

# Discrimination and Other Challenges Experienced by Racialized Newcomers When Accessing Settlement Services in Southwestern Ontario



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## Executive Summary

This project explores the barriers faced by racialized newcomers in accessing settlement services — including the racism and discrimination they may experience — in small and mid-sized communities in Southwestern Ontario. Through interviews with newcomers and key informants in eight regions of Southwestern Ontario, the project identifies barriers that newcomers face when accessing settlement services in these communities and proposes evidence-based recommendations to improve the sector's ability to address these barriers, with potential applications in similar communities across Canada. The project fills a gap in existing research by focusing on the specific experiences of racism and discrimination that newcomers may face in accessing settlement services and by focusing on communities outside of the large metropolises in Canada. The increasing diversity of Canada's immigrant population and the regionalization of immigration in Canada underscore the significance of this study.

The key research goals were to identify the specific challenges faced by racialized and non-racialized newcomers when accessing settlement services, explore experiences of racism and discrimination among racialized (compared to non-racialized) newcomers, and examine settlement service providers' perceptions of these challenges and their awareness of discrimination occurring at their organizations. Additionally, the research investigated current strategies employed by settlement organizations to support equity, diversity, and inclusion, and solicited suggestions by newcomers and settlement workers to ensure all clients are treated fairly and without discrimination.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 94 newcomers who had accessed settlement services recently in the eight regions in Southwestern Ontario and with 15 key informants who had experience working in the settlement sector in these eight regions. Graduate student assistants from diverse backgrounds, many of whom were immigrants fluent in multiple languages, were recruited to conduct the interviews and were rigorously trained with a detailed manual to ensure consistency, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity. All methods and procedures were conducted in accordance with the research team's high standards and Western University's ethical conduct of research requirements. Materials and interviews were made available to respondents in multiple languages to eliminate language as a barrier to participation, and an intersectional approach, Gender-based Analysis Plus, was adopted throughout the research process. Respondents were asked about unfair treatment and exclusion because of who they (or who others) are, rather than discrimination per se, to mitigate potential biases associated with discussing discrimination.

The interviews were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis and findings indicated that newcomers experienced racism and discrimination, and other marked challenges, when accessing settlement services. Discrimination was reported by racialized newcomers in both immigrant-serving agencies and mainstream organizations, with factors such as racial or ethnic background, English language proficiency, immigration class, and sexual orientation cited as the bases. Many racialized newcomers who experienced discrimination noted that it impacted their engagement with settlement services, particularly in mainstream agencies, leading some to discontinue use of the services. In contrast, key informants reported no awareness of discrimination within their organizations, suggesting a potential gap in their understanding or acknowledgement of discrimination.

Moreover, key informants discussed several existing practices to enhance cultural competency within their organizations, including promoting diversity in hiring; providing services and materials in multiple languages; participating in cultural events; and conducting staff training on equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). Despite most key informants having received EDI and cultural competency training, there was variation in the clarity and recall of policies related to non-discriminatory treatment.

Newcomers and key informants provided several suggestions for settlement organizations to make all newcomers feel more welcome, emphasizing the importance of language and communication to improve accessibility and inclusivity, and the need to ensure better awareness of settlement services among newcomers. Suggestions from newcomers and key informants further stressed the need for improved education and training for settlement workers and other employees within these organizations to ensure racism and discrimination are eliminated.

We provide a number of evidence-based recommendations for action in the communities of Southwestern Ontario and similar communities across Canada. These recommendations focus primarily on specific strategies to reduce and address the discrimination and racism faced by newcomers accessing settlement services. The recommendations encompass stringent anti-discrimination policies; anti-discrimination and cultural competency knowledge and skills training that is evidence-based and evaluated on a regular basis; equitable and inclusive organizational practices including targeted programming to support specific newcomer groups who may be especially likely to experience discrimination; and strategies to enhance newcomers' awareness of and right to settlement service supports.

## Research Overview

The goal of this project was to develop a deep understanding of the challenges experienced by racialized newcomers when accessing settlement services in the small and mid-sized communities of Southwestern Ontario, and particularly the racism and discrimination that they may experience. This was accomplished through semi-structured interviews conducted in 2023-2024 with 94 newcomers who had used settlement services in Southwestern Ontario in the last three years and with 15 key informants who had worked in the settlement sector in Southwestern Ontario for at least one year.

Working with Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), respondents were recruited from eight regions of Southwestern Ontario: Chatham-Kent, Guelph-Wellington, Hamilton, London-Middlesex, Niagara, Oxford County, Sarnia-Lambton, and St. Thomas-Elgin. This included four regions (Chatham-Kent, Oxford County, Sarnia-Lambton, St. Thomas-Elgin) comprising solely of small communities (populations less than 100,000) and four regions (Hamilton, London-Middlesex, Niagara, Guelph-Wellington) including both small and mid-sized centres (populations between 100,000 – 1,000,000).

The research questions we addressed are:

1. What are the challenges that racialized and non-racialized newcomers face when accessing settlement services in Southwestern Ontario?
2. Do racialized newcomers experience racism and discrimination when accessing settlement services, and do these experiences differ by intersecting characteristics of these newcomers and the type of organization in which they access services? Do they differ from the experiences of non-racialized newcomers?
3. What are settlement service providers' perceptions of the challenges that racialized and non-racialized newcomers face when accessing services at their organizations, and are they aware of racism and discrimination that occurs?
4. What are organizations that provide settlement services in Southwestern Ontario currently doing to promote cultural competency and make everyone feel welcome?



5. What are the suggested strategies that these organizations can utilize to improve the experiences of racialized newcomers when accessing settlement services and to ensure that all clients are treated in a non-discriminatory manner?

The ultimate goal of the project was to develop evidence-based recommendations to improve the ability of the settlement sector to address barriers that racialized newcomers face in accessing settlement services in small and mid-sized communities in Southwestern Ontario. These barriers include racism and discrimination that may occur. Beyond Southwestern Ontario in which this research was conducted, the recommendations may be applicable to other similar communities across Canada.

# Background

## The Importance of Focusing on Racialized Newcomers

In the past, immigrants to Canada predominantly originated from Europe. Since the 1960s, however, the source countries of immigrants have become increasingly diverse (Statistics Canada, 2022b). In 2021, the top countries of birth of recent immigrants were India, the Philippines, China, Syria, and Nigeria (Statistics Canada, 2022a). This is also reflected in the share of the immigrant population who are racialized. In 2021, almost 70% of the immigrant population was part of a racialized group (Statistics Canada 2022c). This percentage was even higher — 83% — among the recent immigrant population (Statistics Canada 2022c). This highlights the importance of examining the experiences of racialized newcomers, who make up a large proportion of newcomers who may use settlement services. Indeed, in 2020-2021, 91% of service clients who responded to IRCC's Newcomer Outcomes Survey were racialized (IRCC, 2023a).

In addition, racialized newcomers experience challenges that are less likely to be felt by other newcomers. For example, with the exception of a few racialized groups, racialized newcomers tend to be more likely to live in poverty than non-racialized newcomers (Schimmele, Houe, & Stick, 2023). In addition, racialized immigrant women encounter particular barriers in the settlement process, including the gender wage gap, the burden of unpaid care work, and racialization and marginalization in their daily experiences (Zhu, 2016). They are particularly likely to be unemployed, underemployed, and to receive low wages for their employment (Momani et al., 2021). This suggests that the need for settlement services is particularly acute for racialized newcomers.

## Regionalization of Immigration

Examining and addressing the experiences of racialized newcomers in the small and mid-sized communities of Southwestern Ontario is of particular importance due to Canada's emphasis on regionalization — the attraction and retention of newcomers in smaller centres and rural areas (Esses et al., 2021). Many smaller communities in Canada struggle to attract and retain immigrants while dealing with labour shortages and shrinking populations due to outmigration, declining birthrates, and ageing populations (e.g., Esses & Adegbebo, 2022; IRCC, 2020). To encourage a more balanced distribution of immigrants and to extend the benefits of immigration to smaller

communities, the federal and provincial governments have implemented programs to encourage immigration to communities outside of the large centres. These include the Atlantic Immigration Pilot (AIP) and the Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot (RNIP).

The AIP was launched in 2017 with the aim of helping employers in Atlantic Canada hire skilled workers who want to immigrate to the region. It also aimed to help international students in Atlantic Canada stay in the region after graduation. It is now a permanent program (IRCC, 2023b). The RNIP was launched in 2019 and is a community-driven pilot program that offers immigrants a path to permanent residence if they have a job offer from an employer in one of the participating northern or rural communities (IRCC, 2023b).

This drive for regionalization of immigration reinforces the need to ensure that racialized newcomers in the small and mid-sized communities of Southwestern Ontario thrive and choose to remain in these communities. Settlement services may play a key role in supporting the settlement and integration of newcomers in these communities.

## The Importance of Settlement Services

As an immigrant-receiving country, Canada has long prioritized newcomer integration, emphasizing the mutual obligations of both immigrants and Canadian society in ensuring that newcomers adjust to their new lives while also maintaining their cultural identity (IRCC, 2021). The Canadian government has recognized that newcomers often experience multifaceted barriers in their attempts to integrate into Canadian society. These barriers include — but are not limited to — unemployment, underemployment, and low wages (Esses et al., 2014; Financial Accountability Office of Ontario, 2023; Statistics Canada, 2024); lack of support networks (Guo & Guo, 2016; Selimos & George, 2018); lack of access to short- and long-term services (Esses & Carter, 2019; Mukhtar et al., 2015; Whalen, 2019); and racism and discrimination (Naidu et al., 2022; Stewart et al., 2014; Vaswani et al., 2023b).

In order to address these barriers to integration, the federal Settlement Program offers both general and customized services and supports to eligible newcomers. These services include Support Services, including services such as childcare and interpretation; Needs and Assets Assessments and Referrals; Information and Orientation; Language Assessment & Language Training Services; Employment-Related Services; and Community Connections (IRCC, 2021). These services are provided by both immigrant-serving agencies whose primary mandate is to provide settlement

services to newcomers, and mainstream organizations who have a broader mandate but also provide settlement services for newcomers. The Resettlement Assistance Program for refugees also provides government-assisted refugees and other eligible individuals with financial and accommodation support upon arrival in Canada, Needs Assessment and Referrals, Information and Orientation, and referrals to other needed services (IRCC, 2023a). These services are crucial in aiding newcomers in the integration process so that they may become full participants in the social, civic, and economic life of Canada (IRCC, 2021).

## Barriers to the Use of Settlement Services

Recent evaluations have shown that settlement services have been mostly successful in supporting newcomers in their efforts to integrate into Canadian society (IRCC, 2021, 2023). However, not all newcomers benefit equally from the Settlement Program, as some face barriers in their attempts to access or fully benefit from these services. One such barrier that is particularly prevalent is a lack of knowledge regarding available services and how to access them, as research has shown that many newcomers are unaware of the services available to them and, even if they are aware of them, do not know how to obtain the services they need (IRCC, 2021, 2023a; Whalen, 2019).

Discrimination — defined as “behavior that disproportionately favors or provides an advantage to people belonging to some groups while disadvantaging or harming people belonging to other groups” (Vaswani et al., 2023b, p. 95) — is also frequently mentioned as a possible barrier to immigrants’ access to settlement services. Guo & Guo (2016) explored a potential catalyst for discrimination within settlement services, arguing that the Canadian government’s focus on the economic benefits of immigration has resulted in the prioritization of newcomers’ labour force integration over social and cultural integration. As such, newcomers who are viewed as economically valuable are more likely to benefit from settlement services than those who are not (Guo & Guo, 2016). This phenomenon has been acknowledged by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC, 2017, p. vi), who found that “the impact of Settlement Services was affected by client type, as, in general, clients with higher human capital (i.e., economic immigrants, those with a university degree or those with reported knowledge of English or French upon admission) derived greater benefits from IRCC-funded Settlement Services compared to other clients without these characteristics.”

Identity-based and systemic barriers to access may also exist, and though official evaluations discuss the steps taken to eliminate such barriers, they at times fail to

critically analyze the efficacy of these strategies. For example, Whalen (2019) discussed a 2019 request made by IRCC for proposals aimed at developing customized support services for client groups who face unique barriers, including women, persons with disabilities, refugees, and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. However, services directed at disabled and 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers seem to continue to be underrepresented (Whalen, 2019). Thus, for example, gaps still persist in meeting the support service needs of those requiring accommodations for disabilities (IRCC, 2023a).

Other studies point to more blatant forms of discrimination within settlement services, as well as the importance of designing services in culturally appropriate ways (Shields & Lujan, 2019; Stewart et al., 2011). For example, Stewart et al. (2011) presented findings from interviews with service providers in which they described racism and discrimination as major barriers to the delivery of effective settlement services to immigrant seniors. Interviews with clients also revealed that service providers can be culturally insensitive, with underlying prejudices affecting the adequacy of the support provided (Stewart et al., 2011). These findings are supported by an official examination of the existence and impacts of racism within IRCC, in which a variety of racist behaviours were reported, including microaggressions, overt acts of racism, biases in hiring and promotion, and potential biases in IRCC's programs, policy and client services (Pollara Strategic Insights, 2021).

## Racism and Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants in Small and Mid-Sized Communities

Much of the research examining racism and discrimination experienced by immigrants in Canada is based on national samples or has focused on Canada's large urban centres. As such, the situation in small and mid-sized communities has not been as well researched (Vaswani et al., 2023b). Because settlement and integration processes are inherently local, findings and insights drawn from studies conducted in major metropolitan areas are not necessarily applicable to the environments of small and mid-sized centres.

In general, racism and discrimination may be particularly evident in smaller communities in which many residents have had less exposure to diversity, may feel uncomfortable around people from different cultures, and may be apprehensive about demographic shifts occurring in their communities (Vaswani et al., 2023b). A representative survey of immigrants and racialized individuals in nine regions of Southwestern Ontario suggests that discrimination toward racialized newcomers may

indeed be especially prevalent in these communities. Results revealed that in five of the nine targeted regions, over 60% of immigrants and racialized individuals reported experiencing discrimination in the previous three years (Vaswani et al., 2023b). In comparison, in a national study, 35–57% of racialized individuals reported experiencing discrimination *over their lifetime* (Neuman, 2021). Qualitative studies conducted with immigrants in five regions of Southwestern Ontario containing small and mid-sized communities document the nature and severity of this discrimination (e.g., Eloulabi et al., 2024; Vaswani et al., 2023a). Respondents at times reported relatively overt acts of discrimination, including having ethnic slurs yelled at them; having objects thrown at them; being sworn at; and being noticeably avoided, excluded, and disadvantaged in the workplace.

In contrast, IRCC's 2022 survey of newcomers to Canada (IRCC, 2023b) found that newcomers who resided in an RNIP or AIP destination reported similar levels of discrimination to newcomers in other locations. In addition, a survey of newcomers who specifically arrived through the RNIP found that they reported lower levels of discrimination than that reported in the 2022 survey of all newcomers to Canada (IRCC, 2023b). These findings may be attributable to crucial aspects of these programs. It is widely advertised that these programs are specifically designed to attract and retain skilled workers and international graduates to fill important labour market needs in these communities. Crucial elements include intercultural competency training for employers (AIP) and the requirement that local Economic Development Organizations champion the benefits of immigration for their community (RNIP). As a result, these communities may be particularly welcoming to newcomers.

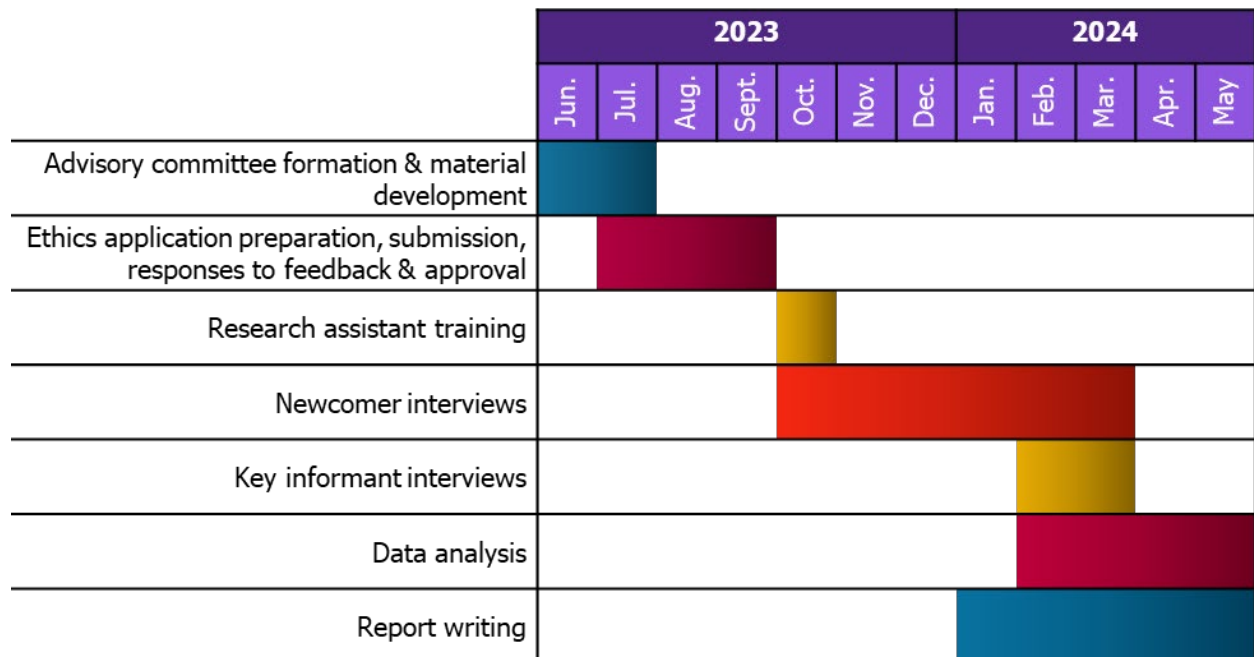
## The Current Study

In order to ensure the benefits of immigration for communities across the country and to ensure the wellbeing of newcomers, it is crucial for policymakers and practitioners to address the barriers that racialized newcomers may face in accessing settlement services, including racism and discrimination. Small and mid-sized communities that are particularly in need of new immigrants must work hard to identify and address these challenges. The current project was designed to contribute to this process through identifying and proposing strategies for ensuring equity in settlement service provision in the small and mid-sized communities of Southwestern Ontario.

## Methods

To better understand the challenges, and particularly racism and discrimination, experienced by those who have used settlement services in Southwestern Ontario, interviews were conducted with both newcomers who have accessed services (i.e., newcomer respondents) and individuals who have worked in the settlement sector (i.e., key informants). Interviews took place between October 2023 and March 2024 and focused on experiences in eight regions of Southwestern Ontario: Chatham-Kent, Guelph-Wellington, Hamilton, London-Middlesex, Niagara, Oxford County, Sarnia-Lambton, and St. Thomas-Elgin. The interviews were semi-structured and employed interview guides consisting of central questions and follow-up probes (see Appendix A for all data collection materials). The interview guides were created through consultation with the Project Advisory Committee and all study materials and activities were reviewed and approved by the Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (Project # 123645). All interviews were conducted online via Zoom and were audio- and video-recorded, as well as transcribed. The full project ran from June 2023 to May 2024, with timeline details provided in Figure 1.

*Figure 1. Timeline of the study.*



Though discrimination is a primary focus of this report, newcomer and key informant respondents were not explicitly asked if they had experienced or were otherwise aware of discrimination occurring at settlement organizations. Instead, respondents were asked about unfair treatment and exclusion because of who they (or who others) are, as well as more general factors that hindered and/or facilitated newcomers' access to and use of services. This indirect approach was adopted for two primary reasons:

- To avoid reactance by respondents in being asked about discrimination, which can be seen as a taboo topic to discuss, and to avoid biases caused by the term discrimination being interpreted differently by different individuals
- To gain a more nuanced understanding of the current situation in settlement services by expanding data collection beyond just negative experiences, and to make respondents feel more comfortable during the interview process by asking about some of the positive aspects of their experiences

This approach was quite successful, as many respondents were open in their responses and some recounted incidents that were — based on our definition of discrimination — discriminatory in nature. This is noteworthy as some who described experiences of discrimination had initially reported that their experiences were positive overall.

To conduct the interviews, we recruited nine graduate students from a variety of disciplinary areas within the Faculty of Social Science at Western University. The graduate student research assistants identified with a variety of ethnic/racial backgrounds and the majority of them were immigrants themselves and spoke two or more languages. To ensure that interviews were conducted in a rigorous and consistent manner, a training manual was developed and provided to the team. This manual, which was discussed during a team training session, highlighted how to conduct interviews in a culturally sensitive manner, following the interview guides closely while holding space for respondents to share their personal — and sometimes sensitive — information at their own pace. The research assistants also received training, guidance, and feedback on their interviewing skills; maintaining confidentiality; note-taking during and after interviews; and using the required technology, such as Zoom and file-sharing software.

## Newcomer Respondents

Newcomers were recruited via posters displayed in settlement and community organizations (e.g., libraries, YMCAs) in each of the eight regions. Recruitment materials were also shared via newspaper ads; word of mouth; and the newsletters,



email listservs, and social media accounts of the LIPs in each region. Recruitment materials directed interested individuals to complete a pre-screening survey, which was used to assess eligibility. To be eligible for the study, newcomers were required to be at least 18 years of age and to have used settlement services in one of the eight regions within the previous three years. Recruitment materials and the pre-screening survey were available in eight languages, including English and French. Languages were selected based on recommendations from the Project Advisory Committee regarding the languages currently most common among newcomers in each region.

Newcomer interviews lasted approximately 1.5–2 hours and included questions related to their personal experiences with settlement services, their observations of how others are treated while using these services, and suggestions for ensuring that organizations providing settlement services are welcoming to all. At the end of the interview, newcomers were asked a series of demographic questions and were provided with a \$50 electronic gift card to President's Choice, Walmart, or Amazon as thanks for their time.

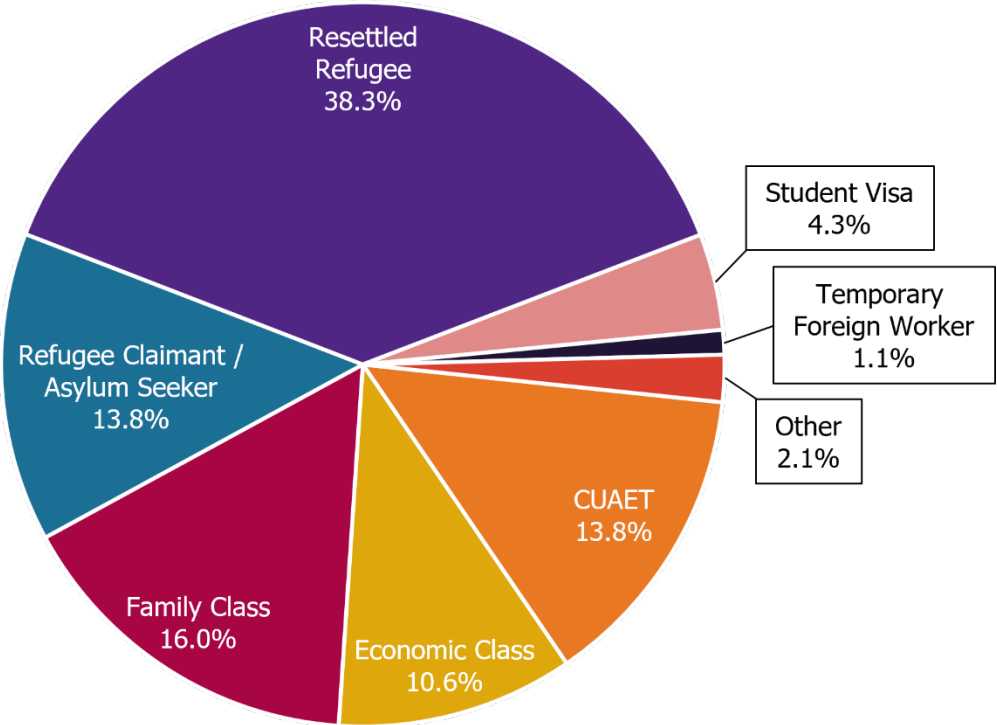
The final sample consisted of 94 newcomers.<sup>1</sup> Newcomer respondents were interviewed in the language of their choice, with the help of professional interpreters when necessary. Fifty-nine newcomer interviews were conducted in English, none were conducted in French, and 35 were conducted in a language other than English or French. Additional details about languages of interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Despite all having used settlement services in the past three years, the length of time that newcomer respondents had been in Canada ranged from 1 month to 14 years, with the average length of time in Canada being 2 years. Respondents had first entered Canada through a variety of programs, with the largest group having entered Canada as resettled refugees (36).

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<sup>1</sup> A total of 98 newcomers were interviewed. Four of these newcomers were excluded from analyses because they were found to be ineligible for the study during the interview (i.e., they had not accessed settlement services in one of the eight target communities).

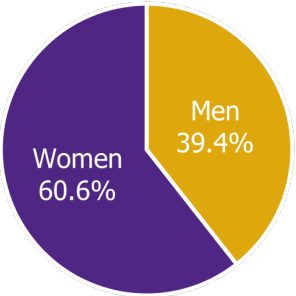
Figure 2. Programs through which newcomer respondents came to Canada.



Note: CUAET stands for Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel. Other includes one respondent who reported that they came to Canada through "Permanent Resident Services" and one who indicated that they entered Canada "via a private agency and sponsorship by a friend."

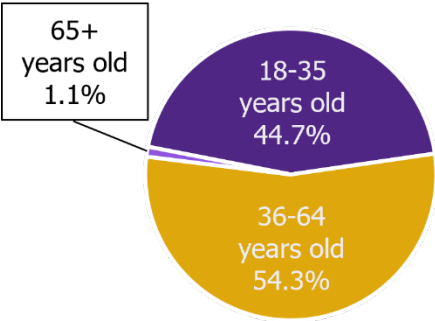
The majority of newcomers identified as women (57). Ages of newcomer respondents ranged from 21 to 68 years old, with the average being 37.5 years old.

Figure 3. Gender of newcomer respondents.



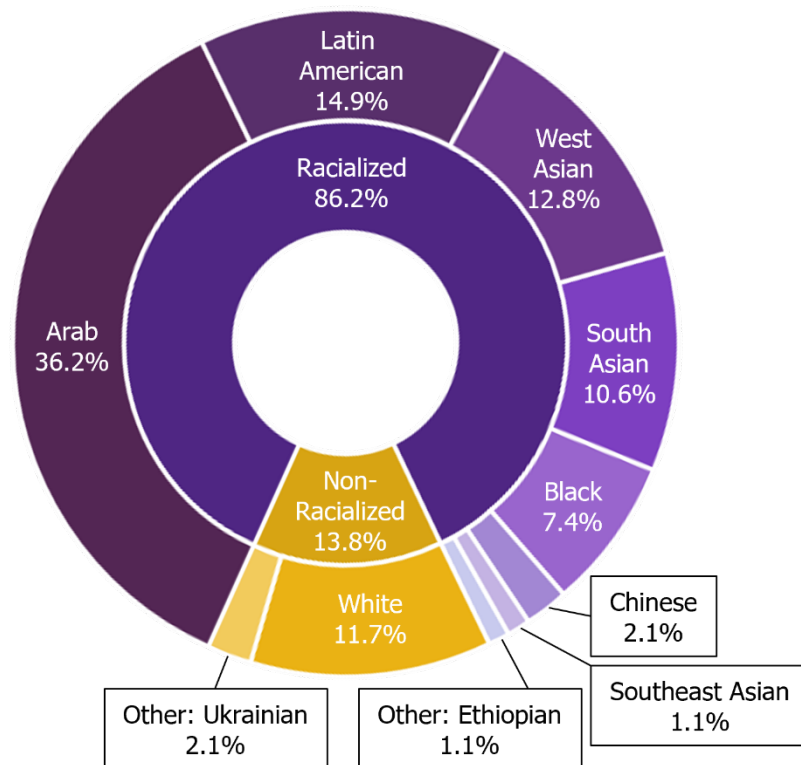
Note: No respondents indicated that they were non-binary.

Figure 4. Age of newcomer respondents.



Newcomers' racial/ethnic backgrounds spanned 10 categories.<sup>2</sup> To assess the effect of being racialized on their experiences with settlement services, newcomer respondents were classified as racialized or non-racialized based on their self-reported racial/ethnic background. Given their representation in the immigrant population and the focus on racialized newcomers in this report, we were particularly interested in recruiting racialized newcomers, who made up 86.2% of the final sample. Other characteristics of the newcomer respondents are presented in Appendix B.

*Figure 5. Race/ethnicity of racialized and non-racialized newcomer respondents.*



*Note: The Latin American category includes two respondents who identified themselves as both Latin American and White and the South Asian category includes one respondent who identified themselves as both South Asian and White.*

<sup>2</sup> Newcomer respondents were presented with a list of races/ethnicities and asked to select the option(s) with which they most identified. This list included an "other" option that respondents could select if they felt that the provided options did not fully capture their race/ethnicity. Three newcomers — two Ukrainian and one Ethiopian — chose this "other" option and further specified their preferred racial/ethnic identity.

## Key Informants

Names and contact information for potential key informants within the eight regions were obtained from organization websites and via suggestions from the Project Advisory Committee. To be eligible for the study, key informants were required to be at least 18 years of age and to have been working in the settlement sector in one of the eight regions for at least one year.

Key informant interviews lasted approximately 1–1.5 hours and included questions related to their perception of newcomers' experiences with settlement services in their region and at their organization; their own experiences at their organization; and what their organization does and could do to promote increased cultural competency and sensitivity, and to ensure they are welcoming to all.

A total of 15 key informants were interviewed. The length of time that key informants had been working in the settlement sector in Canada ranged from 1 to 25 years, with an approximate average of 8 years. At the time of the interviews, two of the key informants were employed at an immigrant-serving agency, whereas 12 were employed at mainstream organizations. One had previously been employed at both an immigrant-serving agency and mainstream organization.

Of the key informants interviewed, the majority (13) identified as women, with two identifying as men. Their ages ranged between 30 and 62 years old, with an average age of 42.5 years.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, 12 key informants were immigrants to Canada themselves and 3 had been born in Canada. Nine of the key informants were racialized, whereas six were non-racialized.

## Analyses

Data collected during the interviews, including transcripts of the recorded Zoom sessions and notes taken by the research assistants, were analyzed in ATLAS.ti Web (version 7.9.0) using thematic analysis. The data were coded and sorted to identify common patterns and themes across respondent responses. The analyses were conducted using an intersectionality approach, applying the Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) process (Government of Canada, 2022a). By employing GBA Plus, we

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<sup>3</sup> Note that four of the key informant respondents did not provide their ages and were not included in this calculation.

ensured a nuanced understanding of how various characteristics and identity dimensions intersected to shape the experiences of newcomers and their outcomes when accessing settlement services in Southwestern Ontario. This approach facilitated the identification of diverse perspectives, highlighting the experiences of those who have often been overlooked, namely racialized newcomers in small and mid-sized communities. Direct quotes from respondents' interviews have been included throughout the report, with respondents' permission, and for newcomers, include their self-identified race/ethnicity and gender. Quotes have been edited slightly for clarity and brevity. Quotes help illustrate the major themes identified and further center the voices and experiences of the newcomer respondents.

Analyses of data collected from newcomer respondents focused on:

- Instances of discrimination that they had experienced while accessing settlement services at immigrant-serving agencies and mainstream organizations, and the effects that these experiences had on their settlement
- Discrimination against others while accessing settlement services that they had witnessed or about which they had been told
- Other challenges that they had experienced when accessing settlement services
- Suggestions for ensuring that settlement organizations are welcoming to all

Analyses of data collected from key informants concentrated on:

- Their perceptions of discrimination occurring during the delivery of settlement services
- Their perceptions of other challenges that newcomers face when accessing settlement services
- Their awareness of existing cultural competency training and policies at their organization
- Suggestions for ensuring that settlement organizations are welcoming to all

Analyses also considered whether newcomers' personal experiences with discrimination were affected by the type of organizations they accessed (i.e., immigrant-serving agencies vs. mainstream organizations), their racial and ethnic background, and other characteristics (such as religion, language(s) spoken, and proficiency in English). These considerations are in-line with the GBA Plus approach, wherein we examined newcomers' experiences as a result of the intersection of their identities and characteristics, appreciating that the combination of these identities and characteristics — as well as external factors — produces outcomes that are unique to each individual or group. The results, therefore, present themes that multiple or all respondents had in

common, while sometimes presenting findings that were particular to one or few respondents.

## Research Challenges

Despite the use of multiple recruitment strategies, the research team faced challenges with recruiting sizable numbers of respondents from some of the regions, particularly those with smaller populations. As such, results have been aggregated across the eight regions to maintain the confidentiality of respondents from smaller regions or from regions with low participation. Conclusions, therefore, are applicable to small and mid-sized communities in Southwestern Ontario, rather than to specific cities or towns. It should also be noted that this study employed convenience and snowball sampling techniques, meaning that the sample was not selected to be representative of the broader population.

Another challenge the team faced during recruitment, data collection, and analysis is the lack of knowledge about settlement services among newcomer respondents. In particular, there was a lack of clarity regarding what settlement services are, where newcomer respondents were accessing them, and the types of organizations at which they were accessing them. Respondents were often unsure what constitutes settlement services, and many assumed they include any service offered by the Canadian government or a public institution (e.g., ServiceCanada, ServiceOntario, foodbanks, hospitals, etc.). This required a great deal of probing of respondents and resulted in a portion of the data collected during interviews falling outside of the scope of the report. Data related to experiences outside of settlement services were not included in the analyses.

## Third-Party Evaluation

This report was reviewed by a third-party evaluator who has experience in evaluation and research on equity, discrimination, newcomer settlement needs, and newcomer settlement and integration in Ontario. The evaluator's report is available in Appendix D.

## Results from Interviews with Newcomers

### Discrimination Experienced by Newcomers When Accessing Settlement Services

Out of 94 newcomer respondents, 14 reported having experienced discrimination when accessing settlement services. Among the newcomers interviewed, discrimination was described by approximately 16% of racialized individuals (12 out of 81 racialized newcomers) and approximately 15% of non-racialized individuals (2 out of 13 non-racialized newcomers). More specifically, discrimination was described by one or more of each of Arab (4); Latin American (3); Black, Chinese, Latin American, South Asian, West Asian, Ethiopian (1 each); and White (2) newcomer respondents.

Among racialized newcomers, experiences of discrimination were reported by a higher proportion of men (7 out of 35; 20%) than women (5 out of 46; 10.9%), and by a higher proportion of those aged 36-64 (8 out of 43; 18.6%) compared to those aged 18-35 (4 out of 37; 10.8%). Racialized respondents who had experienced discrimination included those who had arrived in Canada as refugee claimants (5); resettled refugees (3); Economic Class immigrants (2); Family Class immigrants (1), and temporary foreign workers (1).

Of the two non-racialized newcomers who had experienced discrimination, both were women, and one was between the ages of 18-35, while the other was between the ages of 36-64. One had arrived in Canada through the Economic Class and the other had entered via a 3-year visitor visa through the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel (CUAET) program.

Additional details regarding the characteristics of the newcomer respondents who experienced discrimination while using settlement services are provided in Appendix C.

### Description of the incidents and the contexts of discrimination

The results differentiate between interpersonal and systemic discrimination as experienced by newcomers when accessing settlement services.

Interpersonal discrimination manifests in various ways, operationally defined as "behavior that disproportionately favors or provides an advantage to individuals from

certain groups while disadvantaging or harming those from others" (Vaswani et al., 2023b, p. 95). It occurs in interactions between individuals or groups and includes actions or comments that target individuals based on their race, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, or other personal characteristics.

Systemic discrimination, in contrast, emerges from the policies, practices, or procedures embedded within institutional frameworks that lead to unequal outcomes for different groups. Identifying systemic discrimination can be challenging as it significantly impacts some groups of newcomers more than others, influenced by factors such as gender, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, and more (Government of Canada, 2022b).

Both interpersonal and systemic discrimination can manifest in implicit (covert) or explicit (overt) forms. Explicit bias involves overt, conscious prejudices that result in deliberate exclusion or favoritism. Implicit bias, on the other hand, consists of unconscious assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and stereotypes that individuals hold about various groups, subtly influencing their actions and decisions (Government of Canada, 2022a).

### **Racialized Newcomers**

The analysis distinguishes between immigrant-serving agencies and mainstream organizations in examining the context of these experiences. Of the 12 racialized newcomers who reported discrimination, five reported this occurring within immigrant-serving agencies. This discrimination included instances of derogatory comments related to immigration class and sexual orientation.

One respondent encountered explicit racism at an immigrant-serving agency, including derogatory comments related to their immigration class and sexual orientation, particularly while accessing settlement services.

*"I felt she was ignoring me after I came in as a LGBTQ+ refugee . . . I will never forget the day when I was leaving the hotel and she said 'if you were my son, I would kill you' . . . We asked her multiple times if there was an organization that would help LGBTQ people and she never helped. We avoided talking with her about this subject after." (Male, Arab)*

In our analysis, we identified systemic discrimination affecting several racialized individuals at immigrant-serving agencies, notably through inflexible class scheduling



that did not accommodate the diverse needs of newcomers, including those with disabilities, leading to exclusion.

*"They told me that they may expel me from [language] school because I couldn't go twice and they said if you don't show up the third time, we're going to remove you from the classes. But the thing is I'm working part-time. I am also trying to learn the language, but with the job, I have to work in order to be able to come up with the rent. The help that we get is not sufficient for my family, so I have to work . . . If I am working or if they put [an] appointment for me at the time of school, they don't like it . . . They don't care if you don't have sufficient money for your rent or for your life."* (Male, Arab)

*"Since I came to Canada, I've been sick. [The settlement workers] were not able to help me with anything. I'm sick and spending time visiting doctors. I went to school only for two months. I'm registered but they asked me not to come because I couldn't come [due to being sick]."* (Female, Arab)

Seven racialized newcomers reported discrimination at mainstream organizations. This discrimination often took the form of microaggressions, explicit bias, and preferential treatment based on ethnicity or nationality.

Two respondents reported experiencing microaggressions in mainstream agencies, particularly when accessing language and employment services, due to their ethnic backgrounds and immigration class.

*"The guy at first was entering my data and he pressed refugee. It's not because I am Arab that I am a refugee. We don't have a war in Morocco, so that's a thing I didn't appreciate because he can just ask me what program I am enrolled in."* (Male, Arab)

*"They made it clear to me that I need to work a survival job, nothing more. For people who have advanced, professional level of experience, it's not a place to go. They told me 'You're expecting a lot. You have the expectations of Canada, but it's not real.' Then they told me that everyone who comes from my country is happy with a labour job."* (Female, Ethiopian)

One respondent described facing discrimination on multiple occasions at a mainstream organization while accessing language and youth services. This discrimination was

characterized by exclusionary behavior and language practices that explicitly favored certain groups of newcomers, illustrating a case of explicit bias.

*"The population that goes there are more Middle Eastern people and the workers are Middle Eastern as well, so I'm guessing they treat people of the same background better than, for example, Latinos . . . or at least for my family they weren't that nice. You could see that treatment; even the sense of them speaking in their own language while there are others around that can't understand is rude."* (Female, Latin American)

*"During the youth services, the people that were leading spoke in Arabic because the majority were speaking in Arabic. My sister and I were the only ones who spoke Spanish because we couldn't understand. We asked them to speak in English and they didn't. We felt it was rude, so we stopped going."* (Female, Latin American)

Two respondents reported feeling excluded in mainstream agencies using language and settlement services due to their level of English proficiency.

*"Last semester I did not perform well and most of the time I feel I was ignored. I didn't get the chance to speak or to ask questions, and the professor told me that 'I suggest you not attend your next speaking test' . . . so I did not attend the speaking test."* (Female, Chinese)

*"I remember we didn't have enough English at the time, so we were asking for someone that speaks Spanish, but they were just like 'no, it's only me. I only speak English,' in a rude way."* (Female, Latin American)

### *Basis of discrimination experienced by racialized newcomers*

Racialized newcomers highlighted various factors contributing to discrimination, including English language proficiency, racial or ethnic background, immigration class, and sexual orientation. This elucidates the nuanced nature of discrimination experienced by newcomers, underscoring the intersectionality of factors contributing to unequal treatment within service provision contexts.

Three respondents felt that the reason for experiencing discrimination had to do with English language proficiency — both low and high proficiency — and was expressed through microaggressions and exclusionary language.

*"I think it was because my English level was not good enough and I was not performing well in class." (Female, Chinese)*

*"I think it was because of language." (Female, Latin American)*

*"They were surprised because I had the language skills and they said, 'you're not like the others.' And that is discrimination in itself. Also, they were telling me that you start this way because everyone who came from my country, they were working labour jobs before they worked in the office." (Female, Ethiopian)*

Two respondents reported racial/ethnic background and nationality as the basis of the discrimination they experienced.

*"I do feel there is not fair treatment and racism for some of the newcomers . . . When there are newcomers from Africa and the social workers are African, they treat them better than Syrians or Iraqi newcomers." (Male, Arab)*

*"I feel it could be intentional or unintentional, but sometimes they open up with someone with all the details but with people like me, they don't give all the information. I feel the same person gives better information to people of their nationality or someone who speaks their own languages." (Male, South Asian)*

One respondent, now a permanent resident, reported how their immigration status caused them to be treated differently when they entered Canada as a refugee claimant.

*"People are coming to Canada from different kinds of programs. We entered as refugee claimants, and it is very complicated. The treatment depends on your legal status . . . People with some legal statuses have more options than others." (Male, Latin American)*

Likewise, another respondent highlighted how their immigration class and their sexual orientation was the basis for the discrimination they experienced.

*"Once she learned that I came as an LGBTQ+ refugee sponsorship, she started to treat me unfairly." (Male, Arab)*

## Non-Racialized Newcomers

Two non-racialized individuals reported experiencing discrimination, which they described as preferential treatment by agency workers. In particular, the two individuals described preferential treatment given to people of the same nationality as the worker, or based on ethnic/racial background, leading to feelings of social exclusion. Both of these individuals reported this discrimination as occurring in mainstream organizations.

*"I don't think that he is racist, but he was only communicating with the Black people during the lesson. He is also Black. I was sitting with another guy, and he wasn't communicating with us, so I decided to change groups."* (Female, White)

## Impact of discrimination on racialized newcomers' use of services and on their settlement experiences

Many newcomers who had experienced discrimination (9 of the 14), all of whom were racialized newcomers, shared how discrimination impacted their engagement with settlement services, predominantly in mainstream agencies. The effects of these negative experiences were significant: some respondents chose not to return to the services and opted not to recommend these services to others. Additionally, the discrimination had detrimental effects on their emotional well-being, with many respondents feeling excluded as a direct result of their experiences.

*"I didn't feel myself included. I felt a closed mindedness. They don't ask about your gender. They directly assume you are he/him, and they should not assume . . . I stopped attending."*(Male, Arab)

*"I don't have to rely on them now and do it by myself."*(Male, South Asian)

*"We have no other choices because the treatment we received wasn't fair, so it did affect our decision . . . Now I depend on myself, so I am okay."* (Male, Arab)

*"There was one day that I did not go to class, I did not attend anything."*(Female, Chinese)

*"I left the activities and chose not to come back."* (Female, Latin American)

*"Since that incident, I have not approached the [organization] anymore for any of my needs. I am going to the library. I am no longer interested in their help."*  
(Male, Arab)

*"My husband went into depression. He was really depressed. You just see him cry for no reason. You can see him angry for no reason."* (Female, Black)

## Newcomers' Reports of Discrimination Experienced by Others When Accessing Settlement Services

All respondents who reported witnessing or hearing about discrimination toward others when accessing settlement services were racialized individuals. In particular, nine racialized respondents observed or heard about incidents of discrimination while others were accessing settlement services. These cases spanned a variety of related, and often intersecting factors driving the discrimination, including ethnic or racial background, immigration class, English proficiency, religion, disability, and preferential treatment of specific newcomer groups, highlighting intersectional biases that impact newcomers on multiple levels.

Regarding the types of organizations, four individuals reported discrimination occurring within immigrant-serving agencies, whereas five noted it within mainstream organizations.

Two respondents observed discrimination against newcomers based on their racial/ethnic identity or nationality in immigrant-serving agencies.

*"There was an Egyptian person, he was treated unfairly. He was complaining about his wife's health conditions. They didn't treat him well; I think because of where he is from."* (Male, Arab)

*"Every other person that I knew who complained about her are Black too. I never heard a complaint from a White person."* (Female, Black)

Similarly, two respondents noted discrimination or bias based on ethnic, racial background, and nationality within both an immigrant-serving agency and mainstream organizations.

*"We all have biases, and we cannot avoid it . . . I see it. Some eligible clients are better treated . . . not to say that others are mistreated . . . I always wondered, what makes you so special? . . . With the Ukrainians, for example, there are two appointments to fill out the forms. This client is from Ukraine, this other client is from anywhere else, and they both need forms filled out and a test . . . If they're booking appointments in April but there is a cancellation tomorrow, I've noticed that the person from Ukraine will be given priority over everyone else. I'm not sure if it's because of the media. Right now, there is a war in Pakistan, Sudan, in Latin American countries, but those problems are not as obvious because of that. I never asked why they prefer certain groups of people over others. Is it because of the media? . . . Is it skin colour, appearance, how they look?" (Male, Latin American)*

*"I don't want to generalize, but there are people from other nationalities who are also facing similar things. I noticed in my family, as my wife [is] also facing the same things." (Male, South Asian)*

One respondent reported observing a newcomer experiencing discrimination in a mainstream agency based on her racial identity, English proficiency, and immigration class.

*"I felt I was treated well in comparison to a Black woman that was there. I felt I was more welcomed in comparison to her as a refugee. The way he was talking to her was so tense. I didn't like how he was talking to her. They were speaking in Arabic because she doesn't speak English, so it seemed so hard for her. Just because he was in front of a good profile [Permanent Resident] and someone who speaks the language [English and French], I shouldn't be treated better. I felt it was a discrimination of her class. He should treat everyone the same way regardless of skin colour, refugee or not." (Male, Arab)*

One respondent reported observing an explicit case of racism characterized by derogatory language in an immigrant-serving agency.

*"I noticed the difference in how people from Pakistan and Turkey were treated [in the agency]. I heard comments like 'they stink.' I've seen it and I've heard it." (Male, Latin American)*

One respondent observed more subtle forms of bias in mainstream organizations, noting that certain youth groups were implicitly excluded from group activities, creating a perception of preferential treatment for some groups over others.

*"I've heard some youth say that [the workers] don't like them, or they are not their first option. You hear a lot of comments of them being excluded and then you see how they stop going to those agencies."* (Female, Latin American)

Another respondent did not directly observe the incident but heard from a friend about an experience of religious-based discrimination and discrimination due to English proficiency. The friend described how differences in religious beliefs resulted in unfair treatment.

*"I remember my friend was complaining to me about one teacher, but they were in another class. My friend is Muslim, and the teacher was not nice to her. The teacher told her 'You shouldn't be Muslim; you should believe in Jesus.' . . . She also said to her that she wouldn't succeed in English, and she would fail."* (Female, Arab)

Discrimination based on hearing impairment was identified as a form of systemic discrimination within an immigrant-serving agency.

*"I witnessed our friend was left outside of the hotel during wintertime . . . The big problem [was] because he can't hear. The [organization] does not have anyone to communicate with people like this."* (Female, West Asian)

## Additional Challenges that Racialized and Non-Racialized Newcomers Face When Accessing Settlement Services

In this section, we explore challenges that racialized and non-racialized newcomers reported that they have faced in accessing settlement services other than discrimination. While many newcomers had positive experiences with settlement services, they also reported significant challenges. These challenges, which were unrelated to experiences of discrimination, included a) difficulties with specific settlement workers and other staff, b) lack of knowledge about available services and long wait times, and c) language barriers.

## Difficulties with specific settlement workers and other staff

As key institutional actors, settlement workers and other staff are instrumental in the provision of services to newcomers. However, many newcomer respondents reported significant difficulties in their interactions with staff at organizations at which they were seeking settlement support, including specific settlement workers, interpreters, administrative staff, and case managers. Respondents reported that these challenges often arose from the individuals' attitudes and reactions, with numerous incidents involving behaviour that is harsh, rude, disrespectful, and unresponsive. These incidents directly impact the quality of service provided.

*"There was one instance where I felt a bit uncomfortable due to the behavior of a [settlement staff member] . . . I found her to be a bit harsh in the way she speaks." (Female, Black)*

*"I had a bad experience in two settlement service centres . . . Some workers are willing to help and others no. It really depends on their personality . . . A worker discouraged me to return to the services." (Female, Arab)*

*"I called my home case manager and she said 'I can't do anything; you can do the paperwork yourself. I don't want to help you'." (Female, West Asian)*

Similarly, respondents described instances where settlement service providers failed to deliver essential services, such as support for housing and employment.

*"Case workers are hard to know, reach, and seek support for my needs." (Male, West Asian)*

Another respondent highlighted how the service provider's perception of newcomers and immigrants impact the quality of service they provide.

*"It depends on the [settlement worker] on how they feel or think about newcomers . . . that's how they receive us." (Female, Arab)*



## Lack of knowledge about available services and long wait times

The majority of newcomers reported that it took a long time to learn about and access settlement services. Some respondents also experienced long wait times at immigrant-serving agencies, further hindering their ability to receive timely support.

*"It took me two months to find the offices . . . then they said they had many people in the queue, so I waited for three weeks. I went to the office several times."* (Male, Arab)

Respondents discussed a lack of information about settlement services and how to access them, resulting in poor knowledge of the services available to them and the physical location of the organization. Even when they did find them, they often found the services unhelpful. One respondent also pointed out that the location of the mainstream organization posed a challenge, as it was situated in a remote part of town, making it difficult for them to access.

*"It took me almost three months to access the service . . . it is hard to find someone to ask for specific information on who can help and how to get to services."* (Male, West Asian)

*"The services are in one corner of [the city], but no one really goes there, so people don't see it and don't know about it."* (Female, South Asian)

During the interviews, several respondents were surprised to discover the diverse array of services available to them and stated they would have used more services if they knew about them. This further points to a broader issue with newcomers' lack of knowledge about the services available to them or the ways to access the services they need upon entry to Canada.

## Language barriers

Several respondents identified language barriers as a significant challenge in the settlement process, affecting the relationship and communication between newcomers and settlement workers. Respondents described instances where their limited English language skills hindered effective communication. However, these issues were sometimes resolved with patience and understanding from settlement staff.

*"The main obstacles that I encountered while accessing settlement services in [the city] were related to language. Communicating with others was a major challenge as I found it extremely difficult to understand what people were saying, especially if they were not speaking in Arabic." (Male, Arab)*

*"During our Zoom meeting with a staff member, I faced difficulties due to my language skills not being well-matched with theirs. However, I eventually connected with another staff member who paid close attention to my needs and was able to assist me. Although I was nervous about my language abilities, we were able to find a patient and kind person who understood our situation . . . We have been working to improve our communication, like my husband's language skills which are still a work in progress." (Female, Latin American)*

## Results from Interviews with Key Informants

### Key Informants' Perceptions of Discrimination in the Delivery of Settlement Services

Overall, key informants reported that immigrants had positive experiences when accessing and using settlement services in their respective regions in Southwestern Ontario. The majority indicated that immigrants get the services they need to successfully settle in the region.

*"I would say our services are pretty much good . . . Our clients — they always provide feedback, right? And for me, my perspective, if I have a client and this person brings another family to our centre, it's because they received a good service . . . so that's my measure."*

None of the key informants interviewed reported seeing or being aware of any discrimination toward newcomers accessing settlement services at their organizations. The key informants indicated that they did not witness any incidents of an individual or a group of people being treated unfairly or being excluded because of who they are.

*"No, never. Never. I don't think anybody feels excluded . . . We're so welcoming that we would never have any issues with any of our clients. I would say the opposite."*

*"In my agency? No! If that happened, whoever did that would be in big trouble."*

These results from key informants sit in stark contrast with the results from newcomer respondents regarding discrimination they experienced, observed, and heard about from others at organizations providing settlement services. Despite the variety of incidents described by the sample of newcomers we interviewed, the key informants did not report observing or being aware of any discrimination within their organizations. It is possible that unconscious bias is playing a role here, wherein the key informants do not perceive certain incidents as discriminatory despite newcomers experiencing discrimination. Key informants may also have been more inclined to speak positively to protect their personal reputation and the reputation of their organization, or for fear of facing repercussions. Similarly, key informants who volunteered to participate in our

study may have been more likely to be those who had no knowledge of discrimination within their organizations.

## Key Informants' Perceptions of the Challenges that Newcomers Face When Accessing Settlement Services

Key informants identified several barriers that newcomers face when accessing settlement services in Southwestern Ontario, including fluency in English, transportation, pathway to Canada and immigration status, lack of awareness and inaccurate information about services, difficulties with specific settlement workers and other staff, funding challenges, and digital and cultural communication barriers.

### Language barriers

Many key informants cited a lack of English language fluency as a barrier to newcomers' access to settlement services. Newcomers, especially refugees, often come to Canada with limited (or no) knowledge of English, which restricts their ability to communicate with settlement workers and other employees. Interpretation services are not always readily available, so newcomers sometimes have to rely on the availability of a settlement worker or employee who speaks their language.

*"I hear that sometimes that [because of] the language barrier, they feel lost, that they don't understand what's going on. They feel that it's hard to communicate, although we encourage them to write in their own language and it is the caseworker's job to get this message translated. But sometimes I hear this from clients that they feel like it's so overwhelming that they don't speak English and they don't understand what's going on around them. They receive letters, they receive things from the government, and they really don't understand what's going on and feel like they need someone who speaks their language to just tell them what's going on in their own language."*

### Transportation challenges

Another barrier that several key informants identified is transportation. This was particularly relevant for newcomers who cannot rely on the (at times inadequate) public transportation system in their community, cannot walk to the settlement service organization, and who do not have access to a private vehicle due to age or finances.

*"In [the region], I could say transportation could be one [barrier]. We don't have a great public transit program, so just, you know, getting to the settlement services office for some families is difficult . . . being out in more of a rural area, what would be a barrier . . . Things aren't within walking distance . . . Another [barrier] would be income. Owning a car requires financial resources that most of the families don't have access to . . . So, it would be a financial barrier to owning a vehicle."*

## Immigration status

Key informants cited pathway to Canada and immigration status as barriers to accessing services, specifically for those who are ineligible for many services, such as refugee claimants, international students, and their spouses/family members. This is a systemic barrier for these individuals, who need access to employment services, English language classes, financial literacy lessons, and other services in order to succeed in Canada.

*"I think if you are a PR [permanent resident], you have more priority or you have more services rather than the refugee claimant."*

*"All newcomers, irrespective of them being GAR [government-assisted refugee] applicants, skilled workers, international students, are all vulnerable people."*

## Lack of knowledge about available services

Another barrier to newcomers' access to settlement services is lack of awareness of available services and inaccurate information about services and service providers.

Newcomers are often unaware of what settlement services are, who is eligible to use them, and where they can access them. They find out about services months (or years) after arriving and some never find out about them at all. In addition, they are sometimes misinformed about the services available to them and how to access them by settlement workers as well as employees at other organizations and institutions.

*"I think maybe we don't do as much outreach. I wouldn't say that I've seen us go to a ton of events where we're trying to reach out to people . . . We kind of wait for them to come to us, but it's because we're short-staffed."*

*"It's not easy to find a place where to get information. You need to really do a really hard job [as a newcomer] to put those pieces of information together. And if you're lucky, you come to a place where the information is sort of organized like we do . . . Otherwise you will be knocking on different doors without knowing where to go, what you are doing there, who's gonna help you."*

In addition, newcomers struggle with having no support networks or ties in the region they are resettling in in Canada. The lack of family or community members impacts settlement and their awareness of services.

*"[Newcomers' experience in Canada] varies greatly depending on . . . how well connected they are. So, a lot of families that I work with, that are part of the Low German speaking Mennonite community, when they arrive, they have family and usually a community here. They're usually connected with a local church group, and they have a lot of resources and a lot of help. Families that I work with in [the region] who are international families, refugees, for example, with no family, no connections when they arrive. It can be more difficult for them . . . Sponsorship groups will be really helpful and put a lot of time and effort into the family's lives and really help the family connect with services, schools, things like that."*

### Difficulties with specific settlement workers and other staff

Key informants highlighted that newcomers' experiences vary depending on the competency and adequacy of the settlement workers themselves and other staff with whom they come into contact. This acts as a barrier to newcomers' access to settlement services because the availability and adequacy of information that newcomers receive depends on the settlement worker's knowledge. In addition, the efficiency of services and wait times may depend on the responsiveness of the settlement workers, and the overall experience — including discrimination — depends on the cultural competency of the staff.

*"Even probably you will get wrong information or misinformation that leads to other bigger problems. So instead of solving problems, you create new ones. I've seen that a lot."*

This also applies to staff at the organizations other than settlement workers, as one key informant noted the lack of cultural competency of those in mainstream organizations in which settlement services are located, and their unsuitability to directly interact with

and assist newcomers. This key informant cited an incident wherein a newcomer interacted with staff at their mainstream organization as the newcomer was trying to find the settlement worker and access settlement services.

*"If their language level is quite low, then sometimes the person who is dealing with them or speaking with them is not equipped or [does not have] the patience to be able to provide the proper referrals, because that's not something that they are familiar with or maybe they haven't taken the time to really consider, where many of us who work with our newcomer population have the skills to be patient and to ensure we are listening appropriately . . . The only other thing — I guess you mentioned something about discrimination — now that I think about it, I have often said that sometimes — not all — sometimes if a client first comes into the campus and they are seeking settlement support. So, language training programs are classified as our settlement supports through the college. If the client has an accent or has disclosed that they are not initially from this country, rather than spending those few minutes to kind of gather what the client's specifically looking for, they are often just referred right on, oh, go here. . . . It is discouraging clients that they are being given the run around."*

### Insufficient funding and staff

Moreover, key informants discussed the insufficient levels of funding, resources, and staff at settlement organizations. More settlement workers are needed to be able to increase hours and serve more newcomers. This will also help to ensure that the workers present at a given moment can speak a wider range of languages. Funding will also allow for more interpretation and translation services.

*"One of the things that I struggle with, and I'm only one person and there's a lot of schools, but I am the only settlement worker in schools in all of [the county and region]. So, I have 10 schools under my workload at the moment, which is a lot . . . so part of it could be resources to have a settlement worker in more of the schools."*

*"Sometimes it happens when I'm at the office and we have a client who doesn't speak the language maybe. It's not always easy to have staff who speak a rare language, for example . . . We can say like government cuts can affect [this] sometimes."*

## Digital and cultural communication barriers

Other barriers noted by key informants included lack of technological knowledge, such as the use of Zoom to access a service, and cultural differences between Canada and their previous country of residence, which impacts communication and knowledge.

## Cultural Competency and EDI Practices and Policies in Place in the Organizations

The key informants were asked what their organizations are currently doing to promote cultural competency and what Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) practices and policies they have in place.

### Cultural competency and EDI practices

Key informants described several practices within their organizations to promote the cultural competency of their staff and organization, including diversity in hiring, offering services and materials in different languages, hosting and attending events that celebrate different cultures, discussions between co-workers, and staff training.

Organizations hire diverse staff with personal immigration experiences and fluency in multiple languages.

*"They make sure to hire diverse employees, ensuring there are different languages and ethnicities. We receive a lot of training regarding this. We are also taught how to avoid misunderstandings in terms of culture. Often, we try to match clients with similar background settlement workers to minimize this issue."*

Key informants noted that they offer services in different languages, through speaking the language themselves or hiring interpreters, and offer resources in the languages that the newcomers are most comfortable with.

*"We do have flyers printed about the different programs. We also have them translated in languages in demand."*

*"If we don't have staff in the building that speaks that language, we would connect with staff through our [other city's] office . . . If my colleague in [the other city] can speak Punjabi for example, I would hop on a call with her and say,*



*'can you translate for this client, so I understand what they need?'. But even in the office itself we have people who speak a whole bunch of languages. I couldn't even list them all."*

The organizations host events celebrating different cultures and promote multicultural events hosted by others to their clients and employees.

*"We do, as an organization, different activities including our different backgrounds. So, if we are having a staff meeting, maybe we can bring our own food and we can share as a group. And external with the clients, we try [as well]."*

*"We share a lot of local events. We have a lot of newcomers that have come to our area and are having street festivals and are hosting events where we can learn more about how they celebrate those cultures and what celebration means to them . . . Understanding when events are happening and how that might affect someone's ability to receive services."*

The employees at the organizations have meetings and discussions to learn about best practices and better understand different cultures.

*"Within the staff, we always have meetings as a staff. Within these meetings, we always talk about the challenges that we have, the successful stories."*

*"Actually, it's not through the agency, but the friendly relationship between us as co-workers. We talk about it. Let's say one of the staff is from Colombia and then my client is Latino. I would say, 'oh, my client asked me about this,' and then my co-worker would explain, 'yes, because this is blah, blah, blah, blah in our country.' So, I get a background. She gets a background from me about the Middle East or about Islam sometimes. Especially in Ramadan and why clients prefer not to come in the morning, I tell them."*

The majority of the key informants had taken some training on EDI and cultural competency. Training ranged from formal workshops and lectures from external speakers to informal team discussions, which were less common. Respondents cited training on EDI issues, mental health, and violence, and learning about different cultures, inclusivity, how to make everyone feel welcome, anti-discrimination, anti-oppression, and GBA Plus.

*"Yes, we do [have cultural competency training for staff]. I can't remember the name of the training that we had not that long ago, but it was definitely specifically designed to cover just the fact that there's sensitivities across different cultures and to be respectful of all. Absolutely, we do cover that."*

*"There are some mandatory onboarding training that people will have to complete. It's offered twice a year so, depending on when they come, they might go within 6 months of hiring to the training scheduled about anti-oppression, anti-discriminatory practices."*

*"We constantly have different training on different things like, for example, how to manage conflicts, how to deal with issues that have to do with family violence, how to work with different groups, ethnicity, and especially gender preferences. So, we have training about those things all the time."*

## Policies to promote cultural competency and anti-discrimination

Almost all of the key informants knew of a policy or policies that their organization had in place to ensure that staff treat all clients and each other in a culturally sensitive way. Many noted that the policies were related to anti-discrimination, anti-oppression, EDI, and being culturally sensitive.

*"There are certain expectations from all people. I guess our ultimate policy is 'treat everyone the way you want to be treated.' That's what it comes down to, once again, because it's an organization that's put together by churches and it's a Christian foundation."*

*"We have zero tolerance towards discrimination."*

*"We do have our policies, our mission, and our vision. I think we currently have a new one after the executive director left. It changes based on executive directors; however, broadly, it is under the EDI guidelines."*

However, the degree to which they were able to recall what the policy is varied. Some key informants indicated that they do not know what the policy entails, as management typically handles matters of discrimination and EDI. Others recalled that such policies were presented to them by their organization's Human Resources department or during training sessions but were unclear on what they were exactly.

*"I think we do, in the policies that we read when we are hired."*

*"I guess most of them would be based in anti-discrimination. I don't know the policies off by heart unfortunately . . . If I don't know them specifically, probably not incredibly [effective]."*

# Suggested Strategies for Organizations to Make Sure Everyone Feels Welcome

## Suggestions from Newcomer Respondents

We asked newcomers for strategies that they would suggest to organizations to ensure that everyone feels welcome. They provided several recommendations to improve the experiences of those accessing settlement services. Their suggestions focused on three key areas: 1) accessibility and inclusivity through language and communication, 2) knowledge of and access to settlement services, and 3) newcomer support networks.

### Accessibility and inclusivity through language and communication

Several newcomers emphasized the critical role of language and communication in improving settlement services, including offering translation and multilingual support, relevant disability accommodations for communication, and community engagement with cultural competency.

Some respondents highlighted the importance of making interpretation services readily available at settlement services, including at all activities, events, workshops, and presentations in the languages relevant to the groups of people attending the services. A few suggested developing programs and sessions in the primary languages of the respondents, supported by interpreters and translators. Others suggested that interpreters should be available during assessments or intake processes to facilitate clear and accurate communication.

Likewise, various respondents emphasized the necessity of providing sign language interpretation services and offering assistive listening devices to meet the needs of various newcomers.

Moreover, several respondents underscored the importance of community engagement and cultural competency to improve communication. One respondent suggested that settlement workers regularly engage with the local community to identify language needs and preferences. They described achieving this by collecting and incorporating feedback from community members to continuously improve locally based language services. Respondents also recommended providing cultural competency and diversity training for staff in both immigrant-serving and mainstream organizations to enhance

their ability to communicate effectively with individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

### Knowledge of and access to settlement services

Some newcomers pointed out the general lack of awareness about settlement services, indicating a need for increased efforts to raise awareness of available settlement supports, including outreach activities and initiatives within the community. For instance, a few respondents suggested creating a centralized website that directs newcomers to essential settlement supports and services, tailored to their specific local community.

Other respondents suggested providing comprehensive information at border points and initial entry locations to ensure newcomers are aware of available support services from the onset of their arrival in Canada. In addition, a few suggested ensuring that all newcomers — including refugee claimants — can access settlement services and programming.

### Newcomer support networks

Several newcomers emphasized the importance of enhancing support networks to improve the settlement experience, particularly for those entering Canada as refugee claimants and resettled refugees. These groups often lack the close networks that provide support upon arrival (i.e., family and friends), especially those sharing their cultural background, language, and traditions. This situation contrasts with newcomers who arrive under programs like family class, who typically have more established support systems.

Further, one respondent specifically recommended establishing networks of newcomers from diverse cultural backgrounds to support others with similar backgrounds, in collaboration with immigrant-serving and mainstream organizations. Another respondent highlighted that these familiar networks would help reduce feelings of isolation for newcomers and facilitate the dissemination of essential information about settlement services to newcomers.

## Suggestions from Key Informants

The key informants also made suggestions on what can be done to improve newcomers' experiences when accessing settlement services and to make sure everyone feels welcome. Their suggestions focused on four key areas: 1) education, knowledge, and training, 2) funding and resources, 3) accessibility and systemic barriers, and 4) internal and external communication and reporting discrimination.

### Education, knowledge, and training

Many key informants discussed improving education and training of employees in immigrant-serving agencies and mainstream organizations that provide settlement services to newcomers. This included regular mandatory paid training sessions for employees to develop the skills and knowledge they need to provide culturally competent and effective services to newcomers. These sessions could cover topics such as cultural awareness, communication skills, (culturally appropriate) conflict resolution, working with interpreters, and dealing with newcomers who are struggling with mental health challenges. Training and educational sessions could be held online and/or in-person and could provide spaces where employees could learn from each other by sharing their own personal and professional experiences, as well as from specialized guest speakers. One respondent stressed the importance that this training be standardized across agencies and organizations. Moreover, a few respondents highlighted the importance of providing training and education to all those who work in the organizations (especially for mainstream organizations), even if they do not directly provide settlement services, as they may interact with newcomers nonetheless. This also extends to schools, as there is currently a lack of awareness about the value of having settlement workers in schools.

In addition to education and training for employees, key informants suggested educating newcomers, immigrants, and the general public about settlement services, particularly to raise awareness of available services for newcomers. One respondent suggested the need for centralized information — one central place for individuals to go to get information on settlement services that can act as a starting point. Another respondent suggested that newcomers attend orientation sessions regularly, on a monthly or seasonal basis, to get current information on such topics as Canadian lifestyle, social norms, and communities and neighbourhood.

## Funding and resources

Several key informants spoke about the need for more funding and more agencies and staff to do this work. Involving more agencies and staff would allow for certain jobs to be done better. One respondent suggested extending the working hours of the organization and its employees. Budget limitations have meant that organizations are inadequately prepared to deal with unexpected crises. Following the 2022 full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, for example, organizations did not have the capacity to handle the large number of arrivals of Ukrainian newcomers and simultaneously serve other newcomers. Moreover, additional funding would allow organizations to support newcomers' transportation costs, so that those with financial needs, or those without access to a private vehicle or public transportation, can more easily access settlement services. Another suggestion for helping those facing difficulty in accessing settlement services due to a lack of transportation is to offer more services online.

## Accessibility and systemic barriers

A few key informants suggested that all immigrants and newcomers be allowed access to settlement services and programming, including refugee claimants and international students. Findings from key informant interviews indicated that settlement workers often feel their hands are tied when it comes to helping those that do not fall under regulation or they help them anyway off the record, sometimes at personal cost.

In response to language as a barrier, some key informants suggested hiring settlement workers and other staff that speak multiple languages and offering interpretation to newcomers everywhere. Interpreters should be provided at every appointment and call. In addition, a couple of key informants indicated the need to focus on pre-arrival services, providing English classes for potential immigrants in their countries of residence before they come to Canada.

## Internal and external communication and reporting discrimination

Key informant respondents discussed implementing and improving methods for reporting discrimination and obtaining feedback from newcomers. One respondent suggested that information on how to report discrimination experienced when accessing settlement services be provided to potential newcomers as soon as they are approved to come to Canada or at the border. This reporting should be quick, easy, and accessible on mobile devices, to further deter discrimination from those delivering the

services and hold everyone accountable. The respondent commented that the difficulty and lack of clarity in using the current system of reporting may be leading to more incidents of discrimination. Another respondent suggested using more anonymous surveys with newcomer clients to get their feedback on services, ensuring the survey is culturally appropriate, comprehensive, and easily understandable.

The final suggestions from key informants focused on communication. Respondents suggested that communication between organizations be improved, allowing for the sharing of updates, information, and lessons learned, thus reducing confusion and misinformation among newcomers. Communication should also be improved between the multiple levels of government and the agencies and organizations that serve newcomers. Lastly, one respondent suggested a method to audit and evaluate management and those in higher positions, citing that settlement workers often get evaluated on how well they follow the organization's policies (such as EDI policies), but the managers do not get evaluated on that.



## Recommendations

Based on the findings from the current project, we provide evidence-based recommendations for action in the communities of Southwestern Ontario and similar communities across Canada. These recommendations focus primarily on reducing and addressing the discrimination and racism faced by newcomers accessing settlement services. They are grounded in anti-discrimination policies, cultural competency (i.e., understanding and respect for the values, attitudes, beliefs, and customs of other cultures), equitable and inclusive organizational practices, and enhancing awareness of — and right to — settlement service supports. The Project Advisory Committee further contributed valuable feedback on these recommendations.

Though these recommendations are primarily directed toward settlement organizations, it should be noted that these organizations will require support from their funder(s) to enact many of the changes. Additional funds, and some flexibility in the use of funds, will be necessary to implement our recommendations and to address the issues that are more systemic in nature.

### Anti-Discrimination Policies and Practices

To prevent discrimination toward newcomers in accessing settlement services in immigrant-serving agencies and mainstream organizations:

- Develop, implement, and publicize clear policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on race, ethnicity, language, immigration class, sexual orientation, and other personal characteristics.
- Ensure that all employees are fully aware of the anti-discrimination policy. Implement regular, detailed training sessions and maintain consistent communication from management to ensure everyone understands and can effectively implement these policies.
- Display clearly visible notices informing patrons of the zero-tolerance of discrimination policy.
- Conduct regular paid mandatory employee training sessions on cultural competency and inclusive practices to prevent discriminatory behavior. These sessions should be ongoing, providing continuous opportunities for staff to

discuss emerging issues and learn how to handle various situations while addressing the diverse needs and experiences of newcomers. This training should be based on the latest evidence of effectiveness and include all staff who interact with and/or impact newcomers.

- Conduct regular paid mandatory employee training focused on countering stereotypes and discrimination, encouraging perspective taking, and education about what constitutes discrimination, including microaggressions and the differences between explicit and implicit bias.
- Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of employee training sessions to ensure they meet the needs of staff, the organization, and the newcomers they are serving. Integrate this evaluation process into a continuous learning environment, adjusting and making improvements based on feedback. Funding should be allocated to the hiring of external evaluators to avoid bias during the evaluation process.
- Incorporate consented testimonials from newcomers in which they share their experiences of racism and discrimination encountered while accessing settlement services in regular training sessions to provide real-life context and deepen staff's understanding of the discrimination newcomers face and the impact of this discrimination. When doing so, staff at all levels should be encouraged to reflect on and address the implicit biases present in their own attitudes and behaviour.
- Ensure training is provided to staff in all departments in mainstream organizations — not just those directly involved in delivering settlement services. This may include staff providing programming in other departments, administrative staff, human resources personnel, volunteers and interns, IT support staff, facility management, and senior management and executives.
- Implement only evidence-based programs on cultural competency, anti-discrimination, and inclusive practices. Continuously gather and analyze data to verify the effectiveness of these programs within the organization's specific context.
- Conduct regular audits with external evaluators to assess the effectiveness of anti-discrimination policies and training programs.

To support newcomers who have experienced discrimination in immigrant-serving agencies and mainstream organizations:

- Create accessible and confidential mechanisms for newcomers to report incidents of discrimination without fear of retaliation. Ensure there is a prompt and effective follow-up process for reported issues, including involvement of a third party to further protect against fear of retaliation.
- Conduct regular evaluations of settlement services to identify areas for improvement, with a specific focus on anti-racism and anti-discrimination. Incorporate feedback from newcomers to ensure these evaluations are informed by their experiences and perspectives.
- Ensure that bystander intervention resources are available for all newcomers when they visit the agency or organization.
- Provide newcomers with support groups and safe spaces to discuss their experiences with trained support staff and with those who have had similar experiences.

## Equitable and Inclusive Practices in Settlement Service Provision

To support equitable and inclusive practices in settlement services, both immigrant-serving agencies and mainstream organizations should:

- Monitor and ensure that service providers from all nationalities and ethnicities are equally welcoming to individuals from other communities as they are to individuals from their own communities.
- Create spaces within organizations where all staff can learn from each other's experiences and about each other's cultures.
- Provide interpretation services and ensure multilingual support staff are available to assist newcomers who do not speak English or French. Ensure that critical information and materials are available in multiple languages and provide assistive hearing devices and sign language services to those who need them.

- Adapt service schedules and formats to accommodate diverse needs, including those of newcomers with disabilities, part-time workers, and those with varying language proficiencies.
- Foster an inclusive organizational culture by promoting the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce that mirrors the community's demographics, including individuals' ethnic backgrounds, languages spoken, and lived experiences.
- Develop targeted programs and initiatives to support specific groups of newcomers who may experience more discrimination, including 2SLGBTQIA+ refugees, racialized women, and individuals with disabilities.
- Consider allowing all newcomers to Canada to access settlement services, rather than restricting these services to permanent residents and those for whom special temporary measures have been provided.

## Enhanced Awareness of Settlement Services

To enhance awareness and understanding of settlement services for newcomers, immigrant-serving agencies and mainstream organizations should:

- Provide clear and accessible information about the rights and resources available to newcomers, empowering them to recognize and report discriminatory behaviour when accessing settlement services.
- Ensure newcomers understand their entitlement to certain resources and services, reinforcing that accessing these services is their right, not a favour.
- Raise awareness of available settlement services for newcomers through targeted outreach and informational campaigns.
- Enhance inter-agency communication to facilitate learning and collaboration among organizations, ensuring comprehensive support for newcomers accessing a variety of settlement services.
- Collaborate with Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), Réseaux en immigration francophones (RIF), and other networks to create informational materials about

the variety of settlement services available locally and regionally. Distribute these materials through client welcome packages, and flyers posted and distributed widely.

- Host community events and workshops where newcomers can learn about available services, rights, and resources in an interactive and engaging manner, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

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# Appendix A – Data Collection Materials

## Newcomer Pre-Screen Questionnaire

1. In what year did you land or become a permanent resident in Canada eligible to use settlement services? \_\_\_\_\_
2. In what city or town in Canada did you use settlement services in the last three years? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your gender?
  - Female
  - Male
  - Non-binary
  - I prefer to identify as (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
5. How would you describe your ethnic or racial identity? (You can choose more than one.)
  - Arab
  - Black
  - Chinese
  - Filipino
  - Indigenous
  - Japanese
  - Korean
  - Latin American
  - Mennonite
  - South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
  - Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai)
  - West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghan)
  - White
  - Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
6. Through what immigration program or visa did you enter Canada?
  - Economic Class (Skilled Worker, Canadian Experience Class, Provincial Nominee Program, or Business Programs)

- Family Class (Sponsored Spouse, Sponsored Parent or Grandparent, or Other Immigrant Sponsored by Family)
- Resettled Refugee (Government Assisted, Privately Sponsored, Blended Visa Office-Referred Program)
- Refugee Claimant (or Asylum Seeker)
- Temporary Resident - Student on Student Visa
- Temporary Resident - Temporary Foreign Worker including Agricultural Worker or Live-In Caregiver
- 3-Year Visitor Visa through the Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you are eligible to participate in the study, in what language would you prefer that the interview be conducted?

- English
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

## Newcomer Demographic Survey

1. How long have you lived in Canada (no matter what your immigration status was when you arrived)?

\_\_\_\_\_ (months)

2. What language(s) do you speak most often at home? (You can choose more than one.)

- English
- French
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

3. With regard to religion, how do you presently identify yourself or think of yourself as being? (You can choose more than one.)

- Baha'i
- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Mennonite
- Muslim

- Sikh
- Traditional/Spirituality
- No religion (atheist or agnostic)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your current employment status? (You can choose more than one.)

- Employed full-time (30 hours a week or more)
- Employed part-time (Less than 30 hours a week)
- Self-employed or own your own business
- Unemployed, looking for work
- Unemployed, not looking for work
- Retired
- Student
- Homemaker
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- Did not complete elementary school
- Elementary school
- Secondary school (high school)
- College/vocational training
- University undergraduate degree (B.A., B.Sc.)
- University graduate degree (Master's, Ph.D.)
- Professional degree (e.g., Medicine, Law, Engineering)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Please indicate your approximate annual household income, from all sources, before taxes.

- No income
- Less than \$45,000
- \$45,001 to \$80,000
- \$80,001 to \$130,000
- More than \$130,000
- I prefer not to answer

## Newcomer Interview Guide

Themes and Interview Questions	Probes
Warm Up – Let me start with some general questions	
<p>Can you start by telling me a bit about you and your background?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long have you lived in Canada?</li> <li>• We're going to be talking about your experiences with settlement services in [region]. Do you currently live in [region]? – if not, where do you live?</li> <li>• Is this the first place that you have lived in Canada or did you live somewhere else before coming to [place where they live]?</li> <li>• What is your favorite place in [place where they live]?</li> <li>• Where do you spend most of your time? – please be specific</li> <li>• How have you adapted to living in Canada so far?</li> </ul>
<p>Personal Experiences with Settlement Services – Now I am going to ask you about your experiences using settlement services. When I talk about settlement services, I mean services or programs specifically for immigrants to help them settle in Canada. These are free services paid for by the government. They can include:</p> <p>a) Settlement supports including needs and assets assessment and referrals; information and orientation; and other supports from a settlement agency such as interpretation and childcare</p> <p>b) Language assessment and language training services (LINC)</p> <p>c) Employment services</p> <p>d) SWIS – services by settlement workers in schools</p> <p>e) Canada Connects – matching newcomers with longer-term Canadian residents to help them learn about and integrate into their local community</p> <p>f) RAP Program - Resettlement Assistance Program for refugees</p>	
<p>Overall, what has your experience been like in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long did it take you to access the services that you needed?</li> </ul>

<p>accessing and using settlement services or programs in [region]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do you feel about the settlement services that you used?</li> <li>• Has your experience in general been positive or negative?</li> <li>• If mention negative experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What made it negative? Please explain.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If mention positive experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What made it positive? Please explain.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>From what agency or agencies have you used settlement services in the [region]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From an agency specifically for newcomers to Canada <b>or</b> an agency that has special programs for newcomers to Canada but also has programs for other Canadians (i.e., from an agency where there are only newcomers <b>or</b> an agency where there are both newcomers and non-newcomers)? Or in both types of agencies?</li> <li>• From an agency or agencies that mainly provide services in English <b>or</b> an agency or agencies that mainly provide services in French?</li> <li>• Can you name specific agencies from which you have used settlement services?</li> </ul>
<p>For each agency named (or type of agency if they don't mention specific agencies) What type of service did you use?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settlement supports including needs and assets assessment and referrals; information and orientation; other supports such as interpretation and childcare</li> <li>• Language assessment and language training services (LINC)</li> <li>• Employment services</li> <li>• SWIS – services by settlement workers in schools</li> <li>• Canada Connects – matching newcomers with longer-term Canadian residents to help them learn about and integrate into their local community</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RAP Program - Resettlement Assistance Program for refugees</li> <li>• Another type of service – please describe</li> </ul>
<p>For each agency mentioned above (or if they don't provide names of agencies, ask about each type of agency they mention):</p> <p>What was your experience like in using services from this agency (this type of agency)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did you use services from this agency in person, online, or both?</li> <li>• Did you feel welcome at this agency? – why or why not?</li> <li>• Would you say this agency was helpful? – why or why not?</li> <li>• Did you ever feel that this agency treats some immigrants better than others? If so, why? – please describe</li> <li>• Was your experience with this agency pleasant?</li> <li>• <b>If not:</b> what made it unpleasant?</li> <li>• <b>If yes:</b> what made it pleasant?</li> </ul>
<p>What helped you the most in using settlement services from this agency?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were the staff helpful? – please describe</li> <li>• Were the supports and organization of services helpful – e.g., childcare, time of day in which services were offered? – please describe</li> <li>• Was there anything else that you found particularly helpful in using settlement services from this agency?</li> </ul>
<p>What barriers or challenges did you experience in using services at this agency?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Were these barriers or challenges at reception? – please describe</li> <li>• Were these barriers or challenges in classes or group sessions? – please describe</li> <li>• Were these barriers or challenges in one-on-one sessions? – please describe</li> </ul>
<p>When you were using the services you have mentioned from this agency, do you think you were ever treated unfairly</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please explain further</li> <li>- How often did this occur?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

or excluded in some way because of who you are?

- Please describe how you were treated unfairly or excluded
- Who treated you unfairly or excluded you (e.g., service provider(s), other immigrant client(s), system, other – explain)?
- Why do you think you were treated unfairly or excluded? – e.g., your ethnicity or race, religion, language ability, country you come from, sex or sexual orientation, age, type of immigrant you are, something else – please explain
- What effect did this unfair treatment or exclusion have on you?
- What did you do in response to this treatment? E.g., did you report this to anyone and if so, who did you report it to and what was the result? Did you stop using services from this agency?
- Did anything make the problem worse? – please describe
- Did anything make you feel better about this situation or help you to overcome it? – please describe.
- Did this experience affect your ability to make good use of this agency?
- Did this experience affect how effective you think the services you used from this agency were?
- Did this experience affect how well settled you feel in [region] and in Canada?

- If they say no:
  - What did the agency or service providers do to make everyone feel that that they were being treated fairly and included?



Witnessing Others' Treatment - Now I'd like to ask about any times when you may have seen someone else being treated unfairly or excluded when using settlement services.

For each agency (or type of agency mentioned above)

When you were using services from this agency (or type of agency), did you ever see someone else being treated unfairly or excluded because of who they are?

- If they say yes:
  - Please describe how they were treated unfairly or excluded
  - Did you see this type of treatment of others more than once? If so, how frequently did you see it?
  - Who treated the person unfairly or excluded them (e.g., service provider(s), other immigrant client(s), system, other – explain)?
  - Why do you think they were treated unfairly or excluded? – e.g., their ethnicity, race, language ability, sex, type of immigrant they are, something else – please explain
  - How did the person react to this unfair treatment or exclusion?
  - What did they do in response to this treatment?
  - Did anyone try to help the situation or make it better? If so, who did this and what did they do? What was the result?
  - What effect did witnessing this unfair treatment or exclusion have on you?
  - Did it affect your feelings about the agency or how you felt about using services there?
  - Did it make you not want to use that agency anymore?
  - Did it affect you in other ways?

Suggested strategies for making everyone feel welcome – In this final set of questions, I am going to ask you about strategies you think agencies can use to make everyone feel welcome.

<p>What strategies do you think agencies can use to make sure everyone feels welcome?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you suggest ways that agencies can make sure that everyone feels included?</li> <li>• Can you suggest ways that agencies can make sure that everyone feels they are being treated fairly?</li> <li>• If some people do feel that they are being treated unfairly or are being excluded, what can an agency do to fix that?</li> </ul>
<p>Before we finish up, is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences using settlement services or how we can improve everyone's experiences with settlement services?</p>	

## Key Informant Interview Guide

Themes and Interview Questions	Probes
Warm Up – Let me start with some general questions	
<p>Can you start by telling me a bit about you and your background?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long have you worked in the settlement sector in Canada?</li> <li>• How long have you worked in the settlement sector in [region]?</li> <li>• Where do you currently work and how long have you worked there?</li> <li>• What is your current position?</li> <li>• Are you yourself an immigrant to Canada?</li> <li>• <b>If yes:</b> How long have you lived here and what is your background?</li> <li>• What is your gender, age, and ethnicity?</li> </ul>

Newcomers' Experiences with Settlement Services in [Region] – Now I am going to ask you about your overall view of immigrants' experiences using settlement services in [region].

<p>Overall, what do you think immigrants' experiences are like in accessing and using settlement services or programs in [region]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How long does it generally take immigrants to access settlement services once they get to [region]?</li> <li>• Why do you think this is the case?</li> <li>• Do you think immigrants get the services they need in [region] to successfully settle here?</li> <li>• Why or why not?</li> <li>• Are immigrants' experiences with settlement services pleasant or unpleasant?</li> <li>• Why do you think this is the case?</li> </ul>
<p>What barriers do you think immigrants face in accessing and using settlement services in [region]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please describe these barriers</li> <li>• Why do these barriers exist and who is responsible for these barriers?</li> <li>• What do you think can be done about these barriers and who would be responsible for doing so?</li> </ul>
<p>What specific factors facilitate immigrants access to and use of settlement services in [region]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What could be done to improve these factors?</li> <li>• Who would be responsible for doing so?</li> </ul>
<p>Do you think some immigrants experience unfair treatment or exclusion in accessing and/or using settlement services in [region]?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If yes:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please describe this unfair treatment or exclusion</li> <li>- Why does this unfair treatment or exclusion happen and who is responsible for it?</li> <li>- What do you think can be done about this unfair treatment or exclusion and who would be responsible for doing so?</li> <li>- If some people do feel that they are being treated unfairly or are being</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p>excluded, what can agencies do to fix that?</p>
<p>Newcomer's Experiences with Using Settlement Services from Your Agency - Now I'd like to ask about newcomers' experiences with using settlement services specifically with your agency</p>	
<p>What do you think immigrants' experiences are like in accessing and using settlement services and programs from your agency?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are their experiences pleasant or unpleasant?</li> <li>• Why do you think this is the case?</li> <li>• What barriers do you think immigrants face in accessing and using settlement services in your agency?</li> <li>• How do you think these barriers affect their settlement and integration?</li> <li>• Do you think all immigrants who use services in your agency feel welcome in the agency? – why or why not?</li> <li>• Do you think some immigrants are treated better than others by your agency? – if so, why is this the case?</li> <li>• Does your agency conduct client satisfaction surveys? – if so, what have the results been and do you agree with the results?</li> </ul>
<p>Within your agency, did you ever see an individual or a group of people being treated unfairly or excluded because of who they are? Did you ever experience this yourself?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If they say yes to either question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Please describe how they were treated unfairly or excluded</li> <li>- Did you see this type of treatment more than once? If so, how frequently did you see it?</li> <li>- Who was treated unfairly or excluded (immigrant client(s), other service provider(s), yourself, someone else – please specify)</li> <li>- Who treated the person/people unfairly or excluded them (e.g., service provider(s), other immigrant client(s), system, other – explain)?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Why do you think they were treated unfairly or excluded? – e.g., their ethnicity, race, age, language ability, sex, type of immigrant they are, something else – please explain
- What did the person/people who was treated unfairly or excluded do in response to this treatment?
- Did anyone try to help the situation or make it better? If so, who did this and what did they do? What was the result?
- What does your agency do about reports of unfair treatment or exclusion?
- Is there a formal system in place for addressing unfair treatment or exclusion? – please describe
- What does your agency do to make sure different groups of newcomer clients are treated fairly and included?
- What does your agency do to make sure staff are treated fairly and included?

- If they say no:

- What does your agency do to make sure different groups of newcomer clients are treated fairly and included?
- What does your agency do to make sure staff are treated fairly and included?
- If some people do feel that they are being treated unfairly or are being excluded, what can an agency do to fix that?
- What does your agency do about reports of unfair treatment or exclusion?
- Is there a formal system in place for addressing unfair treatment or exclusion? – please describe

Suggested strategies for making everyone feel welcome – In this final set of questions, I am going to ask you about what your agency does to promote the cultural competency of staff

What does your agency do to promote the cultural competency of its staff?

Does your agency have cultural competency training for its staff?

- If yes:
  - Please describe this training
  - When does this training occur?
  - How frequently does this training occur for each staff member?
  - How effective do you think this training is? – why is this the case?
  - Do you think it could be improved and if so, how?
  - Do you think other training should be provided? – please describe what type of training, how frequently, and when
- If no:
  - What type of cultural competency training do you think would be useful within your agency?
  - How often and when should it occur?

Does your agency have policies in place to make sure that staff treat all clients and each other in a culturally sensitive way?

- If yes:
  - Please describe these policies
  - How effective do you think these policies are? – why is this the case?
  - Do you think these policies could be improved and if so, how?
- If no:
  - What types of policies do you think your agency should have in place to make sure that staff treat all clients and each other in a culturally sensitive way?

Before we finish up, is there anything else you would like to tell me about how we can improve the provision of settlement services by your agency?

## Appendix B – Characteristics of Newcomers

Table B.1. Characteristics of the newcomer respondents, both overall and divided by racialized vs. non-racialized.

	Racialized <sup>a</sup> (Total = 81)		Non-Racialized <sup>b</sup> (Total = 13)		Overall (Total = 94)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Racialized <sup>a</sup>					81	86.2
Non-Racialized <sup>b</sup>					13	13.8
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>c</sup></b>						
Arab	34	42.0			34	36.2
Black	7	8.6			7	7.4
Chinese	2	2.5			2	2.1
Latin American	14	17.3			14	14.9
South Asian	10	12.3			10	10.6
Southeast Asian	1	1.2			1	1.1
West Asian	12	14.8			12	12.8
Other: Ethiopian	1	1.2			1	1.1
White			11	84.6	11	11.7
Other: Ukrainian			2	15.4	2	2.1
<b>Gender<sup>d</sup></b>						
Men	35	43.2	2	15.4	37	39.4
Women	46	56.8	11	84.6	57	60.6
<b>Age</b>						
18-35	37	45.7	5	38.5	42	44.7
36-64	43	53.1	8	61.5	51	54.3
65+	1	1.2			1	1.1



	Racialized <sup>a</sup> (Total = 81)		Non-Racialized <sup>b</sup> (Total = 13)		Overall (Total = 94)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Program of Entry to Canada<sup>e</sup></b>						
3-Year Visitor Visa through the CUAET	2	2.5	11	84.6	13	13.8
Economic Class	9	11.1	1	7.7	10	10.6
Family Class	15	18.5			15	16.0
Refugee Claimant or Asylum Seeker	13	16.0			13	13.8
Resettled Refugee	36	44.4			36	38.3
Student Visa	4	4.9			4	4.3
Temporary Foreign Worker	1	1.2			1	1.1
Other: Permanent Resident Services			1	7.7	1	1.1
Other: Private Agency Sponsored by Friend	1	1.2			1	1.1
<b>Language of Interview<sup>f</sup></b>						
Arabic	22	27.2			22	23.4
Dari	1	1.2			1	1.1
English	50	61.7	9	69.2	59	62.8
Pashto	1	1.2			1	1.1
Russian			1	7.7	1	1.1
Spanish	6	7.4			6	6.4
Ukrainian			3	23.1	3	3.2
Vietnamese	1	1.2			1	1.1
<b>Primary Language Spoken at Home<sup>g, h</sup></b>						
English	17	21.0	5	38.5	22	23.4
French	1	1.2			1	1.1
Other Languages	71	87.7	12	92.3	83	88.3

	Racialized <sup>a</sup> (Total = 81)		Non-Racialized <sup>b</sup> (Total = 13)		Overall (Total = 94)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Religion</b>						
Christian	23	28.4	9	69.2	32	34.0
Hindu	3	3.7			3	3.2
Muslim	43	53.1	3	23.1	46	48.9
Traditional/Spiritual	3	3.7			3	3.2
No Religion (Atheist or Agnostic)	7	8.6	1	7.7	8	8.5
Other: Humanity	1	1.2			1	1.1
Other: Yazidi	1	1.2			1	1.1
<b>Employment Status<sup>h</sup></b>						
Employed Full-Time (≥ 30 hours/week)	18	22.2	5	38.5	23	24.5
Employed Part-Time (< 30 hours/week)	16	19.8			16	17.0
Homemaker	1	1.2			1	1.1
Self-Employed or Business Owner	2	2.5			2	2.1
Student	15	18.5	1	7.7	16	17.0
Unemployed, Looking for Work	24	29.6	6	46.2	30	31.9
Unemployed, Not Looking for Work	14	17.3	1	7.7	15	16.0
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>						
Did not complete elementary school	1	1.2			1	1.1
Elementary School	14	17.3			14	14.9
Secondary School	15	18.5	1	7.7	16	17.0
College/Vocational Training	6	7.4	2	15.4	8	8.5
University Undergraduate Degree	28	34.6	1	7.7	29	30.9
University Graduate Degree	16	19.8	7	53.8	23	24.5
Professional Degree	1	1.2	2	15.4	3	3.2

	Racialized <sup>a</sup> (Total = 81)		Non-Racialized <sup>b</sup> (Total = 13)		Overall (Total = 94)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Approximate Household Income</b>						
No income	6	7.4	1	7.7	7	7.4
< \$45,000	51	63.0	7	53.8	58	61.7
\$45,001 - \$80,000	13	16.0	2	15.4	15	16.0
\$80,001 - \$130,000	5	6.2	3	23.1	8	8.5
> \$130,000	2	2.5			2	2.1
Prefer Not to Answer	4	4.9			4	4.3

Note: <sup>a</sup> Racialized newcomers include those who identified as Arab, Black, Chinese, Ethiopian, Latin American, Latin American and White, South Asian, South Asian and White, Southeast Asian, or West Asian. <sup>b</sup> Non-racialized newcomers include those who identified as Ukrainian or White. <sup>c</sup> The Latin American category includes two respondents who identified themselves as both Latin American and White and the South Asian category includes one respondent who identified themselves as both South Asian and White. <sup>d</sup> No respondents indicated that they were non-binary. <sup>e</sup> CUAET stands for Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel. <sup>f</sup> Some respondents interviewed in languages other than English occasionally responded in English. <sup>g</sup> Other Languages includes 25 languages other than English and French. <sup>h</sup> Respondents could select more than one response to this question, meaning that the within-group percentages may total more than 100%

## Appendix C – Characteristics of Newcomers Who Experienced Discrimination

Table C.1. Characteristics of Racialized vs. Non-Racialized Newcomers Who Experienced Discrimination While Using Settlement Services.

	Racialized <sup>a</sup>			Non-Racialized <sup>b</sup>		
	Total #	Experienced Discrimination		Total #	Experienced Discrimination	
		#	%		#	%
Overall	81	12	16.0	13	2	15.4
<b>Race/Ethnicity<sup>c</sup></b>						
Arab	34	4	11.8			
Black	7	1	14.3			
Chinese	2	1	50.0			
Latin American	14	3	21.4			
South Asian	10	1	10.0			
Southeast Asian	1	0	0.0			
West Asian	12	1	8.3			
Other: Ethiopian	1	1	100.0			
White				11	2	18.2
Other: Ukrainian				2	0	0.0
<b>Gender<sup>d</sup></b>						
Men	35	7	20.0	2	0	0.0
Women	46	5	10.9	11	2	18.2

	Racialized <sup>a</sup>			Non-Racialized <sup>b</sup>		
	Total #	Experienced Discrimination		Total #	Experienced Discrimination	
		#	%		#	%
<b>Age</b>						
18-35	37	4	10.8	5	1	20.0
36-64	43	8	18.6	8	1	12.5
65+	1	0	0.0			
<b>Program of Entry to Canada<sup>e</sup></b>						
3-Year Visitor Visa through the CUAET	2	0	0.0	11	1	9.1
Economic Class	9	2	22.2	1	1	100.0
Family Class	15	1	6.7			
Refugee Claimant or Asylum Seeker	13	5	38.5			
Resettled Refugee	36	3	8.3			
Student Visa	4	0	0.0			
Temporary Foreign Worker	1	1	100.0			
Other: Permanent Resident Services				1	0	0.0
Other: Private Agency Sponsored by Friend	1	0	0.0			

Note: <sup>a</sup> Racialized newcomers include those who identified as Arab, Black, Chinese, Ethiopian, Latin American, Latin American and White, South Asian, South Asian and White, Southeast Asian, or West Asian. <sup>b</sup> Non-racialized newcomers include those who identified as Ukrainian or White. <sup>c</sup> The Latin American category includes two respondents who identified themselves as both Latin American and White and the South Asian category includes one respondent who identified themselves as both South Asian and White. <sup>d</sup> No respondents indicated that they were non-binary. <sup>e</sup> CUAET stands for Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel

# Appendix D – Third-Party Evaluation Report

## **Independent Evaluation of Research Report:**

Discrimination and Other Challenges Experienced by Racialized Newcomers When  
Accessing Settlement Services in Southwestern Ontario

Azhda Mehrpoor

Researcher and Evaluator

## **Executive Summary**

The objective of this report is to evaluate the project titled "Discrimination and Other Challenges Experienced by Racialized Newcomers When Accessing Settlement Services in Southwestern Ontario" and provide possible recommendations.

The project focuses and examines the experiences of racialized newcomers and their experiences interacting with and accessing services from settlement agencies located in small and mid-sized communities in southwestern Ontario, specifically the challenges related to racism and discrimination. By focusing on smaller communities, the project offers a unique perspective that can often be overlooked in research, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of the project's findings. Another key feature of this project was interviewing both newcomers and service providers; this provides diverse and well-rounded data collection. To further ensure unbiased data collection, interviews focused on the general experience of newcomers rather than asking specific instances. With a sample size of 94 newcomers who were recruited and interviewed, the reliability and validity of findings are increased. The project also added a lens of intersectionality by implementing the intersectional Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) approach to analyze and interpret results.

Based on the findings of this evaluation a few suggestions are made in view of possible project extensions, such as increasing the characteristics of newcomers being interviewed, diversifying the types of service providers, expanding the geographic scope of the study, and incorporating focus group sessions.

Overall, the project effectively realizes its objectives and brings forward valuable insights and comprehensive policy recommendations through its multifaceted research approach.

## **Evaluation of Literature Review**

The project effectively utilizes a range of sources that are both informational and relevant to the topic of discrimination and challenges experienced by racialized newcomers when accessing settlement services. By integrating these sources, the project not only grounds its introduction in established knowledge but also introduces the current climate of research, providing a comprehensive background for the study. This literature review is particularly useful in introducing the topic and summarizing

what is currently known about the experiences of racialized newcomers and settlement agencies in Canada. It highlights the critical issues faced by these newcomers, such as systemic discrimination, lack of awareness of available services, and unique challenges experienced by racialized newcomers.

The review covers various aspects, including the level of awareness of services available to newcomers, the importance of immigration regionalization, and how settlement agencies can facilitate and foster the integration and retention of newcomers in smaller communities. It draws from a wide array of sources, including peer-reviewed journals, government reports, and reputable publications, ensuring a robust and credible foundation for the project. The selected sources delve into well-recognized research that is essential for understanding the context of the project, ensuring a well-rounded and reflective overview of both past findings and current trends.

Moreover, the literature review effectively underscores the gaps and barriers that exist in the current research landscape. It identifies significant issues, such as the lack of studies on the effectiveness of settlement services in small and medium-sized communities and rural areas and the need for more comprehensive data on the specific needs of racialized newcomers. The review also points out the critical gap in support for newcomers with accessibility needs, who often face unique barriers in accessing services. Additionally, it highlights the challenges faced by women and members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, who may experience compounded discrimination and inadequate support. By providing a thorough introduction to the current state of research and pinpointing these critical gaps, the review sets the stage for the project. This connection between the cited literature and the research framework not only highlights the relevance and significance of the study but also demonstrates how it builds on and extends existing knowledge, paving the way for future research and policy development.

In conclusion, the literature used is successful in framing the research topic and grounding it in a solid foundation. It serves as a critical tool for understanding the multifaceted challenges faced by racialized newcomers and the role of settlement agencies in addressing these issues. By synthesizing existing research and identifying areas needing further investigation, the literature used for introducing the research topic provides a comprehensive overview that is both informative and essential for the reader.



## **Evaluation of Methodology**

The project employs a careful and rigorous methodology, ensuring the robustness and reliability of its findings. The study involved partnering with eight Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) in the area to get their input into the questions to be asked, recruitment strategies, and the interpretation of findings, particularly the recommendations. This collaboration helped tailor the research to the specific needs and contexts of the communities involved.

The methodology included interviewing both newcomers and service providers. To address potential bias and reactance when discussing discrimination, the researchers used a proxy technique to gain information, priming respondents to think and describe their experiences rather than directly probing for sensitive information. This approach is crucial for gathering unbiased and genuine insights.

A diverse group of nine graduate students conducted the interviews, ensuring a range of perspectives and reducing the likelihood of bias. These students were diverse in terms of race/ethnicity, national origin, and disciplinary areas of study. All nine interviewers were trained using a comprehensive manual and training sessions to ensure consistency, interview integrity, and to prevent any bias or inaccurate response collection. Training sessions for interviewers covered key aspects such as maintaining confidentiality, note-taking, and using the required technology. The data-collection tools included specific interview guides applied in a semi-structured fashion. These guides were developed in consultation with the Project Advisory Committee and reviewed and approved by Western University's Non-Medical Research Ethics Board.

The recruitment process for newcomer respondents included pre-screening surveys to determine eligibility, followed by personal interviews for those who qualified. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, lasting 1.5 to 2 hours, and were performed in a culturally sensitive manner. The sample included a relatively large number of newcomers, with 94 participants interviewed, providing ample data for thorough analysis. Demographic details showed a majority of women (57), with ages ranging from 21 to 68 years old, and having different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Respondents had an equal and equitable chance to participate, with efforts made to remove barriers, such as conducting interviews in multiple languages. Interviews were conducted in the language of choice for the newcomers, with 35 of the 94 interviews conducted in a language other than English or French.

This inclusivity gave voice to diverse newcomers, including those not often represented in such research. The careful interpretation of findings used quotes to give voice to both newcomer participants and key informants, ensuring their experiences were authentically represented.

The analysis used an intersectional and Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) approach, with data analyzed in ATLAS.ti Web through thematic analysis. This process helped identify common patterns and themes, providing a nuanced understanding of the respondents' experiences.

Key informants, who were 18 years of age or older and had worked in the settlement sector for at least one year, were interviewed. These interviews, lasting approximately 1 to 1.5 hours, explored their perceptions of newcomers' experiences, their own experiences at their organizations, and ways to promote cultural competency and sensitivity. Of the 15 key informants interviewed, the majority (13) identified as women, with ages ranging between 30 and 62 years old. Twelve were immigrants to Canada, and nine were racialized individuals.

All data were collected from October 2023 to March 2024, ensuring a comprehensive and up-to-date dataset for the study.

### **Evaluation of Results**

The project meticulously presents the results, offering a nuanced exploration of convergent and divergent themes among racialized participants. While certain experiences were shared across the board, such as discrimination based on race, sexual orientation, or religion, the project also illuminates the unique challenges faced by individuals within these communities. Notably, both racialized and non-racialized newcomers reported instances of discrimination, underscoring the pervasive nature of such biases and the need for inclusive support systems.

Among the newcomer respondents, a myriad of insights emerged regarding their interactions with immigrant-serving agencies and mainstream organizations. Beyond personal experiences, many respondents recounted witnessing or hearing about discrimination faced by others when accessing settlement services. This observation sheds light on the ripple effects of discrimination within communities. Moreover, newcomers encountered various hurdles in accessing services, ranging from language barriers to unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviors from settlement workers. Suggestions

for enhancing the welcoming environment of settlement agencies were also proffered, emphasizing the importance of fostering inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.

The perspectives of key informants further enriched the findings, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of service delivery and the challenges confronting newcomers. While perceptions of discrimination varied among informants, there was unanimity regarding certain barriers, such as language constraints and limited transportation options. Additionally, informants highlighted the impact of immigration status on service accessibility and emphasized the need for greater awareness and accurate information about available services.

The project's analysis delved into the nuanced experiences of racialized newcomers, including the lasting repercussions of discrimination and the prevalence of such incidents within mainstream organizations and immigrant-serving agencies alike. Beyond discrimination, the project addressed a spectrum of challenges, from inadequate service delivery to a lack of essential resources. The inclusion of direct quotes from participants added depth and authenticity to the narrative, providing a compelling glimpse into the realities faced by newcomers.

Furthermore, the project contextualized these findings within broader demographic variables, such as religion, race, and English proficiency, offering a multifaceted understanding of settlement experiences. The insights gleaned from the report are not only informative but also actionable, paving the way for targeted interventions aimed at enhancing the accessibility and inclusivity of settlement services.

In conclusion, the comprehensive presentation of results in the project underlines the multifaceted nature of newcomer experiences and lays the groundwork for informed policy decisions and community interventions. Through its meticulous analysis and inclusive approach, the project offers a roadmap for fostering greater equity and inclusivity within settlement services.

### **Evaluation of Suggestions Provided by Newcomers and Key Informants to Make Settlement Services More Welcoming to All**

The suggestions section of the project demonstrates a strong alignment between the recommendations of newcomers and key informants, enhancing the robustness of the findings. Both groups emphasized the importance of increasing inclusivity within settlement services, with newcomers echoing key informants' suggestions for enhanced

training. This alignment not only consolidates the findings but also accentuates the validity and relevance of the recommendations.

Key informants also highlighted the need to increase awareness among service providers, a recommendation that resonates with the suggestions of newcomers. This consistency in recommendations from both groups further strengthens the credibility of the findings. By aligning the suggestions of newcomers with those of key informants, the project not only provides a comprehensive set of recommendations but also ensures that these recommendations are grounded in the experiences and insights of both groups.

Overall, the suggestions section effectively captures the key themes and recommendations identified by both newcomers and key informants. The alignment between the two groups' suggestions highlights the importance of increasing inclusivity and awareness within settlement services. This alignment consolidates the findings and ensures that the recommendations are relevant and actionable, providing a solid foundation for future policy development and practice improvement.

### **Evaluation of Recommendations**

The project's recommendation section demonstrates a wide variety of actionable suggestions that reflect both the findings of the study and the deep knowledge of the research team and Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) regarding immigration, settlement, and community dynamics. The recommendations are specific, providing clear direction on what actions should be taken. They are also measurable, allowing for progress to be tracked and evaluated effectively. Furthermore, the recommendations are achievable, taking into account the resources and constraints of the organizations involved. Additionally, the recommendations are results-oriented, focusing on the outcomes and impact of the suggested actions.

They address the challenges and barriers identified in the study comprehensively. The project's conclusion sets a clear path for action, ensuring that the findings of the study translate into tangible improvements in the lives of newcomers and the effectiveness of settlement services.

This approach not only enhances the credibility and usefulness of the project but also highlights the commitment of the research team and LIPs to making meaningful change based on the study's findings. The recommendations serve as a roadmap for future initiatives and policy decisions, laying the foundation for a more inclusive and

supportive environment for newcomers in the communities studied and possibly other similar communities.

### **Possible Suggestions for Future Project Extensions**

The study's newcomer demographic distribution was limited but ultimately may accurately reflect the newcomers in the regions targeted and may benefit from future research efforts to broaden the characteristics studied. By broadening the characteristics of newcomers recruited, it could provide a more comprehensive understanding, especially regarding Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus). Similarly, the study's limited representation of service providers from immigrant-serving agencies raises questions about the perspectives captured. Future research should aim for a better balance between service providers from mainstream organizations and those from immigrant-serving agencies to gain a more holistic view.

Exploring why service providers did not project instances of discrimination is another avenue for future research. This discrepancy raises questions about their perceptions or willingness to report such incidents. Delving deeper into this issue could provide valuable insights into whether this reflects a lack of awareness or a reluctance to acknowledge discriminatory practices.

Expanding the geographic scope of the study beyond small and medium-sized communities in Southwestern Ontario to include similar-sized communities across the country would provide a broader perspective. This expansion could help determine the generalizability of the findings and identify regional variations in experiences and challenges. Additionally, incorporating focus groups in future research could provide additional depth and context to the narratives gathered.

Incorporating focus groups could help consolidate and validate the findings of the study. By gathering input from multiple sources, researchers can strengthen the reliability and credibility of their conclusions. Focus groups can help further explore themes and perspectives, deepening the overall understanding of the experiences and issues of newcomers and service providers.

In conclusion, the project successfully met its key objectives, although a few limitations warrant further research. Specifically, expanding the study to include more similarly sized communities could enhance its robustness. Despite these limitations, the current data collection methods — particularly those designed to gather experiences while minimizing biases, large sample size, and gathering of diverse perspectives — solidify

the findings. Overall, this evaluation highlights the project's potential for significantly improving newcomer experiences by addressing crucial interaction points, raising awareness, implementing anti-discrimination policies, fostering inclusivity, and providing comprehensive services to all newcomers regardless of their immigration status.