

# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF IMMIGRANTS IN THE TRI-CITIES

## TRI-CITIES LOCAL IMMIGRATION PARTNERSHIP



**RESEARCH GOAL.** To determine newcomers' perceived community integration needs with regard to social, political, cultural and economic participation in the Tri-Cities.

### PROFILE OF COMMUNITY SURVEY RESPONDENTS.

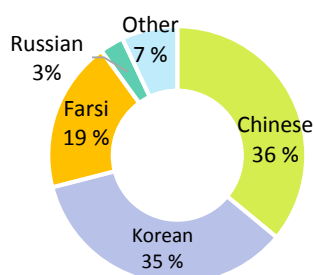
#### Demographics.

- 15% between 18-35 years
- 70% between 35-55 years
- 15% 55 years or older

#### Economic Participation.

- 30% employed
- 21% unemployed, looking for work
- 27% unemployed, will look in the future

#### Participants' First Language



#### Length of time in Canada.

- 53% Very recent immigrants (<4 yrs)
- 34% Recent immigrants (4-10 yrs)
- 13% Established immigrants (10 yrs+)

### PROFILE OF ORGANIZATION SURVEY RESPONDENTS.

- 46% for-profit businesses, 36% non-profit organizations, and 18% government agencies representing a variety of sectors (e.g. healthcare, education)
- 61% indicated that their organization provided immigrant services
- Immigrants constituted 0-25% of the workforce in 39% of organizations

### RESEARCH METHODS.

This research used a multi-faceted approach to gather data.



## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

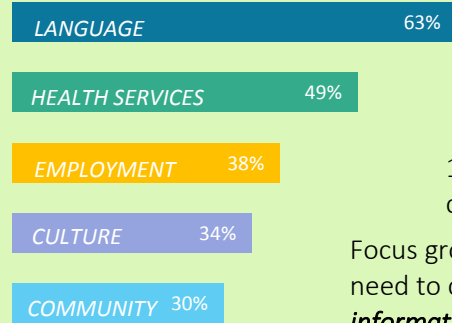
- **Language training, learning about & accessing health care services, and finding a job** were the top 3 areas where immigrants reported needing help
  - Fewer than half of the respondents who needed help learning about and accessing health care services received the help they needed
- Unemployment/underemployment and social isolation remain a problem for immigrants **regardless of how long they have been living in Tri-Cities**
  - One third of respondents say that unemployment/underemployment **still affects their daily life**
  - Respondents' length of time in Canada and their level of comfort communicating in English are positively correlated with being employed
- Overall, immigrants in the Tri-Cities are **more trusting** than the average Canadian
- Respondents who feel more **connected to their neighbourhood** are more likely to report high levels of overall **satisfaction with their life** in the Tri-Cities
- **Language barrier is the most commonly reported ongoing challenge** that affects immigrants' daily life
  - This is problematic because respondents who were less comfortable communicating in English were less likely to feel welcome in their neighbourhood and more likely to experience challenges making friends
- **Civic engagement occurs most commonly in the social and cultural dimensions**, while participation in political and economic activities is lower than the national average
- Three-quarters of organizations surveyed said their workforce is representative of the community they serve
- Three-quarters of organization survey respondents have policies, goals, and training materials related to diversity
- Organization survey respondents identified that **language difficulties, a lack of Canadian experience, and cultural differences** are key challenges for newcomer staff

# SETTLEMENT & INTEGRATION

Top 5 areas where respondents **needed help** after moving to the Tri-Cities area:

- Language training
- Learning about & accessing health services
- Finding a job
- Adapting to a new culture
- Learning about the community

Top 5 needs identified by immigrants.



There were several key areas where respondents had needed help but **did not receive help**.

- Learning about & accessing health services
- Finding a job
- Not knowing about the community/ neighbourhood

**Certain challenges still affect immigrants regardless how long they have been in Canada.**

- Language barrier (64%)
- Unemployment/underemployment (33%)
- Social isolation (23%)

16% have experienced some form of **discrimination** either in the community or in the workplace.

Focus group participants and organization survey respondents identified a need to centralize information in a **“one stop place/kiosk to gain information on all services in the community”**

# CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

According to respondents, the most common **reasons for settling in the Tri-Cities** were:

- Family or friends already living in the Tri-Cities
- Affordable housing and lower cost of living
- Perception that the Tri-Cities is a ‘family-oriented’ community

Fewer than half of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel **welcome in their neighbourhood**. 47% were neutral, and 9% reported that they do not feel welcome in their neighbourhood.

- More than a quarter of respondents find it **difficult to make new friends**, and almost half of the respondents find it hard to make friends with people from other ethnicities.

81% of respondents recognize their neighbours when they see them, but only 35% know the names of their neighbours



**Social isolation** is still a problem for one out of every four respondents and 40% are **alone more often** than they would like.



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic Engagement broadly refers to people’s **connections with the life of their communities**.

When looking at the level of participation across a variety of civic engagement indicators, a much larger proportion of respondents participated in social and cultural activities compared to political activities.

Voting behaviour, however, was high— 71% of those who could vote in Canada had voted.

85% of respondents trust people in their neighbourhood.

Respondents who reported **higher levels of trust were more likely to feel welcome** in their neighbourhood and find it easier to make friends.

