

Centre for
**Immigrant
Research**



Centre pour la
**recherche sur
les immigrants**

Evaluating Newcomers' Safety Awareness and Behaviours

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About The Immigrant Education Society (TIES)

The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) is a not-for-profit registered charitable organization that has been serving newcomers and Canadians since 1988. The primary goal of the organization is to provide immigrants and economically disadvantaged individuals with a solid foothold in Canada and afford them the opportunities to feel belonging in their new community. TIES is governed by a Board of Directors made up of devoted community-minded volunteers and operates through funding from both government and private organizations. Since 1992, TIES has been offering the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, with over a thousand clients participating daily. In the early 2000s, TIES expanded its services to include employment and settlement programs and later introduced the Centre for Immigrant Research to further strengthen its research capabilities. More recently, TIES added childcare services, enhancing its ability to support the diverse needs of newcomers.

TIES now operates and fully owns two large facilities in Calgary's Northeast, Forest Lawn and Whitehorn neighbourhoods. In December 2021, TIES expanded its services to a new, larger facility in the Westwinds area of Northeast Calgary. Since its inception, TIES has assisted over 350,000 clients in strengthening their identities as members of Alberta society.



About TIES Centre for Immigrant Research

The TIES Centre for Immigrant Research aims to move the organization toward greater use of evidence-based knowledge, best practices and data to inform its efforts to help newcomers settle into Canadian society.

With a community-based approach, the Centre for Immigrant Research seeks to produce knowledge that is deeply intertwined with communities and on-the-ground practice. Research projects and programs emerge from and are driven by impacted communities and practitioners. Our projects are founded upon and committed to principles of meaningful participation, co-learning, capacity building, empowerment and action. We operate under three streams:



Community-based Research

Ongoing research allows us to identify and address barriers to integration and share best practices. The Centre employs researchers experienced in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches.



Program Development

We aim to determine and respond to community needs by designing both well-established and innovative solutions and testing pilot programs.



Evaluation

We provide fee-for-service program evaluations, systems mapping, community engagement, staff satisfaction evaluation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) evaluation, etc.

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Executive Summary

This report presents key findings from a study conducted by the TIES Centre for Immigrant Research in April 2024. The report aims to assess newcomers' knowledge and awareness regarding safety across various contexts, including home, nature, workplace, and sanitation behaviours.

Drawing on data collected from 140 clients at TIES, the study revealed significant gaps in newcomers' awareness of safety practices. The findings underscore the importance of targeted educational initiatives and community partnerships to enhance newcomers' safety awareness and preparedness. Recommendations for action include advocating for policy changes to prioritize safety education, forging partnerships with community organizations to disseminate safety information, conducting language-specific safety training sessions, and enhancing access to informational resources. By implementing these recommendations, TIES and other immigrant-serving organizations can play a vital role in empowering newcomers to navigate their new environment safely and contribute to building a resilient and inclusive community in Calgary.

Introduction

Embarking on the journey of settling in a new country entails navigating a maze of unfamiliar customs, systems, and social norms. Amidst this complex web of adaptation, perhaps no aspect is as crucial as ensuring personal safety. However, our engagements with newcomers have revealed a concerning reality: there is a notable gap in their understanding and awareness of safety measures essential for their well-being and integration into Canadian society.

Recognizing the pivotal role safety awareness plays in fostering a thriving community, we embarked on a comprehensive research endeavor. Our aim was twofold: (1) to illuminate the extent of newcomers' knowledge regarding safety across diverse domains, including their homes, outdoor environments, workplaces, and sanitation practices, and (2) to offer recommendations for bridging any potential knowledge gaps.

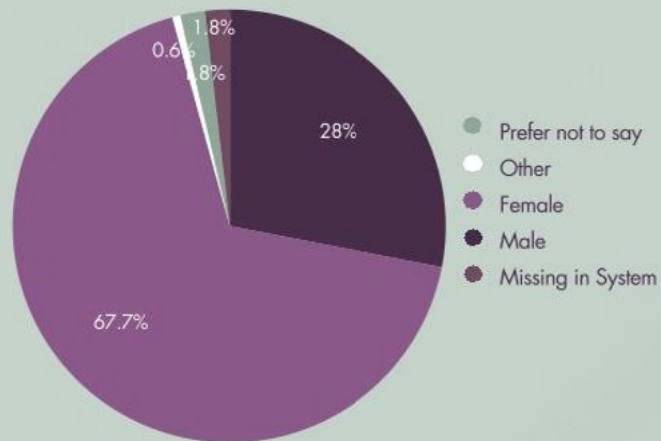
This study serves as a guiding light, illuminating the pressing need to equip newcomers with the tools and insights necessary to navigate their new surroundings safely. It is not merely a document; it is a call to action for stakeholders at all levels to prioritize and invest in initiatives that promote safety awareness among newcomers. By heeding the insights gleaned from this report, we can collectively foster a more inclusive, secure, and resilient community for newcomers and established citizens alike.

Methodology

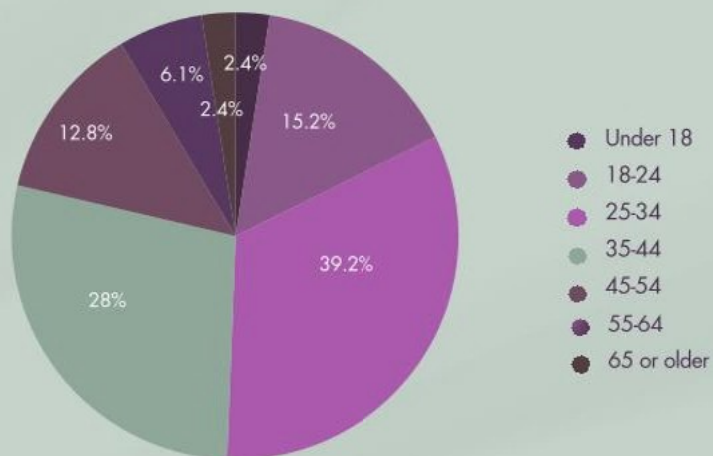
This study was conducted at The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) and involved the participation of 140 clients from various programs, including five online Drop-in ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, four online LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) classes, and three in-person LINC classes. To ensure effective communication, we specifically targeted clients with a language proficiency level exceeding Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 5. This strategic decision was based on our recognition of the linguistic challenges commonly encountered by many newcomers, ensuring that participants could fully engage with the survey and provide meaningful responses.

The survey instrument utilized in this study consisted of a structured questionnaire comprising 24 questions. To enhance accessibility and comprehension, visual aids were integrated to accompany each query. This approach was employed to address potential language barriers and facilitate respondents' understanding of the survey content. Moreover, a researcher personally attended all classes to administer the survey verbally. This hands-on approach enabled the researcher to guide participants through each question, thereby ensuring clarity and comprehension. In instances where clarification was needed, instructors provided valuable support, further enhancing the accessibility of the survey for individuals for whom English is not their primary language. This multi-faceted approach aimed to maximize the inclusivity and effectiveness of our data collection process.

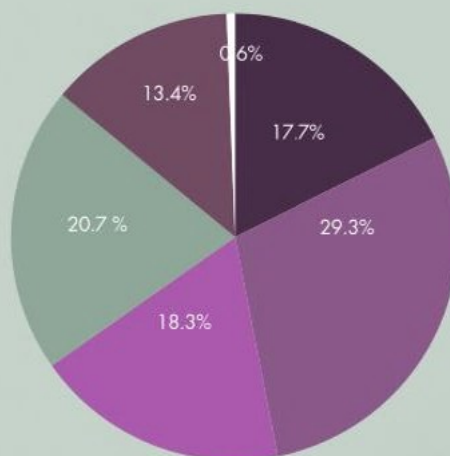
Gender



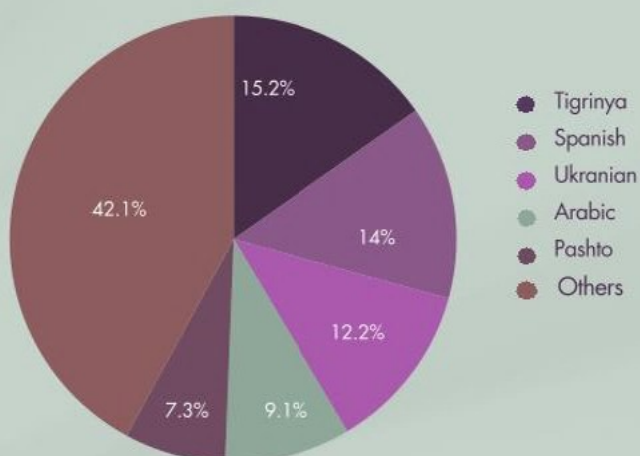
Age



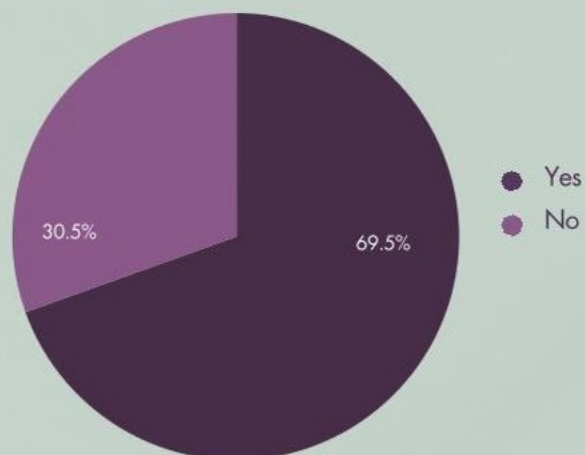
Education



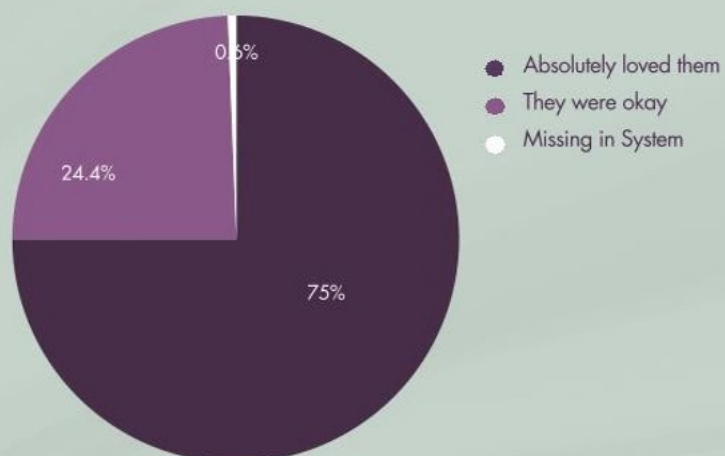
First Language - Top 5



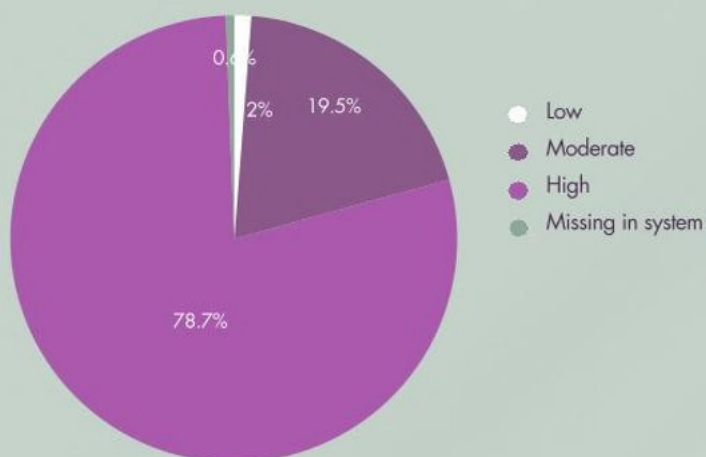
Previous Experience Gardening



Program Satisfaction



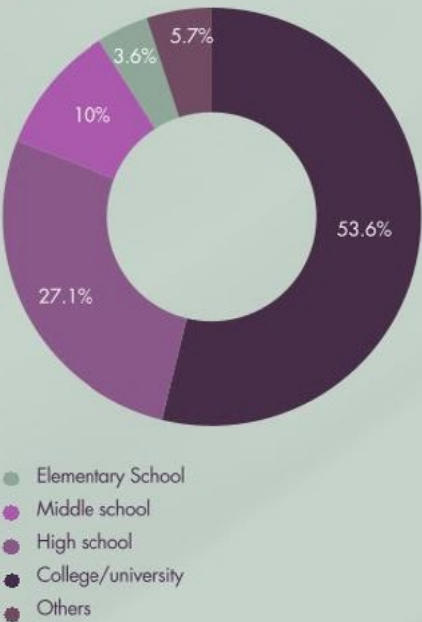
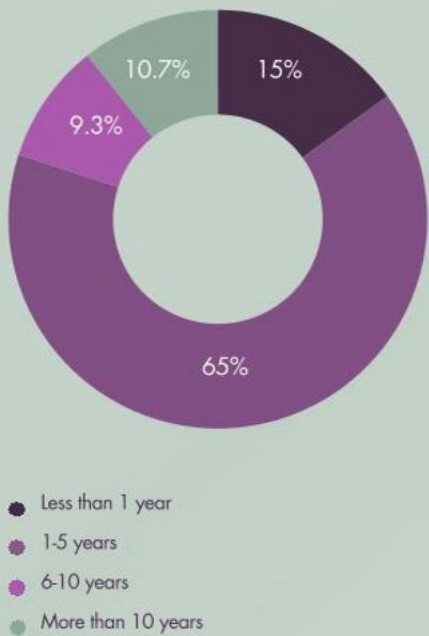
Impact Nominal



Section 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Years in Canada

The majority of participants (80%) arrived in Canada within the last five years. This indicates that most are still in the early stages of settlement, navigating key aspects such as housing, employment, and building social connections. Their recent arrival may also influence their awareness of available services and resources, as well as their integration into Canadian society.



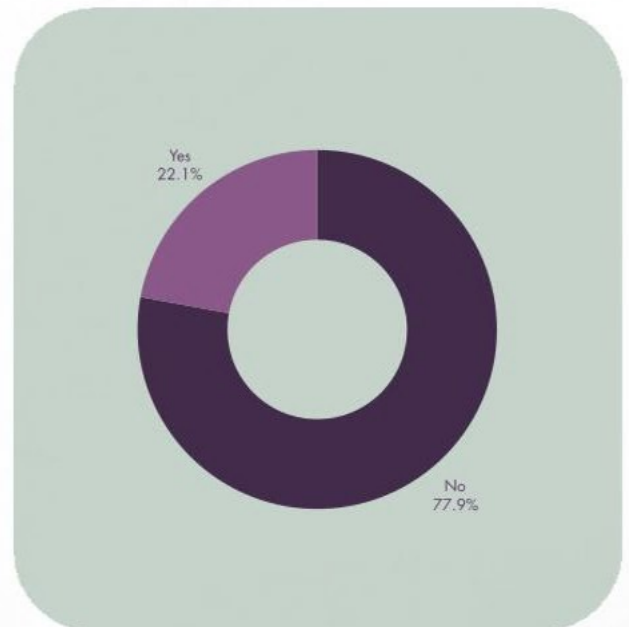
Education Level

Participants' educational backgrounds varied significantly. The majority, constituting 53.6%, reported having attended or completed college or university education. High school education was reported by 27.1% of participants, while 10% reported middle school education and 3.6% reported elementary school education.

Section 2: Newcomers Awareness Regarding Safety at Home

- **Are you aware if your home is located in flood-prone areas?**

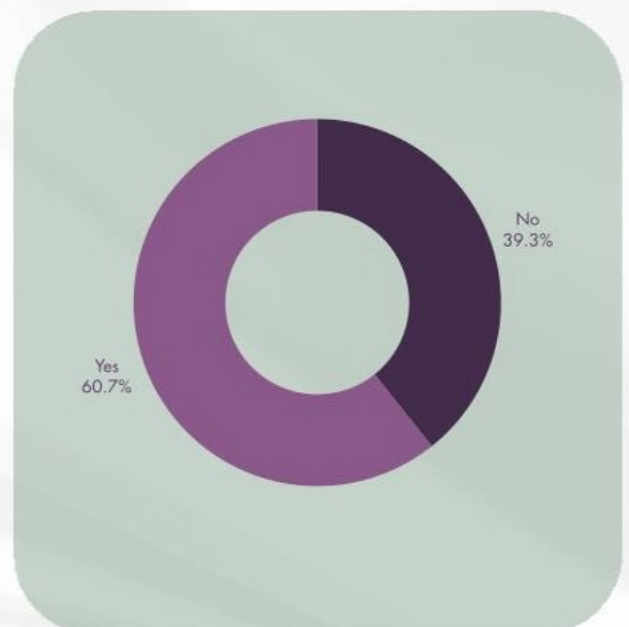
It is revealed that a significant portion of respondents, specifically 77.9%, lacked awareness of whether their homes were situated in flood-prone areas. This indicates a substantial gap in knowledge regarding potential flood risks among newcomers. Conversely, 22.1% of respondents reported being aware of this aspect, suggesting that a minority of newcomers possess knowledge about flood-prone areas in their residential locations. This finding underscores the importance of enhancing newcomers' awareness of natural disaster risks, such as flooding, to promote their safety and resilience in their new environment.



- **Do you have home insurance?**

The majority, comprising 60.7%, reported having home insurance coverage. This indicates that a significant portion of newcomers still lack insurance protection for their residences.

Upon further investigation by the researcher in the surveying session, it was revealed that many newcomers lacked awareness of the distinction between landlord's insurance and renter's insurance. Specifically, respondents expressed confusion regarding the necessity of home insurance when renting a property. This finding underscores a critical gap in understanding among newcomers regarding insurance terminology and coverage options.



- **Do you know how to evacuate your home in an emergency?**

The findings indicate that 45% of respondents reported not knowing how to evacuate their homes in an emergency, while 55% affirmed their knowledge of evacuation procedures. This disparity underscores a significant portion of newcomers who may lack essential preparedness skills crucial for ensuring their safety during emergency situations.



- **Do you know what a carbon monoxide detector is and how it works?**

According to the survey results, 48.6% of respondents indicated that they do not know what a carbon monoxide detector is or how it operates, while 51.4% reported being familiar with this safety device. This finding highlights a noteworthy knowledge gap among newcomers regarding the purpose and functionality of carbon monoxide detectors, which are essential for detecting potentially life-threatening gas leaks in residential settings.



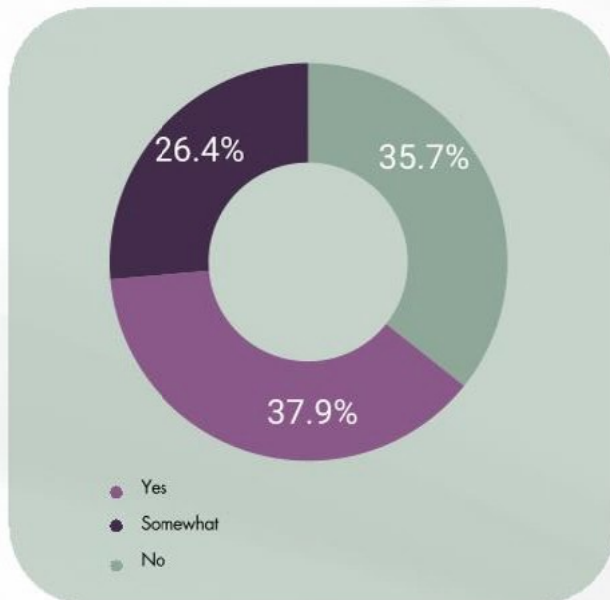
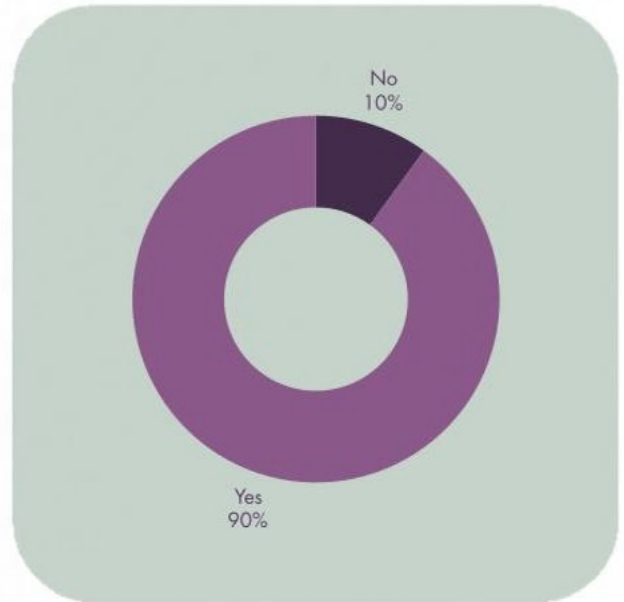
- **Do you know how to use a fire extinguisher?**

The survey findings indicate that 50.7% of respondents reported not knowing how to use a fire extinguisher, while 49.3% affirmed their knowledge of its usage. This near-even split underscores a significant portion of newcomers who may lack essential skills in fire safety and emergency response.



- **Do you know how to call emergency services (police, ambulance, firefighters) in case of an emergency?**

According to the survey results, 90% of respondents reported knowing how to call emergency services, including the police, ambulance, and firefighters, in case of an emergency. Conversely, 10% of respondents indicated not knowing how to do so, underscoring the importance of ensuring that all the newcomers are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to access emergency services in critical situations.



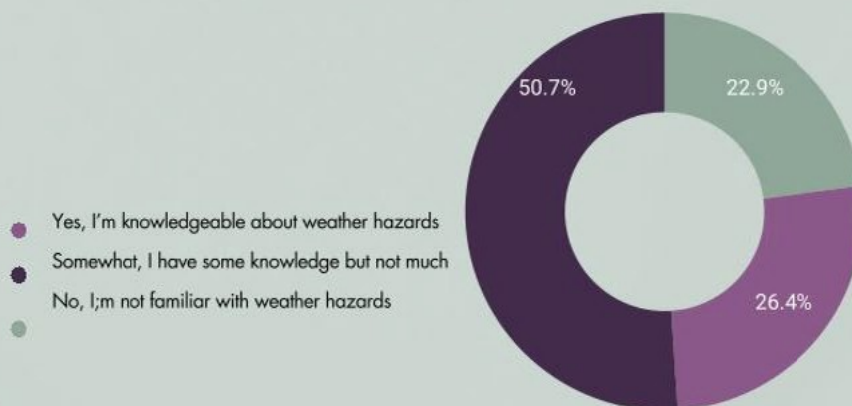
- **Are you aware of how to inspect and maintain your home for potential health hazards (e.g., mould, pests)?**

The survey results reveal that 37.9% of respondents indicated being aware of how to inspect and maintain their homes for potential health hazards, such as mould and pests. Conversely, 35.7% reported not being aware, while 26.4% indicated some level of awareness, suggesting a varying degree of familiarity with home maintenance practices among newcomers.

Section 3: Newcomers' Awareness Regarding Safety in Nature

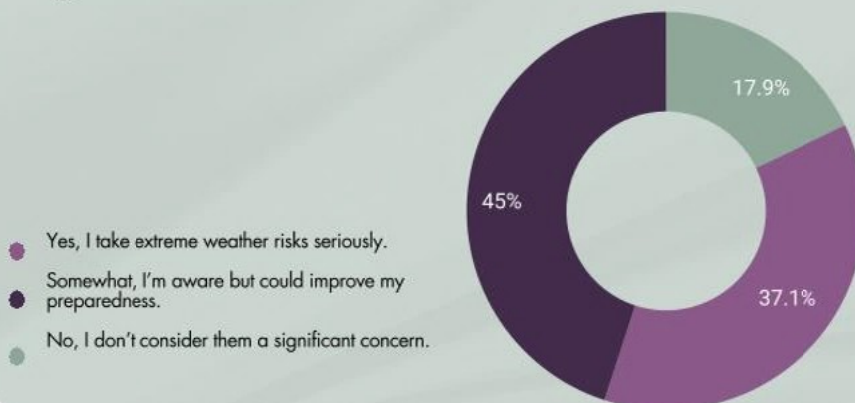
• Do you have knowledge about weather hazards in this city (wildland fire, flood)?

According to the survey results, 26.4% of respondents indicated having a strong understanding of weather hazards, such as wildland fires and floods, in the city. A majority, comprising 50.7%, expressed having some level of knowledge about these hazards, albeit limited. Conversely, 22.9% reported not being familiar with weather hazards in the city.



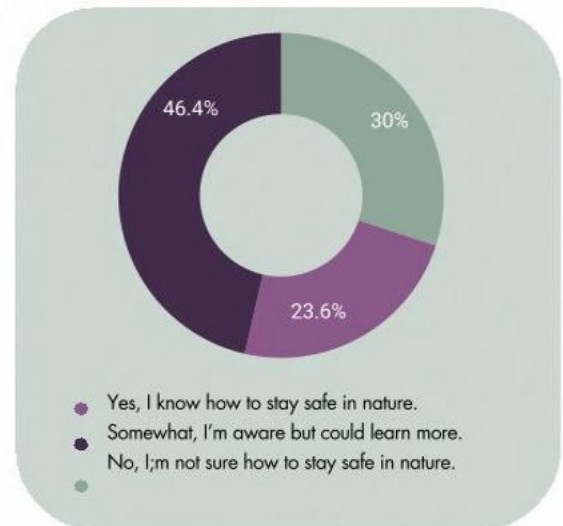
• Do you take the risks associated with extreme weather conditions seriously?

The survey findings reveal that 37.1% of respondents reported taking extreme weather risks seriously, indicating a strong awareness of the potential dangers posed by such events. A significant portion, comprising 45%, expressed a moderate level of awareness but acknowledged the need to improve their preparedness for extreme weather events. Conversely, 17.9% of respondents indicated not considering extreme weather risks a significant concern.



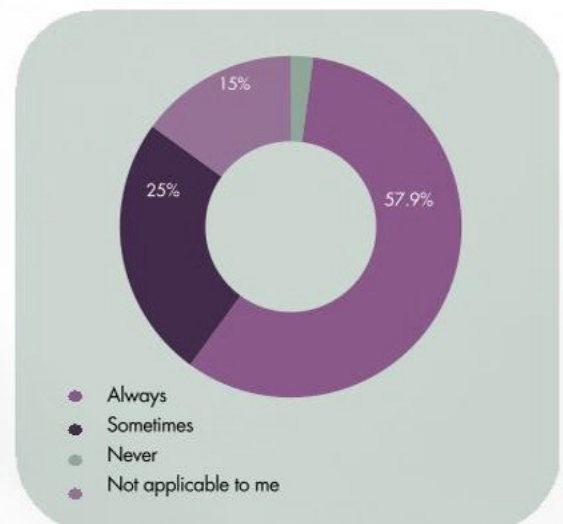
- **Do you know how to stay safe when you're in nature?**

According to the survey results, 23.6% of respondents reported having a strong understanding of how to stay safe when in nature. A larger proportion, comprising 46.4%, expressed some awareness but acknowledged the need for further learning. On the other hand, 30% of respondents admitted not being sure how to stay safe in nature, indicating a significant knowledge gap in this area.



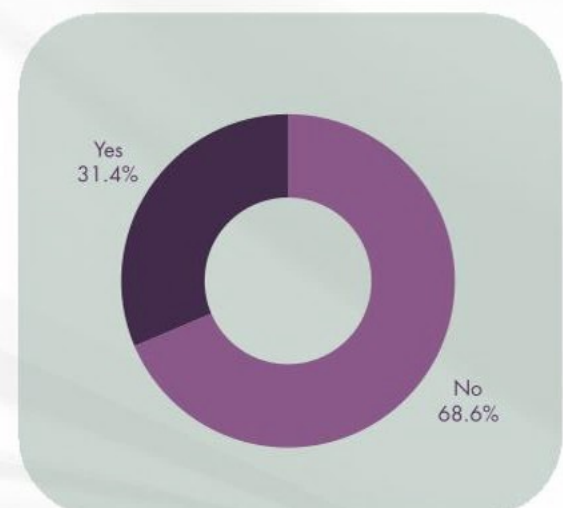
- **How often do you follow posted warning signs and guidelines in outdoor recreational areas?**

The survey results indicate that a majority of respondents, comprising 57.9%, reported always following posted warning signs and guidelines in outdoor recreational areas, demonstrating a high level of adherence to safety protocols. Only a small fraction, 2.1% of respondents, admitted to never following posted warning signs and guidelines.



- **Are you aware of how to identify and avoid poisonous plants or dangerous wildlife when you are in nature?**

The survey results reveal that 31.4% of respondents reported being aware of how to identify and avoid poisonous plants or dangerous wildlife when in nature, indicating a moderate level of knowledge in this area. However, a majority of respondents, comprising 68.6%, admitted to not being aware of these hazards, suggesting a significant knowledge gap.



Section 4: Newcomers' Awareness Regarding Sanitation Practices

- **Are you aware of proper handwashing techniques and the importance of personal hygiene?**

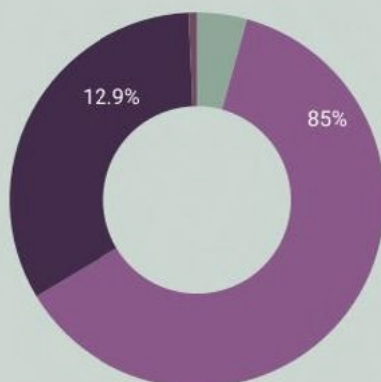
The survey results indicate a high level of awareness among respondents regarding proper handwashing techniques and the importance of personal hygiene, with 96.4% affirming their awareness of these practices. Only a small fraction of respondents, comprising 3.6%, reported not being aware of proper handwashing techniques and the significance of personal hygiene.



- **Do you know how to keep your food and water safe to eat and drink?**

The survey findings indicate a high level of awareness among respondents regarding the practices necessary to keep food and water safe to eat and drink, with 96.4% affirming their knowledge in this area. A small minority of respondents, comprising 3.6%, reported not being aware of the measures required to ensure the safety of food and water.

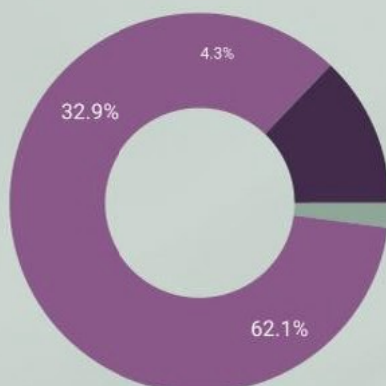




• Yes
 • Somewhat
 • No

- **Do you make sure to throw away trash properly and recycle items when possible?**

The survey results indicate a strong commitment among respondents to proper waste disposal and recycling practices, with 85% reporting that they always ensure to throw away trash properly and recycle items when possible. Additionally, a notable portion of respondents, comprising 12.9%, reported doing so sometimes, suggesting occasional adherence to these practices. A small fraction of respondents, representing 2.1%, admitted to never engaging in proper waste disposal and recycling.



• Daily
 • Weekly
 • Monthly
 • Rarely

- **How often do you clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in your living and working areas?**

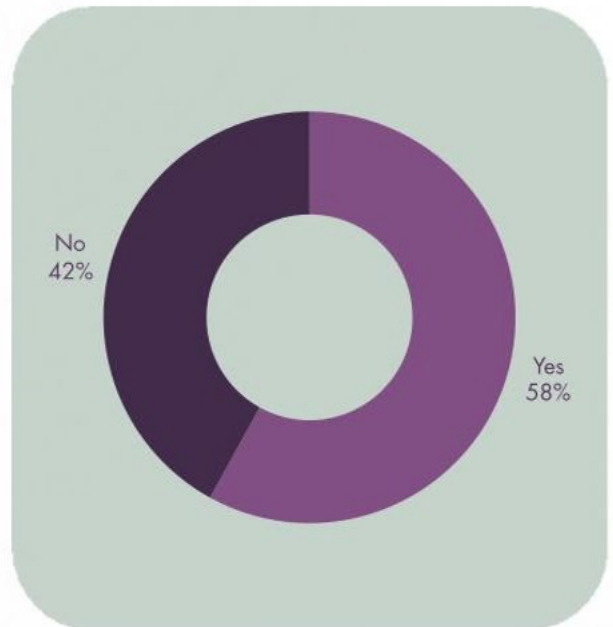
According to the survey findings, a majority of respondents, comprising 62.1%, reported cleaning and disinfecting touched surfaces in their living and working areas daily. Additionally, a significant portion of respondents, representing 32.9%, reported doing so weekly, indicating regular attention to maintaining cleanliness and hygiene.

A smaller proportion of respondents, totalling 4.3%, reported cleaning and disinfecting surfaces monthly, while only 0.7% admitted to rarely engaging in this practice.

Section 5: Newcomers' Awareness Regarding Safety at Workplace

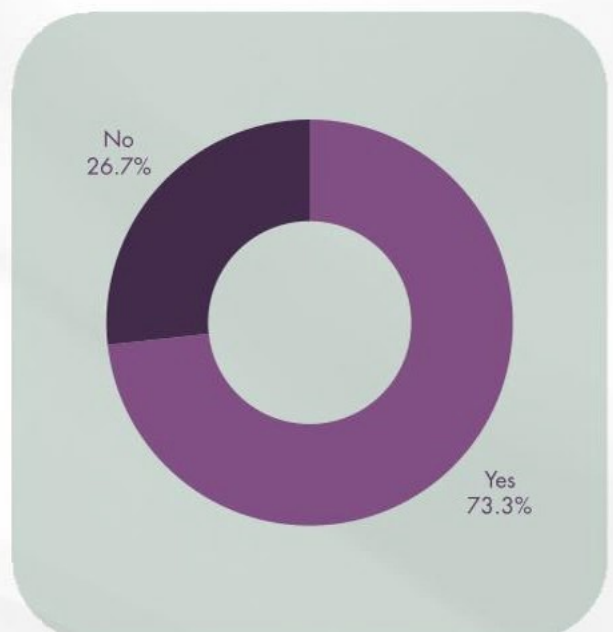
- **Have you received training on emergency procedures (e.g., fire evacuation, medical emergencies) at your workplace?**

Among the participants working at the forefront of surveying, 58% of them have received training on emergency procedures. Conversely, 42 % of respondents indicated that they had not received such training. While a significant portion of respondents have received training, there remains a substantial number who have not, potentially leaving them ill-prepared to respond effectively to workplace emergencies.



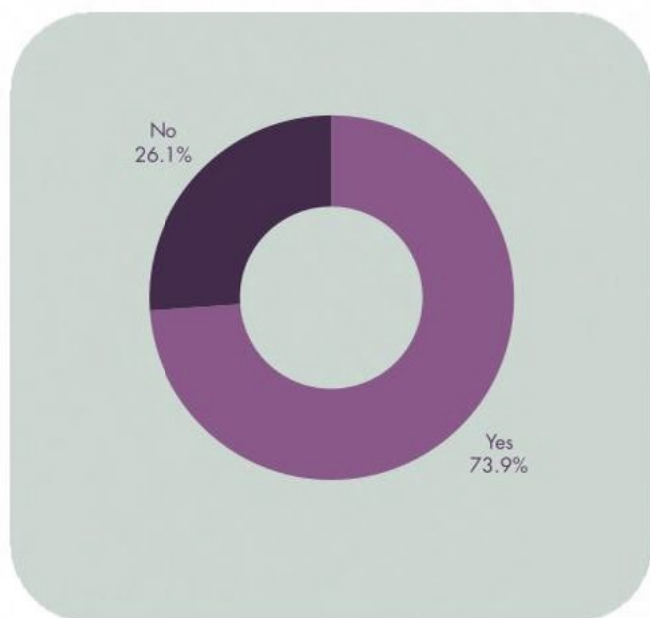
- **Are you aware of potential health hazards in your workplace environment and do you take measures to mitigate risks?**

Based on the survey findings, the majority of respondents who were employed at the time of surveying (73.3%) indicated being aware of potential health hazards in their workplace environment and taking measures to mitigate risks. Conversely, about one-fourth (26.7%) of respondents reported not being aware of these hazards or not taking measures to stay safe.



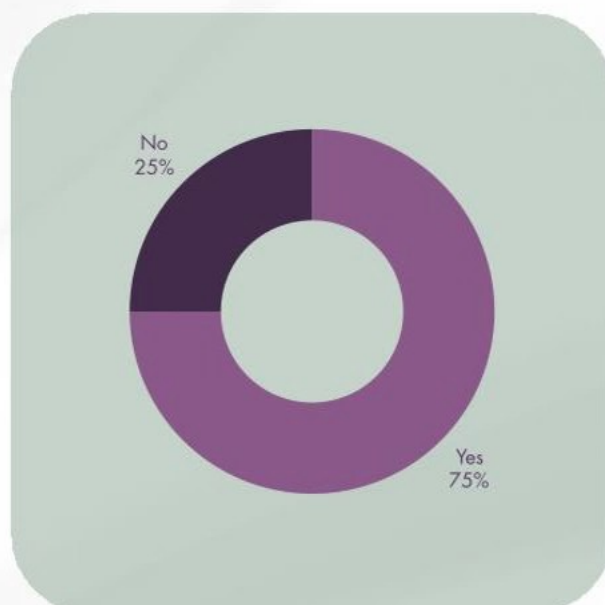
- **Do you use personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by your employer?**

According to the survey results, 73.9% of respondents who were employed at the time of surveying reported using personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by their employer. However, about one-fourth (26.1%) indicated not using the PPE provided by their employer. While a significant portion of respondents reported using the provided PPE, there is also a notable proportion who may not have access to or may not utilize appropriate protective equipment in their workplace.



- **Do you know who to report safety concerns in your workplace?**

Based on the survey results, 70% of respondents who were working at the time of the survey reported knowing who to report safety concerns to in their workplace. Conversely, 30% of employed respondents indicated not knowing who to report safety concerns to. This highlights the importance of providing clear channels for reporting safety concerns in the workplace and ensuring that all employees, including newcomers, are aware of these channels.

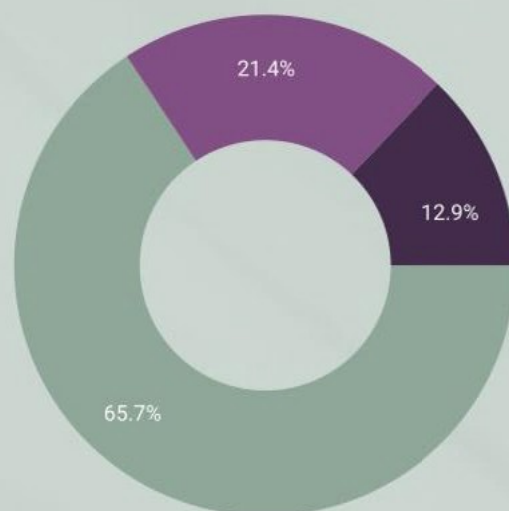


Overall Evaluation

- **Which statement best describes your general knowledge about safety?**

According to the survey results, 21.4% of respondents indicated that they have no knowledge regarding safety and would like to learn more about it. A majority of respondents, comprising 65.7%, reported having some knowledge about safety but acknowledged the need to improve it. Conversely, 12.9% of respondents stated that they are knowledgeable about safety and do not need any additional information regarding staying safe in different contexts.

These findings highlight the diversity of knowledge levels and perceptions regarding safety among newcomer populations. While a significant portion of respondents express a desire to learn more about safety or acknowledge the need for improvement, there are also individuals who feel confident in their safety knowledge.



- Some knowledge, but I need to improve it.
- Knowledgeable, I don't need additional Information
- No Knowledge, I like to gain information about it.

Conclusion

The findings of this study offer invaluable insights into safety knowledge and practices among newcomer populations. Through a comprehensive exploration of various safety-related dimensions, we have gained crucial insights to guide future interventions and initiatives aimed at enhancing safety awareness and practices among newcomers.

Among the notable revelations of this study is a significant gap in newcomers' awareness of potential flood risks in their residential areas and the importance of home insurance, particularly for renters. Many newcomers may not fully comprehend the risks associated with flooding or the necessity of securing renters' insurance to protect their belongings and financial well-being. Addressing these misconceptions is essential for empowering newcomers to make informed decisions and take proactive measures to safeguard themselves and their families against potential hazards.

This study also identified a pressing need for increased training and education on emergency evacuation procedures, the proper use of fire extinguishers, and the essential function of carbon monoxide detectors. These are fundamental safety measures that can significantly reduce the risk of harm in emergencies, yet many newcomers may lack the necessary knowledge to effectively implement them. By equipping newcomers with the knowledge and skills to respond effectively to emergencies, we can enhance their safety and resilience in their new environment.

Moreover, there is a clear need for enhanced awareness and understanding of weather hazards in the city, particularly regarding specific environmental risks in Calgary, such as wildland fires. As newcomers become more acclimated to their new environment, they must be provided with the knowledge and resources to navigate and mitigate potential hazards effectively.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of safety awareness in outdoor recreational areas, where newcomers may spend considerable time exploring the natural beauty of Alberta. While resources like the Canada Parks website offer valuable information for tourists navigating hiking areas, newcomers may face barriers accessing these resources due to a lack of awareness and language barriers. Therefore, providing accessible and culturally sensitive resources, training programs, and community partnerships is essential to bridge these knowledge gaps and empower newcomers to stay safe while enjoying outdoor activities. Drawing from our experience and insights gained from this study, we propose the following practical recommendations for action:

Recommendations

1. **Advocacy for Policy Change.**

This report reveals a great need to advocate for policy changes that prioritize safety education and resources for newcomer populations. We recognize the critical role of policy in addressing systemic barriers and promoting community-wide safety. By engaging with policymakers and advocating for initiatives that support safety education for newcomers, a more inclusive and secure environment for all can be created.

2. **Enhance Access to Informational Resources.**

Ensure newcomers have access to informational resources on safety, including online portals, community centers, and public libraries. Promote awareness of existing resources, such as the Canada Parks website, and provide guidance on how to access and utilize these resources effectively.


3. **Educational Outreach.**

Empowering newcomers with the knowledge and skills to identify and mitigate safety risks in their environments is essential. Educational initiatives should focus on practical skills, such as evacuation procedures, fire safety, and recognizing health hazards, to empower newcomers to take proactive measures to protect themselves and their families. Creating educational materials, including brochures, videos, and online resources might also be helpful.



4. **Language-specific Safety Training.**

Provide language-specific safety training sessions tailored to the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of newcomer communities. By delivering safety information in languages familiar to newcomers, we can enhance comprehension and facilitate meaningful engagement with safety practices. Providing educational materials and training programs in multiple languages is vital for ensuring accessibility and effectiveness among diverse newcomer communities.



5. **Forge Partnerships with Community Organizations.**

Imperative for the public offices and institutions is to forge collaboration with local community organizations serving newcomer populations to gain a deeper understanding of the specific needs the newcomer population might have. This collaboration is also recommended for the dissemination of safety information and the promotion of awareness of available resources. Immigrant-serving organizations like The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) play a crucial role in providing educational resources and training programs tailored to the needs of newcomer populations. Increased funding and support for these organizations can facilitate the development and dissemination of culturally sensitive safety materials and programs aimed at enhancing newcomers' awareness and preparedness for safety risks. Collaboration with local authorities, fire departments, and other community organizations is also essential for delivering effective safety education and outreach initiatives.