Evaluation of the Citizenship Program

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Acronyms

CB	Citizenship Branch
CBSA	Canada Border Services Agency
CEB	Client Experience Branch
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmarks
CLIC	Cours de langue pour immigrants au Canada
CLST	Citizenship Language Screening Tool
CMB	Case Management Branch
CN	Centralized Network
COC	Citizenship Operational Community
CPCC	Citizenship Program Coordinating Committee
CPC-S	Case Processing Centre - Sydney
CPPG	Citizenship and Passport Program Guidance
DG	Director General
DGO	Director General Office
DN	Domestic Network
FRR	Financial Resources Review
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GCMS	Global Case Management System
GSS	General Social Survey
HR	Human Resources
ICES	Integrated Customs Enforcement System
IRCC	Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
IRPA	Immigration and Refugee Protection Act
LAT	Language Assessment Tool
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers
NCLC	Niveaux de compétence linguistiques canadiens
NHQ	National Headquarters
NOS	Newcomer Outcome Survey
NPR	Non-Permanent Resident
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPP	Operations Planning and Performance
PB	Projects Branch
PCH	Canadian Heritage
PDI	Program Delivery Instructions
PIP	Performance Information Profile
PMT	Program Management Table
PR	Permanent Resident
R&E	Research and Evaluation
SIP	Settlement and Integration Policy
SN	Settlement Network
SPO	Service Provider Organizations
SPP	Strategic and Program Policy
TR	Temporary Resident

Executive summary

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Citizenship Program. The evaluation was conducted in fulfillment of requirements under the 2016 Treasury Board *Policy on Results*, and considered program performance with a focus on the citizenship grants line of business and program management. The evaluation covered the period from 2013 to 2018, with some consideration of earlier years to better understand the implications of policy changes, uptake trends and program developments.

Overview of the Citizenship Program

The Citizenship Program administers citizenship legislation and promotes the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, impacting both newcomers who wish to become citizens as well as current Canadians. Broadly, the Citizenship Program consists of citizenship awareness, citizenship acquisition, confirmation and revocation, and program management.

To obtain Canadian citizenship, individuals must first meet eligibility requirements, complete and submit an application, and attend a ceremony where the oath of citizenship is recited before a citizenship judge. Applicants pay a fee for the grant application ($100 for a minor grant application and $530 for an adult grant application), and applicants aged 18 years and older pay a $100 fee for the Right to be a Citizen. Naturalized citizens are conferred legal status in the country and receive rights, namely the right to vote, hold public office and the right to remain in Canada. For many, citizenship is a significant milestone of their integration. Of the 2,826,300 permanent residents admitted to Canada between 2005 and 2015, 50% were naturalized citizens by December 31st, 2018, and a further 7% had applied for citizenship.

Broadly, the Citizenship Program expects to contribute to eligible permanent residents becoming Canadian citizens by ensuring that Canadian citizenship involves active engagement and is a valued status, that citizenship is accessible to all who meet eligibility requirements, including vulnerable groups; and that client service standards are predefined and maintained. In doing so, the department must also ensure that newcomers and Canadians are aware of the responsibilities and privileges associated with Canadian citizenship, that newcomers to Canada have a desire to become citizens, and that the integrity of Canadian Citizenship is protected through a robust processing and policy framework.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the evaluation found that, with time, most permanent residents (PR) become Canadian citizens. However, the citizenship uptake rate can vary for different populations, and has declined among more recent immigrants, suggesting that newcomers are taking longer to become citizens. While there are many reasons for obtaining citizenship, evidence suggested that wanting to feel fully Canadian and to make Canada their permanent home are primary motivators for PRs. It was observed that the grant application approval rate is very high, and recent changes to eligibility under Bill C-6 have generally been facilitative. Furthermore, increases to the application fee over the evaluation period did not have a major impact on overall uptake.

Nevertheless, while most PRs do eventually obtain citizenship, accessing it comes with significant challenges for some, specifically those from more vulnerable groups.

Evidence showed that meeting the language and knowledge requirements can be difficult, particularly for refugees, as well as for those with low official language proficiency and less

education. While the *Citizenship Act* has built in some discretion to waive these requirements on compassionate grounds, compassionate considerations are not well defined, and waivers are typically predicated on a medical opinion. Moreover, waivers have to be requested by applicants, but the waiver process is not well known and difficult to navigate. Evidence showed very few waivers requested or granted during the evaluation period. However, given the issues noted, it was unclear whether these numbers reflected an appropriate level of use of this mechanism.

In addition, the application fee was found to be a common challenge, particularly for refugees, families and those with lower income. The Citizenship Program does not currently offer any flexibility around grant application fees. The fee structure is set out in the *Citizenship Regulations*, and provides individual rates for adult and minor grants.

With this in mind, there is a need to re-examine the waiver process and fee structure in order to ensure that sufficient mechanisms are in place to facilitate equitable access to citizenship and to better serve and support prospective applicants who may be facing socio-economic challenges, as well as families with multiple applications and fees to pay.

Recommendation 1: IRCC should review the costs associated with applying for citizenship and implement a strategy to address the affordability of citizenship for prospective applicants facing economic challenges.

Recommendation 2: IRCC should implement and promote a clear and transparent process for knowledge and language waivers to ensure consistent access and decision-making for prospective applicants who need them.

The evaluation also found that the citizenship eligibility requirements related to physical presence, language and knowledge are largely set at an appropriate level. While there are various tools and methods in place to support the assessment of these requirements, findings were mixed in terms of their effectiveness, highlighting important challenges to be addressed.

It was observed that while the requirement for physical presence is clearly defined, it can be difficult for applicants to prove, as well as for IRCC officers to verify, without entry-exit information. For language, it was noted that the range of evidence accepted is very broad and does not always reflect the applicant's actual language ability. When there are concerns, it can be difficult for IRCC officers to assess language ability, as the tools in place are subjective and officers are not formal assessors. For knowledge, it was noted that the test and study guide have a higher language level than that of the language requirement, and there is a need for more tools and support for applicants.

At the time of the evaluation, implementation of a new Entry/Exit Program was already underway, which was expected to address issues related to tracking and verifying physical presence in the future. In addition, a new approach for the knowledge assessment tools was being developed, with a new study guide and supporting materials, but had not yet been implemented at the time of the evaluation.

Thus, while a strategy is being implemented to improve the tools and methods available to assess physical presence in Canada, there is still a need to address outstanding challenges with respect to the tools and methods in place to assess the language and knowledge requirements.

Recommendation 3: IRCC should review the language verification process and put in place a strategy to ensure that IRCC officers are more effectively equipped to validate language evidence and better supported to assess language ability when needed.

Recommendation 4: IRCC should move forward with its plan to implement a new approach for the knowledge requirement, which could include a revised study guide and additional tools, to improve the accessibility of the required information and enhance supports for prospective applicants studying for and taking the knowledge test.

Overall, integration outcomes were positive for naturalized citizens. It was observed that many feel a sense of belonging to Canada, their province or territory and to their community. They have social connections in Canada and confidence in Canadian institutions. Moreover, many are performing well economically, and some are volunteering and participating in groups, organizations or associations.

It was also observed that many PRs, particularly those intending to apply for citizenship, feel a sense of belonging, have social connections and confidence in Canadian institutions, suggesting that newcomers with stronger feelings of connection to Canada have a desire to become Canadian. In addition, while a difference in employment earnings was found between PRs and naturalized citizens, this difference was not attributable to citizenship, but rather to the socio-economic characteristics of those obtaining it, largely previous earnings and length of time in Canada.

Differences between PRs and naturalized citizens were also found for volunteering and group membership. They were found to be more prevalent among naturalized citizens, followed by PRs intending to apply for citizenship, and lowest among those not intending to apply. The rates of volunteering and group membership also varied based on socio-economic characteristics.

Thus, evaluation results highlight the relationships between integration and engagement in Canadian society, and some of the dynamics of decision-making around citizenship. Becoming Canadian and active engagement are at the core of IRCC's Citizenship Program objectives. While these objectives are generally seen as relevant and appropriate, the program has limited mechanisms and resources to influence them. At present, IRCC's citizenship promotion activities are largely newcomer-focused and tied to the citizenship grant process or funded by the Settlement Program, which excludes citizens from its eligibility.

With this in mind, there is a need to ensure that the department's objectives for citizenship promotion are aligned with the activities, mechanisms and resources in place to achieve them.

Recommendation 5: IRCC should review its objectives for citizenship promotion, and the corresponding activities, mechanisms and resources available, and develop and implement a plan to better support the achievement of its expected outcomes.

Evaluation of the Citizenship Program: Management Response Action Plan (MRAP)

The evaluation found that most PRs become Canadian citizens, however, the citizenship uptake rate can vary for different populations, and has declined among more recent immigrants. While most PRs do eventually obtain citizenship, accessing it comes with significant challenges for some, specifically those from more vulnerable groups.

For example, the evaluation showed that meeting the language and knowledge requirements can be difficult, particularly for refugees, and those with low official language proficiency and less education. While the Citizenship Act has some discretion to waive these requirements on compassionate grounds, these compassionate considerations are not well defined, and waivers are typically predicated on a medical opinion. Moreover, waivers have to be requested by applicants, but the waiver process is not well known and difficult to navigate. Very few waivers were requested or granted during the evaluation period, but it was unclear whether these numbers reflected an appropriate level of use of this mechanism. In addition, the application fee was found to be a common challenge, particularly for refugees, families and those with lower income. However, the Citizenship Program does not currently offer any flexibility around grant application fees.

With this in mind, there is a need to re-examine the waiver process and fee structure in order to ensure that sufficient mechanisms are in place to facilitate equitable access to citizenship and to better serve and support prospective applicants who may be facing socio-economic challenges, as well as families with multiple applications and fees to pay.

Recommendation 1

IRCC should review the costs associated with applying for citizenship and implement a strategy to address the affordability of citizenship for prospective applicants facing economic challenges.

Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

While Canada's citizenship application fees are competitive with comparable countries, citizenship needs to be equitably accessible to all eligible permanent residents to allow for their full participation in Canadian society, and become active citizens.

In addition to application fees, some applicants may incur indirect costs, recent research indicates that securing language evidence and translation services further impact affordability and ultimately the decision to invest in naturalization, especially for families.

Actions

Action 1a: As part of IRCC's review of citizenship fees, bring forward a plan to EXComm to address affordability.

- Accountability: Lead; CB. Support; Financial Strategy, CPPG, OPPB, PB, CN, CEB, and DN.
- Completion date: Q2 2020–2021

Action 1b: Bring forward a plan for a free or low-cost option citizenship-specific language test based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks and work toward adding it to the list of acceptable evidence.

- Accountability: Lead; CB. Support; SN, SIP, CPPG.
- Completion date: Q4 2021–2022

Recommendation 2

IRCC should implement and promote a clear and transparent process for knowledge and language waivers to ensure consistent access and decision-making for prospective applicants who need them.

Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

Acquiring Canadian citizenship is especially important for refugees in order for them to fully integrate and contribute to Canadian society.

The vast majority of waiver applicants are refugees. 58% of all waiver decisions made between 2015–2018 for knowledge and 64% for language were adult applicants admitted to Canada as refugees.

The 5(3) waiver provision was first introduced in the Citizenship Act in 1977. At the time Parliament believed that such a provision was necessary in order to deal fairly with cases that called for humanitarian or generous decisions.

Ensuring equitable access to citizenship is key to social cohesion. Suffering from a mental illness such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or not having had the chance to access formal education in one's country of origin should not be barriers to accessing Canadian citizenship. Additionally, a negative waiver decision should not automatically lead to a refusal. Clients should be offered the opportunity to continue their naturalization journey.

Action 2a: Update the citizenship application form and web content to make sure clients have access to information about the 5(3) waivers before applying and can signal their intention to apply on the application form, and before taking the knowledge test.

- Accountability: Lead; CPPG. Support; Communications, DN, CN, CEB, and CB.
- Completion date: Q4 2020–2021

Action 2b: Adjust waiver related guidance materials and provide necessary training to citizenship officers.

- Accountability: Lead; CPPG. Support; CB, CN, and DN.
- Completion date: Q4 2020-2021

While the evaluation found that citizenship eligibility requirements for physical presence, language and knowledge are set at an appropriate level, findings were mixed on the effectiveness of the tools and methods in place to support assessing these requirements. With respect to assessing language, the range of accepted evidence is very broad, and provided evidence is not always reflective of an applicant's actual ability. Although officers have tools to assess language ability when there are concerns, the tools in place are subjective and officers are not formal assessors. In terms of the knowledge requirement, the evaluation found that the test and study guide have a higher language level than that of the language requirement, and there is a need for more tools and supports for applicants.

Some progress has been made towards addressing these challenges, via developing a new approach for knowledge assessment tools, a new study guide, and new supporting materials. However, at the time of the evaluation, no new approaches had been implemented. Consequently, there is a need to address outstanding challenges with respect to the tools and methods in place to assess the language and knowledge requirements.

Recommendation 3

IRCC should review the language verification process and put in place a strategy to ensure that IRCC officers are more effectively equipped to validate language evidence and better supported to assess language ability when needed.

Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The list of acceptable language evidence has grown substantially since the department made the operational decision to confirm the language in the regulations and accept all "other evidence" of language proficiency.

The tools in place are subjective and officers are not fully trained language assessors. This has created a need to simplify the process for applicants and citizenship officers.

If an officer is not satisfied that the client meets the language requirement, instead of conducting his own assessment, the officer would ask the client to be assessed by one of IRCC's partners (see recommendation 1B). Officers will be more comfortable to request a second opinion if it's low-cost and conducted by experts, increasing program integrity. It will also connect clients with IRCC's service providers, providing them with the support they may require to meet the language requirement.

Action 3a: Add the free or low-cost language evidence, proposed under recommendation 1b, to the list of acceptable evidence.

- Accountability: Lead; CB. Support; SN, SIP, CPPG, CN, and DN.
- Completion date: Q4 2022–2023

Action 3b: Replace the Language Assessment Tool currently used by citizenship officers with the testing method to be identified under recommendation 1b.

- Accountability: Lead; CB. Support; SN, SIP, CPPG, CN, and DN.
- Completion date: Q4 2022–2023

Recommendation 4

IRCC should move forward with its plan to implement a new approach for the knowledge requirement, which could include a revised study guide and additional tools, to improve the accessibility of the required information and enhance supports for prospective applicants studying for and taking the knowledge test.

Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

The citizenship guide is the key learning resource used by newcomers to learn the roles and responsibilities of citizenship. While targeting newcomers, the citizenship guide is also extensively used by Canadians in educational institutions, libraries, and community organisations.

The Government has undertaken consultations to revise the citizenship guide to:

- Respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #93 to reflect more Indigenous perspectives and history;

- Showcase Canada's cultural diversity and present the social evolution of civic rights and freedoms to further reinforce the rights and responsibilities of citizenship; and
- Enhance accessibility for citizenship applicants through the guide and additional study tools.

To support learning of the guide, new study tools are planned to enhance understanding and knowledge of the key content, including in support of a revised guide. These study tools will improve accessibility by supporting second-language learners and different learning styles, whether at home or in a classroom.

Finalizing new study tools will require further consultation and Government Direction, and timelines may be affected by the current COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Action 4a: Develop new study tools for learners and instructors, including in support of a revised citizenship guide.

- Accountability: Lead; CB & Communications. Support; CPPG, DN, and HR (learning).
- Completion date: Q2 2021–2022

Action 4b: Complete a policy review of the knowledge requirement to enhance accessibility and promote equitable assessment methods for all clients.

- Accountability: Lead; CB. Support; CEB.
- Completion date: Q4 2021–2022

Action 4c: Review and update guidance, communications products and training for officers once the new tools are in place.

- Accountability: Lead; CPPG. Support; CB, DN, CEB, and Communications.
- Completion date: Q4 2021–2022

Although becoming Canadian and active engagement are at the core of IRCC's Citizenship Program objectives, the program has limited mechanisms and resources to influence them. At present, IRCC's citizenship promotion activities are largely newcomer-focused and tied to the citizenship grant process or funded by the Settlement Program, which excludes citizens from its eligibility. With this in mind, there is a need to ensure that the department's objectives for citizenship promotion are aligned with the activities, mechanisms and resources in place to achieve them.

Recommendation 5

IRCC should review its objectives for citizenship promotion, and the corresponding activities, mechanisms and resources available, and develop and implement a plan to better support the achievement of its expected outcomes.

Response

IRCC agrees with this recommendation.

IRCC agrees that the Citizenship Program can increase its reach to all Canadians.

Implementation of awareness activities for all Canadians, focused on active citizenship would underline how any Canadian resident, regardless of their immigration status, can investigate and interpret their rights and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship and actively engage in their communities and the broader Canadian society and democracy.

In the past year, IRCC fully assessed its previous promotion strategy and identified opportunities for improvement. With this knowledge, IRCC developed a new strategic plan for citizenship promotion for 2019–2022. Over this period, promotional activities will focus on providing key information on the naturalization process for immigrants and activities that will help everyone in Canada building together an inclusive and connected country through engaged citizenship.

The Citizenship Program Performance Information Profile (PIP) has already been updated to focus departmental efforts towards ensuring that Canadian citizenship is highly valued and involves active engagement. The expected outcomes will be measured and evaluated by monitoring formal giving, volunteering and participation statistics, as well as other informal or community actions, engagements and achievements.

Action 5a: Bring forward a plan to EXComm to better promote active citizenship to newcomers and everyone in Canada.

- Accountability: Lead CB. Support CPPG, SN, and Communications.
- Completion date: Q2 2020–2021

Action 5b: Submit for PMEC approval the newly revised Citizenship Program Performance Information Profile, making active citizenship the official ultimate outcome of the program.

- Accountability: Lead CB. Support CPPG.
- Completion date: Q4 2020–2021

Action 5c: Continue to implement the multi-year, multidimensional citizenship promotion plan for 2019–2022 aimed at communicating the importance of, and value of active citizenship to everyone who calls Canada home.

- Accountability: Lead CB. Support Communications and CPPG.
- Completion date: Q3 2021–2022

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of evaluation

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the performance of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Citizenship Program, with a focus on the citizenship grants line of business and program management. The evaluation fulfilled requirements under the 2016 Treasury Board *Policy on Results*. The need and scope for this evaluation were confirmed during Departmental Evaluation Plan consultations in 2018–2019.

1.2. Program description

The Citizenship Program administers citizenship legislation[1] and promotes the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It impacts both newcomers who wish to become citizens as well as current Canadians. Broadly, the Citizenship Program consists of three components; (1) Citizenship Awareness, (2) Citizenship Acquisition, Confirmation and Revocation, as well as (3) Program Management Functions.

1. **Citizenship Awareness** is aimed at increasing knowledge of the responsibilities and privileges of Canadian citizenship, and increasing citizenship's perceived value. Citizenship awareness also examines ways to encourage eligible permanent residents to apply for citizenship. Further, citizenship awareness includes creation and management of study materials for the knowledge test, citizenship ceremonies, special events and projects, outreach efforts and the activities of partner organizations.[2]

2. **Citizenship Acquisition, Confirmation and Revocation** includes application processing for citizenship grants, proofs, renunciations and resumptions, as well as revocations and recalls. This function protects the integrity of Canadian citizenship, and allows eligible applicants to be granted citizenship and obtain proof thereof.

3. **Program Management Function** includes two main activity streams: (1) setting the direction and plan for the Citizenship Program, and monitoring and reporting on priorities, plans, research, strategic policies, performance, evaluation, and Memoranda to Cabinet and Treasury Board Submissions; and (2) enabling program delivery through legislative and regulatory initiatives, operational policies, advice, interpretations and recommendations, procedural guidance, training and tools.

To obtain Canadian citizenship, individuals must first meet eligibility requirements, complete and submit an application, and attend a ceremony where the oath of citizenship is recited before a citizenship judge. Applicants pay a fee for the grant application ($100 for a minor grant application and $530 for an adult grant application), and applicants aged 18 years and older pay a $100 fee for the Right to be a Citizen. Naturalized citizens are conferred legal status in the country and receive rights, namely the right to vote, hold public office and be protected from deportation. For many, citizenship is a significant milestone of their integration.

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[1]   The *Citizenship Act* and two accompanying Citizenship Regulations are the governing legislation for the program.
[2]   The Institute for Canadian Citizenship and Historica Canada were two key partner organizations for the Citizenship Program related to citizenship awareness during the reporting period for the evaluation.

1.3. Governance

Responsibility for and management of the Citizenship Program is distributed across various IRCC Branches, notably Citizenship Branch within the **Strategic and Program Policy (SPP) Sector**, and Citizenship and Passport Program Guidance Branch, the Centralized and Domestic Networks and Case Management Branch within the **Operations Sector**. Broadly, the SPP Sector is responsible for providing evidence-based policy development, and connecting strategic policy with program policy and design, and the Operations Sector is accountable for all of the department's program delivery activities. Key responsibilities related to the Citizenship Program for branches within these sectors are outlined below.

- **Citizenship Branch** provides policy advice to the Minister regarding citizenship legislation, as well as plans and supports the passage and implementation of legislative and regulatory amendments for the Citizenship Program. It provides policy interpretation and guidance, conducts research and analysis on citizenship-related topics, and provides policy advice on issues related to citizenship programming, citizenship preparation and literacy, and citizenship consultants. Citizenship Branch leads policy development for citizenship grants, the knowledge of Canada and language proficiency requirements, the oath of citizenship and citizenship awareness activities, including content and integrity management of the study guide, citizenship test, and other education resources. It is also responsible for program coordination and stakeholder/public engagement.

- **Citizenship and Passport Program Guidance (CPPG) Branch** houses the Office of the Citizenship Registrar, who is the Minister's Delegate for waivers, recalls, training, as well as delegation of decision makers and presiders. It also has overall responsibility for Citizenship Judges, who are Governor-in-Council appointees and are responsible for some grant-related decision-making, the administration of the Oath, and some promotional activities. CPPG coordinates the delivery of the Citizenship Program across the service delivery network and is the functional authority on the processing of citizenship applications to National Headquarters (NHQ), the service delivery networks (Domestic and Centralized Networks), and external partners (such as Global Affairs Canada and Elections Canada). It also provides a liaison function with the policy and communications groups within IRCC and develops the content of citizenship-related websites, forms, tools and correspondence used in the processing of citizenship applications. Finally, CPPG is responsible for designing program improvements and leading the transformation of the citizenship grant and proof application processes to improve client service, increase processing efficiency, and ensure program integrity.

- The **Centralized Network (CN)** oversees the Case Processing Centre in Sydney, Nova Scotia (CPC-S), where all applications, grants, proofs, searches, renunciations and resumptions are received and triaged. CPC-S also renders decisions on citizenship proofs, searches of records, renunciations, and resumptions as well as certain grant applications[3], and archives citizenship records.

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[3] For example, applications for children under the age of 18 who have a Canadian parent, as well as children under 14 without a Canadian parent.

- The **Domestic Network (DN)** is responsible for delivering the Citizenship Program across Canada. Officials in local IRCC offices complete the process for granting citizenship applications, including assessing applicants' eligibility, prohibitions from acquiring citizenship, and determining whether the applicants meet the knowledge and language requirements, or are eligible to have these requirements waived. DN officers and agents render final decisions on citizenship applications, organize and monitor the citizenship knowledge test and are responsible for organizing and delivering citizenship ceremonies.

- **Case Management Branch (CMB)** provides functional guidance and case management to the CN and the DN on complex and/or high profile citizenship cases and renders decisions on discretionary grants for citizenship. It handles urgent citizenship clearance requests from partners, verification of status for local offices, complex proof and resumption cases referred by CPC-S, and recalls made by the Registrar of Canadian Citizenship. CMB also manages and investigates citizenship revocation cases, as well as manages all litigation matters arising out of the *Citizenship Act*.

In addition, program support is provided by the Operations Planning and Performance (OPP) Branch for operational statistics and reporting.

1.4. Expected outcomes of the Citizenship Program

There are three immediate outcomes expected from the Citizenship Program:

1. Newcomers and Canadians are aware of the responsibilities and privileges associated with Canadian Citizenship;

2. Newcomers to Canada have a desire to become citizens; and

3. The integrity of Canadian citizenship is protected through a robust processing and policy framework.

These immediate outcomes are expected to contribute to three intermediate outcomes:

1. Canadian citizenship involves active engagement and is a valued status;

2. Citizenship is accessible to all who meet the eligibility requirements, including vulnerable groups; and

3. Client service standards are predefined and maintained.

More broadly, outcomes from the Citizenship Program are expected ultimately to contribute to the departmental result that Eligible permanent residents become Canadian citizens under the Departmental Results Framework's Core Responsibility Three: Citizenship and Passports.[4]

1.5. Resources

Between 2013–2014 and 2018–2019, Citizenship Program spending fluctuated, with a high of about $182M in 2014–2015 and a low of about $129M in 2016–2017. The average fiscal year spending was about $153M. Most (83%) of the spending during this six-year period was dedicated to the Citizenship Grants line of business.

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[4] The Citizenship Program expected outcomes reflect those articulated in the Citizenship Program Performance Information Profile (PIP), completed in 2017. In 2019, during the course of the evaluation, the Citizenship Program PIP was updated, including some changes to the expected outcomes.

Table 1: Total IRCC spending ($) by citizenship program line of business (2013–2014 to 2018–2019)

Line of business	2013–2014	2014–2015	2015–2016	2016–2017	2017–2018	2018–2019
Grants	126,287,370	159,691,068	132,578,981	103,582,996	112,054,348	129,598,590
Proofs	17,300,260	16,281,915	18,164,510	18,999,051	23,317,961	23,530,355
Records search	767,347	703,336	1,191,252	957,662	467,106	638,460
Renunciations	386,090	562,442	793,329	614,158	140,946	396,570
Resumptions	247,792	535,253	885,726	652,016	55,296	70,607
Revocations	2,768,733	4,027,641	5,400,036	4,159,573	5,844,370	4,200,771
TOTAL	**147,757,592**	**181,801,655**	**159,013,835**	**128,965,456**	**141,880,028**	**158,435,353**

Note: Spending includes costs associated with program delivery, internal services and Other Government Department processes.

Source: IRCC Cost Management Model

The number of Full Time Equivalents (FTE) also fluctuated during this period, with most FTEs dedicated to the Grants line of business. In 2018-19, there were about 1,098 FTEs supporting the Citizenship Program,[5] of which 83.9% were supporting the Citizenship Grants line of business.

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[5] FTE total includes those supporting program management, delivery and internal services.

2. Methodology

2.1. Evaluation scope and focus

The evaluation of the Citizenship Program covered the period from the last evaluation[6], focusing on 2013 to 2018, with some consideration of earlier years to better understand the implications of policy changes, uptake trends and program developments over a longer period of time.

The evaluation largely focused on the citizenship acquisition component (i.e., grants) of the program. The evaluation examined citizenship uptake by newcomers to Canada, including the factors affecting the decision to apply for citizenship, and the potential challenges or barriers for vulnerable newcomer groups. It also assessed the effectiveness of the program's eligibility requirements in relation to physical presence, language proficiency, and knowledge of Canada, and looked at the integration outcomes of naturalized citizens.

Citizenship Program design, delivery and coordination among partners were also considered as a secondary focus for the evaluation.

Application processing, program integrity, revocations, citizenship awareness and citizenship confirmations (i.e., proofs) were not in scope for the present evaluation.

2.2. Evaluation questions

1. To what extent are eligible permanent residents applying for and obtaining Canadian citizenship?[7]

2. To what extent are physical presence, language and knowledge requirements:
   a) effectively contributing to program uptake?[8]
   b) being assessed effectively by IRCC?

3. To what extent are naturalized citizens actively engaged and participating in Canadian society?

4. To what extent is the program effectively designed and coordinated among program partners?

2.3. Data collection methods

Multiple lines of evidence were used to gather qualitative and quantitative data from a wide range of perspectives, including: IRCC program representatives responsible for program management and delivery (various levels), citizenship judges, permanent residents (PRs) and naturalized citizens, and other external stakeholders. Evaluation methods included:

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[6] An evaluation of the Citizenship Awareness program component was completed in 2013, focusing on the 2007-08 to 2011-12 period. See www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/reports-statistics/evaluations/citizenship-awareness-program/findings.html

[7] This included various factors (social, legal, economic, operational or other factors) affecting PRs' access and desire to apply for citizenship.

[8] This included the preliminary impacts of legislative and regulatory changes.

- **Document review**: Relevant program documents were reviewed to gather background on the Citizenship Program to help contextualize findings, as well as to assess program performance. Documents included citizenship legislation and regulations, internal documents related to policy, program management and program guidance, and citizenship-related research, including research based on Canada's Census and General Social Survey (GSS), as well as results from IRCC's Newcomer Outcome Survey (NOS).[9]

- **Key informant interviews**: 48 interviews were conducted, involving approximately 86 key informants. Interviews were conducted primarily with IRCC representatives across the policy and operation sectors, as well as with representatives of Canadian Heritage, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, and settlement Service Provider Organizations (SPO), and a researcher in the citizenship domain.

- **Survey of Naturalized Citizens and PRs**: An online survey was sent to a sample of 47,575 PRs and 55,567 naturalized citizens (as of December 31st, 2018) with valid email addresses, who were admitted to Canada between 2006 and 2015, and were aged 18 years and older as of April 1st, 2019. The survey was available in both of Canada's official languages, as well as Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Farsi and Urdu. Responses were received from 5,725 PRs and 6,993 naturalized citizens, for a response rate of 12.0% and 12.6% respectively.[10] Responses were further adjusted for those who obtained citizenship in 2019, and then weighted to be representative of the PR and naturalized citizen target populations.[11] After these adjustments, there were 4,956 PR respondents and 7,762 naturalized citizen respondents.[12]

- **Focus groups with PRs**: 110 PRs who were clients of four SPOs delivering settlement services in four provinces (British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia) participated in 16 focus groups (four focus groups per SPO). Of the participants, 70% were female, 30% had previously applied for citizenship, and 89% intended to apply to become a citizen. Participants reported 36 different countries of birth.

- **Administrative data analysis:** Administrative data on PR and citizenship applications from IRCC's Global Case Management System (GCMS) were used to develop a profile of naturalized citizens and examine citizenship uptake for PRs (those applying for and obtaining citizenship) during the evaluation period. T4 Wages and Salary data were also analyzed to examine the economic outcomes of naturalized citizens compared to PRs.

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[9] IRCC's Newcomer Outcome Survey (NOS) is an annual online survey, providing performance and outcomes data related to IRCC's Settlement and Resettlement Programs. Results presented in the evaluation report are based on Wave 1 and Wave 2 of this survey, administered in 2018 and 2019 respectively. Respondents were newcomers aged 18 years and older who were admitted to Canada as PRs between 2011 and 2018. Overall, there were 120,897 respondents to the survey, which included 96,465 PRs and 24,432 citizens. Citizenship was self-reported in the NOS.

[10] The margin of error for the survey was ±1.29% for the PR population and ±1.17% for the naturalized citizen population, with a confidence level of 95%.

[11] Survey responses were weighted to be representative of key socio-demographic characteristics: gender, age (as of April 1st, 2019), immigration category, official language knowledge at admission and education level at admission.

[12] More details on the survey of naturalized citizens and PRs are provided in Annex A.

2.4. Limitations and considerations

The evaluation design incorporated numerous lines of qualitative and quantitative evidence in order to triangulate towards common and integrated findings.

Overall, the different lines of evidence were complementary, and reduced information gaps. The mitigation strategies, along with the triangulation of findings, were considered to be sufficient to ensure that findings are reliable and can be used with confidence.

- Citizenship administrative data were only available for more recent years in GCMS. The citizenship component to GCMS was first deployed in September, 2004 (legacy data), and a new citizenship module was deployed in November, 2014 (new data). Differences between these two modules precluded complete data mapping for the evaluation. To mitigate this issue, legacy data were integrated to the extent possible, and Census-based research was used to complement administrative data analyses.

- IRCC enlisted the assistance of SPOs delivering settlement services to newcomers in order to recruit PR participants for the focus groups. This sampling method created a potential bias in these results, as there may be differences between newcomers who receive and do not receive settlement services. To mitigate this issue, findings from the survey of Naturalized Citizens and PRs, which were based on a representative sample of both populations, were used to complement this qualitative research.

3. Profile of naturalized citizens, citizenship applicants and non-applicants

The profile presents selected characteristics of PRs admitted to Canada between 2005 and 2015 by their citizenship status as of December 31st, 2018, based on GCMS data.[13] Overall, 2,826,300 PRs were admitted to Canada between 2005 and 2015. By December 31st, 2018, 1,415,480 were naturalized citizens, 204,025 had applied for citizenship (applicants),[14] and 1,206,795 had not applied for citizenship (non-applicants).

Naturalized citizens, citizenship applicants and non-applicants were similar in composition to the overall population of 2005 to 2015 admissions in terms of gender. However, slight differences were observed in terms of immigration category and country of birth.

Table 2:   Profile of gender, immigration category and country of birth (OECD) by citizenship status (all ages)

Profile characteristics 2005 to 2015 admissions	Naturalized citizens	Applicants	Non-applicants	Overall population
Male	48%	48%	49%	48%
Female	52%	52%	51%	52%
Economic immigration category	63%	58%	58%	61%
Sponsored family immigration category	22%	25%	33%	27%
Resettled refugees & protected persons category	12%	16%	7%	10%
Other immigration category	2%	2%	1%	2%
OECD* country of birth	13%	11%	20%	16%
Non-OECD country of birth	87%	89%	80%	84%

* See Annex B for a list of OECD countries.

GCMS and Evaluation survey

The top 5 most frequent countries of birth were the same for naturalized citizens and citizenship applicants, though ranked differently. For non-applicants, the countries ranked fourth and fifth were different.

Table 3:   Top 5 countries of birth by citizenship status (all ages)

Naturalized citizens	%	Applicants	%	Non-applicants	%
Philippines	12%	India	13%	China	17%
India	11%	Philippines	10%	India	15%
China	8%	China	8%	Philippines	12%
Pakistan	5%	Iran	5%	United States	4%
Iran	4%	Pakistan	5%	United Kingdom	3%

GCMS and Evaluation survey

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[13] The 2015 cut-off for PRs was selected based on the least possible amount of time in Canada as a PR by the end of 2018 (3 years) to meet the current physical presence requirement for citizenship, without any previous Temporary Resident (TR) time.

[14] Citizenship applicants included PRs who applied and did not obtain citizenship, and those with applications in process (i.e., no final grant decision).

In terms of age, 72% of naturalized citizens were 18 years or older at admission to Canada, compared to 74% of applicants and 81% of non-applicants. Of those 18 years or older:

- **Education level**: A higher proportion of naturalized citizens held a university degree (51%) at admission, compared to citizenship applicants (43%) and non-applicants (40%).

- **Official language knowledge**: The largest percentage across all three groups (ranging from 63% to 65%) had knowledge of English at admission. However, a higher percentage of citizenship applicants (22%) and non-applicants (26%) had no official language knowledge at admission, compared to naturalized citizens (14%).

4. Key findings — Performance

4.1. Citizenship uptake

Two key objectives of the Citizenship Program are for newcomers to Canada to have a desire to become Canadian citizens, and for this objective to be realized by eligible permanent residents. With this in mind, the evaluation examined citizenship uptake, both in terms of applying for and obtaining citizenship, using multiple lines of evidence. It also considered the factors affecting newcomer decision-making to become Canadian, and the challenges encountered by vulnerable applicants that can make it more difficult for them to apply and obtain citizenship.

4.1.1 Overall uptake

Finding: Over time, most permanent residents eventually obtain Canadian citizenship. However, there are differences in their initial uptake based on immigration category, country of origin and age.

Canada has one of the highest naturalization rates among Western countries.[15] Citizenship research based on census data[16] shows that Canada's naturalization rate (i.e., the proportion of PRs who become citizens) increased from about 81.6% in 1991 to 86.3% in 2016. However, the rate among more recent immigrants (five to nine years in Canada) declined, suggesting that immigrants are taking longer to become citizens.

Research based on Census data allows for the study of citizenship uptake over a longer period of time (30 or more years), but is less robust as it is based on self-reporting, and does not consider the immigrant's decision to apply for citizenship as part of uptake process. The decision to apply is also a valid proxy of desire for citizenship. It does not exclude individuals with an interest whose applications are refused, or those who may be delayed in obtaining it due to limitations with IRCC's application processing capacity. With this in mind, the evaluation examined citizenship uptake using administrative data from GCMS, and looked at the initial uptake of PRs admitted to Canada between 2005 and 2015[17], who had obtained or applied for citizenship by the end of 2018.

Overall, the analysis found that citizenship uptake was 57% for this population, with 50% of PRs having become citizens, and 7% having applied. The analysis also showed that the more years in Canada, the greater the percentage of PRs who had obtained or applied for citizenship (Figure 1). Citizenship uptake ranged from 21% after 3 years in Canada as a PR (2015 cohort) to 76.5% after 13 years in Canada as a PR (2005 cohort).[18]

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[15] See Picot & Hou (2011). *Citizenship acquisition in Canada and the United States: Determinants and economic benefit*.

[16] Hou & Picot (2019). *Trends in the citizenship rate among new immigrants to Canada*, Economic Insights, Statistics Canada. This study is based on data from the 1991, 1996, 2001, 2006 and 2016 long-form censuses and the 2011 National Household Survey, and computes citizenship rates among legal immigrants, 18 years and older, who arrived in Canada 5 to 9 years before each census, aligning with the citizenship residency requirement.

[17] The 2005 to 2015 PR cohorts were selected to allow enough time in Canada as a PR by the end of 2018 (at least 3 years for the 2015 cohort) to be eligible for citizenship and enough years of data to show some citizenship trends over time.

[18] For those admitted to Canada as a PR in 2005, 72% had obtained citizenship by the end of 2018, and 4.5% had a citizenship application in process. For those admitted to Canada as a PR in 2015, 8% had obtained citizenship by the end of 2018, and 13% had a citizenship application in process.

Figure 1: **Citizenship uptake for PRs (all ages) who obtained or applied for citizenship by the end of 2018 by number of years since admission to Canada**
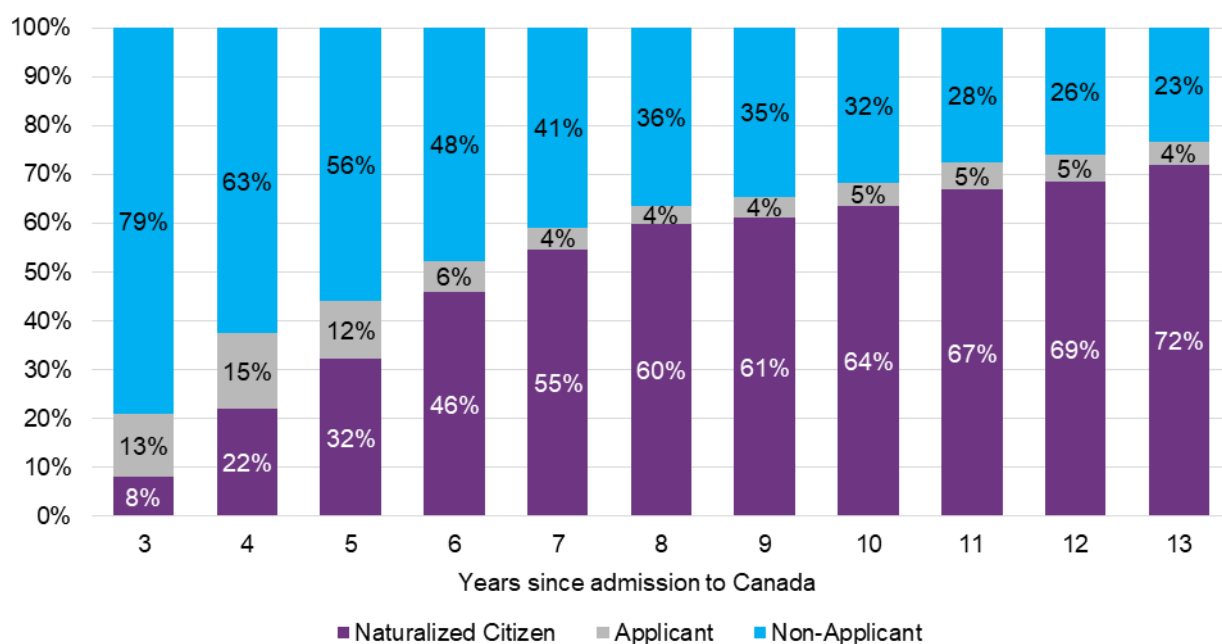
Source: GCMS

The analysis further focused on citizenship uptake trends for adult PRs (18 years and older at admission) in order to better reflect trends in citizenship decision-making. Some notable differences were found based on country of origin, immigration category and age at admission.[19]

- **OECD countries**: A greater proportion of PRs born in non-OECD countries applied for and obtained citizenship, compared to those born in OECD countries.

- **Immigration category**: A greater proportion of resettled refugees and protected persons applied for and obtained citizenship, compared to counterparts in the economic and sponsored family classes.

- **Age**: A smaller proportion of PRs aged 55 and older at the time of admission applied for and obtained citizenship, compared to their younger counterparts.

4.1.2   Challenges related to fees

Finding: The citizenship application fee is a common challenge for permanent residents, particularly refugees, families and those with lower income.

Sections 31 and 32 of the *Citizenship Regulations* deal with the structure of two fees related to citizenship: the Fee for Right to be a Citizen, and the Fee for Application to be a citizen. The Fee for Right to be a Citizen is payable only by applicants aged 18 years or older, at a cost of $100. The Fee for Application varies from $100 for minor grant applications, to $530 for adult grant

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[19] Trends based on these characteristics over time can be found in Annex C.

applications.[20] Of note, these fees do not account for extraneous costs related to applying for citizenship that applicants may incur.[21]

The adult grant application fee increased twice during the evaluation period.[22] A review of citizenship grant application data did not reveal a significant decrease in the volume of applications received after these changes were implemented.[23] Interviews also suggested little to no impact of these changes overall, but pointed to possible challenges for vulnerable people, like refugees.

Evaluation survey results were consistent with interview findings. While many respondents did not indicate a problem with the application fee, 28% indicated that it had delayed or was preventing them from applying for citizenship at the time of the survey.[24] This percentage was greater for resettled refugees and protected persons, respondents with a personal income of $60,000 or less, and those with 5 or more people on their application (or future application) (Table 4). Moreover, about half of evaluation survey respondents who had not applied for citizenship felt a lower application fee would encourage them to apply.[25]

Table 4: **Incidence of the application fee delaying or preventing survey respondents from applying for citizenship**

Respondent characteristics	Impacted–Yes	Impacted–No
Overall	28%	72%
Economic immigration category	26%	74%
Sponsored family immigration category	29%	71%
Resettled refugees and protected persons category	37%	63%
Income of $60,000 or less	34%	66%
Income of more than $60,000	18%	82%
Under 5 people on application or future application	28%	72%
5 or more people on application or future application	32%	68%

Source: Evaluation survey

Census-based research also showed evidence of a more pronounced decline in naturalization among recent immigrants (5 to 9 years in Canada) with low family income.[26] Findings from the interviews and focus groups with PRs suggested that economically disadvantaged newcomers, such as those who are unemployed, are not able to afford the costs associated with applying (e.g., costs associated with third-party language testing). Moreover, the fear of being unsuccessful in an application (e.g., not passing the knowledge test) and losing the applications fees (or paying to reapply) was also noted in the focus groups with PRs and program-led consultations on *Discover Canada*.[27] The impact of the fees was also thought to be amplified for larger families with multiple applications.

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[20] Note: Stateless adults are not required to pay the grant application fee.
[21] For example, costs associated with third-party language testing, or hiring lawyers/citizenship consultants to assist with the application, etc.
[22] The total fee per adult increased from $200 ($100 Right of Citizenship Fee + $100 Processing Fee) to $400 ($100 Right of Citizenship Fee + $300 Processing Fee) on February 6, 2014. It increased a second time on January 1, 2015 increased from $400 ($100 Right of Citizenship Fee + $300 Processing Fee) to $630 ($100 Right of Citizenship Fee + $530 Processing Fee).
[23] Source: IRCC internal program documents.
[24] Survey respondents for these questions were citizens and PRs intending to apply or with an application in process.
[25] Survey respondents for this question were PRs who were intending and not intending to apply for citizenship.
[26] Hou & Picot (2019). Trends in the citizenship rate among new immigrants to Canada, Economic insights, Statistics Canada.
[27] Source: IRCC internal program documents.

4.1.3   Challenges related to language and knowledge of Canada

Finding: Meeting the language and knowledge requirements can be difficult for refugees, those with low official language proficiency and those with less education.

Overall, the analysis of GCMS data found that the approval rate on citizenship grant applications was very high, with 94.6% of processed applicants granted citizenship on their first application.[28] Similarly, research showed a relatively high pass rate for the citizenship knowledge test, with an average pass rate of 86.1% for applicants taking the test for the first time.[29] However, evidence also suggested challenges for more vulnerable applicants.

While only a very small percentage of applicants were refused on their first citizenship application, GCMS data showed that the most common reasons for refusal were not meeting the knowledge requirement (50%) and not meeting the language requirement (22%).[30] Research also showed that the knowledge test pass rate was lower among immigrants with secondary or less education at admission, those with no official language knowledge at admission, and those admitted under the Privately Sponsored Refugee or Government Assisted Refugee programs.[31]

Evaluation survey results were consistent. While only 10% of respondents indicated that the language and knowledge requirements had delayed or were preventing them from applying for citizenship,[32] a greater proportion of resettled refugees and protected persons reported having these difficulties (language, 18%; knowledge, 15%). When asked why the requirements had delayed or were preventing them from applying, evaluation survey respondents most frequently indicated:

- Being afraid of failing the test and losing the application fee (44%), for the knowledge requirement.

- That their English/French was not good enough (41%), for the language requirement.

Of evaluation survey respondents who had not applied for citizenship, 24% felt an easier knowledge test and 20% felt a lower language requirement would encourage them to apply.[33]

Analysis of GCMS data also revealed differences in the citizenship uptake rate based on knowledge of official languages and education level at admission. It showed:

- A smaller percentage of immigrants with no official language knowledge at admission applying for/obtaining citizenship over time; and

- A greater percentage of immigrants with a university degree at admission applying for/obtaining citizenship, though this difference disappeared over time.[34]

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[28] 2.6% of applicants had their application refused (citizenship not granted) and 2.8% had their file closed for other reasons (including those to be closed). The analysis was based on the first citizenship grant application for PRs (2005 to 2015 admissions) with a final outcome by December 31, 2018, excluding applications that were still being processed.

[29] Li, X. (2019). *Citizenship knowledge test results in 2016* (IRCC internal draft research report, R&E Branch). This study examined the results of the 2016 citizenship knowledge test for first-time knowledge test takers aged 18-54 who submitted their application on or after November 1, 2012 (i.e., after the introduction of the upfront language evidence requirement at the time of citizenship application).

[30] The analysis was based on the first citizenship grant application for PRs (2005 to 2015 admissions) with a final outcome by December 31, 2018, excluding applications that were still being processed. Note: An application can have more than one refusal reason. Also, refusal rates do not take into account applications that are returned after the completeness check. Some applications are returned due to missing, illegible or unacceptable language evidence.

[31] Li, X. (2019). *Citizenship knowledge test results in 2016* (IRCC internal draft research report, R&E Branch).

[32] Survey respondents for these questions were citizens and PRs intending to apply or with an application in process.

[33] Survey respondents for this question were PRs who were intending and not intending to apply for citizenship.

[34] Trends based on these characteristics over time can be found in Annex D.

Correspondingly, census-based research showed evidence of a more pronounced decline in naturalization among recent immigrants (5 to 9 years in Canada) with low official language proficiency and low education levels, suggesting it is taking them longer to become citizens.[35]

Interviews and focus groups with PRs also exposed challenges related to the language and knowledge requirements. Language was noted as a barrier, particularly for refugees. It was highlighted that the study guide is only available online, requiring a computer and computer literacy to access, and that there is no IRCC-endorsed practice test available, in spite of many unofficial and costly practice tests online. Interviews suggested that the Bill C-6 changes to the age range for the language and knowledge requirements likely had a facilitative effect on uptake for those who would not meet them.[36] However, it was also noted that these changes may delay uptake for some newcomers, as they may wait until the age of exemption before applying.

4.2. Factors affecting decision-making to obtain citizenship

Finding: While many factors motivate permanent residents to become Canadian citizens, survey results showed that wanting to feel fully Canadian and making Canada a permanent home were the most important considerations.

A variety of factors motivate permanent residents to become Canadian citizens. The evaluation survey asked respondents about the overall factors impacting their decision to obtain citizenship, and also which factor was the most important.[37] More than two thirds (71%) of survey respondents reported want[ing] to feel fully Canadian, and want[ing] to make Canada [their] permanent home as a reason for becoming/wanting to become a citizen. These two reasons were also selected as the most important (29% and 30% respectively).

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[35] Hou & Picot (2019). Trends in the citizenship rate among new immigrants to Canada, Economic insights, Statistics Canada.
[36] In October 2017, Bill C-6 changed the age range for these requirements from 14 to 64 years of age to 18 to 54 years of age.
[37] Survey respondents for these questions were citizens and PRs intending to apply or with an application in process.

Figure 2: Overall and most important factors affecting survey respondents' decision to obtain citizenship

Wanted to feel fully Canadian — 71% / 29%
To be able to vote — 61% / 7%
Other family members are Canadian citizens — 28% / 5%
To get a passport / travel — 53% / 6%
Wanted to make Canada my permanent home — 71% / 30%
So I cannot be deported — 6% / 0%
So I am no longer stateless — 4% / 0%
Political stability / safety in Canada — 39% / 6%
For my children — 38% / 9%
To improve my chances of getting a job — 20% / 1%
To run for political office — 3% / 0%
To have a stronger legal status — 31% / 3%
Freedom to live abroad and still come back to Canada to live — 29% / 4%
The laws in my home country changed — 2% / 0%
Other — 1% / 1%

■ Overall
■ Most important

Source: Evaluation survey

Overall, the third most important factor identified in the evaluation survey findings was getting citizenship for their children (9%). However, there were some differences based on immigration category:

- For their children was third-most important for economic immigrants (12%);

- Political stability/safety in Canada ranked third for resettled refugees and protected persons (9%); and

- Other family members are Canadian citizens ranked third for sponsored family immigrants (12%).

The privilege of the Canadian passport and travel-related considerations figured prominently in the interviews and focus groups with PRs. For many, the passport provides better access to travel, particularly for refugees. It also provides the privilege of not requiring a visa for some travel and access to one of the world's strongest passports. A little over half of evaluation survey respondents (53%) indicated to get a passport/travel was a motivational factor for them, but this was often not the most important factor (6%).

Focus groups with PRs found a variety of rights were central to the decision to apply for citizenship, including freedom of speech, freedom of dress, freedom of movement, and equality. Similarly, 61% of evaluation survey respondents indicated to be able to vote, and 31% indicated to have a stronger legal status as a motivator in their decision-making, though these reasons did not rank highly in terms of the most important.

Other factors may deter newcomers from obtaining Canadian citizenship.

- Costs were noted as a factor in the focus groups with PRs, particularly for families, as well as for women and refugees. Evaluation survey results showed that 23% of respondents who had not applied for citizenship would be encouraged to apply if there were more options for paying the application fee (e.g. ability to pay in installments, a group or family rate).[38]

- Rules in other countries regarding dual citizenship, property, pensions or visa requirements may be a disincentive for those wanting to maintain ties in their home country. For example, China does not allow dual citizenship, and administrative data showed that PRs from China were the largest PR group who had not applied for citizenship. Evaluation survey results showed that 14% of respondents who had not applied for citizenship would be encouraged to apply if the citizenship laws in [their] home country change[d].[39]

- Application processing times can also be a deterrent for some. Evaluation survey results showed that 41% of respondents who had not applied for citizenship would be encouraged to apply if there were shorter application processing times.[40]

4.3. Eligibility requirements

IRCC is responsible for ensuring that individuals applying to become Canadian citizens meet the eligibility requirements, as set out in the *Citizenship Act* and corresponding *Regulations*. Program Delivery Instructions (PDIs) and other tools are available to officers to assist in assessing these requirements. The evaluation focused on eligibility in relation to physical presence, official language ability and knowledge of Canada and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. As these eligibility requirements changed during the reporting period, the evaluation focused on the requirements which came into effect in October, 2017 as a result of Bill C-6, an *Act to amend the Citizenship Act and make consequential amendments to another Act* (henceforth referred to as Bill C-6).[41]

4.3.1   Physical presence in Canada

Finding: While the physical presence requirement is clearly defined, it can be difficult for applicants to prove, as well as for IRCC officers to verify, without entry-exit information. The calculation of non-permanent resident time is particularly challenging.

Defining eligibility

Eligible applicants for Canadian citizenship are PRs with no unfulfilled conditions relating to status under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA), and who have been physically present in Canada for at least 1,095 days during the five years immediately before the date of application.[42] Calculation of physical presence counts one day for every day a person has been physically present in Canada since becoming a PR. Non-Permanent Resident (NPR) time can also be counted at a half day for every day of physical presence as a Temporary Resident (TR) or

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[38] Survey respondents for this question were PRs who were intending and not intending to apply for citizenship.
[39] Survey respondents for this question were PRs who were intending and not intending to apply for citizenship.
[40] Ibid.
[41] An overview of the changes as a result of Bill C-6 to the eligibility requirements for physical presence, official language ability and knowledge of Canada and the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship are outlined in Annex E.
[42] Government of Canada (1985). *Citizenship Act*, Part I, The Right to Citizenship, Grant of citizenship, section 5(1)(c)(i).

Protected Person up to a maximum of 365 days.[43, 44] In addition, residence outside of Canada can be counted in certain circumstances (though these circumstances tend to be infrequent).[45]

Tools and methods to assess eligibility

Citizenship applicants complete an online physical presence calculator, which is printed and submitted to IRCC with their completed application. Initial screening and triage related to physical presence is done at intake by IRCC officers at CPC-S as part of the application completeness check.[46] An Integrated Customs Enforcement System (ICES) report from the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) may be initiated based on triage criteria. The ICES report captures information on traveler entries into Canada.[47]

While the assessment of physical presence is completed at CPC-S for some applications, it is more frequently completed by IRCC officers in local offices. Information provided by the applicant is verified during the file review. If the application is referred to the local office, this information can also be verified during a brief interview. Generally, IRCC officers check passport stamps and other records provided by the applicant (e.g., taxes, employment, school, etc.) and review ICES reports (if applicable). If they have further questions or concerns, they can request supplementary information, ask the applicant to complete a Residence Questionnaire, or conduct a more in-depth interview. If the IRCC officer is not satisfied that the applicant has met the physical presence requirement, the file is referred to a citizenship judge for review, which can include an in-person hearing.

Influence on citizenship uptake

Evaluation survey results showed that 75% of respondents felt that the physical presence requirement was just right.[48] Moreover, most (83.5%) respondents intending to apply for citizenship thought that they would meet the physical presence requirement. However, 52% of respondents agreed that proving that they meet/met the physical presence requirement is/was difficult.[49] Of respondents who had not applied for citizenship, 19% indicated that a lower physical presence requirement would encourage them to apply, while 21% indicated that more flexibility in meeting the physical presence requirement would encourage them.[50]

Generally, interviews indicated that the changes to the physical presence requirement as a result of Bill C-6 had a facilitative effect on citizenship uptake.[51] Correspondingly, GCMS data showed a surge in applications after this change was introduced. The number of grant applications received increased, from 108,635 to 239,518 between 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 corresponding with the change timeframe.[52] Interviews also highlighted how this surge in applications created processing challenges for program delivery.

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[43] Government of Canada (1985). *Citizenship Act*, Part I, The Right to Citizenship, Length of physical presence — calculation, section 5(1.001).

[44] Periods during which a person has been under a probation order, has been a paroled inmate, or has served a term of imprisonment are not counted in the physical presence calculation. Refer to Citizenship Act, Part V, Procedure, Periods not counted as physical presence, section 21.

[45] For more information on these circumstances, refer to the *Citizenship Act*, Part I, The Right to Citizenship, sections 5(1.01), 5(1.02) and 5(1.03).

[46] Citizenship applications without the requisite days are returned to applicants.

[47] Requests for an ICES report can also be initiated later in the assessment process if the local office determines that it is needed.

[48] Compared to 12% who felt it was too long, 6% who felt it was too short and 8% who indicated don't know. Survey respondents for these questions were citizens and PRs intending to apply or with an application in process.

[49] Survey respondents for these questions were citizens and PRs intending to apply or with an application in process.

[50] Survey respondents for this questions were PRs who were intending and not intending to apply for citizenship.

[51] In October 2017, Bill C-6 reduced the amount of physical presence time needed for citizenship eligibility and brought back the ability to use NPR time.

[52] Source: IRCC internal program documents.

Effectiveness of tools and methods

Interviews were mixed in terms of the effectiveness of the tools and methods in place to assess physical presence, with IRCC officers in the field generally less positive than program representatives at NHQ. It was highlighted that there is no room for discretion in the application of this requirement, as the number of days and its calculation are legislated. Issues were noted with some of the triage criteria, as well as with the lack of entry-exit information to verify time in Canada, as IRCC officers only have access to entry information through the CBSA ICES reports. Although implementation of a new Entry/Exit Program was underway at the time of the evaluation, it will take some time to accumulate enough information to use in the verification of physical presence for the purposes of citizenship applications.[53]

In addition, interviews and focus groups with PRs highlighted that keeping track of physical presence time is challenging for prospective applicants, especially if they do not know from the start that they want to apply for citizenship. In order to help with documenting physical presence for the PR and citizenship requirements, a travel journal was introduced by IRCC during the evaluation period to record trips outside of Canada.[54]

Other challenges were found in relation to NPR time and frequent travel.

- Interview findings noted that NPR time is confusing, and requires some knowledge of immigration to assess. Guidance to IRCC officers regarding NPR time was seen to be insufficient/unclear, particularly when it was first introduced with Bill C-6. However, it was acknowledged that it had improved to some extent over time.

- Evaluation survey results showed that some respondents intending to apply for citizenship reported not meeting the physical presence requirement due to personal (52%) or business/work (35%) obligations outside of Canada.[55] Similarly, challenges with having to the leave the country for work were also noted in the focus groups with PRs.

4.3.2 Ability to communicate in one of Canada's official languages

Finding: The range of evidence accepted for language provides flexibility for applicants. However, it is difficult for IRCC officers to challenge the evidence when they have concerns about language ability, as the assessment tools in place are subjective, and officers are not formal assessors.

Defining eligibility

Eligible applicants for Canadian citizenship (if aged 18 and to 54 at date of application) must have an adequate knowledge of one of Canada's official languages.[56] They must be able to:

   a) take part in short, routine conversations about everyday topics;
   b) understand simple instructions and directions;
   c) use basic grammar, including simple structures and tenses, in oral communication; and
   d) use vocabulary that is adequate for routine oral communication.[57]

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[53] With Bill C-21, an Act to amend the Customs Act, both entry and exit data on all travelers (including Canadian and U.S. citizens) began to accumulate as of July 11, 2019 for travel by land. At the time of the evaluation, regulatory amendments for exits by air were expected to come into force in June 2020. Data on exits by air were expected to become available to officers in June 2021, following the onboarding of air carriers by the CBSA.

[54] Refer to www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/canadian-citizenship/become-canadian-citizen/eligibility/record-trips-outside-canada.html (accessed on February 7, 2020).

[55] n=356.

[56] Government of Canada (1985). *Citizenship Act*, Part I, The Right to Citizenship, Grant of citizenship, section 5(1)(d).

[57] Government of Canada (1993). *Citizenship Regulations*, Official Languages Criteria, section 14.

Tools and methods to assess eligibility

Citizenship applicants provide language evidence to IRCC with their completed application to demonstrate that they have achieved a Canadian Language Benchmarks or *Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens* (CLB/NCLC) Level 4 or higher in speaking and listening abilities.[58] Initial screening of the language evidence is done at intake by IRCC officers at CPC-S as part of the application completeness check. A *List of Acceptable Language Evidence for Citizenship Purposes* is available to officers for reference.[59]

IRCC officers in local offices further verify the language evidence and confirm language ability during the interview with the applicant. If there are concerns about the applicant's language ability, the officer can conduct a short language assessment using the Citizenship Language Screening Tool (CLST). If needed, the applicant can also be referred to a hearing with an IRCC officer for a full language assessment using the Language Assessment Tool (LAT).

Effectiveness of tools and methods

When asked about the language requirement, 74% of evaluation survey respondents felt that it was just right.[60] However, 31% felt that obtaining proof of language is/was difficult. This percentage was higher for refugee respondents (43%) and those with no official language knowledge at admission (45%).[61]

Interviews were mixed in terms of effectiveness of the tools and methods in place to assess language, with IRCC officers in the field generally less positive than program representatives at NHQ. Interviews noted that the language evidence accepted is very broad and does not always reflect the applicant's actual ability as demonstrated at the time of the interview. Further, it was highlighted that the assessment tools (CLST and LAT) are subjective. In particular, it was noted that the LAT is complicated, difficult to use, and not well adapted to the client experience. While IRCC officers get training on how to use the tools, they are not formal language assessors, and there is a risk for inconsistent decision-making.

4.3.3 Knowledge of Canada and of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship

Finding: While the test is frequently seen as an effective way to assess the knowledge requirement, its language level is not consistent with the language requirement. Pass rates are lower among applicants with less education and lower language proficiency.

Defining eligibility

Eligible applicants for Canadian citizenship (if aged 18 and to 54 at date of application) must demonstrate in one of Canada's official languages an adequate knowledge of *Canada and of the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship*.[62] They must demonstrate that they know the national symbols of Canada and have a general understanding of various subjects, including

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58 The regulatory requirement for up-front, objective official language evidence was introduced in November 2012. Refer to Government of Canada (2015). *Citizenship Regulations*, No.2, Grant of Citizenship, section 2(1)(g).

59 List of Acceptable Language Evidence for Citizenship Purposes includes third-party language tests, Language Instruction for Newcomers (LINC) and Cours de langue pour immigrants au Canada (CLIC) assessments, provincial program assessments, and academic evidence.

60 Compared to 8% who felt it was too high, 7% who felt it was too low and 11% who indicated don't know.

61 Survey respondents for these questions were citizens and PRs intending to apply or with an application in process.

62 Government of Canada (1985). *Citizenship Act*, Part I, The Right to Citizenship, Grant of citizenship, section 5(1)(e).

Canadian history, geography, laws and system of government, as well as participation in the democratic process and Canadian society.[63]

Tools and methods to assess eligibility

Citizenship applicants have 30 minutes to complete a written knowledge test in English or French, consisting of 20 multiple choice and true or false questions. The passing mark is 75%. Applicants can have access to a re-test if they fail the first written knowledge test and are referred to an oral knowledge hearing with a citizenship officer if they fail the re-test. In addition, some accommodations can be made for applicants with special needs.[64]

The knowledge test is based on the *Study Guide – Discover Canada – The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*,[65] and test questions are developed by IRCC's Citizenship Branch and approved by the Minister. The knowledge test is treated as secret. Copies of the test versions and answer keys are not available to the public and are securely stored. Discover Canada is the only official study guide for the citizenship knowledge test, and is available electronically (in regular or large font), in an audio format, as well as in Braille (upon request).

Effectiveness of tools and methods

As previously noted, most applicants pass the test on the first attempt. When asked about the questions on the knowledge test, 76% of evaluation survey respondents felt that they were just right in terms of level of difficulty[66] and 88% thought that they were good at assessing what [a person] should know about Canada.[67] However, 26% of respondents who had not taken the knowledge test did not think they would pass at the time of the survey,[68] and this was higher for those with no official language knowledge at admission (34%).

Interviews generally noted that the test is efficient, easy-to-grade, and objectively scored. However, the language level of the test and study guide was viewed as higher than the language requirement. Moreover, the evaluation observed that the two requirements involve different skills. The official language criteria are based on oral communication skills (speaking and listening), while the knowledge test is generally written and requires reading skills. Although applicants can access an audio version of the study guide and an oral knowledge hearing, this does not address comprehension challenges related to language level.

Program-led consultations on *Discover Canada* (to update the study guide) also found that the language level can be difficult for many newcomers. Similarly, research findings suggested challenges with the approach, as the knowledge test pass rate dropped sharply for applicants (18-54) after the *Discover Canada* study guide was introduced – from about 96% to 83.5% in 2011.[69] Consultation findings highlighted a need for the wording and tone to be more inclusive and easier to understand, and included suggestions for the use of plain language and definitions, having less text and more visuals, and providing additional tools and support to increase accessibility and effectively communicate the information in the study guide.[70] As a result of these consultations, a

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[63] For a complete list of subjects, refer to Government of Canada (1993). *Citizenship Regulations*, Knowledge of Canada and Citizenship Criteria, section 15(1) and 15(2).

[64] For example, applicants with special needs are allowed up to 75 minutes to complete the test. For applicants with a visual impairment, the written test can be administered in large print, in Braille or via an oral knowledge hearing. For applicants with a hearing impairment, a sign language interpreter may be allowed to interpret the instructions given at a written test.

[65] The *Discover Canada* study guide was introduced in 2010 to replace the former study guide, *A Look at Canada*. Knowledge testing based on *Discover Canada* began in March, 2010.

[66] Compared to 7% who felt it was too hard and 12% too easy and 5% who indicated don't know.

[67] Survey respondents for these questions were citizens and PRs with an application in process who had taken the knowledge test.

[68] Respondents were PRs intending to apply or with an application in process who had not yet taken the knowledge test.

[69] Li, X. (2019). *Citizenship Knowledge Test Results in 2016* (IRCC internal draft research report, R&E Branch).

[70] Source: IRCC internal program documents.

new approach, including a new guide and additional tools, is being developed to help address these concerns, but it had not yet been implemented at the time of the evaluation.

4.3.4   Compassionate waivers for language and knowledge

Finding: While compassionate waivers for language and knowledge provide a means to address barriers to citizenship, the process is not well known and difficult to navigate. The extent to which they are accessible to those who could benefit is unclear.

Waiver process

The *Citizenship Act* provides discretion to waive the language and knowledge requirements on compassionate grounds.[71] However, the Act, corresponding Regulations and PDIs do not provide definitions to delineate these compassionate considerations. Moreover, the onus is on the applicant to request a waiver and demonstrate on which grounds the waiver is warranted. While the waiver's purpose is to provide some flexibility in the citizenship grant application process, it is also meant to be an exceptional measure. It is not expected that all citizenship applicants will be able to satisfy the requirements.

Typically, a medical opinion form has to be completed by a physician as part of the waiver process. The medical opinion details the reasons why an applicant may not be able to meet the language and/or knowledge requirements for citizenship, and specifies whether or not the applicant's medical condition is permanent or temporary in nature. IRCC officers are primarily instructed to consider a waiver when a permanent medical condition exists. Similarly, instructions to applicants note that supporting evidence will be accepted if the applicant cannot demonstrate that they meet the requirements due to a medical condition.

The completed medical opinion form is reviewed in conjunction with other data provided by the applicant to ensure it aligns, as well as with the applicant's personal circumstances.[72] Generally, applicants must also try to do the language and knowledge assessments, unless doing so would cause undue hardship, so that results can be included in the decision-making. Overall, waiver decision-making involves officer discretion and striking a balance between certainty, consistency, and flexibility to deal with specific facts of a case.

Effectiveness of the waiver process

Interviews noted waivers as a way to address barriers to citizenship, but also highlighted that the process is not highly publicized or transparent, and is difficult to navigate for applicants. Similarly, focus groups with PRs underlined a lack of awareness of the waiver process.

Administrative data showed that very few waivers for knowledge and language were requested during the evaluation period. Between 2015–2016 and 2017–2018, a total of 1,713 knowledge and 1,329 language waivers were requested,[73] representing 0.5% and 0.4% respectively of adult grant applications processed during this period.[74] Moreover, the number of waivers requested declined sharply between 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 (by over 50%). Overall, most waiver requests (86%) were approved, for a total of 1,475 waivers for knowledge and 1,152 for language

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[71] Government of Canada (1985). *Citizenship Act,* Part I, The Right to Citizenship, Grant of citizenship, Waiver by Minister on compassionate grounds, section 5(3).

[72] Personal circumstances considered include the applicant's age, personal situation and past living conditions, as well as non-medical hardship factors and length of time in Canada.

[73] More than one waiver reason could stem from one case. That is, one applicant may have been assessed for a 5(3) waiver for multiple requirements including that of language or knowledge. Source: IRCC administrative database (January 15, 2019).

[74] There were a total of 371,529 adult citizenship grant applications processed during the 2015-16 to 2017-18 period. Source: IRCC administrative database (January 24, 2019).

granted during the three-year period, with more waivers granted to females, and resettled refugees and protected persons.[75]

As the onus is on the applicant to request a waiver, and the waiver process does not appear to be well-known or understood, it is unclear to what extent the waiver numbers actually correspond with the level of need for the waiver, or rather signal a lack of awareness or ability to access to it, during the evaluation period. Interviews, document review and observations during the evaluation also suggested that the waiver is being interpreted as a "medical" waiver, even though compassionate considerations are an important part of the review process for waiver requests. Correspondingly, IRCC has identified the waiver process as an area of focus for policy and program planning to "ensure a fair and equitable process is in place to waive requirements for citizenship grants on compassionate grounds".[76]

4.4. Social and civic engagement of naturalized citizens

A key of objective of the Citizenship Program is for Canadian citizenship to involve active engagement and be a valued status. IRCC indicates that "by enhancing the meaning of Canadian citizenship for newcomers and fostering a sense of belonging, newcomers will be encouraged to pursue citizenship and continue to contribute to Canadian society, thus making citizenship a valued status".[77] With this in mind, the evaluation explored various measures related to social and civic engagement in its Survey of Naturalized Citizens and Permanent Residents,[78] and compared them to selected results from the Newcomer Outcome Survey (NOS)[79] and research based on the 2013 General Social Survey (GSS)[80] to better understand the extent to which naturalized citizens are integrated and engaged in Canadian society.

4.4.1 Sense of belonging, confidence in public institutions and social connectedness

Finding: Sense of belonging, community and social connections in Canada were comparable or higher for PRs intending to apply for citizenship compared to naturalized citizens, but lower for PRs not intending to apply.

Sense of belonging

The concept of belonging figures prominently in the literature on citizenship, and sense of belonging is seen as a dimension of concepts, such as social inclusion, social cohesion and social capital.[81] Belonging "refers to feelings of membership in a community, of being part of a collective "we", which facilitates acting together for common purposes".[82] It is also "reciprocal

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[75] Source: IRCC administrative database (January 15, 2019).

[76] Source: IRCC internal program documents.

[77] IRCC (2017). *Citizenship Program: Performance Information Profile*, p.8.

[78] Survey respondents in this section were those residing in Canada at the time of the survey. Survey results compared naturalized citizens to PRs intending to apply for citizenship (including those with an application in process), as well as to those not intending to apply for citizenship.

[79] IRCC's Newcomer Outcome Survey (NOS) is an annual online survey, providing performance and outcomes data related to IRCC's Settlement and Resettlement Programs.

[80] The General Social Survey (GSS) is a social survey within Canada's national statistical system. It collects cross-sectional data from a random sample of Canadians aged 15 and over living in private households in the 10 provinces. The 2013 cycle of the GSS dealt with the theme of Social Identity, and included the following topics: social networks, civic participation and engagement, knowledge of Canadian history, appreciation of national symbols, shared values, confidence in institutions and trust in people.

[81] Painter, C. V. (2013). *Sense of belonging: literature review*. IRCC, Research and Evaluation.

[82] Ibid, p.5.

in nature", with "communities sending signals of acceptance and inclusion."[83] Welcoming communities are thought to promote a sense of belonging.[84] The evaluation examined sense of belonging for naturalized citizens and PRs in relation to Canada, province/territory, local community and country of origin, as well as looked at their views on their community being welcoming.

Evaluation survey findings showed a strong sense of belonging to Canada for naturalized citizens and PRs intending to apply for citizenship (about 93.5% for both groups). Results also indicated a strong sense of belonging to one's local community and province/territory in Canada for these two groups, though the rate was slightly higher for PRs intending to apply for citizenship. A strong sense of belonging (all levels) was less frequent among those not intending to apply for citizenship. Conversely, a strong sense of belonging to one's country of origin was most frequent with this group (Figure 3).[85]

Figure 3: Sense of belonging (somewhat strong or very strong) by citizenship status
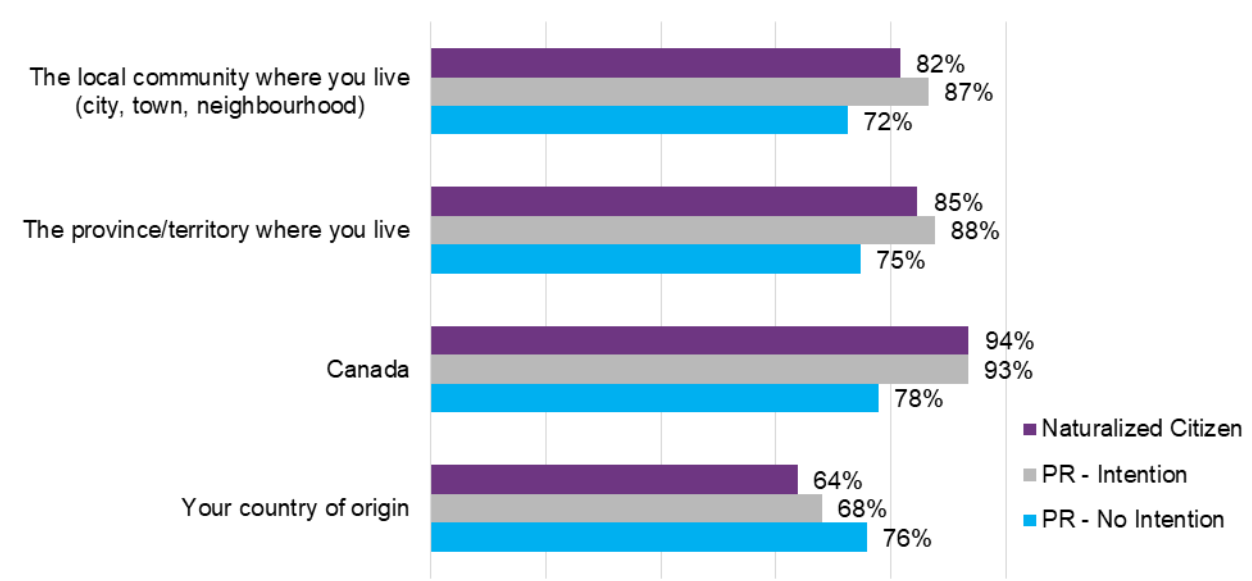
Source: Evaluation survey

Evaluation survey respondents generally indicated a strong sense of belonging to their local community, province or territory and to Canada, irrespective of their socio-demographic characteristics. However, respondents from non-OECD countries, as well as resettled refugees and protected persons, more frequently indicated a very strong sense of belonging to Canada.

- 58% of respondents born in non-OECD countries indicated a very strong sense of belonging, compared to 42% born in OECD countries.

- 71% of resettled refugees and protected persons indicated a very strong sense of belonging, compared to 53% of economic immigrants and 54% of family sponsored immigrants.

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[83] Community Foundations of Canada (2017). *Belonging: Exploring Connection to Community*, 2017 National Vital Signs Report, p.2.
[84] Esses, V.M., Hamilton, L.K., Bennett-AbuAyyash, C. & Burnstein, M. (2010). *Characteristics of a Welcoming Community*, Welcoming Communities Initiative. Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.
[85] Responses of "somewhat strong" and "very strong" were combined to indicate a "strong" sense of belonging.

In addition, resettled refugees and protected persons (43%) less frequently indicated a strong sense of belonging to their country of origin, compared to economic immigrants (68%) and family sponsored immigrants (70%).

In terms of welcoming communities, evaluation survey findings indicated very little difference across respondent groups. Most citizens and PRs intending and not intending to apply for citizenship felt that their community was welcoming to newcomers (about 93%, 94% and 93% respectively).[86]

NOS findings were fairly consistent with evaluation survey results, though the NOS does not make a distinction between PRs intending or not intending to apply for citizenship. NOS findings showed:

- A strong sense of belonging to Canada for naturalized citizens and PRs, though the rate was higher for naturalized citizens (93% and 89% respectively).

- Sense of belonging to one's local community and province/territory in Canada were more comparable for the two groups.[87]

- A strong sense of belonging to one's country of origin was most frequent among PRs.

- Finally, most PRs and naturalized citizens felt that their community was welcoming to newcomers (92% and 91% respectively).[88]

Confidence in Canadian institutions

Confidence in and satisfaction with public institutions have been linked in the literature to sense of belonging in the country and social cohesion.[89] The evaluation explored the confidence of naturalized citizens and PRs in relation to several public institutions in Canada: the police, the justice system and courts, the school system, the healthcare system, banks, local merchants and business people, media and the federal government.

Evaluation survey findings showed that confidence was higher among PRs intending to apply for citizenship and lower for those not intending to apply (on average, 68% and 50% respectively across institutions).[90] Naturalized citizens and PRs intending to apply for citizenship most frequently indicated confidence in the police and in the justice system and courts (74% and 78% respectively for each), while PRs not intending to apply for citizenship most frequently indicated confidence in banks and in local merchants and business people (55% for each) (Figure 4). NOS findings were consistent, with about 71% (on average) of both naturalized citizen and PR respondents indicating confidence in similar Canadian institutions.[91]

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[86] Responses of "agree" and "strongly agree" were combined to indicate "agreement" that the community was welcoming.

[87] A strong sense of belonging (somewhat or very) to one's province/territory was indicated by 83% of PR respondents and 84% of citizen respondents. A strong sense of belonging (somewhat or very) to one's local community was indicated by 81% of PR respondents and 82% of citizen respondents.

[88] The response options for this question in the NOS were slightly different than in the evaluation survey. Responses of "somewhat agree", "agree" and "strongly agree" were combined to indicate "agreement" that the community was welcoming.

[89] Cotter, A. (2015). *Public confidence in Canadian institutions*, Spotlight on Canadian Results from the General Social Survey, Statistics Canada, p.4.

[90] Responses of "a lot" and "a great deal" were combined to indicate confidence in the various Canadian institutions.

[91] Mean frequencies of confidence across the following Canadian institutions were calculated for citizens and PRs: the police, the justice system and courts, the healthcare system and the Canadian government (federal). Responses of "a lot" and "a great deal" were combined to indicate confidence in the various Canadian institutions.

Figure 4:   Confidence in Canadian institutions (a lot or a great deal) by citizenship status

Bar chart showing confidence in Canadian institutions by citizenship status (Naturalized Citizen, PR - Intention, PR - No Intention):

Institution	Naturalized Citizen	PR - Intention	PR - No Intention
The police	74%	78%	54%
The justice system and courts	74%	78%	52%
School system	65%	73%	53%
Healthcare system	61%	67%	45%
Banks	63%	68%	55%
Local merchants and business people	52%	56%	42%
Canadian media	47%	55%	38%
The Canadian government (federal)	64%	73%	46%

Source: Evaluation survey

Evaluation survey findings indicated a few notable trends related to confidence in Canadian institutions based on respondents' admission year, age, country of origin and official language knowledge. On average:[92]

- 66% of respondents from more recent admission years (2011 to 2015) indicated confidence, compared to 60% of those from earlier admission years (2006 to 2010).

- 68% of respondents 55 years and older[93] indicated confidence, compared to 64% of those 35 to 54 years and 62% of those 18 to 34 years.

- 65% of respondents born in non-OECD countries indicated confidence, compared to 58% of those born in OECD countries.

- 65% of respondents with knowledge of at least one official language at admission indicated confidence, compared to 60% of those with no official language knowledge.

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[92]   A mean percentage was calculated across institution types for reporting purposes.
[93]   Age as of April 1st, 2019 was used to correspond with the timing of survey administration.

Social connections in Canada

Social connections can involve family, friends or acquaintances, and can provide individuals with emotional support and companionship as well as access to resources, such as information and opportunities. Sometimes referred to as social capital, social connections can be bonding (stronger emotional ties) or bridging (weaker ties based on mutual interests, work relations or access to resources).[94] The evaluation focused on the social connections of naturalized citizens and PRs, which were more bonding in nature (e.g., people who could be depended on for help or with whom an individual could talk about important life decisions).[95]

Overall, evaluation survey findings showed that social connections were comparable between naturalized citizens and PRs intending to apply for citizenship, though slightly more frequent for the latter (on average, 89% and 91% respectively). Social connections were least frequent among PRs not intending to apply for citizenship (Figure 5). Social connections did not vary significantly based on the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents.

Figure 5:   Social connections in Canada (agree or strongly agree) by citizenship status
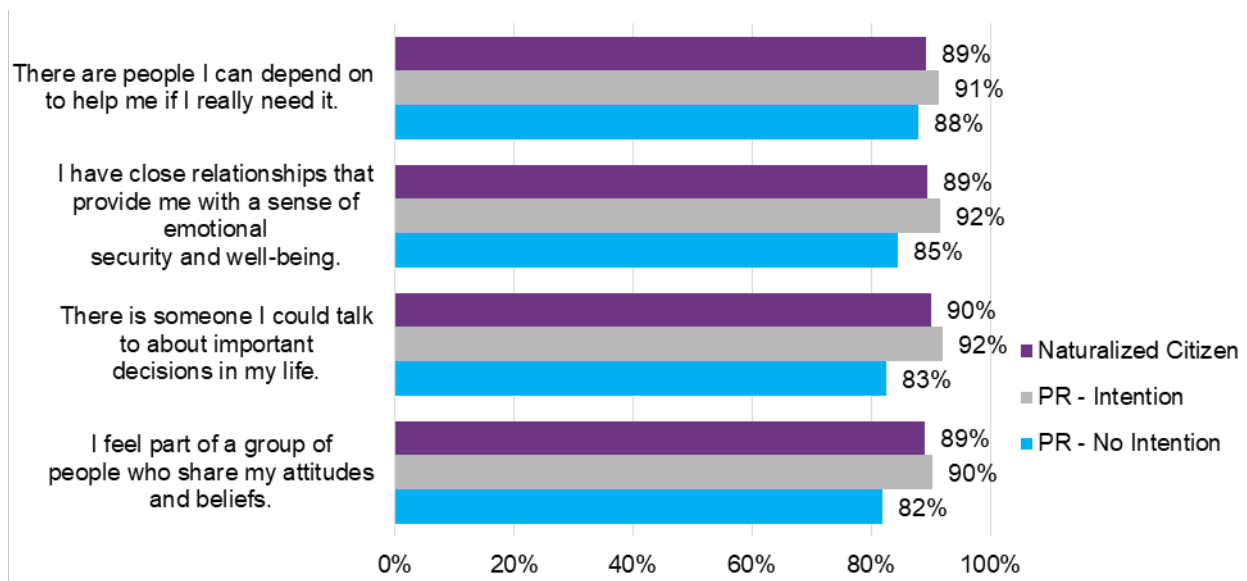
Source: Evaluation survey

The NOS only looked at social connections in terms of the number of close friends. Similar to evaluation survey results, the NOS measure of social connections was comparable between naturalized citizens and PRs, with most indicating having one or more friends (95% and 93% respectively). However, a higher percentage of naturalized citizens reported having five or more friends (55% compared to 50% of PRs).

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[94] Sinha, M. (2014). Canadians' connections with family and friends, Spotlight on Canadian Results from the General Social Survey, Statistics Canada, p.4; Turcotte, M. (2015). *Trends in Social Capital in Canada*, Spotlight on Canadian Results from the General Social Survey, Statistics Canada, p.4.

[95] The evaluation survey did not specify the number or type of relationships. The relationships could have included family members as well as friends.

4.4.2   Volunteering and group membership

Finding: Rates of volunteering and group membership were higher for naturalized citizens compared to PRs. Survey results showed differences based on socio-economic variables, particularly for group membership, suggesting that these factors play a role in more active forms of social and civic engagement.

Volunteering and group membership are more active forms of social and civic engagement. Volunteering can be occasional or ongoing in nature. It can also be formal (e.g., unpaid service for a community organization) or informal (e.g., helping out family, friends or neighbours).[96] Group membership can also vary, depending on the reasons for participation (e.g., social, political or recreational).[97] The evaluation focused on more formal types of volunteering[98] and group membership, looking at their incidence in the 12 months prior to the survey, but not at the amount of time dedicated to these activities. The study also considered the different types of groups in which newcomers participate.

Volunteering

Overall, evaluation survey findings showed that naturalized citizens (46%) indicated volunteering more frequently than PRs intending to apply (37%) and not intending to apply (33%) for citizenship. Similarly, naturalized citizens responding to the NOS (36%) indicated volunteering at a higher rate than PRs (28%), but at a lower rate than those responding to the evaluation survey.

Naturalized citizens responding to the evaluation survey closely resembled Canadian-born citizen respondents to the 2013 General Social Survey (GSS), who volunteered at a rate of 45%. PRs intending and not intending to apply for citizenship from the evaluation survey more closely resembled GSS respondents not born in Canada, who volunteered at a rate of 38%.

Evaluation survey findings also showed differences in the rate of volunteering based on various socio-economic characteristics. Notable differences are highlighted in Table 5.

Table 5:   Volunteering by selected socio-demographic characteristics

Respondent characteristics	Volunteer–Yes	Volunteer–No
18 to 34 years of age	43%	57%
35 to 54 years of age	45%	55%
55 years of age and older	34%	66%
Economic immigration category	44%	56%
Sponsored family immigration category	38%	62%
Resettled refugees and protected persons category	51%	49%
Income of $45,000 or less	42%	58%
Income of more than $45,000	47%	53%
Participating in labour force	44%	56%
Not participating in labour force	34%	66%

Source: Evaluation survey

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[96] Sinha, M. (2015). *Volunteering in Canada*, 2004 to 2013, Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey, Statistics Canada, p.4.

[97] Turcotte, M. (2015). *Civic engagement and political participation in Canada*, Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey, Statistics Canada, p.4.

[98] The evaluation survey defined volunteering as the following: Volunteering means you provided a service, without monetary compensation, for a group or organization. This includes any unpaid help provided to schools, religious organizations, sports, or community associations.

Consistent with these findings, GSS results also showed higher rates of volunteering for respondents participating in the labour force and those with a higher income.[99]

Group membership

Types of groups considered in the evaluation included: union or professional association; political party or group; service club; seniors' group; youth organization; immigrant or ethnic association or club; cultural, educational or hobby organization; religious-affiliated group; school group, neighbourhood, civic or community association; and sports or recreational organization. Group membership could also include supporting a child's participation in a group or activity.

Overall, evaluation survey findings showed that naturalized citizens (47%) indicated group membership more frequently than PRs intending and not intending to apply for citizenship (40% for both). All three respondent groups most frequently indicated membership in a religious-affiliated group. The next most frequent types of group membership across respondent groups were a sports or recreational organization, and a school group, neighbourhood, civic or community association.[100]

Evaluation survey findings also showed differences in the rate of group membership based on various socio-economic characteristics. Notable differences are highlighted in Table 6.

Table 6:   Group membership by selected socio-demographic characteristics

Respondent characteristics	Membership–Yes	Membership–No
18 to 34 years of age	40%	60%
35 to 54 years of age	47%	53%
55 years of age and older	41%	59%
Economic immigration category	46%	54%
Sponsored family immigration category	41%	59%
Resettled refugees and protected persons category	47%	53%
OECD country of birth	56%	44%
Non-OECD country of birth	42%	58%
No official language knowledge at admission	38%	62%
Knowledge of at least one official language at admission	46%	54%
Income of $45,000 or less	41%	59%
Income of more than $45,000	52%	48%
Participating in labour force	45%	55%
Not participating in labour force	40%	60%

Source: Evaluation survey

Like evaluation survey findings, NOS results showed higher rates of group membership among naturalized citizen respondents (56%) compared to PR respondents (47%). Results from the 2013 GSS showed a pattern of group membership aligned with time in Canada, with higher rates of group membership among non-immigrant (67%) and established immigrant (63%) respondents, compared to recent immigrant (59%) respondents.[101] GSS results also showed higher rates of group membership for respondents with a higher income.[102]

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[99] Sinha, M. (2015). *Volunteering in Canada, 2004 to 2013*, Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey, Statistics Canada, pp.22-23.

[100] More details on the types of group membership are provided in Annex F.

[101] The 2013 GSS defined established immigrants as immigrated before 2000, and recent immigrants as immigrated between 2000 and 2013.

[102] Turcotte, M. (2015). *Civic engagement and political participation in Canada*, Spotlight on Canadians: Results from the General Social Survey, Statistics Canada, p.24.

4.5. Economic performance of naturalized citizens

While not central to the objectives of the Citizenship Program, the potential economic benefits of citizenship have been the topic of some discussion in the literature and have served to reinforce the ultimate objective of the Citizenship Program that Eligible permanent residents become Canadian citizens. As such, the evaluation looked at the economic outcomes of naturalized citizens compared to PRs using 2017 T4 Wages and Salary data to better understand the contribution of citizenship to economic performance.

Finding: Average employment earnings of naturalized citizens are higher than those of PRs. However, the difference in earnings is not attributable to citizenship, but rather to the socio-economic characteristics of those obtaining it, largely previous earnings and length of time in Canada.

4.5.1 Research context

Past research related to the economic outcomes of naturalized citizens has pointed to an earnings advantage of citizenship. However, research has also found evidence of a selection bias, whereby immigrants with earnings-related characteristics are more likely to self-select into citizenship.[103] While statistical methods have been used in some research to address the issue of self-selection,[104] it was noted in the literature that very few studies have used longitudinal data to address this question.[105]

Economic advantages of citizenship are described in terms of formal and informal access to certain jobs which affect earning potential. For example, some employers may formally restrict hiring to only citizens, while others may favour citizens as they may be more committed to staying in the country or have a Canadian passport, facilitating international travel.

Picot and Hou (2011) used cross-sectional Census data to look at the relationship between citizenship and economic outcomes for immigrants to Canada. Although noting the possibility of a selection bias, they found that naturalized citizens in Canada had higher employment rates, lower unemployment rates, a greater likelihood of working in a high status occupation,[106] and higher weekly earnings than their non-citizen immigrant counterparts. Moreover, similar differences were observed, though attenuated, after accounting for differences in observed personal and job characteristics.[107]

4.5.2 Comparison of employment earnings of naturalized citizens and PRs

The research reviewed for the evaluation examined employment earnings in relation to various socio-economic characteristics in their analyses, but were limited to cross-sectional data. The

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[103] Refer to: DeVoretz, D.J. & Pivnenko, S. (2005). *The Economic Causes and Consequences of Canadian Citizenship*, Journal of International Migration and Integration; DeVoretz, D.J. & Pivnenko, S. (2008). *The Economic Determinants and Consequences of Canadian Citizenship Ascension*, The Economics of Citizenship, Bevelander, P. & DeVoretz, D.J. (Eds.), pp.21-61; Picot, G. & Hou, F. (2011). *Divergent Trends in Citizenship Rates among Immigrants in Canada and the United States*, Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Statistics Canada.

[104] DeVoretz and Pivnenko (2008) used the Heckman two-stage Mills ratio correction to address the issue of self-selection in their cross-sectional research and found evidence of a selection bias in their results.

[105] Picot, G. & Hou, F. (2011). *Divergent Trends in Citizenship Rates among Immigrants in Canada and the United States*, Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Statistics Canada.

[106] Higher status occupations included management, finance, administration, natural and applied science, and other professional occupations.

[107] Picot, G. & Hou, F. (2011). *Divergent Trends in Citizenship Rates among Immigrants in Canada and the United States*, Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series, Statistics Canada.

present evaluation used longitudinal data, and thus was able to consider employment earnings before the acquisition of citizenship in the analysis.

The analysis examined the employment earnings for immigrants admitted to Canada between 2002 and 2012, aged 18 to 60 years at admission, by their citizenship status as of the end of 2017. Overall, it showed that naturalized citizens had higher average employment earnings than PRs ($51,500 compared to $39,600). In order to better understand the factors associated with the difference in employment earnings, regression analyses were conducted to examine citizenship status in conjunction with other key immigrant characteristics.[108] After controlling for these other variables, the analysis did not find a positive effect of citizenship.

The regression analyses highlighted other key factors associated with employment earnings. For example:

- Higher previous employment earnings were associated with higher employment earnings in 2017.

- More time in Canada as a PR was associated with higher employment earnings.

- Economic principal applicants had higher employment earnings compared to other immigrants.

- Male immigrants had about 18% higher employment earnings than female immigrants.

- Less education was associated with lower employment earnings.

- Those with knowledge of an official language at admission had about 9% higher employment earnings than those with no official language knowledge at admission.

- Those 35 years of age and older at admission had lower employment earnings than those 18 to 24 years of age at admission.

A regression decomposition of the earnings gap between naturalized citizens and PRs showed that 84.6% of the difference in employment earnings was explained by the immigrants' previous earnings and year of admission (i.e., length of time in Canada as a PR). Other variables, such as education, immigration category and age at admission, made up the rest of the difference.[109]

4.6. Citizenship Program management

The evaluation examined Citizenship Program management, with a focus on roles and responsibilities and coordination among partners, as well as program design in relation to the achievement of program objectives.

4.6.1 Citizenship program coordination

Finding: Effective coordination of the Citizenship Program has been challenged by a dispersed management structure, unclear roles and responsibilities, and filtered communication at the branch level.

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[108] Variables included: citizenship status, year of admission to Canada as a PR, age at admission, gender, immigration category, education level at admission, knowledge of official languages at admission, country of citizenship (OECD country or not), incidence of previous TR status in Canada, province of employment, and prior earnings.
[109] More details on the regression analyses are provided in Annex G.

Responsibility for and management of the Citizenship Program is distributed across various IRCC branches in policy, operations and communications, with most branches situated within the operations sector (refer to section 1.3).

Roles and responsibilities

In 2018, the Citizenship Program underwent a Financial Resources Review (FRR). The FRR found that efforts in similar activities were generally dispersed across the organization, mainly in the areas of Program Guidance and Program Monitoring and Reporting. The FRR further found that distribution between branches was not aligned to respective mandates, roles and responsibilities. For example, the FRR found more than twice as many program management FTEs in CN and DN for program integrity, even though program integrity assurance is a primary responsibility of CPPG.[110]

In line with the findings of the 2018 FRR, interviews conducted for the evaluation highlighted challenges with respect to the clarity and appropriateness of roles and responsibilities. In particular, interviews revealed ongoing issues related to a lack of clarity and overlapping responsibilities, primarily between CN, DN and CPPG branches. This was seen to coincide with the creation of DN in 2016. Interviews also noted that the policy group within the Citizenship Program is relatively small compared to the operations side, and suggested that the line between policy and operations work is not always clear.

A revalidation of the 2018 FRR was conducted by CPPG Branch in December 2019. While this exercise did not find overlap of program management activities between branches, it suggested that branches did not have a common understanding of their roles and responsibilities with respect to these activities. A program management activity chart was developed delineating four role types (i.e., responsible, accountable, consulted, informed) to guide the revalidation work. As such, the act of conducting the revalidation exercise served to clarify roles and responsibilities between branches.

Coordination and communication

Interviews highlighted three main mechanisms for program coordination during the evaluation period: the Citizenship Operational Community (COC) at the assistant-director level, the Citizenship Program Coordinating Committee (CPCC) at the director level[111] and the Citizenship Program Management Table (PMT) at the director general (DG) level.[112, 113]

In terms of mandates, both the COC and the CPCC are operations-focused, with objectives to monitor and support program delivery across the service delivery networks. The COC is led by CPPG Branch, while the CPCC is co-chaired by CPPG, CN and DN Branches.[114] It was observed in the interviews that coordination and communication for the Citizenship Program emphasize operations, which can manifest in a one-way relationship where policy acts as a tool for operations. However, it was also suggested that more recently the role of policy had grown in joint policy/operations meetings. It was also noted that the COC was inactive for a time during

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[110] IRCC (2017). *Citizenship Program: Performance Information Profile*, p.5.

[111] The Citizenship Program Coordinating Committee also includes representation at the assistant-director/managerial level for CPPG and OPP.

[112] The Citizenship Program Management Table also involves ad hoc participation of officials at other levels as appropriate.

[113] Also of note, CPPG organizes an annual Citizenship Program in-person meeting, which is typically a three-day meeting and involves participants from various branches across the department.

[114] Source: IRCC internal program documents.

the evaluation period, and that without this mechanism, the opportunity for some to provide input was lost.[115]

The Citizenship PMT, chaired by a Program Official, designated as the DG of Citizenship Branch, was established in 2018, and thus, did not exist until later during the evaluation period. The PMT has a more integrated oversight mandate with a focus on monitoring program performance and evidence-based decision-making. It is intended to provide a forum to inform, consult and seek consensus, and foster dialogue within the Program to ensure coordination and alignment for its initiatives.[116] Interview comments described the PMT as helpful and a good venue for sharing information, as well as important for monitoring progress against results. It was also noted that the PMT had occasionally led to the creation of ad hoc working groups to solve task-based issues.

Overall, a greater proportion of interviews indicated that coordination and communication were not effective. The most commonly noted issue was the filtering of communication through Director General Offices (DGOs), which was emphasized with the creation of DN and CN, leading to communication, which was viewed as too formal, too layered and too controlled. While centralizing communication at DGOs was seen as positive for standardizing responses to questions, interviews noted that questions and responses were becoming diluted in this process, and that this communication was less effective than ad hoc and informal working-level communication.

4.6.2   Citizenship program objectives

Finding: In general, the Citizenship Program's objectives are seen as relevant and appropriate. However, the department lacks mechanisms and resources to promote citizenship and active engagement and has limited influence over newcomers' desire to become Canadian.

Program objectives were defined in terms of the expected outcomes described in the Citizenship Program's Performance Information Profile (PIP).[117] While generally seen to be relevant and appropriate in the interviews, some issues were raised regarding IRCC's ability to influence certain objectives, which are discussed below.

Citizenship promotion

Interviews noted a lack of mechanisms and resources to affect the expected outcome that Canadian citizenship involves active engagement and is a valued status. In particular, it was highlighted that citizenship promotion to all Canadians (including those born in Canada or to a Canadian parent) is difficult in the absence of funding in this area. *Discover Canada* consultations also noted that "passing the citizenship knowledge test does not necessarily equate to integration or belonging" and there is "a need to have additional activities beyond the test and citizenship ceremony to help people be active and engaged Canadians".[118]

When the Multiculturalism Program was transferred to Canadian Heritage in 2015, IRCC's Citizenship Program was no longer able to leverage the Multiculturalism Program's grants and contributions funding mechanism to advance common objectives shared between the programs,

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[115] The COC was inactive for part of 2018 and all of 2019. It was reactivated in 2020 at the request of program partners under a new name, the Operations Community Management Committee, and is co-chaired by the CPPG and DN Branches.
[116] Source: IRCC internal program documents.
[117] While the program completed a review of its PIP in 2019, including some modifications to the expected outcomes in the program logic model, it did not substantively change these outcomes from those examined in the evaluation.
[118] Source: IRCC internal program documents.

such as promotion of civic knowledge.[119] There was a general view in the interviews that the departure of the Multiculturalism Program diminished IRCC's capacity to undertake citizenship promotion activities, and it was noted without this program, IRCC is limited mostly to newcomer-focused activities and mechanisms for its citizenship promotion.

- The Citizenship Program supports various activities through its operational budget, which are largely tied to the citizenship grant process, including citizenship judge outreach, citizenship ceremonies, the citizenship study guide, and information disseminated on the departmental website.

- It also leverages some grants and contributions from the Settlement Program in this work. For example, the Institute for Canadian Citizenship and Historica Canada receive Settlement Program funding for citizenship promotion activities.[120] However, the scope of these activities is constrained by the Settlement Program Terms and Conditions, which specify PRs, and exclude citizens, as eligible recipients of settlement services.

With this in mind, IRCC has identified the expansion of citizenship awareness and engagement as an area of focus for policy and program planning.[121]

Becoming Canadian and measuring citizenship uptake

Interviews highlighted a lack of control in relation to the objective that newcomers to Canada have a desire to become citizens and that eligible permanent residents become Canadian citizens. Evaluation survey findings showed that various factors affect newcomers' decision-making to obtain citizenship (refer to section 4.2). However, IRCC has varying levels of influence with respect to these factors.

- For example, interviews noted that some newcomers just do not want Canadian citizenship. Similarly, a small percentage of evaluation survey respondents indicated not see[ing] the benefit of becoming a Canadian citizen.[122]

- Rules in other countries regarding dual citizenship[123], property, pensions or visa requirements are also beyond IRCC's influence. These rules may be a deterrent for some newcomers wanting to maintain ties (personal or business) in their home country.

IRCC has more influence with respect to other factors, such as the citizenship eligibility requirements, the application fee and the application process. As discussed in other sections of the report, IRCC made changes to the eligibility requirements under Bill C-6. The department has also undertaken efforts to address issues related to the study guide and knowledge test, and there are plans in place to modernize the application process and review the fee structure.

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[119] The Multiculturalism portfolio was transferred to CIC/IRCC from Canadian Heritage (PCH) on October 30, 2008, and remained at CIC/IRCC until November 4, 2015, at which point it was transferred back to PCH.

[120] At the time of the evaluation, the Settlement Program funded Historica Canada to develop online study tools to support learning material in the new Citizenship Study Guide, and the Institute for Canadian Citizenship to provide enhanced citizenship ceremonies with roundtables discussions. In addition, some settlement service provider organizations were funded for activities to help prepare newcomers to apply for citizenship and to integrate citizenship themes into their language training for newcomers.

[121] Source: IRCC internal program documents.

[122] Survey respondents for this question were citizens and PRs intending to apply or with an application in process, who reported other reasons which had delayed or were preventing them from applying for citizenship (n=5,152). 5% of these respondents indicated not seeing the benefit of becoming a Canadian citizen.

[123] For example, China does not allow dual citizenship. Some countries, such as Iran, allow dual citizenship, but do not recognize the second citizenship. Other countries allow dual citizenship if the newcomer applies for it (e.g., Sri Lanka and the Philippines) or allow it with certain conditions (e.g., Republic of Korea, Colombia, Mexico and Egypt).

5.   Conclusions and recommendations

In sum, the evaluation examined the performance of the Citizenship Program, with a focus on results related to the citizenship grants line of business. The study looked at citizenship uptake, including the factors and challenges affecting uptake, as well as assessed the effectiveness and appropriateness of the eligibility requirements, including the tools and methods in place to verify physical presence, language and knowledge. The integration outcomes of new citizens and results related to the overall management of the Citizenship Program were also considered. With this in mind, the conclusions highlight key findings and considerations from the evaluation, and present recommendations to help address challenges with this work.

Citizenship uptake and access

Overall, the evaluation found that, with time, most PRs become Canadian citizens. However, the citizenship uptake rate can vary for different populations, and has declined among more recent immigrants, suggesting that newcomers are taking longer to become citizens. While there are many reasons for obtaining citizenship, evidence suggested that wanting to feel fully Canadian and to make Canada their permanent home are primary motivators for PRs. It was observed that the grant application approval rate is very high, and recent changes to eligibility under Bill C-6 have generally been facilitative. Furthermore, increases to the application fee over the evaluation period did not have a major impact on overall uptake.

Nevertheless, while many PRs do eventually obtain citizenship, accessing it comes with significant challenges for some PRs, specifically those from more vulnerable groups.

Evidence showed that meeting the language and knowledge requirements can be difficult, particularly for refugees, as well as for those with low official language proficiency and less education. While the *Citizenship Act* has built in some discretion to waive these requirements on compassionate grounds, compassionate considerations are not well defined, and waivers are typically predicated on a medical opinion. Moreover, waivers have to be requested by applicants, but the waiver process is not well known and difficult to navigate. Evidence showed very few waivers requested or granted during the evaluation period. However, given the issues noted, it was unclear whether these numbers reflected an appropriate level of use of this mechanism.

In addition, the application fee was found to be a common challenge, particularly for refugees, families and those with lower income. The Citizenship Program does not currently offer any flexibility around grant application fees. The fee structure is set out in the *Citizenship Regulations*, and provides individual rates for adult and minor grants.

With this in mind, there is a need to re-examine the waiver process and fee structure in order to ensure that sufficient mechanisms are in place to facilitate equitable access to citizenship and to better serve and support prospective applicants who may be facing socio-economic challenges, as well as families with multiple applications and fees to pay.

Recommendation 1: IRCC should review the costs associated with applying for citizenship and implement a strategy to address the affordability of citizenship for prospective applicants facing economic challenges.

Recommendation 2: IRCC should implement and promote a clear and transparent process for knowledge and language waivers to ensure consistent access and decision-making for prospective applicants who need them.

Assessing citizenship eligibility

Overall, the evaluation found that the citizenship eligibility requirements related to physical presence, language and knowledge are largely set at an appropriate level. While there are various tools and methods in place to support the assessment of these requirements, findings were mixed in terms of their effectiveness, highlighting important challenges to be addressed.

It was observed that while the requirement for physical presence is clearly defined, it can be difficult for applicants to prove, as well as for IRCC officers to verify, without entry-exit information. For language, it was noted that the range of evidence accepted is very broad and does not always reflect the applicant's actual language ability. When there are concerns, it can be difficult for IRCC officers to assess language ability, as the tools in place are subjective and officers are not formal assessors. For knowledge, it was noted that the test and study guide have a higher language level than that of the language requirement, and there is a need for more tools and support for applicants.

At the time of the evaluation, implementation of a new Entry/Exit Program was already underway, which was expected to address issues related to tracking and verifying physical presence in the future. In addition, a new approach for the knowledge assessment tools was being developed, with a new study guide and supporting materials, but had not yet been implemented at the time of the evaluation.

Thus, while a strategy is being implemented to improve the tools and methods available to assess physical presence in Canada, there is still a need to address outstanding challenges with respect to the tools and methods in place to assess the language and knowledge requirements.

Recommendation 3: IRCC should review the language verification process and put in place a strategy to ensure that IRCC officers are more effectively equipped to validate language evidence and better supported to assess language ability when needed.

Recommendation 4: IRCC should move forward with its plan to implement a new approach for the knowledge requirement, which could include a revised study guide and additional tools, to improve the accessibility of the required information and enhance supports for prospective applicants studying for and taking the knowledge test.

Integration and active citizenship

Overall, integration outcomes were positive for naturalized citizens. It was observed that many feel a sense of belonging to Canada, their province or territory and to their community. They have social connections in Canada and confidence in Canadian institutions. Moreover, many are performing well economically, and some are volunteering and participating in groups, organizations or associations.

It was also observed that many PRs, particularly those intending to apply for citizenship, feel a sense of belonging, have social connections and confidence in Canadian institutions, suggesting that newcomers with stronger feelings of connection to Canada have a desire to become Canadian. In addition, while a difference in employment earnings was found between PRs and naturalized citizens, this difference was not attributable to citizenship, but rather to the socio-economic characteristics of those obtaining it, largely previous earnings and length of time in Canada.

Differences between PRs and naturalized citizens were also found for volunteering and group membership. They were found to be more prevalent among naturalized citizens, followed by PRs intending to apply for citizenship, and lowest among those not intending to apply. The rates of volunteering and group membership also varied based on socio-economic characteristics.

Thus, evaluation results highlight the relationships between integration and engagement in Canadian society, and some of the dynamics of decision-making around citizenship. Becoming Canadian and active engagement are at the core of IRCC's Citizenship Program objectives. While these objectives are generally seen as relevant and appropriate, the program has limited mechanisms and resources to influence them. At present, IRCC's citizenship promotion activities are largely newcomer-focused and tied to the citizenship grant process or funded by the Settlement Program, which excludes citizens from its eligibility.

With this in mind, there is a need to ensure that the department's objectives for citizenship promotion are aligned with the activities, mechanisms and resources in place to achieve them.

> **Recommendation 5: IRCC should review its objectives for citizenship promotion, and the corresponding activities, mechanisms and resources available, and develop and implement a plan to better support the achievement of its expected outcomes.**

Annex A: Survey of naturalized citizens and PRs – Overview of methodology

A Survey of Naturalized Citizens and Permanent Residents (PRs) was conducted to support the evaluation. The survey allowed for the examination of factors affecting citizenship uptake, including motivations and challenges, as well as integration outcomes. It also provided information on PRs' intentions related to citizenship, which allowed for comparisons between naturalized citizens and PRs intending and not intending to apply for citizenship.

Survey questions looked at:

- The reasons why newcomers choose to apply or not apply;

- Factors which had delayed (or were at the time of the survey preventing) them from applying;

- Newcomers' perceptions of and experience with the eligibility requirements and the fee, and

- Elements of newcomers' social and economic integration in Canada.

The survey was administered online and was available in Canada's official languages (English and French), as well as Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, Farsi and Urdu. The selection of survey languages (in addition to Canada's official languages) took into account the most frequently reported mother tongues among Canada's immigrant population (overall and for refugees and sponsored family immigrants), as well as knowledge of Canada's official languages for the population groups using these languages.

The survey populations were based on PRs who were admitted to Canada between 2006 and 2015 and were aged 18 or older as of April 1, 2019. Citizenship status was determined as of December 31st, 2018. Based on IRCC administrative data from the Global Case Management System (GCMS), there were a total of 1,017,660 naturalized citizens and 1,201,140 PRs.

Online survey invitations were sent in two waves:

- The first wave was administered to a sample of newcomers (all immigration categories), and was open from April 29th to June 3rd, 2019.

- The second wave was administered to a sample of newcomers from non-economic immigration categories only to increase these numbers, and was open from June 7th to 24th, 2019.

Overall, a total of 60,482 survey invitations were sent to naturalized citizens and 55,490 survey invitations were sent to PRs. However, some cleaning was done to further remove cases with invalid email addresses. As a result, the final sample, after cleaning, was comprised of 55,567 naturalized citizens and 47,575 PRs with valid email addresses. Responses were received from 6,993 naturalized citizens 5,725 PRs (based on GCMS data), for a response rate of 12.6% and 12.0% respectively. The margin of error for the survey was ±1.17% for the naturalized citizen population and ±1.29% for the PR population, with a confidence level of 95%.

Naturalized citizen and PR respondent numbers were adjusted to account for PRs who obtained their citizenship in early 2019 (determined through their responses to a survey question). After these adjustments, there were a total of 7,762 naturalized citizen respondents and 4,956 PR respondents for survey reporting. Responses were then weighted to be representative of the naturalized citizen and PR target populations in terms of gender, age (as of April 1st, 2019), immigration category, official language knowledge at admission and education level at

admission. Survey responses favour more recent admission cohorts (2011 to 2015), particularly for naturalized citizen respondents. However, this was viewed as acceptable, as more recent newcomers would be better positioned to recall and report on their citizenship experience. Refer to Tables 7 and 8 for profiles of naturalized citizen and PR respondents to the survey.

Table 7:   Profile of naturalized citizen survey respondents (2006 to 2015 PR admissions and 18+)

Profile characteristics	Population (based on GCMS)	Respondents (not adjusted for 2019 CIT)	Respondents (adjusted for 2019 CIT)	Weighted respondents (adjusted for 2019 CIT)
Admission period				
2006 to 2010	69.5%	44.0%	41.3%	41.1%
2011 to 2015	30.5%	56.0%	58.7%	58.9%
Gender				
Male	47.3%	49.5%	49.2%	48.8%
Female	52.7%	50.5%	50.8%	51.2%
Age as of April 1, 2019				
18 to 34	31.8%	27.9%	28.5%	32.1%
35 to 54	55.4%	62.1%	61.5%	57.9%
55 and older	12.8%	10.0%	9.9%	10.0%
Immigration category				
Economic	62.4%	61.2%	61.2%	58.0%
Sponsored Family	23.8%	27.8%	27.7%	29.2%
Resettled Refugee and Protected Person	12.0%	9.7%	9.8%	11.2%
Other	1.9%	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%
Official languages				
English	62.2%	68.3%	68.2%	67.1%
French	9.4%	10.9%	11.1%	11.3%
Both	10.2%	8.7%	8.1%	7.4%
Neither	18.2%	12.2%	12.6%	14.2%
Education				
University	43.1%	53.9%	53.4%	43.1%
Other Postsecondary	16.8%	16.4%	16.3%	16.8%
Secondary or Less (and None)	40.1%	29.7%	30.2%	40.1%
Total numbers	**1,017,660**	**6,993**	**7,762**	**7,762**

Source: GCMS and Evaluation survey

Table 8: Profile of PR survey respondents (2006 to 2015 PR admissions and 18+)

Profile characteristics	Population (based on GCMS)	Respondents (not adjusted for 2019 CIT)	Respondents (adjusted for 2019 CIT)	Weighted respondents (adjusted for 2019 CIT)
Admission period				
2006 to 2010	35.8%	25.5%	26.9%	27.0%
2011 to 2015	64.2%	74.5%	73.1%	73.0%
Gender				
Male	48.5%	47.9%	48.2%	47.8%
Female	51.5%	52.1%	51.8%	52.2%
Age as of April 1, 2019				
18 to 34	30.7%	28.0%	27.0%	28.9%
35 to 54	50.1%	57.0%	57.1%	54.8%
55 and older	19.2%	15.0%	15.9%	16.4%
Immigration category				
Economic	55.3%	55.2%	54.4%	51.4%
Sponsored Family	35.0%	35.0%	36.3%	38.1%
Resettled Refugee and Protected Person	8.1%	8.3%	7.8%	8.9%
Other	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.6%
Official languages				
English	62.7%	67.8%	68.1%	66.4%
French	7.4%	10.5%	10.1%	10.1%
Both	3.8%	3.4%	3.5%	3.2%
Neither	26.1%	18.3%	18.3%	20.3%
Education				
University	37.1%	45.5%	44.9%	37.1%
Other Postsecondary	18.7%	19.2%	19.7%	18.7%
Secondary or Less (and None)	44.1%	35.1%	35.2%	44.1%
Not Stated	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%
Total numbers	**1,201,140**	**5,725**	**4,956**	**4,956**

Source: GCMS and Evaluation survey

Annex B: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Countries

Australia
Austria
Belgium
Canada
Chile
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Japan
Korea
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Mexico
Netherlands
New Zealand
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Slovak Republic
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
Turkey
United Kingdom
United States

Source: www.oecd.org/about/members-and-partners/ (accessed August, 2019).

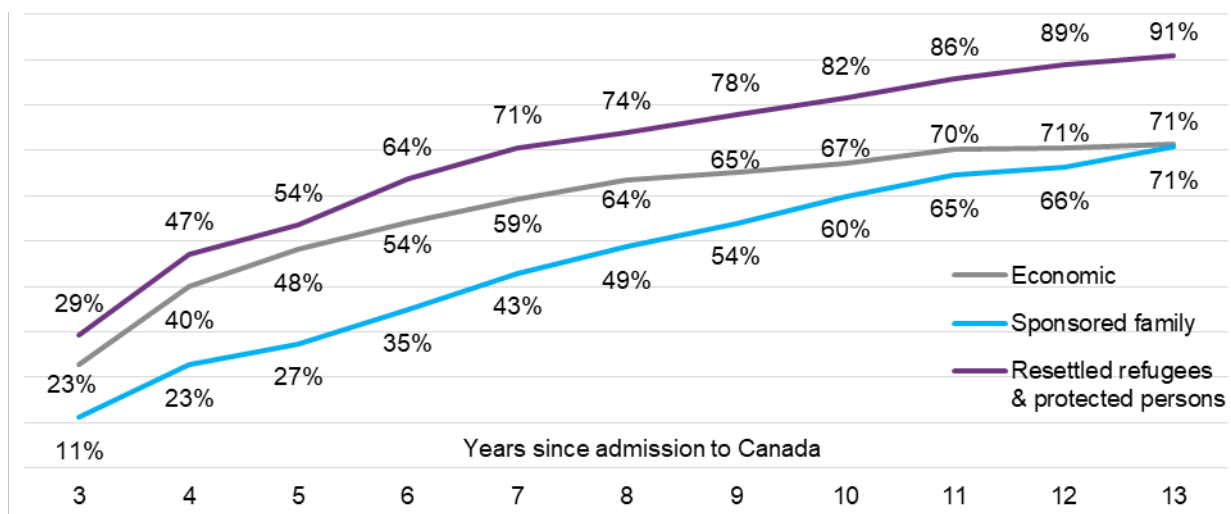# Annex C: Citizenship uptake trends by country of origin (OECD), immigration category and age at admission

The following figures present citizenship uptake trends using administrative data from IRCC's Global Case Management System (GCMS). The analysis examined the initial citizenship uptake of Permanent Residents (PRs), admitted to Canada between 2005 and 2015, 18 years of age or older at admission, who had obtained or applied for citizenship by the end of 2018. Years since admission range from 3 years for the 2005 admission cohort to 13 years for the 2015 admission cohort.

Figure 6: Citizenship uptake for adult PRs by country of birth (OECD) and number of years since admission to Canada
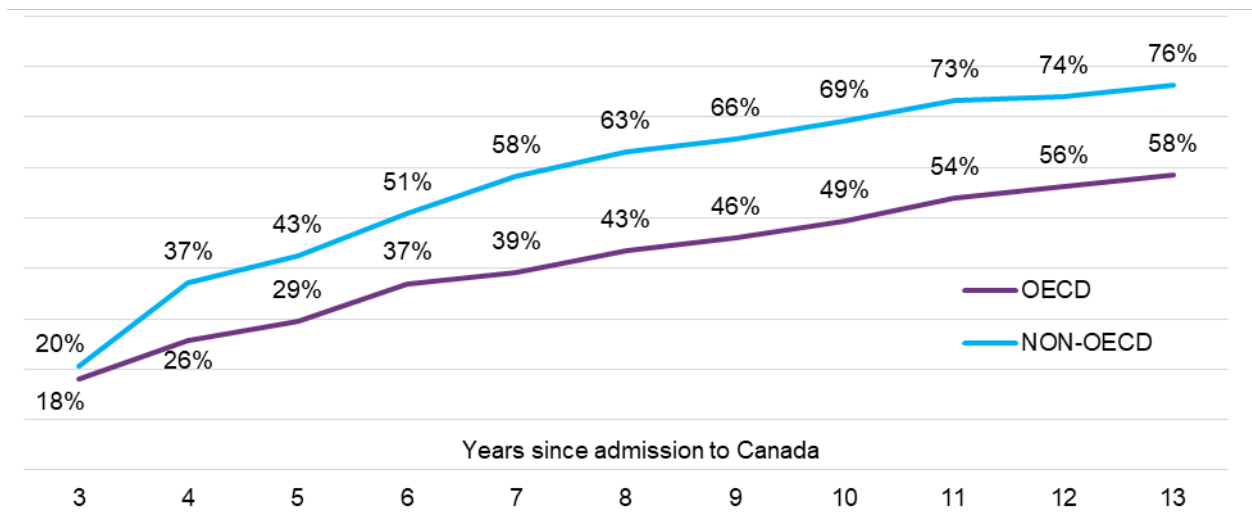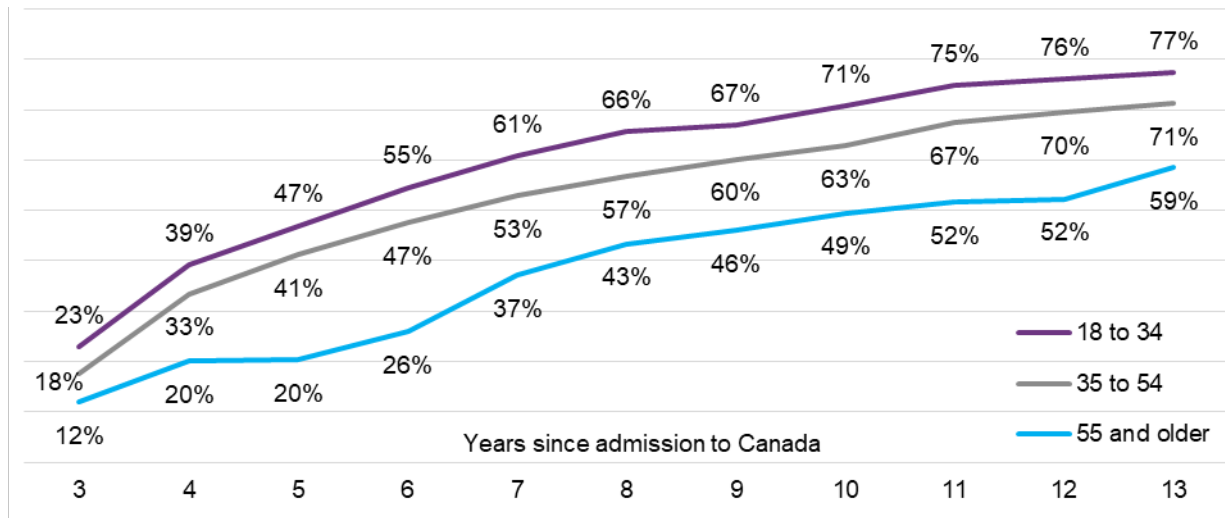

Source GCMS

Figure 7: Citizenship uptake for adult PRs by immigration category and number of years since admission to Canada

Source GCMS

Figure 8: Citizenship uptake for adult PRs by age at admission and number of years since admission to Canada
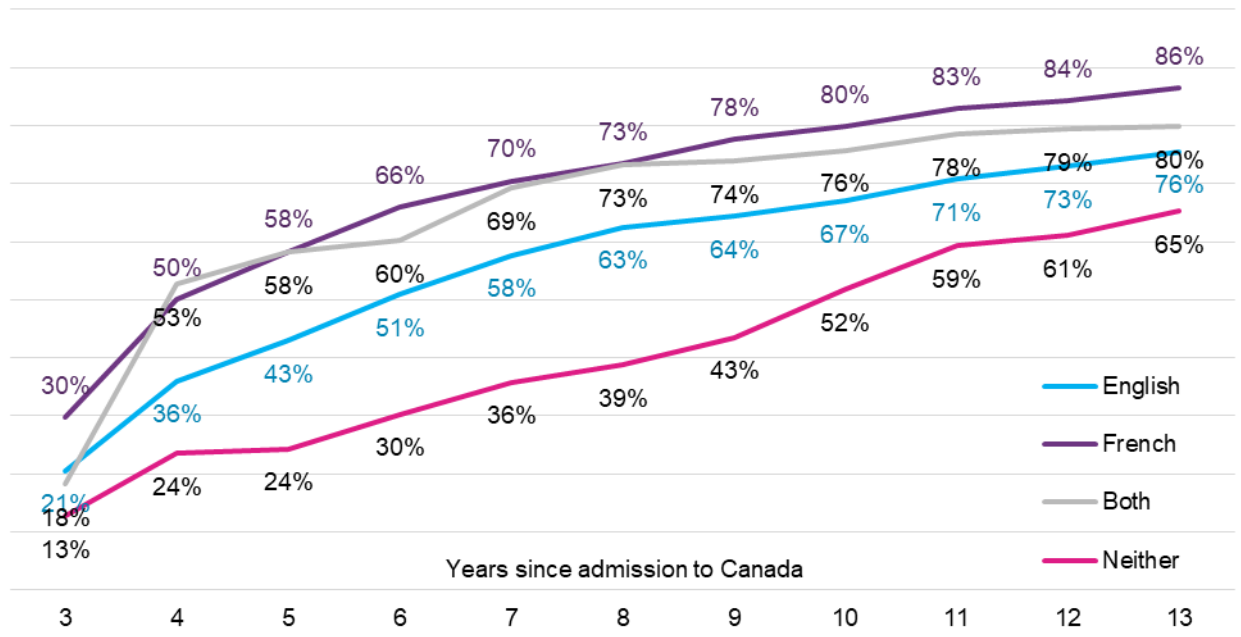

Source GCMS

Annex D: Citizenship uptake trends by official language knowledge and education level at admission
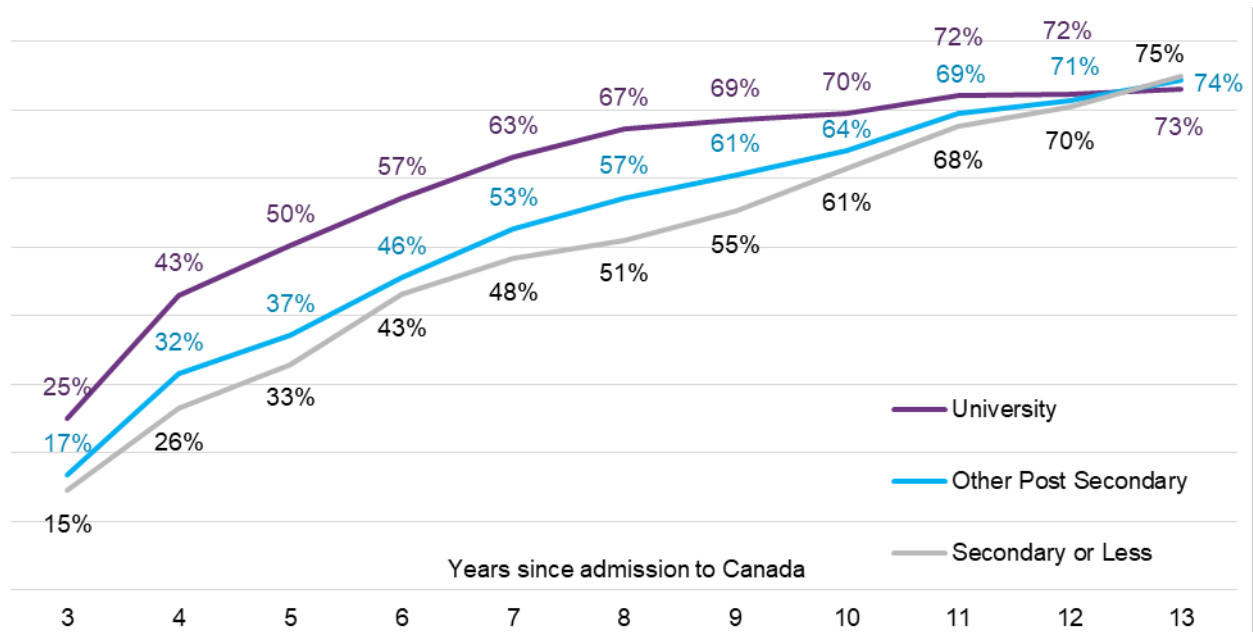
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Figure 9: **Citizenship uptake for adult PRs by official language knowledge at admission and number of years since admission to Canada**

Source GCMS

Figure 10: Citizenship uptake for adult PRs by education level at admission and number of years since admission to Canada

University: 25%, 43%, 50%, 57%, 63%, 67%, 69%, 70%, 72%, 72%, 75%

Other Post Secondary: 17%, 32%, 37%, 46%, 53%, 57%, 61%, 64%, 69%, 71%, 74%

Secondary or Less: 15%, 26%, 33%, 43%, 48%, 51%, 55%, 61%, 68%, 70%, 73%

Years since admission to Canada

University
Other Post Secondary
Secondary or Less

3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12   13

Source GCMS

Annex E: Key changes to citizenship eligibility during the evaluation period – physical presence, language and knowledge

Physical presence

The physical presence requirement changed considerably over the evaluation period (2013 to 2018). While defined in terms of "residence" at the beginning of the reporting period, the requirement was redefined with the implementation of Bill C-24 in June 2015 to require "physical presence" in Canada.

Bill C-24 introduced a requirement for applicants to not have any unfulfilled conditions related to their permanent resident status, as well as added a requirement to meet income tax filing obligations, aligned with the time period for the physical presence requirement. It also introduced an "intent to reside" provision to continue to live in Canada if granted citizenship, and eliminated the ability to use of Non-Permanent Resident (NPR) time for citizenship eligibility.

The implementation of Bill C-6 in October 2017 maintained the condition of "physical presence"; however, the amount of time needed for citizenship eligibility was reduced.

- Bill C-24 changed the residence requirement from "residence" for three out of four years (1,095 days) to "physical presence" in Canada for four out of six years (1,460 days), with a minimum of 183 days of physical presence in each of the four calendar years fully or partially within the six years immediately before the date of application.

- Bill C6 changed the physical presence requirement to three out of five years before applying for citizenship, for a total of 1,095 days, but with no minimum number of days per year.

In addition, Bill C-6 removed the "intent to reside" provision, and brought back the ability to use NPR time for citizenship eligibility.

Language and knowledge

At the beginning of the evaluation period, adult applicants aged 18 to 54 had to meet the language and knowledge requirements. Bill C-24 changed the age range for these requirements in June 2015, increasing the age range to 14 to 64 years of age. In October 2017, Bill C-6 changed the age range back to 18 to 54 years of age.

Annex F: Types of groups

Figure 11: Types of group membership for naturalized citizens, PRs intending and not intending to apply for citizenship
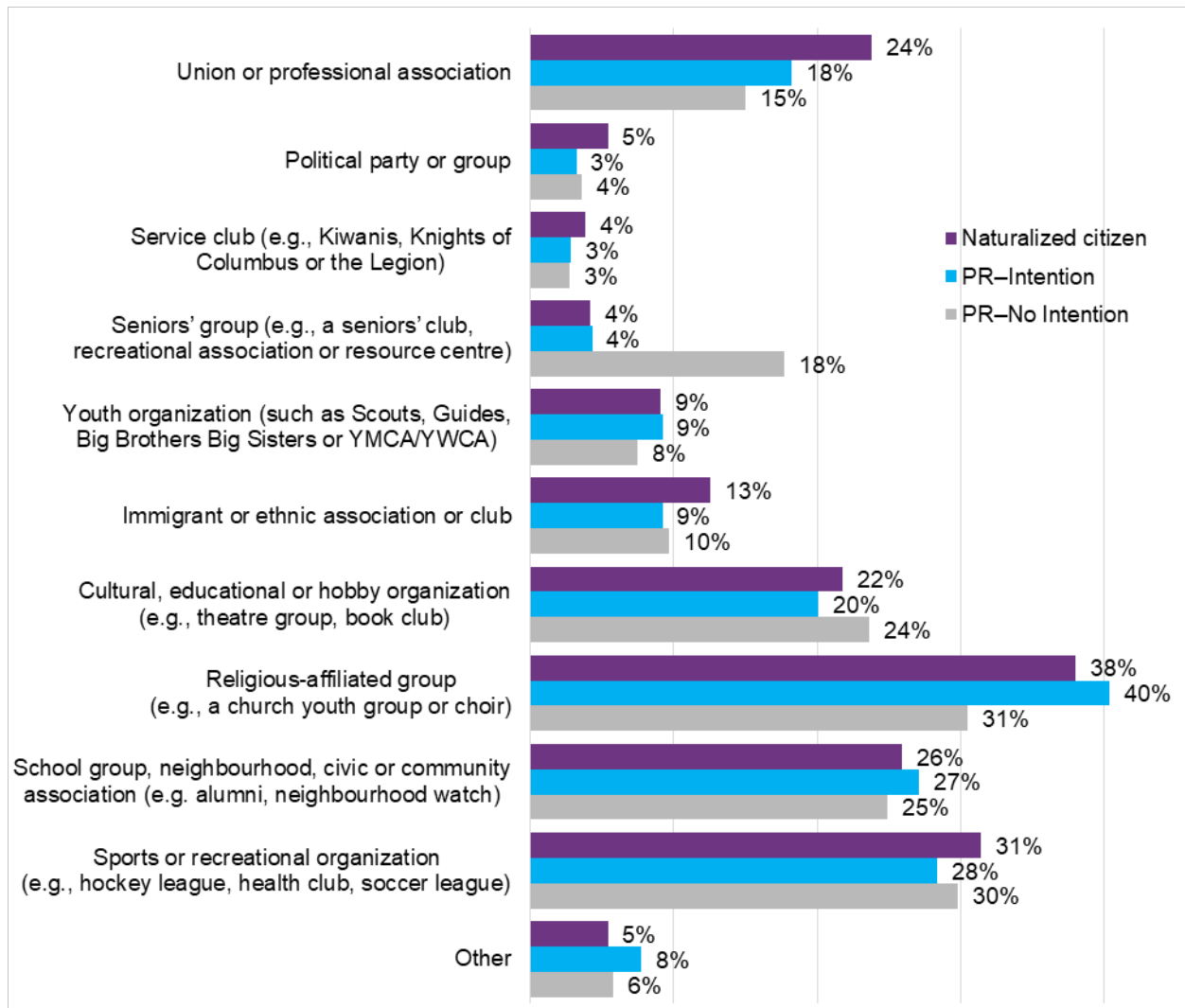
Source: Evaluation survey

Annex G: Economic outcomes of naturalized citizens and PRs – regression analyses

The evaluation looked at the economic outcomes of naturalized citizens compared to Permanent Residents (PRs) using 2017 T4 Wages and Salary data, which is longitudinal in nature. The analysis examined the employment earnings for immigrants admitted to Canada between 2002 and 2012, aged 18 to 60 years at admission, by their citizenship status as of the end of 2017. It showed that, on average, naturalized citizens had higher employment earnings than PRs ($51,500 compared to $39,600).

In order to better understand the difference in employment earnings between naturalized citizens and PRs, two sets of regression analyses were conducted. The first regression analysis examined at the effect of citizenship status in isolation, and showed an earnings premium of about 29% owing to citizenship. However, the regression model only accounted for about 1.9% of the variance in earnings (Table 9).

The second regression analysis examined the effects of citizenship status in conjunction with other key immigrant characteristics.

- The following variables were considered in addition to citizenship status: year of admission to Canada as a permanent resident, age at admission, gender, immigration category, education level at admission, knowledge of official languages at admission, country of citizenship (OECD country or not), incidence of previous temporary resident (TR) status in Canada, province of employment, and previous earnings.

- For naturalized citizens, previous earnings were defined as the highest employment earnings within 5 years prior to obtaining citizenship. For PRs, previous earnings were defined as employment earnings five years after admission to Canada as a permanent resident (including the year of admission). While a longitudinal analysis was not conducted, the consideration of previous earnings introduced a longitudinal component to the analysis.

This regression model accounted for 32.4% of the variance in earnings. After controlling for these other variables, there was no longer a positive effect of citizenship (Table 10). A regression decomposition of the earnings gap between naturalized citizens and PRs showed that 84.6% of the difference in employment earnings was explained by the immigrants' previous earnings and year of admission (i.e., length of time in Canada as a PR). Other variables, such as education, immigration category and age at admission, made up the rest of the difference (Table 11).

Table 9: Log of employment earnings in 2017 – Model 1

Variable	Model 1–Coefficient
Constant	10.214***
Canadian Citizen (ref. No)	
Yes	0.293***
n	1079345
df	1
F	21651.7***
R Square	0.019

Source: 2017 T4 Wages and salary data

Table 10:   Log of employment earnings in 2017 – Model 2

Variable	Model 2–Coefficient
Constant	10.008***
Canadian citizen (ref. No)	
Yes	-0.006**
Year of admission (ref. 2002)	
2003	-0.036***
2004	-0.075***
2005	-0.127***
2006	-0.169***
2007	-0.193***
2008	-0.225***
2009	-0.254***
2010	-0.287***
2011	-0.323***
2012	-0.371***
Age group (ref. 18 to 24 years of age)	
25 to 29 years of age	-0.004
30 to 34 years of age	0.001
35 to 39 years of age	-0.021***
40 to 44 years of age	-0.077***
45 to 49 years of age	-0.154***
50 to 54 years of age	-0.23***
55 to 59 years of age	-0.345***
60 years of age or more	-0.455***
Gender (ref. female)	
Male	0.179***
Immigration category (ref. economic PAs)	
Economic Spouse and Dependents	-0.027***
Family class	-0.138***
Refugees	-0.174***
Other	-0.162***
Education (ref. master's degree or Ph.D)	
Secondary or less	-0.173***
Non-university studies (incl. trades)	-0.111***
Bachelor's degree (incl. Post-grad no degree)	-0.036***
Knowledge of official languages at admission (ref. No)	
Yes	0.092***
Country of citizenship is an OECD country (ref. No)	
Yes	0.034***
Previous TR status in Canada (ref. No)	
Yes	0.039***

Variable	Model 2–Coefficient
Province of employment (ref. Ontario)	
Atlantic	-0.005
Quebec	-0.051***
Manitoba	0.006
Saskatchewan	-0.004
Alberta	-0.001
British Columbia	-0.024***
Territories	0.232***
Prior earnings (ref. 0 / did not work)	
1$ to 24,999$	0.236***
25,000$ to 49,999$	0.677***
50,000$ to 74,999$	1.063***
75,000$ to 99,999$	1.339***
100,000$ or more	1.686***
n	1078010
df	42
F	12354.5***
R Square	0.324

Source: 2017 T4 Wages and salary data

Table 11:   Regression decomposition of the earnings gap between citizens and permanent residents (PR)

Total difference in earnings between citizens and non-citizens: .0293

- Explained difference: .0299

- Explained as percentage of the total difference: 102.0%

Percentage of the explained component attributable to covariates:

- Year of admission: 25.7%

- Age at admission: 3.3%

- Gender: -1.8%

- Immigration category: 4.6%

- Education: 8.3%

- Knowledge of official languages at admission: 2.9%

- Country of citizenship – OECD: -1.3%

- Previous TR in Canada: -0.2%

- Province of employment: -0.6%

- Previous earnings: 58.9%

Source: 2017 T4 Wages and salary data