

IMMIGRATION BEYOND MTV

Research Report



2013



PROJECT'S REGIONAL PARTNERS

- Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training (ASPECT)
- Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS)
- Ontario Network of Employment Skills Training Projects (ONESTEP)
- Regroupement québécois des organismes pour le développement de l'employabilité (RQuODE)



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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIJT	Aide et Intégration Jeunesse au travail de la Vallée-du-Richelieu
AMSSA	Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of British Columbia
ANC	Association for New Canadians
ASPECT	Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training
CCCBET	Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CVIMS	Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society
ESL	English second language
GDP	Gross domestic product
HRSDC	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
ISIS	Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LSIC	Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada
MCAF	Multicultural Association of Fredericton
MESS	Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale du Québec
MICC	Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles du Québec
MTV	Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver
NPO	Non-profit organization
ONESTEP	Ontario Network of Employment Skills Training Projects
PDMS	Penticton and District Multicultural Society
PNP	Provincial Nominee Program
RCM	Regional county municipality
RQuODE	Regroupement québécois des organismes pour le développement de l'employabilité
SCCC	Sault Community Career Centre
SOICS	South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services
SOIT	Service d'orientation et d'intégration des immigrants au travail
WHC	Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre

ABSTRACT

The *Immigration Beyond MTV* research report is the result of a pan-Canadian study conducted by the Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training (CCCBET) that focused on the integration of immigrants into the labour market outside of major urban centres. Since the research began in January 2010, 152 immigrants as well as employment counsellors and executive directors from 12 organizations located in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic Region have participated in the project. The goal of the research is to contribute to a better understanding of immigrants' pathway toward social and occupational integration as well as to share best practices pertaining to the employment integration of newcomers outside urban hubs. The chosen methodology dictated that data be collected through two self-administered surveys, 60 semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, and four regional roundtables. Analysis of the data shows that very recent immigrants and employability training organizations located outside the major Canadian cities face a double challenge that pairs typical integration difficulties with region-specific obstacles. The constraints encountered vary from one province to another and even from one community to another, a heterogeneity reflected in the rich diversity of intervention approaches rooted in the realities of unique local socioeconomic profiles. The implementation of the potential solutions that emerged from this study – whose goal is to address the many challenges catalogued and thereby facilitate the social and professional integration of foreign-trained individuals – will require the concerted involvement of all stakeholders.

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Firstly, it is important to highlight the invaluable contribution of the 152 immigrant participants and the staff of the 12 pilot sites, who generously agreed to share their experiences.

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Introduction

“The integration of immigrants and their offspring is an issue in which all actors, at local and national levels, have an interest in tackling with success. It is a complex and challenging policy area, as integration involves a number of interrelated issues, however it is by no means impossible to achieve.”

(GIGUÈRE, 2006, P. 29)

1.1 Context

In 2010, breaking immigration records set in the 1950s, Canada welcomed more than 280,000 immigrants, a figure that accounts for 75% of the country’s annual population growth (Statistics Canada, 2011a). Given that natural growth, i.e., the difference between the number of births and deaths, decreases over time, by 2026 immigration might be the sole demographic growth vector in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Currently, foreign-born residents make up nearly 20% of the national population and nearly one third of the population in urban centres like Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. Because of the growing presence of immigrants and their critical importance to the country’s socioeconomic growth, their integration into the social fabric and the job market is an issue with significant ramifications. Consequently, it seems essential to address the job integration difficulties experienced by newcomers, including the lack of recognition for training or work experience acquired abroad, linguistic barriers, as well as persistent prejudice in the host country.

Furthermore, while the high concentration of immigrants in urban areas raises questions about the capacity of cities to adequately absorb the massive waves of immigrants that arrive each year, only a limited number of immigrants choose to settle in regions outside these urban centres. With an aging workforce and a low birthrate, as well as the effects of increased migration to cities, many regions outside the large urban centres confront depopulation and experience an urgent need for additional workers. In order to attract more immigrants to non-urban communities and to help compensate for this rural exodus, it is important to improve the service offering provided to newcomers beyond Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver (MTV) by identifying the major difficulties immigrants face and by sharing examples of best practices from across Canada. As most research studies focus on urban centres, little attention has been paid to internationally trained individuals who settle in suburban or rural communities, a deficiency that this pan-Canadian research project hopes to remedy.

1.2 Literature Review

In the last several decades, an abundance of literature on the subject of immigration across Canada has been published, mostly concentrated on the large metropolitan areas. Before focusing on the situation for newcomers in areas outside the large urban centres in Canada, it seems important to briefly consider the main themes generally informing discussions of immigration: national politics and statistics, the controversy surrounding the regionalization of immigration, the main challenges newcomers encounter, as well as the differences between urban centres and outlying communities. An overview of the literature will help define the core research problem.

1.2.1 Immigration in Canada – Statistics and Policies

As an important social and economic driver, immigration forms an integral part of the history of Canada, one of the world's major host societies. Canada is rich in ethnic diversity and second only to Australia when it comes to the percentage of foreign-born inhabitants. Indeed, according to the 2006 census, nearly 20% of Canada's population reported being born outside of the country, the highest level in 75 years (Chui, Tran and Maheux, 2007, p. 5).

The international context and the economic, political, and social concerns of acting governments have played a role in the history of immigration in Canada (Chouinard and Pelletier, 1983; Germain and Trinh, 2010). Although population growth and the settlement of sparsely inhabited regions have been a concern since the time of the Confederation, the two world wars and the depression of the 1930s led to restrictions on the number and origin of immigrants. At the beginning of the 20th century, Canada's rather selective immigration policy was marked by immigration incentives that targeted specific countries of origin or employment classes. In 1947, Canada announced its intention to expand immigration in order to boost population growth as well as increase its international visibility. However, the Immigration Act of 1952, which became effective on June 1, 1953, remained very restrictive and discriminatory, ranking countries of origin according to preference. In 1962, Diefenbaker's Conservative government introduced a reform to eliminate the racial barriers inherent in Canada's immigration policy, in order to rectify – at least in theory – the policy's discriminatory nature (Chouinard and Pelletier, 1983).

Lester B. Pearson's Liberal government introduced two other major initiatives: the creation of the Department of Manpower and Immigration in 1966 and, in 1967, the introduction of a new points-based system for evaluating independent immigration candidates – primarily according to criteria based on the candidates' anticipated potential to succeed in the Canadian labour market (Green and Green, 1996). In 1976, during a slow economic period, as baby-boomers flooded the job market, Trudeau's Green Paper opened the door for a new approach to immigration (Chouinard and Pelletier, 1983, p. 205). The Immigration Act of 1976 became "the cornerstone of present-day immigration policy" in Canada (CIC, 2000). The points system, which took into consideration a candidate's skills, health, financial means, and linguistic aptitude, was tightened up in 1993 with the goal of making educational selection criteria more stringent, thereby increasing the number of university-educated immigrants admitted each year (Labelle, Field and Icart, 2007, p. 24). The latter modification also meant that selection criteria tied to employment and professions in high demand, "jugé[s] inefficace[s] en vertu de la récession, d'une part, mais aussi de la lenteur du processus, d'autre part," were also abandoned (Cousineau and Boudarbat, 2009, p. 233). Between 1967 and 1995, and despite the establishment of the points system, most immigrants to Canada continued to fall into the family class as they were sponsored by Canadian citizens. In 1995, an overhaul of the Canadian immigration system changed things by prioritizing economic immigrants, who would henceforth become the top immigration class in Canada (Gogia and Slade, 2011, p. 29).

Over the years and as schools of thought evolved, the goals of Canadian immigration policy greatly influenced the primary entry classes for permanent residents. At the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, two classes were added to the first more traditional skilled labour and family classes. In 1978¹, the refugee class was added following Canada's ratification of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. In 1980, as part of the neoliberal agenda to promote free trade, the business immigrant class was created (Gogia and Slade, 2011).

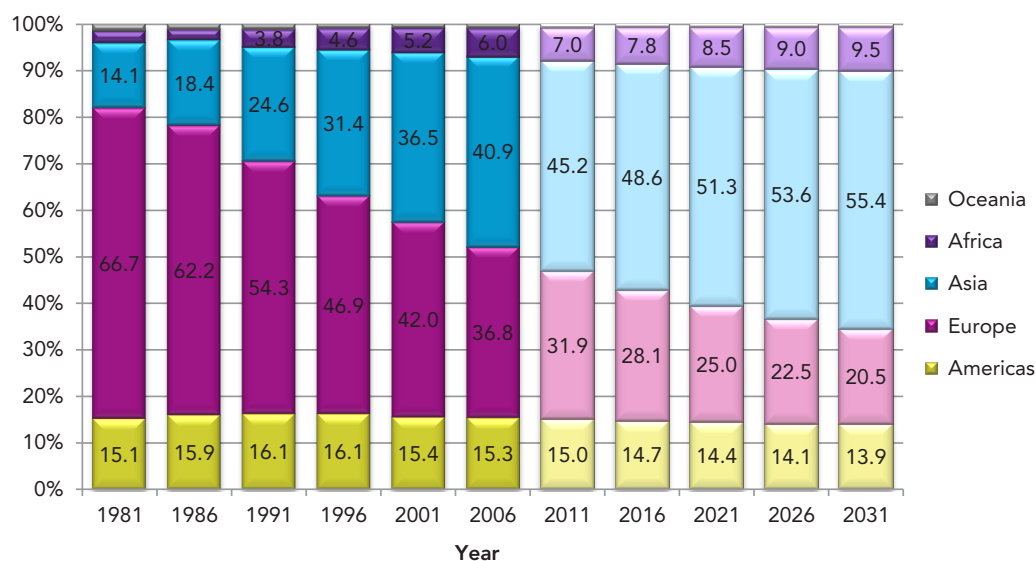
1 Although Canada had signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees in 1969, it wasn't until 1978 that immigration policy officially recognized the refugee class.

In addition, agreements were signed between the federal government and a few provinces, some related to the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), which gave the provinces some measure of control over the selection of immigrants who would settle in their regions, to better ensure that local labour needs were addressed (Froy, 2006, p. 82).

The evolution of Canadian immigration policy since 1867 played a crucial role in the country's demographic, geographic, economic, and sociocultural development. In fact, several authors have studied the impact of the changes to immigration policy and the introduction of a points system on the characteristics of immigrants admitted into Canada, including their birthplace, their knowledge of the country's official languages, and their education level.

First of all, although in the early post-war era nearly 80% of immigrants came from “Old World” Europe, a traditional origin (Bourne and Rose, 2001, p. 4), according to the 2006 census, the Asian continent pulled ahead of Europe to become the primary source of immigrants to Canada (Figure 1) (Caron Malenfant, Lebel and Martel, 2010, p. 19). In fact, the addition of the business immigrant class at the end of the 20th century greatly encouraged the selection of Asian candidates, particularly Hong Kong Chinese, Taiwanese and Koreans (Gogia and Slade, 2011). Thus, while in 1981 the primary countries of origin for immigrants to Canada were the United Kingdom, Vietnam and the United States, between 2001 and 2006, most immigrants came from Asia (58.3%), with the People's Republic of China, India, and the Philippines as the most common countries of origin. Consequently, recent immigrants are more likely to be a member of a visible minority or to have less knowledge of Canada's official languages. In fact, according to the 2006 census, most of those born abroad (70.2%) reported that their native language was neither French nor English (Chui, Tran and Maheux, 2007, p. 5). At the same time, they were increasingly more highly educated: 51% of those arriving in Canada between 2001 and 2006 had earned a university degree as compared to 28% before 2001 (Statistics Canada, 2008, p. 18).

Figure 1. Distribution of Foreign-Born Canadian Population According to Continent of Birth, Canada, 1981 to 2031 (projected baseline scenario)



Source: Caron Malenfant, Lebel and Martel, 2010, p. 19.

Furthermore, changes in migration patterns modified the distribution of immigrants across Canada. While the country's large urban centres such as Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal historically functioned as ports of entry and settlement for a significant percentage of newcomers, the specific characteristics of newcomers further increases their propensity to stay in these large cities rather than later settling in smaller cities or regions as some of their predecessors had. In fact, the growing disparity between the native population's characteristics and those of immigrants, whether in terms of their status as a visible minority, their insufficient grasp of the national languages, their religious affiliation, or socio-cultural

traits, engender the creation of ethnic enclaves (Bourne and Rose, 2001, p. 110). This excessive concentration of newcomers in the country's three primary cities informs the current debate on the regionalization of immigration.

1.2.2 Regionalization of Immigration

Many authors have analyzed the benefits of immigration, paying particular attention to the economic aspects (Labelle, Field and Icart, 2007) but also to sociocultural diversity. Whether to address the needs of the job market, to generate investment, or to stem a decline in population growth, immigration in Canada is often considered to be a driver of socioeconomic development, a by-product of globalization that few authors openly and vigorously oppose. Nonetheless, the very uneven distribution of the immigrant population and newcomers raises numerous concerns related both to the capacity of urban areas to absorb an ever-increasing number of immigrants and to the depopulation and labour shortages affecting outlying regions (Walton-Roberts, 2005). These two concerns – although they should not be seen as two sides of the same coin – fuel the debate on the effects of high concentrations of recent immigrants in certain areas and the regionalization of immigration. The following table (Table 1) shows that more than 85% of the immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006 chose to reside in one of the three most densely populated provinces in the country: Ontario (52.3%), Quebec (17.5%), or British Columbia (16.0%). In 2006, Ontario and British Columbia welcomed a percentage of immigrants that exceeded the provinces' demographic weight within Canada.

Even more significantly, seven out of ten recent immigrants to Canada settle in one of the country's three metropolitan areas – Toronto, Montreal, or Vancouver – thereby contributing to the current demographic imbalance.

Table 1. Distribution of Total Population, Total Immigrant Population, and Very Recent Immigrants in Canada's Provinces and Territories, 2006

PLACE OF RESIDENCE	TOTAL POPULATION	TOTAL IMMIGRANT POPULATION	VERY RECENT IMMIGRANT	RATIO OF VERY RECENT IMMIGRANTS TO TOTAL POPULATION
	PERCENTAGE (%)			
CANADA	100.0	100.0	100.0	-
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.1
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.2
NOVA SCOTIA	2.9	0.7	0.6	0.2
NEW BRUNSWICK	2.3	0.4	0.4	0.2
QUEBEC	23.8	13.8	17.5	0.7
ONTARIO	38.5	54.9	52.3	1.4
MANITOBA	3.6	2.4	2.8	0.8
SASKATCHEWAN	3.1	0.8	0.7	0.2
ALBERTA	10.4	8.5	9.3	0.9
BRITISH COLUMBIA	13.0	18.1	16.0	1.2
YUKON TERRITORY	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.4
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.4
NUNAVUT	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.1

Source: Chui, Tran and Maheux, 2007, p. 14.

Numerous factors, which vary according to the immigration class (Newbold, 2006), influence the settlement destinations of newcomers (Hou, 2005; Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin, 2009). According to the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) conducted by Statistics Canada (2003), and corroborated by various independent studies (Telegdi, 2006; Sherrell, Hyndman and Preniq, 2005), the primary factor for where new immigrants settle is the presence of family, friends, and fellow countrymen. Job opportunities, based on the size and conditions of the local job market, also play a role, particularly for economic immigrants (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin, 2009). To a lesser extent, quality of

life, infrastructure and availability of services, as well as educational and cultural opportunities guide the immigrant's choice of initial destination. It is important to note that the majority of refugees and asylum seekers may not choose their initial destination, which is determined either by the government or based on the location of their sponsors (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin, 2009).

Many writers have analyzed the negative effects of the urban concentration of immigrants on social cohesion, the urban environment, and the potential for the successful socioeconomic integration of these immigrants. According to some researchers, the ethnic enclaves that result from this influx hinder integration into the job market (Borjas, 2000) and the host community, and hamper the acquisition of the national languages (Chiswick and Miller, 2002). This imbalance also increases the spatial polarization of the Canadian population's sociodemographic makeup (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin, 2009; Hou, 2005; Bourne and Rose, 2001). According to Collacot, the "[s]heer numbers and their concentration in relatively few areas could, moreover, lead to a reduction in the level of acceptance by Canadians that would affect not only new immigrants but many of those who have already arrived" (2002, p. 42). By contrast, some research highlights the positive impacts of ethnocultural enclaves, positing that such ethnic cohesion might make financial resources (Hiebert and Ley, 2003) or socioprofessional networks (Ray, 1999) more easily accessible to new immigrants.

Faced with the excessive urbanization of immigration and the demographic challenges experienced in outlying regions, numerous solutions have been proposed to encourage a more even distribution of immigrants across Canada's regions. Responding to certain somewhat restrictive proposals advanced by the federal government, several authors have insisted on the necessity for an incentive-based approach, rather than coercion, to address the regionalization of immigration by encouraging rather than compelling new immigrants to settle in outlying areas (DeVoretz, 2003; Sherrell, Hyndman and Preniqi, 2005).

Overall, the multitude of factors influencing new immigrants' settlement choices highlight the many challenges faced by very recent immigrants, particularly those who settle outside of the large urban centres.

1.2.3 Difficulties Experienced by Newcomers across Canada

Several quantitative and qualitative studies attest to the significant deterioration of conditions for new immigrants since the 1980s (Giguère, 2006; Labelle, Field and Icart, 2007; Reitz, 2001; Omidvar and Richmond, 2003; Landry, 2005; Cousineau and Boudarbat, 2009; Picot and Sweetman, 2005; Frenette and Morissette, 2003). Very recent immigrants have experienced more difficulties integrating into the job market than their predecessors (Henderson, 2004), even in light of their improved levels of education (Reitz, 2001; Landry, 2005). The erosion of personal incomes as well as the increased unemployment rates among newcomers² (Bernard, 2008; Melnyk, 2006) contribute to the growing gap between very recent immigrants and the rest of the Canadian population (Table 2).

Table 2. Labour Force Characteristics (24 to 54 years old) of Native-Born Canadians and Immigrants According to Arrival Period, 2011

LABOUR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS	BORN IN CANADA	IMMIGRANT POPULATION	RECENT IMMIGRANTS	VERY RECENT IMMIGRANTS
	PERCENTAGE (%)			
UNEMPLOYMENT RATE	5.5	8.4	8.2	13.6
PARTICIPATION RATE	87.8	82.5	80.7	73.5
EMPLOYMENT RATE	82.9	75.6	74.1	63.5

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011b.

It is important to note that the employment rate is far from a precise measure of economic integration, as it does not take into account underemployment or the loss of professional status often experienced by very recent immigrants (Chicha and Charest, 2008). As Giguère points out, "financial pressures may encourage migrants to take the most immediately available and accessible jobs to ensure a living, even if these jobs are not at a level commensurate with their skills and experience" (2006, p. 24). According to the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants, upon their arrival in Canada, 60% of new immigrants work in a professional field that differs from their former experience (Statistics Canada, 2003). Settling for

² See Appendix I for a glossary of terms.

subsistence means a significant loss, both for the individual confined to such a job and for the host society that then loses a skilled worker. In this regard, several writers estimate that non-recognition of immigrants' acquired skills leads to annual losses of between \$2.4 and \$3.2 billion (Reitz, 2001; Conference Board of Canada, 2001).

In order to fully realize the potential of immigration, which benefits both the individuals and the host community, new arrivals must be integrated into the job market (Giguère, 2006; Froy, 2006). The results of the first wave of the LSIC confirm that the economic dimension constitutes a critical aspect of the settlement and integration process for newcomers (Chui and Tran, 2005, p. 3). In light of this, the government of Quebec stresses that successful economic integration "influences the ability of individuals to access services they need, achieve a good quality of life, participate in social and political life and develop a sense of belonging to their community" (2006, p. 50).

Numerous factors may slow the immigrant population's economic integration nationwide. On the one hand, newcomers experience the same employability difficulties as anyone else trying to find a first job, such as lack of work experience, lack of information about the jobs available, a weak professional network, and the challenge of reconciling professional and familial responsibilities (Boyd and Pikkov, 2005; Froy, 2006). On the other hand, they also face issues specific to their status as immigrants (Giguère, 2006), including lack of recognition of education and work experience acquired abroad, lack of familiarity with the Canadian job market, and language deficiency (CCOCDE, 2005, 2007; Melnyk, 2006; Bernard, 2008). Moreover, newcomers may fall victim to discrimination based on their accent, their region of origin, their entry status, ethnic, cultural, or linguistic prejudices, or simply negative attitudes towards immigrants (Labelle, Field and Icart, 2007). In addition to the economic impacts, being disqualified from employment as a result of these barriers engenders a high level of frustration and emotional distress for many newcomers.

Although these challenges are widely shared, it is essential to note that the individual experiences of newcomers are quite diverse. Many authors have studied the variables that influence the successful labour market integration of newcomers and have specifically noted the role played by previous visits, education and qualifications, linguistic abilities, region of origin, length of residency, immigration class and period, sex, visible minority status, and so forth (Renaud and Cayn, 2006; Froy, 2006).

1.2.4 Metropolitan Cities versus Outlying Regions

While there is an abundance of literature concerning immigration and immigration-related issues in major Canadian metropolitan regions, few studies focus specifically on the outlying regions. Certainly, a growing number of studies concentrate on a particular region or province, in particular British Columbia (Walton-Roberts, 2005; Sherrell, Hyndman and Preniqi, 2005; Henin and Bennett, 2002; Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin, 2009; Schmidtke and Neumann, 2010), Ontario (Di Biase and Bauder, 2005; Sethi, 2009), and Quebec (Prohet and Chamberland, 2009; Yoka, 2010; Mugwaneza, 2011; Germain and Trinh, 2010; Landry, 2005; Chicha, 2009; Chicha and Charest, 2008), but also Alberta (Melnik, 2001, 2006), Saskatchewan (Wason-Ellam, 2001), Nova Scotia (Byers and Tastsoglou, 2008; HILC and MISA, 2007) and Newfoundland and Labrador (Gien and Law, 2010; Coombs-Thorne and Warren, 2007). Nonetheless, none of these studies provides a national overview of immigrant settlement in outlying regions.

When addressing the employment integration of newcomers, many authors discuss the benefits and drawbacks of major cities and regional municipalities. Several researchers stress that immigrants encounter more obstacles in outlying regions than in metropolitan areas. Smaller cities are less familiar with ethnic, cultural, and racial diversity (Radford, 2007), and often have a sparse concentration of immigrants and fewer ethnocultural and specialized agencies (Schmidtke and Neumann, 2010; Henin and Bennett, 2002; Sherrell, Hyndman and Preniqi, 2005; Donato et al., 2007; Wason-Ellam, 2001). Furthermore, limits on educational infrastructure, public transit system, and job opportunities in regional communities might impact the newcomers' quality of life (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin, 2009). Opinions vary when it comes to discrimination towards visible minorities regarding employment, education, and access to health services in outlying regions, with a slightly more favorable view of the conditions in bigger cities (Lai and Huffer, 2009; Gien and Law, 2010).

By contrast, some studies show that the integration of newcomers, particularly from an economic and professional standpoint, is easier in outlying regions (Bernard, 2008; Frideres, 2006). Sherrell, Hyndman and Preniqi aptly sum up the dynamics at work by noting that "[s]maller centres, however, may force immigrants and refugees to integrate faster in a 'sink or swim' environment" (2005, p. 15–16).

In outlying regions, in addition to a lower rate of immigration, the immigrant profile also differs, particularly with regards to immigration status. For instance, in Quebec, “[...] les travailleurs qualifiés, gens d’affaires et autres immigrants économiques sont très concentrés à Montréal (au-delà de 85 %), tandis que ceux admis en vertu des catégories de regroupement familial et de réfugiés sont plus présents ailleurs (20 % et plus)” (Germain and Trinh, 2010, p. 10). Thanks to a number of successful initiatives, immigration to regional communities is clearly increasing, though it remains much less significant than in urban centres.

Given the Canadian government’s desire to increase the regional distribution of immigrants, it is important to evaluate the current policies and use them as the basis for future initiatives by developing a better understanding of the obstacles newcomers encounter in outlying regions as well as by gaining a firmer grasp of the services offered to immigrants (Radford, 2007). Recognizing that sufficient and appropriate resources are required to host newcomers in a regional context (Sherrell, Hyndman and Preniqi, 2005), the goal of this study is to transfer knowledge and best practices from one region to another (Froy, 2006). By strengthening the immigrant employability services offered in regions outside metropolitan areas, new incentives will be created for very recent immigrants to settle in outlying communities, which will also allow these regions to enjoy the socioeconomic benefits of immigration.

1.3 Research Questions

The goal of this research project is to promote the labour market integration of newcomers outside of Canada’s major urban centres by better understanding the employment integration process experienced by immigrants and by promoting an exchange of best practices developed by non-profit community-based employability training organizations. To this end, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

- What needs and expectations do recently arrived immigrants have concerning their integration into the Canadian job market? What challenges do they face in outlying regions?
- What are the major constraints faced by community-based training organizations and immigrant-serving agencies located in outlying regions?
- What best practices have been developed by the organizations working in a regional context to support the employment integration of newcomers?

To answer these questions, it is essential to review the most significant external factors that influence how community-based training organizations working with newcomers across Canada assist their clientele (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 is devoted to presenting the profile and perceptions of the 152 immigrants who participated in the research project in the four regions studied. An examination of the primary challenges faced by newcomers (Chapter 4), as well as the constraints encountered by the organizations working in a non-urban context (Chapter 5) highlights the differences and similarities between the large urban areas and the outlying regions, in addition to pointing to promising initiatives. Chapter 6 summarizes the study’s results and also identifies interesting avenues for further research. Before beginning the analysis, it is necessary to present the basic underpinnings of the study, including the methodology and ethical considerations, as well as to evaluate the study’s contribution to the literature, and its potential limitations.

1.4 Methodology

By using a primarily inductive, qualitative, and descriptive process, the goal of this applied research project is to contribute through field work to the advancement of knowledge. Therefore, the objective of this exploratory project is to observe, describe, and compare the difficulties encountered by immigrants and the various employability training organizations that assist them in their efforts to integrate professionally outside of Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver.

1.4.1 Data Collection

This research project is based on the participation of 12 non-profit community-based employability training organizations³ located across Canada in four regions: British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic Region (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador) (Table 3). With the goal of representing a range of contexts, the following criteria inform this non-probability sampling:

- Geographic location (at a variable distance from each of the three Canadian metropolitan areas (Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver))
- The recruitment of at least ten participants
- Willingness to participate in each stage of data collection (administration of participant questionnaires, logbook completion, interviews, etc.)

Table 3. Participating Organizations

PROVINCES/ REGIONS	REGIONAL PARTNERS	ORGANIZATIONS	CITIES
BRITISH COLUMBIA	ASPECT	CENTRAL VANCOUVER ISLAND MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY (CVIMS)	NANAIMO
		GREATER TRAIL COMMUNITY SKILLS CENTRE	TRAIL
		PENTICTON AND DISTRICT MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY (PDMS)/ SOUTH OKANAGAN IMMIGRANT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES (SOICS)	PENTICTON
ONTARIO	ONESTEP	JOB SKILLS – WELCOME CENTRE	MARKHAM
		SAULT COMMUNITY CAREER CENTRE (SCCC)	SAULT STE. MARIE
		WELLAND HERITAGE COUNCIL AND MULTICULTURAL CENTRE	WELLAND
QUEBEC	RQuODE	ACCÈS TRAVAIL	VICTORIAVILLE
		AIDE INTÉGRATION JEUNESSE AU TRAVAIL DE LA VALLÉE-DU- RICHELIEU (AIJT)	MONT-SAINT-HILAIRE
		SERVICE D'ORIENTATION ET D'INTÉGRATION DES IMMIGRANTS AU TRAVAIL (SOIT)	QUEBEC CITY
ATLANTIC	ISIS	IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SERVICES (ISIS)	HALIFAX (NS)
		MULTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF FREDERICTON (MCAF)	FREDERICTON (NB)
		ASSOCIATION FOR NEW CANADIANS (ANC) - AXIS CAREER SERVICES DIVISION	ST. JOHN'S (NL)

Between 10 and 20 participants were selected within each participating organization. To be eligible, the participant had to be:

- A very recent immigrant, that is, an individual having landed immigrant status in Canada for five years or less at the beginning of the project in January 2010 (Gilmore, 2008, p. 10)
- Over 18 years old
- Able to give informed consent

³ See Appendix II for a short description of each participating organization.

Survey - Questionnaires 1 and 2

A self-administered questionnaire made it possible to survey participants in two stages and to compile information on participant needs, expectations, and difficulties, in addition to documenting the employability services offered to newcomers in a regional context.

The first questionnaire dealt with issues such as:

- Sociodemographic data (country of origin, sex, age, religion, family situation, immigration class, education, etc.)
- Pre-emigration process (primary occupation in the country of origin, work experience, motives for emigrating, etc.)
- Arrival in Canada (date and place, motivation, relationship to the host community, employment potential, etc.)
- First steps taken toward employability (job-search assistance, personal needs and goals, etc.)

The second questionnaire dealt with issues such as:

- Sociodemographic data (country of origin, sex, age, family situation, immigration category, education, linguistic abilities, etc.)
- Post-emigration process
 - Employment (for the first job and/or current position: position held, sector of activity, full- or part-time status, relevance to prior training, job satisfaction, etc.)
 - Volunteer activities (frequency, motivations, benefits to employment search, etc.)
 - Education and training (language, professional or academic training)
- Difficulties encountered when looking for work
- Access to services (reception and settlement, education and training, employment assistance, community integration and other support services)
- Living outside the major urban centres

In order to compensate for the largely quantitative character of the surveys, particularly the rigidity of answer choices and closed questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted in the spring of 2012 with 60 participants and stakeholders.

Semi-Structured Interviews with Open-Ended Questions

As a complement to the questionnaires, in each region nearly a dozen interviews were conducted, collecting detailed information from participants about their experiences in Canada and their perceptions of the professional integration services they received. Also, other unexpected themes emerged from these 35 interviews and enriched the analysis. Participants were selected according to the following criteria:

- A willingness and availability to share their experience
- The ability to converse in either French or English

Interviews were also conducted with 25 employment counsellors and directors at the 12 participating organizations to gather their perspectives on the challenges encountered by newcomers and the organizations working with them, as well as to compile their best practices regarding reception and settlement, education and training, employment assistance, community integration, and other support services.

These semi-structured interviews were composed of open-ended questions, enabling participants to elaborate on the questions in the interview guide. The interviews were conducted in person, in French or English, and, with the participant's permission, were recorded then transcribed to facilitate analysis.

1.4.2 Data Analysis

In order to merge the quantitative and qualitative data collected, the interpretation of results required two parallel and complementary processes. First, the survey functionalities of SurveyMonkey were used to perform a rough statistical analysis of the quantitative data, making it possible to extract frequency tables on the relevant study topics.

Second, data collected through the semi-structured interview and the codification dictionary was analyzed using NVivo9 software. The software supported the organization of data by topics and sub-topics, which facilitated regrouping, comparison, and analysis of the catalogued interview excerpts. Although the codification dictionary was initially based upon the research questions and existing knowledge of the field, it was later revised multiple times in order to adequately describe the data collected. The NVivo 9 software was also used to record the comments and questions raised, as well as the notes taken during the codification and categorization process.

Using these parallel analytical processes made it possible to consolidate the quantitative data and to validate the interpretation of results.

Validation and Evaluation

Various methods were used to validate and ensure the reliability of the project's results. All the data collected through the surveys and interviews was evaluated and cleansed in order to delete or correct erroneous information. In addition, the triangulation of the compiled data using two methodological processes (i.e., the surveys and the interviews) made it possible to cross-check the results, anchoring the results in a more in-depth analysis. At the end of the research process, regional consultations and a national meeting were organized to elicit feedback on the data collected and the preliminary conclusions from the personnel of the various participating organizations, with the goal of validating the reliability of the data collection and analysis.

1.5 Ethical Considerations

Within the context of this research project, the two major ethical considerations were informed consent and confidentiality for all participants. The participants were informed about the goal of the research, and given the right to withdraw at any time or to refuse to answer any survey or interview questions.

Excerpts from the qualitative interviews and questions were used in the publication of results in order to illustrate certain elements or conclusions. In order to ensure the confidentiality of participants and stakeholders, the sources of direct or paraphrased quotes were identified only by the name of the participating organization in question and the provincial location.

In addition, a Research Steering Committee composed of members of the Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training supervised the project at every stage to ensure the validity of the process and results. A pan-Canadian Review Committee bringing together the regional partners and the directors of organizations was also created in order to review the final report.

1.6 Contribution and Limits

This research project makes a significant contribution to the body of literature about the experience of newcomers who settle outside of Canada's major metropolitan areas. In addition, the results also benefit community-based training organizations and immigrant-serving agencies, newcomers to Canada who were trained abroad and, in general, all stakeholders concerned with the Canadian job market by providing:

- A better understanding of the settlement and labour market integration experiences of newcomers who settle in smaller cities and rural areas;
- Increased knowledge and information sharing about best practices for the employment integration of newcomers who settle outside of metropolitan areas; and

- Strong collaboration at the national level among stakeholders and partners working toward the labour market integration of immigrants living outside major urban areas.

Due to the complex dynamics and the sheer number of variables influencing employability, evaluating the success or failure of local organizations in integrating newcomers into the job market fell well outside the scope of this study. Nonetheless, by comparing the various challenges experienced by newcomers and by the employment training organizations across Canada, and by initiating discussions about potential solutions with those active in the community, it is hoped that some best practices and recommendations for immigrant employment integration in regional communities might emerge from this study.

As for secondary sources, the biggest difficulty was the lack of reliable and consistent regional immigration statistics. In addition, immigration data collected during the 2011 census will not be available until 2013, which means that some statistics date from the 2006 census.

As for the collection of primary data, the project's budgetary constraints limited the number of organizations in each of the four regions, as well as the number of participants from each site who might take part in the study. Certainly, the diversity of the 12 selected organizations highlights the heterogeneity of regional contexts outside of Canada's major metropolitan areas⁴. However, given the unique nature of each community, it would be a mistake to suggest that this sample paints an accurate picture of the reality of all organizations and regions across Canada. Along those same lines, the 152 immigrants who participated in the study were selected based on their availability and their willingness to take part – not because they were particularly representative of the target population. Consequently, it is important to note that the results cannot be generalized to all the newcomers served by the 12 participating organizations, nor to the entire immigrant population living outside of Canada's major urban centres.

Furthermore, because of the time constraints, it proved impossible to conduct interviews with all the participants and counsellors involved in the project. The screening of applicants, however, did ensure a diverse sampling of perspectives and experiences among both the participants and the counsellors. This being a longitudinal study, attrition due to losing contact with some participants or because some participants chose not to continue to be involved in the project must also be taken into account. Of the 152 participants who were recruited for the project and who completed the first survey conducted in the winter of 2011, 131 completed the second survey one year later, which represents an attrition rate of 14%. Although most of the participating organizations had taken measures to ensure the project's continuity, staff turnover at the 12 pilot sites also complicated the data collection and validation process.

The two surveys of immigrant participants were developed in collaboration with staff members from the participating organizations, leveraging their knowledge and expertise to inform both content and format. In addition, the questionnaires were pre-tested with a small sampling of participants who carefully reviewed the wording and the answer choices, in order to minimize ambiguity and confusion. It should be noted, however, that, because no attempt was made to translate the questionnaires into the first languages of those surveyed, linguistic barriers might have hampered the data collection process. Nevertheless, the data evaluation and cleansing stage did allow for the deletion of isolated instances of erroneous information. Language difficulties also complicated the semi-structured interview process for those participants with sub-par levels of understanding and expression (in English or French).

Despite its limitations, the importance and relevance of the study cannot be underestimated, as it examines the employment integration of very recent immigrants outside of large urban centres and sheds light on both the current situation and future prospects. Before presenting the profile and perspectives of the study participants, it is important to briefly examine four variables that influence the integration of newcomers and the role of non-profit community-based employability training organizations in various provinces across Canada.

⁴ The Steering Committee favoured a broad definition of the criterion "outside the large urban centres" in order to include a range of communities located outside of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver.

Four Variables to Consider

The characteristics of each region studied – the sociopolitical environment driving the various aspects of the immigration process, the service-delivery models used by the organizations, the local economic particularities, and the composition of the immigrant population – strongly influence the employment integration of newly arrived immigrants to Canada. As such, it is important to briefly describe the primary external factors that shape the interactions between community-based training agencies and their immigrant clientele in the four study regions.

2.1 Sociopolitical Environment

Within the Canadian confederation, responsibility for immigration is shared by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments. Over the years, some provinces and territories, including British Columbia, Quebec, Ontario, and Nova Scotia, have signed broad agreements with Citizenship and Immigration Canada that cover a variety of immigration-related issues. This section outlines in broad strokes the social and political environment governing immigration issues in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic Region.

2.1.1 British Columbia

In 2010, British Columbia's government executed a third agreement with the federal government to expand its role in the attraction and retention of provincial candidates, temporary workers, and international students. The agreement extended the province's mandate to manage and provide immigrant reception and settlement services to five years (CIC, 2010a). Initiated in 1998, the devolution of settlement services to British Columbia was accompanied by a transfer of federal funds, which allowed for the creation, in 2007, of the WelcomeBC Initiative, a strategic provincial framework for the reception and integration of newcomers. As this first attempt to loosen federal control fell short of expectations, the provincial government continued to push for even more influence over immigration, citing Quebec as a model. According to Christy Clark, the premier of British Columbia:

The biggest one for us is immigration. It's one of the most important economic levers any government has and we don't have it...We need to devolve immigration to provincial governments (Hunter and Walton, 2012).

Nonetheless, in April 2012, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism announced that federal authorities would reappropriate the management of immigrant settlement programs financed by the Canadian government in British Columbia and Manitoba. According to the minister, the goal was to provide consistent services throughout Canada (CIC, 2012a). The leading associations responsible for immigration matters in British Columbia reacted strongly to the announcement of this unilateral decision:

If anything, BC is slightly surpassing other provinces in the range and quality of immigrant services, so we aren't clear what CIC wants to achieve there. [...] BC stands to lose much in this surprising CIC-determined shift, which isn't about cost-savings (AMSSA and ELSA Net, 2012).

Starting in 2014, the integration of newly arrived immigrants to British Columbia will be overseen by the regional CIC office in Calgary, Alberta. The decision means that, of the three major host provinces in Canada, British Columbia will be the only one to have its reception services administered externally.

In April 2012, BC's Ministry of Social Development launched the Employment Program of British Columbia, a new employment-assistance initiative whose goal was to replace a dozen programs financed by the provincial government or through the 2008 Canada–British Columbia Labour Market Agreement. By selecting a primary mainstream agency who in turn subcontracts to specialized agencies and organizations, the provincial authorities hope to facilitate access to employability services for all its citizens and residents:

Each WorkBC Employment Services Centre works to ensure that everyone – including immigrants, youth, Aboriginal Peoples, Francophones, persons with disabilities and people living in rural or remote areas – has access to the same supports and services no matter where they live in the province, so they can get back to work quickly (WorkBC, n.d.).

However, the provincial social service associations fear that this one-size-fits-all approach might undermine the quality of specialized services:

The Employment Program intends to place everyone into whatever employment they can attain without addressing their “barriers”. For most recently-arrived immigrants and many longer-established immigrants this will mean placement into “survival jobs” at the end point of service (BC Provincial Social Service Associations, 2011, p. 4).

The Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Innovation also plays a role in providing services intended for immigrants through Skills Connect for Immigrants, a program that targets skilled immigrant labour. It is important to note that all public sector contracts in the province are awarded by a bidding process open to community-based organizations and educational institutions, as well as private firms.

2.1.2 Ontario

On November 21, 2005, the governments of Canada and Ontario signed an initial broad agreement on immigration aiming to establish roles and responsibilities at all levels of government regarding recruitment, admission, reception, and integration of immigrants. According to this agreement, Citizenship and Immigration Canada manages and provides settlement services to newcomers through the various non-profit community-based training organizations, in collaboration with provincial authorities (CIC, 2005). With a five-year budget of \$920 million, this agreement was extended by one year until March 2011 so that a new agreement might be negotiated. In this context, Eric Hoskins, Ontario's Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, stated in February 2011:

We will not accept an unfair agreement that puts newcomers who settle in Ontario at a disadvantage. We are fighting to help newcomers settle quickly so they can strengthen our economy. We can only do that if the federal government reverses its funding cuts and treats Ontario the same way it treats Manitoba, Quebec and British Columbia. We are asking for fairness (Government of Ontario, 2011).

Ontario, the top destination for newcomers to Canada, is currently the only province that has not signed an immigration agreement with the federal government. In 2012, Dalton McGuinty's provincial government set up an expert roundtable on immigration in order to develop the first provincial immigration policy, allowing Ontario to bolster its position in negotiating a new agreement with federal authorities (Government of Ontario, 2012).

Among the points of contention is a drastic drop in the proportion of immigrants to Ontario over the last decade or so, which has had an impact on both the province's population growth and its economy. Ontario reached its peak in 2001, hosting nearly 60% of all arrivals to Canada, whereas in 2010, the province welcomed 118,116 newcomers, i.e., only 42% of the national total (Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, 2010). Having long relied on Toronto's appeal, Ontario delayed participating in the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP), which rapidly became one of the principal drivers of immigration flows to the Prairies and Atlantic Canada. When the PNP was finally launched in 2007, it only garnered 1,000 Ontarian candidates as compared to Manitoba, where 12,000 candidates are selected annually (Fiesen, 2012).

In addition to its major sociodemographic and economic impacts, the deceleration in immigration to Ontario also triggered significant cuts in the budgets earmarked for the reception and settlement of immigrants, calculated pro rata on the number of newcomers who decide to settle in each Canadian province. The funds allocated to Ontario by CIC fell from \$390.4 million in 2010–2011 to \$346.5 million in 2011–2012, and plunged to \$314.6 million in 2012–2013, signaling the end of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (Chase, 2011).

In addition to these changes at the federal level, the 2010 launch of a new integrated service-delivery framework, whose goal was to create one-stop employment assistance service points in 2012, changed the provincial immigration landscape. In fact, since June 2010, Employment Ontario agencies must provide a full range of training and employment-assistance services, which, according to some observers, compromises the specialized services for immigrants.

In conclusion, as with British Columbia, it is important to note that Ontario's provincial government awards public sector contracts by a bidding process open to all community stakeholders, both public and private.

2.1.3 Quebec

Quebec created a Ministry of Immigration in 1968 and has played a role in candidate selection activities abroad since 1975, when the province signed the Lang-Cloutier Agreement. Following the execution of the Couture-Cullen Agreement on February 20, 1978, and with regard to "cooperation on immigration matters and on the selection of foreign nationals wishing to settle either permanently or temporarily in Quebec", the governments of Canada and Quebec signed a new agreement on February 5, 1991. The Gagnon-Tremblay-McDougall Agreement relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens stipulates that:

Quebec has sole responsibility for the selection of immigrants destined to that province and Canada has sole responsibility for the admission of immigrants to that province (MICC, 1991, article 12 §a)

In addition, as part of the agreement, Canada agreed to withdraw from the reception, integration, and employment assistance services offered to newcomers residing in the province of Quebec, while providing financial compensation to the province in exchange for the management and provision of those services (MICC, 1991, articles 24–26). This agreement renders Quebec the only province in Canada that enjoys such autonomy vis-a-vis the federal government regarding immigration.

In the 1990s, concerned about the uneven distribution of newcomers throughout the various regions of its territory, Quebec adopted an immigration-regionalization policy whose goal was to promote regional and local development (Simard, 1996). Despite limited results, this strategy has had an impact on the settlement of government-sponsored refugees spread out among ten or so locations in Quebec, including Quebec City and Victoriaville (Guyon, 2011).

As the principal actor in the selection and integration of the immigrant population in Quebec, the responsibilities of the *Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles* (MICC) include adult francization programs, refugee reception and assistance services, and activities promoting cultural diversity. In January 2012, the MICC announced it would withdraw from immigrant employability services and that, in the future, such services would fall under the aegis of *Emploi-Québec* and the *Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale* (MESS). Although the policy shift was meant to ease employment integration for immigrants through the creation of an uninterrupted career path, the transfer of responsibilities remains fragmented because the MICC still oversees some pre-employability programs. This division of responsibilities between the two ministries – reception and settlement (MICC) and employment-assistance services (MESS) – has also had an impact on the structure of external resources, as there are on the ground settlement agencies and employability training organizations, that may or may not be specialized to deal with an immigrant clientele.

At the provincial level, in 2006 the Quebec government and external resources specializing in employability adopted the *Protocole de reconnaissance et de partenariat entre Emploi-Québec et les organisations communautaires œuvrant en employabilité*. This document defines the primary roles and responsibilities of each party: "Emploi-Québec et les regroupements d'organisations communautaires œuvrant en employabilité se reconnaissent mutuellement une responsabilité dans la lutte contre l'exclusion sociale et professionnelle" (Emploi-Québec, 2006, p. 5).

2.1.4 Atlantic Region

For more than a decade, due to renewed public and institutional interest in immigration issues in the Atlantic Region, various mechanisms have been initiated that are specifically designed to attract immigrants and encourage them to settle for the long term in this region.

New Brunswick

As the first province in the Atlantic Region to agree to the establishment of a Provincial Nominee Program in 1999, New Brunswick has since taken advantage of this fast-track program to admit newcomers who meet the labour needs of the province's employers. Nonetheless, New Brunswick, like its neighbour Newfoundland and Labrador, remains one of only two provinces in Canada that has signed a broad immigration agreement with the federal government. In spite of this agreement, in 2007 the provincial government created the Population Growth Secretariat whose mandate includes responsibility for the immigration dossier (Evernden, 2008, p. 13–15).

Nova Scotia

In August 2002, Nova Scotia signed an initial agreement with the Canadian government to create a PNP. By virtue of this agreement, and with the approval of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the provincial government may now select potential candidates in four classes: skilled workers, family business workers, community-identified workers, and international graduates. However, due to a longstanding controversy, the federal government refused to increase the number of candidates admitted to Nova Scotia through this program, limiting the number of provincial nominees admitted annually to 500 while at the same time increasing the number of nominees admissible in Western provinces (McMahon, 2012).

In 2005, Nova Scotia's government demonstrated its determination to benefit from immigration by establishing a provincial immigration strategy and creating the Immigration Office, which would be responsible for immigration issues. In 2007, Nova Scotia and Canada signed an expanded cooperation agreement which stipulates that:

Nova Scotia will exercise its responsibilities in the development and implementation of programs, policies and legislation, promotion and recruitment of immigrants, determination of provincial nominees; and facilitating the settlement and integration of immigrants as set out in this Agreement (CIC, 2007, article 1.17 §d)

In theory, the agreement did away with caps on the number of provincial candidates who could be selected annually by the province. In addition to authorizing the admission of provincial nominees, the Canadian government would continue to manage all the federal programs in Nova Scotia, from candidate selection to the provision of integration services.

Newfoundland and Labrador

In 1999, the province of Newfoundland and Labrador signed an agreement with the federal government pertaining to the reception of provincial candidates. This agreement was renewed in 2006; however, the province has yet to execute any framework immigration agreement with the CIC. Created in 2007, the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism is responsible for the provincial immigration strategy, whose objectives include increasing the number of newcomers who settle annually in the province to between 1,200 and 1,500, in addition to maintaining an immigration retention rate of 70% (Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Advanced Education and Skills, n.d.).

Although a comprehensive interprovincial comparison falls outside the scope of this study, this summary does illustrate the disparities and the constant evolution of the different provincial sociopolitical environments. Several changes to immigration and labour policy at the national level have recently impacted the provinces, including new employment-insurance rules instituted by the federal authorities (Parliament of Canada, 2012) and the closure of several regional CIC offices (CIC, 2012b). These modifications influence immigrant employability organizations, both in terms of the intervention practices and the constraints on their operation.

2.2 Service Delivery Models

Due to the unique sociopolitical characteristics of their respective environments, various models of service delivery characterize the 12 participating organizations. Based on the five principal service categories – reception and settlement, employment assistance, education and training, social integration, and other support services – three schematic models emerged from this research. Whether a one-stop service point, a partnership involving several organizations housed at the same location, or a diverse group of organizations operating in the same community, these models affect how employability training organizations function, including how partnerships are formed, how referrals are handled, as well as what services are offered and how the service continuum is organized.

2.2.1 One-Stop Service Point

In this first model, the five large service categories identified are provided at one location by one organization (Figure 2). Under the aegis of a board of directors, the goal of this centralized and specialized structure is to address the needs of newcomers in a single location in order to minimize redundancies and service interruptions, though many of these agencies still offer referrals to other community organizations for more specialized services. This model describes half of the pilot sites, i.e., all the sites in the Atlantic Region, two of the three participating organizations in British Columbia, as well as one site in Ontario.

Figure 2. Model #1 – One-Stop Service Point



2.2.2 Partnership of Multiple Organizations Under One Roof

Located in a Toronto suburb, the Welcome Centre Immigrant Services (Ontario) corresponds to the second service-delivery model identified by the research, i.e., a partnership between several organizations operating at the same location (Figure 3). Since 2006, five organizations – COSTI Immigrant Services, Catholic Community Services of York Region (CCSYR), the Centre for Information and Community Services (CICS), Job Skills and Social Enterprise for Canada – have joined forces to offer a service continuum for immigrants in the York Region. In 2007, the first centre opened in Vaughan. In 2010, four other service points were created and supervised by one of the five central organizations. According to demand, each centre also offers several peripheral services.

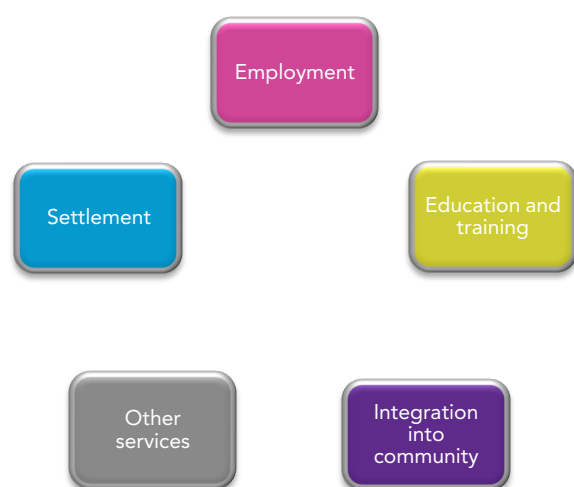
Figure 3. Model #2 – Partnership of Multiple Organizations Under One Roof



2.2.3 Multiple Agencies in the Same Community

Five organizations correspond to the third service-delivery model, i.e., the presence of multiple agencies active in the same community (Figure 4). Whether offering general or specialized services, these organizations offer job assistance services, while other community-based organizations offer reception and settlement services⁵, language training, or social integration. Some regions, however, including Trail (British Columbia) and Mont-Saint-Hilaire (Quebec), have no organization that provides immigrant reception and settlement services.

Figure 4. Model #3 – Multiple Agencies in the Same Community



- Greater Trail Community Skills Centre, British Columbia
- Sault Community Career Centre (SCCC), Ontario
- Accès travail, Quebec
- Aide Intégration Jeunesse au Travail de la Vallée-du-Richelieu (AIJT), Quebec
- Service d'orientation et d'intégration des immigrants au travail (SOIIT), Quebec

Aside from the governmental structure and the various service-delivery models, location-specific socioeconomic characteristics have an important influence on the immigrant integration context. As a result, it is important to sketch a portrait of the 12 municipalities and subregions studied.

⁵ The Sault Community Career Centre is an organization that offers general employability services. Since 2010, the centre offers reception and settlement services for newcomers that are financed by CIC. English as a second language (ESL) courses, however, are still offered by another community organization.

2.3 Specific Socioeconomic Characteristics

In addition to the political environment and the various service-delivery models, the 12 participating organizations must deal with the distinct socioeconomic and social conditions that affect the employment integration process for newcomers.

In June 2012, of the four regions studied, only British Columbia had an unemployment rate slightly lower than the national average. With marginally higher than average rates, the Atlantic Region and the provinces of Ontario and Quebec had the highest differences between subregions. For example, the SOIIT, which is located in the region of the provincial capital (Quebec City), hovers near full employment, i.e., conceivably more than three percentage points above the rate in the province's central region. It is important to note that the large urban areas, including those in the Atlantic Region, generally have a lower unemployment rate than the overall rate in their respective administrative region or province.

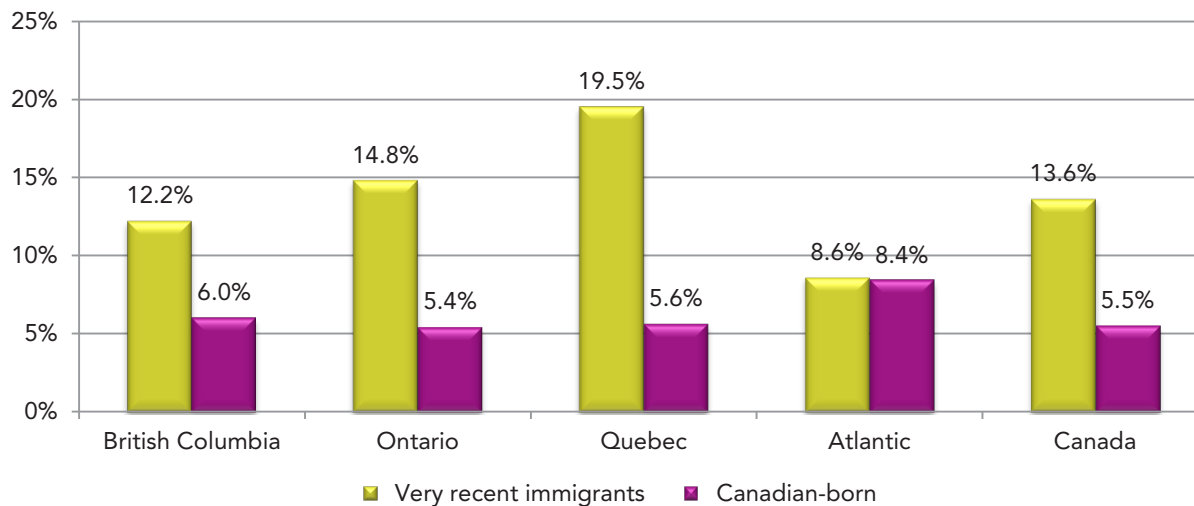
Table 4. Unemployment Rates by Region and Subregion, 2012

REGIONS AND SUBREGIONS	UNEMPLOYMENT RATE
ATLANTIC	10.1
HALIFAX (NOVA SCOTIA)	6.9
FREDERICTON-OROMOCTO (NEW BRUNSWICK)	6.8
AVALON PENINSULA (ST. JOHN'S, NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR)	8.6
QUEBEC	7.7
CAPITALE-NATIONALE REGION (QUEBEC CITY)	5.8
CENTRE-DU-QUÉBEC REGION (VICTORIAVILLE)	9.2
MONTÉRÉGIE REGION (MONT-SAINT-HILAIRE)	6.2
ONTARIO	7.9
GREATER TORONTO AREA (MARKHAM)	8.9
HAMILTON-NIAGARA PENINSULA (WELLAND)	7.4
NORTHEAST REGION (SAULT STE. MARIE)	6.2
BRITISH COLUMBIA	6.6
VANCOUVER ISLAND AND COAST (NANAIMO)	5.8
THOMPSON-OKANAGAN (PENTICTON)	7.2
KOOTENAY (TRAIL)	6.7
CANADA	7.2

Source: HRSDC, 2012c.

In several provinces, however, a rather large gap between the unemployment rates of very recent immigrants (13.6%) and the rates for Canadian-born residents (5.5%) suggests that newcomers may not benefit from this positive economic performance (Figure 5). According to data from the 2011 Labour Force Survey (LFS), of the four regions studied, the most pronounced disparity exists in Quebec (13.9 percentage points), followed by Ontario (9.4), and British Columbia (6.2). Only in the Atlantic Region do newcomers appear to be on par with native-born Canadians in economic performance.

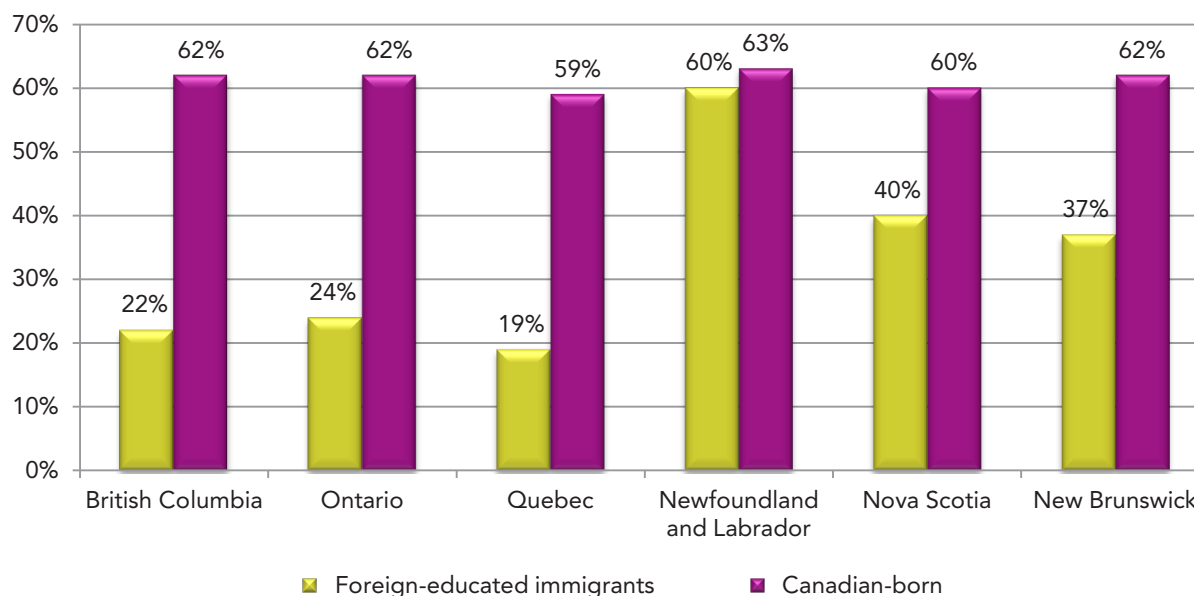
Figure 5. Provincial and National Unemployment Rates for Very Recent Immigrants and Native-Born Canadians, 2011



Source: Statistics Canada, 2011b.

According to 2006 census figures, British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec have had a hard time integrating immigrants into their fields of specialization (Figure 6). With a 40-point gap between the placement rates of foreign-trained immigrants and those of native-born Canadians, the three major host provinces fall way behind their Atlantic counterparts.

Figure 6. Provincial Placement Rates for Foreign-Trained Immigrants and Native-Born Canadians by Field of Specialization, 2006



Source: 2006 Census, cited by Statistics Canada, 2010.

Before considering the principal characteristics of the immigrant population in the four regions studied, the key specific traits of each of the 12 municipalities and economic regions where the organizations are located will be briefly examined.

2.3.1 British Columbia

With a population of over 4.5 million inhabitants (Statistics Canada, 2011c), British Columbia generates 12.5% of Canada's gross domestic product (GDP) in terms of expenditure (Statistics Canada, 2011d). The province is the second-largest producer of natural gas and the fourth-largest producer of crude oil in Canada, although this industry only employs roughly 1% of the active population. Construction and manufacturing are the main employers in the goods sector, while the service sector employs nearly four out of five workers (Government of British Columbia, n.d.). However, each of the three regions studied in British Columbia presents a distinct socioeconomic profile.

Nanaimo, Vancouver Island and Coast

With 17.6% of the population and 9.1% of the territory, the Vancouver Island and Coast Development Region has the second-highest population in the province (City of Nanaimo, 2010, p. 4). Nanaimo, with a population of over 80,000, is the second-largest urban centre on Vancouver Island, surpassed only by the provincial capital, Victoria, located 100 kilometres south (City of Nanaimo, 2010, p. 5). The public and private service sectors, including business and sales (15%) as well as health and social services (12%), employ three-quarters of the region's active population; the goods sector creates the balance of jobs. Most local businesses employ fewer than 20 employees each (City of Nanaimo, 2010, p. 25–26). Nanaimo has a modern and efficient transportation network that includes two airports, two ferry terminals, and a highway system that services Vancouver Island's large urban centres as well as a mass transit system (City of Nanaimo, 2010, p. 41). The city is also home to several postsecondary institutions including Vancouver Island University, Discovery Community College, and Sprott-Shaw Community College. In addition, more than 40% of Nanaimo's population aged over 15 has a postsecondary education (City of Nanaimo, 2010, p. 35–46).

Penticton, Thompson-Okanagan

Located in the heart of a region recognized for its vineyards, Penticton's economy relies primarily on agriculture, tourism (with more than a million visitors annually), the manufacturing sector, and the retirement system. The major employers in the region, including the Penticton Regional Hospital, School District #67, and the City of Penticton, are in the public and institutional sectors (City of Penticton, 2011, p. 20). In addition, roughly 2,000 people work in tourism, primarily for the many restaurants and visitor accommodations. A city of retirees, 25% of Penticton's inhabitants are over 65 years old (City of Penticton, 2011, p. 9). The municipality is home to two postsecondary institutions: the Okanagan College and the Sprott-Shaw Community College. Moreover, the Okanagan campus of the University of British Columbia is located in Kelowna, 60 kilometres north of the city. Accessible by a regional airport and several roads and highways, Penticton is a five-hour drive from both Vancouver and Seattle (USA), and eight hours away from Calgary (Alberta).

Greater Trail, Kootenay

Located in southeastern British Columbia, close to the U.S. border, Greater Trail (population 19,223) consists of five municipalities and two rural electoral districts and is the site located farthest from an urban centre. The main economic driver in this region is the Teck Trail Operation, a large metallurgical complex that employs nearly 1,500 individuals and has attracted several additional industrial suppliers providing services to or complementary with Teck operations. Given that Greater Trail is home to the Kootenay Boundary Regional Hospital with close to 1,000 employees, many retirees remain or are attracted to the region (Lower Columbia Community Development Team, 2010). Although the service sector employs most of the active population in Trail, the production of manufactured goods has made significant in-roads, creating 29% of all jobs. The Selkirk College offers access to postsecondary education at eight campuses spread throughout the Kootenay Region, including a campus in Trail whose course offerings include training in the health care field (Selkirk College, n.d.).

2.3.2 Ontario

Ontario is home to one-third of the Canadian population and generates a third of the country's GDP. The province also shows the largest disparities between economic regions, particularly between the north and the south of the province. In Ontario, goods production generates nearly a quarter of the GDP; the automobile and mining (metals and precious stones) sectors produce the region's top international exports. Ontario's economy has had its share of upheavals in the past few years, including a negative trade balance in 2011, primarily due to the global economic crisis, the appreciation of the Canadian dollar, and the restructuring of the automobile sector (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2012).

Markham, Greater Toronto Area

The Town of Markham, located in the Greater Metropolitan Region of Toronto and situated less than 40 kilometres from the downtown core, is of the 12 sites studied the region closest to an urban centre. Fewer than half of Markham's over 300,000 inhabitants speak English as a mother tongue, mirroring the multiculturalism of Toronto. Business services employ nearly a quarter (22%) of Markham's population, ahead of the manufacturing (14%), finance and real estate (12%), and retail (11%) sectors (Town of Markham, 2011, p. 9–10). In addition, more than 400 businesses have chosen to set up their headquarters in Markham, including American Express Canada. Nearly 900 high-tech companies, such as IBM Canada and AMD Technologies, are also located in Markham (Town of Markham, 2011, p. 3). Established in 2005, the Seneca College is the major postsecondary educational institution in Markham; another 15 community colleges and university campuses are less than an hour's drive away (Town of Markham, 2011, p. 8).

Welland, Hamilton-Niagara Peninsula

Welland is located in the heart of the Niagara peninsula, an hour and a half outside of Toronto. The average age of the city's nearly 50,000 inhabitants is 41.5, two years older than the national average. In 2006, the large francophone population accounted for 11.5% of the population and, overall, less than 10% of the city's inhabitants had a university degree (City of Welland, 2010, p. 13–15). The economy of the St. Catharines-Niagara metropolitan census area relies primarily on the business (15%), health and social services (13%), and manufacturing (11%) sectors. Driven by a strong tourism sector, jobs in food and beverage services and accommodations account for 10% of the region's employment (City of Welland, 2010, p. 65). Welland's top employers are Convergys, Canadian Tire Financial Services, and the Welland Hospital. The average revenue of \$33,729 per inhabitant in Welland is lower than the averages in Sault Ste. Marie (\$36,799) and Markham (\$44,355), and sits below the provincial average (\$42,562) as well (City of Welland, 2010, p. 71). Welland is home to one postsecondary institution: the main campus of the Niagara College of Applied Arts and Technology. Brock University is located in St. Catharines, 20 kilometres north of the city.

Sault Ste. Marie, Northeast Region

The region's economy relies primarily on tertiary industries, including health, social service and education (21%), and business services (18%). The primary and secondary sectors also employ a significant percentage (19%) of the city's active population (Development Sault Ste. Marie, n.d., p. 10). The city's prosperity is tied to several industries, including steel, renewable energy, information technology, and forestry. The steel producers Essar Steel Algoma and Tenaris Algoma Tubes, the Sault Area Hospital, the Algoma District School Board, and the City of Sault Ste. Marie are the city's top employers (Development Sault Ste. Marie, n.d., p. 14–15). Two postsecondary educational institutions – Algoma University and the Sault College of Applied Arts and Technology – serve the 75,000 inhabitants. Located where Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, and Lake Superior intersect, Sault Ste. Marie is also serviced by two airports less than 40 kilometres from downtown: the Sault Ste. Marie regional airport and the Chippewa County International Airport in Michigan (USA).

2.3.3 Quebec

Quebec has the largest land area of any Canadian province and is home to nearly eight million inhabitants. The province's GDP of \$300 billion, 70% of which comes from the service sector, accounts for 20% of Canada's national economy. The tourism industry, for example, attracts nine million visitors and generates \$10 billion annually. On account of its 17 administrative regions, Quebec benefits from a relatively diversified economy (Government of Québec, 2012).

Quebec City, the Capitale-Nationale Region

The Capitale-Nationale Region's economy relies primarily on the service sector, which continues to carve out a choice position in the area's industrial structure. Government services, including public administration, health and social services, and education, employ a significant proportion of the region's active population (Service Canada, 2011). In fact, Quebec City has many postsecondary educational institutions, including four CEGEPS (the French-language institutions – *Sainte-Foy*, *Limoilou*, and *François-Xavier-Garneau* – and one English-language institution, Champlain St. Lawrence). The Capitale-Nationale Region, with a population of nearly 700,000 – of which nearly a half million live in Quebec City (MAMROT, 2012) – is Eastern Quebec's major demographic hub.

Victoriaville, Centre-du-Québec Region

Home to 235,000 inhabitants, the Centre-du-Québec Region has a troubling demographic profile. Although the population growth rate is positive, it is still lower than elsewhere in Quebec. As such, an aging population and a drop in the active population may lead to labour recruitment issues in the long-term. Characterized by a strong goods-production sector and a high proportion of unskilled positions (45%), the Centre-du-Québec's economy was late to feel the impacts of the last recession. The 43,000 inhabitants of Victoriaville benefit from an unemployment rate that is lower than the regional average and have several educational institutions including the *Cégep de Victoriaville*, a campus of the *Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières* and a local satellite campus of the *Université de Sherbrooke* (Ville de Victoriaville, 2012).

Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Montérégie Region

The Montérégie Region has a population of nearly 1.5 million inhabitants, 115,000 of which live in the Vallée-du-Richelieu regional county municipality (RCM) (MAMROT, 2012). Historically, the region registers a lower unemployment rate than provincial averages (Service Canada, 2011). Located close to downtown Montreal at the intersection of many major highways and rail routes, Mont-Saint-Hilaire (population 17,500) enjoys a geographically strategic position (Ville de Mont-Saint-Hilaire, 2012). With no CEGEP or university in Mont-Saint-Hilaire, those who wish to pursue a postsecondary education must go to Saint-Hyacinthe, Longueuil or Montreal. In addition, the city's proximity to several major provincial and regional centres has a significant impact on service delivery for immigrants, as Mont-Saint-Hilaire itself has no immigrant settlement organization.

2.3.4 Atlantic Region

With just over two million inhabitants (Statistics Canada, 2011c), the three provinces in the Atlantic Region participating in this study generate 5% of Canada's GDP (Statistics Canada, 2011d). Throughout the three provinces, the aging population is an ongoing concern. In 2011, between 15.8% and 16.5% of the population in each of the three provinces was 65 years old or older, as compared to the national average of 14.4% (HRSDC, 2012d).

Fredericton, New Brunswick

In 1969, New Brunswick became the first and only officially bilingual province in Canada (New Brunswick Commissioner of Official Languages, n.d.). Today, roughly one third of the provincial population speaks French. Heavily dependent on the economic conditions of its commercial partners, New Brunswick's economy experienced a difficult year in 2011 when the unemployment rate reached 9.5%, breaking the record set in 2005. The goods sector, which provides employment to a fifth of the active population, experienced a lull, mostly affecting primary industries and the manufacturing sector (HRSDC, 2012a). With a population of 750,000, the province is home to four public universities, two with campuses in Fredericton, the provincial capital. With a population of 50,000, Fredericton is home to the New Brunswick provincial government and several federal offices. As a result, the public and institutional sectors, including the New Brunswick River Valley Health Authority, are the city's top employers. For several years now, Fredericton has also been recognized as an important hub for consulting engineers, the knowledge industry, the business sector, and research and development. In 2012, for the third year in a row, the number of seniors exceeded the number of children in New Brunswick (New Brunswick Department of Finance, 2012, p. 18).

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia, with nearly a million inhabitants, 400,000 of whom live in the Halifax metropolitan region (Statistics Canada, 2011c), benefits from an unemployment rate lower than the regional average (HRSDC, 2012c). The public and private service sectors, including health care and social services as well as business and sales, employ more than three quarters of the province's active population (Nova Scotia Department of Finance, 2012). Halifax is the provincial capital and economic hub of the Atlantic Region. The city is home to six universities and three colleges, offering 30,000 students a full range of postsecondary options (Greater Halifax Partnership, n.d.). Nevertheless, the proportion of Nova Scotia's population aged 20 and over with a postsecondary degree (77.1%) is slightly lower than the national average (80%).

St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

The service sector is the economic mainstay for Newfoundland and Labrador's half a million inhabitants (Statistics Canada, 2011c). The province has the highest unemployment rate (13.8%) in the Atlantic Region; however, the gas, oil, and mining sectors have expanded in recent years, thanks to the development of several new worksites. The growth of these well-established industries has positively impacted the construction sector, which, in 2011, registered record employment levels (HRSDC, 2012b). The provincial capital holds a strong appeal for those born in the province, as well as for interprovincial and international immigrants. The 200,000 inhabitants of the St. John's metropolitan region benefit from an unemployment rate of between 6% and 7% and have access to more than 100 programs offered by Memorial University, one of the Atlantic Region's major universities. In 2011, health care and social assistance, as well as business and public administration, were the principal sectors of activity in the city (City of St. John's, 2011).

Although brief, this section illustrates the many differences between the regions studied, particularly in terms of population, economic activity sectors, access to education, and geographic proximity to major urban centres and transportation infrastructure. The diversity of the socioeconomic profiles of the study's 12 subregions underscores the innate heterogeneity of the integration processes experienced by newcomers and the various ways participating organizations interact with their clientele.

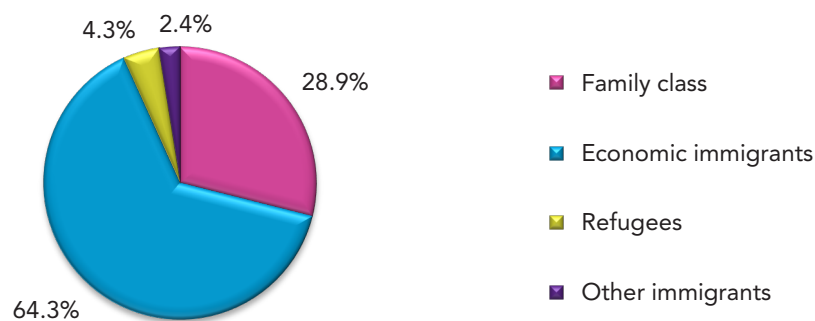
2.4 Characteristics of the Immigrant Population

The individual characteristics of newcomers have an important impact on their employment integration in Canada, be it their education level, their understanding of the official languages, their region of origin, or their immigration class. While the lack of uniform and detailed statistics by subregion throughout Canada restricts the scope of this section, it is important to introduce some attributes of the immigration population in each of the regions studied in order to identify certain sociodemographic trends.

2.4.1 British Columbia

Ranked third as a host province in Canada behind Ontario and Quebec, each year British Columbia receives an average of 40,000 newcomers, which accounts for 16% of the total number of immigrants nationwide (CIC, 2010b). Between 2005 and 2011, more than half of the new permanent residents admitted to the province belonged to the economic immigrant class (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Permanent Residents by Immigration Category in British Columbia, 2005–2011



Source: CIC, 2011.

Between 2005 and 2011, the Mainland-Southwest Region located in the Vancouver metropolitan region was the top destination for nearly all of the 250,000 immigrants who settled in British Columbia. Only 4.4% of newcomers chose the Vancouver Island and Coast Region, while 2.5% preferred to settle in the Thompson-Okanagan Region. A slim 0.5% chose to settle in the Kootenay Region (Table 5).

Table 5. Number of Newcomers by Region in British Columbia, 2005–2011

REGION	2005 2006	2006 2007	2007 2008	2008 2009	2009 2010	2010 2011	2005–2011	
							TOTAL (N)	TOTAL (%)
VANCOUVER ISLAND AND COAST	1,655	1,601	2,135	1,942	1,885	1,656	10,874	4.4
THOMPSON- OKANAGAN	888	878	1,210	1,161	1,103	970	6,210	2.5
KOOTENAY	185	204	262	295	203	179	1,328	0.5
TOTAL BRITISH COLUMBIA	43,846	37,811	43,220	42,375	43,871	38,552	249,675	100

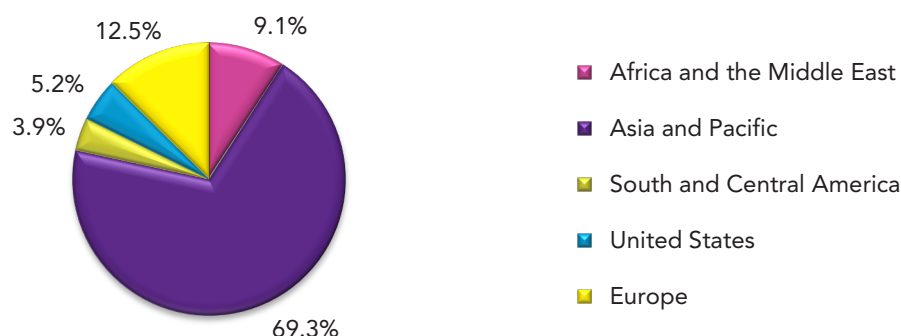
Source: BC Stats, n.d.

In 2008–2009, of the 2,000 immigrants who chose to settle on Vancouver Island, more than 600 opted for the Nanaimo Region (City of Nanaimo, 2010, p. 7).

Between 2005 and 2011, nearly a third of permanent residents (69.3%) admitted into the province came from Asia (Figure 8). In British Columbia, China is ranked as the top country of origin for immigrants, while India and the Philippines alternate between second and third place. The other countries that regularly make the list of the top ten countries of origin are South Korea, the United States, England, Taiwan, and Iran.

In addition, according to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom are two significant sources of immigration for the three regions studied in British Columbia.

Figure 8. Permanent Residents by Source Area in British Columbia, 2005–2011



Source: CIC, 2011.

Table 6. Country of Origin by Region in British Columbia, 2005–2009

VANCOUVER ISLAND AND COAST (NANAIMO)	THOMPSON-OKANAGAN (PENTICTON)	KOOTENAY (TRAIL)
1. UNITED STATES (18%)	1. UNITED KINGDOM (22%)	1. UNITED STATES (25%)
2. UNITED KINGDOM (15%)	2. INDIA (13%)	2. UNITED KINGDOM (21%)
3. CHINA (10%)	3. UNITED STATES (11%)	3. AUSTRALIA (6%)

Source: CIC, cited in Welcome BC, 2009.

Overall, some 120,000 temporary residents, either temporary workers or foreign students, live in British Columbia (CIC, 2010b). Furthermore, to address the region's labour shortages during harvest season in the vineyards, the Okanagan Valley receives a large proportion of the temporary workers admitted (Table 7).

Table 7. Number and Percentage of Newcomers and Temporary Residents by Region, British Columbia, 2009

REGION	NEWCOMERS		TEMPORARY RESIDENTS (STOCK)					
			TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKERS		INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS		REFUGEE CLAIMANTS	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
VANCOUVER ISLAND AND COAST	2,883	5.8	1,386	2.0	2,428	4.4	32	0.6
THOMPSON-OKANAGAN	1,344	3.2	2,385	3.5	2,289	4.1	59	1.0
KOOTENAY	462	1.1	785	1.1	268	0.5	11	0.2
TOTAL BRITISH COLUMBIA	41,440	100	69,105	100	55,508	100	5,784	100

Source: CIC, cited in Welcome BC, 2009.

Between 2005 and 2009, nearly 4% of the 10,000 very recent immigrants who settled in the Vancouver Island and Coast Region were 65 years old or older, the second-highest percentage of individuals in this age group in the province. Like the Mainland-Southwest Region, more than half (52%) of immigrants 25 years or older arrived with a university degree (Welcome BC, 2009).

Between 2005 and 2009, of all the economic regions in British Columbia, the Thompson-Okanagan Region had the highest percentage of immigrants who arrived with only an elementary or secondary school education, as well as the lowest percentage of newcomers with university diplomas (Welcome BC, 2009).

The Kootenay Region has the lowest percentage (29%) of young immigrants (younger than 25 years old) and the highest percentage (69%) of adult workers (between 25 and 64 years old). Between 2005 and 2009, nearly three-quarters of the immigrants who settled in this region had a postsecondary degree, the highest proportion after Vancouver Island and the Coast (Welcome BC, 2009).

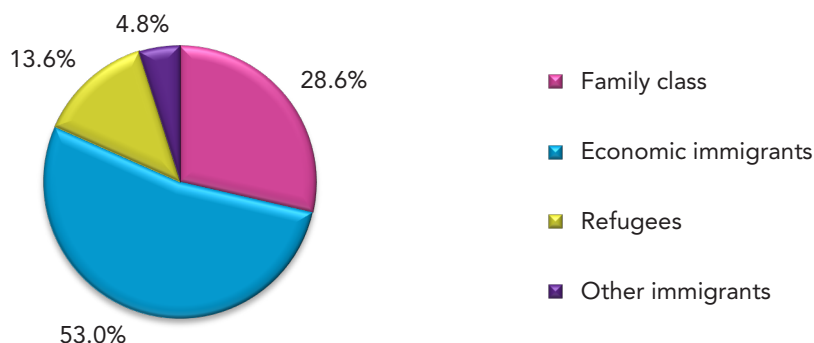
More than three-quarters of immigrants to the Vancouver Island and Coast (81%), the Thompson-Okanagan Region (78%) and the Kootenays (85%) had English-language proficiency. According to data from the City of Nanaimo, however, one out of ten residents speaks neither English nor French – German, Punjabi and Chinese being the most oft-spoken non-official languages in the city (City of Nanaimo, 2010, p. 40).

2.4.2 Ontario

While Ontario is the top host province in Canada, it publishes no regional statistics about the newcomers to its territory. As a result, unlike the other provinces studied, it proved impossible to draw a portrait of the immigration population by region in Ontario. Nonetheless, this section provides some general provincial immigration statistics.

Annually, the Greater Toronto Area receives nearly 80% of newcomers who choose to settle in Ontario, a much higher percentage than Ottawa (6%), Hamilton (3%), Kitchener (3%), London (2%), Windsor (2%), and the Niagara Region (1%) (CIC, 2012). Between 2005 and 2011, more than half (53%) of new permanent residents admitted to Ontario belonged to the economic immigrant class.

Figure 9. Permanent Residents by Immigration Category in Ontario, 2005–2011



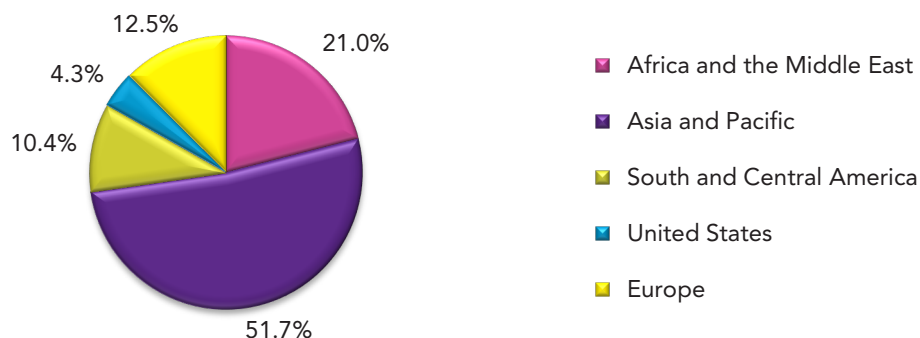
Source: CIC, 2011.

Between 2005 and 2011, permanent residents admitted to the province came primarily from Asia and the Pacific (51.7%), Africa and the Middle East (21.0%) and, to a lesser extent, Europe (12.5%), and South and Central America (10.4%) (Figure 10).

Located in the York Region, where immigrants make up 40% of the total population, the municipality of Markham welcomes many recent immigrants from China (34%), India (14%), and Sri Lanka (9%) (Regional Municipality of York, 2011, p. 14). In 2005, more than half of the recent immigrants to the York Region held a university diploma, as compared to 32% of native-born Canadians (Regional Municipality of York, 2011, p. 21).

Between 2001 and 2006, the Niagara Region welcomed nearly 8,000 newcomers, i.e., 10.4% of the foreign-born population and 1.9% of the total population. In the same period, a third of newcomers (32.4%) came from Asia and the Middle East, followed by South and Central America (21.5%), and Europe (19.5%) (The Ontario Trillium Foundation, 2008, p. 27). According to 2006 census data, roughly one in six Niagara residents was an allophone (16%), less than Ontario's provincial percentage (27.2%). The Niagara Region's allophone population, however, was very diverse with more than 70 languages represented, including Italian (21%), German (12%), Dutch (9%), Spanish (7%), and Polish (7%) (The Ontario Trillium Foundation, 2008, p. 20).

Figure 10. Permanent Residents by Source Area in Ontario, 2005–2011



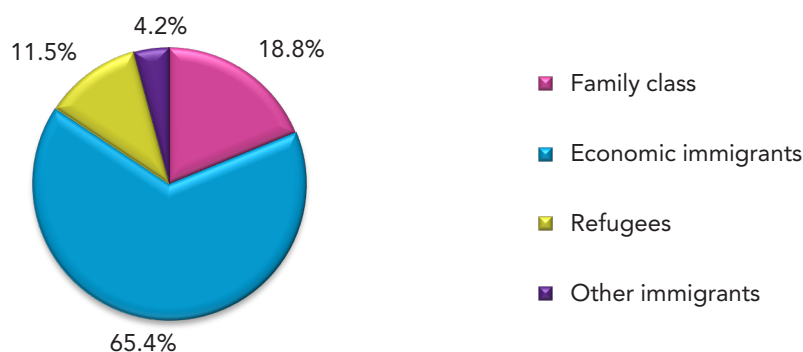
Source: CIC, 2011.

Primarily from Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Germany, immigrants represent a tenth of Sault Ste. Marie's population. The influx of newcomers from these four countries has dropped since 2006 when increasing numbers of immigrants from China, Hungary, and Croatia started settling in the region (CTV, n.d.)

2.4.3 Quebec

Between 2005 and 2011, Quebec admitted 300,000 new residents, making it the second major host province in Canada. Like British Columbia, 65% of newcomers to Quebec were economic-class immigrants (Figure 11).

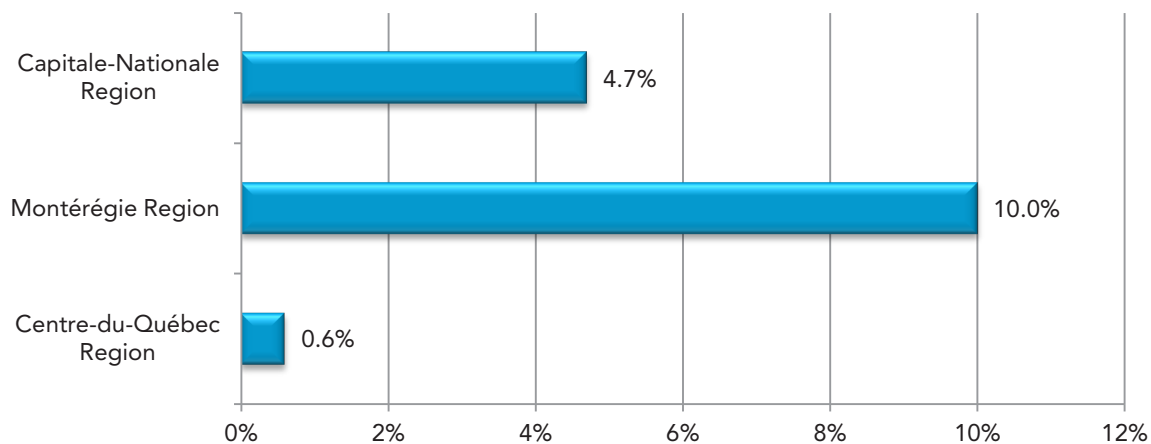
Figure 11. Permanent Residents by Immigration Category in Quebec 2005–2011



Source: CIC, 2011.

In January 2011, data showed that 65% of newcomers (130,000) admitted to the province between 2005 and 2009 had chosen to settle in the Montreal area. The Montréal Region, with a total of nearly 20,000 newcomers (10.0%), ranked second. The Capitale-Nationale Region holds fourth place, while the Laval Region ranks third with 4.7% of recent immigrants. Ranked tenth with 1,271 newcomers, Centre-du-Québec welcomed 0.6% of the immigration population that arrived between 2005 and 2009 (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Newcomers Admitted between 2005 and 2009 and Still Present in January 2011, by Administrative Region, Quebec



Source: Institut de la statistique du Québec, 2012, p. 46.

The table below (Table 8) shows that the majority of immigrants admitted to Centre-du-Québec between 1999 and 2008 and still living in the region as of January 2011 had refugee status (Table 8). Immigrants from the economic and skilled worker classes made up a significant portion of the influx to the Capitale-Nationale and Montérégie regions.

Table 8. Immigration Categories of Newcomers Admitted between 1999 and 2008 and Still Present in January 2010, by Administrative Region, Quebec

CATEGORY	CAPITALE-NATIONALE REGION		MONTÉRÉGIE REGION		CENTRE-DU-QUÉBEC REGION	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
ECONOMIC IMMIGRANTS	7,207	53.5	19,473	55.8	502	24.6
FAMILY CLASS	2,865	21.3	8,828	25.3	447	21.9
REFUGEES	3,355	24.9	6,192	17.7	1,085	53.2
OTHER IMMIGRANTS	40	0.3	414	1.2	5	0.2
TOTAL	13,467	100	34,907	100	2,039	100

Source: MICC, 2010, p. 16, 42 and 50.

The high number of refugees in Centre-du-Québec not only has an impact on the age distribution, but also on the rate of education among newcomers (Table 9). For example, more than 40% of immigrants admitted to Quebec from 1999 to 2008 and still living in the Centre-du-Québec Region in 2010 had the equivalent of an elementary or secondary school education, half as many as the Capitale-Nationale and Montérégie regions.

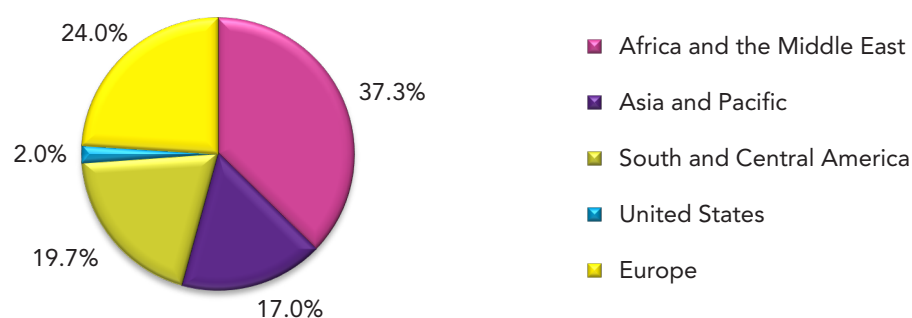
Unlike the other regions studied, the province of Quebec attracts a high proportion of immigrants from Africa and the Middle East, and a relatively small number from Asia (Figure 13).

Table 9. Age Groups of Newcomers Admitted between 1999 and 2008 and Still Present in January 2010, by Administrative Region, Quebec

AGE GROUP	CAPITALE-NATIONALE REGION		MONTÉRÉGIE REGION		CENTRE-DU-QUÉBEC REGION	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
0–14	3,417	25.4	8,650	24.8	726	35.6
15–24	1,628	12.1	4,192	12	296	14.5
25–34	5,049	37.5	12,128	34.7	509	25
35–44	2,453	18.2	6,768	19.4	333	16.3
45–64	791	5.9	2,596	7.4	153	7.5
65 AND OVER	127	0.9	559	1.6	22	1.1
NOT AVAILABLE	2	0.0	14	0	-	-
TOTAL	13,467	100	34,907	100	2,039	100

Source: MICC, 2010, p. 16, 42 and 50.

Figure 13. Permanent Residents by Source Area in Quebec, 2005–2011



Source: CIC, 2011.

Being the only francophone province in Canada, Quebec attracts a great many immigrants from French-speaking countries. Algeria (9.1%), Morocco (8.5%), and France (7.4%) ranked as the three primary source countries of immigrants admitted to the province between 1999 and 2008.

Table 10. Country of Origin by Administrative Region in Quebec, 1999–2008

CAPITALE-NATIONALE REGION	MONTÉRÉGIE REGION	CENTRE-DU-QUÉBEC REGION
1. FRANCE (19.3%)	1. FRANCE (8.8%)	1. COLOMBIA (45.3%)
2. COLOMBIA (12.7%)	2. ROMANIA (8.5%)	2. FRANCE (9.4%)
3. MOROCCO (7.0%)	3. CHINA (8.4%)	3. CHINA (6.1%)

Source: MICC, 2010, p. 17, 43 and 51.

Ranked third in importance province-wide, France leads the list of major countries of origin for immigrants admitted to Quebec between 1999 and 2008 in the Capitale-Nationale and Montérégie regions. In Centre-du-Québec, the top-ranking country of origin is Columbia, way ahead of France and China, which reflects the large number of individuals admitted for humanitarian reasons (Table 10).

2.4.4 Atlantic Region

Accounting for 6.4% of the total population in Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland and Labrador welcome 1.2% of immigrants annually admitted to the country, with Nova Scotia alone accounting for 0.7% (Chui, Tran and Maheux, 2007, p. 15). At the time of the 2006 census, immigrants only accounted for 3.8% of the population in the three provinces, whereas nationwide immigrants made up 20% of the population (Table 11).

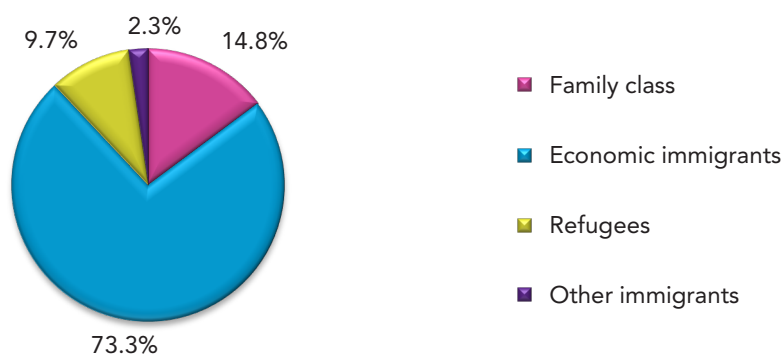
Table 11. Immigrant Population by Landing Period in the Atlantic Region, 2006

PROVINCE	TOTAL POPULATION (N)	IMMIGRANT POPULATION		LANDING PERIOD (%)		
		N	%	1991–1995	1996–2000	2001–2006
NEW BRUNSWICK	719,650	26,400	3.7	0.3	0.3	0.8
NOVA SCOTIA	903,090	45,190	5.0	0.4	0.5	0.8
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR	500,610	8,385	1.7	0.1	0.2	0.3
CANADA	31,241,030	6,186,950	19.8	2.6	2.7	3.6

Source: Statistics Canada, 2009.

Although the figures remain low compared to the national average, initiatives sponsored by the government and other provincial partners to attract more immigrants to the Atlantic Region have yielded results, as demonstrated by the growing number of immigrants who arrived between 2001 and 2006. In addition, between 2005 and 2011, the provinces in the Atlantic Region (including Prince Edward Island) welcomed more than 42,000 new permanent residents, most classed as economic immigrants (75.3%) (Figure 14). In 2011, of the 6,500 newcomers admitted to the region, 2,100 chose to settle in Nova Scotia and nearly 2,000 in New Brunswick.

Figure 14. Permanent Residents by Immigration Category in the Atlantic Region, 2005–2011

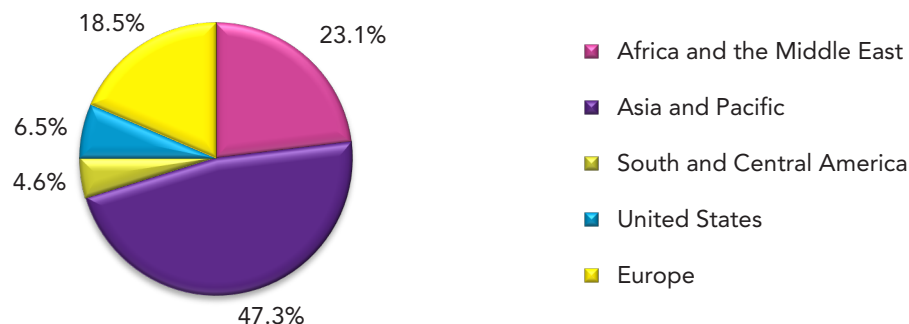


Source: CIC, 2011.

It is also important to mention the high number of foreign students in the Atlantic Provinces, particularly in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia where they account for 11.4% and 9.3% respectively of university enrolment province-wide (McMullen and Elias, 2011). Foreign students with a Canadian degree can take advantage of a range of programs to gain permanent resident status, including the Provincial Nominee Program or the Canadian Experience Class.

The primary regions of origin for immigrants to the provinces in the Atlantic Region are Asia-Pacific (47.3%), Africa and the Middle East (23.1%), and Europe (18.5%) (Figure 18).

Figure 15. Permanent Residents by Source Area in the Atlantic Region, 2005–2011



Source: CIC, 2011.

In 2010, Nova Scotia welcomed more than 2,400 newcomers from Africa and the Middle East (31%), Europe (29%), and Asia-Pacific (28%) (ISIS, n.d.). On average, each year more than 75% of recent immigrants choose to settle in the Halifax metropolitan region (Greater Halifax Partnership, n.d.), where the main provincial immigrant-serving agency, Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS), is located. Furthermore, Halifax receives the highest number of foreign-born individuals in the Atlantic Region.

Between April 2010 and March 2011, the settlement services offered by the Multicultural Association of Fredericton (MCAF) welcomed 327 new clients, including provincial nominees (69%), independent immigrants (14%), refugees (10%), and family-class immigrants (7%). Through the federal Resettlement Assistance Program, the MCAF assisted 38 federally sponsored refugees from Bhutan, Ethiopia, Iraq, and Somalia. Of the other newcomers assisted by MCAF, most came from Korea (30%), China (30%), and Iraq (18%) (MCAF, 2011).

Between April 2011 and March 2012, the Association for New Canadians (ANC) in St. John's, the only provincial reception and settlement organization financed by the federal government, welcomed more than 130 federally sponsored refugees and several hundred newcomers classed as family or economic immigrants. The ANC's Outreach Tutor Program – an English as a second language (ESL) program – and AXIS e-Counselling services partially compensate for the lack of specialized services and ESL classes for immigrants available outside of the capital (ANC, 2012).

Although the Atlantic Provinces manage to attract a growing number of newcomers every year, low retention rates remain problematic. In a study on interprovincial mobility, Citizenship and Immigration Canada notes that of the immigrants admitted to the Atlantic Region between 1991 and 2005, only 43% were still living there in 2006, as compared to 78% in Quebec, 86% in British Columbia, and 91% in Ontario (Okonny-Myers, 2010, p. 3). Nevertheless, the provincial government efforts do appear to be working, as 61% of the immigrants who arrived in the region between 2000 and 2006 were still living there according to the census; Nova Scotia leads the region with an immigrant retention rate of 68% as compared with New Brunswick with 60%, and Newfoundland and Labrador with an even lower rate of 44% (Okonny-Myers, 2010, p. 7).

2.5 Conclusion

Federal, provincial, and territorial governmental bodies share responsibility for immigration. As a result, the six provinces studied must contend with various sociopolitical environments, particularly as they are influenced by agreements signed with the central government. Elements of these political frameworks, combined with diverse societal and geographic factors, also influence the service-delivery models used by community-based training agencies on the ground. In addition, the socioeconomic characteristics and the composition of the immigrant population give rise to major disparities between the 12 subregions studied in the framework of this pan-Canadian research project.

While the diverse social, economic, and political dynamics that characterize each of the provinces and regions studied prevent any direct comparisons between the pilot sites, the goal of this brief portrait is to provide context for the interpretation of the results presented in the next chapters. Having analyzed the main variables that influence the integration of newcomers and the role of community-based training agencies, it is now important to examine the profile and perspectives of the study's immigrant participants. This analysis will highlight some similarities and differences between the participants' points of view in the various study regions.

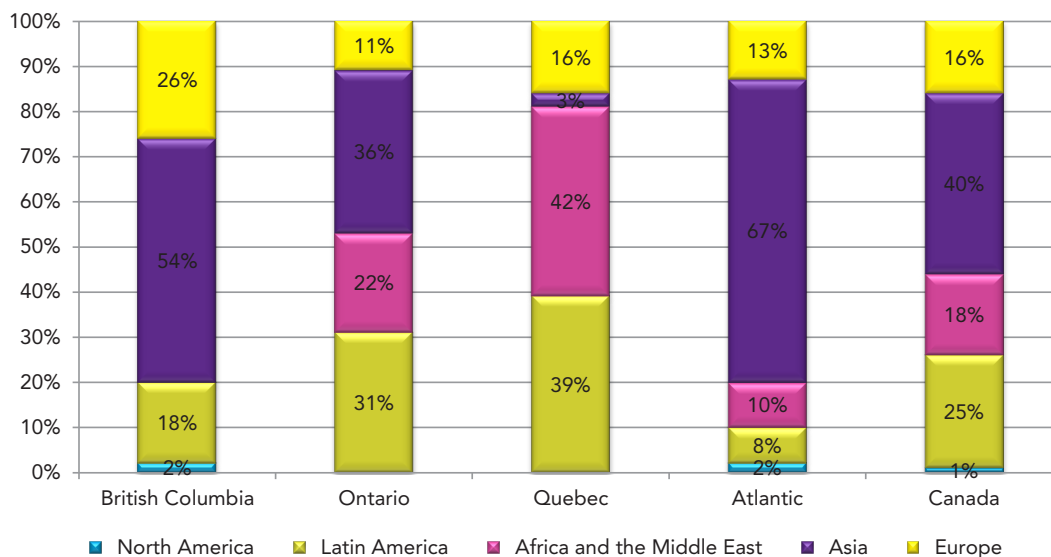
Profile of Survey Participants

In the winter of 2011, as part of the *Immigration Beyond MTV* research project, 152 immigrants from 12 organizations from across Canada participated in the first self-administered survey. The second survey, conducted in the winter of 2012, was completed by 131 participants. It bears repeating at this juncture that those participating in the two surveys are not necessarily representative of the clientele served by the 12 organizations, nor of the entire immigrant population in the selected provinces nor, for that matter, of all immigrants across Canada. This chapter presents the results compiled from the surveys conducted online, highlighting the perceptions and points of view of the immigrant participants. In addition to illustrating the diversity of individual profiles, this quantitative summary introduces the main difficulties experienced by the newcomers surveyed.

3.1 Sociodemographic Data

Overall, the majority of the study's participants originally came from Asia (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Continent of Origin by Region and Overall (n = 152)



The proportion of Asian respondents was high in British Columbia and the Atlantic Region as compared to Quebec, where most survey participants were originally from Africa and the Middle East, slightly ahead of the proportion of respondents originally from Latin America.

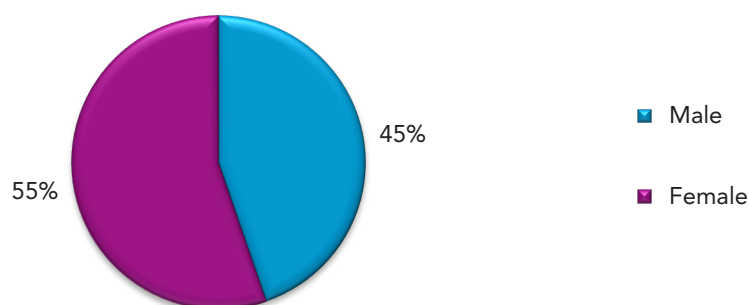
Overall, China and South Korea led the ranking of respondents' countries of origin, followed by India and Columbia (Table 12).

Table 12. Top Ten Countries of Origin (n = 152)

RANK	COUNTRY	SHARE OF RESPONDENTS (%)
1	CHINA SOUTH KOREA	7.9%
2	INDIA COLOMBIA	7.2%
3	PERU	3.9%
4	PHILIPPINES FRANCE MEXICO SRI LANKA	3.3%
5	UNITED KINGDOM MOROCCO GUATEMALA	2.6%

The majority of survey respondents were women (55%), as seen in Figure 17. Overall, the proportion of male participants varied from 44% to 47%, depending on the region.

Figure 17. Gender of Survey Participants (n = 152)



The age distribution was also fairly constant throughout the regions studied (Figure 18). Nonetheless, the average age of respondents in Quebec and the Atlantic Region was slightly lower than the Canadian average (Table 13).

Nearly three-quarters of the respondents were married (Figure 19), a proportion that varied between 70% in Ontario and 79% in the Atlantic Region. In Quebec, the number of single respondents was significantly lower (13%) than in British Columbia (20%).

Figure 18. Age Groups of Respondents (n = 152)

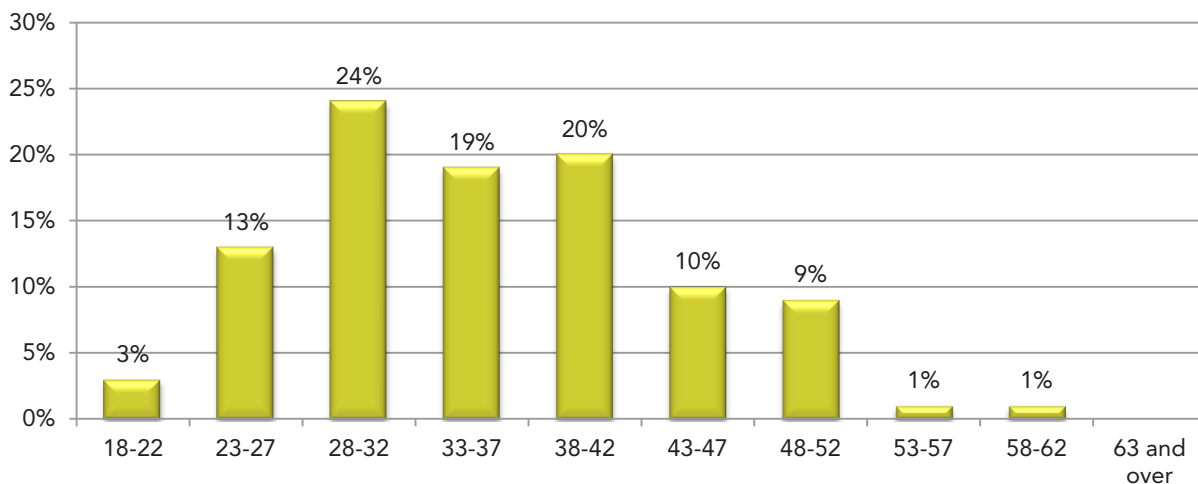
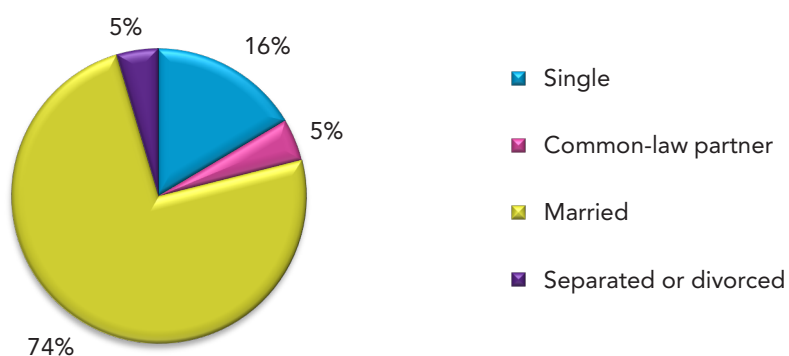


Table 13. Average Age by Region

REGION	AVERAGE AGE
BRITISH COLUMBIA	37.3
ONTARIO	37.9
QUEBEC	34.3
ATLANTIC	34.7
CANADA	36.0

Figure 19. Marital Status of Respondents (n = 152)



Nearly one-fifth of those surveyed were married to Canadian citizens (Table 14). Of the regions studied, the Atlantic Region ranks fourth in this category, with less than 10%.

Table 14. Canadian Spouses by Region (n = 130)

REGION	N	%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	7	22%
ONTARIO	8	27%
QUEBEC	7	21%
ATLANTIC	3	9%
CANADA	25	19%

Although more than half of the respondents had children (53%), proportions varied between regions (Table 15). Participants with children accounted for 60% of those surveyed in Quebec, compared to 44% in British Columbia, where the proportion was lower than the national average.

Table 15. Family Status of Respondents by Region (n = 152)

REGION	N	%
BRITISH COLUMBIA	17	44%
ONTARIO	20	56%
QUEBEC	23	61%
ATLANTIC	21	54%
CANADA	81	53%

By far, the skilled-workers class was the top immigration category among the survey respondents, followed by immigrants in the family-class category (Figure 20). In each region, the majority of those surveyed were skilled workers; Ontario and Quebec had the highest percentages of refugees, 28% and 18%, respectively. Overall, participants from the three provinces in the Atlantic Region represented the highest percentage of foreign students, which attests to the importance of this temporary immigration class to the region. Lastly, the number of respondents in British Columbia from the temporary worker-class exceeded the national average.

Consistent with most recent immigrants' profile, the study's participants were well educated (Figure 21). Overall, the majority of participants had a university degree, with the Atlantic Region ranked highest for this variable (79%), followed by British Columbia (66%). Only Ontario had a higher proportion of participants with a secondary, professional, or college-level education.

Figure 20. Immigration Class of Respondents (n = 151)

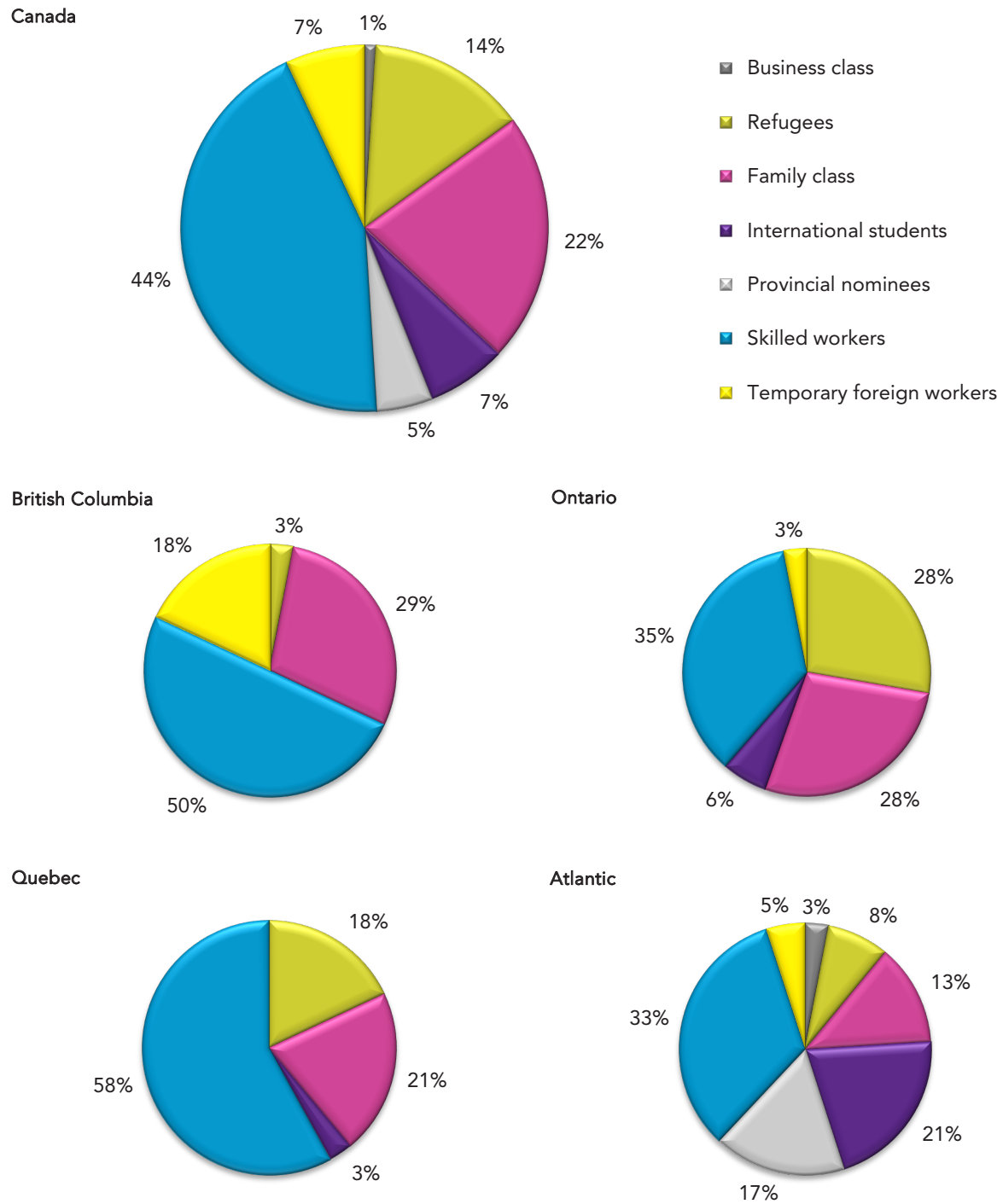
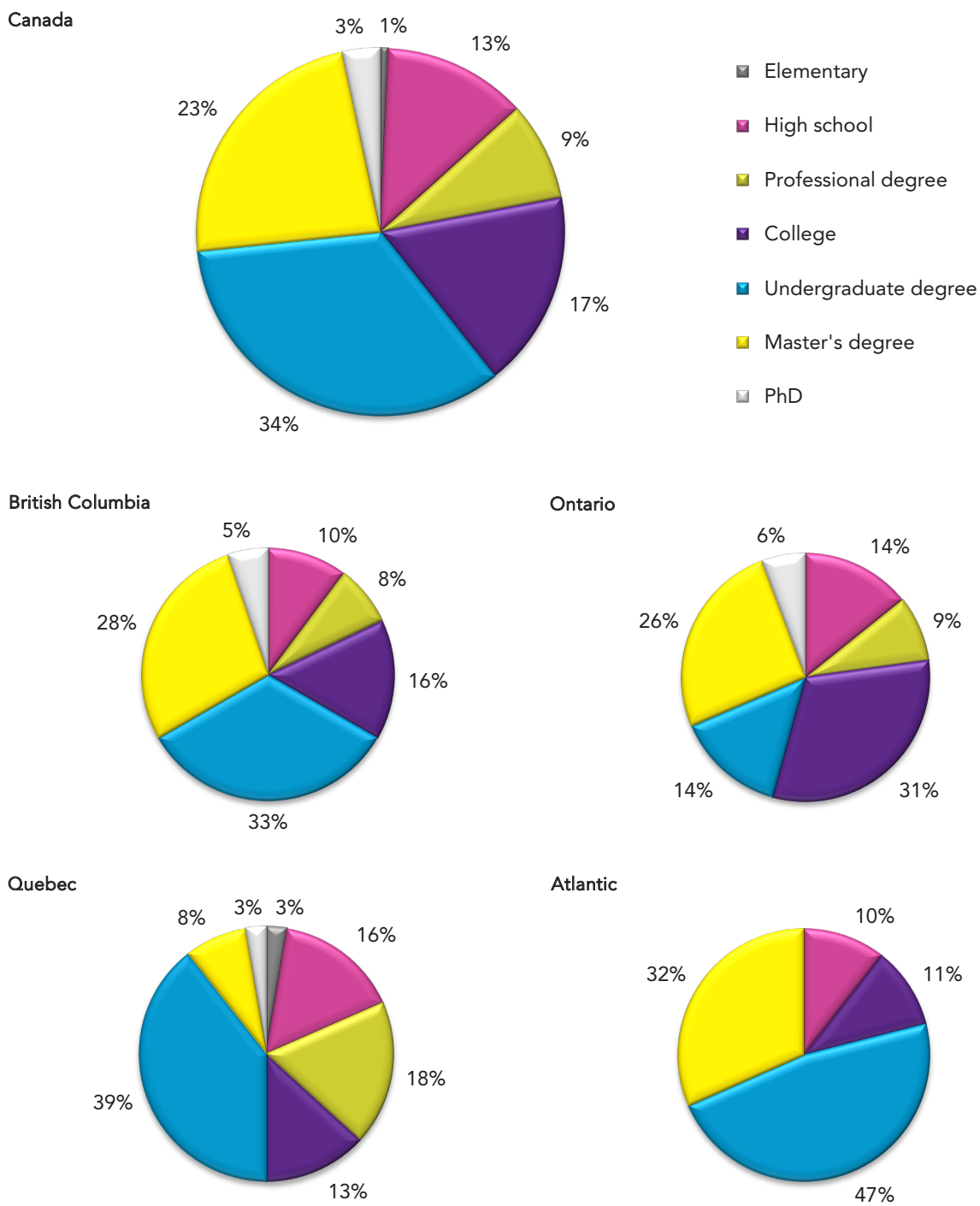


Figure 21. Education Levels by Region and Overall (n = 150)



Slightly more than a third of respondents claimed to speak one of the two official languages at home (Table 16). Consistent with the regions of origin represented, the most common first languages spoken included Spanish (13%), Mandarin (8%), and Korean (6%).

Table 16. Percentage of Respondents Who Speak One of the Official Languages at Home (n = 130)

FRENCH	ENGLISH	OTHER
16%	21%	63%

Self-reporting made it possible to compile data pertaining to the participants' linguistic skills. Nearly half of the participants declared that they had a firm understanding of spoken and written English before arriving in Canada (Table 17). If Quebec is excluded, the proportion of those surveyed with good or very good English proficiency climbs to 51%. Results vary, however, from province to province: in the Atlantic Region, 43% of those surveyed claimed to have a good or very good grasp of written English, while in BC, 59% of those surveyed stated that they understood spoken English well or very well.

Table 17. English Proficiency Before and After Arrival in Canada (n = 131)

	NOT AT ALL	POORLY	FAIRLY WELL	WELL	VERY WELL
SPOKEN ENGLISH BEFORE ARRIVAL	6%	23%	24%	24%	23%
SPOKEN ENGLISH AFTER ARRIVAL	2%	8%	17%	37%	36%
WRITTEN ENGLISH BEFORE ARRIVAL	5%	23%	26%	19%	27%
WRITTEN ENGLISH AFTER ARRIVAL	1%	8%	20%	34%	37%

As for proficiency in the second official language, overall, one-fifth of participants stated that they spoke French before arriving in Canada (Table 18). A significant difference is evident in Quebec where fully 65% of participants claimed to speak French well or very well and 57% claimed to have a good or very good grasp of written French. In the Atlantic Region, including the officially bilingual province of New Brunswick, 9% of the participants stated that they were fairly or very proficient in both spoken and written French before arriving. It should be mentioned that no respondent in British Columbia claimed to master, well or very well, spoken or written French before arriving.

Table 18. French Proficiency Before and After Arrival in Canada (n = 131)

	NOT AT ALL	POORLY	FAIRLY WELL	WELL	VERY WELL
SPOKEN FRENCH BEFORE ARRIVAL	59%	14%	6%	6%	15%
SPOKEN FRENCH AFTER ARRIVAL	55%	13%	3%	9%	20%
WRITTEN FRENCH BEFORE ARRIVAL	63%	13%	6%	5%	13%
WRITTEN FRENCH AFTER ARRIVAL	58%	11%	5%	11%	15%

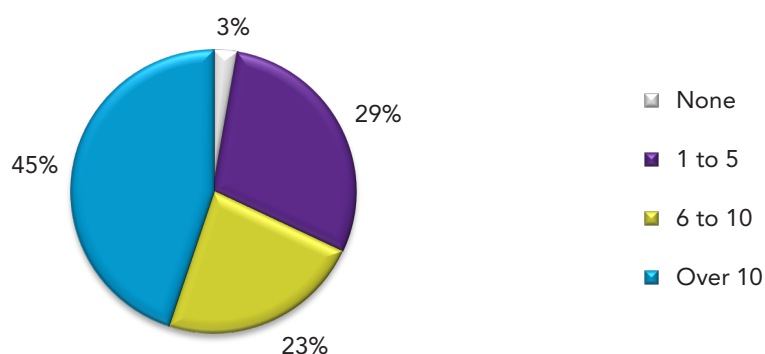
Before focusing on the post-immigration experience of the immigrant participants, it is important to briefly examine certain elements of their pre-immigration experiences, including their motives for settling in a certain host region.

3.2 Pre-Migration Pathways

The unique and richly varied pre-immigration experience greatly impacts each newcomer's integration into the host society, particularly when it comes to previous professional experience and the motivations for emigrating. The choice of where to settle, influenced by several factors including the presence of family or friends, also has an impact on the post-emigration adaptation process.

Overall, the majority of participants had acquired considerable work experience in their country of origin, with more than 45% stating that they had more than ten years of work experience (Figure 22). By contrast, in the Atlantic Region – the destination for a large number of foreign students who wanted to begin or finish their studies, most of those surveyed declared that they had little or no job experience.

Figure 22. Years of Work Experience in the Country of Origin (n = 147)



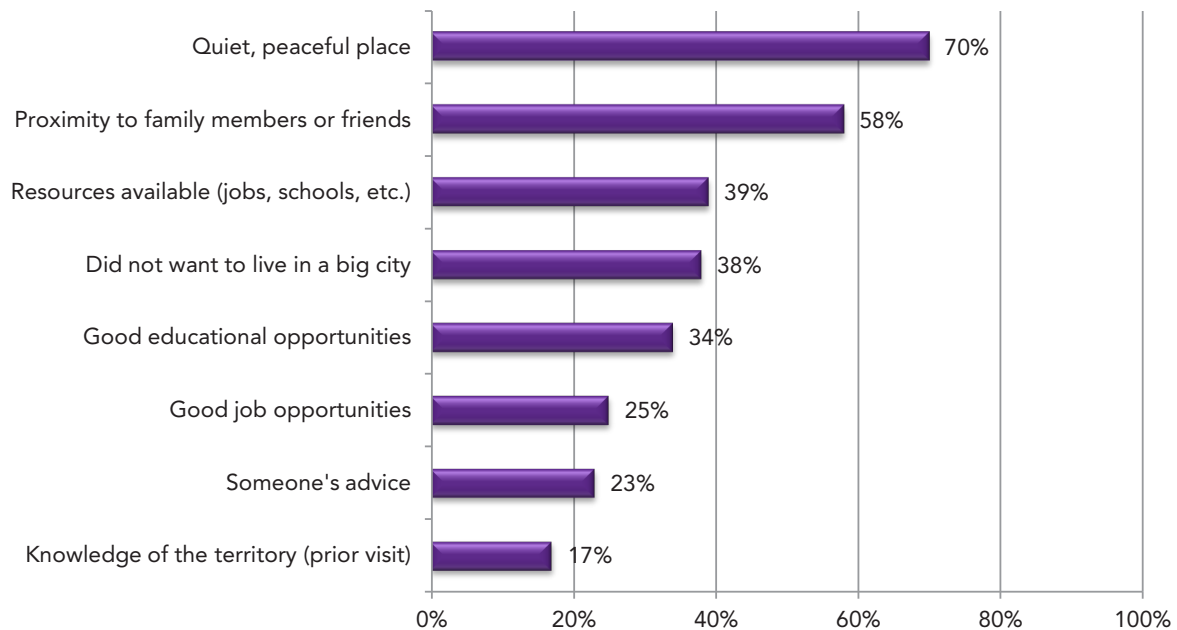
A large number of survey respondents mentioned the presence of family members (42%) or friends (39%) in their host region (Table 19). In contrast, nearly a quarter of those surveyed (24%) did not know anyone when they arrived in Canada, a proportion that varies from 18% in Quebec to 28% in Ontario and the Atlantic Region.

Table 19. Presence of Family or Friends in the Host Region (n = 152)

FAMILY	FRIENDS	NO ACQUAINTANCE IN CANADA
42%	39%	24%

Many intrinsic or extrinsic drivers motivate emigration to a new country and the selection of a host region. When asked about their reasons for settling outside of Canada's major metropolitan centres, most participants referred to the peacefulness of their destination, as well as its proximity to their family and friends (Figure 23). The resources available, including job opportunities and education institutions, motivated one-third of participants to choose to live where they did when surveyed. In the Atlantic Region, educational opportunities ranked third among the participants' motivations for choosing a host city, which explains the large presence of foreign students among the regional sample.

Figure 23. Motives for Settling in the Host Region (n = 140)



3.3 Post-Immigration Experiences

Having all arrived between 2005 and 2011, the participants from the 12 pilot organizations had diverse experiences of employment. On the one hand, among the 80 participants who had acquired work experience since arriving in Canada, half (40) had worked for the same employer since their arrival and half (40) had worked for a variety of employers. On the other hand, several candidates (27) who had held jobs at some point since their arrival in Canada were unemployed at the time of the second survey. In addition, 24 participants had not yet entered the job market because they planned to continue their education. Figures 24 and 25 illustrate the correlation between the participants' prior education and skills and the jobs held, whether the job in question was their first or their current employment (in the case of those who had held more than one job since their arrival).

Figure 24. Match between Employment Held and Prior Education

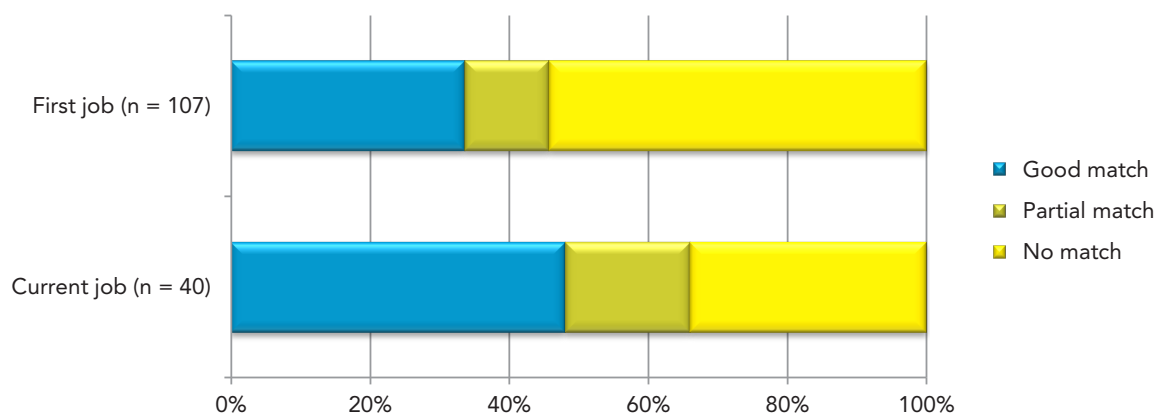
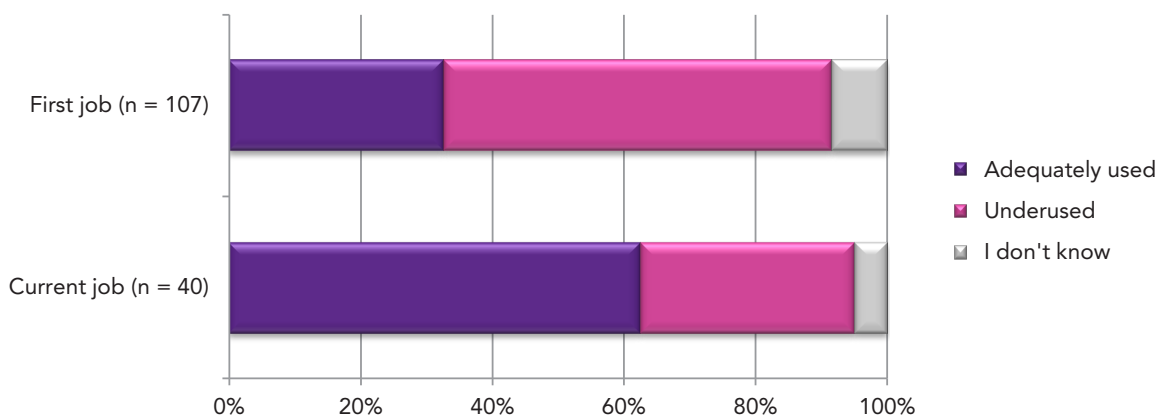
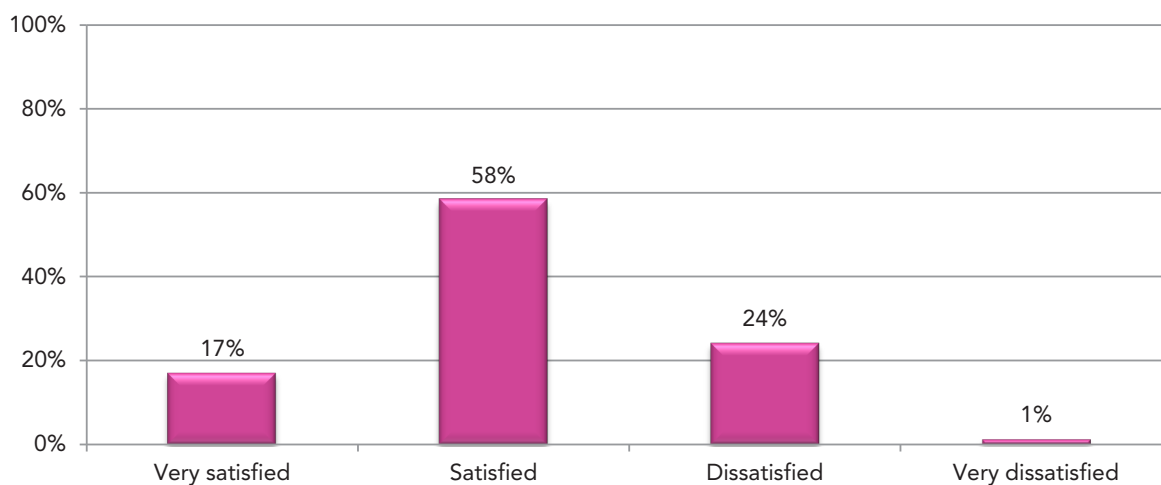


Figure 25. Use of Qualifications and Skills in First and Current Job



When the second survey was conducted in the winter of 2012, 54 participants were working full-time (over 30 hours a week) and 26 held a part-time job. Most of the respondents stated that they were satisfied with their current employment (Figure 26). The level of satisfaction was slightly lower among respondents in Ontario and British Columbia.

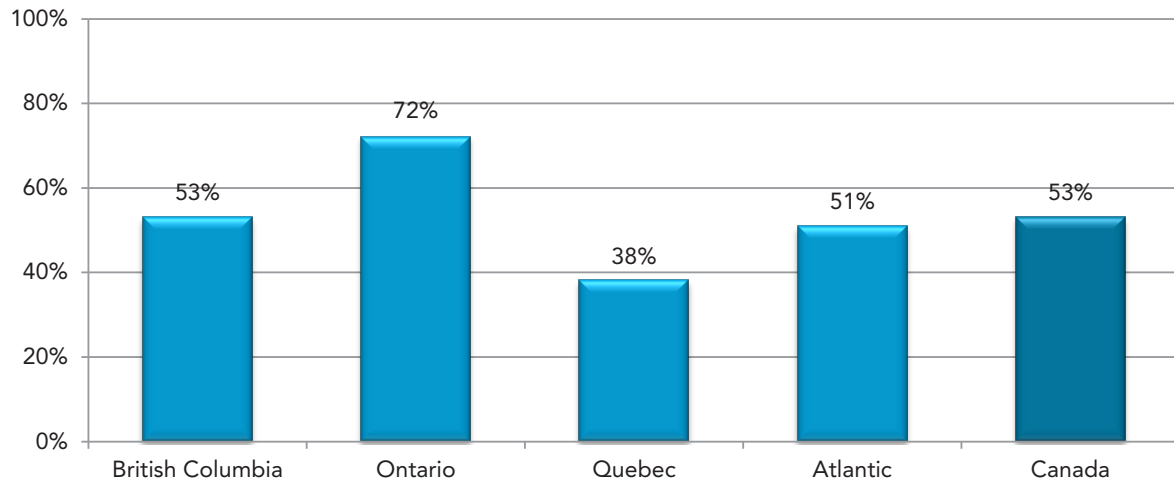
Figure 26. Job Satisfaction for Currently Employed Respondents (n = 79)



The 20 respondents dissatisfied with their employment deplored the lack of advancement or promotion opportunities and insufficient hours, and they felt over-qualified for their positions.

Half of the respondents (53%) had taken part in volunteer activities since arriving in Canada. Proportions varied from 38% in Quebec to 72% in Ontario (Figure 27). Despite the experience gained, the majority of participants (71%) stated that volunteering had not helped them find work.

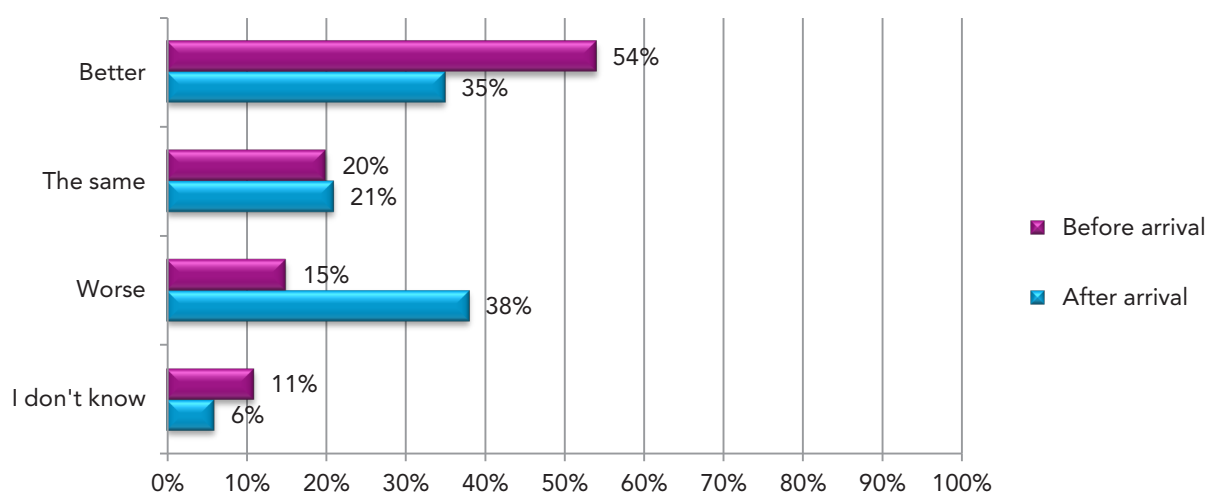
Figure 27. Volunteer Experience Since Arrival in Canada (n = 130)



3.4 Employment Situation in Canada

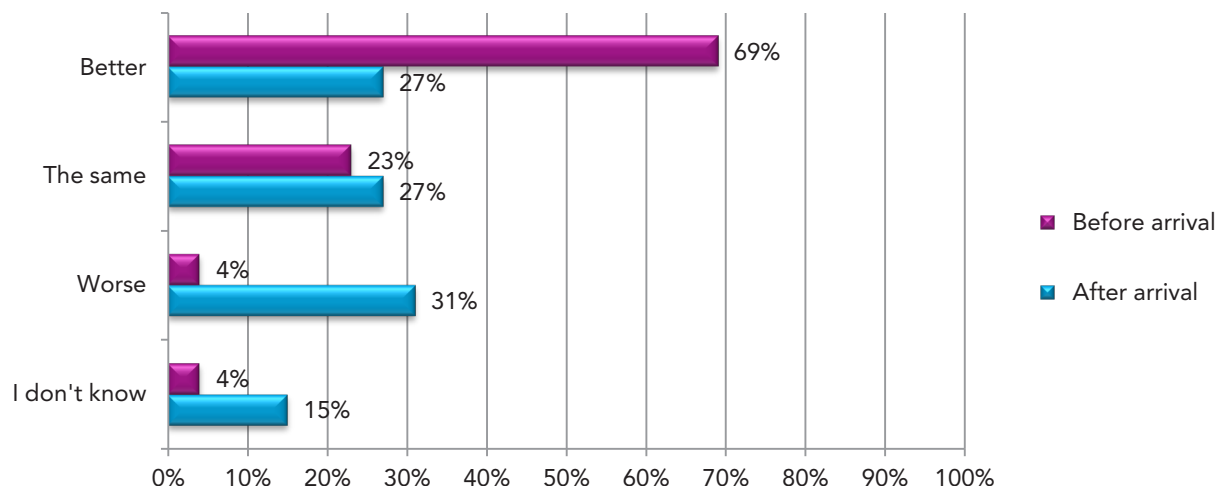
This section presents the main results pertaining to the respondents' job situations since their arrival in Canada. First, the following figure (Figure 28) demonstrates that respondents had harboured high expectations of improving their employment situation after immigrating to Canada. Several years after settling in their new country, however, their perceptions had changed.

Figure 28. Perception of the Employment Situation in Canada as Compared to the Country of Origin (Before and After Arrival) (n = 107)



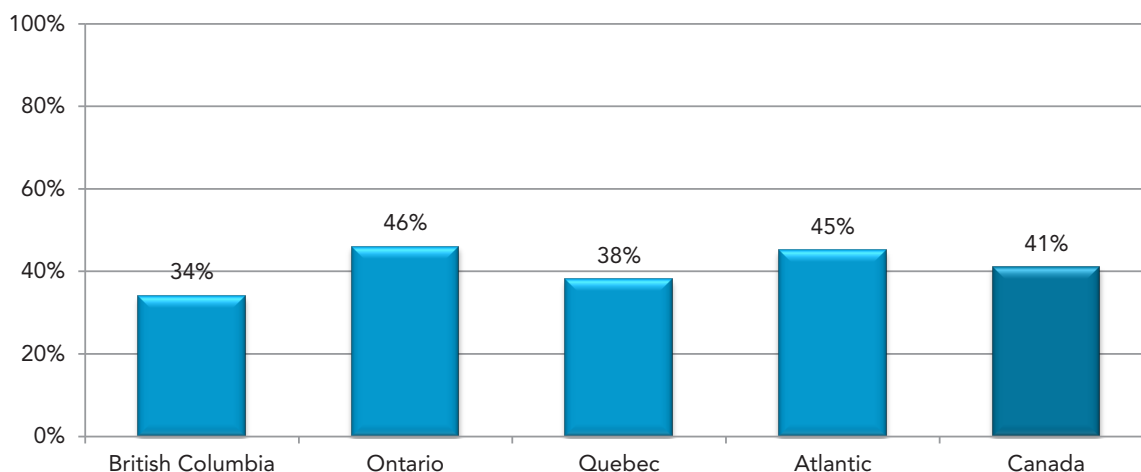
The breakdown of results by region matches the national average, except in Quebec, where the change in perceptions regarding the employment situation is more pronounced (Figure 29).

Figure 29. Perception of the Employment Situation in Canada as Compared to the Country of Origin for Respondents from Quebec (Before and After Arrival) (n = 26)



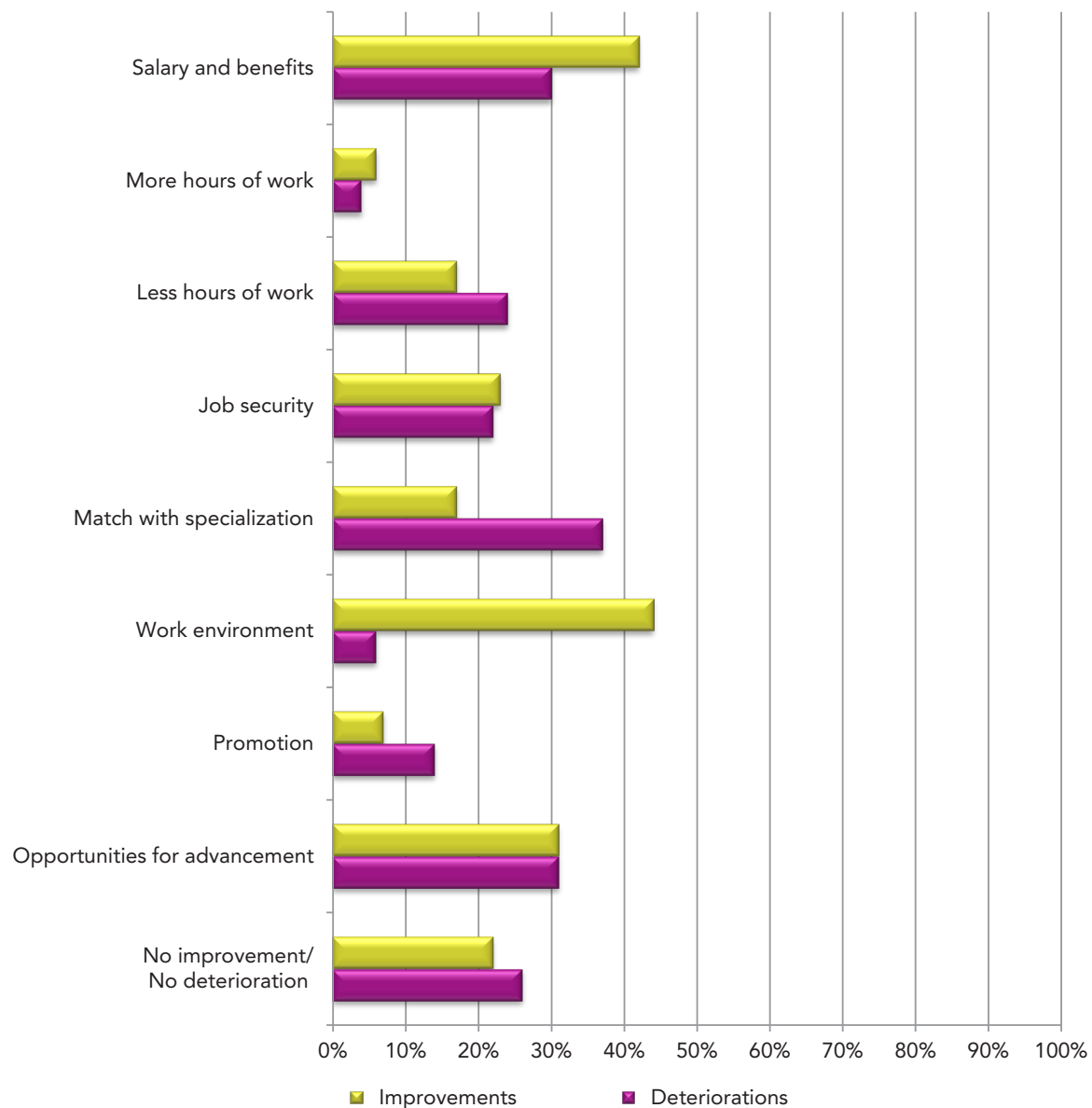
This decline may be explained by the fact that less than half of the participants (41%) asserted that their current occupation corresponded to their field of expertise in their country of origin. A similar correlation emerged in British Columbia – ranked last in this study category, where only one-third of respondents (34%) were employed in a job related to their field of studies.

Figure 30. Relationship between Current Employment and Field of Expertise (n = 107)



In fact, when asked “What are the best/worst aspects of your employment situation?”, the disparity between employment and expertise was cited as the primary negative factor, followed by the lack of advancement opportunities and low salaries (Figure 31).

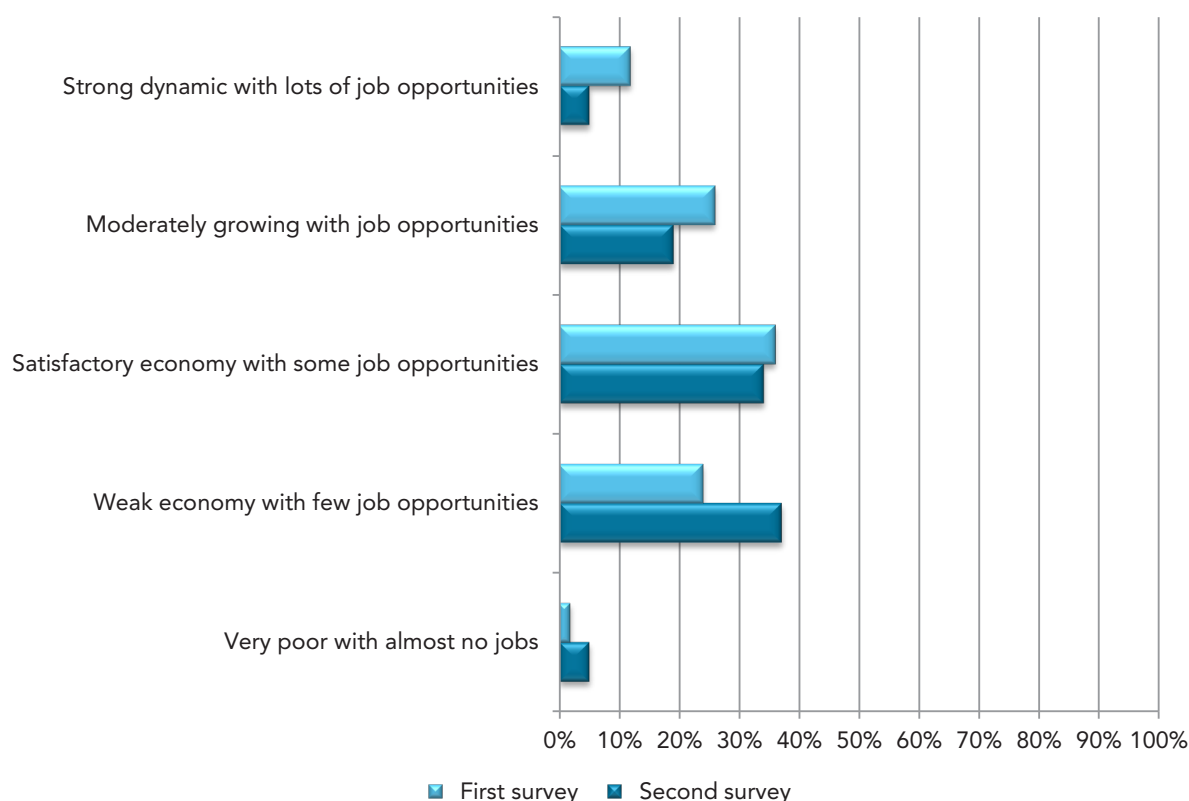
Figure 31. Gains and Losses as Compared to the Employment Situation in the Country of Origin (n = 98)



The two surveys, conducted one year apart, asked participants to evaluate the job market situation in their region. The following figure (Figure 32) attests to the deterioration of their perceptions of the job market from winter 2011 to winter 2012.

The regional analysis made it possible to discern shifts in perceptions of the job market in each of the regions studied during the interval between the first and second survey. When the second survey was conducted, the majority of respondents in Ontario and Quebec believed that the regional economic situation remained satisfactory. Survey participants in British Columbia and the Atlantic Region, however, described their region's economies as weak with few job opportunities.

Figure 32. Perception of the Job Market in the Host Region (n = 152)



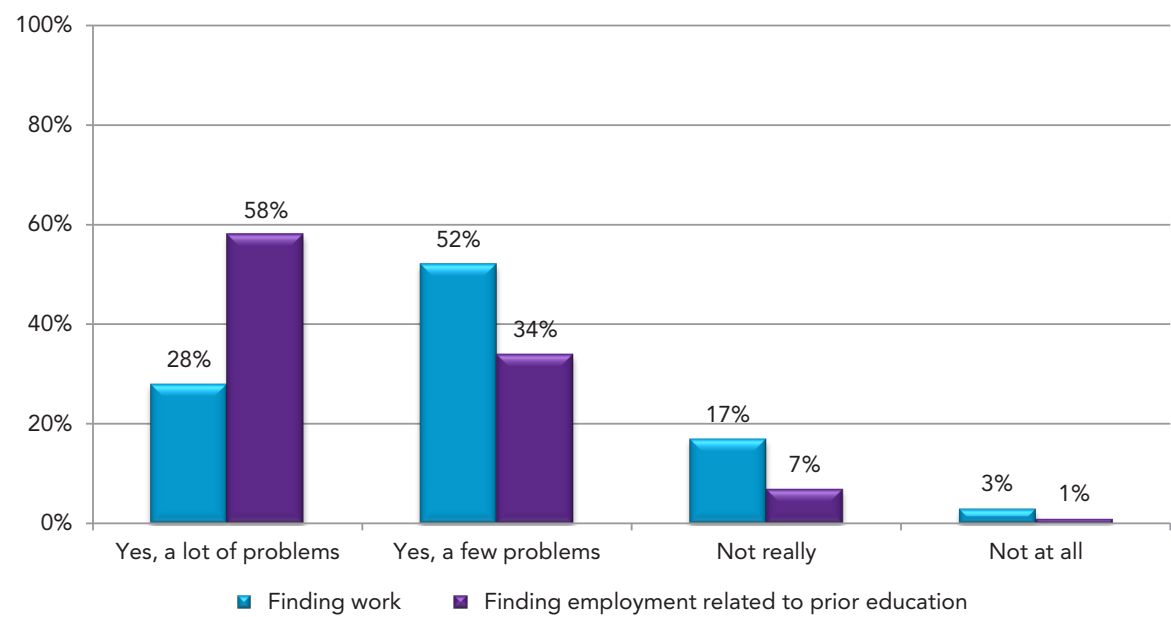
Myriad factors may explain this contrast, including revised expectations and a drop in motivation for some participants faced with numerous job-placement challenges. The next section highlights some of the difficulties experienced by respondents from the 12 study regions.

3.5 Difficulties and Challenges

Newcomers who attempt to enter the Canadian job market experience several difficulties and challenges. Whether tied to the economic context, the local specificities or the characteristics of the immigrants, these obstacles can be significant. This section sketches a portrait of the difficulties encountered by the study participants who received employment services from the 12 selected organizations across Canada.

The next figure (Figure 33) illustrates the heightened difficulties newcomers experience when looking for employment related to the education they received in their country of origin or in line with the position they held before emigrating. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the vast majority of respondents asserted having experienced difficulties finding employment, even when the job in question required fewer skills or fell outside of their fields of expertise.

Figure 33. Level of Difficulty in Finding Work and Finding Employment Related to Prior Education (n = 128)



Overall, the lack of Canadian work experience, lack of recognition for skills acquired abroad, as well as insufficient contacts in the job market top the list of obstacles encountered (Figure 34). Some disparities between the regions emerge from a regional breakdown of results (Figures 35–38). For instance, in Quebec, lack of employment opportunities ranks ninth whereas it ranks third or fourth in the other provinces studied.

Figure 34. Job Search Difficulties Encountered Overall (n = 119)

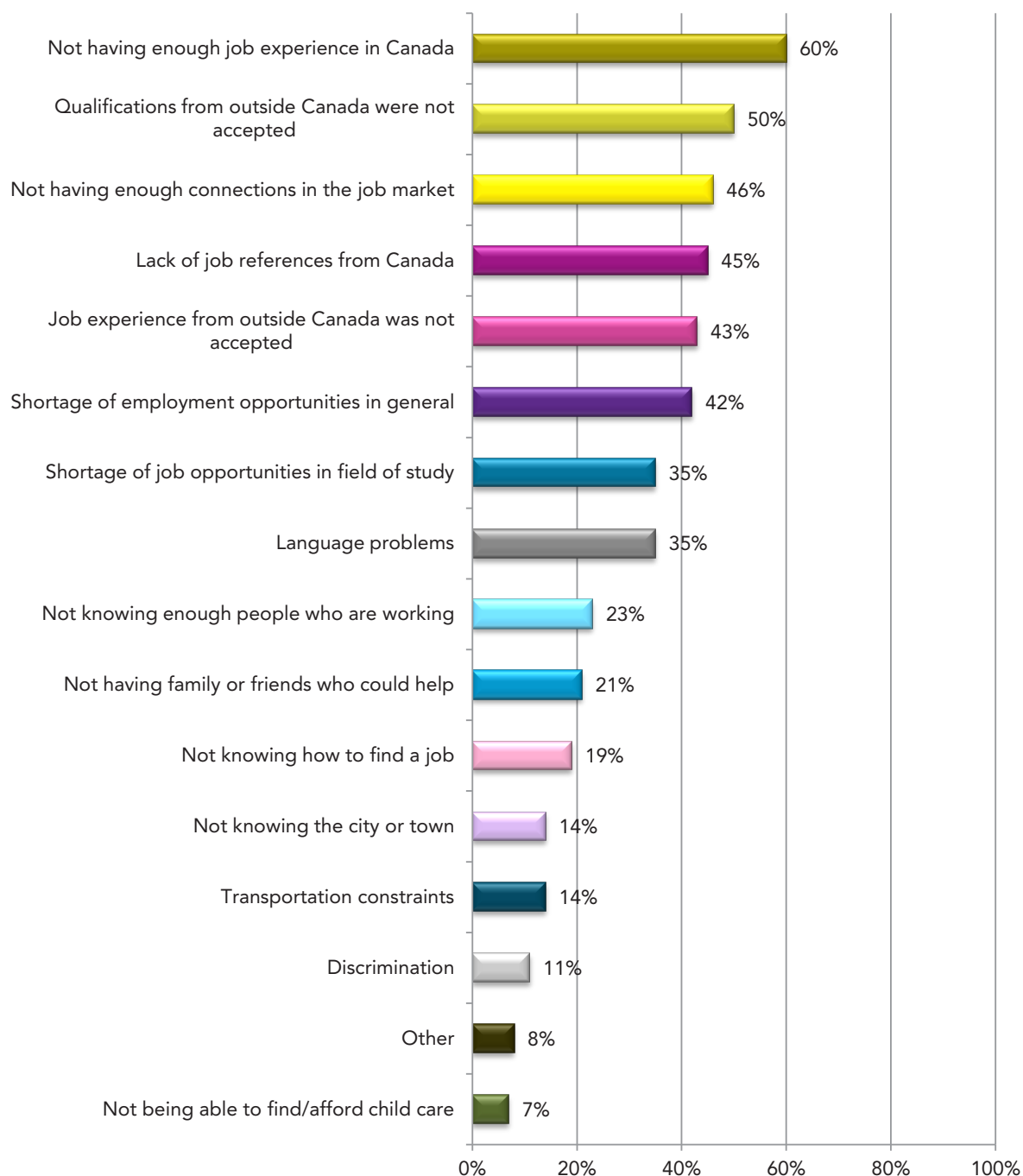


Figure 35. Job Search Difficulties Encountered in British Columbia (n = 30)



Figure 36. Job Search Difficulties Encountered in Ontario (n = 28)

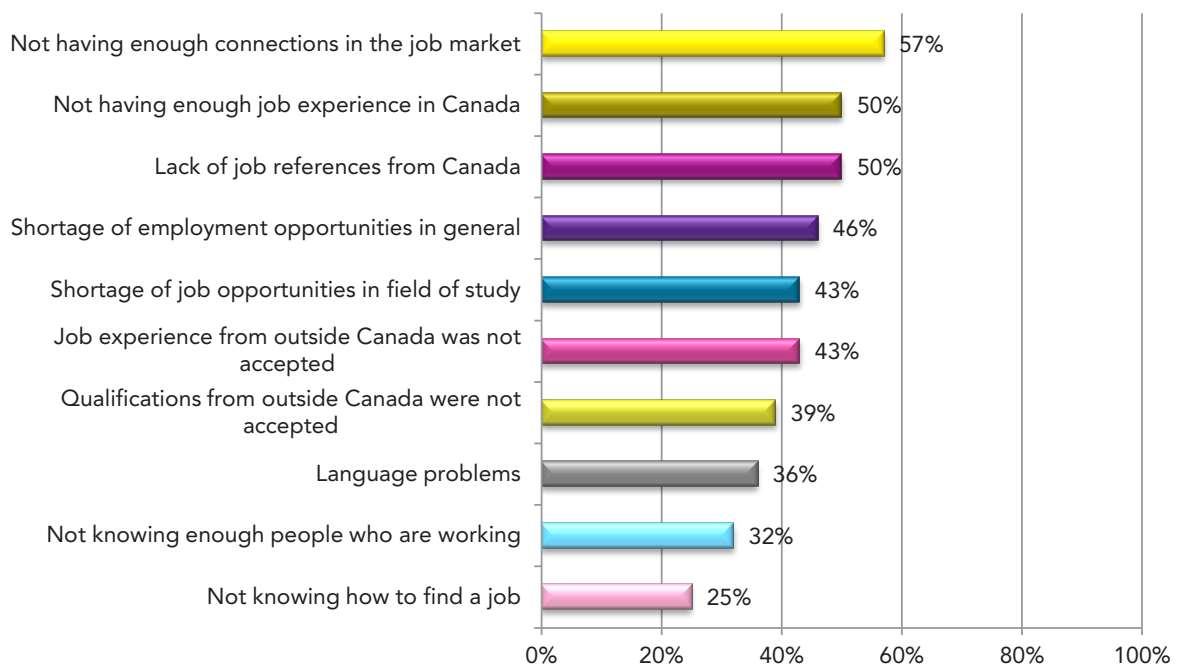


Figure 37. Job Search Difficulties Encountered in Quebec (n = 28)

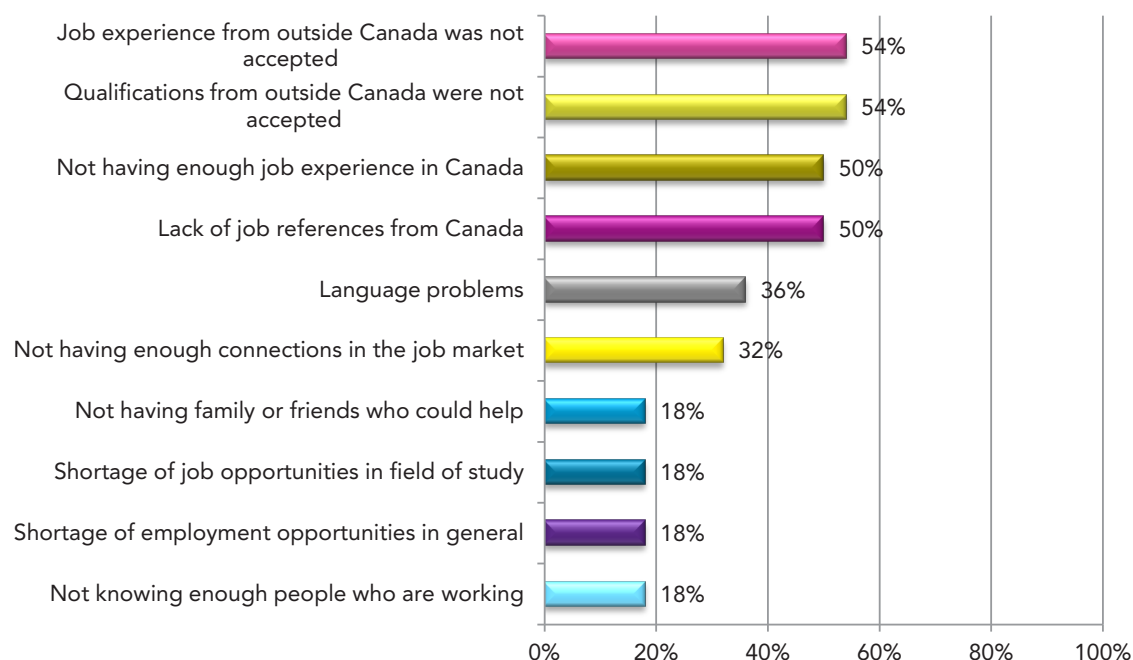
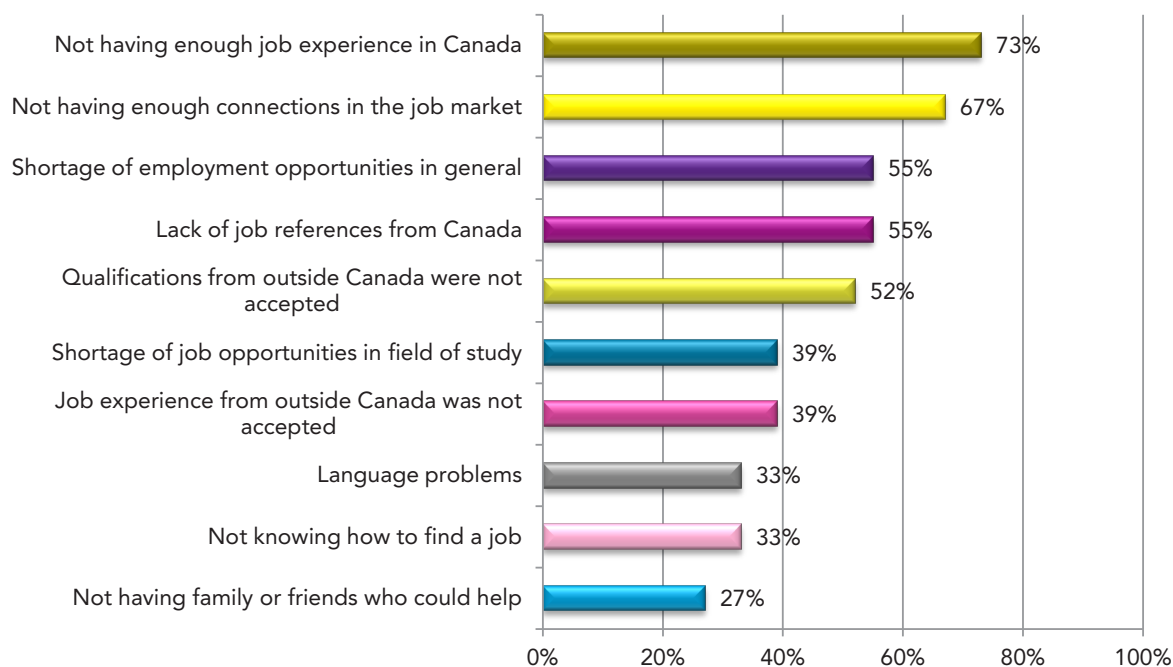
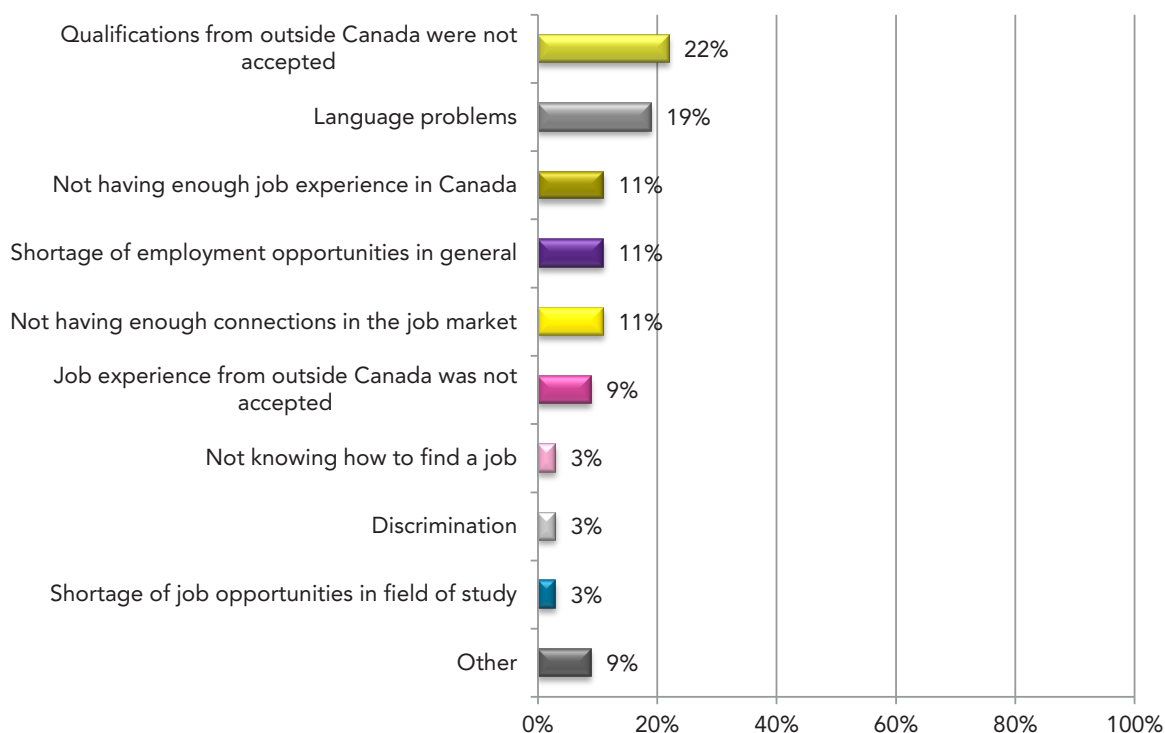


Figure 38. Job Search Difficulties Encountered in the Atlantic Region (n = 33)



Consistent with the previous question, the two major difficulties encountered by respondents when seeking employment were a lack of recognition for skills acquired abroad (22%) and language problems (19%) (Figure 39). The shortage of Canadian work experience and of professional opportunities in general, the lack of professional network, and the absence of recognition for work experience gained abroad were also cited by several participants as being the primary obstacle encountered. In the category “Other”, respondents cited difficulties related to transportation, a lack of references from Canadian employers, an inability to pay or find a babysitter, the absence of family or friends who might help, and a poor knowledge of the host city.

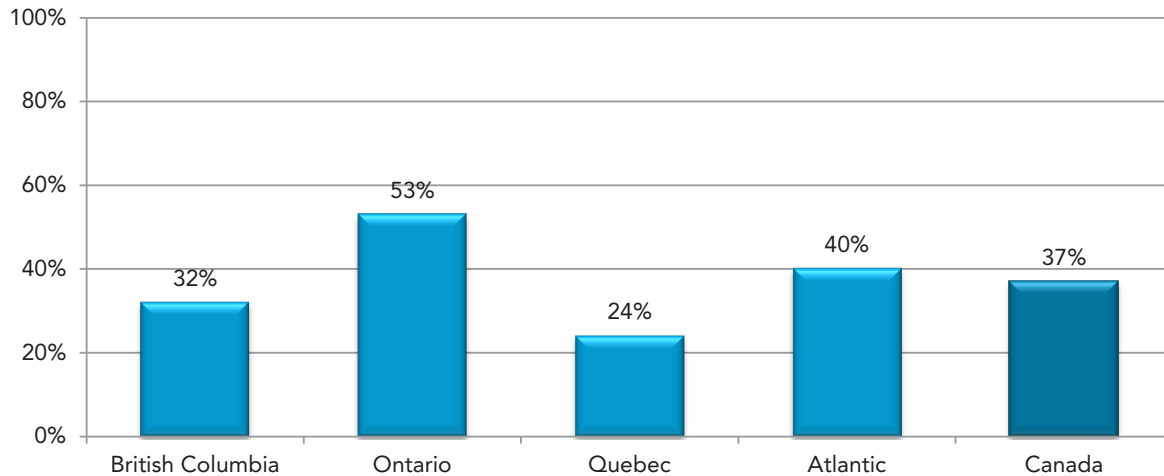
Figure 39. Principal Job Search Difficulty Encountered Overall (n = 124)



In the Atlantic Region, Quebec, and British Columbia, the main job-search difficulty identified by the participants was the lack of recognition of skills acquired abroad. For respondents in Ontario, language problems ranked highest on the list of primary concerns. Similarly, in Quebec, the Atlantic Region, and British Columbia, respondents identified language problems as the second most important job-search obstacle.

More than a third of the respondents (37%) who completed the second survey claimed to have fallen victim to discrimination, whether because of their language or accent (58%), their race or skin colour (50%), or their ethnicity or culture (46%) (Figure 40). For the most part, this discrimination was experienced at work or when applying for a job or a promotion (63%). Of note, more than half of the participants in Ontario (53%) claimed to have faced discrimination, as compared to 24% of respondents in Quebec and 32% of respondents in British Columbia.

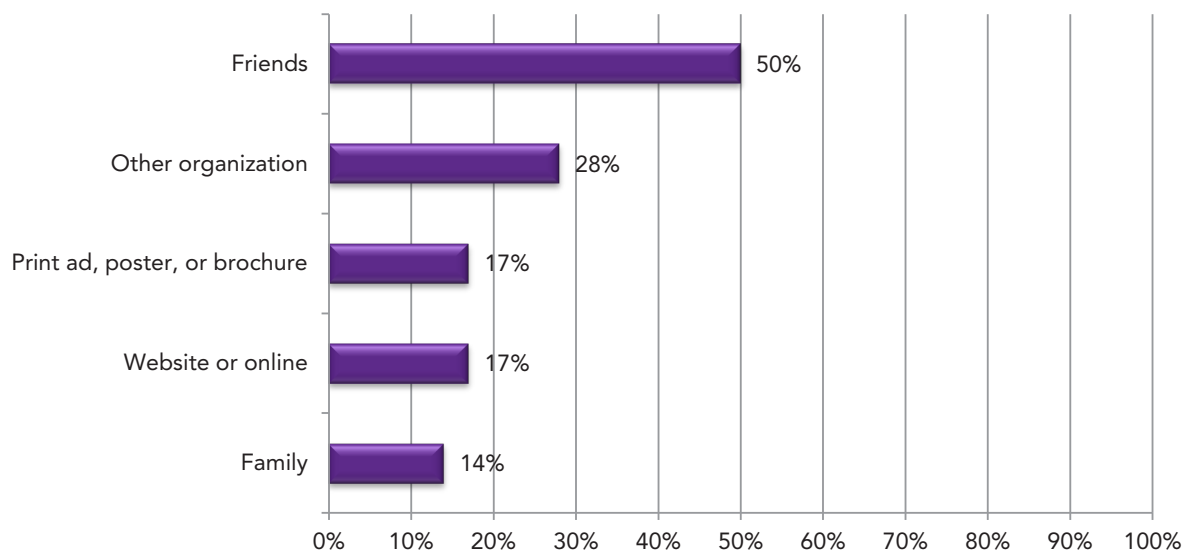
Figure 40. Percentage of Respondents Claiming to Have Been Subjected to Discrimination Since Arrival in Canada, by Region and Overall (n = 130)



3.6 Access to Services

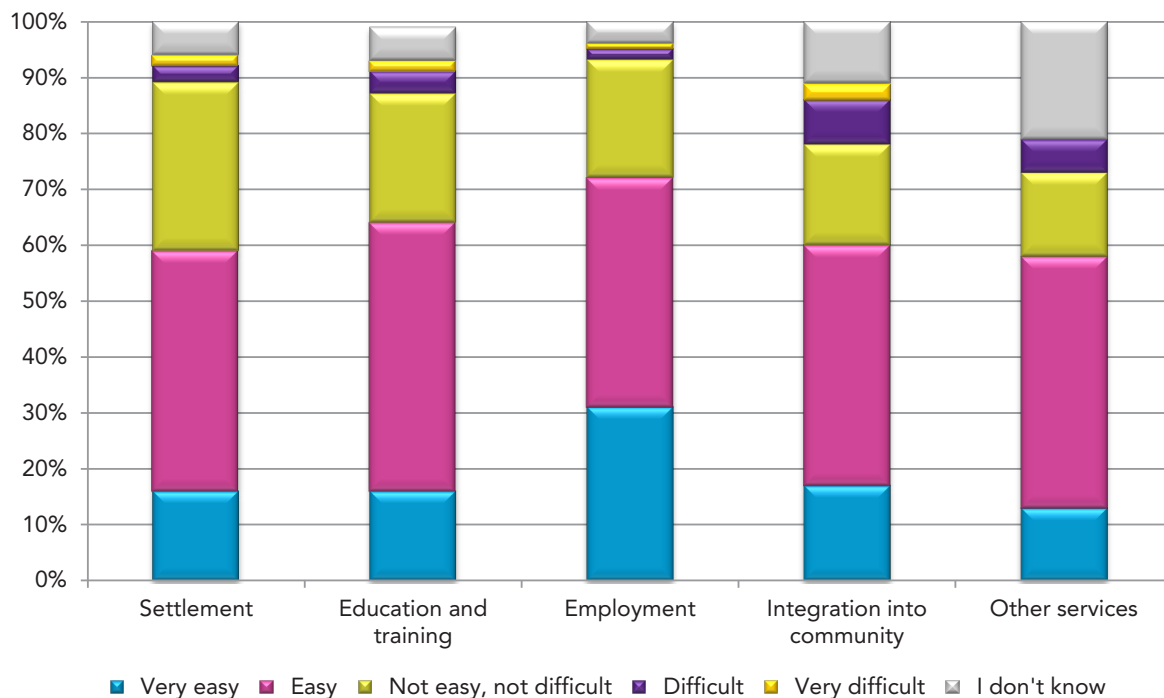
Access to the various services intended for newcomers can greatly facilitate employment integration. First, this section summarizes the perception of the participants from the 12 organizations regarding accessibility to the five categories of services: reception and settlement, education and training, employment assistance, social integration, and other support services. Second, the respondents describe their level of satisfaction with and the main strengths of the community-based employability training organizations that assist newcomers.

Figure 41. How Respondents Became Aware of the Participating Organizations (n = 140)



Most of the respondents became aware of the organization they visit through word-of-mouth (friends or family) or through referrals from other organizations (Figure 41). The national average reflects the situation in each of the regions, with the exception of Quebec, where referrals from other organizations ranks first (57%). The service-delivery model used by organizations in Quebec, i.e., the provision of reception and employment-assistance services by two distinct and separate community organizations, may explain this regional particularity.

Figure 42. Degree of Difficulty in Receiving Needed Assistance (n = 128)



Overall the respondents concluded that, in general, it was easy to get the assistance needed regardless of the category of service sought. In fact, the participants' comments from all the study sites support this finding:

Because we can contact the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society for help easily (Participant, CVIMS, British Columbia).

They will give their best time to explain and give what you really need. All of the people are very accommodating and pleasant. They gave me all the information I needed and helped me to sort things out (Participant, SOICS, British Columbia).

The Skills Centre in Trail was very helpful and friendly and had a lot of local knowledge (Participant, GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

I always got response to my questions whenever I contacted the Centre, by phone, email or personal meeting (Participant, Welcome Centre, Ontario).

The staffs are helpful and readily accessible (Participant, SCCC, Ontario).

The staff is very knowledgeable and friendly (Participant, WHC, Ontario).

Pour le professionnalisme, l'organisation et la qualité humaine (Participant, Accès travail, Quebec).

Parce que tout était fait pour nous rendre la tâche plus facile (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

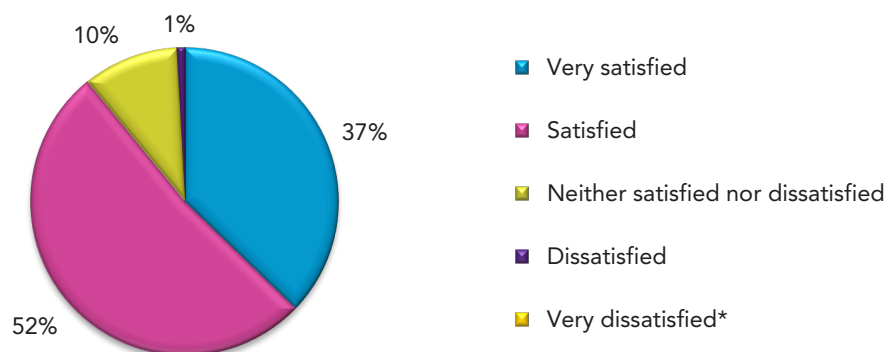
C'est facile de recevoir de l'aide parce que dès que tu arrives au SOIIT, tu es reçu avec des sourires avec respect tous les outils pour aider à trouver un emploi. Il y a des rencontres avec des conseillers qui t'écoutent pour mieux te diriger. Leurs encouragements m'ont bien aidée. J'étais peu confiante à mon arrivée, mais on m'a dit au SOIIT que je suis capable et je suis prête à travailler au Québec. Et ça l'a marché, mon époux est fier de moi (Participant, SOIIT, Québec).

People who are working at Isis are very friendly, supportive and helpful. They are always available and ready for assistance (Participant, ISIS, Atlantic).

It was easy because the personnel were easily approachable, readily available and provided a good program (Participant, AXIS, Atlantic).

MCAF is easily accessible (Participant, MCAF, Atlantic).

Figure 43. Overall Degree of Satisfaction with the Organization Visited (n = 129)



* During the survey, none of the participants selected the answer "Very Dissatisfied".

The degree of satisfaction among respondents regarding their overall experience with the 12 organizations selected was also high (Figure 43). Indeed, the vast majority of respondents claimed to be satisfied or very satisfied with their experience and offered the following reasons:

Because these people are willing to help more than you need. Very pleasant and accommodating and well informed (Participant, SOICS, British Columbia).

Opportunity for language training and educational training support were highly appreciated (Participant, CVIMS, British Columbia).

Services provided helped me to succeed in my career and future prospects in Canada (Participant, GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

The reason is because since I contacted for first time the people of the Sault Community Career Centre I received a great service and support (Participant, SCCC, Ontario).

Very helpful, supportive, friendly and understanding to my situation. Frequently continually contact me to keep me updated about current labour market (Participant, Welcome Centre, Ontario).

Because this is the first place I came to. They are very friendly and welcoming. Being a newcomer, the way this professional has treated me has made the difference. I have received all the help that they have been able to provide (Participant, WHC, Ontario).

Les services de SOIIT m'ont permis de mieux comprendre la culture québécoise et son environnement de travail (Participant, SOIIT, Québec).

J'ai reçu de l'aide personnalisée et un grand soutien moral (Participant, Accès travail, Québec).

Ce sont des gens de biens. Ils sont toujours attentifs et patients pour nous écouter et subvenir à nos besoins (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

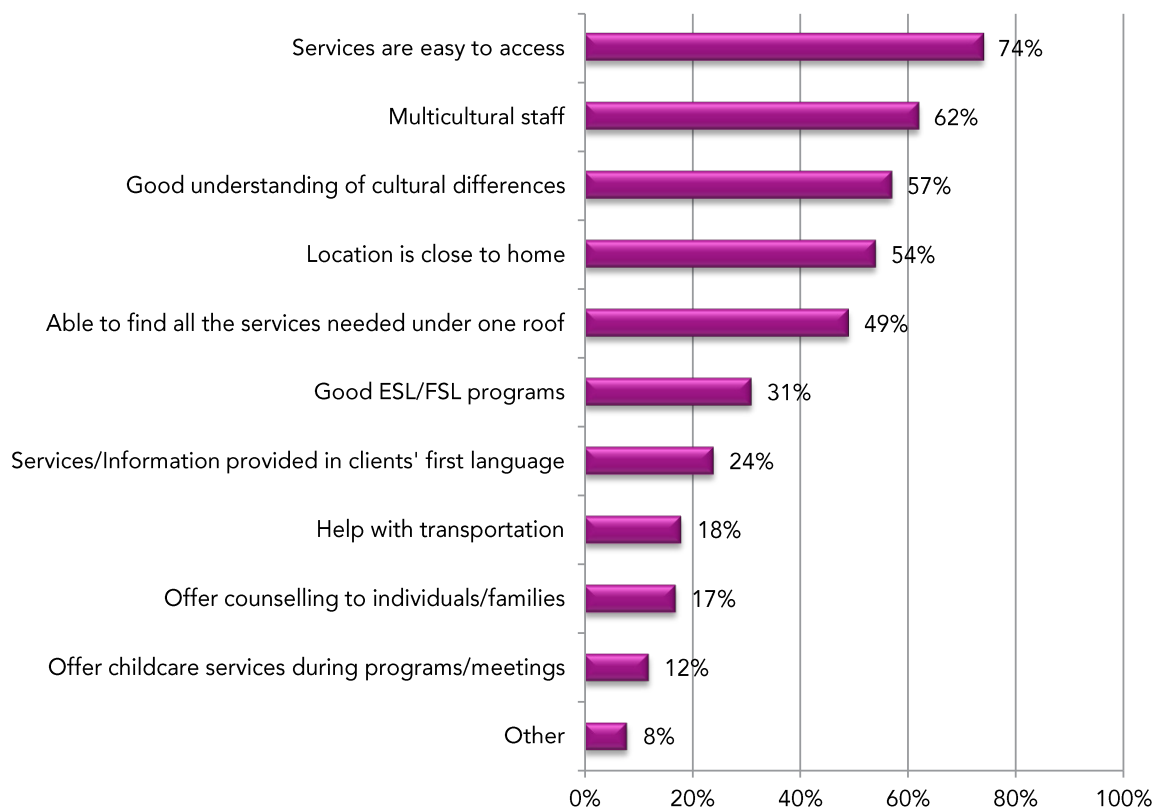
There is a variety of very useful services offered at ISIS. In addition, people at ISIS are expert, helpful and ready to assist whenever we need them and in all types of services (Participant, ISIS, Atlantic).

Satisfied because of the knowledge and support I gain on a constant basis. It's a place where you can always depend on to lead you to some solutions to whatever it is that you seek for (Participant, AXIS, Atlantic).

They are working hard for helping me (Participant, MCAF, Atlantic).

In addition, the respondents indicated that the principal strengths of the 12 organizations were the easy access to a range of services, the multicultural staff, and a solid understanding of cultural differences (Figure 44). Although ranked sixth overall, second-language training was identified as one of the most important strengths of organizations in the three English-speaking regions studied. This may be partially explained by the many one-stop service points that offer English courses in addition to employability services at the observation sites in these regions. The ranking contrasts sharply with Quebec where, since language courses are offered by separate and distinct organizations or institutions, participants barely recognized the second language-programs as a strength of their employment assistance organizations.

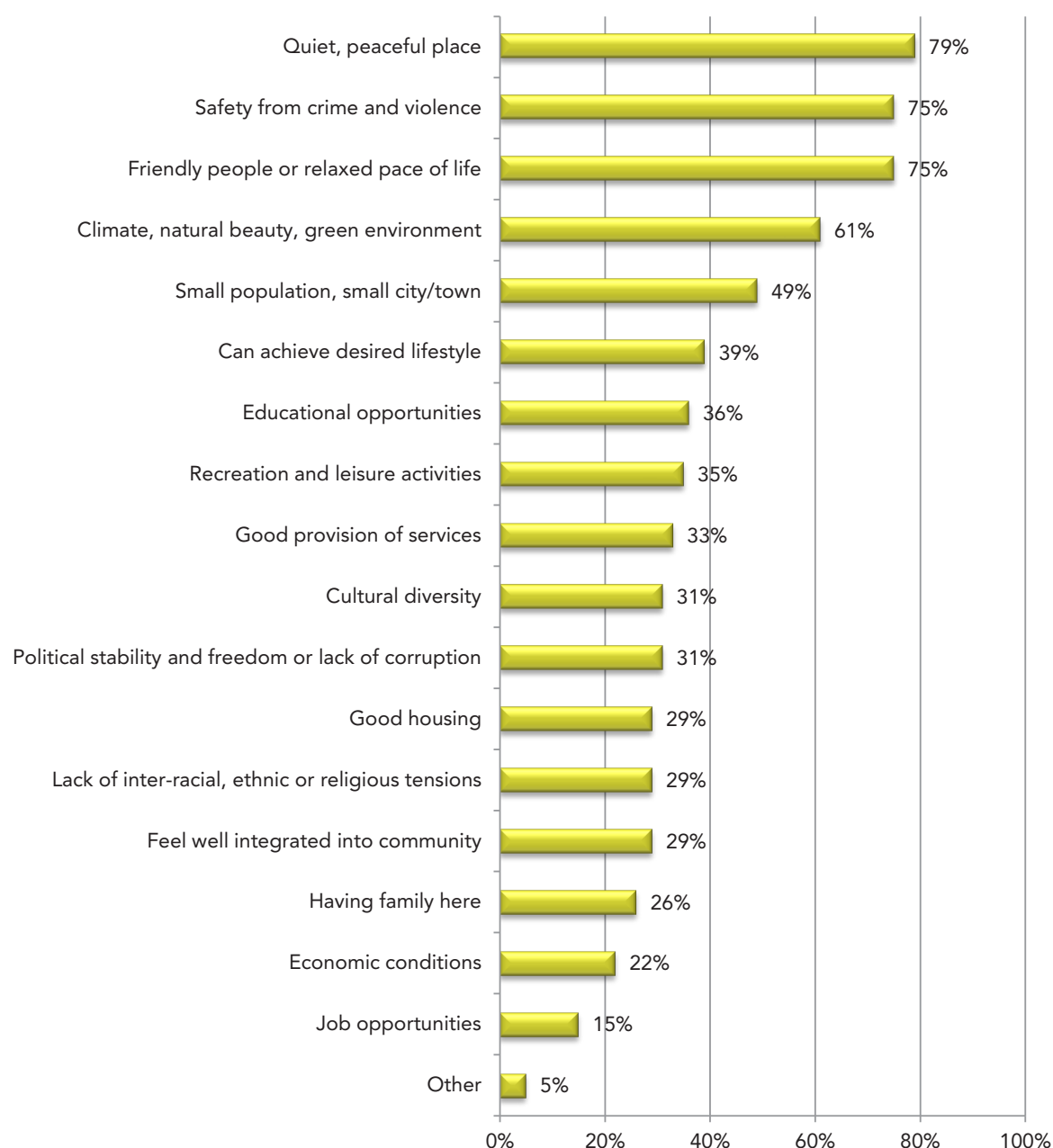
Figure 44. Strengths of Participating Organizations (n = 131)



3.7 Living Outside Metropolitan Areas

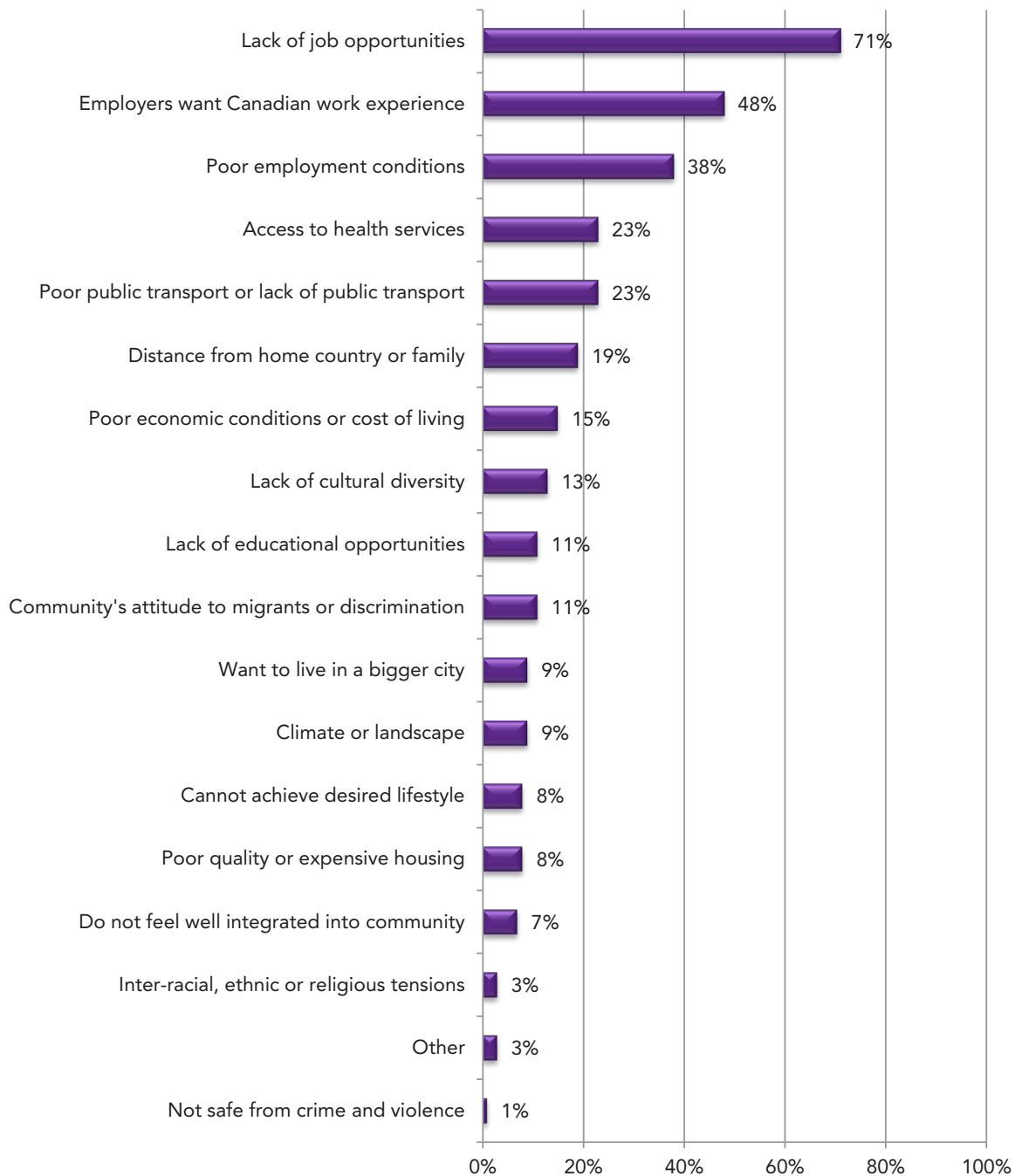
This last section focuses on the pros and cons of metropolitan centres and outlying regions with regards to the employment integration of newcomers. First, respondents were asked to answer the question, “What do you like best/least about your city?” by selecting the appropriate response.

Figure 45. Positive Aspects of the Host City (n = 130)



Overall, as Figure 45 shows, more than three-quarters of those surveyed appreciated the tranquility, safety, and friendliness of their host region. According to more than half of the respondents, their new town's climate, natural setting, and smaller size were also important attributes. In this sense, the primary factors cited by those surveyed echoed the generally acknowledged advantages to settling outside of major urban centres.

Figure 46. Negative Aspects of the Host City (n = 120)

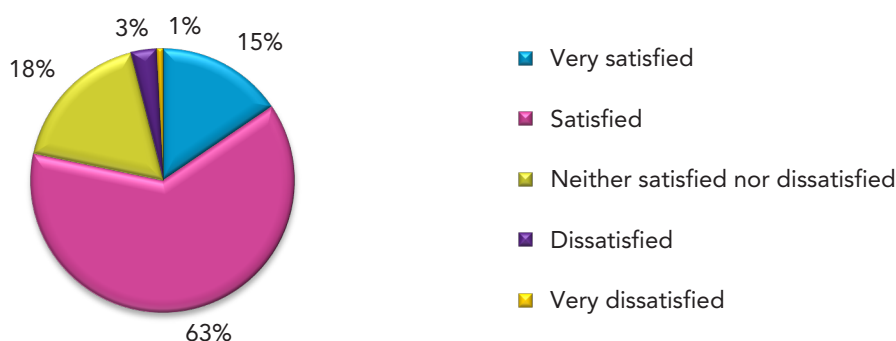


By contrast, respondents cited the lack of employment opportunities as the main negative aspect (Figure 46). Employers requiring Canadian work experience and poor working conditions were also among the disadvantages mentioned by respondents.

Consistent with the principal motivations cited for settling in the host region, this ranking demonstrates the valuation of quality of life considerations over economic conditions.

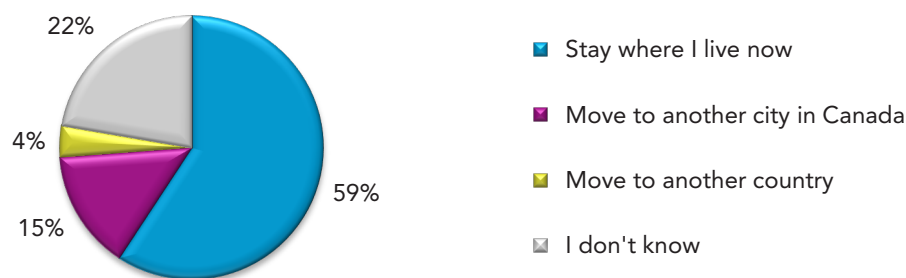
In general, the majority of respondents claimed to be satisfied (63%) or very satisfied (15%) with their respective host cities (Figure 47). Only five (5) participants stated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their new home, i.e., two (2) participants each from Ontario and the Atlantic Region, and one (1) participant from Quebec.

Figure 47. Level of Satisfaction with the Host City (n = 129)



As the preceding figure suggests, more than 50% of those surveyed wanted to stay in their respective regions, but 15% expressed a desire to move to another Canadian city (Figure 48). Only five (5) participants planned to leave Canada for elsewhere.

Figure 48. Future Plans Regarding Settlement Location (n = 130)



Overall, the vast majority of those surveyed would recommend their new host city to future immigrants (Figure 49). Only three (3) respondents each in Ontario and Quebec and two (2) respondents in the Atlantic Region stated that they would hesitate to recommend their new home to other newcomers.

Finally, respondents were asked to compare various aspects of daily life in a metropolitan area with the day-to-day experience in an outlying region (Figure 50). Nearly all those surveyed asserted that it seemed easier to find employment (related or not to prior training) in the country's cities, whether Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. By contrast, several

respondents noted that it seemed easier to find housing and fit into a community outside of urban centres. Opinions vary on other aspects of the comparison.

Figure 49. Likelihood of Recommending the Host City to Newcomers (n = 130)

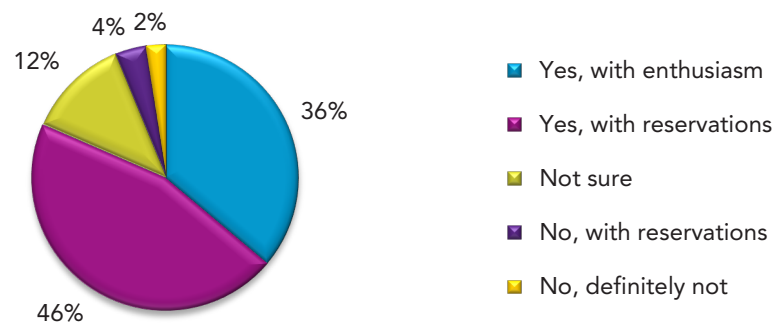
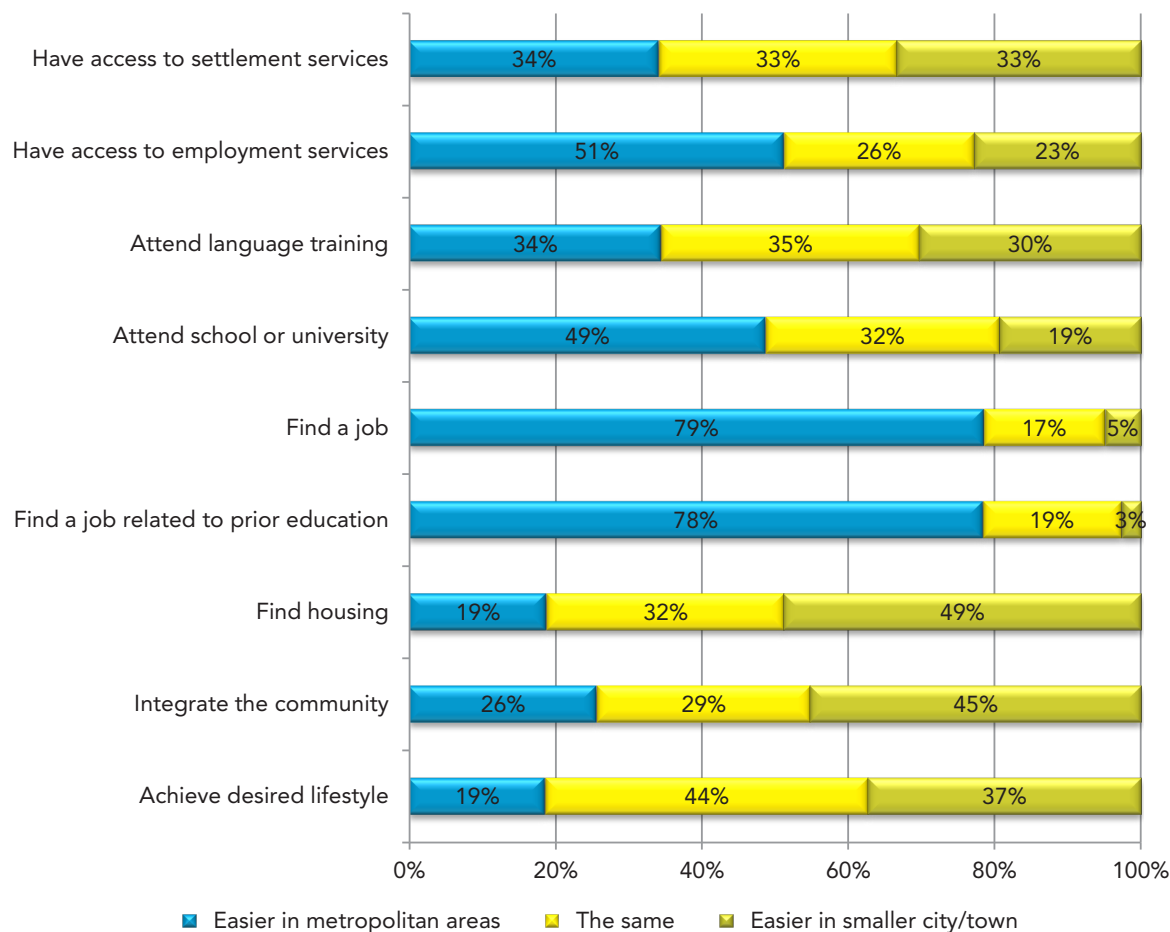


Figure 50. Comparison between Cities and Outlying Regions (n = 126)



3.8 Conclusion

As varied as these profiles are, the perspectives of respondents from the 12 pilot sites do converge on certain points. Although this sampling represents only a small fraction of the clientele served by these organizations and of the annual immigration population welcomed to Canada, it still provides insight into the problems and challenges encountered by newcomers in the four regions studied.

In light of these results, it is clear that many obstacles impede respondents' employment integration regardless of their pre-emigration profile or their host region. According to those surveyed, the lack of recognition for skills and work experience gained abroad tops the list of the difficulties they face. In addition, the data collected through the two self-administered surveys highlights the problems specifically tied to settling outside the major urban hubs, including the lack of employment opportunities in some regions, the limitations of public transit, and the lack of cultural diversity. Nonetheless, the vast majority of respondents claimed to be satisfied with their settlement location and only a slight percentage of respondents planned to move to another Canadian city or to another country. As for the various organizations involved in the research project, the participants are lavish in their praise, specifically appreciating the accessibility of services as well as the cultural sensitivity of those working for the organizations.

These results, in combination with the data from the semi-structured interviews, contribute to the identification of the primary difficulties encountered by newcomers who settle in outlying regions.

Challenges Faced By Newcomers in a Regional Context

I never expected that finding a job in my field was going to be so hard. I came with two degrees, spoke the language quite well, and still it was almost impossible to find a job. Something is definitely not right in this province.

(PARTICIPANT, ISIS, ATLANTIC REGION)

When budgets are cut and jobs are fewer, the first people that everyone points at are the immigrants coming in and taking our jobs. We have to figure out how we are going to deal with that because we still have a policy in this country where we are trying to attract people. And I think it is really dishonest, extremely dishonest and unethical to bring people into this country if there is no way for them to work. I find that extremely unethical. And it hurts, it hurts to see it. I think we should all feel bad.

(MCAF, ATLANTIC REGION)

4.1 Introduction

Recently arrived immigrants who attempt to enter the Canadian job market confront several difficulties and challenges. Whether related to the economic context, local specificities or the characteristics of the immigrants themselves, these obstacles can be significant. This chapter presents a summary of the primary constraints encountered by newcomers living outside the major urban centres in Canada, underscoring as necessary the particularities of the various regions studied. This chapter also highlights some of the best practices developed by the 12 participating organizations in order to mitigate these difficulties, in addition to concluding with some potential solutions intended to facilitate social and employment integration for newcomers living in a non-metropolitan area.

Far from comprehensive, this analysis is based on the responses of participants and community-based trainers provided during semi-structured interviews and regional roundtable results, as well as comments provided by those who participated in the two surveys. The following table (Table 20) lists the top ten challenges experienced by newcomers, as compiled by staff at the pilot sites during roundtables held in the four study regions. It is worth mentioning that the subjects addressed emerged from a nonprobability sample and that, although several analogies may be drawn, the results cannot be generalized to the entire Canadian immigrant population. In addition, while the feedback of participants from across Canada does inform the presentation of results, the relative importance of each issue varies from one province to another.

Table 20. Principal Challenges Encountered by Newcomers to Canada in the Four Regions Studied According to the Respondents from the Pilot Sites

#	BRITISH COLUMBIA	ONTARIO
1	QUALIFICATIONS FROM OUTSIDE CANADA WERE NOT ACCEPTED	INACCURATE INFORMATION REGARDING EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL PRIOR TO ARRIVAL
2	JOB EXPERIENCE FROM OUTSIDE CANADA WAS NOT ACCEPTED	LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ON HOST SOCIETY
3	NOT HAVING ENOUGH JOB EXPERIENCE IN CANADA	INSUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH
4	SHORTAGE OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE REGION	DELAYS FOR THE CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION PROCESS
5	SHORTAGE OF JOBS IN THEIR FIELD OF TRAINING	SHORTAGE OF JOBS IN THEIR FIELD OF TRAINING
6	DELAYS FOR CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION PROCESS	NOT HAVING CONNECTIONS IN THE JOB MARKET
7	TRANSPORTATION CONSTRAINTS	DISCRIMINATION
8	POOR PREPARATION PRIOR TO ARRIVAL	PERSONAL WELL-BEING, DIFFICULTIES WITH INTERNAL TRANSITIONS
9	INSUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH	NOT HAVING ENOUGH JOB EXPERIENCE IN CANADA
10	NOT HAVING CONNECTIONS IN THE JOB MARKET	ISOLATION, LACK OF SOCIAL INTEGRATION
#	QUEBEC	ATLANTIC
1	POOR PREPARATION PRIOR TO ARRIVAL	SHORTAGE OF JOBS IN THEIR FIELD OF TRAINING
2	INSUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OF FRENCH	NOT HAVING CONNECTIONS IN THE JOB MARKET
3	NOT HAVING ENOUGH JOB EXPERIENCE IN CANADA	INSUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH
4	NOT HAVING CONNECTIONS IN THE JOB MARKET	HIGH EXPECTATIONS UPON ARRIVAL
5	NON-RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN CREDENTIALS	NOT HAVING ENOUGH JOB EXPERIENCE IN CANADA
6	OVER QUALIFICATION	DELAYS FOR THE CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION PROCESS
7	DISCRIMINATION	HIGH COSTS FOR THE CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION PROCESS
8	TRANSPORTATION CONSTRAINTS	OVER QUALIFICATION
9	DELAYS IN ACCESSING COURSES AND TRAINING	TRANSPORTATION CONSTRAINTS
10	LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ON HOST SOCIETY	NOT BEING ABLE TO AFFORD CHILD CARE

4.2 Foreign Credential and Qualification Recognition

Foreign credential and qualification recognition, often considered to be a foundation for newcomers seeking employment, is performed at two distinct levels: first formally, by the relevant provincial ministries, the agencies responsible for evaluating foreign education credentials or, in the case of regulated occupations, the professional orders, and second, by employers whose decisions, although informal, are no less binding. This issue, albeit universal, manifests differently from one region to another, as this responsibility belongs to provincial governments, working in concert with federal authorities.

First of all, the formal recognition of prior learning and skills can be a long, costly, and complex process for many very recent immigrants:

I can say that the highly expensive pathway to licensure, like to write exams, it is very expensive. It costs them a lot of money to write the exam the first time and the second time. Specifically if they don't have the support or if they don't come for the support. They have to write exams for certification and it's very, very expensive and not easy to get through. So, for physicians it may cost them between \$15,000 and \$20,000 for writing exams if they pass it on the first try. So, it is not an easy thing to do (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Yes, I went through the CMA credential process. So they came back to me and said that yes, they recognize some of the courses that I did and I still have to do certain courses in the university in Canada in order to complete and I calculated I need to spend another \$15,000 in order to get a Canadian destination. I thought to myself: Why am I going to pay another \$15,000 to learn things I can teach at the university? So I decided not to take the Canadian accounting destination (Participant, Welcome Centre, Ontario).

I was told that they might be able to close the gap between having the knowledge and the work experience on one side but not the right "Red Seal" trade papers to be able to get hired. I found out that I had to go back to school for a few years to get the right papers. By that time I might be too old to "start" in this job market (Participant, GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

In addition, many newcomers are stunned by the cumbersome process and the inconsistent results, which they find unfair:

They said: "Yes, but you still have to study." It is really kind of not fair, because I mean they can verify. There are really good schools in the Philippines and other countries that can be almost the same. I mean I think it is okay if you have to take a six-month course to bridge it, but to study again for two to four years when you already have a bachelor degree in science, it is not fair (Participant, Welcome Centre, Ontario).

Le seul problème, moi, c'est que ce que je ne comprends pas, c'est qu'il y a plein d'équivalences pour plein de choses. Il y a l'équivalence des retraites avec la France. Il y a l'équivalence de l'assurance-maladie, on n'a pas eu de temps de carence. Puis des malheureux diplômés... Dites-moi ce que ça change d'être policier en France ou d'être policier ici ? Les lois sûrement, mais je suis capable de les apprendre. [...] Ce n'est tellement pas logique. Comment peut-on reconnaître la retraite de quelqu'un si on n'approuve même pas ce qu'il a fait comme travail ? (Participant, AIJT, Quebec)

In Canada, regulated professions and skilled trades employ 20% of the active population nationwide (CIC, 2012d), which creates an issue requiring the intervention of professional orders and other regulating bodies:

Mais il n'en demeure pas moins que, malgré tout, les contraintes au niveau des ordres professionnels, ce n'est quand même pas gagné. Je te dirais qu'il y a peut-être l'Ordre des ingénieurs qui a accéléré leur étude de dossiers avec certains candidats venus de France, mais quand tu viens d'ailleurs, c'est encore une contrainte importante. Quand tu es un médecin ou un avocat immigrant, c'est impossible, c'est extrêmement difficile (SOIIT, Quebec).

I am wondering also about the regulatory bodies as well. The regulatory bodies and the licensing process. I mean of course you need to have some sort of process in place, of course you need to regulate occupations, but we all know that the system is too bureaucratic and there is an intention behind that. Especially with medical doctors. I mean if they manage to go through the licensing process, the exams are staggered so it takes years to finish that, then the next challenge is the lack of residency places, which are reserved primarily for Canadians. So the system is discriminatory, there is no question (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

For many allophone immigrants, language represents an additional barrier in the prior-education recognition process:

If you come here and you don't have very strong language skills in either French or English, it is going to take a lot longer to be able to go back there. I met a client a while ago who has been in Canada for the past 20 years and she told me that in her home country, she was an anesthesiologist and she said it was so hard for her because Spanish is her first language. She said I spent many years going to language school just to be able to increase my skills, but I was never able to reach that level where I could comprehend my medical training in either French or English. She abandoned it (SCCC, Ontario).

There are some careers where the language requirements are so high. Law would be an example: in order to have adequate English to pass the Bar, it would be remarkable. That is generally not an option that people will take, it is just too hard. It takes too many years of study (GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

The recognition of prior learning and skills can also prove to be difficult in the context of non-regulated professions because employers are frequently responsible for the assessment of a candidate's education and skills:

Les employeurs ont de la difficulté à évaluer les études qui auraient été faites à l'extérieur. Par exemple, quelqu'un qui arrive dans un poste au niveau de la tenue de livres ou de la comptabilité, bon, jusqu'où on va dans les responsabilités, parce qu'il ne connaît pas les lois québécoises, mais il a eu des gros postes auparavant. Quand c'est des trucs très concrets comme l'information ou l'électronique, c'est encore un peu difficile à évaluer parce que ce n'est pas les mêmes diplômes. Par contre, au niveau des expériences, les candidats ont plus de facilité à dire ce qu'ils ont fait et ce qu'ils sont capables de faire (SOIIT, Québec).

In addition, despite government-issued equivalencies, when it comes to hiring decisions, employers have the final word:

Et aussi, mon diplôme. Parce que mon diplôme, il a été reconnu ici au Québec, mais quand même, il y a des écoles, des gens qui trouvent que ce n'est pas un bon diplôme pour travailler à Québec (Participant, SOIIT, Québec).

It can be a challenge to get their credentials recognized here and, even if they are recognized, getting employers to understand that: "Yes, I can work here" (SOICS, British Columbia).

Finally, whether it is a question of regulated or non-regulated professions, the differences between the education and professional systems in Canada and the systems abroad sometimes create problems, particularly concerning the disparities between the education required to hold certain positions.

Regional Particularities

Isolation from the credential evaluation agencies and major educational and training centres further complicates the recognition process in outlying regions:

I wish that we had a World Education Service or ICES or a Credential Evaluation Office, somewhere, like even in Nova Scotia, or if they come once a month to Nova Scotia to collect all the applications for credential assessment. So our clients could go and submit it directly instead of applying online and waiting for things that may come or may not come. So, credential assessment is a huge barrier (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

And then, another problem for us is, let's say you have a dentist that comes here, we don't have a dental school in this province. If someone was to go off to dentistry or to improve their skills, they have to leave this province and the chances are that they probably won't be coming back (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

Whenever there is a program or a training opportunity that looks really wonderful for a client, we have to get them to Toronto. And transportation is an issue for newcomers. So the added expenses of getting to Toronto and hotel bills and things like that make it impossible for them to do it. So we keep waiting for some programs to come here (WHC, Ontario).

In outlying areas, the limited availability of bridge training, such as the Bridge to HR program offered by Job Skills (Welcome Centre Immigrant Services) in Ontario (see Box 1), slows the employment integration process for newly arrived immigrants. In fact, it is not unusual for

BOX 1 – BRIDGE TRAINING, A PASSAGE TOWARD EMPLOYMENT

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services - Job Skills, Markham, Ontario

In the fall of 2011, Job Skills received a triennial grant from the Ontario Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in order to set up a bridging program for human resources professionals trained abroad. Bridge to HR is a program that offers sector-specific language training, up-to-date resources, job-search workshops, four accredited postsecondary courses (required for completion of the Human Resources Counsellor certification), and a six-week placement in a human resources department. Thanks to tailored training and support, this bridge training program makes it possible to help skilled newcomers quickly find employment in their fields of specialization.

institutions located in outlying regions to be obliged to cancel or postpone training due to insufficient registration, which can considerably delay entry into the job market.

Consequences

As a result, as soon as they arrive, many newcomers rush to enrol in educational programs, convinced that having a Canadian diploma will make it easier to enter the job market:

Aujourd'hui, je parle à beaucoup de monde qui vient du Brésil, surtout de ma ville. Les gens me demandent des conseils. La première chose que je leur dis c'est : « Viens pour étudier. Si vous venez au Québec, pensez à quelque chose pour étudier, parce que ce sera plus facile de trouver un travail. Soit un bac, soit une formation, soit un DEC » (Participant, SOIIT, Quebec).

They don't really trust oversea certificates or oversea education. They want actually to get a degree from here, from Canada. Probably it is easier to get into the workforce. But when you have a foreign degree, it is really difficult to get a job in your field. That is probably a difficulty I had (Participant, ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Without having a Canadian degree, I will not be able to get a good job here, a decent job (Participant, MCAF, Atlantic Region).

This perception, perpetuated in several cultural communities, is not always the right solution for immigrant candidates:

Ils entendent toute sorte d'informations de leur propre communauté : « Oh, fais pas ça, va aux études, c'est le passeport pour l'emploi ! » Les gens se ramassent parfois dans des parcours qu'ils n'auraient pas dû faire, mais parce qu'ils n'avaient pas pris le temps d'arriver et d'atterrir, puis d'analyser leur situation et le marché du travail, bien ils sont allés se taper une maîtrise ou un doctorat à l'université, puis ils nous reviennent après (SOIIT, Quebec).

Although the Canadian and Quebec ministries responsible for immigration require that independent candidates have the funds necessary to support their families⁶, once newcomers arrive in Canada these resources are rapidly depleted, hence the necessity for many newcomers who find themselves with no income to quickly enter the job market. However, the delays due to the degree assessment process and second-language acquisition, as well as ill-suited or insufficient outcomes, lead many immigrants to accept unskilled employment, i.e., "survival jobs" or "subsistence employment":

I still get letters from one man who was a surgeon and he is killing chickens to make a living. And he still calls himself the chickens' killer, and he writes me and he says: I was using my knife to save humans, now I am using it to kill chickens. It is a pretty sad analogy looking at where he came from and what he was having to do just to survive here (WHC, Ontario).

Since I came to Canada, I have noticed many new immigrants like myself who used to have good education background and professional working experience are struggling making a living by doing labour work or entry-level jobs. The newcomers need to find a bridge to bring their competence and skills into Canada (Participant, ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Entering the job market via employment that demands little or no specific qualifications, often outside the newcomer's field of expertise, also has financial impacts:

Dans la majorité des emplois pour les immigrants, le salaire est très bas. 10 \$, c'est bien pour acquérir de l'expérience, mais avec 10 \$, c'est compliqué de bien vivre (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

In order to avoid this pitfall, some organizations collaborate with financial or governmental institutions to offer interest-free or low-interest loans to immigrants who need financial assistance to help them go back to school, mitigate exam fees, or pay their professional dues (see Box 2).

Prolonged deskilling, particularly when education received in the country of origin is not recognized, may be demoralizing or frustrating for newcomers forced to start their education over or come to terms with the loss of professional status:

6 At the federal level, candidates must provide proof of sufficient funds of between \$10,000 and \$30,000, depending on the size of their families (CIC, 2010c). The Ministère de l'Immigration du Québec requires minimum financial independence equivalent to three months (MICC, 2012).

Moi, je pensais qu'au niveau travail, ça serait beaucoup plus facile, parce que je me sens un peu dévalorisée ici, parce que je finis par être vendeuse de vêtements dans une boutique pour enfants. J'aime ce que je fais, l'équipe est super sympa, mais j'ai l'impression d'avoir régressée de dix ans (Participant, AIJT, Québec).

You have been studying, you have been working 10 years and you have to go to school again in the same field, which is kind of discouraging to the new people (Participant, SCCC, Ontario).

Certainly, it is possible to redirect candidates toward alternative professions related to their fields of study that require a less gruelling do-over. Still, these alternative solutions may also lead to a loss of self esteem and financial worth, particularly if the immigrant client receives poor advice. To avoid such a loss of human and economic capital, it is essential to rethink the education and skills recognition process nationwide:

It just needs to be a faster process, there needs to be hope for immigrants that all of the skills and experience they are bringing is being vetted in a time that is not taking more than a year or two years to have it done. So maybe there just needs to be more resources put towards those entities that can quickly assess and adjudicate where this person is and give them clear direction on what they need to do next. Because, in our experience, things just take so much time. And yes, we want to continue having safe workplace practices and we don't want to put anyone's health or safety at risk, but when we see as many skilled and valuable assets in human potential, that end up just getting frustrated with our system and our red tape, and end up settling for jobs that are of a survival nature and that are so far from commensurate with what they have proven in their home countries, then we are not doing enough (ASPECT, British Columbia).

According to one staff member at a community-based training agency in British Columbia, reforming the credentials and skills assessment system will be an uphill battle:

We all know that we need to change the credentialing process but it is regulated by so many different bodies that it is not an easily solvable problem. People have to come to grips with reality. There is an old boys' network out there controlling those regulating bodies and the sooner they retire, the better, because they don't get it. [...] The government needs to be stronger, business needs to push that. They need to put the pressure on those bodies, those regulating bodies. Money drives everything and when money becomes the real driver, you'll see the doors open. When it becomes a desperate solution (CVIMS, British Columbia).

Although strict regulation by professional orders is only part of the problem – and consequently, the solution, it is important to encourage collaboration between all stakeholders in order to facilitate the recognition of foreign credentials and honour the real value of the qualifications newcomers bring to Canada. As such, the strategy adopted by ISIS, in collaboration with the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education, merits consideration (see Box 3).

In order to monitor the impartiality and transparency of credential recognition mechanisms, several provinces, including Ontario and Quebec, have named commissioners empowered to evaluate the handling of applications for admission to certain regulated professions. Although created in 2007, the Ontario Office of the Fairness Commissioner has since kept a low profile, according to certain stakeholders in the province:

The Office of the Fairness Commission was supposed to be something that was going to help international professionals, but you are not hearing a whole lot on it anymore (WHC, Ontario).

BOX 2 – THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A LOAN SYSTEM FOR IMMIGRANTS

Association for New Canadians – AXIS Career Services, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

In 2010, AXIS established an immigrant Small Loans Program to support and expedite the integration of immigrants into the local workforce. This interest-free one-time small loans program is available to immigrants and refugees who need financial assistance with professional examination requirements and assessment costs dealing with licensure and entry into a professional practice or a skilled trade. Participants who want to take a bridging program or pursue part-time studies not eligible for the Canada Student Loans Program may also take advantage of this program. Developed in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Credit Union, which is responsible for financial management, the project is financed by the provincial Department of Advanced Education and Skills.

Through its new policies pertaining to the pre-landing credentials assessment for immigrant candidates, the federal government hopes to provide immigrants with a better understanding of certification standards and employer requirements in Canada (CIC, 2012c). This regulatory modification to the skilled-worker program, effective May 2013, should be subjected to a more thorough evaluation over the course of the next few years in order to measure its true impact on the job market integration experience of newly arrived immigrants.

BOX 3 – INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATION RECOGNITION MULTI-STAKEHOLDER WORK GROUPS

Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Beginning in 2005-2006, ISIS set up the International Qualification Recognition Multi-Stakeholder Work Groups in Nova Scotia. These roundtables bring together the principal stakeholders and decision-makers from diverse spheres of activity to discuss the problems encountered by professionals trained abroad and measures to bring down certification barriers. Since the initiative was launched, work groups have been created for many professional fields, including medicine, pharmaceuticals, dentistry, engineering, medical research technology, nursing, education, law, and for electricians working in construction. Recently, two new roundtables have been added for veterinarians and architects. Developed by ISIS with the support of the Nova Scotia government, this unique approach makes it possible to eliminate certain difficulties experienced by foreign workers who wish to pursue their professional careers in Canada.

4.3 Lack of Canadian Experience

In addition to complications relating to foreign-credentials assessment, immigrants also encounter a lack of recognition for prior work experience gained abroad combined with a lack of Canadian work experience. This setback is a key factor in employment integration and affects many aspects of the immigrant's experience in the host society, including access to a first job:

If you want to get a good job, it is not easy because what you learned in your country or what you have from your country you can't use here. You can use the skills but not the experience or whatever you have in your country. You have to start here from the beginning. And it is hard and I can't apply for a management position because I know I am not going to get the job (Participant, ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Participants also deplored the fact that many employers require newcomers to have Canadian work experience:

Dans la part de la recherche d'emploi, j'ai pensé que ça serait plus facile de trouver un emploi, mais non. C'est compliqué parce que dans la majorité des offres d'emploi, presque toutes, ils recherchent de l'expérience. C'est de l'expérience canadienne de toute façon. On ne dit pas « Expérience canadienne », mais on dit « Expérience deux à trois mois ». Pour moi, c'est de l'expérience canadienne (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

You go to interviews. People are not really sure whether they should employ you, because they can see the skills and all, but they don't know if you will cope in the Canadian market. But the only way one can find that out is being put in there. And for you to get experience. You get back to the same point where the employer wants 20 years of experience but nobody wants to give you that first year of experience. Where are you going to get the 20 years? Work wise, it is difficult (Participant, WHC, Ontario).

I think there are jobs in my field, but it will take time before I can have one. The problem is I have to find a company that will accept me without the Canadian experience and at the same time, give me a chance to start at an entry level, even if my latest job was already on a managerial level (Participant, Welcome Centre, Ontario).

In fact, the lack of Canadian work experience tops the list of constraints for participants throughout Canada and ranks among the top three difficulties identified through the surveys in each of the regions studied. Although some employers refuse to take into consideration work experience gained abroad, others charge that immigrants who apply for an entry-level position are overqualified, relegating these seasoned candidates to an in-between zone with few opportunities.

Several staff members also criticized employers' propensity to give preference to native-born Canadian applicants when making hiring decisions:

Certainly, in general, nothing has changed as far as systemic problems where employers are more comfortable hiring an Ontarian who has got a background here, that they are more comfortable speaking to, whose education and references are easier to confirm. There is a resistance still to taking a new Canadian over somebody who has a proven record here. That has not changed, I would have suspected it should have gotten better, but indeed it has not (ONESTEP, Ontario).

Regional Particularities

In fact, it may prove more difficult to mitigate this difficulty in outlying regions.

And in the more outlying areas, it is perhaps a little more difficult to combat because here in the large centres you have more of an opportunity to get an unpaid placement, or to do some volunteer work, there are more opportunities for that. Where in the smaller communities there are not as much opportunities for volunteering or getting an unpaid placement, that type of thing, so that you can gain some of that experience (ONESTEP, Ontario).

Nonetheless, one community-based trainer from an organization in Quebec insisted on a more nuanced interpretation of the situation:

Oui, on en entend parler, mais je pense que le fait que certains immigrants ne se soient pas trouvé d'emploi, ce n'est pas parce qu'ils n'ont pas d'expérience québécoise. Ça, ça se contourne (SOLIIT, Quebec).

Whether this obstacle is real or imagined, the employers' requirement for Canadian work experience tops the list of the host city's negative aspects, according to the survey participants. Far from being exclusive to outlying regions, this issue has an impact on all newcomers throughout Canada, much as it does on young Canadian graduates looking for a first job. In addition to collaborating with employers in outlying regions to offer newcomers a first job experience in the form of an internship or salaried position, thereby facilitating access to first employment, some organizations, including *Aide et Intégration Jeunesse au Travail* in Quebec, appeal to social enterprises (see Box 4).

BOX 4 – A SOCIAL ECONOMY ENTERPRISE, A FIRST STEP TOWARD EMPLOYMENT

Aide et Intégration Jeunesse au Travail, Mont-Saint-Hilaire, Quebec

A partnership with *Meubletout* and *La Boutique aux Fringues*, two local social enterprises, makes it possible for the AIJT to offer an alternative to its immigrant clients who have difficulty accessing the job market. For four years, this partnership has enabled participants to gain a first-job experience in Quebec and to improve their understanding of French, while providing sustained support with the goal of ensuring smooth job market integration. By addressing the immigrants' lack of Canadian work experience, this springboard into employment receives the usual wage subsidies offered by the Quebec government.

4.4 Pre-Landing Information and Preparation

Some immigration candidates form very high expectations about their post-emigration experience well before arriving in Canada. In fact, according to survey results, 54% of participants expected their Canadian work experience to surpass that of their country of origin.

C'est vrai, c'est sûr qu'avant, c'est différent de ce qu'on s'attend. C'est qu'on a une vision, on se dit : « On va pouvoir avoir ça, on va pouvoir avoir ça, des choses comme ça ». Mais rendus ici, ce n'est pas qu'il y a un choc, mais c'est complètement différent. Tout ce qu'on veut, tout ce qu'on voulait, tout ce qu'on espérait est là, présent. Mais est-ce qu'il est accessible, c'est la question qu'on se demande (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

Canada is a G7 country, socially-oriented society, also welfare excellent, except just that point, you know. As far as I know most of new immigrants, especially skilled worker category, they are well educated. They are a little frustrated, they are disappointed. It is not so easy to find a job, a suitable job. They are dreaming, very beautiful dreaming in Canada but actually, diminution, diminution, diminution because why, my suitable job for my career. That is a problem (Participant, CVIMS, British Columbia).

I had no idea of how unfair, unequal, and partial Canada had become with its own and I am finding it out the hard way. I don't regret being here, but I am disappointed with the official bodies in not painting the true colors of a country of which I was so very proud (Participant, GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

According to many community-based trainers and research project participants, the rhetoric employed to promote Canada abroad fuelled these expectations:

There needs to be a certain amount of responsibility taken by that specific stakeholder in terms of going abroad saying that Canada deserves skilled workers and wants the person to drop friends, family, a career, kids, and embrace a new culture. They come over here and they find out that, indeed, they are not in demand or, if they are, they can't be employed simply because of internal factors, when it comes down to credentials (CVIMS, British Columbia).

We keep telling people, newcomers or foreign-trained professionals, that we need doctors and lawyers and teachers and whatnot. They really shouldn't be saying that, unless... Because people believe that they are going to come and be able to do that. And they can't. So I think we need to do a better job pre-arrival (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

Pre-emigration impressions of the host country vary from one region to another, with Quebec being the province in which reality most failed to meet the participants' high expectations. Despite the fact that Quebec is responsible for the promotion and recruitment of its immigration candidates abroad, once immigrants arrive, perceptions drop precipitously, and for newcomers to Quebec, poor pre-arrival preparation tops the list of difficulties according to the survey:

Le Québec fait beaucoup de publicité pour attirer les étrangers ici. Quand on se fie à la publicité qu'on reçoit soit sur Internet soit dans certains journaux internationaux, on a l'impression que dès que vous venez, le travail vous attend déjà. Ce n'est pas le cas. Ça peut prendre un an. Il y en a bon qui ont plus de chance que d'autres : leur premier job en six mois, cinq mois, deux mois. Mais dans la plupart des cas, ça prend du temps. Quand vous n'avez pas cette information, la réalité à laquelle vous allez être confrontés est très souvent choquante. Il faut vraiment avoir un moral d'acier pour pouvoir surmonter cela (Participant, SOIIT, Quebec).

[Les participants] arrivent ici et nous disent : « Mais pourquoi ils nous disent qu'au Canada, c'est facile de se trouver un emploi et qu'on va être reconnu ? » [...] Ça amène de la frustration, puis il nous faut défaire cet adage-là. C'est nous qui recevons ça et c'est frustrant. Des fois je me dis que c'est vrai qu'il faut être attractif pour conserver notre pouvoir politique, surtout quand on parle d'économie du savoir. Mais est-ce qu'il y aurait un moyen de montrer les autres côtés aussi, de ne pas mettre l'emphasis que là-dessus ? (Accès travail, Quebec)

Il y a comme une inadéquation entre la réalité et le discours qui se prononce à l'étranger ou par les organismes qui entrent en communication avec ces gens-là (Accès travail, Quebec).

When asked about this perceived contradiction between the reality and the vision promoted abroad, two community-based trainers from Quebec pointed out certain nuances:

Est-ce qu'il y a une partie également de ce qu'on leur vend avant d'arriver qui n'est pas tout à fait vrai ? C'est ces questions-là qu'il faut leur poser. Par contre, je peux reconnaître que des fois, on entend bien ce qu'on veut entendre aussi. Donc ils retiennent bien ce qu'ils veulent retenir de ce qu'on leur dit. Ça se joue des deux bords (RQuODE, Quebec).

Pour des immigrants indépendants, il existe tellement de ressources, des blogs, des sites. Sur le site du gouvernement, les gens sont prévenus, il y a des informations sur les ordres professionnels. Je ne dis pas, peut-être qu'il y a dix ans, l'information ne circulait pas autant, mais maintenant, avec tous les moyens qu'on a de s'informer, quand j'entends encore les gens dire : « Je ne le savais pas que c'était comme ça », des fois je me pose des questions. Ou les gens vont peut-être faire du tri sélectif au niveau de l'information (SOIIT, Quebec).

In addition, newcomers often encounter a lack of clear and specific information about the recognition of foreign diplomas. Having completed all the steps in the process for emigrating to Canada, fulfilled the numerous requirements dictated by the federal and provincial governments, and equipped themselves with a skilled-worker designation, economic-class candidates expect to find employment in their field quickly. Several pilot site respondents also criticized the lack of consistency between Canada's admission procedures and criteria and those used to assess diplomas and skills, a criticism echoed by several participants:

My only concern is the part about credential assessment. People need to get direct information. Immigrants need realistic information because they may submit their document and they may be told that, "Yes, you are eligible", but this doesn't mean that they will get a job. It doesn't mean that they will get into their field. The information needs to be clear and immigrants should be given the responsibility for their decisions. They should be taking responsibility based upon really accurate information, and individual cases are different (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Without meeting the minimum point, nobody is eligible to migrate here. The Canadian government has fixed the standards, what type of people they want to bring into Canada. If they meet the minimum standards, then why do they not provide us the relevant job, what I had there. If I am supposed to be a skilled worker, I am not skilled to wash dishes (Participant, MCAF, Atlantic Region).

Consequences

Unfulfilled expectations lead to frustration for newly arrived immigrants, who feel that they have been swindled by the host country's authorities. The combination of these sometimes unrealistic expectations with the system's inherent complexity discourages some candidates:

Usually, people, when they come, they are in a honeymoon phase at the beginning and then, after about six months, they start to... There is some disappointment, maybe some depression (CVIMS, British Columbia).

I mean, my only experience here is that people are really excited to be here and then they get really frustrated because they can't get the jobs they need or they are working in badly placed jobs (GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

BOX 5 – BETTER PREPARATION THROUGH PRE-LANDING SERVICES

Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Since 2009, ISIS has offered several services to immigrants even before they arrive in Canada, including needs assessment and orientation, employment-assistance services, online job-search workshops, information about interview techniques, and language courses. These services are provided by qualified employment counsellors, facilitators, and ESL teachers. In this way, future immigrants receive detailed and realistic information about future employment prospects in the field for which they have been trained, including the certification process required for regulated professions, job-market readiness preparation, and contacts with potential employers. ISIS has recorded a high success rate among the program's participants since launching this pre-emigration initiative.

Unrealistic expectations of the host society can adversely affect the job-market integration of newcomers, who may neglect pre-emigration preparation or lose hope when faced with the actual difficulties of entering the Canadian workforce. To better prepare future immigrants for the integration challenges, Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services, located in Halifax, offers pre-landing services as part of Nova Scotia Start, a provincial government program (see Box 5).

4.5 Shortage of Employment Opportunities in Outlying Regions

In a somewhat unstable economic context, establishing and responding in a timely fashion to the demands of the Canadian job market nationwide can seem complicated. In addition, both the selection criteria put in place by the Canadian government for independent immigration candidates and the significant backlog in the handling of requests amplify the current mismatch between employment supply and demand for immigrants across Canada:

They are planning the big picture. Maybe look at the provincial needs instead of looking at all Canada's needs. In Nova Scotia, when we go and talk to the College of physicians and surgeon, they say we are beyond our capital. We have more than we need for physicians so why are physicians coming to Nova Scotia if there are no opportunities for them? Dentists: in all Canada, everybody says that they don't need dentists but they are recruiting for dentists. We are just creating frustrated people. They thought that they would be able to practice if they passed the exam and then they don't, and even if they pass the exam, there are no spot for them (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

I felt there was a big gap between newcomers demand (ability) and possibility in the job market. I think the services have to focus on narrowing the gap (Participant, MCAF, Atlantic Region).

Despite increasingly higher levels of education and specialization, newly arrived immigrants are having a more difficult time integrating into the job market than their less-qualified predecessors. In 2009, to address the discrepancy created by over-qualified immigrant candidates, the Quebec government modified its selection grid by raising the importance of professional or technical secondary and post-secondary degrees (Boudarbat and Boulet, 2010, p. 24). Opinions remain divided on the actual impact of the revised grid:

Avant, on avait beaucoup plus de gens avec des doctorats, mais pas d'applications possibles; ou des maîtrises, mais pas d'applications possibles, en tout cas pas dans nos entreprises. Il y avait toujours un clivage entre nos besoins et la surqualification de certains travailleurs. Là, c'est plus axé sur nos besoins (Accès travail, Quebec).

Les gens sont toujours autant scolarisés, même s'ils ont changé la grille de sélection. La grille de sélection a été adaptée il y a peut-être quatre ans pour avoir moins de diplômés universitaires, parce que sur le marché du travail, on demande plus des diplômes collégiaux, des DEP. Mais on a autant de scolarisés qu'avant, nos clients sont toujours très scolarisés. 60-65% de notre clientèle a des études postsecondaires et plus (SOLIIT, Quebec).

According to several stakeholders, the gap between supply and demand persists across Canada, but is even more marked in non-urban contexts where employment opportunities remain limited. Respondents in the two surveys, as well as during the interviews conducted in British Columbia and Nova Scotia, mentioned time and again the employment shortage outside metropolitan areas. The lack of employment opportunities in general and for specialized training areas in particular came in sixth and seventh, respectively, in the national ranking of difficulties encountered when seeking employment. In addition, nearly three-quarters (71%) of those surveyed asserted that the lack of employment opportunities is the number one negative aspect of their adopted city. According to respondents in three out of four of the regions studied, the lack of employment opportunities is among the top five challenges experienced by newcomers in a regional context. Quebec, where the issue of meagre employment opportunities was raised by only 18% of the immigrant participants, was the one exception.

Regional Particularities

For immigrants in outlying regions, the lack of diversity of economic sectors along with the limited number of available jobs complicates the employment integration process. Without the right specialization, several participants mentioned that it would be easier to find work in an urban centre:

I met them and they told me after seeing my resume: "Oh you are overqualified. You are not fit for here in Fredericton, because you have 15 years of experience and your qualification. Why don't you go to Toronto or Montreal or Ottawa for corporate office? Your position is prepared for corporate office. We are just doing business here in a small unit. Therefore, where to put you, where to hire you? We don't have exact job here for you". Most of the managers told me that (Participant, MCAF, Atlantic Region).

The lack of employment opportunities is just killing me. I don't really know what to do: should I move to a bigger city to get a job and be unhappy with roundabouts or should I stay in lovely South Okanagan area and die from starvation? (Participant, SOICS, British Columbia)

These remarks were echoed by some employment counsellors who must come to terms with this reality and its attendant disappointments on a daily basis. In more remote communities, the lack of peripheral work opportunities also represents a significant challenge that further shrinks the pool of available jobs:

So employment opportunities, there would certainly be, but will they be as plentiful? It really doesn't matter if the local [job market] is as plentiful; peripheral opportunities are far less [in Sault Ste. Marie], whereas in Welland and in Markham, peripheral opportunities are much greater (ONESTEP, Ontario).

Moreover, the lack of investment outside the major metropolitan areas amplifies the shortage of employment opportunities in outlying regions, as underscored by a community-based trainer from British Columbia:

It is an old city with old thinking. Everyone knows what needs to happen but no one invests. They say there is no money. I say that there is money but everyone is holding on as if they're holding on to a life raft in the Titanic [...] I really believe that that's the downfall. It's that no one is thinking of new ways of fuelling the community and, therefore, the direct and the indirect jobs don't happen. And people don't come (CVIMS, British Columbia).

Other factors aggravate the problem, including the prevalence of seasonal work in several regions whose economies revolve around the exploitation of natural resources or the tourism industry:

And it is not my fault that I can't find a job, I was ready to work right away, but I was laid off, I wasn't allowed, and then I couldn't find a job. Because this area is a seasonal area and seriously, since October until April right now, it is dead, like nothing, absolutely quiet (Participant, SOICS, British Columbia).

It bears mentioning that constraints specific to outlying regions do not just affect immigrants; they have an impact on all those who live outside of the major urban hubs who are sometimes forced to sacrifice their professional careers to enjoy a desirable lifestyle. For candidates not born in Canada, however, there are additional difficulties, including the inaccessibility to certain skilled positions due to national security concerns, an issue brought to the forefront by an employment counsellor in Nova Scotia:

This is a barrier that faces so many foreigners because of the new project with the Department of National Defense, like the shipyard project, IMP project, any electronic project. Because they are all signed by the Department of National Defense, there is a huge security issue. Our clients can't get in if they are not ITAR eligible or if they don't have the highest security clearance. The shipyard is a wonderful place but our clients are the last to be considered. If there is a consideration, except if they are from a non ITAR country. ITAR is a security clearance and if people are born in a specific country, they will never be given the opportunity to work with any project related to the Department of National Defense. It is normal, it is a security issue for the country but it has been difficult. If they are born in Iran, there is no way. Russia, no way. China, no way (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Faced with tough economic times, many immigrants leave their small host municipalities to settle in the country's major cities, which intensifies the urban population concentration. Some households also break up when one parent, unable to find gainful employment, returns to the country of origin in order to support family members still in Canada.

Overall, the socioeconomic benefits of immigration can only be realized if immigration policy reflects, in kind and in volume, the needs of the Canadian job market nationwide, as well the needs specific to the labour market in each destination province. As for the immigration regionalization policy promised by the federal government, ensuring that candidate selection meets the local demand for labour proves to be even more important in smaller regional job markets.

As a complement to the Canadian government's efforts to build a more flexible and rapid immigration system, it is critical to better support regional economies in order to retain more immigrants in outlying regions and encourage increasing numbers of newcomers to settle outside of major Canadian cities.

4.6 Linguistic Difficulties

Ranked eighth among the challenges encountered by those surveyed across Canada, the importance of language proficiency constitutes a significant challenge for newcomers attempting to enter the job market, as the following excerpts demonstrate:

For sure, the English level and depending what they want to do, it can really be a challenge. Sometimes, for them to get into the field they would like to work in, it can be years of studying English and coming here in classes and having a part time job to make some money (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

Employers are constantly saying that one of the challenges or one of the reasons why it is hard to take on an international-trained individual or newcomers is their occupational language skills (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

Difficulties understanding a variety of accents and the influence of the cultural community slow second-language acquisition for the allophone immigrant population and consequently delay entry into the labour market:

The other thing was the accent. I had difficulties in understanding the accent at the beginning and people had the difficulties to understand my accent. Here, I couldn't find solution for that because all of us were immigrants here. Only the teachers are the Canadians and they speak very clearly. I didn't have any problem understanding their accent but when I go out, there was a difficulty for me (Participant, AXIS, Atlantic Region).

One of the most difficult things I find is the language. They will take ESL classes, but never practice English once they leave the ESL classes. Even on breaks, they will talk their native language if they have people there to talk with (WHC, Ontario).

In Quebec and New Brunswick, where bilingualism is a prerequisite for many skilled positions, newcomers face more intense linguistic constraints and the language-acquisition process for numerous allophone immigrants is further complicated:

One other thing I forgot to mention this: New Brunswick is a bilingual province. That is the one I think one of the main reasons to get a job here. Because most of the government jobs are asked bilingual: English and French essential. Even we are weak in English I think, how can I improve my third language? (Participant, MCAF, Atlantic Region)

Par exemple, les ingénieurs qui arrivent d'Amérique latine, c'est des gens qui sont très en ligne avec ce qu'on fait ici. Ils sont arrivés ici, ils ont appris le français. Ils ont un niveau de français intermédiaire, mais ils n'ont pas du tout d'anglais, parce que chez eux, même s'ils étaient responsables de gros projets en Amérique latine, ça se passait 100 % en espagnol. Alors qu'ici, rapidement on va avoir un fournisseur aux États-Unis (SOIIT, Quebec).

All the community-based trainers criticized the lack of sufficient second-language courses, whether for the acquisition of English or French, a criticism echoed by some participants who felt ill-equipped to enter the professional sphere:

Another challenge is that some clients need more time in the language acquisition. They don't always know when they're ready. They think they are ok. But there are four key components of communication and so, I can be a great speaker and not know how to write. I can be a great writer and not know how to listen. So more time needs to be spent. There is not always enough time for language. It is an issue for some clients because they are anxious to get the job before they are actually ready. So that takes more work (AXIS, Atlantic Region).

[La francisation] n'est pas avancée du tout. Puis la problématique qu'on a actuellement, c'est qu'avec les Latino-Américains, le temps de francisation pouvait convenir, mais avec les Irakiens, on a le même temps de francisation qu'avec les Colombiens, mais on a des gens qui parlent arabe, qui n'ont même pas les mêmes lettres. Alors on va avoir un problème au niveau de l'intégration au marché du travail s'ils ne réussissent pas à mieux franciser ces gens-là (Accès travail, Québec).

ESL classes are very short. For example, I was accepted at level 4 and level 4-5 is only 16 weeks, so after class I really felt I needed more ESL classes. My English is not really good enough for real life (Participant, MCAF, Atlantic Region).

In addition to contending with courses that fall short of the demand, some respondents in Ontario also criticized the budget cuts that affected job-specific English-language courses.

Regional Particularities

In areas that are geographically distant from training centres, the limited availability of English or French second-language courses is felt even more acutely, and organizations must occasionally rely on volunteers to teach classes:

There isn't probably enough English language training available. There is some, but people need to take their kids to school and they need to work and do whatever a full life does and it is hard to fit in the little bit of schooling that is available. The Colombia Basin Alliance for Literacy does a lot, but they do it with volunteers and some paid staff, so it is probably limited as well (GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

The main thing, for example, was that my English language was higher than the level that you have an opportunity to help to train. So for myself, I would like to improve my English more than the level that is offered. So probably people who would like to study not the basic level but something more. I would like there to be more suggestions, more opportunities (Participant, GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

And for us, one of our constraints is we do have language classes here because we know it is quite different when you are taking English classes when you are settling in a new country as opposed to taking English at the college because that is more academic English, right? So there is a little bit of a gap there between English you need to settle and English academically. But we only have from literacy to CLB level 4-5. One area we see is there is a real need for CLB level 6-7. We don't have it currently. We have applied to do it and it is something we have been requesting for a very long time, but in those cases we have to rely on volunteers (SOICS, British Columbia).

Similarly, many language tests are only offered in the major urban centres, which means that newcomers who have settled in outlying regions must juggle transportation, accommodations, days off, and childcare in order to take a single linguistic exam:

You will often see courses where you are required to take an exam like the IELTS or the LPI or the TOEFL. Yet, they are not offered in the Okanagan. The only one offered is LPI. For the other two, you need to travel to Vancouver. So there are a lot of challenges I think to being in a smaller community (SOICS, British Columbia).

Consequences

As with the foreign credentials assessment procedures, the process of learning a second language delays entry to the job market for many immigrants, which may over time lead to a loss of skills, particularly for those who work in trades that require a constant renewal of knowledge. Nonetheless, insufficient or impartial proficiency in the official languages may as well lead to the deskilling of immigrant candidates:

Les immigrants qui ne sont pas francophones ont des contraintes importantes, parce qu'ils passent plusieurs mois en francisation. Donc ce sont des gens qui perdent beaucoup de compétences parce qu'ils sont francisés pendant au moins une année. Et souvent, ce n'est pas suffisant le français qu'ils acquièrent. Ce sont souvent des gens qui étaient des professionnels dans leur pays, mais qui arrivent ici et que finalement, à cause du français, ils vont perdre ce statut-là (SOIIT, Québec).

Second-language proficiency, considered a key factor to successful employment integration, requires that newcomers invest a great deal of time, energy and, quite often, financial resources. Encouraging immigrants to settle permanently in outlying regions sometimes proves to be difficult, given the limited language course offerings compared to those available in major cities.

4.7 Lack of Professional Networks

The lack of a professional and social network when seeking employment also poses a challenge for newly arrived immigrants to Canada, as for all newcomers to the labour market:

It is also hard to get a job when you know nobody, like you don't have that kind of wide network of people who can tell you they are looking for an employee here. It is kind of hard to get that information. Go online maybe, it is harder to fill in, because the employees that are working there, they tell all the people in the community: "We are looking for an employee". They just pass the information on them before it reaches you. It is actually difficult (Participant, SCCC, Ontario).

L'autre chose, c'est que pour avoir un poste qui est vraiment approprié aux espérances de la personne, ça prend des contacts. Je trouve que la majorité des entrevues que j'ai passées, j'étais référée par quelqu'un. Comme ils disent, d'ailleurs ils le disent franchement, c'est le « marché caché », il faudrait savoir comment trouver l'emploi qui est caché (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

Regional Particularities

The role of social and professional networks in the economic integration of newly arrived immigrants – a difficulty ranked third overall by those surveyed – becomes even more pronounced in a non-metropolitan context where, to find even unskilled employment, newcomers run up against the hidden job market of small towns. Although building a professional network proves difficult for anyone new to an outlying region, native-born Canadians and immigrants alike, the challenge is particularly daunting for very recent immigrants, many of whom are unaccustomed to the practice of networking:

Another challenge for immigrants: because you are in a smaller community, in terms of employment, networking becomes much more important here. It is a smaller community, especially if you look in the Oliver region, a lot of it is by who you know. So they are really stepping out of their comfort zone and having to take part in networking activities, getting to know people, learning how to basically advertise themselves because we know in many cultures you are taught to be more modest. To talk about yourself in such glowing terms is very much a step outside of their comfort zone. So it is a huge learning curve (SOICS, British Columbia).

I think one of the major challenges that newcomers experience is networking. They feel very self-conscious about their language, even when they reach a certain level of language proficiency, they feel very self-conscious – that is the only way I can put it. It is not natural for them, they feel they are making grammatical mistakes, they are really hard on themselves (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

Once again, immigrants in outlying regions confront a double disadvantage when it comes to establishing a professional network. Many community-based training agencies have developed a variety of innovative strategies to mitigate this lack of professional connections, such as the mentoring program (see Box 6) developed by the *Service d'orientation et d'intégration des immigrants au travail* in Quebec City. Some organizations have also developed business-referral services, job boards, and databases to connect employers and job seekers (see Box 7).

However, the growing need to support mentoring programs, internships, and networking has not yet been addressed in all of the regions studied.

BOX 6 – THE QUÉBEC PLURIEL MENTORING PROGRAM OFFERED BY THE SOIIT

Service d'orientation et d'intégration des immigrants au travail, Quebec City, Quebec

The *Québec Pluriel* mentoring program offers a service that pairs immigrants with regional professionals working in the same field. The objective of the program is to match the participant with a mentor, and then guide their meetings for a fixed period. In addition to sharing knowledge of the Quebec job market and society, the mentors help participants develop their professional network. During meetings, the mentor and the participant explore several subjects – such as the real job-market situation and career-choice evaluation – and exchange ideas about Quebec society and organizational culture, a process that offers effective support during the job-search process. Between 2008 and 2012, through the mentoring program, the SOIIT oversaw 141 professional pairings, paving the way for 96 job placements and 14 cases of participants who resumed their professional training at the end of the program.

BOX 7 – THE AXISCAREERS.NET DATABASE

Association for New Canadians – AXIS Career Services, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador

Since its launch in 2009, AXIScareers.net has become instrumental in matching a talented pool of immigrants with employment opportunities across the province. This skills matching database and online recruitment tool quickly and effectively links job-ready internationally educated workers with employers who are seeking to meet their labour needs. On the one hand, employers are able to post job openings, browse resumes, and find answers to immigration questions and labour market information. On the other hand, job seekers can create a resume, develop an e-Portfolio, apply for jobs posted by registered employers, as well as access information regarding upcoming training and events at AXIS. This tool has assisted AXIS in reaching a wide range of employers in smaller centres and directly supports the e-Employment/Career Counselling initiative.

4.8 Transportation

Transportation constraints, a particular concern in regional contexts, not only have an impact on newcomers but also on everyone who lives in semi-urban or rural areas. Participants ranked transportation as thirteenth among the difficulties they experienced, which reflects the diversity of situations at the 12 observation sites.

While the more densely populated areas, such as the provincial capitals in the Atlantic Region, Quebec City (Quebec), and Markham (Ontario), have more reliable mass transit systems that are efficient and broadly used, the more outlying regions with widely scattered populations struggle to provide sufficiently developed transportation networks:

But if you live in the more remote places, there is no bus transit that goes to the mall, the outlying remote places. Then it means that people who are living there have to have a car to be able to get to town (SCCC, Ontario).

Now when you are looking at outlying areas, there is usually a bus that is once a day going out here and once leaving. So it is very, very limited. If you are working, it makes it difficult to get out to jobs. More so here than in Vancouver, people need to have a drivers' license. It is part of their action plan to get that drivers' license, because without that, you really cut back on the job opportunities that are out there. Because a lot of them do require travel and the transit here is not that reliable (SOICS, British Columbia).

In some regions, including Welland (Ontario) and Mont-Saint-Hilaire (Quebec), transportation between neighbouring cities is fraught with complications:

La difficulté du secteur, c'est qu'il y a très, très peu de transport. Le long de la 116, ça va, donc Saint-Basile et Mont-Saint-Hilaire. Mais Chambly, il n'y a pas du tout de transport en commun pour aller à Chambly de Mont-Saint-Hilaire ou de Saint-Basile. Et puis Saint-Bruno, c'est très compliqué pour aller à Saint-Bruno, ça prend normalement vingt minutes, mais en transport en commun, ça va prendre une heure et demie. Donc c'est vraiment compliqué (AIJT, Quebec).

They have a harder time because there is less accessibility to public transit that can take you within the region, because you have little hubs of transit, but interconnecting the hubs is a little more difficult (ONESTEP, Ontario).

In addition, whatever the local reality, several participants mentioned the costs and time that mass transit involves:

The fact that we are not that accessible to the mainland, it just limits some employment opportunities to some of our clients, although Victoria takes a little bit of that, certainly. It is a burden to go to Vancouver because ferry fares are not cheap (CVIMS, British Columbia).

Beloeil, c'est proche, mais je n'ai pas de voiture. Et le transport, c'est plus cher (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

Consequences

This limited mobility can engender a sense of isolation for immigrants, who may not have access to a car in the months following their arrival:

There is a lot of isolation that happens here, especially if people are working in the agriculture industry. You are often there, you are reliant on other people to get into town most of the time. And so you are isolated, you are on a farm and you don't get to meet people and you don't get exposed as much to the community. And so isolation is a huge challenge I think (SOICS, British Columbia).

These transportation constraints further limit the range of businesses available to job seekers as well as access to training opportunities:

Même les gens qui ont besoin de travailler, qui veulent travailler la journée, mais qui ont besoin de francisation quand même à temps partiel pour approfondir leurs connaissances du français, bien du coup, ils laissent un petit peu tomber parce que c'est trop loin et que le soir, ils ne peuvent pas se permettre de faire une heure et demie de route juste pour aller en cours de français (AIJT, Quebec).

In brief, the inadequacy of mass transit systems outside of major urban centres complicates the employment integration process for newcomers who have no other means of

BOX 8 – WELCOME CENTRE'S MOBILE SERVICES

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services – Job Skills, Markham, Ontario

Since 2010, as part of the reception services offered, the Welcome Centres in the York region have joined forces to develop and deploy two mobile units that provide services to the centres as well as to surrounding communities. As a result, services provided in the Welcome Centre System are mirrored and supplied to outreach locations via fixed (Gateway) or ad hoc (Satellite) locations. These mobile employment-assistance services support and enhance Job Search Workshops (JSW) Program materials (also itinerant) and Resource Area Support. By connecting rural communities throughout the region to immigrant services offered by Welcome Centres – such as career exploration, CV-writing assistance and interview prep –, the mobile units alleviate some of the transportation problems many newcomers experience.

transportation. In order to address the issue of limited transportation options, some organizations offer mobile services to outlying regions (see Box 8).

4.9 Access to Specialized Services

In addition to being unfamiliar with the intricacies of Canadian society, many newcomers encounter cultural differences in their daily lives, that can sometimes be quite extreme:

The different cultures, they have a tendency to behave in different ways that someone who is not culturally smart or someone who's not culturally intelligent is not going to understand. Such as not looking someone in the eyes when they speak, not because they are trying to hide something but because it is a sign of respect (CVIMS, British Columbia).

Very recent immigrants experience the same difficulties as all job seekers; however, they also face special challenges that include navigating an unfamiliar culture, complications related to foreign credentials and prior skills assessment, as well as language issues. Faced by the complexity of the employment integration process in a context of social and cultural estrangement, the tools and experience available to mainstream training agencies are all too often inadequate:

I think what people don't understand is that immigrants have got special needs. What I mean by special needs is not that they are not capable but they may have language issues and the mainstream Canadian services, if they are not aware of immigrant barriers, if they are not aware of credential assessment issues, if they are not aware of the cultural background that they are coming with and the cultural diversity these people come with, the services won't be good. It won't be respectful, it won't take into consideration their background (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

But some of the drawbacks that happened is that if a new Canadian does go to a site where there is someone with very little experience in dealing with a newcomer, then they are getting the standard assistance that you would get. And there are definitely greater needs when it comes to a new Canadian (ONESTEP, Ontario).

I can tell you from personal experience... Once I had the opportunity to sit on a mainstream job search workshop and I went to check how it is different than our workshops. The difference is huge. There is no mentioning of different cultures. Our clients, most of the time, if they lose their jobs, sometimes, with employers, it is because they are not aware of the Canadian workplace culture. This is something we teach. We tell them what to expect. We tell them to reflect from their own countries to the new culture. So, if they are getting the same service as the mainstream Canadians, this is not taking into consideration their needs (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Recounting many stories of immigrant clients who have fallen between the system's cracks, the community-based trainers surveyed emphasized the need to offer specialized programs to immigrants, especially newcomers:

We are very necessary to their adjustment to a new country, we are very necessary to the success or at least to a parallel success of what they will have to face in order to get that job and to get themselves working in the country (CVIMS, British Columbia).

Adapted orientation within the first months of landing coupled with a personalized follow-up provides decisive and promising results: such an approach lowers the risk of prolonged deskilling and a muddled job-market integration that engenders frustration and discouragement. In this regard, the vast majority of the study's participants recognize the relevance of specialized services for newcomers:

About immigrants here, don't forget about us and the help with employment. Because seriously we need help, because on our own, it is very difficult to get a job (Participant, SOICS, British Columbia).

As I mentioned earlier, service needs for different categories of newcomers are different. So, first they have to identify what there are immediate requirement and long term requirement, and create programs accordingly (Participant, AXIS, Atlantic Region).

Similarly, refugees and asylum seekers merit particular attention. The crisis situations in their countries of origin, often combined with a long stays in refugee camps, lead to traumas that have an impact on their integration in Canada. In many cases, besides having their education or professional careers interrupted, refugees often find themselves unable

to document their education, which further complicates the recognition process. In addition to these issues, there are also application processing delays, including processing work permits for asylum seekers, as well as automatic ineligibility for certain government or institutional programs. It should also be noted that the immigrant profiles selected for humanitarian reasons do not necessarily match the needs of the labour market in the host region. These factors contribute to the refugees' singular status, a status that requires community-based training agencies to offer the appropriate support and follow-up services:

Lots of refugees don't arrive with much, you know, in their pocket. Finances are often quite challenging. Government-assisted refugees may also face challenges in terms of their background in education. We are seeing quite a large number of clients are coming with literacy needs, which means they are not educated or haven't gone to school even in their own language. So not only learning how to read and write but also read and write in English. Mental health issues, health needs. [...] So when it comes to employment, there is a difference between doing employment counseling with somebody who is a refugee and doing employment counseling with somebody who is a professional, an engineer or a doctor or computer engineer (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Ultimately, in addition to offering immigrant reception and settlement services in every region, it seems essential that specialized services be developed and maintained, not undermined through restructuring and budget cuts. Moreover, to provide services that reflect the unique reality of each immigrant class, it is important to recognize the specific attributes of each category.

4.10 Discrimination

More than a third of those who participated in the second survey (37%) confirmed having fallen victim to discrimination, primarily in the work environment (63%). On the national scale, however, only 11% of those surveyed mentioned discrimination, ranked fourteenth, as a difficulty encountered while seeking employment:

Au début, c'était un peu difficile à cause de la couleur de ma peau noire, mais avec le temps, ils commencent par s'habituer (Participant, Accès travail, Quebec).

The community is kind of challenging to get into. They will all think that you are not from here. And when you are not from here, it goes back again to that kind of mistrust. Nobody knows you (Participant, SCCC, Ontario).

I feel that not growing up here makes it more challenging as many people I meet are born and raised in the area (Participant, GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

Several community-based trainers echoed the gist of these comments and also deplored the lack of openness of some members of the host community:

Well, I think that is not the host community itself, but I think that many people are unaware of the value and benefits that immigrants offer to our communities because there is that simple sort of perspective of "they are going to come in and take our jobs". And that sounds so outdated but that is still a mindset that exists. And it simply isn't true (GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

People are still very ignorant of the benefits of allowing our city to grow by allowing newcomers or embracing newcomers when they come here. And that is why some people still feel it is them against us, or us against them (SCCC, Ontario).

According to an employment counsellor in Quebec, discrimination is often tied to a lack of knowledge about the other, an ignorance which is sometimes mutual:

Il peut y avoir du racisme aussi, ça, on ne se le cachera pas, mais en soi, ce n'est peut-être pas à Québec une grosse problématique. Des fois, ça va être de la méconnaissance, je vous dirais même de part et d'autre. Le fait cocasse que je retrouve des fois, j'ai des clients qui vont me dire : « Ah, la personne était raciste, je n'ai pas été retenu en emploi ». Puis quand on creuse un petit peu plus loin, on se rend compte que la personne n'a peut-être pas fait non plus tout ce qu'il fallait pour bien performer en entrevue (SOIIT, Quebec).

Xenophobia, racism, and intolerance toward refugees and immigrants are all closely related and may touch every facet of daily life, including schools and access to housing. At a national level, discrimination in hiring or in the workplace also has an impact on the economic integration of many newcomers:

I think just my name because I am qualified and I have the accreditation from the ICES. I think my name is a huge obstacle, because my name is very, very foreign (Participant, SOICS, British Columbia).

Heavier racism here than expected. Canadian employers generally do not recognize overseas working experience. Most high level positions are reserved to Caucasians. Sad to say this is an unwritten rule (Participant, Welcome Centre, Ontario).

BOX 9 – A MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL PROMOTING CULTURAL EXCHANGE

South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS), British Columbia

Originally developed to raise awareness about cultural diversity in the South Okanagan region, the SOIC Multicultural Festival features a parade as well as dance and musical shows and other forms of entertainment from various local cultural groups. In 2011, the opening ceremonies welcomed a number of local, provincial, federal and Aboriginal dignitaries for the signing of the *South Okanagan Similkameen Community Diversity Protocols*, whose goals are to broaden local awareness of diversity and further recognize the needs of a population with diverse backgrounds. The festival has provided an opportunity for local cultural groups to show pride in their heritage and be a visible presence in the community, while learning to embrace the commonalities shared by all cultures and all Canadians. More than 100 artists, volunteers, and vendors participate in this popular event each year.

We had one employer [...] who said: "You have some very good qualified people here, but unfortunately, I can't offer them anything because they have an accent". That is what he said. He said they have an accent-free policy. An accent-free policy within the institution! (SCCC, Ontario)

The community has not been very open. Because sometimes you can see a job being posted over and over and over again. And we have clients who can qualify for that job, but you are wondering how come the resume has been sent and you don't get a response? You realize that you are working with an employer who is not receptive to newcomers, somebody who has foreign credentials, somebody who speaks with an accent, it is not going to be easy (SCCC, Ontario).

Some participants deplored the influence of mass media, which sometimes disseminates negative, cliché-ridden images of immigrants:

Les mass médias doivent informer correctement, en dehors de ce qui se fait. Vous trouvez quelqu'un qui va là-bas pour faire son ONG. Il vous amène des gens, des enfants nus qu'il a trouvés dans un coin. C'est tout ce qu'il fait pour marchander son projet, pour qu'il soit financé. Mais il y a des choses qu'il faut prendre en considération, des bonnes choses aussi pour l'Afrique. On doit aussi en parler. Je ne dis pas qu'il n'y a pas de mauvaises choses en Afrique. Non, il y en a des mauvaises, mais il y en a aussi des bonnes choses. Mieux vaut équilibrer pour donner la réelle position de l'Afrique. Comment cela influence la vie des immigrants ici ? Il est dédaigné partout où il passe comme quelqu'un qui vient d'un pays pauvre (Participant, Accès travail, Quebec).

Looking at the larger system, some of the federal government's positions and policies, particularly those relating to refugees, may fuel the fear of racial groups:

It is a delicate thing to say, but some of the recent changes around immigration at a federal level and the communication around that have put all the immigrants in kind of a negative perspective. [...] The communication around bogus claims, around refugees, demonizes immigration on a macro level. Especially in a province like Nova Scotia that has entered into the immigration field rather tentatively. It creates unnecessary obstacles in terms of public education (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Discrimination, although not rampant, persists in a more or less noticeable form despite efforts made over the past decades. The problem of discrimination, while experienced nationwide, is more pronounced in regions less accustomed to cultural diversity.

Regional Particularities

Several participants gave glowing accounts of the reception they received in their host community; however, and without generalizing about all outlying regions, it is important to emphasize that discriminatory behaviours and practices still continue in some non-metropolitan areas:

As much as you have seen the diversity growing and newcomers are visible and different cultures and different festivals and presence is here, it is still fairly not culturally diverse and fairly old fashioned. So there might be even still some resistance to newcomers and what are newcomers and why they are here? Are they taking my job? Some of those things that we still have to deal with (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

I think it takes time. I think the local people need to be more culturally sensitive about it. I think that immigrants try their best to integrate to the local community. They make an effort to be the best neighbours for people who live there for a long time. I would say that they just get used to it or need to be more aware of the culture differences especially in this town. I would say that when I am working at the hotel, I see that people don't see me as a foreigner like kind of the Ontario area. They are used to different races but if you see someone from rural New Brunswick and I see the people looking at me like: "Oh, she is Asian". I choose to live here so I have to deal with it and I know it is new to them. I know that. I guess people need to see more about the different people. It really depends on where you grew up too. I can't really blame on people who grew up in rural New Brunswick. You can't really go anywhere (Participant, MCAF, Atlantic Region).

Or sometimes they ask me so you have to marry your boyfriend to be able to stay in Canada. Like no, I have my own papers. I don't need my boyfriend or any other. So I had those kind of comments. And I think it is funny. I don't really care because I have done my things and I know I am going to be successful and I know I am going to have friends, but that only shows that people in smaller cities are more closed to information and they assume things. They are kind of scared, you know, of immigrants like aliens or something (Participant, SOICS, British Columbia).

What the community lacks is awareness: awareness about the potential diversity and awareness about where Canada is coming from. Because many people don't even realize that we are actually facing a shortfall in our population and that is why. The government is really bringing newcomers from everywhere to come and fill in that gap. And when they come here, they are not coming to take anything from you. They are coming to be part of the community. They are coming to contribute to the social and economic well-being of that society. And at the end, it is a win-win situation for me and for you (SCCC, Ontario).

BOX 10 – CREATING WELCOMING COMMUNITIES

Greater Trail Community Skills Centre, Trail, British Columbia

The Greater Trail Community Skills Centre has been a lead agency in the *Welcoming Communities Partnership* for the West Kootenay Boundary developing face-to-face and e-learning training for community members who act as the first points of contact for immigrants and other newcomers to the region. The Skills Centre also supported the development of the WelcomeMap website, which features resources in each of the larger communities that would be of interest or value to newcomers, a tool which is now featured on the British Columbia's government website. By raising community awareness about the newcomers' challenges in a regional context, the goal of these different tools is to create a friendlier environment.

Some community-based trainers underscored the improvements they had seen over the years, primarily thanks to the different cultural diversity workshops and multicultural festivals organized in several regions (see Box 9), efforts that they insisted must continue. To this end, British Columbia's government set up the Welcoming Communities Initiative, implemented by some community-based agencies, including the Greater Trail Community Skills Centre (see Box 10). According to these trainers, changing attitudes toward immigrants requires increased awareness and education – not only at the local level, but also at the provincial and national level.

4.11 Isolation

In addition to the many constraints related to the job market, social integration has its own challenges:

Of course, every immigrant will go through the settlement challenges and, you know, sometimes integration is not very easy and it depends on so many things: on personal attributes like age and ethnic background, cultural background, and past experiences. It is just generally talking about settlement challenges that I guess everybody is going through. Sometimes the integration is not very easy. There was a research done on integration and, I think, 15 Somali women are asked to describe what is the integration implying for them and one said: "It looks like you come to the country where everybody has one eye and you have to take one out to become the same". It very strongly describes what integration can look like (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

In this way, cultural communities – whether by their presence or absence – play an important role in the integration process of very recent immigrants. During the first years of settlement, members of an ethnic group can support a newcomer through the social and occupational integration process:

What I hear from working directly with immigrants is that they are here because it is diverse, because they can participate in society while at the same time connecting with their community back home. There is a long history of established immigrants here and they are coming here because they have family here, they have friends here, and they feel comfortable here because they can speak English and speak their language. And enjoy all the food, the Canadian food, all their food and traditions from home. Throughout the year, you have all these celebrations that occurred, it is marvelous (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

Nonetheless, a large or influential ethnic community can impede social and occupational integration for newcomers due to certain members of the community exerting negative pressure, or by the creation of ethnic enclaves:

Je pense également qu'il y a une forte influence de la communauté culturelle qui vit ici, quand la personne qui arrive ici vient rejoindre sa communauté. Il y a encore de la désinformation ou de la surinformation qui passe par là (RQuODE, Quebec).

BOX 11 – RIVERS DAY, AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AND SHARE

Greater Trail Community Skills Centre, Trail, British Columbia

Recognizing both the value of the Columbia River to the community's economic and social development and the historic lack of appreciation for the river, the Skills Centre staff have volunteered their time to create an annual *Celebrate the Columbia Day*, which takes place on BC's Rivers Day. The celebration has taken different forms over the years, including a festival in the park with display booths and music attracting between 700 and 1,500 participants, a sand castle competition, and kayak demonstrations. This annual event, in addition to removing more than 112,000 pounds of garbage from the shoreline, fosters relationships between community members and newcomers.

C'est pour ça qu'on essaie d'intervenir le plus tôt possible avec les clients, pour ne pas effectivement qu'ils se fassent ramasser par leur propre communauté, qui peut être très positive, mais souvent plus néfaste qu'autre chose. Parce que souvent les communautés ont une influence assez négative : les gens qui travaillent ne sont pas disponibles, donc quand les nouveaux arrivants arrivent, ils vont rencontrer souvent les gens qui sont disponibles le jour, donc ceux qui ne travaillent pas, ceux qui rencontrent des difficultés (SOIIT, Quebec).

The other concern that I have is they get into their little cultural groups and rarely do they want to go outside of those cultural groups, and that is not integration. So we have to do a better job at helping them to integrate. That is the major downside I see for them when they get into their little Italy, little Greece and little Colombia. It very much does exist. We have to encourage them to go outside of their comfort zone for their own good, in order for them to succeed at what they want to do. You see generations where the older ones still don't know how to speak English and they have been here for years and years and years (WHC, Ontario).

On the other hand, the absence of ethnic communities in outlying regions where immigration is a relatively recent phenomenon can have both negative and positive impacts. In some cases, sparse ethnic populations outside metropolitan areas can increase adaptation difficulties for newcomers, who lose their cultural frame of reference:

Des inconvénients, c'est par rapport aux communautés, pour trouver des Marocains, des gens de sa propre culture, par rapport aux fêtes. Des fois, on a de la nostalgie pour faire nos fêtes et tout ça et nos coutumes, parce qu'il n'y a pas assez de regroupements de familles et de communautés ici. Il faudrait être plus vers Montréal et ses régions, Longueuil et tout (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

Because we are such a small community, if you are Iranian, just as an example, there are not that many other Iranians in this area so there isn't an alternative to your integration you know. You can't have a day off and go hang out with your friends and have a big buffet and meet some of your social needs. Because I think that is a really hard piece for people. You are communicating with people in your second language and your expressive vocabulary is perhaps not that good. You are not able to speak complicated concepts and you can't talk politics really, because basic ESL doesn't really get a lot into political abstracts and that kind of stuff. So I think that not having that whole cultural community as an option is hard. It doesn't have to be the majority, it just means you need a few people and we are just not big enough (SOICS, British Columbia).

A widely scattered ethnic population, however, may prevent cultural ghettoization and promote the creation of a multi-ethnic society through multicultural immigrant service centres:

I think they feel welcomed. There are opportunities for them and it is easy to integrate within the community here. Unlike in Toronto, you'll find the Chinese in Chinatown, you'll find the Polish group. It is nice, it is a beautiful thing to go and see in the communities but I feel like immigration is about integration. About living in the community and exchanging cultural background and knowledge and I feel that, in Nova Scotia, there is a lot of integration. Like people are mingling and living together (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

I think I have a community, but it is not so big and it is easy to get together. I think if I were living in Toronto, there would be a Japanese community, a Korean community, many communities. I think if I lived in Toronto, I would just make Japanese friends. But here, I can make friends from many countries. It is nice (Participant, SCCC, Ontario).

While the low population densities found in outlying regions foster close relationships and may have certain advantages, the absence of cultural communities combined with transportation constraints, linguistic issues, and the host society's biases can trigger a sense of isolation among newly arrived immigrants:

Ce dont je suis déçue aussi, je pensais qu'on aurait un réseau social plus rapidement. Parce que là, en fait, on commence à avoir des amis ici. Et ça fait un an et demi. Moi je trouve ça super long. Enfin, je suis quelqu'un qui a besoin de parler aux autres (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

Given the significant personal changes that occur during the migration process, isolation can lead to emotional, familial, or psychological problems. For instance, many community-based trainers who assist an immigrant clientele pointed to an increased number of divorces filed in recent years.

In addition to hampering the job-search process, the time it takes to build a social network where no ethnocultural community is yet established can leave newcomers vulnerable to a feeling of isolation. A great deal of work remains to promote diversity in outlying communities through open exchanges between local and immigrant residents. To this end,

several agencies organize social networking activities with the larger community (Box 11) and with other immigrants (Box 12).

BOX 12 – INTERGENERATIONAL ACTIVITIES TO COMBAT SOCIAL ISOLATION

Accès travail, Victoriaville, Quebec

As part of the *Milieux en action* project, whose goal was to motivate individuals distant from the labour market, *Accès travail* helped 15 immigrant participants accomplish a group project intended to pave the way toward employment. With the goal of contributing to their community, program participants organized a variety of leisure activities to bring together several generations of immigrants. Funds raised by selling food at a neighbourhood festival – a group volunteer effort – defrayed the costs of these informal get-togethers. In addition to combating the social isolation experienced by seniors in the Drummondville immigrant community, these intergenerational activities make it possible to create broader social ties. Since the end of the *Milieux en action* project, the initiative was adopted by another community-based group in the region.

4.12 Conclusion and Potential Solutions

Ultimately, newcomers to Canada must tackle multiple constraints and limitations throughout their employment integration process, including non-recognition of skills and foreign education credentials, difficulties relating to the acquisition of one and sometimes two languages, and the absence of a professional network. In a non-metropolitan context, very recent immigrants face additional challenges such as transportation issues, distance from major training centres, and the host community's lack of familiarity with ethnic diversity. Despite these challenges, widely scattered immigration has its advantages, as much for the newcomer as for the host community:

I think we had a client that left here and had gone to Toronto. And when we look and we compare them with those who stayed, those who stayed have homes, those up there do not, in Toronto. Those that stayed, professionally, they are moving up, those that went up there may never have gotten into their professions. When you look at it, their settlement and their language skills are better if they have stayed here. That is also an advantage because they have had to use their English more whereas, if they go where those enclaves are, they can speak their first language and never really progress beyond that. That is really the advantage for anyone (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

To truly benefit from the advantages of immigration regionalization, it is important to really look at outlying regions, to recognize their particular challenges and to act accordingly, as one participant from British Columbia points out:

Immigrants in places other than major urban areas suffer more hardships and are deprived of the same opportunities as those living in metropolitan areas. I hope that it results in a change in the distribution of resources to those who need it and not just through the policy of location. I am sure people like myself are hundreds if not thousands, and that if we were given the same chances and opportunities as in large cities, we would bring more development to less populated regions of this beautiful country, we would enrich the culture and promote better understanding among all, for we are here by choice, and with more chances we would do more than survive (Participant, GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

Having identified the various impediments to newcomers' socioeconomic integration in outlying regions, attention can now be placed on a brief exploration of potential solutions suggested by participants and staff members from the 12 pilot sites.

By focusing primarily on the issues of prior-education recognition, employer involvement, raising awareness in the host society, and poor preparation of immigration candidates, some suggestions emerge to facilitate the employment integration process for newcomers. Since these potential solutions have already received a fair amount of attention in the conventional literature, it hardly seems necessary to conduct a detailed inventory. In light of the data collected in the course of this study, however, a few guidelines from the project's participants and community-based trainers deserve mention.

Facilitating the Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

According to the vast majority of participants, the recognition of prior learning and skills, often a long and costly process, constitutes the primary obstacle to employment integration. Given these conditions, it seems imperative that a national dialogue be initiated – supported by the inter-provincial consultations – to bring together representatives from the government, professional orders, the job market and community-based organizations in order to build efficient communication channels between all the stakeholders and to eliminate superfluous barriers. A clear and uniform procedure combined with transparent and efficient redress mechanisms in the event of potentially unfair treatment would considerably reduce the current delays in the skills-recognition process.

Several possible solutions emerge, from strengthening the role of the commissioners tasked with assessing the fairness of skills recognition and handling complaints, to standardizing the process throughout all the provinces. In the meantime, increased financial support from various levels of government, which might include educational grants and loans to eliminate delays caused by trying to juggle work and studies, would make it possible for many immigrants to gain rapid access to quality employment. Successful employment integration, which benefits both the individual immigrant and his or her family, as well as the host society in general, depends on the appropriate recognition of skills acquired abroad, hence the importance of redoubling efforts to create a simpler, quicker, and more just process.

Promoting Employer Engagement

In order to dissolve many of the barriers to economic integration experienced by newcomers, it is critical to heighten employer motivation through targeted awareness-raising campaigns designed to promote the added value and skills of newly arrived immigrants. These communication strategies, implemented on a regional, provincial, and national level, and developed in collaboration with business and community stakeholders, would also help demystify the requirements and challenges of the skills recognition process.

In addition to allowing newcomers to gain Canadian work experience and expand their professional network, the development or expansion of a work internship program would address employer's needs to evaluate an immigrant candidate's skills before offering permanent employment. The participation of provincial ministries and Citizenship and Immigration Canada remains essential to the implementation of such a program on a national scale.

Along the same lines, many participants suggested that immigrant-assistance organizations could organize more networking activities and information sessions, and invite potential employers from various economic sectors to participate.

In general, strengthened employer engagement would help reduce the many problems encountered by very recent immigrants, specifically the lack of professional experience and of a professional network in Canada.

Creating Friendlier Communities

Besides employment integration difficulties, newcomers to Canada find themselves facing numerous personal and social integration challenges. Discrimination toward immigrants, frequently stemming from ignorance, can take a variety of insidious forms and engender permanent prejudice. To change xenophobic attitudes, educating the host society about the benefits of immigration and cultural diversity has proven to be an effective approach. With a long history of immigration – based in part on the contribution immigrants make to socioeconomic development – Canada must share its vision of a multicultural society with the entire population, not just with the inhabitants of Canada's major cities:

Éduquer et informer les Canadiens de souche sur les difficultés et le courage des nouveaux arrivants pour qu'ils puissent comprendre et adhérer à la politique du pays au niveau de l'immigration, une société multiculturelle doit se voir partout dans les lieux de travail, dans les services communautaires, dans les services de santé et gouvernementaux (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

Along with regional community initiatives, national awareness-raising campaigns would help foster the welcoming spirit already embraced by many stakeholders throughout the host societies. At the local level, community-based training organizations and immigrant-serving agencies hope that all stakeholders will pull together around this priority in order to strengthen non-metropolitan communities' ability to attract and retain newcomers.

Creating pairing or volunteer opportunities would go a long way toward building cross-cultural communication channels, breaking down prejudices, and generating a sense of belonging for newcomers. To that end, a participant in Quebec suggested setting up *"un système de familles d'accueil pour les nouveaux arrivants, c'est-à-dire, mettre les nouveaux arrivants en contact avec des familles locales qui vont les aider à combattre l'isolement, à s'intégrer plus facilement"* (a system of welcome families for newcomers, that is, put newly arrived immigrants in contact with local families who will help them combat isolation and integrate more easily) (Participant, SOIIT, Quebec). Mentoring programs that pair well-established immigrants with newcomers would also be a way of tackling isolation and fostering information exchange.

Providing Better Information to Newcomers

Given the numerous challenges encountered during the immigration process, candidates should have advance access to quality information as early as possible. A lack of such information may compromise pre-immigration preparation and hamper post-immigration integration. According to this community-based trainer in the Atlantic Region, all future newcomers should be afforded personalized coaching as soon as Canadian governmental authorities issue an authorization to immigrate:

I would like to encourage the government to look at pre-arrival services and encourage it as much as they can. Maybe even on a national base. And the pre-arrival services, through settlement agencies, are the best because they have the ability to work one on one with the client either through Skype or Adobe Connect. There is a way to reach clients. When they end up with this information before arrival, they will come much more prepared. So encourage pre-arrival services (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Whether provided through live sessions in the country of origin or from a distance by using technology, accurate information about the foreign credential equivalency process, the Canadian educational system, the local job market, and the cost of living in Canada enables newcomers to weed out the false rumors circulating via informal networks and to arrive in Canada better equipped with all the necessary documents, thereby avoiding many frustrations. While the initial investment may be higher, establishing an interpersonal relationship between the immigrant candidate and the welcome organization in his or her future host community as soon as government authorization is received not only proves to be cost effective in the long-term, but also reduces pitfalls and high workloads caused by poor preparation. Regardless of how it is communicated, all the community-based trainers stressed the importance of offering clear information tailored to the needs of the different client groups.

In addition, according to the participants and trainers surveyed, while it is important to ensure that airport and customs facilities promote newcomers' services, it is also essential that the information guides list organizations and agencies by region. To encourage long-term settlement in outlying regions, it is also clear that all host regions should offer immigrant support services:

Ensure there is "Welcome Wagon" service. As far as I know, there are no official settlement services in the area - it would be helpful if there was (Participant, GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

I think that settlement services are really essential in every community. Because if people cannot meet their basic needs or organize what a basic family life requires to function, then they can't settle in. And then, if the community, of course, is unaware of what those needs are then those people won't stay (GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

Better knowledge and understanding of how the host society works, combined with the solutions proposed, would help avoid some employment integration pitfalls for newly arrived immigrants in Canada. Given all the attendant forces and complexities involved, mobilizing host communities and employers, streamlining the process for the recognition of prior learning and skills, and better preparing immigrant candidates alone cannot ensure seamless integration. Luckily, immigrant assistance and employability organizations and agencies exist to support newcomers throughout their integration experience.

Challenges Faced by Employability Training Organizations in a Regional Context

We need to keep reminding people in Toronto that it doesn't all happen in Toronto. In fact, it happens better in the smaller communities because it is more hands-on and we know them and they are part of the family. It is part of the structure. We have the contacts because we can get them at our fingertips to do better work for those people. We can get them anything that they need. We work with church groups to get furniture, beds. Ok, you want a bed? We can get one for you and you can have it by tomorrow. So it is being in that small community which you get the reaction time much faster.

(WHC, ONTARIO)

5.1 Introduction

As state-sponsored social service agencies, community-based employability training organizations working with immigrants must themselves overcome several obstacles when operating in a non-metropolitan context. The constraints agencies encounter vary depending on geographic location, local socioeconomic conditions, and government infrastructure, and result as much from the administrative framework and how programs are defined as they do from the involvement of multiple stakeholders and obstacles specific to some outlying communities.

Anchored primarily in the information compiled during semi-structured interviews held with employment counsellors and directors at the participating organizations, this chapter examines the foremost challenges faced by community-based training agencies located outside major Canadian cities. This chapter also provides an opportunity to identify certain best practices implemented by the participating organizations and develop some potential solutions based on the feedback provided by those surveyed. It is worth mentioning that the framing of issues in this chapter is primarily informed by the top ten challenges identified by the participating organizations during regional roundtables (Table 21).

Once again, it is important to note that this analysis is the result of a nonprobability sample drawn from 12 pilot sites across Canada. The diversity of profiles represented, however, allows us to highlight a wide range of situations while underscoring the similarities and differences between the regions and subregions.

Table 21. Principal Challenges Encountered by Community-Based Employability Training Organizations Working Newcomers According to Respondents from the Pilot Sites

#	BRITISH COLUMBIA	ONTARIO
1	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE DIFFERENT PROGRAMS	FINANCIAL CUTS
2	ANNUAL FUNDING (FLUCTUATIONS)	COMPLEX AND LABORIOUS BIDDING PROCESS
3	INVOLVEMENT OF EMPLOYERS	ANNUAL FUNDING (VS MULTI-YEAR)
4	LIMITED NUMBER OF NEWCOMERS IN THE REGION	RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
5	SIZE OF THE TERRITORY TO COVER	RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
6	RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	MULTIPLICITY OF ACTORS
7	RETENTION OF IMMIGRANTS IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT	INVOLVEMENT OF EMPLOYERS
8	TIME LIMIT WITH EACH CLIENT	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE DIFFERENT PROGRAMS
9	COMPLEX AND LABORIOUS BIDDING PROCESS	ONGOING TRAINING FOR THE COUNSELLORS
10	MULTIPLICITY OF ACTORS	RECOGNITION OF SPECIALIZED SERVICES
#	QUEBEC	ATLANTIC
1	RECOGNITION OF SPECIALIZED SERVICES	ANNUAL FUNDING
2	RELATION WITH PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT	MULTIPLE FUNDERS
3	LACK OF FUNDING	LIMITED NUMBER OF NEWCOMERS IN THE REGION
4	LACK OF HUMAN RESOURCES	COMPLEXITY OF ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS
5	DIFFERENT OBJECTIVE OF THE FUNDERS (SHORT TERM)	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE DIFFERENT PROGRAMS
6	INVOLVEMENT OF EMPLOYERS	DIFFERENT OBJECTIVE OF THE FUNDERS (SHORT TERM)
7	MULTIPLICITY OF ACTORS	RECOGNITION OF SPECIALIZED SERVICES
8	DIFFICULT PARTNERSHIP	MULTIPLICITY OF ACTORS
9	DIFFICULT REFERENCING	ONGOING TRAINING FOR THE COUNSELLORS
10	RETENTION OF IMMIGRANTS IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT	LACK OF HUMAN RESOURCES

5.2 Funding

Echoing other studies conducted in the community sector in general, and in the employability training sector in particular, the majority of respondents reiterated the need for increased funding from both provincial and federal sources:

I guess one of the main challenges is funding! Always trying to access it, always trying to make sure that we have sustainable programs, that we are providing services the clients need and determining what their needs are. That is one of the biggest challenges. There never seems to be enough of us to do all the work (AXIS, Atlantic Region).

The actual funding formula, we believe to be broken. It doesn't provide sufficient funds for many of the clients who require more assistance (ONESTEP, Ontario).

This need manifests in several ways, including unadjusted contracts, lack of necessary funding to achieve the basic organizational mission, and insufficient human resources to meet the demand for services.

Many organizations recommended an increase in funding earmarked for community-based training agencies so as not to lose the gains made or the expertise developed by those working in the sector – a loss that would undermine services specifically designed to ensure economic integration for immigrants:

Le financement n'est pas suffisant, on vit avec une fourchette qui est là depuis plus de cinq ans, ça n'a plus de bon sens. Ça n'a plus de bon sens. C'est la principale, la plus grosse et c'est presque quasiment la seule contrainte qu'on a, nous, pour pouvoir faire évoluer nos services de façon correcte. Parce qu'on a fixé ça à 1700 \$, ça fait déjà cinq ans et puis on ne peut plus bouger de là. Ok ? Ça, il faut revoir ça totalement à la hausse (SOIIT, Quebec).

In some provinces, certain community-based organizations participating in the study also criticized the lack of funding for the core mission:

Year-by-year funding. And that none of the funding is core in a sense. Like a recognition that the agencies have value in themselves, because they are centres of expertise around immigration. So that is not tapped into: it is still project, project, project (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

On n'a pas de budget pour faire du réseautage, de la concertation. On fait tout ça sur notre bras comme on dit. De toute façon, ce n'est pas propre juste aux organismes qui travaillent avec les personnes immigrantes, tous les organismes qui sont en lien avec Emploi-Québec, on n'a aucun sous pour notre mission de base. Donc c'est très exigeant au niveau de l'investissement de temps qui est nécessaire, mais qui n'est pas reconnu (Accès travail, Quebec).

Insufficient funding also leads to understaffing within organizations that then frequently juggle over-scheduling and long waiting lists:

It is a staff problem always: too few people to do everything (SOICS, British Columbia).

You can't give regular follow-ups because you have so many clients. We had always at least over a hundred clients everyday so that is impossible do to a good follow-up. That is impossible. So, for me, it was challenging because I always had the impression that I didn't know where they were at and I didn't follow up (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

C'est sûr que si on avait plus de ressources financières, on engagerait plus de gens et on donnerait des services plus rapides. Actuellement, on a un délai d'attente important pour certains services. Mais ça qu'est-ce que tu veux ? Je pense que ça fait partie de la plupart des services que le gouvernement offre à ses citoyens, des délais d'attente (SOIIT, Quebec).

Even immigrant participants noticed this situation:

Aussi, j'ai remarqué que les ressources humaines sont des fois insuffisantes pour répondre à toutes les demandes (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

I know that, for example, even here, like [my employment counsellor], she always so busy. To make an appointment with her, it is difficult, not because she doesn't want, because she is so busy, she has so much to do. And I think they need maybe I would say two people like this to help them, because it is not just newcomers who come for this help with employment (Participant, SOICS, British Columbia).

In addition to the meagre resources available, many organizations are forced to contend with high staff turnover due to low salaries and a lack of ongoing training.

Budget Cuts

Repeated budget cuts affect the majority of employability training organizations, especially in Ontario where significant cuts have been carried out by various federal and provincial funders:

I think what our agency faces with the programming itself is government cuts, financial, money. This year, for example, from CIC we only got funding to pay salaries, nothing else. We don't have any money for renting. There is nothing else besides just my salary being paid (SCCC, Ontario).

I guess the only other piece is the bridging program in Ontario, under the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration [MCI] at the provincial level. It is a bridge, it is the most customized approach to getting foreign trained professionals from their country into Canada to continue to practice their profession or to provide some support and bridging activities to get back into their field. [...] That initiative was really cut this year as well. It was a 40 million dollars cut in the MCI bridging program. Many bridging programs were not renewed (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

The program, the enhanced Employment services. We had it for two years which was the only service that said refugees are welcome for employment services. And it was so important to them. Our success rate was huge with finding the refugees work, but as budgets got cut, the program got cut (WHC, Ontario).

In Ontario, a restructuring of employment-assistance programs led to the closure of all the Practice Firms, despite their internationally recognized approach to training and employability (Conference Board of Canada, 2007; Guerrero and Hatala, 2011; Xhelili Krasniqi, Topxhiu and Pula, 2012):

And there is nothing to replace it, nothing to get that work experience in a supported environment. Under the Employment Ontario model, you can certainly negotiate with an employer to take on a client in a work experience placement, but it is a little bit different than having a safe environment to practice your skills, like the practice firms (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

I think that is a huge mistake. The success rate of the clients that have gone through those programs is phenomenal. I would have liked to have seen that type of programming increasing as opposed to being decreased or shut down. And I think that kind of a program is something that the government should be reassessing, and not looking at just how many bodies sucked up how many dollars, but look at it as a return on investment. How many bodies went through that short term program, when you think of the amount of time and the success rate, the return on investment is actually quite high because then, that skilled new Canadian is in the labour market, contributing to our economic growth, but also contributing as far as a tax paying individual (ONESTEP, Ontario).

In the Atlantic Region, only New Brunswick mentioned losses due to federal budget cuts and shake-ups:

On March 31 this year [2012], we had five employment counsellors working here. As of April 1, we have three and they are not even called employment counsellors anymore, their positions have changed, their objectives have changed (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

BOX 13 – FUNDRAISING INITIATIVES

Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre, Welland, Ontario

Since 1993, the Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre has organized fundraisers to purchase necessary equipment, subsidize salaries, and extend various programs, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that the centre continues to offer services. Among the activities organized annually, the *Ladies Night*, the golf tournament and the *Dragon Boat Race* deserve special mention. An annual folklore festival provides another opportunity to raise additional funds – as much for the centre as for the cultural groups that participate – in addition to bringing together the different cultures present in the region. Thanks to the involvement of the centre's employees and community members, these fundraisers are a huge success each year.

According to the results of this study, Quebec and British Columbia seem to have been spared by federally mandated budget cuts, probably due to the devolution of employment and immigrant settlement services to provincial governments. Some questions remain, however, as to the potential impact of the new employability program based on flat-rate financing launched in April 2012 in British Columbia.

Annual Funding

The small proportion of multi-year agreements increases the administrative workload for managers and, due to constant changes, hampers medium- or long-term planning:

We finished writing the funding proposal in May and I am going to start writing the [new] funding proposal in August. So I don't even have a chance to see what is going on (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Je sais que mon patron doit négocier à chaque année ses subventions, alors que si c'était des subventions triennales, ce serait super, on perdrait moins de temps dans la négociation et on donnerait plus de services d'intervention (SOIIT, Quebec).

In addition to the financial constraints shared by all the community-based training agencies, certain organizations located in outlying areas experience additional challenges.

Regional Particularities

Beyond generally inadequate funding for employment-assistance organizations that serve an immigrant clientele, some respondents complained about the current disparity between budgets earmarked for agencies in urban centres and those in outlying regions:

We do know that the federal government is tending towards reductions on a pretty hard basis. Are we back to a perspective that there are so few immigrants that come to small communities: let them sink or swim on their own, it doesn't matter? We will put the money into the big urban centres where there are big challenges. And I am not resenting the money that is going in the urban centres; they have their issues, without a doubt. But they are setting the stage for making it almost impossible for rural communities to be successful with the whole attracting and supporting immigrants. So that is my complaint (GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

Governmental authorities that oversee the activities of community-based employability organizations serving immigrants also govern funding issues – at both the federal and provincial levels. Budgetary shortfalls for immigrant settlement and employment assistance, amplified by recent budget cuts and fluctuations, require many member organizations – such as the Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre (Ontario) – to resort to fundraising campaigns to support their activities (see Box 13).

While these initiatives exemplify the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of community-based organizations, they also attest to the discrepancy between the needs on the ground and the funding awarded by government authorities, as well as to the rigidity of funding programs (section 5.7).

5.3 Government Relations

Although most of the organizations surveyed said they had positive relationships with their governmental partners, several community-based trainers did complain about a lack of recognition for frontline organizations:

If the world were to go into some tragic event, who is there picking up the pieces? It is not the government, it is the non-profit organizations. Really. They know how to mobilize, they know how to do things on shoestrings, they know how to manage people, manage resources. They are really the ones that have got this incredible knowledge base. But, the other side of the coin is that they are often the ones that are hit the hardest (MCAF, Atlantic Region),

For some agencies, there is a definite feeling of them and us, where they feel that they are being questioned and scrutinized as to how they are doing things and not fully supported. Which is sad because that starts to put a black cloud or a grey cloud over the whole agency; depending on how the agency is handling it, it trickles down on the staff and then it trickles down to how I am serving my client (ONESTEP, Ontario).

And my experience has been that, funders, oftentimes, when they look at a service provider, they dismiss who you are, that you are less than them for some reason. And it might be because they have to say no to us when it comes to money so they have to keep this hands-off approach with us, but I find that is what has always been really bizarre to me, working in a non-profit. It is how the funders view the actual expert as the idiot. The one that you don't listen to, when they bring things forward (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

Despite the existing *Protocole de reconnaissance et de partenariat entre Emploi-Québec et les organismes communautaires en employabilité*, the organizations in Quebec also emphasized how difficult it was to have their specialized expertise recognized by their primary governmental partner. Often disconnected from the reality on the ground, the governmental decision-making centres have a hard time imagining the daily scope of the work achieved by community-based trainers:

We have good relationships with [the City Council], but they didn't fully understand the depth of what we do, and, when I began to list the laundry list of the work that we do, they were quite surprised because they don't stop to think about what it means when you say you help immigrants integrate (CVIMS, British Columbia).

I think that what they had no awareness of how many [newcomers] there are. No matter how many statistics we put in our reports, they see what there is, they see what the activity is, but they have no idea what it takes to serve that particular client. What kinds of resources are required, what time has to go into that so. Because of that, that makes it challenging (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

Several organizations did indicate that they have better relationships with nearby local or provincial agencies:

Another angle that we hear is that sometimes in communities the relationship with local government is good, but often they don't have the resources to do what they need to do. So there is sympathy within certain levels of government that value the work that is being done, but there is not the money from the province to back it up. If that makes sense as well. I think the local relationships are very respectful, but the respect doesn't continue all the way up through the top of the province, and there is constant need for more resources to be put towards the immigrant programs or other programs (ASPECT, British Columbia).

I think we get more respect by the provincial government. The federal government right now is just like bulldozing and we are treated with a lack of respect by the federal government people who are coming in (WHC, Ontario).

In short, all the immigrant employability agencies studied identified governmental recognition of expertise developed by community-based organizations as a challenge. The core concerns include respect for the organizations' autonomy – particularly regarding their respective objectives and activities – as well as the consistency between governmental rhetoric and the practices implemented. Community-based organizations, pillars of frontline action, depend to a large extent on decisions made by the relevant ministries, especially concerning modifications to general policy orientations, bidding and accountability procedures, and the relative flexibility of program structures.

5.4 Policy Changes

In the past few years community-based training agencies, at the mercy of sociopolitical vagaries, have had to face myriad changes to both federal and provincial policies and programs.

First, in April 2012, the Canadian government announced it would resume control of CIC-financed reception and settlement services in British Columbia and Manitoba. This far-reaching decision changes the nature of the partner relationships between frontline organizations and the different levels of government, as pointed out by these community-based trainers from British Columbia:

Actually this year, the design of some of the programs and redesign of some of the programs have been so client-centered and so great, that, to get this announcement at this time from CIC, it is such a insult. B.C. has been recognized, has been innovative and now they want us to be run of the mill, one size fits all? Why do you take an innovative model and, instead of replicating it, you dismantle it? It is so disappointing because we are just in new contracts and we were looking forward to some additional changes that were coming for some of the programs and we were so excited about them (CVIMS, British Columbia).

Two years and boom, the province is out of the picture! So we do not have a clue what this means. [...] We don't have the relationships with them, so all that work we did building that relationship provincially, because sometimes, it is hard to be heard from Victoria, but it is even harder to be heard in Ottawa (GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

In addition to policy modifications, the federal authorities announced that, as of June 1, 2012, budget cuts would force the closure of 19 local CIC offices, including six in Ontario alone, and eliminate front counter service at all CIC offices:

They are promoting all the smaller centres in Northern Ontario. Well, that is ridiculous because they just closed all the offices. So you know on the one hand they say they are trying to help people move out of those central areas. How are you supposed to do that? We don't even have a Citizenship ceremony here. And nobody told us anything (SCCC, Ontario).

Several service providers for employability training in Ontario were critical of the inherent contradiction in the Canadian government's promotion of regionalized immigration while simultaneously eliminating numerous client services in those regions. They also expressed fear that migration to outlying regions might suffer from these cutbacks.

In addition, over the last months or years, community-based training agencies in British Columbia, Ontario, and New Brunswick have had to contend with new service-delivery models at the provincial level. Arguing that signing multi-party agreements entails excessive oversight, since April 2012 British Columbia's provincial government has been negotiating with a primary service provider in each of the 73 communities identified, thereby relegating many organizations to the role of subcontractor:

What the government has done is basically, they have made it easier for them and harder for everybody else. So we used to have our own contract and we used to negotiate our own terms and now we have a subcontract and there is no negotiation because we bill only based on every little service. We put it in the computer. And the amount of work involved. So the employment counsellor doing it has to spend half her time putting it in the computer. It is a terrible model; it is an old model that never worked. It was tried before, years ago, by the feds and it is doomed for failure (CVIMS, British Columbia).

Similarly, since 2010 the Ontario government has implemented a "no wrong door" employment policy with the goal of minimizing service redundancies. Now, in an effort to provide standardized services, all residents in Ontario – young or old, immigrant or suffering from substance abuse – may consult any employment-assistance organization financed by Employment Ontario:

And, as far as a client perspective, they are there to assist all Ontarians that need economic integration support. So there is no difference between the services that a newcomer would get or someone that is under-employed. There are women re-entering the workforce or youth at risk. We call it the Costco of employment services (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

Budget cuts have also triggered paradigm shifts in New Brunswick that tighten eligibility requirements for several employment-training programs:

They don't provide any more service to international students due to budget cuts. Right now, I think they are only doing it for landed immigrants or someone who has a Canadian status (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

[We] serve clients that are job-ready. We serve clients that are looking to work more than 25 hours per week. We serve clients who have minimal barriers to employment other than language (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

According to the stakeholders surveyed, the new service-delivery models endanger the provision of specialized services by promulgating a cookie-cutter approach and limiting the time devoted to each client. For instance, in Ontario, clients are allowed to visit an organization a maximum of three times, while in New Brunswick, organizations may only monitor clients for a maximum of six months:

We can only charge \$25 for doing a resume. If we do a resume with someone who has never done a resume in Canada before, it takes us hours and hours because we are not only helping them do it, we have to teach them how to do it and why you need to do it like this. And we get \$25 for it because they have created a one-size-fits-all (CVIMS, British Columbia).

But some of the drawbacks that happened is that if a new Canadian does go to a site where there is someone with very little experience in dealing with a newcomer, then they are getting the standard assistance that you would get. And there are definitely greater needs when it comes to a new Canadian (ONESTEP, Ontario).

At both the national and provincial levels these policy changes seriously impact clients – who receive fewer services, and organizations – who must reduce the scope of their service offerings.

5.5 Labour-Intensive Bidding Process

Training staff – primarily in British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia – named the cumbersome bidding process and the split of funding for community-based training organizations between several governmental authorities as a major impediment. The investment of both human and financial resources in tackling this complex and labour-intensive task, which represent costs not covered by funders, drew criticism from several respondents:

So the bidding process is very strenuous, it is very expensive for an agency because it takes a great deal of work. And it is terribly stressful, really, really stressful. Like I said, you write a 100 page proposal and make a little mistake in the mandatory because, by then, your nerves are shot and you can't even see straight anymore. You work to do that and then it isn't even read, or somebody outbids you by a few points or something like that because it is all scored. It is a stressful process. And very expensive for the agencies that do it! And you don't recover that money! The time that you spend, the research that you have to do, the writing, writing, writing, the putting it together, the formatting, the appendices, the letters of support, you know, it is an expensive process. Not the best process. There are some good things about it but there are some not so good things about it (CVIMS, British Columbia).

Amidst the questions and very specific criteria that organizations must answer, experience represents only one component of the evaluation grid and may well be overlooked in favour of a less costly proposal. Many organizations also made a point of mentioning that bids are open to all, private companies and non-profit organizations alike:

But there was CIC here, under this new Director, that said that they would entertain proposals from anybody who wants to deliver these programs and anybody up to and including Hells Angels. So I was like: "Oh my God, think about it!". So the first year there was one private language school that had always been saying: "Why are you subsidizing those guys? Why don't you fund us, why don't you fund us?". So they did submit a bid proposal, but their budget was equal to the entire CIC budget you know. Those private businesses who have tried to bid on some of the work realized that they can't deliver for the same price (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Nonetheless, non-profits may have a hard time competing against for-profit businesses with more resources to commit to grant-writing. For many community-based agencies, the sheer relentlessness of the bidding process was troubling:

You have to always write each proposal as if the people - even though you might have had a contract with that same ministry for ten years - you need to write each proposal as if they had never heard of you before. And you need to explain who you are and what you do, and how you are going to do it and what your relationship with your subcontractors is in a very clear and concise manner. Each time. You have to; it is like you are writing for strangers (ASPECT, British Columbia).

In general, these rigorous and ceaseless procedures are excessively labour intensive, monopolizing time that could be better spent providing services to clients.

5.6 Complex Accountability

In addition to inflating the number of grant applications that need to be drafted, the proliferation of funding agencies and programs also complicates the accountability process:

We have a contract for settlement and a contract for ELSA, which is English Language Services for Adults. And then we have a contract for our Welcome B.C. Welcoming communities. Then we have some Embrace B.C. project that we have contracts for. And we are currently bidding on another one. And we have several different employment contracts, but they come from different ministries except for Skills Connect. We have a subcontract on that with ASPECT. So, managing a lot of different contracts is a bit of my nightmare, not so much the staff but mine. And bidding on so many different contracts and juggling them all, keeping the finances separate and everything (CVIMS, British Columbia).

I mean of course there has to be some risk assessment, monitoring and accountability. But I think they have gotten bogged down in the minutia of each line item. "Line 208 is a dollar out". It is beyond the point of managing. So many years ago, the Treasury Board and the Blue Ribbon Panel talked about reducing the burden of administration for NGOs [non-governmental organizations]. Unfortunately, although that was approved by the Cabinet and sent down, it has never really reached the ground (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Unlike the other provinces studied, in Quebec time constraints due to heavy administrative workloads created by accountability procedures was barely mentioned during interviews with managers. In Ontario, several respondents made a point of acknowledging Employment Ontario's great flexibility as compared to the procedures required by the various provincial and federal ministries:

I think the whole modernization approach that we talked about, there has been a lot of discussion about easing the burden of administration of the not-for-profit sector, making reporting more friendly, but none of that has really happened. It is worse than ever (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

It is lighter [with Employment Ontario], especially financially. Financially, they give you a pot of money. I mean that is much lighter. They give you a pot of money and quarterly you show your managers. You don't show them line by line. You say: in operating I spent this, in clients' support and employers' subsidy, we spent this. There you go. In CIC, you have to report every salary, every little dime, where you spent it. Every month (SCCC, Ontario).

In general, to reduce time spent on administrative issues, the organizations surveyed would like to see ministries and governmental agencies adopt standardized accountability procedures while, at the same time, avoiding a "race to the bottom".

Basing the evaluation of organizations solely – or predominantly – on the achievement of ever-higher quantitative targets not only paints a distorted picture of the true scope of the services they offer, but also increases the workload of an already overworked training staff:

On a des cibles à rencontrer, on a des cibles de placement à rencontrer qui ne cessent d'augmenter alors que notre clientèle éprouve sensiblement les mêmes difficultés. Mais c'est des nouveaux arrivants qu'on a, alors les nouveaux arrivants éprouvent les mêmes difficultés que les clients qu'on rencontrait il y a cinq ans (SOIIT, Quebec).

Another thing that I think is measuring the outcomes of what we do, you know. Usually we are asked to provide numbers, numbers, numbers, but actually, sometimes it is difficult to measure the scope of work that is behind that result, because it is sometimes, for example, hard to measure how our services change the lives of people. So I think those are major challenges that we face (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

By alleviating the administrative burden – by signing multi-year contracts, simplifying the bidding process, or revising accountability procedures – more resources could be allocated to providing client services, thereby increasing the impact of investments made in the employment-training sector.

5.7 Programs' Lack of Flexibility

To discern and effectively respond to the changing needs of diverse immigrant cohorts, employment-training organizations working with this clientele must be highly adaptable. However, rigid government programs limit organizations' capacity to evolve, whether in terms of eligibility criteria, goals, or the length of time spent with each client.

Many respondents emphasized the need to relax the structure of programs offered to newly arrived immigrants, especially regarding eligibility criteria:

Programs are driven by who is eligible for them. I can serve you, I can't serve you. I think somebody made an analogy in a meeting I thought was really good: when someone comes to the Welcome Centre, it is like putting out a candy stand, you put all the candies out in front of them, but then "Oh no, you can't have that, because you are not eligible". So you start pulling back. "Oh, you can only have the licorice. You can't have all the good chocolates, you are not eligible". So that is a good one, I remember that one. "Oh, look what we do here. Oh, no, no, no, no" (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

Eligibility criteria vary from one province to another, but nearly all the government employability programs require permanent resident status, which excludes many immigrant classes. Despite these limitations, to facilitate integration into Canadian society, several organizations still offer reception services and information to temporary workers, foreign students, or asylum seekers:

We get a lot of clients as well that are temporary foreign workers; they are not actually eligible for services but they are a very vulnerable group so we do what we can to help them as well. It is part of our community service but we are not actually funded to assist them. But they are big chunk. That is quite a large group there as well that are quite vulnerable because of the situation that they are here under (SOICS, British Columbia).

Logiquement, on ne s'occupe pas de ceux qui ont des visas temporaires. Mais on se dit aussi s'ils s'intègrent bien avec leurs visas temporaires, il y a des fortes chances qu'ils restent. Donc, on les aide quand même (AIJT, Quebec).

The lack of funding allocated to these vulnerable clients, who must endure long wait times to obtain work permits or permanent-resident status, draws criticism in regions that host a large pool of temporary foreign workers, such as the Okanagan Valley (Penticton) in British Columbia. Foreign students can receive employment assistance services from participating organizations in the Atlantic Region (except for New Brunswick), even if the criteria set by various programs and funding agencies limit the scope of their intervention:

We did not know that international graduates could be served through our organization [...]. Because they have a social insurance number, they have an open work permit. We just heard that we can definitely serve them but only through employment counselling. So we will work with them with employment counselling, but we can't refer them within the organization or outside the organization to workshops about job search and interview skills or online workshops, because they are not eligible for those two programs, because they are funded by another part of money. So I find this [...] a little bit tricky because we have to be very careful who we are referring and when and what. That could be a little bit difficult (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Some employment counsellors and executive directors took care to point out that, despite the limitations, certain funding agencies had relaxed their programs over the years, particularly compared to some of the measures embraced by federal and provincial immigration ministries:

We are only supposed to see permanent residents, refugees, and caregivers, right? I don't care if somebody just comes from Calgary. They are going to get service. Yes, and thank God we have Employment Ontario to help to do that because I have resources and information and I get money to deliver that (SCCC, Ontario).

Je dis qu'il faut qu'on évolue avec notre temps, il faut que ces mesures-là aussi évoluent. Quand tu fais un PPE [Projet de préparation à l'emploi], c'est ça que tu dois faire, bien sûr. Emploi-Québec est quand même un peu plus ouvert que le MICC à ce niveau-là, parce que tu peux bouger à l'intérieur de ton PPE ou bien de ton SAE [Services d'aide à l'emploi]. Il y a possibilité de bouger (SOIIT, Quebec).

If eligibility criteria were less stringent, not only would all permanent and temporary newcomers benefit from customized services, but organizations would also be recognized for all the work they actually do on the ground.

Beyond eligibility issues, several service providers also emphasized the lack of consistency between the short-term objectives of the primary funding agencies and the long-term vision of study participants and their employment counsellors:

Peut-être qu'Emploi-Québec nous force tranquillement à resserrer nos services pour rapidement mettre le client en emploi. Emploi-Québec a la mentalité que peu importe la qualité, si le client est en emploi, c'est mission accomplie (SOIIT, Quebec).

[In some provinces] a client comes in, they get a job. It is not a job in your field, it is a job. And the agency doesn't get paid until they have got a job. So you invoice based on the number of jobs that you got. So, if you are looking at getting the best productive value from your labour force, a job, especially for immigrants, is not the way to go. It is not a job in their field. So it might mean working with them for a longer period of time (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Again, rushed entry into the job market through low-skilled employment and ill-conceived follow-up may lead to frustration and discouragement for clients who, as a result, are unable to contribute fully to their community's development. According to the respondents surveyed, successful employability requires medium- to long-term coaching adapted to each client's needs and level of preparation.

Certain programs, however, strictly limit the amount of time allocated to assisting each client, whether in terms of the number of visits or the length of time spent monitoring progress. With the imposition of a new employability model in April 2012, organizations in New Brunswick seem to be particularly affected by time constraints:

We have been restricted as to how long we can work with this client, which before was not a restriction that was placed upon us. Because sometimes, people take a little while and so now, they are restricted in how long they are working with them (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

I guess we explain to them: "I have six months to work with you and when do you think is the six months better?". They have to be aware that, if you don't find a job after six months, we have to close your file, at least for a while so. Yeah, that is weird to have to tell your clients you used to work with that you can't work with them anymore (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

In the two other Atlantic Region provinces studied, although few time constraints have been imposed, community-based trainers unanimously emphasized the need to ensure continued coaching beyond the first subsistence-employment placement:

We can't shut them down from our services. If they are getting 20 hours in cleaning or at Tim Horton's or whatever, they still need to receive our services, including job search and maybe advanced language or other language classes. [...] We can't close their files. This is like suicide for them (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

In Quebec, where the three participating organizations match the third service-delivery model and consequently must refer clients to other resources for several pre-employability programs, some respondents complained that the tools at their disposal also lacked flexibility:

Bien je dirais principalement que c'est au niveau de la boîte à outils, parce que des fois on aimerait faire des stages, disons deux semaines de stages dans un supermarché par exemple, puis ensuite aller faire deux autres semaines de stage dans un autre type d'entreprise, mais ça, on n'y a pas accès. [...] C'est pas possible de le faire, alors des fois c'est ce qui répondrait le plus aux besoins de la personne, mais on n'a pas accès à cette boîte-là (Accès travail, Quebec).

Donc, on n'est pas maître. Il y a des éléments qui font que nous ne pouvons pas être aussi en intervention « just in time », propice, au bon moment, il manque de souplesse. C'est clair. Puis, pour toutes les clientèles éloignées du marché du travail, incluant les personnes immigrantes, on a besoin de cadres plus souples, d'être capable de maintenir l'accompagnement de A à Z (Accès travail, Quebec).

Thus, if governmental bodies provided more latitude, non-profit employability training organizations would be able to adjust the nature and length of their involvement to each client's integration path and needs, helping them get a firmer footing in the job market.

Regional Particularities

In addition to stringent measures and restricted services, many respondents complained that the metropolitan context has an inordinately heavy influence on how programs are defined:

A lot of programs are discussed in Vancouver or, certainly, Eastern Canada. They talk about them in urban centres and they identify what the needs are and these needs make absolutely no sense when you take them out of the urban centres and take them into rural context. It is just huge for us (GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

We do try and get involved in national proposals where possible, because it is a way to raise some issues that are different here than other places, and unfortunately, most immigration policy and even new programs are developed thinking of Ontario. And so that shapes the programs and they come down and we think "Oh my God, it is just not going to work here" (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

The rigidity of programs offered to newcomers – whether in the form of overly strict eligibility criteria, short-sighted funding agencies, time limits imposed for each client, available tools, or even just the disparity between program content and the reality in outlying regions – further hampers the work of employability and career training service providers across Canada.

5.8 Attraction and Retention of Newcomers in Outlying Regions

For community-based employability training organizations in outlying regions, one of the most significant ongoing challenges is the tendency of very recent immigrants to settle in major Canadian metropolitan areas. Although the number of newcomers in non-metropolitan areas is slowly rising, several of the organizations surveyed hoped to increase their community's ability to attract and retain newly arrived immigrants:

We want to encourage more young people and young families to come here and it is mostly immigrants that are coming with young families. Nanaimo has closed a lot of schools. I think in the last couple of years they closed something like six schools in the city, just because there weren't enough young people and young families here. So we don't want to become just a retirement place or a vacation place. And so that is the challenge of this area. What a lot of people don't realize is that, without immigrants, you won't get that. Who is going to do the job that all the retirees need if we don't attract more immigrants to this region? Who is going to work to help you if you go to the store, or provide you with the professional services you need if we don't attract young families? (CVIMS, British Columbia)

Nevertheless, federally imposed immigration-class quotas determine how many newcomers may be hosted in some provinces, including Nova Scotia:

We have a cap of 500 immigrants in Nova Scotia which will limit our ability to accept more clients. [...] We are not like Montreal or Vancouver or Toronto. We don't get as many. We are aiming for higher level, higher numbers of immigration and immigrants, but we are not getting as many. In Nova Scotia, last year, we got 2,100 which is a very small number. It is less than the usual number, but we are hoping to increase the number to 3,700 and more. Hopefully, we are aiming for 7,000 but, with the new regulation, I don't know how it is going to affect (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Whether the increase in newcomers to outlying regions is attributed to the growing number of candidates admitted nationwide or to a redirection of migratory flows to regions outside of metropolitan areas, in order for organizations to offer services on par with those offered in the major urban hubs additional resources must be allocated or existing budgets redistributed. Even if the proportion of newcomers remains low in the Atlantic Region provinces, employment counsellors must contend daily with a high number of clients that sometimes exceeds a ratio of 200 individuals per counsellor. Contrary to elsewhere in Canada, according to managers and staff at the sites studied in Quebec, adjusting practices to account for fewer clients seems to be the only problem occasioned by the small volume of newly arrived immigrants in some areas of the province. In contrast, the City of Markham, being located close to Toronto, receives a large number of newcomers each year.

Several participants and staff members from the 12 pilot sites emphasized the tendency of newcomers to spontaneously leave outlying regions to relocate to major Canadian cities in search of better professional, educational or sociocultural opportunities:

Well, you know, we are at the mercy of what is going on in the community and we hate to see immigrants leave to get a job in Vancouver but, unfortunately, sometimes they just can't get in their field of expertise here. Their opportunities are better in a larger centre or even in Alberta or something. We hate to see it. We have no control over that (CVIMS, British Columbia).

Everybody thinks I should go to Montreal. Although the people here think I shouldn't. They think I should stay here because they're tired of people coming to like the small towns and then realizing there is really not much work so they go to the bigger cities where they think or hope there is a better prospect of work (Participant, WHC, Ontario).

Moreover, francophone communities outside Quebec must contend with an exodus and the attendant depopulation. For example, in Nova Scotia, attracting and retaining French-speaking immigrants is a particular problem. Beyond the efforts communities make to retain newcomers, long-term residency depends to a large extent on the job market, particularly in areas where sociocultural attributes leave something to be desired, as this respondent from Newfoundland and Labrador asserted:

The retention rate is always related to the job market here. Of course you can't stay here in Newfoundland whilst there are lots of jobs in Ontario, right? So because the job market is so good and because of our provincial immigration strategy, our retention rate is very high (AXIS, Atlantic Region).

Considering depopulation, an aging population, and low birthrate, several organizations have committed to making immigration a regional priority, and have turned to town counsels, public-service providers, training institutions and other stakeholders for collaboration. More consistent funding, a wider and more specialized service offering, and open-minded host communities would certainly make outlying regions better able to attract and retain immigrants. To that end, the regional integration program developed by the Quebec *Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles* and implemented by organizations such as *Accès travail* in the Centre-du-Québec Region constitutes a compelling model of decentralized migration flows (see Box 14).

BOX 14 – IMMIGRATION REGIONALIZATION AND URBAN RECRUITMENT

Accès travail, Victoriaville, Quebec

Since 2001, *Accès travail* in Victoriaville has promoted immigration regionalization by helping immigrants living in Montreal resettle in the *Arthabaska* and *L'Érable* regional county municipalities. This program assists newly arrived immigrants find specialized or semi-specialized employment matching their skills and professional aspirations, while also helping businesses in the region meet their labour needs in a context of scarcity that is particularly pronounced in outlying regions. Thanks to the support of the *Conférence régionale des élus du Centre-du-Québec*, and by according to a specific agreement, the *Attraction et établissement des personnes immigrantes, Volet Programme régional de l'immigration*, 25 foreign workers and their families leave Quebec's main metropolis each year to settle in the Victoriaville region. In this way, they contribute to socioeconomic growth in this semi-rural community that also hosts many refugees as part of the federal Resettlement Assistance Program.

5.9 Multiple Stakeholders

Immigrant integration services are innately complex and multifaceted and consequently are divided among several federal, provincial, and local government authorities, which sometimes muddles the roles and responsibilities, a situation further exacerbated by the policy modifications described in section 5.4:

I think people have a lot of trouble understanding the difference between the responsibilities between the federal and the provincial governments, and getting caught in the midst of regulatory bodies as well (ASPECT, British Columbia).

For instance, the division of immigrant services in Quebec between two provincial ministries – with the MICC responsible for reception and settlement services and *Emploi-Québec* in charge of employment services – complicates the operational context for community-based organizations:

Il n'y a pas de chapeau au-dessus de ça, c'est parallèle. Au gouvernement, le lien transversal entre les deux n'existe pas. On fait affaire avec le MICC, on fait affaire avec le Centre local d'emploi. Ce ne sont pas les mêmes répondants puis ça ne veut pas dire que leur discours est ajusté. C'est un problème de travailler en silo (Accès travail, Quebec).

C'est assez complexe, nébuleux et ça suscite beaucoup de questionnements sur qui s'occupe véritablement de l'emploi puis à qui on va reconnaître de véritables expertises en employabilité ? (RQuODE, Quebec)

The lack of a coordinating mechanism for shared management and funding also has an impact: because the ministries involved fund their external resources independently instead of identifying a lead training professional – as researchers and practitioners recommend, the number of service providers involved in a newcomer's employability process multiplies:

When you meet with a client within your organization and you know their situation from A to Z, if you create an action plan for them, you create it according to their situation. If they walk into another organization who does not provide them with a general and cohesive intake and counseling session and they may end up asking them to do something different, this contradicts whatever you are dealing with and you end up... and the client ends up being confused. "What should I do? This or this?" [...] What we need to do is definitely not to duplicate the service within the community. We need to have a better understanding of what is going on within the community and refer to the right people (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

In general, the increased number of service providers primarily affects organizations located in medium or large municipalities, such as Markham and Welland in Ontario, while there is less competition in smaller towns such as Sault Ste. Marie:

You might actually find that in smaller communities, they may work more readily together because there is less of a competitive nature, whereas in the large communities, there is more of a competitive nature, which seems contradictory, because in a large community like Toronto, the population is huge. So there is plenty for us to each harvest, so you would think that there would be less of a competitive nature, whereas my experience with member agencies and others is that the competition level between many agencies is higher. Whereas in some smaller communities I see more of a better working relationship where I know I can do so much for my client, but there is one little piece I don't have an expertise in, but you do, and so I will send my client over there just for that part and you will properly send the client back to me after that work is done. Where I see in the larger communities, that it is more: "Yes, you send your client over here, now close their file, I'll take care of them from now on". So less of a sharing and more competitive in the larger. At least that has been my experience in speaking with my members (ONESTEP, Ontario).

When interviewed, community-based trainers cited several examples of productive partnerships including those with other regional stakeholders in the community and the business sectors (see Box 15).

BOX 15 – PRODUCTIVE PARTNERSHIPS IN IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Sault Community Career Centre, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

Over the years, the Sault Community Career Centre, a very active organization in Sault Ste. Marie, has established a number of partnerships with other regional stakeholders. Since 1996, a partnership between the SCCC and the City (Ontario Works) enhances employability among newcomers with special needs and hard to serve clients. Since 2006, in collaboration with the Northland Adult Centre, the SCCC helps newcomers requiring ESL and computer courses. In 2008, the SCCC established a lasting relationship with the Local Immigration Partnership, whose goal is to attract and retain newly arrived immigrants, as well as to enhance awareness of reception and settlement services available in the region. Since 2011 the SCCC has collaborated with both the public and Catholic school boards to offer settlement support to newcomer families and cultural diversity workshops designed for students and staff, while ensuring efficient knowledge sharing between different stakeholders. Aware of the fundamental importance of these partnerships for the delivery of a range of services adapted to the needs of the region's newcomers, the SCCC also hopes to strengthen existing ties and develop new collaborations in the future.

Despite these efforts, a lack of communication between organizations working on the ground remained a concern for some respondents:

Puis la difficulté, c'est le travail en silo. Les institutions ont tendance à travailler... le CÉGEP dans ses affaires, la commission scolaire dans ses affaires, la corporation de développement économique dans ses affaires, le communautaire dans ses affaires. Puis là, les axes transversaux ne sont pas très évidents. Je dirais que ça fait partie des difficultés qu'on vit (Accès travail, Québec).

The cohesion with the different groups that are out there doing work. There is some of that that is lacking. So if you do something, it is always the pitfalls of who is getting the funding? That creates some of the negativity which I really hate to see (WHC, Ontario).

A participant at the Welcome Centre in a Toronto suburb also highlighted the lack of collaboration and the concomitant redundancies:

I think that the community can address the support in a real way to get our adaptation and to obtain our contribution as soon as possible. My impression is that there are many programs for newcomers' support in a disorganized structure (Participant, Welcome Centre, Ontario).

In New Brunswick, the distribution of migratory flows between three host cities – Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John, coupled with the presence of a dozen immigrant-serving organizations, distinguishes the province from its peers in the Atlantic Region and complicates the work of the service providers:

What is problematic about that is that, for instance, I could be working with a specialised engineer here and I am looking for a job here and there is nothing here, but there might be a job in Moncton and I have no knowledge of that. Or, the other problem is, we could have a doctor in this city and two doctors in this city and three over here but, because, if we had the six of them together, we could probably deal with some of the issues that they have. But, because they are in different cities and they are being served by independent agencies, the challenge is that we are not getting that critical mass that can move forward these issues (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

Oftentimes, for instance, we might be aware of certain jobs because an employer asked us about it but we are not necessarily sharing that information with the other agencies (MCAF, Atlantic Region).

In another effort to address these concerns, multicultural centres on Vancouver Island in British Columbia formed an alliance that provides a promising model of productive intersectoral collaboration (see Box 16).

In Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador, the existence of a sole primary immigrant-serving agency facilitates the establishment of communication and cooperation channels between diverse stakeholders:

Because we are a small province and because our numbers are really small, it made it much easier for us to bring everybody together at one table. If we are in Montreal, you know, it would be more difficult. How are they going to come to one table? Montreal, Quebec, is huge, it is not like Nova Scotia, definitely (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

BOX 16 – INTER-SECTORAL COLLABORATION ON VANCOUVER ISLAND

Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society, Nanaimo, British Columbia

Vancouver Island's leading immigrant settlement agencies have come together under a Memorandum of Understanding as *The Vancouver Island Immigrant Welcome Centre Alliance*. The purpose is to enhance the capacity of Vancouver Island agencies to provide services to immigrants and to build welcoming and inclusive communities. Although the five member agencies continue to operate independently, the Island Alliance allows for greater collaboration between staff, sharing of resources, and training and support, thereby increasing the capacity of each agency. This inter-sectoral partnership is also an opportunity for trainers to consult with each other in order to ensure smoother transitions for clients between Vancouver Island communities. The five participating agencies use *Immigrant Welcome Centre* branding for Vancouver Island, a name chosen to reflect the goal of the alliance.

Nonetheless, all the community-based agencies surveyed asserted that there is still a great deal of work to do, as this respondent from Newfoundland and Labrador pointed out:

There is already some good work happening in Newfoundland with collaborative partnerships and building relationships, but I think just building on that even more. Just continuing to reach out to the right people who can support us, and us supporting them as well (AXIS, Atlantic Region).

In addition to the potential for redundancies, the sheer number of stakeholders and a tendency to work in silos complicate referrals between governmental, public, and community-based organizations.

According to the information collected in this study, the efficiency of the referral process between government agencies and community-based organizations varies from one region to another. For instance, some participants stated having heard of the organization they visit when they first landed at the airport or through a referral provided by a governmental organization. Other participants asserted that they had only become aware of available services through happenstance or word-of-mouth, sometimes several weeks after arriving:

On ne savait pas qu'il y avait ce type de rencontre-là, d'établissement-là. On ne l'avait pas su à la première réunion. Ils nous disaient qu'il n'y avait qu'Emploi-Québec. Enfin, ils parlaient que d'Emploi-Québec. Et puis un jour, en discutant avec des amis, ils ont dit il y a un truc juste à côté de chez vous à Chambly. Il y a l'Envol, c'est similaire. Ils sont affiliés avec Emploi-Québec (Participant, AIJT, Quebec).

Like I know that a couple of doctors came to me a while ago, like before I moved to this position, and they had an opportunity to work with mainstream Canadian services and they were here for over a year or a year and a half. They had no clue about our services because nobody told them to come to us (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

Difficulties related to inter-agency referrals, raised particularly by participants in New Brunswick and Quebec, can be linked to a sense of competition caused by the multiplication of stakeholders on the ground coupled with budget cutbacks and ever higher targets:

On est tous là pour aider les autres. Je sais qu'on a des chiffres à rendre, mais l'intégration marcherait peut-être mieux si on pouvait plus s'entraider. Cette « guéguerre » de territoire, c'est un peu dommage (AIJT, Quebec).

The proliferation of stakeholders, due to lack of recognition for organizations and specialized services, complicates not only the institutional bidding and accountability procedures, but also the creation of operational partnerships and referral mechanisms. In certain provinces and communities, redundancies and confusion due to the lack of a clear service continuum combine with the fragmentation of services between several frontline organizations to disrupt the newcomers' employability process. In this sense, it is important, first, to recognize the expertise developed by existing resources in order to avoid an endless proliferation of service agencies and, second, to ensure a continuum of services among the various organizations in outlying regions, in order to facilitate the sharing of information.

5.10 Employer Engagement

Private, parapublic, or public employers who control what jobs are offered and who gets hired are key stakeholders in the employment integration process of workers trained abroad:

On avait remarqué que oui, on peut intervenir sur le client, le préparer à intégrer le marché du travail, puis lui parler de comment ça se passe, lui faire faire de la recherche d'emploi tu sais, l'équiper finalement, mais si on n'équipe pas l'employeur à son intégration, parfois ça peut échouer (SOIIT, Quebec).

I believe there are opportunities out there but if I don't talk to the employers, the connection is not going to happen (CVIMS, British Columbia).

As a result, the lack of employer awareness and engagement regarding immigrants represents an additional pitfall for newcomers seeking to enter the job market. On this topic, many respondents emphasized the need for companies to be more open to cultural diversity:

J'avais noté la difficulté un peu face aux employeurs. Il y a un très, très gros travail à l'heure actuelle de sensibilisation auprès des employeurs. Beaucoup d'employeurs ne connaissent pas PRIIME ou le connaisse, mais trouve ça compliqué ou disent qu'il y a toujours une clause qui fait qu'ils n'y ont pas le droit, qui finalement ont dépensé beaucoup de temps et d'argent... pour eux le temps c'est de l'argent. Et que finalement, ils n'ont pas le droit aux subventions, tout ça. Ils s'arrêtent avant. En fait, ils se disent ça ne vaut pas la peine, c'est trop compliqué. Il y a beaucoup de préjugés qu'il va falloir retravailler (AIJT, Quebec).

The other challenge for the sector, for working with newcomers, continues to be employers' engagement. There is still an incredible amount of work that we need to do, those of us working with newcomers, convincing employers that you really shouldn't not hire someone because you can't pronounce their name. You do need to invest in a new employee and if you are open and you invest, they would be excellent employees like all the others that you have. I think employers should be more open to that and that is a challenge (Welcome Centre, Ontario).

A lack of employer engagement can impact certain employment training initiatives requiring employer participation, such as mentoring programs and internships. Certainly, community-based training agencies already collaborate with many companies, but the scope of the challenge demands action on a larger scale supported by all levels of government:

You have to get out of the office and you have to go sell your product. So support in networking activities is crucial on the part of the agency management. Recognition on the part of the government that these activities are crucial in order to support the agency, it is dollars well spent (CVIMS, British Columbia).

BOX 17 – ANNUAL EMPLOYERS BREAKFAST

Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre, Welland, Ontario

Since 2002, the annual Employers Breakfast organized by WHC has provided an opportunity for regional businesses to learn more about the organization's immigrant clientele and the services offered. Each year, a guest speaker addresses a specific subject, such as the WHC's mentorship program. At the breakfast, participants are surveyed to obtain labour market information, thereby ensuring that the Centre's programs match the needs of local employers. Every year, the WHC partners with the Niagara Chambers of Commerce in 12 municipalities, as well as the greater Niagara Chamber of Commerce.

BOX 18 – EMPLOYER APPRECIATION NIGHT

Multicultural Association of Fredericton, Fredericton, New Brunswick

Employer Appreciation Night, organized by the Multicultural Association of Fredericton, New Brunswick, has become an annual event attracting employers from all over the region. The event aims to recognize community leaders, mentors, and champions for their contributions and commitment to inclusion, diversity, and hiring newcomers in the Fredericton Area. Each year, three prizes are awarded; the *Large Business Appreciation Award* (for businesses with over 50 employees), the *Small/Medium Business Appreciation Award* (for businesses with less than 50 employees) and the *Community Support Award*. This last award is presented to an organization or individual who has assisted newcomers in their settlement into the community, specifically with regards to employment training.

Successful, long-term employability for immigrants requires employer buy-in through increased awareness of the newcomers' reality and of the value added by immigrants, as well as the offering of financial, fiscal, or other incentives. Many of the participating organizations have already implemented strategies designed to motivate regional businesses to get involved, including the annual breakfast hosted by the Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre in Ontario (see Box 17) and the Employer Appreciation Night organized by the Multicultural Association of Fredericton in New Brunswick (see Box 18).

Confronted by labour shortages in certain economic sectors and high rates of unemployment and underemployment among immigrants, coordinated action by stakeholders appears to be the best way for outlying regions to attract and retain newcomers.

5.11 Geographic Scope of the Service Area

In the same way newcomers experience transportation problems in rural areas, organizations serving this clientele must often cover a vast territory by providing services in several more or less distant communities:

One of the biggest challenges for any service provider - and regardless of what you are providing service for - in a rural area is transportation. Not just the physical transportation. It is that you have funding for one person. They are serving maybe three or four communities which, as the crow flies, in a straight line, it doesn't seem like it is really far but, since we are going like this, it takes a long time to get from one place to the other. And so, your staff time is being lost. Your valuable, very limited staff time is being lost in transportation. Your resources becomes spread so thin that, even though you say you are serving all those different areas, the reality is that you are serving the minimal service in all those place because you can't do more (GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

This problem is particularly pronounced in the communities situated furthest from urban hubs, like Trail and Penticton in British Columbia and Sault Ste. Marie in Northern Ontario, but also in areas where the density of immigrant populations remains low, for example, in the Vallée-du-Richelieu (Mont-Saint-Hilaire) in Quebec. Exacerbated by sometimes difficult weather conditions, the complications tied to the geographical scope of the service area also impact the establishment of relationships with regional businesses:

Certainly in the regions, like the smaller regions, there is more of a difficult process, because just the nature of the spread, the physical geography, is more difficult for the employer relationships as far as a job developer, having to go greater distances to prospect and to gain the employer contacts (ONESTEP, Ontario).

Frequent trips definitely increase the workload for staff working in regional organizations, as they must often compensate for the lack of mass transit in rural or semi-rural zones. Among the solutions proposed, some organizations, including ISIS in Nova Scotia and AXIS Career Services in Newfoundland and Labrador, offer online employment-assistance services that link employment advisors and clients through remote communication technology (see Box 19).

BOX 19 – ONLINE ADVISORS FOR OUTLYING REGIONS

*Association for New Canadians –
AXIS Career Services, St. John's,
Newfoundland and Labrador*

In 2010, AXIS initiated an e-Employment/Career Counselling (e-ECC) service for immigrants residing outside of the St. John's metro area. This web-based model aims to assist immigrants with accelerated labour market attachment and integration in smaller centres throughout the province. Through e-ECC and AXIScareers.net, immigrants located anywhere in the province can access resources from AXIS and may have the opportunity to participate in bridging programs such as Mentoring, Strategic Transitions and Employment Partnerships (STEP), and the Internship Placement Program (IPP).

5.12 Conclusion and Potential Solutions

Community-based organizations situated in outlying regions that specialize in employability training for immigrants entering the job market are confronted daily with myriad challenges, mostly related to their relationships with funders. Tight budgets, complicated bidding and accountability procedures, the imposition of multiple policy modifications, rigid measures, and an inflexible service offering all conspire to restrict the positive impact these organizations might have. Furthermore, a lack of employer engagement sometimes undermines the success of promising programs and increases the daily workload of community-based trainers, who must convince employers one by one of the value immigrant employees can contribute to their companies.

Aside from the limitations shared by all non-profit community-based employability training organizations, those located outside major metropolitan centres must also contend with issues specific to outlying regions, including the difficulty of attracting and retaining recently arrived immigrants, the geographic scope of the service area, as well as program definitions informed by the urban – and not rural – reality.

In light of these findings, four potential solutions emerge to more efficiently support employability organizations serving an immigrant clientele, particularly in a non-metropolitan context.

Ensuring Stronger, More Coordinated Government Involvement

First of all, to adequately support the work of organizations on the ground, many community-based trainers and participants would like to see a more sustained commitment at all levels of government:

What I suggested about the Immigration Office, what they could do, it would also be good if each local government, like Trail's local government, could do the same thing and reach out, because when you got immigrants coming in, they have chosen your town or your area for a reason. They didn't just say: "Hey, close your eyes and choose!" It was for a reason that they wanted to be a part of your community. They want to be whatever they can be in the community to help it, to continue to grow, flourish and be an asset to the community. I think the more help they have to do so and become that, the better off they will be, the better off the community will be (Participant, GTC Skills Centre, British Columbia).

Similarly, representatives from Ontario suggested that a truly national immigration strategy be developed, one that takes provincial strategies into account and involves both municipal and regional government bodies. Aware of the impact that national policies and measures have on the provincial and local operational context, the organizations surveyed also emphasized the need for stronger cooperation between all levels of government.

Referring newly arrived immigrants directly and efficiently to specialized resources – through sufficient funding or building real bridges between governmental immigration services and community-based organizations – requires strengthening the existing relationship between the government and its external resources. To fortify partner relationships, however, specialized services and expertise developed by community-based organizations must first be recognized.

Recognizing the Specialized Expertise of Community-Based Employment Organizations and Training Staff

Employment training organizations and their staff play an important role in the successful employment integration of newly arrived immigrants to Canada by providing specialized and personalized services. Echoing the sentiment of the representatives from the Atlantic Region, all the organizations surveyed insisted on more recognition for that expertise:

Better recognition of specialized services for immigrants, based on a demonstrated track record, on investments made on a regional, national, international basis to share best practices, in order to prevent duplication of services and offer a real continuum of services (Roundtable, Atlantic Region).

To that end, governments must recognize and promote how important immigrants are for the development of communities in Canada and, in addition, vaunt the indisputable contribution made by community-based employability training organizations dedicated to serving newcomers:

I think investing in newcomers is definitely a smart move, because they do want to work. They do want to start a new life. They do want to contribute. They do want to move on rather than be stuck as a newcomer with all these needs for a really, really long time (ISIS, Atlantic Region).

In addition to paving the way for newcomers to contribute to the nation through their professional and personal skills, immigrant-serving organizations help build a pluralist and open society through diversity awareness-raising activities designed for employers and the general public.

To support newcomers throughout the integration process, the current service offerings must be strengthened and service delivery to this clientele with specialized needs must not be needlessly fragmented. Government support for the creation of regional networks of community-based employability training organizations and agencies serving an immigrant clientele would facilitate and foster knowledge sharing and the exchange of best practices.

Allowing More Administrative and Structural Flexibility

More flexible measures and services, in particular authorizing participants to make use of more than one program, would enable training organizations to better facilitate smooth job-market integration for their immigrant clientele:

Flexibility in program service delivery and innovation, right, rather than GSW, this is the money and it can only be funded this way and if you do settlement, it can only be done this way. I think more flexibility around what program we can develop and put in place, that is a little broader and this approach would be helpful. So more flexibility in developing a program that meets the local needs. And perhaps less restrictions on eligibility, yes, for sure, for the clients (ONESTEP, Ontario).

More latitude pertaining to the service time duration, selection criteria, and employment assistance program requirements would make it possible to adjust the service offering to match the clientele's specific needs. When surveyed community-based trainers also reiterated the need to bolster programs specifically designed for immigrant clients in outlying regions by not abandoning promising training measures or pilot projects, as happened when Ontario's Practice Firms were closed.

To alleviate the administrative burden, representatives of community-based training organizations suggest that federal and provincial authorities encourage the execution of multi-year contracts, establish a half-yearly or biannual accountability procedure, and develop strategies to evaluate the attainment of qualitative targets.

Improving Partnerships between Employers and Community-Based Employability Training Organizations

In addition to activities designed to raise employer awareness of the value of newcomers, campaigns advertising the services offered by community-based training agencies would help build bridges between the two sectors, thereby increasing the impact of efforts deployed by frontline training staff. Closer cooperation between employers and immigrant-serving organizations would greatly benefit the development of professional mentoring programs and workplace internships. With a view to diversifying funding sources for employability-training organizations, a respondent in Quebec proposed the following solution:

Honnêtement, je trouve que la collaboration des employeurs pourrait être plus importante, pour subventionner des organismes comme le nôtre. S'ils ont à aller chercher des immigrants à l'étranger, mais ils demandent à ce qu'Emploi-Québec subventionne ces activités-là, alors que dans le fond, on rend service aux entreprises. Ça serait intéressant que les employeurs puissent participer à l'aide financière des organismes comme le nôtre, parce qu'on leur rend des services. Donc c'est de responsabiliser les principaux acteurs et non pas mettre ça sur le dos d'Emploi-Québec, parce que ça nous touche indirectement (SIIIT, Quebec).

On a regional level, several respondents hoped for more dynamic collaboration with economic stakeholders, including the economic development counsels:

The immigrant-serving agencies and the economic development coordinators need to really start working together and be proactive. There is no point waiting until it is too late; they should be networking, communicating, solving the problems now. And they might not have all of the people they need now, but at least they are setting up an infrastructure for it (ASPECT, British Columbia).

All in all, more sustained and better coordination at all levels of government, recognition for the specialized expertise of training organizations and their staff, relaxation of program and management strictures, as well as heightened employer engagement would make it possible for training agencies to take full advantage of their potential and their specialized skills in order to better support immigrant integration into Canadian society.

Conclusion

While Canada's three major metropolitan areas – Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal – welcome more than 60% of the country's foreign-born population, immigrants can now increasingly be found in rural, semi-urban and smaller urban municipalities. Indeed, many communities located in outlying regions view immigration as a way to optimize their demographic, economic, and social development. As such, federal governmental authorities are motivated to encourage the regionalization of migration flows; first, to share the benefits of immigration with outlying communities and second, to ease population pressure in the major cities.

6.1 Summary of Results

Given this new policy orientation, the goal of this research project was to foster the labour market integration of newcomers outside of Canada's main urban centres through, in particular, a better understanding of the socioeconomic integration process experienced by immigrants and through an exchange of best practises developed by organizations working in the community. To that end, 12 community-based training organizations and immigrant-serving agencies were selected in British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and the Atlantic Region, the four regions studied, in order to present a range of operational contexts. A preparatory overview of the conventional literature on the subject of immigration and employability made it possible to identify four variables that affect the involvement of community-based organizations, namely the sociopolitical environment, the service-delivery model, local-specific socioeconomic attributes, and the composition of the immigrant population. Next, 152 immigrant participants⁷ were surveyed twice to document their educational and professional experiences before and after arriving in Canada. Finally, sixty semi-structured interviews were conducted with study participants and staff members from the 12 observation sites and complemented by six regional and national meetings. This multi-pronged data-collection method made it possible to catalogue the primary challenges encountered in a non-metropolitan environment both by newcomers (Chapter 4) and the community-based training organizations who assist them (Chapter 5). In light of the results, it is possible to conclude that, outside of major Canadian cities, very recent newcomers and the organizations serving them confront a double-edged challenge comprised of the constraints typical to the immigrant integration process plus the obstacles specific to living and working in outlying regions. Far from being homogeneous, the difficulties experienced vary widely from one province to another and even from one community to another, depending on unique, region-specific demographic, sociocultural, economic, and political characteristics.

Attracted to outlying regions by a desire for tranquillity and the presence of close friends and family, the study's respondents place special value on the safety, friendliness, and natural setting of their new host environment. Originally from Asia and Latin America for the most part, they are highly educated; that is, over half of those surveyed have a university diploma. Despite their qualifications, nearly 60% of those surveyed asserted having experienced significant difficulties finding work related to their training or prior experience, a percentage consistent with the findings of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) conducted by Statistics Canada.

⁷ To be eligible, participants were required to have received their landed immigrant status for five years or less before the beginning of the study in January 2010.

On the one hand, newcomers in outlying regions find themselves confronted by the same issues as their compatriots in major urban hubs. Those issues include a lack of Canadian work experience (a concern raised by 60% of the study's participants), complications tied to the recognition of prior education and skills (50%), weak professional networks (46%), and language difficulties (35%). Nonetheless, the host community's relative remoteness and size exacerbate certain difficulties and amplify the critical importance of having an established network, a problem that is difficult to remedy in communities where established ethnic enclaves are harder to find. Moreover, the local lack of familiarity with ethnic and cultural diversity in some outlying regions increases the risk of discrimination and isolation. On the other hand, very recent immigrants living outside MTV must contend with challenges specific to their communities, including a lack of job opportunities (mentioned by 42% of respondents), a lesser demand for specific professions (35%), and transportation issues (14%). These constraints, which affect everyone living in a remote region, when compounded by the challenges commonly encountered by newly arrived immigrants, further complicate the integration process. Given the smaller numbers of immigrants who live outside the major urban centres, the needed services are sometimes sorely lacking due to a lack of adequate funding. The availability of language courses, profession-specific language training, and employment assistance programs for immigrants remains disproportionately concentrated in urban areas, as corroborated by several authors (Sherrell, Hyndman, Preniqi, 2005; Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin, 2009).

Luckily, immigrant employment assistance services are available through the 12 organizations studied, even if two participating organizations criticized the absence of reception and settlement services in their region. Unfortunately, these organizations continue to confront operational obstacles to achieving their mission of providing quality services to enable immigrants to gain a firmer footing in the labour market. The lukewarm recognition these organizations receive from the government engenders a lopsided partnership and leads to several difficulties including cumbersome administrative requirements related to bidding and accountability procedures. Not only does the constantly shifting political landscape cause annual budget fluctuations, but the instability also impinges upon the relationships between the various stakeholders. In a regional context, these issues affect the community-based training agencies as much as they do the newly arrived immigrants. Constraints specific to outlying regions, such as difficulties tied to the attraction and retention of immigrants, as well as the disparity between the geographic scope of the service area and the availability of resources, further complicate an already complex process.

A juxtaposition of data collected from both respondent groups, reveals certain correlations between the difficulties experienced. The large number of stakeholders involved, like the lack of program flexibility, affects the newcomers' integration process by undermining the establishment of a real service continuum. The many service cutbacks in several provinces contrasts sharply with the need for specialized services and language training intended for immigrants. A lack of commitment on the part of employers, who play a key role in the integration of newly arrived immigrants, also complicates both the experience of foreign candidates and the effectiveness of the assistance provided by employability training agencies.

Although participating organizations have developed a variety of best practices intended to mitigate some of the difficulties encountered, the experience of immigrant participants attests to just how entrenched many key impediments and challenges are. The high rate of unemployment among the very recent immigrants – who were selected primarily on the basis of their professional skills – despite the shortage of skilled labour demonstrates the gravity of the situation and the need to act quickly. To this end, frontline workers with specialized expertise and experience working in the field must have opportunity to participate in the development of potential solutions as part of an inclusive and collaborative process.

6.2 Summary of Recommendations

In order to foster the emergence of solutions adapted to the realities in the regions studied, the representatives from the 12 participating organizations were summoned to a pan-Canadian meeting in February 2013. In addition to discussing best practices regarding the employment integration of recently arrived immigrants in a regional context, the participants were asked to draw up provincial, regional, and national recommendations. To that end, among the ten challenges faced by newly arrived immigrants (Chapter 4) and community-based training agencies (Chapter 5), three major challenges at the national level were identified that take into account the scope and the severity of the problem, as well as the availability of solutions. The framing of this study reflects these three challenges: recognition of prior learning and skills, lack of Canadian work experience, and erroneous information and inadequate pre-arrival preparation. As for the challenges faced by community-based training agencies, survey respondents identified the many constraints related to financing, relationships with government, and a lack of mobilization on the part of employers. In the spirit of collaborative knowledge building, this section provides a summary of pan-Canadian recommendations drafted by the Canadian Coalition of Community-Based Employability Training (CCCBET) as well as provincial recommendations developed by participants in the different regions studied.

Recognition of Prior Learning and Skills

Identified as a major difficulty nationwide, recognition of prior learning and skills entails long wait times, high costs, subpar results, and frustration for newcomers to Canada. Consequently, those surveyed hoped to see speedy and concerted action on the part of federal, regional and provincial governmental bodies.

The CCCBET recommends that the federal government identify the highest norms and standards regarding the recognition of foreign-earned credentials and qualifications through a comparative study of the professional certification processes currently used in each province. Next, in order to optimize the recognition of foreign-earned credentials and qualifications, the CCCBET recommends that the federal government standardize the relevant requirements and procedures across Canada.

British Columbia: *Given the significant challenges experienced by new immigrants in securing recognition of foreign-earned credentials and qualifications, we recommend that professional associations be required to have an application process that mirrors the tiered CIC immigration application in its public accessibility, transparency, accountability, attainability, and efficiency.*

Ontario: *We recommend that the federal government analyze existing licensing processes, understanding regulatory body concerns in order to develop a national credential assessment strategy.*

Quebec: *In order to optimize the recognition of foreign-earned credentials and qualifications, we recommend to the ministère de l'Immigration et de Communautés culturelles du Québec (MICC) that the process begin before arrival and that an executive committee for key stakeholders be established.*

Atlantic Region: *Given the need for trade workers and the lack of gap training within the Atlantic region, we recommend that the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program provide funding to develop a federal and regional approach to competency assessment, certification, and gap training for the Skilled Trades. In addition, we recommend a better collaboration amongst the Atlantic immigrant-serving organizations, regulatory bodies, and training institutions to address gap training for regulated occupations.*

Lack of Canadian Work Experience

With the goal of facilitating the professional integration of newcomers, it seems imperative to address the lack of Canadian work experience and allow newcomers' to break the endless chain of subsistence employment.

In addition to addressing the challenges related to the verification of foreign-earned skills and qualifications, the CCCBET recommends that the federal government create more internship and bridge training programs underwritten by wage subsidies and fiscal and financial incentives to help new immigrants quickly acquire a first job experience in Canada. We additionally urge the federal and provincial governments to work with their respective business sector networks – such as the Chambers of Commerce and Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association – and the community-based employment training sector to champion proactive recognition of international credentials and work experience, so as to attract and retain the knowledge workers essential to economic growth and global competitiveness.

British Columbia: *Given the significant delays experienced by skilled immigrants in securing recognition of foreign credentials and qualifications, we recommend the granting of a "Provisional Qualification License" in their own field of practice upon arrival in Canada or prior to departure from their home country, allowing them to become employed more quickly in their field and receive wages commensurate with their skills and qualifications.*

Ontario: *We recommend that the federal and provincial governments create strategic, targeted employment experience initiatives, such as practice firms, newcomers' association membership categories, and volunteer strategies, to provide newcomers with Canadian workplace experience.*

Quebec: *In order to offset the lack of Canadian experience and to better prepare employers, we recommend ongoing and consistent support for new immigrants and, for both new immigrants and employers, a better handling of cross-cultural communications.*

Atlantic Region: *Given the challenges and complexities of obtaining sustainable labour market attachment, we recommend that additional pre-employment skills development training, internships, and on-the-job training be provided to assist immigrants in more readily securing employment in their fields of expertise.*

Pre-landing Information and Preparation

In light of the apparent disparity between the reality and the picture painted abroad via formal and informal communication channels, the pre-migration expectations of newcomers to Canada are repeatedly dashed by the host society's particularities and limitations, which points to the need for immigration candidates be better prepared.

The CCCBET recommends that the federal government concentrate its efforts on the development of pre-arrival services by allowing new immigrants to undertake several steps, particularly related to the process of securing recognition of foreign-earned credentials, qualifications, and developing/demonstrating strong competencies in the two national languages.

British Columbia: *Given that skilled immigrants would be more successfully integrated if their foreign-earned credentials or licenses could be assessed and recognized prior to arrival in Canada, we recommend "Provisional Qualification Licenses" be granted based on a standardized test or equivalent, written in the candidate's home country and set/determined by Canadian professional associations and their governing bodies, the results of which would be submitted along with CIC and Canadian job applications.*

Ontario: *We recommend that the federal government utilize the credential recognition and assessment recommendation to address and inform pre-landing efforts.*

Quebec: *In order to ensure solid pre-arrival preparation, we recommend fostering the autonomy of specialized workers (through access to pre-arrival services) and ensuring that information received in the country of origin be realistic.*

Atlantic Region: *Given the immigrants' need for individualized support and clear information about work opportunities in their fields and the increased confusion engendered by the development of additional websites, we recommend that information be filtered through immigrant settlement agencies and delivered through technology. We also recommend that pre-arrival services be piloted in the Atlantic Region by settlement services.*

Funding

Confronted with a growing demand and an increased cost of living, most study participants favour modifying the types of funding available to support community-based employment organizations that assist newcomers in their employment integration in areas outside the major urban centres.

To ensure diversified, adequate, complete, and ongoing funding to support the integration of new immigrants into the Canadian job market, the CCCBET recommends that the federal government mobilize all the key stakeholders affected by the issue, particularly recognizing the key role that frontline community-based employment trainers play in immigrant integration.

British Columbia and Ontario: *Given that immigration and settlement agencies require sufficient and predictable resources to provide the services required to assist skilled immigrants successfully integrate into life and work in Canada, we recommend a consistent and transparent procurement process that provides long-term and adequate funding for a full complement of client services and administrative costs that reflect of the needs in non-urban centres.*

Quebec: *In order to maintain the current level of services and foster the development of new services, we recommend increasing funding such that all the necessary activities be included in the price paid by funders. We also recommend diversifying the funding sources, particularly by developing services paid by businesses.*

Atlantic Region: *Given that most immigrants to Canada are coming through the skilled workers stream which requires the maximum points for education and experience, therefore creating the need to prepare them and link them to employment opportunities in their occupational fields, we recommend that all stakeholders who fund and provide employment services for immigrants work collaboratively to develop a common vision and a transparent process that will provide successful outcomes.*

Government Relations

Buffeted by the many changes in policy orientations in recent years, organizations participating in the study hope to bolster their partnership relationships with governmental authorities at the federal, provincial, and local level so that their specialized expertise in employment and immigration might be recognized.

In order to ensure equitable new immigrant services regardless of where a new immigrant decides to settle, the CCCBET recommends that the federal government standardize its internal policies relating to immigration and align those policies with provincial policies in Canada.

British Columbia: *Given that the inconsistent and contradictory policies between levels and departments of government negatively impacts immigrant integration, we recommend that CIC develop a system whereby CIC communicates with their provincial counterparts about changes in policy and corresponding documents and forms, including an articulated process for ensuring the mutual sharing of information and policies affecting the settlement of immigrants.*

Ontario: *We recommend the creation of a steering committee that meets quarterly with the government, co-chaired by both stakeholders, to strengthen and streamline government and service provider relationships.*

Quebec: *In order to ensure equitable new immigrant services, we recommend a better standardization of service delivery on both the regional and national level and across all regions, as well as increased awareness on the part of those serving new immigrants at local employment centres.*

Employer Engagement

Although many regions face a shortage of skilled labour, Canadian employers seem reluctant to hire immigrants particularly in non-urban regions. As a result, it seems critical to mobilize employers in order to foster openness toward cultural diversity and to develop promising integration strategies.

Because employers are essential to integrating new immigrants into the job market, the CCCBET recommends that the federal government create employer incentives for those that hire new immigrants while at the same time emphasizing employer awareness programs.

British Columbia: *Given that employers are often reluctant to hire foreign-trained skilled immigrants without Canadian work experience, we recommend that CIC develop a system of remuneration for employers willing to hire newcomers with a "Provisional Qualification License" in exchange for providing a Canadian work experience opportunity*

Ontario: *We recommend that the provincial government formalize outreach strategies through Boards of Trade and Chambers of Commerce in order to develop a relationship and eventually recognize employer efforts.*

Quebec: *In order to foster positive integration and keep new immigrants in the job market, we recommend to Emploi-Quebec as well as employer associations, including Chambers of Commerce, to raise the awareness of businesses (employers and employees) with trainings adapted according to the size of businesses (large businesses as compared to small and medium enterprises).*

Atlantic Region: *Given the ongoing need to maintain strong partnerships with employers and other partners within the community, we recommend that additional funding be provided to employment services and settlement organizations to build on existing partnerships and forge new collaborative partnerships with employers, professional organizations, and associations, as well as unions and regulators, to assist immigrants in securing sustainable labour market attachment.*

In order to promote the full integration of immigrants into the Canadian job market, it seems essential that services be developed and tailored to the geographic destination and the specific needs of immigrants living in outlying regions. Faced with the decentralization of migratory flows and the emergence of new settlement destinations, it is also important to promote mutual exchange and apprenticeship programs between community-based organizations on a local, provincial, and national scale. However, a cookie-cutter approach to immigrant employment assistance across Canada – or even across one province – that fails to take into account the local dynamics and characteristics that come into play would be neither desirable nor sustainable. For immigrant integration mechanisms to be effective, local communities, immigrants, employers, and service organizations must be included in program development and implementation (Nolin, McCallum and Zehtab-Martin, 2009). Addressing the many challenges identified and implementing the national and regional recommendations proposed in this section therefore require the active collaboration of all stakeholders.

6.3 Directions for Further Research

Immigration outside of the major urban centres in Canada is a subject with far-reaching ramifications, a fuller understanding of which would require that research continue, particularly through widening the geographic scope and surveying other stakeholders involved in the immigrant employability process in regional environments.

First of all, due to the usual financial and time constraints and limited human resources, it proved impossible to include all Canadian provinces in this study. The absence of the Prairies in particular, a region that in 2010 welcomed nearly one-fifth of Canada's new permanent residents (CIC, 2011), prevented a study of the challenges posed by new migratory flows. Every year the three Prairie Provinces, each with its own distinct sociopolitical and economic profile and singular immigration history, receive a growing number of newcomers and together are home to 30 immigrant-serving organizations. The Manitoba government, which each year selects nearly 12,000 immigrants through the PNP program, is a true leader when it comes to attracting foreign workers to outlying regions. To draw a complete pan-Canadian portrait would also require the inclusion of Prince Edward Island, a province that in 2010 welcomed more new permanent residents than its neighbouring province of Nova Scotia (CIC, 2011). By virtue of its small population and surface area, as well as its unique economy, Prince Edward Island would provide a new perspective on immigrant employability in the Atlantic Region. In short, including these four provinces in the study of challenges faced by both employment candidates trained abroad and immigrant employability organizations would provide another perspective on job-market integration for new arrivals outside of Canada's major cities. It would also be an opportunity to highlight and ultimately share the innovative best practices developed in these provinces with stakeholders across Canada.

Secondly, the critical role of local businesses in immigrant employability emerges quite clearly from the research results. According to those surveyed, many employers are unaware of the existence of community-based employability training organizations that serve immigrants – and the expertise they have developed, nor do they really grasp the added value that skilled immigrant workers can contribute as employees. In addition, in the context of many unregulated trades and professions, employers often stand in for regulatory agencies by assessing the value of foreign educational and training credentials. Unfortunately, the usually reliable measures employers use to judge aptitude, such as course curricula and former work experience, fall short when assessing the value of foreign credentials:

Companies struggle with assessing the potential of new immigrants, who tend to lack Canadian experience and whose PSE credentials are difficult to assess. Many businesses are unaware of many of the credential assessment agencies and settlement services that are offered locally. And while this is largely a challenge with small and medium-sized enterprises, even large companies face impediments. Ultimately, many Canadian businesses perceive the risk of hiring newcomers to be too high (Alexander, Burleton et Fong, 2012, p. 16).

To assist newly arrived immigrants in finding employment that matches their skills and ambitions as well as to better document employers' specific needs and challenges in a context of labour shortages, employers from both the public and private sectors must be invited to participate in future research. A better understanding of why company decision-makers are reluctant to hire immigrants and what difficulties they encounter would go a long way toward developing policies and programs better suited to the reality of employers.

Ultimately, since Canada seems determined to maintain high levels of immigration over the next few years while simultaneously modifying eligibility criteria and procedures, providing new foreign-trained residents with all the tools they need to successfully pursue their social and occupational integration will be critical. Thus, as Froy emphasized, "[f]or the potential advantages of migration to be maximized however, it is crucial that immigration is accompanied by integration, that is, effective mechanisms for ensuring immigrants are effectively incorporated into local labour markets" (2006, p. 32).

Glossary

Recent immigrants: Individuals who have been landed immigrants to Canada from 5 to 10 years.

Very recent immigrants (or newcomers): Individuals who have been landed immigrants to Canada for 5 years or less.

Educational attainment: Highest level of schooling completed

Labour force: Civilian non-institutional population 15 years of age and over who, during the survey reference week, were employed or unemployed.

Immigrant population: Refers to people who are, or have been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Canadian citizens by birth and non-permanent residents (persons from another country who live in Canada and have a work or study permit, or are claiming refugee status, as well as family members living here with them) are not landed immigrants.

Unemployment rate: Number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force. The unemployment rate for a particular group (for example, age, sex, marital status) is the number unemployed in that group expressed as a percentage of the labour force for that group.

Participation rate: Total labour force expressed as a percentage of the population aged 15 years and over. The participation rate for a particular group (for example, women aged 25 years and over) is the labour force in that group expressed as a percentage of the population for that group.

Employment rate: (employment/population ratio) Number of employed persons expressed as a percentage of the population 15 years of age and over. The employment rate for a particular group (age, sex, marital status, province, etc.) is the number employed in that group expressed as a percentage of the population for that group.

Source: Statistics Canada, 2011e, p. 10–18.

Profile of the 12 participating agencies

Table 22. Profile of the 12 Participating Agencies¹

ORGANIZATIONS	CITIES	DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT	NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	
			DELIVERING EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO IMMIGRANTS	TOTAL
CENTRAL VANCOUVER ISLAND MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY (CVIMS)	NANAIMO, BC	1979	7	32
GREATER TRAIL COMMUNITY SKILLS CENTRE	TRAIL, BC	1997	1	14
SOUTH OKANAGAN IMMIGRANT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES (SOICS)	PENTICTON, BC	1976	4	18
WELCOME CENTRE IMMIGRANT SERVICES - JOB SKILLS EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS PROGRAMS AND SUPPORTS	MARKHAM, ONT	1988	19	90
SAULT COMMUNITY CAREER CENTRE (SCCC)	SAULT STE. MARIE, ONT	1992	9	29
WELLAND HERITAGE COUNCIL AND MULTICULTURAL CENTRE (WHC)	WELLAND, ONT	1976	6	24
ACCÈS TRAVAIL	VICTORIAVILLE, QC	1984	7	18
AIDE INTÉGRATION JEUNESSE AU TRAVAIL DE LA VALLÉE-DU-RICHELIEU (AIJT)	MONT-SAINT-HILAIRE, QC	1985	2	28
SERVICE D'ORIENTATION ET D'INTÉGRATION DES IMMIGRANTS AU TRAVAIL (SOIIT)	QUEBEC, QC	1985	15	20
IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SERVICES (ISIS)	HALIFAX, NS	1980	10	125
MULTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF FREDERICTON (MCAF)	FREDERICTON, NB	1974	3,5	49
ASSOCIATION FOR NEW CANADIANS (ANC) - AXIS CAREER SERVICES DIVISION	ST. JOHN'S, NL	1979	10	65

¹ Number of employees delivering employment services to immigrants and total number of employees on January 1, 2013.

Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS)

In 1979, the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society (CVIMS) began as a grassroots, mostly volunteer driven registered charity in response to the Vietnamese refugee crisis. Situated in Nanaimo, B.C., it serves the Central Vancouver Island region of about 160,000 people, which includes the city of Nanaimo and rural communities. Since its inception, it has grown to become an award-winning agency and a leader in providing services for immigrants and in promoting inclusion and respect for all people. Also known as the Immigrant Welcome Centre, CVIMS is committed to the values of equity and diversity. CVIMS also ensures that immigrants and diverse people flourish in this community and offers programs that are conducive to that vision.

CVIMS is a registered charity providing services to immigrants. CVIMS offers English language classes, employment and direct settlement assistance (orientation to the culture, customs, systems, laws and norms of Canada and the local community) as well as other related services such as ESL training, credential assessment and employment services. CVIMS is a community-based agency that works with individuals and organizations to ensure that all those in our diverse community have equitable access to its services and opportunities. CVIMS is client-driven and committed to being accessible and responsive to, as well as reflective of, the diverse community.

Greater Trail Community Skills Centre

Located in Trail, British Columbia, the mission of the Skills Centre is to build a caring community of skilled, productive and engaged people. While its primary focus is labour market development, the agency manages a variety of contracts and services that support the broader socioeconomic development of the community and region. For the past 16 years the Skills Centre has taken an active role in the community, seeking to bridge social and economic development. The Skills Centre is also the sole shareholder of Inside Job Consulting Ltd., a company which delivers a range of services related to organizational and human resource development, including the management of the Learning and Wellness Centre for Teck Metals Ltd., the region's largest employer.

The work of the Skills Centre is divided into two broad streams: Employment Solutions and Social Economy Solutions. Firstly, in addition to being the lead contractor for the WorkBC Employment Services Centre for Greater Trail, the agency manages a number of other contracts related to skills development, the immigrant support and the promotion of a community that is more welcoming of newcomers. Secondly, having run a social enterprise for ten years, the Skills Centre delivers technical assistance to other organizations interested in social enterprise development. The organisation is also currently working on projects promoting increased economic security for low income women and affordable housing, particularly for people who are homeless or have difficulty securing housing.

South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS)

The South Okanagan Immigrant and Community Services (SOICS) has been managing community projects, building community partnerships, meeting project objectives, and achieving project outcomes in the South Okanagan for over 30 years. The Society has long prided itself on excellence in grassroots community services, as well as petitioning all levels of government to meet the needs of newcomers. SOICS provides newcomer services throughout the South Okanagan, such as Employment Services, Skills Connect for Immigrants, ELSA (English Language Services for Adults), Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS), Enhanced Early Childhood Education, and Community Bridging/Mentorship activities. In the past year, SOICS has assisted over 1000 clients with their settlement needs in the South Okanagan Region.

Established in 1976 as the Penticton and District Multicultural Society (PDMS), SOICS assists clients in all aspects of ensuring successful settlement and gaining meaningful employment. These services include upgrading English language skills, assessing skills, qualifications, and experience, as well as assisting the clients with the credential evaluation process and regulating bodies. The staff also offer industry-specific skills upgrading and training, work search techniques, coaching and employment workshops, and career exploration and labour market information. In addition to the job postings and employment resources, SOICS provide a helpful introduction to Canadian workplace culture to its newcomer clients.

Welcome Centre Immigrant Services - Job Skills Employment and Business Programs and Supports

Job Skills, a non-profit community-based employment and training agency, began offering employment training in northern York Region in 1988. Twenty-five years later, the agency provides Employment, Newcomer and Business Services and Programs in York Region, Dufferin, Halton, Peel, and Toronto to more than 25,000 individuals annually. Job Skills has proven to be reliable and effective in providing services and programs, and has developed a strong community presence, earning a reputation for excellence that is both client-centered and results-oriented. Over the years, Job Skills' staff of qualified professionals has served a diverse range of clients seeking support and assistance in finding employment or initiating a small business.

Job Skills' Employment Services and Programs combine one-on-one support with self-service and include Employment Ontario Employment Services (EOES) and as well as specialized employment training programs. Employer Services assist employers with the challenges of hiring in today's business world. Newcomer Employment Services provides specialized support for immigrants looking for work and includes a Bridging Program for HR professionals and the Job Search Workshops Program. Job Skills is also one of five lead agencies involved in the unique Welcome Centre Immigrant Services service delivery model in York Region. The Ontario Self-Employment Benefit (OSEB) program and Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP) are specific programs offered to support clients who want to pursue self-employment as an option.

Sault Community Career Centre (SCCC)

Established in 1992, the Sault Community Career Centre (SCCC) is a not for profit, customer-focused, innovative, and resourceful organization. By adhering to values of integrity, transparency, respect and equality, the organization commits to leading Sault Ste. Marie in creating a welcoming community, supporting employers in meeting their human resource and staffing needs, as well as providing settlement services to all newcomers. SCCC is a visible, active, and respected community service organization and community gateway recognized for leading innovative, sustainable employment and settlement services.

Sault Community Career Centre offers a variety of services and programs including Employment Services provided to help Ontarians find sustainable employment and/or to bridge the gap between individuals seeking employment and employers seeking personnel to meet their business needs. It offers a program called New to the Sault to provide settlement and employment support to newcomers, and also provides The Targeted Initiative for Older Workers (TIOW) which prepares mature workers for new and immediate employment, training and upgrading opportunities, and which seeks to increase their employability in communities where there is little likelihood of immediate employment. Finally, the centre offers Fresh Start, a program giving Ontario Works recipients access to a full job search resource room, friendly mentors and staff, and the chance to realize one's potential, gain confidence, and achieve personal goals. In addition, participants have access to subsidies, training and upgrading opportunities.

Welland Heritage Council and Multicultural Centre (WHC)

The WHC has been welcoming newcomers to Welland since 1976, and started its employment services in 2002. The WHC started with a small four-room facility and employed only four staff. The organization has grown to a large multi-service agency owning its own building and employing 30 people. The WHC has employed many newcomers to Canada and has been very pleased with the outcome. Employment services started to assist International Professionals via Canadian Access for International Professionals and Skilled Trades (CAIPS) and then evolved under Employment Ontario into a full service community employment service office - Employment Solutions. A unique program offered was the IMG (International Medical Graduates) Niagara which assisted foreign trained doctors with Canadian education and exams, by means of a resource area and financial assistance, to remove barriers to employment.

The WHC is a multi-service agency offering settlement services, English language classes, emergency shelter, legal assistance, family law, child care, community connections, Niagara mentorship program, youth programs, a Niagara micro lending program for international women and assistance with credential assessments. The organization also offers employment counselling, employment placement, WHMIS, Smart Serve and First Aid certification, one-on-one

counselling, mental health counselling, literacy assessments, as well as pre-employment and life skills workshops. The WHC staff is very proud of their unique expertise with immigration and international professionals.

Accès travail

In the beginning, *Accès travail* started offering services to youth and to workers aged 45 and older. Since then, the organization has adapted its programs and designed new ones to continually adjust to the changing realities of the labour market. Faced with an aging population and scarce workforce in the Centre-du-Quebec Region, *Accès travail* offers a broad range of services meeting the needs of numerous job seekers and businesses in the region, while educating the local population on the importance and added value of cultural diversity. In order to contribute to the continuous improvement of the employability service offering, the organization regularly participates in various research projects, such as *Milieux en action*, in partnership with the *Regroupement québécois des organismes pour le développement de l'employabilité* and the *Université de Sherbrooke*.

For over 30 years, *Accès travail* has been working on the Arthabaska RCM territory, offering specialized services to various clienteles, such as newcomers and immigrants, experienced workers, as well as youngsters and people distant from the labour market. In addition to its Job Find Centre, *Accès travail* provides career development and orientation services. The organization has been providing specialized services to immigrants since 2006 and has offered the Skills Link program for young immigrants since 2008, both on the Drummondville RCM territory.

Aide et Intégration Jeunesse au Travail de la Vallée-du-Richelieu (AIJT)

AIJT has a proven reputation of successful involvement with local clients in terms of employment and professional integration. For more than 25 years, the organization has been developing projects and programs always at the forefront of community challenges. Since 2008, AIJT has developed programs specifically designed for immigrants, including *L'Envol* project in partnership with *Emploi-Québec*. AIJT experience has shown that it is essential to meet the special needs of newcomers and immigrants in light of their labour market, school, and society integration, by offering them efficient and customized care while respecting their specific needs and pace.

As *L'Envol* is an employment measure subsidized by *Emploi-Québec*, AIJT is mostly responsible for the integration of immigrants into the labour market in Quebec. However, in the absence of a settlement agency for immigrants in the Vallée-du-Richelieu Region, *L'Envol* is the only organization offering specialized services to immigrants. Hence, the needs of the clients far exceed the scope of employment training. In this context, AIJT created different workshops to facilitate newcomers' socioeconomic integration in the region and has partnered with another organization to offer the Immigrant Women Entrepreneurship project that has for the past two years supported women in creating their own employment opportunities.

Service d'orientation et d'intégration des immigrants au travail (SOIIT)

Established in 1985, the *Service d'orientation et d'intégration des immigrants au travail* is a non-profit community-based organization offering employment services to immigrants in Quebec City and its surroundings. Its mission is to assist immigrants with their employment integration process and to support organizations and businesses in the implementation of favorable measures to welcome and include immigrant workers into the local workforce. Furthermore, SOIIT's relationship-building with the host community has led to the development of a wide-spread network that includes various industries, as well as partners within the public, private, and community sector.

The organization serves over 700 job-seeking immigrants and refugees annually. SOIIT provides clients with a broad range of services, ranging from job search techniques to work placement. In order to meet immigrants' specific needs, the agency implements different practices to favor an intercultural approach, taking into account each client's adjustment process to cultural differences and to the reality of the labour market in North America and Quebec. Services offered by SOIIT include cultural integration, introduction to the Quebec workplace culture, career guidance, job search training, integration and job retention, as well as training and cultural diversity management awareness programs for employers.

Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS)

In December 2009, two Nova Scotia organizations, the Metropolitan Immigrant Settlement Association (MISA) and the Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre (HILC), merged to form ISIS. HILC and MISA were leading not-for-profit organizations serving immigrants in Nova Scotia since 1980 and 1988, respectively. ISIS envisions a community where all can belong and grow. The organization's mission is to welcome immigrants and to work in partnership to offer services and create opportunities that enable them to participate fully in Canadian life. ISIS' mandate consists of providing the full range of programs and services along the settlement and integration continuum to clients in communities across Nova Scotia.

ISIS provides customized language and skills development programs and services to help clients settle and integrate into the community and into the workplace, through both onsite and distance delivery modes. This includes services to clients pre-arrival in Nova Scotia. In addition, it offers direct client service/community outreach programs, bringing together clients and community partners through a range of volunteer programs such as mentoring, work placements, community connections, and ESL tutoring. Finally, ISIS also develops community capacity programs, offering volunteer training, diversity training, presentations to community and business group, and information and training for community groups to increase their capacity to serve immigrants. In addition, ISIS' staff regularly participate in committees and boards, and in research on immigration.

Multicultural Association of Fredericton (MCAF)

Founded in 1974, the Multicultural Association of Fredericton plays a vital role in establishing communication and fostering understanding between the community, settled immigrants, and newcomers. MCAF accomplishes this by offering programs and services that meet three goals: to encourage and promote the concept of diversity and inclusion, to provide newcomers to Canada with settlement services, language instruction, employment services and community networking, and finally to create an inclusive and welcoming community.

The MCAF Newcomer Programs deliver a range of services to facilitate the integration and full participation of newcomers in the community, including English and French second language classes, settlement services, Settlement Worker in Schools (SWIS), *Programme de liaison communautaire-Écoles francophones*, Newcomer Computer Learning Centre, and Community Connections. The agency also offers ESL for Temporary Foreign Workers and their spouses, NB Employment Language Training, Business English for Newcomers, Employment Services for newcomers. MCAF's Newcomer Children and Youth programming facilitates participation, integration, and leadership. MCAF organizes and delivers a variety of training, events, and programs to celebrate diversity and to promote a welcoming and inclusive community in Fredericton.

AXIS Career Services, Association for New Canadians (ANC)

Established in 1979, the Association for New Canadians continues to be Newfoundland and Labrador's only full-service immigrant settlement agency providing a broad range of settlement, integration, and inclusion programs and services for immigrants and refugees. Since 1995, AXIS Career Services, the Employment and Training Division of the ANC, has been working with all categories of immigrants eligible to work in Canada. AXIS plays a key role in helping to integrate internationally educated workers, tradespersons, and entrepreneurs into the local labour market. Using a collaborative approach, AXIS offers comprehensive pre-employment programs and services which provide newcomers an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and abilities, and links skilled workers with local employment opportunities in their field of expertise.

AXIS offers career-focused programs and services as well as customized workplace communications training for internationally educated professionals, tradespersons and entrepreneurs. Through interactive engagement with employers and collaborative partnerships with government, industry and the community, AXIS aims to facilitate successful labour market integration for newcomers. Newcomers can participate in a wide range of programs including Pre-employment Skills Development Training, Bridging programs, Business Development Support programs and Occupational Communications Training. AXIS also supports and assists newcomers by facilitating Foreign Qualification Recognition processes, Licensure/Certification processes, Prior Learning Assessment, as well as language proficiency assessments.

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