

# 2026 Kingston Newcomer Experience Survey

## Highlights of Findings & Methodology

Produced by Kingston Immigration Partnership  
and le Réseau de soutien à l'immigration francophone on June 11, 2026.



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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Overview of Kingston

In 2021, Kingston CMA had a population of 172,546 residents, including 21.4% seniors and older adults (65 and older), 64.2% working-age adults (15 to 64) and 14.4% children under 15. Between 2016 and 2021, the population grew by 11,371 residents, representing a 7.1% increase.

Newcomer populations in Kingston experienced even stronger growth during this period. Between 2016 and 2021, the immigrant and non-permanent resident population increased by approximately 17.4%.

By 2021, 20,295 Kingston residents were immigrants, representing 12.1% of the population and 3,320 residents, or 2%, were non-permanent residents. The top 3 places of birth among newcomers living in Kingston were the United Kingdom, the United States and India. Among recent newcomers who arrived between 2016 to 2021, the top 3 countries of birth were Syria, India and China.

## 1.2 Survey Methodology

A 38-question survey was developed and offered in 12 languages, including Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Hindi, Kinyarwanda, Persian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tigrinya and Turkish. To support accessibility for English language learners, the language used throughout the survey was reviewed by English language instructors.

The survey was available in both online and print formats, with printed copies distributed through settlement agencies. The survey was shared through community partners, ethnocultural associations and on social media platforms. Questions focused on immigration and demographic information, employment and education history, experiences accessing healthcare systems, digital literacy and how welcomed respondents feel in Kingston.

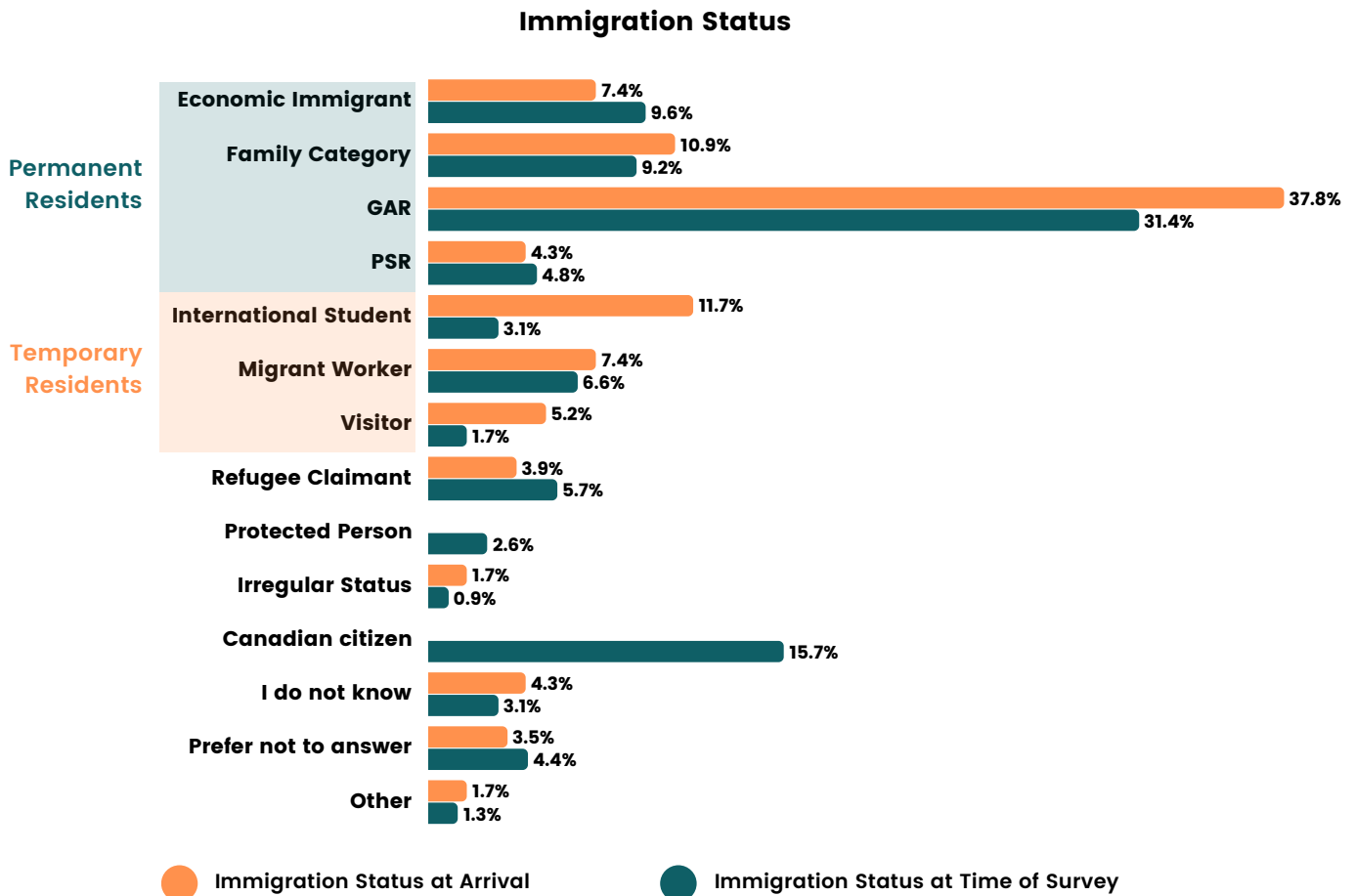
Overall, 275 respondents participated in the survey, with 235 fully completing it, representing an 85.5% completion rate. 69 were submitted in paper format, while the remaining responses were submitted online through SurveyMonkey. Most respondents completed the survey in English (58.7%), followed by Arabic (11.8%), Spanish (9.6%) and French (2.2%). 4 respondents indicated that they were born in Canada and were excluded from the analysis.

## 2. Demographic Information

### 2.1 Immigration Status

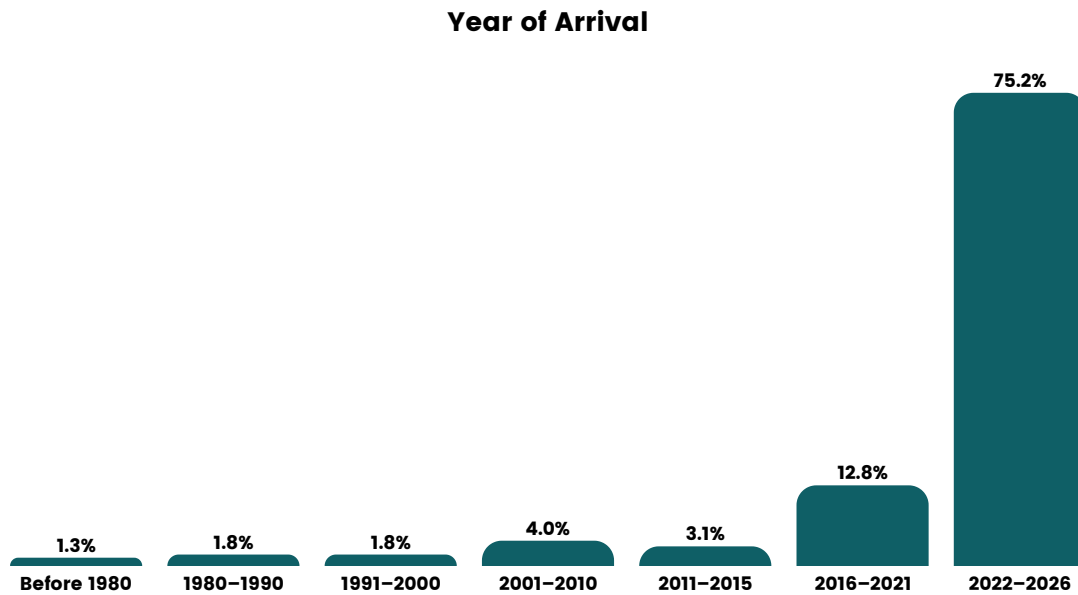
Respondents to the 2026 Kingston Newcomer Experience Survey arrived in Canada through a range of immigration pathways and held a variety of immigration statuses. These included permanent residents through economic, family-category, Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) and Privately Sponsored Refugee (PSR) pathways, temporary residents such as international students, migrant workers and visitors, as well as refugee claimants and other immigration statuses.

The largest group of respondents arrived in Canada as GARs, followed by family-category immigrants and international students. Overall, 15.7% of respondents appeared to have transitioned to Canadian citizenship following arrival, while 63.1% reported that their immigration status had remained the same. Many respondents who initially arrived as temporary residents later transitioned into permanent resident categories (21.4%) or Canadian citizenship (16.1%). In addition, 12.9% of respondents who initially arrived as permanent residents later transitioned to Canadian citizenship. More than half of refugee claimant respondents (55.6%) appeared to have transitioned to Protected Person status.



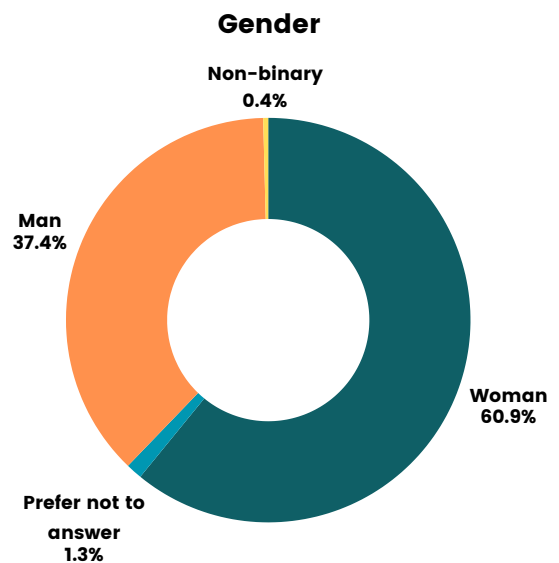
## 2.2 Length of Time in Canada

Three quarters (75.2%) of respondents arrived in Canada between 2022 and 2026, with more than half (50.4%) having arrived within the past 3 years, between 2024 and 2026. Longer periods of residence in Canada appeared to be associated with increased likelihood of transitioning into permanent residency and Canadian citizenship.



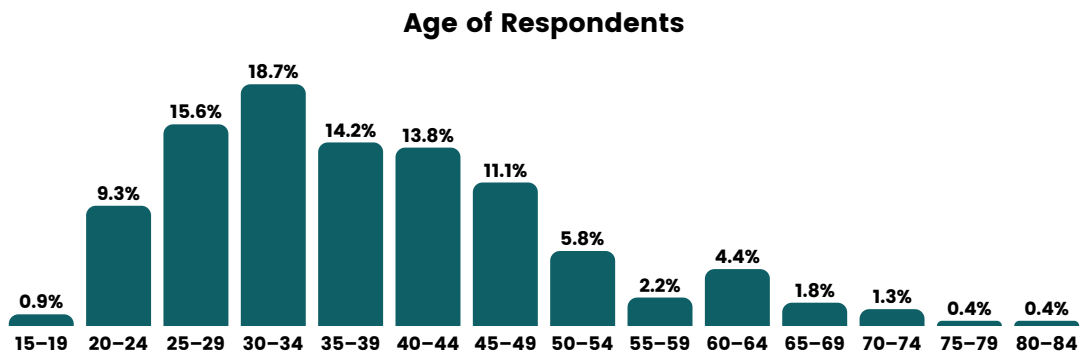
## 2.3 Gender

The majority of respondents identified as women (60.9%), while 37.4% identified as men. A small proportion of respondents identified as non-binary (0.4%).



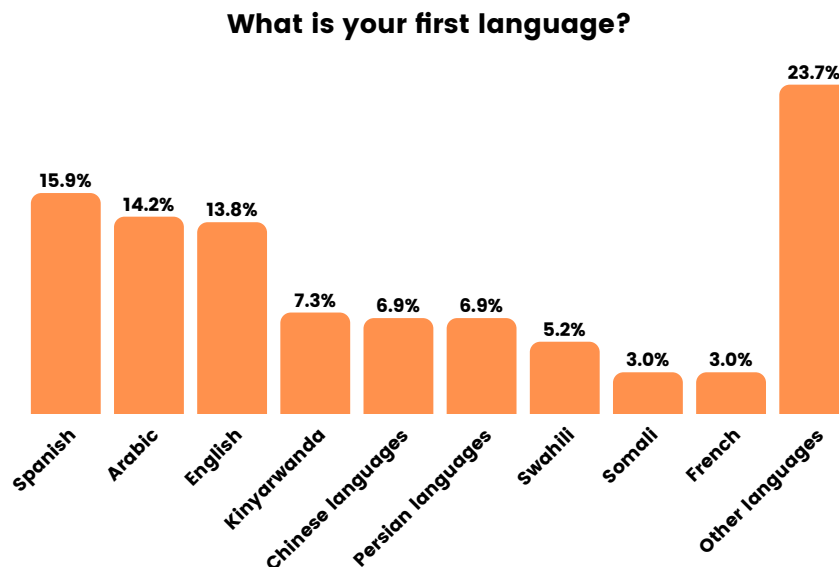
## 2.4 Age

Most respondents (82.7%) were between the ages of 20 and 49. Younger respondents appeared more likely to hold temporary immigration statuses as international students or migrant workers, while older respondents appeared more likely to hold permanent residency or Canadian citizenship. Refugee-related pathways, including GARs, PSRs, refugee claimants and Protected Persons, appeared across multiple age groups.



## 2.5 First Language

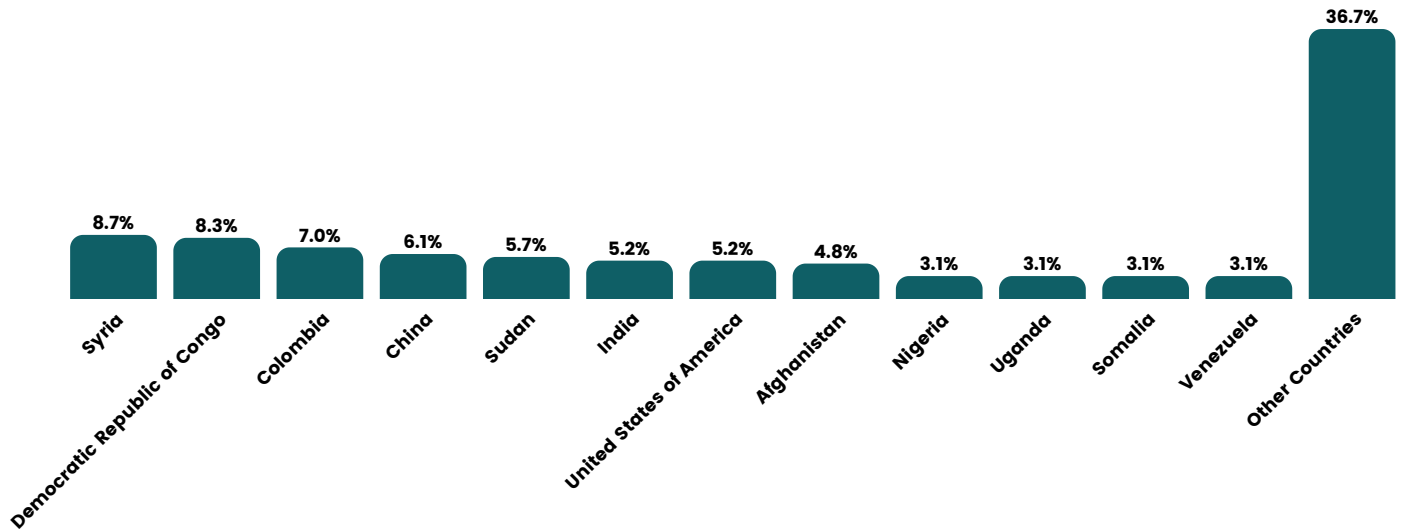
Respondents reported 40 unique first languages, with Spanish, Arabic and English identified as the most common first languages among survey participants.



## 2.6 Countries of Birth

Respondents reported a broad range of countries of birth, with 57 countries identified among survey participants. The largest proportions of respondents identified Syria (8.7%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (8.3%) as their countries of birth.

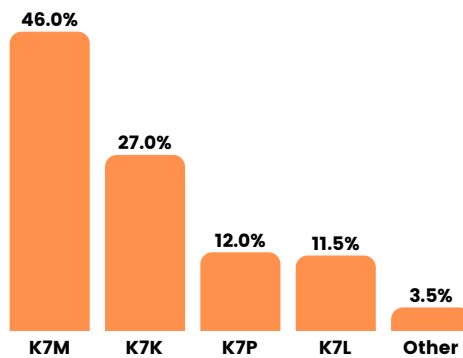
What country were you born in?



## 2.7 Postal Code

Survey respondents were primarily concentrated in Kingston postal code areas K7M (46%) and K7K (27%). This suggests that survey respondents were largely concentrated within more urban areas of Kingston, with smaller representation from surrounding areas.

Postal Code

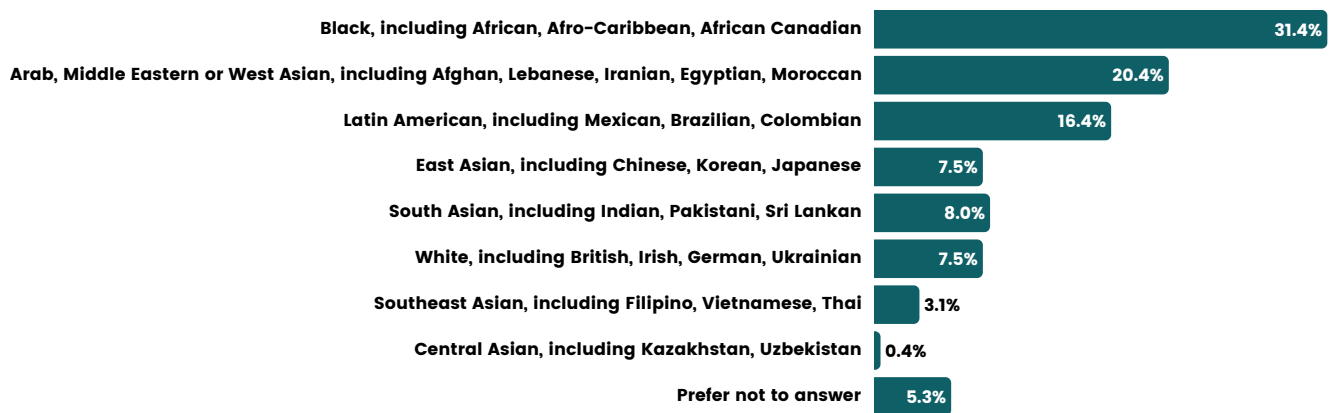


## 2.8 Racialized Population

Race-based data is used to better understand the experiences, needs and barriers faced by racialized communities. Collecting this information can help identify systemic inequities and support more responsive policies, programs and services.

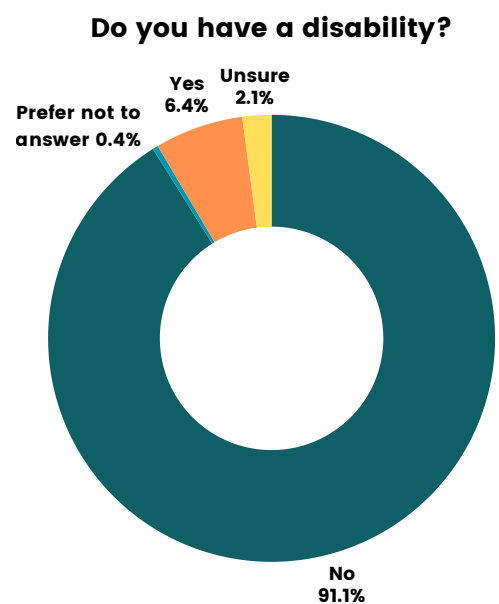
The majority (92.5%) of survey participants identified as racialized, meaning they identified as a race or population group other than White. The largest racialized group represented among respondents identified as Black (31.4%), followed by Arab respondents (20.4%). Eight respondents (3.5%) selected multiple identities.

### What is your race?



## 2.9 Disability

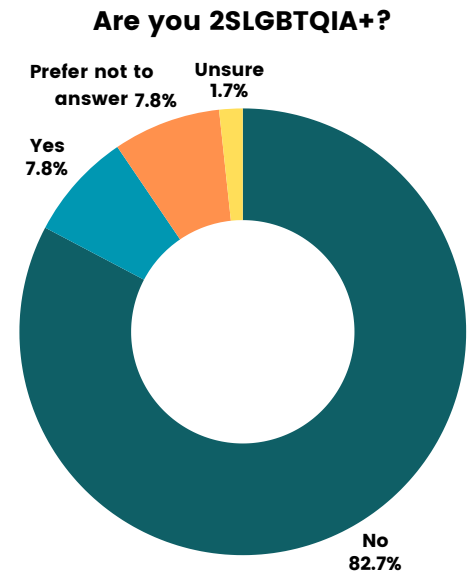
Most respondents (91.1%) did not identify as having a disability. While the number of respondents reporting a disability was small, GAR respondents were most likely to report having a disability, with 9.6% reporting a disability.



## 2.10 2SLGBTQ+

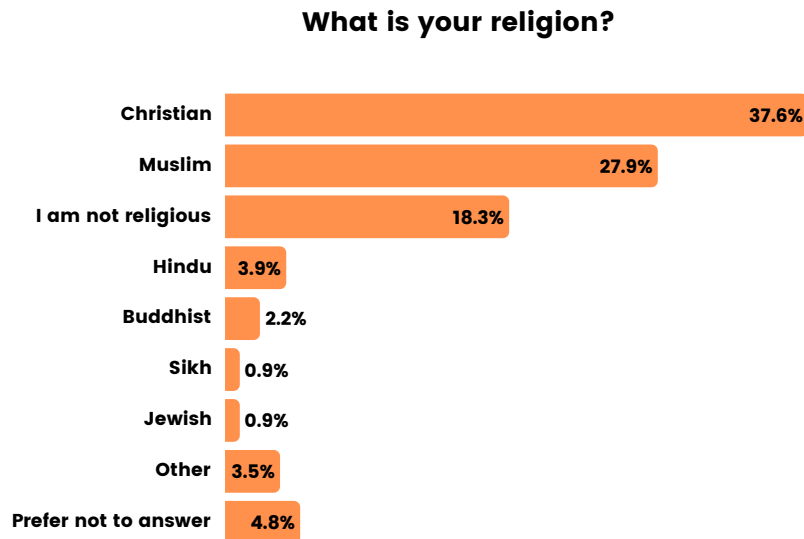
Data related to 2SLGBTQ+ identity was collected to better understand barriers, inequities and experiences among 2SLGBTQ+ newcomer respondents. Overall, 7.8% of respondents identified as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, while 82.7% indicated that they did not.

Refugee claimant respondents reported the highest proportion identifying as 2SLGBTQ+ (33.3%) however the small sample size of refugee claimant respondents limits the ability to determine whether these differences are statistically significant.



## 2.11 Religion

The largest proportion of respondents identified as Christian (37.6%), followed by Muslim (27.9%). 18.3% of respondents indicated that they were not religious. Smaller proportions of respondents identified as Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Sikh or another religion or spiritual identity.



### 3. Knowledge of Official Languages

Most respondents (56.8%) described their English proficiency as “good” or “very good.” Respondents reported lower levels of French language proficiency compared to English.

Only 9.5% of respondents described their French proficiency as “good” or “very good.”

#### How good is your English?



#### How good is your French?



### 3.1 Official Languages and Immigration Status

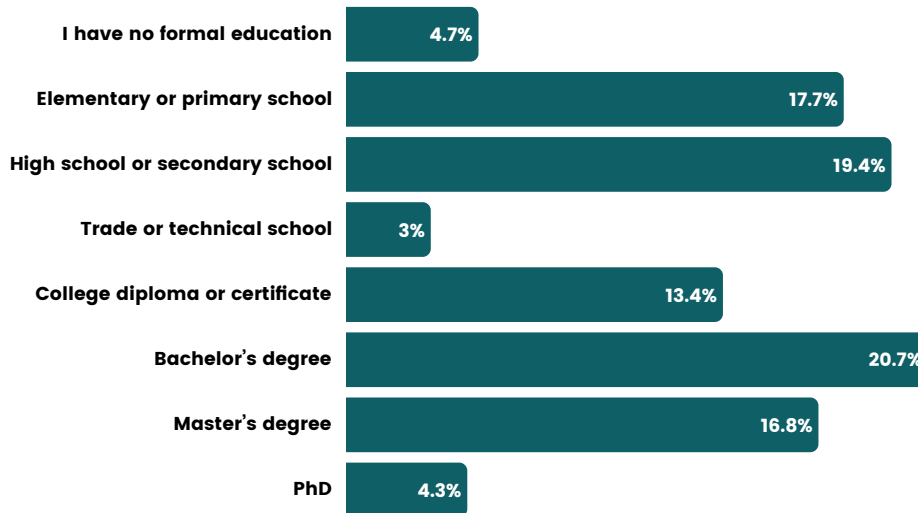
Those who arrived as international students were most likely to report strong English language proficiency, with 96.3% describing their English as “good” or “very good,” followed by migrant workers (88.2%) and economic immigrants (87.5%). No international student, migrant worker or economic immigrant respondents reported their English proficiency as “bad” or “very bad.”

Refugee respondents were among the most likely to report lower levels of English proficiency, with 25.6% of GARs, 22.2% of refugee claimants and 20% of PSRs describing their English as “bad” or “very bad”. At the same time, 77.8% of refugee claimants described their English proficiency as “good” or “very good.” Refugee claimant respondents reported the greatest variation in English proficiency levels (SD = 1.27), compared to Privately Sponsored Refugee respondents (SD = 1.14) and Government-Assisted Refugee respondents (SD = 1.11). Refugee respondents reported some of the lowest levels of French proficiency. Most GAR (89.2%) and PSR respondents (70%) described their French proficiency as “bad” or “very bad.”

## 4. Education

The largest proportion of respondents reported their highest level of education as a Bachelor's degree (20.7%), followed by high school or secondary school education (19.4%), elementary or primary school education (17.7%) and a Master's degree (16.8%). A small proportion of respondents (4.7%) reported having no formal education.

### What is the highest level of education you completed?



### 4.1 Education and Immigration Status

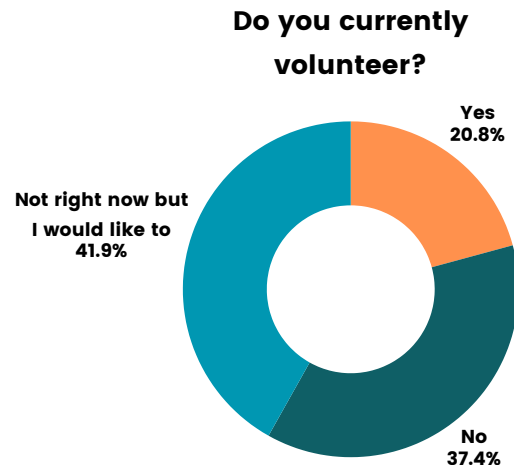
Higher levels of post-secondary education were reported among respondents who arrived through pathways connected to employment, education and economic immigration. Among migrant workers, 82.4% reported completing a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or PhD, followed by international students (81.5%) and economic immigrants (81.3%).

GAR respondents typically reported lower levels of formal education compared to other immigration groups. Among GAR respondents, 5.8% reported completing a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree, PhD, while 44.2% reported either elementary or primary school education or no formal education. Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs) demonstrated more mixed educational backgrounds, with 20% reporting completing a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or PhD and 20% reporting elementary education or no formal education. Refugee claimant respondents reported high levels of education, with 77.8% of refugee claimant respondents reported completing a Bachelor's degree, Master's degree or PhD.

## 5. Volunteering

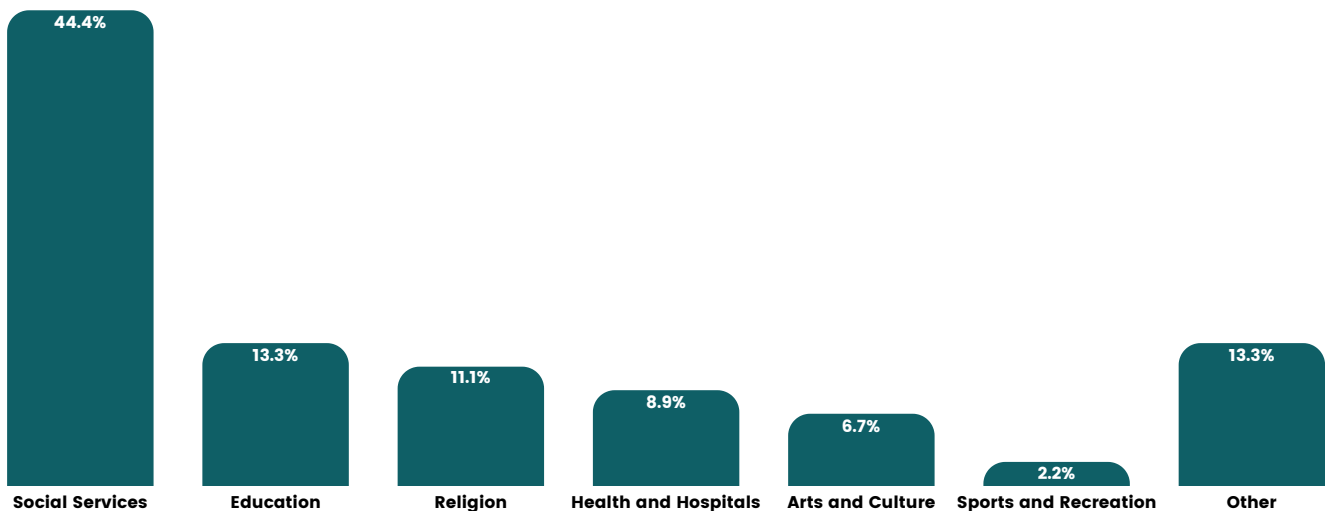
A fifth of respondents (20.8%) reported that they currently volunteer, while 37.4% stated that they would like to volunteer in the future. In comparison, 32% of people across Canada engaged in formal volunteering in 2023.

Respondents with stronger self-reported English proficiency appeared more likely to volunteer. Among respondents who described their English proficiency as “good” or “very good,” 24.6% reported that they currently volunteer. In comparison, among respondents who described their English proficiency as “bad” or “very bad,” only 6.1% reported currently volunteering, while 48.5% indicated that they would like to volunteer in the future. This suggests that interest in volunteering among newcomer respondents remains high, particularly among those who may face language barriers that limit participation.



Among respondents who volunteer, the largest proportion volunteered in social services organizations (44.4%), including food banks and shelters. Smaller proportions volunteered in education (13.3%), religious organizations (11.1%), health and hospital settings (8.9%), arts and culture (6.7%) and sports and recreation (2.2%).

### Where do you volunteer?

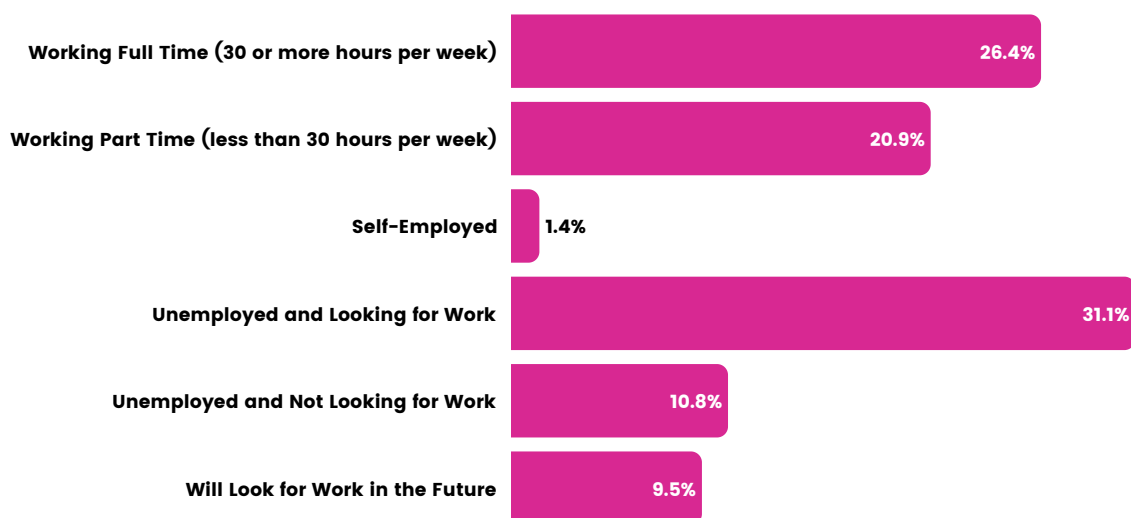


\*The Daily – [Volunteering and charitable giving in Canada, 2018 to 2023].\* Statistics Canada, 23 June 2025, [Statistics Canada](#)

## 6. Employment

More than a quarter of respondents (26.4%) reported working full time, while 20.9% reported working part time. In comparison, 32.9% of Kingston residents reported working full time in 2021, while 28.5% reported working part year and/or part time. Respondents who reported not currently looking for work cited reasons such as disability, health concerns, retirement and caregiving responsibilities. Among respondents who indicated that they planned to look for work in the future, common reasons included not yet being legally permitted to work in Canada or feeling, or being told, that their English language proficiency was not yet strong enough to enter the labour market.

### Are you currently working?



### 6.1 Employment and Education

Respondents with postsecondary education were generally more likely to report full-time employment, with 39.3% reporting working full time. In contrast, respondents with lower levels of education were substantially more likely to report unemployment. More than half of respondents with high school education as their highest form of education (52.4%) reported being unemployed and looking for work. No respondent with elementary or primary school education or no formal education reported full time employment and only 3.7% reported part-time employment.

### 6.2 Employment and Immigration Status

Those who arrived as economic immigrants, migrant workers and international students reported the highest levels of overall employment among respondent groups. Approximately 90.9% of economic immigrants, 90% of migrant workers and 85.7% of international students reported being employed either full time or part time.

Among larger respondent groups, GAR respondents reported the highest levels of unemployment. Nearly half (46.7%) reported being unemployed and looking for work, while an additional 20% reported that they planned to look for work in the future.

Statistics Canada. Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population: Kingston, Ontario. Government of Canada, 2023. Statistics Canada Census Profile – Kingston. Accessed 19 May 2026.

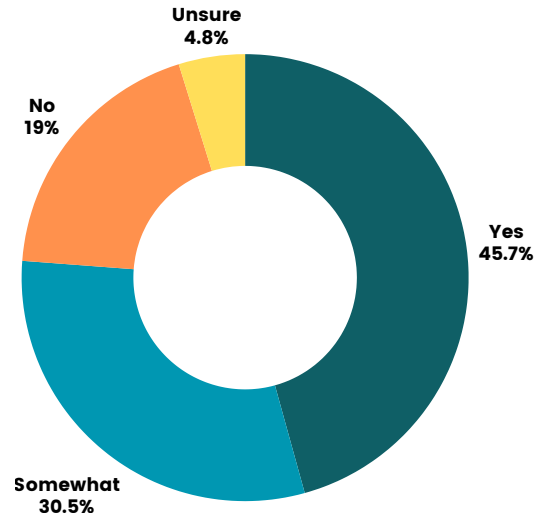
### 6.3 Employment Mismatch

Employment mismatch occurs when a worker’s education, skills, experience or qualifications do not align with their current employment. Across Canada, newcomers are more likely to experience employment mismatch compared to the general population. While approximately 13% of Canadian workers report a skills mismatch in their employment, this survey suggests higher levels among newcomer respondents.

When asked whether their current job matched their education, skills and past work experience, 19% of respondents reported employment mismatch and an additional 30.5% reported somewhat. Economic immigrants reported the strongest alignment between their employment and prior experience, with 69.2% reporting that their job matched their education and skills. Among larger respondent groups, Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs) reported the greatest employment mismatch, with 44.4% reporting that their current job did not match their education, skills and past work experience.

Among respondents whose current jobs did not align with their education, skills, or previous work experience, the most commonly cited barrier was the non-recognition of international education or training (22%). An additional 8.8% of respondents said their immigration status restricted the type of work they could obtain, and 8.8% reported experiencing racism or discrimination while looking for employment.

**For those who are working, does your current job match your education, skills, and past work experience?**



#### What are the reasons your current job does not match your skills or experience?



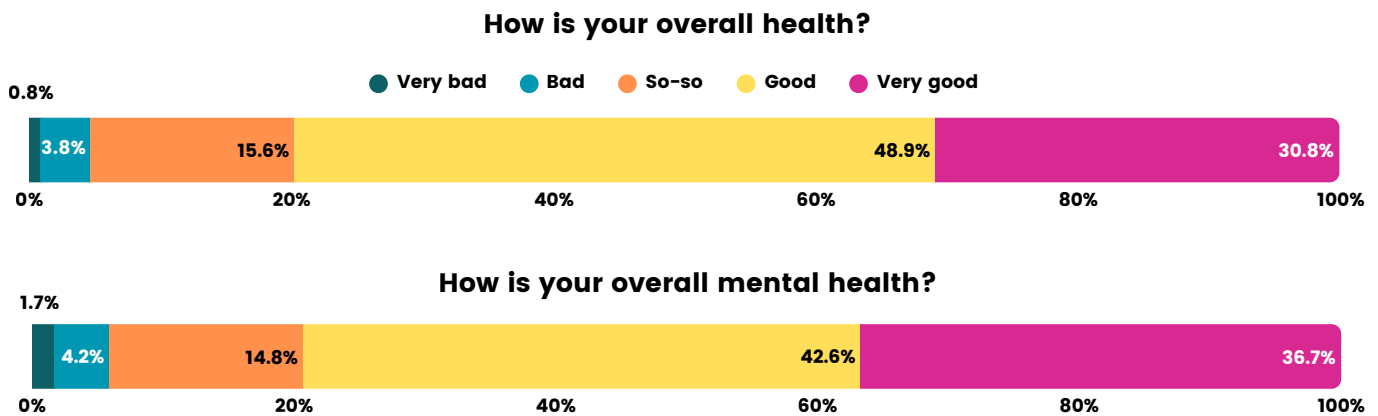
Statistics Canada. Temporary Residents in Canada, 2024. Government of Canada, 2026, Statistics Canada – Temporary Residents in Canada, 2024. Tombe, Trevor. Temporary Migration and Non-Permanent Residents in Canada. University of Toronto, School of Public Policy and Governance, 2019, University of Toronto Commentary PDF.

## 7. Health and Mental Health

### 7.1 Perception of Health

Perceptions of health among respondents were generally positive. When asked to rate their overall health, the large majority of respondents (79.7%) described their health as “good” or “very good.” Perceptions of mental health among survey respondents were generally positive. 53.7% of Canadians reported their mental health as “excellent” or “very good”, while nearly 8 in 10 (79.3%) respondents to this survey rated their mental health as “good” or “very good”.

These findings may align with the Healthy Migrant Effect, a phenomenon in which newcomers often arrive with stronger health than domestic populations, although this health advantage tends to decline over time. Most respondents in this survey had arrived in Canada within the past 3 years.



### 7.2 Perception of Health and Immigration Status

There appears to be some relationship between immigration status and perceptions of health. All international student respondents described their health as either “good” or “very good,” followed by economic immigrants and migrant workers, with 90.9% and 86.7% respectively reporting positive perceptions of health.

Among larger respondent groups, GAR respondents reported lower perceived health outcomes. While most GAR respondents still described their health positively (77.5%), they were more likely than other groups to report “so-so” or “bad” health (23.3%).

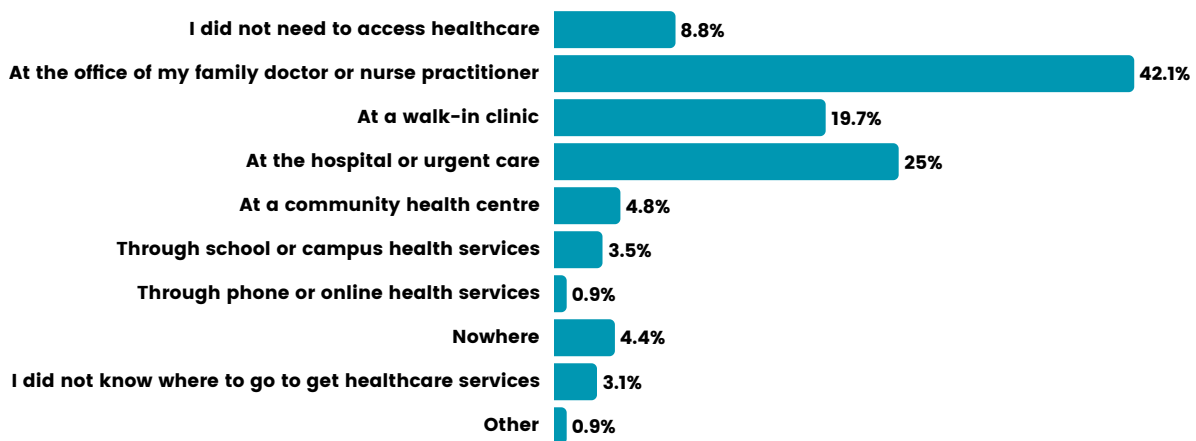
Statistics Canada. “The Daily – Health of Canadians, 2024.” Statistics Canada, 5 Mar. 2025, Statistics Canada – Health of Canadians, 2024.  
Statistics Canada. “Quality of Life Indicator: Perceived Mental Health.” Statistics Canada, Government of Canada, Statistics Canada – Perceived Mental Health Indicator.  
Accessed 19 May 2026.

### 7.3 Healthcare Access

Respondents most commonly reported accessing healthcare through a family doctor or nurse practitioner (42.1%), followed by hospitals or urgent care services (25%) and walk-in clinics (19.7%). Only 8.8% of respondents reported not requiring healthcare during the past year. A small number of respondents also described accessing traditional medicine or private healthcare services. Respondents were permitted to select more than one healthcare access point.

Some respondents reported barriers to accessing care. While only 3.1% of respondents reported that they did not know where to go to access healthcare services, 28.9% of respondents identified accessing healthcare as a challenge they experienced in Kingston.

#### Where do you go to get healthcare?

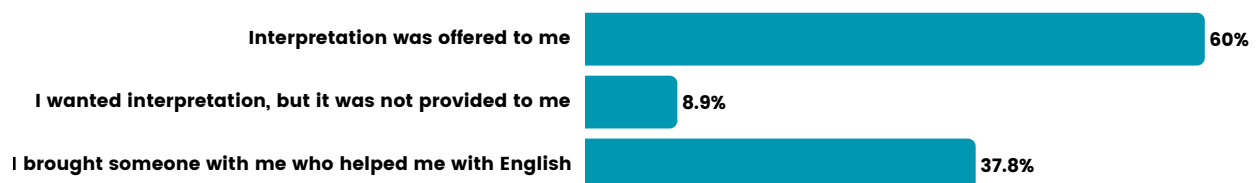


### 7.4 Medical Interpretation

Among respondents who wanted or needed language interpretation, 8.9% said they wanted interpretation but it was not provided. 37.8% reported bringing someone with them to help communicate in English, which may suggest continued reliance on informal interpretation supports during healthcare appointments, where there may be increased risk of miscommunication or interpretation errors.

Respondents were most likely to report wanting interpretation but not receiving it at the office of a family doctor or nurse practitioner and at walk-in clinics. Interpretation was most likely to be offered at a community health centre.

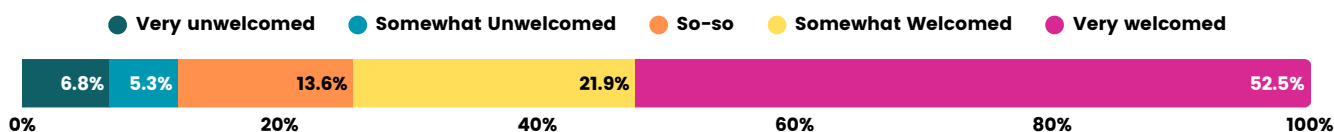
#### For those who needed language interpretation, did the healthcare provider offer language interpretation?



## 8. Kingston as a Welcoming City

Nearly 3 in 4 respondents (74.4%) reported feeling welcomed in Kingston, while approximately 1 in 8 respondents reported feeling somewhat or very unwelcomed.

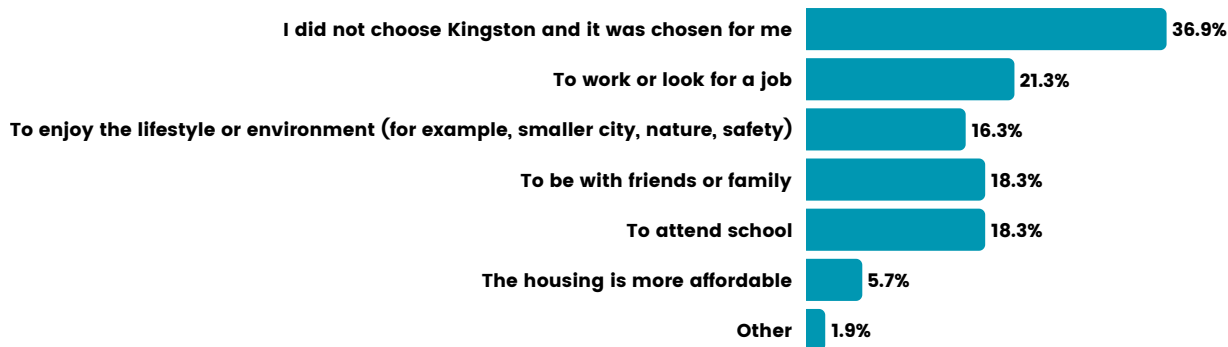
### How welcome do you feel in Kingston?



### 8.1 Attraction Factors for Moving to Kingston

When asked why they moved to Kingston, the most common response was that Kingston had been chosen for them (36.9%). This response was particularly common among refugees, as refugees typically have no choice regarding the city, region or country where they are resettled. Other commonly identified reasons included moving to Kingston to work or look for employment (21.3%), to be with friends or family (18.3%), to attend school (18.3%) and to enjoy the lifestyle or environment (16.3%).

### Why did you move to Kingston?

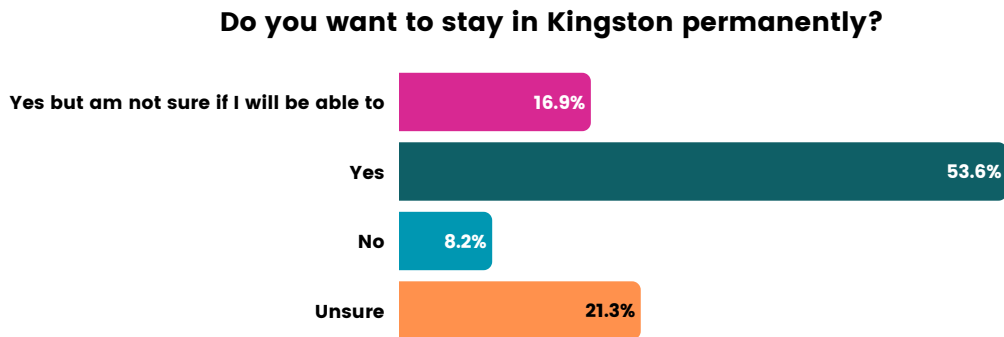


Immigration Status at Arrival	Most Common Reason	Immigration Status at Arrival	Most Common Reason
GAR	Kingston was chosen for me	International student	To attend school
PSR	Kingston was chosen for me	Migrant worker	To work or look for a job
Economic immigrant	To work or look for a job	Visitor	To be with friends or family
Family-category immigrant	To be with friends or family	Refugee claimant	Kingston was chosen for me

## 8.2 Long-Term Retention

More than half of respondents (53.6%) reported that they wanted to stay in Kingston permanently, while an additional 16.9% stated that they wanted to stay but were unsure whether they would be able to.

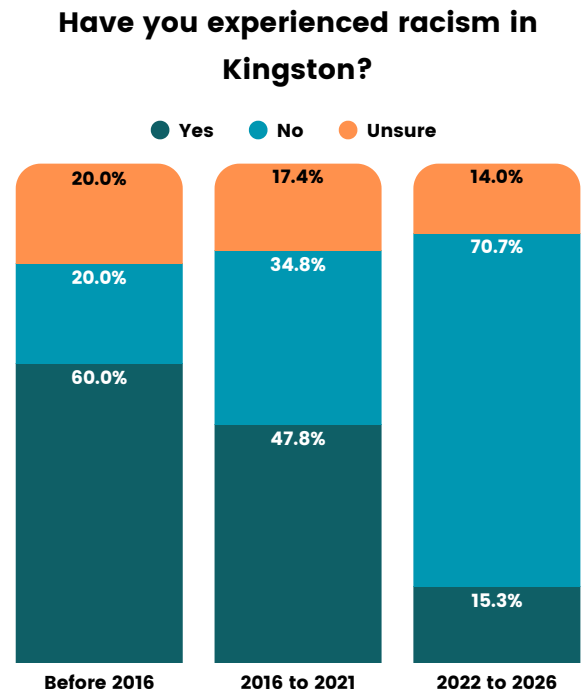
Among respondents who were uncertain about whether they could remain in Kingston long term, common concerns included limited employment opportunities, housing affordability, cost of living and uncertainty surrounding immigration status or future pathways to permanent residency.



## 8.3 Experiences of Racism

Among racialized respondents, 22.3% of respondents reported that they had experienced racism while another 14.4% were unsure. These findings should be understood within the context of the survey population, as most respondents had arrived in Canada recently. Respondents who have lived in Canada longer may have had more opportunities to experience racism.

Among respondents who recently arrived between 2022 to 2026, only 15.3% reported experiencing racism. In comparison, 47.8% of respondents who arrived between 2016 to 2021 reported experiencing racism. Respondents who arrived before 2016 were substantially more likely to report experiences of racism overall, with 60% reporting experiences of racism.

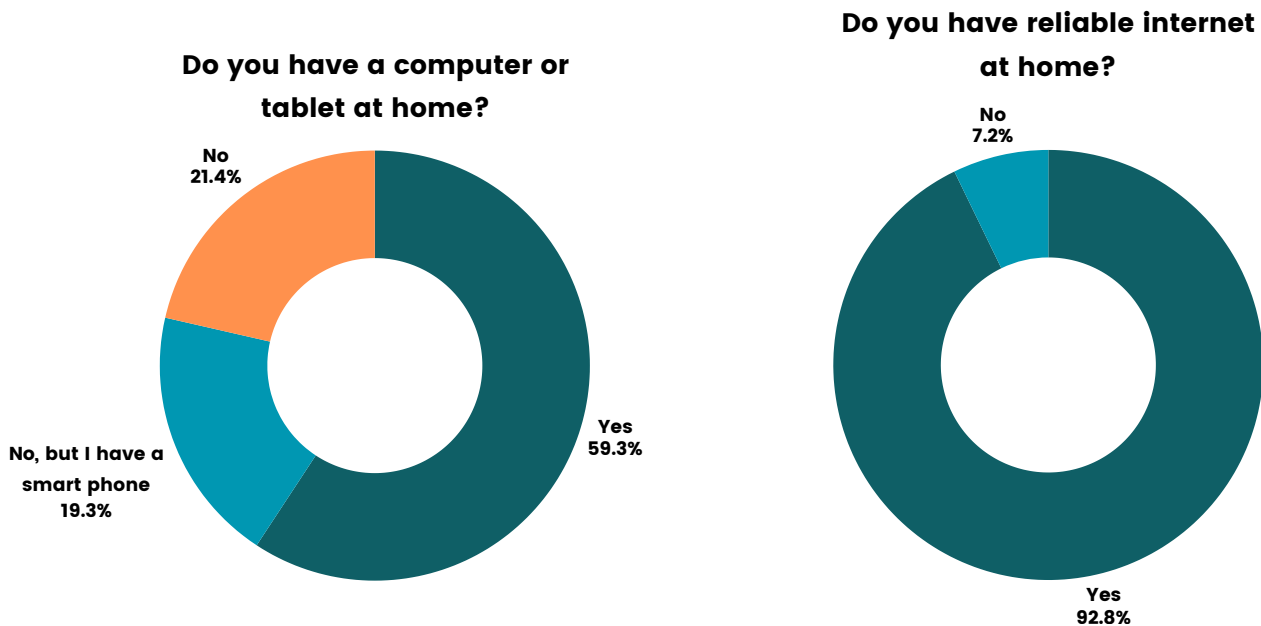


## 9. Digital Access and Literacy

### 9.1 Digital Access

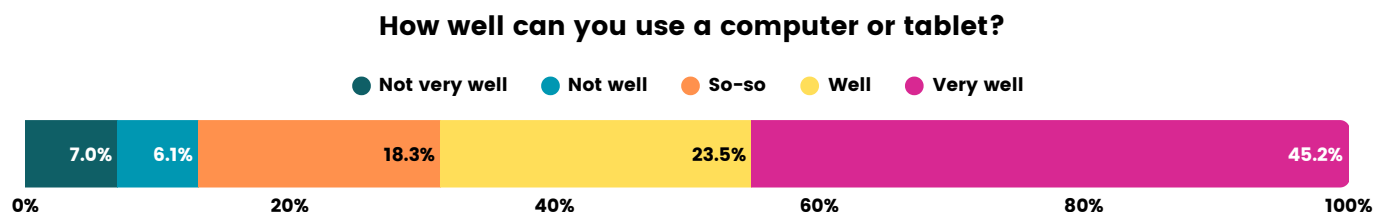
More than a fifth of respondents (21.4%) reported not having access to a computer or tablet at home, while an additional 19.3% reported relying only on a smartphone. Together, this suggests that 40.7% of respondents may face barriers participating in virtual services, meetings or online activities, or may need to access them primarily through a smartphone rather than a computer or tablet.

Refugee respondents reported lower levels of digital access compared to the overall survey population. Among refugee respondents, 61% reported either not having access to a computer or tablet at home (34.3%) or relying only on a smartphone (26.7%).



### 9.2 Digital Literacy

More than two thirds of respondents (68.7%) described their skills using a computer or tablet as “well” or “very well.” Similar to digital access, refugee respondents reported lower levels of digital literacy. Only 51.5% of refugee respondents reported being able to use a computer or tablet “well” or “very well.”

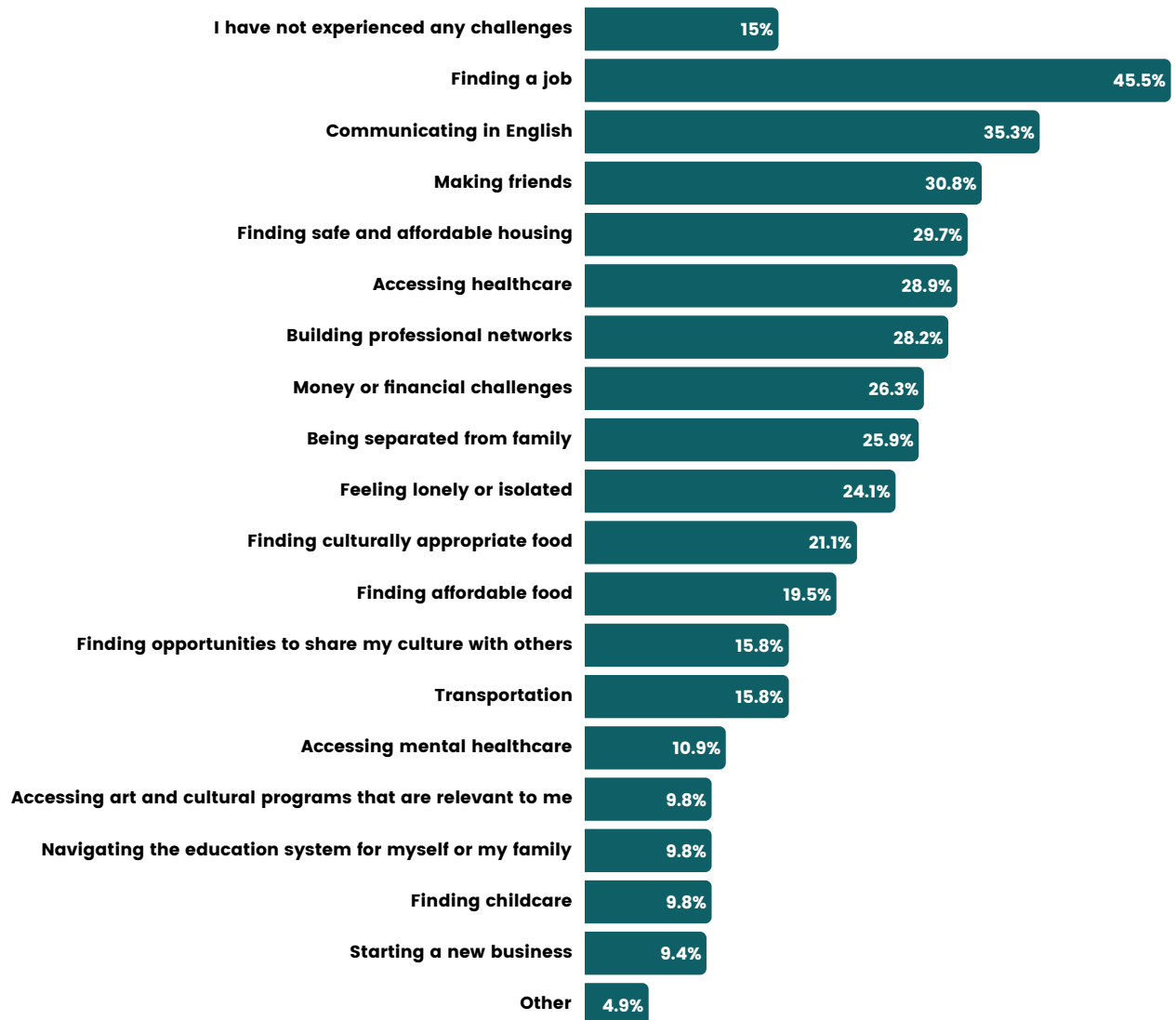


## 10. Community Challenges

Moving to a new country can pose challenges for newcomers. Respondents reported a wide range of challenges. Employment-related challenges were the most commonly identified concern, with 45.5% of respondents reporting difficulty finding a job. Communication in English was also a significant challenge for many respondents (35.3%), followed by making friends (30.8%), finding safe and affordable housing (29.7%), accessing healthcare (28.9%) and building professional networks (28.2%).

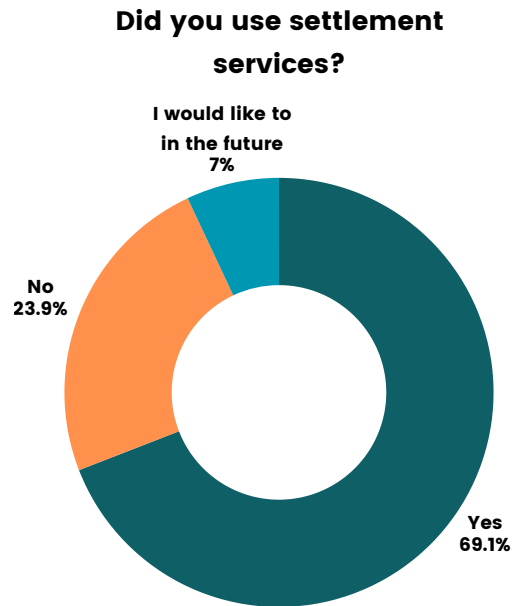
Only 15% of respondents reported that they had not experienced any challenges.

### What challenges have you experienced living in Kingston?

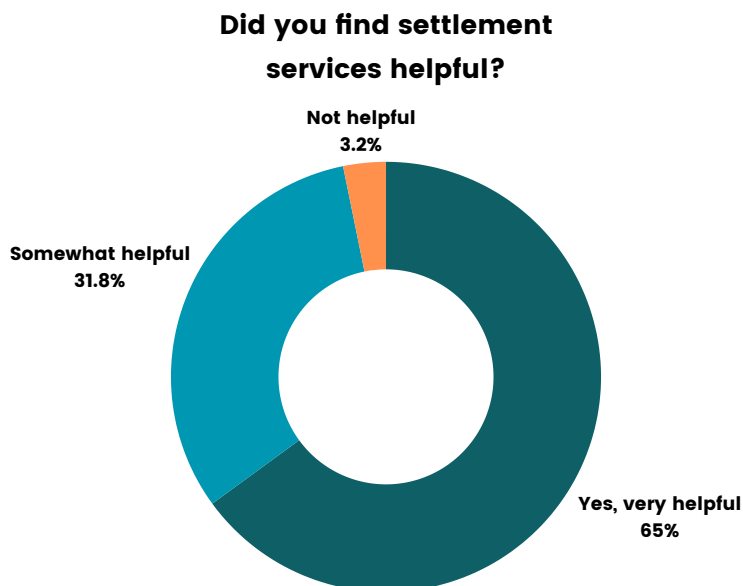


## 11. Access to Newcomer Settlement Services

Most respondents (69.1%) reported having used settlement services and 7% stated that they would like to access them in the future.



Among those who had used settlement services, nearly all respondents found them helpful, with 65% describing them as “very helpful” and 31.8% as “somewhat helpful.”



## **12. Conclusion**

### **12.1 Limitations**

While efforts were made to make the survey accessible through online and printed formats, translation and community outreach, there were still limitations to participation. Individuals who were not connected to settlement services, or who experienced digital, literacy or technology barriers, may have had fewer opportunities to complete the survey. In addition, while the survey was offered in 12 languages, it was not possible to reflect the full linguistic diversity of newcomer communities in Kingston.

The survey also received a higher proportion of responses from more recent arrivals to Canada. While this provided valuable insight into the experiences of recent newcomers, it limited the ability to compare experiences across longer settlement periods.

### **12.2 Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank all newcomers, immigrants and refugees who took the time to participate in this survey and share their experiences. Their perspectives, experiences and insights were invaluable in strengthening understanding of newcomer experiences in Kingston. We also extend our appreciation to the community partners who supported the review, outreach, promotion and distribution of the survey.

### **12.3 Final Reflections**

Responses to the 2026 Kingston Newcomer Experience Survey highlighted the challenges newcomers experience while settling in Kingston, efforts made by the Kingston community to welcome them and the resilience, skills and contributions newcomers bring to the community.

Respondents reflected significant diversity in immigration pathways, countries of origin, languages, educational backgrounds and settlement experiences. Many respondents reported positive experiences in Kingston. At the same time, the survey identified ongoing barriers related to healthcare access, employment, language and experiences of racism and discrimination.

The findings reinforce the importance of coordinated community supports and accessible services that strengthen inclusion, stability and belonging for newcomers in Kingston.