

“We want to make a contribution to Canada’s economy, PICS gives us the opportunity to do so!”

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Focus Groups

To Identify Emerging Needs and New Models of Services for Local Groups of Immigrants

In June and July 2012 Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services (PICS) undertook a study of diverse community service needs and the delivery of new initiatives and models of service delivery. The goals of the study were to identify the levels of satisfaction and make recommendations that would help PICS to deliver services that better meet client needs. Focus groups were facilitated to gather input and the opinions of current clients and immigrants were collected. Focus Groups were conducted at all PICS sites and included a Questionnaire on Demographic Data, a Service Satisfaction Survey and a Group Interview. Participants of all PICS programs were invited to take part in the initiative. The information and data collected was reported in an aggregative format.

A total of **132** immigrants participated in the focus groups representing various ethnic, age and gender groups.

Are you having difficulty integrating?

YES! The overall consensus is that Canadians are very friendly. However language barriers and cultural differences are still an issue, job opportunities are slim to none, and some feel lines of discrimination are clearly drawn in certain situations. A number of group discussions focused on cultural differ-

ences and diversity. Immigrants are losing their confidence due to a lack of understanding of other cultures and miscommunication. Staying within their own ethnic community and culture is seen as a solution though not preferable. The majority are also finding it very difficult to acquire Canadian

work experience. International Medical Graduates are especially frustrated with the lack of opportunities available to them, as well as the costly licensing fees that come with acquiring the necessary accreditation in their field.

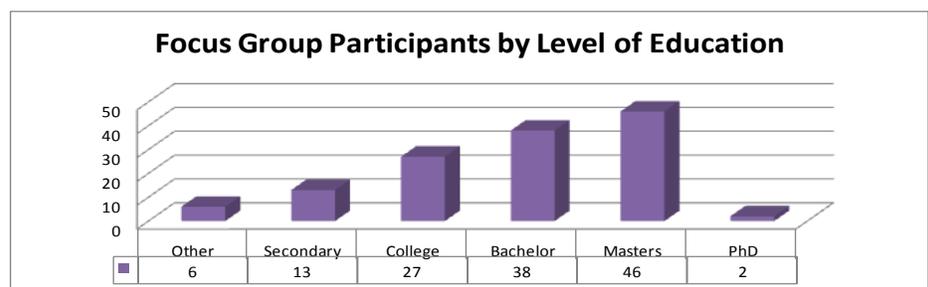
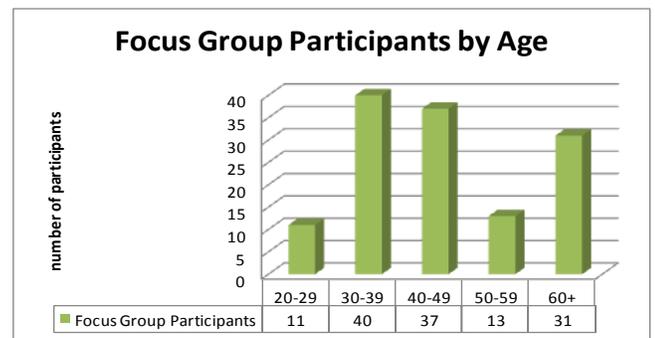
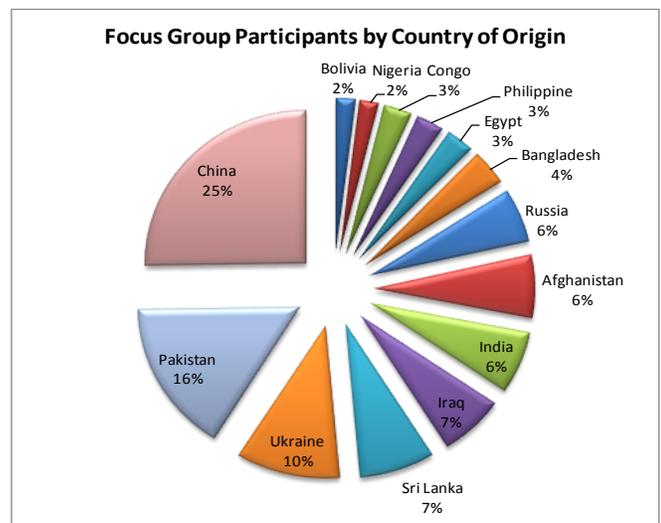
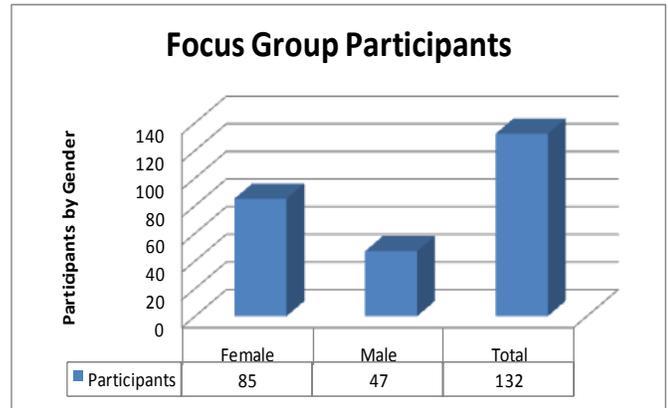
Focus Groups Participants' Profile

"PICS is like a step in becoming part of Canadian society."

"PICS made our integration into Canadian society much easier."

"PICS has helped us emotionally and morally in achieving our goals."

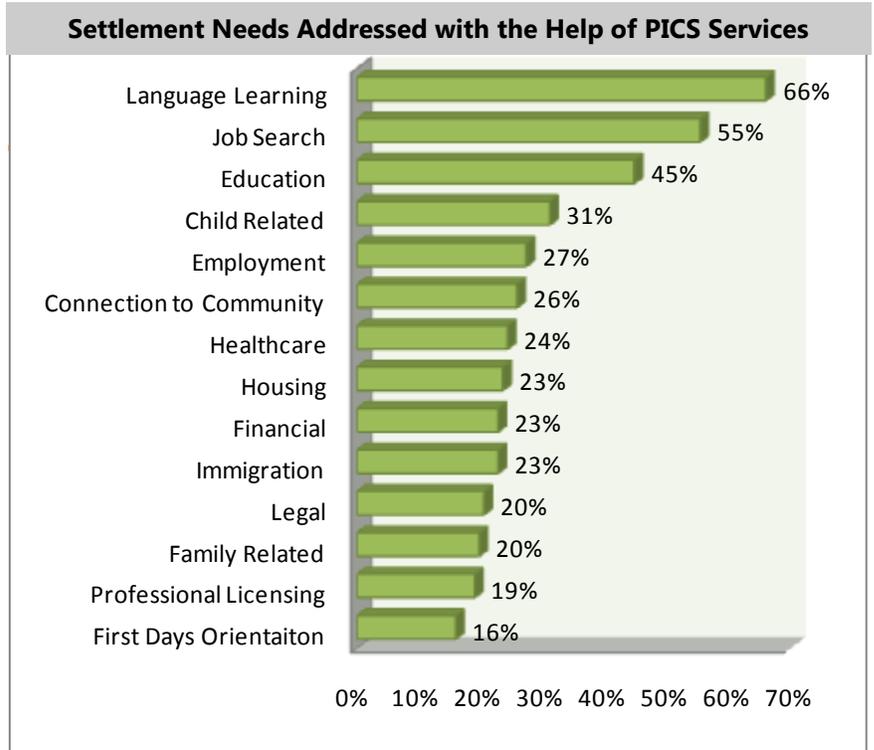
Our test group consisted of 132 clients (47 males & 85 females) from various backgrounds. The majority of participants were between the ages of 30 to 49. The next largest group was 60+, with the remaining being equally distributed between the 20 to 29 & 50 to 59 age groups. China had the largest representation with 25 % of participants taking part. Pakistan represented 16% of the participants, Ukraine 10%, and Sri Lanka and India 7%. The remaining countries in order of participation scoring 6% or less were Iraq, India, Afghanistan, Russia, Bangladesh, Egypt, Philippines, Congo, Nigeria, and Bolivia. 87% of participants have post secondary education ranging from community college to PhD.



Services required upon arrival in Canada

Additional services requested.

The majority of respondents asked for an enhanced or extended Language Training program that would exceed level 7 and offer specialized language classes for professionals from various industries. Some have also requested that we reinstate our night classes, and also consider part-time classes for those who are unable to attend during the day. They would also like to have newcomer services at the airport as it would be highly beneficial to have such information upon arrival. Forming a mentorship program was also a common suggestion, as well as providing information on newcomer rights in Canada. Preparation classes for



the citizenship exam were also suggested, and a more structured program for members of the International Medical Group.

“Services provided by PICS help us smoothly overcome cultural differences and adapt quicker.”

How did PICS programs & services assist newcomers?

PICS clients are saying that language training program assisted with listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The JSW program provided much needed assistance with resume and cover letter preparation, identifying hard, transferrable and soft skills, as well as helping with interview skills for

job placements. Translation and interpretation was something needed almost immediately, as they needed assistance with finding housing, applying for social assistance, access to settlement programs, and document certification. PICS also assisted them with volunteer opportunities that provided

some insight into the Canadian workplace culture. Newcomers were also given access to various workshops on legal information, tenants rights, and financial literacy, all providing an immediate sense of direction within their first few months in Canada.



“PICS is like a second family.”



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PICS aims to be the organization of choice for immigrants seeking services across the GTA.

Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services was formed on February 3, 1993 as a result of a merger between two agencies: Polish Immigrant Aid Services (founded in 1973) and Polish Canadian Community Services (founded in 1982). Amalgamation was completed in January 1994 with the purpose of providing a broader range of services. On August 27, 2000, the name was changed to Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services to better reflect the demographics of the local communities being served. In December 2009 PICS was registered as a charitable corporation.



Client Comments

The government should update settlement systems in better and more efficient ways so the programs can support and work in the newcomers' favour. Without these programs and services, the concept of multiculturalism in Canada will no longer exist. PICS help newcomers to get off social assistance and remove their dependency on the government by providing services and programs that keep individuals as active participants in Canadian society. The government have to recognize and continue to further support PICS in order to save future IMG immigrant populations, and to boost the future economy.

The government must realize that it will cost more if immigrants stop receiving settlement services, without basic programs such as English classes, integration won't be possible. We want to be useful, have a chance to utilize our skills, be a part of Canadian society. Newcomers need to be given more services, not less, without the services that PICS offers it would be very difficult to adjust to life in Canada. The services at PICS help us network, exchange information, gain experience and also make us feel welcome; PICS helps us overcome culture shock.

We need free services, we need information about how to start a life in Canada, we want to make a contribution to Canada's economy; lack of information and no help will make people feel stressed and depressed. The integration process will also be a lot slower, there will be a lack of opportunities to network and learn about government programs that help newcomers, making it impossible to settle and forcing immigrants to become a burden on society.