



ON THE FRONT LINES

OF TORONTO'S IMMIGRANT- AND REFUGEE-SERVING SECTOR



A Report of the On the Front Lines Project

Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
Family Service Association of Toronto

July 2006



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Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T) is a non-profit community agency committed to building a civic society in which diversity, equity, social and economic justice, interdependence and active civic participation are central. CSPC-T engages in policy research and analysis, community capacity building, community education and advocacy, and social reporting with an aim of improving the quality of life of all Toronto residents.



Family Service Association of Toronto (FSA) helps people dealing with a wide variety of life challenges. For 90 years, we have been assisting families and individuals through counselling, community development, advocacy and public education programs.



Any views expressed in this report are the views of the research partners and are not necessarily those of United Way of Greater Toronto.

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Lastly, our appreciation also goes to the hundreds of workers who took time out of their busy, hectic day to participate in the survey. It is our hope that the reports of the *Front Lines* project will provide a tool for the immigrant- and refugee-serving sector as it negotiates for a more equitable funding arrangement to ensure quality services for newcomer communities and fair working conditions for sector staff.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

On the Front Lines: Improving Working Conditions and Ensuring Quality Community Services is a joint research initiative of Family Service Association of Toronto and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto. This one-year project was funded through the United Way of Greater Toronto's Social Research Grants Initiative. The project goals were to examine working conditions, experiences and perspectives of Toronto's community sector staff; identify and build support for organizational practices and social policy responses to improve working conditions and sector capacity; and engage key decision-makers to build support for project recommendations. The project involved focus groups with community sector front-line and managerial staff, roundtable discussions with key stakeholders, a review of collective agreements and a survey of Toronto immigrant- and refugee-serving sector staff.

ON THE FRONT LINES OF TORONTO'S IMMIGRANT- AND REFUGEE-SERVING SECTOR

INTRODUCTION

Working on the front lines in the country's largest immigrant reception centre, Toronto's immigrant- and refugee-serving sector plays a central role in supporting the vast numbers of individuals and families crossing the globe to make a new home in Canada. Among immigrants arriving between 1996 and 2001, nearly 280,000 or 52% of all recent immigrants to Canada settled in the city of Toronto (Statistics Canada, 2001). Taking into account growth patterns in immigration, Statistics Canada has projected that the immigrant population in Canada will increase from 5.4 million people in 2001 to between 7 million and 9.3 million people by 2017, with the majority settling in large urban centres (Statistics Canada, 2005). The already crucial role of Toronto's immigrant- and refugee-serving sector in facilitating the transition of newcomers to Canada will only grow in importance in the years to come.

Newcomers, particularly members of racialized groups, disproportionately struggle with high rates of poverty, unemployment, underemployment, and barriers to accessing affordable housing and other vital services (Chiu & Tran, 2003; Murdie, 2005; Ornstein, 2006). As service providers to newcomer communities, sector workers are deeply engaged in supporting and advocating with and on behalf of marginalized communities. This work is critical to individual newcomers and to achieving equity goals that will result in the redistribution of resources and decision-making power within Canadian society.

In order for the sector to meet the challenges of providing high quality services to newcomer communities and facilitating civic participation within these growing communities, the sector must provide healthy, supportive working environments and stable, living wage employment. Good working conditions are essential to attracting and retaining a highly skilled workforce that can deliver these vital services. Family Service Association of Toronto (FSA) and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto (CSPC-T) launched this survey to explore working conditions within Toronto's immigrant- and refugee-serving sector, identify issues that enable or impede the development of good working conditions, and relay sector workers' recommendations for improving working conditions.

The Survey of the Toronto Immigrant- and Refugee-Serving Sector was conducted as part of the *On the Front Lines* project, a joint FSA and CSPC-T initiative. The *Front Lines* project examined the working conditions of Toronto's community sector with an aim of developing practical proposals to improve working conditions and ensure the delivery of high quality services to communities. The *On the Front Lines of Toronto's Community Service Sector* report highlights the findings and recommendations of the full project, including results of focus groups, roundtable discussions, review of collective agreements and summary of the Survey of the Toronto Immigrant- and Refugee-Serving Sector. The *On the Front Lines of Toronto's Immigrant- and Refugee-Serving Sector* report focuses exclusively on the outcome of the sector staff survey. An additional report focusing on equity-seeking groups working within the immigrant- and refugee-serving sector will follow.

METHOD

The following methodology was used in the implementation of the Survey of the Toronto Immigrant- and Refugee-Serving Sector.

Survey Development. Two online surveys were developed for use in this study:

Organizational Survey

A short 10-item organizational survey was created to collect basic information about participating agencies.¹ Survey items included agency name, contact information, type of agency (direct service and umbrella groups), number and type of paid positions, number of volunteers, size of annual operating budget, levels of various types of funding, unionized workforce, years in operation, and communities and groups served.

Funding types included:

- 1) Core and/or stable, predictable source of government or foundation funding (see next paragraph),
- 2) Project funding including requests for proposals, short-term and one-time project funding,
- 3) Fundraising activities/donations,
- 4) Membership fees and
- 5) Other types of funding (not already specified).

Because of a problem in the interpretation of the term "core funding", the first category is also likely to include Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) funding. ISAP funding is a stable, predictable source of government funding, in that most agencies are able to reapply for, and receive, it on an annual basis. However, it functions similar to project funding as it is, at present, single year funding that requires funds to be applied to specific budget line items and associated deliverables. The federal government has committed to transforming ISAP funding into a multi-year funding program. However, unlike actual "core funding" that provides greater flexibility in how funds can be allocated and allows for greater coverage of administrative costs, the revised ISAP will remain tied to specific deliverables without allowing for flexibility in the allocation of funds. For this reason, care must be taken in the interpretation of data

related to "core and/or stable, predictable sources of government or foundation funding".

Staff Survey

A 36-item staff survey was developed for use with paid staff in participating agencies.² The survey was comprised of three sections:

- 1) *About You* - including demographic items such as age, gender, ethnoracial status, immigrant status, languages, family status, age of children, dependent adults in household, education, and student status;
- 2) *Your Work* - including information about agency services, type of position, length of time in job and community sector, number of paid jobs, working hours, overtime, benefits, employment income, hourly wage, union membership, and professional development;
- 3) *Working Conditions and Job Satisfaction* - including job satisfaction statements requiring participants to rate their level of agreement/disagreement on a 5-point scale, and questions about satisfaction with number of working hours, whether participants had considered leaving their agency, reasons for leaving, and desire to continue to work within the community sector. The survey also included open-ended items inviting participants to identify changes needed to improve working conditions and provide other comments.

As well, one item required participants to enter a 3-digit organizational code. This code was provided to participants and unique to their agencies. It was used to control access to the online survey. The staff survey was anonymous.

The 2001 Census' racial and cultural group categories were used in the staff survey. A list of community agency services from Toronto Community and Neighbourhood Services' (2004) community agency survey was used to identify agency services. Most job satisfaction items were derived from existing surveys that had been pre-tested for reliability and validity. The staff survey was initially developed for use with the *Front Lines'* focus group participants. After analysis of the focus group data, the project team made some changes to improve the quality of data collected from the survey.

Participants

Immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies were identified using the member list of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI; posted on the OCASI website). Member agencies located in Toronto were selected. Large, multi-service agencies that did not include a primary focus on immigrant communities were excluded. In total, 91 Toronto agencies were invited to participate in the survey. The identified agencies represent a broad spectrum of Toronto's immigrant- and refugee-serving sector, including small and large organizations, agencies with varying levels of financial support, organizations serving a diverse range of ethnoracial, cultural, and linguistic communities, providing a vast number of services, and located throughout Toronto including downtown and suburban areas.

Survey Collection Process

Survey collection took place between January 3, 2006 and March 1, 2006. The Front Lines project team faxed, mailed and emailed, as appropriate, invitation letters to the Executive Directors of the selected agencies. The letter described the project, its purpose, the funder and research partners, a description of the survey process, a link to the online survey and contact information. In addition, OCASI staff emailed a notice to their Toronto members encouraging participation in the survey.

Executive Directors were invited to initiate participation by completing the online organizational survey. Once completed, the project team emailed the Executive Director or designate information about the online staff survey, including an invitation letter to be circulated to all paid staff in the agency. Incentives were used to encourage participation, including gift certificates for the first 20 individuals who completed the organizational survey and for the three agencies with the highest rate of staff participation. As well, the project team conducted extensive follow-up with Executive Directors and agency contacts to encourage participation. Follow-up activities included phone call, email and fax reminders, circulation of information flyers for posting in agencies, and a mailing to participating agencies. The survey coordinator was available by phone and email to answer questions and provide information about the project to staff at participating agencies. To facilitate the broadest possible participation, surveys were also mailed to agencies that preferred completing them by hand rather than through the internet.

Data Analysis

Online survey software from SurveyMonkey.com was used to collect the organizational and staff survey data. Descriptive statistics were generated based on surveys collected. This report presents the results of these initial analyses for all participants, including Executive Directors, managers, front-line workers, and administrative and maintenance staff. A second report will follow exploring the findings in greater depth, including a focus on the working conditions and job satisfaction of equity-seeking groups within Toronto's immigrant- and refugee-serving sector.

Limitations

As participation was based on OCASI membership, not all immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies were included in the study. In particular, agencies with very limited resources are underrepresented. As well, there was no participation from agencies that had opened their doors in the past 11 years. In addition, some areas of the city were not represented such as north-east Scarborough. As participating agencies had been in operation for 12 or more years, results are more likely to reflect agencies with greater financial stability and resources than new organizations. Fledgling agencies with very limited resources may have been unable to participate in the survey due to these capacity challenges. Further research is needed to examine working conditions in emerging immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies and underrepresented areas of Toronto.

Outreach to individual staff members was conducted by sending materials to the Executive Director or designate to be forwarded to individual staff. For this reason, it is not possible to ascertain the extent of individual staff awareness of the survey. This method also limited the researchers' capacity to outreach to individual staff members. As well, the nature of funding relationships and employment contracts made it difficult for some agencies to calculate the total number of staff in their agencies. For example, agencies who act as trustees to smaller organizations may have individuals who are technically employees of their agency but work for the trustee organization. In other cases, agencies work with individuals who are not technically employees but rather act as self-employed contractors. These complexities made it difficult to identify the total number of staff employed by participating agencies, and the staff participation rate.

AGENCY PROFILE

- 61 of 91 invited agencies took part in the survey, resulting in a participation rate of 67%

Type of Organization

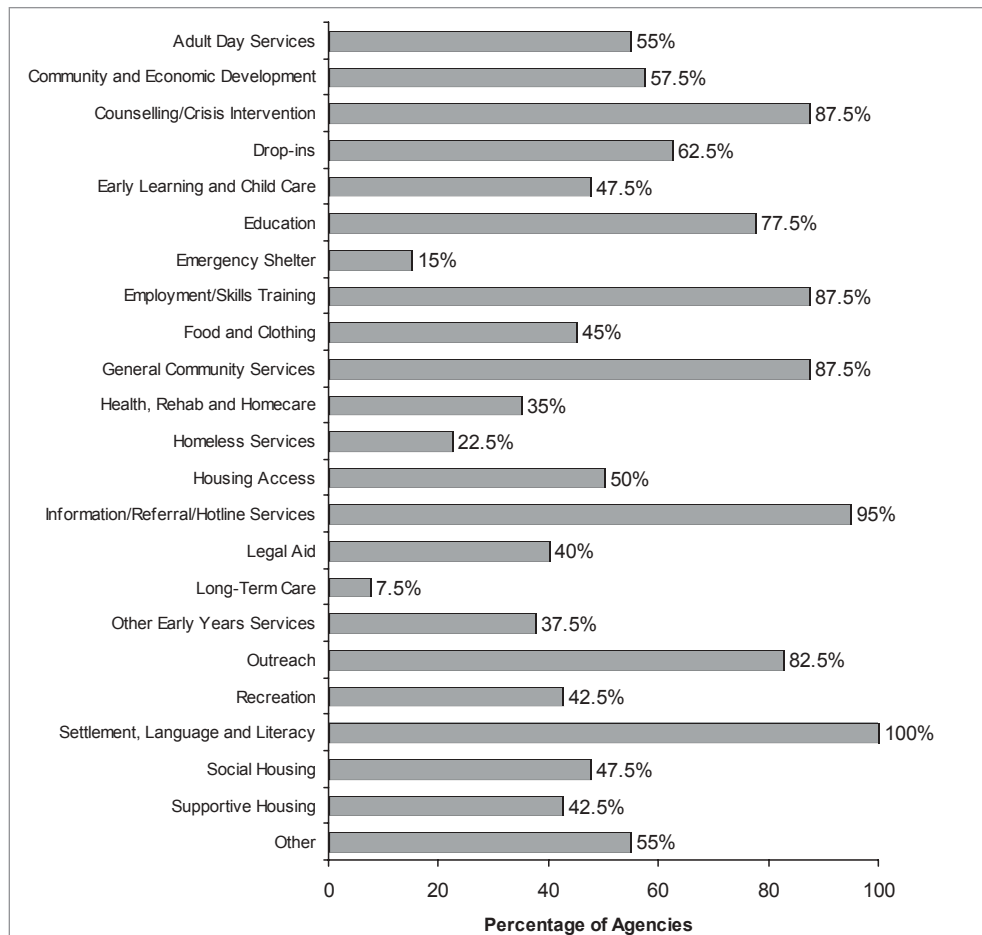
- 87% provide services directly to new immigrants
- 2% represent and provide services to other agencies
- 11% do both

Types of Services

As shown in Figure 1, agencies provide a wide range of services to newcomers and the community at large.³

Participants reporting that their agency provides 'other services' (not already listed) described these services to include: advocacy, after-school programs, chaplain services, children and youth programs, cultural interpretation, interpretation and translation, parenting support programs, programs for Black youth, provision of space for community agencies, seniors programs, services for people with developmental disabilities and mental health problems, services for refugee claimants and people without status, summer and March break programs, tutoring, and violence against women programs.

Figure 1.
Services Provided by Participating Agencies



Responding to an open-ended question regarding service delivery, participants reported that their agencies provide the following specific services:

- Advocacy
- Children and youth programs
- Civic participation initiatives
- Counselling
- Cultural programs
- Education
- Employment and training
- English as a second language classes
- Health promotion
- Housing support
- Immigration process assistance
- Income security support
- Interpretation and translation
- Legal services
- Medical treatment
- Mental health counselling
- Needs assessments
- Primary health services
- Recreation services
- Referrals and assistance with service access
- Settlement services
- Skills development
- Support to other agencies

Communities and Groups Served

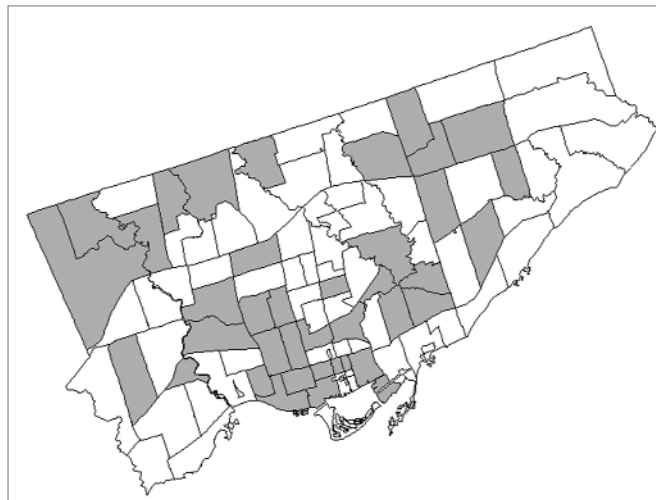
Responding to an open-ended question regarding the communities and groups served by their agencies, participants reported providing services to residents from a wide range of ethnocultural communities, geographic areas and communities and groups sharing a common experience or bond. Communities and groups sharing a common experience or bond include children, homeless people, internationally trained professionals, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered communities, newcomers, non-status immigrants, people living with HIV/AIDS, racialized communities, refugees and refugee claimants, seniors, single mothers, social assistance recipients, unemployed and underemployed adults and youth, women, women of colour, women survivors of violence, youth and at-risk youth.

Geographic Locations of Participating Agencies

Figure 2 shows the locations of participating agencies. For agencies with multiple sites, only the main location is mapped.

Figure 2.

Locations of Participating Settlement Agencies



Length of Time in Operation

Participating agencies had been in operation between 12 and 96 years, with a median of 25.5 years.

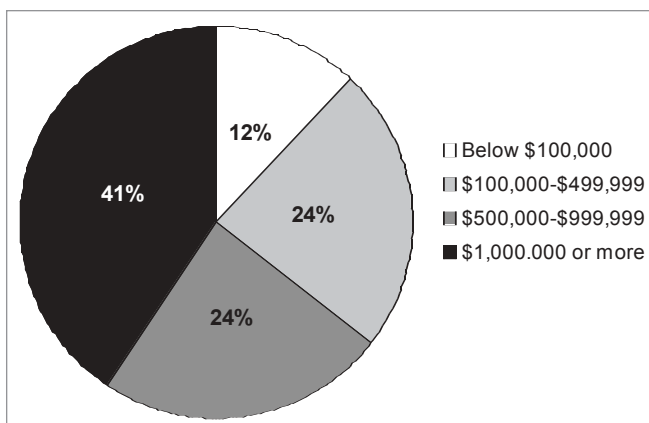
Operating Budgets and Funding Sources

As shown in Figure 3, two out of five of these agencies reported annual operating budgets of more than one million dollars.⁴

- 2 out of 3 (66.7%) agencies reported core and/or stable, predictable sources of government or foundation funding as their major source of income⁵
- Over ¼ (27.1%) reported project funding as their major source of income
- 1 (2.1%) agency reported receiving equal amounts of core and/or stable, predictable funding and project funding as their major source of income
- 2 (4.2%) agencies reported fundraising as their major source of income
- Among agencies receiving the majority of their income from core and/or stable, predictable funding, 43.8% relied on other sources for ¼ or more of their budgets
- Agencies with annual operating budgets of \$1,000,000 or more all reported at least some core and/or stable, predictable funding and most reported it as their major source of income
- Agencies with fundraising as their major source of income had annual operating budgets under \$100,000

Figure 3.

Agencies' Annual Operating Budgets

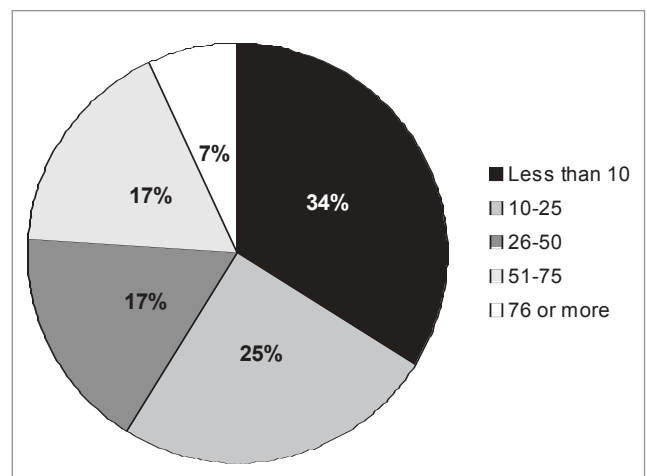


Staff and Volunteers

Figure 4 shows the percentage of participating agencies with different numbers of paid staff, including full-time, part-time, permanent, contract and casual workers. As illustrated, one-third of agencies reported having less than 10 paid staff.

Figure 4.

Total Number of Staff Among Agencies



- 92.2% of agencies reported having permanent staff
- 68.6% of agencies reported having contract staff
- 96.1% of agencies reported having full-time staff
- 88.2% of agencies reported having part-time staff

Agencies work extensively with volunteers. Fifty-one agencies reported the number of volunteers that work with their staff. On average⁶, agencies worked with 2.3 volunteers for every 1 staff person. Agencies with fewer staff were more highly reliant on volunteers than those with larger numbers of paid staff.

Volunteer to staff ratio by agency staff size:

- 6.0:1 Less than 10 staff
- 3.5:1 10-25 staff
- 2.0:1 26-50 staff
- 0.5:1 51-75 staff
- 1.5:1 76 or more staff

Unionized Workplaces

- 29.4% of agencies were unionized

STAFF PROFILE

- 321 staff from participating agencies took part in the staff survey

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Gender:

- 86.4% female and 13.6% male

Age:

- 21-35 years of age: 22.0%
- 36-50 years of age: 48.4%
- 51-65 years of age: 29.2%
- Over 65 years of age: .3%

Immigration:

- 75% immigrated to Canada

Period of immigration:

- 2001-2006: 12.2%
- 1996-2000: 27.4%
- 1991-1995: 15.6%
- 1953-1990: 44.7%

Aboriginal and racialized groups:

- 63% of study participants were members of racialized groups including participants who identified as Arab, Black, Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, Latin American, South Asian, South East Asian and West Asian⁷
- 1% of study participants were Aboriginal

Languages:

- Akan, Albanian, American Sign Language, Amharic, Armenian, Assamese, Bangla, Bengali, Bosnian, Cantonese, Chiu Chow Dialect, Croatian, Dari, Dutch, Edo, Farsi, Filipino, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hindi, Idish, Igbo, Italian, Japanese, Katchi, Kikuyu, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Krio, Kiswahi, Kuttchi, Latvian, Limba, Luganda, Macedonian, Malay, Malayalam, Mandarin, Marathi, Minyu, Nepali, Nigerian Languages, Oriya, Pashto, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Runyoro, Runyankole, Rutooro, Russian, Serbian, Sinhala/Sinhalese, Slovenian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Temne, Tigrigna, Turkish, Twi, Ukranian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Yoruba

Family type:

- 8.3% lone parent families
- 39.1% two parent families
- 52.6% families with no children under 19

Among families with children:

- 47% had 1 child
- 39.7% had 2 children
- 13.3% had 3 or more children

Dependent adults:

- 38.1% of participants provide for dependent adults in their household

Family supporters:

- 69.2% lived with children or dependent adults

Location of residence:

- 22.1% Central Toronto
- 5.7% East York
- 6.0% Etobicoke
- 16.7% North York
- 18.9% Scarborough
- 10.7% York
- 19.9% Other GTA

Level of education:

- Some high school: .3%
- High school graduate: 3.1%
- Some college: 10.7%
- College diploma/certificate or CEGEP: 20.4%
- Bachelor's degree: 35.7%
- Masters degree: 27.9%
- Doctorate degree: 1.9%

Current students:

- 16.8% currently enrolled in a college or university course

WORK PROFILE

Occupation type:

- Management: 17.6%
- Front Line/Direct Service: 68.6%
- Administrative Support/Maintenance: 13.8%

Job status:

- Permanent: 76.2%
- Temporary: 23.8%

Number of paid jobs:

- 1 job: 79.3%
- 2 jobs: 17.8%
- 3 jobs: 3.0%

Work hours:

- Less than 30 per week: 23.1%
- 30 or more per week: 76.9%

Work history:

- 77.2% worked a full year in past 12 months

Unionization:

- 35.2% were union members

Formal training:

- 71.9% received formal training in past year

Length of time working in community sector:

- Less than 1 year: 7.8%
- 1-5 years: 29.3%
- 5.1-10 years: 28.7%
- 10.1-20 years: 26.7%
- More than 20 years: 7.5%

Length of time working in current job:

- Less than 1 year: 19.7%
- 1-5 years: 39.4%
- 5.1-10 years: 23.2%
- 10.1-20 years: 16.1%
- More than 20 years: 1.6%

Where participants work:

- Central Toronto: 32.5%
- East York: 10.4%
- Etobicoke: 2.6%
- North York: 20.1%
- Scarborough: 11.4%
- York: 12.0%
- Different parts of Toronto: 3.6%
- Toronto and GTA: 3.9%
- Other GTA: 3.6%

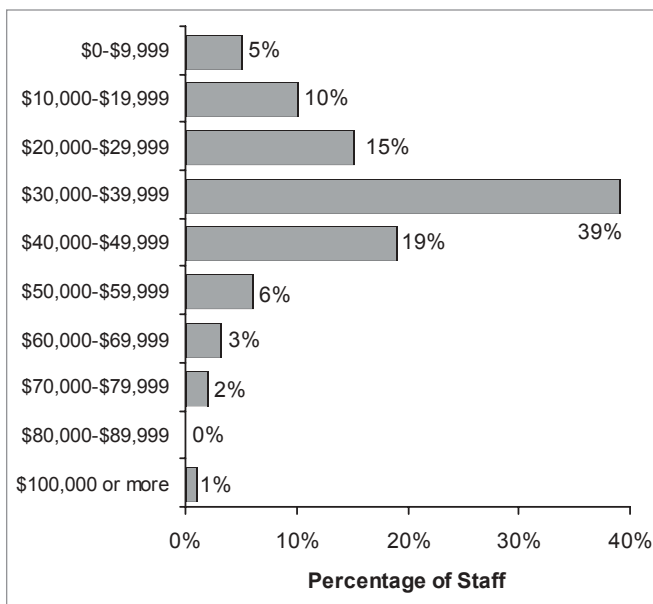
WORKING CONDITIONS IN TORONTO'S IMMIGRANT- AND REFUGEE-SERVING SECTOR

The following data was collected through the staff survey. Participants included front-line, administrative, maintenance and managerial staff as described in the preceding section.

Income Levels

As shown in Figure 5, 69% of participants, including full- and part-time staff, reported annual employment incomes of less than \$40,000. Similarly, 65.9% of full-time staff that had worked 52 weeks in the past year had earnings of less than \$40,000.

Figure 5:
Annual Employment Income of Staff



Just over half of the participants reported an hourly wage. Hourly wages varied dramatically from a low of \$8.00 to a high of \$43.95 with a median of \$19.29.

Hours

Over 80% of staff were satisfied with the number of hours that they worked. Almost 10% reported working too few hours and 7.5% reported working too many hours.

Overtime

Almost 55% of staff reported regularly working overtime. Overtime hours per week ranged from .5 to 20 hours with a median of 3.25 hours.

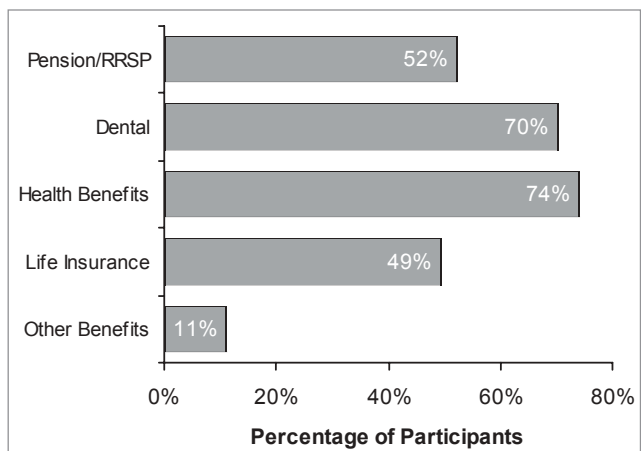
Compensation for overtime:

- Unpaid overtime: 30.0%
- Paid overtime: 3.7%
- Time off in lieu of overtime: 66.3%

Benefits

Almost 80% of staff received some form of non-wage benefits. One in five received no benefits. Figure 6 shows the percentage of staff that receives different types of benefits.

Figure 6:
Percentage of Staff Receiving Benefits



Among participants who reported receiving 'other benefits' (not already listed), these benefits included: accidental death and dismemberment, disability insurance, good sick leave, good vacation package, long-term disability, parental leave top-up, prescription drugs, vision and yoga classes.⁸

Job Satisfaction

Almost 80% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "In general, I am satisfied with my job". Figure 7 shows the percentage of participants that agreed or strongly agreed with additional job satisfaction statements related to aspects of their work.⁹

While a large majority of staff expressed agreement with several statements, some areas emerged as problematic for a significant percentage of staff. Only half of participants endorsed statements regarding adequate staff for workload and having a lot of say about what happens in their job, and just over one-third endorsed statements regarding freedom from conflicting demands that others make and opportunities for advancement.

Figure 7.
Staff Satisfaction
Related to Aspects of
Their Work



Figure 8 shows the percentage of staff that agreed or strongly agreed with statements related to job dissatisfaction. Almost three in five staff endorsed a statement about the hectic nature of their job. One in five staff reported being exposed to hostility or conflict with clients. A similar proportion reported being exposed to hostility or conflict with other staff.

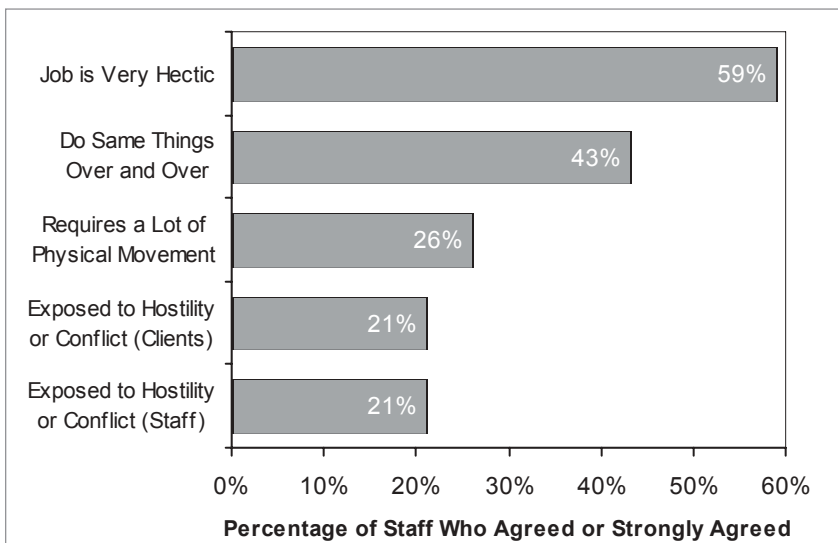


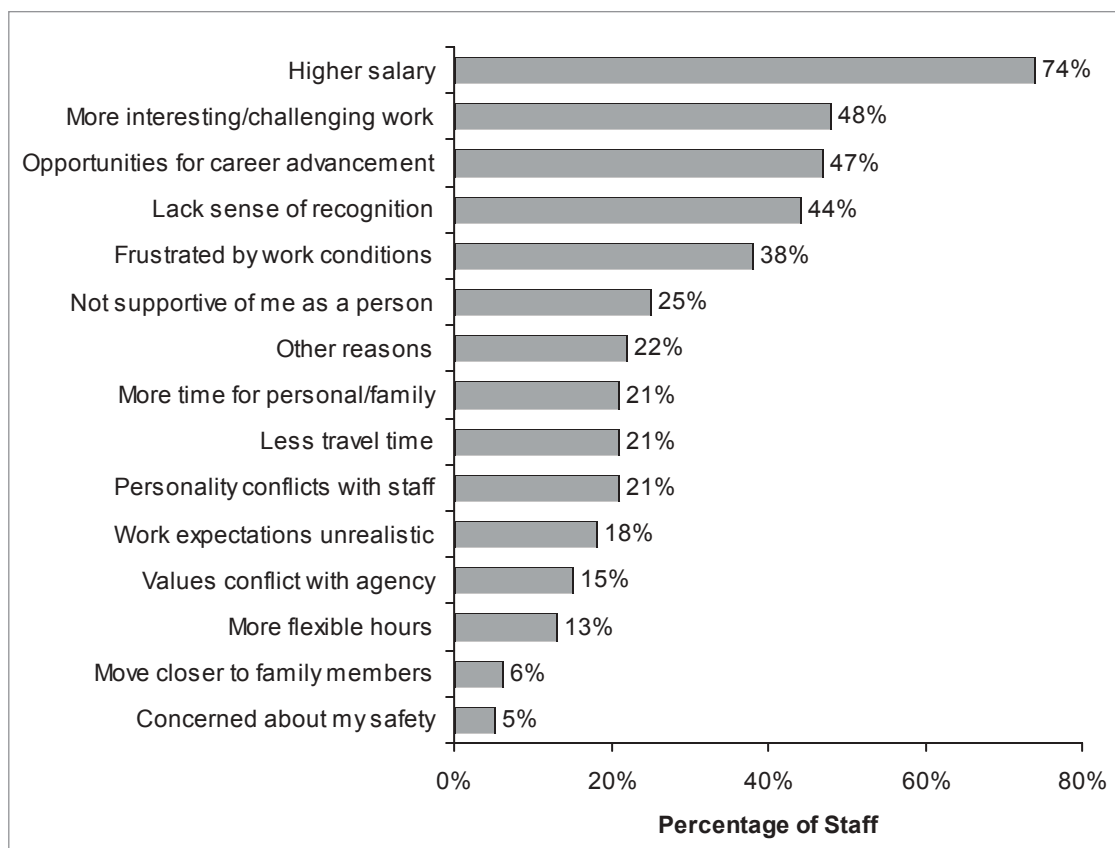
Figure 8.
Staff Dissatisfaction
Related to Aspects of Their
Work

Considered Leaving

Despite a high level of general job satisfaction, almost 44% of participants reported considering leaving their jobs in the past year. Figure 9 shows the percentage of staff that reported various reasons for considering leaving their jobs. Almost three-quarters cited considering leaving to earn a higher salary.

Figure 9.

Reasons for Considering Leaving Current Job



Working in the Sector

Among participants that considered leaving their jobs in the past year, 83.9% reported that they would choose to work in the community sector again.

IMPROVING WORKING CONDITIONS

Participants identified the need for improvement in three key areas:

Improve Funding for the Immigrant- and Refugee-Serving Sector

Inadequate funding of the sector was consistently raised as both a barrier to improving working conditions and ensuring the delivery of quality services to immigrant communities. As well, participants commented on the lack of multi-year, stable funding and reliance on short-term, project funding and its impact on the sector's capacity to maintain programs for newcomers, and provide permanent, living wage employment. Participants identified the need for mechanisms that provide stable, core funding to agencies, that will allow for the delivery of quality services to Toronto's growing immigrant communities and good working conditions within the sector, and reduce competition among agencies. Some staff suggested that funding mechanisms should be centralized in order to facilitate a shift from project to core funding models. As well, participants identified the need for mechanisms to ensure that increased resourcing of the sector result in improvements to working conditions, as well as, services to community members.

Impacts of Underfunding

Participants raised concerns about wage levels, lack of benefits including pension plans, short-term and unstable employment, inadequate travel allowances and lack of equity between sector wages and salaries in other areas of the community, government and private sectors. Participants described unmanageable workloads and resulting job stress as a serious health consequence related to underfunding. While some part-time staff raised concerns about lack of available work hours and underemployment, many full-time staff identified problems with excessive and for many, unpaid overtime hours. Participants also relayed problems with lack of office space, areas for group work and appropriate settings to provide confidential services, and poor physical environments related to light and air quality. Funding constraints have affected the capacity of agencies to provide needed professional development and training for staff. Participants also described the impact of inadequate funding coupled with a highly competitive funding environment in creating unattainable expectations for staff.

Reporting Requirements

A number of participants identified problems with accountability reporting requirements of funders. Participants raised concerns about the volume of statistical information required by funders, the frequency that reports are required, and the lack of recognition of qualitative measures to illustrate program effectiveness. These current practices affect working conditions by increasing staff workload and reducing capacity to respond to the immediate and emerging needs of immigrant communities. As well, participants questioned the effectiveness of these labour-intensive methods to accurately evaluate agency programs.

Reinvest in Social Programs

Many participants identified a link between job stress and cutbacks to social programs, such as housing, social assistance and other essential supports. Staff commented on the difficulties they face providing services to community members who do not have incomes that meet basic needs and lack safe and affordable housing. To reduce demands on the sector, participants recommended increases to social assistance rates, expansion of affordable housing, investments in job creation and employment training, and mechanisms to ensure inclusive, anti-racist delivery of programs and services.

Make Change within the Immigrant- and Refugee-Serving Sector

While funding practices and government investments in the community and the sector are critical to improving working conditions, participants also identified ways to improve working conditions from within the sector.

Sector Change

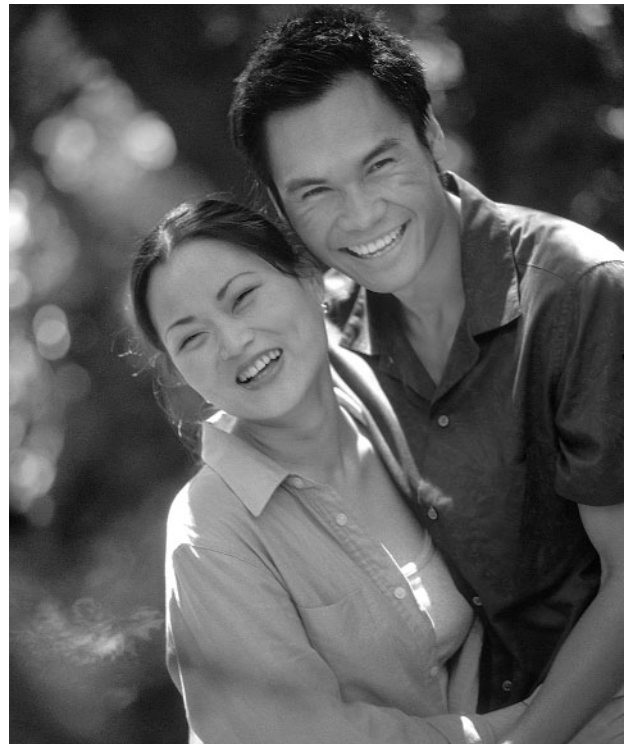
Participants identified the need for increased organizing as a sector to advocate for improved funding to ensure quality services and good working conditions. Some participants felt that the sector needed to better promote the value of its work to funders and the public at large. Many participants identified the need for greater respect and acknowledgement of the sector and its front line workers. Participants recommended increased collaboration among agencies within the immigrant- and refugee-serving sector and across the broader community sector to organize for improved funding and coordinate services effectively. Many participants raised concerns regarding the high stress nature of work in the sector. Some felt that the sector needed to better recognize job stress and make changes to support workers.

Organizational Change

Participants made several recommendations at the organizational level. Participants identified the need for wage scales to promote fair treatment and equitable compensation among workers. The need for board training to ensure that board members understand their role and do not assume management roles such as staff supervision. Some front line workers raised concerns about a lack of opportunity to contribute to organizational decision-making and recommended a more open process that engages all staff. As described in relation to underfunding, participants identified the need for adequate staffing, improvements in wages and benefits, and adjustments to hours to improve part-time and full-time staff working conditions. Concerns regarding wage disparities among staff holding similar jobs, and between management and non-management staff were also raised. As well, some participants suggested that agencies should adopt flextime arrangements. Lack of Workplace and Safety Insurance coverage was raised as a serious concern to staff without protection.

Labour Unions

Some participants identified the need for greater unionization within the immigrant- and refugee-serving sector as a means to improve working conditions. Through collective bargaining, greater advances may be achieved for front line workers within the sector.



NEXT STEPS FOR CHANGE

Results of the Survey of the Toronto Immigrant- and Refugee-Serving Sector offer reasons for hope and cause for concern for the sector's future capacity to respond to the needs of growing newcomer communities. Nearly 80% of settlement sector staff expressed high levels of overall job satisfaction. Many participants described their jobs as extremely meaningful and gratifying. Staff also expressed high levels of commitment to their work with newcomer communities. Most participants knew what was expected of

"It is a very rewarding job that makes you feel good about what you do each and every day."

- Participant

sector staff, almost 44% had considered leaving their organizations in the past year. Among those that had considered leaving, 16% reported that they would not choose to work in the community sector again. Wages emerged as the most common reason for thinking about quitting. Within this female-dominant and largely racialized workforce, the majority of

workers reported annual incomes below \$40,000. According to the 2001 Census, full-time, full year workers in Toronto have an average employment income of \$49,540

(Statistics Canada, 2001). In comparison, over 65% of full-time, full-year staff in the settlement sector reported annual employment earnings of less than \$40,000. Most participants had children or lived with dependent adults. Not surprisingly, many participants cited low wages and wages inappropriate to the skilled work required in the sector as sources of dissatisfaction and concern. Toronto has the highest cost of living of any Canadian city. The sector with its relatively lower wages risks losing highly skilled and committed workers who are struggling to make ends meet for themselves and their families.

them and felt that the goals of their work were made clear. The majority utilized a high level of skill in their work and had opportunities to learn new things.

Despite the dedication and engagement of

"The next job I have will not be in this sector due to low pay."

- Participant

Most staff reported working overtime hours on a regular basis. Thirty percent of participants were unpaid for their

"I would like to see a pension plan for this sector."

- Participant

overtime hours. In addition, over one-quarter of participants did not receive dental or health benefits and almost half did not have a pension plan. These conditions, coupled with excessive workloads, lack of opportunity for advancement, lack of appropriate professional development and the stressful nature of the work, undermine the sector's capacity to attract and retain talented workers.

Staff also identified the need for social policy change to ensure that all newcomers have access to essential services including adequate income supports and safe and affordable housing. The impact of government policies that do not provide for basic needs is felt acutely on the front lines of the sector. To improve working conditions in the sector, inclusive access to social programs and investments in social assistance, affordable housing and other essential supports are needed to improve newcomers' quality of life.

"If Ontario Works rates provided a decent living and if employment, affordable housing and racist - free services were available to all, we would not need so many advocacy and support workers."

- Participant

CONCLUSION

Looking to the future with growing numbers of newcomers making their homes in Toronto, workers' enthusiasm and commitment to newcomer communities will not be sufficient to ensure a strong immigrant- and refugee-serving sector that can recruit and maintain a highly skilled labour force. Agencies must have the resources to provide good working conditions and the commitment to ensure that those resources will be utilized to deliver quality services for newcomer communities and ensure healthy workplaces for sector staff.

Signed in November 2005, the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement promises \$920 million in new funding over five years to assist newcomers to Ontario (Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, 2005, November 21). The new agreement offers hope for Toronto's immigrant- and refugee-serving sector, by providing increased resources to the sector to better support services. As the agreement was developed under the former Liberal Government of Canada, the impact of the country's shift to a Conservative minority government is unclear at this time. As well, details related to the implementation of the funding agreement have yet to be worked out.

In a March 2006 speech to the Public Policy Forum, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Monte Solberg pledged the federal government's support to the immigrant- and refugee-serving sector:

"...Prime Minister Harper and the Government of Canada are committed to strengthening our support for settlement services and to working with the provinces, territories and municipalities on settlement support policies for immigrants."

(Solberg, 2006, March 20).

In the months to come as the federal government releases its first budget and discussions commence on the implementation of the immigration agreement, the meaning of his words will be fully revealed. Federal, provincial and sectoral action is needed to realize the potential of the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement, for the well-being of newcomer communities and workers in the sector.

Future Research

A second report will be produced focusing on equity-seeking groups working within the immigrant- and refugee-serving sector. As well, additional qualitative and quantitative research is needed to explore emerging issues in greater depth. For example, among this largely immigrant, female and racialized workforce, a majority reported that they would choose to work in the community sector again. Given the limitations of the sector to provide good wages and benefits, questions emerge regarding the meaning behind these figures. Do workers feel that they have access to employment in other sectors? Is the choice to work within the sector contingent upon changes in working conditions, particularly with respect to wages and benefits? As well, questions regarding staff turnover, reasons behind individual decisions to enter or leave the sector and working conditions within new agencies remain unanswered.

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APPENDIX A: ORGANIZATIONAL SURVEY

1. Agency Name and Contact Information

Agency Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

2. Type of Agency (please select all that apply)

- Provides Services Directly to New Immigrants
- Represents and Provides Services to Other Agencies (which provide services directly to new immigrants)
- Other (please specify)

3. Please indicate the number of paid staff (including yourself) currently employed by your agency for each of the following categories:

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY	CURRENT NUMBER OF STAFF
Full-Time, Permanent	_____
Full-Time, Contract	_____
Part-Time, Permanent	_____
Part-Time, Contract	_____
Other, please specify:	_____

4. How many people currently volunteer with your agency?

5. What is the size of your most recent annual operating budget?

- Below \$100,000
- \$100,000-\$499,999
- \$500,000-\$999,999
- \$1,000,000 or more

6. Approximately what percentage of your budget comes from the following revenue sources? (please make sure that your figures total 100%)

REVENUE SOURCE	PERCENTAGE
Core funding (i.e. stable, predictable source of government/foundation income) ¹⁰	_____
Project funding (i.e. RFPs, short-term or one-time project)	_____
Fundraising activities/donations	_____
Membership fees	_____
Other, please specify:	_____
Total	= 100%

7. Is your organization unionized? Yes No

8. How many years has your agency been in operation?
_____ Years

9. Please specify which communities/population groups that your agency serves. (e.g., catchment areas, specific ethnoracial, national, cultural, religious, linguistic groups, groups defined by gender, age, disability status, sexual orientation)

10. After the research is complete, we will release a final report at a press conference. Would you be interested in attending this event and/or possibly speaking to the media about the needs of settlement agencies?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

APPENDIX B: STAFF SURVEY

I. ABOUT YOU

1. Organizational ID Number (included in your survey invitation):

2. Gender:

- Male
- Female
- Trans

3. What is your age group?

- Under 21
- 21-35
- 36-50
- 51-65
- Over 65

4. Did you immigrate to Canada?

- Yes No → (go to question 5)

4.1 What year did you immigrate to Canada?

5. Where do you live?

- Central Toronto
- East York
- Etobicoke
- North York
- Scarborough
- York
- Other (please specify)

6. Please indicate which racial or cultural group(s) you belong to (check all that apply)

- Aboriginal
- Arab
- Black
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Latin American
- South Asian (East Indian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.)
- Southeast Asian (Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.)
- West Asian (Afghan, Iranian, etc.)
- White
- Other (please specify)

7. Please list the languages you speak other than English

8. Is your household:

- Lone parent (with children under 19)
- Two parent (with children under 19)
- No children under 19

9. How many dependents in the following age categories live with you some or all of the time:

CATEGORY	NUMBER OF DEPENDENTS
Children under 6 years of age	
Children aged 6-12 years of age	
Youth aged 13-18	
Dependent adults	

10. What is your highest completed level of education?

- Some high school (not graduate)
- High school graduate
- Some college/university
- Diploma or certificate from community college, CEGEP, business college or trade school
- University bachelor's degree
- Masters degree or professional degree above bachelor's
- Doctorate degree

11. Are you currently enrolled in a college or university course?

- Yes
- No

II. YOUR WORK

12. Type of service(s) that your agency provides (check all that apply)
- Adult day services
 - Community and economic development
 - Counselling/crisis intervention
 - Drop-ins
 - Early learning and child care services
 - Education
 - Emergency shelter
 - Employment/skills training
 - Food and clothing
 - General community services
 - Health, rehab and homecare
 - Homeless services
 - Housing access/eviction prevention
 - Information/referral/hotline services
 - Legal aid
 - Long term care
 - Other early years services (e.g. drop in)
 - Outreach
 - Recreation
 - Settlement, language and literacy
 - Social housing
 - Supportive housing
 - Other (please specify)
13. Total number of paid staff working in your agency (count all paid staff including part-time, full-time, contract, permanent, etc.):
14. Type of job that you have:
- Management
 - Direct service (i.e. front line)
 - Administrative support/maintenance
 - Other (please specify)
15. How long have you worked in the community services sector?
- Less than 1 year
 - 1-5 years
 - 5.1-10 years
 - 10.1-20 years
 - Over 20 years
16. How long have you worked in your current job?
- Less than 1 year
 - 1-5 years
 - 5.1-10 years
 - 10.1-20 years
 - Over 20 years
17. How many paid jobs do you have currently?
18. Is your current primary job in the community services sector?
- Permanent (i.e. it has no predetermined end date)
 - Temporary (i.e. it has a predetermined end date)
19. What is the number of regularly scheduled hours you work per week?
20. What is the number of overtime hours you work in an average week?
21. Are you compensated for overtime?
- No, it is unpaid
 - Yes, overtime is paid
 - Yes, compensated with time in lieu of payment
22. Are you satisfied with your hours of work?
- Yes
 - No, too few hours
 - No, too many hours
23. Does your employer provide you with any non-wage benefits (e.g. pension plan, RRSP, dental benefits, health benefits, life insurance)?
- Yes
 - No → (go to question 24)
- 23.1 Which benefits does your employer provide (check all that apply)?
- Pension plan
 - RRSP contribution
 - Dental benefits
 - Health benefits
 - Life insurance
 - Other (please specify)

24. In your current job, are you a member of a union or covered by a collective agreement?

Yes No

25. Where do you work?

- Central Toronto
- East York
- Etobicoke
- North York
- Scarborough
- York
- Other (please specify)

26. In the past 12 months, has your employer provided you with any formal training (at your workplace or elsewhere) relevant to your job? (e.g. conferences, workshops, classes)

Yes
 No

27. If you are paid by the hour, what is your hourly rate of pay?

28. In the past 12 months, how many weeks were you employed, including vacation time?

29. Over the past 12 months, what were your approximate annual employment earnings before tax?

- \$0 - \$9,999
- \$10,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$69,999
- \$70,000 - \$79,999
- \$80,000 - \$89,999
- \$90,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

III. WORKING CONDITIONS AND JOB SATISFACTION

30. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your job:

- I know exactly what is expected of me in my job.
- There are clear goals and objectives for my job.
- I get the training I need to do my job effectively.
- There is adequate staff to manage the workload.
- I have opportunities for advancement in my job.
- I have opportunities to offer suggestions to my superiors in areas of work that may need improvement.
- In general, I am satisfied with my job.

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree
Not Applicable

31. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your job:

- My job requires me to learn new things.
- My job requires a high level of skill.
- My job allows me freedom to decide how I do my job.
- My job requires that I do the same things over and over.
- My job is very hectic.
- I am free from conflicting demands that others make.
- I have a lot to say about what happens in my job.
- My job requires a lot of physical movement.
- I am exposed to hostility or conflict from the people I work with (other staff).
- I am exposed to hostility or conflict from the people I work with (clients).

Strongly Disagree
Disagree
Neutral
Agree
Strongly Agree
Not Applicable

32. During the past year, have you considered leaving your organization?

- Yes
- No

33. If you have ever thought about leaving your organization, please indicate all of the reasons why:

- To earn a higher salary
- To engage in more interesting or challenging work
- Because work expectations are unrealistic
- Because I lack a sense of recognition for what I do
- Because my work environment is not supportive of me as an individual
- Because there are greater opportunities for career advancement elsewhere
- Because I am frustrated by my working conditions
- To get more time to spend on personal/family activities
- Because of personality conflicts with coworkers and/or manager
- Because my values and those of the organization are not the same
- Because I am concerned about my safety on the job
- To move closer to family members
- To have more flexible hours elsewhere
- To spend less travel time
- Other (please specify)

34. Thinking about your experience working in the community sector, would you choose to work in this sector again?

- Yes
- No

35. What, if anything, needs to change to improve the quality of working conditions in the community sector?

36. Is there anything else you want to share about your experience of working in the community sector?

ENDNOTES

1. The organizational survey is included in Appendix A.
2. The staff survey is included in Appendix B.
3. Service categories from the Toronto Community and Neighbourhood Services' (2004) community agency survey were used. Percentages of agencies providing each type of service were calculated based on the responses of one or more staff. Service categories may include different levels of service delivery. For example, agencies providing 'legal aid services' may include community legal clinics, as well as, agencies where free legal advice is provided weekly. Limitations of funding and required deliverables attached to funding restrict the capacity of agencies to provide additional services needed in the community.
4. Budgets may overrepresent funds available for sector work, as some participating agencies may serve as trustees for smaller organizations where funds flow through the larger agency to the smaller one.
5. As noted earlier, because of a problem in the interpretation of the term "core funding", this category is also likely to include Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) funding. ISAP funding is a stable, predictable source of government funding, in that most agencies are able to reapply for, and receive, it on an annual basis. However, it functions similar to project funding as it is, at present, single year funding that requires funds to be applied to specific budget line items and associated deliverables. The federal government has committed to transforming ISAP funding into a multi-year funding program. However, unlike actual "core funding" that provides greater flexibility in how funds can be allocated and allows for greater coverage of administrative costs, the revised ISAP will remain tied to specific deliverables without allowing for flexibility in allocation of funds. For this reason, care must be taken in the interpretation of data related to "core and/or stable, predictable sources of government or foundation funding".
6. Median volunteer to staff ratio reported.
7. Ethnoracial categories from the 2001 Census were used in the staff survey.
8. Health benefits described under "other benefits", such as disability insurance, good sick leave, long-term disability, prescription drugs and vision, are also counted under "health benefits".
9. The complete job satisfaction statements are included in Appendix B.
10. Because of a problem in the interpretation of the term "core funding", this category is also likely to include Immigrant Settlement and Adaptation Program (ISAP) funding. ISAP funding is a stable, predictable source of government funding, in that most agencies are able to reapply for, and receive, it on an annual basis. However, it functions similar to project funding as it is, at present, single year funding that requires funds to be applied to specific budget line items and associated deliverables. The federal government has committed to transforming ISAP funding into a multi-year funding program. However, unlike actual "core funding" that provides greater flexibility in how funds can be allocated and allows for greater coverage of administrative costs, the revised ISAP will remain tied to specific deliverables without allowing for flexibility in allocation of funds. For this reason, care must be taken in the interpretation of data related to "core and/or stable, predictable sources of government or foundation funding".