



C.O.O.K: Cooking On 0 Emissions Kilowatts

Cooking fuel preferences, barriers, and
opportunities in immigrant communities

Kambo Energy Group

A Letter from Yasmin



Dear Reader,

Since 2009, Kambo Energy Group has been committed to increasing equitable participation and representation of underserved communities in the climate sector, while also supporting immigrant and newcomer communities through programs like Empower Me. Our boots-on-the-ground, community-first approach has educated over 70,000 BIPOC households on energy and climate-related topics.

The C.O.O.K: Cooking On 0 Emissions Kilowatts report is a natural extension of this work. Focused on understanding cooking preferences in immigrant and newcomer communities, this research explores the potential for a transition to electric cooking and the cultural, financial, and logistical factors that shape household energy choices. In doing so, it advances Kambo's mission to promote sustainable and equitable energy practices that are culturally relevant and community driven.

The findings in this report serve a dual purpose: they inform the development of future programs that directly support diverse communities, and they provide evidence-based insights that can guide inclusive policymaking by governments, utilities, and sector stakeholders. At its core, this research reflects our continued commitment to making a positive social impact and ensuring that underserved communities are not only included in climate solutions, but also empowered by them.

We are deeply grateful to the individuals who participated in our community engagements, and to the organizations who helped convene them. This research was conducted on the traditional and ancestral territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil Waututh) peoples, in what is now known as the City of Vancouver and City of Surrey. We recognize and honour their enduring stewardship of these lands.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to our funders, BC Hydro and the City of Vancouver, and to our project partners, the City of Surrey and Vancity. Their support made this work possible.

Warm regards,

Yasmin Abraham

President & Co-Founder
Kambo Energy Group

Executive Summary

This research investigates cooking practices and appliance preferences among immigrant and newcomer communities in British Columbia, focusing on the choice between gas and electric appliances.

How do cultural traditions, economic factors, and environmental concerns influence cooking preferences?

This study aims to understand current cooking habits, identify barriers to the adoption of electric appliances, and propose culturally sensitive strategies for promoting the electrification of cooking.

10

SESSIONS

Through ten Community Listening Sessions involving participants aged 18 to 70, immigrant and newcomer communities displayed varying preferences towards gas and electric appliances.

Key Finding

Cultural preferences for gas cooking are often driven by familiarity and perceived advantages in taste, speed, and heat control. A number of barriers, ranging from a lack of education to cultural preferences, also impacted findings.

Key Takeaway

72% of respondents displayed openness to transitioning to electric appliances.

This suggests significant opportunities for cooking electrification in newcomer and immigrant communities. Among these respondents, **57% also displayed a lack of knowledge relating to the differences between gas and electric cooking**, underscoring the need for targeted education initiatives tailored to diverse language groups.

To support the transition to electric cooking, the report recommends prioritizing community-led education initiatives to enhance awareness of the health, safety, and environmental benefits of electric stoves. These initiatives should be delivered in multiple languages by trusted community members and include demonstrations to dispel myths about taste and efficiency. Additionally, exploring financial incentives such as rebates, subsidies, and low-interest loans is crucial to overcoming cost barriers. Collaborative efforts between policymakers and community organizations are necessary to develop effective programs. Further research is recommended to evaluate the long-term impact of education and financial incentives on adoption rates.



Current Cooking Practices Among Immigrant and Newcomer Communities

As part of this research, we engaged 258 immigrants and newcomers through ten Community Listening Sessions and 158 surveys, focusing on the five largest linguistic groups among recent immigrants to Canada: Mandarin, Punjabi, Tagalog, Farsi, and Cantonese. Cooking emerged as a central part of daily life, with 82.9% of respondents cooking daily and 13.3% three to four times a week—highlighting the importance of cooking habits and the significance of appliance choices in household decision-making.

Preferred Cooking Methods and Appliances

APPLIANCE PREFERENCES

83%

STOVETOP

49%

OVEN

*26%

MICROWAVE

*For reheating



When asked about their preference between gas and electric appliances, responses were almost evenly split.

41% Preferred Gas

45% Preferred Electric

However, preferences varied based on cultural background and linguistic group:

- Punjabi and Tagalog-speaking respondents showed a strong inclination toward electric appliances, often citing safety and environmental concerns.
- Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking respondents tended to favor gas stoves, highlighting familiarity, heat control, and perceived taste advantages in traditional cooking.
- Farsi-speaking respondents were evenly divided, with many expressing indifference as long as the appliance could effectively cook their cultural dishes.

Reasons Behind Preferences

ELECTRIC



Safety benefits
(no risk of gas leaks)



Environmental impact
(reduced emissions)



Easier cleaning and
maintenance

GAS



Faster heating and
cooking speeds



Better heat control, especially for
stir-frying and traditional cooking
techniques

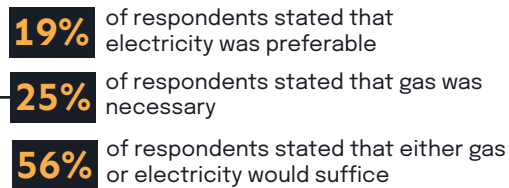


Familiarity, as gas stoves were
commonly used in their countries of
origin

These findings suggest that cooking preferences are deeply influenced by cultural background, familiarity, and practical considerations. While many respondents are open to electric cooking, significant barriers, including perceptions of cooking quality and lack of awareness, may impact adoption rates, requiring targeted education and incentives to facilitate a transition.

Cultural & Traditional Influences on Cooking Preferences

Cultural traditions play a significant role in shaping cooking preferences among immigrant and newcomer communities in British Columbia. When asked whether gas or electricity was essential for preparing traditional foods, responses varied across language groups. These perspectives highlight the adaptability of some cultural cuisines, while



Tagalog-speaking respondents showed the greatest adaptability

“If I am cooking meat, like beef or pork bones, in our language, we call it *bulalo*, I use our pressure cooker. Gas or electricity do not matter, it's a slow cooking process.

Stated that electricity was necessary

60%

40%

Said gas or electricity were fine or traditional cooking

Many respondents explained that Filipino dishes rely heavily on pressure cookers, slow cooking, or electric rice cookers, making the transition to electric cooking seamless.

Cantonese-speaking respondents were more divided

Said gas or electricity was fine for traditional cooking

64%

29%

Said gas was necessary for traditional cooking

Many respondents linked gas stoves to specific traditional dishes, such as soy sauce chicken and Poon Choi (a layered meat and vegetable dish for Lunar New Year). However, those open to electric cooking often cited environmental and safety concerns as reasons they'd consider switching.



Farsi-speaking respondents largely expressed indifference

79%

79% of respondent expressed indifference. Many, however, emphasized that traditional Iranian cooking requires specialized equipment, such as clay ovens or stone pots, which are typically unavailable in Canada.

29%

Among the 21% who preferred gas, many noted that specific dishes, such as kebabs and fried eggplants, taste better when prepared on a gas stove, while others explained that traditional brass and copper pots and pans can only be used with gas.



Mandarin-speaking respondents were mostly split

Believed
gas was
essential

42%

33%

Said gas or
electricity
would work

24%

Preferred
electricity

Many Mandarin respondents emphasized that stir-frying, a key component of Chinese cuisine, requires high heat, which they felt was better provided by gas than electric stoves. However, others countered this by noting that much traditional cooking is steamed and stewed which doesn't favour gas or electricity and can be made in a rice cooker or instant pot.



Punjabi-speaking respondents leaned toward practicality

64%

64% said it didn't matter whether gas or electricity was used.

18%

18% said gas was necessary, citing the need for gas-heated tawas (griddles) for making roti and paratha.

18%

The remaining 18% preferred electricity, often mentioning safety as their main concern.



Generational and Acculturation Differences

Notably, among immigrants born in Canada, 72% said neither gas nor electricity was essential for traditional cooking—a significantly higher percentage than the 56% average among all immigrants and newcomers. The difference in opinions suggests that time in Canada may influence openness to electrification.

These findings highlight that while many immigrant communities have traditional ties to gas cooking, most do not see it as a non-negotiable necessity. The openness to electric cooking is highest among younger generations and those who have lived in Canada longer, reinforcing the need for education and incentives to facilitate a smoother transition toward electrification.

Barriers to Adopting Electric Cooking Appliances

Barriers to adopting electric cooking appliances among immigrant and newcomer communities in British Columbia stem from a **mix of practical, financial, and cultural factors**.

72%

While 72% of respondents expressed openness to electric cooking, significant hurdles remain, particularly among Mandarin, Punjabi, and Farsi-speaking households.

Primary Obstacles

A major obstacle to electrification is a **general lack of knowledge** about the benefits of electric cooking.

Many respondents relied on anecdotal experiences rather than researched information to form opinions. For instance, a Punjabi participant stated:

“I’ve used both, and roti tastes better on a gas stove. What else do I need to know?”

Others expressed disinterest in learning about electric alternatives, believing gas to be inherently superior.

Housing conditions also play a significant role in cooking choices.

74%

74% of those opposed to electric cooking resided in rental units. Many renters feel limited in their ability to make appliance changes, citing landlord restrictions and strata regulations.

“I am a renter, so I just use what’s in the home. There’s no reason to ask the landlord to switch to electric.” – Mandarin-speaking respondent

“For tenants, it’s not possible to change the stove; it depends on the landlord.” – Farsi-speaking respondent

Despite awareness of environmental benefits, many respondents maintain a **strong preference for gas** cooking.

38% of respondents reluctant to switch cited a preference for gas.

38%

“

Gas is all we know, and it is essential for speed, heat, and taste.

“

I know using gas is probably worse for the environment than electricity, but I am old, and I have always used gas.



Awareness and Education Impacts on Electric Cooking

Awareness and understanding of electric cooking technologies vary among immigrant and newcomer communities in British Columbia.

“*I tried electric, but my eggplant didn’t turn out well. We’ve always used gas, and nothing has happened.*”

This lack of education presents a key barrier to electrification, as many individuals base their preferences on assumptions or limited exposure rather than factual information.

57%

While most respondents claimed familiarity with electric stoves and induction cooktops, 57% admitted they had little to no formal knowledge of the differences between gas and electric cooking.

Knowledge Gaps and Misconceptions

“*I know electricity is slow, and the stoves take too long to heat up.*”

Several respondents equated electric stoves with slow heating and poor temperature control, often basing their opinions on outdated electric coil stoves rather than modern induction technology.

The Impact of Formal Education

Among the 43% who had received some education on electric cooking...

35%

35% expressed a preference for electricity over gas.

Key insights acquired and reported on by respondents who received education on electric cooking



Health And Safety Benefits

74% of respondents cited safety as a key benefit.



Lower Emissions

65% of respondents cited reduced emissions as a key benefit.



Environmental Benefits

59% and 41% of respondents cited environmental advantages and energy conservation as a key benefits respectively.



Ease Of Cleaning

46% of respondents cited a cleaner cooking experience as a key benefit.



Communication Preferences

Effectively promoting electric cooking within immigrant and newcomer communities in British Columbia requires culturally tailored communication strategies. **The most trusted sources of information vary across language groups, with preferences for social media, in-language print media, community organizations, and personal networks.** Understanding these channels is key to ensuring education on electrification reaches the right audiences.

Communication Preferences by Type of Outreach

Platforms such as WeChat, WhatsApp, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram are widely used.

51%

→ SOCIAL MEDIA

PRINT MEDIA

34%

In-language newspapers and magazines remain a trusted source, particularly for older generations.

Cultural organizations, settlement agencies, and other community groups play an essential role in information dissemination.

29%

→ COMMUNITY GROUPS

WORD OF MOUTH

19%

Personal recommendations from family and friends are highly influential.

In-language TV channels serve as important sources of news and lifestyle content.

14%

→ TELEVISION

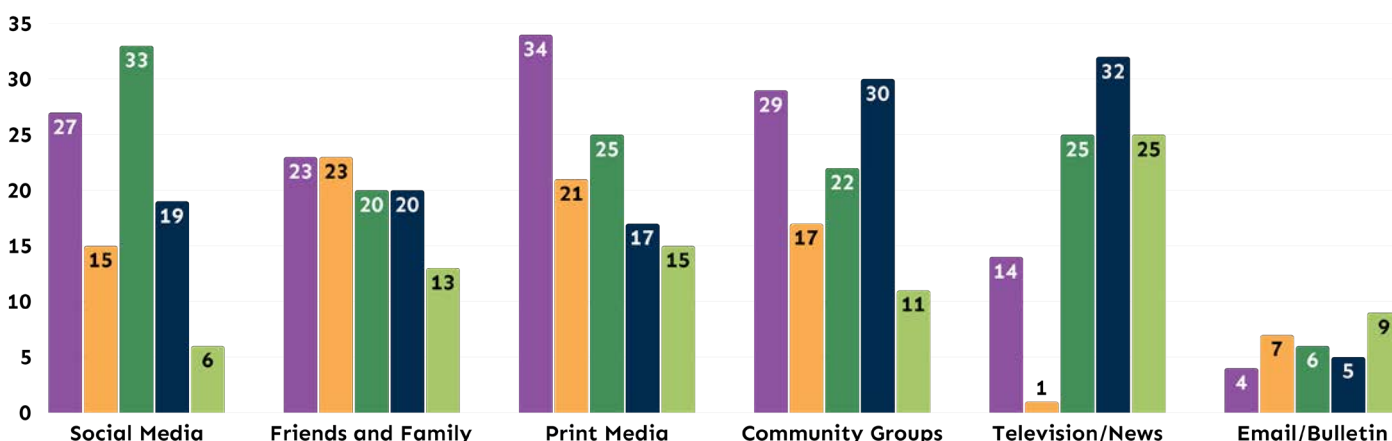
EMAIL

4%

Email newsletters and bulletins from organizations like BC Hydro and community groups are reviewed but less frequently relied upon.

Communication Preferences by Language Group

■ Cantonese ■ Farsi ■ Mandarin ■ Punjabi ■ Tagalog



Willingness to Transition & Support Needed

72%

The willingness of immigrant and newcomer communities in British Columbia to transition from gas to electric cooking varies significantly by language group. While 72% of respondents expressed openness to switching, the level of enthusiasm and conditions for adoption differed.

“To adopt electricity I need answers to questions: What is the cost? What brand is the best? What would my energy savings be? How do I use these new appliances?”

Factors Influencing Willingness to Transition

Factors Influencing Willingness to Transition



Health & Safety Concerns

Awareness of gas-related indoor air pollution and safety risks increased interest in electric alternatives.



Environmental Benefits

Many respondents who had learned about electrification cited reduced emissions as a motivating factor.



Cost Savings

While concerns about the upfront cost of electric stoves exist, respondents recognized potential long-term energy savings.

Those hesitant to switch cited the following barriers



Unfamiliarity with Electric Cooking

Many respondents were unsure how electric cooking compared in terms of performance.



Housing Restrictions Electric Cooking

Renters felt they had limited control over appliance choices.



Cost Concerns

The expense of replacing appliances without financial incentives discouraged adoption.

Summary of Recommendations

To successfully transition immigrant and newcomer communities in British Columbia from gas to electric cooking, the C.O.O.K. – Cooking On 0 Emissions Kilowatts report outlines three key recommendations. These strategies focus on addressing major barriers such as lack of awareness, financial constraints, and cultural cooking preferences while ensuring that efforts are inclusive, community-driven, and effective.



1. Community-Led Education & Awareness



A significant barrier to adopting electric cooking is the lack of knowledge and misconceptions about its benefits. Many individuals remain unaware of the health risks associated with gas stoves and the advantages of electric alternatives. **Community-led education is crucial to dispelling myths and increasing awareness.**

1

Develop and deliver **multilingual education programs** that emphasise the health, safety, and environmental benefits of electric cooking.

2

Work with trusted community members to **demonstrate how electric stoves match or exceed gas in taste, speed, and heat control**. Cooking and taste demonstrations can help confirm that taste is maintained with electric cooking methods.

3

Deliver multilingual initiatives and **leverage communication tactics employed by communities**, such as in-language media, WhatsApp, and other social media channels.

4

Collaborate with with community-based organizations and ensure initiatives are offered long-term to build understanding, awareness, and familiarity within communities.

2. Financial Incentives & Policy Support

Cost is a significant factor preventing many immigrant and newcomer households from transitioning to electric cooking. Financial incentives and supportive policies can help make electric appliances more accessible and affordable.

1

Introduce **rebates, tax incentives, and subsidies** to offset the cost of purchasing electric stoves.

2

Offer **low-interest loans** to support appliance upgrades, particularly for low-income households.

3

Advocate for **landlord incentives** to encourage the replacement of gas stoves in rental units.

4

Ensure financial programs are well-promoted, easy to access, and **tailored to the needs of immigrant communities**.

5

Integrate electric cooking into affordable housing programs and broader energy efficiency initiatives.

3. Future Research

While this research provides valuable insights, more studies are needed to better understand evolving cooking habits, cultural preferences, and the effectiveness of education initiatives. Future research should explore additional communities and long-term behavioral changes to

1

Conduct **comparative studies to assess the impact of education** on electric appliance preferences over time.

2

Expand research to include other cultural communities, such as Korean and Arabic-speaking populations.

3

Identify the most **effective communication channels for different cultural groups** to enhance engagement and information sharing.

4

Implement **long-term studies to track how attitudes and adoption rates change over time** with continued education and financial incentives.

With the right support and engagement, immigrant and newcomer communities can transition toward cleaner, safer, and more sustainable cooking solutions while preserving their cultural traditions.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge that the research and community engagements that inform this report took place on the traditional and ancestral territory of the x^wməθk^wəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwx̌wú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətaʔ (Tsleil Waututh) peoples, in what is now referred to as the City of Vancouver and City of Surrey in British Columbia, Canada.

We are grateful to the first peoples who have stewarded these lands since time immemorial and continue to protect the land, water, and community where we live and work.

We are grateful to everyone who participated in our community engagements and helped convene community members for in-person and virtual engagements. Furthermore, we are grateful to the following community-based organizations for participating in and supporting our engagements:

- Settlement Practitioners, SUCCESS
- Settlement Practitioners, Options Community Services
- Settlement Workers in Schools, Vancouver School Board
- Esaine Mo, Vancouver Gateway Lions Club
- Hong Kong University Alumni, Vancouver branch
- South Vancouver Neighborhood House
- Cantonese Seniors' Group of Killarney Community Center
- Bayanihan Canada
- Society of Punjabi Engineers and Technologists of BC
- Noushin Beheshtipoor, North Shore Community Resources
- Sheenam Bhardwaj, Fairleigh Dickinson University
- Taniya Dehghani, University Canada West
- Leaders of community and cultural groups on WeChat and WhatsApp

We are also grateful to all the people who participated in community engagement sessions, many of whom identify as People of Colour, immigrants, and newcomers, and have trusted us with their stories and lived experiences. We are humbled by the stories they have shared and endeavor to honour them in our work.

Finally, we express our sincere gratitude to our funding partners, BC Hydro and City of Vancouver, and to our project partners, City of Surrey and Vancity, for enabling this important research.



