

WHY NEWCOMER INCLUSION IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS



In an inclusive workplace, employees feel welcomed, respected and valued for who they are and what they bring to the organization. Whether your company is just beginning to think about inclusion or you have some experience, it's essential to consider how to engage immigrants, refugees and other newcomers in efforts to create this type of environment.

This guide provides information to help organizations reflect on the benefits of newcomer inclusion. It also presents common barriers, useful tips, and examples. Plus, there are links to local and national resources to help organizations access training, explore best practices, and build stronger connections with newcomers.

Let's get started with the business case.

WHY NEWCOMERS?



1

Newcomers are a growing segment of the talent pool.

Newly admitted temporary and permanent residents are fueling the growth of Canada's labour force. As this trend continues, employers could benefit from developing strategies to help support newcomers' integration into the workplace. Employers that do this well will stand out in the competition to attract and retain highly qualified newcomers.

IN 2024,

>1/4

Of workers in the labour force were immigrants.¹

AN ADDITIONAL

7%

Of the country's population were non-permanent residents.²

2

Newcomers bring unique benefits to the workplace.

Newcomers possess rich international experience, deep cultural knowledge, and proficiency in different languages, which can help companies become more competitive in local and global markets. Immigrants also have higher rates of university education than non-immigrants.³ Employers that are intentional about newcomer inclusion will be better positioned to unlock the full potential of foreign-born employees.

IN 2021,

45%

Of immigrants had a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to **27%** of non-immigrants.⁴

THE PERCENTAGE IS EVEN HIGHER FOR RECENT IMMIGRANTS.

56%

Of immigrants who were admitted to Canada in the last 10 years had a bachelor's degree or higher.⁵

3

Newcomers aren't typically a focus of workplace diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts.

Even though newcomers face distinct challenges in the workplace, employers may not consider immigrant or newcomer status as markers of diversity when they are designing DEI policies and initiatives. Deliberate efforts to make newcomers feel included in the workplace can help these employees thrive, leading to higher employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention.



[1] - Statistics Canada. [Labour force characteristics of immigrants, annual.](#)

[2] - Statistics Canada. [Annual Demographic Estimates: Canada, Provinces and Territories.](#)

[3] - Statistics Canada (2024). [The Daily — Statistics on social inclusion for ethnocultural groups in Canada: New products and selected results on the evolution of education among racialized groups, 2006 to 2021 \(statcan.gc.ca\).](#)

[4] - Ibid

[5] - Ibid

COMMON BARRIERS

Existing workplace inclusion efforts may not be accessed by newcomers for the following reasons:

- Newcomers may not be aware of these programs and the benefits of participating in them.
- Many workplace inclusion initiatives specifically target groups identified in the Employment Equity Act and therefore miss out on the opportunity to address the unique needs of newcomers.
- Employers that offer Employee Resource Groups and other employee-led initiatives may be waiting for newcomer employees to express interest in creating a group/initiative; however, newcomer staff may not know that this is an option.



BELONGING
INCLUSION
DIVERSITY
EQUITY

Equity Deserving Groups

The Employment Equity Act (EEA) seeks “to achieve equality in the workplace so that no person shall be denied employment opportunities or benefits for reasons unrelated to ability and, in the fulfilment of that goal, to correct the conditions of disadvantage in employment experienced by” equity deserving groups. The law identifies women, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities as equity deserving groups.

Since the EEA’s passage in 1986, it has undergone multiple reviews and expansions. During this time the demographics of the country have shifted, and there has been some recognition that newcomers face unique challenges in the labour market. Even so, immigrants have yet to be added as a distinct equity deserving group.

We recommend that employers and policy makers expand their definitions of equity deserving groups to include newcomers. This shift will provide a foundation for applying a newcomer lens to workplace inclusion.

[6] - Government of Canada. [Guide on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Terminology](#).

[7] - Government of Canada. [Overview of policy issues and background - Employment Equity Act review](#).

[8] - Ibid

TIPS ON HOW TO ENGAGE NEWCOMERS IN WORKPLACE INCLUSION EFFORTS

- During onboarding, ensure that newcomers are provided with information about existing workplace inclusion initiatives and the benefits of participating.
- Offer opportunities for experienced newcomer employees to support newly hired newcomers as they are onboarded into the organization. This can be done by connecting staff over email or by implementing a buddy system.
- Be proactive about asking for newcomers' feedback. Newcomers are a very diverse group, so it's important to ask newcomer employees what their needs are and how they would like to be included in workplace inclusion efforts. These conversations can happen during onboarding, but it is also helpful to have additional, organization-wide feedback mechanisms (e.g. pulse check surveys), which happen periodically.
- Implement workplace inclusion strategies based on feedback from newcomer staff. Some examples are acknowledging days of cultural significance, incorporating cultural considerations into event planning, and organizing social events to help staff build community.

EMPLOYER SPOTLIGHTS

Coffee Chats

A leading technology company introduced coffee chats as part of their onboarding process so new employees could get to know any colleague they chose and ask questions about that person's professional background or the work they do. New hires could even reach out to the CEO or CTO. This strategy helps break down barriers that might normally prevent newcomers and other new hires from developing relationships beyond the team they work with every day. It also helps new hires feel welcomed into the organization.

This strategy has significant benefits for newcomers who are still building their professional networks and exploring potential career pathways. It is also a flexible and low-cost option that can be implemented online or in person.

Language Buddies

A large hospitality company uses a buddy system to support the integration of newcomers who are still developing their English language skills. In this multicultural workplace, the Human Resources team connects newcomer hires with other staff who share the same native language. They also schedule the newcomer and the buddy together, so the new hire will have someone available to answer questions during their shift.

This strategy has helped prevent language barriers in the workplace and boost employee retention. Also, while the buddy system has been very useful in a large workplace with a high number of newcomers, it can be implemented on a smaller scale if the organization has existing multilingual staff and newcomer candidates who need this support.

SUPPORT RESOURCES FOR EMPLOYERS

If you are interested in additional resources, training, and support, here are some organizations that can help:



World Skills Employment Centre

World Skills Employment Centre is a nonprofit organization dedicated to connecting newcomers with employment. World Skills helps employers meet their labour market needs by understanding their business requirements, organizing targeted recruitment events and information sessions, and pre-screening internationally trained candidates for job openings. World Skills also organizes corporate mentorship programs which can create a pipeline of highly qualified candidates who are interested in working in a particular sector.

For more information, contact:
ws@ottawa-worldskills.org.



Hire Immigrants Ottawa

Hire Immigrants Ottawa's mandate is to increase the capacity of employers in the Ottawa region to more effectively attract, hire and integrate skilled immigrants into skills-appropriate positions. Visit [Hire Immigrants Ottawa's website](#) for more information about Cross Cultural Competency workshops, employer resources, and other supports.



Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada

Immigrant Employment Councils of Canada (IECC) is a national organization that aims to significantly improve labour market outcomes for immigrants and support a stronger Canadian economy. [IECC's Resource Page](#) showcases a variety of tools and resources for employers to support newcomer inclusion.



Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership

Ottawa Local Immigration Partnership (OLIP) is a multi-sectoral partnership involving 80 local organizations working to build local capacity to attract, settle, and integrate immigrants. OLIP recently released its [Employment and Human Resources Equity Toolkit](#), which can help guide employers in their journey toward creating inclusive workplaces.

