



New Beginnings for Newcomers.

# **Access Alliance Immigrant Researchers Support Network**

Program Evaluation Report 2024-2025

# Background

## EVALUATION PURPOSE

This evaluation provides an evidence-based assessment of the reach, accessibility, effectiveness, client satisfaction, and impact of the Immigrant Researchers Support Network (IRSN) program. It will help us better understand the aspects of the IRSN program that have been successful and the opportunities for improvement.

The evaluation will identify and explore the IRSN program's:



**EFFECTIVENESS**



**STRENGTHS**



**AREAS OF  
IMPROVEMENT**



**TRAJECTORY**

# What is IRSN?

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The IRSN was established as a networking and professional development platform to help Internationally Educated Researchers to build successful research careers in Canada. The program aims to:

1

Understand the settlement needs of newcomer researchers

2

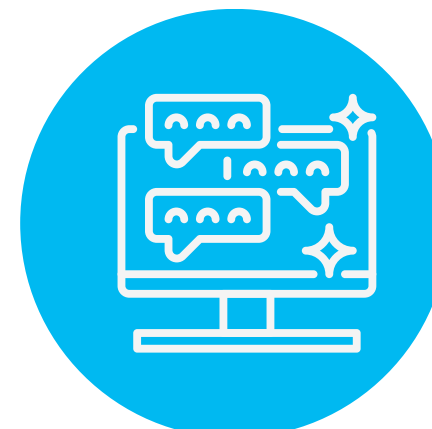
Support their professional success through meaningful integration into the labour market.



**1-TO-1  
APPOINTMENTS**



**COFFEE CHATS**



**IRSN PORTAL**



**IRSN IN-PERSON  
ANNUAL EVENT**

# Methodology

## MIXED-METHODS EVALUATION

This mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2014) (quantitative and qualitative) included a robust evaluation plan that reflected the current best practices of IRSN services. The evaluation was designed to answer the questions in Table 1 (next slide) about the program's reach, access/engagement, effectiveness, satisfaction, and impact on IERs.

- The evaluation focused on the fiscal years (FY) between 2021-2022 and 2024-2025.
- A retrospective review of data from program documents and Electronic Medical Records for client demographics and program outputs, as well as prospective data collected through client surveys, focus groups, and key informant interviews
- The client survey response rate was 41 of 432 (9.5%).

# Methodology

**TABLE 1**

Table 1 Evaluation Questions	
Domain	Question
Reach	1. What is the size of the population in the program? 2. What are the characteristics/demographics of members?
Access/ Engagement	3. How user-friendly is the registration process? 4. What are the facilitators and barriers to accessing the program? 5. What is the meaning of integration to the members?
Effectiveness	6. Is the program being implemented as intended/achieving its outputs as intended? If any changes are required, to what extent are they required? 7. To what extent did the program build the capacity of the members, and in which areas? To what extent have members developed and applied professional skills and established network connections to facilitate successful integration into the labour market? 8. How many of the active participants got a desired job? How many active participants were admitted into further education/school programs/certification?
Satisfaction	9. In what ways does the program meet the needs of members? To what extent was the program responsive to the members' needs? 10. What are the experiences of members of the program? (Satisfaction, loyalty, engagement, etc.)
Impact	11. What are the real / perceived impacts on a member's capacity for professional development over time? 12. What are the real / perceived impacts on a member's capacity for career networking over time? 13. How do the members plan to utilize the IRSN platform to integrate into the mainstream labour market?

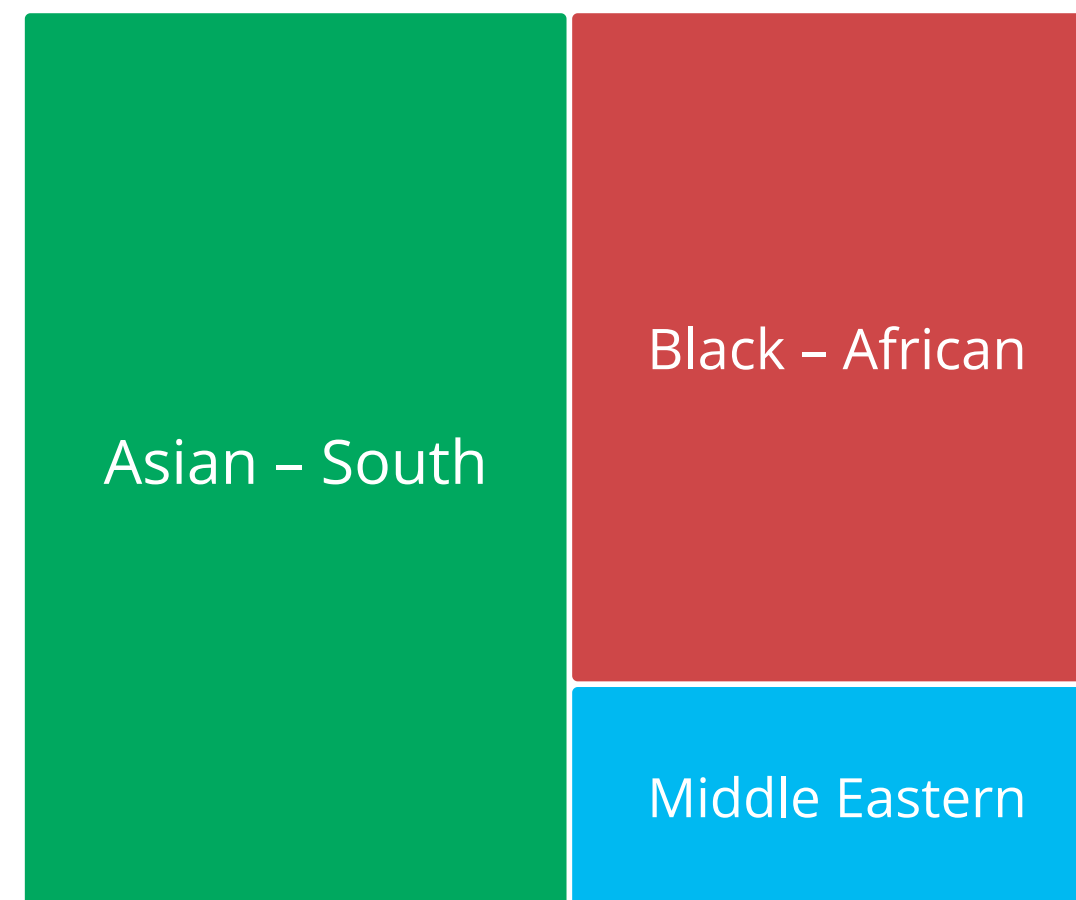
# Who do we serve?



**30%** ARE BELOW THE LOW INCOME CUT-OFF

- The highest proportion of respondents reported an annual household income of less than \$30,000, and over 60% of clients reported supporting 2-4 dependents.
- LICO: \$36,898 for a household of 3 dependents (Statistics Canada, 2025).

- The majority of clients fall within the 25 -44 age range, with most identifying as female and heterosexual.
- South Asian, Black African, and Middle Eastern individuals make up the top three racial/ethnic groups
- Most clients (48% of one-to-one clients and 54.6% of group clients) hold a permanent resident immigration status.



# Findings

## ACCESS AND ENGAGEMENT

### FACILITATORS TO ACCESS

- Format of services (virtual);
- Timing of events;
- Regular communication/access to information (emails, website);
- Having interesting/relevant/unique topics/activities; and
- Proactiveness and approachability of the program lead.

### BARRIERS TO ACCESS

- Frequency of opportunities for clients to make suggestions for the topics/activities to ensure relevance and interest;
- Inflexible scheduling of IRSN events to work around conflicting priorities; and
- Awareness of available services.

# Findings

## PROGRAM OUTPUTS AND EFFECTIVENESS

### 1-TO-1 CHATS



**Table 3**

*Number of 1-to-1 Appointments per Month*

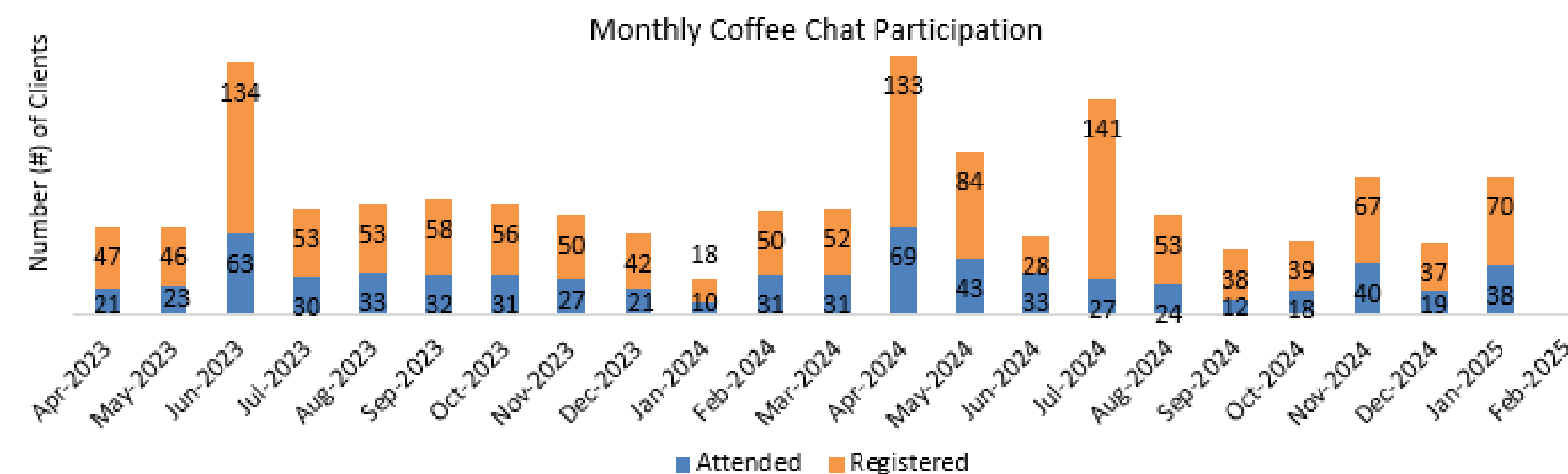
Year	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Monthly Target
2021-2022 FY	0	0	0	1	58	50	41	40	31	38	23	0	44
2022-2023 FY	20	29	14	15	26	29	27	24	32	0	0	0	44
2023-2024 FY	36	40	34	59	34	32	42	31	21	7	7	29	40
2024-2025 FY	26	25	19	11	18	8	31	27	6	21	--	--	40

### COFFEE CHATS



**Figure 1**

*Monthly Coffee Chat Attendance vs. Registration*



# Findings

## PROGRAM OUTPUTS AND EFFECTIVENESS

### IRSN PORTAL



- Since 2021, the number of new members registering has steadily increased, averaging 5.5 per month and 65.5 per year.
- Since the 2023-2024 FY, the IRSN program leads have made 393 posts on the IRSN portal, while IRSN members have made fewer than 5.

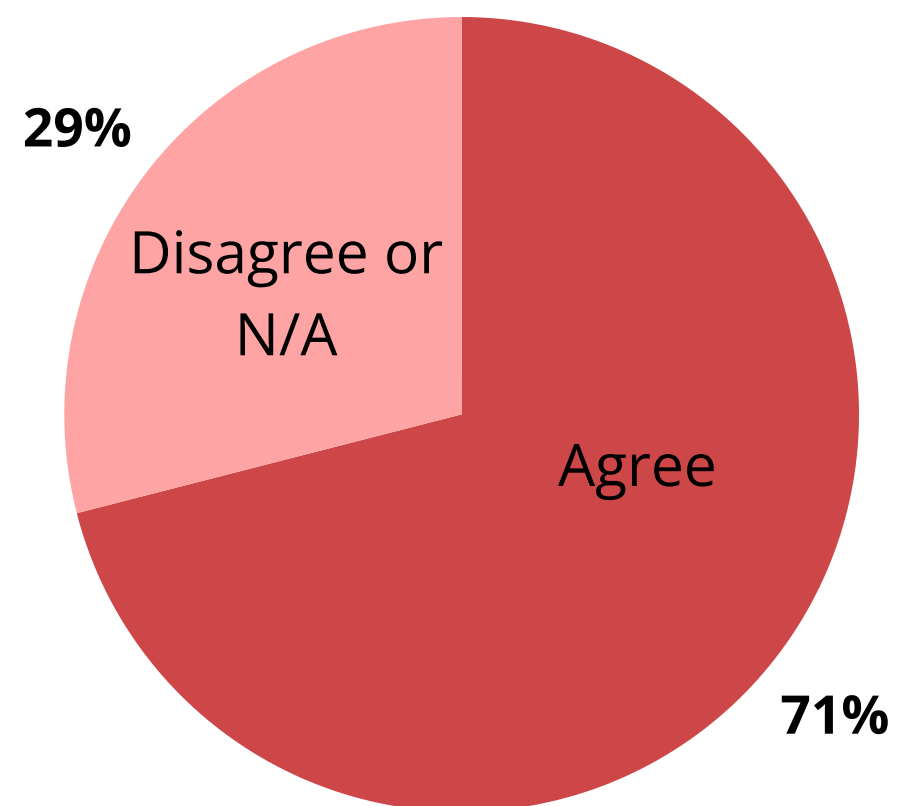
### IRSN EVENT



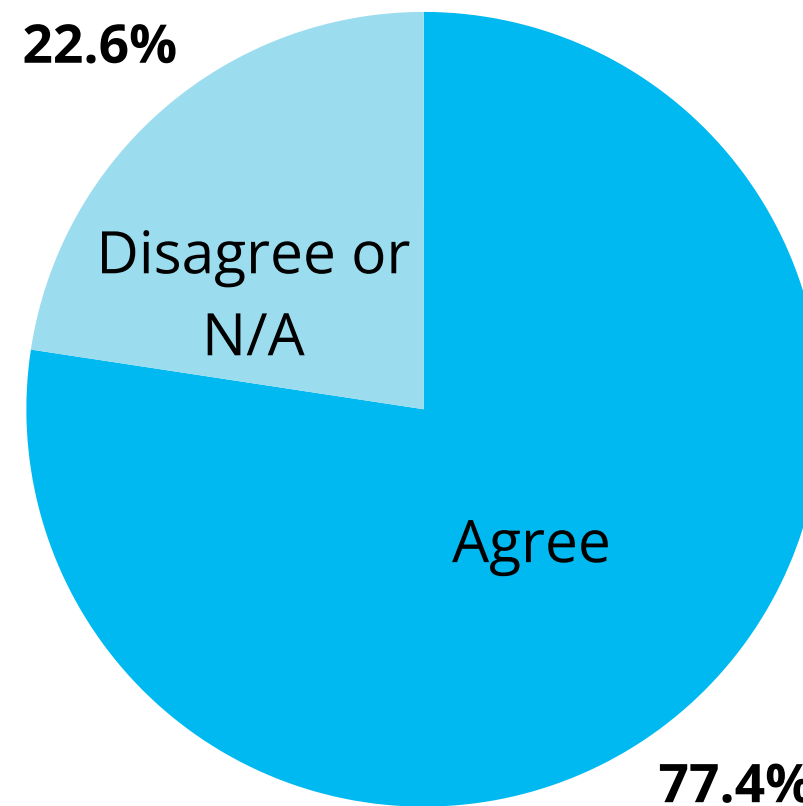
- Attendees find the presenter(s) knowledgeable about the topics discussed and reported satisfaction
- Attendees reported satisfaction with the amount of professional networking and found the annual IRSN event to be useful for their needs.

# Findings

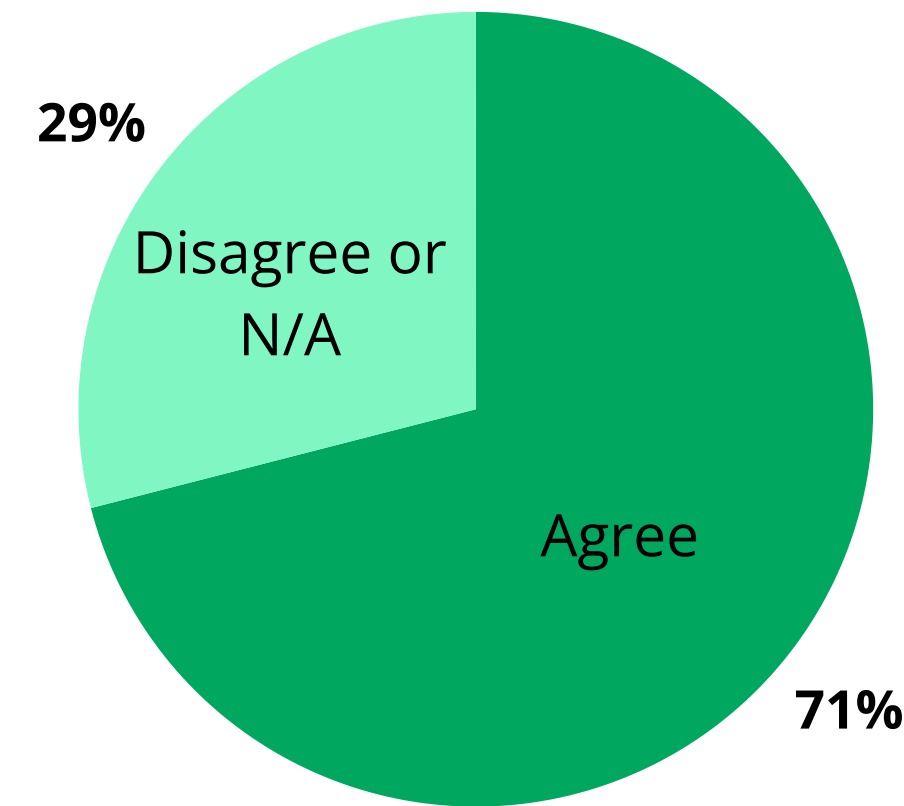
## PERCEIVED IMPACTS



71.0% (n=31) of respondents found that the IRSN contributed to developing knowledge and/or skills that are beneficial to their career.



77.4% (n=31) of respondents found that the IRSN contributed to developing professional networking knowledge that is beneficial to their career.



71.0% (n=31) of respondents found that the IRSN contributed to the acquisition of network connections that are beneficial to their career by leading to job opportunities.

# Findings

## CLIENT SATISFACTION & ADDRESSING NEEDS

**87.6%**

Clients have found the IRSN program satisfactory, with respondents rating the program as good, very good, or excellent (N = 30).

**93.3%**

Many report that they would recommend the IRSN to a family member or friend. (N = 30)

## AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

- More individualized assessments to support and address individual needs.
- Continue and build more bridging programs/ opportunities to help integrate members into their field of interest and help establish clear pathways for careers.
- Offering more targeted job or mentorship opportunities in relevant fields to demonstrate skills/expertise and build industry-specific connections.
- Tailoring program activities based on needs assessments to address key areas or needs that are relevant to the majority of IRSN members.
- Outreach in different areas, organizations, and places where newcomers gather to attract members outside of mutual connections/recommendations.

# PROGRESS OF THE IRSN PROGRAM

## SUMMARY OF TRENDS: 2020 → 2025

### Relevance, Reach & Satisfaction

- **2020:** IRSN is highly valued for its unique and convenient combination of settlement support and professional development.
- **2025:** Participation has grown since 2020, and clients continue to report the program as relevant and pivotal for skill-building, networking, and integration.

### Implementation, Access & Engagement

- **2020:** Early pandemic constraints limited scaling and outreach opportunities, but the program sustained its access engagement.
- **2025:** there is a noticeable increase in engagement in attendance.
- Participant engagement remains high, underlining the program's responsiveness to clients' evolving needs.

### Performance, Effectiveness & Impact

- **2020:** IRSN services continued to be delivered as intended despite operational constraints.
- **2025:** improved satisfaction and meaningful outcomes such as confidence, skill development, and perceived usefulness of supports.

# RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

## Overall impact:

Across evaluation periods, the IRSN has proven resilient. Even during the global COVID-19 pandemic, services remained in high demand despite widespread restrictions. Demand has only grown as participation and engagement steadily increased. This underscores the program's ongoing importance and need for continuity

### AREAS TO MAINTAIN & SUSTAIN

- Referring and connecting clients to potential employers.
- Interactive activities/events that promote engagement.
- Collaboration and networking efforts with external organizations.
- Bridging or other professional development certification / training programs.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Establish long-term funding/resources to hire a full-time program lead.
- Members of the IRSN program need to be bridged directly with the research department programs.
- Improve the IRSN portal to be more user-friendly.
- Increase clients' level of awareness of available IRSN services.
- Incorporate advocacy pieces to address systemic barriers that hinder clients' integration into the Canadian workforce.
- Frequent needs assessments to understand clients' individual needs and tailor IRSN activities to target overarching client needs.

# Q&A



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