



Outcome Management Study of the Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative

Final report

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Summary

SCOPE

This report presents the main findings and conclusions of the Outcome Management Study of the Welcoming Francophone Communities (WFC) Initiative 2020-2024. The Study, like the Initiative, was conducted over almost four years. The main question of the Study was as follows: *To what extent do the activities undertaken in this pilot initiative contribute to the vitality of Francophone Minority Communities (FMC) and the integration and retention of newcomers in the communities?* This question encompassed three long-term desired outcomes: reception and integration; retention; and vitality. The Study framework included several indicators to measure progress under each of these three themes.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The Study took a mixed approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The methods used consisted of the following:

- A literature review
- Quantitative data analysis (administrative and census)
- Analysis of narrative reports from the WFCs and other relevant documents
- An online survey of the communities (newcomers and community partners)
- Ethnographic observation (virtual and field visits)
- Interviews with immigrants
- Focus groups with immigrants
- Interviews with stakeholders and community partners

PROGRESS TOWARD DESIRED OUTCOMES

First, the **governance** structure prescribed by IRCC and the planned rallying of local community partners worked well in most cases. In addition, the Study confirms the following:

- Stakeholders and community partners gained a better understanding of newcomers' **needs and expectations**.
- **Collaboration** among community organizations increased everywhere, a number of new or innovative partnerships were established, and the level of co-operation between governments and community organizations increased.
- The participation of more recent newcomers in the community and associative sectors remains low.

In terms of the desired **short-term** outcomes for **equitable access to reception and settlement services**:

The Study shows an overall improvement in access to French-language services, contributing to better integration in Francophone communities; however, gaps and imbalances in the distribution of French-language services remain. French-speaking immigrants are less likely than English-speaking immigrants to receive services in their own language. Additional efforts are required to guarantee equitable access to French-language services, including capacity-building for organizations, ongoing training for service providers and the centralization of services. Nonetheless, the Study points to increased promotion and visibility of available services, greater awareness among established populations, and more support for newcomers' involvement in sports and cultural activities.

In terms of desired **intermediate and long-term outcomes**:

The Study notes growing awareness among local employers and the creation of new businesses by French-speaking newcomers in connection with WFC-supported initiatives. Challenges remain in terms of English proficiency and skills recognition, which limit access to jobs that match newcomers' skills, impacting their job satisfaction and desire to stay in the region.

Moreover, the Study identifies a number of key elements leading to better outcomes for **engagement, participation, and integration**, which, in turn, contribute to other long-term outcomes (retention and vitality):

- A warm welcome and ongoing support
- Participation in community activities
- The role of Francophone organizations
- The importance of employment and housing
- Preservation of language and culture

Some challenges persist that affect newcomers' integration, particularly challenges related to racism, job mobility and high housing costs.

Lastly, the Study highlights the shortage of welcoming public spaces for Francophones. Existing facilities are mainly for the general population and are designed for service delivery rather than for socializing or recreation.

ADDED VALUE OF THE INITIATIVE

The added value of the Initiative can be summarized as follows:

1. Almost all WFCs experimented with new and **innovative collaborations** leading to the implementation of activities aimed at social cohesion or improved service completeness.¹
2. Several areas have also experienced a revitalization of the **Francophone community's dynamism**.
3. The activities and events organized by WFCs were innovative and engaging, and a **growing interest in WFC activities** was noted in the Anglophone community.
4. WFC efforts to promote themselves, their activities and the reception of newcomers often contributed to a **sense of pride and belonging to the WFC**.
5. **Service completeness** also progressed in some WFCs albeit in a very unequal manner. However, the capacities, skills, and data developed through the Initiative seem to have set the stage for an acceleration of service completeness during and after the Initiative.
6. Although the Initiative did not officially target **temporary residents**, they were very present and engaged in most WFCs. The WFCs that invited and allowed these individuals to participate in their activities contributed to their integration and retention.

FAVOURABLE CONDITIONS

1. A complete or comprehensive range of services.

As the Initiative incorporates societal goals, external factors greatly impact the achievement of results. A thorough analysis of the communities has identified eight conditions that impact the achievement of results. These conditions outline the social, administrative, financial and governmental contexts that should ideally be in place at the start of the Initiative and developed concurrently to ensure its success. The absence of any of these conditions in a given community could hinder the achievement of its results:

1. A substantial budget
2. Access to affordable and accessible housing
3. Access to public transit
4. Access to jobs and language training
5. Support for attracting immigrants
6. Engagement and visibility of the welcoming community
7. Tradition of collaboration with the fiduciary
8. Inclusion of temporary residents

1.0 Introduction

This report presents the main findings and conclusions of the Outcome Management Study of the Welcoming Francophone Communities (WFC) Initiative 2020–2024 (hereinafter referred to as the “Initiative” and the “Study”).

More details regarding the various types of data collected and the detailed analyses conducted over the four years can be found in the seven technical reports. Some tables from these technical reports that may be of interest to the reader of this final report are included in Appendix D.

2.0 Overview of methodology

2.1 Scope

The Study initially took place from 2020 to 2023 in parallel with the pilot phase of the Initiative. The Initiative is described in Appendix C. Since the pilot phase was extended by one year, until 2024, the Study was also extended. The main question of the Outcome Management Study was the following:

To what extent do the activities undertaken in this pilot initiative contribute to the vitality of Francophone Minority Communities (FMC) and the integration and retention of newcomers in the communities?

This question covers three themes: reception and integration; retention; and vitality. These provide an indication of the three areas of expected long-term outcomes (see the logic model in Appendix A). The Study’s framework contains several indicators to measure progress under each of these three themes (see the framework in Appendix B).

2.2 Methodological approach

For the purposes of the Study, “newcomers” were defined as individuals established in Canada for less than five years, while “immigrants” included all individuals who had immigrated to Canada, regardless of the number of years. In addition, both “immigrants” and “newcomers” included all refugees, and permanent and temporary residents of Canada, regardless of their immigration category.

The findings presented in this report come from the triangulation of the sources described below, except in certain cases where the source is mentioned in the findings.

A summary of the methods used is provided in Table 1. Owing to the nature of the pilot phase of the Initiative and the evolving approach of the Study, the review of key documents and various data sources was ongoing throughout the Study. Starting in 2020, the preliminary mapping of the studied communities (a profile based on their main characteristics²) begun using documents and data available to the WFCs and other useful public resources. A Similar Francophone Communities (SFC) was also

2. These profiles contained the geographic definition of each WFC and the main socio-demographic characteristics of each WFC in general and of their immigrant population in particular. They also listed the types of existing organizations and services related to the dimensions of the study framework.

identified for comparison purposes.³ At that time, the researchers also familiarized themselves with each WFCs' implementation plans. In order to start their observation work, they joined the regular WFCs' Community-based Advisory Board (CAB) meetings as observers starting in 2020. A literature review was also carried out in 2020, which helped to fine-tune the Initiative's logic model, followed by its validation with the WFCs.

Review of the quantitative data

Quantitative data collection and analysis started in 2020, drawing on Census data (2011 and 2016) and the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB up to 2017). The results of analyses of the demographic, language and economic situation of Francophone immigration in the 14 WFCs were presented in a technical report in 2021. An analysis of the relevant data from the Immigration Contribution Agreement Management Environment (iCARE) from 2015–2016 to 2021–2022 was also completed in 2023.

In addition, in order to leverage data already compiled from the quarterly narrative reports provided by the WFCs to IRCC in 2020 and 2021 during the Initiative's pilot phase, the analysis of the narrative reports was conducted in 2021. This work was repeated with the WFCs' annual narrative reports in 2023.

Interviews with stakeholders and key partners

A first round of interviews with WFC stakeholders and other community partners was conducted virtually in the spring of 2021. A second round of interviews, in some cases with the same people, was conducted as part of the field visits, two years later in 2023.

- In each community, at least five (5) in-depth interviews were conducted with stakeholders, who were selected because of their involvement with Francophone immigrants and the general Francophone community, with the aim of sharing their perspective regarding the evolution of their FMCs' capacity for promotion, recruitment, reception, integration and retention. They were often members of the CAB.
- In order to understand the evolution of community climates, service offerings, community events and activities, short interviews were conducted with other community partners – approximately three (3).

The number of interviews and the people targeted varied depending on the realities of each community and their availability during each round of interviews.

Survey of respondents

For the online survey, the potential respondents targeted were WFC and SFC members in general and, more specifically, newcomers and community partners. It was an exploratory survey with a so-called snowball effect (as opposed to a random survey) and therefore not representative of the population surveyed. Specifically, IRCC provided two lists of stakeholders directly engaged or more directly concerned by the Initiative, as well as organizations providing services to newcomers in WFCs and SFC. The initial invitation was therefore directed to them (238 invitations sent). They were asked to share the invitation and hyperlink leading to the survey in their networks of contacts and clients and to ask them to participate in the survey. A follow-up was done and two reminders were sent to the above-mentioned 238 stakeholders to maximize their response rate. The survey took place from November 16th to December 22nd, 2021. The total number of survey respondents was 192. This included

3. The six SFC from east to west are: Chéticamp, Nova Scotia; Bathurst, New Brunswick; Saint-Boniface, Manitoba; Windsor, Ontario; Thunder Bay, Ontario; and Surrey, British Columbia.

27 newcomers and 165 non-newcomers. The distribution of respondents by place of residence or work showed a good distribution across the WFCs.

Participation in the survey was much lower than anticipated. It was therefore not repeated the following year as planned (see also section 2.3 – Constraints).

Ethnographic observation

Aside from CAB meetings and a few virtual events where the researchers could observe, the bulk of the ethnographic observation focused on observing the environment and interactions within the 14 communities during field visits in 2023 (see also section 2.3 – Constraints – COVID-19 pandemic). The field visits also involved individual interviews and focus groups with newcomers and other immigrants in the WFCs, in addition to the second round of interviews with the stakeholders and other key partners mentioned above.

Table 1: Summary of methods used and number of participants

Method	Number of Participants
Literature review	N/A
Analysis of quantitative data	N/A
Analysis of narrative reports and other documents	N/A
Online survey of the communities	192 respondents (27 newcomers, 165 non-newcomers)
Ethnographic observation (CAB, Forum and bilateral meetings, field visits)	12 field visits
Interviews with immigrants	46 participants
Focus groups with immigrants	81 participants
Interviews with stakeholders and community partners	1st round 2021: 85 2nd round 2023: 90

2.3 Constraints

Survey

As stated in the methodology section, participation in the online survey among WFCs and SFC in fall 2021 was much lower than anticipated. Therefore, the survey was not as useful as an information source as expected, especially in relation to SFC. It was not repeated as originally planned.

Further details are available in the survey technical report. Reminders:

- Participation rates are traditionally quite low in surveys of engaged community members and surveys of newcomers and other immigrants, as these segments of the population are often asked to participate in such research. This has been especially true since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- There was no direct engagement with SFC to motivate stakeholders in these communities to participate, let alone motivate them to promote the survey in their networks.
- The survey relied on invited respondents' willingness and ability to pass on the invitation within their respective networks. This strategy is far less effective than directly inviting targeted respondents, and does not allow for follow-ups or reminders to maximize the response rate in these networks.

- The approach did not allow for an estimation of the total number of targeted respondents. Without this number, a response rate cannot be calculated.
- Cash, contests or other incentives could not be used.

Interviews

While participation had been satisfactory in terms of numbers and variety of perspectives during the first round of interviews with stakeholders and other community partners in 2021, when a second round of interviews was conducted in 2023, participation was generally much lower. The turnover rate in these groups (coordinators, CAB members, community organization representatives, etc.) over a period of several years certainly played a role. The interviews, as well as the field visits overall, including the interviews and focus groups with newcomers, were impacted by the turnover and low participation of some coordinators and stakeholders.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting public health restrictions:

- The recipient organizations had to rework the community implementation plans. Although this strengthened planning for some communities, the desired outcomes were modified for some WFCs, and/or their activities were interrupted for a period of time, which affected progress toward the desired outcomes.
- There were very few newcomers due to the border closures in 2020–2021, which also made it challenging to measure progress toward the desired outcomes.
- As stated above, the bulk of the ethnographic observation was deferred to the field visits in 2023 and was very limited overall.
 - The planned review of the main Francophone public spaces and the way in which Francophone immigrants occupy these spaces was limited by various factors, including by the still infrequent interactions (events, gatherings) shortly after the pandemic and the low numbers referenced above.
 - It was not possible to coordinate field visits to Calgary or Iqaluit.

That said, in the face of constraints surrounding ethnographic observations, efforts were made to take advantage of other opportunities not initially foreseen. For example, the WFCs' Forum organized by the *Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne (FCFA) du Canada* [Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities of Canada] in 2022 gave researchers the opportunity to observe interactions at the event and to lead group meetings with representatives of the WFCs to which they were assigned. In 2023, an FCFA representative also invited researchers to observe several semi-annual "bilateral" virtual meetings with each WFC. Lastly, the expansion of the Initiative, and thus the Study, made it possible for field observation to be carried out in the spring and summer of 2023.

3.0 Progress toward desired outcomes

This section presents the main findings for the following three themes:

- Background to the launch of the Initiative
- Governance-related findings
- Findings related to desired outcomes (based on the logic model in Appendix A)

It concludes with the findings on unexpected outcomes that were observed..

3.1 Background to the launch of the Initiative

In 2018, one of the priorities announced by the Government of Canada was the consolidation of a Francophone integration pathway, starting before arrival and extending through to citizenship.⁴ In 2019, as part of its new Francophone Immigration Strategy, IRCC rolled out the Initiative.⁵ It was a three-year pilot phase from 2020–2021 to 2022–2023 and was then extended for another year until March 31, 2024. The 14 WFCs in the pilot phase are as follows (see Figure 1):

1. Prince George (British Columbia),
2. Calgary (Alberta),
3. Moose Jaw and Gravelbourg (Saskatchewan),
4. Seine River region (Manitoba),
5. Hamilton (Ontario),
6. Hawkesbury (Ontario),
7. Sudbury (Ontario),
8. Labrador City–Wabush (Newfoundland and Labrador),
9. Haut-Saint-Jean region (New Brunswick),
10. Municipality of Clare (Nova Scotia),
11. Évangéline region (Prince Edward Island),
12. Whitehorse (Yukon),
13. Yellowknife (Northwest Territories), and
14. Iqaluit (Nunavut).

4. IRCC. (2019). Francophone Immigration Strategy, p. 6.

5. Ibid, p. 7.

Figure 1: Welcoming Francophone Communities



Source: Canada en français. (2023). <https://canadaenfr.org/communautes-francophones/> Accessed June 3, 2024.

Inspired by a preliminary literature review, but also framed within the parameters of the settlement program, five characteristics of welcoming communities — or areas of intervention — were selected for the Initiative:

1. Inclusive leadership
2. Equitable access to reception and settlement services
3. Economic, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities
4. Civic engagement and participation
5. Welcoming public spaces

A definition of a Welcoming Francophone Community (WFC) was also established:

A Welcoming Francophone Community is an inclusive community where French-speaking newcomers feel that their identity is respected and that they are integrated into the host community. All community members (including employers, the host community, community leaders, and local authorities) have a positive attitude toward French-speaking newcomers. They trust and understand each other.

More information on the origin of WFCs is available in Appendix C. A literature review (available as a separate report) was carried out as part of this Study to explore the five characteristics listed above in greater depth.

Note that the WFCs' implementation plans and activities had to focus on some, but not necessarily all, of these five characteristics; not all the WFCs prioritized all the characteristics. Inclusive leadership, access to services, employment opportunities and civic involvement were the characteristics most prioritized in the community plans. Other potential characteristics related to newcomers' needs are well documented, but were not included in the interest of focusing the Initiative. The most frequently cited unmet needs and gaps in the Initiative were as follows: access to housing, transportation (linked to

access to services), the employability continuum, access to Internet connectivity, and the particular needs of WFCs which are secondary immigration destinations. These needs are especially pronounced in remote, rural and northern communities.

It is also important to note that the Initiative did not focus on attraction (selection, recruitment, etc.). This was due to the terms of the Settlement Program. For the same reasons, it focused solely on permanent residents and explicitly excluded any temporary residents (temporary seasonal workers, foreign students, etc.). The fact that the Initiative targeted only permanent residents was identified as a major issue that has reduced inclusion, led to an increased workload for WFCs and hindered or complicated the organization of activities that could have more effectively contributed to the desired outcomes of the Initiative. In addition, it is clear that the WFCs were not systematically refusing temporary residents from less formal or group activities (e.g., activities for which no registration was required), as they did not have the means to do so. In some communities, the immigrant population is largely made up of temporary residents (e.g., students with study visas). Stakeholders pointed out that excellent activities could have been organized for these groups, which might have encouraged them to stay in the Francophone community long term.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on all WFCs. Many activities were cancelled, postponed or reinvented. The community implementation plans also had to be reviewed. The pandemic had an adverse effect on the human resources of the organizations implementing the Initiative (e.g., because of the pandemic, more time and effort were often required to carry out activities and provide services on a day-to-day basis, leaving less time and fewer human resources for the Initiative). Furthermore, due to the border closures in 2020–2021, many WFCs did not welcome any newcomers until 2022. Their activities therefore targeted newcomers who had arrived in 2019 or early 2020, and included other immigrants as well. Even in 2022 and 2023, the number of newcomers remained modest in many communities. Small, rural and remote communities have always received relatively few newcomers. Given the overhauled plans and very few newcomers, it was a real challenge to measure—at least quantitatively—progress toward the desired outcomes.

3.2 Governance-related findings

Highlights

- The governance structure prescribed by IRCC and the planned rallying of local community partners worked well in most cases.
- The majority of stakeholders said they were satisfied with the engagement of CAB members.
- The majority also said that the CAB brought together the right partners.
- Stakeholders who were dissatisfied with member involvement cited a lack of shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and contributions from the start, which persisted for some CABs.

The Initiative takes a community-based approach that involves rallying local community partners to identify the needs of French-speaking communities and immigrants and taking action to better meet these needs.⁶ The Initiative therefore prescribes building on existing structures, such as the *Réseaux en*

6. IRCC. (2019). Welcoming Francophone Communities – A Canadian model, p. 11.

immigration francophone (RIF) [Francophone Immigration Networks], and creating CABs to represent the interests of French-speaking newcomers, ensure strong governance, make decisions (e.g., identify and prioritize projects to be funded under the Initiative) and develop a community plan.⁷ The CABs were also meant to be involved in monitoring the implementation of the activities identified in the community plans.

Once the structure was in place, the ability of WFCs to produce the desired outputs depended on a number of factors, including stakeholders' and community partners' engagement and capacity to carry out the activities established in the WFCs' implementation plan and develop the necessary partnerships. In 2021, and again when interviewed in 2023, the majority of stakeholders said they were satisfied with the engagement of CAB members in the implementation of the plan, and noted that most members were highly engaged and passionate individuals. Those dissatisfied with member involvement cited a lack of shared understanding of roles, responsibilities and contributions from the start, which persisted for some CABs, as well as the management style of CAB leaders. Some WFCs have terms of reference or have created contracts for their members; these were cited as best practices that minimize confusion and ensure more consistent engagement. Stable, competent leadership within the CAB is also important.

WFCs with a high proportion of Francophones and well-established Francophone organizations were generally more likely to indicate that the engagement of the CAB and the WFC's main stakeholders was consistent throughout the 2020–2023 period. In remote areas with a small Francophone population, Francophone organizations do not always have sufficient capacity, which could have an influence on these organizations' engagement. The majority of stakeholders also said that the CAB brought together the right partners. Many noted that the same key partners often serve on such boards and committees, meaning there is a risk of repeated demands and burnout.

As indicated in section 2.3, the COVID-19 pandemic and public health restrictions had an effect on many organizations' capacity, at least temporarily. This was the case for the CABs as well. COVID-19 considerably impacted involvement and the number of meetings. For some WFCs in rural or remote areas, holding meetings virtually improved accessibility, as long as the Internet connection remained stable. In addition, several organizations, including the leadership of some WFCs, experienced significant staff turnover, which had a detrimental effect on engagement—particularly among CAB members, who also experienced some turnover—and the ability to produce the desired outputs.

Despite these challenges, the governance structure prescribed by IRCC and the planned rallying of local community partners worked well for most of the WFCs. The main stakeholders in several WFCs, including Prince George, Moose Jaw–Gravelbourg, Hamilton and Haut-Saint-Jean, praised the CABs' interest and engagement, as well as their highly structured meetings and activities, and highlighted the engagement of other key partners. However, some WFCs had various issues with their CABs. For example:

- Engagement of CAB members was not maintained, and/or few meetings were held.
- Turnover among CAB members slowed things down and/or caused key knowledge to be lost.
- The high turnover rate among those involved in WFC coordination, and/or the lack of human resources more generally, hindered CAB operations and thus implementation of the plan.
- Conflict between CAB members, or between the CABs and the WFC coordination, had a negative impact on the plan's implementation.

7. Ibid, p. 15.

3.3 Findings related to desired outcomes

The first two types of outcomes (leadership and access to services) are **immediate** outcomes, meaning that progress is expected in the shorter term, while the others are **intermediate** outcomes (increased economic vitality, community engagement and participation, and welcoming public spaces). Although only a few years have elapsed, this section also provides, when possible, some indications of progress toward longer-term outcomes (integration, retention and overall vitality) identified during the Study.

3.3.1 *Inclusive leadership*

Highlights

- The Study confirms that stakeholders and community partners gained a better understanding of newcomers' needs and expectations.
- Collaboration between community organizations increased everywhere, and a number of new or innovative partnerships were established.
- Collaboration between governments and community organizations has increased in recent years.
 - In general, municipalities were more invested and participated more than provincial, territorial and federal governments.
- The participation of more recent newcomers in the community and associative sector remains low.

Awareness of diversity and inclusion, coming-together

WFCs have made significant efforts in raising awareness of diversity and inclusion.

The Study confirms that stakeholders and community partners gained a better understanding of newcomers' needs and expectations. With a few exceptions, Francophone community groups rallied to support Francophone newcomers. Community leaders made a concerted effort and showed a willingness to integrate newcomers' needs and adapt their services and programming accordingly. Presentations by CABs or WFCs to employers, municipalities, school boards and other organizations helped spread knowledge, as did "citizen cafés" / community meetings and focus groups organized in communities where immigrants could share their experiences.

A number of WFCs organized various types of events to make the Francophone population more aware of the newcomers' contributions. Some launched organizing committees or collaborations that include both established residents and newcomers. In general, newcomers have less time to devote to volunteering that is not related to a potential employment opportunity, although a few communities (Moose Jaw–Gravelbourg, Hamilton and Calgary) recorded a high level of volunteer involvement in community events among newcomers, especially those who had been established for two or three years.

In addition, several WFCs created video portraits and/or positive articles about newcomers that were released on their websites and in the local media and reshared by partners. WFCs such as the Haut-Saint-Jean region, the Seine River region and Calgary set up diversity ambassador or champion

programs, involving established individuals and entrepreneurs from these communities as ambassadors in an effort to raise awareness in their respective networks and in the wider community.

The WFCs also provided opportunities for dialogue and networking among newcomers. Stakeholders in some WFCs underscored the importance of proactively promoting cultural and social events to newcomers in as inclusive a manner as possible. In the larger communities, these events brought together several ethnocultural communities.

Collaboration and engagement

Collaboration between community organizations increased everywhere, and a number of new or innovative partnerships were established as a result of the Initiative. In Yellowknife, for example, organizations combined their budgets to organize larger-scale activities. Nevertheless, these collaborations could have been further strengthened in some WFCs. At times, especially in larger communities, some key partners observed organizations competing with one another for prioritization by governments for resources and funding. With a few exceptions, this competition did not seem to be directly considered problematic. Nonetheless, uncertainties surrounding the implementation of these collaborations seem to have led to some frustration. Despite the Initiative, organizations in some communities, such as Prince George, continued to operate in isolation. Furthermore, collaborations with Anglophone partners were only successful for a few communities, and could have been strengthened in most cases.

Co-operation between governments and community organizations has increased in recent years. In general, municipalities have been more invested and involved than provincial, territorial and federal governments, for example, the Regional Municipality of Taché, Manitoba; Hamilton, Ontario; and Edmundston, New Brunswick. For some WFCs, municipalities have been only marginally invested (e.g., Sudbury and Labrador City–Wabush).

In general, more recent newcomers' involvement in community organizations and associations was still perceived as low. There were a few examples of newcomers who were employed by a Francophone organization in the community, as well as newcomers who were or are coordinators of their WFC or who work within their provincial or territorial RIF. In some more rural or remote WFCs and in Calgary, many more established people with immigrant backgrounds served on boards of directors or were employed by or ran Francophone organizations, but this was certainly not the norm everywhere.

3.3.2 Progress toward equitable access to reception and settlement services

Highlights

- Since 2018, there has been general improvement in access to French-language services, contributing to better integration into Francophone communities.
- Gaps and imbalances in the distribution of French-language services remain, both among communities and among individuals and families within the same community.
- Inequalities persist in terms of access to settlement services such as orientation, language training and employment-related services.
- In more densely populated communities, there are issues with duplication and misalignment of services, as well as varying service quality.
- Provincial iCARE data shows linguistic disparities, with Francophone immigrants receiving services in their own language less often than Anglophones, as well as gender differences in the use of settlement services, with women more involved in integration activities.
- Additional efforts are required to guarantee equitable access to French-language services, including capacity-building for organizations, ongoing training for service providers and the centralization of services.
- There is increased promotion and visibility of available services, greater awareness among established populations and more support for newcomers' involvement in sports and cultural activities.

The Study indicates overall that **access to French-language services for newcomers has improved** since 2018, and that these improvements are linked to more successful integration into the Francophone community. However, gaps and imbalances in the delivery of these French-language services seem to remain, not just among communities, but also among individuals and families within the same community. It is important to note that the Initiative does not target or compete with the delivery of services that are the responsibility of other jurisdictions (education, health care and social services, housing, etc.), but rather supports collaborations and any other form of improving access to all French-language services in WFCs.

Some communities have been innovative in incorporating new technology into their activities and reception services. In Hamilton, for example, the installation of touch screen displays in strategic locations and the development of online platforms such as *Bienvenue à Hamilton* have fostered access to information on French-language services. These technological and digital tools have facilitated access to reception services, but have remained complementary to initiatives that increase human support, which are considered crucial by newcomers and their host communities.

“It says a lot in a community like Gravelbourg. If [the WFC] hadn’t been there, how could I have known what my host community had to offer? No one was going out during the pandemic.”
Newcomer (Moose Jaw–Gravelbourg)

Access to various settlement services, such as orientation, language training and employment-related services, was **unequally distributed**, as was access to health care:

- *Orientation services* were offered by all communities, although the extent, scope and type of services varied. In some communities, such as Prince George, official settlement services were limited and largely remote, but the WFCs sought to make up for the gaps or deficiencies. Other communities offered a more comprehensive range of settlement services, particularly larger communities located in heavily populated cities or near metropolitan areas.
- *Language training* for French-speaking newcomers was offered through different intermediaries and using different methods. Sometimes, training took the form of paid courses offered by post-secondary institutions; other times, it took the form of community initiatives, such as conversation circles and initiating and assisting with the use of Duolingo. However, access to language training remained a challenge, particularly due to the cost of some services and uneven service availability. Immigrant parents actively enrolled their children in French-language schools to preserve their language, despite hesitation related to English proficiency. Most newcomers consider access to French-language education to be very important.

“Thanks to the WFC, we were able to obtain much more funding. As a result, we have two resource people, which means we can take more actions and form more partnerships.” Stakeholder (Whitehorse)
- *Access to health care* in French was rare, yet considered essential by almost all newcomers who participated in the study. These newcomers face communication challenges during medical consultations. In some communities, a large proportion of newcomers do not have a family doctor. Initiatives such as Yukon’s first bilingual medical clinic were appreciated, but communication and access challenges continued to surround this type of bilingual service.

“We need a French-speaking doctor, we need French-speaking lawyers and judges to express ourselves clearly. When you’re using these services and you can’t express yourself, they treat you like a child and they cannot really help you.” Newcomer (Prince George)
- *Access to employment services* aimed at Francophones remained limited in the communities studied, although initiatives such as job fairs and mentoring opportunities indicate positive developments. Projects such as the *ambassadeur de la diversité* project⁸ [diversity ambassador] and conversation circles fostered social and professional integration. However, low levels of English proficiency and difficulty accessing services adapted to cultural and linguistic differences remained major barriers.

Duplication and misalignment of services were an issue in more densely populated communities. Likewise, **service quality varied considerably**, with personalized support and specialized services generally deemed to be the most useful, while services involving only superficial and generic interactions were perceived as being of little use.

8. A brand-new project to create a new mentoring opportunity in the Calgary WFC. Note: A project of the same name in the Seine River region WFC has different objectives that are more geared toward awareness-raising.

Provincial/territorial iCARE data support the finding that Francophone immigrants are less likely than Anglophone immigrants to receive services in the language that matches their linguistic profile. See Figure 3 in Appendix D.

The iCARE data also indicate gender differences in the use of settlement services: Women used these services in higher percentages than men (see Figure 4 in Appendix D). These differences are reflected elsewhere in the Study's findings, which show that women are more often involved in WFC activities aimed at settlement and integration, such as school events, welcome events and orientation services.

Qualitative and quantitative data show that despite the progress made, **further efforts are needed to ensure equitable access** to French-language services. This equitable access must include a complete French-language service offering, increased funding for existing services, capacity-building for organizations, ongoing training of service providers, the development of bilingual digital platforms for all agencies and organizations serving newcomers, and the centralization of services to facilitate access. Increased promotion and visibility of available services, greater awareness of French-speaking newcomers among established populations, and support for newcomers' involvement in sports and cultural activities are also essential.

3.3.3 Progress toward intermediate outcomes in terms of economic opportunities, engagement and public spaces

Highlights

Progress toward economic vitality

- The Study notes growing awareness among local employers and the creation of new businesses by French-speaking newcomers in connection with WFC-supported initiatives.
- Challenges remain regarding English proficiency and skills recognition. These challenges limit access to jobs that match newcomers' skills, impacting their job satisfaction and desire to stay in the region.

Progress toward community engagement and participation

- The Study identifies a number of key elements leading to better outcomes for engagement, involvement and integration, which, in turn, contribute to other long-term outcomes (retention and vitality). These key elements include the following:
 - *A warm welcome and ongoing support.* Newcomers generally expressed satisfaction with the welcome they received in Francophone communities, highlighting a sense of security, friendliness and open-mindedness.
 - *Involvement in community activities.* In various communities, newcomers actively participated in social and cultural activities such as festivals, concerts and multicultural events, reinforcing their social integration.
 - *The role of Francophone organizations.* WFCs and other Francophone organizations played a central role in the integration of newcomers, organizing activities to facilitate their social integration, which fostered community vitality.
 - *The importance of employment and housing.* Access to French-language jobs and affordable housing is crucial to retaining newcomers, who sometimes consider leaving the community due to a lack of suitable housing and employment.
 - *Preservation of language and culture.* Preserving newcomers' French language and Francophone culture is essential for long-term integration as it strengthens their sense of belonging and involvement in community life.
- Some challenges persist that affect newcomers' integration, particularly challenges related to racism (a sometimes hostile atmosphere as well as specific incidents), job mobility, access to French-language services and high housing costs.

Progress toward welcoming public spaces

- The Study highlights the scarcity of welcoming public spaces for Francophones. Existing spaces are intended mainly for the general public. Most of the communities studied had no specific initiatives to create welcoming public spaces for French-speaking newcomers.
- A few communities have set up public spaces that could be considered welcoming for Francophones, but these spaces are mainly used for services rather than socializing or recreation.

Progress toward increased regional economic vitality

The data does not clearly show progress in terms of job opportunities. Nevertheless, the survey of WFC members shows that a majority of respondents (61%) agreed that local employers and business communities were somewhat or much more aware of the contribution of French-speaking newcomers (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Awareness among employers and the business community of the contribution of French-speaking newcomers, by immigration status

Answer	Are you an immigrant?					
	Yes (n = 61)		No (n = 104)		Total (n = 165*)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Much more aware	9	14.8%	10	9.6%	19	11.5%
Somewhat more aware	26	42.6%	55	52.9%	81	49.1%
Neither more nor less aware	11	18.0%	17	16.3%	28	17.0%
Less aware	4	6.6%	2	1.9%	6	3.6%
I don't know	11	18.0%	20	19.2%	31	18.8%

Note: These respondents answered the following question: “Have the local business community and employers become more aware of the contribution of newcomers, especially Francophones, since 2019?”
Source: PRA (February 2022). *Rapport technique [Technical report]*.

The **placement rate for newcomers was relatively high**, with a majority of newcomers having arrived in Canada with a job offer. The remainder, mainly spouses who arrived without jobs, usually managed to find a job within a fairly short time frame, sometimes within two months of their arrival.

The interviews indicated that there are businesses created or taken over by French-speaking newcomers in the Francophone landscape, mainly in sectors such as food services, sewing, cooking, security and pastry-making. Some newcomers succeeded in establishing businesses by relying on their skills and determination, despite barriers such as the non-recognition of degrees and language challenges.

Support initiatives, such as incubation programs and economic forums, were launched to help French-speaking newcomers start their own businesses and contribute to the local economy.

“I really appreciate the activities and projects developed by the centre. I hope that in the near future, thanks to [the WFC], I’ll be able to develop my own initiatives that will bring together and employ Francophones.” Newcomer (Sudbury)

Many newcomers still faced challenges in the job market. The greatest challenge in the majority of communities studied was linked to **necessary English proficiency**. Newcomers’ low English proficiency limited their ability to find a job, find employment that matched their skills or have a satisfying career. In predominantly Anglophone WFCs with little diversity in employment opportunities—for example, communities whose economies depend mainly on agriculture—the language barrier posed an even greater challenge.

The second-greatest challenge was the **non-recognition of prior learning and skills**, which often led to disparities between jobs found and jobs desired. Recognition of qualifications, which leads to relatively more satisfying jobs, therefore contributes to the retention of newcomers in a WFC. Conversely, a lack of recognition leads to newcomers departing to other regions due to an inability to acquire a job that matches their education or experience.

“I like the Francophone community and the welcome I received, but after working 15 years in my field, I can’t go back to doing cleaning work. I have to leave the province.” Newcomer (Seine River region)

In short, newcomers show initiative, motivation and innovation in their efforts to find suitable jobs, often successfully, and despite sometimes unfavourable regional economic conditions. WFCs have worked to reduce barriers, notably through awareness-raising among employers and entrepreneurial support initiatives.

Progress toward civic engagement and participation

Stakeholders, newcomers and other immigrants reported **significant progress** that ultimately contributed to **the integration of newcomers** into their Francophone communities, though various challenges persist in terms of access to services (see previous section), community involvement and managing racist incidents. In all the communities studied, newcomers expressed their appreciation for the welcome they received and the support they were given.

For example, in the community of Haut-Saint-Jean, although racist incidents were reported on a few occasions, newcomers emphasized the community’s friendliness, the sense of security and the support provided on arrival. They appreciated the open-mindedness and the feeling of being heard and understood when they proposed initiatives. Community partners also testified to the quality of life and free highways, which contribute to retention because they make it easier to get to work.

In Iqaluit and Whitehorse, the majority of newcomers were satisfied with their integration, despite the challenges associated with the reality of life in these regions (weather, limited transportation infrastructure, few jobs, poverty rate, etc.). They stressed the importance of living in a Francophone community and appreciated the community activities available. In Whitehorse, the Anglophone community shows a particular interest in the integration of French-speaking newcomers. In Iqaluit, employment opportunities and the increase in the number of newcomers since 2018 are encouraging integration and retention in this region. However, some newcomers pointed to barriers such as job mobility and difficulties accessing services in French. Furthermore, the pandemic naturally curbed involvement in some aspects of community life, and the community would like to diversify activities to reach a wider audience.

“I was drawn to this community because of the opportunity to speak French, which is a plus....But I feel welcomed in another way; it’s a warmer, tighter-knit community.” Newcomer (Yellowknife)

In Sudbury and Hamilton, the Initiative helped build trust and understanding between newcomers and the established community, fostering greater collaboration and cultural exchange. Newcomers felt welcomed and expressed a desire to stay. In Sudbury, newcomers underscored the town’s many welcoming features. That said, according to stakeholders, challenges persisted when it came to interaction between the different groups in the Francophone community.

In the community of Clare, despite initially slow progress, the established population became increasingly aware of the importance of immigration, particularly to ensure the community's survival. This awareness was also strengthened by the presence of foreign students and temporary workers. However, despite a generally positive welcome for newcomers, some people remained critical. Initiatives such as the Journée d'accueil et d'information [welcome and information day] seemed to be well received, although the established community's involvement in some community activities remained low.

In other communities, such as Prince George, Hawkesbury and Yellowknife, newcomers faced similar challenges in terms of employment, access to French-language services and recognition of qualifications. Despite these barriers, many newcomers reported that they felt gradually integrated into their community through their involvement in community activities and the assistance they received from various organizations.

"The WFC has been good for us. We enjoy all the outings, workshops and activities." Newcomer (Prince George)

Lastly, **all communities offered opportunities and climates** that supported the integration of newcomers, at least on the social front. This was largely due to the Francophone or cultural organizations that support or collaborate with the WFCs. Almost all WFCs organized regular activities to support the social integration of their newcomers, such as picnics, walks, festivals, concerts, cultural evenings and outings to cafés and restaurants.

"Integration means meeting people—not other newcomers, but people from the community—who share their experiences and dos and don'ts."
Newcomer (Hawkesbury)

Retention of newcomers is important for Francophone communities, as it affects the cultural, social and economic vitality, as well as the ethnocultural diversity, of these environments. This is another long-term outcome, and specific data on long-term retention are not available. However, interviews and focus groups indicated a high retention rate when newcomers have satisfying jobs and establish strong ties to the Francophone community.

In Prince George, for example, once newcomers had forged ties with other Francophone families, they often expressed a desire to stay and settle there in the long term. The survey also shed light on newcomers' sense of belonging, indicating they attach a great deal of importance to the presence of a Francophone population in their region (Table 3).

Table 3: Importance attached to the presence of a Francophone population in the region, according to newcomers

Answer	n = 27	
	n	%
High importance	19	70.4%
Little or no importance	7	25.9%
Not applicable	1	3.7%
<p>Note: These respondents answered the following question: "What degree of importance did you attach to the idea of settling in a community where French is spoken?"</p> <p>Source: PRA (February 2022). Rapport technique [Technical report].</p>		

Similarly, barriers such as the lack of French-language jobs and the high cost of housing could lead newcomers to consider leaving the community, even if they would have preferred to stay. Francophone communities in which French-language jobs are available seem to better retain newcomers, underscoring the relative importance of this factor.

Testimonials from newcomers emphasized the importance of preserving their French language and Francophone culture for their longer-term integration and vitality. Access to services and events offered by Francophone community organizations, such as the *centres d'accueil multiservices francophones* [Francophone multi-service welcome centres], reinforces this sense of belonging and can encourage long-term retention.

“The established community is fundamentally welcoming. The same is true for the newcomer community itself.” Community partner(Iqaluit)

However, some challenges persist, including the **high cost of housing** in some regions, such as Yukon, where many newcomers were considering leaving due to the financial struggles resulting from the need to house themselves beyond their means. Despite these barriers, the Francophone community was often a refuge for newcomers, offering a form of “authentic” socialization and mutual support that encouraged them to stay and get involved in their new lives. In Iqaluit, the presence of friends or family, as well as employment opportunities and a growing Francophone community, helped reinforce this sense of belonging. In the Haut-Saint-Jean region, many newcomers expressed a strong sense of belonging to their host community, reinforcing their desire to settle there for the long term.

In turn, the integration of newcomers contributes greatly to various aspects of the third long-term outcome, **WFC vitality**. Funding from various sources, such as the RIF or the WFC, supported a range of community activities initiated or orchestrated by French-speaking newcomers, often in collaboration with local ethnocultural groups, as described above. Festivals, musical and culinary events, as well as activities such as talent contests and sports competitions, were organized. Other examples of activities include Christmas parties, religious gatherings, radio broadcasts and cultural events such as dances and multicultural evenings. However, there were few formal community organizations run by French-speaking newcomers (as indicated in section 3.2). International students played an active role in creating community events, such as the international week organized in Edmundston and multicultural evenings at the University of Sainte-Anne. New initiatives such as the creation of a *pétanque* club in Clare and involvement in cultural activities organized by ethnocultural groups in Yellowknife demonstrate newcomers’ “growing willingness” to get involved in their host community. In addition, informal initiatives such as park visits and outdoor excursions were often organized by French-speaking newcomers for their social networks, although these activities did not always follow a formal schedule.

“More than in the community, I saw the impact most in the organizations. That’s where changes took place, leaving a lasting impression. The word is out: There are organizations that want to hear good ideas from newcomers.” Stakeholder (Hamilton)

Although there were still relatively few formal organizations run by French-speaking newcomers, these organizations’ active involvement in various community activities testified to their desire to contribute to their host community’s social and cultural life. These initiatives play an essential role in strengthening social ties for French-speaking newcomers, contributing to the vitality of their communities.

A common concern in all communities was newcomers' involvement in political life. According to both newcomers and stakeholders, newcomers were too busy with the many tasks essential to integration—housing, employment, childrearing, etc.—to get involved in the political life of their communities in the short or even medium term. This involvement increases after a few years, but is very low at first because this participation takes time to develop.

“The WFC is very beneficial for our Francophonie....Things are much better today than they were two years ago. I am seeing a change in involvement. We have a lot more newcomers than [before]. Everyone will appreciate the new daycare. Since most of the employees will be newcomers, a strategy will need to be developed.” Community partner (Labrador City–Wabush)

In short, a combination of factors contributed to progress toward the integration and retention of newcomers in Francophone communities, as well as the vitality of the communities where they settled, including the co-operation of WFC-related organizations, access to French-language jobs, community support, community activities that reinforce a sense of belonging, and the preservation of French language and Francophone culture.

Progress toward welcoming public spaces

Ten of the 14 communities stated they had no specific data or information on this indicator.⁹ Many of the people interviewed said they were unaware of any initiatives to create welcoming public spaces specifically for Francophone immigrants. In the four communities that provided examples of welcoming public spaces for French-speaking newcomers (Hamilton, Haut-Saint-Jean, Clare and Hawkesbury), these initiatives mainly took the form of sports facilities. During field visits, modifications to public swimming pools, soccer fields, skating rinks and a community garden were observed. These developments were aimed at newcomers in general, not Francophones specifically.

In reality, welcoming public spaces for Francophones—whether newcomers or not—were rare in the communities studied. In Yellowknife, the Maison Bleue brings together a number of Francophone organizations and can be considered a welcoming space for the community as a whole. Also in Yellowknife, the Centre interculturel—a Francophone multi-service centre designed to bring together all services for immigrants, whether Francophone or Anglophone—was nearing completion as the first phase of the Initiative drew to a close. It could be considered a welcoming public space for French-speaking newcomers, but these newcomers only went there to receive services, not for socializing or recreation. Therefore, in general, initiatives to create or adapt public spaces, either to make them more welcoming, enhance newcomers' quality of life or promote cohesion, were not prioritized.

4.0 Long-term added value

In addition to the outcomes highlighted in the previous section, the Study indicates that the Initiative's added value can also be linked to dynamics whose **concrete effects will be visible in the longer term**. These dynamics are closely related to actions, environments, collaboration methods and perceptions that tend to show that the launch of the Initiative contributed to the **vitality of Francophone communities and the integration and retention of immigrants**. Compared with simply adding a service

9. Note that welcoming public space initiatives were a priority for only some of the 14 communities.

in a given community, the Initiative involves broad consideration of the community and, as a result, the number of stakeholders increases, distinct collaboration methods are implemented, promotion is focused on the community as a whole and meaningful connections are fostered. More specifically, the following six key findings show progress toward these long-term outcomes.

1. Almost all WFCs experimented with new and **innovative collaborations** that resulted in activities aimed at social cohesion or service completeness. Often, networking between the RIFs and the WFCs helped expand collaborations. The Study also points to a number of partnerships between organizations and groups that had never worked together before. These collaborations made it possible for larger-scale activities to be organized and provided networking opportunities for groups of people who would not have met otherwise or who would not have met French-speaking newcomers: Francophones born in the community, English-speaking immigrants and municipal representatives. For example, in Hawkesbury, a multicultural festival was organized in collaboration with WFC staff. There was one drawback: no tools were available to facilitate and guide these collaborations, which sometimes led to logistical or interpersonal issues.
2. Several communities have also experienced a resurgence in the **dynamism of the Francophone community** during the Initiative. Networking between groups that would not have crossed paths otherwise and the above-mentioned new collaborations contributed to this vitality, as did the opportunity to engage in activities whose main objective was social cohesion. For example, in the Évangéline region, the Acadian community (and the French language) was languishing. The WFC's positive image and the quality of its activities attracted members of the established Acadian community. Moreover, in a number of cases, the activities were unconventional—canoeing or cross-country skiing for beginners, potlucks, showcasing of Indigenous traditions—and allowed the WFC to both introduce newcomers to and spark Canadian-born people's interest in various Canadian traditions. The vitality can also be attributed to the fact that the Initiative involves the entire community's engagement. So, while the level of community engagement rarely met expectations, it seems to have increased most of the time. Finally, while it may not have always had an impact on the communities studied, the significant increase in newcomers to Canada in 2022 and 2023 did spark their imagination in general and likely prompted new stakeholders in the Francophone communities studied to become more involved in welcoming newcomers, even without a specific mandate to do so.
3. The activities and events organized by WFCs were innovative and engaging. They provided new opportunities for children and families to get involved, which was well received by the people living in these communities, regardless of language. In a number of communities, this led to a growing interest in WFC activities among **Anglophones**. In Hamilton and Yellowknife, in particular, new collaborations were established with the Anglophone community, increasing opportunities to promote the WFC to the majority group.
4. WFCs' efforts to promote themselves, their activities and the welcoming of newcomers often contributed to a **sense of pride and belonging to the WFC**. Even though welcoming communities' level of engagement sometimes fell short—mainly owing to some of the Initiative's funding

“Before, people were scared. They said it was just for Francophones. But now, even Francophiles and Anglophones are interested in learning about the different countries and Francophone cultures. Even if their French isn't very good, they feel more comfortable going and getting involved in the community. It's made our community much more diverse and open to others.”
Stakeholder (Prince George)

criteria—quite often, they had opportunities to better understand the importance of welcoming newcomers and the role of every organization and every person in providing a welcoming environment. The welcoming communities also had more opportunities to meet French-speaking newcomers, and in doing so, they became more aware of their realities and their role in the community. The Initiative made the Francophone community more visible to newcomers. The fact that the community organized regular activities — sometimes funded by the WFC, sometimes funded by other organizations — made it more appealing and more engaging. In Whitehorse, activities such as art workshops and culinary experiences gave newcomers a chance to build relationships and share their immigration stories, fostering a sense of belonging. In a number of WFCs, opportunities to develop friendships and “form a community” seemed to occur more often or quicker because of the WFC’s activities.

5. **Service completeness** also improved in some WFCs also, albeit in a very unequal way. In some cases, the service offering improved because WFC staff offered orientation or employment services to fill various gaps. A number of WFCs had to wait until the end of the Initiative’s first phase, that is, when IRCC launched its call for proposals in late 2023, to propose developing new services. Overall, the capacities and skills developed through the Initiative seem to have set the stage for an acceleration of service completeness during and after the Initiative.
6. Although the Initiative did not officially target **temporary residents**, they were very present and engaged in most WFCs. Soon after their arrival, a number of temporary residents sought to connect with the Francophone community by taking part in activities offered in French, as well as serving on boards of directors and finding jobs in French. In doing so, they wanted to participate in the WFC’s events and activities, sometimes with the hope of one day becoming permanent residents and staying in the community long term. Excluding temporary residents from the Initiative undermined the community’s longer-term inclusive vision. The WFCs that reached out to temporary residents and allowed them to take part in their activities contributed to their integration and retention.

5.0 Favourable conditions

Since the Initiative incorporates societal goals, external factors greatly affect the achievement of outcomes. A thorough analysis of the communities allowed for the identification of eight conditions that impact the achievement of outcomes. They pinpoint the social, administrative, financial and government contexts that should be in place at the start of the Initiative and developed in tandem with the Initiative to ensure its success. If a community lacks any of these conditions, it could prevent it from achieving outcomes.

The team of researchers presents these favourable conditions while acknowledging that IRCC has a number of institutional levers. However, some of the favourable conditions identified here depend on other partners, including other levels of government and the local communities themselves. Some are the direct result of IRCC’s action, while others, such as housing and public transportation, are more complex and depend on a number of stakeholders.

5.1 Substantial budget

Setting up a WFC requires having and further developing in-depth knowledge of the community as well as various technical and interpersonal skills. Moreover, because WFCs are aiming to achieve outcomes that are central to the Francophone community's vitality and to immigrants' well-being, the activities to be carried out could be numerous, varied and complex. In particular, WFCs are required to work with organizations and initiatives that contribute to the inclusion of French-speaking newcomers, so they have to establish and maintain partnerships. Despite the range of expertise and initiatives to be undertaken by WFCs, most of them received an overall reduced budget. As a result, even though they have a keen understanding of immigrants' needs, the WFCs had to significantly restrict the ways in which they could meet these needs. Therefore, staff decided not to offer transportation, provide meals, create a service, organize an activity, etc.

5.2 Access to affordable, accessible housing

The federal government now recognizes that a housing crisis is affecting many regions across Canada. However, from the outset of the Initiative, housing was identified as a major impediment to the recruitment, quality of life and long-term retention of immigrants. It is important that targeted communities already have accessible, affordable housing and concrete plans to add more.

5.3 Access to public transit

Most of the WFCs selected were far from large urban centres. As a result, public transportation was either unavailable or insufficient. Poorly organized transportation in a community is a known barrier to inclusion. However, communities across Canada have developed original, affordable means of transportation for newcomers.

5.4 Access to jobs and language training

Access to quality jobs is generally the biggest concern for newcomers, which is in line with the findings of other studies on this population. In a minority Francophone environment, the limited English skills of a significant percentage of newcomers is an additional barrier. Therefore, Francophone communities that cannot offer English-language training, employment services or access to quality jobs in French struggle to provide a quality welcome to recent newcomers.

5.5 Attracting immigrants

In general, activities aimed at attracting immigrants were not included in the WFCs action plans. Given the Initiative's broad objectives, the WFCs focus is on reception, inclusion and retention. However, in addition to the activities that the WFCs conducted, IRCC initiated various promotional activities, including through Destination Canada and a website. Still, it is important that more organizations with a provincial or nationwide mandate effectively promote small or remote Francophone communities. For example, Connexions Francophones should always be able to effectively promote the benefits of small or remote Francophone communities. Moreover, to ensure the success of their integration, it is crucial

that newcomers be put in contact with those responsible for welcoming them before they move into their new community.

5.6 Engagement and visibility of the welcoming community

The Initiative provided a rare opportunity—in Canada and abroad—to consider the inclusion of immigrants by recognizing the important role that the welcoming community plays. In theory, the duty of inclusion in a WFC directly engages the people who have been living there for a long time. However, the Initiative was launched in a way that did not always recognize the value of, or plan for, the involvement of long-time WFC residents. Still, the engagement of the entire welcoming community—Francophones and Anglophones alike—contributed greatly to the success of a number of welcoming communities. For example, the WFCs that benefited from the municipality's support in sharing information, partnering during activities, etc. were able to launch the Initiative more successfully. Similarly, it seems to be easier to achieve outcomes when the main Francophone community organizations are strongly committed to the WFC's success. By the same logic, when members of the Francophone community take part in the WFC's activities, they develop a stronger sense of inclusion.

5.7 Tradition of collaboration with the fiduciary

The fiduciary has a major influence on the achievements of outcomes in WFCs. Therefore, the selected host organization should have certain characteristics. For example, it should be efficient, have immigration expertise and be known for its ability to create harmonious partnerships. In the provinces and territories where Francophone communities are smaller, it seems to be beneficial to specify from the outset the methods for collaboration between the RIF, the organization representing the Francophone community (local or provincial/territorial) and the welcoming community.

5.8 Inclusion of temporary residents

The face of immigration has changed drastically in recent years, with “two-step” immigration process becoming the norm in Canada. Consequently, newcomers in Francophone communities now quite often have temporary resident status. Announcing a Initiative and refusing to allow temporary residents to take part in activities—knowing that often they want to stay in the community long term—was detrimental to achieving outcomes. This issue was even more significant in smaller and more remote communities.

6.0 Summary

This section summarizes the main findings over the four years of the Study. First, the **governance** structure prescribed by IRCC and the planned rallying of local community partners worked well in most cases. In addition, the Study confirms the following:

- Stakeholders and community partners gained a better understanding of newcomers' **needs and expectations**.
- **Collaboration** among community organizations increased everywhere, a number of new and innovative partnerships were established, and the level of co-operation between governments and community organizations increased.
- The participation of more recent newcomers in the community and associative sectors remains low, which is not surprising.

In terms of the desired **short-term** outcomes for **equitable access to reception and settlement services**:

The Study shows an overall improvement in access to French-language services, contributing to better integration in Francophone communities; however, gaps and imbalances in the distribution of French-language services remain. French-speaking immigrants are less likely than their English-speaking counterparts to receive services in their own language. Additional efforts are required to guarantee equitable access to French-language services, including capacity-building for organizations, ongoing training for service providers and centralization of services. Nonetheless, the Study points to increased promotion and visibility of available services, greater awareness among established populations and more support for newcomers' involvement in sports and cultural activities.

In terms of desired **intermediate and long-term** outcomes:

The Study notes growing awareness among local employers and the creation of new businesses by French-speaking newcomers in connection with WFC-supported initiatives. Challenges remain regarding English proficiency and skills recognition, which limit access to jobs matching the qualifications of newcomers, impacting their job satisfaction and desire to stay in the region.

Moreover, the Study identifies a number of key elements leading to better outcomes for **engagement, involvement and integration**, which, in turn, contribute to other long-term outcomes (retention and vitality):

- A warm welcome and ongoing support
- Participation in community activities
- The role of Francophone organizations
- The importance of employment and housing
- Preservation of language and culture

Some challenges persist that affect newcomers' integration, particularly challenges related to racism, job mobility and high housing costs.

Lastly, the Study highlights the shortage of welcoming public spaces for Francophones. Existing facilities are mainly for the general population and are designed for service delivery rather than for socializing or recreation.

In addition to the outcomes previously highlighted, the **added value** of the Initiative can be summarized as follows:

1. Almost all WFCs experimented with new and **innovative collaborations** that resulted in activities to foster social cohesion or service completeness.
2. The **Francophone community** also experienced renewed **vitality** in a number of areas.
3. The activities and events organized by WFCs were innovative and engaging, and a **growing interest in WFC activities** was noted in the Anglophone community.
4. WFCs' efforts to promote themselves, their activities and the welcoming of newcomers often contributed to a **sense of pride and belonging to the WFC**.
5. Service completeness also progressed in some WFCs, albeit in a very unequal way. However, the abilities and skills developed and the data generated through the Initiative seemed to have set the stage for rounding out the service offering more quickly during and after the Initiative.
6. Although the Initiative did not officially target **temporary residents**, they were very present and engaged in most WFCs. The WFCs that reached out to temporary residents and allowed them to take part in their activities contributed to their integration and retention.

In short, there is ample proof of progress toward the desired short-term outcomes and some proof of progress toward the desired medium-term outcomes, mainly because efforts had to be adapted during the global pandemic. A number of best practices resulted from the efforts made and the activities conducted during the pilot phase of the Initiative. According to the expected results chain, a number of elements are in place to make progress toward achieving long-term outcomes, that is, integration, retention and contribution to community vitality.

7.0 Conclusion

The holistic nature of the WFC Initiative provided a unique opportunity to foster community-wide engagement in the inclusion of French-speaking immigrants, whether through innovative partnerships or community networking activities. While RIFs and Local Immigration Partnerships (LIPs) are mandated to plan integration pathways, WFCs have the advantage of including community dynamics and the host community into these considerations. The most successful WFCs were those that managed to create welcoming environments. Moreover, the majority of newcomers surveyed who had interacted with WFCs, recognized that these initiatives had greatly contributed to their sense of well-being in the community.

Nonetheless, the launch of the WFC Initiative was not optimal for a number of reasons, with the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact greatly reduced the Initiative's scope. Also, as indicated in the "Favourable Conditions" section, various aspects of the Initiative and its implementation could be reviewed for the future, such as the possibility of including temporary residents in activities, establishing guidelines for collaborations, or developing more coordinated strategies for engaging host communities. Needless to say, new WFCs will benefit from the experiences—both positive and negative—of the WFCs that have already been operating for four years.

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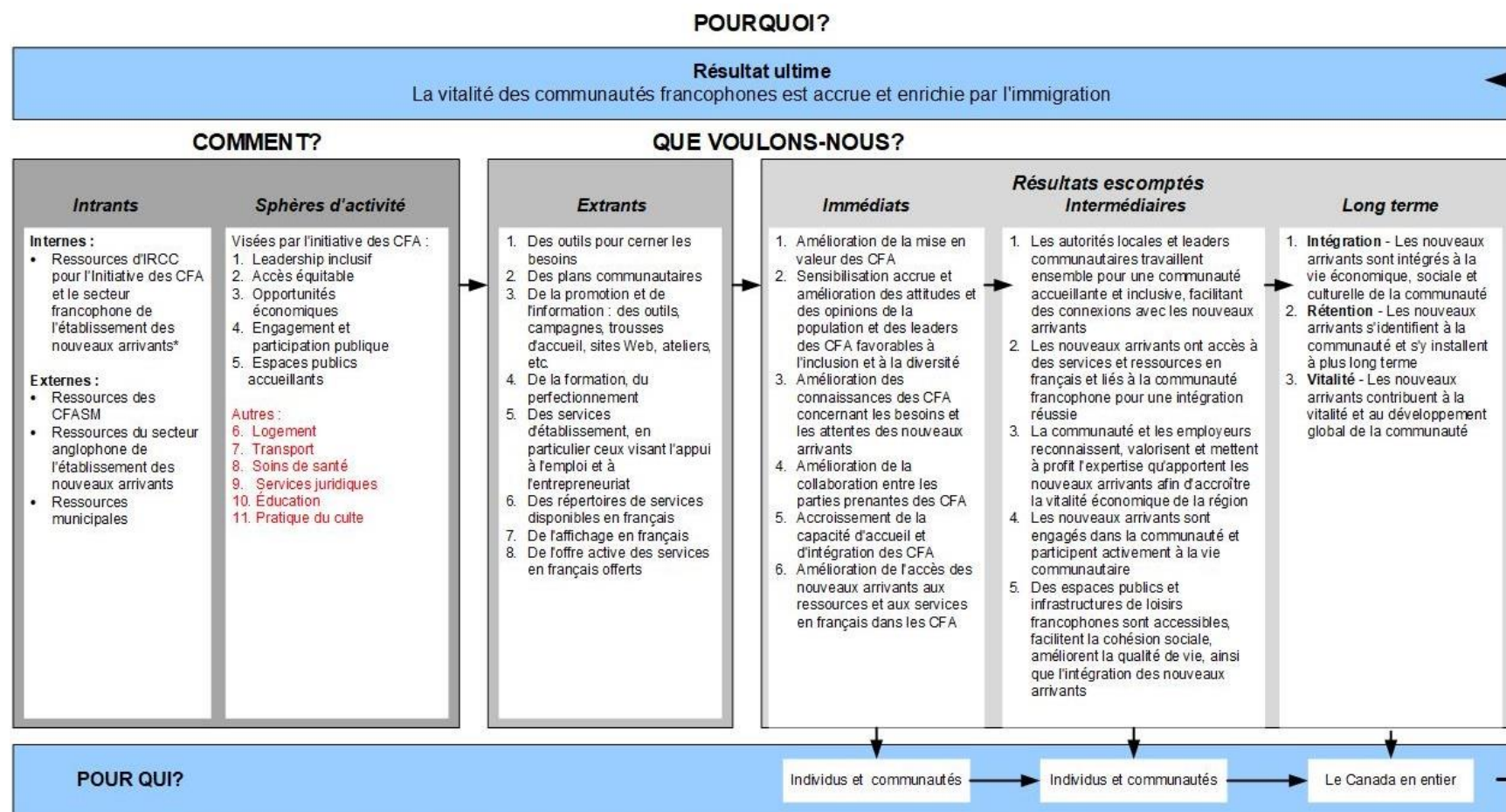
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Appendix A: Initiative logic model

Figure 2: Logic Model of the WFC Initiative



Appendix B: Study framework

Table 4: WFC Initiative: Outcome measurement framework	
Research Questions	Indicators
Aligning WFC plans and IRCC priorities	
1. To what extent was each WFC able to develop and implement a community plan that addressed a number of the target characteristics?	a) Ability to identify key needs and shortcomings to be remedied
	b) Ability to achieve the desired outcomes
	c) Community members' level of engagement in developing the plan
	d) CAB members' level of engagement in implementing the plan
Progress toward desired outcomes	
2. How much progress has been made toward achieving the desired short-term outcomes?	
2.1. Better showcasing of communities	a) Number of volunteers actively involved in promotion activities
	b) Prospective French-speaking immigrants are informed of the advantages of settling in a Francophone community
	c) Percentage of French-speaking newcomers
2.2. Increased awareness among the Francophone population and WFC leaders of newcomers' social, economic and cultural contributions	a) Existence of structures or programs that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. encourage immigrants to volunteer in the community ii. provide opportunities to take part in cultural celebrations
	b) Greater involvement of newcomers in political life (at all political and community levels and as voters, volunteers, organizers, candidates or elected officials)
2.3. Improved attitudes and opinions about diversity and inclusion	a) Percentage of the community in general (including the public, leaders and local authorities) that has a positive and inclusive attitude toward French-speaking immigrants
	b) Percentage of the business community and employers that are aware of the contributions of French-speaking immigrants
	c) Positive portrayals of immigrants in the media
	d) Existence of initiatives that foster positive relationships between immigrants and their communities
2.4. Better understanding of newcomers' needs and expectations	a) Existence of structures, measures, regulations, programs and services that demonstrate that municipalities and other levels of government have given greater consideration to newcomers' needs and distinctive characteristics
	b) Organization of and access to specialized services designed to meet the needs of particularly vulnerable groups

Table 4: WFC Initiative: Outcome measurement framework	
Research Questions	Indicators
2.5. Improved collaboration between stakeholders (including with organizations from the English-speaking majority)	a) Existence of structures that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. support collaboration and reduce competition between organizations ii. support collaboration between the different levels of government and community organizations
	b) Level of involvement and collaboration among a wide range of community partners
2.6. Increased reception and integration capacity (infrastructure, policies, programs and services)	a) Participation rate of newcomers in community reception infrastructure
	b) Existence of infrastructure that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. helps newcomers build networks with other immigrants in the community ii. encourages community members and immigrants to connect and build relationships
	c) Percentage of community organizations with staff who are immigrants themselves
	d) Percentage of organizations' boards of directors with French-speaking immigrant members
	e) Changes in the nature and diversity of the reception programs and services offered
	f) Placement rate of newcomers
	g) Unemployment rate among French-speaking immigrants
	h) Median employment income among French-speaking immigrants
2.7. Better access to French-language resources and services	a) Availability of information booths or information portals on resources and services for newcomers
	b) Number of newcomers' children enrolled in French schools
	c) Access to secondary and post-secondary education in French
	d) Existence of employment councils and networks for newcomers
	e) Availability of mentoring opportunities for newcomers
	f) Improved access to language training (which promotes social and economic integration)
	g) Increased availability of culturally sensitive health care services
	h) Increased number of public spaces and recreational facilities that are open to everyone and that account for ethnocultural differences (in terms of policies and regulations, room rentals, changing rooms, etc.)
	i) Percentage of newcomers who report being able to access general (public) services that meet their needs

Table 4: WFC Initiative: Outcome measurement framework	
Research Questions	Indicators
3. Do the results to date show any signs of progress toward the desired medium- and long-term outcomes?	
3.1. Integration: French-speaking immigrants are integrated into the welcoming community's economic, social and cultural life	a) Level of involvement in the Francophone community's activities
	b) Immigrants (men, women, children, visible minorities, etc.) feel that they are integrated into the welcoming community
	c) Degree to which community members help immigrants integrate
	d) Level of trust and understanding between community members and immigrants
3.2. Retention: French-speaking newcomers identify with the community and settle there longer term	a) Degree to which newcomers continue to identify with the WFC two years after they arrive
	b) Retention rate of French-speaking newcomers <i>*Comparison with similar communities</i>
3.3. Vitality: French-speaking newcomers contribute to the community's vitality and overall development	a) Number of businesses created or taken over by French-speaking newcomers
	b) Evidence of community activities organized by French-speaking newcomers

Appendix C: The origins of WFCs

Introduction

In 2018, the Government of Canada announced, among its priorities, the consolidation of a Francophone integration pathway, which spans from pre-arrival to citizenship.¹⁰ In 2019, as part of its new Francophone Immigration Strategy, IRCC began planning the WFC Initiative¹¹ in 14 FMC. It was a three-year pilot project that ran from 2020–2021 to 2022–2023 and that was then extended by a year, until March 31, 2024.

The Initiative aims to support the reception and settlement of French-speaking and bilingual newcomers in these communities by helping them build connections and develop a sense of belonging in their welcoming community.¹² It is an innovative Initiative for IRCC, as it is built on a community-based funding model. It aligns with the principle of “by and for Francophones.”

On January 16, 2024, IRCC officially announced the [Policy on Francophone Immigration](#), which commits the Government of Canada to restoring and increasing the demographic weight of FMC to the 6.1% recorded in the 1971 census. Since the Initiative is a flagship measure of the policy, it was also announced that it would be renewed and expanded, attesting to the success of the pilot phase. On August 14, 2024, [10 new WFCs were officially added to the Initiative](#).

The Initiative is funded under the Action Plan for Official Languages 2023–2028: Protection-Promotion-Collaboration and the Action Plan for Official Languages 2018–2023: Investing in Our Future. To allocate funds to WFCs, IRCC used an allocation formula that took capacity-building into account.

Role of IRCC, RIFs, the FCFA and the communities

The Initiative is based on existing programs such as the welcoming community programs in Australia, the U.S. and New Zealand¹³ and on Employment and Social Development Canada’s Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS).¹⁴ These projects demonstrate best practices in community-based programs.

What sets the Initiative apart is its adoption of an approach that makes communities central to the decision-making process. Because it is an initiative “by and for Francophones,” members of Francophone communities, under the leadership of RIFs, were mandated to identify and recommend participating communities to IRCC through rigorous evaluations. CABs made up of community members, were then established in each community to evaluate the shortcomings and local settlement and integration needs. The CABs drafted community plans based on the evaluation in order to set objectives and plan activities to improve the community’s reception capacity and the quality of settlement and integration services.

10. IRCC. (2019). Francophone Immigration Strategy. p. 6.

11. Ibid. p. 7.

12. IRCC. (2024). Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative. URL: [Welcoming Francophone Communities initiative - Canada.ca](#).

13. PRA. (2020). Étude sur la gestion des résultats de l’Initiative des communautés francophones accueillantes : Recension des écrits sur les communautés francophones accueillantes. p. 4.

14. IRCC. (2019). Presentation on the Welcoming Francophone Communities Initiative. [PowerPoint presentation](#).

IRCC provided guidance throughout the process, starting by co-planning the Initiative with community partners. IRCC then verified the overall consistency of the plans submitted by the communities to confirm that they met the Initiative's expectations and requirements and to ensure that it was a success. IRCC also monitored contribution agreements.

The FCFA oversaw the Initiative with IRCC by providing national coordination for WFCs in the field and sharing best practices.

The pilot phase of the Initiative was therefore co-led by IRCC, the 13 RIFs and the FCFA.

Initiative parameters

WFC characteristics

WFCs aim to develop one or more specific characteristics to provide a welcoming environment for newcomers. The Initiative is structured around these characteristics. During consultations with RIFs, IRCC identified the following five characteristics: inclusive leadership; equitable access to reception and settlement services; economic, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities; civic engagement and participation; and welcoming public spaces.¹⁵

During Francophone settlement summits in 2018, IRCC held a number of co-planning sessions with RIFs, the *Comité atlantique sur l'immigration francophone (CAIF)* [Atlantic Committee for Francophone Immigration] and the FCFA to select these characteristics. They were inspired by a study done by Vicky Esses that proposes the best components for creating a welcoming community.

WFC scope

Each community's CAB develops a community plan in which numerous objectives and activities are defined for the WFC. The fiduciary chosen for the WFC is responsible for achieving these objectives and completing activities to the extent possible. The activities vary from one WFC to another but may include activities to improve the community's capacity for settlement services. For example, some aim to improve employment services and information and orientation services, while others aim to improve community connections.¹⁶

Outside WFC scope but important to the Initiative's success

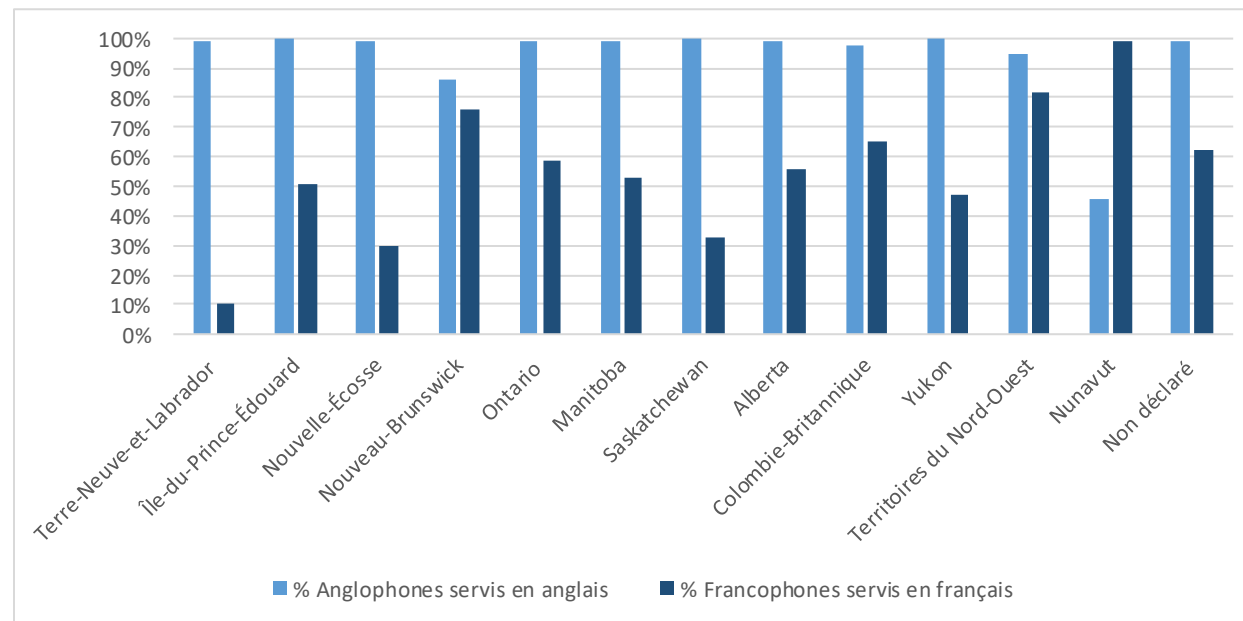
A number of issues related to certain services such as access to health care, housing and public transit are often mentioned. Although these issues are outside the WFCs' scope, they are important and worth reviewing because they affect both the communities and newcomers.

15. PRA. (2020). Étude sur la gestion des résultats de l'Initiative des communautés francophones accueillantes : Recension des écrits sur les communautés francophones accueillantes. p. 11.

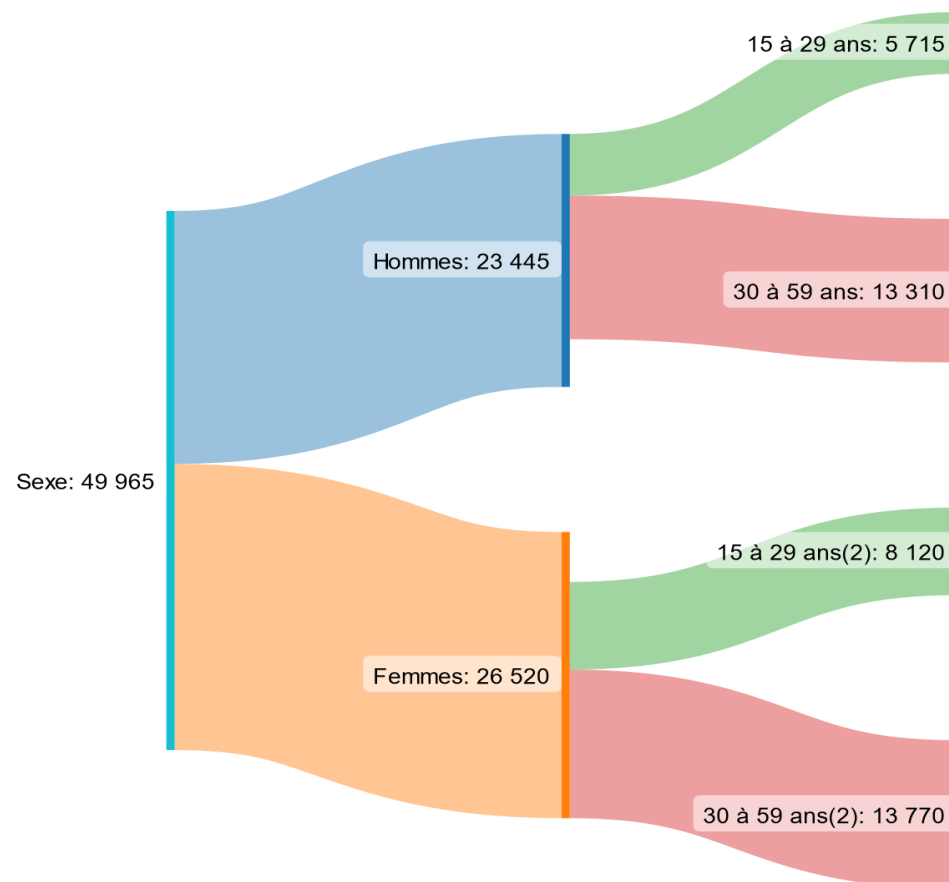
16. See the WFC community plans for more information.

Appendix D: Additional data

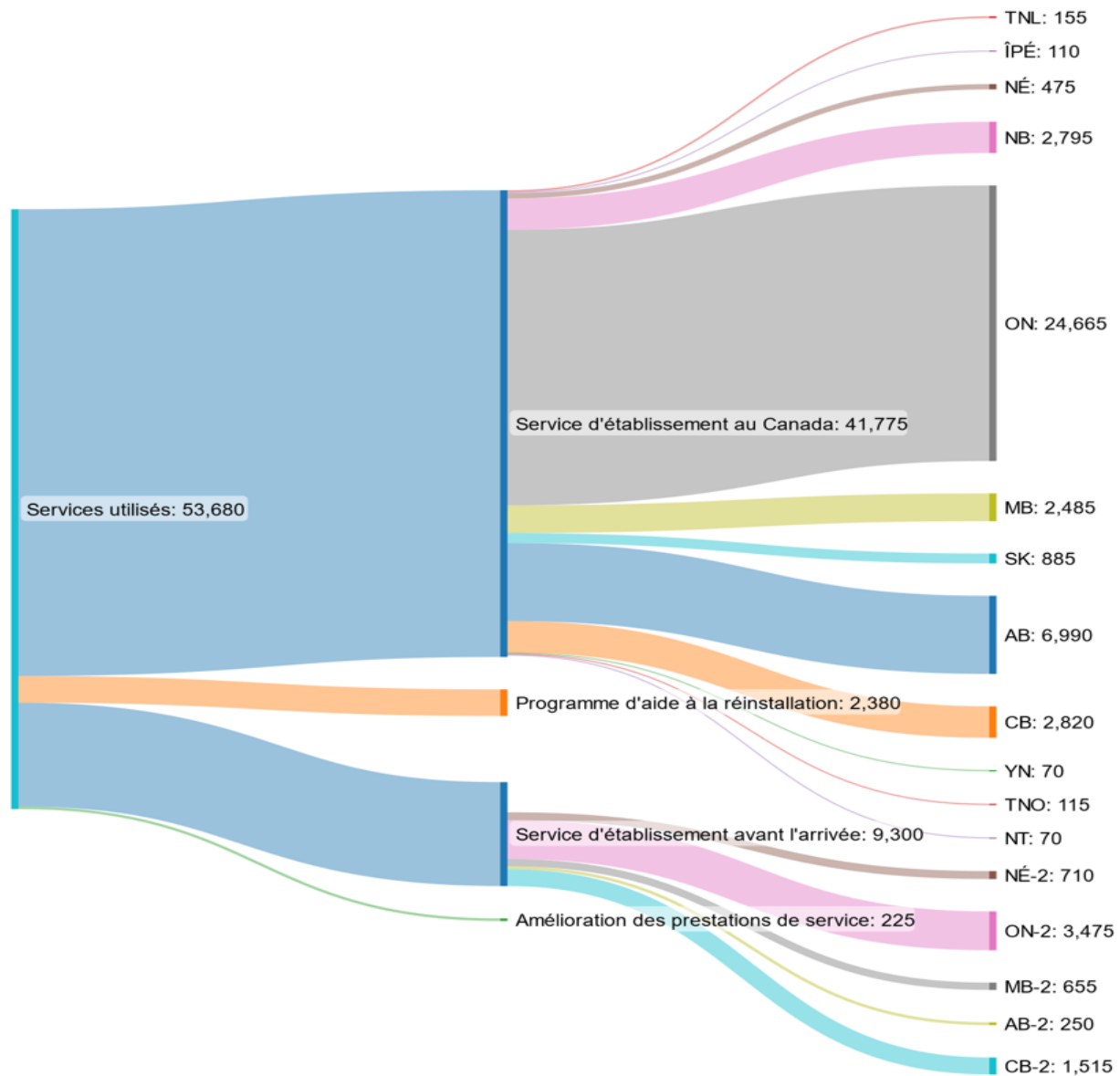
Figure 3 : People Served in the Official Language of Their Choice by User Language Profile, by Province or Territory (*only available in French*)



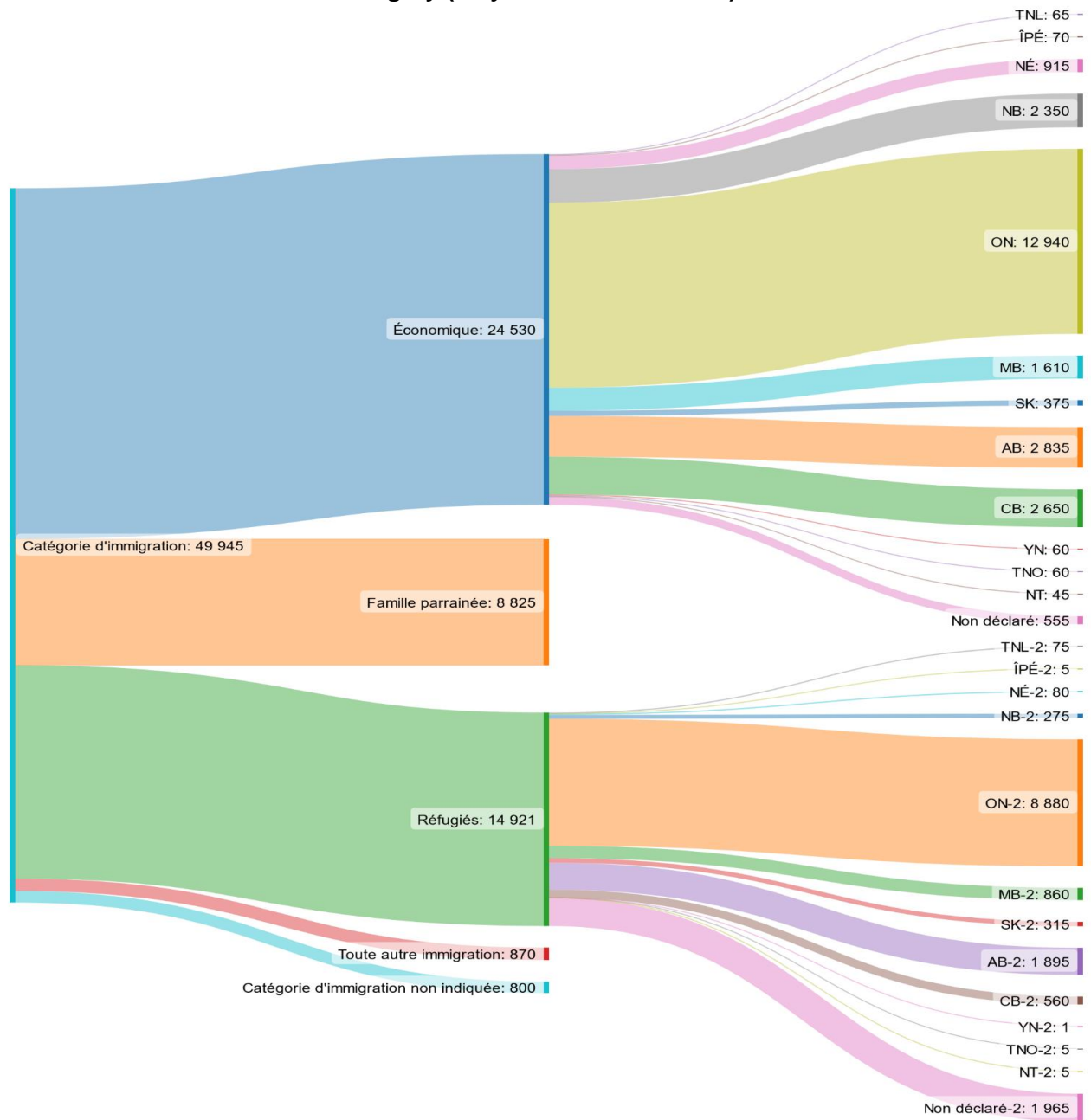
Source: IRCC (October 2022). Spreadsheet of data extracted from iCARE

Figure 4: French-Speaking Users of Settlement and Resettlement Services by Sex (*only available in French*)

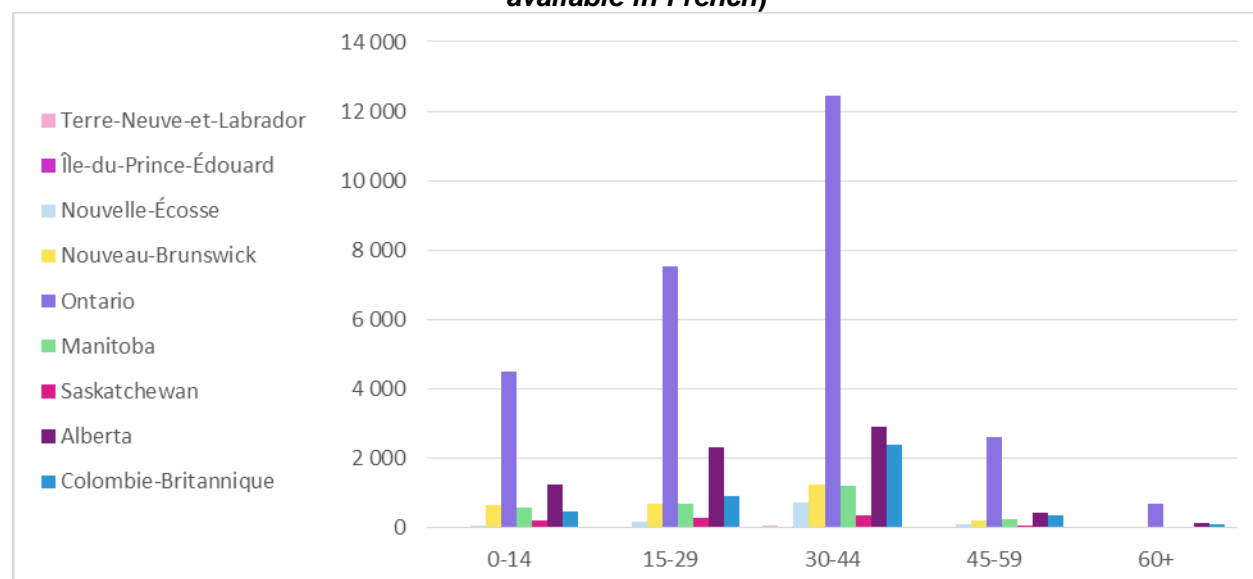
Source: IRCC (October 2022). Spreadsheet of data extracted from iCARE

Figure 5: Types of Settlement and Resettlement Services Used by French Speakers by Service Type (only available in French)

Source: IRCC (October 2022). Spreadsheet of data extracted from iCARE

Figure 6 : French-Speaking Users of Settlement and Resettlement Services by Immigration Category (only available in French)

Source: IRCC (October 2022). Spreadsheet of data extracted from iCARE

Figure 7: French-Speaking Users of Settlement and Resettlement Services by Age Group (only available in French)

Source: IRCC (October 2022). Spreadsheet of data extracted from iCARE

Survey data (2021)

Table 5: Contribution to promoting and showcasing the community, based on immigration status						
<i>Do you contribute to activities to promote or showcase your community to French-speaking newcomers?</i>						
Answer Choices	Are you an immigrant?					
	Yes		No		Total	
	n = 88		n = 104		n = 192	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	76	86.4%	85	81.7%	161	83.9%
No	12	13.6%	19	18.3%	31	16.1%

Source: PRA (February 2022). Rapport technique [Technical Report]

Table 6: Initiatives to foster positive relationships between immigrants and the community, according to non-newcomers		
<i>Since 2019, have you noticed more initiatives to foster positive relationships between immigrants and the rest of the community?</i>		
Answer Choices	Non-newcomers	
	n = 165	
	n	%
Yes	110	66.7%
No	20	12.1%
I don't know	35	21.2%

Source: PRA (February 2022). Rapport technique [Technical Report]

Table 7: Positive portrayal of immigrants and a better understanding among community members				
Answer Choices	Sense of better understanding of immigrants' situation		Observation that immigrants are portrayed more positively in the media	
	Newcomers		Non-newcomers	
	n = 27		n = 165	
	n	%	n	%
Yes	14	51.9%	123	74.5%
No	6	22.2%	12	7.3%
I don't know	7	25.9%	30	18.2%

Source: PRA (February 2022). Rapport technique [Technical Report]