



Hidden Talent:

Unlocking the Employment Potential of Newcomer Youth in the Toronto Region

May 2023

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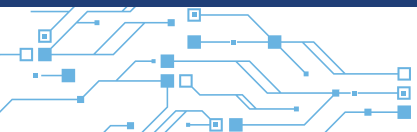
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Acronyms

CMA	Census Metropolitan Area
CREO	Community Research Ethics Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
HR	Human Resources
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTQ2+	Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-spirit and more
NEC	Not Elsewhere Classified
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
TRIEC	Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council
WIL	Work Integrated Learning
YAC	Youth Advisory Committee
YESS	Youth Employment and Skills Strategy



“If you're not hiring young people now, you're joining the train in the last car. Youth are the future. We have to create pipelines for diverse groups of young people across the country.”

– Key informant (employer/funder)



Executive Summary

Although youth have many personal strengths and skills for employment, finding a job and moving up the career ladder are critical challenges. Due to structural barriers, newcomer youth are particularly vulnerable when entering and advancing in the labour market. This report examines the employment-related aspirations, assets and barriers of newcomer youth (16 to 30 years) in the Toronto region and offers recommendations for improving their employment outcomes.

The information in this report is derived from several related exploratory studies led by TRIEC, JVS and WoodGreen, with funding from IRCC through the YESS program. The following tools were used:

- literature reviews on education and career decision-making among newcomer youth, influences on newcomer youth’s employment experiences, and the future of work;
- surveys of hiring managers and youth;
- focus groups with newcomer youth;
- key informant interviews with agencies and individuals with in-depth knowledge of newcomer youth’s employment journeys; and
- workshops with newcomer youth and service providers to validate findings and co-develop recommendations.

The literature reviews were useful for understanding some of the issues facing immigrant and refugee youth in settlement, education and employment. But they highlighted the limited attention paid to the strengths newcomer youth bring to the workforce and the challenges they encounter when preparing for work, searching for jobs and building their careers. The survey of youth provided key statistical findings illustrating the differences and similarities between newcomer youth’s and Canadian-born youth’s employment readiness, work experience in Canada, experiences with job search and entry, use of employment supports and services, perceived job quality and experiences in the workplace. In-person

and virtual focus groups and workshops allowed newcomer youth to talk about their employment strengths and challenges from their own perspectives. The hiring managers survey helped to understand employer views on the drivers and barriers to the recruitment and retention of newcomer youth. Finally, key informant interviews and a workshop with service providers offered insights on the successes and challenges of implementing responsive services to meet newcomer youth's needs.

Overall, newcomer youth have several individual assets that they can leverage to help them with their transition into the labour market and to achieve their career goals – including adaptability, resilience and a strong work ethic. Newcomer youth also expressed confidence in their essential workplace skills and career plans. Many focus group participants highlighted their education, work experience from their countries of origin and volunteer work both in Canada and internationally as assets contributing to their readiness for the workforce. The younger age cohort (16 to 20 years) for whom schooling is the main activity especially expect that their education and work placements will lead them to successful employment in the future.

Yet, newcomer youth, particularly those who arrived in Canada at an older age, said they faced difficulties and frustrations when preparing for employment. Reasons given included: a lack of social connections helpful for adapting to Canada; challenges with navigating new systems for education and requalification; their English language skills; and a lack of awareness of or access to relevant employment-related programs and services.

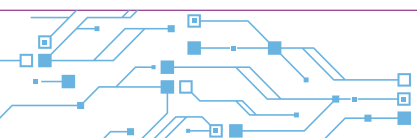
Many newcomer youth acknowledge weaknesses in their abilities around searching and applying for jobs. Proportionally fewer newcomer youth than Canadian-born youth were leaving school with work experiences relevant to their fields of interest. Limited professional networks and discriminatory hiring practices – including employers' ask for prior work experience in Canada, even for entry-level jobs – are among the contributing factors.

Among youth with employment experiences, newcomer youth may be finding themselves in lower-quality jobs compared to Canadian-born youth. Additionally, while both groups reported experiencing discrimination at work because of their ethnicity, race or culture, newcomer youth had also been discriminated for their language or accent.

It is important that newcomer youth be seen as members of a group whose individual circumstances and characteristics will require specific strategies for outreach and employment supports. In this report, where possible, we highlight the heterogeneities among this diverse group.

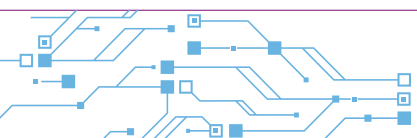
Being a newcomer, that [says] it all – not having Canadian experience, not having your experience being considered equivalent here in Canada. Sometimes the language barrier is also there. Sometimes you experience microaggressions during interviews or when you're in person collecting information, doing marketing, doing networking, and those stuff. I think those are some [of the] most important things.

– Focus group participant, age 30



Taken together, the research points to a lack of programs and services for newcomer youth that span their employment journeys, from career planning to building a career, and recognize their diverse experiences and needs. The actions listed below will help strengthen newcomer youth’s employment outcomes. Details on these recommendations can be found in this report.

	PRE-EMPLOYMENT	JOB SEARCH AND ENTRY	BUILDING A CAREER
PROGRAMS & SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide high-quality, tailored information about services upon arrival • Increase advertising and promotion of employment interventions • Provide more and better mentorship opportunities • Tailor interventions to industries/occupations • Improve career guidance • Offer more flexibility in program delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide more support with the hiring process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand opportunities for ongoing training • Provide more resources and training focused on entrepreneurship
COMMUNITY & SERVICE NETWORKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance community outreach • Ensure service providers have knowledge of a wide range of other service opportunities • Strengthen community connections and networks • Enhance connections between organizations offering newcomer services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand options for validating credentials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and connections on worker rights
LABOUR MARKET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with employers to create high-quality on-the-job experiences • Build broad awareness on the strengths and challenges of newcomer youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage employers to give newcomer youth the opportunity to prove themselves • Offer employer incentives to hire newcomer youth • Require employers to have dedicated placements for newcomer youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide training and incentives for employers to create more inclusive workplaces



Introduction

Canada's immigration policy aims to bolster the supply of skilled workers in the face of an aging population and declining birthrate. With record-low unemployment and high job vacancy,¹ the flow of immigration into the country and the successful settlement of newcomers has become even more important. As the potential leaders of tomorrow, young newcomers are particularly critical to Canada's future workforce and achieving meaningful employment – both in terms of work exposure while in school and career-based employment – is a key marker of their integration.

Yet, research shows that, on average, immigrant youth have a lower employment rate than their Canadian-born counterparts, hold lower-skilled jobs and earn less despite high levels of education.² Young newcomers are often overlooked by existing employment services, programs and policies under the assumption that they will adapt more quickly than older arrivals and catch up to their peers.³

The employment journeys of newcomer youth are distinct from that of Canadian-born youth and older immigrants in that they must navigate a new environment, culture and language, and rebuild social networks while moving through important life stages and, for some, coping with pre- and post-migration traumas. Failing to recognize and address the challenges that lead to the underutilization of newcomer youth's human capital is detrimental to their well-being and a significant missed economic opportunity for Canada.

In this Report

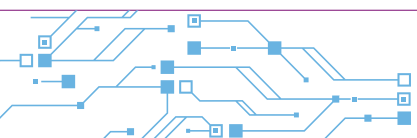
With funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) through the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy (YESS) program, the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC), JVS Toronto (JVS) and WoodGreen Community Services (WoodGreen) jointly explored the employment experiences of newcomer youth in the region where we primarily work, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA).⁴ In collaboration, we sought to better understand the assets newcomer youth bring to the workforce, the challenges they encounter, their employment-related support needs, and gaps in the current system.

This report brings together the data and insights gathered by JVS, TRIEC, WoodGreen and our partners and offers actionable recommendations to foster better employment outcomes for newcomer youth.

Section 1 of this report provides an overview of the study's methodology and who we heard from.

Section 2 details what we learned about newcomer youth's aspirations, assets, barriers and needs.

Section 3 offers recommendations for improving employment interventions to better support newcomer youth's career journeys.



Section 1: About the Study

This section provides an overview of the approach to the study, as well as information on who participated in the different components of the research.

Defining Newcomer Youth:⁵

For the purposes of the primary research, newcomer youth were defined as individuals between 16 and 30 years of age⁶ who were born outside of Canada to parents neither of whom was a Canadian citizen, who landed in Canada within the last ten years and were at least 13 years old at the time of their arrival. These young people⁷ first arrived in Canada as the principal applicant or dependent under any immigration or temporary resident status, and currently live in the GTA.

1.1 Methodology Overview

The study used an exploratory, mixed-methods approach, involving quantitative and qualitative data from both primary and secondary sources, as described in **Figure 1**. Primary data was collected between August 31, 2022, and February 2, 2023, across the GTA through surveys of youth (newcomer and Canadian-born) and hiring managers, focus group discussions (FGDs) with newcomer youth, and key informant interviews (KIIs) with employment-related service providers, employers, funders, educational institutions, researchers, community organizers and other experts. More details on these components of the study are presented in the next sub-section of this report and in the appendices. For details on secondary sources, see [Appendix A](#) and [Section 2.1](#).

Efforts were made to meaningfully engage youth not only as participants in the research but also in research planning, implementation, analysis and validation. JVS established a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC), consisting of six youth recruited through an open call for applications. These youth were trained in community-based research methods and digital marketing. They offered input on the design of focus group guides, observed sessions led by KMA Consultants and provided their feedback or reflections on the sessions. WoodGreen trained eight youth researchers and supported them to conduct institutional interviews using an appreciative inquiry (AI) approach. The youth researchers were also involved in analyzing and interpreting the data from those interviews. TRIEC's youth survey research partner, R.A. Malatest & Associates (Malatest), engaged youth as intercept surveyors. The youth surveyors went out into communities across the GTA to administer the survey to their peers, which was done in addition to distributing the survey online. Finally, newcomer youth took part in a series of workshops led by Blueprint ADE (Blueprint) to validate findings from all study components and gather their advice on actions to remove the shared employment barriers they face. Involving newcomer youth in this way led to a richer understanding of their labour market realities and better-informed recommendations.

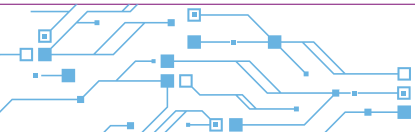
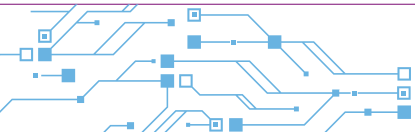
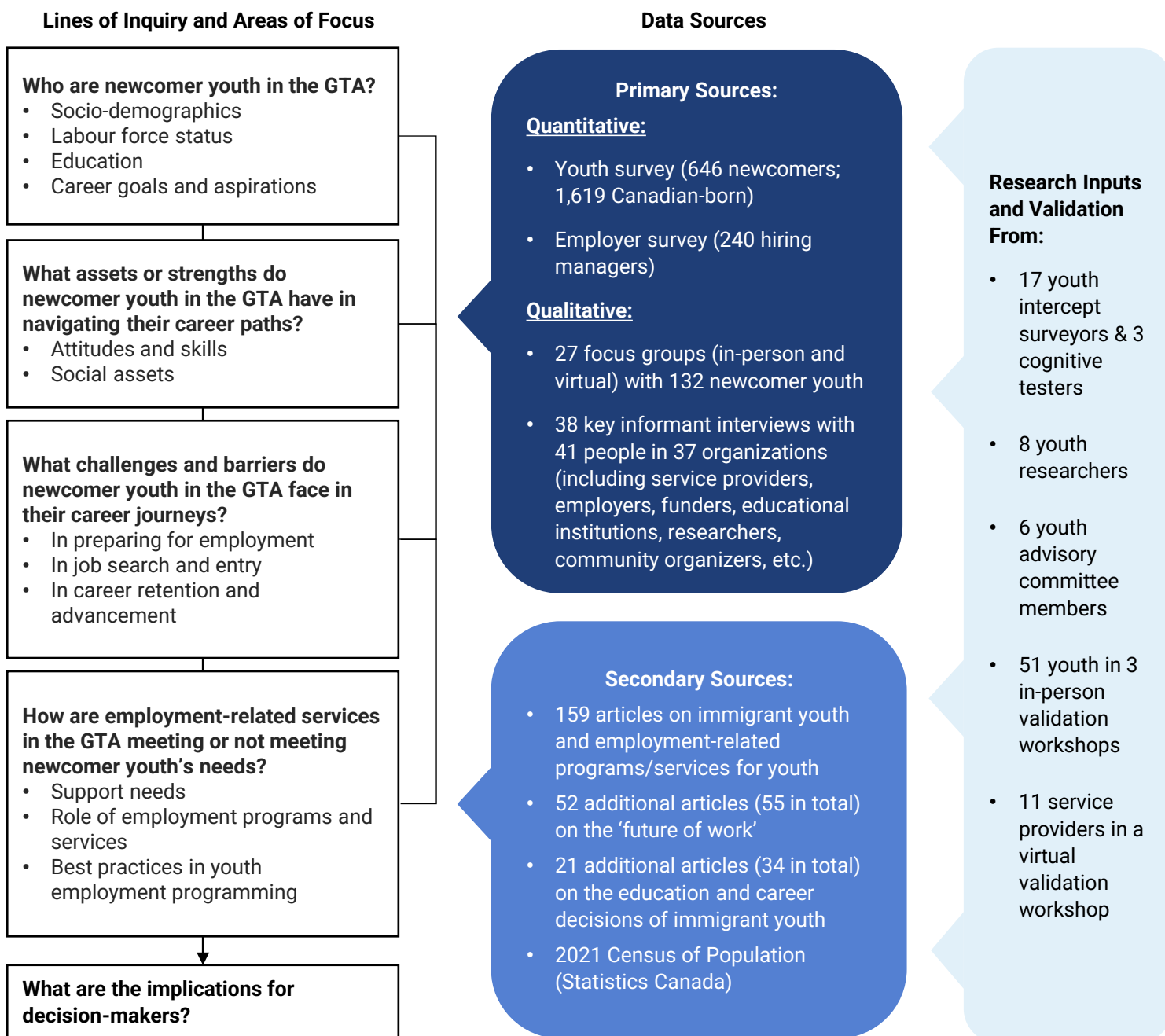


Figure 1. Overview of the Study Design



1.2 Study Participants

Youth Survey

A total of 646 newcomer youth and 1,619 Canadian-born youth completed the survey between August 31, 2022, and November 20, 2022, totalling 2,265 survey participants. The survey included questions on employment readiness, prior work experience in Canada, experiences with job search and entry, use of employment supports and services, perceived job quality and experiences in the workplace.

Given that an objective of the survey was to compare the experiences of Canadian-born youth and newcomer youth, it is important to understand differences in these subsamples, as summarized in **Table 1** below. Canadian-born youth who were surveyed were more likely to have already finished school and were employed, and most were residents of the City of Toronto. Among newcomers, a larger proportion of youth resided in the City of Toronto, but fewer newcomers were currently employed, and more were students. More newcomers were part of a racialized group, and more newcomers were women. Although a greater proportion of newcomers were in the 16- to 20-year-old age group, the mean age of newcomer (24.3 years) and Canadian-born youth (24.5 years) did not differ. See [Appendix B](#) for more details about the youth employment survey approach and sample.

Table 1. Overview of the Study Design

Status	Newcomer (n=646)	Canadian-born Youth (n=1,619)
Employed	57%	81%
Student	39%	22%
Resident of City of Toronto	72%	64%
Part of Racialized Group	90%	57%
Between 21 and 30 Years of Age	74%	82%
Women+ ⁸	58%	50%

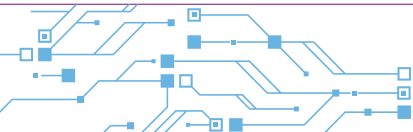
Focus Groups with Newcomer Youth

Focus group participants were recruited through the youth survey, as well as through direct community outreach and newcomer youth-serving organizations. In total, there were 132 participants (71 women+; 61 men+) in 27 focus groups. The majority of participants (80%) were over 20 years old and more women+ than men+ participated in a focus group, as shown in **Table 2**. Participants were diverse in terms of their countries of origin, education backgrounds and current employment situations.

Of the 27 focus groups, 24 were held in English and three were conducted in French (with 13 participants). In total, five FGDs were held in person, while all others were conducted online using Zoom – all between October 7, 2022, and December 19, 2022. For more details on the approaches to the focus groups with newcomer youth and participant profiles, go to [Appendix C](#).

Table 2. Age Group and Gender of Newcomer Youth Participants in FGDs

Gender	Ages 16 to 20		Ages 21 to 25		Ages 26 to 30		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Women+	13	50%	15	50%	43	57%	71	54%
Men+	13	50%	15	50%	33	43%	61	46%
Total	26		30		76		132	



Hiring Managers Survey

The target population for this survey was hiring managers and decision-makers at private, public and non-profit organizations with 10 or more employees in the GTA. Survey participants were drawn randomly from Maru Public Opinion's online panel between November 28, 2022, and December 8, 2022. A total of 240 surveys were complete for analysis. For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size has an estimated margin of error of +/- 6.3%, 19 times out of 20.

The vast majority of respondents were aged 31 years or over (93%), men (83%) and Canadian-born (94%). Eighty-one percent of respondents were senior executives, 5% were human resources (HR) managers, 12% were other managers and 1% were below management level.

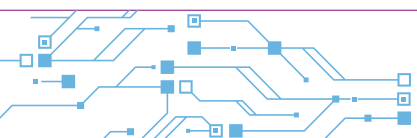
Most respondents worked for organizations with employees in the City of Toronto (75%), followed by Peel Region (22%), Halton Region (19%), York Region (17%) and Durham Region (5%). The proportions of respondents working for small (10 to 99 employees), medium-sized (100 to 499 employees) and large organizations (500+ employees) were 30%, 40% and 30%, respectively. The majority of respondents (81%) represented for-profit organizations, with smaller shares of respondents at public-sector (10%) and non-profit (9%) organizations. Organizations of respondents span almost all industries of the GTA economy.⁹ Refer to [Appendix D](#) for more information about the hiring managers survey.

Key Informant Interviews

A total of 38 key informant interviews were conducted with 41 individuals across 37 organizations between October 11, 2022, and February 2, 2023. Of these, 20 KIIs were conducted directly by JVS. Interviewees included those managing services and programs for newcomer youth, frontline workers in the employment and settlement sector, educators, researchers and community leaders and organizers. WoodGreen directly conducted the other 18 KIIs, using three different approaches: 1) AI approach with four agencies with successful youth programs; 2) interviews with eight individuals across six employers, funders and educational institutions with employment-focused programs for youth; and 3) interviews with 10 service providers delivering newcomer youth employment and career readiness programs and services. [Appendix E](#) offers more background on the approaches to the key informant interviews.

Validation and Design Workshops

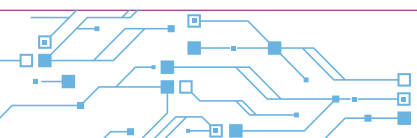
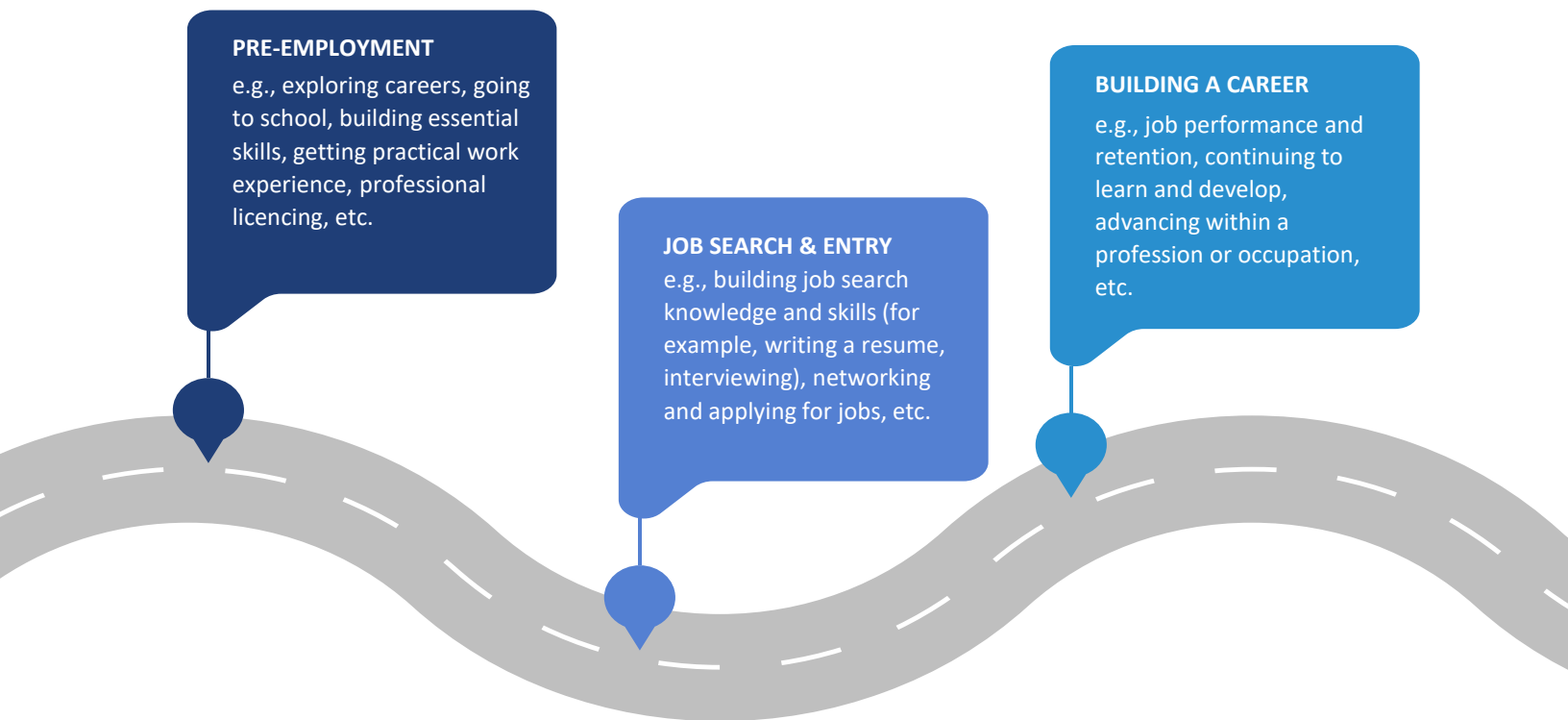
The last step in the project involved workshops with newcomer youth and service providers to validate key findings and co-design recommendations. These workshops were led by Blueprint, in partnership with TRIEC, JVS and WoodGreen. Three in-person workshops with 51 newcomer youth (27 women+; 23 men+)¹⁰ and one virtual workshop with 11 service providers were held between March 10, 2023, and March 22, 2023. The majority of youth participants were aged 21 to 30 years (68%) and came to Canada less than five years prior (74%). Participants were diverse in terms of ethnic-cultural origins, immigration category on arrival, employment status and highest education level. For the service provider workshop, participants came from seven different organizations and had positions ranging from senior leadership roles overseeing multiple employment programs and services, to strategy and planning roles, to frontline workers who directly work with newcomer youth. For more information about the approach to the workshops and participant profiles, see [Appendix F](#).



Section 2: What We Learned

This section summarizes what we learned about newcomer youth's career aspirations, how they make decisions about their careers, the obstacles they encounter and the strengths and assets they draw on to help find work, retain jobs and advance in their careers.

It starts with a brief profile of newcomer youth in the Toronto region, including their demographics, education and labour force status. Study findings are then organized based on three important stages that individuals go through as they engage in the labour market: pre-employment, job search and entry and building a career. Under each employment journey stage, highlights of the strengths or opportunities and gaps identified through the different study components are provided. Recognizing that not all newcomer youth are the same, where the evidence permits, labour market integration enablers and barriers resulting from the intersection of factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, education and years since arrival are highlighted.



2.1 Profile of Newcomer Youth

Newcomer youth are diverse in many ways. The following sub-section provides an overview of the socio-demographic characteristics of newcomer youth in the Toronto region, based on Statistics Canada's 2021 Census data products released at the time of writing this report.

A note on data sources, concepts and definitions used in this section:

This section uses data from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census of Population. All computations, use and interpretation of these data are those of the authors.

All data in this section refers to residents in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). The Toronto CMA covers an area similar to the GTA or Toronto region (i.e., City of Toronto and regions of Durham, Halton, Peel and York).

For consistency with other sections of this report, we use the term "newcomer" to refer to someone who has been a landed immigrant for 10 years or less at the time of the data source. Specifically, a newcomer is someone who became a landed immigrant between 2011 and 2021. "Longer-term" immigrant is used to refer to those who landed more than 10 years prior (e.g., 2010 or earlier). Non-permanent residents (i.e., a person from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who has a work or study permit or is an asylum claimant) are excluded from the analysis.

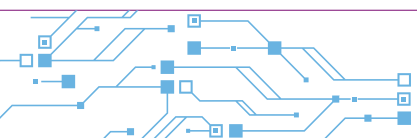
In some cases, census data was available only by generation status and not by period of arrival. First generation refers to persons who were born outside of Canada, and, primarily, consists of immigrants to Canada. Second generation includes persons who were born in Canada and had at least one parent born outside Canada (e.g., children of immigrants). Third generation includes persons who were born in Canada with both parents born in Canada.

In this section, the term "youth" is defined based on age groupings in the census data products. For example, some analysis refers to individuals aged 15 to 24 years, while other analysis is based on the following breakdown: 15 to 19 years, 20 to 24 years, and 25 to 29 years or 25 to 34 years. Data on age at arrival was not available in the census data products at the time of writing this report.

For labour market analysis purposes, we used data on youth aged 25 to 29 years, as individuals in this age group are more likely to have completed school and be available for full-time work than those aged 15 to 24.

Data on employment income was unavailable by period or age of arrival. For this measure, "immigrant" refers to both "newcomer" and "longer-term" immigrants.

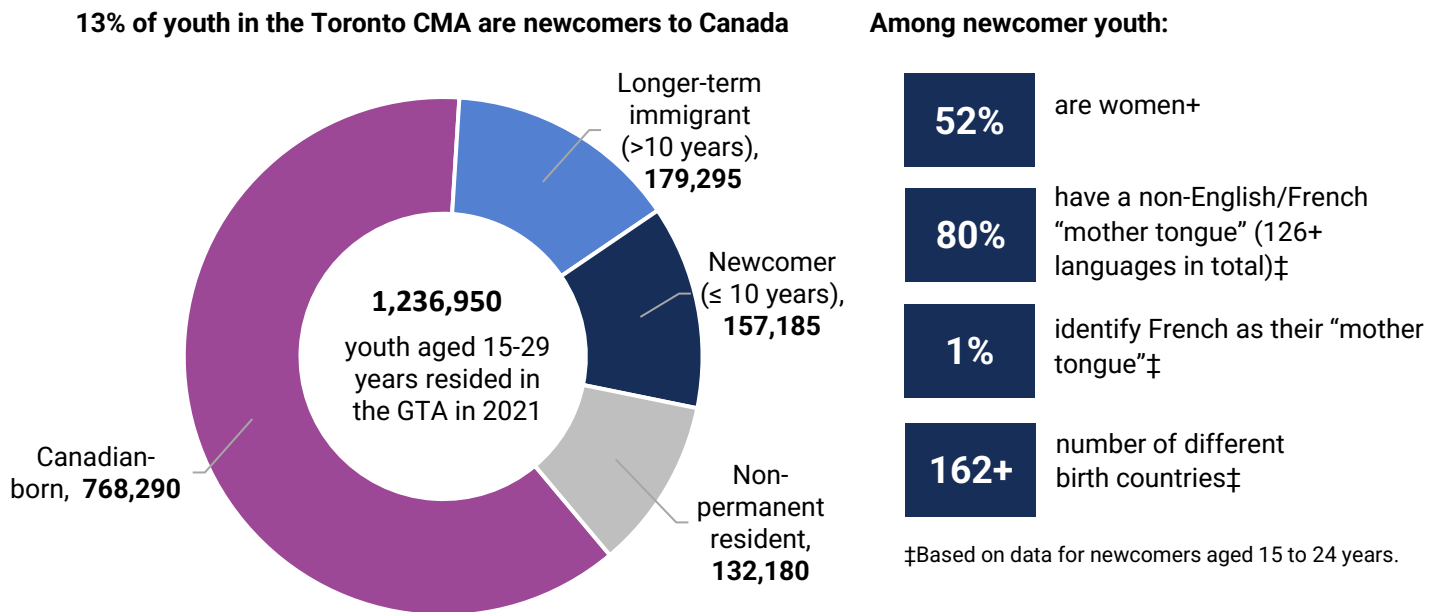
Women+ includes self-identifying women, transgender women and some non-binary persons. Similarly, men+ includes self-identifying men, transgender men and some non-binary persons.



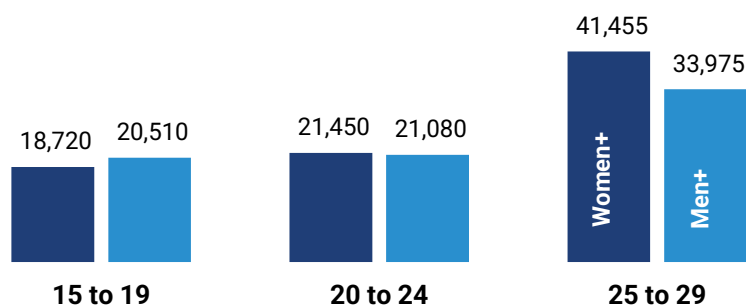
Demographics

There were more than 1.2 million youth aged 15 to 29 years in the GTA in 2021. Of these youth, 27% were immigrants and an additional 11% were non-permanent residents (see **Figure 2**). Forty-seven percent of immigrant youth were newcomers who landed between 2011 and 2021.¹¹ Newcomer women+ aged 15 to 29 years outnumbered newcomer men+ of the same age group. The largest age group was 25- to 29-year-olds, accounting for 48% of the newcomer youth population in the GTA.

Figure 2. Youth in the Toronto CMA by Immigration Status



25- to 29-year-olds were the largest age group among newcomer youth



Numbers may not add up due to rounding.

Newcomers aged 15 to 24 years speak more than 126 languages and identify more than 162 countries of birth. About 3 in 10 newcomers in this age group identified English as their first language. French-speakers made up just 1% of the GTA newcomer youth population. In 2021, the top places of birth of newcomer youth (15 to 24 years) in the GTA were the Philippines, India and China.

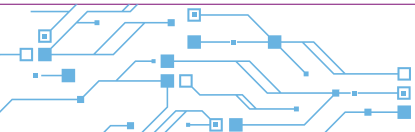
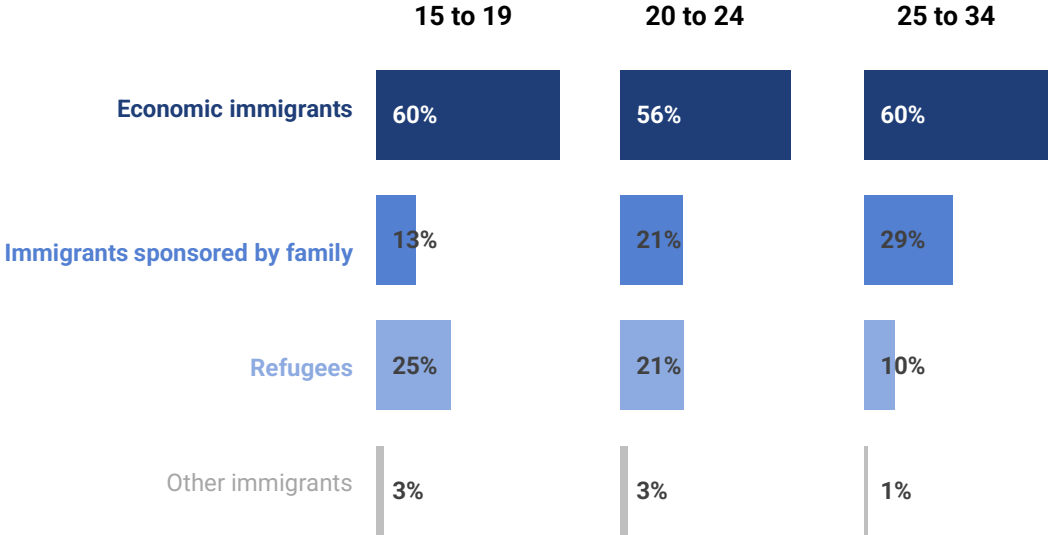
About 87% of the GTA’s newcomer youth (15 to 24 years) population was made up of “visible minorities.” More than a quarter of “visible minority” newcomer youth identified as South Asian (26%), followed by Filipino (19%) and Black (15%). See **Table 3** for more details on the ethnicities with which “visible minority” newcomer youth identified.

Table 3. Ethnicity of Visible Minority Newcomer Youth in the Toronto CMA

Ethnicity	Percentage of “Visible Minority” population
South Asian	26%
Filipino	19%
Black	15%
Arab	11%
Chinese	10%
West Asian	8%
Latin American	5%
Southeast Asian	2%
Korean	1%
Japanese	0%
Visible minority, n.i.e.	1%
Multiple visible minorities	2%

Most newcomer youth came to Canada as economic immigrants, either as a principal or secondary applicant (see **Figure 3**). Newcomer youth in the youngest age cohort (15 to 19 years) were more likely to be refugees compared to the older age cohort (25 to 34 years). In contrast, the older age cohort was more likely than the youngest group to be sponsored by family.

Figure 3. Admission Category by Age Group among Newcomer Youth in the Toronto CMA, 2021



Education

Table 4 displays the highest level of education amongst youth aged 25 to 29 years by immigration status and gender. Newcomer women+ were more highly educated than other groups. About 61% of newcomer women+ aged 25 to 29 years had at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 58% of Canadian-born women+, 52% of newcomer men+ and 43% of Canadian-born men+.

Table 4. Highest Level of Education of Newcomer and Canadian-Born Youth Aged 25 to 29 Years in the Toronto CMA by Gender

	No certificate, diploma or degree	High school diploma or equivalency certificate	Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	Bachelor's degree or higher
Women+						
Newcomers	5%	15%	1%	14%	3%	61%
Canadian-born	3%	16%	2%	19%	2%	58%
Men+						
Newcomers	6%	18%	3%	17%	5%	52%
Canadian-born	4%	27%	4%	20%	2%	43%

Occupations

Occupations did not differ much between youth aged 25 to 29 years who were born outside of Canada (first generation) and second generation or third generation (or more) youth in the Toronto CMA (see **Table 5**). There were some exceptions. Among women+, for example, proportionally more first-generation youth were in occupations such as mathematics, computer and information sciences compared to their second or third generation counterparts, while proportionally more third (or more) generation women+ were in engineering and engineering technology compared to other generations.

Gender-based differences in occupations were starker. For example, compared to women+, men+ were more likely to work as trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations. As another example, women+ were more likely to be in health occupations than men+.

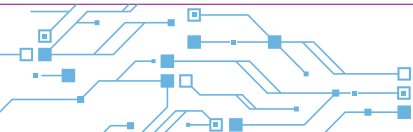
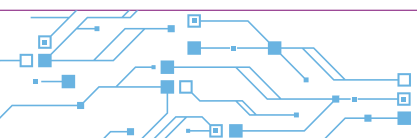


Table 5. Occupational Classifications (NOC 2021) by Generation Status and Gender, 25-to-29-year-olds in the Toronto CMA

	Women+			Men+		
	First gen.	Second gen.	Third gen. or more	First gen.	Second gen.	Third gen. or more
Occupation - not applicable	17%	11%	10%	12%	13%	10%
All occupations	83%	89%	90%	88%	87%	90%
STEM occupations	9%	4%	3%	18%	11%	9%
Science and science technology	9%	18%	18%	3%	5%	6%
Engineering and engineering tech.	17%	18%	30%	29%	29%	35%
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	74%	64%	52%	68%	66%	59%
STEM-related occupations	9%	11%	10%	5%	6%	5%
Business, finance and administration	1%	1%	1%	4%	2%	2%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	25%	14%	20%	49%	40%	50%
Health occupations	69%	81%	74%	35%	50%	33%
Occupations in education, law and social, community and govt. services	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%	3%
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	3%
Occupations in manuf. and utilities	3%	2%	2%	10%	5%	9%
Other than STEM occupations	82%	84%	87%	77%	83%	86%
Senior management occupations	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Business, finance and administration	35%	35%	30%	22%	22%	19%
Natural and applied sciences and related occupations	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%
Health occupations	4%	3%	2%	1%	1%	0%
Occupations in education, law and social, community and govt. services	14%	22%	23%	7%	10%	10%
Occupations in art, culture, recreation and sport	5%	7%	9%	4%	7%	9%
Sales and service occupations	35%	30%	30%	31%	31%	27%
Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations	4%	2%	3%	28%	24%	28%
Natural resources, agriculture and related production occupations	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	3%
Occupations in manuf. and utilities	3%	1%	1%	5%	3%	3%



Labour Force Status

Newcomer youth accounted for 12.5% of the total labour force aged 15 to 29 years in 2021. More than half of newcomer youth were in the labour force (55%), either employed or unemployed. In comparison, 62% of Canadian-born youth were in the labour force.

Table 6 displays the participation, employment and unemployment rates for newcomer and Canadian-born youth, by gender and age group. The labour force participation and employment rates for newcomer youth aged 15 to 19 were lower than for Canadian-born youth, among both women+ and men+. For this age group, the unemployment rate was similar between newcomer and Canadian-born youth. For both newcomer youth and Canadian-born youth, the younger age cohort (15 to 19 years) had unemployment rates that were 2 to 3 times higher than the rate for their counterparts in the older age cohort (25 to 29 years).

For youth aged 20 to 24 years, newcomer women+ had lower participation and employment rates than Canadian-born women+. However, the unemployment rates for these two groups were similar. Among men+, newcomers had lower participation and unemployment rates compared to Canadian-born youth, but their employment rates were similar.

Newcomer women+ aged 25 to 29 years have lower participation and employment rates and a higher unemployment rate relative to newcomer men+ and Canadian-born women+ of the same age group.

Table 6. Labour Force Status by Immigration Status, Period of Arrival, Age Group and Gender

	Women+			Men+		
	15 to 19	20 to 24	25 to 29	15 to 19	20 to 24	25 to 29
Newcomer youth (arrived 2011 to 2021)						
Participation rate	24.1%	64.7%	75.3%	24.0%	67.4%	87.4%
Employment rate	15.5%	46.5%	63.4%	16.1%	51.6%	77.6%
Unemployment rate	35.8%	28.1%	15.8%	32.8%	23.4%	11.2%
Canadian-born youth						
Participation rate	32.4%	72.3%	85.5%	29.5%	70.6%	85.2%
Employment rate	20.1%	50.6%	73.8%	19.3%	50.4%	72.7%
Unemployment rate	37.8%	29.9%	13.6%	34.6%	28.6%	14.6%

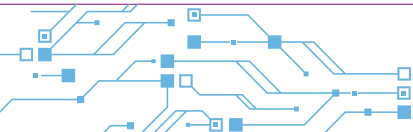
Note: Based on Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey, overall, employment in 2021 was up from the pre-pandemic lows in 2020. Since the 2021 Census, the unemployment rate has been declining gradually, reaching close to record-lows in 2022.

Income

The median employment incomes (2020 calendar year) of youth aged 15 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years were similar between immigrant and non-immigrant youth. However, those of immigrant youth aged 25 to 29 were less than of their Canadian-born counterparts, especially for young immigrant women (see **Table 7**). The median employment income of young immigrant women aged 25 to 29 years was \$31,600 in 2020, which was lower than those of young non-immigrant women (\$4,800 less), young immigrant men (\$5,600 less) and young non-immigrant men (\$7,600 less) in the same age group.

Table 7. Median Employment Income (2020) by Immigration Status, Age Group and Gender

	Women+			Men+		
	15 to 19	20 to 24	25 to 29	15 to 19	20 to 24	25 to 29
Immigrant	\$4,200	\$10,400	\$31,600	\$4,560	\$12,600	\$37,200
Non-Immigrant	\$4,240	\$10,500	\$36,400	\$4,840	\$13,300	\$39,200



2.2 Pre-Employment

The pre-employment stage could involve a range of activities newcomer youth engage in to get ready to work in Canada. This may include discovering their interests and talents, exploring careers, establishing goals and charting a career path, as well as education, skills training, work exposure and professional licencing. This section covers the assets that support newcomer youth during pre-employment and the barriers they deal with.

Summary of Strengths, Opportunities, Challenges and Gaps Related to Pre-Employment

Strengths/Opportunities:

- Newcomer youth possess a number of work-relevant personal assets, have career goals and, overall, feel confident in their essential skills and readiness for the Canadian workforce
- Digital tools and technological innovations offer opportunities to better prepare newcomer youth for work (e.g., virtual/augmented reality technology for English language training)
- Freelancing and gig work provide opportunities to build skills, gain work experience and earn money

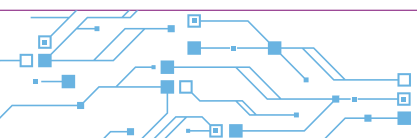
Challenges/Gaps:

- Complex system of programs and services in Canada (e.g., credential recognition, education, employment, housing, health) can be difficult for newcomer youth to navigate alone on arrival
- Lack of social networks that can help newcomer youth prepare for employment, especially as they and their parents may have limited knowledge of the Canadian education system and job market
- Lack of access to appropriate career guidance and information on labour market conditions
- Foreign credentials are not recognized to their full extent by Canadian employers, institutions and professional associations, which delays or prevents newcomer youth's entry into field-relevant employment
- Employers perceive newcomer youth to lack soft skills and are unaware of the strengths newcomer youth bring to the workforce
- Newcomer youth may be less likely to have field-relevant work exposure before leaving school compared to Canadian-born youth
- Low awareness and uptake of employment-related programs and services amongst newcomer youth
- Lack of flexibility in program delivery to help meet the needs of diverse newcomer youth, partly due to funder priorities and restrictions
- Limited occupation-specific employment supports, including mentorship, aligned with newcomer youth's skill levels, backgrounds and fields of interest

Newcomer Youth's Career Aspirations and Influencers

Career Interests and Goals

As shown in **Table 8**, findings from the youth survey suggest that most newcomer youth have clear career interests and goals. On average, newcomer youth also report being knowledgeable about their



respective careers and fields. Relative to Canadian-born youth, significantly more newcomers said they have clear goals and a clear field of interest for their career. Significant differences between newcomer and Canadian-born youth with clear career goals hold when the statements are looked at by age group.

Table 8. Self-Assessed Career Awareness and Knowledge

Statement	Newcomer (% agree) (n = 623-632)	Canadian-Born (% agree) (n = 1,558-1,570)
I have clear goals for my career.	*78%	69%
I know what field I am interested in.	*77%	73%
I know about different kinds of jobs in my field.	70%	67%
I know how to continually develop my strengths and abilities in my field.	69%	68%

ER2. Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Percentages refer to the proportion of respondents providing a positive rating (i.e., selected a 4 or a 5 along the 5-point scale).

*Indicates the group with the significantly higher mean rating when tested for 95% significance with independent samples t-test analysis.

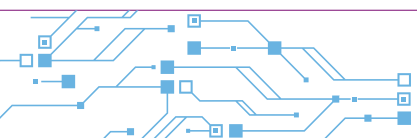
Newcomer youth participants in focus groups and workshops expressed a wide range of career interests and aspirations and many were studying, or have studied, in fields leading to their target professions. Several had specific occupations they aspire to, such as social workers, nurses, project managers, engineers and so on. Some participants want to take “non-traditional” career routes (e.g., actors, travel bloggers), with some reporting resisting common expectations in their country of origin or from family of what they would do.

Newcomer youth tend to view a career as evolving as their circumstances change, interests and abilities develop and experience accumulates. Older youth, who had begun their career decision-making journey in their country of origin, were largely seeking to continue the same path in Canada. However, some participants commented on how their career goals have shifted for reasons including their inability to find work in their field of study.

“My education is in accounting and finance. When I moved to Canada, I wasn’t able to find a job in this [field]. A recruitment and HR opportunity came by, so I decided to take it and go for it. I worked for eight to nine months, and I really enjoyed it.” – Focus group participant, age 28

Influences on Newcomer Youth’s Career Aspirations

The influences on newcomer youth’s career aspirations are varied. Many participants do not know anyone who works in their field of interest; they simply said that the field caught their interest, often in high school or during a specific university course. Others identified people in their lives who influenced them, like parents, siblings, relatives and friends. Youth who come from entrepreneurial families were inspired to want to start a business in Canada, but some said they would first pursue education and get established in an occupation. Some participants are motivated by the social needs they see; for example, refugee youth report wanting to do work that helps refugees. Finally, one focus group participant (aged 21) explained how taking part in a summer mentoring program inspired her career choice: *“I did a summer mentor program at [the University of Toronto]. It’s two months in the summer, and it’s catered for people of colour and racialized groups to have access to shadow medical professionals ... I was able to shadow a physiotherapist for a day. Just that whole experience made me have more interest in it. I saw myself actually being in a place where you see people like you work in such fields. That really inspired me to pursue that.”*



Key informants observed that the pressure to get a job, be financially independent or make money to support their family might prevent some young newcomers from thinking about, planning and pursuing long-term career goals.

“There is not much focus on the whole career goal side of things, especially [among] newcomer youth who need to be financially independent. It's very important to them because they see the struggles of their parents. They just need to find a job so that they are less [of a] burden for their parents. They may not spend time looking at what [they] really want to do or where [they] want to be. So, then what happens is they are just hopping from job to job. There is no stability there – no meaningful employment and opportunities for them to work and grow are there.” – Key informant (service provider)

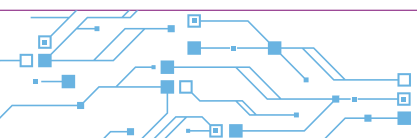
Interviewees spoke of the role that guidance counsellors and settlement workers can play in shaping the occupational choices of newcomer youth. They noted that this experience can vary for newcomer youth and, in some cases, guidance counsellors, settlement workers or employment counsellors may make assumptions about what a young person should do rather than assisting youth to discover the best way forward for them. Indeed Shizha et al. (2020) found that some gatekeepers (e.g., teachers, school counsellors) discourage newcomer students, particularly those of African origin, from pursuing their career aspirations. A related challenge that key informants raised is the lack of collaborative relationships between school guidance counsellors and community-based partners, both of whom may work with the same newcomer youth at cross-purposes.

Among the segment of focus group participants that had not yet embarked on a career path, relatively few had any engagement with career services. Two participants in the Francophone focus groups did not know their schools offered career services or a guidance counsellor that could be sought for career help. Once they were made aware that these services existed, they dismissed the idea that the services could be useful to them.

Newcomer Youth's Personal Assets, Strengths and Essential Skills for Work

Newcomer youth have many assets or strengths that can be leveraged to help them acculturate to the GTA labour market and achieve their career goals. Focus group and workshop participants highlighted a number of personal strengths that can be of benefit in their career journey. In addition, most (94%) newcomer youth survey participants who experienced searching for work in Canada identified employment-related strengths associated with being a newcomer. Some of these were echoed in key informant interviews and in the literature.

- **Adaptability and resilience:** Newcomer youth have a lot of experience navigating new, unfamiliar, and sometimes frightening situations. Many participants highlighted how meeting the challenges of immigrating has helped them become more flexible, resilient, and skilled at problem-solving. Sixty-one percent of newcomer youth survey respondents identified their ability to adapt or cope as an employment-related strength; compared to men, more women saw their ability to cope or adapt as an asset. Key informants also spoke of the determination, drive and perseverance of newcomer youth as assets. As an example of their adaptability, service providers explained how newcomer youth were quick to adjust to online service delivery, accessing information and virtual support, and assisted their families with the process. Having to balance two cultures can also foster better self-awareness, problem-solving skills and flexibility. In a meta-analysis that included 83 studies, Nguyen and Benet-Martinez (2013) found that being bicultural supported adaptation with respect to developmental tasks and well-being.



- **Hard work and initiative:** Words like “perseverance” and “striving” were used by many newcomer youth in focus groups and workshops when talking about their strengths. Newcomer youth are motivated to achieve their goals and recognize that hard work and dedication will be needed to get there. One interviewee explained that “newcomer youth are very eager, very motivated ... because they’re trying to build back up to the stage that they left before they came to Canada. They’re resourceful ... They’re networking already with employers. They’re tapping into their communities ...”
- **Communication:** In focus groups with newcomer youth, the most often noted asset behind resilience, perseverance and determination was communication skills. Many newcomer youth shared that their communication skills are an important strength. Their ability to communicate and connect with people from diverse backgrounds and communication styles is seen as an important asset in navigating their employment journey.
- **Speaking multiple languages:** Most youth participants in the focus groups and workshops spoke at least one language in addition to English. In an increasingly global world, bi- or multilingualism is an advantage in many workplaces and employment situations. Forty-two percent of surveyed newcomer youth highlighted being fluent in a language other than English as an important asset. Some newcomer youth, however, observed that being bilingual or multilingual in Canada is only an asset if the languages include English and French.
- **Open-mindedness:** Many newcomer youth felt that their open-mindedness is a key strength. Because newcomer youth have been exposed to different cultures and environments, they generally approach new experiences or ideas with curiosity rather than fear or judgement.
- **Openness to opportunity:** One workshop participant noted that a key strength is that they “say yes to everything” that might help them move forward in their career journey. Others in focus groups and workshops reiterated this point, noting that their willingness to try different things, seek out new opportunities and explore the possibilities of multiple career paths is an important asset.
- **Ability to learn quickly:** Several newcomer youth saw themselves as fast learners, able to quickly pick up new skills (including new languages) and knowledge. They felt that this is a particular asset in jobs and industries where employees are often asked to take on new tasks.
- **Leadership and teamwork skills:** Several participants highlighted their leadership and teamwork skills. They noted that they are able to work well as part of a team, listen to and understand different perspectives, and both give and take direction from others.

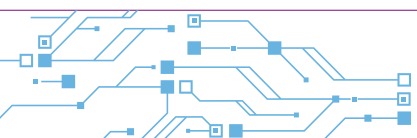
“I was born and brought up in India – there’s a lot of competition there ... more than 1 billion people that you compete with, and that gives you the perseverance ... I think that has helped a lot of immigrants because when you move to a new country and you leave everything behind, one thing that you need is patience, and the other thing that you need is perseverance, because it’s going to be a tough life ... I think that helps you slug it out.”

– Focus group participant, age 30



“I have good leadership skills, and I think that could be influenced by the fact that we moved here four years ago, not really long. So, I had to put myself out there and be responsible – go out, do this, take leadership.”

– Focus group participant, age 19



Unsurprisingly, age and experience seem to shape how newcomer youth understand their individual assets. In focus groups, the youngest cohort (16 to 20 years) had the most difficulty articulating specific strengths they bring to their employment futures. Some clearly identified skills and positive qualities. However, as a group, they had not yet developed a perspective on themselves, nor did they have a significant understanding of employment requirements and how they are equipped to succeed.

Additionally, while young newcomers are known to act as interpreters/translators for their families, caretakers of their younger siblings, navigators of the health, social service and education systems, and third income earners, many youth in focus groups saw these responsibilities as burdens and barriers to their progress rather than experiences that hone skills that will benefit them in future.

When asked about their personal assets and strengths, participants from the older cohort (26 to 30 years) tended to first talk about professional qualifications, technical skills, jobs they have held, or companies they worked for. However, when probed, these participants were able to describe in detail a diverse array of assets they possess.

Self-Rated Essential Skills for Work

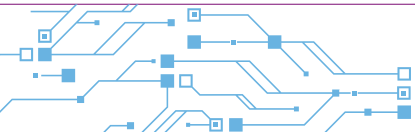
In the youth survey, participants were asked to rate their ability to use a range of skills common to work settings within a Canadian work environment. A large majority of newcomer youth rated themselves positively on each skill, with typically 80-90% of youth evaluating themselves as either “good” or “very good” (see **Table 9**). The highest-rated skills among both newcomer and Canadian-born youth were reading, writing, technology use and work ethic. Document use and numeracy were the lowest self-rated skills. Incidentally, document use was identified by surveyed hiring managers (55%) as among the top three soft/essential skills for young workers (excluding foundational skills of reading, writing and numeracy), along with technology use (57%) and critical thinking (52%).

Table 9. Surveyed Youth’s Self-Rated Essential Skills, Ages 16 to 30 Years

Skill	Newcomer Youth (% Positive) (n = 626-641)	Skill	Canadian-Born Youth (% Positive) (n = 1,553-1,590)
Reading	*92%	Reading	84%
Technology Use	*88%	Technology Use	83%
Writing	*87%	Work Ethic	82%
Work Ethic	*87%	Writing	81%
Continuous Learning	*87%	Verbal Communication	80%
Critical Thinking	*86%	Empathy	80%
Empathy	*86%	Critical Thinking	79%
Verbal Communication	*85%	Working With Others	79%
Working With Others	*85%	Continuous Learning	78%
Documents Use	*85%	Documents Use	78%
Numeracy	*83%	Numeracy	75%

ER1. How would you rate your ability to use the following skills within a work setting in Canada? (Brief definitions were provided for each skill.) The response scale ranged from 1 (very poor) to 5 (very good). Percentages refer to the proportion of respondents providing a positive rating (i.e., selected a 4 or a 5 along the 5-point scale).

* Indicates the group with the significantly higher mean rating when tested for 95% significance with independent samples t-test analysis.



On average, newcomer youth rated themselves significantly higher than Canadian-born youth on all skills, suggesting that they have confidence in their essential workplace skills and their ability to perform these in Canadian work environments. However, youth’s objective ability to perform in work environments may differ from their perceived abilities, especially among those with limited exposure to the workforce. That said, self-ratings remain significantly higher among newcomer youth even when excluding youth without Canadian work experience. All self-ratings also remain significantly higher among newcomer youth when we look only at those aged 26 to 30 years, and many¹² are significantly higher for newcomer youth aged 21 to 25 years. There are no significant differences in the self-ratings of newcomer youth and Canadian-born youth in the youngest age cohort (16 to 20).

Employer Perspectives on Newcomer Youth’s Essential Skills

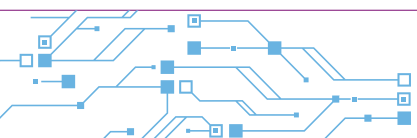
Youth’s perceptions of their own skills are not aligned with some employers’ views. In the hiring managers survey, we provided a vignette describing a young newcomer applicant to an entry-level position and asked how likely they were to consider the individual for an interview (see [Appendix D](#) for details). While 98% of surveyed hiring managers said they would be likely to invite the newcomer youth candidate in the scenario for an interview, almost all of these hiring managers (96%) still had concerns about the applicant.

The main reasons for why hiring managers would be likely to consider the applicant for an interview related to their perceptions about the strong work ethic and loyalty of newcomer youth hires (51%), a desire to give opportunities to youth (48%) and newcomers to Canada (44%), the need to address the organization’s talent and skills shortages (44%) and the willingness of young newcomers to work their way up from entry-level roles (40%). Proportionally fewer surveyed hiring managers recognized newcomer youth’s potential to bring new ideas and perspectives to the workforce (24%), and to better serve the immigrant/refugee population (29%) and the global marketplace (23%). Other reasons given for considering the applicant for an interview related to cost savings (3%), brand image (7%) and meeting diversity quotas (14%), as listed in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4. Reasons Hiring Managers Would Be Likely to Consider a Newcomer Youth Applicant for an Interview (n=235)



H1b. What makes you say that you would be likely to consider this applicant for an interview? Select all that apply. Note percentages will not sum to 100%, as respondents were allowed to select more than one option.



Surveyed hiring managers who said they would interview a newcomer youth candidate harboured concerns about the applicant, most commonly relating to the applicant's soft skills (57%), English language skills (50%), possible lack of familiarity with Canadian business culture, practices and norms (39%) and technical job-related skills (37%).¹³ Proportionally more hiring managers at large organizations (57%) were concerned that the applicant might lack familiarity with Canadian business culture, practices and norms than those at small (27%) and medium-sized organizations (36%). This is consistent with research showing that large employers with significant market power often look for recruits who fit in the organization's culture and ways of working.¹⁴

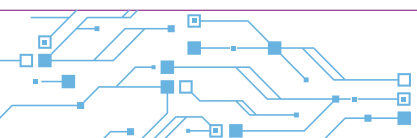
Soft skills are highly valued by employers, but employers may overlook these capacities within young people, especially newcomers.¹⁵ Nearly four in five employers in Canada perceive a skills gap in the labour market, and say they are more likely to hire someone with soft skills (e.g., positive attitude, good communication skills, reliable, etc.) who is a "good fit" than to keep searching for someone with the right technical skills. How employers conceptualize skills and "fit" may affect newcomers' labour market outcomes in particular,¹⁶ as a cultural lens may not be applied to how soft or essential skills are defined. This point was emphasized by key informants who added that employers miss the transferable skills that newcomer youth possess, the richness of their experiences and their qualities and attitudes because they are viewed with a lens that prioritizes "Canadianness." Key informants explained that newcomer youth may not immediately outwardly display behaviours employers are looking for due to differences in cultural norms, but over time, they have the capacity to learn the "unwritten rules" of Canadian workplaces for job retention and success.

Practical Work Experience

Many newcomer youth in focus groups highlighted work experience from their countries of origin, as well as education and volunteer experience both in Canada and internationally as assets that can contribute to their employment readiness. On the whole, when compared to Canadian-born youth, fewer surveyed newcomers were entering and leaving school with career-relevant work experience. Twenty-eight percent of newcomers did not have any experience working in Canada prior to finishing school – compared to 4% of Canadian-born youth – though this was likely related to whether or not they had started any education in Canada. Indeed, newcomer youth appear to be acquiring more career-related and -unrelated work experiences the longer they have resided in Canada. All work experiences (except for full-time, career unrelated work) were more common among newcomers who had lived in Canada for six years or more.

Prior to graduating from their most recent education, 65% of all surveyed Canadian-born youth already had work experiences relevant to their fields of interest, compared to only 36% of newcomer youth, indicating that more Canadian-born youth had finished school with work experiences helpful for finding jobs in their fields of interest. The percentage point difference between Canadian-born youth and newcomer youth with pre-graduation field-relevant work experience is smaller for the youngest age cohort (16 to 20 years) compared to older youth (21 to 30 years), but the gap remains across age groups. Similarly, if we consider highest level of education, the gap between Canadian-born youth and newcomer youth with a secondary-school-or-below education is smaller than that for youth with post-secondary education but differences remain statistically significant.

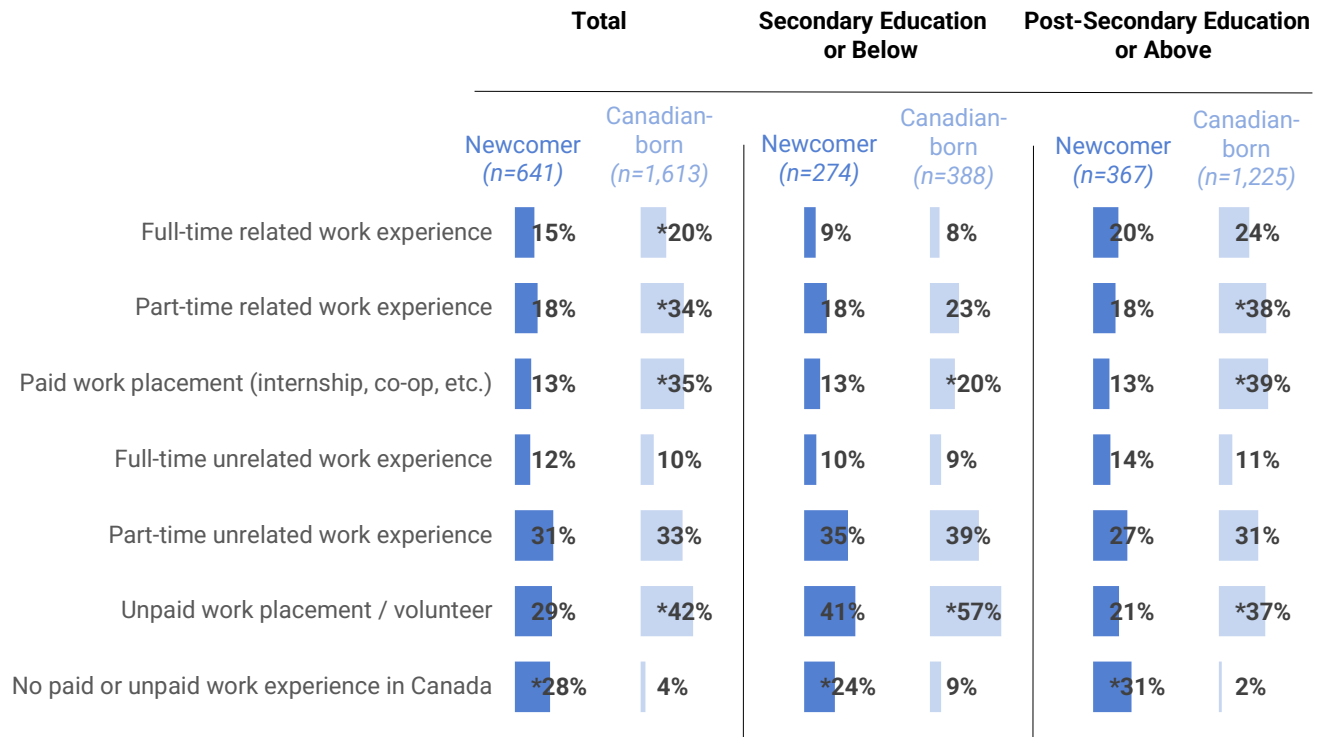
The most common pre-graduation work experiences among surveyed newcomer youth, regardless of highest level of education, were part-time unrelated jobs and unpaid or volunteer work (see **Figure 5**). Among all surveyed Canadian-born youth, pre-graduation work experiences were most often paid work placements and unpaid or volunteer work. However, for Canadian-born youth whose highest level of education is secondary school or below, the most common pre-graduation work experiences were part-time unrelated jobs and unpaid or volunteer work – which is the same as for newcomer youth. For



Canadian-born youth who have completed post-secondary education, the most common types of pre-graduation work experiences were part-time related work experience and paid work placements.

Youth who completed post-secondary education are more likely to have started their careers, while youth who have not completed post-secondary education may be working for money or to gain general work experience. Graduation requirements within an Ontario high school curriculum require 40 hours of volunteer work, which is a likely explanation for unpaid or volunteer work being more common among younger youth.

Figure 5. Work Experience in Canada Prior to Graduation



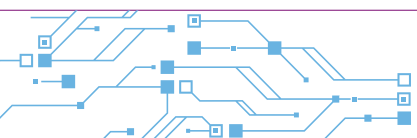
ER3. What work or volunteer experiences have you had in Canada prior to graduating from school? Refer to your most recent graduation. Select all that apply. Note this question was only asked to participants who indicated they had completed some level of schooling (location of education was not considered).

Percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who have had each type of work experience. Note percentages will not sum to 100%, as participants were allowed to select more than one option.

* Indicates groups with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.

Other studies have shown that newcomer youth are, on average, less likely than Canadian-born youth to be employed while in school. For example, Lauer et al. (2012) cite that only 25% of newcomer youth worked at all during high school, compared to 60% of Canadian-born youth, which may reflect the importance immigrant families put on education.¹⁷

Newcomer students who do work may do so to improve their economic circumstances and those of their families in Canada or in their home countries.¹⁸ In one study, immigrant youth were found to work 30 hours a week in addition to attending school in order to contribute to family income.¹⁹



Several focus group participants mentioned various income-generating “side hustles” (e.g., teaching French, content writing, event management) to support themselves as students or to have additional income while working. For some participants, besides earnings, freelancing and gig work provided paid opportunities to build skills and gain work experience.

While studies exploring the challenges of newcomer youth who combine school and work are limited,²⁰ Kanu (2008) found a direct relationship between African refugee high school students’ (aged 17 to 24 years) involvement in full-time employment and their lower academic success.

Work-integrated-learning (WIL) or other structured exposure (e.g., practicums, co-op jobs, or internships undertaken for school credit) to the workplace can help to promote career awareness,²¹ mediate the effects of structural barriers to newcomer youth’s occupational success²² and make youth more attractive to employers.²³ By helping newcomer youth build professional networks and develop skills specific to Canadian workplaces, WIL allows young people to take meaningful steps towards longer-term career goals.²⁴ Several key informants highlighted how co-op and similar arrangements can help as entryways into the workforce. Focus group participants also recognized co-ops as potentially valuable to them.

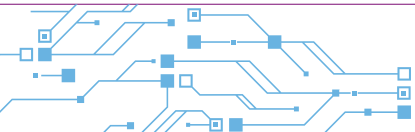
Despite the benefits, WIL and work placements have some potential shortcomings. For one, Turcotte, Nichols and Philipps (2016) argue that work placements create a class of devalued, underpaid or unpaid entry-level positions. Newcomer youth who may not be familiar with Canadian employment standards and regulations pertaining to working conditions may be particularly impacted if they are not guided toward paid WIL positions that include skills training.

Secondly, though WIL programs have been shown to be associated with improved employment outcomes for university students, they are more costly and present barriers to equity-deserving groups²⁵ and older youth. Co-ops and internships are considered potentially helpful by younger participants because they can provide experience that helps with future career choices. For older newcomer youth, these are hard options because they are a step back in their careers and come with no or low pay. Other older youth noted that even if non-payment was manageable for an individual, such opportunities are available primarily through educational institutions or training programs.

Thirdly, work experience programs can sometimes prioritize short-term operational goals over participants’ longer term career interests. In a study by Van de Sande (2019), Somali youth in Ottawa noted that they appreciated the chance to acquire summer employment that programs like the Federal Student Work Experience Program and the Youth Job Connection program offer, but many stated the need to have more job placement opportunities that match their chosen career path. Focus

Basically, the issue that I've noticed with [work placements] is that a lot of them are unpaid - which means that you are fighting against paying rent and life in the city while trying to better your situation. But it's taking, like, too long. A lot of my cohorts would often drop out because they need money. Like, they need to survive so they can't actually pursue the program till the finish. Even for me, my issue with that was they would help me find a job, but it would be, like, a one-month contract or two-month contract."

- Focus group participant, age 25



group participants also noted the importance of field-relevant work placements.

Finally, some focus group participants expressed being frustrated when co-ops and internships did not lead anywhere. They reported a pattern they have experienced or witnessed in their families where a co-op placement is followed by an internship, both unpaid, and then the individual is released by the company, which says it cannot afford to hire them. That leads to feelings of exploitation as unpaid workers.

Factors Affecting Newcomer Youth's Preparedness for the Workforce

Overall feelings of employment preparedness amongst focus group participants were different for the younger age cohort compared to newcomer youth who arrived in Canada at an older age. Those arriving in Canada typically at an older age and seeking quality long-term employment were more likely to feel unprepared. Younger participants for whom schooling is the dominant activity were counting on their education and early work exposure to equip them for their future careers. As one 19-year-old focus group participant said: *"My university studies, they are going well and I also have co-op work terms coming up, so I hope I'll be successful in those and they should be able to enrich my experience ... So yeah, I feel prepared enough."*

Reasons newcomer youth may not feel ready for the Canadian job market relate to the following challenges:

- forming social connections for adapting to Canada
- navigating new systems for education and requalification (e.g., certifications, licencing, etc.).
- their English language skills
- limitations of available employment-related programs and services

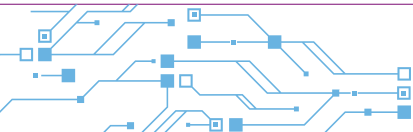
Social Networks

Newcomer youth deal with many new challenges as they settle in Canada. Focus group participants highlighted the multiple factors that can distract from or add difficulties to their efforts to prepare for employment, including managing their health and well-being, figuring out housing and transportation access, waiting for immigration documents that allow them to work or have status in Canada, and establishing new social connections, especially in the absence of family or friends from their countries of origin.

Studies find that newcomer youth with strong support networks adapt more easily to their new culture.²⁶ However, connecting to a new community²⁷ has not come easily for many newcomer youth, especially those who arrived in Canada shortly before or after the

"At the moment, I couldn't connect with any community. But I do understand and believe that belonging to a community and having connections, it will do lots with different things in your whole life in Canada. Connections make everything different."

– Focus group participant, age 24



COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. Some have devoted considerable effort to reaching out to others, for example using online platforms like Meetup. Others, especially those who describe themselves as shy, introverted or lacking confidence, report sustained feelings of being alone due to a lack of community. They report being delayed in their immigration journey as a result.

A small minority of participants in focus groups depend on family – such as an uncle, aunt or older sibling – for career advice and for help in obtaining the type of employment they want. In those situations, it helps when the family has a network. Most participants, however, recognize the importance of family in their lives, but note that family may not be useful in obtaining the jobs they want. One major reason for this is that any influential family network that existed in their home country has largely evaporated in Canada.

Likewise, focus group participants recognized the importance of being part of their ethnic community for creating a “feeling of home”; however, with some exceptions, as a group, they had generally low expectations and little experience that their community would make a material difference in obtaining their desired jobs. Several studies note that cultural enclaves help to build a sense of belonging and provide resources that are not available to newcomers in Canadian mainstream society, but often provide access only to entry-level jobs.²⁸ Isolating in their own ethnic groups can put newcomer youth at risk of economic marginalization.²⁹

Service providers whom we interviewed elaborated that while relying on support networks is important for newcomer youth, those networks can be limited in their ability to share relevant and up-to-date knowledge about the Canadian education system and job market.

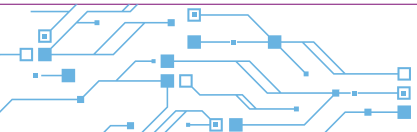
Education System and Credential Recognition

Focus group participants found navigating the path to their education, or the process of getting their credentials accepted harder than the path to employment – with much less help available.

Many interviewees agreed that finding one’s way through the education system as a newcomer youth is difficult and confusing, whether they were in high school, trying to get into post-secondary education, transferring credentials, or starting a new career. Newcomer youth in high school are not always given adequate information to understand academic streaming, career pathways and their options after graduation. They may be streamed into education programs that lead to low-skilled jobs, or they may be prematurely pushed into the workforce.³⁰ Additionally, although the construction industry can be lucrative, according to interviewees, it is not an area that the Canadian education system promotes as a career option partly due to the stereotype that only those who are not good in school learn a trade. Interviewees also spoke of a preponderance of college and university degrees and diplomas misaligned with labour market needs and not translating into meaningful employment post-graduation. Key informants felt these areas need more attention from counsellors and settlement staff in schools.

Many older newcomer youth in focus groups and workshops had credentials (e.g., school transcripts, skills training, work experience and job references) from their country of origin that are not recognized by educational institutions, professional associations and/or employers. Participants spoke of having their university degrees and training dismissed despite being certified as equivalent to established Canadian standards. This is a well-documented challenge in Canada’s immigration and education system, but one that continues to frustrate and create unnecessary barriers for newcomer youth.

While many young newcomers in focus groups find credentialing requirements arbitrary, some seemed to accept that they must pursue further education or training in Canada in order to help find suitable employment opportunities. In the workshops, some participants shared advice received from family and friends about preparing for employment in Canada to “start from the beginning,” regardless of previously attained skills and qualifications.



To have their skills and qualifications recognized in the Canadian context, newcomer youth take entry-level work in fields where they already have significant work experience, repeat education or join bridging programs. Numerous bridging programs have been established in Ontario to help integrate internationally educated professionals. These programs may be of benefit to some participants but are unhelpful for others.³¹

"I have personally found it disturbing that my qualifications back in Uganda are not enough here to earn me a job. I have a degree in social work and social administration. I have a postgraduate diploma in project management, and it is not enough. I find it disturbing that I have to, for example, do a bridging program for me to be qualified enough to get a job here ... the biggest thing that is working against me is time ... six, seven months doing a bridging program [means] a lot of time before I get a job. But I also understand that this is the way here and I have to do it. I have to move forward." — Focus group participant, age 30

"... the bridging programs are built in a way to encompass a large audience, and so it wasn't catered to my situation because I come from the non-profit sector ... the takeaways were very limited for me ... I did feel that I could have done without it as well ... What they were trying to basically teach me was not something that I needed especially. It was helpful for many others, but not for the line of work that I am in." — Focus group participant, age 30

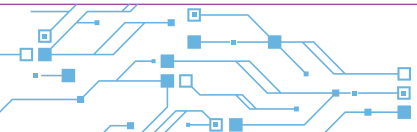
Newcomer youth in sought-after regulated occupations like healthcare were particularly perplexed by Canada's imperfect system for credential evaluation and recognition. One 28-year-old NEET participant in a focus group stated: *"They say they need more people in health. You have the experience and skills, but they don't recognize the credentials."*

As explained in the literature and by key informants, the reasons for not accepting foreign credentials as equivalent to those obtained in Canada include assumptions about the superiority of Western education and workplace standards, racial and ethnic prejudice and a complex credentialing process. Qualifications from Western English-speaking countries are better recognized, and immigrants from these locations tend to fare better in the labour market than those from other countries.³² Because employers and education institutions may not see credentials earned internationally as equivalent to those earned in Canada, newcomer youth may be forced to repeat credits in the Canadian education system.³³ Those whose credentials are rejected may also end up in jobs unrelated to their fields, often with limited career development opportunities.³⁴

English Language Skills

Language is critical to the labour market integration of newcomer youth. Fluency in both official languages of Canada increases chances for upward mobility³⁵ and bilingual youth are more likely to be employed.³⁶ However, about half of immigrant youth aged 15 to 24 years in the GTA who arrived in Canada between 2016 and 2021 spoke neither English nor French at home.³⁷

For newcomers, a low level of fluency in English or a non-Canadian accent contributes to a perception of cultural distance in school and the labour market.³⁸ Because of language fluency challenges, in a study by Ma and Yeh (2010), newcomer parents were found to advise their children to pursue jobs or courses of study that do not require English skills, such as science or engineering. Self-selection into programs of study, occupations and workplaces that are seen to be inclusive may inadvertently reinforce inequities.³⁹



In focus groups and workshops, newcomer youth who do not speak English as a first language highlighted the challenges in navigating the employment preparation process. Many discussed the added layer of difficulty that comes from the local “jargon” used in different work and service settings. Others discussed the difficulties in understanding different job requirements, expressing themselves to service providers and potential employers, and asking for what they want. In the English-language focus groups, most newcomer youth spoke English well, and had no difficulty understanding or being understood. Yet several still said acquiring better language skills was a need.

Outside of Québec, Francophone immigrant youth may face challenges. Studies have shown that African Francophone immigrant youth in Ontario experience difficulties accessing services in French.⁴⁰ Many newcomer youth in the Francophone focus groups expressed language issues in finding employment. One participant shared an experience they had witnessed where two Francophone immigrant youth went for the same job and the youth who was more qualified for the position but lacked English language skills ended up not landing the job. The story discouraged the participant and made him feel concerned about his job prospects as a Francophone in the GTA. Newcomer youth in focus groups also described their expectation of Canada as a bilingual country, which meant to them that they should be equally successful regardless of whether they spoke French or English. Speaking about the asymmetric bilingualism in Canada, one participant noted that speaking French is only a benefit if it comes with significant English language skills.

New digital tools and technological innovations offer opportunities for newcomer youth to enhance their English for the workplace. For example, a project funded by IRCC and the University of Toronto Mississauga, developed by the university language studies departments in partnership with the Syrian Canadian Foundation, uses virtual reality and augmented reality technology to help immigrants learn English through simulated environments that mirror real life situations. Results have shown that this virtual environment improves language learning by placing participants in virtual real-life situations like job interviews and increases the comfort and confidence of participants.⁴¹ Occupation-specific English language training programs are also available through traditional delivery models at participating colleges across Ontario.

Employment-Related Supports

Employment-related service providers have a place in helping newcomer youth with labour market integration through appropriate programs and supports. Employment programs can serve as a way for youth to develop employability skills, develop relationships and networks, and gain workforce exposure in the absence of market opportunities. **Figure 6** lists what interviewees highlighted as the key elements of successful newcomer youth programs.

In major urban areas like the GTA, employment-related services for immigrants and refugees are abundant. A mapping originally conducted by TRIEC in 2020 identified 179 organizations delivering skills development programs (e.g., essential skills, soft skills, occupational skills, entrepreneurship/business and other skills) for new immigrants and refugees in the GTA.⁴² These included information services, job search help, mentoring programs and various other types of support, across a fragmented community of service providers and multiple levels of government involvement. Twenty-six organizations (34 programs) were found to have skills development programs targeting newcomer youth aged 30 years and under and many of these organizations were in the City of Toronto.

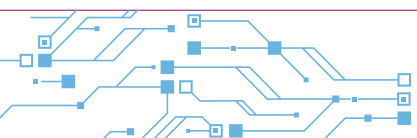
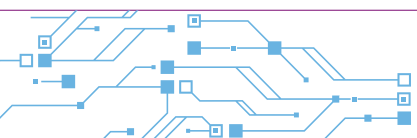


Figure 6. 10 Key Elements of a Successful Employment Program for Newcomer Youth

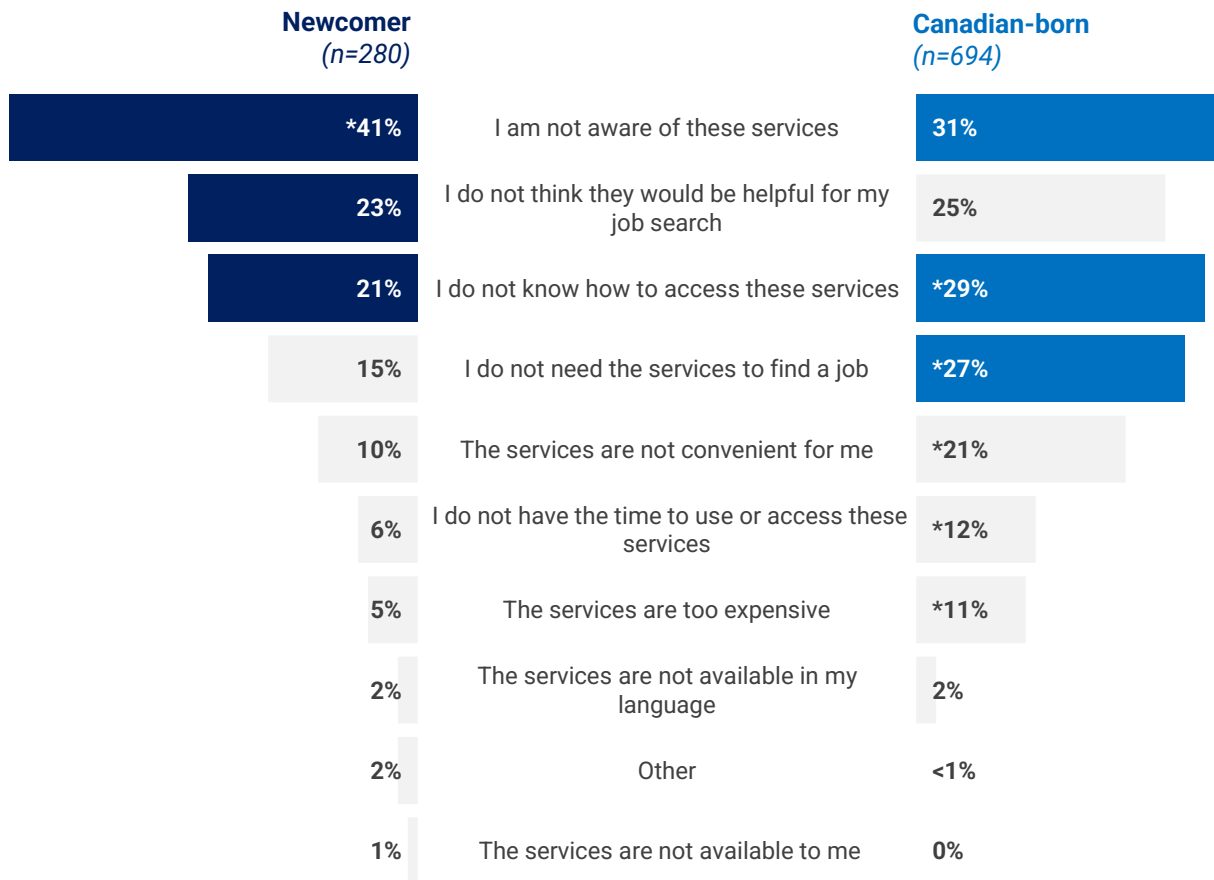
Based on appreciative inquiry interviews with program administrators and funders, key elements of an employment program for newcomer youth that retain participants to the end of the program and sets them up for success outside of the program are as follows:

1	Diverse Staff & Leadership	Diverse and compassionate staff and senior leadership with identities, backgrounds and lived experience similar to that of the youth they are serving, and who are extensively trained on equity, diversity and inclusion topics.
2	Outreach	Employing a number of outreach strategies to recruit participants for programs (e.g., paid social media ads, participating in job fairs, referrals from partner organizations, word-of-mouth).
3	Delivery Channels	Multi-channel and flexible service delivery (e.g., in-person, virtual, hybrid) to improve accessibility of programs to youth in different situations.
4	Building Trust	Getting to know youth as individuals, building their trust and setting goals with youth rather than for them. Newcomer youth are diverse and have different experiences and starting points.
5	Demand-Driven	Designing programs based on employer and industry council inputs to ensure that they are in line with emerging market demand.
6	Wrap-around Supports	Working with partners, including other service providers and businesses, to provide wrap-around supports that address all of the needs that a youth might have.
7	Financial Incentives	Financial incentives such as stipends during the training program, or connections to paid work placements.
8	Monitoring	Tracking job satisfaction, job quality and career trajectories over the long term.
9	Post-Program Follow-ups	Post-program follow-ups with participants to provide ongoing support, for example by matching program graduates with industry mentors either within their workplace or outside.
10	Youth Leadership/ Alumni Network	Leveraging alumni in program delivery and design (e.g., guest speakers, mentors, advisory council), and to build a community youth could go to for support or networking.



Community-based organizations may offer a variety of programs to engage young people, but many have difficulty connecting with newcomer youth.⁴³ Among surveyed newcomer youth, the top reasons for not using an employment service included not being aware of the services (41%), thinking they would not be helpful (23%), and not knowing how to access the services (21%). Newcomer youth without a post-secondary education were more likely to not be aware of the services. Youth in the youngest age group (16 to 20 years) were more likely to report not knowing how to access the services. A larger proportion of Canadian-born non-users (27%) than newcomer non-users (15%) indicated that they did not use the services because they felt they did not need the services to find a job (see **Figure 7**).

Figure 7. Reasons Why Employment Services Were Not Used

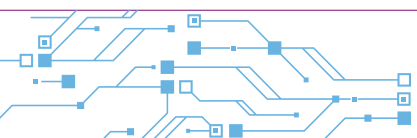


ES5. You indicated that you did not [use/plan to use] employment supports and services. Can you tell us why? Select all that apply. Note this question was only asked to participants with experience working in Canada or searching for work in Canada, and those who indicated they would be searching for work in Canada within the next year.

Percentages reflect the proportion of participants selecting each response option. Note percentages will not sum to 100%, as participants were allowed to select more than one option.

* Indicates groups with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.

Many newcomer youth in focus groups were not aware of employment programs and services available to them – some learned about programs and services that could be useful to them for the first time in the focus groups or workshops. Others shared that they had been in Canada for months or even years before becoming aware of employment programs and services.



Participants in the service provider workshop underscored that a lack of awareness of available resources is among the most important barriers to newcomer youth employment success. They noted that this awareness challenge extends to all services and supports newcomers need to be successful, and that limited coordination between employment services agencies and other sectors (e.g., housing, health) can create challenges for newcomer youth to receive the holistic support they need to move forward in their employment journey.

Access to relevant information and services before arriving in Canada could help newcomer youth feel better prepared to deal with migration challenges. However, pre-arrival services have so far been primarily targeted to adults who have been pre-approved for Canadian permanent residence status, mainly under the economic immigrant category.⁴⁴ Key informants noted the need for pre-arrival programs to be more encompassing to involve other family members like young people who accompany a principal applicant (e.g., a parent).

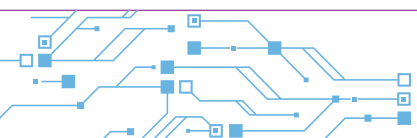
Based on the focus groups, whether a newcomer youth will engage with employment services even if they are aware of them, depends on the following:

- The need for the help of service providers. Some newcomer youth in focus groups had found work quickly, through friends, family or other ways and, therefore, did not need the help of service providers.
- The extent to which newcomer youth perceive that the supports would help overcome the specific challenges they face.
- Understanding the difference between not-for-profit service groups (which are free to use) and for-profit employment agencies (which charge fees).
- Stigmas that are held about those who use employment-related services. Some newcomer youth consider the use of employment services to be a last resort and want to prove themselves by finding a job on their own.
- Eligibility for programs and supports at the time they were needed.

From the focus group discussions, it seems that newcomer youth with the most engagement with employment services:

- Need assistance to find any job, and often have tried various forms of help
- Cannot continue doing in Canada what they did before, and do not know how to move forward
- Cannot find a path from entry-level jobs to careers
- Struggle to access educational institutions
- Need various specific skills to succeed, such as basic computer skills, greater English-language proficiency and networking

Newcomer youth who have used employment-related services have had mixed experiences. Several focus group participants praised the programs they used, especially mentoring. The importance of mentorship was referenced by newcomer youth participants as key to helping them prepare for employment. In particular, some highlighted the value of having mentors from the industry they are interested in working in, as these mentors can provide specific advice and insights on the skills and attributes they will need to succeed.



"The [mentor] that was assigned to me ... was from my own field. He is an electrical engineer, and he has been in sales like me throughout his career. Right now, he's running his own company. Where I want to see myself in the next 20 years, he's already there. He had a lot of industry connections ... he even asked me to go to his LinkedIn profile and just select people that I want to talk with ... it was really amazing. The mentor just worked on my inefficiencies and helped me in every way that I can think of ... At the start of the interaction, we used to have a two-to three-minute introduction ... Every time we met, he used to ask me "Please introduce yourself" ... I practice that answer at least 10, 15 times in front of him, which really helped." – Focus group participant, age 27

Focus group participants said they need help to make that connection with a mentor and proposed greater effort to build the supply of mentors, including by broadening the scope of the industries from which they are recruited. One newcomer youth also highlighted the value of having a mentor who comes from the same country of origin and can provide an added level of understanding and support.

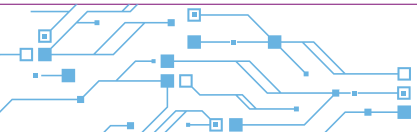
From the total commentary in focus groups, it appears employment services have the greatest benefits among those who feel the need for help with resumes, interviewing skills and basic job searches. Newcomer youth also felt that the programs helped with building self-confidence and personal networks, particularly among other people using the services. The positive anecdotes offered sometimes centred on a particular employment counsellor or other staff member and the investment that staff member made in individuals, sometimes above and beyond normal hours or degree of effort. In some cases, newcomer youth participants reported receiving services that helped them with a few specific gaps (e.g., preparing a resume) but did not provide support with the full employment preparation journey (e.g., navigating the job application process).

Other focus group participants found the time invested in employment programs or services frustrating and unproductive. The primary negative remark was about the emphasis on entry-level or minimum-wage jobs within the employment service system, without paths to professional credentials or jobs. Focus group participants felt that some agencies prioritize funder targets and steer clients only towards minimum-wage jobs.

Additional reasons for some newcomer youth's lack of satisfaction with employment programs included:

- the lack of customization of services;
- insufficient follow-ups and one-on-one time with counsellors because these counsellors have too many people to deal with;
- training content being too basic;
- the lack of a practical work experience component and connections to a range of employers with diverse hiring needs;
- service providers' lack of knowledge of a wide array of occupations and sectors; and
- the inability to use more than one service group at a time.

Interviewees echoed that employment programs are typically focused on outputs and are not focused enough on service provision quality. They said that when funders set an organization's measure of success based on the number of people who accessed services and obtained employment, skills development, the type of work and the quality of employment is not seen as important. The objective becomes to get youth to work in any job, even if the job is not aligned with the newcomer youth's aspirations and goals.



Key informants highlighted some of the structural challenges that can contribute to gaps in service quality and consistency, including unpredictable funding, restrictive eligibility criteria, and ineffective coordination and collaboration across the newcomer-serving sector.

Inadequate, inflexible funding

While the non-profit settlement sector has a central role to play in newcomer youth integration, these organizations can be constrained in their ability to do so.⁴⁵

One interviewee noted that agency staff have had to refuse participants due to limited program capacity. Funding insecurities, high staff turnover due to the lack of competitive compensation and benefit structures⁴⁶ and other resource challenges puts the reliable delivery of programming at risk.

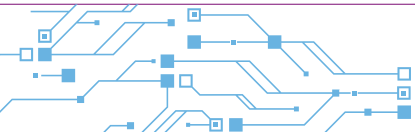
Additionally, funding affects the amount of time agencies have to work with newcomer youth. The short duration of many programs does not allow the time necessary to get to know newcomer youth clients as individuals, build trust and have them open up about the issues they are facing. Service providers say they are unable to effectively support newcomer youth clients as a result.

There is a need for longer engagement with newcomer youth, through the stages of their employment journey. Key informants report with regularity seeing youth accessing a workshop or a training and then never engaging with the organization again. But key informants observe that once newcomer youth enter the workforce, a new set of challenges arise that they might not be prepared for, such as how to approach conversations about wage increases, what to do if the employer takes advantage of them, job safety, how to learn about workplace norms, and how to network within their profession.

Interviewees noted the lack of flexibility of the current funding model to reallocate budget towards complementary supports that arise on a needed basis. For example, in addition to training on occupational language and interviewing skills, some newcomer youth may need help with the cost of professional attire for an interview or assistance meeting basic needs like food. Service providers also described situations where, through the program, youth might learn of a different service to better suit their needs. Further, it is not uncommon for settlement workers themselves to provide resources necessary to welcome youth participation in programs considered as “frills” to funders, such as transit fares, snacks and décor to create a welcoming space.⁴⁷

“I’ve talked to many youth who were like, ‘they put me in a Canadian Tire as a cashier, 45 minutes away from where I live. I never told anyone I wanted to be a cashier, and I never told anyone I wanted to work at Canadian Tire. I don’t want to do retail, I want to do something else, and I voiced another goal to them.’ And so, what happens is they put them in the job, and then they just check a box and say, ‘they’re employees, they’ve got a job’.”

– Key informant
(service provider)



Inadequate funding and staff resources mean key services may be entirely missing from an agency's suite of programming. Immigrating to a new country almost always demonstrates strength and resilience, but often also comes at a significant cost in social and personal connections, and to one's sense of their place in the world. Such needs may be beyond the reach of employment services, but unaddressed trauma and unmet health needs can easily undermine success in employment. Being able to provide trauma-informed service was one of the most significant barriers and challenges listed by service providers. Service providers recognize that understanding the complexity of individual trauma is key to helping youth succeed in and out of their programs. However, their ability to provide this type of support was limited, despite a clear need among clients.

Funding limitations affect the ability of programs to monitor and learn from the long-term outcomes of programs' post-funding cycles. The monitoring and evaluation of programs often prioritizes accountability to donors over participants. Practice or implementation research is often not built into programs to study the strengths and weaknesses of program delivery and the sustainability of outcomes.

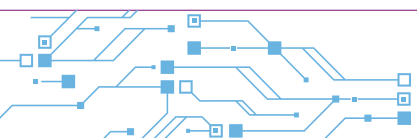
“We attempt to deliver the holistic approach, but because we don't have the capacity to do that, I wouldn't say we are where we should be with that. Again, most of the programs are funder-driven. So, you need to meet the funder's goals. So not all programs do encourage a holistic approach. But we do try to provide it.”

– Key informant (service provider)



“Measuring long-term impact is tough. We're not studying it because the funding doesn't cover the monitoring past one year. It's annual funding, so here [are] your funds; these are the number of people you can help this year with this budget, and we can't follow them for the second year.”

– Key informant (service provider)



Funder-defined eligibility criteria for programs

Because current programming operates within the context of policy and funding requirements, the needs of non-permanent residents, older youth, those out of school and underemployed youth in jobs not matched to their skills have gone unmet.⁴⁸

International students' access to employment-related services is obstructed by eligibility rules imposed by federal government funders, which is in contrast to policies aimed at retaining them through study-migration pathways. This effectively pushes the cost for settlement onto newcomers at earlier stages of their migration journeys.

Program eligibility criteria are typically based on assumptions about identity characteristics that drive underlying skills gaps and needs. If an understanding of barriers associated with one group identity such as "youth" are not assessed in relation to their other needs, the risk of reinforcing barriers experienced by these groups is high. For example, youth programs that have being unemployed as eligibility criteria exclude newcomer youth who may be working in survival jobs. Customized programming that considers newcomer youth's multiple identities, addresses their individual needs and gives them options and choices could better support their integration by ensuring they can access all of the support they require.

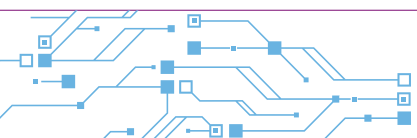
Ineffective co-ordination and collaboration

Focus group participants felt that there was a big disconnect between agencies, where one agency doesn't know what the other is doing or how to best support newcomers.

Youth felt that there may be appropriate services within the GTA to address their employment, education, health, housing or other needs, but report that they end up bouncing from service to service, without proper communication and collaboration between programs and agencies. They expressed that the process can be confusing and results in wasted time and frustration. Interviewees shared similar sentiments.

"A lot of organizations are competing for dollars and not working together. Collaboration is a huge systemic issue and it's a shame because programs should be co-created. If one program can't take on anymore youth, it would be our hope as a funder that they would be sending them to another program, but that's not often the case." – Key informant (funder)

Partnerships between organizations and knowing what services are available in the community to make referrals can help to enhance programs for newcomer youth. Because unique challenges require tailored interventions, it is unrealistic to expect all or even most employment-related services to target newcomer youth and the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. Though many groups would benefit from specialized attention, organizational resources are limited. Programs and services could benefit from better collaboration among different service agencies, between schools and community-based organizations, and especially by involving businesses.



2.3 Job Search and Entry

In this section, we explore newcomer youth's experiences with job search and entry. The job search and entry stage involves a number of activities, including building job search knowledge and skills, networking, applying for jobs and accepting an offer. Some activities may overlap with those in the pre-employment stage.

Summary of Strengths, Opportunities, Challenges and Gaps Related to Job Search and Entry

Strengths/Opportunities:

- Available employment programs/services are seen as helpful for developing resume writing, interviewing and basic job search skills

Challenges/Gaps:

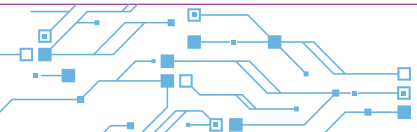
- Disconnect between Canada's points-based immigration system and employers' needs may shunt even highly skilled newcomers towards low-wage, precarious jobs
- Despite anti-discrimination legislation and actions taken by authorities in Ontario to help remove the "Canadian experience" barrier, employers continue to use "Canadian experience" as a way of discriminating against immigrants
- Traversing the job application process and accessing the "hidden" job market is a challenge for newcomer youth with small social and professional networks
- Employment programs as well as recruitment and networking events are seen to primarily focus on entry-level jobs in a limited number of industries/sectors
- Training programs do not always have strong connections with employers to facilitate transitions into field-relevant employment

Post-Graduation Work Experience

Since graduating from their most recent education, 69% of all surveyed Canadian-born youth and 39% of surveyed newcomer youth have worked in career-relevant jobs in Canada. Differences in the proportions of Canadian-born and newcomer youth with career-relevant work experience in Canada hold up even when we consider age group and highest level of education.

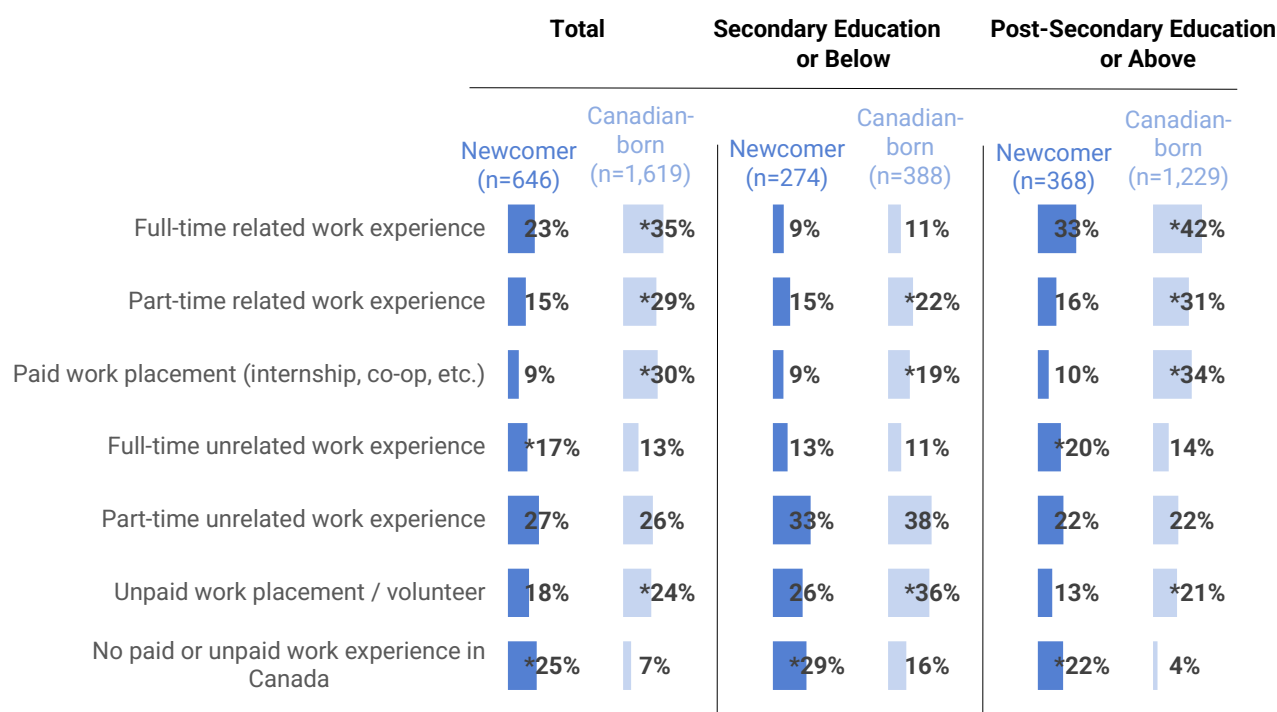
While similar proportions of Canadian-born youth and newcomer youth have held part-time jobs unrelated to their fields of interest, significantly more young people born in Canada have had paid work placements or worked in full- or part-time career-related positions (see **Figure 8**). This indicates that fewer newcomer youth are finding themselves in jobs within their fields after finishing school. Furthermore, one-quarter (25%) of newcomers have not worked in Canada since graduating, compared to 7% of Canadian-born youth.

The above differences between newcomer youth and Canadian-born youth are seen when we consider only those who graduated from post-secondary education. However, among those who last graduated from secondary school or below, the proportions of newcomer youth and Canadian-born youth with full-time related work experience and unrelated work experience, either full-time or part-time, are similar.



Among surveyed newcomer youth, those with post-secondary education were more likely to have full-time jobs (both field-related and unrelated) since graduating. These youth have likely finished their education and started their careers. Those without post-secondary education were more likely to have worked in part-time unrelated jobs or in unpaid/volunteer positions. Newcomer youth who have been in Canada for six years or more were more likely to have experience in full-time jobs and part-time unrelated positions. Full-time career-relevant work experiences were more common among men+, and unpaid/volunteer positions were more common among women+. Lastly, newcomer youth who had been in Canada for five years or less were more likely to have had no work or volunteer experiences since graduating.

Figure 8. Work Experience in Canada After Graduation



S7. What work or volunteer experiences have you had in Canada since graduating from school? Refer to your most recent graduation. Select all that apply. Percentages refer to the proportion of respondents who have had each type of work experience in Canada. Note percentages will not sum to 100%, as participants were allowed to select more than one option.

* Indicates groups with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.

Overall, the time it took to find their first job after their most recent graduation was similar between surveyed newcomer youth and Canadian-born youth, with 60% of both reporting being able to find employment within six months of graduating. However, there were some significant differences between the two groups, with more Canadian-born young people indicating they were able to secure employment before graduating, and more newcomer youth indicating they were not able to find their first job until over a year after graduation (see **Figure 9**).

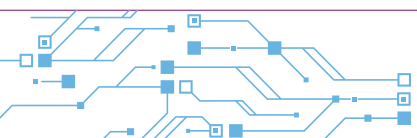
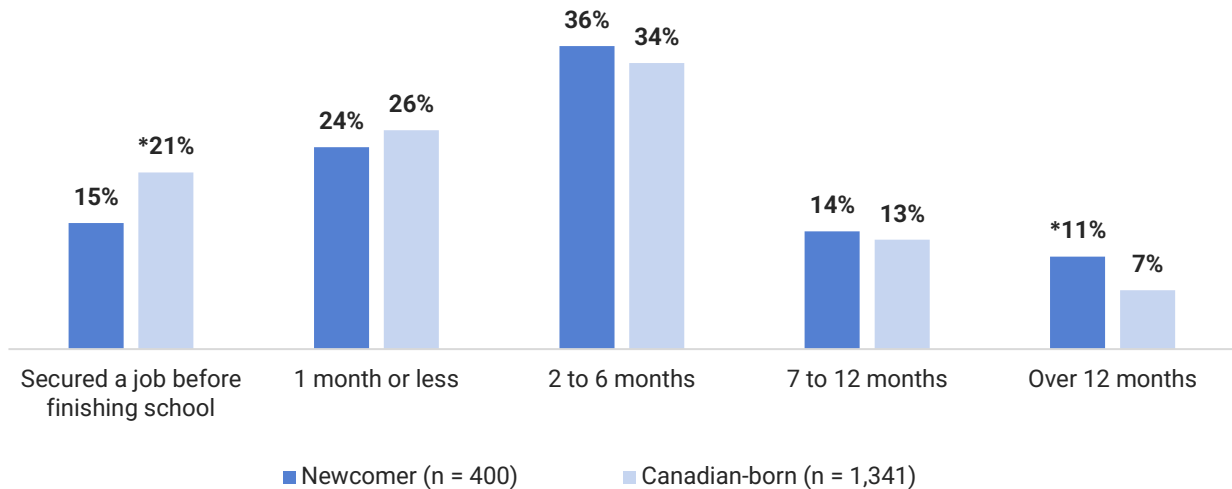


Figure 9. Duration of Job Search by Education and Sample Type



LM1. How long did it take you to find your first job in Canada after finishing school? Refer to your most recent education. Note this question was asked only to participants with experience working in Canada.

* Indicates groups with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.

When asked about whether they had experienced challenges while searching for employment in Canada, 87% of newcomers and 89% of Canadian-born respondents identified at least one challenge. Significantly more challenges were identified by newcomer youth, who identified an average of 2.6 challenges, while Canadian-born youth identified an average of 2.3 challenges.

Newcomer youth most frequently identified the devaluing of non-Canadian work experience and small social and professional networks as challenges. Meanwhile, Canadian-born youth's most frequently identified challenges included a lack of relevant experience or education, a lack of relevant job opportunities, and employers perceiving a poor culture fit.

Relative to newcomers, more Canadian-born youth also identified age-based discrimination and needing to take care of family members as challenges they have experienced while job searching. Notably, a small social network and a lack of relevant experience or education were frequently identified as challenges among both newcomer and Canadian-born youth (ranging from 26% to 35% of respondents), indicating some overlap between the two groups in the type of challenges experienced.

While most youth have experienced challenges while searching for employment in Canada, and while newcomer youth and Canadian-born youth may face both common and distinct challenges (see **Table 10**), it is important to note that the extent to which each challenge created barriers for youth may have varied between groups but was not assessed.

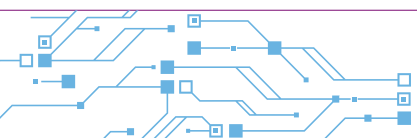


Table 10. Job Searching Challenges Faced by Newcomer and Canadian-born Youth

Challenge	Newcomer (% Selected) (n = 534)	Canadian-born (% Selected) (n = 1,490)
Employers do not value or recognize non-Canadian work experience	33%	-
My social network is small/limited	31%	26%
My professional network is small/limited	*30%	23%
I don't have relevant work or educational experience	26%	*35%
Employers do not value or recognize non-Canadian education	*25%	6%
Discrimination due to my race, ethnicity, culture or religion	17%	19%
There are not enough job opportunities in my field of work/study	17%	*30%
Employers think I will not fit in with the workplace culture	14%	*26%
Employers were concerned about my English skills	13%	-
I don't know how to search for jobs in Canada	12%	9%
Discrimination due to my age	11%	*25%
I can't access employment assistance resources or services	8%	6%
The foreign credential recognition process is too lengthy or costly	6%	-
I was taking care of family members (e.g., children, parents, a spouse/partner)	6%	*9%
Other	3%	1%

LM3. Have you faced any of the following challenges when searching for a job in Canada? Select all that apply. Note this question was only asked to participants with experience working in Canada or searching for work in Canada.

Note percentages will not sum to 100%, as respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

* Indicates the group with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.

Job Search Knowledge and Skills

When asked about their job-searching knowledge, similar proportions of newcomer and Canadian-born youth reported knowing how to look for employment in Canada (**Table 11**). However, over a third of respondents from both groups expressed not being aware of available job searching supports and resources or job searching strategies, or indicated that they did not know how to prepare effective applications or prepare for interviews.

Overall, newcomers reported being less knowledgeable about the job searching resources that were available to support them; only half (53%) of newcomer youth indicated being knowledgeable in this area, compared to 62% of Canadian-born youth. When we consider age group, the difference between the proportions of newcomer and Canadian-born youth with knowledge about job searching resources was statistically significant only for 26-to-30-year-olds.

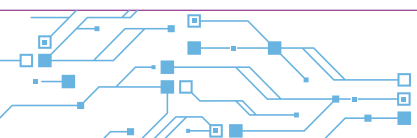


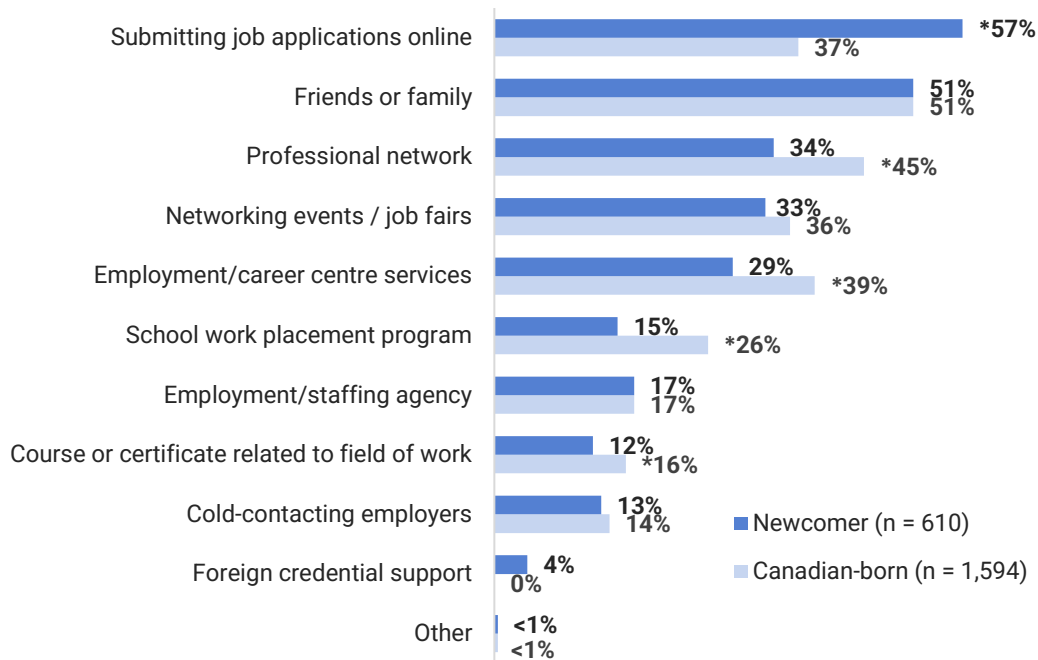
Table 11. Self-Assessed Job-Searching Knowledge and Readiness

Statement	Newcomer (% agree) (n=628-634)	Canadian-Born (% agree) (n=1,558-1,569)
I know where to search for jobs in Canada.	64%	63%
I know how to prepare an effective resume and cover letter.	63%	67%
I know how to prepare for an interview.	64%	65%
I know what resources are available to support my job search.	53%	*62%

ER2. Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. The response scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Percentages refer to the proportion of respondents providing a positive rating (i.e., selected a 4 or a 5 along the 5-point scale).
 * Indicates the group with the significantly higher mean rating when tested for 95% significance with independent samples t-test analysis.

Newcomer youth predominantly preferred using their personal or professional networks or using the internet to search for work, and only a minority of newcomer youth had used services from employment centres, career centres, staffing agencies, work placement programs or foreign credential recognition services. While many Canadian-born youth also used their personal and professional networks when job searching, many had also leveraged internships or co-op programs through their school, or services from career centres or employment centres; fewer had opted to search for work online (see **Figure 10**).

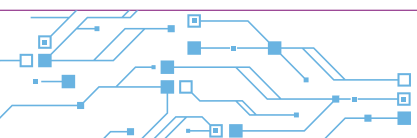
Figure 10. Approaches and Supports Used for Job Searching



ES1. Which of the following [will you use/have you used] to support your job search in Canada? Select all that apply. Note this question was only asked to participants with experience working in Canada or searching for work in Canada, and those who indicated they would be searching for work in Canada within the next year.

Percentages refer to the proportion of participants selecting each response option. Note percentages will not sum to 100%, as respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

* Indicates groups with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.



Twenty-one percent of young newcomers selected an employment-related support or service ((that is, networking events or job fairs, employment/career centre services, employment/staffing agency, school-work placement program, course or certificate, or foreign credential recognition) as their most effective job searching approach. The respondents who selected one of these employment supports as their most effective approach were asked to indicate what they liked about the employment support they chose. For nearly all services, newcomer youth most often liked that people were friendly and helpful and that the services met their specific needs. Provision of virtual employment services was also regarded as valuable.

In the focus groups, many newcomer youth who had used employment programs or services highlighted their importance in helping them prepare for employment. Several specifically mentioned how useful it has been to have support with their resume, cover letter and interviewing skills, especially as Canadian norms and conventions around job applications often differ from conventions used in other countries.

Where newcomer youth had challenges was in “selling” their skills and experience. Several shared that while they have valuable skills and strengths to bring to employment, they struggle to articulate these skills and strengths to Canadian employers. This can, in part, be attributed to language barriers, but also cultural differences in how prospective employees market themselves and explain their strengths. Some participants noted that facing continual rejections from employers who do not see the full spectrum of what they bring to the table can lead to self-doubt and questioning their value.

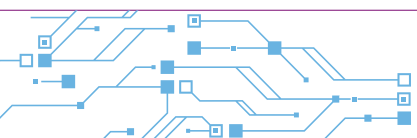
Networks and Networking

Social and professional networks can be an important precursor to good quality jobs. The lack of social networks for many newcomer youth in focus groups and workshops was keenly felt when they started seeking jobs and experienced automated screening of online applications.

Many newcomer youth highlighted the lack of a personal and professional network in Canada as a reason that searching for a job is more difficult. They noted that without these connections, it is difficult to understand different job opportunities and career paths in Canada, obtain references to support their job applications, and access the “hidden” job market of opportunities that aren’t advertised or posted online. Service providers echoed that a lack of personal or professional networks is a major or common challenge faced by the newcomer youth. Service providers also noted that many newcomer youth don’t have connections to role models and mentors who share the same lived experience.

“Yeah, I can say ... lacking of connections to know people here makes it much [more] difficult for me. That’s the thing I face and the difference from the place where I came from.” – Focus group participant, age 25

Some surveyed newcomer youth (23%) found success in searching for work through their personal social networks. Interestingly, relative to the number of newcomer youth who had reported using their professional networks while job searching (34%), the number of individuals who found this approach to be most effective was relatively high, with 14% of newcomer youth considering it to be their most effective means of searching for employment. In other words, professional networks were considered the most useful by almost half of the newcomer youth who had used them.



For job searching, the use of professional networks was especially preferred among newcomer youth between the ages of 21 and 30, as they have likely built larger and more useful professional networks through post-secondary schooling or previous work experiences. Given that newcomer youth may have a limited network of work-related contacts particularly at younger ages, youth may find that their professional networks become more effective for job searching as they gain more professional contacts through school or new jobs. This is evidenced by the increase from only 5% preferred for job searching among the youngest age group to 18% preferred among the oldest age group.

Newcomer youth's networks for job search include school officials, family and friends. Some younger participants in focus groups and workshops discussed the support they have received from guidance counsellors and teachers in connecting them to employment programs and work opportunities. Informal help from family and friends was also seen as important by newcomer youth. Examples were shared of family and friends providing job recommendations, sharing information about helpful programs, directly teaching them skills and supporting them in their job search. Family and friends who have more experience in Canada are seen as a particularly valuable source of guidance and support because of their knowledge of the Canadian service landscape and job market.

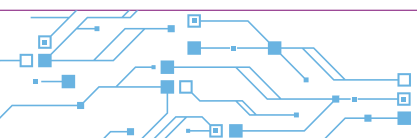
While newcomer youth participants observed that professional networking is important to bypass common barriers and accelerate progress with job search, they felt it requires substantial effort. Time pressures and schedule challenges limit some participants (especially students and people with children) from dedicating time for networking. Those who are not naturally outgoing have a much harder time. Being self-conscious and a lack of confidence – especially about speaking English – also holds people back. Besides this, for those who came to Canada just before or during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the shutting down of face-to-face events was detrimental for forming new connections.

Several newcomer youth in focus groups discussed their strategies for networking. Some spoke about how knowing how to use LinkedIn effectively can be an asset. Others mentioned that they have made use of initiatives like Ten Thousand Coffees and Four Brown Girls.

"When I was looking for my first job, it was almost like every other day, I would try and attend an event ... there would be a lot of 'speed' networking events. There would be workshops or seminars in the field of HR. They would even be like this lunch or these breakfast meetups. I've attended everything. I kind of push myself because I'm not someone who's good at small talk. I've never been exposed to that. It was kind of a weakness of mine. I wanted to put myself out there as much as possible to get used to it ... I'm still learning and the past two years, because of the pandemic, I've just gone back to my shell. So, I'm trying again now." – Focus group participant, age 28

"I've joined a networking group especially for women entrepreneurs. It's a private Toronto women entrepreneurs' group that I've joined where I get a lot of insight on women entrepreneurs based in GTA and get a lot of insight about their business and what is it that they do. [I found it] through a Facebook group. . . I just saw a post coming up where we had this group of 8,000 women from all over Toronto who are women entrepreneurs." – Focus group participant, age 28

Among the items specifically named by focus group participants as beneficial from employment services were networking skills and advice. However, focus group participants also reported being frustrated that networking events arranged by settlement or employment services usually focus on entry-level jobs in a limited set of sectors and industries, and that they often meet no one in their chosen field.



Applying to Jobs

Many newcomer youth shared their frustration with the process of applying for jobs. They noted long wait times before they hear back from employers, and multiple steps in the hiring process that are not communicated upfront. Also noted as a challenge was understanding how to tailor resumes and cover letters to get noticed, especially when automated applicant tracking systems are often used to screen out resumes.

Additionally, many newcomer youth noted that job advertisements sometimes tell only a partial story of an employment experience. They said it can be hard to understand what skills are actually required, what the work environment will be like and what the prospects for career advancement will be, based only on what employers provide in a job description or interview.

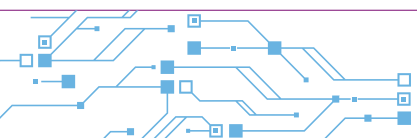
Many newcomer youth are struggling to find work that fits with their particular needs and constraints. For example, newcomer youth who are in school experience difficulties finding work with a flexible schedule. Also shared was how difficult it can be to find work that pays enough to support them in a high cost-of-living city like Toronto. Relatedly, service providers discussed how newcomer youth with family responsibilities can struggle to find time for job search activities, particularly when they lack access to childcare supports and services.

Discrimination in Hiring

The business case for hiring workers from different backgrounds is known. Cultural diversity is said to bring innovative approaches, networks and expertise to the table.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, employers look for signs of integration in potential candidates. Newcomer youth participants in a study by Selimos and George (2018) reported facing discrimination in the labour market due to their immigration status and non-Western name. A 2014 CivicAction report also noted that newcomer youth, among other marginalized youth, frequently experienced structural discrimination and racism in job recruitment and screening as well as in holding a job. In a study by Rossiter et al. (2015), the majority of youth participants stated that they had experienced racism or discrimination since their arrival in Canada, including in employment.

Discrimination in the labour market plays a role in the economic and social disadvantage of newcomer youth.⁵⁰ According to the Ontario Federation of Labour (2014), discrimination faced by newcomer youth as they enter the job market might account for their higher rate of unemployment. Discrimination, or the expectation of being stigmatized, is something newcomer youth in focus groups and workshops said they confront. Workshop participants shared some firsthand experiences of the discrimination they have experienced in the job search process. One newcomer youth participated in a group interview where they were repeatedly skipped over by the interviewer. Another had been notified by a person working for a prospective employer that their resume was screened out of a hiring competition because their name suggested that they were not born in Canada. In the focus groups, some newcomer youth shared how they anticipated rejection from employers on the basis of their religion, sexual orientation race, accent and other factors.

"... I'm also a minority, and I also wear a headscarf and the gown. I think when employers see it like that is immediately a 'no' for them. I think that should change because, equal rights go both ways. I'm also thinking that if I want to get employed, I have to maybe change some aspect of that." – Focus group participant, age 30



“Once [people] know you are from the LGBTQ community, they don’t want to employ you because of your sexual orientation, the colour of your skin. As a Black man and a man that is within the minority ... I might go into a job interview, and I might be qualified, and I might not get the job because of the colour of my skin and where I come from. Based on my accent [and] the fact that I’m Jamaican, the moment someone hears me [they think] “Well, you have an accent,” so they might give [the job] to the person who is actually living here in Canada and who does not necessarily have the qualifications that I may have.” – Focus group participant, age 27

“Canadian Experience” Barrier

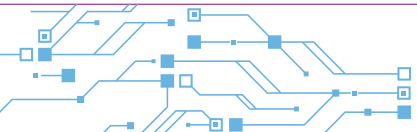
The most unified response among focus group and workshop participants was that the single largest barrier to employment is the requirement by employers that applicants have Canadian experience for almost any job. Newcomer youth noted that even many entry-level jobs ask for experience, and that in many cases, the work experience they bring from their country of origin is not seen as relevant or applicable to Canadian jobs. Some newcomer youth shared how this barrier has led to feelings of frustration, self-doubt, depression, loss of confidence and eroding motivation as they begin to question the value of their existing skills and knowledge.

For some youth in the focus groups, “Canadian experience” is not simply a process for becoming oriented to Canadian ways of thinking and doing things; it is a barrier deliberately erected and deployed to keep immigrants out, or in low-wage employment. Overwhelmingly, key informants also felt that employers are still looking for candidates with Canadian experience. It was felt that when employers view candidates through a lens that places a high value on Canadian experience, they often overlook experiences that can be relevant and applicable to the Canadian workplace.

The “Canadian experience” barrier is a well-known problem in Canada, with harmful consequences. It drives newcomers into minimum-wage jobs, it depresses their earning potential and it delays or prevents their entry into their professions. Being recognized as potentially discriminatory and a barrier to employment in policy and government circles in Ontario⁵¹ has not deterred employers from using Canadian experience as a short-cut proxy to assessing skills and competence (e.g., knowledge about local institutions and ways of working, technical knowledge or experience needed for jobs, knowing Canadian workplace norms).

In a large-scale study of employment barriers for newcomers in Ontario, Bhaskar (2015:11) found that “many employers agreed that Canadian work experience is actually a euphemism for understanding the Canadian workplace culture and having soft skills to adapt to this culture.” The onus has been on newcomers to take steps to meet employer demands by returning to school, volunteering or accepting jobs below their qualifications to gain “Canadian experience.”

“I’m an engineer and I have master’s in engineering as well. I do have experience in my field ... For the time being, to maintain the expenses you need a job that at least pays you not the minimum wage ... the opportunities for newcomers here what I saw so far is only the minimum wage. Like Tim Hortons, this kind of job, okay, the newcomer will be able to work on it. But towards something related to your field and related to your expertise, wherever you go they will ask you, “Okay, do you have this Canadian experience? ... I was working in multinational companies in different countries around the whole world. What Canadian experience will be varied from this?” – Focus group participant, age 30



"I'm in finance. I was a trader back home, so I have a master's in economics. It has been really difficult to find something within the financial industry. It's just two months in, but it's still always trying to get in to create that Canadian experience that everyone's looking for. . . . To me any job that you get, whether it is back home or in a new place, it's a matter of being trainable. Because any job that you go on, they're going to train you how they want their job to be done. Why is it that Canadian experience needs to be a heading of discussion if you're going to train me anyway? From my experience, you can see that I am trainable. I don't think it should be a topic of discussion, but it is." – Focus group participant, age 30

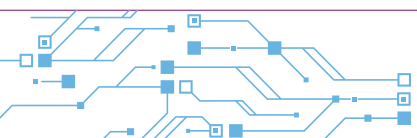
"I was applying for the positions I previously held. I realized that I was not receiving any calls or emails from HR. I took a step down and I started applying for positions that were below my experience and qualification. I got this call from HR and they asked me why do you want to apply? Why do you want to take a step down? I told them this is a win-win for you. I can add more value in this position and then in turn I can get Canadian experience that is required here and that's where I'm facing the most difficulty. That's how I managed to find a way to get my foot in the door. But that was a compromise for me." – Focus group participant, age 30

When it comes to younger newcomers whose initial school-to-work transitions happen in Canada, their challenge is similar to those of Canadian-born youth. Even for low-wage, entry-level positions, young jobseekers with limited work experience must compete with those with more work experience and demonstrable skills. A 2014 study by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario showed that less than one-quarter (24%) of all employers posting entry-level positions would consider hiring a candidate with no work experience. A follow-up study showed that 59% of applicants hired for entry-level positions had three or more years of work experience and 25% had more than five years.⁵²

Several focus group participants observed that what employers see as deficiencies would quickly be addressed by on-the-job training (for employment) and/or customized bridging programs (for credentials and certifications). Many of the newcomer youth in the workshops believed they could demonstrate the skills, strengths and resourcefulness needed to succeed in a range of different jobs and industries, if they were given some specific, on-the-job training. Yet many employers are unwilling to invest in providing this training and instead look to hire people who already have the specific experience required to start performing immediately. Besides a lack of willingness to invest in training, key informants suggested that Canadian employers are risk averse (choosing a so-called "safe bet"), lack adequate onboarding processes and use screening processes that are not equipped to assess competencies or transferable skills.

"If newcomer youth are missing Canadian experience, just because they've worked in their home country, but are just starting out in Canada, what they did abroad and a lot of the skills that they used abroad, I'm sure are transferable. But a lot of employers unfortunately, still assume Canadian experience will just make the orientation process easier for them and the onboarding process faster." – Key informant (service provider)

"They are not screening for competencies and transferable skills. They are screening for job descriptions and the experience that an individual has. So I think what if we screened more for what competencies does the job need? And we then reverse engineer that to say, what do these immigrant youth bring to those sort of jobs, like transferable skills, and screen that way." – Key informant (service provider)



"Canada is very internal looking and they do want you to have gone to university or have worked for a company here. We have a long way to go as a sector, in social impact; as a company, from a business perspective and just from a humane, personal perspective." – Key informant (employer/funder)

"Employers should be giving more opportunities, or equal opportunities, regardless of whether they have Canadian experience or not, and also ensure they have programs in place – simple programs or training – to onboard the newcomer or a new person joining the organization, youth in particular, because they are the bank of the labour market in the future." – Key informant (service provider)

Employer Engagement

The integration of newcomer youth into the labour market is good for business, especially with record low unemployment rates and high job vacancy levels. Despite this, most focus group participants reported employers throwing up barriers rather than opening doors. To address this, interviewees discussed the need to advocate for newcomer youth. This would include supporting employers to understand the biases they may have against hiring newcomer youth.

"Engaging with employers is especially important for newcomer youth vs. mature newcomers. It is important that there should be ads or programming to create awareness among employers about newcomer youth. Especially I'm talking about newcomer youth who may have come into Canada, let's say, in their preteens. So, they're neither here nor there, and here they are, going into the workforce with the mixed cultural characteristics that they are demonstrating ... Employers do not understand the family circumstances or cultural influences." – Key informant (service provider)

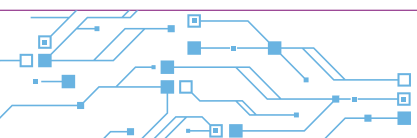
"We try to get employers to understand our member's skills and unique experiences that they can contribute to the employers. Some employers are looking for that Unicorn that checks every box but excludes a lot of Black youth, especially newcomers. So our [focus is] not only to get members job-ready but to help employers to understand the potential that this youth can have." – Key informant (service provider)

Besides working with employers to remove cultural biases in hiring, service providers recognized that it is also necessary to equip newcomer youth with skills to navigate the system.

"We completely removed the addresses from a lot of [resumes] due to red lighting. Many young people come from low-income communities, and we understand that when they apply for jobs, employers can have bias based on what communities they are coming from. Another example would be school names. The reality is there are things bigger than us (an oppressive system) but being able to educate young people about those things and how to navigate those things on their own is important." – Key informant (service provider)

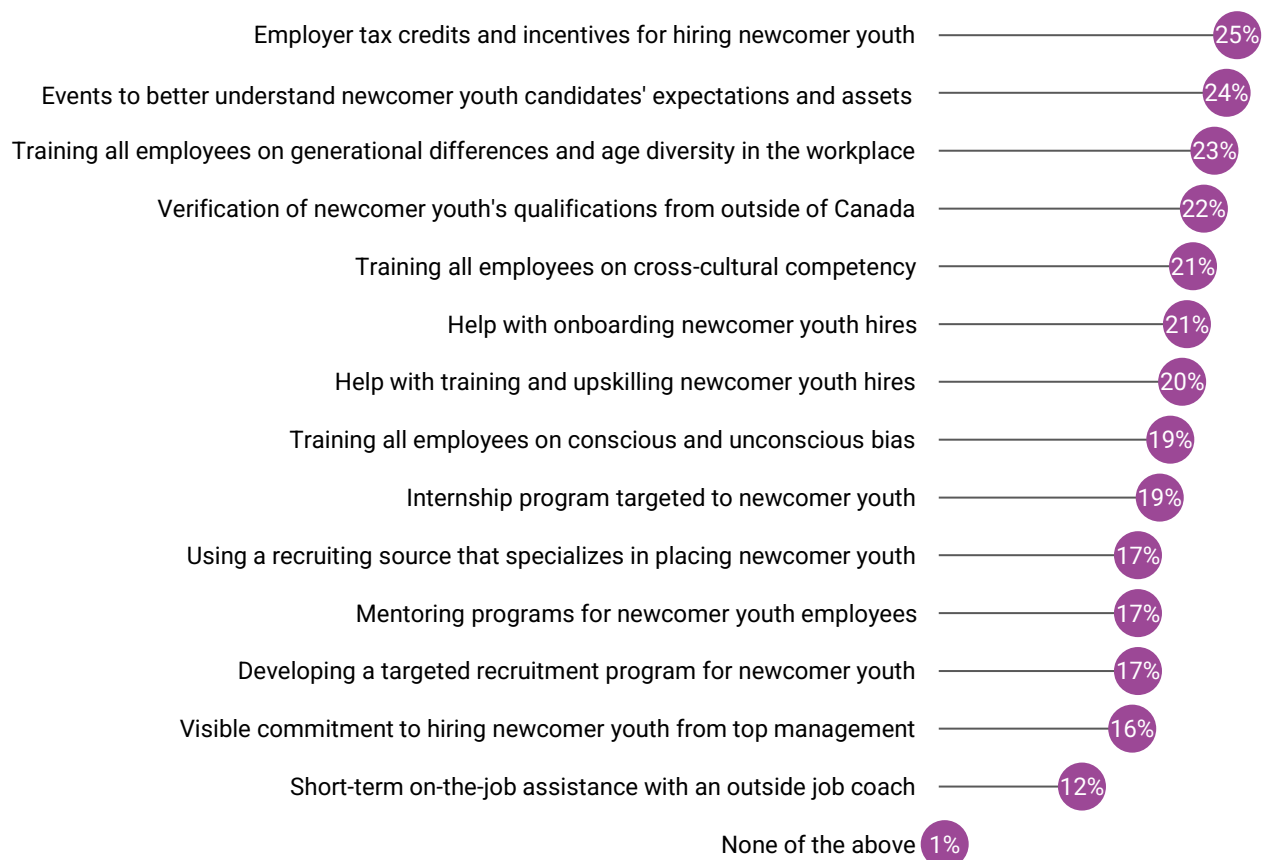
In the hiring managers survey, the majority of respondents wanted to improve their newcomer youth recruitment and retention practices. Nine in ten respondents said they would use services or resources to assist with hiring and retaining newcomer youth. Hiring managers at small organizations were more likely than those at medium-sized organizations to say they would not use such services, if available. Of the 10% of respondents who said they wouldn't use such services, 63% said they have their own tactics, 33% said they do not have time, 29% said they do not need the help and 8% said they do not have any specific interest in newcomer youth.

Employers may need to be incentivized to support youth to transition from school or employment programs to work,⁵³ but finding time to navigate the many employment programs can be challenging. An evaluation of the Immigrant Youth Employability program of the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia found that the government wage subsidy was a significant incentive for employers' participation in the program.⁵⁴ Other employer motivations included labour need, a need for diversity in the workplace and a sense of giving back to the community.

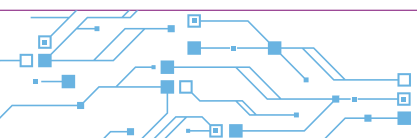


A quarter (25%) of surveyed hiring managers identified employer tax credits and incentives for hiring newcomer youth as among the most useful barrier-reducing strategies. This was followed by events to better understand newcomer youth’s expectations and assets (24%), and training for all employees on generational differences and age diversity in the workplace (23%). Other types of supports that are seen as useful by hiring managers are listed in **Figure 11**.

Figure 11. Strategies Hiring Managers Consider as Potentially Most Helpful for Reducing Barriers to Hiring and Retaining Newcomer Youth (n=216)



QH15. Which of the below strategies would be most helpful to your company/organization in reducing barriers to hiring and retaining newcomer youth? Select up to three.



2.4 Building a Career

This section examines what newcomer youth want in a work environment and the realities of their career building experiences. Building a career involves performing on the job, continuing to learn and develop, and advancing within a profession or occupation.

Summary of Strengths, Opportunities, Challenges and Gaps Related to Building a Career

Strengths/Opportunities:

- Resources for employers to strengthen their equity, diversity and immigrant-inclusion practices are widely available (but underutilized)
- Growing popularity of micro-credentialing to help workers adapt to the ever-changing job market

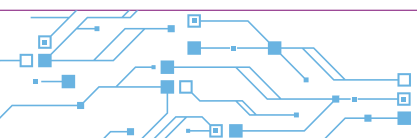
Challenges/Gaps:

- Newcomer youth may find themselves in lower-quality jobs than Canadian-born youth
- Newcomer youth in precarious employment are vulnerable to being exploited through low pay, unpaid work, lack of benefits and security, harsh conditions and a lack of care for safety
- Remote/hybrid work environments may mean fewer opportunities to network
- Discrimination faced by newcomer youth in the work environment negatively affects their full acceptance
- Employment-related training and supports, including mentoring, often end when clients find a job and do not have adequate post-hire follow-ups and supports
- Employers may not feel responsible for skills-building and on-the-job training
- Programs require youth to be in school, unemployed or working part-time; there are few programs for youth who are underemployed in jobs not matched to their skills
- Lack of financing and business connections for youth wanting to pursue entrepreneurship after gaining some work experience

What Newcomer Youth Want in a Work Environment

When describing their preferred work environment (or, conversely, what would make them want to leave a job), newcomer youth commonly expressed the following:

- **A safe, respectful, inclusive and supportive environment where they feel a sense of belonging:** Newcomer youth want to be free to be themselves in their workplace, have their rights acknowledged and protected, be treated with respect and feel they belong, regardless of their background (gender, ethnicity, religion/fait). Some participants discussed the importance of an environment that celebrates different cultures, preferences and communication styles, and where new ideas and ways of thinking are embraced. Participants also mentioned that support and encouragement from both managers and colleagues are key to a positive work environment.



- **Equity and fairness:** Some newcomer youth discussed the importance of having their performance evaluated fairly. They want to be seen, understood and valued for the skills that they bring, and not be viewed through a cultural lens that prioritizes dominant Canadian ways of being and doing. Participants also expect fairness and equity when it comes to pay and benefits. Newcomer youth want to earn enough money to not only meet their basic needs but also for savings and leisure activities – which can be challenging to do in a high cost-of-living city like Toronto. Some newcomer youth also said pay transparency is important to them; being paid equitably relative to their co-workers. Many newcomer youth also highlighted the value of workplace benefits, including dental and mental health coverage.
- **Keeping their professional identity:** For many newcomer youth with work experience in their country of origin, rebuilding their sense of professional identity is an important goal. These youth shared how demoralizing it can be to not find employment in their fields, and how important it is to them to get back on a career path that is aligned with their abilities and expertise.
- **Sense of purpose:** Newcomer youth want to feel that they are putting their skills and knowledge to good use at work, and making meaningful contributions to the company and the country. Many newcomer youth shared how important it is for them to do work that helps people, including their families either in Canada or “back home.” Some newcomer youth aim to do this directly through helping professions like teaching and nursing. Others want to start businesses to create more job opportunities for the next wave of newcomer youth. Some newcomer youth also discussed the importance of working for companies and industries that have high ethical and moral standards.
- **Opportunities for growth and learning:** Many newcomer youth shared how important it is for them to have opportunities to learn new things and advance in their career. Some highlighted the need for variety and opportunities to learn new skills. Others highlighted the importance of environments that allow them to make mistakes and learn from what went wrong. For newcomer youth, part of the growth and learning process involves building confidence in their capabilities. Many newcomer youth spoke about how mentorship⁵⁵ and other opportunities for guidance and professional development can play a role in creating an environment that helps them build that confidence at work. Frequent feedback with a mix of both formal and informal formats can also enable growth and learning.

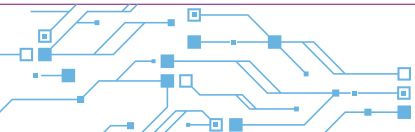
“Everyone wants to work in a place whereby they feel fully respected and welcomed, where people are not going to treat you like you're a dummy.”

– Focus group participant, age 25



“What will make me leave the job is one of exclusion ... Maybe you're working in a company, but the company feels like you're not part of them. Maybe through race or other things because [of] the segregated opinion people take.”

– Focus group participant, age 24



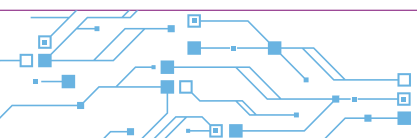
- **Flexibility:** Flexibility is top of mind for many newcomer youth when they imagine their ideal work environment. Many noted that flexible hours can make it much easier to balance work with competing family and community demands. For example, some newcomer youth want the option to rearrange work hours and take days off when they have family visiting from their country of origin. Others noted that mentally strenuous work requires the flexibility to take breaks for self-care and recharging. Opportunities for remote or hybrid work are also important to many youth, particularly those who have or are facing the prospect of long commutes. The ability to work remotely while visiting family abroad was highlighted as an important need. Some newcomer youth mentioned that finding employment as a freelancer or contract worker is an attractive option because of the flexibility it affords.
- **Being trusted:** Some newcomer youth, especially those in the older age cohort (26 to 30 years), highlighted the importance of an environment where employees are trusted to do what is needed (rather than micro-managed). They emphasized a preference to be held accountable for their work outcomes, rather than the number of hours they work, and they appreciate having independence to figure out the best approach.
- **Enjoyment:** Newcomer youth want to enjoy the work they do. Words like “happy,” “content,” “satisfaction” and “passionate” were all used to describe how newcomer youth want to feel about their work. Several newcomer youth shared that working as part of a cohesive team is an important component of their happiness at work. Others simply want work that is not routine or monotonous and plays to their strengths.

Key informants and service providers who joined the validation workshop shared their perspectives on newcomer youth’s preferences based on what they have heard from the youth they serve. Common themes were similar to what newcomer youth directly shared, specifically:

- Work environments free of harassment and exploitation
- Access to benefits
- Opportunities to pursue higher education to increase newcomer youth’s job prospects and build their skillset
- Access to meaningful, skills-commensurate jobs to build knowledge around specific sectors
- Accommodating work cultures
- Access to coaching and mentorship opportunities that support with continuous learning and career laddering
- Opportunities to build personal and professional networks and become leaders in their communities

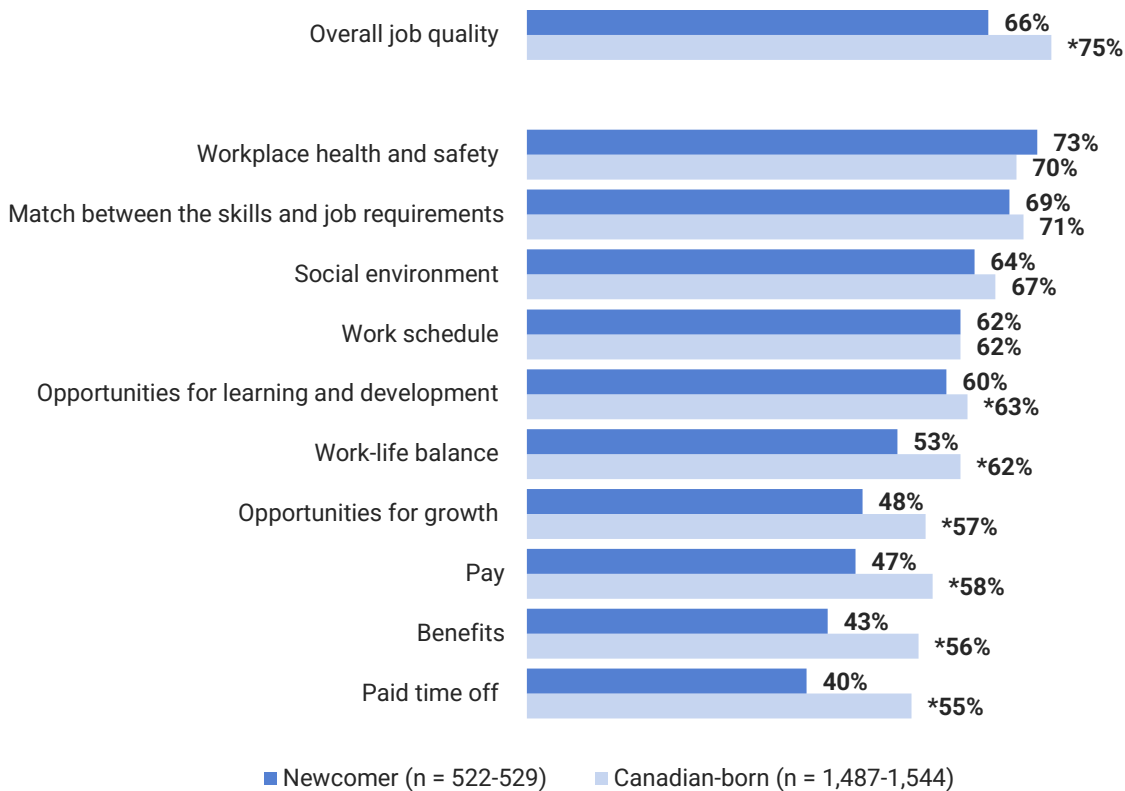
Working Conditions and Job Quality

Overall, on average, newcomer youth evaluated their most recent work experiences as being moderate in quality, while Canadian-born youth were more positive about their experiences (see **Figure 12**). Newcomer youth, on the whole, typically perceived their last jobs as being lower in quality for pay, benefits, paid time off, work-life balance, and opportunities for development or growth, indicating that newcomer youth may be finding themselves in lower-quality jobs. Notably, significantly more Canadian-born youth were working full-time jobs at the time of taking the survey (52% versus 35%), while more newcomer youth were employed in part-time jobs (28% versus 22%). Full-time jobs may typically offer better working conditions (such as benefits, learning and growth opportunities, match between skills and job) and may thus contribute to the higher job quality observed among Canadian-born youth. Additionally,



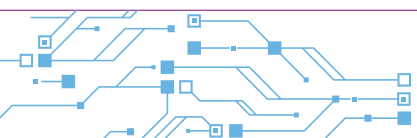
more Canadian-born youth in the survey sample had completed post-secondary education, which is expected to increase access to higher-quality jobs requiring higher education or further credentials. However, even among youth who are post-secondary graduates, on average, newcomer youth rated the overall quality of their last work experience lower than Canadian-born youth did. Newcomer youth with post-secondary degrees/diplomas specifically perceived their last jobs to be lower in quality for paid time off, benefits, pay and opportunities for growth.

Figure 12. Ratings of Job Quality (% Positive)



WE4. All in all, how would you rate the overall quality of your most recent work experience in Canada?
 WE3. Thinking of your most recent work experience in Canada, how would you rate the quality of the work experience on...
 Note WE3 and WE4 were only asked to participants with experience working or volunteering in Canada.
 Percentages reflect the proportion of participants selecting a positive response to the question (i.e., selecting a 4 or a 5 on a 5-point scale, where 1 is “very poor” and 5 is “very good”).
 * Indicates groups with significantly more cases when means were tested for 95% significance with independent samples t-test analysis.

Many aspects of job quality were lower among newcomer youth without a post-secondary education, compared to those with post-secondary education. Similarly, several aspects of job quality such as benefits and paid time off were lower among newcomer youth between 16 and 25 years of age, relative to youth in the oldest age category (26-30 years) who may be more established in their careers. Many aspects of job quality also received higher ratings from newcomer men, including the match between their skills and job requirements, benefits, paid time off, work schedule, and opportunities for growth, which mirrors extant findings on gender-related inequalities in the labour market.⁵⁶ Job quality was also lower on several aspects among newcomer youth identifying as Middle Eastern or West Asian. Additionally, social environment and workplace health and safety were rated significantly lower by refugees when compared to newcomers with permanent residency or citizenship.



Many focus group participants have or previously had precarious employment. Their experience has several dimensions. Some participants believe that the “system” pushes them towards low-wage entry-level jobs because Canada needs those workers and wants nothing else from them. One participant stated that dynamic is accentuated when “heavy” work is required, and for which employers prefer “brown or black people.” Key informants described this kind of work as compelling because people need money immediately and cannot afford to wait, a reality reported by several focus group participants. Key informants cautioned that such short-term strategies can have negative long-term consequences.

“We find these temporary solutions in precarious positions. They need to make money. But then what ends up happening is sometimes the survival drops and you actually just kind of put them on that trajectory for a long time, versus actually from the beginning helping them think about career paths and supporting them to make those steps to meet their ultimate goal.” – Key informant (service provider)

The warning from key informants that low-wage and temporary employment can be a trap and a barrier to future progress was extended by the observation in a focus group that when newcomer youth have a low-wage job, they tend to live and associate with others who are similarly employed, meaning weaker networks to support career development.

Newcomer youth with these kinds of jobs are vulnerable to being exploited through low pay, unpaid work, lack of benefits and security, harsh conditions and a lack of care for safety. It is an unfortunate reality that many newcomer youth have seen examples of exploitative and fraudulent workplace practices as they seek to build their careers in Canada. This includes failing to adhere to compensation standards and workplace safety regulations.

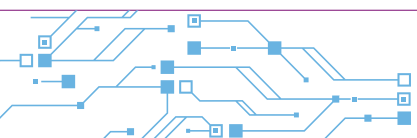
Career Advancement

Many newcomer youth highlighted the ways in which employers and co-workers can count on them to always get work done efficiently and effectively. They talked about their punctuality, dedication, time management, and hard work as key assets that support their prospects for retention and advancement in the workplace.

Service providers noted that, despite youth’s skills and integrity, an important barrier to newcomer youths’ retention and advancement is that most employment programs and services focus primarily on helping youth get hired. There is limited support for ongoing mentoring, job coaching and other post-hire supports to retain employment and to support youth with career laddering and advancement. Yet once youth enter the workplace, they may have questions that they do not feel comfortable approaching their

“In the film world what’s been happening is, since the pandemic and the whole George Floyd rallies, they have these initiatives to hire more Black people. But you find yourself being more of, like, a filler rather than a person that they want to actually give a decent opportunity to.”

– Focus group participant, age 30



supervisors about. Key informants also spoke about the “unwritten rules” within the Canadian workplace regarding what is culturally appropriate in Canada. For example, although conversations about what one wants and needs to advance in their career are acceptable to have in a Canadian workplace, in certain cultures it is not appropriate to ask for a promotion; an employee should instead wait until the boss recognizes their achievements.

“We call it the unspoken rules within an organization or even within the society. How do I advance? Anything from how do I dress up for the next level? How do I perform at the next level? Do I go and ask for better roles, or projects so that I can expose myself to more managers so that they would know what I can contribute? Those are some of the things that we don't know. It's not explicitly mentioned anywhere. And programs are mostly geared towards what is explicit. So do a better resume, make sure you get exposed to other projects, make sure you work beyond your department, those kinds of things are there but the 'How to' is not explained. And managers think that the 'How to' is clear, but it is unclear to newcomers.” – Key informant (service provider)

“There are some questions they may not want to ask their direct supervisor about. You know, [questions about] their own career aspirations that may be outside of that particular company. Just being able to have a candid, frank conversation with an industry mentor can be so helpful.” – Key informant (service provider)

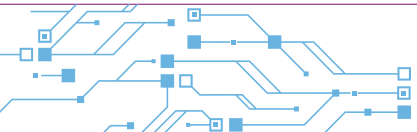
Several newcomer youth shared the challenges they have experienced navigating cultural differences in the workplace. Some discussed different cultural norms around giving and receiving feedback and shared how they have had to learn to accept feedback as an opportunity for improvement rather than personal criticism. Others shared challenges in adapting to the norms of communication in the Canadian workplace, and discussed how language barriers and cultural differences can make it harder to be authentic and confident at work. This, in turn, creates barriers to building social connections and getting to know their colleagues and can hold newcomer youth back from advancing in their careers.

Others in focus groups mentioned challenges in exploring entrepreneurship as a next career option, including finding it difficult to secure financing for business ventures. As one participant mentioned, opening a dance studio, for instance, without having any connections or financing, would prove to be almost impossible.

Learning and Development

Newcomer youth’s experiences with and opportunities for learning and development in the workplace have been mixed. Youth explained how their ability to quickly learn and apply new technology and share this knowledge with others, or to adapt to changing job requirements in other ways, has been a key asset in their workplace. A few newcomer youth in focus groups highlighted the importance of supportive co-workers for ensuring their success. They noted that co-workers can be an important source of encouragement as well as information and knowledge about how to succeed on the job and navigate future career transitions. However, with remote/hybrid work environments, there have been fewer opportunities for some young people to connect with colleagues. In contrast, a few newcomer youth shared experiences with managers who, rather than providing guidance and support, have failed to help or even hindered their career progress. Examples include managers who have failed to provide constructive feedback or have tried to hold newcomer youth solely accountable for issues with team performance. Having an employer who does not feel responsible for skills-building and on-the-job training can thwart youth’s chances to grow within a role.

In the hiring managers survey, many employers saw themselves as consumers of the education system and secondary in terms of preparing young people for the world of work. When asked who is responsible for building the skills of newcomer youth workers, most hiring managers considered the education system (26% post-secondary institutions, 19% high schools, and 11% other education and training



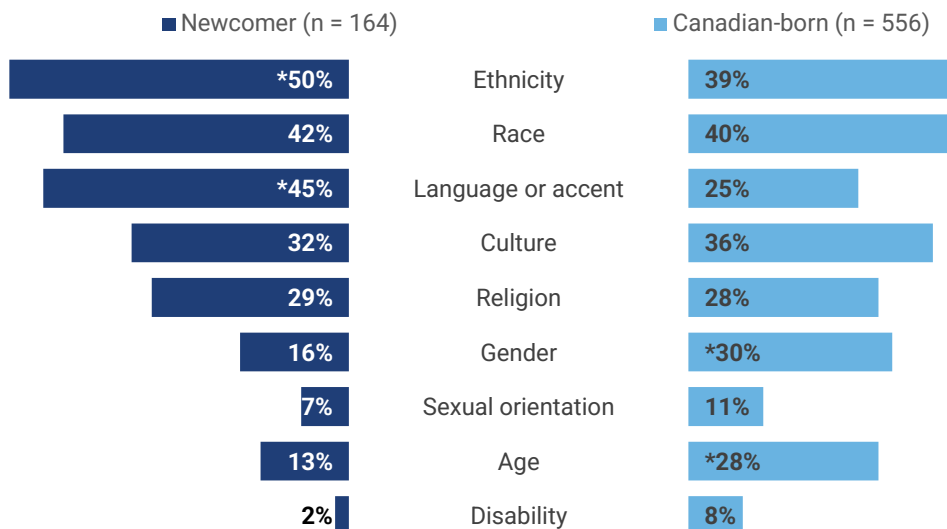
services n.e.c.) to be more responsible for building the skills of young newcomers than employers (23%).

Many employment programs for youth require them to be in school, unemployed or working part-time. Few programs exist for youth who are underemployed in jobs not matched to their skills. Hence, it can be difficult for youth to find the learning and development opportunities they need to build their careers. Micro-credentials are, however, an option for newcomers at any stage of their career journey to gain competencies for the ever-changing job market.

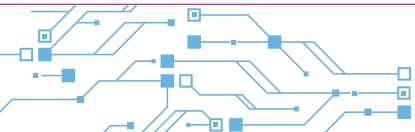
Workplace Discrimination

Though researchers commonly interpret participation in the workforce as labour market integration, newcomer youth may face discrimination in the work environment. Of the 94% of youth survey participants who had experience working or volunteering in Canada, 36% (32% of newcomers and 37% of Canadian-born respondents) said they had experienced direct or indirect discrimination in the workplace.⁵⁷ Twelve percent said they were not sure if they had experienced workplace discrimination. Both newcomer and Canadian-born youth who had experienced workplace discrimination most often reported being discriminated on the basis of their ethnicity or race, though significantly more newcomer youth reported facing discrimination due to their ethnicity (50% versus 39%). Substantially more newcomer youth also reported experiencing discrimination because of their language or accent (45% versus 25%). In contrast, significantly more Canadian-born youth reported experiencing gender-based (30% versus 16%) or age-based discrimination (28% versus 13%). Types of discrimination experienced are shown in **Figure 13**.

Figure 13. Experiences of Workplace Discrimination



WE5B. What have you been discriminated for? Select all that apply. Note this question was only asked to participants who had experience working or volunteering in Canada. Percentages reflect the proportion of participants selecting each response option. Note percentages will not sum to 100%, as participants were allowed to select more than one option. *Indicates the group with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.



Few focus group participants commented on the impact of race and ethnicity on their transition to work or progression through their career. They may not recognize racism when they encounter it. People immediately consider their personal actions, and those of other individuals. Only when an individual gains more knowledge (from a peer group, education, social media, online research) do they begin to understand that what they experienced may be part of a bigger issue.

There were, however, signals embedded in replies to closing questions in the focus groups, about what would entice participants to stay at a job and what would make them leave. In both discussions a number of people expressed that it was important that they be included in terms of their race and religion, and that their principles and values be respected. The few comments from focus group participants about experiences of racism and discrimination are as follows:

"I find that, even though I sound Canadian, when people look at me, they can tell that I'm not from here a lot of the times. I've definitely found that I haven't gotten jobs in the interview portion, or I would get a job, but I would never get promoted past a certain point." – Focus group participant, age 25

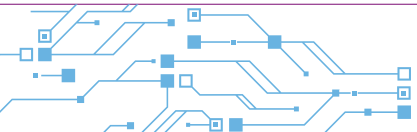
"You're a person of color. Majority of immigrants are persons of color. They have very unique last names and personalities. That itself is a barrier ... Canada is a very diverse country, but racism still exists in Canada. People of color still face it on [an] everyday basis. The job market itself is not very different. It's part of this country itself." – Focus group participant, age 26

"I've recently got into, like, a very technical job. People always say, Are you in costumes? Are you in makeup? ... There's all the racial stuff going on, all the stereotypes. They never see a Black woman doing any higher role jobs. Because I look young, there's a lot of microaggressions that I've had to deal with." – Focus group participant, age 30

Key informant interviews mentioned that engaging equity, diversity and inclusion professionals and more training are needed to create better work environments for newcomer youth.

"Many divisions are hiring directors and managerial staff on equity, diversity and inclusion because we want to infuse these principles in everything that we do." – Key informant (educator)

"Organizations have to come about it from an inclusion perspective, from recognizing differentiated opinions and value systems and cultures. We have to be trained on cross-cultural communication [and] anti-bias training because generally, as a population, we're not." – Key informant (employer/funder)



Section 3: Recommendations

This section discusses recommendations to strengthen employment interventions for newcomer youth based on the research and the workshops with newcomer youth and service providers.

The recommendations are connected to specific parts of the employment journey: pre-employment, job search and entry, and building a career. This includes potential solutions for increasing awareness about already existing employment programs and services to ensure that more newcomer youth can benefit from them.

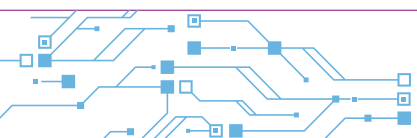
Recommendations Focused on Pre-Employment

Improving Awareness and Uptake of Existing Services

1. **Provide high-quality, tailored information about services upon arrival.** Many newcomer youth felt receiving a streamlined, tailored package of information about available employment services and supports in their area would be beneficial upon arrival to Canada. Some noted this package could also include additional information that would help newcomer youth get settled and figure out their next steps, including details on legal services, mental health supports and basics like where to buy groceries.

Some newcomer youth noted fake resources and false information that can be difficult for newcomers to discern, so it is valuable to receive clear, reliable and trustworthy information about programs and services from the government or government-funded service providers. Other suggestions from youth and service providers about how to ensure newcomer youth have high-quality and customized information about the services available to them included: providing information packages in multiple languages; including information about the local labour market, education funding options, and career options relevant to newcomers' experience and education; sharing information pre-arrival to give newcomers a head start in planning their career journey; and sending follow-up reminders for youth to consult these services and supports as they are often preoccupied when they first arrive in Canada.

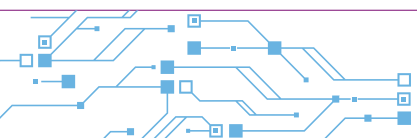
2. **Increase advertising and promotion of employment interventions.** Many newcomer youth felt employment interventions could be more effectively promoted across the GTA. More specifically, some suggested advertising more on public transportation, as many newcomer youth travel this way. Others suggested outreach through schools and universities as a way to increase awareness of available services and supports. Social media (e.g., Instagram, TikTok) was mentioned as another potentially effective channel for reaching more newcomer youth. Government websites were noted by newcomer youth to be especially trusted sources of information on programs and services. Service providers echoed many of the same suggestions, including the use of social media in culturally appropriate ways to effectively attract newcomer youth.
3. **Enhance community outreach.** Many newcomer youth learn about employment programs and services through their personal connections in the community. A relevant recommendation generated in the service provider workshop was for the employment services sector to do more grassroots recruitment in communities, including working with community experts and leaders who can recommend and make warm referrals to programs and services for newcomer youth.



- 4. Ensure service providers have knowledge of a wide range of other service opportunities.** Many newcomer youth noted they have touchpoints with government-funded service providers who are either not aware of the available employment interventions in their community that could help them achieve their career and employment goals. They suggested that building a stronger knowledge base and referral network among service providers would be an effective way to increase service awareness. For example, one participant noted that many newcomer youth participate in Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes, which would be a useful place to share comprehensive information about the range of employment and training programs and services available to them.

Improving Pre-Employment Services

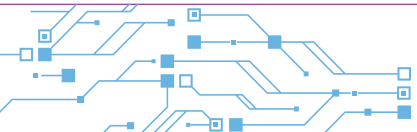
- 5. Provide more and better mentorship opportunities.** Many newcomer youth supported the idea that mentorship, especially field-specific mentorship, is an important enabler of preparation for employment. Providing mentorship opportunities for newcomer youth in a wide range of fields that align with their goals and interests ensures they receive tailored, targeted advice and connections. Some youth highlighted specifically the value of having mentors who are themselves newcomers, and are well-established in their industry and sector of interest. Leveraging the experience of newcomers who went through a similar experience as a source of knowledge and “cultural translators” for navigating the system and building and expanding their network was also seen by service providers to be important.
- 6. Tailor interventions to industries/occupations.** Newcomer youth identified many ways that employment interventions could be better tailored to the needs of specific industries and jobs. They felt that opportunities to hone skills directly related to in-demand jobs and industries are much more important than generic job-readiness training. One specific area where newcomer youth identified an opportunity for a more tailored approach is language training. They noted that providing occupation-specific language training would help provide an accelerated route to prepare for Canadian employment in their target fields. Additionally, service providers discussed the need to customize workshops and training to align with youth’s skill levels, backgrounds and fields of interest.
- 7. Improve career guidance.** Some newcomer youth recommended that employment interventions dedicate more time and support to helping newcomer youth explore their career options and select the right path. They noted that sometimes service providers are eager to funnel youth into particular in-demand jobs or industries without taking the time to understand their interests, goals and aspirations. Relatedly, service providers suggested that providing teachers and parents with more career education could give newcomer youth a leg up in exploring and identifying potential career options. Providers noted how important it is for newcomer youth to be able to rely on these trusted sources for advice and expertise to help them develop their career goals and plans.



8. **Offer more flexibility in program delivery.** Both newcomer youth and service providers discussed the importance of increasing flexibility in the employment and training services that are delivered to newcomer youth. Service providers discussed the use of non-traditional delivery formats, including asynchronous and online training options, as critical for helping newcomer youth balance competing demands on their time. They felt that hands-on programming, alternative modes of learning, and integrated supports are also important ways to keep youth engaged and ensure that programs and services are meeting their needs. Newcomer youth participants also discussed the importance of training and services with multiple entry points, meaning that the duration and intensity of services can be aligned with each newcomer youth's level of preparation for the labour market.

Service providers echoed this point. They said comprehensive needs assessments are an important enabling condition to help understand specifically what youth need to move forward. Other conditions that providers felt would enable flexibility include more resources for newcomer youth programs, a loosening of restrictions around the type/duration of services delivered, and performance metrics that better reflect the different levels of need among newcomer youth.

9. **Strengthen community connections and networks.** Many newcomer youth spoke about the importance of connecting with other newcomers, including those from the same country of origin, as a way to ground themselves in their new environment and receive advice and connections from those who share their lived experience. They felt government and service providers could do more to provide information and services to newcomers that help them build community connections, such as hosting networking events that foster the personal and professional networks critical to preparing for employment.
10. **Enhance connections between organizations offering newcomer services.** Many newcomer youth supported the idea that better connections between organizations offering newcomer services could help address some of the barriers newcomer youth face. Stronger connections would help ensure that youth, regardless of how and when they are connecting with service systems, receive the information and warm referrals they need to connect to the right programs supports at the right time. Service providers also discussed the challenges that youth face navigating complex systems of programs and services, and suggested that having representatives from employment service networks or other experts engage directly with newcomer youth to explain this system and share additional information could be valuable.
11. **Partner with employers to create high-quality on-the-job experiences.** In the newcomer youth workshops, the recommendation that government and service providers work with employers to create high-quality on-the-job training and work experience opportunities was strongly emphasized. Newcomer youth discussed how internships, work placements, co-ops and apprenticeship opportunities could help build their confidence and identify the skills they need to keep improving. They noted that opportunities to interact with employers are extremely valuable for building networks and expanding knowledge of the Canadian labour market. In focus groups, newcomer youth also shared their expectation that these opportunities should have the potential to lead to long-term jobs. Service providers also suggested that government should “walk the talk” by creating government internships and other on-the-job experiences for newcomer youth.
12. **Build broad awareness on the strengths and challenges of newcomer youth.** Many newcomer youth felt that the government and service providers could be doing more to educate employers, as well as the general public, about the strengths and assets that newcomer youth bring as well as the challenges they face. Efforts to build this awareness could help to reduce discrimination and make clear to employers and the general population the immense amount of untapped potential in the newcomer youth population.

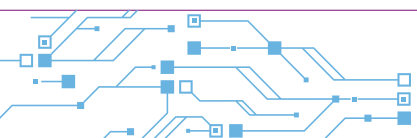


Recommendations Focused on Job Search and Entry

13. **Provide more support with the hiring process.** Some newcomer youth highlighted that while it is relatively easy to find support from service agencies to build their skills and develop a resume and cover letter, they receive less support navigating the intricacies of the job application process. Both newcomer youth and service providers felt more could be done to engage directly with employers to advocate for newcomer youth and help break down the barriers they often face in the hiring process. Besides this, youth could be better supported to “sell themselves” – for example, service providers suggested working with youth to help build holistic candidate profiles to highlight skills, strengths and interests in a way that resonates with Canadian employers.
14. **Expand options for validating credentials.** The disconnect between the skills and credentials that many newcomer youth bring from their country of origin, and the lack of recognition of these credentials by Canadian employers, institutions, and professional associations, is a key barrier. Many newcomer youth supported the recommendation for government and other service institutions to develop more options for validating international credentials when applying for jobs (such as affidavits and direct testing of newcomer competencies). This would help newcomers avoid having to repeat education or participate in lengthy approval processes just to validate the skills and education they already possess.

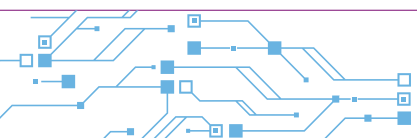
Service providers also discussed the availability of bridge training and other short-term, targeted training options as important enabling conditions that can help newcomers transition more efficiently into the Canadian job market, provided that these programs have connections with employers and pathways into employment.

15. **Encourage employers to give newcomer youth the opportunity to prove themselves.** The idea that more could be done to encourage employers to experiment with new hiring and onboarding practices that reduce barriers for newcomer youth resonated deeply in the workshops. For example, newcomer youth felt having a probationary period to demonstrate their skills to prospective employers before being hired full-time would be extremely effective in helping to overcome the challenges they face in typical hiring processes. They suggested the government and service providers advocate directly to employers to use these approaches, and connect newcomer youth directly to employers who are willing to participate.
16. **Offer employer incentives to hire newcomer youth.** Newcomer youth suggested that direct incentives to employers to encourage them to hire newcomer youth could be an effective strategy for overcoming barriers. Service providers and other key informants echoed this suggestion. They noted that wage subsidies and placement programs are a focused and efficient way to encourage employers to hire newcomer youth.
17. **Require employers to have dedicated placements for newcomer youth.** If employer incentives are a “carrot” approach to getting more newcomer youth into employment, there are also “stick” approaches that require employers to dedicate job placements or work experience opportunities to newcomer youth. Some newcomer youth suggested that having hiring and/or placement quotas as an effective way to address the barriers youth face in their job search.



Recommendations Focused on Building a Career

- 18. Expand opportunities for ongoing training and mentoring.** Many workshop participants advocated for more training opportunities that help newcomer youth navigate their career post-hiring. They felt this should include more supports and/or requirements for employers to provide on-the-job training. While much of the discussion around mentorship focused on preparing for employment, it is also worth noting that some youth and service providers highlighted the value of mentorship opportunities for those who are already employed and looking to advance in their careers. Mentorship during this career phase can assist youth in navigating the unwritten rules that dictate workplace culture and norms in Canada. Service providers also recommended that existing employment and training interventions be expanded to better support working youth, particularly those who are underemployed. They suggested that widening program eligibility criteria, offering more training in professional skills that are important to career advancement and retention (e.g., conflict management, presentation, understanding performance management) and providing coaching on switching jobs/industries would help fill some important gaps for this population of newcomer youth. These changes would in turn require adjustments to the funding and eligibility criteria used in many current newcomer youth employment interventions.
- 19. Provide more resources and training focused on entrepreneurship.** An important theme identified in the service provider workshop was the high level of interest among newcomer youth in pursuing entrepreneurship after gaining some work experience – and the lack of resources and supports available to help. They suggested some ways to address this gap including connecting newcomer youth to mentors who are experienced entrepreneurs, sharing information about financing options, connecting youth to potential financial backers, and providing training specifically focused on entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. Service providers noted that new, flexible grant funding focused on newcomer youth entrepreneurship would be an important enabler of this work.
- 20. Provide information and connections on worker rights.** Service providers recommended that more resources and effort be directed to offering information to newcomer youth about working standards and conditions, worker rights, and what to do in the case of unfair treatment and discrimination. They highlighted basic information about worker rights should be embedded in all employment interventions for newcomer youth. As well, they argued for greater collaboration and connections between employment service providers and organizations that focus on worker's rights to share information and provide direct follow-up supports to youth. One service provider highlighted the development of a sector-wide referral mechanism as one important way to enable this work. Newcomer youth in focus groups also mentioned a desire for employment services to provide more information about working conditions when they are matched to jobs.
- 21. Provide training and incentives for employers to create more inclusive workplaces.** Both newcomer youth and service providers discussed the importance of intervening directly with employers to combat bias and discrimination and create more inclusive workplaces for newcomer youth. Youth noted that this should include educating employers about the business case for hiring newcomer youth. Service providers also discussed the opportunities to promote and spread awareness around promising employer practices that have helped create inclusive, welcoming workplace cultures that position newcomer youth for success. A related idea emerging from the service provider workshop was to offer supports and/or requirements for employers to provide programming that supports the long-term retention and belonging of newcomer youth.



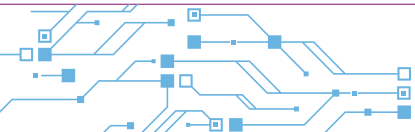
Closing Remarks

Youth are essential to the growth of the GTA economy. However, the employment journey is undoubtedly a challenge for many youth. Newcomer youth in particular face additional challenges, such as their experiences not being recognized by Canadian employers, facing discrimination, and having to learn and navigate a different environment and a different set of systems. Newcomer youth are less likely than youth born in Canada to use available employment supports. They are likely to have less work or volunteer experience and poorer-quality jobs when employed. At the same time, many newcomer youth are resilient and confident in their skills and career directions.

This report presented results of a mixed-methods study conducted by TRIEC, JVS and WoodGreen as part of a collaborative YESS research project, funded by IRCC. Findings have elaborated on the above-mentioned assets that newcomer youth possess and the barriers they face when preparing for employment, searching for jobs and when working. They also point to a key gap: the lack of a coherent continuum of programs and services that covers the employment journey from career planning to succeeding in a job and recognizes the diversity among the youth population.

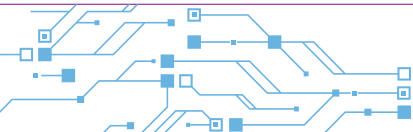
Youth have a breadth of experiences and characteristics that shape their perceptions and needs from employment-related resources. Whether it be their immigration status, age, gender or a combination of factors, these differences must be understood and considered in how employment-related information, tools and resources are delivered to newcomer youth.

Actioning the recommendations in this report, which were co-developed with newcomer youth and service providers, can become a great opportunity to realize the full potential of an underserved but important segment of the Canadian workforce.

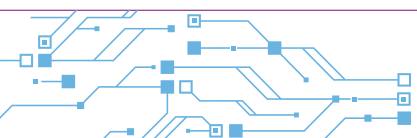


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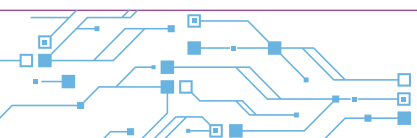
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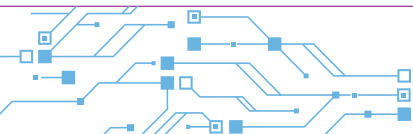
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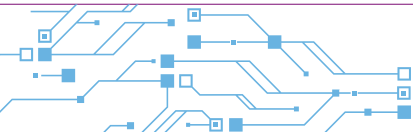
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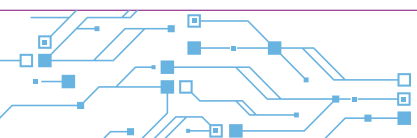
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Appendices

Appendix A: Desk-Based Reviews

Appendix B: Youth Survey

Appendix C: Focus Groups

Appendix D: Survey of Hiring Managers

Appendix E: Key Informant Interviews

Appendix F: Validation and Design Workshops



Appendix A: Desk-Based Reviews

Three separate literature reviews were conducted to inform this project.

1. The first literature review was completed internally by TRIEC. It was driven by two main questions: 1) What factors influence newcomer youth’s labour market integration?; and 2) How can employment-related services best serve the needs of newcomer youth in all their diversity? Results from this literature review were used to shape survey tools, as well as guides for focus group discussions with youth and key informant interviews.
2. The second literature review, led by WoodGreen, focused on the future of work. Specifically, it summarizes trends and factors that were identified to have the most impact on newcomer youth employment.
3. The third literature review was commissioned by JVS to supplement focus group discussion findings. Calience Research and Consulting examined how first-generation immigrant youth, particularly those aged 15 to 19 years of age, conceptualize a career and approach educational pathways, as well as what resources they have or need to make sound career-related decisions.

The sections that follow provide more details on the approach to each of these literature reviews.

Initial Literature Review

The process TRIEC used to find literature for review involved automated search using EBSCO, manual search using Google Scholar and Google, documents referred by IRCC, and checking reference lists from relevant primary studies (i.e., snowballing method). The title, abstract (or executive summary) and conclusions of each article from the searches were reviewed against the inclusion criteria – specifically, the article is published in English, concerns newcomer (or immigrant) youth, examines employment-related experiences and programming, is published in 2010 or after (unless the work is cited in recent literature) and can be found in full-text. Both peer-reviewed academic literature and grey literature were included. Any papers that were clearly irrelevant to the review were excluded. Below are more details on the scope of the literature review:

Definition of youth:	Youth were considered to be from the ages of 15 to 30 years. However, studies that focus on a subset of this age group or include a wider range of ages were also considered, provided that other criteria were met.
Definition of newcomer:	For the purposes of the review, “newcomer” was not strictly defined. It remained open to published papers where the term “newcomer” or “immigrant” is inclusive of landed immigrants, refugees/protected persons and international students. Because most papers do not offer details on study participants’ age at arrival in Canada or years since arrival, these criteria were not applied.
Topics covered:	Research on newcomer youth employment and employment-related programming were prioritized. However, recognizing the interconnected aspects of newcomer youth’s settlement journeys as well as differences in the developmental stages of those aged 15 to 30, literature on experiences with the school system and social integration were also included, where relevant.
Geographic coverage:	The review focused primarily on Canada, Ontario and the Toronto region, but also included articles in other similar contexts.
Type of literature:	Both academic (i.e., peer-reviewed research papers) and grey literature (publicly available reports and documents) were included in the review. Meta-analyses and literature/systematic reviews were included, together with individual studies.
Years of publication:	The focus was on information published in 2010 or later, with the exception of older seminal articles that are referenced in works that are more recent.
Language:	Only English-language materials were considered in the review.



To retrieve materials to address the above-mentioned questions, an online scan was also used. It consisted of the use of Google to:

- Access official websites of GTA municipalities, the Ontario government and the Government of Canada to identify programming and strategies targeting newcomer youth
- Access websites of newcomer youth-serving organizations (for example, to find program evaluation reports)

There is limited recent research on the employment experiences of newcomer youth in Canada.⁵⁸ Studies tend to focus on children of immigrants and immigrant youth's educational attainment, social inclusion and health. Because of the limited existing literature in the domain of newcomer youth employment, a complicated directory tree for the results was not created. A total of 263 articles were found through the search process, of which 159 met the established inclusion criteria and 104 were excluded after review.

Note on defining newcomer youth:

A key challenge in reviewing secondary data and literature was in the variations in how “newcomer youth” are defined.

First, there is a lack of consistency in **age demarcations**. Immigrant youth in the Canadian literature range from 13 to 25 years, with studies on employment commonly focusing on youth above the age of 15 years and those that deal with education and health considering younger people.⁵⁹ Some researchers have preferred the 15 to 35 range, which considers youth who delay labour market entry, marriage and childbearing as they remain in school and living with their parents longer.⁶⁰ Age categories also differ across and within the different levels of government. Employment and Social Development Canada's YESS program defines youth as 15 to 30 years. Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey separates 15-to-24-year-olds from the core-working-age population of 25 to 54 years. Employment programs funded by the Ontario government define eligibility as 15 to 29 years. At the municipal level, the City of Toronto, for example, defines youth as individuals ages 12 to 29, consistent with the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy (but definitions differ by program type).

Classifying youth by age is mostly a convenience for setting entry and exit levels for a given program, or inclusion criteria for research purposes. “Youth” is not so easily bound. The United Nations (2013), which defines youth as 15 to 24 years for statistical purposes, caveats that the nature and length of the transition from childhood to adulthood may look different from one individual or society to another. Those who self-identified as youth in Canada's first State of the Youth report were between the ages of 13 and 36 years.⁶¹ The report defines youth as being in “the stage of life from adolescence to early adulthood” and highlights the diversity of the country's youth population.⁶² Defining youth by their characteristics and developmental stages rather than their age is preferable but not easy to operationalize in research, programming and policy.

A second source of difference in definitions of newcomer youth is in ambiguity around residency status. Many studies adopt Statistics Canada's definition of newcomer, immigrants and refugees — i.e., persons who are born outside of the country and granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. This definition excludes temporary foreign workers, asylum claimants and those with student or working visas. Most settlement programs only consider landed immigrants and refugees and exclude temporary residents (e.g., work permit holders, international students). Researchers, however, have defined newcomers as immigrants and refugees who obtain permanent residence, as well as temporary residents.⁶³ While international students are increasingly garnering the attention of researchers, their lack of permanent residence status in Canada distinguishes their labour market experiences from those of



landed immigrants. Additionally, the research generally does not distinguish between young people who are children of immigrant or refugee parents and those who have migrated to Canada themselves.

Third, **length of residence** in Canada is often not consistent across definitions of newcomer youth. While the term “immigrant” is not related to the length of residence in Canada, “newcomer” has been used in the literature and programming to refer to individuals who have come to Canada within the last three years, five years or a decade ago.⁶⁴ Most federally funded programs are available only to immigrants who arrived under five years prior.

Fourth, conceptualizations of newcomer youth differ based on **age at arrival** in Canada. AMSSA (2016: 1) defines newcomer youth as “persons who have come to Canada during adolescence and early adulthood.” The terms “newcomer youth” and “immigrant youth” are sometimes used interchangeably. Studies about immigrant youth have included first-generation immigrants (who arrived in Canada in their teens or 20s), 1.5 generation immigrants (who arrived in Canada as children aged 0 to 12 years)⁶⁵ and second-generation immigrants (who were born in Canada to at least one immigrant or refugee parent).

Future of Work Literature Review

Studying the future of work involves strategic forecasting and trend analysis to determine how changing factors will affect work in the future. To categorize trends and factors, WoodGreen used a combination of the PESTEL and STEEP-V conceptual frameworks, which organize information based on the origin of potential change.⁶⁶ A total of 55 articles were identified and reviewed through an online scan of documents published within the last 10 years by research institutes, think tanks or government agencies (e.g., Brookfield Institute, Policy Horizon Canada, International Labour Organization). These documents were grouped into 11 major trends, as follows:

1. Automation, AI, and Digital Transformations of Labour
2. The Digital Technology Economy
3. Gig Work and The Platform Economy
4. The Green Economy
5. Increasing Reliance on Immigration
6. Remote Work
7. The Long-Lasting Impacts of COVID-19
8. Increasing Wage Inequality and Uneven Impact of Trends
9. The Rise in Micro-Credentials and Lifelong Learning
10. The Importance of Social and Emotional Skills and Entrepreneurial Abilities
11. The Experience Barrier



Literature Review on the Education and Career Decisions of Immigrant Youth

Calience Research and Consulting, contracted by JVS, reviewed a total of 34 articles related to how immigrant youth progress along educational and career pathways. The principal aim was to explore the education and career paths of first-generation immigrant youth in Canada, identifying factors that influence their decision-making. Specifically, the desk-based research sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do first-generation immigrant youth, particularly those between the ages of 15 and 19 years of age, approach educational pathways?
2. How do they conceptualize a career and make decisions to advance along career paths?
3. What resources do they have to make sound decisions? Who provides this assistance? What more might they need?

The review was conducted in February 2023. JSTOR and Sage electronic databases were searched for peer-reviewed articles in English in journals and research reports and for dissertations at the master's and doctorate levels using keywords associated to "immigrant" and "newcomer youth," including "education aspirations," "education opportunities," "education achievement," "school engagement," "education pathways," "career decisions," "career decision making," "career development," "career aspirations," "parental influence," and "socioeconomic influence." As this is an area in which many professional and non-governmental organizations work, the grey literature from reputable organizations working with immigrant young people and families was searched along the same lines. In addition to electronic searches, the reference lists of highly relevant articles were reviewed to identify additional sources.

Research and analysis conducted in English in the past five years was targeted, but, as the literature was sparse in some respects, relevant earlier research, dating back 13 years, primarily identified manually by reviewing references were also included. Similarly, literature in Canada was principally searched, but research in similar countries was included when it was highly relevant. The abstracts or executive summaries were first reviewed to exclude articles not directly relevant to education and career decisions and outcomes for first-generation immigrant youth. Those not excluded were read in full, assessed for bias, and analyzed using a thematic approach. Having identified themes across the articles, relevant data, context and analysis was extracted according to these themes.

This literature review was added to the study due to the low representation of youth aged 16 to 19 years in focus group discussions held by JVS. However, the secondary research into these questions was characterized as sparse at best. Numerous authors have noted the limited research on immigrant youth and the paucity of qualitative studies that explore their education and career decision-making.⁶⁷



Appendix B: Youth Survey

TRIEC contracted R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (Malatest)⁶⁸ to implement a survey of newcomer youth and Canadian-born youth aged 16 to 30 years living in the GTA. The overall purpose of the survey was to better understand the assets and barriers of newcomer youth in employment integration, their specific needs with employment-related supports, and gaps in existing services.

Questionnaire Development

To develop the survey tool, Malatest reviewed the project background information provided by TRIEC, including a data matrix and preliminary literature review, and, in collaboration with TRIEC and partners, designed questions to meet informational needs.

Most survey questions were closed-ended, while some were semi-closed-ended (i.e., the questions offered an “other, please specify” option). There was one open-ended question where there were no existing choice categories and the respondent was free to enter a text response. The questionnaire contained six modules with questions specific to youth’s:

- employment readiness
- labour market entry experiences
- job searching approaches
- use of employment-related services and supports
- prior workplace experiences
- demographic information

The questionnaire was cognitively tested with three youth from the target demographic, and improvements were incorporated into the final version of the survey. The survey was then reviewed and approved by the Community Research Ethics Board (CREO#269A).

The final questionnaire took about 15 minutes to complete, with the duration varying depending on the respondent’s employment experiences. The questionnaire was translated into French and programmed into Malatest’s Computer Assisted Telephone/Web Interviewing (CATI/CAWI) platform CallWeb for administration.

Survey Administration

Survey administration began on August 31, 2022, and concluded on November 20, 2022. The survey was available online, however, respondents could also use the toll-free number to complete the survey by phone with a professional interviewer in up to 39 languages or dialects.⁶⁹ To encourage participation in the survey, all individuals were offered the opportunity to enter into a prize draw to win one of 14 \$50 gift cards to Indigo, or one \$300 Visa gift card. Respondents who completed the survey with an intercept surveyor were offered a small incentive (a \$5 Tim Horton’s gift card), in addition to the opportunity to enter a prize draw. Additionally, those that referred another newcomer to complete the survey received an additional prize draw entry for every referral.



To reach youth for the survey, the following recruitment methods were used:

- **Social media:** Malatest distributed paid advertisements on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter platforms from September 8, 2022 to October 11, 2022; advertisements were revised on a weekly basis to refresh ad content and further target demographics that were underrepresented in the sample distribution. Malatest and TRIEC posted information about the survey on their LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook accounts. TRIEC’s project partners and service providers shared TRIEC’s social media posts about the survey. Malatest also engaged with relevant posts from partnering organizations and service providers.
- **Service providers:** Service providers were contacted by TRIEC and Malatest to distribute or promote the survey to their clients. Service providers supported promotion of the survey by featuring it in newsletters, on their websites and by emailing notices of the survey to their client lists.
- **Research panel:** A professional research panel company (Maru/Blue Group) was contracted to circulate the survey to their panellists who were within the targeted age group of 16 to 30 years old. Invitations were sent on September 27, 2022, and panel data collection was completed on October 11.
- **Intercept surveying:** Between September 12, 2022 and November 13, 2022 Malatest contracted 17 intercept surveyors that were members of the target population. All surveyors received project-specific training from a member of Malatest’s research staff, as well as a surveying kit that included an iPad, a Malatest-branded shirt and name tag. Intercept surveyors conducted the survey with newcomers in locations across the GTA with high foot-traffic or high density of youth (e.g., university campuses, busy intersections, transit stops). Those who expressed interest in participating in the survey but did not have time to do so with the intercept surveyor were provided the link to complete the survey online at their own convenience.
- **Other recruitment activities:** The survey was also promoted at various youth advisory group meetings around the GTA, and at additional events such as in-person and online job fairs.

Table 12 below shows the proportion of completions from newcomer youth and Canadian-born youth by surveying method.

Table 12. Youth Survey Completions by Method

Survey Method	Newcomer		Canadian-Born		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Online	168	26%	852	53%	1,020	45%
Intercept	391	61%	1	0%	392	17%
Research Panel	87	13%	766	47%	853	68%
Total	646	100%	1,619	100%	2,265	100%

Analyzing Survey Data

After the survey was closed, data were checked for completeness and anomalies. Completions were examined for data quality and legitimacy using a variety of strategies to identify lack of engagement or false completions.⁷⁰ Cases flagged for review were examined thoroughly and subsequently removed from the final dataset. A data analysis plan was drafted by Malatest and approved by TRIEC.



Survey data was analyzed using summary statistics (frequencies) and significance testing in R (by Malatest) and SPSS (by TRIEC). For many summary statistics, results were presented as the percentage of Canadian youth and newcomer youth agreeing to statements about their education, employment, and workplace experiences using a 5-point scale (where 1 = very poor / strongly disagree, 5 = very good / strongly agree). Findings were grouped by the following values: positive values: 4, 5; neutral values: 3; and negative values: 1, 2. Before finalizing analysis and writing a report, Malatest held a virtual validation session to present and discuss preliminary survey findings with TRIEC, JVS and WoodGreen staff, as well as one Youth Advisory Committee member and two youth researchers.

For significance testing, data from newcomer youth were compared to data from Canadian-born youth. Where relevant and where sample sizes are sufficient, additional analyses were conducted for subgroups of newcomer youth, such as by gender, education, age, ethnic group or racialized group status, immigration status, and language, according to the analysis groups listed in **Table 13**.

All significance testing was assessed for 95% significance (that is, significant 19 times out of 20, or $p < 0.05$).

Table 13. Analysis Groups for Demographic Variables

Demographic Variable	Analysis Groups
Gender	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Woman+ (woman, transgender woman) 2. Man+ (man, transgender man) 3. Two-spirited, non-binary
Education (highest education level achieved)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Secondary education or below 2. Post-secondary education or above
Age (based on year of birth)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 16 to 20 years of age 2. 21 to 25 years of age 3. 26 to 30 years of age
Ethnic/Cultural Origins	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. East Asian 2. Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander 3. South Asian, Indo-Caribbean 4. Black 5. Latin American, Hispanic 6. Middle Eastern, West Asian 7. Indigenous 8. White 9. Mixed (identified with ≥ 2 of the above groups)
Racialized Group Status	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Belongs to a racialized group 2. Does not belong to a racialized group
Immigration Status (Newcomers only)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Permanent Resident 2. Canadian Citizen 3. Refugee
Years Since Arrival (Newcomers only)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Very recent newcomer (5 years or less) 2. Recent newcomer (6–10 years)
Language	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. English only 2. English and French 3. English and another language 4. Another language only
Municipality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. City of Toronto 2. Halton, Peel, York, Durham



Profile of Survey Respondents

Age

The majority of participants (82% of Canadian-born youth, 74% of newcomer youth) were 21 years or older (see **Table 14**). Among newcomer youth, there was a higher proportion of those in the 16- to 20-year age range and a lower proportion of individuals in the 21- to 25-year age group. The opposite was observed among Canadian-born youth, which had more 21- to 25-year-old youth and fewer 16- to 20-year-old youth. However, the mean age did not differ between newcomer and Canadian-born youth.

Table 14. Age Group of Youth Survey Respondents

Age Group	Newcomer (n = 646)	Canadian-Born (n = 1,619)	Total (n = 2,265)
16 to 20	*26%	18%	21%
21 to 25	30%	*42%	38%
26 to 30	44%	40%	41%
Total	100%	100%	100%

S2. What year and month were you born?

* Indicates the group with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.

Gender

Table 15 below shows gender breakdown among newcomer and Canadian-born respondents. Newcomer youth had a higher proportion of combined women and transgender women participants, and a lower proportion of combined men and transgender men participants.

Table 15. Gender of Youth Survey Respondents

Gender	Newcomer (n = 640)	Canadian-Born (n = 1,589)	Total (n = 2,229)
Woman, transgender woman	*58%	50%	52%
Man, transgender man	41%	45%	44%
Two-spirit, non-binary	<1%	3%	2%
Total	99%	98%	98%

D5. What gender do you identify with?

Results do not present those selecting "prefer not to say", "prefer to self-identify", or "not sure" (n = 36).

* Indicates the group with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.

Municipality

Most participants, among both newcomer and Canadian-born youth, were residents of Toronto (see **Table 16**). Significance testing for municipality was conducted using combined groups, comparing Toronto to all other municipalities combined. Among newcomers, significantly more youth resided in Toronto, and among Canadian-born participants, more youth resided outside of Toronto.



Table 16. Municipality of Residence of Youth Survey Respondents

Municipality	Newcomer (n = 646)	Canadian-Born (n = 1,619)	Total (n = 2,265)
Toronto	72%	64%	66%
Peel	19%	14%	15%
Halton	4%	9%	8%
York	3%	10%	8%
Durham	2%	3%	3%
Total	100%	100%	100%

S1. What region of the Greater Toronto Area do you live in?

Education

Nearly all Canadian-born participants had completed some form of education in Canada, whereas only 65% of newcomer youth had completed education in Canada (see **Table 17**).

Table 17. Proportion of Youth Survey Respondents with Education from Outside Versus Inside Canada

Location of Education	Newcomer (n = 642)	Canadian-Born (n = 1,617)	Total (n = 2,259)
Completed education in Canada	65%	+100%	90%
Completed education outside of Canada	98%	23%	44%

D1A. What is the highest level of education you have completed in Canada?

D1B. What is the highest level of education, or equivalent, you have completed outside of Canada?

Note percentages will not sum to 100%, as participants may have completed education both inside and outside of Canada.

*Actual value is 99.7%, but is displayed as 100% after rounding.

A total of 57% of newcomer respondents and 76% of Canadian-born respondents reported completing education at the post-secondary level or higher (see **Table 18**). However, education significantly differed by sample groups, with more newcomer youth at a secondary level of education or below, and more Canadian-born youth with post-secondary education or above.

Table 18. Highest Education Completed by Youth Survey Respondents

Highest Education	Newcomer (n = 642)	Canadian-Born (n = 1,617)	Total (n = 2,259)
Secondary or below	*43%	24%	29%
Post-secondary or above	57%	*76%	71%
Total	100%	100%	30%

D1A. What is the highest level of education you have completed in Canada?

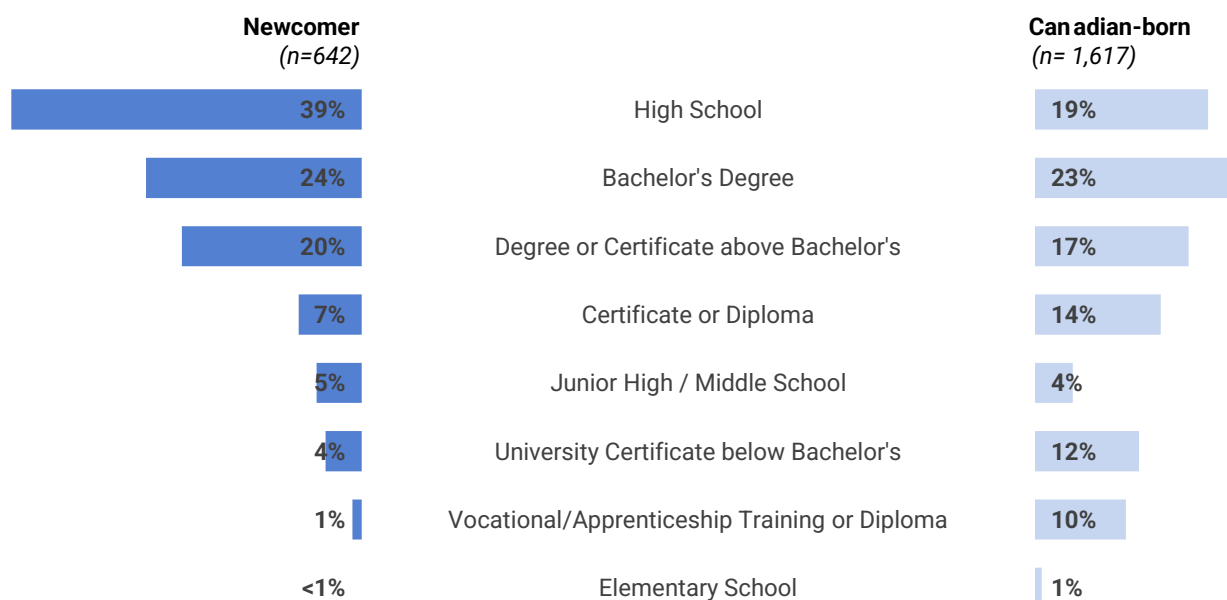
D1B. What is the highest level of education, or equivalent, you have completed outside of Canada?

* Indicates the group with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.



The highest level of education for newcomer and Canadian-born respondents is shown below in greater detail in **Figure 14**. For over a third of newcomer youth (39%), their highest education completed was high school, and 44% of newcomers had a bachelor's degree or a degree above a bachelor's. Canadian-born youth had larger proportions of individuals with other types of post-secondary education like vocational/apprenticeship training, university certificates, or other certificates or diplomas (36%).

Figure 14. Highest Level of Education of Youth Survey Respondents



D1A. What is the highest level of education you have completed in Canada?
 D1B. What is the highest level of education, or equivalent, you have completed outside of Canada?

Employment Status

Seventy-five percent of participants (57% of newcomers and 81% of Canadian-born respondents) indicated they were currently working or employed (see **Table 19**). Newcomer youth were significantly more likely to be working in a part-time job, be a student in studies, be unemployed but looking for work, be unemployed and not looking for work, or be a volunteer. Meanwhile, Canadian-born youth were more likely to be employed full-time, be a student employed in a work placement, be a freelance or contract worker, be self-employed, or be employed but on leave.

Statistically significant differences in employment status were found amongst newcomer youth by demographic subgroups, specifically education, age, immigration status, years since arrival and gender. Full-time students were more likely to be youth without a post-secondary education, youth between the ages of 16 and 25, and youth with Canadian citizenship. Full-time jobs were more likely to be held by youth with a post-secondary education, and by men. Part-time jobs were more likely to be held by youth without a post-secondary education, and youth between the ages of 16 and 25. Women+ were more likely to be freelance or contract workers relative to men+. Youth who have been living in Canada for six years or more were more likely to be employed full-time.



Table 19. Employment Status of Youth Survey Respondents

Employment Status	Newcomer (n = 541)	Canadian-Born (n = 1,590)	Total (n = 2,131)
Full-time job	35%	*52%	48%
Part-time job	*28%	22%	24%
Student in full-time or part-time studies	*39%	22%	26%
Student in internship, apprenticeship, etc.	4%	*14%	11%
Freelancing/contract worker	5%	*10%	9%
Self-employed	3%	*6%	5%
Employed but on leave	2%	4%	3%
Not working, but looking for work	*10%	5%	6%
Not working, and not looking for work	*3%	1%	2%
Volunteering	4%	3%	3%

WE1. Which of the following best describes your current employment status? Select all that apply.

Note that percentages will not sum to 100%, as respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

* Indicates the group with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.

Most Recent Work Experience

The 31% of newcomer youth and 17% of Canadian-born youth respondents who were not currently working but had Canadian work experience were asked about the nature of their most recent work experience. Although a significantly larger proportion of Canadian-born youth were previously employed in part-time jobs when compared to newcomer youth, the most recent work experience among youth in both groups was typically a part-time job (**Table 20**).

Table 20. Most Recent Work Experience Among Youth Survey Respondents Not Currently Employed

Work Experience	Newcomer (n = 168)	Canadian-Born (n = 273)	Total (n = 441)
Part-time job	34%	*46%	42%
Full-time job	31%	24%	26%
Volunteer	31%	26%	28%
Self-employed/freelance	4%	4%	4%

WE2. Which of the following best describes your most recent work experience in Canada?

* Indicates the group with significantly more cases when tested for 95% significance with chi-square analysis.

Ethnicity

Most newcomer respondents identified as South Asian or Indo-Caribbean, Middle Eastern or West Asian, Black, or Southeast Asian or Pacific Islander. Most Canadian-born respondents identified as White, Black or were of mixed ethnicity (i.e., identified with more than two ethnic groups). Results for ethnicity are presented by grouped categories of response options in **Table 21**.

Ninety-seven percent of newcomers and 57% of Canadian-born respondents were associated with a racialized group in Canada. Significantly fewer newcomers were part of a non-racialized group.



Table 21. Ethnicities of Youth Survey Respondents

Ethnic Group	Newcomer (n = 604)	Canadian-Born (n = 1,581)	Total (n = 2,185)
East Asian (1)	6%	8%	7%
Southeast Asian, Pacific Islander (2, 11)	18%	6%	9%
South Asian, Indo-Caribbean (2)	25%	9%	13%
Black (4, 5, 6, 7)	18%	15%	16%
Latin American, Hispanic (1)	3%	3%	3%
Middle Eastern, West Asian (10, 12)	20%	3%	7%
Indigenous (8)	<1%	2%	1%
White (13)	4%	41%	31%
Mixed (identified with ≥2 of the above groups)	5%	13%	11%

D4. What are the ethnic/cultural origins of your ancestors? Please select all that apply, particularly if you self-identify as being of mixed or multiple ethnicities.

Note that percentages will not sum to 100%, as respondents were allowed to select more than one option.

Values in parentheses indicate the response options grouped into each respective category.

Ethnic group could not be tested for significance due to insufficient sample sizes.

Language

When asked about the languages commonly spoken at home, 52% of newcomers and 8% of Canadian-born respondents indicated they regularly used a language other than English or French. Other languages commonly listed included Arabic, Hindi, Urdu and Chinese. The proportion of respondents selecting each language option is shown below in **Table 22**.

Table 22. Languages Spoken at Home by Youth Survey Respondents

Language	Newcomer (n = 632)	Canadian-Born (n = 1,603)	Total (n = 2,232)
English only	44%	75%	67%
French only	<1%	4%	3%
English and another language	33%	20%	23%
Another language only	22%	1%	7%

D6. What language or languages do you commonly use at home in Canada? Select all that apply.

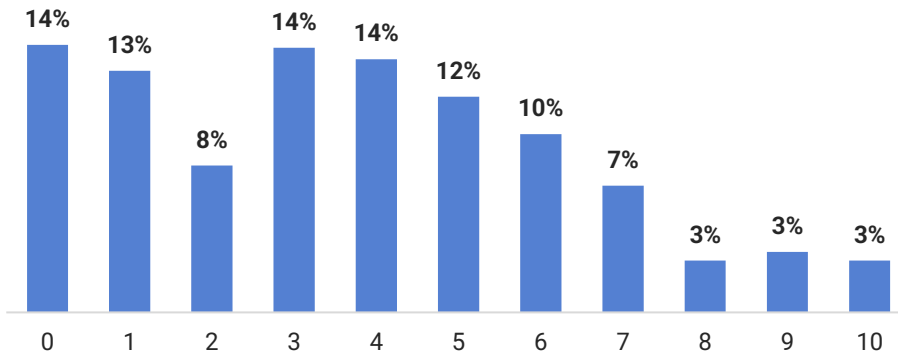
Significance testing for language was not conducted due to insufficient sample sizes.

Current Immigration Status

Among the 646 newcomer respondents, nearly three-quarters (72%) were Permanent Residents, 23% were Canadian citizens (former Permanent Residents), and 5% were refugees at the time of the survey. On average, 63% of newcomers had been living in Canada for less than five years (**Figure 15**). As shown in **Figure 16**, age of arrival was distributed across all eligible ages, though nearly half of newcomers (47%) arrived in Canada before the age of 20.⁷¹

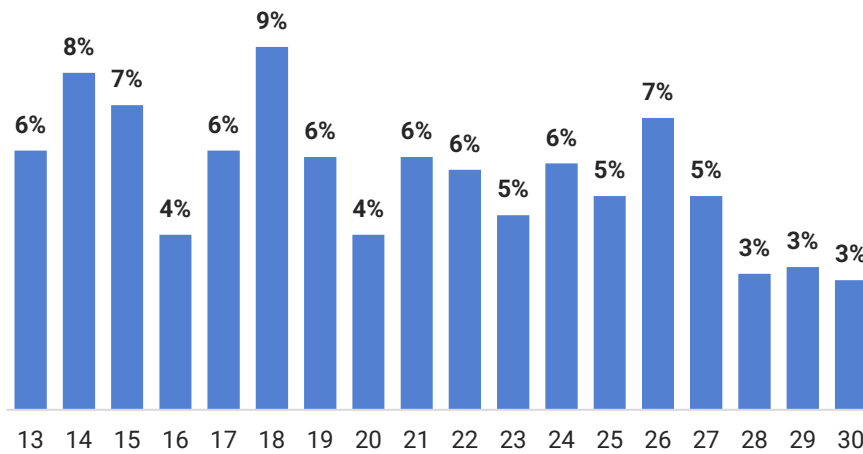


Figure 15. Years Since Arrival (n=646)



S5A. How many years ago did you first come to Canada to live?
 Note individuals were ineligible for the survey if they arrived in Canada more than 10 years prior.

Figure 16. Age on Arrival (n=646)



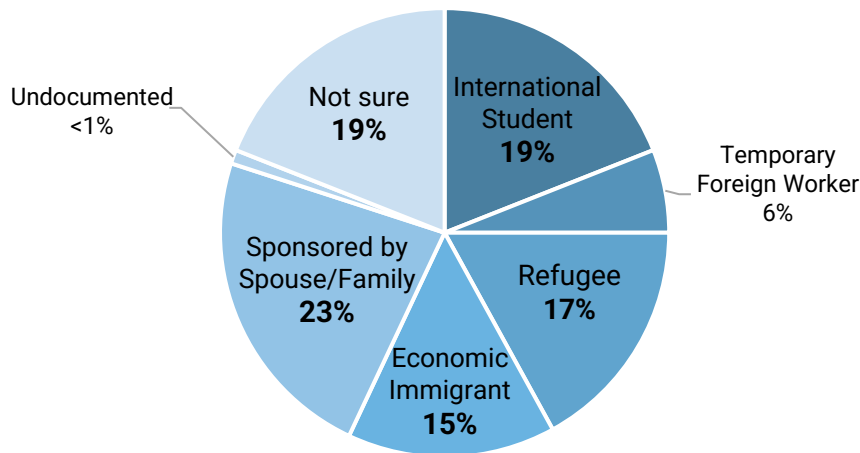
S5B. How old were you when you came to live in Canada?
 Note individuals were ineligible for the survey if they arrived in Canada before the age of 13, or if they were above the age of 30 at the time of taking the survey.

Immigration Status on Arrival

Close to one-quarter (23%) of newcomers immigrated to Canada as a sponsored immigrant. Many also first arrived in Canada as an international student (19%) or refugee (18%), as shown in **Figure 17**.



Figure 17. Immigration Category Upon Arrival (n=646)



S6A. What was your (or your family's) immigration category when you first came to live in Canada?

Most newcomers came to Canada under a parent's immigration application (45%) or applied on their own (40%), and 10% through a spouse's. Five percent were not sure about who applied to immigrate.

Newcomers immigrated to Canada from 90 different countries. Many individuals were from India (20%), Pakistan (9%) and Afghanistan (5%).

Challenges and Limitations

There were some challenges and limitations to the survey that should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

- To increase the number of completions from newcomer participants, the survey was promoted and distributed by TRIEC, JVS and WoodGreen, as well as other partnered or umbrella organizations providing services to newcomers. However, use of these networks may bias the newcomer sample towards those who are familiar with, or are users of, employment or settlement services and supports within Canada and thus may report having greater supports and better employment outcomes than the population of newcomer youth.
- The online survey advertised the chance to win a gift card prize, was largely promoted through social media, and was accessible to anyone who saw one of the posts or advertisements. As such, this may have encouraged false completions from individuals attempting to gain multiple entries into the prize draw. Malatest utilized a number of measures to detect and assess for false completions, resulting in the removal of cases from the final dataset. However, it is possible that some false completions were retained in the dataset, which may add erroneous data to findings and random noise to analysis.

- Intercept surveying was largely limited to the City of Toronto as opposed to the broader GTA, as contracted surveyors were mainly located in this area. As such, intercept surveying locations were limited to those accessible by public transit and within a reasonable travelling distance for the surveyor. This led to an overrepresentation of newcomer youth living in Toronto, who may have better access to jobs and employment services relative to youth living in other municipalities within the GTA.⁷²
- Relative to historical averages, unemployment rates in Canada were low at the time of the survey. As such, some survey results around employment experience (such as current employment status) may have been more positive than that typically experienced by newcomer youth, and any discrepancies between newcomer and Canadian-born respondents in employment outcomes may have been less prevalent.



Appendix C: Focus Groups

Both JVS and WoodGreen led qualitative data collection with newcomer youth. JVS contracted two consultants, KMA Consultants and HE.R. Consulting & Services Inc., to engage newcomer youth in discussions about their experiences transitioning from education to employment, their experiences with employment services and searching for employment. WoodGreen directly implemented focus group discussions using an asset-based, vision journey approach.

Focus Groups Organized by JVS

FGD Guide Development

KMA designed the FGD guides (one per age group: 16 to 20, 21 to 25 and 26 to 30 years), allowing for open-ended discussion and an emphasis on people’s lived experience. HE.R. Consulting & Services Inc. adapted these guides for Francophone newcomer youth. A Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) consisting of six youth recruited through an open call for applications was set up by JVS. Following training in community-based research and digital marketing by Breakwell Consulting, these youth reviewed and commented on the design and approach to the FGDs and were the subjects for pre-testing. Additionally, each YAC member observed one focus group discussion and provided feedback and interpretation of comments made. After each YAC member observed a focus group, a debrief meeting was held. WoodGreen and TRIEC also inputted on the development of FGD guides to help ensure complementarities with other study components.

JVS obtained ethical clearance for the FGDs through CREO. The submission was a follow-up to the one TRIEC prepared for the youth survey (CREO#269B).

Administration

Focus group participants were largely recruited through the youth survey led by Malatest and TRIEC. A list of 262 newcomer youth who indicated their interest in taking part in a focus group and consented to providing their contact information was securely shared with JVS. JVS then followed up with all individuals on the list who could be contacted. However, ultimately, only 63 participated.

Other participants were recruited through various networks, including outreach to the Francophone community and to various community groups and newcomer youth-serving organizations. See **Table 23** for details.

KMA implemented 20 English-language FGDs. HE.R. Consulting & Services Inc. held three focus groups in French. All but one FGD was conducted online using Zoom.

Table 23. Recruitment Sources for Focus Groups

Actions	Recruitment Sources for English FGDS				Recruitment for FGDs in French	Total
	Opt-ins from Malatest/ TRIEC survey	Recruited via flyer	In-person group at a youth program	Total		
Invited to focus groups	258	79	11	348	18	366
Registered for focus groups	98	42	11	151	18	169
Did not attend a focus group	35	9	5	49	3	52
Attended a focus group	63	33	6	102	15	117



Data Processing and Analysis

This study component used a phenomenology methodology to establish a collective understanding of newcomer youth's employment experiences, including accessing employment-related services. For each focus group session, transcripts were created using an automated note-taker (fireflies.ai), edited against an audio file and then reviewed by the facilitators. A third member of the research team who was not present at the focus groups reviewed each transcript for statements that need to be clarified or verified, and then consulted the audio recording for further corrections. The research team then coded the transcripts based on themes emerging from the discussions.

Participant Profile

Demographic information was gathered using a brief questionnaire filled out part-way through each focus group. The researchers also analyzed what was said by participants to collect additional information to characterize participants.

Age and Gender: There were 102 participants (55 women and 47 men) in total across the 20 English-language FGDs and 13 participants (7 women and 6 men) in FGDs conducted in French (see **Table 24**). Of these participants, 22 were aged 16 to 20 years (19%), 28 were aged 21 to 25 years (24%) and 67 were aged 26 to 30 years (57%). Women made up 54% of total participants overall.

Table 24. Age and Gender of FGD Participants

Gender	Ages 16 to 20		Ages 21 to 25		Ages 26 to 30		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Women	11	50%	15	54%	36	55%	62	54%
Men	11	50%	13	46%	29	45%	53	46%
Total	22		28		65		115	

Country of Origin: Thirty countries of origin were represented in the English-language FGDs and an additional five were represented in the French-language FGDs (see **Table 25**). About 19% of participants (22 out of 117) listed India as their country of origin (13 women and 9 men).

Table 25. Region/Country of Origin of FGD Participants

Region/Country of Origin	Number of Participants
South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh)	35
Africa (Cameroon, Uganda, South Africa, Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Egypt)	38
West Asia (Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen, Turkey, Iraq, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain)	20
Americas and Caribbean (Jamaica, Mexico, The Bahamas, USA)	8
Central Asia (Afghanistan)	6
East Asia (China, South Korea, Hong Kong)	4
Southeast Asia (Philippines)	1
Europe (Germany, Albania)	3
Total	115

Education: The educational credentials of focus group participants were not documented through a questionnaire. However, at least 28 participants mentioned having university degrees, ranging from bachelor’s degrees to Ph.Ds. The areas of study were wide-ranging, including education, commerce, finance, food technology, computer science, languages, industrial and fine arts, psychology, engineering, social work and communications. Many participants with degrees earned them outside of Canada, including, in some cases, by participants now attending post-secondary education in Canada to gain Canadian credentials.

Occupations: About 39% of participants (45 of 115) were working at the time of the group discussions, 39% were in university or college and 17% were in high school (see **Table 26**).

Table 26. Current Occupation or Education of Focus Group Participants

Current Occupation/Education	Number	Percentage (out of 115)
Working	45	39%
University	30	26%
High School	19	17%
College	15	13%
Volunteering	5	4%
Placement	3	3%
Trade apprentice	1	1%
Other	21	18%

Note: Participants could choose more than one option. There were 141 mentions amongst the 115 participants.

The jobs participants hold now or have held recently in Canada are diverse. These jobs, as well as those participants held prior to immigrating to Canada where applicable, are described below. To support themselves as students, or to have additional income while working, participants mentioned a number of income-generating “side hustles.”

Jobs participants have now or have had recently in Canada	Accountant, Butcher, Cashier, Cleaner, Construction estimator, Customer service representative, Digital technician, Financial administrator/advisor/analyst, Food service worker, Freelance artist, HR professional, Jewellery model, Legal professional, NGO worker, Portfolio manager, Public administration, Project manager, Quality assurance analyst, Sales, Seasonal worker, Settlement worker, Software developer/engineer, Therapist, Web designer
Pre-immigration employment†	Accountant, Actor, Assistant professor, Banking, Boxing, Business owner/entrepreneur, English-as-a-Second-Language tutor, Cashier, Clinical psychologist, Construction, Electrical engineer, Finance, Fundraising, HR professional, Investment banking, IT/information systems, Lawyer, Marketing manager, NGO worker, Nurse, Optometrist assistant, Product development, Project manager, Spanish tutor, Social worker, Software engineer, Student counsellor, Supply chain procurement, Travel industry, Warehouse manager
The “side hustle”†	Bookkeeper, Boxing, Content writing, Cryptocurrency, Dressmaking, Event management, Investing (securities), Music lessons, Pastry chef, Sculpting, Teaching French, TikTok channel, Writing, YouTuber

†Based on responses from the English-language FGDs only.



Challenges and Limitations

- In all age groups, a high percentage of participants indicated interest and availability in joining a focus group, registered to attend and confirmed attendance but then did not participate in the end. Attracting youth in the 16 to 20 age cohort to participate in focus groups was particularly challenging. The older age group (26 to 30) was, therefore, more heavily represented.
- Part of the research sought to understand how race, ethnicity, gender and age affect youth's employment experiences, and about the dynamics of intersectionality arising from social identities. However, few chose to comment on these topics. There are several reasons why this might have been. Some may not yet understand how such variables are experienced in a Canadian context. Other youth may not wish to share their experiences with others or may not have experienced any effects.
- Most of the focus groups were conducted virtually, with some of the technical challenges that can arise. Many participants elected not to turn on their cameras, which seemed to inhibit the sort of discussion between participants that is characteristic of in-person discussion. When stimulating back-and-forth discussion with and between individuals happened in the groups, it took on added significance.

Focus Groups Organized by WoodGreen

FGD Guide Development

A semi-structured discussion group guide was drafted by WoodGreen's Research and Evaluation Coordinators. The guide, which JVS and TRIEC reviewed and provided inputs on, included employment-related questions regarding:

- Present employment situation
- Employment-related visions and aspirations
- Opportunities and enablers
- Challenges and constraints
- Solutions and risks

Administration

The vision journey exercise was guided by WoodGreen's Research and Evaluation Coordinators. Participants were handed a large flip chart paper, pens, markers and sticky notes to complete the exercise. They were encouraged to freely draw a vision for the future and pathways to realize their employment aspirations. The facilitators and participants worked together in creating the visual tool as they simultaneously unpacked the discussion questions focused on the present situation of a newcomer youth, their visions and aspirations, opportunities and enablers, challenges and constraints, and solutions and risks. Each discussion lasted for 90 to 120 minutes.

Discussion group participants met the below criteria and were recruited using several methods, including digital and printed postcards, social media campaigns, using existing WoodGreen youth program networks and outreach efforts of the youth researchers involved in this project.

- Between 16 and 30 years old
- Newcomer (landed in Canada up to 10 years ago, and arrived at age 13 or older)
- Comfortable speaking with new people
- Having functional English proficiency to understand instructions and materials



All discussion groups were conducted in-person at two WoodGreen locations (815 Danforth Avenue, and 1533 Victoria Park Avenue), to accommodate participants based on which location was more conveniently accessible. Upon participants' written and verbal consents, all discussion groups were recorded.

Data Analysis

The focus groups were recorded, transcribed automatically and edited. Transcripts were reviewed and coded using themes formed based on the interview guide and themes that emerged from the discussion.

Participant Profile

A total of 17 newcomer youth participated in the four discussion groups. Participants ranged in age from 17 to 30 years. Eight participants were women, eight were men and one participant identified as non-binary.

A total of four discussion groups were conducted in person with three to six participants in each group. The breakdown of the groups was as follows:

- **Mixed group:** This group had six participants in total (1 woman and 5 men). The participants were permanent residents (2), refugees (3) or undisclosed (1). The participants in this group were aged 21 to 30 years.
- **NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) group:** There were four participants in this group (3 women and 1 man). Participants were permanent residents (1), refugees (1), work permit holder/former international student (1) and undisclosed (1). The participants in this group were aged 28 to 30 years.
- **All female group:** Among the three participants in this group, one identified as 2SLGBTQ+. Two group participants were refugees and one was a permanent resident. They were aged 25 to 27 years.
- **Youngest age (16 to 20 years):** Group participants were permanent residents (2) and undisclosed (2). They were aged 17 to 19 years. There were two women and two men in this group.

Challenges

Recruiting youth to take part in the vision exercise journey was difficult. NEET youth were particularly challenging to recruit. Among those who did join focus groups, it was challenging to encourage these youth to open up and actively participate in the discussion.



Appendix D: Survey of Hiring Managers

The survey of hiring managers explored the drivers and barriers to the recruitment and retention of newcomer youth, as well as how employers can be supported to make better use of this talent. To conduct the survey, TRIEC contracted Maru Public Opinion.

Questionnaire Development

The initial questionnaire was informed by a literature review undertaken by TRIEC as a starting point to guide the broader research project. TRIEC developed the questionnaire, which was reviewed by [Maru Public Opinion](#).

One set of questions (Q.H1a-d) was scenario-based. The scenario provided was as follows: “*Suppose your team is hiring for a full-time, entry-level position. Among the applicants is a 24-year-old female newcomer who arrived in Toronto as a permanent resident earlier this year. The applicant attended a four-year post-secondary program in her country of origin, where she graduated with good grades. After graduating, the applicant spent more than one year working in her home country in the field for which you are recruiting. She has not worked in a similar role in Canada before, but her resume shows that she has taken on a few casual jobs since arrival. Unlike some other applicants whose cover letters and resumes were passed on to you through colleagues and friends, the applicant submitted her application to the email address included on the job posting only.*”

A factorial survey design, allowing for variation on the above variables, was not used as it would have resulted in an unmanageable number of questions.

[Maru/Blue’s](#) Data Quality Module (DQM) was programmed into the survey to automatically remove speeders⁷³ and low quality⁷⁴ completes.

Survey Administration

The target population for the survey was hiring managers and decision-makers at private, public and non-profit organizations with 10 or more employees in the GTA. Survey participants were drawn randomly from Maru Public Opinion’s online panel between November 28 and December 8, 2022. A total of 240 surveys were adequately completed for analysis. For comparison purposes, a probability sample of this size has an estimated margin of error (which measures sampling variability) of +/- 6.3%, 19 times out of 20.

Analyzing Survey Data

Maru Public Opinion tabulated results and performed significance tests for differences in proportions based on variables such as employer size and sector, as well as the respondent’s gender, age group and immigration background.

Profile of Respondents

Most respondents were aged 31 years+ (93%), men (83%) and Canadian-born (94%), as shown in **Figure 18 to Figure 20**. Only 1% (n=3) of respondents were themselves newcomer youth (aged 18 to 30 years).



Figure 18. Age Group of Respondents (n=240)

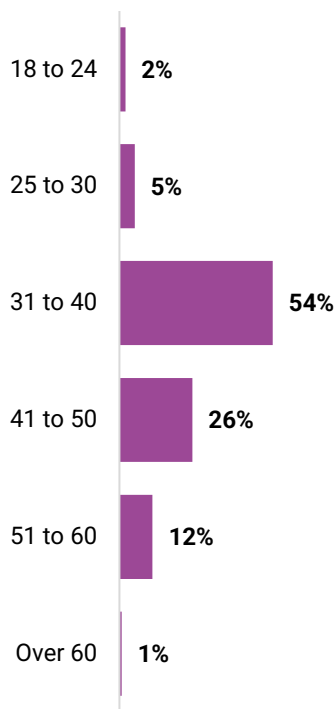


Figure 19. Gender of Respondents (n=240)

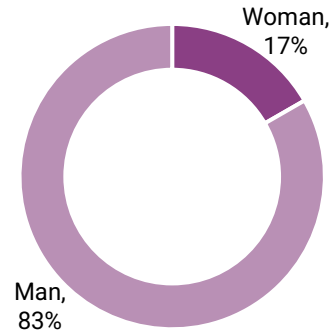
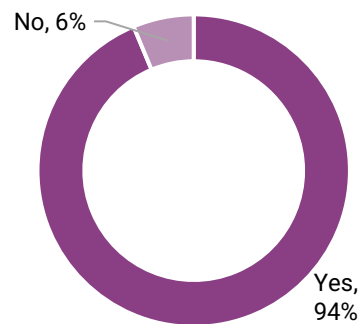


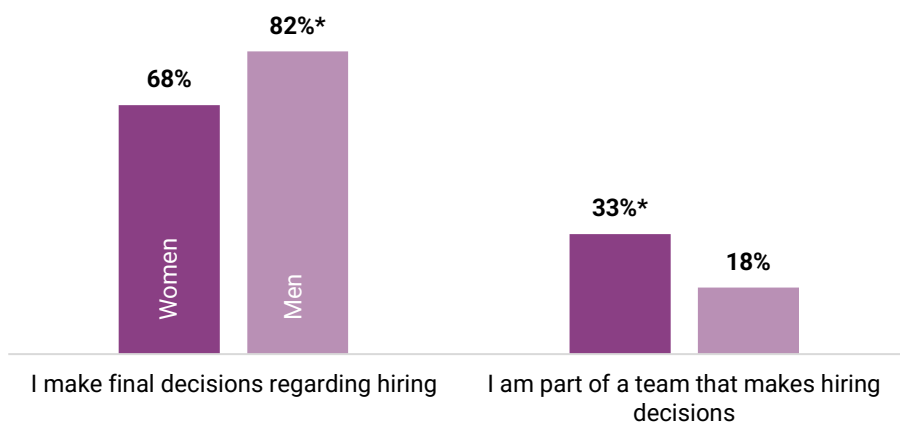
Figure 20. Respondents Born in Canada (n=240)



- D1. What is your current age?
- D2. What is your gender? (Select one.)
- D3. Were you born in Canada?
- D4. What is your current immigration status in Canada?

Figure 21 describes the role of respondents in human resources and the hiring process. All respondents either made final hiring decisions (80%) or were part of a team that makes hiring decisions (20%). Men respondents (82%) were more likely than women respondents (68%) to be in positions where they make the final hiring decision.

Figure 21. Respondent's Involvement in Human Resources and Hiring Process (n=240)

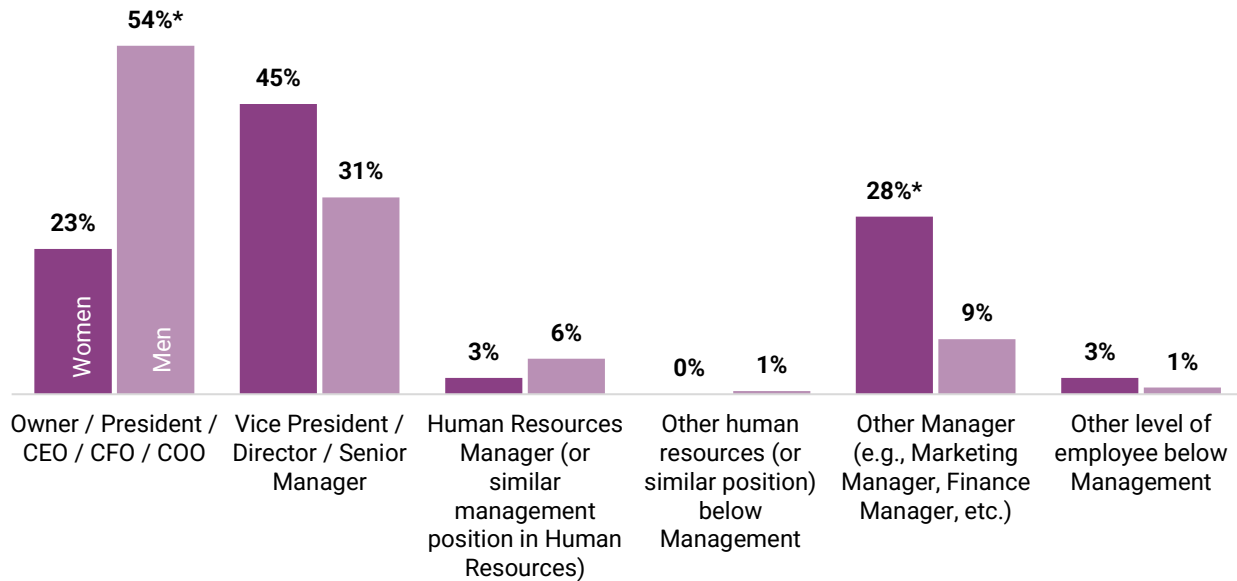


- S4. How involved are you in human resources and the process of hiring potential staff?
- Note numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.
- * Significantly higher at the 95% confidence level.



Eighty-one percent of respondents were senior executives, 5% were HR managers, 12% were other managers and 1% were below management level. **Figure 22** describes the breakdown of respondents' positions by gender. Male respondents were more likely to be Owners, Presidents or in the C-suite (54%) than women respondents (23%). Conversely, women respondents were more likely to be non-HR managers (28%) than male respondents (9%). Respondents from large organizations (11%) were more likely to be HR managers than those from small organizations (0%), which often do not have HR positions.

Figure 22. Respondent's Involvement in Human Resources and Hiring Process (n=240)



B1. What is your title or position at your company/organization
 Note numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.
 * Significantly higher at the 95% confidence level.

See **Figure 23 to Figure 25** for details on the respondent's organization. The majority of respondents work for organizations with employees in the City of Toronto (75%), followed by Peel Region (22%), Halton Region (19%), York Region (17%) and Durham Region (5%). The proportions of respondents working for small (10 to 99 employees), medium-sized (100 to 499 employees) and large organizations (500+ employees) were 30%, 40% and 30%, respectively. Hiring managers and decision-makers at microenterprises (fewer than 10 employees) were excluded from the survey. The majority of respondents (81%) represented for-profit organizations, with smaller shares of respondents at public sector (10%) and non-profit (9%) organizations. Women respondents (68%) were less likely to work for for-profit organizations than men respondents (84%).



Figure 23. Regions Where Respondent's Organization Has Employees (n=240)

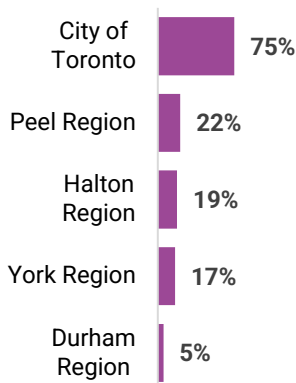


Figure 24. Size of Respondent's Organization (n=240)

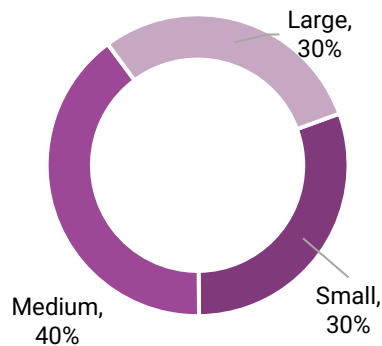
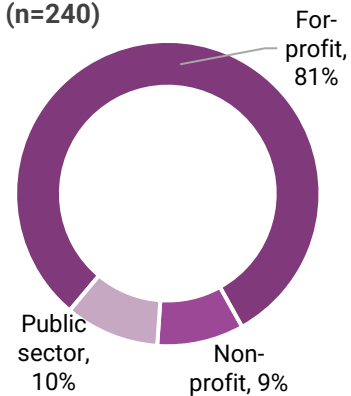


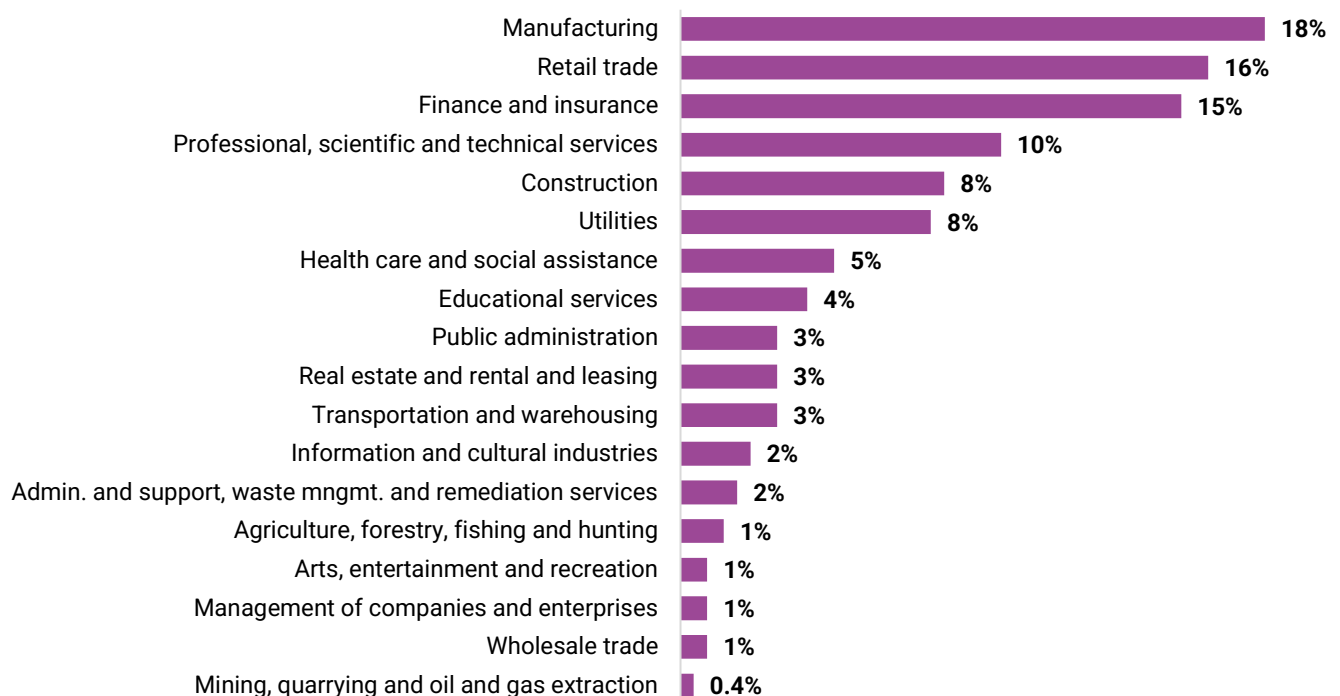
Figure 25. Sector of Respondent's Organization (n=240)



S2. Do you work for a company/organization with employees in the Greater Toronto Area? Select all that apply.
 S3. How many full-time employees work for your company/organization in the Greater Toronto Area?
 B2. What type of company/organization is your place of work?

Organizations of respondents span almost all industries of the GTA economy, as shown in **Figure 26**. The exception is other services (NAICS 81), such as personal and laundry services and repair and maintenance. No respondents were from this industry.

Figure 26. Distribution of Survey Respondents by Main Industry (n=240)



B3. What is your company's/organization's industry or business sector? Select the industry or business sector most closely related.
 Note numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.



Challenges and Limitations

- Survey implementation started with a soft launch where 38 responses were collected. The data was checked before proceeding with the full launch of fieldwork. The scenario-based question (Q.H1a) about the willingness of respondents to consider a newcomer youth applicant for interview likely suffered from social desirability bias. To address this, a follow-up question (Q.H1d) was added to ask respondents who answered positively on their likelihood of giving the applicant an opportunity for an interview about any concerns they might have with doing so. Responses to the new question are not available for the 38 soft launch completes. Sample sizes are reported in all tables and figures.
- Data are not weighted to correct for any imbalances in the sample as a reliable method for estimating the total size and composition of hiring managers in the GTA is not available. However, where there are meaningful statistical differences, results are presented by characteristics the weights would adjust for.
- Comparisons based on different respondent characteristics are made, where appropriate. However, it should be recognized that survey analysis allows only for the inference of correlation. Causation between respondent characteristics and statistically significant differences in responses should not be assumed.
- The labour market conditions, selection of newcomers, availability of employment-related services and programs, and other factors differ between the GTA and other regions of Canada. The survey is specific to the GTA, and findings cannot be generalized to other regions.



Appendix E: Key Informant Interviews

WoodGreen and JVS both undertook key informant interviews as part of this project. At WoodGreen, these interviews were conducted directly by project team members. Eight youth researchers were also involved in some of the KIIs led by WoodGreen. At JVS, KIIs were implemented by the Research Specialist and Research Manager on this YESS project.

KIIs Led by JVS

A total of 20 key informant interviews with 21 people were conducted directly by JVS between October 11, 2022 and November 18, 2022 (refer to **Table 27** for details). The work and service of these key informants gave them first-hand and professional experience with the issues and needs of newcomer youth.

Interviewees included those managing services and programs for newcomer youth, frontline workers in the employment and settlement sector, educators, researchers and community leaders and organizers. Key informants had a breadth and depth of perspectives, including on the implications of some findings and suggested solutions. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using Otter.ai. The JVS Research Manager coded transcripts based on themes in questions from the interview guide and those that came up in the interviews.

Table 27. KII Participants - JVS

Category	Number of Interviewees
Service Provider	11
Social Enterprise/Council	4
Researcher/Academic	4
Community Organizer/Planner	2

KIIs Led by WoodGreen

In total, WoodGreen conducted 18 KIIs with 20 individuals across 17 organizations (see **Table 28** for details).

Table 28. KII Participants - WoodGreen

Category	Number of Interviewees
Service Provider	13
Educational Institution	4
Employer/Funder	3

Appreciative Inquiry Approach

To better understand what is working best for agencies and institutions offering employment-related services to youth in the GTA, WoodGreen conducted KIIs with four institutions/programs offering successful youth employment-related programs. An appreciative inquiry (AI) approach was followed in conducting the interviews. A semi-structured interview guide was prepared by WoodGreen's Research and Evaluation Coordinators, following the AI method. The AI approach promoted questioning and envisioning the future in positive ways and built on the potential of organizations. This method informed the research and helped institutions to:



- Define the success of their youth employment programs and services
- Discover what's working well and where the success comes from
- Dream to be more successful and envision what their programs could look like in the future
- Design or plan and prioritize processes that would help to make the dream a reality
- Deploy, by identifying structures, processes and behaviours that would allow changes to be implemented

In addition to the WoodGreen Research and Evaluation Coordinators, the interview team consisted of eight newcomer youth researchers recruited through an open recruitment call posted on WoodGreen's social media sites.

The youth researchers were trained by WoodGreen's Research and Evaluation Coordinators on the AI approach and interviewing techniques, preparation and background on the institutions included in the interviews, the interview guidelines, using digital platforms (MS Teams) for interviewing, note-taking and transcription, and ethics around data collection, storage and disposal. All transportation costs were paid for and youth researchers each received \$500 for their work.

The interview guide was tested by the youth researchers. They also conducted one mock interview with one WoodGreen staff using the interview guide. Based on the mock interview experience, some of the questions in the interview guide were adjusted.

To conduct interviews, youth researchers worked in pairs. Each pair of youth researchers conducted one interview with each of their assigned institutions. The youth researchers produced transcripts following the interviews and participated in a facilitated sharing session/debrief in person. Recognition activities were held to celebrate youth's contributions to the study.

Employers and Educational Institutions

WoodGreen's Research and Evaluation Coordinators conducted six virtual interviews with eight representatives from employers/funders and educational institutions with existing programming and partnerships providing job opportunities for newcomer youth. The focus was on understanding successes and areas for improvement.

A semi-structured KII guide was developed and included agency briefs. Interview questions concerned current programming (e.g., eligibility criteria, activities, monitoring and evaluation), partnerships with other institutions, success stories and challenges/concerns.

Service Providers

WoodGreen and KDP Consulting Inc. conducted interviews of services providers delivering newcomer youth employment and career readiness programs and services across the GTA between October 2022 and January 2023. A total of 10 agencies were interviewed (4 small, 3 medium, 3 large).

A key challenge with the KIIs was a high level of agency non-response. Reasonable attempts were made to adapt to the challenge, such as moving timelines, increasing the frequency of follow-up emails and expanding the original agency target list with other agencies. Some organizations cited a lack of current capacity to engage in the project, while another had lost its core youth funding resulting in a cancellation of its related programs. These examples reflect the reality of small agencies.



Appendix F: Validation and Design Workshops

In March 2023, TRIEC, JVS and WoodGreen collaborated with Blueprint ADE to design and deliver a series of workshops focused on validating research findings and generating recommendations to strengthen employment interventions for newcomer youth in the GTA. The workshop series included three in-person workshops with newcomer youth in the GTA, and one virtual workshop with service providers who deliver employment services and supports for newcomer youth. As the last step in the project, the workshops focused on:

- Filling in gaps and adding additional detail and context to the research findings
- Identifying high-priority recommendations to strengthen employment interventions for newcomer youth

Newcomer Youth Workshops

Workshop Approach

Blueprint led the design and delivery of three in-person workshops with newcomer youth in the GTA, held between March 10, 2023 and March 14, 2023. The workshops were hosted at three different locations across the city, at three different times of day (morning, afternoon and evening).

TRIEC, WoodGreen and JVS led the recruitment of workshop participants, drawing on their existing client lists, partnerships with other service agencies, connections with newcomer youth who had participated in previous components of the research initiative, and posting to social media. Prospective participants were asked to complete a registration and consent form prior to the workshop.

There was a high level of interest in the workshops, with over 250 young people reaching out to express interest in participating. However, registration was capped at 15 to 20 participants per workshop in order to ensure that all participants would have opportunities to meaningfully contribute to the conversation.

Each of the three workshops focused on a specific part of the newcomer youth employment journey: pre-employment, job search and entry, and retention and career advancement.

Each workshop followed the same general format. We began with an overview of the broader research initiative, the workshop goals and the ground rules for the discussion. Newcomer youth participants were then led through three activities:

1. Activity 1 focused on identifying newcomer youth's career goals and aspirations. Participants were divided into breakout groups of five to six people where they discussed and documented what an amazing job or career looks like to them. The breakout group discussions for each activity were led by facilitators from Blueprint or one of the project partners (JVS, TRIEC and WoodGreen). Examples of newcomer youth goals and aspirations identified through the other components of the research initiative were shared to spur the participants' thinking. Each breakout group then reported back the key points from their discussion to the full group.
2. Activity 2 focused on identifying newcomer youth's strengths, assets and obstacles. Participants were divided into breakout groups of five to six people where they discussed and documented what has been helpful to them in navigating their employment journey, and what has been challenging and frustrating. Examples of strengths and barriers identified from the other components of the research initiative were shared to help start the conversation. Each breakout group then reported back the key points from their discussion to the full group.



2. Activity 3 focused on developing recommendations to strengthen employment interventions for newcomer youth. Participants were divided into breakout groups of five to six people where they reviewed the recommendations generated through the research initiative to date, and added new recommendations based on their own ideas and experiences. They then used “dot” stickers to vote for the recommendations that were most important to them. Each breakout group then reported back the key points from their discussion to the full group.

Participants

In total, 51 newcomer youth attended the workshops. **Table 29** provides information on the socio-demographic characteristics of participants in each workshop.

The majority (32 out of 51) of the participants heard about the workshops through an email from TRIEC, JVS or WoodGreen (the workshop organizers). Seven participants heard about the workshops through a friend, six were referred by another organization, and two heard about the workshops on social media.

A high proportion of participants (38 out of 51) said a reason they were motivated to take part in the workshops was the opportunity to share their experiences as a newcomer to Canada. Other common motivations for participating included the opportunity to help make recommendations for improving services for newcomers, the chance to meet other newcomer youth, and the compensation provided for participating. Most participants cited multiple reasons for participating.

Participants were relatively evenly split as to whether they had ever received services or supports from an employment-related service provider. Twenty-three participants reported that they have received services, 18 reported that they have not received services, nine reported that they were not sure or preferred not to answer and one did not respond to the question.



Table 29. Newcomer Youth Workshop Participants

Characteristics		Workshop			Total
		1	2	3	
# participants		18	16	16	50+
Age	16-20 years	6	7	3	16
	21-25 years	3	5	4	12
	26-30 years	9	4	9	22
Gender	Man	9	7	7	23
	Woman	9	9	9	27
Ethnic-cultural origins	Black-African	5	7	4	16
	East Asian	3	0	0	3
	Middle Eastern or North African	3	3	2	8
	Latin American/Hispanic	1	0	0	1
	West Asian	2	2	2	6
	Black-South and Central American	0	0	1	1
	South Asian or Indo-Caribbean	3	2	7	12
	Southeast Asian	0	2	0	2
	Not sure	1	0	0	1
	Year came to Canada**	2022 or 2023	6	9	3
	Between 2018 and 2021	4	5	10	19
	Prior to 2018	7	1	3	11
Immigration category upon entry***	Refugee	4	5	3	12
	International student	2	2	3	7
	Temporary foreign worker	1	1	0	2
	Sponsored by partner/family	5	2	2	9
	Undocumented/non-status	0	0	1	1
	Economic immigrant	2	0	1	3
	Not sure	3	0	0	3
	Other	0	5	6	11
Employment status****	In school (HS or equivalent)	4	7	1	12
	In university or college	2	1	1	4
	Looking for a job	10	7	6	23
	Working (paid)	5	2	8	15
	Working (unpaid)	1	0	0	1
	Community volunteering	1	1	1	3
	Other training	0	1	4	5
Education level	Junior high/middle school	4	2	1	7
	HS or equivalent	3	8	3	14
	Certificate or diploma	9	2	8	19
	Bachelor's degree or higher	1	3	4	8
	Not sure	1	1	0	2

+Socio-demographic questions were voluntary. One participant did not respond to the questions.

**Two youth did not provide an answer to this question

***Two youth selected "prefer not to answer" for this question

****Youth could select multiple options (e.g., working and going to school) for their employment status



Service Provider Workshops

Workshop Approach

Blueprint led the design and delivery of one virtual workshop for employment and training service providers in the GTA who work with newcomer youth. This two-hour workshop was held on March 22, 2023.

TRIEC, WoodGreen and JVS led the recruitment of workshop participants drawing on their existing partnerships and connections in the employment services sector. Prior to the workshop, Blueprint shared with participants:

- A summary of the findings generated through the broader research initiative to date
- A pre-workshop survey to solicit service providers' perspectives on the career goals and aspirations of the newcomer youth they work with and the most important gaps and challenges faced by newcomer youth. The survey results were used to inform the focus areas for discussion during the workshop.

The workshop began with an overview of the research project and the workshop goals, as well as a review of findings from the pre-workshop survey about newcomer youth's career goals and aspirations.

Participants were then divided into three breakout group discussions each focused on a specific part of the newcomer youth employment journey: pre-employment, job search and entry, and career retention and advancement.

Participants had the opportunity to select which breakout group to participate in based on their areas of interest and expertise. In each small group discussion, service providers were asked to:

- Reflect on the gaps and challenges that newcomer youth face in their employment journey. Insights from the pre-workshop survey were used to prioritize discussion on the gaps and challenges that providers feel are most important to address.
- Add additional gaps and challenges that they feel are important to address. Service providers were asked to add additional gaps that they see newcomer youth struggling to deal with as they seek to move forward in their employment and career journey.
- Identify recommendations for addressing these high-priority gaps and challenges. Service providers were asked to reflect on the recommendations already generated through the broader research initiative, and add additional recommendations that they felt could help address challenges and barriers.

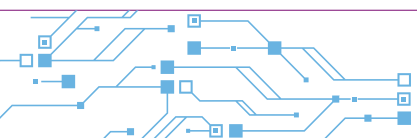
Participants

There were 11 total participants in the service provider workshop. Participants came from seven different organizations and were diverse in terms of their positions, ranging from senior leadership roles overseeing multiple employment programs and services, to strategy and planning roles, to frontline workers who directly support newcomer youth.

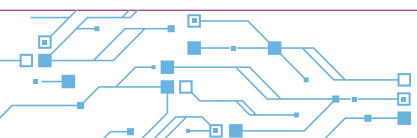


Endnotes

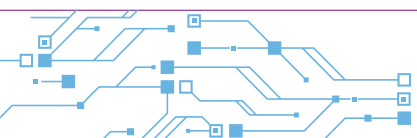
1. Statistics Canada (2022)
2. Lauer et al. (2012); Nichols, Ha & Tyyskä (2020); Febria & Jones (2023); CCYP & LMIC (2023)
3. Wilkinson et al. (2012); Francis & Yan (2016); Kaufmann (2021)
4. The GTA includes: the City of Toronto (Old Toronto, East York, North York, York, Etobicoke, Scarborough); the regional municipality of Halton (Oakville, Milton, Burlington, Halton Hills); the regional municipality of Peel (Caledon, Brampton, Mississauga); the regional municipality of York (King, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Markham, Aurora, Newmarket, Whitchurch-Stouffville, East Gwillimbury, Georgina); and the regional municipality of Durham (Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Oshawa, Clarington, Uxbridge, Scugog, Brock).
5. A key challenge in the research – specifically in reviewing secondary data and literature – was in the variations in how “newcomer youth” are defined. The period of youth, the use of the terms immigrant and newcomer, age at arrival in Canada and other differences made it difficult to identify commonalities and effectively compare and contrast findings across studies. See [Appendix A](#) for more details on the challenges of defining newcomer youth.
6. Primary data collection targeted youth aged 16 and above who, in Ontario, are able to give free and informed consent for their participation in minimal risk research on their own behalf.
7. The terms “newcomer youth” and “young newcomers” are used interchangeably in this report.
8. Women+ includes self-identifying women and transgender women. Men+ includes self-identifying men and transgender men.
9. Excludes only ‘other services’ such as personal and laundry services, repair and maintenance, etc.
10. One participant did not respond to the question on gender in the registration form.
11. 19% of immigrant youth landed between 2011 and 2015, and 28% between 2016 and 2021.
12. The following self-ratings are significantly higher for newcomer youth aged 21 to 25 years compared to Canadian-born youth in the same age group: technology use, continuous learning, working with others, work ethic, document use and numeracy.
13. Lesser cited concerns of respondents with inviting the newcomer youth applicant in the scenario for an interview included the following: cultural fit with organization (22%); equivalence of education credentials (22%); Canadian work experience (15%); professional references in Canada (14%); professionalism and work ethic (13%); high training costs (9%); not as strong as other applicants (7%); job requires travel and visa issues might arise (6%); bad prior experiences with immigrant/refugee hires (6%); too many family commitments outside of work (3%); bad prior experiences with youth hires (3%); prefer applicants who have been referred (3%); and other (1%).
14. Snape (1998) as cited in Hasluck (2011)
15. Morneau Shepell (2018); Bobadilla et al. (2021)
16. Elrick (2015)
17. Rae (2018)
18. Kanu (2008); Parada et al. (2019); Rossiter et al. (2015)
19. Wilkinson (2008)
20. Lauer, Wilkinson, Yan, Sin & Tsang (2012)
21. Canadian Council on Learning (2009)
22. Park-Taylor & Vargas (2011); Yan et al. (2012); Wilkinson (2008); Yan et al. (2008)
23. Crebert (2004)
24. Febria & Jones (2023)



25. Future Skills Centre (2022)
26. Lamba & Krahn (2003)
27. Community had many meanings for newcomer youth in focus groups and workshops, including ethnic group, those who share identity as LGBTQ2+, youth living at the same shelter, people who speak the same language, people who practise the same religion, people who are in the same profession, people in the same employment programs, peers at school, colleagues at work, neighbours, online communities, and so on.
28. For example, Galabuzi & Teelucksingh (2010).
29. Shields & Lujan (2019); Yan et al. (2012); Fang et al. (2010); Selimos & George (2018)
30. Nichols, Ha & Tyyskä (2020)
31. Hathiyani (2017)
32. Fuller & Martin, 2012; Wilkinson (2008); Fitzsimmons, Baggs & Brannen (2020)
33. Lauer et al. (2012); Nichols, Ha & Tyyskä (2020)
34. Lam (2021)
35. Berman et al. (2009)
36. Wilkinson (2008)
37. Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0301-01 Languages spoken at home by mother tongue, immigrant status and period of immigration and first official language spoken: Canada, provinces and territories and census metropolitan areas with parts
38. Khadka et al. (2011); Munro (2003)
39. SRDC (2021)
40. Social Planning Council of Ottawa (2010); Mady (2012)
41. Keung (2022)
42. This is part of an environmental scan of programs that deliver skills training to immigrants in Canada. It was based on online sources and interviews with members of Immigrant Employment Councils across Canada.
43. Rossiter et al. (2015)
44. Shields & Lujan (2019)
45. Shields & Lujan (2019); Nichols, Ha & Tyyskä (2020)
46. Shields et al. (2017)
47. Shields & Lujan (2019)
48. Febria & Jones (2023)
49. McKinsey & Company (2020)
50. Galabuzi (2007); Kunz (2003)
51. For example, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2013) Policy on Removing the “Canadian experience” barrier and actions taken by authorities in Ontario such as through the Working for Workers Act 2021.
52. Refling & Borwein (2014)
53. van Adams (2007)
54. Abiagom (2019)
55. While many newcomer youth used the term “mentorship,” some of the activities and areas of support that they spoke about were more akin to “sponsorship” (e.g. move the sponsored person up the career ladder and not just give advice).
56. In support of the survey findings of lower job quality ratings among women, in a meta-analysis, Joshi et al. (2015) found that women received lower pay, smaller bonuses, and fewer promotions relative to men, even when performance was equal. In combination with the results of the current survey, findings suggest that gender inequalities in job quality exist both objectively and subjectively. However, note that objective job quality was not assessed in the current survey.



57. The two groups of youth did not significantly differ in the number of discrimination types experienced. Although comparable proportions of newcomer and Canadian-born youth reported experiences with workplace discrimination, it is possible that the average frequency or severity of discrimination experienced may have varied between the two groups. However, the survey did not assess the frequency or severity of the discrimination experienced.
58. Nichols, Ha & Tyyskä (2020); Wilkinson et al. (2012); Chuang & CISSA (2010); Lauer et al. (2012)
59. Shields & Lujan (2018)
60. Nichols, Ha & Tyyskä (2020)
61. Canadian Heritage (2021)
62. Canadian Heritage (2021: 12)
63. Kaufmann (2021)
64. Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey uses the terms very recent immigrant, recent immigrant and established immigrant to refer to individuals who have been landed immigrants in Canada for 5 years or less, 5-10 years and more than 10 years, respectively.
65. Some studies define the 1.5 generation as comprising those who immigrated to Canada at age 15 or younger (Abada & Tenkorang, 2009).
66. PESTEL stands for political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors. Similarly, STEEP-V stands for societal, technological, economic, environmental, political, and values-based.
67. Mathew (2019); Lauer, Wilkinson, Yan, Sin & Tsang (2011); Britten (2014); Richardson (2012)
68. Malatest is one of Canada's largest privately owned research firms that specializes in human resource research. It has been involved in satisfaction research and evaluation for more than 30 years.
69. Arabic, Bengali, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Chinese, Croatian, Czech, Dogri, Dutch, English, French, Gujarati, Haryanvi, Hindi, Japanese, Kashmiri, Kinyarwanda, Korean, Lao, Macedonian, Marathi, Pahari, Portuguese, Punjabi, Pushto, Russian, Serbian, Shona, Sinhalese, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog/Pilipino, Tamil, Telugu, Twi, Urdu and Yoruba.
70. Measures for assessing data quality and legitimacy included the amount of time taken to complete the survey, the time at which a survey was started, patterns in email addresses (such as sequences of multiple emails that look auto-generated), congruency of the contact information provided for the prize draw entry (such as name and email), the sequence of responses selected to question matrices in the survey, coherency of comments provided to the open-ended question, duplicated comments, IP address, area codes of phone numbers, duplicated phone numbers, and duplicated email addresses.
71. Note participants were ineligible for the survey if they had not arrived within the last 10 years, if they were under 13 years of age when immigrating to Canada, or if they were currently above 30 years of age.
72. Weights were not applied to adjust for the representativeness of youth's municipalities in the sample, as the primary interest of the survey was in comparing newcomer youth to Canadian born youth.
73. Anyone who completed the survey in less than 30% of the median LOI was automatically removed.
74. Respondents who failed the red herring question were automatically removed.



For questions or more
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