



Central Vancouver Island
Multicultural Society

Through the Eyes of Our Community

Nanaimo Needs Assessment Report on Inclusion

February 2025





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For questions about the report, more information about alternate format or other resources by CVIMS, or to request a copy, please contact CVIMS at:

www.cvims.org

community@cvims.org

250-753-6911

Research team:

Heba Elgharbawy

Jansait Qughondouqa

Sarah Haynes

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Territorial Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge with respect that Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS) community is located on the traditional unceded lands of the Snuneymuxw, Stz'uminus and Snaw-Naw-As First Nations.



This image was taken at CVIMS's Truth and Reconciliation event on Saysutshun Island with Snuneymuxw cedar weaver David Bodaly.

A message from the research team

The City of Nanaimo has experienced significant growth in recent years, attracting a growing number of newcomers from both within Canada and abroad. This influx has highlighted the importance of researching the factors contributing to the feeling of belonging for newcomers and identifying areas where further efforts are needed to strengthen the community.

Our research team embarked on a comprehensive study focusing on equity, diversity, and inclusion in Nanaimo, with a particular emphasis on newcomers and their experiences within the community. The primary objective of our research was to assess the level of welcoming and inclusivity in Nanaimo from the perspectives of newcomers, service providers, and the broader community. Additionally, to assess the needs within the community by the community members. Through a collaborative effort, we aimed to shed light on the challenges faced by newcomers and identify opportunities for enhancing diversity and fostering a more inclusive and resilient environment for everyone in Nanaimo.

After researching previous work and interviewing individuals involved in similar research, the team tailored questions and approaches to meet the specific needs of newcomers and service providers in Nanaimo.

The journey has been an eye-opening experience, revealing the significant amount of work required in this area, not only for current residents but also for many generations to come. We hope that you find this report inspiring and encourages you to support the journey of more newcomers in Nanaimo.

With gratitude,
Jansait Qughondouqa and Sarah Haynes

Executive Summary

This report outlines the findings of a comprehensive study conducted in 2024 to assess the needs and challenges faced by newcomers in the Nanaimo area. Data was collected through interviews, focus groups, and surveys with newcomers, CVIMS employees, community organizations, service providers, and long-term residents of Nanaimo. Surveys were made accessible in multiple languages to reflect the diverse language needs of participants. The study identifies critical areas for improvement and proposes actionable recommendations to enhance the integration of services and ways to improve the well-being of newcomers.

Key Findings and Recommendations

1. Language and Communication Support

Newcomers face significant language barriers that limit their ability to access essential services and settle into the community. Multilingual resources such as websites, apps, and infographics can be developed along with provide more English language learning opportunities through various methods to increase accessibility. Detailed orientation programs, centrally housed information for newcomers in various languages will also help facilitate smoother communication and understanding.

2. Community Engagement and Empowerment

Social isolation is a common issue for newcomers. Organizing cultural events, community gatherings, and peer mentorship programs can help newcomers build social connections and resiliency. Strengthening partnerships with schools, local businesses, and community organizations will also create a more inclusive environment.

3. Access to Services and Resources

Many newcomers struggle to navigate local systems, such as healthcare and legal services, due to a lack of centralized information and guidance. Establishing resource hubs in key areas and streamlining referral systems can improve accessibility and provide continuous care.

Focused efforts to enhance access to healthcare and legal assistance are also essential. Increasing digital literacy and providing support through virtual platforms can also ease the overwhelm some newcomers face when trying to navigate these systems.

Executive Summary

4. Youth and Family Inclusion

Newcomer youth face unique challenges related to education, mental wellbeing and social isolation. Implementing specialized programs that address educational integration, career guidance, and social-emotional support is crucial.

For families, offering parenting workshops, child-minding services, and family-oriented community events can foster better connections and provide meaningful support.

5. Employment and Economic Support

Newcomers encounter obstacles such as credential recognition, foreign experience recognition, limited job opportunities, and economic hardship. Financial literacy training, employment support, and workplace education on employee rights can support professional engagement. Additionally, providing resources for entrepreneurs will help.

6. Cultural Competency and Awareness

Misunderstandings and stereotypes about newcomers persist in the community, creating barriers to inclusion. Delivering cultural competency training to service providers, businesses, and community members regularly will foster better understanding and cultural competency. Outreach campaigns and community events can also combat stereotypes and highlight the contributions of newcomers. Greater anti-racism training and initiatives are also recommended.

7. Transport and Accessibility

Limited transportation options, especially in rural areas, hinder newcomers' access to basic needs and services. Providing transportation support for individuals, especially those with mobility challenges or new to the region can alleviate this issue.

8. Community-Based Support and Volunteerism

Newcomers often lack opportunities to engage with the local community. Creating structured volunteer networks and encouraging both newcomers and long-term residents to participate in community projects can strengthen connections and provide newcomers with a sense of belonging.

Executive Summary

9. Holistic Support for Mental and Physical Health

Newcomers frequently face challenges related to trauma, social isolation, and accessing healthcare services. While newcomers reported feeling content and welcomed in the community, many continue to experience adversities such as isolation, racism, and post-migration stress. Trauma-informed counselling, wellness programs focused on mental health and stress management that are culturally tailored, and faster access to healthcare services can significantly improve their well-being.

10. Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration

Local community organizations are eager to collaborate with CVIMS to share information, resources, and offer support for newcomers in various ways. Continuous partnerships are essential for creating an integrated support network. Interdisciplinary partnerships can ensure comprehensive services that address all aspects of settlement for newcomers.

11. Raising Awareness

Raising awareness about CVIMS and its services through social media, outreach programs, and community events can increase engagement with newcomers. Highlighting the contributions of newcomers and educating businesses on hiring practices that support diverse talent will also promote inclusion.

Findings from this project highlight significant challenges faced by newcomers in accessing services, settling in the community, and feeling a sense of community and belonging in Nanaimo. By addressing these areas through the recommended initiatives, community organizations, businesses, and individuals can foster a more inclusive and supportive environment that empowers newcomers to thrive in Nanaimo.



Introduction

The City of Nanaimo is a vibrant community known for its extensive natural beauty. As the fifth-largest city in British Columbia, Nanaimo is a rapidly growing community with an estimated population of 107,865 in 2023 (City of Nanaimo, 2024; Statistics Canada, 2021). The city houses over 100 parks, several public beaches, and numerous recreational facilities (City of Nanaimo, 2024).

The city has experienced significant growth, ranking among the fastest-growing regions in Canada. Between 2016 and 2021, the population grew by 10.3%, surpassing both provincial and national averages (Manhas, 2024). Migration is the primary driver of this growth, with over 3,200 net new residents relocating to the area annually over the past five years. The majority of newcomers come from within British Columbia (53%), followed by other provinces (34%), and international locations (13%). The population is expected to continue to grow, with the city's population expected to grow by 12.2% annually over the next five years (Manhas, 2024).

In terms of diversity, members of the community who identify as a visible minority were estimated at 10,675 in 2023 and is expected to grow by 16% by 2028 (Manhas, 2024). The city has a balanced age distribution, with 25% of the population aged 25–44 and another 24% aged 65 and older (Statistics Canada, 2021). The average household size in 2024 was 2.3, with a median household income of \$81,606, below the provincial median. About 66% of households own their residence, while rental affordability continues to be a challenge due to rising costs and limited supply (City of Nanaimo, 2024).

The labour force grew by 3.3% in 2023, higher than provincial growth rates, and unemployment is at 4.8%, below both the provincial and national averages. However, challenges remain in terms of education and income levels, which are behind provincial averages. The service sector, particularly healthcare, social assistance, retail, and education, makes up much of the city's job market (Manhas, 2024).

The housing market reflects broader economic shifts, with a decline in new housing starts in 2023 but a continued emphasis on multi-unit homes, which accounted for 78% of new construction. Housing prices saw a mixed trend, with single-family homes decreasing by 7.2% to an average of \$827,617, while new single-family home prices surged by 13%.

Introduction

Rental vacancy rates rose slightly to 2.7%, yet affordability challenges persist, with average two-bedroom rents increasing by 9% (Manhas, 2024). In 2022, Nanaimo had 3,610 business with one or more employees, according to the City of Nanaimo's, State of the Economy Report.

Nanaimo's educational landscape is influenced by Vancouver Island University (VIU), where international student enrollment grew by 9.4% in 2022, contributing to local economic activity and demand for housing. Across BC, about 1% of all immigrants settled into Nanaimo between 2016-2021. Immigration rates to Nanaimo are expected to continue to grow by 2030, though recent changes to Canadian immigration policy may reduce those rates, particularly for international students (Ramsley, 2024).

Newcomers to Nanaimo are predominately adults in the work force, with most aged 25-44, followed by 5 to 14 years and 15 to 24 years, according to the 2021 Canadian Census (Statistics Canada, 2021). CVIMS provides a wide array of support for newcomers of all ages and backgrounds. Based on CVIMS' Annual Impact Report, they provided over 2,700 clients and 1,103 families with settlement support. They support newcomers from over 100 countries, particularly from the Ukraine, India, China, Philippines, and Syria (CVIMS, 2024).

CVIMS also curates programming specifically for those who identify as refugees or from forcibly displaced backgrounds and has helped settle over 175 government-assisted refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia and more (CVIMS, 2024).



Methodology

To incorporate a variety of perspectives and lived experiences in this research, a mixed method approach was used including administration of surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Data was collected from newcomers to the Nanaimo community as well as long-term residents, service providers, and staff from local community organizations. Data collection occurred between Oct-Dec 2024. See Appendix A for definitions of key terminology used throughout this report and Appendix B for the survey, focus group, and interview questions used. Each source of data consisted of the following:



01. Surveys

A total of 200 survey entries were collected from newcomers, CVIMS employees, local community organizations and service providers were conducted. Surveys were promoted through print and digital advertisements in local media. Surveys were also offered in multiple languages: English, French, Ukrainian, Dari, Mandarin, Spanish, and Arabic.



02. Focus Groups

A total of five focus groups were held with 56 newcomers all together. Focus group and interview questions were developed by CVIMS Community Engagement Team. Facilitators took detailed notes of discussions within each focus group.

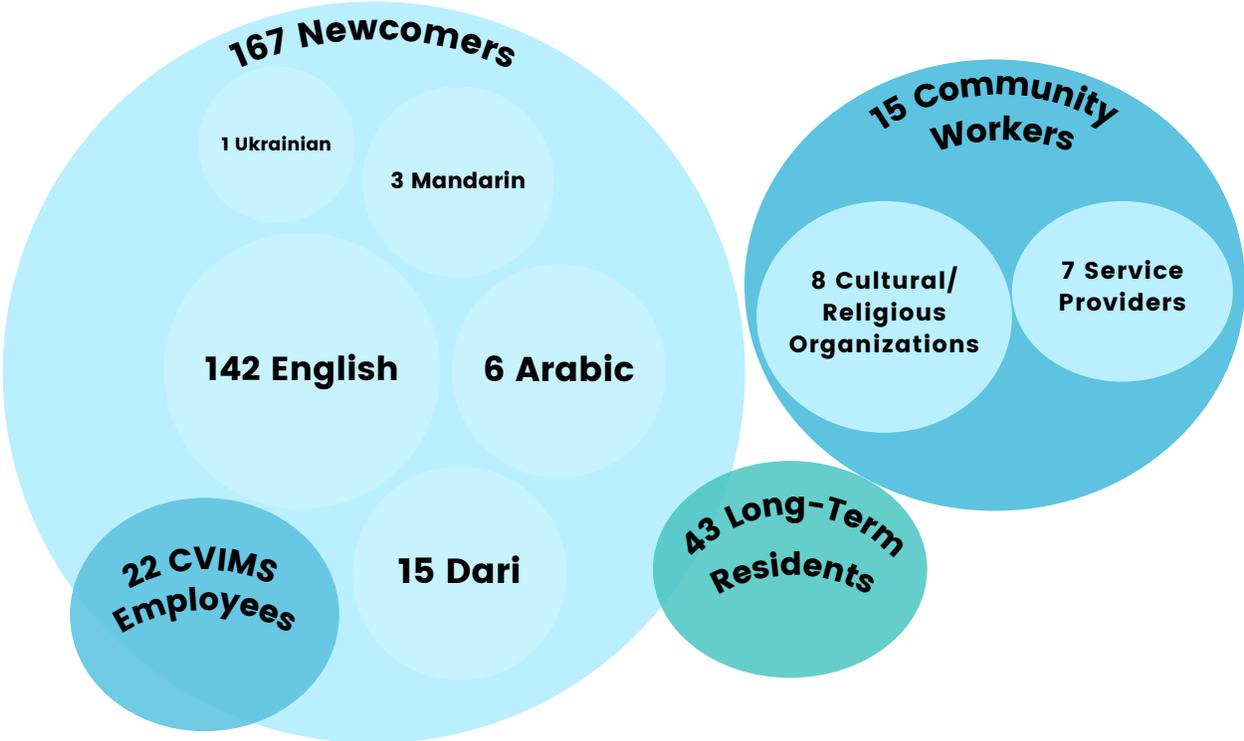


03. Interviews

Fourteen interviews were conducted with service providers in the community. Service Providers interviewed included employees and/or volunteers from large publicly funded organizations and institutions, not-for-profit organizations of varying sizes, and small organizations funded through private donations. Interviews were conducted online for approximately 30-45 mins. Interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Methodology

Of the 200 total survey responses, participants identified as:



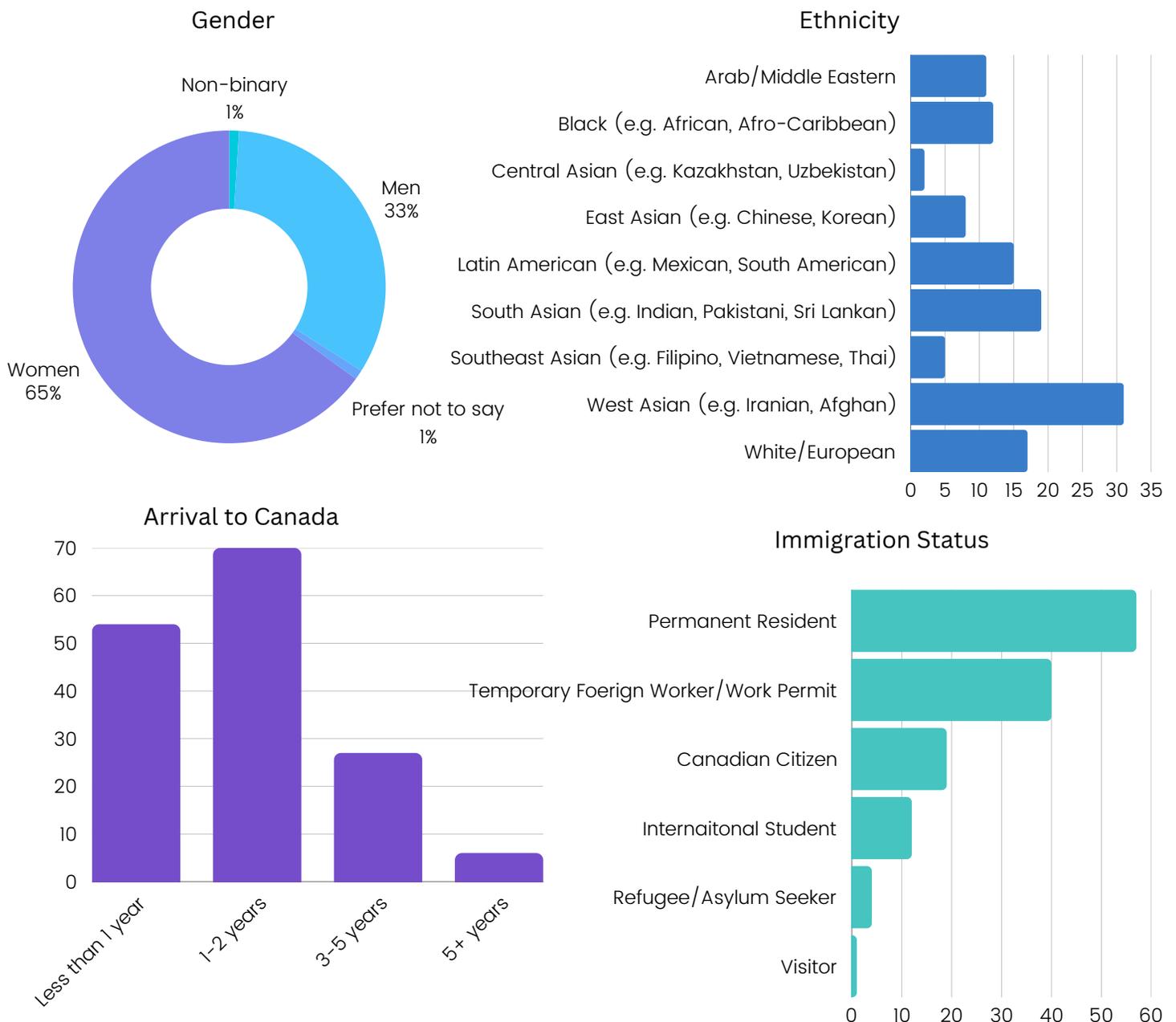
Questions used in these surveys were developed by the CVIMS Community Engagement Team and were adapted from the 2023 Needs Assessment Report 2023 by the Immigrant Welcome Centre in Northern Vancouver Island, the Langley Local Immigrant Partnership (LIP) Resident from 2022, the Calgary LIP Newcomer Survey, and 2023 Guelph-Wellington Immigrant Survey Report. The goals of this assessment report is to understand the current state of newcomers needs, community strengths, areas for further improvement and opportunities for collaboration with local community organizations.

The following is a summary of the key findings from the survey data received from newcomers, community organizations, service providers, and other long-term residents.

Survey Results

Newcomers Survey

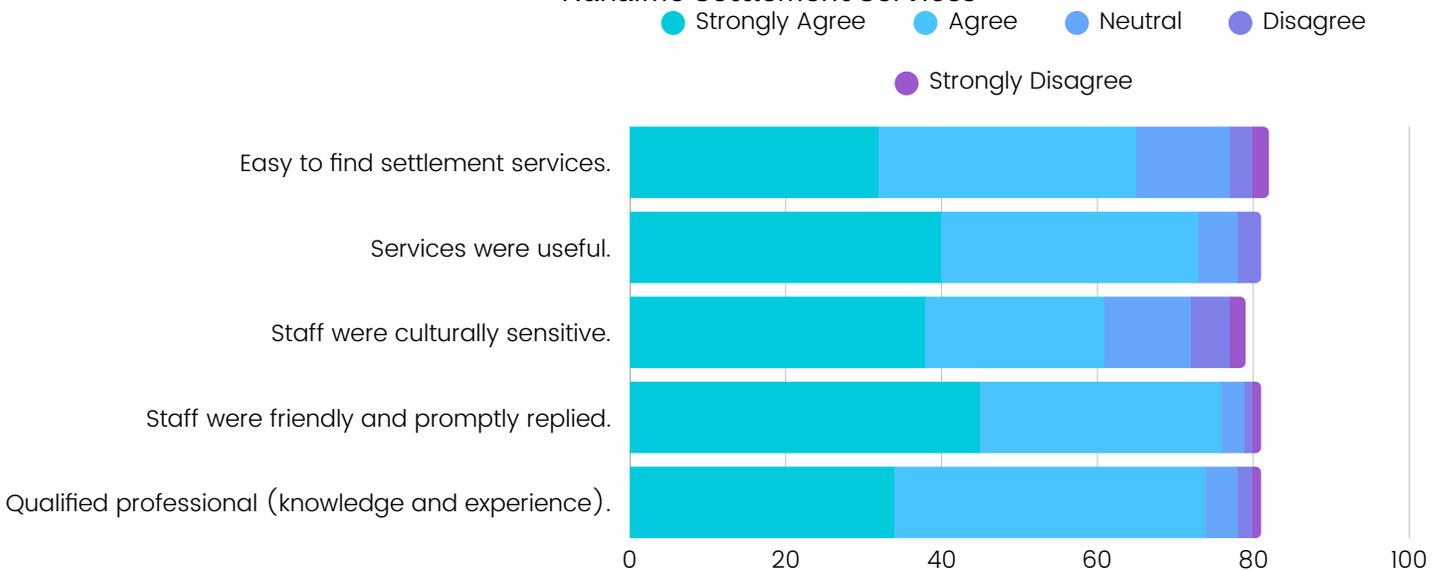
Of the 167 newcomers who participated in our survey, the majority of participants have been in Canada between 1-2 years, identify as women and aged 35-44 years old, and identify as West Asian. Many hold advanced post-secondary degrees and have permanent residency.



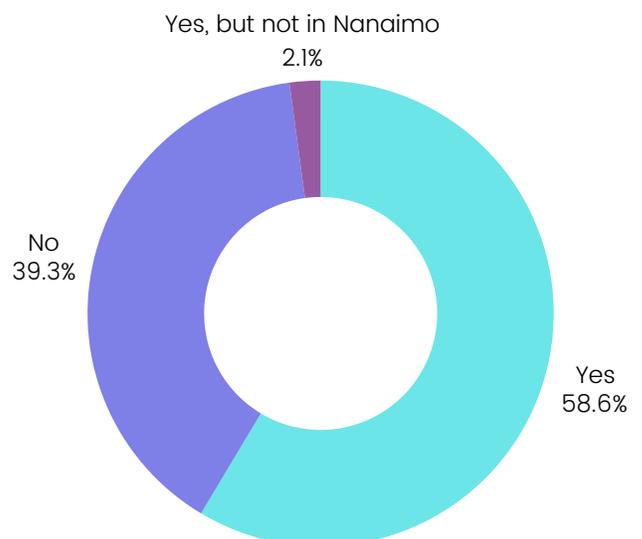
Survey Results

Approximately 59% of newcomers had accessed settlement services in Nanaimo and when asked for feedback on the quality of these services, most reported satisfaction with all aspects of the services they received, particularly staff interactions and their demonstrated knowledge and experience. For those who did not use settlement services, most reported they had no knowledge that such resources were available or assumed they would not qualify for these services.

Nanaimo Settlement Services



Settlement services

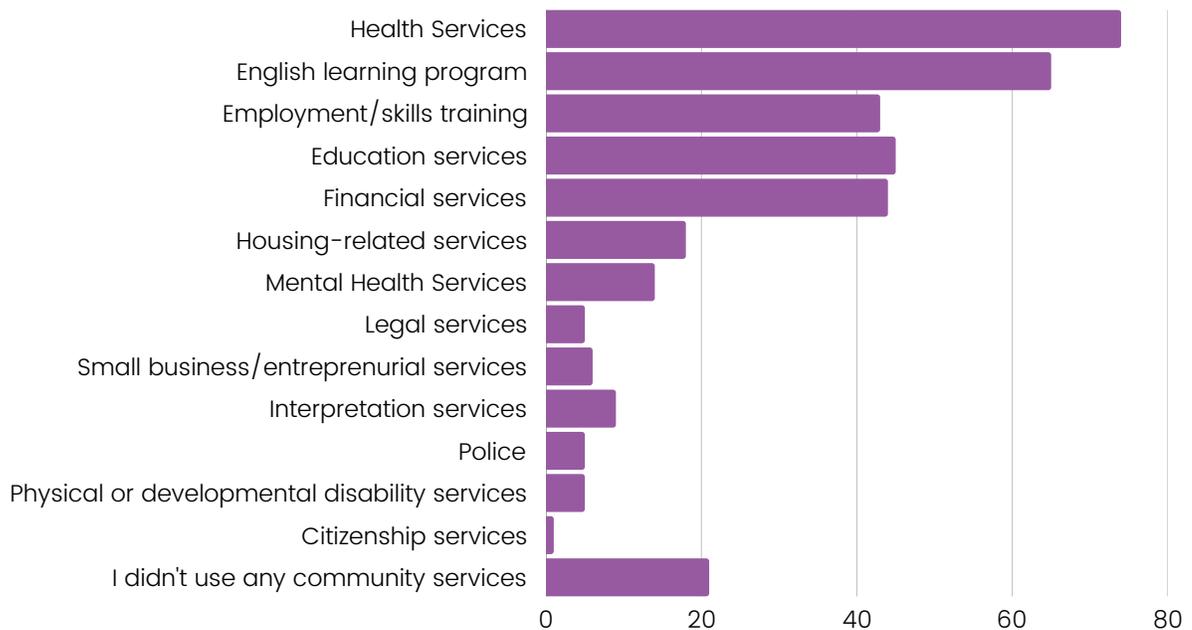


“Housing (and property generally) is not affordable, this is critical to a healthy economy and society, we are failing. Also the public spaces are lacking and hostile to non-automobile movement, with large roads being forced upon everyone.”
 -Newcomer Respondent

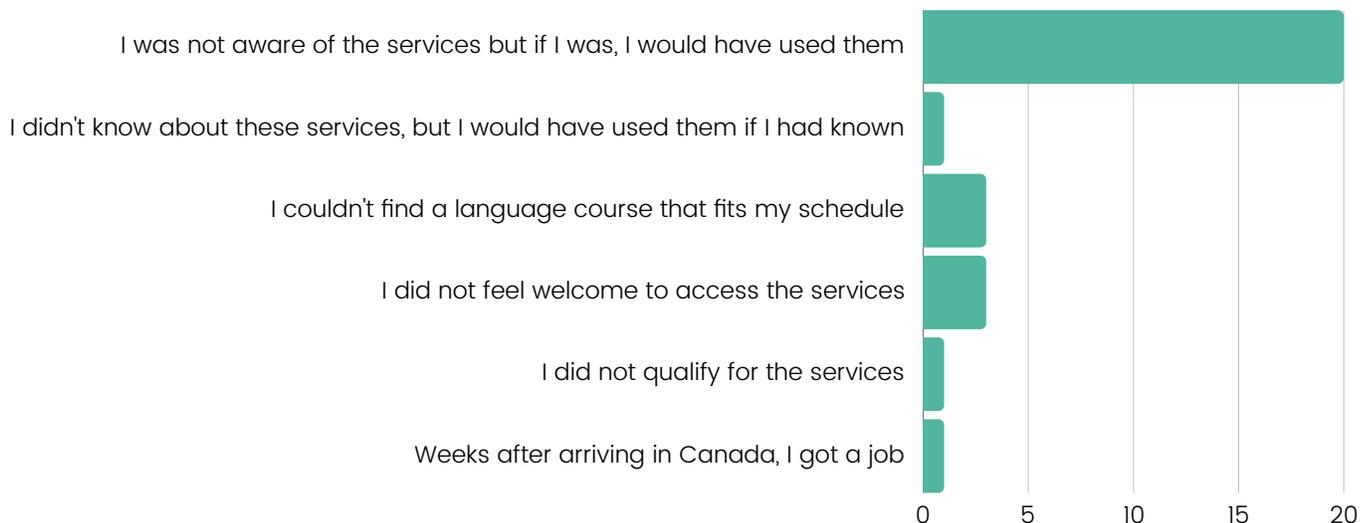
Survey Results

Outside of settlement services, newcomers who did access resources primarily used health related services as well as English programs and other educational services. However, about 13% of participants did not use any community services, primarily because they were unaware of their existence.

Which of the following community services have you accessed?

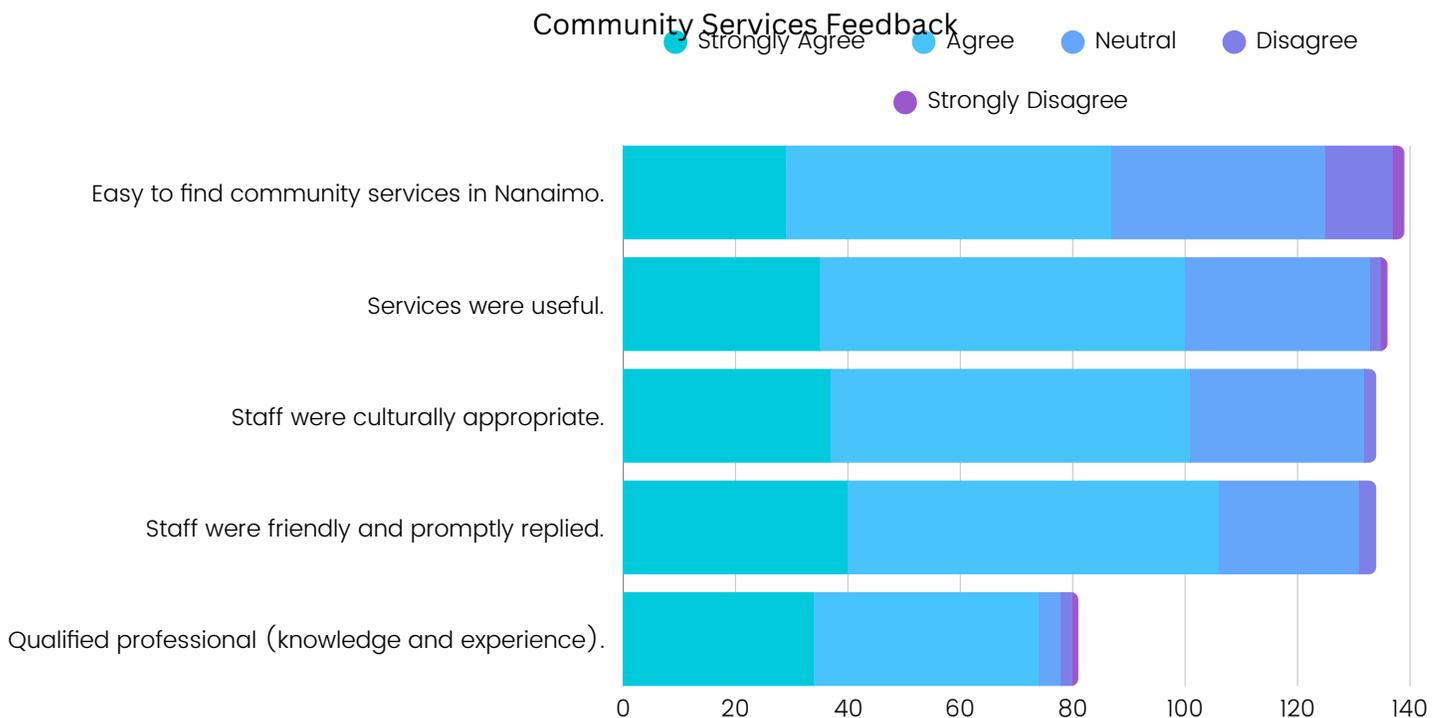


What are the reasons for not using community services?



Survey Results

Those who accessed community services reported mostly positive feedback including ease of access, usefulness of services, and that staff were qualified, friendly, and culturally responsive. Respondents also shared additional events and programming through community organizations can help facilitate social connections, economic growth, and learning opportunities for all.



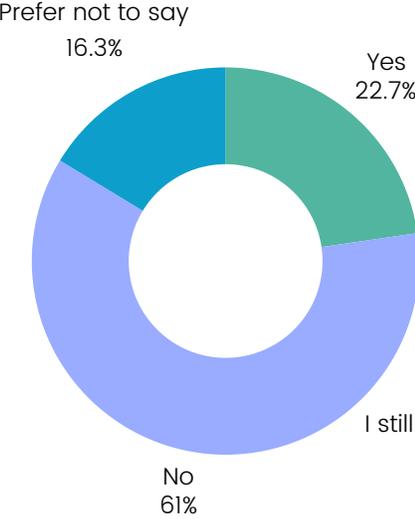
“Personally, I would like more cultural and recreational events as well as theme fairs (cultural exchange week, international food fairs, local talent contests, international dance contest, costume contest, etc.) in general to stimulate more social life and, at the same time, more opportunities to get a job where I can contribute my energy, commitment and willingness to learn and develop new experiences despite my poor command of English.” -Newcomer Respondent

Survey Results

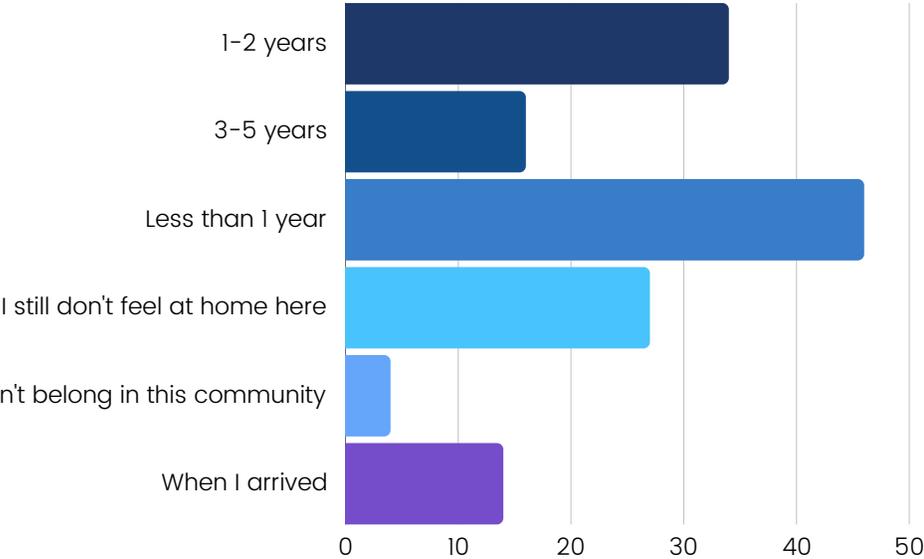
Discrimination and racism can have deep, lasting impacts to newcomers' sense of connection and belonging in communities. While the majority of newcomers surveyed (61%) did not report any instances of discrimination or maltreatment, 23% did report experiences of discrimination and 16% chose not to report. This relatively high percentage of anonymous respondents choosing to opt out of this question may indicate many are not comfortable sharing about such experiences or are not aware of how they can occur in the community.

Those who reported experiences of discrimination shared that it occurred in a variety of settings and predominately due to their English language abilities, skin colour, and immigration status. Discrimination was also experienced primarily in employment or hiring settings, in public, or in a local business. It is also important to note that a majority of newcomers surveyed have been in Canada between 1-2 years and research shows that immigrants often experience initial positive feelings known as the "honeymoon phase" of immigration before perceiving greater cultural shock, migration stress, and feelings of exclusion and isolation (Mohamed et al., 2022). This transitional phase may have impacted some of the more positive responses received by the newcomers surveyed in this report.

Have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in the community?

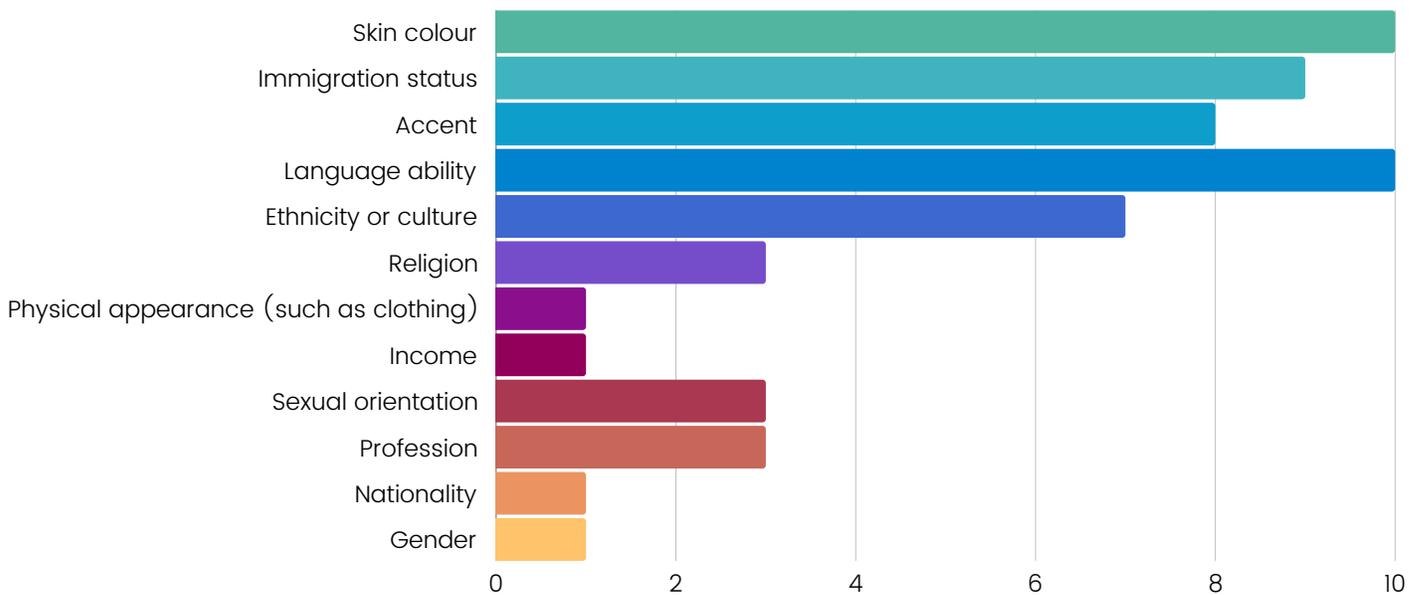


How long did it take for you to feel at home and a sense of belonging in Nanaimo?

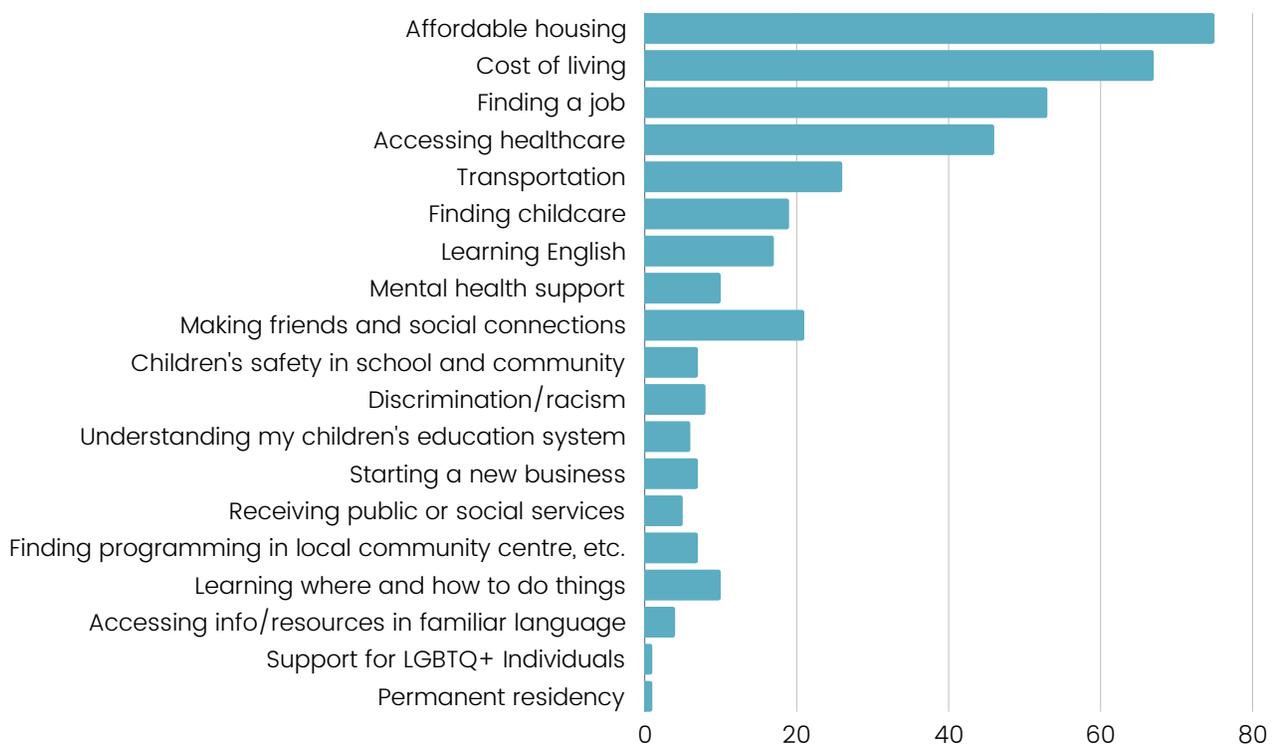


Survey Results

If you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others, what are the reasons?



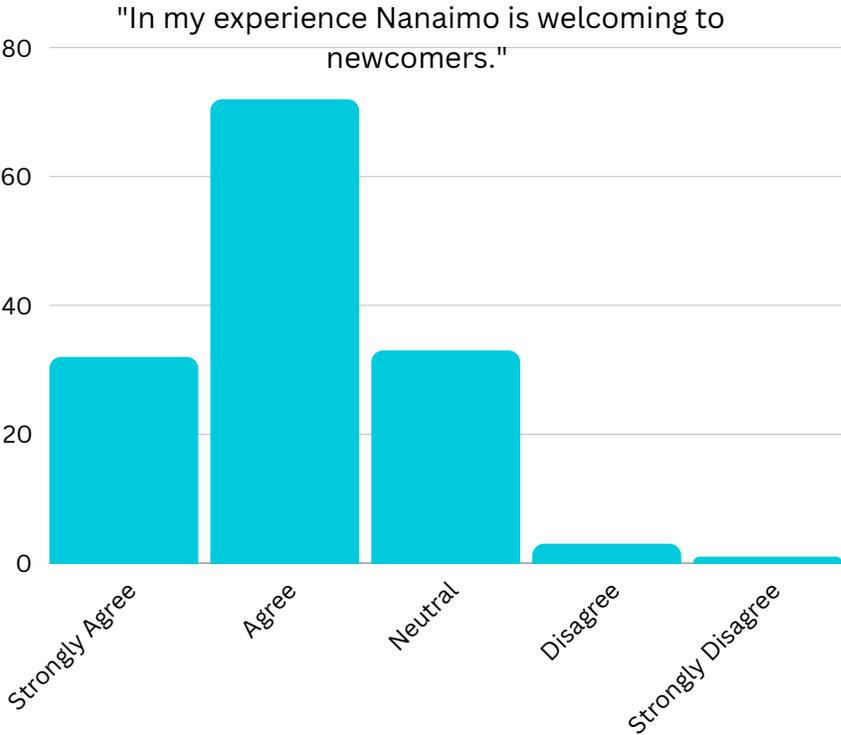
What are the biggest challenges you and your family have experienced in the last year in Nanaimo?



Survey Results

Participants also provided suggestions for organizations on how to better support newcomers. Some examples include supporting with basic needs such as affordable housing and employment support. The need to stress the importance of supporting newcomers to employers and local community members was also expressed.

Although some negative experiences and areas of improvement were shared, the vast majority of newcomers felt that the city of Nanaimo is an overall welcoming place for them. Many respondents also expressed their gratitude for the supports they have received and for the opportunity to share their insights through this survey.



“Thank you for valuing our opinions and working so hard for our well-being.”
-Newcomer Respondent

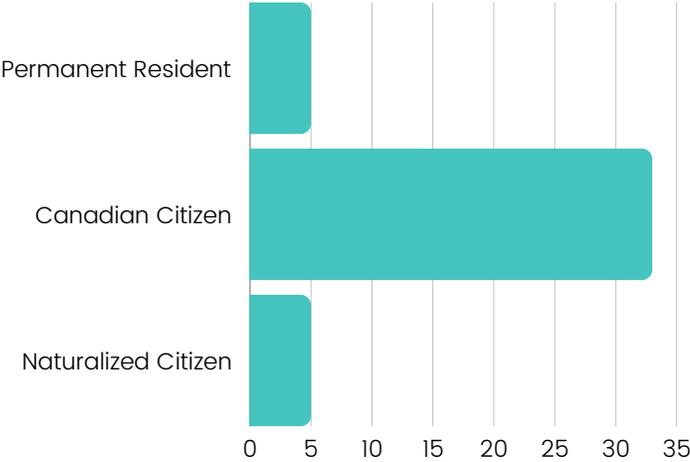
“Nanaimo is a wonderful and special place for me and my family because of its people, climate, tranquility and beautiful nature.”
-Newcomer Respondent

Survey Results

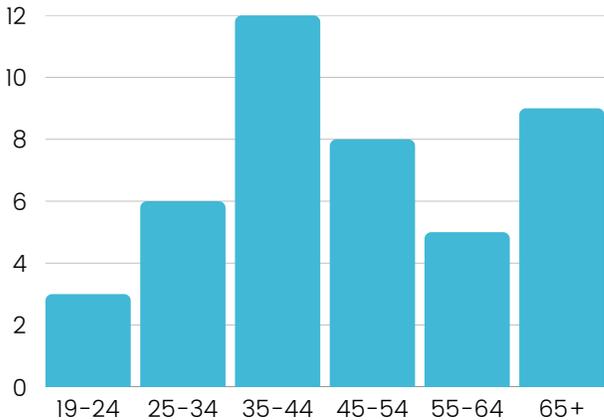
Long-term Residents

Long-term residents of Nanaimo represents those who have lived in Nanaimo for over 5 years or more. A total of 43 people participated in this survey asking about their interactions with newcomers, perspectives on immigration, and suggestions on how to support newcomers to Nanaimo. Majority of the participants were ages 35-44, identified as women and White, and were Canadian citizens with higher education and full-time employment, or retired.

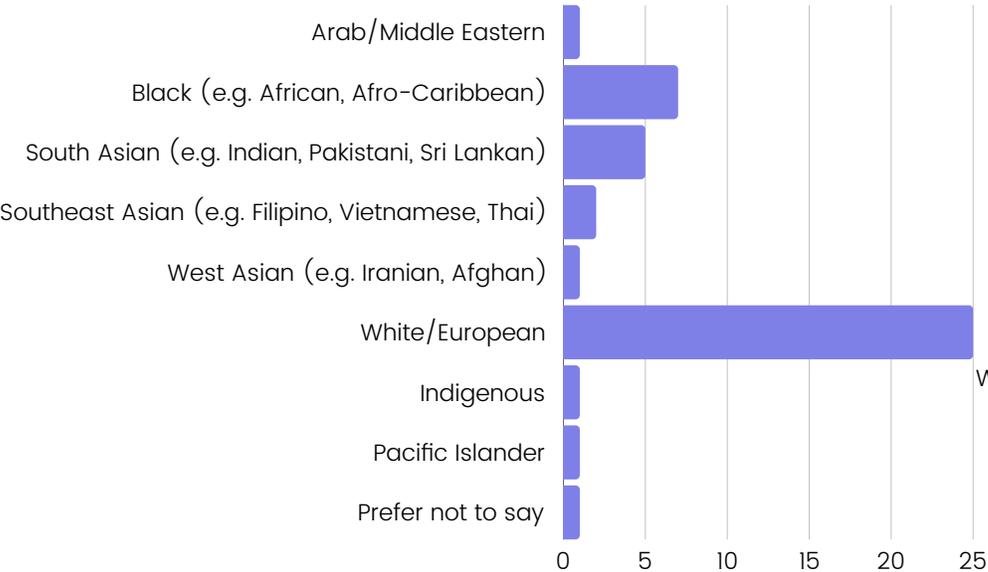
Immigration Status



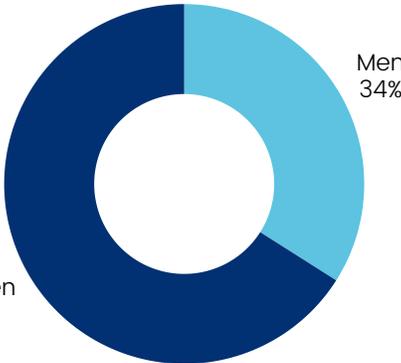
Age Range



Ethnicity



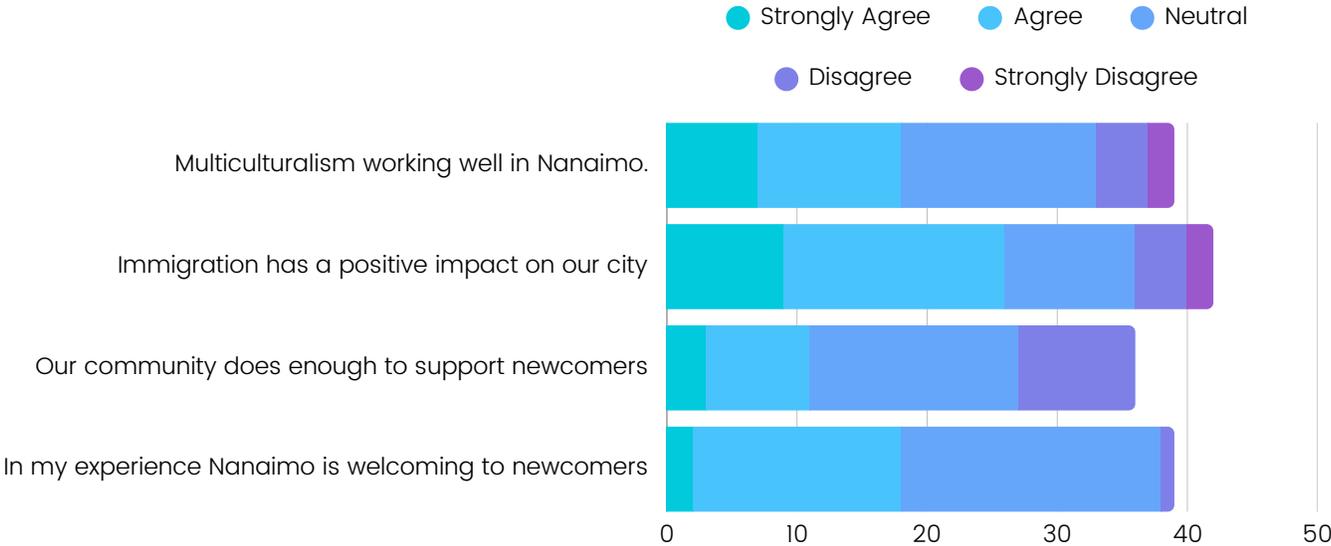
Gender



Survey Results

Long-term residents of Nanaimo were asked their views on immigration, diversity, and their experiences interacting with newcomers. Most shared that they are for immigration and multiculturalism in their communities while a considerable amount shared, they were unsure or neutral on whether their city is providing sufficient support and is a welcoming place for newcomers.

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements:



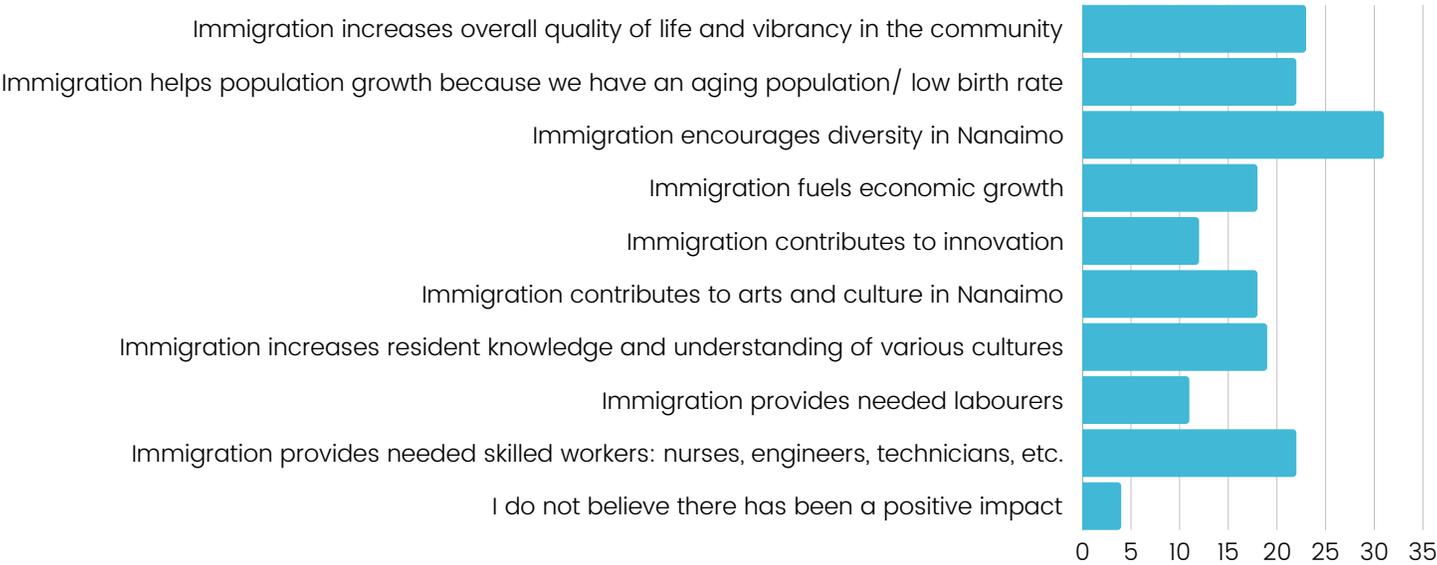
What are some ways that Nanaimo makes new immigrants feel welcome in the community?



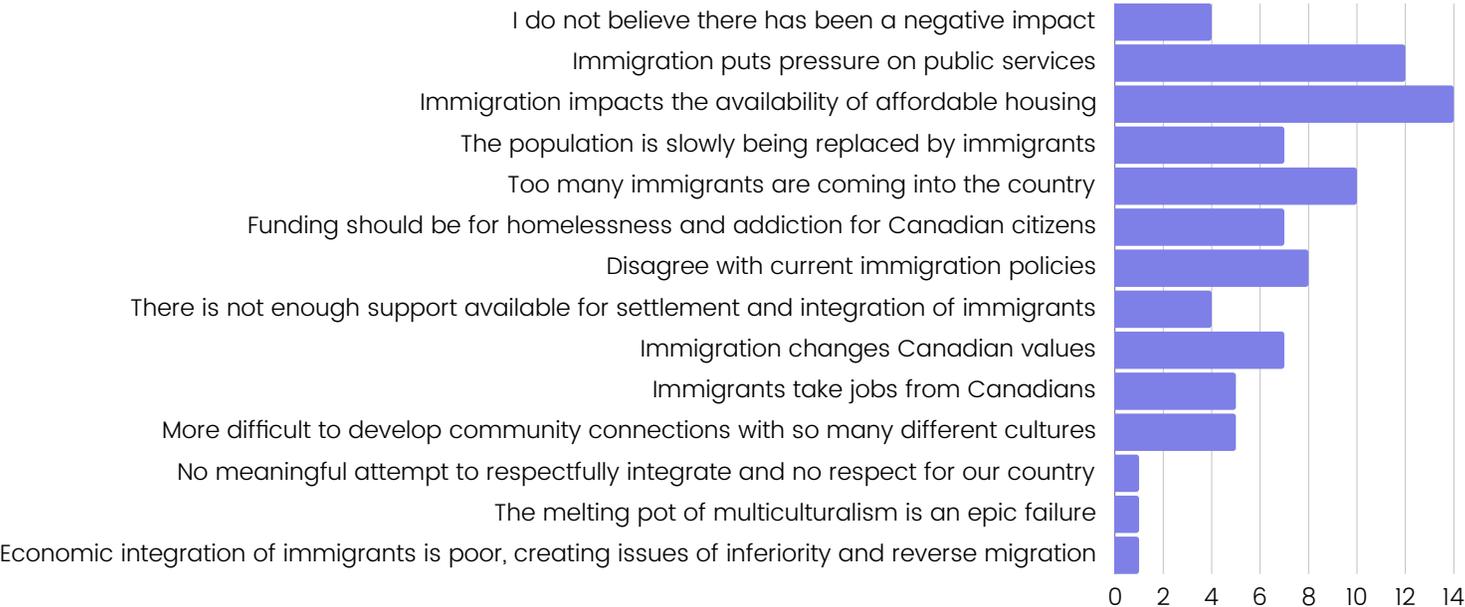
Survey Results

In terms of perceptions on immigration, many felt that newcomers provide several advantages to the local community such as encouraging diversity, supporting the local economy and overall quality of life in Nanaimo. However, some participants were also concerned of how the city can provide sufficient resources such as housing and local services.

In your opinion, how has immigration *positively* impacted Nanaimo?



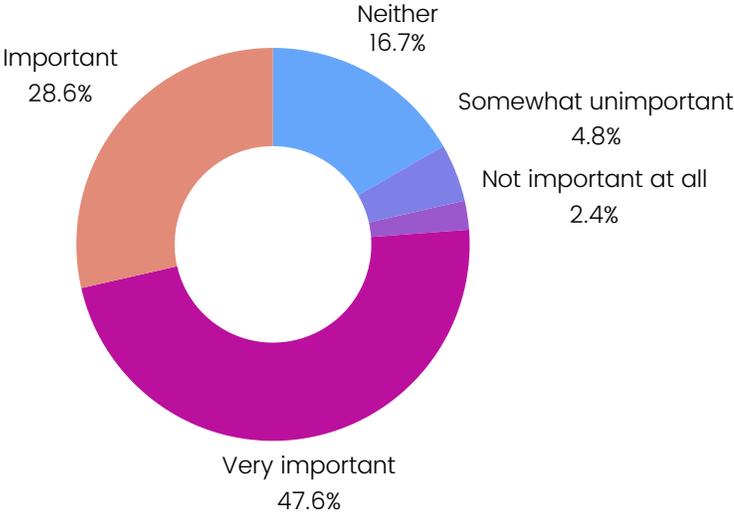
In your opinion, how has immigration *negatively* impacted Nanaimo?



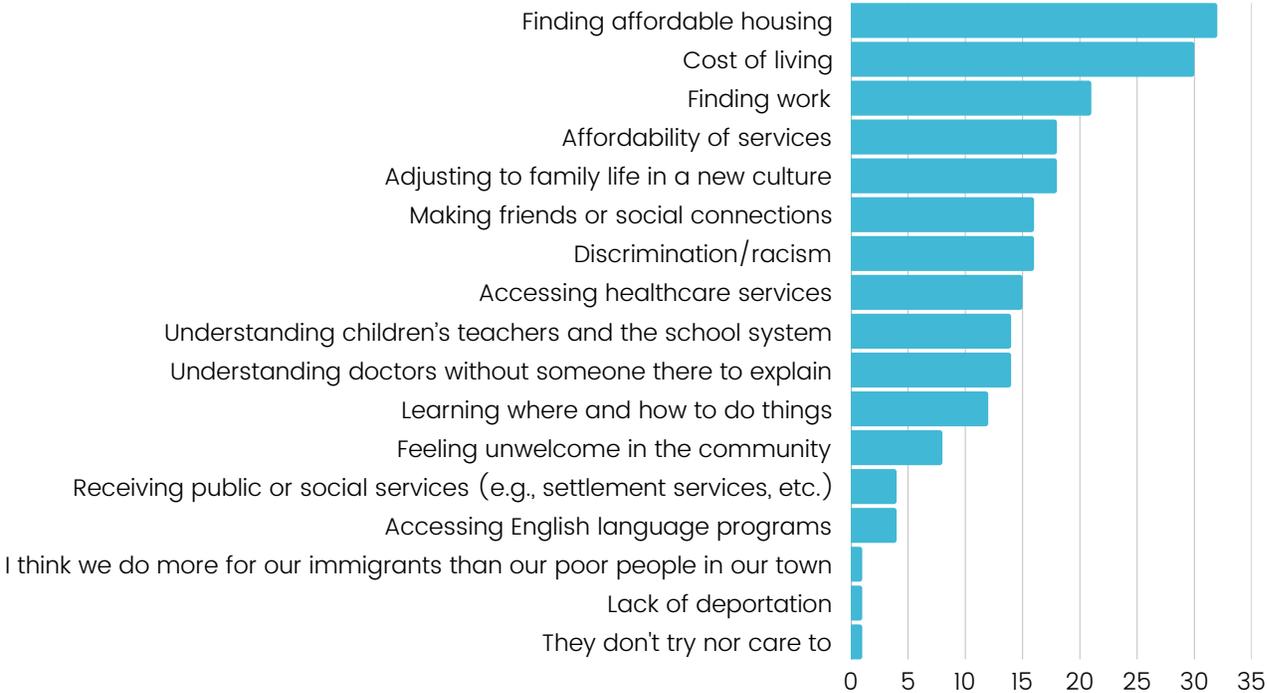
Survey Results

Some participants also felt that immigration changes what they consider to be traditional Canadian values or were strongly against Canadian immigration policy at the time of the survey, particular concern was also placed on how delegation of resources for immigrants impacts locally unhoused people or those experiencing the impacts of substance abuse.

How important is it for Nanaimo to make more of an effort to be welcoming to new immigrants?



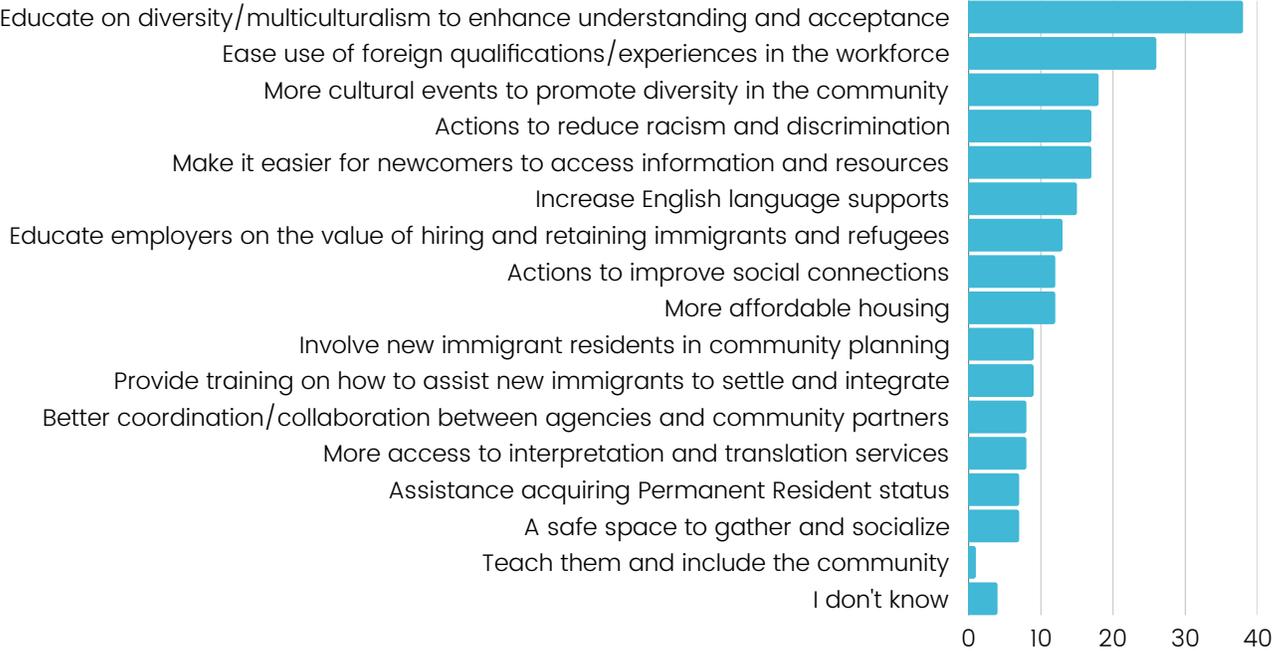
In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges faced by new immigrant residents in Nanaimo?



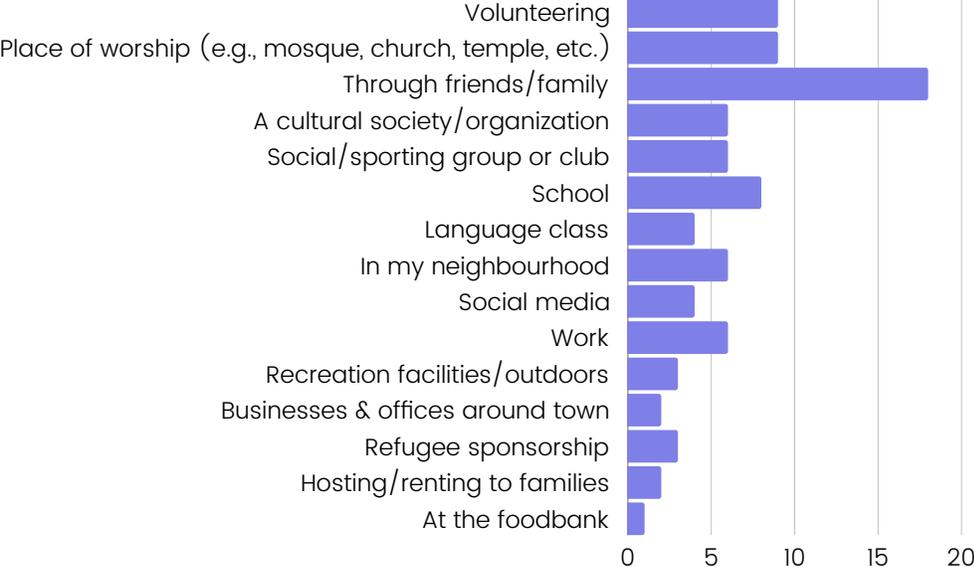
Survey Results

Strong feelings against immigration and misconceptions of including community members from diverse backgrounds was also noted in survey responses. For example, some used strong language to express feeling that immigrants should “get the f** out”, or believed that there is a lack of respect or lack of assimilation into Canadian life that they disagree with.

What further efforts should be made to welcome and include immigrants?



If you have social relationships with immigrants in Nanaimo, where are you forming those relationships?



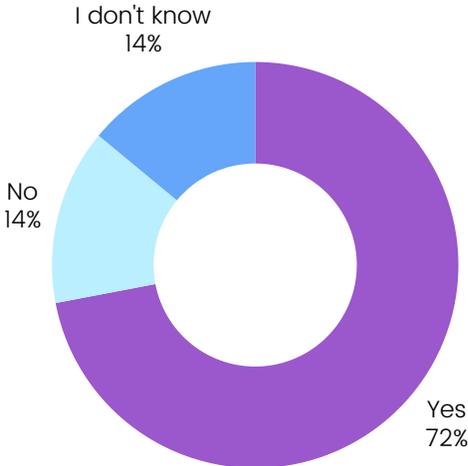
Survey Results

Service Providers

Local settlement and community services are key to supporting newcomers to the area. Learning from professionals on how they have supported newcomers and how to help them in their important work is can be a vital means of support in the settlement process.

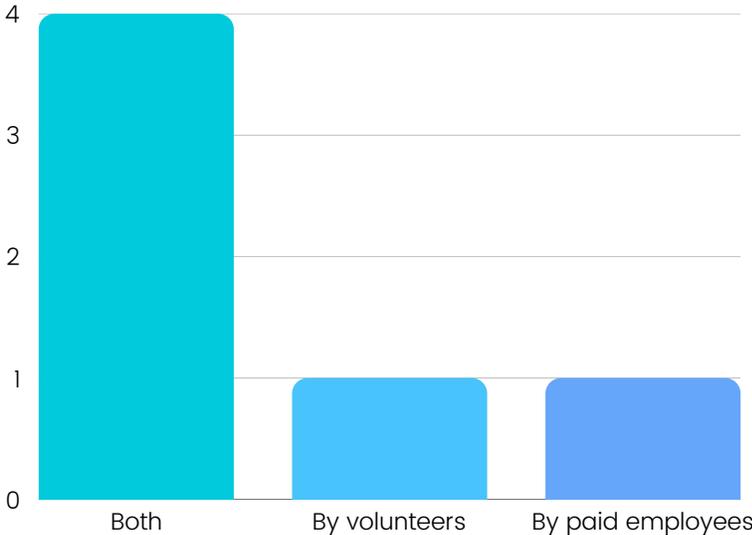
Service providers reported that much of their work relies on both staff and volunteers for community initiatives and many have made efforts to support diverse client needs including integrating Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) policies and cultural training into their work and offering supports for clients in multiple languages.

Does your organization or business have policies on equity, diversity, and inclusion informing its hiring process and interactions with the public/clients?



57% of organizations surveyed provide services to newcomers in languages other than English

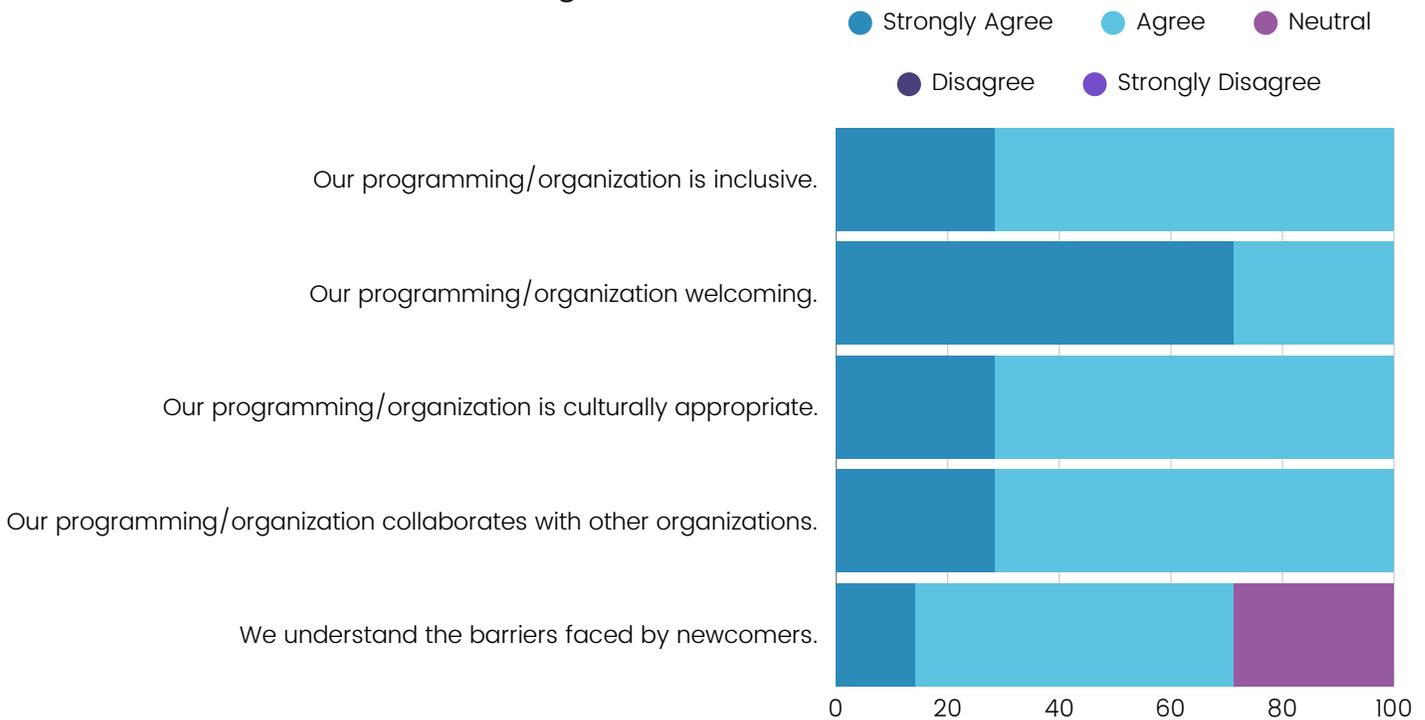
How are the services and resources for newcomers delivered?



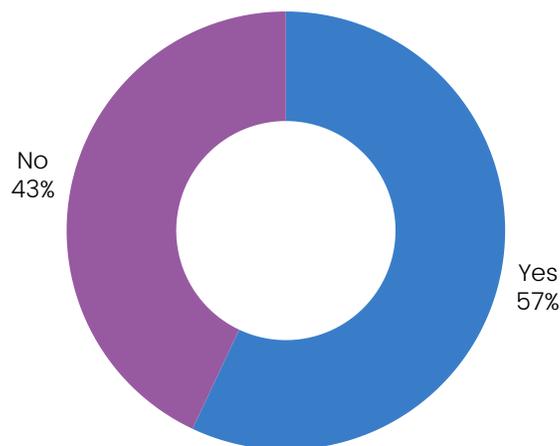
Survey Results

A vast majority of service providers also feel strongly that their organization is a welcoming, inclusive place for newcomers and that they value demonstrating culturally tailored approaches to their work and collaborating with other local organizations.

Organization Characteristics



Does your organization or business offer any training to staff or volunteers to work more effectively with newcomers (trauma informed practices, mental health, cultural competency)?

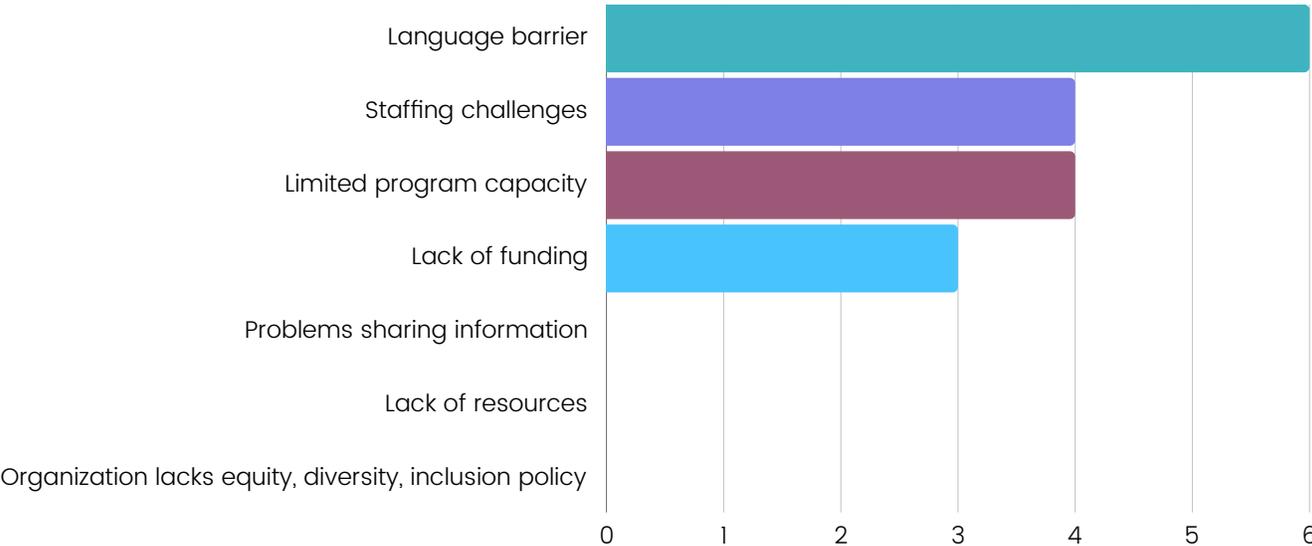


Survey Results

Service providers were keen to collaborate with CVIMS on future initiatives/programming and the majority were knowledgeable about CVIMS services. Providers were open to helping newcomers on their needs but some felt unsure if they were aware of the exact challenges newcomers to Nanaimo face or how they can be of help. Participants felt that while they are eager to help newcomers how they can, they felt that language differences and capacity/funding issues in their organizations would make it difficult to do so.



What are the barriers you face in effectively providing services for newcomers?

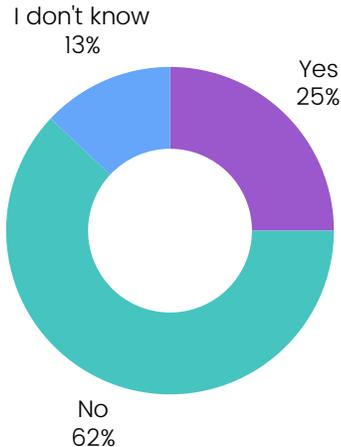


Survey Results

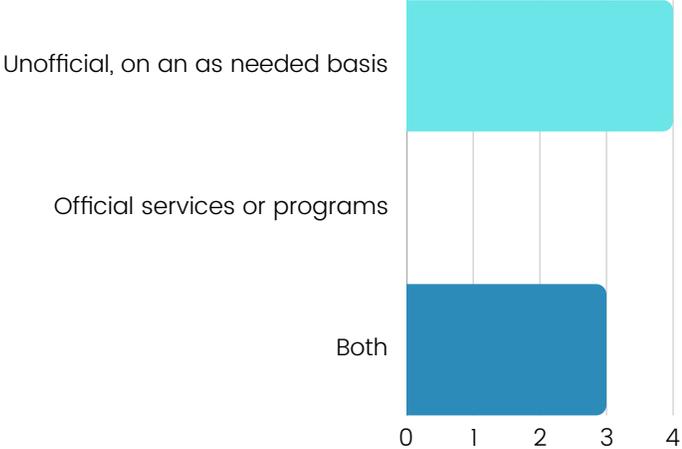
Cultural/Religious Organizations

Community resources such as local cultural programs, community centres, and religious spaces are also a key aspect of supporting newcomers to the community and building social connections. Staff from local cultural and religious organizations were surveyed and while none had established official programs designated to newcomers, they do make efforts to support newcomers on an individual basis and many offer sponsorship and supports in multiple languages. About 75% of organizations surveyed did not or were not aware of training they have on supporting newcomers with their unique needs.

Does your organization offer any training to staff or volunteers to work more effectively with newcomers (trauma informed practices, mental health, cultural competency)?



How would you describe the services and resources your organization offers to newcomers?



offer sponsorship for refugees or services in languages besides English

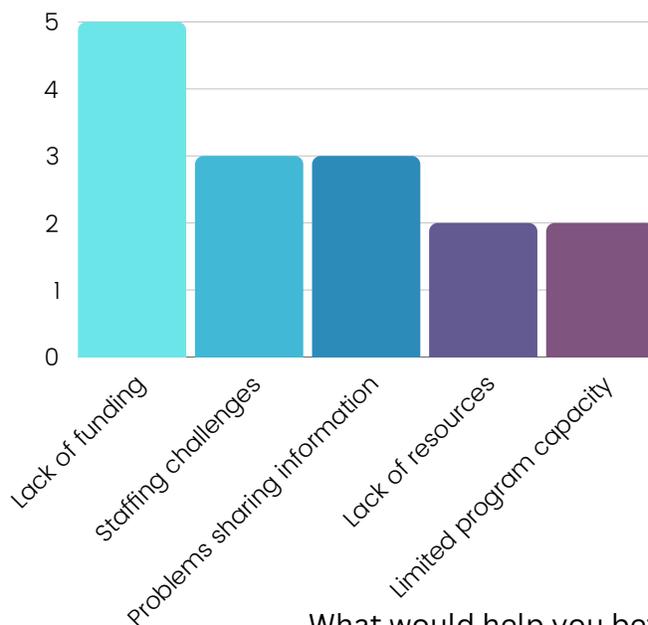


do not offer sponsorships for refugees or services in languages besides English

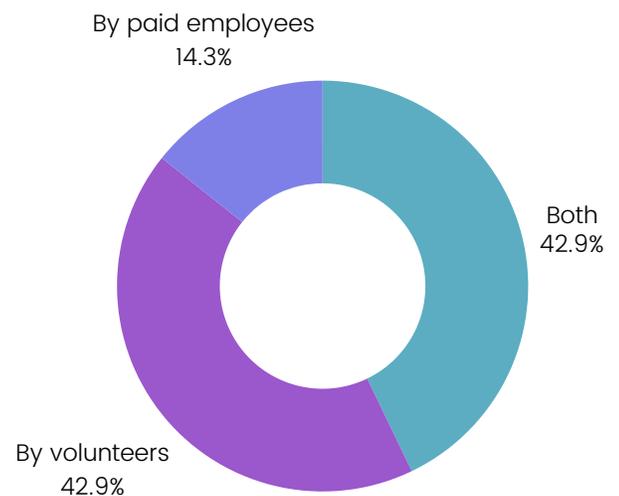
Survey Results

Staff also shared other challenges they have for effectively supporting newcomers including lack of funding and capacity to have the staff and resources needed to do so. Most programs heavily rely on volunteers to facilitate their programming. Participants are open to collaborating with other groups to support local initiatives and feel that increase in funding, educating the community on immigration would help. About 62% were aware of services CVIMS offers for newcomers.

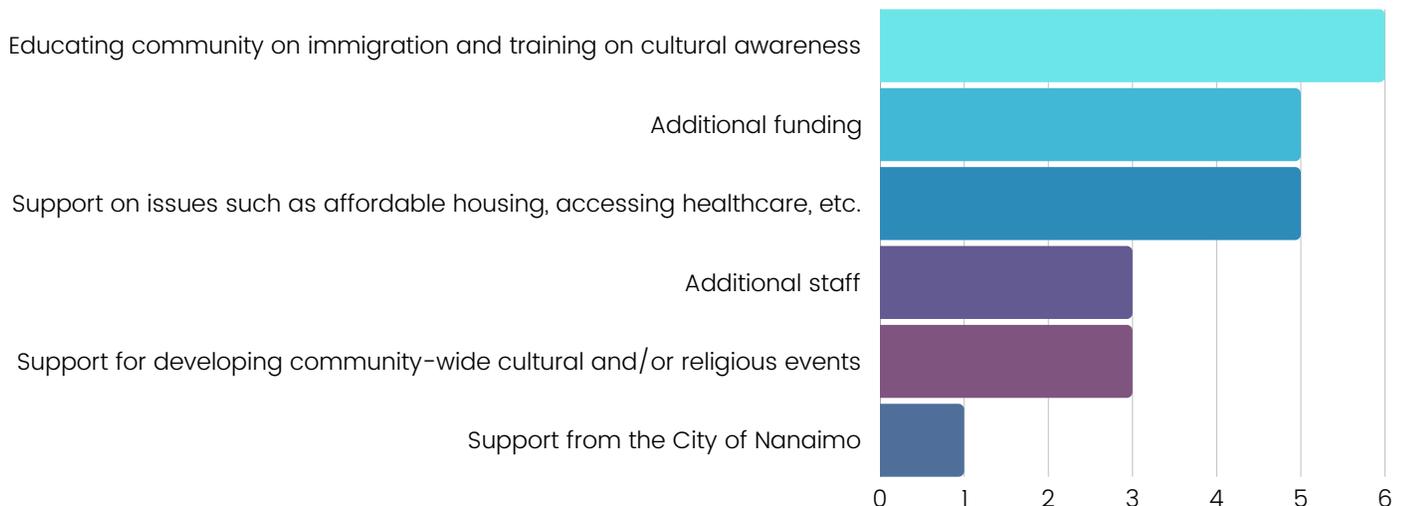
What are the barriers you face in effectively providing services for newcomers?



How are the services and resources for newcomers delivered?



What would help you better serve and offer support for newcomers?

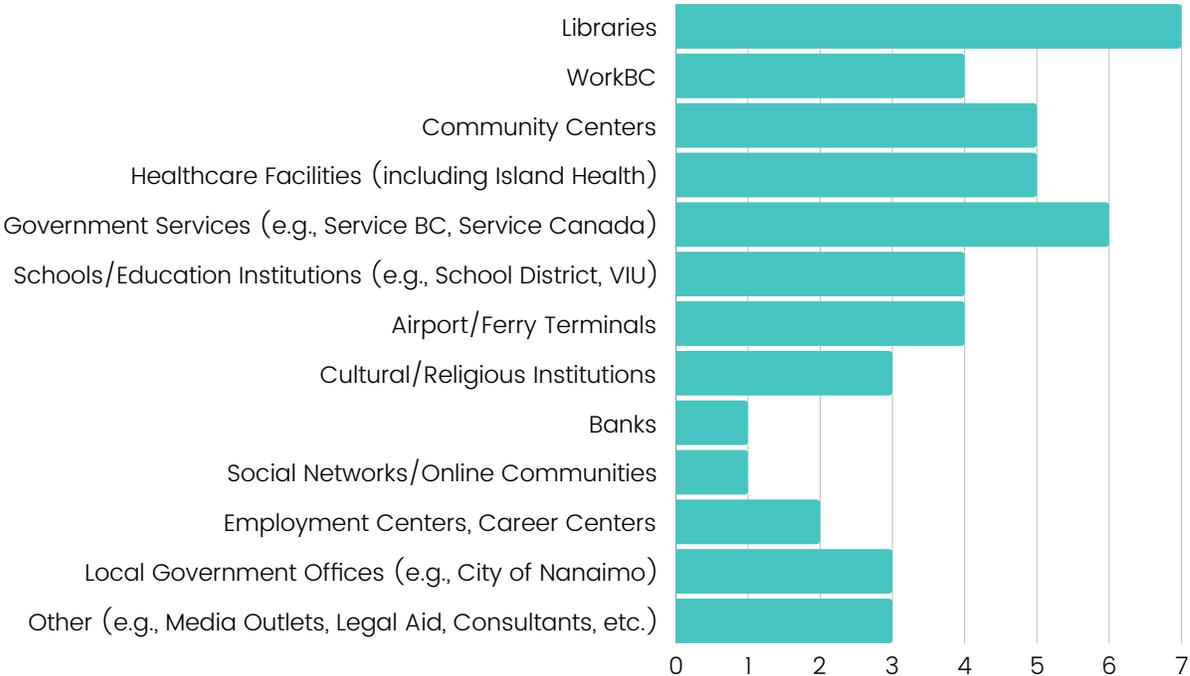


Survey Results

CVIMS Employees

CVIMS staff were also surveyed on barriers they continue to face in their mission to support newcomers and their thoughts on ways programming can be improved. Staff shared their ideas on where CVIMS can concentrate their efforts for community outreach such as having points of contact in local community centres, libraries, and workplaces and utilizing social media and other outlets to advertise their services.

Where do you think the first points of contact should be for newcomers seeking information and services in Nanaimo external to CVIMS?



Language and Communication

One of the main barriers that continues to be an area of difficulty is language and communication challenges. Staff reported many newcomers they work with face challenges with language, limiting their ability to access services and integrate into the community. They also suggested increasing multilingual resources to both advertise CVIMS services and conduct them in multiple languages to meet client needs.

Survey Results

Accessible Resources

Access to services and resources is also a continued challenge for newcomers. Navigating services can be difficult and overwhelming due to a lack of information or understanding of the system, including legal, healthcare, and educational services. Many newcomers may lack the digital skills necessary to navigate online systems. Providing digital literacy training can help them access information, services, and opportunities. Training can also be tailored for those of various ages and language abilities. Using interactive videos, virtual information sessions, and other digital tools that newcomers can access on-demand can also help.

Offering detailed orientation sessions for newcomers, cultural awareness training for service providers, and ensuring digital resources are accessible in various languages can also help alleviate communication issues. Some staff also suggested using digital tools to create multilingual websites and apps, provide event notifications, and allow for virtual consultations will increase access to services for newcomers. Simple, user-friendly, and accessible content (e.g., infographics, videos, subtitles) is also key.

Social Connections

According to staff, newcomers, especially seniors, women, and youth, face social isolation due to cultural and language differences, as well as a lack of understanding of the Canadian system. This is where cultural and social events to facilitate community gatherings, and cultural events to connect newcomers with the local community and others from similar backgrounds, will help them feel welcomed and supported.

Community Partnerships

Capitalizing on community partnerships including building stronger relationships with community centres, schools, businesses, and other organizations can help bridge gaps and create a supportive environment for newcomers. Some also suggested a peer mentorship program in which former clients or community mentors from the similar cultural background can help guide and support newcomers through the settlement process and beyond.

Survey Results

Streamlining Services

CVIMS' referral process can be streamlined to ensure newcomers can efficiently access services. CVIMS can also consider offering a centralized directory and coordinating with various service providers to make the system more user-friendly. Many also suggested creating centralized information hubs (physical and digital) that are placed in high-traffic areas (e.g., libraries, community centres, public transportation) can help provide easily accessible information about local services and supports.

Health and Legal Services

Staff suggested CVIMS have a greater focus on improving access to health services, particularly for newcomers without family doctors, and provide legal support for issues such as immigration, employment, and housing. Newcomers often need legal help with immigration, housing, and family issues but may not be able to afford professional services. Establishing partnerships with legal aid or creating a legal support branch within CVIMS can fill this gap.

Assisting newcomers in understanding Canadian documentation processes (e.g., social insurance numbers, healthcare registration, voter registration) would also help.

Community-Based Support and Volunteerism

Volunteer Networks: Engage both newcomers and established community members in volunteer opportunities to build stronger connections and offer newcomers a sense of purpose and belonging. **Local Volunteerism:** Encourage newcomers to get involved in local volunteer projects, which can help with building skills and creating a sense of community.



Survey Results

Employment and Economic Support

Skilled workers, international students, and newcomers face challenges related to credential recognition, limited work hours, especially for international students, and accessing employment resources. Limited English language skills further add to these difficulties. Providing education on labor standards, workplace safety, and employee rights is important, especially for newcomers who may be unfamiliar with Canadian work culture. Addressing economic hardships by providing financial literacy training, job placement assistance, and support for entrepreneurs is also strongly suggested.

Cultural Competency and Awareness

Service providers, local businesses, and community members need ongoing cultural sensitivity training to better understand the needs and challenges faced by newcomers. Addressing cultural differences in the community, particularly around religion, gender roles, and Canadian social norms, will help ensure newcomers feel respected and understood. There are also many misconceptions about newcomers that need to be addressed by fostering a positive narrative through outreach programs, community events, and storytelling initiatives that showcase the contributions of newcomers to the community.

Transport and Accessibility

Staff reported limited access to transportation is a barrier for many newcomers, particularly those living in rural or remote areas. Improving public transit accessibility and providing transportation support for those who need it is vital. Participants also suggest partnering with transportation authorities to provide newcomers with clear information on local transit options and ensure that transportation is accessible for those with mobility issues.



Survey Results

Holistic Support for Mental and Physical Health

Ensuring services are trauma-informed, including mental health and counselling support, is essential. Improving access to healthcare services, including faster access to doctors, mental health support, and community health programs that cater specifically to newcomers' needs will help improve service utilization. Staff also suggest offering wellness programs that focus on mental health, stress management, and the overall well-being of newcomers. Social support groups can also help alleviate isolation and provide emotional support especially in areas where access to mental health programming is limited.

Youth and Family Inclusion

Newcomer youth face unique challenges related to education, mental health, and social isolation. Specialized programs addressing educational integration, career guidance, and social-emotional support are crucial. Offering programs and activities tailored to families, especially for isolated immigrant women with children is also key. This could include childcare, parenting support, and community-building events for families to connect with one another.



“At times, we find ourselves relying on personal experiences to offer guidance, which is neither practical nor professional. It’s important that we don’t find ourselves scrambling to locate resources only when they are requested. We need to have these resources readily available to ensure that we can provide informed and timely assistance.”

-CVIMS Employee

Survey Results

Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration

Working closely with local partners such as Vancouver Island University, local libraries, WorkBC, and local chambers of commerce can enhance service delivery and create a more integrated support network for newcomers according to staff. They also suggest collaborating with a range of service providers (e.g., healthcare, housing, legal, education) to ensure newcomers have comprehensive support in all areas of settlement. Educating businesses on the importance of hiring newcomers and the resources CVIMS offers to help businesses navigate the needs of newcomers.



Visibility and Awareness Campaigns

Promoting CVIMS services to improve service use is key. This can be achieved through targeted social media campaigns, community outreach, and local events to raise awareness of CVIMS and its services. Community engagement initiatives and promoting CVIMS on social media can increase visibility among potential clients and the community at large.

“CVIMS’s strengths as a service provider include its expertise in multicultural services, comprehensive range of offerings, strong community connections, experienced and diverse staff, effective language support, active community outreach, established reputation, innovative programs, robust volunteer network, and focus on holistic support.”
-CVIMS Employee

Focus Group Findings

1. Cost of Living and Financial Concerns

The high cost of living in Nanaimo is a major concern for newcomers, especially when it comes to rent, taxes, and overall living expenses. Many were surprised by the high rent, processes of taxes and securing documents such as driver's license, and securing a job. Participants also noted the added burden of expensive healthcare services and other regular expenses. Participants suggested simplifying and educating newcomers on tax and other procedures to reduce feelings of overwhelm or confusion.



2. Healthcare and Access to Services

Access to healthcare services in Nanaimo has proven to be a challenge for newcomers. Long wait times for medical appointments, limited availability of family doctors and walk-in appointments, and the high costs associated with health care are common frustrations. Additionally, newcomers face barriers when trying to navigate health-related documentation, procedures and insurance systems. There is a call for easier access to healthcare and healthcare information and more affordable medical services for newcomers.



3. Social Connection and Cultural Adjustment

Many newcomers felt they were expected to adapt to a new culture and language upon arriving to Canada which is a significant hurdle for many. Language barriers often lead to misunderstandings, and some have expressed feeling discriminated against because of their English proficiency. Cultural shocks, such as unfamiliar gender identity norms and other social dynamics, further add to these challenges. Newcomers suggest offering workshops to empower people, particularly women, who wish to learn new skills, and learn more about the local culture to facilitate smoother transitions and increase self-efficacy.

Focus Group Findings

4. Community and Social Support



A sense of belonging and community support plays a crucial role in the settlement process. Many newcomers find the people of Nanaimo to be kind and helpful, which helps foster a feeling of safety and inclusion. However, there are still challenges such as negative interactions with public service employees and instances of discrimination in educational settings. Efforts to enhance inclusivity, especially in public services and education such as making resources accessible in multiple languages, are needed to make the city more welcoming for all.

5. Transportation and Infrastructure



Transportation, particularly the ferry commute to the mainland, local public busses, are aspects of Nanaimo, and lack of bike paths that surprised newcomers. While the ferry is an essential link to the rest of the region, the laid-back infrastructure and relatively small size of the city can affect newcomers' mood and daily routines at times. Limited accessible shopping options, and a lack of public transportation alternatives are other concerns that could benefit from improvement.

6. Recreation, Entertainment, and Socializing

Recreational and entertainment opportunities in Nanaimo are seen as limited, particularly when compared to larger urban areas. Many newcomers wish for more variety in shopping, recreational activities, and places to go in the evening, especially options that stay open later into the night. Enhancing opportunities to socialize and engage in recreational services would make Nanaimo more vibrant and engaging for both residents.



Focus Group Findings

7. Educational System and Child-Friendly Environment

Nanaimo's educational system is generally well-received, with newcomers appreciating the ease of school admissions, the lack of pressure in schools, and favourable school schedules. However, some challenges participants shared include the availability of English classes and some respondents mentioned that courses in specialized fields (e.g., plumbing) were not available, despite having relevant experience. Specialized education and clear information to help newcomers build their careers, employee and student rights, or information on starting businesses would also be helpful. The family-friendly environment, with safe neighborhoods and good schooling options is a significant positive.



8. Environmental and Lifestyle Factors

The natural beauty, mild weather, and clean air in Nanaimo are frequently praised by participants. The city's tranquil environment, abundant wildlife and greenery, and safe atmosphere for children contribute to a positive overall quality of life. Many immigrants appreciate the pollution-free air and the general peacefulness of the area, which is ideal for families seeking a serene place to settle.

Interview Themes

1. Language Barriers and Access to Information



Participants shared that many newcomers they have worked with face significant challenges when trying to access services due to language barriers, including the lack of translation and interpretation services across various community settings, such as healthcare, education, and social services. Participants also suggested more clear specific instructions for newcomers and a central hub to house all needed information.

“Especially in the last three years, we’ve had more requests from people who are so new that they haven’t learned much English. That’s a new sort of gap and need that we’re seeing develop.”—Service Provider

2. Cultural Informed Practice and Policy



There is a need for culturally-informed training within institutions, such as healthcare systems, schools, and social programs, to better support newcomers. This includes understanding the unique challenges they face, such as discrimination, and adjusting to a new cultural environment. Many providers shared initiatives they have created to support diverse clients such as cultural cooking classes. Some organizations have also integrated cultural/trauma-informed practice and EDI policy into their work. However, the understanding of what cultural competency vs informed vs sensitivity are and the importance of actionable EDI policy and initiatives are somewhat muddled. Many did not or were not aware of what policies/programming they have that supports diverse clients.

“[The training]’s been more on a case by case basis than an actual form of training. So we would be interested to note what’s available in terms of being able to to improve in that area.”—Service Provider

Interview Themes

3. Barriers to Accessing Services and Resources



There are significant obstacles in accessing community resources such as social services, education, legal aid, health care, housing, and recreation. These barriers often stem from a lack of awareness of or access to services, complicated registration processes, language barriers, lack of capacity and systemic challenges within institutions. Newcomers often experience difficulty understanding and navigating local and larger systems due to unfamiliarity with processes, including access to support services.

“The staffing crisis that we've been going through and finding experienced staff has been challenging. A lot of that information isn't being passed on like those collaborative partnerships or even informal partnerships that we've been having sometimes fall when staff leave.” –Service Provider

4. Trauma and Mental Health Support



Participants have met some newcomers who come from backgrounds of trauma, including exposure to violence or displacement. Their mental health needs require attention, including trauma-informed care and services tailored for their needs. Post-migration stress also creates continual impacts to their mental health. For example, some had met immigrant youth who experience “parentification,” where they take on adult responsibilities due to family separation, lack of resources or trauma, impacting their mental health and inclusion in the community. Support programs can aim to help newcomers find balance and enjoyment and utilize a multi-faceted, culturally informed care approach.

“We've had people fleeing violent areas of the world and coming here and coming with a lot of trauma. And sometimes not residing with their entire nuclear family and helping support the youth. So whether they come over with one parent or somebody's been left behind.” –Service Provider

Interview Themes

5. Community Engagement and Inclusion



Participants shared how newcomers often feel isolated due to feeling a lack of belonging into their local communities. Creating inclusive environments, where they can participate and engage in various community activities, can improve well-being. Many organizations have communicated the need for sharing of knowledge and resources across the local community to provide further support for newcomers, this is especially helpful for organizations experiencing a lack of capacity and funding. Many newcomers face difficulties in more homogenous communities, with some moving to larger communities due to feelings of exclusion and challenges in Nanaimo. Some organizations have experienced success by working together, such as supporting families with complex needs. Better communication and joint training between organizations can ensure all staff are equipped with the tools to serve effectively. This includes sharing best practices, coordinating services, and training staff on cultural competency and trauma-informed approaches.

"I think the more diversity that we bring and the more that we can help people get settled and bring their best, the better. It absolutely makes us strong, makes for a strong community and hopefully we can find ways to enhance services and resources and work together as community organizations to make Nanaimo a welcoming place for everyone."

-Service Provider

Recommendations

Based on the collected data, the following recommendations have been made:

01

Improve Language Access and Translation Services

- Language barriers are a primary challenge to accessing services and settling in the community, and improving translation services can facilitate better understanding and reduce delays in care and service access.
- Enhancing translation and interpretation services within facilities and community programs is strongly recommended. This can be achieved by increasing the availability of multilingual staff, contacting professional interpreters/volunteers, and utilizing available resources such as Island Health's interpretation services. Implementing user-friendly, translated materials (e.g., registration forms, informational websites) and the CVIMS website in the most common languages spoken will help bridge communication gaps.

02

Expand Cultural Competency and Culturally Informed Training

- Service providers need additional training to effectively work with diverse populations. This will not only improve outcomes but also help retain staff from diverse backgrounds that may be challenging due to cultural insensitivity. Greater educational awareness on EDI for the wider community is also strongly recommended.
- Developing cultural competency training for providers can also help. The training should include practical strategies for addressing the unique challenges faced by newcomers such as understanding trauma, addressing cultural differences, and providing more inclusive care.

03

Foster Interorganizational Networks and Collaboration

- Encourage development of formal and continuous networks that bring together organizations from various sectors (e.g., healthcare, social services, and community organizations). These networks can provide a platform for sharing information, resources, and expertise, allowing for more coordinated and comprehensive support for newcomers

Recommendations

04

Create Shared Resource Hubs

- Develop shared resource hubs where organizations can pool their resources, such as language support services, mental health specialists, and legal aid, to provide a one-stop service for newcomers. This would minimize the burden on individual organizations and ensure that immigrants and refugees can access the full spectrum of services they need without unnecessary barriers.

05

Develop Specialized Support Programs for Newcomers

- Immigrant youth often face unique challenges that impact their mental health and well-being. Specialized programs can help address their specific needs, support their inclusion, and reduce the burden placed on their families.
- These programs should provide counselling, mentorship, and safe spaces for socialization and recreation, helping cope with cultural adjustment and family dynamics. Adapting programs to include supportive and culturally inclusive language, such as for newcomers who may come from cultures where emotions or mental health struggles are not typically shared. Some newcomers may also be afraid of consequences for sharing their concerns so clear consent, understanding confidentiality and providing anonymous options is key.

06

Enhance Education for Newcomers

- Providing low barrier support for newcomers to learn basic skills and English training is crucial. Offering variety of options for receiving this information to accommodate those with accessibility needs, lower financial resources, less digital literacy etc. will allow for greater engagement with resources and ease of use.
- Many are surprised at the high cost of living and other aspects of living in Nanaimo, greater education and awareness of the current realities of coming to Canada, ways to prepare before arriving, and who to contact upon arrival can help ease the shock and transition that can be extremely stressful and difficult for newcomers is key.

Recommendations

07

Regular Coordination Meetings and Communication

- Setting up regular coordination meetings between stakeholders from different organizations and agencies that are involved in newcomer support. This would improve communication, provide continuous open dialogue, forge stronger support networks and sharing of resources, ensure timely referrals, and reduce duplication of efforts.

08

Simplify and Streamline Access to Community Resources

- Newcomers often face confusion when trying to access services. Simplifying these processes and providing clear guidance will make it easier for immigrant populations to engage with their local communities, fostering greater social inclusion and community building.
- Revamping and simplifying registration and access process for local services (e.g., parks and recreation, healthcare, social services) to make them more accessible for newcomers is key. This could involve creating one-stop service centres that guide individuals through various systems or offering online platforms with clear, multilingual instructions. Greater integration of services can also boost efficiency.
- Staff across various organizations and newcomers surveyed also stress that a case manager to help provide continuous care and support for various needs.

09

Enhance Community Engagement and Support

- Many newcomers feel disconnected due to a lack of understanding of local systems and sensing a lack of cultural inclusivity. Community-based support networks can play a critical role in providing guidance, reducing isolation, and fostering connections with key services.
- Strengthening community partnerships and support networks that link immigrant and refugee populations with local resources, including healthcare providers, legal aid, and social services. These networks could include community organizations, cultural associations, and peer support groups that provide mentorship and advocacy. Enhancing community engagement and volunteerism can also address current capacity issues across organizations.
- Due to a high need for affordable housing, finding employment, and financial strains that community members are experiencing, incentivizing positions for new volunteers/participants and supporting current volunteers can be prioritized to facilitate engagement and retention of supporting members long term, this may also help engage new volunteers who care about these initiatives

Recommendations

10

Address Systemic Discrimination and Inclusion in Communities

- Discrimination and a lack of cultural inclusivity contribute to feelings of alienation and newcomers leaving certain areas. Promoting inclusion will help retain diverse professionals, residents and improve wellbeing for all.
- Address systemic racism and discrimination in community settings by fostering a more inclusive environment through advocacy, education, and policy changes. This could include anti-racism training, support for diversity in the workplace, and community outreach programs designed to build mutual understanding.
- CVIMS currently has a cultural competency checklist for individuals and organizations to reflect on their knowledge and ability to support those of different cultural backgrounds which can be used as an open dialogue with staff.

11

Joint Training Programs and Widespread Education

- Establish training programs for staff from different organizations, focusing on cultural competency, trauma-informed care, and navigating the unique needs of newcomers. This would promote a unified, cohesive approach across organizations and ensure that all staff are aligned in their approach to providing support.
- Normalizing training across all agencies even those who do not directly support newcomers can provide greater community awareness and cultural competence. This can also help foster greater incorporation of inclusion and diversity awareness and actionable initiatives across all sectors. Greater awareness and education for community members can also improve public awareness about the importance of supporting newcomers and eventually mitigate experiences of discrimination.

12

Future Research

- Completing a follow up study to this project in the coming years can allow for updated feedback from community members, center on pressing issues to have more opportunities for qualitative open responses for individuals to share other areas that may have not yet been asked.
- Conduct program evaluation on current CVIMS initiatives to collect specific feedback from service users on areas of strengths and improvement.
- Interviews with newcomers and frontline staff from service organizations can provide deeper insight on the experiences of newcomers within the community.

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Appendix A

Key Terminology

Culturally Informed - The ability to work and communicate well with people of different cultures by being respectful of and responsive to beliefs, practices and linguistic needs.

Cultural Competency - The ability to collaborate effectively with individuals from different cultures in personal and professional settings. This usually involves a recognition of the diversity both between and within cultures, a capacity for cultural self-assessment, and a willingness to adapt personal behaviors and practices.

Cultural Sensitivity - Awareness and appreciation of the values, norms, and beliefs of a cultural, ethnic, racial, or other group that is not one's own, accompanied by a willingness to adapt one's behavior accordingly

Discrimination - The practice or act of making distinctions between people on the basis of prejudicial attitudes and beliefs, which leads to the inequitable treatment of individuals or groups.

Diversity - The variety of characteristics that distinguish people as individuals and that identify them as belonging to a group or groups. Diversity is a concept that includes notions of age, class, culture, ability, ethnicity, family, sex, language, place of origin, race, religion, and sexual orientation, as well as other characteristics that vary among people and groups within society.

Ethnicity - Ethnicity is a social and political construct used by individuals and communities to define themselves and others. Specifically, "ethnicity" refers to a person's cultural background, including his or her language, origin, faith and heritage. Ethnicity comprises the ideas, values and behaviours that are transmitted from one generation to the next. It tends to be perceived in terms of common culture, history, language or nationhood. Ethnic identity and ethnicity are interchangeable terms.

Appendix A

Immigrant - A person who was born outside of Canada and has been granted permanent resident status by Canada or is a Naturalized Canadian Citizen who has settlement and adaptation needs. Includes persons who are, or who have ever been, landed immigrants.

Multiculturalism - The quality or condition of a society in which different ethnic and cultural groups have equal status and access to power but each maintains its own identity, characteristics, and mores.

Naturalized Canadian Citizen - A person who acquired Canadian citizenship via the naturalization process. **Newcomer** - Someone who is newly arrived, learning about and navigating one or more of Canada's social, cultural, civic and economic systems.

Newcomer - Newcomers in this report are defined as individuals who are new or recently arrived in Canada. For the purposes of this research, arrival within the last five years.

Permanent Resident - An immigrant who has been granted permanent residence status by the Government of Canada, and who is not yet a Canadian citizen.

Racism - A set of mistaken assumptions, opinions and actions both negative and positive resulting from the belief that one group of people categorized by colour or ancestry is inherently superior to another. Racism may be present in organizational and institutional policies, programs and practices, as well as in the attitudes and behaviour of individuals.

Appendix A

Refugee - Immigrants who have had their refugee claims accepted and who subsequently applied for and were granted permanent resident status in Canada.

Skilled Worker Class - An immigrant selected for his / her ability to participate in the labour market and to establish himself / herself economically in Canada.

Temporary Resident - A person who is lawfully in Canada on a temporary basis under the authority of a valid document (i.e., a work permit, study permit, temporary resident permit or a visitor record) issued for the purpose of entering Canada, and an individual who seeks asylum upon or after arrival in Canada and remains in the country pending completion of processes relative to their claim.

Trauma-Informed Care - Policies and practices that recognize the connections between violence, trauma, negative health outcomes and behaviours. These approaches increase safety, control and resilience for people who are seeking services in relation to experiences of violence and/or have a history of experiencing violence.

Appendix B

Survey Questions

Service Provider Survey

- 1) How would you describe your organization?
 - Newcomer-serving organization (all programs/services are for newcomers)
 - Mixed organization (some programs/services are specifically for newcomers, and some for all residents)
 - Universal organization (all programs/services are for all residents)
 - Other, please specify.
- 2) How are your services delivered?
 - By paid employees
 - By volunteers
 - By a combination of paid employees and volunteers
- 3) Do you provide services in any languages other than English? If so, which ones?
 - Yes. Please specify.
 - No
- 4) Do you offer access to translation and interpretation services?
 - Translation
 - Interpretation
 - Both
 - I don't know
- 5) Does your organization have policies on equity, diversity, and inclusion informing its hiring process and interactions with the public/clients?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 6) Does your organization offer any training to staff or volunteers to work more effectively with newcomers (trauma informed practices, mental health, cultural competency)?
 - Yes
 - No
 - I don't know

Appendix B

7) Thinking of the specific programs you are affiliated with or resources you provide, are there waiting lists for any of your programs or access to resources?

- Yes, for all (Skip to Question 9)
- Yes, for some (Skip to Question 9)
- No (Skip to Question 8)
- Not applicable (Skip to Question 12)

8) Please share the main reasons you do not have waiting lists.

- We are adequately resourced to meet demand
- We haven't advertised widely so some people may not be aware of it
- Planning and operational practices ensure everything runs efficiently
- We coordinate with others in our sector to meet the needs of clients
- Other, please specify.

9) What types of programs/resources currently have waiting lists?

- Language programs
- Employment programs
- Networking programs
- Family programs (e.g., parenting programs, home visitation programs, etc.)
- Childcare programs
- Youth programs
- Seniors' programs
- Support programs (e.g., counselling, technical training, etc.)

Other, please specify.

10) The programs identified are listed in the table below. For each program type, please select the main reason or reasons there is a waiting list.

Program type	Reasons for a Waiting List						
	Demand Exceeds Staffing Resources	Service Not Provided Elsewhere	Budget Cutbacks	Lack of Service Provider Coordination	High Demand at our Location	Demand Exceeds Service Availability	Other
Language programs							
Employment programs							
Networking programs							
Family programs							
Childcare programs							
Youth programs							
Seniors' programs							
Support programs							
All other programs							

Appendix B

11) Aside from receiving additional funding, what strategies would help alleviate your waitlists?

- More or different staff or volunteers
- More, different, or low-cost program space
- More resources
- More, different, or improved programs or services
- Refer to other programs, or modify referral processes
- Staff or volunteer training
- More partnerships with other service providers and community organizations
- Other. Please Specify.

12) Does your program or organization currently have the capacity to grow?

- Yes, we have the capacity to grow
- Some room for growth but others are at capacity
- No, we are at capacity
- Don't know
- Not applicable

13) Would you be open to exploring partnership opportunities with other agencies to help resolve existing waitlists and other challenges in accessing services and resources in the community?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

14) Apart from the discussion on waitlists, do you feel your organization and programs are well-equipped to meet the needs of newcomers?

Description	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral/ Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
Our programming/organization is inclusive						
Our programming/organization welcoming						
Our programming/organization is culturally appropriate						
Our programming/organization is developed in collaboration with other organizations						
We understand the barriers faced by newcomers						

Appendix B

15) What are the barriers you face in effectively providing services for newcomers? Please select all that apply.

- Lack of funding
- Staffing challenges
- Language barrier
- Limited program capacity
- Lack of resources
- Problems communicating information
- Organization lacks equity, diversity, inclusion policy
- Other, please specify.

Cultural/Religious Organization Survey

1) How would you describe your organization?

- Cultural organization
- Religious organization
- Both
- Other

2) How would you describe the services and resources your organization offers to newcomers?

- Official services or programs
- Unofficial, on an as needed basis
- Both
- Other

3) Does your organization offer sponsorship for refugees?

- Yes
- No

4) How are the services and resources offered to newcomers delivered?

- By paid employees
- By volunteers
- By a combination of employees and volunteers

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- 5) Do you provide services to newcomers in any languages other than English?
- Yes. Please specify
 - No
- 6) Do you offer access to translation and interpretation services?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 7) Do you offer services to individuals who are not members of your organization?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 8) Does your organization offer any training to staff or volunteers to work more effectively with newcomers (trauma informed practices, mental health, cultural competency)?
- Yes
 - No
 - I don't know
- 9) What type of services, programs, or resources do you offer or help individuals with?
Please select all that apply.
- Language programs/resources
 - Employment programs/resources
 - Networking programs
 - Cultural programs
 - Religious programs/services
 - Childcare resources
 - Youth programs
 - Seniors' programs
 - Support programs (e.g., counselling, technical training, etc.)
 - Help finding and accessing settlement services
 - Help finding and accessing community/recreational programs
 - Help navigating government bureaucracy (e.g., BC Services, CRA, PR card, etc.)
 - Other, please specify.

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10) What are the barriers you face in effectively providing services for newcomers? Please select all that apply.

- Lack of funding
- Staffing challenges
- Lack of resources
- Limited program capacity
- Problems communicating information
- Other, please specify.

11) What would help you better serve and offer support for newcomers?

- Additional funding
- Additional staff
- Support from the City of Nanaimo
- Support from community organizations on issues such as affordable housing, accessing healthcare, etc.
- Educating community on immigration and training on cultural awareness
- Support for developing community-wide cultural and/or religious events
- Other, please specify.

12) Do your programs, services, or organization have capacity for growth?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

13) Are you aware of the services Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society offers for newcomers?

- Yes
- No

14) Would you be open to exploring partnership opportunities with other agencies and organizations in Nanaimo to resolve challenges you face when providing support to newcomers?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Appendix B

CVIMS Employee Survey

Section One: The research conducted so far reveals that a multi-network approach is crucial to reaching the greatest number of newcomers with settlement and service information.

1. What barriers do you encounter in providing services/resources to CVIMS clients?
 - a. Do you have suggestions for how these barriers might be addressed?
2. Where do you think the first points of contact should be for newcomers seeking information and services in Nanaimo external to CVIMS?
3. Beyond settlement service providers, what other organizations do you see as the “critical” distribution points of settlement and service information for newcomers?
4. Are you aware of any barriers or challenges that these organizations/institutions face in information provision and dissemination to newcomers? Examples: Island health, clinics, schools, BC services, ICBC, etc.
 - a. Do you have suggestions for how these barriers might be addressed?
5. What are the barriers unique to different groups of newcomers?
 - a. Do you have suggestions for how these barriers might be addressed?

Section Two: In addition to a network of settlement service information partners, many best practices emphasize a centralized hub of information, both for newcomers and community partners alike.

6. Do you have any thoughts or considerations on this notion of a newcomer information hub in Nanaimo? Do you have recommendations for a location or host of such a hub in Nanaimo?

Section Three: Our research shows that many different types of organizations take an active role in disseminating settlement and service information to newcomers.

7. Are there approaches to providing settlement and service information to newcomers that CVIMS could participate in?
 - a. Are there additional approaches you have considered or have tried or want to try? Please describe.

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Section Four: There are numerous tools and approaches for information provision and dissemination including websites, social media, print handouts / facts sheets, Apps, program directories, brochures, and posters, etc.

8. Are there specific tools and approaches that you would recommend to reach the greatest number of newcomers and community partners?

Section Five: What are the strengths of CVIMS as a service provider?

9. Do you have any further thoughts or recommendations on improving access to information, resources, and other services for newcomers in Nanaimo?

10. If you are willing to share your name and are open to being contacted for additional feedback, please feel free to enter your information below. Otherwise, your name will not be tied to your responses.

Long-term Resident Survey

Section A: Demographics

1) How long have you lived in Nanaimo?

- 5-7 years
- 8-10 years
- More than 10 years

2) What is your age range?

- 19-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or older

3) How would you best describe your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to answer
- Other

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- 4) Which of the following best describes you?
- Canadian citizen
 - Permanent resident
 - Naturalized citizen
- 5) How long have you lived in Nanaimo?
- 5 to 7 years
 - 8 to 10 years
 - 10+ years
- 6) Which ethnic or racial group(s) best describes you? Please select all that apply, particularly if you self-identify as being of mixed or multiple racial groups.
- Arab
 - Black (for example, African, Afro-Caribbean, African-American, African-Canadian)
 - Central Asian (for example, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan)
 - East Asian (for example, Chinese, Korean, Japanese)
 - Latin American (for example, Mexican, Central American, South American)
 - South Asian (for example, Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
 - Southeast Asian (for example, Filipino, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Thai)
 - West Asian (for example, Iranian, Afghan)
 - Indigenous or Métis
 - White
 - Prefer not to say
 - Other
- 7) What's the highest level of education you've completed?
- PhD
 - Master's degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - College diploma
 - Trade/Technical school
 - Highschool diploma or equivalent
 - Elementary school
 - No formal education
- 8) What is your current employment status?
- Employed full-time (30+ hours per week)
 - Employed part-time (29 hours or less per week)
 - Self-employed
 - Unemployed
 - Retired
 - Student

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- Student, but also employed

9) If you are a member of a faith community, please share which one:

- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- I am not a member of a faith community
- Prefer not to answer
- Other, please specify.

10) Why have you chosen to stay in this community?

- Work/employment
- My education/school
- My children's education/school
- Nature/recreation
- Family and friends
- Lifestyle and sense of community
- Other, please specify.

Section B: Awareness of Immigration Issues

In 2023, 471,771 permanent immigrants made Canada their home, which was within the target range of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The federal government increased its immigration targets and plans to welcome about 500,000 new immigrants each year for 2025 and 2026.

11) What do you think about the current immigration targets?

- They are too high
- They are not enough
- They are just right
- I don't know

Rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

12) "Multiculturalism (all cultures are promoted and accepted) is working well in Nanaimo."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

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13) "Immigration has a positive impact on our city."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

14) In your opinion, how has immigration positively impacted Nanaimo? Please select all that apply:

- Immigration increases overall quality of life and vibrancy in the community.
- Immigration helps with population growth because we have an aging population and low birth rate.
- Immigration encourages diversity in Nanaimo.
- Immigration fuels economic growth.
- Immigration contributes to innovation.
- Immigration contributes to arts and culture in Nanaimo.
- Immigration increases resident knowledge and understanding of various cultures.
- Immigration provides needed labourers.
- Immigration provides needed skilled workers: nurses, engineers, technicians, etc.
- I do not believe there has been a positive impact.
- Other, please specify.

15) In your opinion, how has immigration negatively impacted Nanaimo? Please select all that apply:

- Immigration puts pressure on public services.
- Immigration impacts the availability of affordable housing.
- The population is slowly being replaced by immigrants.
- Too many immigrants are coming into the country.
- Funding should be for homelessness and addiction for Canadian citizens.
- Disagree with current immigration policies.
- There is not enough support available for settlement and settlement of newcomers.
- Immigration changes Canadian values.
- Immigrants take jobs from Canadians.
- More difficult to develop community connections with so many different cultures.
- I do not believe there has been a negative impact.
- Other, please specify.

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Section C: Sense of Belonging

16) Rate your level of agreement with the following statement: “Our community does enough to support immigrants and refugees.”

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

17) What are some ways that Nanaimo makes new immigrants feel welcome in the community? Please select all that apply.

- Multilingual signage, publications, and services
- Access to free English language training
- Resources and services designed to help new immigrants
- Community events and opportunities to share and celebrate different cultures
- Access to various religious facilities
- Residents are accepted regardless of skin colour or accent or country of birth
- Friendly neighbours
- Encouraging new immigrants to participate in committees, boards, and municipal government
- I don't know
- Other, please specify.

18) In your opinion, what do you think are the biggest challenges faced by new immigrant residents in Nanaimo?

- Finding work
- Accessing English language programs
- Learning where and how to do things
- Making friends or social connections
- Cost of living
- Affordability of services
- Adjusting to family life in a new culture
- Finding affordable housing
- Discrimination/racism
- Receiving public or social services (e.g., settlement services, government services, etc.)

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- Accessing healthcare services
 - Understanding medical recommendations from doctors without someone there to explain
 - Understanding children's teachers and the school system
 - Feeling unwelcome in the community
 - Other, please specify.
- 19) How important is it for Nanaimo to make more of an effort to be welcoming to new immigrants?
- Very important
 - Somewhat important
 - Neither important nor unimportant
 - Somewhat unimportant
 - Not important at all
- 20) If you answered very or somewhat important to Question 19 above, what further efforts should be made to welcome and include immigrants? Please select all that apply.
- Educate residents on diversity and multiculturalism to enhance understanding and acceptance
 - More cultural events to promote diversity in the community
 - Actions to make it easier to use foreign qualifications/experiences in the workforce
 - Actions to reduce racism and discrimination
 - Make it easier for newcomers to access information and resources
 - Increase English language supports
 - Involve new immigrant residents in community planning
 - Educate employers on the value of hiring and retaining immigrants and refugees
 - Provide training to residents on how to assist new immigrants to settle and integrate
 - Actions to improve social connections
 - More affordable housing
 - Better coordination/collaboration between service agencies and community partners
 - More access to interpretation and translation services
 - Assistance acquiring Permanent Resident status
 - A safe space to gather and socialize
 - I don't know
 - Other, please specify.
- 21) In your opinion, do you have any social relationships with immigrants in Nanaimo?
- Yes
 - No

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22) If you have social relationships with immigrants in Nanaimo, where are you forming those relationships?

- Volunteering
- Refugee sponsorship
- Language class
- A cultural society/organization
- Hosting/renting to families
- Recreation facilities/outdoors
- Businesses & offices around town
- Social media
- Place of worship (e.g., mosque, church, temple, etc.)
- Through friends/family
- In my neighbourhood
- Work
- School
- Social/sporting group or club
- Other, please specify.

23) In the last 5 years, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in the community?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

24) If yes, where have you experienced discrimination?

- When dealing with the court system
- When crossing the border into Canada
- In a store, bank, restaurant, or other business
- When looking for housing
- When dealing with the police
- Walking on the street or other public areas (parks, recreation facilities, etc.)
- Online or on social media
- In my neighbourhood
- At work or when applying for a job or promotion
- At school or university
- At government offices or agencies
- At community/public events
- At a hospital, health centre, or medical clinic
- Other, please specify.

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25) If you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others, what are the reasons?

- Skin colour
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Profession
- Physical appearance other than colour (such as clothing)
- Language ability
- Income
- Immigration status
- Gender
- Ethnicity or culture
- Disability (either a disability that people can see or one that is not readily visible)
- Age
- Accent
- Other, please specify.

26) Who would you be the most likely to report the discrimination to?

- It depends
- A reporting website (such as Racist Incident Helpline)
- Someone in authority (such as management, teacher, store owner, human resources)
- Friend or personal connection
- Police
- No one, I would deal with it on my own
- Other, please specify.

27) Please rate your agreement with the following statement, "Nanaimo a welcoming community for newcomers."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

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Newcomer Survey

1) How long have you lived in Nanaimo?

- Less than 1 year
- Between 1-2 years
- Between 3-5 years
- More than five years

2) What is your age range?

- 19-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65 years old or older

3) How would you best describe your gender?

- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to answer
- Other

4) What is your current immigration status?

- Canadian citizen
- Permanent resident
- International student
- Refugee claimant
- Asylum seeker
- Temporary foreign worker
- Provincial nominee
- Business investor
- Humanitarian and compassionate grounds
- Other

5) Which ethnic or racial group(s) best describe you? Please select all that apply, particularly if you self-identify as being of mixed or multiple racial groups.

- Arab
- Black (for example, African, Afro-Caribbean, African-American, African-Canadian)
- Central Asian (for example, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan)
- East Asian (for example, Chinese, Korean, Japanese)
- Latin American (for example, Mexican, Central American, South American)
- South Asian (for example, Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)

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- Southeast Asian (for example, Filipino, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Thai)
 - West Asian (for example, Iranian, Afghan)
 - White
 - Other, please specify.
- 6) What's the highest level of education you have completed?
- Ph.D.
 - Master's degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - College diploma
 - Trade/technical school
 - Highschool diploma or equivalent
 - Elementary school
 - No formal education
- 7) What is your employment status?
- Employed full time (30+ hours per week)
 - Employed part time (29 hours or less per week)
 - Self-employed
 - Unemployed
 - Retired
 - Student
 - Student, but also employed

Section B: Settlement Services

8) Have you received settlement services?

- Yes
- No
- Yes, but not in Nanaimo

9) Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It was easy to find settlement services in Nanaimo					
The services I received were useful					
Staff were culturally appropriate.					
Staff were friendly and promptly replied when I contacted them					
Qualified professionals work at settlement agency (have appropriate knowledge and experience)					

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10) How do you prefer to receive information from settlement organizations? Please select all that apply.

- Websites
- Social media
- Printed materials
- Telephone
- Mail
- Email
- In-person sessions
- Online sessions
- Text message

11) The following question ask why you did NOT use settlement services.

- Why didn't you use settlement services? Please choose all that apply.
- I didn't know there were services for newcomers available to me
- I knew there were services for newcomers, but I didn't think I qualified for them
- I was confused about services and who to go to
- I was too busy with family obligations
- I was too busy working / looking for a job
- I was too busy finding a place to live and other basic needs
- I didn't need services specifically for newcomers, I used services that are available to everyone in Nanaimo
- Other, please specify.

Section C: Community Services in Nanaimo

Nanaimo has many different community organizations and agencies who provide services to residents. We're interested in knowing the kinds of services you used, how you found about them and how satisfied you are with the service you received.

12) Which of the following community services have you accessed?

- Health services
- Financial services
- Education services
- Employment and/or skills training programs
- English language learning programs
- Legal services
- Police
- Services for physical or developmental disability
- Housing-related services
- Interpretation services
- Mental health services
- Small business/entrepreneurial supports
- Other community services
- I did not use any community services

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13) What were your sources of information about community services? Select all that apply.

- CVIMS
- Friend or family member
- Online or social media
- Community centres/neighbourhood associations
- School
- Settlement worker
- Library
- Sponsorship team
- As seniors, we were mostly assisted by our children
- Online newsletter
- Community support worker
- Other, please specify.

14) What are the reasons for not using community services? Select all that apply.

- I did not need the services
- I was not aware of the services but if I was, I would have used them
- I did not feel welcome to access the services
- I did not qualify for the services
- I was not aware of the services but even if I was, I would not have used them
- As seniors, we were mostly assisted by our children
- Got a job weeks after arrived here in Canada
- Unable to find a language class to fit my schedule
- We were sponsored by our children who introduced us to several of the services available

15) We would now like to ask you about using other community services in Nanaimo, such as recreational, cultural, not-for-profit, and community-based programming. These agencies and organizations provide programs, information and guidance to all residents of Nanaimo at no or low cost. Examples of some of these organizations are:

- BGC Central Vancouver Island
- Poverty Advocacy Nanaimo
- Vancouver Island Regional Library
- City of Nanaimo recreation centres
- Loaves & Fishes
- Nanaimo Foodshare
- Literacy Central Vancouver Island

Appendix B

16) Have you used these types of community services in Nanaimo? Please select the best answer.

- Yes
- No
- I tried to access community services but was not successful

17) If you tried to use these types of community services but were unsuccessful, why was that? Please select all that apply.

- I was turned away for not meeting criteria
- There was a fee, and I can't afford additional expenses
- I need help with childcare and the agency I approached could not meet this need
- The programs that were offered were not delivered at a time that worked for my schedule
- I need help with transportation and the agency I approached could not meet this need
- The programs that were offered were not delivered at a time that worked for my schedule
- My English is not good enough for me to access the services
- Bad weather stopped me from accessing services
- I was unaware of the programs
- The registration system for programs was complicated
- The program was full or there was a waiting list

18) How did you hear about these programs or organizations?

- IRCC / other government sources
- Settlement agency
- Family / friends
- Library
- Faith group
- Co-worker
- Teacher/school
- Social media
- I can't remember
- Other, please specify.

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19) Please rate your level of agreement regarding the services provided or resources used?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It was easy to find community services in Nanaimo.					
The services I received from community organizations were useful.					
Staff were culturally appropriate.					
Staff were friendly and promptly replied when I contacted them.					

Section D: Community and Sense of Belonging

20) In the last 5 years, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in the community?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

21) If yes, where have you experienced discrimination?

- When dealing with the court system
- When crossing the border into Canada
- In a store, bank, restaurant, or other business
- When looking for housing
- When dealing with the police
- Walking on the street or other public areas (parks, recreation facilities, etc.)
- Online or on social media
- In my neighbourhood
- At work or when applying for a job or promotion
- At school or university
- Settlement organization
- At government offices or agencies
- At community/public events
- At a hospital, health centre, or medical clinic
- Other, please specify.

Appendix B

22) If you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others, what are the reasons?

- Skin colour
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Profession
- Physical appearance other than colour (such as clothing)
- Language ability
- Income
- Immigration status
- Gender
- Ethnicity or culture
- Disability (either a disability that people can see or one that is not readily visible)
- Age
- Accent
- Other, please specify.

23) Who would you be the most likely to report the discrimination to?

- It depends
- A reporting website (such as Racist Incident Hotline)
- Someone in authority (such as management, store owner, teacher, human resources)
- Friend or personal connection
- Police
- No one, I would deal with it on my own
- Other, please specify.

24) What are the biggest challenges you and your family have experienced in the last year in Nanaimo? Select all that apply.

- Cost of living
- Affordable housing
- Accessing healthcare
- Finding work
- Making friends and social connections
- Transportation
- Learning where and how to do things
- Learning English
- Finding childcare
- Getting information and accessing resources in a familiar language
- Finding relevant programming in local community centres, recreational facilities, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.

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25) What changes would help newcomers reach their full potential in Nanaimo? Select all that apply.

- More affordable housing
- Better help securing employment
- Educate employers on the value of hiring, retaining, and promoting newcomers
- More opportunities to improve English language skills
- More effort by community services to better support newcomers
- Actions to reduce racism and discrimination against newcomers
- Actions to improve the social connections of newcomers
- Creation of a safe social space for newcomers
- Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of newcomers by local community
- Partnerships between service providers and community partners
- Computer access and digital literacy training
- More newcomer programming in local community centres and recreational facilities
- I don't know
- Other, please specify.

26) How long did it take for you to feel at home and a sense of belonging in Nanaimo?

- When I arrived
- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- I still don't feel at home in this community

27) Please rate your agreement with the following statement. In my experience Nanaimo is welcoming to newcomers.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Appendix B

Focus Group Questions

Name of Focus Group Moderator:

Time and Date of Focus Group:

Focus Group Demographics:

Before we begin, I would like to take the time to establish some ground rules for this focus group:

1. Be respectful of others while they are speaking
2. There are no right or wrong answers
3. Try to stay on topic
4. Make space for everyone to contribute to the conversation equally
5. Protect the privacy of others by not discussing this conversation outside of this group
6. Thank you for participating!

- How long have you been in Nanaimo?
- What do you enjoy most about living in Nanaimo?
- What would you say to a friend who was considering moving to Nanaimo from your home country?
- Thinking back to when you first came to Nanaimo, what were the biggest surprises?
- What has been easy about moving to Nanaimo?
- What services/resources have been easiest to access?
- What has been hard about moving to Nanaimo?
- What are the barriers to accessing services/resources?
- What do you think would make settling in Nanaimo easier for newcomers?
- In your opinion, how could information be better channeled to newcomers?
- When do you (and in what ways do you) feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in Nanaimo?
- In what ways is Nanaimo welcoming and inclusive? Please explain further.
- Has your perspective changed during your time in Nanaimo? If so, why?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience moving to or accessing services as a newcomer in Nanaimo?
- Of the issues we discussed today, which is the most important to you?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Section A: Background Information

- Organization Name:
- Interviewee Name:
- Interviewee Position/Role:
- Time & Date of Interview:

Section B: Organizational Perspective

1. Please briefly describe your organization's role in providing services to newcomers in Nanaimo.

What kinds of services do you provide?

- Do you provide your services in any languages other than English? If so, which ones?
- If not, do you offer access to translation and interpretation services?
- How do you identify the needs of the populations you serve?
- Approximately what percentage of your clients are newcomers (i.e. people who have lived in Canada for less than 5 years)?
- Does your organization offer any training to staff or volunteers to work more effectively with newcomers (trauma informed practices, mental health, cultural competency)?
- Does your organization have policies on equity, diversity, and inclusion informing its hiring process and interactions with the public/clients?
- In what ways does your organization collaborate with community partners when providing services to newcomers?

2. What are your organization's greatest successes working with newcomers?

3. What have been your organization's biggest challenges working with newcomers?

4. What would most help your organization handle these challenges?

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Section C: Community Perspective

5. How would you describe the overall state of the services you are most familiar with for newcomers?

- a. From your perspective, which services are most available and accessible to newcomers? What is working well?
- b. What is unique about the newcomer experience in Nanaimo?
- c. Have there been any major changes in Nanaimo in the past 3–5 years that have impacted services for newcomers in the city?

6. Are there particular challenges for certain newcomer populations (e.g. by visa type, gender, age, etc.)?

Section D: Priorities for Action

7. What would you say are the top three to five priorities for improving services for newcomers in the community?

8. What do organizations need to serve newcomers more effectively?

9. Do you have any additional comments you would like to share?

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