



# PVLIP IMMIGRANT SURVEY

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[Abstract](#)

Community survey on immigrant settlement in the Pembina Valley

Sally Ogoe (PhD)

Data Analysis and Report Author on behalf of PVLIP

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Purpose of Study

This report presents the findings of the Pembina Valley Local Immigration Partnership (PVLIP) immigrant survey held in 2021/2022. This survey was conducted to understand immigrant experiences, awareness of existing settlement services, access to information and use of these services in the Pembina Valley. The results of this survey are to guide and improve services provided as well as the living experiences of immigrants in the region. The findings will also be shared with local

### Overview

The Pembina Valley Local Immigration Partnership (PVLIP) was launched in 2017 to organize local engagement of service providers and other stakeholders to assist in a successful integration process for newcomers and provide more welcoming and inclusive communities. PVLIP focuses on five key prioritized areas: **Develop** and engage a multi-sector council, a diverse immigrant advisory table and working groups to support the community's settlement and integration priorities; **Engage** traditional and non-traditional partners in the inclusion of newcomers; **Support** community-level research and strategic planning; **Strengthen** local capacity to integrate newcomers; and **Increase** knowledge about newcomer needs, strengths and local strategies for support.

The current survey was conducted by PVLIP to understand immigrant experiences relating to accessing settlement services. The data was collected using survey monkey - the survey comprised of 60 questions in English and was made available also in Arabic, German, Filipino, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian and French. Focus groups were offered to provide assistance with language however, this was not needed. This could be as a result of people having translation apps on their phones and thereby, able to access the survey in

organizations and decision-makers to help understand and support immigrants' settlement and integration in South Central Manitoba (Pembina Valley).

Again, the results of this survey helps Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) to better understand the gaps as well as opportunities relating to improving newcomers' settlement, developing engagement strategies and creating more inclusive policies.

their mother tongue without further assistance from PVLIP or Regional Connections settlement staff.

**In total, 271 immigrants participated in this survey.** Participants were recruited through social media (Facebook, Instagram, and Spotify – podcast), advertised via newspaper (Winkler/Morden Voice did an article), posters, network and partnership partners - 500 Promo Survey Cards were printed and disbursed through:

- Regional Connections Staff (Winkler, Morden, Altona, Carman, Morris)
- Employers: Friesen's (Altona), Décor (Morden), Elmer's MFG (Altona), Elias Woodwork (Winkler) – major employers with large newcomer staff.
- Community Partners: Chambers of Commerce (4 in region), South Central Libraries (5 locations), City of Winkler, City of Morden, Town of Altona, Town of Carman/RM of Dufferin.
- Multiple local cultural food stores/restaurants in Winkler and Morden - 15 all together, including Tim Hortons and McDonalds with multiple newcomer staff.

## Findings

This report focused on the following objectives:

- To shed light on immigrants accessing settlement services;
- And immigrants who have not accessed settlement services;
- Areas that need change or improvement

### Immigrants accessing settlement services

Settlement organizations provide immigrants and newcomers with settlement services such language learning, interpretation, integration to community, volunteering, notary or document services, employment assistance, and childcare services for parents attending English classes.

In this survey, participants were asked about their awareness of available settlement services in their community: 86.3 % indicated they were aware of these services whereas 13.7% did not have knowledge about available settlement services. In terms of accessing settlement services, 89.6% indicated they have accessed these services while 10.4% indicated they never tried to access these services or were not in need of them.

Nonetheless, overall, immigrants who access settlement services in the Pembina Valley are relatively high.

When asked what helped them to integrate or resettle successfully in their communities, the four major answers were: finding work (52 %), making friends (50.9%), support from settlement service (48.0 %) and family support (38.7 %).

Most participants (84%) in the survey had extremely positive perception and a sense of belonging in their communities whereas 3.9% disagree and 12.5% were indifferent.

### Areas that need change or improvement (by survey participants)

The major challenges identified by participants while resettling in their communities include lack of knowledge on how and where to access resources (30.6%), finding work (25.8%), learning English (24.0%), affordable housing/paying rent (23.2%), making friends or social connections (21.4%) and accessing transportation (20.7%).

In addition to the above major challenges faced by immigrants, the participants also pointed out lack of access to some healthcare services, requirements in getting jobs (lack of foreign credentials recognition, language barriers, lack of Canadian work experience).

However, top suggested areas for improvement pointed out by the participants include accessible and available transportation, affordable housing, assistance in English and skills training to assist in securing employment, access to health care, recognition of international credentials and organizing cultural events (festivals).

Participants in this survey ranked affordable housing as the most important change needed to support them settle successfully in their communities. The next most important change indicated by participants was opportunities for English and skills training.

### Opportunities for Improvement

The survey identified several areas that could improve newcomer and immigrant settlement in the Pembina Valley. Few of the top most needed change areas (in no particular order) identified by the participants are discussed below:

#### **Provision of affordable housing**

In a 2014 study, housing numbers indicate that about 500,000 immigrant households in Canada are in core housing need (Bell, 2019). Although 78.1% assert that their current housing is affordable and were satisfied with their accommodation, improved access to affordable housing (46.9%) ranked high as suggested by participants in the survey for a successful settlement of immigrants in the Pembina Valley. Housing plays a central role in settlement, especially among immigrants - adequate and affordable housing (identified as an under-provided resource) is critical to facilitating, attracting and retaining newcomers in the Pembina Valley. As such, provision of affordable and safe housing for newcomers and immigrants especially in the rural communities would be a step towards solving this immigrant challenge. Collaboration and coordination among different sectors involved in supporting immigrants with housing need is vital as it a key step for successful integration of immigrants in various communities in Canada (Tabibi et al., 2017).

#### **Creating awareness on available settlement services**

Another factor that prevents immigrants and newcomers from accessing settlement services is lack of awareness on available resources. Despite participants satisfaction (86.3%) of available settlement services to be relatively high, lack of awareness was discussed as one of the major challenges towards thier succesful settlement in the Pembina Valley. This shows that many immigrants may not be benefiting from the suuport available to them. In the survey, some of the participants indicated they had no knowledge on how and where to find some of the community resources. Promoting awareness on available settlement services is vital. Creating

and improving online information hub for newcomers is one way to address this challenge. In addition, a more specific component could be built within the immigration welcome to Canada packages for all immigrants that arrive in Canada especially those whose destinations are rural.

#### **Organizing cultural festivals and celebrating diversity**

From this survey, participants indicated the desire to connect more with the community. This could be done by organizing diverse festivals in the Pembina Valley that are newcomer inclusive. This will also create awareness of settlement services available to newcomers and immigrants for those in the community that are not aware of these services. Again, it will create a sense of social connection for many immigrants and opportunities for local volunteering. As such, collaborating with municipal units, business and other organizations is important to facilitate sharing ideas regarding actions that can be taken to improve immigrant settlement experiences.

However, it is important to note, that this survey was conducted during the 22<sup>nd</sup> month of the Covid-19 Pandemic, with all in person events being cancelled. Various communities throughout the Pembina Valley traditionally support cultural festivals and celebrate diversity during their annual community celebrations. So it is possible, recent newcomers over the past 2-3 years, have yet to experience one of these festivals within the Pembina Valley.

### English and skills training to be able to find employment

Despite most of the participants (79.3%) indicating that they can communicate very well in English, English language training was discussed by participants as one of the areas that needed improvement. Some of the participants asserted that although they were qualified for English classes offered by the settlement organization, visitors for instance were not able to access these services. Some the participants discussed that because daycare in Canada is expensive, their retired parents are the ones they invited to come and help take care of their children while they access language classes or go to work. It is important to have it in mind that immigrant's access to jobs often depends on several factors such as their access to language classes, schools/daycare for their children and other settlement needs to speed up their ability to find employment (Wilkinson et al., 2018). Furthermore, the language class services can assist in helping them find job opportunities. Again, there is a need for immigrants to get skills training where necessary to be able to get appropriate jobs.

### Access to health care services

From the survey, most of the participants expressed great concern regarding access to health care services. This included long waiting lists to be assigned to family doctors or specialized doctors, access to Manitoba health card, prescriptions out of stock, and culturally appropriate services such as language translation for those whom English/French was not their first language. Taking measures to improve

access to health care for newcomers and immigrants is necessary for a successful integration. This will mean various stakeholders coming together to see how best to reduce or eliminate this barrier as access to proper health services is crucial to recognizing the rights and dignity of the various members that makeup a society.

### Provision of transportation

Providing accessible transportation for immigrants in the rural community is vital. Some of the participants in this survey indicated transportation (20.7%) is their biggest challenge in settling in the community. Some indicated that travelling to the closest city for university was a major challenge as they had no transportation to do so. Collaborating with the right stakeholders to provide transportation for immigrants in the Pembina Valley region would be a great step to solving this major challenge immigrant's experience.

### Recognition of international credentials

Almost half of the participants (44.6%) who participated in this survey suggested steps needed to be taken that recognize foreign credentials, skills and experiences to be able to find jobs in their field of education or training. Majority of the participants expressed their inability to secure a well-paid job in their field even though some have qualifications. In other words, they are unable to find work in their profession and commonly accept jobs which do not commensurate with their education and work experience.

*I think our community does a very good job at integrating immigrants. There are many things to support immigrants and all though I have not needed most supports, and at first did not know of all the support, I am very impressed. I went home for 10 days and returned last week. For the first time in my life, I felt more connected to my home in the Pembina Valley that I did in my country"*

*~ Quote from Survey Participant*

## INTRODUCTION

The Pembina Valley Local Immigration Partnership (PVLIP) is a collaborative community initiative dedicated to improving immigrant integration. PVLIP is regional in scope and includes 13 municipalities in the Pembina Valley in Southern Manitoba, including the communities of Winker, Morden, Altona, and Carman (communities representing survey respondents). Communities across Canada are recognizing the importance of immigration by making it a main component of sustaining their economic development plans.

To better support settlement outcomes for newcomers and immigrants, PVLIP introduced a strategic plan in 2019 called Action Plan 2020-2025. Action plan 2020-2025 identifies and aligns the goals and objectives with the three priority areas identified by the PVLIP Regional Partnership Council (RPC). This action plan is informed by the needs of newcomers as reported through research, the Ethnocultural Council (ECC), PVLIP consultations, and partner networks. To this, the PVLIP has committed to ongoing consultation with newcomers and immigrants to best understand current gaps and opportunities in relation to immigrant settlement in the Pembina Valley.

The PVLIP is pleased to present the results of its 2021/2022 immigrant survey in this report. The goal is that this report will contribute to a collective understanding of what is working when it comes to welcoming newcomers and immigrants to the Pembina Valley as well as the areas where changes or improvements are needed.

## METHODOLOGY

In early Fall 2021, the PVLIP worked in collaboration with its partners to develop a research strategy for the PVLIP Immigrant survey. The survey was made live from December 3, 2021 to January 15, 2022, followed by the data collection and analyzing the findings. These research questions guided the overall process:

- Do immigrants access settlement services?
- What are the challenges for newcomers and immigrants who settle in the Pembina Valley?
- What are the opportunities to improve their settlement experience?

## DATA COLLECTION

Due to the nature of the study, the target population coupled with COVID-19 restrictions, it was determined that the data would be best collected primarily using online tools. The online data collection was conducted through survey monkey.

### Survey

The survey was designed for newcomers and immigrants in the Pembina Valley. In other words, people who are not Canadian born and who live in the Pembina Valley area of Southern Manitoba. The survey was reviewed by the PVLIP Council and Ethnocultural Council (ECC) who provided feedback and assisted in pilot testing before finalizing.

The survey was conducted in English using the Survey Monkey platform. Participants had the option to complete the survey in a different language and as well, there was the option to complete the survey in an alternative delivery form (eg. hardcopy). In addition, the survey was made available in the top languages represented in the region: Arabic, German, Filipino, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, French and English. However, there were no requests for this service - so it is assumed everyone accessed it in English, or had someone in their homes assisting them if necessary. Again, some immigrants have

translation apps on their phones and may have accessed the survey in their mother tongue without further assistance from PVLIP or Regional Connections settlement staff.

Overall, 271 immigrants between the ages of 16-65 who live in the Pembina Valley area participated in this survey.

### **Communication Strategy**

With the support of the communications team at PVLIP, a strategy was developed to promote the survey and communicate with potential participants. The strategy included advertisements via:

- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Spotify – podcast), Newspaper – (Winkler/Morden Voice did an article).
- 500 Promo Survey Cards were printed and disbursed:
  - Via: Regional Connections Staff (Winkler, Morden, Altona, Carman, Morris).
  - Employers: Friesen’s (Altona), Décor Cabinets (Morden), Elmer’s MFG (Altona), Elias Woodwork (Winkler) – major employers with large newcomer staff.
  - Community Partners: Chambers of Commerce (4 in region), South Central Libraries (5 locations), City of Winkler, City of Morden, Town of Altona, Town of Carman/RM of Dufferin.
  - Multiple local cultural food stores/restaurants in Winkler and Morden - 15 altogether, including Tim Hortons, and McDonalds with multiple newcomer staff.

### **Data Analysis**

All data collected was analyzed using SPSS - The collected findings from the survey were coded using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Subsequently, a list of topics and themes was developed to clearly

organize and present participants’ perspectives and experiences. Conversational analysis was rooted in the process between the research consultant and the PVLIP Coordinator to share ongoing insight into the findings and to ensure the applicability of themes. This was done to ensure a maintained focus on the primary research objectives.

### **Limitations**

This survey was conducted online which poses limitations in terms of accessibility. Newcomers who are not conversant with technology might have difficulty completing the survey. In addition, those who may not even have access to a device (such as laptop, ipad, mobile phone) to access the survey monkey platform will be discouraged from participating in the survey thereby impacting the response rate for the survey. As such, even though multiple methods were employed to reach a significant number of immigrants, the estimated number of participants was not reached (300). It should also be noted that some groups or individuals may understand specific words or concepts differently despite the definitions which were provided (e.g., sense of belonging, discrimination or expectations of excellent service delivery) and this could impact the findings. The results therefore are not necessarily representative of all groups and this subpopulation and as such, the findings should be interpreted with caution.

### **Detailed Findings**

In this section, the findings of surveys are presented. The intention is to share the perspectives of participants as accurately as possible.

### **Participant profile**

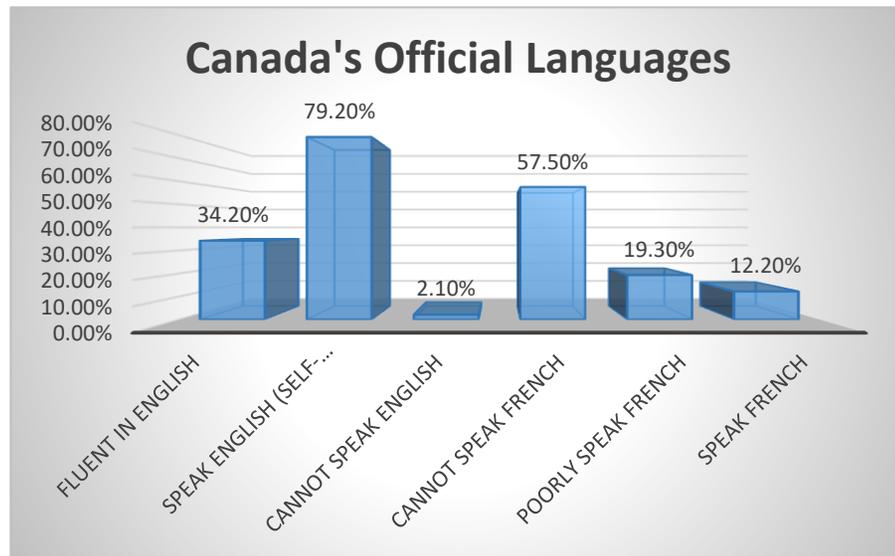
271 immigrants took this survey. Participants’ ages ranged from between 16 to 65years or older, with most being between the ages of 35 to 44 years old. 52.0% identified as male and 46.5% as female, 1.1% preferred not to answer and 0.4%

were non-binary. 5.6% participants indicated they were living with disability or chronic illness. Also, the top countries of origin of the respondents included: United States (20.4%), Philippines (18.5%), India (7.4%), Mexico (5.9%), Ukraine (5.9%) and Syria (4.4%).

In terms of immigration status, out of the 271 immigrant respondents who participated in this survey, 37.2% migrated through the family category, 29.7% used

the economic category to migrate to Canada, and 10.4% arrived in Canada as government assisted refugees. Less than 10% of the respondents were international students (9.3%), on a temporary work visa (8.6%), privately sponsored (4.5%) and blended visa office referred refugees. Most of the survey respondents have lived in their community for 2 - 5 years (44.7%), whereas 30.1% have lived in their community for 6 -10 years, 15.8% for less than a year and 9.4% for more than 10 years

## Language



### Canada's Official Languages

Majority of the respondent spoke English with 34.2% of participants speaking English as their first language. 79.3% of the participants self-assessed that they can communicate well in English while 2.1% indicated they cannot communicate well in English.

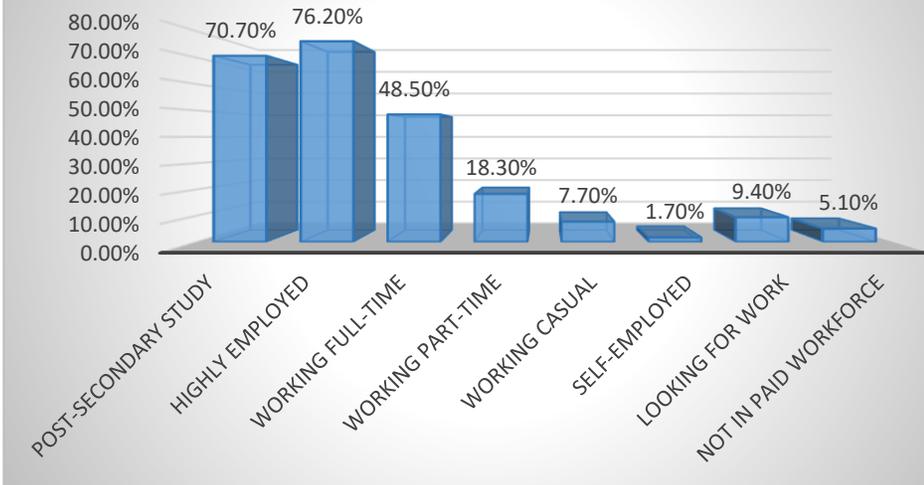
On the other hand, 57.5% of the survey respondents asserted that they cannot communicate well in French, 19.3% poorly and less than 20% can communicate well in French (12.2%).

## Housing

Responses were received from immigrants residing in Pembina Valley. 34.6% constituting the majority live in an apartment or a house with their family, 30.8% live in a house they owned, 20.3% rent an apartment or house and they live alone whereas 13.1% live in a shared apartment or house.

Further to this, 78.1% asserted that their current housing is affordable for them as opposed to 21.9% who responded no.

## Education and Employment



### Education and Employment

Majority of the respondents were highly educated, with 70.7% having completed post-secondary studies. Most of the respondents were also highly employed (76.2%), with 48.5% working full-time, 18.3% working part-time, 7.7% working casual and 1.7% self-employed. 9.4% are looking for work whereas 5.1% were not in a paid workforce and these are students, the retired, and those caring for children.

### For those who were employed:

- 56.2% disagree with the assertion that they have experienced discrimination.
- 67.3% agree that their workplace embrace diversity.
- 67.3% indicated that they feel safe and accepted at their workplace.
- 66.1% agree that they work suitable number of hours.
- 65.1% agree that their employer offers adequate training opportunities.
- 62.8% agree that they are paid a fair wage.
- Overall, 65.3% were satisfied with their current job

*"We experienced hard time finding job for my husband. He is skilled with 10+ years experience and has a Masters Degree. I would say local employers are not really interested in over qualified immigrants. What makes no sense to immigrants coming here through MPNP program, it took him 2 years to enter the same field. We went through multiple interviews. It was very desperate. Settlement services helped us a lot. I would like to admire excellent professional work of their settlement worker. She helped him to make a nice CV. However he was hired with help of friends. In small communities its all about people you know, not about who you are."*

### Sense of Belonging and Social Connectedness

Almost 84% of respondents agree that they are welcome in their community, 3.9% disagree while about 12.5% are indifferent. 75.7% of the respondents in this survey have a strong sense of belonging to their community, 7.1% indicated they had weak sense of belonging to their community while 17.28% are indifferent regarding their sense of belonging to their community. In addition, when asked about how they connect or integrate in their community, most indicated they connect with the community using recreational facilities (59.6%), cultural events (57.8%), spending time and using services provided by public libraries (54.5%), attend church or other

religious services (53.7%), and group activities organized by Regional Connections Immigrant Services (51.3%).

Most of the respondents representing 73% indicated that they feel safe in their community, 16.8% reported that they do not feel safe in their community and 10.2% were not sure. Although most indicated they were felt safe in the community, some of the respondents suggested that there should be more services for newcomer women regarding domestic violence, services such as legal support, webinars teaching rights and opportunities for females especially with children.

"This is a very friendly community"

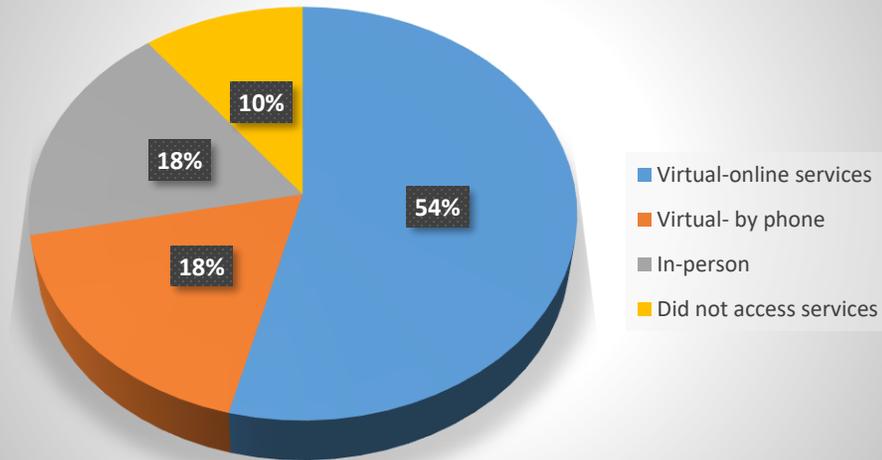
"I'm so happy to be here and I feel safe to live in Canada!"

"I always try to find a way out to get to know my community well. It's a bit difficult in Canada to understand people. So I have joined as a volunteer to a local NGO that works local people and this gives me much better understanding about the Canadian people and their way of doing things and thinking. I am grateful for that"

"The area I migrated to were a very welcoming community"

"Whenever I go to church or even a walk I have people saying good morning...how are you...or just wave and smile and honestly I enjoy that"

## Experience during COVID-19



### Experience during COVID-19

Respondents were asked if they are afraid of been infected by coronavirus - majority (69.3%) indicated that they were afraid of been infected of the virus (69.3%) while few (30.7%) indicated that they were not afraid of contracting the COVID-19. 87.8% also responded they have taken the COVID-19 vaccine while 12.2% indicated they were not vaccinated.

Furthermore, respondents were asked how they accessed services during the COVID-19 pandemic to which 93.4% said virtual-online, 31.0% virtual-by phone or other ways other than online, 30.6% in-person and 18.1% indicated they did not access services.

### Participants experienced varying degrees of difficulty in areas of their lives during COVID-19:

*"Virtual services can be difficult at times as my internet connection cannot always handle it. But in general I prefer it"*

- accessing food (46.9%)
- improving language skills (44.9%)
- finding or maintaining work (42.9%),
- paying mortgage or rent (42.4%)
- making friends and maintaining healthy relationships (36.0%)
- socially isolated (34.8%).

*"Virtual services is really great, but I'm used to face-face communication"*

## Experiences of Discrimination

In this survey, discrimination was defined as someone being treated unfairly because they are seen differently. When asked if they have been treated unfairly in the community, 55.2% of the respondents stated that they have never been treated unfairly by anyone in their communities while 44.8% responded that they have been treated unfairly in their communities. The main reasons indicated by the respondents for experiencing discrimination were due to their accent or language (26.9%), race or skin color (21.4%), ethnicity or culture (21.0%) and 17.0% due to their religion or beliefs.

The respondents further indicated such discrimination was experienced mostly at work or when applying for a job or a promotion (25.8%), when looking for housing (12.9%), in a store, bank or restaurant (14.8%), at community/public events (10.7%), at a health center (9.2%) and on the streets (9.2%).

Additional comments on discrimination:

"I talk and someone say they cannot hear, while another person heard me correctly. Sometimes is like they want to ignore you"

"I was at work one day, and I discovered I wasn't given some benefits mainly because of ethnicity"

"I was told to speak English by a stranger in a shopping place"

"(There are) Limited promotion opportunity due to language accent"

"Personally I have never witnessed any discrimination, but I can feel there's a strong notion that "immigrants are taking jobs away". Local people need to be told that immigrants come to Canada with strong academic background, work experience and knowledge. Immigrants are competitive and hardworking people."

"At work, when I wasn't confident with my English yet, I felt like they were being stressed out understanding what I'm saying, even if I tried to speak clearly, I felt like they didn't want to listen".

"There's a lot of discrimination in finding work if you are an African. Inclusiveness for the African community would really reduce the stares and violence I and my family faced in our community"

## Service Use and Experience

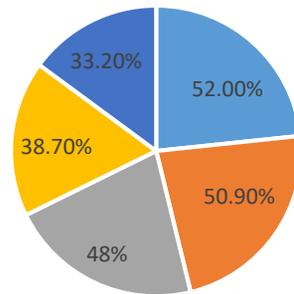
When asked about their awareness of available settlement services in the Pembina Valley, 86.3% indicated that they were aware of settlement services available in their community while 13.7% did not have knowledge about such services. Ranging from 1 month to 12 months after arrival, 89.6% of the respondents indicated they have used the settlement services in their community. However, 10.4% of the respondents indicated that they did not access these services.

Overall, satisfaction of immigrants on services in the Pembina Valley was relatively high. When asked how they learnt about the Settlement Services for immigrants in their communities, respondents most frequently reported they got to know about these services through friends (38.0%), from a settlement worker - someone who works at regional connections (28.8%), family member and social media (24.4%) while 6.3% indicated 'other'.

When asked how helpful Regional Connections was with the following services, the most selected factors according to the respondents are: assisting with documents (51.8%), learning about their community (48.8%), learning English (48.6%) and preparing resume (41.8%), looking for employment (38.2%).



### Top Support



- Finding work
- Making friends
- Settlement Services- RC
- Family Support
- Connection with others

### Top Support

Respondents were also asked about what has helped them the most while settling in the Pembina Valley. Since arriving in the Pembina Valley, the top factors which have helped the respondents were:

- Finding work (52.0%)
- Making friends (50.9%)
- Settlement services -Regional Connections Immigrant Services (48.0%)
- Family Support (38.7%)
- Connection with others that share same background or language (33.2%)

**When asked about the top 5 changes that could be made to better support immigrant settlement in their community, the respondents indicated:**

- More affordable housing options.
- Opportunities to help improve English/French skills.
- Education for employers on the values and ways of hiring and retaining immigrants.
- Better programs for newcomers to find work.
- More cultural festivals.
- Recognition of international credentials.

## CONCLUSION

### Next Step for PVLIP

This report provides insights into the experiences of immigrants in the Pembina Valley with the goal that community members, organizations and decision-makers may be more informed in their efforts to support immigrants in the region. There are several areas which show the current important work already done as well as areas where there is a need for changes or improvements. The PVLIP will continue to engage with the

information in this report as well as share it with those who can translate it into concrete action.

The findings from this survey will help to inform ongoing activities of the Action Plan (2020-2025). In developing the next tactical plan for PVLIP, the hope is that the PVLIP Council will adapt its efforts to best incorporate the priorities that have been voiced by the immigrant community.

**Additional information about PVLIP and access to the Action Plan (2020-2025) is available at [www.pvlip.ca](http://www.pvlip.ca)**

**If interested in the survey questionnaire or any questions relating to this report, please contact the PVLIP Coordinator: [info@pvlip.ca](mailto:info@pvlip.ca)**

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