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CANADA

2024 SERIES

Canadian public opinion about immigration and refugees

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As part of its Focus Canada public opinion research program (launched in 1976), the Environics Institute updated its research on Canadian attitudes about immigration and refugees. This survey was conducted in partnership with the Diversity Institute at Toronto Metropolitan University, and with the ongoing support of the Century Initiative.

This survey is based on telephone interviews conducted (via landline and cellphones) with 2,016 Canadians ages 18 plus between September 9 and 23, 2024. A sample of this size drawn from the population produces results accurate to within plus or minus 2.2 percentage points in 19 out of 20 samples. All results are presented as percentages, unless otherwise noted.

For more information about this research, contact Dr. Keith Neuman at keith.neuman@environics.ca



The Environics Institute for Survey Research was established in 2006 as an independent non-profit organization to promote relevant and original public opinion and social research on important issues of public policy and social change. It is through such research that organizations and individuals can better understand Canada today, how it has been changing, and where it may be heading. www.EnvironicsInstitute.org



The Diversity Institute conducts and coordinates multi-disciplinary, multi-stakeholder research to address the needs of diverse Canadians, the changing nature of skills and competencies, and the policies, processes and tools that advance economic inclusion and success. Our action-oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by underrepresented groups, leading practices to effect change, and producing concrete results. www.torontomu.ca/diversity/



Century Initiative is a national, non-partisan charity with a mission to enhance Canada's long-term prosperity, resiliency and global influence by responsibly growing the population of Canada to 100 million by 2100. Century Initiative delivers its mission by leading, enabling and partnering on initiatives that support long-term thinking and planning in immigration, urban development, employment and entrepreneurship, early childhood supports, and education. The Century Initiative is concerned about our future and believes a bigger, bolder Canada benefits us all. www.centuryinitiative.ca

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Executive summary

2024 has been another challenging year for Canadians. While inflation finally began to recede, the cost of living remains high and housing continues to be unaffordable for many, and in short supply. The previous year saw a record number of new immigrants settling in cities across the country, and arrivals continued to build in 2024 until mid-year when the federal government finally announced new limits on the number of temporary foreign workers and international students. The global context has grown darker, with the intensification of conflict in the Middle East, and the unfolding drama of a pivotal US presidential election. This year also marks another dramatic surge in public opinion that immigration levels are too high, along with rising concerns about who is being admitted and how they are fitting in.

For the first time in a quarter century, a clear majority of Canadians say there is too much immigration, with this view strengthening considerably for the second consecutive year. This trend is evident across the population but is most significant in the Prairie provinces, while least so in Quebec.

The latest Focus Canada research shows that almost six in ten (58%) Canadians now believe the country accepts too many immigrants, reflecting a 14 percentage point increase since 2023, building on a 17 point increase over the previous year (2022 to 2023). This is the most rapid change over a two-year period since Focus Canada began asking this question in 1977, and reflects the largest proportion of Canadians who say there is too much immigration since 1998. The latest findings suggest the balance of public opinion about the volume of immigration currently being admitted into the country has effectively flipped from being acceptable (if not valuable) to problematic.

Rising agreement about too much immigration levels has taken place across the country, with the most substantial change taking place in the Prairie provinces. Quebec follows the general trend but at a slower pace, and increasingly is the region in Canada expressing comparatively less concern about immigration levels. Notably, on this question there is little difference in the perspectives of people who are first-generation and those born in Canada.

As before, opinions about immigration diverge most sharply across federal political party lines, with Conservative Party supporters most widely in agreement about too much immigration (now up to 80%). But there has also been an equivalent increase in this sentiment among those who would vote for the Liberal Party (45%) or NDP (36%).

Public support for immigration has been grounded in large part in the belief that it contributes to the country's economy. For two decades a decisive majority of Canadians have adopted this view, but rising concerns about immigration levels appear to be eroding this consensus. Close to seven in ten (68%) agree that immigration has a positive impact on the Canadian economy, but this majority has declined for the second consecutive year. Since 2023, this view has weakened most significantly in the Prairie provinces and among Canadians ages 18 to 29.

Public judgement about too much immigration continues to be driven by concerns about housing, but also by the state of the economy, about over-population and – increasingly – about how the immigration system is being managed.

Canadians who say the country is accepting too many immigrants cite various reasons for this view, but as in 2023 they are most likely to express concerns about how newcomers can be accommodated given the lack of housing availability and affordability, as well as concerns about the state of the economy, about over-population, and the potential strain on public finances. The most notable change from a year ago is an

increase in the proportion who believe there is too much immigration because it is being poorly managed by government. By comparison, the public is less likely to focus concerns about high immigration levels due to a threat to Canada's (or Quebec's) culture and values, as a security or public health risk, or to an influx of international students.

Along with rising concerns about immigration levels, an increasing number of Canadians are expressing doubts about who is being admitted to the country and how well they are integrating into Canadian society. The public places most value on immigrants with specialized skills and those with a good education who settle permanently, and less on temporary foreign workers and international students.

A year ago – in 2023 – the public was expressing increasing concerns about the number of immigrants arriving in the country, but there was no corresponding change in how they felt about immigrants themselves and their place in Canada. In 2024 this is no longer the case. The increasing view that immigration levels are too high now appears to be accompanied by changes in how Canadians view immigrants themselves and how they are fitting in.

Over the past year, an increasing proportion of Canadians agree that many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees (43%, up 7 points from 2023) and that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values (57%, up 9); in both cases the balance of opinion reflects a notable uptick in concerns following several years of notable stability. On this question, the balance of opinion is the same between racialized Canadians and those who identify as white.

Similarly, an increasing minority of Canadians believe the country accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups (39%, up 15 points from 2022), and that immigration increases the level of crime in Canada (35%, up 21 points from 2019). Canadians are still more likely to say that immigration makes their local community a better place (32%) than a worse one (14%), but the balance of opinion is less positive than it was a year ago.

Such growing concerns notwithstanding, Canadians believe the government should continue to give some priority to newcomers across all categories of permanent and temporary status, with some more likely to be valued than others. As in 2023, the public most widely believes the government should give a high priority to immigrants with specialized skills in high demand (73%), and people with a good education and skills who move to Canada permanently (64%). Fewer assign this priority to admitting refugees fleeing conflict or persecution in their own countries (47%), and reuniting family members of current citizens (33%).

Canadians are least likely to say the government should prioritize lower-skilled workers hired short term to fill unfilled jobs (28%), and international students attending Canadian colleges and universities (27%). The relative importance assigned to the six immigrant categories remains the same as in 2023, but in all cases the proportion saying it should be a high priority has declined modestly over the past year. And it continues to be the case that even a majority of those who agree that there is currently too much immigration believe that some categories of immigrant – notably those who are highly skilled or well-educated – remain a high priority for the country.

General context

Canadians continue to be more negative than positive about the direction of the country, and identify the top issues to be inflation, housing affordability and the cost of living. A majority continues to believe the country's economy is getting weaker.

General direction of the country. Public opinion on immigration can be understood in the context of broader trends taking place over the past year.

Canadians' general feeling about the direction of their country is more negative than positive, with opinions at the national level essentially unchanged from one year ago. Just over one in three (35%) now say they are satisfied with the way things are going in our country today (up 1 percentage point from September 2023), compared with a clear majority (57%, down 1 point) who express dissatisfaction. The remainder (7%, down 1) have no clear opinion either way. While public sentiment appears to have stabilized following a previous year of significant change, Canadians' view of how their country is doing remains the most pessimistic since 2016 when this question was first asked in Focus Canada.

Across the country, Quebecers continue to express the most positive views about the direction of the country, and this sentiment has improved modestly (48%, up 4), following a previous year of significant decline. Satisfaction with the direction of the country is also up marginally (2 to 5 percentage points) in other parts of the country, except in Manitoba and Saskatchewan where this sentiment has plummeted by half (22%, down 21 points), and have now replaced Alberta as the region with the most negative outlook. As on previous surveys, first generation Canadians (44%) are more likely than those born in Canada (32%) to be positive about the direction of the country.

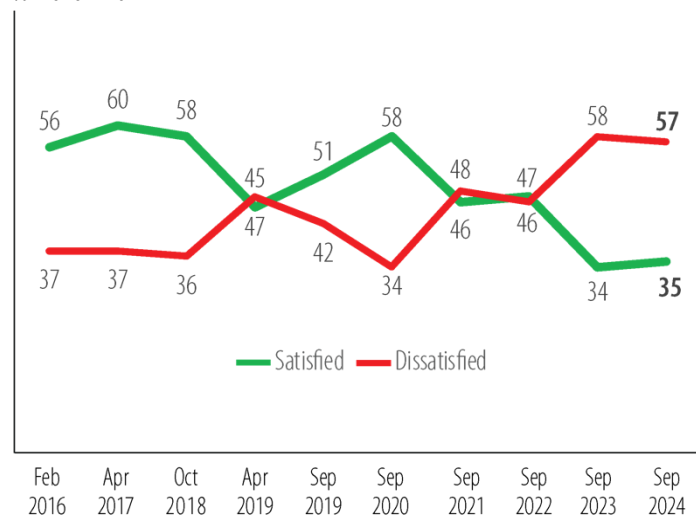
Public judgements about the direction of the country are typically coloured by political sentiments, and which party is in government at the time. With the Trudeau-led Liberal Party now approaching 10 years in office and a likely election within the year, the partisan divide continues to widen.

As might be expected, Canadians who support the federal Liberal Party express the strongest satisfaction with the direction of the country (61%, up 3 points since 2023), compared with 32 percent dissatisfied (down 3); this partly reverses a substantial slide recorded over the previous year (2022-2023). Positive views have also increased since 2023 among supporters of the BQ (51%, up 7) and NDP (44%, up 4).

In contrast, just over one in ten (13%) supporters of the federal Conservative Party are now satisfied with the country's direction (down 3), compared with more than eight in ten (83%, up 3) who are dissatisfied. This reflects a notable change from the current government's first term, when in 2018 close to half (44%) of Conservative Party supporters felt the country was moving in the right direction.

Overall are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in your country today?

% 2016 – 2024



Q.1 Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the way things are going in our country today?

Most important problem facing Canadians today. What do Canadians see as “top of mind” as the most pressing problems facing the country today (asked unprompted, with only one response recorded)?¹ As is in the past, the public identifies a number of issues that concern them, and in 2024 the focus is essentially the same as in 2023.

Canadians are most likely to identify the top issue to be inflation and the cost of living (22%), followed by the economy and unemployment (14%), affordable housing (12%), health care (11%), and poor government leadership (9%), followed by the environment and climate change (5%) and immigration-related issues (4%). Mention of each of these issues has changed little since a year ago, moving up or down by no more than a few percentage points.

Public focus on most important issues is largely similar across the country with modest regional variation. Concerns about inflation and the cost of living are most apparent in both Atlantic Canada (30%) and in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (28%) (but unchanged in these regions), while health care is of growing concern in Quebec (18%, up 6), and immigration attracts more attention in Alberta (8%, up 6). Canadians’ list of pressing national issues is generally the same across partisan political lines, although Conservative Party supporters are somewhat more likely to mention poor government leadership (17%) and immigration (7%).

Most important problem facing Canadians today?
 % 2018 – 2024 Top mentions–unprompted

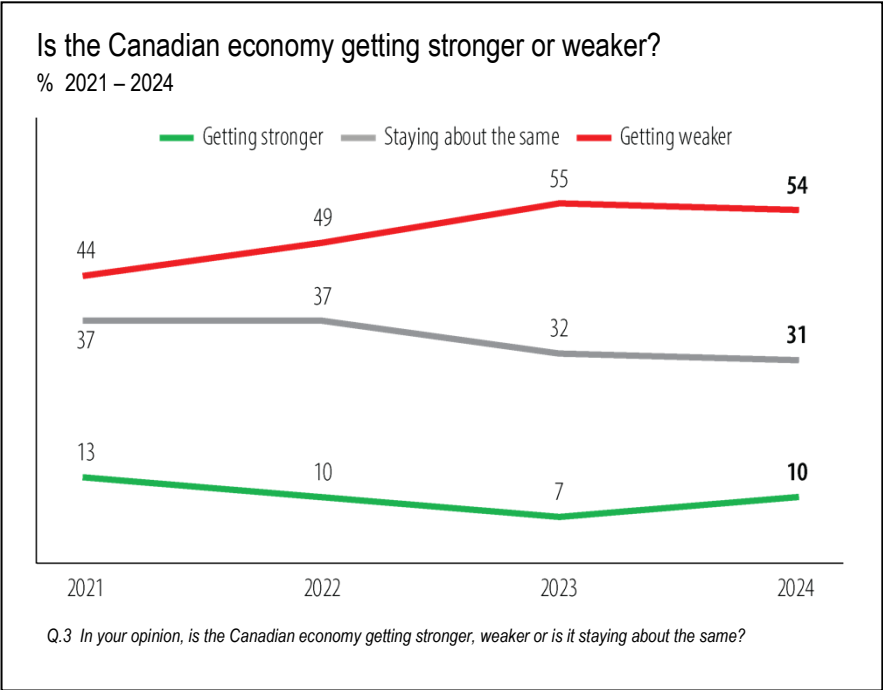
	Oct 2018	Oct 2019	Oct 2020	Sep 2021	Sep 2022	Sep 2023	Sep 2023
Inflation / cost of living / gas prices	4	8	1	3	22	24	22
Economy / interest rates / unemployment	18	14	17	10	12	13	14
Affordable housing	–	–	1	5	6	14	12
Health care	9	9	7	9	15	9	11
Poor government leadership	8	8	8	7	7	8	9
Environment / climate change	10	24	5	13	10	8	5
Immigration / refugees	5	2	1	1	1	2	4
Taxes	3	4	1	1	2	2	3

Q.2 In your opinion, what is the most important problem facing Canadians today?

¹ This question asks for and only accepts one response (*the* most important issue), as a way to measure the relative salience of problems. A different question allowing for multiple responses would undoubtedly result in Canadians identifying more than one problem as important ones facing the country.

Direction of the Canadian economy. In recent years Canadians have been growing increasingly negative about the direction of the national economy, but this pessimistic view appears to have levelled off over the past year. In 2024, a majority (54%) believe the Canadian economy is growing weaker (down 1 point from 2023), compared to just one in ten (10%, up 3) who say it is getting stronger. The remainder believe the economy is staying the same (31%, down 1) or offer no opinion (5%, unchanged).

Public sentiment about the direction of the Canadian economy has shown modest improvement over the past year in Ontario, among Canadians 45 and older and those who support the federal Liberal Party, while the opposite trend has taken place in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and among younger Canadians. A pessimistic view of the national economy is now most pronounced in the Prairie provinces (61%), among Canadians ages 18 to 29 (62%), those without a high school diploma (63%) and federal Conservative Party supporters (73%).

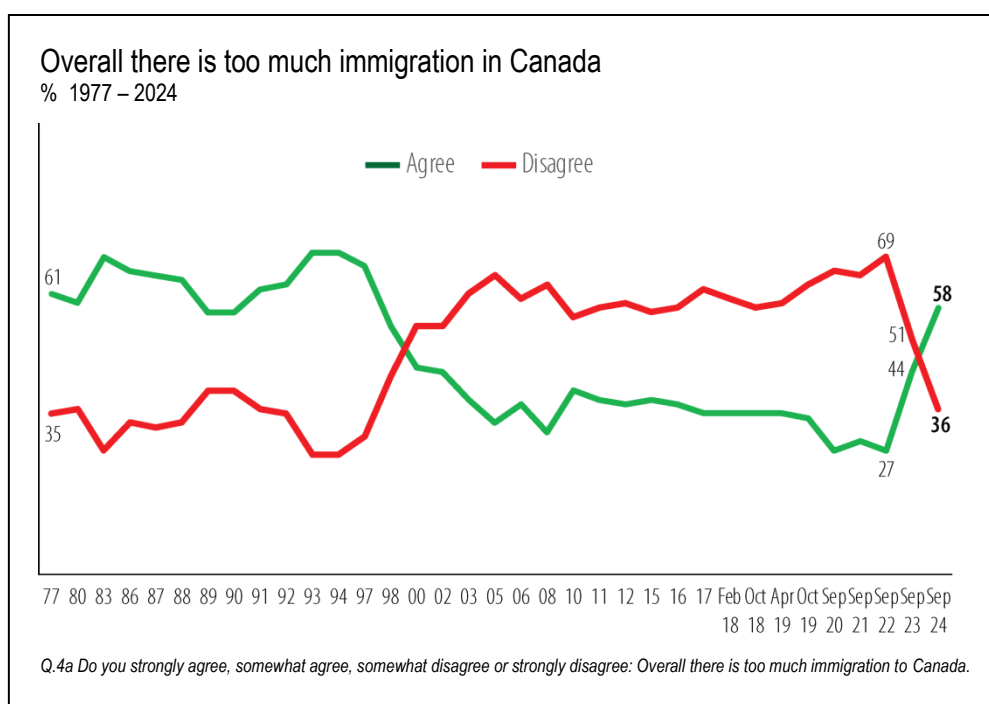


Overall level of immigration

For the first time in a quarter century, a clear majority of Canadians say there is too much immigration, with this view strengthening considerably for the second consecutive year. This trend is evident across the population, and driven chiefly by concerns about the economy and housing.

Agree-Disagree: “Overall, there is too much immigration to Canada.” For most of the past two decades, most Canadians have generally considered that the volume of immigration as a whole arriving in the country was not an issue. In 2023, through a combination of factors including record high immigration intake, persistent inflation and a declared “housing crisis”, the public started focusing more closely on immigration levels and expressed increasing concerns about how many immigrants were arriving in the country. In 2024, such concerns have grown to the point where the balance of public opinion has effectively flipped from viewing immigration levels as acceptable (if not valuable) to being problematic.

Close to six in ten Canadians now strongly (32%) or somewhat (26%) agree there is too much immigration to Canada. This represents a 14 percentage point increase over the past 12 months, building upon a 17 point rise over the previous year (2022 to 2023). This is the most rapid change over a two-year period since Focus Canada began asking this question in 1977, and reflects the largest proportion of Canadians who say there is too much immigration since 1998.



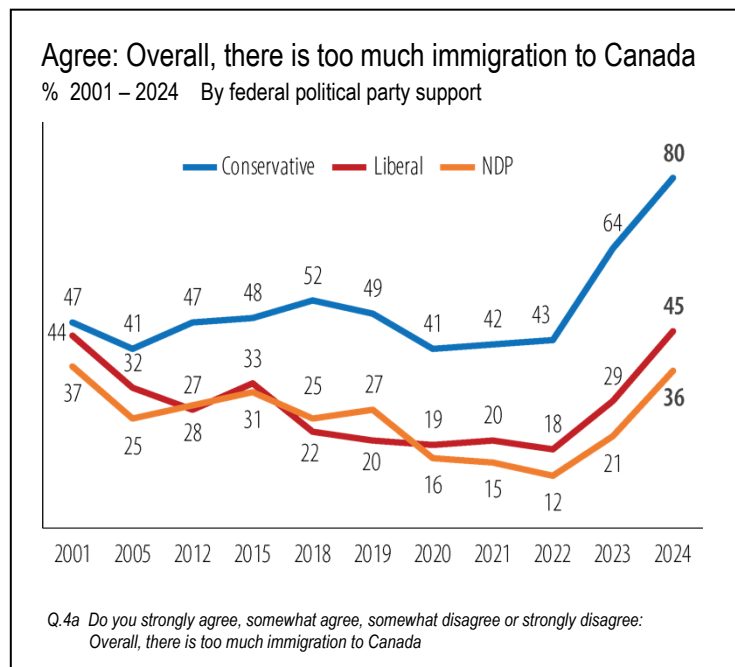
In comparison, just over one-third of the public now somewhat (18%) or strongly (18%) disagrees there is too much immigration (down 15 points from 2023); This proportion is now just over half as many Canadians who expressed this view in 2022 (69%).

Rising agreement about too much immigration levels has taken place across the country, as was the case over the previous year. The most substantial shift since 2023 has been in the Prairie provinces, with overall agreement up 34 percentage points in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (to 68%), and Alberta (up 17 points to 63%: where *strong* agreement is up 19 points to 42%). In comparison, fewer than half (46%, up 9) of Quebecers agree with the statement, compared with an equivalent percentage (47%) who disagree. Quebec has not avoided the broader trend of increasing concern about immigration levels, but it is happening at a slower pace and the gap in perspective with the rest of Canada continues to widen.

Rising concern about immigration levels has taken place across generational cohorts, but more noticeably over the past year among Canadians under 45 years of age (up 20 points), compared with those who are older (up 13). Opinions on this question remain roughly comparable by community size and household income. Notably, opinions on this question are essentially the same between Canadians who are first-generation and those born in Canada.

As before, opinions about immigration diverge most sharply across federal political party lines. This divide continues but the growth in concern about immigration levels is evident across the political spectrum. Once again, supporters of the federal Conservative Party are most widely in agreement that there is too much immigration (80%, up 16 points since 2023), but there is an equivalent increase among those who would vote for the federal Liberals (45%, up 16) or NDP (36%, up 15).

As with Quebec generally, Bloc Québécois supporters demonstrate a smaller increase in agreement with the question since 2023 (50%, up 6).



Reasons for too much immigration. Those who agree with the statement that Canada accepts too many immigrants were asked why they believe this (in an open-ended question, without offering prompting response options). As in the two previous years, several reasons are offered for this opinion, and in most cases the emphasis given to each is largely the same as in 2023.

Those holding this view are most likely to say there is too much immigration because of concerns about how newcomers are placing additional pressure on the a difficult housing market in Canadian communities (33%, down 5 points since 2023), with others mentioning the weak economy (29%, up 4), over-population (25%, up 6) or because immigrants place a drain on public finances (20%, down 5). The most notable change from a year ago is a significant increase in the proportion who believe there is too much immigration because it is being poorly managed by government (21%, up 10).

In comparison, Canadians are less apt to express concerns about immigration levels because it represents a threat to Canadian or Quebec culture (10%, up 2), because immigrants pose a risk to public health (4%, up 3) or security (3%, down 1), or because there are too many foreign students coming to study at Canadian universities and colleges (3%, down 1). It is in Quebec where the past year has seen a sharp rise in immigration concerns due to poor government management and perceived threats to culture and values.

Although opinions about immigration levels differ sharply across federal party lines, this is not reflected among those who agree with the statement that Canada is admitting too many immigrants: Supporters of the three main national parties who say that immigration levels are too high all give the same types of reasons for this view, in roughly the same proportions and shifts since 2023. Liberal Party supporters are somewhat less likely to mention concerns about housing, while NDP supporters are most apt to point to poor government management.

Why there is too much immigration to Canada

% 2022 – 2024 Unprompted responses

	2022	2023	2024
Immigrants place pressure on housing prices / supply	15	38	33
Weak economy / take jobs from other Canadians	21	25	29
Over-population / already too many people in Canada	19	19	25
Immigration is poorly managed by government / lack of screening	13	10	21
Immigrants are a drain on public finances / cost too much	23	25	20
Threat to Canadian / Quebec culture (identity / language / values)	24	8	10
Immigrants are a public health risk / COVID-19 threat	1	1	4
Too many foreign students	*	4	3
Immigrants are a security risk / risk of terrorism / extremism	3	4	3
Other reasons	5	3	5

Q.5 Why do you say there is too much immigration to Canada?

Economic impact of immigration

Most Canadians continue believe that immigration contributes to the country's economy, but the strength of this consensus has eroded over the past two years amidst growing concerns about other impacts of newcomer arrivals.

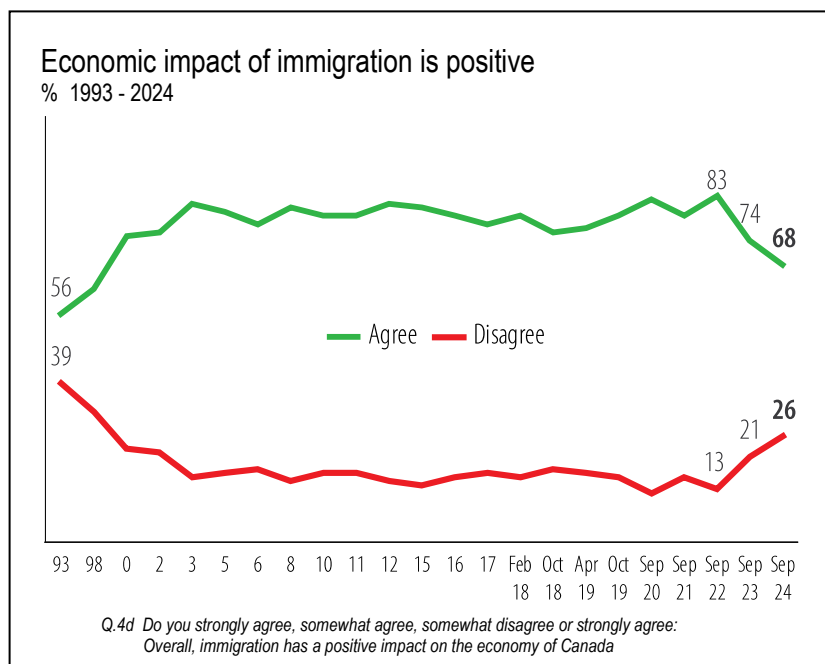
Agree-Disagree: “Overall, immigration has a positive impact on the economy of Canada.” Public support for immigration has been grounded in large part in the belief that it supports the country's economy. For two decades a decisive majority of Canadians have adopted this view, but rising concerns about immigration levels appear to be eroding this consensus.

Just under seven in ten Canadians now strongly (32%) or somewhat (36%) agree with the statement about immigration having a positive impact on the country's economy. Although this proportion reflects a large majority, it has declined for the second consecutive year, this time by six percentage points since 2023. One quarter now somewhat (14%) or strongly (12%) disagree with the statement, up five points and now double the percentage who expressed this view in 2022.

Declining confidence in immigration's contribution to the national economy is evident across most but not all groups across the country. Agreement with the statement has declined most noticeably in the Prairie provinces, among Canadians ages 18 to 29 (with *strong* agreement dropping by 21 points in the past 12 months).

Strong agreement remains most widespread among Canadians with a university education (38%), first generation Canadians (41%) and supporters of the federal Liberal Party (46%) and NDP (46%), and least so among those who would vote for the federal Conservative Party (21%) or Bloc Québécois (13%).

Predictably, belief in the positive economic benefits of immigration is closely tied to opinions about current immigration levels. Among those who disagree that immigration levels are too high, most (88%) agree on immigration benefitting the economy, with 69 percent in *strong* agreement. By comparison, among those say immigration to Canada is too high, only 57 percent believe in positive economic benefits (with 20% who *strongly* agree).

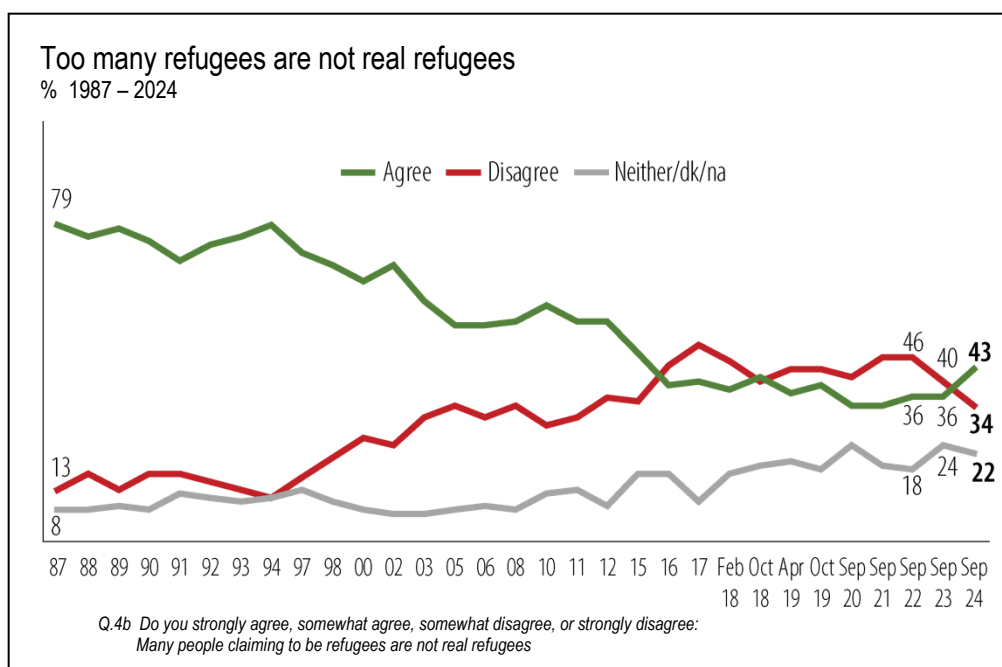


Refugee policy

For the first time in almost a decade, Canadians are now more likely than not to express the belief that some people claiming to be refugees are not legitimate, with this view strengthening most noticeably in Ontario and the Prairie provinces.

Agree-Disagree: “Many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees.” Refugees make up a very small proportion of newcomers arriving in Canada each year, and they have not been the main focus of recent media and political commentary about immigration levels and their impact on housing and cost of living. However, the heightened debate about immigration has bled into how the public views refugees and their status as newcomers.

For the first time in almost a decade, a plurality of Canadians now agree with the statement that “many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees.” More than four in ten now strongly (20%) or somewhat (23%) agree with this statement, up seven percentage points from 2023 and now at its highest level since 2015 (when 47% shared this view). One in three now somewhat (17%) or strongly (17%) disagree with the statement (down 6), with another one in five (22%, down 2) who have no clear opinion on the question.



Across the country, agreement about some refugees not being legitimate has increased noticeably in Ontario (48%, up 10), Manitoba and Saskatchewan (44%, up 14) and Alberta (54%, up 14), where the balance of opinion has now swung clearly toward this viewpoint. By comparison, opinions have changed little and remain more divided among residents of Atlantic Canada (31% agree with the statement, down 2), Quebec (38%, up 2) and B.C. (36%, up 3). Concerns about refugee legitimacy is now most prevalent in Alberta (where 28% now *strongly* agree), as well as among men (47%) and first-generation Canadians (51%).

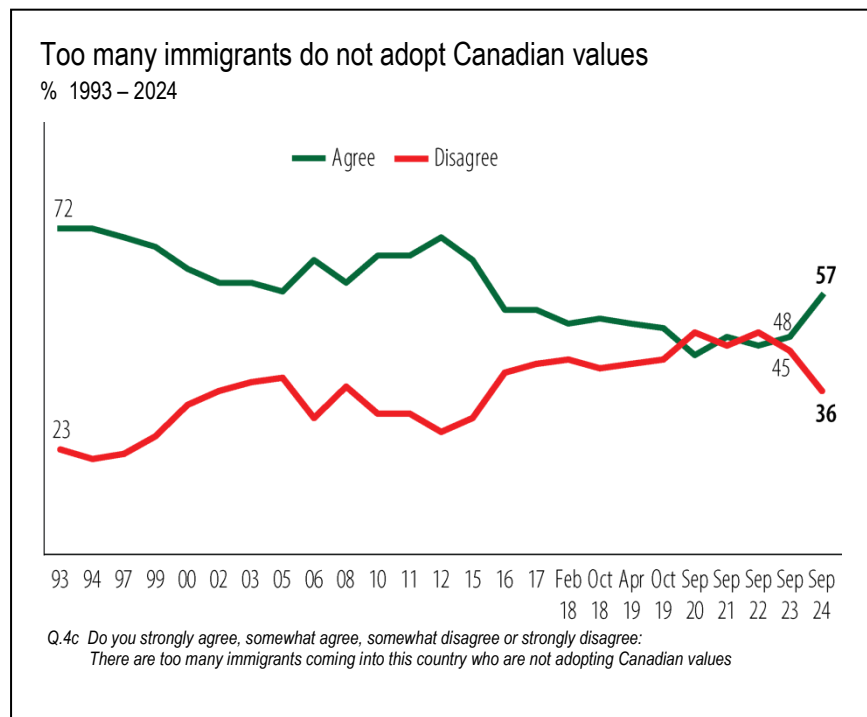
As on immigration levels, opinions about the legitimacy of refugees divides along partisan political lines, with Conservative Party supporters most strongly in agreement with the statement (59%, up 10 from 2023) compared with one-third as many (18%) who disagree. As before, this view is much less apt to be shared by supporters of the federal Liberal Party (32%, up 3) and NDP (27%, up 6), although both reflect the national upward trend. In Quebec, one-third (34%) of Bloc Québécois supporters agree with the statement questioning the legitimacy of some refugees, but this proportion has declined since 2023 (down 6 points), along with an increasing proportion who do not have clear opinion either way.

Integration of immigrants into society

Public concerns about newcomer integration have grown over the past year, with a rising proportion of Canadians saying that newcomers are not adopting the right values, that the country is accepting too many immigrants from minority groups, and that immigration leads to higher levels of crime.

Agree-Disagree: “There are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values.” Canadians have long recognized the economic benefits of immigration, but many have been ambivalent or uncomfortable with how newcomers are integrating (or not) into Canadian society, especially when it comes to religious practices and gender equality. Along with other indicators in this latest survey, the past year has seen increasing public concern about how immigrants are fitting in. This shift may in part be due to what people believe is happening because of high immigration levels, but could also be in response to other ongoing events such as the spike in targeted attacks directed at Jewish and Muslims in Canada.

In 2024, a clear majority of Canadians agree strongly (34%) or somewhat (23%) that “*there are too many immigrants coming into this country who are not adopting Canadian values*”, up nine percentage over the past year, all of which comprise those who *strongly* agree with the statement. This represents the largest one-year increase recorded on this question dating back three decades to 1993, and is the highest proportion in agreement since 2015 when 65 percent expressed this sentiment.



Just over one-third now somewhat (20%) or strongly (16%) disagree with this statement (down 9 points from 2023), with most of this decline among those who *strongly* disagree. Roughly one in ten neither agree nor disagree with the statement (4%) or have no opinion to offer (4%), both unchanged from a year ago.

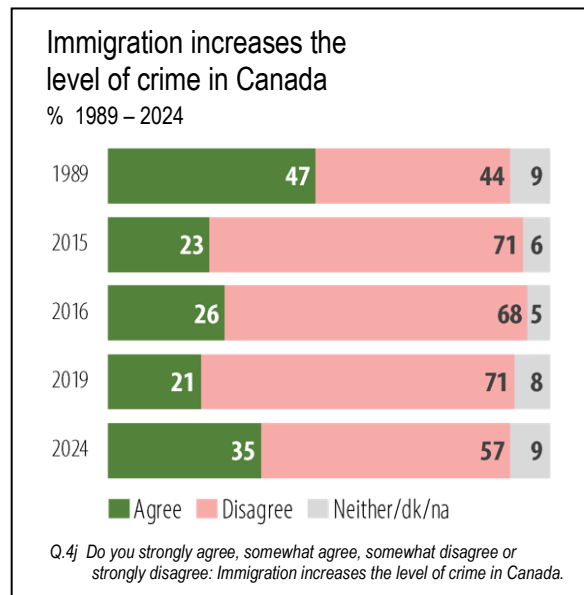
As with opinions about refugees, concerns about too little immigrant integration have risen most noticeably in Ontario (59% agree, up 10 points from 2023), Manitoba and Saskatchewan (59%, up 13) and Alberta (66%, up 19), and to a lesser extent in B.C. (52%, up 8). Opinions on this question have changed much less in Atlantic Canada (50%, up 2) and Quebec (53%, up 4), where issues of cultural integration have in historical terms been most sensitive. Of note is the fact that views are essentially the same between first generation and Canadian-born, as well as among those who identify as white and those who report a different racial identity or background (agreement with this statement has increased within each of these groups over the past two years).

Attitudes about immigrant integration are shaped by political leaning, but concerns about newcomers fitting in are up across all major parties. Agreement with the statement continues to be most prevalent among Conservative supporters (75%, up 11 points from 2023), in comparison to those who would vote for the Liberals (44%, up 7) or NDP (34%, up 7). In Quebec, two-thirds (65%) of Bloc Québécois supporters share this sentiment (up 9).

Agree-Disagree: “Immigration increases the level of crime in Canada.” Consistent with other trends over the past year, Canadians are more likely than before to express concerns about immigration leading to more crime. More than one in three now agree strongly (15%) or somewhat (20%) that “immigration increases the level of crime in Canada.” This represents a 14 percentage point increase since 2019, and reverses a mostly downward trend recorded between 1989 and 2015. Fewer than six in ten somewhat (26%) or strongly (31%) disagree with this statement (down 14), with another one in ten unsure or offer no opinion (9%, up 1). Given the five-year span covered by this latest comparison, the increased likelihood of linking immigration and crime could be due to other trends and issues of concern to Canadians, apart from immigration levels and where migrants are coming from.

Belief in a link between immigration and crime has strengthened in all groups across the country since 2019. Agreement with the statement has grown most substantially in Ontario (40%, up 19 points) and in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (41%, up 20). This proportion is now largest in Alberta (48%, up 14) compared with half as much in Quebec (24%, up 7).

Among partisan supporters, those who would vote Conservative are the most likely to link immigration and crime, and it is among this group where this view has risen most substantially from five years ago (55%, up 22 points). In comparison, this sentiment is shared by considerably fewer who support the federal Liberal Party (23%, up 11), NDP (18%, up 5) or Bloc Québécois (22%, up 2).



Not surprisingly, Canadians expressing concerns about the impact of immigration on crime are also more likely to believe there is too much immigration and that too many newcomers are not adopting Canadian values.

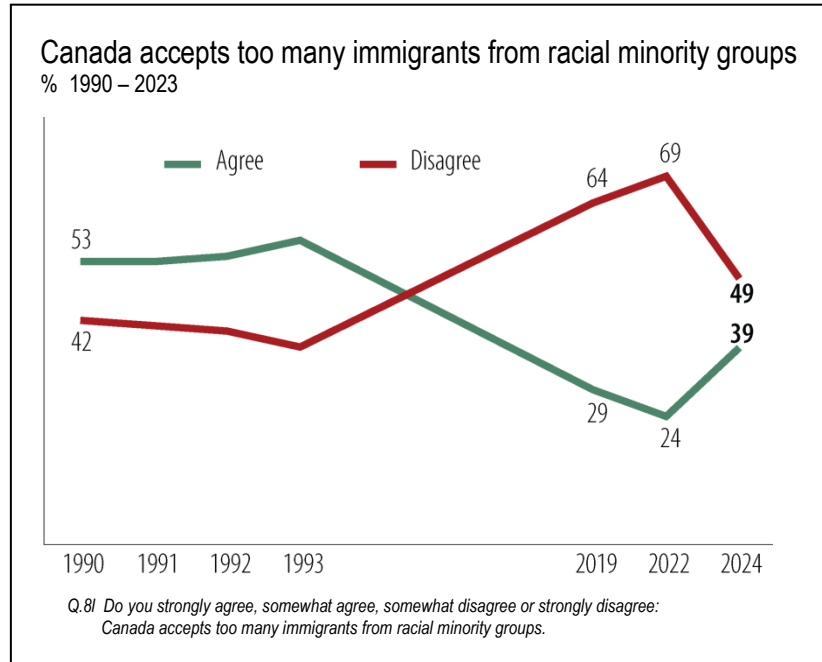
Agree-Disagree: “Canada accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups.” Public resistance to immigration has long been based in part on prejudice against newcomers with specific racial and ethnic backgrounds (predominantly non-white or racialized). This view was prevalent in the 1990s and then subsided in the past few years. It has now rebounded along with other rising concerns about immigration as documented elsewhere in this report, although not back to the level recorded three decades ago.

In 2024, four in ten Canadians agree strongly (19%) or somewhat (20%) agree that “Canada accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups” (up 15 points from 2022). Half somewhat (22%) or strongly disagree (27%) (down 20), while another 12 percent have no clear opinion either way (up 5). This latest shift is likely due in part to the fact that an increasing proportion of Canadians believe that immigration levels are too high; this heightened general concern may get reflected in more hesitation about newcomers from all backgrounds, including racial minorities, and for some it may also reflect more concern about immigrants from racial minorities being part of the immigration flow.

The belief that Canada accepts too many immigrants from minority groups has increased across the population, but most noticeably in Alberta (51%, up 22 points) and among Canadians ages 18 to 29 (40%, up 22). This view is notably now most likely to be shared by first generation Canadians (46%) and those with a racialized background

(45%), and least so among Quebecers (34%), British Columbians (33%) and Canadians with a university degree (30%). Across the political spectrum, rising concerns about immigrants from minority groups is most pronounced and growing among Conservative Party supporters (54%, up 18 points), compared with those who would vote for the Liberals (28%, up 8), NDP (24%, up 9) or Bloc Québécois (38%, up 6).

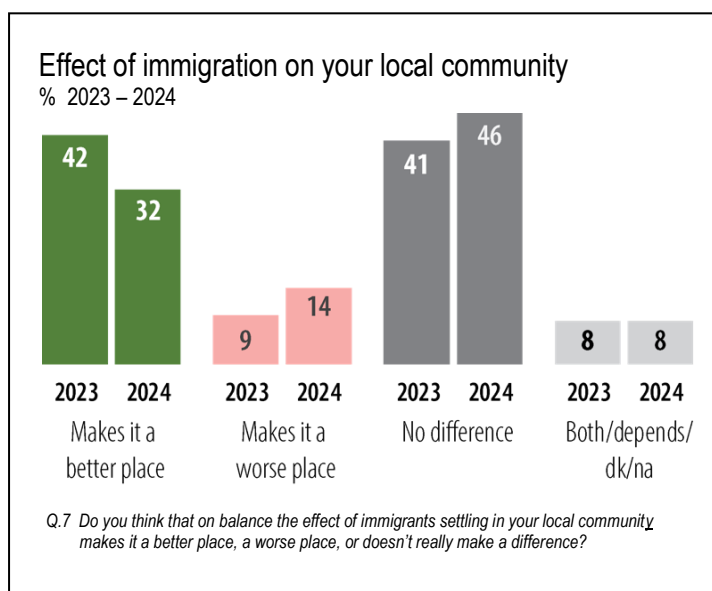
Racialized Canadians (45%) are more likely than those who identify as white (36%) to agree that the country accepts too many immigrants from racial minority groups, as was also the case in 2022 (the proportion who hold this view increased by similar proportions in both groups).



Local impacts of immigration

Canadians are more likely to say that immigrants make their local communities better rather than worse, but this view is less prevalent than a year ago. Newcomers are most valued for the multicultural diversity they contribute, while those with concerns worry most about threats to local culture or identity.

Focus Canada asked Canadians if, on balance, they believe the effect of immigrants settling in their local community makes it a better place, a worse place, or makes no difference in the end. The results reveal that immigrants are much more likely to be valued for what they contribute than what they may be seen to take away from local communities, but the balance is now less positive than a year ago.



In 2024, one-third (32%) of Canadians say that immigrants make their community a better place (down 10 points from 2023), compared with 14 percent who believe they make things worse (up 5). The remainder maintain that immigrants make no net difference (46%, up 5), volunteer a more nuanced response (e.g., both better and worse – 4%) or do not offer an opinion (4%).

The weakening of positive views about local immigrant impacts is evident across the country, but most noticeable in Alberta where opinions have shifted from seeing immigration making their community a better place (30%, down 12 points) to a worse place (22%, up 13). British Columbians continue to express the most positive views on this question (42%, down 9), as do Canadians with a university degree (43%, down 12) and supporters of the federal Liberal Party (45%, down 7) and NDP (47%, down 14).

In comparison, Conservative Party supporters are now more likely to say that local immigrants make their local community a worse place (24%, up 8 points) than a better one (17%, down 13).), with a plurality maintaining no net difference either way (49%, up 5).

How immigrants make local communities better. Canadians who say that immigrants make their country either better or worse were asked why they think so (unprompted, without offering response options), and the reasons given are largely the same as in 2023. Among those who believe that immigrants make their communities a better place (32% of the population), most (70%) say they value what immigrants bring in terms of multiculturalism and diversity.

Others emphasize the practical benefits to the local economy (27%) (e.g., adding new businesses, new customers and contributing to the labour force) and helping the local population grow (14%). Others focus on more intangible benefits of newcomers in terms of showing that people in their community are caring (9%) or otherwise enhancing its reputation (6%). One in six (14%) say that immigrants make a positive local difference because they appreciate being in Canada, with this proportion up most noticeably over the past year (up 10).

Why do you say immigrants make your community a [better/worse] place?

% 2023 – 2024 Unprompted responses

BETTER PLACE (32%)			WORSE PLACE (14%)		
	2023	2024		2023	2024
Adds to diversity / multiculturalism	75	70	Immigrants weaken local culture / identity	41	46
Helps economy grow	33	27	Hurt the economy / cause unemployment	21	22
Helps local population grow	12	14	Immigrants not screened well enough	8	15
Immigrants appreciate Canada	4	14	Drain on public finances	17	14
Shows people in my community care	11	9	Drive up housing prices	15	14
Enhances community reputation	7	6	Over-population / too many people here already	13	11
Other reasons	4	2	Immigrants are a security risk	6	11
			Other reasons	13	11

Q.8 Why do you say that new immigrants make your local community a [better / worse] place?

How immigrants make local communities worse. Among those who say that immigrants make their communities a worse place (14% of the population), the most prominent reasons – as a year ago – pertain to concerns about weakening local culture or identity (46%, representing 6% of all Canadians). Others maintain that immigrants hurt the local economy (22%), place a drain on public finances (14%), drive up housing prices (14%, 2% of all Canadians), or otherwise contribute to over-population (11%).

Canadians expressing concerns about local immigrant impacts are more likely than a year ago to mention a lack of proper screening (15%, up 7 points) or security concerns (11%, up 5). As was the case in 2023, many who say there is too much immigration to Canada attribute this to housing concerns, but comparatively few identify this issue on the ground in their own communities.

Immigration category priorities

Canadians are most likely to want government to prioritize immigrants with specialized skills and good education, followed by refugees and reuniting families, and lower priority given to temporary workers and international students. The priority given to all categories has declined modestly over the past year.

Canada accepts immigration across a number of different categories that encompass both permanent and temporary status upon arrival. The most significant change over the past few years has been a substantial increase in the number temporary foreign workers and international students arriving in the country, which has attracted most of the media attention and controversy surrounding immigration. Focus Canada asked Canadians what priority they feel the government should place on each of six streams of newcomers, updating a question first asked one year ago.

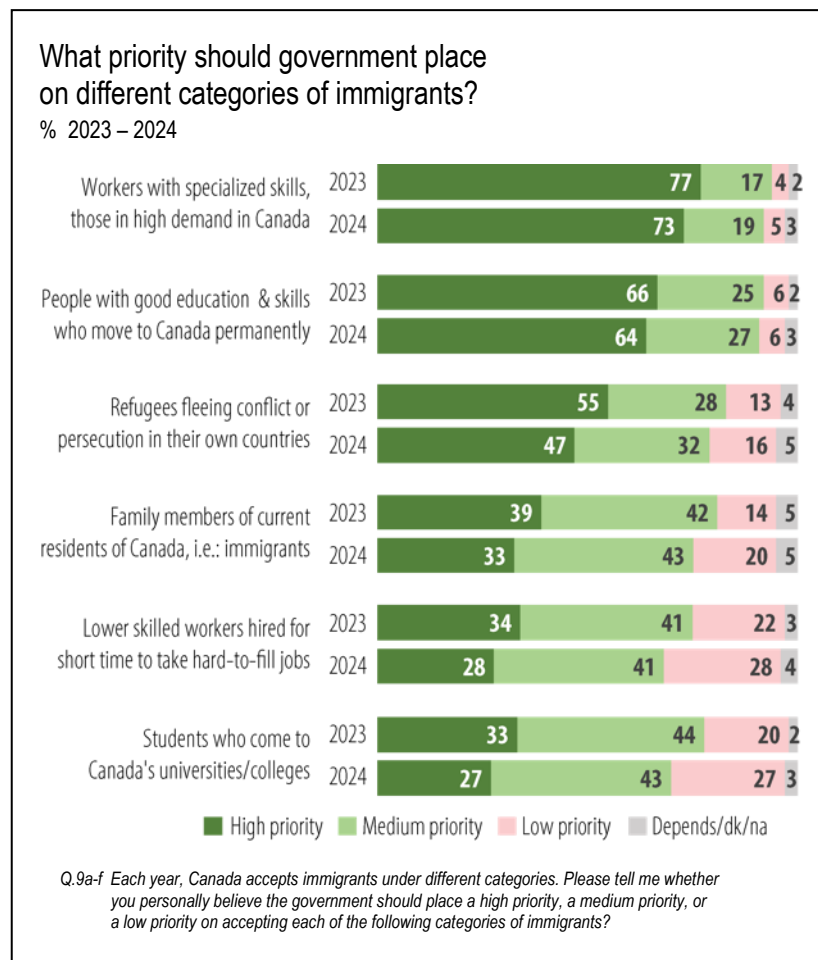
As in 2023, most Canadians consider all six streams of immigrants to be of medium, if not high, priority in terms of government policy in the country's interest, with some categories assigned a greater priority than others. Along with rising concerns about immigration levels, the public is somewhat less likely than a year ago to assign a high priority to each of these immigrant streams.

Of the six immigrant categories, Canadians continue to place the highest priority on workers with specialized in high demand; close to three in four (73%) say this should be a high priority category (down 4 percentage points from 2023), compared with only five percent who believe it should be a low priority for immigration (up 1). More than six in ten (64%) assign a high priority to people with good education and skills who move to Canada permanently (down 2), versus six percent who say a low priority (unchanged).

The most notable change over the past year is a decline in the proportion of Canadians who place a high priority on admitting refugees fleeing conflict or persecution in their own countries (47%, down 8), compared with 16 percent who assign a low priority to this category (up 3). Fewer still

believe government should give high priority to family members of current residents (including immigrants) (33%, down 6), versus 28 percent assigning this category a low priority..

As in 2023, the public is least likely to place a high priority on lower skilled workers hired to come to Canada for a short time to take on hard-to-fill jobs (28%, down 6) and on students who come to study in Canadian colleges and universities (27%, down 6). In both cases a clear and stable plurality continue to say these are medium priority categories, with close to three in ten considering each to be a low priority (up 6 and 7 points, respectively).



Public perspectives on the importance of immigration categories are broadly similar across the population, especially for the two most valued categories (workers with specialized skills, people with good education and skills). The downward shift in “high priority” ratings over the past year can be seen in most but not all regions and groups.

- Public priority on admitting refugees fleeing persecution has declined since 2023 most noticeably among residents of the Prairie provinces, along with Canadians ages 30 to 44 and women. This category is most likely to be assigned a high priority by NDP supporters (70%, down 1), and least so among first generation Canadians (39%, down 8) and Conservative party supporters (30%, down 13).
- The decline in priority given to family reunification since 2023 is most noticeable in the Prairie provinces and among NDP supporters, although this latter group remains among the most supportive (42%) along with supporters of the Liberal Party (42%, down 4 points) and Bloc Québécois (48%, up 7 points), as well as among first generation Canadians (43%, unchanged). This view is least apt to be shared by Conservative Party supporters (21%, down 9).
- Support for lower skilled temporary workers has declined across most groups, but remains strongest in Quebec (41%, down 3) and among BQ supporters (41%, up 3), in contrast with Canadians under 45 years of age (21%, down 9), those without a high school diploma (22%, down 11) and Conservative Party supporters (22%, down 7).
- The priority placed on international students coming to study in Canadian colleges and universities has declined over the past year most noticeably in Atlantic Canada (27%, down 13 points), Manitoba and Saskatchewan (23%, down 11) and B.C. (20%, down 12). Support for this category remains strongest among first generation Canadians (35%, down 10), Quebecers (37%, down 6), those with household incomes under \$30K a year (39%, unchanged) and Liberal Party supporters (34%, down 3). This view is least evident among Conservative Party supporters, with only 19% assigning this category a high priority compared with twice as many (40%) saying it is a low priority (up 10 points).

While Canadians express clear preferences for some categories of immigrants over others, more than nine in ten identify at least one category as meriting high priority by the government, and almost no one (fewer than 1%) rating all six categories to be of low priority. These proportions apply even among those who now say there is too much immigration to Canada; people with this view identify on average two of the six groups to merit a high priority. This reveals that Canadians who express concerns about the number of migrants arriving in the country are not rejecting immigration outright, and consider some categories as beneficial.

Multiculturalism in Canada

Canadians continue to express a belief in the broad benefits of multiculturalism to the national identity, but in the past two years have become less certain about value of today's youth growing up with friends from diverse backgrounds.

Agree – Disagree: Multiculturalism has contributed positively to the Canadian identity. Multiculturalism has been an official federal government policy for more than 50 years, and over time has become the country's reality as the population has become increasingly diverse through immigration from many parts of the globe. Despite growing concerns about the number of immigrants arriving and their impact on the economy and housing, Canadians remain as positive as they were 20 years ago about the broad contribution that multiculturalism has made to the national identity.

Close to eight in ten say they are strongly (44%) or somewhat (34%) agree that “multiculturalism has contributed positively to the Canadian identity”, largely unchanged from 2003. Fewer than one in five somewhat (10%) or strongly (8%) disagree (unchanged), with another four percent who have no clear opinion either way (up 3).

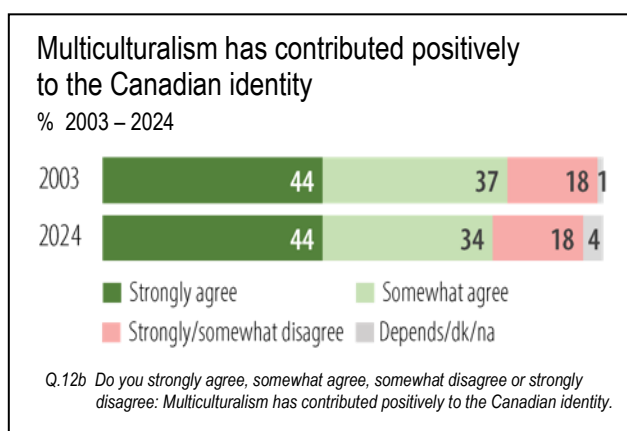
Endorsement of this statement about the importance of multiculturalism is a clear majority view across the country, with *strong* agreement most widespread in Atlantic Canada (53%, up 8 points from 2003) and British Columbia (51%, up 4), and least so in Quebec (31%, down 2). This view is also most likely to be expressed among women (50%), first generation Canadians (52%) and those with a university degree (52%).

As on other questions, perspectives divide along political partisan lines and this gap has widened since 2003. Strong agreement with the contribution of multiculturalism is strongest among supporters of the federal NDP (68%, up 17 points since 2003) and Liberal Party (58%, up 7), in sharp contrast to those who would vote for the federal Conservative Party (31%, down 8) or Bloc Québécois (22%, down 5).

Predictably, opinions about multiculturalism are strongly linked to attitudes about immigration. The positive contribution of multiculturalism to Canadian identity is *strongly* endorsed by more than seven in ten who also *strongly* disagree that immigration levels are too high, that too many immigrants are not adopting Canadian values, and/or believe Canada is accepting too many immigrants from racial minority groups; this is in comparison with only one in four who *strongly agree* with one or more of these statements.

Agree – Disagree: Young Canadians today are fortunate to grow up surrounded by friends from all different races and religions. The public's enduring support for multiculturalism broadly notwithstanding, Canadians have become somewhat less sure about the benefits of living in a diverse society over the past two years. Close to nine in ten strongly (54%) or somewhat (34%) agree that “young Canadians today are fortunate to grow up surrounded by friends from all different races and religions”, but the proportion who *strongly* agree has declined by 17 percentage points since 2022.

Strong agreement about the benefits of diverse connections for youth has declined by double digits across most of the population, and most notably in Manitoba and Saskatchewan (52%, down 22) and British Columbia (55%, down 22). This view is now most likely to be expressed in Atlantic Canada (61%, down 14) and Ontario (60%, down 18), and least so in Quebec (41%, down 14%). Canadians ages 18 to 29 continue to be more likely to *strongly* agree with this statement (57%, down 20), but the gap with those 60 plus (50%, down 13) has narrowed since 2022.



Once again, opinions can be predicted based on federal political party affiliation. Strong agreement about young people benefitting from diverse friendships is primarily among Canadians who support the NDP (75%, down 7 from 2022) or Liberal Party (64%, down 14), in contrast to those who would vote for the Conservative Party (42%, down 20) or Bloc Québécois (34%, down 15).

More generally, attitudes about youth friendships largely match those about the overall benefits of multiculturalism for Canadian identity – a majority express a consistent viewpoint on both questions (i.e., those who strongly agree with one of the statements also strongly agree with the other, and vice-versa).

