



ICES Public Advisory Council Annual Report: 2025/2026



Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to summarize the activities pertaining to the ICES Public Advisory Council in 2025/2026. The summary includes information on:

- Overview of the PAC
- Recruitment of New Members
- PAC Meetings and Activities
- Member Feedback

ICES Public Advisory Council (PAC) Overview

Progress in Year 6

The ICES Public Advisory Council was formed in 2019 and is made up of members of the public from across Ontario. The council represents the public's voice and guides ICES on what matters most to Ontarians regarding health data research and policy. Their thoughts, perspectives, and values inform ICES research activities and influence how ICES researchers use data to improve Ontario's health care. We are currently in our fifth iteration of the Council and Year 6 of its work.

The Public Advisory Council (PAC) is the primary mechanism for ICES to engage with the public at an institutional level. The PAC guides topics that the ICES Management feels require or would benefit from, from the perspective of the Ontario public. The PAC also provides feedback to ICES researchers and other areas of the organization that come to the group seeking guidance on matters related to the public.

The PAC continues to guide ICES on what matters most to Ontarians regarding health data research. The thoughts, perspectives, and values of the PAC influence ICES' research and the way ICES researchers use data to improve and evaluate healthcare.

PAC Membership

As of March 31, 2026

The PAC includes individuals from across Ontario and aims to reflect the diversity of those whose data reside in the ICES Data Repository. Recruitment for new members to join the ICES PAC began in May 2025, as we said goodbye to 4 members who wished not to renew for an additional 3-year term. The 4 outgoing members joined the PAC on September 1, 2022, and contributed to countless initiatives during that time, including advancing the PAC research question project. We sincerely thank them for all their contributions! All members are added to our PAC alumni mailing list, where they receive updates on ongoing related PAC work and other opportunities.

ICES uses a staggered membership approach to maintain continuity of the PAC, adding new members every 18 months for a 3-year term. Last fiscal year, we also added the opportunity for members to continue for an additional, and final, second 3-year term (for a maximum term length of 6 years). 4 existing members chose to extend their term to join 5 other continuing members. This left 6 open spots for recruitment for a 15-member group. During this year's recruitment process, we aimed to ensure PAC recruitment reached specific audiences that have been underrepresented on the PAC in years past. To achieve this goal, targeted recruitment strategies were used to better reach individuals living in Northern regions and regions outside of Urban Centres like Toronto. The selection process for PAC membership has not changed from the previous year and was as follows:

- Applicants submit an online application to express interest
- The ICES Public & Community Engagement, Knowledge Translation (PCEKT) Team reviews all applications and determines those chosen for a 30-minute phone screening
- Applicants attend phone screening based on availability and interest
- The PCEKT Team determines successful applicants and notifies those chosen for the PAC
- Those not chosen to join the council are encouraged to join the Public Engagement mailing list and apply again for future recruitment cycles

Recruitment concluded in July 2025, with 7 new members invited to join the PAC. Due to strong candidates this year and a small number of openings, we decided to onboard an additional member, bringing the PAC to a total of 16 members. An orientation session followed in September 2025.

PAC Chair

The position of PAC Chair was created in March 2024 and made permanent in March 2025. The aim of having an existing PAC member serve as Chair is to provide peer leadership and perspective for the group, and work with ICES staff to guide the PAC in its key responsibilities/roles.

Simisola Johnson has served as the PAC Chair for the past two years and was ending her term in March 2026. In January 2026, the position reopened to existing members who have served on the PAC for at least 1 year and wish to self-nominate. Lisandra Hernandez Hernandez was the successful candidate and assumed the role on March 31, 2026, for a maximum 2-year term.

Summary of Activities

April 2025 – March 2026

PAC Meetings

ICES staff who were present at the 2025 PAC meetings were as follows:

Laura Ferreira-Legere, Senior Manager, Public & Community Engagement, Knowledge Translation
Sabella Yussuf-Homenauth, Senior Officer, Public & Community Engagement, Knowledge Translation
Elise Leong-Sit, Senior Officer, Public & Community Engagement, Knowledge Translation
Michael Schull, Chief Executive Officer
Astrid Guttman, Chief Science Officer
Other ICES staff attend periodically as needed for updates.

We also welcomed a new ICES Board of Directors PAC liaison this year. Existing PAC member Vu Ngo stepped down from his PAC role to join the Board of Directors upon nomination. Vu is the second PAC member to move into this role and brings valuable community engagement and AI insight to the Board.

The PAC has met four times over the past year, with 5 projects/initiatives brought forward and 3 reporting changes resulting from feedback (some still in progress). The group also had the opportunity to hear from our [Indigenous Partnerships, Data and Analytics Department](#) in June 2025, not as an opportunity to provide feedback, but as a PAC-requested opportunity to better understand the work of the department and how ICES partners with Indigenous communities to enable Indigenous-drive analyses using ICES data. Three of the four meetings were held virtually, with two optional working groups meeting periodically throughout the year (i.e., the communications working group and continuous learning working group). The PAC's annual hybrid meeting was held on October 22, 2025, and PAC members also had the option to attend the [ICES Annual Forum](#) the following day on October 23, 2025. The ICES Annual Forum returned to an in-person event for the first time since 2018, which allowed members the opportunity to meet more ICES Staff and Scientists, while also expanding their understanding of ICES' research and analytics. This year's PAC hybrid meeting also incorporated feedback from the previous year to provide more networking opportunities and fewer agenda items. The meeting was held at the DoubleTree by Hilton, which was beside the ICES Forum venue to better facilitate accessibility to both events.

PAC Advisory Feedback

This year, the PAC contributed to several organizational initiatives, a scientist-led project, and provided ongoing feedback on our own PAC-related processes and procedures as a group. Most notably, at our April 2025 meeting, we presented our initial plans for implementing community governance of the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada data we hold at ICES. We presented to the entire group for initial thoughts and sought volunteers for a more focused group discussion in June 2025. The focus group's feedback helped shape our plan for community governance and ultimately contributed to key recommendations we have begun to action, including a required education module for all project teams using the data.

In addition, at our October 2025 hybrid meeting, the PAC provided feedback and reviewed plans for patient contact studies at ICES. The PAC's preliminary thoughts and questions related to ethical and practical considerations are being incorporated into a revised plan, and the internal team responsible for actioning it will likely return to the PAC next year. At the October hybrid meeting, the PAC also helped to refine plans to promote opportunities for [community organizations to request data analytics](#). This included offering recommendations around who and where to promote this opportunity for better community reach.

Finally, in January 2026, an ICES trainee at The Temerty Centre for AI Research and Education in Medicine at the University of Toronto developed a session to educate patient-partners on medical AI research to better support their engagement with these projects. The team, including Konrad Samsel, Project Manager and ICES Trainee Gemma Postill, delivered the workshop and sought feedback on ways to further refine the session

We received qualitative feedback from the team on the experience presenting to the PAC and how their feedback is being incorporated:

"PAC feedback is informing our Summer Research Studentship Program (May-August 2026), where we will place additional emphasis on topics such as data ethics, privacy, health disparities, and patient engagement in research. We collaborated with North York General Hospital to deliver a four-part interactive workshop for the hospital's Patient Experience Partners (persons with lived experience). We have incorporated PAC feedback to support the planning of these sessions. We are also collaborating with TRANSFORM-HF to deliver a workshop in May on patient engagement in AI research. Co-led by a patient partner, the session is intended to support patients involved in research projects and hospital committees. We have also incorporated ICES-PAC feedback, focusing on patient autonomy, human relationships, and health equity. We thank the ICES PAC for their time and contributions to this important work and are more than happy to stay in touch with the committee if there's continued interest!"

PAC Quality Improvements

This year, with assistance and guidance from the continuing education PAC working group, quality improvements were made to the new member orientation and onboarding process. The working group provided feedback on the interview package for new members and the orientation process, including a package and a video, and introduced a new concept for a 'buddy system' in which existing members can mentor and support new members. Members also suggested we share an optional existing 'data 101' module for members that would like a more in-depth orientation to data and research. All changes were implemented and delivered to our 7 new members in September 2025.

The baseline evaluation survey completed by the 7 members demonstrated improvement in our orientation process compared to previous years. We achieved 100% agreement on 5/8 metrics:

- I currently understand the purpose of the PAC.
- I was provided enough information to be able to begin my role on the PAC.
- I have existing knowledge about ICES as an organization.
- The other PAC members and ICES staff represent a broad range of perspectives.
- I am confident that ICES will take the feedback provided by the PAC into consideration.

Members' Evaluation

Annual Evaluation

PAC Annual Evaluation

All PAC members are invited to complete an annual evaluation survey for every year of their term. The goal of the evaluation is to address the comments and improve how the PAC is run the following year. The survey was anonymous and based on the Public and Patient Engagement Evaluation Tool (PPEET) Version 2.0 (licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-Commercial license) by McMaster University.

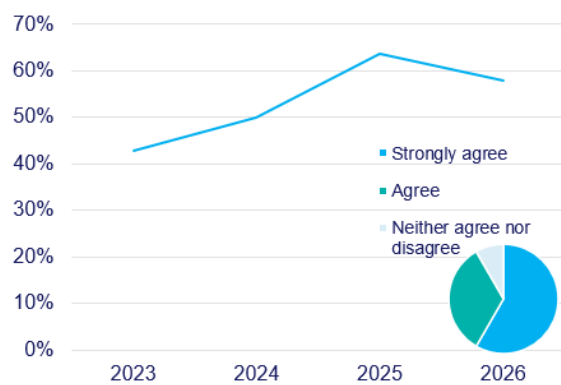
The March 2026 annual evaluation was completed by 12/16 PAC members, representing the highest participation rate in four years. There were similar responses to last year in terms of communication/support, impact and influence, and overall satisfaction. We have seen year-over-year improvement in key areas we have been working on, such as ensuring members understand the role of the PAC, have what they need to fulfill it, and feel they can express their opinions freely. Members generally agree or strongly agree with many of the measures we review year over year.

Qualitatively, some members expressed a desire for more communication between meetings, which we appreciate, as we did have to space the meetings out further this year due to fiscal year-end deadlines. Some members also flagged an interest in seeing more pre-reading materials ahead of each meeting.

An ongoing area for improvement is ensuring we communicate impact to our members and that they can see tangible results and improvements from their feedback. We have already begun some of this work, for example by providing project updates each meeting on initiatives that have come forward. We also completed an annual debrief to demonstrate annual impacts to members. The feedback from both the annual and end-of-term evaluations will be used to improve activities for the coming year. A snapshot of results from the survey is included below:

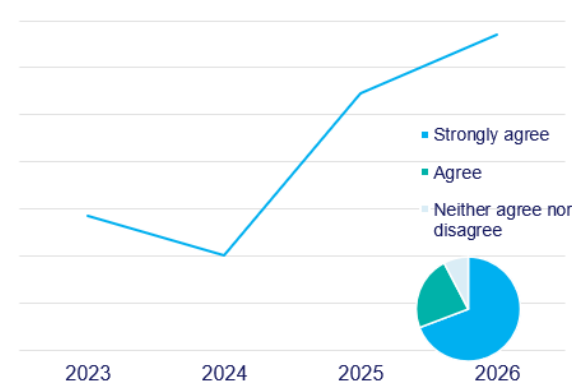
I understand the purpose of the PAC

Change in members who **strongly** agreed



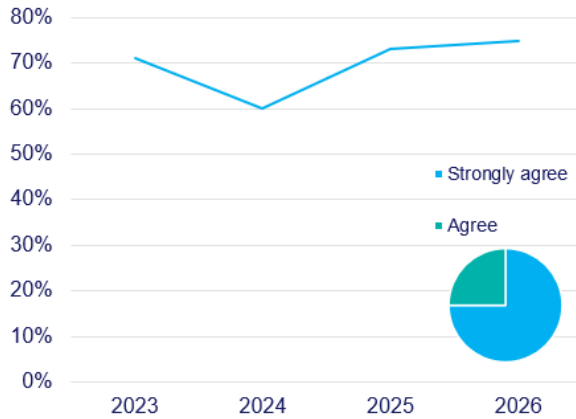
I have enough info to carry out my role

Change in members who **strongly** agreed



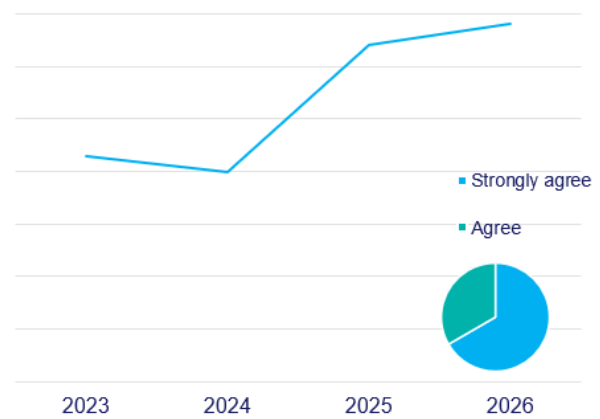
I am able to express my views freely.

Change in members who **strongly** agreed



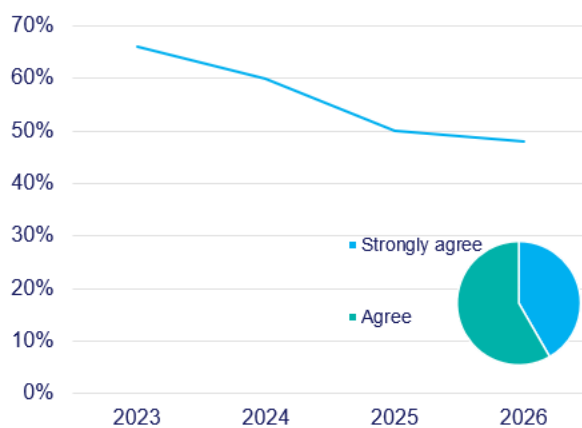
A wide range of views on discussion topics are shared.

Change in members who **strongly** agreed



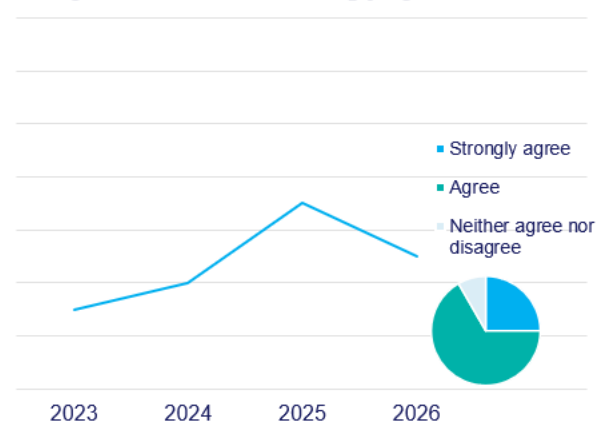
ICES takes feedback provided by the PAC into consideration

Change in members who **strongly** agreed



The work of the PAC makes a difference to ICES

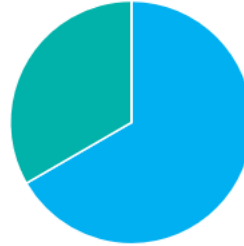
Change in members who **strongly** agreed



The PAC is achieving its goals



PAC members and ICES Staff reflect a broad range of perspectives



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



The supports I need to participate are available to me



Overall, I am satisfied with being a PAC member



