

Newcomers

EMBRACING DIVERSITY, CREATING COMMUNITY

SURREY'S

VitalSigns

2016



 **surreycares**
THE FOUNDATION of our COMMUNITY

WWW.SURREYCARES.ORG

Welcome to 2016 Vital Signs report on newcomers. We know Surrey is a welcoming, diverse, and inclusive community. We know many people make a deliberate choice to move here, whether from somewhere else in BC or Canada or from elsewhere in the world. What we wanted to know is, why Surrey? And what happens when they get here? Why might someone choose to stay? And, more importantly, how can Surrey reach out to and better accommodate new residents? So we asked newcomers themselves, and we got some answers.

We hope you will find this report helpful and insightful. We know, as a community, there is work to be done to help new residents overcome challenges and find success in Surrey. Sharing this research is one step of many that will continue to improve the lives of all citizens of Surrey.



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Cover Photo:
What We Can't Do Alone, We Can Achieve Together, public art in Surrey City Hall by Studio Roso, an international team of artists.

About Vital Signs®

Vital Signs is a national program led by community foundations and coordinated by Community Foundations of Canada that leverages community knowledge to measure the vitality of our communities and support action toward improving our collective quality of life.

More than 65 communities in Canada and around the world are using Vital Signs to mobilize the power of community knowledge for greater local impact. For more information, visit vitalsignscanada.ca.

About SurreyCares

Our community foundation works to improve the quality of life for all area residents through the growth and stewardship of permanent endowment funds and the distribution of income to a broad range of eligible organizations and activities.

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Mission: To have a positive and lasting impact on the quality of life in Surrey by:

- Creating and managing endowment funds on behalf of donors wanting to contribute to their community over the long term
- Encouraging and building community partnerships to create more powerful resources to move forward
- Demonstrating leadership in identifying and addressing important community challenges

For more information, see the inside back cover or visit www.surreycares.org.

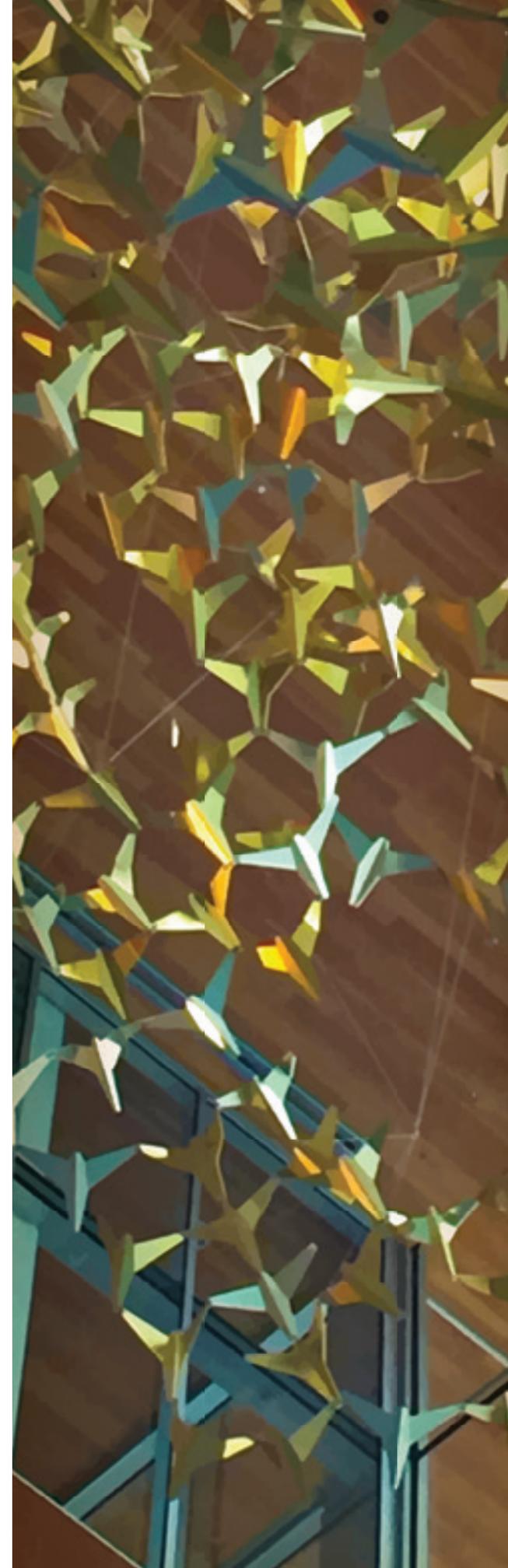
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From the Chair

I am excited to introduce SurreyCares Community Foundation's 2016 Vital Signs report on newcomers. This is our third in a series of consolidated snapshots identifying the trends and issues in our city. It is also an interesting look into the lives of our newest neighbours, friends, and colleagues.

In partnership with Community Foundations of Canada, we continue to look at the information provided to philanthropists, grantors, leaders, service providers, and decision-makers. We understand this is the first time a community has looked at the experiences of newcomers not only from outside our country, but also from elsewhere in Canada.

Welcoming Newcomers to Surrey

Who is a newcomer? Using five years as a benchmark (since 2011), for this year's survey, we included anyone moving to Surrey—from elsewhere in BC, Canada, or the world. For us, a newcomer was someone, whether alone or as part of a family, who chose to make Surrey home, for whatever reason, and stayed.

Although we planned this report some time ago, its timing has coincided with key current events. In fall 2015, the federal government committed to resettle 25,000 Syrian refugees in Canada, and hundreds of families have since arrived in Surrey. Steady immigration along with the recent rise in real estate costs in Vancouver has led to unprecedented growth in Surrey. We anticipate that the 2016 Census will demonstrate even greater growth in population than in past years.

A Place Where Everyone Belongs

We know Surrey is a desirable location for newcomers and poised for growth. We also know that everyone needs to work together to address the concerns and issues raised by the newcomers we surveyed. While doing so, we need to continue to embrace and celebrate our great community.

Our vision is to lead a stronger, more meaningful, inclusive community connection into the future, and to build a resilient and resourceful community. As in the past, we encourage you to gain insights and inspiration from the stories in these pages and then look beyond them. Learn more about what you can do to engage with and support those in the community who will benefit from your assistance.



Jeff Hector, CPA, FEA
Chair, Board of Directors
SurreyCares Community Foundation



Vital Signs 2016: An Overview

Surrey acts as a powerful lure for newcomers, whether from other parts of the Lower Mainland, BC, and Canada, or other countries. That is what our 2016 Vital Signs report on newcomers tells us. And we believe it.

How Do You Measure Quality of Life?

Vital Signs is an important annual community check-up. Funders and policy-makers use these check-ups, or reports, to determine where to focus their attention in helping to create better lives for all residents of Surrey.

Our report provides a comprehensive, reader-friendly look at how our community is faring in key quality-of-life areas. We call these areas *indicators*.

Indicators can be measured in a number of ways. These include the resources being provided (people, programs, and dollars) through to perceptions or ideals. Personal experiences often play an important role in our own reactions to either success or identified needs.

Hearing Directly from New Residents

This year's report includes comments from survey participants who shared their thoughts. It also provides a closer look at several of Surrey's newer residents. We hope you enjoy reading these profiles and learning about some of our newcomers as much as we did.

Hearing from newcomers allows us to see our community in a new way. As we experience Surrey through their eyes, we see their challenges, their resilience, and how things could be improved. We are also reminded of what makes Surrey a truly remarkable place to call home.



Newcomer Profile

Surrey is one of Canada's fastest-growing cities. For the past 15 years, the city had an average growth rate of 2.17%. That means almost a thousand people move to Surrey each month. Who are these new arrivals, the 10,000 or so people setting up new lives in Surrey each year? Our research reveals some interesting things about newcomers.

Where Do They Come From?

About 46% of people who took our newcomer survey moved here from outside Canada. Most of them came from countries in East Asia, like China, Korea, or the Philippines. A third came from South Asian countries, like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

However, slightly more newcomers moved here from other parts of Canada. And more than half of these newcomers made only a short move, from another city in the Lower Mainland.

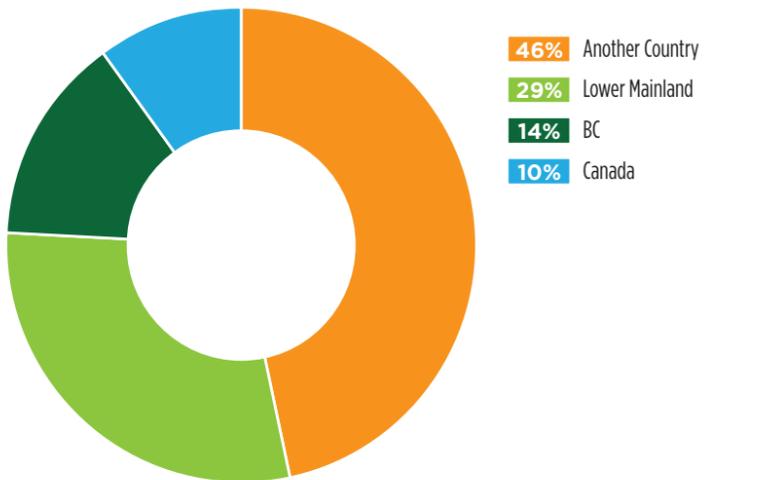
By 2020, Surrey is expected to become BC's most populated city.

What Brings Them Here?

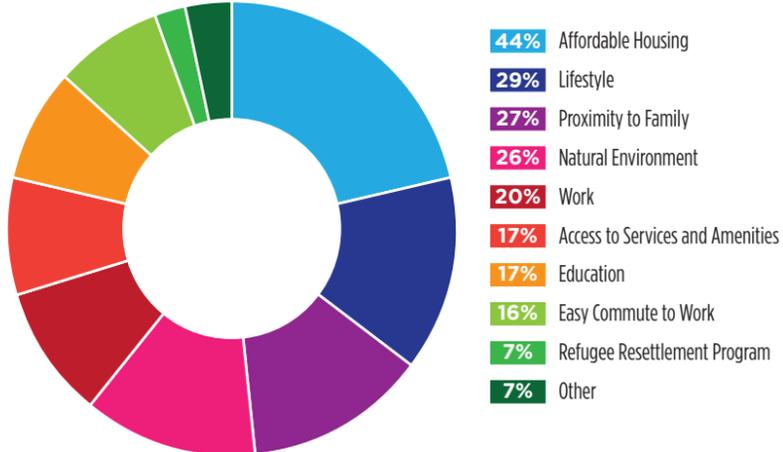
Our survey asked newcomers to give their top three reasons for moving to Surrey. More than 44% chose the city's relatively affordable housing as one of their top three reasons (see graph at right). Other important factors were lifestyle, being close to family, the natural environment, and employment.

1,000 newcomers arrive each month

Origins of Newcomers



Top 3 Reasons to Move to Surrey



New residents like the city's **Diverse Population**



Newcomers value Surrey's **Natural Environment**



The top reason to move to Surrey is **Affordable Housing**

What Else Did We Learn?

Because our survey sample was small, the data we collected does not represent newcomers as a whole. (For more on study methods, see page 36.) For instance, we heard from mostly women (73%). The people who took our survey were also younger than the average for Surrey.

In general, Surrey has a young population. In 2011, the median average age was 37.5, and 19.2% of city residents were under the age of 14. Our younger sample may relate to how the survey was distributed. Younger adults are more likely to take part in language classes or social media.

About four out of every ten people (38%) who answered the survey said they were part of a visible minority. (Note: 19% preferred not to say.) That 38% was also lower than Surrey's average. Statistics Canada reports that almost 53% of Surrey residents belong to a visible minority.

Newcomers tend to be very well educated. More than three-quarters of those taking the survey had completed some

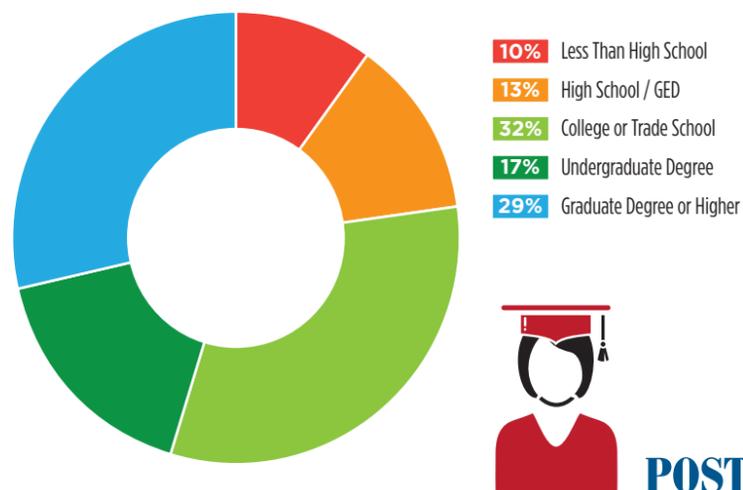
post-secondary education (see graph on this page). Only 10% of newcomers said they had not completed high school. This is less than the 19% of all Surrey residents, who have no diploma or certificate.

As for income, newcomers reported amounts lower than the averages for Surrey. About 31% of newcomers reported annual household incomes of less than \$30,000. This contrasts with other data showing about one-fifth of all Surrey residents live on less than \$30,000 per year. Note that 27% did not report their income, further decreasing the sample size.

The survey showed that newcomers are a diverse group. They come almost equally from other countries and other parts of Canada. They tend to be young, well educated, and often belong to visible minorities. More research is needed to find out how levels of income affect their well-being and community participation.

by the Numbers

Highest Level of Education



77% of newcomers have some **POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

HALF moved from other parts of Canada

526,290
current population of Surrey (est.)



77% of newcomers have some **POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION**

3 of 10 moved from the Lower Mainland

A Note on Diversity

Diversity is all around us. Being diverse simply means being different from another. The ways we are different include age, race, gender, religion, levels of ability, and many other factors. The city of Surrey is a special and diverse community, where numerous ethnic and cultural lifestyles are celebrated. So it's not surprising that most people feel welcome here when they choose to make Surrey their home.

In its diversity and multiculturalism, Surrey reflects the country as a whole. Canada is often called a cultural mosaic, a fabric, or a quilt. And what a beautiful one it is! Rather than becoming a "melting pot," where all people adopt one culture, in Canada we tend to celebrate our differences. We extend our traditions, share our foods, and learn about each other's way of life. We embrace uniqueness.

**D+B
FA+C**

Why Do We Grade?

A central feature of our Vital Signs research project is the grading of key indicators. Newcomers who took our survey were asked to select a grade of A, B, C, D, or F for each area of life, or indicator.

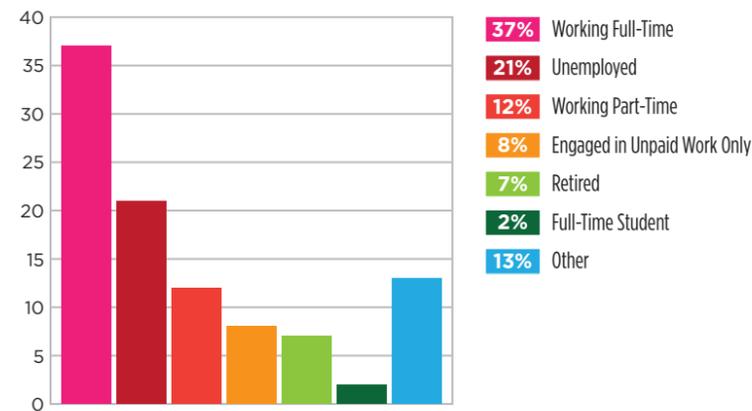
Grades cannot provide an objective assessment of Surrey's success in any area. Instead, they should be seen as one of various ways that newcomers might express their subjective rating of their life satisfaction.

The Vital Signs letter grades were assigned to percentages based on the grade distribution chart of Simon Fraser University's Department of History.* Given the small sample size, we chose to present the average grade for each indicator.

* Grade distribution based on percentages was as follows: A+ 90-100, A 85-89, A- 80-84, B+ 77-79, B 74-76, B- 70-73, C+ 67-69, C 64-66, C- 60-63, D 50-59, F 49 and below.



Occupational Status

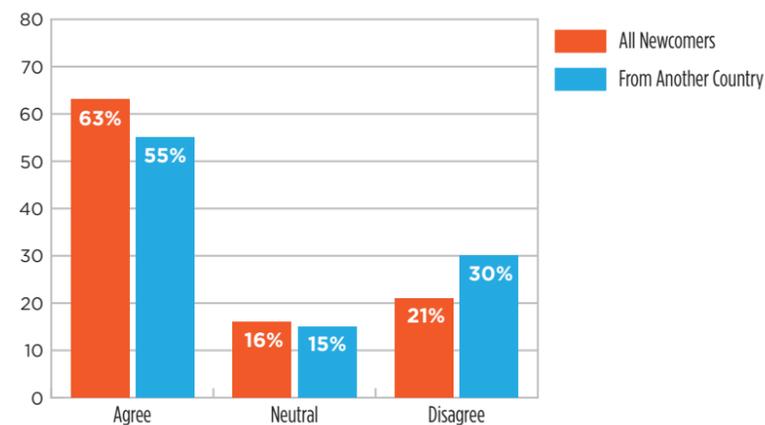


Almost all the people answering the survey questions (89%) were content with their job status. Half of those said they were very satisfied with their jobs. Despite these answers, newcomers gave employment a low grade overall. People expressed concern with finding a job, finding and affording child care, and getting to and from work.

People Move for Different Reasons

Less than half of the people answering the survey questions were working either full-time or part-time. Put another way, more than 50% of the newcomers we surveyed were unemployed (see graph top left). Some said they were volunteering, retired, or attending school. Others said they were receiving workers' compensation or disability assistance or were on maternity leave.

Job Matches Skills and Experience



Job Satisfaction Varies

People who said they belonged to a visible minority were less satisfied with their jobs than others. Newcomers from other countries were also not as happy with their job status as those who arrived from other parts of Canada (see graph at left). People who moved from other countries had trouble finding a job in their field.

Finding Work Can Be a Challenge

Trying to complete the requirements to work in BC or elsewhere in Canada takes a long time. It is expensive and difficult. The biggest barrier to job satisfaction was language and being unable to communicate well in English (see graphic below left).

Finding child care and affordable transportation is a challenge for those who are employed. Child care spaces are limited and expensive. Transportation to and from a job can be very time-consuming, as Surrey is spread over a large area. Not everyone feels safe at the transit stations. These are also factors in job satisfaction.

In general, immigrants living in Surrey earn less than Canadian-born residents, although they tend to be better educated.

THINGS TO CELEBRATE

- **Nine out of ten** newcomers were **satisfied** with their occupational status.
- After ten years, immigrants face the **same, or lower, unemployment rates** as other Canadians.
- **Only 14%** of newcomers surveyed reported discrimination in the job market.

THINGS TO IMPROVE

- Many newcomers have trouble **transferring foreign credentials** and getting their work experience recognized.
- Surrey is well below the national average for number of **child care spaces**.
- A majority of newcomers agreed that their **daily commute to work** is too long.

Employment by the Numbers

49%
of newcomers were
WORKING
either full- or part-time

89%
of them were
SATISFIED
with their
EMPLOYMENT

4 of 10
IMMIGRANTS
have had trouble
finding a suitable job

Surrey Local Immigration Partnership,
"How Well Are Immigrants Being Integrated?" [Fact sheet]
(September 2015), http://www.surreylip.ca/sites/default/files/LIP-InfoSheet06-web-final-rev_0.pdf.



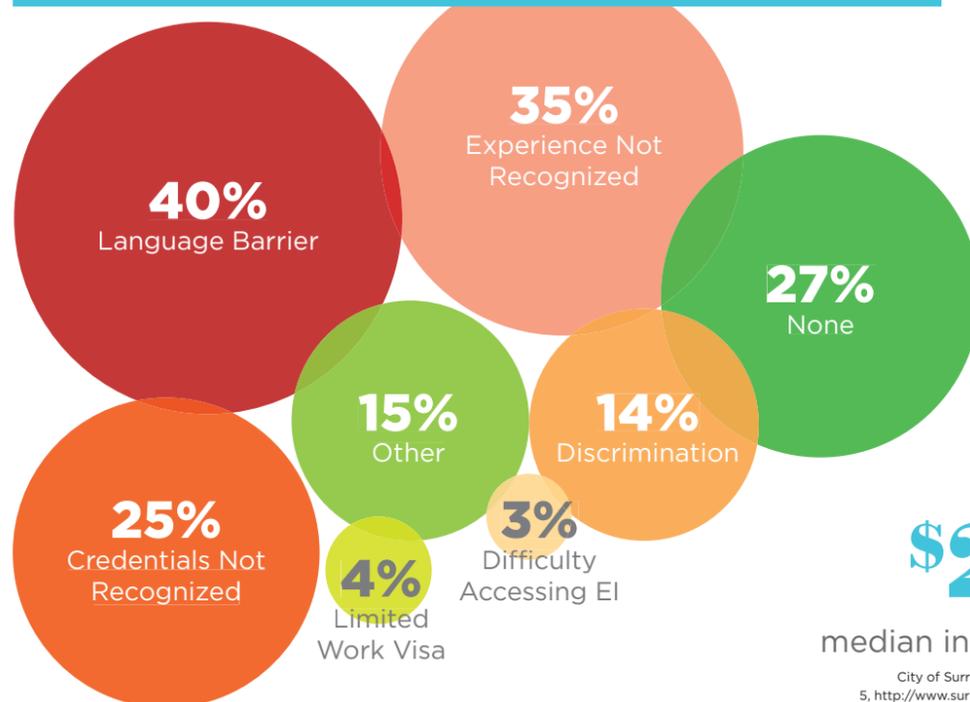
\$10.85
MINIMUM WAGE
in BC as of
September 15, 2016

\$26,799

median income of Surrey residents

City of Surrey, "Total Income Fact Sheet" (December 2014),
5, [http://www.surrey.ca/files/Income_\(Total\)_Demographic_Profile.pdf](http://www.surrey.ca/files/Income_(Total)_Demographic_Profile.pdf).

Challenges in the Job Market



meet Manjinder

June 2013 was a busy time for Manjinder. She had just landed in Canada from India, and she and her husband were getting their family settled in Surrey. She was also trying to find work and find activities to keep her children busy. School was out for summer, so the programs normally available for immigrant children weren't running.

"My children came from a tri-semester system of school, so here they had to wait until school started," she explains. "If we had arrived closer to the beginning of the school year, they would have been assimilated sooner."

Adding to Manjinder's challenges as a newcomer, her computer didn't seem to work properly in her new environment. "I knew that the one place I could go for information and possibly to use a computer was the library," she says.

"It was a challenging time when I first got here, but I also proved to myself that I am resilient and I certainly became more self-reliant."

So Many Differences...

Her story, like those of many newcomers from other countries, is one of getting familiar with a different culture, especially differences in work, schools, and getting around.

By chance, Manjinder saw a sign for WorkBC asking, "Are you looking for work?" She says, "If I had turned left instead of right, I would never have seen the sign, but I'm glad I did, as it led me to work."

"My biggest surprise in coming to Surrey was how multicultural it is. I have met people from countries I may not have met if I had stayed in India."

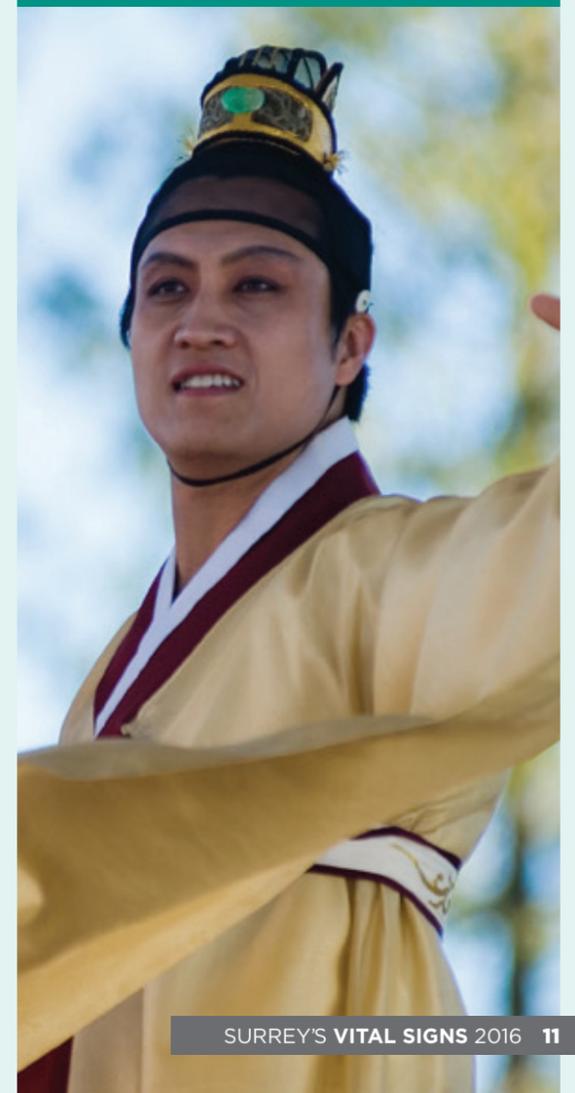
Retraining to Open Doors

Even though Manjinder has a PhD in psychology, her credentials did not open doors for her right away. She worked at a gas bar and a pizza restaurant while she had her education assessed by International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES). She also took university courses to prepare her for work in human resources.

Manjinder had to undergo retraining to take on work that was similar to but not the same as what she had done in India. However, she says that she and her family are happy living in Surrey, and they feel safe going anywhere. With the difficult adjustment time over, they are settled and plan to stay.



"Life would have been easier for me and my husband if we had stayed in India, but we knew our children would have more opportunities here."





“Many training programs have long wait lists. When you also have transit and daycare issues, it’s a challenge to prepare for a career.”

—Cherry, a newcomer from Richmond (see profile page 23)

Child Care

People living in Surrey have a harder time finding child care than people living almost anywhere else in BC. There are less than 9 child care spaces available for every 100 children. The Canadian average is more than twice that number, at 19 spaces per 100 children. Lack of available child care poses a major problem for parents and other guardians of young children, including newcomers to Surrey.

Lack of Spaces Burdens Families

When trying to find a job, parents must think about who will look after their children. Since few child care spaces are available, parents are sometimes forced to make difficult decisions, such as going from full- to part-time work.

Finding child care with relatives or friends may be possible, but it may also increase the commute time to and from work. As summer approaches and children are let out of school for two months, finding affordable child care presents yet another problem.

by the Numbers

\$1,850
per month for
PRIVATE CHILD CARE
for children under three

Tom Zytaruk, “Finding Child Care in Surrey Is Still Dire Despite 280 New Spaces,” *Surrey Now*, June 16, 2016, <http://www.thenownewspaper.com/news/383171581.html>.

280
new licensed
CHILD CARE SPACES
announced June 2016

<9
CHILD CARE SPACES
for every
100 children,
compared
to 19 in Canada



7
children at most
to be cared for at a
LICENSED FAMILY CHILD CARE

46%
of newcomers agreed
AFFORDABLE and
APPROPRIATE
child care options exist

Transportation

Surrey is the third-largest city in BC based on the amount of land that it covers. This makes transportation options critical to residents. Public transit does not reach all areas, so residents must drive a car to and from work. Some people drive because the transit stations in some parts of Surrey make them feel uncomfortable. Operating a car needs to be factored in when adding up how much it costs to work and live in Surrey.

“Surrey is physically five times larger than Manhattan, six times larger than Tel Aviv; we’re almost three times larger than San Francisco, and we’re nearly four times the size of Zurich.”

—Mayor Linda Hepner, “2016 State of the City Address”

Transit Use Is Rising—Slowly

Three times as many people are using the transit system today compared to 15 years ago. This may sound like a large increase, but still close to three-quarters of Surrey residents are driving to work. Ease of use is key to getting around, and we know it is often easier to drive than take transit due to the sheer size of Surrey. This is especially true for a family of four or more people.

Commuting Times Remain High

The average commute time for Surrey residents travelling to work is just over 30 minutes one way. This is much higher than the average for BC and for Canada. As Mayor Linda Hepner stated, “Good transportation options are more than just key. They are absolutely critical.”

“While taking the bus is more cost-effective and less hectic than driving, taking the bus [from South] to North Surrey takes a long time. There are so many stops. It’s easier to get to downtown Vancouver.”

—Annette, a newcomer from Alberta (see profile page 15)



Transportation *by the Numbers*

13%
of Surrey residents
USED PUBLIC TRANSIT
to get to work in 2011

368
total number of
TRAFFIC SIGNALS
in Surrey

1923
KILOMETRES:
total length of Surrey roads,
excluding highways

Both this and stat above from City of Surrey, "Transportation Inventory,"
<http://www.surrey.ca/city-services/13372.aspx>.

30.2
MINUTES:
average one-way commute
for Surrey residents

55%
of newcomers agreed
**"MY DAILY COMMUTE
IS TOO LONG."**

\$10,456
average annual cost of
OWNING A CAR

TravelSmart.ca (2016).



meet Annette

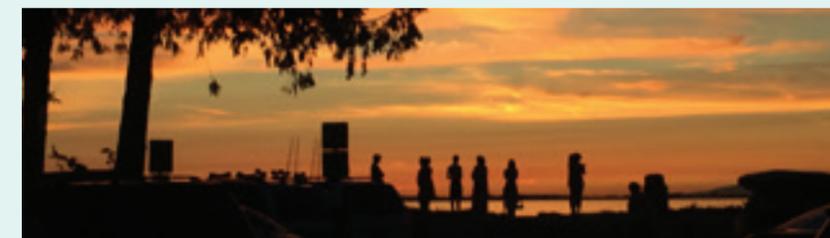
Annette and her husband moved from Alberta two years ago. The retired couple have two sons already living and working in Vancouver and Langley, so for them South Surrey is a good midway point. However, Annette says the media portrayal of crime was almost a factor against moving here.

Annette feels crime is an issue, as their vehicle has been broken into three times. But in general she finds her neighbourhood is a safe place to live. Housing was expensive when they moved here and has increased even more. Annette wonders how younger families can afford to buy a home. Despite these drawbacks, she says that her overall experience has been positive.

*"Moving to a new area is always a leap of faith.
You have to reach out."*

Active Retiree Enjoys the Outdoors

Soon after she arrived, Annette joined the White Rock and South Surrey Newcomers Club. Right away, she met people with common interests and found out about local resources. She loves the outdoors and has hiked many of the local parks. Her husband is an avid golfer and enjoys the extended season. She worries the influx of people in need of housing will reduce the green space now available.



Distances Are Long on Transit

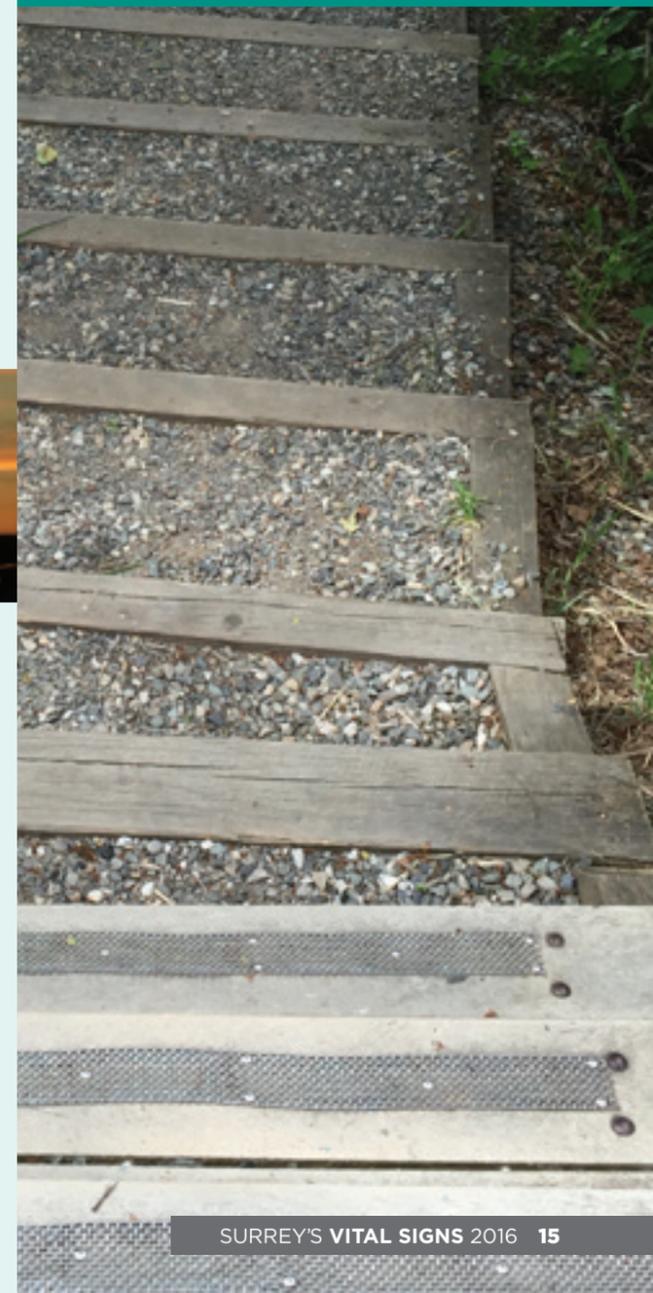
Annette used transit while she was working, so she takes the bus quite often. But she says going to Vancouver is easier than travelling within Surrey. Also, she finds driving to Langley is easier than getting around Surrey.

Annette and her husband have adapted to their new lifestyle and have no plans to leave Surrey. They say their current location gives them what they need and want.

*"This is the place for active retirees.
You can hike the trails, meander through the
plentiful thrift stores, walk on the beach, or take
part in activities at the recreation centres."*



*"I like all the parks and the
beach. It's beautiful here and
I can go out year round."*



2

Education

C+

“I’m fortunate that I was able to learn English quickly, and I really would like to learn French next.”

—Ikagarjot, a newcomer from India (see profile page 34)

Surrey residents who filled out the survey are generally pleased with the education system in Surrey (see bar graph on facing page). Most of them agree that Surrey schools offer more than one kind of learning style to help meet the various needs of learners. Parents are satisfied with the diversity and inclusion in their children’s classrooms. They appreciate the support given to special needs students.

High School and Beyond

In Surrey, almost nine out of ten high school students graduate within six years of entering Grade 8. This is better than the provincial average. However, new students experienced six-year completion rates of 12% lower than other students in 2014/15 (see line graph on facing page).

Many newcomers have studied in university or college (see graph on page 7). Almost one-third of newcomers have a graduate degree or higher. This does not mean that they will earn more money. It takes about ten years for newcomers to earn the same as or more than established Canadians.

Crowded Classes, Waiting Lists

Overcrowding in Surrey classrooms is a leading local issue. However, average class size is not much higher than the average in BC. More than 250 portable classrooms house the students that do not fit into Surrey schools. On May 13, 2016, Premier Christy Clark announced funding to make 2,700 new seats available for students. There are 1,870 seats already under construction.

Another concern raised by people who took the survey was waiting lists for adult education. Newcomers are not finding courses they need to help them get a job. There is a long wait to get in to any of the continuing education classes. The long wait includes classes for English as a Second Language (ESL).

“I seek guidance to put me back in my career line.”

THINGS TO CELEBRATE

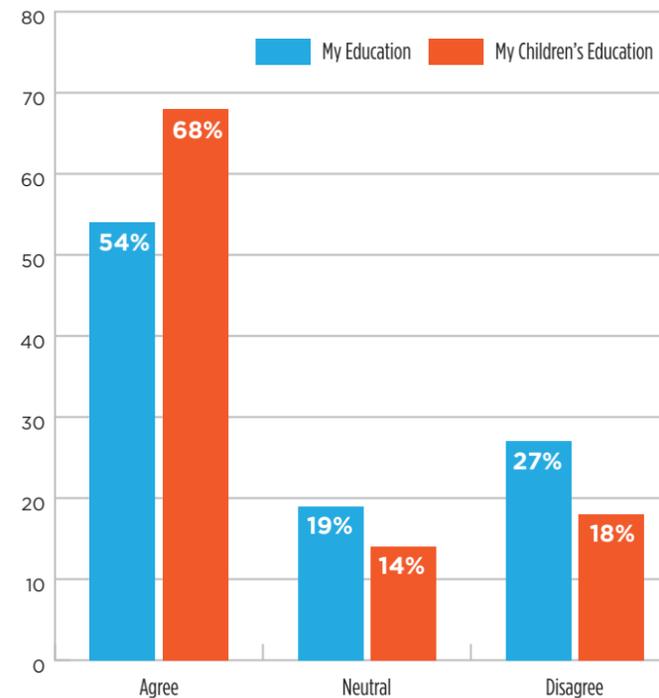
- **Surrey offers options** for different types of learners.
- Most newcomers are **satisfied with the quality of education** they and their children receive.

THINGS TO IMPROVE

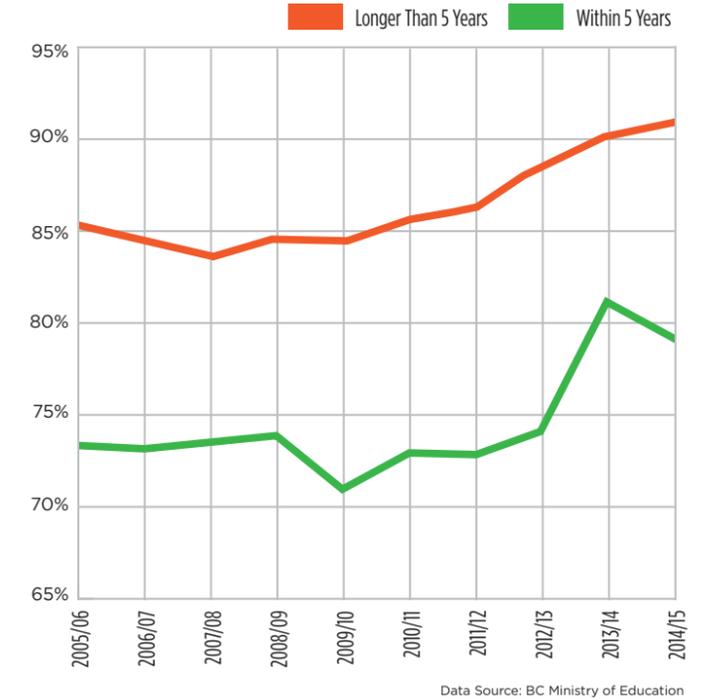
- **Serious overcrowding** is an issue in Surrey schools.
- Newcomers experience **waiting lists** for adult education.
- **Educational opportunities may not be well matched** to the needs of the job market.
- Newcomers may need **more educational guidance**.

“I didn’t [get] help for how I can upgrade my diploma (what documents are needed).”

I Am Satisfied with the Quality of Education I or My Children Have Received



Six-Year High School Completion Rates for Newcomers to Surrey



by the Numbers

250+
PORTABLES

house students with no permanent classrooms

9 of 10

Surrey students **GRADUATE** high school within six years

68%

ARE SATISFIED with their **CHILDREN'S EDUCATION**

27

is the **AVERAGE CLASS SIZE** for Grades 4 to 7 in Surrey schools

54%

of newcomers are **SATISFIED** with the education **THEY'VE RECEIVED**

Health and Wellness

C

By some measures, health and wellness are positive factors in the lives of newcomers to Surrey. Most reported being in good physical health and generally happy. And most are satisfied with the health care being provided in our community. Yet a number of challenges need to be addressed to improve the health and wellness of Surrey's newest residents.

“Almost [all] family doctors who can speak Mandarin are occupied and cannot accept patients any more in South Surrey.”

A Shortage of Family Doctors

Family doctors are critical to looking after ourselves. However, only 61% of newcomers have found a regular family doctor. More than a third have no regular doctor and depend on walk-in clinics. There, the waiting times can be long and the operating hours not long enough.

Newcomers have trouble finding doctors partly because Surrey residents have fewer doctors to serve them than other places in Canada. There are only 133 doctors per 100,000 residents in Surrey, whereas the Canadian average is 225 doctors per 100,000 residents. Surrey needs more doctors if more of us are to get the ongoing care needed to get and stay healthy.

“Increasing the number of multilingual family doctors serving Surrey residents would improve access to care.”

“The doctors are good, but the waiting times are ridiculous.”

Other Health Care Challenges

Besides finding a doctor, newcomers face other health care challenges (see graph on facing page). For instance, 43% agreed they have problems accessing services. (However, note that 38% disagreed.) Even though 90% had no problems getting a health care card, newcomers are not finding enough doctors or specialists who speak their first language. Beyond language, they also have problems communicating with doctors about health problems.

New residents say Surrey hospitals provide excellent care, even if they can be busy and wait times can be long. Some newcomers are finding it difficult to travel outside Surrey to see specialists. And almost half find the costs of prescriptions and dental care to be a challenge.

“Too many clinics, no language assistance.”

THINGS TO CELEBRATE

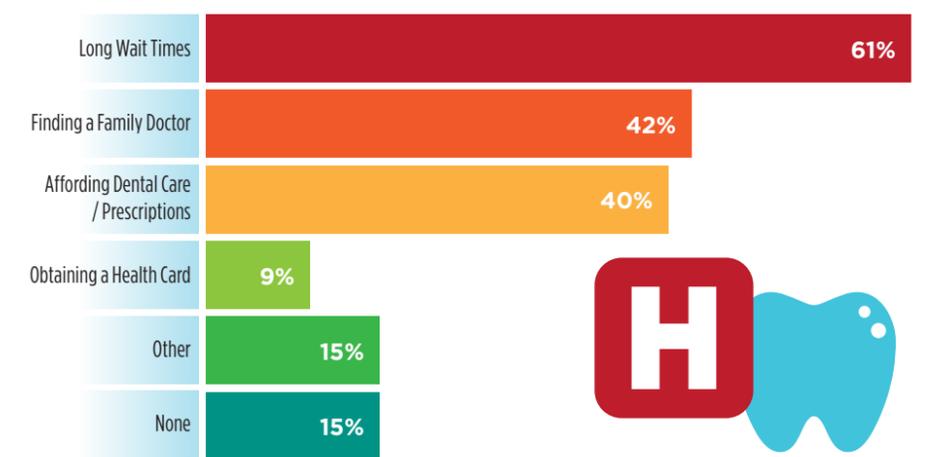
- **Eight out of ten** newcomers were **satisfied** with their physical health.
- **Three-quarters** of newcomers said they were **happy**.

THINGS TO IMPROVE

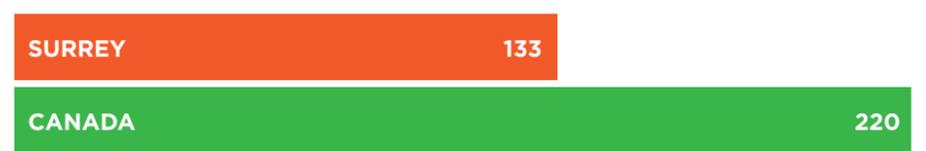
- Many newcomers have **trouble finding a family doctor**.
- Six in ten of those surveyed indicated **long wait times** as a health challenge.
- Surrey has **60%** of the Canadian **average of doctors** per 100,000 residents.



Health Challenges



Doctors per 100,000 Residents



by the Numbers

1 HOSPITAL serves the **ONE-HALF MILLION** residents of Surrey

80% ARE SATISFIED with their **PHYSICAL HEALTH**

133 DOCTORS are available to serve each **100,000** Surrey residents

City of Surrey Open Data, "Availability of Doctors" (2014), http://dashboard.surrey.ca/#health_and_safety/doctors.

42% of newcomers said **“FINDING A FAMILY DOCTOR”** is a top health challenge



5% OF BC RESIDENTS, about 220,000, do **NOT HAVE A FAMILY DOCTOR**

Canadian Medical Association, "Physicians per 100,000 Population by Province/Territory, 1986-2014" (2014), https://www.cma.ca/Assets/assets-library/document/en/advocacy/12-Phys_per_pop.pdf.

4

Lack of parking is one of the challenges newcomers face when looking for a place to live.

Housing

C

It's a common problem around the Lower Mainland: housing prices are high and availability is low. Having a place to live is important for everyone, but finding that place can be a big challenge for newcomers to Surrey.

Affordability Is an Issue

Most newcomers still see Surrey as affordable and a reason to move to the community. But being able to afford housing is an issue for many. Put another way, compared to other communities, Surrey's housing is cheaper. However, new residents still find it hard to afford the rapidly rising rents and home prices (see line graph on facing page).

Affordability is one of the overall top-three challenges noted by newcomers. And 60% of newcomers named affordability as one of their challenges in finding housing (see bar graph on facing page). In Surrey, the average price of a single-family detached home is more than \$1 million, and rents have been going up too.

Hard Decisions and Compromises

A large part of the income of Surrey residents goes toward housing costs, whether they rent or buy. Due to high housing costs, many newcomers may have to live with family or friends. While they may have dreams of buying a home, that dream could be a long way off.

For newcomers lucky enough to find suitable housing, many had to go outside their desired neighbourhood to do so. Some said they faced discrimination while looking for a place to live. Another challenge is the lack of parking. So on top of finding a place to lay their head, newcomers must also find a place to park their car.

"I can't lie, I had a hard time, pregnant and had three children, but once I found my place it worked beautifully."

THINGS TO CELEBRATE

- **Affordable housing** is the leading reason to move to Surrey.
- **Three-fifths** of newcomers see Surrey as a **good place to raise a family.**

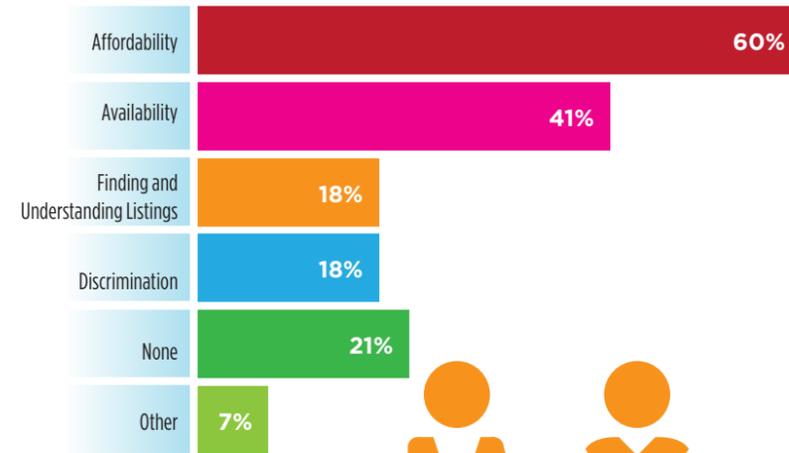
THINGS TO IMPROVE

- Surrey detached **house prices have soared 43%** in the past year.
- Newcomers see **affordability** as the **biggest challenge.**

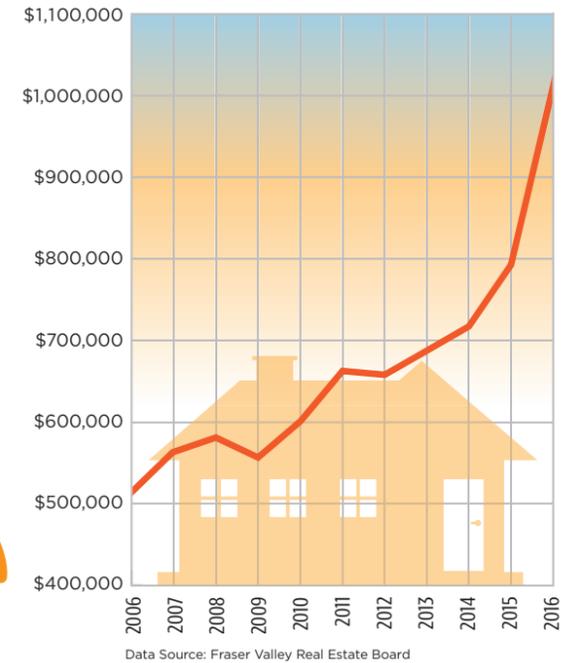
"We had set a limit. We weren't going to spend more than what we had in our previous home. It took a while..."

—Annette, a newcomer from Alberta (see profile page 15)

Challenges in Finding Housing



Average Surrey House Prices, 2006 - 2016



by the Numbers

38% of renter households **SPEND 30% OR MORE** of household income on shelter

Surrey Poverty Reduction Coalition [Fact sheet] (January 2015), https://222.Surrey.ca/Files/housing_factshet.pdf.

\$879,300 average price of a **SINGLE-FAMILY DETACHED HOME** in Surrey, April 2016

Rick Kupchuk, "Surrey Home Prices Soar 30%," *Surrey North Delta Leader*, May 10, 2016, <http://www.surreyleader.com/business/378879731.html>.

1 of 5 newcomers said **DISCRIMINATION** was a challenge in **FINDING HOUSING**

43% increase in Surrey housing prices from April 2015 to April 2016

Fraser Valley Real Estate Board, "City of Surrey Average Housing Prices" (2016).



Public transit is available, but it is not convenient for all neighbourhoods.

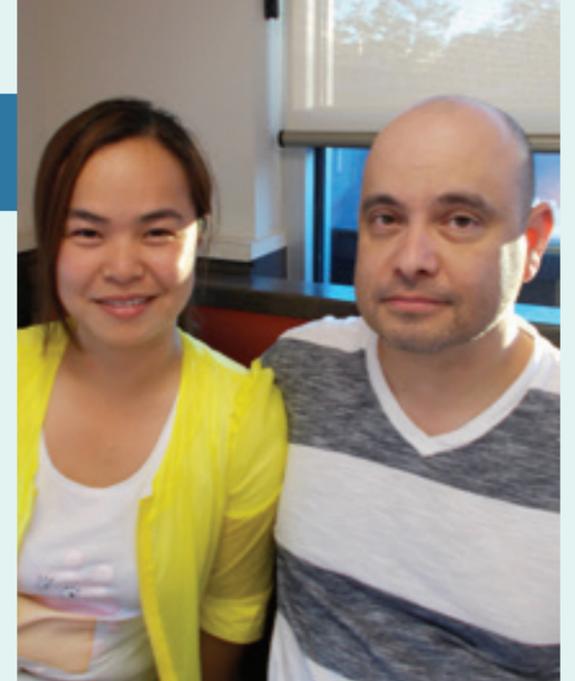
\$23,292 average annual **HOUSING COSTS** in Surrey/White Rock for working owners with mortgages

Metro Vancouver, *The Metro Vancouver Housing and Transportation Cost Burden Study* (2015), 14, <http://www.metrovancouver.org/services/regional-planning/PlanningPublications/HousingAndTransportCostBurdenReport2015.pdf>.



meet Cherry and Wil

Cherry and Wil moved to South Surrey from Richmond in 2012. Both were attracted by the green spaces and the slower pace of life. Wil is a professional in the high-tech industry. He has a longer commute to work, but the move was worth it because he likes where he now lives.



“The pace of life is good. It’s less hectic. We don’t feel people are on top of each other.”



Saving for a Home of Their Own

Cherry says people are friendlier and more inclined to talk. Finding a rental home for their young family was difficult, as many places are for the over-55 age group. They are saving for a home but are concerned about affordability. “Though we like it here, we may end up moving to find a house,” she says.

Both say neighbours and the community have been welcoming. Cherry, a stay-at-home mom with two young children, says grandparents babysit when they are able to visit Canada. Otherwise, due to cost, daycare is not an option. Cherry wants to take courses, but transit, daycare, and wait lists for programs are all obstacles.

“Safety is an issue.... In Surrey, there are areas you don’t want to visit in the evening.”

Safety Matters to This Young Family

The family uses the local recreation centre and looks forward to using facilities more as their children get older. They feel there is more crime in Surrey than there was in Richmond. After their building was broken into, Wil joined Block Watch, the neighbourhood crime prevention program.

They take the children to parks and playgrounds in the daytime. In the evenings, they don’t find Surrey is as safe. Despite that, overall, the couple says their move was positive and they enjoy their life in Surrey.



5



Safety

D

The good news about safety is that, overall, two-thirds of newcomers to Surrey feel safe in the community. Members of visible minorities are more likely to disagree that they feel safe. They are also more likely to feel threatened because of race or religion.

Yet almost all newcomers agree they have friends and family to call on when things go wrong. Almost all know how to call emergency services when needed. And most share the view that the local police are hard-working and trustworthy, even if they're struggling to resolve crime problems in Surrey.

Crime Is the Most Pressing Issue

Newcomers surveyed chose safety and crime as the biggest issue facing Surrey. The crime rate is growing across the city, especially in Whalley (see graph on facing page, top right). There are also more drug-related deaths now, a problem that is growing throughout the province. So it's no wonder that more than half of newcomers consider drugs and gangs as the biggest challenges to safety (see graph).

“The police service is trying hard, but lacks sufficient manpower and needs to focus its resources in the community, not elsewhere.”

Other Safety Challenges

Issues of concern to newcomers are not limited to drugs and gangs. They include violent crimes, break-ins to homes and businesses, vehicle thefts, and people drinking and driving. A small number (1% each) indicated

domestic violence and bullying as problems. A few mentioned being ready for a natural disaster.

About one-third of newcomers admitted to feeling nervous about their children's safety in school. So while newcomers generally feel safe, there are also serious problems for the community to address.

THINGS TO CELEBRATE

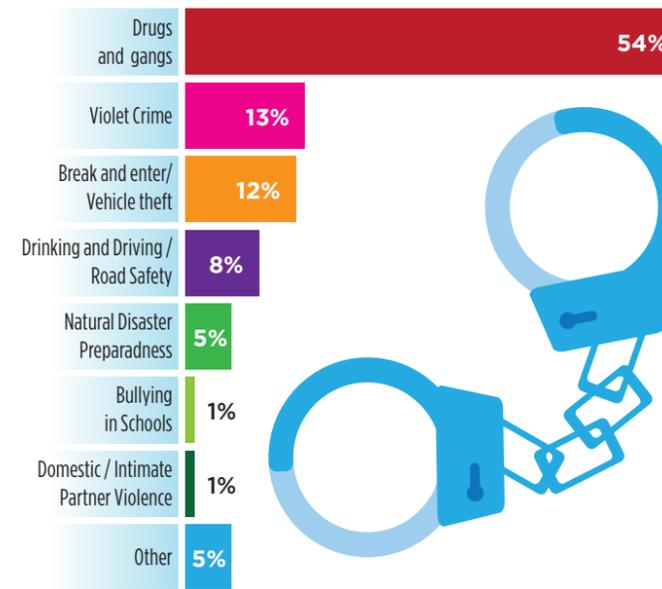
- **Two-thirds** of those surveyed **feel safe** in their community.
- Newcomers say they have **strong support networks in case of emergency**.
- The majority of newcomers have **confidence in the police**.

THINGS TO IMPROVE

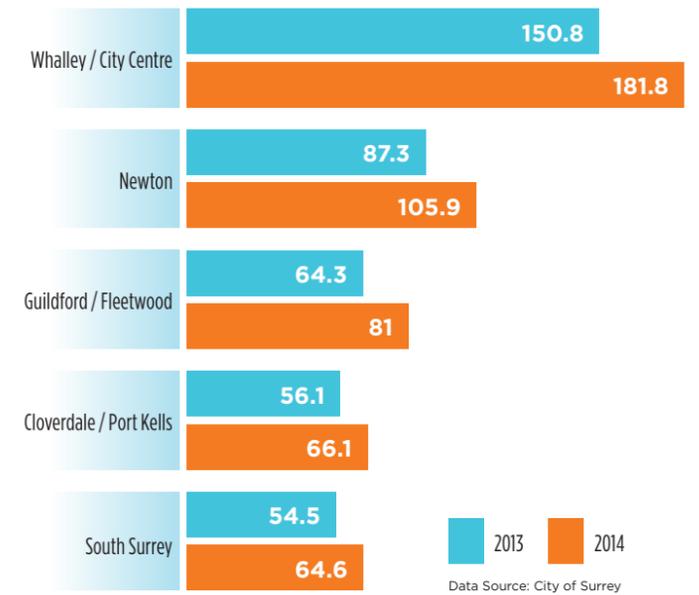
- Most newcomers consider **drugs and gangs** to be Surrey's **top safety issue**.
- **Drug-related deaths** have increased dramatically in 2015/16.

“We need more protection when it comes to crime, drug users.”

What Is Surrey's Biggest Challenge in Terms of Safety?



Criminal Code Offences per 1000 Residents, 2013 - 2014



by the Numbers

6 of 10 newcomers agreed **“I HAVE CONFIDENCE** in my local police force.”

34% of newcomers agreed they **FEEL NERVOUS** about their **CHILDREN'S SAFETY IN SCHOOL**

480 DEATHS in BC in 2015 due to **DRUG OVERDOSES**

Jeff Nagel, "Charts: Drug Overdose Deaths in B.C. by City, Region," *The Now*, May 13, 2016, <http://www.thenownewspaper.com/news/379476281.html>.

1,000 average **CRIMINAL CODE OFFENCES** per 1,000 residents across Surrey in 2014



36 **DRUG OVERDOSES** in Whalley July 16-17, 2016, leading to a **PUBLIC HEALTH WARNING**

John Colebourn, "Surrey Health Officials Warn Public After 36 Drug Overdoses in One Weekend," *The Vancouver Sun*, July 18, 2016, <http://vancouversun.com/news/crime/36-drug-overdoses-in-one-weekend-prompt-warning-from-surrey-health-officials>.

“Surrey needs to resolve its gang and drug problems if it is to improve the safety of residents.”

6



“Local markets are good, but loss of farmland to development is not good at all.”

Environment and Sustainability

B-

Surrey is famous for its parks and many green spaces. Undeveloped areas offer residents a break from busy, densely populated urban centres. Almost all newcomers believe that protecting this environment and the beauty it adds to people’s lives is important. And they’re ready to play their part. Most say that all residents need to protect the natural environment that they enjoy. One way to do this is to recycle, and it’s good to know that more than two-thirds of newcomers know how to use recycling services.

Concerns About Loss of Green Space

However, newcomers see a number of threats to the environment. Almost 40% are worried about the loss of green space and trees (see graph on facing page, top left). They see this as a significant challenge to keeping Surrey green. About a quarter of newcomers also see waste management as a challenge. Some others are concerned about the threats posed by fossil fuels and their effects on air quality.

Access to Affordable Locally Grown Food

Newcomers also see food security and sustainable agriculture as local problems. Even though the city is surrounded by farms and agricultural land, almost a third of newcomers say they do not have access to locally grown food. A few also expressed concerns about the availability of water. Littering was also mentioned as a challenge to keeping the environment green. These

are all things that need to be addressed if Surrey is to keep the green space that makes it such a great place to live.

“Every resident needs to protect our environment and keep Surrey clean from unused furniture on the street.”

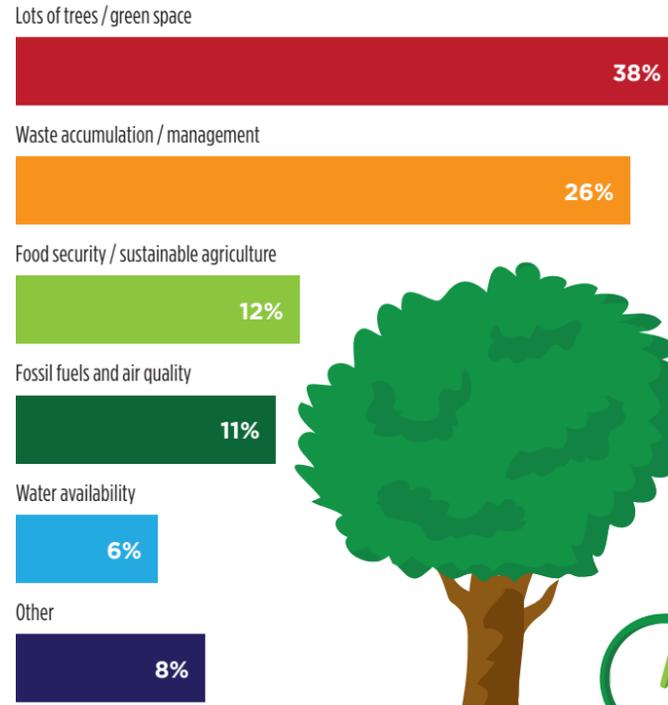
THINGS TO CELEBRATE

- More than **nine in ten newcomers** see protecting the environment as a priority.
- Newcomers feel individual Surrey **residents need to play a role in conservation.**
- New residents **appreciate Surrey’s waste management program.**

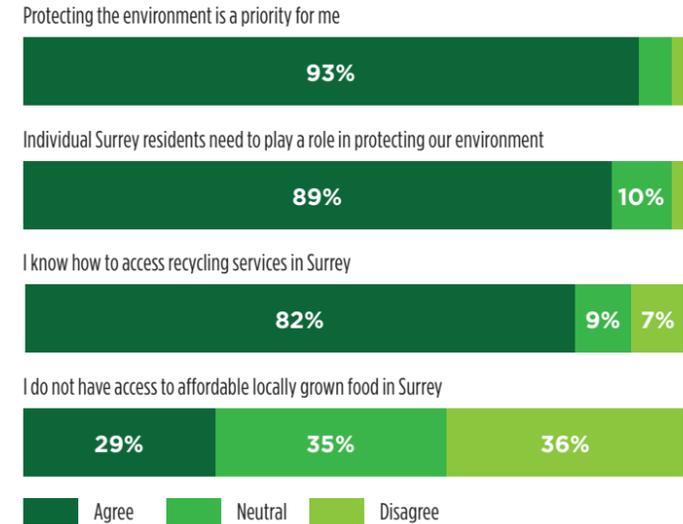
THINGS TO IMPROVE

- Newcomers see **loss of trees and green space** as Surrey’s **top environmental challenge.**
- **One-third** of newcomers said they **lack access to affordable locally grown food.**
- A quarter of newcomers were concerned about **trash in the community.**

What Is Surrey’s Biggest Environmental Challenge?



Newcomers and the Environment



by the Numbers

3 of 10 newcomers lack access to **AFFORDABLE** locally grown food



82% of newcomers know how to **ACCESS RECYCLING SERVICES**



93% agree **“PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT IS A PRIORITY”**



200 PARKS in Surrey, featuring **FORESTS, BEACHES, AND NATURE TRAILS**

City of Surrey, “Parks in Surrey,” <http://www.surrey.ca/culture-recreation/2015.aspx>.

“Every Surrey resident needs to play their role in protecting the environment by recycling and correctly disposing of garbage.”

23,000 ACRES within the **AGRICULTURAL LAND RESERVE** in Surrey

Patrick Blennerhassett, “Surrey Struggles to Keep Agriculture from Withering,” *Business in Vancouver*, March 8, 2016, <https://www.biv.com/article/2016/3/surrey-struggles-keep-agriculture-withering>.



Nearly 60% of newcomers said the government should spend money to fund arts and culture in the community.

Arts and Culture C+

The city of Surrey is definitely a culturally diverse community. More than 40% of its residents were born outside of Canada—that's more than two times the national average! With so many different cultural points of view, there are varying demands for arts and culture. The majority of newcomers feel that arts and culture are an important way to express their identity (see graph on facing page).

Almost a quarter of new residents identified local festivals and events as one of the top three things about Surrey. Taking time out to celebrate is a strong priority.

Fresh Ideas for Local Arts

Most newcomers feel that the government should contribute funds to the growth of arts and cultural activities. Some even provided ideas on where that money could be spent. The desire for permanent public art is a common theme. Newcomers wish to see more classes and art shows that showcase emerging local artists and allow them to interact with the community. People are also looking to art as a way to engage with their own family. They seek other ways in which children and adults can explore the arts together.

Many Cultures, One Community

About a quarter of new residents saw festivals and events as one of the best things about Surrey. Our survey prompted many requests for multicultural days and other displays of cultural diversity. Arts and culture are important for all ages and ethnicities. They allow us to celebrate our own backgrounds and also explore the traditions of others. Newcomers place a distinct value on the varied cultural landscape of Surrey and are ready to embrace it.

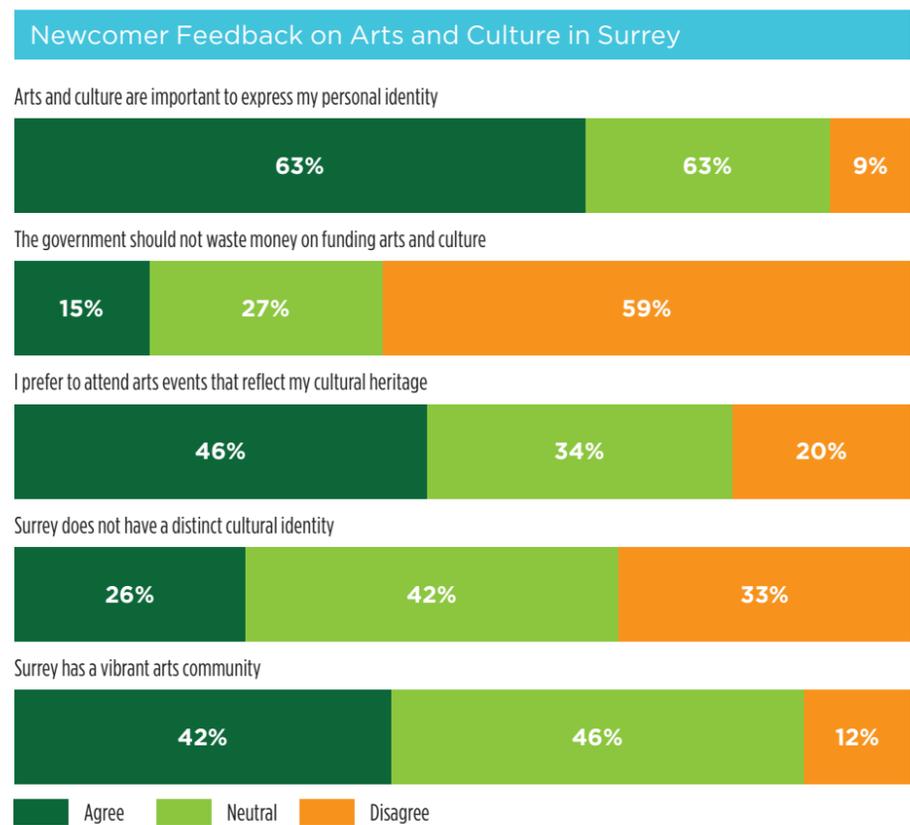
“Engage community in festivals that feature art education and participation. Organize opportunities for adults to re-engage with arts and culture they did as a kid.”

THINGS TO CELEBRATE

- Almost **two-thirds** of newcomers agree **arts and culture are important** to express their personal identities.
- Newcomers value Surrey's **diverse cultural landscape**.
- A majority of newcomers recognize **arts and culture as a public good**.

THINGS TO IMPROVE

- **Only a third** of newcomers surveyed feel Surrey has a **distinct cultural identity**.
- More free performances, exhibitions, and events would provide more **access for low-income residents**.
- **Direct and indirect funding** to local artists will help them develop.



by the Numbers

15+
ANNUAL EVENTS
sponsored and produced by
the Arts Council of Surrey

Arts Council of Surrey, "About Us,"
<http://www.artscouncilofsurrey.ca/html/aboutus.htm>

\$16 million
annual budget of
SURREY LIBRARIES
(9 branches)

68
PUBLIC ART SITES
listed on the City of Surrey's
Arts & Culture Map

City of Surrey, "Public Art," Surrey Arts & Culture Map, <http://cosmos.surrey.ca/external/tools/CulturalCorridor/?starttab=Public%20Art>



42%
of newcomers agree that Surrey has a
VIBRANT ARTS COMMUNITY

46%
of newcomers prefer to attend
arts events that reflect their
CULTURAL HERITAGE

20,000
attendees at Surrey International
CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL
in 2015

Surrey International Children's Festival, "About Us,"
<http://www.surrey.ca/childrensfestival/136.aspx>

8

Belonging and Community Participation

B-

Everyone wants to feel as though they belong, whether it's within their family, neighbourhood, special interest group, or community. Fortunately, Surrey has given newcomers a warm welcome. Whether they came from across the river or the other side of the world, new residents believe strongly in their sense of belonging and ability to be part of the community (see graph on facing page, top left).

Getting Out, Getting Involved

Newcomers are already active in their community, which may be part of what contributes to their sense of feeling welcome. They take on roles as volunteers or spend time at the library, community centre, or cultural centre. These family-oriented and community-minded individuals are comfortable making use of the many amenities and facilities available in Surrey. They also take advantage of cultural activities, festivals, and religious options.

“Personally I love the parks, community-minded people, and diversity.”

Challenges to Overcome

Many newcomers moved here to be closer to family and friends. While that's a common value among them, they've also branched out to get to know their neighbours and build friendly relationships with them. Despite that openness, it's hard for anyone to make friends in a new community (see graph on facing page, top right). Discrimination can be a concern. Some have felt uncomfortable because of their race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation. But overall, the diversity of Surrey residents is seen as a positive.

Newcomers are an active bunch, with nearly everyone taking advantage of what the community has to offer. These activities range from getting fit to lounging in one of the many green spaces with the friends and family that are so important to them.

THINGS TO CELEBRATE

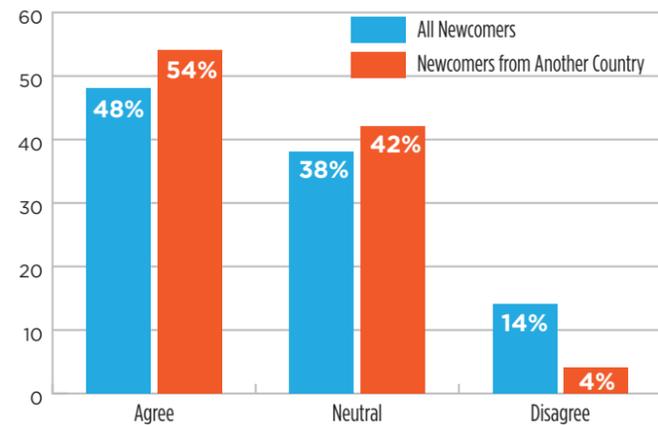
- New arrivals to Surrey gave belonging and community participation the **highest score** among the indicators.
- **Seven in ten** newcomers reported having **friendly relationships with their neighbours**.
- Newcomers take part in **many different activities** in the community.

THINGS TO IMPROVE

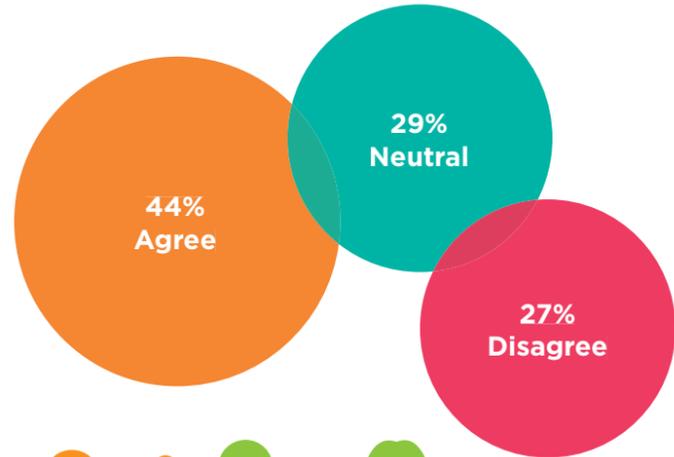
- Four in ten newcomers said they find it **hard to make friends** in Surrey.
- **Less than half** of newcomers said they feel a **sense of belonging**.

A majority of newcomers (70%) have established friendly relationships with their neighbours. Neighbourhoods are essential to growing a sense of belonging and community.

I Feel a Sense of Belonging in Surrey



It Is Difficult to Make New Friends in Surrey



by the Numbers

7 of 10 newcomers use the **PUBLIC LIBRARY** at least occasionally

22% report having **FELT UNCOMFORTABLE** due to **RACE, RELIGION, GENDER, OR ANOTHER FACTOR**

48% of newcomers feel a **SENSE OF BELONGING** in Surrey

HALF of immigrants and other Surrey residents feel that **DISCRIMINATION IS A PROBLEM**

More than 50% of newcomers are already active volunteers within community organizations. Being new to Surrey hasn't stopped them from giving back and sharing.

93% of Surrey immigrants expressed comfort accessing **PUBLIC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

Both stats above from Surrey Local Immigration Partnership, "How Well Are Immigrants Being Integrated?" [Fact sheet] (September 2015), http://www.surreylip.ca/sites/default/files/LIP-InfoSheet06-web-final-rev_0.pdf.

9 Overall Quality of Life

B-



Newcomers to Surrey appreciate their city for its cultural diversity, its friendly people, and its abundance of green space. They enjoy the good things that Surrey has to offer and are pragmatic about the challenges it undoubtedly faces. These attitudes were reflected in our survey, which showed that most newcomers are happy with life overall. Plus, almost two-thirds said that they plan to still be living in Surrey in five years' time.

Newcomers' Biggest Challenges

There are of course many challenges involved in moving to a new city, particularly for people coming from other countries. The top three in Surrey were finding a job, finding a place to live, and the affordability of housing. It's important to note that the experience of moving to Surrey is not the same for all newcomers. Those who identified as a visible minority reported a lower quality of life than those who did not.

Asked to name the three biggest issues facing Surrey, 57% of newcomers selected crime and personal safety. Behind that, at 45%, was the increasing cost of living, with housing almost tied, at 44%.

Top Things to Celebrate

Despite these challenges, there is plenty to celebrate about life in Surrey. A majority of newcomers chose parks and recreation as one of the three best things about their city. They value its trees, its many parks and green spaces. Coming in a close second was the natural environment, followed by friends and family. Still on the theme of the great outdoors, more than a quarter of newcomers chose Surrey's temperate climate as one of the city's prime features.

Perhaps best of all, despite the challenges, newcomers were optimistic about being able to be part of positive change. Fully 45% said that they believe they can make a difference in their community.

3 BEST THINGS ABOUT SURREY

- Parks and recreation
- Natural environment
- Friends and family

3 TOP ISSUES FACING SURREY

- Crime and personal safety
- Cost of living
- Housing

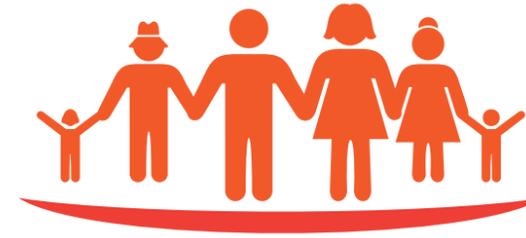


by the Numbers

1 in 4
newcomers named
FINDING A PLACE
to live as a
TOP CHALLENGE



65%
agreed they
PLAN TO BE
LIVING IN SURREY
in five years

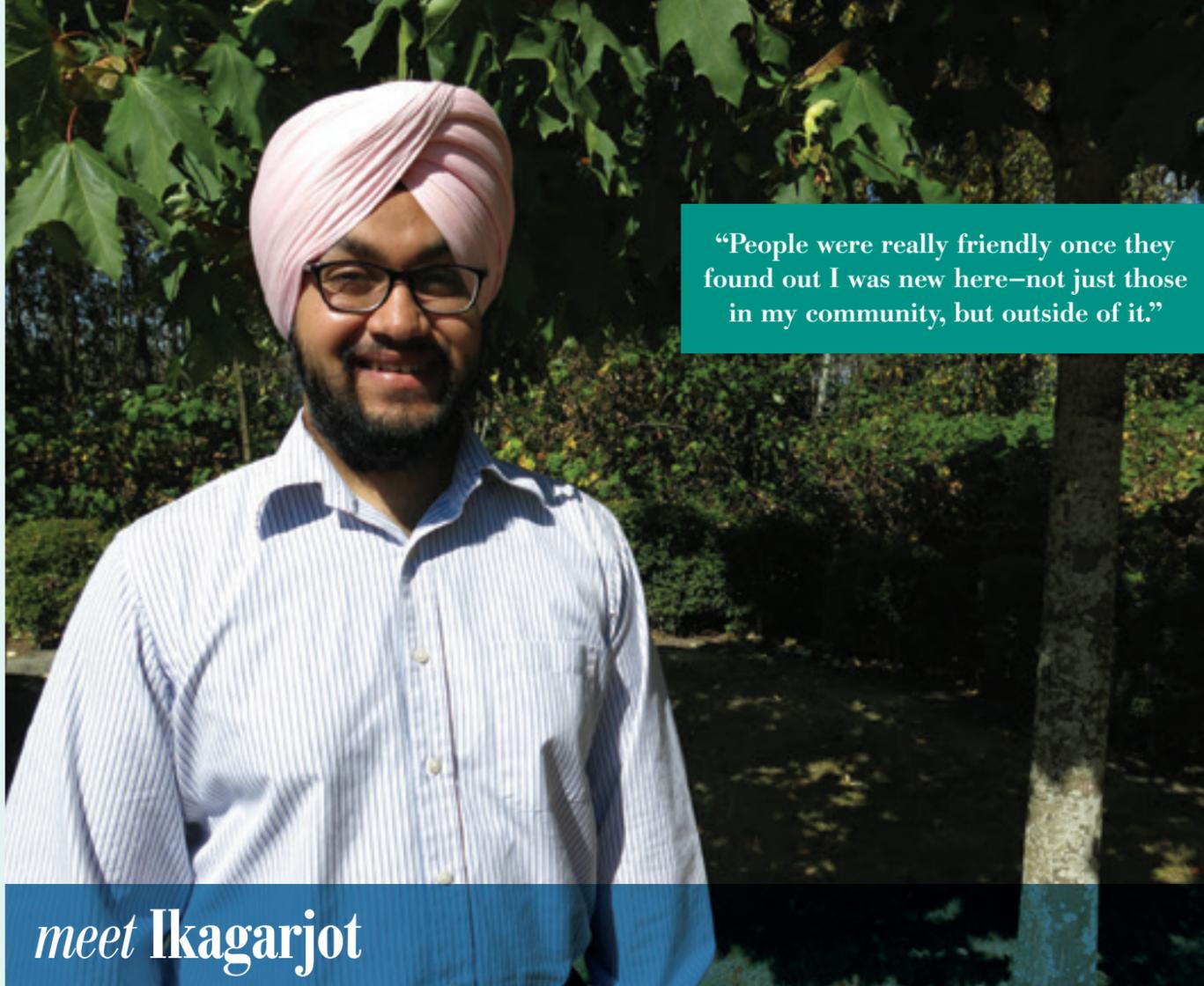


57%
of newcomers identified
CRIME/PERSONAL SAFETY
as the top issue facing Surrey

50%
chose
FINDING A JOB
as one of their top challenges

HALF
said the
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
was one of Surrey's best things





“People were really friendly once they found out I was new here—not just those in my community, but outside of it.”

meet Ikagarjot

“You have to be willing to talk to people,” says Ikagarjot, “but if you’re not naturally social, it’s going to take some effort.” Ikagarjot has been here only a short while, but he has a natural ability to learn languages and is very outgoing.

When he arrived in 2011 from India, he found that there was a community of people from his own culture. However, he realized he was interested in meeting people through work and school who had arrived in Surrey from all over the world.

*“Push past your comfort zone.
Be willing to talk to people.”*

Parents Had to Start Over

Since 2014, Ikagarjot has worked at a settlement agency helping other newcomers. For him and his brother, the transition to life in Canada has been easier than it was for their parents. They are both highly educated professionals who had to take jobs for which they were overqualified. Ikagarjot and his brother found it hard to see their parents having to start over professionally. However, their parents felt that the sacrifice was worth it to see their children succeed.

Getting the Right Information

When his family arrived, they had a family member able to help them with some of the issues that new immigrants face. But Ikagarjot says they could have been better prepared if they’d known where and what to research before arriving.

“We went by the information that we were provided, but in hindsight, we may have made different choices if we had been better prepared,” he says. As an example, he mentions that there are other parts of Canada where the cost of housing is not as high. Overall, he is happy with living in Surrey, but he is curious about other parts of BC and Canada.

“We did go back for a visit, but we realized that in the short time we’d lived in Surrey, it had become our home and we couldn’t leave.”



What Did We Learn?

Surrey’s natural setting, its young and diverse population, and its relatively affordable housing are a big draw for newcomers. At least a thousand new residents arrive each month. Those who took our survey reported that they enjoy close networks of family and friends and are active in their community. They also said they care deeply about the arts and see Surrey as a welcoming place to live.

Ways We Can Help Newcomers

Newcomers can teach us some lessons about how to help improve their lives. New residents were looking for more guidance in the job market. They wanted easier ways to have their credentials and experience recognized, and they wanted clearer expectations from employers.

They also identified housing as a big challenge related to moving to Surrey. Many newcomers reported problems finding affordable and appropriate housing. For some, the red-hot real estate market had forced them to settle away from their most desired areas.

Areas for Future Research

Our small sample size means we cannot assume that the survey results represent the opinions of Surrey’s newcomers as a whole. But the research did uncover some interesting views and suggested areas for further study.

- How can we foster a greater sense of belonging among newcomers?
- How can we ensure newcomers find suitable and satisfying employment?
- How can we provide affordable and appropriate housing for newcomers?

If we can find solutions to these questions, we can start to build a more welcoming community for all Surrey residents.

How to Assist Newcomers

- Provide more guidance in their job searches.
- Make available more housing suitable for young families.
- Increase awareness of existing services.



Study Methods

Our study aimed to investigate two key questions:

- How satisfied are newcomers with their lives in Surrey?
- What challenges delay their success and prevent them from fully integrating into the community?

For the purposes of the report, newcomers were defined as anyone who had moved to the city within the past five years, since 2011.

The report uses the methodology provided by Community Foundations of Canada. It focuses on nine quality-of-life indicators: employment, education, health and wellness, housing, safety, environment and sustainability, arts and culture, belonging and community participation, and overall quality of life.

Where Our Data Came From

Study data came partly from existing secondary sources. These sources included statistics compiled by organizations such as Statistics Canada, DataBC, the City of Surrey, Fraser Health, the BC Ministry of Education, the Surrey School District, the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership, and the Fraser Valley Real Estate Board. We also referred to data from previous Vital Signs reports.

To augment these statistics, we gathered primary data through a direct survey of newcomers. The survey asked a total of 80 questions, including 69 multiple-choice and 11 open-ended questions. Detailed findings were presented in a white paper, available on the SurreyCares website. This report, written and edited according to principles of plain language, aims to summarize key findings and reach more readers.

How Our Survey Was Distributed

The online survey was offered on the SurreyCares website between May 9 and June 21, 2016. The survey was shared through social media and promoted by various community media outlets. It was also shared by organizations serving immigrants, refugees, and other newcomers, by local governments, Surrey libraries, and other community social organizations.

Surrey libraries and two community service organizations made printed survey forms available. At some of these sites, newcomers could access some help in translating and filling out the survey. The survey was also made available for one day during the Surrey International Children's Festival.

Responses to the Survey

A total of 117 complete surveys were collected, out of 132 total responses. Because of the small sample size, results are considered to be accurate to within +/-9.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. This means that the opinions and perceptions revealed in the data do not represent the views of all Surrey's newcomers. Even so, they do provide critical insights that will be helpful in shaping both targeted services and further research.

Limitations of the Study

The research conducted for this study faced five main limitations.

- Little secondary data was available for the study group, which combined immigrants and refugees with people arriving from other parts of Canada.
- Minor discrepancies occurred in the response patterns, based on whether newcomers used the print or online survey, which may affect the results.
- The survey was only available in English. Even where limited help was available, many newcomers who do not speak English would not have been able to access the survey.
- Newcomers are a challenging population to reach. They make up only 10% of the local population and are spread out across the city. Some may be busy finding housing and employment.
- The timeline to deliver the survey was short. Reaching more newcomers would have required more time, due to the limitations already noted.



Vital Work So Far

It is a pleasure to provide a closer look at the lives of newcomers to Surrey. We see their common experiences on arrival, from finding work or child care to locating suitable housing. Newcomers who took our survey identified the various challenges they face. In this way, they highlighted areas where the community can provide more supports and engagement, along with understanding and compassion.

Building on a Strong Foundation

This report, our third in a series, builds on the work of SurreyCares very first look at Surrey, in 2014. We knew that a general overview of our community could not stand in isolation. Last year, in 2015, we looked at youth. We were pleasantly surprised at some of what we found. For instance, we learned that youth are just as passionate about our community as the adults.

In 2016, we had some challenges in accessing our targeted audience of newcomers. Our sample size was small. We were challenged not because newcomers didn't want to talk to us, but because they are difficult to find. They are also busy settling in. Yet if we as service providers can't find you, are we certain you can find us? This leads us to further conversations about connecting and caring.

Let's Make Surrey Even Better

These pages provide inspiration and ideas, supported by research, for ways we in Surrey can further learn from, encourage, and support each other and our diverse population. Let us all help improve our community by reaching out to others.

To those who helped to make this important and ongoing research a success, we thank you. We could not have made it this far without you! Thank you for joining us at SurreyCares Community Foundation as we build community through building relationships.

Shirley Wilson
Project Manager, Vital Signs

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About Our Foundation

SurreyCares Community Foundation is proud to continue our tradition of serving the community. Our Vital Signs report this year focuses on the experiences of newcomers to Surrey. It relates the experiences, the triumphs, and the fears of those who are moving to our city from elsewhere in BC, from across Canada, and from around the world.

These statistics and stories will educate service providers, planners, and the public. They let us know what works well and where we can improve. They will also inform grant giving and planning for the provision of services.

SurreyCares continues to support our community in the following ways:

- Doing **community research** and publishing our Vital Signs report
- Managing **endowment funds** that contribute to charitable activities in perpetuity
- Granting out **funds to eligible charities** each year
- Publicly recognizing and **celebrating charities** through events
- Hosting **educational workshops** focused on non-profit groups and charities
- Providing a **safe investment environment** for permanent donations and bequests

For more information about SurreyCares events and activities, please visit our website at surreycares.org or call me at (604) 591-2699. SurreyCares is a registered charitable organization (#892378043 RR0001), serving Surrey since 1994. We are a member of the national network Community Foundations of Canada (CFC).

Karen Young

Executive Director

SurreyCares Community Foundation



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