

The consequences of presenting information about a non-restrictive immigration policy on immigration attitudes: Results from a survey experiment

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a 6000-respondents pre-registered survey experiment exploring the effects of presenting different types of information about official immigration targets on Canadians' preferences toward immigration policy. Our previously published research (Lawlor and Paquet 2021; Paquet and Lawlor 2022) has shown that Canadian respondents are significantly attuned to messages from the Canadian government (institutional cues) when it comes to outcomes of the immigration system (e.g. relative importance of specific immigration categories) and exhibit surprising patterns of numeracy when it comes to national immigration intakes. This project extends that work, taking as a starting point Canada's official record for immigration targets for 2023-2025, and the country's plans to increase intake even further after 2026. We compare the effect of presenting national numerical targets or regional numerical targets, as well as the impact of cueing specific types of immigrants in relation to these targets (e.g. economic immigrants and refugees). Our results confirm that presenting numerical information about official immigration targets leads to an increased propensity to support restrictive policies but that this effect is partially mitigated for respondents who received factual information about the official proportion of economic immigrants within those targets. The results of this experiment contribute to research on the effects of information provision on attitudes towards immigration and will support the development of better public communication on immigration policies.

Biography

Mireille Paquet holds the Concordia Research Chair on the Politics of Immigration at Concordia University and is the scientific director of the Équipe de recherche sur l'immigration au Québec et ailleurs (ÉRIQA). She has held fellowships at Harvard University and UC Berkeley and was the recipient of the 2016/2017 Concordia University Research Award in Social Sciences. In 2020, she was selected as the inaugural Scholar in Residence of the Centre of Excellence on the Canadian Federation at the Institute for Research on Public Policy (IRPP), and in 2022, she was an International Research Fellow at the Institut Convergences Migrations at the Collège de France. Mireille is routinely invited to present her research to governments in Canada and internationally. Moreover, she is directly involved in public policy, as she acts as a consultant and advisor for different government departments and NGOs on policy design and research projects. She maintains an active presence as a public intellectual by engaging in outreach through traditional media and by publishing articles in accessible venues in French and in English.