

Healthy Newcomers, Healthy Communities



Introduction

- In 2010, Newcomer Women's Services Toronto embarked in a project to engage newcomer women in making policy recommendations to support newcomers in raising heart-healthy families.
- We convened an advisory committee to inform the content of a leadership training weekend for newcomer mothers
- After the training, a group of women conducted their own research projects and then presented their recommendations to the advisory committee

Outline

- Background: Healthy Immigrant Effect
- MOSAICS – Newcomer Parents Leadership Training
- Factors Affecting Newcomer Health (what we heard at the training)
- Research Methodology
- Research Projects:
 - Access to Community Centres
 - Newcomers and Mental Stress
- Recommendations

Background:

The Healthy Immigrant Effect

- “[A] pattern whereby newcomers initially present positive health characteristics that deteriorate or worsen following immigration is known as the "healthy immigrant effect." (Gushulak, 2007).
- 9 out of 10 immigrants are *healthier* [than average Canadian population] upon arrival in Canada, as they have to undergo a medical examination as part of the eligibility criteria.

MOSAICS – Newcomer Parents’ Leadership Training

- 50 women, 30 children, 1 weekend
- Topics covered:
 - Newcomer health
 - Nutrition
 - Diabetes
 - Public policy
 - Civic engagement
 - Public speaking



MOSAICS – Newcomer Parents' In Action



Factors Affecting Newcomer Health

(according to leadership training participants)

- **Settlement stress**

- Communication (language, accent)
- Change in social status
- Separation from family/homesickness
- Education/Credentials not recognized

- **Financial issues**

- Lack of employment
- High cost of housing, transportation, food

Factors Affecting Newcomer Health

(according to leadership training participants)

- **Employment**

- Credentials not recognized
- Change in economic status
- No Canadian experience
- Lack of knowledge of Canadian labour laws and worker rights
- Lack of information about employment programs
- Structural unemployment

Factors Affecting Newcomer Health

(according to leadership training participants)

- **Diet and nutrition**

- Trouble finding Halal food (lack of knowledge / no clear labeling)
- Parents don't have enough time to prepare food
- Expensive to buy healthy food for big families
- Food banks don't provide fresh food, some foods are expired or inappropriate
- Organic food is too expensive

Factors Affecting Newcomer Health

(according to leadership training participants)

- **Isolation**
 - Language barriers (shy to speak)
 - Fear of discrimination (different treatment because of accent)
- **Lack of information on programs and services for newcomers**
- **Lack of exercise**
- **Poor public transportation**
 - Not all TTC stations are accessible, especially to strollers

Community-Based Research

- After the leadership training weekend, 8 participants conducted research on two major themes:
 - Access to Community Centres
 - Survey was designed and administered to 78 newcomers
 - Environmental scan of community centres was conducted
 - Newcomers and Mental Stress
 - Survey was designed and administered to 22 newcomers

Access to Community Centres

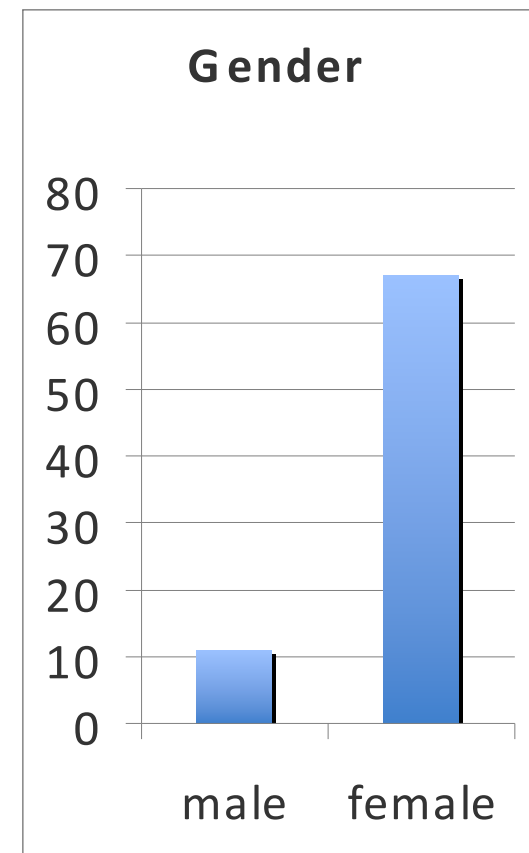
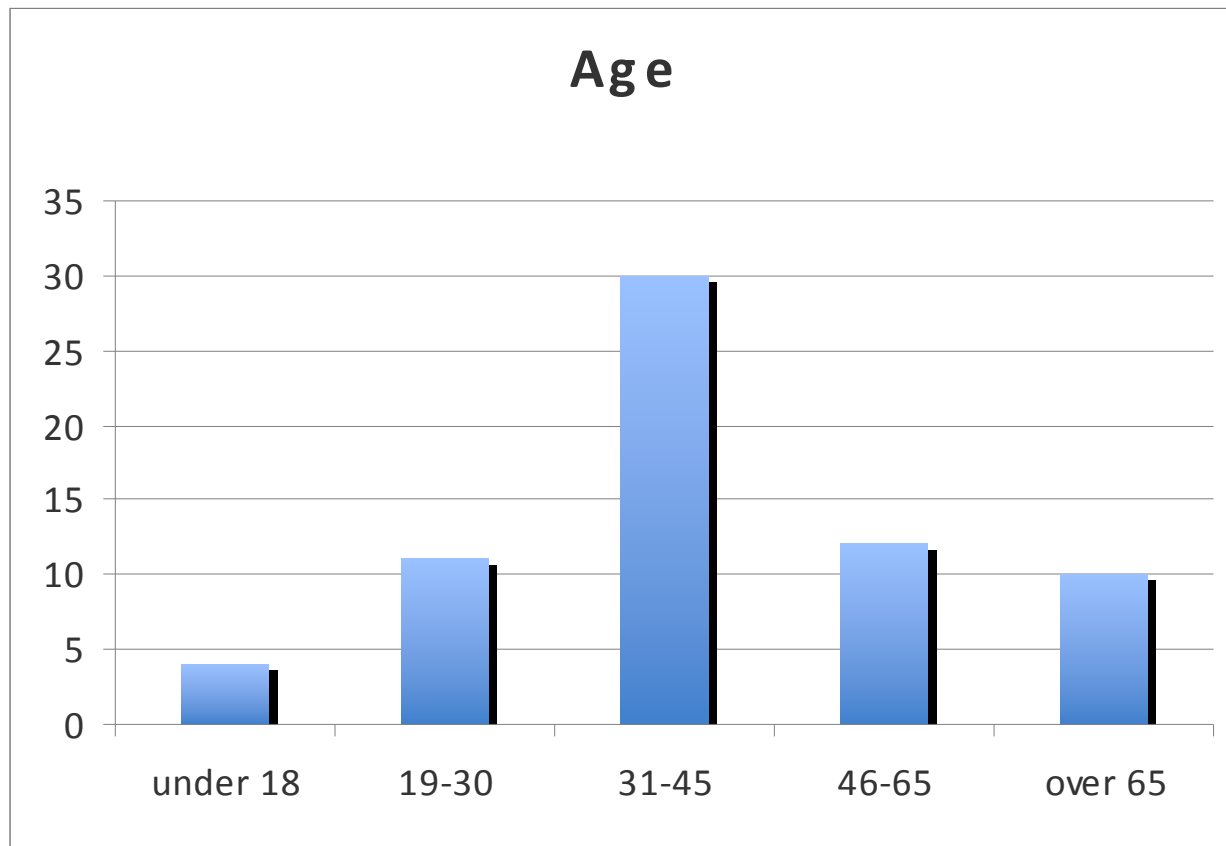
by

Jingbo Xu, Tenzin Fatema, Amal Al-Badri, Farhana Choudhury, Mumtaz Somani, Nurun Khanam

- **Access to community centres was examined because these facilities have the potential to address the following challenges:**
 - **Isolation**
 - **Lack of information on programs and services for newcomers**
 - **Lack of exercise**

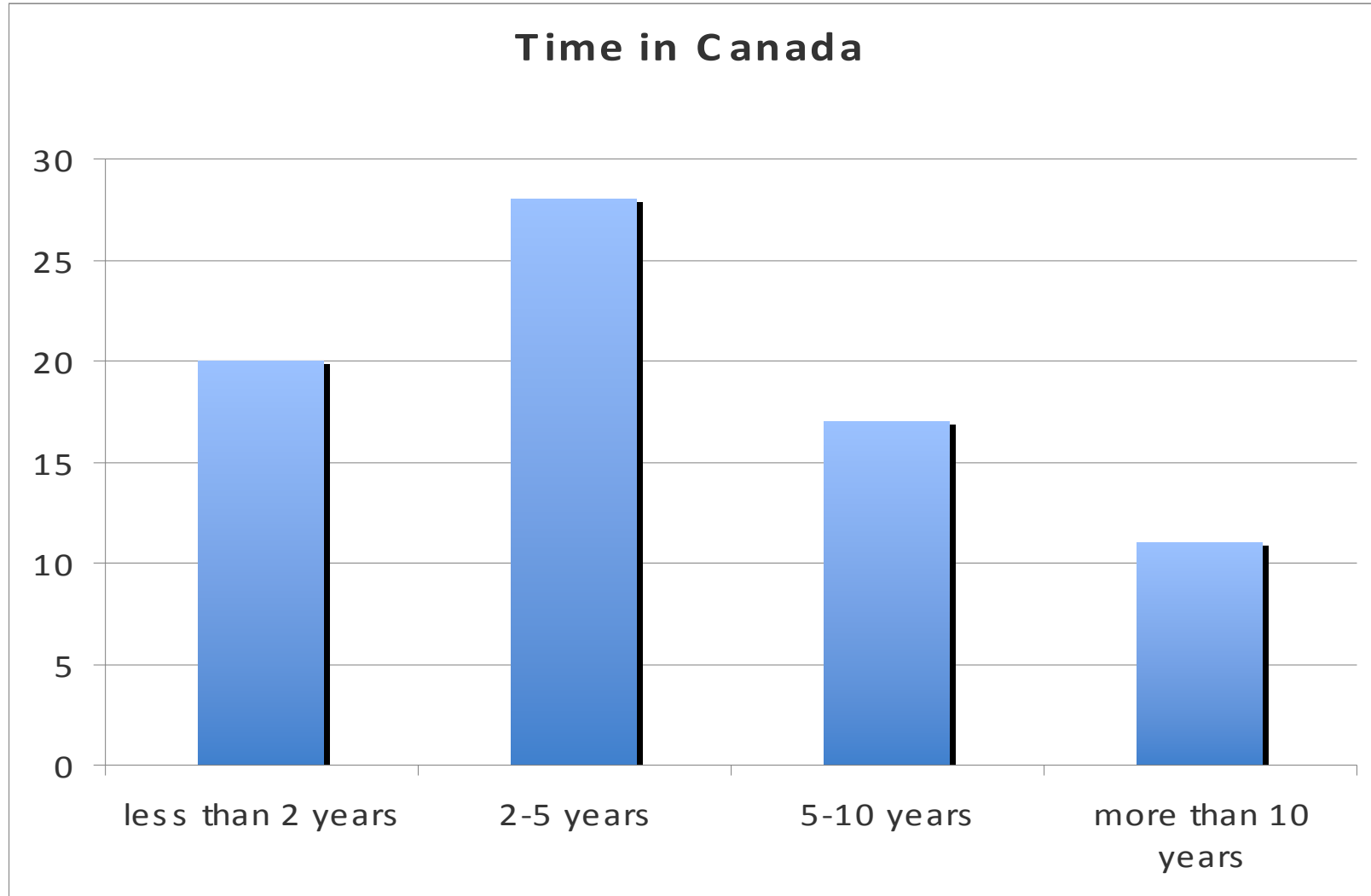
Access to Community Centres

Survey Respondents



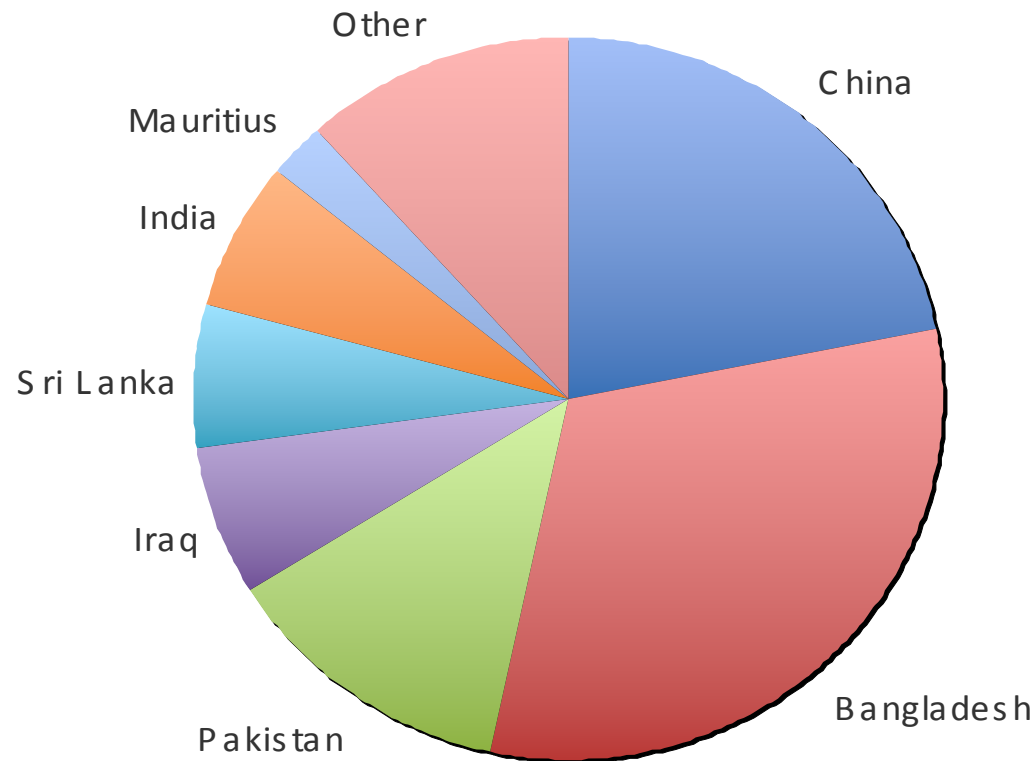
Access to Community Centres

Survey Respondents

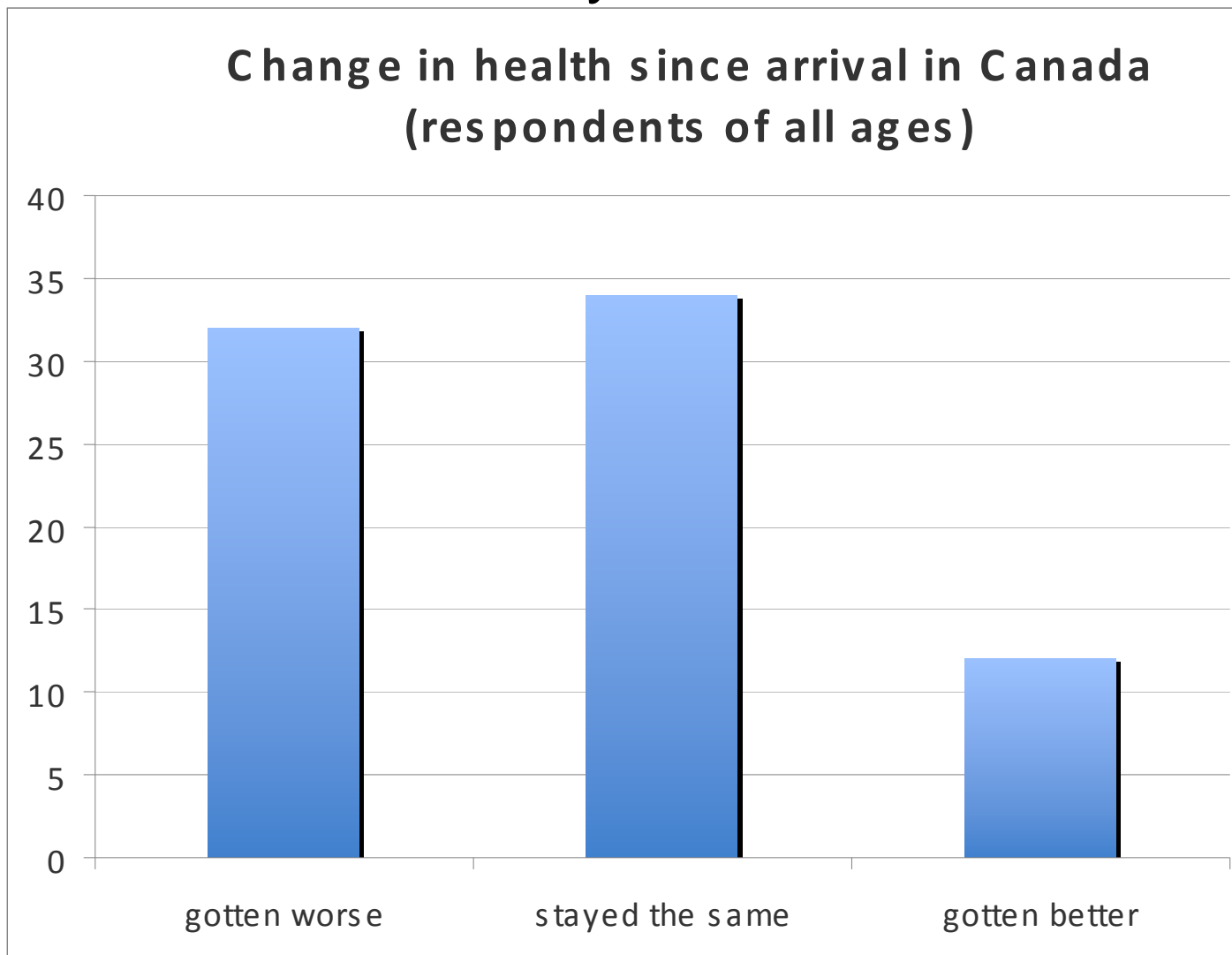


Access to Community Centres Survey Respondents

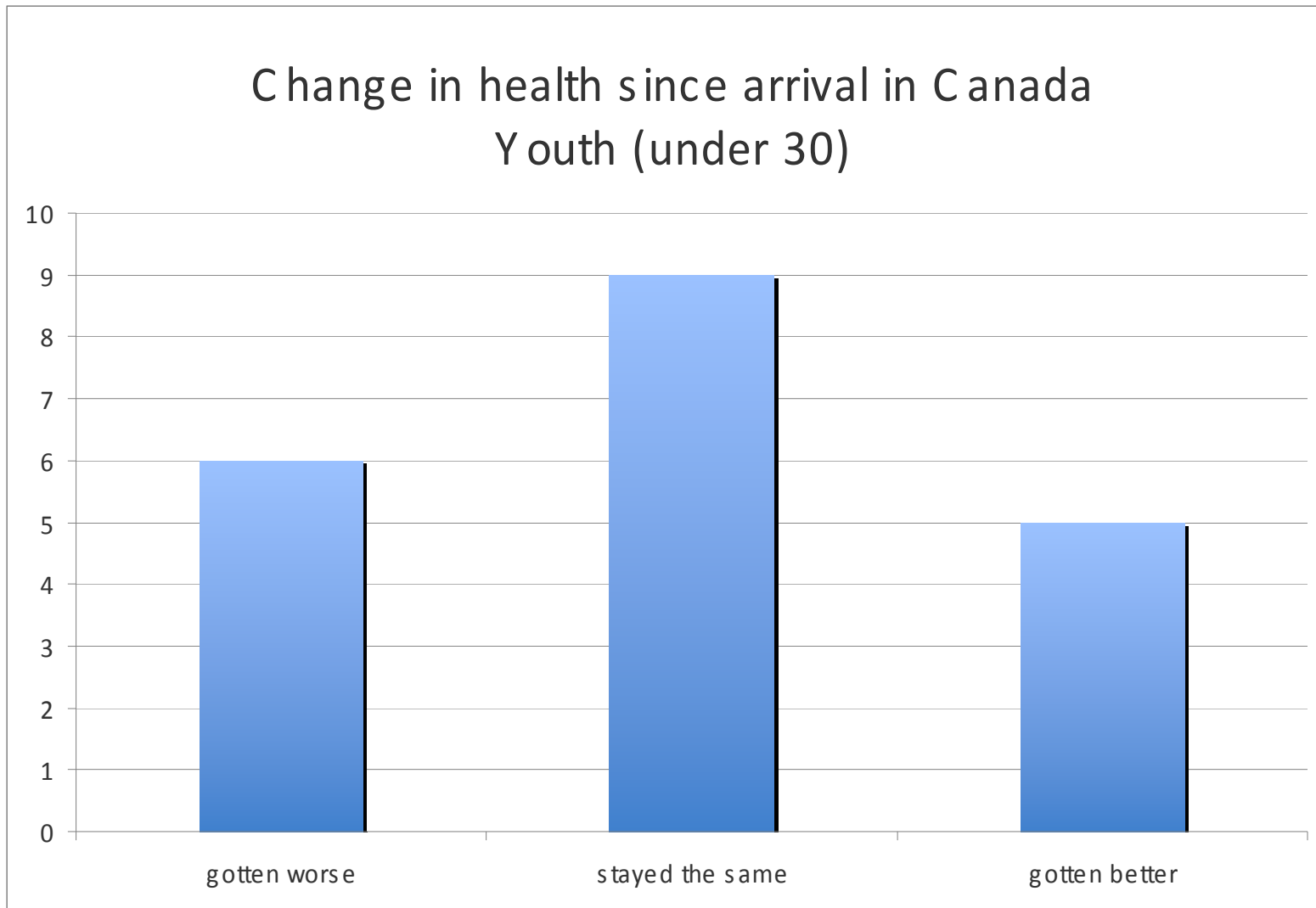
Country of Origin



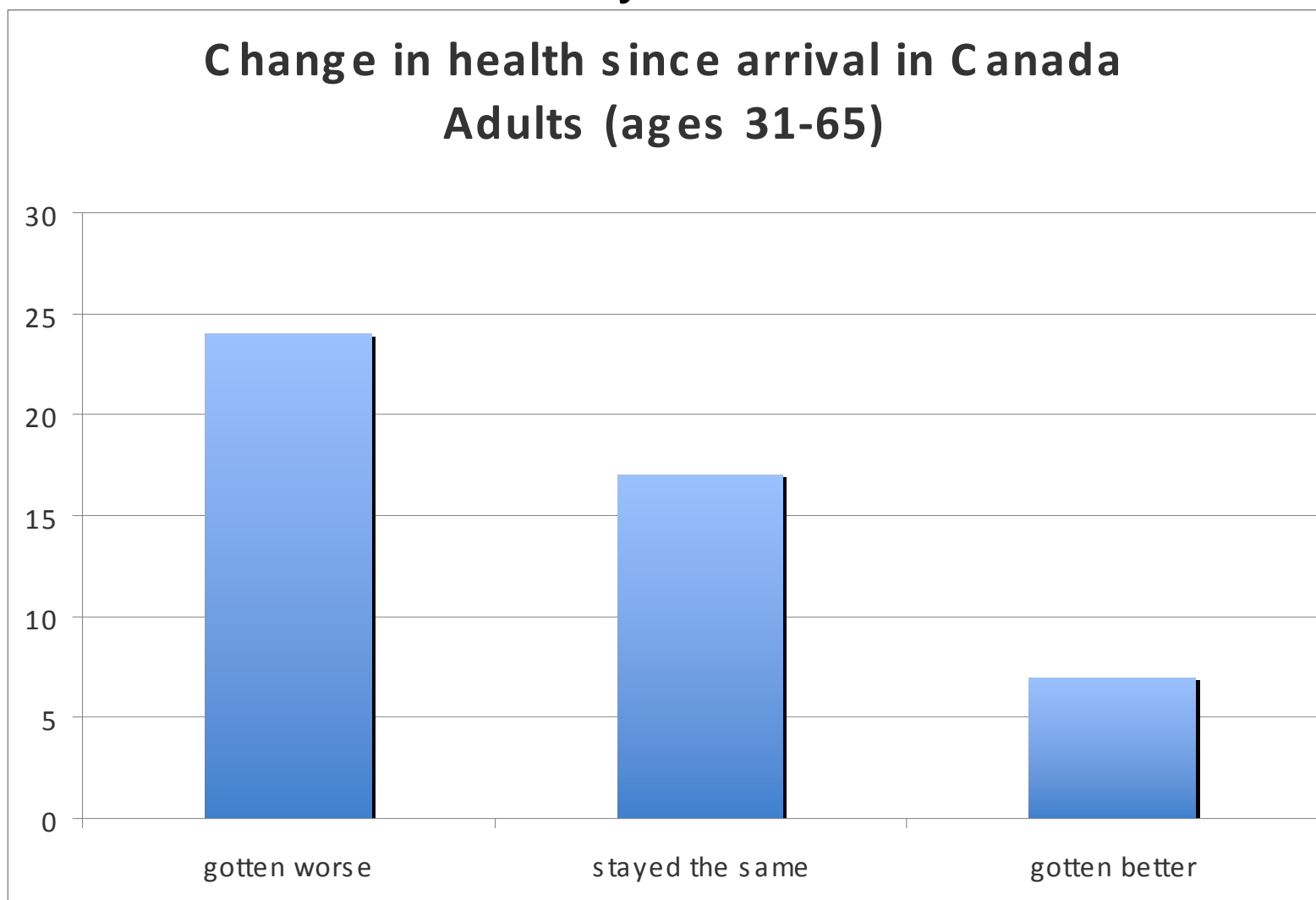
Access to Community Centres Survey Results



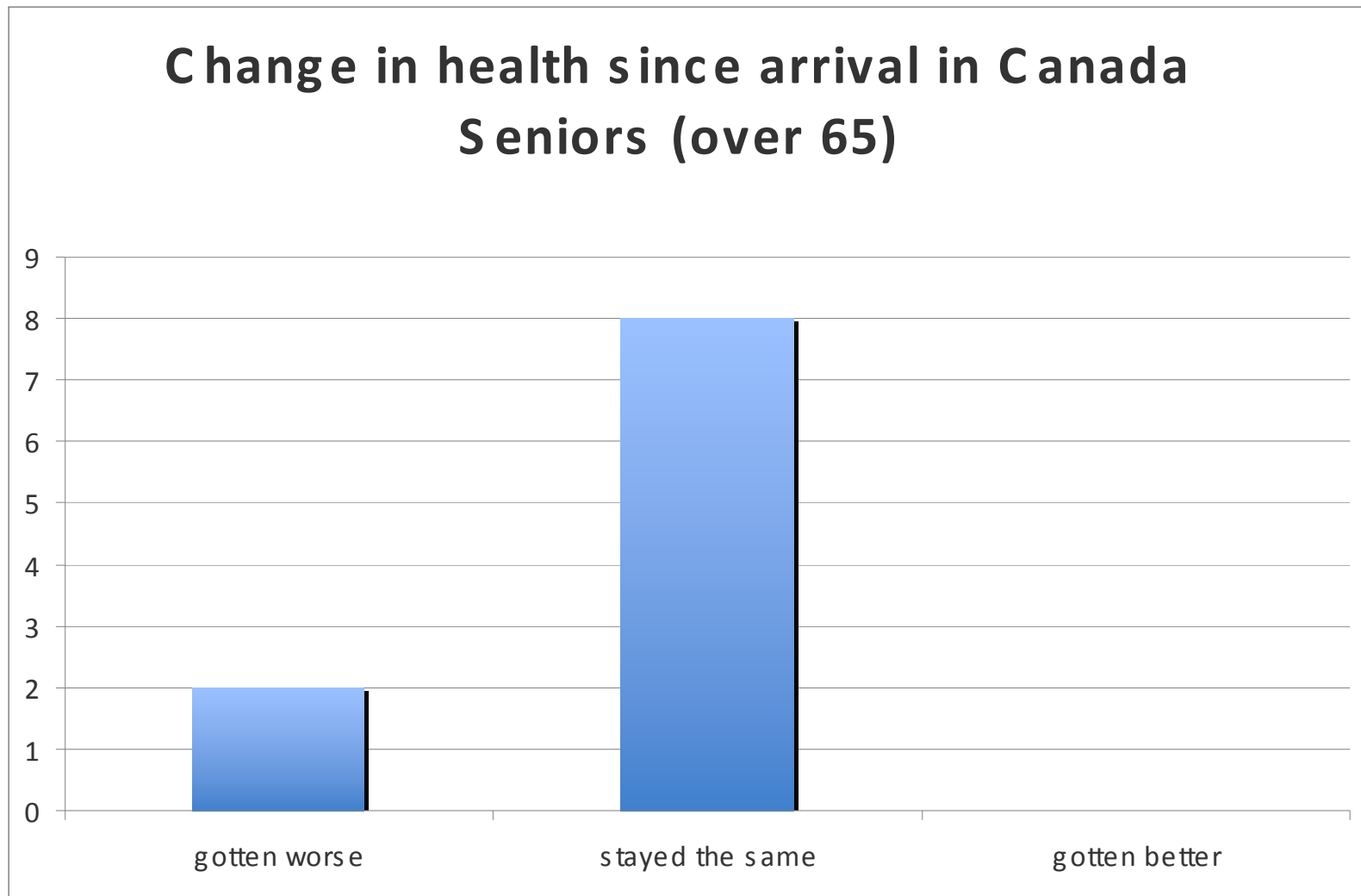
Access to Community Centres Survey Results



Access to Community Centres Survey Results

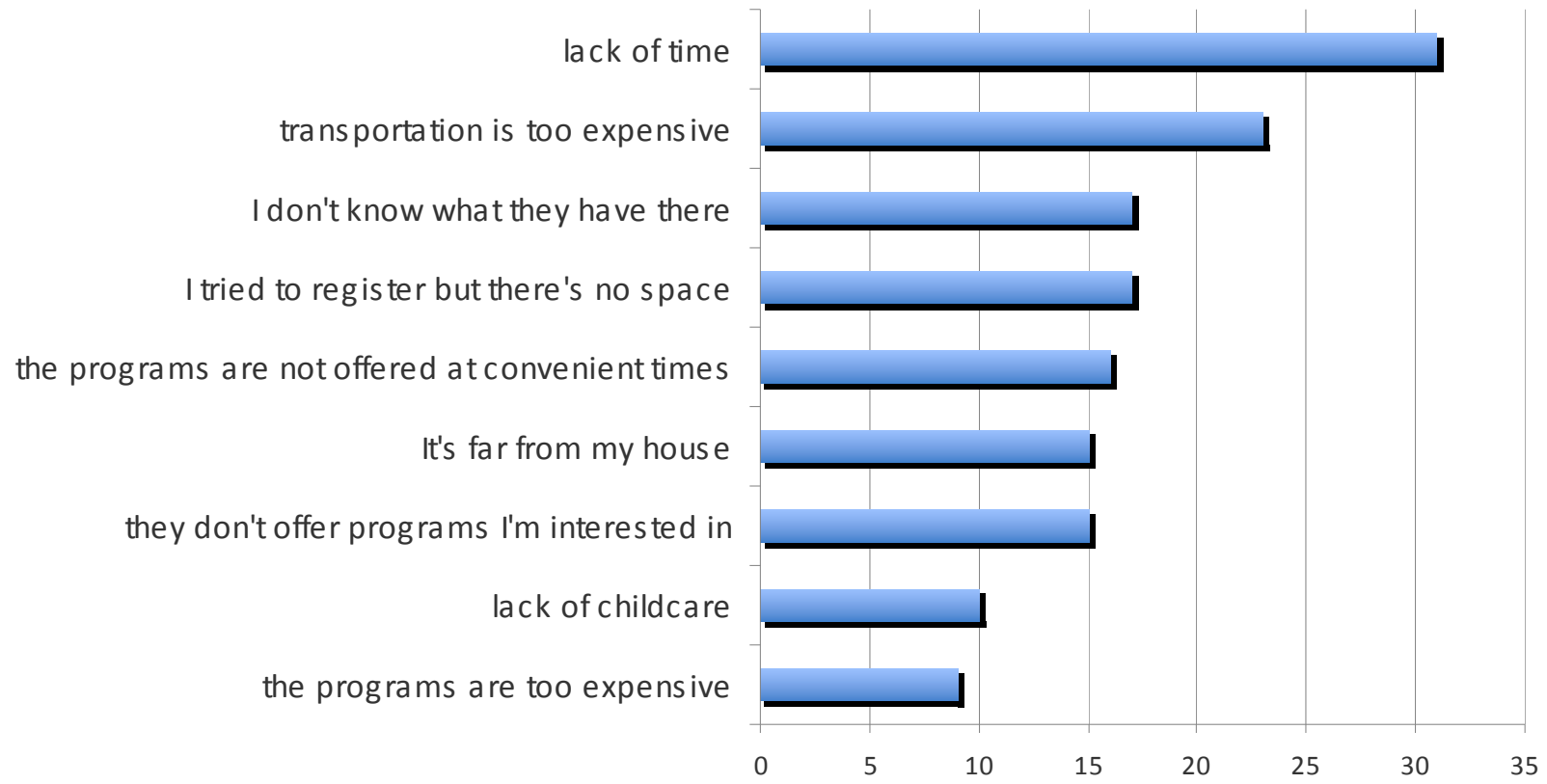


Access to Community Centres Survey Results



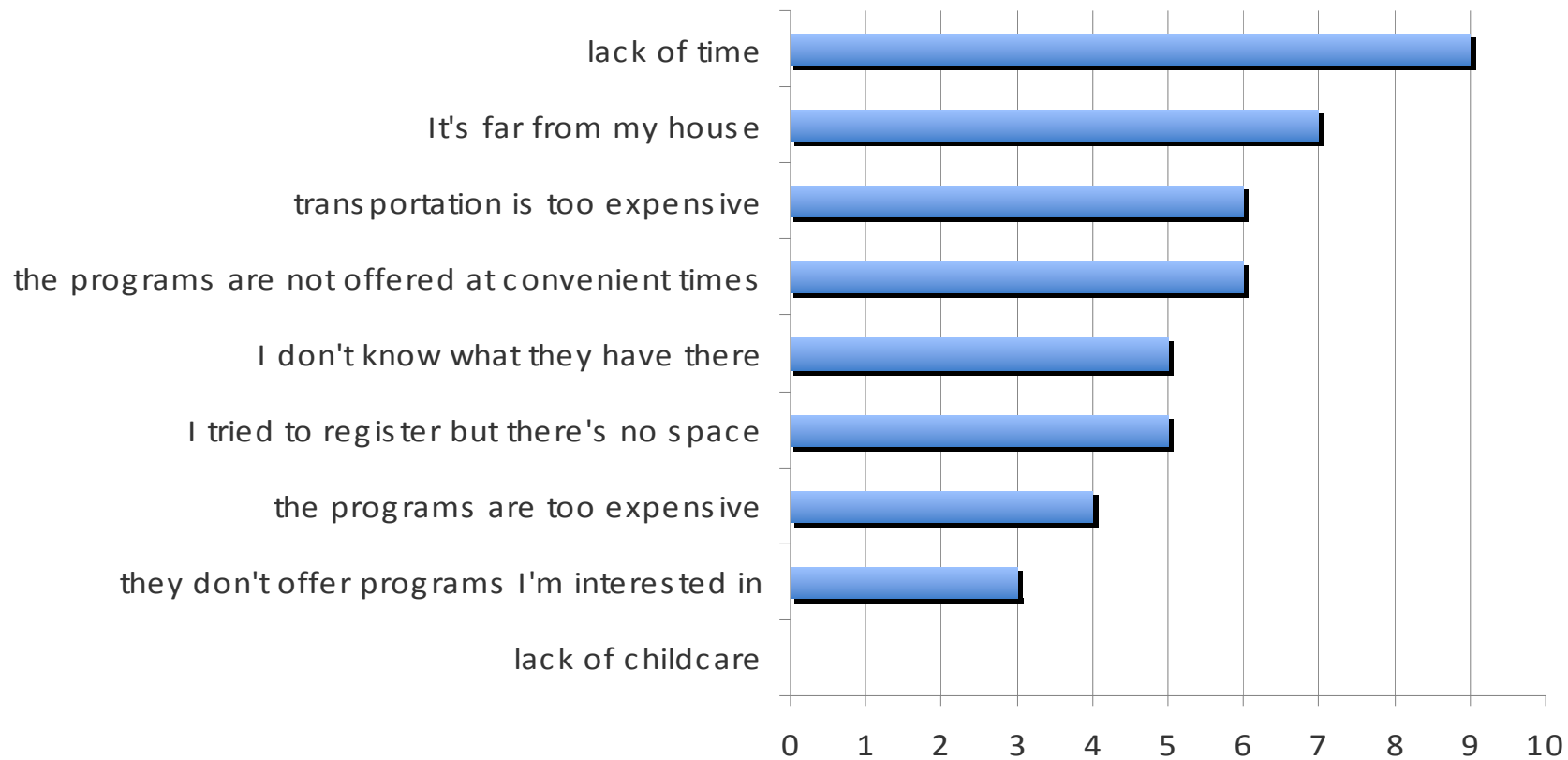
Access to Community Centres Survey Results

Barriers to Community Centre Use (respondents of all ages)

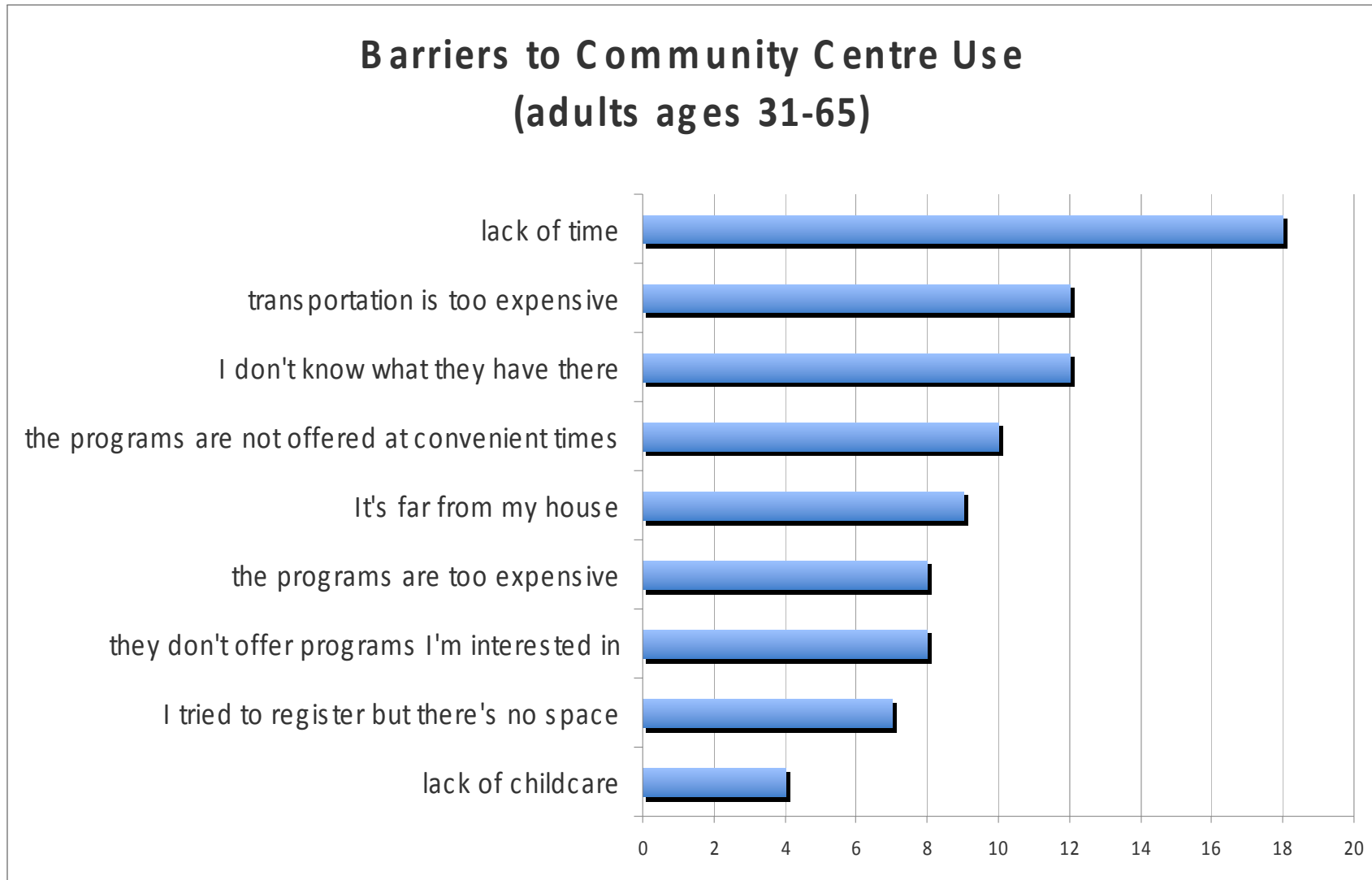


Access to Community Centres Survey Results

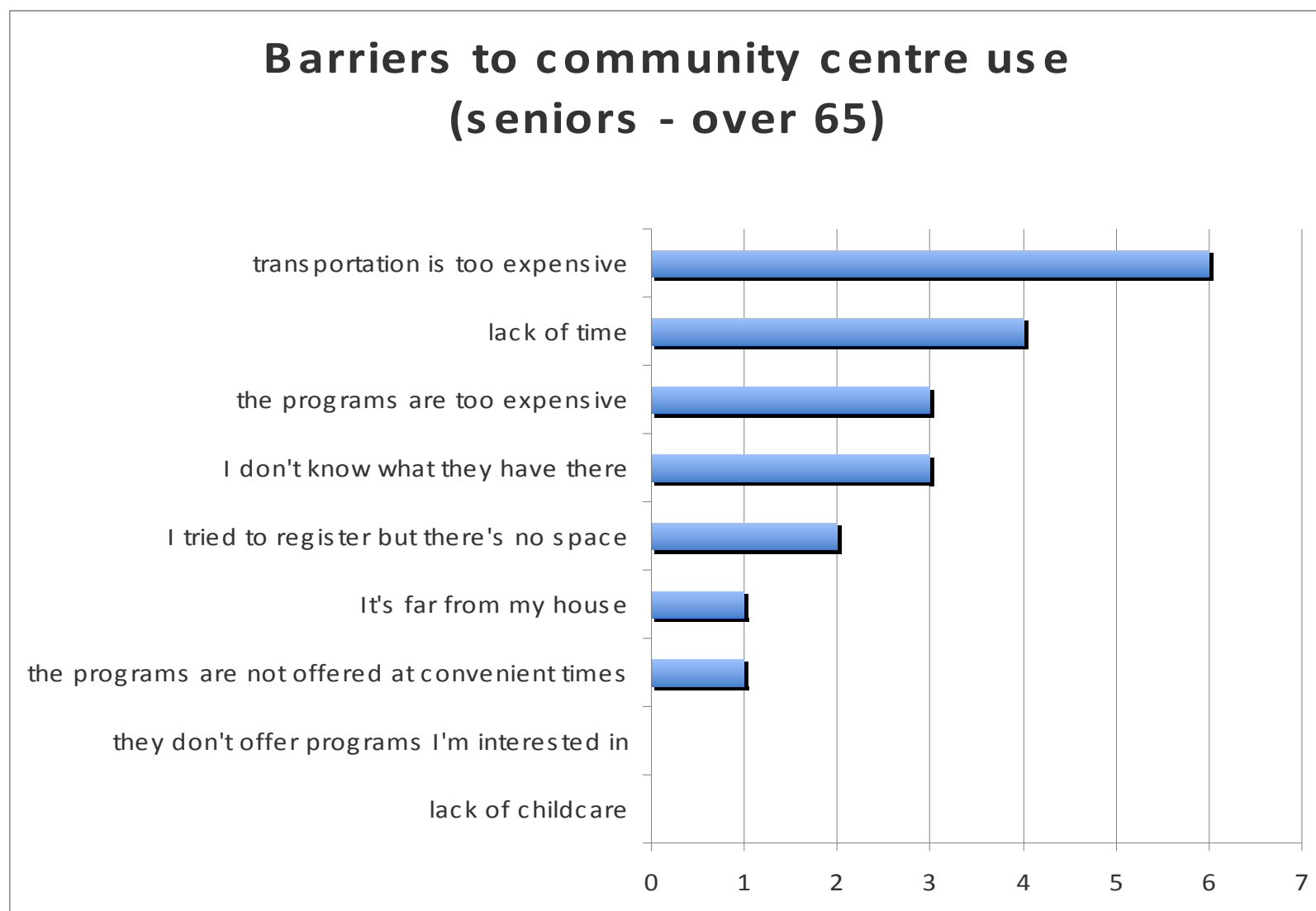
Barriers to Community Centre Use (youth - under 30)



Access to Community Centres Survey Results

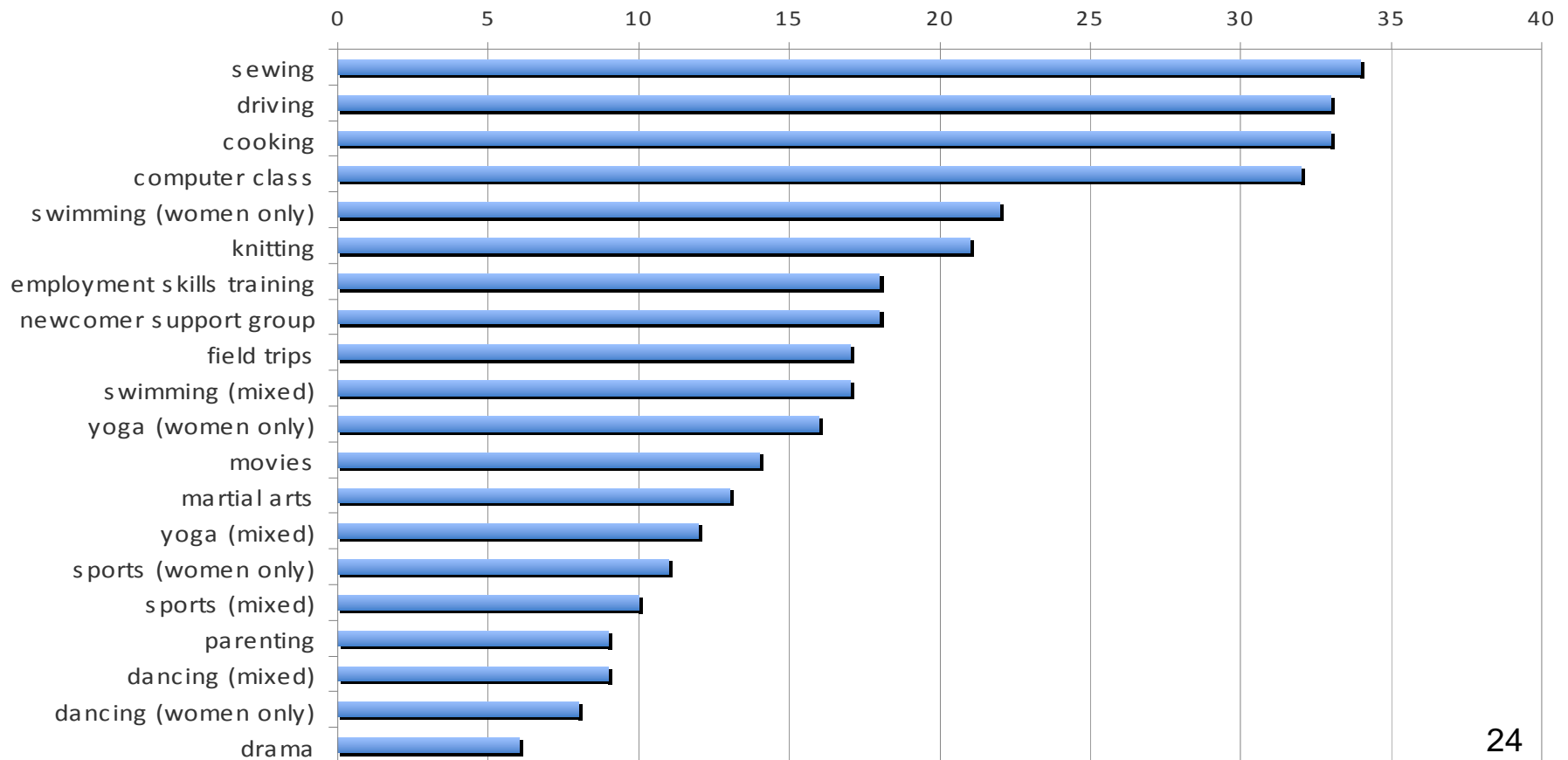


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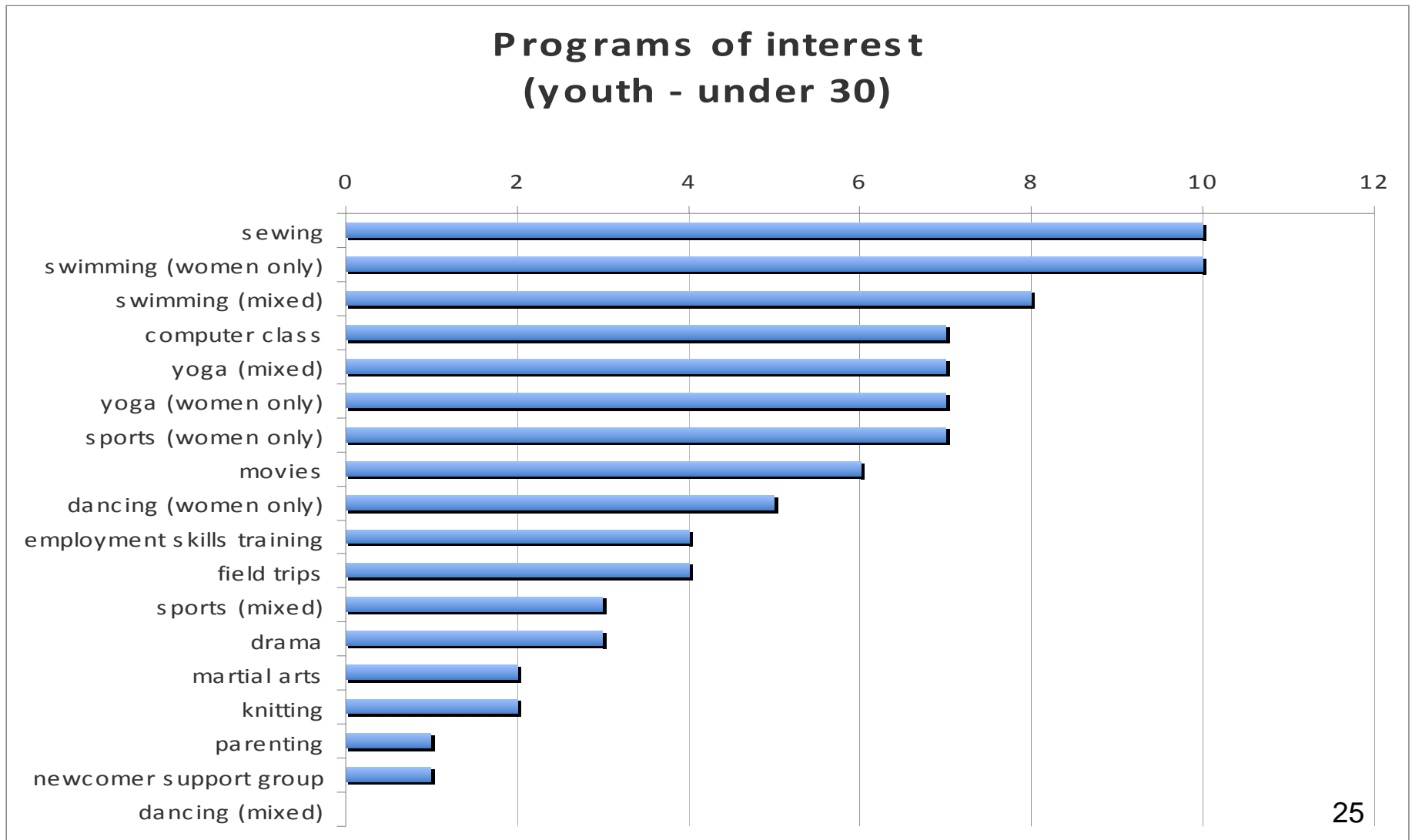


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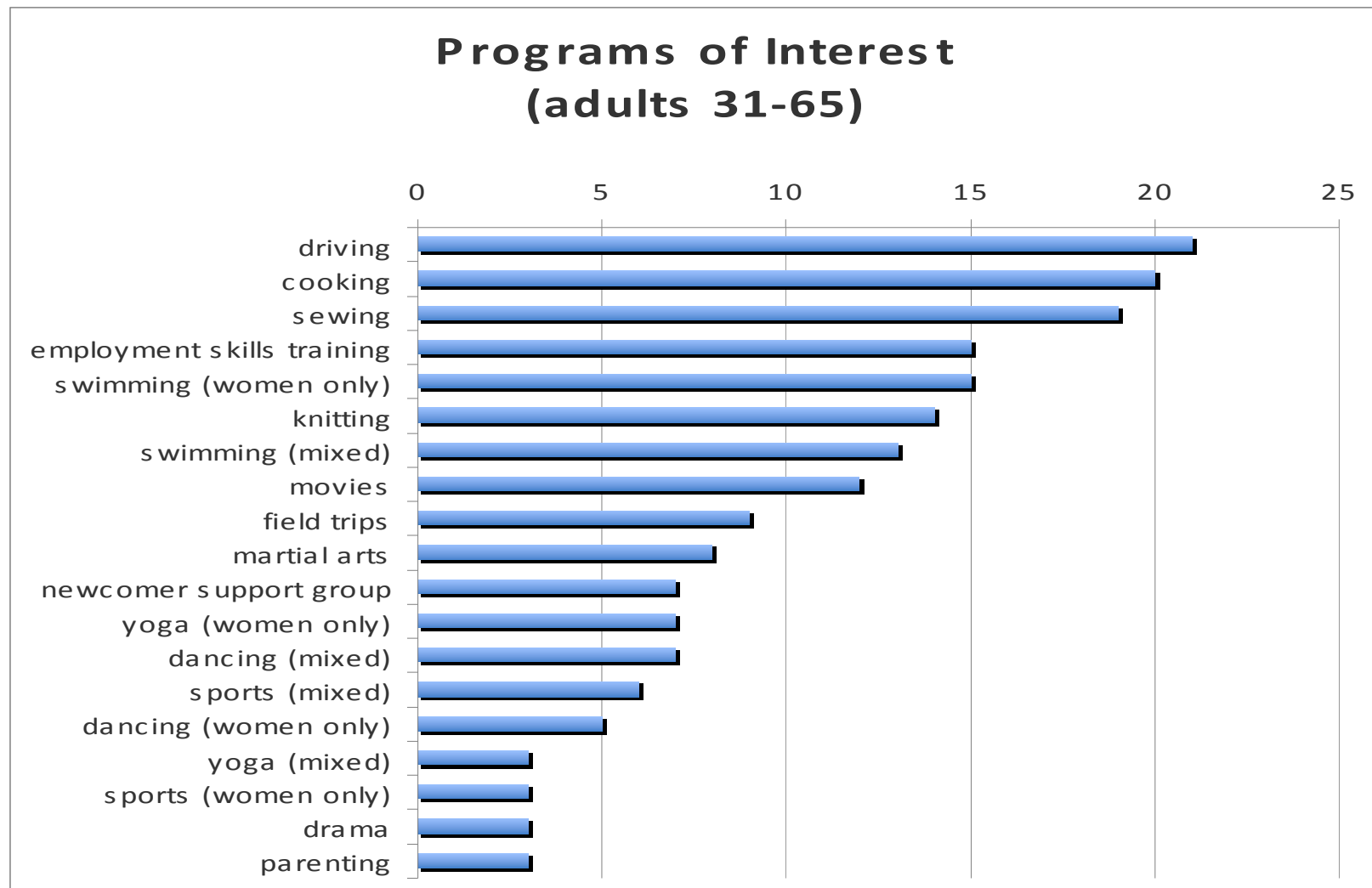
Programs of Interest
(respondents of all ages)



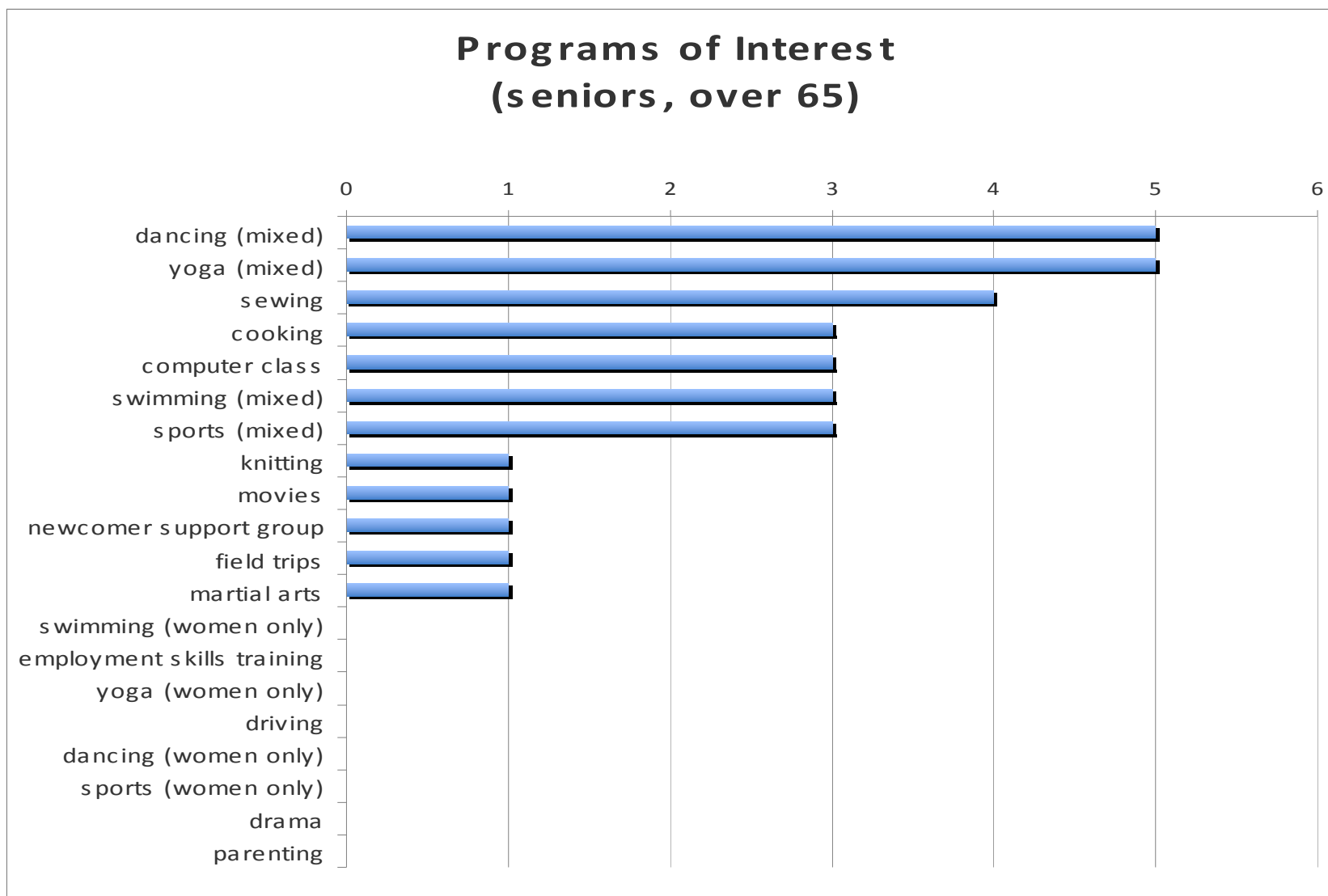
Access to Community Centres Survey Results



Access to Community Centres Survey Results



Access to Community Centres Survey Results



Access to Community Centres

Environmental Scan

Do available program match newcomers' interests?

Community Centre	Sewing	Driving	Cooking	Computer	Women's only swimming	Fitness programs
Eastview Neighbourhood Community Centre				😊		😊
South Riverdale Community Health Centre			😊			😊
Flemingdon Health Centre			😊	😊		😊
Oakridge Community Centre						😊

Access to Community Centres

Environmental Scan

Can community centres accommodate women's only fitness programs?

Community Centre	Response
Oakridge	"Why not?" – willing to look into it, if given support
4040 Lawrence Storefront	"We'll think about it"
Flemingdon Neighbourhood Services	"This is a request that should be sent to the Manager of the department"
Eastview	"No one has requested that before"

Access to Community Centres

Recommendations

- Provide more opportunities for newcomers to socialize and overcome isolation
 - More volunteer opportunities
 - Driving, sewing, cooking classes
- More support for families with young children
- Increase the recreational services and programs in underserved areas

Newcomers and Mental Stress

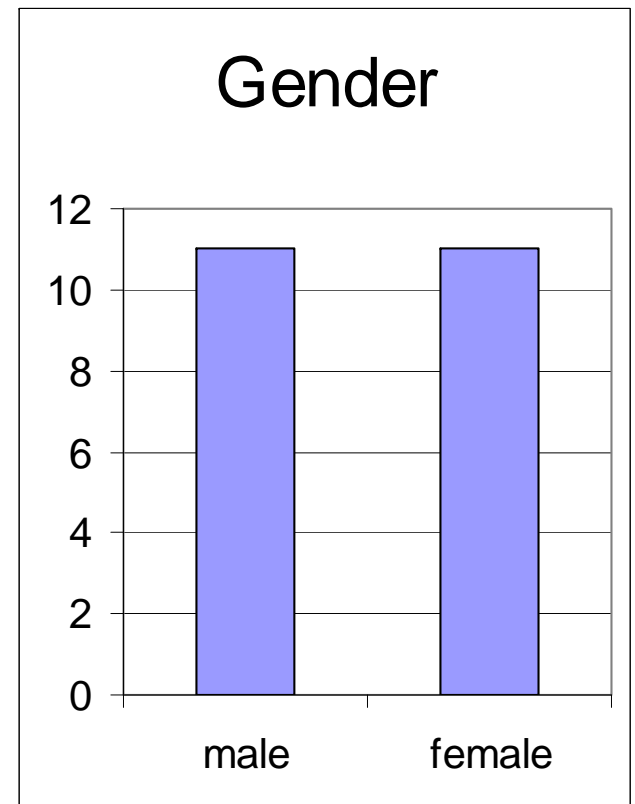
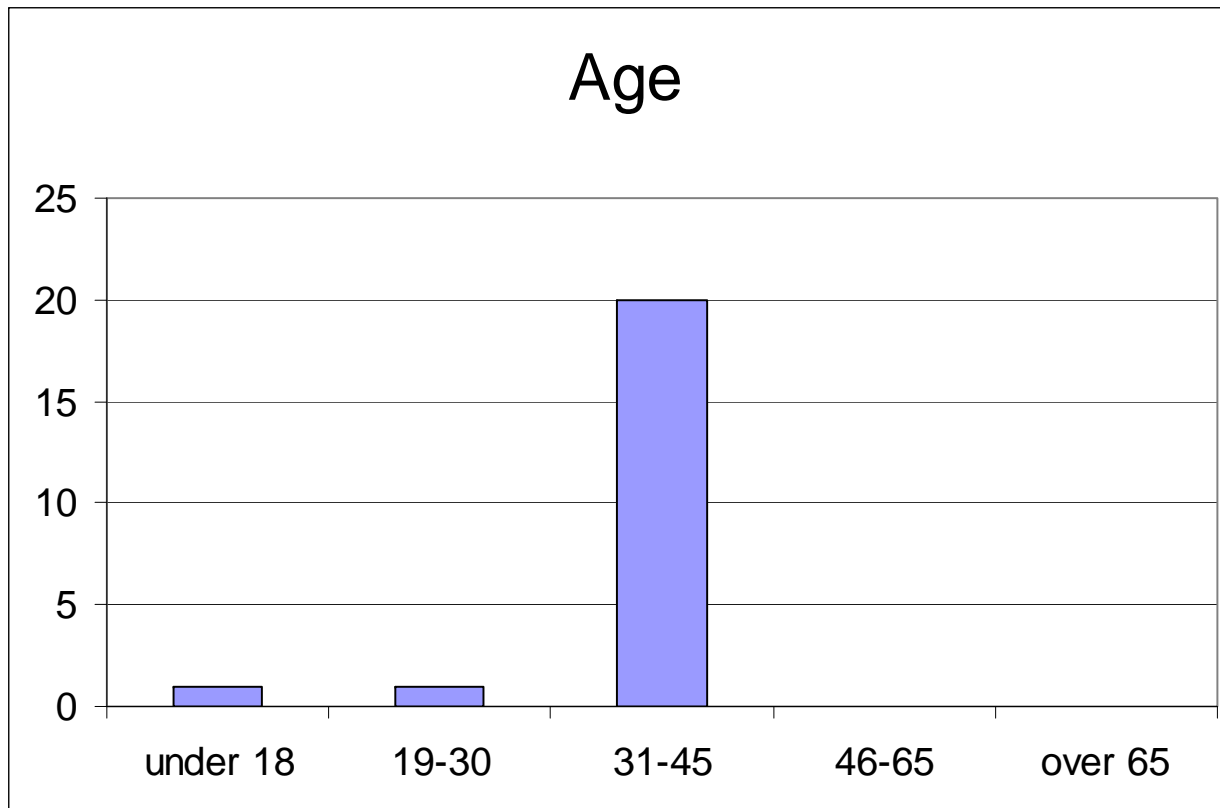
By

Hafsa Imam and Nurun Khanam

- The factors influencing the mental stress of newcomers were examined *because mental stress is a key determinant of health* and may be a contributor to the healthy immigrant effect

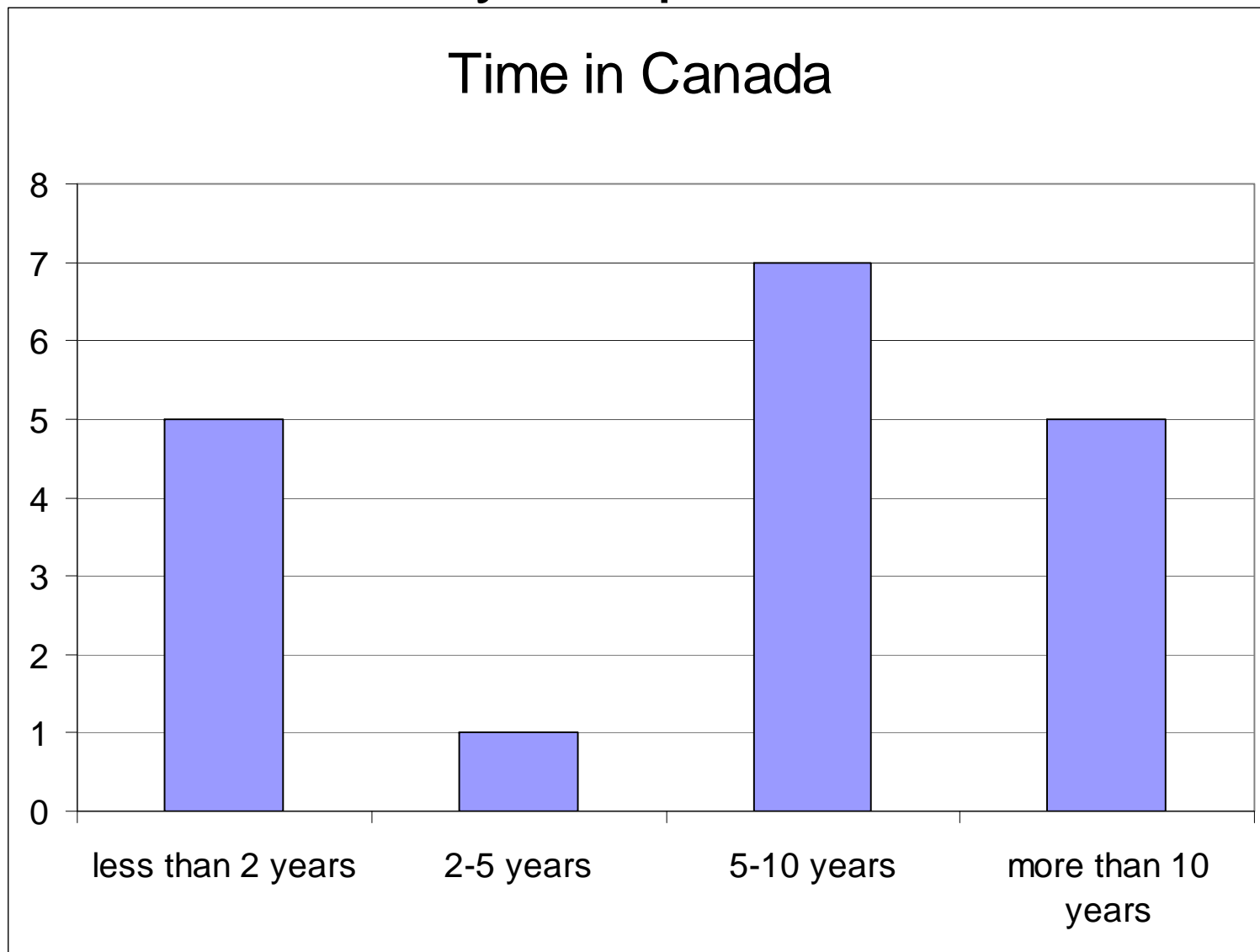
Newcomers and Mental Stress

Survey Respondents



Newcomers and Mental Stress

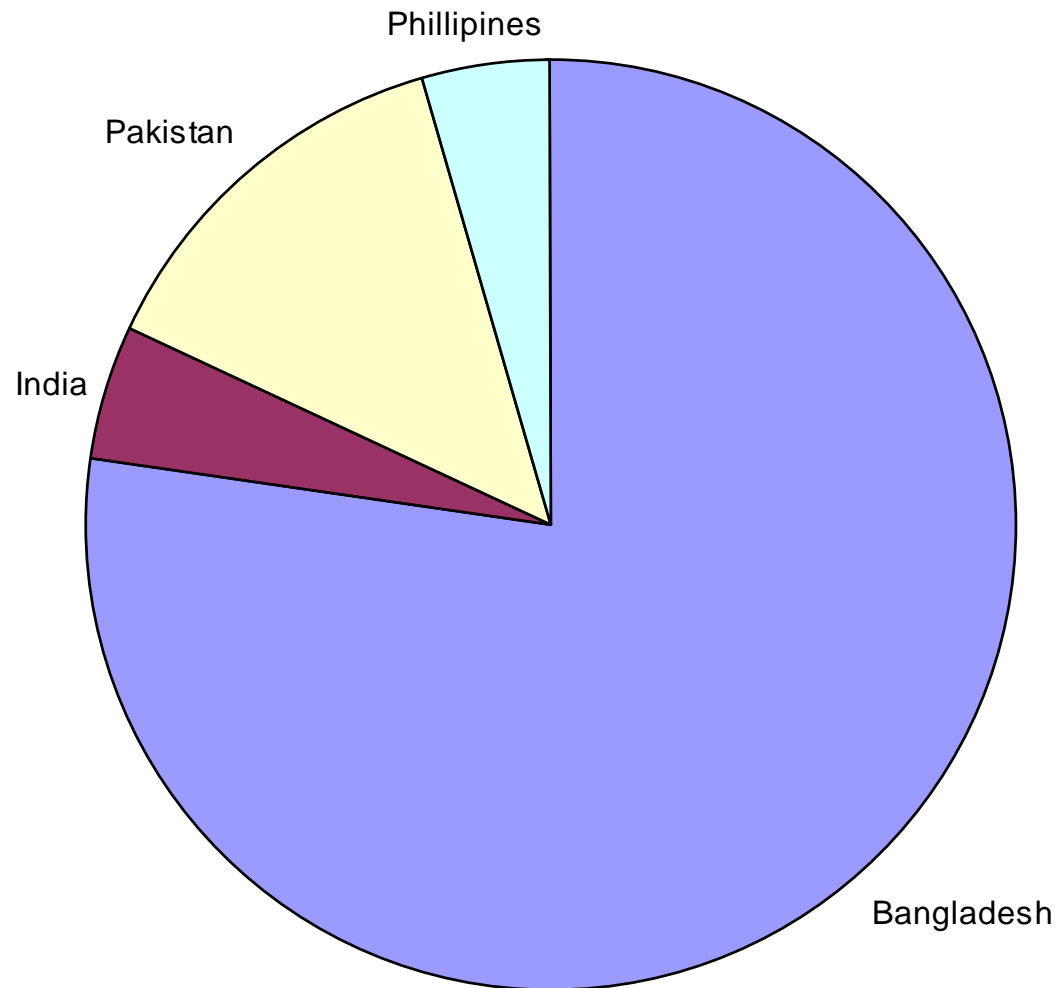
Survey Respondents



Newcomers and Mental Stress

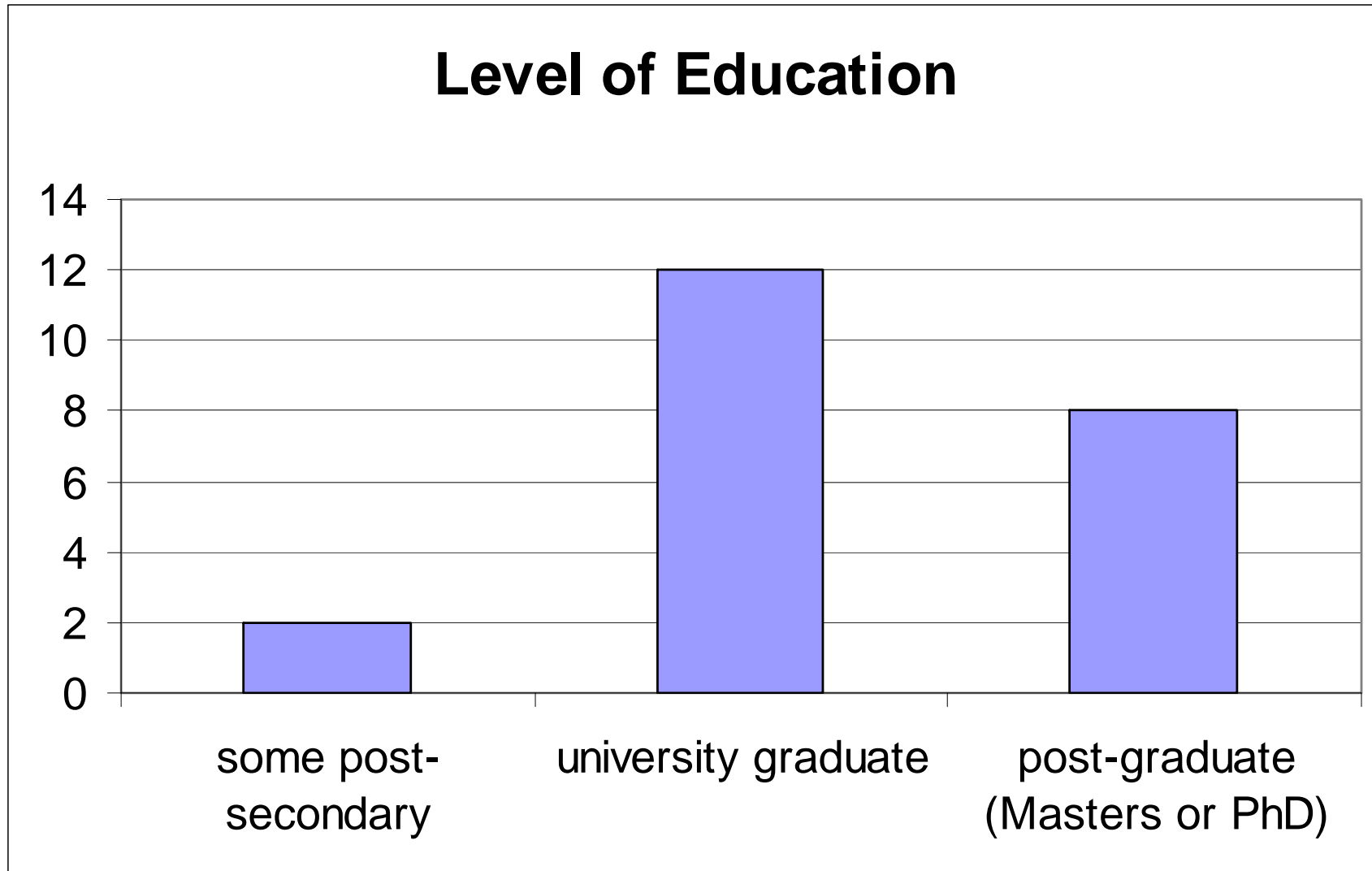
Survey Respondents

Country of origin



Newcomers and Mental Stress

Survey Respondents



Newcomers and Mental Stress

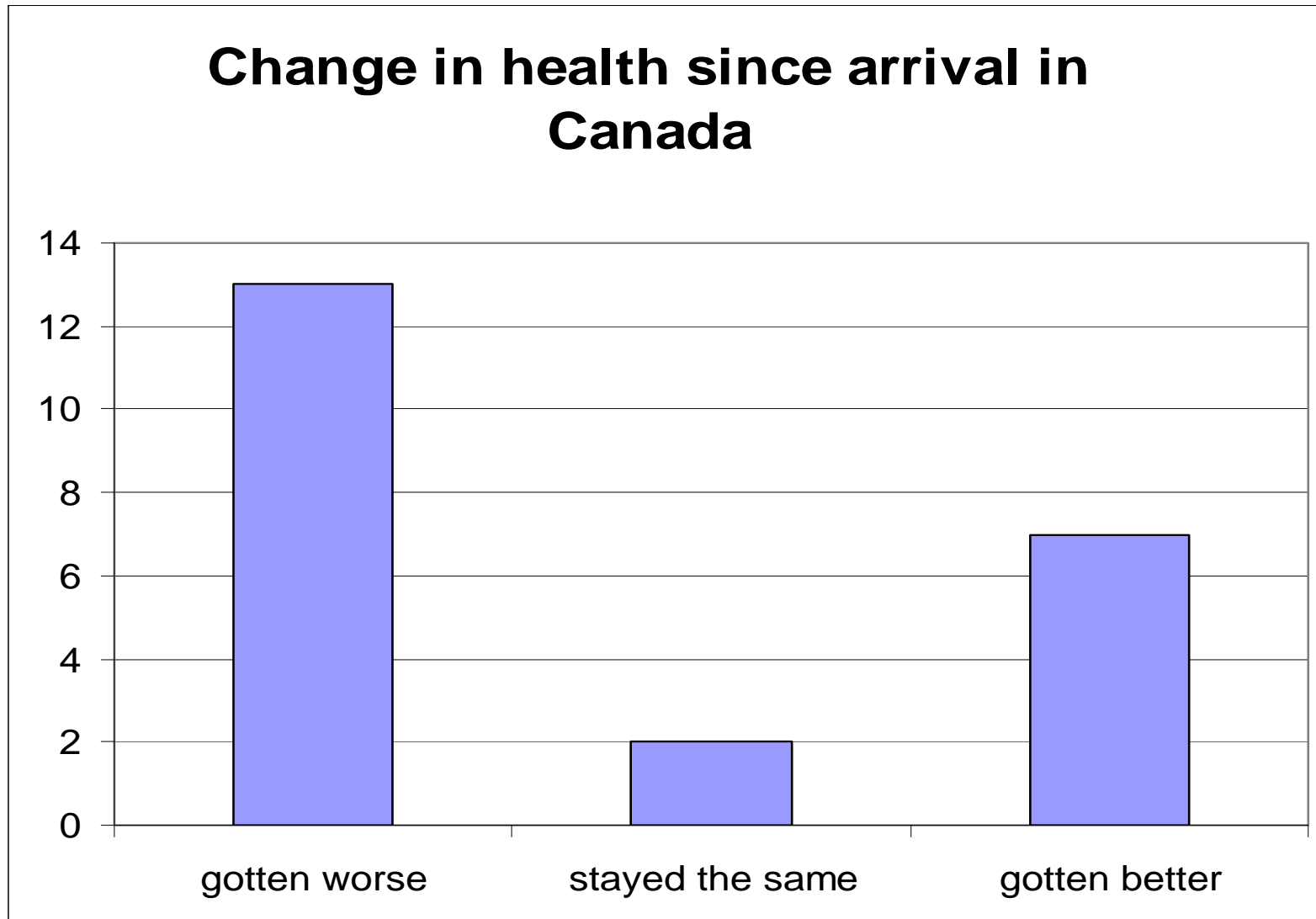
Survey Respondents

Previous Occupations in Home Country	
Accountant (1)	Businessman (1)
Engineer (4)	Lawyer (1)
NGO worker (2)	Nutritionist (2)
Scientist (1)	Statistician (1)
Police officer (1)	Teacher (1)
Not applicable (7)	

Current Occupations in Canada	
Retail (7) – Tim Horton's – Walmart – McDonalds – Shoppers Drug Mart – Home Depot	Hospitality (2) – Hotel management – Restaurant chef
	Security guard (2)
	Cleaner (1)
Taxi Driver (4)	“Survival job” (1)
Not applicable (5)	

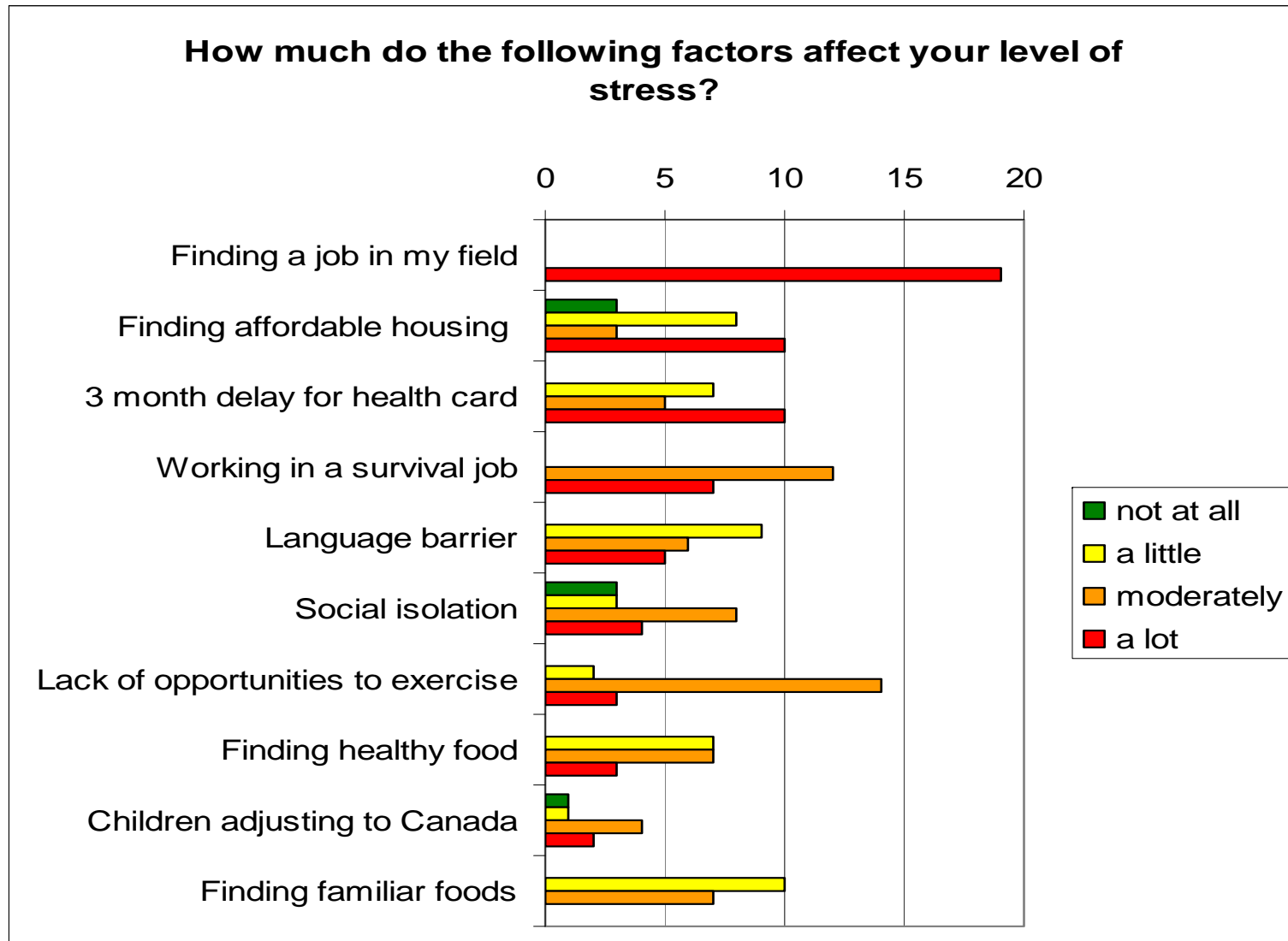
Newcomers and Mental Stress

Survey Results



Newcomers and Mental Stress

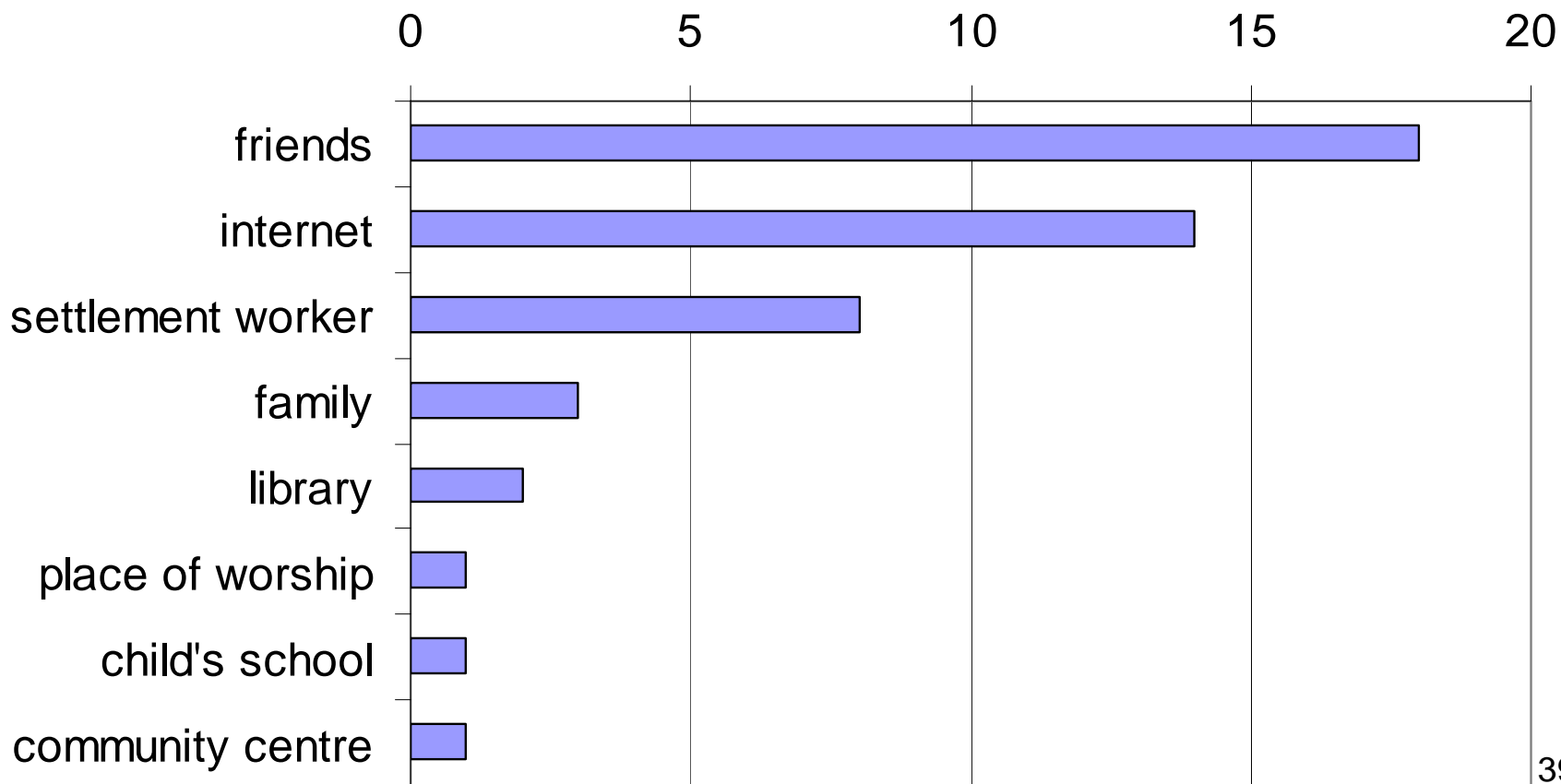
Survey Results



Newcomers and Mental Stress

Survey Results

Sources of Settlement Information



Newcomers and Mental Stress

Recommendations

- Bridging programs for newcomers in their fields of expertise
- Housing support/subsidy for first two years after arrival in Canada
- Eliminate the 3 month delay for obtaining health insurance (OHIP cards)
- Cost free and quick accreditation

The Big Picture as we see it

- The data points to the need for a shift away from the current ‘health promotion lifestyle framework’ (which privileges middle-class Canadian-born) to a more structural analysis of settlement & health

i.e. *‘Less jogging, more jobs’*

‘Portion size vs. Portion availability’

The Big Picture

A structural analysis integrates an understanding of the racialization of poverty and the social of determinants of health grounded in the reality of settlement and migration stress facing newcomer families

Racism + Poverty = Poor Newcomer Health

Possible Policy Options (within existing resources)

- Schedule 'women-only' swimming for mothers and their children after school
- Schedule joint or dual programming: scheduling mothers and children's classes to address timing and TTC costs
- Train outreach workers to reach people at newcomer gathering places
- Create 'knowledge portals'; conduct 'search engine optimization' so newcomers can Google 'women and swimming class'; 'family recreation programs' and access services

Acknowledgements

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