

HEALTH OF THE NEWCOMER-SERVING SECTOR IN THE PNT REGION

A SURVEY OF FRONT-LINE WORKERS IN
ALBERTA, MANITOBA & SASKATCHEWAN:
DISAGGREGATED DATA SUMMARY FOR
LANGUAGE TRAINING

MARCH 2022



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INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As we collectively strive to understand the historic and ongoing relationship between settlement and the land on which we are located, AAISA respectfully acknowledges that the province of Alberta is comprised of Treaty 6, Treaty 7, and Treaty 8 territories, and is the traditional lands of First Nations and Métis peoples.

This Health of the Sector report was authored by Marokh Yousifshahi and Leesha Kanbour with contributions from Oluwatomi Turner.

AAISA would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the front-line staff from across Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan who participated in Health of the Sector Survey, and we are grateful for the invaluable information that was provided through your engagement. AAISA would also like to extend our thanks to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for their financial support as well as their partnership throughout all stages of this project.

INTRODUCTION

The Health of the Sector (HOTS) survey was conducted between March 31, 2021, and July 31, 2021, with 912 responses from front-line settlement and integration professionals across the Prairies and Northern Territories (PNT) region. The HOTS survey examines the perspectives of front-line staff working within agencies in the newcomer-serving sector to better understand their employment experience, assess organizational strengths and challenges, as well as discern the opportunities available to them. The findings of the report are highlighted in the *Health of the Newcomer-Serving Sector in the PNT Region: A Survey of Front-line Workers in Alberta, Manitoba & Saskatchewan* which portrayed the perspectives of front-line employees and contains foundational information to inform discussions between Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), newcomer-serving agencies, and Umbrella organizations.

While the *Health of the Newcomer-Serving Sector in the PNT Region* report provides high-level themes identified from the PNT newcomer-serving sector, the HOTS survey accumulated a wealth of perspectives from various front-line roles, program types, locations, small and urban centres, and Francophone and Anglophone agencies. As a result, the perspectives of front-line staff based on location, department, municipal population of agency, and official language of agencies requires further analysis. Accordingly, the purpose of this report is to highlight the disaggregated results from front-line staff in the **Language Training** program or department which was comprised of 192 respondents.

Please note that more information about the purpose, process and methodology, and background about the HOTS survey can be found in the *Health of the Newcomer-Serving Sector in the PNT Region* report.

BACKGROUND: ROLE OF LANGUAGE TRAINING FRONT-LINE STAFF

To orient the content of the HOTS disaggregated results for the **Language Training** program, this section will outline the general purpose and role of the front-line staff supporting the Language Training program. The Settlement Program funded by Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) aims to “support newcomers’ successful settlement and integration so that they may participate and contribute in various aspects of Canadian life,” through funding investments to agencies that provide newcomers services under the following six areas:

- Needs and Assets Assessment and Referral Services (NAARS)
- Information and Orientation
- Language Assessments
- Language Training
- Employment-Related Services
- Community Connections

Language Training services are an essential part of the Settlement Program that supports newcomers to improve their official language skills through specialized instruction for each clients’

ability (i.e., reading, writing, listening, speaking) (IRCC, 2017). The Language Training program provides services that support newcomers in developing their official language skills required for the labour market and/or navigating life outside of work through language training classes, and informal language learning sessions (IRCC, 2022). Language Training programs within agencies are also funded by provincial governments to support the settlement and integration of newcomers.

Front-line staff in the Language Training program or department are often instructors and are required to have specific certifications that qualify them to teach the official languages. Instructors are required to have one of the following certifications to teach newcomers:

- Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certification
- Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL)
- Teaching English to Speakers of Another Language (TESOL)
- Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA)

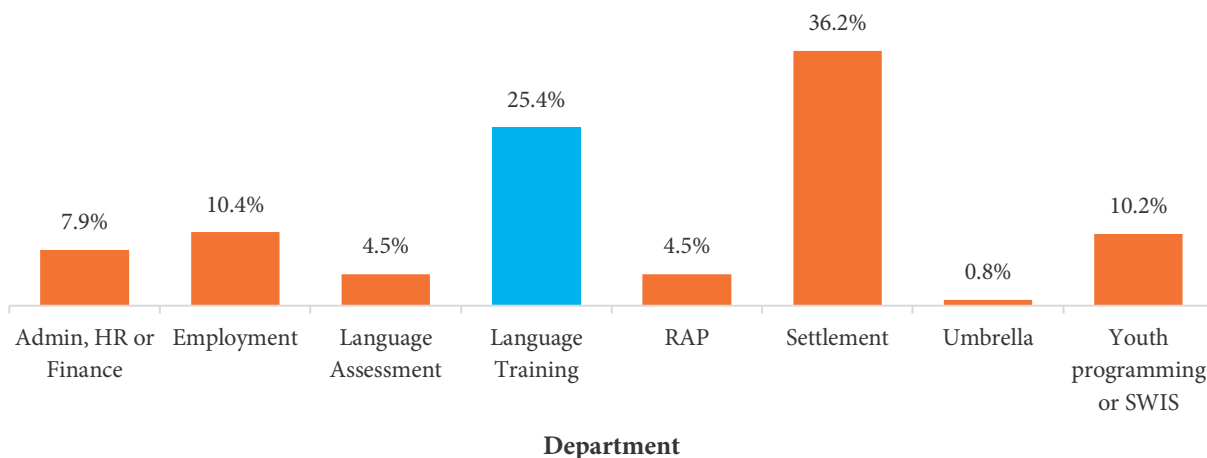
Front-line staff are also required to have various capabilities and responsibilities to assist newcomers develop language skills such as designing, developing, and sharing resources that are appropriate for online and in-person teaching and learning.

RESPONDENT FRONT-LINE STAFF PROFILE

The following sections will outline the demographic information, employment profiles, and agency profiles of respondents that indicated their current role in the Language Assessment department or program within an agency in the HOTS survey. The disaggregated data for respondents in the Language Training program was informed by 192 of the 756 respondents which comprise the sample size of the *HOTS Report* (see *Figure 1*).

Figure 1

Program/Department of Respondents in Agency by Percentage

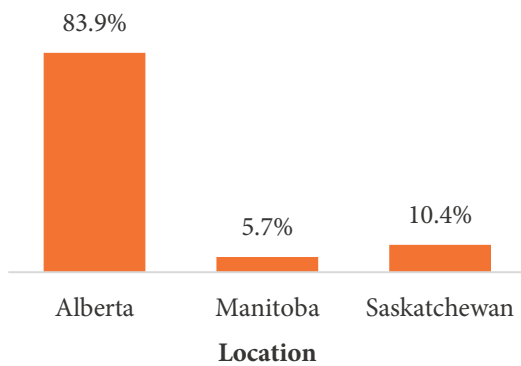


RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Location of Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 2

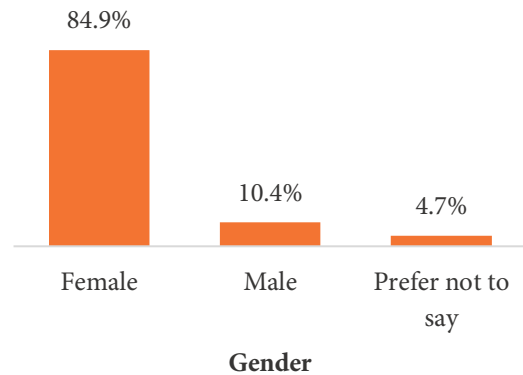
Location of Respondents by Percentage



Gender of Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 3

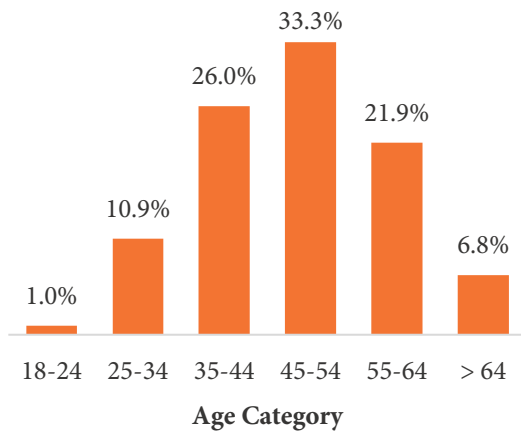
Gender of Respondents by Percentage



Age of Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 4

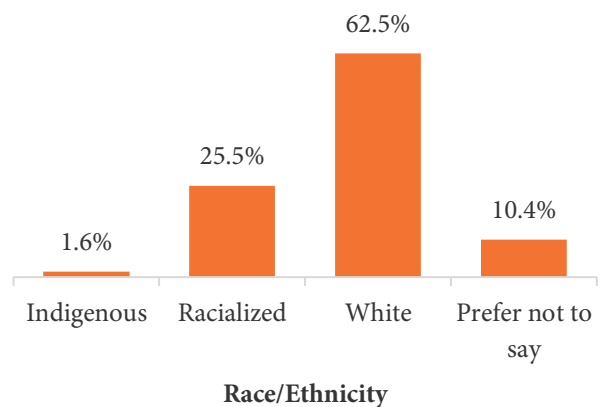
Age Category of Respondents by Percentage



Race and Ethnicity of Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 5

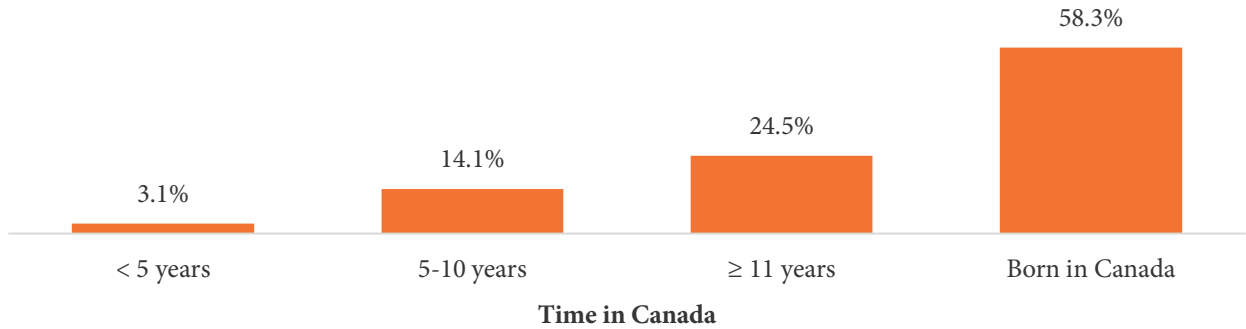
Race and Ethnicity of Respondents by Percentage



Length of Time in Canada of Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 6

Length of Time in Canada by Percentage

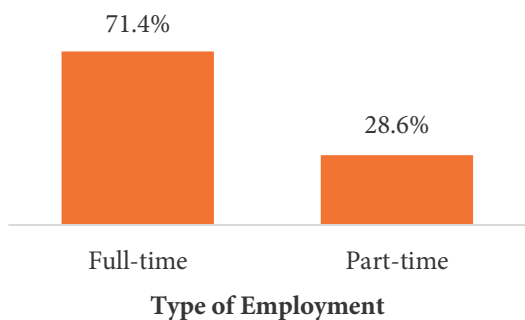


EMPLOYMENT PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Employment Status of Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 7

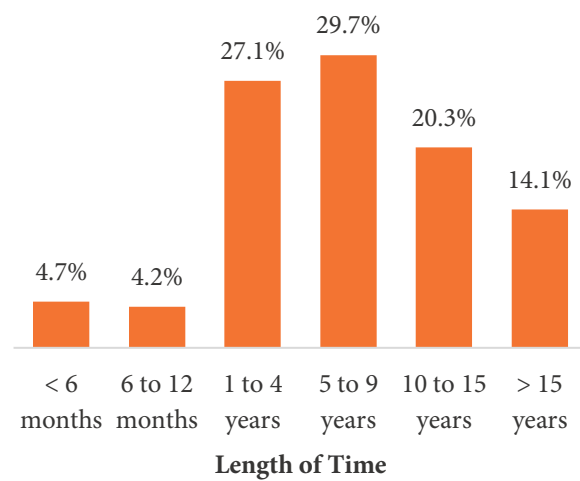
Employment Status by Percentage



Length of Service of Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 8

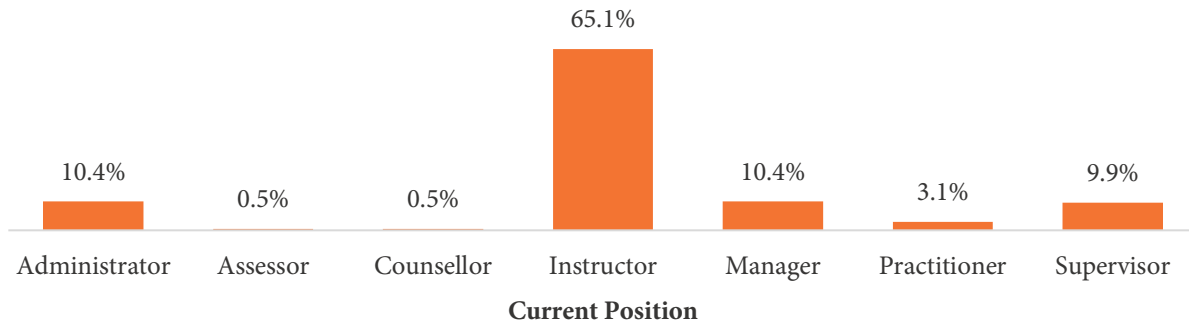
Length of Service in Current Organization by Percentage



Current Position of Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 9

Current Position of Respondents in Agency by Percentage

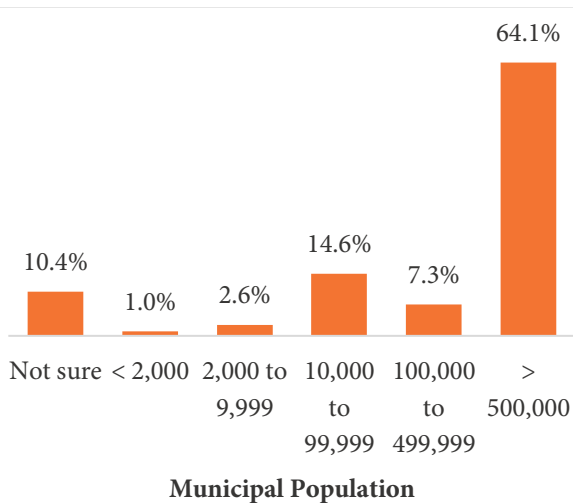


AGENCY PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Municipal Population of Settlement Provider Location for Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 10

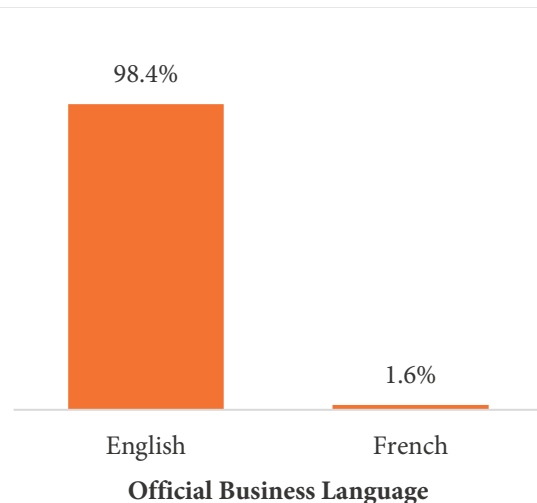
Municipal Population of Agency Location by Percentage



Primary Language of Settlement Provider for Respondents in the Language Training Department

Figure 11

Primary Language of Settlement Service Provider by Percentage



FINDINGS

The following data analysis illuminates the distinct strengths and challenges amongst front-line employees in the Language Training program in the PNT region. The sections represent themes present in the data findings collected in the HOTS survey.

The following sections have been distilled into **six focus areas**:

- Organizational alignment
- Compensation and benefits
- Diversity and inclusion
- Work-life balance and wellbeing
- Management and leadership
- Professional growth and stability

ORGANIZATIONAL ALIGNMENT

The data results demonstrate that front-line staff in the Language Training program are passionate people who care deeply about their work and are driven by a genuine interest in supporting newcomer integration in Canada. The results highlight the following as shown in *Additionally*, in comparison to the other departments outlined in *Figure 1*, respondents from the Language Training department are 1.89 times more likely to select “disagree” and 3.97 times more likely to strongly disagree with the same statement.

The issues encompassing funding realities and the realities of front-line staff in the Language Training department are further highlighted in the *Overarching Themes* section on page 21.

Figure 12:

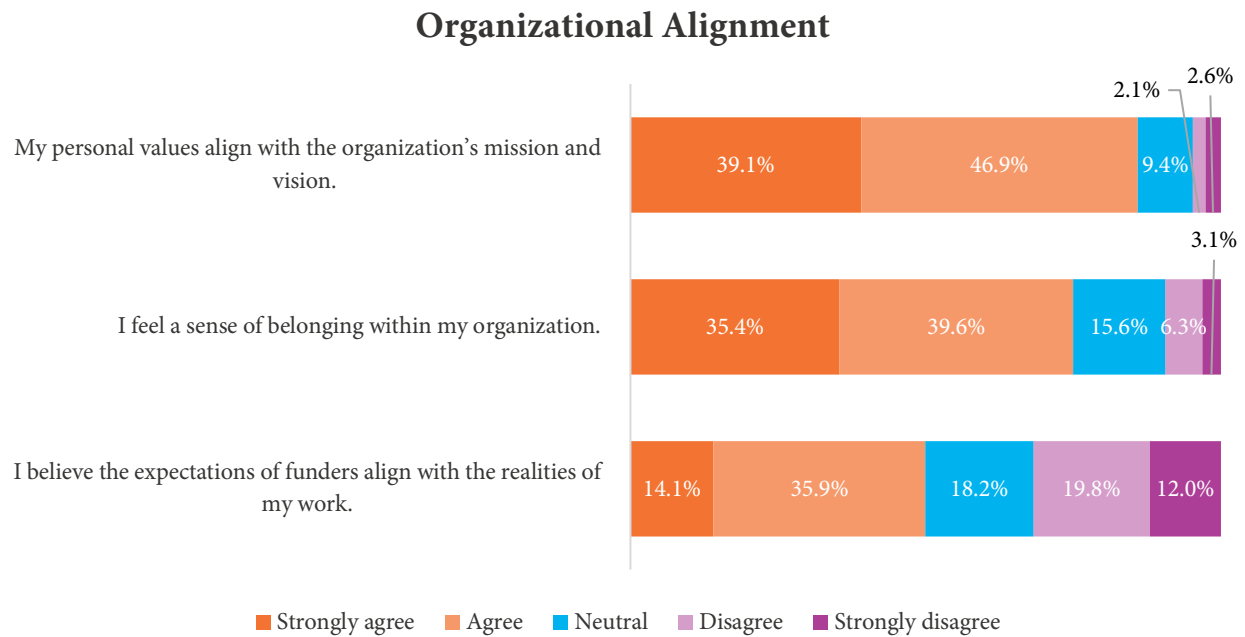
- 85.9% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their personal values align with their organizations’ mission and vision.
- 75.0% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they felt a sense of belonging within their organization.

Where the data requires further attention is the satisfaction level of respondents regarding the expectations of their funder aligning with the realities of front-line Language Training employees:

- 50.0% strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I believe the expectations of funders align with the realities of my work,” while, 19.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 18.2% are neutral. Additionally, in comparison to the other departments outlined in *Figure 1*, respondents from the Language Training department are 1.89 times more likely to select “disagree” and 3.97 times more likely to strongly disagree with the same statement.

The issues encompassing funding realities and the realities of front-line staff in the Language Training department are further highlighted in the *Overarching Themes* section on page 21.

Figure 12



COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Broadly, concerns surrounding compensation, including salary and benefits, is a recurring theme amongst the settlement and integration sector and the respondents from the Language Training program are no exception. Generally, the results as shown in *Figure 13* do not reflect a high degree of satisfaction for respondents in the Language Training department. Respondents from the Language Training program reported lower levels of agreement with statements regarding the level of compensation for their role. In regard to monetary compensation, respondents in the Language Training program reported the following (see *Figure 13*):

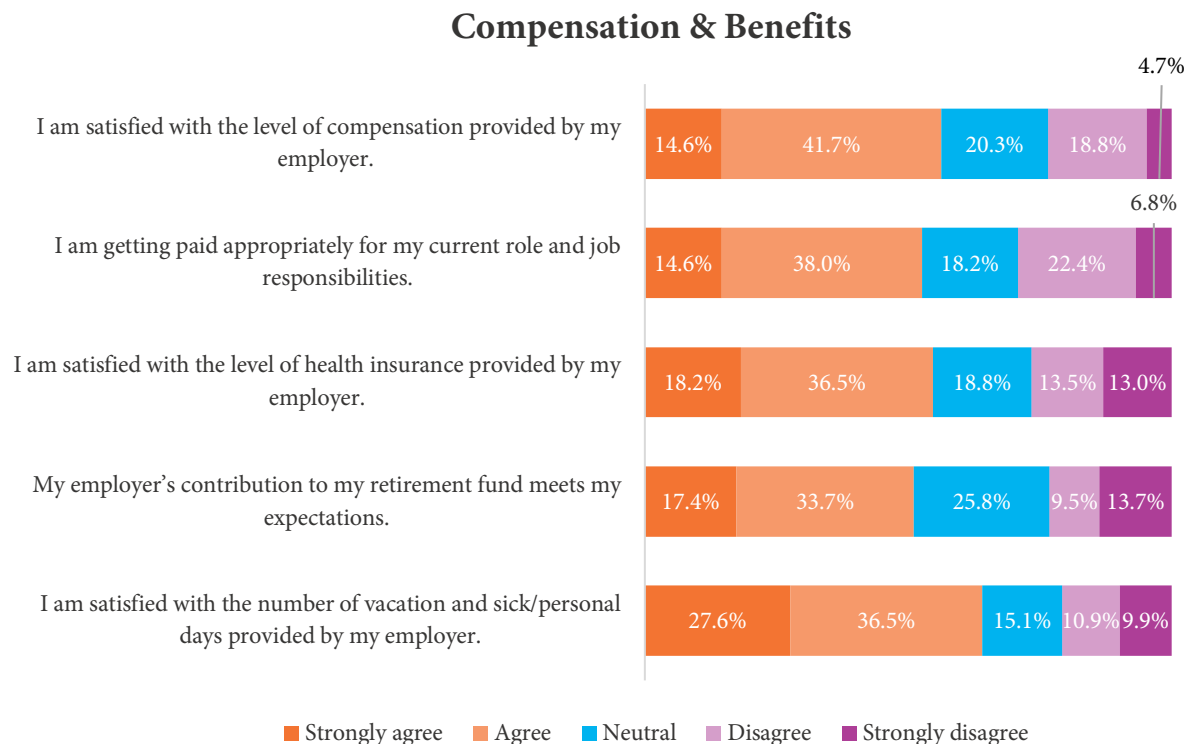
- 56.3% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I am satisfied with the level of compensation provided by my employer”, while 23.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 52.6% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I am getting paid appropriately for my current role and job responsibilities”, while 29.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

In regard to compensation beyond monetary compensation, respondents from the Language Training program also reported similar results with agreement to the statements divided in the middle with approximately 50% strongly agreeing or agreeing to the statements, while a range between 20% to 27% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Similarly, respondents indicated

neutrality for the same statements which fell between a range of 18% to 26%. The respondents in the Language Training program reported the following (see *Figure 13*):

- 54.7% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I am satisfied with the level of health insurance provided by my employer”, while 26.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The respondents in the Language Training program are 3.87 times more likely to strongly disagree with this same statement in comparison to the other departments shown in *Figure 1* and more specifically, Instructors are 2.81 times more likely to strongly disagree in comparison with other positions.
- 51.1% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my employer’s contribution to my retirement fund meets my expectations”, while 23.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The respondents in the Language Training program are 2.01 times more likely to strongly disagree with this same statement in comparison to the other departments shown in *Figure 1*.
- 64.1% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I am satisfied with the number of vacation and sick/personal days provided by my employer”, while 20.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In comparison with other programs outlined in *Figure 1*, respondents in the Language Training program are 1.67 times more likely to disagree while Instructors in comparison to other positions are 3.48 times more likely to strongly disagree with this same statement.

Figure 13



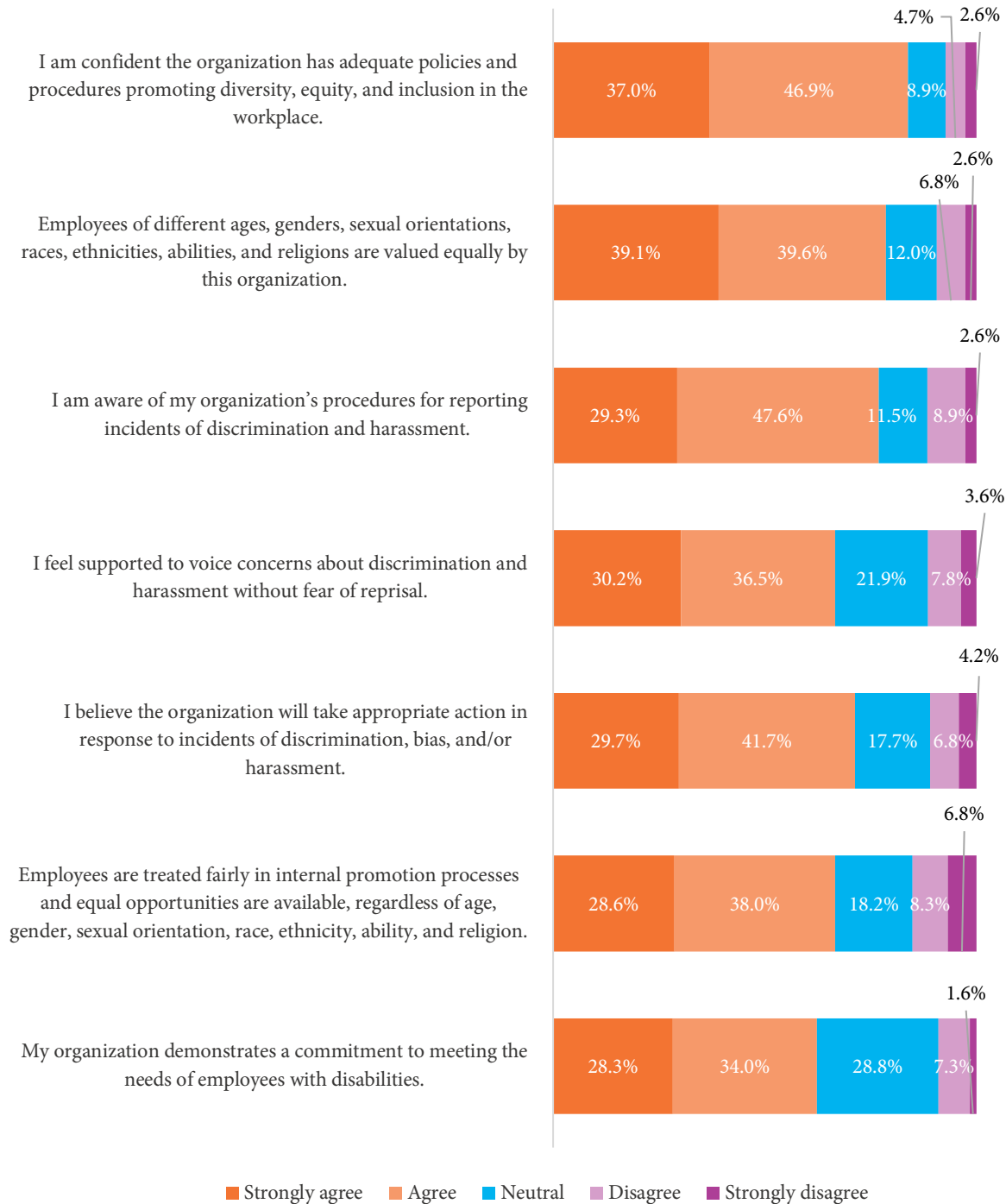
DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The survey results for the overall organizational evaluation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) for respondents in the Language Training program demonstrate a moderate to high degree of confidence.

- Over 80.0% of respondents are confident in their organizational policies and procedures for DEI and over 75.0% of respondents aware of their organizations procedures for reporting incidents of discrimination and harassment (see *Figure 14*). However, respondents who were between the ages of 55 to 64 were 2.50 times more likely to disagree that they are aware of their organizations' procedures for reporting incidents of discrimination and harassment. Similarly, while 66.7% (see *Figure 14*) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they felt supported to voice their concerns about discrimination and harassment without fear of reprisal, respondents did not take a strong stance on this question and were more likely to indicate neutrality (21.9%; see *Figure 14*).
- Over 75.0% were confident that all employees are valued equally (see *Figure 14*). In contrast, respondents exhibited a reduced amount of confidence in their organizations' fair treatment of internal promotion processes and equal opportunities (66.7% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed and 15.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement; see *Figure 14*) and more specifically, respondents aged 35 to 44 were 3.65 times more likely to disagree.
- In comparison to the other departments within agencies (Administration, Human Resources, or Finance, Employment, Language Assessment, Resettlement Assistance Program, Settlement program, Youth programming or Settlement Workers in Schools, and Umbrella agencies), the Language Training department was 1.96 times more likely to disagree that their organization demonstrates a commitment to meet the needs of employees with disabilities.
- There are increasing figures of neutrality for respondents' confidence and/or satisfaction for their organization taking appropriate action in response to incidents of discrimination, bias and/or harassment, and their organization demonstrating a commitment to meet the needs of employees with disabilities (17.7% and 28.8% respectively).

Figure 14

Diversity & Inclusion



WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND WELLBEING

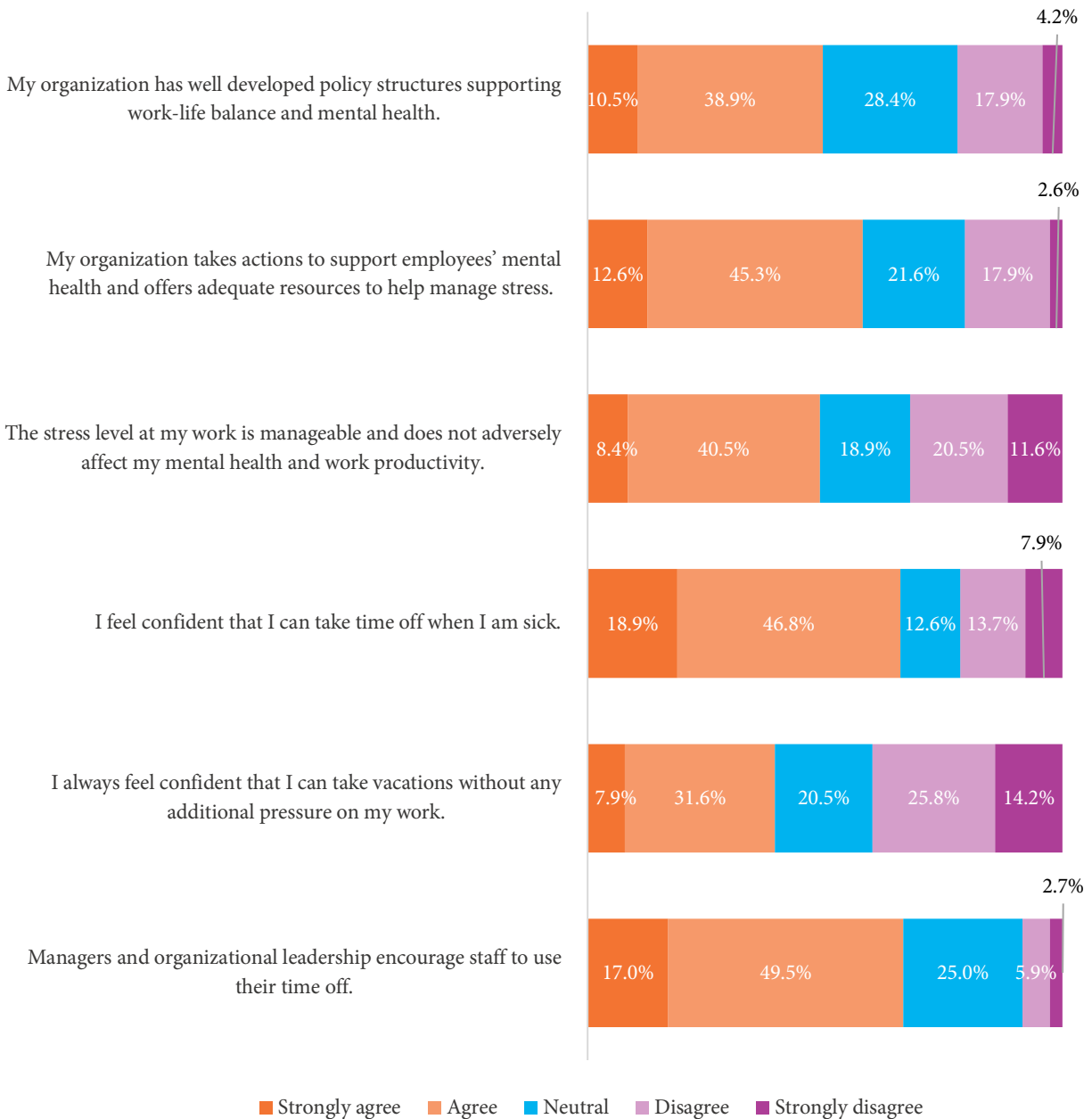
The HOTS survey captured perspectives regarding mental health supports and other factors that play into the mental health of employees in the workplace. The survey respondents in the Language Training program show that front-line employees in this program will need more mental health support from their agencies and leadership along with other measures that will mitigate stress levels such as being able to freely take time off work without added pressures. In comparison to the other positions outlined in *Figure 1*, respondents in the Language Training department are two to three times more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the statements regarding work-life balance and wellbeing.

The respondents in the Language Training program reported the following (see *Figure 15*):

- 49.5% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my organization has well developed policy structures supporting work-life balance and mental health”, while 22.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Additionally, in comparison with other programs outlined in *Figure 1*, respondents from the Language Training program are 2.13 times more likely to disagree with this same statement.
- 48.9% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my organization takes actions to support employees’ mental health and offers adequate resources to help manage stress”, while 20.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In comparison with other programs outlined in *Figure 1*, respondents from the Language Training program are 2.17 times more likely to disagree with this same statement.
- 48.9% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “the stress level at my work is manageable and does not adversely affect my mental health and work productivity”, while 32.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Interestingly, individuals that identified as male in the Language Training program are 2.87 times more likely to agree with the statement. However, respondents from the overall Language Training program in comparison to the other departments outlined in *Figure 1* are more 1.68 times more likely to disagree and 2.39 times more likely to strongly disagree with this same statement.
- 65.8% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I feel confident that I can take time off when I am sick”, while 21.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The Language Training department is 3.18 times more likely to disagree and 2.57 times more likely to strongly disagree with the same statement in comparison to other departments outlined in *Figure 1*.
- 39.5% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I always feel confident that I can take vacations without any additional pressure on my work”, while 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The Language Training department in comparison to the other departments outlined in *Figure 1* are 2.06 times more likely to disagree and 3.45 times more likely to strongly disagree with the same statement.
- 66.5% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “Managers and organizational leadership encourage staff to use their time off”, while 8.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 15

Work-Life Balance & Wellbeing



MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership within the newcomer-serving sector is multidimensional and will vary depending on the experiences of leaders at each organization. While the goals of leadership can vary, leadership remains a large determinant of organizational health for all levels of staff. The HOTS survey explored the level of satisfaction with management and leadership amongst front-line employees within the Language Training program. Broadly, the survey findings demonstrate that respondents have favorable perspectives towards their agencies' management and leadership. The survey findings show the following (see *Figure 16*):

- 63.3% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my manager/supervisor provides me with regular constructive feedback on my performance”, while 18.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 69.1% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my manager/supervisor recognizes and appreciates my outstanding efforts and accomplishments”, while 17.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The Language Training department in comparison with other departments outlined in *Figure 1*, are 2.07 times more likely to disagree with this same statement.
- 58.3% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my manager/supervisor shows genuine interest in my professional growth and career advancement”, while 19.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 58.0% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my manager/supervisor uses appropriate techniques to effectively resolve conflict among team members”, while 12.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 68.1% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I feel comfortable to approach my manager and share my concerns and needs”, while 17.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The Language Training department in comparison with other departments outlined in *Figure 1*, are 1.69 times more likely to disagree with this same statement.
- 67.7% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I believe our leadership team models our organization’s mission, vision, and values”, while 11.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 74.1% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “our leadership team keeps employees informed of decisions affecting them and the organization”, while 10.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 16

Management & Leadership



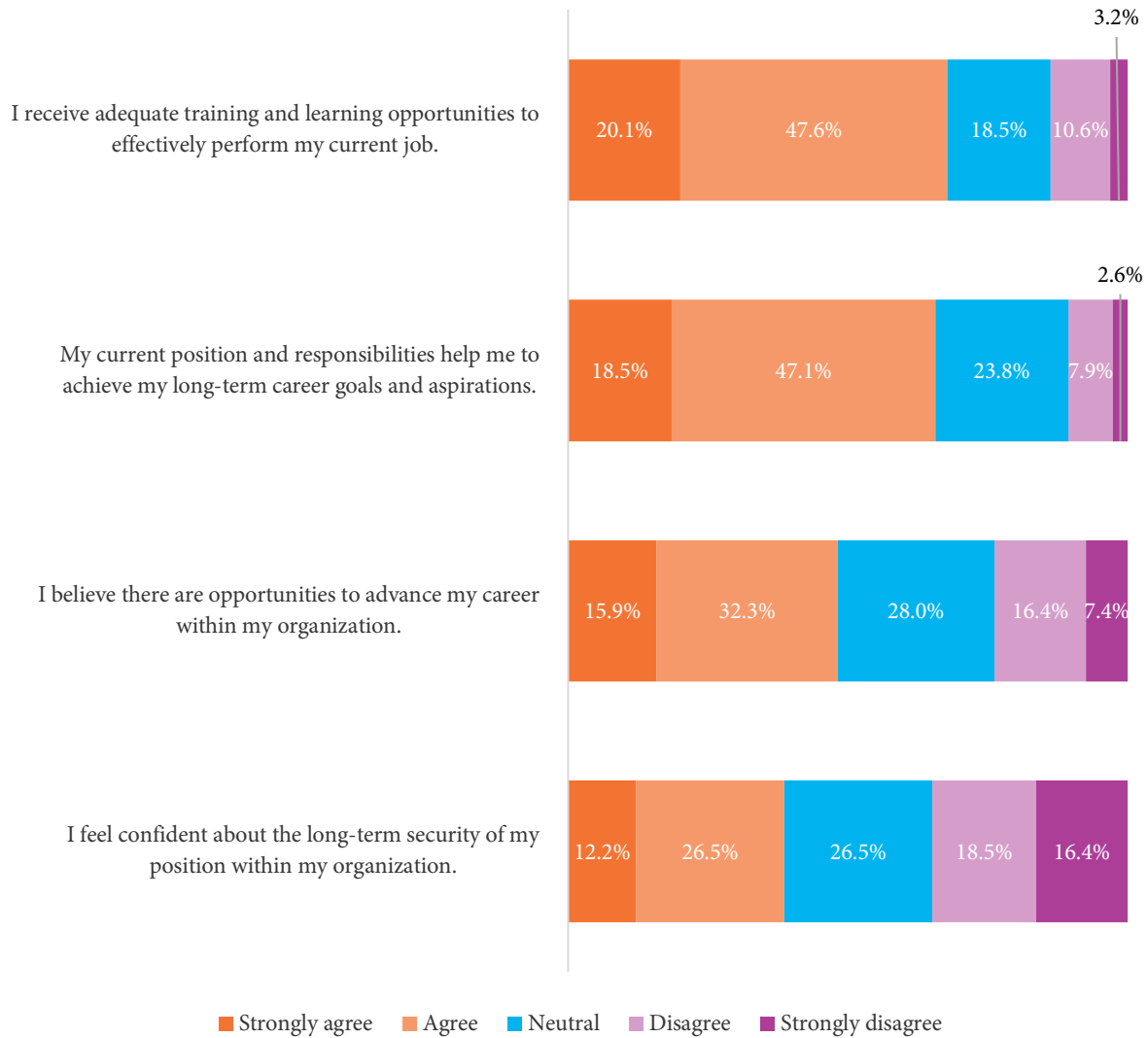
PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND STABILITY

Investments in professional development opportunities for employees in the workplace provides a multitude of benefits for employers and employees alike. Broadly, respondents in the Language Training program indicated that there are opportunities, such as training and learning events, that are available to support their professional development. However, the results show that respondents feel that there are few opportunities to advance, and little confidence in job security. The survey findings for respondents in the Language Training program show the following (see *Figure 17*):

- 67.7% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I receive adequate training and learning opportunities to effectively perform my current job”, while 13.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 65.6% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “my current position and responsibilities help me to achieve my long-term career goals and aspirations”, while 10.6% disagreed or strongly disagreed. In particular, respondents who identified as racialized are 1.95 times more likely to strongly agree with this statement.
- 48.1% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I believe there are opportunities to advance my career within my organization”, while 23.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 38.6% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I feel confident about the long-term security of my position within my organization”, while 34.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed. The Language Training program in comparison to then the departments outlined in *Figure 1* are 1.98 times more likely to strongly disagree with the same statement.

Figure 17

Professional Growth & Stability



FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF FRONT-LINE STAFF

The following sections provides perspectives of front-line staff in the Language Training program or department and their plans for the future regarding employment within the newcomer-serving sector. The following sections have been categorized into three focus areas:

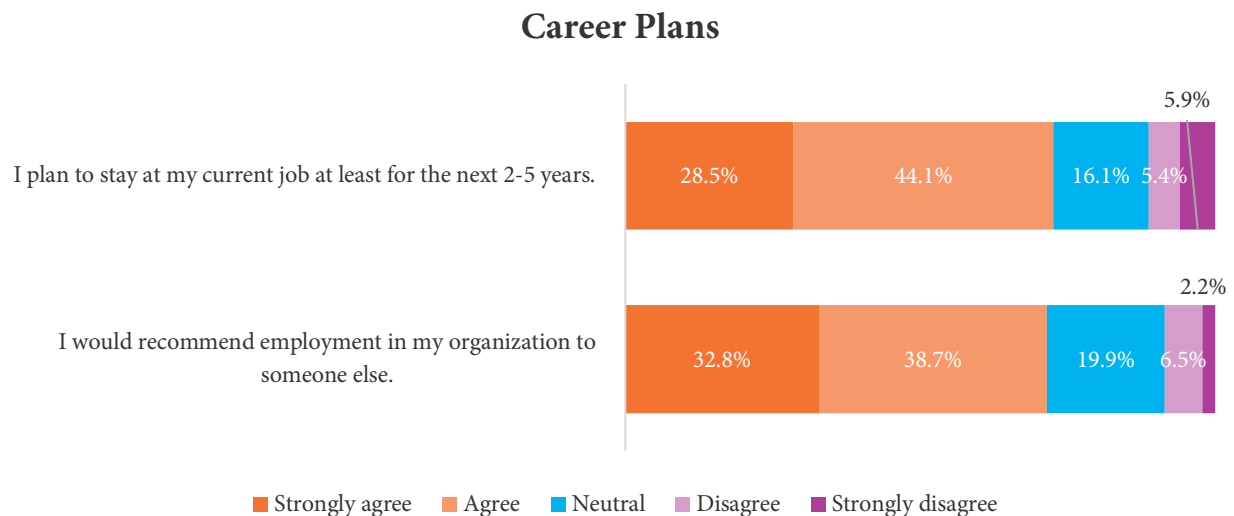
- Career plans of front-line Language Training staff
- Reasons that would compel Language Training staff to leave their current position
- Priorities for improvement that the sector will need to consider

CAREER PLANS

Respondent results tend to show favourable results in regard to staying at their current job for the next 2-5 years and are more likely to recommend their organization to someone else. The results show the following:

- 72.6% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they plan on staying at their current job for the next 2-5 years while 11.3% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.
- 71.5% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they would recommend employment within their organization to someone else while 8.6% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 18

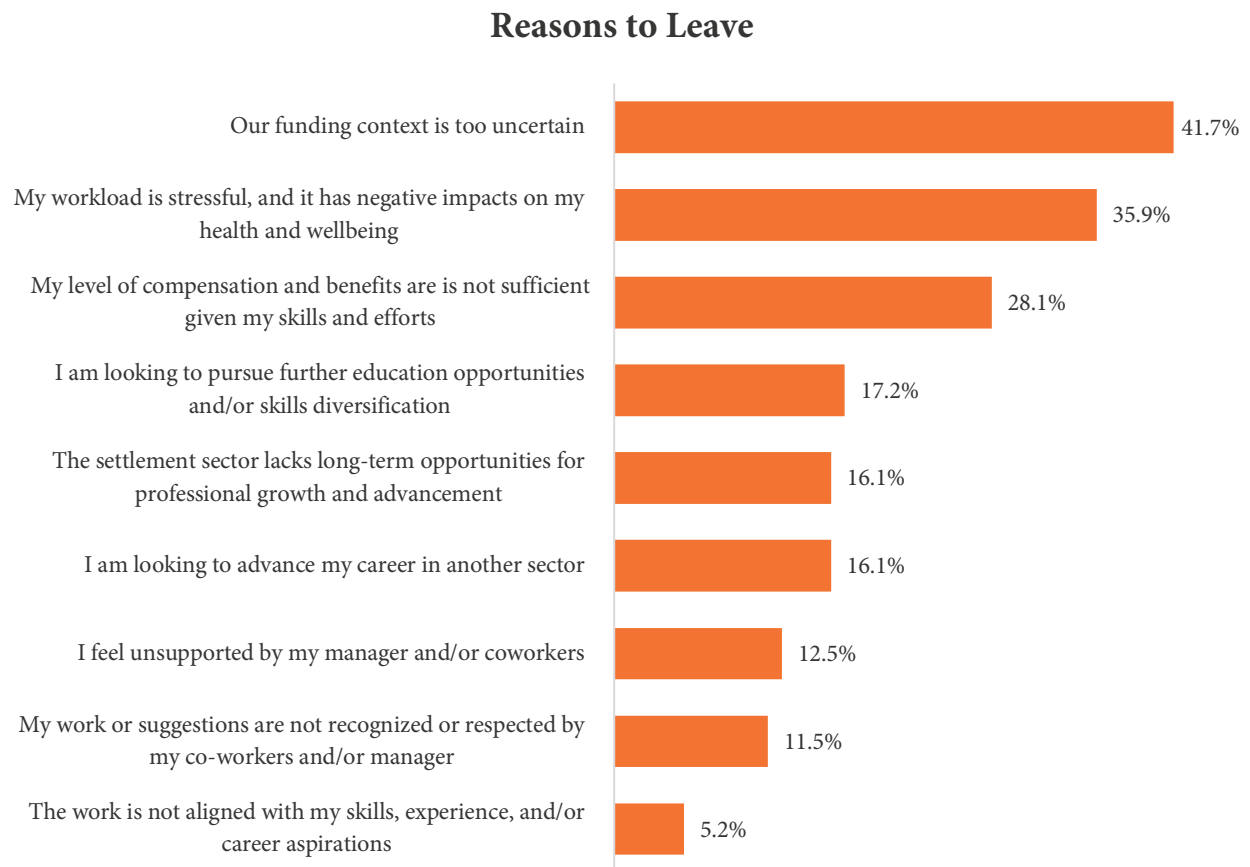


REASONS TO LEAVE

Respondents were asked to indicate the most important reasons for leaving their current work if they planned to leave within the next 2-5 years. *Figure 19* reveals the most selected answer to the least. The results show that Language Training respondents selected the following top three reasons:

- Funding context of their organization.
- Workload stress and its negative impacts on their health and wellbeing.
- The level of compensation and benefits they receive are not sufficient with their skills and efforts.

Figure 19



OVERARCHING THEMES & ASPIRATIONS

The findings of the disaggregated HOTS survey results for front-line respondents in the Language Training program provide a comprehensive understanding of key areas that will require further reflection and action to promote improved sector health. This section will highlight the themes that have emerged from the findings and will highlight three areas that have been further analyzed from the data. The **three focus areas** include the following:

- The diversity of the newcomer-serving sector and its strength in the Language Training program. The newcomer-serving sector is comprised of an extraordinarily diverse workforce as highlighted in the *Health of the Newcomer-Serving Sector in the PNT Region* report.
- The current funding environment for the Language Training program and its impact on compensation, including salary and benefits, mental health and wellbeing, and professional growth and stability of front-line staff.
- Management and leadership within organizations and their role in implementing and emulating best practices for their staff in all areas, including constructive feedback, professional growth and advancement, and conflict resolution. This section will also highlight the need for leadership to advocate on behalf of the Language Training program to funders to evolve their policies and implement best practices based on evidence-based research and data collected from staff in the Language Training program.

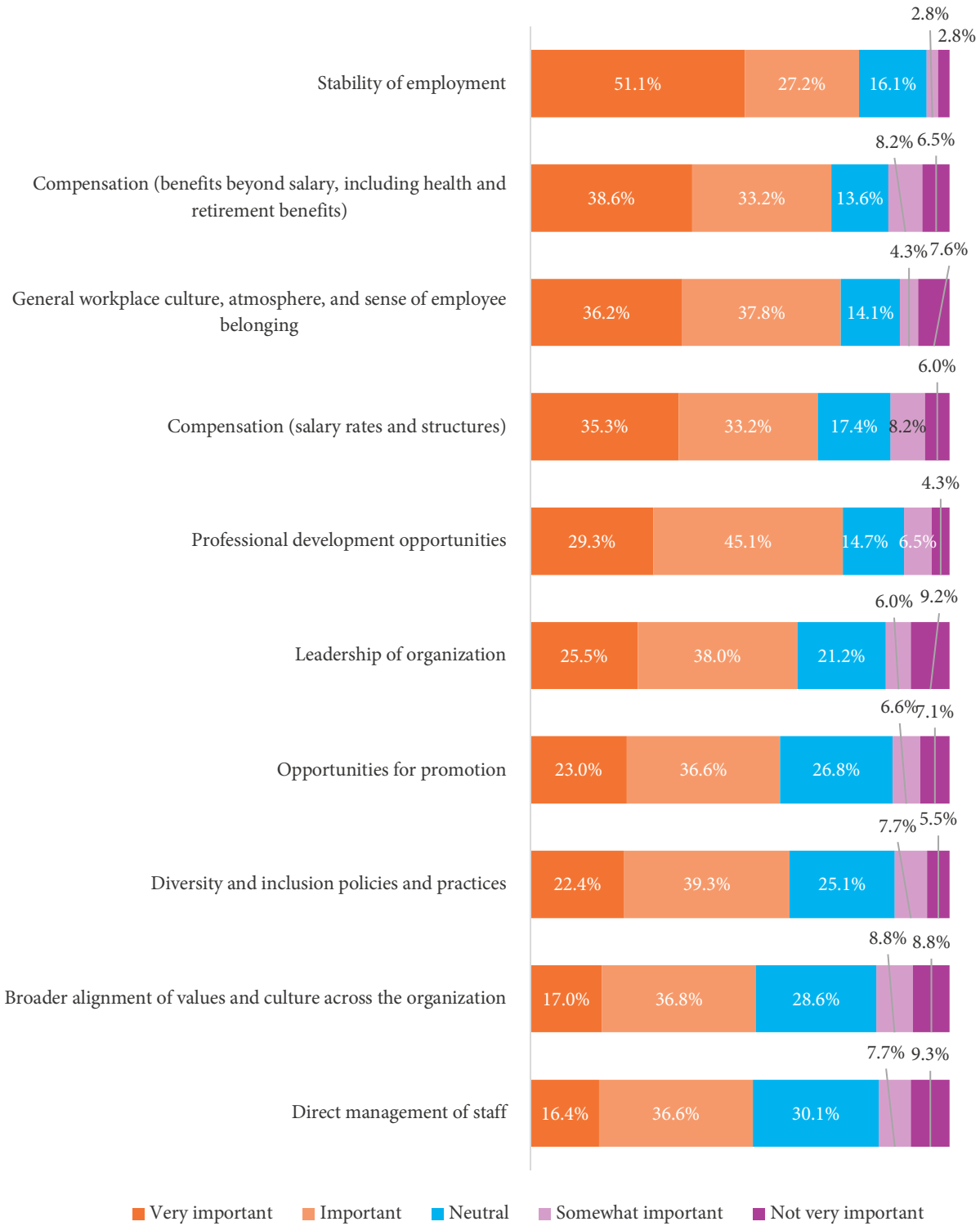
A review of the findings in the disaggregated data for the Language Training program reveals strengths and areas that require further reflection. The front-line perspective of the Language Training program is permeated with job insecurity that impacts both newcomers and employees, such as instructors in the sector. This section of the report will outline the three focus areas mentioned above with recommendations that address the challenges. The recommendations are developed from the focus areas and in some instances are further examined in the *Health of the Newcomer-Serving Sector in the PNT Region* report.

The three focus areas also encompass the priorities for improvement outlined by the respondents in the Language Training program. As shown in *Figure 20*, the top five priorities for improvement include the following:

- Stability of employment.
- Professional development opportunities.
- General workplace culture, atmosphere, and sense of employee belonging.
- Compensation benefits beyond salary and income such as health and retirement benefits.
- Compensation benefits such as salary rates and structures.

Figure 20

Priorities for Improvement



CELEBRATE THE STRENGTH OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

The newcomer-serving sector is comprised of an extraordinarily diverse workforce as highlighted in the *Health of the Newcomer-Serving Sector in the PNT Region* report. Broadly, the Language Training program is a woman-dominated field (84.9%; see *Figure 3*), ranges across age groups (see *Figure 4*), is comprised of employees who are immigrants to Canada (41.7% of respondents who indicated that they have lived in Canada for more than 11 years as shown in *Figure 6*), and is an employer of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds (25.5% racialized as shown in *Figure 5*). The Language Training program is also an employer of individuals who were once newcomers which is a consistent data figure amongst the HOTS survey results as the settlement and immigration sector is often a credible and familiar career pathway for many newcomers to Canada. In particular, respondents who identified as racialized are 1.95 times more likely to strongly agree that their current position and responsibilities help them to achieve their long-term career goals and aspirations. While this diversity should be celebrated, there are points of homogeneity worth noting, including pronounced number of female employees compared to male (10.4% respondents identified as male as shown in *Figure 3*), and white employees (62.5%; see *Figure 5*) compared to racialized (25.5%; see *Figure 5*), and Indigenous people (1.6%; see *Figure 5*).

The neutrality values shown in *Figure 14* are difficult to interpret as neutrality can sometimes be interpreted in a variety of ways including that some respondents may select “neutral” as to avoid voicing extreme opinions, or that they are less inclined to express their opinion (Chyung, Roberts, Swanson, & Hankinson, 2017). Respondents may have also selected “neutral” even if their true opinion is not neutral, or that they are unfamiliar with the questions presented (Chyung, Roberts, Swanson, & Hankinson, 2017). While the neutrality question cannot be answered for all the questions asked in *Figure 14*, there are explanations for one of the statements. In comparison to the other statements, the likelihood of respondents to select “neutral” was at least 1.3 times more likely for the statement relating to respondents’ organization demonstrating a commitment to meet the needs of employees. This suggests that respondents may be unaware of the supports available for people who need assistance as a result of a disability, or that appropriate supports are not embedded into organizational policy and daily business. This issue is discussed more thoroughly in the *Health of the Newcomer-Serving Sector in the PNT Region* report.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SECTOR

The results of the strength of DEI within organizations (see *Figure 14*) shows that respondents in the Language Training program are generally satisfied with policies, procedures, and equitable treatment for all employees within their organization. However, there are some key areas in which the Language Training program could benefit from with the following recommendations for agencies.

- 1. The sector is encouraged to build diversity, equity, and inclusion into the culture of the organization through policies, procedures, and training for all staff, including board members. This recommendation can be followed through with the following:**

- Investing in a DEI professional to inform their leadership teams and staff about opportunities their agency could be undertaking to improve DEI. Encompassing this strategy are the prioritization of meeting the needs of people with disabilities. There are lessons learned from the pandemic that have shed light on accessibility gaps that agencies have had to decipher and implement solutions. Moving forward, strategies that have been utilized to meet the needs of people who do not fit the majority should be a central consideration to ensure accessibility and equity. In this same context, agencies must prioritize and rethink how they utilize technology in accessible ways to meet the needs of their clients and of their employees.
- Ensure that the methods utilized to implement DEI are intersectional and all encompassing, but not performative. While there is a myriad of approaches to DEI, it is essential that these practices should centre the voices of marginalized folks, support Truth and Reconciliation, prioritize decolonization and anti-oppression, and consider all levels of the organization. These methods should regularly be evaluated and actively supported across the organization.
- Agencies should ensure that all policies and practices within their organization are implemented through a DEI lens, including onboarding and human resources practices, managing day-to-day operation of agencies, liaising with funders, and speaking at and/or organizing conferences that include and amplify voices from culturally diverse individuals.
- Commit to align the organization and advance the process of reconciliation through the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. Agencies are encouraged to prioritize learning and meaningful action in this regard through searching for Indigenous organizations and professionals that can help organizations understand their role in reconciliation through education, models, and frameworks that centre Indigenous inclusion. This work should centre Indigenous knowledge and experiences, provide robust and appropriate compensation for this work, and should be proactively stewarded in daily practice across all levels of the organization. Building models and frameworks centred on Indigenous inclusion may increase Indigenous talent to the sector which brings many benefits for employers and clients alike.

CURRENT FUNDING ENVIRONMENT & ITS IMPACT

The perspectives of front-line Language Training staff regarding funding stretches beyond funding expectations. Satisfaction levels regarding compensation, including salary and benefits, trended towards lower levels, as illustrated by *Figure 13*. Respondents from the Language Training department were two to three times more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with statements that positively attribute to compensation and benefits in their program. Related to this, there is an added stress of long-term security for positions, and dwindling confidence in opportunities to advance their career within the program amongst respondents (see *Figure 17*). All encompassing these issues are funding contexts of organizations that directly impact the compensation levels of all staff within the Language Training program (see *Figure 19* and *Figure 20*).

Impact on Small and Rural Centres

Funding contributions by IRCC, coupled with increasing demands (see *Figure 19*) for both management and staff, has resulted in many organizations implementing one-year fixed term contracts for Language Training staff. This dynamic has created a sense of insecurity amongst staff on the front-line within the Language Training program, with 34.9% of respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that they felt confident about the long-term security of their position within their organization (see *Figure 17*). In 2016, federal funding for language services across Canada, including LINC (excluding CLB 4) was reduced, resulting in an approximate reduction of 85% of in-class offerings, including the cancellation of Friday and Saturday Classes, as well as evenings (DeBooy, 2017). While funding reductions will have far-reaching impacts, regional funding for smaller centres and smaller communities plays a greater role for instructors and impacts thus reverberate more acutely. Due to low overall landing rates, rural areas do not have access to the same levels of funding (primarily due to the National Settlement Funding Formula) as larger urban areas, resulting in a more limited network of newcomer-services in rural areas. A respondent noted that:

“The IRCC funds the program for which I work, but the funding is unequal and unfair to smaller communities. Because I work with students who do not live in the large centres, I can only work as a “contractor” even though I have worked with the same students in the same place for over five years. My wage is significantly lower than those in the large centres. There are neither benefits for me, nor babysitting, computers, or other technology for the students. The teachers in the larger centres have all of these things. I have also seen cuts in the number of classes offered in rural Alberta twice in less than six years, leaving many students without adequate opportunity to learn English. After five years of teaching and efforts that enhanced and grew the program in my area 1000%, it would be nice to receive a little recognition. Instead, I saw the program cut because of funding, leaving several colleagues unemployed. I love my job. I love my students, but I am becoming quite overwhelmed by the uncertainty of my position and the concern that many of my students have recently lost their opportunity to study.”

Other notable issues that result from this funding context include newcomers' declining desire to relocate to rural areas decreases when essential services are often limited, such as language services,

access to technology, access to community services, and access to basic services. While these impacts are unintentional, they are counterproductive to provincial and federal efforts to attract and retain newcomers to settle in small and rural communities.

Impact on Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing

Language Instructors are bound to 1–3-year contract funding agreements that may not necessarily be stable as their program or funding can be suspended by IRCC. As a result, many front-line service providers indicated that this has been contributing to added stress due to job insecurity and instability. The survey results revealed that respondents from the Language Training are 2.39 times more likely to strongly disagree that the stress level at their work is manageable and does not adversely impact their mental health and work productivity. A respondent noted that although their organization is stable,

“the nature of the LINC Program funding (contracts) makes the position very unstable and is a difficult industry to work in for this reason.”

Another respondent added that,

“the biggest challenges for me are income precarity and sense of belonging. It's difficult to feel that you belong to an organization when you have worked there for several years and have no opportunities for permanent status. The environment feels pretty competitive, and the work keeps piling on. I love my work but teaching PBLA in a LINC program with the administrative and other demands in our program (without support) is overwhelming sometimes.”

As noted in the HOTS results, this reality often results in unintended and deleterious consequences, such as increased levels of stress for Language Training staff. More recently, in the wake of the pandemic, other unintended consequences have been revealed as it has become increasingly difficult for language service providers, such as instructors, to provide language services effectively and efficiently to newcomers. For example, instructors have had to become proficient in teaching through virtual formats to provide an engaging and fruitful environment for newcomers through utilizing new software and technology effectively and efficiently to teach language.

The impacts of virtual learning on students and instructors are multifaceted. In addition to improving official language competencies, in-person language programs are an opportunity for newcomers to build their community networks and social connections in Canada and are a gateway for newcomers to learn from other newcomers, to be exposed to different points of view, open doors for career opportunities, increase their civic participation, and build supports that they can rely on. The virtual format for language learning therefore may not always allow the same opportunities as in-person language classes do. As a result, instructors are often responsible to provide language classes beyond their expected role, which has included building online supports for newcomers and finding novel ways for newcomers to gain from their learning while also supporting newcomers who have digital literacy issues and access to technology. On virtual language delivery, one respondent expressed,

“the present necessity to teach online, the number of PBLAs required, the preparation of materials according to the CLB requirements and multi level classes, and the extra stresses of teaching literacy students are having a profound effect on my physical and mental health. In the past year, I have started to have problems with high blood pressure, which I never had before. Since COVID, I work almost all the time, and even have to do extra work wanted by my organization on my holidays. I don't have enough time to take care of my physical health through exercise and rest. Because of the stress of learning and implementing new technologies and the sedentary nature of online teaching, I'm having problems with weight gain. I may have to start working half time because I just find this job so unhealthy.”

These concerns should not be underestimated. Teaching language virtually is demanding for both learners and instructors, however, instructors have limited capacity to fully support newcomers' needs in this changing environment. The increased workload of respondents can be alleviated with extra support. One respondent indicated:

“my concerns (and stress level) with LINC are partly systemic and partly program level. PBLA should never have been rolled out without a curriculum. We need more quality, ready to use content and PBLAs. Instructors also need to be able to teach the same level for a number of terms in a row to avoid the burnout that accompanies having a full-time job creating curriculum on the spot and also teaching full-time.”

Another respondent noted that:

“a lot of the burdensome/superfluous pressures are not just from the organization; many are from national LINC or IRCC policies for LINC and their redundancy or incompatibility with the organization's processes. The LINC program is also so occupied with constant assessment that teaching is hindered. I'd say that is one of the biggest sources of unnecessary stress/pressure on most LINC teachers, and it also affects the quality of instruction/learning. The benefits of LINC (of which there are many) would be much better realized if we weren't expected to formally assess over 20 times in a 14-week term. We've been saying this for years.”

Challenges surrounding Portfolio Based Language Assessment (PBLA) are well documented, though some action has been taken in this regard. In particular, platforms such as Tutela were created to provide a space for instructors to store and share quality PBLA learning materials and assessment tools. Additionally, IRCC has also funded positions dedicated to developing PBLA materials. While the PBLA may be a useful pedagogical approach for some learners and instructors, as illustrated by the literature and HOTS findings, there is a need to further support the demands that fall on language instructors. The often-burdensome demands of PBLA, in combination with increased stressors from the pandemic, have the potential to compromise the wellbeing and mental health of instructors and can thus negatively impact the language services that clients receive. As such, it is critical that these Language Training systems are evaluated in concert with front-line employees to better address these challenges in service of improving the experiences of instructors, bolstering the overall health of the sector, and supporting increased language training outcomes for clients.

Impact on Compensation & Benefits

HOTS survey respondents from the language subsector, particularly the LINC program, indicated increased stress because of overwhelming administrative demands and income precarity due to the often-fluctuating nature of funding of the LINC program. This past year, Alberta saw their settlement funding allocations decline due to recent declines in newcomer arrivals (El-Assal, 2021). Consequently, the respondents in this survey indicated that this decrease in funding has created some operational challenges for agencies, including laying off employees, which often had adverse impacts on the quality of service provided to newcomer clients. The challenges in compensation and funding precarity in the language subsector were striking amongst the Language Training program survey data as respondents were 3.87 times more likely to indicate strong dissatisfaction with the level of health insurance provided by their employer compared to other departments and 2.01 times more likely to indicate strong dissatisfaction with their employers' contribution to their retirement fund. Additionally, the Language Training program respondents were also 1.67 times more likely to disagree compared to other departments while Instructors were 3.48 times more likely to strongly disagree that they were satisfied with the number of vacation and sick/personal days they received from their employer.

These figures are striking amongst the Language Training department and are more nuanced than general dissatisfaction with compensation benefits. A respondent expressed:

“I feel like my organization does have good compensation packages for salaried employees, but as a LINC instructor, we are poorly compensated and unfairly treated. Our jobs, training, and skills are similar to other employees, but we are paid hourly for teaching time only and are not compensated for any prep time, and therefore don't get paid enough hours to qualify for all the benefits everyone else gets. Also, there is no room to 'move up' as an instructor. Other employees get bigger salaries, more vacation, and better titles just for being there longer, but it never changes for instructors. It is frustrating, and we lose good teachers because of it. We are discouraged from speaking out because we are made to feel like we are lucky to have a job and that we can be replaced easily.”

Other respondents indicated that language instructors frequently work uncompensated overtime due to responsibilities outside of teaching hours, such as marking exams, office hours, preparing for class, and creating activities. A respondent stated:

“I work at least twice the number of hours that I am paid for due to prepping and marking. The hourly wage does not compensate for that. I continue to do this because I love it and the work is intrinsically rewarding.”

These survey findings are also confirmed by the qualitative data received from respondents who are instructors. Approximately 10% of all respondents who are also part of the Language Department (Language Assessment and Language Training positions) noted a variety of issues including funding concerns regarding instability, increased workload and stress, compensation related issues (salary and benefits), and the need for more mental health supports in the workplace. The adversities felt by instructors can be attributed to longstanding challenges as well as the added pressures from the pandemic, such as virtual language delivery, which has forced instructors to

adapt in different ways to provide services to newcomers. For example, instructors have had to learn how to teach through virtual formats, navigate new software and technology, and build online supports for their clients, while also supporting newcomers who have digital literacy issues and barriers in accessing to technology. Ultimately, as shown in the HOTS data, while compensation and benefits are a key concern of the Language Training department, these concerns are often multi-dimensional and related to a multiplicity of factors. As such, to mitigate these concerns and thereby promote the health of the sector, it is integral that a more nuanced approach is undertaken to support the intersecting needs and realities of Language Training staff.

Long-Term Job Security & Lack of Confidence to Advance Career Within Organization

One of the recurring concerns throughout the survey for the Language Training department is long-term job security. As noted in earlier sections, the funding context impacts the long-term job security of staff in the program. *Figure 17* shows that 34.9% of Language Training program staff disagree or strongly disagree that they have long-term security within their organization. More specifically, in comparison to the other surveyed departments in the newcomer-serving sector, the Language Training department is 1.98 times more likely to strongly disagree that they felt confident about their long-term job security. Additionally, in *Figure 20*, HOTS survey respondents highlighted stability of employment to be the most important reason that would influence them to leave their role in the Language Training program.

Long-term job security is equally important for employees, organizations, and the newcomer-serving sector. For employees and organizations, job security and stability increase employee wellbeing and standard of living, which ultimately supports increased productivity and reduced employee turnover. Benefits to the overall newcomer-serving sector include increased job security as newcomers are provided with greater relationship building opportunities with employees, reduced likelihood of brain drain of highly skilled employees into other sectors, and provides the opportunity for employees to build their skills within their organizations. However, the HOTS survey results reveal that respondents in the Language Training department are not confident that there are opportunities for growth available within their organization (see *Figure 17*). The benefits of professional development for employees are discussed in more detail in the *Health of the Newcomer-Serving Sector in the PNT Region* report. Similar to the larger newcomer-serving sector, this is an area in which organizations and funders can step in to implement policy changes that can positively impact this area of concern.

Impact on Teaching and Learning

A holistic, nuanced understanding of the Language Training program is required as this is an important focus of settlement and integration outcomes in Canada. Language skills are essential in ensuring that newcomers are safe and able to access programs and services, engage within their communities, and expand their networks. Challenges that exist on the employment side of the Language Training program can impact the teaching and learning of newcomers looking to expand their language skills. Due to greater stress on Instructors in the Language Training program, teaching, and instructors' personal and professional development can be hindered by the lack of stable working conditions. Employment patterns can often undermine professionalism when they

are not addressed. Job stability can impact the quality of instruction that need to be provided and in turn impact students learning needs. Further, when employee challenges in the program are not addressed, the impacts of job turnover can trickle down to student learning outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUNDERS

Among the lessons to be learned from these findings are the importance of assessing mental health support provided by agencies, along with decreasing other stressors that negatively impact employees.

1. Predictable, flexible, and stable long-term funding that ensures benefits, pension, a steady salary for long-term employment, and professional development. It is recommended that funders and stakeholders, in collaboration with the newcomer-serving sector, consider the following when funding agreements are discussed:

- Utilize evaluation methods that do not solely rely on occupancy and enrollment numbers and that better considers the holistic needs and realities of learners For example, incentivise employment rates within classrooms and provide increased flexibility for programs with low-literacy learners, learners with complex needs, learners with young families, etc., to contextualize occupancy and enrollment numbers.
- Invest in a compensation survey for the Language sector in settlement and integration to understand the nuances and sectoral environment.
- Provide increased transparency and set best practice employment standards for language funding agreements to promote more consistency across employment and compensation standards across service providers.
- Provide permanent employment contracts to instructors to ensure greater job stability for employees. With immigration targets set to increase as outlined by the 2022-2024 Levels Plan (IRCC, 2022), priority should be given to retaining to qualified instructors and providing employment security to ensure continuity and quality of service.
- Invest in Education Assistants (EAs) and Digital Literacy Specialists and/or Navigators to provide more robust support for Instructors and students.
- Review the National Settlement Funding Formula to reflect the changing realities and implications of the pandemic.
- Provide flexibility and creative freedom to newcomer-serving agencies to redesignate their funding according to their needs through increased ability to transfer funds across budget lines as agencies see fit, and the ability to transfer any unexpended revenue from one fiscal year to another within their contribution agreement.
- IRCC to continue providing agencies with grant opportunities that are less restrictive and have less reporting requirements. In the spirit of flexibility and agency autonomy, grants can be provided as a supplement to contribution agreements to better meet emergent needs and changing agency realities.
- A greater level of transparent collaboration between the sector and funders to redefine priorities that reflect current sector needs and challenges.

- Funding opportunities should robustly account for all costs, including the health and well-being of staff. Benefits should provide secure and stable employment through compensation that allows for long-term job security, consistent pay structures that reflect skills, tenure, and the cost of living, and retirement plans and options.
- Incentivize agencies by setting standards and requirements in funding proposals and opportunities that promote a healthy sector such as competitive compensation packages (salary and benefits), RRSP and pension contributions for employees, leadership that represents the population being served, collaboration with other agencies that aim to reduce duplication, and overall good employment practices. As IRCC and other funders are not employers of the settlement sector, this recommendation will promote organizational well-being beyond the delivery of services and encourage collaboration amongst settlement agencies rather than promote competitiveness.
- Funding opportunities should provide adequate training and professional development opportunities to support front-line employees in achieving their goals and the goals for newcomers identified by the government.
- As part of professional development, provide targeted funding for digital literacy training and digital equipment to settlement service providers in all regions, including small centres and rural communities.
- Fund agencies to develop multi-year anti-racism strategic plans and activities.
- Prioritize mental health needs by increasing the availability of a variety of resources that go beyond supporting the mental health needs of settlement staff, such as increasing wages, addressing systemic issues, making workloads more equitable, and creating safe workplaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SECTOR

The challenges outlined with the funding context can be alleviated to create robust, sustainable organizational budgets that directly impact the wellbeing of front-line staff. Newcomer-serving agencies can benefit and take advantage of these opportunities and funding initiatives by prioritizing a change to their funding models and approaches.

- 1. Provide stable employment through permanent employment as opposed to temporary or short-term employment to reduce the lack of predictability and precarity in the Language Training program.**
 - Agencies are encouraged to identify the need for greater stability and advocate for language sector employees with funders to ensure predictability for employees through longer-term contracts or permanent contracts.
 - Agencies are encouraged to diversify funding sources to ensure greater organizational sustainability and employee health. Diversifying funding sources can provide organizations with greater opportunities to address employee needs and long-term stability where funding capacity is not directly provided by one funder.
- 2. Ensure that compensation packages including benefits, salary, and unpaid work are provided for employees.**

- Access to extended health care can make a significant difference to the quality of life for employees. Although benefits are not widely available to all Language Training employees, especially part-time and temporary employees, it is imperative that organizations are seeking to improve the compensation packages for this group by way of diversifying funding sources and advocacy for employees through grant agreements.
 - Consult with language training staff to determine equitable compensation that more accurately account for preparatory work done outside of teaching hours, including lesson-planning and marking, as well as compensation approaches that better reflect professional experience, qualifications, and credentials
- 3. Collaborate with provincial and federal professional associations that exist to support teachers and language learners to continue and bolster active engagement in teacher and student advocacy.**
- Actively engage and advocate with provincial and national TESL/TEAL associations and jointly advocate for best practices, teaching standards, and compensation levels.
- 4. Diversify funding sources.**
- Seek new funding opportunities from community foundations, private sector funding, and strategies through social innovation and social finance models. In particular, social innovation and social finance models have been a focus for the federal government in that it has developed the Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy for social purpose organizations across Canada (Government of Canada, 2021).
 - Coordinate and collaborate with other newcomer-serving agencies to share best practices in applying for and receiving funding from diverse funders and organizations to support broad knowledge mobilization and capacity building.
 - Connect with the private sector and diverse community organizations to seek opportunities for partnership and potential funding opportunities while also supporting cross-sectoral learning.

On a programmatic level, diversifying organizational funding can allow service providers to do the following:

- Support flexibility of language programs in response to emerging needs.
- Facilitate broad opportunities for innovation, support employee retention, and promote organizational longevity and growth through a variety of initiatives. For example, it will allow agencies to develop compensation plans customized to organizational needs and internal structures, employee promotions, and wage increase. Additionally, agencies have more organizational flexibility to improve their staff well-being by providing or increasing health benefits, offering retirement and pension plans, increasing investments for professional development opportunities, and increasing mental health resources.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MANAGEMENT & LEADERSHIP TO ADVOCATE & SUPPORT STAFF

Leadership within the newcomer-serving sector is multidimensional and will vary depending on the experiences of leaders at each organization. While the goals of leadership can vary, leadership remains a large determinant of organizational health for all levels of staff. The HOTS survey explored the level of satisfaction with management and leadership amongst front-line settlement and integration employees. Broadly, the survey findings demonstrate that respondents have favorable perspectives towards their agencies' management and leadership. This is also true for respondents in the Language Training program. The results show that leadership-modelled behaviors that encourage a healthy workplace, such as taking time off and encouraging employees to take time off, are not sufficient and other actions need to be taken to combat current stressors. These themes are discussed broadly in the *Health of the Newcomer-Serving Sector in the PNT Region* report and can be applied in the same way for employees in the Language Training program.

To effectively support the well-being of all staff, increase employee confidence with their organization regarding mental health supports, and ensure that all staff are well supported, agencies need to develop stronger and more robust policy structures and actively ensure their implementation and actualization. There are areas in which leadership teams and managers can invest time and resources to further strengthen a healthy workplace for the language sector as there are some areas where meaningful processes are needed to strengthen employees' trust in their leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are for Language Training organizations to implement within their workplace.

- 1. Provide tangible and culturally sensitive mental health and wellbeing supports for all staff.**
 - Leaders in the sector must proactively anticipate and address the mental health needs of front-line staff, such as burnout and vicarious trauma. Being mindful and aware of the challenges faced by front-line workers, such as the increase of work that go beyond their capacity, while also proactively providing supports to address these issues can increase mental health and employee morale.
 - Leaders should embody practices and lead by example to encourage employees to seek support safely and meaningfully.
 - To go beyond the informal practices that promise employees the support they need in their workplace, agencies can also benefit from formalizing mental health through organizational policy that highlight the differing needs and contexts of all employees.
 - All mental health practices and solutions should recognize and address the diversity of staff through tailored, intersectional, and culturally competent mental health supports.
- 2. Leaders must embody and demonstrate the sector's values while supporting the development of future leaders within the sector.**

- Invest in succession planning that supports the development of leaders within the organization to increase employee satisfaction, morale, wellbeing, and sense of belonging. Succession planning and investment in leaders should take an all-encompassing approach that recognizes the strength in diversity, equity, and inclusion of all employees.
 - Cultivate an environment that welcomes and celebrates diverse individuals through implementing and actively stewarding diversity, equity and inclusion in the recruitment, retention, and promotion of employees.
 - Ensure that employees in the Language Training program have time to participate in professional development opportunities. Instructors are often working outside of classroom hours to prepare and grade student work and may not always have time to engage in professional development activities. Leaders are encouraged to adopt an environment that provides professional development opportunities to employees during work hours to enhance and build on employee skills.
 - Provide an environment that has continuous learning along with a succession plan that is built into the organization to increase the level of loyalty, stability and creates an environment where employees feel valued for their contributions and commitments.
- 3. Prioritize transparency within the organization to facilitate the growth and development of front-line employees and foster buy-in and a broad culture of trust.**
- Implementation of policies on human resources that build communication channels for all employees to voice concerns without fear of retribution, create opportunities for employees to voice their opinions and share their thoughts on organizational matters (employee-driven or collective decision-making rather than hierarchical decision-making).
 - Show dedication to all staff by showing fairness in dealing with conflict and challenges within the organization.
 - Foster an environment that prioritizes continuous learning.
- 4. Implement innovative and inclusive approaches to work.**
- A balance between work and life responsibilities while also taking into consideration the intercultural approaches to work. This recommendation should also encompass safe workspace that create inclusivity in which employees are empowered and comfortable to bring forward requests and ideas to utilize within their workspace.
 - Employers are encouraged to provide opportunities on a regular basis for employees to communicate with senior leaders to highlight issues, co-create solutions, and promote innovation and professional development. These strategies bridge organizational hierarchy while creating a short communication channel to discuss issues in a confidential environment. Establishing communication amongst everyone in the workplace enables discussions that lead to greater understanding amongst each other and therefore builds a truly inclusive workplace that celebrates its diversity to enrich employees' lives, productivity, innovation, and creativity.

CONCLUSION

The HOTS survey results provide the newcomer-serving sector, governments, funders, and other stakeholders critical knowledge and insight to build on and evaluate the systems in place that impact front-line staff within the sector as a conduit to supporting sectoral health. Through data collection across the PNT region, the HOTS survey examined the perspectives of front-line staff within the settlement and integration sector by looking at the employment experience, organizational strengths and challenges, and opportunities available. This report focuses on the perspectives of staff within the **Language Training** program which provides a strategic lens on front-line staff regarding their perspectives on organizational evaluation and their plans for the future within the newcomer-serving sector. Through these results, targeted actions and increased understanding of front-line Language Training staff within the PNT to support a strengthened, sustainable, and equitable settlement and integrations sector.

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