

Pathways to Prosperity
Virtual Workshop Series

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

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PROJECT PARTNERS



**Western
SocialScience**

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**PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY**
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada

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SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Settlement services provide newcomers with crucial support during the integration process.

However, some newcomers face barriers when attempting to access and use settlement services:

- Lack of knowledge
- Finite resources
- Ineligibility
- Discrimination

DISCRIMINATION

“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., 2023, p. 95)

Discrimination can be:

- Subtle
- Overt
- Interpersonal
- Systemic

OUR GOAL

To better understand the challenges – particularly discrimination – experienced by **racialized newcomers** when accessing settlement services **in small and mid-sized communities in Southwestern Ontario**

WHY RACIALIZED NEWCOMERS?

In 2021:

- Almost 70% of the immigrant population in Canada was racialized
- 83% of the recent immigrant population was racialized (Statistics Canada, 2022)

Racialized newcomers are more likely to experience certain challenges than other newcomers.

WHY SMALL AND MID-SIZED COMMUNITIES

Much of the research on discrimination experienced by immigrants focuses on large urban centres or national samples

Racism and discrimination may be particularly evident in smaller communities due to:

- Limited exposure to diversity
- Feelings of discomfort around people from other cultures
- Apprehension about demographic shifts (Vaswani et al., 2023)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

To develop **evidence-based recommendations** about how the **settlement sector** can support the needs of racialized newcomers in **small and mid-sized communities** in Southwestern Ontario

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1. What are the challenges that 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:**
 - Across people with different characteristics
 - Across organization types
 - From the experiences of non-racialized newcomers

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 3. What are settlement providers' perceptions of the challenges that newcomers face when accessing services at their organizations? Are they aware of any racism and discrimination that occurs?**
- 4. What are settlement providers in Southwestern Ontario currently doing to promote cultural competency and to make everyone feel welcome?**

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 5. What strategies can organizations use to improve the experiences of racialized newcomers when accessing settlement services to ensure that all clients are treated in a non-discriminatory way?**

RESEARCH METHODS

We interviewed both newcomers and settlement workers (i.e., key informants) in 8 regions of Southwestern Ontario:

- Chatham-Kent
- Guelph-Wellington
- Hamilton
- London-Middlesex
- Niagara
- Oxford County
- Sarnia-Lambton
- St. Thomas-Elgin

Interviews were conducted by 9 Social Science graduate students via Zoom and were audio- and video-recorded

INTERVIEW GUIDES

Newcomer Interview Guide

Themes and Interview Questions	Probes
Warm Up – Let me start with some general questions	
Can you start by telling me a bit about you and your background?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How long have you lived in Canada?• 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?• Is this the first place that you have lived in Canada or did you live somewhere else before coming to [place where they live]?• What is your favorite place in [place where they live]?• Where do you spend most of your time? – please be specific• How have you adapted to living in Canada so far?

Personal Experiences with Settlement Services – Now I am going to ask you about

Interview guides were created through consultation with the Project Advisory Committee

INTERVIEW GUIDES

Newcomer Interviews

- 1.5 – 2 hours

Asked about:

- Personal experiences with settlement services
- Observations of how others are treated at organizations
- Suggestions for ensuring that organizations are welcoming to all

Key Informant Interviews

- 1 – 1.5 hours

Asked about:

- Newcomers' experiences in their region/at their organization
- Personal experiences at their organization
- What their organization does/could do to ensure they are welcoming to all

AN INDIRECT APPROACH

Instead of asking about discrimination, we asked about:

- **Unfair treatment** and **exclusion** because of who they (or others) are
- Factors that **hindered** and/or **facilitated** access to and use of services

This indirect approach was used to:

- Minimize reactance from respondents
- Avoid biases due to different interpretations of the word “discrimination”
- Gain a more nuanced understanding the situation
- Make respondents feel comfortable

NEWCOMER RESPONDENTS

- 1. Recruited via posters, newspaper ads, newsletters, email listservs, social media accounts, word of mouth**
- 2. Recruitment material was available in 8 languages**
- 3. Eligibility was assessed via a pre-screening survey:**
 - 18+ years of age
 - Have used settlement services in 1 of the 8 regions within the past 3 years

Final sample: 94

NEWCOMER RESPONDENTS

Language of interview:

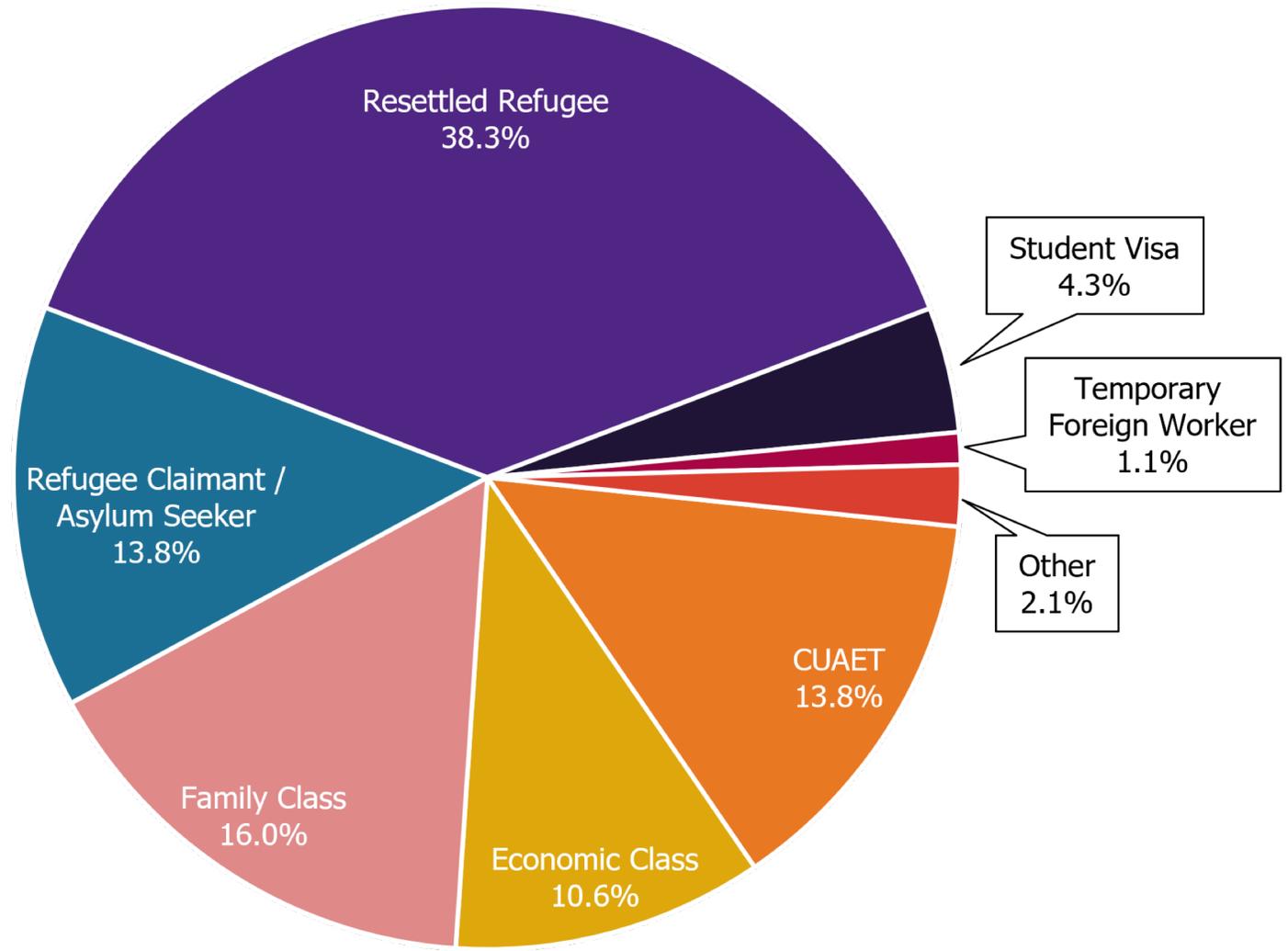
- English: 59
- French: 0
- Other: 35

Length of time in Canada:

- Range: 1 month – 14 years
- Average: 2 years

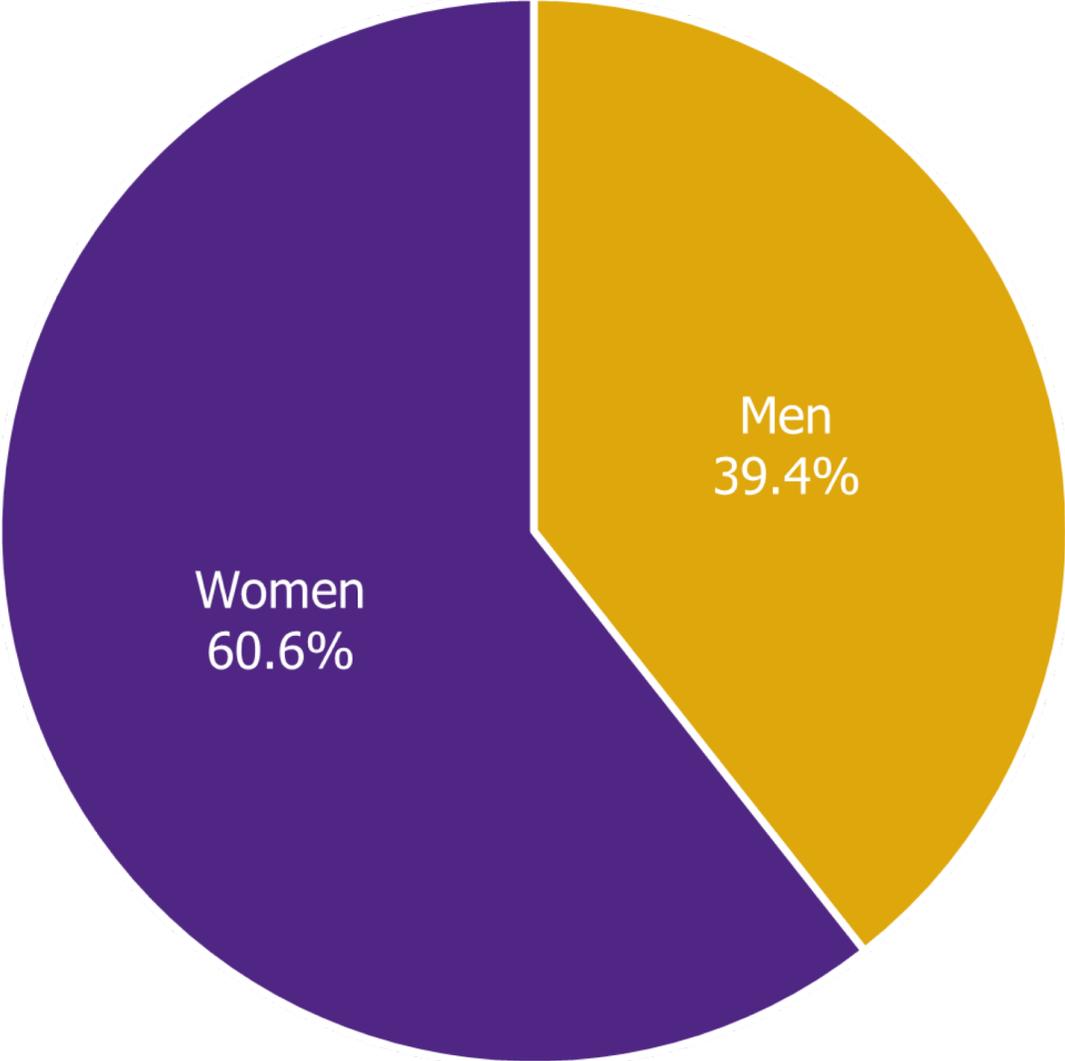
NEWCOMER RESPONDENTS

PROGRAM OF ENTRY



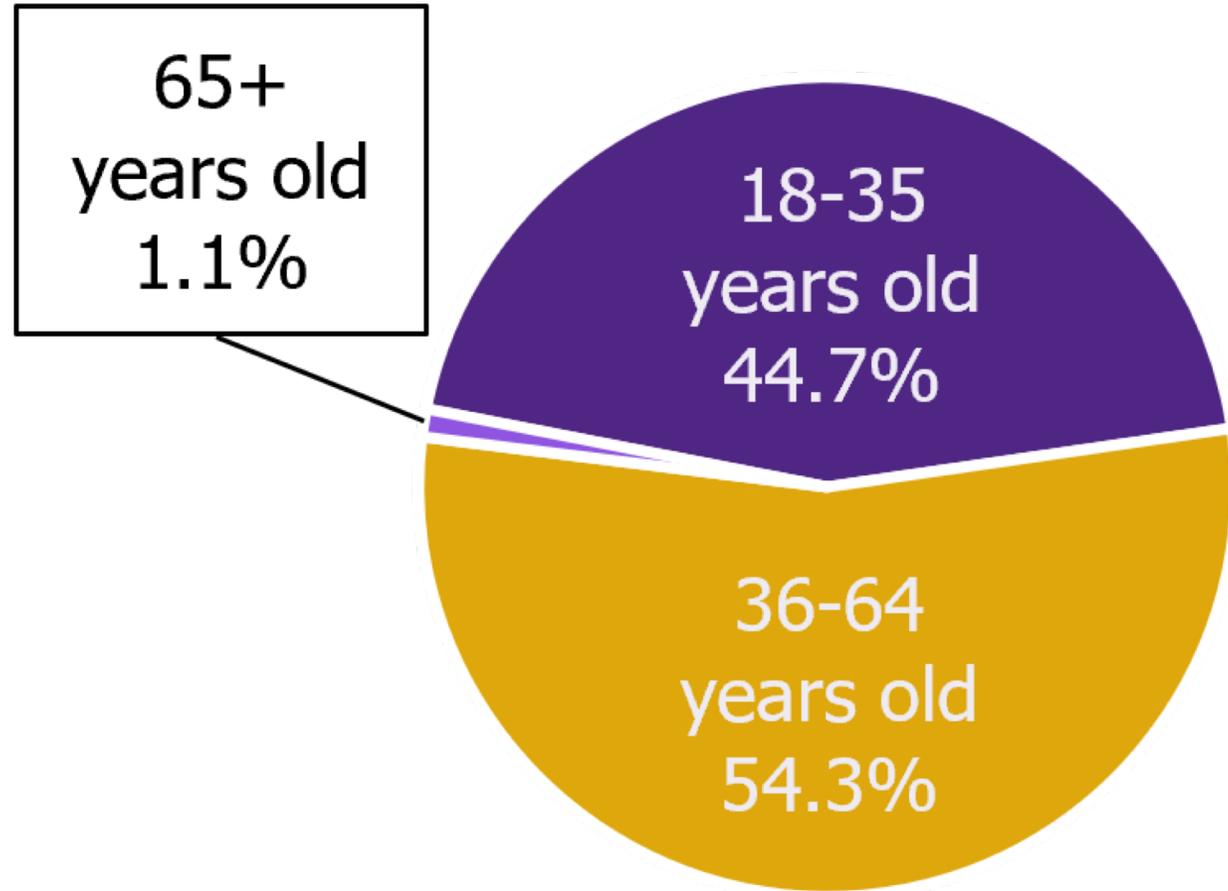
NEWCOMER RESPONDENTS

GENDER



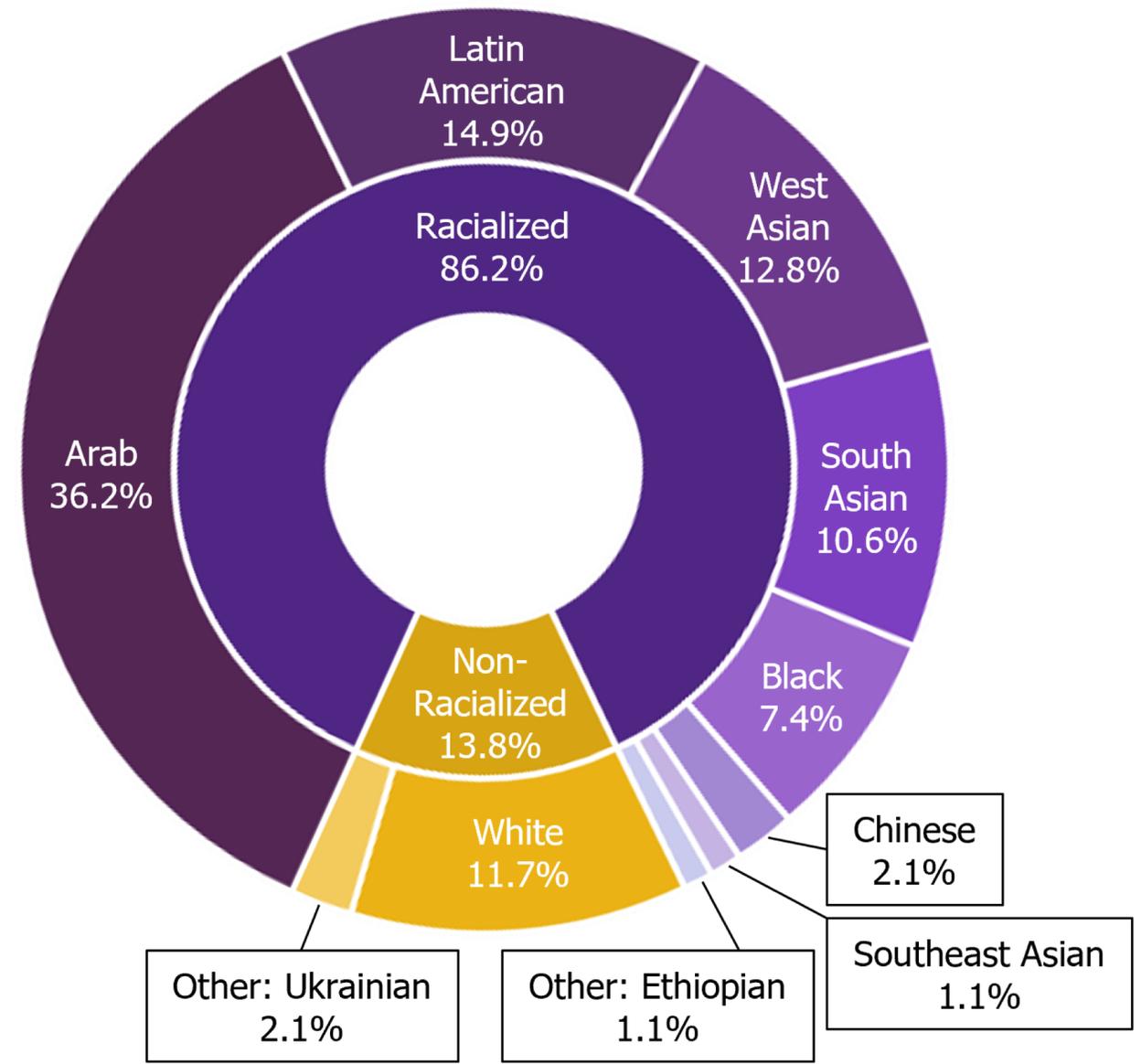
NEWCOMER RESPONDENTS

AGE



NEWCOMER RESPONDENTS

RACE/ ETHNICITY



KEY INFORMANTS

Contacted based on suggestions from the Project Advisory Committee and information found online

Eligibility:

- 18+ years of age
- Have been working in the settlement sector in 1 of the 8 regions for at least 1 year

Final sample: 15

KEY INFORMANTS

Length of time in the sector:

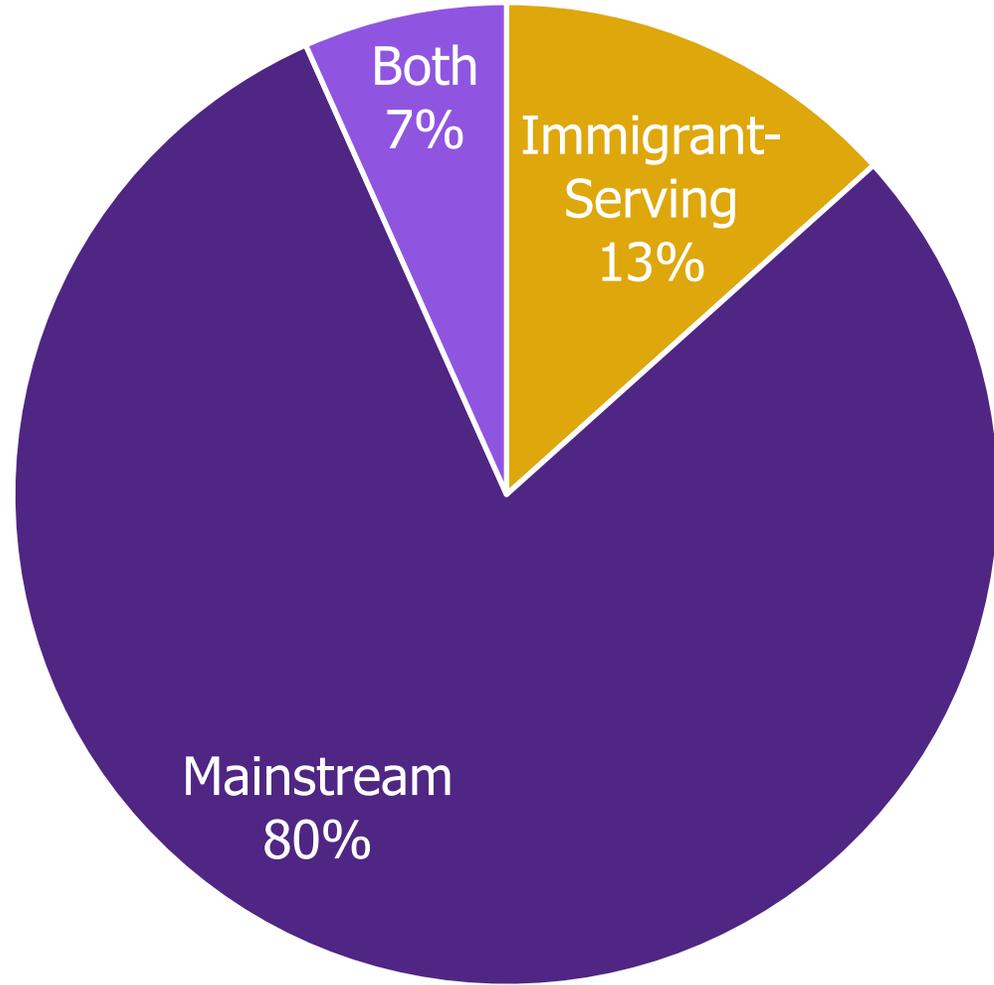
- Range: 1 – 25 years
- Average: 8 years

Ages:

- Range: 30 – 62 years old
- Average: 42.5 years

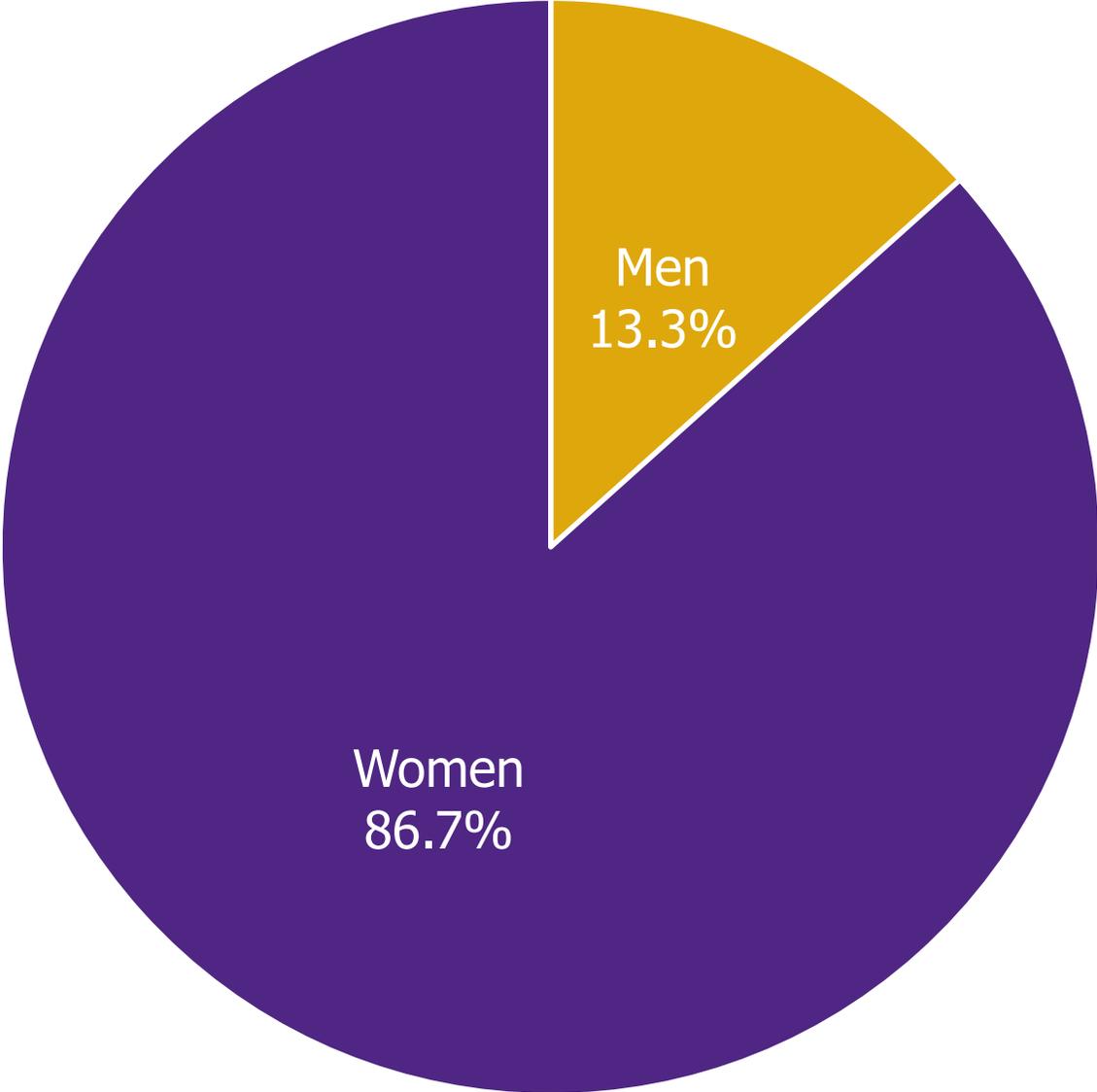
**KEY
INFORMANTS**

**ORGANIZATION
TYPE**



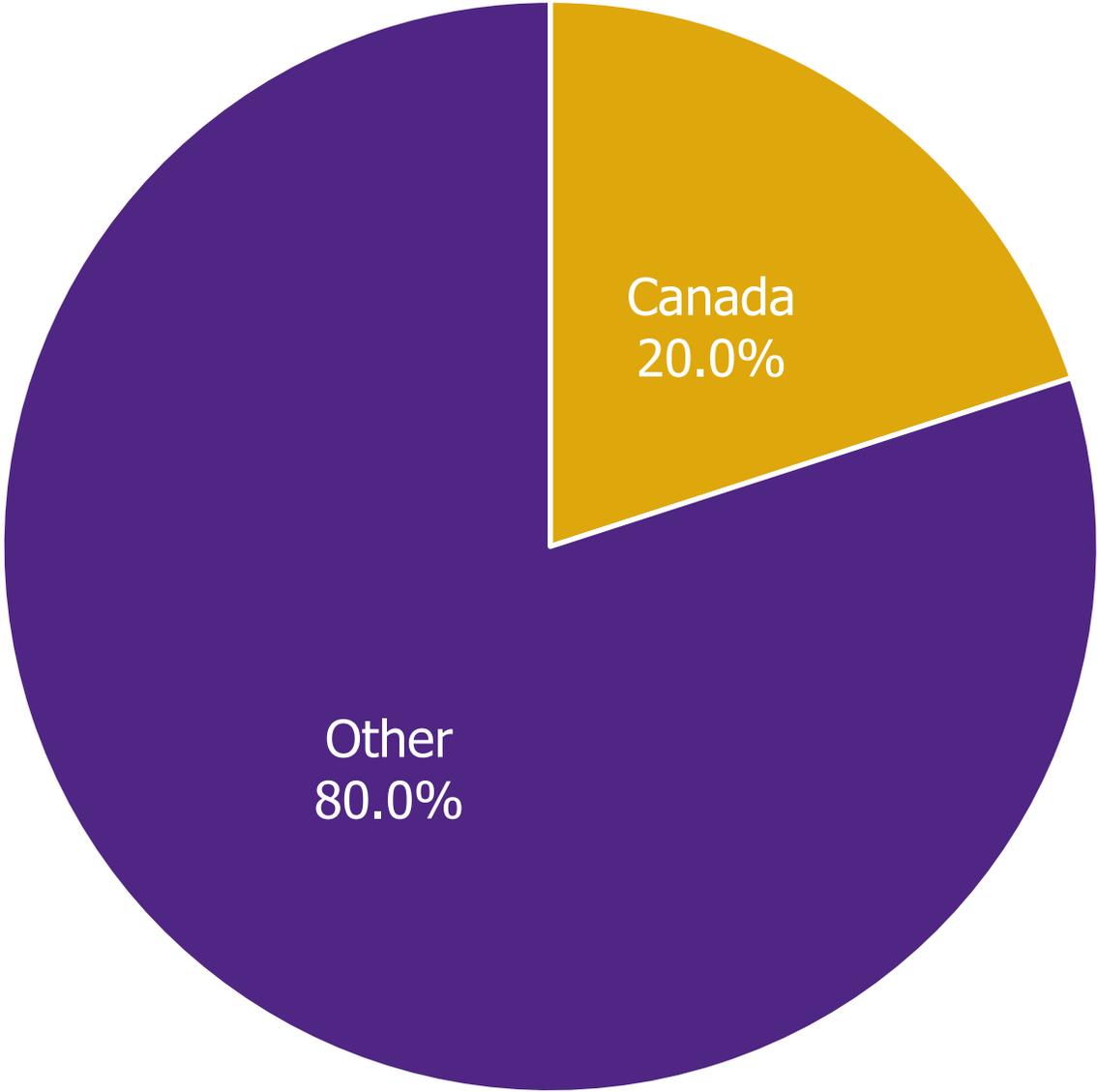
**KEY
INFORMANTS**

GENDER



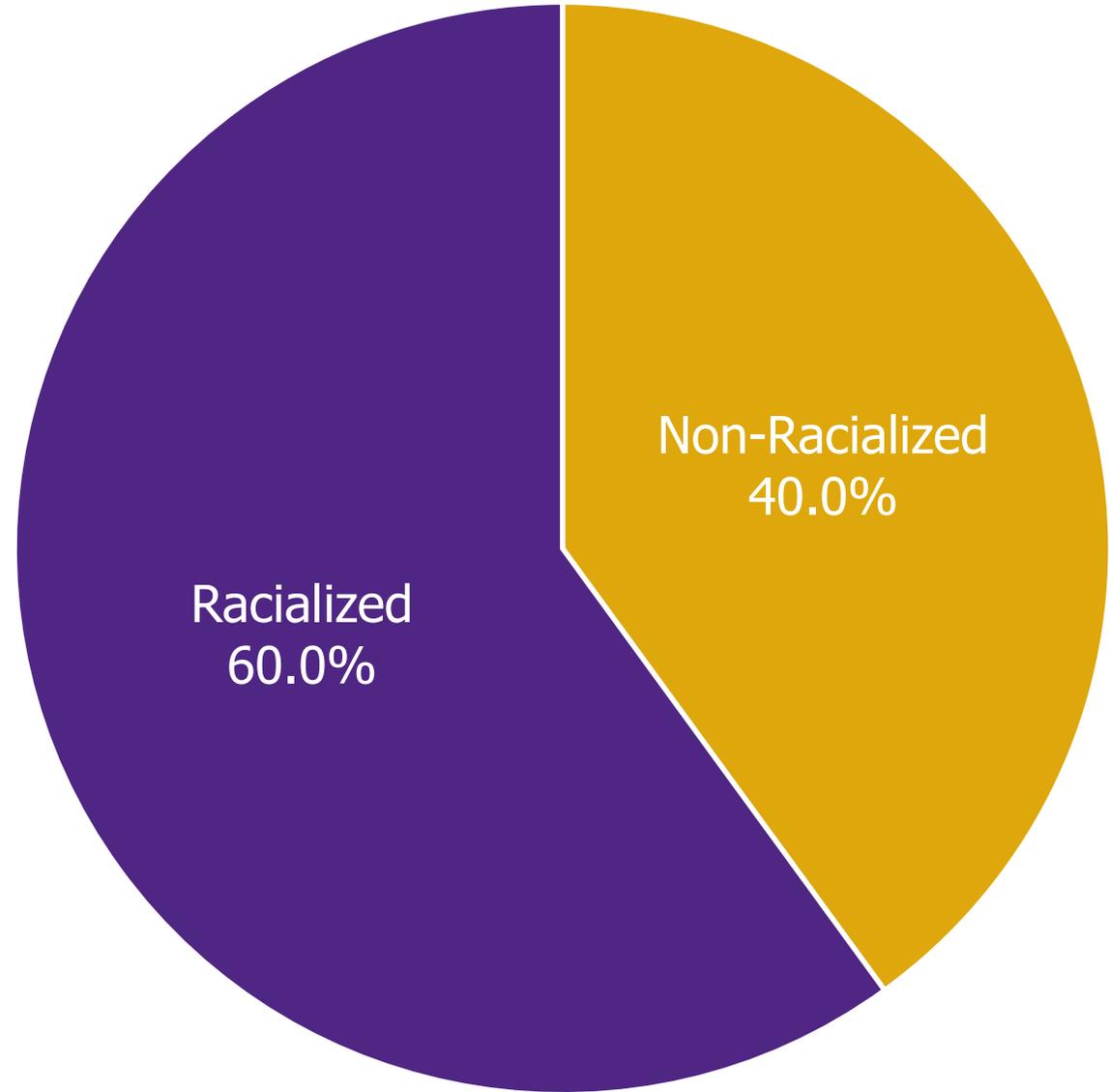
**KEY
INFORMANTS**

**COUNTRY OF
ORIGIN**



KEY INFORMANTS

RACE/ ETHNICITY



ANALYSES

Data was analyzed using **thematic analysis**:

- A technique used to code and organize data according to patterns of themes in the dataset

We used a **Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus)** approach to form a nuanced understanding of how respondents' experiences are shaped by the various intersecting dimensions of their identities

DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED BY RACIALIZED NEWCOMERS

Immigrant-serving Agencies

Among the **12 racialized newcomers** who reported discrimination, **five** experienced it within immigrant-serving agencies. The incidents involved overt racism, derogatory comments about immigration status, and discrimination based on sexual orientation.

QUOTE

“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)

QUOTE

“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)

DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED BY RACIALIZED NEWCOMERS

Mainstream Organizations

Seven racialized newcomers reported discrimination at mainstream organizations, often in the form of microaggressions and preferential treatment based on ethnicity or nationality, immigration class, and English proficiency. This resulted in exclusionary behaviour.

QUOTE

"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)

QUOTE

“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)

QUOTE

“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)

NON-RACIALIZED NEWCOMERS

Two non-racialized participants reported experiences of **discrimination**.

Discrimination was described as **preferential treatment** toward individuals of the same nationality or ethnic background as the agency worker.

Both incidents occurred in **mainstream organizations**, leading to feelings of **social exclusion**.

IMPACT OF DISCRIMINATION

Many of the newcomers who experienced discrimination (9 out of 14) shared how discrimination, particularly in mainstream agencies, had a profound impact on their engagement with settlement services.

"We have no other choices because the treatment we received wasn't fair, so it did affect our decision."

"I left the activities and chose not to come back."

"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."

DISCRIMINATION EXPERIENCED BY OTHERS

Racialized newcomers reported witnessing or hearing about various forms of discrimination, often influenced by intersecting factors:

- Ethnic/racial background
- Immigration class
- English proficiency
- Religion
- Disability
- Preferential treatment of certain newcomer groups

This discrimination was observed in both immigrant-serving and mainstream organizations.

QUOTE

“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)

QUOTE

"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)

KEY INFORMANTS' PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATION

Key informants, primarily settlement service providers, generally reported positive experiences for immigrants accessing services in Southwestern Ontario, stating that.

No Reported Discrimination

"No, never. Never. I don't think anybody feels excluded."

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

Positive Client Feedback

"Our clients – they always provide feedback... If this person brings another family to our centre, it's because they received a good service."

KEY INFORMANTS' PERCEPTION OF DISCRIMINATION

However, these positive reports conflict with the lived experiences of discrimination shared by racialized newcomers, highlighting a **disconnect** between the two perspectives and experiences.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY AND EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION (EDI) PRACTICES

Key informants highlighted several initiatives aimed at promoting cultural sensitivity and inclusivity

- Diversity in hiring practices
- Language accessibility
- Multicultural events and celebrations
- Regularly engage staff in sharing cultural knowledge and sharing best practices for supporting clients

QUOTE

“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.”

QUOTE

“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.”

EDI TRAINING AND POLICIES

EDI Training: Most key informants received training on EDI, cultural competency, and mental health, but the depth and format varied from formal workshops to informal discussions.

Anti-discrimination Policies: Many key informants acknowledged policies on cultural sensitivity and anti-discrimination, but there was uncertainty about the details of the policies.

"I think most of them would be based in anti-discrimination, but I don't know them specifically."

QUOTE

“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.”

QUOTE

“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].”

SUGGESTIONS FROM NEWCOMERS

Newcomers 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
3. Newcomer Support Networks

SUGGESTIONS FROM KEY INFORMANTS

The key informants also made suggestions on what can be done to make sure everyone feels welcome, which focused on four key areas:

1. Education, Knowledge, and Training
2. Funding and Resources
3. Addressing Accessibility and Systemic Barriers
4. Internal and External Communication and Reporting Discrimination

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

We offer evidence-based recommendations for reducing and addressing discrimination in Southwestern Ontario

1. Anti-Discrimination Policies and Practices
2. Equitable and Inclusive Practices in Settlement Service Provision
3. Enhanced Awareness of Settlement Services

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- **Develop**, implement, and publicize clear policies that explicitly prohibit discrimination based on any personal characteristics, and ensure that all employees and patrons are aware of the policy.
- **Conduct** regular paid mandatory employee training sessions on cultural competency, countering stereotypes and discrimination, and education about what constitutes discrimination. Ensure training is provided to staff in all departments in mainstream organizations.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- **Incorporate** consented testimonials from newcomers about the racism and discrimination they encountered while accessing settlement services in training sessions to provide real-life context and deepen staff's understanding of the discrimination and its impact.
- **Implement** only evidence-based programs and continuously gather and analyze data to verify the effectiveness of these programs, including conducting regular audits with external evaluators.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- **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.
- **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.

EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- **Foster** an inclusive organizational culture by promoting the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce that mirrors the community.
- **Monitor** and ensure that service providers are equally welcoming to individuals from other communities and from their own communities.
- **Adapt** service schedules and formats to accommodate diverse needs, including those of newcomers with disabilities and those with varying language proficiencies. This includes providing interpretation services and ensuring that materials are available in multiple languages.

ENHANCED AWARENESS OF SETTLEMENT SERVICES

- **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.

EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- **Distribute** information about available settlement services for newcomers through targeted outreach and informational campaigns, and community events and workshops.

THANK YOU



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LIP | Oxford Local
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GUELPH | WELLINGTON

Local Immigration Partnership

Creating a caring, equitable community where everyone thrives.

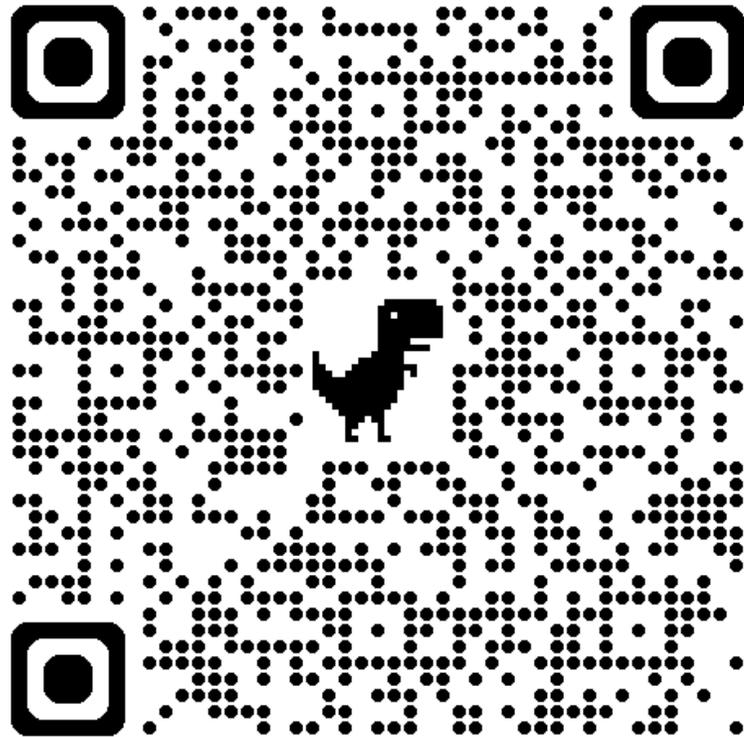


CHATHAM-KENT
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FULL REPORT



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