

The effect of COVID-19 on economic and social well-being of newcomers to Nova Scotia and their access to settlement services.

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Introduction

In February and March 2021, an online survey of newcomers who had arrived in Canada since 2018, and were living in Nova Scotia, was conducted to understand their well-being and access to integration services before and after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown in March 2020. Some of these newcomers included clients of Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) and some were approached through personal contacts of the researcher. By the end of March, 118 responses had been received, with a completion rate of 48.6%. Some responses out of the 118 responses were excluded as the respondents had arrived in Canada before 2018.

This report is presented in three parts: First part provides some demographic information about the respondents. Second part analyzes the effect of the pandemic and the lockdown on respondents' well-being. Third part analyzes how the pandemic affected their access to settlement and integration services.

Method

The survey questionnaire was distributed electronically to ISANS clients as well as some newcomers who are not necessarily clients of ISANS who were identified by personal connections of one of the researcher. Once the data were cleaned, textual analysis was conducted of all the open-ended responses using the Hotjar software. In some cases, because of the relatively low number and diversity of responses, patterns were not detected by automatic text analyzer. In such cases, the texts were analyzed manually. The analyzer identified relevant keywords in the responses and mapped them to calculate each word's relative percentage to each question's total number of relative keywords.

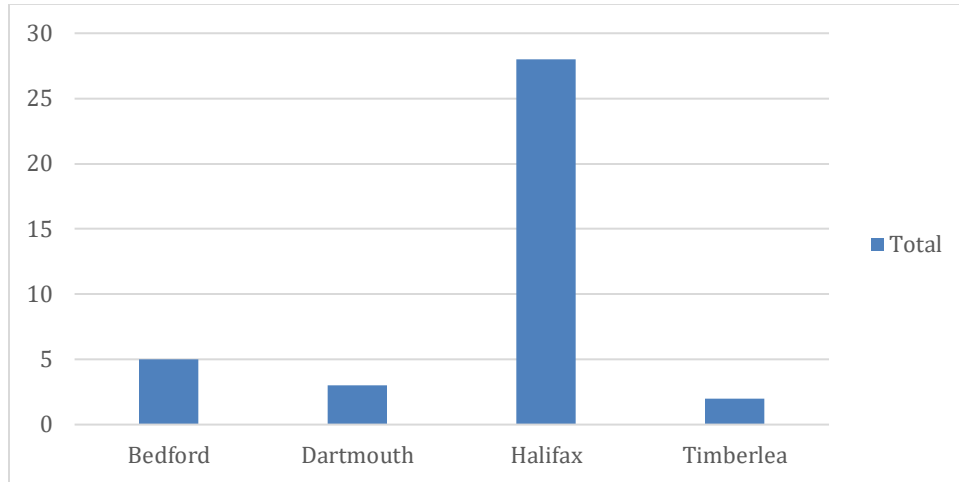
Response analysis

The number of responses varied from question to question.

Demographic questions

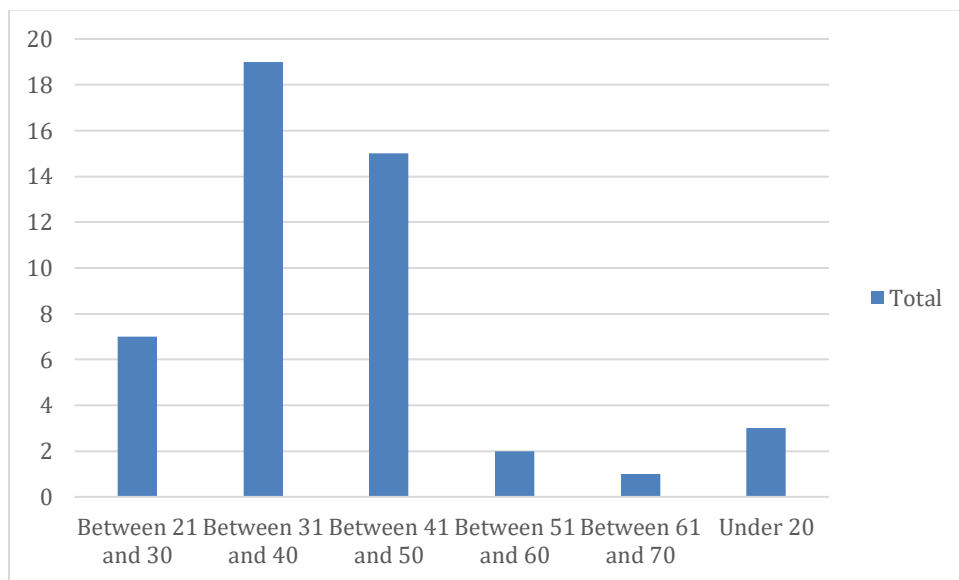
Number of respondents by location

- Number of respondents was 38
- Most lived in Halifax.



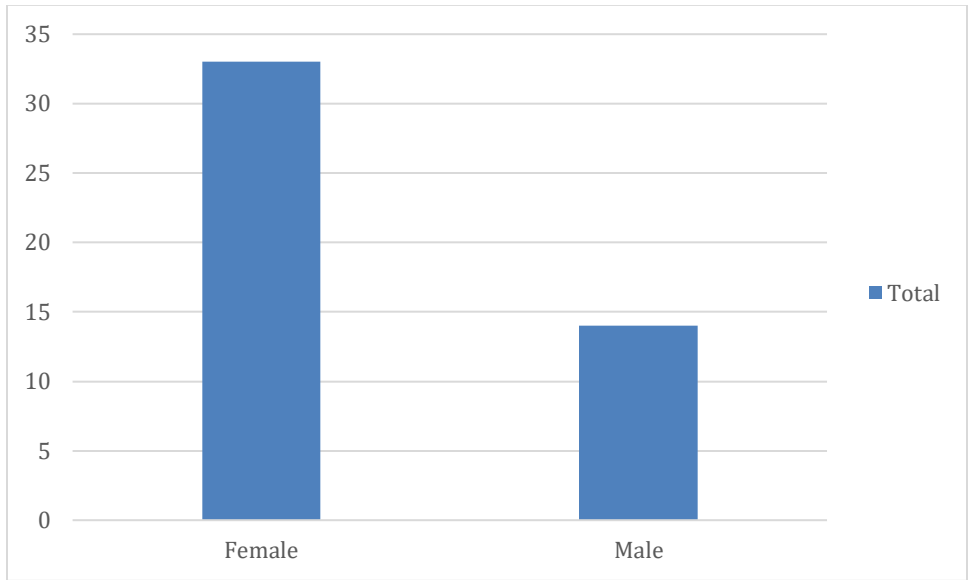
Number of respondents by age

- Number of respondents was 47
- The highest number of respondents were between 31 and 50 years.



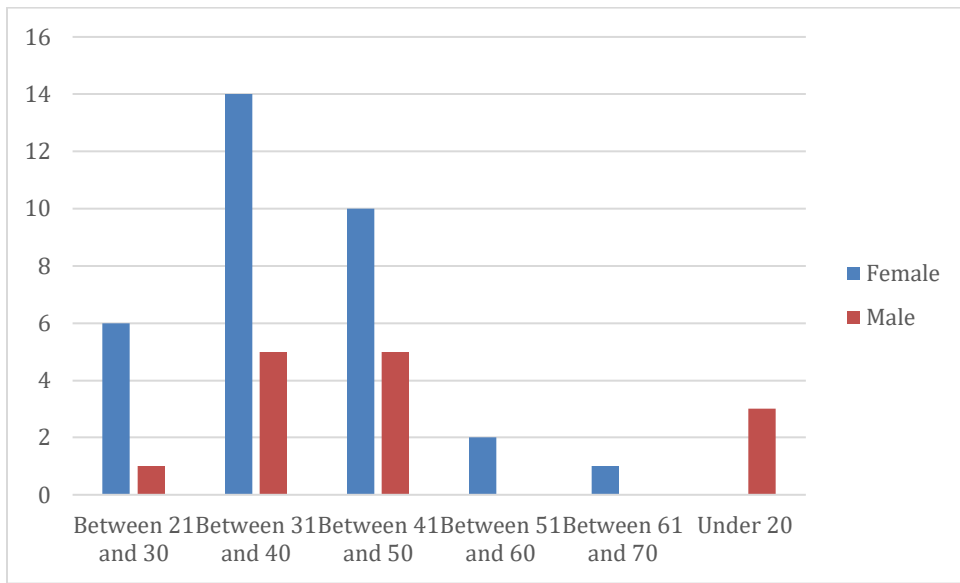
Number of respondents by gender

- Number of respondents is 47
- Most of the respondents are females



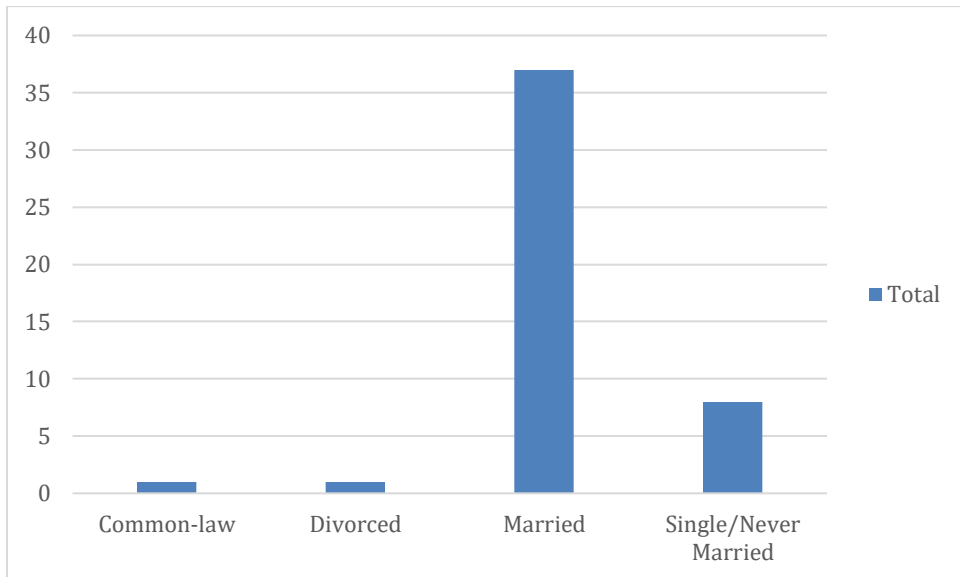
Number of respondents by age and gender

- Number of responses 47
- Highest number of respondents is for females between 31 and 40
- Second highest number of respondents is for females between 41 and 50
- Only one male between 21 and 30
- No males between 51 and 70
- No females under 20



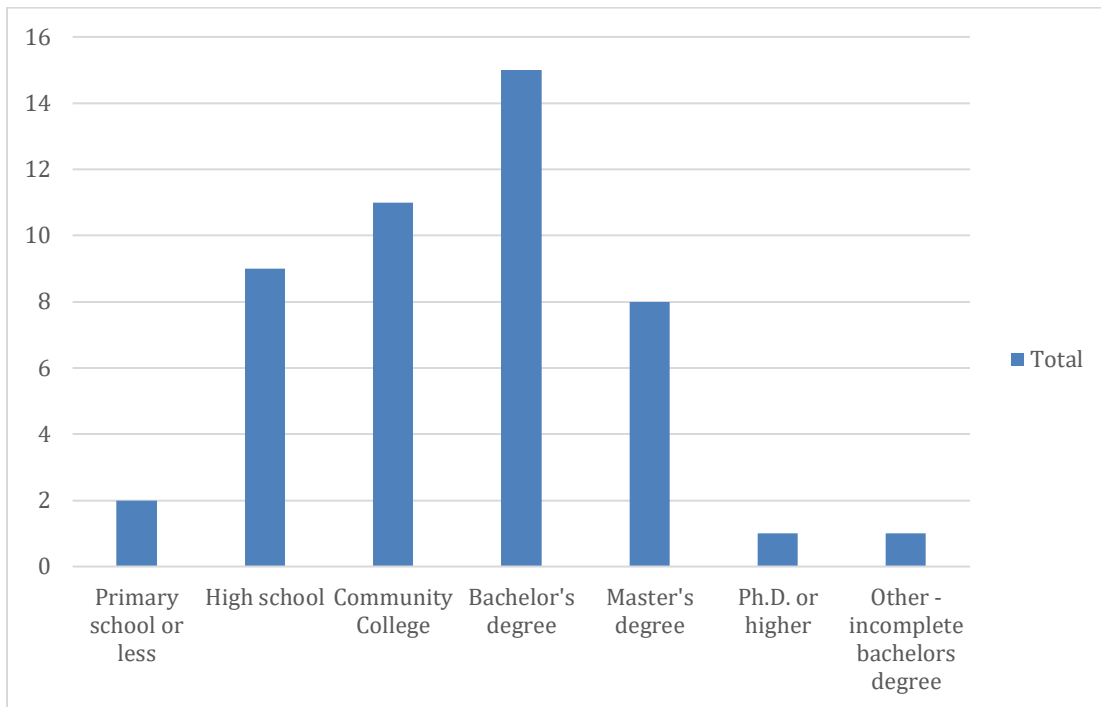
Number of respondents by marital status

- Number of responses 47
- Most respondents are married



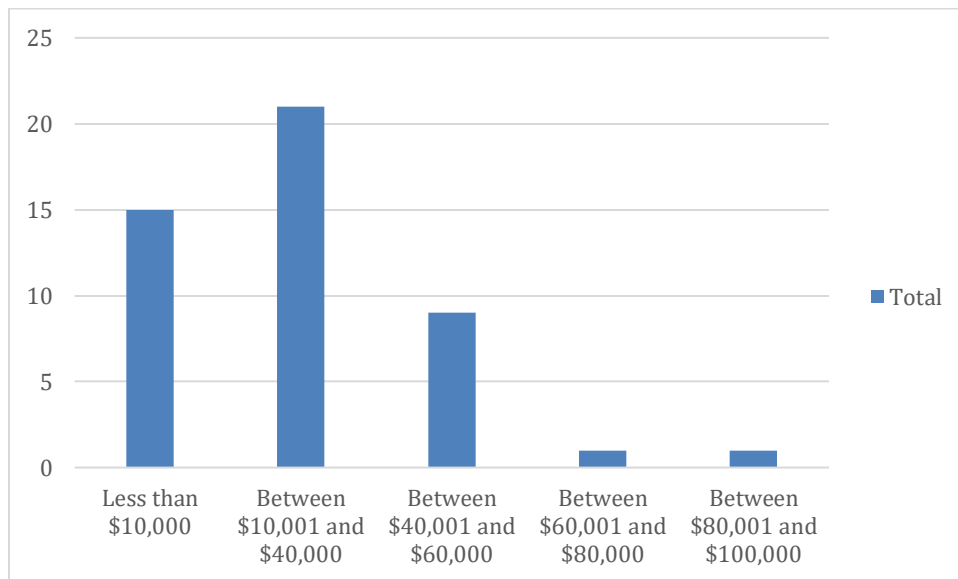
Number of respondents by the highest level of education

- Number of respondents 47
- Most respondents finished post-secondary education



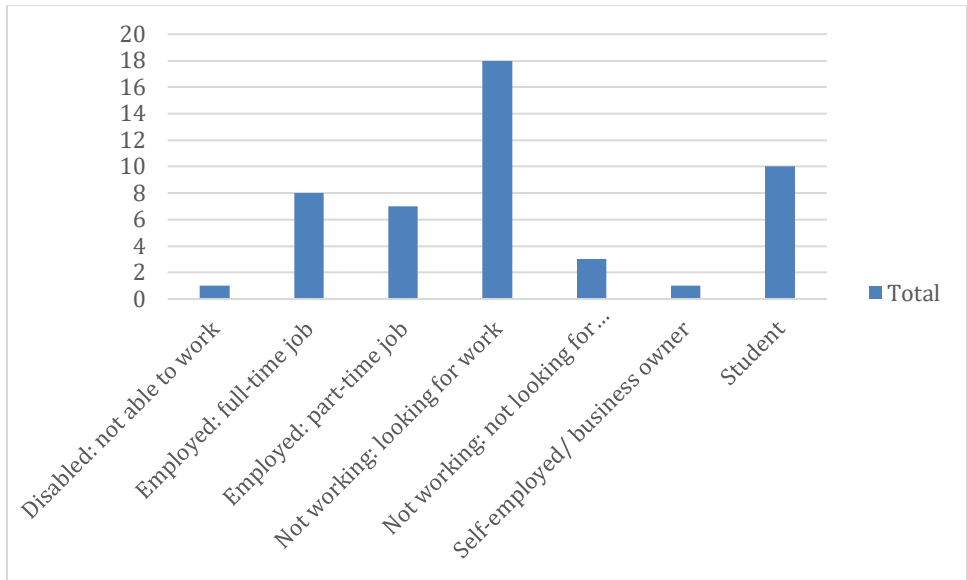
Number by household income

- Number of respondents 47
- Highest number of respondents has a household income between \$10,001 and \$40,000
- Most respondents have household income of \$60,000 and less



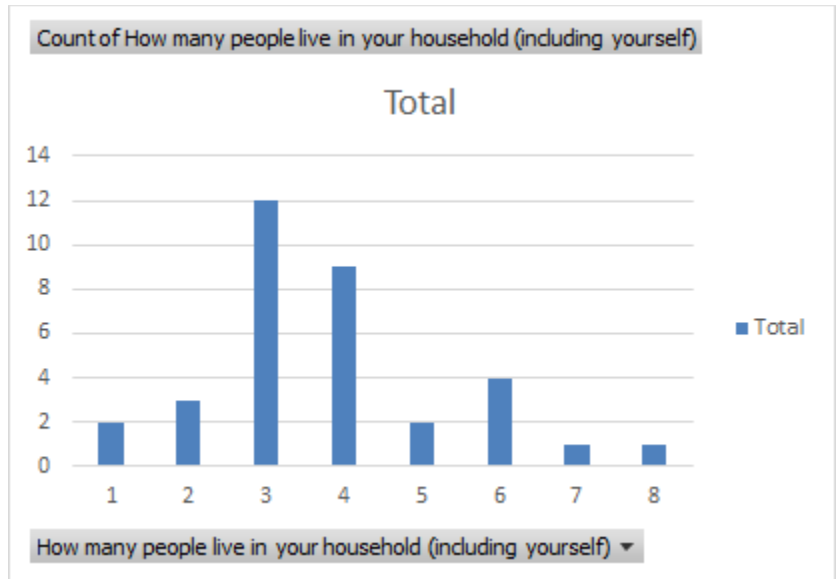
Number of respondents by employment status

- Number of respondent 48
- Most respondents not working and looking for job



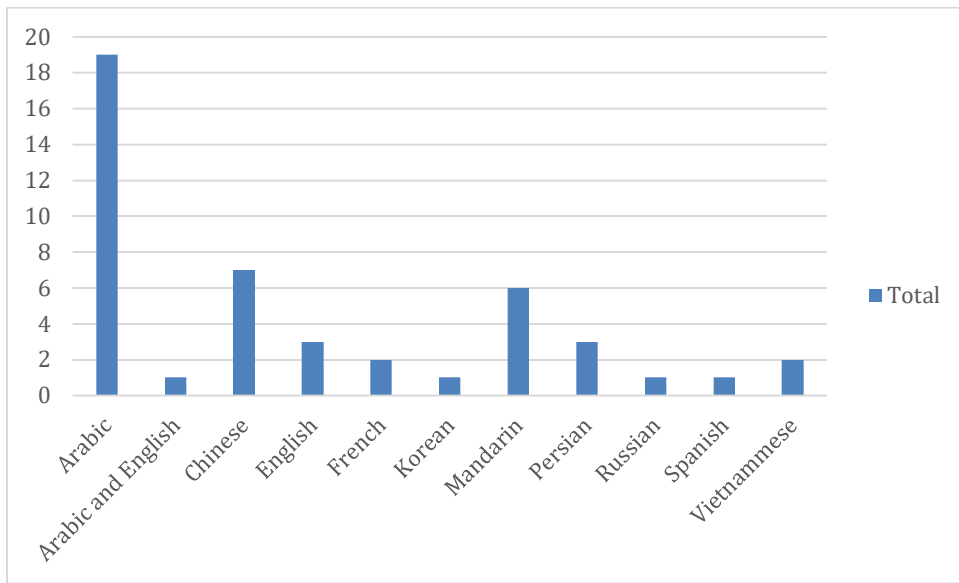
Number of respondents by household size

- Number of respondents 47
- Most households contain 3 or 4 people



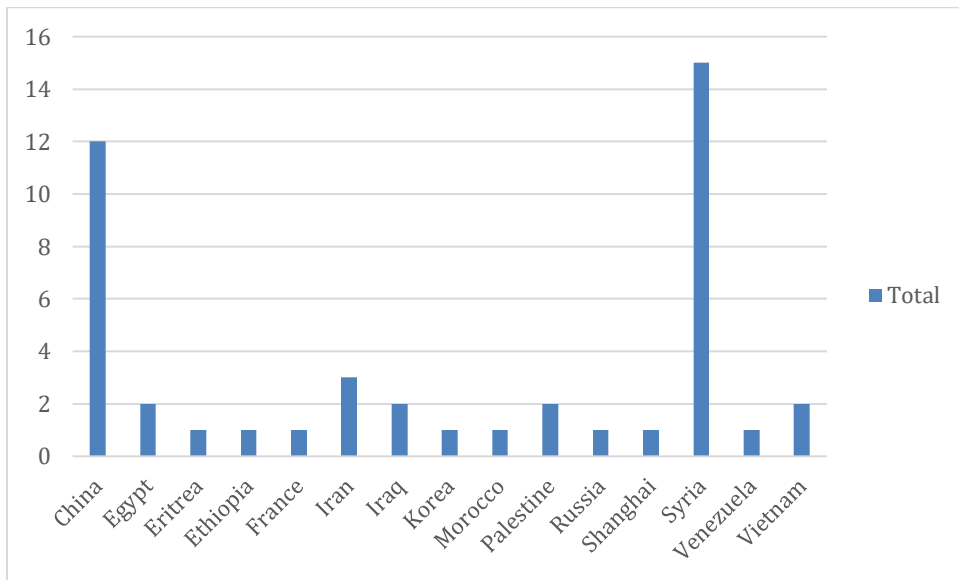
Number of respondents by language most spoken at home

- Number of respondents 46
- Most respondents speak mostly speak Arabic at home



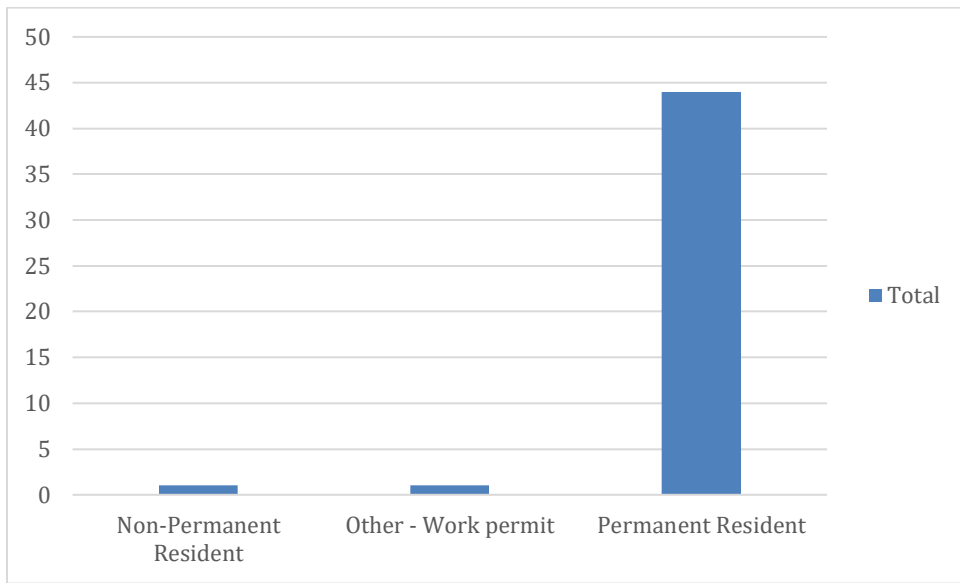
Number of respondents by country of origin

- Number of respondents 46
- Highest number of respondents from Syria and then from China



Number of respondents by immigration category

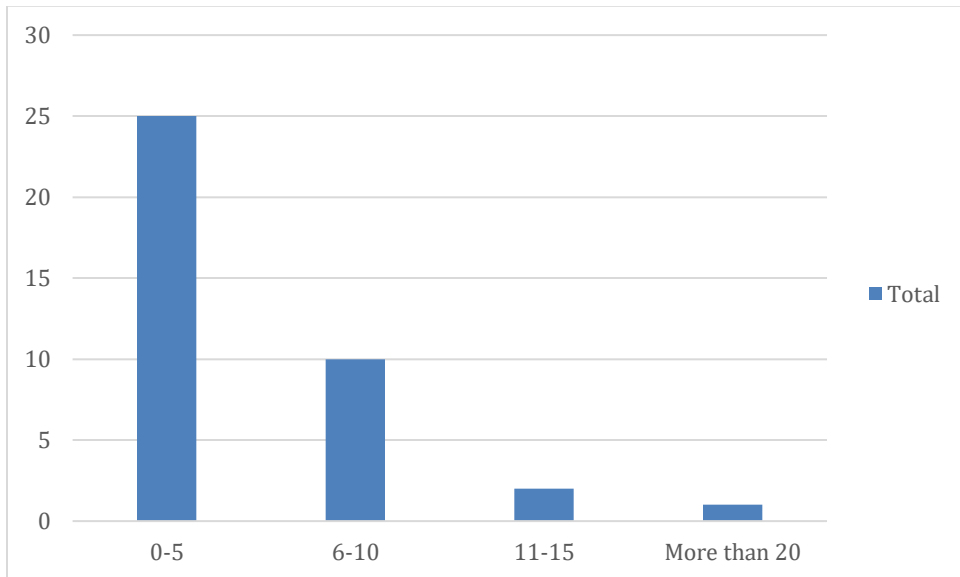
- Number of respondents 46
- Most respondents are permanent residents



Well-being questions (economic, social and mental)

Number of respondents by number of months employed since March 2020

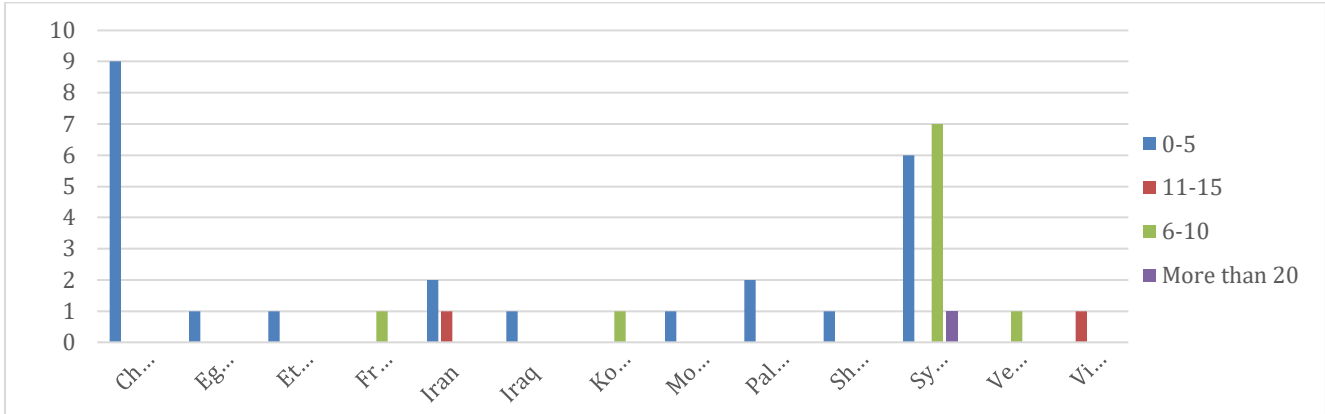
- Number of respondents 38
- Most respondents were employed between 0 and 5 months



Number of respondents by number of months employed and country of origin

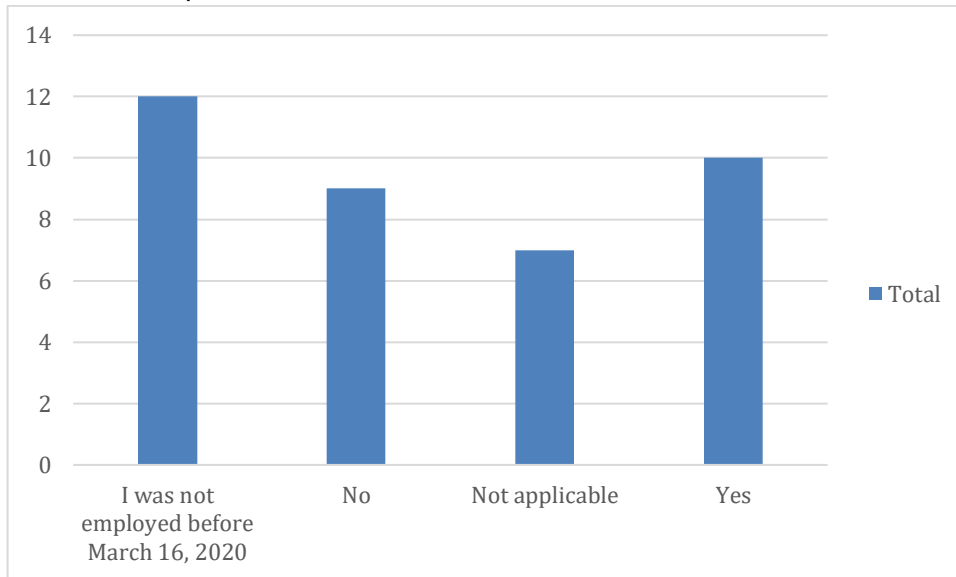
- Number of responses 37
- Highest number of respondents employed between 0-5 months is from China then Syria

- Only one respondent was employed more than 20 months and is from Syria



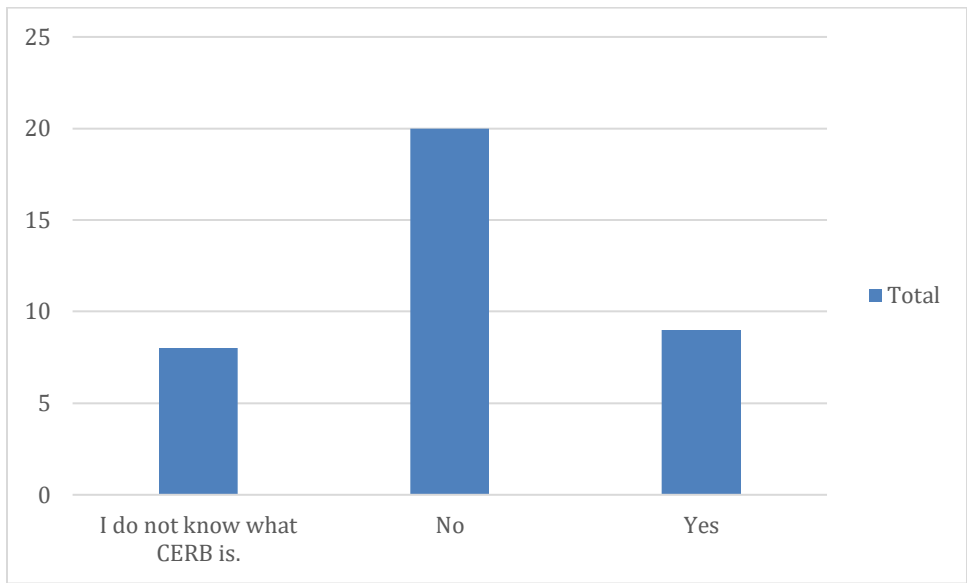
Number of respondents laid off after March 2020

- Number of respondents 38
- Highest number of respondent were not employed before March, 2020
- 10 respondents were laid off after March 2020



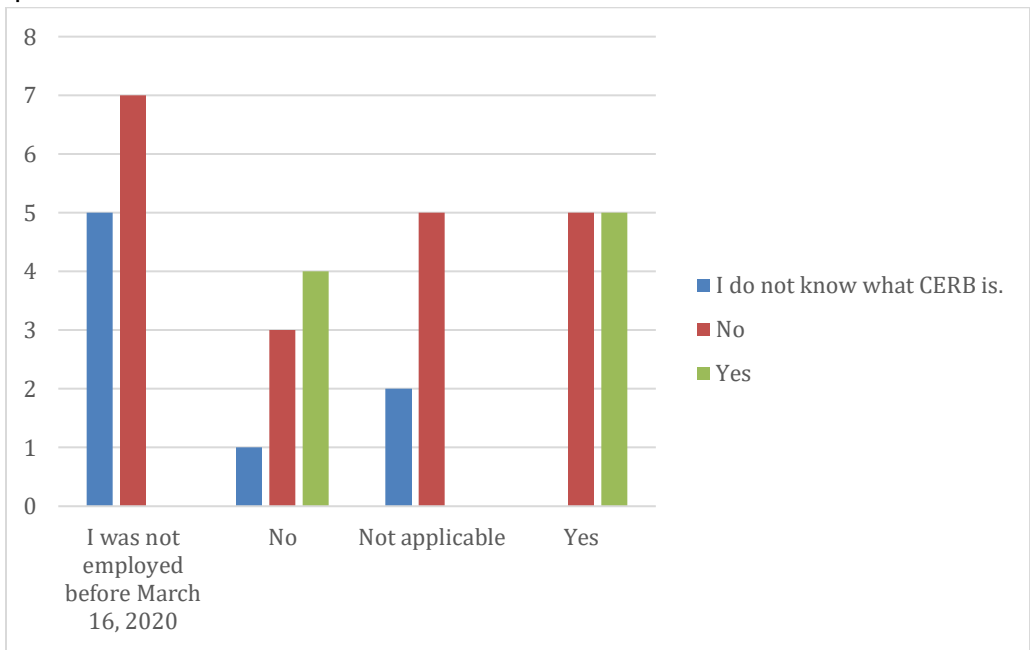
Number of respondents by having benefited from CERB or not

- Number of respondents 37
- Highest number of respondents did not benefit from CERB
- 8 respondents did not know what is CERB



Number of respondents who were laid off and benefited from CERB

- Number of responses 37
- 5 respondents were laid off and did not benefit from CERB
- 5 respondents were laid off and benefited from CERB
- 4 respondents were not laid off and benefited from CERB

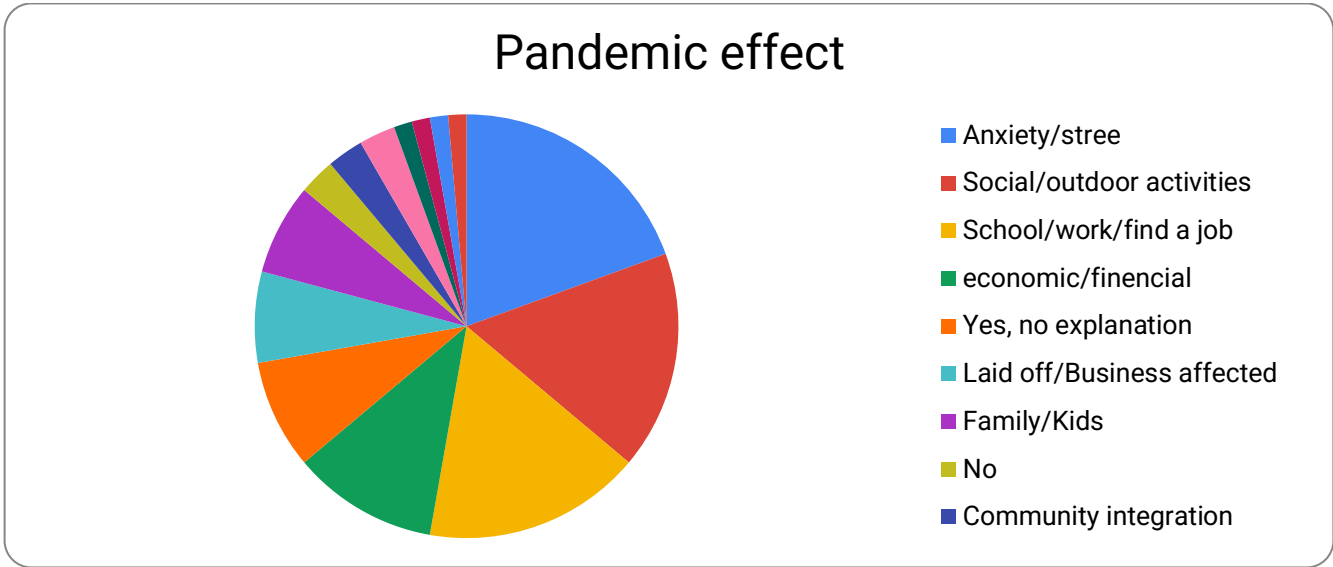


Responses about the effect of the pandemic on mental and social well-being (open ended question)

Number of respondents 34 (None caught by COVID-19)

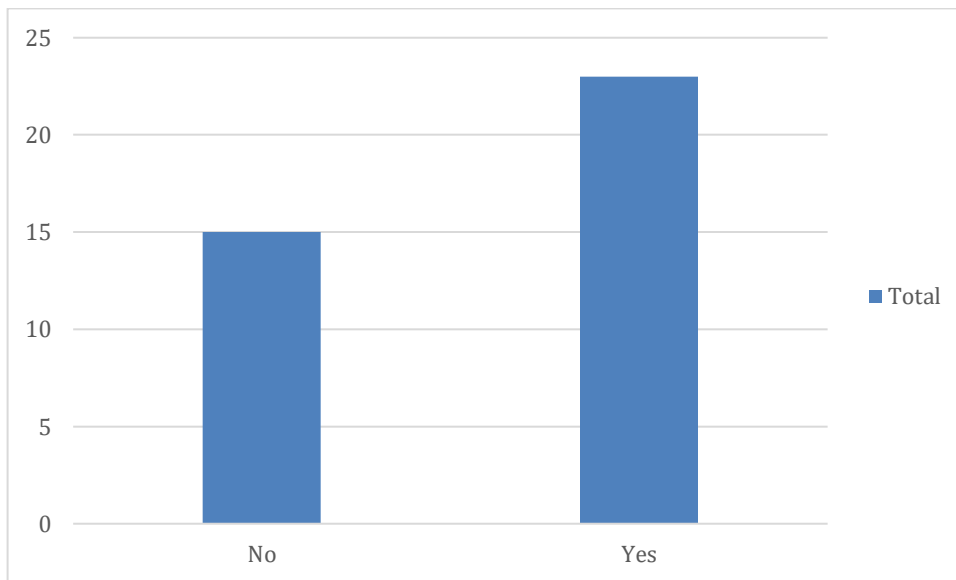
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- Total number of responses 72
- 19% of total number of responses were about anxiety and stress

- 17% of total number of responses were about less social/outdoor activities
- 17% of total number of responses were about school and find a job
- 11% of total number of responses were about financial issues
- 17% of total number of responses were about laid off
- 3% of total number of responses were not affected by the pandemic



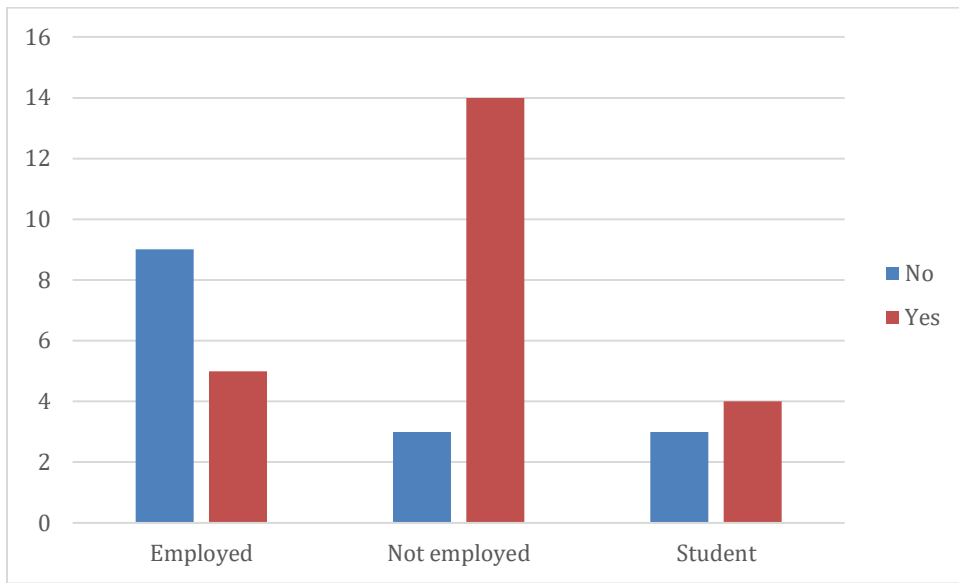
Number of respondents needing more effort remembering things during or after the lockdown

- Number of respondents 38
- Most responses were yes



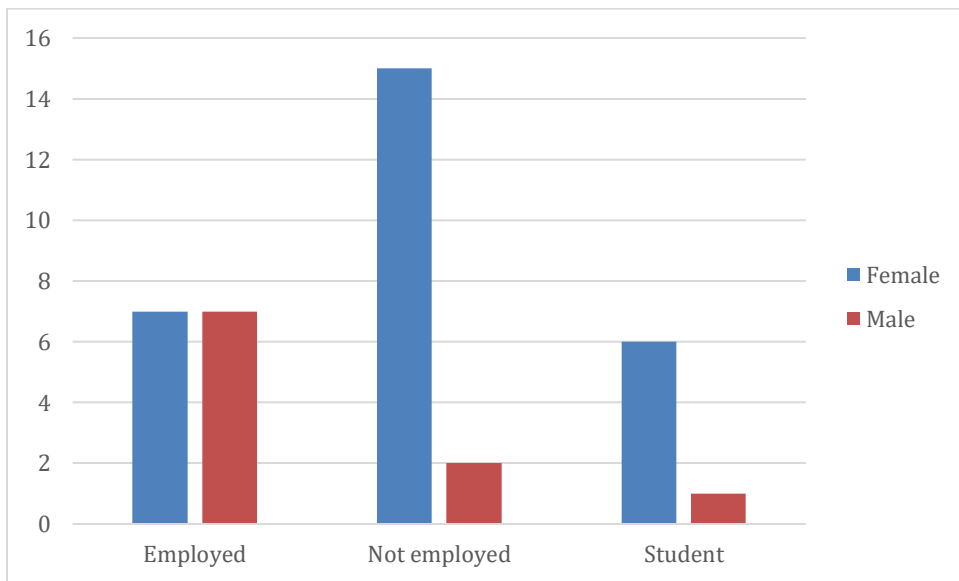
Number of responses needing more effort to remember things by their employment status

- Number of responses 38
- Highest number of respondents that needed more effort to remember things are unemployed



Number of responses needing more effort to remember things and employment status and gender

- Number of responses 38
- Highest number of respondents that needed more effort to remember things are unemployed females (15 out of 28)
- Number of female students needed more effort to remember things were 6 compared to 1 male student



Number of respondents by number of social activities before, during and after the lockdown

	0-2	3-5	6-10	More than 10	Grand Total
Before the lockdown on March 16, 2020: On average, when allowed by the law, how many social activities (sports, religious, recreation, family and friend visits, etc.) did you have	23%	36%	18%	23%	39
During the lockdown (between March 16, 2020 and July 1, 2020): On average, when allowed by the law, how many social activities (sports, religious, recreation, family and friend visits, etc.) did you have	86%	8%	5%	0%	37
After the lockdown (after July 1, 2020): On average, when allowed by the law, how many social activities (sports, religious, recreation, family and friend visits, etc.) did you have	61%	26%	13%	0%	38

Number of respondents by experience of homeschooling during the lockdown

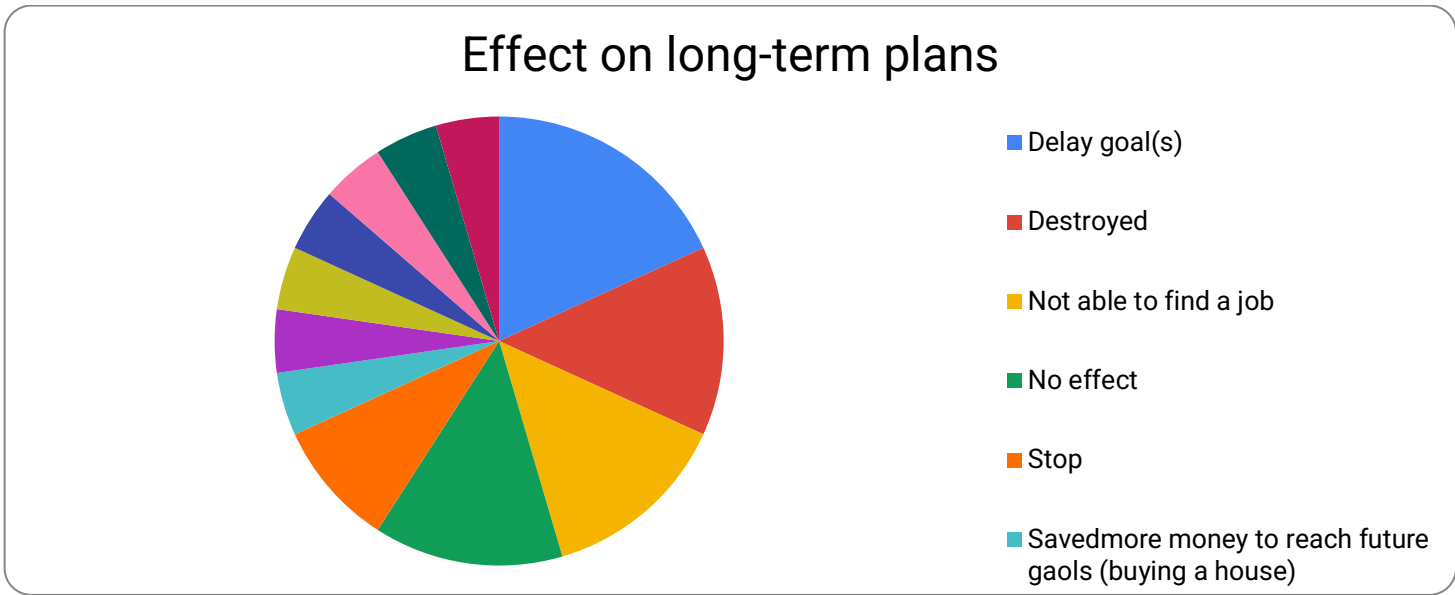
- Number of respondents 31
- Total number of responses 36
- Most replies were negative
- High level of diversity in explaining why the experience was negative

Categories	Volume	Percentage
Social Issues	5	10%
Communication issues	4	8%
Unsatisfied, no explanation	3	6%
Managed home learning activities/OK	3	6%
Children did not like homeschooling	2	4%
Adaptation	2	4%
Difficulty for parents to support children because of English language level	1	2%
Engagement issues	1	2%
Understanding issues	1	2%
Parents need support	1	2%
Concern about the effect of the home schooling period on the mental health of the children in the future	1	2%
Neighbours complained about kids noise at home	1	2%
No practice	1	2%
Hard assignments	1	2%
Life style	1	2%
More video games	1	2%
Need for extra classes	1	2%
Only home schooling	1	2%

Good	1	2%
Required extra effort from parents	1	2%
No library/e-books	1	2%
Boring	1	2%
Technical difficulties	1	2%

Number of respondents by effect on their long term plans

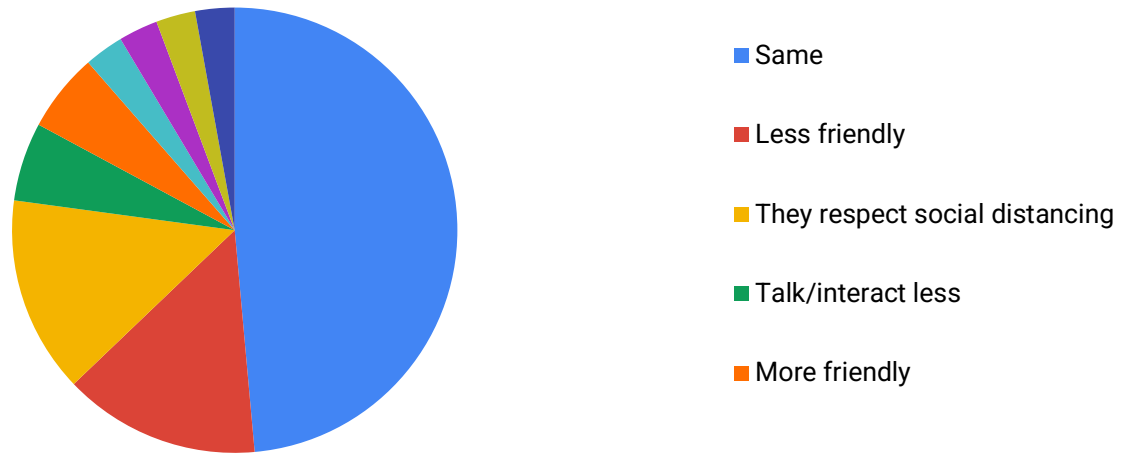
- Number of respondents 33
- Total number of responses 22
- Some responses were irrelevant
- Most replies were negative
- For one respondent the effect was positive (saved more money to buy a house)
- Only relevant answers are presented



Number of respondents by neighbors' attitude after the pandemic

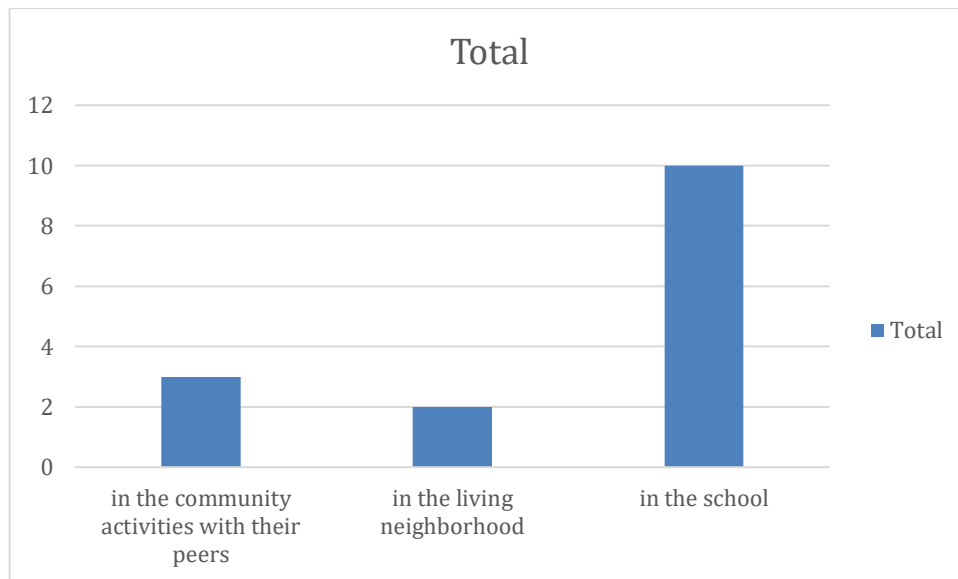
- Number of respondents 33
- Total number of responses 35
- Most answers express a no-change in attitude

Neighbors' attitude during and after the pandemic



Number of respondents by children feeling change in attitude

- 15 respondents
- Only respondents that have children
- Most respondents who answered yes mentioned that the change felt by the children was in school

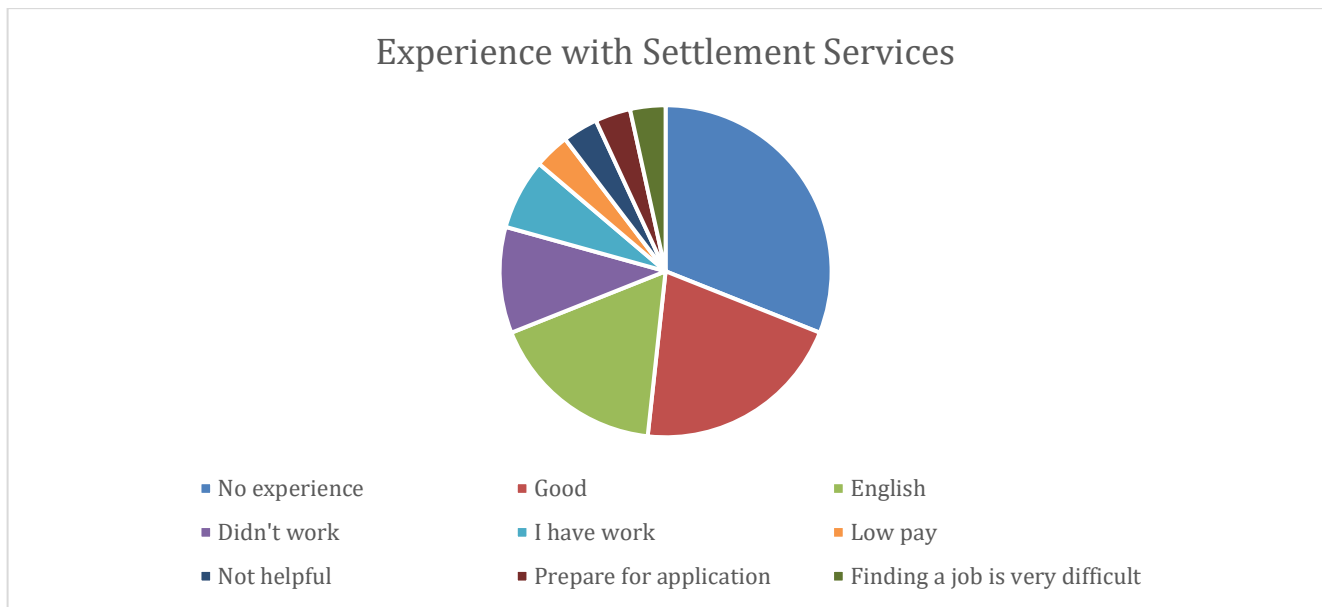


Access to settlement services and satisfaction

Experience with Settlement services since March 2020 (open-ended question)

- Number of respondents 29
- 21% expressed that they were satisfied

- 26% related the settlement services to job and job search

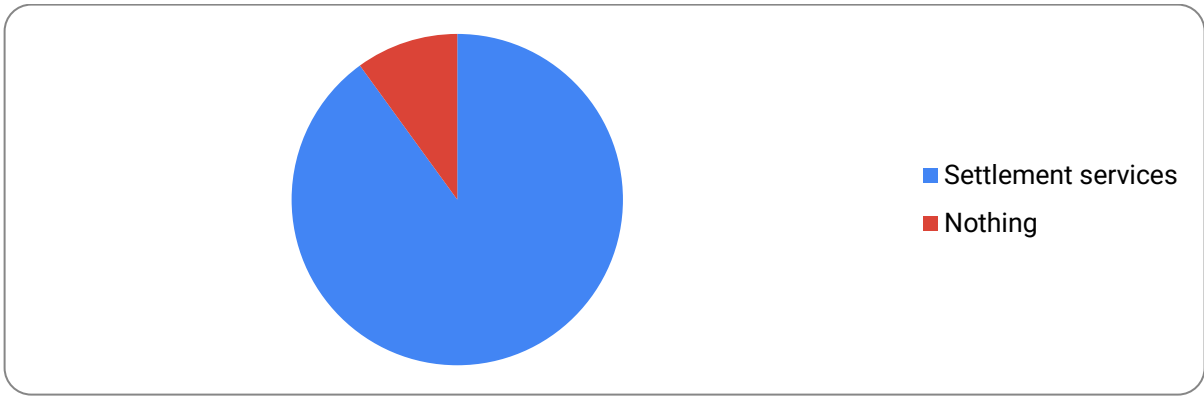


Settlement services used by respondents

	Count of used before the pandemic	Count of used after the pandemic	Count of not received because of the pandemic	Total
Employment	39%	26%	35%	23
Integration	42%	13%	46%	24
Business	40%	10%	50%	20
Translation	48%	20%	32%	25
Daycare	41%	0%	59%	17
Language	37%	47%	16%	38
Settlement	47%	32%	21%	34
Orientation	33%	33%	33%	24
Bridging	38%	13%	50%	16
Other	31%	13%	56%	16
Total	95	57	85	

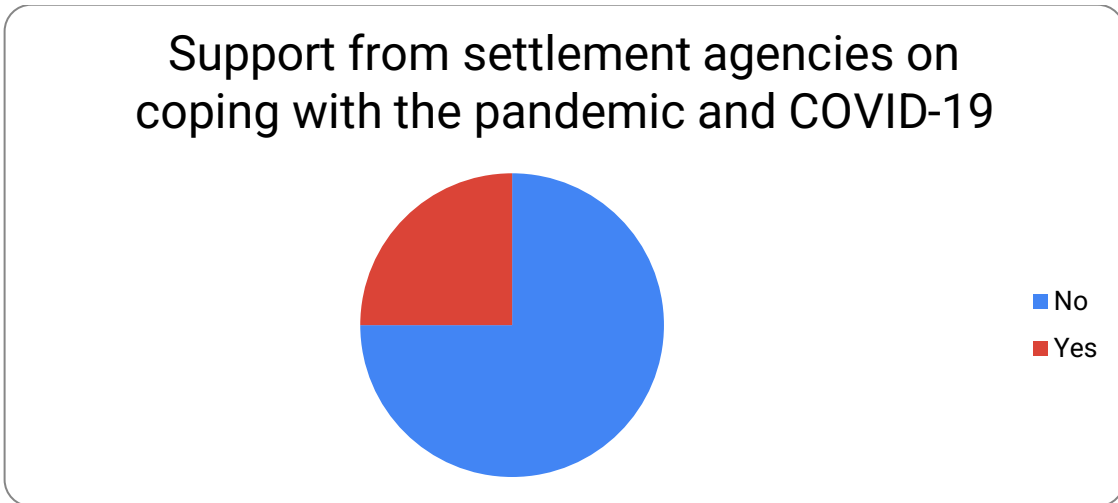
Services used during the first few days of arrival

- Number of respondents 20
- Most services were settlement services
- 9.5% stated explicitly that these services were useful, even though the question did not ask about satisfaction level



Number of respondents by support from settlement agencies on coping with the pandemic and COVID-19

- Number of respondents 20
- Most respondents answered that they did not use support



Conclusion

This survey evaluated the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the well-being and access to settlement services of immigrants who arrived in Nova Scotia after 2018.

The main conclusion of this evaluation is that the pandemic had a negative effect on several aspects of the respondents' lives, including long-term plans. A high level of dissatisfaction was expressed about homeschooling during the lockdown period between March 16, 2020 and June 30, 2020. In general, use of settlement services dropped because of the pandemic.