated highly** by those that used services with 94 per cent rating at least one service positively;²¹ 32 per cent rated at least one service poorly.²²
 - The services most consistently rated as positively were: Education (91 per cent), settlement (90 per cent), English language learning (89 per cent) and interpretation (88 per cent).
 - Those more likely to be rated poorly: Small business/entrepreneurial (29 per cent), housing (26 per cent), mental health (23 per cent) and employment/skills training (22 per cent).²³ (IMS 2019)
- The most common **reasons for poor service experiences**: Long wait times, lack of sufficient information, and language barriers. Different groups had different reasons for rating services poorly: (IMS 2019)
 - Refugees and immigrants with low English were more likely cite language barriers.
 - Seniors were more likely to note long wait times.
 - Women were more likely to cite unfriendly staff and lack of coordination between services.
 - Racialized immigrants were more likely to note lack of coordination between services or low accessibility.
 - Muslim immigrants were more likely to cite cultural barriers, unfriendly staff or lack of coordination between services.

²¹ Includes the ratings Excellent, Very Good or Good.

²² Includes the ratings Acceptable or Poor.

²³ 2017 Community Survey (CS) comparisons: The top-rated services were similar in both 2017 and 2019. In the 2019 IM survey, the top-rated services were: Education services (91%), Settlement services (90%), English language learning programs (90%), and Interpretation services (88%) – compared to in 2017 when respondents were most satisfied with English language learning services (91%), Settlement services (90%) and Education services (88%). The lowest-rated services were also relatively similar. In 2019 they were: Small business/entrepreneurial supports (29%), Housing services (26%), Mental health services (23%), and Employment and/or skills training programs (22%). In 2017²³, respondents were least satisfied with Employment services (30%), Health/mental health (25%), and Housing services (21%).

- Immigrants with low income were more likely to note low accessibility, long wait times, lack of coordination between services, unfriendly staff and cultural barriers.
- Immigrants with a disability/chronic illness were more likely to cite low accessibility, unfriendly staff, lack of coordination between services, cultural barriers, long wait times, high cost of services and lack of sufficient information.
- Recent economic immigrants were more likely to note lack of sufficient information, lack of coordination or low accessibility.
- Highly educated immigrants were more likely to note lack of coordination, low accessibility, lack of sufficient information and long wait times.
- Recent immigrants found rec/culture facilities to be less accessible compared to established immigrants and non-immigrants due to location, child care and cost. (CWBS 2018)
- The majority of IP partners felt the needs of immigrants and refugees had generally been better met in the last year. They were somewhat less likely to suggest this related to housing, small business/entrepreneurial, legal and mental health services. (IPPS 2019)

When asked how to improve the welcoming and wellbeing of immigrants and refugees, some responses related to service delivery ...

“There are lots of organizations that help immigrants, refugees, newcomers... sometimes they overlap. A centralized organization that gathers the agencies under its umbrella would be great”

“As immigrants have absolutely no knowledge about most of the government programs, they tend to miss out such opportunities, thus efforts should be made so that they all know such programs”

--IMS 2019 Survey Participants

How to Most Strategically Move Forward

Immigrants in Waterloo Region consistently say finding work, making friends and social connections and learning English are among their biggest challenges

- Immigrants living in Waterloo Region reported that the **most common challenges** they faced in the last year were: finding work, finding affordable housing, making friends or social connections, and learning English. (IMS 2019) Service providers noted the same top challenges (though the order may have varied slightly). (IPPS 2019)
- These responses have been consistent over the course of the Immigration Partnership's 10 years of outreach. As a new option, affordable housing was near the top of the list this year. In previous years, navigating services bubbled up to the top. (IMS 2019)

	# responses	% responses
Finding work	397	46%
Finding affordable housing	254	29%
Making friends or social connections	225	26%
Learning English	202	23%
Learning where and how to do things	169	20%
Transportation	130	15%
Accessing health care	114	13%
Making sure my kids are okay at school and in the community	110	13%
Discrimination/racism	84	10%
Receiving public or social services (e.g. settlement services, government services, etc.)	79	9%
Other	71	8%

- At 60% immigrants with low income were more likely to note that one of their top challenges was finding work. (IMS 2019)

Immigrants and community partners align on what would be of greatest help, with social connectedness, work, service improvements and welcoming/anti-racism/discrimination at the top

Immigrants living in Waterloo Region tell us that **what helped most** in the last year were: making friends, having family support, finding work and volunteering. (IMS 2019) ²⁴

	# responses	% responses
Making friends	343	40%
Having family support	313	37%
Finding work	208	24%
Volunteering	196	23%
Community programs and services	183	21%
Belonging to a religious group	161	19%

²⁴In 2017, the responses were similar. Top responses were: Family support, making friends, community programs and services and finding work.

Being involved in a cultural association or connection with others that share your background or language	142	17%
Settlement worker	111	13%
Other community group	43	5%
Other	65	8%

When asked about the **top changes** that could be made to better support their settling, working and belonging in Waterloo Region, immigrants and refugees most often list work-related options (collectively), housing (single most common), service improvements (collectively) and connectedness/welcoming/anti-racism/discrimination options (collectively): (IMS 2019)

	# responses	% responses
More affordable housing options	235	45%
More or better programs for immigrants and refugees to find work	171	33%
Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring and retaining immigrants and refugees	135	26%
More ESL opportunities to help improve English skills	127	24%
A central place for employers to find immigrant and refugee workers and where workers can find employment opportunities	109	21%
A central location where immigrants and refugees can receive many settlement and other services in one place	107	20%
ESL opportunities in workplaces	73	14%
Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants and refugees	71	14%
Better coordination between service agencies	54	10%
More effort by community services to better serve immigrants and refugees	52	10%
Better coordination between levels of government	48	9%
Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants and refugees	46	9%
Funding for interpretation and translation	42	8%
Better collaboration between service agencies	41	8%
Actions to improve the social connectedness of immigrants and refugees	41	8%
More funding for... (please specify below)	21	4%
Other	61	12%

- Responses from community partners tended to be very similar. (IPPS 2019)
 - Immigrants were more likely to suggest “More or better programs for immigrants and refugees to find work”, “ESL opportunities in workplaces”, and “Better coordination between levels of government. (IMS 2019)
 - Community partners were more likely to suggest “More affordable housing options”, “More ESL opportunities to help improve English skills”, and “Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants and refugees.” (IPPS 2019)

References

This document includes information about immigration in Waterloo Region from a wide variety of reports, surveys and data sources, including:

1. IMS 2019 – Immigration Matters Survey 2019 – survey of immigrants in Waterloo Region (<https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/IMsurvey2019>; technical report DOCS#3128112)
2. IPPS 2018 – Immigration Partnership Partner Survey 2019 – survey of IP partners and organizations serving immigrants (<https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/partnersurvey2019>)
3. CWBS 2018– Waterloo Region Community Wellbeing Survey 2018 (Internal document only - DOCS#3128112) – general public survey with analysis for recent and established immigrants
4. WRMS 2019 – Waterloo Region Matters Survey 2019 – public perceptions survey (<https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/publicperceptions2019>)
5. WRIP 2019 – Waterloo Region Immigration Profile 2019 (www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/immigrationprofile)
6. IEP 2019 – Waterloo Region Employment Immigration Profile (https://www.workforceplanningboard.com/resources/knowledge_library/knowledge_library_folder/wpb_reports/population_reports/youth-2~2)
7. WRCB 2018 – Waterloo Region’s 2016 Census Bulletins (<https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/regional-government/census.aspx>)
8. SUP 2019 – Service Use Profile: Languages and Countries of Origin (<https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/ServiceUseProfile>)
9. SCCP 2016 – Statistics Canada Community Profiles - 2016 Census (<https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm>)
10. SCTP 2016 - Statistics Canada Community Data Program target group profiles - 2016 Census (<https://communitydata.ca/data>)