# How Digital Diversity Shapes Employment Outcomes – Digital Inclusion Is a Settlement Imperative

Bridging the gap between Newcomer tech practices and Canadian employer expectations

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# Canada's Evolving Digital Labour Market

Canada's workforce is undergoing rapid **digital transformation**. Employers increasingly prioritize advanced digital **skills**, AI literacy, and modern workplace technologies as essential **competencies** for success.

For immigrants and refugees, **navigating** this landscape requires understanding both the technical requirements and the unwritten **cultural codes** of Canadian digital workplaces.

Digital inclusion isn't just about **access**. It's about ensuring newcomers can **leverage** their tech-savviness to **thrive** in Canada's modern economy.

# DIGITAL INCLUSION

"Digital Inclusion requires intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional and structural barriers to access and use technology" (NDIA)

**Hardware: Access to devices**

Increase access to appropriate hardware and technical support to residents in need.

**Connectivity: Access to affordable, reliable and fast internet for all**

Expand access to the internet and broadband infrastructure for those facing barriers, including low-income and rural residents

**Ability to Use: Digital Literacy**

Train residents in digital skills to increase access to services, equity in accessing virtual learning for high school graduation, employability and more

**Capacity of the nonprofit sector**

Increase the capacity of the nonprofit sector to provide services digitally including for residents for low technical capacity

# DIGITAL EXCLUSION

The digital divide is directly linked to inequality when Newcomers are not able to:

- apply for jobs online
- use basic operating software at work
- use technology for continuous learning/training
- work remotely/online

- access health, financial, government or other services online
- sell or buy new or upcycled items
- monitor utilities usage/pay bills online ie water or electricity

- participate in children's schools' communication systems online
- engage with civic issues online
- access resources to be an informed citizen

If we don’t address digital inclusion in the ongoing processes of digitalization in the labour market and employment we risk further marginalizing Newcomers in their job seeking and career trajectories.

# How Newcomers Use Technology

### Social Media as Pre-Arrival

Many newcomers begin job searches and build networks through platforms like Facebook, Instagram, & WhatsApp before arriving in Canada, often seeing better employment outcomes.

### Peer Information Networks

Immigrants leverage community groups and informal peer networks on culturally specific platforms that may not be mainstream in Canadian offices.

### Mobile-First Habits

Smartphones are often the primary means for digital communication and accessing resources, though these habits don't always translate to workplace technology requirements.

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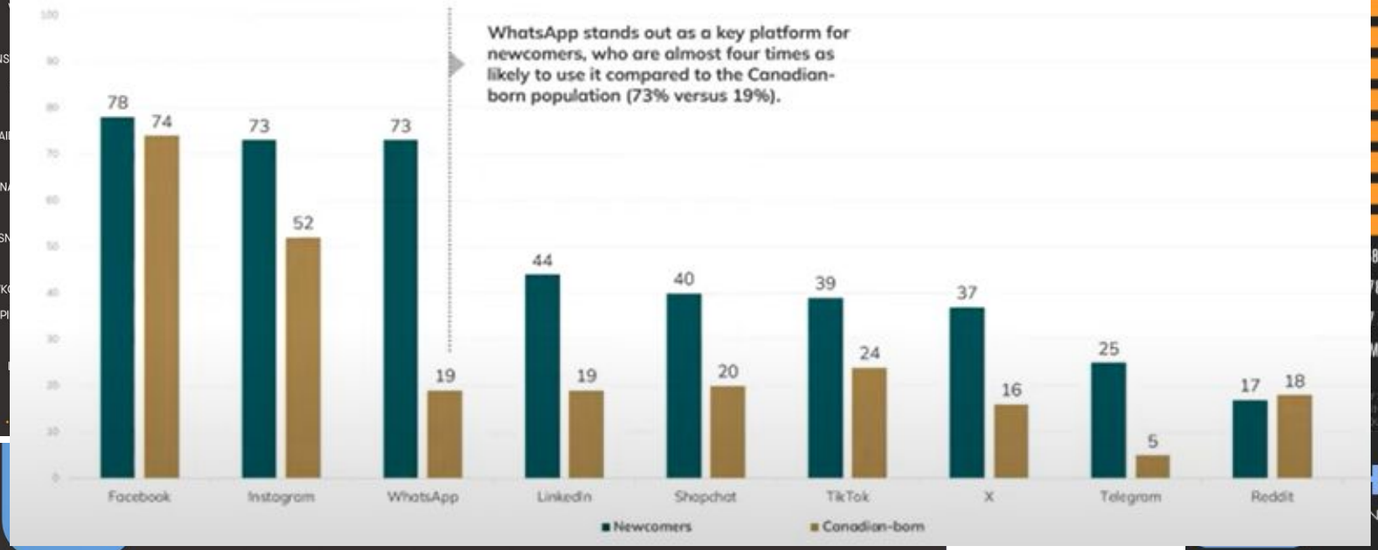
UPDATED

# Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are the leading social networks among newcomers

Social Networking Usage*
Respondents 18+ | %

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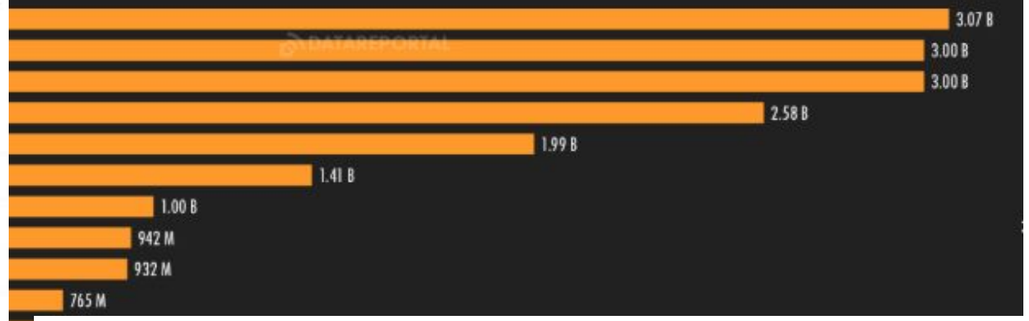
# PERSPECTIVES: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM USE

ILLUSTRATING USE OF THE WORLD'S TOP SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS (NOTE: VALUES MAY NOT REPRESENT UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS)

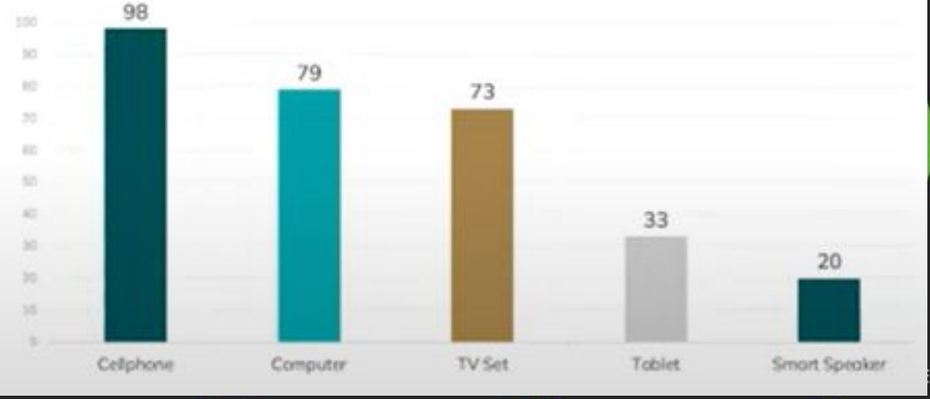
GLOBAL OVERVIEW




# Virtually all newcomers own a cellphone

4 in 5 newcomers have a computer in their household and just over 7 in 10 own a TV set

Device Ownership
Newcomers 18+ | %




SHARE OF WEB PAGE VIEWS: LAPTOPS & DESKTOPS

**56%**

*YEAR-ON-YEAR:*
**-9%**

SHARE OF WEB PAGE VIEWS: MOBILE PHONES

**39%**

*YEAR-ON-YEAR:*
**+21%**

SHARE OF WEB PAGE VIEWS: TABLETS

**5%**

*YEAR-ON-YEAR:*
**-21%**

SHARE OF WEB PAGE VIEWS: OTHER DEVICES

**0.1%**

*YEAR-ON-YEAR:*
**-10%**

we are social · Source: StatCounter, Q1 2016. Main figures show the share of total web page requests originating from each type of device.

@wearesocialsg · 26

MOB
PHON

59.1

YEAR-ON-YEA

**-4.8%**
**-299 BPS**

**+10.0%**
**+358 BPS**

**-27.2%**
**-58 BPS**

**0%**
**[UNCHANGED]**

94

SOURCE: STATCOUNTER. NOTES: FIGURES REPRESENT THE NUMBER OF WEB PAGES SERVED TO BROWSERS RUNNING ON EACH TYPE OF DEVICE COMPARED WITH THE TOTAL NUMBER OF WEB PAGES SERVED TO BROWSERS RUNNING ON ANY DEVICE IN AUG 2025. PERCENTAGE CHANGE VALUES REPRESENT RELATIVE CHANGE (I.E. AN INCREASE OF 20% FROM A STARTING VALUE OF 50% WOULD EQUAL 60%, NOT 70%). "BPS" VALUES REPRESENT BASIS POINTS, AND INDICATE THE ABSOLUTE CHANGE. FIGURES MAY NOT SUM TO 100% DUE TO ROUNDING. WHERE VALUES SHOW AS "→▲", THE GROWTH VALUE DOES NOT FIT IN THE AVAILABLE SPACE. THIS IS TYPICALLY DUE TO CALCULATIONS INVOLVING GROWTH FROM A STARTING POINT OF ZERO OR NEAR ZERO.

we are social · Meltwater

# Real-World Digital Strategies

1

### Pre-Arrival Networking

Building connections through social platforms before landing

2

### Community Forums

Accessing job leads and settlement advice through peer groups

3

### Online Credential Matching

Using LinkedIn and professional networks to showcase qualifications

4

### Information Exchange

Sharing resources and opportunities within communities

These adaptive strategies demonstrate tech-savviness and resourcefulness, yet often go unrecognized by traditional hiring practices.

# The Digital Diversity Gap

A mismatch between immigrant digital practices and employer expectations creates barriers to integration and advancement.

If Newcomers are not aware of what they need to learn in order to work in the Canadian labour market, they'll face additional barriers, layered on top of already challenging labour market access issues, such as credential, skill, and previous employment experience recognition.

# What Canadian Employers Expect

## Core Digital Tools

- Email etiquette and protocols
- Productivity software (Word, Excel)
- Collaborative platforms (Slack, Teams)
- Video conferencing (Zoom, Teams)
- Interacting with a computer

## Advanced Competencies

- AI-powered communication tools
- Cloud computing platforms
- Data analysis capabilities
- Cybersecurity awareness

## Cultural Fluency

- Canadian workplace communication norms
- Professional digital etiquette
- Continuous learning mindset
- Adaptability to new technologies

# Understanding the Gap

### Mismatch in Digital Habits

Newcomers may be highly active and resourceful on digital platforms but may lack familiarity with specific workplace tools or communication norms, resulting in underemployment despite high tech-savviness.

### Credential Devaluation

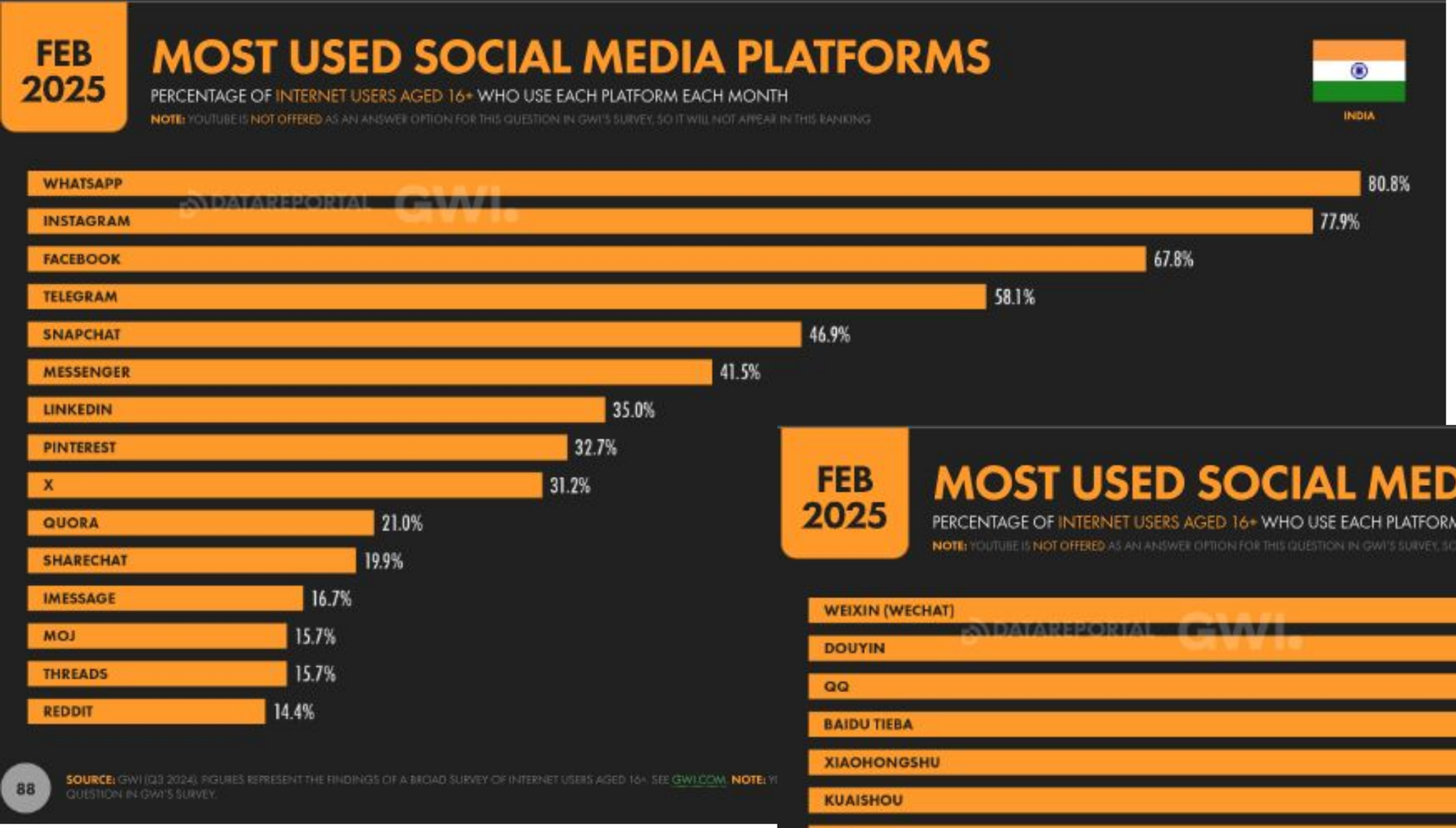
Canadian employers often undervalue overseas digital skills or peer-to-peer learning, focusing instead on locally recognized credentials and traditional formats that don't capture innovative digital strategies.

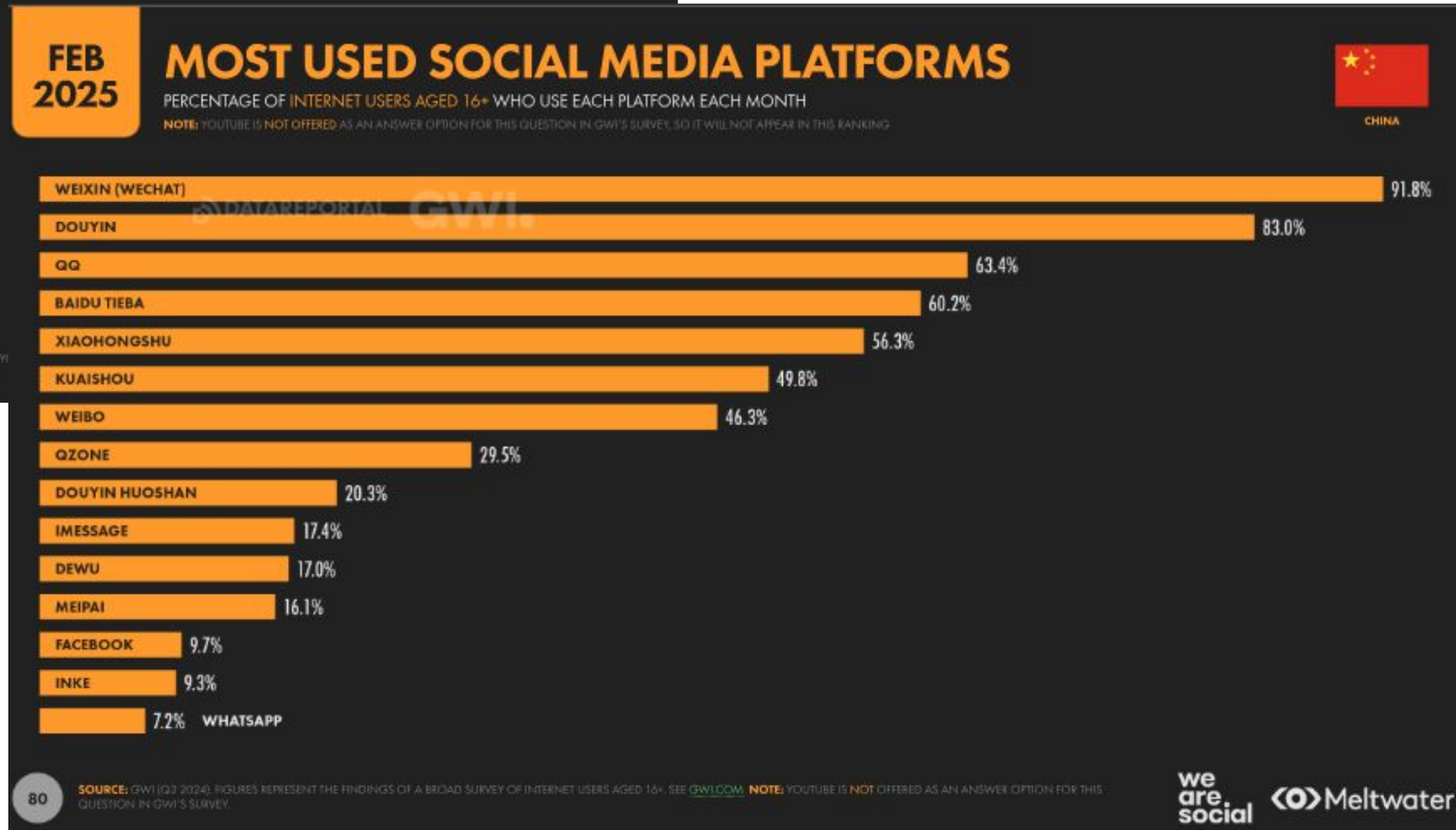
### Missed Opportunities

Employers overlook the innovative digital strategies newcomers use, while newcomers remain uncertain about which digital literacies matter most for local employment success.

### Digital Precarity Risk

Without culturally responsive pathways to bridge these gaps, newcomers remain excluded from higher-skilled, better-paying jobs as automation and AI reshape work processes.




> *If we need Chinese we put We Chat. If you need Indian you go to Telegram.*

# The Cost of Digital Precarity

Digital precarity refers to the vulnerability newcomers face when their digital skills and strategies aren't recognized or valued in the Canadian labour market. This creates a cascading effect:

- Persistent underemployment despite qualifications
- Barriers to career advancement and wage growth
- Exclusion from emerging tech-driven opportunities
- Loss of confidence and professional identity
- Reduced economic contribution to Canadian society

The consequences extend beyond individual outcomes. Canada's economy loses the full potential of skilled immigrant talent.

# Bridging the Gap: A Path Forward

### Culturally Inclusive Digital Training

Design programs that recognize diverse digital backgrounds while teaching Canadian workplace tools and communication norms

### Mentoring and Peer Support

Connect newcomers with mentors who understand both technical requirements and cultural navigation of Canadian workplaces

### Recognition of Digital Diversity

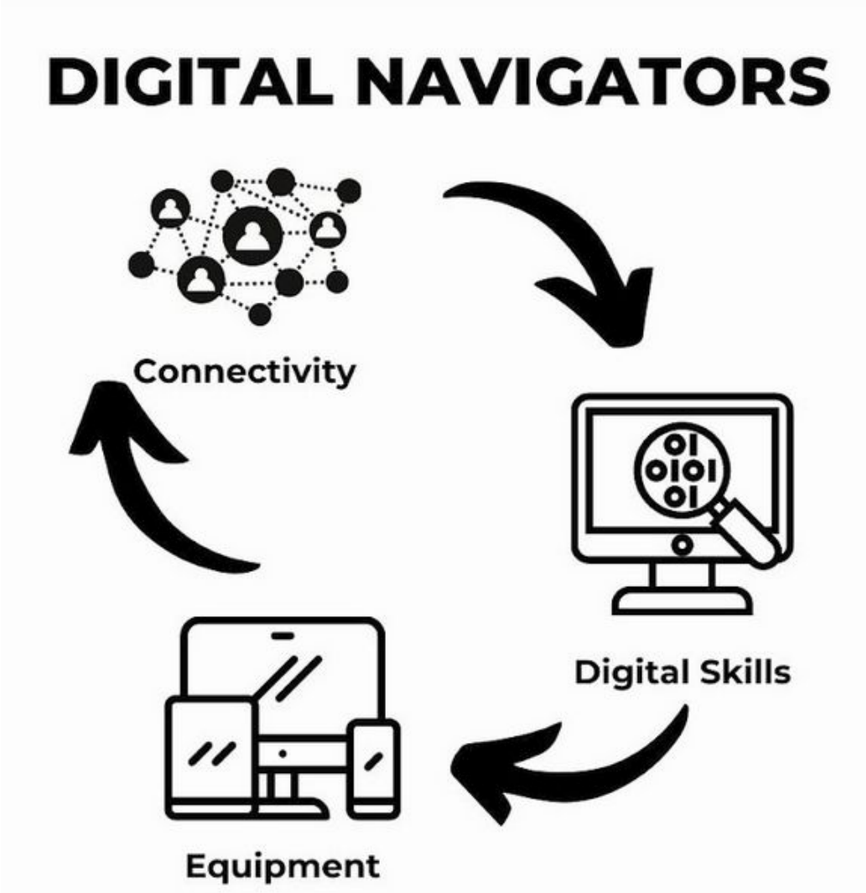
Value innovation and lived digital experience alongside formal credentials, acknowledging transferable skills

### Strategic Partnerships

Collaborate with employers, immigrant influencers, community networks, and settlement agencies to create responsive pathways

# Bridging the Gap: A Path Forward

| Informal digital champions | Volunteer digital champions | Professional digital champions | Embedded digital champions | Work based digital champions |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family, friends or neighbours | Based in variety of locations such as libraries, community & voluntary organisations | Work for charities, private or public sector organisations - full-time, dedicated role | Work for organisations providing services to people who are sometimes digitally excluded | Work for any organisation - especially those undertaking digital transformation |
| Informal learning & support | Informal learning & support | Informal and formal training | Informal digital nudges often linked to specific digital skills and digital transactions | Informal and formal support & training - developing in-work digital skills of work colleagues |



# Digital Diversity: Our Collective Imperative

> Digital inclusion creates an equitable, innovative workforce where immigrant talent can truly thrive.

Settlement service providers, employers, and policymakers must work together to close the digital diversity gap.

By valuing diverse digital practices and creating culturally responsive pathways, we unlock the full potential of Canada's immigrant workforce.

KM4S

# Knowledge Mobilization for Settlement

Articles, webinar recordings, thoughts, research summaries, and good ideas in settlement and inclusion.
Making information more accessible for you to use in your work.

## Digital Settlement Agency

### Baselines in hybrid service delivery

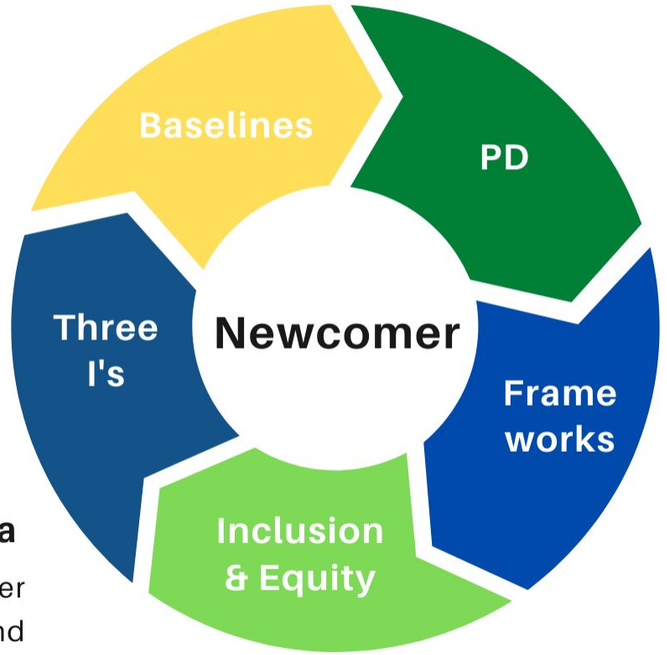
A floor of infrastructure & competencies

### Three I's of Immigrant Integration

Intentionality, Instruments, Investments

### Newcomer-Centric Data

Creating a seamless Newcomer settlement experience and journey.




### Professional Development

Competencies framework for PD. Knowledge mobilization.

### Digital/Data Maturity & Risk Frameworks

Learn, borrow, customize, implement.

### Digital Inclusion & Equity

Aligned with sector values of access, anti-oppression, inclusion.