Pandemic Response Survey Results

OCASI Agency Frontline Workers[1]

September. 2020-September. 2021

Executive Summary

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May 2022

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Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada

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Executive Summary

This technical report documents the responses to a survey of paid frontline staff from member agencies of the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI) conducted between November 26 and December 23, 2021. A separate survey of managers has a separate report. The survey was undertaken in collaboration with OCASI by the Building Migrant Resilience in Cities/ Immigration et résilience en milieu urbain (BMRC-IRMU), a SSHRC-funded partnership. A *Settlement Services Working Group* of community-based and academic members from BMRC-IRMU helped to guide the research. The survey instrument was approved by the Human Participants Review Committee at York University. From the perspective of frontline workers, the survey investigates the impacts of COVID-19 on workers, clients, and Ontario agencies in the twelve-month period following the pandemic's first wave. Many questions parallel questions from an earlier survey conducted by OCASI focused on the first wave of the pandemic.

This web-based survey was distributed to OCASI member agencies and they were asked to send the survey to frontline staff with a request for them to complete the survey. The survey was available in English and French. We only report the English responses that make up the vast majority of completed surveys. The number of completed responses in English varied from question to question with a maximum of 170. The response rate is satisfactory, especially given the challenges of conducting survey-based work during a pandemic.

The report is descriptive. It presents the frequencies of responses for each question and a brief summary of the responses for each question. The questions focus on five topics:

1)   Demographics (gender of respondent; respondents' current position in the organization; size of organization; region organization is located).

2)   Client services (types of services offered; changes in service delivery and quality; assessment of working with clients).

3)   Pandemic impacts on workers (satisfaction with working from home; hybrid work; return to office issues; work-life balance and stress).

4)   Assessments of their organization's actions and abilities to manage during the pandemic (health and safety; communications; community outreach; addressing the needs of different groups).

The survey provides insights into the experiences and reflections of frontline settlement workers in Ontario beyond the first wave of the pandemic that are critical to the sector itself and policymakers from all levels of government who are concerned with the integration of migrants. The assessment of the health and capacities of the sector's workforce and the organizations themselves is invaluable. Overall, the data reveal a highly resilient sector that has adapted continuously and quite successfully to support the settlement and integration of migrants during an unprecedented global pandemic. The data will be analysed in detail in subsequent reports.