

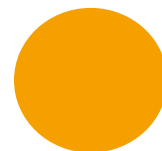
Newcomer Experiences
of Housing in

Huron & Perth

Complete report



Contents



03	Executive Summary
04	Background to the study
05	Introduction
06	Literature review
09	Research questions & Methodology
11	Description of Participants (Infographic)
12	Finding 1: Housing is just one part of the settlement experience
14	Finding 2: Affordable housing challenges
16	Finding 3: Stable housing
17	Finding 4: Housing adequacy
19	Finding 5: Housing conditions
20	Finding 6: Landlord-tenant relationships
21	Finding 7: Accessing housing information
23	Finding 8: Newcomers generally feel safe in their communities
24	Finding 9: Newcomers find the local residents helpful and friendly
25	Finding 10: People are unsure if they'll stay in the area
26	Limitations
27	Conclusion
28	References
31	Appendix A
33	Appendix B



Executive Summary

Understanding the housing needs of newcomers in Huron-Perth

As Canada's demographic landscape evolves, rural communities are seeing a growing influx of newcomers. This report delves into the unique housing experiences of these immigrants and refugees, shedding light on challenges and opportunities that often go overlooked. In order to foster inclusive growth and support sustainable rural development, understanding the specific needs of this group is not just important—it's essential.

This research specifically examines the housing experiences of immigrants and newcomers in rural and small-town Canada, with a focus on Huron and Perth counties. Forty immigrants and newcomers participated in focus groups held in Exeter, Goderich, Listowel, and St. Marys. Through these discussions, participants shared valuable insights on housing affordability, accessibility, and adequacy, as well as their challenges in accessing housing information and building connections within their communities. These conversations provide a deeper understanding of the unique hurdles newcomers face, offering critical data to inform future housing policies and community initiatives.

Key Findings:

- 1. Housing, Employment, and Transportation Interconnected:** Housing is part of a triangle of needs when newcomers arrive—linked to employment and transportation. Employment determines housing affordability, while transportation limits the geographic area where housing can be accessed.
- 2. Housing Affordability:** Many newcomers spend more than 30% of their income on rent, a national standard for affordability. Newcomers fleeing war, particularly those from Ukraine and Syria, report paying 40-80% of their income on housing. Those under the 30% threshold often share rent with roommates.
- 3. Barriers to Renting:** Renting a place is often difficult due to a lack of Canadian employment history and credit, which are required by many landlords for rental applications.
- 4. Temporary Housing Solutions:** Newcomers often rely on friends, family, employers and acquaintances for temporary housing when they first arrive, and many move more than once within the first five years as they search for affordable options.
- 5. Overcrowded Conditions:** Overcrowding is common, with children often sharing bedrooms, and in one instance, up to 10 adults lived together in a dwelling with only one bathroom.
- 6. Positive Landlord Relationships:** Many newcomers report having good relationships with their landlords, finding them responsive and supportive to their needs.
- 7. Housing Information Gaps:** To find housing, newcomers turn to family, friends, and digital platforms like Facebook Marketplace. Not one participant accessed public resources for housing information, highlighting the need for official information, particularly around tenant rights.
- 8. Appreciation for Small Communities:** Newcomers enjoy living in small or rural areas for the sense of safety, connection to nature, and slower pace of life compared to urban centers.

9. Supportive Community Bonds: Participants particularly valued the support from community members, such as receiving rides or celebrating holidays together, fostering a strong sense of belonging.

10. Challenges to Long-Term Settlement: Although many newcomers wish to stay, their ability to do so is often hindered by high housing costs, limited employment opportunities, and immigration policies, particularly for those on temporary permits.

These findings highlight the complex, multifaceted challenges newcomers face in securing stable housing in rural Canada. Understanding these issues is crucial for shaping policies that promote successful integration and the long-term sustainability of rural communities.

Background to the study

The Huron County Local Immigration Partnership's goal is to build a welcoming community where newcomers to Canada feel supported, have a sense of belonging and are integrated into all spheres of life.

Working with more than 20+ community partners, we are working to achieve our goal through four strategic priorities:

1. Encouraging collaboration among organizations and service providers to address newcomer challenges.
2. Strengthening the capacity of newcomer-serving organizations.
3. Building welcoming communities by supporting events and creating informational resources to support newcomer integration.
4. Conducting research to better understand the issues immigrants face in our communities.

After conducting a survey of immigrants in Huron-Perth in 2023, it became apparent that many newcomers struggle with finding affordable housing in our communities. That finding led to more questions about newcomer experiences of housing that could only be answered in a qualitative research project. In 2024, this research project investigating newcomer experiences of housing in rural and small communities was launched, with focus groups taking place in November 2024 and research analysis and report writing occurring

in the winter of 2025.

This research project was designed, implemented, analyzed and written by consultant Rana Telfah, PhD who specializes in immigrant experiences in small and rural communities. A research working group, with representatives from six community organizations and three municipalities, played a critical advisory role in research design and recruitment. The research project was funded with support from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, along with funds from the Huron County Economic Development Board, Perth County Economic Development and the Municipality of North Perth. A research ethics body, the Community Research Ethics Board reviewed and approved this project.

It's hoped the findings of this research will contribute to building knowledge about rural immigrant experiences and contribute to finding actionable solutions to address the unique challenges that newcomers in Huron and Perth face in relation to housing affordability, accessibility, and adequacy, along with accessing information about housing and feeling a sense of belonging in their community.

Introduction

Like many other groups, newcomers to Canada face challenges looking for housing in Huron and Perth. Yet, a unique set of circumstances challenge the about 1,900 newcomers who arrive in Huron and Perth each year (Statistics Canada, 2023a; Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2024a) in finding adequate, affordable and available housing.

Existing research highlights that newcomers arrive in Canadian communities with limited knowledge and information about housing markets and rental costs. For many newcomers settling in small and medium-sized communities, finding housing is more difficult than expected (Teixeira & Drolet, 2017). The affordability of housing is a primary concern, limiting the number of options available (Wayland, 2007; Wiginton, 2013; Brown, 2017). Few personal connections and a lack of adequate information about housing and tenant rights are also distinct challenges newcomers face (Brown, 2017). Limited English language skills may further compound the challenges newcomers face in accessing housing in Ontario (Wachsmuth, 2008). Further, newcomers often lack an established Canadian credit history, making it hard to meet landlord requirements to rent a place (Brown, 2017). As well, newcomers may also face discrimination based on ethnicity, cultural background, or immigration status that prevents them from accessing a place (Teixeira, 2009; Brown, 2017). For newcomers fleeing war and resettling in Canada, the challenges of finding adequate housing may be more pronounced (Oudshoorn et al., 2020; Telfah, 2023). Overall, newcomers face distinct barriers and require additional support to navigate the housing market in Canada.

The benefits of ensuring newcomers find appropriate housing as quickly as possible

are widely documented. When newcomers find safe, affordable and adequate housing, their integration and settlement into the community is expedited (Danso, 2001). Housing improves quality of life, affects health, allows social connections to be built, mediates community involvement, increases job opportunities, and impacts overall well-being (Hiebert et al., 2006). After securing a place to live, newcomers can more easily pursue employment or training (Danso, 2001; Wiginton, 2013). Further, housing allows newcomers easier access to community support services (Carter & Polevychok, 2004). Housing also enables newcomers to begin establishing a network of support in their new community, ultimately leading to feeling a sense of belonging and integration (Bushell & Shields, 2018). Simply put, when housing is sorted out, newcomers' settlement experiences improve.





Like many other rural and small communities in Canada, Huron and Perth Counties are looking towards welcoming immigrants and newcomers as a key strategy to maintain economic and social vibrancy. Huron and Perth counties cover 5,600 km² in southern Ontario, and have a population of 143,000 (United Way Perth-Huron, 2023). The majority of the population are rural or small-town residents, with agriculture being the area's leading industry. Aligning with other rural regions in Ontario, just over eight percent of Huron and Perth's population are immigrants (Statistics Canada, 2023; Ontario, 2024). Ensuring newcomers have the best opportunities to succeed in these communities requires a multi-faceted approach, including a better understanding of their housing experiences, which can support immigrant attraction and retention (Esses et al., 2023).

This research project aimed to better understand the housing experiences of newcomers in Huron and Perth. In 2023, nearly one in three (29%) immigrants and newcomers who lived in the region reported that they were challenged by finding affordable housing in the past year (Nonkes et al., 2024). To better understand these housing challenges, focus groups were organized in Goderich, Exeter, Listowel, and

1. Newcomers is a term that applies to anyone born outside of the country and has resided in Canada for five years or less and intends to stay (Caidi & Allard, 2005; Wayland, 2007).

St. Marys. Through group discussions with 40 newcomers, the adequacy, accessibility, and affordability of housing for immigrant families were examined. The study also assessed how well housing information is communicated to newcomers and evaluated the impact of housing experiences on their sense of belonging in the community. This report examines an existing literature review

that explores the importance of housing in the immigrant experience. Next, it describes the research methodology and presents the key findings and discussion. Ultimately, this report aims to increase understanding of the housing challenges faced by newcomers in Huron and Perth, providing insights to improve the housing experience and support their integration into the community.

Newcomers by County, temporary/permanent status	Number of People
Newly arrived permanent residents - Perth (2019-2023)	 1,105
Newly arrived permanent residents - Huron (2019-2023)	 405
Temporary work or study permits issued - Perth (2022-2023)	 1,550
Temporary work or study permits issued - Huron (2022-2023)	 1,860

data sources: (IRCC, 2024a; IRCC, 2024b)

Literature review

Newcomer settlement and integration

“The settlement and integration of immigrants are complex and multifaceted” (Kaushik & Drolet, 2018). Settlement is a process that individuals go through in unique ways according to their experiences and needs. It is a continuum involving adjustment, adaptation, and integration into a new society (Bucklaschuk, 2008).

Settlement involves three general stages, with housing embedded throughout it. The first step requires newcomers' immediate needs for information, referrals, language, and shelter to be met. The intermediate step entails placing newcomers with suitable jobs, housing, and schooling. In the third step, newcomers gain some sense of belonging in society (Bushell & Shields, 2018). When immigrants become productive members and develop close relations with society, they are considered to be integrated into the new country (Li, 2003).

Other scholars conceptualize integration as a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Ager and Strang (2008) consider integration as comprising four main areas:

1. Economic, social, and cultural integration
2. Social connections
3. Other factors that help integration (like language and cultural knowledge; safety and stability)
4. Foundations (such as rights and citizenship) that make it possible for newcomers to fit in.

The indicators of adequate housing include the physical size, quality, housing facilities, and the financial security of tenants and, where appropriate, ownership (Ager & Stranq, 2008).

Additional key housing indicators cover various aspects of affordability, availability, quality, and access. Esses et al. (2023) define the four areas with affordability measured by the percentage of before-tax household income

spent on housing, ideally less than 30%. Availability includes subsidized, non-profit, and co-op housing. Housing quality ensures that no significant repairs are needed and that there are no infestations, and that there is no overcrowding. Access refers to the vacancy of suitable rental properties or homes for purchase that are transit-accessible and adequately sized. Another key measure is evidence of discrimination in acquiring or living in housing from property managers, landlords, or real estate agents. Finally, the availability of reliable information about the housing market and tenants' rights and responsibilities is crucial (Esses et al., 2023).

Housing discrimination is an unjust social phenomenon wherein families or individuals are subjected to unfair treatment when attempting to find or retain housing based on their socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or social class (Mensah & Tucker-Simmons, 2021). Housing discrimination encompasses more than just unequal access to housing in a specific building or area; it also includes biased treatment in maintaining housing. It has both exclusionary and non-exclusionary aspects. Housing discrimination is prevalent in Canada, particularly among racialized individuals (Wilkinson et al., 2016; Li & Sah, 2019; Mensah & Tucker-Simmons, 2021; Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022). Huron and Perth's discrimination survey found that 31% of the 295 immigrants and visible minorities polled said they experienced discrimination during the past three years when looking for a place to live, in comparison to 15% of white-non-immigrants (Lapshina & Essess, 2021 p.39).

In summary, the settlement and integration of newcomers are influenced by various interrelated factors, including housing. Housing experiences encompass key indicators of affordability, availability, quality, and access. The following section discusses the attraction and retention of newcomers in rural communities and housing as a part of the larger settlement experiences.

Rural Ontario

Immigrant attraction to small communities is a growing reality in Canada due to the

recent regionalization, "marketization," and decentralization of immigration policy (Wiginton, 2013). Seven challenges emanating from immigrant attraction to small communities are identified:

1. Access to appropriate housing
2. Suitable employment
3. Transportation systems
4. Settlement services
5. Cultural amenities
6. Diversity in the school system
7. Community tolerance

In addition, immigrants and visible minorities often encounter discrimination on an individual basis and face unequal access to employment, housing, education, and public services on a systemic level. These disparities are often rooted in factors such as ethnicity, race, and religion, which typically do not disadvantage their native-born White counterparts (Lapshina & Essess, 2021). It is important to note that rural communities are very diverse, and each area faces unique challenges depending on its population size, distance from metropolitan centres, etc. (Lauzon et al., 2015). Existing research highlights some of the challenges immigrants face when they arrive in rural communities. These include inadequate public transportation systems, unsuitable employment for spouses, a lack of cultural amenities, and inappropriate housing (Wiginton, 2013; Aurora, 2017; Beattie, 2009).

Housing as part of a larger settlement experience

Recognizing that immigrants have complex, varied, and sometimes unpredictable needs is crucial. While attracting newcomers is essential for a successful immigration strategy, retaining them is just as vital. Aside from finding accessible and affordable housing, researchers have found that immigrants decide to stay in a community if a multiplicity of factors are in place. These include:

1. Job opportunities with a sufficient income (Carter et al., 2008; Teixeira, 2009; Depner & Teixeira, 2012)
2. Accessible and affordable transportation (Depner & Teixeira, 2012)

3. Access to education (Teixeira, 2009; Depner & Teixeira, 2012)
4. Language training (Carter et al., 2008; Lam, 2019)
5. Appropriate health care assistance (Carter et al., 2008)
6. Social programs and social support (Carter et al., 2008; Teixeira, 2009; Depner & Teixeira, 2012)
7. Cultural activities (Carter et al., 2008; Teixeira, 2009; Depner & Teixeira, 2012)
8. Family and community connections (Carter et al., 2008)
9. Settlement support (Carter et al., 2008)

The housing situation significantly affects newcomers' ability to adapt to a new society. Housing shortages continue to be a barrier in small communities (Carter et al., 2008). Access to adequate and appropriate housing with housing stability is crucial for new immigrants to integrate into a new society. Quality housing shortens the resettlement period for immigrants and decreases long-term costs to society in areas such as health, education, social assistance, and employment insurance (Hadi & Labonté, 2011).

Institutional and systemic obstacles to finding adequate housing differ in across various immigrant groups and regional contexts, especially given the evolving immigrant settlement patterns (Esses et al., 2023). Meeting the housing needs of immigrants in small and rural communities can enhance regionalization policies designed to attract and retain immigrants, thereby addressing skill shortages and revitalizing the economic population (Esses et al., 2023). However, relatively little is known about the settlement experiences of immigrants in small and mid-sized Canadian cities, including their access to local services as well as their housing experiences and outcomes—both crucial factors for successful integration (Teixeira & Drolet, 2018). According to Teixeira and Drolet (2018), “The local, regional and provincial contexts vary widely (rural, semi-urban,

second-tier cities, provinces with declining demographics, minority communities) and must be analyzed in light of their specific and complex features” (p.166). This research aims to address some of the gaps and provide a contextualized understanding of newcomers' housing experiences in rural and small-town Ontario.

Regarding attracting newcomers, Huron and Perth Counties are comparable to rural Canada. In small communities, housing of newcomers poses a significant barrier to immigrant settlement (Wiginton, 2013; Danso, 2001). The availability of small-unit rental housing is a challenge as small communities are generally dominated by single-family housing. Moreover, when large families relocate to small communities, such as refugee families, they encounter significant challenges in finding rental housing that meets their needs and accommodates their family size (Telfah, 2023). Having an appropriate, affordable place to live is crucial not only for its own sake but because it is one of the most critical components of integration – it enables a new resident to pursue other matters, such as training and employment (Wiginton, 2013; Danso, 2001).

In communities where semi-skilled work or connections to relatives drive migration, new immigrants typically experience modest earnings or underemployment. For example, according to a recent immigrant survey that examined the experiences, challenges, and various strengths that newcomers bring to Huron-Perth, as well as their recommendations for how to enhance settlement and integration, just 39% of respondents said their work matched their professional experiences (Nonkes et al., 2024). Even when considering highly qualified immigrants who earn greater wages, economic immigrants frequently arrive without their families and subsequently join them later, where they need to rent temporary small units (Wiginton, 2013). Employment affects access to housing and is critical to newcomers' settlement experiences in Canada.

Research goal

This research study explored the housing experiences of immigrants and newcomers in Huron and Perth Counties. It took a qualitative approach by using focus group discussions to understand newcomers' housing experiences in Huron and Perth Counties.

The study objectives were as follows:

1. **To determine whether housing was adequate, accessible, and affordable for immigrant and newcomer families in Huron and Perth counties** (*See Appendix B for research questions asked*).
2. **To determine whether housing information and resources about the housing market are provided to immigrants and newcomers in Huron and Perth counties.**
3. **To determine whether the housing experiences of immigrants and newcomers have increased their feelings of belonging and being part of the community.**

Methodology

The movement of immigrants and newcomers in southwestern Ontario, including Huron, Perth and other areas, highlights the need to understand the challenges they face when settling into rural and small communities, especially in relation to housing.

This research aimed to directly benefit immigrants, newcomers, residents of southwestern Ontario, rural municipalities, and provincial government/policymakers. By gathering the perspectives of immigrants and newcomers, this study sought to contribute valuable insights into their housing challenges.

The findings may be instrumental in informing policymakers and driving policy changes that address the specific housing needs of immigrants and newcomers in rural areas, ultimately facilitating their long-term integration into rural Ontario. Furthermore, this research may align with Canada's current governmental interest in regional development.

This study intended to investigate the housing

experiences of newcomers recently resettled in Huron and Perth counties. The Huron County Local Immigration Partnership led this project in collaboration with various affiliated partners and organizations, which included the Social Research and Planning Council, United Way Perth Huron; Settlement Services, YMCA Southwestern Ontario; Avon Maitland District School Board; Fanshawe College; Perth County Economic Development; Huron County Economic Development Board; Huron Newcomer Support Association, Huron County Library, and North Perth Library. This study was supported by funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

This project was reviewed and approved by the Community Research Ethics Board to ensure it was ethically sound and did not unintentionally cause harm, along with verifying that the research would benefit diverse communities.

Study design

This qualitative study involved focus group discussions to explore newcomers' housing experiences in Huron and Perth counties. Focus groups are particularly effective in capturing the diverse perspectives within a population (Mack et al., 2011). Focus groups are typically used

to create a complete picture of how a given issue affects a broader group of people. Focus groups contribute to a broad understanding by providing data on social and cultural norms, the pervasiveness of these norms within the community, and people's opinions about their values (Mack et al., 2011). The richness of data from focus groups arises from the group dynamic and the diversity of the participants. Participants influence each other through their presence and their reactions and build off the comments of others. Due to variations in age, gender, education, access to resources, and other factors, not everyone has the same viewpoints and experiences. Therefore, participants are expected to express a wide range of perspectives (Mack et al., 2011).

In this study, purposive sampling was used to select participants who shared their experiences of early settlement in their communities and the challenges they faced in finding housing. This study focus group locations were in the communities of Goderich, Exeter, Listowel, and St. Marys. The group discussions included open-ended questions to determine whether housing is adequate, accessible, and affordable for immigrant and newcomer families in Huron and Perth counties. Additionally, it aimed to assess how housing information and resources regarding the housing market is used by immigrants and newcomers in these areas. Finally, it sought to evaluate whether the housing experiences of immigrants and newcomers have enhanced their feelings of belonging and their sense of belonging in the community (*Appendix B*).

Recruitment of participants

Since Local Immigration Partnerships and affiliated organizations do not have lists of recent immigrants to Huron and Perth counties, the study was promoted by preparing English, Spanish, Ukrainian and Arabic advertisements. The Local Immigration Partnership outreach officer emailed newcomer-serving organizations in the area with information about the research project, who shared information with their clients. Additionally, information was shared on different venues such as the Facebook platform, in English language conversation circles, and with established immigrants to

help recruit individuals. Additionally, it was shared with school board contacts.

A poster with project details and an email were distributed to community libraries in Perth and Huron communities. It included a link to the study webpage and a Qualtrics survey to assess eligibility, obtain consent, and allow anonymous use of quotes. The survey also gathered participants' contact info, country of birth, nearest town, year of arrival in Canada, translation needs, and preferred focus group.

Inclusion/exclusion criteria

The criteria specified that participants had to be adults over 18 years old and have been in Canada and reside in Huron and Perth counties. To ensure that newcomer voices were heard, the research explicitly included people who had arrived in Canada from 2018 onward. To ensure that the research captured the experiences of people in rural areas, people who lived in communities of less than 10,000 were included.

A total of 279 responses were gathered from various communities, showcasing a range of backgrounds and experiences. Requests via email and phone call were extended to 63 people to take part in the in-person research. In total, 40 people across the four locations took part.

Data collection

Data for this study were collected during November 2024 through five focus group discussions with immigrants, refugees, and temporary workers who had arrived in their communities within the past three years. These five focus groups were conducted in four locations across Huron and Perth counties. The data collection lasted from November 1 to 30, 2024. Each focus group session was held in community public libraries from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. At the start of each focus group, participants completed a brief survey that gathered demographic information, including their year of arrival in the community. Notes were captured by transcribers on the research team. While most of the focus groups were conducted in English, Ukrainian, Arabic and Spanish translators were brought in to assist in two locations.

Description of Participants

40 people participated in focus groups

17 Listowel 8 St. Marys
10 Goderich 5 Exeter

63% female 38% male

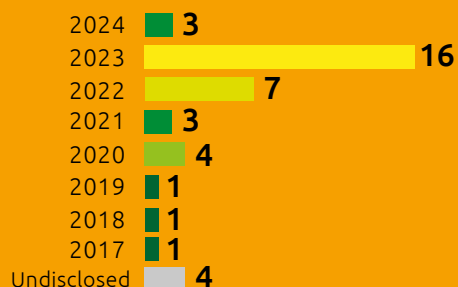
Country of origin

15 - Ukraine 3 - India
5 - Philippines 2 - Guatemala
5 - Mexico 1 - Iran
4 - Syria 1 - Russia
3 - Ghana 1 - Ivory Coast



Age groups

Year arrived in Canada



31 Participants who live with children in their home

All participants rented either in



Number of people who participants live with in their home



Finding 1:

Housing is just one part of the settlement experience

During the focus groups, participants quickly quantified that housing was just one piece of their settlement experience, and highlighted how housing was intrinsically linked to employment, transportation, English language acquisition, education, along with other key factors.

Employment and housing

A total of 23 participants highlighted how employment impacted their housing experience, with eight in Goderich, six in Listowel, five in St. Marys and four in Exeter mentioning how work impacted their housing options. Contrary to earlier research that housing provided an anchor for newcomers to look for work (Wiginton, 2013; Danso, 2001), many participants in this project highlighted how employment enabled them to find housing. Participants mentioned that they were hesitant to sign a one-year rental agreement without a job, as emphasized in this comment by a Goderich participant: "Rent is at least for one year, but we have a fear about that because how can I rent if I do not have a job that's good? In a small town, there's not so many choices of where to work." Wages and the number of hours defined what a newcomer could afford and what was available in terms of housing in their community. For instance, an Exeter participant highlighted their precarious temporary employment and how that limited their ability to cover rent expenses: "I started working in June, but they do not give me the opportunity to work a lot. They gave me four hours a week. Where do I have money to pay for rent? How can I buy food? And this continued in July, August, and September. In October, someone became sick, and I was called to come to help. And after that, they invited me to work more and more. So, for four months, I was so, yes, this was a job, but it was not a job, and it was a barrier to finding a new residence." As such, housing and employment cannot be looked at separately; the two factors are interconnected.

Transportation and housing

Transportation was also identified as a key consideration in relation to housing. Fifteen participants (five in Listowel, four in Goderich, three in Exeter, and three in St. Marys) highlighted how transportation was a barrier in their community and limited housing options. Participants flagged that buying a car was not a priority during their early years in Canada, as the cost of the vehicle, parking, and insurance was deemed expensive when they had little income. The lack of a vehicle and limited public transportation options limited housing options. A Goderich participant illustrated the challenge: "Since I do not drive, I cannot move around easily. After searching, I found a one-bedroom apartment in Goderich that cost \$1,400. As a foreign worker with a limited salary, that is just too much for me. Thankfully, a family offered a room in their home which is much more affordable than the other places in Goderich. While renting in the town itself is expensive, options outside of it are significantly cheaper and more reasonable." A Listowel participant echoed the challenge of transportation in the community and how it limited his satisfaction in the community: "If you do not have transport, you're always restricted. You cannot go anywhere, because once you go, you miss the bus and you cannot cough out about \$100 to get to transportation. That is a major issue here." As this illustrates for the participants, transportation is connected to their housing and overall community experience.

English language acquisition and housing

Many newcomers also perceived that the acquisition of English was also a key component that impacted housing and their plans to stay in the community. Seven participants (three in St. Marys, two in Exeter, and two in Goderich) mentioned fluency in English as impacting their lives and housing experiences. A St. Marys participant from Ukraine highlighted how

English, employment and housing were linked: “I am still living with my daughter. And I came here because of my daughter. But I want to live separately. And I want to work and let the young family live on their own. So, I’m now looking for a job, but the problem is my English. I have trouble to learn English and to find a job, I need English...I don’t know a lot of English, so I don’t have language, and because of language, it’s hard to find a job, and because of no job, it’s hard to find separate housing.” Another St. Marys participant stated that due to her limited English skills, she was unable to work in her profession from her home country, where she worked as a pharmacist, leading her to take work in a job that had low pay. With the need to work to meet the financial demands, participants mentioned they had little time to take formal English language classes.

Education and housing

Another important consideration in relation to housing was schools, particularly among participants with children. The importance of having a place to live within walking distance to schools was viewed as a positive factor for six participants (two in Goderich, two in Listowel, one in St. Marys and one in Exeter). The relationships that children were creating with their classmates were also viewed as important factors that anchored participants’ desire to remain in the community.

Other key community features

Other factors mentioned during the focus groups that impacted housing and a newcomer’s desire to stay within a community included access to family doctors and the local hospital, applicable programs at the community library, and the proximity of

grocery stores.

It is clear that newcomer housing experiences cannot simply be viewed in isolation but in relation to other available community infrastructure and programs that support newcomers to Canada. The insight from the Huron and Perth participants about housing being connected to other core welcoming features in a community is reflective of the work by Victoria Esses et al. (2023), who identifies 19 key characteristics of welcoming communities that included housing, employment, access to public transportation, education, opportunities to learn an official language and more. Like Esses et al.’s research, participants in these focus groups highlighted how different characteristics mutually reinforced and interacted with one another, impacting newcomers’ settlement. When developing an understanding of newcomer housing experiences, it must be done with a broad understanding of the spectrum of community infrastructure that aids in newcomer settlement.

The insight from the Huron and Perth participants about housing being connected to other core welcoming features in a community is reflective of the work by Victoria Esses et al. (2023), who identifies 19 key characteristics of welcoming communities that included housing, employment, access to public transportation, education, opportunities to learn an official language and more. Like Esses et al.’s research, participants in these focus groups highlighted how different characteristics mutually reinforced and interacted with one another, impacting newcomers settlement. When developing an understanding of newcomer housing experiences, it must be done with a broad understanding of the spectrum of community infrastructure that aids in newcomer settlement.

Finding 2:

Affordable housing challenges

One of the most crucial elements in assisting newcomers integrating into a new society is secure, inexpensive, and suitable housing, which assists in accessing various formal and informal services and building social connections. In this study, participants were asked, “How much of the monthly income is paid for rent?”

Indicated that they pay more than **30%** of their income on rent



19
out of **40** Participants

A total of 19 participants from four communities indicated that they pay more than 30% of their income on rent. This includes five participants in Exeter, six in Listowel, five in Goderich, and three in St. Marys who reported the same. The 47.5% in this study who reported unaffordable housing is dramatically higher than data from Statistics Canada which reported that 31.2% of renters in Huron County and 32.9% of renters in Perth County spend more than 30% of their income on housing (Statistics Canada, 2023b).

Housing unaffordability impacts people fleeing war the most

Participants from Ukraine and Syria indicated they dedicate 40% to 80% of their income to rent, marking the highest proportion among newcomers. For example, an Exeter participant shared that “60% of my income goes to rent. It varies depending on how many hours I worked in the previous month.” Meanwhile, a Goderich participant noted that she spends about 80% of her income on housing, leaving her with just \$200 monthly. These findings align with a report on displaced Ukrainian, Afghan and Syrian refugees in Vancouver Island. Most participants spend over 70% of their income on rent, with another quarter spending 30% to 50%, exceeding the recommended 30% before-tax income (Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria, 2024, P.14).

Refugee participants noted that they arrived

in Canada unprepared. Upon arrival, they encountered significant challenges, particularly in their employment search; many struggled to navigate the job market without relevant work experience or professional connections.

Lack of credit history a barrier to housing

Moreover, the lack of a credit history further complicated their ability to find suitable accommodations, especially given the high cost of living and steep rental prices in many areas. As new arrivals to Canada, they emphasized the importance of having a guarantor for the rental process. They also pointed out the essential support provided by Canadian friends who can guide them through these early challenges. This network not only aided in finding housing but also smoothed their integration into the community. A Goderich participant recounted her journey of arriving in her community with her son and highlighted their challenges: “I find a job, then I find the apartment, and then they ask where is your credit history?”

Lengthy wait times after applying to rent

Furthermore, a key concern raised by participants was the lengthy waiting list for rental properties, which kept them waiting between two and four months, after which they were either accepted or refused. As newcomers,

they are often refused because they are still seeking employment. For instance, a Goderich participant described her housing experiences as “tough” and added, “You must submit an application, and to do so, you must have the necessary funds. Additionally, you are placed on a waiting list, and many people are ahead of you waiting for interviews.” Similarly, an Exeter participant shared, “We must fill out a form. The questions are: What is your job and salary? As a beginning worker, if I need to write that I do not have a job, they will not rent to me.” This closely parallels insight from nearby Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership (2016) results, revealing that low-income individuals, especially immigrants and refugees, faced significant barriers to affordable housing. The main difficulties comprised high rental costs, long waitlists, and lack of housing. Moreover, immigrants and refugees frequently lack credit history or social support and networks to act as a reference or a co-signer for documents; on the other hand, social supports that are available or do exist are generally not intensive or stable (Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership, 2016).

Larger families struggle to find places to rent

The group discussions revealed that participants with large families mainly lived under financial constraints and faced difficulties making ends meet. A St. Marys participant described her situation as “scary,” emphasizing the pressure not to miss a single day of work, even if rent is affordable. She said, “Your employment is crucial because houses are relatively affordable overall, but it is frightening. You cannot afford to miss work—even if you are sick, you have to go. Missing even one payment can lead to struggles with paying bills.” In the Waterloo Region study, inadequate housing conditions

were highlighted as a compelling reason immigrants and refugees relied on government support, such as the Child Tax Benefit, to improve their living situations (Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership, 2016). Additionally, families dependent on government support or sponsorships still encountered difficulties with rental costs. A Listowel participant reported that of their \$2,000 monthly rent, her family received \$1,200 in assistance, requiring extra funds to cover costs.

Sharing a place a cost-saving strategy

However, in this study, eight participants reported allocating 20% to 30% of their income to rent, primarily due to living in shared houses or rooms with multiple roommates. Specifically, three individuals were based in Goderich, while five were in Listowel. They shared that they relocated to these communities for work opportunities, predominantly from India, Ghana, Mexico, Guatemala, and the Philippines. These participants effectively reduced their housing expenses by sharing accommodations, with rent typically accounting for 20% to 30% of their income.

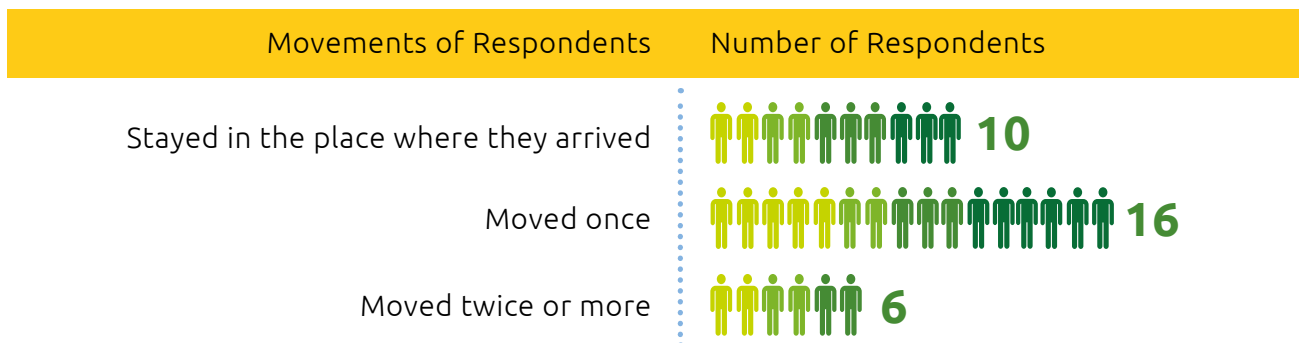
Employers who assist with finding a place to live reduce stress

Additionally, a couple in Goderich paid less than 30% of their combined income on housing. The discussions revealed differences in the employment types among participants and the associated benefits, especially concerning housing. Three participants who relocated to Goderich felt fortunate that their employment benefits fully covered their housing costs, as they moved there for appealing job prospects. In contrast, other participants working in low-paying or seasonal jobs found it challenging to meet their rent obligations.

Finding 3:

Stable housing

Housing stability refers to accessing a reliable, secure, reasonably priced, and suitable living environment. The number of moves a family must take is one of the most commonly used indicators of housing instability (Frederick et al., 2014).



In this study, we aimed to assess participants' stability within their communities during group discussions. To do this, we included questions such as "How long did it take you to find a house?" and "How often have you moved since arriving in Canada?"

Two or three months required to find a place to live

In total, 13 participants from four communities responded that the time required to secure rental housing varied between three days and two months. During this period, many relied on temporary arrangements, such as staying with friends or host families or, in some instances, leaving the country temporarily and returning once suitable housing was obtained. According to Frederick et al. (2014), individuals who stay in shelters, group homes, or with friends are classified as unstable; living with family or independently is generally considered a sign of stability. That phenomenon was described in both Huron and Perth Counties. For instance, a Listowel participant revealed that he stayed with a friend for two weeks while searching for rental accommodation. He shared, "I was in Quebec for seven months. I received assistance from a friend via Facebook and stayed with a friend for two weeks. I have now been in Listowel for seven months."

20% remained in the first place they found upon arriving in Huron-Perth

In this study, 10 participants from four communities reported achieving housing stability since moving to Canada, indicating that they have not moved again since settling into their communities. This group included four participants in Listowel, one in Exeter, four in Goderich, and one in St. Marys. These participants settled with ease and have been in their communities for up to two years, such as when an Exeter participant moved to the area and lived in employer-provided housing for over two years without any changes. She reported, "I moved to Canada over two years ago since I am single; before I came to Canada, I found a job with an employer who provided me with an apartment."

Additionally, participants highlighted that moving in with relatives or getting help from a sponsoring group helped them settle down in their community, including an engaged couple who moved from Mississauga to Listowel in a relative's house. Moreover, two families who escaped war and relocated to different areas—Goderich and Listowel—secured housing through their sponsoring groups. However, these experiences significantly differed from another 16 individuals who moved at least once.

40% moved once after arriving in Huron-Perth

The 16 participants who moved once after arriving included three participants from St. Marys, four in Goderich, four in Exeter, and five in Listowel. Upon arriving in these communities, they faced challenges in finding suitable and affordable housing. Initially, these participants relied on host families or friends until they could secure permanent rentals. In St. Marys, for instance, it was common for Ukrainian families to reside with their host families while searching for their own homes. One St. Marys participant recounted her experience: “We stayed with a wonderful host family for several months while I searched for an apartment. I found a lovely apartment in a beautiful, expensive building.”

People fleeing war more likely to move twice or more

Furthermore, six participants demonstrated significant housing instability, having

relocated twice between residences—two in Listowel, two in Goderich, one in Exeter, and one in St. Marys. These frequent moves may indicate an underlying challenge where landlords requested them to vacate. This was particularly evident for Ukrainian and Syrian participants escaping war who faced these challenges in St. Marys and Listowel communities, where both women have large families. For instance, the St. Marys participant has a family of five. She transitioned from living with a host family to securing a house two years ago, only to relocate again due to her landlord selling the property.

Overall, the housing stability observed among participants highlights the significance of access to affordable, stable housing in fostering successful settlement. Participants with fewer moves likely experience smoother transitions into their new communities, while those with frequent relocations may face additional barriers to integration. We suggest that addressing these housing challenges is key to improving settlement outcomes.

Finding 4:

Housing adequacy

For many newcomers, securing appropriate and adequate housing is the first essential step toward settlement (Sherrell et al., 2007).

This study aimed to assess the adequacy of housing; participants were asked, “To what extent is the house’s physical size (family size to room number) suitable for their families?”

Housing viewed as suitable when enough bedrooms are available

In response to this question, only six participants from four communities indicated that their living arrangements were adequate based on the size of their house relative to their family sizes. This includes two participants in Goderich, three participants in

Listowel, and one participant in St. Marys. Those participants have small families and moved into two- or three-bedroom apartments; they also included a Goderich female participant who lives in a two-bedroom apartment with her son and husband.

Overcrowding reported

However, two participants from Goderich and Listowel, primarily from Ukraine and Syria, indicated that their apartments or houses were inadequate for their family size, resulting in overcrowding. These participants have between

Participants from four communities that moved into shared houses or rooms

 7 Single  4 Couples  2 Families

three and five children, aged from a few years up to 20, and reported that all their children share a single bedroom. Inadequate dwelling size is one of the main barriers that families fleeing war encounter in their quest for suitable and stable housing (Rabiah-Mohammed et al., 2022; Rose, 2019). This suggests that finding safe and affordable housing in Canada poses challenges that differ among populations and are particularly difficult for refugees and people fleeing war compared to other groups (Murdie, 2008).

Furthermore, the federal housing agency recognized that finding suitable rental housing for families with four or more children in Canada is a significant challenge, negatively impacting immigrant families (Rose, 2019). A Listowel participant explained that the current living situation created challenges for her older children, mainly because she has a daughter who requires her own space and privacy. Unfortunately, searching for a larger house is not an option for their family because of the cost of rentals in their community.

Shared living situations vary

Another finding from the study indicated that a total of 13 participants from four communities had moved into shared houses or rooms. Out of thirteen, there were seven single participants in Goderich and Listowel, four couples in Goderich, Listowel and Exeter, and two families with children in St. Marys. During the discussions, single participants mainly noted that this arrangement was adequate, particularly those who lived in a house or room with a relative. However, another male participant had a different experience and revealed that living in a shared house with a stranger was inadequate because he needed his privacy; he shared, "I live in an apartment. It is a one-bedroom, and I shared it with a colleague. But I need my room. I need my privacy and also thinking about the possibility of disease with COVID; we do not know what will happen next or

influenza, so it is suitable if I have my room."

Privacy was a concern for this participant, and his fear of transmitted diseases was causing him dissatisfaction with his living situation.

In addition, during group discussions, participants highlighted the issue of shared bathrooms while living in shared houses/rooms. For example, one Listowel participant stated that she used to share an apartment where 10 people shared one bathroom. Moreover, there were families with children and people who did shiftwork. All of these people used only one bathroom. She noted that this living arrangement was inadequate.

During discussions, families with children expressed a different perspective on shared housing and felt dissatisfied with the arrangement yet forced to share with other families due to financial constraints. Two female participants and their families shared a house with another family. This included two participants in St. Mary's who expressed unhappiness with this arrangement but could not afford to rent a house. One participant revealed that her children were a noise source that disrupted her Canadian neighbours. She reported, "I live upstairs, and the Canadian couple lives downstairs. I have two kids, and they are very loud, and I have to hide some of the toys. My neighbours say it is pretty loud, the kids. Moreover, a woman and her boyfriend are very quiet." She added, "One time she said, it is pretty loud, please. But what can I do? Sorry, I cannot pay for my own house or townhouse."

Therefore, shared housing can be a cost-effective strategy; however, it is not always adequate due to family size or personal preferences. This finding is supported by Oudshoorn et al. (2020), who found that the primary barriers newcomer families face when seeking suitable and stable housing include limited employment options, lack of affordable housing, reduced quality of residential homes, unsafe conditions, and inadequate living spaces.

Finding 5:

Housing conditions

During discussions, maintenance was a key topic. Participants were asked, “Are there any necessary repairs for your home or apartment?”

In response, they highlighted differences in housing conditions, landlord responsiveness, and individual approaches to managing repairs.

The joy of problem-free buildings

During the discussions, seven participants reported that they moved into houses that were in good condition and renovated. This includes three participants in Listowel, two in Exeter, and two in Goderich. The two in Goderich, a couple, noted, “It is actually a very lovely house. It is an old house.” His wife added, “The quality of the house from 100 years ago is very good because everything still works.” Finally, four Listowel participants and one St. Marys expressed satisfaction with their newly constructed housing. They described their homes as new and free of issues. A St. Marys participant shared that they had moved into a brand-new apartment and had waited a few months for construction to be finalized.

The challenge of an old building

A total of four participants from four communities indicated challenges related to older properties. This included two participants in Exeter and two in Listowel. Additionally, a participant in Exeter and another in Listowel reported issues, including plumbing, sinks, and general wear and tear. An Exeter participant shared her housing experiences with her previous and current residences with old and needed renovations and maintenance. She described her former residence as being quite old, remarking, “The previous house had a carpet from the 60s. Our current place only has a dehumidifier, and half the ceiling in the basement is missing, but that is okay. It accommodates all of us and is newer than the previous place. I love everything

about it. I am so happy we have a place to live.” Despite challenges, participants said that many problems are eventually resolved, often due to landlords or management companies providing maintenance services.

Repair delays

However, delays in addressing issues were occasionally noted due to the high workloads of maintenance teams, as an Exeter participant addressed, “I had problems with pipes, with the sink, with neighbours and everything, and I was patient and tolerant and nice.” Moreover, she added, “With all the issues and troubles I had, we eventually solved them because it is a big company. They have lots of buildings in London as well. So, they have lots of work, and many people have plumbing, electricians, and everything. Sometimes, they cannot send it immediately, like the next day, depending on how bad the situation is.”




Laundry concerns

In addition, participants articulated their concerns regarding the shared laundry within their buildings. Participants from Listowel faced difficulties accessing the laundry room in their buildings. Additionally, some expressed discontent with the unavailability of a laundry room, while others noted the malfunctioning washing machines. Furthermore, they mentioned paying for laundry services, adding to their monthly expenses. A Listowel participant shared her dissatisfaction and unhappiness with the shared laundry in her building, citing a lack of privacy, high costs, and inadequate accommodation for her needs as a large family, which includes five children. She stated she needed to do laundry continuously, making the shared laundry room impractical.



Finding 6:

Landlord-tenant relationships

Relationship of respondents with their landlords	Number of Respondents
The landlord is good and responsive	 12
The landlord is slow to respond and has limited interaction with the landlord	 2
The landlord is unfair	 3

During group discussions, participants were asked, “Who deals with the landlord?” and “Can you describe your relationship with him/her?”. The table below summarizes respondents’ relationship with landlords.

Responsiveness an indicator of a positive landlord-newcomer relationship

In this study, 12 participants from four communities indicated that their landlords responded to their needs and maintained good relationships with them. They included three participants in Exeter, seven participants in Listowel, and two participants in St. Marys. An Exeter participant described her relationship with both her current and former landlord, praising her current landlord’s quick responsiveness and the provision of tools within minutes. She described her landlord’s response, “Immediately! I asked him for rakes because there were many leaves in the backyard. Yeah, in 20 minutes, he brought me two like we all. I can text him, and he is going to be answering. So it is, like, perfect.” Moreover, a Listowel participant revealed a positive relationship with his former landlord and said, “We have a good relationship. We are even returning to a former landlord, the place we had when we first moved to Canada.”

Nonetheless, two Exeter and Listowel participants experienced repair delays, which they attributed to a forgetful superintendent and limited personal interaction with their landlords. An Exeter participant stated during discussions, “I have not seen the landlord.

I managed to speak with the superintendent and the real estate broker; however, she is responsible for several houses, so she often forgets things. As a result, you might have to wait two weeks for a repair...That is just how she is — she tends to forget everything.” Another Goderich participant shared, “When I moved in last September, I had an issue with my kitchen window; I could not shut it and had to go outside to close it. I informed my landlord, and he said it could wait. I understand, but there are so many things I am just waiting on.” She also added, “Landlords do not like to deal with immigrants. They often say there is nothing they can do for us.”

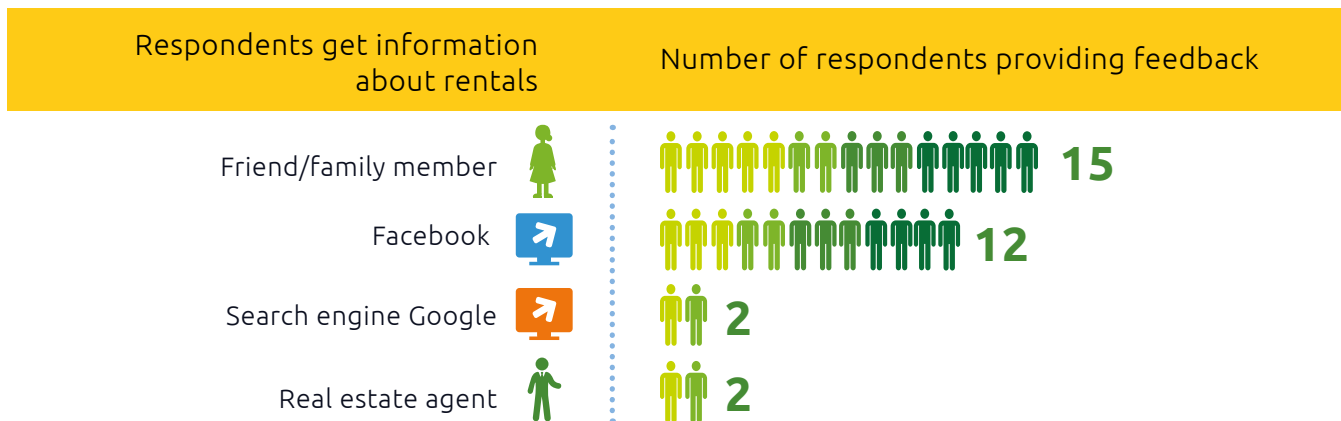
Some instances of unfair treatment

Furthermore, three participants, two in Goderich and one in Listowel, experienced unfair treatment as landlords were reluctant to rent to newcomers. A Goderich participant recounted her experience, “My husband found a room in a house and he paid the first and the end of the rent. After two days they called my husband and said just you are welcome in there (not me or my child). They said ‘We are not sure you can afford this or manage all of the costs’. So we couldn’t rent the house, even though my husband offered to pay for six months of the rent.” Two other participants stated they were told by their landlord that their spouse could not move in, forcing them to find another place to live. Newcomers encountered housing barriers, and their experiences indicate they have faced unfair treatment and exclusion from the housing market. The literature highlights that newcomers are disadvantaged due to their skin colour, race, gender, and ethnicity (Sherrell et al., 2007).

Finding 7:

Accessing housing information

During the group discussions, participants were asked about their sources of information for finding a place to live, such as “What sources of information are available about the housing market?”



The importance of in-person connections in finding a place to live

In this study 15 participants indicated that their primary source of information was friends and relatives. They placed significant value on personal connections within these communities and their role in assisting with the search for a rental. This includes three participants in Exeter, seven participants in Listowel, two participants in Goderich, and one participant in St. Marys. The participants often relied on friends or family to navigate housing challenges during their settlement. This support network connected them with housing vacancies in four communities.

Furthermore, other participants sought advice from relatives and friends on where to find affordable housing and essential services. A Listowel participant shared that they moved to the community according to a friend's advice and stated, “A friend recommended Listowel as a good place to live. I had been in Thunder Bay and Brampton but moved here after two weeks at a friend's house. I have now been here for a year.” Newcomers to Canada differ in labour market connections, social networks,

and understanding of the local housing markets. Consequently, whereas some individuals may quickly secure housing that fulfills their needs and aspirations, others may undergo multiple relocations to enhance their quality of life or improve their job prospects (Renaud et al., 2006).

Harnessing social media to build virtual connections during housing searches

Twelve participants from four communities reported using social media, particularly Facebook. They consisted of three participants from Exeter, three from Goderich, six from Listowel, and one participant in St. Marys. For instance, a couple residing in Goderich recounted their experience locating their current home through Facebook. They explained, “We initially posted about our search on Facebook, and it turned out that the landlord reached out to us directly. This eased the process since the homeowner reached out after seeing our post.” A St. Marys participant shared she had a distinct experience with Facebook groups, where an unexpected connection with an individual sharing their last name resulted in discovering a host family in Kitchener mere weeks before their

relocation from Ukraine, alleviating concerns about the move. Overall, the participants' experiences indicate that social media is the primary avenue for finding rental housing.

The participants shared how they leveraged social media to seek employment with housing benefits. A Listowel participant shared his experiences, "Three years ago when we arrived in Montreal, our initial stay was only four days. During that time, with my background in construction and landscaping, I came across a listing on Facebook that was looking for cleaners and a married couple. Since my spouse and I fit the criteria, it was a perfect match. The landlord informed me he had arranged an apartment for us, simplifying everything." Facebook became the primary source for connecting with friends, landlords, realtors, and employment. These experiences show that finding a rental relies on online tools and social networks to tackle housing challenges.

Other digital tools to find housing

Participants shared house-searching strategies for securing rentals, which included using realtor.ca, a recommended site with a vast real estate database. Others highlighted search engines like Google.

Challenges connecting with real estate agents

An issue was raised during the discussion in Goderich when participants shared mixed experiences with real estate agents. A female participant recounted, "My friend worked with a real estate agent who charged both the landlord and the renter. We were surprised since agents typically only charge landlords." Other participants confirmed that this was unusual. This story suggested that newcomers often lacked proper knowledge of their legal

rights as tenants, which is crucial to reducing their challenges when searching for rental housing.

Lack of knowledge of tenant rights

This study showed that some participants lacked knowledge about their rights as tenants. A few participants shared their experiences of leaving their homes at the landlord's request, including one incident where a participant faced housing difficulties in Goderich due to a landlord's rejection based on family size. She and her son were forced to return home to her country of origin. After 10 months, her husband secured housing, allowing them to return.

Evidence indicates that immigrants and refugees encounter discrimination related to their immigration status, race, ethnicity, language, and class, resulting in denial of accommodation based on their status (Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership, 2016). This evidence may suggest the need to inform immigrants and refugees about their rights as tenants in the housing market.

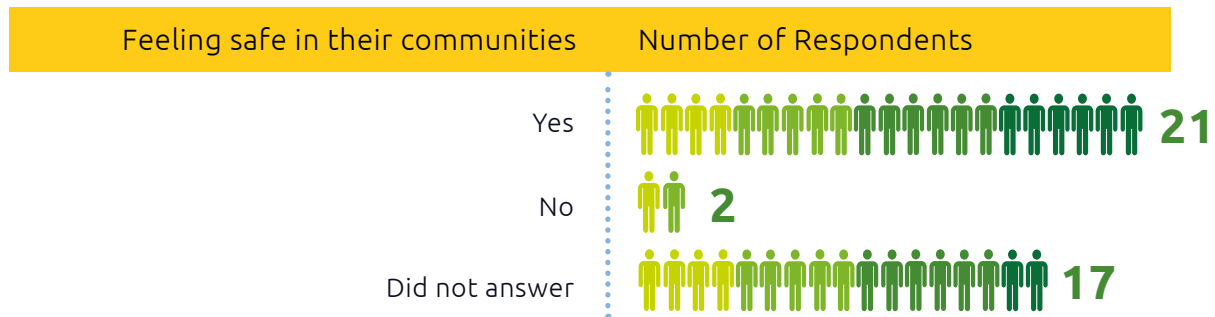
Information gaps identified

When asked about information about housing from government sources, such as information that could be found at a library or on an official website, newcomers responded they were not aware about it. When asked about social housing, participants were not familiar with the term or other ways local governments supported affordable housing. In a supplementary questionnaire, delivered prior to the focus groups began, 22 participants stated there was not enough information, or they were not sure about how much information there was, about housing in Huron and Perth. On the other hand, 18 participants stated there was enough information.

Finding 8:

Newcomers generally feel safe in their communities

This study aimed to measure feelings of belonging - based on safety, tranquillity, building relationships with local people and with neighbours.



Feeling safe in small communities

In this study, 21 participants from four communities emphasized feeling safe in their communities, which is a key factor in fostering a sense of belonging. The table above illustrates the respondents' feelings of safety in their communities. This includes five participants in Exeter, four in Goderich, seven in Listowel, and four in St. Marys. In this study, this sentiment was powerful among female participants who appreciated the security these small towns offered for themselves, their children, and their daily activities.

Many participants highlighted the safety of their communities while conducting their daily activities, such as expressing confidence in walking freely at any time of day, whether walking dogs, commuting to work early in the morning or late at night, or allowing children to walk to and from school. A Listowel participant shared, "I feel confident walking when it is five in the morning and returning from work at 10 in the evening. So yeah, I usually walk because I do not have a car and feel safe." Moreover, a few participants contrasted their communities with larger cities or war-torn regions; participants who had lived in big cities or war-affected areas noted the stark contrast in safety. Mainly, Ukrainian participants highlighted how unsafe they felt in urban areas like London, Ontario or Kyiv

compared to the peace and security of their current communities.

Furthermore, three participants highlighted the close-knit nature of small towns, where neighbours look out for each other and even children who are not their own. For example, another Listowel participant shared, "It is pretty secure. People are watching, for example, when there are children, something like that. People are watching them, even if they are not their children, yeah? So, yes, yeah, that is part of a good community." Similarly, another participant described how leaving cars unlocked and belongings unattended is commonplace, signifying high trust in the community.

While most participants highlighted safety, two participants in Listowel noted minor concerns, such as insufficient street lighting or occasional theft (e.g., stolen bicycles). Overall, feelings of safety—personal and for their families—were common among participants, contributing to their positive experiences and attachment to their new communities.

Feeling accepted

In a questionnaire distributed prior to the focus groups, 33 of the 40 participants stated that they felt accepted in their community. At 82%, this is significantly higher than a year prior when a survey of immigrants in Huron Perth (Nonkes

et al., 2024) recorded that 69% of immigrants and newcomers living in the two Counties felt their community was welcoming to newcomers and immigrants.

Slower pace appreciated

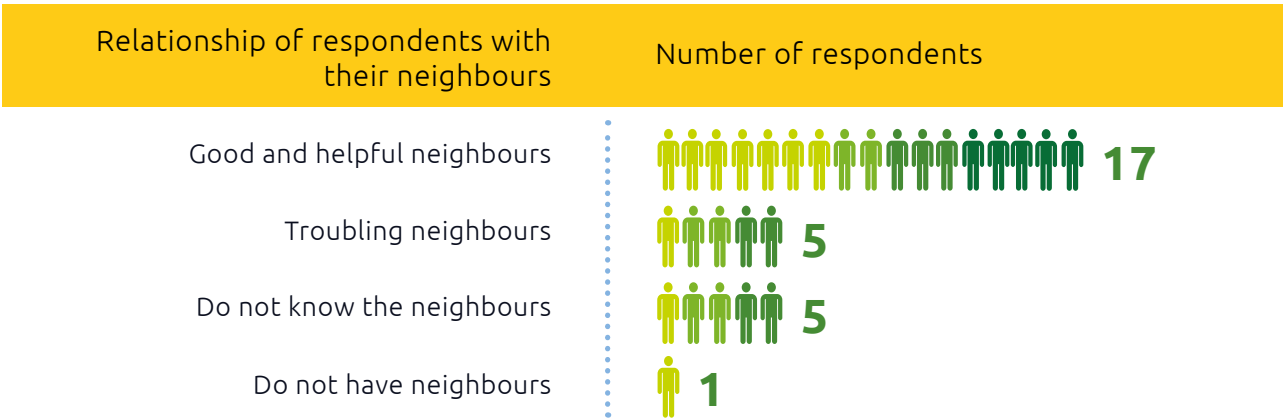
Furthermore, seven participants across four communities highlighted the peaceful nature of smaller communities, including two participants in Exeter, two in Listowel, one in St. Marys and two in Goderich. The peaceful nature and slower pace of life in these towns starkly contrast with the bustling cities they left behind, whether in Ukraine, India, or Ghana. Participants who moved from large cities like Kyiv or other urban centers appreciated the quietness and coziness of their new communities. They described these spaces as peaceful and less exhausting than their previous lives. For instance, a participant

described his community as “a very cool place, you have your piece of mind. I mean, a quiet environment, and I mean, it is good.” Another participant shared how moving to a smaller community made them feel “nice” and “cozy.” They did not regret choosing a small town over a larger city like Toronto.

Moreover, several participants recognized the ease of living close to larger cities like Toronto or Kitchener for occasional entertainment or activities. Yet, they expressed satisfaction with returning to their smaller communities. This finding from our study complements research among immigrants in Grey and Bruce Counties, who found a key reason immigrants remain in small and rural communities is because of the ease of lifestyle and the positive connections with community members (Kelly & Nguyen, 2023).

Finding 9:

Newcomers find most local residents helpful and friendly



A total of 11 participants from four communities highlighted the friendliness and helpfulness of local residents, including three participants in Goderich, four in Listowel, two in St. Marys, and two in Exeter. Participants highlighted the warmth and kindness of the local residents who frequently greeted them, smiled on the streets, and engaged in casual conversation. They valued

the locals’ welcoming nature and generosity, noting instances such as a neighbour assisting with a flat tire or giving groceries, along with a farmer sharing produce with newcomers. Participants felt locals were empathetic and willing to help, even with small gestures, like sharing information about raccoon safety or volunteering to babysit. In addition, they praised host families and volunteers who

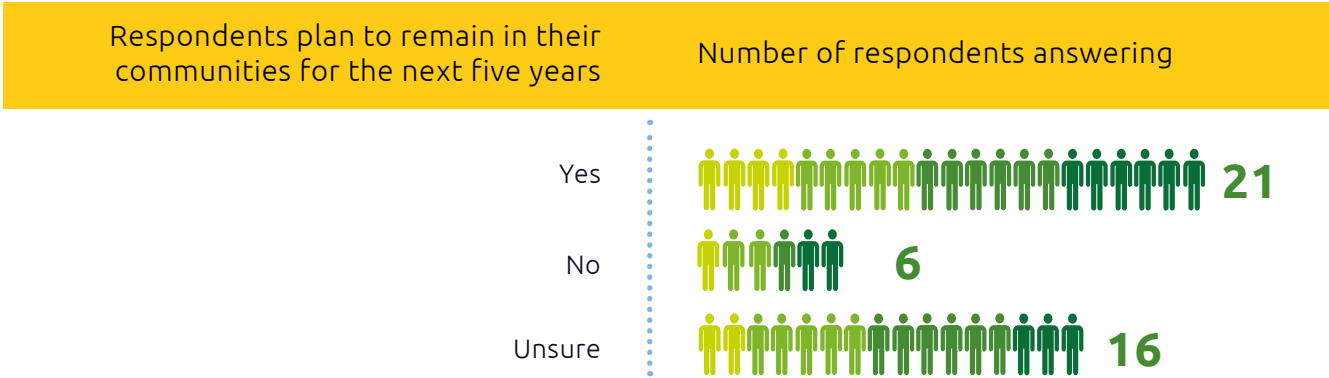
supported some of them adjust to their new surroundings. Thirteen participants shared their positive experiences with their kind and helpful neighbours, including two from Goderich, five from Exeter, two from Listowel and three from St. Marys. The table above shows the relationships respondents have with neighbours.

Ukrainian female participants underlined how their small communities were supportive. They noted that neighbours often collaborated to strengthen communal ties, such as coordinating rides or celebrating holidays. Furthermore, chat groups enabled resource sharing, allowing members to swiftly buy,

donate, or acquire items that assisted with childcare or transportation. Furthermore, acts of neighbourliness, like delivering packages to one another’s doorsteps, exemplified the close-knit relationships inherent in these communities, as mentioned by a participant. Although most experiences were positive, a few noted disruptive neighbours and minor cultural misunderstandings. Overall, the friendliness of locals and the supportive relationships with neighbours were central to participants’ positive experiences in their communities. These interactions fostered a sense of belonging and trust, making the transition to life in Canada effortless and more fulfilling.

Finding 10:

People are unsure if they will stay in the area



Prior to the focus group started, participants were asked in a paper questionnaire if they wished to stay in the community in the next five years. In their responses, detailed in the table above, 21 reported yes, 16 stated they were not sure, and six said they did not plan to stay.

This question was further explored at the end of each group discussion, when participants were asked again whether they planned to stay in their community over the next five years. In the group setting, participant responses varied too, reflecting diverse perspectives on long-term settlement. Eleven participants in four communities spoke about their plans to stay in their communities over the next five years.

This included four participants in Goderich, two in Listowel, three in St. Marys, and two in Exeter. However, nine participants said they were uncertain and could not decide whether they would remain in their communities in the coming years. This included four Goderich participants, two Listowel, and two Exeter. Three participants who spoke about their intention to leave their communities were in Goderich (1 person) and Listowel (2 people).

Reasons to stay or leave

Those who wanted to stay cited various reasons; either aimed to buy homes in their communities, while others sought larger homes to accommodate their families better. Housing

affordability and closeness to essential services are key factors in their decision to stay. Those who wished to stay stated they hoped to transition from renting to owning a home in the community they lived. In this study, Ukrainian participants emphasized that obtaining permanent residency is a significant reason for their desire to remain. Furthermore, two participants pointed out that their children's successful integration into the local community was vital in their decision-making process.

Uncertainty about remaining

Participants uncertain about staying in their communities were influenced by employment opportunities, immigration policies, and housing costs. Many felt job dissatisfaction, low wages, and limited career prospects, while restrictive immigration policies added to their

challenges. A Goderich participant shared, "To be honest, I want to live here, but as the rules are changing day by day for the immigrants. It is hard to stay committed to the same places for me just as I spend thousands of dollars to immigrate here, but it's very hard to commit to live here because no PR (permanent residency), no chances of PR so they are only implementing to secure the refugees and so yeah, it's very hard."

Rising housing expenses influenced choices, motivating some to explore relocation for better affordability. While many cherished their communities, the prospect of career growth was a significant factor, resulting in a few contemplating their move. These insights highlight the necessity for enhanced job prospects, affordable housing, and supportive immigration policies to encourage newcomer settlement in these communities.

Study limitations

Although this research offers essential insights into the settlement of newcomers in rural Ontario, several research gaps persist.

The experiences of racialized newcomers need deeper investigation since this study did not specifically look at how race and ethnicity affected integration. Furthermore, the small participant sample and the study's emphasis on Huron and Perth counties limit the applicability

of the results to other rural areas. In addition, time and cost constraints also limited the scope of data collection. The low representation of skilled workers among participants left gaps in understanding their challenges in rural settlements. More importantly, rural communities are not homogeneous, and the unique characteristics of Huron-Perth may not reflect the realities of other rural regions.

Conclusion

This study highlighted the central role of housing in the early settlement of newcomers in Huron and Perth counties. For many participants, securing adequate and affordable housing was their priority upon arrival, as it directly influenced their ability to access employment, education, healthcare, and community resources. However, many newcomers struggled with high housing costs, and newcomers fleeing war experienced the most significant financial strain. Furthermore, this study highlighted limited housing availability and overcrowding, with these challenges particularly pronounced for larger families, single parents, and those with lower incomes, forcing some to settle in temporary or inadequate accommodations.

Several structural factors further complicated the housing experiences of newcomers: navigating the rental market, communicating with landlords, and understanding lease agreements. In addition, families faced financial constraints, including reliance on government assistance and minimum-wage jobs, which limit housing options and, in some cases, led to housing instability. Furthermore, immigration status and lack of credit history made it harder for newcomers to secure

leases, as landlords often preferred tenants with established credit and local references. The study revealed that participants demonstrated a significant reliance on their social networks, drawing support and assistance from relatives and friends in securing stable housing. Research findings revealed a lack of information about housing support programs, affordable rental options, and community-driven initiatives to ensure that all newcomers can achieve long-term housing security.

To ensure newcomers have the keys to successfully settle and integrate into Huron and Perth Counties, addressing housing must continue to be prioritized. All spheres of government, community organizations, service providers, landlords, builders, volunteers and other stakeholders have a role to play. If housing can be adequately addressed, newcomers will more quickly navigate the settlement process and contribute in all spheres of life. Finally, it is important to emphasize that rural communities are not homogeneous, and there is an old saying among rural development practitioners: if you know one rural community, then you know one rural community. This truly reflects the diversity that exists within rural Canada at any level of rurality (Lauzon et al., 2015) .



References

- Ager, A. and Strang, A. (2008). Understanding integration: a conceptual framework. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2), 166–191. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>.
- Arora, P. (2017). *Immigrant voices : An exploration of immigrants experiences in Rural Ontario* [Master's thesis, University of Guelph]. University of Guelph Atrium. <https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/items/6ca7f794-5e02-4763-8fdf-519eb22f250e>
- Beattie, M. (2009). *Rural immigration: Welcoming, settling and retaining*. Rural Development Institute. https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2015/08/Rural_Immigration_welcoming_settling_and_retaining.pdf
- Brown, N. R. (2017). Housing experiences of recent immigrants to Canada's small cities: The case of North Bay, Ontario. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 18, 719–747. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-016-0498-5>
- Bucklaschuk, J. (2008). *Settlement: Considerations for Temporary Foreign Workers in Brandon and Area*. Rural Development Institute. https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2015/09/RDI_DiscussionPaper2_Settlement_considerations_for_Temporary_Foreign_Workers.pdf
- Bushell, R., & Shields, J. (2018). *Immigrant settlement agencies in Canada: A critical review of the literature through the lens of resilience*. Paper of the Building Migrant Resilience in Cities (BMRC) Project.
- Caidi, N., & Allard, D. (2005). Social inclusion of newcomers to Canada: An information problem?. *Library & Information Science Research*, 27(3), 302–324. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2005.04.003>
- Carter, T., & Polevychok, C. (2004). *Housing is good social policy*. Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc.
- Carter, T., Morrish, M., & Amoyaw, B. (2008). Attracting immigrants to smaller urban and rural communities: Lessons learned from the Manitoba provincial nominee program. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 9, 161–183. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-008-0051-2>
- Danso, R. (2001). Danso, R. (2002). From 'there' to 'here': An investigation of the initial settlement experiences of Ethiopian and Somali refugees in Toronto. *GeoJournal*, 56, 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021748701134>
- Depner, W. & Teixeira, C. (2012). Welcoming Communities? An Assessment of Community Services in Attracting and Retaining Immigrants in the South Okanagan Valley (British Columbia, Canada), with Policy Recommendations. *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 7(2), 72–97.
- Esses, V. M., Hamilton, L. K., Aslam, A., Ribeiro, P., & Barros, P. (2023). *Measuring welcoming communities: A toolkit for communities and those who support them*. Pathways to Prosperity. <http://p2pcanada.ca/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2023/03/Welcoming-Toolkit-I-Measuring-Welcoming-Communities.pdf>
- Frederick, T., Hughes, J., Karabanow, J., & Kidd, S. (2014). How Stable is Stable? Defining and Measuring Housing Stability? *Journal of Community Psychology*, 42(8), 964–979. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop>
- Hadi, A., & Labonté, R. (2011). Housing and health of recent immigrants in Canada: A narrative review. *El Exchange*, 2(5), 1–39.
- Hiebert, D., Germain, A., Murdie, R., Preston, V., Renaud, J., Rose, D., Wyly, E., Ferreira, V., Mendez, P., Murnaghan, A. M. (2006). *The Housing Situation and Needs of Recent Immigrants in the Montréal, Toronto, and Vancouver CMAs : An Overview*.
- Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada. (2024a). *IRCC Temporary Resident Admission Tables, 2015 to 2023* [Data set]. Community Data Program. <https://communitydata.ca/data/ircc-temporary-resident-admission-tables-2015-2023>
- Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada. (2024b). *IRCC Permanent Resident Admission Tables, 1998 to 2023* [Data set]. Community Data Program. <https://communitydata.ca/data/ircc-permanent-resident-admission-tables-1998-2023>
- Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria. (2024). *Finding Housing For Displaced Ukrainians and Refugees on Vancouver Island: Regional Housing Report*. <https://www.icavictoria.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Regional-Housing-Report-Ready-for-Digital-Use.pdf>
- Kaushik, V., & Drolet, J. (2018). Settlement and integration needs of skilled immigrants in Canada. *Social Sciences*, 7(5), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.3390/SOCSCI7050076>
- Kelly, M., & Nguyen, M. (2023). Choosing to stay: Understanding immigrant retention in four non-metropolitan counties in southern Ontario. *Journal of Migration and Integration*, 24(6), S1055–S1075. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-023-01034-8>
- Lam, M. A. (2019). Language education for newcomers in rural Canada: Needs, opportunities, and innovations. *Journal of*

References

Rural and Community Development, 14(14), 77–97. <https://journals.brandonu.ca/jrcd/article/view/1596>

Lapshina, N.; Essess, V. (2021). *Discrimination Experienced by Immigrants, Visible Minorities, and Indigenous Peoples in Huron-Perth*. Huron County Immigration Partnership. https://www.huroncounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/2021-11-16-Report-Discrimination-Huron_Perth.pdf

Lauzon, A., Bollman, R., & Ashton, B. (2015). Introduction. In *State of Rural Canada*. <http://sorc.crrf.ca/intro/>

Li, P. S. (2003). Deconstructing Canada's discourse of immigrant integration. *Journal of International Migration and Integration / Revue de l'integration et de La Migration Internationale*, 4(3), 315–333. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-003-1024-0>

Li, G., & Sah, P. K. (2019). Immigrant and refugee language policies, programs, and practices in an era of change. *Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies*, 2014, 325–338. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315458298-33>

Mack, N., Woodsong, C., McQueen, K. M., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2011). Qualitative Research Methods: A data collector's field guide. In *Qualitative Research Methods: A data collector's field guide*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb020723>

Mensah, J., & Tucker-Simmons, D. (2021). Social (In)justice and rental housing discrimination in urban Canada: The case of ethno-racial minorities in the Herongate community in Ottawa. *Studies in Social Justice*, 15(1), 81–101. <https://doi.org/10.26522/ssj.v15i1.2239>

Murdie, R. A. (2008). Pathways to housing: The experiences of sponsored refugees and refugee claimants in accessing permanent housing in Toronto. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 9(1), 81–101. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-008-0045-0>

Nonkes, M., Nadkarni, S., & Thomson, L. (2024). *Huron-Perth Immigrant Survey 2023*. University of Guelph Atrium. <https://atrium.lib.uoguelph.ca/server/api/core/bitstreams/b6d6e7ff-a694-401a-8405-49ccaf253a4a/content>

Ontario. (2023, August 22). *Socioeconomic facts and data about rural Ontario*. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/socioeconomic-facts-and-data-about-rural-ontario>

Oudshoorn, A., Benbow, S., & Meyer, M. (2020). Resettlement of Syrian refugees in Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 21(3), 893–908. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-019-00695-8>

Rabiah-Mohammed, F., Hamilton, L. K., Oudshoorn, A., Bakhash, M., Tarraf, R., Arnout, E., Brown, C., Benbow, S., Elnihum, S., El Hazzouri, M., Esses, V. M., & Theriault, L. (2022). Syrian refugees' experiences of housing stability during the COVID-19 pandemic: Barriers to integration and just solutions. *Studies in Social Justice*, 16(1), 9–32. <https://doi.org/10.26522/SSJ.V16I1.2669>

Renaud, J., Bégin, K., Ferreira, V., & Rose, D. (2006). The residential mobility of immigrants to Canada: The first months. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research*, 15(2), 67–81. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26192503>

Rose, D. (2019). Creating a home in Canada: Refugee housing challenges and potential policy solutions. In *Transatlantic Council on Migration*, Migration Policy Institute. https://cdn.givingcompass.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/20095133/TCM-Canada-Housing-Refugees_FINAL.pdf

Sherrell, K., D'Addario, S., & Hiebert, D. (2007). On the outside looking in : The precarious housing situations of successful refugee claimants in the GVRD. *Refuge*, 24(2), 64–75. <https://doi.org/10.25071/1920-7336.21385>

Statistics Canada. 2023a. (table). Census Profile. *2021 Census of Population*. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 98-316-X2021001. Ottawa. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed March 7, 2025).

Statistics Canada. 2023b. Table 98-10-0259-01. *Housing indicators by tenure: Canada, provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions*. <https://doi.org/10.25318/9810025901-eng>

Teixeira, C. (2009). New immigrant settlement in a mid-sized city: a case study of housing barriers and coping strategies in Kelowna, British Columbia. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien*, 53(3), 323–339. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0064.2009.00266.x>

Teixeira, C., & Drolet, J. L. (2018). Settlement and housing experiences of recent immigrants in small- and mid-sized cities in the interior of British Columbia (Canada). *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 33(1), 19–43. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10901-017-9550-9>

References

Waterloo Region Immigration Partnership. (2016). *Immigrant & Refugee Housing Consultation Report*. <https://www.immigrationwaterlooregion.ca/en/business-opportunities/resources/Immigrant--Refugee-Housing-Consultation-Report-2016.pdf>

Wayland, S. V. (2007). *The housing needs of immigrants and refugees in Canada: A background paper for the Canadian Housing and Renewal Association*. In Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA). https://homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/FinalReport_CHRAImmigrationHousing_June_2007.pdf

Wiginton, L. K. (2013). *Canada's decentralised immigration policy through a local lens: How small communities are attracting and welcoming immigrants*. Rural Development Institute, Brandon University. https://www.brandonu.ca/rdi/files/2015/09/Canadas_Decentralized_Immigration_Policy_How_Small_Communities_are_attracting_and-welcoming_Immigrants.pdf

Wilkinson, L., Bhattacharyya, P., Bucklaschuk, J., Shen, J., Chowdhury, A., & Edkins, T. (2016). Understanding job status decline among newcomers to Canada. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 48(3), 5–26. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/ces.2016.0023>

Appendix A:

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Newcomers & Housing in Huron-Perth: A Research Project (study)

Upon arrival, the research team distributes paper copies of the supplementary questionnaire and consent form for the participants, with a version to take home.

SCRIPT: Introduction and welcome

Good evening and welcome to the Newcomer & Housing in Huron-Perth Research Project.

My name is Rana Telfah – you can all just call me Rana. I am a research consultant and I am going to be your lead moderator/facilitator for these focus group discussions. We also have Emma Hunking, Outreach Officer from the Local Immigration Partnership and Mark Nonkes, Manager of the Immigration Partnership present with us. They will be assisting me through this process and will be taking notes throughout our conversation.

The purpose of this study is to explore your housing experiences in Canada, especially those who have moved to Huron or Perth counties since 2018. We want to better understand:

- If housing is adequate, accessible, and affordable to immigrant and newcomer families in Huron and Perth counties.
- How immigrants and newcomers find information and resources about the housing market in Huron and Perth counties.
- How housing experiences increased the feeling of belonging for newcomers in Huron and Perth.

A better understanding of your experiences can deepen our knowledge of your needs, how you find information and resources, and service gaps through this project, which we aim to develop relevant and actionable responses to your housing needs. This will be achieved through your participation in this focus group so please feel free to share your thoughts and opinions. The Immigration Partnership works with more than 25 community partners who provide services to newcomers to Canada in the community. Your responses will help inform the development of new information resources and influence service delivery for other newcomers.

You were all selected to participate in these focus groups because we felt that you best represent the wide range of newcomers to Canada (I was a newcomer myself not too long ago, I moved from Lebanon in 2011). Your opinions and answers as a result, are greatly valued! We are lucky to have you with us, so thank you for taking the time to be here.

Preliminary housekeeping

Although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. The researchers would like to remind participants to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

You have all signed the consent forms.

Just to remind you, participating in the focus group and survey are an opportunity to influence how services for immigrants are offered in the Huron-Perth region and impact the development of policies at municipal, provincial and federal levels.

We don't anticipate that there will be any significant risks to participating in this survey. Although we, the researchers, will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of focus groups prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality.

We ask you to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the focus group to others.

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, you can call the Huron Perth Helpline and Crisis Response Team crisis line at 1-888-829-7484. If you need help but are not in crisis, you can call the Canadian Mental Health Association Huron office at 1-877-218-0077.

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you withdraw from the study, every attempt will be made to remove your data from the study, and have it destroyed. You have the right to omit any question(s)/procedure(s) you choose.

Are there any questions you would like to ask about the consent and research form?

(Research consultant waits for 2 minutes, answers questions if asked).

Just to confirm, you understand what this project is about and agree to take part. If you agree, please raise your hands.

(Research consultant waits for show of hands, inquires with anyone who has not raised their hand, proceeds when all hands are raised).

About today's discussion, please know:

- There are no right or wrong answers, just points of view. Please feel free to share your views even if they differ from others. Likewise, please listen to others' views even if you do not like or agree with what they say.
- We are taking notes during these sessions so kindly, let us have one person speaking at a time.
- We are all using names we prefer to be called, like I'm Rana and that is Emma. Please write your preferred name on the piece of folded cardboard paper in front of you so that we can address each other with ease.
- You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views.
- My role as moderator will be to guide the discussion.
- You do not have to answer any question. You will still receive compensation if you choose not to answer questions.
- Please respond to each other – this is a focus group discussion after all.

Note taking

As I mentioned before, Mark and Emma are taking notes during this session. As indicated in the consent forms you all signed, the information will be treated with the strictest of confidence and only reviewed by myself, Emma and Mark. Your names will not appear on reports – while we know each other's names, the information we collect will be anonymized to protect your confidentiality. The anonymized data we collect will be analyzed and the reports produced will go to County staff, community organizations and other service providers to help improve service provision and delivery.

Time

Each session is expected to last for 75 minutes.

Process

We will discuss 13 questions. After asking each question you can ask for the moderator to clarify any points and then you can discuss the questions as a group. As moderator I shall from time to time ask questions to either introduce a topic or subtopic, to follow up on comments or views, to summarize where appropriate as well as finalize a topic or subtopic.

At the end of the focus group session, we invite you to fill out a small questionnaire that will further assist this research project. Again, there are no right or wrong opinions. This information will be used by us as moderators/facilitators to better understand newcomer experiences of housing in your community.

Let's start off by thinking about the availability, accessibility and affordability of housing in Huron and Perth Counties.

Questions

Let's discuss the following questions:

1. How did you find your current place? How many times have you moved since you came to Canada
2. How much of your monthly income goes towards rent?
3. What are the key barriers to newcomers to Canada to find a suitable place to live in Huron and Perth?
4. What's the condition of your home like? Is it in good repair? Is your current place suitable for your family?
5. What's your relationship like with your landlord?
6. Do you plan to stay in your current place for the next 5 years? Why / Why not?

Thank you for this insight.

We also are curious about how people get information about housing in Huron and Perth. Could you help us answer these questions:

7. What information is available about the housing or rental market here? Where is the best place to learn about places for rent or sale?
8. What information and assistance from public services (for example local government, the library, social services) is available about finding a place to live?
9. What have you heard about social housing (when local government subsidizes part of your rent)?

Thank you for sharing. The last part of this focus group aims to look at feelings of belonging in your community.

10. Did you feel like it was easy to settle and integrate into this community? Yes or No. If not, what's missing in this community that could help people settle easily?
11. Do you feel safe in this community? Yes or no, please provide examples
12. What specific challenges have you faced in this community?
13. Can you tell us what your relationship is like with your neighbours?

Thank you very much for taking part in this session. We truly appreciate your responses and feedback. The data I/we have collected here today will go a long way in helping Huron County Immigration Partnership improve service provision and delivery.

Conclusion and Feedback/Reflection Session

- The moderator will answer any lingering questions or clarify unclear terms. Now that we have come to the end of this focus group session, please fill out the short questionnaire that was handed out when you arrived. Do not write your name on the form. Thank you for your time and participation. Do enjoy the rest of your day. Please hand your filled-out questionnaire to Emma as you leave the room.

Appendix B:

Supplementary Questionnaire

Newcomers & Housing in Huron-Perth: A Research Project

1. What type of place do you live in?

- ☐ House
- ☐ Apartment
- ☐ Trailer
- ☐ Other

2. Who lives in your place? (please list the number of adults and children)

_____ number of adults

_____ number of children below age 17

3. Who deals with the landlord?

- ☐ Me
- ☐ Partner/spouse
- ☐ Roommate
- ☐ Another tenant
- ☐ Real estate agent
- ☐ Other

4. What is your relationship with your landlord like?

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Very good
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Poor

5. How many bedrooms do you have?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7 or more bedrooms

6. Do you feel like places are affordable in your community?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ No

7. Do you plan to stay in your current place for the next 5 years?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

8. Do you think there is enough information about how to find a place to live in your community?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

9. How did you find the place you currently live?

- ☐ Friend/family member
- ☐ Real estate agent
- ☐ Through work contact
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Airbnb
- ☐ Website

10. Do you feel accepted in this community?

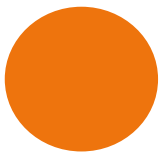
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

11. Would you like to have a copy of the research report when it's ready?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

12. If yes, what email address shall we send the report to: _____

13. Do you have any additional information about your housing experience in this community you would like to share?



County of Huron | Immigration Partnership

Email: home@huroncounty.ca

www.HuronCounty.ca/immigration-partnership

Funded by:



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Financé par :

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada



Perth County
Cultivating Opportunity