

Needs Assessment Report

March 2022

Toronto East Quadrant
Local Immigration Partnership





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We would also like to thank TEQ LIP Partnership Council members and LIP staff team for reviewing and provide valuable feedback to improve the survey tool and research report. Our special thanks to Anne Marie Kaskens at TCDSB for her help with editing the survey.

Newcomer Need Assessment Survey - Scarborough

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic that hit Canada in March 2020 affected all the Canadians, businesses, government sector, private sector and settlement services sector. While all the sectors were affected during the unprecedented time, the settlement services sector is affected unequally.

Pandemic preventive measures taken by all three levels of government led to major shutdowns and a significant impact on our community and stakeholders, immigration, the way services are delivered and on society overall. The settlement sector had to find alternate approached to serve their clients uninterruptedly in continuously changing environment. Organizations started shifting from in-person to a virtual and remote service delivery and online communication.

However, the modified service delivery approaches faced new challenges where access to technology joined the list of existing barriers to access services. Limited access to devices, limited data and lack on knowledge to use the technology made it harder for many newcomers to access the services that they received in-person before pandemic.

Access to Current and Relevant Information Action Group determined to conduct a needs assessment survey in Scarborough to assess how the pandemic has impacted the access to programs and services among newcomers who have limited access to technology and how digital literacy affects access to services.

Objective:

The objective of the survey is to assess how has pandemic impacted access to services among newcomer who have limited access to technology and how digital literacy affect service accessibility.

Expected outcomes:

- Have better understanding on how online/remote services affected newcomer engagement and modify the programs accordingly.
- Have better understanding on improvement in digital literacy among new immigrants.
- Find ways to encourage clients to attend programs/ classes
- Improve outreach strategy

Target Population:

Newcomers to Scarborough who have arrived within 5 years in Canada. (PR, refugees, refugee claimants, international students, Work permit). The specific target group is newcomers who have limited access and no access to online services. The research team also decided to ensure diversity in terms of age, gender and ethnic background during data collection.

Methodology:

The survey tool was developed by a small working group made of members from the Access to Current and Relevant Action Group. The working group decided to use a survey tool (questionnaire) in order to collect the data in structured way so that data analysis including correlation analysis would be possible.

The draft tool was reviewed by the Partnership Council and Action Group members and revised as per the suggestions made by both bodies. Finalized survey tool was reviewed by the TCDSB Adult teaching staff to simplify the language used in the document. (See appendix 2)

Due to the Pandemic, the survey committee decided to do an online survey to collect the data. However, the committee also decided to collect data for some client in-person where some organizations are providing services to client in person during fall season of 2021.

The survey was conducted from September to October 2021 online and there were nine inperson data well also collected. There was a total of 106 data collected during the data collection period.

Limitations of the study

As the team had to conducted survey due pandemic safety guidance, the team was not able to control the representation of age group, gender and other demographic parameters.

The survey was not translated into different languages due to resource and time limitation. Some participants might have responded to some questions better if they had the chance to have the survey in their first language.

As the survey was conducted online, team wasn't able to make sure that each participant answering all the answers. There were number of questions left unanswered in the survey which was a barrier in getting complete responses from all the interviewees.

Research Findings:

Demographic information of the respondents

Age and Gender

The majority of the respondents among were in the age group of 25-34 years (38%), followed by the age group of age group of 35-44 years. There were 21 percent of the respondents in the age group of 45 -54 years and 9 percent of the respondents were over 55 years. There were no respondents participated in the survey in the age group of 18 - 24 years.

Though we expected equal male, female representation in the sample, we had very little control over who is filling the survey. As a result, 90 percent of the respondents were females and only 9 % were male in the total sample population. There was 1% of respondents didn't want to identify their gender.

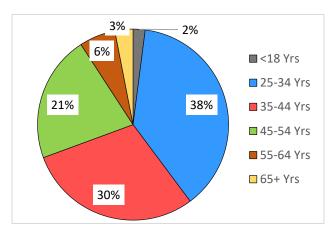


Image 1: Age group of the respondents

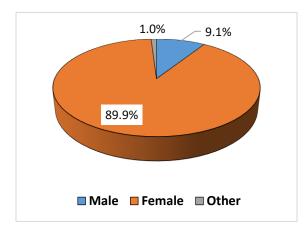


Image 2: Gender of the respondents

Duration of Living in Canada and their status

Among the respondents, majority (74.8%) of the them have been living in Canada less than five years. A quarter of the respondents have been living more than five years in Canada.

On the other hand, 86.5% respondents are permanent residents and only a 10.4% are Canadian citizen. The data shows that 62 percent of the respondents who have been live more than five are still permanent residents.

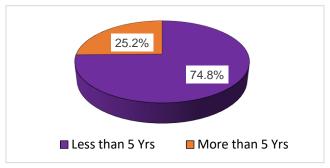
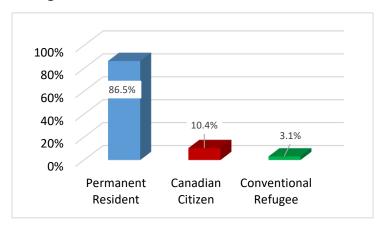


Image 3: Length time period living in Canada

There were 3 percent of the respondents stated that they are conventional refugees.

Immigration Status



Among the respondents, majority of the respondents were permanent residents (86.5%). There were 10.4% Canadian citizens and 3% conventional refugees in the total sample size.

Image 04: Immigration status of the respondents

Country of Origin (Regions)

Among the respondents, 41 percent of them are South Asians, 20% are from Middle East. It was followed by East Asian (18%) and African (7.8%).

Rest of the respondents have migrated from Central America, Europe and South America (Each 4.4%). The respondents speaking 32 different languages as their first language.

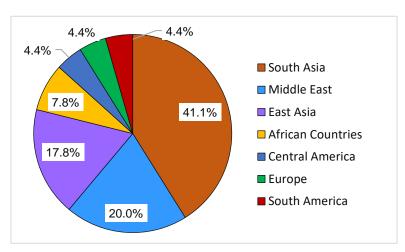


Image 05: Country of origin of the respondents

Household Income

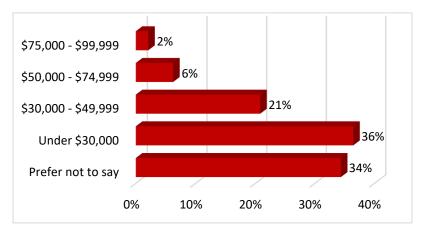


Image 06: Household income level of the respondents

As per the responses, majority of the falls under lower income category (36%) and 1/5 of them have the income level between \$30,000 - \$50,000. There was only 8% of the respondents had income over \$50,000. On the other hand, 34% preferred not to response to this question.

Education level of the respondents

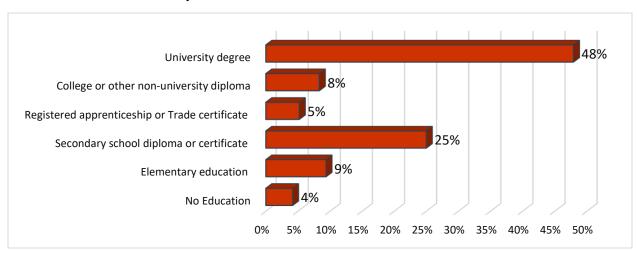
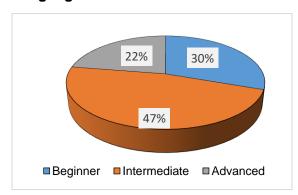


Image 7: Education level of the respondents

Among the respondents, nearly half of the respondents (48%) have a university degree. There were 25% of the respondents have secondary school diploma or certificate. There were 4% of the respondents have no education at all and 9% of the respondents have elementary education.

Language Skills



Among the respondents, 22% of them have advance level language skills in English where as 30% of the respondents are beginners. Another 47% of the participants are at intermediate level in English.

Among those have trade certificate, diploma or degree, 38% of them have advanced level English skill and 48% of them are at intermediate level skills.

Image 8: English Language skills of the respondents

Among the total respondents, 84% of them are at beginner level in French language followed by 11% of them have intermediate level language skills. There were only five percent of the respondents are at advance level in French.

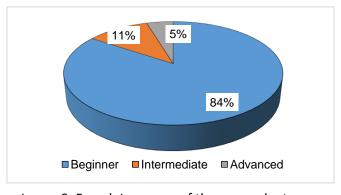
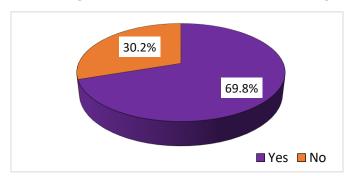


Image 9: French Language of the respondents

Accessing Settlement Services in Scarborough



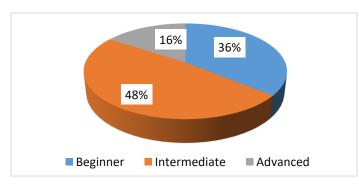
Among the respondents, 70 percent of them have stated that they are either living or access services in Scarborough. On the other hand, 30 % of the respondents indicated that they are neither living nor accessing services in Scarborough.

Image 10: Percentage of respondents accessing services in Scarborough and elsewhere

Access to Devices and Data

Accessing settlement services remotely is highly influenced by computer skills of the clients, access to suitable devices and data. In this section, we are presenting the data in this section.

Computer skills



Among the respondents, 16% of them have advanced skills in using computers whereas 36% of the respondents are at beginners' level. Nearly half them (48%) are at intermediate level. The data indicates that 64 % of the respondents have good skills in using computers to access the services remotely.

Image 11: Skills level of respondents in using computers

Access to Devices

Among the respondents, 18% of them mentioned that they have access to desktop and 60% of them have access to a laptop. While 18% of them have access to Tablet and 61% have access to smartphone. There were 13% of the have no access to any devices.

Among those members have access to any devices, 10 % of the have access to all four types of devices.

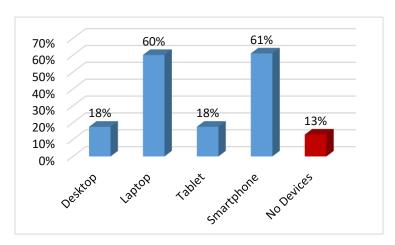


Image 12: Access to different devices to access services

48 % of the respondents have access to smartphone and laptop. There were 20 % of the respondents have access to laptop only. There were 2% of them have access to desktop only and 4% of the have access to tablet only. Number of respondents have access to smart phone only is 21%.

Number of Household members

Among the respondents, average number of adults is 2.5 and children was 1.2. there were 48% of the respondents do not have children under 18 years old.

As per the data, 26% of the respondents are two members household units, 23% of them are three members household units and 22% are four members units. There are 12% of the respondents have 6 or more members in their family. It was also noticed that 7% of the total respondents are living alone.

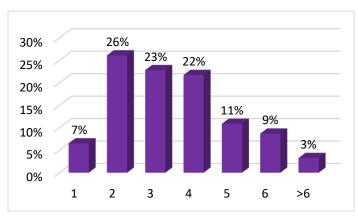


Image 13: Number of household members in the family

Number of devices

In response to another question, 27% of them have only one device and 35% of the respondents have two devices.

There were 17% of them have 3 devices with them and 12% have 4 devices. A total of 8% of the respondents have 5 or more devices with them.

When compare the number of households and number devices at home, when there were a greater number of household members.

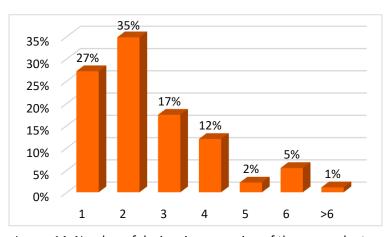
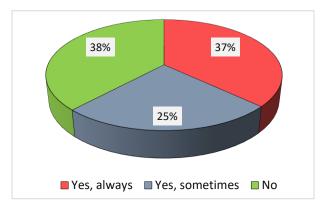


Image 14: Number of devices in possession of the respondents

they have a smaller number of devices. It can be a result of income level and some factors which are not captured by the survey.



According to the data, 38% of the respondents mentioned that they don't have to share any devices with anyone else in the house. Another 37% mentioned that they always have to share the devices with someone in the family whereas 25% of the respondents share the devices sometimes.

Image 15: Sharing devices with someone in the family

Accessing Services, Programs and Challenges

Types of Programs and services are being accessed

Among the total respondents, 54% mentioned that they are accessing programs and services in Scarborough and others do not currently accessing any programs or services.

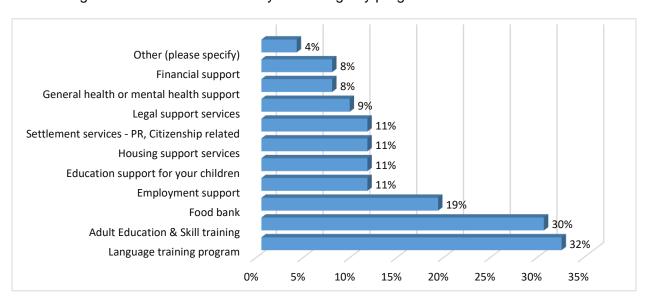


Image 16: Types of services accessed by respondents during pandemic

As indicated the above diagram, majority of the respondents have been accessing language programs (32%) and Adult Education & Skill training programs (30%). It was followed by accessing food bank services (19%). Equal number of respondents (11%) indicated that they have accessed employment support programs, education support for children, housing support and PR, citizenship application and other settlement services. A smaller number of respondents mentioned that they have accessed legal support services, general/ mental health support and financial support services.

Challenges in Accessing settlement services

The respondents have also indicated the challenges they are facing in accessing services remotely. The respondents were allowed to choose more than one reasons and the results are displayed in the image 17 shows the results from the data analysis.

As per the responses, limited access to internet data (33%) is top reason, which is followed by bad or unstable internet connection (25%). Lack of quiet and private space to work (25%) is another top reason made the respondents hard to access services online. A 21% of the respondents indicated that they have to share the device with someone else in the household and 15% of the respondents indicated that they don't have a suitable device to access online services.

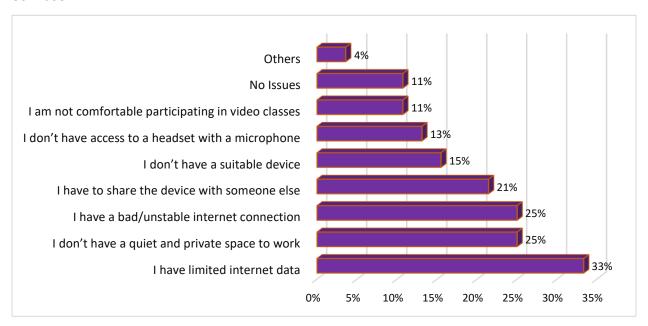


Image 17: Challenges in accessing online services

At least a 11% of the respondents mentioned that they were not comfortable in participating in virtual classes with video option. A very small sample of respondents mentioned that they are busy at work and others mentioned that their device is too old to use for this purpose.

Support provided by Agencies who lend devices and data

There were number of organizations offered devices, especially laptops and tablets to use during pandemic on a free loan so that clients with low income would be able to use the them to access online services. Similarly, some organization including Toronto Public Library provided data key to access internet.

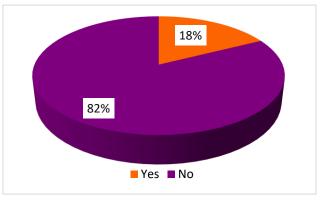


Image 18: Respondents used device & data support

However, many clients in Scarborough were not aware of these services or didn't use this service. There were 56% of the respondents heard about this service. Majority of them (33%) heard about this service through their friends and 29% of them heard about it from settlement workers or their teachers. There were a 14% of the respondents heard about this service from a promotional flyer while 10% said they heard about it from someone they know.

There were small number of respondents (6%) mentioned that they heard about this service from their children's school.

Among the total number of respondents, only 18% had access to devices or data during this time. Among those who had access to devices or data, 77% of them mentioned that they had access to wifi hotspot and 23% has access to loan device.

Mode of access of services and frequency

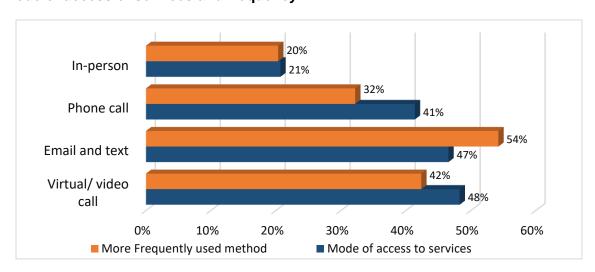


Image 19: Mode of accessing services and Frequency of using different methods

Among the respondents, majority of them (48%) mentioned that they use virtual/video calls to connect with service provider organization and access services. During the survey period, only 21% accessed services in-person. While 47% of the respondents mentioned that they used email and text to communicate and stay connected with frontline workers. 41% of the respondents have mentioned that they used phone calls to get support from service provider organizations.

Though the respondents mentioned that they used virtual/ video called the most, they have used email/text more often than the virtual calls.

Help needed to access online services

Among the respondents, 57% of them indicated that they didn't need any assistance from their family members or friends to access services remotely. However, 30% of the respondents mentioned that they needed help all the time and 11% mentioned that they needed help sometimes and 2% mentioned that the asked someone's help first time only.

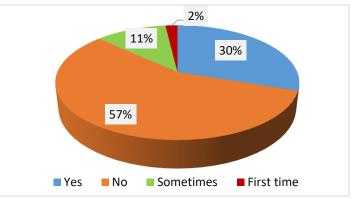
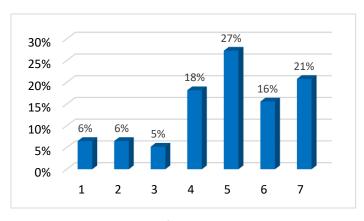


Image 20: Respondents needed help to use the devices

Experience of accessing services online

64% of the total respondents have rated their overall experience rank 5 and above as their experience was very positive in accessing the services online. As discussed earlier, accessing services remotely helped many clients to access the programs and services at their convenience, save travel time and money as well.



However, as per the responses,17% has rated their experience low. This lower

Image 21: Experience of using devices to access

rating could be due to the challenges mentioned before in accessing services such as devices, data and other responsibilities.

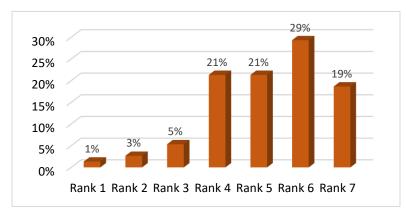


Image 22: Friendliness and support provided by frontline

Among the respondents, 69% have rated the friendliness and support extended by the frontline staff. While there were 21% ranked moderate there was a small percentage rated staff friendliness and support lower. However, frontline staff members also had their own challenges in providing services remotely as they were also working from home in many cases.

As shown in the image 23, there were 69% of the respondents rated satisfaction in accessing services remotely high and at least 49% rated very high (rank 6 & 7). There were another 20% of the respondents rated their satisfaction level as moderate. There were 11% rated the level of satisfaction as low.

All the responses to the questions asked under this section indicates that despite some barriers faced by some clients in accessing services

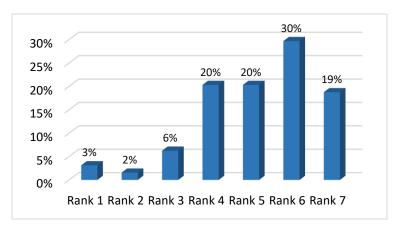


Image 23: Satisfaction of services clients received remotely

remotely, many clients found that accessing services remotely is more convenient and make them satisfied.

Challenges faced by the newcomer who have not accessed services during pandemic

As discussed earlier in this report, 46 percent of total respondents have indicated that they haven't access any newcomer's settlement services during the pandemic. In response to a question on the programs and services they have accessed before the pandemic, they have listed number of programs and services which is displayed the diagram # 24.

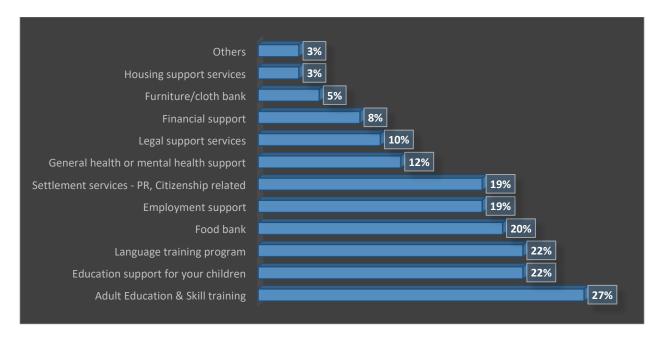


Image 24: Services accessed by the respondents before pandemic who haven't access any service during the pandemic.

As per the responses, majority of the respondents indicated that they have discontinued adults education programs (27%). Similarly, 22 percent of the respondents have not accessing language training program during the pandemic. 1/5 of the respondents stopped using food bank. However, according the reports from local food banks, number of people using food banks have increased during the pandemic.

On the other hand, 18 % of the respondents discontinued using immigration related settlement services and employment support services. Similarly, 10 % of the respondents had stopped using legal support services and 12 % of them have stopped using general health and mental health support.

Restrictions implemented by the provincial and federal government and fast spread of COVID-19 virus forced the people to follow totally a different communication method to connect with each other. Face to face interaction was highly restricted and people had to adopt to the virtual meetings and electronic communication. Though the authorities have already started giving vaccination doses to the public during the survey period, many people even haven't received their first dose. It explains why those respondents haven't access some essential services during the survey period.

Reasons for not using the services

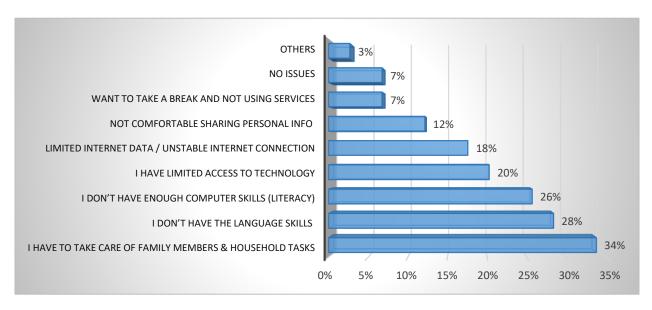


Image 25: Challenges faced by the respondents who haven't access any service during the pandemic.

The restrictions imposed by the government during the pandemic forced the service providers and clients to shift to virtual communications to offer and receive services. As we discussed earlier all the clients didn't have access to devices and/or data. On the other hand, language barrier was another challenge in accessing services. As shown in image 25, there were 28% of the respondents mentioned that they were not able to access services remotely due to language

challenges. There were one fourth (26%) of the respondents indicated that they don't have enough computer literacy.

As we discussed in the previous section, access to data and devices was also a significant challenge in accessing services. There was a 20% of the respondents mentioned that they have limited access to technology and 18% indicated that they have either limited internet data or unstable internet connection.

There were 34% of the respondents mentioned that they haven't access any services during the pandemic as they have to take care of someone in the family and have to take care of household tasks. At least 12% of the respondents indicated that they were not comfortable in sharing their personal information over the phone or through email or any other electronic media. There were 7% of the respondents mentioned that they wanted to take a break.

Preferred method for future communication

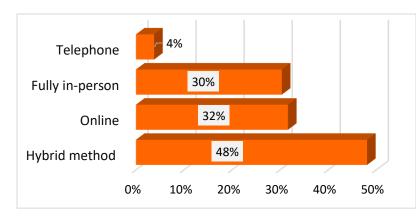


Image 24: Preferred service delivery methods in the future

In response to a question on the future direction in accessing services, respondents have shared the following responses. 48% of them have indicated that they prefer hybrid method for future communication.

There were 32% of the respondents mentioned that they prefer to access programs and services online. However, 30% of the respondents have

indicated that they prefer to access programs and services in person. There only 4% of the respondents have mentioned that they prefer to access the service using telephone.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The pandemic restrictions and safety measures that were implemented by the federal and provincial governments made major impact on delivery of programs and services. As all the organizations have shifted to virtual methods and electronic communication, clients were forced to either adopt to the new normal or stop accessing newcomer settlement services.

However, computer skills and language skills in either English or French affected the access of programs and services. On the other hand, majority of the members have limited access to devices, limited data and unstable internet connection. A significant number of households have to share the available devices among the family members for school activities, work from home tasks and accessing newcomer settlement services. Though, there were few institutions offered free data and lending devices, the information hasn't reached the public as expected.

As per the survey results, respondents have been accessing language programs and adult education program whereas, accessing other services such as employment support and settlement support services have been reduced significantly. While majority of the respondents have used video calls, email/text and phone calls to connect with service providers and access services, majority of the members preferred virtual meetings and email/text messages as their primary communication channels.

Respondents who have been accessing services virtually had positive experience in using devices and communicating with frontline workers who were friendly and supportive. However, some of continue to face some other challenges such as limited number of devices available and other responsibilities at home. As students continues online schooling and parents also worked from home, the household tasks also changed.

Recommendations

- The new normal made clients to get familiar with virtual service model and some of them
 prefer to access online services continuously. However, there are number of clients prefer to
 receive services in-person. Therefore, it would be advisable for organizations to adopt hybrid
 model in the future so that clients with different family situation could be benefited.
- If the organizations continue virtual service model or hybrid model, they should form partnership with private sector to expand device lending program and data key supplies to needy families.
- Introducing computer literacy programs in the settlement sector would be another requirement and settlement service providers to consider in the long-run. Organizations could explore building partnership with the organization already conducting computer literacy programs.
- Programs such as language classes, literacy circles and some of the support groups can be continued virtual. However, periodic in-person sessions would help to better interaction among the clients who are part of group sessions.

Appendix 1:

Languages spoken by the respondents: (Answers to question 13)

• Below are a list of languages respondents can speak:

Amharic (1)	Hungarian (1)
Arabic (15)	Korean (1)
Armenian (4)	Malayalam (2)
Assamese (1)	Mandarin (6)
Bahasa Indonesia (1)	Nepalese (1)
Bengali (1)	Pastho (1)
Cantonese (1)	Persian (1)
Chinese (1)	Portuguese (3)
Creole (1)	Punjabi (1)
Czech (1)	Shona (1)
Dari (3)	Sindhi (1)
English (6)	Spanish (1)
Farsi (6)	Tamil (18)
Filipino (1)	Turkish (1)
French (1)	Urdu (3)
Gujarati (2)	Vietnamese (2)

Appendix 2

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on newcomer access to programs and services

TEQ LIP is conducting this survey to assess how the pandemic has impacted the access to programs and services among newcomers who have limited access to technology. We also attempt to assess how digital literacy affects access to services.

Your input will help service providers to have a better understanding of what is working well and what are the challenges faced by residents in accessing the services remotely.

C 35-44

Informed Consent:
Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you can stop participating at any time. All information you give us during the research will be confidential and anonymous. I understand the purpose of the survey and I agree to participate in this study by TEQ LIP. Please select I agree or I do not agree below. If you select "I agree" you are consenting or agreeing to take this survey.
C Agree
C Disagree
2. Are you a newcomer who has lived in Canada for less than five years?
Yes
C No
3. Are you living in Scarborough and/or accessing settlement services in Scarborough?
C Yes
C No
Demographic Information
4. What is your gender?
Male Male
Female
Other Other
C Prefer not to say
5. What is your age group?
Under 18
C ₁₈₋₂₄
C 25-34

0	45-54
O	55-64
O	65+
6. (Country of Origin
	, c, c.i.g.ii
	Country of last residence (Answer this question only if it is different from your country of gin)
<i>8.</i> I	What is your first language?
<i>9.</i> I	What is your current immigration status?
0	Permanent Resident
0	Canadian Citizen
O	Conventional Refugee
O	Refugee Claimant
0	International Students/ Study Permit holder
0	Live-in caregiver
O	Work permit holder
0	Other (please specify)
0	Prefer not to say
10.	What is your total household income level?
0	Under \$30,000
0	Between \$30,000 and \$49,999
O	Between \$50,000 and \$74,999
O	Between \$75,000 and \$99,999
O	Over \$100,000
	Prefer not to say

11.	What is the highest level of education you have completed?
0	Elementary education (primary school)
0	Secondary school diploma or certificate (high school)
0	Registered apprenticeship or trade certificate diploma
0	College or other non-university diploma
0	University degree
0	Other (please specify)
	vices and Data Do you have access to the following technology (Check all that apply)?
	Desktop
	Laptop
	Tablet
	Smartphone
13.	Do you share this technology (Device) with someone in the same household?
0	Yes, always
O	Yes, sometimes
0	No
0	Not Applicable
14.	How many people live in your household?
Adı	ults
Chi	ldren (under 18)
15.	How many devices do you have? (tablet, smartphone, laptop, desktop computer)
	Which of the followings make it difficult for you to access online services and programs? eck all that apply)
	I have limited internet data
	I don't have a suitable device
	I don't have a quiet and private space to work
	I have to share the device with someone else
	I have a bad/unstable internet connection

	I don't have access to a headset with a microphone
	I am not comfortable participating in video classes
	Other (please specify)
then	Have you accessed the support provided by agencies who lend devices to clients and give n access to internet data? (Example: Toronto Public Library Wi-Fi; community hot spots, device program, etc.)
0	Yes
0	No
18. I	f yes, what support did you get?
19. l	f you did use these services/devices, where did you hear about them?
0	From friends
0	In community agency flyers
0	From settlement workers
0	By word of mouth (someone I know told me about them)
0	At my child's school
0	Other (please specify)
Pers	sonal Skills
<i>20.</i> I	What is your language level in English
0	Beginner
0	Intermediate
0	Advanced
21. I	What is your language level in French
0	Beginner
0	Intermediate
0	Advanced

22.	How would you rate your computer skills?
O	Beginner
0	Intermediate
0	Advanced
Ac	cessing settlement services
	Are you currently accessing any services or receiving any support from any agency? (If you swered "No", please skip to Q# 31)
0	Yes
0	No
24.	If yes, which of the following services are you accessing? (Check all that apply)
	Education support for your children
	Adult Education & Skill training
	Employment support
	Financial support
	Food bank
	Furniture/cloth bank
	General health or mental health support
	Housing support services
	Language training program
	Legal support services
	Settlement services - PR, Citizenship related
	Other (please specify)
25.	How do you access these services? (Check all that apply)
	Phone call
	Virtual/ video call
	Email and text
	In-person

26. Which of the above methods do	you use	most fre	quently v	vhen ac	cessing s	ervices?	
Phone call							
☐ Virtual/ video call							
Email and text							
In-person							
27. Do you need/get help from fami	ly or frie	ends to a	ccess the	services	remote	ly?	
28. How would you rate your experi with services providers? (Scale: (1=		_	-		or the ph	one to co	onnect
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Connecting with Service providers Remotely							
29. How would you rate the following (1=Very dissatisfied, 7=Very satisfied)	d)	<u> </u>	ı	I	1	<u> </u>	ı
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Friendliness and support of frontline workers							
Outcome of the services you received							
30. How would you like to access the (Please check only one option)	ese servi	ices in the	e future (when th	e pande	mic is ove	er)?
Fully in-person							
Telephone							
Online							
Hybrid method (combination of	in-perso	n and tel	ephone a	nd/ or o	nline)		
31. If you are not currently accessing faced in accessing the services onlin			•				
I don't have enough computer sl	kills (Lite	racy)	-	-			
I don't have the language skills (I	English/	French)					
☐ I have limited access to technological	gy						

I don't have enough internet data or I have an unstable internet connection
I have to take care of family members and household tasks
I feel like I don't want to use the service now and I want to take a break
I'm not comfortable sharing personal & sensitive information over the phone or by email
Other (please specify)
What services did you access before the pandemic that you are not accessing now? (Check that apply)
Education support for your children
Adult Education & Skill training
Employment support
Financial support
Food bank
Furniture/cloth bank
General health or mental health support
Housing support services
Language training program
Legal support services
Settlement services - PR, Citizenship related
Other (please specify)

Thank you for participating in the survey!