

From Arrival to Belonging:

Cultural Brokers' Contributions and Challenges Fostering Community Connections, Equity, and Access to Resources Across Communities.

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** This poster shows key results from the study on Cultural Brokers: Agents for Health and Wellness Equity for Newcomers, Along the Full Continuum of Settlement, Integration and Social Inclusion. (Phase I, 2022-2025)*

Introduction:

- Cultural Brokers (CBs) act as essential intermediaries, helping newcomers navigate cultural and systemic barriers in health & social services, by establishing connections, providing language support, and by fostering community integration.
- They facilitate access to services such as housing, employment, healthcare, and public safety for families and individuals.
- CBs' job titles include: settlement agents, liaison officers, interpreters, cultural brokers, multicultural health navigators.
- This three-year study sought to learn about the role of CBs in facilitating the settlement, integration, and social inclusion of immigrants and refugees across Canada.

Theoretical Framework:

- Social Capital Theory highlights CBs' fostering of bonds within communities and bridging connections across diverse groups, as well as CBs' challenges in accessing mainstream institutions.
- Segmented Labour Market Theory elucidates CBs' precarious work, as reflected in low-paid and unstable employment, structural barriers, and credential and practice devaluation.
- A GBA Plus lens reveals how intersecting factors such as gender, race, class and migration status compound social inequities, shape CBs' labour conditions, and impede recognition of their contributions to community equity and integration.

Methods:

- Design-Mixed Methods Study Across Canada in English & French (EN/FR):**
 - Qualitative Case Study:** 50 interviews (29 CBs, 9 families, 12 policymakers)
 - Quantitative Survey:** 153 participants (123 EN, 30 FR)
- Analysis:**
 - Qualitative:** Phenomenological thematic analysis of interview data
 - Quantitative:** Descriptive statistical analysis of survey data

Key Findings:

1. How do CBs contribute to Social Capital?

■ Social determinants of health

Extent of support CBs provide to families:

Sector	High Support (count)	Some Support (count)
Housing	45	67
Food Security	44	61
Employment	67	54
Healthcare	52	56
Public Safety	28	62

N = 153 (EN/FR); Source: NSCB 2024-25

■ Being gateways to mainstream culture

Family Perspective

"I think they play a very important role for newcomers. It's a bit like a gateway to the other culture. They must be and must already know the reality of what has been left behind in order to be able to better advise us on what to embrace later."

(Family 7FR)

Policy maker perspective

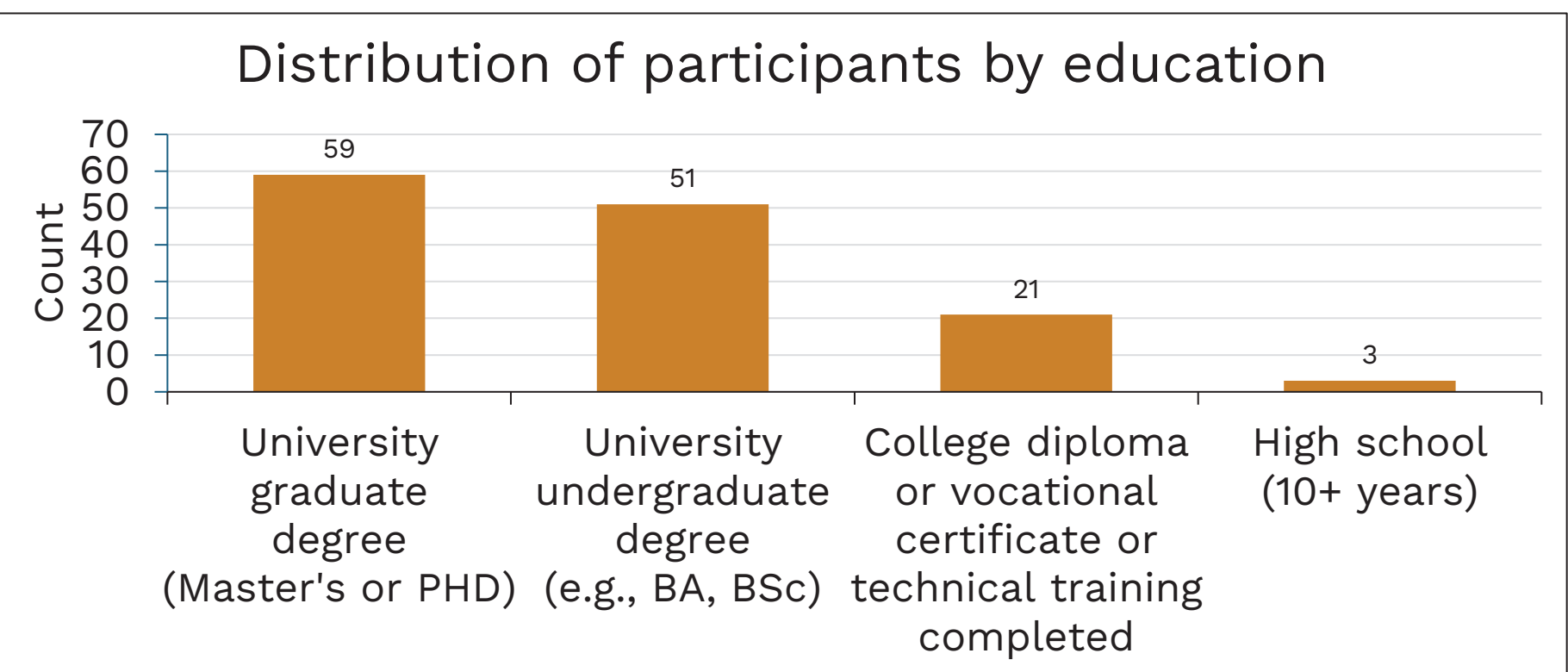
"They advocate on behalf of their clients. They educate their clients. They connect them to social services, as well as health services in the community. So they play a huge role. They are not crisis workers, but often they are pulled into situations because things become so dire and it is a crisis. And they are the go-to because clients feel comfortable reaching out to them because of, ... the language, ... of the trust that they've established with their clients."

(Policy-maker-7EN)

2. How is CB's Labour Segmented?

■ Education

CBs are diverse, often highly educated



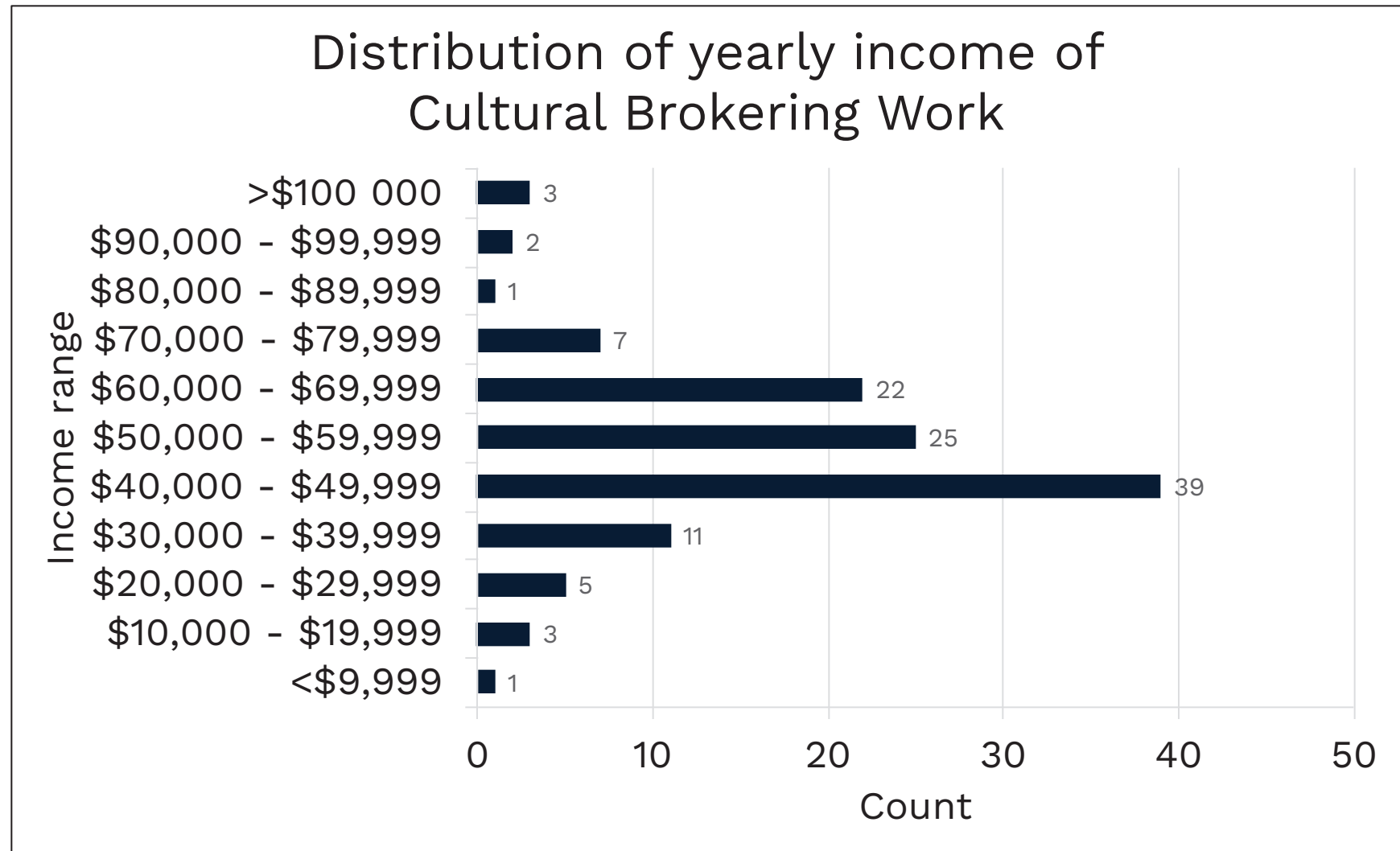
N = 153 (EN/FR); *16 Preferred to not answer; *18 Did not select any response; Source: NSCB 2024-25

■ CBs face credential non-recognition

"I think that if I stay here, I will stay in the same position, with the same salaries, with the same responsibilities."

(CB 9FR)

■ Income



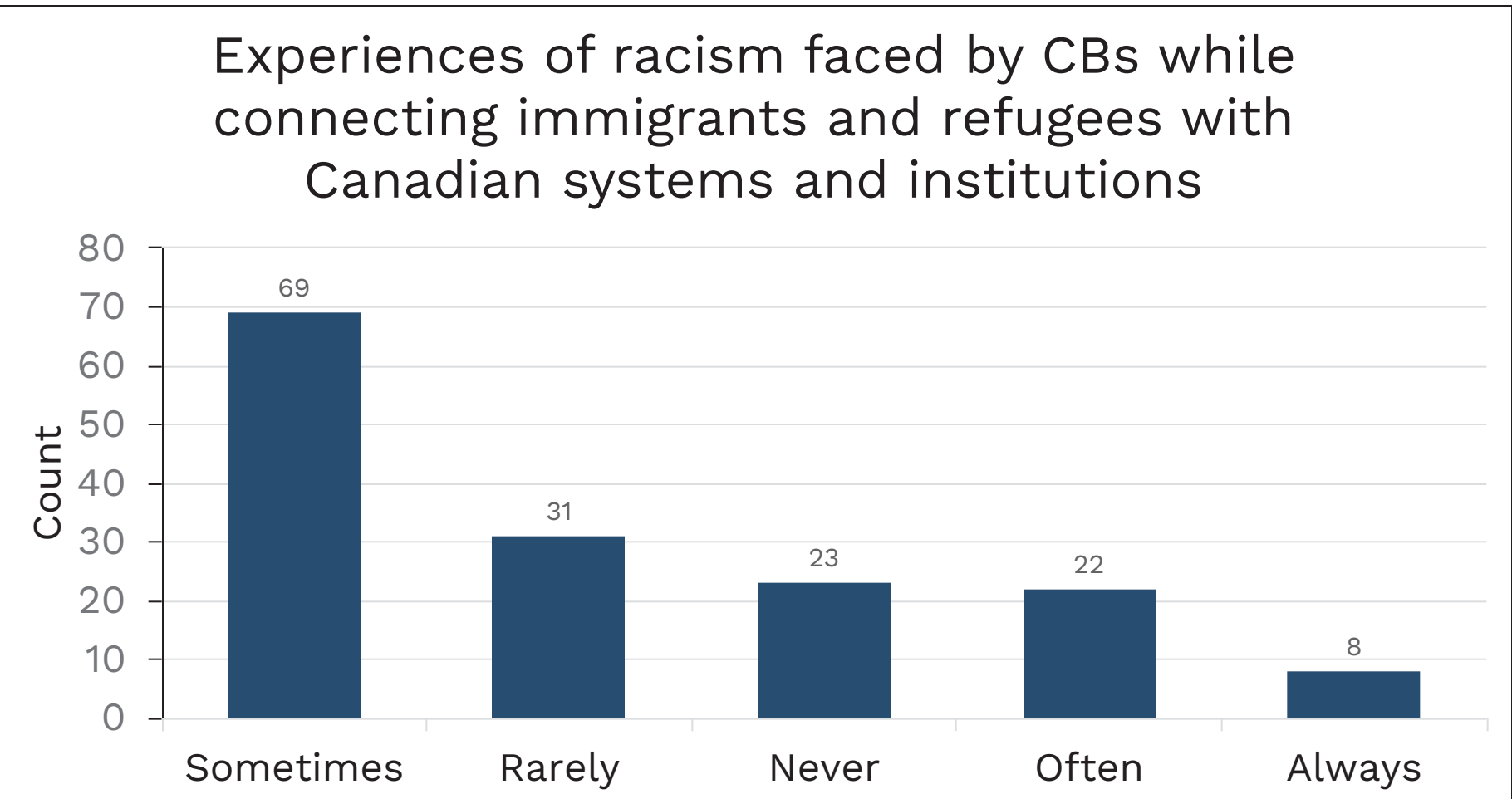
N = 153 (EN/FR); *16 Preferred to not answer; *18 Did not select any response; Source: NSCB 2024-25

- Survey data reveals that the median annual income for CBs is \$50,000 to \$59,000.
- Findings also reveal many are the key household earners and are responsible for other members of a household.

Source: NSCB 2024-25

3. How does CBs' work reflect GBA Plus?

■ Racism



N = 153 (EN/FR); Source: NSCB 2024-25

"And for racism also, the mindset is like that. Because we are a person of colour, we have to take it. People don't think that, 'Oh, I can raise my voice', I also have the same right as a mainstream person, white person. I have the same rights."

(CB1-EN)

Recommendations:

■ Building on social capital theory:

- Investments in bonding and bridging opportunities such as partnerships can enhance linkages to mainstream institutions.

■ Addressing Labour segmentation:

- Create pathways for CBs to transition from precarious income to better wages and better recognized roles within mainstream and community-based institutions, and invest in training.

■ Integrating an intersectional GBA Plus:

- Adopt policies that recognize and address the compound barriers faced by women and racialized CBs by addressing institutional racism within and across systems.

Conclusion:

Cultural brokers are indispensable intermediaries enhancing newcomer integration, yet remain marginalized through precarious labor conditions — owing, in part, to racialization, gender and class disparities.

Sustainable funding, policy support, and formal recognition of this workforce are essential for addressing equity and inclusion of CBs and of the immigrant and refugee communities they support.

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