

# INFORMAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

a review of service capacity and demand in Surrey, BC



A Report for the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (Surrey LIP)

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**April 2017**



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project benefitted from the valuable input of many people. We would like to thank all Surrey residents who took the time to complete our online survey. Your views and insights are helping strengthen language service delivery in your community. Many thanks are also due to all the agencies that shared information on our online questionnaire. These include: City of Surrey, DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society, Douglas College, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, MOSAIC, Muslim Food Bank, Options Community Services Society, Back in Motion, Pacific Community Resources Society (PCRS), Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS), SUCCESS, Surrey Public Library, YMCA.

Special thanks to community stakeholders who agreed to be interviewed:

Ilhan Abdullahi (PCRS)  
Ravi Basi (Surrey Public Library)  
Janice Bexson (DIVERSEcity)  
Brianna Collis (City of Surrey)  
Patrick Donahoe (KPU)  
Neil Fernyhough (Alexandra Neighbourhood House)  
Caroline Lai (with Meredith Verma, School District 36)  
Jenny Lam (with Roja Bagheri and Jeffrey Graham, SUCCESS)  
Diana Ospina (MOSAIC)  
Khim Tan (Options)  
Eva Touzard (PICS)

Additional thanks to our wonderful project team: Olga Shcherbyna (Surrey LIP, Project Coordinator), Aileen Murphy (Senior Social Planner, City of Surrey), Kent Waugh and Rupinder Baweja (CitySpeaks Research Team), Ashleigh Rajala (City of Surrey), Yu-Han (Linda) Chen (Surrey LIP, Project Assistant), and Veronica Reiss (Planning Technician, City of Surrey).

Your support and contribution has made this project possible,

Jacopo Miro (lead researcher)

## GLOSSARY

**Informal English Language Learning/Programming/Training:** a term meant to refer to free language classes offered outside of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program. Unlike LINC, informal English Language classes do not all share the same curriculum. Agencies structure informal ELL as they see fit. Examples of informal English language programming include, conversation circles, ESL Book Clubs, and literacy classes.

**CLB:** The Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) are used to assess English language level in reading, writing, listening and speaking. These are the benchmarks followed under the LINC program.

**ELL:** English Language Learning

**ELP:** English Language Programming

**ELT:** English Language Training

**LINC:** The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) program, formerly known as ELSA (English Language Services for Adult). LINC is funded by Immigration and Refugee Citizenship Canada, and is the main free language training program available to newcomers in Canada.

## REFERENCES

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IRCC (2012) "Canadian Language Benchmarks" Government of Canada. Catalogue No. 978-1-100-20772-8 <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/language-benchmarks.pdf>

IRCC Website: "Language classes funded by the Government of Canada" Last modified 2014-07-04. Accessed February 2017. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomers/live/language.asp>

# SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

## **INFORMAL ELP IS HIGHLY DECENTRALIZED AND VARIED.**

- There are 25 different informal English language programs offered in Surrey (not counting those offered by faith-based organizations). Programming varies from year to year, and can significantly vary from one agency to the next. This makes any attempt at assessing system's capacity and demand challenging.

## **MOST NEWCOMERS ARE 'SATISFIED' WITH THEIR PROGRESS AND LEARNING OF ENGLISH.**

- On the whole, (60% of) people enrolled in informal ELL are "satisfied" with their progress and learning of English. Only a small minority, less than 10% of survey participants report being "dissatisfied" with their progress and learning of English.

## **MANY NEWCOMERS USE INFORMAL ELL AS A WAY TO COMPLEMENT THEIR LINC STUDIES.**

- A significant number of people in our sample (32%) participate both in informal ELT and LINC classes. In other words, about a third of respondents complement their informal English classes with LINC. This is especially true for skilled immigrants, but less so for refugees. About 50% of skilled immigrants involved in informal ELT also take LINC classes, while only about 20% of refugees do so.

## **'GOOD INSTRUCTORS' AND 'SOCIALIZING WITH OTHER STUDENTS' ARE THE TOP 2 THINGS THAT NEWCOMERS LIKE BEST ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING.**

- 55% of newcomers view 'Meeting and socializing with other students' as the best feature of ELL, followed by 'Good instructors' (50%), and 'Convenient location' (45%).<sup>1</sup>

## **NEWCOMERS FACE BARRIERS ACCESSING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING.**

- A significant percentage of newcomers (~40%) report facing difficulty attending or signing up for English language classes. Skilled immigrants report the lowest rates (only 17% report having difficulty attending or signing up for ELT classes), while refugees report the highest rates (as many as 90% of refugee in our sample report facing difficulty attending or signing up to ELT).

## **NEWCOMERS REPORT 'WAITLISTS' AS A TOP BARRIER TO ACCESSING ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES.**

- 23% of newcomers see 'Long Waitlists as a top barrier to attending language classes, followed by 'Employment/work duties', and 'Transportation costs' (both 14%)

## **DEMAND FOR INFORMAL ELL IS STRONG**

- The more cited suggestion among newcomers for how to improve the delivery of ELT is 'More frequent programming', followed by 'Offering a greater variety of skill levels', and 'Increasing class length'

## **THERE IS A DEARTH OF LANGUAGE SERVICES IN SOUTH SURREY**

- The vast majority of English language programming is offered in Whalley/City Centre, Guildford and Newton, with few programs offered in South Surrey.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that respondents could select more than one answer, so the percentage does not add up to 100%.

# INTRODUCTION

The following report was commissioned by the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) as part of its Immigrant Integration Strategic Plan. The report outlines a community-based research project created to facilitate the implementation of Strategic Direction 1: **Accessible Services**. Strategic Direction 1 lays out the three following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** Develop, promote and disseminate tools & resources to enhance service coordination in order to assist both newcomers and stakeholders to navigate the continuum of programs and services.
- **Objective 2:** Identify and determine Surrey's immigrant programs and services capacity and demand to better inform service planning and articulate community needs.
- **Objective 3:** Enhance Surrey's capacity to define and address the demand for English Language and communication skills training require by immigrants to integrate within the workplace and community.

Settlement service provision and the issue of access to settlement services have emerged as key issues of interest to the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP). Within the broad spectrum of service provision, English Language Learning (ELL), has been singled out as a one of the most important elements of immigrant and refugee settlement in Surrey. Yet, there are growing concerns over the ability of the current system of ELL to adequately meet community needs. This issue is in part reflected by a continuing influx of newcomers to Surrey, and persistent complaints about waitlists. Preliminary consultation with local stakeholders points to the value of **informal** and informal approaches to ELL in bridging the gap between service demand and service provision in Surrey. Informal approaches to ELL (such as Conversation Circles) provide accessible English language training to newcomers who might not otherwise access the more formal program of Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), formerly known as ELSA.

The following report compiles information on **informal** ELL as a way to inform and enhance service planning and coordination of English language programming in Surrey. Three goals guided the research:

1. Assess the extent and nature of informal English Language Programming (ELP) available in Surrey:
  - What's currently available in Surrey?
    - Range of programming (nature & type)?
    - Number of classes/programs & spots available?
    - Demographic profile of users
  - Examine system strengths and weaknesses
2. Map and compile an inventory of informal ELP in Surrey
  - What's been offered where and when?
  - Develop a service map/inventory for newcomers
3. Develop best practices for community-based ELP
  - What do innovative models look like?
  - Are there ways of replicating successes from elsewhere?

## DESIRED OUTCOMES

This project sought to bring about the following outcomes:

1. Create a strong platform from which to raise awareness about current gaps in the existing system of language training in Surrey, and provide a framework for how these gaps can be addressed.
2. Foster inter-agency coordination in regards to the provision of language training in Surrey, and enhance local community capacity to serve newcomers who are settling in the city.
3. Help streamline the delivery of language training, and improve service delivery for newcomers.
4. Bring attention to the challenges facing service providers, and help make a case for continued and improved support where needed.

## BACKGROUND

### *LINC*

English language training is a key component of immigrant settlement services in Canada. In Surrey, the bulk of language training programming is administered through non-profit agencies and post-secondary institutions with funds provided by provincial and federal levels of government. The LINC program is the largest and most extensive English language training program of its kind. In Surrey, about half a dozen immigrant settlement agencies provide LINC classes to hundreds of newcomers every month. The LINC program has been recognized as a significant initiative in assisting immigrants and refugees transitioning to life in Canada. However, recent issues over waitlist times have led IRCC to review key procedural aspects of the LINC program.

Language referral guidelines and waitlists are two key issues currently under review by IRCC. Along these two issues are broader concerns over the efficacy of English Language Learning (ELL) in meeting the needs of a growing and diverse immigrant and refugee population, especially in regards to more marginalized groups.

Providing English language training in Surrey can be challenging. LINC provides standardized training to what is effectively a highly diverse population. Differences in literacy rates, professional backgrounds, and education levels among newcomers can be significant. Not only this, but descriptors such as age, gender and religion all play a role in the way that people access and make use of English language training.

### *Servicing a Diverse Immigrant Population:*

Between 2001 and 2011, Surrey's immigrant population increased 34% compared to 4% for Vancouver. Likewise, the recent immigrant population in Surrey grew by 32% from 2001 to 2011. In contrast, Vancouver's recent immigrant population actually decreased by 25% in the same period. Today, Surrey has become the main port of entry for new immigrants and refugees in Metro Vancouver. A rapidly growing and diversifying population brings opportunities but also challenges, particularly in regards to service provision. Newcomers arrive to Surrey with different expectations, priorities and needs as well as with varying levels of education and professional



experience. These factors, combined with people's own cultural and religious backgrounds, shape the way newcomers access and make use of English language training.

#### *Informal English Language Learning*

A number of agencies provide language training programming alongside LINC to better accommodate broader community needs. Common examples of informal approaches to ELL include conversation circles, ESL book clubs, and literacy classes. Informal ELL has been particularly successful in catering to immigrant seniors, refugees, and Muslim women, that is, in other words, groups that might benefit from a more specialized approach to English language training. But the lack of single repository detailing what resources are available and where, make it difficult to assess current system capacities and gaps. This is made all the more difficult by the sheer diversity and quantity of informal ELL programming available in Surrey.



Photo Credit: Province of British Columbia FLICKR Creative Commons



## METHODOLOGY

A **working group** comprised of staff from various immigrant settlement agencies, the City of Surrey, IRCC, and community residents was set up for the purpose of this project. The Accessible Services Working Group was tasked with providing guidance, expertise and auxiliary support to ensure the successful execution of the research. A twenty-question, **online survey** was distributed to service agencies as a way to gather information on the type of informal ELL programming available in Surrey. The survey main focus was to provide information on class size and location, the nature of programming available in the city, and service demand. Information was gathered over the course of four weeks. Links to the online survey were distributed through the Surrey LIP contacts list, and members were asked to promote the survey through their respective networks.

**Expert interviews** were conducted with local service providers to complement the information gathered through the online survey. Interviews lasted on average 30 minutes, and asked participants about the strengths and weaknesses of informal ELL programming, opportunities for improvement, and examples of innovative models. A total of 11, in-person and on the phone, interviews were conducted over the course of 6 weeks. A list of key informant interviewees representing a variety of sectors was developed with the assistance of City of Surrey staff. Sectors represented in the list included 'immigrant settlement', 'youth services', 'post-secondary', 'municipal government', and 'community services'. An online scan of local ELL programming was also conducted to inform the interview material and create the inventory.

An additional **online survey** was distributed to clients participating in English language classes in Surrey. The survey consisted of 6 demographic profile questions, followed by 6 questions about language training, and took about 5 to 8 minutes to complete. Participants were asked information covering the following question headings:

1. Are clients supplementing/complementing LINC classes with informal ELL?
2. What are some of the barriers that newcomers face in accessing informal language programming?
3. What are some of the incentives/benefits that allow newcomers to access informal language programming?
4. How can the delivery of informal language programming be improved?

The survey ran for 4 weeks, and was uploaded on the Surrey LIP website. Hard-paper copies of the survey were also distributed to encourage people with limited computer skills or internet access to share their feedback. An extensive promotional campaign was conducted to generate responses. Links to the survey were distributed among Surrey LIP members, contacts and networks. A poster advertising the survey was designed and circulated online and throughout the community, including at Surrey Library branches and community centres. Translated versions of both the survey and the poster were provided in Arabic, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, and Punjabi. More than 20 personal visits were made to various informal ELL classes to further promote the survey. Visits were strategically set up to maximize the number of people reached, and to connect with a diverse audience. Visits to smaller classes were also made to ensure adequate representation from more marginalized groups (e.g. women only classes; and pre-literate beginners classes). To further generate responses, survey participants were also given the chance to enter a draw and win prizes sponsored by the City of Surrey.

Survey data was cleaned, and analysed using the statistics software package SPSS. Key charts and tables were re-formatted in Excel to achieve the required design guidelines. The interviews were transcribed into detailed notes, and relevant information was used to compile the inventory and final report.

For the purpose of the project, the research focused exclusively on programming available in Surrey, BC. Funding constraints limited the research to this one community, and prevented a broader scan of resources in the rest of BC or Canada. In regard to programming, the project focuses on so-called 'informal' or 'informal' approaches to English language learning (ELL). **Informal ELL** is defined as any language programming that falls outside of the of the LINC program. These include such programs as conversation circles, ESL book clubs, literacy classes, and informal ESL classes. For the sake of the project, only free alternatives to LINC were included in the research.

The project was limited by a number of methodological **challenges**. First, informal ELL defies clear definition. While some language programs clearly fall within the purview of informal ELL, others do not. Many immigrant settlement programs include some element of language learning, but in themselves are not specifically language classes (e.g. community kitchens, community gardening, etc.). The line between what should count as an innovative English language programs is not always clear. Second, the diversity and the decentralized nature of informal ELPs makes attempts at quantification challenging. It is difficult to identify all existing programs in Surrey, as many operate in an informal basis and are run by a number of agencies. This is further complicated by the fact that classes tend to change from year to year. Programming that was operational 8 months ago might not have been in place at the time of the research. Third, reaching out to and receiving feedback from students of informal ELP proved to be particularly challenging. Despite an extensive promotion campaign, survey responses were limited. Translated surveys were provided, but language barriers remained an issue. Some of the students enrolled in informal ELL lacked basic literacy skills which made the outreach efforts all the more difficult.

## SUMMARY OF METHODS

### Survey #1 (Local Service Providers)

- Online questionnaire circulated to selected local agencies
- Various data gathered on type, location and size of language programming
  - Total responses: 14
  - Timeline: 4 weeks
  - Instrument: online questionnaire
  - Type: non-random
  - Outreach strategy: hyperlink circulated through Surrey LIP members and partners

### Expert Interviews:

- Expert interviews with selected local service providers (managers & directors)
- Information gathered on strengths & gaps of informal English language programming
  - Total interviews: 11
  - Timeline: 6 weeks
  - Interview time: ~30 minutes
  - Type: semi-structured (open ended questions)

**Survey #2 (Clients of ELL)**

- Online questionnaire distributed to newcomers taking English language classes in Surrey
- Data gathered on various topics relating to informal English language programming
- Questionnaire was made available in four languages (English, Arabic, Simplified & Traditional Chinese, and Punjabi)
  - Total valid responses: 56
  - Timeline: 4 weeks
  - Number of questions: 6 demographic & 6 survey questions
  - Length of survey: ~ 5minutes
  - Outreach strategy: hyperlink distributed to Surrey LIP members and partners; printed posters circulated throughout the community; 20+ personal visits to language classes

**Scan of local programs & successful models**

- Research and map of successful English Language Training (ELT) programs/models in Surrey
  - Focus on innovative community-based programming
  - Identify critical features/elements
  - Focus on informal ELL (i.e. non-LINC classes)

**Analysis & Compilation of results**

- Qualitative analysis of interview material
- Numerical analysis of survey data
- Creation of inventory of existing informal English language programs in Surrey
- Identify best practices and provide recommendations for future policy
- Identify system strengths and gaps

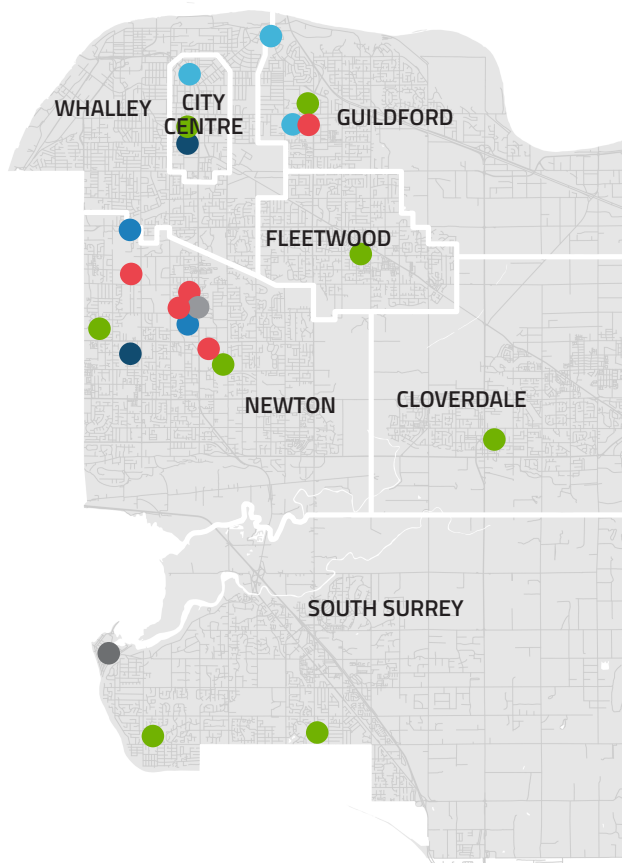
# FINDINGS

## INFORMAL ELT IN SURREY: OVERVIEW

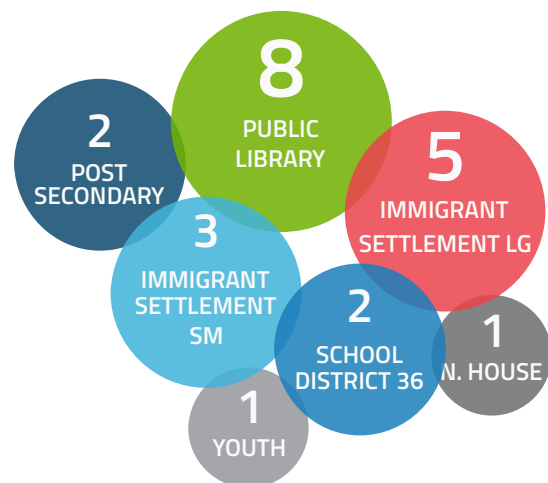
The landscape of informal English language in Surrey is varied with about **15 agencies** providing the bulk of the programming.<sup>2</sup> Most of these agencies belong to the immigrant settlement sector, but immigrant settlement is not the only sector in which informal English language training takes place. Broader community services agencies such as the Surrey Public Library, and the City of Surrey also play an important role in the delivery of informal ELT. Alongside these two sectors is a handful of post-secondary institutions, which play a specialized though more peripheral role.

Many faith-based organizations (FBOs), such as churches, temples and mosques, also provide English language services to the public, most notably in the form of informal ESL classes. But clear estimates of the number of such faith-based agencies are difficult to quantify. There are several hundreds – if not thousands – of FBOs in Surrey each offering distinct services to their members. The lack of a single repository detailing what services are offered where and by what FBO makes the task of identifying informal English language programming a difficult one. Conservative estimates range between **75 to 100**. In other words, it is estimated that at 75 to 100 FBOs offer some kind of English language service in Surrey.

### Location of English Language Learning in Surrey



- Post-Secondary
- School District 36
- Immigrant Settlement (Small)
- Surrey Library
- Immigrant Settlement (Large)
- Youth
- Neighbourhood House



<sup>2</sup> This does not include faith based organizations.

Without counting faith-based organizations, there are currently about **25 different English language programs** available to Surrey residents looking for free informals to LINC. Much of the programming takes the form of informal Conversation Circles, Literacy Classes, and Workplace Language Training. Classes are available throughout Surrey with most of the programs offered in Whalley/City Centre, Guildford and Newton. Student enrolment varies considerably from one class to another. Classrooms range from as low as 5 students to as high as 20 students, with an **average class size** of about **10**. On the whole, informal ELT classes are smaller than LINC classes – a distinctive feature between the two programs.<sup>3</sup>

A **few hundred** students participate in informal English language classes in Surrey every month. Again, the informality of the programming makes clear estimates hard to compute. Many of the classes function on a drop-in basis with attendance fluctuating from week to week. On top of this, a lot of the programming tends to change from year to year with some classes lasting only a few weeks. Programming that exists at the beginning of the year, may not necessarily be in place by the end of the year. Funding streams make it difficult to ensure multi-year continuity of service forcing agencies to alter their programming on a yearly basis.

On the whole, informal English language programming comes in a variety of forms. But most programming can be categorized by type and length (*drop-in vs. registered*; and *year-long vs. multi-week/month*). Settlement agencies tend to offer classes with structured curricula lasting on average 10 to 12 weeks. Students are required to register, and are encouraged to stick with the program through its entirety. Not only are classes structured around a formal curriculum, but students' progress is also closely monitored. Examples include: MOSAIC's *Family Literacy Program*, KPU's *English Language Studies*, and DIVERSEcity's *Literacy Success*. Opposite to these programs, are drop-in English language classes offered throughout the year. These tend to be informal conversation classes that do not require prior-registration, and that can be accessed at any point in time, for any length of time. The most popular example is the City of Surrey's English Conversation program which runs weekly, drop-in classes at libraries throughout the city.

#### **Informal English Language Programming: Main Types**



\*Note: not all programs fit squarely within one category – some are overlapping. Also, the above diagram represents broad category types. Some programs such as the Muslim Food Bank's "Summer School" lay outside of the above categorization.

Informal English language classes are taught, for the most part, by trained instructors who have previous teaching experience. Some agencies utilize paid staff (usually chosen from their own pool of LINC instructors), while others rely on volunteers. Experience and skillset varies from one program to another, but common threads can be identified. Many agencies require instructors to have TOFL certification, a university degree, and

<sup>3</sup> Regional differences, and the continuous intake of LINC classes make it difficult to estimate the average class size for LINC, but most calculations range between 15 and 20 students. See "Evaluation of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) Program"

previous English language teaching experience. In some cases, agencies deploy instructors with post-secondary education in early-childhood learning. In addition to trained staff, organizations will sometimes also have specialized teaching assistants tasked with supporting specific population groups (e.g. Arabic-speaking teaching assistants).

Most agencies promote informal English language programming through a variety of channels, including newsletters, bulletin boards, word of mouth, referrals, and general community outreach. Promotion creates challenges for agencies with more limited resources, as it requires considerable effort and time. Unlike LINC, agencies have to actively promote informal English language programs as a way to recruit a continuous stream of clients. In cases where the demand for a class exceeds the number of spots available, promotion becomes less of a concern.

For the most part, agencies are able to manage the demand for informal English language programming adequately, meaning that they are able to do so without having extensive waitlists. In some instances, agencies are struggling to keep up with the demand, and in others they are struggling to sign up enough clients to fill up available classroom space. The extent of the demand for informal ELT varies from agency to agency, and from one type of programming to the next.

## KEY FACTS: INFORMAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN SURREY

- **15** different agencies provide the bulk of English Language Programming (ELP) in Surrey today (not counting faith-based organizations)
- The estimated number of agencies providing some kind of informal English language class can be as high as **75 to 100** when considering faith-based organizations.
- The three largest sectors involved in informal ELT are: the **City of Surrey** (Parks & Rec); **Surrey Public Library**; and the **Immigrant Settlement** sector
- Currently, there are **25** confirmed informal English language programs available in Surrey
- The average class size for informal ELL is about **10** people
- It is estimated that a **few hundred students** participate in informal ELL every month in Surrey



**List of Informal English Language Programs in Surrey**

AGENCY	PROGRAM(S)	SECTOR	LOCATION(S)	WEBSITE
Alexandra Neighbourhood House	English Corner	Community Services	▪ South Surrey	<a href="http://www.alexhouse.net">http://www.alexhouse.net</a>
City of Surrey	English Conversation	Community Services	▪ Whalley/City Centre ▪ Guildford ▪ Newton ▪ Fleetwood ▪ Cloverdale ▪ South Surrey	<a href="http://www.surrey.ca/community/3622.aspx">http://www.surrey.ca/community/3622.aspx</a>
DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society	▪ Literacy Success ▪ LINC Prep ▪ English Conversation	Immigrant Settlement	▪ Newton	<a href="http://www.dcrs.ca/services/language-programs">http://www.dcrs.ca/services/language-programs</a>
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	▪ English Language Studies	Post-secondary Ed.	▪ Newton	<a href="http://www.kpu.ca/aca/els">http://www.kpu.ca/aca/els</a>
Middle East Friendship Centre	▪ ESL Classes ▪ Conversational English	Immigrant Settlement	▪ Whalley/City Centre	<a href="http://www.mefriendshipcentre.com/our-events.html">http://www.mefriendshipcentre.com/our-events.html</a>
MOSAIC	▪ Family Literacy ▪ Employment Language Training	Immigrant Settlement	▪ Newton	<a href="https://www.mosaicbc.org/services/settlement/refugees/moving-ahead/">https://www.mosaicbc.org/services/settlement/refugees/moving-ahead/</a>
Muslim Food Bank and Community Services	▪ English Conversation for Women ▪ Conversational English for Beginners ▪ Summer School	Immigrant Settlement	▪ Whalley/City Centre	<a href="http://www.muslimfoodbank.com/upcoming-events">http://www.muslimfoodbank.com/upcoming-events</a>
Options Community Services Society	▪ Literacy Program ▪ English Conversation ▪ Workplace English	Immigrant Settlement	▪ Newton	<a href="http://www.options.bc.ca/immigrant-services/overview">http://www.options.bc.ca/immigrant-services/overview</a>
Pacific Community Resources (PCRS) Society	▪ Community Adult Literacy Program ▪ English Conversation (Youths)	Community Services	▪ Guildford ▪ Newton	<a href="http://www.pcrs.ca/services/">http://www.pcrs.ca/services/</a>
Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) Society	▪ English Conversation	Immigrant Settlement	▪ Newton	<a href="http://pics.bc.ca/language-literacy/">http://pics.bc.ca/language-literacy/</a>
School District #36 (Surrey)	▪ Literacy Foundation ▪ Connect Through Community	Public Education	▪ Newton ▪ South Surrey	<a href="http://www.welcomecentre.sd36.bc.ca/news/brochure.pdf">http://www.welcomecentre.sd36.bc.ca/news/brochure.pdf</a>
Simon Fraser University	▪ Tutoring, Homework & English Support	Post-secondary Ed.	▪ Whalley/City Centre	<a href="http://cec.sfu.ca/programs/tutoring">http://cec.sfu.ca/programs/tutoring</a>
SUCCESS	▪ English Conversation for Women ▪ Workplace English ▪ English Conversation for Low Literacy Learners	Immigrant Settlement	▪ Guildford	<a href="http://www.successbc.ca/eng/services/language-services">http://www.successbc.ca/eng/services/language-services</a>
Surrey Public Library	▪ ESL Book Clubs ▪ Storytime for Kids, Families and Caregivers	Community Services	▪ Whalley/City Centre ▪ Guildford ▪ Newton ▪ Fleetwood ▪ Cloverdale ▪ South Surrey	<a href="https://surreylibraries.ca/services/newcomers">https://surreylibraries.ca/services/newcomers</a>
UMOJA Operation Compassion Society	▪ Literacy and Life Skills Program	Immigrant Settlement	▪ Guildford	<a href="http://umojawordpress.apps-1and1.com/literacy-and-life-skills-program">http://umojawordpress.apps-1and1.com/literacy-and-life-skills-program</a>



## INFORMAL ELT IN SURREY: CLIENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Students involved in informal English language classes are on the whole “satisfied” (60%) with their progress and learning of English, with only a small minority (7%) who report being “dissatisfied”. Nonetheless, satisfaction levels tend to be higher among LINC-only students, 46% of whom report being “very satisfied” compared to only 21% for students participating in informal ELT. The difference in satisfaction rates is most likely explained by the profile of the student population itself. Many ELT classes are geared specifically toward refugees with very basic English language skills (some of whom are illiterate). For such a population group, the learning English is likely to take longer and be more difficult.

Lower rates of satisfaction among refugees are reflected in the data. Among ELT students, “skilled immigrants” are the most satisfied, followed by “family class” immigrants, and refugees. For instance, 75% of skilled immigrants report being “satisfied” with their progress and learning of English, compared to 53% for refugees.

Although, most students involved in informal ELT are satisfied with their language progress, many also report having difficulty accessing ELT programs. About 45% of survey respondents report facing some difficulty in either attending or signing up for English language training. A great degree of disparity exists between refugees and skilled immigrants in this regard. About 90% of refugee students report facing some difficulty accessing ELT compared to only about 20% for skilled immigrants.

The top barriers include, “long waitlists”(23%), “employment/work duties”(14%), and “transportation costs”(14%). Also listed, but less widespread, are “childcare/family responsibilities”(9%), “class location”(9%), and “registration process”(5%). It is worth noting that for some reason, “long waitlists” is identified as a particularly important barrier among refugee respondents, but not “skilled immigrants”.<sup>4</sup>

A number of factors contribute to making informal ELT appealing among newcomers. These include “meeting and socializing with other students” (55%), “good instructors” (50%), “convenient location(s)” (45%), and convenient hours (38%). Answers are consistent despite some slight variations between refugees, skilled immigrant and family-class immigrants.

- The majority of survey respondents (**60%**) are “satisfied” with their progress and learning of English.
- Refugees tend to have higher rates of dissatisfaction than other immigrant classes.
- About **45%** of survey participants report facing some level of **difficulty** in accessing ELL, this is especially true for refugees.
- Top barriers to access include, “long waitlists”, “employment/work duties”, and “transportation costs”.
- The best-liked features of ELT include, “meeting and socializing with other students,” “good instructors,” and “convenient location(s).”

<sup>4</sup> Note that respondents could select more than one answer. As a result the percentages do not add up to 100%.

## RELATIONSHIP WITH LINC

A significant share of students (~30%) who are participating in informal ELT are also taking LINC classes. This is particularly true for “skilled immigrants” (50%), but less true for “refugees” (only 20% of whom are also taking LINC classes). These rates speak to the way that newcomers use informal English language training as a way to complement their LINC studies. Among students attending informal ELT there are also some who are waiting to enter a LINC class (~20%), this applies more to refugees and less so to skilled immigrants. The fact that a significant portion (60%) of refugees are on a LINC waitlist sheds further light on the value of informal ELT as a bridge to LINC. Students sign up for informal English language classes while they are waiting to enter the LINC program. But longer waitlists among refugees may also reflect the inability of LINC to adequately meet local demand.

- 30% of clients enrolled in informal ELT are also taking LINC classes.
- Skilled immigrants are more likely to supplement informal ELT with LINC than other immigrant groups.
- Refugees are more likely to be enrolled in informal ELT while waiting to enter into the LINC program.

## ADVANTAGES/BENEFITS

Informal English language training offers a number of advantages to newcomers. Unlike LINC, informal ELT can be better tailored to specific students’ needs, interests and abilities. It does so by providing a customized learning and an individualized pace. Students have more freedom as to what to study and cover in class. Smaller classrooms allow targeted support from instructors and greater guidance, an element that is further strengthened by providing - in some cases – volunteer teaching assistants capable of offering translation services, and one-on-one learning. Informal English language training is particularly well suited to students with specialized needs, such as refugees lacking literacy skills, and for students not yet ready to enter LINC. In short, informal ELT offers a bridge to students looking for a graduated transition into a more structured and higher-level learning environment.

Another advantage over LINC, is the way in which informal ELT offers different approaches to learning such as activity-based learning, and portfolio-based language assessment. **Activity-based learning** combines teaching with hands-on guided activities. It pushes students to experience and interact with ideas and information, rather than passively absorbing information as is commonly done in a lecture-style LINC class. Similarly, **portfolio-based language assessment** encourages students to create a collection of exhibits – a portfolio – reflecting the student’s work, progress, and achievements (e.g. email correspondence; piece of writing; application form; poster; etc.). It helps students visualize their progress, while letting them take ownership and control of their own learning. The results are increased students’ engagement and knowledge retention. In both scenarios, students take on an active learner’s role while being connected to real world problems.

More lenient **attendance requirements** are yet another advantage of informal English language programming. In some cases, participants are able to attend on a drop-in basis which gives students’ greater flexibility as to how often and when to attend classes. Even in scenarios where prior registration is required, and regular attendance

expected, informal ELT often offers more flexible attendance requirements than LINC.<sup>5</sup> Operators are more likely to assess clients' attendance records on a case-by-case basis, and often work to accommodate clients' needs. Informal ELT may also demand less time commitment as some classes are offered only once or twice a week, unlike LINC where some classes run five days a week. More relaxed time commitments allow students with busier schedules to attend English language training without having to worry about getting expelled from the program. For many newcomers the early phase of settling in Canada can be especially challenging. By better accommodating clients' needs, agencies effectively remove extra pressures that might further destabilize newcomers and their families.

Looser attendance requirements also result in greater inclusivity as many informal English language classes are not only open to Permanent Residents, but also to immigrants with Canadian citizenship, international students, and newcomers on work permits. This makes informal ELT especially important to older and more established immigrants – in particular immigrant seniors – whose citizenship credentials might preclude them from accessing LINC classes. But informal ELT, such as conversation circles, also offer LINC graduates an accessible option by which to further polish and develop their English language skills.

On top of all these benefits, informal English language classes also provide an important space for people to meet, socialize and connect. This cannot be understated. Community connections and support networks are crucially important for newcomers seeking to adjust to life in Canada. Creating a safe and informal space for people to socialize, and share information goes a long way in assisting newcomers in their transition process. In addition to their teaching duties, instructors assist clients navigate community resources, and decipher cultural norms.

#### Key strengths of informal ELL:

- Customized learning & individualized pace
- Smaller classes
- Specialized instructors and/or teaching assistants
- Less rigid attendance requirements
- Well suited to newcomers who are not yet ready for LINC

## DISADVANTAGES/WEAKNESSES

Despite its many advantages, informal ELT has also important challenges and weaknesses. Recruiting enough participants is sometimes a challenge. While many newcomers have to take LINC to fulfill citizenship requirements, the same is not true for informal English language classes. This limits the pool of available participants making it harder for agencies to fill out seats. The upside, is that in some cases, agencies are dealing with too much demand, especially for more highly specialized programming such as literacy classes for refugees.

ELT's curriculum also tends to be less comprehensive than the one offered through LINC. A focus on specialized learning results in a more restricted syllabus with fewer topics being covered. Similarly, it is also clearer what a

<sup>5</sup> Note that LINC students who miss more than three days in a row, or three days in a month will be asked to exit the program.

student will get out of LINC compared to an informal English language class where teaching approaches and materials change from one program to the next. Furthermore, the standardized nature of LINC make it particularly well suited to tracking students progress, something that is not always easy to do with informal English language programming. For students looking to develop their reading and writing skills, a key weakness of conversation circles is the exclusive focus on listening and speaking. LINC classes are also categorized along a finer level of difficulty (CLB 1 to 8+) which prevents students with different skillsets to be lumped together in the same class. In regards to conversation circles this is not always adequately achieved.

Another key weakness of informal ELT is the lack of long term funding. Unlike LINC, which is effectively a IRCC program, informal ELT is a collection of decentralized programs created and run by individual agencies. This makes informal ELT more prone to changes. Classes that might be offered at the beginning of the year, might not be available at the end of the year. Programming that was in place two years ago, might not be in place this year, and so on. ELT classes also tend to run for shorter periods of time (3 to 6 months), at which point they might end, or change altogether. As different agencies compete for the same funding, programming migrates from one agency to the next, making it harder for clients and community agencies to know what classes are offered where and when.

Recruiting qualified instructors can also prove difficult. For instance, instructors and teaching assistants with Arabic-speaking skills are currently in high demand, but difficult to find. Many clients with very low literacy levels require added support in the form of instructors capable of speaking more than one language. It is harder for agencies to find instructors who not only fulfill basic qualification requirements (post-secondary degree, TOFL certification, and teaching experience), but who can also speak Arabic.

Employee retention is another challenge. Most agencies rely on experienced outreach workers to recruit clients, promote classes, and build relationships with community members. When an outreach worker leaves, it is often difficult for agencies to maintain those community connections. Employee turn over impedes the ability of agencies to effectively reach out to marginalized community members for whom informal ELT is intended.

#### **Key challenges and weaknesses of informal ELL:**

- Sacrifices breadth over depth (i.e. curriculum not as comprehensive as LINC)
- More difficult to track and compare students' progress (lacks standardization)
- Most informal ELL focuses on one skillset: conversation
- Informal ELP is susceptible to change and cancelation from one year to the next
- Can be difficult to recruit and retain qualified instructors and teaching assistants
- Recruiting participants can be a challenge (not a citizenship requirement in the same way as LINC)

## PROMISING MODELS: HIGHLIGHTS

Informal English Language Learning encompasses a broad range of programs, from conversation circles to family literacy classes to ESL book clubs. Within this spectrum, some programs stand out as uniquely successful models of ELL service delivery. What distinguishes these programs from others is their innovative approach to learning, their ability to assist specialized needs, and their contribution to broader community development. The following list showcases some of the most innovative ELL programs in Surrey. This is not an exhaustive list, and should not detract from the important role that other programs play in English language training in the city.

### **DIVERSEcity “Literacy Success”**

A learner-centred approach that emphasizes supported self-assessment, self-review and self-direction. Students attend classes as well as monthly meetings to review their plans and progress. The idea behind the Literacy Success program is to have the students take control of their own learning and work toward building a ‘portfolio’ (such as writing samples, posters, email correspondences, application forms, etc.) The portfolio-based language assessment is aligned with the Canadian Language Benchmarks, and provides students with customized learning at an individualized pace. As students build their portfolio, they visualize their progress and what they are learning. The program is well suited to accommodate different learning styles, interests and abilities. Literacy Success is specifically structured to help newcomers transition into LINC, and for whom LINC might be too advanced or rigid. Volunteer community members provide added support to instructors working with students on an individual basis. These volunteers – who are themselves immigrants to Canada – are encouraged to bring their own personal experience and knowledge to class, effectively creating a bridge between life in the community and in the classroom.

### **MOSAIC “Family Literacy Class”**

A weekly literacy programs for families targeted to newcomers with very low English language skills. The program is aimed primarily at principal caregivers who are unable to attend LINC classes because of family duties or waitlist issues. It follows a flexible learning structure to accommodate clients’ needs and abilities. The Family Literacy Program is run by a skilled certified teacher with support from a teaching assistant who speaks Arabic. Alongside this program, MOSAIC also provides child-minding services run by early childhood educators who closely monitor the progress and development of the children (ages 15 months to 5 years). During last 30 minutes of each 2.5 hour session, caregivers and children are brought together where they participate in activities designed to work on the children’s motor, literacy, and inter-social skills. The program is based on the popular “Parent-Child Mother Goose Program” (<http://nationalpcmgp.ca>). MOSAIC’s Family Literacy Class goes beyond literacy to help clients develop confidence, foster family wellness, and nurture parent-child relationships.

### **Options “Literacy Program”**

Activity-based literacy classes targeted to newcomers for whom LINC is not a good fit. These include newcomers with limited classroom learning skills, or schooling history. Student learn literacy skills by partaking in specific hands-on activities. Examples include, music and singing, sowing, and cooking. Activity-based learning offers students who do not thrive in a traditional classroom setting with an informal way of developing English language skills. Literacy classes are tailored to individual clients’ needs and interests. Classes tend to be smaller and seek to create a safe and comfortable space for students with limited literacy skills to learn at a more individualized pace.

Students have the opportunity to be paired with tutors and engage in one-on-one teaching once or twice a week. The program is structured around a formal curriculum and students are formally assessed as they progress through the classes. Three different levels are offered, with the intent of having clients advance from level 1 to 3, after which point they would transition into LINC.

### Surrey Library “ESL Book Clubs”

Surrey Library offers monthly ESL Book Clubs in all of its locations. The sessions bring together newcomers looking to practice reading, speaking and listening in English. Book clubs are free, fun, and friendly. Readers are welcome at any level from beginners to advanced, and participants are provided with the books by the Surrey library. This program provides a safe and informal setting for people to practice English, promote literacy, and make friends. ESL Book Clubs combine people’s interests for reading and storytelling with English language learning while getting to know new cultures and meeting new people. The program expansion to all Surrey libraries makes it one of the most accessible and popular informal English language service in the city.

Several unique features make these models successful. These include:

- **A focus on customized learning:**

The class material is tailored as closely as possible to students’ needs, interests and abilities. Whether working with a structured curriculum or without, class discussions and activities are customized to individual interests. An open framework gives students greater flexibility to focus on those things that they deem important.

- **An emphasis on individualized pace:**

Students are encouraged to progress at their own pace. This is particularly important for clients who have no or very limited literacy skills. The pace of learning will vary from student to student, but by creating a safe space where clients feel comfortable advancing at their own speed goes a long way in optimizing the learning process.

- **A commitment to smaller classes:**

Smaller classes enhance learning by fostering more targeted and specialized training. Instructors have greater ability to track student’s progress and provide support on an individual basis. A small class setting is conducive to relationship building as it makes it easier for students to get to know their teachers and fellow classmates.

- **A focus on teacher support:**

Teaching assistants bring added support and specialized skills to ELL. Assistants can provide one-on-one support when needed. They can also step in to offer interpretative service to students with very basic English language skills (e.g. Arabic-speaking assistants brought in to help guide basic learners through class activities and material).

- **An emphasis on innovation:**

Frameworks such as “activity-based learning,” and “portfolio-based language assessment” combine English language learning with guided hands-on activities. Increased student engagement results in greater knowledge retention. It gives students greater ownership of their learning and is well suited to different learning styles.

- **A commitment to wrap around services:**

Alongside English language training, students also receive broader support services. These might include, child minding, job training, career guidance, work placements, and counselling. But they might also entail social and emotional support, and community connections.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Finding(s):** While on the whole, newcomers are satisfied with their progress and learning of English, refugees tend to be less satisfied than skilled immigrants

**Recommendation:** *Utilize and expand informal ELP as a specialized program to assist refugees in improving their English language skills*

**Finding(s):** Informal ELP is highly decentralized, and runs in a more informal basis than LINC, which makes it harder to assess system capacity and demand. For instance, it is difficult to get hard data on class size and the number of programs available throughout Surrey.

**Recommendation:** *Encourage all agencies to systematically track the number of unique students who attend informal ELP (even when the programming functions on a drop-in basis). Likewise, encourage all agencies to keep a detailed inventory of available programming (past and present) with information on such things as location of programming, length of programming, number of sessions per week/month, average class size, etc.*

**Finding(s):** Informal ELP is highly decentralized, and tends to change from year to year, which makes it harder for newcomers to know what classes are available where.

**Recommendation:** *Encourage agencies to always keep an updated inventory of available programming on their websites. Have the Surrey LIP create a centralized online inventory of the different classes offered throughout the city*

**Finding(s):** Informal ELL is especially well suited for newcomers who are not yet ready to enter LINC, or for LINC graduates who are looking to polish their English language skills. LINC is a strong language program that provides an essential learning foundation for newcomers

**Recommendation:** *Informal ELP should continue to be offered in parallel with existing LINC classes. In other words, informal ELL should be viewed as a way to complement or supplement LINC, but not as a replacement to it. Continue to promote informal ELL as an effective program for students with specialized needs.*

**Finding(s):** A majority of refugees report being on a waitlist for LINC, and also report facing difficulty attending ELL. The top three barriers to attending ELT are: (1) Long waitlists, (2) Employment/work duties, (3) Transportation costs.

**Recommendation:** *Commission further research to examine waitlist issues among refugees. Consider providing transportation subsidies to help students attend classes*

**Finding(s):** Survey respondents make a number of suggestions as to how to improve informal ELL in Surrey. The top cited suggestion is to run the programming more frequently.

**Recommendation:** *Examine ways of providing (1) more weekly or monthly sessions, (2) more skill levels, and (3) longer sessions*

**Finding(s):** "Good instructors", "Convenient location" and "Convenient hours" are among the best liked features of ELL

**Recommendation:** *Continue to recruit strong candidates and continue to provide sound training for instructors. Focus on providing programming throughout Surrey, and at a variety of different times of the day*

**Finding(s):** There is a dearth of language services provided in South Surrey

**Recommendation:** *Encourage agencies to examine opportunities for expanding service delivery in South Surrey. Create a pilot program offering English language classes to South Surrey residents, and track attendance over time.*



## APPENDIX A: INVENTORY OF PROGRAMS

### ALEXANDRA NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE 2916 McBride Avenue, Surrey, BC, V4A 3G2

W: <http://www.alexhouse.net>

P: (604) 535-0015 ext.236

**English Corner:** *Currently Inactive*

A conversation circle where people come together in a safe and friendly space to talk about topics of their choosing. It first started as a “Tea and Chat” conversation group, and gradually evolved into a bigger program. The idea behind English Conversation is for people to practice their language skills, learn about new cultures and build relationships.

### CITY OF SURREY (PARKS, REC & CULTURE) 13450 104 Avenue, Surrey, BC, V3T 1V8

W: <http://www.surrey.ca/community>

P: (604) 502-6325

**English Conversation:** *Active*

An informal setting where people meet to practice their conversation skills. Sessions are run by trained volunteers, many of whom have previous teaching experience. Classes run on a drop-in basis, and range from as low as 5 to as high as 20 students. Two levels are offered: “beginners” and “advanced”, as well as “women’s only” classes. The target audience is diverse, but tends to reflect the demographic profile of neighbourhood in which the classes take place. Morning, afternoon and evening sessions are offered in over 14 locations to allow people throughout Surrey to participate. This is one of the most popular informal/informal English language program in the city.

### DIVERSE city COMMUNITY RESOURCES SOCIETY 13455 76 Avenue, Surrey, BC, V3W 2W3

W: <http://www.dcrs.ca/services/language-programs/>

P: (604) 547-1303

**Literacy Success (Literacy and Essential Skills Program):** *Active*

A learner-centred approach that emphasizes supported self-assessment, self-review and self-direction. Students attend classes as well as monthly meetings to review their plans and progress. The Literacy Success program encourages students to take control of their own learning, and to work toward building a ‘portfolio’ (such as writing samples, posters, email correspondences, application forms, etc.) The portfolio-based language assessment is aligned with the Canadian Language Benchmarks, and provides students with customized learning at an individualized pace. As students build their portfolio, they visualize their progress and what they are learning. The program is well suited to accommodate different learning styles, interests and abilities.

**LINC Prep (Literacy and Essential Skills Program):** *Active*

A learner-centred approach that aims to facilitate transition into LINC for adults with low literacy skills. Based on the same model as the Literacy Success model (see above). By having community members assist as trained volunteers, both programs (Literacy Success and LINC Prep) also provide opportunities for clients to get to know and engage with people who have been in Canada for sometime, and who may further help them to navigate life in Surrey.

**English Conversation Group (Workplace):** *Active*

A drop-in conversation group that focuses specifically on workplace conversation. The class is facilitated by staff in order to enhance spoken English and increase participant confidence in conversational workplace English. Participants have a unique opportunity to ask questions related to their own job search or employment situation in a nonthreatening environment. They explore, in a small group setting, topics such as networking, job search techniques, and common hiring procedures.

**KWANTLEN POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY** 12666 72 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3W 2M8

W: <http://www.kpu.ca/aca/els>

P: (604) 599-2964

**English Language Studies Courses:** *Active*

KPU offers a variety of English Language Studies courses for newcomers, including Canadian citizens, permanent residents, and those with "Protected Person" status. Courses focus on listening & speaking, and reading & writing skills, with the aim of helping students transition/upgrade into university-level education. Students with financial needs are eligible to apply for an Adult Upgrading Grant (AUG) which covers the costs of tuition.

**MIDDLE EAST FRIENDSHIP CENTRE** 13483 108th Avenue, Surrey, BC, V3T 2K2

W: <http://www.mefriendshipcentre.com/our-events.html>

P: (604) 288-5588

**ESL Classes:** *Active*

An informal program that provides beginner and intermediate English level classes to newcomers in Surrey. Classes cover not just speaking & listening, but also reading and writing.

**Conversational English:** *Active*

The Centre provides conversational English classes on a regular schedule. These are not certificate ESL classes but rather give individuals an opportunity to practice their English conversationally and often in a one on one setting.

**MOSAIC** 7134 King George Blvd, Surrey, BC, V3W 5A3

W: <https://www.mosaicbc.org/services/settlement/refugees/surrey-project-refugee-families/>

P: (778) 591-9334

**Family Literacy Program:** *Active*

A weekly literacy programs for families targeted to very recent newcomers with very low English language skills. The program is aimed primarily at principal caregivers who are unable to attend LINC classes because of family duties or waitlist issues. It follows a flexible learning structure to accommodate clients' needs and abilities. The Family Literacy Program is run by a skilled certified teacher with support from a teaching assistant who speaks Arabic. Alongside this program, MOSAIC also provides child-minding services run by early childhood educators who closely monitor and track the progress and development of the children (ages 15 months to 5 years). During last 30 minutes of each session caregivers and children are brought together and focus on activities to teach literacy to kids. This is based on the "Parent-Child Mother Goose Program" <http://nationalpcmgp.ca>

**Employment Language Training:** *Active*

A workplace language program targeted to refugees. The program focuses on providing refugees with basic English language skills to find employment in the manufacturing sector. It includes a work placement with a textile manufacturing company. Students learn the basic English language skills they need to get the job done (e.g. how to read safety rules; understand order forms; how to ask permission for scheduling changes; and how to address colleagues and supervisors). As part of the curriculum, students also learn basic intercultural competency, and workers' rights under the BC Employment Standards Act.

**MUSLIM FOODBANK AND COMMUNITY SERVICES** 101-13085 115 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3R 0C3

W: <http://www.muslimfoodbank.com/programs>

P: 1-866-824-2525

**English Conversation Circles (Women Only):** *Active*

English conversation circles for women. The Muslim Food Bank offers an informal and culturally sensitive space for women to gather and practice their English conversation skills on a weekly basis.

**Conversational English for Beginners:** *Active*

These classes are meant as an introduction to English prior to the newcomers enrolling in a formal ESL program or LINC. Conversation topics includes advice on daily living activities like shopping and cultural norms in Canada.

**Summer School for Children:** *Active*

The aim of the summer school tutoring program is to bridge the gap in schooling faced by the Syrian refugee children who have had their lives uprooted, and will be starting in an entirely new school system in Canada. The program involves teaching basic English and Canadian etiquette to elementary school-age children. The summer school also benefits parents, in that it allows both children and parents an opportunity for socialization, while simultaneously providing them with a chance to go out into the community and practice their English skills.

**OPTIONS COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY** 9815 - 140 St, Surrey, BC, V3T 4M4

W: <http://www.options.bc.ca/immigrant-services/moving-ahead-program>

P: (604) 572-4060

**Literacy Program:** *Active*

Activity-based literacy classes targeted to people for whom LINC is not a good fit. Students learn literacy skills by partaking in specific hands-on activities. Examples include, music and singing, sewing, and cooking. Activity-based learning offers students who do not thrive in a traditional classroom setting with an informal way of developing English language skills. Literacy classes are tailored to individual clients' needs and interests. Classes tend to be smaller and seek to create a safe and comfortable space for students with limited literacy skills to learn at a more individualized pace. Students have the opportunity to be paired with tutors and engage in one-on-one teaching once or twice a week. The program is structured around a formal curriculum and students are formally assessed as they progress through the classes. Three different levels are offered, the idea being that clients advance from level 1 to 3, after which point they would transition into LINC.

**English Conversation Circles:** *Active*

Participants practice conversational English with each session having a special theme of settlement information, such as Medical Terminology, Safe Living, Recreation Activities, Healthy Eating and Canadian Culture. The classes are 2 hours per session held in the morning and afternoon and the sessions run twice a week. Through this Conversational Circle, clients will strengthen their ability and confidence to speak English and also have opportunities to interact with native English speaking volunteers in a comfortable and informal setting.

**PACIFIC COMMUNITY RESOURCES SOCIETY** #201 – 2830 Grandview Hwy, Vancouver, BC, V5M 2C9

W: <http://www.pcrs.ca/service-resource-centres/surrey-youth-resource-centre/>

P: 604-592-6200

**Moving Ahead Program for Youths (MAP-Y) English Conversation:** *Active*

The program offers individualized services to empower and support newcomer youth who are experiencing settlement and integration difficulties due to their cultural and background differences. As part of the MAP, PCRS organizes a Conversation Group for youths. The idea behind the program is to create an informal setting where newcomer youths can practice their conversation skills. Youths come together to talk about everyday things under the supervision of a facilitator. While improving their conversation skills youths learn to engage with one another and learn to develop life skills. The program is provided in partnership with a settlement agency tasked with providing trained and experienced facilitators.

**PROGRESSIVE INTERCULTURAL COMMUNITY SERVICES SOCIETY** 12725 80 Ave #205, Surrey, BC, V3W 3A6

W: <http://pics.bc.ca/language-literacy/>

P: (604) 596-7722

**Community Adult Literacy Program:** *Currently Inactive*

A free one-on-one tutoring program for basic English language learners. Students are matched with trained volunteers once a week for two hours. Meetings take place at a local library, and student discuss topics of their own choosing covering all skillsets: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

**English Conversation Skills:** *Active*

A weekly drop-in conversation circle aimed at intermediate English speakers. Classes run during the day (1pm to 3pm) for a total of 10 weeks. The curriculum is tailored to individual clients' needs, and the small class size allows the instructor to explore topics of interest to the students that might not be covered in LINC classes. Students tend to be immigrants who have been in Canada for a couple of years, but are looking for opportunities to improve their conversation skills

**SCHOOL DISTRICT #36 (SURREY) – WELCOME CENTRE** 7525 King George Blvd, Surrey, BC, V3W 5A8

W: <http://www.welcomecentre.sd36.bc.ca/index.php>

P: (604) 543-3060

**Literacy Foundation Courses:** *Active*

The Welcome Centre partners with the Invergarry Adult Education Centre to run literacy foundation courses. Foundation courses operate out of the Welcome Centre, Invergarry, and various elementary schools in South Surrey, and are aimed at newcomer youths and young adults.

**Connect Through Community:** *Active*

In this innovative program from the ELL Welcome Centre, families and students visit a mix of local attractions and community resources such as Surrey Public Library, Surrey Museum, the RCMP detachment, and the Surrey Fire hall. The goal of the program is to help newcomers establish meaningful connections between other newcomers and learn about important community resources by experiencing these resources hands-on. This annual event runs during spring break and brings together over 150 parents and students.

**SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY** 250 - 13450 102nd Avenue, Surrey, BC, V3T 0A3

W: <http://cec.sfu.ca/programs/tutoring>

P: N/A

**Tutoring, Homework and English Support:** *Active*

In partnership with the Friends of Simon Tutoring Project and the City Centre Library, The SFU Surrey CEC provides a no-cost tutoring outreach program targeted towards immigrant and refugee children in grades 5-9. Tutoring in this program is provided by Friends of Simon Tutoring. Simon Fraser University students are assigned as literacy and numeracy tutors to work with students in grades 5-9. Friends of Simon tutors are highly trained and qualified SFU students who speak a variety of second languages including French, Tagalog, Spanish, Romanian, Punjabi, and Czech.

**SUCCESS** 100-15117 101 Avenue, Surrey ,BC, V3R 8P7

W: <http://www.successbc.ca/eng/services/language-services>

P: 604-588-6869

**English Conversation for Women:** *Active*

A weekly conversation circle targeting Arabic-speaking women. SUCCESS provides an informal and safe space for learners with basic literacy skills to improve their conversational English.

**English Conversation (Occupation Focus):** *Active*

A conversation class that focuses on improving English language proficiency, soft and hard skills as well as knowledge of Canadian workplace culture, and safety. The program aims to increase clients' chances of obtaining employment in Canada. These conversation classes help participants improve their listening and speaking skills by focusing on the language used in specific occupations.

**English Conversation:** *Active*

A conversation circle where people come together in an safe and friendly space to talk about topics of their choosing. The program is targeted to low-literacy English learners.

**SURREY PUBLIC LIBRARY** 10350 University Dr, Surrey, BC, V3T 4C3

W: <https://www.surreylibraries.ca/events/>

P: (604) 598-7411

**ESL Book Club:** *Active*

Surrey Library offers monthly ESL Book Clubs in all of its locations. The sessions bring together newcomers looking to practice reading, speaking and listening in English. Book clubs are free, fun, and friendly. Readers are welcome at any level from beginners to advanced, and participants are provided with the books by the Surrey library. This program provides a safe and informal setting for people to practice their English, promote literacy, and make friends.

**Storytime for Kids, Families and Caregivers:** *Active*

A program that promotes literacy and English language skills to children and their caregivers. The sessions are particularly popular among grandparents who help their grandchildren develop literacy skills while also improving their own English. Though the classes are not exclusive to ESL learners, they provide a good launch pad for non-native English speakers to further develop their English language skills. Surrey Libraries offers up to ten different types of storytime programming: for 6 to 18 months-old (Babytime); 18 months- to 3-year olds (Toddertime); 3 to 5 year olds (Preschool Storytime); Family Storytime; Daddy Storytime; School Age Storytimes; and Pyjama Storytime.

**UMOJA OPERATION COMPASSION SOCIETY** 208-14888 104 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3R 1M4

W: <http://umojawordpress.apps-1and1.com/literacy-and-life-skills-program>

P: (604) 581-5574

**Literacy and Life Skills Program:** *Active*

Description: This program focuses on English language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) with the intent of helping students progress to LINC and career-oriented programs. Students develop English language skills while also learning about life in Canada, and the spectrum of community resources available to them and their families.

## APPENDIX B: LOCATION OF INFORMAL ELL PROGRAMS

### Location of Informal English Language Programs in Surrey, BC

AGENCY	PROGRAM	LOCATION	ADDRESS
Alexandra NH	English Corner	Alexandra NH	2916 McBride Ave, Surrey, BC, V4A 3G2
City of Surrey	English Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City Centre Library</li> <li>Newton Library</li> <li>Guildford Library</li> <li>Strawberry Hill Library</li> <li>Semiahmoo Library</li> <li>Fleetwood Library</li> <li>Cloverdale Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10350 University Dr, Surrey, BC, V3T 4C3</li> <li>13795 70 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3W 0E1</li> <li>15105 105 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3R 7G8</li> <li>7399 122 St, Surrey, BC, V3W 5J2</li> <li>1815 152 St, Surrey, BC, V4A 9Y9</li> <li>15996 84 Ave, Surrey, BC, V4N 0W1</li> <li>5642 176A St, Surrey, BC, V3S 4G9</li> </ul>
DIVERSE <sub>city</sub>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy Success</li> <li>LINC Prep</li> <li>English Conversation</li> </ul>	DIVERSE <sub>city</sub> Main Office	13455 76 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3W 2W3
Kwantlen Polytechnic University	English Language Studies	KPU Surrey Campus	12666 72 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3W 2M8
Middle East Friendship Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESL Classes</li> <li>Conversational English</li> </ul>	M.E. Friendship Centre Office	13483 108th Ave, Surrey, BC, V3T 2K2
MOSAIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family Literacy Program</li> <li>Employment Language Training</li> </ul>	Surrey Newcomers' Centre	7134 King George Blvd, Surrey, BC, V3W 5A3
Muslim Food Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English Conversation Circle</li> <li>Conversational English for Beginners</li> <li>Summer School for Children</li> </ul>	Iqra Islamic School	14590-116A Ave Surrey, BC V3R 2V1
Options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy Program</li> <li>English Conversation Circles</li> <li>Workplace English</li> </ul>	Options Newton Office	13520 78 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3W 8J6
PCRS	MAP-Y English Conversation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guildford Youth Centre</li> <li>Newton Youth Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14727 108 Ave, Surrey, BC V3R 1V9</li> <li>13479 76 Ave, Surrey, BC V3W 2W3</li> </ul>
PICS	English Conversation Skills	PICS Main Office	12725 80 Ave #205, Surrey, BC, V3W 3A6
School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Literacy Foundation</li> <li>Connect Through Community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ivergarry Adult Education</li> <li>Welcome Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12772 88 Ave, Surrey, BC V3W 3J9</li> <li>7525 King George Blvd, Surrey, BC V3W 5A8</li> </ul>
Simon Fraser University	Tutoring, Homework and English Support	Simon Fraser Surrey Campus	250 13450 – 102nd Ave, Surrey, BC V3T 0A3
SUCCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>English Conversation for Women</li> <li>English Conversation (Occupation Focus)</li> <li>English Conversation</li> </ul>	Surrey Service Centre	100-15117 101 Ave, Surrey BC, V3R 8P7
Surrey Public Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ESL Book Clubs</li> <li>Storytime for Kids, Families and Caregivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City Centre Library</li> <li>Newton Library</li> <li>Guildford Library</li> <li>Strawberry Hill Library</li> <li>Semiahmoo Library</li> <li>Fleetwood Library</li> <li>Cloverdale Library</li> <li>Ocean Park Library</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10350 University Dr, Surrey, BC, V3T 4C3</li> <li>13795 70 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3W 0E1</li> <li>15105 105 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3R 7G8</li> <li>7399 122 St, Surrey, BC, V3W 5J2</li> <li>1815 152 St, Surrey, BC, V4A 9Y9</li> <li>15996 84 Ave, Surrey, BC, V4N 0W1</li> <li>5642 176A St, Surrey, BC, V3S 4G9</li> <li>12854 17 Ave, Surrey, BC V4A 1T5</li> </ul>
Umoja	Literacy and Life Skills Program	Umoja Office	208-14888 104 Ave, Surrey, BC, V3R 1M4





## APPENDIX C: SURVEY ANALYSIS

# Informal English Language Learning

## SURVEY ANALYSIS

A Report for the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership



APRIL 2017

Jacopo Miro  
Research Analyst | PhD Candidate, UBC



Immigration, Refugees  
and Citizenship Canada

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# ◆ Introduction

## Research Objectives

The “Informal English Language Learning” (IELL) project is part of the Surrey Local Immigration Partnership (LIP). Launched in the winter of 2016, the project has been created to facilitate the implementation of Strategic Direction 1 under the Surrey Immigrant Integration Strategic Plan:

*Accessible Services. Strategic Direction 1:*

**Objective 1:** Develop, promote and disseminate tools & resources to enhance service coordination in order to assist both newcomers and stakeholders to navigate the continuum of programs and services.

**Objective 2:** Identify and determine Surrey’s immigrant programs and services capacity and demand to better inform service planning and articulate community needs.

**Objective 3:** Enhance Surrey’s capacity to define and address the demand for English Language and communication skills training require by immigrants to integrate within the workplace and community.

At its core the IELL was set up to:

1. Assess the extent and nature of informal English Language Programming (ELP) available in Surrey
2. Map and compile an inventory of informal ELP in Surrey
3. Develop best practices for community-based ELP

As part of this project, an online survey of Surrey residents was commissioned to explore key aspects of informal ELP delivery in the city.

The intent behind the survey was to better understand clients’ perspectives on informal ELP, identify key barriers and benefits, and gain input on how ELP can be improved. The survey centred around the following four questions:

1. Are clients supplementing/complementing LINC classes with informal ELP?
2. What are some of the barriers that newcomers face in accessing informal ELP?
3. What are some of the incentives/benefits that allow newcomers to access informal ELP?
4. How can the delivery of informal ELP be improved?

## Methodology

A non-random survey was conducted between February and March 2017. The survey was conducted through an online questionnaire, and one traditional ‘paper’ questionnaire. Translated versions were also made available in the following languages: Arabic, Simplified/Traditional Chinese, and Punjabi.

A **first** questionnaire was uploaded on the Surrey LIP website. Residents taking English language classes were asked to complete the questionnaire.

## ◆ Introduction Con't

A **second** questionnaire was circulated in 'hard copy' format to immigrant settlement agencies, as well as being posted online as a pdf file for people to download. The questionnaires asked the same questions (a copy of the survey is appended at the end of this report).

A total of **202** completed questionnaires were returned. The following respondents were selected out of the survey:

- 16 respondents who reported having being born in Canada
- 38 respondents who reported having never taken an English language class

The remaining list of 148 questionnaires was further cleaned to eliminate faulty responses. The resulting list consisted of **56** people reporting to have taken some kind of **informal** English language class, and **83** people reporting to have taken a **LINC** class, and nothing else.

In all cases, respondents were self-selected. An extensive promotional campaign was conducted to generate responses. Links to the survey were distributed among Surrey LIP members, contacts and networks. A poster advertising the survey was circulated online and throughout the community, including at Surrey Library branches and community centres.

Online promotion was paired with on-the-ground outreach efforts. More than 20 personal visits were made to various informal ELL classes. Visits were strategically set up to maximize the number of people reached, and to connect with a diverse audience.

Visits to smaller classes were made to ensure adequate representation from more marginalized groups (e.g. women only classes; and pre-literate beginners classes). To further generate responses, survey participants were also given the chance to enter a draw to win prizes sponsored by the City of Surrey.

Despite these considerable efforts, the number of valid responses gathered after four weeks remained low. Several factors can help explain the **limited response rate**. First, the decentralized nature of ELP makes it difficult to conduct community outreach. ELL classes are offered by a myriad of agencies, and spread out throughout the city. Unlike LINC, classes tend to be small (sometimes as low as 5 people) which hinders attempts at reaching large audiences. Second, many students enrolled in informal ELL have very low literacy skills. The availability of translated surveys was not always enough to generate responses, as some clients lacked the literacy skills to read the survey in their own mother tongue.

### Key Restraints

- Fairly small and very specific population sample
- Language and cultural barriers
- Limited time frame and resources

## ◆ Introduction Con't

### Profile of ELL Clients

Although small, the research sample is diverse, and reflects the expected make up of English language classes in Surrey.

- 68% Female vs. 32% Male
- 54% People between the ages of 30 to 49
- Almost 20 different ethnicities are represented
- Refugees and Family Class Immigrants make up the majority of respondents
- 93% Surrey residents

People born in India are NOT strongly represented in the sample (only 9% of respondents), but this is to be expected as immigrants from India tend to have strong English language skills upon arrival in Canada.

Also, youths younger than 19 years of age are not well represented in the sample. But this is not a discrepancy, as the vast majority of minors who access English language training do so through the public education system.

In light of the sample size, and its self-selected nature, statistical weigh techniques could not be applied to the analysis.

### Survey Scope

The survey focuses on informal English Language Learning (ELL). The term is meant to refer to language classes offered outside of the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC ) program, such as conversation circles, ESL Book Clubs, and literacy classes.

The survey specifically targeted foreign-born persons enrolled in informal ELL (current or past students), irrespective of length of stay in Canada. The survey was not limited to Surrey residents as we wanted to know whether (and to what extent) non-Surrey residents are participating in informal ELL here in the city.

Various screening questions were asked to ensure the right fit with our study. Respondents were asked about their place of birth, and whether they were currently taking (or had taken in the past) an English language class. Respondents were further asked to indicate what kind of class they had taken, if any.

Responses that did fit with your chosen target audience were discarded from the survey analysis.

## ◆ Overview

### Key findings

- On the whole, (60% of) respondents are “satisfied” with their progress and learning of English. Only a small minority, less than 10% of survey participants report being “dissatisfied” with their progress and learning of English.
- A significant number of people in our sample (32%) participate both in informal ELT and LINC classes. In other words, about a third of respondents complement their informal English classes with LINC. This is especially true for skilled immigrants, but less so for refugees. About 50% of skilled immigrants involved in informal ELT also take LINC classes, while only about 20% of refugees do so.
- About 20% of survey respondents report being on a LINC waitlist - a significant number. Important variations exist between different immigrant classes in this regard. For instance, a majority of surveyed refugees (60%) are currently on a waitlist for a LINC class, compared to only 8% for skilled immigrants, and 5% for family-sponsored immigrants.
- A significant percentage of people (~40%) report facing difficulty attending or signing up for English language classes. Skilled immigrants report the lowest rates (only 17% report having difficulty attending or signing up for ELT classes), while refugees report the highest rates (as much as 90% of refugee in our sample report facing difficulty attending or signing up to ELT).
- Informal ELT encompasses a greater diversity of age groups than LINC-only classes. Both ends of the age spectrum (young adults and seniors) have greater representation in informal ELT than in LINC-only classes.
- The vast majority of respondents (66%) report participating in “Conversation Circles and/or ESL Book Clubs”, followed by “Literacy” classes (9%), and “English Adult Education” (9%).
- The top 3 things that people like the best about their informal English class are:
  - Meet and socialize with other students (55%)
  - Good instructors (50%)
  - Convenient location (45%)
- The top barriers that make it difficult for people to access English classes include:
  - Long Waitlists (23%)
  - Employment and work duties (14%)
  - Transportation costs (14%)
- The top suggestions as to how to improve the delivery of informal ELT in Surrey, include:
  - “Running the programming more often” (i.e. increasing the number of sessions offered per week/month).
  - “Offering a greater variety of skill levels”
  - “Increasing the time slot of each session”

## ◆ Detailed Findings Con't

### Target Population

- Profile of people accessing informal English language training is diverse, but:
  - Refugees, family-sponsored immigrants, and women are more likely to access informal English language training than other newcomers (most likely because of the customized learning, flexible attendance requirements, and child minding services)
- All age groups participate in informal English language training. On the whole, the strongest participation is among people between the ages of 30 to 39 (34%) – although that may vary from one programming to another. At 16%, participation among younger adults (19 to 29yrs) is on par with other age groups: 40 to 49yrs (20%), 50 to 59yrs (16%), and 60yrs+(13%).
- Informal English language classes have, on the whole, a greater degree of age diversity than LINC only classes. LINC classes have strong representation among 30 to 49 year olds, but less so at each ends of the age spectrum. People between the ages of 30 to 49 make up 74% of LINC students, but only 54% of informal English language students.
- The largest populations of students participating in informal ELT include people born in China (29%), Syria (20%) and India (9%). The student population of informal ELT is not limited to these three countries, and in fact encompasses people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. More than a dozen countries of birth were identified in our small sample.
- The vast majority of students (93%) who attend informal ELT classes are Surrey residents. But there are a few students (5%) from outside municipalities who participate in informal ELT in Surrey.
- On the whole, people are “satisfied” (60%) with their progress and learning of English. A fifth (20%) of respondents report being “very satisfied” with their progress. Only a small minority, less than 10% of participants report being “dissatisfied” with their progress and learning of English. Skilled immigrants are less likely to be “dissatisfied” with their progress of English than refugees or family-sponsored immigrants (0% skilled immigrants, compared to 13% and 11% for refugees and family-sponsored immigrants report being “dissatisfied”).
- Students enrolled in LINC-classes report significantly higher rates of satisfaction than students attending informal ELT. Up to 46% of LINC students report being “very satisfied” of their progress and learning of English, compared to only 21% of students in informal ELT.
- No participant in our small sample report being “very dissatisfied” with their progress and learning of English.



## ◆ Detailed Findings Con't

### Waitlist for LINC

- About 20% of respondents taking informal English language classes report being on a LINC waitlist. But the majority of respondents (70%) taking informal English language classes are NOT on a LINC waitlist.
- Nonetheless, important inter-group differences exists. For instance, a majority of refugees (60%) do report being currently on a waitlist for a LINC class, compared to only 8% for skilled immigrants, and 5% for family-sponsored immigrants.

### Type of Class

- The vast majority of respondents (66%) report participating in "Conversation Circles and/or ESL Book Clubs", followed by "Literacy" classes (9%), and "English Adult Education" (9%).
- "Literacy" classes are popular among refugees (33%), but less popular among skilled and family-sponsored immigrants. This might be due to registration requirements established by service providers.

### Formal Assessment

- A majority of people (70%) taking informal ELT have visited an authorized Language Assessment Centre. This is true of all classes of immigrants (refugees, skilled, family-sponsored, etc.) However, it is worth noting that a substantial number of participants (30%) report NOT visiting an authorized Language Assessment Centre, which is surprising. This is particular high when compared to students enrolled in LINC-only classes, where only 2% of students report NOT visiting an authorized language assessment centre.

### Taking LINC

- A significant number of people in our sample (32%) participate both in informal ELT and LINC classes. In other words, about a third of respondents complement their informal English classes with LINC. This is especially true for skilled immigrants, but less so for refugees. About 50% of skilled immigrants involved in informal ELT also take LINC classes, while only about 20% of refugees do so.

## ◆ Detailed Findings Con't

### Benefits and Barriers

- The top 3 things that people like the best about their informal English class are:
  - Meet and socialize with other students (55%)
  - Good instructors (50%)
  - Convenient location (45%)
- “Convenient hours” (38%) follows closely behind.
- There is little variation between immigrant classes in this regard (skilled immigrants, refugees and family-sponsored immigrants value the same things: “good instructors” “convenient location & hours”, and “meet/socialize with other students”).
- A significant percentage of people (~40%) report facing difficulty attending or signing up for informal English language classes. Skilled immigrants report the lowest rates (only 17% report having difficulty attending or signing up for ELT classes), while refugees report the highest rates (as much as 90% of refugee in our sample report facing difficulty attending or signing up to informal ELT programming).
- In comparison, only 27% of LINC-only students report having difficulty attending or signing up for informal ELT.
- The top barriers that make it difficult for people to access English classes include:
  - Long Waitlists (23%)
  - Employment and work duties (14%)
  - Transportation costs (14%)
- About one in two (~50%) refugees report “long waitlists” as a main barrier for attending or signing up to English language programming.

### Suggestions for Improvement

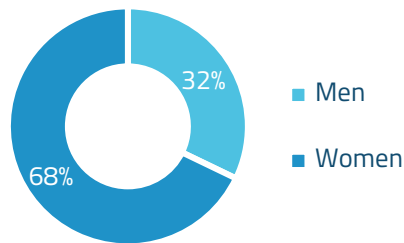
- Survey participants provided a variety of suggestions as to how to improve the delivery of informal ELT in Surrey. The top suggestions include:
  - “Running the programming more often” (i.e. increasing the number of sessions offered per week/month).
  - “Offering a greater variety of skill levels”
  - “Increasing the time slot of each session”

## ◆ Analysis

The following section presents the detailed analysis of the survey results.

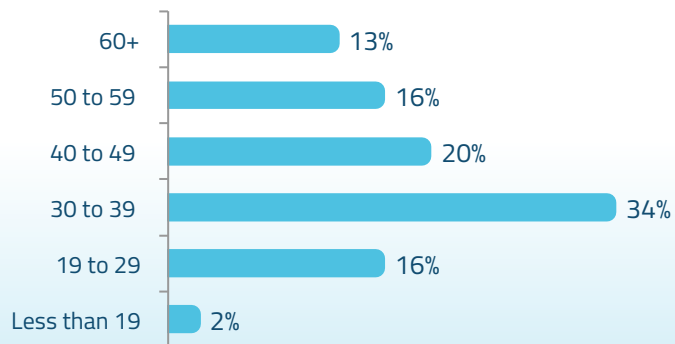
# ◆ Study Sample: Demographic Profile

## 1.1 Gender



Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: How do you identify yourself?

## 1.2 Age

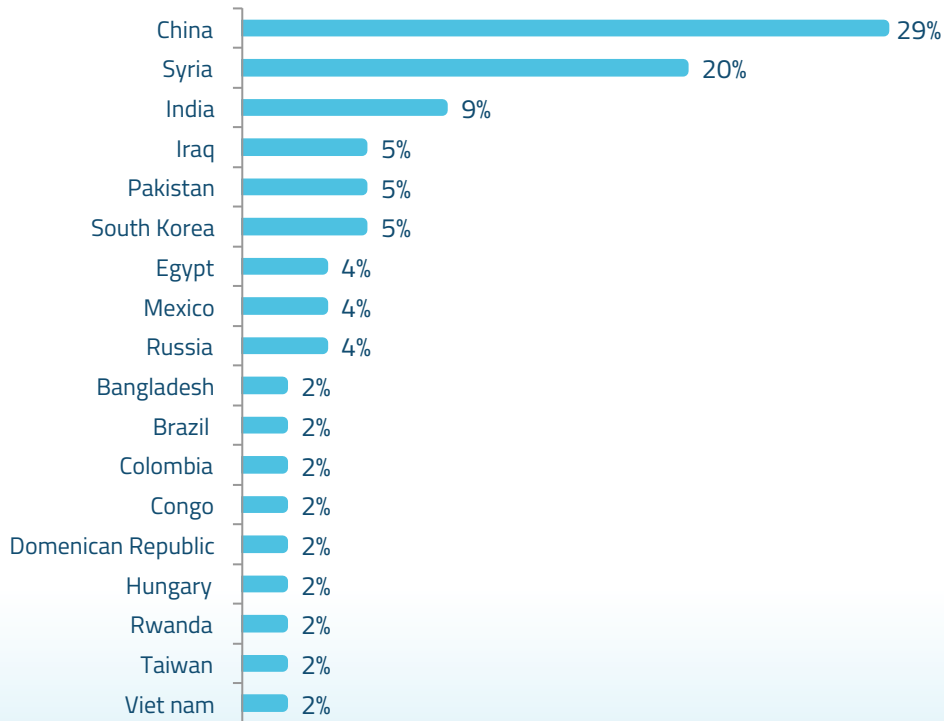


Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: How old are you?

- Of the **56** people taking an informal English language class, 32% are men, and 68% are women.
- Women tend to have higher participation rates than men, as many of the classes are offered during the day when men are more likely to be working. The availability of women's only classes, is another factor contributing to higher participation rates among women.
- But gender balance varies from one programming to next. Therefore one can expect some classes to be more consistently balanced in regards to gender ratios.
- All age groups are well represented within the sample, with most people falling between the ages of 30 to 49. But there is adequate representation at both ends of the age spectrum. About 13% of respondents are 60 years of age or older, and about 16% are in their 20s.
- Youths younger than 19 years of age are virtually absent (with only a 2% response rate). But this is expected, as most youths would access English language training through the public education system (i.e. Surrey School District #36).

# ◆ Study Sample: Demographic Profile

## 1.3 Country of Birth

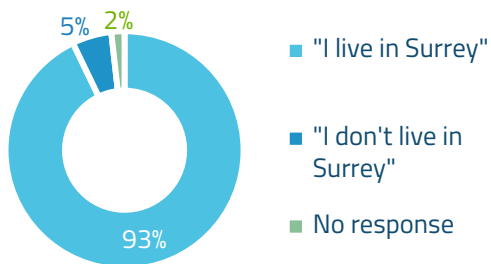


Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: Where were you born?

- The sample is highly diverse, with almost 20 different countries represented in it. People born in China make up the largest proportion of respondents (29%), followed by Syrians (20%).
- Immigrants from India and Pakistan make a considerably smaller fraction than the one observed at the city-wide level for Surrey (only 9% and 5% respectively). This is also the case for Filipino-born persons, which are altogether absent from the survey. However, low participation rates among these groups is expected, as they tend to have strong English language skills when arriving to Canada.
- The strong presence of Syrian-born people in the study sample, reflects the importance of informal English language training for refugees. It is also worth noting the presence of Iraqis in the sample. These higher rates can in part be explained by the fact that a number of informal English language classes are specifically targeted to low-literacy refugees.

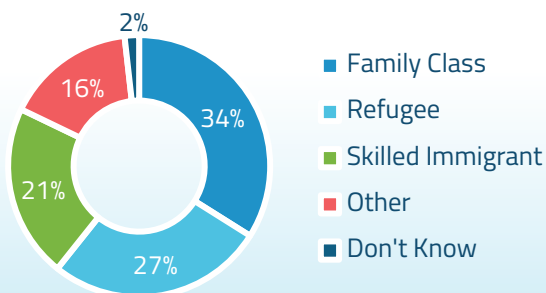
# ◆ Study Sample: Demographic Profile

## 1.4 Place of Residence



Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: Do you live in Surrey? (Y/N)

## 1.5 Immigrant Class

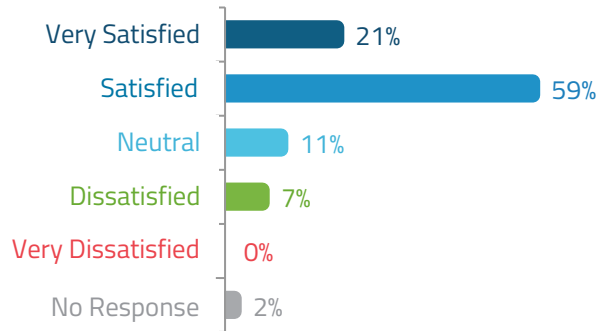


Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: What immigrant class are you?

- The vast majority of surveyed respondents accessing informal ELT are Surrey residents (93%). It is worth noting, nonetheless, that some non-Surrey residents do travel to Surrey to access language services (5%). Non-Surrey residents are likely to access drop-in programs with low registration requirements, such as the English Conversation circles offered by the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department. Such programs tend to have low access barriers. The upside, is that such programs might also attract participants from outside Surrey.
- Within our sample, family-class immigrants and Refugees are the largest groups attending informal ELT in Surrey (34% and 27% respectively). Skilled immigrants are less likely to attend informal language programs. This trend can in part be explained by the targeted approach of informal ELT which is particularly well suited for residents with specialized needs.

# ◆ Language Progress

## 1.6 Language Progress

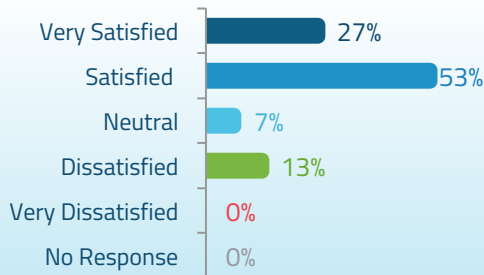


Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: In general how satisfied are you with your progress and learning of English?

\*The population size for different immigrant classes is markedly small, ranging between 12 to 19 people. For this reason, findings broken along immigrant class lines ('Refugees', 'Skilled Immigrants,' and 'Family Class') need to be taken with a grain of salt. This is not to say that the findings are unreliable, but rather that the level of accuracy is limited.

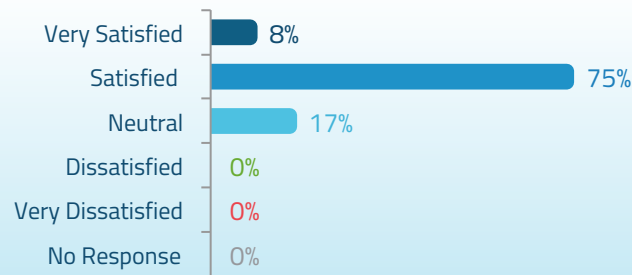
- A majority of respondents (60%) are 'satisfied' with their general progress and learning of English, with only 7% who are 'dissatisfied'. Another 20% report being 'very satisfied'.
- Responses vary when broken down along immigrant class. Skilled immigrants are on the whole more satisfied about their progress and learning of English than Refugees and Family-class immigrants. Up to 75% of Skilled immigrants are 'satisfied' compared to 53% of Refugees.
- No Skilled immigrants responding to the survey report being 'dissatisfied' with their learning of English, compared to 13% of Refugees and 10% of Family-class immigrants who do so. Note, that the small sample size necessitates careful and cautious interpretation.

### Refugees



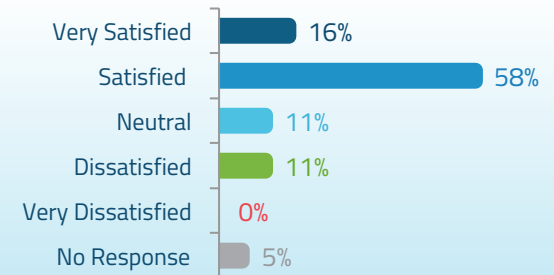
Base: Total (n=15)

### Skilled Immigrants



Base: Total (n=12)

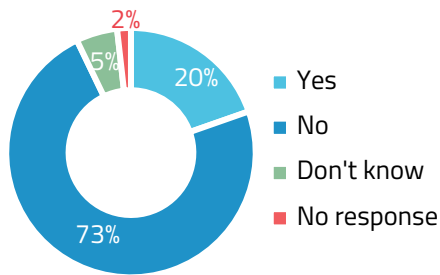
### Family Class



Base: Total (n=19)

# ◆ LINC Waitlist

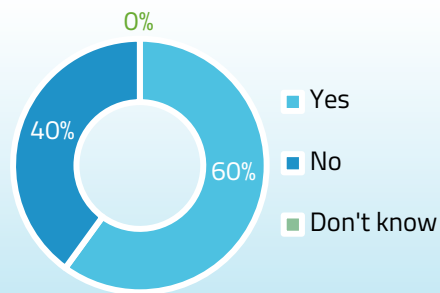
## 1.7 Waitlist for LINC?



Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: Are you currently on a waitlist for a LINC class?

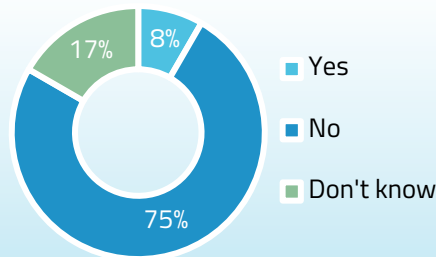
- About 20% of respondents report being on a waitlist for LINC, which is a significant number. These are individuals participating in informal ELT who are waiting for an opportunity to enter a LINC class.
- Variations between different immigrant classes are considerable. Both Skilled immigrants and Family-class immigrants report low waitlist rates (75% and 89% respectively are not a LINC waitlist).
- In contrast, a majority of Refugees (60%) report being on a LINC waitlist. The small sample size necessitates careful and cautious interpretation. Nonetheless, the findings are suggestive, and likely reflect a real trend– though perhaps not as acute as the one presented in these statistics.

### Refugees



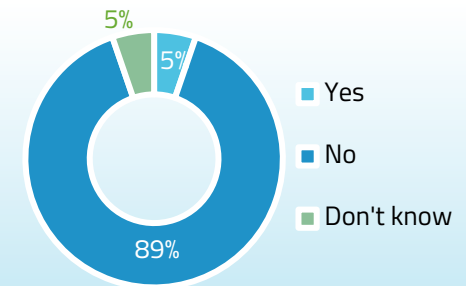
Base: Total (n=15)

### Skilled Immigrants



Base: Total (n=12)

### Family Class

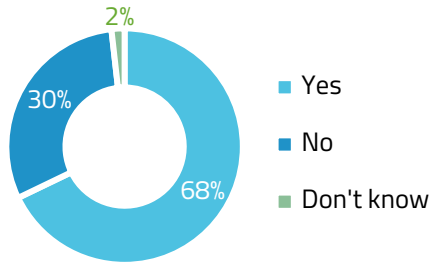


Base: Total (n=19)



# ◆ Language Assessment

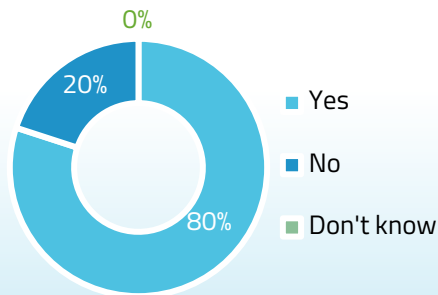
## 1.8 Formal Language Assessment



Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: Have you gone to an authorized Language Assessment Centre to find out your English level?

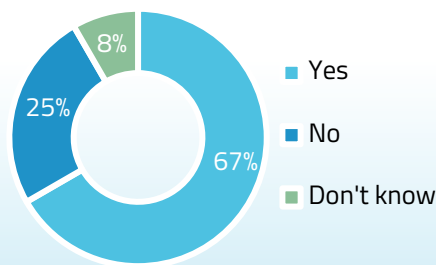
- Although a majority of respondents have visited an authorized language assessment centre (~70%), a significant number – about 1 in 3 – have not.
- It is not clear what would explain these statistics since newcomers are required to receive a formal language assessment upon arrival to Canada. One possible explanation is that survey participants did not fully understand the wording of the question asked.

### Refugees



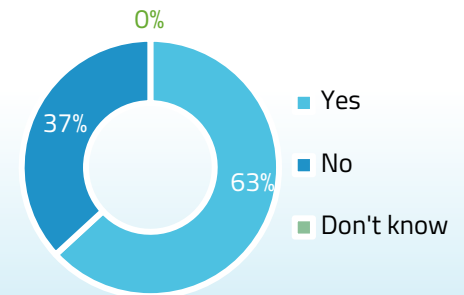
Base: Total (n=15)

### Skilled Immigrants



Base: Total (n=12)

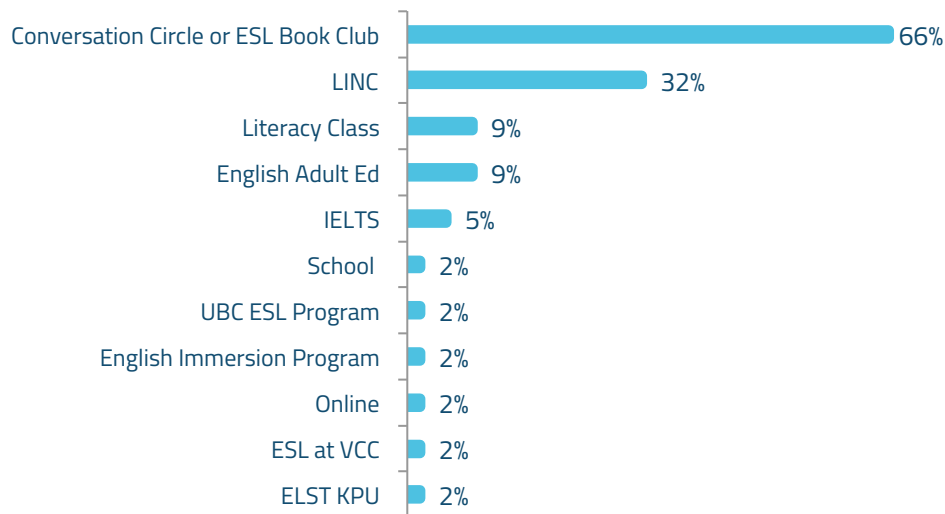
### Family Class



Base: Total (n=19)

# ◆ Program Type

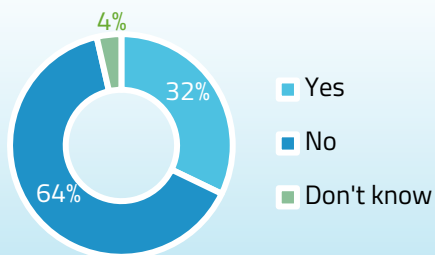
## 1.9 English Language Programming



- A clear majority of study participants report attending Conversation Circles and ESL Book Clubs (66%). This is true for all immigrant groups (Refugees, Skilled Immigrants and Family-Class Immigrants). Literacy classes as the third most popular program as reported by survey respondents.
- A considerable number of students (about one third) who participate in informal English language training, are also enrolled in LINC classes. In other words, many people complement informal ELT with LINC.

Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: Are you currently in (or have taken in the past) an English language class? If "Yes", please specify: \* Note that respondents could select more than one answer; therefore, the total percentage does not add up to 100%.

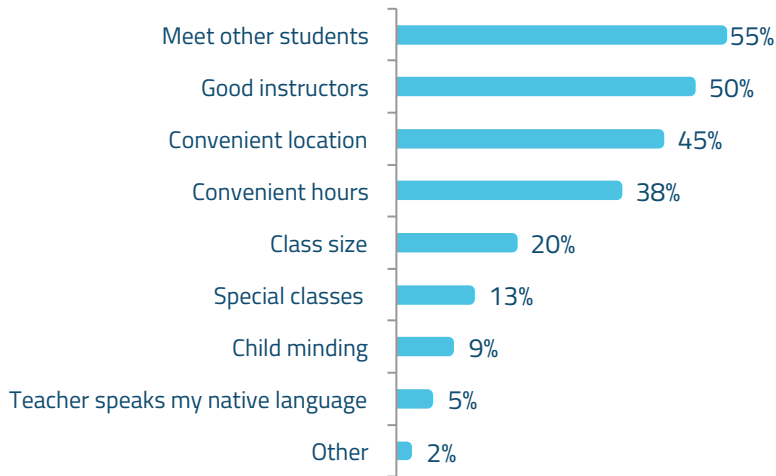
## 1.10 Also Taking LINC?



Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: Are you currently in (or have taken in the past) an English language class? If "Yes", please specify:

# ◆ Benefits

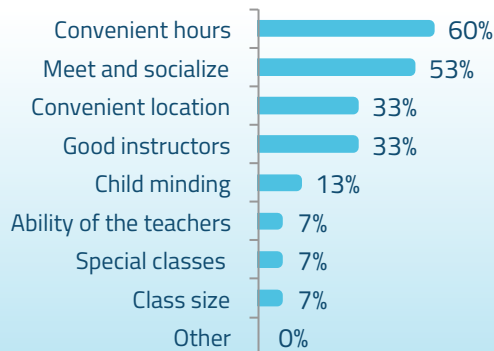
## 1.11 What Do You Like Best About your Class?



Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: What are some of the things that you like best about your Conversation Circle, ESL Book Club, or other non-LINC class? Select your TOP THREE. \*Note that respondents could select more than one answer; therefore, the total percentage does not add up to 100%.

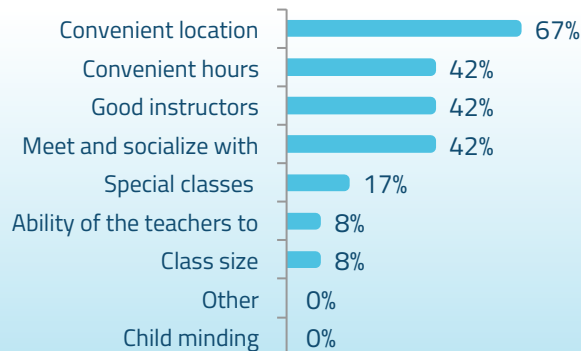
- The top three things that people like best about informal English language classes are: (1) Meeting and socializing with other students, (2) good instructors, (3) convenient location. Language classes are not only beneficial for the training they provide, but also for allowing newcomers a safe space in which to meet others and make friends.
- Instructors are a key aspect of what makes language training a success, and a key appeal factor for students.
- As expected, both the location of the programming and the time at which the programming takes place are key considerations for newcomers looking to develop their English language skills.

### Refugees



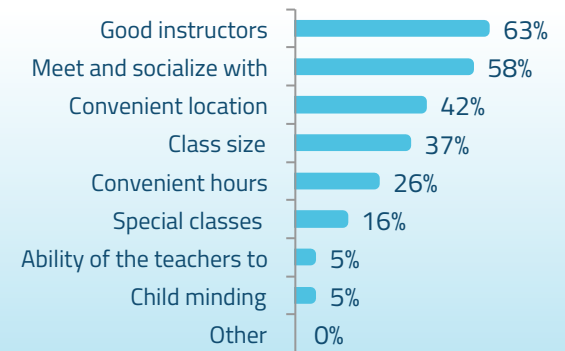
Base: Total (n=15)

### Skilled Immigrants



Base: Total (n=12)

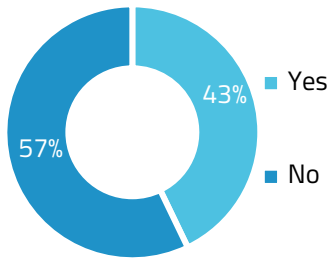
### Family Class



Base: Total (n=19)

# ◆ Barriers

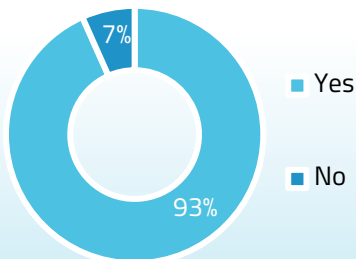
## 1.12 Difficult to Attend/Sign Up for English Language Class?



Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: Are there things that make it difficult for you to attend or sign up for English language classes?

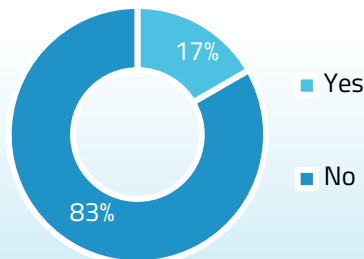
- Just less than half (~45%) of participants report facing difficulty attending or signing up for English language training in Surrey. This is an issue that is particularly true for Refugees, but considerably less so for Skilled immigrants.
- Once again, the small sample size necessitates careful and cautious interpretation. Nonetheless, the findings are suggestive.

### Refugees



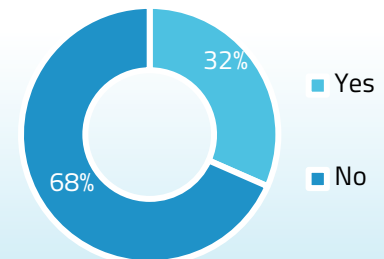
Base: Total (n=15)

### Skilled Immigrants



Base: Total (n=12)

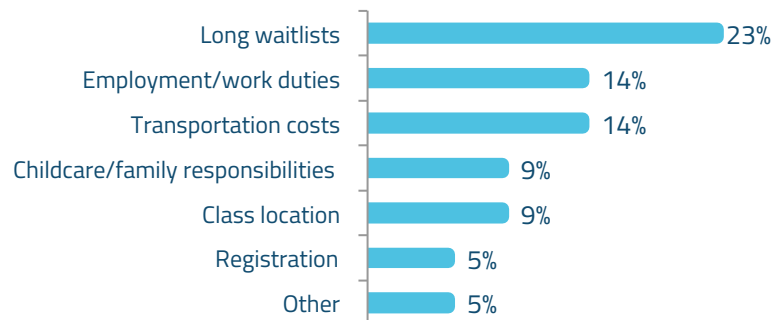
### Family Class



Base: Total (n=19)

# ◆ Comments

## 1.13 Top Barriers



Base: Total (n=56) Derived from Q: Are there things that make it difficult for you to attend or sign up for English language classes? If "Yes", please specify. \* Note that respondents could select more than one answer; therefore, the total percentage does not add up to 100%.

## 1.14 Suggestions for Improvement

Themes	# of responses
Run programming more often	6
Offer more skill levels	2
Have longer sessions	2
Have certified teachers	2
Focus on conversation skills	1
Extend the length of programming	1
Provide more childminding services	1
Better accommodate women	1
Better and more promotion	1
More locations	1
More one-on-one tutoring	1

Derived from Q: Do you have any suggestions for improving English language classes in Surrey? Please explain:

- As shown above, a number of participants report facing difficulty attending or signing up for language classes in Surrey. The top three reported barriers include: "long waitlists" (23%), "employment/work duties" (14%), and "transportation costs" (14%). In this particularly instance, it is not possible to fully differentiate between informal and general English language training. So some respondents might be referring to LINC specifically.
- There was limited feedback on the part of respondents in regard to suggestions as to how to improve the English language classes in Surrey. The low response rate is likely attributable to language barriers, as the question required a written comment.
- On the whole, respondents suggested "running the programming more often", "offering more skill levels", and "have longer individual sessions". The comments provided confirm a strong demand for English language delivery in Surrey.

## ◆ Questionnaire Template

The following document presents the template of the questionnaire distributed online and through service agencies.

## English Language Training in Surrey:

*Share your thoughts!*

Please complete the survey and return to City of Surrey via email to [veronica.reiss@surrey.ca](mailto:veronica.reiss@surrey.ca) OR fax to [604-591-2507](tel:604-591-2507) OR **Drop off** to Reception at Surrey City Hall. Please ensure all completed surveys are sent with **Attn: Veronica Reiss** (Planning and Development) clearly visible.

Help us improve English language training in Surrey. Fill out this brief survey and enter to win an iPad Mini, one \$100 gift card at Surrey Central City Mall, and a \$50 Safeway gift card. The information you provide us will be used by the City of Surrey to strengthen the delivery of English language services in Surrey.

This project is funded by “Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada”, and is part of the “Surrey Local Immigration Partnership”, an initiative that seeks to strengthen immigrant integration in Surrey. For more information please contact: Olga Shcherbyna, LIP Coordinator, (604) 592-7059 [oshcherbyna@surrey.ca](mailto:oshcherbyna@surrey.ca)

**Time: ~5 minutes**

### PART 1: ABOUT YOU

1. How do you identify yourself?

- Male                       Female                       Other                       Prefer Not to Answer

2. How old are you?

- Less than 19 years                       40 to 49 years  
 19 to 29 years                       50 to 59 years  
 30 to 39 years                       60 years or older

3. Where were you born?

<input type="checkbox"/> Canada	<input type="checkbox"/> Iran	<input type="checkbox"/> Somalia
<input type="checkbox"/> Afghanistan	<input type="checkbox"/> Iraq	<input type="checkbox"/> South Korea
<input type="checkbox"/> China	<input type="checkbox"/> Japan	<input type="checkbox"/> Sri Lanka
<input type="checkbox"/> Egypt	<input type="checkbox"/> Mexico	<input type="checkbox"/> Syria
<input type="checkbox"/> El Salvador	<input type="checkbox"/> Netherlands	<input type="checkbox"/> Taiwan
<input type="checkbox"/> Fiji	<input type="checkbox"/> Pakistan	<input type="checkbox"/> United Kingdom
<input type="checkbox"/> Germany	<input type="checkbox"/> Philippines	<input type="checkbox"/> USA
<input type="checkbox"/> Hong Kong	<input type="checkbox"/> Poland	<input type="checkbox"/> Viet Nam
<input type="checkbox"/> India	<input type="checkbox"/> Russia	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
		Please [SPECIFY] _____
		<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know

4. Do you live in Surrey?

- Yes     No

5. What immigrant class are you?

<input type="checkbox"/> Refugee <input type="checkbox"/> Skilled Immigrant	<input type="checkbox"/> Family Class <input type="checkbox"/> Other Please Specify: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
--	--	-------------------------------------

6. In general, how satisfied are you with your progress and learning of English?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
0	0	0	0	0

## PART 2: ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES

7. Are you currently on a waitlist for a LINC\* class?

Yes  No  I don't know

8. Have you gone to an authorized Language Assessment Centre to find out your English level?

Yes  No  I don't know

\*LINC is a free language training program for immigrants and refugees. To be in a LINC class you have to first visit an Assessment Centre to find out your English level.

9. Are you currently in (or have taken in the past) an English language class?

Yes  No  I don't know

If "Yes" Please specify:

- LINC class
- Conversation Circle or ESL Book Club
- Other

Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_

10. What are some of the things that you like best about your Conversation Circle, ESL Book Club, or other non-LINC class? Select your TOP THREE.

- Meet and socialize with other students
- Convenient hours
- Convenient location
- Special Classes (e.g. women's only; job focus; etc.)
- Class size
- Child minding / babysitting services
- Good Instructors
- Ability of the teachers to speak my native language / mother tongue
- Other

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Are there things that make it difficult for you to attend or sign up for English language classes?

Yes  
 No

If "Yes", please specify:

- Registration Process
- Long waitlists
- Class location (e.g. too far; hard to get to; etc.)
- Transportation costs (bus fare; parking costs; etc.)
- Childcare and family responsibilities
- Employment/work duties
- Other

Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

12. Do you have any suggestions for improving English language classes in Surrey?

Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thanks for taking the time to provide your input! This information will be used by the City of Surrey to inform future planning of English Language Training services in Surrey, and guide efforts to better serve immigrants and refugees in the city.*



## Community-Based Research: “Informal” English Language Training

### Questionnaire to Service Agencies

#### **Background:**

As part of its Surrey Immigrant Integration Strategy’s implementation phase, the Surrey LIP is looking to enhance service planning and coordination of informal English Language Training (ELT) in the city. ELT has been singled out as a one of the most important elements of immigrant and refugee settlement in Surrey. Yet, there are growing concerns over the ability of the current system of ELT to adequately meet community needs. This issue is in part reflected by a continuing influx of newcomers to Surrey, and persistent waitlists.

Preliminary consultation with local stakeholders points to the value of **informal** ELT programming (such as Conversation Circles) in bridging the gap between service demand and service provision in Surrey.

To better inform service planning of ELT, the Surrey LIP is looking to compile information on what **informal** ELT programs are available in Surrey, where these programs are located, who is accessing these services, barriers to access, and opportunities for improvement. Three main goals have been identified:

1. Assess the extent and nature of informal ELT programming available in Surrey
2. Compile an inventory of informal ELT services in Surrey
3. Identify opportunities for addressing unmet client needs regarding informal ELT programming in Surrey

#### **What you can do:**

Help us enhance the service planning and coordination of local English Language Training in Surrey. You can do so by taking the time to fill out the following questions, and provide us with valuable feedback.

Approximate time (5minutes)

#### **Key Terms:**

Informal English Language Training (ELT): Simply put, any language programming or service other than LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada), such as Conversation Circles, or ESL Book Clubs, language training offered through post secondary etc.

## **PART 1: INFORMAL ELT PROGRAMMING**

### WHAT?

1) What organization do you work for? Select one of the following:

- Alexandra Neighbourhood House
- DIVERSEcity
- Douglas College
- City of Surrey
- ISSofBC
- Kwantlen University
- MOSAIC
- Muslim Food Bank
- Oak Avenue Neighbourhood House
- Options
- PCRS
- PICS
- SFU
- Sources
- SUCCESS

- Surrey Public Library
- Surrey School Board
- UMOJA
- YMCA
- OTHER: Please Specify \_\_\_\_\_

2. Does your agency offer non-LINC English Language Training programming (e.g. Conversation Circles; ESL Book Club; etc.)?

- Yes  No  I don't know

3. If "Yes", please list the programs/activities offered.

- English conversation circles for adults
- English conversation circles for women only
- English conversation circles for low literacy English learners
- English classes for children
- English training offered through post-secondary
- Other

**WHERE?**

4. Where does the programming take place? (Select all that apply)

- Whalley/City Centre  Guildford  Cloverdale  I don't know  
 Newton  Fleetwood  South Surrey

**HOW MANY CLASSES?**

5. How many classes/activities are offered per week?

- 1 per week  1 per month  Other (Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)  
 2 per week  2 per month  I don't know  
 3 per week

**WHEN?**

6. When are the classes offered? (Select all that apply)

- Summer  Fall  I don't know  
 Spring  Winter

**HOW LONG?**

7. How long has this programming been in place?

- Less than 1 year  4 to 10 years  Other (Please Specify: \_\_\_\_\_)  
 1 to 3 years  More than 10 years  I don't know

**DEMAND**

8. How well are you able to keep up with the demand for this programming?

- a. We have a hard time keeping up with demand (we have long waitlists)
  - i. If yes, please provide an estimate of your waitlist: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. We are able to manage the demand adequately (we are able to fill up spaces for this programming without having long waitlists)
- c. We are struggling to get enough people signed up (we have lots of opens spots)
- d. Other: Specify \_\_\_\_\_
- e. I don't know

**PART 2: ELT PARTICIPANTS/CLIENTS**

**IMMIGRANT CLASS?**

9. How would you describe the class of newcomers accessing this programming?

- Economic skilled workers  Family class immigrants  Live-in caregiver class

Business class immigrants

Refugees

I don't know

**HOW MANY PEOPLE?**

10. How many people are registered/participate in these classes/activities at any point in time?

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 10	<input type="checkbox"/> 51 to 70	<input type="checkbox"/> 121 to 150	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify: _____)
<input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 30	<input type="checkbox"/> 71 to 100	<input type="checkbox"/> 151 to 200	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't know
<input type="checkbox"/> 31 to 50	<input type="checkbox"/> 101 to 120	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 200	

**ELT INSTRUCTORS**

11. Who runs the informal ELT programming? (Paid staff, volunteer, former teacher, etc.)

12. Is training provided for informal ELT instructors?

Yes       No

a. If "Yes", what kind of training? Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Do you support any particular language group other than English (i.e. instructors can speak other languages to support the English learning process)?

Yes       No

b. If "Yes", please elaborate: \_\_\_\_\_

**PROMOTION**

14. How does your agency promote/publicize the program?

**FEES/COSTS**

15. How much do you charge participants/clients to access this programming?

0\$ (this is free)

\$51-\$100

Other: Specify \_\_\_\_\_

\$1 - \$50

More than \$100

I don't know

---

**PART 3: COMMENTS**

**COMMENTS**

16. Which sector does your organization belong to? Select the top two that apply to your organization:

- c. Community social services
- d. Immigrant services
- e. Post-secondary education
- f. Public sector (municipality, library, health etc.)
- g. Religious/ethnic organization
- h. Business sector
- i. Other

i. Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

17. If you would like to receive a report from this survey and research on informal English language training in Surrey, please provide your email: \_\_\_\_\_

18. Do you have any comments/thoughts that you would like to share with us?

19. What is your name? Please enter \_\_\_\_\_

*"By providing us with your name we will be able to ensure that the survey results are accurate, and from a legitimate source. Your name will also allow us to keep you better informed about the findings of this project, and follow up with you about any clarification questions that may come up."*

*Thanks for taking the time to provide your input!*

*This information will be used by the City of Surrey to inform future planning of English Language Training services in Surrey, and guide efforts to better serve immigrants and refugees in the city.*