



Citizenship and
Immigration Canada

Citoyenneté et
Immigration Canada

Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program

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List of Acronyms

CBI	Content-Based Instruction
CIC	Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CIF	Class Information Form
CLB	Canadian Language Benchmarks
CLBA	Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment
CLIC	Cours de Langue pour les Immigrants au Canada
COIA	Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement
ESL	English as a Second Language
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
HARTs	History of Assessments, Referrals and Training System
IALSS	International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey
iCAMS	Immigration Contribution Agreement Management System
LINC	Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada
LSIC	Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada
OMC	Operational Management and Coordination
PD	Professional Development
PTR	Pupil-Teacher Ratio
RPA	Regional Program Advisors
SAM	Summative Assessment Manual
SPO	Service Providing Organizations (SPOs)
TESL	Teachers of English as a Second Language

Executive summary

A strategic goal of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is to support the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada. Although settlement refers to the shorter-term transitional issues faced by newcomers, integration could be a life-long process of mutual accommodation between an individual and society. Among CIC's settlement programs, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) contributes to the key strategic objective of Citizenship and Immigration's settlement program, that is, the [s]uccessful integration of newcomers into society and promotion of Canadian citizenship.

LINC provides basic language training in English or French to legal school-leaving age permanent residents to facilitate social, cultural, economic and political integration into Canada. By developing linguistic communication skills, immigrants and refugees are better able to function in Canadian society and contribute to the economy.

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to examine program relevance, program management and delivery, and to conduct an assessment of the impact the LINC program.

Evaluation design

Several lines of inquiry were used to evaluate the program: document review; a literature review; administrative data analysis; interviews with national, regional and local CIC officials; case studies of a random selection of LINC classes (which included analysis of relevant administrative and survey data, focus groups with learners and outcomes testing with a random selection of LINC learners); outcomes testing with a random selection of newcomers who did not take LINC. Several surveys were administered to key program stakeholders and participants: all LINC SPOs, a random sample of LINC instructors, a random sample of LINC learners, a random selection of newcomers who did not take LINC and a random sample of former LINC learners.

The evaluation compared the outcomes of LINC learners with a similar group of newcomers who have not taken LINC classes (the "comparison group"), using a quasi-experimental approach. The outcomes which relate to the objectives of learning English and learning about Canada were assessed through testing and a follow-up survey. To measure general English language proficiency at LINC program exit and thereby to observe possible gains attributable to LINC, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) standardized assessment tool was used.

Key findings

Program relevance and design

- The LINC program is closely aligned with CIC priorities, namely the departmental Strategic Outcome of "[s]uccessful integration of newcomers into society and promotion of Canadian citizenship".
- There is a need for language acquisition for newcomers to Canada.
 - In 2008, the majority (86%) of Canada's permanent residents had a mother tongue other than English or French.
 - Language constitutes the most serious barrier newcomers face to furthering their education or training and is among the most serious barriers to finding employment.

- The federal government’s role in the delivery of language training for newcomers to Canada is appropriate.
- LINC training is high quality and designed to meet the needs of students.
 - LINC instructors are experienced: almost all teachers have ESL certification, formal ESL qualifications or have taken at least one professional development course.
 - Instructor materials are relevant and they use a variety of teaching tools to help ensure the goals of students are met.
 - Good quality curriculum guidelines exist for all levels of LINC
- Language assessments are effective and result in participants being placed in the appropriate program level.
 - Ninety-four percent of LINC students said they were placed at the correct level, and 85% were comfortable with the pace of the class.
- Most potential participants are able to gain access to LINC in a timely fashion.
 - Waiting lists were not an issue in most areas of the country.
- Numerous support services are provided by a large majority of SPOs, but availability of child care assistance was cited as the main obstacle to attending LINC.
- Over 90% of LINC classes feature continuous intake, which comes with challenges for teachers, but also has a benefit: it makes classes more readily accessible for students.

Program management and delivery

- Program guidelines and the various modes of LINC delivery allow SPOs to create a flexible program that meets learner needs.
- SPOs have adequate tools/information to support and improve the service delivery, as about 71% of SPO administrators surveyed agreed with this.
- Around 80% of SPOs offer child care and transportation assistance for LINC students, though not in every location.
- The program has not calculated a take-up rate due to the various language training options available to newcomers and the voluntary nature of language instruction.
- Program data contained in iCAMS (and HARTs in Ontario) are largely administrative in nature and do not provide adequate information on client outcomes.

Program impacts

- On average, LINC students had completed one LINC level. Sixty percent had passed at least one LINC level; 26% had completed more than one level.
- In an ideal environment, it might be possible to test the effectiveness of LINC against a control group who had not received language training. It would, however, be difficult to isolate the impact of LINC, on LINC learners, from other influences on their language acquisition. Similarly, for a control group, it is difficult to identify the impact of unobservable characteristics (e.g. motivation, diversity of social networks, etc.) on their language acquisition, outside of a LINC environment. In this study, in an effort to provide a more

quantitative assessment, a small sample group (those assessed but not enrolled in LINC) was selected and a pre-test/post-test approach was used to compare gains scores. For the “control” sample under consideration in this evaluation:

- LINC had improved the language abilities of students in the areas of reading (by 0.88 benchmark level) and writing (by 0.51 benchmark level) but not in listening and speaking beyond what they would have gained from living in Canada.
- But, by the time students reach 1000 hours the gains attributable to LINC rise markedly.
- LINC clients are settling well in Canada, but they are no further ahead than non-clients when it comes to certain initial settlement activities.
- Clients learn about many different aspects of living and working in Canada (English for daily life and settlement/integration Canadian civics).
 - Over 90% of LINC classes teach English for daily life and settlement/integration.
 - Almost 80% teach Canadian civics.
 - About two-thirds teach English for the workplace. Focus group participants felt better equipped to compete in the Canadian labour market.
- LINC is helping students to develop skills for interaction in a culturally diverse environment.
 - The typical LINC class had 5.8 countries and 5.2 languages represented out of every 10 students.

Cost-effectiveness/alternatives

- The cost per LINC student has risen substantially in recent years, while the number of students has remained stable.
 - As expenditures rose from \$94 million in 2004-05 to \$172 million in 2008-09, the number of learners rose from about 52,000 to about 55,000. As a result, the cost per LINC student had risen from about \$1800 to approximately \$3150.
 - Part of the reason for this is that LINC payments to SPOs had fallen behind the actual cost of delivering the program and required an investment to improve service delivery.
 - Combined, child minding and transportation expenses have risen from approximately 2% in 1998-99 to 18% of total LINC expenditures in 2008-09.
- Though the approach to program delivery through third-party organizations is considered cost-effective by respondents, further analysis of other delivery models would be required in order to determine true cost-effectiveness of the program.

Management response

Key Finding	Response	Action	Accountability	Implementation Date
I. Program Relevance and Design				
The LINC program is aligned with CIC priorities; there is a need for language acquisition for newcomers to Canada, as it is a key to successful integration; and the federal government role is appropriate.	CIC agrees with this finding.	CIC will continue to review its settlement programming to ensure its continued relevance.	Integration	Ongoing
II. Program Design				
LINC training is high quality and designed to meet the needs of students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> LINC instructors are experienced and use a variety of teaching tools to help ensure the goals of students are met. The assessment tools and student placement are effective. 	CIC agrees with this finding and is committed to maintaining the high quality of LINC training.	CIC will continue to refine its approach to ensure the high quality of instruction.	Integration	Ongoing
Potential participants gain access to LINC in a timely fashion in most areas of the country, with only Calgary and PEI identifying waiting lists as an issue.	CIC agrees with this finding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIC will continue to monitor immigration flows, spikes in demand, and the effects of its vouchers pilot project on LINC waiting lists. The department will work with its regional offices and with provincial and territorial partners to meet demand for language training as it arises in Alberta, PEI and elsewhere. 	OMC / Regions	Ongoing
Numerous support services are provided by a large majority of SPOs, but availability of child care assistance was cited as the main obstacle to attending LINC.	CIC agrees with this finding and continues to address barriers to program access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between FY 2004-05 and 2008-09, CIC increased funding for childminding in LINC from \$17.3M to \$27.8M (a 61% increase). New money increased both the total number of students receiving childminding service and the average hours of service provided per student. CIC will continue to ensure that the expansion of childminding remains consistent with the Childminding Monitoring and Support (CMAS) guidelines. CIC is undertaking a review of its Settlement Program, including the role of childminding and other support services. 	Integration / OMC	Ongoing Q3 2010-11
Over 90% of LINC classes feature continuous intake, which presents challenges for teachers, but makes classes more accessible for students.	CIC agrees with this finding, and recognizes the need to strike a balance between program accessibility and the quality of the classroom experience.	The Department will explore how to better manage and support student intake, and will bring forward recommendations to its National Language Training Working Group (NLTWG).	Integration	Q4 2010-11

Key Finding	Response	Action	Accountability	Implementation Date
III. Program Management and Delivery				
Program guidelines and the various modes of LINC delivery allow SPOs to create a flexible program that meets learner needs.	CIC agrees with this finding, and recognizes the importance of a national set of objectives that allows space for SPOs to tailor programs to meet local needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIC is disseminating renewed program guidelines, including curriculum guidelines for higher levels of LINC and CLIC (levels 5-7). • Program flexibility will be further increased through the expansion of LINC Home Study and CLIC en ligne, and through the introduction of Occupation-Specific Language Training (OSLT) projects. • CIC continues to improve coordination with provincial partners to ensure a coordinated and complementary spectrum of training programs. In Ontario, CIC and MCI will pilot the Coordinated Language Assessment and Referral System (CLARS) in Fall 2010. Pilot results will inform efforts to enhance coordination of services in other jurisdictions. 	Integration / OMC / Regions	Q2 2010-11
				Q4 2010-11
				Q3 2010-11
Program data contained in iCAMS (and HARTs in Ontario) are largely administrative in nature and do not provide adequate information on client outcomes.	CIC agrees in part with this finding, noting that iCAMS and HARTs were designed to capture administrative data. This data provides some indication of immediate client outcomes, and can be complemented by data from other sources such as surveys, focus groups, standardized testing, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIC will pilot a standardized portfolio-based assessment system in LINC classrooms, which will produce reports on student progress and the immediate outcomes of language training. • CIC is developing a standardized language test to independently measure language proficiency at two key milestones. Test results will contribute to CIC's ability to assess overall program outcomes and impact. • CIC will develop a client feedback survey to gather global outcomes on the language training of newcomers. • CIC will also upgrade iCAMS, enhancing the quality of the data collected to align output data capture with the Department's modernized approach to settlement. • CIC will develop a standardized approach to the assessment of newcomer needs, allowing CIC to track progress against intended outcomes. • CIC will work with representatives of the settlement sector and service providers to determine how to improve performance measurement across the settlement sector. 	Integration / OMC / Research & Evaluation	Q1 2011-12
				Q1 2011-12
				Q4 2010-11
				Q4 2010-11
				Q4 2010-11
				Q3 2010-11
The program has not calculated a take-up rate due to the various language training options available to newcomers and the voluntary nature of language instruction.	CIC agrees with this finding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through its vouchers pilot project, CIC will assess the effect of vouchers on the uptake of language training. • The Department will study the feasibility of introducing a standardized language test as part of the citizenship application process, including its effect on the uptake of language training. 	Integration	Q2 2011-12
				Q1 2010-11

Key Finding	Response	Action	Accountability	Implementation Date
IV. Program Impact				
<p>In an ideal environment, it might be possible to test the effectiveness of LINC against a control group who had not received language training. It would, however, be difficult to isolate the impact of LINC, on LINC learners, from other influences on their language acquisition. Similarly, for a control group, it is difficult to identify the impact of unobservable characteristics (e.g. motivation, diversity of social networks, etc.) on their language acquisition, outside of a LINC environment. In this study, in an effort to provide a more quantitative assessment, a small sample group (those assessed but not enrolled in LINC) was selected and a pre-test/post-test approach was used to compare gains scores. For the “control” sample under consideration in this evaluation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LINC students improved their language abilities in the four skill areas: reading, writing, listening and speaking (by greater than one benchmark level in each). • However, for listening and speaking, the gains were not beyond what they would have achieved from living in Canada. • The number of hours in LINC makes a considerable difference: by the time students reach 1000 hours, the gains attributable to LINC rise. 	<p>CIC agrees with this finding, recognizing that the difficulty of establishing a suitable control group and the limited precision of existing tests prevents the study’s conclusions from being applied to the LINC program as a whole.</p> <p>CIC is prepared to take action to (1) improve the tools needed for future impact analysis, and (2) develop tools and approaches to support student progress in speaking and listening to the same degree as in reading and writing.</p>	<p>CIC will introduce new tools and approaches to monitor performance and measure language outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pilot a standardized portfolio-based assessment system in LINC classrooms, which will increase CIC’s ability to identify areas for improvement. • Develop a CLB-based, standardized language test in order to measure incremental gains in language acquisition and allow for a full assessment of program impact. • Develop a standardized approach to the assessment of newcomer needs, allowing CIC to track progress against intended outcomes. • Work with representatives of the settlement sector and service providers to determine how to improve performance measurement across the settlement sector. • Explore new approaches to monitoring instructional practice and bring forward recommendations to the NLTWG. <p>CIC will also continue to focus on delivering quality language instruction that achieves measurable gains in each of the four areas. In this regard, CIC will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and develop new curriculum materials to enhance the resources available to LINC teachers; • Explore the use of conversation circles, guest speakers and other informal opportunities for oral interaction, resulting in recommendations to the NLTWG; • Explore the introduction of professional development opportunities for teachers to improve instructional practice in several areas, including pragmatics, pronunciation, listening and speaking, resulting in recommendations to the NLTWG; • Disseminate best practices and build teacher communities across the ESL/FSL sector through an online national repository. 	<p>Integration / OMC / Regions</p>	<p>Q3 2010-11</p> <p>Q1 2011-12</p> <p>Q4 2010-11</p> <p>Q4 2010-11</p> <p>Q4 2011-12</p> <p>Q3 2010-11</p> <p>Q4 2010-11</p> <p>Q2 2011-12</p> <p>Q2 2011-12</p>

Key Finding	Response	Action	Accountability	Implementation Date
	CIC agrees with this finding, and recognizes that newcomers face competing priorities which limit the amount of time they can devote to full-time language training.	<p>The Department will further endeavour to provide training options that help newcomers extend their period of study by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding enrolment and offering higher levels of online training, in both English and French; • Offering out-of-class tutoring; • Exploring the use of conversation circles and other informal opportunities to practice communication skills; • Exploring options for language training in the workplace; • The Department will study the feasibility of introducing a standardized language test as part of the citizenship application process, including its effect on the number of hours students stay in LINC. 	Integration / OMC / Regions	<p>Q4 2010-11 Ongoing Q4 2010-11</p> <p>Q4 2011-12 Q1 2010-11</p>
LINC clients are settling well in Canada, but they are no further ahead than non-clients when it comes to certain initial settlement activities.	CIC agrees with this finding, and notes especially LINC's role in ensuring that settlement results for its students are similar to those attained by newcomers who did not require training in the first place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LINC classes will continue to serve newcomers whose language skills hinder their ability to undertake certain settlement activities by combining the language training and information they need for successful settlement. • As part of the forthcoming portfolio-based language assessment pilot, CIC will incorporate key settlement information into LINC student binders. 	Integration / OMC	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Q3 2010-11</p>
LINC students learn about many different aspects of working and living in Canada, with content typically focused on English for daily life, settlement/integration, Canadian civics, and employment/English in the workplace.	CIC agrees with this finding.	No action required.	N/A	N/A

Key Finding	Response	Action	Accountability	Implementation Date
V. Cost-Effectiveness/Alternatives				
<p>Cost per LINC student has risen significantly as a result of funding increases in several key program areas, while the number of students has remained stable.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In particular, child-minding and transportation expenditures rose significantly. 	CIC agrees with this finding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIC will conduct a review and produce a report identifying potential efficiencies and recommending costing models and standards, to ensure that program costs are consistent and regionally appropriate. The Department is currently determining how to improve newcomer outcomes in a cost-effective manner. This assessment will form part of a settlement review. Starting in 2010-11, CIC will plan resources required to meet the needs in local communities and issue priorities. Guidelines will be issued to target funding to priorities. The Department will monitor indirect program costs through the financial tracking of separate lines for support services and capital expenditures, in order to assess the balance between direct (assessment and training) and indirect costs. CIC will expand online training for those in a position to benefit from it. 	Integration / OMC / Regions	<p>Q4 2010-11</p> <p>Q3 2010-11</p> <p>Q4 2010-11</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>Q4 2010-11</p>
<p>While the approach to program delivery through third-party organizations is considered cost-effective, further analysis of other delivery models would be required in order to determine true cost-effectiveness of the program.</p>	CIC agrees with this finding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CIC will produce a report surveying the cost of delivering effective language training in comparable jurisdictions, both domestic and international. The report will provide a means to assess LINC spending against comparable programs and provide a basis for the establishment of baselines and spending targets. CIC will propose new guidelines for regional and local offices governing LINC spending targets and the process for establishing reasonable LINC costs at the local level. CIC will continue to pilot the use of vouchers and examine their role in program delivery. 	Integration / OMC	<p>Q3 2010-11</p> <p>Q1 2011-12</p> <p>Q2 2011-12</p>

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

A strategic goal of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is to support the settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada. Although settlement refers to the shorter-term transitional issues faced by newcomers, integration could be a life-long process of mutual accommodation between an individual and society. Among CIC's settlement programs, Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) contributes to the key strategic objective of Citizenship and Immigration's settlement program, that is, the [s]uccessful integration of newcomers into society and promotion of Canadian citizenship.

LINC provides basic language training in English or French to facilitate social, cultural, economic and political integration into Canada. By developing linguistic communication skills, immigrants and refugees are better able to function in Canadian society and contribute to the economy.

To be eligible for the LINC program, applicants must be of legal school-leaving age and either a permanent resident of Canada or a protected person as defined in Section 95 of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. They are placed at a level commensurate with their English/French language skills as assessed by certified assessors using tools based on Canadian Language Benchmarks. Service Providing Organizations (SPOs) such as schools, colleges, universities, libraries and community agencies deliver the programs. LINC is managed and delivered through contribution agreements, following a public call for proposals.

Administration of settlement programs varies across the country. Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia have their own language and settlement programs (these are excluded from this study). Alberta co-manages the service with the federal government; in the other provinces CIC manages settlement programs.

Four CIC regions currently administer settlement programs: a) the Prairies and Northern Territories Region, representing Alberta, Saskatchewan, NWT, and Nunavut; b) Ontario Region; c) Atlantic Region, representing Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick ; d) BC/Yukon Region, representing the Yukon Territory. Regional offices act as a link between local CIC offices and the Operational Management and Co-ordination and Integration Branches at CIC National Headquarters.¹

In the regions/provinces/territories where CIC administers settlement programs, CIC local offices have direct and on-going contact with the service providers delivering settlement programs. One of the main responsibilities of local offices is to receive applications and prepare contribution agreements outlining CIC's expectations of the service providers. As well, local offices monitor progress towards the objectives/targets laid out in the agreements.

¹ LINC Fact Sheet, CIC.

1.2. LINC profile

A profile of LINC, including several key program elements, is presented below². A more detailed profile is found in Appendix A:

From 2003 through 2008, an average of 36,800 clients per year were assessed for LINC training. Over the same period, an average of 52,500 clients per year had received training and roughly 19,900 clients completed at least one training course per year.

Table 1-1: Size of three LINC populations³, 2003-2008⁴

LINC Populations	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Assessed Clients	38,394	37,897	37,346	35,820	34,509	36,814
Clients in training	51,182	52,534	51,914	50,936	53,348	55,286
Clients with completed training	21,102	20,992	19,941	18,740	19,489	19,162

Source: iCAMS and HARTs, CIC

Ontario accounts for the vast majority of the LINC client population. However, its share has declined since 2003 due to a decrease in the number of Ontario clients and an increase in the number of clients in Alberta and Nova Scotia.

Table 1-2: Share (%) of LINC clients by province

Province*	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Atlantic Region	1.7	2.0	1.8	2.4	2.5	2.7
Newfoundland	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.4	0.5
Nova Scotia	0.8	0.9	0.8	1.2	1.2	1.6
Prince Edward Island	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.1
New Brunswick	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.5
Ontario	88.4	86.5	84.5	83.6	82.4	82.4
Saskatchewan	0.7	1.2	1.3	1.2	1.3	1.0
Alberta	9.2	10.3	12.4	12.8	13.7	14.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

* Refers to clients with completed LINC training

Source: iCAMS and HARTs, CIC

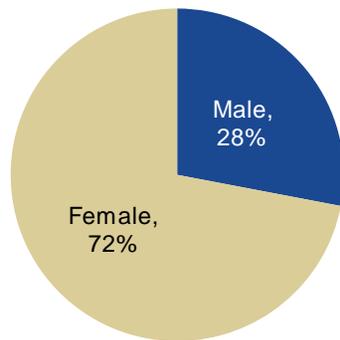
² The source for this profile information is two CIC reports: *Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada – Client Profile and Performance Indicators (2009)* and *Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada – Performance Results by LINC Level (2009)*.

³ After assessment, clients may enroll in LINC training at the level identified by the assessment. These clients are counted as “Clients in training” in the year that they enroll. Additionally, there are clients continuing their training. These clients are also counted as “Clients in training”. Each client is counted only once per year at time of first training for that year. Finally, clients who complete at least one LINC course are counted as “Clients with completed training”. Each client with completed training is counted only once per year at time of first completion for that year.

⁴ Counts do not include clients from the Territories.

The LINC population is dominated by females, accounting for almost three-quarters of clients.

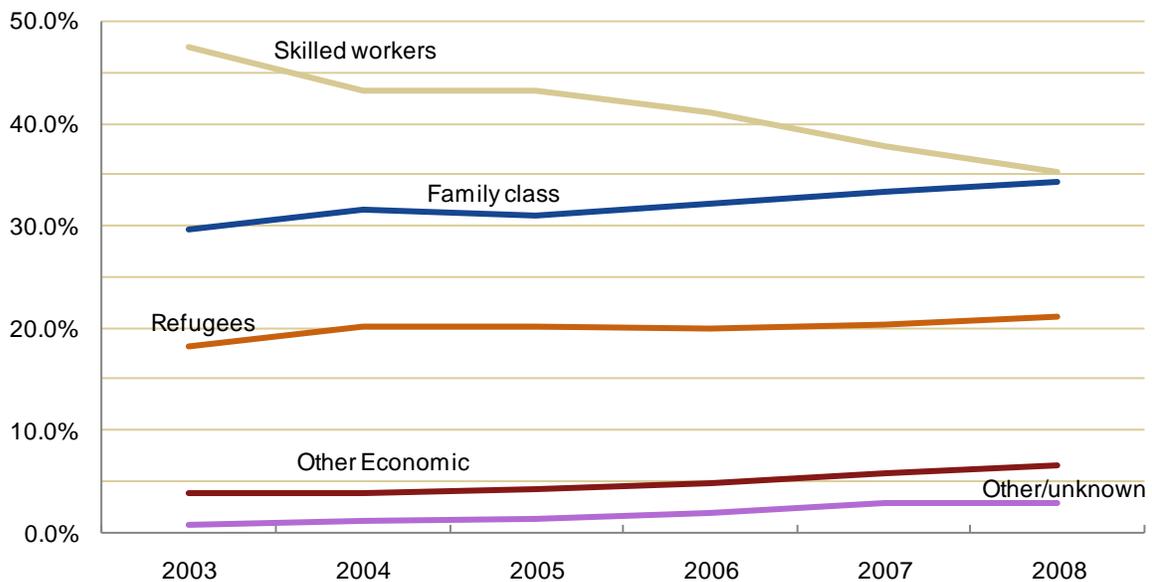
Figure 1-1: Average annual share (%) of LINC clients by gender, 2003-2008



Source: iCAMS and HARTs, CIC

Skilled workers (including spouses and dependants) account for the largest number of LINC clients each year, followed by family class immigrants, refugees, and other economic immigrants.

Figure 1-2: Share (%) of LINC clients by immigrant category, 2003-2008*



Source: iCAMS and HARTs, CIC

* Refers to clients with completed LINC training.

1.3. Evaluation objectives

The primary purpose of this evaluation was to examine program relevance, program management and delivery, and to conduct an assessment of the impact the LINC program. It assesses the extent to which LINC participants improved their language abilities and acquired knowledge of Canada and of Canadian civics, and examined the tools and methods used to deliver language instruction, as well as LINC promotional and outreach strategies, assessment tools, and barriers to program access.

Several lines of inquiry were used to evaluate the program: document review; a literature review; administrative data analysis; interviews with national, regional and local CIC officials; case studies of a random selection of LINC classes. Several surveys were administered to key program stakeholders and participants: all LINC SPOs, a random sample of LINC instructors, a random sample of LINC learners, a random selection of newcomers who did not take LINC and former LINC learners.

The evaluation compared the outcomes of LINC learners with a similar group of newcomers who have not taken LINC classes (the “comparison group”), using a quasi-experimental approach. The outcomes which relate to the objectives of learning English and learning about Canada were assessed through testing and a follow-up survey. To measure general English language proficiency at LINC program exit and thereby to observe possible gains attributable to LINC, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) standardized assessment tool was used.

1.4. Structure of this report

The document is structured as follows. Chapter 2 presents the methodology used for the evaluation. Chapter 3 considers program relevance and design. Program management and delivery are covered in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 discusses impacts. Finally, Chapter 6 draws conclusions. Appendix A gives a statistical overview of the program. Appendix B discusses important methodological details beyond the basics presented in Chapter 2.

2. Methodology

2.1. Document review

The overall purpose of the document review was to enable the evaluators to learn about the program and its context and to collect pertinent information on the program. Key documents included: LINC pamphlets, an annual report, policy documents, earlier evaluation frameworks and evaluations of LINC, iCAMS reports on LINC data, and more general literature dealing with assessment of language proficiency and language programs.

2.2. Administrative data review

Analysis of administrative data was used to develop a statistical profile of the program, to ensure the program is (or can be) properly monitored, to address pertinent evaluation issues, and for preliminary outcome analysis. Pertinent databases were iCAMS⁵ and HARTs⁶. HARTs is the system used in Ontario to collect the iCAMS data.

2.3. Key informant interviews

Interviews with key stakeholders were crucial to assess program implementation and operation; to explore interviewees' perceptions of the success of LINC in achieving its immediate and long-term objectives; to examine communications and promotion activities; to investigate the interaction between LINC and provincial ESL programming; and to gather suggestions for improving the program. Key informants were identified and interview guides were designed to govern the interviews. Interviews were held with national, regional and local CIC officials. Interviews lasted between 25 minutes and two hours.

Table 2-1: Summary of interviews

Interview Group	Number
CIC NHQ	10
CIC regional officers	10
Provincial representatives	4

2.4. Surveys

The evaluation included surveys of SPOs, teachers, LINC learners, a comparison group of newcomers who never enrolled in LINC and a group of former LINC learners.

LINC administrators

Surveys were sent by email to all 155 LINC providing organizations in Canada (outside of Quebec, Manitoba and BC), to be completed by the LINC program administrator at each SPO.

⁵ Immigration Contribution Agreement Management System (iCAMS) is a CIC system that includes data and information from Service Provider Organizations (SPOs) from Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Territories. Due to alternative funding arrangements with CIC, Quebec, Manitoba and British Columbia do not report data through iCAMS.

⁶ History of Assessments, Referrals and Training system (HARTs) data includes information from SPOs in Ontario.

The survey was administered by email, with a response of 141 returned surveys, for a rate of 91.0%.

Learners

It was determined that the best option was to rely on instructors to conduct the survey in their classroom. This attenuated the issue of English/French comprehension because teachers could help lower-level learners through the survey.⁷

Multistage random sampling was used to select the sample (see Appendix B: for explanation).

It turned out that one of the 70 classes selected was a literacy class: it had to be excluded because of the extreme difficulty surveying such students. Sixty-eight survey packages were returned. This represents a response rate of 98.6%. In total, 651 surveys are included in the analysis (in several classes there were fewer than 10 learners in class on the day of the survey; all those surveys were included in the sample). This represents about 2.3% of LINC learners in the country. Home Study learners represent 3.1% of the survey respondents, about the same as their proportion of the LINC population. Non-response was negligible so it should not be a source of bias.

As expected, the characteristics of the LINC sample closely mirror those of the population (Table 2-2). Based on the sex, LINC level, age, time in Canada and education variables, it is safe to conclude that inferences drawn from the survey findings should be valid. Note that for age and time in Canada the differences between the two groups reach statistical significance. The distributions are very similar but the large number of cases makes the statistical tests very sensitive.

⁷ This was checked through the case studies and no evidence was found of teachers biasing responses.

Table 2-2: Survey respondents compare closely to the LINC population

LINC Learner Characteristics	LINC Population (2008) ⁸	LINC Survey Respondents	LINC Case Study Survey Respondents
Sex			
Female	71.4%	73.5%	79.9%
Male	28.6	26.5	20.1
LINC level			
L	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%
1	13.9	16.3	9.0
2	18.3	17.7	17.9
3	25.4	26.6	34.3
4	19.1	23.2	17.9
5	11.7	8.1	11.9
6 - 7	7.2	8.1	9.0
Age			
15-24	12.2%	10.2%	9.1%
25-44	65.6	62.9	56.1
45-64	19.7	22.9	28.0
65 +	2.4	4.1	6.8
Time in Canada			
Less than 1 year	23.0%	26.1%	27.2%
1 - 1.99 years	28.8	23.6	24.8
2 - 2.99 years	17.2	14.1	15.2
3+ years	31.1	36.1	32.8
Education			
Secondary or less	37.0%	39.6%	31.8%
Non university certificate	24.5	25.4	29.6
University degree	38.5	35.1	38.6

The case study sample is also reasonably close to the population on all characteristics shown in the table. In the case study sample, women and older age groups are somewhat over-represented. LINC level 3 is also over-represented.

Teachers

An instructor’s survey collected teacher opinions and feedback on the program. In addition, a class information form (CIF) was also completed by the teachers, collecting administrative information on the classes. The CIF survey collected administrative data, including enrolment dynamics, class level, class schedules, class focus, teaching materials used, and methods of assessment used. The evaluators surveyed teachers of classes selected for the learner survey. This was a random sample, although the number of surveys was limited to 68 (with a 98.6% response rate). This represents approximately 4% of LINC teachers nationwide. All class information forms were returned.

Teacher surveys and class information forms, along with the learner surveys, instruction sheets were sent to 56 of the 70 classes selected at random. The other 14 instructors were involved in the case studies.

⁸ Data from iCAMS: discrete LINC clients in 2008.

In addition, four Cours de Langue pour les Immigrants au Canada (CLIC) classes were selected at random for the survey. All teacher and CIF forms were returned. Twenty-eight CLIC learner surveys were completed as well.

Comparison group

Surveying the comparison group of newcomers not enrolled in LINC was carried out at the time of the outcomes testing of the selected newcomers. They were handed a paper copy of the survey for completion. The assessors who administered the outcomes testing did their best to help those with low-level English skills understand the survey.

Former LINC learners

The evaluation attempted to reach former LINC clients in order to determine their reasons for discontinuing classes, and overall perceptions of the LINC program. A difficult respondent group to reach due to often outdated contact information, the response was low, with 91 surveys returned, for a rate of 17%. However, the findings from this group do provide good indications regarding several key questions.

2.5. Case studies

Fifteen case studies were conducted: 14 LINC classes were randomly selected from the 70 selected for the survey, in addition to a randomly chosen CLIC class. Each case study visit consisted of: facility/classroom observations, completion of the learner survey, completion of the CLBA⁹ by class participants and a learner focus group discussion. Prior to the visit the LINC instructor completed and submitted a teacher survey and a class information form.

2.6. Literature review

A literature review of existing research on language training in Canada and other countries was conducted to provide additional perspectives and evidence regarding the impact of various designs and models of language instruction for newcomers. It focused on the following topics: the impact of language proficiency on settlement and integration; language instruction program design; and, best practices in language training delivery. The literature review findings¹⁰ were incorporated into the report.

2.7. Outcomes testing of comparison group

In order to measure changes in language proficiency, the CLBA was used in a pre/post-test approach. To help isolate the impact of randomly selected LINC learners from all other possible influences on language acquisition, the evaluation included a comparison group of newcomers (who were initially assessed but never took LINC). Initial assessment scores were then compared against re-test results, using the CLBA tool. There is no standardized exit test available for LINC; while the CLBA was not specifically devised for this purpose, it was determined that it was the best available tool to use for the purposes of the evaluation.

⁹ These tests were administered and scored by professional assessors. Outcomes testing was not done for CLIC.

¹⁰ The final report is available under separate cover.

The challenge was locating those who had been assessed but did not enroll in LINC classes; the sample totaled 53 people. The Ontario database, HARTs (History of Assessments, Referrals and Training), was the electronic source for selecting a comparison group,¹¹ which includes all newcomers to Ontario whose language abilities were assessed by language assessors. The challenge was to find those who were assessed but had not taken LINC. A random sample of newcomers in Ontario and Edmonton who were assessed but did not enroll in LINC improved the representativeness of the comparison group. For newcomers selected at random who had not attended LINC, the evaluation surveyed and assessed language capability via CLBA testing. To facilitate outcomes testing, the selection of the comparison group was limited to newcomers originally assessed at one of three assessment centres, one in Toronto, one in Halton/Peel and one in Edmonton. The newcomers were contacted with the assistance of the assessment centres (the evaluators did not have access to personal identification information). Each newcomer was given an honorarium for time spent testing.

2.8. Limitations

There are several limitations to this evaluation:

- LINC program data is collected through two systems – HARTs in Ontario (which represents approximately 82% of LINC clients) and iCAMS in the other regions. The data used in this study corresponds to all reporting SPOs in the iCAMS and HARTs data systems. There may be instances where SPOs have not reported LINC training in these systems for various reasons.
- LINC data contained in iCAMS (and HARTs in Ontario) are largely administrative in nature, providing client and program profile information, but does not provide adequate information on client outcomes. Development of a systematic approach to collection of outcome information (such as exit scores) would permit further analysis of client progress.
- In an ideal environment, it might be possible to test the effectiveness of LINC against a control group who had not received language training. It would, however, be difficult to isolate the impact of LINC, on LINC learners, from other influences on their language acquisition. In this study, in an effort to provide a more quantitative assessment, a small sample group (those assessed but not enrolled in LINC) was selected and a pre-test/post-test approach was used to compare gains scores.
- A related challenge to assessing language progression was the absence of a standardized exit test available for LINC. The evaluation used the CLBA to measure changes in language proficiency. Though it was not devised for this purpose, it was determined that CLBA was the best available tool to use for the purposes of the evaluation, and it allowed a direct comparison of assessment and ‘exit’ scores.
- The comparison group selected for outcomes testing is representative of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and Edmonton only, (but Ontario represents approximately 80% of LINC clients). Many who were selected could not be contacted; others refused to participate. The final number of individuals in the comparison group (53) is modest, but is enough for reliable statistical analysis. Multiple regression analysis controls for observable differences between the LINC client and comparison groups but there may be other differences (e.g., motivation) that cannot be controlled for.

¹¹ Note that iCAMS LINC Assessment Data includes this for all of Canada, but individual-level data could not be released to consultants.

- There was difficulty contacting former LINC learners, resulting in a response rate of 17% (96 returned surveys), thus the associated results, while a good indication for this group, should be taken as approximations.
- Because course content can vary between SPOs, there was difficulty in assessing the extent to which LINC participants acquired knowledge of Canada and of Canadian civics and the degree to which the program has assisted with settling in Canada. Using already validated theme-based tools to test thematic (content) information¹² yielded unreliable results. Thus content gains were assessed with surveys and focus groups which provided defensible conclusions about content gains attributable to LINC.

¹² The Summative Assessment Manual (SAM) for learners at CLB levels 1,2,3 and 4; and CLB 5-10 Exit Tasks for the higher level students.

3. Program relevance and design

Part of CIC's mission is to develop and implement policy and programs that facilitate the integration of newcomers to Canada. CIC provides a continuum of strategies and programs that start before newcomers enter the country and continue after arrival to help them settle, integrate and eventually attain Canadian citizenship so they can fully participate in Canadian society.

Using findings from the document review, interviews and surveys this chapter assesses LINC program relevance and design.

3.1. Program relevance

Key findings:

- The LINC program is closely aligned with CIC priorities;
- There is a need for language acquisition for newcomers to Canada, as it is key to successful integration;
- The federal government's role in the delivery of language training for newcomers to Canada is appropriate.

The need for LINC

According to CIC's *Facts and Figures* 2008, approximately 86% of Canada's permanent residents in 2008 had a mother tongue other than English or French. However, this does not imply that 86% need training in English or French. Furthermore, in 2008, an estimated 21% of Canada's permanent residents felt they could converse in neither official language (approximately 24,000 people).¹³ Children under the age of 15 and provinces not offering LINC (Quebec, Manitoba, British Columbia) were removed from the data for these calculations. Of course, many newcomers who can converse in English or French may need to improve their conversation skills or their reading and writing skills. The 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) found that 60% of immigrants were below Level 3 prose literacy, which is the threshold for coping with the modern knowledge economy. This compares to 37% of those born in Canada.¹⁴

The literature review, undertaken as a part of this evaluation, clearly illustrates the importance of language instruction on the economic and social integration of newcomers in Canadian society. Numerous studies have shown that knowledge of an official language has a positive effect on earnings, and that those with limited English abilities are more likely to earn less, be unemployed and/or live in poverty (Creticos et al. 2006; Martinez & Wang 2006; Ray 2004), which results in a greater reliance on social programs.

One key study, the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (LSIC) found that language constituted the most serious barrier newcomers faced to furthering their education or training and among the most serious barriers to finding employment. "A lack of skills in either official language was identified by 22% of the immigrants as the greatest hurdle when seeking employment. Among immigrants who could not converse in English or French, 69% stated that this was the most serious problem."¹⁵ Language difficulties also had an adverse effect on getting access to health care. Asked about the difficulties encountered in Canada four years after arrival,

¹³ CIC *Facts and Figures*, 2008: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2008/permanent/20.asp>

¹⁴ Statistics Canada. The Daily, Nov 9, 2005. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/051109/dq051109a-eng.htm>

¹⁵ Statistics Canada—89-611-XIE. *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, progress and prospects*, 2003, p.34.

newcomers were most likely to identify finding a job (38%) and learning a new language (18%) as the most serious.¹⁶

An overwhelming majority of researchers agree that language instruction is generally beneficial in the acquisition of a second language (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig 2000; Flege & Liu 2001; Lightbown 1985; Long 1983; Norris & Ortega 2000). Further, "...just living in a second language environment does not guarantee the experiences and exposures required to learn a second language. Even for those who are exposed to English, mere contact is insufficient for learners to "access and internalize the second language (L2) rules, forms and features", and outside the classroom it is difficult to identify and practice pragmatic language skills."¹⁷

In addition, the literature suggests that knowledge of an official language is a crucial prerequisite to social integration or acculturation (voting, volunteering, talking to neighbours, etc). Good second language skills increase non-native speakers' confidence and sense of affiliation, which results in more interaction experiences with native speakers, which in turn enhances language skills. Thus the rationale for a language acquisition for newcomers is compelling.

The need for a federal role

The obligation of the government to ensure all immigrants are able to fully participate in Canadian society was the predominant rationale for LINC cited by key informants. All but one – both federal and provincial – agreed that the federal government should be involved in official language training for newcomers. The reasoning most cited by respondents was that the federal government is facilitating the entry of newcomers into the country and is responsible to play a role in preparing them to live and work here. Also mentioned was the national perspective federal government brings to second language programming. LINC is provided in a Canadian context; learners are taught about Canadian education and health care systems, laws, community, and so on. Provincially funded English as a Second Language (ESL) programs do not necessarily use this context.¹⁸ The government provides LINC free of charge for eligible newcomers, an important aspect of its accessibility since many newcomers might not be able to afford to pay for language training. No informant could identify a better mechanism for delivering LINC than third-party agencies with expertise in language training.

LINC alignment with federal government and CIC priorities

LINC aligns well with federal government priorities. The federal government has the responsibility to assist and successfully integrate immigrants into Canadian society. LINC assists in the realization of the following objectives respecting immigration found in Section 3.(1) of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*:

- a. to permit Canada to pursue the maximum social, cultural and economic benefits of immigration;
- b. to enrich and strengthen the social and cultural fabric of Canadian society, while respecting the federal, bilingual and multicultural character of Canada;

¹⁶ Statistics Canada, 2007, *Canadian Social Trends*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue no. 11-008. Special edition.

¹⁷ Tracey Derwing, Lori Diepenbroek & Jennifer Foote. *A Literature Review of English Language Training in Canada and Other English-Speaking Countries*. University of Alberta, 2009.

¹⁸ LINC and ESL have a similar language instruction goal: the development of listening, speaking, pronunciation, reading and writing skills to allow participants to pursue and achieve their education goals. However, LINC has an explicitly stated goal of language for the purpose of settlement and integration.

- c. to support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy, in which the benefits of immigration are shared across all regions of Canada;
- d. to promote the successful integration of permanent residents into Canada, while recognizing that integration involves mutual obligations for new immigrants and Canadian society;

LINC also accords well with CIC priorities. Strategic Outcome 3 from the 2009-2010 Report on Plans and Priorities for CIC sets the “[s]uccessful integration of newcomers into society and promotion of Canadian citizenship” as a priority for the department. LINC is a key element of CIC’s integration programming, accounting for about a third of the integration budget.

3.2. Program design

LINC provides language training in English or French, intended to improve newcomers’ language skills. It is also meant to improve clients’ knowledge of Canada and of Canadian civics. All key informants interviewed considered the LINC program objectives to be clear and appropriate.

According to virtually all key informants, the double mandate of language training and settlement/integration does not dilute the language training; in fact the settlement mandate strengthens the language component. LINC policy experts interviewed held that since language is always taught in a context, that context should be something that can help newcomers settle into their new country.

Because newcomers need to learn the basics of Canadian society, it is more efficient to include this with their language training. This dual focus improves newcomers’ ability to more fully participate in Canadian society with their knowledge of English/French and of Canada.

LINC teachers surveyed were supportive of this double mandate. Many said the combination of teaching language skills in the Canadian context was what really sets LINC apart from other language training. They felt both of these central aspects were equally important: indeed the mean on the 5-point scale below was 2.99.

Table 3-1: Teacher support of LINC’s double mandate (5-point scale)

LINC should focus exclusively on language training		Mean ↓	LINC should focus exclusively on teaching about Canada	
1	2	3	4	5
2%	11%	76%	12%	0%

The literature review offers support to LINC’s dual focus, suggesting that there is ample research that supports the use of content-based instruction (CBI). LINC’s objective of teaching cultural information is not incompatible with its primary goal of teaching a second language. According to the literature, the two objectives can potentially complement each other. Learners in immersion programs are able to master the content offered in their course, while significantly improving their language ability (Met 1991). Another rationale for CBI is that learners may develop intrinsic motivation as they are exposed to new ideas and information relevant to their immediate circumstances. Grabe and Stoller (1997) argue that the integration of language and

content area objectives contributes to more learner-centred classrooms because learners can be offered some choice of the content they want to learn.¹⁹

Quality of the LINC program

The remainder of this section examines the quality of the LINC program. On almost every dimension of quality examined LINC fares well.

Key findings:

- LINC training is high quality and sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of students:
 - LINC instructors are experienced and use a variety of teaching tools to ensure student needs are met.
 - The assessment tools and student placement are appropriate.
- Numerous support services are provided by a large majority of SPOs, but availability of child care assistance was cited as the main obstacle to attending LINC.
- Over 90% of LINC classes feature continuous intake, which comes with challenges for teachers, but also has a benefit of making classes more readily accessible for students.
- Potential participants gain access to LINC in a timely fashion in most areas of the country, with only Calgary and PEI identifying waiting lists as an issue.

3.2.1. Quality of the teaching

The evaluation examined teacher qualifications and experience and student reactions.

ESL qualifications

The survey of LINC administrators and teachers showed that 95% of LINC teachers had at least one university degree. In addition, approximately 90% had formal ESL qualifications, a proportion that did not differ significantly by type of employer or age of teacher. It did differ by region, however. Almost all (98%) Ontario instructors had formal ESL qualifications, compared to about three-quarters of Alberta instructors and two-thirds of Atlantic instructors.

- Nearly 85% of LINC teachers surveyed had a TESL diploma or certificate.
- Two-thirds of the teachers surveyed had taken formal CLB training. There was no significant difference by type of employer or region.
- All teachers surveyed were aware of the LINC curriculum guidelines, saying that they were available where they teach.
- Most LINC teachers (97%) had taken at least one professional development course. On average, they had taken 3.1 courses each. Learning CLB and lesson planning were the professional development courses taken most frequently.

LINC/ESL experience

The typical teacher had 6.6 years of experience teaching LINC. Ten percent also teach ESL at present and a further 46% had taught ESL in the past. Counting all experience, the teachers surveyed had 9.0 years of experience teaching English on average.

¹⁹ Tracey Derwing, Lori Diepenbroek & Jennifer Foote. *A Literature Review of English Language Training in Canada and Other English-Speaking Countries*. University of Alberta, 2009.

Half had been teaching LINC for under five years, 21% for five to nine years, and 29% for 10 years or longer. School board teachers had the most experience teaching LINC – 9.6 years on average. Teachers with community agencies had an average of 5.9 years experience, those with colleges 3.0 years. There was no significant difference by region.

Student feedback on teachers

The learner survey asked for feedback on how well LINC teaches English and how well LINC has taught them about Canada. Respondents were very positive about both aspects, awarding each a B+ grade on average. The focus groups also asked about student satisfaction with LINC and the most common reaction was high praise for the teacher.

Through the case studies, it was observed that in teachers' interaction with the students, those who were enthusiastic had students who were enthusiastic. Teachers who were organized and well prepared had students who were motivated and felt challenged. Teachers who placed work-like expectations on their students tended to have students more committed to attending and being on time. Teachers who established an "English only" rule in the classroom seemed to have students who made a greater effort to speak English away from the classroom. Conversely, teachers who had lax standards, particularly relating to showing up on time and taking breaks, had students who were more likely to show up late and take long breaks.

While there are multiple factors that can affect language acquisition, such as educational background, age, gender, and aptitude and intelligence, it is difficult to conclude their impact. However, what becomes evident is that the quality of the language instructor plays a significant role in the process. As evidenced in the literature, teachers who match learners to instruction by playing to their strengths can lead to greater success (Skehan, 2002). Moreover, teachers can help motivate learners by creating a positive and enjoyable learning environment. Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) found a strong correlation between teachers' use of motivational strategies in the classroom and learners' higher levels of motivation.²⁰

3.2.2. Quality of administration

The administrator survey explored several policies relating to quality. The findings indicate that SPO policies promote high quality LINC programs.

Certified teachers

One critical factor to ensure a quality program is hiring certified teachers. As reported above, the great majority of instructors had formal ESL training. A primary reason for this is that 92% of the agencies that hire them require newly hired instructors to have formal ESL training.²¹ About five in six of these SPOs specified that a TESL certificate was required.

Use of LINC curriculum guidelines

LINC Curriculum Guidelines were created to ensure quality of teaching and to enhance consistency in LINC curriculum across the country. The SPO survey asked administrators

²⁰ Ibid 2009.

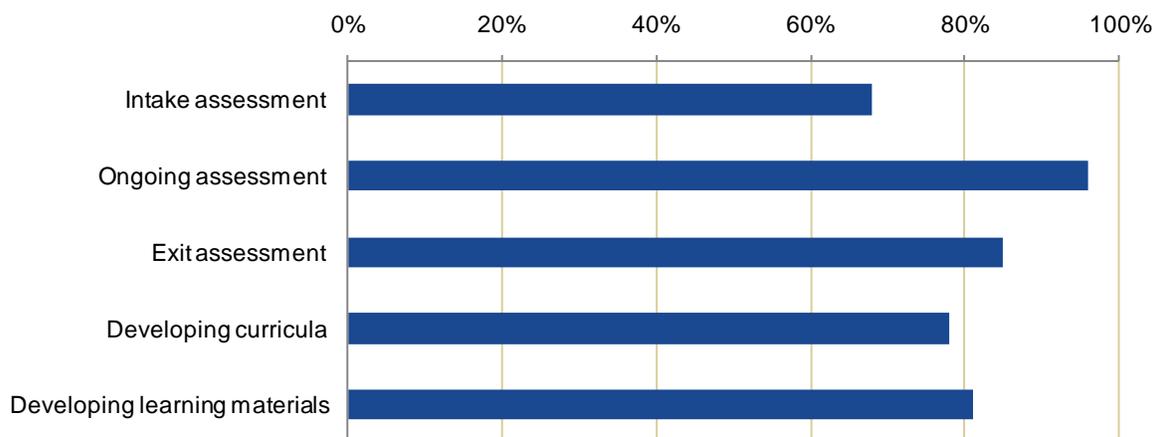
²¹ The question was restricted to newly hired teachers in case any policy had been enacted recently and previously hired teachers were still on staff.

whether they were aware of the LINC Curriculum Guidelines, whether they were available, and how they were used. All but one LINC SPO in Canada (that answered the survey) are aware of the Guidelines and have them available. All but one LINC SPO use LINC Curriculum Guidelines.

Canadian language benchmarks

Use of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) is often cited as an important issue in the field of ESL by language experts. Using LINC teacher survey data, the next graph shows the great majority of LINC providers use the CLB for each of five different purposes.

Figure 3-1: Uses of Canadian language benchmarks



Source: Administrators survey

N = 139

Ongoing assessment

Administrator survey results show that almost all SPOs (94%) require their instructors to conduct some form of on-going assessment. The CIF results confirmed that ongoing monitoring is a feature of every LINC class. Verbal proficiency is assessed as a matter of course. Proficiency checklists are used by virtually all teachers. Written assessments using non-standardized methods are also common. Outcome assessments are common as well. Proficiency checklists and verbal proficiency assessments took place in almost every classroom. Most other methods of conducting outcome assessments²² were used by half to three-quarters of the teachers.

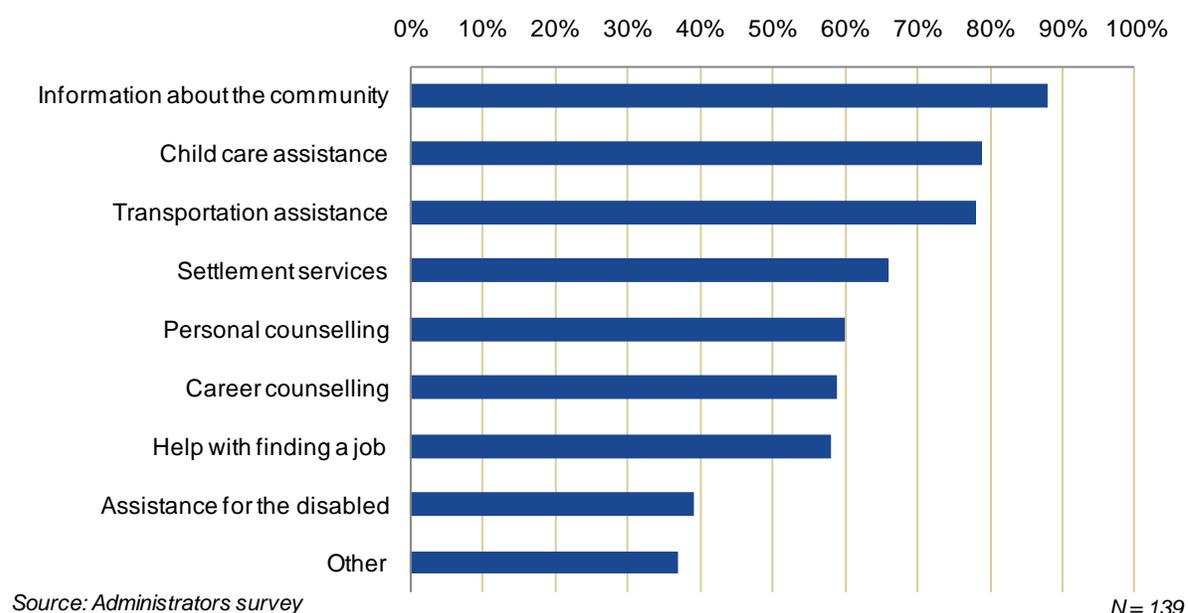
²² Additional types of outcome measurement methods cited by respondents included the SAM tool, grammar and listening tests, and in some cases, a portfolio approach.

Student supports

Without support services such as child care assistance and transportation assistance, many LINC learners may not have had the opportunity to take the class. Other support services such as provision of counselling and help with finding a job can assist the learner during and after the class.

As the data from the administrators survey below reveals, 88% of SPOs offer information about the community and around 80% offer child care and transportation assistance. Career counselling, personal counselling and job search help are less common, but are still provided by more than half the trainers. Assistance for the disabled is offered by 38% of SPOs. Note that these figures do not imply that a provider offers these services in every class it delivers. The case studies found that many providers offer services such as child care in some locations but not in others.

Figure 3-2: Percent of SPOs providing various services to LINC students



Dynamics of enrolment

In spring, 2009, the typical LINC class in Canada had approximately 18 students enrolled²³, but that mean masks a great deal of activity. The classes began with 17 students on average; but because over 90% of classes feature continuous enrolment, the typical class surveyed had 9 more students join during the term. Between the start of the term and the time of the survey, 6 students had dropped out and 2 had graduated or transferred to another class.

²³ This is different from the mean class size reported above. Replacing class information data collected through the survey with HART's data for Ontario classes, the mean class size is approximately 17 for classes surveyed. This compares with a mean class size for all LINC classes of approximately 14. The sample is somewhat biased in terms of mean class size, under-representing small classes. The primary reason for this is that none of the very small classes (including dozens of one-on-one tutoring "classes") were included in the survey sample. Also, literacy classes, which tend to be small, were excluded.

Table 3-2: Enrolment dynamics

	Mean number of students*
At the start of the term	16.7
Enrolled after the start of the term	9.1
Dropped out before completion	5.8
Transferred to other levels	1.8
Current students (June, 2009)	18.2

N=63. *Excludes Home Study cases because they are not “classes” as such but are classified by city.

Calculating a dropout rate is not straightforward because it is not known when each student joined, transferred or quit. A rough approximation is the number of students quitting divided by the number enrolled at any time, which equals 22%. This will be an underestimate of the final dropout rate, since the term was only part way through in most programs at the time of the survey. Continuous enrolment appears to be more frequent in the east than elsewhere, which is not surprising given that a vast majority of LINC clients are in Ontario.

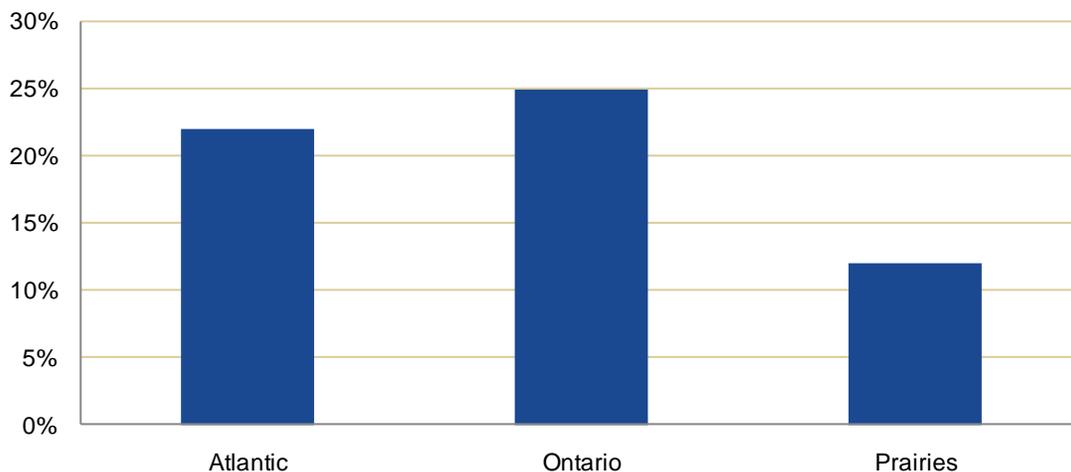
Table 3-3: Enrolment dynamics by region

	Total Students			Statistical Significance**
	Atlantic	Ontario*	Prairies	
At the start of the term	10.6	17.9	15.3	p < .05
Enrolled after the start of the term	15.8	10.1	3.3	p < .01
Dropped out before completion	5.8	6.9	2.2	p < .01
Transferred to other levels	4.8	1.7	1.1	p < .02
Current students	15.8	19.4	15.4	p > .05

N = 63. *Ontario data for this table excludes the two Home Study classes in the sample because they are not “classes” as such but are classified by city. ** ANOVA F-test with df = 2/60.

The “approximate” dropout rate is similar in the Atlantic and Ontario regions; the dropout rate in the Prairies is much lower.

Figure 3-3: Dropout rate by region



Source: Class Information Form

N = 63

Prairie classes experienced much less entry and exit after the start of the term than other regions. Alberta has a unique way of limiting the impact of continuous intake according to a key informant. For part-time (evening/Saturday) learners, they have “Managed Continuous Intake.” New students can only start on the first Monday of each month, which makes it easier for teachers and learners already in the class. For full-time learners they have “Lock-step Method” or blocked semesters: these last 12 weeks (16 weeks at colleges). New students can only enter during the first two weeks.

Approximately 52% of the teachers of classes with continuous intake surveyed said it had an effect on the progress of other students. Chief reasons cited were that it slows down the class/students due to the need to cover previously-taught materials, and it can disrupt the group dynamic. Teachers with literacy learners in the class were much more likely to believe continuous intake affects progress (80%) than teachers with basic level learners (55%) or teachers with intermediate level learners (47%).

Most focus group participants felt that continuous intake did not negatively affect the classes. Students who started LINC well after their classmates said that the other students had been understanding and helpful. One of the reasons students accept the concept of continuous intake is because they recognize that without this option they may have had to wait a considerable period of time to enter LINC. If intake occurred only on set dates at the beginning of the term students would be forced to wait; continuous intake allowed them much more immediate access to the program.

Multilevel classes

In about three-quarters of the classes surveyed all students were at the same LINC level; a quarter had students at two LINC levels, virtually all one level apart. This figure may be underestimate the situation, however, because there will be many students with different CLB levels for the four skill areas. The literature suggests that multilevel classes can be problematic for instructors in terms of meeting the disparate needs of learners (Beder & Medina 2001; Bell 1991; Comings, Soricone, & Santos 2006).²⁴

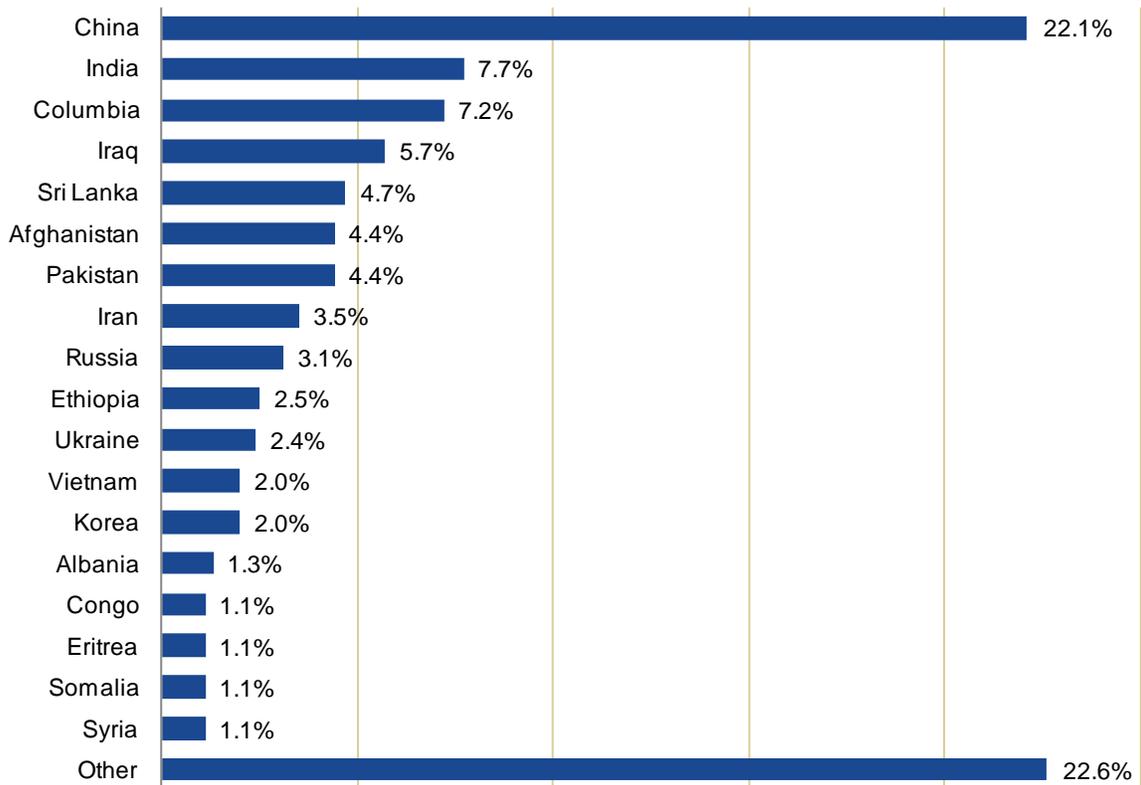
Students in the focus group knew there was some variance in level of language proficiency among the students, particularly when the specific components of language training (listening, speaking, reading and writing) were taken into consideration. Most felt, however, that the students in the class were at a similar level overall. Hence, variation in skill level across class members was not typically a concern for the students involved in the case study visits.

Culturally diverse / mixed ethnicity classes

Survey data (Figure A-7) shows that LINC students originate from all parts of the world, 81 different countries in all (in the figure, nations accounting for less than one percent of students were combined into the “other” category). China was the nation of origin of the largest number of LINC learners (22%). Second was India, the birthplace of 8% of the students.

²⁴ Tracey Derwing, Lori Diepenbroek & Jennifer Foote. *A Literature Review of English Language Training in Canada and Other English-Speaking Countries*. University of Alberta, 2009.

Figure 3-4: Country of birth of LINC students



Source: Learners survey

N = 637

LINC is helping students to settle in Canada and develop skills for interaction in a culturally diverse environment. The typical LINC class had 5.8 countries and 5.2 languages represented out of every 10 students.²⁵ That is good evidence of a cultural mix. Focus group participants seemed comfortable in their mixed classes.

Examining the source countries of LINC clients using iCAMS²⁶ data shows similarities to the sample in the evaluation (table above):

- China is the top country of birth for LINC clients in all provinces. Depending on the year, clients who were born in China account for 25-30 percent of clients in Ontario, 20-30 percent of those in Alberta, 20 percent in Saskatchewan, and 10-15 percent in the Atlantic region.
- In Ontario, clients who were born in India account for, on average, another 7 percent of those who have completed LINC courses. Additionally, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka each account for approximately 5 percent of the clients each year.
- In the other provinces, the breakdown by country of birth of LINC clients is a bit different. Columbia accounts for roughly 9 percent of the clients outside of Ontario. Sudan and Afghanistan account for approximately 10 percent each in 2003 but decline over the period to near 5 percent in 2008.

²⁵ Data derived from the learner survey (# countries/languages) and from the focus groups.

²⁶ Source: iCAMS and HARTs, data for 2003-2008, *Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada – Client Profile and Performance Indicators*, CIC (2009).

The literature review examined how learners' backgrounds affect the second language classroom. Research shows that, for learners with different backgrounds, cultural differences are not a barrier to a successful learning environment. Furthermore, while prejudice among learners can be an issue, according to a 2005 study interviewing Canadian ESL instructors, the ESL classroom is a good context to deal with such issues (Stuart 2005). Because a mixed ethnicity class is also very likely to be a multilingual class, it is reasonable to think that grouping learners in a monolingual class would allow teachers to focus on specific problems. However, the literature review suggests that the benefits of a multilingual class may outweigh the benefits of specialized instruction in a monolingual class; learners in a multilingual class benefit from the communication and friendships they create with people from different backgrounds.

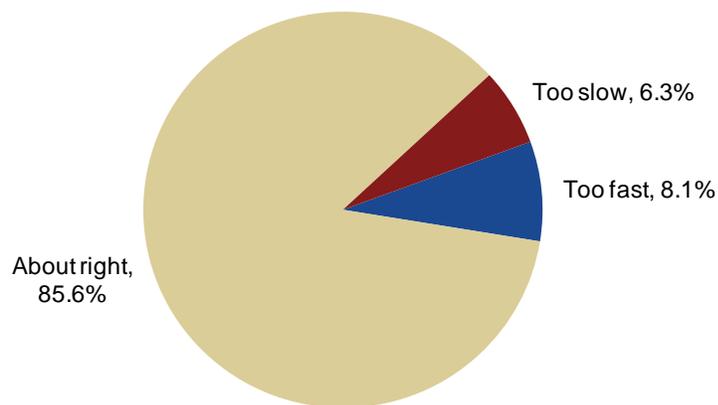
3.2.3. Quality of assessments

The quality of the LINC assessment process was assessed by looking for evidence that the assessments placed LINC students appropriately. This subsection finds that the assessment tools available to LINC are appropriate and effective.

The teacher survey asked what percentage of LINC students are moved to a different level in their first week or two in class, which would be an indication of ineffective assessments. The mean response was 5%; the mode was 0% and the median was 4%. This is a good indication that from the teachers' perspective most assessments are accurate.²⁷

Ninety-four percent (94%) of surveyed students felt they were placed at the correct level. About 86% were comfortable with the pace of the class, which again suggests they were placed at the correct level (Figure 3-5).

Figure 3-5: Perceived pace of LINC class



Source: Teachers survey

N = 616

According to the literature, some aspects of second language acquisition develop in predictable stages. The greatest gains are made when a learner is exposed to language suitable for his/her stage (Lightbown, 2000; Pienemann, 1989). This suggests that language placement is important for a learner to fully benefit from the learning environment. The aforementioned evidence suggests that the LINC assessment process is effective, with students likely to be placed at the right level.

²⁷ Two cautionary notes, however: a few teachers wrote in the margin that they are not permitted to move new students to a different level; and one teacher mentioned that the SPO changes the level for a small percentage before the student gets into a class.

3.2.4. Other aspects of quality

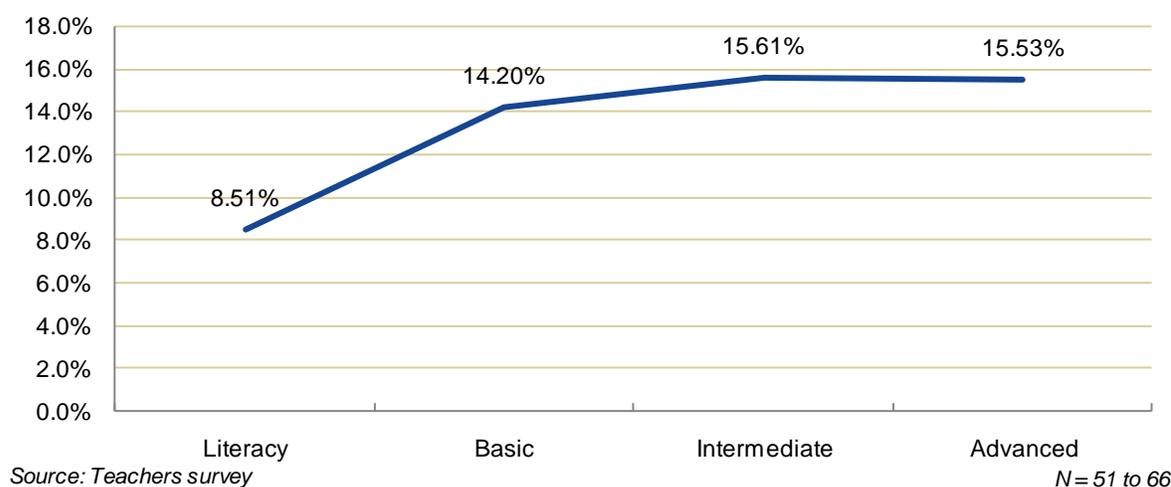
Other indicators of quality included in LINC evaluation frameworks include pupil-teacher ratio, relevance of teaching tools used and percentage of learners moving, accessibility, and average time to move from one LINC level to the next. The evidence suggests that mean LINC class size is reasonable; SPOs have adequate tools/information to support and improve the service delivery; and most potential participants are able to gain access to LINC in a timely fashion.

Class size

No research could be found that pinpoints the ideal number of students per teacher in language instruction classes. Therefore the teacher survey asked LINC teachers for their view on the matter. According to these teachers, the ideal pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) rises as student level rises from literacy to basic level, but beyond these the ideal PTR is fairly stable (Figure 3-6). There was no significant difference between regions or type of SPO on this variable, however, there was a wide range of opinion on ideal numbers across teachers. For example, the ideal number of literacy students per teacher ranged from 4 to 20.

The mean class size for all LINC classes was approximately 14, but for surveyed classes this rose to approximately 17. The latter figure is a more realistic reflection of the typical LINC class because it excludes tutoring and literacy classes. Still, a class size of 17 compares favourably to the ideal class size of 14 to 16 for levels above literacy.²⁸

Figure 3-6: LINC instructor's perceived ideal number of students per class, by level

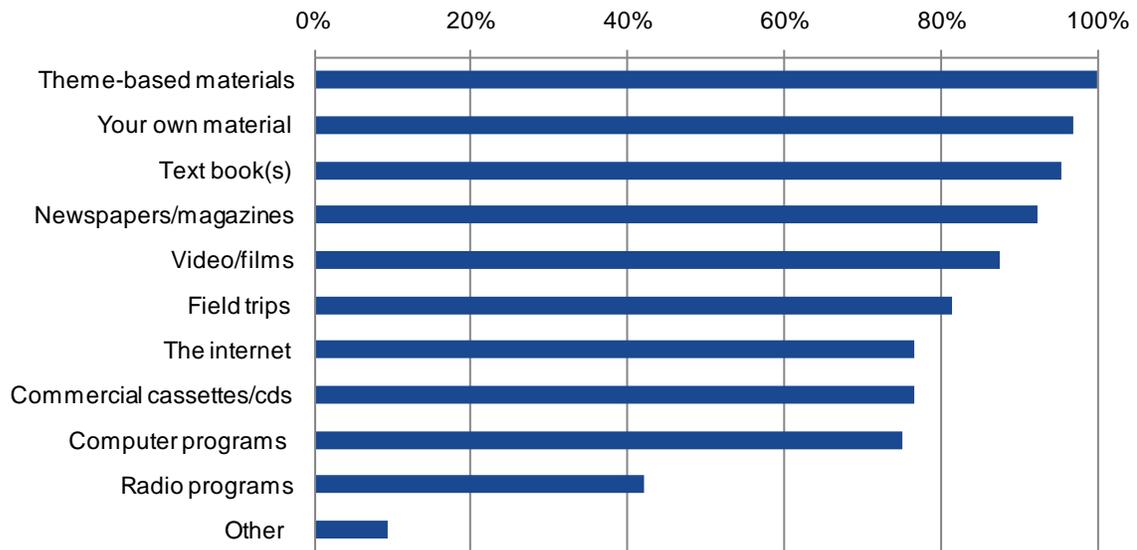


Teaching tools

Instructors have the flexibility to tailor LINC course content to the needs of their students. All use theme-based materials and almost all use their own materials to help ensure the class meets the particular goals and circumstances of their students. The typical class used 8.0 of the materials listed in Figure 3-7, and 9 different types of tools were used in at least 70% of classes.

²⁸ It also compares favourably to the mean student-teacher ratio in Canada for public elementary and high schools: 16.3 to 1 in 2002-03. Statistics Canada, Summary Public School Indicators for the Provinces and Territories, 1996-97 to 2002-03, Catalogue no. 81-595-MIE2004022.

Figure 3-7: Teaching materials used in class



Source: Class Information Form

N = 64

Accessibility

It is evident that LINC has the properties of an accessible program:

- It is free for eligible newcomers;
- It offers classes at proficiency levels from literacy through LINC level 7²⁹;
- It offers classes full and part-time, morning, afternoon and evening and on weekends;
- It offers courses in classrooms, on-line, via mail, and through one-on-one tutoring;
- It offers funding to overcome transportation and disability barriers;
- It offers free childcare;
- It has continuous intake so few newcomers need to wait long for placement in a class; and
- It funds a range of service providers (colleges, school boards, community organizations, private language schools, etc) that offer classes in various locations in most cities.

Among focus group participants the consensus was that LINC was easily accessible. They felt that LINC is well known amongst newcomers and that those who want to get into the program are able to do so readily. Students were asked if they knew of anyone who would like to be taking LINC, but was unable to get into the program. Not one of the students included in focus group discussions answered this question affirmatively.

As of October 2009, in Calgary there were approximately 1380 newcomers waiting for assessment and 790 awaiting LINC spaces in class, some because of insufficient child care spaces. Waiting lists were generally not an issue in most other areas of the country, with only PEI experiencing a waiting list for LINC spaces.

Lack of childcare was cited as the main obstacle preventing individuals from attending LINC classes. A few of the LINC providers involved in the case study did not offer childcare services.

²⁹ Learners may undertake LINC instruction at levels 1 through 5 in all provinces, while Nova Scotia offers LINC up to level 6 and Ontario to level 7.

Those that did, offered varying degrees of service: some accepted infants while others did not accept children until they were over 2 ½ years of age. Several students indicated that they had to either deal with a wait because there were no spaces available in the child care program or they had to wait until their child was old enough to participate in the program. Also, in most facilities school age children are not allowed to attend the daycare in the summer, so parents of school age children do not have the opportunity to attend summer classes. Transportation, which is advertised as a benefit of LINC, was also an issue for some. Some providers have established stringent rules for eligibility for transportation subsidy while others seem to be more lax - a disparity that raised questions with some students.

4. Program management and delivery

4.1. Communication and coordination

Key finding:

- Communications within CIC, and with program stakeholders, is working well.

Communications within CIC

OMC has an effective relationship with the Regional Program Advisors (RPAs) in each region from the perspective of OMC and of every RPA interviewed for the evaluation. RPAs liaise regularly with the OMC lead to share information and to seek advice on programming issues in the field. In turn, NHQ asks for input from each Region on new policy and initiatives. The Regions provide formal reporting twice a year on regional work plan activities, a monthly work in progress report (and in Ontario a quarterly Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA) report). The regional directors general are also in regular communication with NHQ. More regular discussions between OMC and the regions was cited as a potential improvement from both perspectives.

The National Language Training Working Group was lauded by three interviewees as an excellent mechanism to communicate with LINC officials from across Canada. Consisting of middle and lower-level managers from policy and operations at NHQ and representatives from each regional office, the group explores operational realities, challenges, and shares best practices. It was noted that they meet less often than many would like but do hold periodic conference calls with stakeholders.

Communications with NGOs and provinces

Each year there is a settlement conference which involves service providers, as well as colleagues from NHQ. This was considered valuable by most informants. In addition, a LINC administrators' conference is held annually, bringing together SPOs and CIC regional LINC managers.

Communications between federal and provincial officials are important to ensure LINC and ESL programs are coordinated to the extent possible. In Ontario, for example, under COIA, regional CIC officials work in collaboration with their provincial counterparts to develop a more coordinated approach and address gaps in services, with several program delivery improvement initiatives being developed or underway.

Two regional examples of coordination are in Alberta and the Atlantic region. In Alberta, federal staff work and consult with their provincial colleagues to ensure delivery of programs that are complementary.

In the Atlantic region the federal and provincial governments work together in determining where program funding is being placed in order to avoid overlap/duplication. Key informants felt both levels of government work well together and communicate regularly. For example, in Nova Scotia there is a committee that meets monthly on the LINC program which includes a local CIC officer, a representative from the province, an assessor and representatives from the SPO community.

4.2. Modes of delivery³⁰

Key finding:

- Program guidelines and the various modes of LINC delivery allow SPOs to create a flexible program that meets learner needs.

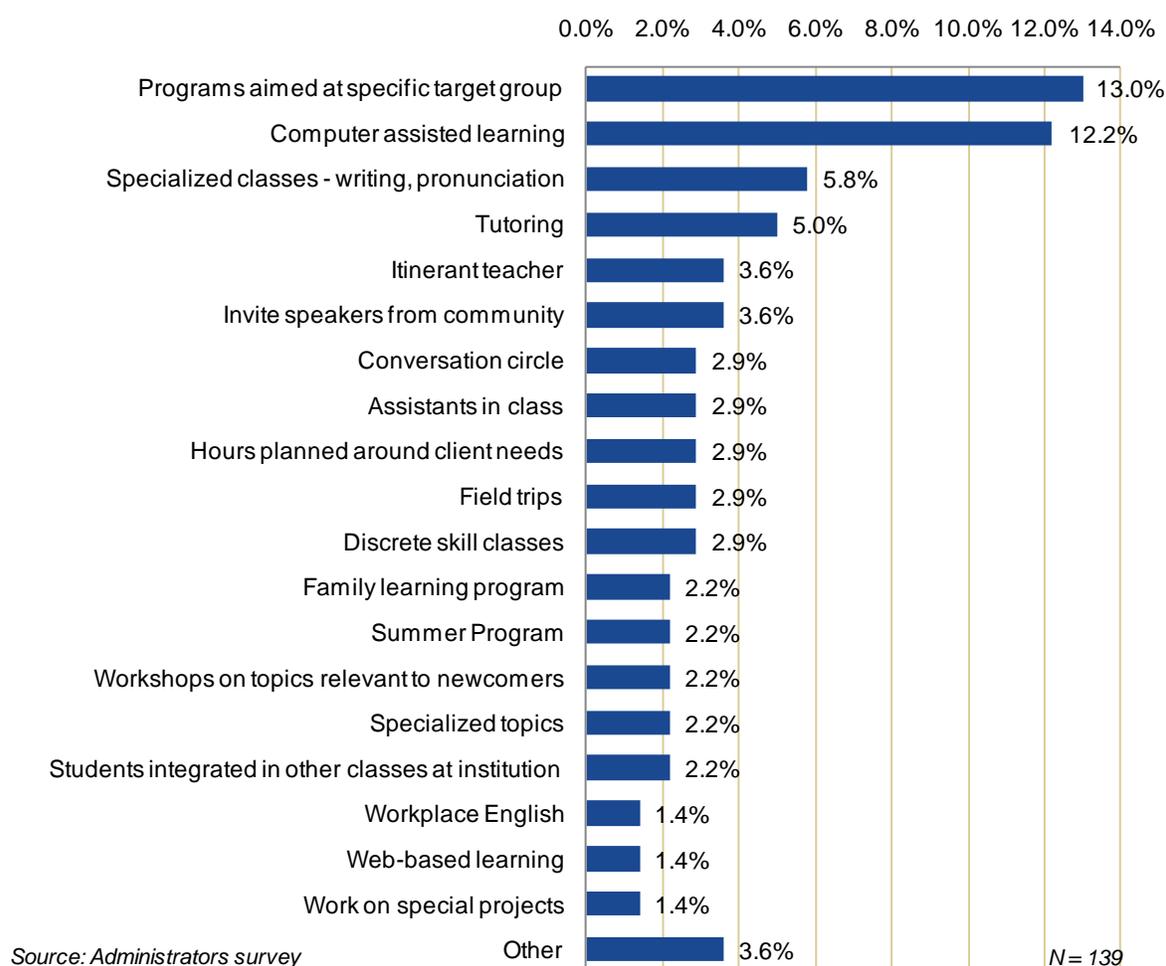
LINC is almost entirely a classroom-based program. Approximately 95% of LINC students attend classes. This may be a standard school classroom or a room in a commercial building.

The primary alternate mode of delivery is via the LINC Home Study Program. Home Study students may take the course online or through correspondence. Both options feature a weekly phone conversation between teacher and student. As of May, 2009, there were approximately 950 Home Study students, about 3% of all LINC learners in Canada.

The SPO administrator survey explored innovations that SPOs are using. These are listed in Figure 4-1. A clear conclusion is that no single variation of the standard classroom mode of delivery is common. About 13% of providers offer classes aimed at specific target groups such as women, youth and seniors. Another 12% offer computer assisted learning in class or in labs. Classes focusing on specific skill areas such as writing and pronunciation were mentioned by 6% of SPOs. Another 5% offer tutoring: e.g., one on one tutoring in the student's home, and after-school tutoring groups for students who require extra support through the use of volunteers. Four percent of SPOs feature itinerant teachers who travel to the students' homes to provide LINC instruction. In the English Language Tutoring for the Ottawa Community (ELTOC), volunteer tutors visit learners in the learner's home. Alberta and Newfoundland also have rural itinerant teachers. Only one SPO offered English in the workplace, but two others taught classes that focused chiefly on language in the workplace. LINC in the workplace is being piloted in Ontario.

³⁰ Additional background on LINC modes of delivery is found in Appendix A.

Figure 4-1: Innovative models of delivery



Additional regional program differences

The primary regional differences in modes of delivery have already been stated: different LINC levels and different modes of delivery are available. There are other differences as well:

- At present LINC levels 1 through 5 are available across Canada; level 6 is available in Nova Scotia; levels 6 and 7 are available in Ontario.³¹ In addition, literacy classes are available for newcomers who are assessed at pre-benchmark levels on the CLBA.
- There are no limits on the length of time an eligible client can remain in the LINC program, except in the case of Alberta, where collaboration between CIC and Alberta Employment and Immigration allows students to bridge from LINC to training funded by the Province.
- On the delivery assistance side Northern Alberta features Centralized Delivery Assistance by the CLB/LINC Projects Office. They fund/develop all the research, professional development (PD) opportunities, conferences, advisory committees etc. Most special projects are planned with the community.

³¹ In late 2006, programming began in Ontario for LINC 6 and 7 and curriculum guidelines were developed for those levels.

- According to key informants, Ontario designates more of its LINC budget to research and to the production of resources than do other regions. It is also more likely to test innovations in delivery³².
- The Yukon faces unique challenges because of the small immigrant population (60-70 per year), the small number of SPOs, and limited opportunity for instructor training. There are no distance education programs and funds for child minding and travel are very limited.

4.3. Outreach

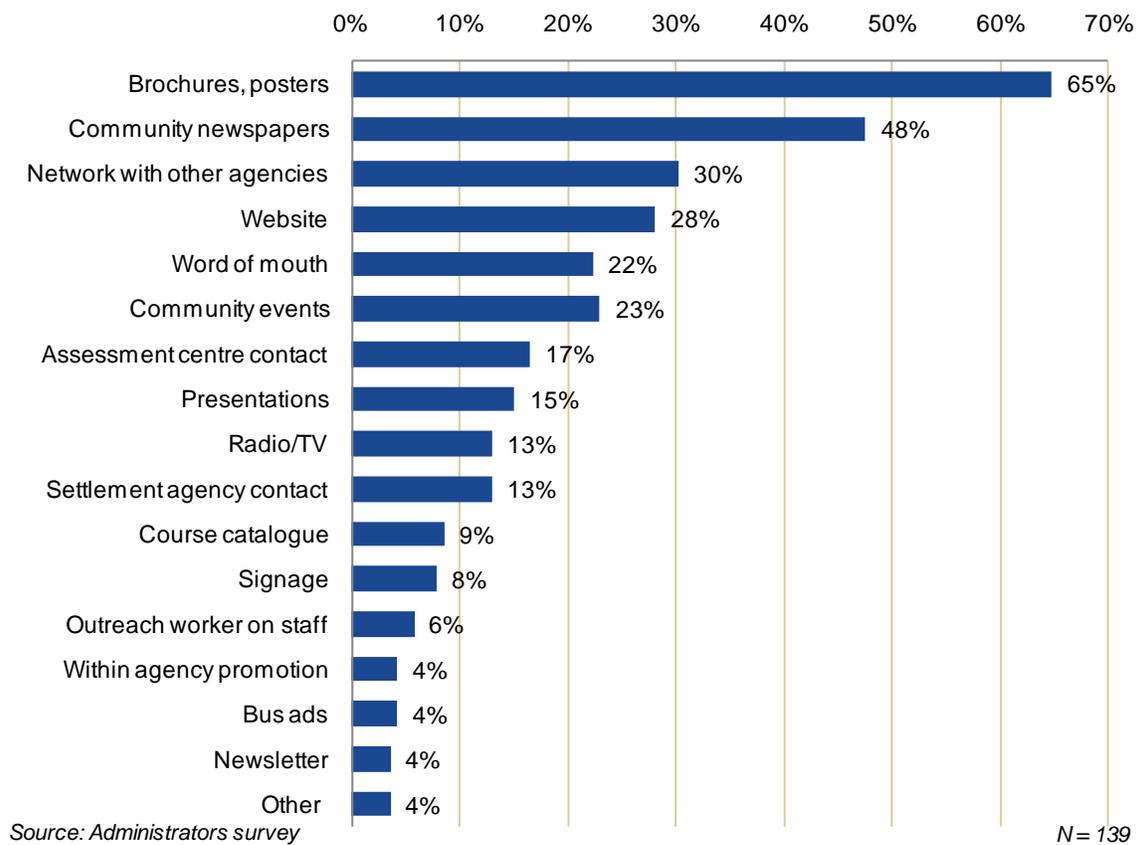
No co-ordinated campaign to promote LINC has ever been undertaken. CIC has provided high quality brochures and posters on LINC in the main languages of newcomers. Promotion of LINC is the responsibility of SPOs, who may apply for funding to market their LINC programs, subject to maximums.

LINC agencies use various means of promotion to attract students to their classes. Nearly two-thirds make use of LINC pamphlets and posters. About half advertise in community – usually ethnic – newspapers. Figure 4-2 lists the other marketing tools used.

Nearly two-thirds of LINC administrators surveyed said that word of mouth – generally from current and former students – is the most effective means of promoting their program. SPOs attract future students by providing good service to current ones. Other marketing techniques considered effective included LINC pamphlets and posters (15% of administrators mentioned these), assessment centres (12%), community newspapers (11%), networking with other agencies (9%), website (7%) and signage (7%).

³² Source: key informant interviews with CIC Regional officers.

Figure 4-2: Proportion of SPOs using various marketing and outreach techniques

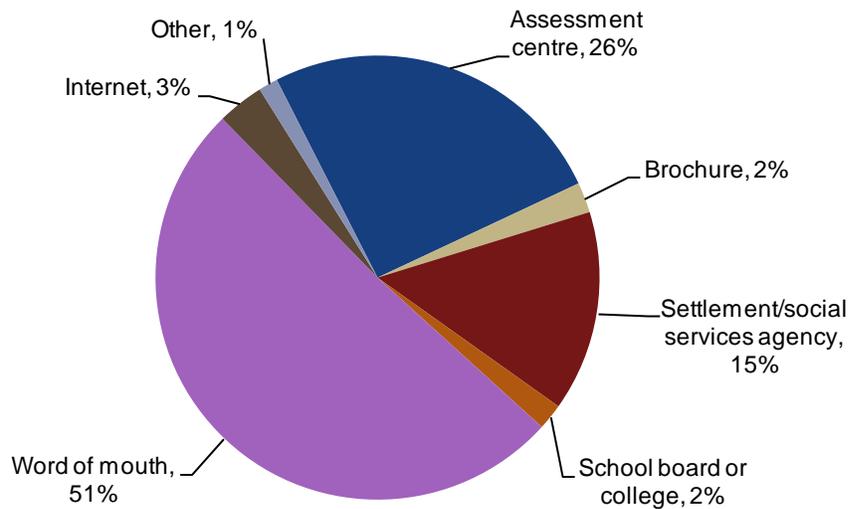


Data from the student survey confirm word of mouth is the most important means of learning about LINC (Figure 4-3). This differed significantly by CIC region³³:

- *Ontario* - with a large concentration of newcomers in the GTA, friends and relatives accounted for 60%; assessment centres (20%) and settlement agencies (10%) were secondary
- *Prairies-Northern Territories* - most learners found out about the class from an assessment centre (43%) or a settlement agency (27%)
- *Atlantic* - word of mouth was the most prevalent single source (39%), but assessment centres (29%) and settlement agencies (29%) were also common sources

³³ No student survey was returned from the SPO in Yukon that was part of the sample.

Figure 4-3: How students learned about the class



Source: Learners survey

N = 623

Only 7% of students found out about LINC before coming to Canada.

4.4. Program Take-up

Key finding:

- The program has not calculated a take-up rate due to the various language training options available to newcomers and the voluntary nature of language instruction.

The perception about the program is that the uptake rate for LINC is low. Some key informants within CIC felt that more newcomers should be taking advantage of LINC. As noted earlier there is a need for language acquisition for newcomers: approximately 21% of newcomers reported that they could not converse in one of Canada's official languages (children under the age of 15 and provinces not offering LINC were removed from the data for this calculation), and in a different study, the IALSS found that two-thirds of immigrants to Canada were below level 3 prose literacy.

A recent pan-Canadian study found that there are around 257,000³⁴ immigrants in English or French publicly funded language training, with 217,000 in English courses and 40,000 in French courses throughout Canada. Of this, approximately 50,000 - 55,000 are annually enrolled in LINC across the country and roughly 200,000 are enrolled in provincial programs. With the availability of federal and provincial language training, it is possible that some learners are registered in multiple courses. This is especially likely in Ontario, where learners may be enrolled in both a part time LINC program, as well as a part time provincially sponsored course, (both of which could be delivered by the same provider). The survey of the comparison group³⁵ (newcomers who had been assessed but had not taken LINC) found that 90% would like to take a class to improve their English and in fact 46% had taken an ESL class at some point since immigrating.

³⁴ A significant majority of those learners are in part time courses, upwards of 60% to 70%.

³⁵ There were 53 individuals in this sample.

When discussing program take-up, it is also important to consider the reasons and barriers for not enrolling in the LINC program. LINC administrators were asked what insights they have on why the proportion taking LINC is not higher. The reasons include:

- Need to work (to support themselves/family) (66%)
- Lack of information on LINC (33%)
- Family obligations (31%)
- Belief that their English suffices (14%)
- Unsuitable class schedules (11%)

CIC informants gave a similar list of responses. And comparison group responses were also similar: the reasons cited most often for not enrolling in LINC were the need to work (54%), they had young children to care for (21%), and felt they did not need more English training (21%).

LINC program administrators identified the following ideas for increasing the proportion of newcomers who take LINC:

- **More promotion of the program** (34%) This included providing information packages before and upon immigration to Canada; better advertising at ports of entry; promotion by intake and settlement workers and CLB assessors during language counseling; a national advertising campaign; a national branded LINC with a clear logo; translation of marketing materials into more languages.
- **More flexible models/hours** (23%) Including providing part-time instruction or evening classes; developing different formats to deliver classes in the community (e.g., libraries, community centres, shopping malls); diversifying the means of delivering LINC (online and correspondence); and offering mix modality - LINC in-class and home study.
- **Provide a stipend** (19%) .

It should be noted, however, that the program has no way to calculate a take-up rate due to the various language training options available to newcomers and the voluntary nature of language instruction.

Capacity

Operational and capacity impacts were assessed as part of the uptake issue through interviews with regional CIC officials. Atlantic region stated that some SPOs might not be able to handle an increased demand for services, the main challenges being a limited amount of physical space and limited availability of language instructors.

Ontario region believed that CIC and SPOs have the capacity to provide services to more clients, though some SPOs might not have the required childminding spaces. Informants felt that an increase in uptake would not necessarily have a positive or negative impact on quality as long as classes do not become overcrowded or poorly managed.

In the West the feeling was that current providers could probably expand, but the problem would be lack of new qualified SPOs. Also, it was felt that staffing at local CICs has not kept pace with expanded funding so managing new SPOs could be a challenge.

Yukon region said that if there were an increase in enrolment the SPOs would be able to serve the increased numbers.

5. Program impact and cost-effectiveness

5.1. Language proficiency

LINC is designed specifically to improve the language proficiency of newcomers in a Canadian context. Accordingly, one focus of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the program in terms of language gains. In an ideal environment, it might be possible to test the effectiveness of LINC against a control group who had not received language training. It would, however, be difficult to isolate the impact of LINC, on LINC learners, from other influences on their language acquisition. Similarly, for a control group, it is difficult to identify the impact of unobservable characteristics (e.g. motivation, diversity of social networks, etc.) on their language acquisition, outside of a LINC environment.

In this study, in an effort to provide a more quantitative assessment, a small sample group (those assessed but not enrolled in LINC) was selected and a pre-test/post-test approach was used to compare gains scores, measuring changes in language proficiency using the CLBA tool. To further isolate the impact LINC classes from all other possible influences on language acquisition, the scores of a comparison group of newcomers (who were initially assessed but never took LINC) were analyzed using a regression model³⁶.

Key findings:

- On average, LINC students had completed 1.0 LINC level.
- In an ideal environment, it might be possible to test the effectiveness of LINC against a control group who had not received language training. It would, however, be difficult to isolate the impact of LINC, on LINC learners, from other influences on their language acquisition. Similarly, for a control group, it is difficult to identify the impact of unobservable characteristics (e.g. motivation, diversity of social networks, etc.) on their language acquisition, outside of a LINC environment. In this study, in an effort to provide a more quantitative assessment, a small sample group (those assessed but not enrolled in LINC) was selected and a pre-test/post-test approach was used to compare gains scores. For the “control” sample under consideration in this evaluation:
 - LINC students improved their language abilities in the four skill areas: reading, writing, listening and speaking (by greater than one benchmark level in each);
 - However, for listening and speaking, the gains were not beyond what they would have achieved from living in Canada;
 - The number of hours in LINC makes a considerable difference: by the time students reach 1000 hours, the gains attributable to LINC rise.

LINC levels completed

On average, LINC students had completed 1.0 level. Just over half the LINC students in the case studies had completed at least one LINC level³⁷ (refer to Table 5-1). The mean number of hours to complete each level is presented in Table 5-2.³⁸ The large standard deviations suggest that many individuals deviate substantially from the mean at every level. Across all students (in the case studies) the mean number of hours to complete a LINC level was 347.4. Using iCAMS data

³⁶ The comparison group sample was 53 people. Both the LINC clients and comparison group individuals surveyed and tested were taken as a random sample in May 2009. For additional details, refer to Methodology sections 2.5 and 2.7.

³⁷ A completed level can mean the client has completed a LINC level or has exited the program.

³⁸ Outliers (unrealistically low or high number of hours) were excluded from the analysis. Even so the standard deviations are very high.

for all LINC students in late spring 2009, the typical learner took 389.4 hours to complete a level. Table 5-2 compares the LINC population to the case study sample by level. The sample is reasonably close to the population except at level 5 (where there were only four cases in the sample).³⁹

For the case study cases, number of hours was examined by using HART's data and information solicited directly from the case study SPOs outside of Ontario. Table 5-1 includes iCAMS data on the population and data from the case studies; the proportions are very close, confirming that the sample well represents the population.

Table 5-1: LINC levels completed

LINC Levels Completed	Percent of Students	
	LINC Population (iCAMS)	Case Study Sample
0	39.8%	39.6%
1	33.3	33.3
2	18.1	18.7
3	6.4	6.0
4	1.9	0.7
5	0.4	0.0
6	0.1	0.7

Table 5-2: Mean hours to complete LINC level by level

LINC Level	LINC Population (iCAMS)		Case Study Sample	
	Mean Number of Hours to Complete	Standard Deviation	Mean Number of Hours to Complete	Standard Deviation
Literacy	405.5	357.6	392.8	468.5
1	406.7	321.3	430.0	241.6
2	400.3	298.2	337.7	218.7
3	403.0	307.8	363.8	298.8
4	363.7	283.1	294.1	256.0
5	349.9	274.3	496.1	313.8

N = 126

³⁹ For example, one outlier with 2.5 hours to complete level 5 was dropped from the case study sample for the hours analysis. Including this case would reduce the mean hours to 397. Including an outlier of 1620 hours in level 4 would raise the mean hours to 382.

Language proficiency gains - mean difference scores

Table 5-3 compares language proficiency gains without considering possible influencing factors or observable differences. The table below illustrates the mean difference in language proficiency gains by subtracting the current assessment score from the client’s initial assessment score. The entries under “LINC” and “Comparison” represent the difference between the current and original benchmark score for both groups. Most notably, LINC clients improved their reading skills by 1.21 benchmark levels, and experienced gains in all skill areas. While the comparison group (those assessed but not enrolled in LINC) improved their proficiencies, the gains were more modest.

Table 5-3: Comparing mean difference scores (uncontrolled)

Language area	Current assessment - original assessment		
	LINC	Comparison	Difference
Listening	1.05	0.92	0.13
Speaking	1.14	1.13	0.01
Reading	1.21	0.68	0.53
Writing	1.12	0.81	0.31

All the results in the “Difference” column are in a positive direction – that is, LINC students improved more than the comparison group – but the gains were not enough to reach statistical significance for listening, speaking and writing. Note that a simple pre/post-test design (using only the results in the LINC column) demonstrates that LINC brought about significant gains in all four skill areas. However, this does not consider the differences in the two groups nor attempt to attribute the gains to the LINC program. Some of these key differences considered were: education completed before immigration, age, gender, language distance⁴⁰, LINC level at initial assessment, employment status and length of time since initial assessment.

Language proficiency gains - regression/observable differences

Because LINC client and comparison group individuals differ, observable differences were controlled for by using multiple regression analysis in order to attempt to isolate the effect of LINC.⁴¹ Introducing statistical controls, the analysis supports the findings from Table 5-3.

The column labeled β is the regression coefficient, which indicates the unique (independent) contributions of the “group” variable (LINC group vs. comparison group) to explaining the total variance in the assessment score, Table 5-4 displays the results of the analysis for each language skill.

⁴⁰ Language distance refers to difference between a learner’s native language and a target language.

⁴¹ Independent variables included in the regression equations were: group (LINC/comparison), education completed before immigration, age as at June 2009, sex, a language distance measure, LINC level at initial assessment, employment status and length of time since initial assessment. In addition, an ESL variable accounts for comparison group members who enrolled in non-LINC ESL programs during the study period. Selection of independent variables was influenced by Orr, L., H. Bloom, S. Bell, F. Doolittle, W. Lin & G. Cave (1996) *Does Training for the Disadvantaged Work? Evidence from the National JTPA Study*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute Press; and Chiswick, B R. & P. W. Miller *A Model of Destination Language Acquisition: Application To Male Immigrants In Canada*. September 8, 2000.

Table 5-4: Regression analysis⁴² – group variable only

Group variable	β	SE	t	p
Listening	0.231	0.256	0.902	0.368
Speaking	0.205	0.236	0.868	0.387
Reading	0.878	0.309	2.843	0.005
Writing	0.514	0.260	1.979	0.050

Although LINC students appeared to advance about 21% of a benchmark level more in speaking than the comparison group, and 23% listening (see the β column in Table 5-4 above), the gains were not enough to reach statistical significance once the differences between the groups were controlled.

Gains for reading (88% of a benchmark level) and writing (51% of a benchmark level) reached statistical significance for the group variable.⁴³ The regression coefficients for “group” may be interpreted as the change in benchmark with a unit change in Group (from comparison to LINC) on the assumption that all other values for the remaining regressors are held constant. Thus, once observable differences between the groups are accounted for, *gains of 0.9 benchmark in reading and half a benchmark in writing were most likely attributable to LINC.*⁴⁴ The analysis cannot make more definitive conclusions as it is not possible to control for unobservable differences (such as motivation and native intelligence).

The only variable that significantly influences listening and speaking is **length of time since initial assessment**. The more time spent since the initial assessment – that is the more time spent in Canada immersed in English – the more listening and speaking improved. This variable also positively influenced reading and writing gains. Note that none of the other independent variables – age, sex, education, language distance, LINC level, employment status, enrolment in non-LINC ESL – significantly affected any of the four skill areas.

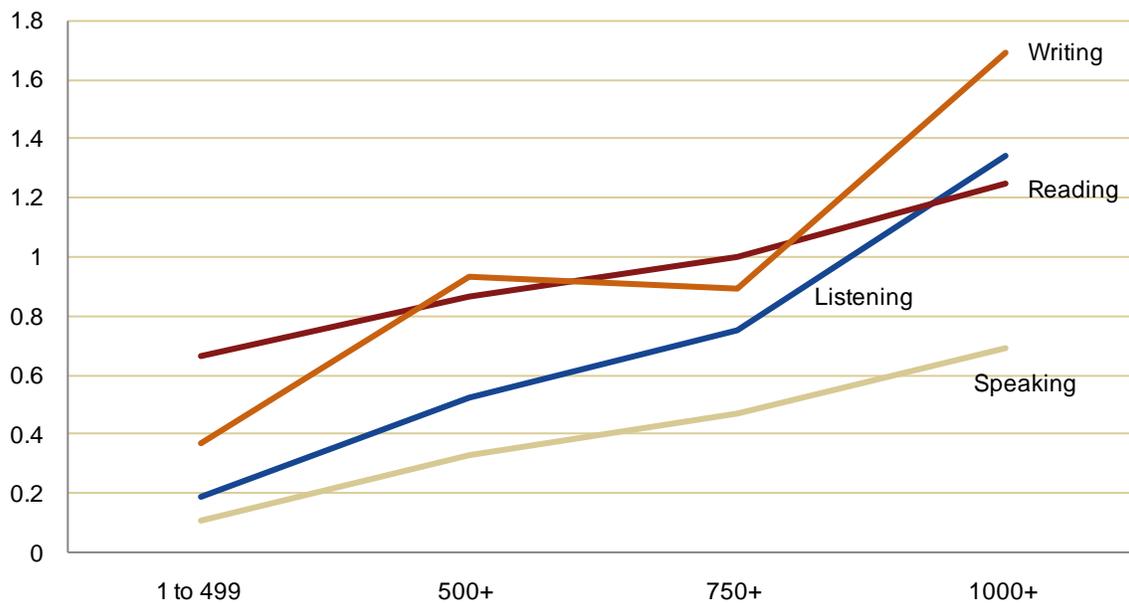
Number of hours in LINC makes a considerable difference. The next figure shows that as the number of hours in LINC rises, the impact of LINC rises. While benchmark levels increase moderately from 1 to 750 hours, a more significant impact is realized as more time is spent in LINC classes: *When students attend LINC classes for 1000 hours or more, the gains likely attributable to LINC increase to 1.3 benchmark for listening, 1.2 for reading and 1.7 for writing.*

⁴² The column labeled β is the regression coefficient, SE is the standard error and t is the t-test statistic. Standard errors indicate how accurate the sample is (for inference to the population): the lower the SE, the more accurate the estimate. The t-test was conducted to confirm that there is no linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. A significance level (p) of <.05 supports the hypothesis that the independent variable (e.g., group) influences the dependent variable (change in assessment score). A check of multicollinearity was also carried out. There were no indications of problems.

⁴³ LINC group vs. comparison group.

⁴⁴ The regression coefficients for Group are positive, indicating that the writing and reading gains increase as the group variable rises (from Group = 0 for the comparison group to Group =1 for LINC students).

Figure 5-1: Benchmark gains over time – gains versus comparison group



While the language gains ascribable to the program are higher in certain skills, there are elements of language acquisition that cannot be captured in the evaluation approach.

5.2. Course content

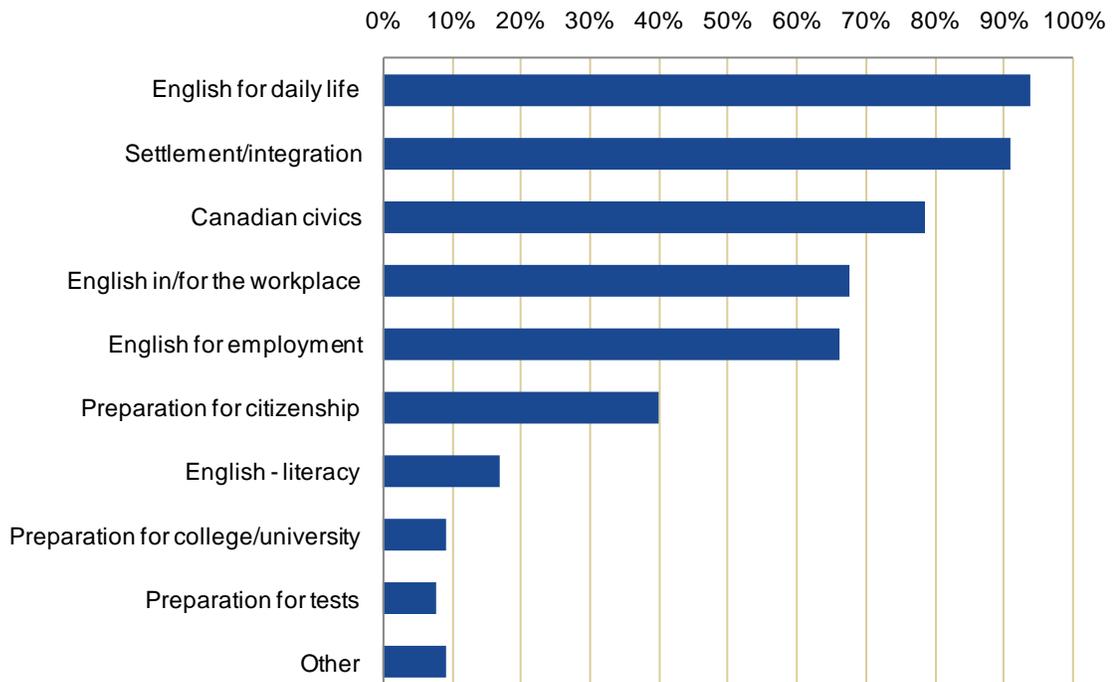
Key findings:

- LINC clients learn about many different aspects of working and living in Canada, with content typically focused on English for daily life, settlement/integration, Canadian civics, and employment/English in the workplace.
- LINC clients are settling well in Canada, but they are no further ahead than non-clients when it comes to certain initial settlement activities.

LINC is also intended to improve students' knowledge of Canada and of Canadian civics and to introduce students to concepts they need to integrate in Canada by providing information on the Canadian workplace, job search techniques and tools and so on. Because LINC does not have a mandated curriculum it is almost impossible to create validated instruments to assess what has been learned in LINC classes beyond proficiency in English. Content gains were examined using findings from the surveys and focus groups.

Since content gains should take into account what is taught in the classes the class information form asked teachers to specify what subjects their class focused on and to pinpoint the main focus. As Figure 5-2 shows, the two main foci of LINC – English for daily life and settlement/integration – were covered in almost all LINC classes. This corresponds to the dual purpose of LINC. Asked to specify the main focus from among those listed, 63% of teachers said English for daily life and 31% said settlement/ integration (many said both – their responses were evenly distributed between the two categories).

Figure 5-2: Class focus



Source: Class Information Form

N = 65

The focus groups got more specific about the subjects covered in class. The list of what students had learned about Canada was considerable and, for the most part, consistent across classes selected for the case studies: History; Geography; Culture/multiculturalism; Government /politics; Customs and traditions; Weather/climate; Procuring documents and learning how to get access to key services; Transportation; Natural resources; Medical system; Emergency services; Laws; Family life; Sports and activities; Housing; Taxes; Shopping; Education system; Industry; Immigration; Holidays; Music; Banking; Women’s rights in Canada.

For most case study classes, topics related to employment were also cited as a crucial facet of LINC. When asked, focus group participants consistently responded that a wide array of job search and work place skills and concepts were taught in LINC classes.

Settling in Canada

The ability to settle in Canada was assessed (with LINC client and comparison group surveys) to determine the extent to which newcomers were able to gain access to basic services. LINC was said to help most in those areas where there is more of an interaction than merely applying for something, like a bank account, SIN or health card. It helped most with making friends – likely to include classmates.

Table 5-5: LINC students settling in Canada

Aspect of life	Percent saying Yes	Percent saying LINC helped with this
Made new friends in Canada	74.7%	91.0%
Have a bank account	93.3	45.5
Comfortable using public transportation	85.2	66.3
Have a Social Insurance Number	96.1	31.5
Have or have applied for a health card	95.4	35.7
Feel comfortable going alone for health services	69.1	66.5

Column 1 represents responses for all survey cases, thus the slightly different percentage from Table 5-6 below

These questions were asked of the comparison group as well, enabling a test of the incremental benefit of LINC. Table 5-6 suggests that LINC has been of little incremental benefit for these elements, as comparison group responses indicate the same level of settlement without attending LINC classes.

Table 5-6: Comparison group settling in Canada

Aspect of life	LINC students saying Yes	Comparison group saying Yes
Made new friends in Canada	72.0%	67.3%
Have a bank account	91.9	92.3
Comfortable using public transportation	82.2	88.9
Have a social insurance number	96.8	98.1
Have or have applied for a health card	95.2	100.0
Feel comfortable going alone for health services	57.4	75.0

Column 1 represents the case study respondents, thus the slightly different percentage from Table 5-5 above.

Regression was used to control for observable differences between groups. The conclusions are the same: for none of these variables did LINC make a notable difference. Comparison group members were more comfortable going alone for health appointments, likely because they had better English skills on average than the LINC group. For several aspects of settlement, newcomers are likely to require them immediately upon arrival before even enrolling in language training. Many students indicated in the focus groups that they had bank accounts, SIN and health cards before taking LINC so LINC could not be expected to help.

5.3. Cost-effectiveness

This section examines LINC program expenditures and the key areas where investments were made.

Key findings:

- LINC program expenditures increased significantly in several key program areas, while the number of students has remained stable.
- Combined, child minding and transportation expenses have risen from approximately 2% in 1998-99 to 18% of total LINC expenditures in 2008-09.
- The cost per LINC student has risen substantially in recent years.
- Though the approach to program delivery through third-party organizations is considered cost-effective by respondents, further analysis of other delivery models would be required in order to determine the cost-effectiveness of the program.

5.3.1. LINC funding

LINC funding has increased considerably in recent years (see Table 5-7). In the five year period beginning in 2004-05, LINC spending increased by 83%. Because integration spending increased by 178% during the same period, LINC accounts for a smaller proportion of total integration spending as settlement funding increased.

Table 5-7: LINC expenditures

Fiscal year	LINC expenditures (millions)	Total integration spending (millions)	% of Total integration expenditures
2001-02	\$ 90.7	\$ 178.1	50.9%
2002-03	\$ 91.8	\$ 174.1	52.7%
2003-04	\$ 92.7	\$ 176.6	52.5%
2004-05	\$ 94.0	\$ 181.2	51.9%
2005-06	\$ 93.5	\$ 188.7	49.5%
2006-07	\$122.3	\$ 280.3	43.6%
2007-08	\$152.7	\$ 373.5	40.9%
2008-09	\$172.2	\$ 503.7	34.2%

Source: LINC Factsheet with updates from CIC. Excludes a grant to Quebec and funding arrangements with Manitoba and British Columbia.

5.3.2. LINC expenditures

For the last 10 years, investment in teacher salaries has accounted for the largest portion of LINC spending. Under a revised settlement funding model for the period of 2000-01 to 2005-06, this category ranged from 69% to 76% of total program expenditures and was relatively constant, ranging from \$64.7M to \$68.5M during that time⁴⁵. Combined, child minding and transportation expenses have risen from approximately 2% in 1998-99 to 18% of total LINC expenditures in 2008-09.

⁴⁵ With the exception of 2001, in which the increase in the Language Training category of expenditure was due to the full implementation of a new settlement funding allocation model.

Table 5-8: LINC Program expenditures by category, 1998-99 – 2008-09⁴⁶

Category	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	05/06	06/07	07/08	08/09
Adm costs NGO	N/A	30,552,618	35,366,193								
Lang. training	91,369,877	72,703,471	68,524,485	73,318,640	64,898,416	65,488,224	67,148,718	64,713,684	80,531,133	82,465,165	91,280,926
Lang. assess.	1,689,086	3,857,683	3,860,232	4,619,345	5,263,663	5,395,649	5,617,515	5,818,192	6,996,693	4,423,952	5,150,348
Childminding	1,639,791	909,526	955,630	7,856,856	16,242,128	16,801,528	17,272,326	16,841,302	19,975,240	25,027,451	27,832,499
Transport. Cost	166,418	134,623	69,526	855,013	1,532,053	1,358,589	1,485,314	1,385,952	1,881,907	2,922,527	2,887,939
Provis. for dist.	1,981	-	21,767	5,911	31,190	12,892	11,108	20,245	94,420	51,951	40,099
Cap. cost (NGO)	380,696	131,759	27,640	99,677	506,037	443,313	238,953	2,059,449	6,926,150	3,690,499	3,619,751
Deliv. assist	2,069,485	2,466,381	4,603,928	3,922,300	2,917,687	2,779,042	1,862,539	2,127,993	5,068,925	2,803,626	5,319,821
Reimb. of GST	-	-	-	40,200	389,545	412,137	396,895	563,859	783,468	720,421	658,579
Total	97,317,333	80,203,443	78,063,208	90,717,942	91,780,718	92,691,375	94,033,368	93,560,666	122,287,936	152,658,209	172,156,155

As a result of the increased funding, the cost per LINC student has risen substantially. As program expenditures rose from \$94 million in 2004-05 to \$173 million in 2008-09, the number of learners rose from about 52,000 to about 55,000. As a result, the cost per LINC student had risen from about \$1800 to approximately \$3130.⁴⁷

The substantial increase in the average cost per LINC client reflected the need for CIC to invest in program renewal following several years of static funding prior to 2006-07. During this period, LINC payments to SPOs had fallen behind the actual cost of delivering the service. The 2004 LINC Evaluation confirmed that program funding levels had not kept pace with rising costs, that funding deficits were associated with long wait lists, and that new monies would be required to implement program improvements suggested by the evaluation. With an influx of new funds in 2006, CIC invested significantly in the following areas⁴⁸:

- **Program renewal:** New program funding has been used to provide more, and more diverse, course offerings to ensure that newcomers can access courses tailored to their particular learning needs and goals.
- **Teachers:** The single largest commitment made by CIC to the renewal of LINC since 2004-05 has been its increased investment in the salaries, benefits, and training provided to LINC teachers and assessors. The quality of teachers is the primary determinant of program effectiveness (as noted in section 2 of this report).
- **Childminding and support services:** From 2004-05 to 2008-09, substantial funding (\$12M) has been allocated to expand the availability of childminding, facilitating access to training for newcomers (transportation and provision for the disabled) who might otherwise be unable to participate due to barriers related to access. The expansion of childminding services⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ Language training is the largest LINC expenditure category and is comprised almost entirely of teacher salaries. Administrative costs as a category did not exist prior to 2007-08. The sharp rise in the Language Training expenditures in 2001-02 is due to the full implementation of a new settlement funding allocation model. The LINC (and Settlement) budget increased significantly in 2006-07 through the infusion of Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement funding.

⁴⁷ Spending for 2008-09 was approximated at \$172.2 million. Using iCAMS data there were approximately 55,000 students during 2008-09.

⁴⁸ Source: Interviews and document review with CIC Finance branch, CIC Operational Management and Coordination (OMC) branch and CIC Regional offices.

⁴⁹ The number of clients beginning LINC with at least one child in child-minding doubled between 2004-05 and 2008-09, from 3,400 to 6,900 (+103%).

spending increased from \$17.3M to \$27.8M while transportation services spending increased from \$1.4M to \$2.9M.

- **Infrastructure and resources:** A proportion of new spending (\$6.5M) has been devoted to facility enhancements (for both training and childminding) and the development of new teaching resources.

5.3.3. Cost-effectiveness and alternatives

Most key informants felt that LINC was adequately funded and there were few calls for more resources. Those who did want more funding tended to point to specific areas in need of enhancement such as expanding childminding services, offering more classes on the weekend and moving into more distant and rural communities. Also, some informants pointed out that not all provinces have the same levels of LINC available and said that could be addressed with additional funds.

Virtually all key informants in CIC and with the provinces believed that LINC was cost-effective. They reasoned: funding is distributed through competitive contacting processes; service providers are required to make a case for funding received; most SPOs are not-for-profit organizations that have reasonable overhead and moderate salaries; and each SPO is subject to rigorous financial reporting requirements.

Many SPOs deliver an array of integrated settlement services, including LINC, which may contribute to cost effectiveness of program delivery.

No informant was convinced there were any more cost effective methods of delivering second language services. All were in agreement that it would not be possible for CIC to deliver the services directly – it has neither the expertise nor the infrastructure required – and that if it did the cost would certainly be much higher. The Ontario LINC Home Study evaluation reported that LINC Home Study costs approximately two-thirds as much as classroom LINC per benchmark completed. Progress for Home Study learners was slower mainly because the number of hours per week in Home Study tends to be much less than the number of hours spent in LINC classes, but in 2005-06 classroom LINC cost over twice as much per seat as LINC Home Study.⁵⁰ This suggests that expanding LINC Home Study to complement existing modes of delivery could potentially improve cost-effectiveness in addition to widening accessibility.

Further comparative analysis of other models of delivery would be required in order to better determine the cost-effectiveness of the LINC program.

⁵⁰ Power Analysis Inc. *Evaluation of the LINC Home Study Program, 2006.*

6. Summary of findings

6.1. Program relevance and design

- The LINC program is closely aligned with CIC priorities.
 - Strategic Outcome 3 of the CIC 2009-2010 *Report on Plans and Priorities* sets the “[s]uccessful integration of newcomers into society and promotion of Canadian citizenship” as a priority for the department.
 - LINC is a key element of CIC’s integration programming, accounting for the largest part of settlement funding.
- There is a need for language acquisition for newcomers to Canada.
 - In 2008, the majority (86%) of Canada’s permanent residents had a mother tongue other than English or French. Furthermore, 21% of Canada’s permanent residents felt they could converse in neither official language.
 - Language constitutes the most serious barrier newcomers face to furthering their education or training and among the most serious barriers to finding employment.
- The federal government’s role in the delivery of language training for newcomers to Canada is appropriate.
 - All but one key informant agreed that the federal government should be involved in official language training for newcomers.
 - The reasoning most used was that the federal government is facilitating the entry of newcomers into the country and that makes it responsible to play a role in preparing them to live and work here. Also mentioned was the national perspective federal government brings to second language programming.
- LINC program objectives are clear according to all key informants.
- LINC training is high quality and designed to meet the needs of students.
 - Almost all teachers have ESL certification and two-thirds have CLB training. In addition, approximately 90% have formal ESL qualifications.
 - Most LINC teachers (97%) had taken at least one professional development course.
 - The typical teacher had 6.6 years of experience teaching LINC and 9.0 years in the ESL field.
 - Instructor materials are relevant and they use a variety of teaching tools to help ensure the goals of students are met.
 - Good quality curriculum guidelines exist for all levels of LINC
 - The dropout rate for students was at least 22% but few left for reasons of dissatisfaction with LINC.
- Language assessments are effective and result in participants being placed in the appropriate program level.
 - Ninety-four percent of LINC students said they were placed at the correct level, and 85% were comfortable with the pace of the class.
 - Only 17% of LINC administrators said there are better assessment tools in existence than those available to LINC assessors, but many of these were unaware of any specific tool that was better.

- Teacher survey results showed that they only move 5% of LINC students to a different level in their first week or two in class, indicating that from the teachers' perspective most assessments are accurate.
- Numerous support services are provided by a large majority of SPOs, but availability of child care assistance was cited as the main obstacle to attending LINC.
 - Around 80% of SPOs offer child care and transportation assistance for LINC students, though not in every location.
- Most potential participants are able to gain access to LINC in a timely fashion.
 - Waiting lists were not an issue in most areas of the country: PEI has a waiting list for classes and Calgary has a waiting list for assessments and classes.
 - The mean wait between assessment and referral was 35 days for Ontario LINC clients assessed in 2009.
- Over 90% of LINC classes feature continuous intake, which comes with challenges for teachers, but also has a benefit: it makes classes more readily accessible for students.

6.2. Program management and delivery

- Program guidelines and the various modes of LINC delivery allow SPOs to create a flexible program that meets learner needs.
 - The two basic modes of delivery are classroom training (about 95% of students) and Home Study through the internet and correspondence (about 4%). The other 1% is personal tutoring, itinerant teachers and pilot projects such as workplace LINC and mixed models of classroom and Home Study.
 - Classes are offered in the morning (55%), afternoon (26%) and evening (19%). There are few weekend offerings – only 3% of classes surveyed met on a weekend.
- SPOs have adequate tools/information to support and improve the service delivery.
 - About 71% of SPO administrators agreed with this. Those who felt that the tools were inadequate were asked what they needed. Most often mentioned was improved technology.
- There are regional differences in the way SPOs provide LINC service.
 - Concerning modes of delivery, Home Study is available in Ontario, Saskatchewan, PEI, Newfoundland, and it is currently being piloted in Alberta and Nova Scotia.
 - Itinerant instructors are used in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan and Alberta. One-on-one tutoring programs are available in Ontario and Saskatchewan.
 - LINC in the workplace is being piloted in Ontario.
 - Alberta limits the number of hours a learner may take LINC.
 - Otherwise service providers and CIC report consistent program management.
- Various methods were used to promote LINC.
 - Nearly two-thirds of SPOs make use of LINC pamphlets and posters.
 - About half advertise in community – usually ethnic – newspapers.
 - Almost two-thirds of administrators said that word of mouth – generally from current and former students – is the most effective means of promoting their program.
 - Only 7% of students found out about LINC before coming to Canada.

- The program has not calculated a take-up rate due to the various language training options available to newcomers and the voluntary nature of language instruction.
- Program data contained in iCAMS (and HARTs in Ontario) are largely administrative in nature and do not provide adequate information on client outcomes.

6.3. Program impact

- In an ideal environment, it might be possible to test the effectiveness of LINC against a control group who had not received language training. It would, however, be difficult to isolate the impact of LINC, on LINC learners, from other influences on their language acquisition. Similarly, for a control group, it is difficult to identify the impact of unobservable characteristics (e.g. motivation, diversity of social networks, etc.) on their language acquisition, outside of a LINC environment. In this study, in an effort to provide a more quantitative assessment, a small sample group (those assessed but not enrolled in LINC) was selected and a pre-test/post-test approach was used to compare gains scores. For the “control” sample under consideration in this evaluation:
 - LINC had improved the language abilities of students in the areas of reading (by 0.88 benchmark) and writing (by 0.51 benchmark level) but not in listening and speaking beyond what they would have gained from living in Canada.
 - But, by the time students reach 1000 hours the gains ascribable to LINC jump to 1.3 benchmarks for listening, 1.2 for reading and 1.7 for writing. (This assumes no unobservable traits of the groups are affecting the results.)
- On average, LINC students had completed 1.0 LINC level.
 - Sixty percent had passed at least one LINC level; 26% had completed more than one level.
 - Across all students (in the case studies) the mean number of hours to complete a LINC level was 347.4.
- LINC clients are settling well in Canada, but they are no further ahead than non-clients when it comes to certain initial settlement activities.
- Clients learn about many different aspects of living and working in Canada (English for daily life and settlement/integration Canadian civics).
 - Over 90% of LINC classes teach English for daily life and settlement/integration.
 - About two-thirds teach English for the workplace. Focus group participants felt better equipped to compete in the Canadian labour market.
- LINC is helping students to develop skills for interaction in a culturally diverse environment.
 - The typical LINC class had 5.8 countries and 5.2 languages represented out of every 10 students.

6.4. Cost-effectiveness/alternatives

- Though the approach to program delivery through third-party organizations is considered cost-effective by respondents, further analysis of other delivery models would be required in order to determine true cost-effectiveness of the program.
 - More training via Home Study may be one means of improving efficiency.

- The cost per LINC student has risen substantially in recent years, while the number of students has remained stable.
 - As expenditures rose from \$94 million in 2004-05 to \$172 million in 2008-09, the number of learners rose from about 52,000 to about 55,000. As a result, the cost per LINC student had risen from about \$1800 to approximately \$3150.
 - Part of the reason for this is that LINC payments to SPOs had fallen behind the cost of delivering the service.
 - Combined, child minding and transportation expenses have risen from approximately 2% in 1998-99 to 18% of total LINC expenditures in 2008-09.

Appendix A: LINC - A statistical portrait

This appendix draws a profile of the LINC Program, its students and its teachers. Information is drawn from the SPO, learner and teacher surveys along with the class information form. Data from HART's was added to the survey data for missing SPOs concerning number of classes and number of students. Thus for these important variables the analysis excludes data from only four SPOs. Because SPO data represent the population of the program, no statistical testing is required when comparing groups.⁵¹ Relevant statistics will be presented for learner, teacher and CIF data. Strengths and weaknesses of LINC conclude Appendix A.

Modes of delivery

LINC was initially designed to provide basic language training and knowledge about Canada. When it was established in 1992 it offered three levels of LINC training. The first curriculum guidelines were drafted in 1993 for levels 1 to 3. In 1997, LINC levels 4 and 5 were introduced (though only in Ontario) and in 1998 the curriculum guidelines were expanded and revised to reflect *Canadian Language Benchmarks Working Document (1996)*.⁵² The guidelines were combined into one document in 2001 and amended to be consistent with the new *Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) 2000*. In late 2006, programming began in Ontario for LINC 6 and 7 and curriculum guidelines were developed for those levels. At present LINC levels 1 through 5 are available across Canada; level 6 is available in Nova Scotia; levels 6 and 7 are available in Ontario. In addition, literacy classes are available for newcomers who score pre-benchmark levels on the CLBA.

For the most part, LINC is still a classroom-based program. Approximately 95% of LINC students attend classes. This may be a standard school classroom or a room in a commercial building.

The primary alternate mode of delivery is via the LINC Home Study Program. Home Study students may take the course online or through correspondence. Both options feature a weekly phone conversation between teacher and student. Eligible for the program are adult newcomers (17 years of age and older) who are assessed at LINC levels 2 to 7. They must be unable to attend regular LINC classes because there are none available locally, or due to shift work, lack of transportation, lack of available child care or chronic illness. The program, administered by the Centre for Education and Training in Mississauga, is available in a number of Ontario communities and in Saskatchewan, PEI, Newfoundland; it is currently being piloted in Alberta and Nova Scotia. It is currently being piloted in Nova Scotia and Alberta. In addition, a combined classroom and Home Study model for rural areas is being tested in northern Ontario and northern Alberta. It is internet-based but itinerant teachers visit for one session per week. As of May, 2009, there were about 950 Home Study students, about 3% of all LINC learners in Canada.

⁵¹ The purpose of statistical testing is to determine whether perceived differences between groups are real or the result of sampling error. Since there is no good reason to analyze a sample when one has data on the entire population, we use population data for the administrative data analysis. Hence, no statistics are required.

⁵² <http://www.settlement.org/downloads/linc/LCG1to5/overview.pdf>

LINC classes

The first graph presents the geographic breakdown of the SPOs in Canada. Nearly three-quarters of the providers were located in Ontario. Most of the balance of SPOs (21.3%) was located in the Prairies-Northern Territories region, with Alberta accounting for 16%.

Figure A-1: LINC SPOs by region

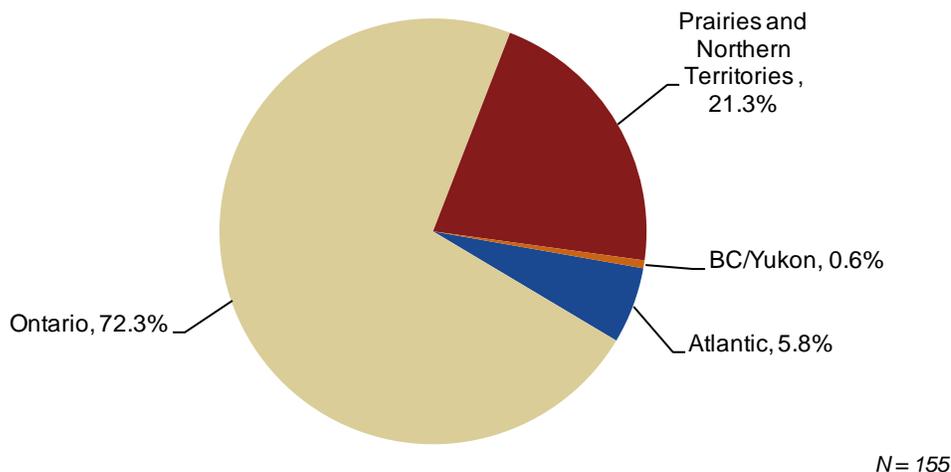
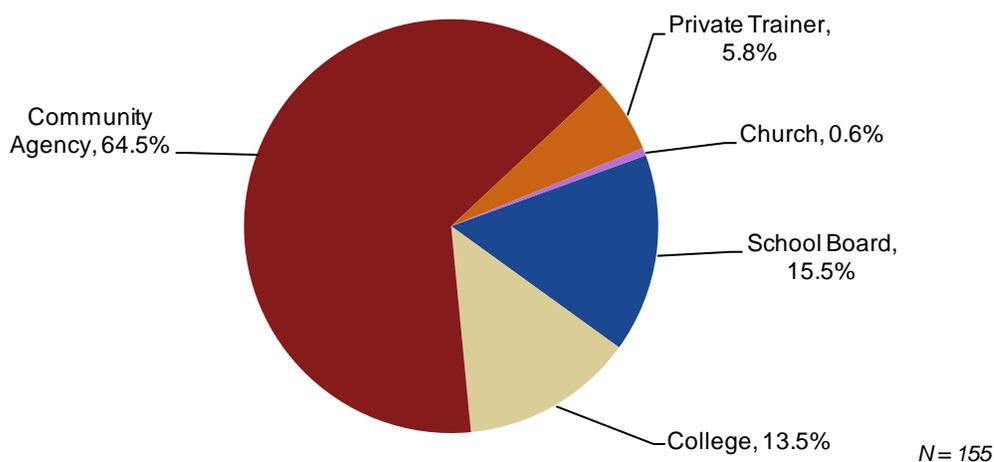


Figure A-2 reveals the distribution of LINC service providers by organization type. About two-thirds were community-based agencies.

Figure A-2: Type of service provider



Number of classes, teachers and staff

Table A.1 shows program information during mid-spring 2009 for all LINC providers.⁵³ Ontario accounted for about three-quarters of the learners, instructors and classes. Almost 90% of the classes featured continuous intake.

⁵³ Excludes four SPOs outside Ontario that did not return the survey.

Table A-1: Basic program information for Canada’s LINC Program, mid-spring 2009

Program information*	Atlantic	Ontario	Prairies & Northern Territories	BC/Yukon	Canada
Number of classes (full and part-time) With continuous intake	70	1,634	260	2	1,966
With admission at a specific time	16	75	141	0	232
Number of registered students	1,002	21,964	5,121	9	28,096
Number of individual instructors	75	1,265	354	2	1,696
Number of program supervisors/ lead instructors/ coordinators	10	191	56	1	258

* Note: Excludes non-respondents to survey outside Ontario (HARTs data used for non-respondents within Ontario).

The data above yield an average class size of 12.8 learners. Using data from HARTs instead of survey data for Ontario cases, the mean class size is 13.7. The difference may be because the HARTs data and survey data are from a different week in May or because some administrators may have provided estimates in the survey.

Over half (58%) the LINC SPOs also offered ESL training for adult newcomers.

Dynamics of enrolment

In spring, 2009, the typical LINC class in Canada had approximately 18 students enrolled.⁵⁴ But that mean masks a great deal of activity. The classes began with 17 students on average; but because over 90% of classes feature continuous enrolment, the typical class surveyed had 9 more students join during the term. Between the start of the term and the time of the survey, 6 students had dropped out and 2 had graduated or transferred to another class.

Table A-2: Enrolment dynamics

	Mean number of students*
At the start of the term	16.7
Enrolled <i>after</i> the start of the term	9.1
Dropped out before completion	5.8
Transferred to other levels	1.8
Current students (June, 2009)	18.2**

N = 63

*Excludes Home Study cases because they are not “classes” as such but are classified by city.

** To illustrate the degree of error associated with a sample of this size the standard error is approximately 0.8 for a margin of error of approximately ± 1.6 , 19 times in 20.

Calculating dropout rate is not straightforward because it is not known when each student joined, transferred or quit. A rough approximation is number quitting divided by the number enrolled at any time. That equals 22%. This will be an underestimate of the final dropout rate, since the term was only part way through in most programs at the time of the survey.

⁵⁴ This is different from the mean class size reported above. Replacing CIF data with HARTs data for Ontario classes, the mean class size is approximately 17 for classes surveyed. This compares with a mean class size for all LINC classes of approximately 14. The sample is somewhat biased in terms of mean class size, under-representing small classes. The primary reason for this is that none of the very small classes (including dozens of one-on-one tutoring “classes”) were included in the survey sample. Also, literacy classes, which tend to be small, were excluded.

There are some interesting differences by region. Continuous enrolment appears to be a much larger issue in the east than elsewhere.

Table A-3: Enrolment dynamics by region

Total students	Atlantic	Ontario*	Prairies	Statistical significance**
At the start of the term	10.6	17.9	15.3	p < .05
Enrolled after the start of the term	15.8	10.1	3.3	p < .01
Dropped out before completion	5.8	6.9	2.2	p < .01
Transferred to other levels	4.8	1.7	1.1	p < .02
Current students	15.8	19.4	15.4	p > .05

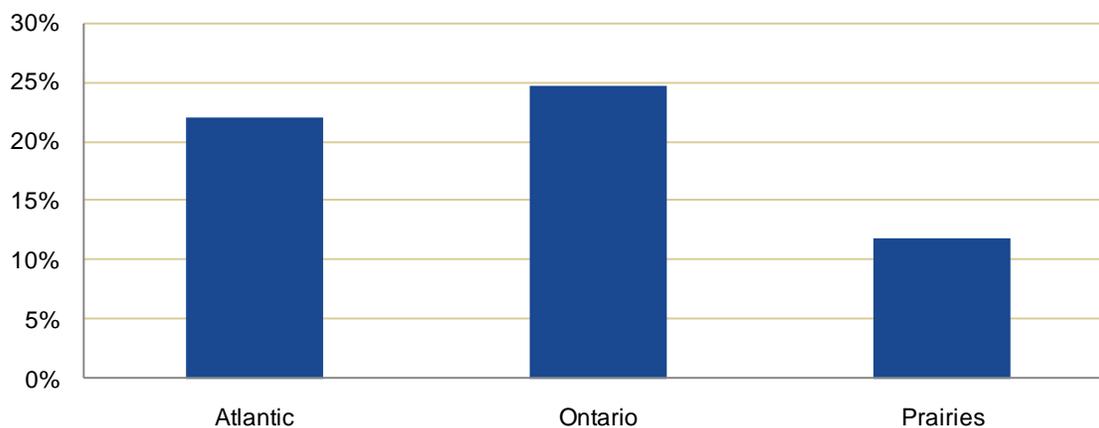
N = 63

* Ontario data for this table excludes the two Home Study classes in the sample because they are not “classes” as such but are classified by city.

** ANOVA F-test with df = 2/60.

The dropout rate is similar in the Atlantic and Ontario regions; the dropout rate in the Prairies is much lower.

Figure A-3: Dropout rate by region



Source: Class Information Form

N = 63

In fact, Prairie classes experienced much less entry and exit after the start of the term than elsewhere. Alberta has a unique way of limiting the impact of continuous intake according to a key informant. For part-time (evening/Saturday) learners, they have “Managed Continuous Intake.” New students can only start on the first Monday of each month, which makes it easier for teachers and learners already in the class. For full-time learners they have “Lock-step Method” or blocked semesters. These last 12 weeks (16 weeks at colleges). New students can only enter during the first two weeks.

About 52% of the teachers of classes with continuous intake said it had an effect on the progress of other students. Asked how it affects progress, teachers said: it slows down the students because the teacher has to go back to cover previously taught materials for the sake of new students; and it sometimes disrupts the group dynamic – “students bond early in session.” Teachers with literacy learners in the class were much more likely to believe continuous intake

affects progress (80%) than teachers with basic level learners (55%) or teachers with intermediate level learners (47%).

One teacher listed the pros of continuous intake:

Continuous intake gives students the opportunity to start when they are ready to begin their program. It provides flexibility and understanding of the difficult process that the students are going to when they move to another country. It also provides an opportunity for all seats to be used throughout the semester. Moreover, for current students it gives a chance to review, reinforce, and consolidate what they have learned so far.

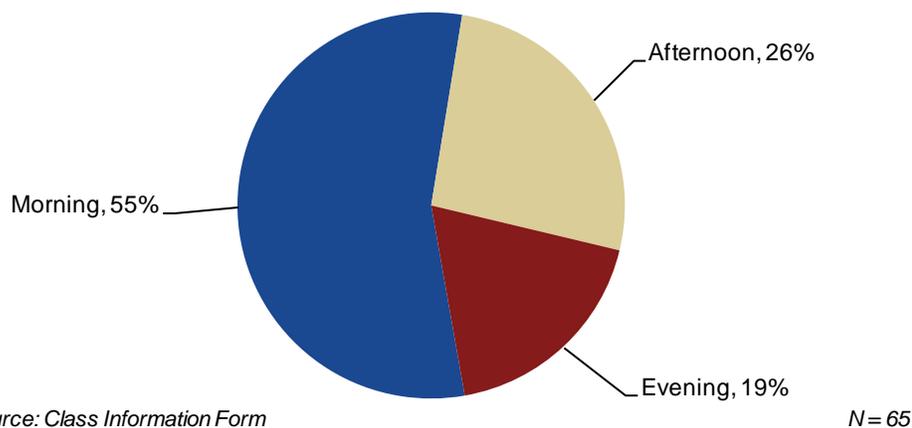
Most of the students involved in the focus group discussions felt that continuous intake was fine. A few felt that continuous intake is a challenge, especially when someone arrives well after most of the others. Students who started LINC well after their classmates said that the other students had been understanding and helpful, however. “When you first start in a class it is pretty tough because of it being a more difficult level, but you soon fit in.”

One of the reasons students accept the concept of continuous intake is because they recognize that without this option they may have had to wait a considerable period of time to enter LINC. If intake occurred only on set dates at the beginning of the term students would be forced to wait; continuous intake allowed them much more immediate access to the program.

Class schedules

Classes were offered at all times of the day. This speaks to the flexibility of LINC to meet the needs of its clients.

Figure A-4: Class start time



Source: Class Information Form

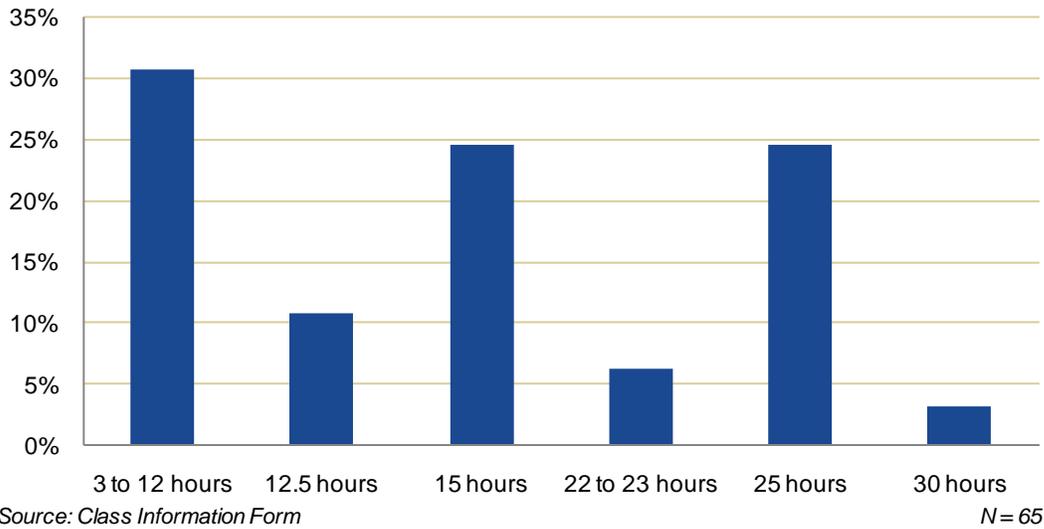
N = 65

Most classes met in school classrooms (62%). Most of the rest met on the premises of community agencies that ran the class. Some classes met in the back offices of shopping malls.

Only 12% of classes targeted a specific group, almost all of which were women. One class targeted Chinese and Vietnamese newcomers.

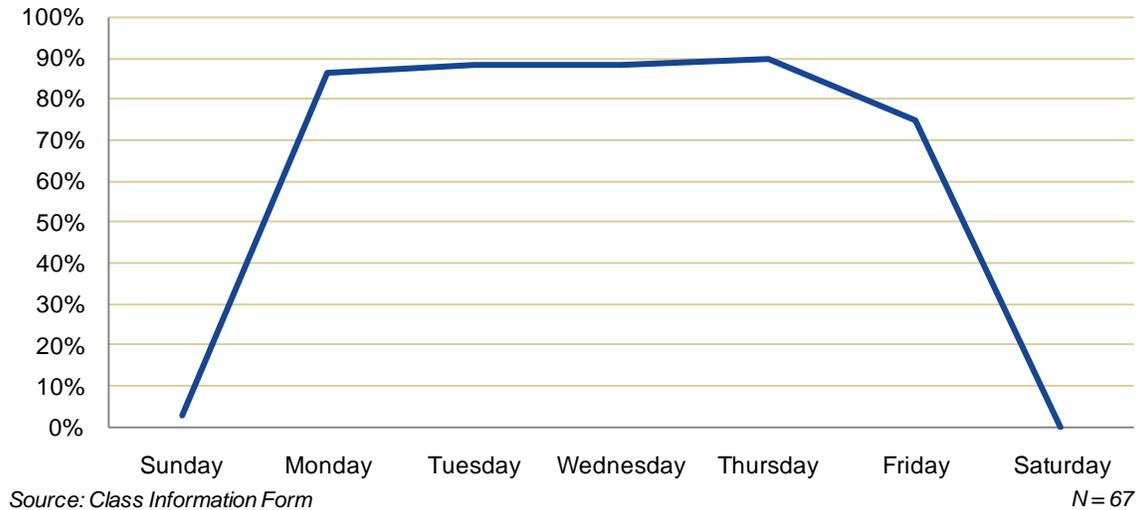
The typical class met for 32.7 weeks and 15.7 hours per week. The next graph shows the great variety of hours offered by LINC SPOs. Only 28% of LINC classes met CIC’s definition of full-time LINC classes (25 or more hours per week).

Figure A-5: Hours per week in LINC classes



The next graph shows weekly class meeting days. As the graph suggests, the normal pattern is five weekday meetings per week: 72% of classes fit this pattern. Classes met 4.3 times per week on average. Nine percent of classes meet Monday through Thursday; 4% meet Monday and Wednesday; another 6% meet Tuesday and Thursday. Weekend classes are rare.

Figure A-6: Weekly class meeting days



LINC students

Table 2-1 lists several key learner characteristics of both the population and of the sample selected for this evaluation. Close to three-quarters of LINC learners were women. The average age of LINC students as of July 1, 2009 was 38.7 years. On average LINC students had been in Canada for 2.7 years.

Table A-4: Survey respondents compare closely to the LINC population

LINC learner characteristic	LINC population (2008)*	LINC survey respondents	LINC case study survey respondents
Sex			
Female	71.4%	73.5%	79.9%
Male	28.6	26.5	20.1
LINC level			
L	4.2%	0.0%	0.0%
1	13.9	16.3	9.0
2	18.3	17.7	17.9
3	25.4	26.6	34.3
4	19.1	23.2	17.9
5	11.7	8.1	11.9
6 - 7	7.2	8.1	9.0
Age			
15-24	12.2%	10.2%	9.1%
25-44	65.6	62.9	56.1
45-64	19.7	22.9	28.0
65 +	2.4	4.1	6.8
Time in Canada			
Less than 1 year	23.0%	26.1%	27.2%
1 - 1.99 years	28.8	23.6	24.8
2 - 2.99 years	17.2	14.1	15.2
3+ years	31.1	36.1	32.8
Education			
Secondary or less	37.0%	39.6%	31.8%
Non university certificate	24.5	25.4	29.6
University degree	38.5	35.1	38.6

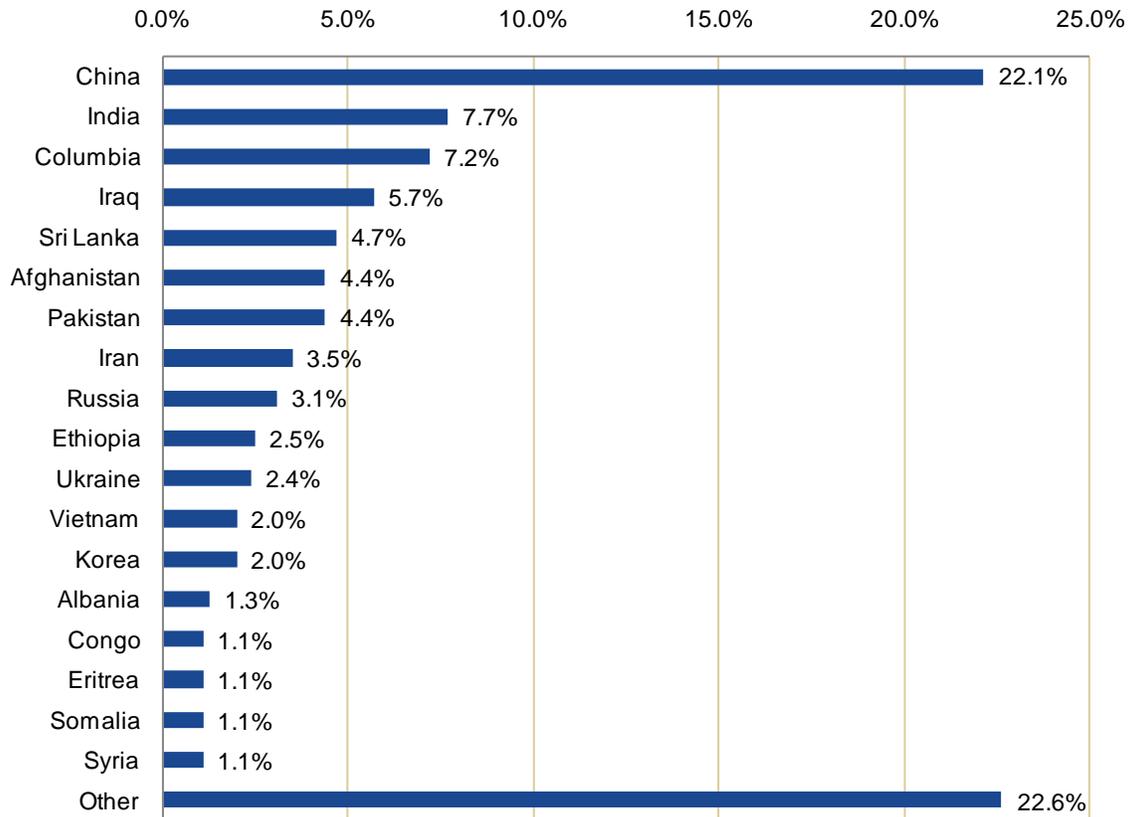
* Data from iCAMS: discrete LINC clients in 2008

The case study sample is also reasonably close to the population on all characteristics shown in the table. In the case study sample, women and older age groups are somewhat over-represented. LINC level 3 is also over-represented.

Country of origin

Figure A-7, which lists country of birth in order of frequency, shows that LINC students originate from all parts of the world, 81 different countries in all (in the graph nations accounting for less than one percent of students were combined into the “other” category). China was the nation of origin of the largest number of LINC learners (22%). Far behind in second place was India, the birth place of 8% of the students.

Figure A-7: Country of birth of LINC students



Source: Learners survey

N= 637

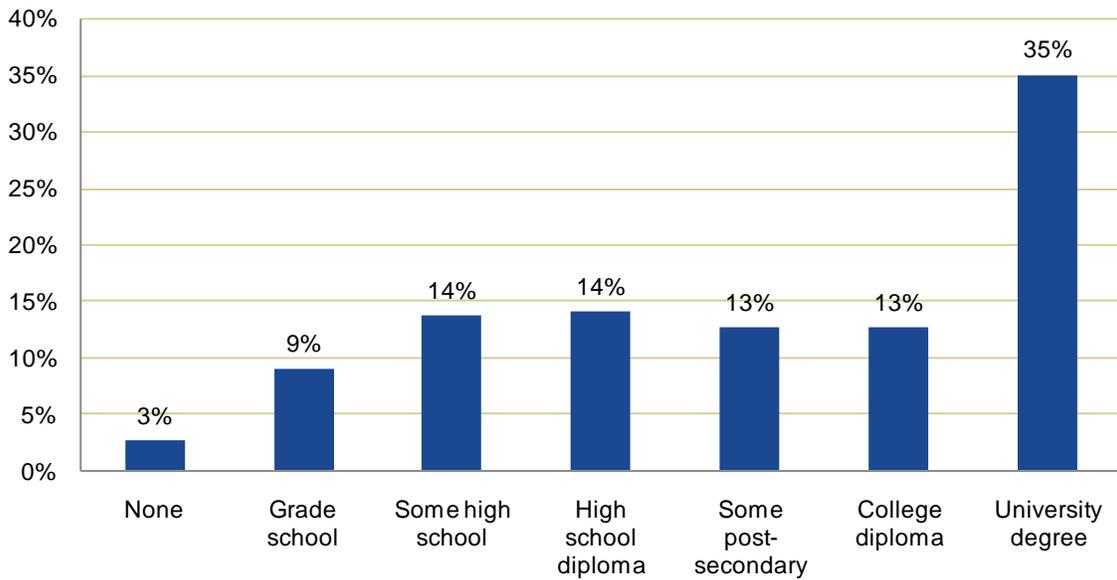
Immigration status

LINC students are supposed to be landed immigrants or convention refugees. Most (93%) were landed immigrants; another 4% were convention refugees. Three percent were Canadian citizens; they should not have qualified for LINC, but most of these had got their citizenship after they began the LINC class.

Education

Figure A-8 reveals a wide variation in highest level of education accomplished by LINC students before moving to Canada. Over a third of the students said they had a university degree. Another 13% had a community college diploma. At the other extreme, 3% had absolutely no education and a further 9% never made it to high school.

Figure A-8: Highest level of education completed before moving to Canada



Source: Learners survey

N = 639

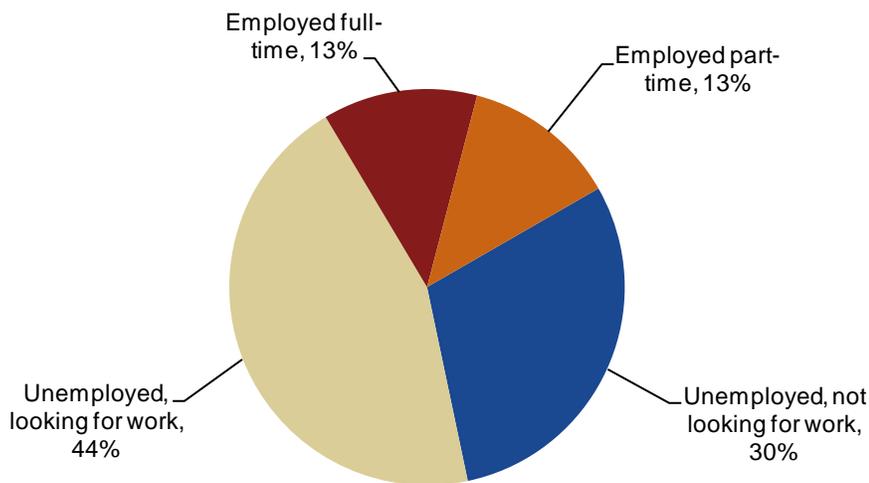
Occupation

Before immigrating to Canada, the largest proportion (14%) of LINC students worked in managerial/government positions; jobs in the education field ranked second. About one in nine had been students in their home country. Only 4% were unemployed, although many of the missing cases, amounting to 13% of respondents on this variable, may have been unemployed.

Employment status

As Figure A-9 shows, about a quarter LINC students were employed at the time the survey took place.

Figure A-9: Employment status of students



Source: Learners survey

N = 640

Reasons for taking LINC

The survey asked students why they took the course. To guard against the natural tendency of respondents to say all reasons were important, the question required them to rank the reasons for taking the course. Results are tabulated below.

Table A-5: Students took the LINC course mainly to improve their English and to get a job

Reason	Proportion ranking this # 1	Proportion ranking this among top 3	Mean rank
To improve English for daily life	47.1%	82.5%	1.55
To get a job	33.6	72.4	1.75
To help prepare for studying	7.5	36.6	2.21
To help pass a test to get certified in a trade or profession	5.2	33.1	2.18
To learn about Canada	2.6	26.3	2.47
To help prepare for citizenship test	1.9	25.7	2.64
To help talk with children or grandchildren	1.6	16.5	2.39

The number one reason for taking the course was to improve English for daily life. Taking the course to get a job was ranked second. Learning about Canada does not rank highly. Students do want to learn about Canada – this was an important point brought up in most of the focus groups – but it is a tertiary concern compared to learning the language and preparing for a job.

The only statistically significant difference by LINC level concerned improving English for daily life. Learners at the basic levels (mean ranking 1.52) ranked this higher than did learners at the intermediate levels (mean ranking 1.70).⁵⁵

Student satisfaction with LINC

A key indicator of the quality of any program is the level of satisfaction among its target group. Learners were asked to rate the two central facets of LINC – teaching the language and teaching about Canada – on the familiar A to F scale, where A means excellent, B is good, C average, D below average and F poor. On the key dimension of how well LINC teaches English, half the learners felt their course was excellent (Figure A-10). The mean grade was B +.⁵⁶

Students were also positive, albeit slightly less enthusiastic, about how well LINC has taught them about Canada, awarding a B+ grade (Figure A-11).

Mean satisfaction ratings tended to decline as LINC level rose, though in every case the mean grade was between B and A -.⁵⁷

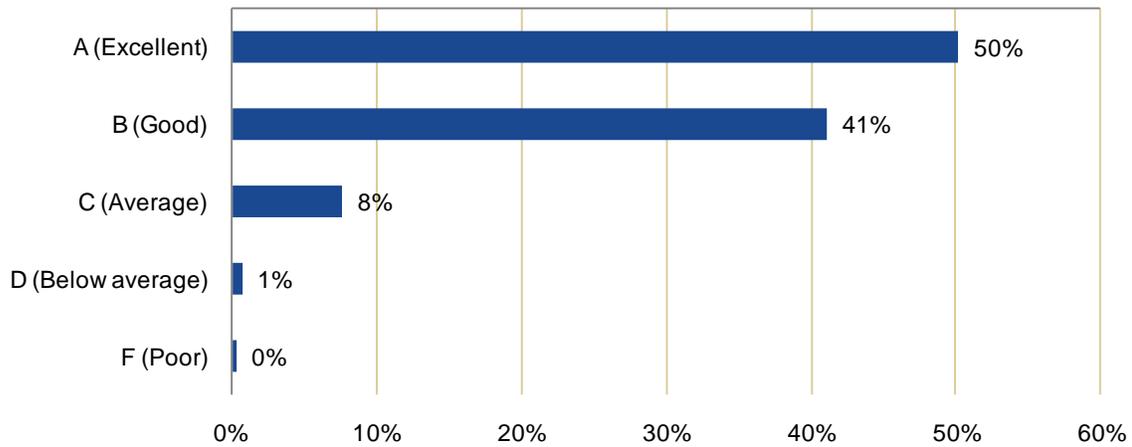
About 89% of the students said they intended to take further LINC courses, which implies they are satisfied with their courses thus far. The most prevalent reason for saying no to this question was that students (in Alberta) had exhausted their hours for LINC. The need to work or seek a job was the second most common reason.

⁵⁵ $t = 2.1$, $df = 474$, $p < .05$

⁵⁶ Mean grade is calculated by setting A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, and F=5 (the values used in the questionnaire). Equal intervals are established to stand for the grade average: 1 to 1.167=A; 1.168 to 1.5=A-, 1.501 to 1.834=B+; 1.835 to 2.167=B; 2.168 to 2.5=B-; 2.501 to 2.834=C+; 2.835 to 3.167=C; and so on.

⁵⁷ For teaching English: $F = 2.9$, $df = 6/608$, $p < .01$. For teaching about Canada: $F = 2.8$, $df = 6/605$, $p < .02$.

Figure A-10: Student rating of LINC for how well it teaches English

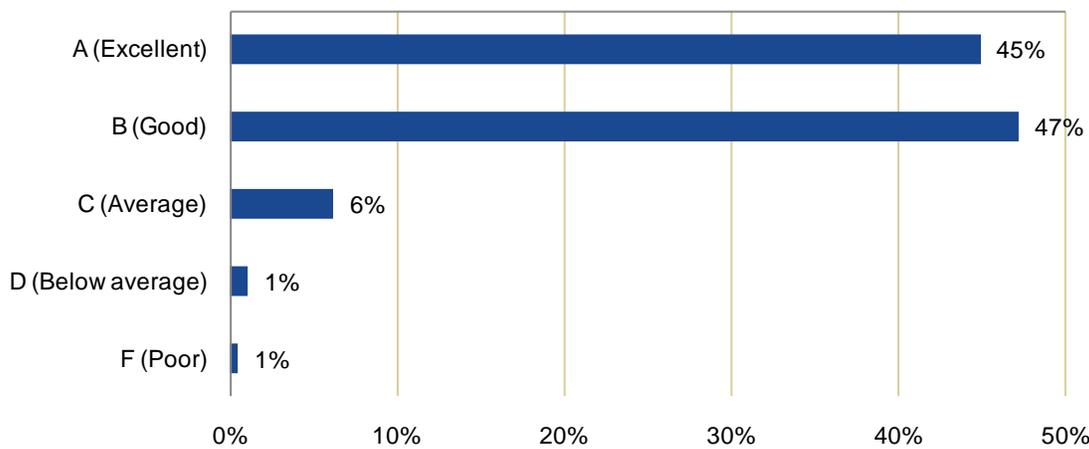


Source: Learners survey

Mean rating = B+

N = 615

Figure A-11: Student rating of LINC for what it teaches about Canada



Source: Learners survey

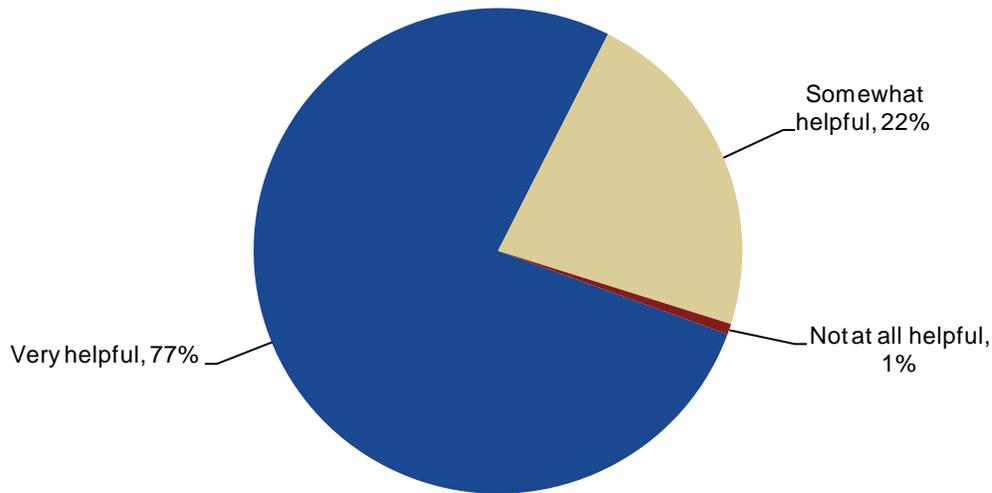
Mean rating = B+

N = 612

The next two figures portray students' reckoning of how helpful the LINC course has been for reaching their goals and for understanding and speaking with Canadians in everyday life. In both ways LINC was considered very helpful by about three-quarters of learners. There were no significant differences by LINC level.⁵⁸

⁵⁸ In both cases the probability exceeded .05 (using Somers' d for ordinal by ordinal analysis).

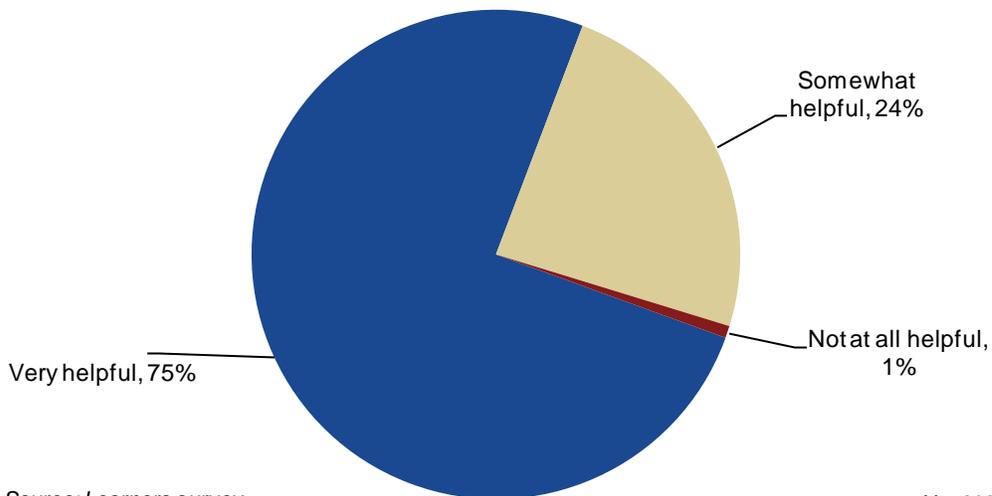
Figure A-12: Helpfulness of LINC course for reaching learner goals



Source: Learners survey

N = 607

Figure A-13: Helpfulness of LINC course for understanding and speaking with Canadians in daily life



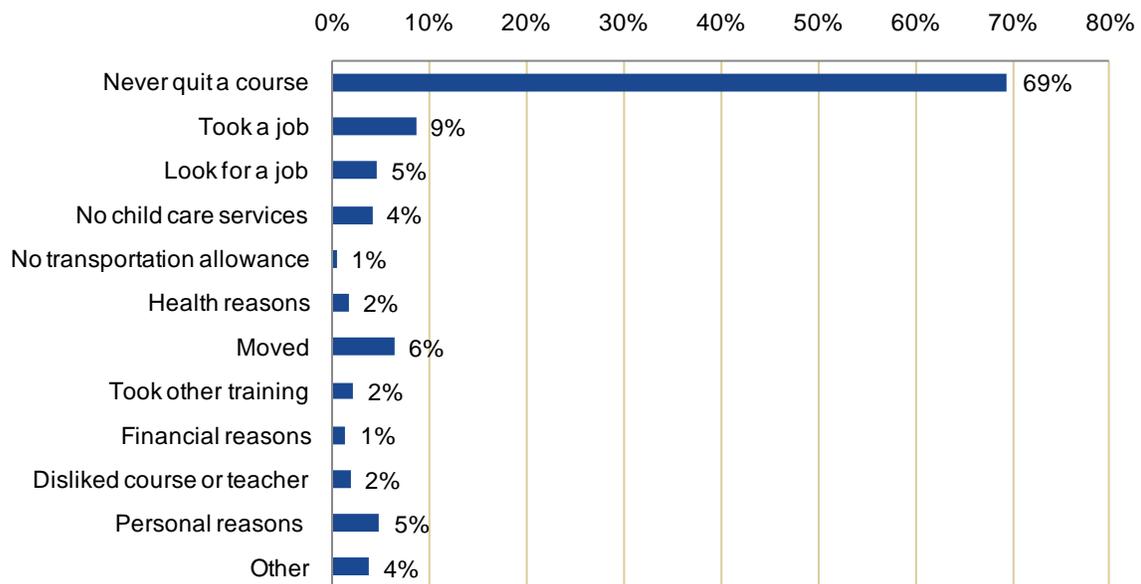
Source: Learners survey

N = 609

A final aspect of student satisfaction is their propensity to drop out. Data from the class information form suggest a dropout rate of at least 22%. The student survey could not get at this directly since it was aimed at current students rather than dropouts. It did, however, examine the issue by asking whether the respondent had ever quit a course and why. Of those who had taken a previous course, 31% had quit at least one before completing it. Figure A-14 shows the reasons respondents gave for quitting a previous course. Most students quit to take a job, to look for a job, or because they moved.

There is little indication from this graph that students quit because they were dissatisfied with LINC. Only 2% said they disliked the course or teacher.

Figure A-14: Reasons for quitting previous courses



Source: Learners survey

N = 637

LINC learner suggestions for improvements

LINC learners had several suggestions for improving the program. Most often mentioned in the survey was more conversation. This included talking with the teacher, in-class conversation among students and inviting native speakers into the classroom – any opportunity to listen to and speak English. In the focus groups suggestions for improvement were often, as would be expected, reflective of what was lacking in the particular class:

- Computers (in cases where there were none) or, in other instances, more computer time
- Reference books for students
- CDs for listening practice
- Access to some of these items (books and CDs) to bring home for additional practice
- More fieldtrips to learn about the community first hand
- Longer class time (in a part-time programs) and more flexible hours (in programs that offered only day-time classes or only evening classes)
- More space (in particularly over-crowded classrooms)
- More specialty classes to better meet the needs of different learners (speaking, writing, grammar)
- More homework to provide the opportunity to practice and advance at a faster pace (this suggestion, which was given in a few different focus groups, received a mixed reaction from the group because those individuals who have families felt that they would not have time to do homework and that their time in class was a big enough commitment).
- More tests on a regular basis (again, this received a mixed reaction). Students who lobbied for this expressed frustration with not knowing how well they were progressing and when they could expect to move up to higher levels of LINC. Those who were really motivated to progress and challenge themselves argued that more frequent testing would provide them and the teacher with indicators of progress.
- Several students agreed that in lower level LINC classes the focus should be on communication, without the emphasis on grammar.

- More opportunities to interact with people (Canadians) outside of the classroom
- More levels offered by the same provider in order to maintain more consistency (not only in program delivery, but in the learners' lives)

LINC teachers

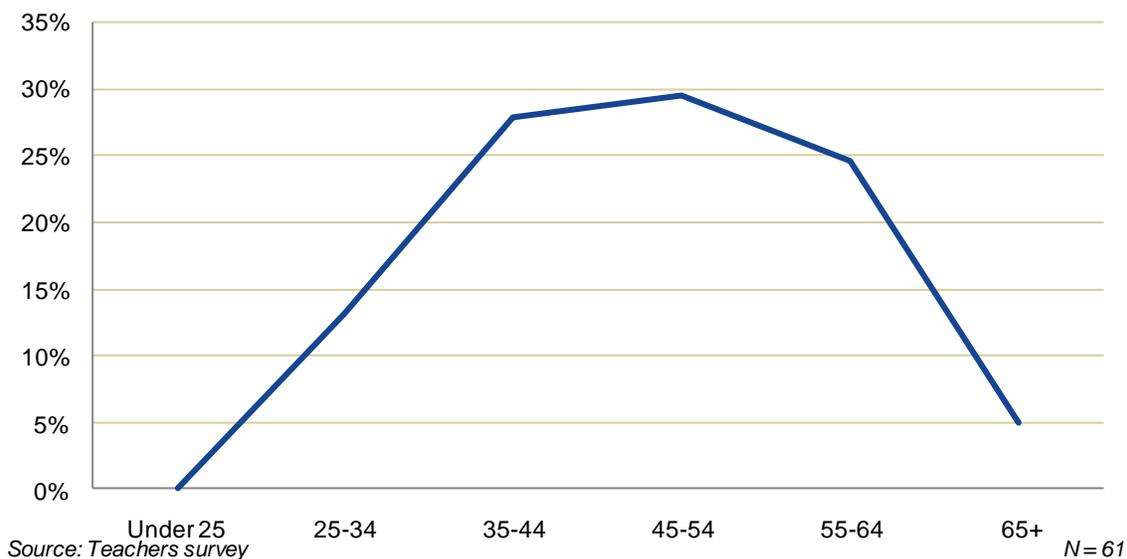
This section profiles LINC teachers beginning with demographics.

Demographics

The overwhelming majority (85%) of LINC teachers were women.

The mean age of LINC teachers was 47.8 years.⁵⁹ Most were in the 35 to 64 age group. Five percent were already past normal retirement age and another 25% were within 10 years of it. Comments by two teachers in the survey indicated that it is difficult attracting younger teachers into the field because of the contractual nature of most of the positions.

Figure A-15: Age distribution of teachers

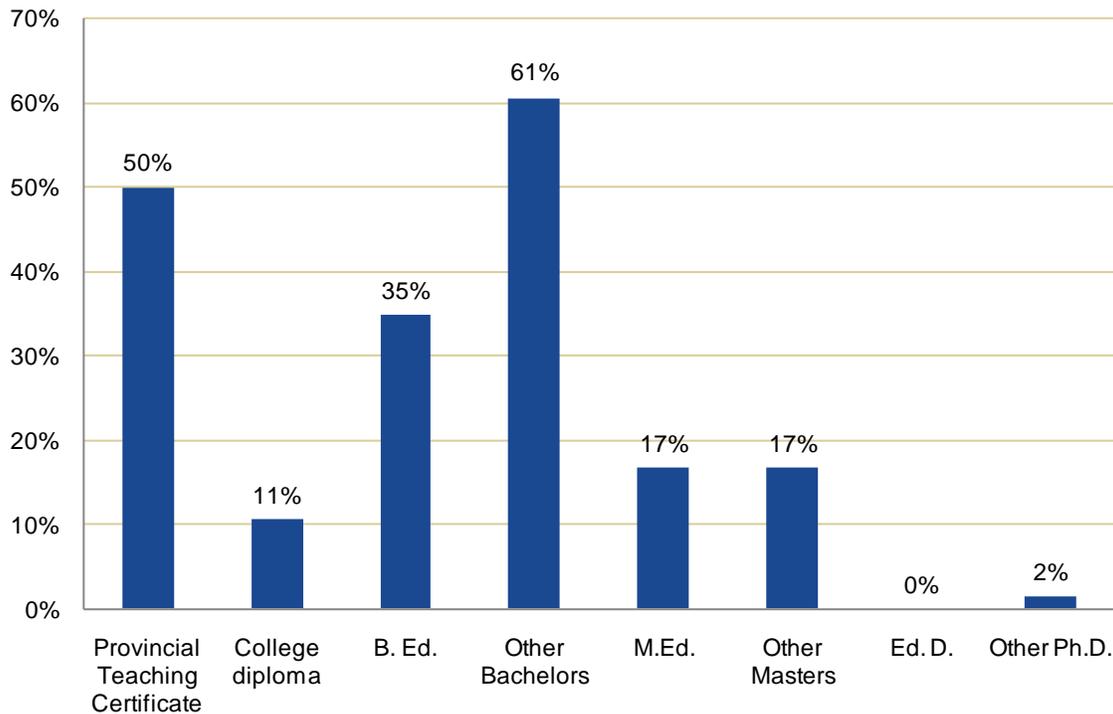


Almost half the LINC teachers (46%) were not native speakers of English. This did not differ significantly by region, employer type or age group. Having a LINC teacher whose first language was not English was an issue for some students, judging by comments in the learner surveys and focus groups. They felt that they would learn more English from native speakers. Understanding the vernacular and correct pronunciation are important issues for many students and some questioned whether they are being served well by teachers whose command of English may be less than ideal.

LINC teachers are very well educated (Figure A-16). Almost all – 95% – had at least one university degree. A third had two or more degrees.

⁵⁹ To illustrate the degree of error associated with a sample of this size the standard error is approximately 1.5 for a margin of error of approximately ± 2.94 (years in this case), 19 times in 20.

Figure A-16: Educational qualifications



Source: Teachers survey

N = 66

There was no evidence of lower standards for teachers in any type of organization, since there were no substantial differences in educational qualifications of instructors across type of provider. Neither were there significant differences across regions.

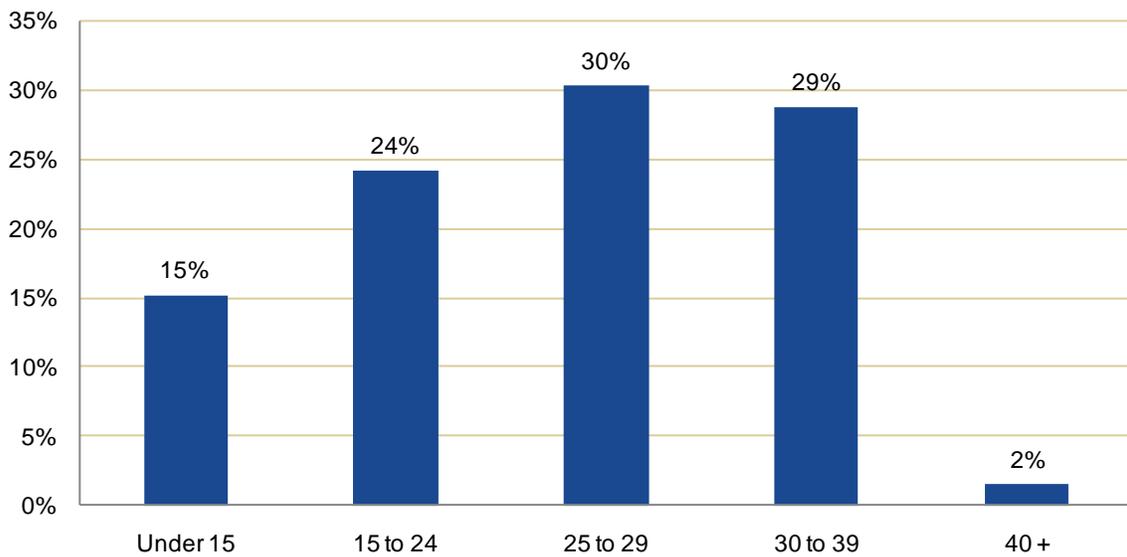
Conditions of employment

A long-standing issue in the field is the temporary or contractual nature of the teaching positions. Because the number of newcomers signing up for LINC is never certain and because of the short-term CIC contracts with LINC SPOs, many SPOs are unwilling to hire teachers on a permanent basis. The teacher survey results confirm that a minority of LINC teachers were permanent employees (39%); 52% were on contract, which generally lasted for the school year; and 9% were casual employees.

About 60% of LINC instructors were full-time employees (defined as teaching at least 25 hours per week). They taught LINC for an average of 21.4 hours per week. Including the 10% of teachers who also teach non-LINC ESL courses, the mean total weekly hours of instruction was 23.4. On average, teachers employed by school boards taught the most hours (26.4), followed by community agency instructors (21.9) and college instructors (17.7).⁶⁰ There was no significant difference by region.

⁶⁰ F = 3.9, df = 2/58, p < .05

Figure A-17: Weekly hours of LINC instruction



Source: Teachers survey

Mean hours = 21.4

N = 66

Suggestions for improvements

Teachers were asked to make one recommendation to improve LINC. About 85% made a recommendation. Nothing predominated. Better resources/learning materials/facilities and standardized exit tests were mentioned most often.

Asked directly about the importance of an exit test, teachers replied that having a formal exit test is important: the mean was 2.1 on the five-point scale.

Very important	Mean ↓			Not at all important
1	2	3	4	5
37%	29%	25%	5%	5%

Strengths and weaknesses of LINC

Strengths and weaknesses of LINC were explored during interviews with CIC national and regional representatives and in the teachers survey.

Strengths

The main strengths, listed in order of frequency mentioned, according to key informants:

- **Flexibility** LINC has a variety of modes of delivery and hours of delivery; because its funded through SPOs it can focus on what the community needs most (e.g., classes for women or certain ethnic groups or certain professions); it can be delivered by colleges, schools, community centres or private educators; curriculum is not standard and can be tailored to suit the needs of local immigrants; it is continually evolving to meet the needs of the newest newcomers to the country. “It has the flexibility to adapt to local circumstances but its principles and foundations ensure consistency across the county.” (6 informants)

- **Accessibility** LINC is free, it provides instruction by internet and mail and volunteer tutoring programs in the homes of clients who cannot attend regular classroom training, and it provides transportation assistance and child minding to help immigrants who otherwise would have difficulty getting access to programming. (6 informants)
- **Quality** LINC Curriculum Guidelines give the instructor ideas on how to proceed and themes on what to cover at various levels and help to ensure greater quality and standardization; it is delivered by certified teachers for even quality (5 informants)
- **Partnerships with SPOs** Experience and committed partners that are dedicated to helping newcomers and have an understanding of the big picture outside of language training that immigrants face during integration. (3 informants)
- **National program** Federal government involvement helps ensure even quality and access across Canada and provides the program with more legitimacy (3 informants)
- **Research and resource development** Top quality materials and tools have been developed; training for assessors, professional development available for child minders, assessors and teachers. (2 informants)

The strength mentioned most often by LINC teachers was the top-notch curriculum guidelines (21%). Other strengths cited by teachers included flexibility (18%); its dual focus on language and culture (18%); its generous funding (17%); and the help it gives newcomers to integrate (15%).

Weaknesses

The main weaknesses, listed in order of frequency mentioned, according to key informants:

- **No progress and exit tests** One design flaw is the lack of progress and exit tests. A cohesive exit test might make students more serious about staying in the program because they'll have milestones to meet and proof of accomplishment. (5 informants)
- **No standard curriculum** Having curriculum guidelines instead of a standard curriculum has drawbacks and benefits. The drawbacks are the lack of consistency across Canada in the way in which LINC is taught and it makes it much harder to create content and exit tests; the benefit is that it allows the flexibility to meet the varied needs of immigrants and the community context in which the immigrants are learning. Perhaps there could be a standardized curriculum that leaves room for regional modifications. (4 informants)
- **Confusion around CLB levels and LINC levels** Whereas CLB levels are used for assessment, LINC levels are used for placement and people often get confused; LINC usually clusters classes around benchmarks rather than around skills or specific learning needs (3 informants)
- **Lack of access for newcomers in rural areas** (3 informants)
- **No clear milestones** The program does not have clear objectives for newcomers so it cannot maximize the benefits for them: too many discontinue before moving up. Milestones would improve clarity for learners and could motivate them to complete more levels. (2 informants)
- **Lack of development of CLIC** Assessment and level appropriate curriculum is needed to parallel LINC (2 informants)
- **Considerable administrative burden for SPOs and CIC** (2 informants)

Other weaknesses mentioned by one informant each: low take up levels and retention levels; availability of higher level LINC varies from region to region; lack of content test; no income support; limited professional development for instructors; lack of emphasis on workplace training; anticipated shortage of language instructors due to retirements; length of time many

newcomers are spending at one LINC level; lack of skill-centered classes such as pronunciation; continuous intake; and uneven quality among SPOs (CIC has increased the number of service providers and expanded the capacity of others, but has done little yet to ensure the quality is high).

For teachers no single issue predominated, suggesting no glaring weaknesses in the eyes of teachers. Heading the list was lack of up-to-date resources (18%). For example: “Not enough funds to buy materials.” “Lack of a basic resource in the form of a book in the hands of a student.” “The material is out of date and does not take in all of Canada, only specific regions.”

Appendix B: Other methodological considerations

Teacher surveys and class information forms, along with the learner surveys, instruction sheets and a return postage paid envelope were couriered to 56 of the 70 classes selected at random. The other 14 instructors were involved in the case studies. These teachers were emailed an electronic version of the questionnaires for return before the case study site visit (information on the forms was needed to prepare for the site visit).

Choosing the case study classes and learners

Multistage random sampling was used to select the classes and learners for the evaluation. Under this procedure, classes are chosen at random, and selections from within the selected classes are made at random. The principles of multistage sampling are straightforward, but avoiding inadvertent biases can complicate its execution. It is not as simple as first selecting the class and then selecting learners from within them. *Each individual across all the classes should have an equal probability of selection.* The selection of the LINC classes had to take into account the number of learners within them. Thus the first step was to get a list of all LINC students in Canada. This was available for Ontario only (through HARTs). For the six other provinces involved in LINC, SPOs (numbering about 40) were asked for a list of their LINC classes and the number of learners in each. HARTs and survey data showed there were 27,470 LINC learners in Canada during the last week in April (this excludes only a few SPOs outside of Ontario that did not return a SPO survey).⁶¹ An SPSS data set was created with all 27,470 students. The file was listed by class (which weights each class by its number of learners). It was randomly shuffled to guard against any inadvertent ordering effects. The total number 27,470 was divided by the number of classes to be chosen (70) to give the sampling interval of 392. A random number between 1 and 392 was chosen to determine the first class → 173. The class that learner 173 belongs to was then chosen. Then 392 was added to the random number to give 565; that person's class was selected. And so on until 70 classes were selected. The final stage was to select 10 surveys at random from each class.

Choice of dependent variables

An important methodological consideration was the choice of dependent variables for the analyses. The evaluation used difference scores (also called change or gain scores) computed by subtracting the pretest from the posttest CLBA score for each skill area. Some researchers (e.g., Cronbach & Furby, 1970; Werts & Linn, 1970)⁶² have warned against use of difference scores because they often have little variability and they frequently correlate with the initial level of the characteristic measured: in short, they tend to be unreliable. Others (e.g., Rogosa & Willett, 1983; Allison, 1990; Williams & Zimmerman, 1996; Collins, 1996)⁶³, however, disagree, asserting that difference scores provide unique information on individual change and thus should not be

⁶¹ More SPO surveys were returned after this sampling was done; the final total of learners was 28,096.

⁶² Cronbach, J. & Furby, L. (1970). How should we measure change - Or should we? *Psychological Bulletin*, 105, 68-80; Werts, C.E. & Linn, R.L. (1970) A general linear model for studying growth. *Psychological Bulletin*, 7, 17-22.

⁶³ Rogosa, D. R., & Willett, J. B. (1983). Demonstrating the reliability of the difference score in the measurement of change. *Journal of Educational Measurement*, 20, 335-343. Allison, P Change scores as dependent variables in regression analysis. In P. Clogg, *Sociological Methodology*, V20, 1990. Collins, L. M. (1996). Is reliability obsolete? A commentary on 'Are simple gain scores obsolete?' *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 20, 289-292. Williams, R. H. & Zimmerman, D. W. (1996). Are simple gain scores obsolete? *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 20, 59-69.

dismissed. The emerging consensus is that for experimental designs, ANCOVA is preferable to difference scores because it is more powerful, but for quasi-experimental designs difference scores are the better alternative.⁶⁴

When data meet certain conditions, the use of difference scores is not be problematic. Analysis of change scores can be a reasonable alternative when there is a high correlation between baseline and follow up measurements.⁶⁵ For this evaluation these correlations are: Listening = .80; Speaking = 0.83; Reading = 0.76; Writing = 0.76.

Another condition is a strong intervention: “In order for gain scores to be reliable it is necessary for the intervention between the two testing occasions to be relatively potent and for the instrumentation to be specially designed to be sensitive enough to detect changes attributable to the intervention.”⁶⁶ There is a strong argument that this is the case for LINC.

Finally, very substantial decreases in post-test variance would be a warning sign that difference scores should not be used. This is not the case, so it reasonable to use difference scores for this evaluation.

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Original	3.329	3.410	4.579	3.235
Current	3.717	3.724	4.182	2.726

Surveying former LINC learners

One drawback of the multistage option is that it excluded former LINC learners, thus yielding less valuable information on longer term impacts of LINC. CIC expressed interest in hearing from former LINC clients to learn why they discontinued in LINC, what they thought of the LINC class and what they are doing now. This presented a significant challenge because former students are very hard to track down: newcomers move a lot. In fact, the evaluators believed the challenge was difficult enough that it was not a part of the original plans for the evaluation. But CIC wanted an attempt.

The first problem was identifying a sampling frame. The iCAMS database would have been ideal but CIC determined that confidentiality issues made this an unlikely option. The only other alternative was the HART's database in Ontario. Although this is an excellent database it covers only Ontario LINC clients. Thus the first shortcoming of the sample: it represents Ontario only. The second problem was reaching the sample with the survey. Confidentiality is, of course, also a concern with HART's data. The Centre for Education and Training was willing to release email addresses (with CIC's approval) but not client names and addresses. Therefore, an email survey was the only possible mode for conducting the survey. Unfortunately only a small percentage of newcomers have email addresses. Moreover, it was also anticipated that many newcomers would not understand the survey. Since this was not a part of the proposed evaluation there were no funds available for translation into several languages. Other problems included the natural

⁶⁴ Cribbie, R.A. & Jamieson, J. Decreases in Posttest Variance and The Measurement of Change. *Methods of Psychological Research Online* 2004, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 37-55.

⁶⁵ Vickers, A.J. & Altman, D.G. Analysing controlled trials with baseline and follow up measurements. *BMJ*. 2001 November 10; 323(7321): 1123-1124.

⁶⁶ Williams, R. H., Zimmerman, D.W. and Mazzagatti, R.D. (1987) Large Sample Estimates of the Reliability of Simple, Residualized and Base-Free Gain Scores. *Journal of Experimental Education*, Vol. 55.

tendency of many people to distrust unsolicited emails with attachments and to delete the email; and surveying in summertime. All these problems yielded a response rate of only 17% despite two follow-ups. That leaves a chance for non-response bias. A separate report on the survey results was submitted to CIC.