



ST. THOMAS • ELGIN
Local Immigration Partnership

Immigrant Survey Report

2023



Introduction

In June 2023, STELIP facilitated a survey to understand the experiences, challenges, and recommendations of immigrants in the St. Thomas-Elgin area. This was the first year STELIP conducted the survey, and to our knowledge, the first time a dedicated survey about immigrant experiences in St. Thomas-Elgin has been undertaken.

The survey was open to any immigrant (age 16+) who lived, worked, or studied in St. Thomas or Elgin County at the time of the survey. For the purposes of the survey, “immigrant” was defined broadly as anyone who was born outside of Canada.

The St. Thomas-Elgin area, as it is referred to in this report, encompasses all seven municipalities of Elgin County (Bayham, Aylmer, Malahide, Central Elgin, Southwold, Dutton-Dunwich, West Elgin) as well as the City of St. Thomas.

Data from the 2021 Canadian census is included throughout this report for comparison purposes. All census data is for the Elgin County Census Division, which likewise includes St. Thomas and all of Elgin County.

A total of 99 immigrants participated in the survey. Of this total, 68 completed the full-length survey, and an additional 31 completed a shorter version in English, Spanish, or Ukrainian. Most questions were optional, so not all participants answered every question. The number of respondents for each individual question is listed in the footnotes.

While the survey sample size is not large enough to be a statistically significant representation of all immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin, the results still provide important insight into the perspectives and experiences of those immigrants who participated in the survey.

The following survey findings can be used to start to build an understanding of immigrant experiences in St. Thomas and Elgin County.

Executive Summary

- A total of 99 immigrants completed the survey (68 completing the full-length survey and 31 completing the shorter survey). The respondents represented most major categories of immigration, including permanent and temporary residents and Canadian citizens. However, refugees were underrepresented in the survey respondents compared to census data; notably there were no privately-sponsored refugee respondents.
- Nearly half of the respondents had been in Canada for 5 years or less (46%), while over a third (37%) had lived in Canada for over 10 years.
- While survey respondents represented both St. Thomas and most of the rural municipalities, a large majority of respondents were from St. Thomas (77%), with no respondents from the west Elgin region (municipalities of Dutton-Dunwich and West Elgin).
- The survey respondents were diverse, representing many different racial and language groups. Of the respondents, 71% were racialized, meaning they identified with a race/population group other than white (most common: Black (26%), South Asian (19%), Filipino (10%)). Racialized respondents were overrepresented compared to the proportion of immigrants who are racialized according to 2021 census data for St. Thomas and Elgin County. Respondents spoke 25 different languages, with 61% indicating their first language was something other than English. Common first languages spoken included: English (39%), Spanish (7%), Ukrainian (7%), Gujarati (6%) and Tagalog (6%). Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they spoke English well or very well.
- Respondents had a high level of participation in the workforce, with 85% employed and 12% looking for work.

Education and Employment

- Respondents were highly educated, with 82% having a college or university degree, compared to 47% of the overall population who have some kind of postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree.
- Despite most respondents being employed and highly educated, 26% indicated that their job did not match their skills.

Income and Housing

- While the majority of respondents indicated that they had sufficient income to cover their needs (54%) and suitable and affordable housing (83%), a sizable minority of respondents did not have enough income to cover their needs (43% not quite enough, 4% definitely not enough) or suitable and affordable housing (17%). Racialized respondents had higher percentages of insufficient income and housing compared to all survey respondents.
- A third of respondents (34%) indicated they had experienced cost of living or money problems, while 21% indicated they had difficulty finding affordable housing.

Service Use

- Nearly all the respondents (95%) used at least one of the following service categories: health, mental health, recreation services, police, employment and/or skills training, education, settlement/immigration services, language interpretation/translation, English language learning, French language learning, local municipal government/bylaw, transportation services, housing, small business/entrepreneurial supports, legal/courts, and childcare.
- The services with the highest positive ratings were language interpretation/translation (89% of users rated positively), local municipal government/bylaw (84% of users rated positively), and police (84% users rated positively). The services with the highest negative ratings were transportation (76% of users rated negatively) and childcare (44% of users rated negatively).
- When asked about challenges, 28% of respondents reported challenges finding healthcare, 24% reported challenges accessing transportation, and 20% reported challenges finding childcare.

Connection and Integration

- Half (50%) of the respondents reported that they chose to settle in St. Thomas-Elgin because of affordability. Additionally, 40% reported having family or friends in St. Thomas-Elgin as a reason for settling here.
- Many respondents reported contributing to their community in various ways including helping their neighbours (45%), improving the natural environment like recycling or picking up garbage (39%), and contributing to the local economy through their job (38%).

Sense of Belonging, Isolation and Discrimination

- While 64% of respondents felt that St. Thomas-Elgin was quite welcoming, an additional 26% felt it was somewhat welcoming, and 10% felt it was not welcoming. Respondents who immigrated under a family category were more likely to feel St. Thomas-Elgin was quite welcoming, while respondents who immigrated under economic categories were less likely to feel St. Thomas-Elgin was quite welcoming. Racialized respondents and respondents that had experienced discrimination were also less likely to feel that St. Thomas-Elgin was quite welcoming.
- Three-quarters (75%) of respondents reported a strong sense of belonging, with the additional 25% reporting a weak sense of belong.
- About a fifth (22%) of respondents felt isolated, with an additional 20% feeling somewhat isolated.
- Over a third (39%) of respondents had experienced discrimination over the previous 12 months.
- Nearly half of the survey respondents (49%) provided a reason for being discriminated against, the most common of which were race or skin colour (41%), immigration status (39%), and accent (31%).

Note that these reasons did not necessarily have to be connected to an instance of discrimination that occurred in the past 12 months.

- For the respondents, discrimination was most likely to have taken place at their job (47%).
- Three-quarters (75%) of respondents reported an overall positive experience settling in St. Thomas-Elgin, while 20% reported an overall neutral settlement experience, and 5% reported a negative settlement experience.

Challenges

- The respondents reported facing a variety of challenge. When asked to indicate the biggest challenges they faced, the most common answers were were cost of living or money problems (34%), finding healthcare (28%), finding work (24%), transportation (24%), and finding affordable housing (21%).

Solutions to Challenges

- When asked to select three changes that would help immigrants reach their full potential in St. Thomas-Elgin, the most commonly selected were more affordable housing (39% of respondents selected), better programs for immigrants to find work (36%), and education for employers on the value of hiring immigrants (29%). Additionally, 33% of respondents selected “other”, giving responses including better availability of interpretation and translation services, English language learning opportunities in the workplace, and better opportunities for involvement in community leadership and planning.

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Survey Findings and Analysis

Immigration Characteristics

Immigration Category or Status

The survey respondents represented a range of immigration categories or statuses, including temporary and permanent residents and Canadian citizens.¹ The large proportion of family category immigrants follows trends for the region (Table 1). Refugees (including government-assisted, privately sponsored, and refugee claimants) were particularly underrepresented in the survey respondents compared to the proportion of immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin who are refugees according to 2021 census data (Table 1).

Table 1 - Immigration Category or Status of Participant

Status or immigration category	Survey respondents (%)	Immigrant population in St. Thomas-Elgin, 2021 (%)
I immigrated to Canada as a family-category immigrant (sponsored spouse, sponsored parent or grandparent, or other immigrant sponsored by family)	44%	45.4%
I immigrated to Canada as an economic-category immigrant (e.g., Federal Skilled Worker Program, Provincial Nominee Program, Canadian Experience Class, and dependants of economic applicants)	20%	34.7%
I am currently in Canada as an international student	9%	2.7%
I am currently in Canada on a temporary work visa	5%	11.7%
I am currently in Canada on a CUAET (Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel) visa	5%	N/A
I immigrated to Canada as a government-assisted refugee	5%	17.8%
I immigrated to Canada as a privately sponsored refugee	0%	
I am currently in Canada as a refugee claimant	2%	6.2%
I immigrated to Canada as a refugee claimant and am now a permanent resident or citizen	0%	
Other (please specify) ²	7%	-

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=99; 2021 Census

¹ Q1 - Which of the following best describes you? (n=99)

² Other responses included: I am a protected person; I immigrated on a work permit and am now a permanent resident; I am currently in Canada as a family member of an international student; I came as a visitor and married a Canadian; and I was born Canadian abroad.

Understanding the immigration category or status of the respondents can give important insight into social connections, education and/or skill level, and other characteristics and experiences of some immigrants living in our communities.

Time Spent in Canada

Almost half the survey respondents (46%) were recent immigrants, having arrived in Canada in the last 5 years (Table 2).³ Although St. Thomas-Elgin has seen an increase in the numbers of recent immigrants settling in the area over the past decade, a large proportion of immigrants living in St. Thomas-Elgin settled before 2010 (84.8%) according to the 2021 census.⁴ This group was underrepresented in the Immigrant Survey, possibly because some older immigrants, particularly those who arrived decades ago, may no longer identify with the term “immigrant”. There may also be an erroneous perception that “immigrant” is synonymous with a racialized person⁵, whereas most of the immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin are of white, European origin (e.g., British, Dutch, Low German Speaking Mennonite).⁶ Possibly some of these immigrants did not feel the survey pertained to them, even though they were eligible to complete the survey, and their experiences make up a large part of immigrant experiences in the region.

Table 2 - Time Spent Living in Canada

Time spent living in Canada	Survey respondents (%)
Less than 1 year	9%
1 to 5 years	37%
6 to 10 years	16%
10+ years	37%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=99

Nonetheless, the experiences and perceptions of recent immigrants are extremely important, particularly in understanding how newcomers access information, navigate social systems, and overall integrate into St. Thomas-Elgin. This understanding can be used to shape services that meet newcomers’ needs, which is crucial since they often have specific and greater needs (e.g., employment support, access to English language learning etc.).⁷

³ Q2 - How long have you been living in Canada? (n=99)

⁴ Statistics Canada, “Census Profile. 2021 Census,” (2023), *Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001*, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

⁵ For more discussion about immigrant identity and racialization in Canada, see Sara Shahsiah, “Identity, identification and racialisation: Immigrant youth in the Canadian context,” (2006), [https://rshare.library.torontomu.ca/articles/thesis/Identity identification and racialisation immigrant youth in the Canadian context/14656611](https://rshare.library.torontomu.ca/articles/thesis/Identity%20identification%20and%20racialisation%20immigrant%20youth%20in%20the%20Canadian%20context/14656611), and Government of Canada, “Cultural Diversity in Canada: The Social Construction of Racial Difference,” (2022), https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/jsp-sjp/rp02_8-dr02_8/toc-tdm.html.

⁶ Statistics Canada, “Census Profile. 2021 Census,” (2023), *Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001*, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

⁷ Victoria M. Esses, Leah K. Hamilton, Awish Aslam, and Priscila Ribeiro Prado Barros, “Measuring Welcoming Communities: A Toolkit for Communities and Those Who Support Them.” (2023), *Pathways to Prosperity*, <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2023/03/Welcoming-Toolkit-I-Measuring-Welcoming-Communities.pdf>

St. Thomas-Elgin also sees a sizeable amount of secondary migration, where immigrants move to the area after first settling in another community, potentially from a larger urban area like the GTA (Greater Toronto Area).⁸ This can result in additional challenges since St. Thomas-Elgin's smaller population and large geographic area means that there may be fewer resources available than in urban areas with high proportions of immigrants, and the available resources can be geographically distant or even inaccessible to newcomers, particularly any newcomers settled in the rural municipalities.

Demographic Information

Current Location of Residence

While survey respondents represented both St. Thomas and most of the rural municipalities, a large majority of respondents were from St. Thomas (77%), with no respondents from the west Elgin region (municipalities of Dutton-Dunwich and West Elgin).⁹ Immigrants from the east Elgin region were particularly underrepresented in the respondents, comprising 38% of St. Thomas-Elgin's immigrant population but only 11% of survey respondents (Tale 3)

This is likely because many of east Elgin's immigrants are Low German-Speaking Mennonites, who often face a variety of communication barriers and, culturally, are hesitant to take part in research projects.^{10 11}

⁸ Statistics Canada, "Target group profile of the population by immigration and citizenship status, Census 2021," (2023), *Community Data Program*, Accessed September 8. 8% of immigrants in Elgin Census Division (St. Thomas-Elgin area) were "migrants" over the past year, and 34% were migrants over the past 5 years, meaning they had moved to a different city, town, township, village etc. Although this figure includes both migrants who moved within St. Thomas-Elgin, and immigrants who migrated directly from their country of origin to St. Thomas-Elgin, it also includes secondary migrants, who came to St. Thomas-Elgin after living in another Canadian community. Of the 1-year migrants, 85% moved within Canada, and the remaining 15% came from outside of Canada. Similarly, for 5-year migrants, 86% moved within Canada and 14% from another country. Anecdotal evidence from local settlement agencies suggests that many immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin first settled in the Greater Toronto Area.

⁹ Q3 - Where do you live? (n=92)

¹⁰ Low German Speaking (LGS) Mennonites are an ethnoreligious group that share both a common religious background and ethnic origin, originating in Western Europe during the Protestant Reformation (1500s) and undertaking various mass migrations throughout the centuries. Since the 1950s, LGS Mennonites have been moving to southern Ontario from Mexico, and to a lesser extent, from other Central and South American countries. This marks a return to Canada, since their ancestors left Western Canada for Mexico in the 1920s.

¹¹ Rob Haile and Linda Funk, "Improving Accessibility of Health and Social Services for Low German Speaking Mennonites," (2019), *Southwestern Public Health*, <https://www.swpublichealth.ca/en/reports-and-statistics/resources/Evaluations-and-Situational-Assessments/REP-Improving-Accessibility-of-Health-and-Social-Services-for-LGS-Mennonites---201909.pdf>

Table 3 - Location of Residence

Region ¹²	Survey respondents (%)	Immigrant population in St. Thomas-Elgin, 2021 (%)	Recent immigrant population in St. Thomas-Elgin, 2021 (%) ¹³
St. Thomas	77%	40%	49%
East Elgin	11%	38%	31%
Central Elgin	4%	15%	17%
West Elgin	0	7%	4%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=92; 2021 Census

Age

The survey was open to immigrants over the age of 16 who lived or worked in St. Thomas-Elgin. The majority (75%) of survey respondents were in the 25-44 age range (Table 4).¹⁴ The age distribution of the survey respondents more closely matches the age distribution of recent immigrants (arrived in Canada in the last 5 years) than it does the age distribution of all immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin. This is expected considering the high proportion of recent immigrants who responded to this survey. Immigrants aged 65 or older were particularly underrepresented in our survey, comprising over a third of St. Thomas-Elgin’s immigrant population, but only making up 2% of survey respondents.

Table 4 - Participant and Immigrant Population Age

Age category	Survey respondents (%)	Immigrant population in St. Thomas-Elgin, 2021 (%)	Recent immigrant population in St. Thomas-Elgin, 2021 (%) ¹³
16-19 years	3%	2% ¹⁵	8% ¹⁵
20-24	2%	2%	4%
25-34	38%	10%	33%
35-44	37%	14%	20%
45-54	13%	16%	6%
55-64	5%	17%	4%
65 or older	2%	36%	2%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=60; 2021 Census

¹² The east Elgin region includes the Municipality of Bayham, the Town of Aylmer, and the Township of Malahide. The central Elgin region includes the Municipality of Central Elgin and the Township of Southwold. St. Thomas Region includes the City of St. Thomas. The west Elgin region includes the Municipality of Dutton-Dunwich and the Municipality of West Elgin.

¹³ “Recent immigrant” is defined as having lived in Canada for 5 years or less.

¹⁴ Q27 - What is your age? (full survey only, n=60)

¹⁵ The age range for the two columns based on 2021 Census data is 15-19, since this is what is reported on the census.

Understanding the age of the respondents can give important insight into the settlement and integration experience. Age can affect various aspects of the integration progress including ability to access community supports and develop social connections. Older adults are more likely to have disabilities and/or to face barriers to mobility, maintaining social connections, and accessing resources.^{16 17}

Gender and Sexuality

There was a fairly even split in the gender of survey respondents, with 47% identifying as male and 53% as female. No respondents identified as non-binary, any additional gender, or selected prefer not to answer.¹⁸ Less than 5% of the participants identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community.¹⁹

Racial Identity

The survey results indicated 71% of the respondents were racialized, meaning they identified with a race/population group other than white.²⁰ The most common racialized identities were Black (26%), South Asian (19%), and Filipino (10%). Another quarter of the respondents identified as White (26%). Racialized respondents were overrepresented compared to the proportion of immigrants who are racialized according to 2021 census data for St. Thomas and Elgin County (Table 5).

Table 5 - Racial Identity

Racial identity category	Survey respondents (%)	Immigrant population in St. Thomas-Elgin, 2021 (%)	Recent immigrant population in St. Thomas-Elgin, 2021 (%) ¹³
Black (e.g., Black-Caribbean, Black-African, Black-North American)	26%	5%	14%
White	26%	78%	43%
South Asian (East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan)	19%	4%	14%
Filipino	10%	3%	5%
Southeast Asian (e.g., Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai)	5%	2%	2%
Other ²¹	10%	8%	21%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=58; 2021 Census

¹⁶ Federal Disability Report, (2011), <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/disability/arc/federal-report2011/section1.html>

¹⁷ Victoria M. Esses, Leah K. Hamilton, Awish Aslam, and Priscila Ribeiro Prado Barros, “Measuring Welcoming Communities: A Toolkit for Communities and Those Who Support Them.” (2023), *Pathways to Prosperity*, <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2023/03/Welcoming-Toolkit-I-Measuring-Welcoming-Communities.pdf>, 8.

¹⁸ Q30 - How would you describe your gender identity? (full survey only, n=58)

¹⁹ Q31 - Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community? (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning) (full survey only, n=55)

²⁰ Q28 - What would best describe you? (Select all that apply) (full survey only, n=58, with less than five selecting prefer not to answer)

²¹ Other responses included: Arab, Latin American, Chinese, and West Asian.

St. Thomas-Elgin has a small, but growing, racialized population: 4.6% in 2021 (referred to as "visible minority" on the census).²² In St. Thomas, the racialized population sat at 7.1% of the population in 2021, an 82% increase from 2016.²³ The high proportion of racialized survey respondents reflects the most common countries of origin both for recent immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin and in Canada more generally.²⁴

A small racialized population may mean that racialized individuals are more likely to feel isolated.²⁵ Moreover, a previous survey found that 68% of immigrants and racialized residents²⁶ of St. Thomas-Elgin experienced discrimination in the past three years, with the most common experience being discrimination on the basis of race or skin colour.²⁷

Research also shows that when someone from a dominant group (i.e., white) has positive individual interactions with someone from an oppressed group (i.e., racialized), it can decrease their unconscious racial bias.^{28 29} But with small numbers of racialized residents in St. Thomas-Elgin, there are fewer opportunities for white residents to interact with someone who is racialized, likewise there are less opportunities to decrease unconscious racial bias.

Faith Community

Survey respondents were members of a variety of faith groups, with respondents indicating four different faith communities (Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu), in addition to 17% not belonging to any faith community (Table 6).³⁰ Half of the respondents were Christians (53%), which is slightly less than the 60% of St. Thomas-Elgin residents who reported having a Christian faith on the 2021 census.

²² Statistics Canada, "Census Profile. 2021 Census," (2023), *Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001*, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>. This number reflects a 65% increase in racialized (visible minority) population from 2016.

²³ Statistics Canada, "Census Profile. 2021 Census," (2023), *Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001*, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

²⁴ Statistics Canada, "Census Profile. 2021 Census," (2023), *Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001*, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>. The most common countries of origin for recent immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin were: Mexico, United States, India, Jamaica, United Kingdom and Philippines. The most common countries of origin for recent immigrants in Canada were: India, Philippines, China, Syria, Nigeria, and United States.

²⁵ For more discussion about the intersections of isolation and racialized identities, see: Feng Hou, Christoph Schimmele and Max Stick, "Changing demographics of racialized people in Canada," (2022), *Statistics Canada*, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2023008/article/00001-eng.htm> and "A Portrait of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Canada today," (2019), *Angus Reid Institute*, <https://angusreid.org/social-isolation-loneliness-canada/>.

²⁶ Note that this statistic encompasses all immigrants, including white immigrants, in addition to all racialized residents, both immigrants and non-immigrants.

²⁷ Alina Sutter, "Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous Peoples in St. Thomas-Elgin County," (2021), <https://stelip.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/St-Thomas-Elgin-Discrimination-Report.pdf>, 20, 31.

²⁸ Victoria Esses and Charlie Carter, "Beyond the Big City: How Small Communities Across Canada Can Attract and Retain Newcomers," (2019), <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2019/08/Beyond-The-Big-City-Report.pdf>

²⁹ Diana Burgess, Michelle Van Ryn, John Dovidio, and Somnath Saha. "Reducing racial bias among health care providers: lessons from social-cognitive psychology." *Journal of general internal medicine* 22 (2007): 882-887.

³⁰ Q33 - If you are a member of a faith community, please share which one. (full survey only, n=47)

Table 6 - Faith Community

Faith community category	Survey respondents (%)
Christian	53%
I am not a member of a faith community	17%
Muslim	15%
Buddhist	11%
Hindu	4%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=47

Understanding the various faith communities of immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin can give insight into the diversity of our region. Over the past five years, St. Thomas has seen both an Islamic Centre and a Hindu Centre established in the community, which also reflects the increase in diversity of faiths in the area.³¹ Faith can also be an important factor in an immigrant's sense of belonging and settlement experience. Many faith communities offer opportunities for social connection and support that can enhance well-being and belonging.⁷

Disability Status

When asked about disability status, 16% of the survey participants indicated they are living with a physical or mental disability or chronic illness that limits their activity.³² A disability can add additional barriers to accessing necessary services and supports.¹⁶

³¹ See the St. Thomas Islamic Centre's website for more information about their establishment:

<https://stislamiccentre.ca/>. There is also a Hindu Spiritual Centre, Shree Hari Har Mandir, located at 100 Redan Street in St. Thomas.

³² Q32 - Are you living with a physical or mental disability or chronic illness that limits your activity? (full survey only, n=56)

Language

The survey respondents spoke a variety of languages.³³ Common first languages spoken included: English (39%), Spanish (7%), Ukrainian (7%), Gujarati (6%) and Tagalog (6%), Malayalam (4%), and Tamil (4%). An additional 29% indicated “Other” and inputted 18 additional languages (Table 7).³⁴ A total of 25 languages were reported as the first language spoken.

Table 7 - First Language Spoken

Language category	Survey respondents (%)
English	39%
Spanish	7%
Ukrainian	7%
Gujarati	6%
Tagalog	6%
Malayalam	4%
Tamil	4%
Other ³⁴	29%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=72

Again, the most common first languages spoken reflect the most common countries of origin for recent immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin, particularly with a large number of languages spoken in India and South Asia (Gujarati, Malayalam, Tamil).²⁴ The wide variety of first languages is an indicator of the diversity of St. Thomas-Elgin's immigrants, with small numbers of immigrants representing many different countries of origin and languages spoken. This characteristic can make providing interpretation and translation services more challenging, since it not necessarily effective to provide service in one or two key languages. It may even be difficult to determine what a few “key languages” would be.

Low German (also known as Plautdietsch) is likely underrepresented in these results compared to the first languages spoken by all immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin, due to low numbers of Low German Speaking (LGS) Mennonite survey respondents.³⁵ LGS Mennonites make up a large part of St. Thomas-Elgin's immigrants.^{11 36} When asked to rate their English language ability, 67% of survey respondents indicated they spoke English

³³ Q4 - What is your first language? (Your first language is the language you first learned at home and still understand.) (full survey and translated short survey only, n=72)

³⁴ Other languages included: Arabic, Bengali, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Khmer, Low German (Plautdietsch), Mandarin, Nepali, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Tamil, Thai, Turkish, and Urdu.

³⁵ Additionally, it is difficult to get an accurate count of Low German (Plautdietsch) speakers in St. Thomas-Elgin. Some Low German speakers report their language as “German” when more accurately it should be referred to as “Low German” or “Plautdietsch”. The high number of German speakers and lower number of Low German/Plautdietsch speakers (reported as both “Plautdietsch” and “Low German, not otherwise specified”) on the 2021 census point to some “German” speakers in fact speaking Low German (Plautdietsch).

³⁶ Most of the immigrants who report Mexico as a country of origin are likely Low German Speaking Mennonites.

well or very well.³⁷ An additional 18% indicated they could speak English fairly well, with 15% indicating they either had poor English ability or didn't speak English at all (Table 8).

Table 8 - Ability to Speak English Among Non-English First Language Speakers

Proficiency category	Survey respondents (%)
Very well or well	67%
Fairly Well	18%
Poorly or not at all	15%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=73

Understanding the respondents' English language ability can give insight into their capacity to experience belonging and integration in the community. Having English language skills, particularly in an area like St. Thomas-Elgin where 99% of the population speak English³⁸, is extremely important in removing barriers to navigating life, accessing information and services, making social connections and so on.⁷

When asked about access to interpretation in a healthcare setting, 71% of respondents indicated they did not need interpretation (either because they did not access healthcare, or they did not require interpretation).³⁹ An additional 9% did access interpretation supports, either provided by the healthcare provider (6%) or, at their preference, by a family member or friend (3%). The remaining 19% experienced barriers to accessing interpretation in healthcare settings, although some of them opted to bring a family member or friend to provide interpretation when it was not otherwise provided by the healthcare provider (Table 9).

Table 9 - Access to Interpretation in Healthcare Settings

Access to healthcare interpretation category	Survey respondents (%)	
I did not go to a hospital, clinic or health professional	11%	71% - Did not need interpretation
I did not need language interpretation	60%	
Language interpretation was provided for me	6%	9% - Accessed preferred interpretation
I brought a family member or friend because I prefer this instead of a professional interpreter	3%	
I brought a family member or friend with me because interpretation was not available to me	15%	19% - Barriers to interpretation
I wanted language interpretation but did not receive it	4%	

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=97

³⁷ Q6 - How well can you communicate in English? (n=73)

³⁸ Statistics Canada, "Census Profile. 2021 Census," (2023), *Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001*, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

³⁹ Q8 - If you or a family member went to a hospital, health clinic or talked to a health professional in the past year, did the health clinic provide in-person or phone/video interpretation? (multi-select question) (n=97)

While it is a very small sample, these results show that two-thirds of the respondents who needed interpretation did not receive it, which speaks to the need for accessible interpretation, particularly in healthcare settings. Professional interpretation is crucial in medical, legal, and other situations that require informed consent, confidentiality, specialized terminology, or impartiality. It is particularly inappropriate to use a child to provide interpretation in critical situations. This can place undue responsibility on the child and cause a power imbalance within the family, in addition to breaching privacy and confidentiality.⁴⁰

Education

The survey respondents were highly educated, with 82% having a college or university degree.⁴¹ Nearly a quarter of respondents had a master’s degree (24%). Only 10% of respondents had high school and equivalent or less (Table 10). In comparison, 53% of St. Thomas-Elgin's total population have a high school and equivalent or less (47% had some kind of postsecondary certificate, degree, or diploma).⁴² It is possible that immigrants with lower levels of education are underrepresented in the survey results, and potentially this group faced barriers in accessing the survey.

Table 10 - Highest Level of Education

Education category	Survey respondents (%)
High school and equivalent, or less	10%
Trade/technical school	8%
College diploma	22%
Bachelor's degree	36%
Master's degree	24%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=61

The higher levels of education for survey respondents compared to the total population could potentially be partly explained by age of the survey respondents, following a trend of younger people being more likely to have higher education.⁴³ Moreover, economic category immigrants—20% of the survey respondents (Table 1)—are selected for their professional skills, which often necessitates a university or college education.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Cat Goodfellow and Christine Kouri, “Pan-Canadian Standards for Healthcare Equity: The Case for Provincial Interpretation Services,” (2022), *National Newcomer Navigation Network*, <https://www.newcomernavigation.ca/en/our-tools/resources/documents/PositionPaper-AccessToInterpretation-Oct2022.pdf>

⁴¹ Q29 - What is the highest level of education you have completed? (full survey only, n=61)

⁴² Statistics Canada, “Census Profile. 2021 Census,” (2023), *Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001*, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

⁴³ Klarka Zeman and Marc Frenette, “Chapter 3: Youth and Education in Canada” in “Portrait of Youth in Canada: Data Report,” (2021), *Statistics Canada*, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/42-28-0001/2021001/article/00003-eng.htm>

⁴⁴ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, “Immigrate to Canada,” <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada.html>

Employment and Income

The survey respondents had a high level of participation in the workforce: 97% were employed or looking for work. More than half the respondents had full-time employment (55%), with an additional 21% working part-time, 12% looking for work, and 9% self-employed (Table 11).⁴⁵

Table 11 - Employment Status

Employment category	Survey respondents (%)
I am employed (working full time)	55%
I am employed (working part time or casual)	21%
I am unemployed but seeking work	12%
I am self-employed	9%
I am not in the paid workforce (retired, caring for children, not seeking work, etc.)	3%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=61

The survey results indicate that most respondents who want to work can find work; however, just over a quarter reported that their job did not match their skills (26%), likely meaning they were underemployed (Table 12).⁴⁶ Underemployment refers to either when a person is overqualified for their job (job does not match their skills) or when they do not have enough paid work.⁴⁷ Potentially there are additional respondents who work part-time or casually who would like to be working more and are therefore also underemployed.

Table 12 - Job Matching Skills

Response – Does your job match your skills?	Survey respondents (%)
Yes	74%
No	26%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=91

Workplaces may experience employee retention issues and loss of productivity when their workers are underemployed, particularly when their worker's skills and experience do not match their job description.⁴⁸

Economic immigrants were more likely to have a job that matched their skills, with 87% reporting their skills matched. Respondents with post-secondary education were also more likely to have a job that matched their

⁴⁵ Q34 - What is your employment status? (full survey only, n=61)

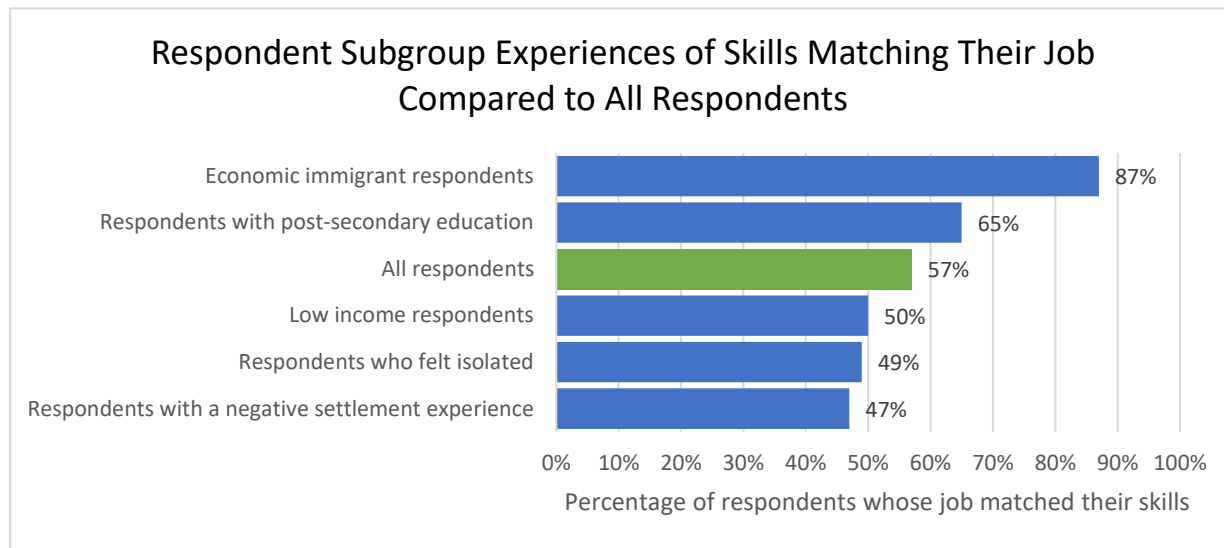
⁴⁶ Q37 - Are you in a job that is at the same level as your skills and experience? (n=91)

⁴⁷ Statistics Canada, "Quality of Life Indicator: Labour Underutilization," (2023), <https://www160.statcan.gc.ca/prosperity-prosperite/labour-main-doeuvre-eng.htm#shr-pg0>

⁴⁸ "Managing for Employee Retention," *Society for Human Resource Management*, <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/managing-for-employee-retention.aspx>

skills (65%). Conversely, low income respondents (50%), isolated respondents (49%), and respondents with a negative settlement experience (47%) were all less likely to have a job that matched their skills (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Respondent Subgroup Experiences of Skills Matching Their Job



Just over half of the respondents indicated that they had enough income to cover their needs (54%).⁴⁹ An additional 43% indicated that their income was not quite enough, and 4% indicated inadequate income (“definitely not enough”) (Table 13).

Table 13 - Sufficient Income

Income category	Survey respondents (%)
Our income is enough for our needs	54%
Our income is not quite enough for our needs	43%
Our income is definitely not enough for our needs	4%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=56

These cost of living challenges mirror the increase in cost of living across Canada in recent years, particularly in housing and grocery costs.^{50 51}

Several groups of respondents were more likely to report insufficient income⁵², including racialized respondents (50%), respondents who experienced discrimination (55%), recent immigrants (59%), and

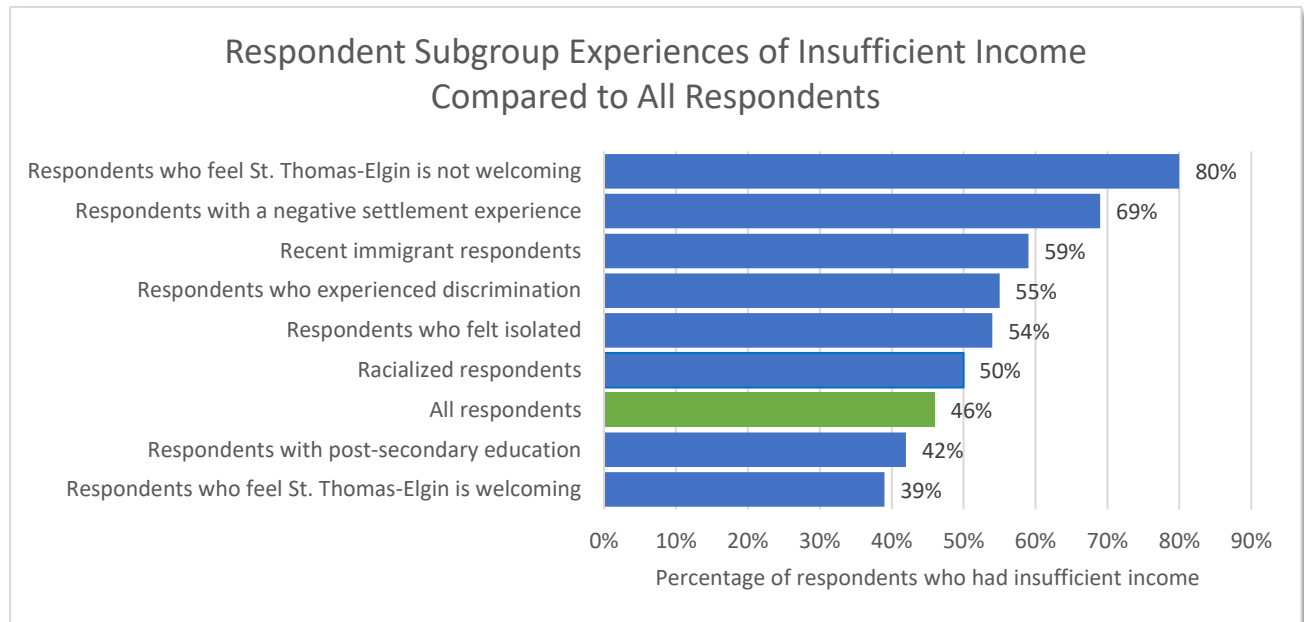
⁴⁹ Q36 - Is your household income enough for the needs of you and your family? (full survey only, n=56)

⁵⁰ Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, “Housing shortages in Canada: Updating how much housing we need by 2030,” (2023), <https://assets.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/sites/cmhc/professional/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-research/research-reports/2023/housing-shortages-canada-updating-how-much-we-need-by-2030-en.pdf>

⁵¹ Statistics Canada, “Consumer Price Index, February 2023,” (2023), <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/230321/dq230321a-eng.htm>

respondents who felt St. Thomas-Elgin is not welcoming (80%). Conversely, respondents with post-secondary education (42%) and respondents who felt St. Thomas-Elgin was welcoming (39%) were both less likely to have insufficient income (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Respondent Subgroup Experiences of Insufficient Income



Housing

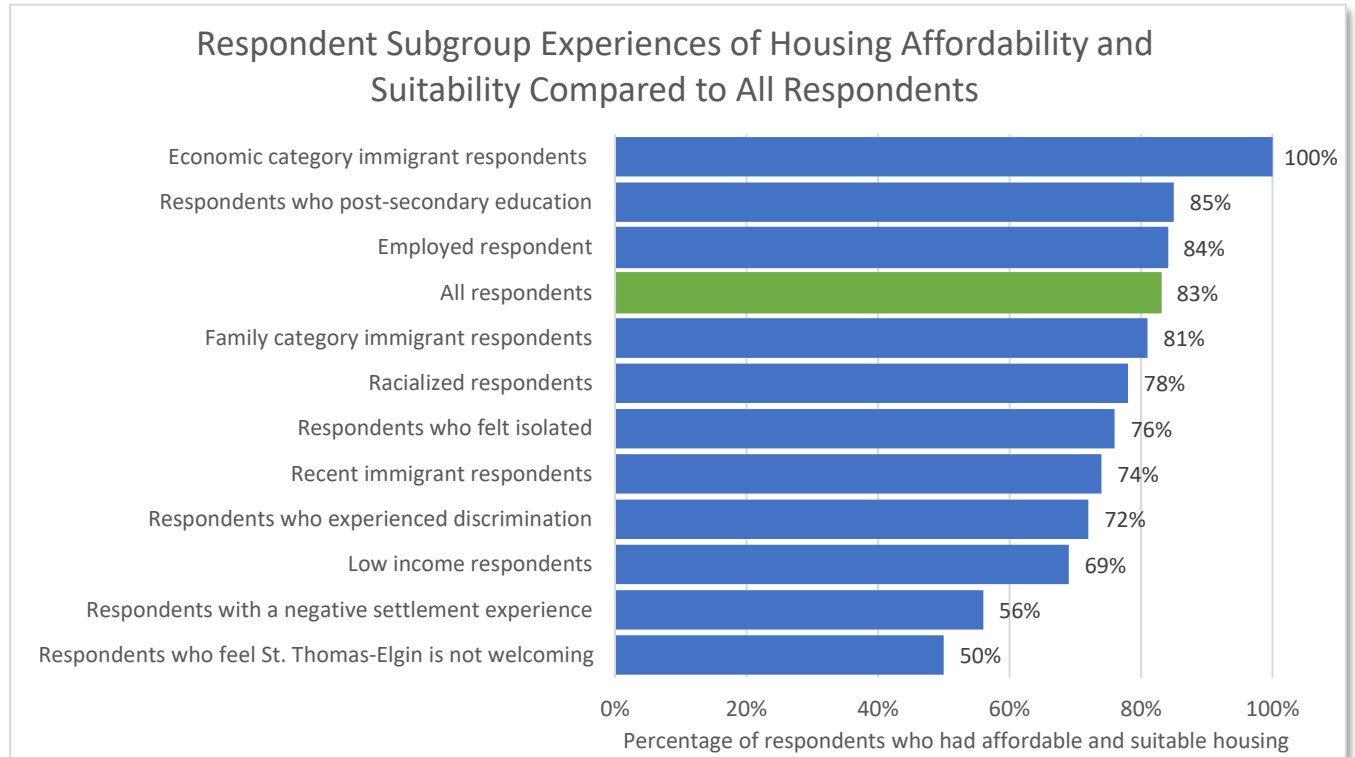
When asked about housing, 17% of respondents indicated that their housing was not suitable and affordable for them.⁵³ Economic category immigrant respondents, respondents with post-secondary education, and employed respondents were all more likely to have suitable and affordable housing.⁵⁴ Notably, 100% of economic category immigrant respondents had suitable and affordable housing. Conversely, only 50% of respondents who felt St. Thomas-Elgin was not welcoming had suitable and affordable housing. Other groups of respondents who were less likely to report suitable and affordable housing included racialized respondents (78%), recent immigrant respondents (74%), and low income respondents (69%) (Figure 3).

⁵² Insufficient income refers to both respondents who indicated their income was “not quite enough” and “definitely not enough”.

⁵³ Q35 - Is your current housing both suitable and affordable for you? (Are there enough bedrooms and is it in good repair, AND can you afford it with your other living expenses) (n=92)

⁵⁴ “Employed” respondents as a subgroup refers to respondents who are employed full-time, part-time or who are self-employed.

Figure 3 – Respondent Subgroup Experiences of Housing Affordability/Suitability



Service Use

Nearly all the respondents (95%) used at least one of the following service categories: health, recreation services, police, employment and/or skills training, education, local municipal government/bylaw, transportation services, settlement/immigration services, housing, small business/entrepreneurial supports, language interpretation/translation, mental health, English language learning, legal/courts, childcare, or French language learning.⁵⁵ The most used services were health (84% of respondents), recreation (69%), police (65%), and employment and/or skills training (63%) (Table 14). Many residents had positive experiences accessing services, with 97% rating at least one service positively (i.e., "excellent", "very good" or "good"). However, 72% also rated at least one service negatively (i.e., "acceptable" or "poor").

⁵⁵ Q7 - Please rate your experience with the following community services in the last 12 months in St. Thomas-Elgin Region (n=99)

The services with the highest positive ratings were language interpretation/translation (89% of users rated positively), local municipal government/bylaw (84% of users rated positively), and police (84% users rated positively). The services with the highest negative ratings were transportation (76% of users rated negatively), childcare (44% of users rated negatively), small business/entrepreneurial supports (32% rated negatively), and recreation services (32% of users rated negatively) (Table 14) (Figure 4).

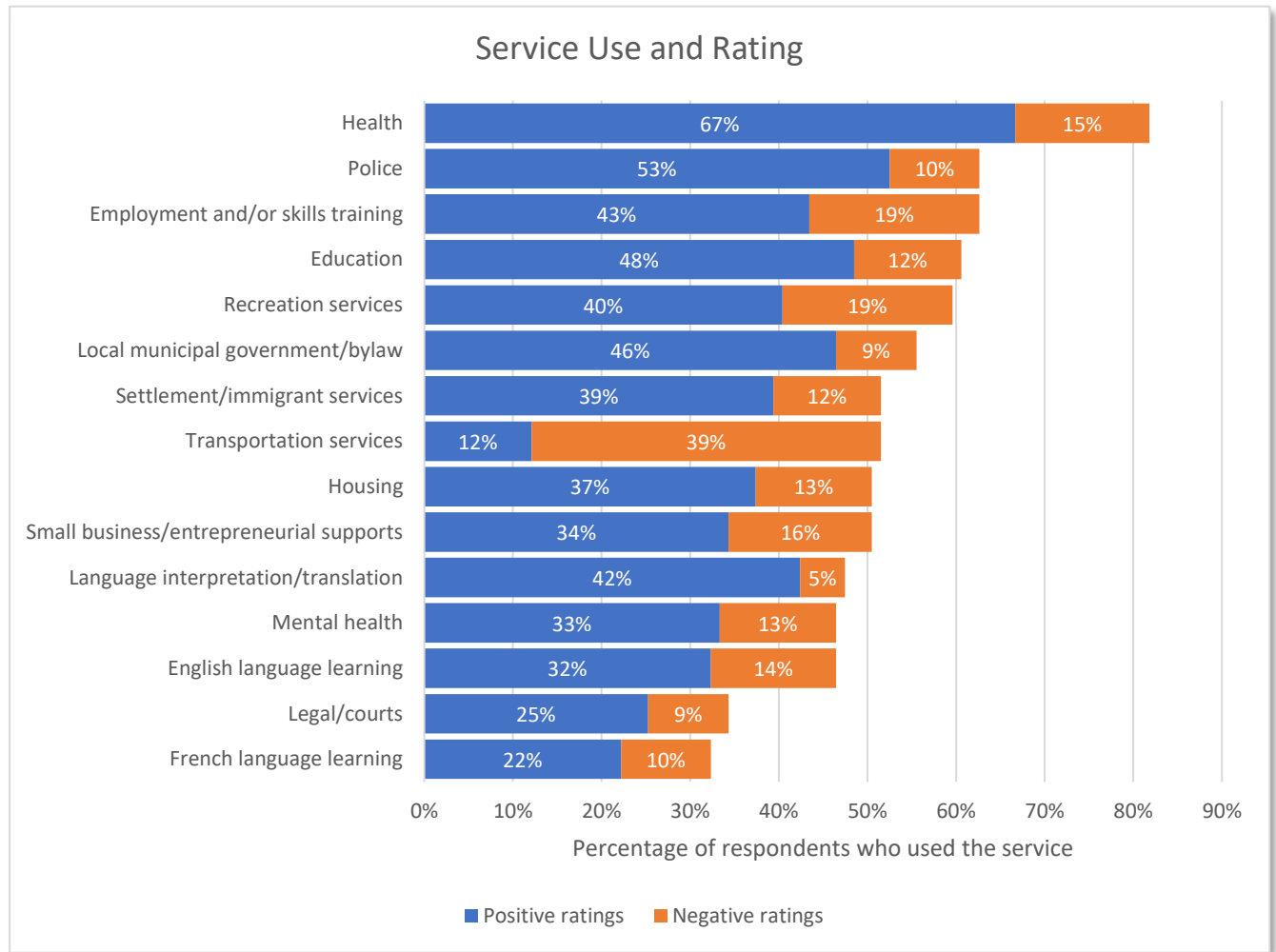
Understanding what services the respondents are accessing in our community, and what their experiences are with those services, can give insight into their needs.

Table 14 - Service Use and Rating

Service category	Survey respondents (%)	Users rating the service positively (%)
Health	84%	81%
Recreation services	69%	68%
Police	65%	84%
Employment and/or skills training	63%	69%
Education	61%	80%
Local municipal government/bylaw	59%	84%
Transportation services	59%	24%
Settlement/immigrant services	53%	76%
Housing	53%	74%
Small business/entrepreneurial supports	53%	68%
Language interpretation/translation	48%	89%
Mental health	48%	72%
English language learning	46%	70%
Legal/courts	37%	74%
Childcare	36%	56%
French language learning	33%	69%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=99

Figure 4 - Service Use and Rating



Community Connection and Integration

The respondents settled in St. Thomas-Elgin for a variety of reasons.⁵⁶ When asked to indicate the top three reasons they settled in St. Thomas-Elgin, 50% indicated they settled here due to the affordability of the area, and 40% were drawn to the area by friends or family already living in St. Thomas-Elgin. Nearly a quarter settled in the area because of a job (23%). An additional 19% selected "other" reasons, indicating factors such as existing cultural or language groups, safety, and smaller community size (Table 15).

⁵⁶ Q22 - Why did you come to St. Thomas-Elgin Region? (Select your top 3 reasons) (Full survey only, n=62)

Table 15 - Reasons for Choosing and Staying in St. Thomas-Elgin

Reason category	Survey respondents (%)
St. Thomas-Elgin was more affordable than other communities	50%
Family or friends that live in St. Thomas-Elgin	40%
For a job in St. Thomas-Elgin	23%
Post-secondary institutions	16%
A healthy local economy	8%
Other ⁵⁷	19%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=62

Understanding why the respondents settled in St. Thomas-Elgin can give insight into how to attract immigrants to the area and how to retain immigrants already living here.

Respondents indicated they contributed to their community in a variety of ways.⁵⁸ The most common ways respondents contributed were helping their neighbours (42%), improving the natural environment (e.g., picking up garbage) (37%), supporting the local economy through their job (36%), volunteering with a community or faith group (34%), and treating people fairly and kindly (34%) (Table 16).

⁵⁷ Other responses included: cultural or language groups in the community; services and support in the community; safety of the community; size of the community; and “I didn’t choose St. Thomas-Elgin—it was chosen for me”.

⁵⁸ Q24 - What are some of the ways you contribute to creating a thriving and prosperous community for everyone? (Select all that apply) (n=56)

Table 16 - Ways of Contributing

Contribution category	Survey respondents (%)
I help my neighbours when they need it	42%
I contribute to improving the natural environment in my community (recycling, picking up garbage, planting trees, etc.)	37%
I contribute my skills and experience to the local economy through my job	36%
I volunteer with other community organizations, groups or faith communities	34%
I speak up for fairness and treat people with kindness in my community	34%
I donate to local charities	31%
I provide unpaid help for family members (children, grandparents, etc.)	27%
I vote in local/municipal, provincial or national elections in Canada	27%
I help newcomers to Canada as they make their home in our community	22%
I build my skills and strengthen the ways I can contribute to this community (learning English, further education, building professional skills, etc.)	21%
I am a business owner, and my business contributes to our community's economy	17%
I volunteer in cultural or ethnic association activities	10%
I tutor or help youth learn in this community	8%
Other ⁵⁹	10%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=59

These results help build a picture of the diverse ways that immigrants contribute to building a welcoming, caring, and inclusive community.

⁵⁹ Other responses include: I volunteer with youth sports (coaching, driving youth, etc.) and I am on a board of directors or other committees.

Perception of Community Welcoming

Most respondents felt that the St. Thomas-Elgin community was quite welcoming to immigrants (64%).⁶⁰ An additional 26% felt the area was somewhat welcoming, and 10% felt it was not welcoming (Table 17).

Table 17 - Community Welcoming

Rating – How welcoming is St. Thomas-Elgin?	Survey respondents (%)	
10	36%	64% - Quite welcoming
9	12%	
8	15%	
7	9%	26% - Somewhat welcoming
6	3%	
5	13%	
4 to 0	10%	10% - Not welcoming

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=97

A welcoming community is one where immigrants feel valued and have a sense of belonging, where their needs are met, and where the community actively works to identify and remove barriers, promote belonging, and offer services to support the integration of immigrants. It is a reciprocal process; the existing community plays as much a role in the integration of immigrants as a new immigrant does.⁶¹

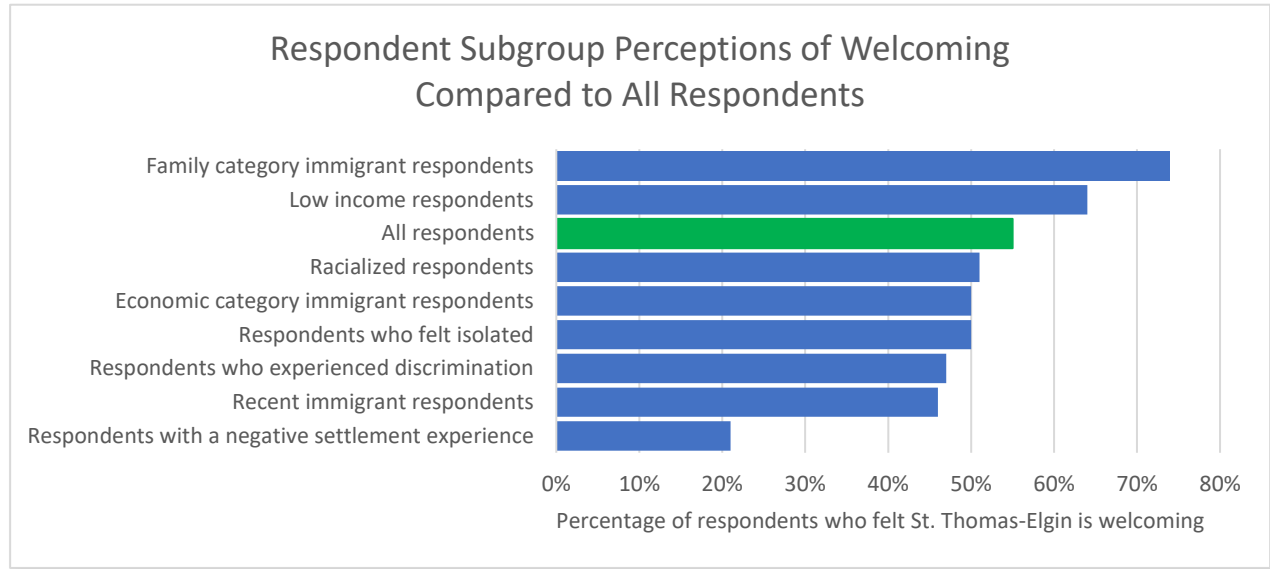
Both family category immigrant respondents (74%) and low income respondents (64%) were more likely to perceive St. Thomas-Elgin as quite welcoming. Conversely, racialized respondents (51%), economic category immigrant respondents (50%), respondents who felt isolated (50%), respondents who experienced discrimination (47%), recent immigrant respondents (46%), and respondents with a negative settlement experience (21%) were all less likely to feel that St. Thomas-Elgin was quite welcoming (Figure 5).

Understanding the respondents' perception of welcoming can help evaluate how successful St. Thomas-Elgin is at welcoming and promoting the integration of immigrants.

⁶⁰ Q10 - How welcoming is the St. Thomas-Elgin region community towards immigrants? (n=97)

⁶¹ Victoria M. Esses, Leah K. Hamilton, Awish Aslam, and Priscila Ribeiro Prado Barros, "Measuring Welcoming Communities: A Toolkit for Communities and Those Who Support Them." (2023), *Pathways to Prosperity*, <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2023/03/Welcoming-Toolkit-I-Measuring-Welcoming-Communities.pdf>, 5.

Figure 5 – Respondent Subgroup Perceptions of Welcoming



Sense of Belonging

Three quarters (75%) of respondents indicated they felt a strong sense of belonging, with 38% indicating a "somewhat" strong sense and another 37% indicating a "very" strong sense.⁶² The remaining 25% of respondents indicated they felt a weak sense of belonging (Table 18).

Table 18 - Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging category	Survey respondents (%)	
Very strong	37%	75% - Strong sense of belonging
Somewhat strong	38%	
Somewhat weak	20%	25% - Weak sense of belonging
Very weak	5%	

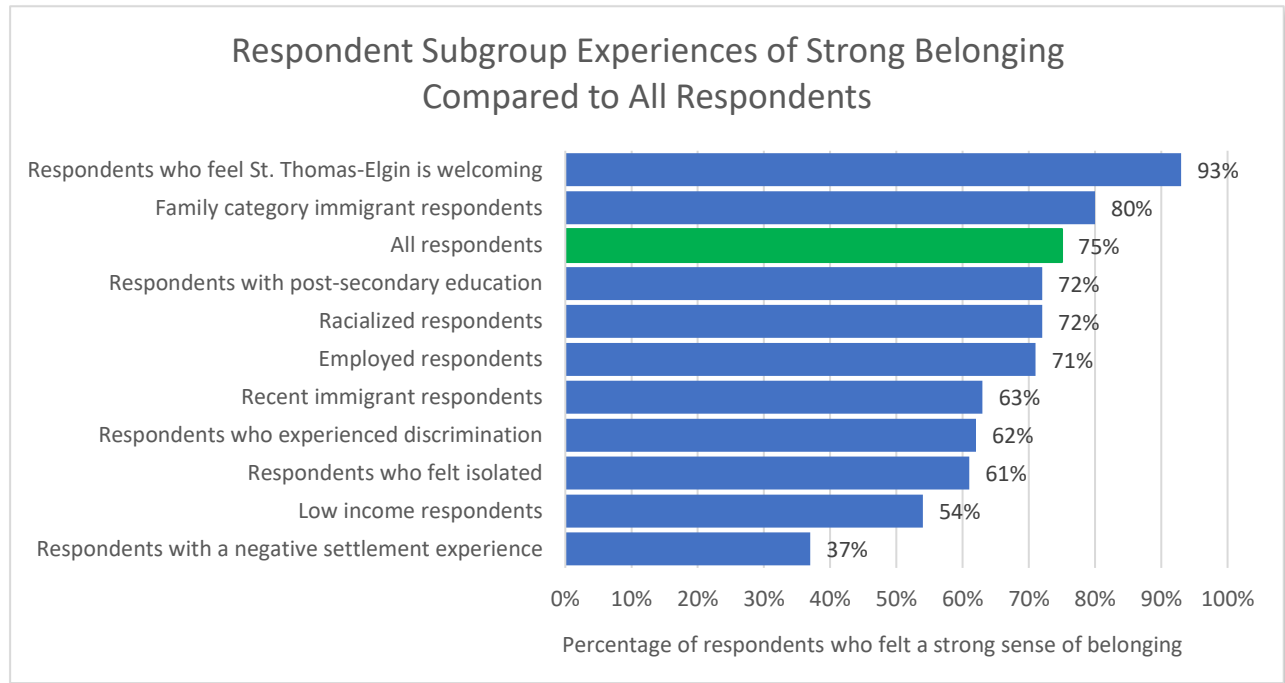
Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=98

A sense of belonging is an important part of integration into a new community. A sense of belonging also contributes to feeling welcomed in a community.⁷ These findings roughly echo the respondents’ feelings of welcoming (Table 17). To this point, 93% of respondents who felt St. Thomas-Elgin was welcoming, also felt a strong sense of belonging. Family category immigrant respondents (80%) were also more likely to feel a strong sense of belonging, potentially due to their strong family ties in the area.

⁶² Q11 - How do you describe your sense of belonging in St. Thomas-Elgin Region? (Sense of belonging is when you feel accepted and valued by others around you. It is when you feel like St. Thomas-Elgin Region is truly your home.) (n=98)

Conversely, many other groups of respondents were less likely to report a strong sense of belonging, including racialized respondents (71%), recent immigrant respondents (63%), and respondents who experienced discrimination (62%), respondents who felt isolated (61%), and low income respondents (54%). Unsurprisingly, respondents with a negative settlement experience had the smallest proportion that felt a strong sense of belonging (37%) (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Respondent Subgroup Experiences of Belonging



Isolation

Nearly a quarter of respondents felt isolated (i.e., "a great deal" or "quite a bit" isolated) (22%), and an additional 20% felt "somewhat isolated".⁶³ The remaining respondents either did not feel isolated, or only felt "a little bit" isolated.

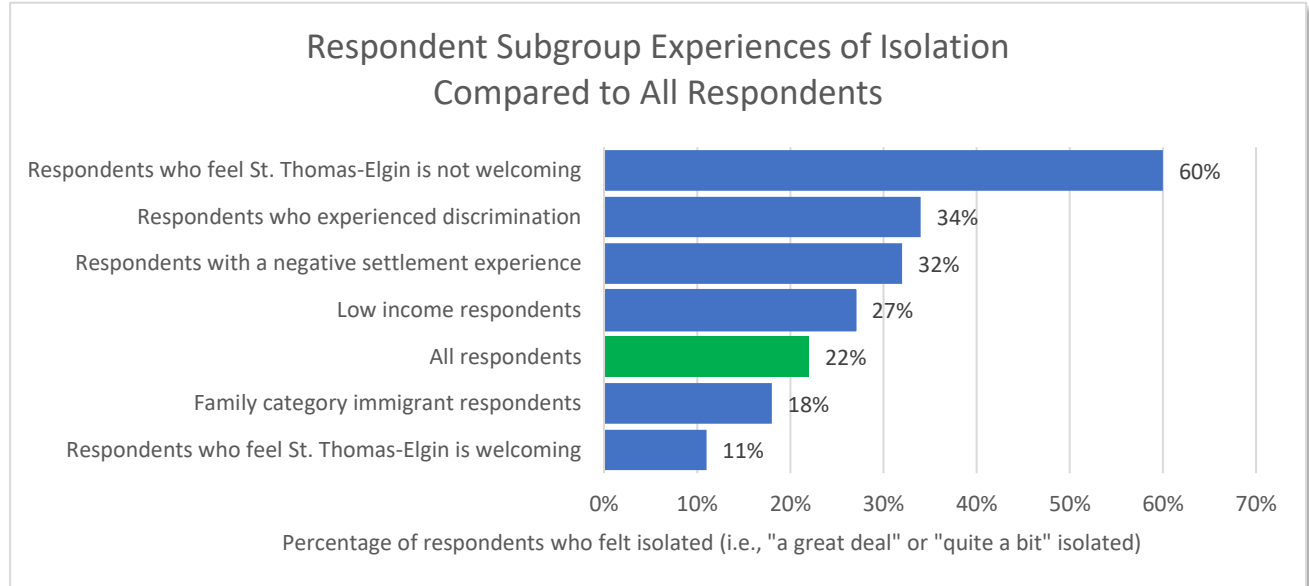
A crucial part of integration in a new community is feeling connected and valued. When immigrants feel isolated, they may be less likely to feel integrated in their community.⁷

Unsurprisingly, respondents who felt that St. Thomas-Elgin was welcoming had a much smaller proportion who felt isolated (11%). Family category immigrant respondents also felt less isolated (18%), possibly owing this to their strong family ties in the area.

Conversely, respondents who felt that St. Thomas-Elgin was not welcoming had a much larger proportion who felt isolated (60%). Other groups who were more likely to report feeling isolated include respondents who had experienced discrimination (34%) and respondents with a negative settlement experience (32%) (Figure 7).

⁶³ Q12 - How much have you felt isolated in the past 12 months in St. Thomas-Elgin Region? (n=98)

Figure 7 – Respondent Subgroup Experiences of Isolation



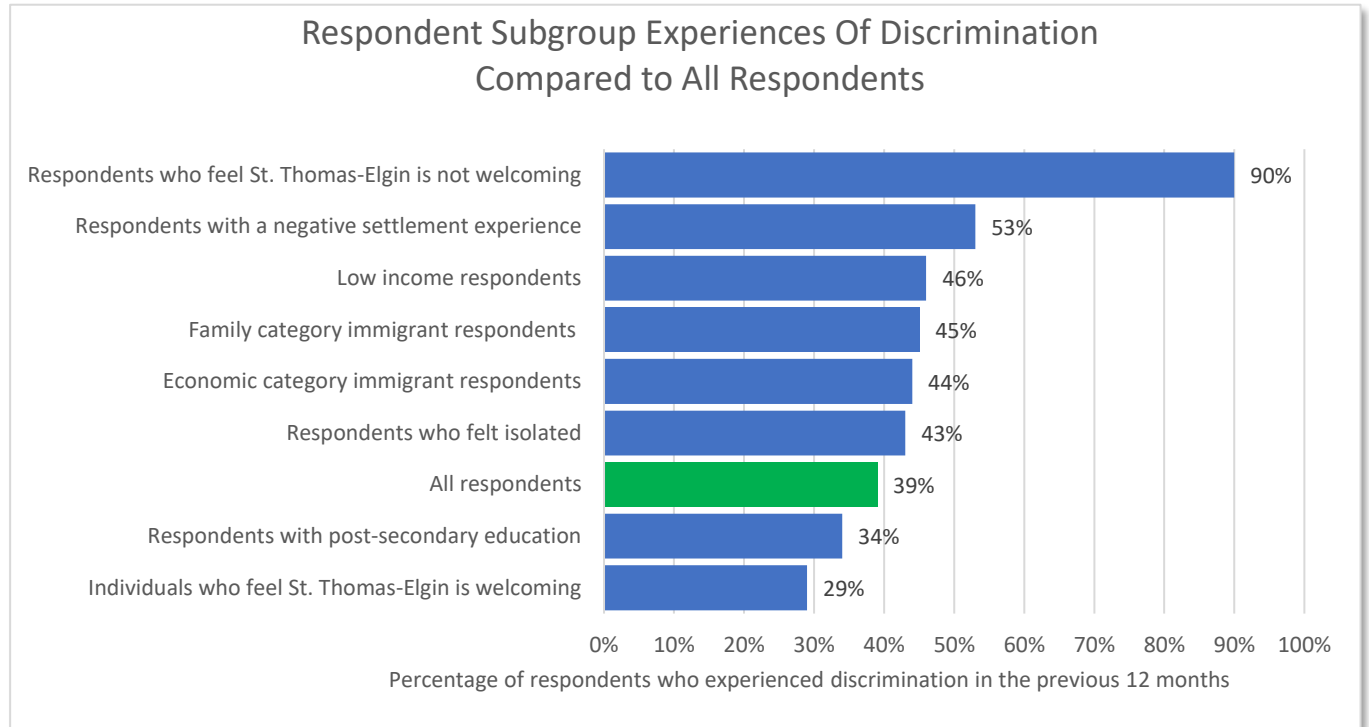
Discrimination

When asked about discrimination, 39% of respondents reported they had experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly in the previous 12 months.⁶⁴ Respondents who felt that St. Thomas-Elgin was welcoming (29%) and respondents with post-secondary education (34%) were less likely to report experiencing discrimination.

Conversely, respondents who felt St. Thomas-Elgin was not welcoming were vastly more likely to have experienced discrimination (90%). Other groups who were more likely to have experienced discrimination include respondents with a negative settlement experience (53%) and low income respondents (46%) (Figure 8).

⁶⁴ Q14 - In the last 12 months, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in St. Thomas-Elgin Region? (n=99)

Figure 8 - Respondent Subgroup Experiences of Discrimination



Participants were also asked to provide further details about their experiences of discrimination. This question was not limited to only the respondents who had indicated they experienced discrimination in the previous 12 months. Around half of the survey participants provided more details, notably more respondents than had reported experiencing discrimination in the previous 12 months.^{65 66} Likely, the additional respondents had experienced discrimination more than 12 months ago.

Race or skin colour was the most common basis for discrimination reported by respondents (41%), while 39% of respondents who experienced discrimination indicated it was on basis of immigration status and 31% indicated on it was on basis on their accent (Table 19). Respondents also reported experiencing discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity or culture, language ability, religion, age, gender, physical appearance and sexual orientation.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Q15 - If you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others, what are the reasons? (n=49)

⁶⁶ Q16 - If you did experience discrimination, in what type of situations did you experience that? (n=51)

Table 19 - Bases of Discrimination

Basis of discrimination category	Respondents who experienced discrimination (%)
Race or skin colour	41%
Immigration status	39%
Accent	31%
Ethnicity or culture	27%
Language ability	24%
Religion	20%
Other ⁶⁷	18%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=49

Respondents also provided information about where they experienced discrimination, the most common of which were at their job (47%); in a store, bank or restaurant (37%); and when applying for a job or promotion (25%) (Table 20).⁶⁶

Table 20 - Context of Discrimination Experience

Context of discrimination category	Respondents who experienced discrimination (%)
At my job – for example from supervisors, co-workers or clients	47%
In a store, bank or restaurant	37%
When applying for a job or a promotion	25%
At community/public events	24%
When interacting with my neighbours	20%
While using public areas, such as parks or sidewalks	20%
When crossing the border into Canada	10%
Other ⁶⁸	42%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=51

These results mirror other research about discrimination in St. Thomas-Elgin. A 2021 survey found that 68% of immigrant and racialized respondents²⁶ had experienced discrimination in the previous three years, and that most common type of discrimination was on the basis of race or skin colour and the most common situation was when applying for a job or promotion.²⁷

⁶⁷ Other responses included: age, gender, physical appearance, and sexual orientation.

⁶⁸ Other responses include when interacting with the police; when using the library, community/recreational centres, arenas or other spaces; at school or university; when seeing a doctor or in other healthcare settings; when looking for housing; while using buses, trains or taxis; and when accessing other community services.

Discrimination can have a range of negative impacts on immigrants, including distrust of and lack of confidence in institutions as well as poor physical and mental health. Discrimination has also been associated with a lower sense of belonging among Canadian immigrants.⁶⁹

Settlement Experiences

When asked about life satisfaction, 55% of respondents reported they felt quite satisfied with their life (i.e., a rating of 8 out of 10 or higher).⁷⁰ An additional 35% were somewhat satisfied (i.e., a rating between 5 and 7 out of 10), and the remaining 11% were dissatisfied (i.e., a rating of 4 out of 10 or lower) (Table 21).

Table 21 - Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction rating	Survey respondents (%)	
10	20%	55% - quite satisfied
9	13%	
8	22%	
7	20%	35% - somewhat satisfied
6	3%	
5	12%	
4	3%	11% - dissatisfied
3	3%	
2	1%	
1	3%	
0	0%	

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=97

Three quarters of respondents (75%) indicated they had a positive settlement experience (i.e., "excellent" or "good"), 20% indicated a "neutral" settlement experience, and 5% indicated a negative experience (i.e., "not very good").⁷¹ No respondents indicated they had a "not at all" good settlement experience.

Both economic category immigrant respondents (88%) and respondents who felt St. Thomas-Elgin was welcoming (91%) had higher levels of positive settlement experiences. Groups that were less likely to indicate a positive settlement experience include racialized respondents (73%), recent immigrant respondents (70%), family category immigrant respondents (59%), and low income respondents (58%) (Figure 9).

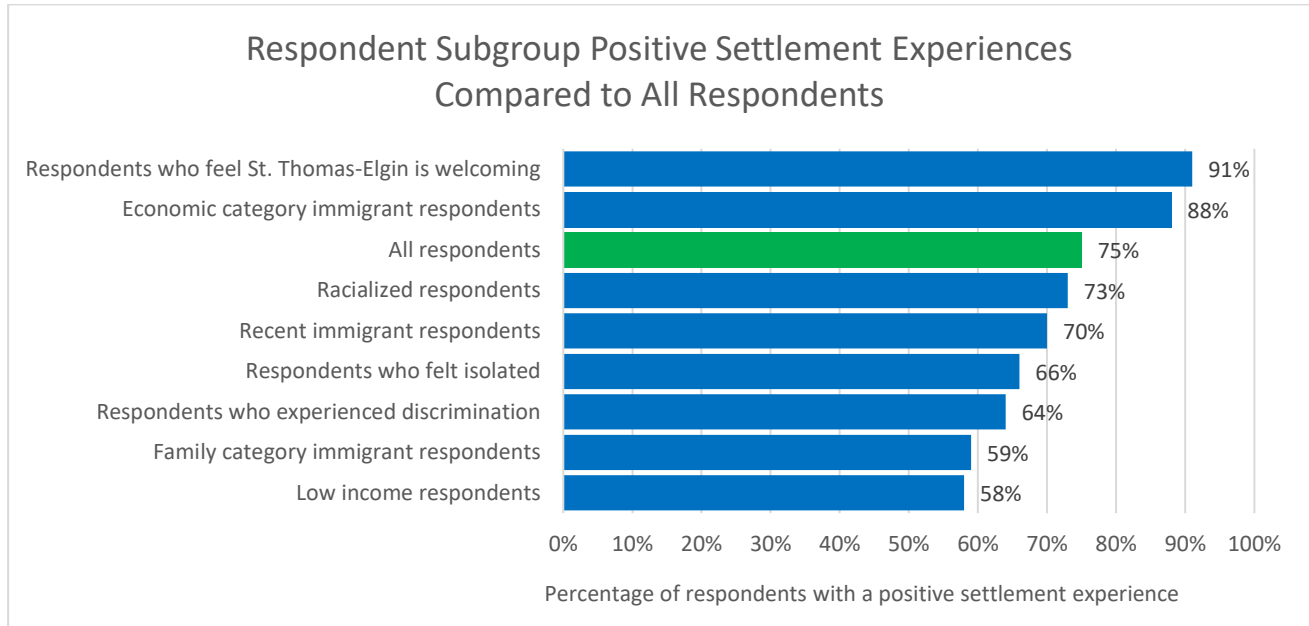
⁶⁹ Victoria M. Esses, Leah K. Hamilton, Awish Aslam, and Priscila Ribeiro Prado Barros, "Measuring Welcoming Communities: A Toolkit for Communities and Those Who Support Them." (2023), *Pathways to Prosperity*, <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2023/03/Welcoming-Toolkit-I-Measuring-Welcoming-Communities.pdf>, 7.

⁷⁰ Q9 - How do you feel about your life as a whole right now? (n=97)

⁷¹ Q17 – How would you describe your overall experience of settling in St. Thomas-Elgin Region? (n=75)

Understanding the overall settlement experience of respondents can give insight into the wellbeing and integration of some immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin.

Figure 9 - Respondent Subgroup Settlement Experiences



Challenges and Suggested Changes

The respondents reported facing a variety of challenges, the most common of which were cost of living or money problems (34%), finding healthcare (28%), finding work (24%), transportation (24%), and finding affordable housing (21%) (Table 22).⁷²

These challenges align with other findings from this survey. The sizeable minority of respondents who did not have enough income to cover their needs points to the cost of living challenges as well as challenges with finding affordable housing (Table 13). A number of workplace related issues came out in these findings that align with the challenges reported above, including the quarter of respondents whose job does not match their skills (Table 12) and the large proportion of respondents who experienced discrimination in the workplace (Table 20). Respondents also rated their experiences with transportation quite negatively (Table 14), which also reflects challenges with transportation.

⁷² Q20 – What are the biggest challenges you or your family have experienced in the last year in St. Thomas-Elgin region? (select all that apply) (n=80)

Table 22 - Challenges Experienced

Challenge category	Survey respondents (%)
Cost of living or money problems	34%
Finding healthcare	28%
Finding work	24%
Transportation	24%
Finding affordable housing	21%
Finding childcare	20%
Making friends	20%
Starting a new business	20%
Learning English	15%
Finding relevant programming in local community centers, arts and culture spaces, libraries, etc.	11%
Discrimination/racism	11%
Learning where and how to do things	11%
Getting information in a language you understand	10%
Finding mental health care	9%
Making sure your children are safe and happy at school and in the community	8%
Other (please specify) ⁷³	9%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=80

When asked to select the top three changes would help immigrants reach their full potential in St. Thomas-Elgin, the most commonly selected options were more affordable housing (39%), better programs for immigrants to find work (36%), and education for employers on the value of hiring and retaining immigrants (29%) (Table 23).⁷⁴ Additionally, 33% of respondents selected “other”, giving responses including better availability of interpretation and translation services, English language learning opportunities in the workplace, and better opportunities for involvement in community leadership and planning.⁷⁵

⁷³ Other responses included: Receiving public or social services (e.g., settlement services, government services); current economic realities; understanding car insurance; and effects of immigration status on work permit.

⁷⁴ Q21 - What changes would help immigrants to reach their full potential in St. Thomas-Elgin Region? (Select your top 3 options) (full survey only, n=59)

Table 23 - Suggested Solutions

Solution category	Survey respondents (%)
More affordable housing	39%
Better programs for immigrants to find work	36%
Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining, and promoting immigrants	29%
A central place for both employers to find immigrant workers and for workers to find employment	22%
One place to get all settlement, immigration and other services	19%
More opportunities to help improve English skills	15%
Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants	15%
Actions to improve the social connections of immigrants	15%
Service agencies working together more	12%
More effort by community services to better serve immigrants	10%
Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants	10%
Other ⁷⁵	33%

Source: STELIP Immigrant Survey 2023, n=59

These results reflect the major challenges that respondents reported experiencing, including cost of living (34% of respondents), finding work (24%), and finding affordable housing (21%) (Table 22). Furthermore, a sizeable number of respondents who experienced discrimination faced discrimination at their job (47%) or when applying for a job or promotion (25%) (Table 20). This further illuminates the need for supports for immigrants both when looking for work and while in the workplace.

⁷⁵ Other responses included: Availability of interpretation and translation; English learning opportunities in workplaces; more relevant programming in local community centres, arts and culture spaces, libraries, etc.; greater voice or involvement in community leadership and planning; computer access and training; more funding for childcare and after school programs; and more job opportunities.

Methodology

This survey was based on a similar survey facilitated by the Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership.⁷⁶ Building on Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership's success, several Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs), including the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership, undertook a survey of local immigrants in their respective areas in Spring 2023.

Two versions of the survey were developed: A full-length version available online in English, and a shorter version available either online or as a paper copy in English, French, Spanish, Ukrainian, Farsi, and Simplified Chinese. A Low German-speaking interpreter was also contracted during promotion at a local Mennonite event to conduct the short survey orally in Low German.^{35 77} An ethics review of the survey was completed by the Community Research Ethics Office.

Survey Timing and Participant Recruitment

The St. Thomas-Elgin Immigrant Survey was open between June 1 and June 26, 2023. Participants were recruited through a variety of methods: volunteer survey ambassadors, in-person outreach at community events, media promotion (radio ads, social media, posters), presentations for community groups including faith groups, promotion by community partners, and distributing information to local settlement agency clients and during English Language classes.

Survey ambassadors were volunteers who had connections to a particular immigrant or cultural group, and who recruited survey participants through their connections.

Most of the respondents heard about the survey directly from the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership (25%), through a friend or personal connection (21%), social media (19%), or through YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin Settlement Services (16%).⁷⁸

Because of the relatively small number of participants and the use of survey ambassadors connected to specific immigrant or cultural groups, it is possible that some immigrant/cultural groups are overrepresented or underrepresented in the survey results compared to the proportion of that group within the overall immigrant population in St. Thomas-Elgin.

Data Collection Tool

The survey questions were based on Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership's survey questions from 2021, 2019, and 2017, which were developed according to key measurement indicators, and feedback on

⁷⁶ Refer to the Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership's 2021 Immigrant Survey report for more information: <https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/en/business-opportunities/resources/Resources--Publications/2021-Immigrant-Survey-Summary-Report.pdf>

⁷⁷ Low German (Plautdietsch) is a predominantly oral language, so it was not effective to offer a written survey translated into Low German. Low German is almost entirely spoken by Low German Speaking Mennonites.

⁷⁸ Q39 – How did you find out about this survey? (full survey only, n=57)

previous Immigrant Surveys. The questions were adapted in collaboration with LIPs across Canada implementing similar surveys, updates were made to address emerging needs and other local research. The St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership Council provided input on the questions and approved the survey implementation.

The survey was primarily completed online using CheckMarket survey software and kept on servers within Canada. Survey responses were deleted from the CheckMarket servers two months after the data collection period was completed.

Paper surveys were collected confidentially and stored at the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership until the results could be inputted, after which the paper surveys were destroyed.

Analysis

After the survey collection period, the data was reviewed and cleaned. Incomplete surveys (ending the survey within the first 10 questions (completing less than 25% of the questions), and potential bots were deleted from the responses. Responses were designated as probable bots if the IP address was from outside of the region, the response time was low (under 6 minutes), and there was inconsistency in their responses (i.e., the immigration category did not match the demographics, the language ability and need for interpretation was inconsistent etc.).

The findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings presented in this report are those that were most noteworthy or where there were substantial differences when considering immigration category, racialized status etc. In general, differences were considered substantial when there was more than 5% difference between two or more respondent subgroups or between the respondent subgroup and all respondents or all survey respondents and 2021 Census Data for all immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin. Comparisons were made with 2021 Census Data to help contextualize the snapshot of the St. Thomas-Elgin immigrant community this survey offered.

The data was disaggregated to understand differences between subgroups within the survey respondents. The subgroups chosen were adapted from the Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership's past surveys, which developed the list of subgroups based on a Resilience-Vulnerability Index and input from their advisory group and local partners. In other words, these subgroups were identified as potentially more likely to have difficult or unique experiences and thereby important to understand their specific experiences in our community. For the St. Thomas-Elgin survey, only subgroups that had a sufficient number of respondents were chosen. Some subgroups could not be analyzed simply due to a lack of respondents.⁷⁹ Additionally, STELIP was unable to develop a Resilience-Vulnerability Index based on our own context due to the survey's small response rate. Therefore, the Waterloo Regional Local Immigration Partnership's index was used as a framework.

⁷⁹ For example, the Waterloo Region Local Immigration Partnership survey disaggregated data by racial group, faith group, LGBTQ+ identifying individuals, location, gender, age, and by some language groups and language abilities. We were unable to disaggregate data to this degree due to a small sample size. Often, we instead chose to disaggregate data at a higher level, i.e., disaggregating by racialized status instead of disaggregating by specific racial groups.

The following subgroups were disaggregated and analyzed: economic category immigrants, family category immigrants, recent immigrants, immigrants with post-secondary education, employed immigrants, low income immigrants, immigrants who felt isolated, immigrants with a negative settlement experience, immigrants who felt St. Thomas-Elgin is not welcoming, immigrants who experienced discrimination, immigrants who felt St. Thomas-Elgin is welcoming, and racialized immigrants.

Limitations

Multiple promotion methods were used to reach a wide variety of immigrants, but the results are not necessarily representative of all groups and subpopulations. When compared with 2021 census data about St. Thomas-Elgin's immigrant population, it is clear there are some known gaps in the survey respondents (e.g., immigrants from the west and east Elgin regions, older immigrants, and refugees are all underrepresented, see Table 1, Table 3, Table 5. Low German Speaking Mennonites are also underrepresented (Table 7), see footnote 10 for more details about this population. There may be further unknown gaps.

Because of small sample sizes for some subpopulations, the findings should be interpreted with caution. The survey sample size is not large enough to be a statistically significant representation of all immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin, but the results still provide important insight into the perspectives and experiences of those immigrants who participated in the survey.

Results were reported as percentages and were only disaggregated in a manner that maintained anonymity.

It should also be noted that some groups or individuals may understand specific words or concepts differently (e.g., "belonging", "isolation", "discrimination" or "good" vs "poor" service delivery) and this could impact the findings.

How the Results will be Used

The information outlined in this report provides a snapshot of the experiences of the survey respondents and can be used to inform policy, service provision, and other planning in the St. Thomas-Elgin area. Contact the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership if you have questions about the data or findings, or suggestions for how it could be used to impact change in our community.

St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership
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16 Mary Street West
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Appendix

Long and Short Survey

The questions highlighted in blue are also included in the short survey. All questions are included in the long survey.

St. Thomas-Elgin Region Immigrant Survey 2023

Immigrants make St. Thomas and Elgin County a much more diverse and vibrant community, and your story is important to hear and understand. We want to learn about the welcoming, integration, and well-being of immigrants. The Local Immigration Partnership will use the survey results to guide how more organizations will work together to improve services and living experiences for immigrants in the St. Thomas-Elgin region.

This survey is for all immigrants living or working in St. Thomas-Elgin region who are age 16 or older This includes people born outside Canada who are now living, working, or studying in this community (permanent residents, Canadian citizens, refugees, temporary residents, refugee claimants, and international students).

Please complete this survey by June 19, 2023. It will only take 10-20 minutes.

You do not have to provide your name to do the survey. The survey will ask both multiple choice questions and short answer questions about your thoughts, and a short section about demographic information. When you finish the survey, you can choose to enter your name into a draw for a prize. If you provide your name, it will not be connected to your survey answers and will only be used for the draw. Draw prizes include a \$100 prepaid credit card, \$50 prepaid credit cards and Tim Horton's gift cards.

Completing the survey is voluntary and you can skip any question you do not want to answer. You can stop or close the browser window any time you like, but we cannot remove your answers once you submit them because we will not be able to separate your answers from the rest of the data.

The information you provide will remain confidential. Only Petrusia Hontar (Principal Investigator), and Fiona Murray (Communication Coordinator) will have access to the raw survey data. We are hoping to hear from 400 immigrants in this survey. All the responses will be anonymous and will be summarized in a series of reports and presentations. They will be available on the St. Thomas Elgin Local Immigration Partnership website at <https://stelip.ca/projects/2023-immigrant-survey/> later this year.

Each person may react differently when reflecting on the questions, and it may raise anxiety for some people. If you need support at any time, please call or text the Canadian Mental Health Association Thames Valley's crisis line "Reach Out" at 519-433-2023. If you need help but are not in crisis, please call the Canadian Mental Health Association Thames Valley at 519-601-8055 or 1-844-360-8055.

You can find more information about your rights as a survey participant, including the contact information for the ethics office that reviewed the project, in the information and consent letter found on the website <https://stelip.ca/projects/2023-immigrant-survey/>

If you have questions, are not able to fill out this survey online, or would prefer to respond by phone, email or on paper, contact the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership at communication@stelip.ca or 519-631-9800 x 241.

Thank you for taking the time to share your story by completing this survey. It will help us build better services to serve everyone in our community!

[If you agree to participate and are ready to begin the survey, please click here.](#)

Section A: Basic Information

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- I immigrated to Canada as an economic-category immigrant (e.g. Federal Skilled Worker Program, Provincial Nominee Program, Canadian Experience Class, and dependants of economic applicants)
- I immigrated to Canada as a family-category immigrant (sponsored spouse, sponsored parent or grandparent, or other immigrant sponsored by family)
- I immigrated to Canada as a government assisted refugee
- I immigrated to Canada as a privately sponsored refugee
- I immigrated to Canada as a refugee claimant and am now a permanent resident
- I am currently in Canada as a refugee claimant
- I am currently in Canada as an international student
- I am currently in Canada on a temporary work visa
- I am currently in Canada on a CUAET (Canada-Ukraine Authorization for Emergency Travel) visa
- Unknown
- I was born in Canada (This survey is for people who were born outside of Canada and now live, work or study in St. Thomas-Elgin Region.)
 - [FOR ANY RESPONDENTS THAT INDICATE THEY WERE BORN IN CANADA, SKIP THEM TO THE LAST QUESTION OF THE SURVEY ABOUT ANY OTHER COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE SETTLING/INTEGRATION AND THEN END THE SURVEY]
- Other (please specify) _____

2. How long have you been living in Canada?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- 10+ years

3. Where do you live⁸⁰?

- St. Thomas
- Aylmer
- Bayham
- Malahide

⁸⁰ changed to open ended question partway through to address bots

- Central Elgin
- Southwold
- Dutton Dunwich
- West Elgin
- Other (please specify) _____

4. What is your first language? (Your first language is the language you first learned at home and still understand.)

- English
- French
- Arabic
- Farsi/Persian
- German
- Gujarati
- Hindi
- Khmer
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Plautdietsch
- Punjabi
- Rohingya
- Spanish
- Urdu
- Other (please specify) _____

5. How many languages do you know well enough to have a conversation in that language?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 or more

6. How well can you communicate in English?

- Very well
- Well
- Fairly well
- Poorly
- Not at all

----- [FOR ALL RESPONDENTS] -----

Section B: Use of Community Services

7. Please rate your experience with following community services in the last 12 months in St. Thomas-Elgin.

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Poor	Did not access
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment and/or skills training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
English language learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
French language learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language interpretation/translation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal/courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local municipal government/bylaw	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Settlement/immigrant services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small business/entrepreneurial supports	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recreation services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childcare	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other community services (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. If you or a family member went to a hospital, health clinic or talked to a health professional in the past year, did the health clinic provide in-person or phone/video interpretation? *[multi-select question]*

- Language interpretation was provided for me
- I wanted language interpretation but did not receive it
- I brought a family member or friend with me because interpretation was not available to me
- I brought a family member or friend with me because I prefer this instead of a professional interpreter
- I did not need language interpretation
- I did not go to a hospital, clinic or health professional
- Other (please specify)_____

Section C: Belonging

9. How do you feel about your life as a whole right now?

Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “very dissatisfied” and 10 means “very satisfied,”

10. How welcoming is the St. Thomas-Elgin community toward immigrants?

Using a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means “not at all welcoming” and 10 means “very welcoming,”

11. How do you describe your sense of belonging in St. Thomas-Elgin?

(Sense of belonging is when you feel accepted and valued by others around you. It is when you feel like St. Thomas-Elgin Region is truly your home.)

- Very strong
- Somewhat strong
- Somewhat weak
- Very weak
- Don't know / no opinion

12. How much have you felt isolated or alone in the last 12 months in St. Thomas-Elgin?

- A great deal
- Quite a bit
- Somewhat
- A little bit
- Not at all

13. How safe do you feel in St. Thomas-Elgin?

- Not at all
- Slightly
- Moderately
- Very
- Extremely

14. In the last 12 months, have you experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others in St. Thomas-Elgin? ((Discrimination is when others treat you unfairly because of your race, skin colour, religion, ethnicity or other reasons.)

- Yes
- No

15. If you have experienced discrimination or been treated unfairly by others, what are the reasons? (Select all that apply)

- Race or skin colour
- Religion
- Ethnicity or culture
- Physical appearance (other than skin colour)
- Immigration status
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Language ability
- Accent
- Age
- Income
- Disability (either a disability that people can see or one that is invisible)
- Other (please specify): _____

16. If you did experience discrimination, in what types of situations did you experienced that? (Select all that apply.)

- In a store, bank or restaurant
- When applying for a job or a promotion
- At your job – for example from supervisors, co-workers or clients
- At school or university
- At community/public events
- When interacting with your neighbours
- When looking for housing
- When crossing the border into Canada
- When interacting with the police
- When interacting with the courts
- When seeing a medical health professional or in other health care settings
- While using libraries, community/recreational centres, arenas
- While using public areas, such as parks or sidewalks
- While using transportation such as buses, trains or taxis
- When accessing other community services
- Other (please specify): _____

----- [FOR ALL RESPONDENTS] -----

Section D: Challenges and Solutions

17. How would you describe your overall experience of settling in St. Thomas-Elgin?

(Settling includes your whole experience of moving to, settling and integrating in St. Thomas-Elgin.)

- Excellent
- Good
- Neutral
- Not very good

18. How many years have you been in this community? _____

(If you have been here for less than a year indicate zero.)

19. How long did it take you to feel at home in this community?

- When I arrived
- Less than a year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- More than 10 years
- I still don't feel at home in this community

20. What are the biggest challenges you or your family have experienced in the last year in St. Thomas-Elgin? (Select all that apply.)

- Accessing health care
- Accessing mental health care
- Accessing relevant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.
- Cost of living or financial struggles
- Discrimination/racism
- Finding affordable housing
- Finding childcare
- Finding work
- Getting information you need in a language you understand
- Learning English
- Learning where and how to do things
- Making friends or social connections
- Making sure your children are safe and happy at school and in the community
- Receiving public or social services (e.g. settlement services, government services, etc.)
- Starting a new business
- Transportation
- Other (please specify): _____

21. What changes would help immigrants to reach their full potential in St. Thomas-Elgin? (Select your top 3 options below.)

Immigrants includes people born outside Canada who are now living, working or studying in this community (permanent residents, Canadian citizens, refugees, temporary residents, refugee claimants, and international students).

- More opportunities to help improve English skills
- Availability of interpretation and translation
- More affordable housing options
- A central location where immigrants can receive settlement and other services in one place
- More effort by community services to better serve immigrants
- More or better programs for immigrants to find work
- Educate employers on the value and ways of hiring, retaining and promoting immigrants
- English learning opportunities in workplaces
- A central place for employers to find immigrant workers and where workers can find employment opportunities
- Actions to reduce racism and discrimination towards immigrants
- Actions to improve the social connections of immigrants
- Actions to increase welcoming and acceptance of immigrants
- More relevant programming in local community centres, arts & culture spaces, libraries, etc.
- Greater voice or involvement in community leadership and planning
- Better collaboration and coordination between service agencies
- Better internet/technology access and training
- More funding for... (please specify using "Other" below)
- Other (please specify): _____

Section E: Community Contributions

22. Why did you come to St. Thomas-Elgin? (Select your top 3 reasons)

- Family or friends that live in St. Thomas-Elgin
- St. Thomas-Elgin was more affordable than other communities
- Post-secondary institutions
- For a job in St. Thomas-Elgin
- A healthy local economy
- Cultural or language groups in this community
- Community services and support in this community
- I didn't choose St. Thomas-Elgin, the community was chosen for me
- Other (please specify): _____

23. How likely are you to stay permanently in St. Thomas-Elgin?

- I plan to stay permanently in St. Thomas-Elgin Region
- I might stay permanently in St. Thomas-Elgin Region
- I'm not sure
- I don't plan on staying in St. Thomas-Elgin Region
- Not applicable

24. What are some of the ways you contribute to creating a thriving and prosperous community for everyone? (Select all that apply)

- I help my neighbours when they need it
- I provide unpaid help for family members (children, grandparents, etc.)
- I volunteer with youth sports (coaching, driving youth, etc.)
- I tutor or help youth learn in this community
- I volunteer in cultural or ethnic association activities
- I volunteer with other community organizations, groups or faith communities
- I am on a board of directors or other committees
- I donate to local charities
- I help newcomers to Canada as they make their home in our community
- I speak up for fairness and treat people with kindness in my community
- I vote in local/municipal, provincial or national elections in Canada
- I am a business owner, and my business contributes to our community's economy
- I contribute my skills and experience to the local economy through my job
- I build my skills and strengthen the ways I can contribute to this community (learning English, further education, building professional skills, etc.)
- I contribute to improving the natural environment in my community (recycling, picking up garbage, planting trees, etc.)
- Other (please specify): _____

25. If you would like to share a story that illustrates one of the above contributions that you are particularly proud of, please do so here:

26. What is the most important thing you would like community leaders to do to improve the welcoming, integration and well-being of immigrants in St. Thomas-Elgin Region?

Section F: Demographics

These final demographic questions are intended to help organizations supporting immigrants to understand how to build programs and services that meet the needs of diverse groups. While all these questions are optional, your answers are important. We want to make sure we are hearing from immigrants across many different groups in St. Thomas-Elgin Region.

27. What is your age?

- 16-19 years
- 20-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 or older

28. Which would best describe you? (Select all that apply.)

- Arab
- Black (e.g. Black-Caribbean, Black-African, Black-North American)
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Latin American
- South Asian (East Indian Pakistani, Sri Lankan)
- Southeast Asian (e.g. Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, Thai)
- West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghan)
- White
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify): _____

29. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- No formal education
- Elementary school
- High school or equivalent
- Trade/technical school
- College diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- PhD
- Prefer not to answer

30. How would you describe your gender identity?

- Man

- Non-binary
- Woman
- Prefer to self-describe (please specify): _____
- Prefer not to answer

31. Do you identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community? (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning)

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

32. Are you living with a disability (physical or mental) or a chronic illness that limits your activity?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to answer

33. If you are a member of a faith community, please share which one:

- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Sikh
- Other (please specify): _____
- I am not a member of a faith community
- Prefer not to answer

34. What is your employment status?

- I am employed (working full time)
- I am employed (working part time or casual)
- I am unemployed but seeking work
- I am self-employed
- I am not in the paid workforce (retired, caring for children, not seeking work, etc.)
- Prefer not to answer
- Other (please specify): _____

35. Is your current housing both suitable and affordable for you?

(Are there enough bedrooms and is it in good repair, AND can you afford it with your other living expenses)

- Yes
- No (please explain): _____

36. Is your household income enough for the needs of you and your family?

- Our income is **enough** for our needs
- Our income is **not quite enough** for our needs
- Our income is **not enough** for our needs
- Prefer not to answer

37. Are you in a job that is at the same level as your skills and experience?

- Yes
- No
- I'm not currently employed
- Prefer not to answer

38. Where do you prefer to get information about community and settlement services?

	Yes	Maybe	No
Twitter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facebook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Instagram	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LinkedIn	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community organization websites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emails	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
STELIP Newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information sessions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Settlement worker or other community organization staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local media (newspaper, radio)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Messaging apps (e.g. Whatsapp, Telegram, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

39. How did you find out about this survey?

(Select the option that was the most instrumental in encouraging you to fill out the survey.)

- St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership
- YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin Settlement Services
- Mennonite Community Services (MCS)
- St. Thomas and District Chamber of Commerce
- Employment Services Elgin
- Fanshawe Employment and Career Services
- St. Thomas Public Library
- Elgin Library
- St. Thomas Social Services
- Karen Vecchio Member of Parliament
- A poster in a public place
- Newspaper
- Radio
- Social Media
- A friend or personal connection
- Other (please specify): _____

---- [FOR ALL RESPONDENTS] ----

40. Are you interested in sharing your thoughts in the future by participating in other surveys or research by the St. Thomas-Elgin Local Immigration Partnership?

(You can always say no in the future if you change your mind. You will be redirected to a form to provide your contact information)

- Yes
- No

If you want to, you can chose to enter your name and contact information into a draw for a prize. The prizes include one \$100 prepaid credit card, \$50 prepaid credit cards and Tim Horton's gift cards. The information you share for the draw will not be linked to your survey answers. By selecting yes you will be transferred to a separate survey not linked to this one.

41. Do you want to enter your contact information into a draw for a prize?

- Yes
- No

CONFIRMATION PAGE AFTER SUBMISSION:

Your responses have been submitted. Thank you completing this survey and for helping to make a difference in your community.

We will share the results of this and other surveys at <https://stelip.ca/projects/2023-immigrant-survey/>

If you would like to receive the *STELIP quarterly newsletter*, an update on local immigration and newcomer related upcoming events, information and resources in St. Thomas and Elgin County, you can subscribe at <https://stelip.ca/news-events/newsletter/>

For newcomers looking for information and resources, the YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin offers settlement services. One of the newest programs available is called “Canada Connects.” Canada Connects matches newcomers to Canada with more established community members to help newcomers make connections in the community, practice English and learn about life in Canada. If you would like to learn more about the Canada Connects program or other settlement services offered by the YWCA, please contact 519-631-9800 or email settlement@ywcaste.ca . The application form for volunteer mentors is also available on the YWCA's website: <https://ywcaste.ca/volunteer/>