



Experiences of French-speaking Immigrants in Rural Communities in Northern Ontario and Northern New Brunswick

Research and Knowledge Mobilization Division

July 2025

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This project was funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

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Également disponible en français sous le titre : *Le parcours des personnes immigrantes d'expression française au sein des communautés rurales du nord de l'Ontario et du nord du Nouveau-Brunswick.*

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Ci4-272/2025E-PDF

ISBN 978-0-660-76945-5

Project reference number: R13-2024

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Acronyms

AMINA	Association Multiculturelle d'Intégration des Nouveaux Arrivants [multicultural association for integrating newcomers]
MACR	Multicultural Association Chaleur Region
AFNOO	Association des francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario [Northwestern Ontario association of Francophones]
CAIENA	Comité d'accueil, d'intégration et d'établissement des nouveaux arrivants de la Péninsule acadienne [Acadian Peninsula newcomer reception, integration and settlement committee]
CRNA-NO	Centre de ressources pour nouveaux arrivants au Nord-Ouest inc. [Northwest resource centre for newcomers inc.]
OLMC	Official language minority community
FMC	Communauté francophone en situation minoritaire
SÉO	Société économique de l'Ontario [economic society of Ontario]

Executive Summary

As early as 2003, the Government of Canada made the regionalization of Francophone immigration a priority objective in its first Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities. Approximately 20 years later, it is clear that Francophone immigration is still highly concentrated in urban areas and mostly in Ontario. The overall objective of this study was to better understand the experiences of French-speaking immigrants in rural Francophone communities in northern Ontario and northern New Brunswick. To carry out this project, the research team used a mixed methodology based on the collection of primary and secondary data. The methodology included a literature review, analysis of the 2021 Census data and interviews with French-speaking immigrants (n=40), stakeholders and companies (n=6).

Socio-demographic profile. In both provinces in the study, immigrants or those who report belonging to a visible minority group represent a much smaller segment of the province's northern population than of its entire population. In northern New Brunswick, Francophone immigration occurs in a context where French is the language used by the majority. In Ontario, nearly a third of the population in the Northeast (30%) has some knowledge of French compared to 7% of the population in the Northwest. Furthermore, the admission data for permanent residents show increasing regionalization of Francophone immigration in New Brunswick, even though most permanent residents still settle in the south of the province (60% in the Greater Moncton area). In Ontario, Francophone immigration is still highly concentrated in the south of the province (over 90%).

Recruitment. Rural communities with little immigration history often have to make additional efforts to make their job opportunities known. Recruitment abroad can be especially complex for companies unfamiliar with international recruitment pools, immigration procedures and ways of supporting people recruited abroad, highlighting the need for guidance. Recruitment events such as Destination Canada are considered very helpful, but they are still not easy for people in Sub-Saharan Africa to access and do not always provide enough information on rural areas. Regarding where immigrants choose to settle, most of those interviewed did not know the region where they settled until they became aware of a job opportunity or chance to study there. Nearly three quarters of the people interviewed or their partners already had a job offer before they arrived, a finding that confirms the important role played by employers in recruitment. The fact that the place of work was in a rural community did not always influence the decision regarding where to settle, even though a quarter of those interviewed did want to settle in a small community. The presence of French in a community positively influenced more than a third of those interviewed.

Pre-departure. In general, those interviewed who received advice from people whose job it is to support settlement preparation (pre-departure and settlement service staff and the employers' staff) had more positive experiences. Poorly informed individuals experienced more disappointment or stress when they arrived in Canada, and some migration plans were even jeopardized. It seems that the level of support offered by employers can vary greatly from one person to the next before their arrival in Canada. Approximately a quarter of those interviewed had access to pre-departure services, as access varied depending especially on immigration status and settlement location. On the one hand, pre-departure services are still unavailable to those arriving in Canada with a temporary permit. On the other hand, more people used these services in Ontario than in New Brunswick, and they reported having a more positive experience. However, in both provinces, respondents mentioned that the

information they received was too general to be really useful and that they would have rather had access to content more adapted to rural realities.

Reception and settlement. Collaboration between stakeholders and the involvement of settlement services in newcomers' initial steps seem significant and effective, especially for recent newcomers to Canada. A large number of interviewees recognized the hospitality of the people in the community where they settled. We also noted increasing openness to settlement support for temporary residents, not only among settlement service managers but also at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The fact remains that many communities still cannot rely on settlement services, while in some communities, settlement services simply have to provide lower-quality services or a smaller range of services due to a lack of resources. In addition, in most communities, access to affordable housing seems to have declined in the last few years.

Economic integration. At least a quarter of those interviewed had a job that did not match their professional skills or for which they were overqualified. This situation is largely due to how difficult it is for immigrants to have their credentials (experience and education) recognized, particularly in the health-care field. Other issues with professional integration were identified: the risk of abuse by employers when someone holds a closed work permit; openness to diversity, which varies from one workplace to another; the importance of proficiency in English (particularly in Ontario); the limited pool of jobs in rural communities for those looking for a new job; and the lack of spaces in child care. That being said, more than half of the interviewees said that they were satisfied with their employer's efforts to welcome them to the company, with some even adding that the support provided exceeded their expectations.

Social integration. Activities for newcomers to socialize are mostly organized by settlement services, but also sometimes by employers or colleagues, the municipality, ethnocultural associations or other Francophone organizations. However, nearly half of those interviewed felt lonely. While some felt that the smaller size of their community made it easier to develop ties, others stressed the difficulty of establishing ties in a small community where everyone already has their own network. In our sample, racism and race-based discrimination were not widespread, but those living in New Brunswick experienced them more often. Difficulty in developing personal connections outside immigrant circles was sometimes perceived as being due to a certain lack of openness. Lastly, the interviewees appreciated the socio-linguistic meeting points provided by Francophone majority communities, where they could quickly interact with locals. However, when French is less present in a community, having a low level of proficiency in English can be a barrier to social integration and access to services for newcomers to Canada.

Retention. The interviewees who reported that they planned to stay in their host community for the long term attributed it to many factors rather than one specific reason: satisfactory professional integration for themselves and their partner, a living environment that matches their expectations, new friends, an open community and a safe environment. These factors can also explain why someone would leave the region or consider doing so when their experiences are less positive. For example, the quiet or remote nature of a rural area might be in line with one individual's aspirations but not another's. That said, it was found that the main factor leading a person to leave is an unsatisfactory work situation. More than half of those interviewed reported that they might migrate again for that reason.

Recommendations. The following recommendations are based on the main findings of this study:

1. Support the regionalization of Francophone immigration at the selection stage.

2. Support activities to match employers with potential candidates abroad.
3. Carry out recruitment missions adapted to the realities of the source countries and the rural Francophone communities.
4. Ensure that temporary residents have access to the full range of pre-departure and settlement services.
5. Focus on providing pre-departure services that reflect local realities and collaboration with local partners.
6. Recognize the importance of and strengthen connections between settlement services, employers and other community stakeholders.
7. Make it mandatory for companies hiring French-speaking people abroad to work with Francophone settlement services.
8. Consider the specific realities of rural areas in settlement funding agreements.
9. Accelerate the credential recognition process improve access to related information.
10. Support activities promoting cultural diversity and awareness campaigns.

Introduction

For the past 20 or so years, Francophone minority communities (FMCs) in Canada have made immigration a national priority. In doing so, these communities have made significant efforts to recruit, receive and support the settlement of French-speaking immigrants as well as to integrate and retain them (OCOL, 2021).

As early as 2003, the Government of Canada made the regionalization of Francophone immigration a priority objective in its first Strategic Framework to Foster Immigration to Francophone Minority Communities (Citizenship and Immigration Canada). Approximately 20 years later, it is clear that outside Quebec, Francophone immigration is still highly concentrated in urban areas and mostly in Ontario. In fact, outside Quebec, [translation] “the two largest metropolitan areas of Ontario, Toronto and Ottawa, were the destinations where more than half (52%) of the French-speaking permanent residents admitted from 2016 to 2020 planned to settle” (Deschênes-Thériault and Forest, 2022, p. 21).

The overall objective of this study was to better understand the pathways for French-speaking immigrants in rural Francophone communities in northern Ontario and northern New Brunswick. This study was carried out in three stages. First, a statistical portrait of French-speaking immigrants in the target regions was developed. Second, settlement pathways and social and economic integration pathways were identified through interviews with immigrants and stakeholders. Third, the interviews made it possible to highlight the factors that influence immigrants’ settlement, inclusion and retention in these regions and the resources available.

In conclusion, recommendations were made for IRCC so that the pathways for immigrants to settle in rural areas in Northern Ontario and Northern New Brunswick lead to their successful inclusion and retention.

Methodology

To carry out this project, the research team used a mixed methodology based on the collection of primary and secondary data. The methodology included a literature review, analysis of the 2021 Census data and interviews with French-speaking immigrants, stakeholders and companies.

Principles guiding the literature review

The literature review was carried out before the research began so that the review findings could guide the data collection tools and the analysis framework. The review drew mainly on the scientific and grey literature over the last ten years on immigration to rural communities, with a particular focus on Francophone immigration, while giving priority to the themes of recruitment, access to settlement services, social and economic integration, and retention.

Statistical portrait

Using data from Statistics Canada's 2021 Census, we developed a statistical portrait of the French-speaking immigrant population that has settled in the rural communities of the two target regions in the last ten years. The geographic divisions of the North of each province were used to delimit the two study regions. For New Brunswick, we used the three northernmost counties, Madawaska, Restigouche and Gloucester (which includes the Chaleur region and the Acadian Peninsula). For Ontario, we instead used the economic regions in the north, which include the province's Northeast and Northwest. Each of the people interviewed lives in a community in one of these counties or economic regions. The two main variables used to define the study population were the first official language spoken (French only or French and English) and the immigration period (ten years or less).

Interviews with immigrants

Our interviews with the immigrant population were aimed at deepening our understanding of French-speaking immigrants' pathways, from the pre-departure stage to now.¹ The target population was French-speaking immigrants over the age of 18 who live or have lived in a rural area of northern Ontario or northern New Brunswick and who landed in Canada in the last ten years. The interviews were semi-structured and adopted a retrospective, trajectory-based, intersectional approach. The participants were identified primarily by approaching organizations that provide settlement services to permanent residents in the two study regions. In Ontario, the Société économique de l'Ontario (SÉO) [economic society of Ontario] was also approached. We asked these service providers to forward a link to a short online questionnaire to their current and former clients. The questionnaire² contained socio-demographic and geographic questions designed to determine eligibility for the study and to target people according to various inclusion criteria. We aimed for representativeness in terms of age, gender, visible minority status, settlement location and immigration status. The target of 40 interviews—20 in Ontario and 20 in New Brunswick—was achieved.

¹ For the immigrant interview guide, see Appendix I.

² For the recruitment questionnaire, see Appendix IV.

Interviews with stakeholders and employers

Our interviews with stakeholders and employers were aimed at deepening our understanding of promising practices introduced by service providers or companies³ and determining what conditions made these practices successful. We carried out six interviews with stakeholders and employers, thus exceeding our target of at least five.

Ethical considerations

The research was carried out in accordance with the Government of Canada's Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR, 2022). At each stage during data collection, the participants were given a consent form⁴ to read and sign. During data processing, we maintained strict confidentiality. Interview excerpts in this report were made anonymous so that the participants cannot be identified.

³ For the stakeholder interview guide, see Appendix II.

⁴ For the research consent form, see Appendix III.

Literature review

The following literature review shows that there is continued interest in the regionalization of immigration, although little has been written on Francophone immigration. Factors specific to recruitment, reception, inclusion and retention in both small and remote communities are outlined below.

Pre-departure

Studying what motivates a person both to migrate and to choose a rural Francophone community provides a better understanding of immigrants' expectations of their host communities and helps to connect them with international promotion and recruitment activities.

The first attempts to theorize what causes migration are generally associated with the work of Ernest George Ravenstein (Piguet, 2013). Analyzing British and international migration data, Ravenstein (1889) established a series of "laws of migration" explaining why people migrate. His framework of analysis focuses on economic factors. The basic assumptions of Ravenstein's work had a lasting influence on the emergence and development of international migration as a field of study (Piguet, 2013; Piché, 2013).

Recent research on the factors that lead migrants to settle in rural areas of Canada is in line with the classic approaches in the field of study of migration, since it emphasizes economic motivations (Traisnel et al., 2020; Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020; Arcand et al., 2021). Study results produced by Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc (2020, p. 19) [translation] "confirm the extensive research in the scientific literature that has highlighted the importance of labour market characteristics and vacant positions and the major role of employment as key aspects attracting immigrants to regions."

However, a study by Sall and Bolland (2018) on immigration from France and Belgium to New Brunswick puts the importance of employment as a factor into perspective. In fact, several interviewees in this study were looking primarily for a lifestyle associated with small communities and a family-friendly environment. A [translation] "peaceful place to raise a family" is also highlighted as a reason in a study by Arcand, Ben Mansour and Robichaud (2021, p. 9).

In addition to the factor of employment and family-related reasons, studies by Traisnel et al. (2020) and Deschênes-Thériault (2021) show that people's reasons for settling in a Francophone community outside the major centres vary greatly. They include, in particular, looking for a lifestyle that matches their aspirations, wanting to be close to friends or family already there, having a lower cost of living than in the city, wanting to improve their level of proficiency in English or simply wanting to discover new things.

Lastly, it seems that easily accessible information on opportunities to immigrate to a region and the services in place can influence decisions to move there (Arcand, Ben Mansour and Robichaud, 2021). This finding highlights the importance of being able to count on pre-departure services adapted to the realities of rural areas and of disseminating information on opportunities to settle in the region during international promotion activities.

[Translation] "The programs and services offered to immigrants can also influence where they choose to live.... Information on these programs and services [available on virtual platforms], social networks and the media all provide indicators of the regions' potential, which is an incentive to settle there"

(Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020, p. 3). In this regard, the study by Traisnel et al. (2020) notes that promotional activities abroad have intensified since the start of the 2000s and that a diverse range of actors are involved in recruiting French-speaking immigrants. However, this study confirms the importance of providing information that faithfully reflects the local reality at these promotional activities, since disappointing experiences for newcomers can undermine their retention. In addition, the study by Deschênes-Thériault (2022) on Western Canada highlights that despite the potential that pre-departure services hold, they can be relatively unknown and even more underused by French-speaking immigrants. In 2023, these services were still unavailable to those arriving in Canada with a temporary permit, even though two-step immigration is being made increasingly easier (GGI, 2023a and 2023b).

Reception in rural communities

Receiving and settling immigrants are important elements of a long-term immigration strategy. Research on the subject highlights several challenges that immigrants can face during the settlement phase, such as accessing housing that is affordable or suited to their needs, finding spaces in child care and dealing with the lack of public transit in rural areas (CCNÉF, 2022).

In addition, much has been written on the issue of reception, settlement and integration, highlighting structures and practices that foster welcoming and inclusive communities (Esses and Carter, 2019). For immigrants, settlement services are very often their first point of contact in a Francophone community, and they help address many of their needs upon arrival, such as finding housing, dealing with administrative matters, finding a job, enrolling children in school and learning languages (Kamano, Benimmas and Côté, 2020; Traisnel et al., 2019).

Access to these settlement services is a factor that contributes to their successful integration in their host community and that promotes access to high-quality, up-to-date information (Melançon, Kikulwe and Akinpelu, 2022). However, upon arrival, immigrants are not always aware of official services (Traisnel et al., 2019), or these services cannot be accessed by some categories of migrants, such as temporary residents (GGI, 2023a and 2023b). Those who “discover” the Francophone community several months or years after arriving seem to have more difficulty developing ties in the community. In addition, there is often a more limited range of services available in rural areas than in urban centres. Sall (2019) refers to “institutional incompleteness” in immigration in the Acadian region of New Brunswick.

While these services are necessary, in the context of rural immigration, some authors propose exploring ideas that go beyond the classic reception-and-settlement model. For example, rural communities are now at the centre of several dynamics, including migrant distribution, community revitalization, repopulation and economic development (Flamant, Fourot and Aisling, 2021).

In relation to the distribution of immigrants outside large urban centres, rural immigration has become a more visible reality that engages locals, some who want to develop it, some who oppose it and some who want to establish ties in solidarity with newcomers. This kind of migration has diversified to include refugees, seasonal workers, economic migrants and students. So how are rural communities mobilizing to receive newcomers? What role should individuals have in receiving and integrating migrants? How can relationships be built between newcomers and those in the host communities? Only a few studies address these questions about the various forms that acts of solidarity and hospitality can take (Belkhodja, 2023).

In a research report entitled *Beyond the Big City*, Esses and Carter (2019) highlight that the success of immigration to rural areas depends on several measurable factors, but also on the implementation of a team dynamic. The authors note that developing a promising immigration project takes a collective effort over time. The key message is that immigration can play a role in the vitality of small centres and rural areas if the community makes a collective effort to develop into an attractive destination that is open to diversity.⁵

Canada's small centres have unique attributes and many of them can make a compelling lifestyle proposition for potential new residents. Sensible policy solutions and collaboration will help small centres and rural communities in Canada benefit from the economic and social contributions of newcomers (Esses and Carter, 2019, p. 6).

Furthermore, a welcoming space is created through small-scale interactions, like day-to-day encounters in places such as community centres, neighbourhoods, workplaces, high schools, libraries, stores and recreational areas (Radice, 2015; Veronis and Huot, 2019). To be welcoming, then, rural communities should plan for the development of such connections between residents and newcomers.

Another important attribute for host communities to have relates to the skills, values and ethics at the heart of the relational dynamic that develops between people. It is therefore important to think about hospitality, solidarity and resilience (Coutant, 2018; LeBlanc and Burgère, 2017). This type of reflection serves as a reminder that reception involves more significant changes than those made simply to meet measurable criteria, such as the delivery of settlement services. Reception requires a more introspective work on values and more engaged participation from the community. This aspect involves a combination of citizen and community values and skills (Isin and Nielsen, 2008). It refers to an ethics of hospitality based in particular on individuals and communities acting with compassion, resilience and responsibility.

Economic integration

In an immigrant's settlement pathway, economic integration is of particular importance. An adequate work situation is one of the conditions for the successful integration of immigrants, if not the main pillar of their settlement (Traisnel et al., 2019; Hyppolite, 2012). The literature consulted reveals that there are many obstacles to the economic integration of immigrants in rural areas and that the pitfalls tend to become more complex when individuals settle in FMCs.

The most common obstacle is the difficulty that newcomers to Canada have finding a position that matches their training and skills (Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020; Traisnel et al., 2019; Sall, 2021). Immigrants often find themselves working in jobs that do not really match their education or level of experience, if at all (Traisnel et al., 2020, p. 125).

This reality can partly be explained by structural limitations due to government selection processes for immigrants, which are largely aimed at recruiting university graduates and reportedly do not sufficiently take into account the labour needs of regional businesses (Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020) as well as the issue of recognition in Canada of newcomers' credentials (degrees, diplomas, skills and work experience) (Sall and Bolland, 2021).

The ethno-racial characteristics of immigrants, the particularities of their host community and the proximity between the two are also factors that could help shed light on this situation (Sall and

⁵ See the 10 recommendations made regarding Francophone communities as part of this study.

Bolland, 2021). For example, an immigrant and an employer may have expectations that are difficult to reconcile for cultural or other reasons (Arcand, Ben Mansour and Robichaud, 2021). Along the same lines, regional economic development officers consulted by Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc in a study conducted in rural areas of Quebec [translation] “associate the lack of recognition of degrees and diplomas with employers’ distrust of cultural diversity” (2020, p. 20). Lastly, in their work on New Brunswick’s Acadian region, Sall and Bolland (2021) argue that employment sectors that are essential to the vitality of Francophone communities, such as education and health, are difficult for immigrants to access. These researchers discuss the reluctance of members of the host community to open up these sectors to outsiders, leading them to conclude that for [translation] “identity-related reasons, there seems to be discrimination in the employment of French-speaking immigrants” (Sall and Bolland, 2021, p. 76).

Another factor that complicates the professional integration of immigrants in rural FMCs is the asymmetrical bilingualism that often characterizes these communities. Since English-speaking Canada offers a greater number of services and a wider range of employment opportunities to immigrants, those who are proficient in English or have an opportunity to learn the language may decide to move to an English-speaking community if their professional integration in French proves unsatisfactory (Sall et al., 2022). According to Sall and Bolland, some immigrants in New Brunswick’s Acadian region even feel that their professional success depends on their skills in English (2021).

Lastly, Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc note that in Quebec, another obstacle to successful job integration for immigrants is the limited number of resources supporting employers in rural areas (2020). The authors add that in Quebec, public transit outside urban centres is reportedly insufficient or unsuitable for [translation] “certain businesses’ work schedules and location and the reality of immigrant workers,” since these workers often do not have a Canadian driver’s licence or a vehicle (2020, p.12).

Therefore, employment [translation] “can be a factor in putting down roots when it [meets] expectations, but if it does not, it can lead a newcomer to leave the region” (Traisnel et al., 2019, p. 111). The literature highlights conditions that could prevent this exodus. First, having a local social network increases immigrants’ [translation] “employability and desire to stay in the host region” (Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020, p 3). Next, an adapted and equitable approach to integrating immigrants into the workplace increases the likelihood of retaining them in the community. Ensuring that immigrant employees have all the information they need about their work responsibilities and the company’s organizational culture and that their colleagues are aware of their arrival and their role within the organization are examples of good practices. According to Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, some employers go so far as to determine immigrants’ position on the company pay scale by recognizing their skills and degrees or diplomas of their own initiative, in order to increase their likelihood of staying (2020).

Social integration

Integration into the host community is also a key stage in immigrants’ settlement pathways in rural areas and can play a decisive role in their retention over the long term (Traisnel et al., 2019). Immigrants build their social network by visiting shared spaces such as schools, places of worship and community centres and using organizations responsible for receiving and supporting them as they settle (Forest and Deschênes-Thériault, 2021; Melançon, Kikulwe and Akinpelu, 2022; Kamano, Benimmas and Côté, 2020). In FMCs, Francophone community spaces are key to the social integration of newcomers (Veronis and Huot, 2018).

However, Melançon, Kikulwe and Akinpelu argue that these spaces only partly meet immigrants' need for conventional contacts and day-to-day interactions and that their [translation] "need for understanding remains" (2022, p. 92). In a study of FMCs in Saskatchewan, Melançon, Kikulwe and Akinpelu found that immigrants are able to truly fulfil their institutional, relational, communication and settlement needs by getting involved with newcomers in turn: [Translation] "Once the first obstacles have been overcome and the first ties established, many newcomers feel the need to get involved in their host communities.... This need may be a response to a feeling that they can get involved and make a contribution in turn..., reaching out to others, building networks and establishing ties that can benefit them and others" (2022, p. 96).

Similarly, many authors raise the issue of openness to diversity, to people [translation] "who are not from here" (Racine and Tapia, 2020, p. 32). Locals, influenced by the rural nature and particular context of their FMC, sometimes have reservations about immigrants, resulting in a paradoxical situation when it comes to welcoming these newcomers. Even when immigrants feel their host community is open, it is difficult to penetrate (Traisnel et al., 2019). In the regions of Quebec, Racine and Tapia report that locals are reluctant to take part in activities promoting cultural diversity and that immigrants find themselves [translation] "among strangers" (2020, p. 29). In the opinion of Vatz Laaroussi, Bernier and Guilber, these communities' attitude to immigration is not due to their rural setting, but to their limited exposure to diversity (cited by Fourot, 2014). In the case of FMCs, belonging to a different part of the Francophonie adds to the factors noted above, and [translation] "language can [then] appear to be as much an obstacle as a unifying element" (Benimmas et al., 2014, p. 112).

Newcomers' personal characteristics and host populations' lack of knowledge have an impact on the amount of openness to immigration and therefore on the interactions between the two groups (Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020; Melançon, Kikulwe and Akinpelu, 2022). A host community that already includes people from a variety of cultures and is sensitive to this diversity therefore has conditions for the successful social integration of immigrant newcomers (Forest and Deschênes-Thériault, 2021; Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020).

In addition, several studies have shown that the presence of a spouse is beneficial to the social integration of immigrants, especially if the spouse is well integrated into the community (Castro and Villeneuve, 2019; Racine and Tapia, 2020). Similarly, the chances of retaining immigrants increase when their children become positively integrated into the host community (Forest and Deschênes-Thériault, 2021).

The involvement of employers can also promote the social integration of immigrants. By providing training and raising awareness of cultural diversity in their companies and the community, employers see themselves as helping to [translation] "mitigate the negative effects of stereotypes and [encourage] the community's openness to cultural diversity" (Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020, p. 15).

Retention

In addition to helping to explain the factors that contribute to a successful settlement, some of the literature also helped better understand why people leave their host region. First, it's important to recognize the complexity of the dynamics related to retention (Fourot, 2014; Vatz Laaroussi, 2008; Traisnel et al., 2020). There are various factors that could affect retention. In fact, several pull factors can also be considered retention factors (Esses and Carter, 2019).

Nonetheless, Fourot (2014) specifies that it is harder to retain immigrants in small communities than in urban centres. Traisnel et al. (2020) compare the pathways of French-speaking immigrants who settled in Atlantic Canada on arrival and subsequently left the region with those of immigrants who stayed. The main difference that emerged between these two groups is a successful professional integration. Therefore, for an immigrant, obtaining a job that meets their expectations and matches their skills is a key factor that affects their decision to settle in their host community over the long term. [Translation] “Employment is central to mobility and settlement motivations and...can also lead people (paradoxically) to leave, meaning to pursue the feeling of being mobile (elsewhere). The same employment-related reasons bring people [to] New Brunswick [and then lead them to leave the region]” (Traisnel et al., 2020, p. 88).

Other factors noted in the literature that affect retention (Traisnel et al., 2020; Castro and Villeneuve, 2019; Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020; Sall and Bolland, 2021; Esses and Carter, 2019) include:

- The spouse's work situation;
- The development of a social network;
- The presence of strategies to ensure inclusive workplaces;
- The support received on arrival;
- An unexpected crisis;
- Access to public transit;
- Access to housing that is affordable and suited to their needs;
- Discrimination;
- Distance and homesickness;
- The presence of a community of the same origin;
- A situation that does not meet initial expectations;
- The language factor in a minority setting;
- Administrative hurdles;
- The end of a planned temporary stay.

Socio-demographic profile of the French-speaking immigrant population in Northern New Brunswick and Northern Ontario

As mentioned above, to develop a portrait of the population of both study regions, we used Statistics Canada's census divisions to delimit each province's northern regions. For New Brunswick, we used the province's three northernmost counties, Madawaska, Restigouche and Gloucester (which includes the Chaleur region and the Acadian Peninsula). For Ontario, we instead used economic regions, including the province's Northeast and Northwest.

Northern New Brunswick

Northern New Brunswick's population declined from 2016 to 2021, whereas the entire province's population slightly increased.⁶ Although the population of Madawaska, Restigouche and Gloucester represented 19% of the province's total population in 2016, this proportion dropped to 18% in 2021. In addition, in 2021, the province's northern population was older (the median age varied from 52 years to 53.6 years) than its entire population (the median age was 46.8 years) and had a slightly lower median income.

The first official language spoken of most of northern New Brunswick's population is French, with the proportion varying from 62% in Restigouche to 90% in Madawaska. The proportion is 30% across the province. A vast majority of the population reports being able to hold a conversation in French, that is, 73% in Restigouche, 89% in Gloucester and 94% in Madawaska, compared to 41% overall in New Brunswick. Therefore, Francophone immigration to the north of the province occurs in a context where French is the language used most often. With regard to the rate of bilingualism (English and French), it is 50% in Restigouche and Gloucester counties and 58% in Madawaska, compared to 34% across the province.

The proportion of the population that reports having visible minority status is lower in the north (2% to 3%) than in the entire province (6%). Immigrants also represent a smaller segment of the northern population (1% to 4%) than that of the province (6%).

In 2021, in all three counties, the recent immigrant population (2016 to 2021) was less than the non-permanent resident population. In total, 715 people who obtained their permanent residence between 2016 and 2021 lived in one of these counties, compared to 970 non-permanent residents.

⁶ For detailed data on New Brunswick's total population, see Appendix VI.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profile of the population, Northern New Brunswick counties, 2021

	Madawaska		Restigouche		Gloucester	
	Data	Proportion	Data	Proportion	Data	Proportion
Total population	32,603		30,700		78,256	
Rate of population change from 2016 to 2021	-0.4%		-0.8%		-0.2%	
Median age of the population	52 yrs		53.6 yrs		53.6 yrs	
Median total income in 2020 for income recipients	\$36,400		\$34,800		\$34,000	
Population reporting a visible minority status	865	3%	475	2%	1,270	2%
People with French as their first official language spoken (only, or French and English)	29,465	90%	19,185	62%	64,695	83%
People with knowledge of French (only, or French and English)	30,640	94%	22,525	73%	69,660	89%
People with knowledge of French and English	18,945	58%	15,235	50%	39,465	50%
Immigrant population	1,170	4%	515	2%	1,140	1%
Recent immigrant population (2016 to 2021)	320	1%	100	0%	295	0%
Non-permanent resident population	405	1%	155	1%	410	1%

Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

In Madawaska county, four of the five main countries of birth of the recent immigrant population are part of the Francophonie: Morocco, the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC], Haiti and France. The United States is the first country of origin of the county's immigrant population, which may be explained by its proximity to the border. In Gloucester, France and Haiti are among the main places of birth of the immigrant population, whereas in Restigouche county, the immigrant population does not come from any country in the Francophonie.

Table 2: Main countries of birth of the recent immigrant population (2016 to 2021), Northern New Brunswick counties, 2021

Country	Madawaska		Country	Restigouche		Country	Gloucester	
	Number	Proportion		Number	Proportion		Number	Proportion
United States	65	20%	India	60	60%	Philippines	100	34%
Morocco	40	13%	United States	10	10%	France	60	20%
Congo (RDC)	30	9%	Philippines	10	10%	Haiti	15	5%
Haiti	20	6%	-	-	-	Russia	15	5%
France	20	6%	-	-	-	United States	10	3%
Total	320		Total	100		Total	295	

Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

Northern Ontario

Northern Ontario's population has a lower growth rate (1.6% in the Northeast and 0.3% in the Northwest) than that observed at the provincial level (5.8%).⁷ As in New Brunswick, Northern Ontario's population is somewhat older (the median age varies from 42.8 years to 46.8 years) than the entire province's population (the median age is 41.6 years). However, the median income of the population of the study region is comparable to that of the entire province.

In Ontario, French is more present in the Northeast than in the Northwest. In the Northeast, it is the first official language spoken by 19% of the population, and almost a third of this population (30%) is able to hold a conversation in French. In the Northwest, French is the first official language spoken by only 2% of the population, and 7% of the population has some knowledge of the language. These proportions are 4% and 11% respectively for the entire province's population. With regard to the rate of bilingualism (English and French), it is 29% in the Northeast, 7% in the Northwest and 11% in all of Ontario. These data confirm that the vast majority of the population that knows French is bilingual, unlike in New Brunswick, where the unilingual French-speaking population is greater.

With respect to the proportion of the population that reports a visible minority status, it is lower in the north of the province (4% to 5%) compared to all of Ontario (34%). Immigrants also represent a much smaller segment of the province's northern population (5% to 6%) than of its entire population (30%).

In 2021, in both study regions, the recent immigrant population (2016 to 2021) was half the size of the non-permanent resident population. In total, 4,990 people who obtained their permanent residence between 2016 and 2021 lived in the north of the province, compared to 9,485 non-permanent residents.

Table 3: Socio-demographic profile of the population, Northern Ontario economic regions, 2021

	Northeast		Northwest	
	Data	Proportion	Data	Proportion
Total population	557,220		232,299	
Rate of population change from 2016 to 2021	1.60%		0.30%	
Median age of the population	46.8 yrs		42.8 yrs	
Median total income in 2020 for income recipients	\$40,800		\$42,400	
Population reporting a visible minority status	22,275	4%	10,715	5%
People with French as their first official language spoken (only, or French and English)	104,810	19%	5,145	2%
People with knowledge of French (only, or French and English)	166,025	30%	16,245	7%
People with knowledge of French and English	159,815	29%	16,000	7%
Immigrant population	29,610	5%	14,825	6%
Recent immigrant population (2011 to 2021)	3,350	1%	1,640	1%
Non-permanent resident population	6,245	1%	3,240	1%

Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

In Northeastern Ontario, the list of the 10 main countries of birth of the recent immigrant population has only one country from the Francophonie, Côte d'Ivoire. The number of immigrants from that country is similar to the number from the United States and the Philippines. In the Northwest, there is no member country of the Francophonie on this list.

⁷ For detailed data on Ontario's total population, see Appendix VI.

Table 4: Main countries of birth of the recent immigrant population (2011 to 2021), Northern Ontario economic regions, 2021

Country	Northeast		Country	Northwest	
	Number	Proportion		Number	Proportion
India	665	20%	India	370	23%
United States	260	8%	Philippines	240	15%
Philippines	255	8%	United States	155	9%
Côte d'Ivoire	245	7%	Syria	100	6%
Syria	210	6%	China	60	4%
Nigeria	170	5%	South Korea	50	3%
China	110	3%	United Kingdom	45	3%
United Kingdom	80	2%	Bangladesh	35	2%
Pakistan	65	2%	Egypt	30	2%
Jamaica	50	1%	South Africa	30	2%
Total	3,350		Total	1,640	

Source: Statistics Canada (2021)

Admissions of French-speaking permanent residents in Northern New Brunswick and Northern Ontario

IRCC's monthly updates enable ongoing tracking of admissions of French-speaking permanent residents to the country.⁸ Tables 5 and 6 present the number of annual admissions in certain communities of Northern New Brunswick and Northern Ontario, namely, those where at least five people were admitted in the same year during the reference period (2015 to 2023).

In Northern New Brunswick, there was an increase in the number of French-speaking permanent residents admitted annually. The largest increase was in the Edmundston area, where admissions went from 15 in 2015 to 310 in 2023. After Moncton, this region has the second-highest increase in number of Francophone admissions in the province. In 2023, 11% of the French-speaking permanent residents admitted to New Brunswick settled in the Edmundston area, 6% in the Bathurst area and 2% in the Campbellton area, whereas the Greater Moncton area had 60% of the admissions. From 2018 to 2022, this proportion was actually about 70%, which attests to an increasing regionalization of Francophone immigration in New Brunswick, even though most immigrants still settle in the province's south.

Table 5: Admissions of French-speaking permanent residents by census metropolitan area of intended destination, Northern New Brunswick

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Edmundston	10	15	--	15	60	70	60	185	310
Bathurst	15	45	70	35	45	30	35	100	190
Campbellton	--	--	0	--	10	--	15	40	65
Total	195	260	320	420	875	650	790	2,320	2,935

Source: IRCC, monthly updates (2024)

⁸ IRCC's definition of a French-speaking immigrant is an immigrant for whom French is the first Canadian official language used. This includes permanent residents who declare knowledge of "French only" as their official language or those who declare knowledge of "French and English" as their official languages, as well as those who declare French as the official language in which they are most comfortable.

Few communities in Northern Ontario have more than five admissions of French-speaking permanent residents annually. There has been some increase in the Greater Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Timmins areas. However, Francophone immigration in the province remains highly concentrated in Ottawa, Toronto and, to a lesser extent, Hamilton. These three cities totalled 91% of admissions in 2023. In 2023, there were only a little over one thousand (1,080) admissions of French-speaking permanent residents outside these three cities in Ontario, out of a total of 11,905 admissions.

Table 6: Admissions of French-speaking permanent residents by census metropolitan area of intended destination, Northern Ontario

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Greater Sudbury	15	5	15	15	20	15	35	130	90
Kenora	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	--
North Bay	0	--	5	0	--	0	--	--	5
Sault Ste. Marie	0	--	--	10	--	--	0	--	--
Thunder Bay	--	--	--	10	--	10	--	25	15
Timmins	0	0	--	--	--	0	0	10	5
Total	1,620	2,070	2,255	2,945	5,240	3,390	3,905	9,765	11,905

Source: IRCC, monthly updates (2024)

Service mapping

Using information available to the public and documentation provided by IRCC, we identified the various settlement services offered in French available to immigrants in both study regions. We were able to complete the information through calls and interviews with stakeholders.

In the following tables, it should be noted that the language of service is defined according to the organization's mandate and actual capacity to actively provide services in French. Therefore, organizations with a website in English and French, but that do not seem able to provide quality services in French within a reasonable amount of time are not included in these tables.

Table 7: Pre-departure and settlement service mapping for Northern Ontario

Organization	Mandate and language of service	Services or initiatives	IRCC funding (yes or no)
Centre francophone du Grand Toronto [Greater Toronto Area Francophone centre]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provincial (not adapted to northern realities) ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pre-departure services 	Yes
Collège Boréal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional (Sudbury, Timmins, Greater Toronto Area) ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Information and orientation ○ Needs assessment and referrals ○ Skills development program for newcomers ○ Language training (LINC and CLIC) 	Yes
Association des francophones du Nord-Ouest de l'Ontario (AFNOO) [Northwestern Ontario association of Francophones]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional (Northwest) ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Needs assessment and referrals ○ Information and orientation ○ Community connections ○ Employment assistance services ○ Support for access to services 	Yes
Centre de santé communautaire du Grand Sudbury [Greater Sudbury community health centre]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communauté francophone accueillante de Sudbury [Sudbury welcoming Francophone community] ○ Needs assessment and referrals ○ School-based settlement services ○ Information and orientation ○ Community connections 	Yes
Société économique de l'Ontario (SÉO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provincial (adapté aux réalités du Nord) ○ Français 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Services d'aide à l'emploi ○ Entrepreneuriat 	Yes
Le Groupe InnovaNor (Northeastern Ontario Settlement Services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional (from Hearst to Smooth Rock Falls) ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Needs assessment and referrals ○ Information and orientation ○ Community connections 	Yes
North Bay and District Multicultural Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional (Nipissing and Timiskaming) ○ English and French (limited French resources) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Needs assessment and referrals ○ Information and orientation ○ Community connections 	Yes
Sault Community Career Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local ○ English and French (limited French resources) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Needs assessment and referrals ○ Employment assistance services 	Yes
Yes Employment Services– Oui services d'emploi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional (Nipissing) ○ English and French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment assistance services ○ Language training 	Yes

Table 8: Pre-departure and settlement service mapping for Northern New Brunswick

Organization	Mandate and language of service	Services or initiatives	IRCC funding (yes or no)
Immigration francophone Nouvelle-Écosse [Nova Scotia Francophone immigration]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Atlantic provinces ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Pre-departure services 	Yes
New Brunswick Community College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provincial ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Language testing ○ Language training (CLIC and LINC) 	Yes
New Brunswick Multicultural Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provincial ○ English and French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rural Settlement Network (provides settlement assistance services in Campbellton, the Acadian Peninsula and Restigouche West) 	Yes
RDÉE Nouveau-Brunswick [New Brunswick economic development and employability network]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provincial ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Employment assistance services ○ Employer support services for recruitment and workplace integration 	Yes
Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick [New Brunswick Francophone association of municipalities]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communauté francophone accueillante du Haut-Saint-Jean [Haut-Saint-Jean welcoming Francophone community] 	Yes
Multicultural Association Chaleur Region (MACR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) ○ Settlement assistance services ○ Employment assistance services ○ Community connections ○ School-based settlement services ○ Business Immigrant Mentorship Program (Ruche Chaleur) ○ Intercultural training 	Yes
Centre de ressources pour nouveaux arrivants au Nord-Ouest inc. (CRNA-NO) [Northwest resource centre for newcomers inc.]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Settlement assistance services ○ Employment assistance services ○ Community connections ○ RAP ○ School-based settlement services 	Yes
Association Multiculturelle d'Intégration des Nouveaux Arrivants (AMINA) [Multicultural Association for the integration of Newcomers]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Local ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Settlement assistance services (through the Rural Settlement Network) ○ Orientation and reception services ○ Community connections 	No

Organization	Mandate and language of service	Services or initiatives	IRCC funding (yes or no)
Restigouche Multicultural Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Settlement assistance services (through the Rural Settlement Network) ○ Orientation and reception services ○ Community connections ○ Conversation circles 	No
Comité d'accueil, d'intégration et d'établissement des nouveaux arrivants de la Péninsule acadienne (CAIENA) [Acadian Peninsula newcomer reception, integration and settlement committee]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional ○ French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Settlement assistance services (through the Rural Settlement Network) ○ Community connections ○ Conversation circles 	No

Profile of immigrant interview participants

The 40 French-speaking immigrants interviewed who live or lived in a rural area of Northern Ontario (20) or Northern New Brunswick⁹ (20) have similar characteristics to those of the overall study population:

- The sample consisted of a similar number of women (21) and men (19);
- Most of the interviewees reported belonging to a visible minority (24);
- A large majority (36) were under 45 years old, and almost half of them (19) were 35 years old or younger;
- Most (25) were born in Sub-Saharan Africa, seven were from Europe, six from North Africa and two from South America.

Time spent in Canada varied across the sample, from less than one year to ten years. However, most of those interviewed (31) arrived in the country less than two years ago. At the time of the interviews, 27 had permanent resident status, one was a naturalized citizen, 10 were temporary workers and two were international students.

Table 9: Current immigration status, sample

	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
International student	1	1	2
Temporary worker	4	6	10
Permanent resident	14	13	27
Naturalized citizen	1	0	1

The 28 interviewees who have or had permanent resident status used various immigration programs. However, most obtained permanent residence through a federal economic program managed in Express Entry (13) or the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) (11). A distinction should be made between the two study provinces because a greater number of people obtained their permanent residence through the PNP in New Brunswick (10) than in Ontario (1).

Table 10: Program used to obtain permanent residence, sample

	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
Provincial Nominee Program	10	1	11
Canadian Experience Class or Federal Skilled Worker Program	2	11	13
Temporary resident to permanent resident pathway	2	1	3
Secondary applicant	1	0	1

⁹ For detailed characteristics of the sample, see Appendix V.

Finally, with respect to knowledge of official languages, almost all those interviewed (38) considered their level of proficiency in French to be advanced. Two people considered their level of proficiency in French to be intermediate, even though it is their main official language. As for their level of proficiency in English, most people in the sample thought that they had a beginner (17) or intermediate (19) level, and only four people reported having an advanced level.

Table 11: Level of proficiency in English, sample

Level of proficiency	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
Beginner	7	10	17
Intermediate	13	6	19
Advanced	0	4	4

Analysis of the interviews

Recruitment

Recruitment in regions far from major centres does not unfold in the same way as in urban areas. In several rural communities, immigration is still a relatively new phenomenon, which requires stakeholders and businesses to be able to adapt and innovate. For immigrants, the very beginning of the migration pathway is a period that involves many choices (leaving their country, choosing a place to settle, finding the right immigration program, finding a new job, starting studies abroad, etc.) and where the level and forms of support vary from person to person.

The choice of settlement location. When thinking about their destination, immigrants often consider Canada as a whole, rather than a specific region, such as Northern New Brunswick or Northern Ontario. Most of the interviewees did not know the region where they settled until they became aware of a job or study opportunity there. Nearly three quarters of the interviewees or their partners already had a job offer before they arrived. A common scenario was a person who applied to positions in several communities within the same province or across Canada and then began the immigration process after receiving a positive response from an employer. Whether the workplace was in a rural or urban community did not always influence their decision. This finding regarding the importance of a job in the decision to migrate aligns with the literature on the subject (Gravel, Dupuis and Robidoux-Bolduc, 2020; Arcand et al., 2021).

The statements gathered show a variety of means used abroad to obtain a job in Canada, in particular, job postings on Job Bank or other websites, Destination Canada Mobility Forum events in which employers participate, sector recruitment virtual sessions, Canadian employers' recruitment officers abroad, matching initiatives piloted by Francophone community organizations, and information circulating by word-of-mouth in a network of contacts or even on social media. In addition, some people interviewed, who initially settled in cities such as Toronto, Montreal or Sudbury, had had a dissatisfying work situation and migrated to a region after obtaining a job that seemed to better meet their expectations.

[Translation] "I found out about this village when I received the work contract. I had no idea where it was before." (N.B. – 05)

[Translation] "It's the job [opportunity] that tipped [the scales] in favour of New Brunswick. I also tried other provinces, but I didn't receive any positive responses." (N.B. – 26)

[Translation] "Settling in a rural area? I had no preference. I knew I had to set foot in Canada with a job." (Ont. – 05)

The presence of a university or college campus is also an important pull factor for a region. Teaching institutions' recruitment officers and graduates who returned to their country of origin after their studies contribute to the visibility of small Canadian cities abroad. Canadian post-secondary institutions' good reputation is also an asset. About a quarter of those interviewed were, at the time, or had been international students. Although some people submitted applications for admission to several schools located in different parts of Canada and elsewhere in the world, others received an offer of admission from a school in Ontario or New Brunswick on the first attempt. These individuals were more interested in finding a program offered in French than a specific place to settle. School is a time that is conducive to establishing ties in the community (Forest and Deschênes-Thériault, 2022; DPMR,

2020). The two interviewees who were studying wanted to stay longer-term in Northern New Brunswick or Northern Ontario, provided that there would be job opportunities.

[Translation] “I’d always wanted to go to university abroad, so I tried everywhere in France and Canada. It turned out that it worked out in Timmins, Canada.” (Ont. – 23)

Although, for some, obtaining a job or an offer of admission to a study program is a sufficient reason to choose a place to settle, others have more specific criteria to narrow their search for a place to settle. A little over a third of those interviewed highlighted the importance of their destination being bilingual and Francophone. Primarily Francophone municipalities in Northern New Brunswick or those that have a strong Francophone presence in Ontario are especially attractive to those with a limited knowledge of English. For others, the bilingualism of a community represents an opportunity to enhance their level of proficiency in English, while being able to access services in French.

A quarter of those interviewed specifically wanted to settle in a small community, far from the noise and congestion associated with major urban centres. These individuals were looking for a community that is [translation] “liveable,” quiet, safe and, in some cases, close to nature. They would not have accepted a job in a big city. Research carried out by Sall and Bolland (2018) deals with cases of people looking primarily for a lifestyle associated with small communities. Several other factors were noted to explain the choice of place of destination, including:

- A PNP stream that matches the immigrant’s profile;
- Immigration procedures considered less complex than those in Quebec;
- Friends or family members who already live in the region;
- The presence of a Francophone school for children.

[Translation] “I preferred a province that was bilingual or [where] French was spoken. I can manage in English a little, but it’s not really the best.” (N.B. – 13)

[Translation] “I knew I didn’t want to stay in a big city. I wanted something a little calmer. I was in a big city before, with traffic, which is exactly why I wanted a change.” (Ont. – 7)

[Translation] “The Skilled Worker Program in New Brunswick is not a complicated program. I had looked at Quebec, but it was too complicated.” (N.B. – 17)

[Translation] “My brother is here. So already, I have family. I had someone who could welcome me, guide me and give me quite a bit of advice.” (N.B. – 26)

Destination Canada and other recruitment missions. A quarter of those interviewed, primarily people from France or North Africa, participated in a Destination Canada Mobility Forum event. This type of event is considered very useful for learning more about immigration procedures, job opportunities and the different provinces’ specific aspects, in addition to being an opportunity to make initial contact with settlement organizations and potential employers. Some people interviewed even received a job offer after participating in a Destination Canada Mobility Forum. However, people from Sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to these events because they only take place outside their region. In addition, some noted inconsistencies between the professional qualifications required in order to participate in this type of event and the low level of skills required by several job postings. Although some people mentioned that the Destination Canada presentations exaggerated reality

somewhat, this problem seems less serious than it was a few years ago. This was a major issue highlighted in the research by Traisnel et al. (2020).

In addition to Destination Canada, several other recruitment activities, in person and online, are held throughout the year by the federal government, the provinces and community organizations. For example, online information sessions on various trades organized by the Government of New Brunswick were noted several times during the interviews. Sessions regarding specific employment sectors, such as nursing, have the benefit of offering information more adapted to the profiles of people participating in them and of facilitating networking with potential employers.

[Translation] “It was really nice to have the different provinces there, it gives you a good overview of the country and helps you think about your options.” (N.B. – 11)

[Translation] “Job postings and the required level of training should be more in line with each other. [Highly] qualified people are sought, while a lot of the posted positions require a lower level of skills.” (N.B. – 09)

Exploratory visits. A third of the interviewees who settled in New Brunswick participated in an exploratory visit, a requirement of one of the PNP streams. This type of visit is an opportunity to determine whether the province actually meets expectations, meet with potential employers and explore different communities. Although this visit adds a costly step to the immigration process, most people who took part in one considered that it gave them a more solid basis for their migration plan and confirmed their interest in the region. The study by Deschênes-Thériault (2022) on the Francophone integration pathway in Western Canada showed that exploratory visits in Manitoba were a good practice.

Immigrants. Immigrants can also play a role as an ambassador of their host community with people from their country of origin. By sharing their experience with members of their networks, they can spark interest in others who have not yet thought of migrating to Canada. This finding is in line with the literature on the influence of networks on migration (Massey et al., 1998; Krissman, 2005). Therefore, some of those interviewed applied to job postings that people from their region of origin, living in Ontario or New Brunswick, had shared on social media.

Recruitment from the perspective of companies and stakeholders. In recent years, since the local population has not been a sufficient pool to meet the workforce needs of some Canadian businesses anymore, they turned to international recruitment for the first time. Moreover, rural communities with little immigration history often have to make additional efforts to make their job opportunities known. The interviews revealed that considerable effort still needs to be made to actually regionalize immigration in Canada. For example, stakeholders stated that Francophone immigration partners in an urban centre in the south of the province are unfamiliar with the realities of the rural areas in Northern Ontario and Northern New Brunswick and with the job opportunities available in these regions. Therefore, even if their mandate is provincial or national in scope, these partners do little—or nothing—to discuss immigration opportunities outside urban centres when they participate in international recruitment activities or when immigrants contact them.

In addition, recruitment abroad can be especially complex for companies unfamiliar with international recruitment pools, immigration procedures and ways of supporting those recruited. In New Brunswick, the provincial government provides support to businesses through Working NB, while in Northern Ontario, the SÉO is the main organization providing support to companies that want to recruit abroad to help Francophone communities. In this regard, the SÉO has set up a matching system by keeping updated lists of available positions and potential candidates. When a position matches an application,

the organization puts the person looking for a job and the employer in contact and offers them support to facilitate the placement, followed by settlement. At least five of the immigrants interviewed obtained a job with the SÉO's support. Without this matching service, they would probably not have considered immigrating to the north of the province because they were unaware of job opportunities available in the region.

[Translation] "I had barely started my job search. The SÉO told me that there was an employer in my field who was looking for candidates. Otherwise, I wouldn't have known about it." (Ont. – 15)

In addition to a good match between the professional profile and the position to fill, a representative of a company in Northern New Brunswick emphasized the importance of a match between the linguistic profile of those recruited and that of the host community. The recruitment activities of this business, which is located in a municipality with a strong Francophone majority, specifically target countries in French-speaking Africa in order to promote newcomers' successful integration into the host community and, therefore, increase these peoples' retention potential. The interviews conducted with stakeholders also helped identify several other things to consider in recruitment activities in a rural context, including:

- Taking into account the specific aspects of each region (immigration history, main industries, etc.) to offer adequate support and target the right profiles;
- Working closely with local companies to make them aware of international recruitment opportunities and properly support them in the process;
- Adopting a personalized approach by taking the time to really know a person's professional profile before matching it with job postings;
- Ensuring that the people recruited are well aware of the rural environment in which they are settling;
- Trying to contact future permanent residents when they are beginning their immigration process and have not yet made a definitive choice about where to settle, in order to let them know about the opportunities available outside the major centres;
- Considering the family context of the person recruited (for example, sending them information about the school system, helping their partner find a job, etc.);
- Planning for more virtual recruitment events (webinars, information materials, etc.) to reach an audience that lives outside the major cities and in Sub-Saharan Africa;
- Participating in job fairs in different Canadian cities to promote secondary migration opportunities.

Fictional account of recruitment and preparation for arrival – Northern New Brunswick

Huguette is not satisfied with her personal or professional situation in her country. Her cousin, who lives in Toronto, talked to her about Canada as a place where there are many job opportunities. She does not really know where to begin and does some research online. For several months, she applies to dozens of job postings, but does not receive a response. Then, she joins a Facebook group on immigration to Canada and sees a posting about a job at a factory in New Brunswick. She does not know where it is, but applies anyway. Two days later, the employer contacts her and invites her for an interview. Then, she does research on the city where the factory is and discovers that it is a very small community. This is fine with her because she thinks that getting this job is her best chance to come to Canada. Her employer participates in a program that allows Huguette to obtain a work permit while her permanent residence application is being processed. Her employer informs her that someone will come and pick her up at the airport when she arrives and will help her find housing.

Pre-departure

After deciding to migrate and beginning the immigration procedures, people have to prepare to leave their country and arrive in Canada. The interviews revealed that access to quality information is of the utmost importance at this stage in the pathway in order to avoid missteps that may have consequences in the longer term. Experiences vary, from people who find out about every last detail using a variety of sources to those who do little research, with most immigrants falling somewhere in between.

In general, those interviewed who received advice from people whose job it is to support settlement preparation—pre-departure and settlement service staff and the employers’ staff—had more-positive experiences. Poorly informed people experienced more disappointment or stress on arrival, and some migration plans were even jeopardized. For example, some people who did not fully understand the rural setting of their settlement location had difficulty when they arrived. Other main topics discussed in the interviews that those interviewed would have liked to have more information about include public transit in the region, access to child care, the search for housing, the credential recognition process, immigration procedure turnaround times and the weather in Canada.

While their sources of information varied, interviewees often benefitted from several of the following sources.

Unofficial sources of information before arrival. A vast majority of those interviewed stated that they consulted both official sources (government documentation, community organizations, etc.) and unofficial sources to prepare for their arrival in Canada, which is in line with the literature on the subject (Traisnel et al., 2020). People who have family or friends in Canada often turn to them for advice and to ask questions. They appreciate these personal exchanges with others who have followed the same pathway that they are about to embark on.

In addition, a little over a third of the interviewees looked for information in online groups, namely on Facebook and WhatsApp. The interviews revealed that there are a variety of groups on social media, some of which bring together members who have one or more of the following in common: place of origin, destination, language, immigration program or even employer (for example, the group of Guineans in New Brunswick and those applying to the Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program). These groups are generally considered useful for quickly finding answers, obtaining information about various subjects that one would not have thought to ask about and even making contacts in Canada before arriving. However, some of the interviews revealed that it may sometimes be difficult to distinguish between what applies to everyone and what deals with a particular case or to identify

incorrect information. In this regard, when content published in four different Facebook groups for immigrants was observed over several months, it was noted that the information circulated varied in quality and could sometimes be misleading (Deschênes-Thériault, 2022). AFNOO has developed a good practice in this respect. Some of the organization's team members are members of various Facebook groups, and they contact people looking for information to ensure that they received the correct information.

[Translation] "I got information from friends who were already settled in Canada, who knew about life in New Brunswick and who shared their experience, what they had heard, what was or wasn't good." (N.B. – 16)

[Translation] "I would say I read too much information. There is also a lot of bad information on social media. When I was looking, one person gave me information on permanent residence, and another person told me something else." (Ont. – 16)

Official sources of information. Being able to access information from official sources, whether government or community sources, helps to confirm the information gathered through personal research. People who were in direct contact with a community organization or a post-secondary institution's reception service usually had more positive experiences in preparing for their arrival.

People who settle in Northern Ontario have access to support provided by AFNOO (Northwest) or the SÉO. AFNOO seems especially efficient because as soon as the organization is informed of the imminent arrival of an immigrant, it contacts them, first by email, then by telephone or videoconference, in order to ensure that they receive all the necessary information before they arrive. Those who benefitted from this support found it very useful during their preparation, as well as reassuring.

[Translation] "I thought it was the same everywhere, that Timmins would be like Toronto or Montreal. When I arrived, I was really in shock." (Ont. – 03)

Employers. As mentioned above, three quarters of the individuals from our sample already had a job before they arrived. The level of support offered by employers to immigrants before they arrive in Canada varies from case to case. Some employers have employees dedicated to supporting people recruited abroad. They therefore offer a range of services, including webinars, preparatory meetings, information materials, access to an immigration consultant and logistical planning for the move. Other employers refer recruits to the resources available in the community and answer questions as needed. Finally, some employers do not offer any support in particular and limit the exchange of information to work-related issues.

[Translation] "My employer set up a team that is in charge of welcoming their employees recruited abroad. I benefitted from support with my family—from my country to New Brunswick. The person responsible explained to us a little about life in New Brunswick, the difficulties we might face, basically everything we needed to know before arriving." (N.B. – 16)

[Translation] "My employer prepared us. We knew that where we were going for work was not very lively and was quite far from major cities. My boss prepared us well psychologically." (Ont. – 22)

[Translation] "The employer offered me a job, which allowed me to get a designation. The emails they sent me were about work and the date when I was supposed to start working. That's all." (N.B. – 05)

Pre-departure services. The pre-departure services (Connexions francophones [Francophone connections]) give people access to information, training and tools to help them prepare for their arrival in Canada. In our sample, the number of people who had access to these services varied widely depending on immigration status and settlement location. Only a quarter of interviewees had access to pre-departure services. On the one hand, these services are still not available to people who arrive in Canada with a temporary permit, and on the other hand, more people benefitted from these services in Ontario than in New Brunswick and stated that they had a more positive experience.

In Ontario, pre-departure services offer concrete benefits, as noted by those interviewed, such as getting a job through forwarded job postings, being referred to an organization able to help them look for housing, and carrying out administrative steps prior to their arrival. However, some recently arrivals stated that the information they received was too general to really be useful and that they would have preferred the content to be more adapted to Northern Ontario. The stakeholders interviewed did not like that the organization responsible for these services did not work with them or provide information adapted to the northern context.

A large majority of interviewees in New Brunswick were not aware that pre-departure services existed, and those who used them would have preferred to have had information on their settlement location specifically. Instead, the workshops given were about life in Canada in general and dealt less with the realities of rural areas, such as Northern New Brunswick. A study on Francophone immigration in the Northwest Territories (Deschênes-Thériault and Bacher, 2021) also found that there was a lack of awareness of pre-departure services and that information was not very adapted to the local context.

[Translation] “I attended almost all the sessions available. A person from Connexions francophones [forwarded] me a job posting that might have interested me based on my profile, and that’s how I got my current job.” (Ont. – 21)

[Translation] “To be honest, I didn’t find the Connexions francophones information relevant. It was not really concrete help.” (Ont. – 15)

[Translation] “It was interesting information, but I want to add, if we take a little bit of time to research by ourselves, we can find this information. I would have liked to have information on Edmundston, such as how to find housing, how to move, etc.” (N.B. – 11)

[Translation] “To me, a service that is not local is useless.” (N.B. – 01)

Reception and settlement

Regarding the reception stage, the people interviewed regularly had strong emotions. These emotions sometimes reflected that they were happily surprised at how efficiently and warmly people mobilized in support of their well-being. They also reflected painful memories when things to do were full of obstacles or even difficult to figure out.

Hospitality. The vast majority of those interviewed recognized the hospitality of the people in the community where they settled. That said, they often had difficulty specifying the source of the support offered, not knowing whether it was connected to the official management of their settlement, their employer’s interest or the local population’s desire to help (Belkhodja, 2023). Even though this is unclear, the dedication of settlement service staff members is undoubtedly behind this testament to the hospitality shown, since they approach their work with an ethic of care and mobilize people in the community to “help” orchestrate a humanizing welcome.

While communities located near small cities with post-secondary institutions already have ethnocultural communities, others have received their first immigrant families in recent years. The presence of these ethnocultural communities contributes to the wider community's hospitality. However, even when their presence in these communities was limited, several attested to voluntary actions, official and unofficial, that contributed to the hospitality of many communities.

[Translation] "We had friends who had come before us. He had bought a car, and then we arranged amongst ourselves to do the shopping and go to work. Now we have a car, and we do it for others when they arrive." (N.B. – 15)

[Translation] "I was surprised that people were not used to seeing an African person or a Black person. When I arrived, there were people who tried to find out where I'd come from. I attracted peoples' curiosity.... I did not have a bad experience. I would say that they were curious, because they wanted to talk to me." (N.B. – 21)

[Translation] "I didn't know anyone, and I was very warmly welcomed by the locals. To tell you the truth, it surprised me: you leave a country, and you don't know how it's going to be. Also, I have a wife and children. But the people from [name of the community], for newcomers, it's the best place to be. They gave me everything." (Ont. – 08)

The airport. The first few hours in Canada are already particularly challenging because the distance between the housing and the international airport is often significant and not served by public transit. In Northern Ontario, remote rural communities can be located up to almost a dozen hours' drive from the airport. In such cases, most of the interviewees were welcomed at the airport by a settlement service or an employer. In New Brunswick, the settlement services interviewed were less involved at the arrival stage at the airport, primarily because of a lack of resources. Several service providers in New Brunswick do not have access to a shuttle service to transport people from the airport. In Ontario, access to a second shuttle service would enable AFNOO to pick up more people, particularly those who land in Winnipeg.

Housing. Experiences looking for housing also vary widely. At least a third of those interviewed stated that they received support from their employer finding housing before they arrived. Some employers, such as Irving in New Brunswick, have housing reserved for newcomers, who stay for at least a few months. People who benefitted from this type of support were grateful. Moreover, some permanent residents benefitted from effective support from their settlement service. All the same, about half of those interviewed experienced a challenge and stress when looking for or moving into their first place, because of too high a cost, scarcity, inadequate housing, etc. In addition, in most communities, access to affordable housing seems to have decreased in recent years. Therefore, people who arrived more recently experienced more stress in this regard, either during their first few days in Canada or when they left their first temporary housing.

[Translation] "Our work contract came with housing. Everything was ready. The apartment was already furnished." (Ont. – 22)

[Translation] "For those of us who arrive, it is difficult to find housing. There are not a lot of apartments or houses available, and in addition, it's a lot of word-of-mouth." (N.B. – 10)

Big companies with considerable workforce needs that are met by workers from abroad sometimes innovate in terms of housing by resorting, for example, to the following solutions:

- Signing multi-year agreements with real estate developers to commit to renting a certain number of apartments (such agreements help the developers access funds while guaranteeing the companies' employees access to housing);
- Buying properties that could contain several housing units;
- Building small houses and signing rental contracts with the option to buy with newcomers (if someone decides to buy the house, the money they paid in rent can be used as a downpayment).

Settlement services. In New Brunswick, at least four settlement services cover part of the large study regions, namely, Restigouche West (AMINA), the Acadian Peninsula (CAIENA), the Chaleur region (MACR) and Madawaska (CRNA-NO). Although CRNA-NO and MACR have existed for several years and have a larger team, albeit insufficient to meet needs, both of the other services were set up more recently, in particular, AMINA, which has only officially existed since 2022. Northern Ontario, which covers an area of over 800,000 km², has only two settlement services (AFNOO and Northeastern Ontario Settlement Services), which are insufficient to cover all communities in this region.

It should be noted that our sample was mostly recruited using settlement services' mailing lists, and therefore, we spoke to few people who did not benefit from any service. Through the statements gathered during our interviews, it is clear that the collaboration among the various stakeholders and the presence of a settlement service during newcomers' initial steps seem significant and effective, especially for people who have recently arrived. Moreover, because the communities are small, it seems easier to identify newcomers, before or after they arrive.

That being said, in Ontario and New Brunswick, quality services cannot be provided to all newcomers with the resources available. The increase in immigrants arriving in recent years and some employers' reliance on them have certainly contributed to a restructuring of stakeholders and a better collaboration among them. The fact remains that many communities still cannot rely on settlement services, while in some, settlement services simply have to provide lower-quality or a smaller range of services. The interviews show a lack of resources. Therefore, the organizations that lack resources struggle with problems related to ethics and excellence. These organizations:

- Must reduce their follow-ups, meaning that their staff take care of "new people" but cannot follow up with them a few weeks after they have settled;
- Cannot meet all newcomers' transportation needs when they arrive at the airport, because they do not have the necessary resources or a shuttle service;
- Cannot provide services in some communities that are too remote (such as ones that are a seven-hour drive from their head office), even though, in theory, they are in their jurisdiction.

For CRNA-NO staff, whose mandate is to offer services to refugees, it is difficult to support these individuals in their settlement steps, which are complex, and they are not able to offer them a range of appropriate resources.

Temporary residence. In the context of our study and after reading other research (GGI, 2023a, GGI, 2023b, Forest, 2002), we noted increasing openness to settlement support for temporary residents, not only among settlement service managers but also at IRCC. In general, stakeholders highlighted their community's reliance on international recruitment of temporary or permanent foreign workers. They

also noted that if settlement goes smoothly for these people and the job suits them, they will look to settle permanently in the region. In communities where there are community organizations, we note increased collaboration between these organizations and employers, as well as sometimes with the municipality and volunteers, which fosters a more efficient, reassuring and friendly reception.

Employers. As previously suggested, many employers consider themselves dependent on newcomers for developing their business, maintaining their activities and improving performance. They are therefore increasingly engaged in recruitment, settlement preparation and settlement of their newcomer staff. As a result, although settlement services remain essential, they are no longer necessarily newcomers' first or only resource, contrary to what was noted in the literature more than five years ago (Kamano, Benimmas and Côté, 2020; Traisnel et al., 2019). In New Brunswick, the New Brunswick Critical Worker Pilot identified five participating employers who had to demonstrate an “ability to provide enhanced supports around newcomer settlement” (Government of New Brunswick, n.d.). Our interviews with staff responsible for migration and settlement processes and with newcomers hired by these companies have confirmed this program's effectiveness, at least in the short and medium terms.

Regarding Ontario and the other employers in New Brunswick, company involvement varies greatly. Too often, according to the stakeholders responsible for settlement services interviewed, employers fail to send the contact information for the person recruited abroad to the settlement service before their arrival. Even though many immigrants manage to figure things out on their own, the interviews clearly show that some decisions could have been better informed.

[Translation] “[Sometimes] we find out the same day that someone is arriving! So, there is no one to help with transportation or housing, meet them at the airport or show them around town. None of that has been arranged. The employer doesn't know you have to do it when you bring someone from another country.” (Stakeholder)

Fictional account of a reception with no major problems – Northwestern Ontario

A few weeks before arriving in Ontario, Augustin participated in a virtual meeting with SÉO representatives, his regional settlement service and his employer to plan his settlement. Who would meet him at the airport? Who would help him with administrative matters? What furniture would he like to have? Who would take him to work on the first day? Augustin arrived at the airport in Toronto on November 4, 2022. He was welcomed by a work colleague who provided him with clothing for the sub-zero temperatures in store for him. His colleague drove him for close to 10 hours and told him about several things he could expect. Augustin had a hard time understanding. Everything was so different. He had temporary housing that his employer had found for him, which he could leave whenever he was ready. He wanted to find a larger unit to accommodate his wife and children, who, if all went well, would arrive in a few months. Over the first few days, people visited Augustin, giving him useful day-to-day items and guiding him through his first few steps. He did not really know which organizations had sent them, but it was comforting to have them there. When someone went with him to do his first grocery shop, he realized that he lived far from his workplace and the stores. He had read in passing that there was no public transportation, but he understood more concretely what that entailed, in particular, the cold he had to deal with. He realized that he would have to get a car quickly, but that he might not be able to afford it.

Economic integration

Regarding the economic integration pathway, those interviewed can be divided into two large categories, some of whom who found themselves successively in both categories (because of dismissals or personal decisions):

1. Those who were recruited abroad (approximately three quarters of the sample);
2. Those who looked or are looking for a job in Canada (nearly half of the sample).

Welcome to the company. More than half of interviewees said that they were satisfied with their employer's efforts to welcome them to the company, with some even adding that the support provided exceeded their expectations. One employer interviewed cited a best practice implemented to promote workplace integration of foreign workers: training sessions that cover topics such as the different social codes, expectations, punctuality and work relationships are given in partnership with a local multicultural organization.

However, at least seven people who settled in New Brunswick and two in Ontario mentioned that they had difficulty adjusting, which could be explained by, among other things, the lack of support provided by the employer and discrepancies between the working conditions and the agreement concluded. To remedy this situation, the SÉO suggests supporting employers with workshops and training to address, in particular, workplace adjustment for immigrants and cultural competencies. Likewise, although the steps for integrating newcomers into companies are not part of the mission of organizations responsible for receiving and integrating them, AFNOO organizes sessions to raise awareness about intercultural communication and relationships.

[Translation] "In terms of the company, the managers were very welcoming. Even my colleagues. Some of them offered to take me fishing or hiking or to introduce me to regional specialties, like eating moose for the first time." (Ont. – 09)

Recourse for problematic situations. When a newcomer believes that their working conditions do not comply with their work contract or the employment standards in their province, they may file a complaint with IRCC. However, because of the size of rural Francophone communities, it is difficult, if not impossible, to ensure the confidentiality of the cases processed. Statements made during an interview showed how much distress such a situation could cause and the resulting loss of confidence in the complaint processing system. The SÉO, which is sometimes asked to intervene in problematic situations, noted that the employers who contact it are ready to make the effort to resolve the conflict and keep the newcomer in the job.

Credential and skills recognition. At least a quarter of those interviewed had a job that did not match their professional skills or for which they were overqualified. This is an issue that seems to particularly affect people working in the health-care field. This situation is largely due to the difficulty in having foreign experience and education recognized and correctly assessing its equivalency.

On the one hand, the fact that temporary work permit holders are not allowed to take courses is a major barrier to having credentials recognized. On the other hand, newcomers who are allowed to take courses are shocked at the cost, time and effort required to have their foreign degrees or diplomas recognized. Some have to try to obtain missing degrees and diplomas, at their own expense, while continuing to meet their family's needs, which puts them in a difficult financial situation. According to one participant, government grants would not be enough to cover all the costs related to credential and skills recognition.

[Translation] "The Nurses [Association] of New Brunswick does not give us an easy option for returning to school.... [Studying] nursing part time for two years, working full time and looking after a family is really not easy. We therefore started asking ourselves: "Are we really going to stay here [in New Brunswick]?" (N.B. – 23)

[Translation] "I felt I no longer had the opportunity for professional growth in Edmundston. I had a job, but it didn't match my experience or meet my expectations." (N.B. – 12)

[Translation] “I have 20 years’ experience in France, but my credentials were not even recognized. I had to go through a credential recognition process with the College and [take] the licensing exam.” (N.B. – 08)

Knowledge of official languages. Knowledge of English played a decisive role in the professional integration of the newcomers interviewed and their relatives when they were job-hunting or joining a company, especially in Ontario. However, the level of proficiency in English of the sample interviewed was relatively low. Only four people considered themselves to be at an advanced level, and 19 at an intermediate level. For those who settle in communities where French is by far the primary language used, it is generally given preference in the workplace, and the level of proficiency in English is less important. Communities with a strong Francophone majority, where the level of proficiency in English matters less, are mainly in Madawaska, Restigouche and the Acadian Peninsula, in Northern New Brunswick. However, in the Chaleur region of New Brunswick and in Northern Ontario, newcomers would benefit from having a good level of English proficiency.

AFNOO encourages businesses to draw on the Francophone workforce, but doing so involves additional costs and steps, such as using an interpreter during the hiring interview. One participant interviewed, who worked at an Anglophone company, indicated that his bilingual employer had helped him with his initial adjustment. However, in spite of this, because he did not know English well enough, he faced problems in the long term.

Job search. Almost half of those interviewed ended up looking for another job. Most of the time, they had obtained permanent residence and were looking for their first job, wanted to change jobs after obtaining permanent residence or entered the job market as part of their studies or after receiving a study permit. One third of job seekers described difficult and sometimes unsuccessful steps that they had to undertake. It seems that the rural and Francophone nature of the study areas limits the employment opportunities available and complicates the job search for newcomers and their partners. The interviews also highlighted several other factors that came into play, including:

- The level of proficiency in English;
- Canadian work experience;
- The network of local contacts;
- The modes of transportation available to the individual;
- Knowledge of the region, employers and Canada Labour Code;
- Employers’ reluctance to hire immigrants.

Since they did not find opportunities related to their field of study, some of those interviewed said that they, or members of their network, had moved to an urban centre or another province to improve their work situation. Others chose to accept a position that did not match their professional profile or was not in line with their ambitions, for example, because of a precarious financial situation or to acquire their first Canadian work experience.

[Translation] “You need to have work experience, add value at work and have credentials, but in reality, it’s not really recognized if you don’t have Canadian experience.” (N.B. – 11)

[Translation] “It was very hard [for my spouse] to find a job because he didn’t speak English. To our surprise, there was almost no French.” (Ont. – 14)

[Translation] “Jobs are not always posted. It’s sometimes hard for a newcomer to know about [job opportunities] in the community.” (N.B.– 06)

Closed work permit. Less than a quarter of those interviewed had a closed work permit. The interviews indicate that this type of status creates a power imbalance between the employee and the employer, which sometimes leads employers to commit abuses (GGI, 2023a). Unable to quickly find another job, some of those interviewed who had lost or left their job while holding a closed work permit found themselves in a precarious economic situation and experienced major stress.

[Translation] “I had a closed work permit. It did not necessarily go very well because it gave the employer all of the power. The conditions set out at the beginning were not always respected.” (N.B. – 12)

[Translation] “I looked everywhere for work. I had interviews, but as soon as I spoke about immigration programs and my work permit, I felt that the employers were less interested. They didn’t call me back.” (Ont. – 19)

Openness to diversity. A little less than a quarter of interviewees reported situations where they were the victims of racism or discrimination in the workplace. Some of them noted a disconnect between the employer’s talk about openness to diversity and the reality experienced on the job. More people in New Brunswick than in Ontario said that they had noticed discrimination against newcomers at work. There was a socio-cultural divide between Canadian-born staff and immigrants, with some beneficiaries refusing to be served by a foreigner or a Black person and limited opportunities for advancement for newcomers.

Nevertheless, most participants described their workplace as open to diversity. They said that they were welcomed well, even warmly. In some cases, the presence of immigrants had helped to speed up their integration. In contrast, in communities where most immigrants were relegated to less-valued positions, the impression of discriminatory relationships was more acute.

[Translation] “In my workplace, I have had families come in, and when they see me, they ask to be served by someone else.... In the workplace..., you end up with the immigrants. This creates two groups: a group of Canadians and a group of immigrants.” (N.B. – 16)

[Translation] “They see a foreigner as someone who is there to do the work they don’t want to do.” (N.B. – 05)

[Translation] “Really, people are very nice and welcoming. They explain things. Management is really healthy.” (Ont. – 13)

Child care. Successful professional integration of those with pre-school children often depends on the availability of child care. At least four of those interviewed indicated that they or their spouse could not work because of a shortage of child-care spaces. On the one hand, this situation has major financial repercussions on immigrant families, who did not expect to have to live on a single income, and on the other hand, there are the social repercussions on the person forced to stay at home. In addition, the cost of child care was too high for some people, who had to allocate a large portion of their earnings to it. One person interviewed indicated that because there were no spaces in child care, she had to work nights while her spouse worked days to pay their rent.

Social integration

Activities for newcomers to socialize are mainly organized by settlement services, but also sometimes by employers, colleagues, the municipality, ethnocultural associations or other Francophone organizations. As a result, ties of solidarity are forged not only in professional and community settings and through associations, but also at church and in the neighbourhood.

The effects of the communities' small size and remoteness. The interviews show a great appreciation for the lifestyle in rural or remote communities, which are described as being calmer, less stressful, safer, friendlier or less expensive. This sentiment was expressed by both individuals from small communities and those who had lived in cities or metropolitan areas. People who first lived in large cities particularly appreciated the absence of traffic jams and the slower pace of life. Being close to natural spaces was also seen as an asset. The few people interviewed who had the opportunity to engage in outdoor activities particularly enjoyed this aspect. Community support came up most often when highlighting the positive aspects of more remote communities, as individuals in these communities seem to help each other more often than in the city.

[Translation] "There is community support here. It's good to see. You don't find that everywhere." (N.B. – 08)

[Translation] "There isn't much, but things are good here, and there's not all the stress of the city." (N.B. – 10)

[Translation] "I think small communities make integrating easier. For example, if you bump into someone on the street, you talk to them." (Ont. – 10)

The interviews also indicate the difficulty in concretely imagining, from as far away as Africa in particular, what a rural municipality in Northern New Brunswick or Northern Ontario will be like. As a result, those interviewed were surprised by certain rural settings or had more difficulty adapting to them. Some struggled to adjust to the rigours of winter, but more so to the great distances, especially since they could not always afford to get a vehicle soon after they arrived. Many did not like not having access to public transportation and wished the concrete consequences of the distances to travel had been explained to them beforehand. For others, being far from medical services seemed to be an issue that significantly changed their quality of life and increased their stress level. The distance from airports, an incomplete service offering, the small variety of activities, the difficulty in finding African products in grocery stores and the lack of intercity transportation were cited as other negative factors.

[Translation] "For one year, I walked in -20 or -30. Also, often when I had medical appointments, it was complicated because I had to travel 300 km." (Ont. – 05)

[Translation] "The region is still very caring, but you feel that people are increasingly becoming a little more distrustful. There is a lot of immigration. Among all the people who come, there are some who are not really trying to integrate. I think that just one "bad immigrant" is enough to create an obstacle. We can all be somewhat lumped together, even if, in reality, that is not the case." (N.B.– 08)

[Translation] "There is not much going on. I know there is a bingo club not far from my home, but I don't play bingo." (N.B. – 17)

The fact that the rural populations are ageing is visible, and newcomers sometimes had a hard time socializing with other adults their age. In addition, some adults without dependent children did not like the lack of community activities organized for them. Activities tend to be mainly geared toward families or seniors.

Social and volunteer activities. Given the isolation, participation in more or less structured activities is greatly appreciated. Most of those in both New Brunswick and Ontario had participated in at least one social activity organized by a settlement service. Sometimes in small municipalities, the main employers were involved in organizing these activities. It seems easier to participate in community connection activities organized by the settlement service because positive ties were developed in the first few days of settlement and because other people in similar situations also participated in these activities. The fact that some organizations provide opportunities for informal discussions seems important. For example, organizations help connect newcomers and immigrants from the same country.

[Translation] “With some colleagues, [the settlement service staff] organized activities outside of work in the winter. I was happy to take part in them. I had a good time snowshoeing and snowmobiling.” (Ont. – 07)

[Translation] “The host organization, through the activities it organized, connected me with other Africans here. These activities are an opportunity to meet many other people and to ultimately realize that you are not alone in the community.” (Ont. – 21)

Our interviews showed that people who have been settled for a little longer sometimes voluntarily organize activities. They might set up sports teams (soccer) or create opportunities for Francophones to get together. These individuals receive considerable community support in carrying out their plans.

Personal connections and solidarity. The church remains a place for socialization and solidarity for many newcomers, in particular those from Africa. Official activities organized by the employer—Christmas festivities, sugar bush outings, etc.—also seem to take place fairly often and seem effective for developing personal connections. In addition, these activities seem less intimidating than others provided by less well-known organizations, such as the municipality. More rarely, colleagues organize informal activities and make a point of inviting the newcomers. Parents of young children often make friends with the parents of their children’s friends from school, child care or extracurricular activities.

[Translation] “In case of an emergency, you can call someone from the church to take you to the hospital, for example, if you are sick.” (N.B. – 15)

Loneliness. Almost half of those interviewed felt lonely. Although their initial encounters were generally caring and those interviewed appreciated the community’s kindness, some were unhappy that they often found themselves alone at home. Some commented on the more homebody lifestyle of Canadians compared with the social habits in their countries of origin. While some felt that the smaller size of their community made it easier to develop ties, others stressed the difficulty of establishing ties in a small community where everyone already has their own network.

[Translation] “On some level, it’s a little harder to hit it off with people. You may see each other during activities, but there is a glass ceiling of sorts.” (Ont. – 07)

[Translation] “Most people know each other, which means you develop a sense of belonging to a community.” (Ont. – 23)

Diversity and ethnic communities. In municipalities with very recent immigration, loneliness is also linked to not having the opportunity to socialize with people who share similar customs. However, in municipalities with a high level of immigration, some worried about having very few opportunities to socialize outside newcomer circles. This is especially true since these circles can change, with

friendships often having to be rebuilt after a few years when newcomers leave the community to move to urban centres or other provinces, in particular Quebec.

[Translation] “It’s really hard because you would like to be surrounded by people with whom you share the same experiences, the same culture and traditions. Even in church, we’re the only Black family.” (Ont. – 22)

[Translation] “When activities are organized by [the settlement service], the locals are invited, but I feel there’s still no openness with the newcomers.” (N.B. – 01)

Racism and discrimination. In our sample, racism and race-based discrimination were not widespread, but those living in New Brunswick experienced them more often. Historically, the province has had little exposure to diversity, which may explain this fact, as the literature suggests (Vatz Laaroussi, Bernier and Guilbert, 2013; Fourot, 2014). The racism took the form of comments randomly made in public, such as [translation] “go home” or “you’ve come to steal our jobs.” The difficulty developing personal connections outside immigrant circles was sometimes perceived as being due to a certain lack of openness. In Ontario, discrimination against Francophones, for example when looking for work or housing, seems to be more common.

Impact of official languages. Several of those interviewed lived in areas where French is the language of the majority or the vast majority, such as Kedgwick (N.B.) or Hearst (Ont.). They appreciated the socio-linguistic meeting points provided by these communities, where they could quickly interact with locals, whether it be at church, during community activities or in stores. However, when French is less present in a community, newcomers were surprised and sometimes disappointed by the limited level of bilingualism and the Francophone community’s lack of visibility. In these communities, if those interviewed have a low level of proficiency in English, they may encounter barriers to social integration and access to services. For temporary residents, not having access to the English courses offered by IRCC seems to be an additional barrier to their integration.

Regarding access to the health-care system in French, the comments received vary. In Ontario, three interviewees who had to deal with the health-care system were unhappy that it was difficult or impossible to obtain services in French, with some misunderstandings proving truly problematic. In New Brunswick, those interviewed who had to deal with the health-care system were able to use the Vitalité Health Network, where service in French is the norm.

Inclusion and impact on children. All of those interviewed who had young children found that their children’s social integration was positive or very positive. They also emphasized how quickly their children had integrated into school or a child-care centre. However, two parents pointed out the lack of diversity in activities for children in their community. Some parents with children preparing to go to a post-secondary institution were concerned that there was not one in their region or that the options to pursue competitive sports were reduced.

Several parents stated that finding child care and the costs associated with this service were challenging, particularly in New Brunswick. Among those interviewed, three stated that their spouse had to go without work for several months until a child-care centre was found. In New Brunswick, those who did not yet have children were worried about starting a family in a community where there was such difficulty accessing child care. A few stated that they were surprised that schools did not provide after-school child-care service or subsidize the costs related to this service.

[Translation] “The kids have friends who come and pick them up and they go on boat outings. They [go] fishing. The youngest was also given a free bike. There are many little thoughtful gestures, and they make friends” (Ont. – 09).

Retention

To stay or to leave? There were only a few detailed and definitive answers to this question. Those interviewed who reported that they planned to stay in their host community for the long term attributed it to many factors, not one specific reason, including satisfactory professional integration for themselves and their partner, a living environment that matches their expectations, new friends, an open community and a safe environment. These factors can also explain why a person would leave the region or consider doing so when their experiences are less positive (Esses and Carter, 2019; Traisnel et al., 2020). For example, living in a rural area may be in line with one individual’s aspirations but not another’s.

[Translation] “I think I will stay here for a long time. My husband and I both found good jobs. I like my apartment. The people are very welcoming.” (N.B. – 14)

[Translation] “Several factors make me not want to move. First, the community is welcoming. Then, there is the environment with many outdoor activities. I also get along very well with my employer.” (Ont. – 16)

Work situation. Having a job, when it meets a person’s expectations and level of professional skills, is a factor that can contribute to their long-term settlement, but it can be a reason to leave when it is not the case. Note that most of those interviewed initially settled in rural areas because of an employment opportunity. In fact, more than half said that they could migrate again if their work situation was or were to be unsatisfactory. The interviews revealed that having a job is not enough to keep an immigrant in a community. Several other elements must be considered, such as professional advancement opportunities, salary, working conditions, management styles and the quality of relationships with colleagues. Those who have a hard time getting their credentials recognized and who hold a position for which they are overqualified are more likely to express the desire to seek opportunities elsewhere. Moreover, the study by Traisnel et al. (2020) on Francophone immigration in the Atlantic region highlighted that access to employment that meets expectations was the main obstacle to retention. A common scenario is to find a first job, any job, and hold it down while gaining Canadian experience (and permanent residence) before looking for a position that better matches one’s own skills and expertise, even if it means leaving the initial region of settlement. Several people stated that they were willing to accept an unsatisfactory job, but ideally, only for a while.

[Translation] “I was told to get my diploma and that I could be a supervisor. I like my job, and I’m getting support to advance.” (Ont. – 19)

[Translation] “I would like to change, especially to go to a big city. We can’t grow here. Our ambitions are limited. I work in production, and when I tried to apply for a position in management, I was told no.” (N.B. – 03)

[Translation] “I don’t think I’ll stay in New Brunswick because I’m being blocked from becoming a nurse. I’m not going to be a patient service associate my whole life. I need to grow, I need to be able to put my knowledge into practice.” (N.B. – 17)

Social ties and community attachment. The interviews highlighted that access to a good job is a necessary factor for long-term settlement but is generally not a sufficient condition. The reception received, the community's degree of openness and the quality of social relationships can significantly impact retention. Those who were warmly welcomed and socially integrated well were more likely to develop a sense of belonging in their host community and to want to stay there. Conversely, those who, several months after arriving, had few or no friends, or who experienced rejection or discrimination, were more likely to consider leaving their community even if they had a satisfactory job.

[Translation] "I arrived in an unknown world, and the warmth with which I was welcomed makes me think I can stay here longer." (Ont. – 11)

[Translation] "The Acadian community played a big role in our arrival and social integration. Something that makes me feel at home now is that my children have an Acadian accent. I don't feel like I want to go back." (N.B. – 25)

The rural setting and remoteness. Living in a remote region is not for everyone. During the interviews, some indicated that they found it difficult to live in a place where there were few socio-cultural activities, where access to specialized products like "ethnic" foods were limited, where the costs of air travel to their country of origin were higher and where it was harder to access public services like specialized health care. Conversely, others expressed their appreciation of the quality of life associated with rural living (peacefulness, sense of safety, liveable community, access to nature, etc.) and emphasized that they would not want to live in a large urban centre, even if it meant having to occasionally travel for certain services. People without cars were more likely to emphasize the challenges associated with the distance from large centres, given the limited or non-existent public transportation in a community or intercity transportation.

[Translation] "It's a very beautiful region. It's quiet, and there are large natural spaces all around. I can really see myself staying here. It's a lovely place to live." (Ont. – 21)

[Translation] "Here, health-wise, there's no longer a gynecologist. So, if you're in a relationship and your wife is pregnant, you have to go to another community. These points take away the appeal of staying here long term. It's also hard to manage with the airport. Hobbies, shops, everything is limited. Products are limited." (Ont. – 10)

[Translation] "If we want to see something different, we go to the city. We visit it and then we go home." (Ont. – 09)

[Translation] "If you want to go back and visit family, from here, it's double the price and time. You have to take a domestic flight and an international one." (N.B. – 06)

Access to affordable housing. Purchasing a property was a factor for putting down roots within a community. When asked about whether they planned to stay, almost a quarter of those interviewed stated that they were already homeowners or wanted to buy a home soon. Buying a home is a plan that seems more achievable in regions than in cities, as properties are generally more affordable there. However, renters with limited financial means were more likely to consider housing as a factor that could lead them to move to another region. There is a housing shortage in some small communities, and it can be difficult to find affordable housing that meets the needs, particularly for a family.

[Translation] "I'm a renter, but it would be possible to buy a house. It's a long-term plan." (N.B. – 13)

[Translation] “Homes in Hearst are still very affordable, but I wouldn’t be able to buy a house in the big cities. Here, we can aspire to get a house.” (Ont. – 07)

Family. It seems easier to migrate to another region alone than with a partner or children, especially when the children are well integrated in school and have made friends. Several parents stated that they wanted to stay in their host community to provide their children with stability despite the challenges that they could face in their own integration pathway. In addition, the rural setting is considered conducive to raising a family in peace and safety. However, others interviewed thought instead that living in a rural area provided their children with limited opportunities, particularly in relation to sports and socio-cultural activities, specialized programs at school or post-secondary studies, which could lead them to settle elsewhere when their children are teenagers..

[Translation] “When you have children, everything needs to be planned in advance and well organized. They already moved a lot. They’ve made friends here, and we don’t want to upset them by moving again.” (Ont. – 22)

[Translation] “Sooner or later, for children, [the question of migrating to the city] will come up. As for my children, they like playing soccer. Here, there is no soccer, no team.” (Ont. – 05)

Change of status. Several of the interviewees who arrived with temporary residence status stated that obtaining permanent residence was a key moment in particular when the issue of staying or leaving arose. When a person has established good ties in the community, whether during their studies or their temporary work permit, and when their working conditions are satisfactory, it may be worthwhile staying. In contrast, when the experience has been rather negative, obtaining permanent residence makes mobility within the province or the country more accessible.

Furthermore, those who still had temporary residence status at the time of the interview emphasized that it was difficult to fully plan for the future without having first obtained permanent residence. A few also mentioned the difficulties they had with the immigration process to bring a life partner who remained abroad, which could raise doubts about settling permanently in Canada.

[Translation] “After my studies, things became familiar to me, like I was at home. I said to myself: ‘Why not stay and try to get a job?’” (N.B. – 18)

[Translation] “Permanent residence gives you the flexibility to go elsewhere to find something that meets your expectations.” (N.B. – 16)

Other factors. During the interviews, several other factors that can impact retention were discussed. Among them, the following were noted:

- The climate, while too harsh for some, seems to be good for outdoor activities for others.
- People with more and better quality information experience less disappointment and stress upon arrival.
- The presence of a community of the same ethnic origin creates an opportunity to share cultural references and similar migratory experiences.
- Homesickness can influence the decision to stay in Canada, particularly when family members remained abroad.
- Being in a relationship can increase the chances of retention for some, while for others, it can make it difficult to meet new people in a small community.

[Translation] “My family is on the other side of the world. I don’t see myself going much longer without seeing them. It’s very hard for me.” (Ont. – 23)

[Translation] “There are a lot of immigrants who come with a job offer, and they don’t know they’re coming to a very small community. They don’t know it snows here.” (N.B. – 01)

Findings and recommendations

Overall, this study showed that the interviewees viewed living in a rural, remote region positively. Furthermore, positive social and professional integration was closely correlated with an appreciation of the host region and a willingness to remain there. Therefore, people who settled in communities where there were many stakeholders working closely together in the integration pathway (settlement services, employers and other partners), and where more services were provided, were also more satisfied with their migration.

Most of the experiences in Ontario were similar to those in New Brunswick. It is important, however, to make two distinctions. Generally, a low level of proficiency in English was a greater obstacle to the integration and retention of the interviewees living in Ontario. On the other hand, experiences with discrimination or racism, while rare, seemed to be more frequent in New Brunswick.

The recommendations that follow reflect the main findings of this study.

1) Support the regionalization of Francophone immigration at the selection stage

IRCC's findings reveal that Francophone immigration is still highly concentrated in urban areas, with the proportion of admissions in 2023 reaching 60% in the Greater Moncton area and more than 90% in the large cities of southern Ontario. When evaluating the existing permanent residence programs and creating a new economic Francophone immigration program (planned as part of IRCC's Policy on Francophone Immigration), it would be appropriate to define criteria that favour immigration outside of urban centres, such as giving additional points to those who wish to settle in rural areas. A similar practice is already in place in the British Columbia PNP streams to support the regionalization of immigration in the province.

2) Support activities to match employers with potential candidates abroad

Rural communities with little immigration history often have to make additional efforts to make their job opportunities known. In addition, recruitment abroad can be especially complex for companies unfamiliar with international recruitment pools, immigration procedures and ways of supporting the people recruited. In this context, the matching model established by the SÉO seems to be particularly relevant and should be replicated elsewhere in the country. IRCC could dedicate specific funding to this type of initiative. Note that the SÉO has set up a matching system by keeping updated lists of available positions and potential applications. When a position matches an application, the organization puts the person looking for a job and the employer in contact and offers them support to facilitate the placement. It also supports the settlement of the recruit, particularly by facilitating collaboration between the recruit, the settlement service and the employer.

3) Carry out recruitment missions adapted to the realities of the source countries and the rural Francophone communities

The interviews showed that Sub-Saharan Africa is a region where international recruitment activities are held much less often compared to Europe and North Africa. However, it is the region that has the most French speakers worldwide (OIF, 2022). To increase Francophone immigration, including in rural areas, it is important to develop an actual recruitment strategy adapted to Sub-Saharan Africa and substantial resources. Additionally, stakeholders stated that Francophone immigration partners in an urban centre in the south of the province are unfamiliar with the

realities of the rural areas in Northern Ontario and Northern New Brunswick and with the job opportunities available in these regions. To effectively support the regionalization of immigration, it is important to ensure that rural communities are well represented and that the people responsible for recruitment are knowledgeable of the realities of these communities. Furthermore, it appears to be necessary to ensure a better match between the professional requirements to participate in events like Destination Canada and the needs of the labour market in rural communities.

4) Ensure that temporary residents have access to the full range of pre-departure and settlement services

The literature and data clearly demonstrate the dramatic growth in temporary immigration, particularly in Northern New Brunswick and Northern Ontario. However, temporary residents need to be supported in French before and after arriving in Canada so that their experience leads to long-term settlement. When necessary, taking care of the entire family's migration plan is important, since the decision to remain in a rural, remote area depends largely on the well-being of the other family members.

5) Focus on providing pre-departure services that reflect local realities and on working with local partners

Note that most of those interviewed did not know about pre-departure services and that those who did use them would have preferred to get information specifically on their settlement location. Therefore, the information shared and the workshops organized by the organizations that offer pre-departure services should be effectively adapted to the realities of the regions. Settling in a rural area differs greatly from the experience of those who settle in an urban centre. Ongoing collaborative initiatives with local organizations would help fill the gaps noted. For example, AFNOO's approach seems to be particularly effective because as soon as the organization is informed of an immigrant's imminent arrival, it contacts them, first by email, then by telephone or videoconference to ensure that the person receives all the necessary information before arriving. However, at this time, this practice is not tied to pre-departure services. Moreover, it depends on the willingness of employers and community partners in the region to share information on those coming to settle.

6) Recognize and value the importance of strong connections between settlement services, employers and other parts of the host community

Migration experiences were much more positive in communities where employers recognized the importance of providing support during settlement and where the settlement service developed methods to effectively work with other services and organizations in the community (language training, employment services, cultural centres, the municipality, etc.) and gain access to volunteers. However, the way in which this ecosystem should be set up, mobilized and maintained needs to be better understood. This navigation function and the need to cultivate and maintain a "welcoming community" should also be recognized to ensure the long-term language and geographic retention of immigrants.

7) Make it mandatory for companies hiring French-speaking people abroad to work with Francophone settlement services

An increasing number of companies are developing expertise and mobilizing resources to support their staff hired abroad at the pre-departure and settlement stages. However, few measures oblige

these companies to commit to providing such services, and not all companies have the capacity to do so. The degree of support provided by employers to foreign workers before and after arriving in Canada therefore varies from one case to another. This support might involve an obligation to share information and to work with local settlement services. It would therefore be important that any non-compliance with these obligations result in consequences.

The Atlantic Immigration Program could serve as an example. Employers that want to recruit through this program must commit to working with a service provider to facilitate the workers' settlement and promote their retention. These employers are required to provide a personalized settlement plan through a settlement service provider, and this plan must be co-signed by the person recruited. Such a practice should be adopted by other economic immigration programs when a job offer is included in an immigration file.

8) Take into account the specific realities of rural areas in settlement funding agreements

As shown above, in Northern Ontario and Northern New Brunswick, there are not enough available resources to provide quality service to all newcomers. Many communities still cannot rely on settlement services, while others simply have to provide lower-quality services or a smaller range of services. For example, organizations cannot provide services in some communities that are too remote, even if they are, in theory, part of their jurisdiction. Or, they cannot meet all of the newcomers' transportation needs when they arrive at the airport because they do not have the necessary resources or a shuttle. In funding agreements, taking into account the realities associated with settling in rural areas and the additional costs related to providing services to large areas seems to be essential. Providing services to an immigrant in a small community in Northern Ontario requires more resources than providing services to someone with a similar profile settling in downtown Toronto.

9) Speed up the credential recognition process and make it easier to access information on the topic

It was found that the main factor that can lead someone to leave is an unsatisfactory work situation. Several interviewees held a position for which they were overqualified, particularly because of the challenges with having their credentials (education and skills) recognized in Canada. To support retention, the provinces, with the federal government's support, should fund more innovative projects aimed at recognizing credentials through intensive training while working with post-secondary institutions and professional orders. In addition, before they begin their immigration processes, immigrants need clear, detailed information in French on credential recognition (procedure to follow, processing time and associated costs). Personalized records, taking into account priority professional fields and adapted to the top source countries and to the province of destination, could be developed to share this information.

10) Support activities promoting cultural diversity and myth-busting campaigns

As for the reception of immigrants, communities do not have the same level of preparation and history. Moreover, Northern New Brunswick is among the regions with the lowest proportion of immigrants in the country. The literature revealed that limited exposure to diversity is a factor that can contribute to discrimination against and distrust of immigrants. In such contexts, activities promoting cultural diversity are particularly important to raise awareness among members of the host community. Furthermore, it also seems appropriate to push back against immigration-related misinformation and myths. Funding could be provided to carry out awareness-raising campaigns

on cultural diversity and to demystify the realities of immigration. To reach the target audience, it is important that initiatives be based on local realities and include concrete examples drawn from the target communities.

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Appendix I – Interview guide (immigrants)

Recruitment

1. What reasons led you to move to the X region?
 - How did the presence of a Francophone community affect your choice?
 - How did the region's rural setting affect your choice?
2. How did you find out about possibilities for immigrating to the X region?
 - Role of the employer? Francophone community organizations? Governments? Family and friends? Social media or the Internet?
 - Did you previously visit the X region? On an exploratory visit?
3. Did you participate in any fairs, forums or other major recruitment events (in person or virtually)? Please share your experience.
 - How was participating useful to you? How did it help with your settlement in the X region?
 - What could be done differently to improve the recruitment activities?

Pre-departure

4. Before arriving in Canada, how did you prepare for your arrival? How did you obtain information on the X region? Was the X region your first destination in Canada?
 - Are you satisfied with the information you received before you arrived?
 - What information would you have liked to have had before arriving in Canada, but did not have?
 - Did you experience any particular challenges in planning your arrival?
5. Did you use any pre-departure services? If yes, please share your experience?
 - How did you learn that these services were available?
 - Did the services meet your needs? How could they be improved?

Reception

6. What was your experience when you arrived in the X region? The first few days? The first few weeks?
 - What were the biggest challenges you encountered when settling in the region (finding housing, administrative procedures, orientation, school registration for children, transportation, etc.)?
 - What were the main factors (networks, services, etc.) that made settlement easier? What help did you find when you arrived?
 - What additional support would have made your settlement easier? What organization is most able to provide this support?
7. What settlement services have you used since arriving in the X region? Please share your experience.
 - How did you learn that these services were available?

- Did the services meet your needs?
8. If you did not use any settlement services, why not?

Economic integration

9. How would you describe your employment integration today? Does your job match your education and level of experience?
10. What were the biggest obstacles you encountered (networks, resources, services, skills, knowledge, attitudes, etc.) in terms of your economic integration?
- In terms of your job search?
 - In terms of your employment integration?
 - In terms of your working conditions?
 - Do you think employers were reluctant to hire you because of your status as an immigrant? A member of a visible minority? A French-speaker? Explain.
 - How did your skills in English and/or French affect your ability to enter the labour market?
11. What were the main factors (networks, resources, services, skills, etc.) that made your economic integration easier?
- In terms of your job search? If applicable, what services, resources or personal networks helped you find a job? How were they helpful?
 - In terms of your employment integration?
12. What additional support would have made your economic integration easier?
- What organization is most able to provide this support?

Social integration

13. How would you describe your social integration now?
- Have you created meaningful connections since arriving in the X region? In the Francophone community?
14. In your experience, how would you describe the local population's openness to people from other places? To French-speakers?
- What is your relationship like with the locals as a whole? With the Francophone community?
15. What were the biggest obstacles you encountered in terms of your social integration?
- How did your skills in English and/or French affect your social integration?
 - Did your status as an immigrant affect your social integration? As a member of a visible minority? As a French speaker? Explain.
16. What are the main factors (networks, resources, services, skills, etc.) that made your social integration easier?
- Did you participate in social activities organized by Francophone organizations? By other organizations? Please share your experience.
 - Are you involved in your host community? Why? What about your family members (if applicable)?
17. How did living in a rural region affect your integration pathway?

18. If you have children, please tell us about their integration at school. Success factors? Challenges?
What is the main language of instruction at the school they attend?
19. If you have a spouse, please tell us about their social and professional integration. Success factors? Challenges?
20. What additional support would have made your social integration easier?
 - What organization is most able to provide this support?

Retention

21. Are you planning to stay in or leave the X region?
 - If applicable, when do you think you will leave? Where would you go?
22. What factors are encouraging you or could encourage you to leave the X region (job, rural community, quality of life, family or friends, access to services, etc.)?
23. What factors are encouraging you or could encourage you to stay in the X region (job, rural community, quality of life, family or friends, access to services, etc.)?

General

24. How does your experience in the X region compare to your expectations before you arrived?
25. What do you think are the main advantages of the X region in welcoming and retaining French-speaking immigrants? Biggest challenges?
26. [For people who now live in another region] What are the main advantages of the new location compared with the X region? Biggest challenges?
 - Are you planning to return to the X region? Why?
27. Do you have anything to add about how your immigration pathway could have been more positive?

Appendix II – Interview guide (stakeholders)

1. What is your professional role with respect to Francophone immigration? What is your organization's role with respect to French-speaking immigrants?
2. How are recruitment activities for French-speaking immigrants delivered in the X region?
 - What role do the various stakeholders (e.g., local entrepreneurs, municipal representatives, community organizations) play in recruitment?
 - How are current recruitment activities optimized? What promising practices are in place?
 - What are the limitations of the current recruitment activities? How could they be improved?
 - What factors do you think encourage French-speaking immigrants to settle in the X region?
3. How would you assess the economic integration of French-speaking immigrants in the X region?
 - What is your role?
 - What is positive about their economic integration? Negative? What are the challenges?
 - What formal or informal services or resources are available to facilitate the reception and settlement of French-speaking immigrants? How do these services and resources compare to the services and resources available in English or in urban centres?
4. How would you assess the economic integration of French-speaking immigrants in the X region?
 - What is your role?
 - What is positive about their economic integration? Negative? What are the challenges?
 - What formal or informal services or resources are available to facilitate the economic integration of French-speaking immigrants? How do these services and resources compare to the services and resources available in English or in urban centres?
5. How would you assess the social integration of French-speaking immigrants in the X region?
 - What is your role?
 - What is positive about their social integration? Negative? What are the challenges?
 - What formal or informal services or resources are available to facilitate the social integration of French-speaking immigrants? How do these services and resources compare to the services and resources available in English or in urban centres?
6. What factors do you think encourage French-speaking immigrants to stay in a rural community or move to an urban centre?
 - What could be done to increase the likelihood that immigrants stay in rural Francophone communities?
7. What services or resources should be implemented to facilitate the settlement, social and economic integration, and retention of French-speaking immigrants in rural communities? Are similar services or resources available in Anglophone communities or in urban centres?
 - What services and initiatives should be changed or better supported by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to foster Francophone immigration in rural communities?

Appendix III – Research consent form

Experiences of French-Speaking Immigrants in Rural Communities in Northern Ontario and New Brunswick

I agree to participate in this research project co-led by Mariève Forest and Guillaume Deschênes Thériault of Sociopol. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada is providing financial support for this research project.

Research objectives

The objective of this research is to better understand the pathways for French-speaking immigrants in rural Francophone communities in Northern Ontario and Northern New Brunswick. To that end, we would like to identify the obstacles and success factors in terms of the recruitment, settlement, integration and retention of French-speaking immigrants in rural communities and how to help this population have more positive settlement and integration experiences.

My participation

My participation will mainly consist of a recorded interview lasting approximately one (1) hour. During this interview, I will be asked to answer the researcher's questions about my employment trajectory. I understand that relevant excerpts from the interview will be transcribed either by the research team or by a software program and that it will then be analyzed. I confirm that I am at least 18 years old.

Why participate in this research project?

It is very important for a minority language community to understand why its members choose to socially and economically integrate into the community and stay there. By sharing my experience, I can make a significant contribution to a better understanding of these factors, which is why the research team contacted me. My participation may also make it possible to assess my human and professional experience here. While my assistance is voluntary, it is very important!

Financial compensation

I will receive \$30 in financial compensation for participating in the interview.

Use of data

I expect that the content will be used for research purposes only and that the research team will keep my comments confidential and anonymous. The team commits to ensuring that all measures are taken to protect the anonymity of the people interviewed: identifying information and references to other people or known organizations will be omitted from the transcript.

Commitment of the research team and rights of participants

I understand that my participation in this project will not create greater risks than those faced in day-to-day life. Respect for the continuing right to information about this project is guaranteed. I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the research project at any time, before or during an interview, without explanation and without prejudice. I may also decline to answer questions.

The team commits to ensuring that all measures are taken to protect the anonymity of the people interviewed: identifying information and references to other people or known organizations will be omitted from the transcript. Electronic interview files and other data collected will be saved on a secure virtual server. They will be accessible only to the research team and will be saved for at least five years following the interview. Before the research is published, I may request at any time that the content of the interview not be used by contacting the research leads.

Communications

For more information about this project or about my rights as a participant in this research, I may contact the research leads: Mariève Forest and Guillaume Deschênes-Thériault.

Contact information for the principal co-researchers

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Signatures

There are two copies of the consent form, and I may keep one copy for myself.

I understand the information about this research project, and I understand that I may ask questions at any time. I understand that I may stop participating at any time, without having to give an explanation, and that if I withdraw before the interview ends, any recordings and data collected will be destroyed. I hereby freely consent to participate in this research project in accordance with the conditions set out above.

Name of consenting person (please print)

Signature of consenting person

Date

I certify that I explained the content of this form, as well as the objectives and implications of the research project, to the consenting person; that I clearly answered the person's questions; and that I

informed the person that they may stop participating at any time during the research project, without having to give an explanation and without prejudice.

Name of researcher (please print)

Signature of researcher

Date

Appendix IV – Recruitment questionnaire

Experiences of French-Speaking Immigrants in Rural Communities in Northern Ontario and New Brunswick

Thank you for your interest in participating in an interview for the study of the pathways for French-speaking immigrants in rural communities in Northern Ontario and Northern New Brunswick, sponsored by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

We estimate that you will need no more than five minutes to complete this questionnaire, which will be used to determine the immigration and socio-demographic profiles of the people wishing to participate in the study, and to ensure diversity in the profiles of the people interviewed.

Your answers to the questions will remain confidential and will have no impact on your current or future relations with government authorities in Canada. All information collected through the questionnaire will be handled in accordance with privacy laws.

If you would like more information about the project, please contact the IRCC Policy Research Division (IRCC.OLImmigrationResearch-RechercheImmigrationLO.IRCC@cic.gc.ca) or Mariève Forest (marieforest@sociopol.ca), Sociopol project lead.

Q1 Where were you born?

- In Canada
- Outside Canada (specify the country)

Q2 What is your age group?

- 17 years or younger
- 18 to 25 years
- 26 to 35 years
- 36 to 45 years
- 46 to 55 years
- 56 to 65 years
- 66 years or older

Q3 Do you currently or did you previously live (more than 6 months) in Northern New Brunswick or Northern Ontario?

- No
- Yes, I currently live in Northern New Brunswick
- Yes, I previously lived in Northern New Brunswick, but I currently live somewhere else
- Yes, I currently live in Northern Ontario
- Yes, I previously lived in Northern Ontario, but I currently live somewhere else

If yes, please specify the location(s) where you lived in Northern New Brunswick or Northern Ontario

Q4 How long have you lived in Canada?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 2 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

Q5 What is your current status in Canada?

- Citizen by birth
- Naturalized citizen
- Permanent resident
- Temporary resident (study permit)
- Temporary resident (work permit)
- Temporary resident (refugee protection claimant)

[Questions 1 to 5 determine eligibility for the study. Only those who are eligible will be invited to continue the questionnaire.]

Q6 Where do you currently live (city/town and province)?

Q7 Under which category or program did you obtain permanent residence? [Question will appear only for those who indicated that they are a permanent resident or Canadian citizen]

- Federal economic programs managed through Express Entry (Federal Skilled Worker Program, Federal Skilled Trades Program or Canadian Experience Class)
- Provincial Nominee Program
- Atlantic Immigration Program
- Rural and Northern Immigration Pilot
- Temporary resident to permanent resident pathway
- Business Immigration Program
- Family sponsorship
- Resettled refugees and protected persons in Canada
- Other (please specify)

Q8 How would you assess your official language proficiency

	None	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced
French				
English				

Q9 Do you consider yourself to be a member of a visible minority?

- Yes
- No
- I prefer not to answer

Q10 What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Trans, gender fluid, non-binary, Two-Spirit
- I prefer not to answer

Q11 Please share the following information so that we can contact you for the interview:

First name

Last name

Email address

Phone number

Thank you for completing this questionnaire! We will contact you shortly to schedule an interview if you are selected.

Appendix V – Characteristics of the sample of immigrant interviewees

Table 12 – Gender, sample

Gender	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
Female	13	8	21
Male	7	12	19

Table 13 – Age groups, sample

Age groups	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
18 to 25 years	2	2	4
26 to 35 years	8	7	15
36 to 45 years	7	10	17
46 to 55 years	2	1	3
56 to 65 years	1	0	1

Table 14 – Visible minority reporting, sample

Visible minority	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
Yes	6	18	24
No	14	2	16

Table 15 – Place of birth, sample

Place of birth	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
North Africa	3	3	6
Sub Saharan Africa	9	16	25
South America	2	0	2
Europe	6	1	7

Table 16 – Level of proficiency in English, sample

Level of proficiency in English	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
Beginner	7	10	17
Intermediate	13	6	19
Advanced	0	4	4

Table 17 – Level of proficiency in French, sample

Level of proficiency in French	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
Beginner	0	0	0
Intermediate	2	0	2
Advanced	18	20	38

Table 18 – Time spent in Canada, sample

Time spent in Canada	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
Less than 1 year	5	7	12
1 to 2 years	9	10	19
3 to 5 years	4	1	5
6 to 10 years	2	2	4

Table 19 – Current immigration status, sample

Status	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
International student	1	1	2
Temporary worker	4	6	10
Permanent resident	14	13	27
Naturalized citizen	1	0	1

Table 20 – Immigration program (permanent residents only), sample

Immigration program	New Brunswick	Ontario	Total sample
Provincial Nominee Program	10	1	11
Canadian Experience Class or Federal Skilled Worker Program	2	11	13
Temporary resident to permanent resident pathway	2	1	3
Secondary applicant	1	0	1

Appendix VI – Socio-demographic profile of the populations of New Brunswick and Ontario

Table 21 – Socio-demographic profile of the populations of New Brunswick and Ontario

	New Brunswick		Ontario	
	Data	Proportion	Data	Proportion
Total population	775,610		14,223,942	
Rate of population change from 2016 to 2021	3.8%		5.8%	
Median age of the population	46.8 years		41.6 years	
Median total income in 2020 for income recipients	\$37,600		\$41,200	
Population reporting a visible minority status	44,205	6%	4,817,360	34%
People with French as their first official language spoken (only, or French and English)	234,370	30%	583,145	4%
People with knowledge of French (only, or French and English)	320,295	41%	1,558,675	11%
People with knowledge of French and English	260,120	34%	1,519,365	11%
Immigrant population	44,120	6%	4,206,585	30%
Recent immigrant population (2011 to 2021)	16,040	2%	584,680	4%
Non-permanent resident population	10,860	1%	387,850	3%

Source: Statistics Canada (2021)