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Availability of After-School Programs in Canada: Addressing the Educational Transitions and School Adaptation of Newcomer Students

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Abstract

This study examined the availability of youth-serving organizations (YSOs) and the after-school programs (ASPs) they provide to newcomer students in Canada, with a focus on supporting learning, integration, and adaptability within school contexts. Data were gathered through an internet-based scan of provincial and territorial YSOs and after-school educational resources for newcomer students. The scan identified 143 youth-serving organizations and 231 after-school programs across Canadian provinces serving both refugee and immigrant students. These programs included scholarships and bursaries, homework assistance, tutoring services, and language development initiatives, among others. Collectively, these programs and initiatives are developed to enhance school readiness, self-confidence, resilience, and academic achievement for newcomer students, as discussed in the paper. The paper further considers how the challenges facing newcomer students and the after-school programs intended to support them are often framed within a deficit narrative, despite evidence that these students possess strengths that can contribute to their academic success and social inclusion. The study concludes that a diverse array of after-school programs accessed by newcomer students through youth-serving organizations is essential for their social and school integration and academic success. Although after-school programs for newcomer students are often conceptualized within a deficit-oriented framework, their significance as robust assets and sources of academic, social, linguistic, and emotional support for them should not be overlooked.

Keywords: after-school programs; deficit framework educational outcomes; newcomer students; strengths-based approach; youth-serving organizations

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1. Introduction

Canada has long attracted newcomers, including immigrants and refugees, seeking economic opportunity, religious freedom, and protection from political and social conflict. In recent years, immigration has risen sharply, with more than 400,000 newcomers recorded in 2023 (Government of Canada 2021) and 483,655 in 2024, followed by a 19% decline to 393,530 (Humphreys 2026), along with hundreds of thousands of newcomer children. In 2024, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (2025) reported that 125,530 economic and family reunification immigrants, combined, came from India, 32,175 from the Philippines, and 26,095 from China. IRCC also reported that Canada gave protection to 15,675 refugees from Eritrea, 9970 from Afghanistan, 6775 from Syria, and

1710 Ukrainians on humanitarian and compassionate grounds. These figures show how important schools are in helping newcomer children transition, adapt, and integrate into Canadian schools and society. Transitioning to Canadian schools involves adjusting to a new academic, linguistic, and cultural environment through structured language support, community inclusion, and high academic drive.

Whichever route to Canada, immigrants and refugees often share a common goal: they want their children to do well in school and in life. Although Canada is often seen as welcoming, newcomer students frequently encounter serious challenges as they adjust to a new school environment. These challenges include school transitions, social adjustment, language barriers, and acculturative stress (Berry and Hou 2016), all of which can affect their academic outcomes and well-being. Often, these challenges are interpreted through a deficit lens from the perspectives of policymakers (Shea, 2021), provincial governments, and schools (DeMartino, 2021; Guo, 2012), without considering the strengths, capacities, and other advantages students bring to educational settings.

The deficit model raises several important questions: What will the future hold for these newcomer students' educational outcomes? How can they be supported in attaining their educational goals and ambitions? What resources are available to help them achieve those goals? Research has reported that although after-school programs (ASPs) are generally associated with a deficit theory, they are intended to help students develop a sense of belonging, build peer relationships, strengthen positive identity, and improve academic performance (Paramalingam et al. 2018). As a result, many youth-serving organizations (YSOs) across Canada have developed ASPs to support newcomer learners. Although much of the research on newcomer students has been grounded in a deficit model that overlooks their personal, familial, and cultural strengths, this study marks a shift toward asset-based approaches that recognize and leverage existing capacities and capabilities of newcomer students. It highlights how youth-serving organizations and after-school programs mobilize resources from immigrant communities and organizations to support and improve the educational performance of newcomer students. Accordingly, this study contributes a foundational framework to the literature by advancing a strength-based perspective, supported by a network of youth-serving organizations and after-school programs across Canada, as an alternative to deficit-oriented approaches.

2. Purpose of the Study

This study was developed and carried out in partnership with the Supports for Student Learning Program (SSLP), a program unit within Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), the federal department responsible for supporting investments in education, employment, and social development for Canadian youth (Employment and Social Development Canada 2022). SSLP supports service organizations that help students, including newcomer youth, stay engaged in school and transition successfully to post-secondary education.

In Canada, education is decentralized (Council of Ministers of Education n.d.) and is administered by 10 provinces and 3 territories: Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Saskatchewan, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon. The purpose of this study was to identify the availability of and gaps in youth-serving organizations across provinces and territories that offer ASPs supporting the educational needs of newcomer students. It also aimed to determine the types of programs available in each province and territory. The study asked three questions:

Which youth-serving organizations support newcomer students in Canada?
What kinds of after-school programs do they offer to newcomer students?

What after-school activities do youth-serving organizations provide to support school engagement, integration, and learning opportunities for newcomer youth?

3. Methodology

Data were collected using a systematic literature search across multiple bibliographic databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, and Google Scholar, to identify scholarship on after-school programs. In parallel, an internet-based environmental scan was conducted to map youth-serving organizations and ASPs operating in each Canadian province and territory. An internet-based research design is well suited to map the landscape of organizations and programs at a national scale while relying on publicly available information (Doherty et al. 2022). In the context of mapping youth-serving organizations and after-school programs across Canada, several considerations support this approach. The primary objective was to produce a systematic, descriptive overview of available YSOs and ASPs, not to evaluate program effectiveness or outcomes. Internet-based environmental scanning directly supports this aim because, according to Harris and Brooker (2025), it enables researchers to (a) identify which organizations and programs exist and where they are located, (b) extract standardized descriptive information (e.g., target populations, services offered, eligibility criteria) from organizational websites, and (c) generate counts and distributions of programs by province and territory. Because the research questions are largely "what exists" and "where," publicly posted web content constitutes an appropriate and sufficient data source (Harris and Brooker 2025).

In this study, the definition of a newcomer youth was based on Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and related federal frameworks, as well as academic and regional settlement studies that define newcomer youth as immigrant and refugee individuals aged 13 to 30 years old (Kalchos et al. 2022) who arrived in Canada within the past 10 years (Smith et al. 2021). Among immigrant youth, the definition included youth with Canadian citizenship and permanent residents. The study was not to evaluate the effectiveness of ASPs. Consequently, no qualitative data were collected from service providers, students, teachers, or parents. Given the exclusive reliance on publicly available, non-identifiable human-generated interview information, formal research ethics review was not required. Data collection employed two complementary methods. A qualitative component extracted descriptive program information from organizational websites. The scan did not aim to enumerate all organizations serving immigrants and refugees; rather, it focused on those supporting newcomer youth through ASPs with an explicit or implicit orientation toward enhancing school performance and academic success. A quantitative component was used to count the number of such organizations and the ASPs they offer across Canada. To ensure consistency, SSLP developed a standardized data-extraction template to record both qualitative and quantitative information on Canadian YSOs and ASPs.

Web-Search Procedure

The environmental scan utilized an internet-based research approach, with web searches conducted through Google as the primary method for generating data. Google was selected because it facilitates rapid access to a wide range of publicly available information through continuous crawling and indexing of web content, thereby enabling retrieval of relevant webpages. Accordingly, the scan involved systematic searches of websites and webpages to identify organizations serving newcomer youth that offer relevant programs and activities. The searches incorporated the following terms: "settlement organizations," "newcomer youth organizations," "immigrant youth-serving organizations," "newcomer youth programs," and "after-school programs." The generated web links and pages were subsequently reviewed to assess their relevance to the data required for our study. These

keywords generated links to organizations and resources pertinent to the research objectives. Many of the identified organizations receive funding from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and play a substantial role in supporting the settlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in Canada. These organizations provide services and programs designed to advance settlement and integration objectives (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2023).

Using the identified search terms, the following web links provided lists of youth-serving organizations and after-school programs:

— The IRCC website https://ircc.canada.ca/english/newcomers/services/index.asp (accessed on 17 February 2023) provided a comprehensive directory of youth-serving organizations offering services and programs to newcomer youth across Canada's provinces and territories. Using the website's search function, we generated a list of organizations for each province. The search was then expanded to identify additional websites containing information on youth-serving organizations in each province.

— For Ontario, the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) website https://services.settlement.org/en/ (accessed on 17 February 2023) served as the primary source for identifying settlement and newcomer youth-serving organizations.

— In Alberta, the Alberta Association of Immigrant Serving Agencies (AAISA) membership directory https://aaisa.ca/membership-directory/ (accessed on 17 February 2023) provided a list of settlement agencies, including those offering after-school programs for immigrant and refugee youth.

— The WelcomeBC website https://www.welcomebc.ca/Start-Your-Life-in-B-C/Settlement-Services (accessed on 18 February 2023) directed the search to the "Find a Settlement Service Agency Near You" page. The associated directory of British Columbia Settlement and Integration Services (BCSIS) service-provider organizations https://www.welcomebc.ca/start-your-life-in-b-c/find-newcomer-services/services-for-refugee-claimants%C2%A0(bc-safe-haven) (accessed on 18 February 2023) was used to identify newcomer youth-serving organizations and after-school programs in British Columbia.

— The Government of Quebec's Ministry of Immigration, Francisation and Integration website https://services.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/services-offerts.php (accessed on 18 February 2023) was consulted to identify newcomer youth-serving organizations and after-school programs and activities available to immigrant and refugee youth in Quebec.

— A review of Nova Scotia's Family Law and Immigration website https://www.nsfamilylaw.ca/other/family-law-and-race-culture-language-or-ethnicity/resources-immigrants-newcomers (accessed on 20 February 2023) produced a list of newcomer youth-serving organizations in Nova Scotia. Similarly, the Government of New Brunswick's Immigration and Settlement webpage https://welcomenb.ca/content/wel-bien/en/LivingSettling/content/SettlementAgencies.html (accessed on 20 February 2023) provided a list of settlement agencies in that province.

The Government of Saskatchewan website https://www.saskatchewan.ca/residents/moving-to-saskatchewan/live-in-saskatchewan/language-training-and-settlement-services/settlement-services (accessed on 20 February 2023) was used to identify province-wide settlement service providers for newcomers in Saskatchewan. The search for settlement organizations and newcomer youth-serving organizations in Prince Edward Island was conducted through the provincial immigration supports webpage https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/topic/immigration-supports (accessed on 20 February 2023), which identifies settlement service providers in the province.

— Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nunavut, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories did not provide publicly accessible directories of settlement agencies. For these jurisdictions, the search was redirected to the IRCC website.
— An additional website, Kids New to Canada https://kidsnewtocanada.ca/care/youth-resources (accessed on 17 February 2023), was also reviewed because it provides a list of organizations offering resources for newcomer youth.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were based on each organization's mission statement, objectives, and available services and programs. Settlement organizations that did not provide services or programs specifically designed for newcomer youth were excluded from the collected data and compiled lists. The objective of the scan was to generate lists of youth-serving organizations and after-school programs that support newcomer youth in school settlement, integration, and learning. Although the study was conducted over one year, the internet-based environmental scan continued until data saturation was achieved; that is, until no additional links to settlement or youth-serving organizations could be identified. The organizations were then counted and listed by province. In addition, the after-school programs offered by each organization were counted and categorized according to type and the activities provided to newcomer youth, thereby illustrating their availability across Canada.

The internet scan enabled us to collect a Canada-wide inventory of YSOs and ASPs without relying on prohibitively resource-intensive fieldwork, interviews, or site visits. The Internet-based data collection method allowed us to access information from all provinces and territories within realistic time and budget constraints and apply a consistent data-collection protocol across diverse jurisdictions. However, an environmental scan has its limitations. The key issue is controlling the amount of data collected, which can be overwhelming. It was not possible to analyze every possible source of related information collected in the data-searching phases, as there is always the risk of missing valuable insights. The scan, having been developed by the SSLP, constrained the scope of the research to particular categories of data deemed pertinent to the government department. Given that organizational websites exhibit variability in terms of completeness, terminology, and timeliness, it is conceivable that certain data may have been omitted or rendered obsolete.

4. Theoretical Framework: From a Deficit-Based Discursive Construction of Newcomer Students to a Strength-Based Model

Newcomer students and their families are victims of dominant discourses and assumptions embedded in deficit ideologies, which can manifest in overt (judgmental perceptions) or covert (blatantly ignoring attitudes) ways (DeMartino 2021). These pervasive deficit ideologies point to familial, cultural, linguistic, and community differences as the root causes of newcomer students' struggles in Canadian schools. These challenges are attributed to perceived cultural deficits and deficiencies in Canadian school culture. Educators treat newcomer students as tabula rasa and often view them as lacking the cultural capital required to succeed within Canadian educational standards (Shizha and Makwarimba 2026). The deficit discourse frames equity-deserving students, particularly newcomer non-White students, in terms of deficiencies, inadequacies, or failure, thereby placing responsibility for academic failure and social challenges on them, their parents, and their communities despite pervasive structural inequalities (Fogarty et al. 2018). Rooted in racism, this model racializes, marginalizes, and otherizes newcomers by portraying their race and culture as barriers to success, attributing lower academic achievement to personal or cultural shortcomings, community attitudes, or minimal parental involvement (Dei and Thobani 2007; Volante et al. 2021). It views newcomer learners as lacking proficiency in English or

French, or as lacking dominant cultural norms, rather than recognizing the knowledge, skills, and lived experiences they already bring—an unacknowledged strength.

The deficit lens reinforces stereotypes, devalues the knowledge of newcomer families, and often blames language barriers or cultural differences for failure. It can also discourage students from participating in class because they may fear discrimination based on their accents (Guo et al. 2022; Shizha et al. 2020). Lash and Fehrer (2024) highlight the same misconceptions associated with the deficit views of newcomer students. They point out that many teachers view newcomers in terms of what's missing, and students' limited proficiency in English or French is often unconsciously misinterpreted as lacking "language" altogether. If newcomer students cannot read or write fluently in English or French, or hesitate to participate in class, Canadian white teachers may question the students' overall intelligence and competence. Such deficit thinking demoralizes students, engendering fears of judgment—particularly their accents—that are perceived as unCanadian, thus dehumanizing the students (Shizha and Makwarimba 2026).

The deficit model disempowers newcomer students and undervalues their intellectual capabilities, talents, and hopes when teachers employ colonizing dominant educational models that oppress and marginalize students (Tauzel et al. 2025). Consequently, immigrant and refugee students are symbolically, physically, and programmatically positioned on the periphery of schooling processes rather than at the centre of the schooling process. Shizha et al. (2021) found that teachers often see students as less academically capable based simply on the ethnic origins of their names, race, and accents. Thus, the source of the deficit discourse reinforced by teachers in schools is multifaceted and originates in various hegemonic and colonizing social conditions that determine the dominant discourse in society. These deficit narratives reinforce the perceived white supremacy and maintain the historical legacies of Whiteness that dominate Canadian schools (Shizha and Makwarimba 2026).

Anti-deficit proponents argue that the model provides an inadequate explanation of the academic performance and achievement of newcomer students (Reed 2024; Wilson-Forsberg et al. 2018). They shift focus from an individual's or group's perceived shortcomings, failures, or "gaps" and instead centre on their inherent strengths, cultural wealth, and enablers of success (Reed 2024). It disregards perceived disadvantages students bring into schooling and learning. The anti-deficit model, also known as the strengths-based approach, challenges the stereotypes promoted by the deficit narrative. In academic settings, the term strengths-based model (also called positive interventions, resilience-based, or resource-oriented) refers to behaviors designed to acknowledge, validate, and foster newcomer students' strengths, capabilities, and motivational readiness for change (Flückiger et al. 2023). It is a narrative that focuses on the strengths or assets newcomer families and students use to overcome barriers in their new country of settlement.

Incorporating a strength-based lens into understanding newcomer students' academic success de-emphasizes perceived deficits among students who struggle with systemic marginalization by considering 'difference-as-strength' (Silverman et al. 2023). Research has also highlighted strengths among newcomer youth who have overcome adversity throughout the migration process (e.g., Betancourt et al. 2017). Wilson-Forsberg et al. (2018) reject the cultural deficit theory, arguing it fails to explain why some Black/African immigrant students, for instance, excel while others struggle. Unlike deficit-based research, which focuses on failure or problems, strength-based research highlights and builds on community and individual assets and possibilities (Shea 2021) rather than blaming victims, perpetuating stereotypes, and marginalizing them.

The strength-based approach emphasizes existing competencies and resources, which can empower individuals and communities. The approach takes a holistic view of new-

comer youth, recognizing their capacities, talents, competencies, possibilities, visions, values, and hopes, even when affected by oppression, trauma, or other circumstances. It focuses on developing a holistic understanding of individuals' identities, experiences, strengths, and challenges, and helps guide the investigation of the sources of and solutions for pervasive inequities (Silverman et al. 2023). Shifting to the strengths-based model offers a critical lens in which human agency is central, as newcomer students are considered active participants in their academic learning process and in after-school activities to enhance academic success. The initiatives empower them to influence their schooling, settlement, and integration experiences (AbuJarour et al. 2021). In schools, the strengths-based approach builds on students' strengths while addressing the challenges they may face during their learning.

There is a need for asset-based practices to replace deficit theories and deficit thinking, especially relating to immigrant children. Researchers argue that all students have inherent strengths and skills that may be drawn upon to allow for a comprehensive understanding of the student (Wilson-Forsberg et al. 2018). According to Gay (2010), shifting to asset-based thinking when working with newcomer students should focus on cultural assets. The impact of culture on learning is well documented (Georgiades et al. 2023), and research suggests that academic achievement improves when the student sees their culture reflected in their school, classroom, and curriculum (Shizha et al. 2020, 2021). One way to affirm the identity of immigrant students is to identify their "cultural assets," which are "the valuable skills, attitudes, and experiences, which emerge from the culture of the student" (Aganza et al. 2015), and use these assets in school-based interventions. Strength-based approaches guide the researchers and educators to recognize the imposed limitations of deficit-based ideologies and advance opportunities to engage in research and teaching that effectively understand and value systemically marginalized people (Silverman et al. 2023).

5. Literature Review

Newcomer youth constitute a significant subpopulation in Canada. About 2 million children aged 14 or younger immigrated to Canada between 1980 and 2023, accounting for approximately 20% of newcomers admitted to Canada during this period (Statistics Canada 2025). Despite Canada's multicultural reputation, its education system does not adequately reflect the country's cultural diversity. Schools and curricula continue to privilege English and French cultural values as dominant forms of cultural capital, thereby reinforcing Eurocentric, middle-class norms while marginalizing immigrant and Indigenous cultures (Abdi 2023; Dei and Rutherford 2023). In Europe, Grabowska et al. (2025) criticize the complexities of integrating young migrants from non-EU countries into European contexts because of state-centric, assimilationist frameworks that neglect local nuances and diverse migrant experiences. The authors criticize the nationalist identity and Western norms imposed on youth transitions and argue for a shift toward inclusive, locally informed, and reciprocal integration processes. This cultural dominance shapes school environments, interactions, and curricular content. These Western norms often neglect lived experiences and histories that shape newcomer students, thus leading to structural and systemic barriers to their schooling and educational experiences.

The barriers to academic success contribute to feelings of invisibility and misjudgment of intellectual capacities. At the same time, pervasive deficit discourses frame these students as lacking abilities and competencies, labeling them "at-risk," "dropouts," or "disadvantaged" (Dei and Kempf 2013; Paramalingam et al. 2018). Such discourses, perpetuated by educators and policymakers, contribute to the marginalization and neglect of newcomer students (Shizha et al. 2021; Wilson-Forsberg et al. 2018). The result is blatant dis-

couragement from pursuing university pathways, disproportionate streaming into applied education tracks, and harsher disciplinary measures that particularly affect Black students.

Effective school integration within provincial and territorial educational frameworks is crucial to academic achievement and future economic success of newcomer students (Volante et al. 2017). In this respect, ASPs offered by youth-serving organizations, including ethnic community organizations, can help move beyond deficit-based categorizations by addressing educational challenges through the capacities that students, their parents, and communities possess. By providing supportive learning environments outside formal schooling, these programs can complement students' educational experiences and respond to their diverse needs (Paramalingam et al. 2018). As explained earlier, the dominant group advances a deficit theory to explain the schooling and educational challenges of newcomer students and places the onus on students, families, and their communities rather than on schools to find solutions to students' underperformance; hence the establishment of ASPs.

Rationale of After-School Programs for Newcomers

Literature on ASPs demonstrates that they significantly contribute to the educational success of newcomer students by complementing formal schooling (Durlak et al. 2010). Unlike public schools, these programs—organized by local organizations, settlement and community members—offer flexible, tailored support that addresses educational skills, bolsters students' unique identities, and fosters a sense of belonging (Wong 2010). Recent government policy in Canada suggests that ASPs improve settlement and integration (Government of Canada 2021). In the European context, in Germany, the approach to after-school programs for newcomer youth is similar to Canada's—promoting economic inclusion and social inclusion (Moralli et al. 2023). Similarly, in Italy, community organizations provide after-school programs to support the reception and integration of refugees and asylum seekers to speed the adaptation process (Ince-Beqo and Ambrosini 2022). Beyond academic assistance, after-school initiatives enhance social networks and career aspirations for newcomer students, thereby addressing gaps in traditional educational frameworks (Durlak et al. 2010; Volante et al. 2017). While these ASPs may be viewed as enhancing newcomer students' school performance and contributing to academic success, their development and application reinforce dominant deficit thinking associated with newcomer students. These programs are often intended to address the educational barriers newcomer students may encounter in Canadian schools and society. However, framing students primarily in terms of their "deficiencies" can reinforce a deficit-oriented perspective. A more strengths-based view recognizes after-school initiatives as valuable opportunities to support students' academic development, confidence, inclusion, and overall educational success (Shizha and Makwarimba 2024).

A growing body of evidence highlights the role of ASPs alongside school-based learning that includes cultural inclusion to help students navigate and celebrate multiple cultural identities, peer socialization to foster positive interactions among diverse youth groups, and socio-emotional growth that builds self-esteem, resilience, and leadership skills through structured activities (Durlak et al. 2010). Schwartzkopff (2022) contends that in Germany, sports clubs and other sports initiatives organized through refugee initiatives, migrant organizations, and youth facilities that help after-school programs integrate refugees and improve their mental health and well-being. By offering newcomer youth opportunities for peer networking, ASPs can bridge the cultural barriers that can marginalize immigrant and refugee students. Schools and policymakers alike should recognize and support these programs as vital to educating and integrating newcomer students in the Canadian education system. Newcomer students and parents have acquired knowledge, strengths, and skills, including cultural capital, that are unrecognized or unacknowledged in Canada's education

system. Rather than emphasizing perceived deficits, teachers should build on the assets that students and families bring to school. In an analysis of mainstream teachers' perspectives on immigrant parents, Guo (2012) argued that educators may fail to recognize cultural diversity as a source of alternative strengths, experiences, knowledge, and perspectives. Instead, they may overlook or minimize diversity or view it as an impediment to learning. Contrary to some teachers' assumptions, immigrant parents' knowledge holds significant implications for Canadian schooling; this helps explain their support for ASPs administered by community organizations across Canada. Knowledge, diversity, and inclusion combine different life stories, skills, and ideas. This mix prevents groups from thinking the same way, sparks creative problem-solving, and helps teams find smart answers to hard questions about newcomer youth and their struggles in pursuing education in Canada.

6. Findings

The scan employed was designed exclusively to identify settlement organizations serving youth and the after-school programs they provide to newcomer youth. Settlement organizations that did not include newcomer youth in their programmatic offerings were excluded from the reported findings. Ultimately, the scan produced the following key findings:

6.1. Youth-Serving Organizations Offering After-School Youth Programs

The number of organizations found across Canada varies with each province's size and the settlement patterns of newcomer families who tend to be attracted to provinces with large metropolitan cities, where they are likely to find jobs and social networks for people from their ethnic groups. Table 1 shows that in 2025, more immigrants settled in Ontario (Toronto is the main metropolitan city), Alberta (Calgary and Edmonton are the main metropolitan cities), British Columbia (Vancouver is the main metropolitan city), and Quebec (Montreal is the main metropolitan city. Information from the organizations' annual reports showed that all organizations are state-funded and receive funding from local, provincial, and federal governments. In addition, some organizations also get financial support from private organizations.

Table 1. Number of immigrants arriving in Canada in 2025, by province or territory of residence.

Province	Immigrant Arrivals
Ontario	190,576
Alberta	58,194
Quebec	57,629
British Columbia	56,203
Manitoba	21,433
Saskatchewan	18,199
New Brunswick	12,532
Nova Scotia	10,984
Newfoundland and Labrador	5473
Prince Edward Island	2843
Yukon	826
Northwest Territories	456
Nunavut	73

Source: Statistics Canada (2026).

As shown in Table 2, data that were collected from the provincial and territorial scan indicate that YSOs operate in all 10 provinces and two territories of Canada, with most organizations in Ontario and the fewest in the territories.

Table 2. Youth-Serving Organizations Across Canada by Province.

Organizations Supporting Newcomer Youth	Province	Organizations Supporting Newcomer Youth
– Alberta Immigrant Women & Children Centre – Edmonton Immigrant Services Association – Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers – ASSIST Community Services Centre – Calgary Immigrant Women's Association – Centre for Newcomers Calgary – Calgary Catholic Immigration Society – Catholic Social Services – YMCA of Northern Alberta – Edmonton Multicultural Coalition – Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo	Alberta	– The Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth – Lethbridge Family Services – SAAMIS Immigration Services Association – Realize Your Potential Youth Society of Alberta – Accès Emploi – YMCA Calgary – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Calgary and Area – CARE for Newcomers – Diversecities – Indo-Canadian Women's Association – Islamic Family & Social Services Association – Portail de l'Immigrant Association
– Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre – DiverseCity Community Resources Society – Burnaby Neighbourhood House – Impact North Shore – Archway Community Services – Immigrant Services Society of BC – BC Newcomer Camp: Welcome to Canada – MOSAIC – YMCA of BC	British Columbia	– Inter-Cultural Association of Greater Victoria – Immigrant and Multicultural Services Society – Kelowna Community Resources – Central Okanagan Public Schools – The South Okanagan Immigrant Community Services – Kamloops Immigrant Services – Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society – Big Brothers of Greater Vancouver – S.U.C.C.E.S.S
– Newcomers Employment & Education Development Services – Altered Minds Inc. – The Peaceful Village Program – Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization	Manitoba	WIS (Westman Immigrant Services) – Neepawa & Area Immigrant Settlement Services Inc. – Portage Learning and Literacy Centre – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Winnipeg – Family Dynamics
– New Brunswick Multicultural Council – Multicultural Association of Fredericton Inc – Saint John Newcomers Centre – YMCA Greater Saint John – Multicultural Association of Carleton County	New Brunswick	– Asian Heritage Society of New Brunswick – Multicultural Agency of the Greater Moncton Area – Chaleur Region Multicultural Association – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Moncton
– Association for New Canadians – YMCA of Newfoundland and Labrador	Newfoundland & Labrador	– Big Brothers Big Sisters of Eastern NL
– YMCA Port Hawkesbury – Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia – YMCA Greater Halifax/Dartmouth	Nova Scotia	– Cape Breton Island Centre for Immigration – Immigration Francophone Nouvelle-Écosse – ARAISA – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Halifax

Table 2. *Cont.*

Organizations Supporting Newcomer Youth	Province	Organizations Supporting Newcomer Youth
– Immigrant Services Kingston & Area – Somali Immigrant Aid Organization – YMCA of Greater Toronto – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Toronto – African Community Services of Peel – Caribbean African Canadian Social Services – Cross-Cultural Learner Centre – Somali Centre for Family Services – Catholic Centre for Immigrants – Vanier Community Services Centre – Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization – YMCA of Niagara – YMCA of Southwestern Ontario – Adventure4Change – Reception House Waterloo – Black Youth Helpline– Centre for Immigrants and Community Services – New Canadians' Centre of Excellence	Ontario	– WEST Neighbourhood House – Mennonite New Life Centre – The Centre for Spanish Speaking Peoples – Thunder Bay Multicultural Association – Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services – New Canadians Centre Peterborough – Malton Neighbourhood Services – YMCA of Simcoe/Muskoka – Achēv – Halton Multicultural Council – Central Toronto Youth Services – COSTI Immigration Services – Catholic Community Services of York Region – Afghan Association of Ontario – Strides Toronto – WoodGreen – Bring on the Sunshine – Bridging Cultures – Thunder Bay Multicultural Association – Skills for Change – Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor
– Immigrant & Refugee Services Association – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Prince Edward Island	Prince Edward Island	– Black Cultural Society of Prince Edward Island – Coopérative d'intégration francophone de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard
– Centre Multiethnique de Québec – Accueil aux immigrantes de l'est de Montréal – Soutien aux Familles Réfugiées et Immigrantes de l'Estrie – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Greater Montreal – CARI St-Laurent	Quebec	– The Center RIRE 2000 – Vision Inter-Cultures – Desta Black Community Network – Entraide Bois-de-Boulogne – Chinese Family Service of Greater Montreal – La Maisonnée – PROMIS Aid for Immigrants and Refugees
– Southeast Newcomer Services – Moose Jaw Multicultural Council Inc – YWCA Prince Albert Community Connection Centre – The Regina Open Door Society – RIWC Regina Immigrant Women's Centre Inc	Saskatchewan	– Saskatchewan Intercultural Association – International Women of Saskatoon – Southwest Newcomer Welcome Centre – Saskatoon Open Door Society – Moose Jaw Newcomer Welcome Centre – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Prince Albert – Global Gathering Place – Catholic Family Services
	Northwest Territories	CDETNO: Welcome and immigration service – Yellowknife Immigration Partnership – Fédération franco-ténoise

Table 2. *Cont.*

Organizations Supporting Newcomer Youth	Province	Organizations Supporting Newcomer Youth
	Nunavut	Has no newcomer youth-serving organizations
	Yukon	– Multicultural Centre of the Yukon – Yukon Tourism Education Council

Table 3 shows 143 YSOs identified across all provinces and territories. Ontario has the greatest number, while Nunavut has none. Some organizations, such as the YMCA and Big Brothers Big Sisters, are both national and international and are found across Canada, except in the territories.

Table 3. Number of Youth-Serving Organizations by Province and Territory in Canada.

Province	Number of Youth-Serving Organizations
Ontario	39
Alberta	24
British Columbia	18
Quebec	12
Saskatchewan	13
Manitoba	9
New Brunswick	9
Newfoundland & Labrador	3
Nova Scotia	7
Prince Edward	4
Yukon	2
Northwest Territories	3
Nunavut	0
Total	**143**

Note: The numbers do not reflect all the settlement organizations in each province or territory, but only those serving newcomer youth.

6.2. Programs Offered by Newcomer Youth-Serving Organizations

Figure 1 below presents the distribution of major after-school programs serving newcomer students in Canada. The most common programs involve academic support (20.4%), including school readiness activities, homework assistance, and tutoring. Language-focused programs account for 18.6% of offerings and comprise both formal in-class Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) and informal activities such as conversation circles and other social networking opportunities. Peer networking and related social activities account for about 16.3% of after-school programs offered by Youth-Serving Organizations. Additional program categories include career readiness (10.3%), school and cultural adaptation (9.5%), mental health and well-being (8.8%), and other services (12.2%). Financial support programs are the least prevalent, constituting 3.9% of offerings, including scholarships and bursaries reported by very few YSOs.

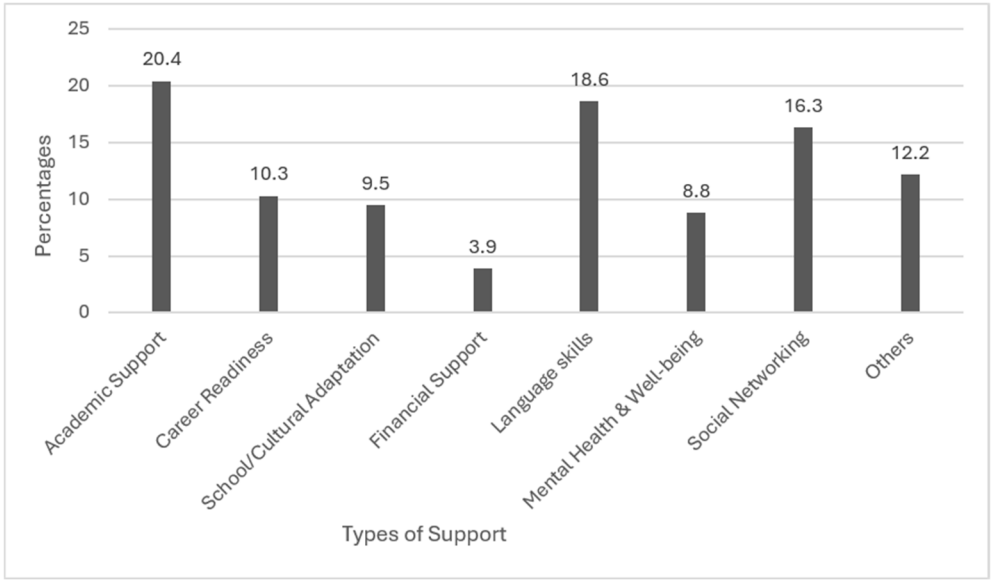


Figure 1. After-School Programs for Newcomer Youth Across Canada.

The scan identified approximately 231 services and programs offered by YSOs across Canada. Figure 2 presents the number of after-school programs identified through youth-serving organizations across the provinces and territories. Of these, Ontario provides the most, with 65 programs (28%), followed by Alberta with 49 (21%), British Columbia with 32 (14%), Saskatchewan with 21 (9%), and Quebec with 16 (7%). The four Atlantic provinces (New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island) offer fewer programs, and the three territories have the fewest overall. Nevertheless, Statistics Canada (2022) reports a nearly threefold increase in the share of recent immigrants settling in Atlantic Canada, rising from 1.2% in 2006 to 3.5% in 2021, suggesting that additional funding will be needed to develop or expand newcomer YSOs and youth programs in that region. While the territories are often perceived as remote and economically limited, 2175 recent immigrants (0.2% of all newcomers) settled there in 2021, underscoring the need for tailored programs to support newcomer children's school enrollment and retention.

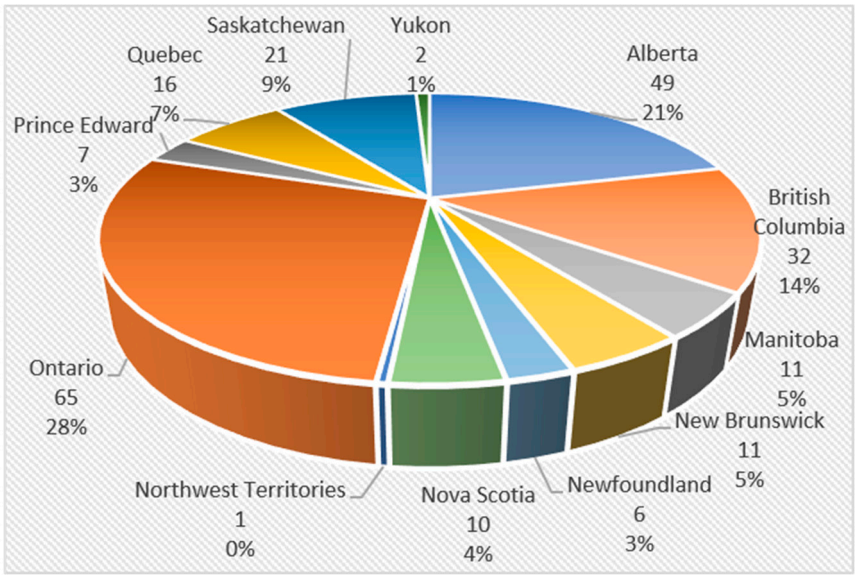


Figure 2. Number of After-school Programs for Newcomer Youth by Province and Territory in Canada.

6.3. Programs Offered to Newcomer Youth by Ethnocultural Community Organizations

Among the YSOs that provided ASPs, some were ethnocultural community organizations providing newcomer youth from their ethnic background a range of programs tailored to their needs. As shown in Figure 3, the most commonly offered services include academic support (11%), mentorship and coaching (10%), peer networking opportunities (8%), mental health and well-being support (7%), financial assistance, culturally responsive programming, and career-readiness training. Conversely, the least commonly offered services include language training, volunteering opportunities, homework support, and counselling services, standing at 3% each.

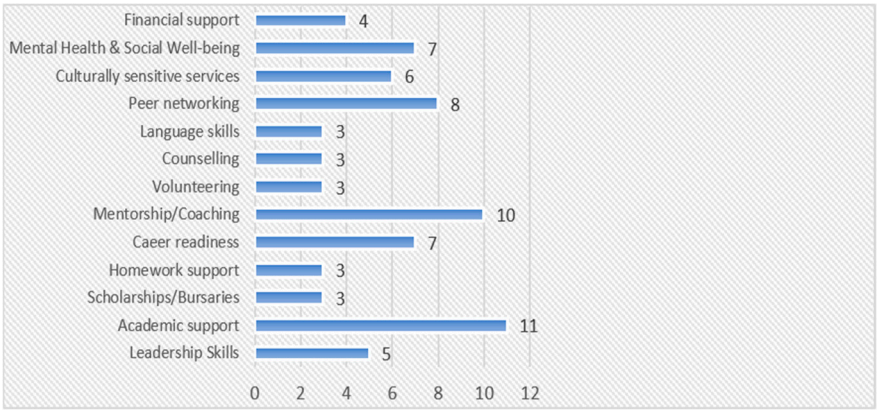


Figure 3. Percentages of After-school Newcomer Students' Programs Provided by Ethnocultural Community Organizations.

7. Analysis of Data

One important implication of the current findings is that ASPs provide a wide range of after-school programs that offer newcomer students' academic support, cultural adaptation, social integration, financial support, and school performance and employment readiness, among others. Whether the programs address the deficit that newcomer students bring into their learning or the strengths and resources they apply in their learning, ASPs play a vital role in enhancing the academic performance and integration of the students.

7.1. Program Availability Across Provinces and Territories

Youth-serving organizations and after-school programs vary considerably across Canada. These differences are based on provincial size, geographic location, and the scale of urban centres. Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, and Alberta are home to large immigrant and refugee populations in major metropolitan areas—including Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and Calgary—where newcomers often choose to settle. These cities offer employment opportunities, stronger career prospects, and established communities with shared ethnic and cultural backgrounds, which can facilitate newcomers' transition and access to social support. As a result, settlement services are heavily concentrated in these four provinces, reflecting long-standing patterns of immigrant and refugee settlement. This concentration also influences service provision and the demographic structure of provinces and territories. Larger provinces with major metropolitan centres therefore tend to have more settlement organizations offering programs and services, including after-school programming for newcomer youth, than Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the Maritime provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island, and the territories of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon.

Outside Quebec, where settlement services are delivered through government offices, services are primarily provided by non-profit organizations funded by government. These

organizations are often considered well positioned to serve immigrant communities because of their proximity to newcomers and their capacity to respond to community-specific needs. Not-for-profit and community-based organizations with proven track records, and a primary mandate in delivering settlement and integration services receive provincial and federal funding.

7.2. Newcomer Youth-Serving Organizations and Newcomer Students' School Cultural Adaptation

Canada has newcomer YSOs and programs designed to address the assumed cultural deficit that may cause newcomer students to struggle with cultural dissonance as they adapt to the Canadian education system and life. These programs are delivered in culturally responsive, sensitive ways to help students navigate the complex challenges associated with their multiple, intersecting identities in new school settings. The study found that 9.5% of ASPs that are provided by YSOs across Canada target cultural and school adaptation and integration. Students may experience tension when reconciling the values and cultural practices of their home countries and families with those of their peers, their schools, and broader Canadian society.

Youth-serving organizations act as crucial intermediaries, bridging cultural gaps and facilitating smoother transitions to Canadian life and educational environments. These organizations work with historically marginalized youth and employ workers who share similar cultural backgrounds. The workers are also well connected to resources and uniquely positioned to support newcomer youth by recognizing the risks and assets linked to their mental well-being. They offer ASPs that mitigate various adaptation challenges, including language barriers, social isolation, discrimination, and unfamiliarity with local norms. Learning the Canadian school culture promotes positive interactions between newcomer students, non-immigrant peers, and teachers. The students will learn how to speak and behave in "expected ways." The strength of YSOs and their programs lies in validating newcomer students' ethnic cultures by treating them as assets rather than deficits, which may reduce acculturative stress. The cultural values, beliefs, and norms that newcomers bring to Canada are not liabilities to adaptation but assets of their ethnic cultural capital (Berry 2009). For instance, organizations that employ settlement workers in schools (SWIS) as mediators between families, communities, and students and the school play a crucial role in reducing this stress by promoting school integration through cultural brokering. Neepawa and Area Immigration Settlement Services describes the role of its SWIS workers in providing school adaptation as

> Our SWIS workers act as a cultural bridge between the school, home, and community. Though many programs take place within schools, we assist newcomer immigrants and refugee students, along with their families, in their transition to a new culture and school environment to better understand the education system and provide information and referrals to education and community resources.

Adding to this role of SWIS workers, the Multicultural Association of Fredericton in New Brunswick describes its support for cultural adaptation as follows:

> In partnership with local schools, the Anglophone School District and community partners, our SWIS workers support and facilitate the integration and participation of newcomer students in Anglophone or Francophone schools and community; and provide culturally sensitive and inclusive services to students, their families, school staff and community partners. . . to promote diversity and inclusion in schools and in the community. SWIS workers collaborate with school staff and community partners to ensure that the needs of newcomer students and families are identified and met, and follow up with students regularly in their new school to support their settlement and integration.

Settlement workers in schools deliver programs that affirm students' cultural heritage as valuable academic assets. When teachers recognize and acknowledge students' cultures, newcomer students feel accepted and included in the school setting. According to Deci and Ryan's (2011) theory of positive developmental environments, SWIS workers often share similar ethnic backgrounds as the students they serve and act as cultural brokers who provide culturally relevant services, including school-readiness orientation, family outreach, cultural counseling, interpretation, and advocacy that benefit youth in their community and school. These are powerful assets, not deficits, for newcomer students' school preparation and mental health well-being, which they are likely to encounter in a new school and country. This cultural commonality supports the social and academic development of newcomer students by fostering familiarity with school expectations and strengthening connections with their peers (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada 2022). Consequently, YSOs and culturally tailored support programs are vital for newcomer students to navigate the complex process of settlement and integration in Canadian schools and society. Inclusion and integration are central to students' membership in the school and may enhance school participation, retention, performance, and educational outcomes. SWISs help manage newcomer students' school anxieties resulting from unfamiliarity with a new school system and adapting to a new culture, which can create feelings of isolation, social exclusion, and academic failure.

7.3. Language and Communication Skills Development Programs

Language proficiency is an important communication tool at school and in the community. Newcomer students in Canada, particularly those not proficient in English or French, face considerable challenges due to language barriers. These barriers, which should not be equated with deficits but rather a lack of proficiency, often hinder their ability to communicate effectively, participate in classroom discussions, and understand academic content, particularly affecting refugee youth with limited or no prior formal education (Shizha et al. 2021). Insufficient proficiency in English or French can lead to academic disengagement, misunderstanding of material, fewer opportunities for peer interaction, and less effective communication with teachers. Language challenges may also affect newcomer families, as parents face difficulties with the official languages, which limit their ability to support children's homework and learning, potentially resulting in family exclusion from educational involvement (Sugarman and Lazarín 2020). Our study found 18.6% of ASPs offer language practice services in Canada. They offer informal spaces such as conversational circles, social networking activities, cooking clubs, and in-class services such as the LINC program. To help newcomer students improve their communication skills, the Cross-Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC) of London, Ontario, offers informal language practice through its Youth Networking Program and describes the program as:

> CCLC Youth Networking Program provides mostly Syrian newcomer youth with opportunities to practice English by meeting informally at our centre, making new friends, engaging in sports, recreation, art, learning about London, and developing their English skills through conversation circles and discussions surrounding Canadian geography, history, and economy. The programs offer sessions on youth leadership, volunteering, and civic engagement.

Additionally, the Halton Multicultural Council in Milton, Ontario, provides a variety of programs and services immigrant and refugee youth can access to practice their language skills. The organization states that

> The Halton Multicultural Council aims to increase student engagement in school and/or community, reduce youth isolation, promote successful positive school experiences, and maximize student success through supporting language acquisi-

> tion and learning Canadian culture. The programs include a Tutoring Program for youth needing help with schoolwork and improving their language skills, and Summer & March Break Camps to allow newcomer youth to meet new people, practice their English, and learn about their community.

While some organizations, in general, offer language programs to newcomers, such as the federally funded Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), these often focus on basic communication skills suited to adults seeking social integration in their communities rather than academic language needed by school-age students (Anderson 2020), those under the age of 18 and in high school. The program does not prepare newcomer students for specialized, discipline-specific language used in classroom instruction, school assignments, and course expectations. For example, the ASSIST Community Services Centre in Edmonton, Alberta describes its LINC program as follows.

The LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) Program is an English language training program funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)/Government of Canada for young adult immigrants and refugees. It is free for students and helps newcomers learn practical, useful English for life in Canada. The classes focus on the English needed for settlement in Canada. The classes address themes related to health, education, employment, and community life, including transportation, recreation, housing, food, and shopping. To enroll in LINC, newcomers must be 18 years of age or older. Another Alberta-based organization, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS), describes its LINC program similarly as follows:

> The LINC Program, federally funded by IRCC, offers 21-day and evening, full-time and part-time English language classes. It is free of charge and only for permanent residents and convention refugees, 18 years and older. English language instruction is designed to help newcomers adapt to life in Canada, reflect on their interests and needs, the health and well-being of their family, provide supportive skills to help them find meaningful employment, and allow them to make a positive contribution to a supportive community. It is specific to beginners and includes instruction in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, advanced conversation, effective writing, literacy support, and assistance in accessing resources in the community, such as health clinics, retail businesses, and recreational facilities.

Schools address academic language needs not emphasized in LINC programs by offering English as a Second Language (ESL) and French as a Second Language (FSL) instruction that develops students' proficiency, fluency, and confidence in using the language in the classroom and in communication with teachers and peers. However, these programs may also marginalize newcomers' ethnic languages by prioritizing Canadian norms of accent and pronunciation. The purpose is to Canadianize the newcomer students (Shizha 2019). ESL/FSL programs and teachers, from a deficit approach, ignore the diverse experiences of newcomers that may not align with the repetitive imaginings of Canada as a redeemer of immigrant Others whose languages and accents are perceived as barriers to academic performance and participation.

ESL/FSL programs inadvertently isolate and stigmatize newcomer students who already speak English or French with accents, labelling them as "dumb and stupid" (Shizha et al. 2020, 2021). Non-recognition of youths' distinct linguistic and social capitals, the imposition of official languages, and the regulation of the education and language market according to dominant linguistic norms discriminate against newcomer students in Canada. In-school and after-school language programs suggest that newcomer youths' cultural and linguistic experiences of inclusion and exclusion cannot be dissociated from the wider politics of race, ethnicity, and hegemonic social inequalities in Canadian schools. Zemba

and Mehrotra (2023) observed that race and ethnicity shape reactions to speech and accent in patterned ways, and attitudes toward language and accent influence immigrants' sense of belonging. In their study on language and belonging among older immigrants, they found that white immigrants were perceived as "Acceptable Outsiders," and they largely received positive appraisals of their accents, while in contrast, non-white immigrants experienced ridicule, microaggressions, and discrimination.

Community-based YSOs serve an important supplementary role in mitigating stigma and isolation by offering informal language-practice environments, including conversation circles, clubs, and cultural events. Such initiatives promote social connection, identity formation, and a sense of belonging among newcomer students. These social spaces enhance cross-cultural understanding and support language acquisition outside formal education frameworks. Smith and Crooks (2022) study on newcomer resilience found that maintaining a connection to home culture and religion, reframing thoughts positively, receiving emotional support, accessing community support at newcomer agencies, and building language proficiency helped build confidence for educational success. Ungar (2012) defines resilience as "both an individual's capacity to navigate health resources and a condition of the individual's community and culture to provide these resources in culturally meaningful ways" (p. 5). This aligns with the social capital framework, which emphasizes trust, shared norms, a sense of belonging, and supportive networks as resources that strengthen social participation and language development (Coleman 1988). Addressing the language needs of newcomer students requires multifaceted support that combines formal academic language instruction with community-based social programs to strengthen both educational outcomes and social integration. Research also shows that sustained language support, content-based instruction, and partnerships with community organizations help newcomer students develop proficiency, a sense of belonging, and school success (Kalchos et al. 2022). Language programs offered by ASPs may reflect a deficit-based paradigm, as they seek to modify newcomer youths' accents and pronunciation in accordance with Canadian linguistic norms. Because accent and pronunciation can be important markers of identity, such approaches may risk devaluing newcomers' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

7.4. After-School Programs and School Preparation Initiatives (School Readiness Programs)

ASPs play a critical role in preparing students for sustained school engagement, including maintaining enrolment and facilitating successful transitions from high school to postsecondary education. School readiness denotes the extent to which students are prepared to enroll and thrive academically, encompassing both cognitive and non-cognitive factors (Farrington et al. 2012). Nevertheless, research on the contribution of ASPs to school readiness among newcomer students remains limited. However, organizations such as the Association for New Canadians (ANC) in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, have programs that prepare newcomer students for schooling in Canada. It describes one of its programs as follows:

> The Summer Enrichment Program is a 4-week program offering immigrant youth (ages 13–21) the opportunity to participate in programming that reinforces school-acquired knowledge, while also assisting them in preparing for the coming school year. This classroom- and curriculum-based program focuses on strengthening math and English skills.

From a deficit perspective, however, these programs may appear to target newcomer students who may be viewed as lacking the cognitive readiness required to begin their education in Canada. However, this framing is problematic because it reduces students to perceived deficiencies rather than recognizing their prior knowledge, language assets,

and lived experience. Cognitive factors include measurable skills such as academic content knowledge and problem-solving abilities (Wiley et al. 2010), which some newcomer students may have already developed in schools in their home countries before coming to Canada. The ASPs available to students play an important role in reinforcing these abilities and forms of knowledge. Noncognitive factors refer to mindsets (for example, self-efficacy), behaviors, and motivation that complement cognitive skills and support students' success (Farrington et al. 2012) and are qualities that newcomer students possess. Research shows that newcomer students are motivated to stay in school and graduate to be successful in Canada. They have both the cognitive and noncognitive abilities that promote educational performance. Nevertheless, they may need support to navigate the education system in Canada.

YSOs such as Lethbridge Family Services and its NOW Out-of-School program offer orientation to newcomer students and their families to prepare for their first weeks in Canadian Schools. Such support may include relationship building, peer connections, and school tours. After-school programs provide emotional and psychological support to help students prepare for the new school environments they are likely to encounter. Although many newcomer students are educationally oriented and aspire to succeed in and contribute to Canadian society, they may require support to prepare for unfamiliar environments and experiences. Newcomer students—especially refugees—face added challenges that extend beyond adapting to life in Canada. As a subset of first-generation immigrants, refugee students often have educational gaps from missed schooling and may carry trauma from exposure to conflict (Shakya et al. 2010). Traumatic experiences may include exposure to violent conflict and prolonged threat, human rights violations, forced separation from parents or caregivers, detention, and experiences of torture. Studies consistently reveal how this complex cluster of migration-related stressors may constrain refugee children and young people's development and put them at an increased risk for a broad range of psychosocial and mental health difficulties, with high rates of anxiety, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder (De Haene and Rousseau 2020; Spaas et al. 2022). In cases of war and civil conflict, such as Ukrainian, Afghan, and Syrian children who have been relocated and settled in Canada, their education could have been interrupted. In addition, they experience both pre-and post-migration trauma that might affect their educational outcomes. They may also experience learning deficits and lingering psychosocial effects (Volante et al. 2021).

Displacement and time in refugee camps can leave these young people unfamiliar with Canadian school rules, procedures, and expectations, and with limited literacy and numeracy in English or French. To provide support to these students, ethnic youth serving organizations, such as the DIVERSEcity in British Columbia, the Afghan Association of Ontario, the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba, and the Somali Centre for Family Services in Ontario, provide some support to refugee children and youth in their communities to prepare them for Canadian education by providing programs that focus on peer networking, one-on-one or group counselling, and conversation circles to improve the emotional and mental well-being of the students. The findings from this study indicate that 8.8% of ASPs provide mental health programs such as counselling services to newcomer youth regardless of their immigration status. These organizations emphasize comprehensive family supports, including helping parents identify and help their children overcome stress-related anxieties associated with unfamiliar settings, isolation, and cultural adjustment. A comprehensive family support program refocuses parents and children on educational goals and connections to essential community resources to promote academic and socioemotional readiness for newcomer children. Nevertheless, programs observed in this environmental scan did not appear specifically designed to address the unique needs

of refugee students. YSOs in our study provided generic programs for both immigrant and refugee students.

Additionally, the community SWIS workers, parental involvement, and language programs discussed earlier are components of the school preparation for refugee and immigrant students alike. This finding is consistent with research indicating that newcomer parents' engagement—including immigrants and refugees—home-based support, and connections to community services strengthen children's academic achievement, foster a sense of belonging, and support school adjustment (Nikolovski 2022). In Quebec, La Maisonnée is a program that involves community social workers and local parents in assisting newcomer students with school integration. As described by the organization, as follows:

> This program, funded by Centraide, allows La Maisonnée to accompany and support immigrant and refugee students aged 12 to 17 in their integration and academic journey at George-Vanier High School. Two afternoons a week, a social worker from the community, as well as students doing work placements at La Maisonnée and parent volunteers, go to the school to help students in reception classes with homework, but also, above all, to develop self-esteem, to support them in their personal journey, and help them integrate well into their new environment and the host society by offering them socio-cultural and fun activities after class as well as attentive listening.

In Canada, the policy landscape for newcomer education is fragmented and heavily weighted toward literacy and language acquisition, with minimal provincial or territorial support for a holistic transition to Canadian schooling (Scott 2013). As a result, settlement organizations and ethnic community groups that focus on youth programs often fill this gap. Some ASPs, such as the NewLife Regeneration Program offered by Realize Your Potential Youth Society of Alberta, employ youth cultural ambassadors to help newcomer students navigate school policies, prepare for cultural adjustment, and develop coping strategies. The program "is a comprehensive, recognized postsecondary preparation and mentoring program for newcomers ages 8–15 designed by educators and facilitated by talented youth ambassadors, ages 16–24." Youth cultural ambassadors help newcomer students connect school to their everyday lives (Afterschool Alliance 2014), fostering teamwork, youth connections, and experiential learning that promotes problem-solving and decision-making. By focusing on both cognitive and non-cognitive assets, these programs can boost students' confidence and aspirations, encouraging active school participation, school retention, and the setting of ambitious educational goals. Some YSOs, such as the New Canadians' Centre of Excellence—Newcomer Orientation Week (NOW) & Welcome and Information for Newcomers (WIN), offer school readiness orientation programs that focus on cultural literacy, preparing students for expectations in a Canadian classroom, essential English language skills (for non-native English speakers), peer mentorship, recreational activities, and social-emotional coping strategies. According to the New Canadians' Centre of Excellence, "the WIN Program is an orientation to newcomer parents and their children entering elementary schools. The NOW program engages students who were newcomers in previous years as peer leaders to demonstrate school routines, provide information, and offer advice to new students. Peer Leaders receive training to welcome and help newcomer students settle into secondary schools." Peer-led school orientation workshops ease the transition from pre-migration schools to post-migration schools in Canada. Peer-led support groups for newcomer students offer safe spaces to share adjustment challenges, practice language skills, and build community.

7.5. After-School Programs and Financial Support for Newcomer Students

Newcomer students face financial pressures that may interfere with completing high school or postsecondary school because many newcomer families come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, which means these youth must often assist their families financially by taking some form of employment while attending school (Shizha et al. 2020). Financial pressures may compel these students to leave school to contribute to their families' financial needs. However, education-inclined parents are likely to encourage their children to participate actively in ASPs offered by community organizations to access information on financial assistance, scholarships, academic support, and career preparation. For example, the NewLife Regeneration Program, offered by The Realize Your Potential Youth Society in Calgary, Alberta, and Kamloops Immigrant Services in British Columbia, provides newcomer youth with tuition assistance (bursaries and scholarships) to encourage participation and transitioning to postsecondary education. Of the YSOs identified, 3.9% provided financial information, scholarships, and bursaries to newcomer students. For instance, the Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization's scholarship program in Ontario states that

> The Marion Dewar Scholarship Fund (MDSF) provides financial support to foster academic and leadership excellence in immigrant and refugee youth. Each year, a $1500 scholarship is awarded to three newcomer youth going on to postsecondary education in the National Capital Region to supplement the tuition and supplies required for their postsecondary education.

In addition, the Black Cultural Society of Prince Edward Island offers the Courtside Black Culture Bursary as one of its programs. According to the organization,

> The Courtside Black Culture Bursary presents a $1000 award (each) to three Black Prince Edward Island students annually to help defray post-secondary education costs. The bursary is awarded based on the demonstrated financial need of the recipient, volunteer experience, extracurricular involvement, community service, and being of immigrant and refugee background.

Financial difficulties may prevent some newcomer parents from encouraging their children to attend post-secondary education, preferring them to work and contribute to the family income. The findings suggest a need for more expanded financial support for scholarships and bursaries, as they are currently available through a limited number of YSOs. This limited availability creates inequities in newcomer students' access to the financial support they require. Nevertheless, multiple studies confirm that immigrant parents are consistently "education inclined" and have "a culture of education", irrespective of their formal educational and financial backgrounds (Bendixsen and Danielsen 2020; Martin et al. 2025; Rae 2018), and seek means to promote their children's educational aspirations. For that reason, YSOs can provide financial assistance when available. Such financial assistance may supplement the support newcomer parents can provide for their children and encourage them to participate in ASPs, where they may obtain information about financial resources, including scholarships and bursaries.

Immigrant parents maintain robust optimism regarding their children's potential for success through available programs that can enhance their children's academic success in the Canadian education system and consistently motivate them to achieve greater accomplishments than they have attained (Robson et al. 2018). This aspirational mindset creates a powerful motivational framework for seeking out-of-school programs that transcends the parents' educational and financial limitations. Additionally, parents—particularly those of economic immigrants—often serve as role models and mentors for their children (Shizha and Makwarimba 2024) and may support their ethnic YSOs through financial donations for

bursary or scholarship programs. The Regina Open Door Society (RODS) reports that its Newcomer Bursaries are funded by the Social Justice Committee, which receives donations from community members, especially immigrant professionals who have successfully integrated into the employment market in Canada. Because economic immigrants generally have higher levels of education and may have adequate financial resources, they are likely to donate to programs that promote their children's educational and career pathways. Newcomer parents' capacity to serve as role models, their financial contributions, and the support they provide to both their children and ethnic community organizations challenge the deficit model that positions immigrants as dependent on external assistance to succeed in Canada.

Parental involvement—including parents' engagement with their children's education and their relationships with community organizations—is a crucial factor motivating children to participate in after-school programs. This engagement strengthens parent–child attachment, enhances communication pathways, and promotes both parental responsibility and responsiveness to available assistance (Boulaamane and Bouchamma 2021). Contrary to what some school practitioners believe or what some research protocols and literature take for granted, Guo (2012) argues that newcomer parents can be actively involved in their children's education and further contends that, beyond the cultural deficit model, parents have funds of knowledge drawn from their own educational backgrounds, professional and personal experiences of interacting with schools in their countries of origin, current understanding of the host country's education system, their own struggles as immigrant parents, and their future aspirations for their children. Drawing on these funds of knowledge, newcomer parents possess the capacity to support their children in pursuing their academic aspirations.

Consequently, YSOs in this study implement programs that engage both parents and children, involving adults in support initiatives such as homework clubs to encourage academic focus among students. Some initiatives, such as SWIS workers, facilitate homework support clubs, parent-teacher communication, and essential partnerships among immigrant families, schools, and immigrant communities. These partnerships effectively support, guide, and cultivate a sense of belonging among immigrant families and their children, creating comprehensive support networks that extend beyond traditional educational boundaries.

7.6. Academic Support and Homework Support Clubs for Newcomer Students

The study found that 20.4% of ASPs offered academic support through homework clubs, which proponents of both deficit- and strengths-based approaches consider beneficial for newcomer students' academic performance, school completion, and graduation. Such support often relies on the knowledge and capabilities of peers, parents, and community members. Rather than reflecting deficiencies, these familial and community strengths can enhance coping strategies, confidence, trust, peer connection, belonging, and students' understanding of the Canadian context. Several community organizations provide free or low-cost tutoring through homework support, English-language support, and help with school assignments.

Homework clubs are defined as "after-school programs that provide a structured environment for students to complete their homework, serving as a preventative measure against school failure and early school dropout" (Department of Education and Science 2005, p. 17). These clubs aim to reduce disparities in academic performance associated with perceived differences in newcomer students' educational, cultural, and psychological preparedness. Students attend after-school centres to facilitate completion of homework, which resonates most strongly where newcomer parents do not always have enough time

to assist their children with homework due to multiple work shifts to make ends meet and who may not be sufficiently proficient in their child's language of instruction to help with homework (Bélanger et al. 2015). According to Wilder (2014),

> [. . .] Most parents are not trained to teach certain concepts, regardless of their difficulty, or they may not be familiar with appropriate teaching methods. In either case, students are not likely to benefit much from this type of involvement. [. . .] It is also likely that students who are struggling academically represent the majority of children requesting parental assistance in homework, which could explain negative trends between homework involvement and academic achievement (392).

Because many newcomer students are developing proficiency in English or French while simultaneously learning complex academic content, they are often perceived as lagging behind their non-immigrant peers in academic achievement (Bempechat et al. 2011). One way to bridge this gap is through after-school homework clubs. For instance, the Calgary Bridge Foundation for Youth offers two homework clubs, the NxtGen Junior High (Grades 7–9) and the NxtGen Homework Club (Grades 10–12), to provide youth "one-on-one and group academic support in Mathematics, Science, English, Social Studies, and English as a Second Language (ESL). The objective is to help them improve their study skills and grow in personal confidence. Engaging students in homework clubs is expected to enhance school performance and support their progress toward completing their education. Homework clubs support the development of students' cognitive and non-cognitive skills, self-efficacy, confidence, and academic performance. In addition, they may foster positive social, academic, and emotional development, thereby strengthening students' academic self-concept.

Academic self-concept refers to an individual's knowledge and perception of their academic achievement in school (Marsh and Seaton 2013). Homework clubs that involve peer networking and support students working together enhance their academic self-concept and encourage cooperation in solving academic problems. Our study shows that 16.3% of ASPs offer newcomer students opportunities to develop new social networks. Generally, peer and social networking improve academic self-concept, which is influenced by comparisons of one's academic performance with that of immediate peers (Marsh and Seaton 2013). After-school homework clubs provide students with opportunities to learn from peers and develop their academic self-concept through social comparison by comparing their academic performance with that of their peers and identifying strategies to improve it. Notably, Kumari and Chamundeswari (2013), in their study on self-concept, concluded that academic self-concept significantly influences students' achievement, playing a decisive role in gauging their level of competence and potential among other students. Previous work by Plucker and Stocking (2001) demonstrated that the development of academic self-concept hinges upon two concurrent comparison processes: (a) internal comparison, where students gauge their perceived aptitude in one subject against their performance in other domains, and (b) external comparison, wherein students evaluate their prowess in one subject vis-à-vis their peers' competence. Homework clubs and peer support during homework provide these comparison processes. Research has also examined both internal and external comparisons, as newcomer students evaluate their performance relative to one another and to their school or classroom peers. It has further demonstrated positive correlations between academic self-concept and academic achievement, motivation, and effort (Sunu and Baidoo-Anu 2024). Arguably, these homework clubs foster motivation, self-esteem, and stress-coping strategies by providing peer support that can enhance academic performance, social skills, and competencies. Homework support creates opportunities and resources not only to promote social justice and equity but also to activate individual and

community resources and capacities so that newcomer students can benefit from academic support opportunities available in their communities.

7.7. After-School Tutoring Programs for Newcomer Students

Closely related to homework clubs are tutoring programs organized by newcomer-serving YSOs. Such programs may constitute an important part of after-school initiatives that may help mitigate "transfer shock" among newcomer students. (Teshera-Levye and Vance-Chalcraft 2024) from their home school to new school settings in Canada. Newcomer students' transition experiences, including familiarity with coping strategies, are central to their adjustment in Canadian schools. Academic success requires not only relevant skills but also an awareness of, and capacity to access, school resources for self-improvement. Nevertheless, strategies and behaviours that facilitated success in their previous educational contexts may be less effective owing to differences in norms and expectations between those schools and Canadian schools (Teshera-Levye and Vance-Chalcraft 2024). The scan identified several tutoring and mentoring programs across Canadian provinces and cities, with most programs in larger provinces and metropolitan cities. These programs offer academic instruction, guidance, and support designed to promote newcomer students' educational success.

Tutoring Models and Structures Utilized by Tutors

Newcomer-serving YSOs typically engage senior peers—such as current students or graduates—with experience in the Canadian education system as tutors. This cross-age peer tutoring model represents the most extensively researched approach for immigrant and refugee youth. Programs often pair newly arrived students with peers who have already settled and integrated into the country (Karcher 2013). Tutoring may take the form of one-on-one mentoring relationships or small-group sessions led by one or more tutors, and it may occur in school-based or community-based settings. Tutors may include peers, university students, or motivated adults committed to supporting newcomer students (Bridging Refugee Youth & Children's Services [BRYCS] 2010). Although tutoring programs may be perceived as addressing deficits or framing newcomer experiences as barriers, they often employ a strengths-based model that draws on personal, parental, and community assets. This approach can promote a sense of belonging, cultural identity, language development, and broader integration into new educational and community environments. As some YSOs, such as The Adventure4Change—Youth Accelerator Project Mentorship in Waterloo, Ontario, have noted, guidance from caring tutors can increase confidence and motivation among students. In its program description, it states that

> The Youth Accelerator Project (YAP) is designed to help maximize the potential of all youth, but particularly racialized youth. With the support and guidance of a positive, caring adult mentor, young people are motivated and inspired to perform well in school. The program enables youth to expand their minds, build confidence, and persevere through various challenges... Adventure4Change supports the academic pursuits of youth in a relational context to address systemic and academic barriers experienced by racialized youth.

Students, parents, and communities actively cultivate resilience, adaptability, goal orientation, optimism, and resourcefulness through engagement in peer mentoring, academic coaching, and tutoring programs. (Garrigues and Olukotun 2025). Peer tutoring, mentorship, and peer support through YSOs play a crucial role in fostering a sense of belonging, social inclusion, and relationship formation while enhancing mental well-being and resilience among newcomer youth (Oxman-Martinez and Choi 2014; Teja and Schonert-Reichl 2013). Aligning with existing literature on the benefits of peer or near-peer mentorship in

fostering a sense of belonging, these programs alleviate social concerns in schools for shy students who are introverted or who need to "put themselves out there" to make friends. Tutoring goes beyond, and above, academic support, as indicated by the Edmonton Immigrant Service Association (EISA) description of its tutoring program, which involves

> Children and Youth Tutors and Mentors who go to participating community schools during out-of-school time to assist newcomer students to effectively integrate into the Albertan school systems, develop skills to adapt to Canadian cultures, and cope with cultural, social, emotional, and other relationship-related challenges. The tutors and mentors visit participating community schools regularly and provide reliable and long-term support. They also develop a holistic approach when supporting the newcomer students. They learn about the students' needs and goals, and design and lead different activities, including academic tutoring.

EISA's tutoring approach facilitates students' holistic adjustment to new cultural and academic environments by drawing on peer support. Peer-to-peer learning that involves peers as tutors from the same community has been described as a strength that promotes peer networking, social inclusion, and academic performance and success. Research demonstrates that peer tutoring interventions through ASPs benefit immigrant and refugee youth by serving as protective factors during their transition to new schools and countries (Oberoi 2016). The significance of peers is reported by the Association for New Canadians in its Elementary, Junior High and High School After-School Program when it points out that

> The program provides immigrant youth with academic assistance through instructor-peer tutoring and volunteer-based classroom assistance from ethnic youth from the community. The goals of the program are to enhance the linguistic, academic, and social competencies of refugee and immigrant youth while promoting civic engagement and integration.

Peer tutoring initiatives contribute to multiple positive outcomes, including social integration, a stronger sense of belonging, successful acculturation and school integration, and improved academic performance. Given the significant role of peers in youth adjustment (Ellis et al. 2020), peer support constitutes an underutilized resource for enhancing social inclusion and adjustment of newcomer students. Peer tutoring and coaching are documented interventions that mediate against alienation and isolation, racism, and othering (Crooks et al. 2021).

7.8. Resilience, Motivation and Ambition for Academic Success

Refugee and immigrant youth must adapt to new environments, navigate unfamiliar cultures and languages, and rebuild social networks while moving through critical developmental stages. These stages involve biological, cognitive, and psychosocial changes that can profoundly affect well-being and academic outcomes. Nevertheless, research examining adjustment and coping experiences of recently arrived newcomer youth in Canada remains limited, with much of the existing literature framed through a deficit-based perspective (Mawani 2014). In contrast, newcomer youth demonstrate notable strengths and resilience that support their adaptation (Smith and Crooks 2022). In much of the literature on resilience, it is conceptualized as shaped by both individual characteristics and contextual factors (e.g., cognitive skills and emotional regulation) and coping abilities (e.g., problem-solving, sense of agency, and hope), which act as protective factors (Smith and Crooks 2024). Ethnic newcomer YSOs have established spaces where newcomer students can interact with community leaders, parents, and settled youth who motivate them to utilize their assets and capacities to enhance school adaptation and integration and achieve academic success.

Resilience itself is a complex, context-dependent construct that varies across cultures (Liebenberg and Theron 2015). The existence of culturally different ethnic newcomer YSOs indicates that cultural communities possess distinct assets that foster hope and achievement despite adversity. In a recent qualitative study, newcomer youth emphasized the importance of accessing support through newcomer agencies, highlighting that resilience extends beyond individual traits and is nurtured by the sense of community and safety in these environments (Smith and Crooks 2024). These organizations and communities provide newcomer youth with coping strategies—such as problem-solving, agency, future orientation, hope, and growth—that function as protective factors (Este and Van Ngo 2011). The Somali Centre for Family Services' Together We Can Mentorship (Black Youth Action) program demonstrates how communities can build youth resilience by fostering hope and growth and by positioning community members as accessible role models and sources of support. It states that

> The Black Youth Action Plan is an initiative to help reduce disparities for Black children, youth, and their families. The Together We Can (TWC) Mentorship Program engages 40–50 youths annually who face multiple challenges and risk factors that hinder their capacity to develop their resilience and confidence to be successful. The mentors are dedicated Black professionals who help overcome risk factors such as cultural barriers, educational underperformance, lack of meaningful employment, and interaction with the justice system. By matching youth mentees with suitable professional community mentors, the goal is to enhance their protective factors and their potential to succeed by providing insights and coaching while augmenting mentees' social capacity, building networking and partnership development, and providing opportunities for school and job placement, and access to educational support. The goal of this program is to create spaces for black youth to be themselves while being among their peers and having the guidance of the TWC mentors.

Resilience scholarship highlights the importance of community assets and strengths for newcomer youth, which are essential to fully understand their educational experiences and educational ambitions—even when youth encounter hopelessness (Nakhaie et al. 2022) and when teachers and non-immigrant white peers doubt their intellectual capabilities. ASPs, particularly those that are culturally appropriate and sensitive, motivate resilient learners to persist in their efforts because they believe they can overcome significant challenges imposed by structural racism in their schools. Ethnic YSOs, such as the Somali Centre for Family Services in Ontario, offer volunteering initiatives and counselling services that prepare newcomer students to face challenges so that they do not feel helpless at school or perceive their new lives as a continuous struggle marked by a sense of second-class citizenship (Hilario et al. 2019).

Research has revealed that some newcomer students, particularly African and Black immigrants and refugees, may underperform relative to their potential due to the stress of constant surveillance and evaluation in and beyond the classroom (Asadi 2023) and stigmatizing labels such as "dodgy," "lazy," or "troublemakers" (Shizha et al. 2020). In response, ethnic newcomer YSOs prepare newcomer students to draw on their resilience, motivation, personal agency, and resistance to challenge and disrupt hegemonic racial stereotypes—particularly teachers' low expectations—and to prove doubters wrong (Wilson-Forsberg et al. 2018). Some YSOs, such as ASSIST Community Service Centre, the Centre for Immigrants and Community Services, and Achēv—Black Youth School Success Initiative, encourage newcomer youth to develop leadership skills to build confidence, improve age-appropriate social skills to expand their social networks, volunteer to gain hands-on leadership and work experience, and work towards being independent. Through these

initiatives, newcomer students are encouraged to assert themselves and challenge attitudes and the low expectations of White teachers and students. As a result, studies by Shizha et al. (2017) and Wilson-Forsberg et al. (2019) report that immigrant and refugee students often assert they are motivated to work "twice as hard" to earn respect and succeed academically. Griffin et al. (2011) describe this resilience and self-motivation as a "proving process." The pressure to avoid mistakes while also excelling—to counter negative stereotypes—is well documented (Holder et al. 2015). The "proving process" and the need to work "twice as hard" are framed within deficit ideology, which places the responsibility on students to demonstrate their academic abilities. However, motivation and ambition to succeed are resilient assets that discredit the deficit narrative.

7.9. Youth-Serving Organizations and Career Readiness

Among newcomers, education is regarded as a pathway to employment and success in Canada. Migration is associated with employment opportunities perceived to exist in the receiving country of settlement. Young immigrants with low educational attainment are pushed into the secondary labor market, which is characterized by long hours, low wages, and unsafe conditions that limit opportunities for socioeconomic mobility (Uriostegui et al. 2023). Parents and immigrant communities are concerned that without adequate preparation, their children will remain in this sector that creates and recreates poverty. Research has reported that persistent poverty is prevalent among racialized communities (Ratcliffe 2015). To lift racialized children and youth out of poverty, they must have access to education and a career path leading into adulthood. YSOs can leverage their expertise to tailor programming and services to youth-identified education and career interests and needs. Our study found that 10.3% of YSOs in Canada provide career readiness programs that equip newcomer students with skills for securing employment. For instance, COSTI Immigration Services in Ontario offers a Youth Job Connection program, and according to the organization.

The program assists youth facing challenging life situations to make informed educational and career planning decisions. The program is intended for youth aged 15 to 18 who are currently enrolled in school, returning to school in the fall, and seeking summer employment. Youth who are interested undergo an assessment to clarify their educational and employment goals and develop an employment service plan outlining activities and services designed to help them secure summer jobs or part-time employment during the school year.

While summer jobs are short-term, they have long-term benefits for youth. Employed teens are more likely to graduate high school, and recent research suggests that summer jobs can prevent involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems (Ingmire 2014). However, these jobs should not be considered as employment to supplement their parents' household income but to familiarize themselves with workplace ethos and expectations.

Many newcomer parents expect schools to prepare their children for future careers. However, because schools may be unable to meet this expectation adequately, some youth-serving organizations offer career-readiness programs designed to equip newcomer youth with the skills needed to pursue employment. One of these organizations is Catholic Family Services—Youth Link Program in Regina, Saskatchewan, which offers newcomer youth aged 15 to 25 in high school or postsecondary education skills to prepare for employment while in school. The career readiness programs prepare youth to secure employment in the Canadian labour market through one-on-one career counselling and employment-related workshops, and information sessions. Another YSO, the Burnaby Neighbourhood House in British Columbia, provides a Youth Employment Program for newcomers. Through this program, youth receive career planning and training, employment counselling, job

search coaching, attendance certificates, and mentorship during job placement to gain work experience. The Newcomers Employment & Education Development Services (N.E.E.D.S.) Employment Services of Winnipeg provides employment placement services for immigrant and refugee youth, including work-experience opportunities and on-the-job support. Youth are matched with partner employers to participate in meaningful, hands-on work placements. In addition, clients receive on-the-job mentorship and support to increase their chances of success in participating in the Canadian labour market.

According to the literature, career guidance, counselling, and mentorship may improve students' job readiness by strengthening their confidence in pursuing careers, simplifying career-related decisions, and supporting them in addressing decision-making challenges (Alnajjar and Abou Hashish 2024). Additionally, Hirschi and Koen (2021) report the benefits, such as career transition support and guidance in defining career paths, underscoring the holistic approach of career guidance programs in addressing various aspects of career development. Youth-serving organizations that provide these programs foster positive self-efficacy and confidence among newcomer students who require information to navigate the Canadian employment market. These career-readiness programs are likely to influence newcomer students' life skills and career aspirations by providing a nurturing environment, access to comprehensive career guidance and counselling, and opportunities to build networks with prospective employers. Positive attitudes, competencies, and the development of personal and professional identities are essential for effective career planning and overall life satisfaction (Maree 2020). Career readiness provides the foundation for a successful career; therefore, YSOs should offer these and other experiential education programs to support informed decision-making among newcomer students.

8. Conclusions

An analysis of the environmental scan data reveals that Canadian youth-serving settlement organizations offer newcomer-student programs nationwide, but these programs are unevenly distributed. Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, and Alberta host the greatest concentration—particularly in metropolitan centers such as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Calgary—where job opportunities and services attract newcomer families. Consequently, these urban areas provide the bulk of after-school and settlement programs that help newcomer youth adapt to Canadian schools and communities. In contrast, Atlantic Canada and the territories receive fewer newcomer families and far fewer settlement services.

Newcomer students in Canada exhibit both strong academic resilience and significant challenges. While newcomer students' school experiences are often framed within a deficit framework, they have strengths in their agency, parental support, and communities that are explained by the strengths-based approach. Although a full impact evaluation of community-run ASPs is beyond the scope of this study, environmental scan data indicate that these programs provide critical academic support—such as homework assistance, financial assistance, counseling, and work and school-readiness activities—that can prevent students from "falling through the cracks." Unlike deficit-focused models, newcomer YSOs build on the students' and the communities' assets and cultural capital. Many struggling newcomer youth come from ethnocultural communities, where community-based organizations create safe spaces for peer networking, collaborative learning, and cultural affirmation. These environments foster belonging and normalcy—antidotes to the exclusion, racism, and marginalization students may face in schools that can leave them feeling like outsiders or "second-class" learners. Through familiar routines, cultural traditions, and support networks, newcomer YSOs reinforce students' identities, strengthen their motivation, and help them navigate educational obstacles. However, this issue requires a comprehensive

approach, and the work of youth-serving and after-school organizations represents only one dimension of support during cross-cultural adaptation as millions of people, including children, relocate and cross cultural or subcultural boundaries each year.

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