

Connections and Engagement

A Closer Look



The experience of new immigrants

Our survey found that new immigrants — people who have lived in Canada for five years or less — are very optimistic about the new lives they hope to build for themselves and for their children. That in itself may not be surprising, but what is interesting is that their optimism fades the longer they live here.

Metro Vancouver continues to be an attractive destination for immigrants. Census Canada data shows that foreign-born residents of metro Vancouver represent approximately 40 per cent of the total population. Between 2001 and 2006, 151,690 immigrants came to metro Vancouver. That accounts for over half of the population increase during that time period.

Key findings

- New immigrants feel a strong sense of belonging in their neighbourhood — as much as those who have been living in Canada for over 10 years.
- New immigrants are more likely to think their new neighbours are not interested in getting to know them. At the same time, they make a greater effort than others to get to know their neighbours and to take part in certain community events.
- New immigrants are more optimistic about neighbourhood ties in the first five years. That optimism that fades over time.



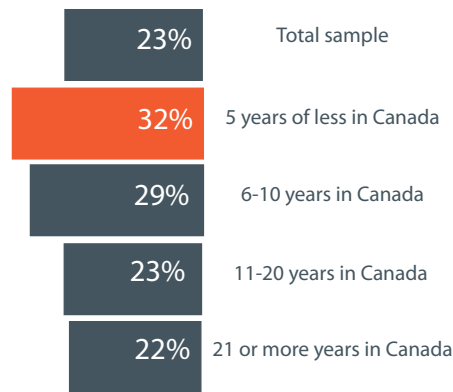
High optimism fades

Our survey showed that new immigrants are very optimistic about their new neighbourhoods. For example, 32 per cent of immigrants who have been living in Canada for five years or less think the ties in their neighbourhood are growing stronger. That compares to 23 per cent of the total sample who agree ties are strengthening.

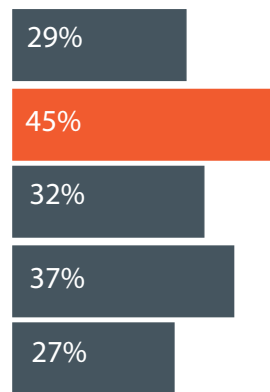
They also feel good about their neighbours' ability to work together to solve local problems. 45 per cent think neighbours would work together, compared to just 29 per cent of the total sample.

But on both measures, their optimism fades over time to eventually mirror the attitudes of the total sample.

Percentage who agree that the ties in their neighbourhood are growing stronger



Percentage who think their neighbours would work together to solve a local problem



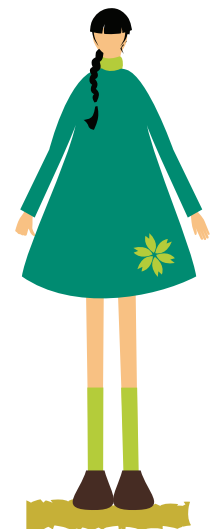
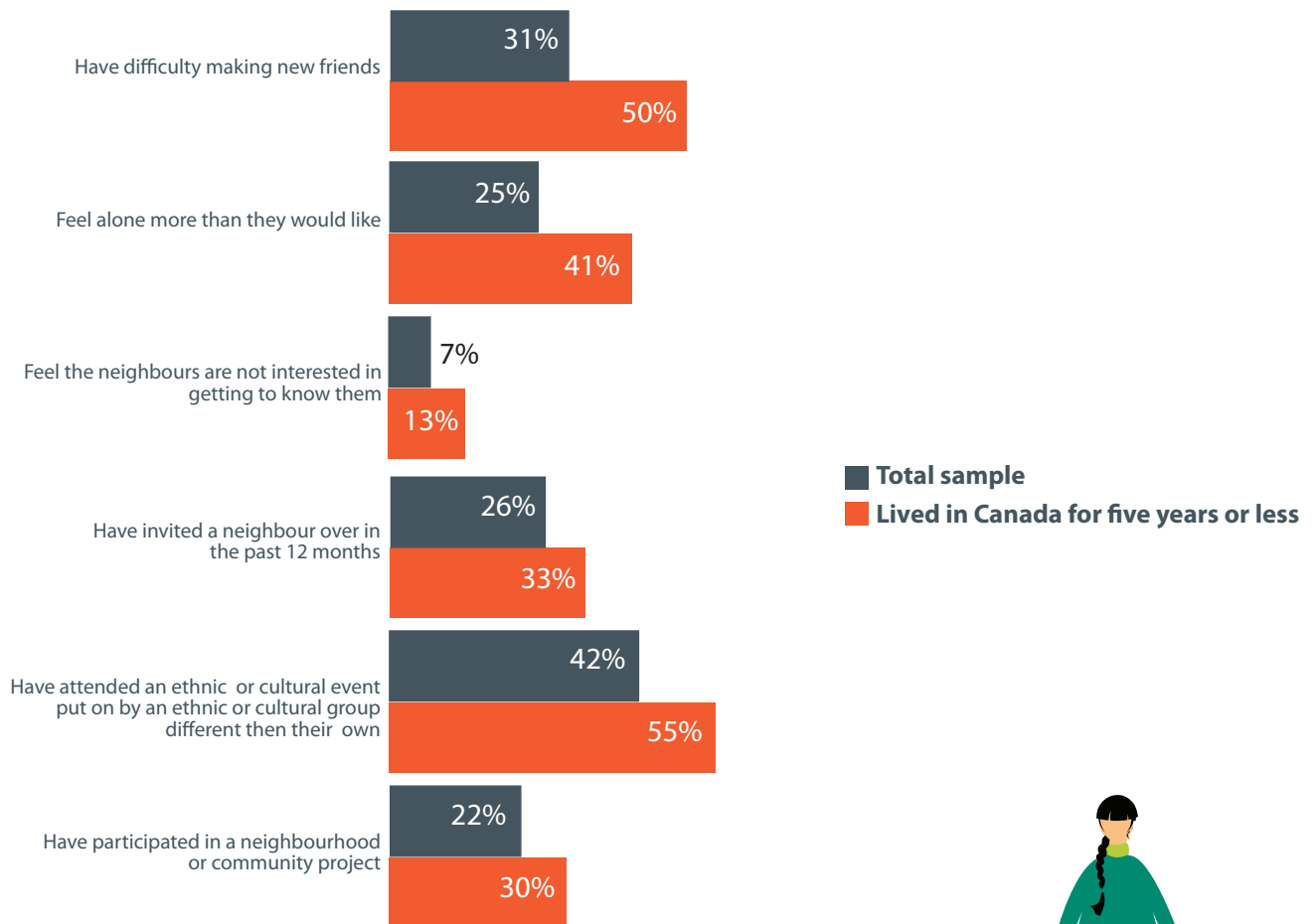
Immigrants who have been living in Canada for five years or less are more tolerant (73%) of other ethnic groups moving into the neighbourhood than the total sample (65%). And despite being new to Canada, 61 per cent say they do not experience discrimination in their day-to-day lives. That compares to 66 per cent of the total sample.



Reaching out to others

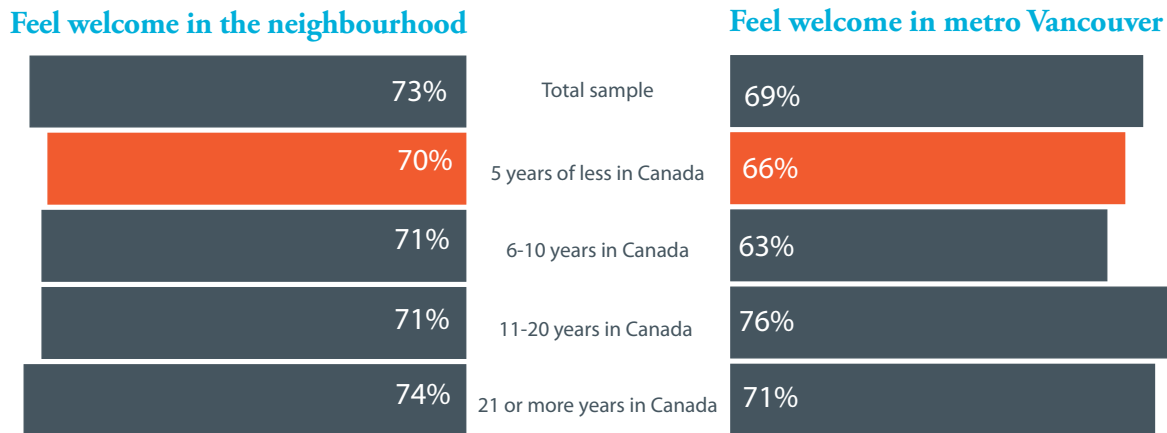
Our survey showed that new immigrants struggle more with feelings of isolation and loneliness. They also are more likely to think that their neighbours are not really interested in getting to know them. Yet they are also somewhat more likely to make an effort to reach out to their neighbours. And they participate more in some community events.

However, by the time they have lived in their neighbourhood for 21 years, immigrants are no more likely than others to invite a neighbour over for dinner or barbecue or some other type of get together. Their participation in certain community events, including attending ethnic or cultural events put on by ethnic or cultural groups different than their own also drops to mirror the total sample. Feelings of isolation and loneliness also diminish over time.



Feeling right at home

Our survey showed that despite the challenges of settling in a new country, a new city and a new neighbourhood, new immigrants feel a strong sense of belonging — as much as those who have been living in Canada for over 10 years.



Stories

There are many ways that Vancouver Foundation has helped connect and engage new immigrants to their community. Read the story about how a diverse group of refugee children shared the story of their often difficult journey to Canada. The “Illustrated Journeys” project not only taught these children how to tell their story using comic book art, it also built bonds among the youth despite language barriers.

www.vancouverfoundationstories.ca/story.php?recordID=198

Share your ideas on how to connect and engage or tell us your personal stories at info@vancouverfoundation.ca

About this publication

A Closer Look is a series that explores, in more detail, some of the interesting findings from our Connections and Engagement Survey released June 2012. The survey and analysis was done by Sentis Market Research, who interviewed 3,841 people across metro Vancouver.

The full survey report is on our website at: www.vancouverfoundation.ca/connect-engage

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