

# TOGETHER PROJECT

togetherproject.ca | a project of MakeWay

## 2021 IMPACT REPORT

Together Project makes change in three interconnected ways: building newcomer social connections, supporting newcomer integration priorities, and amplifying community involvement in newcomer integration.

### LETTER FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

When we started Together Project in 2016, one of the central questions we asked ourselves was "how can a group of individuals help build a more welcoming community?" It should come as no surprise that in the 5 years since, with hundreds of volunteers and newcomers joining us to help answer that question, we know a lot more now than we did in that moment - and we continue to learn. This impact report, our very first, is an attempt to share with you some of what we've done, the changes we've made, and what we have learned along the way.

From very early on in our history, we decided that we wanted to not only be intentional in our work at building welcoming communities, but to measure, learn from, and share our efforts and impact. There is so much more to the incredible experiences shared by the volunteers and newcomers in our programs than simple numbers - there are powerful stories and evidence of real, meaningful change. This report is intended to capture that, if only in a snapshot.

In spite of ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, we were fortunate to continue growing our impact through a number of new partnerships, and this gives us many reasons to look forward to 2022. We'll be continuing our work in Toronto and Mississauga while expanding the program to British Columbia and Ottawa. We're embarking on a multiyear research project to learn more about the effectiveness of remote social support and what it can tell us about digital settlement service delivery. And with community agency partners, old and new, we're looking forward to applying everything we've learned, in the 5 years since we started, to welcome and support new arrivals from Afghanistan.

We're eternally grateful to our newcomer participants, supporters, partners, and especially our volunteers, who have gotten us this far. We hope you'll stay with us on our journey ahead.

Andrew Luszyk & Anna Hill

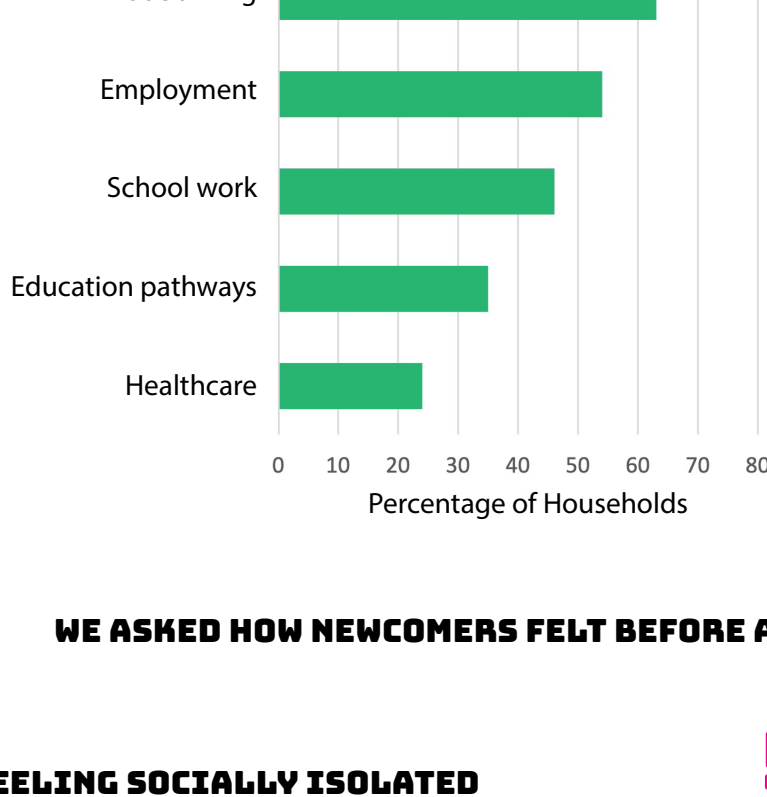
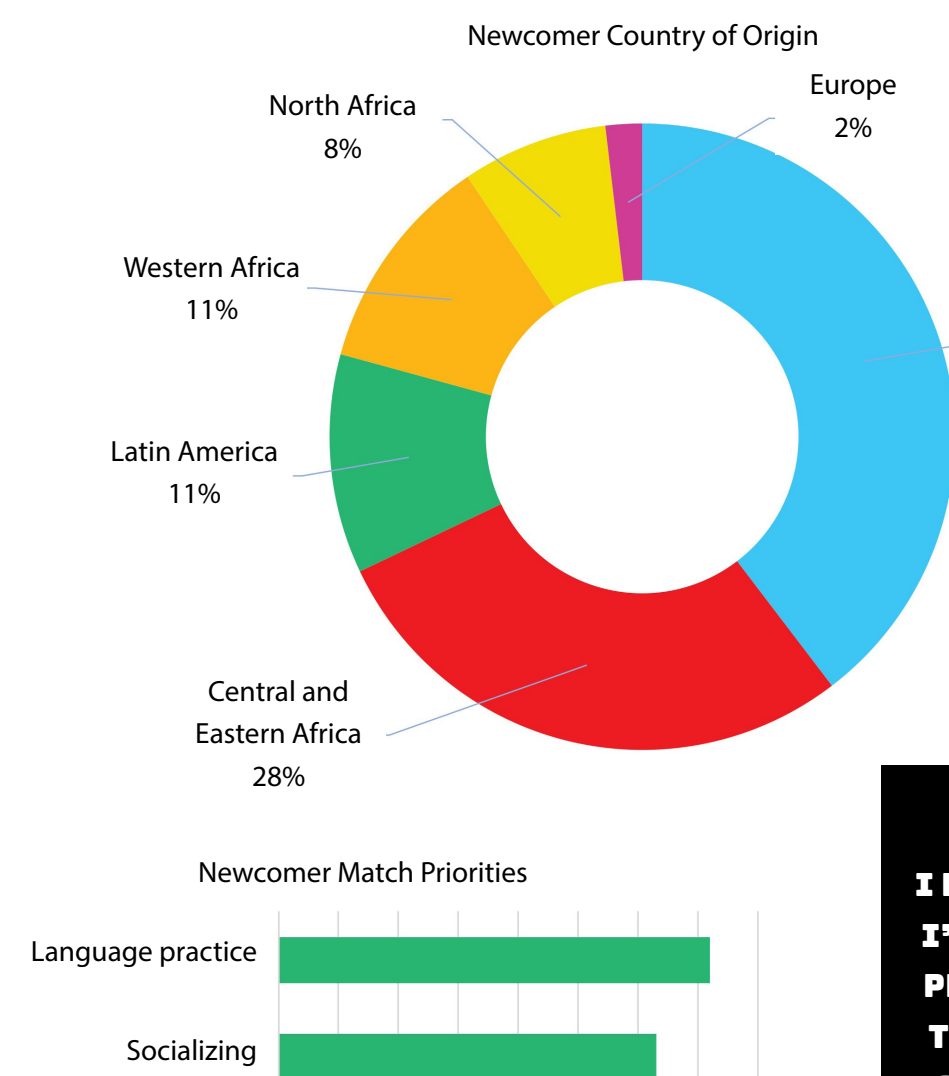
### 2021 WELCOME GROUP PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

Together Project connects government-assisted refugees or refugee claimant newcomers with Canadians to build stronger, more integrated communities. Our Welcome Group Program serves newcomers that face significant challenges to successful integration in their new communities. These include language and culture barriers, health issues, unemployment, and lack of social connections. Below you'll find out more about who joined our program in 2021, including the origin and priorities of our newcomer participants, and the impact of their experience.

**150**  
NEWCOMER PARTICIPANTS

**239**  
NEW VOLUNTEERS

**52**  
NEW MATCHES



“  
**I FOUND A NEW JOB, AND I'M SO RELIEVED IT'S A PERMANENT POSITION. THE CREDIT IS REALLY TO THE WELCOME GROUP, WHO HELPED ME TAILOR MY RESUME TO THE JOB, PREPARE FOR MY INTERVIEW, AND ALWAYS ENCOURAGED ME.**  
”  
RITA,  
NEWCOMER PARTICIPANT

### WE ASKED HOW NEWCOMERS FELT BEFORE AND AFTER THEIR MATCHES:

	BEFORE	AFTER
FEELING SOCIALLY ISOLATED	50%	15%
FEELING SUPPORTED	31%	81%
MAKING PROGRESS TOWARDS THEIR INTEGRATION GOALS	43%	71%
MADE NEW SOCIAL CONNECTIONS IN THEIR COMMUNITY	23%	65%

### WE ASKED HOW VOLUNTEERS FELT ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE:

- 84%** HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE CHALLENGES NEWCOMERS FACE.
- 75%** FELT THEY MADE A DIFFERENCE IN A NEWCOMER'S TRANSITION TO LIFE IN CANADA.
- 73%** FORMED NEW SOCIAL CONNECTIONS WITH NEWCOMERS.



### COMMUNITY PROJECTS

In 2021, in addition to our flagship Welcome Group Program, we also undertook a number of community projects to support newcomer inclusion.

#### EDUCATION SUPPORT GUIDE

With the support and input of subject matter experts, volunteers, and newcomers, we developed a unique and comprehensive guidebook for volunteers supporting young learners and parents looking to better engage in their children's education.

#### VACCINE ACCESS PROJECT

From May to July, Together Project collaborated with the Crossroads Refugee Clinic at Women's College Hospital to address systemic challenges facing refugee newcomers hoping to access the COVID-19 vaccine, by training and coordinating volunteers to assist over 70 newcomers with vaccination appointments.

#### TD FEF NEWCOMER URBAN NATURE ACCESS PASS

In compliance with public health guidelines and through the generous support of TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, we hosted four nature walks in 2021 to help over 80 newcomers learn about and access public green spaces in the Greater Toronto Area, including Black Creek Community Farm, Colonel Sam Smith Park, and the High Park Nature Centre.

#### CENTRING NEWCOMER VOICES

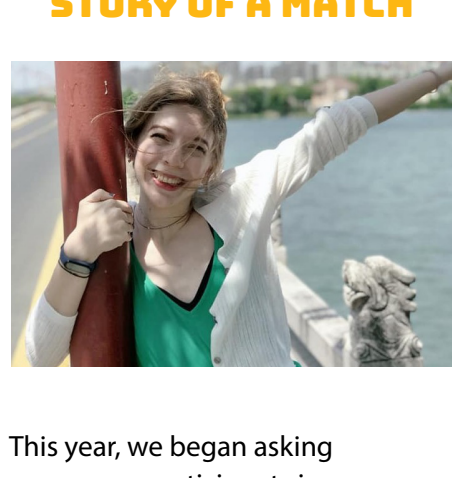
In Spring 2021, we hosted three focus groups with 20 newcomers about our communications and how to best centre newcomer voices within them. Participants were recruited from within our Welcome Group matches, as well as from outside the program.

“  
**I HAVE NOTHING BUT GREAT THINGS TO SAY ABOUT THE PROGRAM - IT WAS A JOY. I WAS VERY ENCOURAGED BY THE MOTHER'S OWN ENTHUSIASM, AND HOW MUCH SHE WANTED TO SUCCEED IN CANADA. ALL OF US THINK IT WAS AN EXTREMELY REWARDING EXPERIENCE.**  
”  
BHUMICA,  
TD VOLUNTEER GROUP LEAD  
“  
**EVEN THOUGH WE COULDN'T MEET IN PERSON, I WAS REALLY HAPPY TO MEET THEM AND STILL CREATE FRIENDSHIPS DURING THE PANDEMIC.**  
”  
JUDY,  
NEWCOMER YOUTH PARTICIPANT

### STORIES TO SHARE

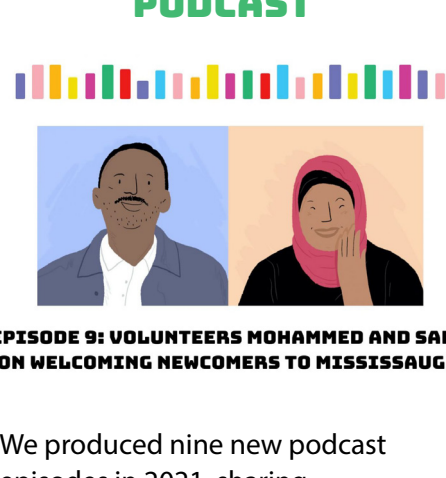
2021 also brought us opportunities to share the stories of the volunteers and newcomers in our community, as well as important insights about newcomer integration.

#### STORY OF A MATCH



This year, we began asking newcomer participants in our program to describe their experience in the program from their perspective.

#### PODCAST



We produced nine new podcast episodes in 2021, sharing perspectives from newcomers and volunteers alike. Listen on Spotify, ApplePodcasts or GooglePodcasts.

#### PROMISING PRACTICE



Our pivot to "remote social support" during the course of the COVID-19 pandemic was chosen by Pathways to Prosperity as one of its 25 Promising Practices of 2021.

**READ MORE**  
[TOGETHERPROJECT.CA/BLOG](https://togetherproject.ca/blog)

“  
**TOGETHER PROJECT HAS HAD AN IMPORTANT IMPACT ON MY LIFE AND I WANT TO THANK ALL THE FRIENDS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED ME AND CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ME. THANKS TO THEM I HAVE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO VISIT SPECIAL PLACES AND MAKE NEW ACQUAINTANCES.**  
”

RAMONA,  
NEWCOMER PARTICIPANT

### THANK YOU

We'd like to thank our funding partners, program partners, program supporters, Steering Committee, advisors, and our staff for continuing to help us build more inclusive and welcoming communities.

#### FUNDING PARTNERS



#### PROGRAM PARTNERS

Catholic Centre for Immigrants Ottawa  
COSTI Immigrant Services  
DIVERSEcity  
TD Ready Commitment  
Western University

#### PROGRAM SUPPORTERS

Christie Refugee Welcome Centre  
Crossroads Refugee Clinic at Women's College Hospital  
Peel Multicultural Council  
Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services  
Romero House

#### STEERING COMMITTEE

Leith Bishop, Chair  
Hani Bashir, Vice-Chair  
Kate Bate  
Patrick Marshall  
Dr. Vanessa Redditt  
Shadi Shami

#### ADVISORS

Manisha Burman  
Shavonne Hasfal-McIntosh  
Samantha Mehra  
Lindsay Oughtred  
Lisa Wyndels

#### STAFF

Anna Hill, Co-Director  
Andrew Luszyk, Co-Director  
Natasha Comeau, Coordinator

We would like to thank Lisa Kannakko for photography and Emilie Muszczak for illustrations.

#### FOLLOW US

[@Together.Hello](https://www.facebook.com/Together.Hello) [@Together\\_Hello](https://www.instagram.com/Together_Hello) [@TogetherProject](https://www.linkedin.com/company/TogetherProject)