

Family Service Association of Toronto

Who Are We? The Iranians in Toronto Today: Profile, Contributions and Issues

Prepared by

Shokofeh Dilmaghani

1999

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
2.	PROBLEM	1
3.	CONCEPT	2
4.	THEORY	2
	4.1 Traditional or Deficiency Model	4
	4.2 Capacity-focused Model	4
5.	DEFINITION	5
	5.1 Need	5
	5.2 Needs Assessment	6
	5.3 Community	6
	5.4 Community Development	7
6.	PURPOSE OF RESEARCH	8
7.	OPERATIONAL ISSUES	8
	7.1 Variables	8
	7.2 Feasibility	9
	7.3 Limitations	9
	7.4 Evaluation	10
	7.5 Ethical Issues	11
8.	CHOICE OF RESEARCH METHOD	11
	8.1 Quantitative Research	11
	8.1.1 Designing the Questionnaire	11
	8.1.2 Collecting the Data	12
	8.1.3 Quantitative Data	12
	8.2 Qualitative Research	66
	8.2.1 Focus Group	67
	8.2.2 Key Community Informant Interview	72
9.	POPULATION & SAMPLING	78
10.	OUTCOME OF THE RESEARCH	78
11.	Summary of Findings & RECOMMENDATIONS	86
12.	CONCLUSIONS	

REFERENCES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Iranian community needs assessment/community profile titled “WE ARE LISTENING/HARFAT RA MISHENAVAM” has been truly a collaborative effort, and it would not have been completed without the assistance of the following funder, organizations, and individuals.

We would like to thank Community Neighbourhood Services (formerly North York Parks and Recreation) for accepting our proposal for this project and providing the opportunity to conduct the needs assessment/community profile. I also would like to thank Mary Alberti, Director of Community Services for her continued guidance, supervision and unquestionable support. Ms. Alberti’s patience, continued encouragement, and knowledge of the field were essential for the fulfillment of this project’s objectives.

We also wish to acknowledge the contributions of the Iranian Advisory Council members who approved and supported the project through out. Especially Mr. Tajdolati who persistently oversaw the project from beginning to the end and consistently provided feedback.

Furthermore, we would like to take the opportunity to appreciate Mr. Bahram Parsi whose tireless efforts in helping with many aspects of this research were inspirational. Mr. Parsi’s statistical knowledge, insight into the Iranian community, and boundless enthusiasm were instrumental in the completion of the project.

In addition, the sincere co-operation of the community informants, who readily shared their knowledge and experiences, is greatly acknowledged and appreciated. In sharing their insights Ms. Shahin Asayesh, Ms. Shahla Dafeleh, Mr. Ali Gholipour, Dr. Manijeh Mogheisi, Ms. Marjan Montazemi, Ms. Afkham Mardoudkhi, Dr. Ezat Mosalanezhad, Mr. Bahram Parsi, Ms. Mina Sarlati, and Mr. Hassan Zerehi enhanced the depth of our understanding regarding the needs/barriers, and assets/capacities and potential solutions suitable for the community. Similarly, we are grateful to focus groups’ participants for providing much needed information, which enabled us to better recognize the communities, issues and concerns.

In addition, we would like to acknowledge the valuable assistance of Farideh Ardeshiri Cham, Fariba Davani, Effat Ghasemi, Sima Komeilinejad, Parvin Samadzadeh, Faranak Sobhanipour, and Miranda Yousefipour who have contributed their time, energy, and skills.

Furthermore, the assistance of Professor Sue Wilson of the Ryerson Polytechnic University’s Department of Nutrition enriched this project with a wealth of academic knowledge and community enlightenment. We thank Prof. Wilson for her scholarly contributions and true spirit of collaboration.

In addition, this project is indebted for the concerted efforts and cooperation of the following organizations: Shahrvand Publications, Iran Javan, and Iran Star, as well as Persian Heritage Language School, York University Iranian Student Association, U of T Iranian Student Association, Iranian Women's Organization, Iranian Woman Publication, Iranian-Canadian Senior's Organization, Iranian Community Association of Ontario, Zoroastrian Association, Culture Link, C.C.V.T., Skills for Change, Overland Learning Centre, Jane Finch Community Centre, Vazeh, Dr. Yarmand's Office, Asi and Toraj Grocery Store.

We apologize for any errors or omissions in acknowledging individuals or organizations' co-operation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established in 1914, the Family Service Association of Toronto (FSA) is a social service agency with the mission “to strengthen individuals and families in just and supportive communities”. FSA services include counseling, family life education, community development, children’s and seniors camps, and family support services to all age groups across the city of Toronto.

The Community Action Unit was formed in January 1997 with the objective of promoting quality of life for selected ethno-cultural communities and pre-school children in disadvantaged families. A team of social workers was assembled to work in Iranian, Tamil, Somali, and Serbian communities. The worker from each of the communities works with a volunteer Advisory Council that oversee the planning and implementation of all the programs in their respective communities.

The Iranian Advisory Council (IAC) was established in March 1992 to develop a domestic violence program for the Iranian community. After five years, other developmental needs of the Iranian Community were identified by the Advisory Council; hence, a community development component was added in 1997.

The Iranian Advisory Council’s role is to work cooperatively and collaboratively with the agency in order to maximize the resources required to respond to the developmental needs of the Iranian community. The IAC is comprised of a cross section of the community, and it is instrumental in service planning, advocacy, community development, and education/integration. In order to begin the work of community development in the Iranian community, the Advisory Council agreed that a comprehensive needs assessment/community profile was necessary to identify barriers and challenges as well as strengths and the capacity of the community.

The Iranian community is a relatively new community in Canada. Although a small number of Iranians have emigrated to Canada since the 1950s, the first wave of migration took place after the Islamic revolution in 1979. Most of the Iranians who came to Canada were university educated professionals from the middle and upper class. In the mid 1980s and at the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, a second wave of migration began. However, this time some of the migrants were university educated and some were not. Recently, due to changes in immigration policy, the number of Iranian independent professionals is once again on the rise. On the whole, the Iranian community has 20 years of history in Canada and is comprised of people from different classes, educational backgrounds, religions, and political affiliations. Although Islam is the main religion and Farsi the official language, various religions are practiced and many languages/dialects are spoken by Iranians.

The goals for conducting this research are, first, to produce an up-to-date profile of the Iranian community living in Toronto, and second, to produce a profile of current community needs and assets.

This research is designed to provide a more accurate picture of demographics and trends of the Iranian community in a way that has not been achieved through quantitative data. In addition, identifying the community's needs/barriers and assets/capacities will assist us with program planning that is most suitable to the Iranian community.

Objectives of the Needs Assessment/Community Profile are as follows:

- A. To identify the demographics of the Iranian community in Toronto, including age, education, employment, family, and immigration status.
- B. To identify the needs/barriers which limit Iranians from accessing services and integrating into the community.
- C. To identify the major strengths and skills such as problem solving, leadership, and creativity.
- D. To prioritize community needs/barriers by analyzing the number of people who identify the need/barriers and the impact of the identified issues.
- E. To generate ideas about types of community solutions and planning services that are appropriate to the Iranian culture.

METHODOLOGY

To conduct this needs assessment in such a way so as to capture the overall needs, challenges, and capacities of the Iranian community, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies utilizing a triangulation approach have been selected. The triangulation method utilized in this research includes survey questionnaire, community informant interview, and focus group. This method has been used to gather and synthesize information more accurately. The main quantitative methodology used in this research is the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in both Farsi and English. The majority of the questions were close-ended where multiple answers were provided. In order to add some context and depth of meaning, a few open-ended questions were included as well. The questionnaire was comprised of three sections: Respondent's Profile, Assessment of Difficulties, and Solutions. A total of 632 questionnaires were distributed and 406 questionnaires were collected.

For distribution of the survey, various methods were selected. Iranian service providers, both in Iranian and mainstream social agencies, and the Iranian Students Associations were contacted to distribute the survey to their clients. In this way, the relationship between service providers and their clients and members has ensured a higher rate of return and a better response rate.

Furthermore, a number of questionnaires were left at the Iranian dentists' offices and at businesses in areas that are highly populated by Iranians. Other methods included setting up a table with questionnaires and a collection box in highly populated ESL classes, learning centres, and social and cultural events organized for the Iranian community. In addition, in an attempt to make the needs assessment more participatory and inclusive, special efforts were made to include religious minorities within the target population. However only one, Zoroastrian temple, responded positively.

Due to the limitation of the quantitative research, a qualitative method component was added for more complete and comprehensive results. Focus group and key community informant interviews were the two methods selected to gather data that is more detailed and descriptive. The goal was to delve into the feelings and thoughts of the participants and to capture the meaning of their experiences.

Youth, women, seniors, and refugees were selected as special populations with unique needs. A total of four focus groups were held to gather more information about the specific needs of these groups. The number of participants ranged between 5 and 6 individuals.

For the convenience of the participants, the focus groups were held in different locations in the community and lasted from one and a half to two hour. Since these groups were intended to provide supplementary data to complete the questionnaire, only a few vital questions were selected for discussion

As another method of qualitative research, community informant interviews were selected because it was believed that active members of the community could shed light on determining community capacities, resources, needs, barriers, and challenges. A total of 10 community informant interviews were conducted for this project, comprised of Iranian service providers such as, student guidance counsellors, social workers, members of community media, community organizers, community educators, and active volunteers.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Problems:

1. Unemployment and underemployment
2. Under utilization of the Iranian professionals
3. Inadequate language training for newcomers
4. Insufficient accessibility to information, training and services
5. Cultural differences with the host country
6. Family conflict
7. Intergenerational gap
8. Insufficient social and emotional support for seniors
9. Insufficient community co-operation

Causes of Problems:

1. Lack of recognition of non-Canadian credentials
2. Under utilization of Iranian professionals
3. Absent of adequate emotional support
4. Disturbance in family relationships
5. Inadequate access to services and information
6. Inadequate orientation and language training for newcomers
7. Low self-esteem
8. Peer pressure (youth)
9. Systemic racism
10. Financial shortcoming
11. Conflicting cultural values
12. Ineffective immigration policies and negative attitude and treatment of refugees
13. Lack of resources to train competent interpreters/translators for refugees
14. Inadequate facilities for seniors
15. The government's lack of commitment to multiculturalism

Strengths/Capacities:

1. High level of education
2. Tenacity, flexibility, and adaptability
3. Willingness to learn
4. Self-reliance and hard work
5. Secular community and vibrant culture
6. Strong Family ties
7. Existence of many Iranian Professional associations
8. The ability to analyze and solve problems
9. The ability to seek help
10. Wealth within the community and financial independence for a segment of the community
11. Cooperation and goodwill toward the host country

Factors Contributing to Quality of Life:

1. Employment
2. Developing social and emotional support network
3. Access to services and information
4. Services for newcomers including language training
5. Good family relationship
6. Counselling, community and professional services
7. Promoting effective cultural and traditional practices and recreational activities
8. Financial means
9. Promoting community unity, cohesiveness, and a sense of belonging
10. Community sponsored programs and partnership projects
11. Raising awareness and promoting community leadership
12. Developing an umbrella organization that will organize lobbying and advocacy for the community
13. Building alliances across immigrant communities so that multiculturalism will develop horizontally and not vertically

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Issues Identified	Recommendations
<p>Unemployment & underemployment</p> <p><i>The issue of employment and underemployment is acute in the Iranian community. Employment problem is a multifaceted issue that has to be addressed from different angles. Since access to professions and trades is one of the fundamental barriers in the Iranian community, up grading credentials and qualifications requires special attention.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Various activities and strategies need to be developed in order to increase the employability of the community members. These strategies need to be flexible and open to modification as the needs of the community continues to change. ❖ Provide a group of qualified staff to provide employment related information and services. ❖ Create a job centre with counsellors to provide employment services. ❖ Utilize the experience and skills of the Iranian professionals in this area. ❖ Provide language training; basic and technical level
<p>Under utilization of Iranian professionals expertise & experience in helping the Iranian community.</p> <p><i>Iranian community is a highly educated community, and it is comprised of a large number of professionals. However, lack of recognition for their education and credential often compel them to accept menial jobs where their education, skills and work experience are wasted.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Expand the services by hiring more Iranian staff working within the community to provide culturally appropriate services. ❖ Acknowledge the experience and know-how that the Iranian community has brought to Canada by appointing higher number of Iranians for boards and committees. This also will help in raising self-esteem of the Iranian community.

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Identified issues	Recommendations
<p>Migration, displacement and integration</p> <p>Conflicting cultural values between home country and mainstream</p> <p>Low self-esteem Inter-minority racism Intergenerational gap Insufficient awareness about women’s rights Insufficient awareness about civic rights Insufficient information, training, and orientation for newcomers Systemic racism</p> <p><i>Migration and displacement often results in drastic changes that create new challenges for newcomers. Uprooting, conflicting cultural values, language barrier, loss of emotional support, loss of social and economic status, low self-esteem, and lack of familiarity with rules, policies and customs of the host country has complicated the process of integration for Iranians.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Organize education and information sessions and forming groups to address specific issues in order to improve the process of settlement and integration; also to enhance the quality of life of community members. However, these activities need to be innovative (not necessarily apply the Euro-centric model) and culturally appropriate to the community. Taping the resources within the Iranian community to organize these activities. At the same time, providing information about other workshops outside the community. ❖ Provide information and orientation to the Canadian system, and develop strategies to improve accessibility to information and services. ❖ Publicize the community’s achievements in the larger society. Also, sensitize and educate mainstream service providers about the Iranian culture. ❖ Develop an Iranian web sight or provide referral to other web sights.

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Identified issues	Recommendations
<p>Emotional difficulties Loneliness, isolation, low self-esteem, lack of social and emotional support, depression and disorientation.</p> <p><i>Disconnection from the past and absence of a sense of belonging to the larger society coupled with settlement related challenges has increased the stress level of the community members. In turn, high level of stress and lack of emotional support lead to a multitude of other problems including mental health.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establish social networks for community members, especially for youth, women and refugees, to aid in coping with emotional difficulties ❖ Assist Iranian seniors in achieving their goals for expanding their activities and social network ❖ Organize and promote recreational and cultural activities as a form of engaging people. ❖ Develop outreach strategies to connect to isolated individuals in the community ❖ Develop an Iranian Family Service program under the auspices of Family Service Association.
<p>Youth Issues Peer pressure Difficulty with academic work Low self-esteem Intergenerational gap Conflicting cultural values Inter-minority racism and systemic racism</p> <p><i>Intergenerational gap is encountered by all types of families- mainstream and immigrant alike. This is exasperated in the Iranian community due to discrepancies in cultural values and norms. The Iranian community needs to invest in the youth in order to ensure their achievement and integration into society.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Develop “buddy club” for youth to create a social network as well as assisting them with school work ❖ Develop “Youth Achievement Club” to reflect their academic, athletic, humanitarian, and other achievements in the Iranian community and the larger society. ❖ Develop groups for youth to enhance communication skills and to improve relationships with parents ❖ Develop parenting groups for dual purpose of disseminating information about parenting and cultural issues as well as creating social network of support. ❖ Promote volunteerism among youth

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Identified Issues	Recommendations
<p>Insufficient information, training and lack of proper orientation for newcomers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide information and orientation to the Canadian system is a necessity. At the same time, action plans need to be developed in order to improve accessibility to information and services
<p>Inadequate information, services and negative attitude and treatment of refugees</p> <p><i>Although the number of Iranian refugees has decreased in recent years, this segment of the community is faced with specific issues and challenges some of which are ineligibility for certain services</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Develop better relationship between the immigration office and Iranian service providers. ❖ In collaboration with service providers serving Iranian refugees, develop a paper on current status of refugees. ❖ Develop social action strategies in order to enhance the condition of refugees
<p>Family conflict</p> <p><i>The Iranian culture is family oriented and places a high value on strong family ties. In fact, family is considered to be one of the most important units of the society. The pressure of settlement and integration as well as conflicting cultural values has created rift in family relations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide culturally appropriate services such as counselling, mediation, etc.

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Identified Issues	Recommendation
<p>Insufficient community cooperation and cohesion</p> <p><i>Iranian community is comprised of people with various ethnicity, language, religion, political affiliation, and socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Community members have a tendency to form their own groups. As a result, a high level of cohesion has not been developed in the community.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Take the initiative in developing programs, coordinate and deliver services that are tailored for the community and addressing common needs. ❖ Develop an umbrella organization to coordinate services in the Iranian community as well as undertaking advocacy and lobbying for the whole community. ❖ Celebrate the achievements of the Iranian community to promote unity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Established in 1914, the Family Service Association of Toronto (FSA) is a social service agency with the mission "to strengthen individuals and families in just and supportive communities". FSA services include counseling, family life education, community development, children's and seniors camps, and family support services to all age groups across city of Toronto.

The Community Action Unit was formed in January 1997 with the objective of promoting quality of life for selected ethno-cultural communities and pre-school children in disadvantaged families. A team of social workers was assembled to work in Iranian, Tamil, Somali, and Serbian communities. The worker from each of the communities works with a volunteer Advisory Council that oversee the planning and implementation of all the programs in their respective communities.

The Iranian Advisory Council (IAC) was established in March 1992 for the development of a domestic violence program for the Iranian community. After five years, other developmental needs of the Iranian Community were identified by the Advisory Council, hence, a community development component was added in 1997.

The Advisory Council's role is to work cooperatively and collaboratively with the agency in order to maximize the resources required to respond to the developmental needs of the Iranian community. The Iranian Advisory Council is comprised of consumers and community members, and it is instrumental in service planning, advocacy, community development, community education/integration, and community economic development.

2. PROBLEM

The demographics of the Iranian community continue to show dramatic growth and change. For example, the 1991 census population analysis for the City of North York by ethnic origin did not even include Iranians as a separate group; while in 1996, the North York Board of Education reported 2,849 Iranian students—approximately 4% of enrollment. The growth is also reflected in the Iranian population- based on language-increasing 336% from 1986 to 1991 in the Greater Metro Toronto.

1996 Statistics Canada indicates that, based on ethnic origin, 64,405 Iranians live in Canada. With population of 36,255, Ontario is the largest Iranian settlement in Canada. The majority of Iranians in Ontario (28,850) live in Toronto.

In considering the Iranian population living in Canada, the following factors need to be taken into account. First, in the absent of most current statistics, the figures presented here goes back to 1996. Since then, migration trend from Iran to Canada has continued. Second, due to multiple ethnicity, some Iranians may not identify themselves as such. For example, Kurds, Turks, Asurians, and Armenians may not identify themselves as Iranians. Therefore, it may be safe to assume that the Iranian population in Canada is greater than it is stated here.

In addition, the demographics of the Iranian community continues to change. In 1986, there was an estimated 60% to 40% split of Iranian immigrants and refugees respectively; this ratio had changed to 70% immigrants and 30% refugees by 1992. Due to recent legislative changes once again the number of Iranian independent immigrants are on the rise.

Due to these changes, in order to provide appropriate services, it is imperative to have an up-to-date profile of this rapidly growing community, its strengths and capacities, as well as identifying the barriers which prevent Iranians from fully participating in community life.

There is a general consensus among the Iranian Advisory Council, FSA's Iranian volunteers, and Iranian service providers that developing a current community profile and conducting a needs assessment is crucial to the next stage of development in the Iranian community.

We believe that a community operates best when it is united and when it draws its resources together in order to overcome barriers. To achieve this, the community has to be involved in the process of identifying its needs and assets and in developing its own solutions.

3. CONCEPT

The central theme of this research project has been based on two multifaceted questions:

(1) What does the Iranian community in Toronto look like?

(2) What are the major needs/barriers and assets/capacities of this community?

Understanding the general trend and demographics of the Iranian community enable us to produce a picture of the Iranian community in Toronto. However, the majority of data is based on statistics that do not provide context. Quantitative data does not capture the true characteristics of a community and does not provide an in-depth understanding of how community members feel, think and cope. The picture can be made clearer if the community members participate by identifying their own needs, strengths, and challenges.

This research project has used a community development approach to engage Iranians to work together. This approach has been selected because during the process, different sectors of the Iranian community came together to address the needs of the whole community. The involvement of the Iranian community as a whole is not only important in community development, but also because FSA is a mainstream agency. It would be more empowering for the Iranian community as a minority group to be directly involved in assessing their own needs, recognizing their own capacities and suggesting appropriate solutions rather than having a mainstream agency provide all that for them.

4. THEORY

The literature regarding needs assessment and/or community development related to the Iranian community is scarce and it almost exclusively explores community development in rural areas in Iran. Since there is a significant difference between the population living in rural areas in Iran, and the Iranians who reside in urban centres like Toronto, the literature reviewed did not include these materials.

Considering the recent history of the Iranian community in Canada, with the exception of a study in 1993, there has been no research specific to this population. In 1993, the Iranian Women's Publications of Canada conducted a study on the emotional impact of immigration on Iranian immigrants and refugees. The resulting report identified the problems that Iranian immigrants faced upon arrival or shortly thereafter; however, this report contained little information on what community members thought about the types of

strategies or services which could best prevent or respond to these issues. This gap probably reflects the early settlement stage, when immigrants are reluctant to speak publicly about problems or to seek out services.

There was no "map" to facilitate access to and/or how to provide culturally appropriate ways for Iranian people to improve their well-being and their capacity to integrate into their community.

It has been decided that instead of reviewing program evaluations such as summative (outcome) and formative (process) evaluation, different community development approaches would be reviewed. Since this needs assessment is based on a community development approach, the Traditional or Deficiency Model and Capacity-focused Model will be examined.

4.1 Traditional or Deficiency Model

The Traditional or Deficiency model of community development is based on inadequacy and shortcomings and lack of resources in the communities. In other words, this model focuses on problems, and it is negative in nature. To apply this model, the systems in place-- be it public, private or non-profit charitable organizations-- plan for providing services to these “needy” communities. As a result, for needs that are identified by one sector or another, services are provided to reduce or eliminate the problems. This approach conveys the message that the only way to solve problems is by providing services. Consequently, people are turned into clients or consumers of services who depend on receiving services for their survival and well-being.

Often, the planning of services for lower-income communities involves needs assessments that are based on a “needs map”. The needs map consist of three sections. In the centre, individual problems such as child abuse, crime, mental and disability are identified. In the middle, problems related to the family as a whole is outlined such as broken families, slum housing, and welfare recipients. Finally, the outer level illustrates environmental and societal problems: unemployment, truancy, illiteracy, dropouts, lead poisoning, and gangs.

Although it is an undeniable fact that some services are needed for less privileged communities, the emphasis of this theory on services creates major problems. Allocating resources for the purpose of creating services will transfer funding to service providers not to the community members. This disempowers the local residents because they will be dependent on receiving services to meet their needs. Fragmentation and disunity can result from this approach because local residences rely on outside experts. Instead of co-operation and collaboration in their own community, they will be looking for outside professionals to provide solutions. Furthermore, policies that are made from the needs map are reactive. They are established to resolve problems or at least maintain survival level in the community. This approach is not conducive to proactive planning in which the enhancement and betterment of the community is the goal and not simply dealing with major problems. Also, this model appears to be too limiting as it does not provide room for individuals to use their capacity and strength toward community building.

4.2 Capacity-focused Model

In contrast to the Deficiency model, Capacity-focused approach is based on skills, assets, and strength within a community. Basically, this framework has been grounded in two principles. First, historically, community development has been successful only when the local residents have been directly and actively involved in the process of development; this is why the top down approach in the Traditional model has not been effective. Hence, building a community from the outside in will never result in meaningful and long lasting development.

The second principle is rooted in the reality that in recent years public funding has been consistently dwindling. In the competitive environment of restructuring, globalization, and national deficit, government funding has been reduced to subsidizing marginalized communities. As a result, waiting for resources to come from the outside of communities does not appear to be a viable option.

For these reasons an alternative map, the “community asset map”, has been developed to locate communities assets, capacities and capabilities. Similar to the “needs map” in the Traditional model, the “community assets map” has three sections. However, instead of indicating the needs, it points out positive aspects of the community. The three sections of the “community assets map” include: First, gifts of individuals: income, youth, elderly, labeled people, and artists. Second, Citizen’s associations: churches, cultural groups, and block clubs. Third, local institutions: businesses, parks, hospitals, community colleges, libraries, and schools.

Kretzmann & McKnight (1993) definition for citizen’s association and local institutions are as follows: Citizen’s association refers to formal and local institutions where all or most staff are volunteers. Local institutions allude to more formal and organized parts of the establishment such as schools, police forces, hospitals and social services.

They postulate that in a Capacity-focused model, the assets, resources and skills of a community needs to be recognized and mobilized. In their view, each individual possesses unique talents and resources and can be effective in the process of community building. In addition, every community has a number of citizen associations that can be instrumental in solving problems and achieving common goals. Moreover, since a community does not live in a vacuum, it is necessary to link local institutions with individuals and citizens’ associations. The result of this linkage will be maximized when community builders are able to influence these institutions in such a way that they are more responsive to the initiatives of local residents.

By and large, this is a holistic model of community development with many positive points. A major drawback of this theory is its somewhat idealistic perspective. This is because capacity and assets of individuals are neither weighed against individuals’ shortcomings, nor against systemic barriers. However, due to its many positive aspects it has been selected as the theoretical framework for this research.

5. DEFINITIONS

In this section an attempt has been made to define concepts of “need”, “needs assessment”, “community”, and “community development”.

5.1 Need

A literature review shows that there are different ways to identify need. Some consider the different dimensions of needs, such as physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual. While others make a distinction between need as a noun and need as a verb. In this school of thought, need as a noun resembles the gap between present and future, while need as a verb refers to what is required to modify the disparity.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is one of the best known theories about human needs. Maslow believes that human needs can be categorized into five levels: 1) Physical needs, 2) Safety needs, 3) Love or belonging needs, 4) Esteem needs, and 5) Self-actualization needs. According to his theory, lower needs are more basic and fundamental than higher needs. As a result, individuals basic needs (food and shelter) have to be satisfied before they can strive to fulfill higher needs such as self-actualization (Hoffman, Vernoy, Williams & Vernoy, 1991).

Another attempt at defining need has been achieved by developing two categories: normative and demand. Normative refers to the needs of a target population in comparison with the basic needs according to the standard of living in a given society. While needs that are defined in terms of demand identify target populations as those who see themselves in need of services.

For the purpose of this needs assessment we will define needs normatively.

5.2 Needs Assessment

If we consider the definition of needs that refers to the discrepancy between present situation and preferred future, then the needs assessment is a process in which the current situation is examined, problems and their causes are identified, and an action plan is drawn. Witkin & Altschuld (1995) describe needs assessment as "A systemic procedure for setting priorities and making decisions about programs and allocation of resources" (p.4). In other words, needs assessment consist of several phases. Systematic procedure refers to standardized method of data collection. An appropriate method of data collection is selected according to the circumstances at hand. Priorities determine the type of solutions. Finally an action plan will address the defined needs of target population.

A needs assessment is also viewed as an operational perspective:

"...needs assessment strategies are designed to provide data for program planning purposes. Intended outcomes could include: establishing policies, setting priorities, planning new programs, modifying or enhancing existing programs, coordinating services, community development and empowerment, etc."(Community Health Needs Assessment: A Culturally Sensitive Approach, City of Toronto, Department of Public Health, 1991, p. 1).

Some researchers view needs identification, needs analysis, and needs assessment as separate processes. In this research, needs assessment refers to a process that encompasses all of the above components; the main purpose being to identify and prioritize needs and capacities in order to develop culturally appropriate programs.

5.3 Community

The word "community" has been used to convey various concepts in literature. In fact, Milson, one of the scholar in the field of community work, has identified 94 different definitions for "community". His own definition for "community" is as follows: "A community is a social group, usually localized, in which there is manifest or latent, existent or potential, a sense of identification among the member" (Milson, 1974, p. 11).

According to Sarason, Klein, and Stuart a community is a vicinity that is distinguished by the following 6 attributes:

- 1) Membership, a sense of identity and belonging,
- 2) Common symbol systems, similar language, rituals and ceremonies,
- 3) Shared values and norms,
- 4) Mutual influence, community members have influence and are influenced by each other,
- 5) Shared needs and commitment to meeting them,
- 6) Shared emotional connection, members share common history, experiences, and mutual support (Health, Education and Community Empowerment, The Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, 1990, p.3).

In addition, community can be defined as “a specific group of people, defined by geography and/or affinity (e.g., occupation, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or interest), who exhibit some awareness of their identity as a group.” (City of Toronto, Department of Public Health, 1992, quoted from Healthy Toronto 2000. P.2).

The American Public Health Association’s definition of community has been adopted for this research. However, its limitations are noted because of the diversity and heterogeneity of the Iranian community.

5.4 Community Development

Similar to “community”, the term “community development” has been used in the literature to cover a vast area with vague boundaries. Added to this ambiguity, other terminology has been used to describe community development: community organization, community action, and community participation.

Basically, community development refers to a process of improving the lives of community members by encouraging their participation and involving them in the process of development. Often, empowerment is a component of community development. It is through empowerment that individuals are encouraged to be part of decision making and to influence their own environment (Health, Education and Community Empowerment, The Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, 1990).

The United Nations has defined community development as “... qualitative changes expressed in attitudes and relationships, which add to human dignity, and increase the continuing capacity of the people to help themselves to achieve goals which they determine for themselves” (King, 1965, quoted from the United Nations Economic and Social Council Document, 1956).

A more current definition for community development has been created by City of Toronto Community Services “Community development refers to work with community groups. ...Groups that look outwards in order to engage in social actions to alter socio-environmental risk conditions” (Making Communities: Community Development Definitions, Principles and Strategies, City of Toronto Community Services, 1993, p.4).

Other definitions emphasize on the importance of individual involvement as opposed to group work. For example, in the Healthy Toronto 2000 Report, community development is described as:

...the process through which all members of a community gain an increase in the control over their lives as well as the life of their community by achieving equal access to participation in collective decisions about their needs and in the development and implementation of strategies which utilize their collective power to meet those needs” (Community Development, City of Toronto, Dept. of Public Health, 1991, p.3).

For the purpose of this needs assessment the definition offered in the Healthy Toronto 2000 Report has been adopted.

6. PURPOSE OF RESEARCH

The goals for conducting this research are first, to produce an up-to-date profile of the Iranian community living in Toronto, and second, to produce a profile of current community needs and assets.

Objectives are as follows:

- A. To identify the demographics of the Iranian community in Toronto including age, education, employment, family, and immigration status.
- B. To identify the needs/barriers which limit Iranians from accessing services and integrating into the community.
- C. To identify the major strength and skills such as problems solving, leadership, and creativity.
- D. To prioritize community needs/barriers by analyzing the number of people identifying the need/barriers and the impact of the identified issues.
- E. To generate ideas about types of community solutions and planning services which are appropriate to the Iranian culture.

7. OPERATIONAL ISSUES

In this section, variables will be defined, and feasibility, limitation, evaluation, and ethical issues will be explored.

7.1 Variables

This research is concerned with two main variables. “The independent variable is presumed to cause or determine a dependent variable, [while] dependent variable is the variable that is assumed to depend on or be caused by another (called independent variable)” (Rubin & Babbie, 1997, p. G.2. & p. G.4). According to the preceding definition, it is proposed that the needs assessment is an independent variable, while the needs of the Iranian community are viewed as the dependent variable. This is because the main purpose of the needs assessment is for planning programs to assist the Iranian community to fulfill some of their needs and to overcome some of their barriers. As a result, the needs assessment or the intervention methods can influence and change the needs of the Iranian community.

7.2 Feasibility

In order to ensure the reliability and validity of this research, a number of issues regarding community background and characteristics of the sample population have been considered carefully. Through out the thousand years of history, Iran's political system was a monarchy. The type of monarchy that ruled Iran was very different than the parliamentary democracy that is in place in some European countries. In Iran the monarch had the ultimate power and authority in making vital decisions for the entire nation.

In 1979 a religious revolution overthrew the monarchy and replaced it with a republican regime that was administered by Islamic fundamentalists. On the whole, it is sufficient to say that the Islamic revolution substituted one dictatorial regime with a more authoritarian and repressive one.

For this research project, the historical background of the Iranian people has been considered on several levels. On one hand, asking personal questions regarding such issues as marital, education, immigration status, and family and employment problems will appear threatening. Some may fear that this information will be used against them. On the other hand, as people who lived in an authoritarian society most of their lives, it may be difficult to convince them of the importance of their opinions, and that these opinions can help to improve their own lives as well as the community. In an authoritarian society, individuals' will and opinions are not valued and their participation in the process of decision making is minimized. As a result, a sense of apathy or lack of faith in the importance of their opinions had played a part in gathering the data.

Another consideration was paid to cultural issues in a sense that on the whole, the Iranian culture is a verbal culture. Although, the Iranian community in Toronto is comprised of a high number of educated and professional individuals, by and large, people are reluctant to read and respond in writing. On the whole, the community would be more inclined to communicate verbally. This is an important issue for the survey questionnaire, and it will be discussed more thoroughly in the methodology section.

Another challenge was based on the division in class, political, and religious affiliation that is deeply grounded in the Iranian community. Often, people from different socio-economic classes and political or religious beliefs do not interact with each other; in the extreme cases, they are even suspicious of one another. As a result, neutrality was significant to the success of data collection.

Use of language was yet another issue that was crucial in collection of data. However, since this will be explored in the survey questionnaire section, it will not be reviewed at this point.

7.3 Limitations

Due to limited resources available for this research project the majority of the work has been completed by the staff at Family Service Association and by utilizing the expertise of volunteers within the Iranian community.

Another limitation was related to the aforementioned community fragmentation. No matter how hard one tries to remain neutral and to be inclusive in one's approach, the existing diversity may have prevented reaching certain groups within the Iranian community.

In addition, applying participatory research proved to be challenging. Participatory research refers to a research method that includes all stakeholders. Although contacting the Iranian Advisory Council, the agency's clients and program manager was easily done; connecting with some individuals in the Iranian community was much more difficult. A segment of the Iranian community (refugees, survivors of wife assault, and consumer survivors of mental health) may have chosen to keep their distance from the community. Although, people from these categories were included in data collection, their participation may have been rather limited.

7.4 Evaluation

Program evaluation is an important component of social programs; good design and implementation can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of social programs and services. For this needs assessment, we recommend two program evaluations. The first evaluation is to be conducted on the needs assessment itself to evaluate its outcome, and to assess whether the needs assessment achieved its goals and objectives.

Originally it was planned to:

- collect 400 questionnaires
- conduct 4 focus groups (seniors, women, refugees, and youth)
- conduct 8 community informant interviews
- organize a community forum to present the result of the needs assessment

In addition, from the outset, the following indicators of success or failure for this needs assessment have been established:

- Completion/return rate of the questionnaire
- Attendance and content analysis of focus groups
- Attendance and content analysis of the key community informant interviews
- Endorsement of the final report by the Iranian Advisory Council and support of the broader community for program planning.

In reviewing the results of the needs assessment the following was indicated:

- A total of 406 questionnaires have been collected. The rate of return has been calculated as 64%.
- A total of 4 focus groups (seniors, women, youth and refugees) have been conducted with substantial material gained for final analysis
- A total of 10 community informant interviews have been conducted with a vast amount of information useful for final analysis
- The Iranian Advisory Council has approved the report. A community forum will be organized to launch the report.

The second evaluation will involve process evaluation and will be conducted a few years after recommended programs (by this needs assessment) have been in place. This evaluation will serve to ensure that the implemented programs fulfill the needs of the target population as it was defined by the needs assessment. It is important however that the component of process evaluation be built in from the start.

The process evaluation can be accomplished by involving different stakeholders such as community members, workers, Iranian Advisory Council, and the program manager.

7.5 Ethical Issues

An extra effort had been made to ensure the voluntary participation of community members in the needs assessment. This is because part of the distribution method included Iranian service providers asking their clients to participate in the survey and focus groups. Therefore, issues of authority and potential coercion have been dealt with in sensitive manner. An attempt had been made to overcome ethical issues by individually meeting with each worker to explain the purpose and goals of the needs assessment, as well as discussing the concept of voluntary participation.

The principle of anonymity and confidentiality is one of the fundamental ethics of any research. This has been recognized as especially important for the target population because of their deep-rooted suspicion of authority. Both anonymity and confidentiality will be discussed further in research method section.

8. CHOICE OF RESEARCH METHOD

To conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that would capture the overall needs, challenges and capacities of the target population, both qualitative and quantitative methodology utilizing triangulation approach have been selected. The triangulation method utilized in this research includes survey questionnaire, community informant interview, and focus group. This method has been used to gather and synthesize information more accurately.

8.1 Quantitative Research

According to Rubin & Babbie (1997), “quantitative methods are research methods that emphasize precise, objective, and generalizable findings” (p.6.7). The main quantitative methodology used in this research is survey questionnaire. This section includes designing the questionnaire, collection of data, and analysis and interpretation of the data.

8.1.1 Designing the Questionnaire

The questionnaire for this needs assessment began with a brief cover letter. The brevity was necessary due to the sample population’s cultural background. As was mentioned previously, the Iranian culture is an oral culture; a lengthy cover letter may bear the risk of not being read at all.

After careful consideration, it was decided that the questionnaire would not require personal disclosure such as participants’ name and address. The cover letter introduced FSA and its services in a short paragraph. Then an underlined statement informed the reader about the anonymity of their responses.

Considering the historical and cultural background of the sample population, this seemed to have been an effective strategy for gaining the trust and interest of participants. In the next paragraph, the main objectives for the needs assessment were stated in point form. The cover letter ended with the name, address, and a phone number of a contact person and thanked the respondents for their participation.

The questionnaire was designed in Farsi, the official language of Iranians. However, in attempt to have a more inclusive sample especially among youth, an English version was also prepared. This is because in the process of integration into the mainstream, some Iranian youth and young adults prefer to communicate in English and have lost their fluency in their mother tongue.

For valid and reliable research, precision and accuracy are the aims of any survey questionnaire. One way to achieve these goals was to design a questionnaire that was simple and easy to understand. This principle was especially important for this needs assessment since the difference in class and education is substantial among the community members. It was believed that using professional terminology and sophisticated language would have alienated people on the lower educational scale, and it would have skewed the results as they may have answered without fully understanding the questions.

The majority of questions were close-ended where multiple answers were provided. In order to add some context and depth of meaning, a few open-ended questions were included. The questionnaire was comprised of three sections; Respondent's Profile, Assessment of Difficulties, and Solutions.

The Respondent's Profile was designed for the purpose of establishing a snapshot of the demographic of the Iranian community i.e. gender, age, marital and immigration status, etc.

The questions in the Assessment of Difficulties section included an overview of current difficulties such as family, financial and employment problems etc. The Solution section was more comprehensive as it asked the respondents to examine themselves by answering more analytic, more open-ended questions. Also, in this section, attempts have been made to identify strengths and assets of community members (see Appendix A).

8.1.2 Collecting the Data

Due to cultural considerations and a limited budget, the survey was not distributed by mail. It was anticipated that the mail-in method would have resulted in a very low rate of return. For a culture that is oral, suspicious of authorities, carries a general disbelief that an individual opinion matters, and puts special emphasis on personal contacts, a mail-in questionnaire would have not been an appropriate method of data collection. For this reason, Iranian service providers, both in Iranian and mainstream social agencies, were contacted to distribute the survey to their clients. In this way, the relationship between service providers and their clients has ensured a higher rate of return and a better response rate. As was discussed earlier, special attention has been paid to ethical issues regarding this method of data collection.

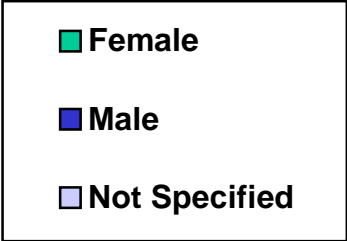
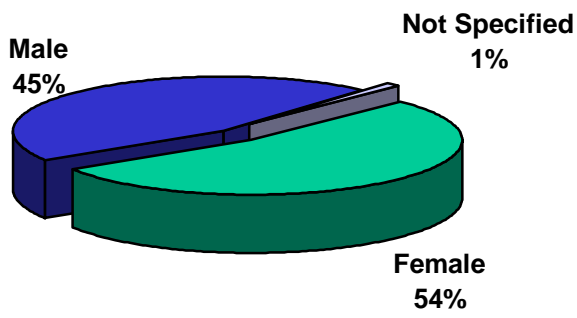
Furthermore, a number of questionnaires were left in the Iranian dentists' offices and businesses that are highly populated by Iranians. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, a sealed collection box facilitated participants in returning their questionnaires. Other methods included setting up a table with questionnaires and a collection box in high-populated ESL classes, learning centres and social and cultural events organized for the Iranian community. Also, in order to include students and young adults in the survey, a number of questionnaires were distributed through the Iranian Student Association at University of Toronto and York University.

In addition, in attempt to make the needs assessment more participatory and inclusive, special efforts were made to include religious minorities within the target population. However, only one Zoroastrian temple responded positively.

8.1.3 Quantitative Data

After the survey questionnaires were collected, a preliminary visual audit of the questionnaires was done first. Then data entry and verification was completed using Q & A software. A logic audit process was performed on the database identifying duplication and logical errors, and cases of obvious errors were rectified. All the way through, the integrity and impartiality of the survey was maintained. The data distribution and graphs were analyzed by using Excel software, and presentation material were developed using Power Point and Microsoft Word.

1- Sex

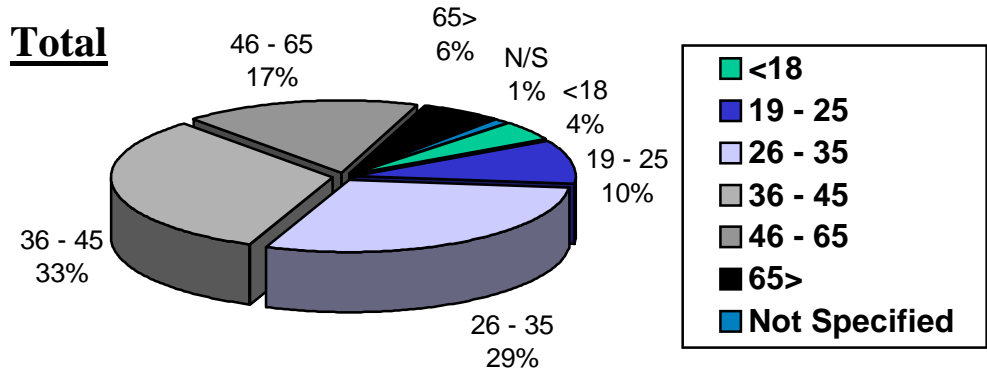


Total Responses = 406

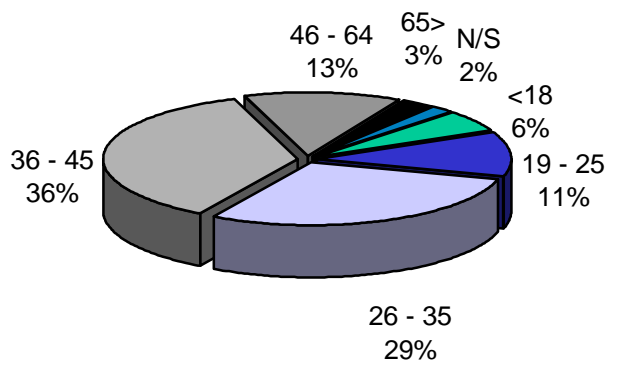
(1) Sex

Respondents' Sex			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Female	218		
2. Male		183	
3. Total			406

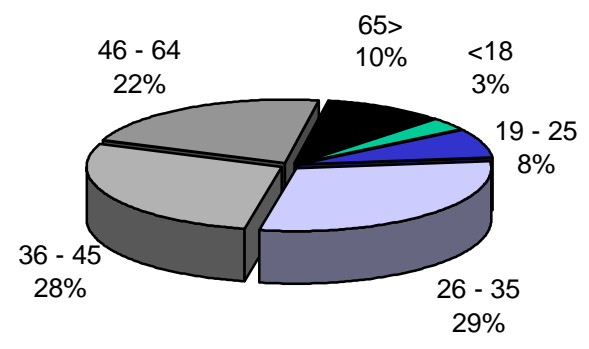
2 - Age



Female



Male

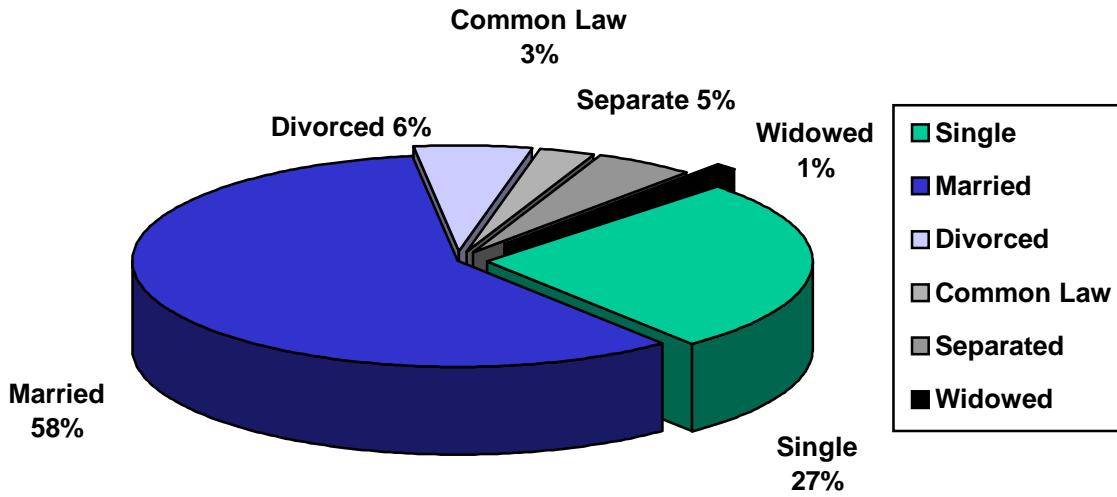


(2) Age

Respondents' Age			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Under 18	12	6	18
2. 19-25	25	14	40
3. 26-35	63	54	119
4. 36-45	79	51	131
5. 46-65	29	40	70
6. over 65	6	18	24

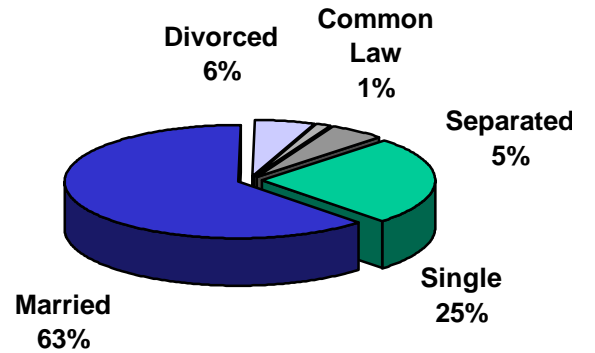
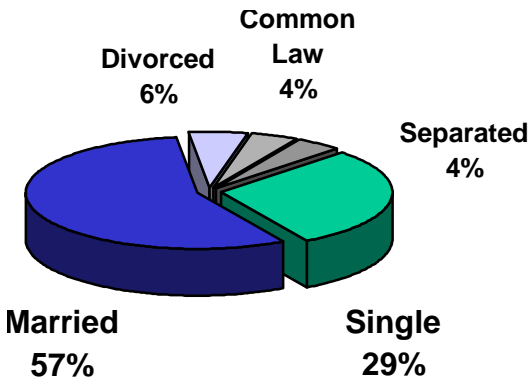
3 - Marital Status

Total



Male

Female



(3) Marital Status

Respondents Marital Status			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Single	54	53	108
<i>With Children</i>	8	0	8
<i>Without Children</i>	4	2	6
2. Married	133	102	236
<i>With Children</i>	113	88	203
<i>Without Children</i>	11	11	22
3. Divorced	12	10	23
<i>With Children</i>	11	8	20
<i>Without Children</i>	0	1	1
4. Common Law	13	8	11
<i>With Children</i>	1	5	6
<i>Without Children</i>	2	2	4
5. Separated	11	8	20
<i>With Children</i>	9	6	16
<i>Without Children</i>	2	2	5
*. Widow			5

Note

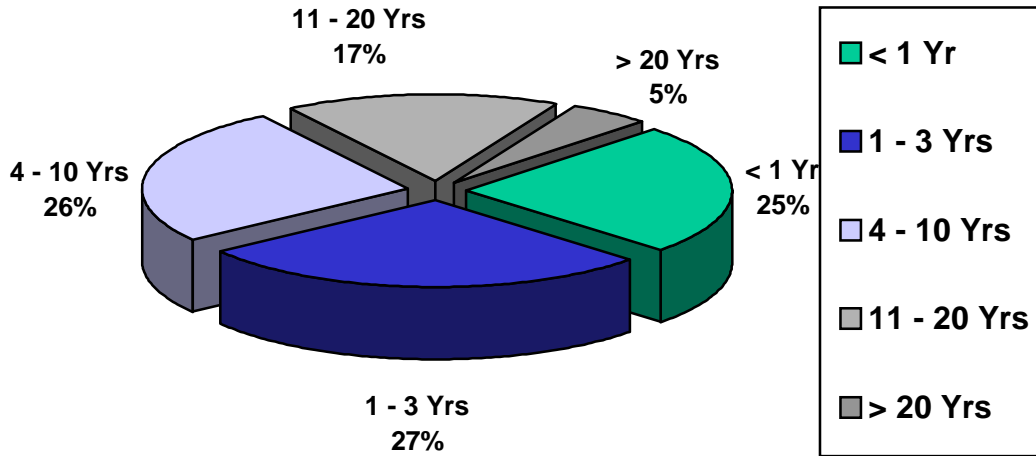
No chart is provided for this table.

(4) Number of Respondents' Children

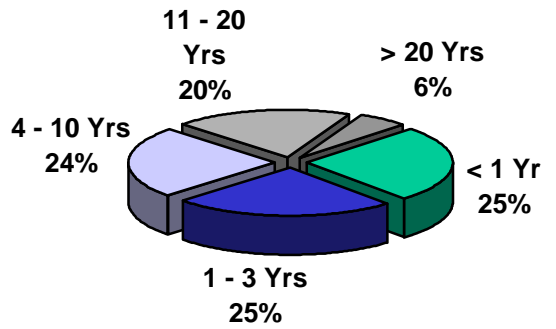
Number of Respondents' Children			
	Female	Male	Total
1. One	24	23	48
2. Two	70	40	113
3. Three	26	22	48
4. Four	11	7	18
5. Five	2	1	3
6. Six	-	2	2
7. Seven	1	-	1

5 - Years of Residency in Canada

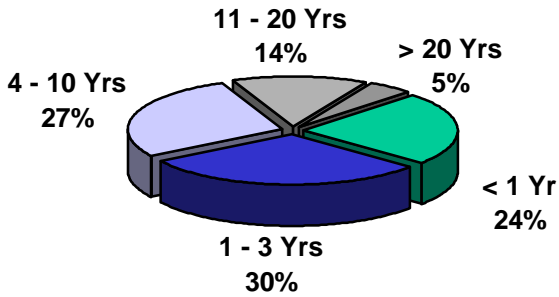
Total



Male



Female

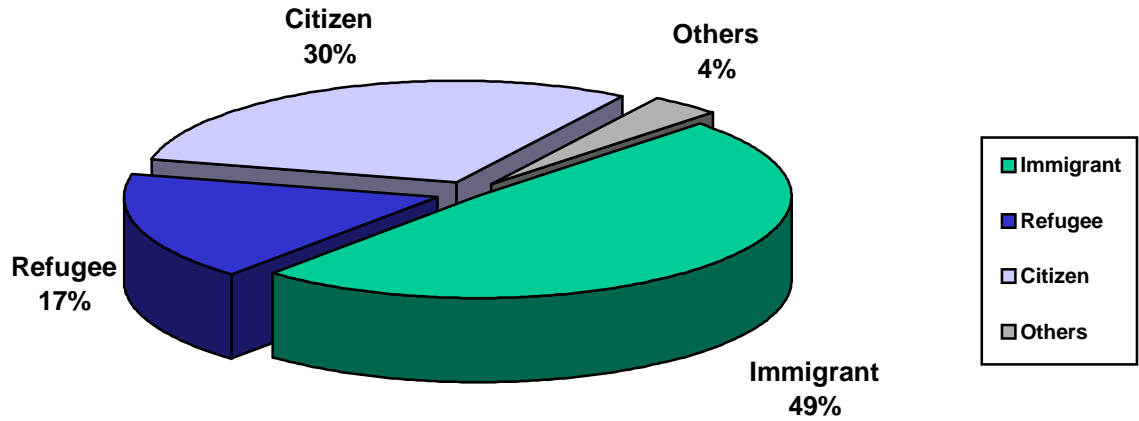


(5) Years of Residency in Canada

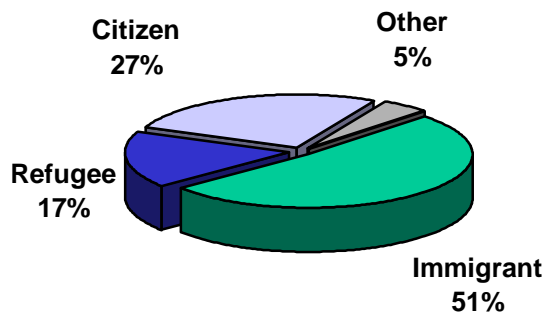
Respondents Years of Residency in Canada			
	Female	Male	Total
1. under 1 year	51	46	98
2. 1-3 years	65	44	111
3. 4-10	59	43	103
4. 11-20	31	35	67
5. over 20 years	10	10	20

6 – Immigration Status

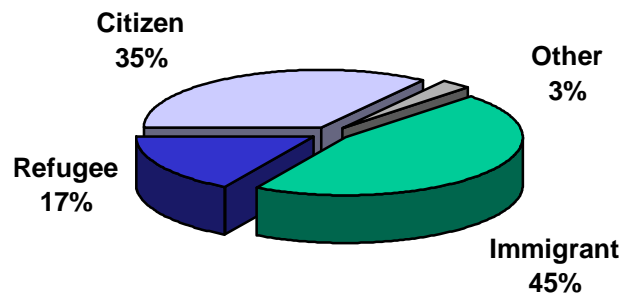
Total



Female



Male

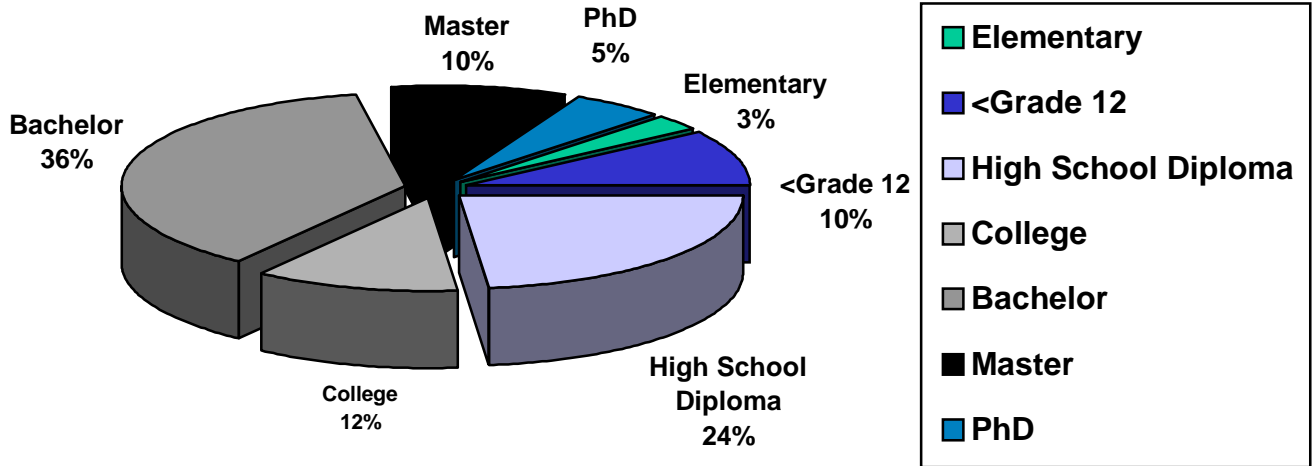


(6) Immigration Status

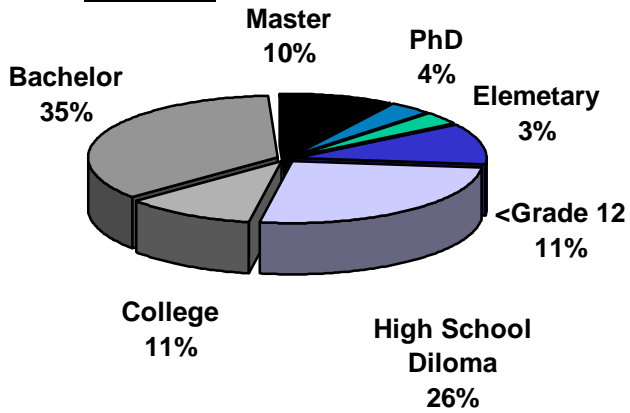
Respondents' Immigration Status			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Immigrant	111	83	196
2. Refugee	37	30	68
3. Citizen	57	63	121
4. Other	10	5	15

7 – Level of Education

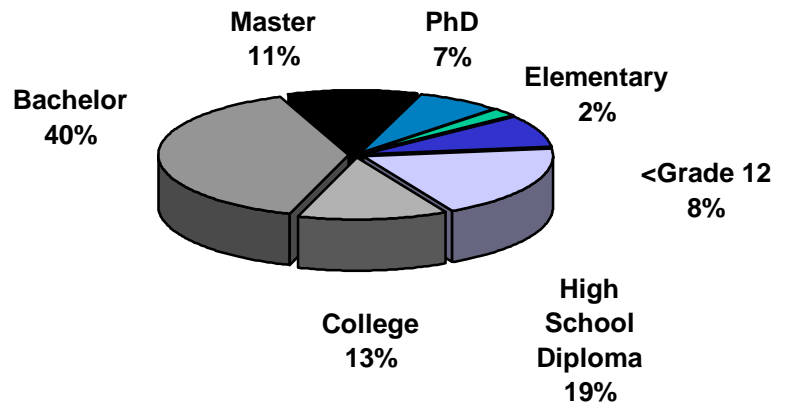
Total



Female



Male



(7) Level of Education

Respondents' Level of Education			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Elementary school	7	4	11
2. Some high school	24	15	39
3. High school diploma	57	35	95
4. College degree	24	23	47
5. Under graduate degree	77	71	150
6. Graduate degree	21	20	41
7. Ph.D.	8	13	21

(8) Field of Education

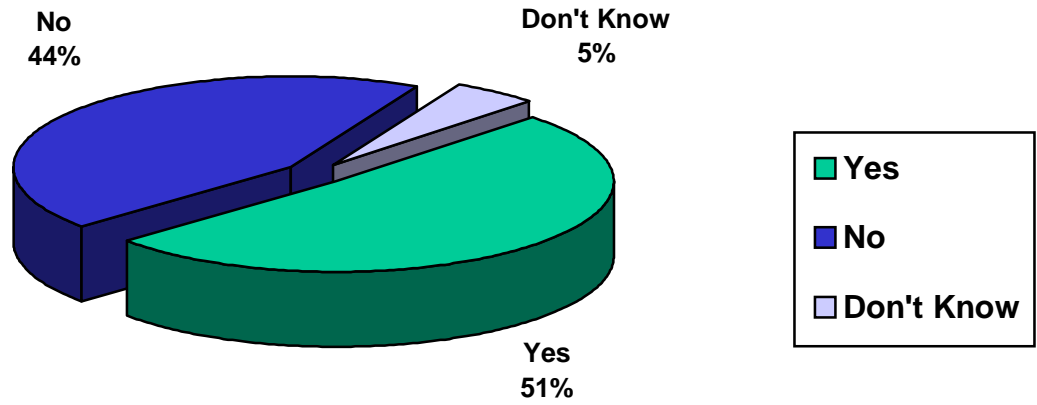
Respondents' Field of Education			
	Female	Male	Total
A. Accounting, Financial, Banking	6	10	16
B. Business, Economics & Administration	28	15	43
C. Civil Engineering & Architect	2	8	10
D. Design & Arts	2	2	4
E. Education & Teaching	9	-	9
F. Food & Food industry	1	-	1
G. General & Basic Education/Sciences	32	14	48
H. Health & Medical Science	26	10	36
I. Industrial	3	22	25
K. Cosmetics & Beauty	2	-	2
L. Literature & Language	10	3	13
M. Military Academics	-	6	6
N. Natural Sciences	7	8	15
S. Social Science	6	9	16
T. Technology & Information Technology	7	13	20

Note

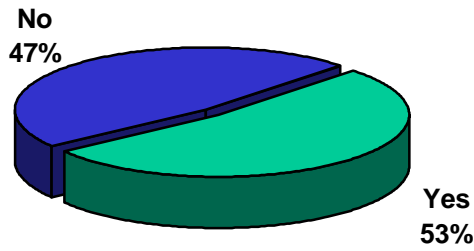
No chart is provided for Table 8.

9- Acceptance of Non-Canadian Degrees

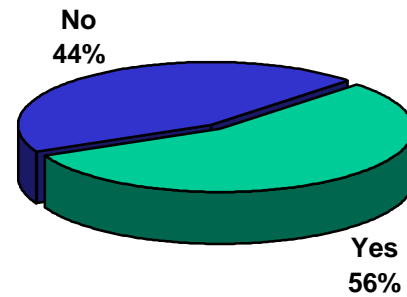
Total



Female



Male

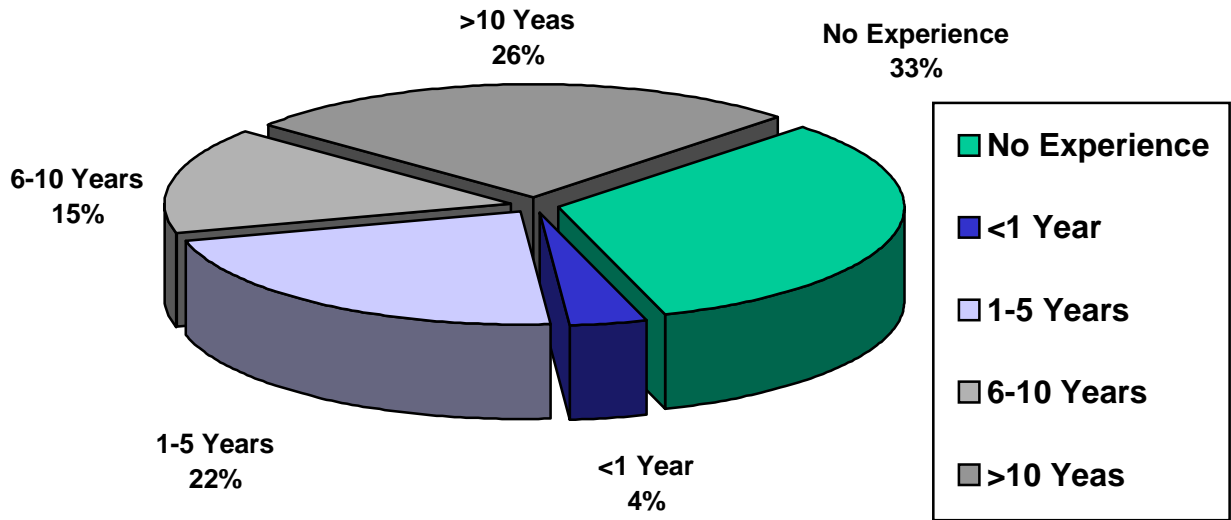


(9) Acceptance of Non-Canadian Degrees

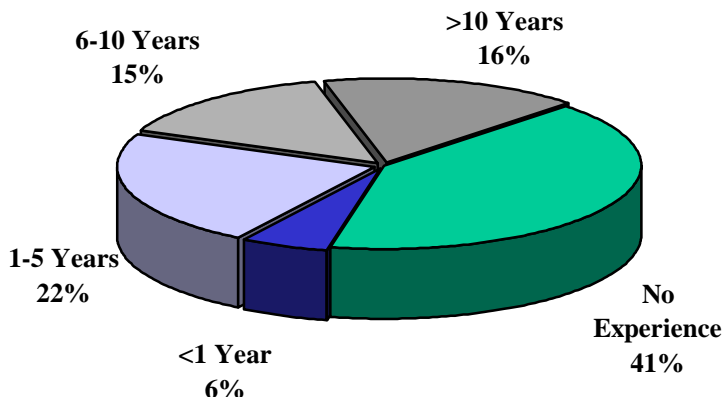
Acceptance of Respondents' Non-Canadian Degrees			
	Female	Male	Total
Yes	80	80	162
No	72	64	139
Don't know	8	8	16

10- Years of Work Experience in Iran

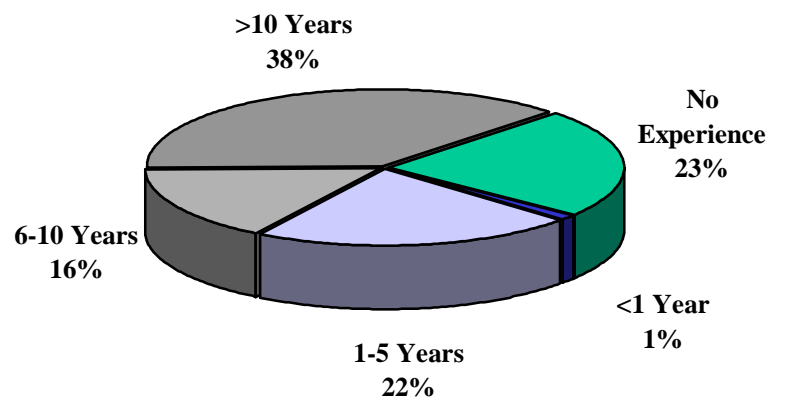
Total



Female



Male



(10) Years of Work Experience in Iran

Respondents' Years of Work Experience in Iran			
	Female	Male	Total
1. No experience	80	39	120
2. Less than 1 year	11	2	14
3. 1-5 years	44	38	82
4. 6-10	29	27	56
5. More than 10 years	32	64	98

(11) Position & Field of Employment in Canada

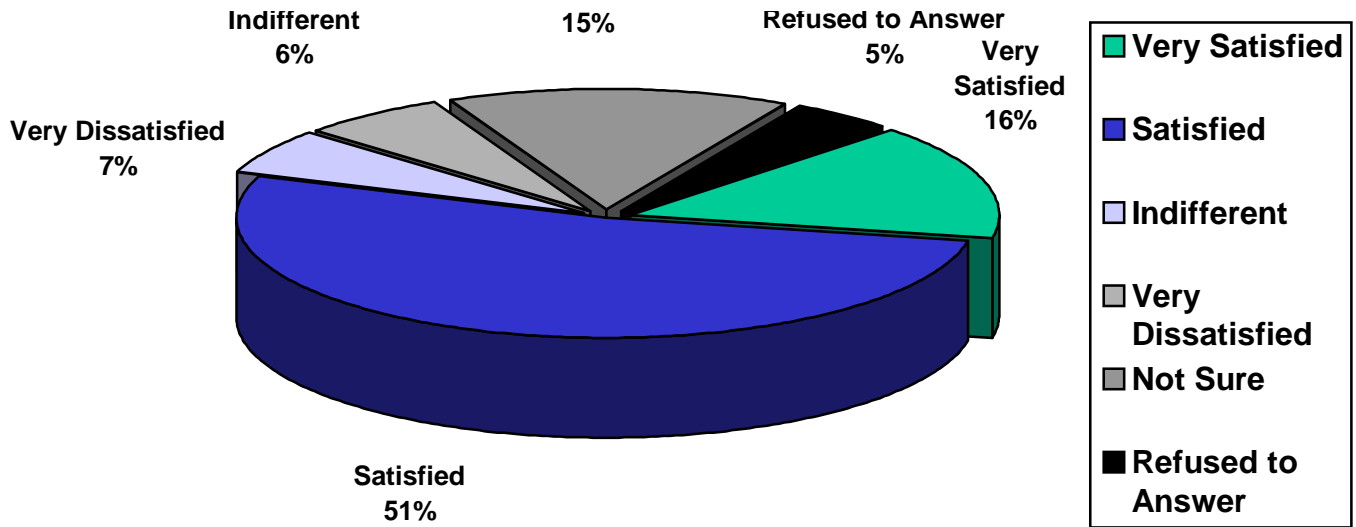
Respondents' Position & Field of Employment in Canada			
	Female	Male	Total
A. Accounting, Financial, Banking	4	8	12
B. Business, Economics & Administration	3	7	10
C. Civil Engineering & Architect	1	3	4
D. Design & Arts	6	3	9
E. Education & Teaching	12	1	13
F. Food & Food industry	8	2	10
G. General & Basic Sciences	7	13	20
H. Health & Paramedic	9	3	12
I. Industrial	1	14	15
J. Journalism	2	2	4
K. Cosmetics & Beauty	3	-	3
L. Learning, Students	42	22	66
M. Legal & Security	-	2	2
N. Not working	35	36	73
P. Private, self-employed	4	7	11
S. Social Works	6	1	7
T. Technology	6	9	15

Note

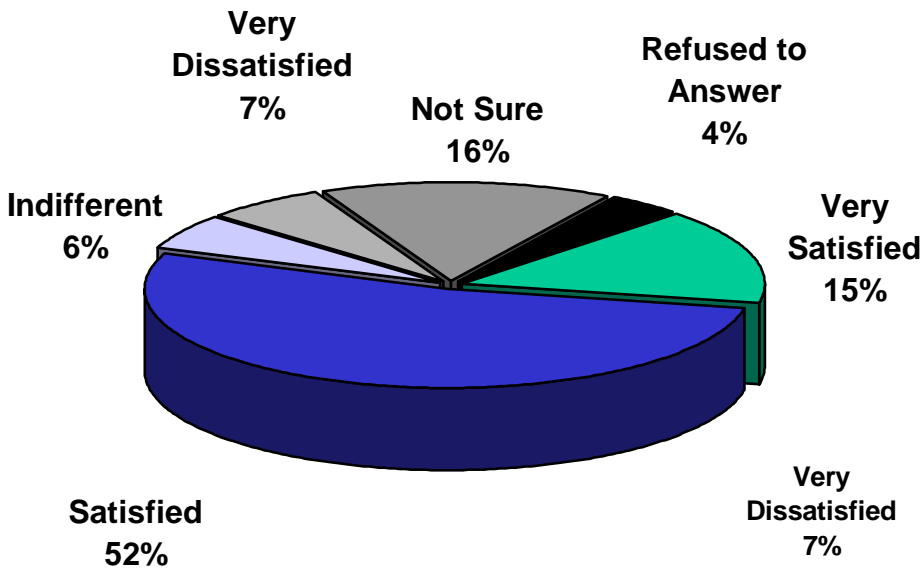
No chart is provided for Table 11.

12- Level of Satisfaction in Canada

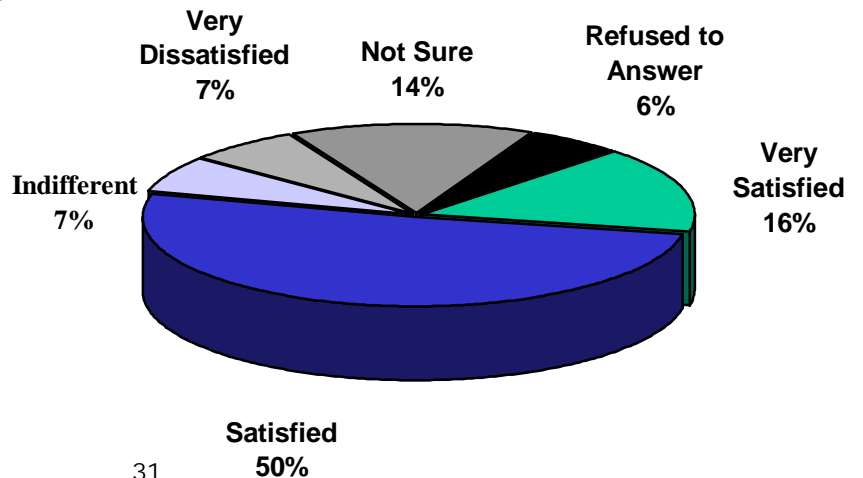
Total



Female



Male

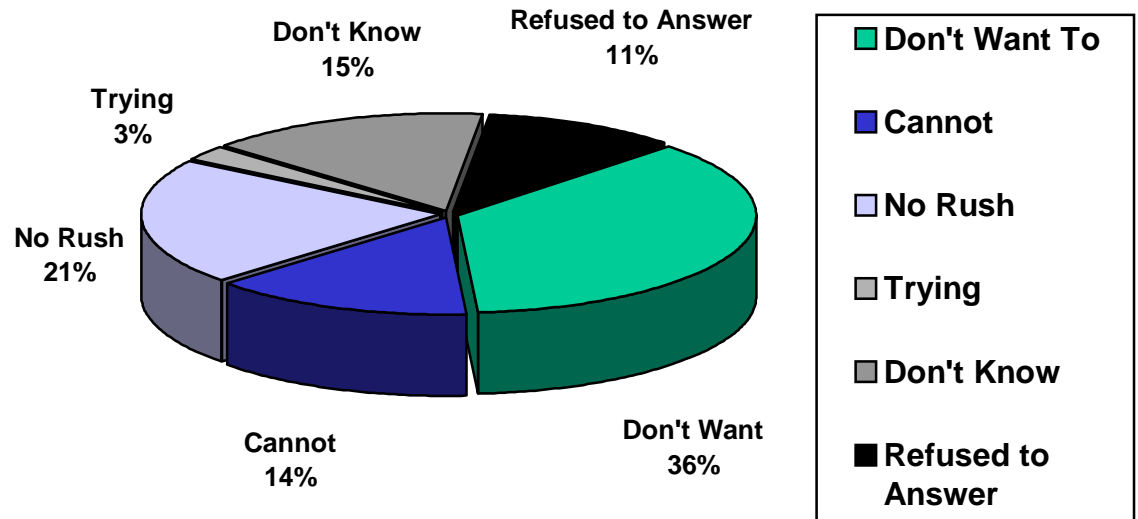


(12) Level of Overall Satisfaction in Canada

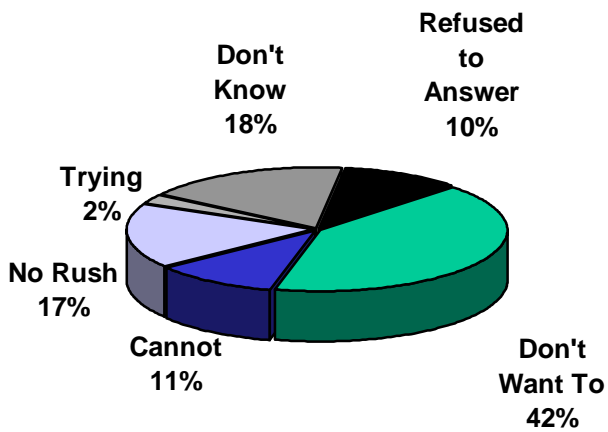
Respondents' Level of Overall Satisfaction in Canada			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Very satisfied	33	28	62
2. Relatively satisfied	112	92	208
3. Indifferent	12	12	24
4. Extremely dissatisfied	14	12	26
5. Not sure	33	26	59
6. Refuse to answer	8	10	18

13- Interest in Returning to Iran

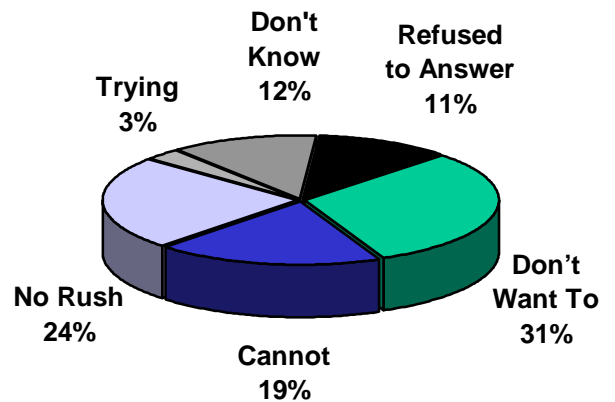
Total



Female



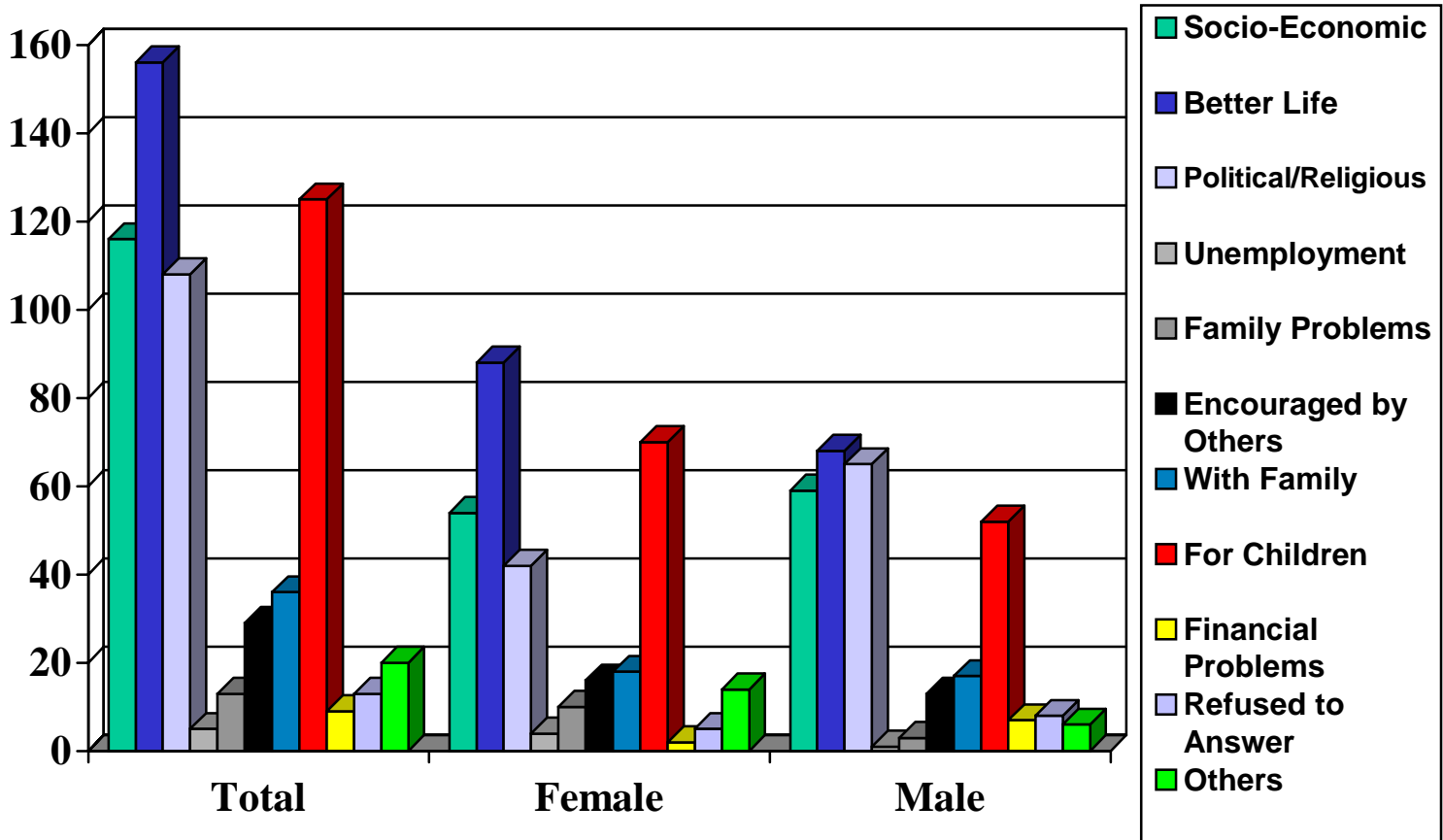
Male



(13) Interest in Returning to Iran

Respondents' Interest in Returning to Iran			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Would not like to go back	88	55	144
2. Would like to, but cannot	23	34	57
3. Would like to, but not in a hurry	37	43	83
4. Would like to, and trying	5	5	10
5. Do not know	38	22	61
6. Refuse to answer	22	20	42

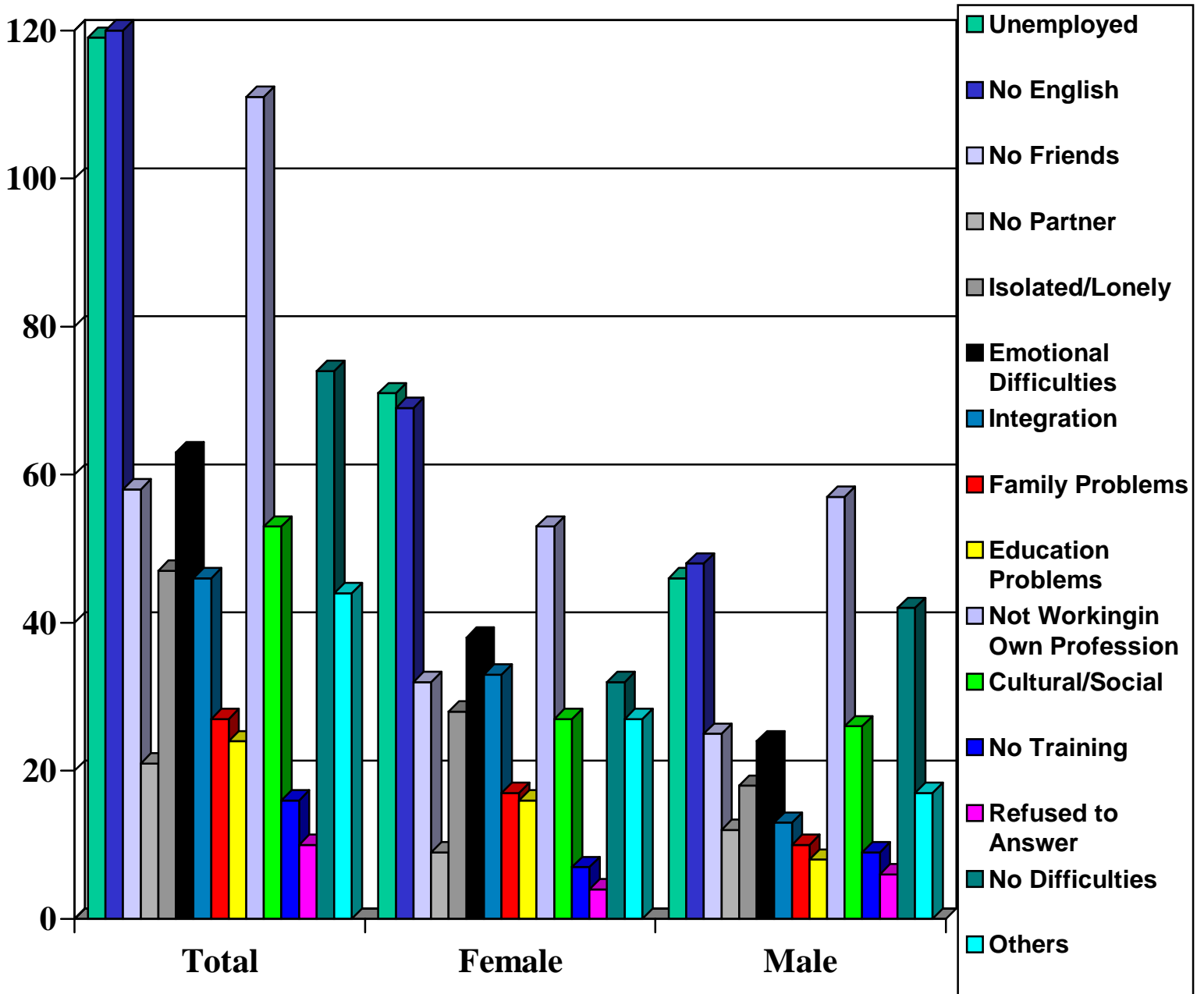
14- Reasons for Coming to Canada



(14) Reasons for coming to Canada

Respondents' Reasons for coming to Canada			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Lack of favourable socio-economic climate	54	59	116
2. In search for better life	88	68	156
3. Political & religious problems	42	65	108
4. Unemployment	4	1	5
5. Family problems	10	3	13
6. Encouragement from others	15	13	29
7. Emigrated with family	18	17	36
8. For children	70	52	125
9. Financial problems	2	7	9
10. Refuse to answer	5	8	13
11. Others	14	6	20

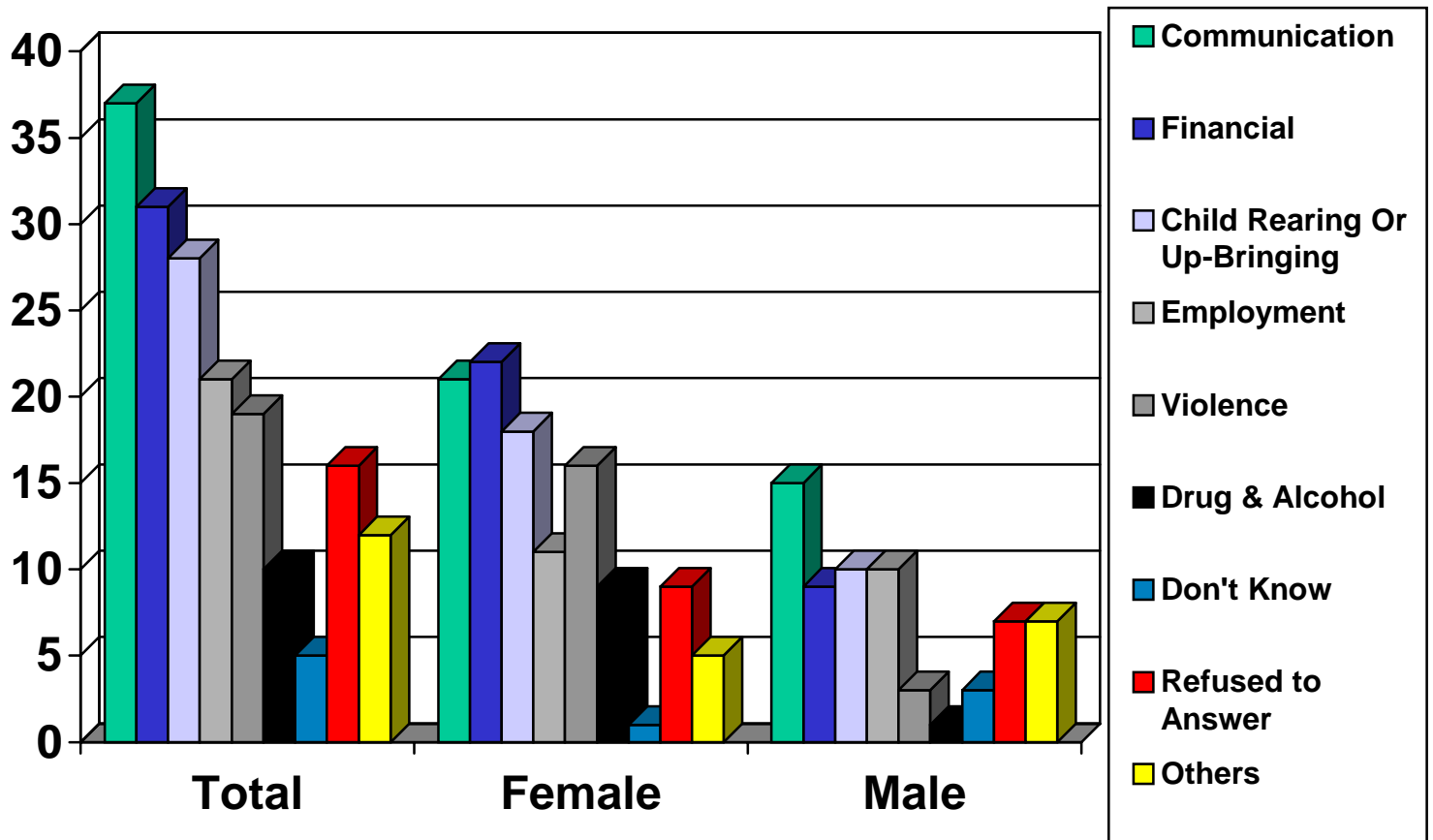
15- Current Difficulties



(15) Current Problems

Respondents' Current Problems			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Unemployment	71	46	119
2. Insufficient English	69	48	120
3. Not having friends	32	25	58
4. Finding partner	9	12	21
5. Isolation & loneliness	28	18	47
6. Emotional difficulties	38	24	63
7. Lack of integration	33	13	46
8. Family problems	17	10	27
9. Educational problems	16	8	24
10. Not employed in own profession	53	57	111
11. Cultural & social differences	27	26	53
12. Lack of access to training	7	9	16
13. Refuse to answer	4	6	10
14. Have no problems	32	42	74
15. Others	27	17	44

16.1- Problems with Spouse



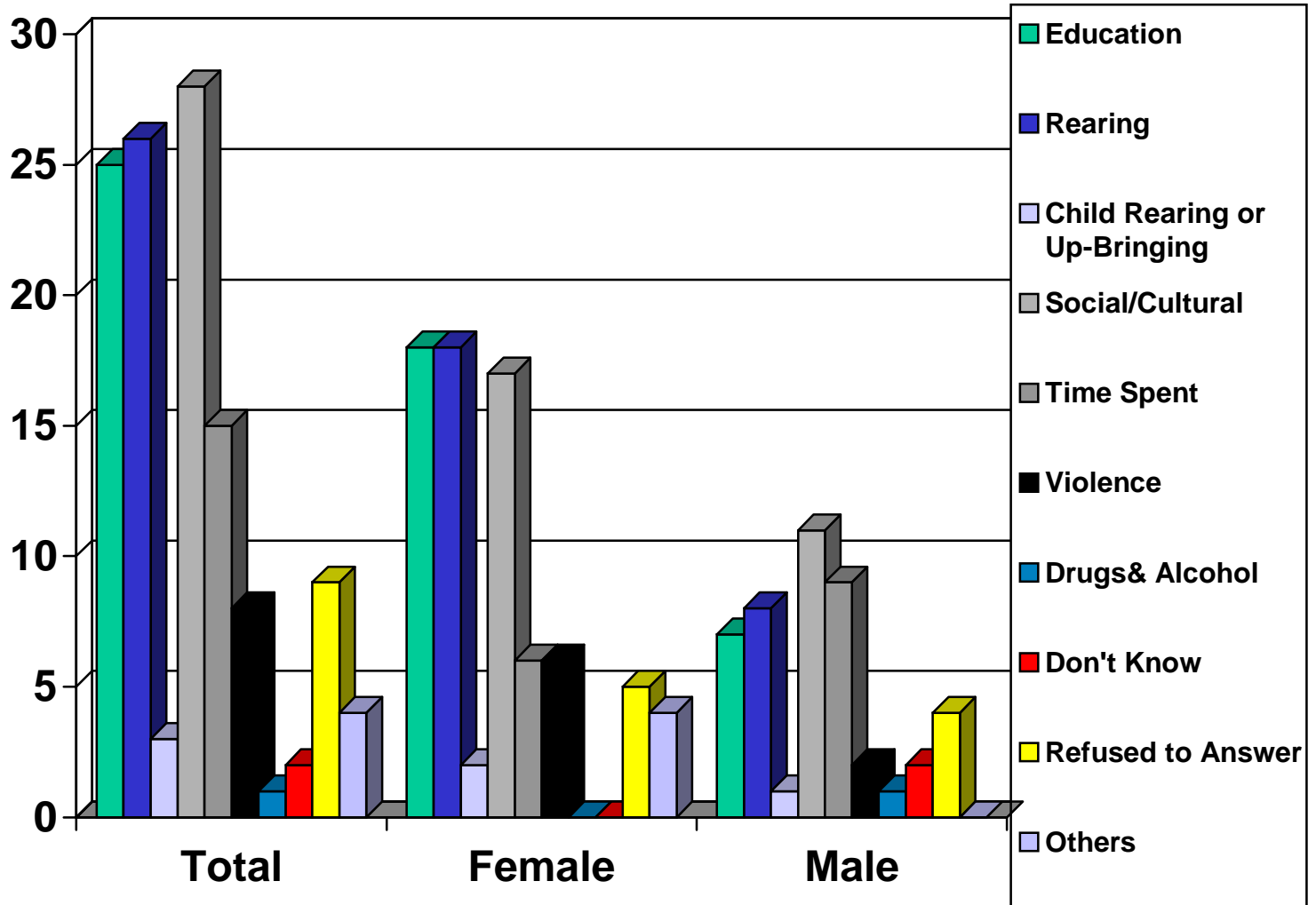
(16) Family Problems

Categories of family Problems			
	Female	Male	Total
Is there a problem?			
Yes	94	65	161
No	98	102	202
If Yes, what category?			
Spousal	60	43	105
Parental with children	41	25	66
With parents	12	10	22
Others	1	2	3

(16.1) Family Problems with Spouse

Respondents' Problems with Spouse			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Lack of open communication	21	15	37
2. Financial	22	9	31
3. Child rearing methods	18	10	28
4. Employment related	11	10	21
5. Violent behaviour	16	3	19
6. Drug or alcohol use	9	1	10
7. Do not know	1	3	5
8. Refuse to answer	9	7	16
9. Others	5	7	12

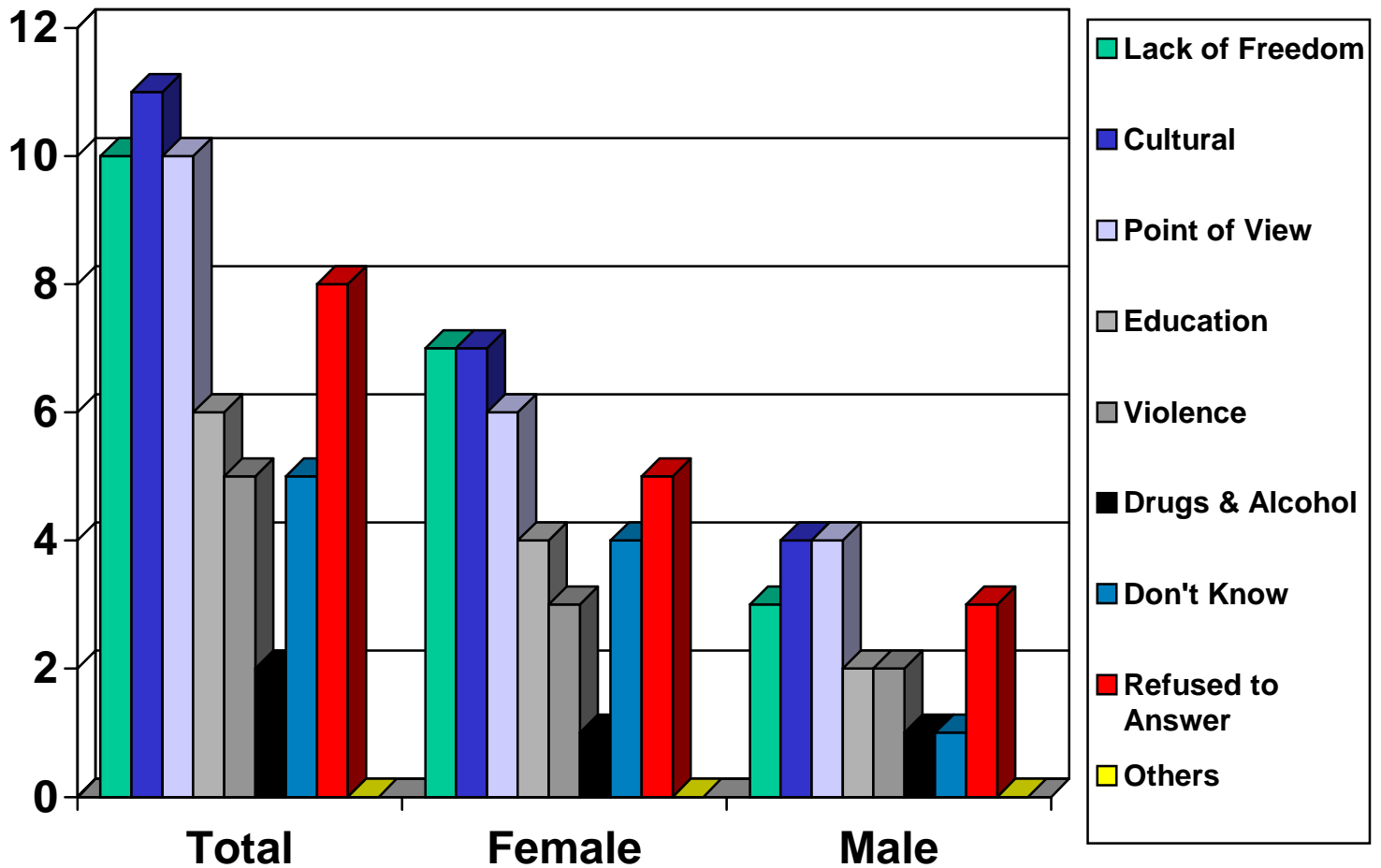
16.2- Problems with Children



(16.2) Family Problems with Children

Respondents' Problems with Children			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Education	18	7	25
2. Child-rearing	18	8	26
3. Religion issues	2	1	3
4. Social, Cultural and moral issues	17	11	28
5. Shortage of time spent with parents	6	9	15
6. Violent behaviour	6	2	8
7. Drugs and alcohol use	0	1	1
8. Do not know	0	2	2
9. Refuse to answer	5	4	9
10. Others	4	0	4

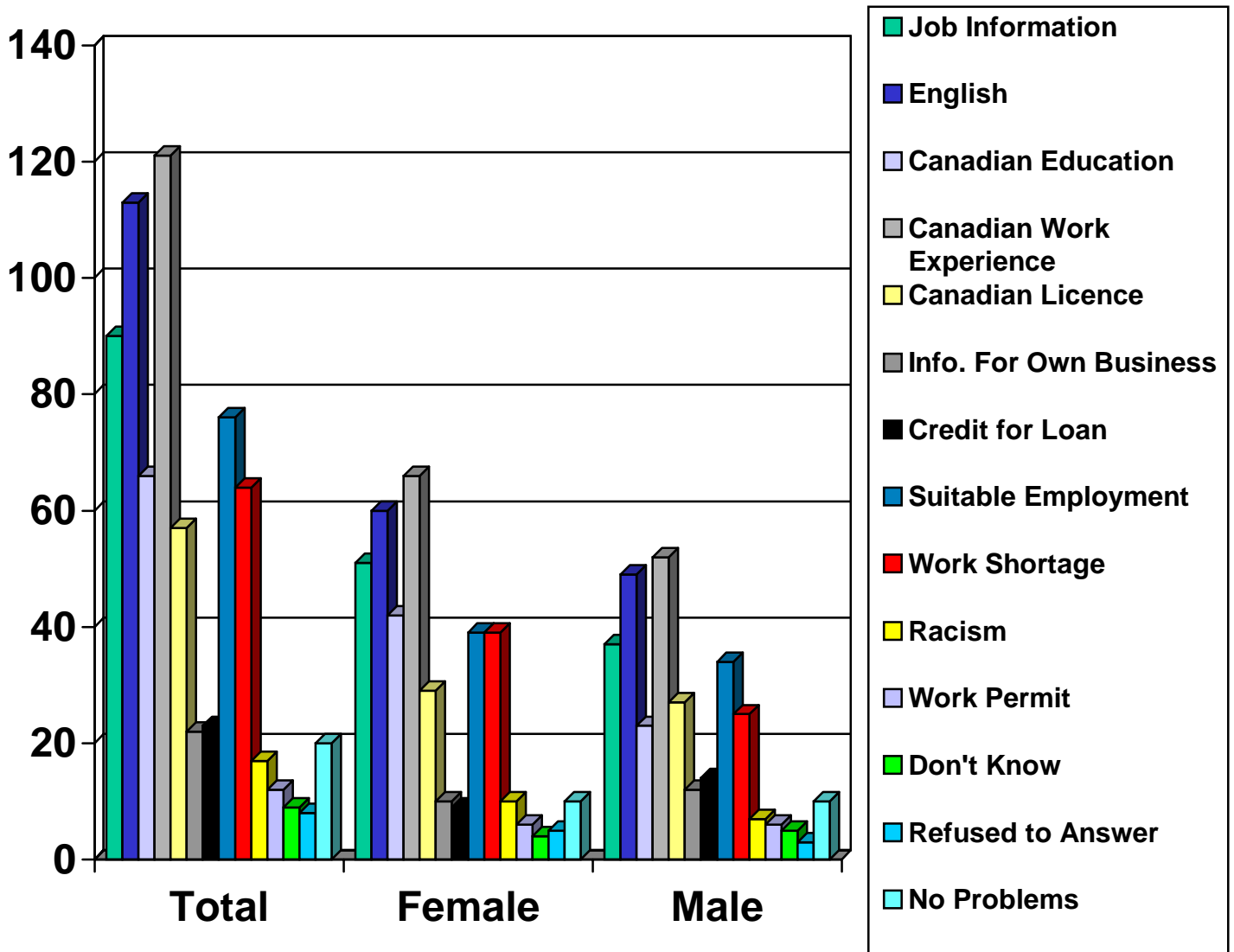
16.3 – Problems with Parents



(16.3) Family Problems with Parents

Respondents' Problems with Parents			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Lack of adequate freedom	7	3	10
2. Cultural differences	7	4	11
3. Lack of understanding parents' point of view	6	4	10
4. Educational issues	4	2	6
5. Violent behaviour	3	2	5
6. Drugs and alcohol use	1	1	2
7. Do not know	4	1	5
8. Refuse to answer	5	3	8
9. Others	0	0	0

17 – Financial and Employment Problems



(18) Causes of difficulties

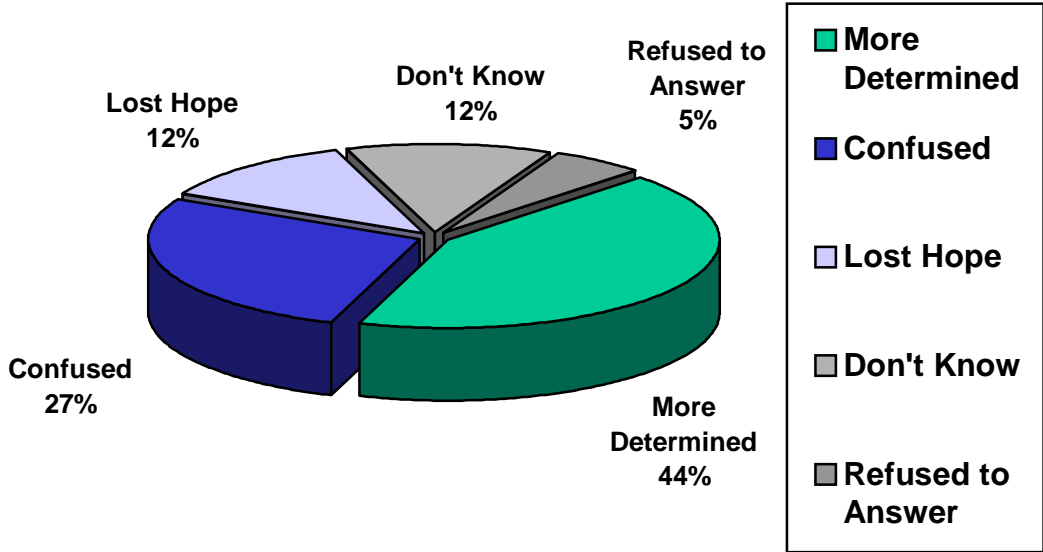
Respondents' Causes of difficulties
Lack of fluency in English
Isolation, loneliness & emotional difficulties
Cultural differences
Immigration issues
Parenting related issues
Lack of information about the Canadian society
Family related problems and issues
Insecurity about the future
Others:
Racism, addiction, lack of community services

Note

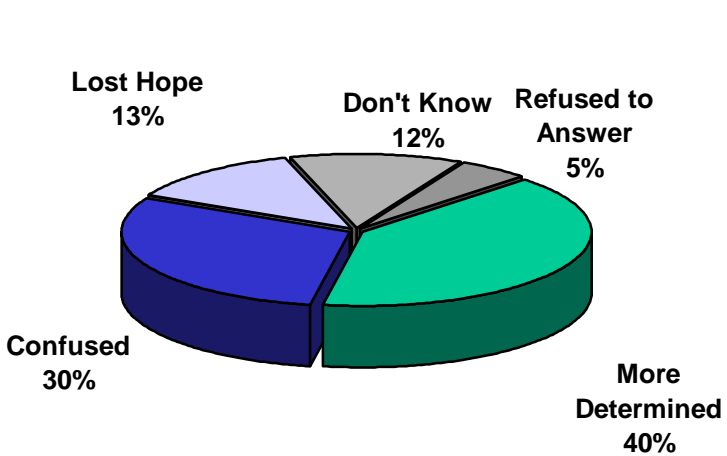
No chart is provided for Table 18.

19 - Responses to Difficulties

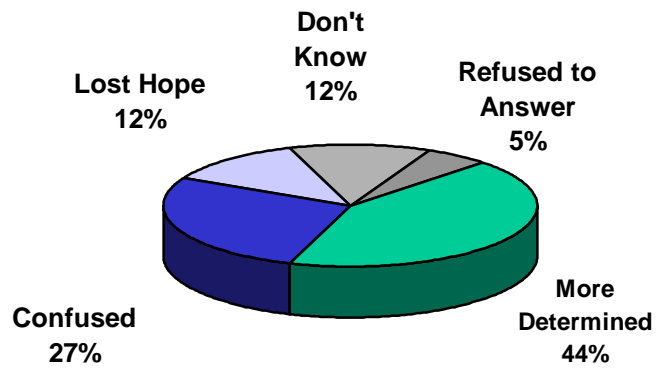
Total



Female



Male

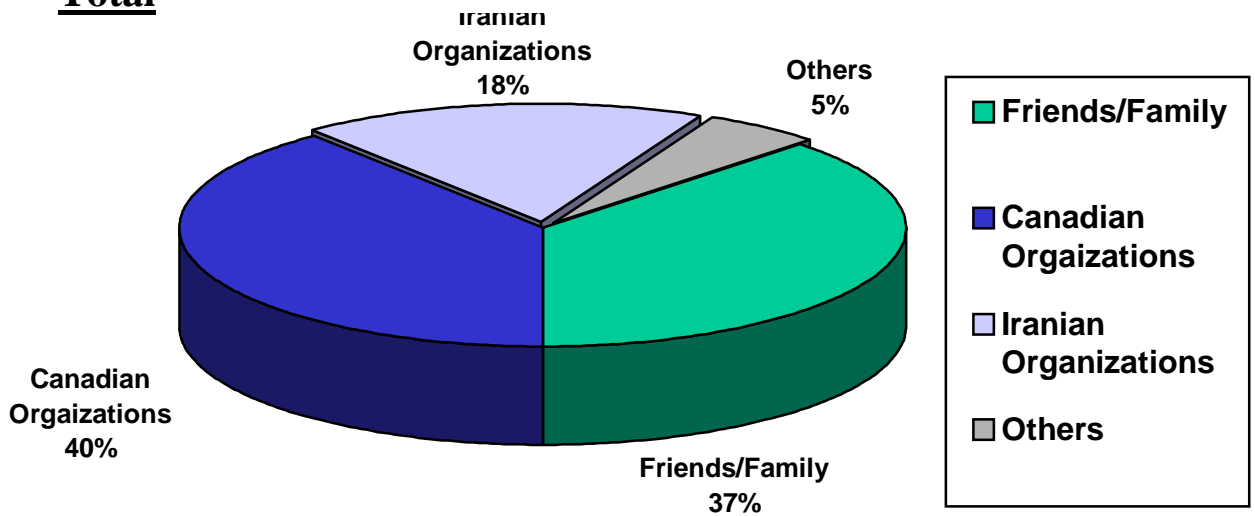


(19) Responses to Difficulties

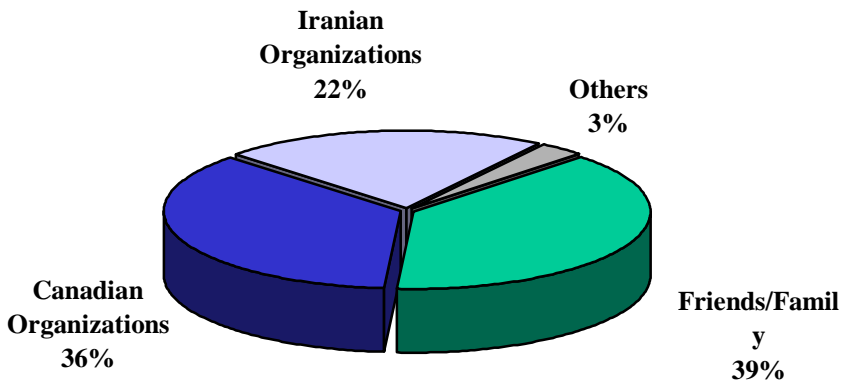
Respondents' Responses to Difficulties			
	Female	Male	Total
1. More determined	82	71	156
2. Confused & indecisive	61	38	99
3. Lost hope and ability to cope	26	18	44
4. Do not know	25	19	45
5. Refuse to answer	10	10	20

20 - Seeking Help to Solve Problems

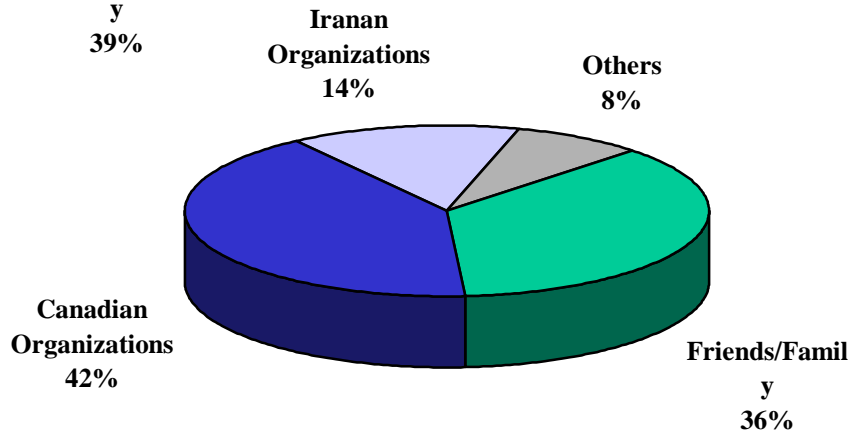
Total



Female



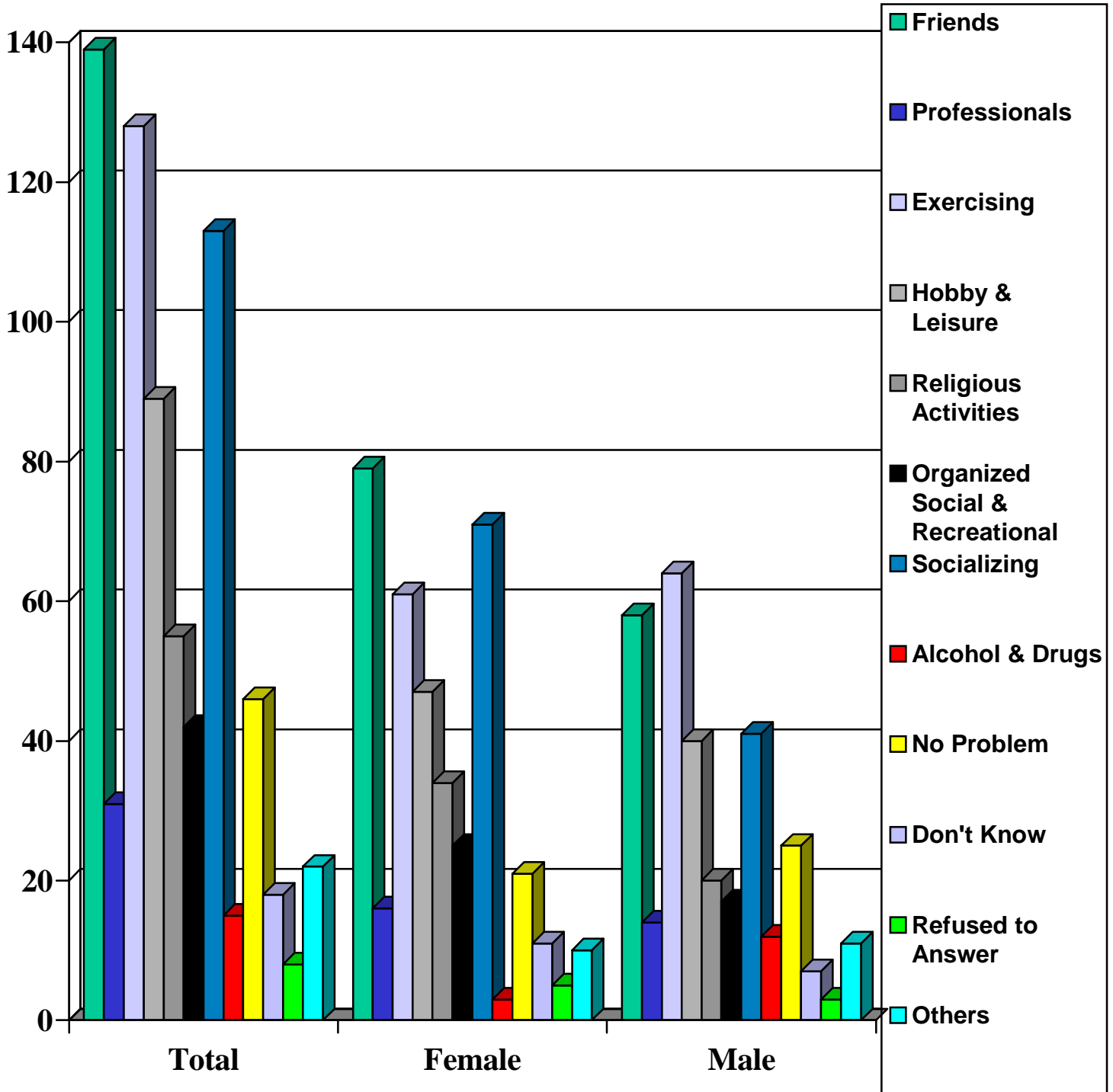
Male



(20) Seeking Help to Solve Problems

Respondents' Pattern of Seeking Help			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Friends & family	49	41	91
2. Canadian organizations	46	47	95
3. Iranian organizations	28	16	44
4. Others	4	9	13
Respondents' Reasons for not Seeking Help			
1. Lack of accessibility	15	19	35
2. Lack of information	35	20	56
3. Too embarrassed to ask	11	11	22
4. Others	21	17	38

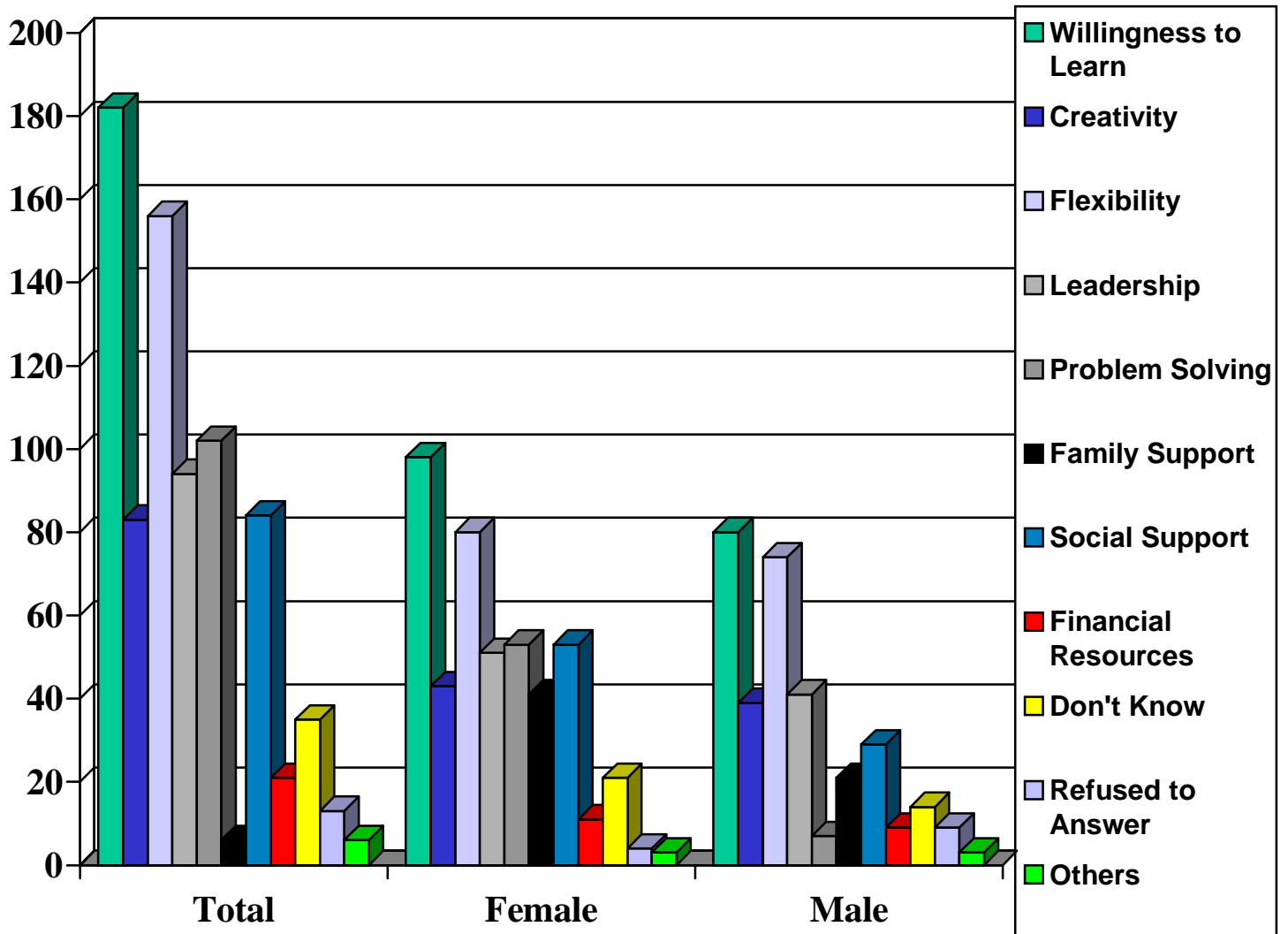
21- Methods of Coping with Problems



(21) Methods of coping with Problems

Respondents' Methods of coping with Problems			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Confiding in friends	79	58	139
2. Assistance from professionals	16	14	31
3. Exercising	61	64	128
4. hobby & leisure	47	40	89
5. Religious activities	34	20	55
6. Social & recreational activities offered by organizations	25	17	42
7. Socializing with friends & families	71	41	113
8. Use of alcohol or drugs	3	12	15
9. Have no problems	21	25	46
10. Do not know	11	7	18
11. Refuse to answer	5	3	8
12. Others	10	11	22

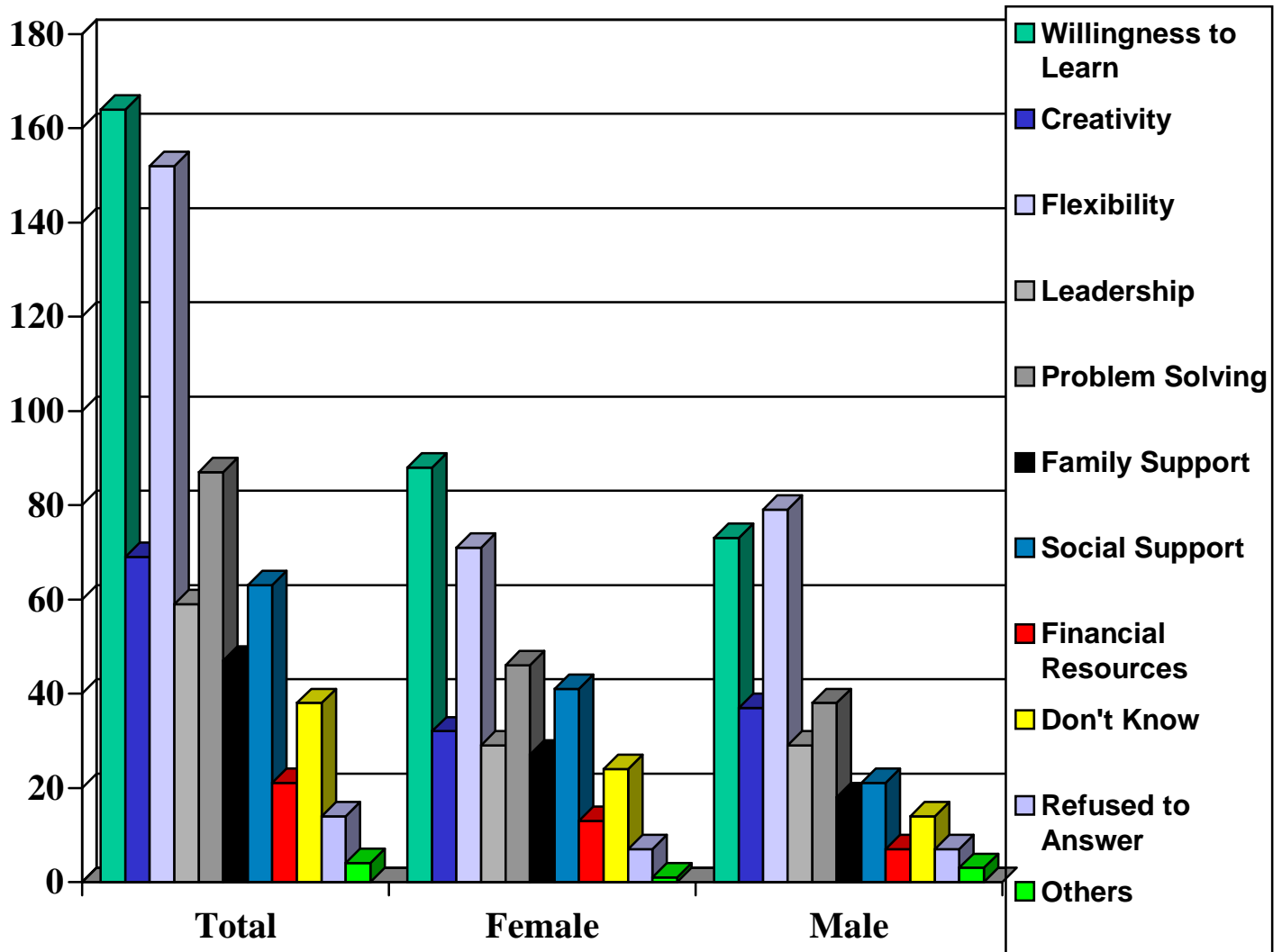
22- Type of Skill and Resources



(22) Type of Skills and Resources

Type of Skills and Resources Possessed by Respondents			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Willingness to learn	98	80	182
2. Creativity	43	39	83
3. Flexibility	80	74	156
4. Leadership skills	51	41	94
5. Problem solving skills	53	47	102
6. Ability to seek support from nuclear/extended family	41	21	63
7. Ability to develop social support network	53	29	84
8. Access to financial resources	11	9	21
9. Do not know	21	14	35
10. Refuse to answer	4	9	13
11. Others	3	3	6

23- Type of Skill and Resources Utilized to Overcome Problems

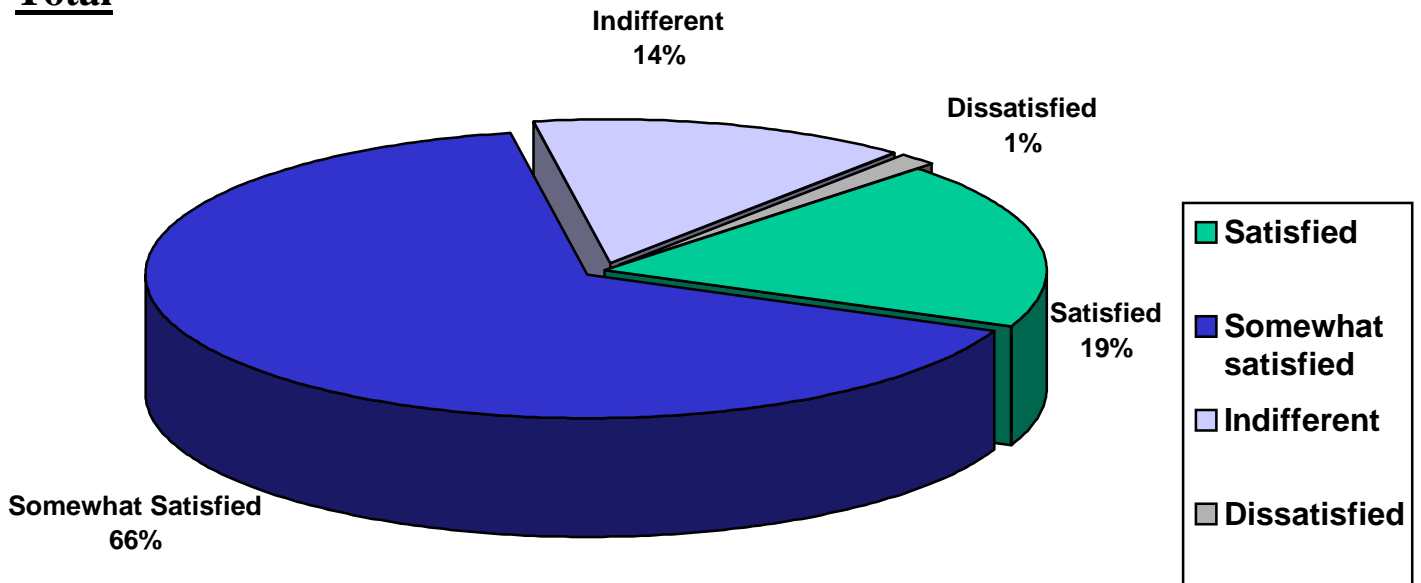


(23) Type of Skills/Resources Utilized to Overcome Problems

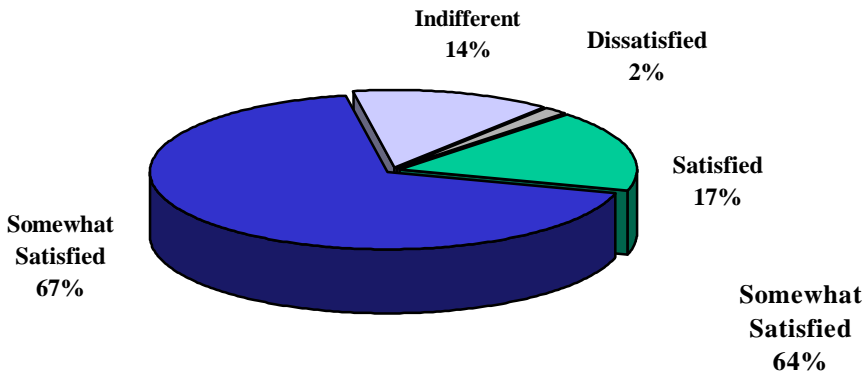
Respondents' Skills/Resources Utilized to Overcome Problems			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Willingness to learn	88	73	164
2. Creativity	32	37	69
3. Flexibility	71	79	152
4. Leadership skills	29	29	59
5. Problem solving skills	46	38	87
6. Ability to seek support from nuclear/extended family	27	18	47
7. Ability to develop social support network	41	21	63
8. Access to financial resources	13	7	21
9. Do not know	24	14	38
10. Refuse to answer	7	7	14
11. Others	1	3	4

24 - Assessing the Result of Effort

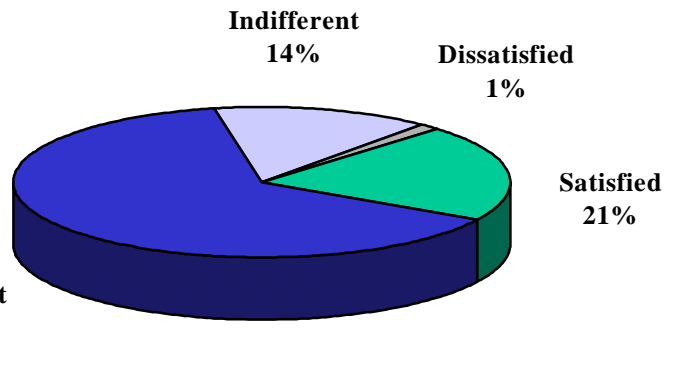
Total



Female



Male



(24) Assessing the Results of Efforts

Respondents' Assessment of Efforts			
	Female	Male	Total
1. Satisfied	31	31	63
2. Somewhat satisfied	123	94	221
3. Indifferent	25	21	46
4. Dissatisfied	3	2	5

(25) External Factors for Improving Quality of Life

External Factors for Improving Quality of Life
Social Services
◆ Providing information
◆ Assisting immigrants
◆ Enhancing social life and social support
◆ Financial assistance
◆ Access to social services
◆ Family support
Socio-political and Environmental Factors
◆ Changes in social services
◆ The role of media
◆ Anti-racism and social freedom
◆ Social interactions with mainstream Canadians
◆ Safety
◆ Responsible government
◆ Understanding cultural differences
◆ Stabilizing public policies
Personal
◆ Exercise
◆ Music
◆ The nature
◆ Encouragement from family and friends
Employment
◆ Suitable employment
◆ Better work environment and work relationship
Education
◆ ESL classes
◆ Access to education

Note

No chart is provided for Table 25.

(25.1) Internal Factors for Improving Quality of Life
--

Internal Factors for Improving Quality of Life
Hope
Self-esteem and confidence
Patience
Forgiveness
Good family relations/strong family ties
Being organized/plan ahead
Being logical and analytical
Facing problems head on
Will power and being strong
Learning from mistakes
Continued efforts
Unity
Problem solving
Flexibility
Faith in god
Being straight forward and honest
Setting goals and try to achieve them

Note

No chart is provided for Table 25.1.

(26) FSA Services that Can Help to overcome barriers

FSA Services that Can Help to overcome barriers
Information
◆ Social, professional & cultural
◆ Family Service Association services
◆ Education
◆ Information sessions for various topics
◆ Addiction
Employment
◆ Training for professionals
◆ Programs for employment
Social Services
◆ Counselling
◆ Financial assistance
◆ Family issues
◆ Programs for youth
◆ Programs for refugees
◆ Wider social services and programs
◆ Program for women
◆ Translating
Community Services
◆ Community cohesion
◆ Recreational & cultural programs
◆ Programs for seniors
◆ Developing & enhancing community media
◆ Legal services
◆ Inter-generational issues
◆ Developing volunteer network & increasing Iranian workers
Education
◆ ESL classes
◆ Heritage language for children
Others
◆ Appropriate services that are in accordance with cultural and religious beliefs

Note

No chart is provided for Table 26.

(27) Suggestions and Recommendations
Respondents' Suggestions and Recommendations
Community Services
◆ Promoting unity and cohesion in the community
◆ Recreational activities
◆ Opportunity to meet future spouse
◆ Programs for newcomers
◆ Establishing a financial co-operative
◆ Programs for seniors
◆ Programs for youth
◆ Programs for children
Employment
◆ Employment services
Information
◆ Family Service Association services
◆ General information
◆ Civic rights
◆ Cultural differences
Social Services
◆ Emotional & mental problems and issues
◆ Financial assistance
◆ Family problems
◆ Refugee issues
Others
◆ Co-operation between FSA and the Iranian community
◆ Challenging immigration policies
◆ Developing community programs
◆ Encouraging Iranian employers to hire Iranians
◆ Clarifying misconceptions about Canada for Iranians prior to migration
◆ Creating training centres

Note

No chart is provided for Table 27.

Highlights and Implications:

This study indicates that a considerable number of participants (79%) have been living in Canada from less than 1 year to 10 years. This confirms the fact that the Iranian community is a relatively new community in Canada and it is still coping with settling in their new country. Providing programs and services that enhance the process of adaptation and integration therefore becomes important. (Chart 4).

Clearly, a high level of education is one of the main characteristics of the Iranian community and this is consistent with Iranians' high regard for education. Parents often sacrifice a great deal in order to provide an opportunity for their children to acquire post-secondary education. The survey indicates that 52% of participants have obtained Bachelor, Master, or Ph.D. Degrees. It also indicates that women's level of education is slightly lower than men. However, it is interesting to note that a slightly higher percentage of women have elementary and secondary education in comparison with men - while in all levels of post-secondary education categories (Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D.) men have a higher percentage of education. (Chart 6).

In addition, a considerable number of participants hold high school diplomas, degrees in Business, Economics and Administration, as well as health and medical science and industry. In general, more women's education is limited to a high school diploma and those with post-secondary education are in the field of business/economics/administration, health/ medical science, and literature/language to compare with men who mostly are occupying the fields of business/economics/administration, industrial, and technology/information technology.

Acknowledging the overall high level of unemployment due to slow economic recovery, unemployment among Iranians is still relatively high. 26% of respondents indicated that they are unemployed. Bearing in mind that admission of not being employed may imply reliance on social assistance- which on its own may be viewed as shameful- one may speculate that the number of unemployed may be higher than admitted on this survey (refers to chart 11).

It appears that slightly more than half of the participants educational degrees obtained outside Canada were evaluated and accredited. This of course means that almost half of the participants' non-Canadian degrees were not accepted by Canadian standards. A small number of participants did not know about educational evaluation and equivalency (chart 9). This has serious ramifications for community members because the lack of acceptance of their educational degrees puts them at a disadvantage. As newcomers coping with cultural and language barriers and facing various settlement issues, many Iranians are unable to go back to university and to obtain the necessary credentials. The issue of access to professions and trades is a serious issue in the Iranian community and has led to high levels of unemployment, and under employment. (Chart 11). In turn, the instability in the field of employment

adversely affects other aspects of life for community members.

Lack of Canadian work experience is another reason for high unemployment . Just as non-Canadian qualifications are not accepted neither is non-Canadian work experience. The survey shows that 42% of participants had between 6 to more than 10 years work experience in Iran. However, a high degree of professional experience has not led to employment because it was not recognized in Canada. Again, not having Canadian work experience severely undermines Iranians' opportunity to gain good and stable jobs. (chart 10).

In addition, a relatively high number of participants indicated that they are currently enrolled in educational institutions. Given the high percentage of participants, who are over 25 years of age, it may be safe to assume that many Iranians are trying to up-grade their education. Also, the majority of participants in this group consisted of women. This may be indicative of the fact that women are taking advantage of educational opportunities in Canada and perhaps an economic need for having an income. (Table 11).

This may have some implications in family relations because a shift in division of labour may offset some of cultural norms, disturb the equilibrium and lead to family discord. A more comprehensive study will provide more information in this area.

The overwhelming majority of participants (67%) stated that, overall; they are satisfied with their life in Canada. (Chart 12). However, at the same time only 36% of respondents expressed unwillingness to go back and live in Iran. (Chart 13)

The main reason for migrating to Canada has been identified as the search for a better life (25%). The next most important reasons given were to improve their children's prospects (21%), to enhance socio-economic status (18%) and to escape religious and political persecution (17%) respectively. Given that the highest three answers are closely interrelated may indicate that the motivation behind immigration may often not be limited to one condition, but rather, arises from a multiplicity of interconnected issues. (table 14).

14% and 13% of participants identified unemployment and not being employed in their professions as the main causes of their current problems. Given the fact that 14% of participants were under 25 (school age, not concerned with employment) one may speculate that the actual percentage of participants dissatisfied with current employment/unemployment circumstances may in fact be higher than it appears. This highlights the importance of addressing the issue of unemployment and access to professions and trades that is of such great concern in the community.

Lack of fluency in English language was also noted as the major causes of problem for 14% of respondents. This is consistent with the relatively high number of Iranians (53% of participants) who have come to Canada less than three years ago. This suggests that appropriate and accessible ESL classes are still a community priority.

When we combine responses about social and emotional well being (chart 15 item 5,6,7 & 11) the difficulty and hardship of integration and adaptation into Canadian society becomes evident. Lack of social and emotional support and cultural differences with the host country poses as challenges that many community members face. Therefore, programs that provides information and orientation and activities that facilitate development of social network becomes essential. It is also noteworthy to point out that a number of participant selected the “not having any problems” option. This may be influenced by the cultural norm of saving face and not admitting one’s problem publicly. (chart 15).

In responding to the question about family conflict almost half of participants answered that they did not have any problems and slightly less than half confirmed that they did have family problems. However, a number of participants who had originally answered no, later in the survey, marked related problems from the list. This may indicate the community members’ unwillingness to admit there are family conflicts unless they can be selective about raising them. In other words, they may feel less inhibited to discuss certain types of family problems and not others.

While 47% of respondents identified spousal problems, 34% and 18% respectively indicated problems with children and problem with parents as family conflict. In the spousal category “lack of open communication”, “financial” and “child rearing methods” respectively, were selected as the most sever problems. A slightly lower number of respondent cited employment related issues, violent behaviour and drug or alcohol use as the reasons for family problem. Perhaps a more extensive research and further analysis will shed more light on this complex area. In the “problems with children” category the most often cited were “social, cultural and moral issues”, “child rearing” and “education”. The third section of family problems included problems with parents. In this section three major difficulties were identified as “cultural differences”, “lack of adequate freedom”, and “lack of understanding parents’ point of view”. In the second and third sections (problems with children and problems with parents) the majority of identified issues indicate a generational and cultural gap between parents and their children. (Chart 16).

The high level of family conflict warrants special attention to this issue in order to remedy the situation. Also, in light of the gap between parents and their children it becomes vital to establish programs that would increase parents awareness of their children’s concerns, enhance communication and to improve relationships among family members.

Under financial and employment problems nearly 19%, nearly 18% and 14% respectively identified their difficulties as lack of Canadian work experience, lack of fluency in English language, and lack of adequate information to find a job. In addition, lack of suitable employment, lack of adequate & necessary education in Canada, shortage of work and lack of professional licenses necessary in Canada were also noted as financial and employment related problems by a significant

number of respondents.

Identification of these problems confirms the previous analysis about difficulties that community members were faced with due to lack of acceptance of their educational degrees and non-Canadian work experience. (chart 17).

Questions # 18, 25, 26 and 27 were open-ended. On the whole, the responses to these questions was relatively low. In this section, lack of fluency in the English language was by far the most frequent cause of difficulties identified by participants. In addition, isolation, loneliness and emotional difficulties as well as cultural differences and immigration issues were identified as the main causes of participant's problems. (Q 18). These difficulties are consistent with the condition of migration and displacement and the challenges of settlement in the host country.

In question 25 respondents were asked to expand on external factors for improving their quality of life. While some identified a number of external factors, others pointed out internal factors that improve their quality of life. This is interesting to note because it may be indicative of the fact that instead of relying on external factors, respondents count on their own abilities to improve their circumstances. Enhanced social services, improvement in socio-political and environmental conditions, better access to employment and education were among external factors suggested. Some of the internal factors acknowledged by the participants include hope, patience, will power, strong family ties, being logical and analytical, facing problems head on, being straight forward and honest, and setting goals and working toward achieving them.

In answering the question about ways in which Family Service Association (FSA) could help, the largest number of responses was as follows: outreach and expansion of FSA services, promoting unity in the Iranian community, training for professionals and programs for employment.

In the last question, respondents were encouraged to share their suggestions and recommendations for Family Service Association. Relatively small number of respondents answered this question. The majority of recommendations were to develop programs for newcomers, youth, seniors, and children. In addition, addressing employment and training, family problems, and community cohesion, emotional and mental issues were among other suggestions.

8.2. Qualitative Research

Due to the limitation of the quantitative research, a qualitative method component was added for more complete and comprehensive results. Rubin & Babbie (1997), describe qualitative methods as "research methods that emphasize depth, understanding and the deeper meanings of human experience..."(p. G.7).

Two methods of focus group and key community informant interviews were selected to gather data that is more detailed and descriptive. The goal was to delve into participants feelings and thoughts and to capture the meaning of their experiences.

8.2.1 Focus Group

After much deliberation, youth, women, seniors, and refugees were selected as special populations with unique needs. A total of four focus groups were held to gather more information about the specific needs of these groups. The number of participants ranged from 5 to 6 people with the exception of the refugee group, which consisted of 3 participants. Considering the background of refugees, the low turn out for this group was understandable. By and large, refugees are apprehensive about participating in groups where they have to divulge personal information. The focus groups were designed to be small to take advantage of its informality and the ease with which participants could share their experiences.

At the beginning of each focus group, the concept of voluntary participation and confidentiality was explained. Participants were then asked to sign a consent form. For convenience of the participants, the focus groups were held in different locations in the community and lasted from one and a half to two hours.

Since this was supplementary data to complete the questionnaire, only a few vital questions were selected for discussion (see appendix B).

Summary of youth's focus group

Youth focus group was held at Culture Link with 6 Iranian youth- 1 boy and 5 girls. Unfortunately efforts to have an equal number of male and female participants fell through as less males were interested in participating and one who had agreed to attend the group was absent. The participants seemed receptive and excited about expressing their opinions. At times however, instead of talking about their own difficulties they spoke about difficulties of Iranian youth in general, or gave example of friends having problems. As previously mentioned, in order to create a safe environment for participants to freely express their opinions, they were assured of complete anonymity. To honour this commitment, we refrain from disclosing participants' names.

When problems were discussed, there was some consensus among group members. For instance, the majority of them agreed that English language and finding friends were among their biggest problems. In addition, some made reference to emotional and financial problems.

When asked to talk about the causes of their problems, they replied by counting peer pressure as one of the major causes of problems. Other problems included the lack of a close relationship with their parents, as well as a lack of adequate information. One of the participants - with a great deal of emotion - said, "Lack of information is one of the causes of problems because when you come to

Canada, you don't know any thing about drugs, sex and what is going on here". Low self-esteem was another factor mentioned by a few participants.

In answering the question about their skills and resources, some counted the ability to seek support from friends while others pointed out to ability to confide with their mothers. Some indicated that they try to solve their own problems while others said they would try to obtain information and get help from organizations.

Their answers to what would contribute toward their quality of life were similar. The first participants replied by saying money could help a lot. But if we talk about non-material things, it is having friends that it is so important because without friends people are not complete". Others elaborated on this point. They said money could increase the quality of life only if the problem is financial. But if the problems are non-material, for example emotional, what helps is having the support of people around you. If the problems are serious, then community agencies can help by providing professional services and improve quality of life. One participant prioritized elements that would affect the quality of life as first, the family, second, friends, and then other people in the society.

The youth were enthusiastic about offering suggestions for FSA. Providing information about the Canadian system, including anti-racism, seemed to be on top of their list. They also expressed interests in programs that would improve their relationships with family members and those who would help them find friends. Another suggestion was to develop a "buddy club" for newcomer's youth so they can find friends and help each other with their homework". Furthermore, they suggested expansion of services to downtown Toronto. Currently services are concentrated in North York. Also in addition to increased outreach in Boards of Education they asked for some fun activities that would help them to cope with their stresses.

Summary of women's focus group

Five Iranian women attended the women's focus group which was held in North York Public Health Dept. Two of the participants were single mothers, two were single and one was married with no children.

The participants agreed that learning to speak English, lack of self-esteem, lack of support systems, and cultural differences were among their biggest difficulties. The lack of employment and financial independence were also counted as major problems. Single mothers were concerned about providing materially for their children. As one woman said "...This is hard for children to understand because they compare themselves with Canadian kids".

Again, there was a general agreement about the causes of their problems as having low self-esteem, cultural differences, loneliness and lack of emotional support. There was a lengthy discussion about cultural differences and how that

was the root cause of many problems. The participants discussed the difference between division of labour in Iran and Canada. They stated that, in Iran, division of labour in the family is defined clearly. By and large, women are responsible for domestic work, while men are the main breadwinners. But in Canada women are expected to work while having the full responsibility of the housework as well. They also discussed low self-esteem and how that keeps some women in their homes. This leads to lack of integration into the larger society and often is the reason for women staying in unhappy marriages. This discussion led to recognition that women's lack of awareness about their rights in this society is one of the real reasons for some of their problems.

In assessing their skills and resources, a few women counted their abilities to lift themselves up by gaining self-esteem and self-confidence that they lost as newcomers. They also added that becoming active and socializing helped them in overcoming their difficulties. A participant talked about focusing on her reasons for emigrating to Canada, what she has sacrificed to come here and what she had gained. Tenacity in starting life from the beginning after arriving in Canada and working one's way through ups and downs was mentioned.

In identifying factors that would increase the quality of life, the general consensus was that social service agencies could help in different aspects of their lives. They talked about importance of counselling, as well as information about the Canadian system. Access to ESL classes was also pointed out not only because it led to proficiency in English but also "...because in school we learn a lot about different aspects of our environment here". One of the women talked about volunteerism and how it has helped her add more meaning to her life. She also reiterated the importance of accessibility to appropriate social services for Iranian women because in her volunteer work in one of the Iranian organization she is faced with high number of people who seek help from her. She believes Iranian professionals in human services can be instrumental in increasing quality of life for community members.

Participants offered varied suggestions for FSA including forming groups where people can share their issues and ideas, information sessions, and informative brochures in English and Farsi. They also talked about counselling however, they felt counselling should be extended to different groups like youth and seniors. In addition, they indicated that having two Iranian workers is not enough. They suggested that FSA needs to look at expanding its Iranian staff in order to be able to serve the community, especially families who have problems with their children. Furthermore, they recommended that FSA needs to have a bigger presence in the Iranian community.

Summary of seniors' focus group

The seniors' focus group was held in the Iranian-Canadian Seniors Citizens' Organization. Five Iranian men and one woman attended the group. Although it was arranged for another woman to participate, due to an illness this was not

possible. However, inequality in male/female ratio may be reflective of cultural norms. Since traditionally men are more active and vocal outside the home, their initiative and willingness in participating in the focus group is understandable.

Without a doubt, the biggest problem identified by all the participants was the lack of a permanent place for the Iranian seniors to get together every week. Although the Iranian-Canadian Seniors Citizen Organization is active in providing weekly events, the space is inadequate for the number of seniors who would like to attend. There is only enough space to accommodate 30 seniors.

The participants spent some time in explaining why having a place for seniors is so important to them. The main points were:

- Most seniors are not working and they need to get together for socializing, support and problem solving.
- A lot of seniors have health and emotional issues that can be helped through exercising, meditation etc.
- The majority of seniors experience isolation due to being away from their home country and the hardships they experience here. As a result, forming different groups and exercising will help in many different levels, including health.

The second problem they named was transportation. A number of seniors rely on public transportation. This is troublesome because they have to make a number of transfers and it takes too long to reach their destination.

Other problems were identified as loneliness, emotional problems such as depression, lack of fluency in English, as well as health and dental problems. However, they clearly believed that the majority of these problems would be solved if there is a permanent place that could accommodate a large number of Iranian seniors who could come together on regular basis. They cited examples of other communities who have established their own community agencies, and the benefits to their communities.

When asked what the reason was for not been able to have a place like other communities, they answered:

Some ethnic groups have emigrated to Canada a long time ago, and they are in a better financial situation. The Iranian community is a relatively new community. The majority of Iranians came to Canada 20 years ago. At that time, there was no need for having an agency for seniors. However, the demographic of the Iranian population has changed since then so that it is now necessary to consider the needs of seniors.

In order to resolve the problem of a space to meet, they all agreed that assistance from the municipal government and a social service agency will help them to reach their goal of having a permanent community agency that is suitable for their gatherings and activities. They also emphasized the need to obtain charitable organization status. This would assist them in fundraising in the Iranian business community for donations resulting in tax receipts.

When asked about their own skills and resources they replied by saying “we have all the skills to run programs that are beneficial for seniors, but we do not have the place to do it”. They added there are volunteers who are ready to help provide support and resources (financial and human resources) but “we need a place first”.

Again, in their recommendations for FSA, all participants- without exception- requested “assistance in obtaining a permanent place for Iranian seniors”. Then, they added that FSA should provide programs that assist family problems such as intergenerational gap. Some participants viewed counselling for seniors helpful, while others believed programs teaching seniors English and providing more information would be useful. They also said they need more time to think about other services that FSA may be able to offer.

Summary of refugees’ focus group

The focus group for refugees was held at the Iranian Community Association of Ontario where two men and one woman attended. Due to difficulty in recruitment (refugee’s reluctance to identify themselves and offer information), it was determined from the outset that the refugee focus group would be smaller than other groups. Four refugees were scheduled for attending this focus group, however, participation of one individual was prevented due to a transportation problem.

The number one problem identified was confusion, disorientation and lack of accessibility to needed information upon and shortly after arrival. All participants agreed that immigration officers’ disrespectful behaviour was also problematic. Then, the lack of proficiency in English and inadequate access to ESL classes was counted as another problem. The woman participant pointed out that the lack of subsidized daycare prevented her from attending full-time ESL classes. They also counted loneliness and feeling isolated as major problems. They all agreed that deficiency in accurate translation/interpretation created major problems for them.

In their discussions about the causes of their problems they emphasized a lack of information and deficiency in information system. They indicated that immigration officers in the airport did not convey necessary information to them. They also believed that the Iranian community has not played an active role in providing information for refugees upon their arrival in the airport. Lack of accessibility to ESL/daycare and translator/interpreters who do not have the necessary credential were also counted as major causes of problems.

They elaborated on inefficient translation and interpretation negatively affecting their cases. They also concluded that due to a shortage of work, more people become translators/interpreters when they are not qualified for the work.

As for skills and resources they possess, they named inner strength and flexibility. As one participant said with a lot of conviction “dealing with hardship in Canada has made me stronger. ...I had to use my own mind and use my logic to solve my problems”. Another informed the group that because he cannot find a job as an accountant, he is studying to become employed in the field of computers. In addition, awareness and the ability to obtain information about Canadian society were counted as a skill that was helpful in overcoming problems.

The participants were clear about elements that could improve their quality of life; money, employment and education. One participant stated that money was important because when she compares her life with her Canadian neighbours she sees the difference. She added that there is a sense of relief when one does not have to constantly worry about making ends meet. She also pointed out the personal satisfaction that one feels when one earns money and is able to contribute.

Another participant felt strongly about employment. He said when he is unemployed he feels useless and this causes one to lose self-confidence. His sentiment about employment was echoed by others. The third participant accentuated the importance of education. He said the biggest factor that would increase the quality of life for him is “having an educational degree that is accepted by Canadian standards”.

8.2.2 Key Community Informant Interview

This method of qualitative research has been selected because it is believed that involved and active members of the community could shed light on determining community capacities, resources, needs, barriers and challenges (Soriano, 1995).

The community informants interviewed for this project comprised of Iranian service providers such as, student guidance counsellors, social workers, members of community media, community organizers, and volunteers with extensive community involvement.

A total of ten community informant interviews were conducted in which each individual shared a wealth of knowledge and experiences gained through years of living and working in the Iranian community within Toronto. Please see Appendix C for the list of Community Informants.

Summary of Community Informant Interviews

◆ Categorization of Problems

All the Community Informants (CI) agreed that employment, family conflict, mental health, inter-generational issues, cultural difference and racism are major problems in the Iranian community. Half of the CIs stated that they cannot categorize problems in any particular order because they are interrelated, and often one problem leads to multiple other problems. One CI stated that "...in many instances, lack of employment has been identified as contributing factors for depression, family violence, lack of motivation, alcoholism or substance abuse, and at times even illegal engagement".

Other CIs prioritized the existing problems as :

CI (A): 1.Family 2. Cultural differences. 3. Intergenerational issues 4. Racism
5. Employment

CI (B): 1.Cultural issues 2. Racism 3. Intergenerational issues 4. Employment
5. Family 6. Mental health

CI (C): 1.Family 2. Employment 3. Cultural differences

A few CIs selected employment as the most important issue in our community because of its relation to everything else in the life of community members

An emphasis on racism as a problem in our community was evident. Two types of racism were mentioned; racism from the mainstream toward ethnic minorities and petty racism that stems from one ethnic minority group to another.

Other Problems

Many CIs viewed insufficient community organization, co-operation, and mobilization as serious difficulties. A few CIs voiced their concerns about the lack of services, and accessibility of existing services including comprehensive orientation for newcomers. Others identified the lack of civic participation and attention to policies that impact on community members. This was confirmed by adding that preoccupation with political events in Iran, and not enough interest in local politics was another problem in the community. Although racism was mentioned in the above list, some CIs reiterated the severity of this problem in its two dimensions; racism and inter-minority or petty racism.

◆ Causes of Problems

The most frequently mentioned cause of problems was the displacement that occurs as a result of migration. This was attributed, on one hand, to high expectations and lack of prior awareness about the host country. On the other hand, it was due to cultural insensitivity on the part of the larger system.

Ineffective and bias immigration policies, especially as they relate to employment, was among other causes of problems. Furthermore, systemic racism and lack of commitment to multiculturalism were pointed out by a few CIs. This was related to a general lack of access to services and information and, in particular, lack of training for newcomers.

A lack of co-operation within the Iranian community was identified as another root cause of these problems. The reasons for deficiency in community co-operation was sought in (a) living in a country of origin with authoritarian systems (family, school, work, government etc.) and (b) not valuing diversity within the community.

And another factor was seen as the governmental lack of interest in utilizing skills of Iranian professionals, such as social workers, to help the community.

◆ **Solutions to Overcome Barriers**

CIs offered numerous suggestions for overcoming barriers in the community, some of which were similar to one another and others were distinctly different. Sensitizing the larger system and funding for more community services were among those factors that were common among CIs. In terms of funding issues, the point about proper allocation of funding was also made.

Training community members to understand their civic rights and encouraging them to become active in impacting public policies were also suggested by some CIs.

Although the issue of collaboration was raised several times, the context in which it was discussed varied. Different aspects of collaboration were pointed out as (1) Collaboration between immigration offices and Iranian community agencies. (2) Collaboration in a form of co-ordination and communication among Iranian service agencies, and (3) Collaboration as building cohesiveness among the Iranian community and other immigrant communities for the purpose of effective lobbying.

Some CIs were concerned about promoting proactive approaches as opposed to dealing with crises all the time. In this vein, community empowerment was explored and it became evident that teaching the community how to solve their own problems is more effective than giving them what they need.

Educating, raising awareness in the community as well as community support to overcome cultural/language barriers were among other solutions.

Using holistic approaches, i.e., addressing individual and systemic racism while teaching community members civic participation, was viewed as an effective method of overcoming barriers.

Other solutions that will assist the community in addressing their problems included:

- creating a safe environment in the community that encourages unity
- valuing co-operation and diversity
- valuing our own identity
- teaching multiculturalism
- ethno-cultural studies
- promoting equity in societal structures
- more advocacy for access to trades and professions to assist the community with many issues at hand.

◆ **Systemic Problems Verses Individual Problems**

Systemic Problems:

For the most part, unemployment, racism, and discriminatory policies were identified as systemic as it applies to the larger society. Some CIs stipulated that part of the systemic problem is reflected in a system that is not user friendly, and the low priority that is given to settlement agencies and other organizations that provide immigrant services. In addition, lack of accessibility to services and ineffective processes to provide information was specified as another systemic problem. The issue of devaluing the Iranian identity was also selected as systemic, however, it relates to a cultural system within the Iranian community.

On the whole, the majority of CIs stated that the main barriers discussed previously are systemic problems.

◆ **Individual Problems:**

Although most problems were classified as systemic barriers, intergenerational issues and cultural differences were viewed as individual problems. Only a few CIs stated that most problems are individual except unemployment, discrimination and lack of cultural sensitivity.

◆ **Strengths, Capacities and Assets**

In terms of the community strength/capacity, the number one asset identified by most CIs was the high level of education in the Iranian community. Related to education, the accomplishment of Iranian youth in the education system was also determined as an asset. Some CIs pointed out financial independence and success in self-employment while others focused on a vibrant culture and secular community. The adaptability, especially among Iranian women, as well as goodwill toward the host country was among other capacities counted by CIs. Political mindedness and social activities that have led to development of many Iranian associations were considered other assets. Furthermore, family ties and the extent of reciprocity among family members was also identified as strength.

◆ **Strategies to Utilize Strengths, Capacities and Assets**

After identifying strengths/capacities in the Iranian community, CIs offered many strategies in utilizing these strengths. Promoting community economic development, creating a sustainable economy, providing employment and education opportunities were identified as some practical strategies. Promoting collectivity and a sense of community, developing an umbrella organization for purposes of lobbying and advocacy for the whole community, community sponsored partnership projects and developing leadership to solve community problems were among other approaches. Some CIs emphasized the importance of supporting ethno-cultural activities through heritage language classes and cultural studies, as well as promoting effective cultural and traditional practices.

In contrast, there was a view that the current strategies have not been sufficient, therefore, more research is required to develop effective approaches. Yet for others, orienting the Iranian community and providing specialized services tailored to the needs of the community were essential steps toward utilizing the existing strength/capacities. Although most approaches were focused on the Iranian community, a few suggested that the strategies need to be stretched outside the community. For instance, efforts are needed to keep the mainstream society accountable to the Iranian community. Also, the Iranian community needs to build alliances with other immigrant communities so multiculturalism could develop horizontally and not vertically.

◆ **Community unity/disunity**

The notion of community disunity was widely split among CI. Several CIs agreed that the Iranian community is fragmented, while others dispute the notion of disunity and viewed it as differences within the community. It was clear that since the definition of “unity” varied vastly among CIs that their perspectives were also different. Others challenged the concept of unity by pointing out that “the mainstream society is not all that unified”.

One CI cautioned against romanticizing the notion of community unification, and questioned the degree of unity that is desirable. It was pointed out that if the unity leads to disconnection of the Iranian community from the host country, than the cost of unity is alienation from the mainstream which is not constructive.

In any case, many CIs offered suggestions for increasing cohesion within the Iranian community. Addressing common goals and common needs such as difficulties in financial and employment areas was most frequently suggested. More recommendations in these areas were made. For instance, developing a credit union, providing protection for people who lose their businesses, alternative loans and support and advocacy with financial institutions was believed to play an important role in bringing the community together. Additionally, it was noted that grassroots groups have to be involved in the process of identifying these needs.

Clearly, the theme of celebration was common among the suggestions, however, different dimensions of celebration was explored. First, celebrating cultural events such as Norooz and Mehregan was emphasized. Second, the importance of celebrating achievements within the community was pointed out. Third, recognizing and celebrating diversity within the Iranian community was viewed as effective method of promoting unity.

It was also suggested that we should reach out to those members who are less involved in the community. Efforts should be put in place to encourage younger generations to be more interested in the Iranian community, as well as reaching out to more isolated individuals in the community.

Others recognized that, although unity could be developed over time, there is no rapid and easy solution to make it happen.

◆ **Additional Comments**

At the end of the interviews, community informants were given the option of making additional comments to discuss issues that were not covered by prepared questions. Although most felt that the interview covered most of the issues relevant to the Iranian community, some offered additional points.

One CI commended FSA for upholding the cause of justice and fairness in family life. It was suggested that a progressive agency like FSA, with global vision and commitment to ethno-cultural communities, needs to expand its services for these communities. In addition, “an organization of this caliber should keep in mind that equity does not mean equality. The Iranian community or any smaller community within Metro should not have an equal portion of the funding, they should have an equitable portion of the funding in order to stabilize themselves”.

Another CI emphasized the importance of involving the community in identifying services they need. He cautioned against the government model which basically dictates to communities to develop or adopt certain programs by setting funding criteria. In this way, communities compete with each other for funding and the objective becomes fulfilling the government’s criteria rather than catering to community needs.

Another comment was made by a CI about racism. This was around the racism that stems from ethnic communities towards other minority groups. It was stated that “the community has very little awareness about their own racism which causes problems”. In probing into finding the reason for this type of racism, the CI declared that she has not studied the field and that this was based on her own experience working with a lot of Iranian families. The speculation was made that perhaps this might have been due to intolerance toward minorities and/or different groups within the country of origin. In addition, sexism was mentioned as an ideology that goes hand-in-hand with racism.

9. POPULATION & SAMPLING

For this needs assessment, the sample population selected was based on a non-probability sample. A non-probability sample refers to samples that do not rely on the principles of probability theory that postulate that everyone in the larger population has the equal chance of being selected. Although there are certain geographic areas that are populated by Iranians, the Iranian population is disbursed through out Toronto. For this reason, choosing a random sampling would be cumbersome, tedious, and costly.

It was decided that within non-probability sampling, the most appropriate method was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is often called judgmental sampling because it is based on the researcher's judgment of the subjects. In this research project, purposive sampling was recognized as suitable because of the researcher's knowledge of the target population—knowledge that comes from shared culture/ethnicity and prolonged professional and personal engagement with the community; as well as discussions with community organizers and leaders.

To increase the validity and the reliability of the needs assessment, efforts were taken to ensure a broad selection of samples. This was made possible by selecting varied distribution points for the survey questionnaire. In order to be more inclusive, the sample criteria were quite wide, hence, all Iranians could participate. The only restriction was residency (not immigration status) in Toronto.

10. OUTCOME OF THE RESEARCH

The intended outcome for this research has been to obtain a current general profile of the Iranian community in Toronto. Also, to identify major needs and barriers that prevents the Iranian community from receiving full access to services and participation in the larger society. Furthermore, since this needs assessment has been based on a Capacity-focused model; it has assessed the community strengths and capabilities in order to utilize them in the process of community development.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Problems:

1. Unemployment and underemployment
2. Under utilization of the Iranian professionals
3. Inadequate language training for newcomers
4. Insufficient accessibility to information, training and services
5. Cultural differences with the host country
6. Family conflict
7. Intergenerational gap
8. Insufficient social and emotional support for seniors
9. Insufficient community co-operation

Causes of Problems:

1. Lack of recognition of non-Canadian credentials
2. Under utilization of Iranian professionals
3. Absent of adequate emotional support
4. Disturbance in family relationships
5. Inadequate access to services and information
6. Inadequate orientation and language training for newcomers
7. Low self-esteem
8. Peer pressure (youth)
9. Systemic racism
10. Financial shortcoming
11. Conflicting cultural values
12. Ineffective immigration policies and negative attitude and treatment of refugees
13. Lack of resources to train competent interpreters/translators for refugees
14. Inadequate facilities for seniors
15. The government's lack of commitment to multiculturalism

Strengths/Capacities:

1. High level of education
2. Tenacity, flexibility, and adaptability
3. Willingness to learn
4. Self-reliance and hard work
5. Secular community and vibrant culture
6. Strong Family ties
7. Existence of many Iranian Professional associations
8. The ability to analyze and solve problems
9. The ability to seek help
10. Wealth within the community and financial independence for a segment of the community
11. Cooperation and goodwill toward the host country

Factors Contributing to Quality of Life:

1. Employment
2. Developing social and emotional support network
3. Access to services and information
4. Services for newcomers including language training
5. Good family relationship
6. Counselling, community and professional services
7. Promoting effective cultural and traditional practices and recreational activities
8. Financial means
9. Promoting community unity, cohesiveness, and a sense of belonging
10. Community sponsored programs and partnership projects
11. Raising awareness and promoting community leadership
12. Developing an umbrella organization that will organize lobbying and advocacy for the community
13. Building alliances across immigrant communities so that multiculturalism will develop horizontally and not vertically

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations for this report have been prepared by summarizing and analyzing the information obtained from the questionnaires, focus groups and community informant interviews.

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Issues Identified	Recommendations
<p>Unemployment & underemployment</p> <p><i>The issue of employment and underemployment is acute in the Iranian community. Employment problem is a multifaceted issue that has to be addressed from different angles. Since access to professions and trades is one of the fundamental barriers in the Iranian community, up grading credentials and qualifications requires special attention.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Various activities and strategies need to be developed in order to increase the employability of the community members. These strategies need to be flexible and open to modification as the needs of the community continues to change. ❖ Provide a group of qualified staff to provide employment related information and services. ❖ Create a job centre with counsellors to provide employment services. ❖ Utilize the experience and skills of the Iranian professionals in this area. ❖ Provide language training; basic and technical level
<p>Under utilization of Iranian professionals expertise & experience in helping the Iranian community.</p> <p><i>Iranian community is a highly educated community, and it is comprised of a large number of professionals. However, lack of recognition for their education and credential often compel them to accept menial jobs where their education, skills and work experience is wasted.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Expand the services by hiring more Iranian staff working within the community to provide culturally appropriate services. ❖ Acknowledge the experience and know-how that the Iranian community has brought to Canada by appointing higher number of Iranians for boards and committees. This also will help in raising self-esteem of the Iranian community.

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Identified issues	Recommendations
<p>Migration, displacement and integration</p> <p>Conflicting cultural values between home country and mainstream</p> <p>Low self-esteem Inter-minority racism Intergenerational gap Insufficient awareness about women’s rights Insufficient awareness about civic rights Insufficient information, training, and orientation for newcomers Systemic racism</p> <p><i>Migration and displacement often results in drastic changes that create new challenges for newcomers. Uprooting, conflicting cultural values, language barrier, loss of emotional support, loss of social and economic status, low self-esteem, and lack of familiarity with rules, policies and customs of the host country has complicated the process of integration for Iranians.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Organize education and information sessions and forming groups to address specific issues in order to improve the process of settlement and integration; also to enhance the quality of life of community members. However, these activities need to be innovative (not necessarily apply the Euro-centric model) and culturally appropriate to the community. Taping the resources within the Iranian community to organize these activities. At the same time, providing information about other workshops outside the community. ❖ Provide information and orientation to the Canadian system, and develop strategies to improve accessibility to information and services. ❖ Publicize the community’s achievements in the larger society. Also, sensitize and educate mainstream service providers about the Iranian culture. ❖ Develop an Iranian web sight or provide referral to other web sights.

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Identified issues	Recommendations
<p>Emotional difficulties Loneliness, isolation, low self-esteem, lack of social and emotional support, depression and disorientation.</p> <p><i>Disconnection from the past and absence of a sense of belonging to the larger society coupled with settlement related challenges has increased the stress level of the community members. In turn, high level of stress and lack of emotional support lead to a multitude of other problems including mental health.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Establish social networks for community members, especially for youth, women and refugees, to aid in coping with emotional difficulties ❖ Assist Iranian seniors in achieving their goals for expanding their activities and social network ❖ Organize and promote recreational and cultural activities as a form of engaging people. ❖ Develop outreach strategies to connect to isolated individuals in the community ❖ Develop an Iranian Family Service program under the auspices of Family Service Association.
<p>Youth Issues Peer pressure Difficulty with academic work Low self-esteem Intergenerational gap Conflicting cultural values Inter-minority racism and systemic racism</p> <p><i>Intergenerational gap (conflict) is encountered by all types of families- mainstream and immigrant alike. This is exasperated in the Iranian community due to discrepancies in cultural values and norms. The Iranian community needs to invest in the youth in order to ensure their achievement and integration into society.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Develop “buddy club” for youth to create a social network as well as assisting them with school work ❖ Develop “Youth Achievement Club” to reflect their academic, athletic, humanitarian, and other achievements in the Iranian community and the larger society. ❖ Develop groups for youth to enhance communication skills and to improve relationships with parents ❖ Develop parenting groups for dual purpose of disseminating information about parenting and cultural issues as well as creating social network of support. <p>Promote volunteerism among youth</p>

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Identified Issues	Recommendations
<p>Insufficient information, training and lack of proper orientation for newcomers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide information and orientation to the Canadian system is a necessity. At the same time, action plans need to be developed in order to improve accessibility to information and services
<p>Inadequate information, services and negative attitude and treatment of refugees</p> <p><i>Although the number of Iranian refugees has decreased in recent years, this segment of the community is faced with specific issues and challenges some of which are ineligibility for certain services</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Develop better relationship between the immigration office and Iranian service providers. ❖ In collaboration with service providers serving Iranian refugees, develop a paper on current status of refugees. ❖ Develop social action strategies in order to enhance the condition of refugees
<p>Family conflict</p> <p><i>The Iranian culture is family oriented and places a high value on strong family ties. In fact, family is considered to be one of the most important units of the society. The pressure of settlement and integration as well as conflicting cultural values has created rift in family relations.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Provide culturally appropriate services such as counselling, mediation, etc.

IRANIAN NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Identified Issues	Recommendation
<p>Insufficient community cooperation and cohesion</p> <p><i>Iranian community is comprised of people with various ethnicity, language, religion, political affiliation, and socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Community members have a tendency to form their own groups. As a result, a high level of cohesion has not been developed in the community.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Take the initiative in developing programs, coordinate and deliver services that are tailored for the community and addressing common needs. ❖ Develop an umbrella organization to coordinate services in the Iranian community as well as undertaking advocacy and lobbying for the whole community. ❖ Celebrate the achievements of the Iranian community to promote unity.

12. CONCLUSION

The Iranian Advisory Council will continue to provide guidance for the staff in program planning and service delivery. The results of this Needs Assessment/Community Profile will be used in order to prioritize the community needs. An extra attention will be paid to ensure that the Needs Assessment/Community Profile Report will be widely distributed in the Iranian community.

Community development approach will be used to carry through the recommendations of this report. This could be achieved by utilizing the community strengths and capacities in meeting some of the community's needs. Also, planning programs that are culturally appropriate and responsive to the Iranian community.

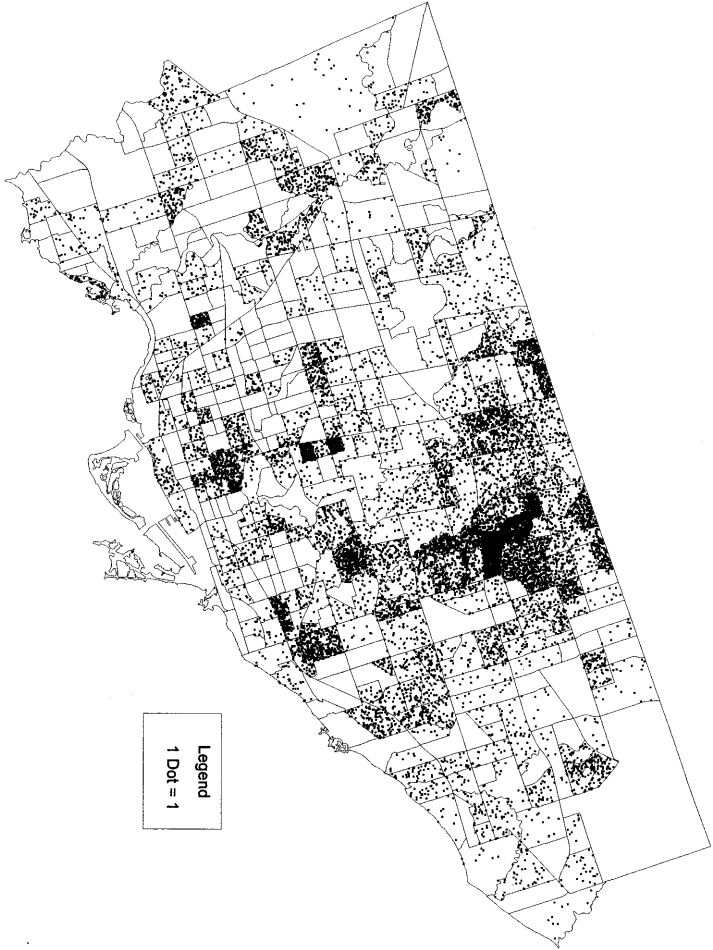
REFERENCES

- Annual Meeting of the American Public Health Association, (1990). "Health Education and Community Empowerment". USA
- Csiernik, Rick. (1997). *Social Work Research: Case Studies & Selected Readings*. Toronto.
- City of Toronto, Community Services, (1993). "Making Communities: Community Development Definitions, Principles and Strategies".
- City of Toronto, Department of Public Health, (1991). "Community Development".
- City of Toronto, Department of Public Health, (1991). "Community Health Needs Assessment: A Culturally Sensitive Approach".
- Huffman, K., Vernoy, M., Williams, B., Vernoy, J. (1991). Psychology in Action. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Hunsaker, P. & Cook, C., (1987). Managing Organizational Behaviour. Massachusetts: Addison-Welsely Publishing Co.
- Iranian Woman's Publications of Canada. (1993). Iranian Immigrants and Their Problems. Toronto.
- King, Clarence, (1966). Working with People in Community Action. New York: Association Press.
- Kirst-Ashman, Karen K. & Hull, Jr. , Grafton H. (1995). Understanding Generalist Practice. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.
- Kretzmann, J.P., McKnight, J.L., (1993). Building Communities from the Inside Out. Chicago: ACTA Publishing.
- Moser, C. & Kalton, G., (1972). Survey Methods in Social Investigation. London: Heinemann Educational Books Lit.
- Milson, Fred. (1974). An Introduction to Community Work. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Ministry of Tourism & Recreation, (1991). Enjoying Research? A "How-To" Manual on Needs Assessment. Toronto: Government of Ontario.
- Rossi, Peter H. & Freeman, Howard E. & Wright, Sonia, R. (1979). Evaluation: A Systematic Approach. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

- Rubin, Allen & Babbie, Earl (1997). Research Methods for Social Work. Pacific Grove: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.
- Shadish, Jr., W.R., Cook, T.D. & Leviton, L.C. (1991). Foundations of Program Evaluation: Theories of Practice. Sage Publications: London.
- Sanders, William B, & Pinhey, Thomas K. (1983). The Conduct of Social Research. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Soriano, Fernando I. (1995). Conducting Needs Assessments: A Multidisciplinary Approach. London: Sage Publications.
- Towle, Charlotte. (1987). Common Human Needs. United States: National Association of Social Workers.
- Witkin, Belle Ruth & Altschuld, James W. (1995). Planning & Conducting Needs Assessments: A Practical Guide. London: Sage Publications.

APPENDIX "A"

Number of Iranian Immigrants to the City of Toronto, 1996



Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 census

APPENDIX "A"

Geography Profile of CD/C	Canada	Ontario	New city of Toronto	Scarborough	Toronto	East York	North York	York	Etobicoke
Total immigrants by selected countries of birth	4,971,070	2,724,485	1,124,410	284,225	271,225	44,495	308,165	73,770	142,525
Total recent immigrants (between 1991 & 1996)	47,410	27,210	16,555	3,405	2,745	450	8,350	415	1,190
Iranian immigrants (between 1991 & 1996)	1,038,990	562,985	315,470	88,710	68,435	13,140	90,120	19,410	35,645
	21,410	13,150	8,930	1,980	1,430	300	4,450	160	615

Source: Statistics Canada, 1996 census

APPENDIX “B”

Needs Assessment/Community Profile

Family Service Association of Metropolitan Toronto (FSA) is a non-profit organization with various programs for children, teenagers, seniors, families, individuals, newcomers and immigrants. One of FSA newest services is COMMUNITY ACTION. In this program, social workers from four ethnic backgrounds including Iranian, working to increase the quality of life for immigrants from these countries who reside in Toronto.

We recognize that some of the questions are of personal nature and may seem intrusive. Therefore, **to complete the questionnaire, it is not necessary to disclose your name and address.**

Since the Iranian community is comprised of cross-section of our society, and are in different stages of integration, it is imperative to ask the community members to identify their own needs.

In short the main objectives of this needs assessment are as follows:

- 1- To determine the real needs of the community**
- 2- To determine the assets, strength, and capacity of the community**
- 3- To prioritize community needs**
- 4- To seek appropriate solutions**

The success of this needs assessment depends on your co-operation. Therefore, we ask you to take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire. The result of this questionnaire will be announced through community media and a community forum.

For more information, please contact Shokofeh Dilmaghani at 225-1166 ext. 30.

Family Service Association, 5248 Yonge St., North York, Ont., M2N 5P6.

Thank you for your participation.

QUESTIONS FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT/COMMUNITY PROFILE

RESPONDENT'S PROFILE

IF APPLICABLE, PLEASE MARK MORE THAN ONE ANSWER

1- sex:

(1) female (2) male

2- age:

(1) under 18 (4) 36-45
(2) 19-25 (5) 46-65
(3) 26-35 (6) over 65

3- Marital status:

(1) single
(2) married with children without children
(3) divorced with children without children
(4) common law with children without children
(5) separated with children without children

4- How many children do you have? please indicate their ages

5- How many years have you been residing in Canada?

(1) under a year (4) 11-20 years
(2) 1-3 years (5) over 20 years
(3) 4-10 years

6- What is your current immigration status?

- (1) immigrant []
- (2) refugee []
- (3) citizen []
- (4) other []

7- Education:

- (1) elementary school []
- (2) some high school []
- (3) high school diploma []
- (4) college degree []
- (5) under graduate degree []
- (6) graduate degree []
- (7) Ph.D []

8- What is your educational field?

9- Is your non Canadian degree accepted in Canada?

- (1) yes[]
- (2) no[]

10- How many years of experience do you have in your profession in Iran?

- (1) no experience []
- (2) less than 1 year []
- (3) 1-5 years []
- (4) 6-10 years []
- (5) more than 10 years []

11- What is your position and the field of employment in Canada?

12- Overall, how satisfying has your life been in Canada?

- (1) very satisfied []
- (2) relatively satisfied []
- (3) indifferent []
- (4) extremely dissatisfied []
- (5) I am no sure []
- (6) refuse to answer []

13- What is your interest in going back and living in Iran again?

- (1) I Do not like to go back []
- (2) I would like to go back, but I cannot []
- (3) I would like to go back, but I am not in a hurry []
- (4) I would like to go back and I am trying []
- (5) I do not know []
- (6) refuse to answer []

14- What was/were your reason(s) for coming to Canada?

- (1) not being able to tolerate the socio-economic climate []
- (2) in search of a better life []
- (3) political, religious problems []
- (4) unemployment []
- (5) family problems []
- (6) encouragement from others []
- (7) emigrated with my family []
- (8) for my children []
- (9) financial problems []
- (10) refuse to answer[]
- (11) other reasons, please explain (optional) []

ASSESSMENT OF DIFFICULTIES

IF APPLICABLE, PLEASE MARK MORE THAN ONE ANSWER

15- Currently, what are the difficulties you experience?

- (1) unemployment [
- (2) lack of knowledge of English [
- (3) not having friends [
- (4) finding the right partner [
- (5) isolation and loneliness [
- (6) emotional difficulties [
- (7) not feeling accepted in Canadian society [
- (8) family problems and lack of understanding [
- (9) educational difficulties [
- (10) not working in my profession [
- (11) cultural and social differences [
- (12) lack of access to appropriate training [
- (13) refuse to answer[
- (14) I do not have any difficulty [
- (15) other reasons, please explain (optional) [

16- Have you ever experienced family problems?

- (1) yes [
- (2) no[

If no, please go to question 17.

If yes, what kind?

- (1)with spouse/partner
- (2)with children
- (3)withparents

16.1- Difficulties with spouse

- (1) lack of open communication []
- (2) financial []
- (3) child rearing methods []
- (4) employment related []
- (5) use of drugs or alcohol []
- (6) violent behaviour []
- (7) refuse to answer []
- (8) other problems, please explain (optional) []

16.2- Difficulties With Children

- (1) education []
- (2) child-rearing []
- (3) religion issues []
- (4) social, cultural, and moral issues []
- (5) shortage of time they spend with you []
- (6) use of drugs and alcohol []
- (7) violent behaviour []
- (8) refuse to answer []
- (9) other problems, please explain (optional) []

16.3- Difficulties With Parents

- (1) Lack of adequate freedom []
- (2) cultural difference []
- (3) lack of understanding my parents' point of view []
- (4) educational issues []
- (5) use of drugs or alcohol []
- (5) violent behaviour []
- (6) refuse to answer []
- (8) other problems, please explain (optional) []

17- Financial & Employment Problems

- (1) not having adequate information to find a job []
- (2) lack of fluency in English []
- (3) lack of adequate & necessary education in Canada[]
- (4) lack of adequate work experience in Canada []
- (5) lack of professional license necessary in Canada[]
- (6) have you applied to obtain the professional license? (1) yes [] (2) no []
- (7) if yes, what is the result?
(1) successful [] (2) unsuccessful []
- (8) lack of adequate information to start your own business []
- (9) insufficient credit to obtain a business loan []
- (10) lack of suitable employment []
- (11) shortage of work []
- (12) racism []
- (13) not having work permit []
- (14) I do not know []
- (15) refuse to answer []
- (16) I do not have any problems []

18- On the whole, what are the causes of your difficulties?

SOLUTIONS

IF APPLICABLE, PLEASE MARK MORE THAN ONE ANSWER

19- How have the above mentioned difficulties affected you?

- (1) I feel more determined []
- (2) I feel confused and indecisive []
- (3) I feel I have lost my hope and ability to cope []
- (4) I do not know []
- (5) refuse to answer []

20- So far, have you sought help in order to solve your problems?

- (1) Yes []
- (2) No []

If yes, please identify the source []

- (1) friends and family []
- (2) Canadian organizations []
- (3) Iranian organizations []
- (4) others, please explain (optional) []

If no, why not?

- (1) they are out of my reach []
- (2) lack of information []
- (3) too shy to ask []
- (4) others, please explain(optional) []

21- Have you used any of the following methods to overcome emotional difficulties, or to decrease your discomfort?

- (1) talking to friends []
- (2) asking for help from professionals (psychiatrists, psychologists, or social workers) []
- (3) exercising []
- (4) hobby & leisure []
- (5) religious activities []
- (6) attending social & recreational activities offered by various organizations []
- (7) socializing with friends and families []
- (8) using alcohol or drugs []
- (9) I do not have any problems []
- (10) I do not know []
- (11) refuse to answer []
- (12) other methods, please explain (optional) []

22-What kind of skills and/or resources do you have, in order to resolve your problems and remove barriers?

- (1) willingness to learn []
- (2) creativity []
- (3) flexibility []
- (4) leadership skills []
- (5) problem solving skills []
- (6) ability to seek support from your nuclear/extended family []
- (7) ability to develop social support network []
- (8) access to financial resources []
- (9) I do not know []
- (10) refuse to answer []
- (11) other skills/resources, (optional) []

23-What kind of skills and/or resources have you utilized, in order to resolve your problems and remove barriers?

- (1) willingness to learn []
- (2) creativity []
- (3) flexibility []
- (4) leadership skills []
- (5) problem solving skills []
- (6) ability to seek support from your nuclear/extended family []
- (7) ability to develop social support network []
- (8) access to financial resources []
- (9) I do not know []
- (10) refuse to answer []
- (11) Other skills/resources, (optional) []

24- Overall, how do you assess the result of your efforts?

- (1) satisfied []
- (2) somewhat satisfied []
- (3) indifferent []
- (4) dissatisfied []

25- What external factor(s) would improve the quality of your life?

26- What kind of services can FSA offer to overcome some of the barriers?

27- Please write other suggestions/recommendation

WE THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX “B”

Focus Groups’ Questions

Q.1. What is your biggest problem(s)?

Q.2. What is the main cause of your problem?

Q.3. What are some of the skills/resources you have in order to overcome these problems?

Q.4. What are the external elements that could improve the quality of your life?

Q. 5. What services can FSA offer?

APPENDIX “C”

List of Community Informants

- Name:** Shaheen Asayesh
Title: Former Editor
Organization: Iranian Women’s Publication
- Name:** Shahla Dafeleh
Title: Former Executive Director
Organization: Iranian Community Association of Ontario
- Name:** Ali Golipour
Title: Executive Director, Co-Chair, and Crisis Assessment Worker
Organization: Vigil Toronto, Canadian Council for Refugees and St. Elizabeth Health Care
- Name:** Afkham Mardukhi
Title: Community Development and Youth Worker
Organization: North York Board of Education and Social Planning Council
- Name:** Hayedeh Mogheisi
Title: Professor of Sociology and Women’s Study
Organization: York University
- Name:** Marjan Montazemi
Title: Regional Director for Ontario Operation
Organization: Canadian Crossroads International, Former Board of Director of Iranian Women’s Organization
- Name:** Ezat Mossllanejad
Title: Counsellor
Organization: Canadian Centre for Victim of Torture
- Name:** Bahram Parsi
Title: Senior Project Manager for Government System and Co-ordinator of Persian Heritage Language Classes
Organization: Government of Canada, Persian Heritage Language Classes

List of Community Informants

Name: Mina Sarlati
Title: Multicultural Consultant
Organization: Toronto District School Board

Name: Hasan Zerehi
Title: Editor in Chief
Organization: Shahrvand Publication

APPENDIX “D”
Community Informant Interviews’ Questions

1. If we recognize the existing problems in our community as:
 - Employment
 - Family
 - Mental health
 - Inter-generational issues
 - Cultural differences
 - Racism

Which category should be the priority to deal with?

2. In your view, are there any other major problems in our community that are not included in the above list?
3. Would you elaborate on some of the causes of these problems?
4. What are some of the solutions you suggest to overcoming these problems/barriers?
5. How many of these problems are systemic, and how many are individual?
6. In your view, what are some of strengths/capacity of our community?
7. What are some of the strategies that can help utilize these strengths to benefit our community?
8. As you know, disunity is prevalent in our community;
 - A. Would you suggest some strategies for uniting our community?
 - B. Given the diversity that exists in our community, to what extent can we expect to bring our community together?