



# WOSOOL

Arab Community Centre of Toronto  
Canadian Arab Institute

## A Snapshot:

Findings of Quantitative and Qualitative Research on  
anti-Arab Discrimination in the Settlement Sector



ACCT



CANADIAN ARAB  
INSTITUTE | INSTITUT  
CANADO-ARABE



Funded by:

Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

Financé par :

Immigration, Réfugiés  
et Citoyenneté Canada

FEBRUARY 2024

## Land Acknowledgement

The Arab Community Centre of Toronto acknowledges that we operate on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.

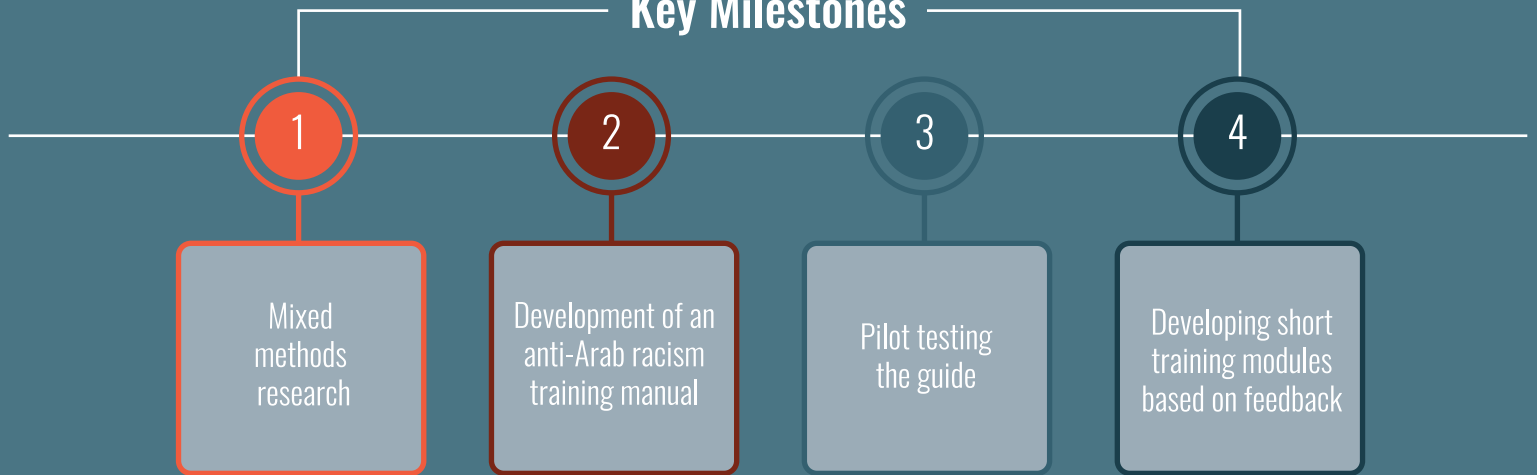
## About WOSOOL Project



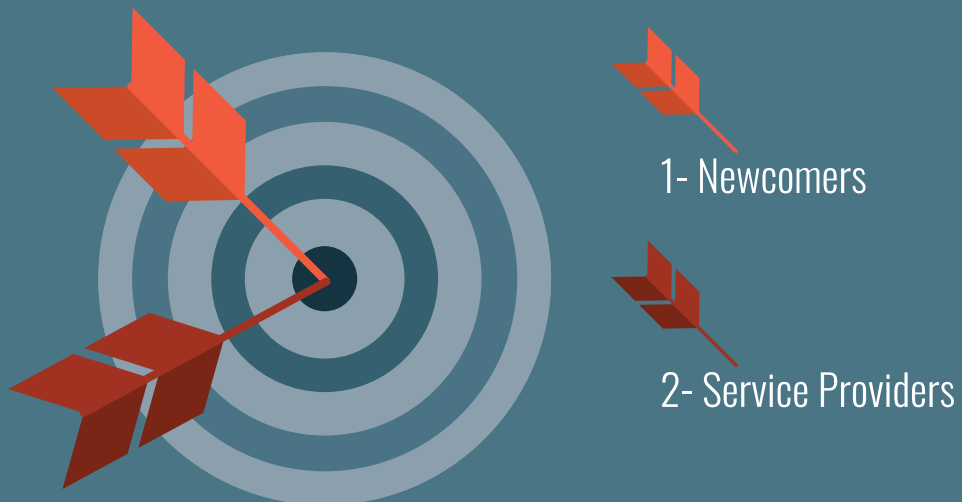
WOSOOL, meaning both 'arrival' and 'connection' in Arabic, is an indirect service delivery project funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), designed to fill a knowledge gap of anti-racism, particularly as it relates to Arab newcomers. It is being implemented with the Canadian Arab Institute (CAI) as a research partner.

The project aims to gain understanding of how racism/discrimination may manifest within the settlement sector in Canada, with a particular focus on anti-Arab racism, and use that knowledge to inform the development of a guide and training tools that will be shared with service-provider organizations to contribute to more inclusive, anti-racist, and culturally sensitive practices in the settlement sector.

## Key Milestones



## Project Targets

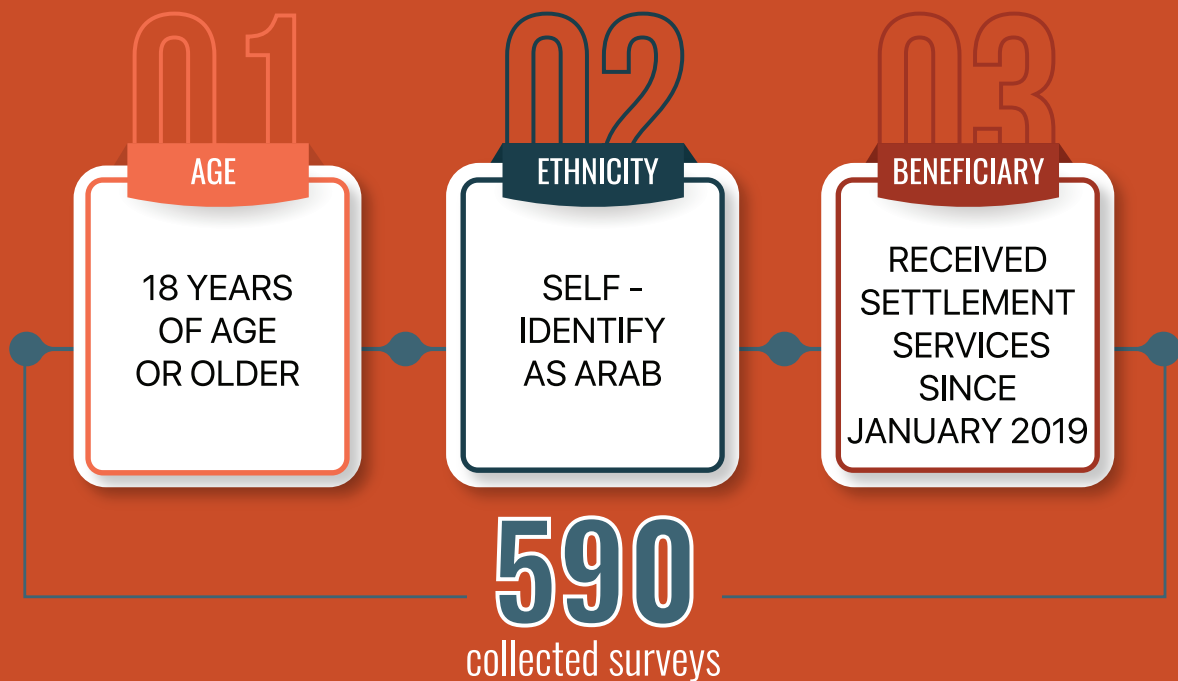


## Implementation Components



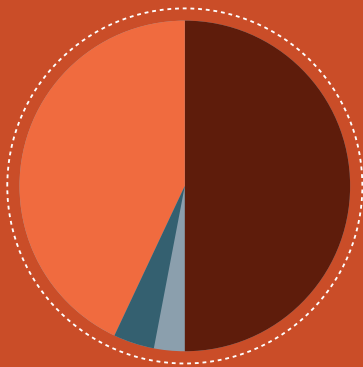
The information presented below was collected from Arab newcomers across Canada through surveys, focus groups, and bilateral ethnographic observations. Surveys were made available by phone and online in both Arabic and English

## INCLUSION CRITERIA



# DEMOGRAPHICS

## GENDER



50%  
Women



43%  
Men

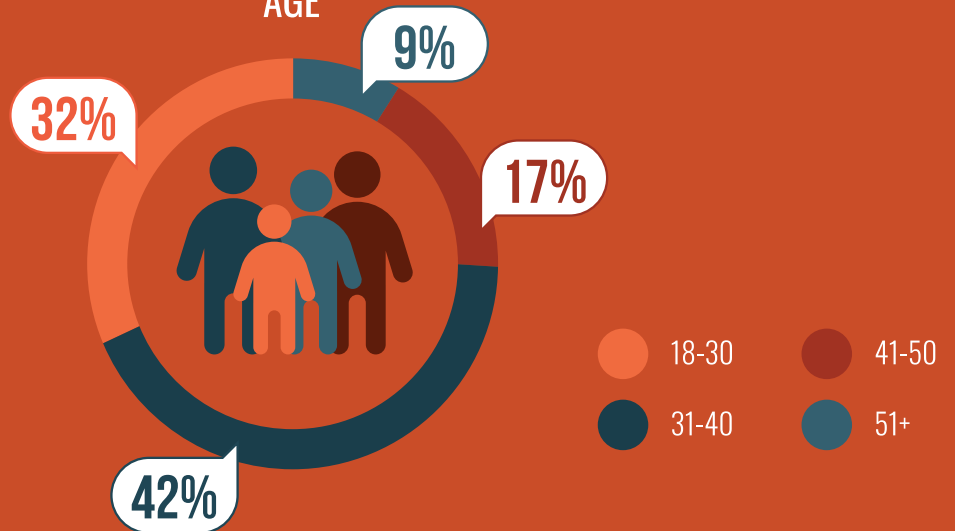


4%  
Other



3%  
Non-binary

## AGE



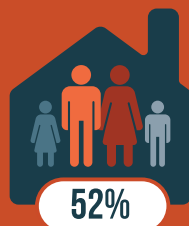
18-30

41-50

31-40

51+

## HOUSEHOLD SIZE



3 to 4 Individuals

## EMPLOYMENT



Majority of participants are employed

## EDUCATION



Have received some type of post-secondary education

## RELIGION



Muslim



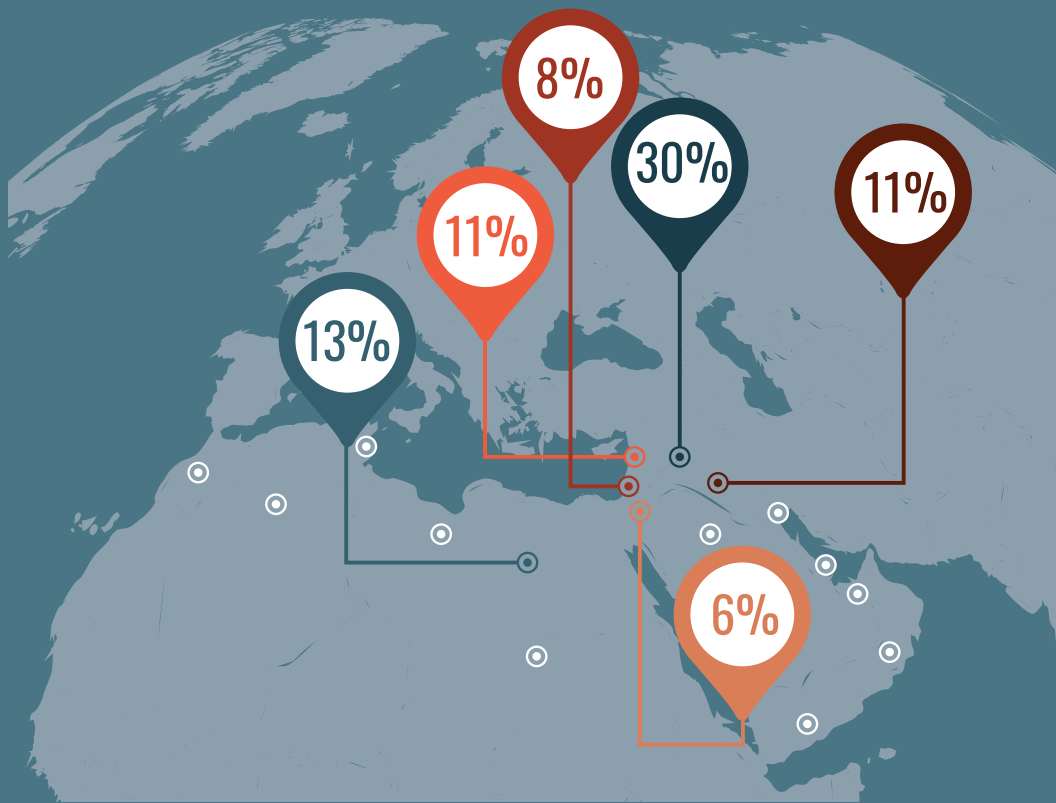
Christian



Jewish



Other



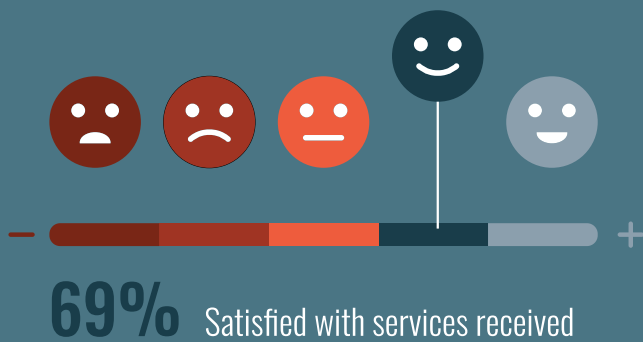
### COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

- Syria
- Egypt
- Lebanon
- Iraq
- Palestine
- Jordan
- Other (21%)



### PROVINCE

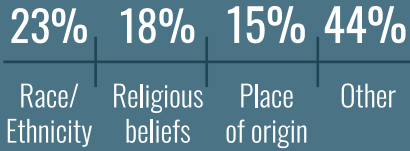
- 73% Ontario
- 7% Quebec
- 6% Alberta
- 6% British Columbia
- 4% Nova Scotia
- 2% New Brunswick
- 1% Saskatchewan
- 1% Manitoba



52%

Thought there was somewhat of a problem or a major problem in relation to discrimination in the settlement sector

Top 3 reasons for the discrimination



17%

Reported being prevented from accessing a settlement service

Top 3 reasons for the discrimination



27%

Reported receiving negative or unfair treatment

Top 3 reasons for the discrimination



40%

Felt like their ethnic, racial, or cultural backgrounds influenced the quality of services

8%

Did not always feel welcome and safe while receiving a service

78%

Had services offered to them in their preferred language



44%

Kept it to themselves or talked about it with someone outside the organization (ie. friends or family)





## IMPROVEMENTS THAT COULD BE MADE

TOP 4 SUGGESTIONS IN ORDER

1

Kind and thoughtful  
service delivery

2

Receiving service  
in their own language

3

Service providers' knowledge  
of their cultural or  
ethnic background

4

Receiving services from  
someone of a similar cultural  
or ethnic background



The information presented below was collected from settlement service providers across Canada through surveys, focus groups, and bilateral ethnographic observations. Outreach was done through settlement service networks and community partners

## INCLUSION CRITERIA

SERVICE PROVIDERS

WHO HAVE WORKED WITH  
NEWCOMERS IN CANADA

670

collected surveys

### GENDER



47%  
Women



52%  
Men



1%  
Non-binary

### AGE



84% 25 to 45 years old

### LANGUAGE SPOKEN

72% English of which

60% English & Arabic

15% English & French



### ETHNICITY

- 55% Arab
- 23% White
- 5% Indigenous
- 4% Black
- 3% West Asian
- 3% South Asian
- 3% East Asian
- 3% Latin American
- 1% Other



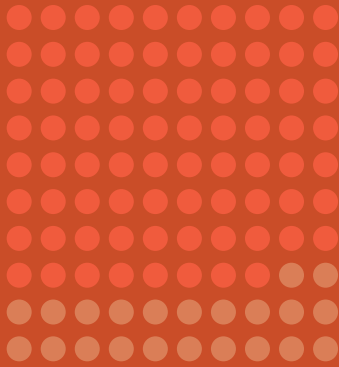
### PROVINCE

- Ontario
- British Columbia
- Alberta
- Quebec
- Prince Edward Island
- Saskatchewan
- Newfoundland & Labrador
- Manitoba
- New Brunswick
- Nova Scotia

THE FOLLOWING DATA IS FROM **114** RESPONDENTS WHO COMPLETED THE ANTI-RACISM PORTION OF THE SURVEY QUESTIONS

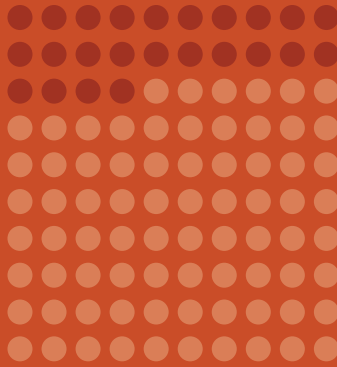


Are familiar or very familiar with the concept of anti-racism and its principles



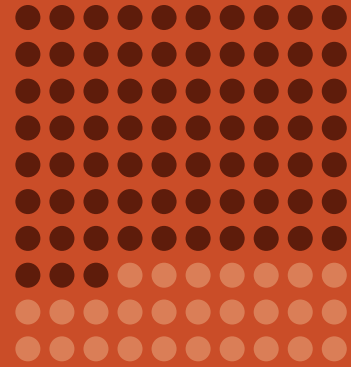
**78%**

Observed racism or anti-Arab discrimination while providing settlement services



**24%**

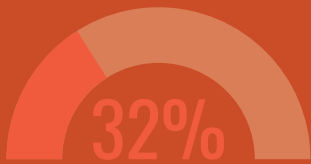
Lacked training on Arab culture or newcomers, indicating either scarce resources or employee reluctance to seek training



**73%**

Are familiar or very familiar with Arab-Canadian culture, traditions and experiences

### MEASURES TAKEN TO ENSURE INCLUSION OF ARAB-CANADIAN NEWCOMERS IN SERVICE PROVISION



**32%**

Reported that they provide resources and materials in Arabic or other relevant languages to the clients



**28%**

Collaborated with the Arab-Canadian community organizations to gain insights into their specific needs



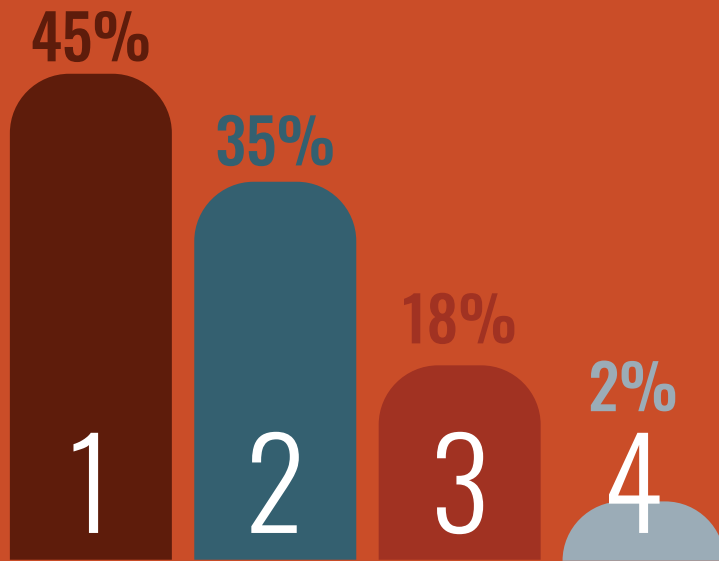
**25%**

Provided services and programs specifically in Arabic and tailored to address the needs of the Arabic community



**15%**

Other



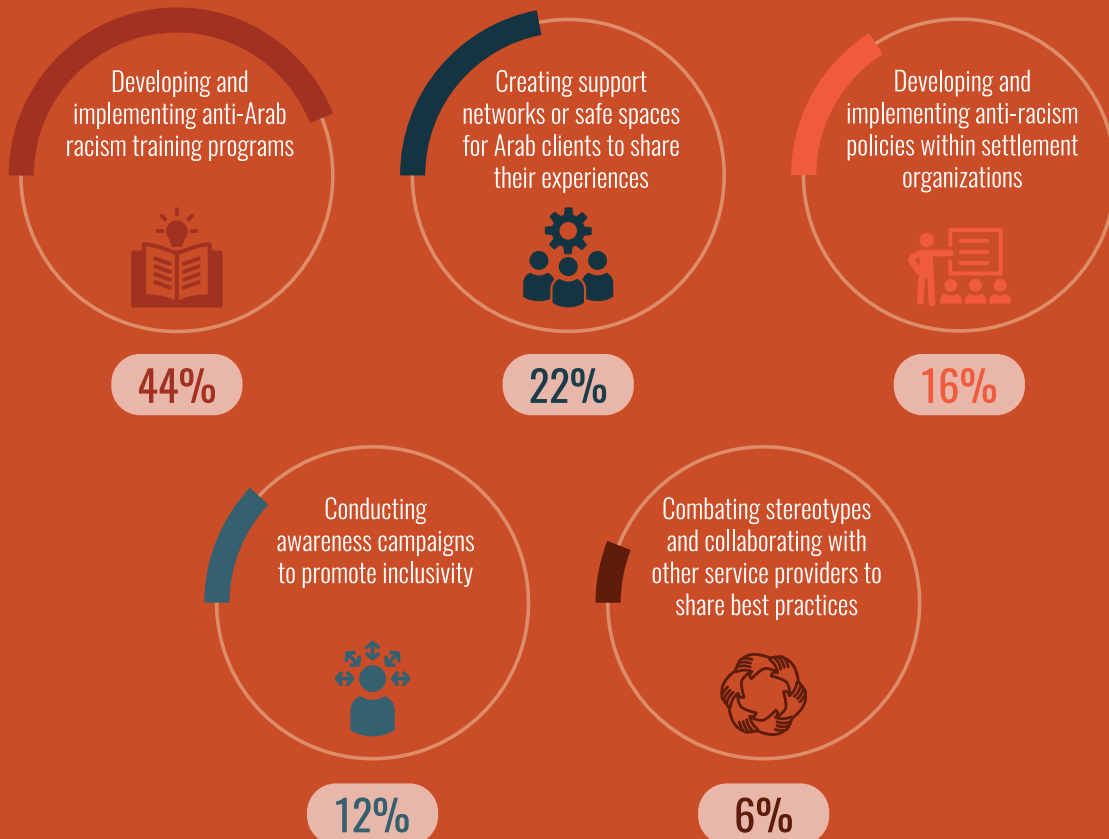
## TOP 3 CHALLENGES

facing Arab newcomers- as identified by service providers



## SUGGESTIONS

by service providers to address anti-Arab discrimination



The below findings are from 2 focus groups with 22 newcomer clients, observations of 3 interactions between service providers and their clients, and 1 group activity for Arab newcomers that included 1 service provider and a group of 30 women.

# PART 1

## FOCUS GROUPS: CLIENTS OF SETTLEMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS

Factors that contribute to newcomers having difficulty accessing services and facing anti-Arab discrimination when accessing services

1

### UNAWARE OF ORGANIZATIONS' SERVICES

Some clients struggled with service providers who failed to assist them in finding suitable services.

— TESTIMONY —

“ I didn't have a good experience with them. When I first entered, I talked to the receptionist and asked what services do you offer here? She's like, go check on the wall. It was kind of rude, and I remember I left and never went back until I had to go back to get a service that no one else offered. ”

2

### CULTURAL AWARENESS

Some clients found that organizations that lack awareness of Arab culture made them less likely to offer a diverse range of services tailored to Arab newcomer needs.

— TESTIMONY —

“ I think most of the people that I've worked with and the people in the organizations, have a preconceived idea about what is a Middle Eastern, and I remember this very vividly when I went to get my language assessment, they were all so confused. They were like, wait, you already speak English? ”

3

### LANGUAGE

Some clients reported facing language discrimination, struggling to communicate in English or French. This led to frustration and confusion, with some being denied services due to language barriers.

— TESTIMONY —

“ There's this one family friend who's actually also a Syrian refugee and basically, she has a lot of health issues. Every time she goes to the emergency room or to a doctor's appointment, even if it's in the emergency room, they will deny her the service. They're like, we're not going to treat you unless you have someone with you as an interpreter. ”

4

### ETHNIC BACKGROUND/ NATIONALITY

Clients reported discrimination based on ethnicity and/or nationality. Arab newcomers were treated differently than Ukrainian newcomers for example, indicating possible stigma against Arabs, with preference for European nationals.

— TESTIMONY —

“ I heard from some people in the organization that Ukrainians were treated a bit differently. I learned a lot about how they deal with refugees, especially Syrian, especially the ones who don't speak English. ”

5

### TYPE OF IMMIGRATION

Clients reported being assumed as refugees, without proper asset/needs assessment, suggesting that service providers were acting on bias and assumptions rather than communicating with their client.

— TESTIMONY —

“ The people, they were looking at us, they didn't like that we came here to Canada. Many people seemed to think as if we came here to take their money or I don't know. I didn't like the way they were dealing with us. ”

The below findings are from 3 focus groups with 20 service provider staff members, and observation of 1 group activity for Arab newcomers that included 1 service provider and a group of 30 women.

# PART 2

## FOCUS GROUPS: SERVICE PROVIDERS

Anti-racism knowlegde of service providers and their experinces with discrimination against Arabs in the service delivery sector

1

### UNDERSTANDING OF ANTI-RACISM

Most service providers understood racism and anti-racism concepts, and provided explanations and examples. They identified that the biggest barrier when working with newcomers is language.

— TESTIMONY —

“If you want to tackle the root causes of why [racism/discrimination] is occurring, or why we see it more frequently then you would focus on the language barrier. Interpretation will come as a second thing, I would say it would cause indirect discrimination.”

2

### ANTI-RACISM TRAINING

Due to lack of training some service providers have observed other service providers act based on preconceived biases where the quality of service toward newcomers is impacted.

— TESTIMONY —

“I’ve heard judgments around things like family size, dynamic, or cultural practices. So it’s just, it’s people expressing their biases around families or the way that they operate, rather than someone being very obviously racist about clients.”

3

### SPECIFIC CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participants raised concerns about specific cultural considerations including: religious background, familial relationships, and language. Participants also mentioned that newcomers should be made aware of their rights.

— TESTIMONY —

“They don’t understand that it’s not a right, it’s not an entitlement, you have to be eligible for these kinds of services. So it’s a responsibility for you to figure out your eligibility criteria first, and see what kind of commitment you have to provide in order to access these kinds of services.”

4

### OBSERVING ACTS OF DISCRIMINATION

When observing discrimination, some service providers mentioned that they would have to act as advocates for the Arab newcomers even when they aren’t their clients due to lack of engagement on the part of other staff.

— TESTIMONY —

“There are times where if I have the client’s consent, I may make an effort to explain the situation to the provider. But I also personally don’t feel like I should have to do that for the client to receive respect either.”

5

### CHALLENGES FACED BY NEWCOMERS

Participants mentioned mental health, culture shock, financial difficulties, employment difficulties, lack of community support, isolation, family separation, housing security, and language barriers as big challenges faced by newcomers.

— TESTIMONY —

“So there was a guy, they got mental problem. He came to the office. He said I’m going to kill myself. I said what are you talking? Because he just was so frustrated but he didn’t do anything, and the HR was there. He said I’m fed up, I hate Canada. But he’s OK now. He’s getting better. So this is a big issue of the people.”

6

### OVERWHELMING NUMBER OF PROGRAMS

Participants reported that clients often got overwhelmed by the number of programs, which could hinder their progression.

— TESTIMONY —

“I don’t feel that programs are helping anymore because when a newcomer arrives in Canada, they’re bombarded by so many programs that they have to be a part of.”

# Thank you!

WOSOOL is grateful to the efforts and time of partners who have been supporting this project, particularly community partners who have been dedicatedly serving on the project's Peer Review Committee. ACCT and CAI also thank the IRCC, the City of Toronto, academics, leaders and staff members of various organizations, community members, clients, and the research team for their contributions to this project.

Please check out our webpage to follow updates and participate in the project!



[www.acctonline.ca](http://www.acctonline.ca)