



**Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, and Katzie Nation
Local Immigration Partnership (LIP)
Research Project**

Final Report

May 2021

Contents

Tables and Figures.....**3**

Acknowledgements..... **4**

Executive Summary**5**

Introduction **8**

Project Methodologies..... **9**

Background on Newcomers and Immigrant Populations in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows **11**

Priority 1: Increase Access to Information and Services..... **13**

Priority 2: Support Employment & Entrepreneurship**23**

Priority 3: Promote Social Inclusion**35**

Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Admission category for immigrants and recent immigrants, Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows..... 11

Figure 2: Most common mother tongues, excluding English..... 12

Figure 3: How settlement services help newcomers 14

Figure 4: How newcomers and immigrants find out about services and other information 15

Figure 5: Why newcomers and immigrants do not use settlement services 16

Figure 6: Use of recreational services 19

Figure 7: Factors to increase use of recreational services20

Figure 8: Self-reported physical and mental health, pre-COVID 19 and currently20

Figure 9: Use of health services over the past year 21

Figure 10: Satisfaction with various aspects of work24

Figure 11: Share of residents in low income families, Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows26

Figure 12: Educational attainment in Maple Ridge..... 27

Figure 13: Barriers to finding work.....29

Figure 14: Challenges experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs32

Figure 15: Factors that would make individuals more likely to volunteer..... 37

Table 1: Recommendations to Increase Access to Information and Services.....22

Table 2: Recommendations to Support Employment and Entrepreneurship34

Table 3: Recommendations to Promote Social Inclusion.....39

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Executive Summary

Settling in a new country is never easy. In recognition of the unique challenges faced by newcomers and immigrants to Canada, Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funds Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) in communities across the country. Each LIPs bring together local service providers, public agencies, community groups, employers, and other key organizations with the aim of supporting newcomers in their settlement and integration to Canada and creating a welcoming, inclusive community.

One key role of the LIP is to regularly conduct community-based research to help community partners better understand and address the needs of newcomers. To this end, the Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, and Katzie Nation Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) has contracted the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) to conduct research on the experiences and needs of newcomers in the community, with the aim of informing the LIP's strategic priorities over the next five years. Funding for this project was provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

About the Report

This Final Report shares what we have learned about the experiences and needs of newcomers in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows through a wide range of research and engagement activities, including:

- A statistical community profile
- An online survey of 88 newcomers and immigrants
- Four newcomer focus groups
- One-on-one interviews with seven newcomers
- Interviews with 13 community stakeholders
- A virtual Community Forum with 24 participants, included elected officials, School District staff, community agencies, service providers, and local newcomers

This report highlights research findings and recommended actions for three strategic priority areas. These priority areas were identified through the Community Forum as areas with significant need where the LIP partners may be able to make the greatest impact over the next few years:

- 1) Increasing Access to Information and Services**
- 2) Supporting Newcomer Employment and Entrepreneurship**
- 3) Promoting Social Connection and Inclusion**

This Report includes a total of 27 concrete recommendations for action.

Priority 1: Increasing Access to Information and Services

Many newcomers face barriers to accessing services. These barriers include lack of information, language barriers, limited transportation, challenges navigating governmental bureaucracy, lack of eligibility for services based on visa type, and lack of child-minding services. When newcomers cannot access vital services and information, their physical, social, or financial needs may go unmet. This adds stress to the already difficult process of settling in a new country.

Key actions to increase access to key information and services include:

- Continue to strengthen the LIPs as a forum for information-sharing, joint outreach and collaboration to ensure newcomers are connected to community services.
- Explore re-establishment of a central Multi-Cultural Hub where newcomers can learn about and connect with local services and programs.
- Work to routinely make important information about programs, services, community events, and bureaucratic processes available in languages other than English wherever possible.

Priority 2: Supporting Newcomer Employment and Entrepreneurship

Finding or maintaining work was the number one most common challenge reported by Newcomer & Immigrant Survey respondents. Despite high levels of educational attainment, many newcomers are forced to work “survival jobs” that do not make use of their knowledge and skills. As a result, immigrants, recent immigrants, and non-permanent residents are all more likely to be low-income than non-immigrants.

Overall, 44% of all recent immigrants in Maple Ridge and 57% in Pitt Meadows had a bachelor’s degree or higher. 55% of respondents to the Newcomer & Immigrant Survey had experience running their own business. It is clear that supporting newcomers to fully contribute in the labour market benefits not only them and their families, but also the broader economy and society.

Key actions to support newcomer employment and entrepreneurship include:

- Work to further promote existing employment services to newcomers (i.e., through WorkBC, ISS of BC, or Douglas College’s Career Pathways for Skilled Immigrants).
- Partner with local employers to address lack of recognition of foreign experience and credentials and to explore creation of professional mentorship programs.
- Work with the City to make it easier for new entrepreneurs, including newcomers to navigating City permit and approval processes.

Priority 3: Promoting Social Connection and Inclusion

When newcomers come to Canada, they leave behind friends and family in their home countries. Newcomers must often start from scratch to forge local social connections, which is sometimes made even more challenging by language, transportation, and other barriers. Youth, seniors, and mothers with young children may face additional barriers to social connection and inclusion. As a result, many recent immigrants experience loneliness and isolation, which can have serious repercussions for mental well-being.

At the heart of successful immigration, beyond accessing services and finding work, is making meaningful social connections, and feeling like one belongs in the community.

Key actions to promote social connection and inclusion include:

- Explore designation of centralized meeting places where newcomers can gather on a regular basis (e.g., for a multi-cultural potluck).
- Prioritize cultural celebrations and community gatherings when safe to resume in-person activities.
- Explore the expansion of meaningful volunteer opportunities for newcomers, including exploring creation of Parent Ambassador and Senior Ambassador programs.

Introduction

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One key role of the LIP is to regularly conduct community-based research to help community partners better understand and address the needs of newcomers.

To this end, the Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, and Katzie Nation Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) has contracted the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) to conduct research on the experiences and needs of newcomers in the community, with the aim of informing the LIP's strategic priorities over the next five years.

This report provides an overview of the research and engagement activities conducted for this project, followed by key statistical background on the immigrant and newcomer populations of Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows. The report then highlights key research findings and recommended actions for three strategic priority areas. These priority areas were identified through the Community Forum as areas with significant need where the LIP partners may be able to make the greatest impact over the next few years:

- 1) Increasing Access to Information and Services**
- 2) Supporting Newcomer Employment and Entrepreneurship**
- 3) Promoting Social Connection and Inclusion**

Project Methodologies

This project has been informed by a statistical community profile, engagement with newcomers and key community stakeholders, and an action-planning focused Community Forum. The research and engagement activities are described in detail below.



Community Profile

Engagement with Newcomers & Key Stakeholders



105 immigrants
63 newcomers
13 key informants



Community Forum

24 service providers, public partners,
elected officials, and community members

Community Profile

The Community Profile provides important statistical data about immigrants, including recent immigrants, non-permanent residents, and non-immigrants in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows¹. It includes information about the origin, time of arrival, and application types of immigrants in these communities, as well as a wide range of demographic, socio-economic, and labour force data. The Profile draws primarily on data from the 2016 Census.

Engagement with Newcomers & Key Stakeholders

To help address well-documented barriers to conducting research with newcomer and immigrant populations, this project used many different engagement methods, including surveys, focus groups, interviews, and one-on-one engagement through local settlement service providers.

¹ As of the 2016 Census, there were no recorded immigrants or non-permanent residents living in the two Katzie Nation reserves.

Newcomer & Immigrant Survey

The project team conducted an online survey of immigrants and newcomers in the community between December 2020 and January 2021. The survey included questions about personal and family characteristics, experiences settling in Canada, and experiences accessing various community resources. The survey was distributed by the LIP Committee and local service providers through their websites, social media challenges, and direct outreach by settlement workers. The survey was available in English, Mandarin, Korean, Farsi, Arabic, and Punjabi. To incentive response, survey respondents also were given the option to enter a draw for one of four \$50 gift card prizes. The final valid survey sample was 88 respondents.

Newcomer Focus Groups

To supplement the online survey responses, the project team conducted four focus groups with a total of ten participants in January and February 2021. Focus group participants had been living in Canada from anywhere between 6 months and 7 years. Each participant received a \$20 honorarium to thank them for their participation.

Newcomer One-on-One Engagement

The project team partnered with ISS of BC to create a supplementary one-on-one engagement process that builds on the strength of existing relationships between clients and service providers. Settlement staff from ISS of BC reached out to their existing clients and conducted a brief, informal interview, using the same set of questions as were used to guide the larger focus groups. This engagement took place February 2021. Overall, seven newcomers participated in the process.

Key Informant Interviews

To better understand the local service context for newcomers, the project team interviewed 13 key informants (i.e., individuals that were identified as having experience, knowledge, and organizational perspectives on the needs of newcomers in the community). The interviews took place between December 2020 and January 2021 and included staff from ISS of BC; SUCCESS; Work BC; Ridge Meadows Multicultural Society; Fraser Valley Regional Library; and City of Maple Ridge Parks, Recreation, and Culture.

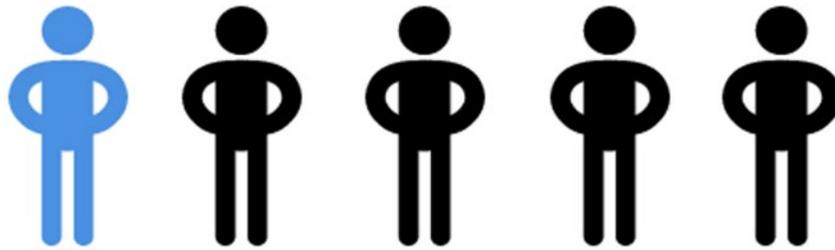
Community Forum

The Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, and Katzie LIP and SPARC BC hosted a virtual Community Forum on Supporting Newcomers on March 16, 2021. The purpose of the Community Forum was to share findings from the research and engagement work about the experiences and needs of newcomers in Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and Katzie, followed by a facilitated process to identify priorities and action ideas. Attendees included elected officials, School District staff, community agencies, service providers, and local newcomers. In total there were 24 participants.

Background on Newcomers and Immigrant Populations in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows

In 2016, there were a total of **19,415** immigrants living in Maple Ridge (15,460) or Pitt Meadows (3,955). **One in five residents of Ridge Meadows are immigrants.** An additional 1% of residents are non-permanent residents (890 individuals total).

One in five residents is an immigrant.

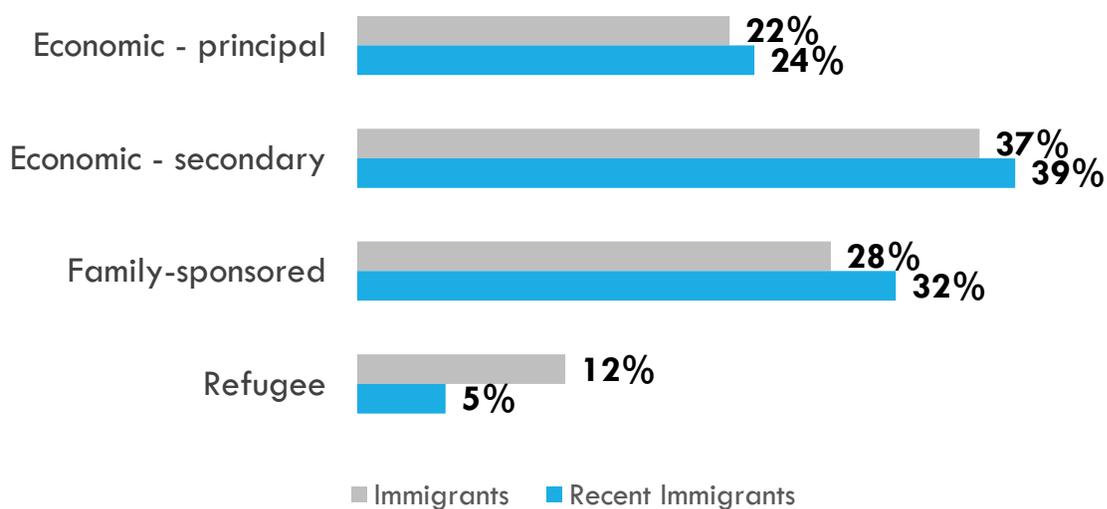


Out of this total immigrant population, there were **1,905 newcomers** (obtaining landed immigrant or permanent resident status between 2011 and 2016). Newcomers are **10% of the immigrant population** and **2% of the total population.**

As shown in the Figure below, over half of all immigrants and recent immigrants are economic applicants, followed by family-sponsored immigrants and refugees.

Figure 1: Admission category for immigrants and recent immigrants, Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows

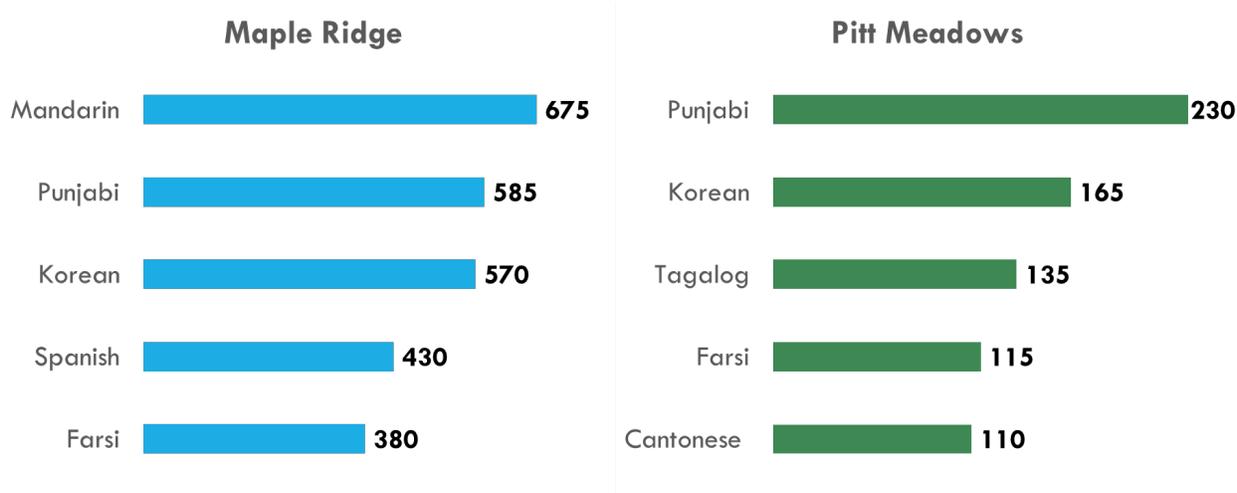
Admission category for immigrants and recent immigrants, Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows combined



The most common places of birth for **all immigrants** in both Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows were the United Kingdom, the Philippines, India, and China. For recent immigrants, in Maple Ridge, the most common places of birth were **the Philippines, China, the United Kingdom, and India**. In Pitt Meadows, the most common places of birth for recent immigrants **were the Philippines, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Mexico, and South Korea**.

The most common mother tongues, excluding English, in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows are shown in the Figure below.

Figure 2: Most common mother tongues, excluding English



In Maple Ridge, **45%** of all immigrants are visible minorities, compared with **70%** of recent immigrants, **72%** of non-permanent residents, and only **7%** of the non-immigrant population.

In Pitt Meadows, **54%** of all immigrants were visible minorities, compared with **84%** of recent immigrants, **61%** of non-permanent residents, and **9%** of non-immigrants.

Priority 1: Increase Access to Information and Services

Many newcomers face barriers to accessing services, both services directly related to settlement, as well as other community amenities such as public transit, recreational programs, schools, and health care. These barriers can be related to lack of information, language barriers, transportation, physical ability, and challenges navigating governmental bureaucracy. Many of these barriers have been accentuated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including heightened need for technology and digital literacy skills in order to access information and services available online.

When newcomers cannot access vital services and information, their physical, social, or financial needs may go unmet. This adds stress to the already difficult process of settling in a new country. Helping newcomers avoid or alleviate some of these stresses through improved access to existing resources not only benefits them and their families, but also benefits the broader community.

Through the community engagement work of this project, including the Community Forum, it was found that expanding access to information and services is a top community priority to better support newcomers in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

Overview of Current Services Available to Newcomers

Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows currently have many available services that help support newcomers in the community. ISS of BC provides a full range of settlement, language, and employment services. SUCCESS is the other major settlement service provider, through its Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS) program. Other key community groups and public partners that support newcomers include the Family Education & Support Centre, Work BC, Career Path for Skilled Immigrants, the Community Literacy Committee, Ridge Meadows Multicultural Society, the Senior's Network, as well as municipal recreation and community services, the public libraries, and schools.

Many service providers expressed pride in offering high quality services to newcomers and connecting them to services they need. Many shared stories of newcomer success and emphasized the importance of facilitating belonging and inclusion. In Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, communication and collaboration between community agencies is a major community strength.

Newcomers Use of Settlement and Community Services

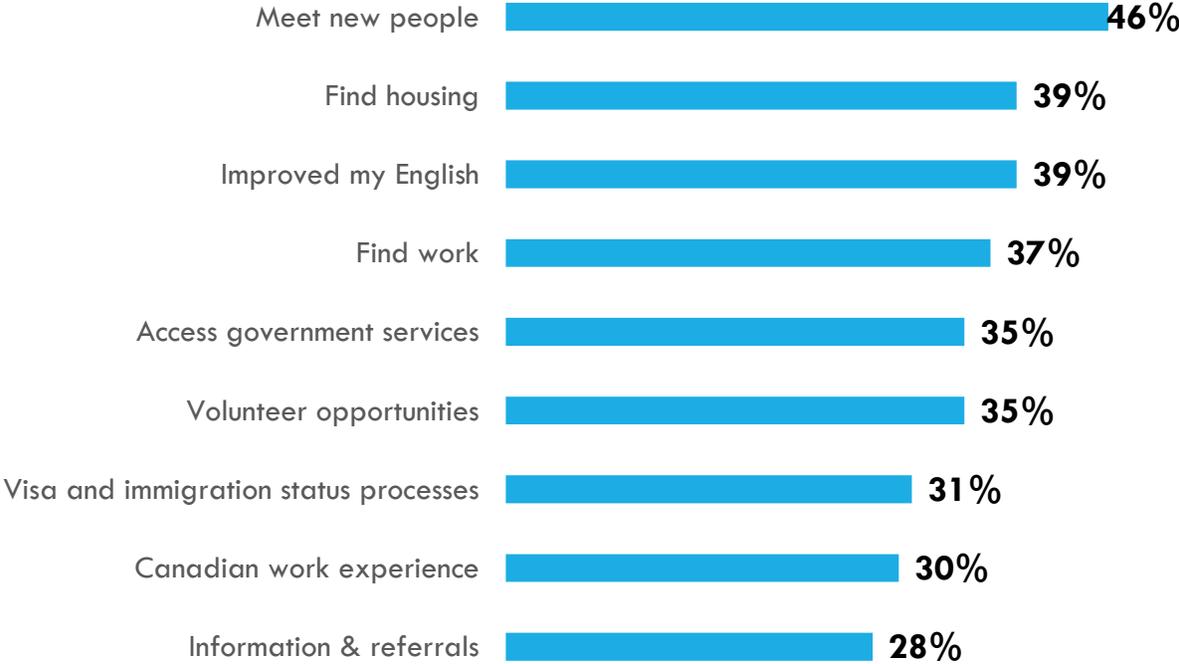
Many newcomers in the community have accessed the existing settlement and community services. In response to the Newcomer & Immigrant Survey, the majority of respondents (75%) reported that they have used or are currently using settlement services (broadly defined here as services related to information, government services, language skills, or employment). 32% reported that they are currently using settlement services, while 42% reported that they are not using them currently but have used them in the past².

As shown below, these services help newcomers navigate many different aspects of life. Survey respondents were asked about how settlement services have helped them.

The most common response was meeting new people (46%), followed by help finding housing (39%), improving English (39%), and finding work (37%).

Figure 3: How settlement services help newcomers

How have settlement services helped you?



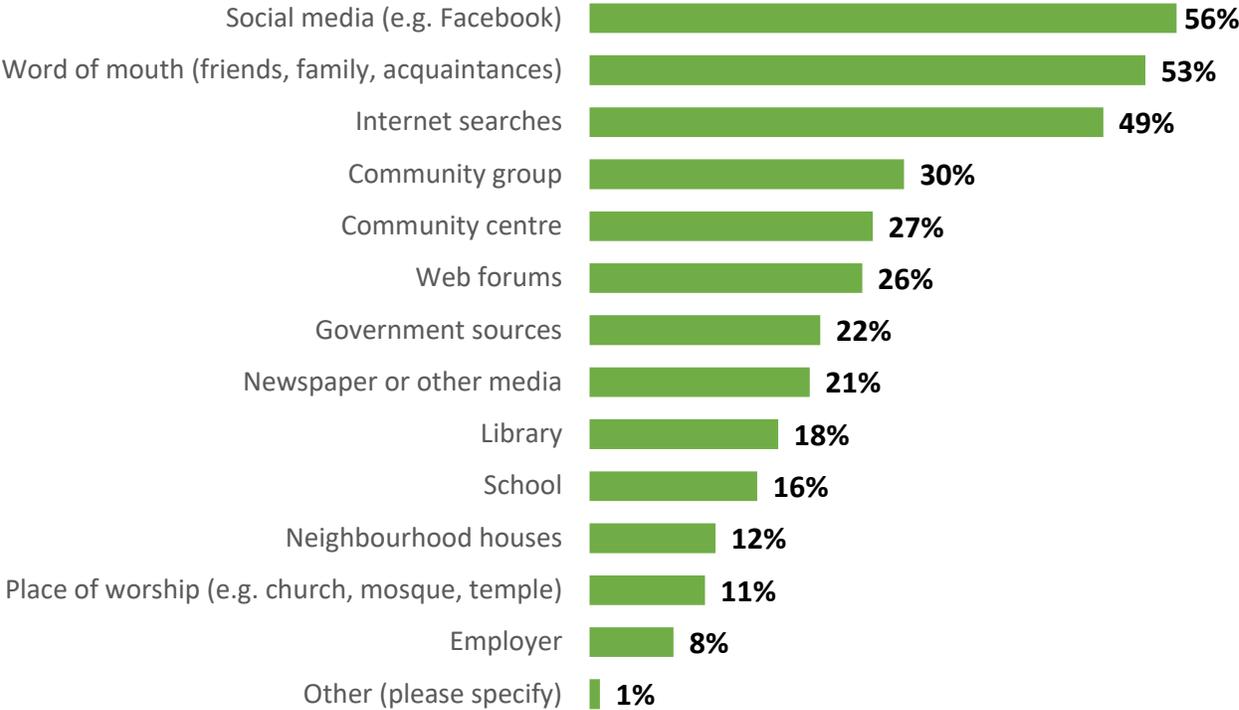
² Because the survey was largely distributed through settlement and community services, there is likely an over-representation here of newcomers and immigrants already connected to those services. As such, these results should be interpreted with caution.

Survey respondents reported finding out about settlement services and information through multiple channels. The three main ways that people found this information was through social media (56%), word of mouth (53%), and Internet searches (49%).

It is interesting to note that two of the top three most common ways to access information are online, underlying the importance of digital technology access and digital literacy skills. However, word of mouth remains another important form of information-sharing, as well as connections with community groups and centres.

Figure 4: How newcomers and immigrants find out about services and other information

How do you normally find out about services and other information about settling in the community?



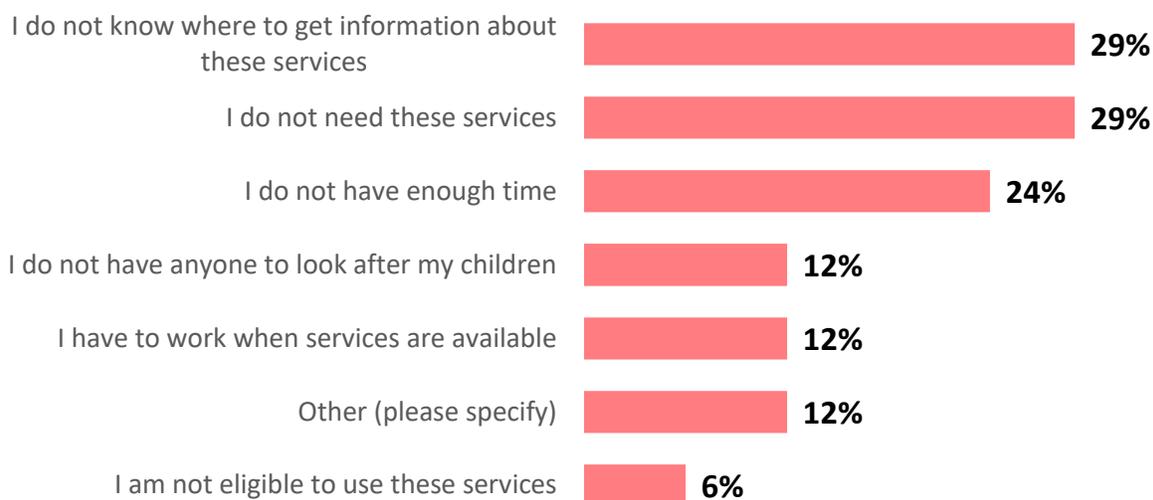
Barriers to Community Services

While many newcomers have used and benefited from existing settlement and community services, many newcomers still experience significant gaps and barriers.

Newcomer & Immigrant Survey respondents who reported that they have *never* used settlement services were asked why this is. The Figure below shows that the most common reasons for not using these services were not knowing where to get information about the services (29%), followed by not needing the services (29%), and not having enough time to access them (24%)³.

Figure 5: Why newcomers and immigrants do not use settlement services

Why do you not use immigrant settlement services?



Organizational Capacity

Settlement services are critical for many newcomers in their settlement process. However, many organizations face limitations in terms of funding, staffing, and facility space. For example, there is currently only one SWIS worker for the entire School District. A major challenge highlighted by the key informant interviews was that, at time of writing, both major settlement service providers did not have permanent, full-time office space, and were relying on access to temporary and shared spaces, which made it more difficult for them to connect with newcomers. One respondent noted small, shared spaces also mean “less workshops, less group sessions, less community

³ It is important to note that the Newcomer & Immigrant Survey and other forms of newcomer engagement provide important information about some of the barriers that newcomers face when trying to access community services. However, these tools likely underestimate the incidence and extent of these barriers as the newcomers who face them are also less likely to hear about and participate in these research activities.

building”. At time of writing, at least one major settlement service provider was in the process of looking for permanent space.

Adequate funding is foundational to overall organizational capacity. There are also unique funding limitations within the settlement sector. In general, only individuals with permanent resident status or privately sponsored refugee status are eligible for IRCC-funded services. This means those on temporary work or study visas, permanent resident applicants, temporary foreign workers, refugee claimants, and naturalized citizens have limited access to services, programs, and targeted support⁴.

Informational Barriers

As noted above, the most commonly reported reason for not accessing services was lack of information about them. Newcomers are sometimes not aware of available programs, especially if they are not already connected to local services, classes, or community groups. Because of this disconnect, community organizations often struggle to get the word out about their services. Key informants reported that outreach has been even more difficult with the COVID-19 pandemic. Many organizations within Ridge Meadows do already work together to do outreach and promote programs and services to newcomers. This key community strength is critical to addressing informational barriers.

Language Barriers

Barriers to information are further accentuated by language barriers, which can further limit access to key services for many newcomers. According to the Newcomer & Immigrant Survey, 61% of survey participants (excluding native and fluent English speakers) agreed (46%) or strongly agreed (15%) that they sometimes have trouble using services because of the language barrier.

61% of survey respondents say
language barriers sometimes make it
difficult to access services



Many organizations reported that they need more translation and interpretation support to better serve newcomers. While some settlement service providers have funding for professional language support, many community groups rely informally on staff and volunteers. While these informal language supports are valuable, professional translation services are needed for more confidential and personal situations, such as around medical care, school performance, or legal issues.

⁴ House of Commons (2019). Improving Settlement Services Across Canada. Report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration.

However, many organizations do not have budgets to accommodate the cost of these professional language services.

Some organizations report success using translation apps. However, these applications are typically not appropriate for more complex or official situations, such as those mentioned above. Some key informants also noted that many situations require not only literal translations of each word, but also holistic, context-sensitive explanations. While applications are a helpful tool, they cannot replace in-person language supports that also help newcomers navigate different cultural norms and expectations, and gain knowledge that is often implicit for those who grew up in Canada.

Cultural Barriers

To be fully accessible, newcomers not only need information about services in language that is easy to understand, but also access to services that are welcoming and inclusive. This aim can be supported through training of frontline staff and volunteers.

While most settlement service providers have extensive training in working with newcomers, this training is not always available to those outside the settlement sector. Key informants described a need for increased education and training for all frontline workers on working effectively with individuals from different cultures who are navigating settlement in Canada. Some respondents also mentioned the importance of diverse staff, including those with first-hand experience immigrating to Canada, in making settlement and other services accessible and welcoming to newcomers.

Geographic Barriers

Most local services are concentrated in downtown areas which can be difficult for newcomers living further out to access, especially given limited public transportation infrastructure. However, it is important to note that the concentration of services in the downtown core area does offer some benefits in terms of ease of referring newcomers to other agencies once they are already in the downtown location.

Digital Access Barriers

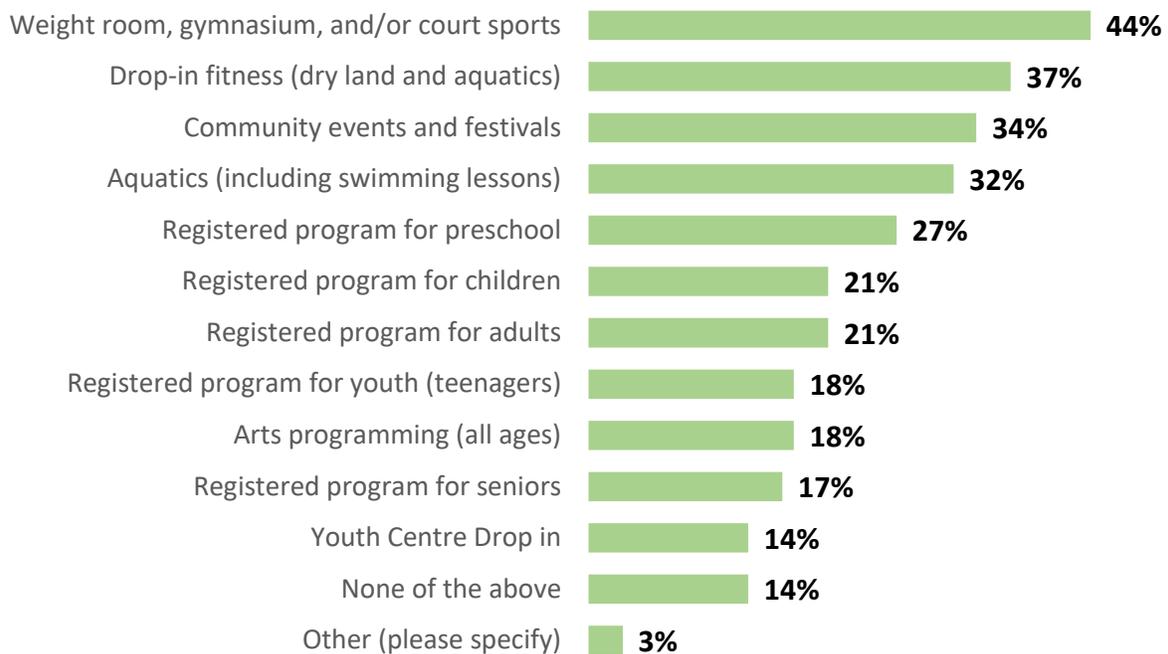
COVID-19 has also highlighted and accentuated barriers around lack of access to technology and digital literacy skills. As key information and services are made available online, access to technology and digital skills are critical for accessing information, gaining employment, and overcoming isolation.

Spotlight on Recreational Services

To better understand how newcomers use recreation services, Newcomer & Immigrant Survey respondents were asked which types of recreational services they had used (prior to COVID-19). Many survey respondents reported using recreational services⁵. The most frequently used recreation services were the weight room, gymnasium, and/or court sports (44%), followed by drop-in fitness classes (37%), and then community events and festivals (34%).

Figure 6: Use of recreational services

Which of the following recreation services have you or your family used (before COVID-19)?

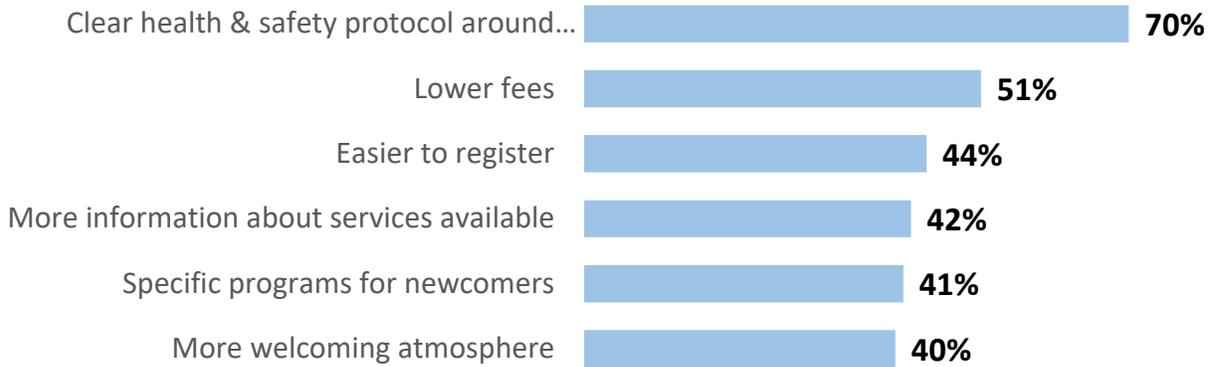


Survey respondents who had not used recreation services were asked about factors that would make them more likely to use them. **70%** of all survey respondents indicated that clear health and safety protocols around COVID-19 would make them more likely to use recreation services. **51%** indicated that lower fees would make them more likely to access these services, and **44%** indicated easier registration.

⁵ As with use of other services, newcomers who use recreational services may be over-represented in the survey sample.

Figure 7: Factors to increase use of recreational services

What, if anything, would make you more likely to use recreation services?

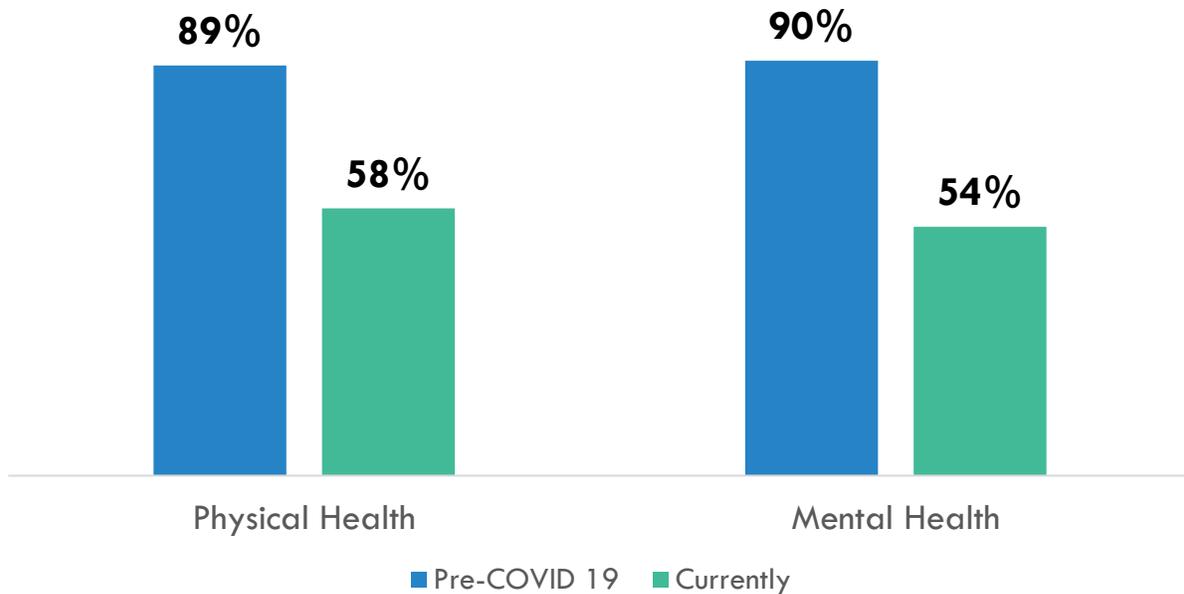


Spotlight on Health Care Services

Newcomers may face additional barriers when accessing health care services. As shown below, this is of particular concern given declines in both physical and mental health over the past year reported by Newcomer & Immigrant survey respondents.

Figure 8: Self-reported physical and mental health, pre-COVID 19 and currently

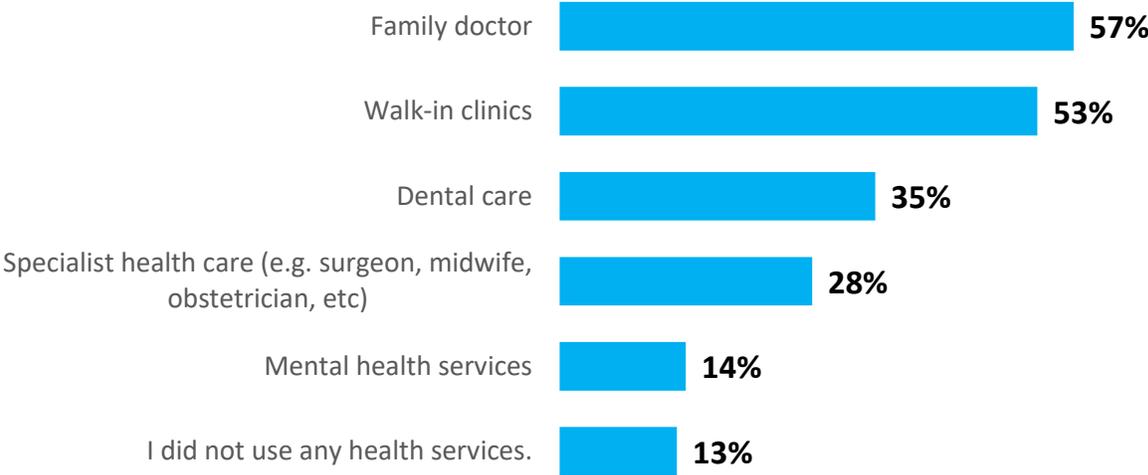
Newcomer & Immigrant survey respondents reporting 'good' or 'excellent' health



The survey results indicated that the most commonly used health care services by newcomers and immigrants were family doctors (57%), followed by walk-in clinics (53%), and then dental care (35%). 13% of all respondents indicated that they did not use any health services.

Figure 9: Use of health services over the past year

What types of health services have you used within the past year?



However, some newcomers faced barriers to accessing health services. Among those who reported needing each type of service, 35% of respondents reported that accessing a family doctor was either ‘difficult’ or ‘very difficult’. 39% reported difficulty in accessing specialist health care, 22% for walk-in clinics, 20% for dental care, and 21% for mental health services. Barriers to access may be somewhat under-stated for mental health services in particular, as a significant share of respondents reported not needing that type of health service.

When asked why these services were difficult to access, the most common reasons were long wait times, services not being available near where people lived, and not knowing how to find or access them. Other barriers include language, lack of culturally appropriate care, transportation, and difficulties navigating bureaucracy.

Recommendations to Increase Access to Information and Services

The following recommendations are based on community engagement for this project, including the Community Forum.

Table 1: Recommendations to Increase Access to Information and Services

Recommendations to Increase Access to Information and Services	
1	Continue information-sharing, cooperation, and joint outreach efforts to newcomers through the LIP Committee (e.g., providing contributions to the local service map, sharing updates at monthly meeting, etc.)
2	Work together to identify opportunities for collaboration on programs and events.
3	Expand outreach of LIP to include more partners beyond the settlement sector, including federal and provincial government agencies, health care services, professional bodies, employers, and other community service providers not already at the table.
3	Support core settlement agencies (ISS of BC and SUCCESS) to help them secure permanent, suitable space.
4	Advocate for an additional SWIS worker in the local School District.
5	Explore opportunities, including financial support, to offer training for frontline workers beyond the settlement sector to work with newcomers and immigrants more effectively.
6	Explore re-establishing and supporting a Multi-Cultural Hub at the Maple Ridge & Pitt Meadows libraries, providing a central space for newcomers to learn about and connect with local services and programs.
7	Routinely make important information about services, programs, and processes available in languages other than English wherever possible. Work with partners to understand how to address financial and non-financial barriers to doing this.
8	Explore coordination between organizations to advocate for and secure access to professional interpretation support for services that may involve disclosure of personal and sensitive information.
9	Explore use of apps like the Arrival Advisor App and Talking Points App to reduce information and language barriers.
10	Supporting existing efforts to provide technological equipment and free digital skills trainings to newcomers. Explore creation of community-based initiatives to gather and distribute second-hand devices to those who need them.
11	Build on existing work to create FAQs on the LIP and City websites, to create a centralized info hub for newcomers that can be shared in the community.

Priority 2: Support Employment & Entrepreneurship

Many newcomers to Canada face barriers to finding decent work that matches their qualifications and experience. Some of these barriers include lack of employer recognition of international credentials and experiences, lack of local professional networks and references, language barriers, and overt discrimination by employers⁶⁷.

As a result, many newcomers work in “survival jobs” that do not make use of their knowledge and skills⁸. These “survival jobs” are often low-paid and insecure. They typically leave newcomers with little time and money to pursue additional training or credentialing processes, making it harder as time goes on for newcomers to re-enter their previous field of work.

This form of underemployment not only causes financial hardship. It can also cause a profound sense of frustration and discouragement, and significant mental stress for newcomers and their families. As such, labour market integration is identified by both newcomers and services providers as a critical element of successful settlement and integration.

Moreover, when newcomers are able to fully contribute to the workforce, this benefits not only them and their families, but also the broader economy and society.

***“Finding work and a job is difficult. Everything is expensive here.
In my country everything is cheap, but here everything is expensive.”***

– Focus Group Participant

What we heard from newcomers

Finding or maintaining work was the number one most common challenge experienced while settling in Canada reported by Newcomer & Immigrant Survey respondents (51%). In addition, 56% of survey respondents reported that finding or maintaining work has become difficult with COVID-19. Challenges finding and maintaining work were also a common theme in the Newcomer Focus Groups and one-on-one engagement.

***“It is very difficult to find a job, especially immigrants who do not work
and are soon asked to go to other cities to find work.”***

– Survey Respondent

⁶ Wilkinson, Lori, et al. "Understanding job status decline among newcomers to Canada." *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 48.3 (2016): 5-26.

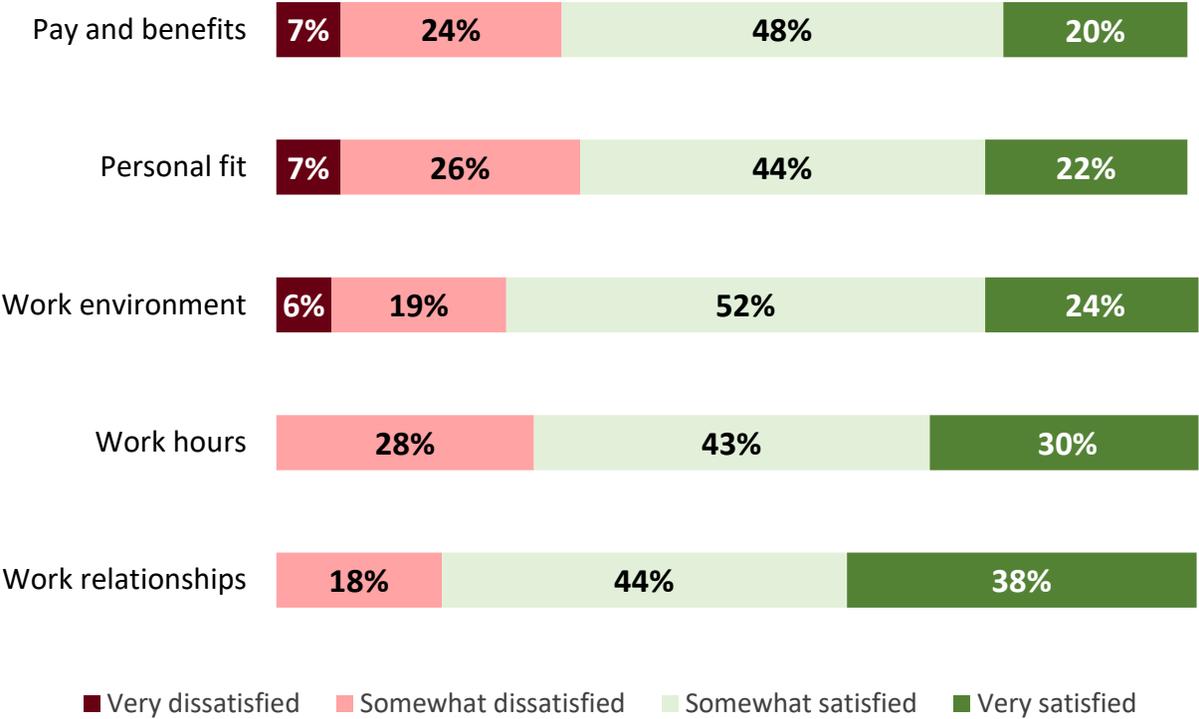
⁷ Chun, J., & Cheong, A. (2011). Immigrants and Low-Paid Work: Persistent Problems, Enduring Consequences. *Metropolis British Columbia, No.11-20*.

⁸ Creese, Gillian, and Brandy Wiebe. "Survival employment': Gender and deskilling among African immigrants in Canada." *International migration* 50.5 (2012): 56-76.

As shown below, when employed newcomers and immigrants were asked about their current jobs, **38%** were very satisfied with relationships with coworkers and/or bosses, **30%** with work hours, **24%** with work environment, **22%** with personal fit between the job and their interests and skills, and **20%** with the pay and benefits. While we cannot compare this to the response of Canadian-born residents of these communities, the results do suggest a significant gap between aspirations and labour market reality for a significant share of newcomers.

Figure 10: Satisfaction with various aspects of work

How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your work?



Labour market outcomes

The labour market data highlights important differences between the newcomer settlement experience in Maple Ridge and in Pitt Meadows.

In 2016 in **Maple Ridge**, a slightly higher share of recent immigrants were employed (70%) than the non-immigrant population (67%). Recent immigrants were also slightly *less* likely than non-immigrants to be unemployed.

However, among all residents who worked, recent immigrants were much more likely than non-immigrants to be working part year and/or part time, rather than full year, full time, at 61% of recent immigrants compared with 47% of non-immigrants. This is suggestive of under-employment.

In Maple Ridge...



70% of recent immigrants are employed

67% of non-immigrants

61% of recent immigrants work part year/part time

47% of non-immigrants

In **Pitt Meadows** on the other hand, recent immigrants had a significant higher unemployment rate (10%) than non-immigrants (4%). A much higher share of recent immigrants reported not working (40%) compared with non-immigrants (26%). However, among those who worked, rates of part year and/or part time, rather than full year, full time work were similar for recent immigrants and non-immigrants. This suggests newcomers to Pitt Meadows are more likely to struggle to find any work at all.

In Pitt Meadows...

10% of recent immigrants are unemployed

4% of non-immigrants

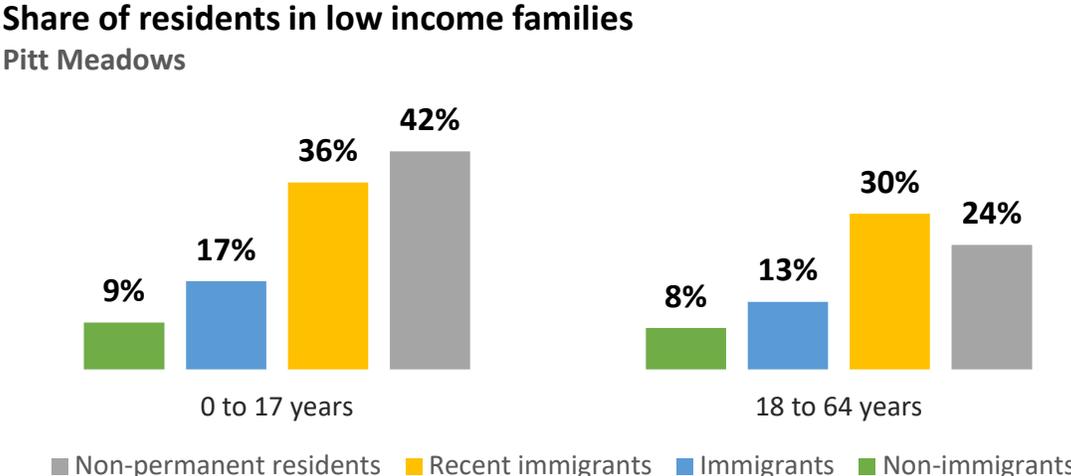
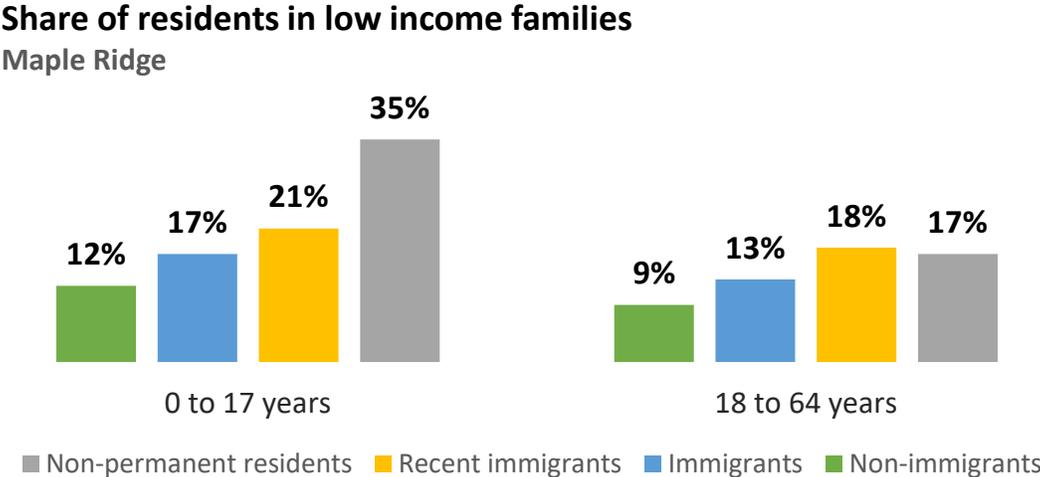
40% of recent immigrants are not working

26% of non-immigrants



These divergent labour market outcomes have impacts on income. Immigrants, recent immigrants, and non-permanent residents are all more likely to be low-income than non-immigrants. In Maple Ridge, **21%** of recent immigrants under 18 were low income, as well as **18%** of those 18 to 64. Pitt Meadows has even higher rates of low-income. In Pitt Meadows, **36%** of recent immigrants under 18 were low-income, as well as **30%** of those 18 to 64.

Figure 11: Share of residents in low income families, Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows



While it is important to note that most recent immigrants are not low-income, poor labour market integration does impact the income level of a significant portion of recent immigrants. It is particularly striking that recent immigrants in Maple Ridge have a higher rate of individuals living in low income households than non-immigrants, despite higher employment rate. This suggests higher incidence of part-time, unstable, and low-paid work.

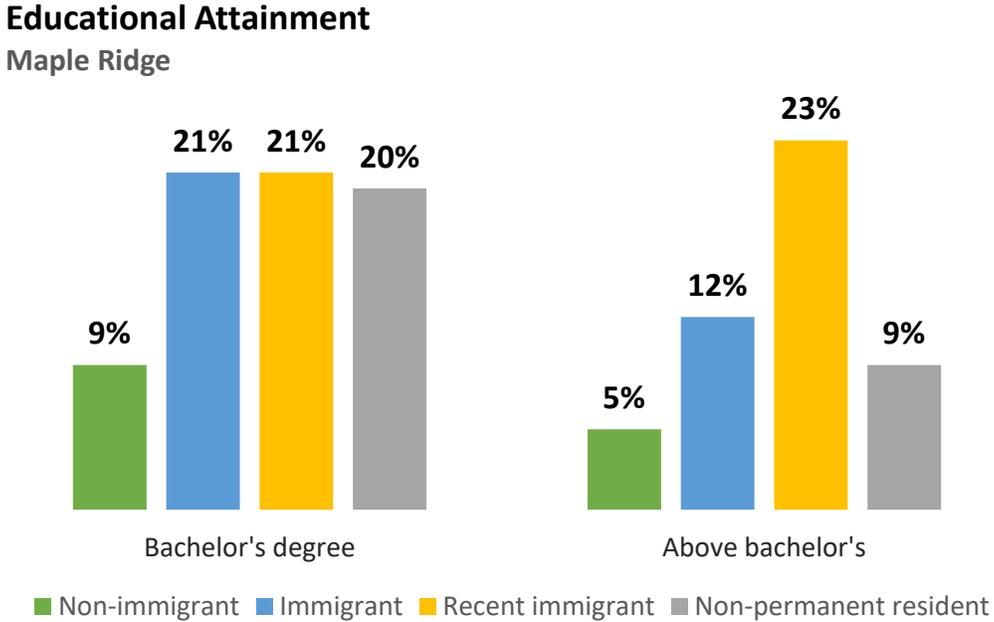
It is important to note that these statistics are based on 2016 Census data. However, immigrant employment has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research suggests that recent immigrants, particularly immigrant women, have been among the most impacted by COVID-19 related job losses⁹.

Educational attainment

Newcomers face barriers in the labour market despite high levels of educational attainment.

In Maple Ridge, about one in five immigrants, recent immigrants, and non-permanent residents had a bachelor’s degree, compared with 9% of non-immigrants. Even more striking, 23% of all recent immigrants had education above the bachelor’s level, compared with 5% of the non-immigrant population.

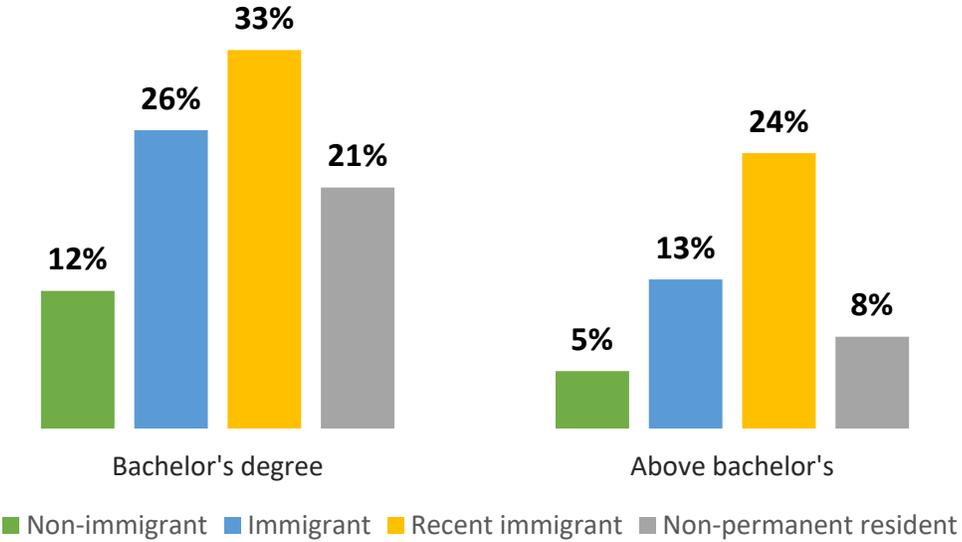
Figure 12: Educational attainment in Maple Ridge



⁹ Hou, F., Picot, G., & Zhang, J. (2020). Transitions into and out of employment by immigrants during the COVID-19 lockdown and recovery. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/45-28-0001/2020001/article/00070-eng.pdf?st=wyjanFuE>

The educational profile of immigrants in Pitt Meadows is similar to that of Maple Ridge, with even higher rates of educational attainment among recent immigrants. One-third of all recent immigrants have a bachelor's degree, as well as 26% of all immigrants and 21% of non-permanent residents. An additional one-quarter of recent immigrants had educational attainment above the bachelor's level.

Educational Attainment Pitt Meadows



Immigrants to Canada often bring high levels of educational attainment, including specialized training at the graduate level. However, despite high levels of educational attainment, many newcomers nonetheless face barriers to decent, meaningful employment in their chosen field.

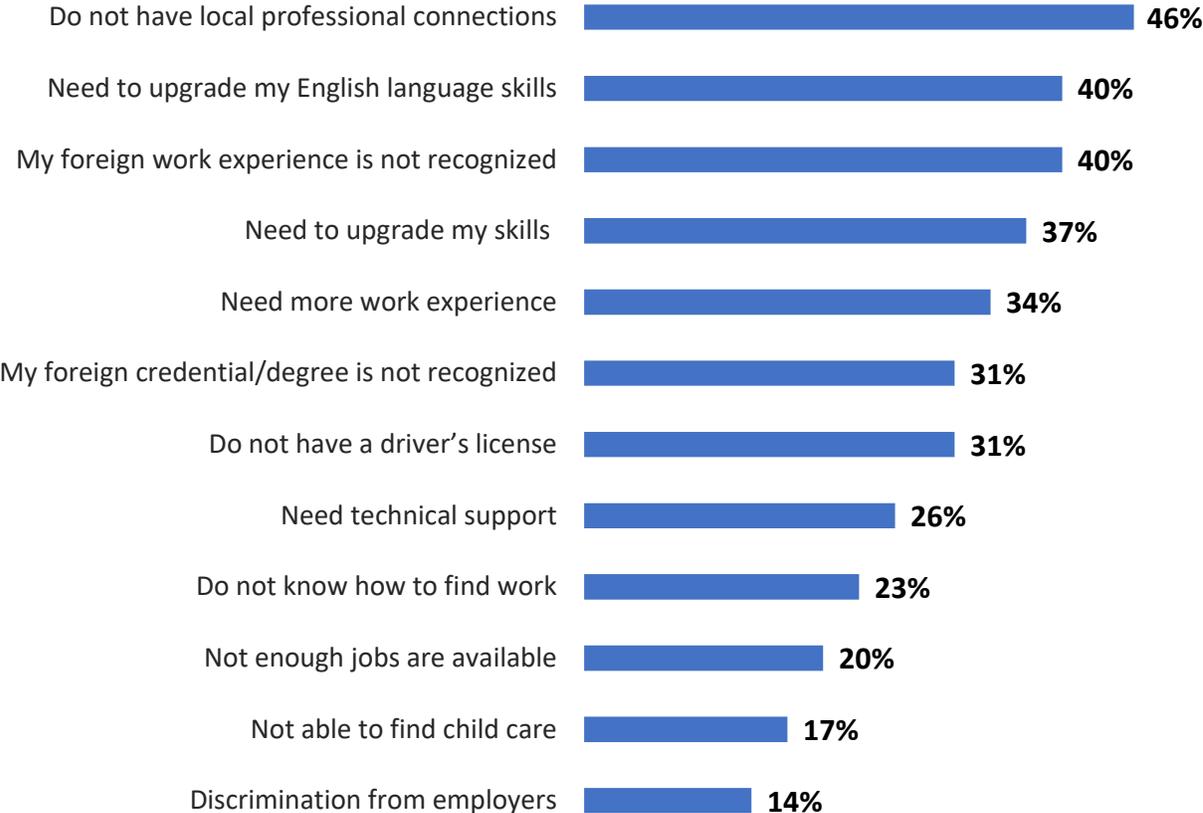
Barriers to decent, meaningful employment

To better understand some of the barriers to labour market integration for newcomers, the Newcomer & Immigrant Survey asked those who were unemployed at the time of the survey and those who were employed but reported that finding work was difficult about the barriers they experienced.

As shown below, the three most common barriers for finding work were local professional connections or references, need to upgrade English language skills, and lack of recognition for foreign work experience. However, a wide range of barriers were reported and many newcomers experience multiple barriers.

Figure 13: Barriers to finding work

Greatest barriers to finding work



Nearly half of all survey respondents reported that **lack of local professional connections and references** was one of the biggest barriers to finding work. **Lack of recognition of foreign work experience** and **lack of recognition of foreign credentials** were also common. In combination, these barriers can make it very difficult for newcomers to enter their field of choice. Lack of employer recognition of foreign work experience often creates a painful catch-22, as described by one focus group participant below:

“It was hard to find employment. First criteria is having Canadian experience, but need to start somewhere before you can get that experience.”

– Focus Group Participant

Lack of foreign credential recognition often means highly skilled professional, such as medical doctors, are not able to work in their chosen field. While programs such as Career Path for Skilled Immigrants successfully support many newcomers through credential recognition and re-licensing processes, many newcomers nonetheless experience systemic barriers and have no choice but to work in a totally different field¹⁰.

The second most commonly selected barrier was **English language proficiency**. It is notable that higher levels of English language proficiency are required for many occupations, as well as training and education programs. However, LINC classes above CLB level 6 are not permanently available in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

Newcomers also reported a need to **upgrade their skills and work experience** more generally, though this may also be linked to lack of recognition of their existing experience and training. **Lack of driver’s license** is another common barrier.

Some newcomers also require assistance with **technical support to find and apply for jobs** and, more generally, with **knowing how to find work in Canada**, as norms around job applications can vary significantly by country.

Some newcomers note that, aside from their personal barriers, **there are not enough jobs available**. There are fewer employers in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows than in some other areas of the Lower Mainland, such as Vancouver, and jobs are not available in all sectors.

¹⁰ For more information about systemic barriers faced by internationally trained medical graduates, please refer to the Multi-Agency Partnership of BC’s webinar, *A Bitter Pill: Utilizing the talents of refugee women doctors*, available at: <https://mapbc.org/a-bitter-pill/>.

Lack of child care is another major barrier to employment, that is likely under-estimated in the above survey question, as it was also answered by many respondents without young children. In fact, 66% of survey respondents with children 12 and younger reported their main care arrangement was a parent at home with the children. A majority of these respondents reported that they would like to change this care arrangement if a preferred option became available at an affordable price. Parents of young children, typically mothers, experience other barriers, including limited access to career development and other training programs.

Survey respondents with children 12 and younger:



66% had no child care, main care arrangement was a parent at home

70% would change their care arrangement if they could

Finally, some newcomers experience overt **discrimination from employers**. Research suggests there is significant discrimination in the labour market. For instance, in one field experiment in Toronto, researchers found that resumes with non-English names had significantly lower rates of call-backs than identical resumes with English names¹¹. Discrimination from employers can also interact with the other barriers described above. For instance, research suggests employers sometimes under-estimate job candidates' English language proficiency if they speak with an accent¹².

Entrepreneurship – an alternate pathway?

Entrepreneurship is an alternate route to employment that is attractive for many newcomers. In both Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, immigrants in the labour force are more likely to be self-employed than non-immigrants. Entrepreneurship is also an important contributor to the local economy and community.

¹¹ Oreopoulos, Philip. "Why do skilled immigrants struggle in the labor market? A field experiment with thirteen thousand resumes." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 3.4 (2011): 148-71.

¹² Chun, J., & Cheong, A. (2011). Immigrants and Low-Paid Work: Persistent Problems, Enduring Consequences. *Metropolis British Columbia*, No.11-20.

In addition, responses to the Newcomer & Immigrant Survey suggest a large share of newcomers already have experience running their own business. More than half (55%) of survey respondents reported either currently (25%) or previously (30%) running their own business. 67% of those who previously ran their own business said they would be interested in running a business again.



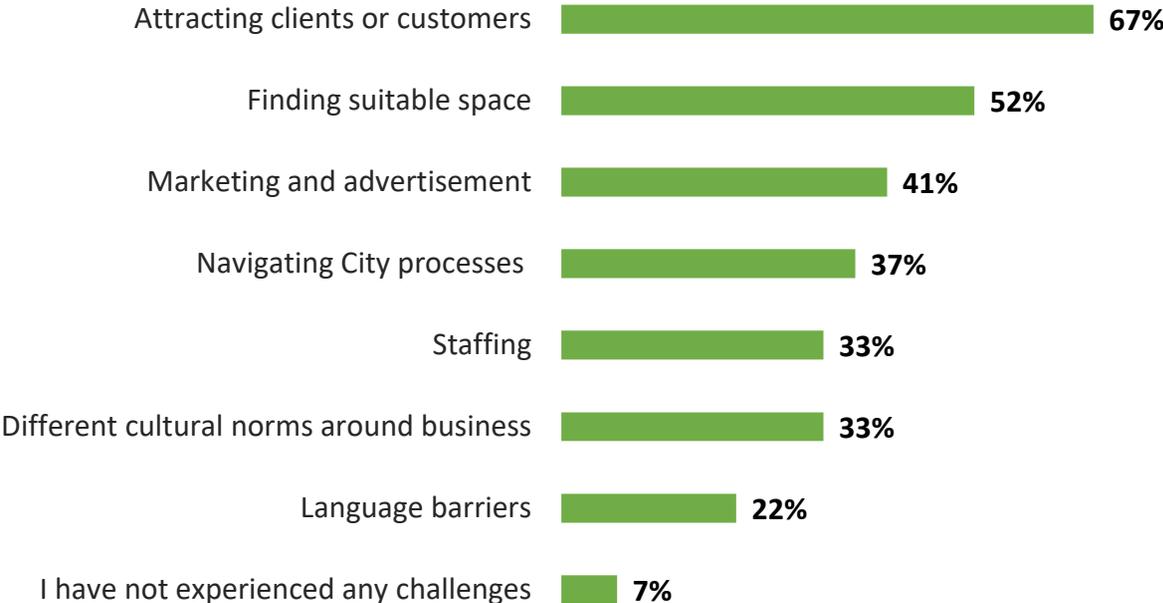
55% of survey respondents have experience **running their own business**

The survey responses also suggest strong interest in entrepreneurship from individuals who have not run their own business before. 55% of respondents in this group said they would be interested in starting their own business. 35% said they would be very likely to attend free training sessions and/or mentorship opportunities on starting a business.

Survey respondents who are already running their own business were asked about the challenges they experienced, as shown below.

Figure 14: Challenges experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs

Greatest challenges for immigrant entrepreneurs



Services currently available

WorkBC, ISS of BC, and Douglas College Career Paths for Skilled Immigrants are key community assets, offering a range of services to support newcomers in overcoming barriers and securing meaningful, decent work. An overview of each program is provided in the Table below.

Organization	Programs and Services
ISS of BC	ISS of BC (Maple Ridge) offers several employment services for newcomers, including JobQuest, Employer Solutions, Business Quest, TechWomen, Respect at Work Legal Clinic and Online Learning for Migrant Workers in BC, in addition to language instruction and other settlement services.
Douglas College – Career Path for Skilled Immigrants	Career Paths for Skilled immigrants assists immigrant professionals to maximize their career potential by helping them build an action plan and providing financial support to have their credentials assessed and upgrade their skills.
Work BC	Employment services for all newcomers with goal of securing long-term, meaningful employment

37% of survey respondents reported using some form of settlement services to help them find work. Supporting these existing organizations and programs is critical to meaningful increasing labour market integration for newcomers in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

Recommendations to Support Employment and Entrepreneurship

The recommendations below focus on prioritizing services that can help address some of the key barriers to employment and entrepreneurship faced by newcomers. Several recommendations are also aimed at working with employers to create changes within recruitment, hiring, and retention practices to ensure immigrants have a fair chance at contributing their knowledge and skills.

Table 2: Recommendations to Support Employment and Entrepreneurship

Recommendations to Support Employment and Entrepreneurship	
1	Work together to further promote existing employment services to newcomers.
2	Increase outreach to local employers and the Ridge Meadows Chamber of Commerce, including education efforts around recognition of foreign experience and credentials.
3	Explore creation of professional mentorship program to help newcomers establish local professional connections and navigate Canadian norms and expectations around employment.
4	Explore promotion and expansion of entrepreneurship training for newcomers.
5	Work with City to make it easier for new entrepreneurs, including newcomers, to navigate City permit and approval processes.
6	Prioritize on-site child minding for career development and skills training programs to make them more accessible for parents of young children.
7	Advocate for LINC Classes at advanced CLB levels (above level 6) to be offered in Maple Ridge or Pitt Meadows on a permanent, ongoing basis.

Priority 3: Promote Social Inclusion

When newcomers come to Canada, they leave behind friends and family in their home countries. Newcomers must often start from scratch to forge local social connections, which is sometimes made even more challenging by language, transportation, and other barriers. Youth, seniors, and mothers with young children may face additional barriers to social connection and inclusion. As a result, many recent immigrants experience loneliness and isolation, which can have serious repercussions for mental well-being.

At the heart of successful immigration, beyond accessing services and finding work, is making meaningful social connections, and feeling like one belongs in the community. Both newcomers and service providers highlighted this as a top priority.

“Moving to Canada is a hard and difficult journey and you can’t help the rest of your family to come to Canada”

– Focus Group Participant

What we heard from newcomers

Overall, 72% of Newcomer & Immigrant Survey respondents reported feeling welcome and included in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows. While many newcomers have positive experiences with the local community, as exemplified by the focus group participant group below, making meaningful social connections can also be very challenging.

“People are very friendly, even to strangers. I did not experience kindness from strangers in [other countries]. Here people say hi on the street.”

– Focus Group Participant

Making local friends was the second most commonly reported challenge experienced when settling in Canada, reported by half of all Newcomer & Immigrant Survey respondents. In addition, 61% reported that making friends has become more difficult due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



50% of survey respondents say **making local friends** is a challenge

Focus on youth, seniors, and mothers at home with young children

Newcomer youth, seniors, and mothers with young children often face additional barriers to making meaningful social connections in the community. For instance, many key informant interviewees noted the need for programs specifically for youth. Newcomer and immigrant seniors, particularly if they do not speak English at a high level of proficiency, are often isolated, with limited independent transportation and fewer opportunities to meet others.

Many key informants also highlighted challenges experienced by mothers caring for young children at home. Being at home can be isolating, especially for women who have few local social supports. Mothers with young children at home are typically unable to access programs and services unless they can bring their children with them, as when child minding services are provided. However, even in these cases, mothers with young children at home may face challenges to access, such as difficulty navigating infrequent public transit routes with children in tow.

This lack of access can have cumulative effects. For instance, a mother with young children who cannot attend English classes may also experience language barriers to accessing other programs or making local friends.

At time of this writing, the COVID-19 pandemic has made necessary drastic reductions in-person activities and gatherings. While many people have been affected by the pandemic, recent immigrants to Canada are at heightened risk of many of its negative impacts, including job loss, financial hardship, difficulty accessing necessary services, and social isolation.

As many services have moved online, the pandemic has accentuated the need for increased digital technology access and skill development, particularly for seniors. Research suggests that the pandemic has resulted in a significant increase in depression and anxiety for mothers¹³. While online programs have some advantages, such as eliminating transportation barriers, resumption of in-person activities and social occasions when it is safe to do so will be critical to facilitating important social connections, particularly for seniors and stay-at-home mothers.

¹³ Racine, Nicole, et al. "Maternal depressive and anxiety symptoms before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in Canada: a longitudinal analysis." *The Lancet Psychiatry* (2021).

Volunteer opportunities

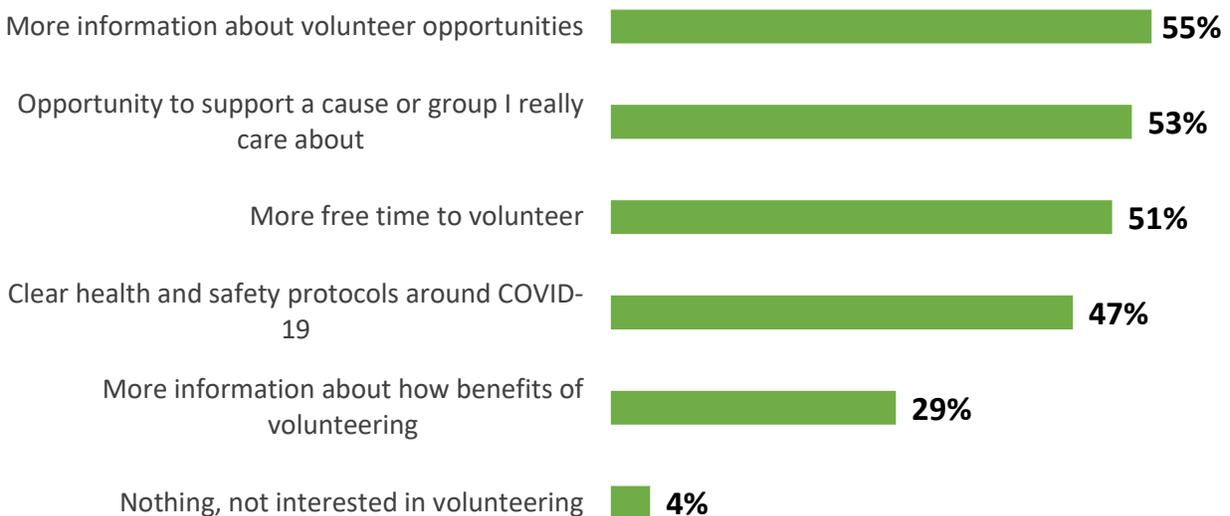
Volunteer work can be one pathway for newcomers to meet new people and get involved in community life. In some cases, it can also help recent immigrants gain Canadian work experience, though it is important to note that employers do not always recognize unpaid work experience and it is sometime not possible or undesirable for recent immigrants to do unpaid work in a field where they have professional expertise. For these reasons, many key informants and participants at the Community Forum emphasized the value of volunteer work primarily in terms of its social benefits and as an opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the community.

Many newcomers and immigrants are already volunteering in the community. In response to the Newcomer & Immigrant Survey, 26% of all respondents reported that they currently volunteer. An additional 49% reported that they have previously volunteered in Canada but are not doing so currently.

To better understand potential barriers to volunteering, the survey asked respondents not currently volunteering about what would make them more likely to volunteer. As shown below, the most common responses were more information about opportunities, opportunities to support a cause or group they really care about, more free time, and clear health and safety protocols around COVID-19.

Figure 15: Factors that would make individuals more likely to volunteer

What would make you more likely to volunteer?



While newcomers and immigrants volunteer for a wide range of events and organizations, according to their interests, there are some unique opportunities for immigrants to support and connect with other newcomers to Canada. These opportunities also often provide extensive training and mentorship. For instance, the [New to BC Library Champions](#) program trains and supports newcomers to become “library ambassadors”, helping connect others to the wide range of services and programs available at the library. Some communities, such as the Tri-Cities, have [Parent Ambassador](#) programs, which offer newcomer parents training on understanding and sharing information in their communities about programs and services available to families. These programs allow newcomers to develop skills, help other newcomers access information and services, and contribute to a stronger community.

What services currently exist

Several community and public agencies play critical roles in facilitating social inclusion of newcomers, including many settlement and employment related organizations. For instance, English language classes and job training programs are also opportunities to socialize and build community. In this sense, lack of permanent space for key settlement service providers in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows not only impacts access to services for individuals, but also undercuts the critical social dimension of those services. As noted earlier, when Newcomer & Immigrant Survey respondents were asked about how settlement services have helped them, the most common response was that it helped them meet new people.



46% of survey respondents say
community and settlement services
helped them meet new people

In addition, the Ridge Meadows Multicultural Society, Family Education & Support, and Community Literacy Committee all contribute significantly to the social inclusion of recent immigrants in the community. Libraries are not only important informational and service hubs, as noted earlier, but also important public meeting space and source of free community programs and events. And schools are an important entry point to the community for newcomers with school aged children.

“When I came to Canada, everything was nice and easy. Children are in school. No fees. Teachers are nice and kind. Children go to school everyday with a smile on their face.”

– Focus Group Participant

Recommendations to Promote Social Inclusion

The recommendations below highlight possible actions to build on existing community strengths to further promote the social inclusion of newcomers and immigrants in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

Table 3: Recommendations to Promote Social Inclusion

Recommendations to Promote Social Inclusion	
1	Explore partnerships with First Nations to further anti-racism work.
2	Explore designation of centralized meeting places where newcomers can gather on a regular basis (e.g., for a multi-cultural potluck).
3	Prioritize cultural celebrations and community gatherings when safe to resume in-person activities.
4	Collaborate with local churches and other faith communities to connect with newcomers and create social opportunities.
5	Explore creation of programs to meet specific needs of youth and expand opportunities for immigrant youth to participate in community activities.
6	Continue to strengthen existing collaborations between LIP and Seniors’ Network to meet specific needs of newcomer and immigrant seniors.
7	Prioritize securing funding for child minding to allow mothers of young children to access programs and activities.
8	Explore the expansion of meaningful volunteer opportunities for newcomers, including exploring creation of Parent Ambassador and Senior Ambassador programs.
9	Continue to support engagement of newcomers in recreational and community centres.