

GBLIP Immigrant Survey 2023

Executive Summary

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Introduction

In 2023, the Grey Bruce Local Immigration Partnership (GBLIP) partnered with the Research Shop, part of the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI) at the University of Guelph, to conduct their Immigrant Survey 2023. The Immigrant Survey 2023 is a collaborative project involving Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) across Canada. Each participating LIP conducted a similar survey in their own region to better understand their community, the needs of newcomers, and the impact of their collective work. This survey gathered 120 responses from immigrants living in Grey and Bruce Counties; the key findings from the Grey Bruce survey are presented below.

Summary of findings

Demographics

- 120 immigrants participated in the survey. They were primarily economic (37%) and family (31%) category immigrants.
- The majority (56%) had lived in Canada for between one and 10 years, and most (66%) were between the ages of 25 and 44.
- The most represented ethnic groups were: South Asian (25%), Chinese (21%), white (17%) and Black (14%).
- Respondents belonged to a range of faith communities. The most communities identified were Christian (35%) and Hindu (18%), and 29% were not members of a faith community.

- The most commonly spoken first language was English (35%), and the vast majority (99%) of respondents reported that they could speak and understand English fairly to very well.

Housing, education, income & employment


- Respondents lived across Grey and Bruce Counties. Most lived in the City of Owen Sound (36%), the Town of Saugeen Shoes (16%), the Municipality of Grey Highlands, and the Municipality of West Grey (7%).
- The majority (85%) reported that their housing suited their needs, and most (64%) indicated that their housing was affordable.
- Most respondents had completed some form of post-secondary education, such as Bachelor's degrees (38%), Master's degrees (25%), College diplomas (13%) and PhDs (8%).
- The majority (77%) of respondents reported being a part of the paid workforce, both full-time (52%), part-time (15%), and self-employed (10%), and a slight majority (54%) reported that they were in a job that suited their skills and experience.
- Respondents had varied feelings around their income; some reported that their income was enough for their needs (43%), while others reported that it was definitely not enough for their needs (12%).

Access to services

- The top five most commonly accessed services in Grey Bruce within the last 12 months reported by respondents were health care, dental care, recreation services, driver's licence, and housing.
- Many of the most frequently accessed services were also the most poorly rated by respondents. The top five most poorly rated were health care, housing, childcare, dental, and recreation services.
- The majority (68%) of respondents who accessed a hospital, health clinic, or talked to a health professional in Grey Bruce reported that they did not need language interpretation.

Community integration

- Many respondents indicated that they came to Grey Bruce for a job (37%) or because they had friends and family in the area (20%) and were at least considering staying in Grey Bruce permanently.
- Grey Bruce was rated a 5.87 on a scale of 0-10 in terms of how welcoming its community was to immigrants.
- The majority (57%) of respondents had an 'Excellent' (20%) or 'Good' (37%) experience of settling in Grey Bruce. 32% of respondents reported a 'Neutral' experience, and only 11% reported having had a 'Not very good' experience.

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- The majority of respondents indicated that it took zero to two years for them to feel at home in Grey Bruce. However, 1/5 of respondents reported they still do not feel at home in the community.
 - Immigrants who had lived in Grey Bruce for six or more years reported greater life satisfaction on average than those who have been in the community five or fewer years.

Community contributions

- When prompted to share stories of their personal contributions to the community, many shared their experiences of formal volunteering in the community through organizations, and some also shared stories of informal volunteering such as being a helpful neighbour.
- Many respondents also shared ways that they have contributed to positive community development such as helping to promote and develop recreation and education.
- Another notable theme in these responses was their efforts to support other newcomers in the area.

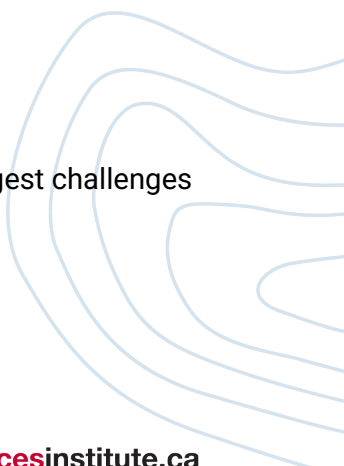
Isolation


- The majority of respondents reported feeling some isolation in the past year.
- 30% said they felt 'A little bit' isolated, 24% said they felt 'Somewhat' isolated, 19% said they felt 'Quite a bit' isolated, and 10% said they felt isolated 'A great deal.'
- 17% of respondents indicated that they did not feel isolated at all in the past year.

Discrimination

- When asked if they have had experiences of discrimination or unfair treatment in the past 12 months 43% of respondents said 'Yes' and 57% said 'No.'
- Respondents with racialized identities were more likely to report experiencing discrimination than white respondents, and women and non-binary people were more likely to report discrimination than men.
- When then prompted to indicate the reasons for their discrimination, race or skin colour, ethnicity or culture, accent, and immigration status were reported most frequently.
- Respondents shared that discrimination most frequently occurred at stores, banks or restaurants, when interacting with neighbours, at places of potential or current employment, at community events, when interacting with the police and in recreational spaces.

Key challenges

- Many answers were provided when respondents were asked what the biggest challenges they faced in the past year were.
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- The top response, with 42% of respondents selecting it, was 'Finding healthcare'. Similarly, access to other services such as relevant programming/recreation (32%), transportation (32%), childcare (16%), mental health care (16%), and other public or social services (16%) were selected as key challenges.
 - Another top response, with 41% of respondents selecting it, was 'Making friends.'
 - Economic challenges was a prominent theme in these responses. Respondents reported cost of living (32%), finding affordable housing (23%), finding work (17%), and starting a new business (12%) were selected as key challenges.
 - 23% also noted that discrimination was one of the biggest challenges they were facing in Grey Bruce.

Helpful changes

- Respondents were asked to indicate the changes that could be made in the community to help immigrants reach their full potential. Top responses surrounded more affordable housing, actions to bring immigrants together to facilitate community connection, assistance with and more equitable employment, reducing discrimination, improved access to services and involving immigrants more in community development.
- These topics were underscored when respondents were able to provide their own responses on what community leaders could do to help immigrants in Grey Bruce.
- Themes in these responses centred facilitating social connections in the community, efforts to reduce discrimination by building cultural competence in the community broadly and anti-racism actions, and having more cultural recreation, events, and programming.

Conclusions

The results of this study demonstrate that immigrants in Grey Bruce have had a wide variety of experiences, ranging from overwhelmingly positive to extremely challenging. Generally, the demographics of immigrants in Grey Bruce follow existing local and national trends, despite a lower (but increasing) proportion of immigrants in the population. Immigrants in Grey Bruce expressed both satisfaction and frustration with services available and the overall community, with those newer to the community more likely to experience challenges and discrimination than long-time residents. An avenue for future research may be to explore the barriers that prevent immigrants from accessing services, as well as some of the factors that lead to overwhelming 'Poor' ratings, particularly around housing, health care and mental health and wellbeing.